

The Safest Grünfeld Reloaded



Alexander Delchev

chessstoring.com

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The Safest Grünfeld Reloaded

A Complete Repertoire for Black

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Foreword

What's new?

This book is a completely new edition of the original The Safest Grünfeld of 2011. I rechecked all the lines and changed my recommendations according to latest developments of theory and my new understanding.

Especially the anti-Grünfeld chapters are basically new. In my opinion top players have long lost hope to find advantage in the main lines and try early deviations. Anand chose 3.f3 against Gelfand and 5.♗d2 against Carlsen. So I devoted special attention to the Sämish approach with two different propositions. 3...♖c6 is less studied and probably more rewarding from a practical standpoint, while 3...d5 is in perfect theoretical shape, but requires more memorization.

Every too often White players try to avoid the Grünfeld by refraining from d4 or c4. I added an additional chapter on the very topical lately Trompowsky and Barry/Jobava attack.

The 7.♗c4 system in the Exchange Variation, and the Russian System have also underwent a major reconstruction.

In general, I aimed to propose a more dynamic approach than in the first edition, despite the book title.

A little background

I have been studying the Grünfeld for years. I often used it in decisive games as Black, but I also have extensive practice as White.

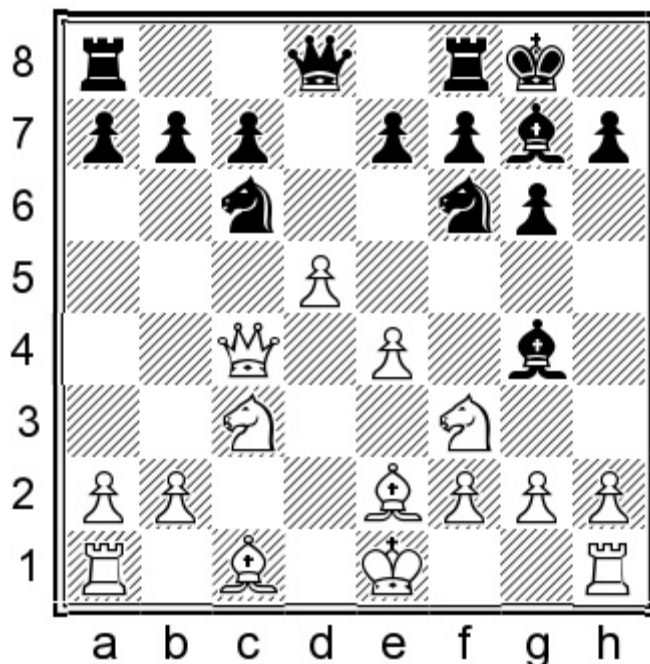
I always aim to surprise the opponent in the opening, so after the appearance of the book in 2011 I started to choose the Grünfeld mostly in rapid chess, to avoid home preparation. However, many of my students went on developing new ideas. Thus I have been constantly in touch with current theory, and in 2019 I decided to test my new recommendations in classical chess.

I am convinced that learning an opening should not begin with memorization of variations. We should firstly understand what our positional aims are, what to pursue, and what to avoid. Then we should examine the typical pawn structures and plans that ensue from them. Only then should we choose a system which best fits in with our style of play. You will hardly remember many details, but general understanding will save you from big trouble.

Here are some examples from the practice of my students.

We had studied the typical ideas and a few classical examples, so when Kadric got into the position of the following diagram, he did not get crushed, despite the fact that he did not know the best move order:

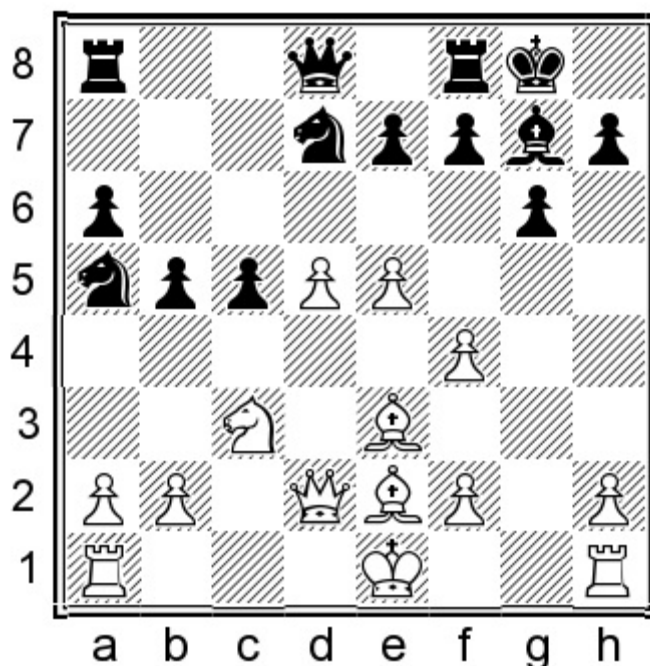
Drenchev-Kadric
Plovdiv 2011



9...Qxf3?!

Correct is 9...Na5! 10.Qa4 Qxf3.

10.gxf3 Na5 11.Qd3! c5! 12.Qe3 Nd7 13.f4 a6 14.e5 b5 15.Qd2



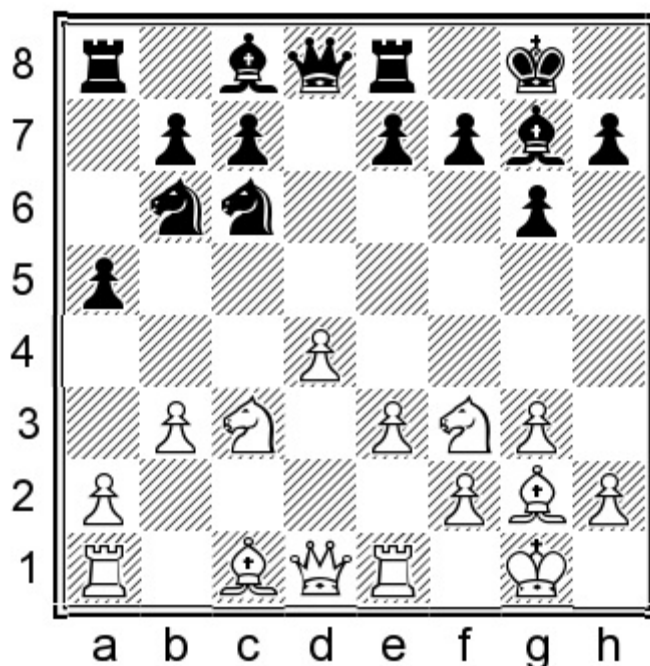
White is 150 Elo points higher rated (2521) than his opponent and much more experienced, but he was forced to think concretely in an unusual position. Black remembered that I advocated ...a6 and ...b5 in the Grünfeld and successfully gained space on the queenside. Now he could have applied another typical method – a pawn sacrifice – to seize the initiative: 15...f6 16.e6 Nb6 17.Qxc5 Nbc4 18.Qc1 f5 19.0-0 Rxc8↑, instead of the timid 15...Rc8. Later he got the upper hand nonetheless.

When we studied the ideas of the g3-system, I showed the game Benko-Smyslov, Budapest 1949 (given in Chapter 1), which introduced for the first time the attack on the queenside by the a-pawn.

During the following game, Kadric recalled it and, inspired by Smyslov's example, followed up by:

G.Szabo-Kadric

Plovdiv 2011



11...a4!?

Consistent, though probably not best (11...e5! =).

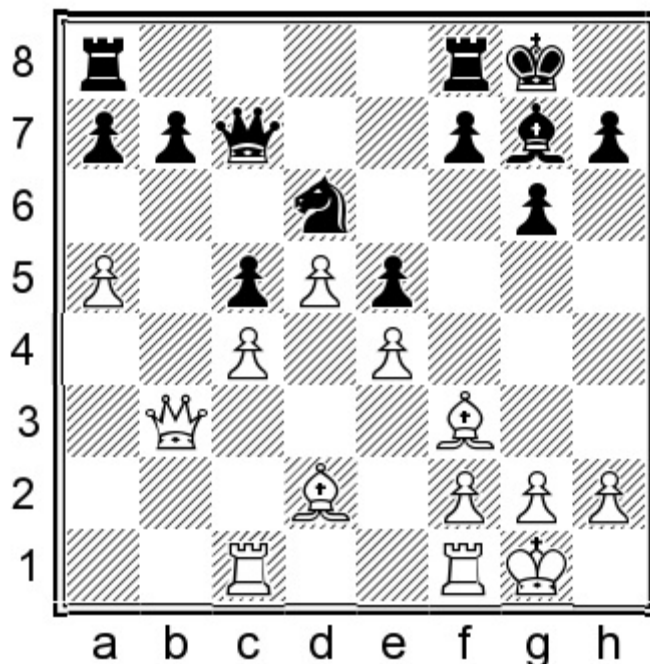
12. ♖xa4 ♘xa4 13. bxa4 e5! 14. ♕b2 exd4 15. ♕xd4 ♖xd4 16. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17. ♙xd4 ♙xd4 18. exd4, and Black easily drew against the 185 Elo points favourite.

I would also like to call your attention to a thematic manoeuvre in the Grünfeld – ...♗c6-a5-b7-d6, blocking the advanced d5-pawn.

I first delved into this idea during my work with Ivan Saric, a World and European champion under 18, now a leading Croatian grandmaster. One of my students liked it so much that he strived to reach a similar pawn structure in every game, thinking that Black was even better. I spent some effort to convince him that the evaluation of such positions depended on the placement of the other pieces. Here is an example from my own practice:

Naumkin-Delchev

Cappelle la Grande 2011



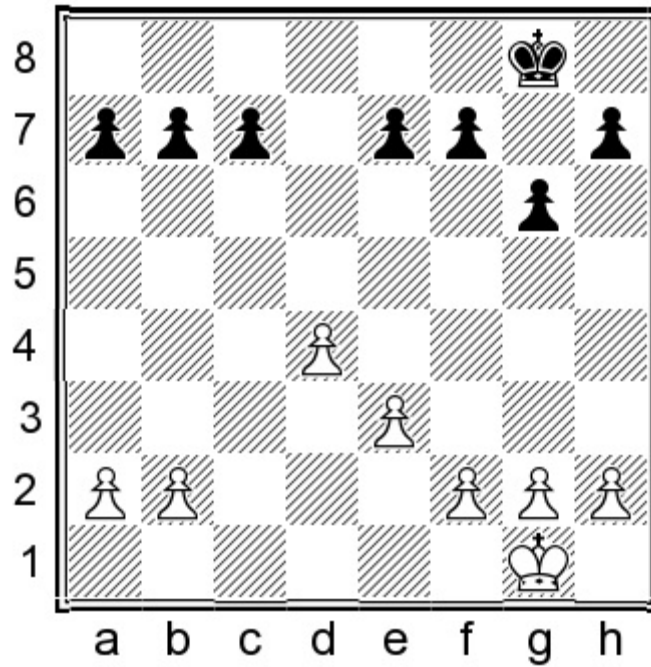
During the game I indulged in meditation of a philosophical character – if White did not have any problems even in this perfect example of a blockade, I thought, then perhaps Black did not stand so well in other similar positions either. He lacks an active plan. The natural-looking move ...f7-f5 would only weaken the e5-pawn. After ♖e1, ♔c3, Black cannot make any progress since his setup is basically passive and defensive. His left flank is cramped. That is why I recommend to resort to this plan mostly after having gained space on the queenside first with ...b5. In this new edition of the book, I even avoided such lines in favour of the more dynamic pawn structure arising after ...e6xd5. My advice is: study different strategic ideas before drawing your conclusions. Play according to the position – do not overestimate your chances.

The biggest challenge before the author of an opening book is how to solve the problem of the speed with which information becomes outdated and obsolete. I tried to offer at least two alternatives in every major system. That should bring about flexibility in our repertoire, and allow a variable approach to opponents according to their strength or playing style. With our backup lines you should be able to avoid long forced variations and surprise your opponents.

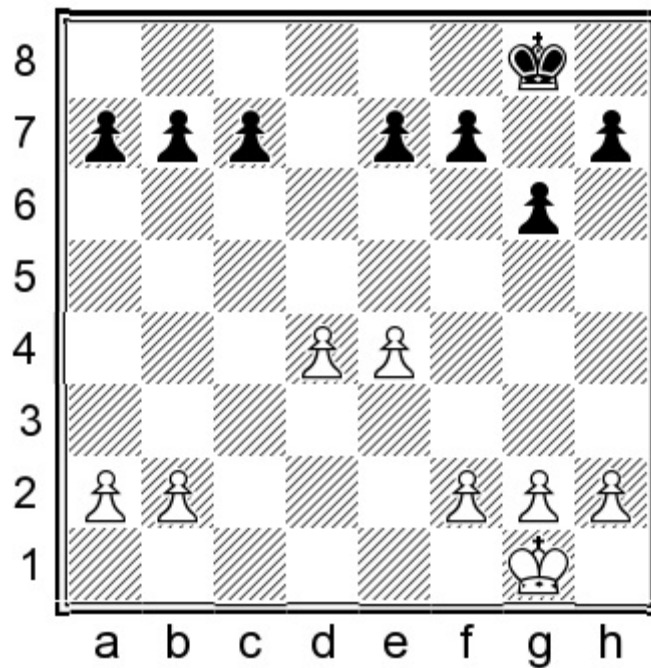
The main dish of the book are the “Step by Step” sections. However, the “Main Ideas” are also very important as they often complement the “Step by Step” sections. I also tried to reduce the amount of “Step by Step” theory by examining some backup lines in heavily annotated games, given in the “Complete Games”. That should facilitate your navigation between the numerous branches of our repertoire.

I have arranged the material according to the main pawn structures in the Grünfeld.

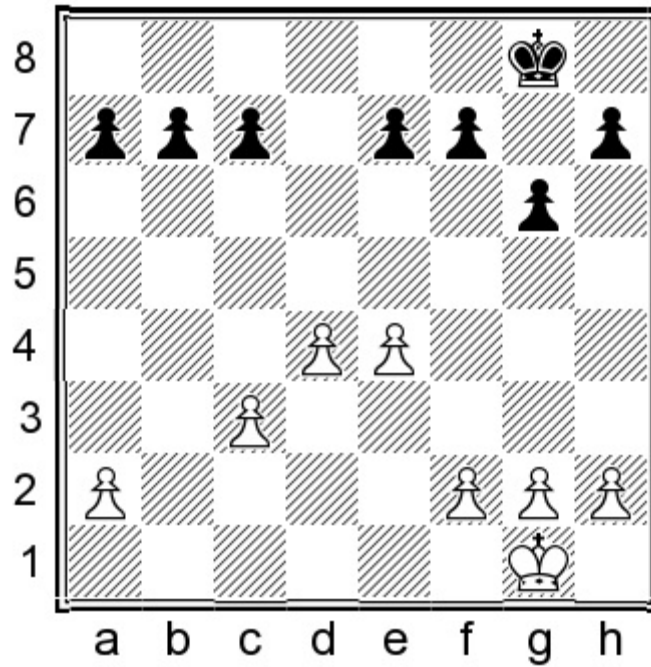
Thus Chapters 1-4 consider systems where White does not hurry to occupy the centre and our g7-bishop is restrained by the d4-pawn:



Then in Chapters 5-6 I examine the more aggressive pawn formation:



Chapters 7-10 are devoted to the Exchange System. This has been White's most popular weapon.



Chapter 11 calls your attention to several offbeat systems which might surprise you in OTB games. The last part deals with some Anti-Grünfeld approaches. The material in this book is up to date to the end of July, 2019.

*A.Delchev
August 2019*

Introduction

Black lets White build a strong pawn centre and subsequently tries to transform this strength into a weakness
Botvinnik

The dynamic character of play makes the Grünfeld Defence one of the most popular contemporary openings. However, in the beginning this original and highly provocative setup did not inspire confidence.

The birthday of this hypermodern opening was in 1922. In the first top level game, Alekhine-Grünfeld, Vienna 1922, the future world champion probably underestimated the great idea of his opponent and lost. Subsequently, Alekhine adopted it himself, starting in the same year. He even chose it for a main weapon in his match against Euwe in 1935, but the overall score was 3-1 in White's favour and he did not try it again in the rematch.

In the match-tournament in 1948, another future World champion, Smyslov, took up the torch and opted for the Grünfeld in three games. He lost one of them to Euwe, but no one could lightly dismiss the new opening anymore.

Six years later the Grünfeld appeared in the 1954 match Botvinnik-Smyslov, and later Botvinnik himself adopted it, popularizing it further. Henceforth nearly all world champions included the Grünfeld Defence in their repertoire. After the catastrophe in the Tarrasch Defence in his first match against Karpov, Kasparov put his fate in the Grünfeld. Still, the total score of 5-1 and 17 draws, shows that back in the 1980s this defence was going through a crisis. Or perhaps Karpov's seconds did a better job.

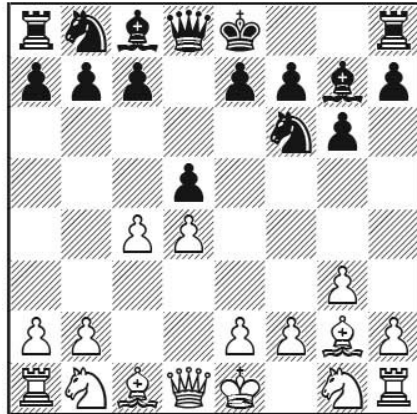
For many years the forced character of the main Grünfeld lines put the home preparation of both sides to the test and made this opening difficult to play. The strong pawn centre allowed White to launch kingside attacks where every mistake could be fatal.

Eventually the powerful new engines helped Black neutralise the most dangerous lines and nowadays the Grünfeld Defence is as reliable as ever. Svidler and Vachier-Lagrave have brought it at a new level of competitiveness and keep on winning decisive games with it. Black is in perfect theoretical shape, so do not hesitate. Join the party!

Chapter 1

The Fianchetto System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2 d5



Main Ideas

Objectives and Move Orders

The Fianchetto System is in no way the most challenging weapon against the Grünfeld Defence, but it is definitely quite insidious. White develops his forces slowly, but very solidly. That makes it difficult for Black to attack the centre in the same way he does against the systems where White advances his e-pawn on the fifth or sixth move. A quarter of century ago the Fianchetto System was not too popular because general opinion held that Black had good chances to equalise by holding the centre with ...c6 and ...d5. This approach is very solid indeed and play is rather drawish, but tastes have been changing lately.

First of all, White players discovered that the Main (or the Exchange) line in the Grünfeld was far from clear, with Black firmly holding his own in the long forced variations. This prompted many of them to turn to less studied systems, and the Fianchetto is certainly the most solid of them.

Secondly, Grünfeld fans wanted sharper play for the three possible results. Struggling to draw in a symmetrical position is not too inspiring indeed. I'll provide you with advice and analyses how to play after ...c6 and ...d5, but I'll focus on the most dynamic way to put pressure on White's centre and queenside, namely ...d5 without preparation. It leads to rich double-edged play, with the main events unfolding on the queenside.

If Black seized the initiative and forced White to relocate his pieces to defend weaknesses on the left wing, he could get opportunities to strike at the weakened enemy king.

Here is an instructive example of that scenario by the great expert of the Grünfeld Defence, world champion Vasily Smyslov:

Benko-Smyslov Budapest, 1949

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 ♘b6!

By retreating the knight Black starts the battle for the d4-pawn.

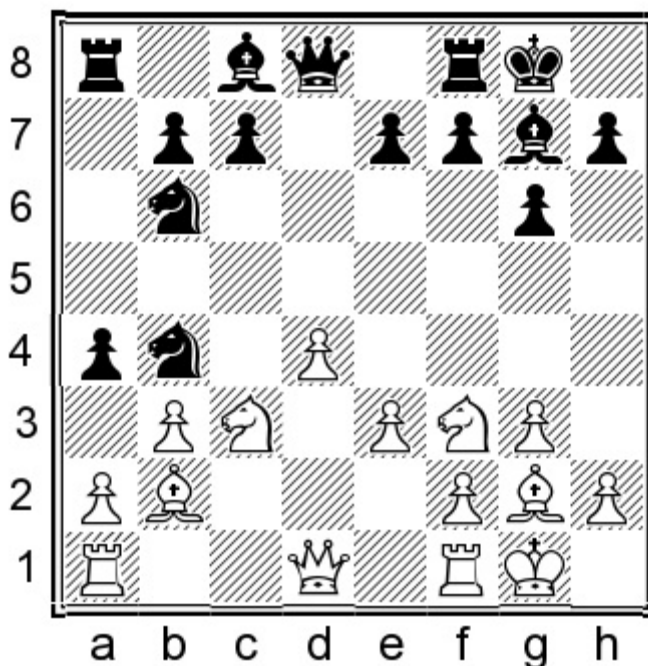
8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.e3 a5

I prefer 9...♞e8, which will be analysed in the “Step by Step” section.

10.b3

After 10.a4 e5 11.d5 ♘b4 Black obtains a perfect stand for his knight.

10...♘b4 11.♗b2 a4!



Taking over the initiative.

12.♘xa4 ♘xa4 13.bxa4 ♘d5

The second knight is on its way to recapture the a4-pawn. That will make the a2-pawn the next target.

14.♘e5 ♘b6 15.♘d3 ♘xa4 16.♗a3 ♗e6! 17.♞c1

The b7-pawn is immune in view of 17.♗xb7? ♘c3-+.

The seemingly active 17.♘c5 ♘xc5 18.♗xc5 would stumble into 18...b6! 19.♗xa8 ♞xa8 with Black’s advantage, for example 20.♗xe7 ♞e8 21.♗g5 ♗h3 22.f3 ♗xf1 23.♞xf1 ♞d5!±.

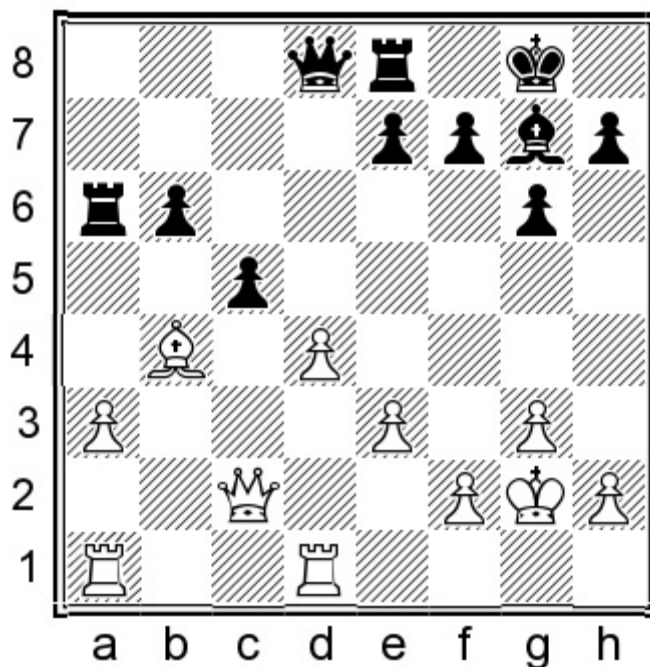
17...c6 18.♞d1 ♞e8 19.♘c5 ♘xc5 20.♗xc5 ♞a6!

Threatening 21...♗xa2 22.♞b2 ♞a8.

21.a3 ♗d5 22.♞c2?!

22.e4 would have only weakened the centre after 22...♙b3 23.♖d3 ♙a4, intending ...b6, as pointed out by Smyslov. White's best choice was probably 22.♙xd5 ♜xd5 23.♖b1 b5 24.♜c2, but after 24...e6!, Black will threaten to exchange the bishops from f8. The arising heavy pieces endgame would be unpleasant for White due to the clear target on a3. The slightly weakened White's castling position could provide a second target.

22...♙xg2 23.♔xg2 b6! 24.♙b4 c5!



"A very strong idea probably missed by Benko." – Smyslov.

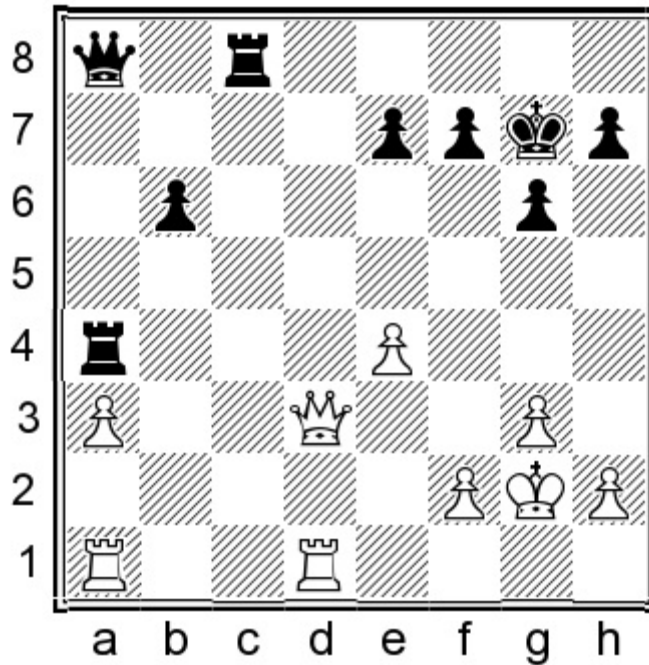
25.♙c3

In the event of 25.dxc5 ♜a8+ 26.c6 ♙xa1 27.♖xa1 b5! 28.♖c1 ♖c8 White is in trouble.

25...cxd4 26.♙xd4 ♜a8+ 27.e4

If 27.♔g1 ♙xd4 28.♖xd4 ♖xa3 29.♖xa3 ♜xa3 30.♜c6 ♜a1+ 31.♔g2, Black keeps the edge with 31...♖b8! (Smyslov)

27...♖c8 28.♜d3 ♖a4! 29.♙xg7 ♔xg7



30.f3?

30.♖e1 ♜c5 31.♞e3 ♝c6 clearly favoured Black, but it still preserved some drawing chances. After the text Smyslov changes the direction of his offensive, exploiting the gaping second rank.

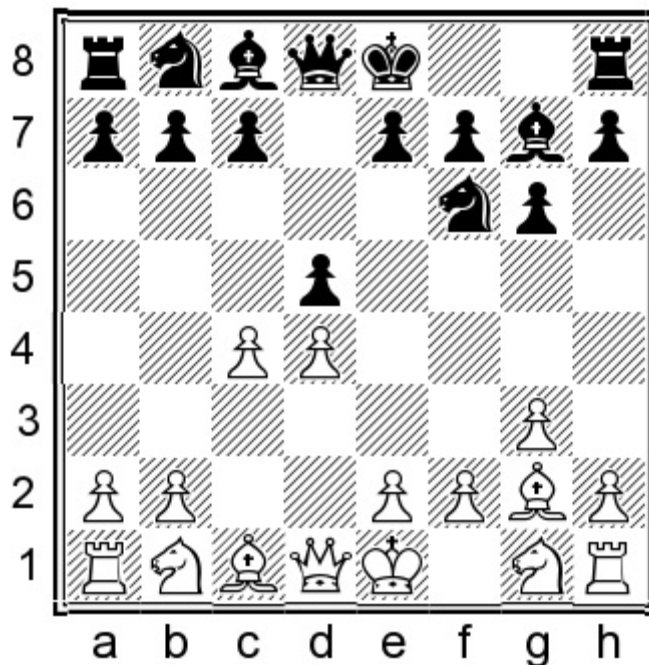
30...♞a5 31.h4

Or 31.♞d7 ♜c2+ 32.♘h1 ♜xa3 – Smyslov.

31...♜c3 32.♞d7 ♜axa3 33.♞xa3 ♝xa3 34.♞d4+ f6 35.♞xb6 ♜c2+ and White resigned.

Note that White chose 3.♘f3. This move has no advantages over 3.g3, which is more flexible because it leaves open the possibility for leading out the king's knight to e2. Thus I'll consider the move order:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 (or 3...d5 at once) 4.♗g2 d5



I divided the material into three major systems:

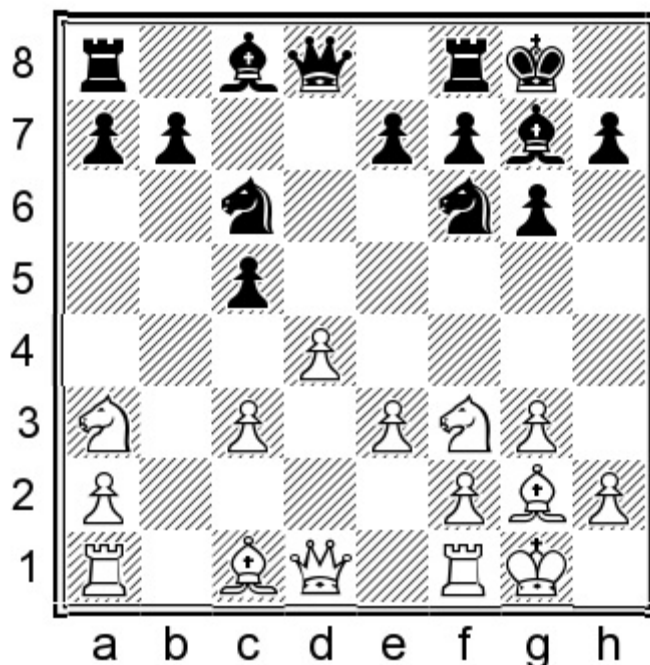
A. White does not take on d5, offering Black to capture the c4-pawn, or entrench himself with ...c6.

B. White takes on d5 and follows up with e2-e4 and ♖g1-e2.

C. White does take on d5, but develops the knight to f3. The e-pawn often stays back to e3, bolstering d4 and helping to restrain Black's wildest attacker, the g7-bishop.

A. 5.♗f3 dxc4! 6.♗a3 c3 7.bxc3 0-0 8.0-0 c5 9.e3 ♖c6

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures



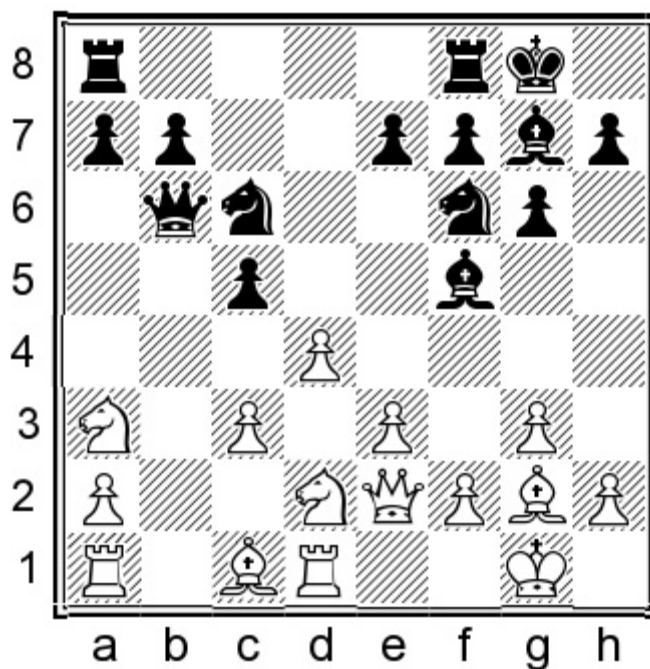
The key to understanding this structure is the general weakness of White's light squares a4, d3, c4, especially the latter. It is caused by the absence of the light-squared bishop which has gone to the main diagonal.

The best setup of Black's forces is:

- The c8-bishop goes to f5, hoping to reach e4.
- Black's queen finds an employment on the queenside via b6-a6-a4.
- In most variations a trade of queens favours Black. Any exchange of minor pieces is also welcome. Hopefully we could block the b2-bishop with ...c5-c4, or gain control over the c-file with a timely exchange on d4. Therefore, do not hurry to define the fate of the c5-pawn!

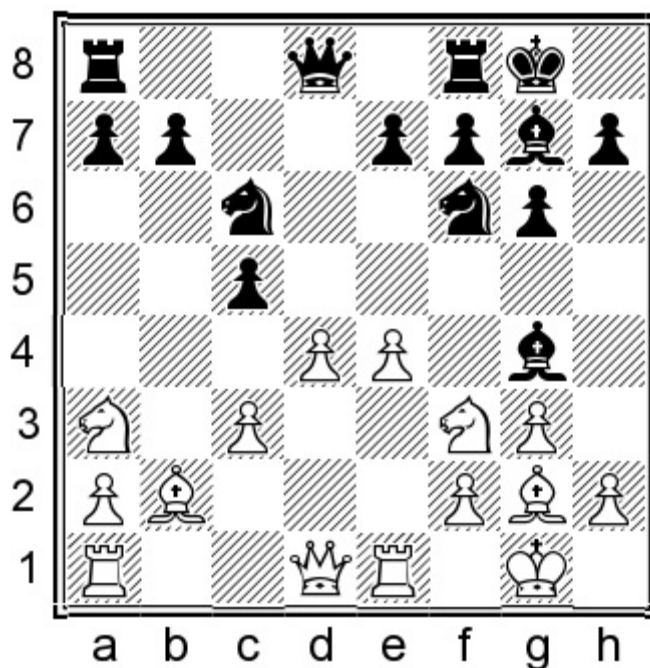
In general, Black should avoid opening the c-file until White threatens to push d5 and c4. His favourite

scenario is to exchange the opponent's knights and queen and exploit the queenside weaknesses.



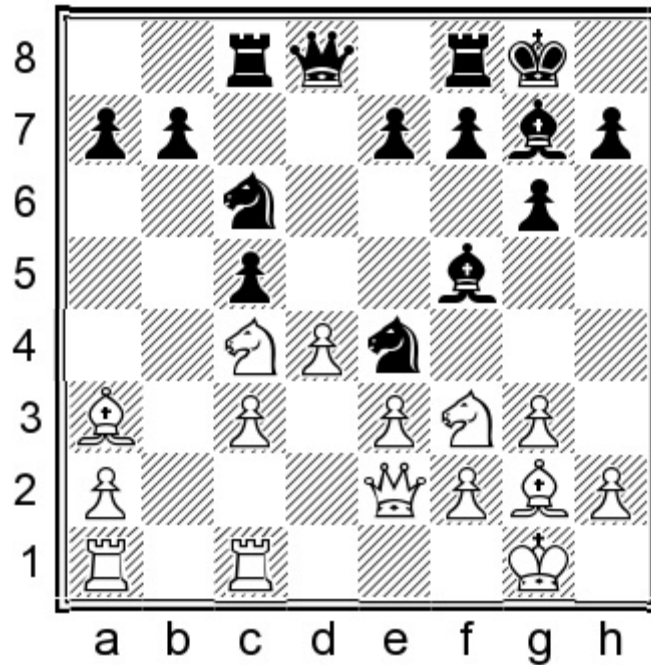
12...cxd4! 13.cxd4 ♖ac8 14.♘b3 ♗a5! =.

If White chooses a hybrid of two systems, playing e4 instead of e3, we focus on the d4-pawn:



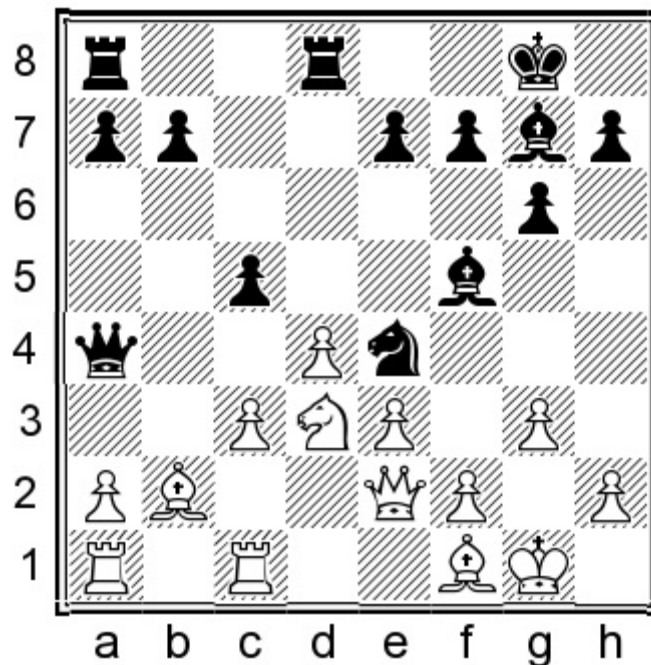
11...♘d7! 12.h3 ♕xf3 13.♕xf3 cxd4! 14.cxd4 ♖b6.

The following example show how to exploit imprecise play from White:



White is fully developed and rules in the centre. However, this impression is deceptive. The game went 13...b5 14.♖ce5 ♜xe5 15.♖xe5 ♜xe5! 16.dxe5 ♚a5 17.♗b2 ♞fd8 18.♞c2 ♚a4 19.♞ac1 ♜g5+ with total domination on the light squares.

Khismatullin-Efimenko
Moscow 2008

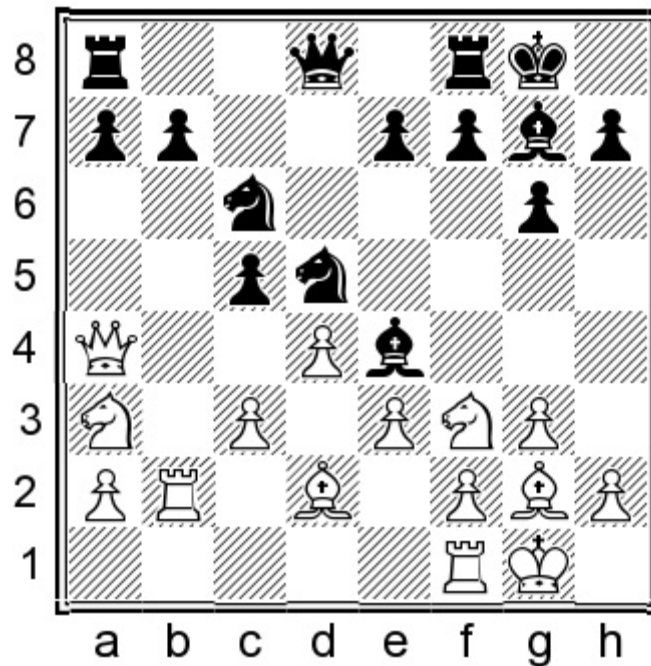


17...c4! 18.♜b4 ♚a5 19.♜c2 ♜d6 20.♗g2 ♗d3 21.♚d1 e5+.
Compare the b2-bishop to the one on d3!

Now let us draw inspiration from an old game of the great fianchetto expert Predrag Nikolic. In the

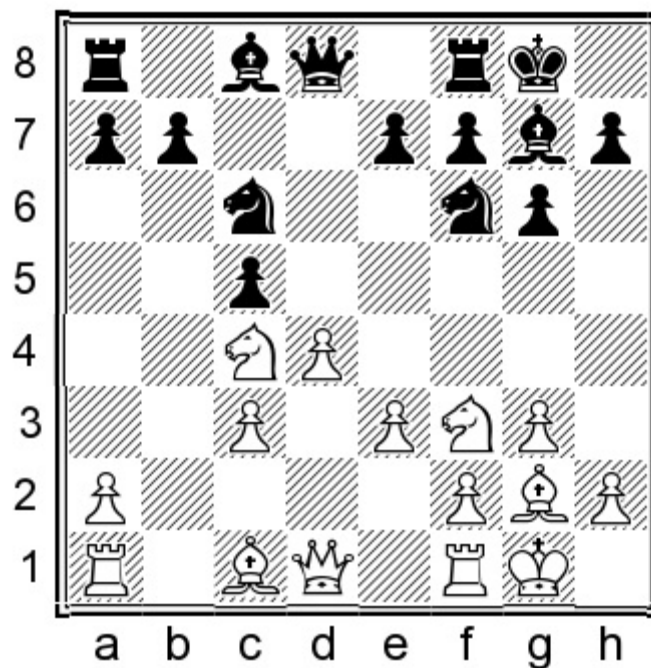
distant 1988 he was Black though!

Kurajica-Pr.Nikolic Brezovica, 1988



13...♞b6! 14.♙d1 ♚d5! 15.♙e2 ♜ad8. A perfect blockade! Next Black can shift the queen to f5 or h5.

Espig-Peter Heine Nielsen Germany 2004



In this example White decided to forestall the opponent's plans and immediately occupied c4, chess.com

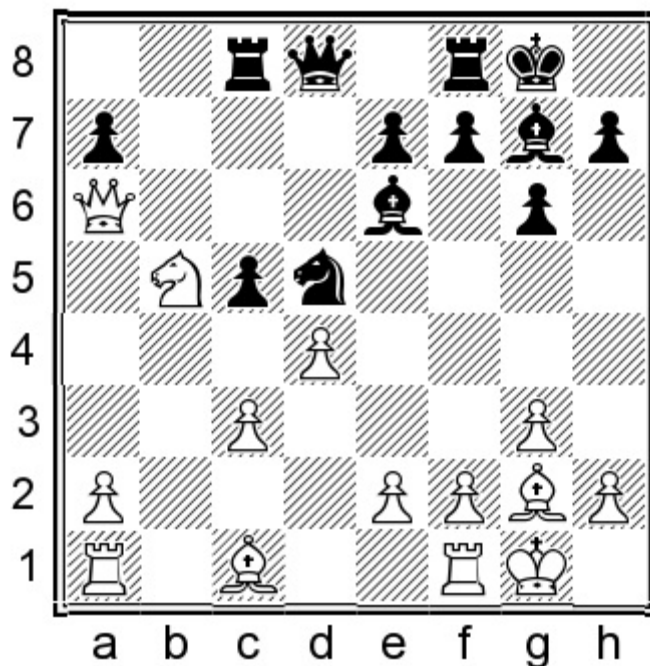
preventing ...♖b6. The game went 10...♗d5 11.♘b2 ♗b6! 12.♙e2 ♗a4 13.♗fe5?! (We already know this positional mistake. 13.♞ad1 is equal.) 13...♗xe5 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5! 15.dxe5 ♘e6 16.c4 ♙b6 17.♞ab1 ♙a6 18.♞fc1 ♗b6 19.♘f1 ♞fd8. White is paralysed with the defence of the pawn on c4.

Typical Tactical Motifs

Most tactical hits are based on the power of the g7-bishop.

Schwarz-Delchev

Arnhem 1990

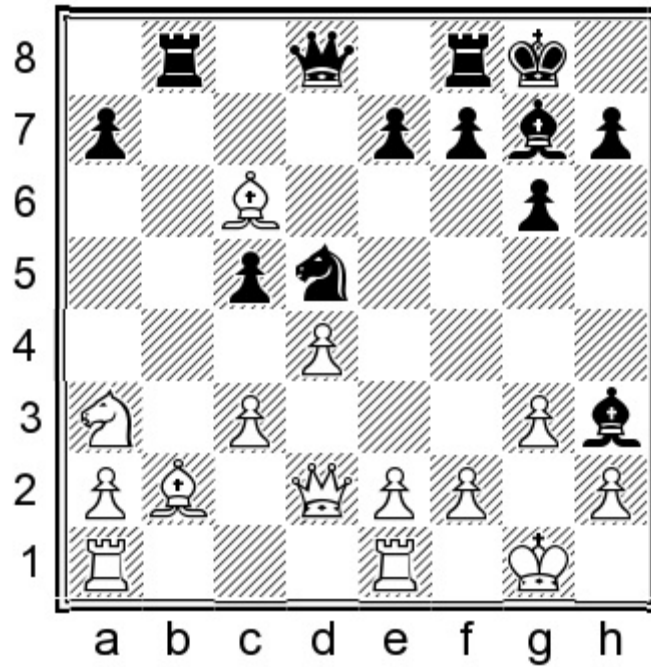


When the d4-pawn is shaky, we should always be looking for some tactics:

14...♗xc3!! 15.♗xc3 cxd4 16.♗a4 (Or 16.♗b5 d3; 16.♗e4 d3 17.♞b1 ♘c4 18.♙a3 dxe2 19.♞e1 ♘d3) 16...♘c4 17.♙xa7 ♘xe2 18.♞e1 d3 19.♘d2 ♘d4 20.♙a6 ♞c2 21.♘h6 d2—+.

Panchenko-Malaniuk

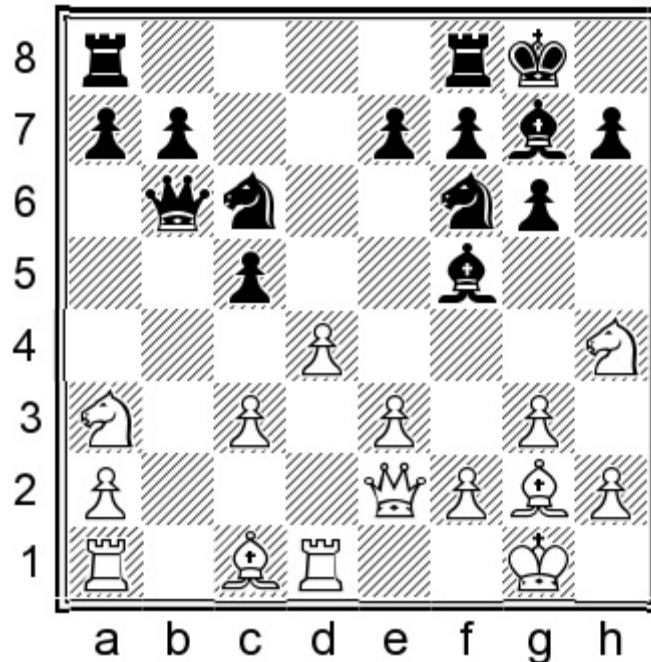
Kharkov, 1980



14...♞xc3!!

This hit combines the destruction of White's centre with a double attack: 15.♙xc3 cxd4 16.♙b2 (16.♙a5 ♜d6; 16.♙b4 ♜b6) 16...♜b6 17.♙b5 a6-+.

Karpov-Leko Cannes 2002



The d4-square looks rock-solid, but Leko's next two moves shake it dramatically:

12...♙g4 13.f3 ♞d5! White's pieces lack coordination so Black can unleash his tactical imagination:

14.♞c4

Or 14.♙b2 ♞xe3! 15.d5 (15.fxc4 ♞xd1 16.♞xd1 cxd4+; 15.dxc5 ♜xc5 16.♜f2 ♙e6 17.♞e2 g5)

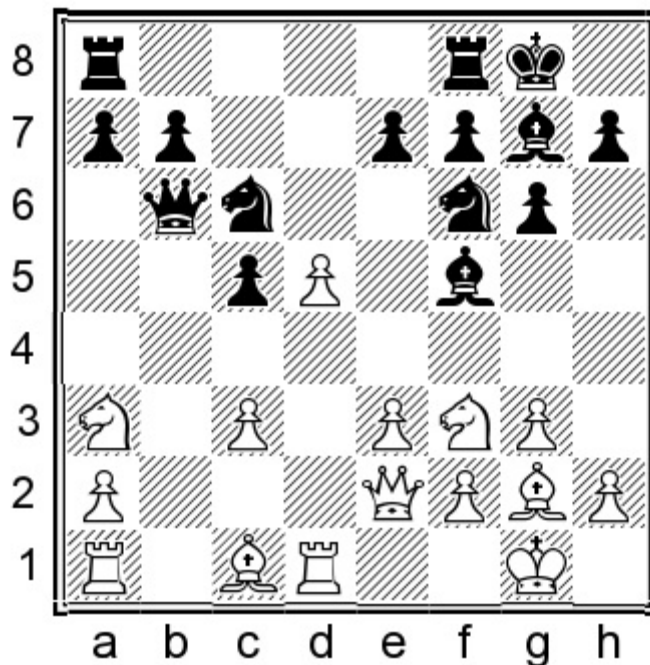
15...♖xd1 16.♞xd1 ♕d7 17.♗c4 ♜a6 18.dxc6 ♘xc6 19.♙f1 e6⚡.

14...♜a6! 15.♙b2 ♘b6 (15...♙e6=) 16.♙f1 (16.fxg4 ♜xc4) 16...♜xc4 17.♜xc4 ♗xc4 18.♙xc4 ♗a5.

The endgame is pleasant for Black because the knight on h4 is misplaced, to say it mildly.

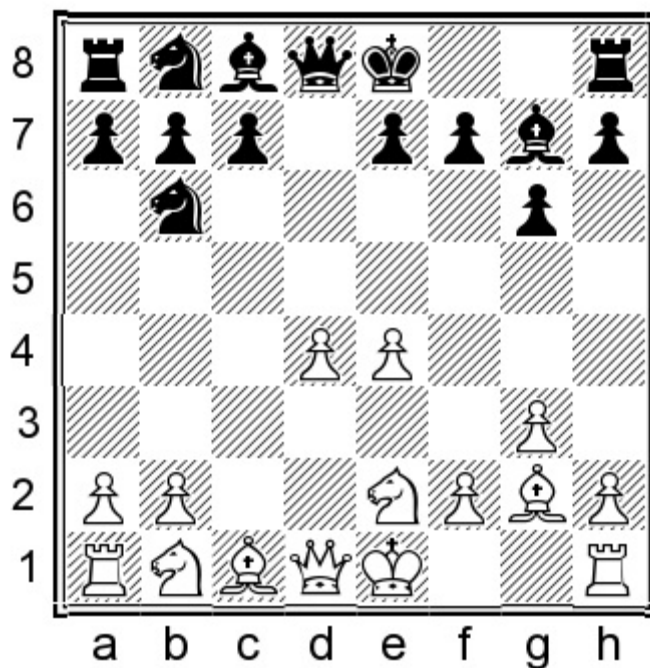
Piotrowski-Wisniewski

Ustron 2015

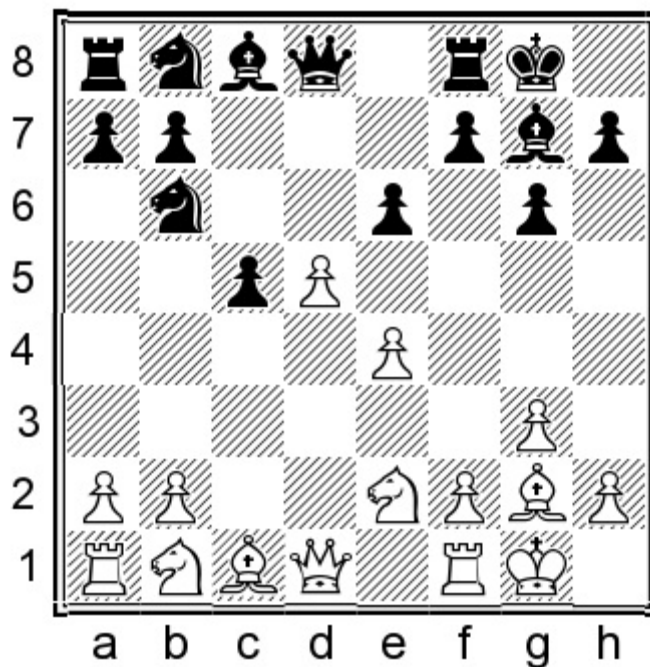


12...♗xd5! 13.♞xd5 ♙xc3 14.♗c4 ♜a6 15.♞xf5 ♙xa1 16.♞xc5 ♞ac8↑.

B. 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.e4 ♗b6 7.♗e2



7...c5! The move order is very important here!

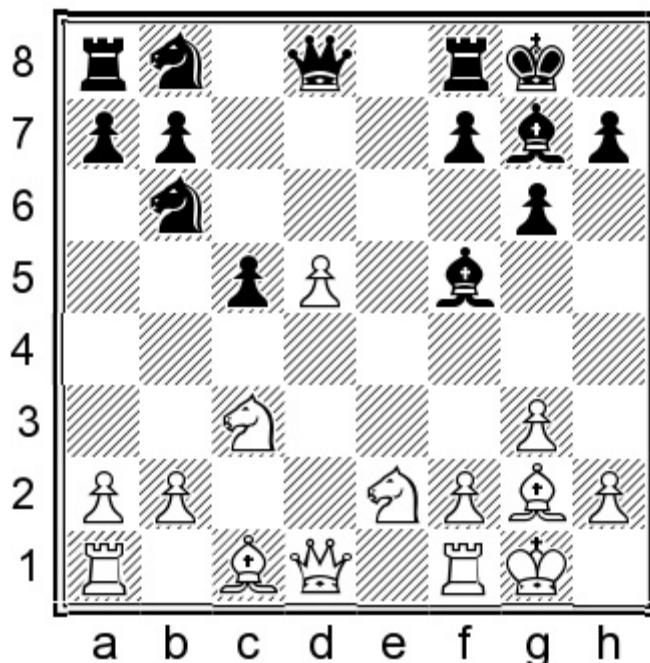


Now White chooses which knight to put on c3. Lately top players prefer 10.♘ec3.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

The character of play in this variation differs significantly from line A. Instead of hiding behind the pawn shield in the centre, White gains space and builds his game around the d-pawn. Dynamic factors prevail over strategy and the piece activity is decisive.

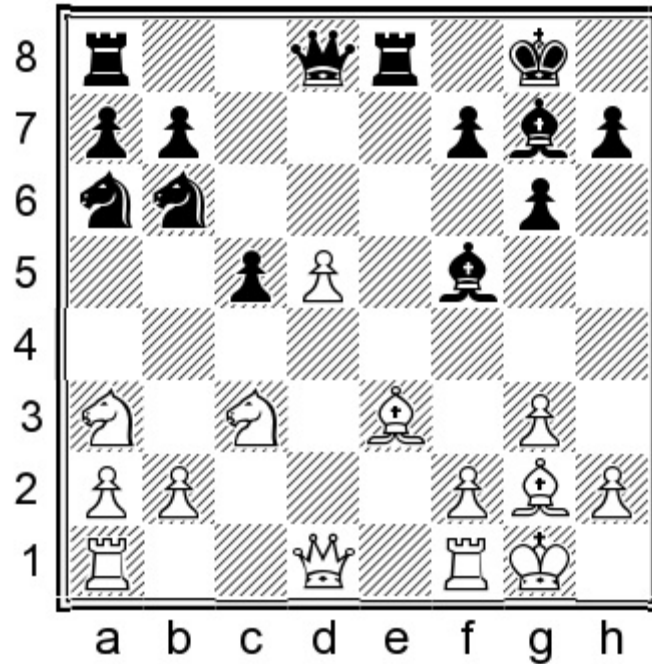
White tried at least 3 different setups of his knights: ♘bc3+♞f4; ♞e2-c3+♞a3; ♞e2-c3+♞d2.



In this knight configuration after 10.♘bc3 exd5 11.exd5 ♙f5 we must watch out for d5-d6. It is

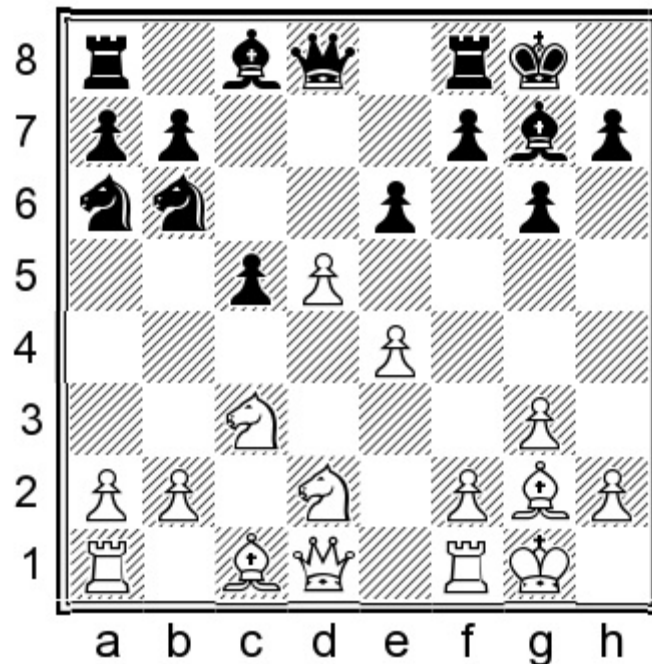
essential to develop the bishop on f5 **before** moving the queen's knight. Then we meet ♖e4 by ...♗xe4, 12.♗e3 by 12...♘8d7 13.b3 ♗e8 14.d6 ♗e6, and in the event of 12.h3 h5 13.♗e3 we could try the more active 13...♘a6 since the pawn on h3 would give us an important tempo on ...♙d7.

The same setup works against ♖c3+♘a3, eyeing the d3-square:



Black prepares ...c4 with ...♗c8.

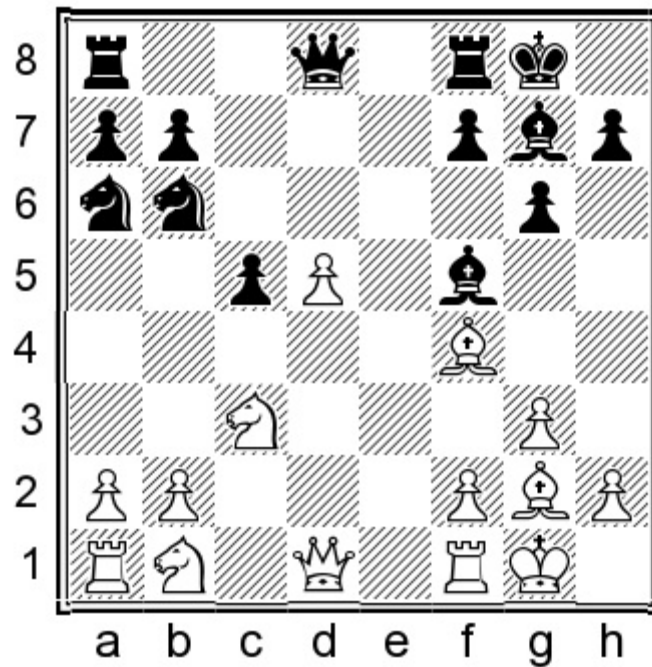
The configuration ♖c3+♘d2 is simply dubious because our knight leaps to d3:



11...♘b4! 12.♘b3 c4.

Most critical of all is the move order when White leads out his bishop before defining the queen's

knight:



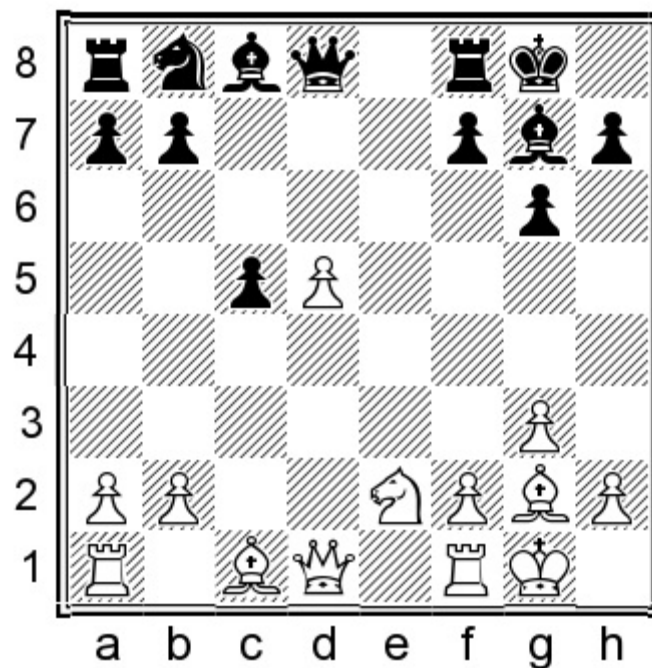
After 13.g4! ♙d7 14.♘d2 ♟b4 15.♘de4 c4 16.♙d6 we must sacrifice an exchange – 16...♘d3!, with an excellent compensation though.

See **game 2** Maldonado Pacheco-C.Smith, ICCF 2016.

As a rule, our play in this line is based on exploiting the weakness of the d3-square. Here is another example:

Szczepanski-Szczepankiewicz

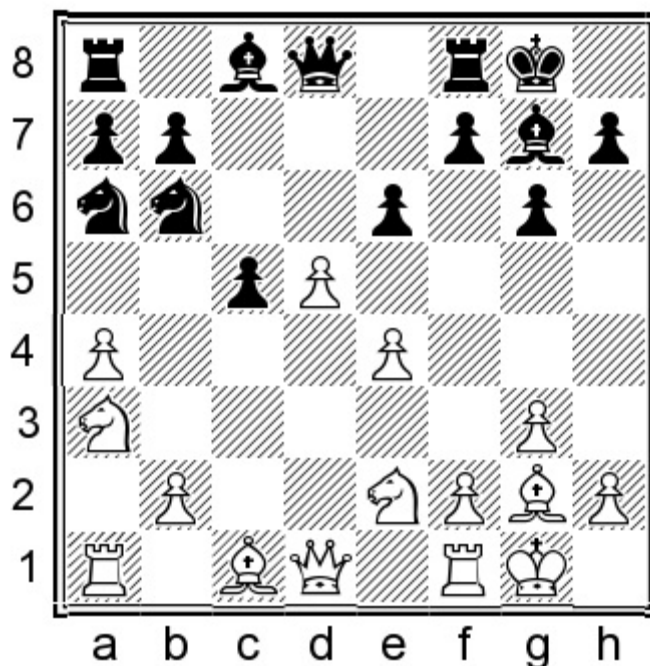
ICCF 2009



12...♙f5 13.♘c3 c4! 14.♙a4 ♙d3 15.♞d1 ♘d7 16.♙e3 ♟e5 (16...b5!) 17.♞ac1 a6 18.b3 b5

In the following game from the legendary Candidates tournament in Zuerich, Euwe put his queen's knight at the edge of the board after the preliminary a4. This idea is too slow and Smyslov attacked immediately with:

Euwe-Smyslov Zuerich 1953

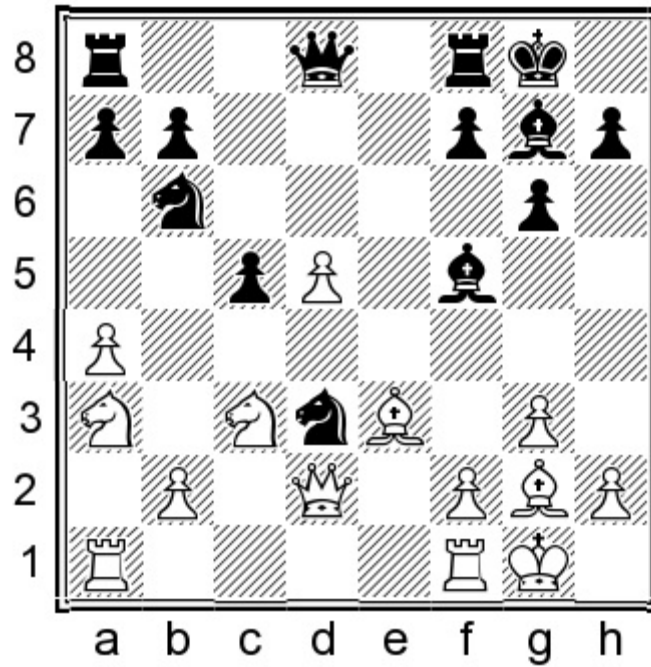


11...exd5 12.exd5 Qf5 13.Nc3 Nb4. A typical picture – the d3-square is in full control of the black pieces. The game went on 14.Qe3 Bc8?! (14...Nd3!) 15.d6 Qd3, and here White sacrificed the exchange with a sufficient compensation: 16.Qb7 Bb8 17.Qg2 Qf1 18.Qf1 Nd7 19.Nc4 when 19...Qd4 would have been equal.

Typical Tactical Motifs

In this line the raging bishop on g7 has no barrier before it, and is the driving force in tactical skirmishes:

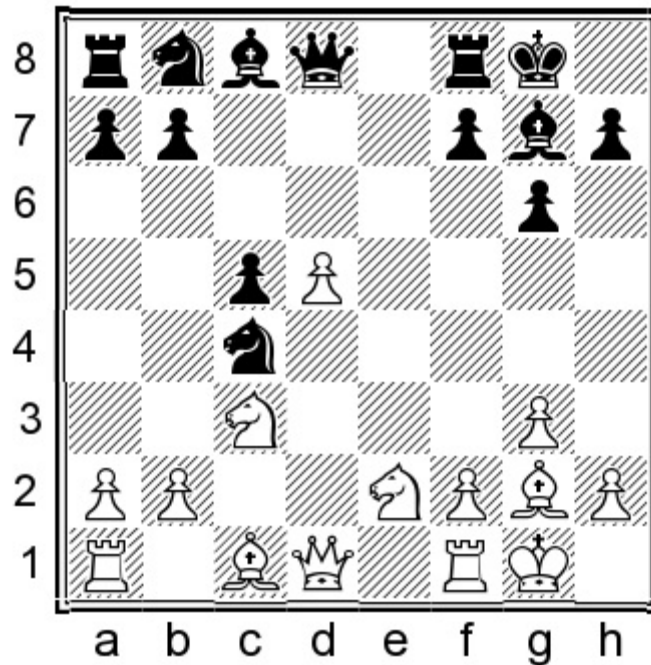
Reinartz-Pusch Nordwalde 1988



15...♖xb2! 16.♔xb2 ♘xa4 17.♔xb7 (or 17.♘xa4 ♕xb2 18.♘xb2 ♖e8±) 17...♕xc3 18.♖a2 ♕b4±.

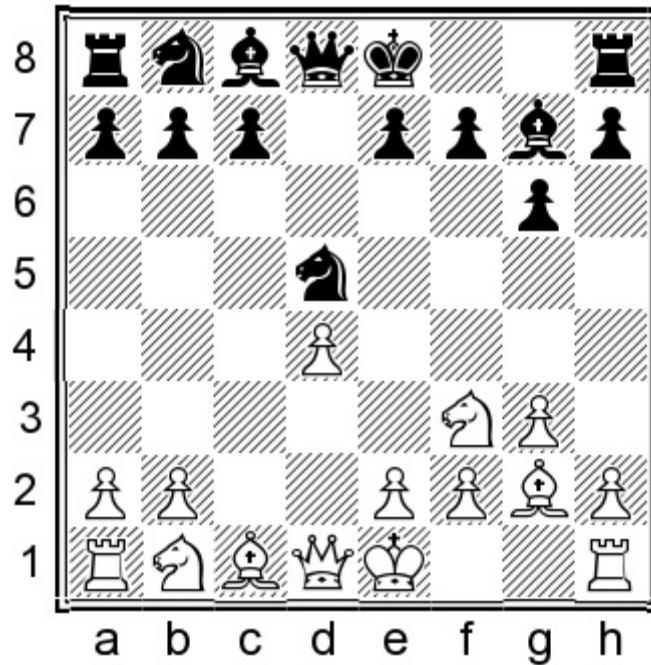
Be careful when calculating your tactical blows. White might be able to strike back:

O'Kelly-Phillips
Hastings 1950



12.♗e4! ♘xb2? 13.♔c2 ♘a4 14.♔xa4! ♕xa1 15.♕g5 f6 16.♕h6 ♕e5 17.♕xf8 ♔xf8 18.f4. White has a winning attack. The black king lacks defenders, the passed d-pawn is also very strong.

C. 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗f3



Objectives and Move Orders

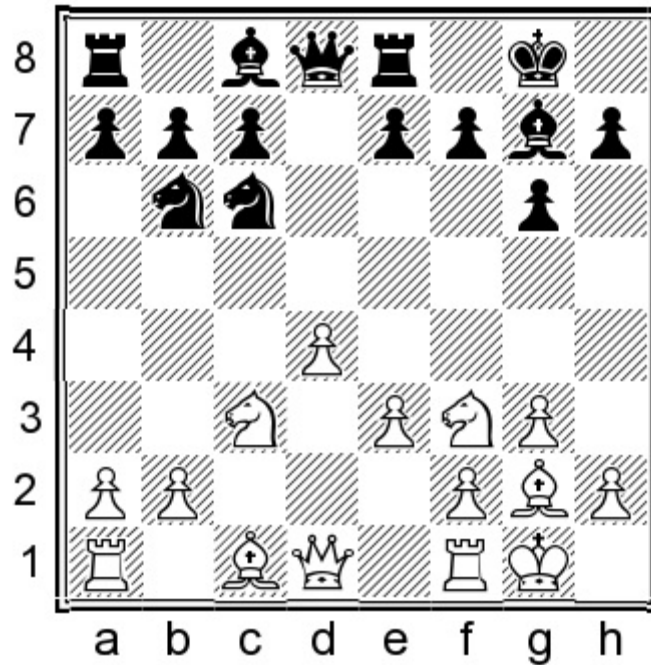
In the Grünfeld, as a rule, we aim for asymmetrical, strategically unbalanced positions. We want to have our own trumps – active pieces, pressure on weak white pawns. That should be enough to compensate for the strong enemy centre. Thus in the diagram position we principally reject plans with 6...c5. Being a tempo down, the arising symmetry would doom us to a long defence without serious winning chances.

Instead we shall be preparing ...e5, but the timing for this breakthrough will be decisive for the outcome of the opening battle.

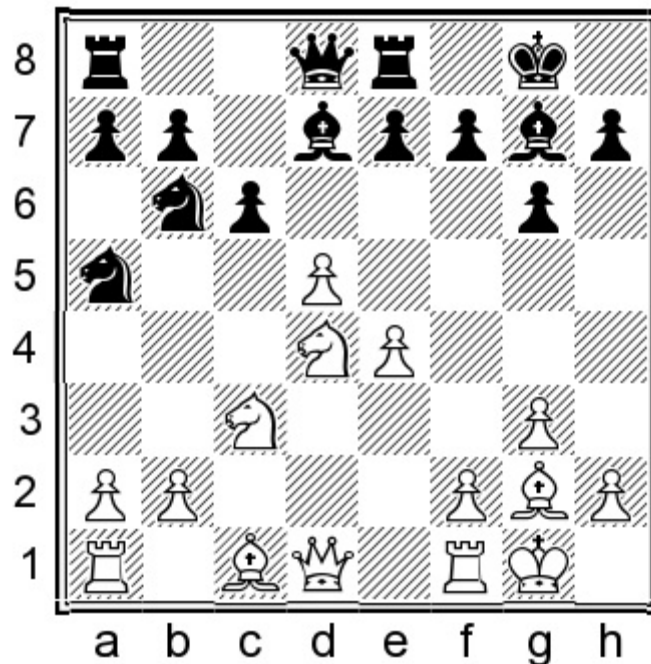
6...♞b6!

It is important to play this move **before** castling. Thus we sidestep the unpleasant variation 6...0-0 7.0-0 ♞b6 8.♞c3 ♞c6 9.d5 which does not work now because Black can take on c3 with check and win a pawn. Note that our move order sets up a positional trap – if White answered with the mundane 7.0-0, we equalise at once by 7...♞c6! 8.e3 e5! 9.♞c3 exd4 10.exd4 0-0. White's best is:

7.♞c3 ♞c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 ♞e8!

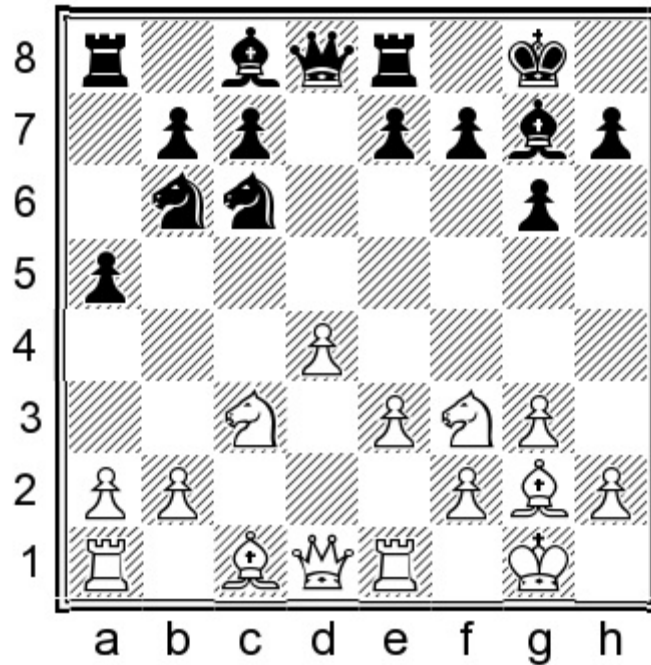


9...e5 10.d5! is better for White, so we must wait for him to weaken the main diagonal with b3. We have plenty of useful “waiting” moves as ...a5-a4, even ...♖a5 in some variations to control d5. After the text 10.d5 is not that strong as the g7-bishop breaks loose along its striking diagonal. We’ll be preparing ...c6 or ...c5: 10...♘a5 11.♘d4 ♕d7 12.e4 c6!



Black equalises, using the c8-square in an exemplary way:
 13.♞e1 cxd5 14.exd5 ♛c8!! 15.♟f4 ♟g4 16.♞de2 ♞ac4 17.♞b3 e5 or:
 13.♟f4 ♟c8!!, hoping for 14...e5!

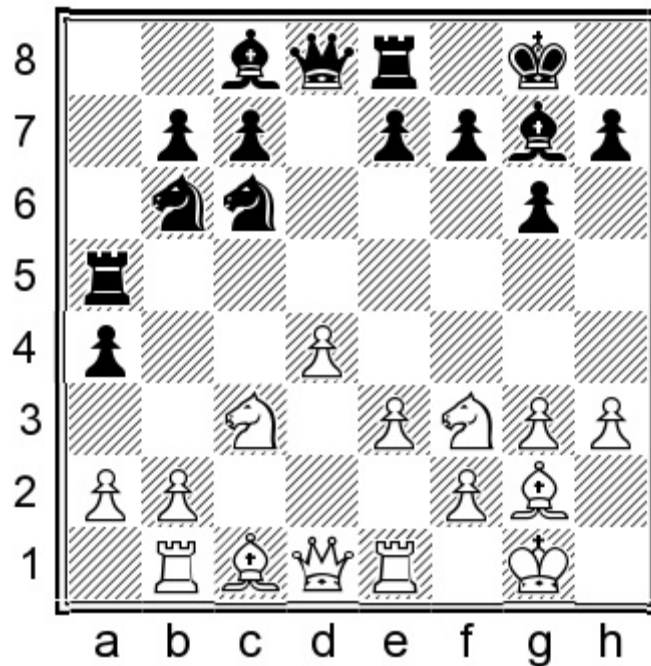
When White understood that the straightforward approach is not very promising, he began trying all possible waiting moves. The most topical line for years had been **10.♞e1 a5**



11.♙e2 – untill **game 1** Leitao-Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, dealt this line a terrible blow. White attempted several improvements, but without much success. In short, we should prevent him from clamping on e5 with f4 by pushing ...e5 to 10.♘h4 (Avrukh's recommendation in his latest repertoire book) or 10.♘e1.

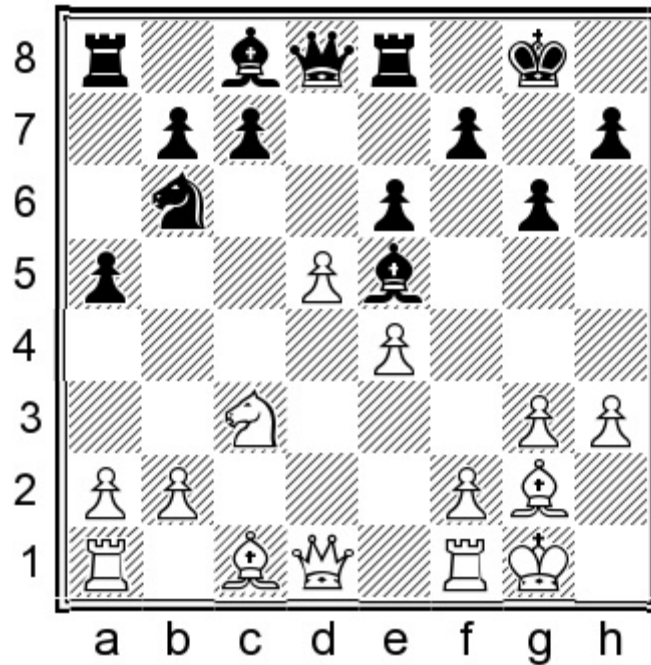
We meet h3 by advancing the a-pawn:

10.♙e1 a5! 11.h3 a4! 12.♖b1 ♖a5!



The a5-rook controls d5, so we are ready to break in the centre with ...e5.

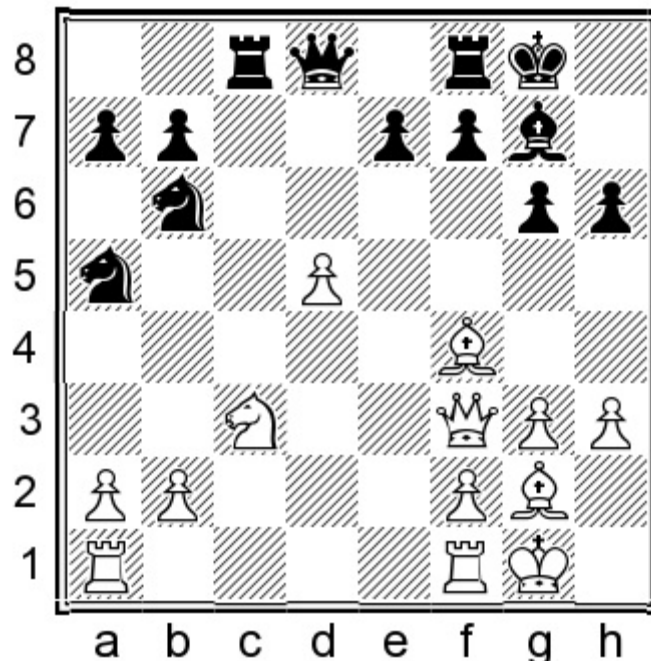
Or 10.h3 a5!? 11.d5 ♘e5! 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.e4 e6∞.



We open the e-file and transfer the knight on d6. The bishop goes to d7 and the queen seeks an employment from c8 or f8. Black looks a little cramped, but in practice he comfortably equalised in several games.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

Ehlvest-Ftacnik
 Haninge 1990



We see a typical pawn structure with an open centre. Black would have been OK, had he a bishop on d7. However, he has exchanged it on f3 and now White is better due to his bishop pair. With his next

move he is aiming for d5-d6 to open play even more:

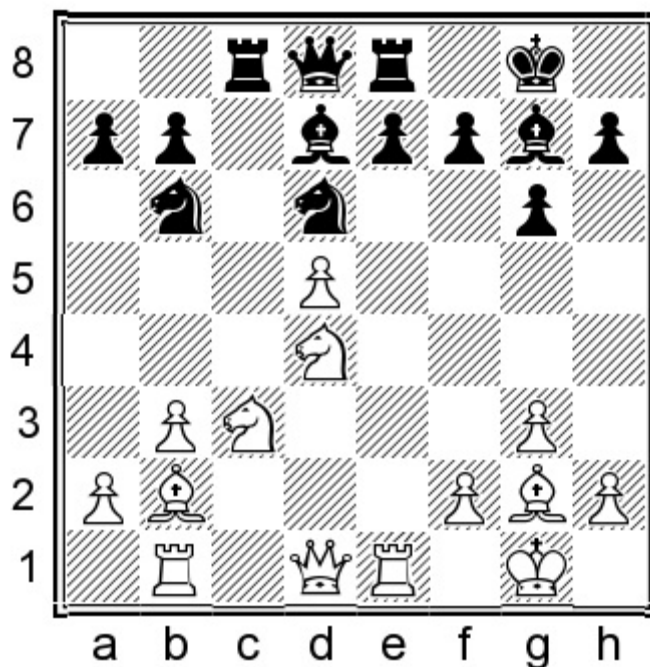
16.♖ad1! ♜ac4 17.♙c1! ♜d7 18.♚e2 ♜e8 19.h4!

White is dominating the board and exchange combinations like 19...♜xb2 are in his favour.

The correct setup of Black is:

Aronian-Rowson

Noyon 2005



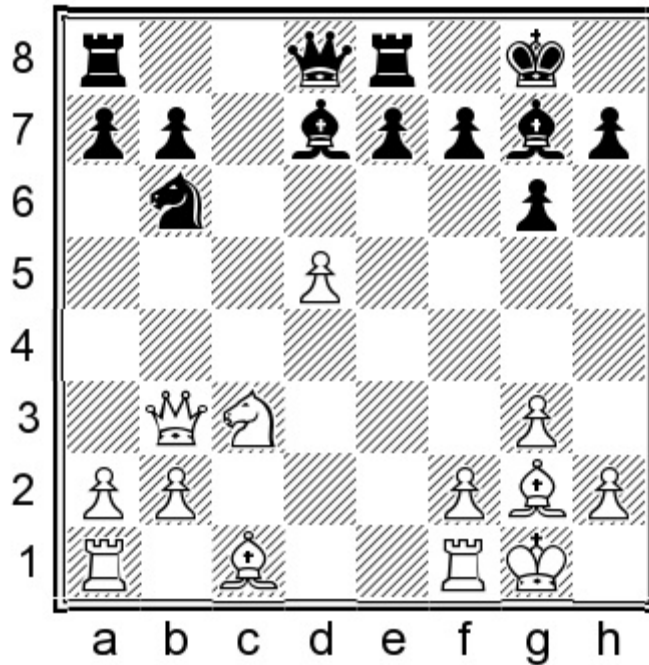
17...♜a8!!

Black needs to activate his queen. Another way to achieve it is 17...♜c7!? 18.a4 ♚c8 19.♚d3 ♙f5 20.♜xf5 ♚xf5 21.♚xf5 gxf5 22.♜e2 ♙xb2 23.♖xb2 ♜ec8, Maletin-Zhou Jianchao, Novokuznetsk 2008.

18.a4 ♚b6 19.♜ce2 ♜c7=.

Kempinski-Khalifman

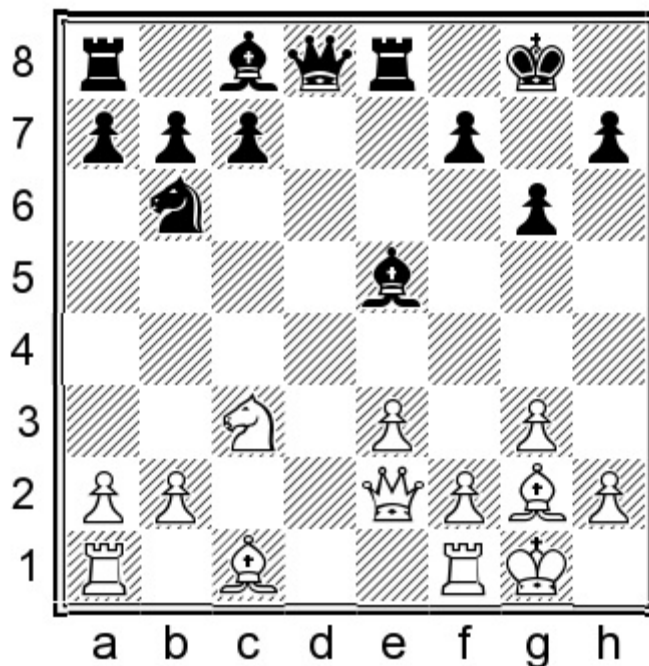
EU-chT Plovdiv 2003



White has changed a pair of knights and prevented the thematic redeployment ...Nc4-d6. Still, the c4-square remains a perfect juncture point for Black's pieces:

15...Qc8 16.gf4 Qc4. The queen is following the route d8-c8-c4-a6-a5. 17.Bac1 Bc8 18.Bfe1 h6! 19.h4 Qa6 20.gf1 Qa5 21.Nb5 Bxc1 22.Bxc1 Bc8 23.Bxc8+ Nxc8=.

Beaumont-John Hodgson
England 2011



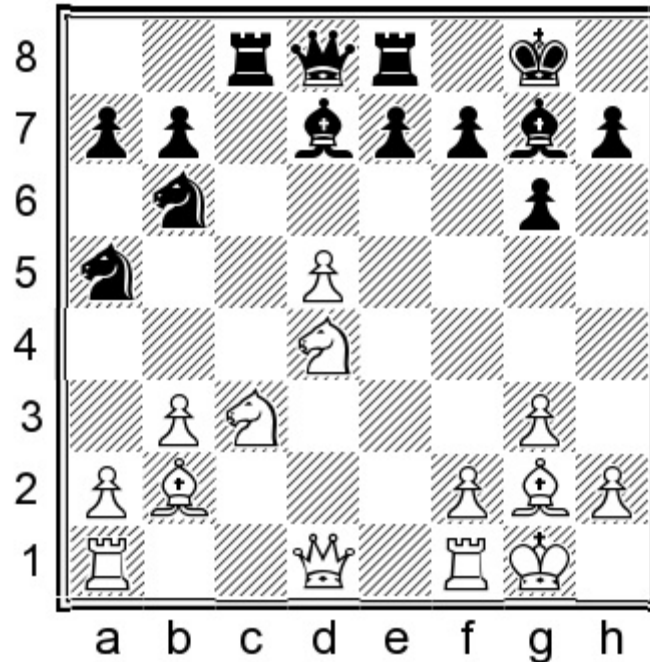
This is an example where it is not bad to open the centre with ...e5. As a rule this structure is more pleasant for White, but here the opposition of the B vs Q throws a spanner into White's plan to roll his central pawns: 13.e4 would be met by 13...Qe6! so White has to insert 13.Bd1 Qe7 14.e4 (14.f4 Qxc3!

15.bxc3 ♕e6) 14...♕e6!? 15.f4 ♕xc3! 16.bxc3 ♕d5 17.♖d4 c5 18.♕a3 ♜c7↑.

Finally, an example of a tactical solution of a positional problem:

Bacrot-Gustafsson

Germany 2001



Black is in danger since his knights remained useless at the edge of the board.

15...♖bc4! 16.bxc4 ♜b6

Again, the hero of the day is the g7-bishop. White is unable to defend all his hanging pieces along the main diagonal: 17.♖a4 ♕xa4 18.♜xa4 ♖xc4 19.♕c3 ♕xd4 20.♕xd4 ♜xd4 or 17.♖cb5 ♖xc4 18.♕c3 ♕xb5 19.♖xb5 ♜xb5 20.♕xg7 ♖xg7 21.♜d4+ ♖g8 22.♜xa7 ♖d6 23.♜d4 ♖c2. So he strikes back with:

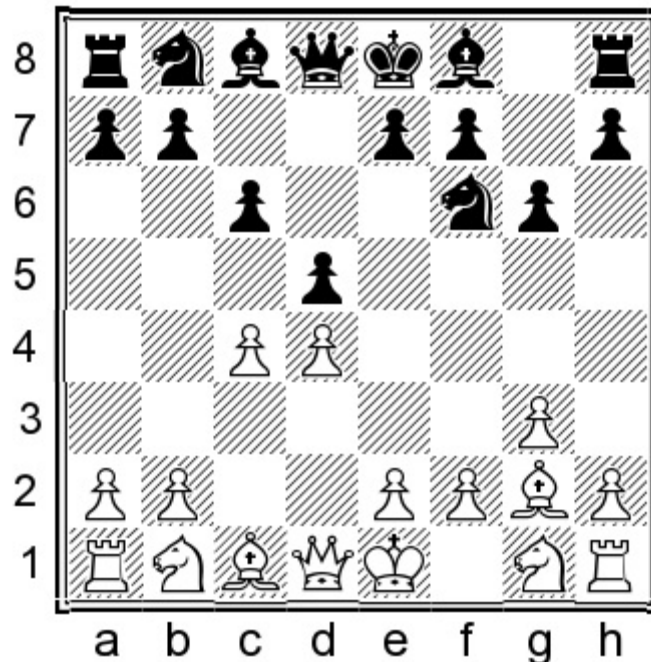
17.♖e6! ♖xc4! 18.♖xg7 ♖xb2 with an active position for Black.

Chapter 1

Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♔g2 d5

I advocate this sharp system against the fianchetto because it is true to the Grünfeld spirit and allows Black to play for a win. However, you should be aware that many players discard the fianchetto setup against the King's Indian/Grünfeld as a main repertoire mostly because of the extremely solid variation: 3...c6! 4.♔g2 d5

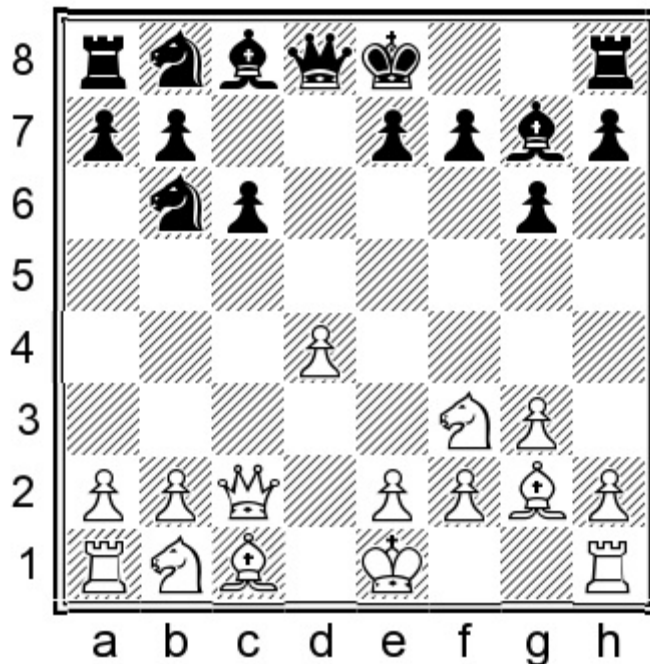


Even the ultra-aggressive young Kasparov placed his trust in it when he wanted to make a draw against Karpov. This approach has several positive sides: Black's game is clear and easy, one can learn all the vital variations in an hour. You might want to try it in the event of temporary difficulties in the sharp main lines. White's main plans are:

a) 5.♖a4 is Avrukh's latest attempt to revive a fianchetto-based repertoire against the KID/Grünfeld. The idea is to use the pin to break the symmetry after 5...♔g7 with 6.cxd5. We answer 6...♗xd5 7.♗f3 ♗b6! 8.♖c2

8.♖a3 does not prevent our main plan with ...c5, e.g. 8...♗a6 9.e3 0-0 10.0-0 c5. Besides, we could also eat the pawn – 8...♔xd4!? 9.♗xd4 ♖xd4, with subsequent ...f6.

8.♖a5 ♔xd4 9.♗xd4 ♖xd4 is similar. Jumabayev-Sunilduth Lyna, Xingtai 2019, went 10.♗c3 ♗a6 11.0-0 f6 12.♗e4, when 12...♗f7 would favour Black.



8...♙g4! (hitting d4) 9.e3

White did not obtain compensation after 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.h3 ♕xf3 11.♘xf3 ♕xd4 12.♘xd4 ♖xd4 13.0-0 ♘a6 14.♙g5 f6, Duda-Vachier-Lagrave, Germany 2019.

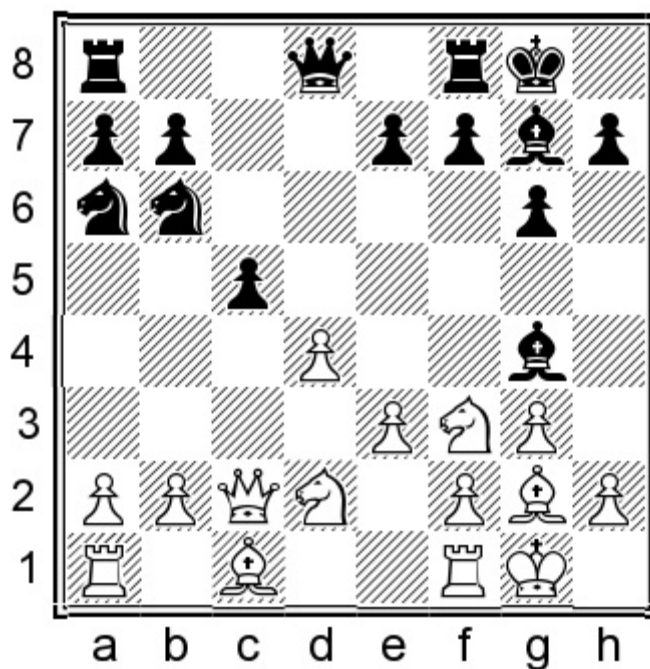
9...♘a6!

Black's plan is to prepare ...c5 with ...♖c8 or ...♗c8. Avrukh considers only 9...♘8d7.

10.0-0 0-0 (10...♗d7!?) 11.♘bd2

Moroni-Ragger, Skopje 2018, saw 11.♙d2 ♖c8 12.b4?, when 12...e5 gains the upper hand.

11...c5! =.



This position occurred in Bruzon Batista-Zherebukh, Saint Louis 2018. White erred here with 12.♗e4 ♕e6 13.♗xb7 ♘b4. Apparently the onus is on White in this line.

b) 5.e3 is an original idea, intending to develop the knight on e2.

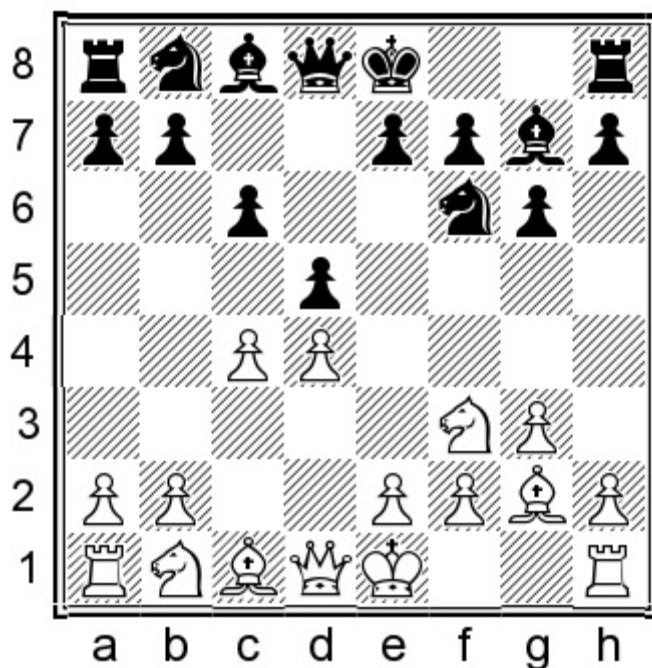
Black can ignore it and continue his normal development with 5...♗g7 6.♖e2 0-0 7.0-0 b6. Of course it is more challenging to take the gift:

5...dxc4 6.♖e2

Dvirnyy-Salgado Lopez, Jerusalem 2015, saw 6.♖d2 b5 7.♖e2 ♖d5 8.0-0 a5 9.e4 ♖b6 10.b3 cxb3 11.axb3 ♗g7 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♖c2, when 13...♖a6 or 13...♗g4 would have been in Black's favour.

6...♗g7 7.0-0 ♖bd7 8.♖a3 ♖b6 9.♖c2 0-0 10.e4, Potkin-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2015. Here it would have been consistent to keep the extra pawn with 10...♗e6! 11.♖d1 ♖h5! (preventing ♖f4) 12.♗e3 (12.h3 stumbles into 12...f5) 12...♖d7∞ (12...f5 13.d5 cxd5∞).

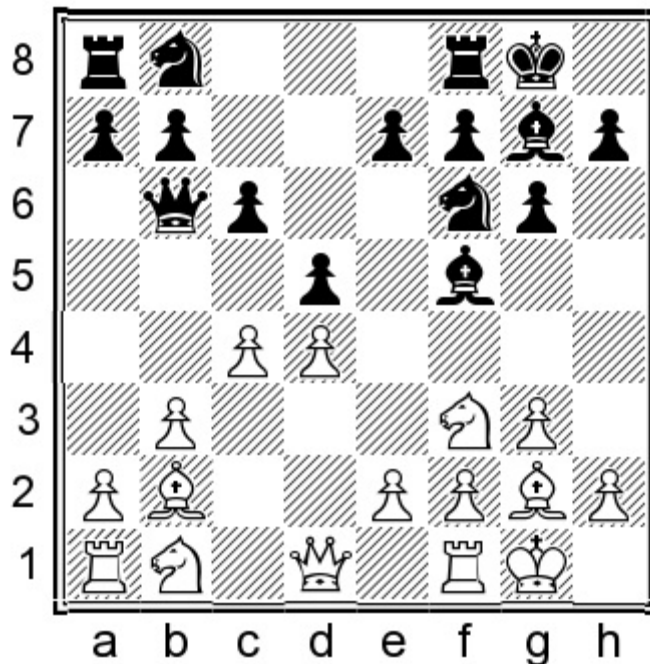
c) 5.♖f3 ♗g7



c1) 6.b3 0-0 7.0-0 ♗f5

The latest trend at highest level is to open the centre – 7...dxc4 8.bxc4 c5 9.♗b2 cxd4 10.♖xd4 ♖b6 11.♖c1 ♗d7 12.♖d2 ♖c6 13.♖2b3 ♖ac8 or 13.e3 ♖ac8. It is a matter of taste which line to choose.

8.♗b2 ♖b6!?



Black is eyeing the d4-pawn. His next move can be ... Rd8 or ... Ne4 . Natural answers are:

9. Nbd2 Rd8 10. Nh4 Re6 11. Wc2 Na6 12. Rac1 Rac8 13. Wb1 Ne4= , Karjakin-Smirnov, Tbilisi 2017;

9. Ne5 Rd8 10. Nc3 Nbd7 11. Nxd7 Rxd7 12. Na4 Wd8 13. Nc5 Rc7 14. Rc1 Ne4= (14... b6=).

c2) 6. cxd5 cxd5 7. Ne5 (7. Nc3 0-0 8. Ne5 transposes, while Black has the additional option of 7... Ne4 .)

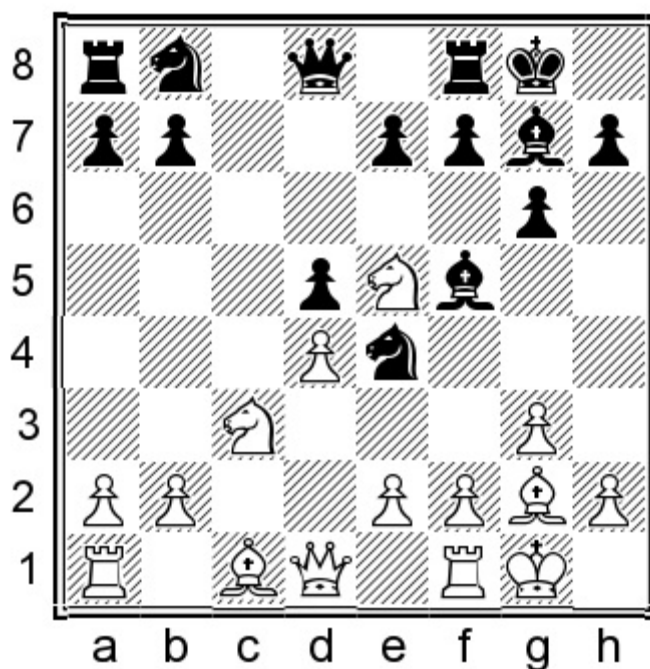
7...0-0 8. Nc3 $\text{Rf5!?$ (8... e6 9. 0-0 Nfd7 is also popular) 9. 0-0

Or 9. Re3 Wb6 10. Wd2 Nc6 11. Rc1 Rac8 12. 0-0 Rfd8 ;

9. Rf4 Wb6 10. 0-0 Wxb2 11. Nxd5 Nxd5 12. Rxd5 Nc6 13. Rxc6 Re5 14. dxe5 bxc6= ,

Mchedlishvili-Ragger, Bogota 2014.

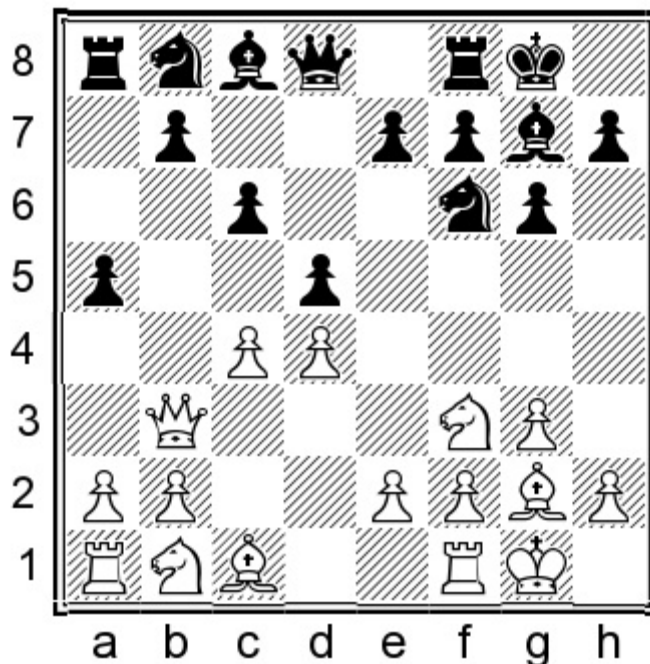
9... Ne4 !



A simple and straightforward way to equality. Black takes on c3 and follows up with ... Nc6 . When

Botvinnik first faced this move in the world championship match against Smyslov in 1954, he took on e4 and agreed to a draw two moves later. White will have the double attack 10. ♖b3, but it leads to a forced draw – see **game 3** M.Ivanov-Delchev, Benasque 2008. I also analyse in the annotations the other fashionable variation – 10. ♕f4.

c3) 6. ♖b3 0-0 7.0-0 a5!? is an ambitious attempt to seize the initiative at once.



The idea is to grab space on the queenside. For instance:

8. ♘c3 a4! 9. ♖b4 dxc4 10. ♖xc4 ♕f5 11.e3 b5 12. ♖e2 b4 13. ♘b1 c5 ♞, Esipenko-Erdos, blitz, Skopje 2018.

Besides, 7... ♖b6= is solid and well tested.

8.cxd5

Alternatively:

8. ♕f4 a4 9. ♖b4 ♘bd7! 10. ♘a3 (or 10. ♘c3 dxc4 11. ♖xc4 ♘b6) 10...dxc4 (Black won a correspondence game with 10... ♖b6!?) 11. ♖xb6 ♘xb6 12.c5?! ♘bd7 ♞ – White has no plan.)

11. ♖xc4 ♘d5∞;

8. ♞d1 a4 9. ♖b4 ♞e8!? (aimed against 10. ♘c3, when 10... ♕f8 would be awkward) 10. ♘a3 e6 11. ♕f4 ♘bd7 12. ♞ac1. Here in Cheparinov-Ding Liren, rapid Riadh 2017, Black chose 12... ♘e4 and the game finished with a quick draw. It would be interesting to insert 12...h6 13.h4 first, intending 13... ♘e4 14. ♘e5 g5 15.hxg5 hxg5 16. ♕e3 ♕f8∞.

8...a4 9. ♖d1

This retreat brings no glory, but 9. ♖a3 cxd5 10. ♘e5 ♘fd7 11. ♞d1 e6 is already more pleasant for Black.

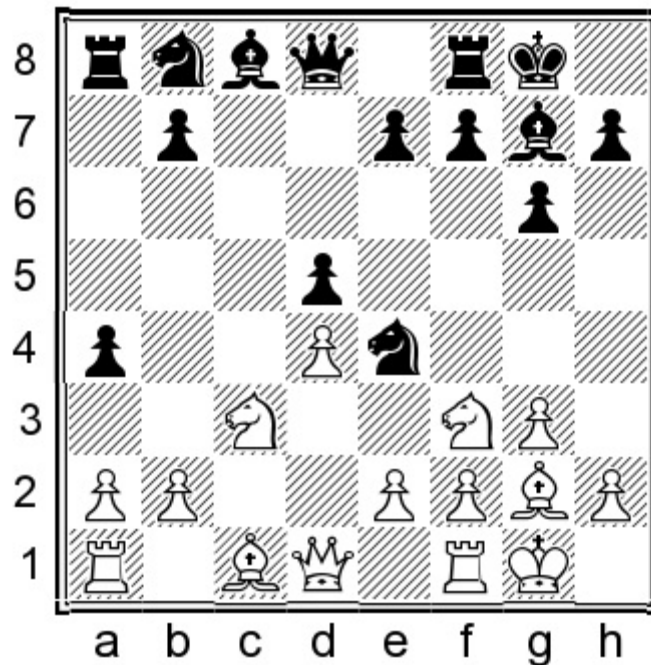
9...cxd5

This leads us to the structure of line c2, with Black having the extra moves ...a5-a4. Is it in Black's favour?! I would say, it compares at least not worse – the queen has found a comfortable stand at a5.

You could also keep the pawn structure fluid with 9...♖xd5 10.e4 ♖c7!?

10.♖c3 ♖e4

A consistent way to exploit ...a5-a4 is 10...♙a5!? 11.♙d2 ♙a6 12.b3 (12.♙g5 ♗d8 13.♖e5 ♖c6 14.♞c1 ♙e6) 12...axb3 13.axb3 ♙xa1 14.♙xa1 ♞xa1 15.♞xa1 ♖c6=.



11.♖e5

The point is that it would be dubious to win a pawn with 11.♖xa4 owing to 11...♙a5 12.b3 b5 with a strong initiative.

Rapport recently played against Amin (Danzhou 2019) 11.♖g5 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 ♖c6?! 13.e4.

Perhaps 12...♙c7 13.♙xd5 ♙xc3 14.♙e3 ♖c6 15.♞c1 ♙b2 is an improvement.

11...♙f5=. Again 12.♖xa4 ♙a5 13.b3 b5 14.♖b2 passes the initiative to Black – 14...♙xe5 (14...♙c3!? 15.e3 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♙xe5) 15.dxe5 ♖c6=, Rustemov-Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2005.

c4) 6.♖bd2 0-0 7.0-0 a5! is even better than in the previous line as White has committed his knight to a passive place.

8.b3

8.♖e5 ♖bd7 9.♖df3 a4 10.♙f4 dxc4 looks nice for Black.

8...a4

8...♙f5 9.♙b2 a4 transposes.

Or 9.e3 a4 10.♙a3 ♖bd7 11.cxd5 ♖xd5 12.♙c1 ♖c7 13.♖c4 ♖b5 14.♙b2 ♙e4=, Caruana-Giri, Zagreb 2019.

9.♙b2 ♙f5 10.a3!

We were not threatening ...a3 at once, but White should be considering this positional threat on every turn. The only other reasonable way to cut the Gordian knot is 10.bxa4 ♙a5 11.♙b3 ♖bd7=, regaining the sacrificed pawn.

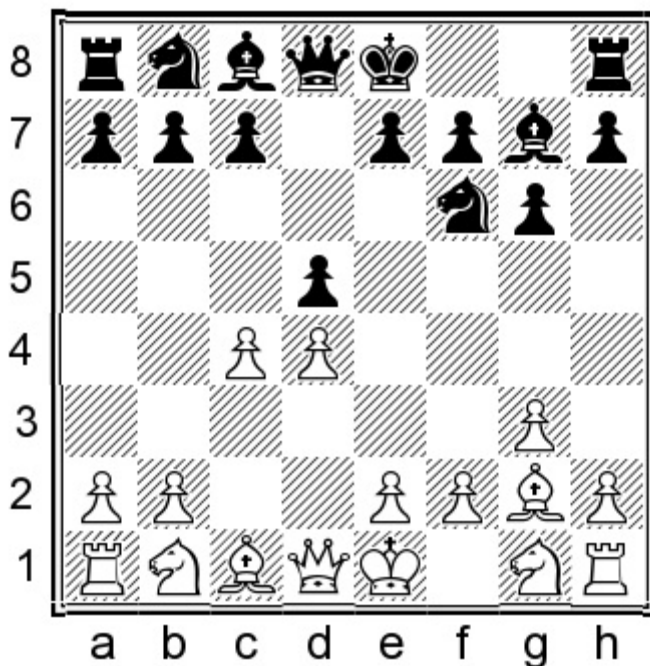
10.e3 ♖bd7 11.♙e2 axb3 12.axb3 ♙b6= targets the b3-pawn, Pr.Nikolic-Brkic, Vogosca 2007.

10...axb3

10...♖bd7 11.b4 b5 12.c5 ♗e4 and 10...b5 11.cxd5 cxd5 are also possible)
 11.♙xb3 ♗bd7 12.♙c3=, Alonso Rosell-Melkumyan, Skopje 2019.

d) Finally, 5.♗f3 ♙g7 6.0-0 allows 6...dxc4!?, but we could transpose to the familiar lines with 6...0-0. Only 7.a4 is independent, hoping for 7...dxc4 8.♗a3. Instead we could ask the opponent to define the centre with 7...♙e6, e.g. 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♗c3 ♗c6.

Now, with a solid backup line in store, let's return to the much more interesting positions from our main repertoire:



I examine here:

A. 5.♗f3; B. 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.e4; C. 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♗f3.

Variations B and C look similar, but in fact they have quite different character and deserve independent main lines.

A. 5.♗f3 dxc4!

This is the best move order. After 5...0-0, White could switch to 6.cxd5 and throw us out of the proposed repertoire.

6.♗a3

The most challenging response to 6.♙a4+ is the surprising 6...♗c6!

6...♗fd7 7.♗bd2 retains a space advantage.

7.♖xc4

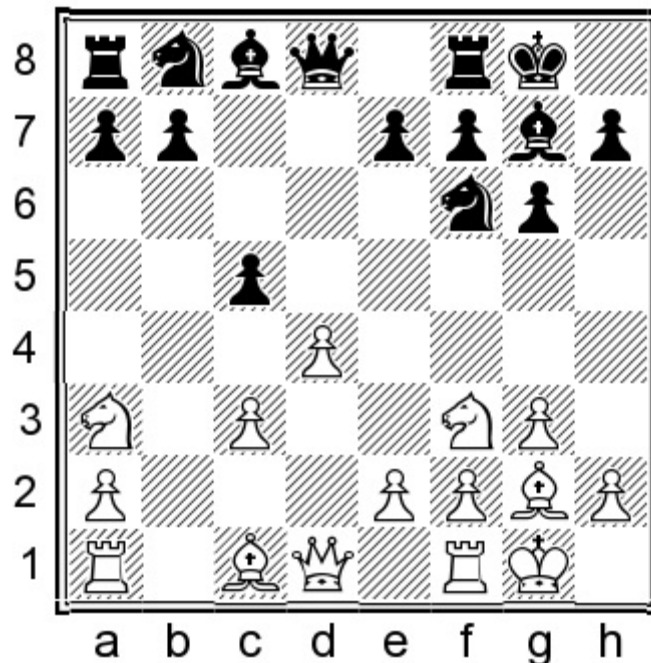
7.♗e5 0-0 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♗xc4 ♕e6 10.♗xc6 ♗xd4 is roughly equal.

7...♕e6 8.♗a4 ♘d5 (hitting indirectly d4) 9.e3 ♗d7 10.0-0 0-0∞. Black's last move sets up a little trick – 11.♗c3? would drop a pawn to 11...♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xd4.

6...c3!

This genuine Grünfeld move was first played by Vidmar in 1940. It has gradually pushed into the background the variation 6...0-0 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.♗c4 ♕e6 where Black aims to put a blockade on the light squares and seek counterplay on the a-file with 9.b3 ♕d5 10.♕b2 a5. The main expert for White is Predrag Nikolic who every too often proves that White's powerful centre prevails in this structure. I advocate the more active approach linked with a direct attack of the centre with ...c7-c5. It is true that 6...c3 bolsters up White's centre, but the closure of the c-file and the shift of the pawn to c3 weakens the c4-square which should become the fulcrum of Black's strategy. We should only watch out not to allow the advancing of the pawns to c4, d5, e4.

7.bxc3 c5 8.0-0 0-0



A1. 9.♖e1!?!; A2. 9.e3.

9.♕b2 ♗c6 10.♖e1 or e3 transposes.

9.♗e5 is well met by 9...♗c6! (9...♗d5 fares even better in practice) 10.♗xc6

10.♗ac4 ♕e6 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗d3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖c8 14.♕a3 c5 15.dxc5 ♗xd3 16.exd3 ♖fd8 was absolutely comfortable for Black, N.Petrov-Grandelius, Reykjavik 2016.

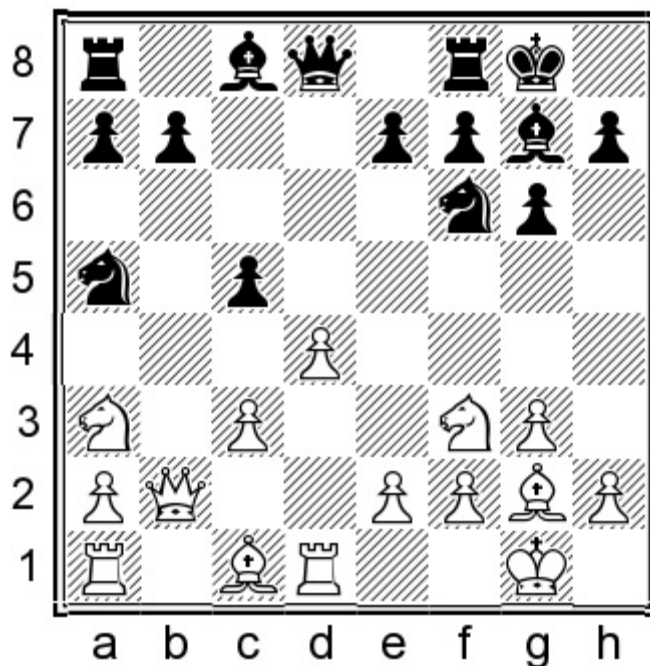
10...bxc6 11.♕xc6 ♕h3 12.♕g2

The point is 12.♕xa8 ♗xa8 13.f3 ♗d5!♣.

12...♕xg2 13.♔xg2 ♗e4. Black seizes the initiative.

9. ♖b3!?. An idea of E. Vladimirov – one of Kasparov’s assistants in the KK matches. The queen frees d1 for the rook.

9... ♘c6 10. ♖d1 ♘a5 (to control c4!) 11. ♖b2



11... ♖b6 12. ♘e5 ♙e6!

In Inarkiev-Kurnosov, Moscow 2010, Black lost tempi on manoeuvring and ended up without counterplay after 12... ♘d7 13. ♘ac4 ♘xc4 14. ♘xc4 ♖a6 15. ♘e3!±.

13. e4?!

13. ♖b1 is more adequate – 13... ♖xb2 14. ♖xb2 ♖ad8 15. ♙xb7 ♘xb7 16. ♖xb7 ♘d5, regaining the material. However, I cannot ignore Karpov’s ideas – the ex-world champion beat Kulaots with this straightforward move.

13... ♖fd8 14. f4 cxd4! (the game saw 14... ♘g4, which is not bad either) 15. cxd4 ♘g4 16. ♖xb6 axb6 17. ♘f3 ♘c6, and White should make a concession with 18. e5 f6̄.

A1. 9. ♖e1!? ♘c6 10. e4

10. ♙b2!? seems to be the latest trend.

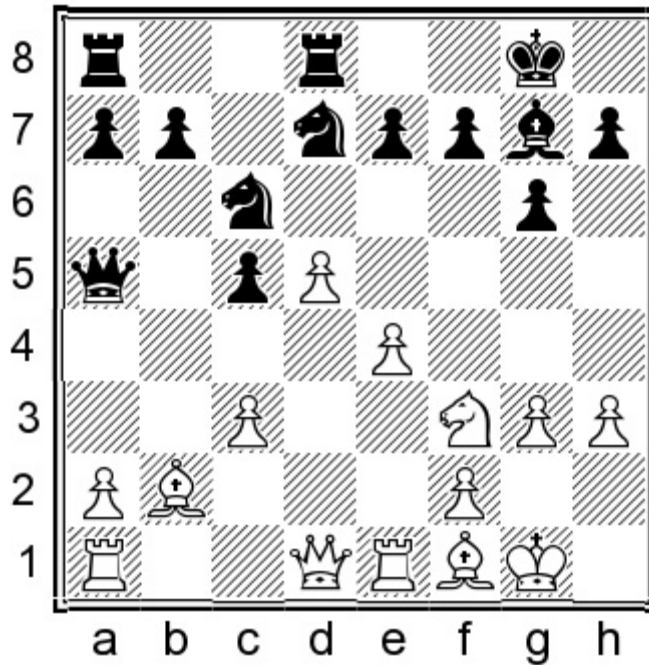
Black has not established the best response yet. In fact he has many plausible options. In 2019 Negi won with 10... ♙f5; Adhiban – with 10... ♘d7; Grandelius and Sjugirov – with 10... ♖b6.

Let’s delve into the last one:

10... ♖b6

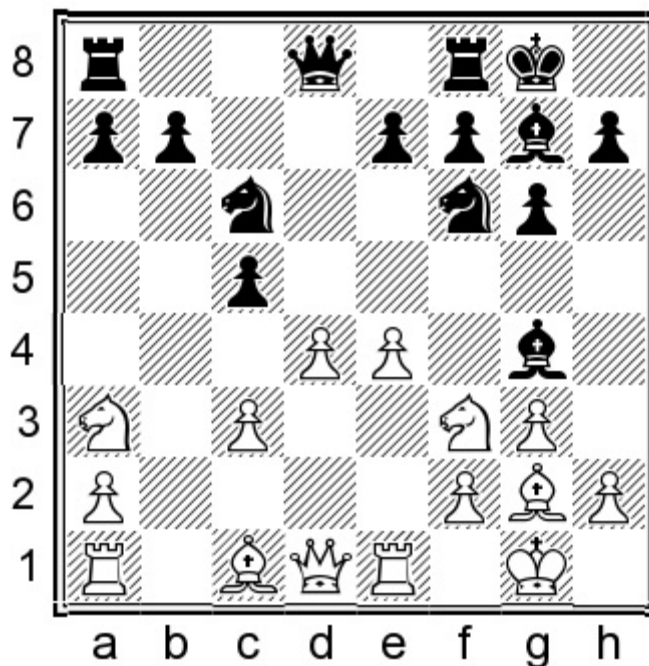
10... cxd4 11. cxd4 ♘e4 12. ♖c2 ♘d6 also deserves attention.

11. ♘c4 ♖a6 12. ♘cd2 ♖d8 13. e4 ♙g4 14. h3 ♙xf3 15. ♘xf3 ♘d7 16. ♙f1 ♖a5 17. d5, Wen Yang-Zhao Yuanhe, Shijiazhuang 2015.



Here Black's knight should go to e5, and after 17...♞ce5 18.♞xe5 ♞xe5 19.f4 ♞d7 20.♞c2 c4!∞ Black keeps the b2-bishop in a state of a "big pawn".

10...♞g4



11.♞b2

11.d5 ♞e5 12.h3 ♞xf3+ 13.♞xf3 is also consistent, if we take into account that:

13...♞xh3 14.♞b1, followed by ♞c4, e5, promises White a stable pull. It is better to seek counterplay on the queenside with:

13...♞xf3 14.♞xf3 a6! 15.♞b1 b5 16.c4, when both 16...b4 and 16...♞d7 17.♞b2 ♞a5 are possible.

11. ♖c2 is passive, and it weakens the critical square c4. We could send a knight towards it with 11... ♗d7 12. a4

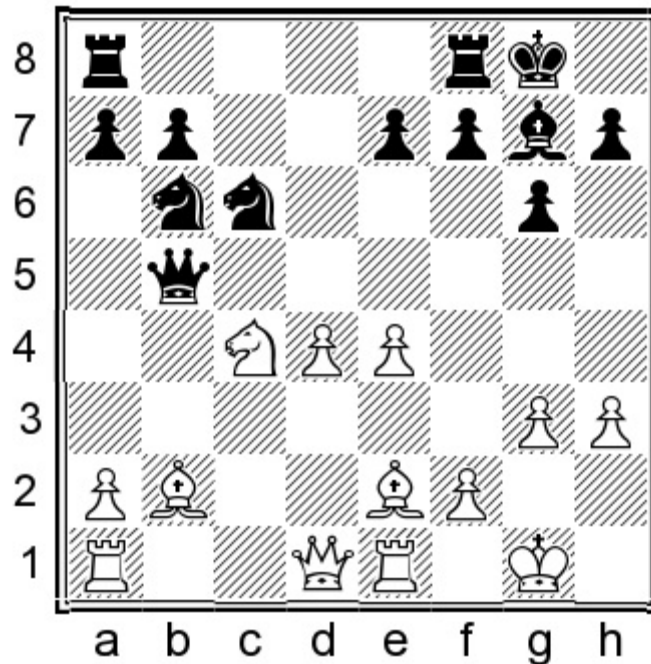
Or 12. h3 ♙xf3 13. ♙xf3 ♚a5 14. ♙d2 ♗b6.

12... ♗b6∞.

11... ♗d7! 12. h3 ♙xf3 13. ♙xf3 cxd4

Black generally refrains from this exchange to keep the b2-bishop passive, but here he has forced play:

14. cxd4 ♚b6 15. ♖c4 ♚b5 16. ♙e2 ♗b6



This position has been tested in a dozen of correspondence and engine games. All of them finished in a draw. White cannot preserve his strong centre and must allow exchanges – 17. a4 ♚b4 18. d5= or 17. ♗xb6 ♚xb6 18. ♖b1 ♗xd4=.

A2. 9.e3

White builds a dark-squared pawn triangle to reduce the scope of the bishop on g7. He will then develop with natural moves as ♗e2, ♙b2, ♖ac1, ♗fd1. In the middlegame White will attempt to put his pawn cluster in motion. Many Black players feel uncomfortable when facing such an approach because it is very difficult to generate any tactical threats. Still, Black has found a good setup, which promises sufficient counterplay:

9... ♗c6 10. ♗e2

10. ♗c4 is just a minor alternative: 10... ♗d5 11. ♙b2 ♗b6! 12. ♗e2 ♗a4 13. ♗fe5?! ♗xe5 14. ♗xe5 ♙xe5!.

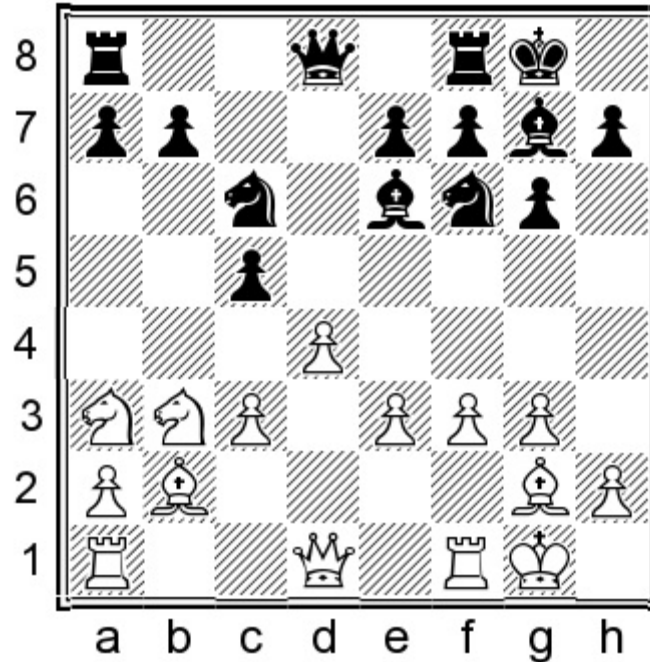
10.♙b2 is also seen. Lately White counts on 10...♙f5 11.♘d2 to put his centre in motion.

Alternatively:

11.♖e1 offers Black the light squares – 11...♙e4 12.♘c4 ♙d5=, Drasko-Esen, Izmir 2017.

11.♚e2 enables the break 11...e5, exploiting the weakness of the d3-square. White is not any better following 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.e4 ♙xe4.

11...♙g4! 12.f3 (12.♚a4 ♚d7 13.♖fe1, Cheparinov-Radulov, Albena 2011, 13...♙h3) 12...♙e6 13.♘b3



Here everybody takes on d4 – 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 ♚b6 with active pieces, Kubicki-Nývlt, ICCF 2016, but it is more logical to keep the centre undefined with:

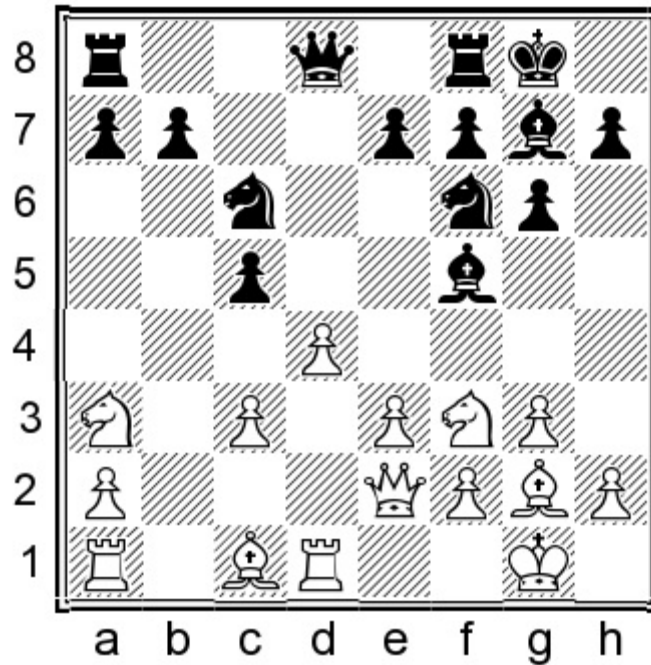
13...♚b6. It is also interesting to trade the e6-bishop, which does not have bright prospects anyway – 13...♙xb3 14.axb3 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘d5 16.♖e1 e6∞.

10...♙f5

In the first edition I offered the manoeuvre ...♘d5-b6, see **game 4** Matnadze-Delchev, Zaragoza 2010.

11.♖fd1

11.♙b2 e5! was mentioned above.



11...♔b6

Black intends to meet ♖c4 by ...♔a6. An important detail is that 12.d5 is parried by 12...♘xd5! (12...♘e4 13.♙b2 ♘a5 is also possible, but 12...♘a5?! 13.♘g5 would be in White's favour.) 13.♞xd5 ♙xc3 14.♘c4 ♔a6 15.♞xf5 ♙xa1 16.♞xc5 ♞ac8. White's pieces are hanging along the c-file and he went on to lose in Piotrowski-Wisniewski, Ustron 2015.

12.♘d2 cxd4

It is time to exchange on d4 before White could advance all three central pawns one step further.

13.cxd4 ♞ac8 14.♘b3 ♘a5!=

Exchanges favour Black in this line. The tactical background is:
15.♘c5?! e5!.

15.♘xa5 is also dubious – 15...♔xa5 16.e4 ♙g4! 17.♔d2 ♔a4.

The most reasonable continuation is 15.♔b5 ♔xb5 16.♘xb5 ♘xb3 17.axb3 a6 18.♘a3 b5, where the white knight at a3 is a poor sight. White cannot answer 19.♙b7 in view of 19...♞b8! 20.♙xa6?! ♙d7↑.

B5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4

White decides to occupy the centre. Our bishop on g7 welcomes such a strategy! It is more difficult to obtain counterplay against the rock-solid dark-squared fortress e3-d4 which I consider in line C.

I would also like to mention the move order:

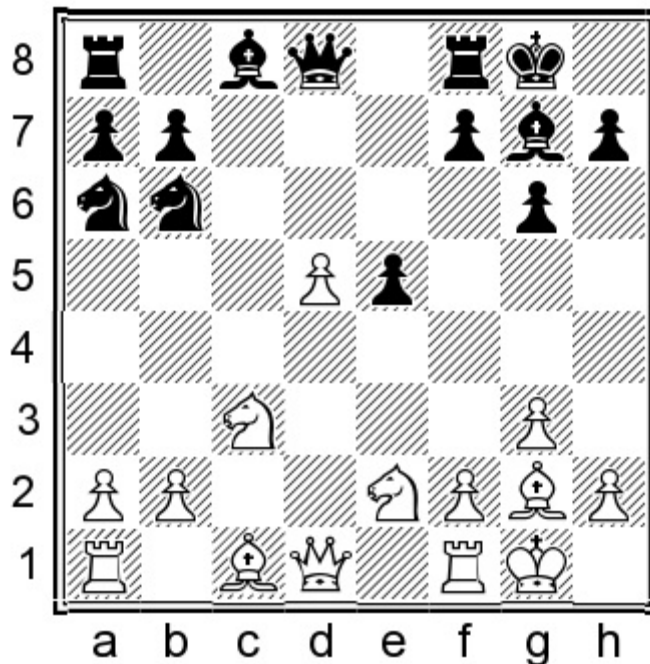
6.♘c3 ♘b6!? (I prefer this to 6...♘xc3, which is recommended by the engines.) 7.e3

7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 transposes to line C.

7...0-0 8.♘ge2 e5 9.d5

9.0-0 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♚e7 was the first game in this line, Capablanca-Flohr 1935. Black took over the initiative with ...♞d8, ...c5 and ...♘a6-b4.

9...c6 10.e4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘a6 12.0-0



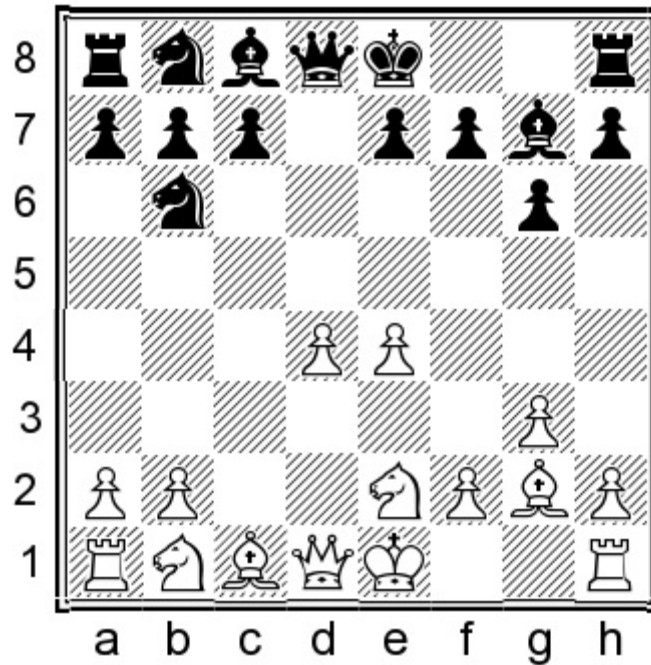
This position often arises after 6.e4 ♘b6 7.♘e2 0-0 8.0-0 e5 9.d5 c6 10.♘bc3 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘a6, when White has an extra tempo for 12.b3.

In our example it is Black to move, and he levels the chances with:

12...♙f5 13.b3 (13.d6 ♚d7 14.b3 ♘b4) 13...♘c8 14.a4 ♘d6=.

6...♘b6 7.♘e2

7.♘f3 is not popular due to 7...♙g4 (or 7...0-0 8.0-0 ♙g4) 8.d5 c6 9.h3 ♙xf3 10.♚xf3 ♘8d7 with excellent statistics for Black.



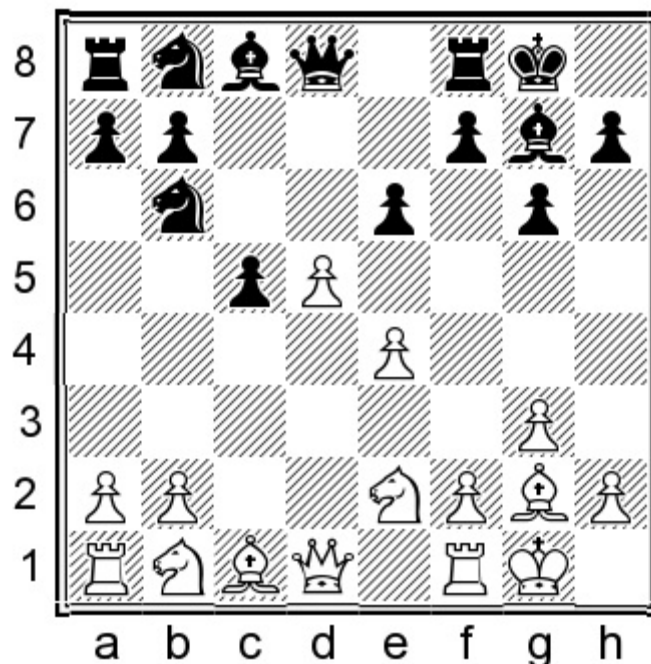
7...c5!

The move order is important here! After 7...0-0 8.0-0 c5 White would have the option of 9.dxc5!

8.d5

8.dxc5?! does not even win a pawn owing to 8...♙xd1+ 9.♚xd1 ♘a4 10.♜bc3 ♜xc5 11.♛e3 ♜ba6 12.♙c2 ♛e6 13.♞ad1 ♞c8=.

8...0-0 9.0-0 e6!



Black has managed to disrupt the white pawn pair in the centre and prolong the scope of his dark-squared bishop. On the other hand the d5-pawn is powerful, especially after reaching d6. We should

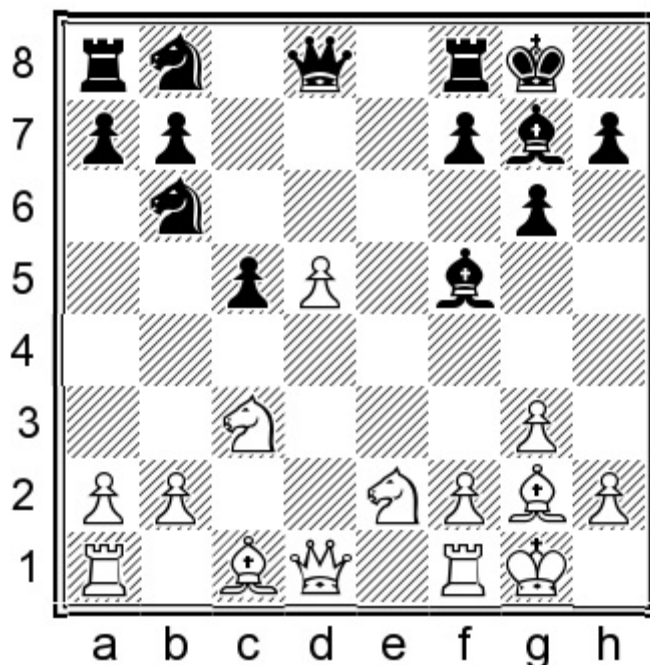
play energetically to compensate for that. Our goal should be the d3-square. Thus our natural development is ...♟f5, ...♞a6-b4, ...c4. We could even sacrifice the exchange to put a knight on d3.

10.♞ec3

10.♞bc3 is rarely seen nowadays – 10...exd5 11.exd5

The idea of trading a pair of knights by 11.♞xd5!? is also reasonable since ♞e2 and ♞c3 essentially control the same squares. 11...♞xd5 (or 11...♟g4 12.h3 ♟xe2 13.♞xe2 ♞c6 14.♞b5 ♞d4 15.♞xc5 ♞xd5 16.exd5 ♞d7) 12.exd5 ♟f5 13.♞c3 c4! 14.♞a4 (14.♟f4 ♞d7 15.d6 ♞e5) 14...♟d3 15.♞e1 ♞b6 16.d6 ♟d4 17.♞d5 ♞xd6 18.♞b5∞.

11...♟f5!



11...♞a6 is dubious due to 12.d6!

12.h3

12.♟e3 ♞8d7!? 13.b3 ♞e8 14.d6 ♞e6 15.♞d2 ♟f8∞.

12...h5 13.♞e4 ♟xe4! 14.♟xe4 ♞e8 15.♟g2 ♞c4 16.♞c2 ♞d6 with an ideal blockade.

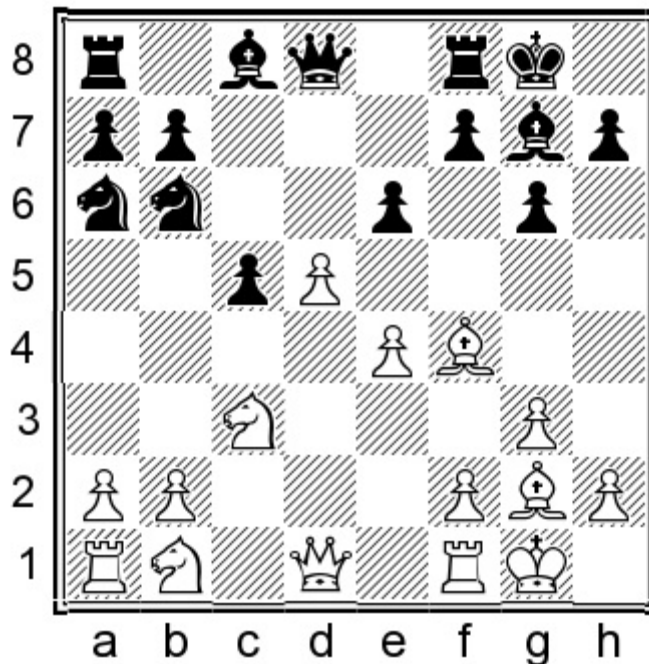
10...♞a6

Black keeps open the option of ...e6-e5, followed by an eventual transfer of the knight to d6. Lately I tend to avoid the blockading plan as being a little boring.

11.a4

The favourite weapon of Karpov in his blitz match against Kasparov in 2009. It remains the most frequent move, but lately White came up with another very dangerous idea:

11.♟f4!



The bishop targets the d6-square. This variation is a big challenge to Black's concept. It has been yielding OTB more than 80% so far!

11...e5 12.♔c1 ♖c4 13.b3 ♗d6 14.♗d2 f5 15.♗c4 f4 may be difficult to break, but still White enjoys a passed pawn and pressure on the queenside. This line can serve only as a backup rather than a main repertoire. Instead I would prefer to get active pieces, even at the cost of the exchange.

11...exd5 12.exd5 ♔f5

We cannot spend a tempo on 12...h5 as White's knight quickly reaches e4 – 13.♗d2 ♗b4 14.♗de4 ♔g4 15.♚b3 ♗d3 16.♔g5 f6 (16...♚d7 17.♔f6 c4 18.♚c2 ♖ac8 19.♚d2±) 17.♔e3 c4 18.♚c2 f5 19.♗g5 f4 20.♔xf4±.

Or 12...♖e8 13.♗a3 ♔f5 14.d6 ♗b4 15.♗ab5 ♗d3 16.♗c7 ♗xb2 17.♚f3±.

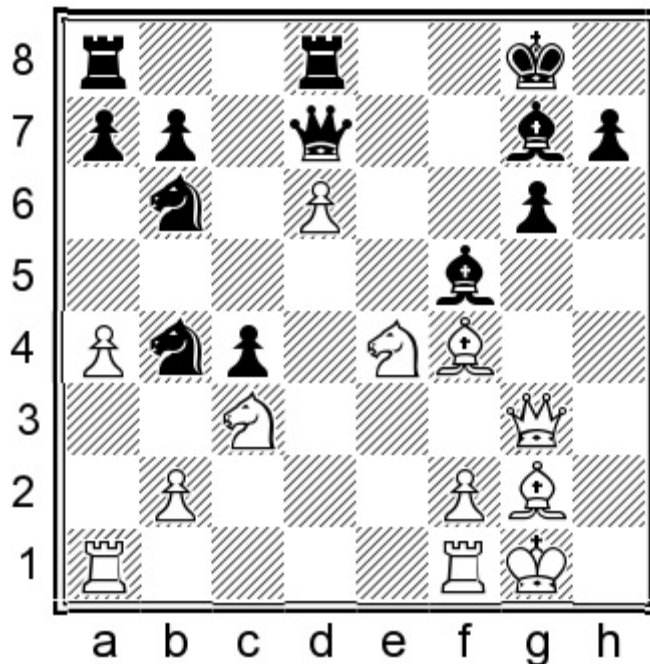
13.g4!

Repulsing the bishop before it could go to d3 as in the line 13.♗a3 ♗b4 14.♚d2 (14.g4 ♔d3 15.♖e1 ♗6xd5–+) 14...♖e8 15.♖ad1 ♚d7 16.b3 ♔d3 17.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 18.♚xe1 ♖e8. The d5-pawn is very weak.

13...♔d7 14.♗d2 ♗b4!

14...♚c8 15.h3 f5 16.♔d6 ♖d8 17.♚f3! fxg4 18.hxg4 ♔xg4 19.♚g3 ♚d7 20.♗de4 ♔f5 21.♔f4 c4 brought Black two draws in correspondence games.

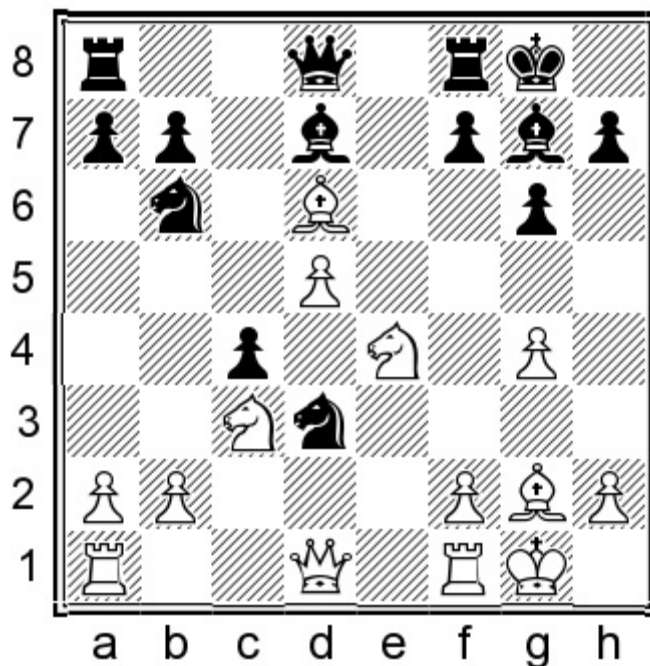
However, I do not like his position following the untested 22.d6! ♗b4 23.a4!. White's initiative begins to shape up.



23...♖6d5 24.♙g5 ♜xc3 25.bxc3 ♜d3 26.♞ab1 b6 27.♙e7±.

14...♞e8 makes no sense – 15.♜de4 ♜c4 16.♙g5±.

15.♜de4 c4 16.♙d6 ♜d3

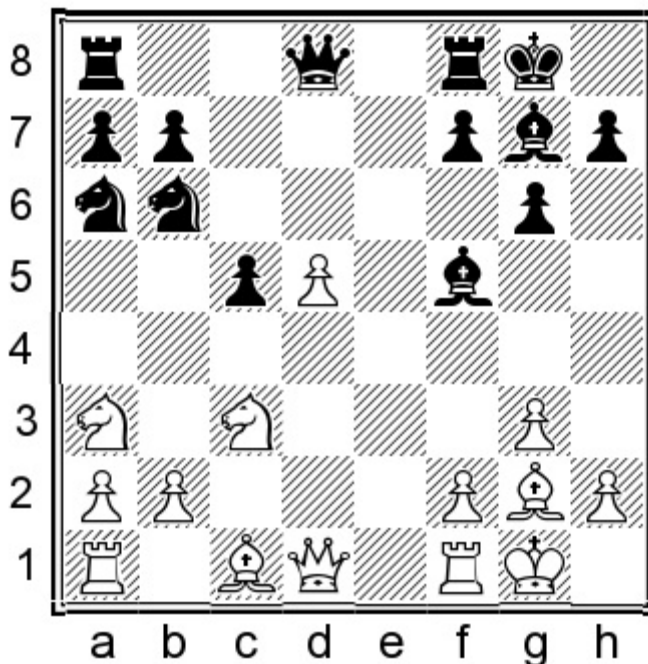


White wins the exchange, but subsequent play is double-edged. I believe that Black has fair practical chances here. See **game 2** Maldonado Pacheco-C.Smith, ICCF 2016.

11.♜d2?! is considered as an opening mistake, for example, 11...♜b4! 12.♜b3 c4! 13.♜c5 ♜d7, winning the battle for the d3-square – 14.♙e3 ♞a5 15.♜xd7 ♙xd7 16.♙d2 ♜d3♞, Hulak-Sutovsky, Istanbul 2003.

11.♜a3 exd5 12.exd5 ♙f5!

The a3-knight remains passive, its only function being to defend c4. Black will prepare ...♞b4 to target the sensitive d3-square.



13.♙e3

13.g4 is more principled, but Black is still fine after 13...♙d7 14.♙f4 ♞b4 15.d6 ♚c8 16.h3 ♙c6=.

Other alternatives are:

13.♞ab5 ♞b4 14.d6 ♞c4=;

13.d6 ♚d7.

13...♚d7

13...♞e8 14.d6 ♚d7 15.♚d2 ♞e6 16.♞ad1 ♞d8 17.♞cb5 ♞a4 is also possible.

14.♚b3

After 14.♚d2 ♞ac8 15.♞cb5 the threat on a7 is not dangerous since 15...♞fe8 16.♞xa7?! ♞cd8

17.♞ad1 ♞a4 passes the initiative to Black.

14...♞ac8

Or 14...♙d3 15.♞fd1 c4 16.♚b5 ♞fd8=.

15.♞ad1 ♞b4=.

11...exd5

11...♞b4 12.♙e3 ♙d4 is dangerous in view of 13.♙h6 ♞e8 14.♞d2 exd5 15.♞b3.

12.exd5 ♞c4!

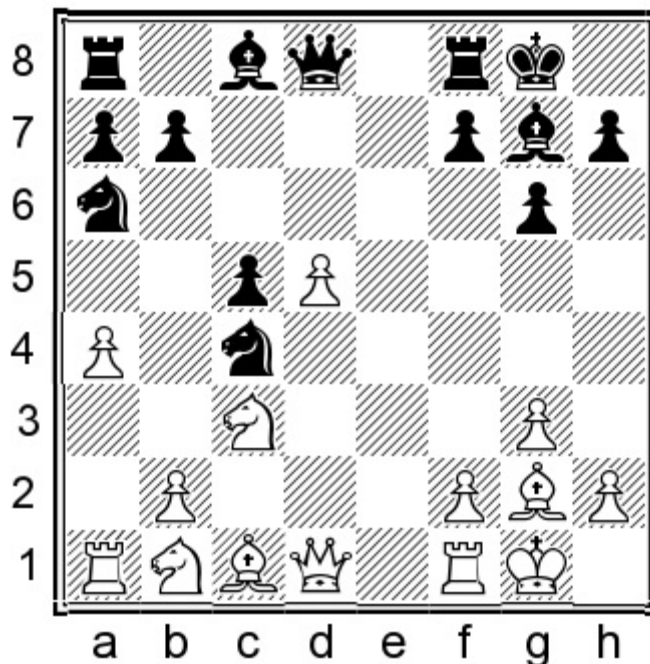
Transferring the knight to a central square.

12...♙f5 13.g4! seizes the initiative:

13...♙c8

Or 13...♙d7 14.♞d2! ♚h4! 15.h3 f5 16.♞f3 ♚f6 17.d6!? fxg4 18.♞g5±.

14.♖d2 ♗b4 15.♗de4 ♗6xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗xc5 ♗b4 18.♙xd8 ♚xd8 19.a5 a6 20.h3±. Despite the symmetry, the pressure on b7 is unpleasant.



13.♗a3

13.♗d2 ♗e5 14.♗de4 ♙g4 15.f3 ♙d7 16.d6 (16.♙g5 f6 17.♙e3 f5) 16...c4∞.

13...♗e5 14.h3 ♗b4 15.♗e4

15.♙b3 b6 16.♗e4 h6 17.♚d1 ♙a6 assures Black of counterplay – 18.♗b5 ♗bd3 19.f4 c4 20.♙c2 ♗xc1 21.fxe5 ♗d3 22.d6 ♗xe5 23.♗c7 ♙b7 24.♗xa8 ♙xa8 with excellent compensation.

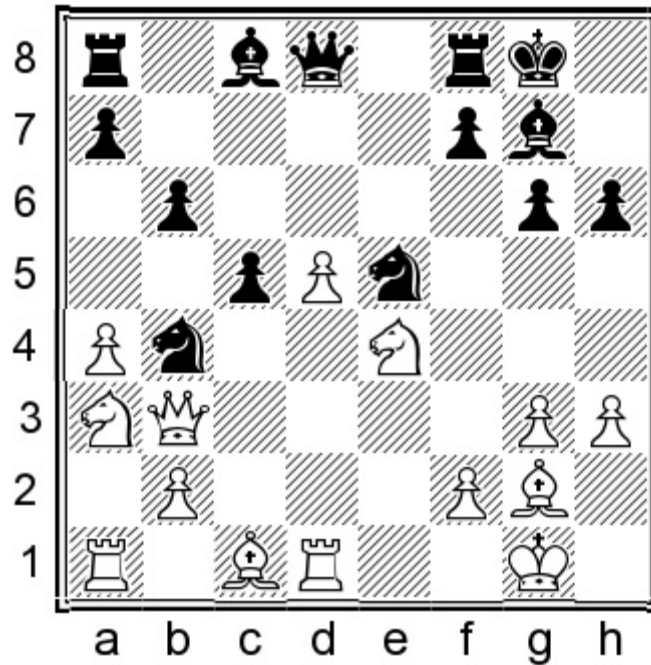
15...b6

After 15...♗xd5 16.♗xc5 ♙e7 17.♙xd5 ♚d8 18.♙e4 ♙xc5 19.♙e3 ♙e7 20.♚fd1 a5 Black should neutralise the enemy initiative, but his winning chances would be null.

16.♙b3

16.♙g5 f6 17.♙e3 ♙b7!? is unclear, while 17...f5 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗e6 ♙xe6 20.dxe6 ♚c8 should gradually equalise.

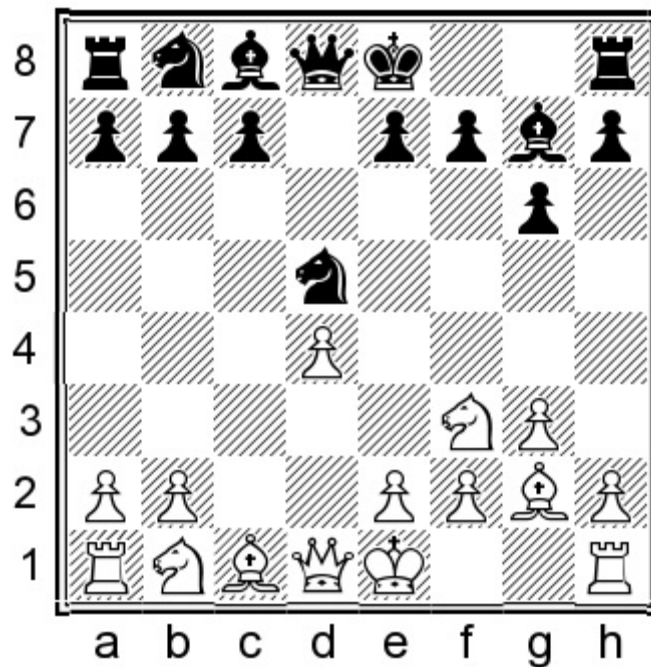
16...h6 17.♚d1



We have reached a dynamic position with mutual chances. A correspondence game saw 17...a5 18.♞f4 ♞a6 19.♞xe5 ♞xe5 20.♞d2 ♞a7∞.

I also checked 17...♞f5!? 18.f4 ♞d7 19.♞d2 a5∞.

C. 5.cxd5 ♞xd5 6.♞f3



6...♞b6 7.♞c3

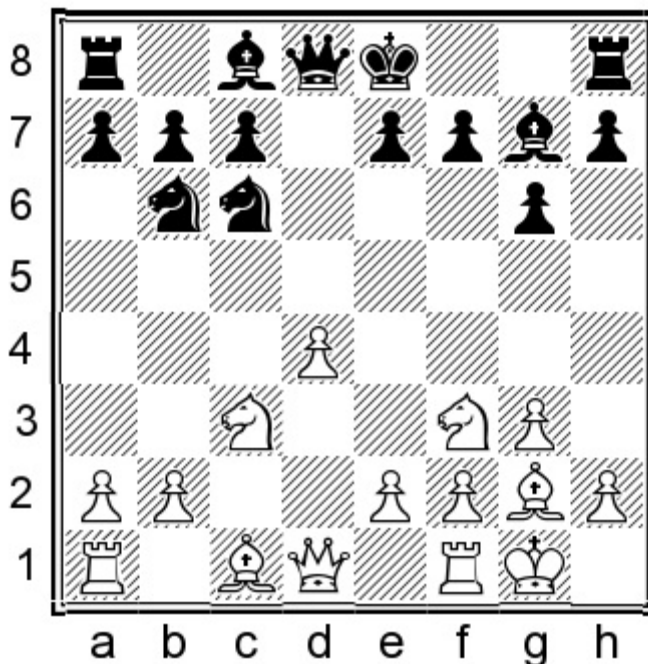
7.0-0 ♞c6 8.e3 0-0 transposes to the main line.

8...e5 9.♞c3 is too drawish for my taste: 9...exd4 10.exd4 0-0 11.♞g5 ♞d7! 12.♞e4 ♞xd4!

13.♞f6+ ♞xf6 14.♞xf6 ♞xf3+ 15.♞xf3 c6 16.♞fe1 ♞f5 17.♞e7 ♞xf3 18.♞xf3 ♞d7 19.♞d1 ♞ad8

and a draw was soon agreed in Pantsulaia-Gupta, Dubai 2006.

The only independent variation is the pawn sacrifice 8.♖c3, but it is not dangerous at all:



8...♖c3

Carlsen preferred 8...0-0!? 9.d5 ♖a5∞, which requires a lot of theory to learn.

9.♖xd4 ♗xd4 10.♖b5

No better is 10.♗xd4 ♕xd4 11.♖b5 ♕e5 12.♕f4 ♕xf4 13.gf4 ♔d8! with an extra pawn.

10...♗c4 (10...♗e5 is of equal worth) 11.a4

11.♗b3 regains the pawn but it is completely harmless, 11...0-0 12.♗xc4 ♖xc4 13.♖xc7 ♖b8

14.♖d5 ♖e8 15.♕f4 ♕e5 16.♕xe5 ♖xe5 17.♖fd1 ♕g4 18.f3 ♕d7 19.f4 ♖c6=, Kotsur-Kempinski Moscow 2005.

11...0-0 12.b3 ♗g4 13.♕f4!?

After 13.♕e3 ♕e6 14.♕xb7 (14.♖xc7 ♖ad8 15.♗b1 ♕xa1 16.♗xa1 ♕xb3 17.a5 ♖c4 18.♕h6

♗d4, Pr.Nikolic-Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 2000.) 14...♖ad8 15.♗c2 ♕xa1 16.♖xa1 ♕d5, Esen-Ruck, Kemer 2007, Black is the exchange up and he has an attack.

13...♕e6 14.h3 ♗h5 15.g4 ♗c5=. White's b3-pawn is weak so 16.♖c1 does not work due to 16...♗b4.

Instead Bu Xiangzhi-Timofeev, Sochi 2009, saw 16.♗c1 ♗xc1 17.♖axc1 c6 18.♖c7 ♖ad8 19.♖xe6 fxe6 20.♕g5 ♖d5=.

7...♖c6 8.e3

Our mission has been accomplished. The fine point of Black's move order is that 8.d5 is impossible in view of 8...♕xc3+ so we sidestepped the variation 6...0-0 7.0-0 ♖b6 8.♖c3 ♖c6 9.d5!?.

8.♕f4 aims to prevent ...e5, but nevertheless after 8...0-0 9.e3 h6 10.h4 ♕g4! 11.♖c1 Black went on with 11...e5!?

This is not the only good option. The game Nguyen-Saric, Vung Tau 2008 saw instead 11...♖d5! 12.♗b3 ♖db4 13.0-0 ♕e6! 14.d5 ♕xd5 15.♖xd5 ♗xd5 16.♖c4 ♖a5, with a material advantage for

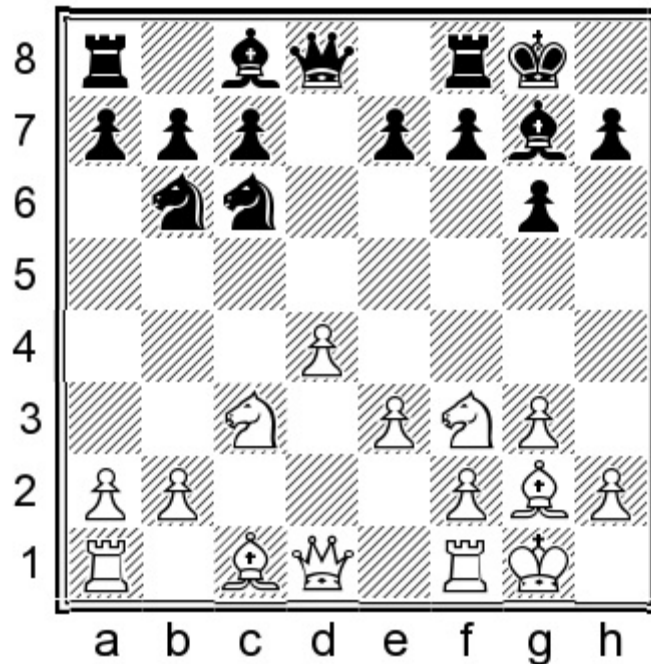
Black.

12.dxe5 ♖c4 with active play, Ju Wenjun-Negi, St. Petersburg 2009.

8...0-0!

8...e5 9.0-0 is about equal, as we had seen above, but 9.d5 is not too clear.

9.0-0



9...♖e8!

Nimzowitsch called such moves mysterious – putting a rook on a closed file. Indeed, if we wanted to play ...e5, we could have done it outright. After all we have enough hits on e5. Let us shed light on the reasons behind this strange move.

We shall be meeting time and again in the book the pawn formation e3-d4. It is getting on Black's g7-bishop nerves because this usually most active piece is biting at granite. Naturally it is longing for action, but the immediate 9...e5 would be met by 10.d5, and the bishop will remain plugged behind its own pawn.

Practical experience shows that after 10.d5 Black is about to struggle for many moves ahead.

It is clear that the active approach to the opening problems does not bring Black benefits. Then he should adopt a waiting strategy.

Let us consider White's plans and look at the position from his perspective. He happens to face the same problem! The pawn formation in the centre restricts its own dark-squared bishop even worse than it does with our hero on g7.

Evidently White's most sensible setup is b3, ♘b2 followed by ♙e2, ♞fd1, ♜ac1. If he achieved it without allowing us to get counterplay with ...c5 or ...e5, will be straddled with a passive defence.

In the diagram position Black is somewhat cramped and the lack of space will tell in future. Thus the idea is clear. The battle is for ...e7-e5, which remains the only active option after the knight on c6 has blocked the c7-pawn. The key is when to thrust the e-pawn forward. We should seize the moment when

White would not have d4-d5. Let us make a useful move and pass White the turn.

We'll understand better the character of position if we briefly examine various other options:

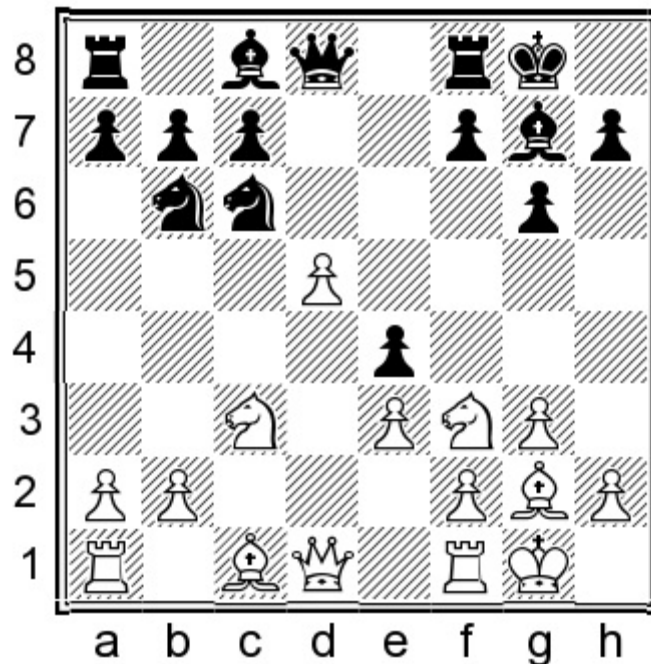
a) 9...e5 10.d5! e4

The rest is gloom for Black:

10...♞e7 11.e4 ♙g4 12.h3 ♙xf3 13.♚xf3±;

10...♞a5 11.e4 c6 12.♙g5 f6 13.♙e3 cxd5 14.♙xb6!. Many games have proved White's advantage here. Most instructive are probably Portish-Schmidt, Bath 1973 and Hulak-P.Popovic, Zlatibor 1989.

The pawn sacrifice was introduced in the women's world championship match Chiburdanidze-Akhmilovskaya which took place in Sofia 1986. I (still very young then!) was among the spectators and I remember myself telling the neighbours that the demonstrator probably messed something on the board.



11.dxc6 ♚xd1 12.♞xd1 exf3 13.♙xf3 bxc6 14.♙d2!?

This improvement tips the balance in White's favour. Previously White used to take the c6-pawn, but Black had sufficient counterplay after 14.♙xc6 ♞b8 15.♞d5 (or 15.♞b5 ♞c4 16.♞xa7 ♙g4 17.f3 ♙e6 18.♙d5 ♙xb2=, Konopka-Seres, Hungary 1998) 15...♞c4 16.♞e7+ ♚h8 17.♞xc8 ♞fxc8.

14...♞c4 15.♞a4 ♞b8 16.♞ab1

16.♙c3 ♙xc3 (16...♞xb2?? 17.♙xb2 ♙xb2 18.♞ab1+–) 17.bxc3 earned White a victory in Tkachiev-Sutovsky, Dresden 2007, but his advantage is minimal.

16...♞d8 17.♙e1 ♙f5 18.♞xd8 ♞xd8 19.♞c1 ♞e5 20.♙e2 ♞d3. Although White retains the better pawn structure, Black has substantial chances to draw, Vinchev-Kösebay, ICCF 2017.

b) 9...a5

We saw this idea in the intro game Benko-Smyslov, Budapest, 1949. However, later White

discovered better ways:

10.b3

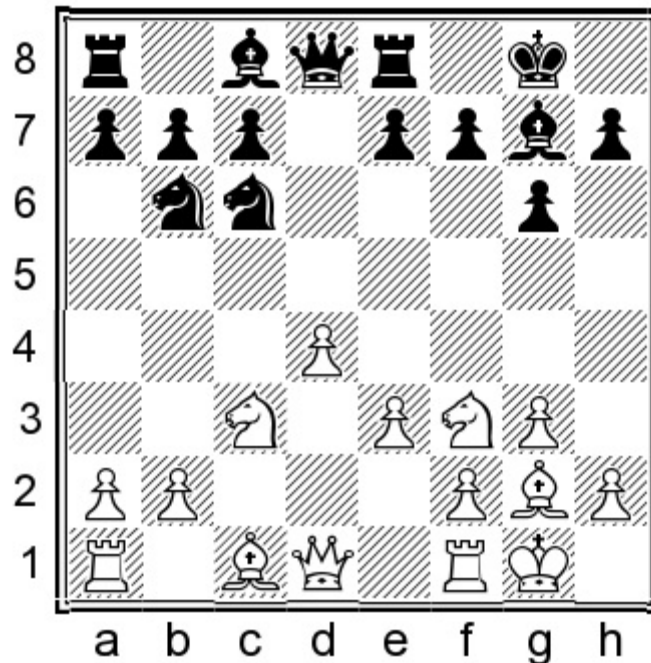
10.d5 ♖b4 11.e4 f5! generates counterplay. White has tried 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗e6 ♕xe6 14.dxe6 ♜xd1 15.♞xd1 c6 16.exf5, when both recaptures are roughly equal.

10...e5

10...♗b4 yields amazingly good results, but this move means that Black cedes the centre. The simple 11.a3 ♗d4d5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♞c2 c6 14.♞d1 ensures a lasting pull.

10...a4?! 11.♗xa4 ♗xa4 12.bxa4 ♕e6 (Perhaps 12...e5 13.♕a3 ♞e8 14.d5, Leenhouts-Danin, Bussum 2009, 14...e4!? gives more chances.) 13.♞b1 ♞a7 14.♞c2 ♞a8 15.♗h4! and Black has no time to recapture the a4-pawn due to d4-d5.

11.♕a3 (gaining a tempo) 11...♞e8 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 13.♗d4 c6 (13...♕g4 14.♞c2) 14.♞c2. Black executed ...e5 without risking to face d5 in answer, but play has opened in White's favour. The queen on d8 has no good squares.



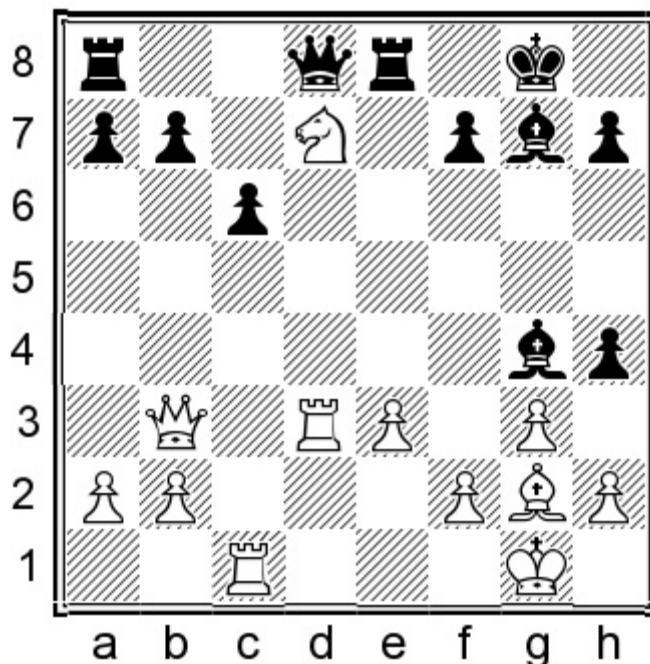
C1.10.d5; **C2.** 10.♞e1; **C3.** 10.h3;

Minor alternatives are:

10.♗h4 – Avrukh's recommendation in his latest repertoire book. If White follows his receipt all the way, he should end up with a somewhat worse position. The threat is f4, so we answer:

10...e5 11.d5 ♗b4 12.♞b3?!

12.a3 is more realistic – 12...♗a6 13.♞c2 ♕d7, followed by ...c6, e.g. 14.e4 c6 15.dxc6 bxc6=. 12...♗d3 13.♞d1 e4 14.♗xe4 ♗xc1 15.♞axc1 ♕g4 16.♞d3 g5 17.d6 c6 18.♗c5 gxh4 19.d7 ♗xd7 20.♗xd7



Avrukh concludes his analysis here with 20...♖c7 21.♗c5. It was tested in two correspondence games of 2018. They both finished with quick draws after 21...h3 22.♙f1 b6 23.♗a6 ♖e5 24.♖xc6 ♖ac8 25.♖xc8 ♖xc8 26.♖c3.

However, the pawn on h3 is a great asset, which should tip the balance in Black's favour in the long run:

20...♖c8! 21.♗c5 h3 22.♙h1 ♖b8 23.♖c4 h5 24.♖f4 ♖e7 25.♖d2 ♙e5 26.♖e4 ♖c7 27.f4 ♖d8!↑.

10.♗e1 also plans f4. I recommend 10...e5 11.d5 ♗a5 12.e4 (12.♗c2 e4! =) 12...c6 13.♗d3 (13.♗c2 ♗ac4 14.b3 ♗d6 =) 13...cxd5 14.exd5 f5! with counterplay.

10.♖e2. The opposition of ♖e8 vs. ♖e2 suggests that we should open the centre with 10...e5! 11.dxe5 ♗xe5 12.♗xe5

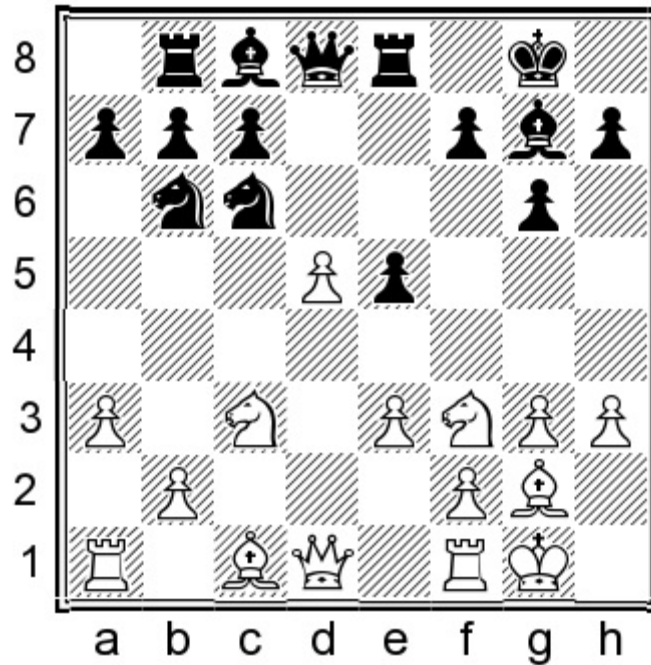
Or 12.♖d1 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♖e7 14.h4 c6 15.♙d2 ♙e6 16.♙e1 ♗c4 17.b3 ♗e5 18.♙g2 ♖ad8 =, Brunello-Safarli, Reggio Emilia 2009.

12...♙e5.

In principle, White should aim in this structure for e3-e4-e5, but here 13.e4 would be met by 13...♙e6! so White has to change plans:

13.♖d1 ♖e7 14.e4 (14.f4 ♙xc3! 15.bxc3 ♙e6) 14...c6 15.♙e3 ♙e6 16.f4 ♙g7 (16...♙xc3 17.bxc3 f5 18.e5 ♖a3 is also interesting.) 17.e5 f6 =.

10.a3 is a normal waiting move. The engines like the mysterious retort 10...♖b8!, and it was played by strong GMs as Cheparinov, Kozul. Black prepares to meet 11.h3 (11.♖e1 e5 12.d5 e4!) by 11...e5 12.d5



12...e4! 13.dxc6 exf3 (now we understand the reason behind 10...♖b8!) 14.♙xf3 bxc6 with active pieces.

Instead 10...e5 11.d5 ♞a5 12.♙c2, intending 12...e4 13.♞d4! f5 14.♖d1, scores well for White.

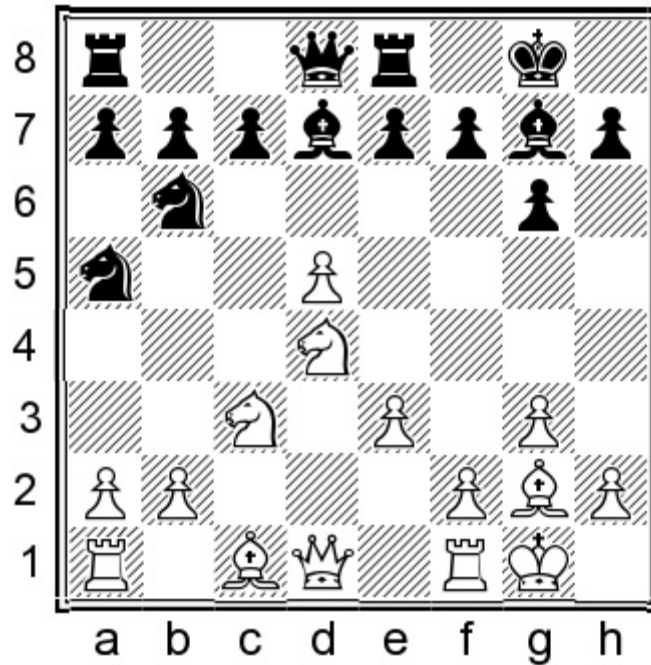
C1. 10.d5

The bishop on g7 is happy now. Black can renounce the advance of the e-pawn and prepare ...c6 instead, in order to open the c-file.

10...♞a5 11.♞d4

This centralisation of the knight only temporarily prevents the break ...c6. We meet 11.e4?! by 11...c6!.

11...♞d7

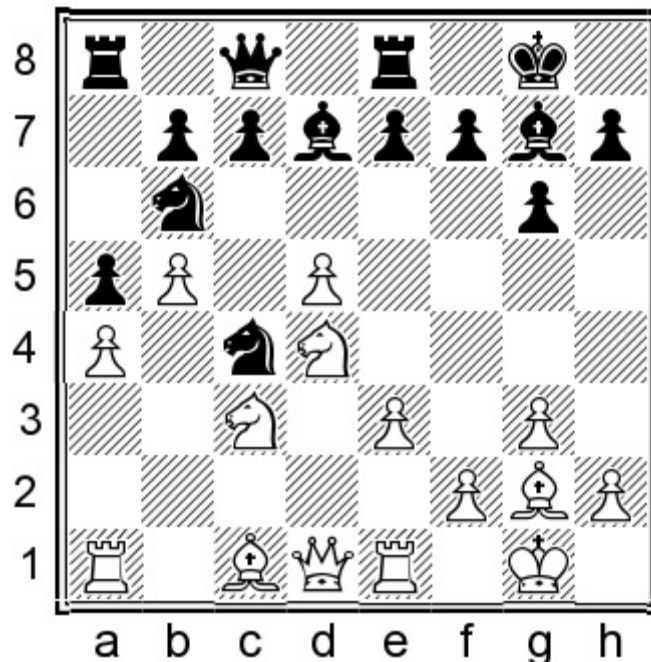


Completing development and intending ...c7-c6 while the opponent's bishop is still stuck on c1.

12.e4!

White opens the c1-h6 diagonal and reinforces his front central pawn. White has also tried in practice nearly all other legal moves:

12.b4 ♖ac4 13.a4 a5 14.b5 ♔c8 15.♖e1 had been the main line for a long time. Only in 2004 Ivanchuk showed a convincing way to destroy White's centre:

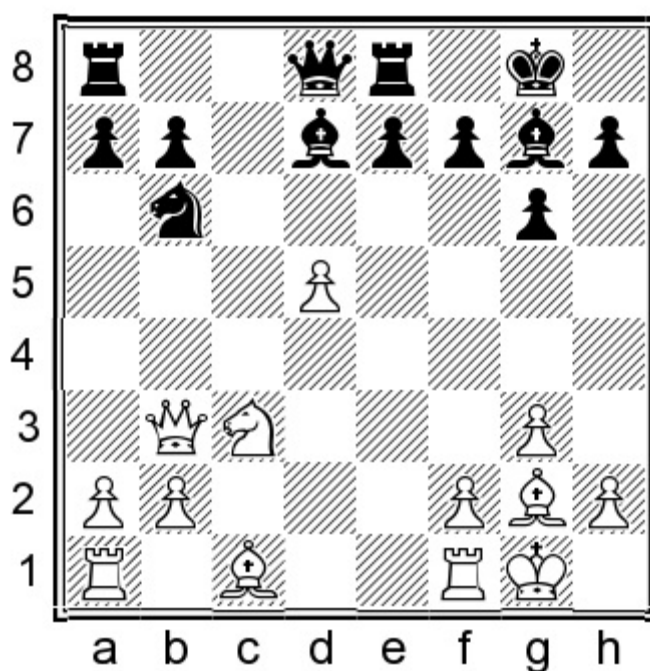


15...e5! 16.♘b3 (16.dxe6 ♙xe6) 16...c6 (the engines also suggest 16...♙g4) 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♖a2, Aronian-Ivanchuk, Antalya 2004, 18...♖d8! 19.♔e2 ♖b8.

12.a4 is threatening 13.b4, but 12...♖c8! discourages it in view of the counterblow 13.b4 c5!♣. In my game Roiz-Delchev, Pamplona 2008, went on 13.♗ce2 c5 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 15.a5 ♗c4 and I was already slightly better.

12.b3 c6! underlines the weakening of the main diagonal and forces White to exchange his d5-pawn (12...c5 allows 13.♗de2, although 13...e6 should be OK.) After 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♗xc6 ♕xc6 15.♕xc6 bxc6 (or 15...♖xd1 16.♖xd1 bxc6 17.♕d2 a5 as in Ljubojevic-Kasparov, Barcelona 1989) 16.♕b2 c5 17.♖e2 c4, Black gets rid of his pawn island and the game should be drawn.

12.♗b3 ♗xb3 (It is natural to trade pieces when the opponent has a spatial advantage, but the blockading 12...♗ac4 followed by ...♗d6 is playable, too.) 13.♖xb3 c6 14.e4 cxd5 15.exd5



Here in Kempinski-Khalifman, Plovdiv 2003, the ex-FIDE world champion manoeuvred his queen to its best stand on a5 via ...♖c8-c4-a6-a5 and levelled the game.

The simpler 15...♖c8 16.♕f4 ♗c4 17.♖ac1 ♖b6 is also good enough.

12.♖b1

Anticipating 12...c5 which, however, still proves to be good enough – 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♗xc6 ♕xc6 15.♕xc6 bxc6 16.♖c2 c5=.

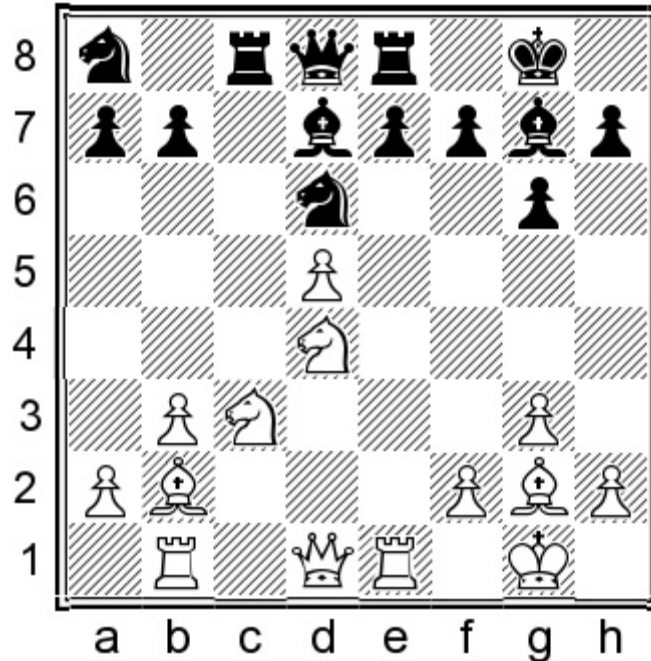
12...♖c8 retains more chances to play for a win, intending to meet 13.b4 by 13...c5! 14.♗e6 fxe6 15.bxa5 ♕xc3 16.axb6 axb6∞, Woodard-Ballow, ICCF 2014.

12...c6!

12...♖c8 is frequently seen and yields good results. However, the deeper analysis convinced me that we need the c8-square for other pieces! I'll show more details about the rook move only to bring your attention to the amazing manoeuvre of Miroshnichenko 17...♗a8:

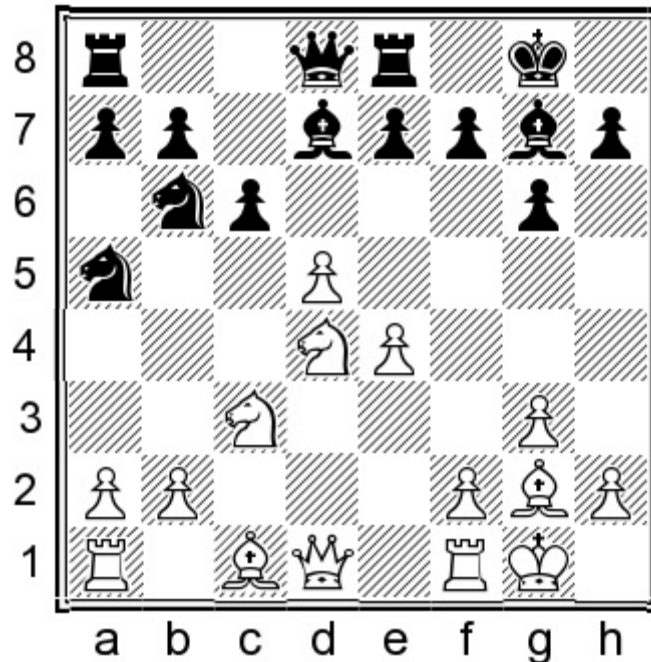
13.♞e1 (13.♙f4 c5! 14.♘f3 e5) 13...c6 14.♙f4

Or 14.♞b1 cxd5 15.exd5 ♖ac4 16.b3 ♘d6 17.♙b2 ♘a8!!



Black gives way to his queen which is longing to reach a5, while the knight is redeployed to c7-b5 (or a6). 18.♘ce2 ♙a5 19.a4 ♙g4 20.h3 ♙xe2=.

14...cxd5 15.exd5 ♖ac4 16.b3 ♘d6 17.♙d2 ♘f5. Black found satisfactory stands for most of his pieces. He only needs to redeploy the b6-knight to d6. Still, White remains the active side thanks to his space advantage.



13.♞e1

13.♙f4 discourages ...♙c8, but puts the bishop under the hit ...e5 following the brilliant retreat (or rather attack!) 13...♙c8!! (hoping for 14...e5!). Then both:

14.♖b3 ♗ac4 15.dxc6 ♔xd1 16.♗xd1 bxc6 17.e5 ♗d5= and:
 14.♗de2 cxd5 15.exd5 e5 are very comfortable for Black.

13...cxd5 14.exd5 ♔c8!!

Activating the passive d7-bishop. Black is fine – 15.♕f4 ♕g4 16.♗de2 ♗ac4 17.♔b3 e5.

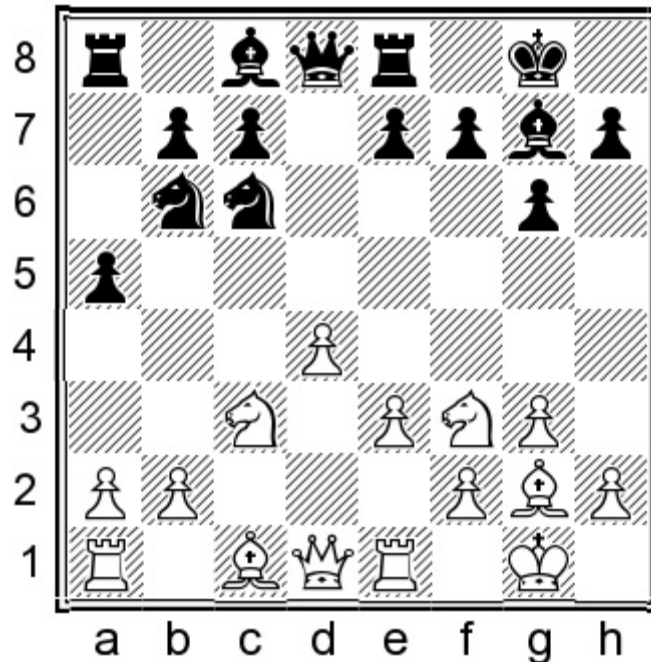
C2. 10.♖e1

The same improving and waiting-to-see strategy. At the same time White prepares to meet the breakthrough ...e5 by advancing his e- and f-pawns.

10...a5!

Another useful move before starting operations in the centre. Black's idea could be to push a4-a3 at some point, creating weaknesses on the queenside. Another original idea behind this move is to activate the rook via a5 after a5-a4.

In the previous edition I gave as an alternative line the idea of Cuban GM Dominguez 10...e6. It continues the waiting strategy. Black wants to see b3 and only then open the centre by ...e5. It worked well in Alekseev-Dominguez Perez, Havana 2010, after 11.♔c2 ♔e7 12.b3 e5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♗xe5 ♔xe5 15.♕b2 c6=. However, White had other useful moves instead of b3 – 12.a3! ♕d7 13.♗d2 ♗d8 14.b4 ♕c6 15.♕xc6 ♗xc6 16.♕b2 ♗b8 17.♗ce4±.



C21. 11.♔c2!?!; **C22.** 11.♔e2; **C23.** 11.h3.

White has also tried:

11.♖g5. This move looks like a provocation. Indeed, 11...e5 12.d5 ♖xg5 13.dxc6 ♜d8 14.♚c2 bxc6 15.♙xc6 ♜b8 16.b3 ♙a6 17.e4 is slightly better for White due to his better pawn structure. Perhaps we should question White's idea with 11...h6 12.♗ge4 e5.

11.b3 e5 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♙xe5 14.♙b2 c6 15.♚e2 ♚e7 and the counterplay with ...a5-a4 is enough for maintaining the balance.

11.♚d2?! e5 12.d5 ♗b4 13.e4 c6 14.a3 cxd5 15.axb4 axb4 16.♜xa8 bxc3 17.bxc3 ♗xa8 18.exd5 ♗b6, with a fine game for Black in Carlsen-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2011.

11.a4?!. It is a really bad idea to spend a tempo on this positionally wrong move which abandon the b4-square: 11...e5 12.d5 ♗b4 13.e4 c6 14.♙g5 f6 15.♙e3 cxd5 16.♙xb6 ♚xb6 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 18.♚xd5+ ♙e6μ.

11.d5. This pawn sacrifice was played in two rapid games at top level, but apparently it only seeks the surprise effect: 11...♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♚xd5 13.♗d4 ♚c4! 14.♙a3 (Or 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♚d4 ♜b8 16.♙f1 ♚a4 17.c4 ♙a6 18.c5 ♗c4♣.) 14...♙d7 15.♙f1 (15.♚b1 ♗d8) 15...♚a4 16.♚xa4 ♗xa4 17.♜ec1 ♗e5♣, Navara-Ivancuk, rapid match, Prague 2009.

11.h3 a4! 12.♚e2 (12.♜b1 ♜a5 13.♙d2 e5; 12.d5 ♗b4 13.e4 a3!) 12...♙e6 13.♗d2 ♗b4 14.♜d1 ♚c8, Zhao Zong Yuan-Navara, Khanty-Mansiysk, 2010. It is obvious that White's strategy has been a failure.

11.♗d2 e5 12.d5 ♗b4 13.e4 c6 and Black already has a slight initiative, Jasniewski-Ftacnik, Passau 1994.

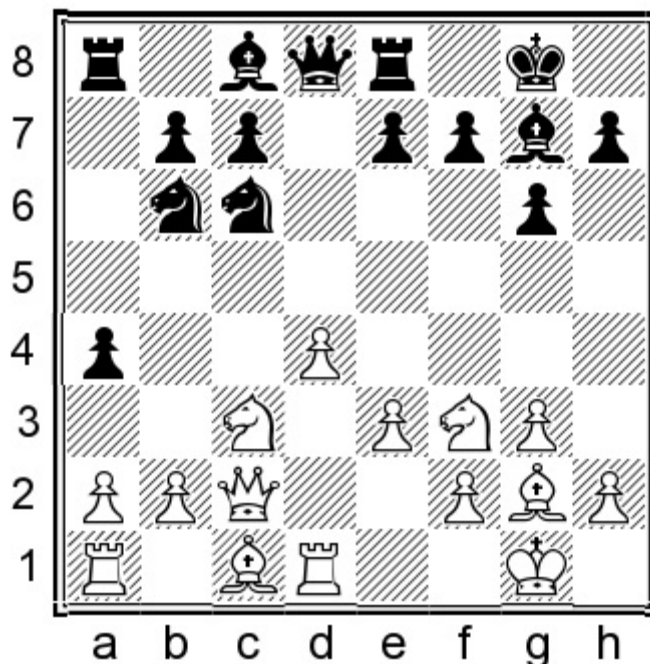
11.♗b5 has some obscure idea which escapes to me. It looks that it defends d4 and enables e3-e4, but when Black answers 11...a4 White does not play e4, but 12.♙d2. Then 12...e5 should equalise. Another logical retort is 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♙d7.

As usual Black could also leave the centre undefined for a while with 11...♙d7 12.e4 a4 13.h3 (or Black plays ...♙g4) 13...e5 14.d5 ♗a5 15.♗c3 c6.

C21. 11.♚c2!? a4

11...e5 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♙xe5 14.e4 allows White to begin rolling his central pawns.

12.♜d1



12...♔f5!?

We have gained space on the queenside and made room at a5 for our rook. Furthermore, we dragged the white rook to d1. That enables a pin from g4 if White pushes e4. The game Huzman-Nepomniachtchi, Plovdiv 2010, saw instead the innocuous move:

12...h6, which weakens the castling position. Huzman answered with the equally mundane move 13.h3?!, but I do not like Black's position after the more purposeful thrust in the centre: 13.d5! ♖b4 14.♚e2 a3 15.e4 ♔d7

15...♗a4 16.♗xa4 ♞xa4 17.b3 ♞a8 18.♞b1±;

15...♔g4 16.♞b1 axb2 17.♔xb2±.

16.♗d4 c5 17.♗e6 fxe6 18.dxe6 axb2 19.♔xb2 ♔d4 20.♗d5! ♔xe6 21.♔xd4 cxd4 22.♗xb4±.

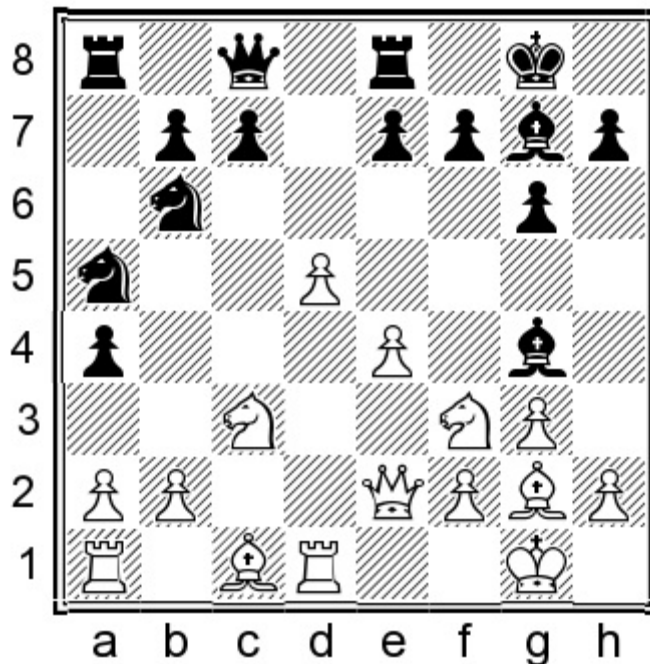
13.♚e2

13.e4 ♔g4 14.♗b5 ♞a5! 15.♚e2 offers a choice between 15...e5 16.d5 ♗d4 17.♗bxd4 exd4 18.h3 ♔xf3 19.♚xf3 c6 and 15...♚d7!? 16.♔e3 (16.♔f4 ♔xf3 17.♔xf3 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 ♔xd4 19.♔g4 e6 20.♞ac1 c5=) 16...♗e5 17.♗xe5 ♔xe5 18.f3 ♚xb5 19.♚xb5 ♞xb5 20.dxe5 ♔e6=.

13...♚c8

Removing the queen from the X-ray of the rook. This could be useful in the event of 14.♔d2, when we can use our own rook on e8 with 14...e5! 15.d5 ♗d4 16.exd4 exd4 17.♚b5 dxc3 18.♔xc3 ♚d7 19.♚xd7 ♔xd7=.

14.d5 ♗a5 15.e4 ♔g4

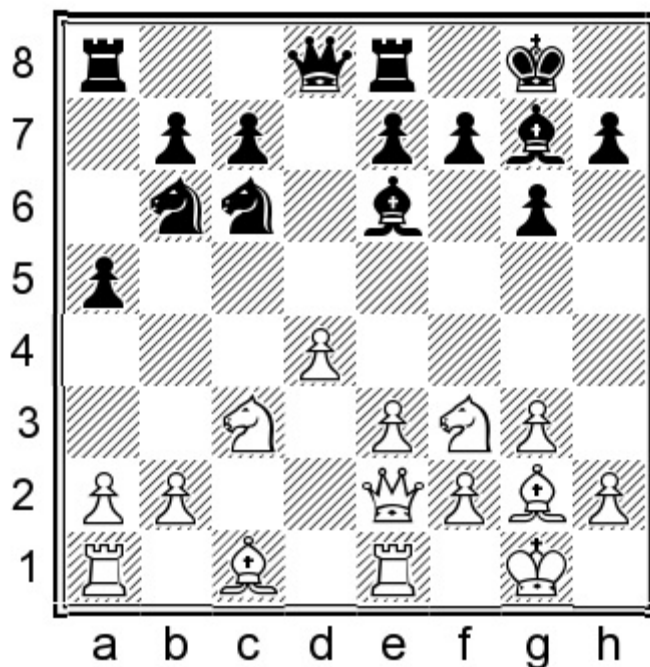


We have fulfilled our plan to provoke d5 without pushing ...e5. Chances are roughly equal. Our plan is to undermine the centre with ...c6, e.g. 16.♖b1 c6 17.dxc6 bxc6.

An interesting attempt is 16.h3, when 16...♙xh3 17.♙xh3 ♖xh3 18.♘b5 ♜ac8 19.♙f4 ♘ac4 20.♞ac1 ♗g4 is equal, but Black could also keep the tension in the centre with 16...♙d7!? 17.♙e3 a3 18.♙d4 18.b3 ♘xb3 19.axb3 ♙xc3 20.♞ac1 ♙b2 21.♙xb6 ♙xc1 22.♞xc1 cxb6! uncorks a typical combination, based on the power of the a-passer.

18...axb2 19.♗xb2 ♘ac4 20.♗b4 c5∞.

C22. 11.♙e2 ♙e6!



A vital move in Black's setup. The bishop is going to harass the enemy queen from c4, while the c6-

knight will repel it from c2 if it ran away to this square.

11...e5 is bad due to 12.dxe5 ♖xe5 13.♗xe5 ♙xe5 14.e4! ♙e6 15.f4 ♙g7 16.♙e3 ♚e7 17.e5 ♜ab8 18.♚f2±.

12.♗d2

This move appeared in 2010. The knight is heading for c5 via e4. White does take c4 under control, but this manoeuvre is too artificial to be dangerous.

Previously he had played only:

12.♞d1 ♙c4 13.♚c2 ♗b4! 14.♚b1, but the brilliant **game 1** Leita-Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, has dealt this line a terrible blow. Black followed with 14...e5!! and went on to win in grand style. See the “Complete Games” section.

12...♗b4

Simple and good. If Black seeks complications, he should opt for:

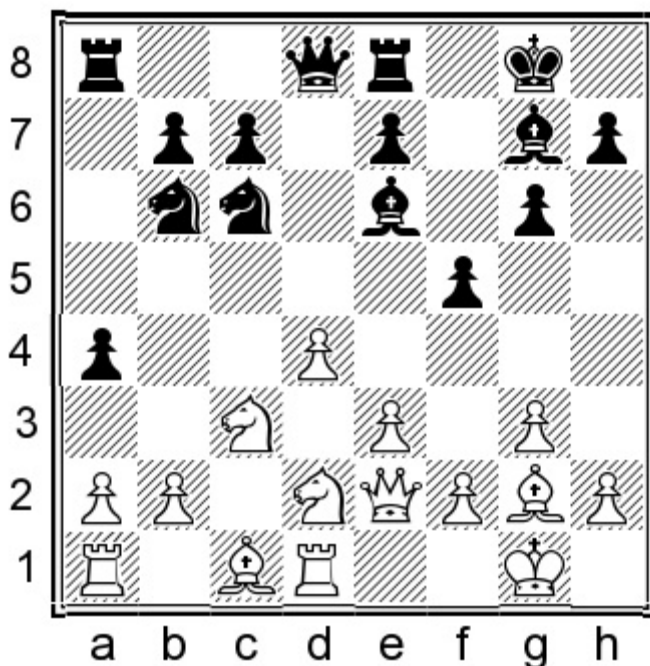
12...a4!? 13.♞d1 f5!?

13...h5!? holds well in correspondence games. The idea is to provoke weaknesses after 14.♚f1 ♙g4 15.f3 ♙e6∞ or 14.h3 ♗b4 15.♙xb7 ♙xh3∞.

I have also analysed:

13...♞a5, bringing another hit on d5 and preparing ...e5. However, the game Poobalasingam-Darini, Zuerich 2010 (with a transposition), cast a doubt on this idea – 14.♞b1! ♚c8 15.b4 axb3 16.♗xb3!±.

Now let us return to 13...f5:



An original plan. Black wants to exchange 2 minor pieces through d5 while restricting the d2-knight from reaching c5.

14.♖b1 ♕f7 15.b3 axb3 16.axb3

Black was better in Maletin-Kurnosov, Irkutsk 2010, after 16.♗xb3 ♖d5 17.♗xd5 ♕xd5 18.♚b5 e6.

16...♗d5 17.♕b2

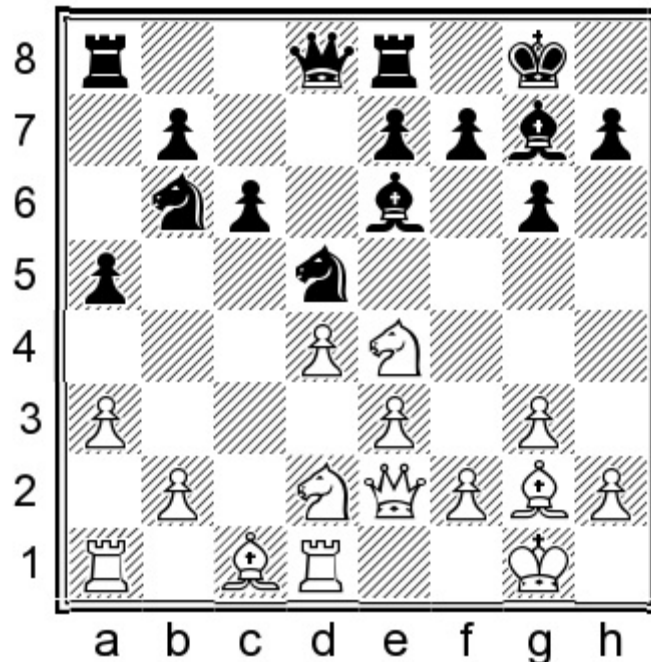
I have been following the game Harikrishna-So, Guangzhou 2010. Here 17...♗xc3 18.♕xc3 ♕d5 would have been roughly equal.

13.♖d1

13.♕xb7?! ♗c2 14.♕xa8 ♚xa8 15.♖b1 ♗xe1 16.♚xe1 c5! gives Black the initiative.

13...c6 14.a3 ♗4d5 15.♗ce4

15.♗de4 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 (16.♗xc3 ♕b3) 16...♕b3 17.♖e1 ♕d5 18.♗c5 ♕xg2 19.♗xg2 e5=, Laznicka-Zhigalko, Plovdiv 2010.



15...♚c8

15...♕f5 16.♗c5 e5 17.dxe5 ♚e7 18.♗d3 ♕xd3 19.♚xd3 ♚xe5 20.♚c2 ♗f6 is not bad either. Black even went on to win in Nyzhnyk-Nepomniachtchi, rapid, Warsaw 2011. Still, I prefer to avoid offering the opponent 4:3 pawn majority on the kingside if he had many minor pieces left. There is always a risk that we could gradually get cramped. The text addresses exactly that problem – we want to trade the bishop.

16.♗c5 ♕g4 17.f3 ♕h3 18.♕xh3 ♚xh3

Black has a comfortable position.

The trick is that 19.♗xb7? does not win, but loses a pawn after 19...♗xe3!! 20.♚xe3 ♚d7 21.♗c5

♙xd4, Ly Moulthun-Li Zuhao Cammeray 2013.

The game Wunderlich-Maia, ICCF 2014, saw instead 19.♘de4 ♚c8 20.♘f2∞.

C23. 11.h3

This idea is similar to 10.h3. We simply follow our queenside plan:

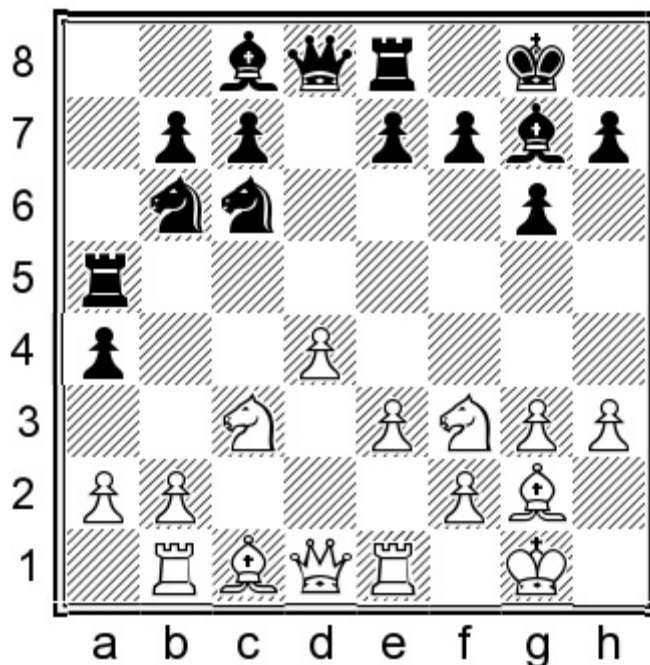
11...a4! 12.♞b1

12.♞e2 is pointless owing to 12...♙e6.

12.d5 could be met by 12...♘b4=, but why not eat the pawn by 12...♙xc3! 13.bxc3 ♞xd5.

12...♞a5!

Taking d5 under control. It was still early for 12...e5 due to 13.d5 ♘b4 (13...♘e7 14.e4 ♙d7 15.b3±) 14.e4 c6 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♙g5±.



13.b4

Otherwise ...e5 would solve the opening problems:

13.♙d2 e5 or:

13.♞c2 e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♙xe5 16.f4 ♙g7 17.e4 ♙e6 18.♙e3 ♘c4 19.♙f2 ♞d2=, Felkel-Witzschel, ICCF 2014.

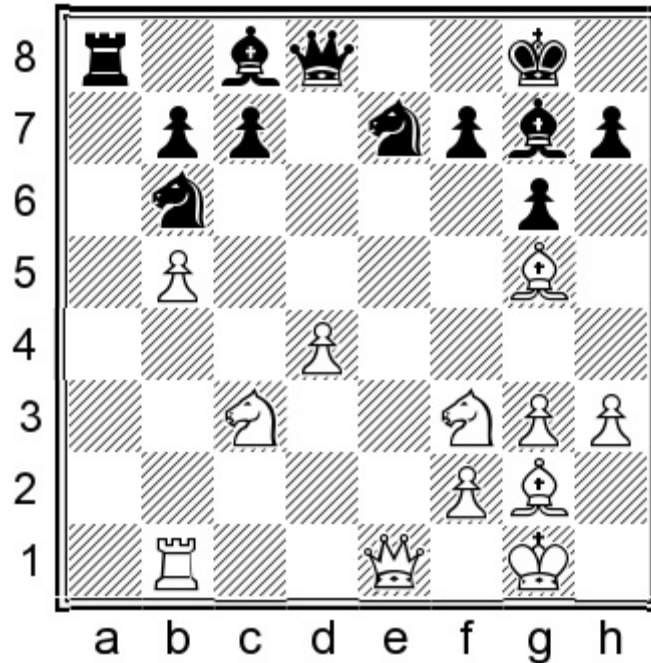
13...axb3 14.axb3 e5! 15.b4 ♞a8 16.b5

16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘d4 ♘ec4 is pleasant for Black in view of his stable knight on c4. hesstouring.com

16...exd4 17.exd4 ♖xe1+ 18.♔xe1 ♗e7

18...♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♕xd4 20.♗d5! gave White a nice initiative in Magalashvili-Azaladze, Ureki 2015, although 20...♗d7 should hold on.

19.♗g5



19...♗e6!?∞

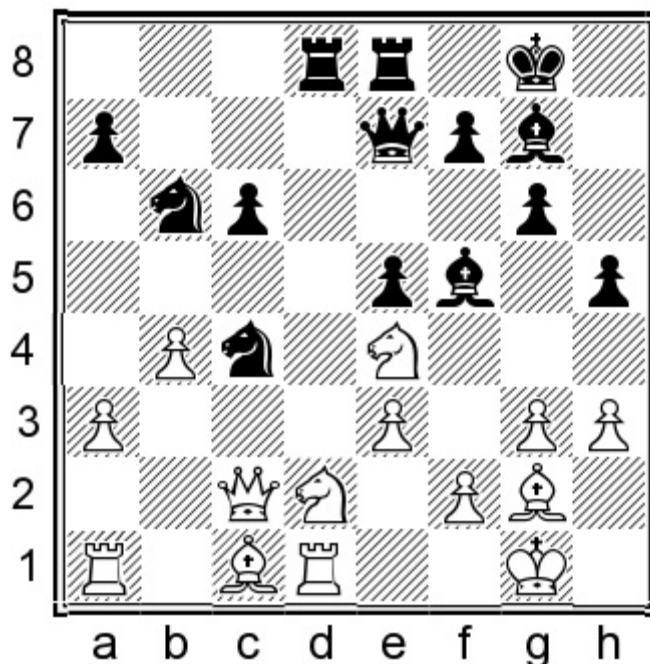
Of course 19...f6 20.♗f4 (20.♗d2 ♗f5) 20...♗ed5 is safe enough, but it would be difficult to win with a passive dark-squared bishop.

The text is more principled. We do not fear neither 20.♗e4 ♕e8 21.♗f6+?! ♗xf6 22.♗xf6 ♗ed5 23.♗g5 f6 24.♗d2 ♗f5 nor 20.d5 ♗xc3 21.♕xc3 ♗exd5 22.♕b2 f6.

C3. 10.h3 a5

As a rule this approach is more risky, but it leads to more tangled play.

10...e5 is a solid alternative – 11.d5 ♗a5 12.♕c2 c6 13.b4 ♗ac4 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.♖d1 ♕e7 16.♗d2 ♗f5 17.♗ce4 ♖ad8 18.a3 h5



Black's pieces have stable stands, but his pawn structure remains crippled:

19. ♖xc4!

Kuljasevic suggests in *New in Chess Yearbook 128* 19. ♕h2, which threatens to win the c6-pawn.

We could indirectly protect it with 19... ♜d5 and after 20. ♖xc4 ♜xc4 21. ♞f1 we can give it up altogether – 21... ♜d6 22. ♞xc6 ♘e6 (22... ♞d3!? 23. ♖c5 e4 24. ♞b1 h4 25. g4 ♞c8 26. ♞a6 ♘e6

27. ♖xd3 exd3 throws in an exchange, but the d3-pawn fully neutralises White's material advantage. You could check it for yourself, e.g. 28. ♘d2 ♖c4 29. ♞fd1 ♞d7 30. ♞bc1 ♘b2 31. ♞c3 ♕h7) 23. ♞a4 ♖c4 24. ♖c5 e4 25. ♞b1 f5. Both White's bishops are out of play.

19... ♞xd1+ 20. ♞xd1 ♖xc4 21. ♞a2. Now 21... a5 should be enough to hold the draw.

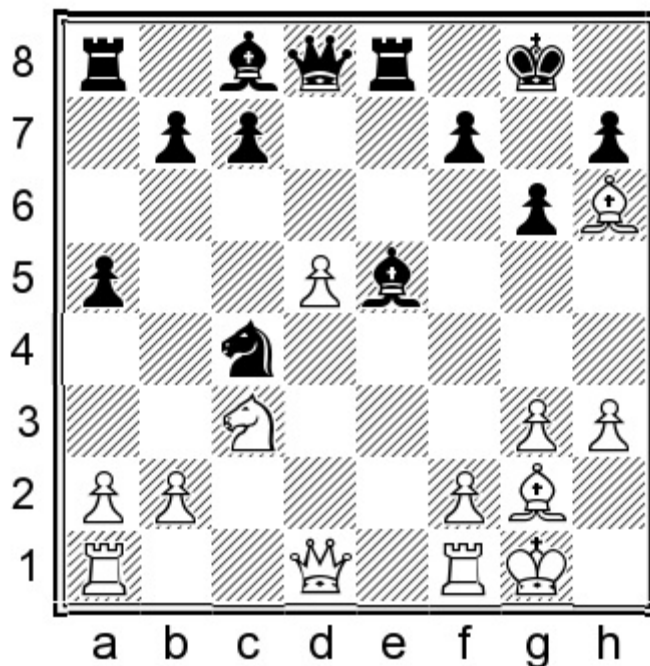
11.d5

If White keeps waiting with 11. ♞b1, we have 11... a4 12. ♕h2 e6 or 12... h6.

11... ♖e5

Kuljasevic ignores this move in his survey on 10.h3 in *Yearbook 128*. Yet it is well known in correspondence chess. 11... ♖b4 12. e4 c6 13. a3 favours White.

12. ♖xe5 ♘xe5 13. e4 e6 14. ♘h6 exd5 15. exd5 ♖c4



The pawn structure has crystallised. White has space advantage, our counterchances are based on the strong Grünfeld bishop on the main diagonal. Our main problem is the restricted queen. Although a trade of the dark-squared bishops looks positionally justified (as White will remain with a “bad” one on g2), it would be preferable to keep it and support it by ...♗f6. One such line is 16.b3 ♖d6 17.♞c1 ♔d7 18.♞e1 ♗f6.

16.♞e1 ♖d6

We have been following the game Dziuba-Grandelius, Reykjavik 2013. It went 17.♞c1 ♔d7 (17...♙f5 18.b3 ♗f6 is at least as good.) 18.♞d2 ♖c4 19.♞c2 ♖d6 20.b3 ♗f6 21.♞d2 ♔d4 22.♙e3 ♙xe3 23.♞xe3 ♞xe3 24.♞xe3 b6=, and soon a draw was signed.

17.♞d2!? ♔d7

An ambitious continuation. We could also question the opponent’s intentions with 17...♖c4!? 18.♞c1 ♖d6, when the only logical idea is 19.♙g5 ♙f6 20.♞xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♙f4 ♖d6, followed up by ...♙d7, ...♗f8, ...♞e8=.

18.♙g5 ♗c8 19.♙h2

Two email games reached this point. Although we could adopt the exchange strategy, mentioned above – 19...a4 20.♞ad1 ♙g7 21.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 22.♞e1 ♗f8, it is better to harass the enemy queen:

19...♖c4 20.♞c1 ♖d6

Here Neubauer-Bobel, ICCF 2013, saw 21.♙f4 ♙xf4 22.♗xf4 ♞xe1 23.♞xe1 ♗f8 24.♖e4 ♖xe4=. Szabó-Merrheim, ICCF 2015 went 21.♖e4 ♖xe4 22.♞xe4, when simplest would have been 22...c6=,

e.g. 23. ♖e3 ♗xb2 24. ♜xe8+ ♞xe8 25. ♜b1 ♗g7 26. ♜xb7 cxd5 27. ♗xd5 ♞xe3 28. ♗xe3 ♗e8.

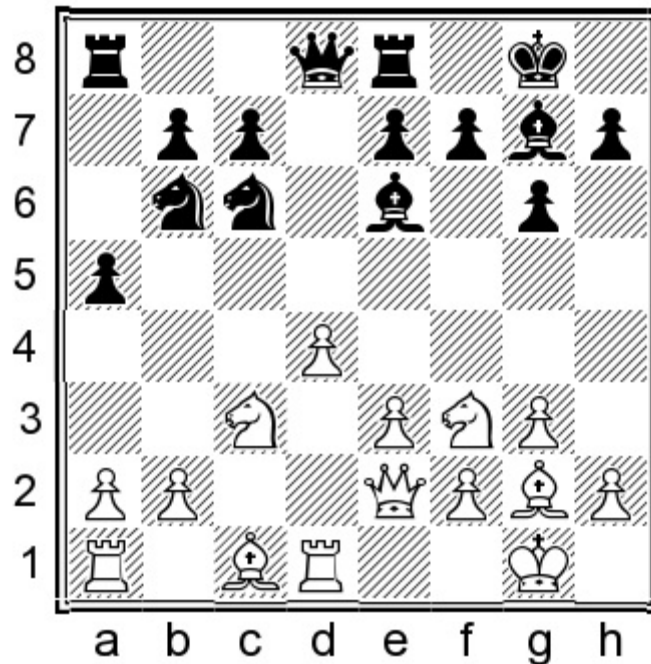
Chapter 1

Complete Games

1. Leitao-Caruana

Khanty-Mansiysk 30.09.2010

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗f3 ♕g7 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♖g2 ♗b6 7.♗c3 ♗c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 ♜e8 10.♞e1 a5 11.♞e2 ♖e6 12.♞d1



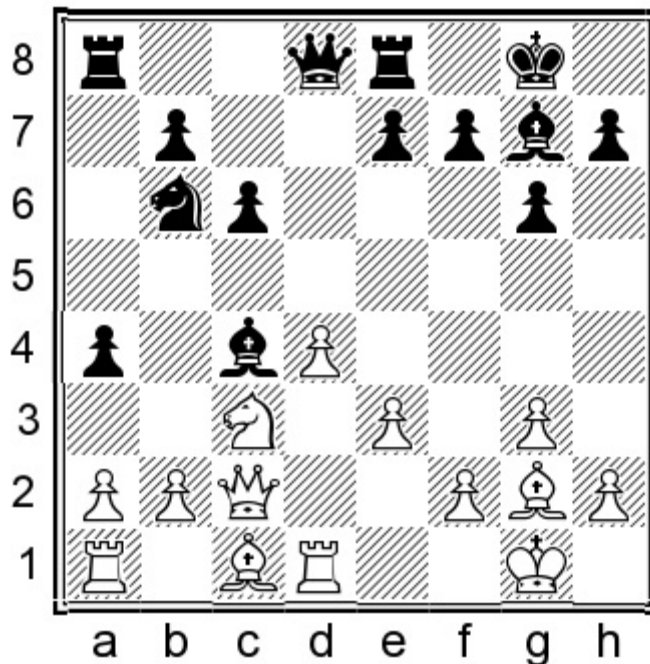
I suppose that 12.♞d1 will become obsolete. After this game White began trying 12.♗d2.

12...♖c4 13.♞c2

Perhaps here or on the next two moves White should look for deviations as the main line is not too inspiring for him. He can try 13.♞e1 ♗b4 14.b3 ♖a6 15.♞d2 c5! 16.♖a3 ♜c8=.

13...♗b4! 14.♞b1

In a blitz game one very strong grandmaster surprised me with 14.♞d2. Having in mind that Carlsen also resorted to this move (as early as on move 11), this ugly placement of the queen was evidently White's last hope to revive the whole variation. I still do not believe in such an artificial setup. Agrest's analysis of my game showed that Black is OK after 14...a4! 15.♗e1 (15.♗e5 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 c6 17.e4 ♞c7) 15...c6 16.e4 ♞c7 17.♗c2 c5↑. Then I was surprised to see Nyzhnyk also employing 14.♞d2 against Bok in Wijk aan Zee 2011. This game did see 14...a4 15.♗e1 c6, but here White deviated from
chesstouring.com

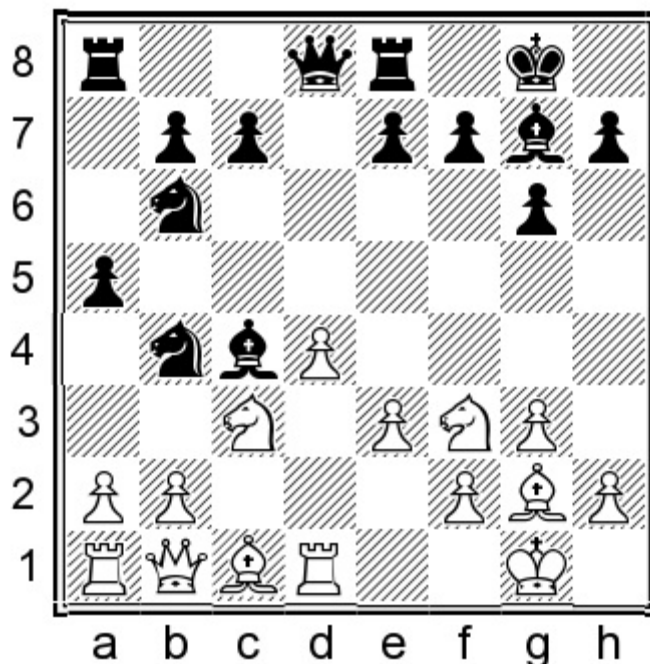


Basically, Black should be glad to trade knights as he has less space in the centre. Furthermore, the exchange has vacated the b4-square for Black's queen. It would be very annoying to White in a number of variations, for instance:

17...♙e6! 18.e4 ♖d6 19.e5 (19.♙e3 ♘c4) 19...♚b4 20.♗e4 ♜ed8. The d4-pawn is a nice target. Another attractive line is 17...♙e6! 18.e4 ♙g4!? 19.f3 ♙e6 20.♙e3 ♘c4 21.♙f2 ♚a5 22.♗e2 a3 23.b3 ♘b2 24.♞d2 ♜ad8, intending to meet 25.♗f4 by 25...♚b4.

Bok chose the mundane 17...♚c7?! 18.e4 ♜ed8 19.♙e3 ♙e6 20.b3 axb3 21.axb3 ♜xa1 22.♜xa1 and still would have had a satisfactory game after 22...♚d6 23.e5 ♚b4 24.♗e4 ♘d5=. He opted again for the most passive setup: 22...♚c8 23.♞d1 ♘d7 24.f3 ♚c7 25.♙f2 ♘f8 26.♗a4 and even here 26...♚d6 would have been quite safe. Only his tactical mistake 26...♚a5? 27.d5! gave White an advantage.

Now let us return to the stem game:



White's heavy pieces are so cramped on the queenside, that a tactical solution would not surprise anybody. Still, the find of Djukic, first demonstrated at the Olympiad in 2010, was a kind of revelation:

14...e5!!

A very deep queen sac for a rook, piece and a pawn. Curiously, the Fianchetto System was extensively tested at that Olympiad in 2010. Black scored 7 out of 8 in the first ten rounds! That tournament prompted White to seek new ways on move 10.

15.a3

15.b3 exd4! 16.exd4 (16.bxc4 dxc3 17.♖xd8 ♖axd8–+) was the stem game McNab-Djukic, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, when best is 16...♘6d5±.

Perhaps White should opt for 15.♘xe5 ♙xe5 16.b3 ♙d3 17.♖xd3 ♘xd3 18.♚xd3. Of course, White has full compensation for the exchange, but I have not seen any candidate for playing this position OTB for a win as White. In contrast, it was abundantly tested in email chess in 2012-2014, with a ton of draws.

15...exd4 16.axb4

16.♘xd4 ♙d3 17.♖xd3 ♘xd3 18.♚xd3 c5 19.♙xb7 cxd4 20.exd4 ♖b8; 16.exd4 ♘c6±.

16...dxc3

16...axb4 17.♖xa8 ♚xa8 18.♘e4 ♚a4 19.♖e1 ♙a2 20.♚d3 ♙c4 is only a draw.

17.♖xd8 ♖axd8 18.♚c2

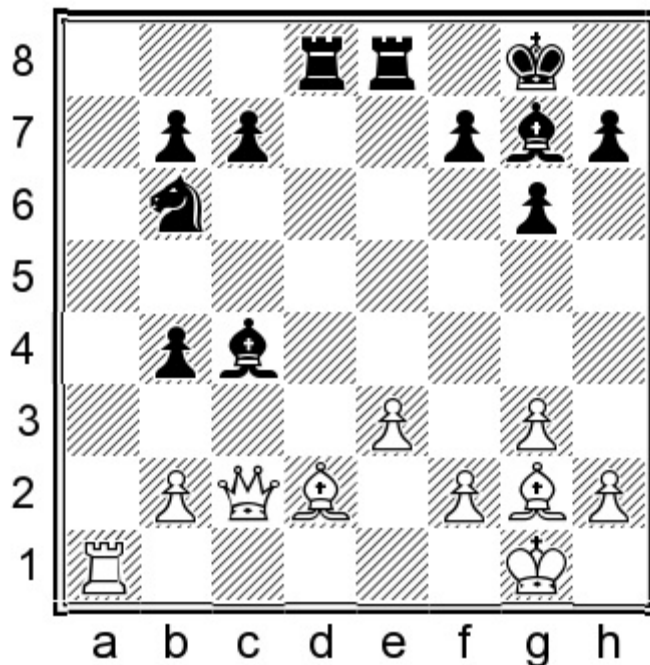
18.bxc3 is more stubborn. Then 18...♖d1+ 19.♙f1 ♙xf1 20.♚c2 ♙e2+ was a draw in Amanov+Young,

Las Vegas USA 2010, but Black can play on with 19...♖xf1+! 20.♔g2 axb4.

18...axb4 19.♘d2 cxd2?!

The later game Arakeljan-Biriukov, Bogoroditsk 2011, showed the right way 19...♙d3! 20.♚b3 cxd2 21.♙xd2 c5 with heavy pressure on the queenside.

20.♙xd2



20...♖a8! (20...c5=) 21.♖xa8 ♖xa8 22.♙xb7??

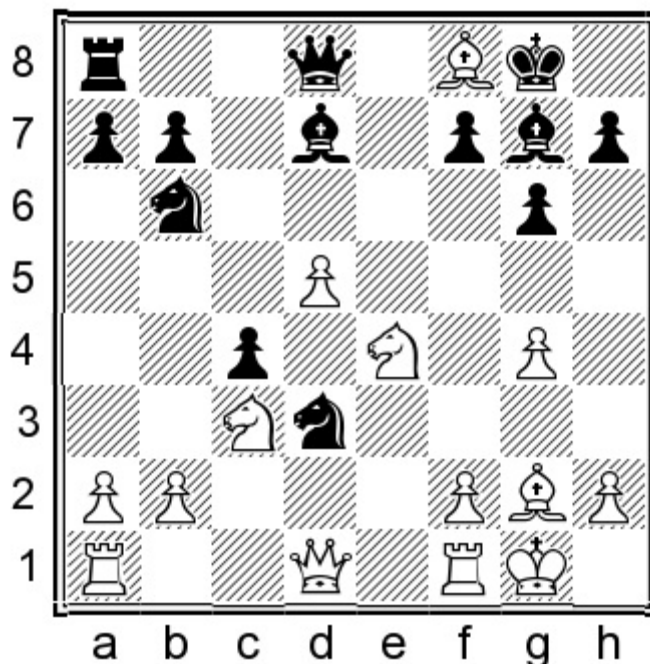
The only move was 22.h4 and White is still holding, although Black maintains the pressure – 22...♖a2! 23.♙c1 h5, Gavrijski-Rawlings, ICCF 2013.

22...♖a1+ 23.♙c1 b3 24.♚d1 ♙xb2 0-1

2. Maldonado Pacheco-C.Smith

ICCF, 01.05.2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘b6 7.♘e2 c5 8.d5 0-0 9.0-0 e6 10.♘ec3 ♘a6 11.♙f4 exd5 12.exd5 ♙f5 13.g4 ♙d7 14.♘d2 ♘b4 15.♘de4 c4 16.♙d6 ♘d3 17.♙xf8



17...♞xf8

I think that the other recapture is more precise: 17...♔xf8!. The idea is to preserve the option of ...♞h4. Another threat is ...f5. White's kingside is weakened and that tells in many lines.

Thus 18.b3 f5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.♞f3 ♔g8 regains the material.

18.g5 ♕f5 underlines another weak spot of White – the d5-pawn. 19.b3 only help Black to activate the rook – 19...♖f4! 20.bxc4 ♜c8 with a strong initiative.

The computer suggests:

18.♞f3

We should not get distracted by the b2-pawn – 18...♖xb2?! 19.a4! ♖d3 (The a4-pawn is immune owing to the check from a3!) 20.a5 ♖c8 21.♞ab1 ♞b8 22.♞g3±.

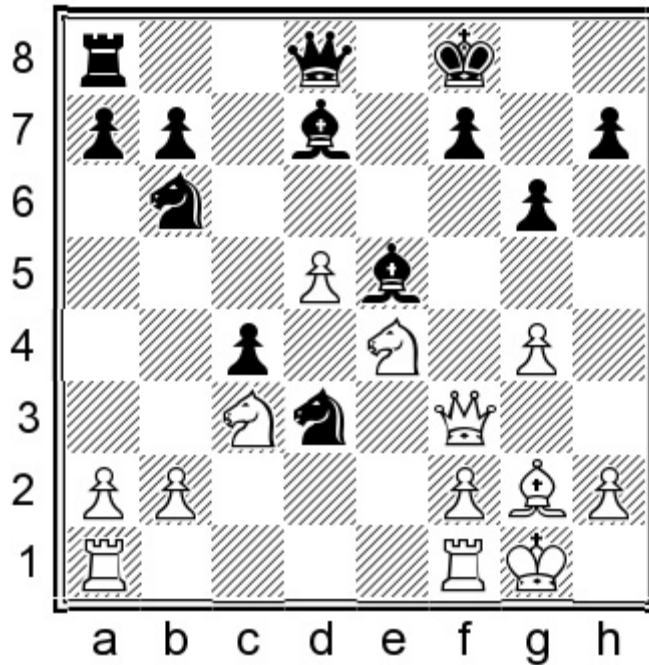
Instead we should stake on activity. Our first goal should be to oust the knight from e4:

18...♕e5!?

Perhaps this move, which prevents ♞g3, offers Black best practical chances to win.

The only drawback of 18...♞h4 is that it invites a queen trade with ♞g3, which often leads to balanced endgames – 19.h3 (19.♞g3 ♞xg4) 19...f5! 20.♞ab1 (20.d6 could be met by 20...♞d8 or 20...♕e5 21.a4 ♞d8) 20...♔g8 21.♞g3 ♞xg3 22.♖xg3 fxg4 23.hxg4 ♕xg4. This queenless middlegame is roughly equal. For instance: 24.♖ge4 ♖f4 25.♞fe1 ♖d3=; 24.d6 ♞f8 (24...♞d8 25.♕xb7 ♞xd6=) 25.♕xb7 ♕d4=.

Now let's return to 18...♕e5:



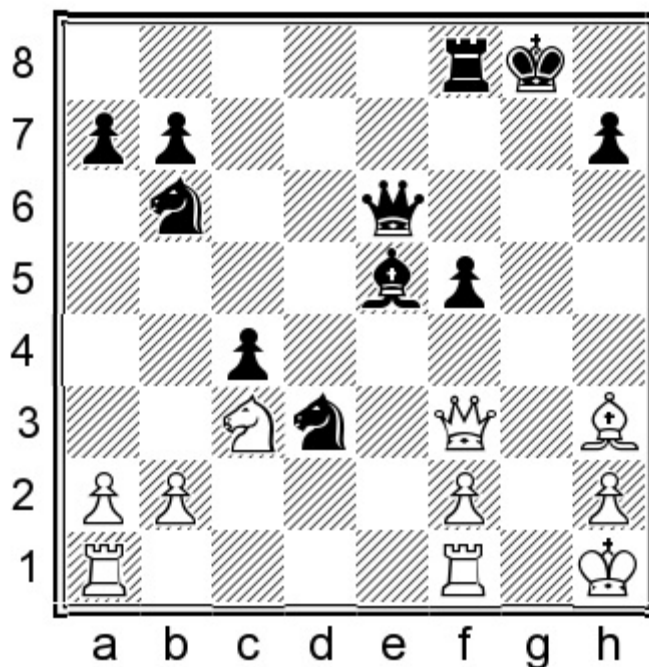
Stockfish at depth 41 proposes 19.a4 a5 20.♖fe1 ♔h4 21.h3, which is of course fine for Black after 21...♗xe1.

19.h3 hides more venom – 19...♔h4 would leave the b6-knight unprotected, so White has 20.a4 a5 21.♔e3!. The best retort to 19.h3 is probably 19...♖c8 20.a4 a5 21.b3 ♗f4 22.♖ab1 f5 23.♗g3 ♔f6 24.♗ge2 ♗xg2 25.♔xg2 ♔g8 with the bishop pair and full compensation for the exchange.

18.♔f3 f5 19.gxf5 ♗xf5

I do not understand this move. 19...gxf5 is certainly more natural. For instance:

20.♗g5 ♗e5 21.♔h1 ♔h6 22.♗h3 ♖f8 23.♗e6 ♗xe6 24.dxe6 ♔xe6



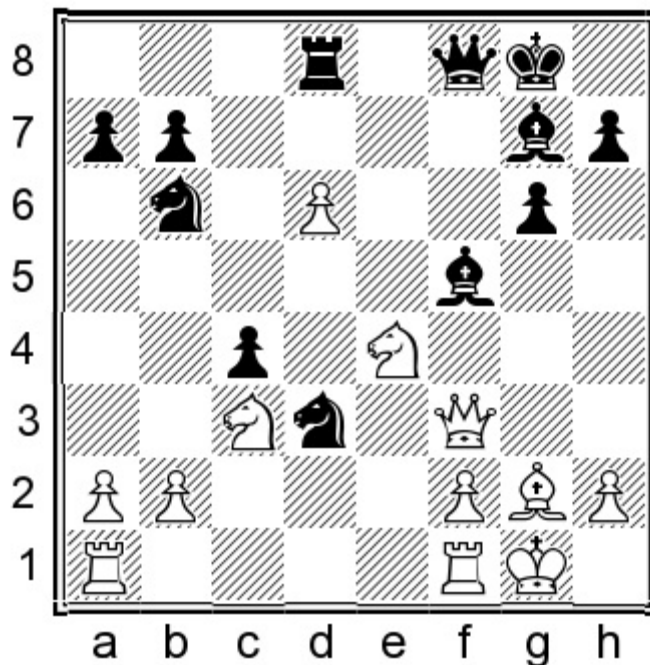
The d3-knight balances the small material deficit:

25.♖ab1

Or 25.♖g1+ ♔h8 26.♖af1 ♜c8 27.♞xb7 ♞h6 28.♞f3 ♜d6 29.b3 ♜e4=.

25...♔h8 26.♜e2 ♞c6! 27.♞xc6 bxc6 28.b3 c3 29.♖bd1 ♜b2 30.♖c1 ♜d3 31.♜xc3 ♜xc1 32.♖xc1 ♖d8=.

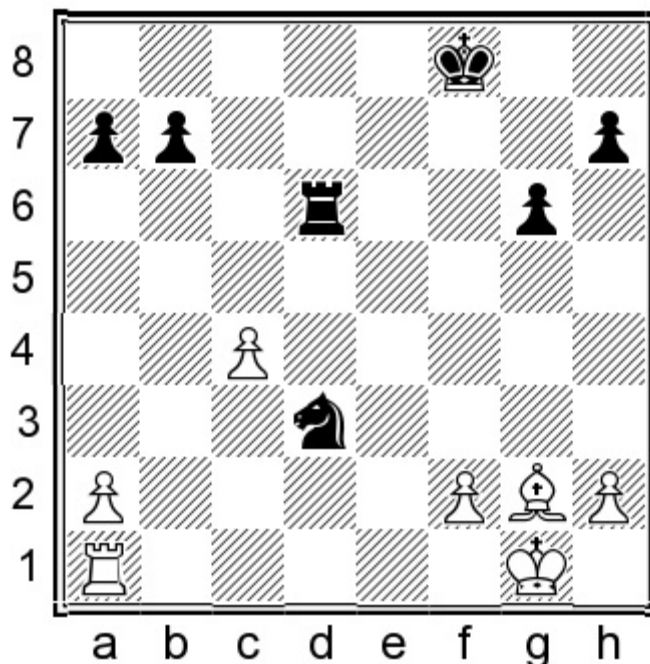
20.d6 ♖d8



21.b3?!

Of course this is the safest approach, but it is clear that Black should be able to hold the endgame. Critical was 21.♜g3 ♖xd6 22.♜xf5 gxf5 23.♖ad1 ♔h8 (23...♜xb2? 24.♖xd6 ♞xd6 loses to 25.♜e2+—) 24.♖d2 ♙e5 25.♖fd1 ♜d7 26.♞xb7 ♜7c5 27.♞a8 ♖d8 28.♞c6 ♖d6 29.♞f3. White's rooks will find freedom after b3, e.g. 29...♖g6 30.♜e2 ♙c7 31.♜g3 f4 32.b3 ♜e5 33.♞c3 fxg3 34.hxg3↑.

21...♙xe4 22.♜xe4 ♙xa1 23.♞xf8+ ♔xf8 24.♖xa1 ♜c8 25.bxc4 ♜xd6 26.♜xd6 ♖xd6



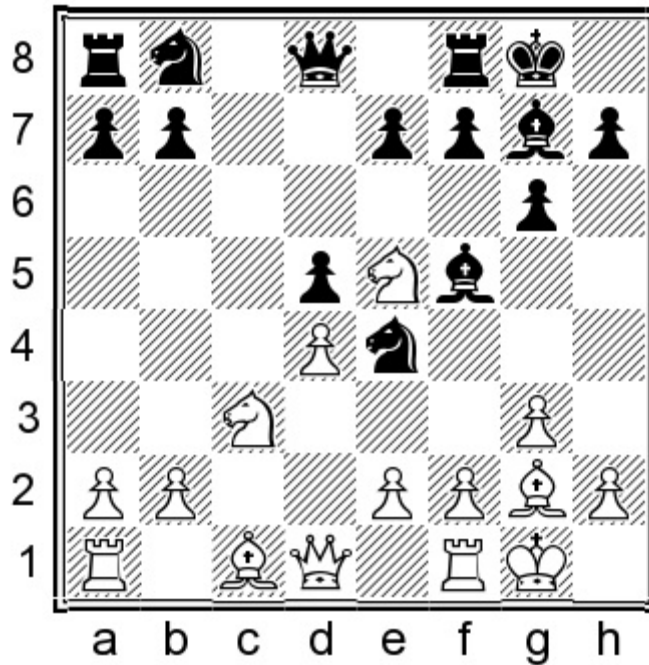
A great deal of the material has disappeared from the board. White wins a pawn, but the weaknesses in his position hamper its conversion. In a practical battle he would have had some chances, but the engines' verdict is draw. Note that if White's pawns were connected, for instance f2+g3 or h2+g3, his advantage would have been tangible.

27.♞d1 ♔e7 28.♙xb7 ♚f4 29.♞e1+ ♔d7 30.c5 ♞d2 31.c6+ ♔c7 32.h4 ♚d5 33.a3 a5 34.♞e5 ♔b6 35.h5 ♞d3 36.h6 a4 37.♔h2 ♚c7 38.♞e7 ♞xa3 39.♞xh7 ♞f3 40.♞d7 ♞xf2+ 41.♔g3 ♞f5 42.♞d4 a3 43.♞a4 ♞h5 44.♞xa3 ♞xh6 45.♞b3+ ♚b5 46.♞xb5+ ♔xb5 ½-½

3. M.Ivanov-Delchev

Benasque 06.07.2008

1.♚f3 ♚f6 2.g3 g6 3.♙g2 ♙g7 4.d4 d5 5.c4 c6 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♚e5 0-0 8.♚c3 ♙f5 9.0-0 ♚e4



10. ♖b3

10. ♖f4 ♗xc3! (It is essential to avoid the structure which arises after 10... ♗c6?! 11. ♗xc6 bxc6 12. ♗a4±.) 11. bxc3 ♗c6 12. ♖b3

12. ♗xc6 bxc6 13. ♖a4 e6! 14. ♖xc6 (14. f3 g5=) 14... ♖c8 15. ♖a4 ♖xc3 16. ♖fc1 (16. ♖xa7 ♖a8=) 16... ♖xc1+ 17. ♖xc1 ♖b6= was a clever way for White to make a draw against the world champion – Ding Liren-Carlsen, Shamkir 2019.

12... e6! 13. ♖xb7 ♗xe5 14. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 15. dxe5 ♖a5 16. ♖b4 ♖xb4 17. cxb4 ♖fb8 18. a3 a5 was last drawn in Howell-Jones, London 2018.

10. ♖e3 ♗xc3 11. bxc3 ♗c6 12. ♗xc6 bxc6 13. ♖a4 ♖b6= was the famous game Geller-Fischer, Palma de Mallorca 1970 – 14. ♖ac1 ♖ab8 15. c4?! ♖xd4 16. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 17. e3 ♖e5 18. cxd5 cxd5 19. ♖fd1 e6 20. ♖xa7 ♖a8±.

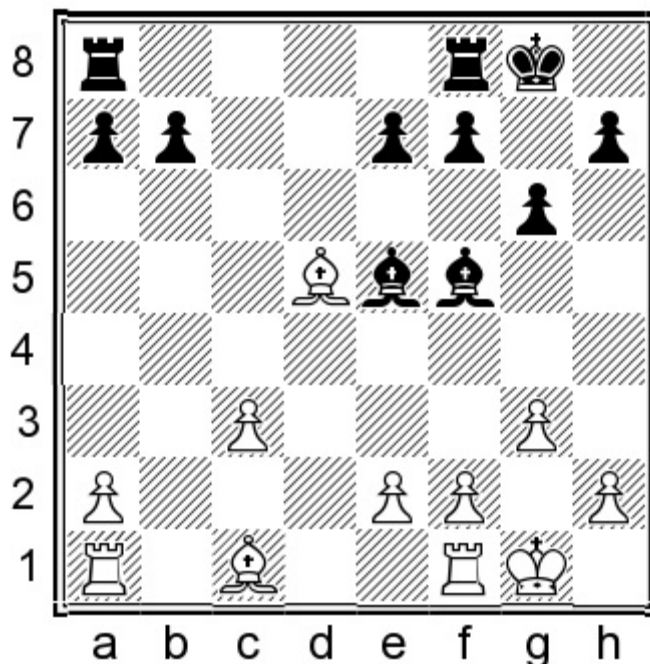
10... ♗c6 11. ♖xd5

11. ♖d1 allows 11... ♗xd4!.

11. ♖e3 ♗xc3 12. bxc3 e6! is also harmless.

After 11. ♗xc6 bxc6 12. ♗xe4 our best chance to keep more tension is 12... dxe4 13. ♖d1 ♖b8 (Cheparinov somehow won recently with 13... ♖b6).

11... ♗xc3 12. bxc3 ♗xe5 13. dxe5 ♖xd5 14. ♖xd5 ♖xe5



White has successfully sucked all the life out of the position.

The game Benko-Fischer, New York 1962, saw further 15.♙h6 ♜fd8 16.♙xb7 ♜ab8 17.♞ad1 ♙xc3 with a quick draw

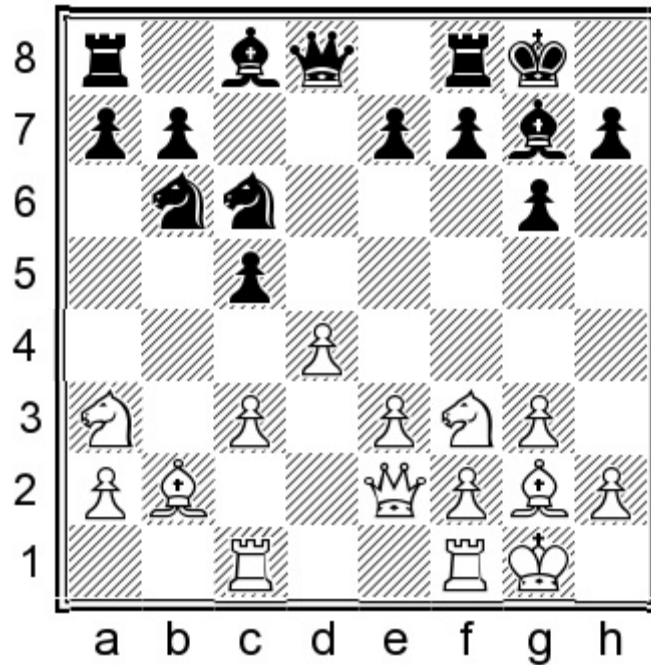
A dozen of games were drawn after 15.♙a3, e.g. 15...♞ac8. The text does not change anything.

15.♙e3 ♞ac8 16.♙xb7 ♞xc3 17.♞ac1 ♞d8 18.♞xc3 ♙xc3 19.♙a6 ♞d6 20.♙c4 ♙d4 21.♙xd4 ♞xd4 22.♞c1 a5 23.f3 ♞d2 24.♙f2 ♞b2 25.♞c3 ♙g7 26.♙e3 a4 27.g4 ♙b1 28.♞a3 ♙c2 29.♙d4 ♙d1 30.♙d3 ♙c2 31.♙c4 ♞b8 32.♙c3 ♞c8 33.♙d4 ♞b8 ½-½

4. Matnadze-Delchev

Zaragoza 30.12.2010

1.d4 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♙g2 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 dxc4 7.♘a3 c3 8.bxc3 c5 9.e3 ♘c6 10.♙e2 ♘d5 11.♙b2 ♘b6 12.♞ac1



12...♔d5!

It is time to evacuate the queen from the d-file because White was planning to put a rook on d1. The other thematic manoeuvre in this variation is 12...♘a4 13.♕a1 ♔a5, but here it is not with tempo (White had defended c3 twice!) so 14.♘d2 is possible and quite awkward – 14...♘b6 15.♕b2.

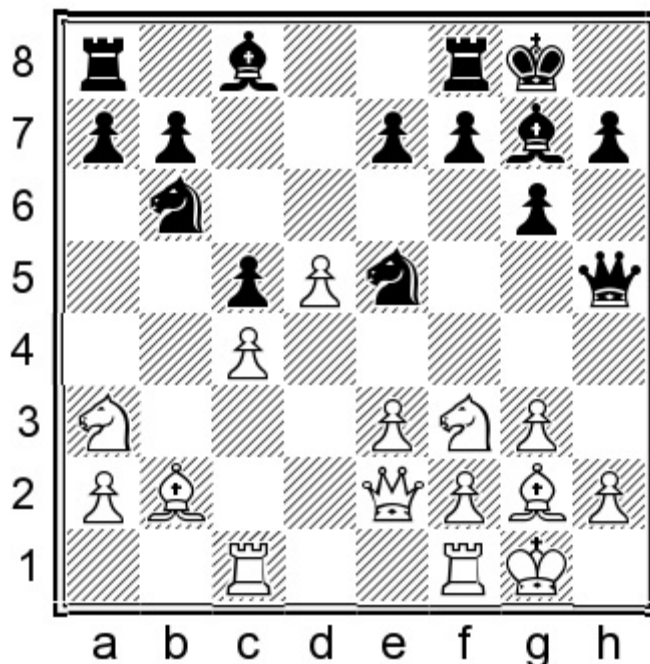
13.c4

The a2-pawn could be defended with 13.♕a1. After 13...♔h5 14.e4 ♕g4! 15.♘c2 f5!, Black destroys the enemy centre.

13...♔h5 14.d5

P.Nikolic-V.Belov, Istanbul 2003 saw 14.dxc5. Although Black was fine after 14...♔xc5=. Besides, 14...♕xb2 15.♔xb2 ♘a4, recapturing on c5 by knight, looks even better.

14...♘e5



15. ♖xe5

If White has to make such moves, her opening strategy was wrong. White remains with the bad bishop on g2. Drasko-Jankovic, Neum 2005, saw instead 15. ♖c2 ♗g4 16. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 17. h3 ♗xf3 18. ♕xf3 ♖xf3 19. ♗xf3 ♗a4 20. ♖b1 ♖ab8 21. ♗g2 ♖fd8 22. f4 ♗g7 23. e4 ♗d4+ 24. ♔h2 a6=.

15... ♗xe5 16. h3

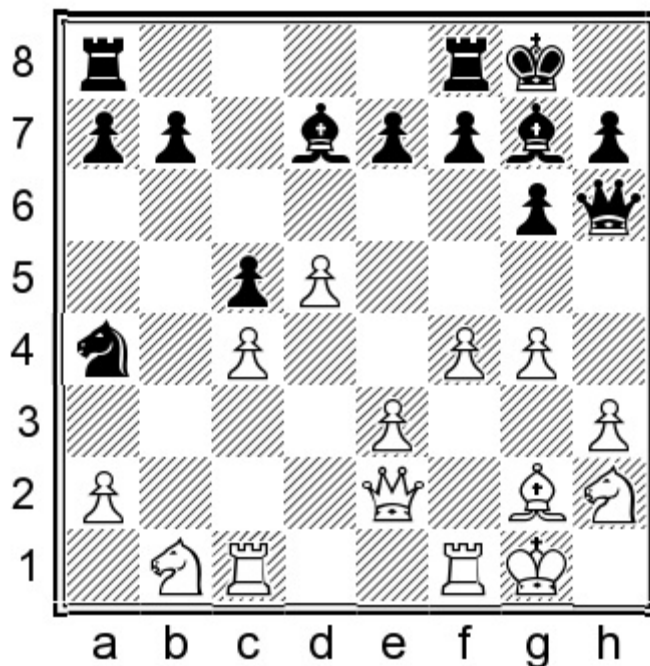
So White's idea was to isolate my queen on h6. In fact, it can easily join the action from g7. In the game, I was influenced by other Grünfeld variations where Black counterattacks on the queenside with...b5. However, the concrete situation made possible another plan, connected with ...g5 and ...f5, for instance:

16... ♗b8!? 17. g4 ♕h6.

16... ♗g7 17. g4 ♕h6 18. ♗h2

Matnadze is planning to gain more space with e4 and f4. However, immediate 18.e4 would let my queen slip to f4. Therefore she wants to start expanding with f4.

18... ♗a4 19. ♗b1 ♗d7 20. f4



The computer says that Black could have seized here the initiative with 20...b5 21.cxb5 ♖ab8, because 21.g5 ♗h4 was not dangerous. The machine may be right, but I was getting goose skin from the sight of my caged queen. No wonder I preferred to stay on the safe side.

20...♗b2! 21.♖c2 ♔g7 22.e4?!

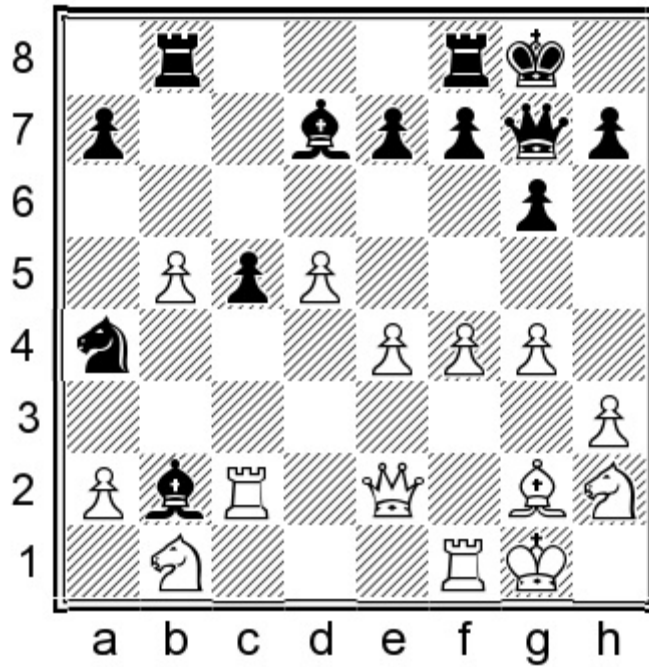
This does not prevent 22...f5 as it is still good, and, as a whole, lacks any sense. Pawns do not go back and now the d4-square will be permanently ill. My bishop gets the needed stable square on the main diagonal to make way to the a4-knight.

White should have waited with 22.♘d2 b5! 23.♘e4.

22...b5! 23.cxb5

23.♘d2 ♗d4+ 24.♔h1 bxc4.

23...♖ab8



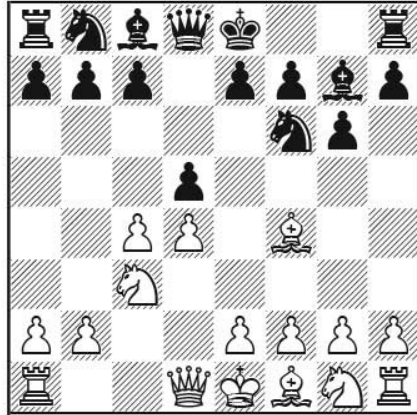
All my pieces invade White's camp from the queenside. A great triumph of the Grünfeld's ideas!

24.♞d1 ♜xb5 25.♞f3 ♜d4+ 26.♔h1 ♞b2 27.♞e1 ♞d3 28.♞d1 c4 29.♜f1 ♜a4 30.♜xd3 cxd3 31.♞xd3
 ♜xc2 32.♞xc2 ♜e3 33.♞f1 ♞fc8 34.♞d3 ♜xf4 35.♞f3 ♞b2 36.♞bd2 ♞c1 37.♔g2 ♞xf1 38.♔xf1 ♞xa2
 39.♔e2 a5 40.e5 ♞d8 41.e6 fxe6 42.♞e4 e5 0-1





Chapter 2

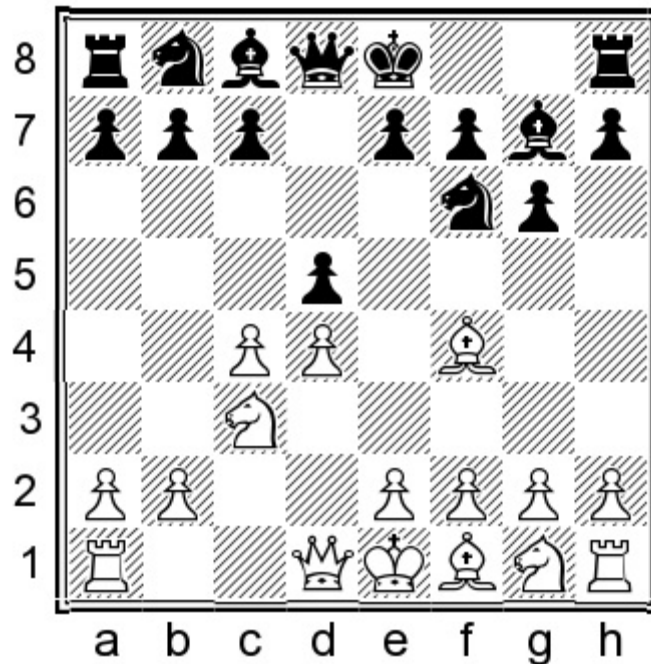
The f4 System

1.d4  f6 2.c4 g6 3. c3 d5 4. f4



Main Ideas

1.d4  f6 2.c4 g6 3. c3 d5 4. f4  g7



This natural development was popular in the first half of the 20th century. White is developing his queenside pieces, intending to generate pressure on c7. A lot of variations lead to endgames or symmetrical pawn structures with a slight initiative for White. No wonder it was Capablanca's favourite system. Euwe scored an important victory over Alekhin in the world title match in 1935. Also notable was the loss of Fischer to Petrosian in the Candidates final in 1971. Black had successes too, as Gligoric's victory over Botvinnik at the Olympiad in Tel Aviv 1964. Later Black found precise move orders and the whole system has receded to the background. I have not met fresh ideas for White for a long time.

Black's play is simple and very purposeful. Good calculation is paramount, so you should pay special attention to the typical tactical motifs and the precise order of moves.

White's main problems stem from the absence of the dark-squared bishop from the queenside. Kingside development is also delayed, and that offers Black good tactical options. His counterplay is based on ...c7-c5, ...♖a5, ...♘e4 and a concentrated attack on the knight on c3. Pawn losses should not scare Black. As a rule, he gains a strong initiative and sometimes even queens trade does not help White.

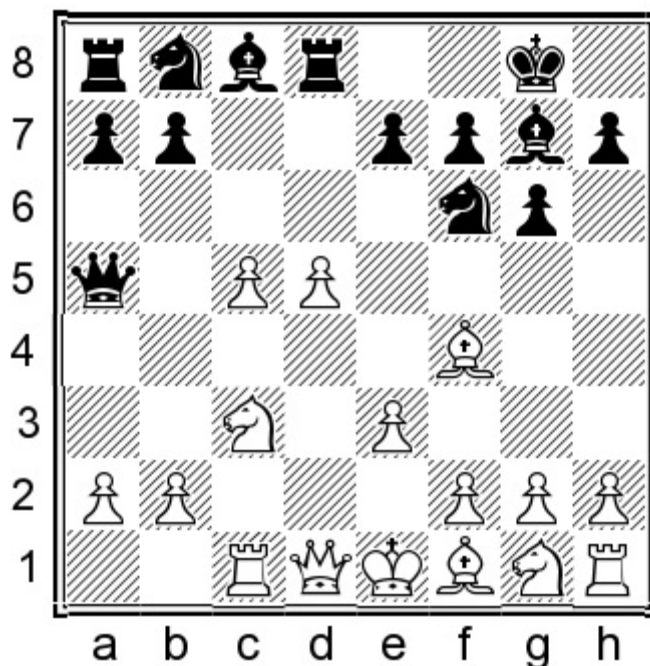
Tolush-Botvinnik

Leningrad 1939

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙f4 ♙g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♖c1 c5

The greatest chess thinker and researcher of his time, Botvinnik, has an enormous contribution to the development of the Grünfeld Defence. He played it with both colours, and his games were milestones in the opening theory. Here he showed one of his famous home preparations.

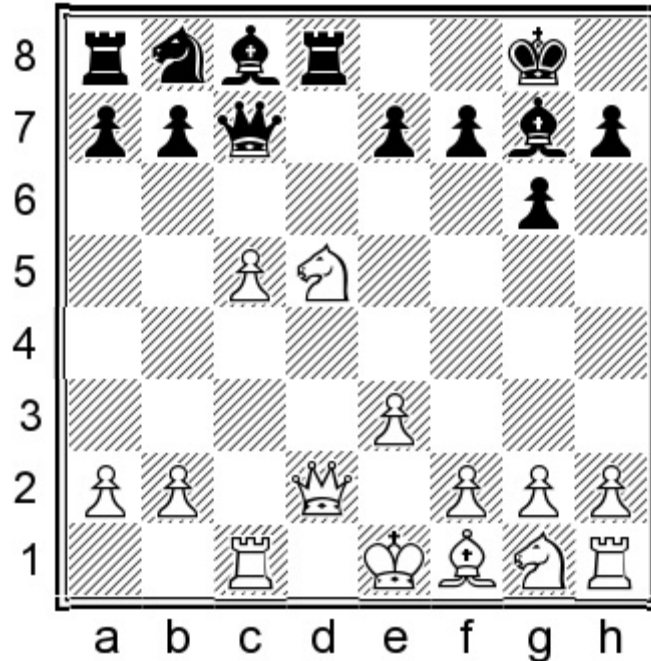
7.dxc5 ♖a5 8.cxd5 ♖d8



This position had occurred in the game Capablanca-Reshevsky, AVRO Tournament 1938. White answered 9.♖a4, but after 9...♖xa4 10.♘xa4 ♘xd5 Black reached a pleasant game. So Tolush prepared

an improvement:

9. ♖d2?! ♜xd5 10. ♙c7?! ♚xc7 11. ♜xd5



11... ♜xd5!

Surprise! Perhaps the fine tactician and master of the attack Tolush missed this blow. Now Black's pieces come into play with tempi and White's position becomes critical.

12. ♖xd5 ♙e6!

12... ♙xb2 13. ♜c2 ♙e6 14. ♖d2 would have given White time for consolidation. Botvinnik also mentions 12... ♜c6!? 13. ♖d2 (13. ♙c4 ♙e6) 13... ♙f5.

13. ♖d2 ♜c6 14. ♜d1

14. ♙c4 loses to 14... ♜d8 15. ♖c2 ♖a5+ 16. ♙f1 ♜d2, so White decides to contest the d-file. In his annotations Botvinnik recommended 14. ♜c3!? as the only chance, whereas he intended to continue the attack with 14... ♜b4 15. ♜f3 ♜d8 16. ♜d4 ♙xa2. Of course the most natural 14... ♙xc3 15. ♖xc3 ♙xa2 16. ♜f3 ♜c8 17. ♙e2 a5! would be also in his favour.

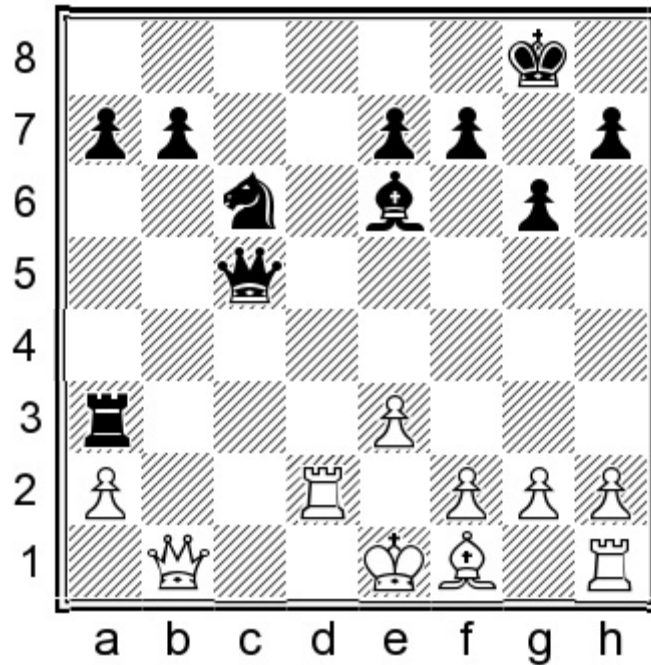
14... ♜d8 15. ♖c1 ♖a5+ 16. ♜d2 ♜d5

Suddenly the decisive blow comes from the c-file, for instance: 17. ♜f3 ♜xc5 18. ♖b1 ♙xa2 19. ♖a1 ♜c2 20. ♙d3 ♙xb2. Note the importance of the d5-square which served as a juncture point for Black's pieces.

17. ♜e2 ♜xc5 18. ♜c3 ♙xc3 19. ♖xc3 ♜xc3 20. ♖b2 ♜a3

White is helpless against the killing threat of ... ♜xa2.

21. ♖b5 ♖c3! 22. ♖b2 ♖c5! 23. ♖b1



23...♙xa2! 24.♖xa2 ♚a5+ 25.♗d2 ♖a1 26.♘d3 ♖xb1+ 27.♘xb1 ♜e5!

The game is over. The rest is a short agony.

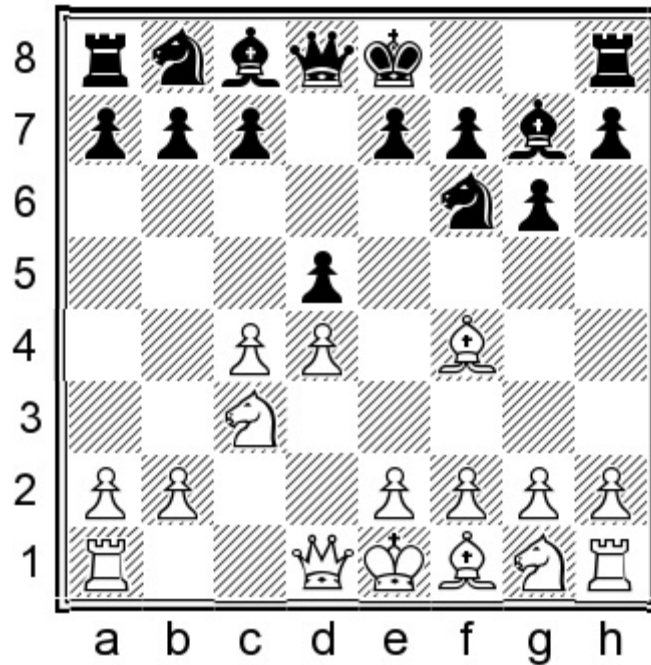
28.♜e2 ♚b5+ 29.♘d3 ♜xd3 30.♗xd3 ♖a5 31.♗hd1 ♚c4 32.♜f3 ♖b5 33.♗d7 ♖b4 34.♖a7 ♖a4 35.♗d8+ ♜g7
36.♗da8 ♖a3 37.g3 ♚b5 0-1

Undoubtedly, such games are capable of boosting up the popularity of any opening.

Objectives and Move Orders

The ♗f4-system is relatively easy to play with Black because the strategic ideas are clear and many games feature one and the same symmetrical pawn structure. The centre is open, with an early elimination of the c- and d-pawns. That enhances the role of tactics and requires heavy calculation. On the other hand Black commonly has no theoretical problems. Black's plan is to play ...c5, ...♚a5, ...♜e4 while the important pawn on d5 can be sacrificed or bolstered up with ...♘e6.

The first thing we should decide is when to push ...c5. This depends on White's fifth move after 4...♘g7:



A. 5. ♖c1; B. 5. ♘f3; C. 5. e3

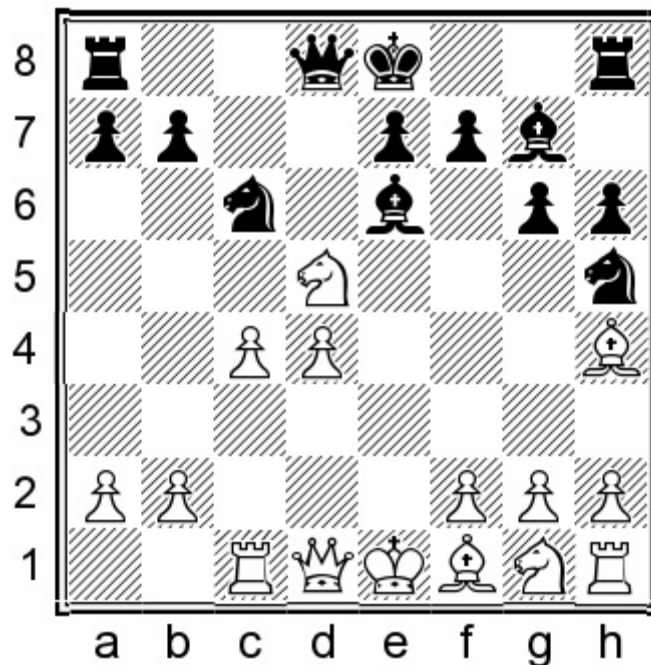
My recommendation is:

We meet 5. e3 by 5...c5. In the event of 5. ♘f3, we castle (note that 5. ♘f3 c5? is outright bad!), and after 5. ♖c1 we repel the f4-bishop by 5... ♘h5 6. ♗g5 h6 7. ♗h4 and only then push 7...c5. Let us now go into some detail:

A. 5. ♖c1

This move anticipates Black's counterplay, but ...c5 is still possible, albeit with a preparation:

5... ♘h5!? 6. ♗g5 h6 7. ♗h4 c5 8. e3 (8. ♘xd5 ♘c6 9. e3 cxd4 10. exd4 0-0 11. ♗e2 ♗e6!, and Black is fine.) 8...cxd4 9. ♘xd5 ♘c6 10. exd4 ♗e6!

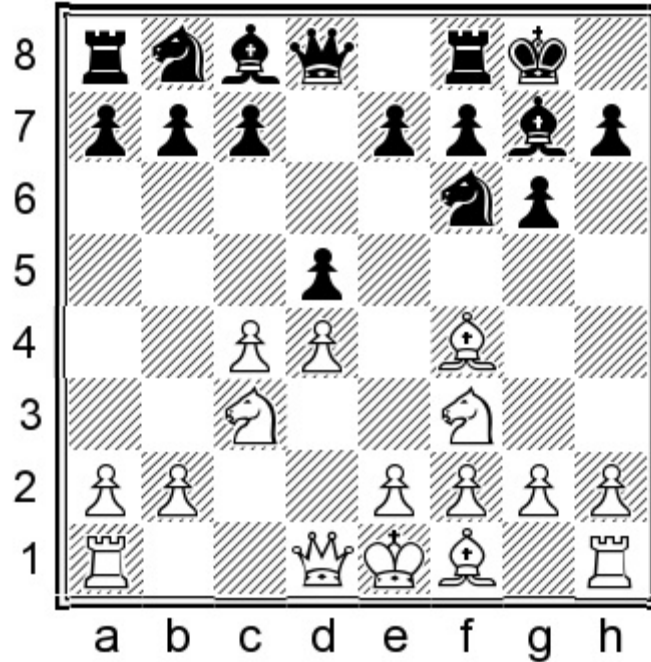


White has to struggle to equalise.

B. 5. ♘f3

Botvinnik thought this natural developing move to be the best. It discourages the immediate 5...c5, but we have other good options:

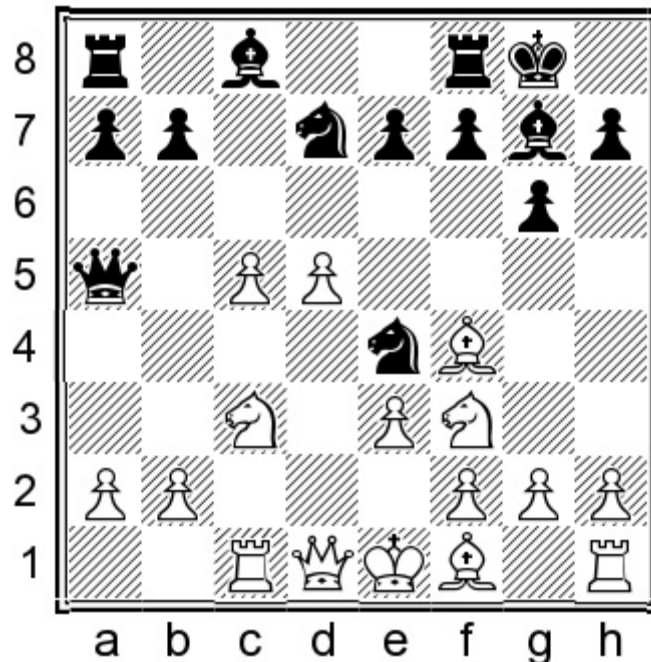
5...0-0



B1. 6 e3; **B2.** 6. ♖c1.

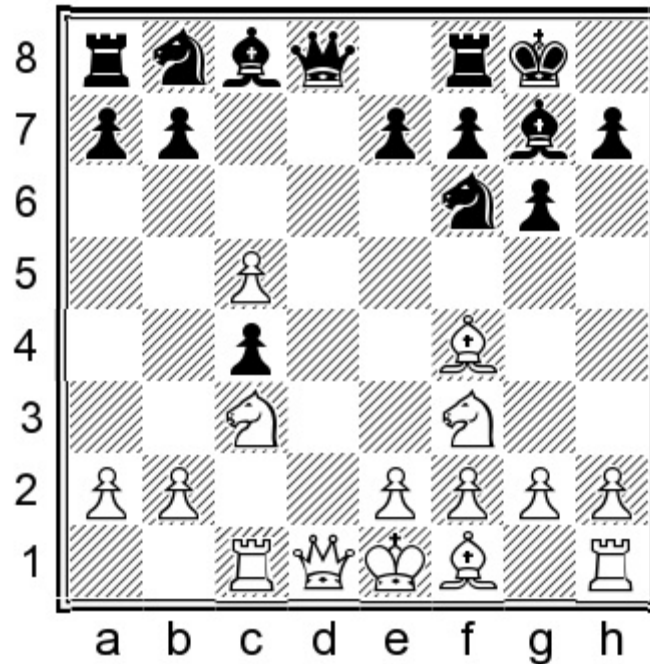
B1. 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♘e4! 8. ♖c1 ♘d7! 9.cxd5 ♚a5

This variation has been very hot lately, and White has not found a satisfactory retort yet. Perhaps we may consider this line closed.



The point is 10.♘d4 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♚xa2! – **game 7** Henri-Oliveira, ICCF 2017.

B2. 6.♞c1 defends ♘c3 in advance, but does not deny 6...c5! (I also analyse 6...dxc4 as a backup line)
7.dxc5 dxc4!



8.♚xd8

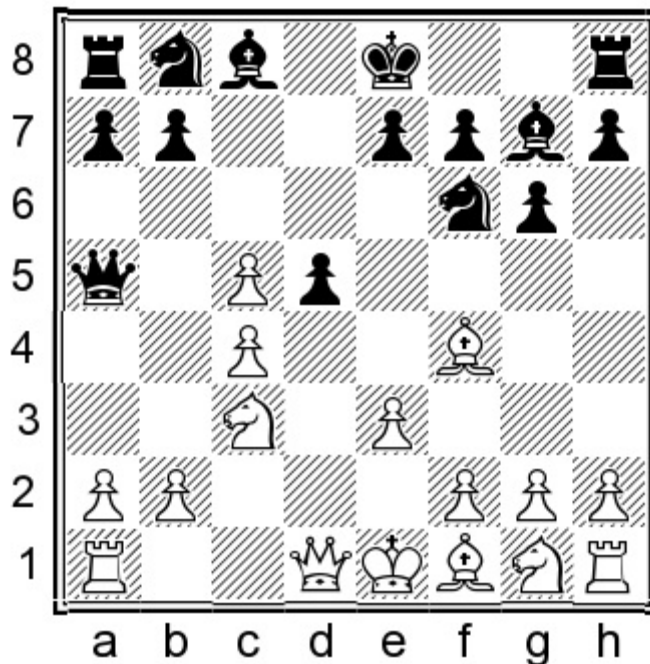
8.e4 ♚a5 9.e5 ♘h5! 10.♙e3 ♘c6 11.♙xc4 ♙g4 is unclear.

8...♞xd8. Now safest for White is 9.e3 ♘a6 10.c6 bxc6 11.♙xc4 ♘d5=.

C. 5.e3 c5

This is the sharpest line. The main reason to play 5...c5 instead of 5...0-0 is to avoid the drawish endgame after 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘xd5 ♚xd5 8.♙xc7 ♘a6 9.♙xa6 ♚xg2 10.♚f3.

6.dxc5 ♚a5



7.♖c1 (7.♘f3 ♘e4!?) 7...dc4! 8.♙xc4 0-0!

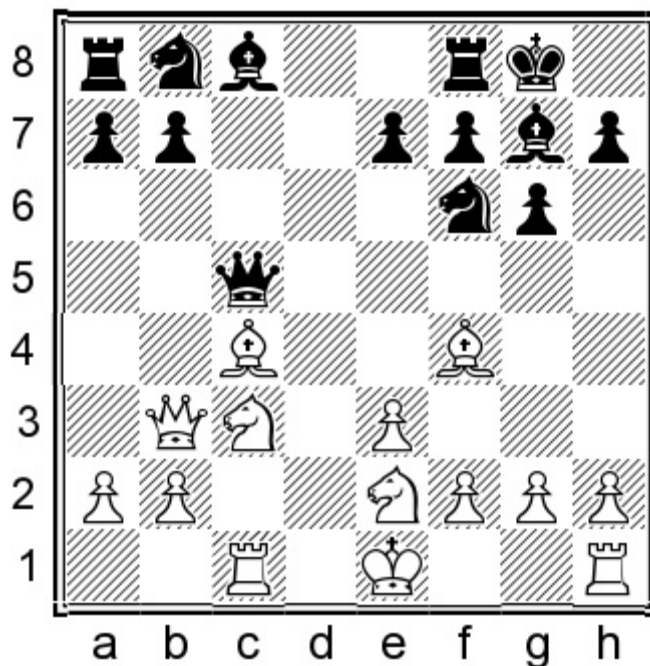
Black does not need to recapture immediately on c5. For instance, 9.a3 is well met by 9...♘c6.

9.♘ge2!

The only way to set some problems. The c3-knight is overprotected now and we have no reason to keep the queen on a5 anymore.

9...♙xc5 10.♙b3!

Eying f7 and freeing d1 for the other rook. The alternatives lead to easy equality. We simply retreat the queen back to a5 after 10.♙d4 or 10.♙b3.

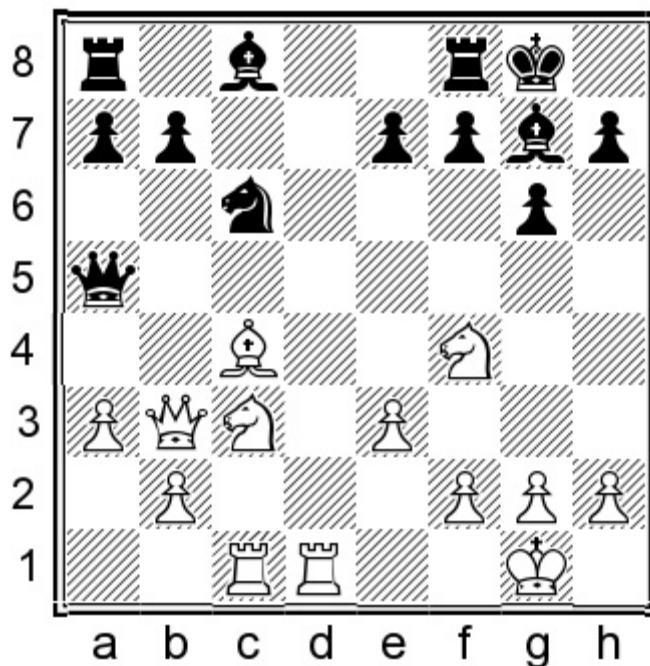


10...♙a5!

This way Black avoids long forced variations. I put an exclamation mark because this line is much simpler and easier to learn than the more popular 10...♘c6. However, if you seek complications and

trust your memory, you can choose the knight move. It leads to very interesting, materially unbalanced positions, although the main line concludes with a boring endgame where White is a pawn up, but without real chances to convert it. See **game 6** Brömme-Ylönen, ICCF 2016.

11.0-0 ♖c6 **12.♜fd1!** ♘h5! **13.a3** ♘xf4 **14.♘xf4**



Black is still experiencing minor problems with his light-squared bishop, but a few precise moves level the game:

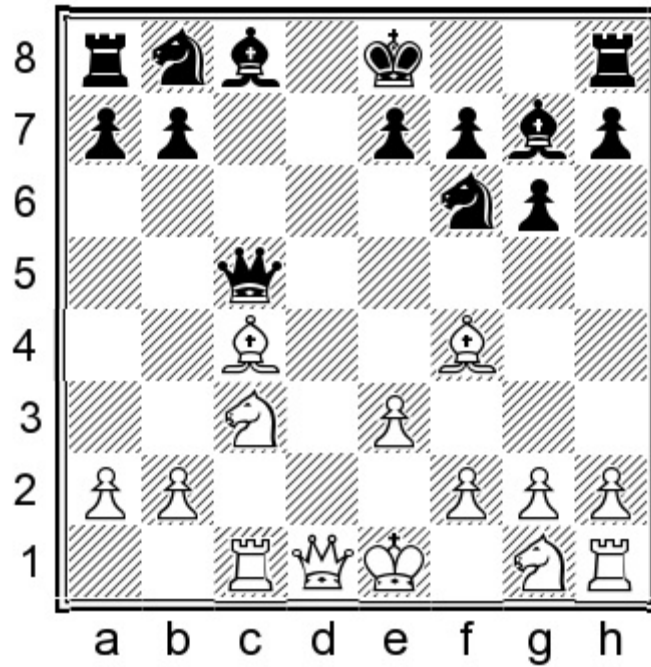
14...e6 15.♙e2 ♜d8 16.♘d3 ♙d7 17.♘e4=, Kraidman-W.Schmidt, Nice 1974, or even the provocative 14...♙g4!? 15.f3 (15.♜d5 ♚c7 16.♜c5∞) 15...♙c8.

Typical Tactical Motifs

Perhaps the most critical moment in the ♙f4 system is when to recapture the c5-pawn. The general rule is to delay it if there are other good developing moves.

Here is a typical mistake where Black was too hasty to regain the pawn with 8...♚xc5??:

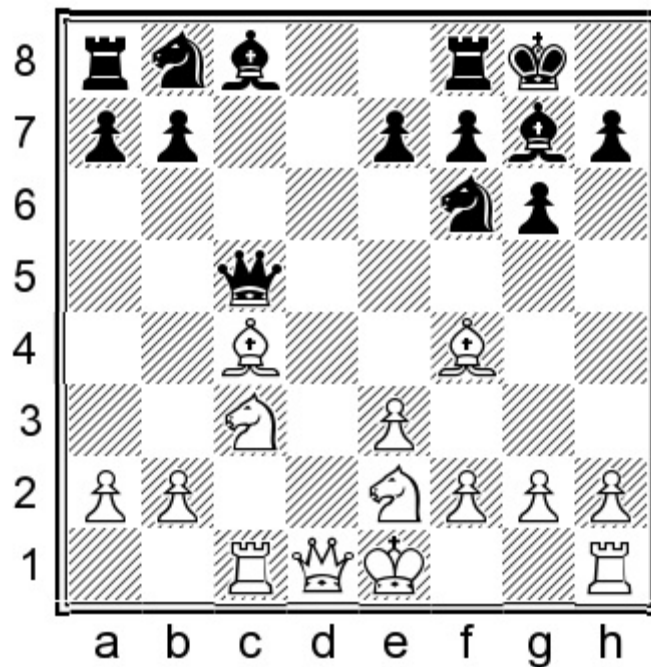
Example



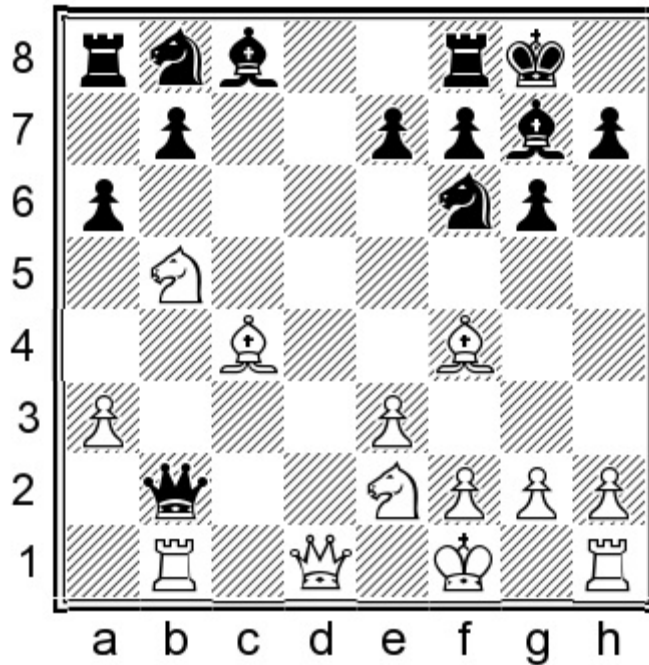
9. ♖b5! ♜b4+ 10. ♕f1 ♘a6 11. a3 ♛a5 (11... ♜b2 12. ♝c2+-) 12. ♙c7! ♘xc7 13. ♘xc7+ ♛xc7 14. ♙xf7+ ♕xf7 15. ♝xc7+-.

One move later, when Black has already castled, 9... ♛xc5 is possible and sets up an insidious trap:

Zaja-Brkic
 Omis 2005



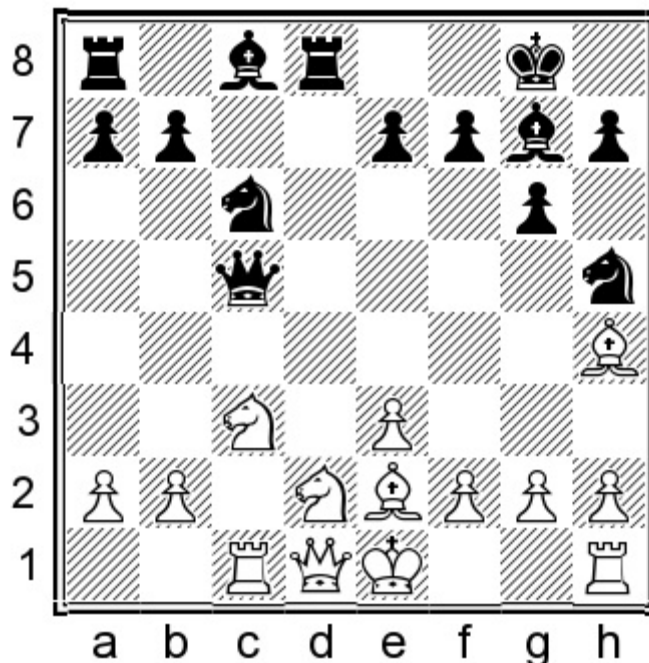
10. ♖b5? ♜b4+ 11. ♕f1 a6 12. a3 ♛xb2 13. ♝b1



White wins the queen, but this proves to be an unfortunate idea. Black's pieces generate amazing energy: 13... ♖xb1 14. ♗xb1 axb5 15. ♘xb5 ♜xa3 16. ♙xb8 ♞e4!! 17. ♗xe4 ♜a1+ 18. ♘c1 ♜xc1+ 19. ♕e2 ♜xh1 20. ♗xe7 ♙g4+ 21. f3 ♙xf3+ with a clear edge.

The most often cause for opening catastrophes is the a5-e1 diagonal. Here are some instructive examples:

Barbosa-Rojas
Santiago 2005

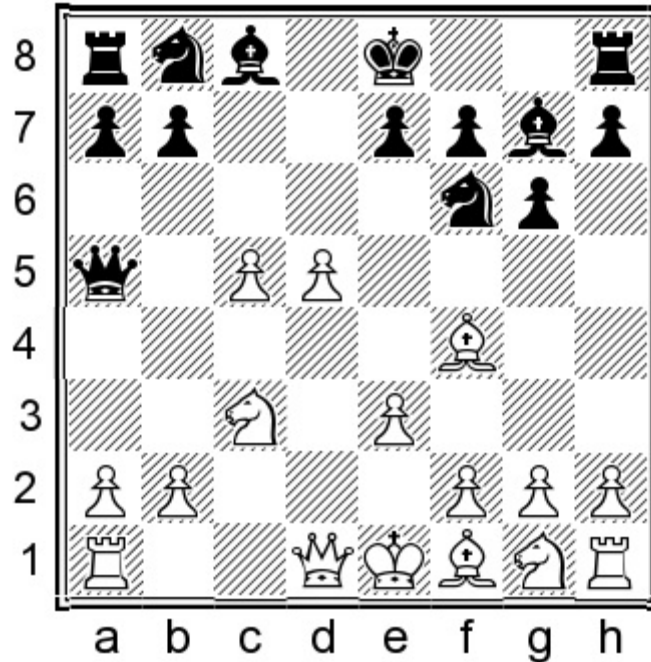


13... ♗b4!

White is desperately behind in development so this double attack finishes the game. chesstouring.com

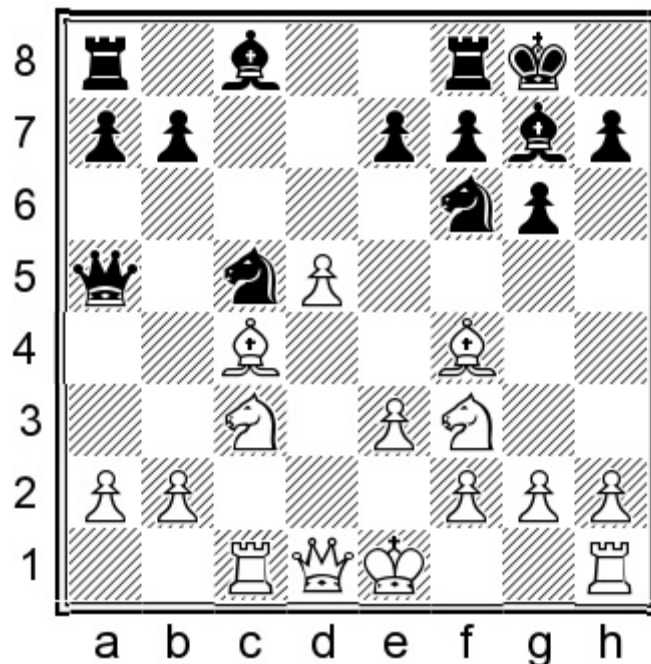
14. ♖xh5 gxh5 15. ♘g3 ♜xb2 16. ♞c2 ♜xc3! 17. ♞xc3 ♘xc3–+.

Farago-Ftacnik
Passau, 1994

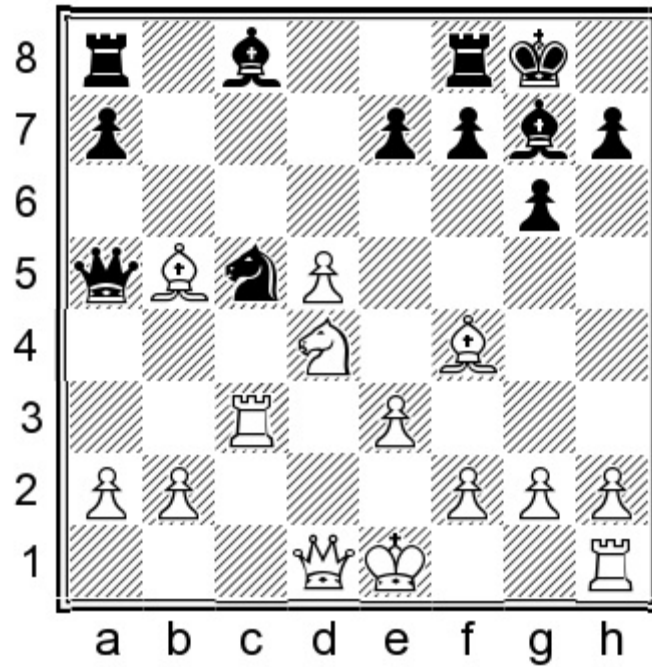


7... ♞xd5! 8. ♜xd5 ♘xc3+ 9. bxc3 ♜xc3+ 10. ♔e2 ♜xa1 11. ♘e5 ♜b1! 12. ♘h8 ♘e6 13. ♜d3 ♜xa2+ 14. ♔f3 f6!. Black has a winning attack.

Komljenovic-Luecke
Olot 1992



10...b5! 11.♙xb5 ♖fe4 12.♗d4 ♗xc3 13.♞xc3 (13.bxc3 e5!)



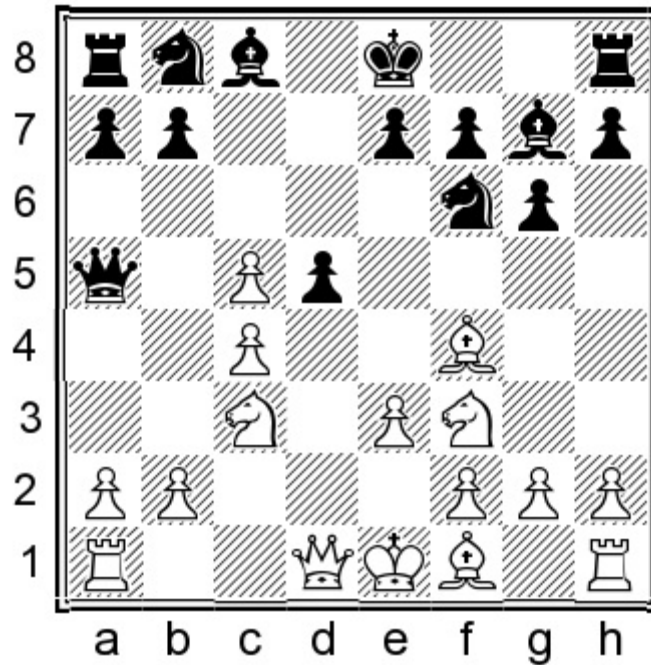
White survived the first wave of the attack. He is not afraid of the variation 13...♗e4 14.♚a4 ♜xa4 15.♙xa4=, but Black deals another blow: 13...e5! and this time White loses composure: 14.dxe6?

14.0-0! ♗b7 15.♞a3 ♜b6 16.♙g5 exd4 17.♙c6 dxe3 18.♙xe3 ♜c7 19.♞b3 would have been unclear.

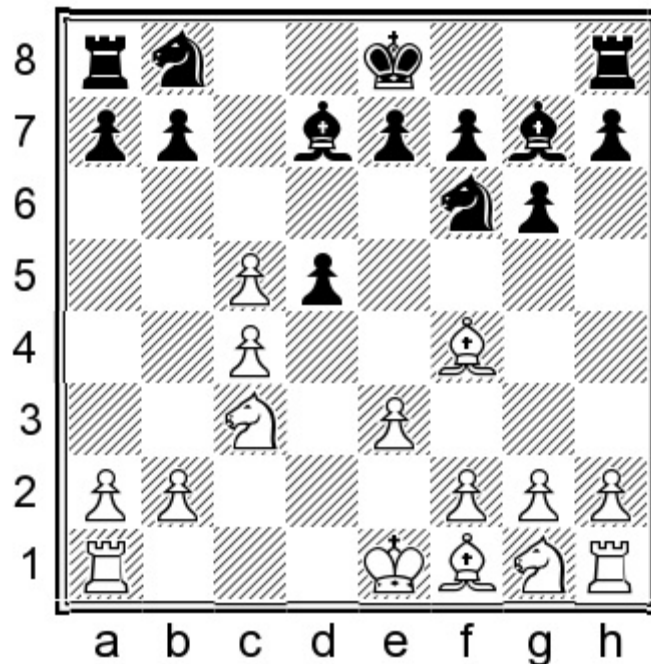
14...♗xe6 15.♙c6 ♙xd4 16.exd4 ♗xf4 17.♜f3 ♞b8 18.♜xf4 ♞xb2 19.♜c1 ♞b1! 20.♜xb1 ♜xc3+ 21.♗f1 ♜xc6 0-1.

Sometimes tactical stabs only help Black to solve the opening problems:

Pinter-Ruck
Hungary 2001



7...♞e4!? 8.♙e5 ♞xe5 9.♞xe5 ♞xc3 10.♚d2 ♙e6! 11.♞c1 0-0 12.♚xc3 ♚xc5 13.b4 ♚c7, with counterplay.

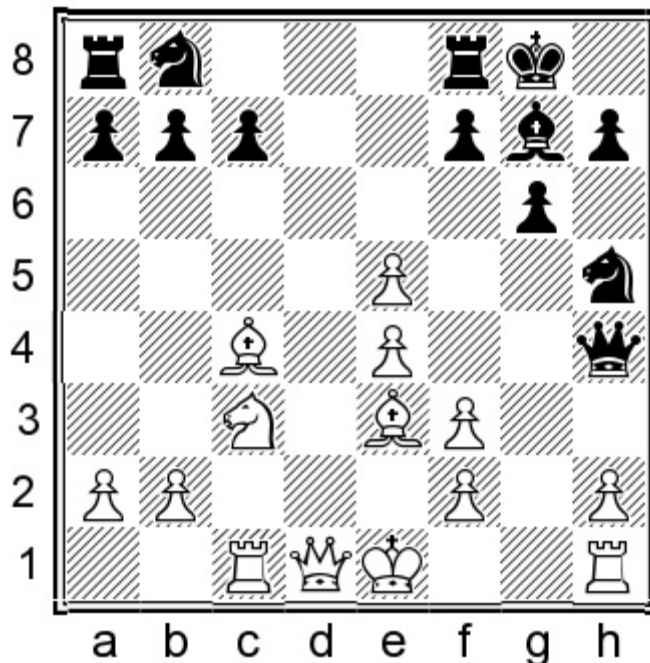


9...♞e4!. You should always consider this move in the ♙f4 system. It helps the ♙g7 break loose. 10.♞xd5 (or 10.♞ge2 ♞xc5!? 11.♞xd5 ♞d3+ 12.♙d2 ♞xf2) 10...♞a6 11.f3 ♞exc5. Despite the extra pawn, White achieves the meagre 27% in practice. His queenside is vulnerable.

The most sensitive point in Black's position is, apart of c7, the square f7. White usually attacks it by ♚b3, but sometimes he can hit without this preparation, as in the following example:

Bosboom-Finkel

Dieren 1997

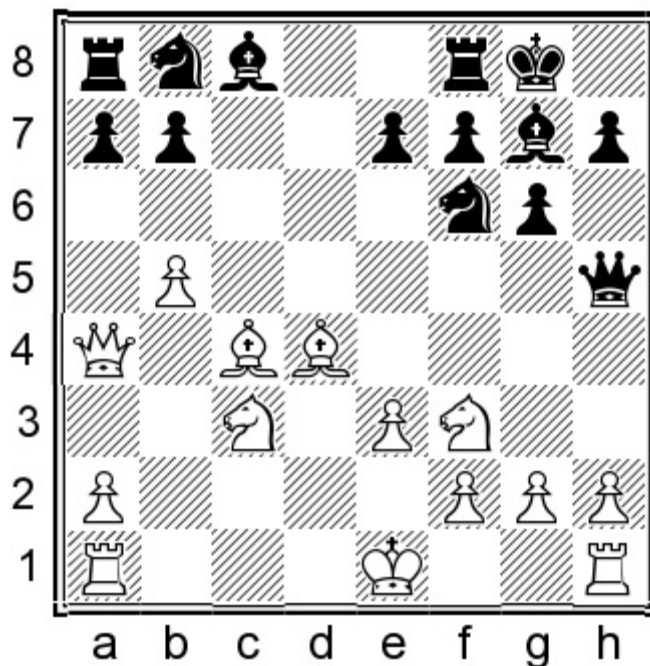


12. ♖xf7+! ♜xf7 13. e6 ♜f8 14. ♛b3 White regains the piece with interest. Later he can evacuate his king to the queenside.

The white knight at f3 is often a target for tactical hits:

Secrieru-Szabo

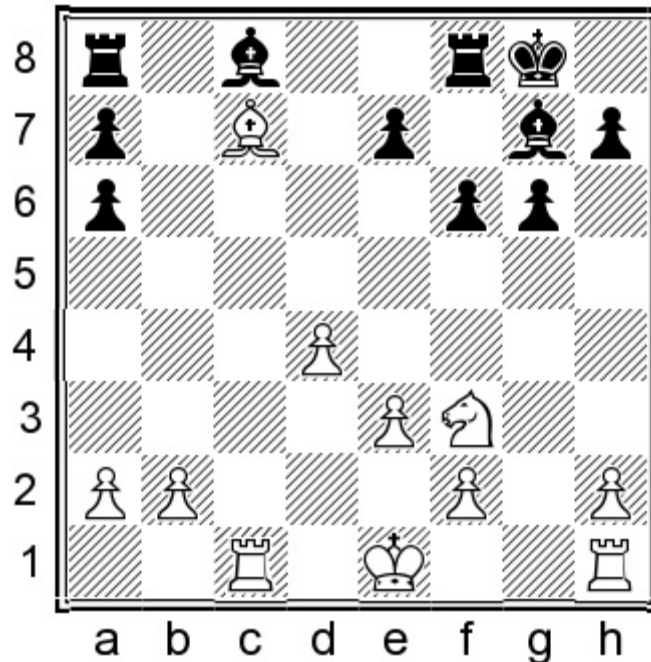
correspondence game 2006



13... ♗h3! 14. ♗f1 ♜bd7 15. ♜e2 e5! 16. ♜g3 ♛g4 17. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 18. ♗e2 ♜d3+! 19. ♜f1 ♛h4 20. ♗xd3

♙e6, with an initiative.

Pelletier-Illescas Cordoba Pamplona 2003



13. ♔e2?! The king goes under a nasty pin: 13... ♙g4!.

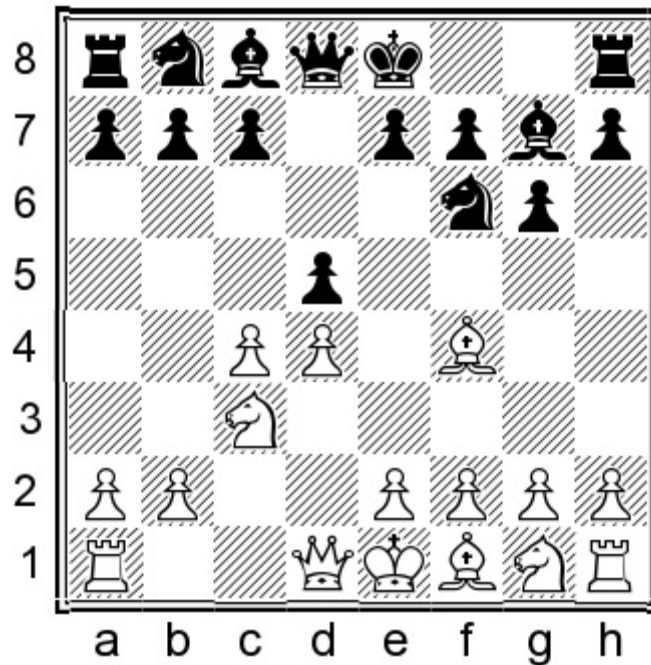
Theoretical Status

The 4. ♙f4 system had been close to oblivion until recently. Curiously, the renewed interest to it has been caused by the boom of another opening – the London System. It turned out that White had little to oppose to the Grünfeld setup, so he looked back to the “oldie”. Kiril Georgiev devoted a separate chapter to it in his book *Fighting the London System*, and NIC published surveys in *Yearbook* 125 and 126.

However, all the attempts to improve White’s play were quickly neutralised. The real challenge before Black is how to deviate from the long forced equalisers in the most popular lines. My task in this chapter was to show the well tested paths, but also to offer playable alternatives without making serious concessions. Notable examples are the recommendations for line B11. 7... ♘e4! instead of B12. 7... ♔a5, and for 5...c5 instead of 5...0-0 in line C.

Chapter 2 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♕f4 ♕g7



A. 5.♖c1; B. 5.♗f3; C. 5.e3.

A. 5.♖c1 ♗h5!?

An interesting attempt to fight for the initiative. The common 5...0-0 is a good alternative, but then 6.e3 would throw us out of the main repertoire, based on the aggressive 5.e3 c5.

6.♕g5

Alternatively:

6.♕e5 ♕xe5 7.dxe5 d4! ♣.

6.♕d2 c5! 7.e3

Or 7.dxc5 d4; 7.cxd5 cxd4 8.♗b5 ♗a6.

7...cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4! 9.d5

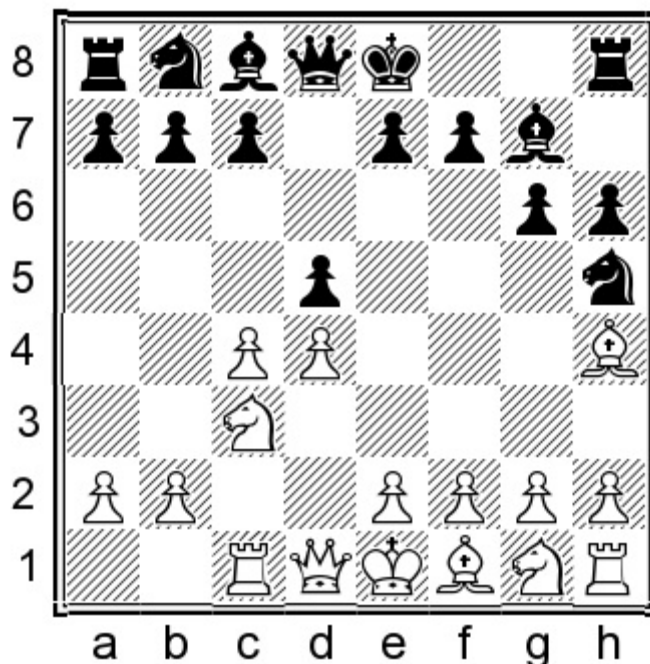
9.♕xc4 0-0 10.d5 ♗d7 11.♗f3 a6 12.a4 b5! 13.axb5 ♗b6 14.b3 axb5 15.♗xb5 ♗xd5 with a pleasant game, Stohl-Ilincic, Vrnjacka Banja 1989.

9...0-0 10.♕xc4 a6 11.♗f3 b5=, Portisch-Fogarasi, Hungary 2001.

6.♕e3. I.Sokolov beat Smirin with this move, but I really do not grasp White's idea. What was he going to do if we simply returned 6...♗f6!?. Sooner or later play will transpose to the main line, e.g. 7.♗f3 0-

0 8.♔f4. However, we have an even better option: 6...dxc4! 7.♖a4+ c6! 8.♗xc4 ♕e6 9.♗d3 (or 9.♗b4 ♗b6 10.♗a3 ♗a6) 9...0-0 (9...♘a6 10.a3 ♗a5 11.♘f3 ♗d8) 10.♘f3 ♘a6 11.a3 ♗a5 12.♕d2 ♗fd8 13.♘e4 ♗b6 14.♕c3 ♕f5, Bergmann-Arenhoevel, Germany 2001.

6...h6 7.♕h4



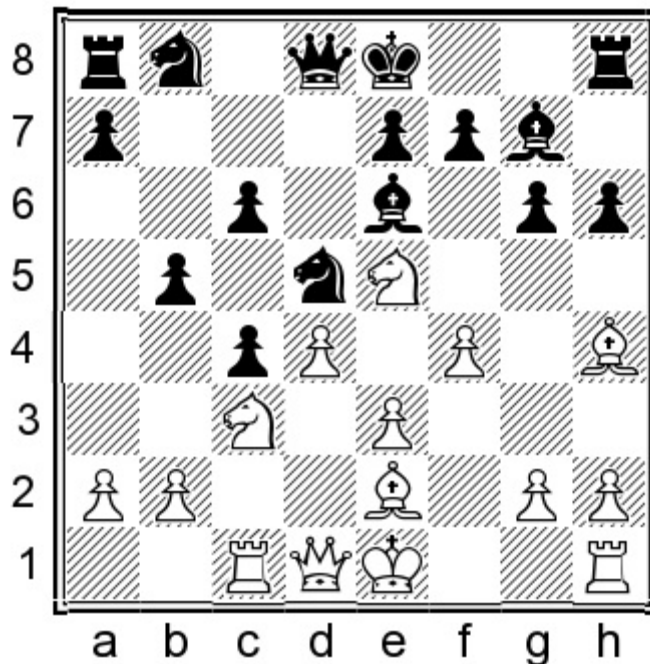
If 7.♕d2, we could eat the c4-pawn and keep it: 7...dxc4 8.e3

8.♘f3 could also be met by 8...♕e6, e.g. 9.e4 ♕xd4 10.♗a4+ ♘c6 11.♕xc4 ♕xc4 12.♗xc4 ♗d7 13.0-0 ♘e5∞.

8...♕e6! 9.♘f3 c6 10.♘e4 ♕d5 11.♗c2 b5 12.♘c5, Pinter-Popovic, Thessaloniki 1988, when 12...♕xf3! 13.gxf3 0-0 is better for Black.

7...c5

7...dxc4 is not bad either, but it gives White a strong centre for the sacrificed pawn: 8.e3 ♕e6 9.♕e2 ♘f6! 10.♘f3 (10.♕xf6 exf6! planning ...f5↑) 10...c6 11.♘e5! (11.0-0 ♘bd7! 12.♘e5?! ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♘d5) 11...b5 12.f4! (12.0-0 ♘d5! 13.♘e4 ♕xe5! 14.dxe5 ♘d7) 12...♘d5!



13. ♖d2

It is not too inspiring to defend the pawn with 13. ♕f2. Play would be balanced after 13... ♜xc3 14. bxc3 ♘d5 15. ♕f3 (15. 0-0 ♜d7) 15... ♕xf3 16. ♖xf3 ♖d5 17. e4 ♖d6 18. 0-0 ♜d7=.

13... ♜xc3! 14. bxc3

White can try counterplay with b3, for instance, 14. ♖xc3!? ♘d5 15. 0-0 ♜d7 16. b3!, or 15... a5 16. b3 cxb3 17. axb3 ♕f6 18. ♕f2 a4∞.

14... ♘d5 15. ♖c2□ (15. 0-0 ♜d7±) 15... ♕f6!.

This position is in Black's favour: 16. ♕f2 ♕xg2 17. ♖g1 ♖d5! 18. ♖xg2 ♖xg2 19. ♕f3 ♖h3 20. ♕g4 (20. ♖e4? ♖f5!) 20... ♖xh2 21. ♔e2 ♕h4 22. ♖f1 ♕xf2 23. ♖xf2 ♖h4 24. f5 ♜d7-+.

8.e3

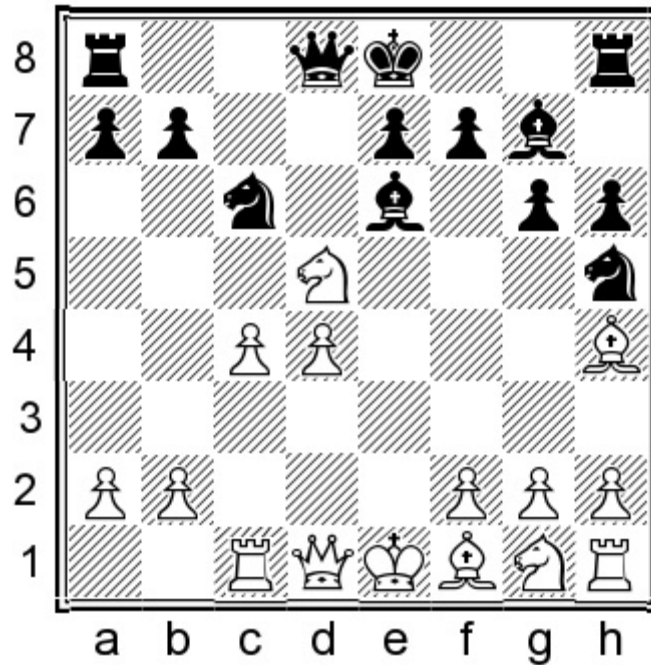
8. cxd5 cxd4 9. ♜b5 ♜a6 10. ♜xd4 loses to 10... ♖a5+.

8. ♜xd5 ♜c6 9. e3 cxd4 10. exd4 0-0 11. ♕e2 ♕e6! and Black is fine.

8...cxd4 9. ♜xd5

Or 9. exd4 dxc4 (9... ♜c6 10. ♜f3 ♕g4 11. cxd5 ♜xd4=) 10. ♕xc4 0-0 11. d5 ♜f4 12. ♕g3 e5 13. dxe6 ♕xe6±.

9... ♜c6 10. exd4 ♕e6!



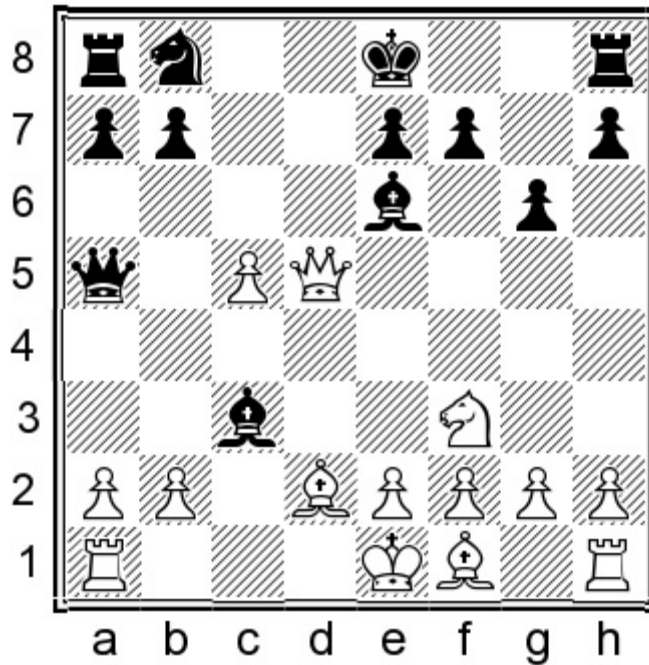
White has to struggle to equalise here:

- a) 11. ♖e2 ♙xd5 12. cxd5 ♚xd5 13. ♗c3 ♚xd4.
- b) 11. ♙e2 ♙xd5 12. cxd5 ♚a5+ 13. ♚d2 ♚xd5 14. ♙f3 ♚xd4.
- c) 11. ♗f3 ♙xd5 12. cxd5 ♚xd5 13. ♙c4 ♚e4+ 14. ♔f1 0-0.

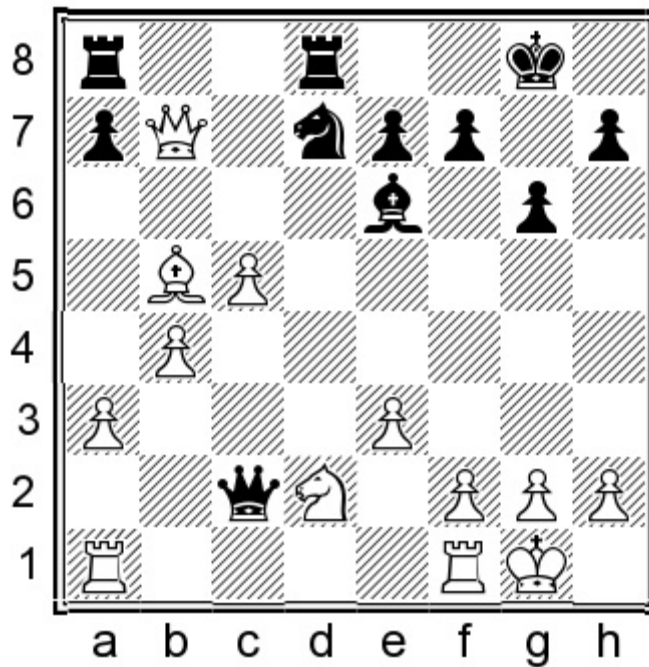
B. 5. ♗f3 0-0

5...c5?, intending to sacrifice two pawns, is entirely in the spirit of the Grünfeld. Botvinnik believed it to be incorrect, but it is often seen in practice, so I put it under the microscope. My verdict is that Black should forget about this move! Thus the intuition of the patriarch of the Soviet chess school proved right. The problem line is:

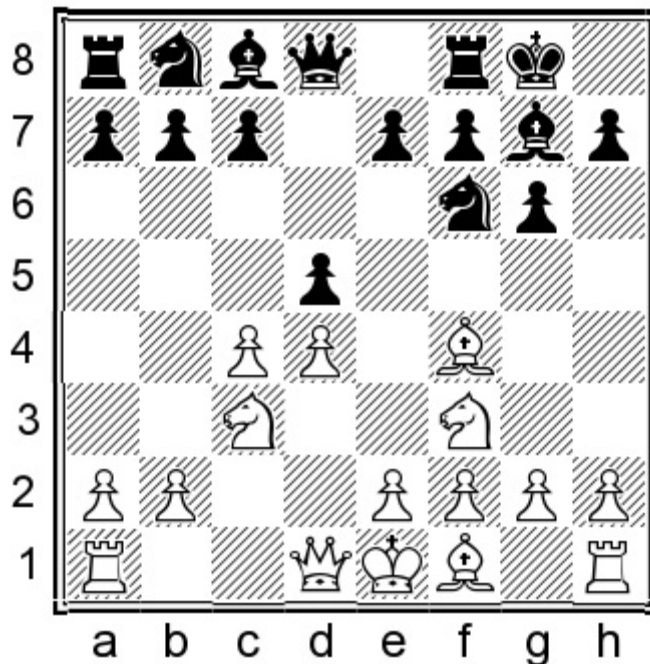
6.dxc5 ♚a5 7.cxd5! ♗xd5 8. ♚xd5 ♙xc3+ 9. ♙d2 ♙e6



10. ♖xb7 ♜xd2+ 11. ♘xd2 0-0 12. b4 ♞a4 13. e3! ♞d7 14. a3. Black is two pawns down without sufficient compensation. This position has been tested in practice and it was believed that Black got counterplay with 14... ♜fd8, but I found 15. ♜b5! ♞c2 16. 0-0! This novelty eliminates all Black's threats. Black wins a piece, but gets into a doom-and-gloom position without any counter-chances:



16... ♜ab8 17. ♞c7 ♜bc8 18. ♞xa7 ♜a8 19. ♞c7 ♜ac8 20. ♞g3 ♞xd2 21. ♜a6 ♜a8 22. ♜b7 ♜ab8 23. ♜ad1 ♞e2 24. ♜f3 ♞a6 25. c6± ♞f8 26. ♜a1.



B1. 6.e3; **B2.** 6.♞c1.

6.cxd5 ♞xd5 7.♞xd5 ♞xd5 8.♙xc7 is dubious as Black obtains a strong initiative – 8...♞c6 9.e3 ♙f5 10.♙e2 ♞ac8 11.♙g3 ♞a5+ 12.♞d2 ♞b4 13.0-0 ♞c2 14.♞e1 ♞xb2 15.♞e5 ♙xe5 16.♙xe5, Anikaev-Giorgadze, Soviet Union 1973, when Avrukh gives 16...♞a3!.

6.h3 c5 7.e3 hardly deserves any attention as any natural answer like 7...♞c6 or 7...♙e6 promises Black the somewhat better chances.

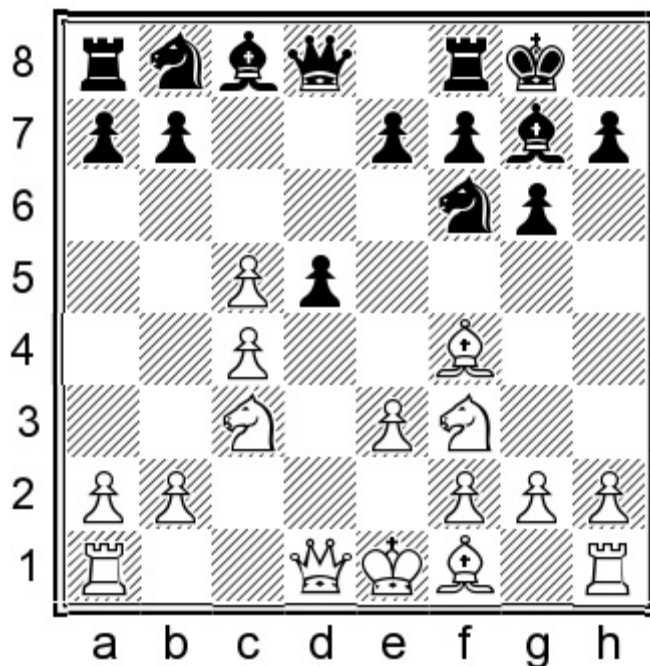
B1. 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5

Occasionally White tries to avoid complications with the harmless 7.♙e2. After 7...♞c6! White has a choice – to play in the Tarrasch style with an isolani on d4, or to opt for a symmetrical pawn structure with dxc5:

8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♙g4 11.d5 ♞a5 12.♙e2 ♞c8=.

8.h3 cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♞a5 11.♙e2 ♙e6 12.0-0 ♞c8. Black has a clear-cut plan on the queenside in this Tarrasch with reversed colours.

8.dxc5 ♞e4! 9.0-0 ♞xc3 10.bxc3 dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♞a5=.



B11. 7...♘e4!; **B12.** 7...♚a5

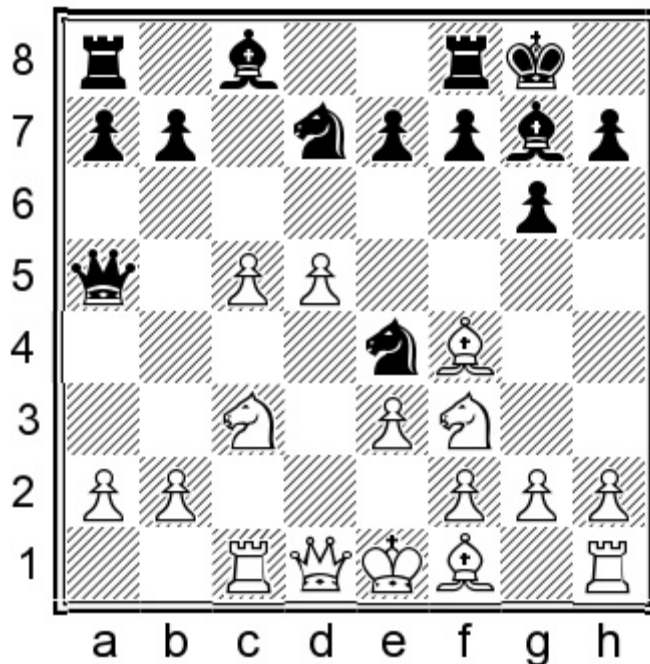
B11. 7...♘e4! 8.♞c1

8.♞e5?! is a bad idea. After 8...♘xc3 9.♞xc3 ♞xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♚a5 11.♚b3 dxc4 12.♚xc4 ♘a6 White does not have compensation for his split pawns, Markov-Wang Hao, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

8...♘d7!

More precise than 8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♚a5 10.cxd5 ♘d7 11.♚b3 ♘xc5 12.♚b4.

9.cxd5 ♚a5



10. ♖d4

10. ♖c2 ♜xc3 11. bxc3 ♜xc5 12. e4 ♔d7 13. ♔d2 ♜ac8! 14. c4 ♜b6! (Kiril Georgiev) offers Black an initiative.

10... ♜xc3 11. bxc3 ♜xa2

White may be able to maintain the balance with precise play. See the beautiful **game 7** Henri-Oliveira, ICCF 2017.

B12. 7... ♜a5 8. ♜c1

Botvinnik showed how to neutralise 8. ♜a4 back in 1937: 8... ♜xc5 9. ♜b5

Or 9. cxd5! ♜xd5 10. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 11. ♔c4 ♜c6=, Golubov-Sjugirov, Moscow 2018.

9... ♜xb5 10. ♜xb5 ♜a6 11. ♜d1 ♔e6! 12. ♜fd4 ♔d7 13. ♔e5 ♜fc8!? 14. cxd5 ♜xd5 15. ♔xg7 ♜xg7 16. e4 ♜db4 17. ♜c3 ♜c5 18. a3 ♜c6 19. ♔e2 ♜xd4 20. ♜xd4 e5♣, Levenfish-Botvinnik, Leningrad/Moscow 1937.

8... dxc4

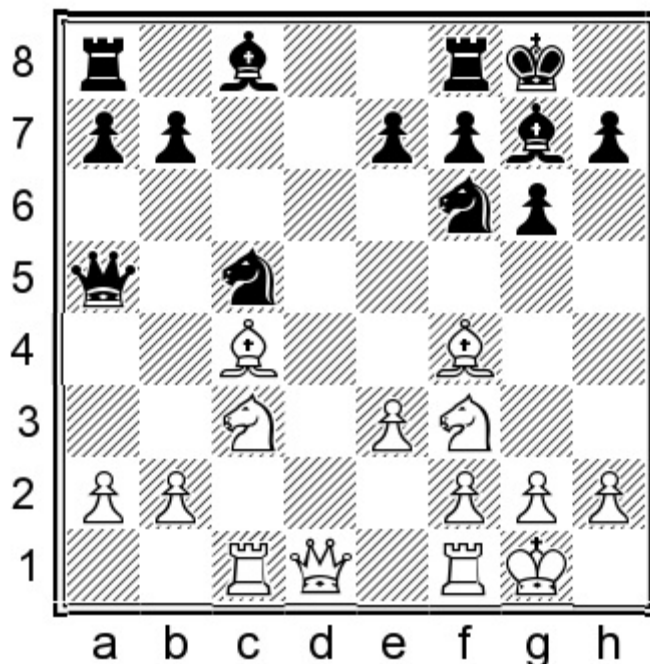
Here 8... ♜e4 is already bad in view of 9. ♔e5 ♔xe5 10. ♜xe5 ♜xc3 11. ♜xc3 ♜xa2 12. ♜c1 ♜a5 13. cxd5±.

Carlsen played once 8... ♜d8, but it is too timid in my opinion.

9. ♔xc4 ♜xc5

9...♞bd7!? is a valuable alternative to the main line. The idea behind it is instead of shuttling the queen between a5 and c5, to develop the knight on an active position. It is relatively unexplored, and gives you a chance to surprise an otherwise well prepared opponent:

10.0-0 ♞xc5

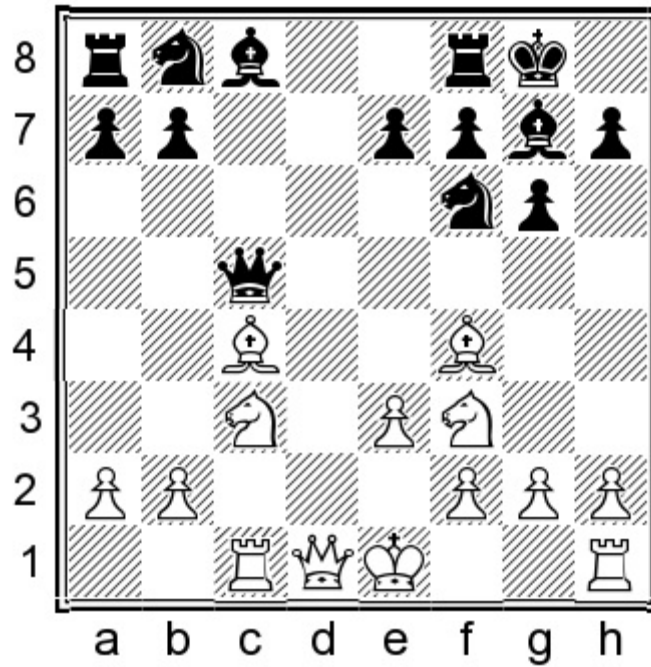


11.♞e2

11.♞d4 is the only way to prevent ...♙e6 since 11.a3 is still answered with 11...♙e6!, e.g. 12.♞e2 ♙xc4 13.♞xc4 ♞e6 14.b4 ♞f5 15.♙g3 ♞ac8=, Korobov-Muradli, Nakhchivan 2018.

The correspondence game Plauth Herr-Geissler, 2001, went 11.♞d4 ♙g4! 12.f3 ♙d7 13.♞e2 (or 13.a3 ♞a4) 13...♞ac8 14.♞fd1 a6 15.e4 b5 16.♞b3 ♞xb3 17.♙xb3 b4 18.♞b1 ♙e6! 19.♙xe6 ♞b6+ (the point of 11...♙g4!) 20.♙e3 ♞xe6=.

11...♙e6 12.♞d4 ♙xc4 13.♞xc4. White is only a little ahead in development, but 13...♞cd7 neutralises all the threats.



10. ♖b3

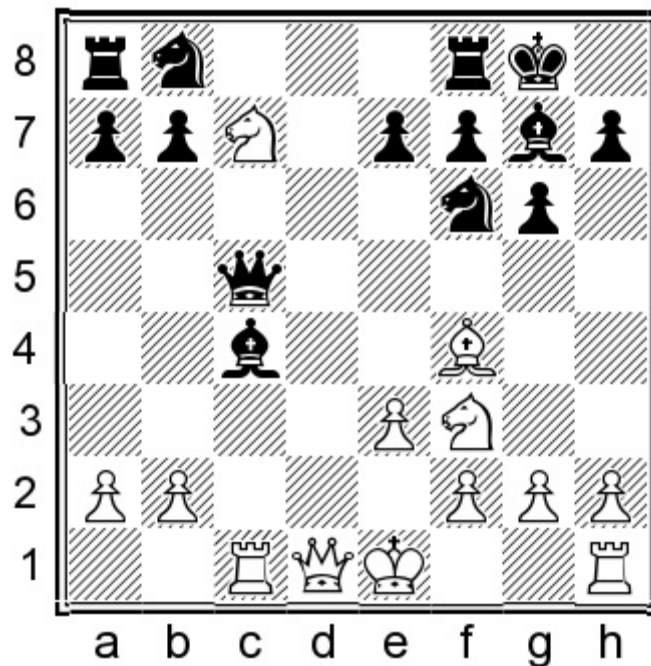
Rare alternatives are:

10. b3 ♘c6 11. 0-0 ♙g4 12. h3 ♜fd8 13. ♚e2 ♙xf3 14. ♚xf3 ♚a5=.

10. ♚b3 ♘c6 11. ♘b5 ♙e6!, exploiting the hanging state of the c1-rook. 12. ♘c7 ♙xc4 13. ♜xc4 ♚a5+.

10. ♚e2?! ♙g4 11. ♘b5 (11. 0-0 ♙xf3 12. gxf3 ♘c6) 11... ♚b4+ 12. ♙f1 ♘c6 is quite dubious for White.

10. ♘b5 ♙e6! 11. ♘c7 ♙xc4.



White is worse because of his uncastled king, for instance:

12.♖xa8 ♔a5+ 13.♕d2 ♕xa2 14.b4 ♘c6 15.♕xa2 ♖xa2 16.♘c7 ♘xb4 17.0-0 ♘e4 and the black bishops control the queenside;

12.♘d2 b5 13.b3 (13.♘xa8 ♘d5) 13...♘d5;

12.b3 ♕a5+ 13.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14.♘xd2 ♖d3 15.♘xa8 ♘d5 16.♘c7 ♖c8!. The point of Black's play. The knight is pinned and the threat of ...♖b2 assures Black of the better game, Inkijov-Lputian, St.John 1988.

10...♕a5

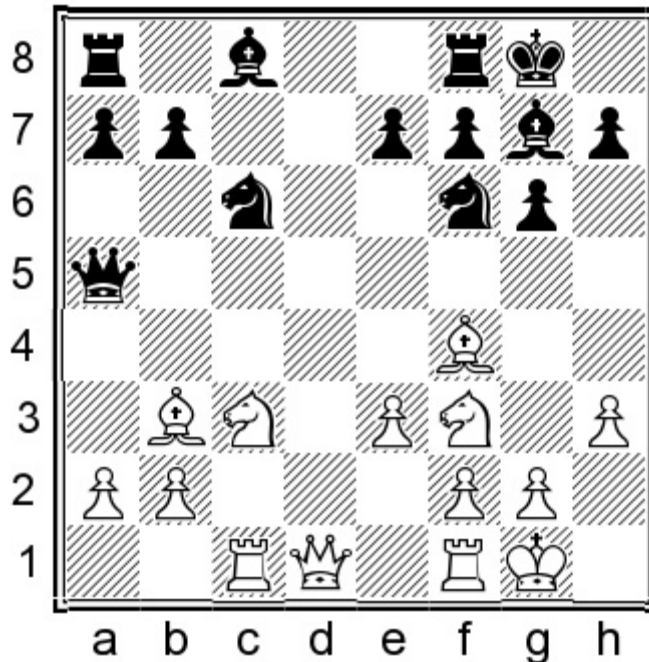
10...♘c6 11.0-0 ♕a5 transposes to the main line as 11...♕h5 12.h3 e5 13.♖h2 ♖d8 14.♘d2! ♕h6 15.♕e2 ♖f5 16.♖fd1 ♖d3 17.♕f3, Larsen-Tal, Bled 1965, left Black with uncoordinated pieces.

10...♖g4!? 11.0-0 ♕h5 12.h3 ♖xf3 13.♕xf3 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♘c6=, Moranda-So, chess.com 2019, elegantly evades the big theory without any risk.

11.0-0 ♘c6 12.h3!

Preventing both ...♖g4 and ...♘h5. 12.♘g5 h6 13.♘ge4 allows 13...♘h5=, and 12.♕e2 ♘h5 13.♖g5 – 13...♖g4, when 14.♘e4 ♕f5 15.♖c2 ♕e6 hands the initiative over to Black.

12...♖f5



12...♕a6?! is an interesting multipurpose move. It denies White's queen the e2-square, frees a5 for the c6-knight, and prepares the exchange of the light-squared bishops through e6 (after ...♘b4 first). However, Black is severely lagging behind in development so White easily takes command in the centre:

13.e4! ♖d8 14.♗c2! ♕d7! (14...♗b4? 15.♕xf7+!) 15.♖fd1 ♗a5 16.♕a4 ♕xa4 17.♗xa4 ♖c4 18.♗xa6 bxa6 19.b3±. The a7-pawn is too weak.

13.♗e2

13.♗d4 ♕d7 14.♗e2 ♗xd4 15.exd4 e6 was equal in Karpov-Kasparov, London 1986.

13.♕c4 ♖ad8 14.♗b3 is easily neutralised by 14...♗b4! 15.♖cd1 ♗xb3, Kempinski-McShane, Germany 2017.

13.♗g5, targeting f7, is more challenging, but Black has at least two good defences:

13...♖ad8!? 14.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 15.♗b3 ♗d5 16.♕c7 ♗xc7 17.♗xd5 ♗e5 18.♗xf7 ♖xf7 19.♗xe7+ ♕e6 20.♗xc6 bxc6 with a tangled position;

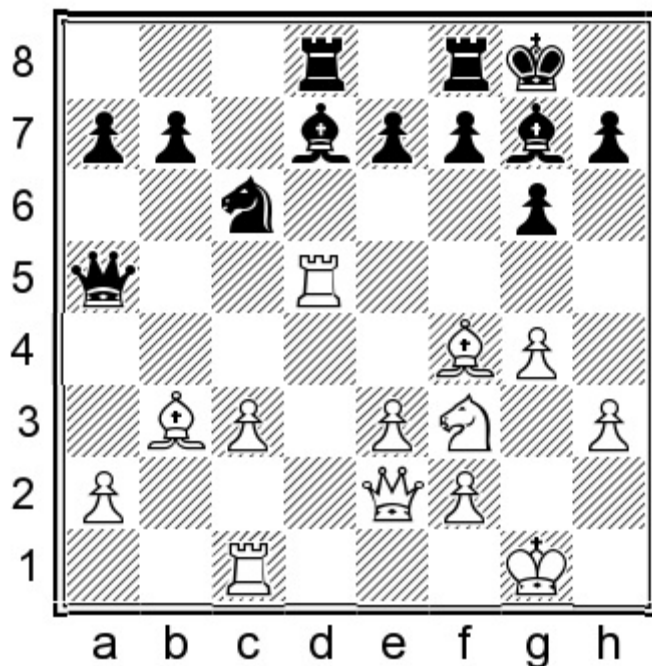
13...e5 14.♕g3 ♖ad8 15.♗f3 (15.♕xf7+?! ♖xf7 16.♗b3 ♗c7 17.♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 18.♖xd1 ♗e7 19.e4 ♕c8 20.♗d5 ♗xd5 21.♗xf7 ♗xf7 22.exd5 ♗d4 23.♗c4 ♕d7 24.♖e1 ♕b5 25.♗c8+ ♕f8 26.d6 ♕c6 27.♕xe5 ♗d5 28.f3 ♗xf3+ 0-1, Grigore-L'Ami, Bratto 2010) 15...h6 16.♗ge4 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗b4 (17...♖d3 is also good: 18.♗c5 ♗d4 19.♗xb7 ♗e2+ 20.♖h2 ♗xc1 21.♖xc1 ♖dd8=) 18.♗c3 (18.♖c4 ♗e7=) 18...♖d2 19.♗d5 ♗a5 with a pleasant game.

13...♗e4 14.♗d5

White should keep more pieces on the board.

14.♗xe4 is very timid: 14...♕xe4 15.♖fd1 (15.♗d2 ♕d5) 15...♖ad8 16.♗g5 ♕d5 17.♕c7 ♗xc7 18.♖xd5=, L.Hansen-Shirov, Novi Sad 2009.

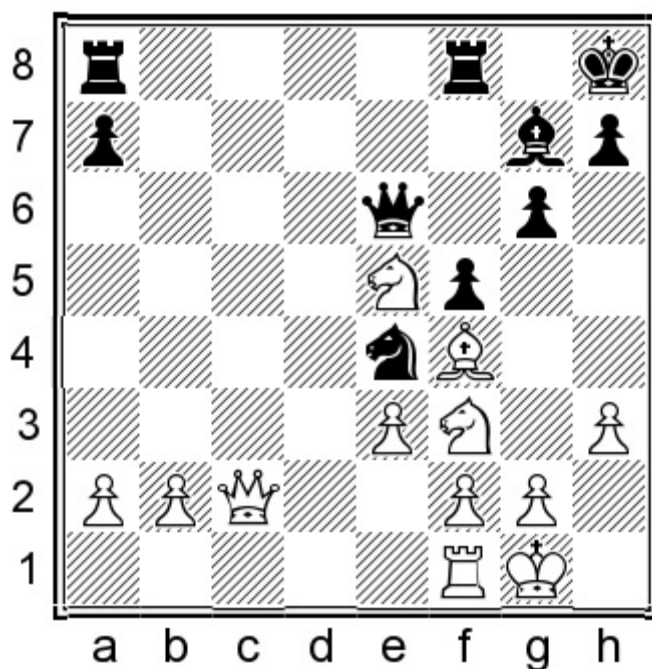
14.g4!? was first played by Kasimdzanov in 2009. White repels Black's centralised pieces and gains some temporary initiative. However, his weakness on c3 gives us just enough counterplay to maintain the balance: 14...♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♕d7 16.♖fd1 ♖ad8! 17.♖d5



17...♙a3! 18.♞cd1 ♘e6 19.♞xd8 ♘xd8! 20.♙b5 a6 21.♙b6 ♘xb3 22.axb3 ♘e6=, Dreev-Delchev, Cento 2011.

14...e5 15.♞h2

15.♞xc6 gained popularity after the world championship match Karpov-Kasparov in 1986. Kasparov did not accept the sacrifice, preferring 15...exf4, but later practice showed that 15...bxc6 16.♘e7+ ♔h8 17.♘xc6 ♙b6 18.♘ce5 ♘e6! 19.♘xe6 ♙xe6 20.♙c2 f5!



is quite safe for Black. Perhaps White's best approach is to stay solid with: 21.♘c4 ♞ac8 22.b3=. In practice he commonly continues with:

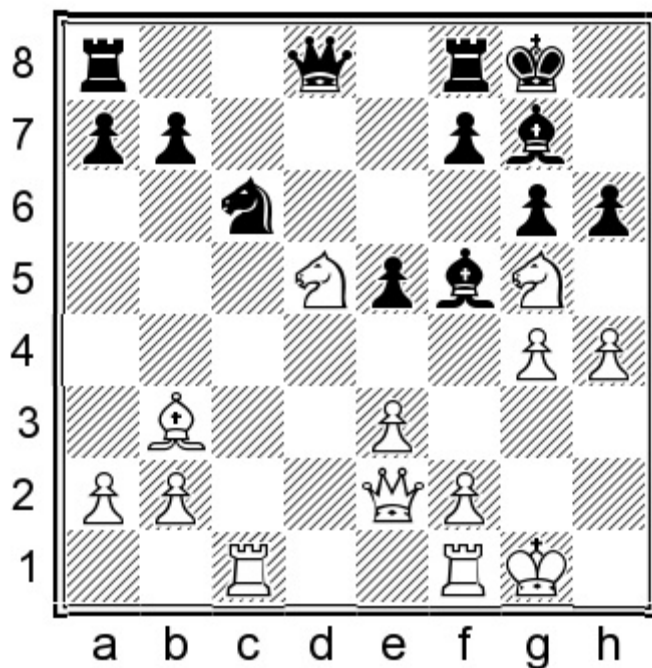
21. ♖a4 to tie Black's rook with the defence of the a7-pawn. Black grasps the opportunity to generate threats on the kingside with:

21...g5!

In 2010 the great Grünfeld expert Svidler introduced the novelty 21...a6. Mchedlishvili followed in his footsteps in 2018 to make a draw after 22. ♖d1 ♜ad8 and so on. Still it seems a bit slow. It is true that the a8-rook recovers its freedom, but on the other hand, White can petrify the kingside with 22.h4. I think that 21...g5 is more straightforward and easy to play.

22. ♗h2 ♚e8. Black has sufficient counterplay against the enemy king. See the annotated **game 5** Iljushin-V.Belov, Sochi 2006.

15. ♗g5 seems a very ugly move, but several strong GMs apparently had another opinion. They base it on a pawn storm on the kingside. We eat the bishop of course – 15... ♖xg5 16. ♗xg5, and question White's plan with 16... ♚d8. The game Jobava-Areshchenko, Burgas 2012, saw further: 17.h4 h6 18.g4!



18... ♗d7 (18... ♗c8 and 18... ♗a5 are of equal worth.) 19. ♗e4 ♚xh4 20.f3 ♗h8! 21. ♖f2 (21. ♗g2 f5 22. ♖h1 ♚d8) 21...f5 22. ♖h2 ♚d8 23. ♖xh6+ ♗xh6 24. ♚h2 ♗g7 25. ♖xc6 fxe4 26. ♚xe5+ ♗h7 27. ♗f6+ ♖xf6 28. ♖xf6 ♗e8 29.g5 ♚d2 with a draw.

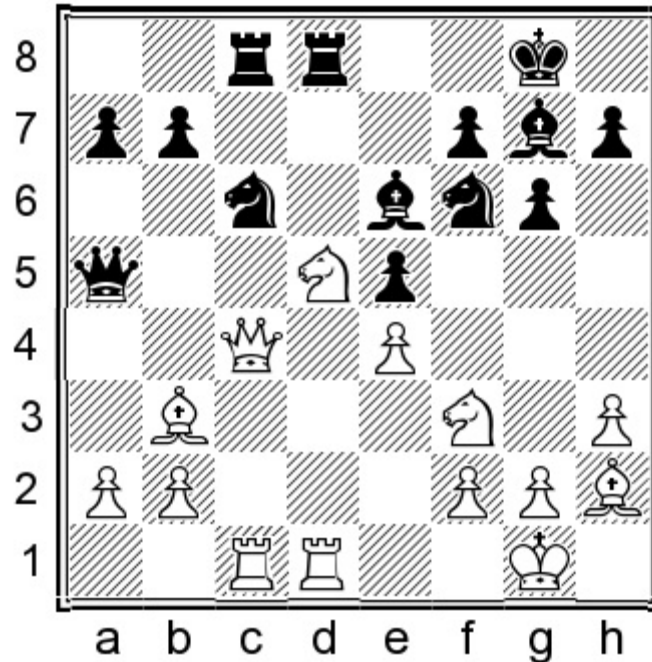
15... ♗e6!

An alternative is 15... ♗c5!? 16. ♗c4!? (or 16.e4 ♜ad8!) 16...e4 17. ♗d4 ♗xd4 18. ♗e7+ ♗h8 19.exd4 ♗d3 20. ♖cd1 ♜ad8 21. ♗xf5 ♚xf5 22. ♗xd3 exd3 23. ♚xd3 ♚xd3 24. ♖xd3 ♖xd4=, Mecking-Lima, Sao Paulo 2005.

16. ♖fd1

16. ♖xc6 is innocuous owing to 16... ♗xd5.

16...♖fd8 17.♚c4 ♘f6 18.e4 ♜ac8



This position has been known since 1971 as the main line of the ♔f4 system. The opening stage is over. Both sides have completed their development. The white bishop is not too impressive on h2, so White should try something quickly:

19.♘g5!

Alternatively:

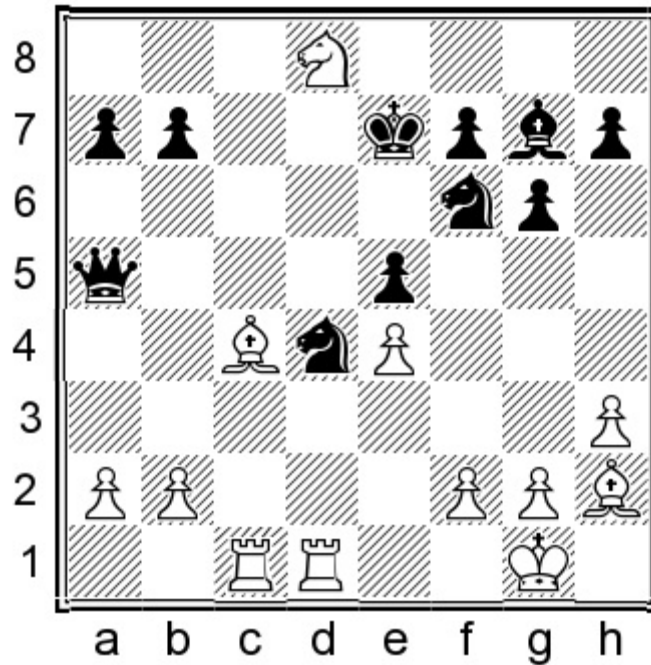
19.♚c3 ♚xc3 20.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 21.bxc3 ♙xb3 22.axb3 ♘a5=.

19.♚c5 ♚xc5 20.♞xc5 ♘xe4 21.♞xc6 ♞xc6 22.♘e7+ ♔f8 23.♘xc6 ♞xd1+ 24.♙xd1 bxc6 25.♙c2 ♘c5 26.♘xe5 ♙xa2 27.♘xc6 ♙b3 28.♙xb3=.

19...♘d4 20.♘e7+ ♔f8

Note the funny mate after 20...♔h8 21.♚xe6! fxe6 22.♘f7#.

21.♘xe6+ ♔xe7 22.♘xd8 ♞xc4 23.♙xc4



A critical position for the assessment of line B1. Black has several playable options, but in all of them a draw is the most likely outcome:

a) 23... ♖xe4 24. ♗xf7 (24. ♗xb7 ♕b6) 24... ♕b6 25. ♗xe5

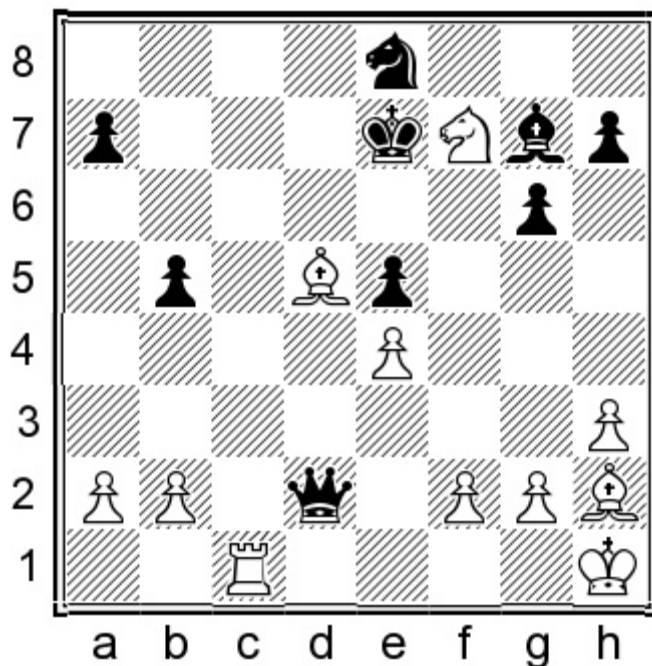
25. ♕xe5? ♗f3+! 26. gxf3 ♕xf2+ 27. ♖h1 ♕xf3+ 28. ♖h2 ♕f2+ 29. ♖h1 ♕xe5 30. ♗xe5 ♗g3#.

25... ♕xe5 26. ♕xe5 ♗f3+ with perpetual. This draw has been known since the game Timman-Ivanchuk, Hilversum 1991.

b) 23... ♕h6 24. ♗xb7 (24. ♕xe5?! ♕xe5 25. ♗xf7 ♕f4 26. ♗xh6 ♕xh6 ♠ Huzman-Dorfman, Lvov 1988)

24... ♕c7 25. ♖c3 ♗xe4 26. ♖xd4 ♗xc3 27. bxc3 ♕xb7 28. ♕xe5, with a balanced position.

c) 23... ♗e8!?. This was the choice of Kamsky against Kramnik, Moscow 2008: 24. ♗xf7 b5 25. ♕d5 ♗e2+ 26. ♖h1 ♗xc1 27. ♖xc1 ♕d2



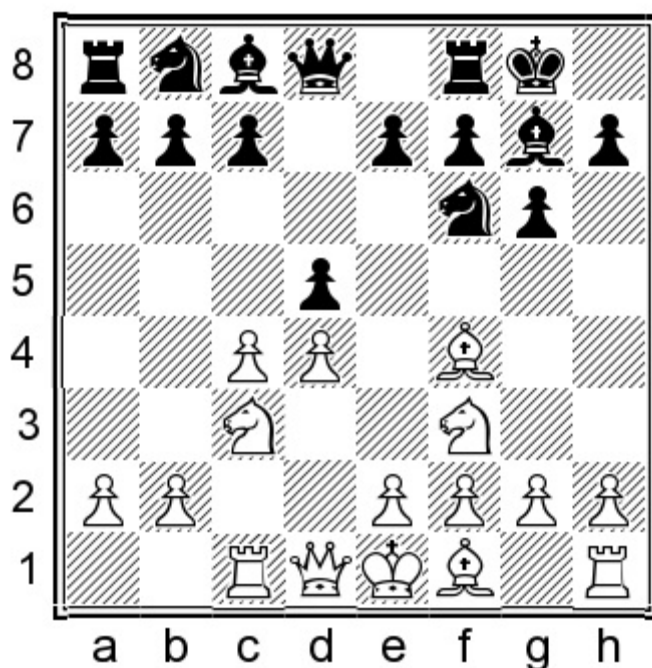
28.♖c6 (or 28.♖c8 ♜xf2 29.♔g1 ♜f1 30.♞a8 ♘c7 31.♞xa7 ♔d7 32.b3 g5 33.a4 g4 34.hxg4 ♜f6 35.g5 ♜f4 36.axb5 ♜h4+) 28...♜xf2

The correspondence game Kovacs-Klimakov 2008, went 28...♜xb2 and a draw was signed.

29.♔g1 ♜f1 30.♞a6 ♘c7 31.♞xa7 ♔d7 32.b3 g5 33.a4 g4 34.hxg4 ♜f6 35.g5 ♜f4 36.axb5 ♜h4+, draw.

B2. 6.♖c1

This line is assessed as not too challenging. Black usually answers 6...dxc4 – line B22, but I recommend instead a simple and easy to learn approach (line B21).



B21. 6...c5!?!; **B22.** 6...dxc4.

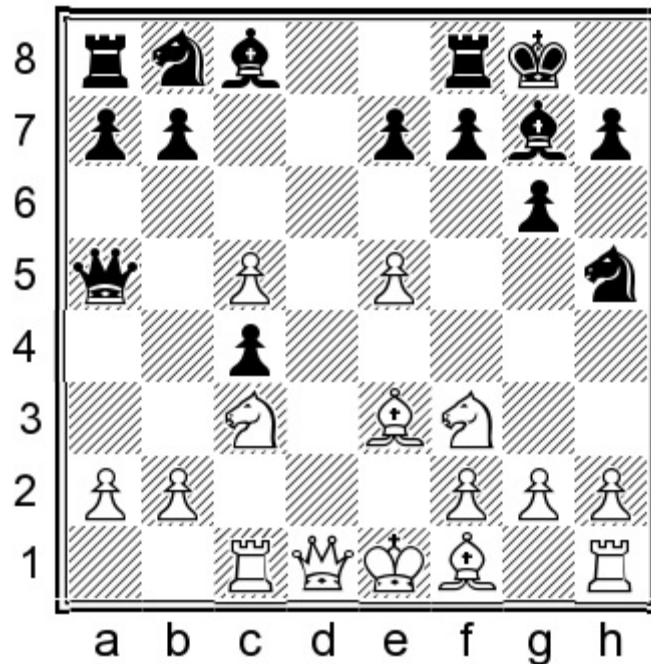
B21. 6...c5!? 7.dxc5 dxc4

Kiril Georgiev recommends 7...♙e6 8.♘d4 ♘c6 9.♘xe6 fxe6 10.e3 d4!?, which is more tangled.

8.♙xd8

White can switch here to line B1 with 8.e3 ♗a5 9.♙xc4 ♗xc5.

8.e4 ♗a5 9.e5 (9.♘d2 ♙e6 10.♙xc4 ♙xc4 11.♘xc4 ♗xc5=) 9...♘h5! is unclear. My analysis suggests that Black has good counterplay in the sharp middlegame: 10.♙e3



10...♘c6

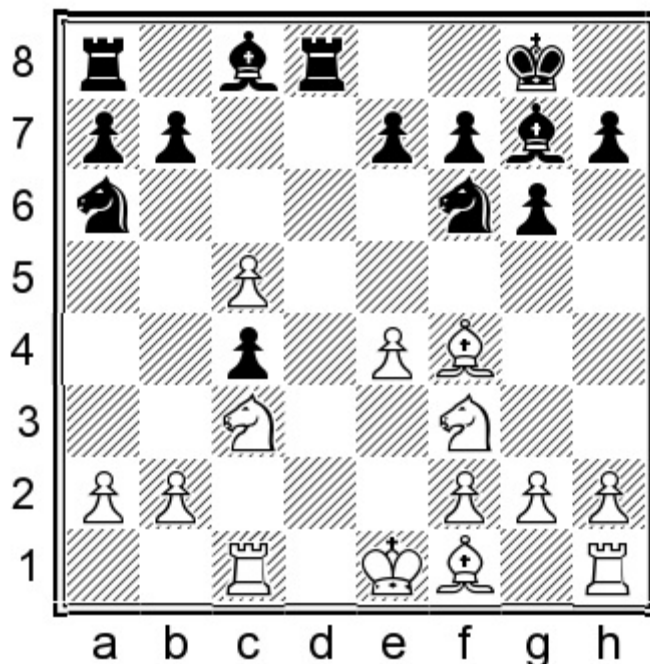
Besides, 10...♞d8 11.♗a4 ♗xa4 12.♘xa4 ♘c6 may be simpler.

11.♙xc4 (11.♘d2 ♞d8!?) 11...♙g4 12.♙e2 (12.e6 fxe6 13.♗b3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♘e5 15.♙e2 ♘f4 16.♙xf4 ♞xf4 17.♗xb7 ♞af8) 12...♞ad8 13.♗b3! (13.♗a4 ♗xa4 14.♘xa4 ♙d7! 15.0-0 ♘xe5=) 13...♙xf3 14.♙xf3 ♘xe5 15.♙e2 ♘f6 16.♗xb7 ♘fg4 17.♙g5 ♞b8 18.♗a6 ♗xc5 19.0-0 ♘d3 20.♙xe7 ♗xe7 21.♗xd3 ♞fd8 22.♗e4 ♗xe4 23.♘xe4 ♙xb2 24.♞c2 ♘f6=.

8...♞xd8 9.e4

9.e3 ♘a6 10.c6 bxc6 11.♙xc4 ♘d5 or 11...♘b4 is equal.

9...♘a6



10.e5?!

10.c6 bxc6 11.♔xc4 ♖c5 12.♗e5 ♕e6 13.♕xe6 ♗xe6 14.♕e3?! (14.♕g3=) left White lagging behind in development after 14...♗xe4 15.♗xc6 ♕xc3+!, Van Wely-Malisauskas, Novy Smokovec 1992.

10...♗d5!

Black owns the initiative.

B22. 6...dxc4 7.e4

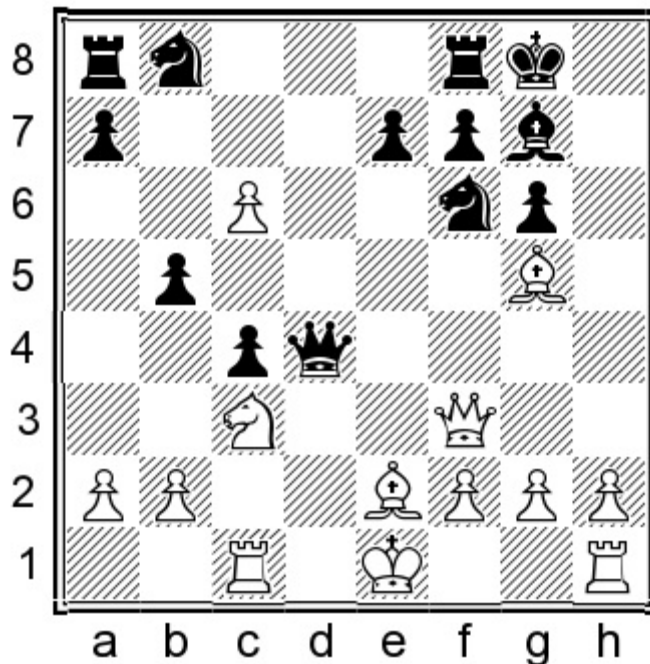
The solid 7.e3 is commonly met by 7...♕e6, when White must move a second time the same piece.

Kiril Georgiev recommends 7...♗bd7!? 8.♕xc4 ♗h5 9.♕g5 h6 10.♕h4 g5 with complications.

11.♗d2 e5 12.♖xh5 exd4 13.exd4 gxh4 looks OK. Perhaps Edouard's invention 11.g4 needs further testing. In my opinion 11...♗b6 12.♕b3 ♕xg4 13.h3 ♕xf3 14.♖xf3 ♗f6 15.♕g3 c5 16.dxc5 ♗bd7 17.♗a4 ♖a5+ 18.♔f1 b5 19.cxb6 axb6 20.♔g1 ♖ac8 is roughly equal.

8.♗g5 ♕d5 9.e4 h6 10.exd5 hxg5 11.♕xg5 ♗xd5

11...b5!? 12.♖f3 (12.♕e2 c6!) 12...c6 13.dxc6 ♖xd4 14.♕e2, leads to interesting sharp play.

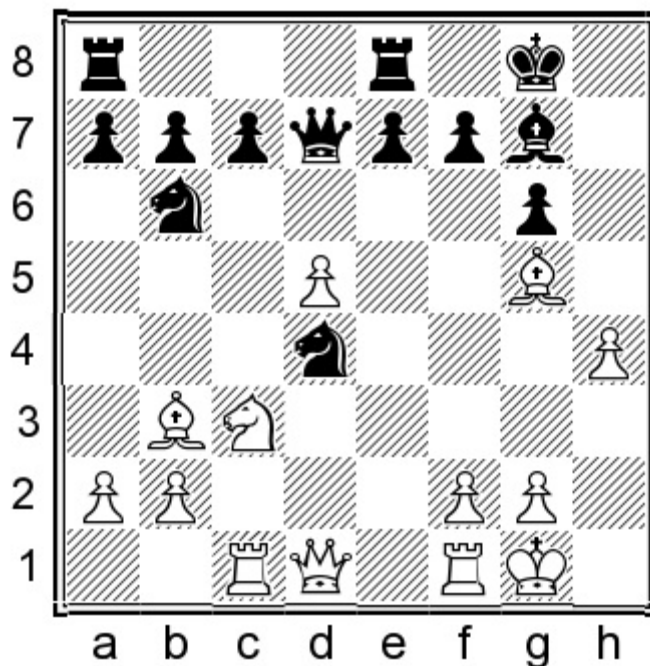


An illustrative line is 14... ♖b6 15. ♕e3 ♗a6 16. c7 ♘bd7 17. 0-0 ♝ac8 18. ♗g3 ♘b6 19. ♗g5 e5 20. ♗xe5 ♘fd5 21. ♗g5 ♘xe3 22. fxe3 ♝xc7 23. ♘xb5 ♞d7=.

12. ♕xc4 ♘b6 13. ♕b3 ♘c6 14. d5 ♘d4 15. 0-0 ♗d7

15... ♘xb3 16. ♗xb3 ♕xc3 led to a quick draw in Dreev-Mareco, Forni di Sopra 2019 – 17. bxc3 ♗xd5 18. ♕xe7 ♗xb3 19. axb3 ♝fe8 20. ♕g5 a5 21. ♞fd1 a4 22. bxa4 ♝xa4 ½-½.

16. h4!? ♝fe8



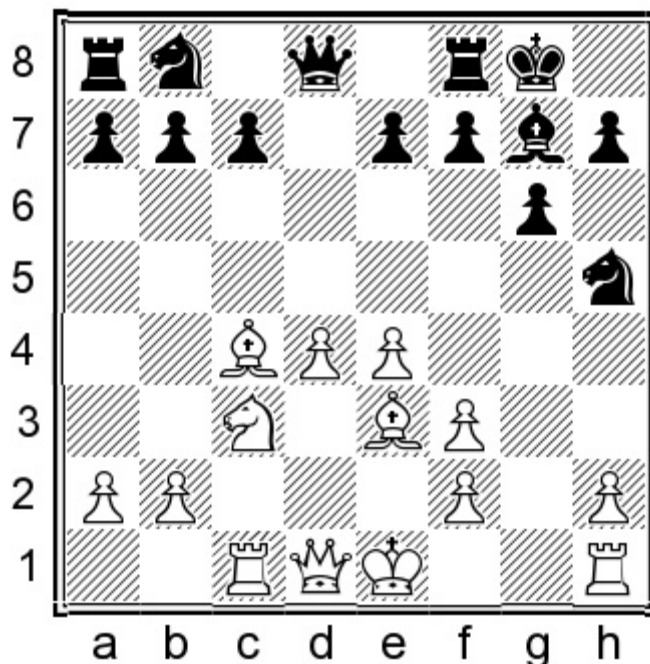
This position looks dangerous for Black, although concrete analysis suggests he should hold it:

17. a3 ♘xb3 18. ♗xb3 ♝ad8 with a dynamic balance, Vitiugov-Vachier Lagrave, Shenzhen 2018. 17. ♞e1 ♝ad8 18. a4 ♘xb3 19. ♗xb3 ♕xc3! 20. ♝xc3 ♘xd5! 21. ♝g3 ♖g7 22. h5 ♗d6= (Kiril Georgiev).

The latest top-level game saw an attempt to improve the above-mentioned idea:

17.a4 ♖xb3 18.♙xb3 ♕xc3!? 19.♞xc3 ♚xd5 20.♚c2. Here in Xiong-So, Saint Louis 2019, Black decided to return the pawn with 20...♞ad8 (An older correspondence game featured 20...c6 21.♞g3 ♚f5 22.♙b3 with sufficient compensation. It also concluded peacefully.) 21.♞xc7 ♞c8 and held the draw.

7...♕g4 8.♕xc4 ♕xf3 9.gxf3 ♖h5 10.♕e3



We play on the dark squares:

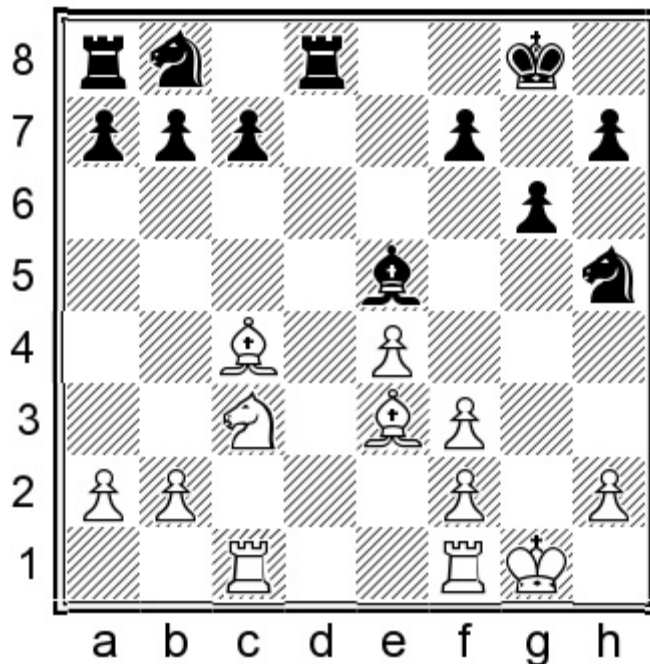
10...e5

10...e6!? is more tangled – 11.f4 ♚h4 12.♙f3 ♖c6 13.e5 ♞fd8∞.

11.dxe5 ♕xe5 12.♙xd8

Or 12.♙b3?! ♖c6 13.♙xb7 ♚f6∞.

12...♞xd8 13.0-0



Black has two decent plans here – the solid 13...♖d7, leaving c6 for the pawn, and the more active:

13...♗c6!? 14.♗d5!

Or 14.♖fd1 ♗d4! 15.♙d5 c5, with full control of the dark squares, Bosboom-Akesson, Hafnarfjordur 1998. Similar is 14.♙d5 ♗d4!.

Or 14.♗e2 ♙xb2! 15.♖b1 ♗e5=.

14...♗a5 15.♙g5 ♖d7 16.♙b5 c6 17.b4! cxb5 18.bxa5 ♖e8!

The game is level. Black prepares counterplay with ...f5, for instance, 19.♖fd1 f5! 20.♙e3 a6 21.f4 ♙b2 22.♖c2 ♙a3=.

Sumets-Shishkin, Milan 2009 saw 19.♖c5 a6 20.♖fc1 f6=, 20...f5 also deserves attention.

C. 5.e3!

The most unpleasant move. White keeps the option of developing the king's knight on e2 from where it would be able to support ♗c3.

5...c5

Botvinnik claims that 5...0-0!? is more precise because Black avoids the very sharp line with ♗ge2. Instead White can win the c7-pawn by exchanging first on d5.

That variation is not dangerous, but it is deeply analysed and should lead almost certainly to a draw.

This is the only reason why I did not choose it for the main line.

Still, it is a reliable weapon, so I examine it in **game 8** Sarana-Alekseenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2018.

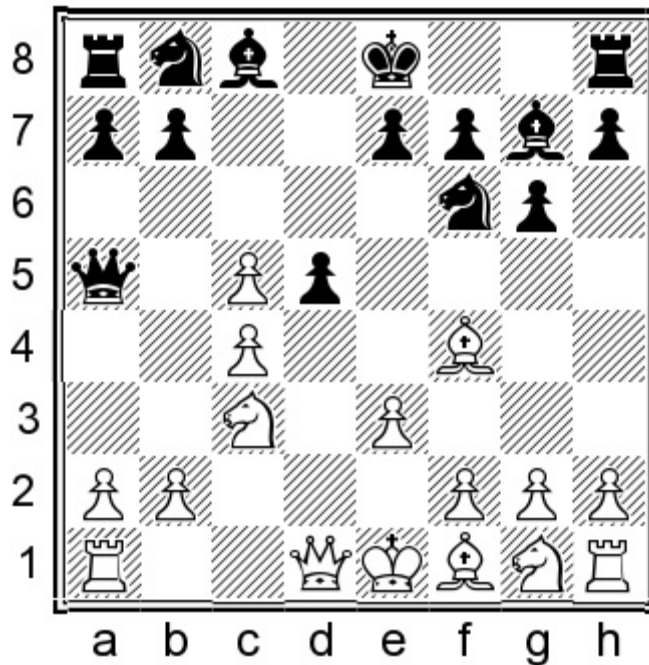
6.dxc5

Botvinnik considers 6.♙xb8 ♖xb8 7.♚a4+ ♕d7 8.♚xa7 as an argument against the early 5...c5, but I think that such a greedy approach in a sharp opening as the Grünfeld is rather misguided. After all the a7-pawn has no significance, while development does matter. We continue with 8...cxd4 9.♚xd4 0-0 10.cxd5 ♚a5 and White must be happy to live up to move 30.

6...♚a5

Black's idea is based on the variation 7.cxd5? ♘xd5 8.♚xd5 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♚xc3+ 10.♔e2 ♚xa1 11.♙e5 ♚b1 12.♙xh8 ♙e6 13.♚d3 ♚xa2+ with a winning initiative. For instance: 14.♔e1 f6 15.♙g7 ♘c6 16.♘f3 ♖d8 17.♘d4 ♙f5 18.♚b5 ♖d7 19.♙e2 ♚a1+ 20.♙d1 ♘xd4 21.exd4 ♚xd4+ or 14.♔f3 f6 15.♙g7 ♘c6 16.♔g3 ♖d8 17.♚e2 ♚b1 18.h4 ♖d1 19.♘f3 a5.

Instead White has the following reasonable continuations:



C1. 7.♚b3; **C2.** 7.♚a4+; **C3.** 7.♘f3; **C4.** 7.♖c1!

C1. 7.♚b3 ♕d7!

Preventing the possible exchange of queens after 7...0-0 8.♚b5!±.

8.♙e5

White has also tried:

8.cxd5 ♖xd5 9.♗xd5 ♕xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 11.♔e2 ♗xa1–+, Levesque-Gustafsson, playchess.com 2004.

8.♗xb7 0-0 9.♕c7 (9.♗xa8 ♕c6 10.♗xb8 ♖xb8 11.♕xb8 ♖e4–+) 9...♗xc5 10.♗xa8 ♕c6 11.♗xb8 ♖xb8 12.♕xb8 ♖e4 13.♖ge2 ♗b4 14.♖d1 ♖xc3 with a decisive attack, Gleeson-Chabot, WCCF email 2000. White is lost after both 15.bxc3 ♗xb8 16.cxd5 ♕a4 17.♖c1 ♗b2–+ and 15.♖xc3 ♗xb8 16.♖xd5 ♗xb2 17.♖xe7+ ♖f8–+.

8.♖f3 ♖a6! (8...♖e4 9.♖c1 ♖xc5 10.♗d1±) 9.♗xb7 0-0 with perfect compensation since 10.c6 fails to 10...♖e4.

8.♖c1 ♕c6 9.♖f3 ♖bd7=.

8...dxc4 9.♕xc4

9.♗xc4 ♖c6 10.♖f3 ♖xe5 11.♖xe5 0-0 also gives Black nice compensation.

9...0-0 10.♖f3 ♖a6 11.♕xa6

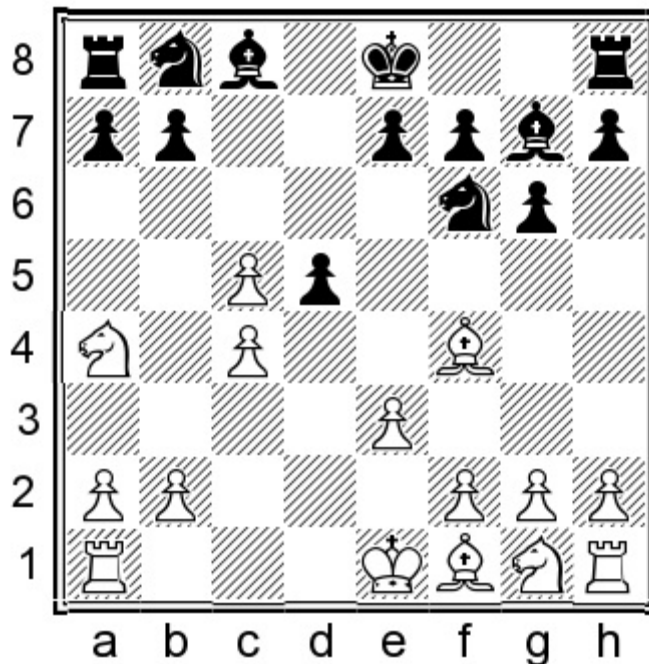
It is difficult to play such a move, but 11.0-0 ♖xc5 12.♗c2 b5 was clearly better for Black in Lautier-Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 1998 – 13.♕d5 ♖ac8 14.a3 ♕f5 15.♗d2 ♖d3±.

11...♗xa6 12.0-0-0 ♖fc8

Black's bishop pair makes his position preferable.

C2. 7.♗a4+ ♗xa4 8.♖xa4

The exchange of queens eliminates most of Black's imminent tactical threats. White hopes to consolidate and remain a pawn up in the endgame. Still, Black's piece activity promises him a nice game. Recently only Dreev opted for this line at top level, and was happy to escape with a draw.



8...d7 9.c3 e4!

After 9...dxc4 10.cxc4 c6 11.f3 (11...b5 fd7!) 11...bd7 White's task is easier:

12.e5

Or 12.0-0 h5 13.g5 (13.d5 c8 14.g5 xd5 15.xd5 xc5 16.xb7 h6=) 13...0-0 14.ac1 xf4 15.exf4 xc5 16.b4 a4 17.xa4 xa4 18.d5 h6 19.f3 fd8 20.xb7 ab8 21.c7 d7 22.c8+. Here Spacek and Berndt, Berlin 1990, signed a draw although only Black can play for a win.

12...xe5 13.xe5 xg2 14.g1 c6 15.b4 a6 16.e2, Yuferov-Gogichaishvili, Naberezhnye Chelny 1988. White has some initiative on the queenside.

10.dxd5

10.c1 xc3 11.bxc3 dxc4 12.cxc4 c6 13.f3 d7 or 10.e4 (Ftacnik) 10...dxe4 11.0-0-0 a6= are obviously fine for Black. Sharper positions arise after:

10.ge2 xc5!?

Immediately targeting the weak square d3. 10...a6 11.cxd5 axc5 is inferior in view of 12.d1! (The alternatives assure Black of active play: 12.d4 xc3 13.bxc3 c8 or 12.e4 xe4 13.d4 c8 14.d1 a4!? 15.b3 d7 or 15.b1 0-0 16.d3 f6 17.d6 exd6 18.xd6 fd8 19.a3 h5.) 12...c8 13.e4 xe4 14.f3 c5 15.b3±.

11.dxd5 d3+ 12.d2 xf2 13.c7+ d8 14.xa8 e5 15.g5+ f6. The knight on a8 is doomed.

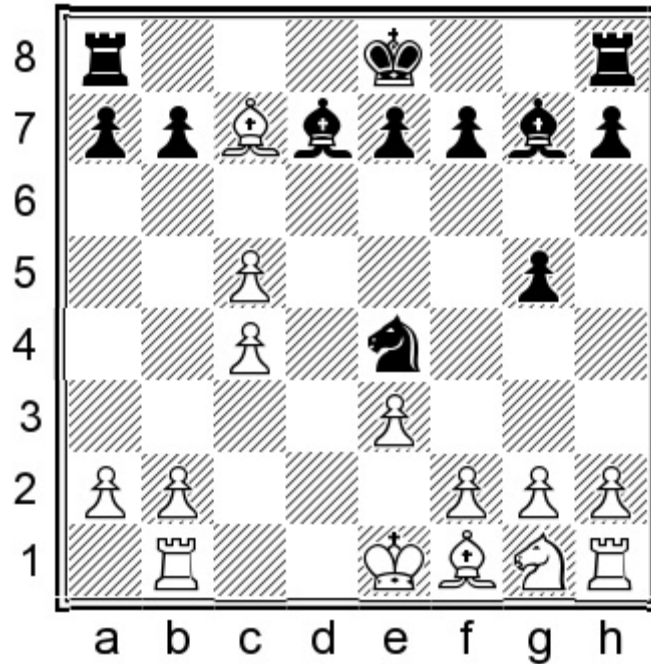
10...a6 11.f3

This way White anticipates ...e6, which leads to a slight edge for Black after 11.f3 e6 12.c7+ xc7

13.♙xc7 ♜xb2 14.♞b1 ♜c3+ 15.♚e2 ♜xc5.

11.♞b1 is an ambitious attempt to keep the extra pawn. Then 11...♙f5 12.f3 ♜c3 13.♞a1 ♜a4! is about equal. The best reply to 11.♞b1 is 11...g5! 12.♜c7+ (12.♙g3 ♙f5) 12...♜xc7 13.♙xc7.

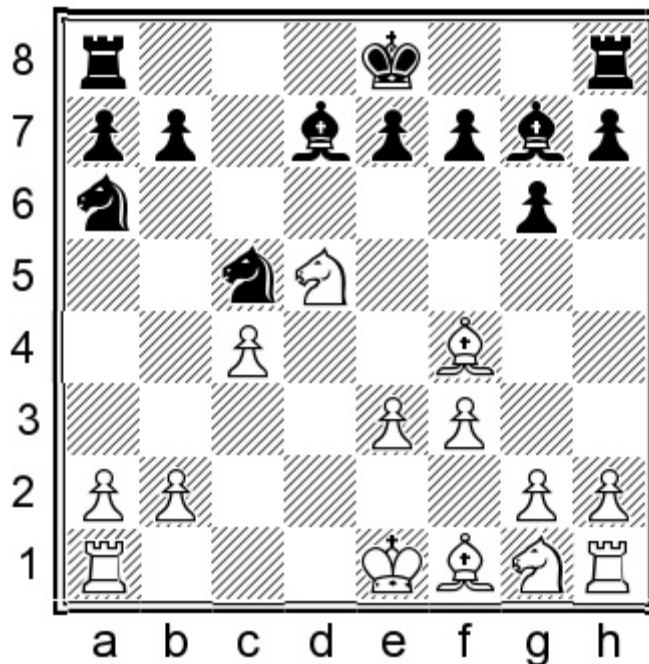
We see a typical picture for this variation. Black's pieces are so active, that it is White who must be careful. For instance:



a) 13...♙f5 14.♙d3 ♞c8 15.f3 ♜g3 16.♙xg3 ♙xd3 17.♞d1 ♙xc4 18.b3 ♙b5 19.♞d5 h5. The game is level, for instance: 20.a4 ♙c6 21.♞xg5 ♙f6 22.♞f5 ♙d7 23.♞d5 h4 24.♙f2 ♙e6 25.♞d3 ♞xc5 26.♜e2 ♞c2 27.e4 ♞b2 28.♜d4 ♞b1+ with a draw, or:

b) 13...♞c8!? 14.c6 ♞xc7 (14...♙xc6 15.♙a5 ♜c5) 15.cxd7+ ♞xd7 16.♙e2 ♜d2 17.♞c1 ♙xb2 18.♞c2 ♙a3=.

11...♜exc5



Despite the extra pawn, White achieves the meagre 27% in practice.

12.0-0-0

The other ways to defend b2 are:

12.♘c3 ♖a4.

12.♙g5 ♙xb2 13.♖b1 f6=, Dreev-Gopal, Zuerich 2009.

12.♖b1 is too passive. We should answer 12...e6

12...♖c8 13.♙g5! f6 14.♙h4 g5 15.♙g3 e6 16.♘c3 ♖b4 17.♖d1 f5 18.♖d2!±.

13.♘c7+ ♖xc7 14.♙xc7 ♖a4 15.♙d6 ♖xb2 16.♙a3 ♖a4 17.♖xb7 ♙f8!. Paradoxically, exchanges favour Black who will eventually remain with a raging rook on the second rank and a perfect blockading knight at c5. White is unable to cut across his plans with 18.♙c1 a5 19.a3 because after 19...♙d6 20.e4 f6 Black will follow with ...♔e7, ...♖hb8, and will invade the queenside anyway. And after 18.♙xf8 ♖xf8 19.♖e2 ♔e7 20.♖d4 ♖c5 21.♖b4 ♖fb8 22.a3, Novikov-Sutovsky, Koszalin 1998, Black owns the initiative. He could have underlined that with 22...♖b6! 23.♙e2 ♖a6 24.♖b3 ♖c8 25.♖xc5 ♖xc5 26.♖b3 ♖ca5 27.♖b7 ♖xa3 28.c5 ♖c6 29.0-0 ♔d8 30.♖d1 ♖c7 winning a pawn.

12...e6

12...♖c8 is imprecise owing to 13.e4 and Black fails to build a pawn barrier on f6, e5 – 13...e6 14.♘c3 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 f6 16.e5!

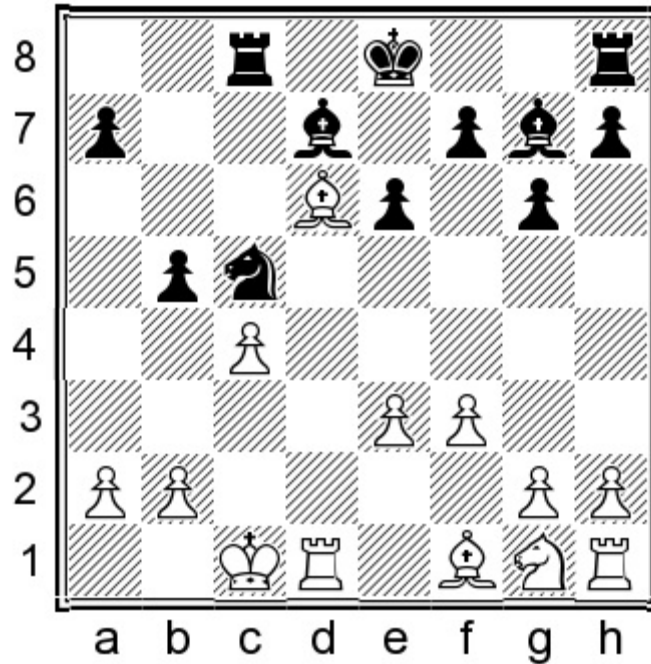
13.♘c7+

13.♘c3?! ♙xc3 14.bxc3 f6 leaves White an extra doubled pawn, but this structure is unpleasant for him because his pieces do not have good stands – 15.e4 e5 16.♙e3 ♖c8 17.♖d5 ♙e6 18.♖d2 ♔e7!+,

13...♖xc7 14.♙xc7 ♜c8 15.♙d6

Ftacnik also considers 15.♙g3 b5 16.cxb5 (16.b3 bxc4 17.♙xc4 ♖a4♞) 16...♖a4+, with an initiative.

15...b5



Even without queens, the position remains very sharp. White's king is in danger under the fire of 3 long-range pieces, but our own monarch is in his turn rather restrained by the bishop on d6. In general, Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

16.b3

Of course 16.cxb5? loses to 16...♖e4+ 17.♗b1 ♖f2. The attempt to close the queenside by 16.♙xc5 ♜xc5 17.b4 ♜c7 18.c5 does not work too well due to 18...♙c3 19.a3 a5 20.♗c2 (20.♜xd7 ♖xd7 21.♙xb5+ ♗e7♞) 20...axb4 21.♗b3 ♜xc5 22.axb4 ♜c7.

16...♖b7

16...bxc4 is about equal: 17.♙xc4 (17.bxc4 ♖b7 18.♙a3 ♙b5 19.♗b1 ♙a4♞) 17...♖a4! 18.♞d2□ (18.bxa4 ♜xc4+ 19.♗d2 ♙xa4♞; 18.♗d2 ♙c3+ 19.♗e2 ♖b2 20.♞c1 ♖xc4 21.bxc4 ♜xc4 22.♗d3 ♙b5 23.a4 ♙a6 24.♜xc3 ♜c6+ 25.♗c2 ♜xd6 26.♖h3=) 18...♙b5 19.♞c2 ♙xc4 20.bxc4 (20.♜xc4 ♜xc4+ 21.bxc4 ♗d7 22.♙g3 ♜c8♞) 20...♗d7 21.c5 (21.♙a3 ♜c6 22.♖e2 ♜hc8 23.♞d1+ ♗e8=) 21...♜c6! 22.♖e2 (22.♞d2 ♗c8 23.♞c2 ♗b7 24.♖e2 ♖xc5) 22...♖xc5! 23.♞d1! (23.♙xc5 ♜hc8 24.♞d1+ ♗e8 25.♗d2 ♜xc5 26.♜xc5 ♜xc5♞, Novikov-Yermolinsky, New York 1998) 23...♜xd6 24.♜xc5=, intending ...♙a5.

17.♖b1 ♜xd6 18.♞xd6 ♕e7 19.♞d1 a6

Or 19...♙h6 20.f4 e5, when Black's bishop pair is in full control, e.g. 21.♙d3 bxc4 22.♙xc4 ♙f5+♚, Kiss-Rowson, Reykjavik 2002.

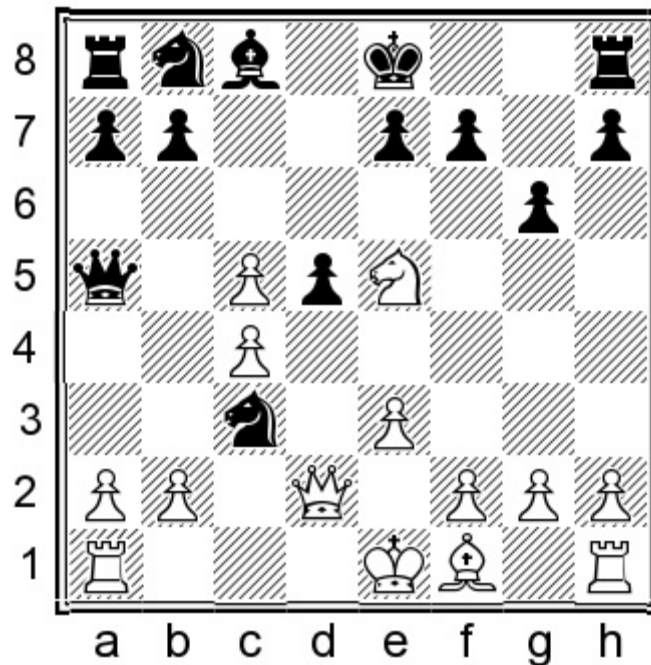
20.cxb5 axb5 21.♜h3 ♞c3

Black has an initiative, Vosselman-Malashenkov, ICCF 2014.

C3. 7.♜f3 ♜e4!?

We can transpose to other main lines by 7...0-0 8.♞c1 dxc4, but the text is simpler.

8.♙e5 ♙xe5 9.♜xe5 ♜xc3 10.♚d2



10...f6

10...♙e6 is also possible. Black recaptures the material and comfortably castles – 11.♞c1 0-0 12.♞xc3 ♞xc5 13.b4 ♞c7 14.c5, Pinter-Ruck, Hungary 2001, when 14...♜c6= is a little more precise than 14...♞fd8 as in the stem game.

11.♜f3 dxc4

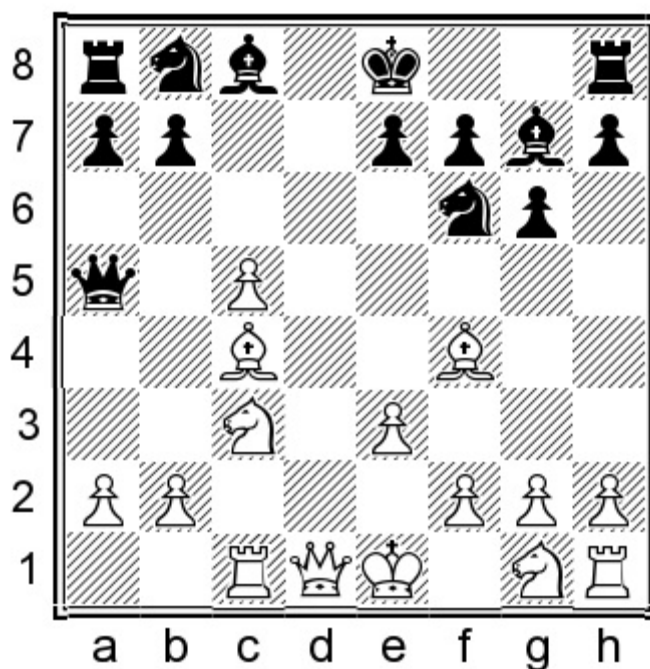
11...♙e6 12.♞c1 dxc4 13.♞xc3 ♞xa2 is also balanced.

12.♙xc4 ♞b4

The threat ...♖xa2 evens the chances. Black has comfortable play following 13.♙xc3 ♜xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♘d7 15.♙b5 a6 16.♙a4 ♕f7 17.c6 bxc6 18.♙xc6 ♝a7 19.♙d5+ e6 20.♙b3 ♘c5 21.0-0 ♞c7=.

C4. 7.♞c1 dxc4 8.♙xc4

Losing tempi with 8.♙a4+ could be risky for White, even without queens: 8...♙xa4 9.♘xa4 ♙d7 10.♞xc4 ♘d5! 11.♘f3 ♘c6↑. Black simply develops his pieces, threatening ...♘a5.



8...0-0!

In most branches of this system Black should not hurry to regain the sacrificed pawns. Here 8...♙xc5?? loses the queen after 9.♘b5 ♜b4+ 10.♕f1 ♘a6 11.a3 ♜a5 12.♙c7 ♘xc7 13.♘xc7+ ♜xc7 14.♙xf7+.

9.♘ge2

9.♘f3 transposes to line B12.

The text bolsters up the c3-knight. White is undeveloped for tactical attempts like:

9.♙a4 ♙xc5 10.♘b5 ♘d5 11.♘e2 ♘a6 12.♙b3 ♘xf4 13.♘xf4 ♙b4+ or:

9.a3?!

Setting up a trap, which in fact leads to unclear consequences: 9...♙xc5! 10.♘b5 ♙e6 11.♙e2 ♙f5 12.♘c7 g5! 13.♙g3 ♘e4. Now my opponent showed good appetite and took the rook, but turned up worse after 14.♘xa8 ♙xb2 15.♘f3 ♙a5+ 16.♕f1 ♙xc1 17.♙xc1 ♘a6³, Nikolov-Delchev 2001. He could have tried instead 14.f3!? ♘g3 15.hxg3 ♙xb2 16.♞b1 or 16.♙d3, aiming to exploit the open h-file. However, I recommend:

9...♘c6! 10.♙b3 (10.♘ge2 ♙xc5 11.♘b5 ♙h5=) 10...♙xc5 (10...♘e4=) 11.♙b5 ♙xb5 12.♙xb5 ♙e6 13.♘ge2 ♘d5.

9...♖xc5 10.♗b3!

10.♘b5? ♗b4+ 11.♔f1 a6 12.a3 ♗xb2 13.♖b1. White wins the queen, but this idea proves rather dubious. The rest of Black's pieces generate tons of threats while the rook at h1 is out of play:
13...♗xb1 14.♗xb1 axb5 15.♙xb5 ♖xa3 16.♙xb8 ♘e4!! 17.♗xe4 ♖a1+ 18.♘c1 ♖xc1+ 19.♔e2 ♖xh1+
20.♗xe7 ♙g4+ 21.f3 ♙xf3+ 22.♔xf3 ♖xb8 23.♗c7 ♖f8. This position should be lost for White.

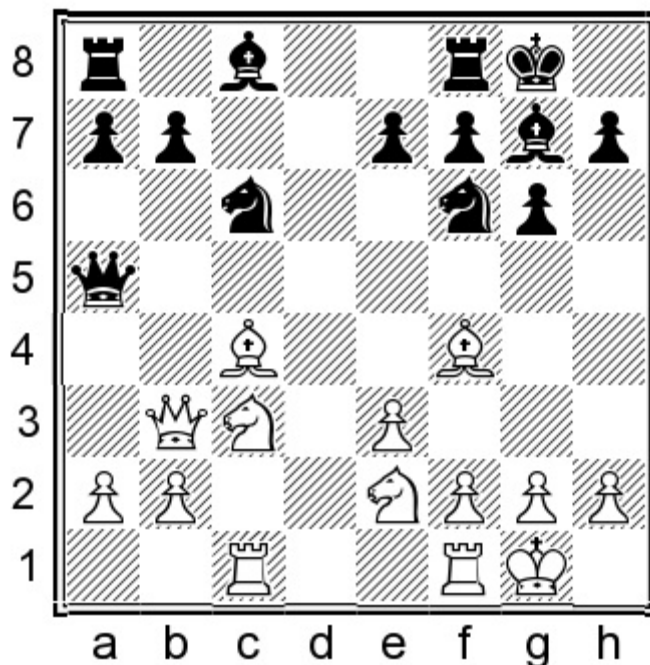
10.♙b3?! Black has no problems after this waste of time. Any normal move should be OK: 10...♗a5
11.0-0 ♘a6! (eyeing the d3-square) 12.♗e1 ♖d8 13.♖d1 ♖xd1 14.♗xd1 ♘c5 15.♙c2 ♙e6+,
Kakageldyev-Sasikiran, Jodhpur 2003, or 10...♘c6 11.0-0 ♗h5 (10...♗a5) 12.♘g3 ♗h4 13.♘ge2 ♖d8
14.♗e1 ♘h5=.

10.♗d4 ♗a5! (Or 10...♗h5 11.♙xb8 ♖xb8 12.♗xa7 ♙d7 13.♘g3 ♗h4 14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.exd4 b5, Istratecu-Iordachescu, Predeal 2006.) 11.b4 ♗a3 12.♙xb8 ♖xb8 13.0-0 ♘g4+.

10...♗a5!

10...♘c6 is more popular. It could lead by force to a drawish endgame where White is a pawn up with little chances to convert it. See **game 6** Brömme-Ylönen, ICCF 2016.

11.0-0 ♘c6!



I do not like 11...♘bd7?! in view of 12.♖fd1

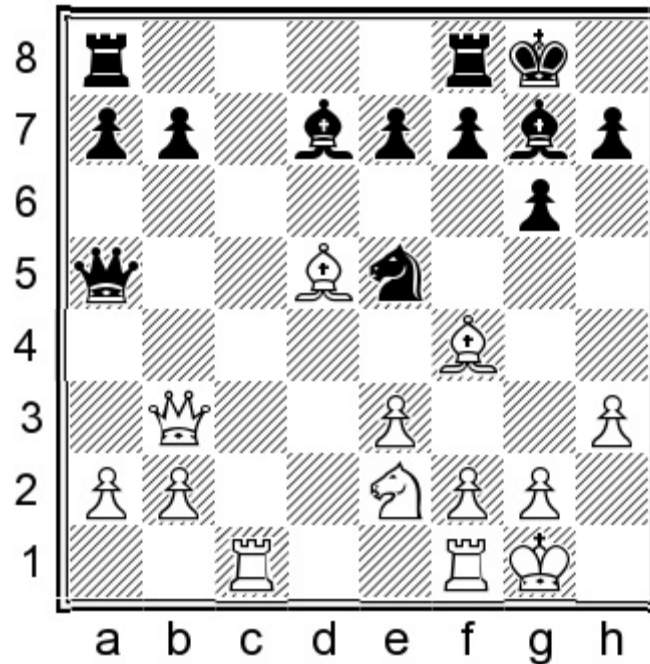
Or 12.a3 ♘b6 13.♙c7 ♙d7 and the game Wang Yue-Carlsen, Sofia 2009, eventually ended in a draw.

12...a6 (12...♘c5 13.♗b5 ♗xb5 14.♘xb5 ♙e6±) 13.♘d5!±.

12.♖fd1

The idea of ensuring a retreat for the dark-squared bishop by 12.h3 doesn't promise much. After 12...♘e5! 13.♙xe5

Or 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♙xd5 ♙d7!



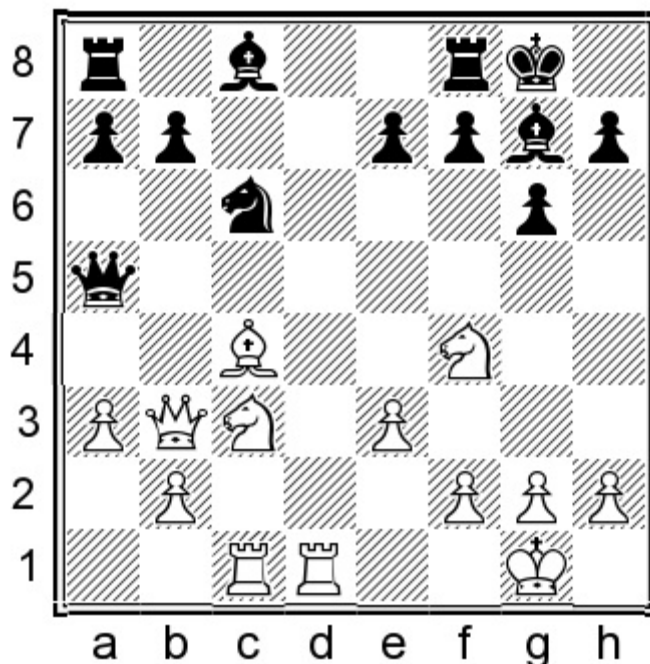
15.♖fd1 ♜ad8 16.♚xb7 ♙c8 17.♚b3 ♙a6 promises full compensation for the pawn – 18.♘g3 e6 19.♙e4 ♜xd1+ 20.♜xd1 (20.♚xd1 f5 21.♙b1 ♜d8=) 20...♘c4.

13...♚xe5 14.♖fd1 e6 (aimed against ♘d5) 15.♘d4 ♚a5, Black protects the a7-pawn and will soon develop the light-squared bishop, e.g. 16.♘db5 ♙d7 17.♘d6 ♙c6=.

12...♘h5! 13.a3

White prevents an exchange of queens through b4 and threatens to disturb Black's queen with 14.♜d5, or thrust the b-pawn after the preliminary ♚a2.

13...♘xf4 14.♘xf4



14...e6

The game Kaidanov-Mikhalevski, Lubbock 2008, introduced the amazing, I would even say, arrogant, idea:

14...♔g4!? 15.f3 (15.♖d5 ♔c7 16.♗c5∞) 15...♔c8.

Is the weakening of the whole complex of White's kingside dark squares worth two tempi?!

Kaidanov was obviously so perplexed, that he immediately lost the thread and decided to spend 2 tempi on his turn with 16.♘fd5? in order to provoke the useful move 16...e6!.

A sterner test of Black's idea would be 16.♘a4 e6 (preventing ♘c5) 17.♙d3 ♖d8 18.♙e4 ♗xd1+ 19.♗xd1.

It looks like Black is still under pressure, but 19...♗g5 seems to solve the problem of the ♔c8-development: 20.b4 e5! 21.♘d5 ♙e6 22.♗e1 ♙xd5 23.♙xd5 ♙h6 24.♖c3 ♖d8=. Black is ready to counterattack: 25.♙e4?! ♘e7 26.♙xb7? ♘f5 27.e4 ♘e3—+.

15.♙e2

White can try 15.♙b5 and take on c6, but Black should not have problems, having the bishop pair.

15...♖d8 16.♘d3

Or 16.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 17.♖d1 ♗e7=.

16...♙d7 17.♘e4=

We have been following the game Kraidman-W.Schmidt, Nice 1974, which eventually ended in a draw.

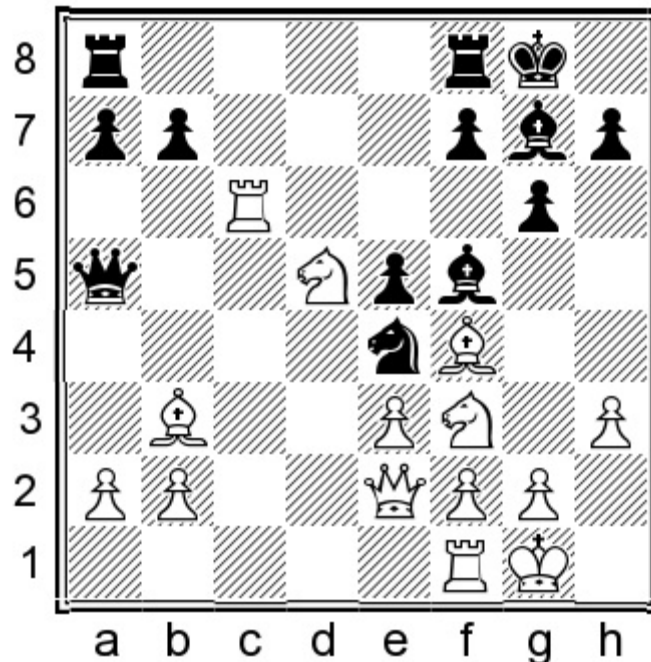
Chapter 2

Complete Games

5. Iljushin-V.Belov

Sochi 2006

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.♖f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♜a5 8.♞c1 dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♛xc5 10.♙b3 ♗c6 11.0-0 ♜a5 12.h3 ♙f5 13.♛e2 ♗e4 14.♗d5 e5 15.♞xc6!!

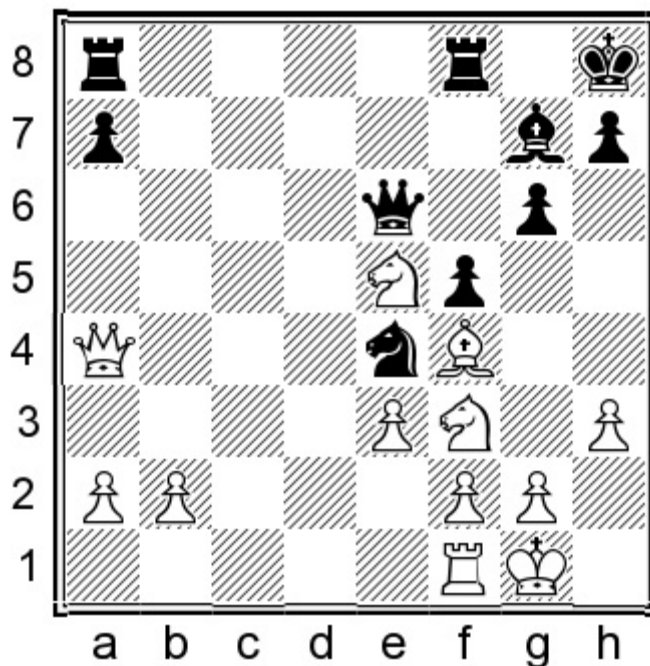


This move became popular after the 1986 match Karpov-Kasparov. Kasparov took on f4 and went on to draw, but White retains a small plus in this line. Lately Black prefers the more challenging capture.

15...bxc6 16.♗e7+ ♔h8 17.♗xc6 ♜b6 18.♗cxe5 ♙e6 19.♙xe6 ♜xe6 20.♛c2 f5!

Occasionally, Black opts for 20...♗f6 to avoid making weaknesses on the kingside. However, we can turn this vulnerability into a strength – if we push the pawns even further!

21.♛a4

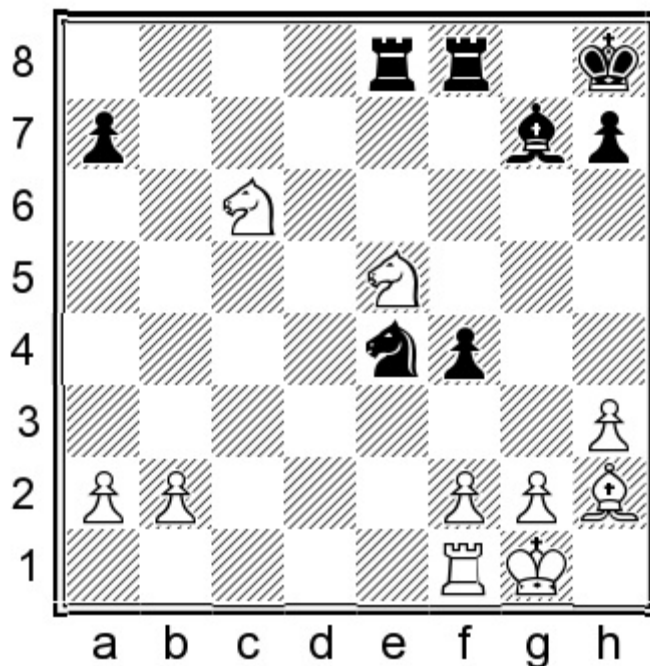


21...g5! 22.♔h2 ♖e8

22...♖ad8!? sets White some problems. It is threatening ...♖d5. The point is that:

23.♕xa7 g4 24.♘d4 ♕e8 promises a strong attack. White cannot trade queens by 25.♘ec6 (hoping for 25...♖a8 26.♕e7 ♕xe7 27.♘xe7 f4 28.hxg4 fxe3 with a draw) in view of 25...♖d7 26.♕b8 ♕h5. Therefore, he should choose:

23.♘d4 ♕e8 24.♕xe8 ♖dx8 25.♘dc6 f4 26.exf4 gxf4



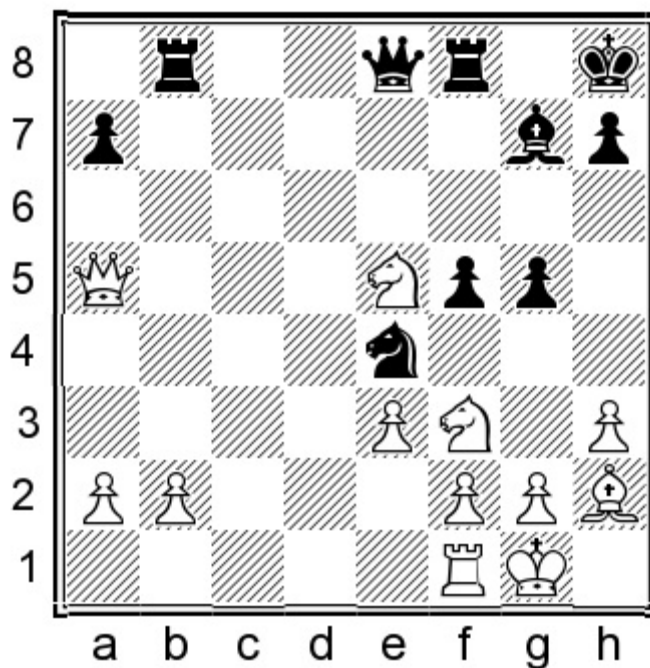
White should hold the draw – 27.♘d3 ♖e6 28.♘xa7 f3 29.♖e1 ♖d8 30.♘f4 ♖a6 31.♘b5 ♕xb2 32.gxf3 ♖g8+ 33.♔f1 ♘d2+ 34.♔e2 ♘c4 35.♘d5=, Shredder 12-Deep Junior 11, 2010.

23.♕a5

Nobody has taken on e8, but White has fair chances to make a draw after it.

Kosyrev-Sakaev, Internet 5' 2004 saw 23.♘c6 ♜c8 24.♘fd4 f4! (24...g4). The point is that 25.exf4 gxf4 26.♞e1 would lose to 26...♘c3!! 27.♞xe8 ♞fxe8 28.♞c4 ♞xc6! 29.♞f1 ♚xd4 30.bxc3 ♚xc3.

23...♞b8



Modern engines claim that Black can allow the luxury of spending a tempo on 23...a6, with slightly the better chances.

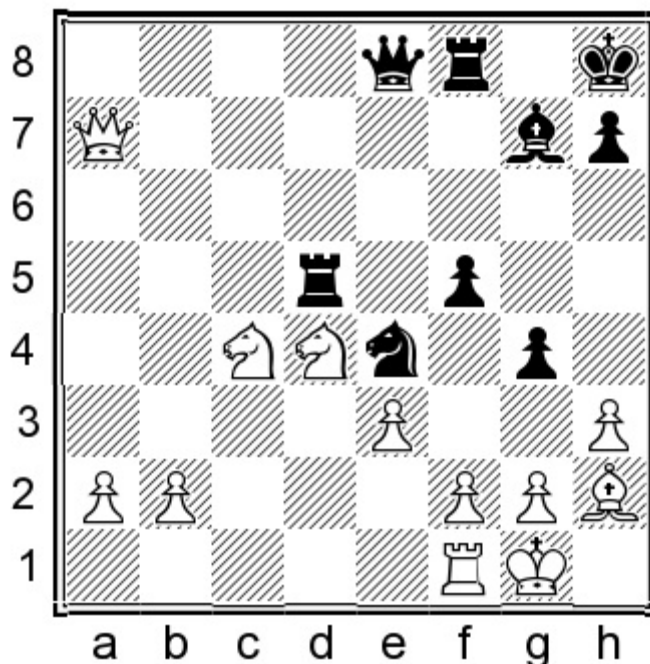
24.♘c4

24.♞xa7 ♞xb2 25.♘c4 is equal.

24...♞b5 25.♞xa7 g4 26.♘d4

Of course White should not open the f-file.

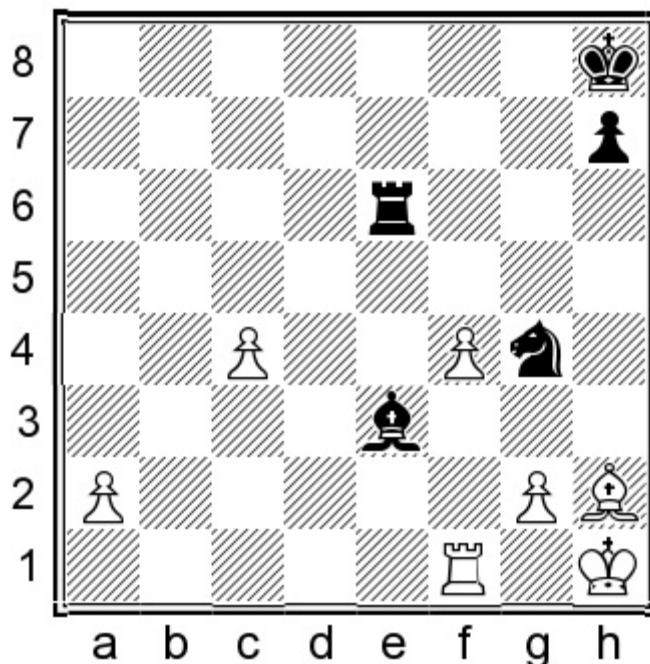
26...♞d5



Such positions are very difficult to evaluate over the board. One really needs an engine in the head to play them. This task can be facilitated by formulating a few postulates which both sides should have in mind:

1. White does not have any advantage here. No matter how many extra pawns he has, he is the defending side because his castling position is vulnerable and his only stronghold in the centre, d4, is about to be undermined after ...f4. The bishop on h2 is rather useless.
2. White should be seeking to trade queens at any cost.
3. Any other exchanges also help White.
4. He should keep his pieces together around the king. Any attempt to push queenside pawns only wastes time and discoordinates White's forces.

In the light of this to-do list, 27. ♖b6! f4 28. ♕e6! looks best because Black cannot avoid queens trade. Variations like 28... ♜xd4 29. ♖xe8 ♜xe8 30. exd4 g3 31. ♗e5 gxh2+ 32. ♕xh2 ♜a8 33. a3 ♕g8= or 28... ♜c5 29. b3 (29. ♗d6 ♗xd6 30. ♖xd6 ♜c8 31. ♗xf4 ♜d8 32. ♖c7 ♜d7 33. ♖c1 gxh3 34. ♗g3 hxg2 35. ♕xg2=) 29...g3 30. fxg3 ♜xc4 31. ♖xe8 should lead to a draw. If you do not believe in Black's attacking resources, look at this variation: 31. bxc4? ♗xd4 32. ♖xe8 ♗xe3+ 33. ♕h1 ♜xe8 34. gxf4 ♗f2+ 35. ♕g1 ♗xh3+ 36. ♕h1 ♗f2+ 37. ♕g1 ♗g4+ 38. ♕h1 ♜e6—+:



White has no defence against ...♖h6!

27.♙b7 ♜d7 28.♙b5 f4

Perhaps 28...gxh3 left more chances to Black:

29.♘e5 ♜a7 30.gxh3 ♙xb5 31.♘xb5 ♜xa2, or 29.♘xf5 hxg2 30.♙xg2 ♙h5 31.♙xd7 ♜xf5 32.♙c8+ ♜f8 33.♙h3 ♙g5+ 34.♙h1 ♘xf2+ 35.♜xf2 ♜xf2.

29.♘f5 g3 30.fxg3 ♜xf5 31.♙xf5 fxg3 32.b3 ♜a7

In the next moves Belov is trying to maintain some tension and confuse his opponent. 32...gxh2+ 33.♙xh2 ♘d2 was equal.

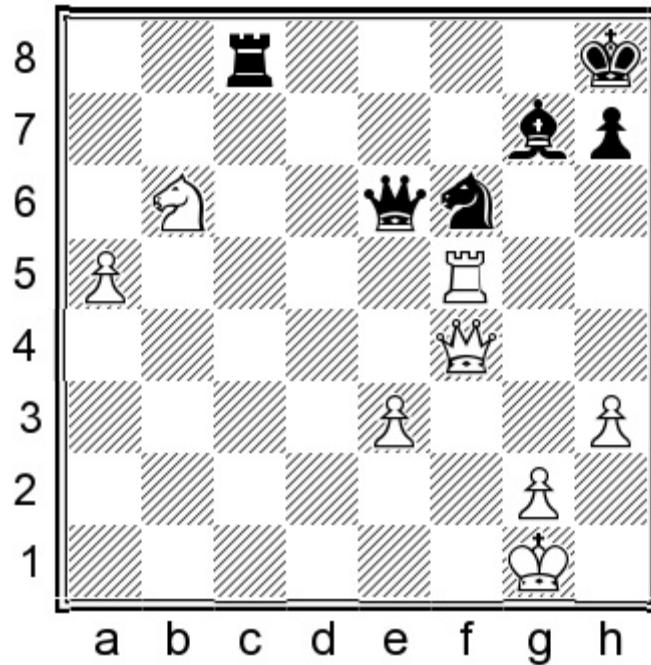
33.a4 ♜e7?! 34.♙f4?!

34.♙f4 gxh2+ 35.♙xh2 ♙b8 36.g3 ♘f6 was still unclear.

34...gxh2+ 35.♙xh2 ♜b7 36.a5 ♜xb3 37.♙c7 ♜b8 38.♙f4 ♘f6 39.♙f5 ♜c8 40.♙f4 ♙e6

40...♘e4! to prevent the knight from returning home with 41.♘d2, was better

41.♘b6?



The knight is protected on this square, but it is far away from its king. 41. ♖d2 was called for, with good drawing prospects after 41... ♜c1+ (41... ♘d5 42. ♙e4 ♙xe4 43. ♘xe4 ♘xe3 44. ♝b5 ♘c4=) 42. ♕h2 h6.

41... ♜d8

Black misses his chance to obtain a probably decisive advantage with 41... ♜c3! 42. ♕h2 h6, making a luft for his king.

42. ♜c5?

Losing outright. 42. ♘c4! was holding the position.

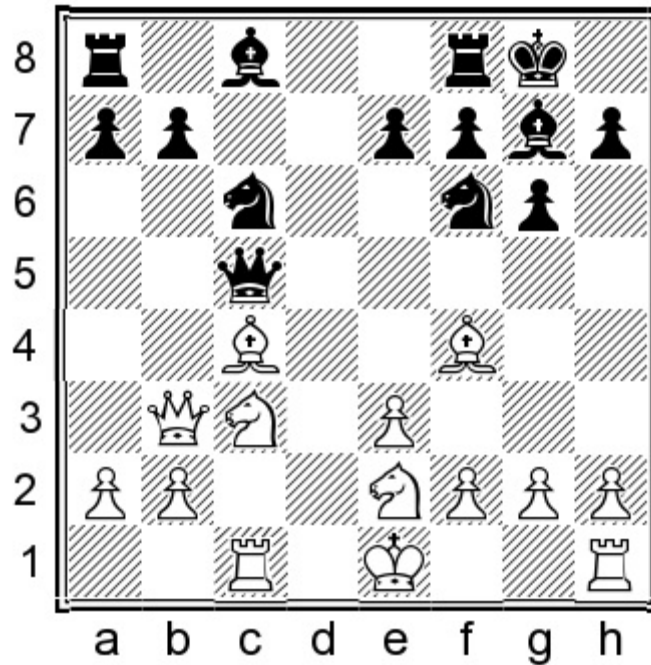
42... ♗h6 43. ♙e5 ♗xe3+ 44. ♕f1 ♜d1+ 45. ♕e2 ♙a2+ 0-1

This game is a good example of the power of Black's coordinated forces. The f- and g-pawns tear apart White's castling position.

6. Brömme-Ylönen

ICCF 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3. ♘c3 d5 4. ♗f4 ♗g7 5.e3 c5 6.dxc5 ♙a5 7. ♜c1 dxc4 8. ♗xc4 0-0 9. ♘ge2 ♙xc5 10. ♙b3 ♘c6

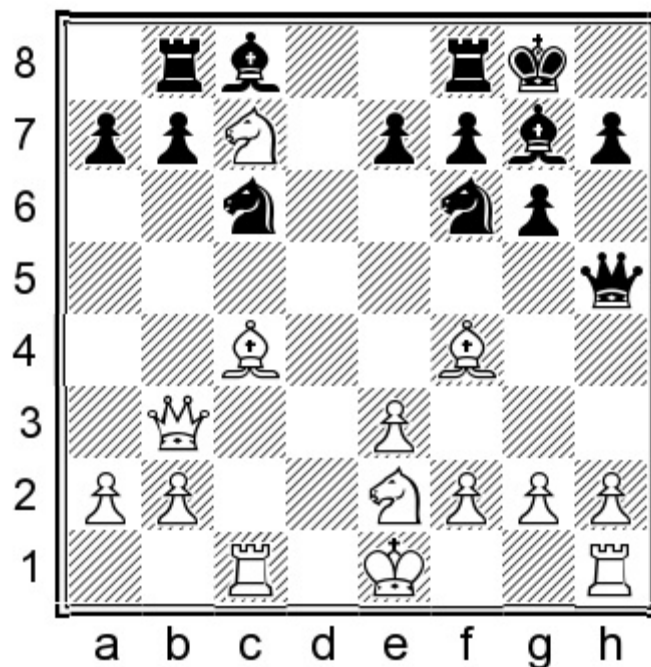


11. ♖b5

Heading for c7. Mundane moves like 11. ♖b5 ♗xb5 12. ♘xb5 ♙d7= or 11. 0-0 ♘a5 12. ♖b5 ♗xb5 13. ♘xb5 a6 14. ♙d3 ♙d7= do not deserve more attention.

11... ♗h5! 12. ♖g3!

12. ♖c7 ♗b8 does not disturb Black:



13. ♖d5 e5 14. ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 15. ♙xf7+ ♗xf7 16. ♗xc6 bxc6 17. ♖xb8 ♗g4! 18. ♙g3 (18. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 19. ♖xe5 ♖xg2 20. ♗f1 ♙h3 21. ♖g3 ♖f3) 18... ♗b7 19. ♖d6 ♗xb2 20. 0-0 ♖e6+.

13. ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 14. ♜xc6 loses to 14... ♚a5+ 15. ♜c3 (15. ♘c3 e5 16. ♜xf6 ♙xf6 17. ♘7d5 ♙e6 18. ♙g3 ♙xd5 19. ♚xd5 ♚xd5 20. ♘xd5 ♜c8 21. 0-0 ♙g7 22. e4 ♜c2-+) 15... e5 16. ♙g3 ♘e4-+.

13. ♘a6 ♚a5+ 14. ♘c3 ♜a8 15. ♘c7 e5 16. ♘xa8 exf4 17. 0-0 fxe3 18. fxe3 ♚e5!±, Perun-Shishkin, Kiev 2005.

12. ♚a3 a6!?

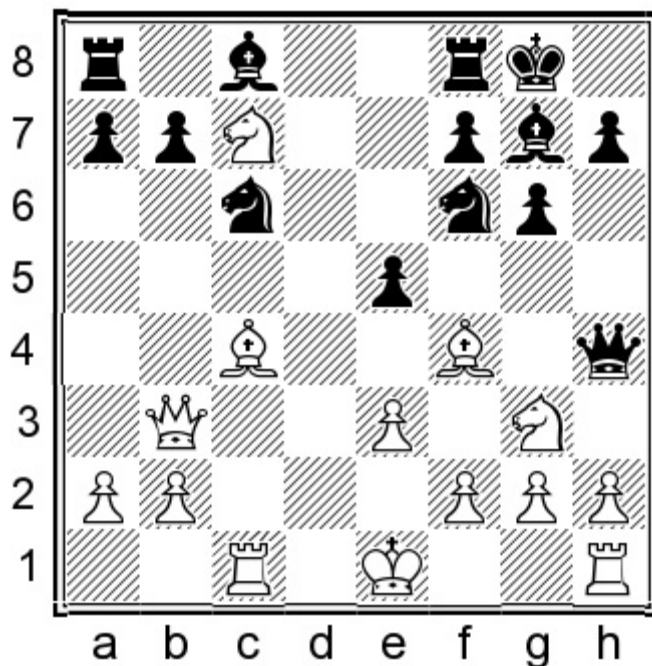
Or 12... ♙d7 13. 0-0 ♘g4 14. ♙g3 ♘ge5 15. ♘bd4 ♘xc4 16. ♜xc4 ♘xd4 17. ♘xd4 e5=.

13. ♘c7 ♜a7 with an initiative.

12... ♚h4 13. ♘c7 e5!

Note the trap 13... ♜b8? 14. ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 15. ♜xc6.

13... g5? is popular, but bad: 14. ♙xg5 ♚xg5 15. ♘xa8 ♙d7 16. ♚xb7 ♜b8 17. ♚c7 ♜xa8 (17... ♜c8 18. h4 ♚h6 19. ♚f4 or even 19. ♚xc8!±) 18. ♙a6 ♚g4 19. ♜xc6, and White keeps a healthy extra pawn. For instance: 19... ♘d5 20. ♚b7 ♙xc6 21. ♚xc6 ♚b4+ 22. ♔e2 ♚xb2+ 23. ♔f3 ♜d8 24. ♜d1±, Tregubov-Oral, Selfoss 2002.

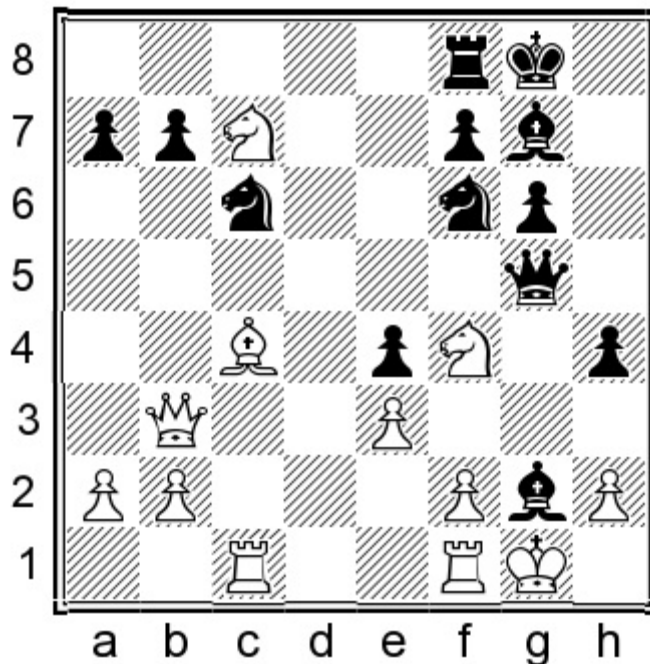


14. ♙xe5

14. ♙g5 ♚xg5 15. h4 has faded out of fashion.

15. ♘xa8 e4 16. 0-0 refrains from weakening the kingside. At first glance Black should have a strong attack. The e5-square is a good juncture point for his pieces. The advance of the h-pawn could be also unpleasant. Meanwhile the a8-knight needs two moves to join in the battle.

However, tactics work in White's favour and he is likely to end up with a tiny edge in the endgame arising after 16... h5?! 17. ♘c7! (17. ♘e2 ♘g4 18. ♘f4 ♙e5 19. h3 ♘f6 20. ♜fd1 ♔g7±, Berczes-Braun, Balatonlelle 2006) 17... h4 18. ♘e2 ♙h3 (18... ♘h5!±) 19. ♘f4 ♙xg2

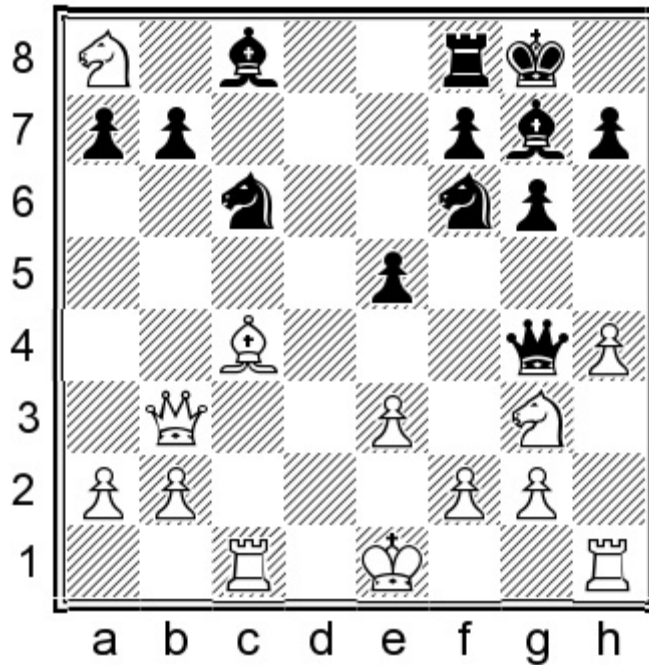


20. ♖ce6!! ♜g4 21. ♗xg2 h3 22. ♗ef4 ♘e5 23. ♙e2 ♗f3+ 24. ♗h1 hxg2+ 25. ♗xg2 ♙h6!? (25...g5 as in Bhat-Gupta, Benasque 2008, is insufficient owing to 26. ♜xb7! ♜h3 27. ♜c7 ♗h5 28. ♙xf3 exf3 29. ♜g1 fxg2+ 30. ♜xg2 g4 31. ♜b7 ♗f6 32. b4!±, followed by ♜c8) 26. ♗f4 (Black was threatening ...♗g7) 26...♙xf4 27. exf4 ♗g7 28. ♙xf3 exf3 29. ♜g1 ♜xf4 30. ♜c3! ♗g8 with full compensation for the exchange.

Instead of playing for mate Black could stake on the isolation of White's knight on a8 with: 16...♜e5! 17. ♙e2 (17. h3! ♜e7 18. ♜a3 ♜e5 19. ♜b3=) 17...h5!. This is an important improvement over 17...♜e7? 18. ♜a3! ♜e5 19. b4±, Kuzubov-Swinkels, Neuhausen Baden, 2007. The key moment is to keep the threat of going to b8 (which currently does not work because of ♜xc6) and gain space on the kingside.

18. ♜fd1 h4 19. ♗f1 h3↑.

15...♜g4 16. ♗xa8



16...♘a5!?

Two elite players, Topalov and Sasikiran, preferred 16...♙d7. However, the text is more simple and easy to play.

17.♙b5

White is worse after:

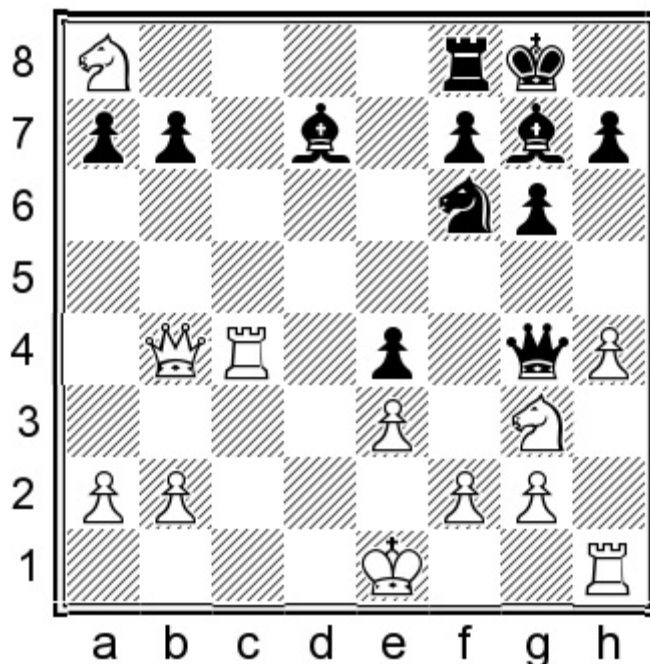
17.♙b4 ♕e6 18.♙xa5 ♕xc4 19.♘c7 ♕d3!± (or 19...♘h5!?)

17.♙d3 e4 18.♙d2 ♘xc4 19.♖xc4 ♘h5! (19...♕e6 20.♖c5) 20.♖xe4 ♙d7 21.♘xh5 gxh5. The knight cannot be saved without further material losses. 22.f3 ♙xd2+ 23.♔xd2 ♕f5 24.♘c7 ♖d8+ 25.♖d4 (25.♔e2 ♕xe4 26.fxe4 ♖c8) 25...♕xd4 26.exd4 ♖xd4+.

17...♘xc4 18.♖xc4 ♕d7! 19.♙b4

19.♖xg4 loses to 19...♕xb5 20.♖b4 ♕c6 21.♘c7 ♖c8 22.♘b5 ♕xg2-+.

19...e4



20. ♖c7

20. ♖xb7 is more aspiring. White destroys our queenside. 20... ♗e6 21. ♖d4 ♜d7! 22. ♖xd7 ♗xd7 23. ♖c7 ♗e5 24. 0-0 ♗xg3! (24... ♖xh4 25. ♖xa7 ♗xb2 occurred in Mamedjarov-Eljanov, Gothenburg 2005. Material balance has been restored, but White's a-pawn should not be underestimated. White eventually won the game and I think that it would be wise to avoid this position. Fortunately we have a direct way to the draw.) 25. fxg3 ♖xg3 26. ♖d5 ♗e6 27. ♖f6+ ♔g7 28. ♖xa7 ♗h3 29. ♖f2 ♖c8 30. ♖h5+ gxh5 31. ♖xf7+ ♔h8 32. ♖f6+ ♔g8=.

20... ♗c6 21. ♖d6

White is under attack after:

21. ♖e7 ♜d7 22. 0-0 ♗f6 23. ♖b4 ♗e5 24. ♖b5 ♗xg3 25. fxg3 ♖xg3 or 21. ♖b5 ♜d5 22. ♖d6 ♗xb5 23. ♖c5 ♖b4 24. ♖xb5 ♜d3+ 25. ♔d2 ♖c8.

After 21. ♖d6 all email games finished in a draw following 21...h5! or 21...♜d7 with nice compensation.

14... ♜xe5 15. ♖xa8 b6!

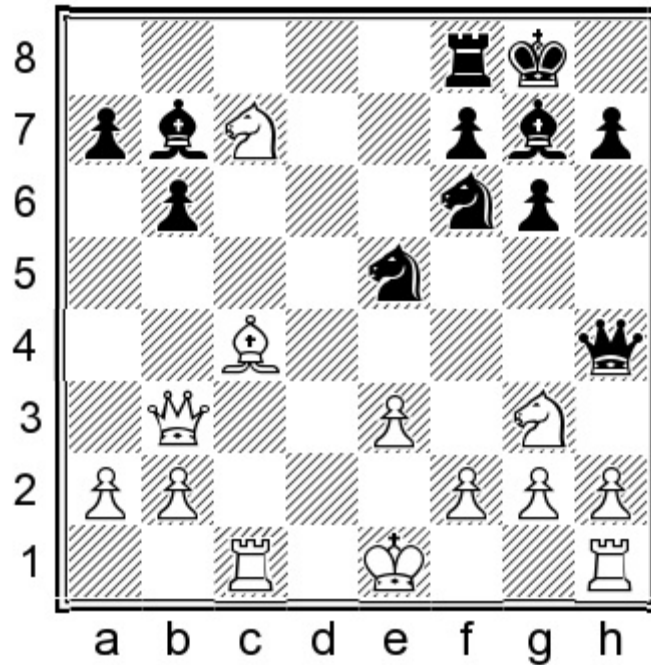
Protecting the b7-pawn, which is vulnerable in some lines after 15... ♗d7 16. ♖c7 ♗c6.

16. ♖c7

White should not even think about castling under the fire of four black pieces: 16. 0-0? ♗b7 17. ♖c7 ♜fg4 18. h3 ♜f3+!

16. ♖b5 is well met by 16... ♗b7 (16... ♜fd7 is not that simple due to 17. ♗e2 ♗b7 18. ♜xb6 ♜xb6 19. 0-0 ♜g4 20. ♗xg4±) 17. ♖xe5 ♗xg2.

16... ♗b7

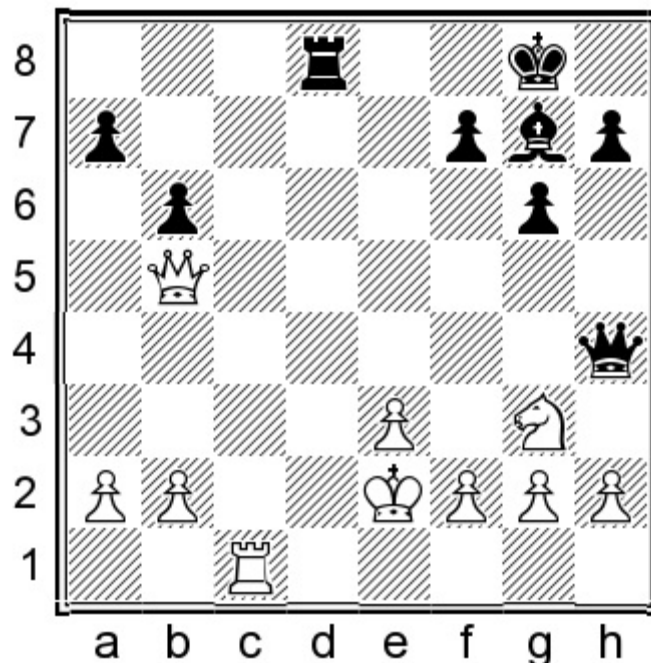


17.♔d5

17.♖b5 ♕xg2 18.♗xe5 ♘g4 19.♗b5 ♕xh1 20.♘h1 ♘xe3 offers Black terrific compensation, for example, 21.♘d5 (21.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 22.♗e8+ ♕f8 23.♗xe3 ♖e7 24.♘e6 ♗g4 25.♖c6 ♗b4+) 21...♘f5 (21...♘g4!?) 22.♘g3 ♘d4 23.♗b4 ♘f3+=.

Or 17.♕f1 ♖c8 18.♖c2 ♘e4 19.♕e2 ♖d8 (19...♘xg3 20.fxg3 ♗e4 21.♖f1 ♕f8 22.♖c3 ♕b4 23.♖f4 ♕xc3+ 24.♗xc3 ♗b1+ 25.♔f2 g5 26.♖a4 ♗f5+ 27.♔g1 a5=) 20.0-0 ♘d2 with an edge.

17...♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♕xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖d8 20.♗b5 ♘d3+ 21.♔e2 ♘xc1+ 22.♖xc1



Forced play is over and we can take stock. It looks that White is a healthy pawn up (22...♗xh2?! would dangerously isolate the queen). However, a second glance should notice that he lacks a trivial way to

hide his king. ♔f1 would invite ...♞d2, while f3 would permanently weaken the kingside. Black does not have enough material to win, but he could maintain a draw by harassing the enemy weak pawns. His first task is to centralise the queen so it could both attack and defend.

22...♞e7

22...♞f6 does not actually threaten b2 since the queen trade would give White some pull. Jónsson-Holroyd, ICCF 2018, went 23.a4 ♞d6 24.♘f1 h5 25.h3 a6 26.♞b3 ♞b8 27.♞d3 ♞xd3+ 28.♔xd3 b5 29.a5 ♟xb2 30.♞c6 ♞a8 31.♘d2 ♟a3 32.♔c3 ♟e7 33.♘b3 and Black held on.

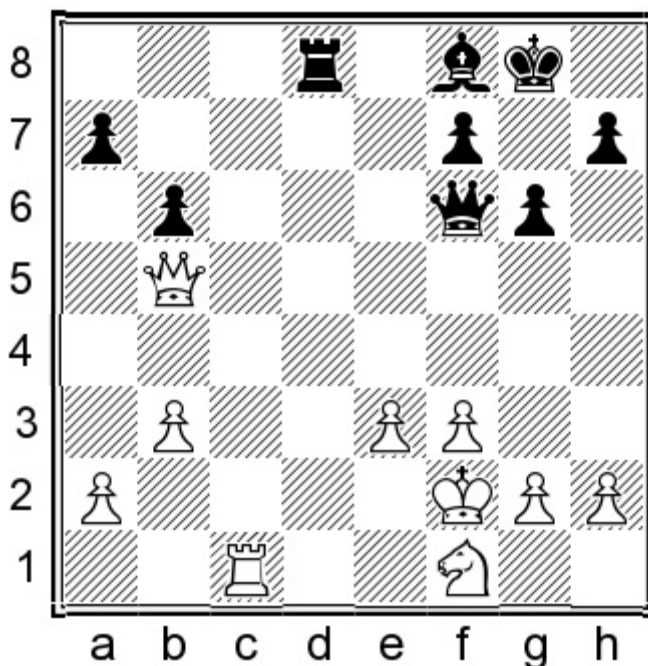
23.f3

Another possible stand is 23.h3 h5 24.a4 h4 25.♘f1 ♞d6 26.f3 ♟f6.

23...♞e6

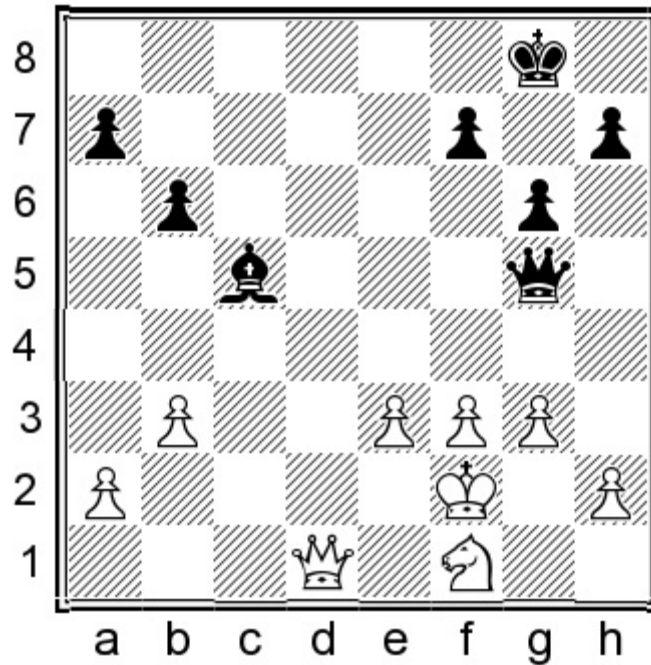
Another example is 23...♟e5 24.♘f1 ♞g5 25.g3 ♞e7 26.♞c2 ♞e6 27.♔f2 h5 28.b3 ♞f5 29.♞e2 h4 30.f4 ♟d6=, Goncharov-Satici, ICCF 2014. The character of play is similar to the main game. It is pointless to seek the best move for Black here as his intention is to stay and wait.

24.b3 ♞d6 25.♘f1 ♟f8 26.♔f2 ♞f6



Note that Black refrains from ...h5 so far, avoiding any weaknesses.

27.♞c6 ♞g5 28.♞c2 ♟a3 29.♞d1 ♞xd1 30.♞xd1 ♟c5 31.g3



31...h5

After the exchange of rooks Black finally makes this move. His opponent could not find any idea how to break in:

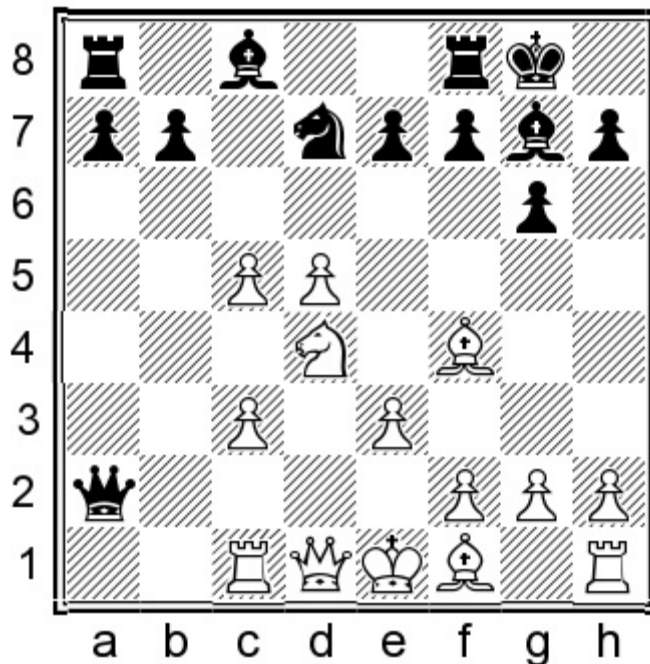
32.h4 ♖e5 33.♚c1 a5 34.f4 ♜e4 35.♞h2 a4 36.bxa4 ♚xa4 37.♚b2 ♜e4 38.♚c3 f6 39.♚b3+ ♔g7
40.♞f3 ♚c6 41.♚c3 ½-½

The moral of this game is that perhaps Black should be able to defend his pawnless position which could arise by force after 10...♞c6. However, that is an unrewarding task, so I recommend the less committal 10...♚a5.

7. Henri-Oliveira

WC41/sf04 ICCF, 2017

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 g6 3.c4 ♙g7 4.♞c3 d5 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♞e4 8.♚c1 ♞d7 9.cxd5 ♚a5 10.♞d4
♞xc3 11.bxc3 ♚xa2



12. ♖b3

It looks logical to keep the extra pawn in order to have at least some consolation for having to struggle. However, after 12.c6 ♘c5 White lacks a good move. For instance:

13.c4? fails to 13...e5! 14.dxe6 ♔a5+ ♚. White cannot force a draw with:

13. ♙e2 ♜xd5 14. ♙f3 ♜c4 15. ♙e2 as Black plays on with 15... ♜a2 16.0-0 e5 17. ♞a1 ♜b2 18. ♞b1 ♜xc3 19. ♖b5 ♜a5 20. ♙g5 bxc6.

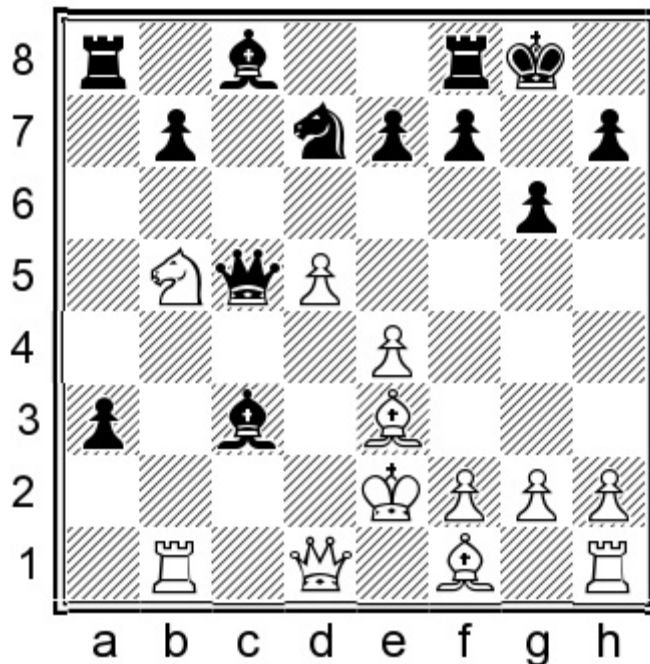
12...a5 13.e4

Or 13. ♙c4 ♖xc5 14. ♖d2 ♜a4 ♚.

13... ♜b2!? 14. ♙d2 a4 15. ♖d4

Two correspondence games featured this move, but it hands the initiative to Black.

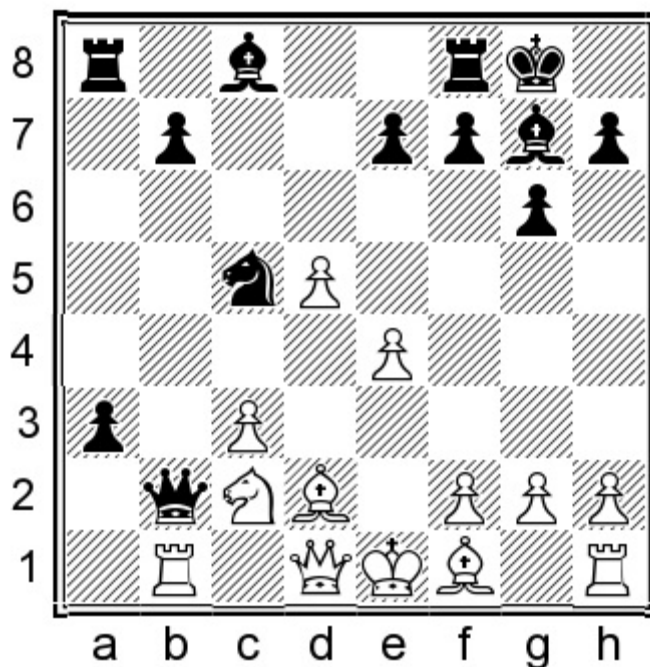
15. ♞b1!? ♜a3 16. ♖d4 ♜xc5 17. ♖b5 a3 (17... ♜b6!?) 18. ♙e3 ♙xc3+ 19. ♙e2 is critical.



Black has a wide choice of queen sacs here. For instance: 19...♙f6! 20.♙xc5 ♘xc5 21.♚e3 a2 22.♙e2 axb1=♚ 23.♚xb1. In the pre-computer age a commentator would have probably evaluated this position as slightly better for White in view of his formal material advantage. Nowadays the engines highly appreciate the activity of Black's pieces after 23...♞a4 24.f3 ♙d7 25.♞d1 ♞fa8. Objectively play should be balanced, but psychologically Black owns the initiative.

15...♞xc5 16.♞b1 a3!! 17.♞c2

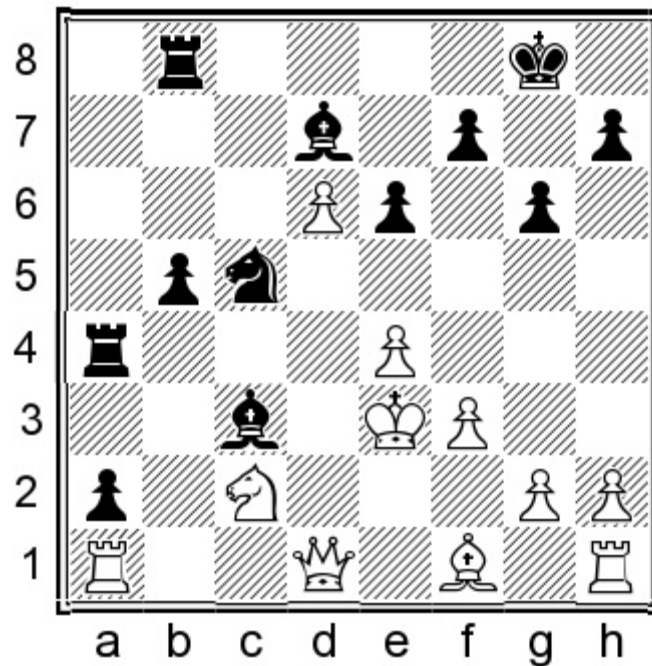
The previous game Stebac-Schwiizer, www.chess-mail.com 2012, had seen 17.♙c4 ♙xd4 18.♞xb2 axb2 19.0-0 ♞xe4 20.cxd4 b1♞ 21.♚xb1 ♞xd2 22.♚b4 ♞xf1 23.♙xf1 ♞d8 24.♚xe7 ♞xd5=, but Black could pour more oil into the fire with 17...b5! 18.♞xb5 ♞a4, keeping the initiative.



17...♙xc3!! 18.♘xc3 ♘xc3+ 19.♕e2 a2 20.♖a1 ♘d7 21.♕e3 b5!

It suddenly transpires that White is helpless against the march of the b-pawn, backed by ...♖fb8.

22.♘d4 ♖a3 23.♘c2 ♖a4 24.f3 ♖b8 25.d6 e6

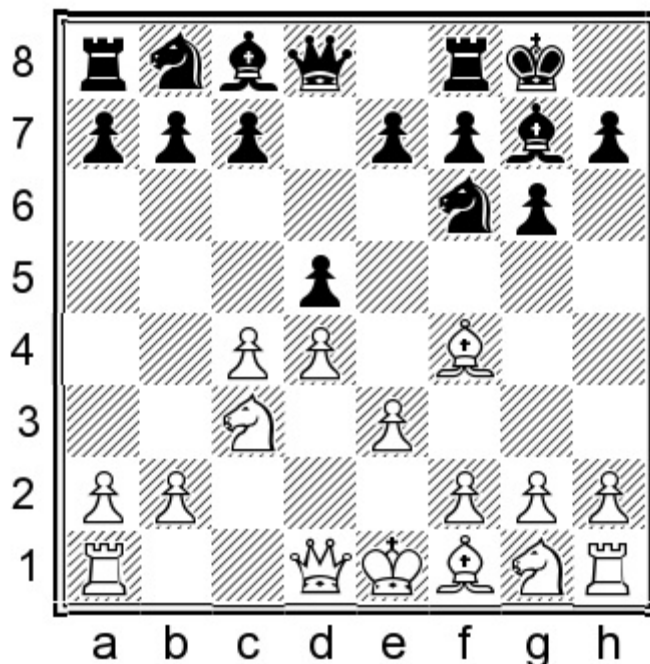


Total domination! The game went 26.♕f2 b4 and was adjudicated in Black's favour.

8. Sarana-Alekseenko

Khanty-Mansiysk 08.12.2018

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f4 ♘g7 5.e3 0-0



6.cxd5

6.♖c1!? is the main move. It is aimed against Black's counterplay with ...c7-c5. However, developing another queen's piece leaves White 3 moves away from castling, so we should seek to open up the centre.

6...♗e6!?

A Korchnoi's idea, which aims to define the setup in the centre.

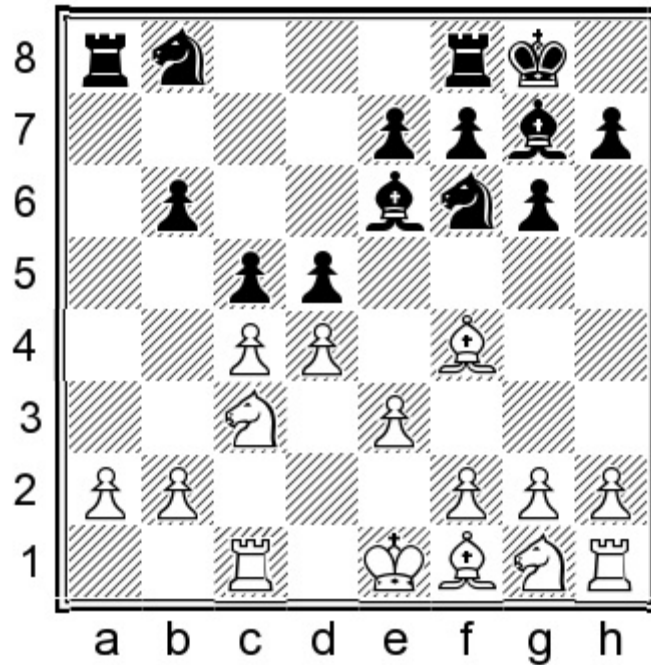
6...c5 7.dxc5 ♗e6 was the famous game Botvinnik-Gligoric, Tel Aviv 1964.

7.c5

7.♘f3 transposes to line B22 – 4.♗f4 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♖c1 dc4 7.e3 ♗e6.

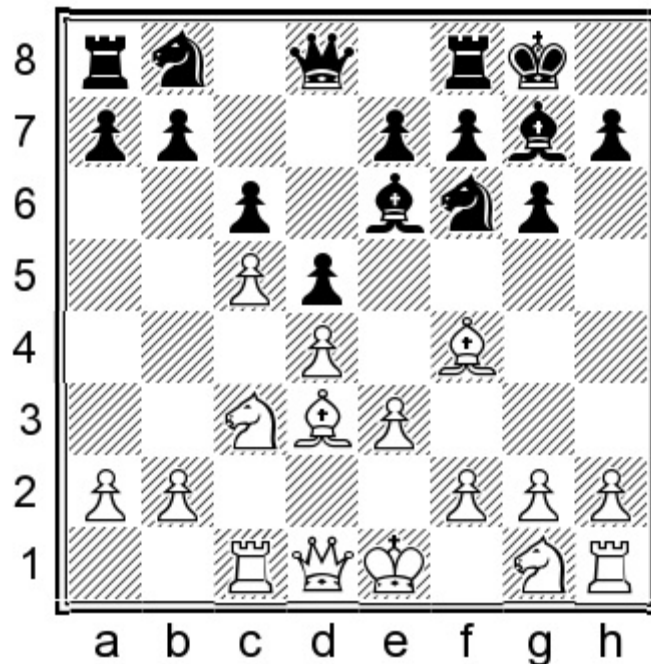
7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘xd5 ♗xd5 9.b3 (9.a3 ♗a2 10.♗d2 ♖c8 gives Black the initiative.) 9...♗a5+ (Tabatabaei tested 9...♘a6 10.♘f3 ♖ac8 11.♗d2 c5, but White looks slightly better after 12.♗c4.) 10.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 11.♔xd2 c6 12.♘f3 ♗d5=.

7.♗b3!? is a nice way to remain in the battle for the centre. It is well met by 7...c5! – an important novelty of V.Belov, played for the first time in 2010. 8.♗xb7 (8.♘f3 offers Black the initiative following 8...♘c6 9.dxc5 ♘e4 10.cxd5 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♗xd5) 8...♗b6 9.♗xb6 axb6



Black has a big lead in development and he will quickly regain the pawn. Obviously White cannot dream of any advantage here. 10.♘f3 (White failed to equalise in Hammer-Le Quang Liem, Cap d'Agde 2010: 10.dxc5 bxc5 11.♙e5 dxc4 12.♘h3 ♘c6 13.♙g3 ♘h5 14.♘g5 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♘e5 17.♞c2 ♞fb8 18.♘xe6 ♞b1+ 19.♚e2 fxe6.) 10...dxc4 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♘g5 ♙d5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♙xc4 ♘xf4=, Pinter-Antal, Hungary 2018.

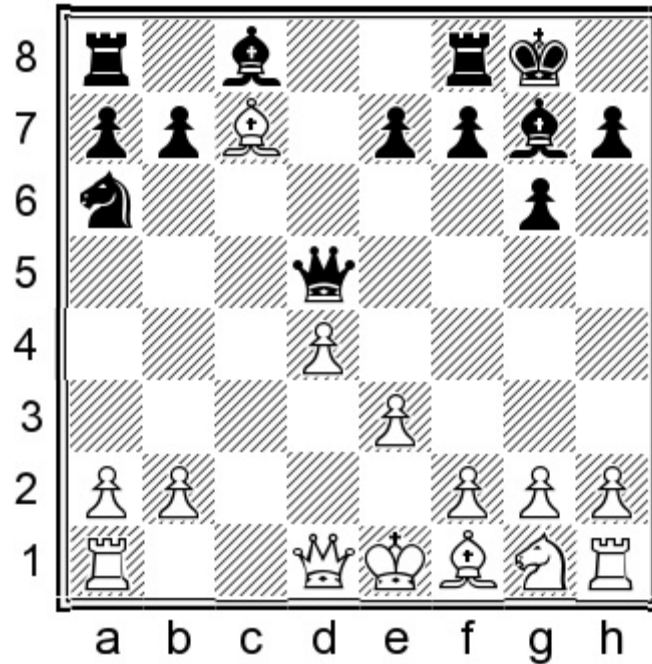
Let's return to 7.c5. The point is whether we can break through the centre with ...e7-e5 or not:
7...c6 8.♙d3 (8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5)



8...♙c8! (opening the lane to the e-pawn) 9.h3

After 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♙g5 ♞e8 Black achieves his goal to push ...e5.
9...♘fd7 10.♘f3 e5 11.dxe5 ♘xc5 12.♙b1 ♘bd7 with mutual chances.

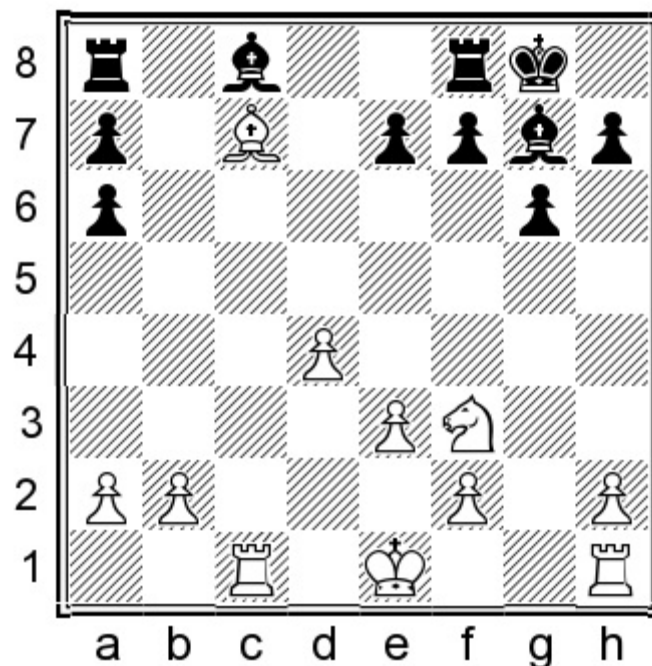
6...♖xd5 7.♗xd5 ♕xd5 8.♙xc7 ♗a6!



9.♙xa6

It is very risky to spend a new tempo on retreat: 9.♙g3 ♙f5 10.a3 ♖ac8 11.♗e2 ♕b5! (an improvement over 11...♙c2 12.♕d2 e5? 13.dxe5 ♕b3 14.♗d4 ♕xb2 15.♖c1±, Levenfish-Ragozin, Leningrad 1936) 12.b4 (Or 12.♗f4 ♕xb2 13.♗d5 ♖fe8 14.♙xa6 bxa6 15.0-0 e6 16.♗c7 ♖ed8 17.♗xa6 e5±) 12...♖c2 13.♗c3 ♕c6-+.

9...♕xg2 10.♕f3 ♕xf3 11.♗xf3 bxa6 12.♖c1



White returned too quickly the extra pawn. Furthermore, he conceded the bishop pair. Why then is this

line still occurring in practice?! White's positional aim is to double rooks on the c-file behind the shield of the c7-bishop. Black's bishop on g7 is passive, restricted by the d4-pawn. We can try to activate it from f8, but then White will exchange it with the help of a3, ♖a5-♖b4. The arising endgame would be clearly in his favour. The other problem is that the black rooks cannot find any open file to operate on. Thus White is not risking anything and could torture us to put our endgame technique to the test. However, Black has an original way to regroup his forces and solve most practical problems:

12...f6! 13.b3

This useful waiting move marks a new trend in this line. White is waiting for ...♖b7 before putting his king on e2. He also prepares a4 in the event Black put his bishop on d7.

Instead 13.♖e2 ♗g4 was a nasty pin in Pelletier-Illescas, Pamplona 2003. The more direct way to prevent ...♗g4 is the older main line:

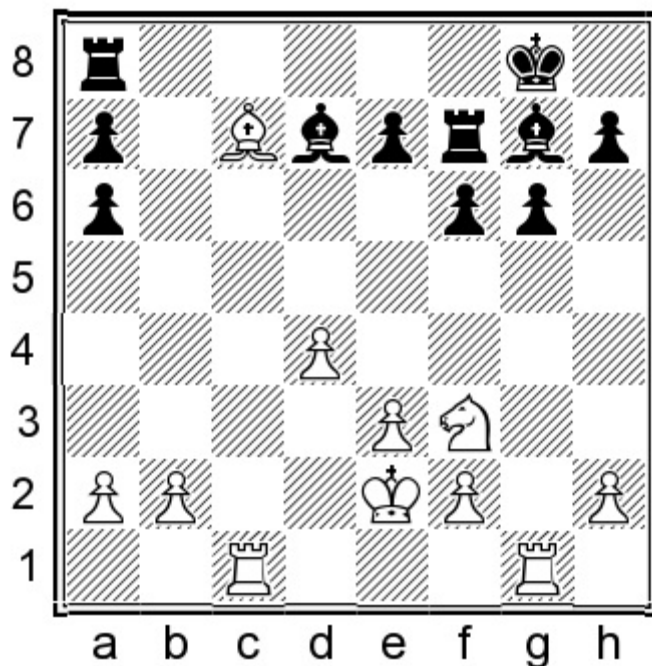
13.♖g1 ♖f7!. Very flexible! Black does not define the future of his light-squared bishop. It could be useful both on d7 (threatening to check from b5) or on b7. Instead:

13...♗d7 14.♖d2 ♖fc8 15.♖c3 ♗f8 16.a3 ♖f7 17.♖gc1 e6 18.♖e1 ♗e7 19.♘d2 ♖e8 20.♘e4 gave White some pull in Trifunovic-Najdorf, Opatija 1949.

14.♖e2

We understand now the finesse of Black's previous move. 14.♖d2 would be met by 14...♖b7! and apparently White should correct himself with 15.♖e2 e6=.

14...♗d7



15.d5

15.♘d2 led to a repetition after 15...e5 16.d5 ♖b5+ 17.♖f3 f5 18.b3 e4+ 19.♖g2 ♖b2 20.♖c2 ♗d3 21.♖c6 ♖b5 22.♖c2 ♗d3 23.♖c6, draw, Radjabov-Ivanchuk, Morelia/Linares 2006.

15.♖c3 looks more natural, but Black has 15...e5! 16.dxe5 (16.d5 ♖b5+ 17.♖d2 ♗f8 gains a crucial tempo, e.g. 18.a3 ♖c8 19.♖gc1 ♖d7 20.e4?? ♗h6+) 16...fxe5 17.♘g5 ♖b5+ 18.♖e1 e4

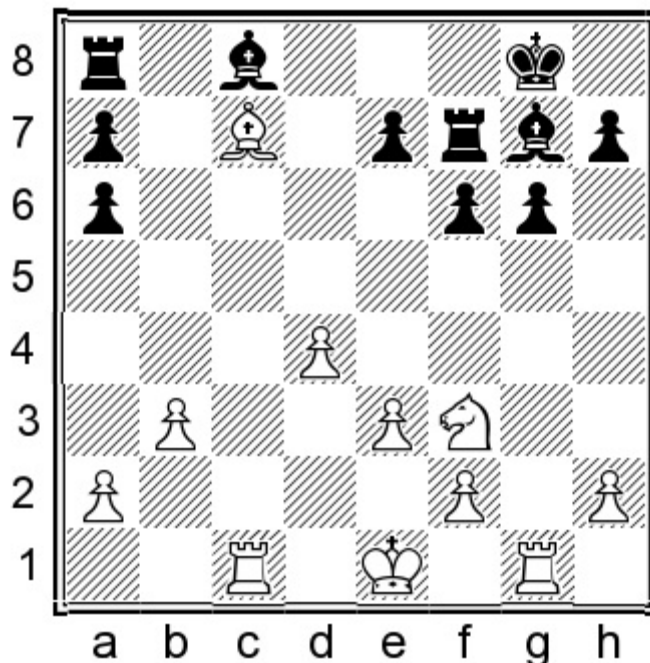
19. ♖xf7 ♗xc3+ 20. bxc3 ♕xf7=, Gyimesi-Luther, Germany 2008.

15...e5 16.d6

16.dxe6 ♗xe6 17.b3 ♗f8 is roughly equal.

16...♖e8. This position is balanced, but White should be careful. Sarana-Xiong, Saint Louis 2017, went 17.♖c5?! ♗b5+ 18.♕d2 ♗f8, when it turned out that the consistent 19.b3?! (to repel the b5-bishop) would run into 19...♖xc7!! 20.♖xc7 ♗xd6 21.♖xa7 ♖c8 with an amazing activity of Black's long-range pieces.

13...♖f7 14.♖g1



14...♗b7

Vachier-Lagrave has tested 3 other moves here.

14...♗f8 is a solid approach, and it would be similar to the main game after 15.♗d2 ♗b7.

14...♗d7 is more passive. White is somewhat better following 15.d5 e5 16.♗d2.

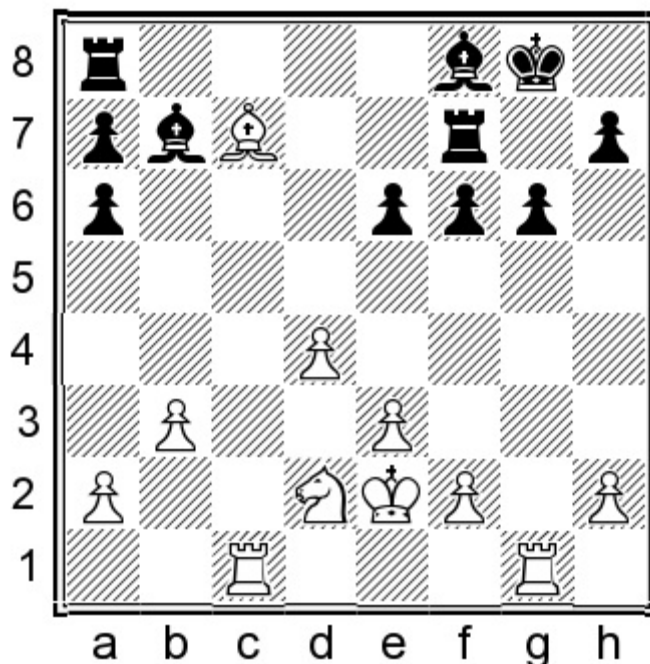
15.♕e2 ♗f8

15...♖e8!? 16.♖gd1 (16.♗d2 e5) 16...e6 is also possible. White has nothing better, but 17.♗d2 as in the game.

16.♗d2 e6

In principle Black's counterplay is based on ...e5, but perhaps the best moment for it has not come yet. In a blitz game against Giri in 2017 Vachier-Lagrave rushed with 16...♖e8 17.f3 e5 18.dxe5 ♗b4?! (18...fxe5 19.♗a5²), when simplest was 19.f4±.

Fridman-Sarana, Karlsruhe 2019, saw 17.♗c4!?, hoping for 17...e5?! 18.♗d6!, but Sarana, this time with Black (!), answered 17...♗d5 18.♗g3 e6 19.♗d6, and the opponents called it a day.



17. ♖g3

White has to move the ♖c7 to enable ♗c4. In Abdulmanov-Pastukhov, ICCF 2017, White retreated the bishop to a5, but had to transfer it to g3 anyway – 17. ♖a5 ♜d7

Black should be careful to control d5. The plan 17... ♜e8 18. ♗c4 e5?! 19. ♜gd1 e4 20. d5,

Kashlinskaya-Bodnaruk, Antalya 2019, is an example of what you should not do with Black.

18. h4 ♜e8 19. ♗c4 ♜d5 20. f3 ♖e7 21. ♖d2 ♖c6 22. ♜c2 ♜h5 23. ♖e1 ♜c8 24. ♖g3=.

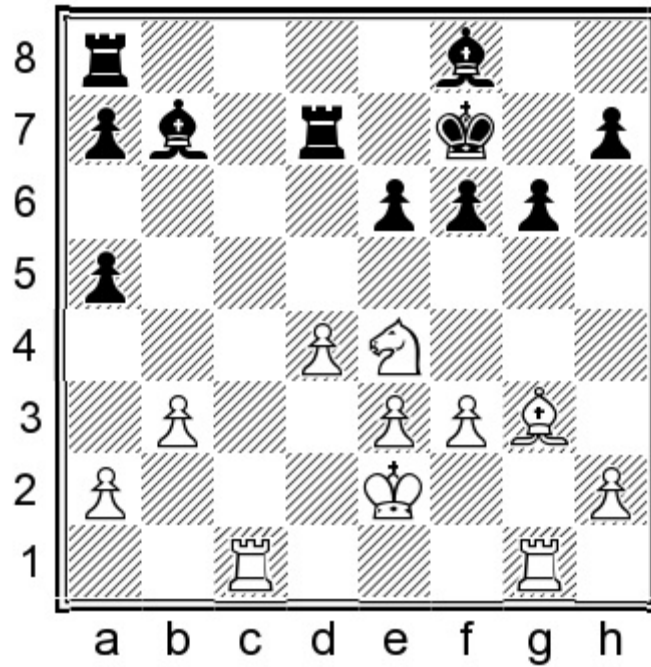
17... ♜d7

Lysyj-Dominguez Perez, Sochi 2016, saw the manoeuvre 17... ♜d8 18. ♗c4 ♜d5 19. f3 ♜fd7 and the position became ripe for ...e5 – 20. ♜gd1 e5 (besides, 20... a5! deserves attention) 21. e4 ♜xd4 22. ♜xd4 exd4 23. ♗a5=.

18. f3 a5

18... ♜ad8 should gradually equalise after 19. ♗c4 ♜d5.

19. ♗e4 ♖f7



20. dxc5

White practically wins a pawn, but the opposite-coloured bishops spell a draw.

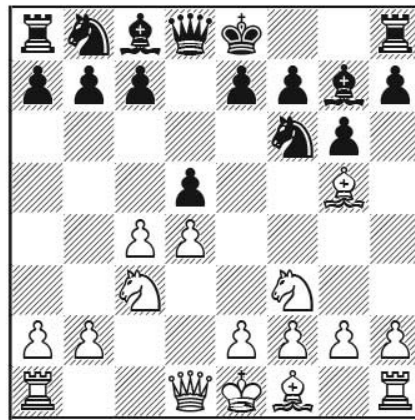
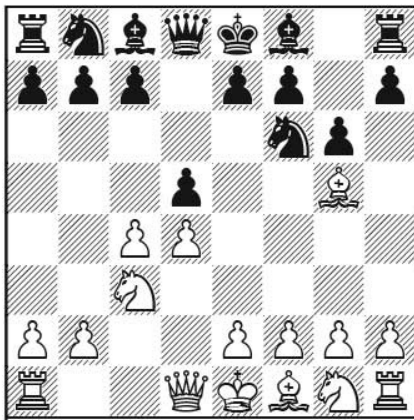
20...dxc5 21. Bxc5 e5 22. Rd1 Bc8 23. Bdc1 Bxc5 24. Bxc5 exd4 25. exd4 a4 26. bxa4 Qe6 27. Qe3 Bd5 28. Bc7 Bd7 29. Bc1 Bd5 30. Qe1 Qd7 31. Qg3 Qe6 32. Qb8 Bf5 33. Bc7 Bxf3+ 34. Qe2 Qd5 35. Bxh7 Ba3 36. Bxa7 Bxa2+ 37. Qe3 Qc6 38. Ba5 Ba3+ 39. Qe2 Bxa4 40. d5+ Qf5 41. Bxa4 1/2-1/2

Chapter 3

The ♗g5 System

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.♞g5

4.♞f3 ♞g7 5.♞g5



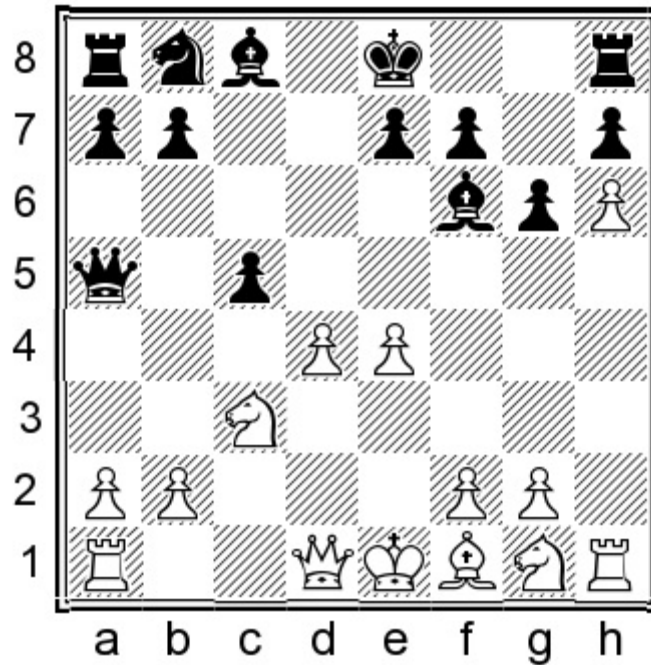
Main Ideas

Introduction

In this chapter I deal with systems where White develops his bishop to g5. Line A is devoted to 1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.♞g5, while line B considers its “improved” version 4.♞f3 ♞g7 5.♞g5. The first test of this system was the game Alekhine-Grünfeld, Vienna 1922. It saw 4.♞g5 ♞e4!, and the future world champion unexpectedly responded with 5.cxd5. This probably took the godfather of the opening, Grünfeld, unawares, as he failed to find the best continuation. (Nevertheless he won the game.) It was demonstrated a year later: 5...♞xg5 6.h4 ♞e4! 7.♞xe4 ♞xd5 8.♞c3 ♞a5 9.h5 ♞g7 10.h6 ♞f6 11.e4 c5!

Euwe-Von Hoorn
Amsterdam 1923

chesstouring.com

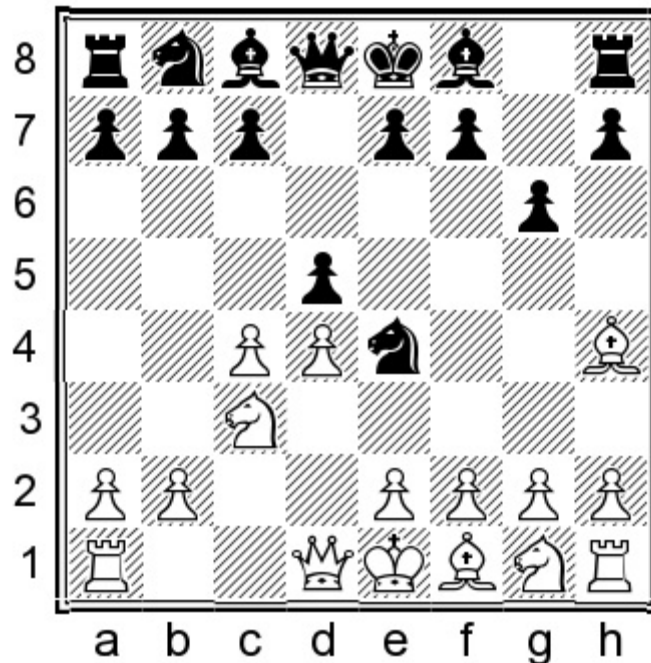


12.e5 cxd4!, with a big advantage.

For half a century White did not come up with any fresh ideas until the year 1970. Then the ♔g5 system enjoyed a burst of popularity, connected with the novel move 5.♙h4. Black reacted with the thematic ...c5, but Taimanov won a number of games, which put the whole Black's setup under question. The turn of the tide was the game:

Mecking-Fischer

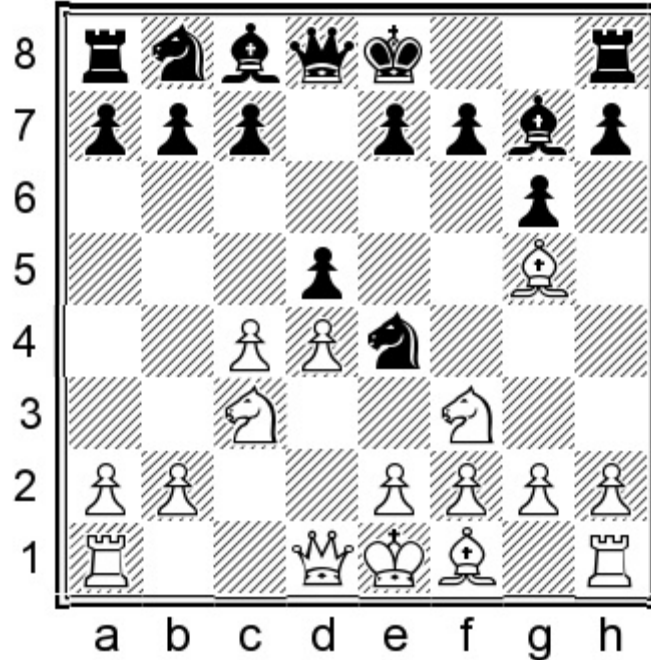
Buenos Aires 1970



Bobby Fischer played here 5...♞xc3! 6.bxc3 dxc4! 7.e3 ♙e6!. His idea marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the ♔g5 system. It is the foundation of our proposed repertoire, although we

also provide a more solid and safe setup as a backup line.

The improved branch of the ♔g5 system – 4.♘f3 ♔g7 5.♕g5, had similar development. In the beginning White linked it with the idea to grab the d5-pawn after 5...♘e4



6.cxd5, using the fact that the g5-bishop was defended. Of course, Black could easily regain the pawn, but not without concessions: 6...♘xg5 7.♘xg5 e6 8.♙d2 exd5 9.♙e3+ ♔f8, losing the right to castle. So Black should play first 8...h6 9.♘f3 and only then recapture the pawn. The resulting Carlsbad pawn structure with ...h6 on the kingside had been assessed as slightly better for White. However, Black gradually learned how to cope with this approach. He found a good manoeuvre – before castling, the g7-bishop returned to f8 and then went to d6 to support play on both flanks. Alternatively, it turned out that Black was not even obliged to even the pawns. Firstly Korchnoi tried 7...c6?!, and then 7...0-0!? was discovered. Thus about 1970, White had to borrow the retreat to h4 from the 4.♔g5 variation. As a result, after 6.♔h4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 dxc4, instead of having an extra pawn, White was playing a real gambit.

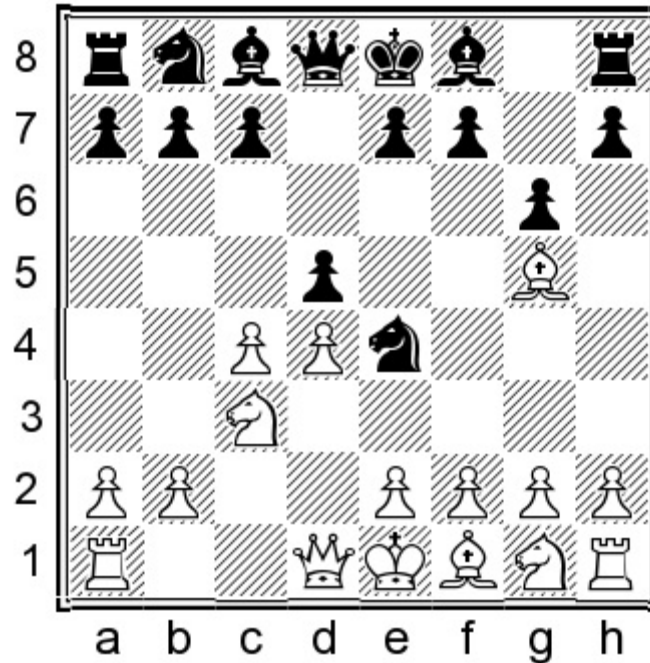
A. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♔g5

Objectives and Move Orders

Similarly to the previous chapter, White leads out his bishop, intending to complete development with e3. The big difference is that instead of targeting the c7-pawn, which is a remote threat, he now simply wants to snatch the central pawn on d5. Black has no convenient way to defend it, so he will have to take on c4. However, he should first exchange his f6-knight to reduce the number of minor pieces which is important in cramped positions. The immediate 4...dxc4?! 5.e4 ♔g7 6.♔xc4 0-0 7.♘ge2! would be horrible for Black so he answers:

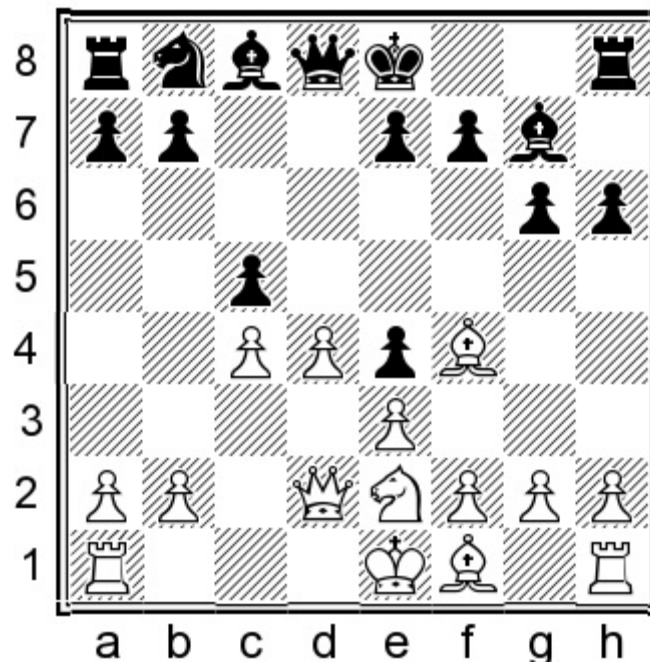
4...♞e4

This is by no means the only move. Svidler's efforts in the early 1990s popularised the amazing move 4...♞g7!?. Practice has confirmed that Black gets good compensation for the central pawn. Still, I advocate the opposite approach – instead of sacrificing a pawn, to pocket one. That gives more chances to win.



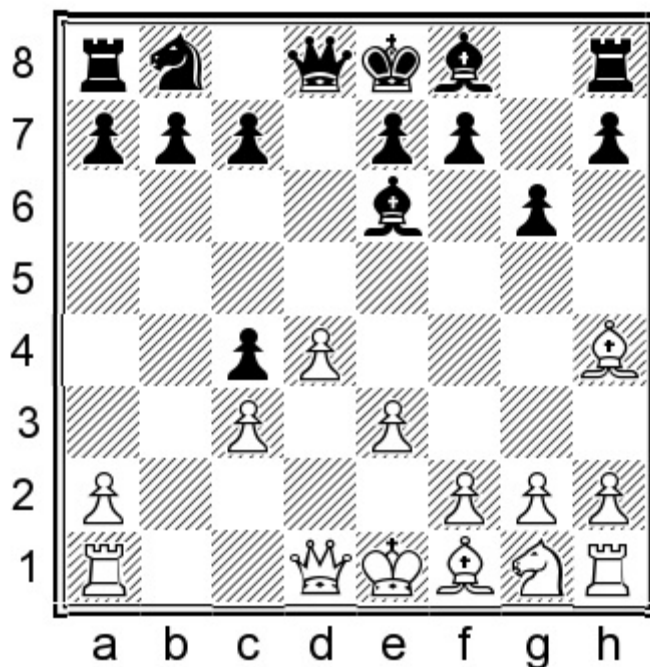
5.♞h4

5.♞h4 deprives White of the f3-square. Black can use this to attack the central dark squares, e.g. 5...dxe4 6.e3 ♞g7 7.♞e2 c5 8.♞d2 h6! 9.♞f4 leads to the following position:



Now best is 9...g5! 10.♙xb8 ♜xb8 11.♞d1 ♚c7∞.

5...♘xc3! 6.bxc3 dxc4 7.e3 ♙e6!

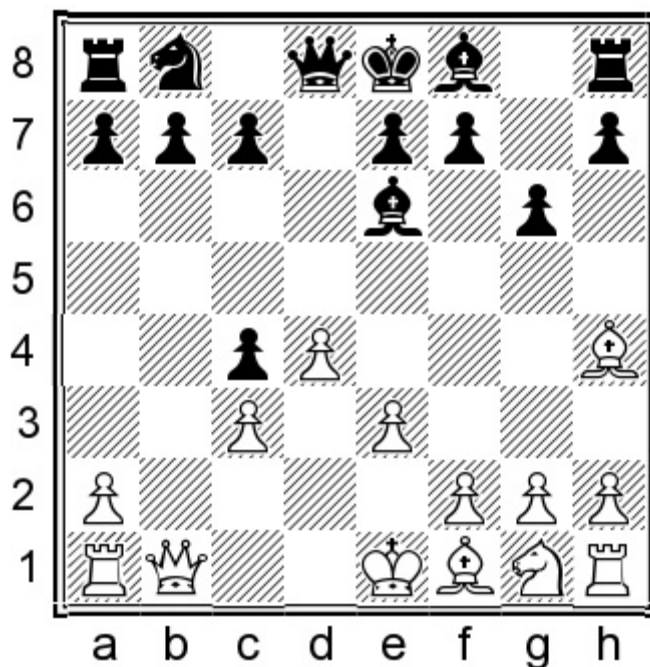


Our plan is to finish development with ...♘b8-d7-b6, ...♙g7, ...0-0. Then we'll wait for an opportunity to push ...c7-c5. If White played e3-e4, we should be ready to stop his central expansion with ...f7-f5 or ...e7-e5.

White could play a4 to provoke ...a5. That discourages the break ...c5 since the b6-knight would be hanging, but provides a nice target on a4. We could attack it with ...♙d7, ...♚e8.

The only way of hampering Black's development is to hit the b7, but we can ignore the threat!

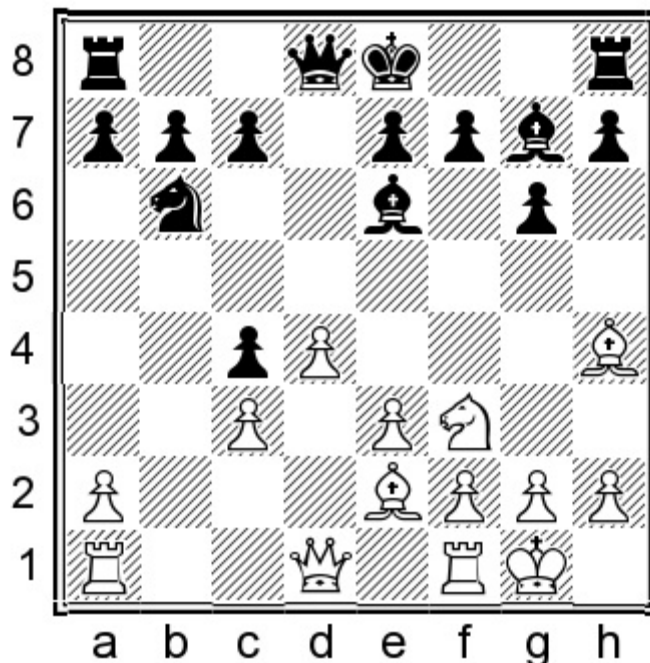
8.♚b1?! is well met by 8...c5! – an idea of Svidler.



9.♚xb7 ♙d5 10.♚b5+ ♚d7! with a roughly equal position.

Agrest proposed to attack **8.♖b1** in the same manner – **8...c5!**, for instance, **9.♖xb7 ♔a5 10.♘e2 ♕d5**. Black has active pieces and an easy game.

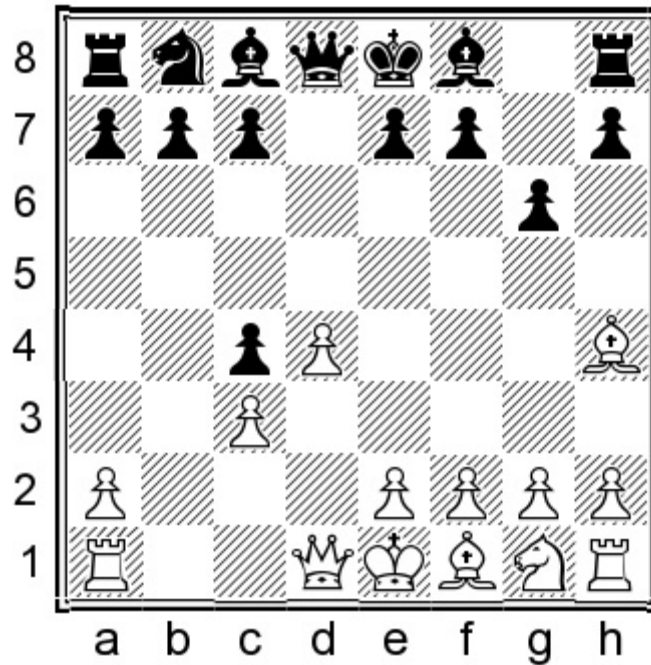
The normal development **8.♘f3 ♘d7! 9.♕e2 ♘b6 10.0-0 ♕g7** leads to a position where White chooses between plans with e4 and without it.



For a4 see **game 11** Bo.Vuckovic-Sutovsky, Moscow 2011. If White refrains from it, Black has the manoeuvre ...♔d8-e8-a4.

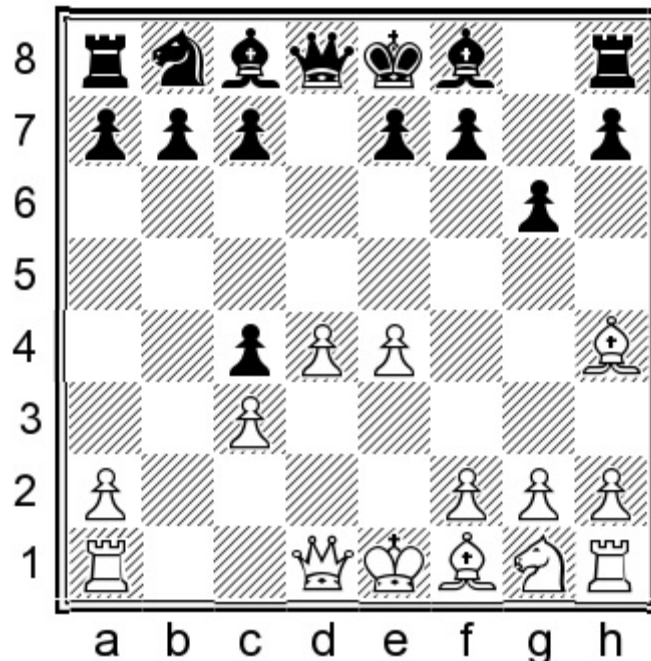
Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

Most often we'll be dealing with the following pawn structure:



In positions with a mobile pawn centre White usually aims for a kingside attack. However, here our c4-pawn prevents the light-squared bishop from arriving at the b1-h7 diagonal. Furthermore, our fianchettoed bishop on g7 provides good protection to our castling position. That inspires confidence in our defensive possibilities and allows us to cling to the extra pawn and temporarily concede the initiative to the opponent. When we consolidate, we will think about rolling forth our queenside pawn mass.

Drozdovskij-Shipov
Internet 2004



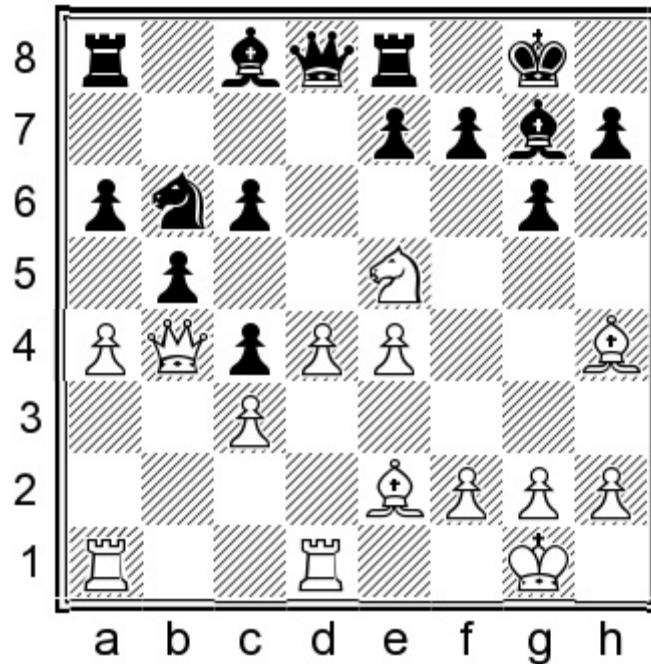
White hurried to occupy the centre with 7.e4?!, but now his light-squared bishop and his knight have no prospects. We successfully defend the pawn with 7...b5!. Note that this would have been a blunder after

7.e3, because the white queen could hit our rook from f3.

8.a4 c6 9.♘f3 ♕g7 10.♖e2 0-0 11.0-0 a6!

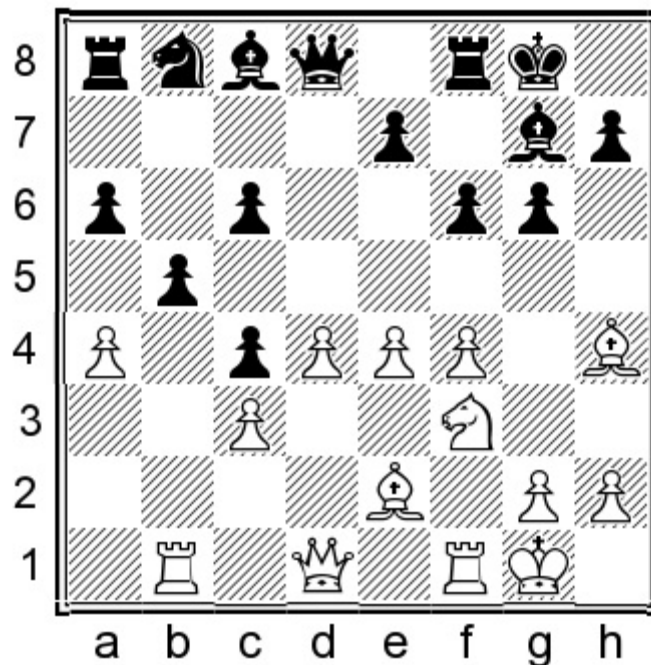
Do not put the bishop on b7 as it will be hanging there after 12.♝b1.
12.♝b1 ♘d7 13.♞d1 ♘b6?!

13...♞e8! was better, discouraging 14.♝b4 in view of 14...a5.
14.♝b4 ♞e8 15.♘e5



Now Black had the spectacular combination 15...a5! 16.♝c5 ♘xa4! 17.♞xa4 ♝d6!! ♠ winning material.

Dreev-Svidler Poikovsky 2005



White has built a broad centre which restricts our minor pieces. The decision is a light-squared blockade:

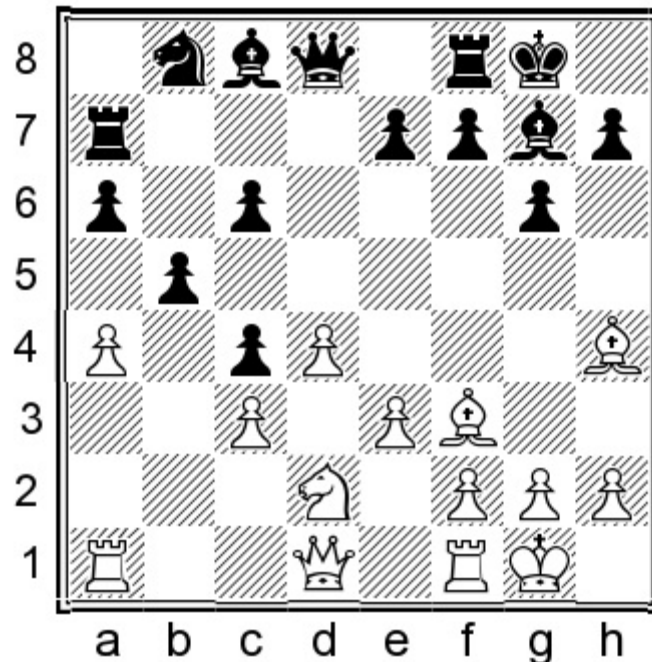
16...f5!. We have nothing to worry about with the d5-square in our control.

17.♔e1 ♕f6! 18.♖d1 fxe4 19.♗g5 ♔d5 20.♙c2 ♕f5 and Black took over the initiative.

The following position arose from the move order with 4.♘f3 ♕g7 5.♙g5, but the game soon transformed in the same pawn structure as in the previous examples:

Delchev-Karr

Top 16 France 2010



I was quite happy with my position. All my pieces are better than its counterparts. Black cannot easily develop his queenside. All I need is to finish regrouping with ♔b1 and ♖fd1. However, look what happened in just a few moves:

13...♕f5! What is this for?!

14.e4. Off course I cannot let him land on d3! (which would have been the best decision – 14.♖e1 ♕d3

15.♗b3)

14...♙c8!

Black has lost too tempi, but the white centre became unstable.

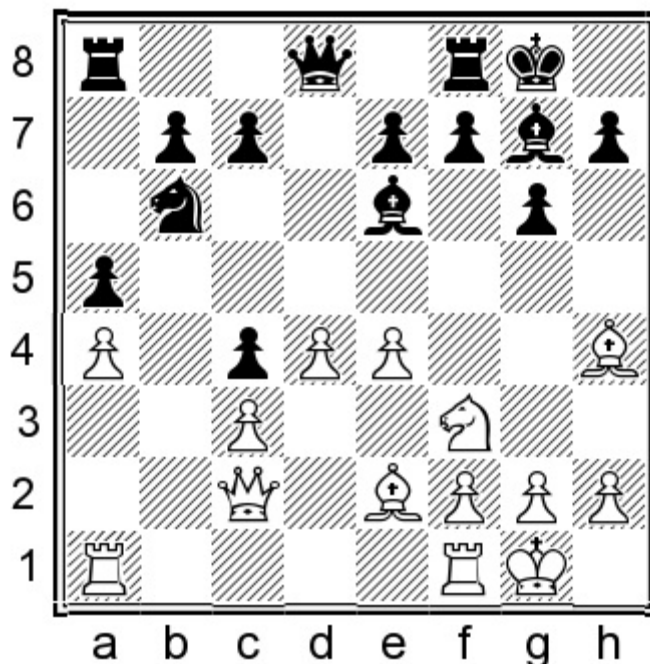
15.♔b1?!. This routine move is a mistake.

15...c5! 16.axb5 ♖b7! 17.♗xc4 cxd4!

My centre has fallen apart. Only with very precise play and a little help from my opponent did I manage to escape.

Delchev-Ve.Schneider

La Massana 2010



We see here the same pawn formation in the centre, but the queenside setup is different. Black's counterplay is linked with the weak a4-pawn. The break ...c7-c5 is efficient as always in the Grünfeld. In the diagram position I expected something like 13...h6 with the idea of ...f7-f5 next, which I was planning to meet with ♖fe1! However, practically without even thinking, my opponent surprised me with:

13...♙d7!

It turns out that the a4-pawn is very sensitive. For instance: 14.♘d2 c5 15.d5 ♕e8 16.♘xc4 ♘xa4; 14.♖fb1 ♕e8 15.♙d1 f5!, or:

14.♙g3 ♕e8!. Remember this battery!

15.♙d1 ♖c8

Black gives me a respite. She could have taken on a4 with a better endgame: 15...♘xa4! 16.♖xa4 ♙xa4 17.♕xa4 ♕xa4 18.♙xa4 c6 19.e5 b5 20.♙c2 ♙h6.

16.♖e1 (against ...f7-f5!)

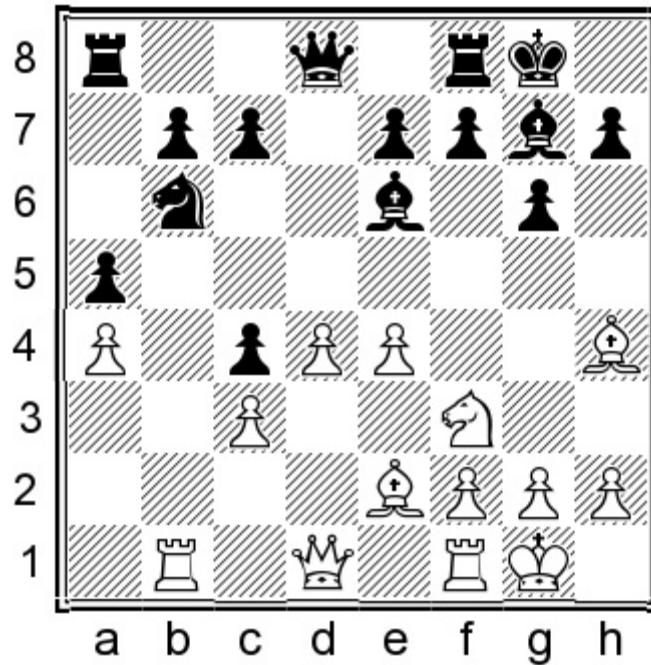
Now the most consistent was 16...c5, but my opponent suddenly changed her mind in favour of a restraining tactic:

16...f6 17.♕a2 e5=.

My bishop on g3 is a poor sight. I had to use a great deal of imagination (and help from the opponent) to activate it through h2-g1.

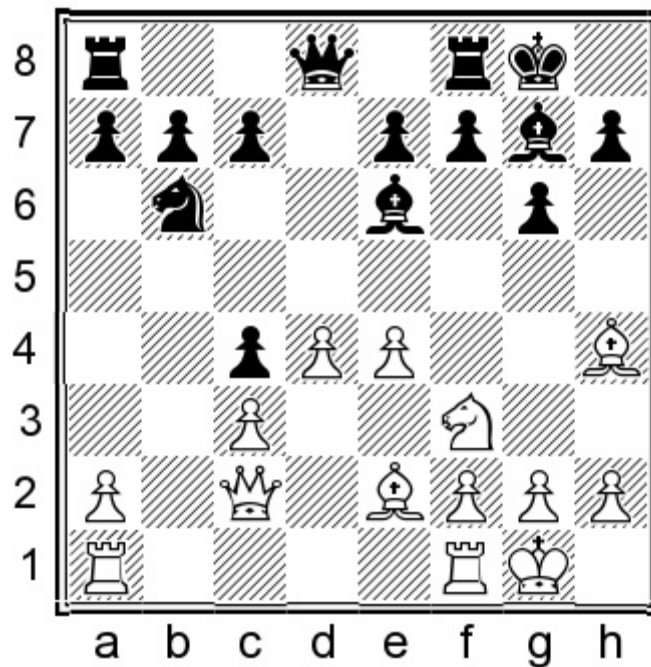
Akopian-Roiz

Khanty Mansiysk 2007



13...♔d7! 14.♚c1 ♕xa4 15.♚a3 ♚d6! 16.♕xe7 ♚xa3 17.♕xa3 ♜fe8 18.♞d2 ♕c2 19.♞b2 ♕d3!-+.

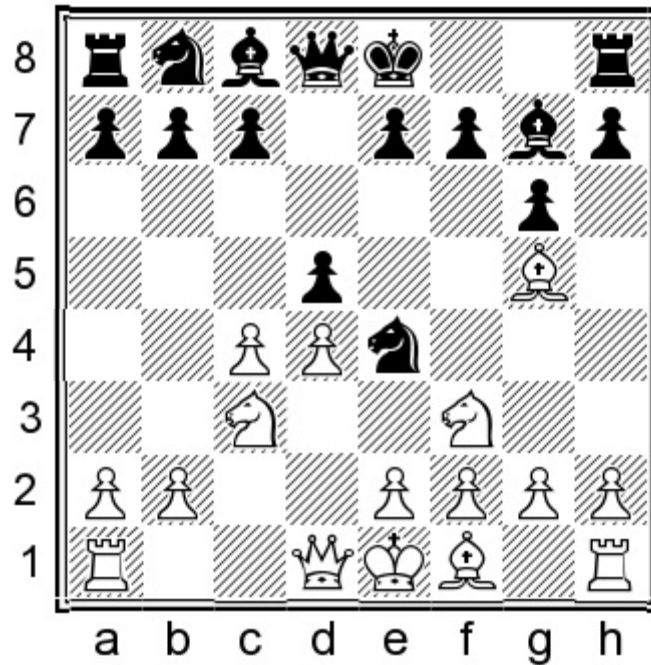
Analysis



In this example White's pawn is on a2 so Black should seek counterplay in the centre – 12...f5!!. With this essential blow Black wins the battle for the d5-square.

13.♜fe1 fxe4 14.♚xe4 ♕d5! 15.♚e3 ♕f6 16.♕g3 e6. Black gained an important central square and now he will aim for ...c7-c5.

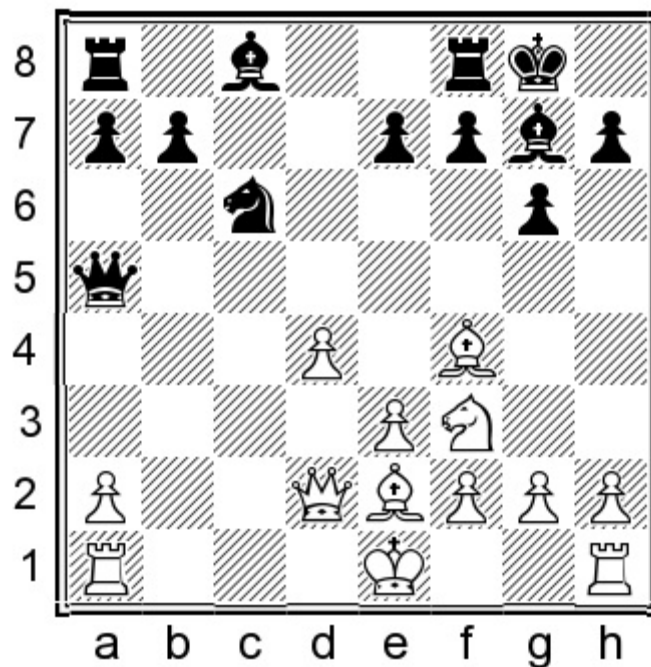
B. 4.♞f3 ♕g7 5.♕g5 ♞e4



Main lines

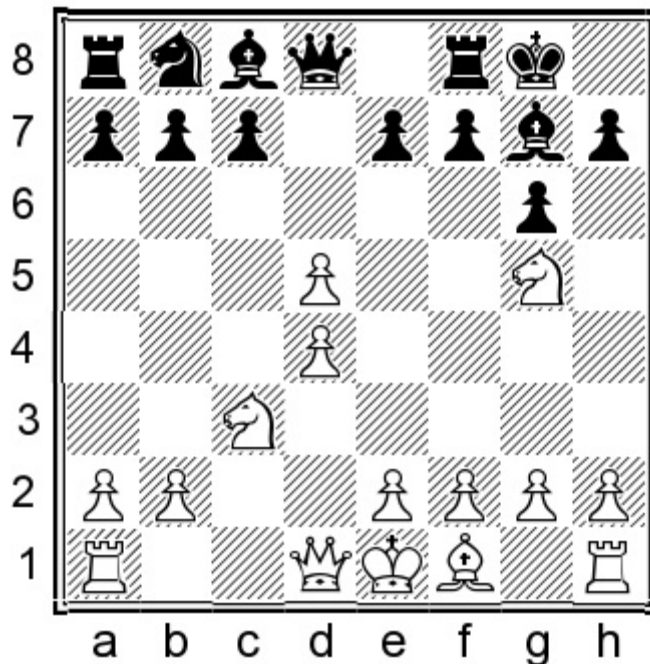
I chose this move for our repertoire because it offers Black active pieces and clear plans. Alternatives are 5...dxc4 and 5...0-0!?

B1. 6.♔f4 ♖xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.e3 0-0 9.cxd5 cxd4! 10.cxd4 ♔xd5 11.♔e2 ♖a5+ 12.♚d2 ♘c6=



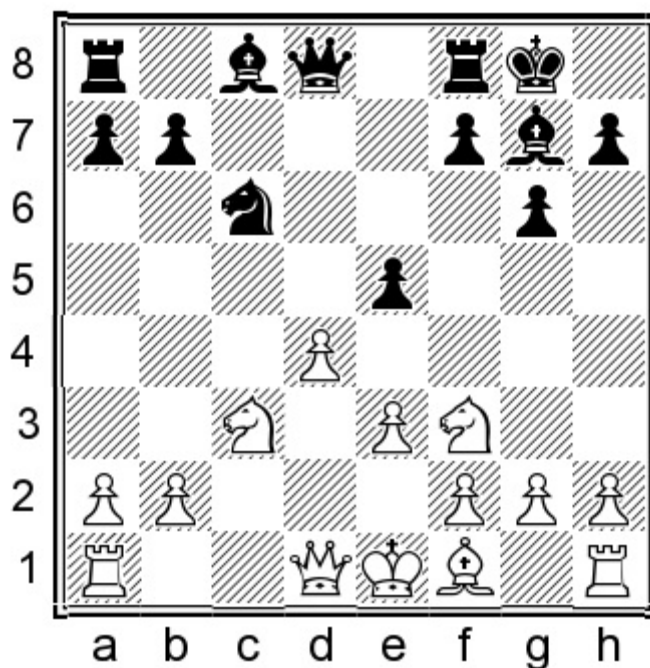
Stayed White's bishop on h4, White would have been better due to the pressure on e7 and the d8-h4 diagonal. From f4, the bishop is hitting void. Black can trade the rooks on the c-file with a comfortable endgame.

B2. 6.cxd5 ♘xg5 7.♘xg5 0-0!?



I prefer this move to 7...e6 or 7...c6!?. Now we threaten to regain the pawn with 8...e6 or even meet 8.e3 with the sharp 8...c6 9.dxc6 e5!?, so White's knight should retreat:

8.♞f3 c6 9.dxc6 ♞xc6 10.e3 e5

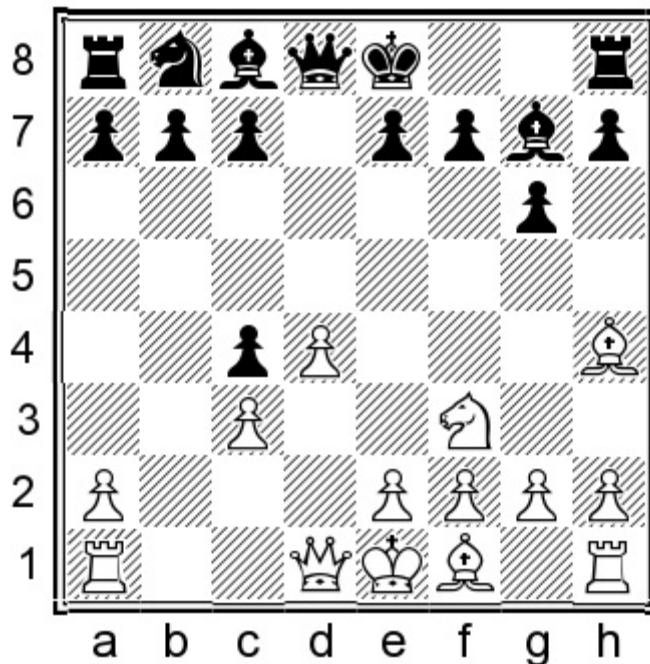


Black has full compensation for the pawn:

11.dxe5 ♞xe5 12.♙e2 ♞xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙e6 14.0-0 ♚a5 15.♚c2 ♞ab8, Smyslov-De la Villa, Barcelona 1990, or:

11.d5 e4 12.♞xe4 ♙f5 13.♞c3 ♞b4 14.♞c1 ♚a5.

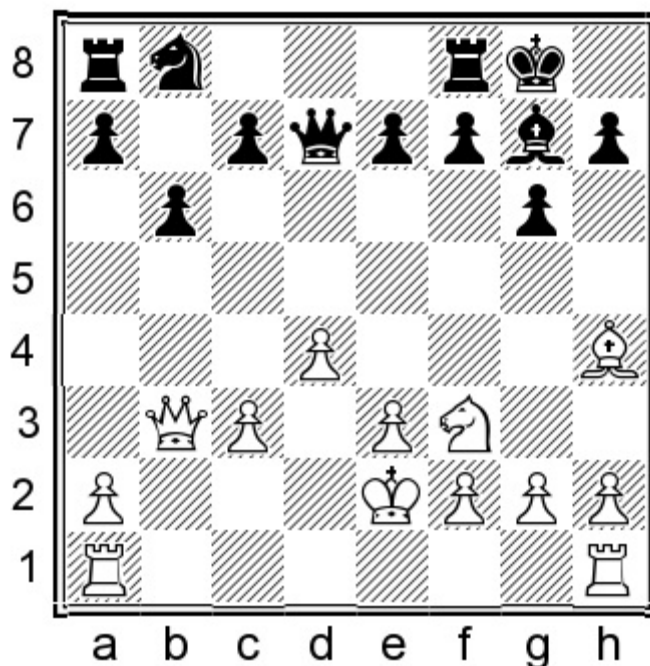
B3. 6.♙h4 ♞xc3 7.bxc3 dxc4!



8.e3 b5! 9.a4 c6 does not give White substantial compensation, so he often answers in the Catalan style:

8.♙a4+ ♚d7! 9.♙xc4 b6! 10.e3 ♘a6 11.♙b3 ♘xf1 12.♔xf1 0-0 13.♔e2

It is obvious that Black's only reasonable plan is connected with ...c7-c5, but I prefer to execute it when we'll be better mobilised.



13...♗c6!?! 14.♞hd1 ♗a5 15.♙b4 e6! 16.♞ac1 ♞fc8 17.c4 c5!, followed by ...♙b7∞.

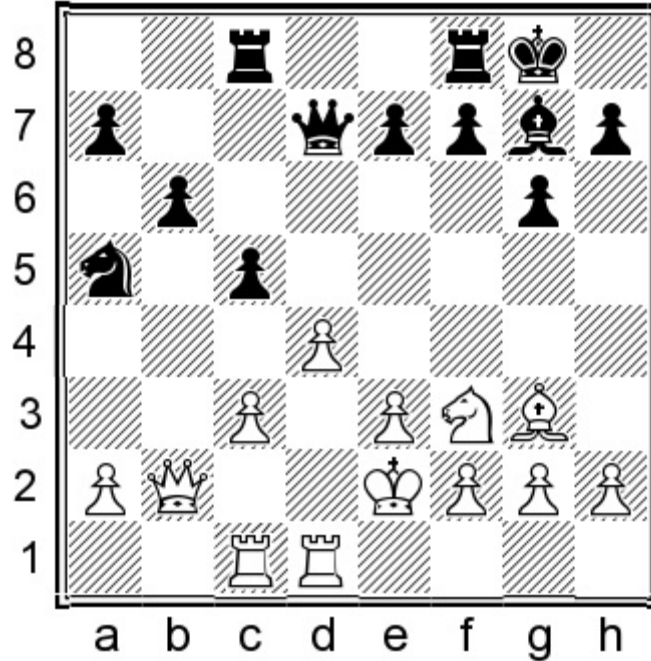
B4. 6.h4 is a trendy line, which leads to opposite castles after 6...♗xg5 7.hxg5 dxc4 8.♙a4+ c6 9.♙xc4 ♘e6 10.♙a4 ♙b6 11.0-0-0 0-0. Black's chances for an attack are higher.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

We have seen already examples where White sacrificed the c4-pawn and allowed Black to defend it with ...b5 and ...c6. I'll examine here only structures that are specific for the 4.♘f3 ♕g7 5.♖g5 line.

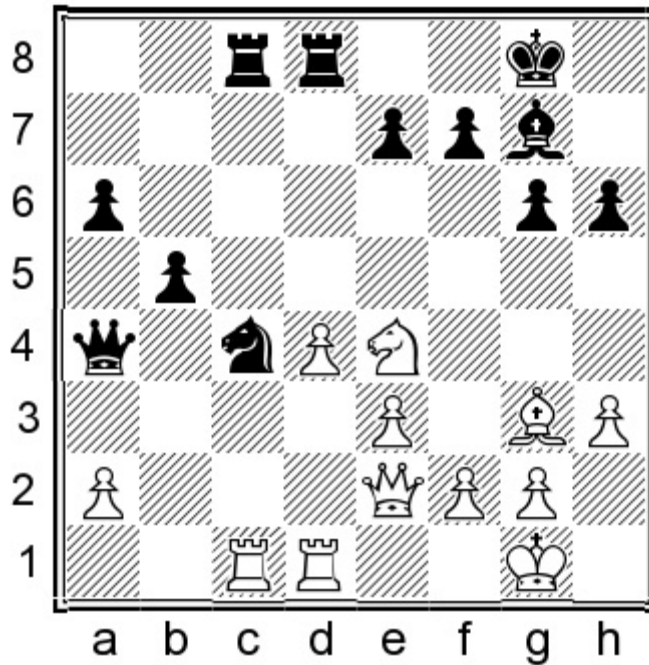
Sahovic-Dorfman

Lvov 1984



A typical position for the line B3 with ♕a4+. White has a very solid pawn structure, but the weakness of the c4-square gives Black the better game. It is very instructive to watch how the fine strategist Dorfman accumulates small advantages:

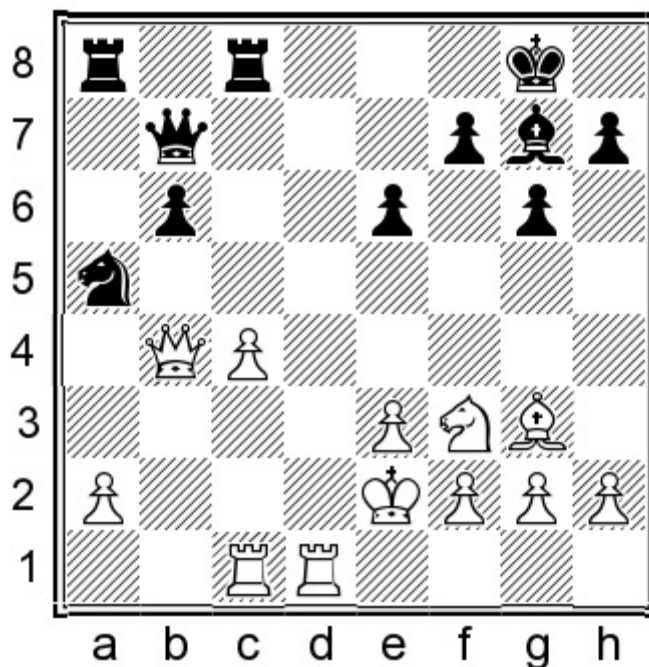
17...♕a4! 18.♔f1 ♖fd8 19.♗e2 ♘c4 20.♕g1 b5 21.h3 a6 22.♘g5 h6 23.♙e4 cxd4 24.cxd4



No matter how good Black's position is, he can hardly win the game without activating the g7-bishop. That is achieved by:

24...e5! 25.dxe5 ♖xd1+ 26.♚xd1 ♜xd1+ 27.♞xd1 ♘xe5 28.♞d6 ♞c6+ and Black went on to convert his edge.

Cebalo-Mark Tseitlin Davos 2008



Black has compensation for the pawn. Both c4- and a2-pawns are weak. Still, the white pieces are active and there is no an immediate way to regain the pawn.

20...e5!

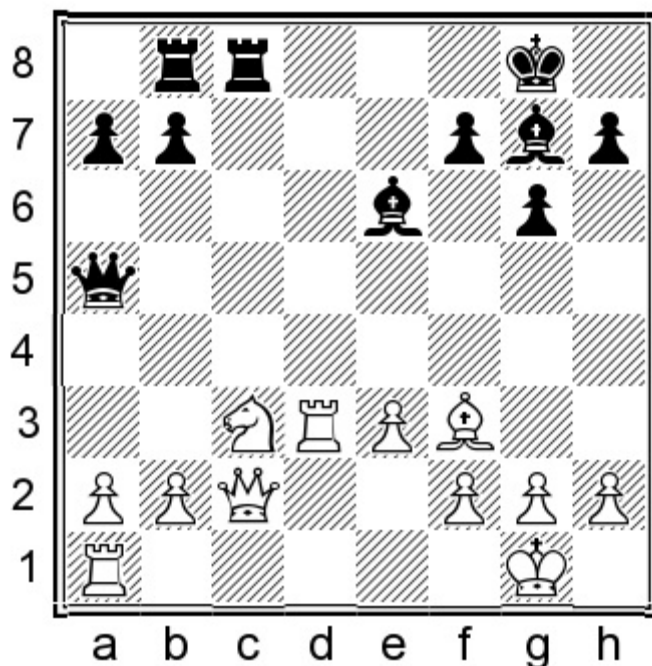
Cutting off the bishop and the knight. Black can always redeploy his own bishop via f8. White got nervous from this turn of events and tried to force exchanges:

21.♔f1 ♕f8 22.♜b5?! (22.♜b1 f6) 22...♖c5! 23.♜d7 ♜xd7 24.♖xd7 ♘xc4 25.♖cd1 f6 and Black won easily this endgame.

In line B2 we sacrifice a pawn without any obvious compensation. We have neither prospects for an attack, nor immediate threats. Still, Black's game is easy owing to the better pawn structure.

J.Horvath-Gyorkos

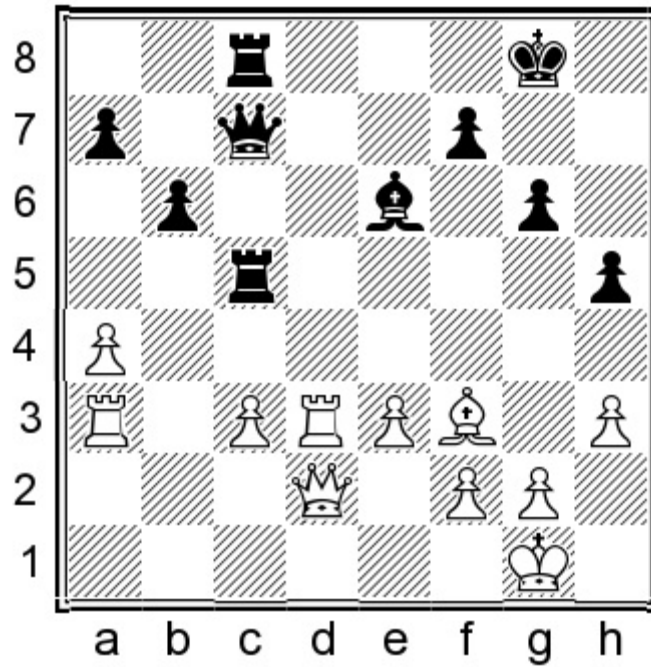
Zalakaros 1994



Black's can transform the activity of his pieces into a long-term structural advantage by taking on c3.

In Smyslov-De la Villa, Barcelona 1990, that happened after 17...♕f5! (forcing another weakening) 18.e4 ♕e6 19.♜d2 ♕xc3 20.bxc3 ♖c4=. Gyorkos is more direct:

17...♖c5 18.♜d2 ♕xc3 19.bxc3 (19.♖xc3 ♖xc3 20.♜xc3 ♜xc3 21.bxc3 b6=) 19...♜c7 20.a4 ♖c8 21.h3 b6 22.♖a3 h5



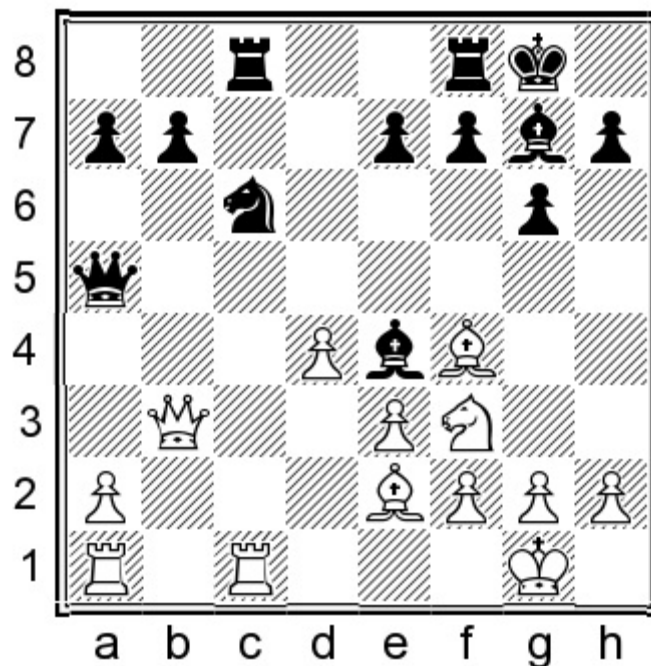
It is clear that White cannot improve his stand. Even more, it is not so easy to wait. After 23.e4 ♕e7 24.♞a1 ♜f6 25.♞a3 ♖g7 26.♙d1 ♜h4 27.f4 ♞c4 28.♞d4 ♜e7 29.♜b2 ♜c5 30.♖h2 ♞xc3 Black regained the pawn, keeping the initiative.

Typical Tactical Motifs

Like in the other Grünfeld systems, White often falls victim to the bishop on g7.

Gelfand-Kasparov

Astana 2001

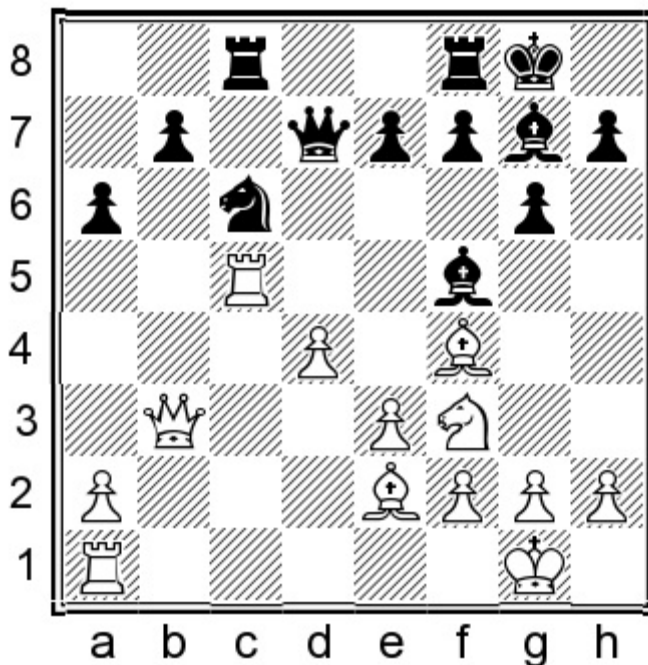


However, Gelfand was on his guards and played 16.h3, avoiding the insidious trap:

16.♖c5 ♜xd4!!, when 17.♖xa5 ♜xe2+ 18.♔f1 ♗xa1 19.♔xe2 ♖c2+ 20.♔f1 ♖c1+ is a draw by perpetual while 17.exd4?? would leave the a1-rook hanging.

Pantev-Bratimirova

Bulgaria 2009



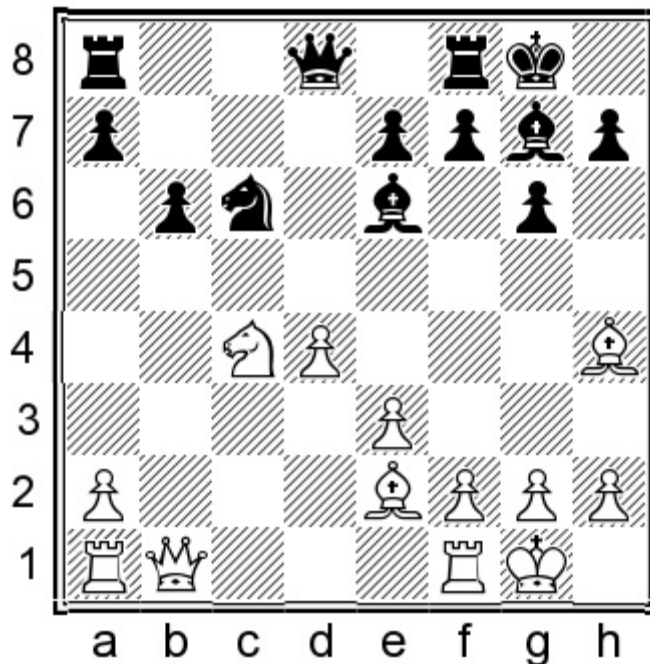
Apparently White was not acquainted with the above-mentioned tactical motif as his last move was

16.♖c5??. It should not be a problem for us to find:

16...♜xd4!. Black finished the game in a beautiful manner.

Stefanova-Sutovsky

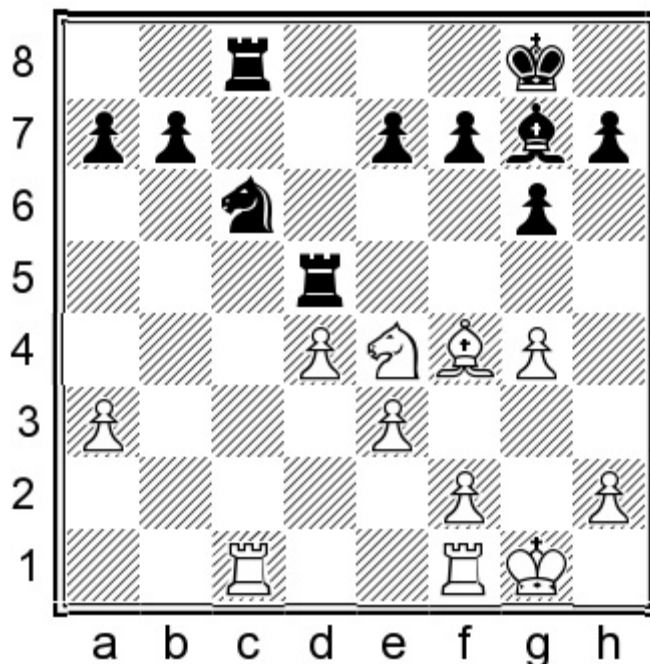
Hoogeveen 2005



The hanging h4-bishop is often a precondition for double attacks along the 4th rank:
 14...♘xd4! 15.exd4 ♚xd4 16.♙xe7 ♜fe8 17.♚b4 a5! and Black regains the piece.

Even top players can overlook linear attacks in the centre. The following combination is quite long and complicated, but once you recognised the pattern, the rest should be easier:

Eljanov-Svidler
 Nalchik 2009



21...♙xd4! 22.♜cd1 ♜cd8 23.exd4 ♜xd4 24.♜xd4 ♜xd4 25.f3 f5 26.gxf5 gxf5 27.♙e3 ♜d3–+.

Chapter 3

Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5

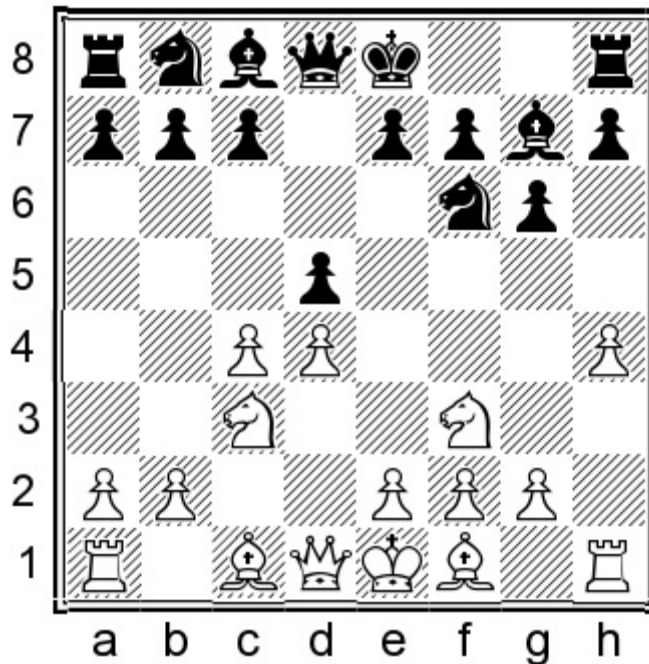
I examine 4.♕g5 in line A and 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.♕g5 in line B.

I'd like to mention here the rare variation 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.h3.

Vachier-Lagrave beat Meier in Karlsruhe 2019 with 5...dxc4!? 6.e4 c5, but you might narrow your preparation by:

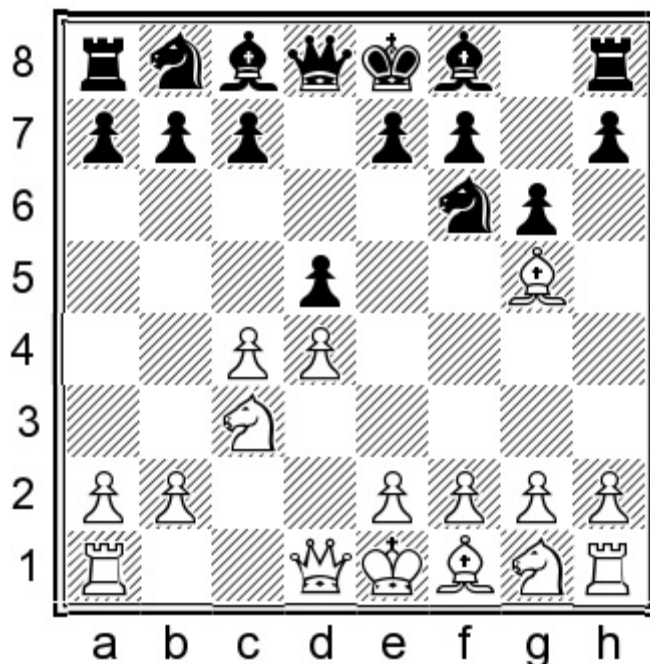
5...0-0, when 6.cxd5 ♗xd5 7.e4 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 c5 transposes to Chapter 9/line C, while 6.♕f4 c5 7.e3 ♕e6 (7...♗c6!?) is simply dubious for White.

4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.h4 deserves attention mostly because it was played by Kasparov in 2017.



I analyse it in Chapter 11/line C.

A. 4.♕g5



A1. 4...♘e4!; **A2.** 4...♙g7.

White's fourth move threatens the d5-pawn. In line A1 I deal with the most popular and interesting retort of Black. It brings about unbalanced positions with mutual chances. 4...♙g7 is a safe and solid variation. If White takes the pawn on d5, Black obtains an easy game. He puts his rooks on the open files and his activity fully compensates for the material deficit. Black's only problem is that he cannot play for a win. On the other hand, having 4...♙g7 in the repertoire saves some study since White's choice is restricted to 5.♙xf6, or 5.♘f3 (line B).

A1. 4...♘e4! 5.♙h4

I consider 5.h4!? and 5.♙c1?! in Chapter 11 – SOS systems.

5.cxd5?! was Alekhine's choice in the very first game where 4...♘e4 was played. It is based on the tactical trick:

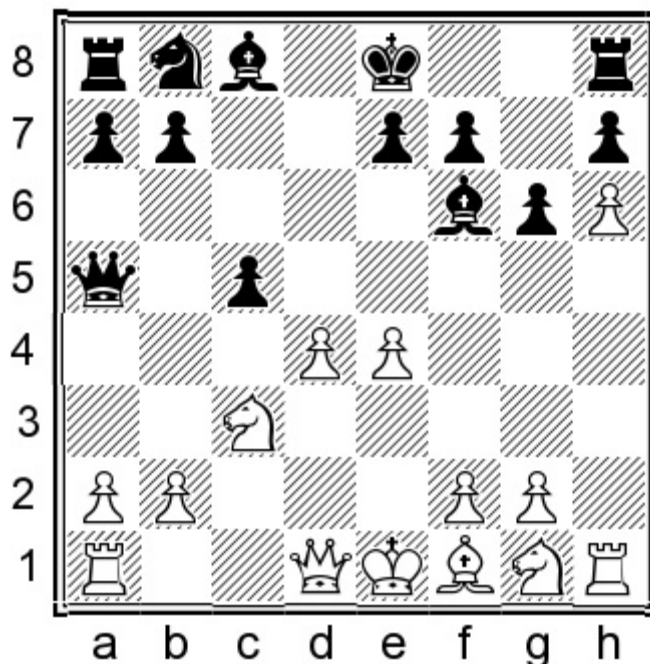
5...♘xg5 6.h4

White regains the piece, but we have the bishop pair:

6...♘e4 7.♘xe4 ♙xd5 8.♘c3

Rogers mentioned 8.f3?! in his SOS book. Black answers 8...♙g7 9.e3 e5↑ 10.♘e2 exd4 11.♘xd4 0-0 12.♙c1 ♙xa2 13.h5 ♘c6→.

8...♙a5 9.h5 ♙g7 10.h6 ♙f6 11.e4 c5!



It is easy to find this move nowadays. The source game Euwe-Von Hoorn, Amsterdam 1923 went: 12.e5 cxd4! 13.♔b5+ ♖c6 14.♙xd4 0-0 15.♙xc6 ♙xe5 16.♗e3 bxc6.

5.♙f4. This retreat often transposes later to line B1 – 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♙g5 ♘e4 6.♙f4.

5...♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5

6...dxc4 7.e4 ♙g7 8.♙xc4 c5 9.♘e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘c6 is a paradoxical attempt to transpose to the main line of the Exchange system. Here White has an extra tempo, but it is not obvious how (and is it possible at all) to make any use of it: 11.d5!? ♘a5! 12.♙d3 e6!.

7.e3 ♙g7 8.♘f3

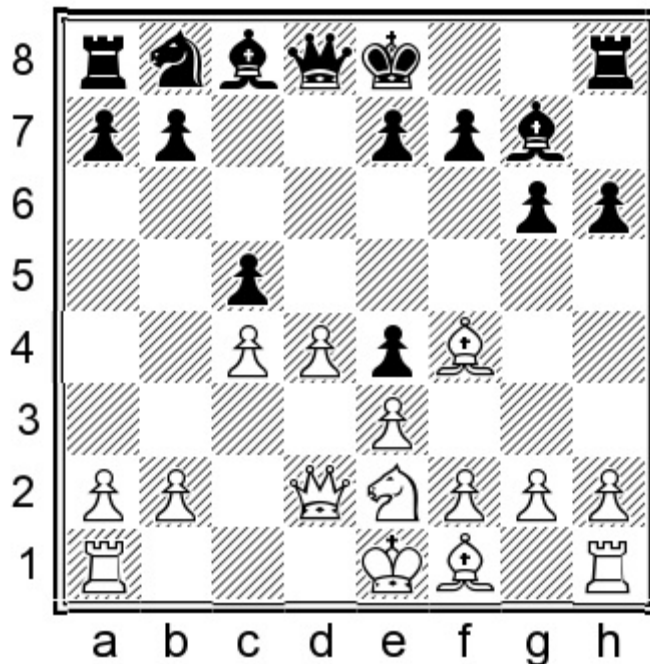
8.cxd5 cxd4! (8...♙xd5 9.♗f3) 9.cxd4 ♙xd5 10.♘f3 0-0 transposes.

8...0-0 9.cxd5 cxd4! 10.cxd4 ♙xd5 – see line B1.

5.♘xe4 is an attempt to deprive Black of his usual counterplay in the centre and to eventually prove that the pawn on e4 is weak. However, White's knight would need one more tempo for activation, and his king will be constantly in danger, no matter which side it will choose for castling.

5...dxe4 6.♗d2

6.e3 ♙g7 7.♘e2 c5 8.♗d2 h6! 9.♙f4 (9.♙h4 cxd4 10.♘d4 ♘c6) leads to this position:



Now best is 9...g5! 10.♙xb8 ♜xb8 11.♞d1 ♚c7∞.

6...♙g7 7.e3

7.0-0-0 is dubious, because Black will have nice attacking prospects after 7...c5 8.d5 h6 9.♙f4 ♘d7 10.e3 b5↑, Erdogan-Khachiyan, Yerevan 2000.

7...c5 8.d5!

8.♘e2 h6 9.♙f4 transposes to the position of the above diagram.

8...♞b6 9.♞b1

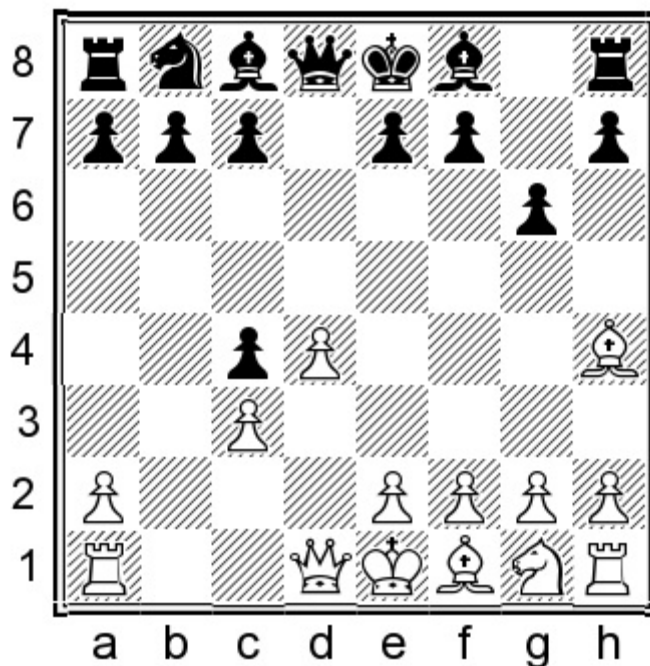
Again, 9.0-0-0!? ♘a6 10.a3 ♙d7 would place White's king under attack.

9...♘d7 10.♘e2 ♘e5 11.♘c3 h6, following with 12...f5 to any retreat. Black has a pleasant game.

5...♘xc3!

After 5...c5 6.cxd5 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♞xd5 8.e3 Black has many options, but all of them lead to positions with only two possible results. Instead of struggling to make a draw, I prefer to snatch a pawn and play for a counterattack in the centre.

6.bxc3 dxc4



7.e3

The pawn sac 7.e4?! is unclear: 7...b5 8.a4 c6 9.♘f3 ♕g7 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 and White is yet to prove his compensation.

We meet 7.♙a4+ by 7...c6!

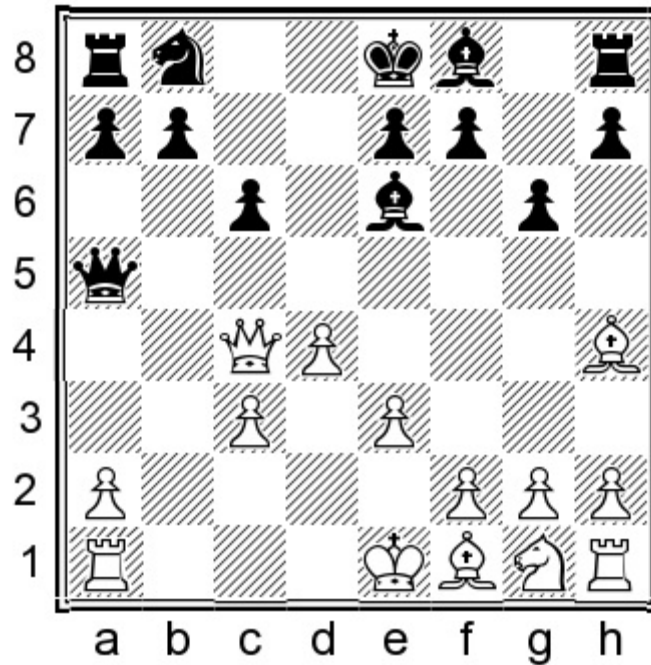
7...♙d7 8.♙xc4 b6 9.♙g3 c5! is also a good option, Dreev-Najer, Ulan Ude 2009.

8.♙xc4 ♙a5 9.e3

9.♘f3 is less precise since after 9...♙e6! 10.♙b4 (Or 10.♙d3 ♘d7 11.e4 ♘b6 12.♘g5 ♙b3! and the bishop will retreat later to a4.) 10...♙xb4 11.cxb4 a5! White lacks the answer 12.b5.

9.e4 is not as good as in line B, where ♘f3 ♙g7 is inserted, since Black can lead out the bishop to h6: 9...♙e6 10.♙d3 ♘d7 11.♘f3 ♘b6 12.♘d2 ♙h6! followed by 13...♙d8, 14...♘a4, and eventually 15...♘c5.

9...♙e6



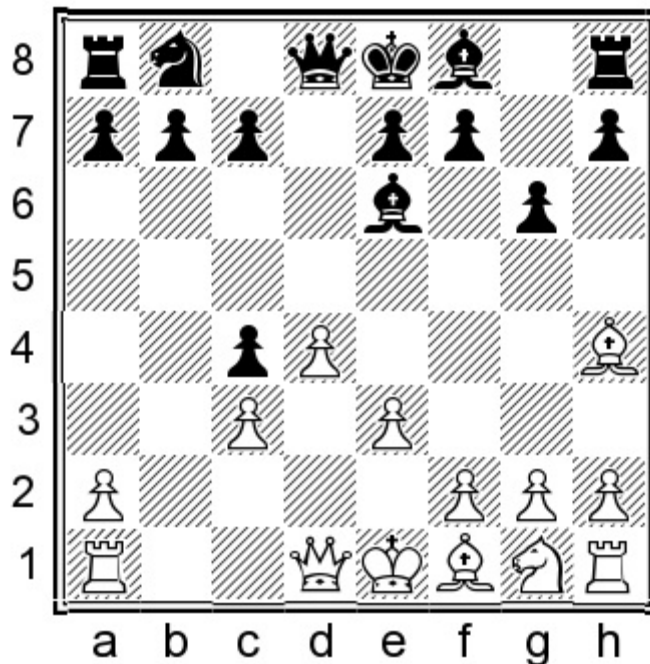
10. ♖b4

On d3 the queen is exposed to tactical tricks, for instance: 10. ♖d3?! ♗g7 11. ♘f3 ♘d7 12. ♙e2 ♘c5 13. ♖c2 ♙f5 14. ♖b2 ♘a4 15. ♖b4 ♖xb4 16. cxb4 ♘c3 17. ♙c4 a5±; 12. ♖d2 ♘c5! 13. ♖c1 ♘e4 14. ♖c2 ♘d6! 15. ♙d3 ♖xa2 16. ♖xa2 ♙xa2±, Wang Yue-Kamsky, Sochi 2008.

10... ♖xb4 11. cxb4 ♙d5 12. ♘f3 ♘d7=. Black even has some initiative, so White should be careful. In P.Genov-Bok, Groningen 2009, he carelessly wasted a tempo with 13.a3, when the thematic 13...a5! 14.b5 c5 would have earned Black an edge.

7... ♙e6!

Of course we should defend the pawn. Our plan is to finish development with ... ♘d7-b6, ... ♙g7, and ...0-0. (Beware the blunder 7...b5?? 8.a4 c6 9.axb5 cxb5 10. ♖f3.) Sometimes Black also chooses a setup with ... ♙h6.



I examine here:

A11. 8.♙e2; **A12.** 8.♚b1?!; **A13.** 8.♖b1; **A14.** 8.♘f3.

A11. 8.♙e2 ♘d7!? 9.d5?!

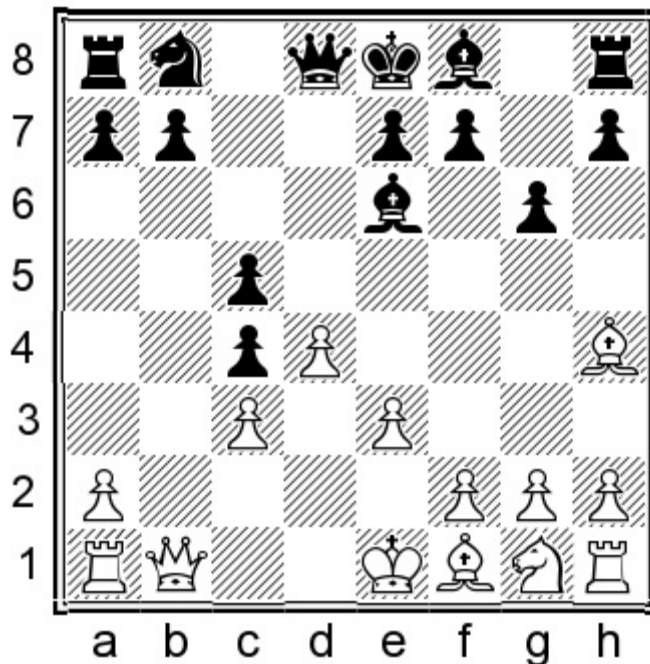
9.♘f3 ♘b6 10.0-0 ♙g7 transposes to line A4. Agrest suggested in the first edition 10...♙h6. Although it ran a practical test in 2017, both games were more or less irrelevant because of early mistakes. For instance, Sarana-Savchenko, rapid Sochi 2017, saw 11.a4 0-0 12.♚c2 a5 13.♖fb1, when 13...♖a6 was obviously unaesthetic. More consistent was 13...f5 with ...♙d5 to follow.

9...♙f5 10.♚d4 ♖g8

Black has the initiative. For instance, 11.e4? ♙g7 12.♚xc4 would fail to 12...♙xe4.

A12. 8.♚b1?! c5!

This idea of Svidler yields best practical results.



9. ♖xb7

9. ♘f3 ♗a5 is bad for White, so the only alternative to the text is 9. ♗b5+?! ♘d7

9... ♘c6 10. ♗xc5 ♗b6 was unclear in Iljushin-Dominguez, Khanty Mansiysk 2007

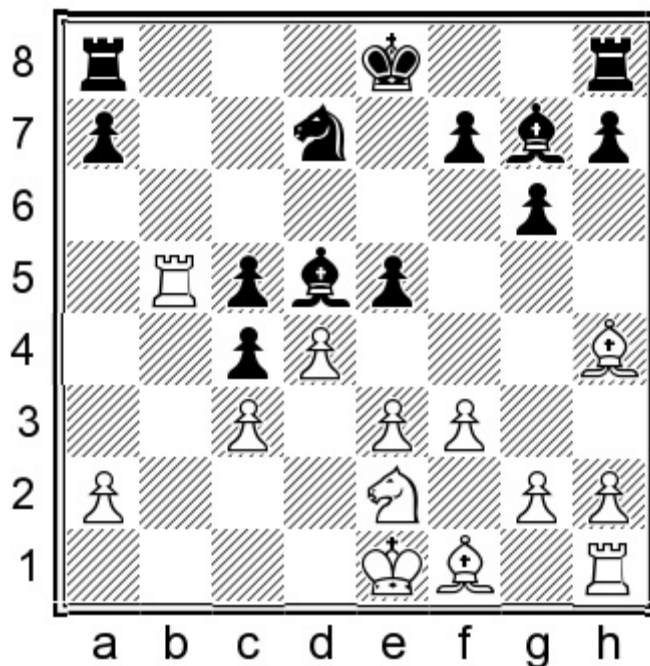
10. ♙xc4 ♙xc4 11. ♗xc4 cxd4 12. exd4 (12. ♗xd4 e5!; 12. cxd4 ♗a5+) 12... ♘b6 with clear play against White's central pawns.

9... ♙d5 10. ♗b5+ ♗d7! 11. ♖b1 ♗xb5

It is better to trade queens, or White will have some initiative after 11... ♘c6 12. ♘f3.

12. ♖xb5 ♘d7 13. ♘f3

The other approach is 13. ♘e2 e5 14. f3 ♙g7



Black is close to completing development, while the opponent still needs 3 more moves. White has tried here:

15.♖b1 ♘c6 16.♗c1 exd4 17.cxd4 cxd4 18.♙xc4 dxe3 19.♙g5 ♗b6 20.♙b5 ♙xb5 21.♖xb5 0-0 22.♙xe3 ♗c4♞, Sanikidze-Rodshtein, Plovdiv 2008.

15.dxc5?! 0-0 16.e4 ♘c6 17.♖b1 ♖fb8 18.♖d1 ♙a4♞, Arutinian-Pashikian, Martuni 2007.

13...e6 14.♙e2

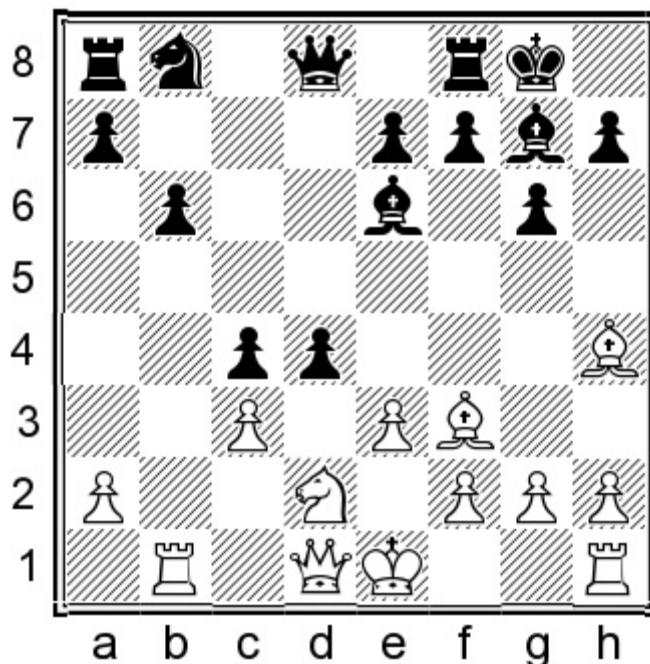
14.♗d2 does not win the c4-pawn due to 14...cxd4 15.exd4 ♙e7 16.♙xe7 ♖xe7 17.♗xc4 ♖hc8♞.

14...♙e7 15.♖d2 cxd4 16.exd4 a6 17.♖bb1 g5 18.♙g3 g4 19.♗e1 h5

Black has an initiative on the kingside, Sargissian-Naiditsch, Germany 2006.

A13. 8.♖b1

This move aims to prevent ...b5. Since Fischer's times, Black had been automatically answering 8...b6 9.♗f3 (Avrukh recommends 9.♗h3 ♙h6 10.e4∞.) 9...♙g7 10.♗d2 0-0 11.♙e2 (11.♙xc4? ♙xc4 12.♗xc4 ♖d5), when Svidler's fascinating rook sac 11...c5! 12.♙f3 cxd4! gives Black a strong attack. However, the game is most likely to end in a draw after:



13. ♖xa8

Or 13. cxd4?! ♗d7 14. ♖xa8 (14. d5 ♕f5 15. e4 c3 16. ♖b3 ♜c8 17. ♚c2 g5! 18. ♖xg5 ♕g6, with an excellent position) 14... ♚xa8, Moiseenko-Svidler, Sochi 2005, and the bishop pair dominates the board.

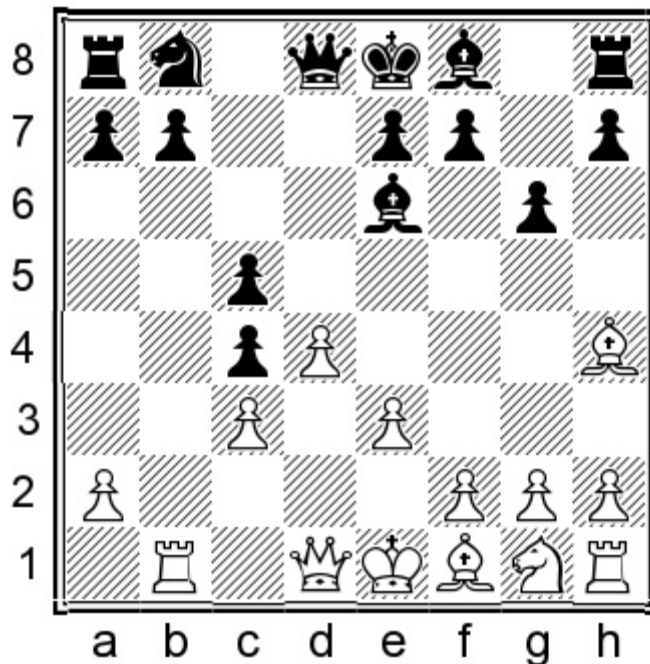
13... dxc3 14. ♗f3

Or 14. ♗e4 ♗d7 15. ♖c6 ♕f5 16. g4 ♖xg4! 17. ♚xg4 c2∞.

14... ♚d3 15. ♜c1 ♗a6 16. ♖b7 (16. ♖c6 ♗b4 17. ♖a4 ♗xa2 18. ♜c2 ♗b4 19. ♜c1 ♗a2=) 16... ♗c5 17. ♖xe7 ♗xb7 18. ♖xf8 ♗xf8 19. ♗d4 ♗c5 20. ♚xd3 (20. ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 21. ♜c2 ♗c5 22. ♚e2 b5 23. a3 a5⊕) 20... ♗xd3+ 21. ♗e2 ♗xc1+ 22. ♜xc1 ♖xd4 23. exd4 b5 24. a3 a5 25. ♜xc3 ♗e7 26. ♜e3 ♗d6 27. ♜e5 ♖d5 28. f3 b4 29. axb4 axb4=.

Lately Black discovered that he did not need to spend a tempo on 8...b6 and began playing 8...♗d7=. The problem of this move is that usually the knight is more active on c6. In the first edition of 2011 my coauthor Agrest made a further step forth by proposing the novelty:

8...c5!?



9. ♖xb7

9. ♘e2 ♜a5 10. ♘f3 ♜xc3+ 11. ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 12. ♔xd2 might be more realistic. Play is equal after 12... ♞c6 13. ♖xb7 ♜c8.

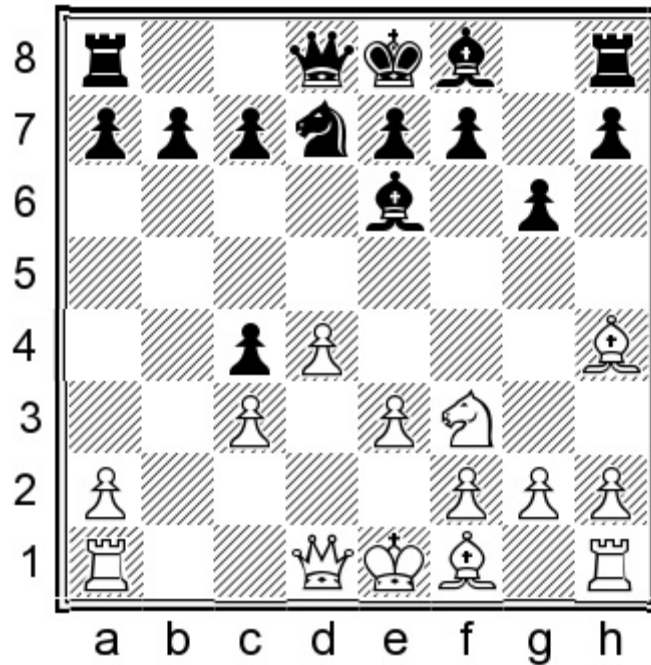
9... ♜a5 10. ♞e2

Or 10. ♜d2 ♘d5 11. ♖b2 ♞c6 12. ♞e2 ♘g7↑.

10... ♘d5 11. ♜b1 (11. ♖b2 ♞d7) 11... ♞d7 12. ♖b5 ♜a3

Black has full compensation for the pawn and an easy game. He can develop his bishop to g7 or h6 while White should think up a way to disentangle his pieces.

A14. 8. ♞f3 ♞d7!?

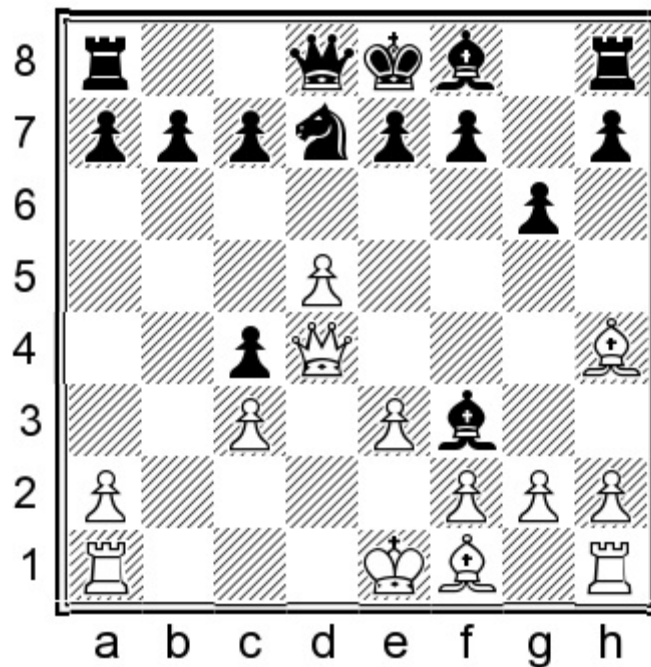


Perhaps this is the most precise move order. Thus Black cuts off sidelines like 8...♙g7 9.♚b1 or 9.♖b1.

9.♙e2

Alternatives are:

9.d5 ♙g4 10.♚d4 ♙xf3



11.♚xh8

11.gxf3 may be objectively better, but then Black has split the enemy pawn structure for free. After 11...♖g8 12.♚xc4 ♙g7 13.♖d1 ♘b6 14.♚b3 ♚d6 15.♙b5+ ♔f8 Black has decent prospects. This position was tested twice in 2012 – in Dreev-Cheparinov, Helsingor 2012, and an email game. Both finished in a draw.

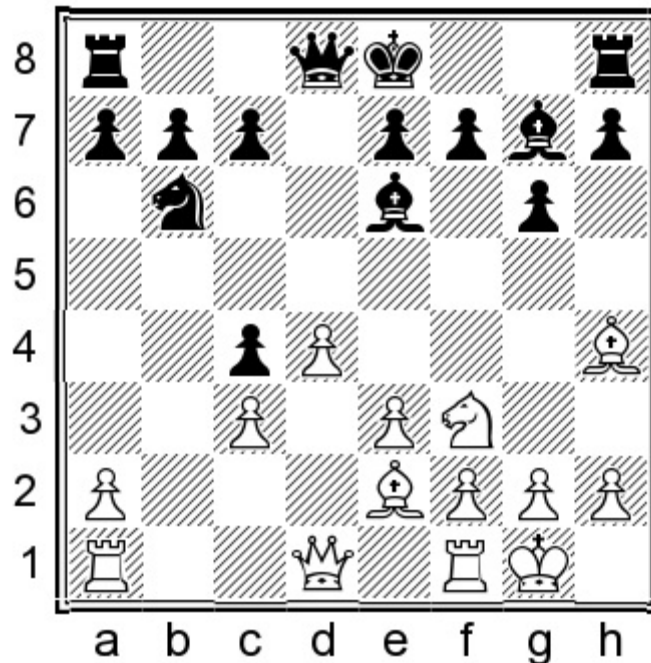
11...♙xd5 12.♚d4 ♖b6 13.e4 ♙c6. Black had more than sufficient compensation for the exchange in Gelfand-Ponomarev, Nice 2010.

9.a4. Played by Kiril Georgiev against Rodshtein in 2010. Black answered with the safe 9...♙g7, and White regained the pawn with 10.♘d2 – the idea of White’s previous move.

10.♘g5 does not work in view of 10...♙d5 11.e4 h6 12.exd5 hxg5 13.♙xg5 ♖b6 14.a5 ♘xd5 15.♙xc4 ♚d6 16.♚b3 ♘xc3!.

After 10...♘f6 11.♙e2 c5 12.♘xc4 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘e4 14.♖c1 ♙xc4 15.♙xc4 ♚a5+ 16.♔f1 ♘d2+ 17.♔g1 ♘xc4 18.♖xc4, play was about equal, for instance, 18...0-0! 19.h3 ♖fc8.

9...♘b6 10.0-0 ♙g7



Here White chooses between plans with e4 – line **A141**, and without it – line **A142**.

A141. 11.a4 a5 12.♚c2

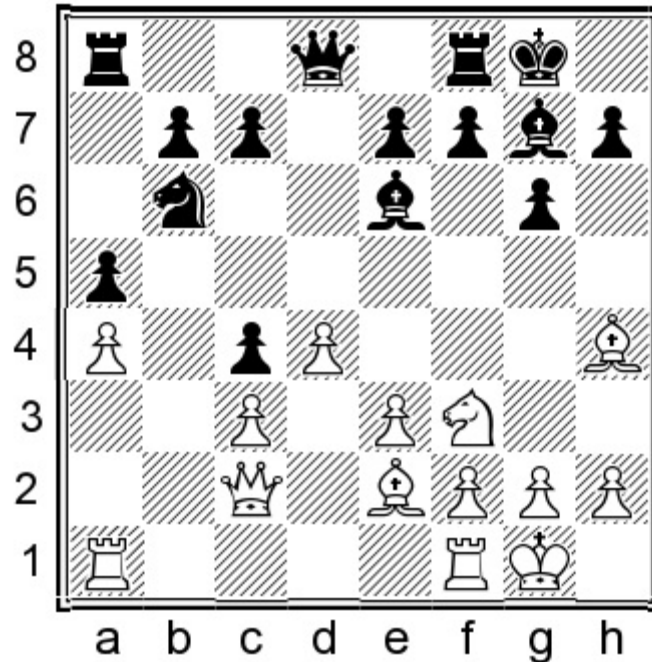
This seems to be the most flexible move order. An alternative is:

12.♘d2

White vacates the f3-square for the bishop and prepares to send the knight to c5 via e4. The latter threat is not dangerous so I do not see a reason to hamper it by 12...f5 as in Wojtaszek-Krasenkow, Warsaw 2010. Still, Black had a good game after 13.♚b1 ♚d7 14.♚a2 0-0 15.♖fb1 ♙d5.

12...0-0 13.♙f3 should be met by 13...♖a7! (13.♚c2 c5) 14.♘e4 ♙d5 15.♘c5 ♙xf3 16.♚xf3 ♘d5 17.♖fc1 b6 18.♘e4 ♚d7 19.♘d2. Here Black gets a preferable game by opening the c-file and trading all the rooks. In the endgame White’s a4-pawn will be very sensitive: 19...c5! 20.♘xc4 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♖c7 22.♙g3 ♖c6 23.♘e5 ♖xc1+ 24.♖xc1 ♙e5 25.♙e5 ♖c8♯.

12...0-0



13.♖fb1

Alternatively:

13.♘d2 allows 13...c5!

13...♞e8 14.♙g3 ♘d7 15.♙xc7! ♘xa4 16.♘xc4 b5 17.♘b6 ♘xb6 18.♙xb6 a4 19.♙c5 ♙c6 20.c4 bxc4 21.♙xc4±.

14.♞b2

Or 14.dxc5 ♘d5 15.♙xc4 ♞c7.

The computer suggest the defensive 14.♞fc1 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♞d7 16.♘xc4 ♙xc4 17.♙xc4 ♞ac8 18.♞b3 ♘xc4 19.♞xc4 ♞xc4 20.♞xc4 ♞c8 21.♞b3 e6=.

14...cxd4 15.cxd4, Petran-Hoelzl, Budapest 1987, 15...♞c8! 16.♞fc1 ♞c7 17.♞b5 c3. This pawn is cramping White's pieces. I prefer Black here: 18.♘e4 ♘d5 19.♘c5 ♞c6 20.♞xb7 ♞xb7 21.♘b7 c2 22.♘xa5 ♞c3 23.♙f1 ♞fc8↑.

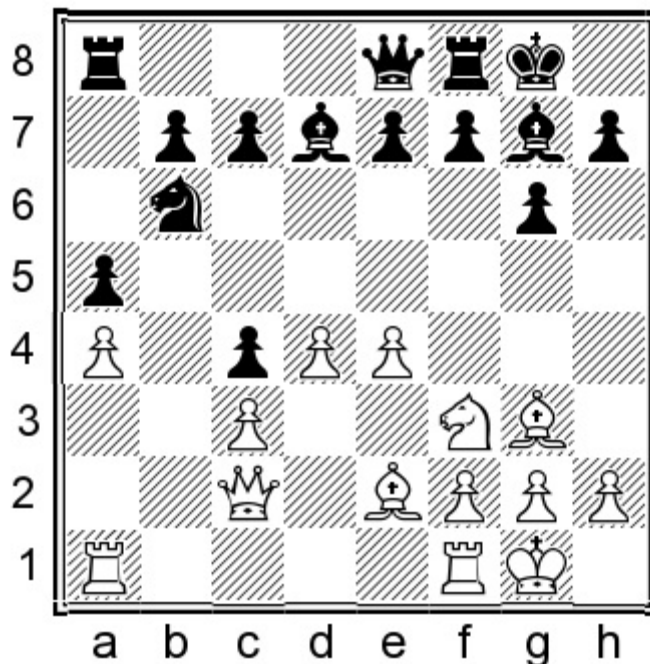
13.♙g3 ♙f5!?

A typical motif. We provoke e3-e4 in order to weaken d4. Thus our future breakthrough ...e7-e5 will gain strength. In 2016 Grischuk played instead 13...♞c8 14.♞fb1 (14.e4 f5) 14...c5 with sufficient counterplay. The point is that 15.♞b2?! ♘d5 was already better for him since 16.e4? would fail to 16...♘xc3!.

14.e4 ♙g4 15.♘e5 (or 15.♞fb1 ♙xf3 16.♙xf3 e5 17.dxe5 ♞e8) 15...♙xe2 16.♞xe2 ♙xe5 17.♙xe5 ♞d7 18.♞c2 f6 19.♙g3. Black is fine here. He can continue, for instance, with:

19...♞ae8 20.♞fb1 e5 21.dxe5 fxe5 22.f3 ♞c6 23.♞b5 ♘d7 24.♞d1 b6 25.♞dd5 ♞e6, or even better: 19...f5!? 20.f3 fxe4 21.fxe4 ♞xf1+ 22.♙xf1 ♞f8+ 23.♙g1 e6 24.h3 ♞c6 25.♙h2 ♘d7 26.♞d1 ♘f6 27.♞e1 ♘h5 28.♙e5 ♘f4.

I played with White 13.e4 ♖d7 14.♗g3 (14.♘e5 ♗xe5), but 14...♕e8! turned to be unpleasant.



In 2013 Houdini 3 opted for 15.♗xc7 ♘xa4 16.♗f4 and held an inferior position.

Delchev-Ve.Schneider, La Massana 2010, went instead 15.♗d1?! ♖c8 16.♖e1 f6 17.♗a2 e5 18.♗c2, with a double-edged game which I eventually won. However, Black can eliminate to a better endgame with 15...♘xa4! 16.♖xa4 ♗xa4 17.♗xa4 ♗xa4 18.♗xa4 c6 19.e5 b5 20.♗c2 ♗h6.

13...♕e8

Underlying the drawback of the early a4 – this pawn is a constant source of concern for White. Now he must reckon with ...♗d7. This setup offers a more straightforward plan than the most popular 13...♗d7!?, when critical is 14.♗g3 ♗d5 15.e4 ♗c6 16.♖xb6 cxb6 17.d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 b5 19.♘e5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♗xd5 21.f4. According to the computer, this position is balanced, and Schreiber-Eljoseph, ICCF 2018 was agreed drawn. However, in an OTB game White's bishop pair might prove to be more dangerous.

14.♗g3

14.♘d2 ♗d7 15.♘xc4 ♗xa4 is satisfactory for Black. His pieces are active, not to mention that he is still a pawn up. See **game 11** Bo.Vuckovic-Sutovsky, Moscow 2011.

14...♗d7 15.♗d1 ♗d8

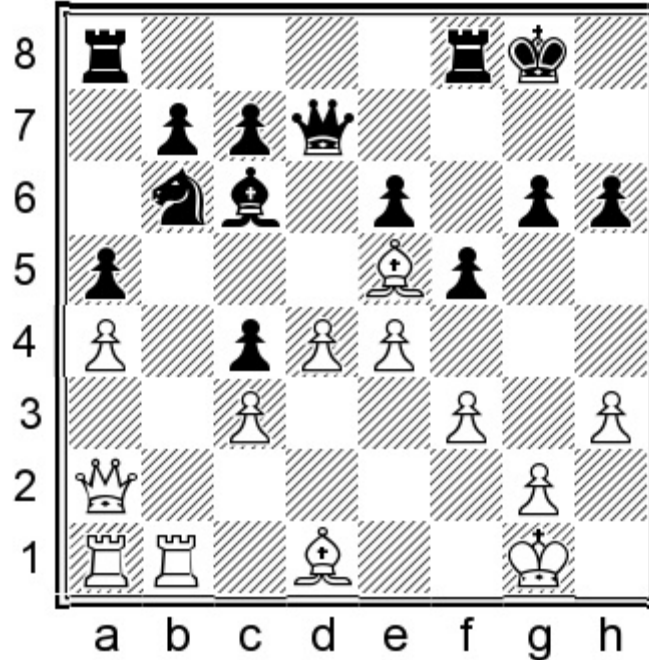
15...♗c8 is similar.

Then 16.♘e5 ♗xe5 17.♗xe5 ♗c6 18.f3 ♗d7∞ is tangled, so Moiseenko-Sieciechowicz, Trzcianka 2014, went:

16.h3

Now instead of 16...♖a6, preparing ...c5, Black could try to undermine the centre from the other wing:

16...♙c6 17.♘e5 ♙xe5 18.♙xe5 e6 19.♚a2 ♚d7 20.f3 h6 21.e4 f5



Black has enough counterplay. He could continue with ...♖f7, ...♗h7.

16.♘e5 ♙xe5 17.♙xe5 ♙c6 18.♚a2 ♚d7 19.f3 e6 20.e4 f6 21.♙g3 ♖fc8

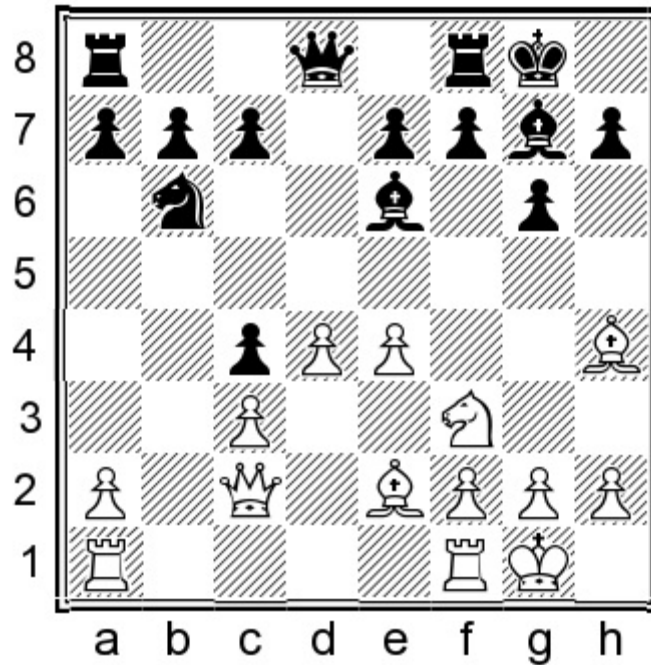
Here a draw was agreed in Rost-Biedermann, ICCF 2014.

A142. 11.e4 0-0 12.♚c2!

The insertion of 12.a4 a5 is hardly in White's favour since the a4-pawn is likely to fall. For instance:

13.♘g5 ♙d7 14.f4 ♚e8 15.♚d2 f6 16.♘f3 ♙xa4, Kazhgaleyev-Smirin, Chalons en Champagne 2009, when 17.d5 f5!? 18.e5 ♙b3 would have paved the way to conversion of the a5-pawn. White's d5-pawn is also quite weak;

13.♚c2 ♙d7! transposes to line A141.



12...♔e8

Heading for a4 in some lines!

In the first edition I proposed the novelty 12...f5, which wins the battle for the d5-square. My analysis holds true, but perhaps White has enough compensation for the pawn:

13.♖fe1

Alternatives are:

13.♘g5 ♕d7 14.f4 ♔e8 15.♞ae1 h6;

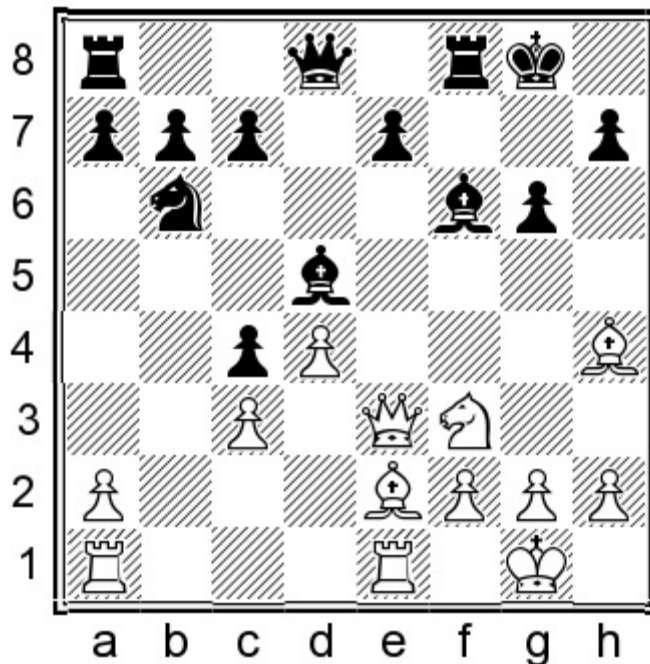
13.d5 fxe4 14.dxe6 exf3 15.♙xf3 (15.♞fd1 ♔c8 16.♙xf3 ♞xf3! 17.gxf3 ♔xe6) 15...♞xf3! 16.gxf3 ♔d5±;

13.a4!? Now Black can continue with 13...a5, e.g. 14.♘g5 ♕d7 15.♙xc4 ♘xc4 16.♔b3 h6 17.♔xc4+ ♖h8 18.♘f7+ ♞xf7 19.♔xf7 g5 20.♙xg5 hxg5 21.exf5 ♔e8 22.♔b3 b6 23.g4 ♔g8 24.d5 ♙e5! intending ...♙d6 and Black's position should be preferred.

13...fxe4 14.♔xe4 ♕d5! 15.♔e3

Naturally, White would prefer to keep queens on. 15.♔xe7 ♔xe7 16.♙xe7 ♞f7 17.♙g5 ♘a4 18.♙d2 ♞e8 19.♘g5 ♞fe7 is obviously better for Black.

15...♙f6



This position is sharp and unbalanced, but besides the extra pawn, Black has plenty of counterplay in the centre with the manoeuvre ...♞b6-c8-d6-f5.

13.♙g3

13.♜fe1 allows the same idea – 13...♚a4! 14.♚d2 ♜a3.

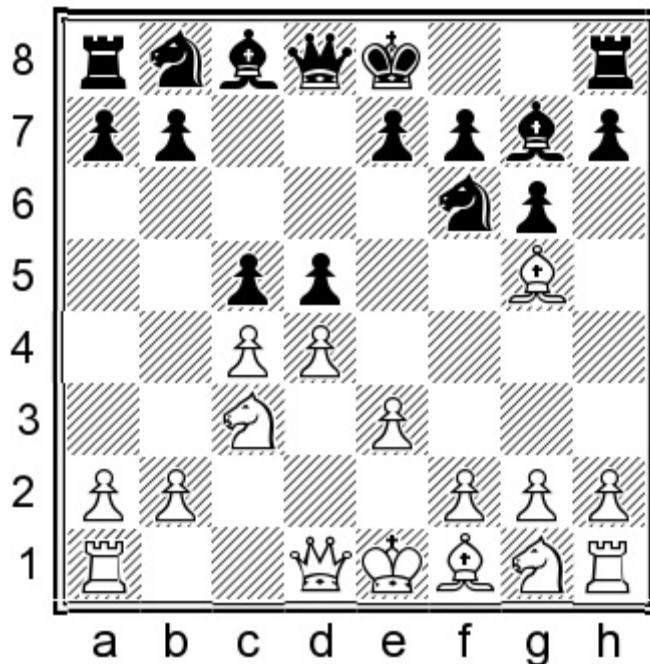
13...♚a4! 14.♚d2 ♜ac8

It is unclear how White could generate threats. For instance: 15.♞g5 ♙d7 16.f4 f6 17.♞f3 e6 or even 17...f5.

A2. 4...♙g7 5.♙xf6

5.♞f3 ♞e4 is considered in line B.

5.e3 c5! faces White with a choice:



a) 6.dxc5 ♖a5 7.♙xf6 (The bishop is hanging in many lines so White exchanges it. Instead 7.♚d2 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♚xc5 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.♞c1 ♜c6 11.♞e4 ♚f5 12.♞xf6+ ♚xf6 13.♙d5 0-0 is equal.) 7...♙xf6 8.♞c1 dxc4 9.♙xc4 0-0 10.♞f3 ♚xc5 11.♚e2 ♜c6 12.0-0 ♚a5=. Next, Black plays 13...♙g4.

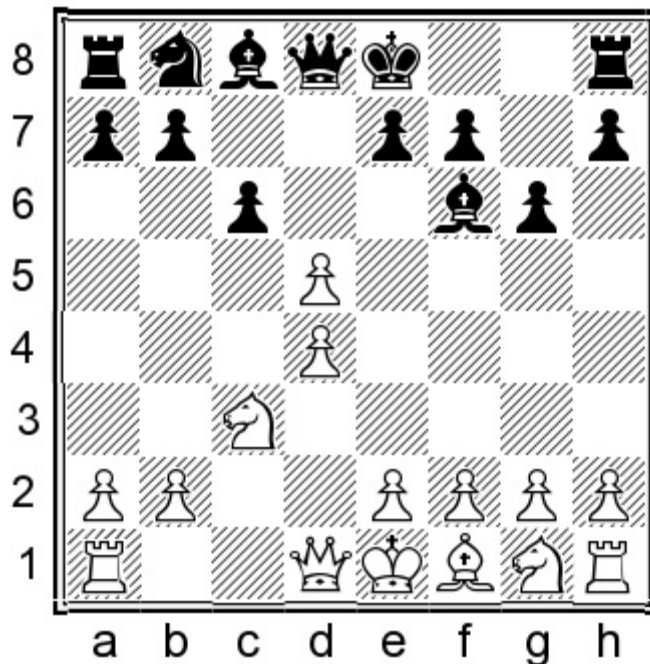
b) 6.♞f3 cxd4 7.exd4 0-0!? 8.♙xf6 ♙xf6 9.♞xd5 ♙g7 10.♞c3 ♙g4 11.♙e2 ♜c6 12.d5 ♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♞a5 14.♙e2 ♞c8 15.♚a4 ♚c7 (15...♙xc3+!? 16.bxc3=) 16.♞b5 ♚e5! 17.♚xa5 ♚xb2 18.♞d1 a6=.

c) 6.♙xf6 ♙xf6 7.cxd5 (7.♞xd5?! ♙g7 8.♞f3 ♜c6; 7.dxc5!? ♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 dxc4) 7...cxd4 8.exd4 0-0 9.♙c4 ♚b6 10.♞ge2 ♚xb2 11.♞b1 (11.0-0 ♚b4 12.♙b3 ♞d7) 11...♚a3 12.0-0 ♞d7 13.♞e4 ♞b6, Krasenkow-Svidler, Jonkoping 1998.

5...♙xf6 6.cxd5

6.♞xd5?! ♙g7 7.e3 (7.♞f3) is bad owing to 7...c5!.

6...c6!



A21. 7.dxc6?!; **A22.** 7.e3; **A23.** 7.e4; **A24.** 7.♞c1.

A21. 7.dxc6?! ♔xd4! 8.cxb7 ♔xb7

The lead in development offers Black full compensation. Some of White's queenside pawns will fall sooner or later:

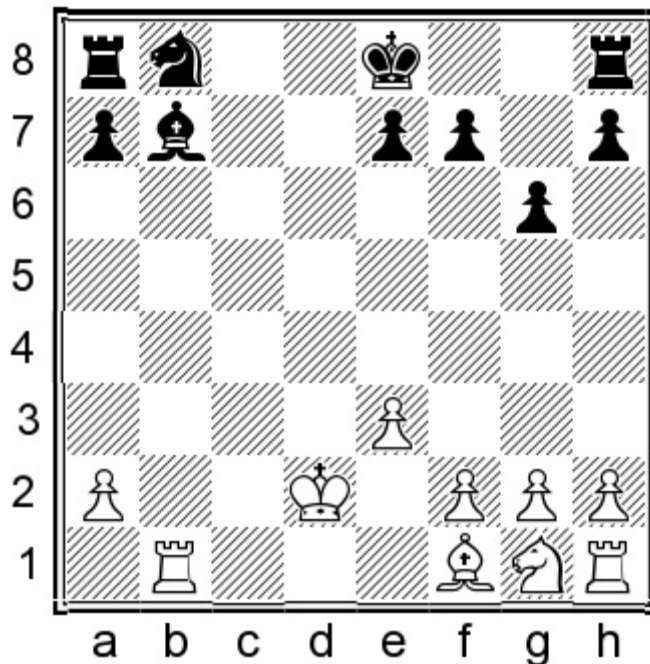
a) 9.♘f3 ♕xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖a5 11.♗b3 0-0 12.e3 ♕xf3 13.gxf3 ♘d7 14.♗b4 ♗f5 15.♕e2 ♞ab8 16.♗e4 ♗xe4 17.fxe4 ♞b2⚡, Orlinkov-Najer, Moscow 1996.

b) 9.♗b3 ♕xc3+! 10.bxc3 (10.♗xc3 0-0 11.e3 ♗b6 12.♘f3 ♞c8 13.♕c4 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♘c6 15.0-0 ♘a5 16.b3 ♘xc4 17.bxc4 ♞c5 18.♞fc1 ♞ac8 19.♗d4 ♗c6 20.f4 a5 21.♞ab1 ♞xc4=) 10...♗c7 11.♘f3 ♘d7 12.e3 ♕xf3! 13.gxf3 0-0 14.♕e2 ♞ab8 15.♗a3 ♗c5 16.♗xc5 ♘xc5⚡.

c) 9.e3 ♕xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖a5 11.♞b1

11.♗d4 0-0 12.♗b4 ♗c7 13.♘f3 (13.♞c1 ♘c6 14.♗c5 ♗b6! 15.♗b5 ♞fc8 16.♘f3 ♘b4↑) 13...♘c6 14.♗c5 ♞fc8 15.♕e2 ♘a5 16.♗xc7 ♞xc7 17.♞c1 ♞ac8⚡.

11...♗xc3+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13.♔xd2



13...♙d5 14.♙b5+ ♔f8 15.♘f3

Here Vl.Georgiev-Svane, Copenhagen 2014, saw 15...♔g7 16.♖hc1 (16.a4!=) 16...♙xa2 and Black went on to win. It is better to snatch the pawn at once:

15...♙xa2!.

d) 9.♖c1. White defends the knight on c3, but the b2-pawn is also vulnerable:

9...0-0 10.e3 ♙f6! 11.♙xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘f3 ♘d7 13.♙e2 ♖ab8↑.

A22. 7.e3

This line has disappeared as White gets nothing in return for the exchange of his bishop.

7...cxd5 8.♙b5+ ♔f8! 9.♘ge2 ♔g7 10.♙b3 e6

Evidently, only Black can be better here. After 11.0-0 a6 12.♙d3 ♘c6 13.♖ac1, simplest is 13...b5.

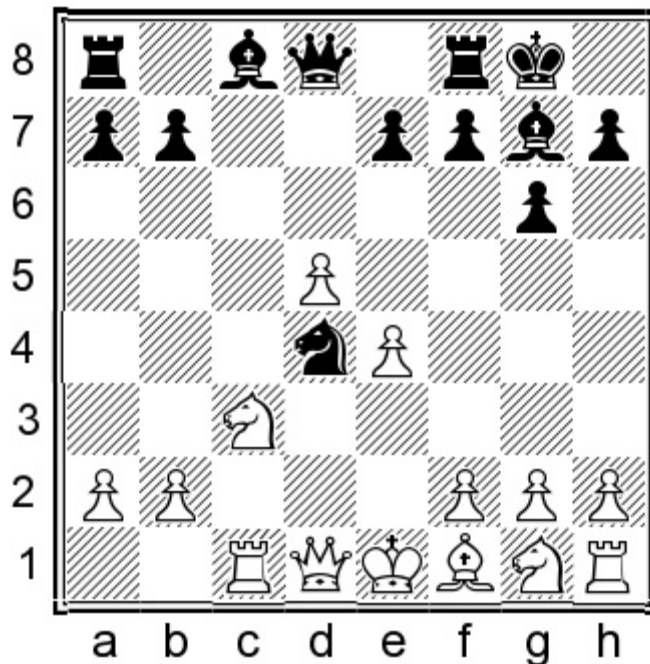
A23. 7.e4 0-0!

7...cxd5?! 8.♙b5+! ♙d7 9.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 10.exd5 ♘a6 11.♘f3 ♘b4 (11...0-0 12.0-0 ♘c7 13.♙b3 ♖ab8 14.♘e5) 12.♘e5 ♙xe5 13.dxe5 ♖d8 14.0-0 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 ♙xd5 16.♙a4+ b5 17.♙xa7 favours White.

8.e5

Bulgarian grandmaster Iotov mentioned the interesting novelty:

8.♖c1!? ♙g7! (8...cxd5 9.♘xd5 ♙g7 10.♖xc8!+-) 9.dxc6 (9.♙c4 cxd5 10.exd5 ♙b6 11.♘ge2 ♙xb2=) 9...♘xc6! 10.d5 ♘d4



I analysed here:

a) 11. ♖ge2 e5! (11... ♙b6 12. ♗xd4 ♘xd4 13. ♚d2 ♙d7 14. ♙d3 ♜ac8 15. 0-0 ♜c7 16. ♞c2 ♞fc8 17. ♞fc1 ♙f6) 12. ♗g3 h5∞.

b) 11. ♚d2 f5 12. ♙c4 ♙d7 13. ♗ge2 ♜c8⇝.

c) 11. ♙d3 e6! 12. ♗ge2 exd5 13. ♗xd5 ♗xe2 14. ♙xe2 ♙e6 15. ♙c4 b5 16. ♙b3 ♚a5+, with more than sufficient compensation, e.g. 17. ♗c3 ♙xc3+ 18. bxc3 ♜ac8 19. 0-0 ♙c4 20. ♙xc4 ♜xc4=.

Another logical idea is 8.h4!? cxd5 9.e5 ♙g7 10.h5 ♗c6 11. ♙d2

Or 11.h6 ♙h8 12. ♙d2 f6 13.f4 ♙f5∞.

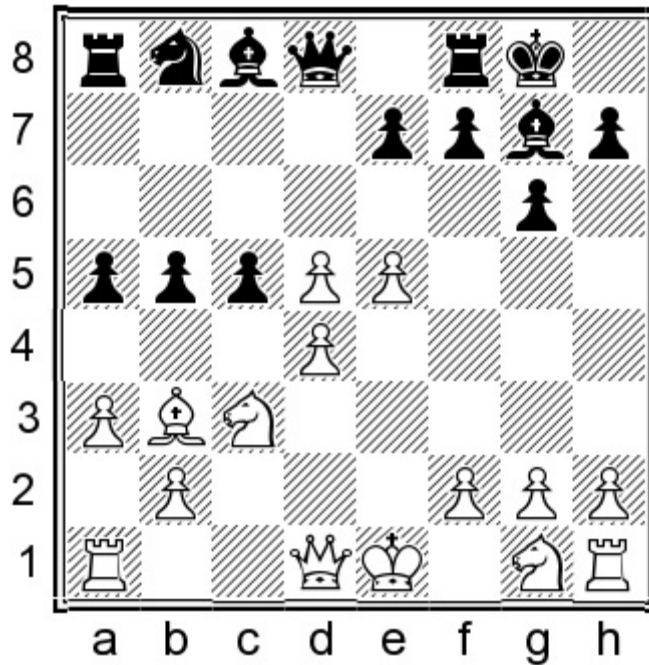
11... ♙f5 12.f4 e6 13. ♗f3 (13.h6!?), Lomasov-Globus, Petah Tikva 2019. Here it is best to prevent the positional threat h6 in the root by 13...gxh5.

8... ♙g7 9. ♙c4 b5 10. ♙b3 a5!?

This move, in connection with the second pawn sac on the next turn, appeals to me since it is unexplored and might earn us the psychological initiative.

10...b4 11. ♗ce2 cxd5 is the common continuation. Black regains the pawn, but White keeps his space advantage. See **game 10** Bukavshin-Matlakov, Moscow 2011.

11.a3 c5!



Undermining e5! 12.♘f3 does not help owing to 12...♙g4, and 12.♘xb5 a4 13.♙xa4 ♖xd5 is even worse.

Thus we should focus on:

12.♘ge2

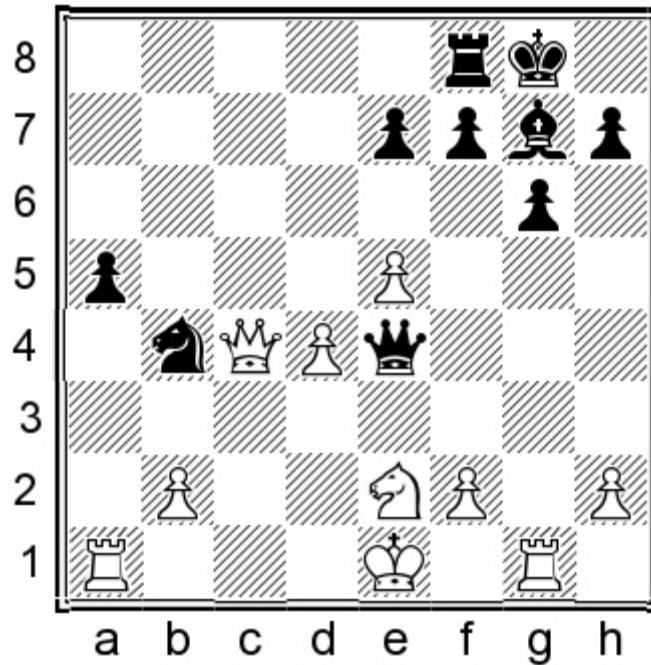
12.dxc5 may be the safest answer – 12...♘d7 13.c6 ♗xe5 14.♘ge2 e6 15.0-0 a4 16.♙a2 exd5 17.♖xd5 (17.♙xd5 ♖b6=) 17...♖b6 18.♖xb5 ♖xb5 19.♘xb5 ♘xc6 20.♘ec3 ♙a6=.

12...c4 13.♙c2 ♙b7 14.♙e4 b4 15.♘a4 ♙xd5 16.♙xd5 ♖xd5 17.♘b6 ♖xg2 18.♙g1 ♖c6 19.♘xa8

Now Black has two ways to obtain full compensation for the exchange:

19...♘a6 20.axb4 ♘xb4 21.♙xa5 ♘d3+ 22.♙f1 ♖f3 23.♙g2 ♙xa8 24.♙xa8+ ♖xa8 25.b3 ♘b2 26.♖c1 ♘d3, or:

19...♖xa8!? 20.axb4 ♘c6 21.♖c2 ♘xb4 22.♖xc4 ♖e4=



White has to deal with multiple threats – ...♘c2+, ...♙e5, ...♚f5 and ...♞c8. The computer holds on, but OTB Black’s chances should be higher.

A24. 7.♞c1

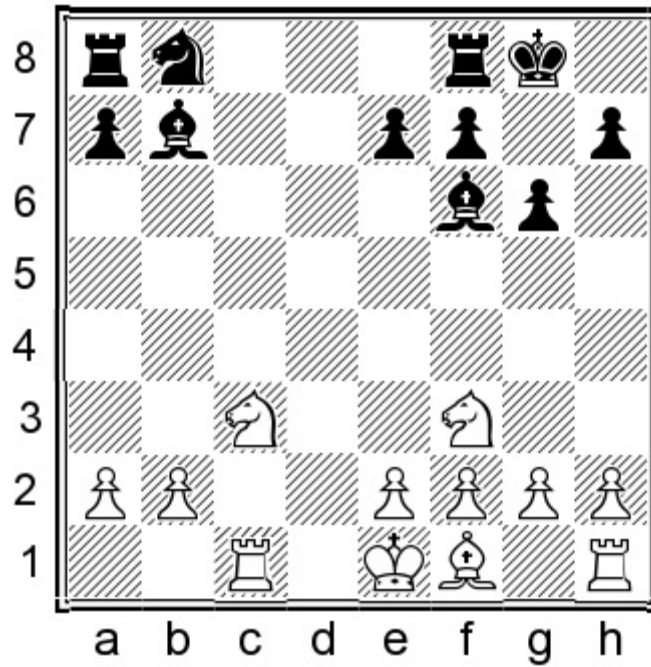
Developing a piece and indirectly keeping the extra-pawn in view of 7...cxd5?! 8.♘xd5.

7...0-0 8.dxc6 (8.e4 ♙g7!) 8...♚xd4! 9.♚xd4 ♙xd4 10.cxb7

a) 10.c7 ♘c6 11.♘f3 ♙b6! 12.♘d5? ♙a5+.

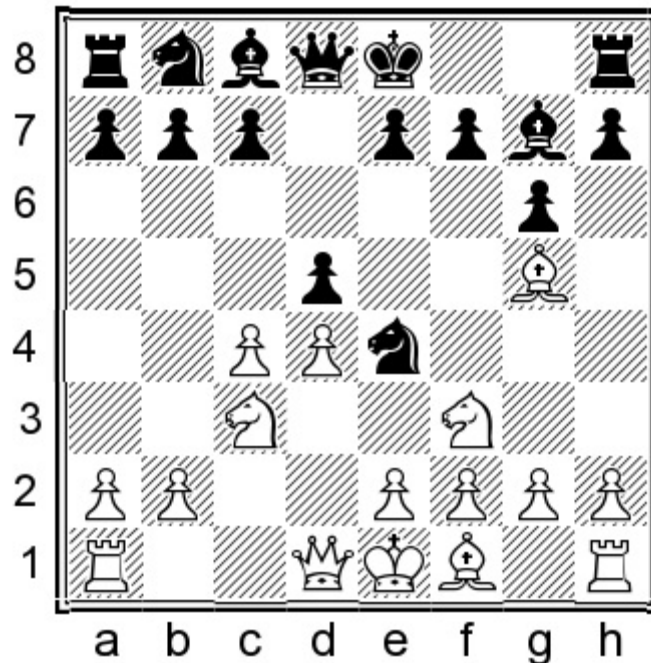
b) 10.♘f3 ♙xc3+ 11.♞xc3 ♘xc6 12.e3 ♙e6! 13.♙c4 (13.♙b5?! ♙xa2) 13...♙xc4 14.♞xc4 ♞fc8 15.♙d2 ♘a5=, Ivanchuk-Dominguez, Havana 2010.

10...♙xb7 11.♘f3 ♙f6



Black's activity balances the game. He has different ways to develop his initiative. See the annotations to **game 9** Bo.Vuckovic-Mekhitarian, Moscow 2011.

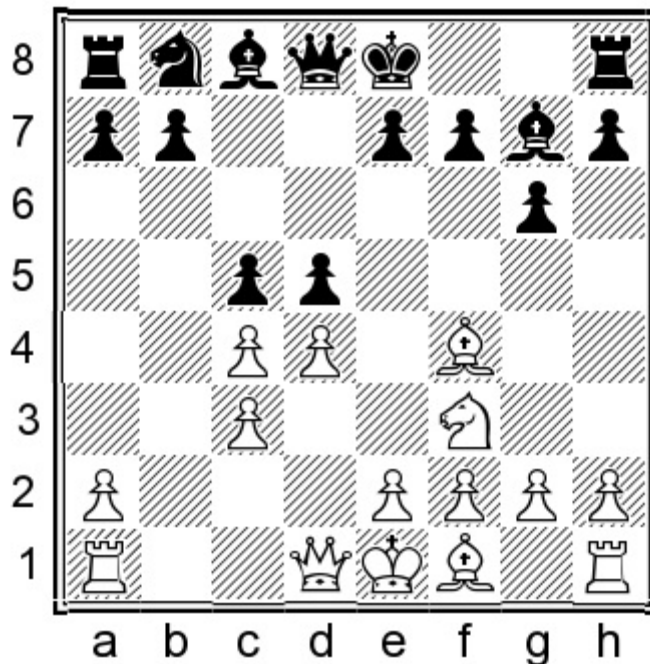
B. 4. ♖f3 ♗g7 5. ♘g5 ♘e4



I examine here:

B1. 6. ♗f4; **B2.** 6.cxd5; **B3.** 6. ♗h4; **B4.** 6.h4.

B1. 6. ♗f4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5



8.e3

8.cxd5 ♖xd5 9.e3 ♘c6 10.♙e2 cxd4 11.cxd4 transposes.

8...0-0 9.cxd5 cxd4! 10.cxd4 ♖xd5 11.♙e2 ♖a5+

11...♘c6 12.0-0 ♙f5 13.♖a4 ♖a5! 14.♖xa5 is similar to the main line, only Black's bishop is already committed to f5.

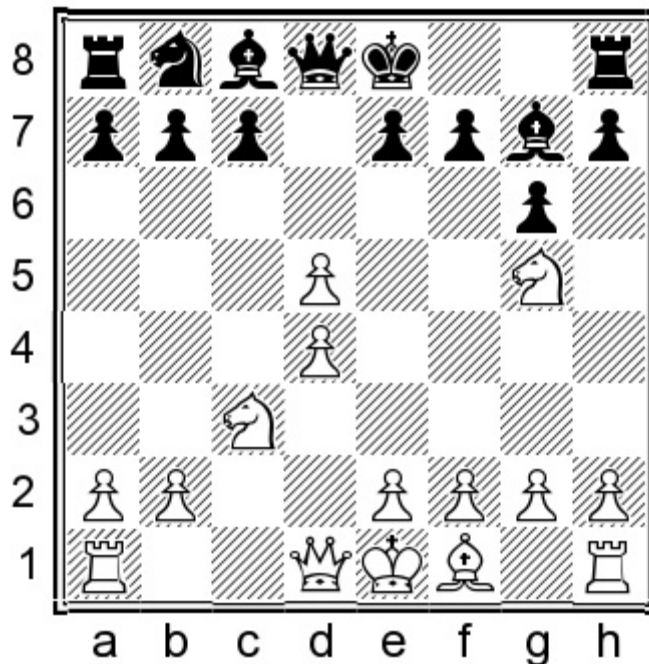
12.♖d2 ♘c6 13.♖xa5 ♘xa5 14.♙c7

White wants to provoke ...b6, hoping to exploit the weakening of the light squares. After 14.0-0 ♙e6 15.♖fc1= Black easily trades rooks along the c-file.

14...♘c6 15.♖b1 b6 16.0-0 ♙b7 17.♖fc1 ♖fc8 18.♙g3 e6 19.♙b5 ♙f8=

The game Kuna-Palladino, ICCF 2017 was drawn a couple of moves later.

B2. 6.cxd5 ♘xg5 7.♘xg5



7...0-0!?

There is a very good chance that this move will be a surprise to your opponents as it occurs in less than 7% of the games.

The most popular answer is 7...e6 8.♖d2 when 8...exd5 allows the awkward 9.♗e3+, while 8...h6 9.♘f3 exd5 leads to the Carlsbad pawn structure with the insertion of ♗d2 h6 which is undoubtedly in White's favour. Contemporary theory has found a reliable setup where Black redeploys the ♘g7 to d6 via f8. Still, I prefer the more lively positions of our repertoire.

Now I would like to draw your attention to another interesting option, which has completely disappeared from modern practice:

7...c6!?. Black gets fair compensation for the pawn. It may be sufficient for equality, but the fact is that Black should work for it. On the other hand, Black's play is easy, while White has a wide choice at every move. That could cost him precious time.

8.dxc6!

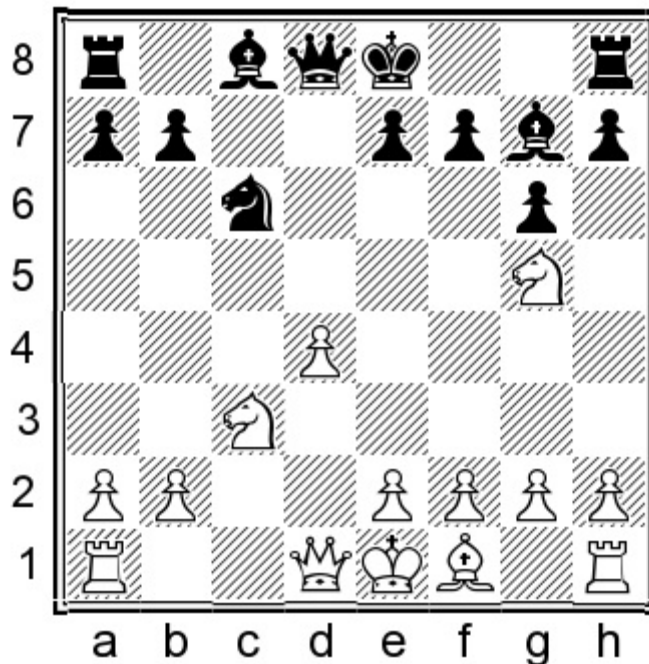
8.e3 e6! 9.♘f3 exd5 10.♙e2 transposes to the main line.

8.♗b3 0-0 9.♘f3 cxd5 10.♗xd5 ♗b6 11.♗b5 (11.♗b3 ♙xd4 12.♘xd4 ♗xd4 13.♞d1 ♗c5)

11...♙xd4 12.♘xd4 ♗xd4 13.♞d1 ♗b6 14.♗xb6 axb6 15.e3 ♙e6 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♙e2 ♘c5 18.0-0 ♙b3 19.♞d4 ♞fd8=.

8.♘f3 cxd5 9.e3 0-0 10.♙e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 e6 12.♞c1 ♗d6 13.a3 ♙d7=.

8...♘xc6



9.d5

9.e3 e5 10.d5 ♖xg5 11.dxc6 0-0 12.h4 (12.c7 e4 13.♖c1 ♗a5 14.♙e2 ♗xc7 15.0-0 ♖d8 16.♘xe4 ♗e7=) 12...♗d8 13.♗xd8 ♖xd8 with enough compensation. For instance: 14.♙b5 bxc6 15.♙xc6 ♖b8 16.♙d5 e4 17.0-0-0 ♙g4 18.♖d2 ♘f8 19.♙b3 (19.♘xe4 ♙f5 20.f3 ♖xb2=) 19...♖dc8 20.♖c2 a5 21.♘a4 (21.♖g1 ♖b6 22.♙d5 f5) 21...♖xc2+ 22.♘xc2 ♖c8+ 23.♘c3 (23.♘b1 ♖d8) 23...♙xc3 24.bxc3 ♖c6 25.♖f1 ♖f6=. White cannot improve his position.

9...♗a5 10.♗d2

10.♘ge4 is bad owing to 10...♙f5 11.dxc6 ♙xe4 12.♗d7+ ♘f8 13.♗d2 ♖d8 14.cxb7 ♙xb7 15.♗c2 ♙e4 16.♗b3 ♙e5-+.

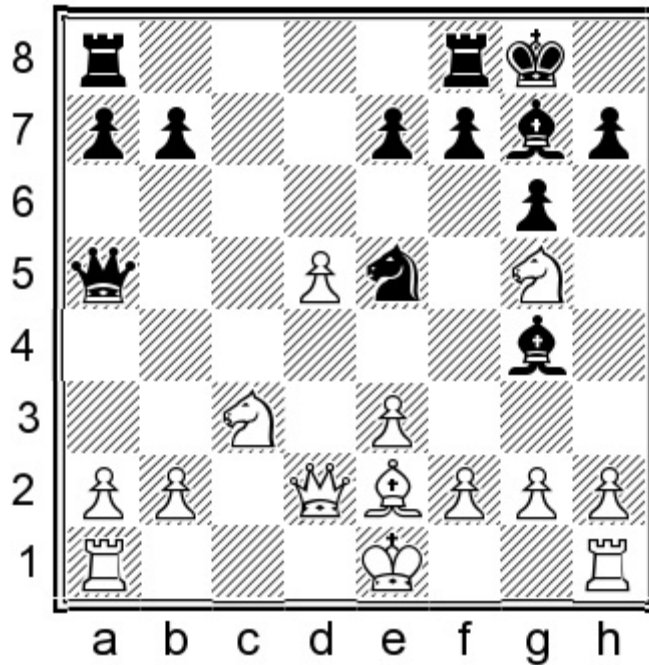
10...♘e5 11.e3

White would like to bolster up his d5-pawn with 11.e4, but after 11...h6 12.♘f3 (12.♙b5+ ♙d7 13.♙xd7+ ♘xd7) 12...♘xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♙d7 he has nothing to oppose to Black's queenside play: 14.h4 ♖c8 15.♖c1 0-0 16.f4 b5.

11...0-0 12.♙e2

Black's plan is simple: he will put the rooks to c8 and d8 and threaten with ...♘c4 or ...b7-b5. Contrary to the first impression, White's pawns on d5 and a2 are very sensitive. If he decides to repel the knight from e5 before it could reach c4, it will go to f6: 12.f4 ♘g4 13.h3 (13.♙e2 ♖d8 14.♖d1 ♗c5) 13...♘f6 14.♖d1 ♖d8 15.♙e2 ♖b8 16.e4 h6 17.♘f3 b5 18.e5 b4=.

12...♙g4. Black would be glad to trade bishops.



13.f3 h6 14.♘ge4 ♕f5 15.♘g3 ♖ac8 16.♘xf5 gxf5 17.0-0 b5! with decent chances, e.g. 18.e4 b4 19.♘d1 fxe4 20.fxe4 ♘c4 21.♙xc4 ♖xc4 22.♘e3 ♚c5 23.♖fc1 ♚d4 24.♚xd4 ♖xd4 25.♘f5 ♖xe4=.

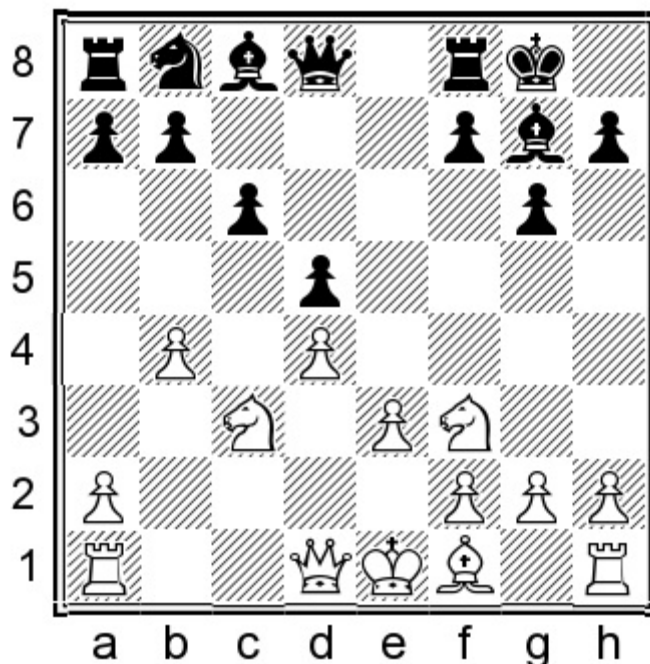
8.♘f3

8.h4?! h6 (or 8...c6 9.dxc6 ♕xd4 10.cxb7 ♕xb7) 9.♘ge4 c6 10.dxc6 ♕xd4 11.cxb7 ♕xb7 12.e3 ♕g7 13.♚xd8 ♖xd8 is fine for Black.

8.e3 only offers Black additional options.

He can transpose to the main line with 8...c6 9.dxc6 e5! (9...♘xc6?! 10.h4! h6 11.♘ge4) 10.♘f3 (10.cxb7 ♕xb7 11.♘f3 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♚b6 13.♚b3 ♕xd4 14.exd4 ♖e8+ 15.♕e2 ♚xb3 16.axb3 ♕xg2 17.♖g1 ♕f3 18.♔f1 ♕xe2+ 19.♘xe2 ♘c6 is balanced) 10...♘xc6. However, he can also choose a good version of the Carlsbad structure with:

8...e6! 9.♘f3 exd5 10.b4 c6



In this pawn formation White commonly builds up a minority attack on the queenside with ♞c3-a4-c5 followed up by b4-b5 . Black, for his part, seeks counterplay on the opposite flank. However, the concrete position suggests another setup. In order to activate our dark-squared bishop, we should aim to push $\dots\text{c6-c5}$. Then the c-file will open in our favour. I recommend $\dots\text{♙e6}$, $\dots\text{♞d7}$, $\dots\text{♚e7}$, $\dots\text{a5}$, intending to meet b4-b5 by $\dots\text{c6-c5}$.

11. ♙e2

11. ♞c1 b5 12. a4 ran into 12... $\text{a5}\uparrow$ in Matveeva-Chiburdanidze, Jakarta 1993.

11... ♙e6 12. 0-0

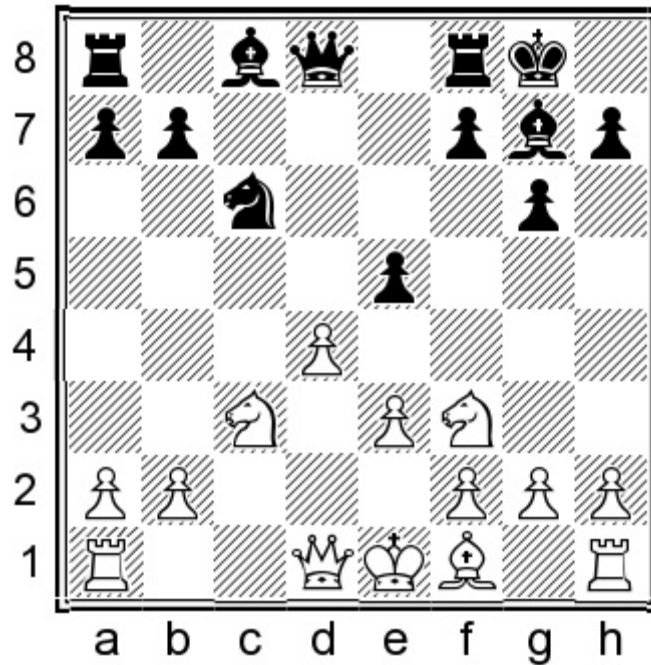
Or 12. ♞c1 ♚d6 13. ♚b3 ♞d7 14. ♞a4 a5 15. b5 ♚b4+ 16. ♞d2 ♞fc8 , Saric-Pashikian, Plovdiv 2010.

12... ♞d7 13. ♞c1 ♚e7 (13... b5 is also fine) 14. ♚b3 (14. b5 c5=) 14... ♞fc8 (14... ♞b6 going for c4 is fine, too – 15. ♙d3 a6 16. a4 ♞c4) 15. ♞fd1

If White waits with 15. h3 , then 15... a6 16. ♞a4 b5 17. ♞c5 a5 18. a3 ♙f5 is pleasant for Black as White lacks a plan.

15... ♞b6! . Now Black counterattacks on the queenside – 16. a4 a5 17. ♞b1 (17. bxa5 ♞c4) 17... ♞cb8 with an initiative.

8... c6 9. dxc6 ♞xc6 10. e3 e5



11.d5

We'll better understand the strength of Black's position on the example of the game Smyslov-De la Villa, Barcelona 1990:

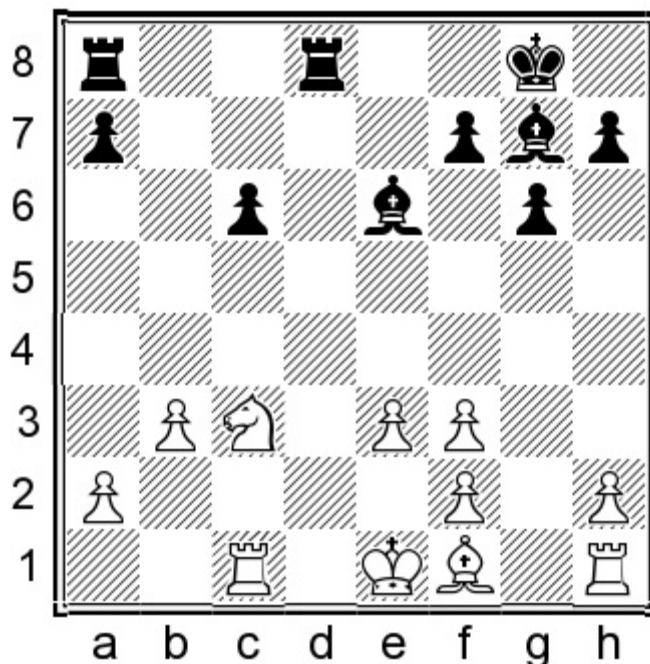
11.dxe5 ♞xe5 12.♙e2 ♞xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙e6 14.0-0 ♚a5 15.♞c2 ♜ab8 16.♞fd1 ♞fc8 17.♞d3 ♙f5 18.e4 ♙e6

The last 8 moves of the ex-World champion were the first lines of Houdini 6, and still he had to be careful to make a draw:

19.♞d2 (19.h3 h5=) 19...♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♞c4 (20...♞d8=) 21.h4 h5 22.♞b1 b6 23.♞f4 ♞bc8 24.♞bd1 ♔g7 25.♞d6 ♞e8 26.♙e2 ♞c5 27.c4 ♞xa2=.

11...e4! 12.♞xe4

12.dxc6 exf3 13.♞xd8 ♞xd8 14.gxf3 bxc6 15.♞c1 ♙e6 16.b3



16...a5! 17.♔e2 ♕xc3+ 18.♖xc3 a4 19.bxa4 ♖xa4 20.a3 ♖da8 21.0-0 ♖xa3 22.♖xc6. Of course this position is a draw, but in Kraus-Konopka, Czech Republic 2016, Black somehow found a way to lose it even without bishops. The computer offers 22...♖8a5! 23.f4 g5 with an evaluation of 0.00.

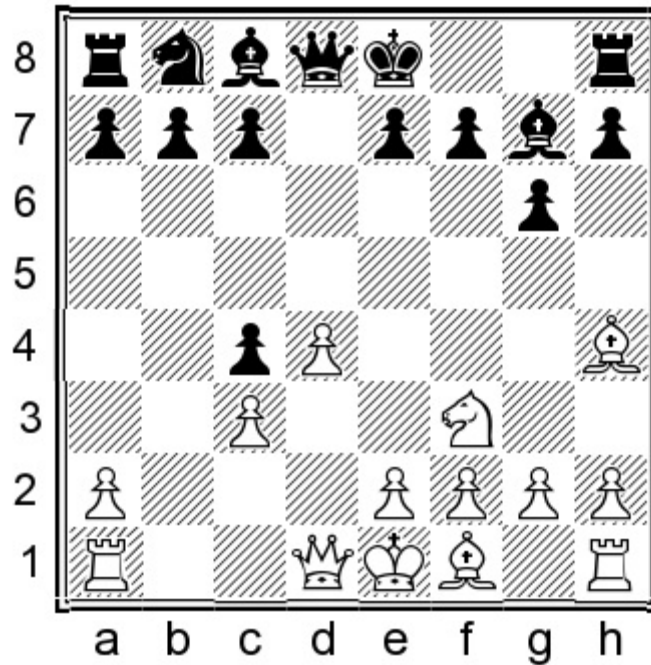
12...♕f5 13.♖c3 ♗b4 14.♖c1 ♕a5

White should play precisely to hold the equality. Besides, 14...♕xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♗xa2 and 14...♖c8 15.♗d4 ♗xd5 also level the chances.

B3. 6.♕h4 ♗xc3

After 6...c5 7.cxd5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♕xd5 9.e3 White has a small, but stable advantage. Furthermore, Black's chances to play for a win seem next to none: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♗c6 11.♕e2 0-0 12.0-0 e5 13.dxe5 ♕a5 14.♕f6 (14.♖b3 ♗xe5 15.♗d4 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖ac1 ♕e6 18.♕c4 ♖ab8=) 14...♕xf6 15.exf6 ♕f5 16.♗d4 ♕xf6 17.♗xc6 ♕xc6 18.♕f3 ♕a6 19.♖d4 ♕f5 20.♖fd1 ♖ac8, Kotronias-Ghinda, Athens 1988. With good defence, Black should be able to make a draw.

7.bxc3 dxc4!



8. ♖a4+

8.e4?! does not set Black any problems – 8...b5 9.a4 c6 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0 a6 12.♚b1 ♘d7.

Lately White has been trying 8.e3 b5! 9.a4 c6 10.♙e2

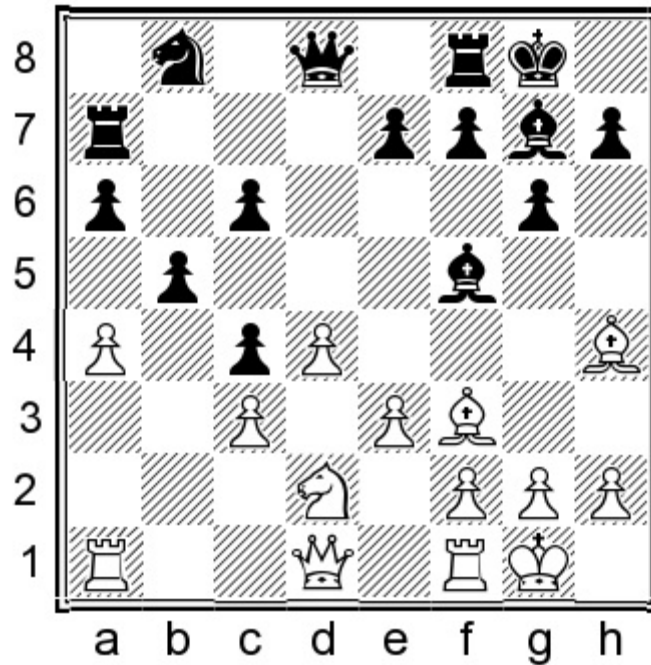
In a blitz game against Aronian, Nakamura included 10.♚b1 a6, but it only cost him another pawn after 11.♙e2 ♘d7 (11...0-0!? 12.0-0 ♖e8, Nguyen-Gupta, Xingtai 2019) 12.0-0 ♘b6 13.♘e5 ♙xe5 14.dxe5 ♘xa4.

10...a6 11.♘d2

Or 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.e4 0-0.

11...0-0 12.♙f3 ♖a7 13.0-0 ♚c7!. Preparing ...e5.

Kasparov played 13...♙f5.



14.♖e1. (I have learned from my own experience that in this structure 14.e4?! is a strategic mistake. White only weakens the support of the d4-pawn and limits the scope of his light-squared bishop. If Black succeeds in breaking through with ...b4 or ...c5, White's centre will collapse. Black can retreat to d7 or e6, but perhaps most unpleasant is 14...♙c8! as in Delchev-Karr, France 2010, which went 15.♜b1? c5! 16.axb5 ♜b7! 17.♞xc4 cxd4! ♞) 14...♙d3 (14...a5! ♞) 15.♞b3 ♙f5 16.♞d2 (16.♞c5 ♞d7=) 16...♙d3, Sorin-Kasparov, sim. Buenos Aires 1997.

14.♙g3 (14.♞e4 f5 15.♙g3 e5) 14...e5 15.♙e2 ♞d7 16.♞f3 ♜e8 17.♜d2 ♜d6 18.♞fb1 ♜d5 19.♜a2 e4 with a huge advantage, Murdzia-Kasimdzhanov, Germany 2013.

8...♜d7!

8...c6 9.♜xc4 ♜a5 is also possible, but Black's setup is defensive. Play may continue:
10.e4

Or 10.e3 ♙e6 11.♜d3 ♞d7 12.♜d2 ♞c5 13.♜c1 ♞e4 14.♜c2 ♞d6 15.♙d3 ♜xa2.

10...♙e6 11.♜d3 ♞d7, when White can prevent the threat of 12...♞c5 by 12.♞d2! ♙h6=, Chirila-Shishkin, Baia Sprie 2012.

9.♜xc4 b6!

We know that in the Grünfeld the c4-square is often Black's main strategic aim. Therefore, it would be helpful to trade light-squared bishops. White can prevent that by:

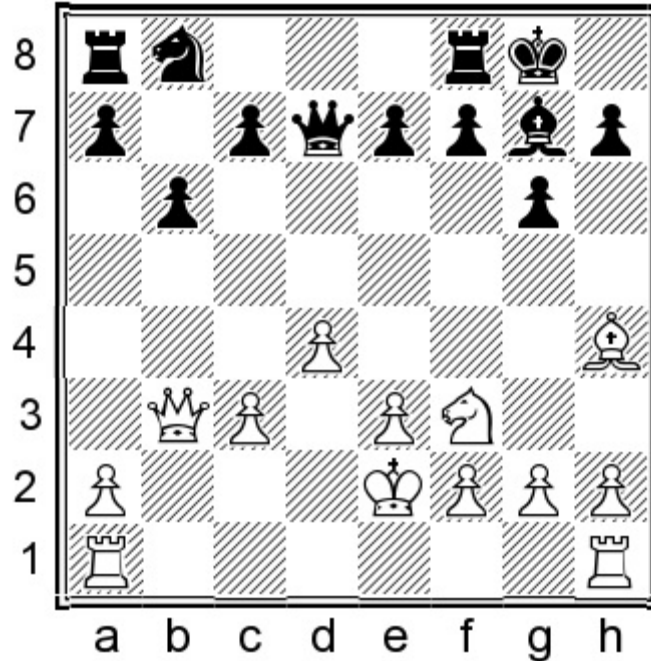
10.♙g3?! c5 11.♞e5, but then the typical motif 11...♙xe5! 12.♙xe5 ♙a6 13.♜b3 0-0 gives good play due to his lead in development: 14.e3 (14.d5 ♜f5 15.♙g3 c4 16.♜b4 ♜xd5 17.♜xe7 ♞c6 18.♜f6 ♞ad8 19.♙f4 ♞fe8 20.♙h6 ♜e5 21.♜xe5 ♞xe5 22.♙e3 ♙b7 23.♜d1 ♙d5 24.h4 f6=; 14.♜d1 ♞c6 15.♜a4 ♞xe5) 14...♙xf1 15.♙xf1 ♞c6 16.♙g3 ♞a5 ♞.

10.e4 ♖a6 11.♚d5 is outright bad: 11...♙xd5 12.exd5 ♗xf1 13.♕xf1 ♜a6 14.a4 0-0-0 15.♗xe7 ♞xd5 16.g3 c5.

10.e3 ♗a6 11.♚b3

11.♚b4? ♗xf1 12.♕xf1 goes halfway Black's plan to open play with 12...c5! 13.dxc5 ♜a6 14.♚e4 ♞c8 15.cxb6 ♜c5 16.♚b4 axb6 with a decisive attack.

11...♗xf1 12.♕xf1 0-0 13.♕e2



13...♜c6!

13...c5 is also popular, but I prefer to execute this break when Black is fully developed. Anyway, White cannot prevent it. The problem position arises after:

14.♞hd1

14.dxc5?! at this moment is risky because our knight will arrive at c5 with tempo: 14...♜a6!

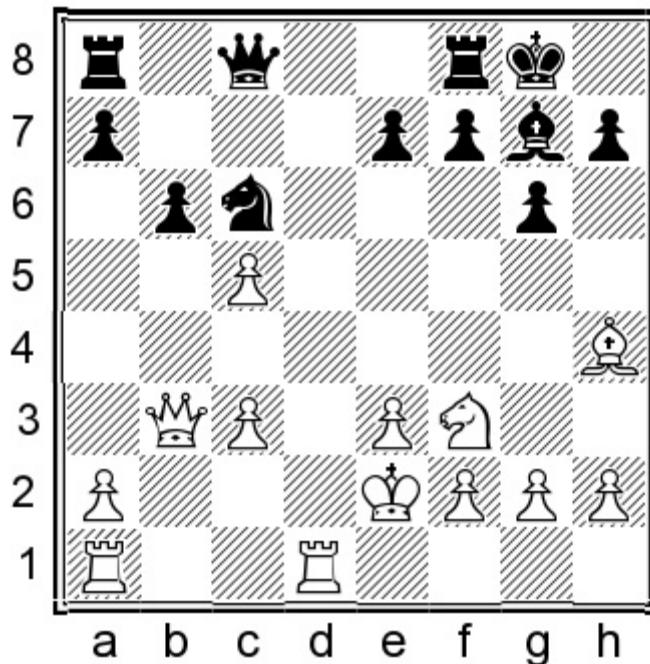
15.♞hd1 ♚c7! (15...♚b7 16.c6 ♚xc6 17.♗xe7 ♞fe8 18.♗a3 ♚xc3 19.♚xc3 ♗xc3 20.♞ac1 ♗b4

21.♗b2 ♗f8 22.♜d4 ♜c5 23.g4 ♞e4 24.♕f3 ♞ae8 25.h3 f6 26.♗a3 ♕f7 27.♞c2 ♜a6 28.♗xf8 ♕xf8

29.♞c6 ♕g7 30.♜b5 ♞4e7 31.♞dd6±) 16.cxb6 (or 16.c6 ♜c5 17.♚c4 e6 18.♜d4 ♚xh2) 16...axb6

17.♗g3 ♚c6 18.♕f1 ♜c5 19.♚d5 ♚xd5 20.♞xd5 ♗xc3 21.♞c1 ♗f6 22.♞c2 ♞a6=.

14...♜c6! 15.dxc5 (15.♞ab1 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♞fc8=; 15.♕f1 ♜a5) 15...♚c8



16.♖ab1! parries all the threats: 16...bxc5 17.♔c4 ♖ab8 18.♖xb8 ♔xb8 19.♔xc5 ♖c8 20.♔f1±. White has evacuated his king from the centre, and he is still a pawn up (20...e6 21.♔a3).

14.♖hd1 ♘a5 15.♔b4 e6!

Saving the pawn and controlling d5. 15...♖fe8 16.♖ac1 ♖ac8 17.c4 ♔g4 18.h3 ♔e4 19.♔a4 c5 20.d5 is slightly better for White.

16.♖ac1 ♖fc8 17.c4 c5!

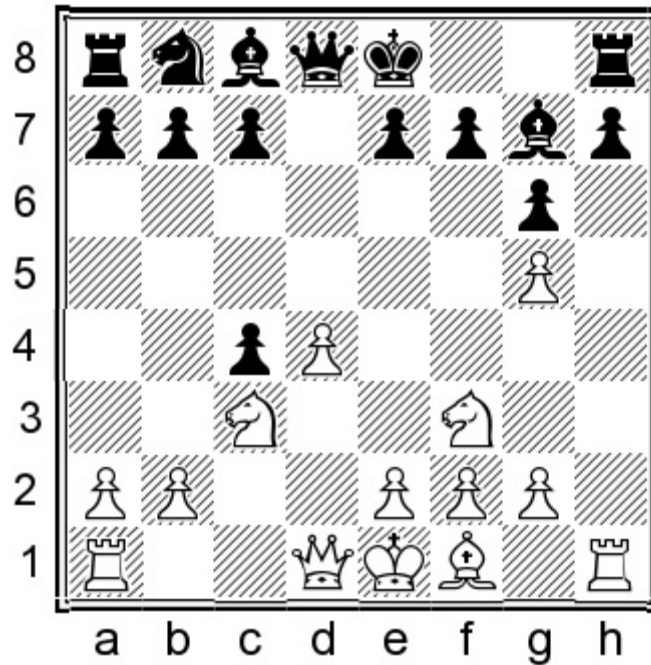
Just in time! Now 18.dxc5 ♔b7 (18...♔c6 19.cxb6 axb6 20.♖d6 ♔e4 21.♖xb6 ♘xc4 22.♔b1 ♔d5 23.♖b3 h6) 19.cxb6 axb6 gives Black an excellent compensation. After 20.♔f1 ♔f8 he should be even better.

18.♔b5 is also sharp and unbalanced after 18...♔b7!

The computer proposes the following draw variation: 18...♔xb5 19.cxb5 ♘b7 20.a4 a6 21.dxc5 ♘xc5 22.a5 bxa5 23.b6 ♖ab8 24.♔e7 ♔f8 25.♔xf8 ♔xf8 26.♖d2 ♘e4 27.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 28.♘e5 ♘xd2 29.b7 ♖e8 30.♔xd2 ♔e7 31.♘c6+ ♔d6 32.b8♔+ ♖xb8 33.♘xb8 ♔c7 34.♘xa6+ ♔b6 35.♘b8 ♔c7=.

19.d5 exd5 20.cxd5. Here Black can choose between 20...c4 21.d6 ♖c5 22.♔a4 f6 and the more solid 20...♖c7!? 21.♔f1 ♖d7 22.e4 ♖e8.

B4. 6.h4 ♘xg5 7.hxg5 dxc4



8. ♖a4+

8.e3 ♗e6 9. ♗e2 c6 keeps the extra pawn.

8...c6 9. ♖xc4 ♗e6

Another option is to play 9...♗b6 10.0-0-0 ♗e6 or 10...♗a5.

10. ♖a4

After 10. ♖d3 Black could prepare long castling with 10...♗b6.

10...♗b6

Vachier Lagrave chose against Moranda in 2019 10...♘d7 11.e3 0-0 12.♗h4 c5, but after 13.♗d1 White's pieces were quite solid in the centre. It makes sense to drag his king to the queenside, where we could attack it later.

11.0-0-0 0-0 12.e3 ♖c7

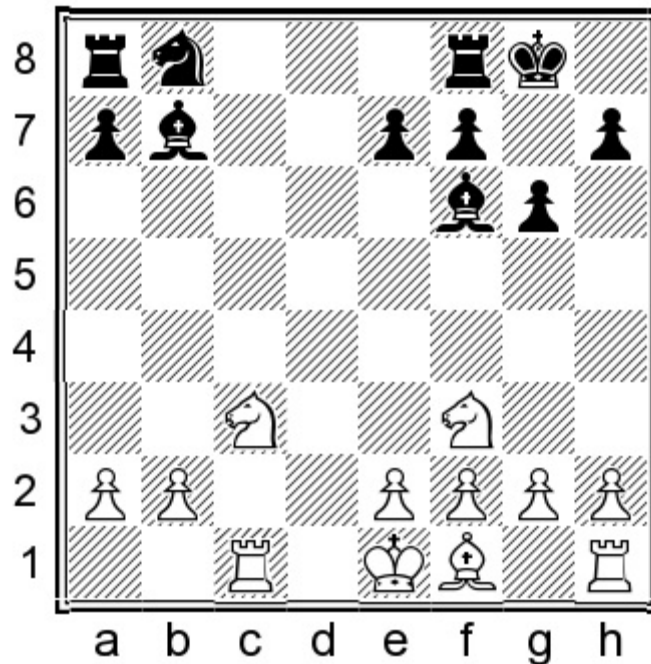
A Black's offensive on the queenside is looming ahead.

Chapter 3 Complete Games

9. Bo.Vuckovic-Mekhitarian

Moscow 10.02.2011

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙g5 ♙g7 5.♙xf6 ♙xf6 6.cxd5 c6 7.♞c1 0-0 8.dxc6 ♚xd4 9.♚xd4 ♙xd4 10.cxb7 ♙xb7 11.♘f3 ♙f6



12.e3

This move weakens the d3-square, but 12.g3 ♘d7 13.♙g2 ♞ab8! regains the pawn by force: 14.♞c2 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♞xb2 16.♞xb2 ♙xc3+ 17.♞d2 ♞b8♯; 14.♘a4 ♞fc8 15.0-0 ♙a6↑; 14.0-0! ♙xf3=.

12...♞d8

The biggest weakness in White's position is not the b2-pawn but the squares d2 and d3. White will castle and after the exchange on f3, Black's rook will invade the second rank. 12...♘d7 13.♙b5 ♞fd8 should also be enough to make a draw:

14.0-0 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♞ab8 16.♙xd7

Or 16.b3 ♙xc3 17.♙xd7 ♙d2 18.♞c7 ♙a5 19.♞c5 ♙b4 20.♞b5 ♞xb5 21.♙xb5 ♞d2 22.a4 g5=.

16...♞xd7 17.♞c2 ♞db7 18.♞b1 ♙xc3 19.♞xc3, Kazhgaleyev-So, Guangzhou 2010.

13.♙e2 ♘a6 14.0-0 ♘b4 15.a3

15. ♖fd1 ♜xd1+ 16. ♙xd1 ♜d8 17. ♙e2 ♙xf3 18. ♙xf3 ♜d2 equalises outright.

15... ♜d3 16. ♙xd3

Or 16. ♜c2 ♙xf3 17. gxf3 ♜xb2 18. ♜e4 ♙g7=.

16... ♜xd3 17. ♖fd1 ♜xd1+ 18. ♖xd1 ♙xc3

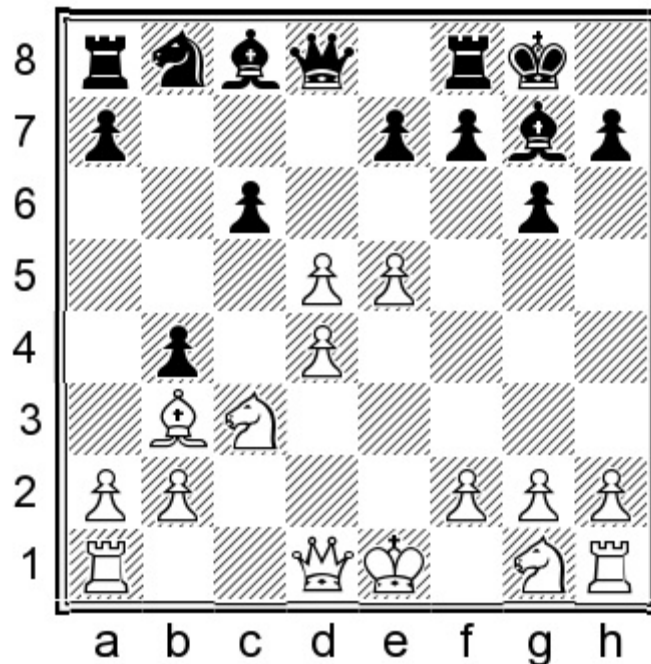
Black eliminates now to a draw rook endgame.

19. bxc3 ♜c8 20. ♜c1 ♙xf3 21. gxf3 ♜c4 22. ♜f1 e5 23. ♜e2 ♜f8 24. ♜d3 ♜a4 25. c4 ♜e7 26. ♜c3 ♜d6 27. f4 exf4 28. ♜d4 fxe3 29. ♜xe3 ♜a5 30. ♜f3 ♜e6 31. ♜e3+ ♜d6 32. ♜f3 ♜e6 33. ♜e3+ 1/2-1/2

10. Bukavshin-Matlakov

Moscow 01.02.2011

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♜c3 d5 4. ♙g5 ♙g7 5. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 6. cxd5 c6 7. e4 0-0 8. e5 ♙g7 9. ♙c4 b5 10. ♙b3 b4 (10...a5!? 11.a3 c5!)



11. ♜ce2

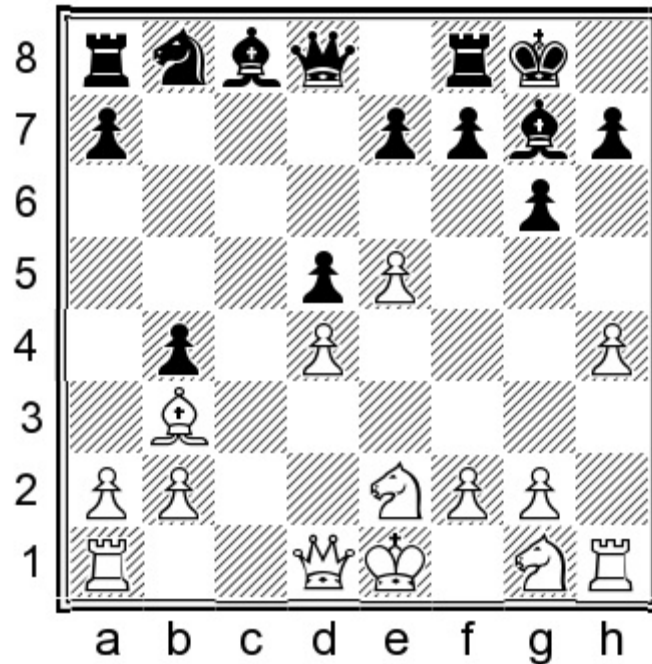
11. ♜a4 is just enough to struggle for equality after 11...cxd5 12. ♜e2 e6 13. 0-0 ♜d7.

11...cxd5

11... ♙a6 has no advantages. Simplest for White is probably 12. ♙d2. Then 12...cxd5 would be similar to the main line, while 12...c5 13. ♜f3! c4 14. ♙c2 ♙b7 15. ♙xb4 ♙xd5 16. 0-0 ♜c6 17. ♙c3 f6 18. exf6 ♙xf6

19.♖ad1 should be in White's favour.

12.h4



I do not believe in this attack because White lacks a dark-squared bishop. Still, it faces Black with a choice: to allow or not to allow h4-h5? The game Pashikian-Edouard, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, went 12...h5 13.♗f4 e6, with unclear play.

12...h6?! 13.♗f4 e6 14.♗f3 ♖d7 15.♙c2 ♙a6 16.♙d3 ♙xd3 17.♚xd3 ♚e7 18.0-0 ♜fc8 19.♞ac1±, Rodshtein-Khusnutdinov, Moscow 2010, is not inspiring at all.

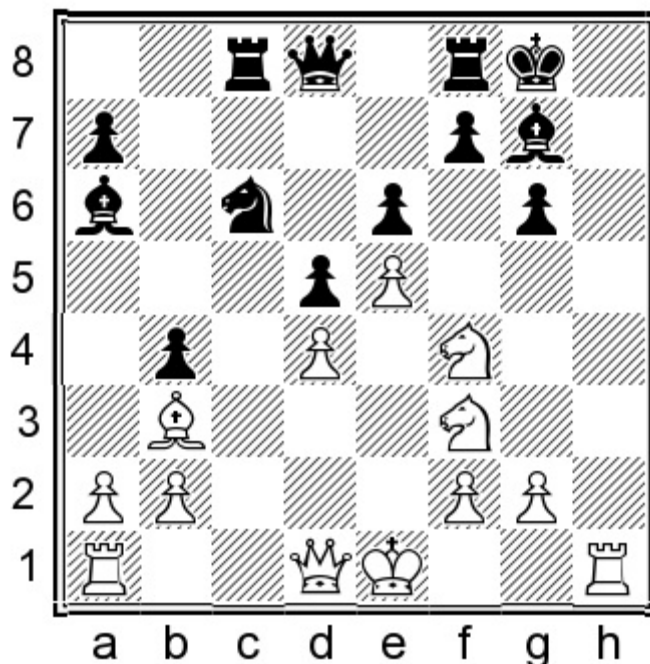
Agrest is an optimist about Black's defence in a position with an open h-file because White lacks a dark-squared bishop. He proposed the novelty 12...♙f5, which would have been justified in the event of 13.h5 ♗c6 14.♞c1 ♞c8 15.♗f3 ♙g4 or 13.♗f4 ♗c6 14.g4 (14.♙xd5 ♞c8) 14...♙d7 15.h5 e6 16.♗f3 g5. However, 13.♞c1!, preventing ...♗c6, looks unpleasant. For instance, 13...e6 (13...♙h6 14.f4 ♙g4 15.♗f3 f6 16.h5!) 14.h5 f6 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.f3. Evidently, he is not alone to think that 12...h5 is not an obligatory retort. This game presents another interesting idea:

12...♗c6 13.h5

One year later Matlakov changed sides and, as White, rejected h5 in favour of 13.♞c1!?. Robson opted for 13...♗a5 (13...♞b6!? 14.h5 ♞d8∞) and after:

14.♙c2 the easiest way of shifting the focus of the battle is 14...b3!?. (The computer's proposition 13...♙h6 requires a lot of nerve.) Instead of 14.♙c2 White could try:
14.h5! ♙a6 15.♗f3.

13...e6 14.♗f3 ♙a6 15.♗f4 ♞c8 16.hxg6 hxg6



A critical position. Let's consider the plans of both sides.

Obviously, White should try to bring his pieces closer to Black's king. However, even if he checked from h7 with his queen, that would not be any progress since the king would be comfortable on f8.

White could think about some destructive sacrifice on e6 or g6, but this idea does not seem efficient as a simple move like ...♖e8 or ...♔d7 would be enough to parry it.

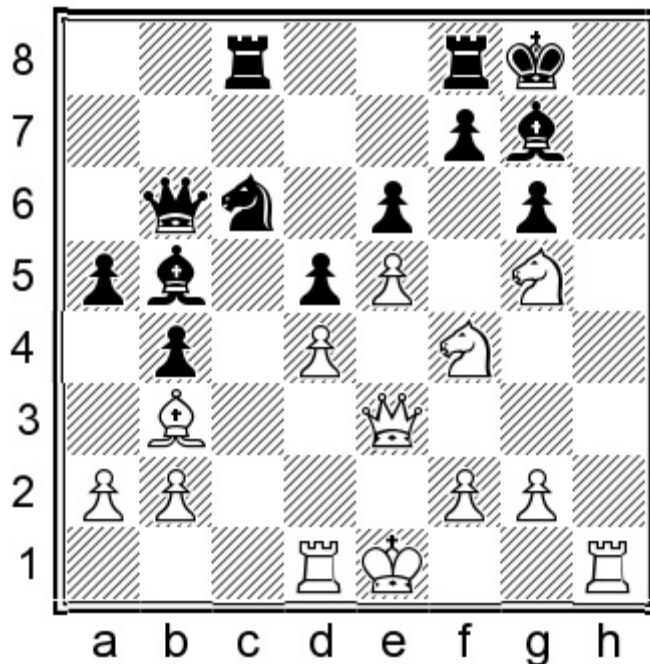
A closer look at the position reveals the manoeuvre ♘f3-g5-h7-f6. It is really dangerous. White would have at least a draw in the pocket, if not a direct win. This manoeuvre is not possible yet because the d8-queen controls g5, so perhaps a useful move like 17.♔d2 should be a candidate number 1 in our calculations. If Black did not shift the queen from the h4-d8 diagonal (for instance, to b6 or a5), White could think about ♘f4-h3-g5-h7.

You might ask, why not then immediately 17.♘h3? Because Black would answer 17...♕h6!, followed up by 18...♔g7, with domination on both flanks!

So we pick up:

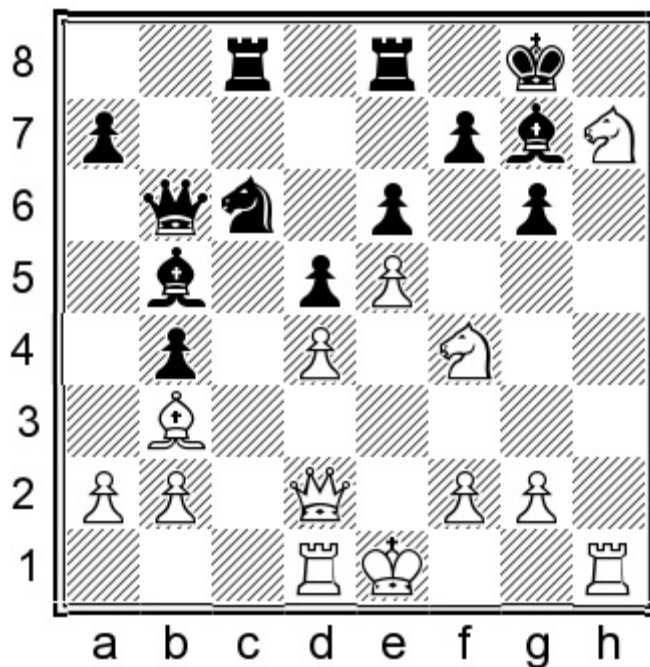
17.♔d2 and start thinking about what Black can do in his turn.

The engines enthusiastically point out to 17...♔b6, "having in mind" to double the rooks on the c-file. They see a tactical trick to tame White's attacking possibilities. I checked 18.♖d1!, overprotecting d4 à la Nimzowitsch. How to proceed further? 18...♕b5 19.♘g5 a5 20.♔e3



Suddenly a mate is looming – 20...a4?? 21. Rf8+!. Black should answer 20...Rfe8, and it is a miracle that the computer finds a defence after 21. Nxf7 Qxf7 22. Nxd5 exd5 23. Wf3+ Qe7 24. Rh7 Qd8! 25. Rg7→.

Perhaps 19...a5 was too provocative? Let's see – 19...Rfe8! 20. Nh7



20...Wd8? 21. g4 a5 22. g5 a4 23. Nf6+ Qf8 24. Qc2→. However:

20...Wxd4! saves Black from trouble – 21. Wxd4 Nxd4 22. Rxd4 Rxc1+ 23. Qd1 b3 24. axb3 Qxe5 25. Rb4=.

Going further back, the idea of playing safely 18...Rfe8! (instead of 18...Qb5) and taking on d4 after 19. Ng5 works perfectly, thus neutralising the dangerous knight's attack.

Having established that 17. ♖d2 ♗b6 equalises thanks to the hit on d4, we could move on to seek an advantage! It is clear that Black's only counterplay could be connected with an invasion down the c-file since he does not have any other open files or diagonals on the queenside. I suppose, Black would be glad to steel the b4-pawn from the board, but GM Vuckovic would have noticed, I'm sure!

As the pawn is still on b4, alas, let us think how to remove its blocker – the b3-bishop.

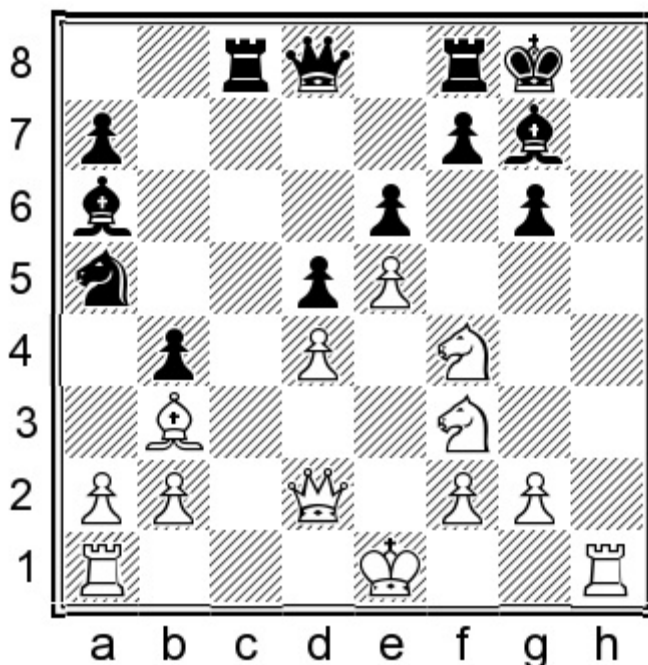
17... ♗c4 seems consistent, but:

1. It does not really threaten to take on b3, since 18. ♘h3 ♗xb3 19. axb3 is positionally great for White. He can even castle now.

2. 18. ♗d1!? would put Black into an awkward situation – how to continue?

3. The variation 18. ♘h3 ♗a5 19. ♘hg5 ♗xb3 20. ♗f4 ♗e7 21. ♘h7, when 21... f6 is the only move, does not look too attractive.

The most sensible candidate move after 17. ♖d2 remains 17... ♗a5!?



Now the Force (and the tempi!) are with us!

18. ♘h3 ♗c4 19. ♗xc4 dxc4 and Black mates first – 20. ♗f4 c3 21. b3 ♗a5 22. ♘hg5 c2+.

18. ♗d1 ♗xb3 19. axb3 ♗c7.

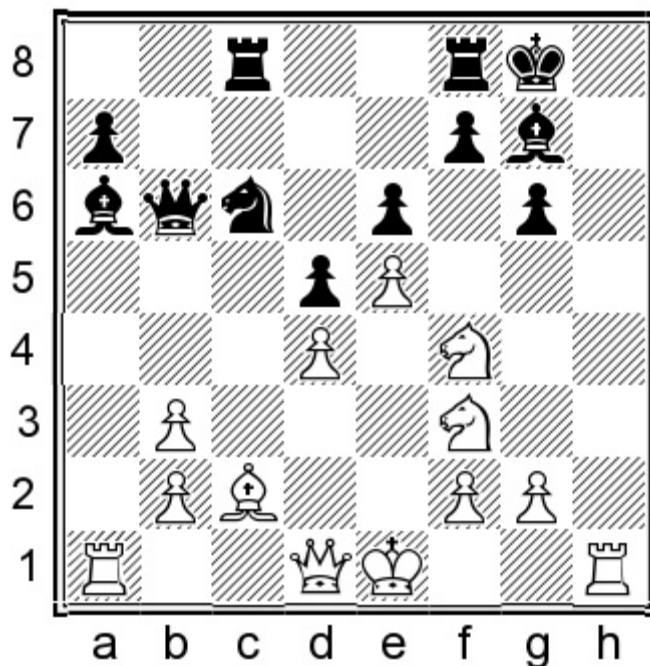
18. ♗d3 ♗b6

18... ♗xd3 19. ♗xd3 ♗c7 20. ♗d1 ♗c4 is also possible.

19. ♗c5 ♗c4 20. ♗xc4 dxc4 21. ♗e4 ♗fd8 22. ♗f4 c3 (threatening ... ♗b5!) 23. ♗fg5 ♗c7 24. ♗f6+ ♗f8 25. ♗h4, and White has a perpetual.

White has hardly paid due attention to this critical moment of the game as he made a serious positional mistake, which cost him the initiative:

17. ♗c2?! b3!? 18. axb3 ♗b6 (18... ♗b4!?)



Black has seized the command, and White has to beat the retreat. He tries to cover the diagonal a6-f1, but chooses the wrong piece. Instead of 19.♔d3! ♕xd3 20.♖xd3=, he played:

19.♗e2?! ♕xe2 20.♖xe2 ♗b4 21.♔d3 ♜c7 22.♞d2

22.♖f1 ♞b8 23.♔e2 ♗c2 ♞ regains the pawn.

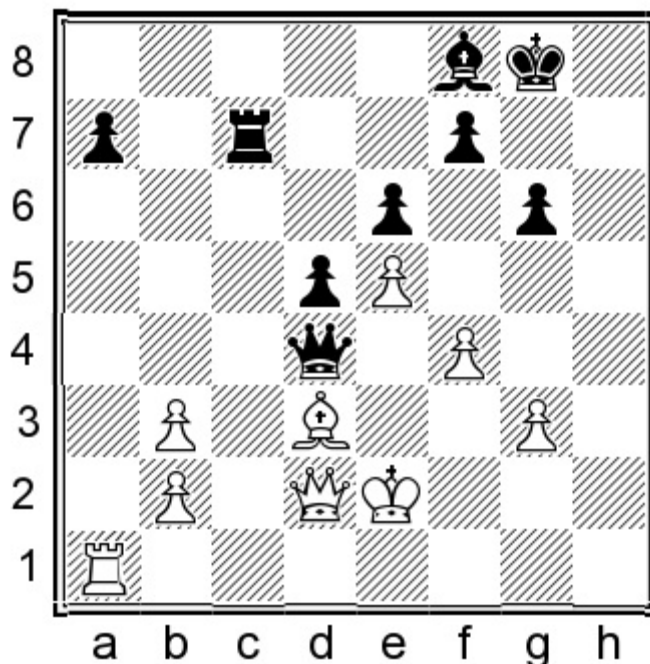
22...♞fc8 23.♞hc1 ♗c6?

It is understandable that Black wants to maintain more pieces on the board, but 23...♞xc1 24.♞xc1 ♞xc1 25.♞xc1 ♗xd3 26.♖xd3 ♞xb3+ would have won a pawn and, why not, the game. For instance: 27.♖e2 ♞b5+ 28.♖e1 ♔f8 29.♗d2 ♔b4 30.♞c2 ♔a5 31.♖d1 ♔b6.

24.g3 ♗xd4+

24...♔f8!? was more tricky. White should find 25.♖f1 ♗xd4 26.♗xd4 ♞xd4 27.♞xc7 ♞xc7 28.♞e2 to remain in the game.

25.♗xd4 ♞xd4 26.f4 ♔f8 27.♞xc7 ♞xc7



28.♖a4?

Now White is lost. 28.♔f3! would have been more stubborn. The fine point is that he can hide the vulnerable king to g4 in some variations.

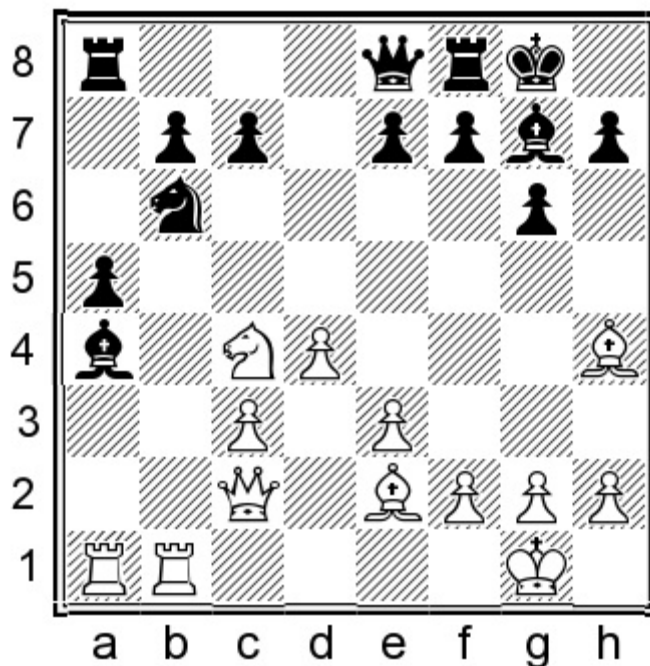
28...♗g1 29.♕e1 ♖b6?

29...♗g2+ 30.♗f2 ♗h3 should be winning. The opposite-coloured-bishops-attack continues in full steam, e.g. 31.♗e1 ♗h5+ 32.♔f2 ♗h2+ 33.♔f3 ♗xb2 – winning a couple of pawns. In the game Black gradually let his advantage slip away.

30.♗a5 ♗c6 31.♖a1 ♖b7 32.♗c3 ♗b6 33.♖c1 ♗xb3 34.♗xb3 ♖xb3 35.♖c2 ♖b4 36.g4 ♖a5 37.f5 gxf5 38.gxf5 exf5 39.♖xf5 ♖b6 40.♔d1 ♖e3 41.♖e2 ♔f8 42.e6 ♖xe2 43.♔xe2 f6 44.♔f3 a5 45.b3 ♔e7 46.♖g4 ♔d6 47.♔f4 ♖d8 48.♖h3 ♔c5 49.♖g2 d4 50.♔e4 ♖e7 51.♖f3 ♔b4 52.♔xd4 ♔xb3 53.♖d5+ ♔b4 54.♔d3 a4 55.♖c4 ♔c5 56.♖a2 ♖d8 57.♖c4 ♔d6 58.♔e4 ♔c5 59.♔d3 f5 60.♖a2 ♖g5 61.♔e2 ♔d4 62.♔f3 ♔e5 63.♖c4 a3 64.♖a2 ♔d4 65.e7 ♖xe7 66.♔f4 ♔c3 67.♔xf5 ♖f6 68.♔xf6 ♔b2 69.♖e6 a2 70.♖xa2 ♔xa2 1/2-1/2

11. Bo.Vuckovic- Sutovsky Moscow 11.02.2011

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♖g5 ♘e4 5.♖h4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 dxc4 7.e3 ♖e6 8.♘f3 ♖g7 9.♖e2 ♘d7 10.0-0 ♘b6 11.a4 a5 12.♗c2 0-0 13.♖fb1 ♖d7 14.♘d2 ♗e8 15.♘xc4 ♖xa4



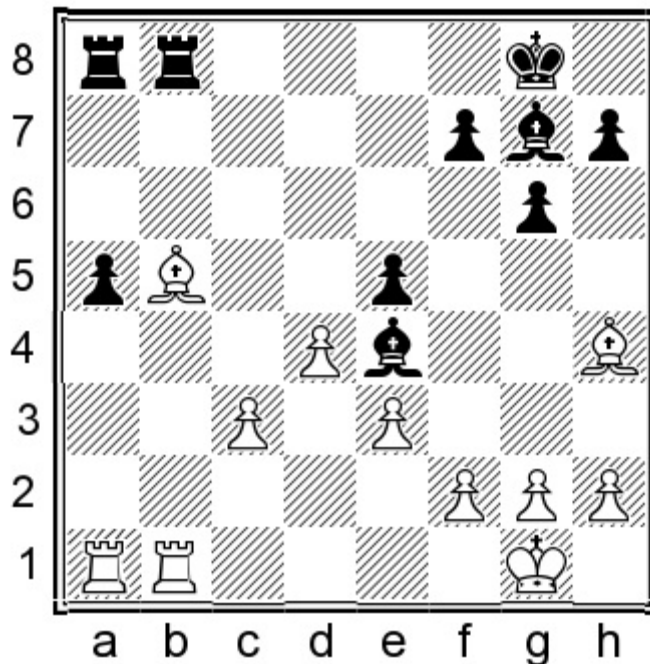
16. ♖e4?!

Later it was discovered that White can maintain the balance with 16. ♖a2! ♘d5 17. ♖a3 (17. ♖d2 could be met by 17...b5 18. ♘xa5 e5! =.) 17... ♗c6 18. ♙xe7 ♜fb8 19. ♙g5 b5 20. e4 ♘xc3 21. ♖xc3 bxc4 22. ♜xb8+ ½-½, Rost-Van Unen, ICCF 2013.

Vuckovic's novelty aims to restore the material balance at once, but it hands Black the initiative.

16... ♙c6?!

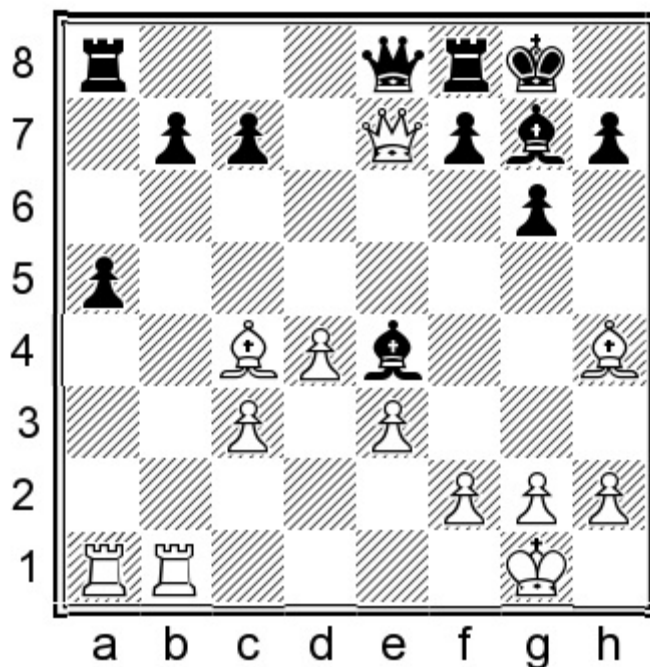
This move looks natural, but perhaps it drops the chance to take the command. My understanding tells me that the centre should be attacked immediately by 16... ♘xc4! 17. ♙xc4 e5!, when 18. ♖xb7 ♙c6 19. ♖xc7 ♙e4 20. ♙b5 ♖b8 21. ♖xb8 ♜fxb8 reverses the roles.



White is a pawn up, but Black is extremely active and the a-pawn will probably win material. For example: 22.♖b3 ♕c2 23.♖b2 ♕d3 24.♕c6 ♖xb2 25.♕xa8 a4. Black trades rooks and dark-squared bishops, and the pawn reaches a2.

17.♙xe7 ♘d5

This is against basic chess rules. Black avoids exchanges having less space in the centre. 17...♘xc4 18.♕xc4 ♕e4 is more precise. (18...♙xe7 19.♕xe7 ♖fb8 20.♕d3 b5, Nisipeanu-Rambaldi, Wunsiedel 2014, 21.f3 is balanced.)



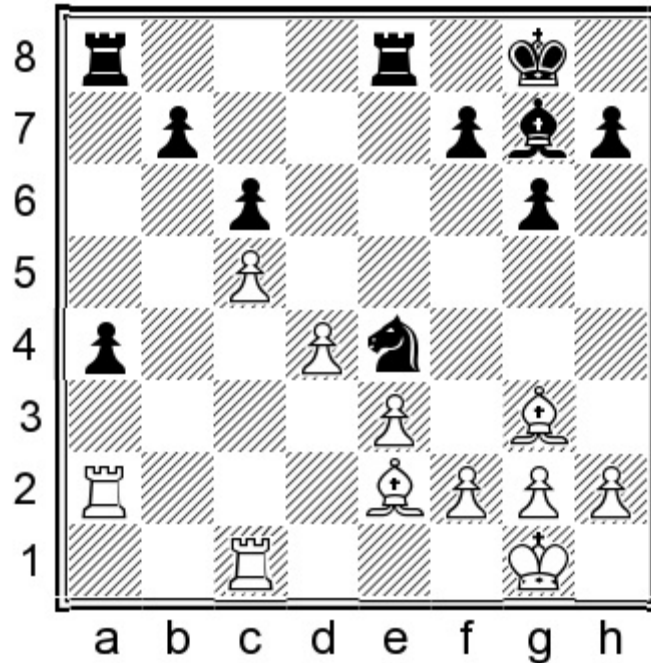
Now 19.♖b2 is bad due to 19...♙c6, so White should play 19.♖c1 or 19.♙xe8. In both events Black may be holding, but it is only White who could improve his position. Variations are not forced, so my

examples can only illustrate the character of play:

19.♖c1 ♜xe7 20.♙xe7 ♜fe8 21.♙a3 c6 22.f3 ♙f5 23.e4 ♙d7 24.♙c5 b5∞;

19.♜xe8 ♜fxe8 20.♜b2 a4 21.♙g3 ♜ec8 22.f3 ♙c6 23.♙f2 ♜a5 24.♙e2 b5 25.♙d3 a3 26.♜b3 ♙f8∞.

18.♜xe8 ♜fxe8 19.♖c1 a4 20.♙g3 ♙b5 21.♘b6 ♘xb6 22.♙xb5 c6 23.♙e2 ♘d5 24.c4 ♘f6 25.c5 ♘e4 26.♜a2

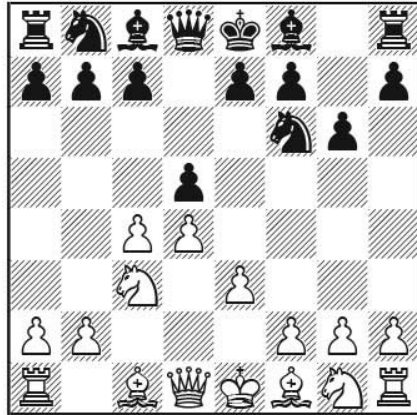


A critical moment. Black should play 26...♘xg3 27.hxg3 a3 28.♙f1 ♜a7 29.g4 ♜b8 30.♖c3 ♜ba8 (30...b6 31.♜b3) and struggle to hold this unpleasant endgame. White will blockade the a-pawn with his king, and will try to win it and advance his central chain. Instead Sutovsky enters a hopeless position:

26...f5 27.♜ca1 ♘xc5 28.dxc5 ♙xa1 29.♜xa1 a3 30.♙f1 ♙g7 31.♙e1 ♙f6 32.♙d2 ♜a5 33.♙d6 b5 34.♙c3 ♜a4 35.♙f3 ♜c8 36.♙b3 ♙e6 37.♜xa3 ♜xa3+ 38.♙xa3 ♙d7 39.♙b2 ♜e8 40.h4 ♜a8 41.♙d1 ♜e8 42.♙b3 ♜a8 43.♙e5 ♙e7 44.♙c2 ♜e8 45.♙d3 ♙d7 46.♙d4 ♜a8 47.f3 ♜a3 48.♙c2 ♜a8 49.♙e5 ♜e8 50.♙f4 ♜a8 51.♙b2 ♜f8 52.g3 ♜e8 53.♙c2 ♜a8 54.e4 fxe4 55.fxe4 ♜a1 56.♙g8 ♙e8 57.♙d6 ♜g1 58.♙d2 ♜g2+ 59.♙e3 b4 60.♙d3 1-0

The e3 System

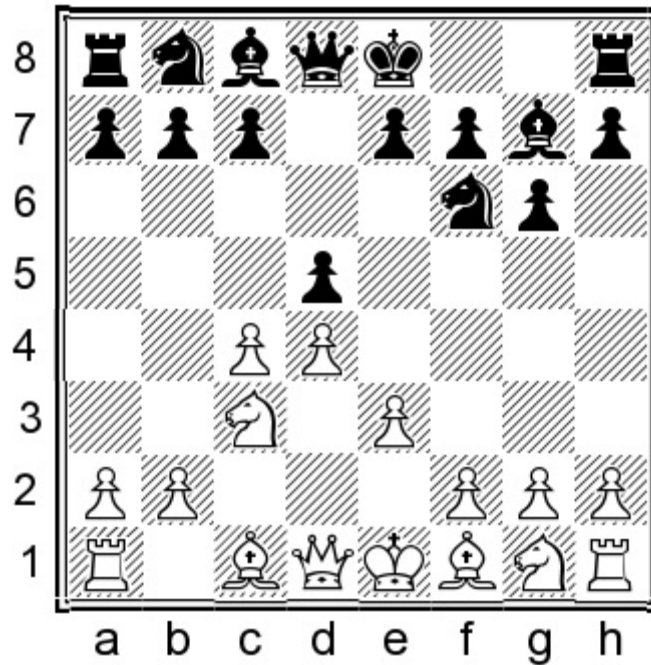
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.e3



Main Ideas

Introduction

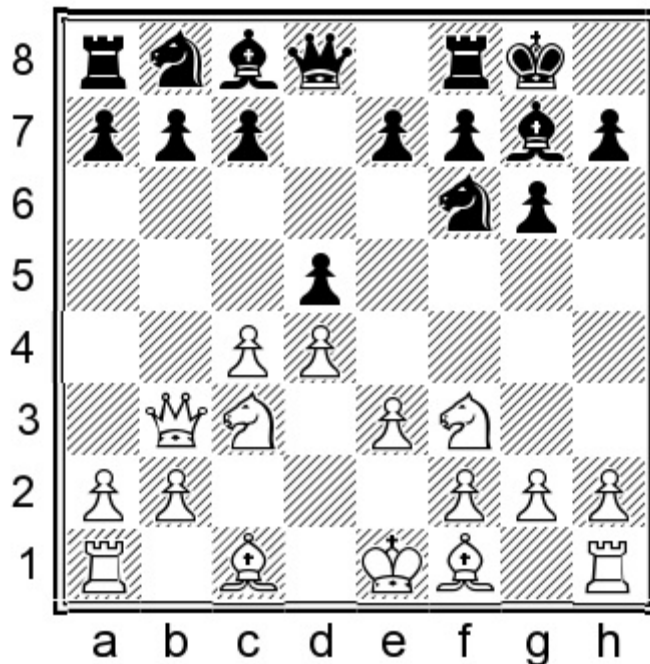
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.e3 ♔g7



Be careful with the move order! If White refrained from Nc3 and played instead $3.\text{Nf3}$ Kg7 $4.\text{e3}$, we should better reject the idea of pushing $\dots\text{d5}$ at all! The reason is that after $4.\dots\text{d5}$ $5.\text{cxd5}$ Nxd5 $6.\text{e4!}$ we cannot exchange a piece on c3. Thus we remain cramped, and even the extra tempo is not enough to ensure full-fledged counterplay. Indicatively, the most devoted Grünfeld adherent lately, Vachier-Lagrave, migrated to Benoni and KI structures with $4.\dots\text{c5}$ and $4.\dots\text{d6}$. Against them the move e3 is a pure loss of tempo.

In the e3 -system White adopts an anti-Grünfeld approach. Instead of gaining space in the centre, he tries to anticipate Black's thematic counterplay with $\dots\text{c7-c5}$, or at least render it inefficient. Such a restraining tactic could hardly assure White of an opening advantage, but it might be justified in practice since Black will have to handle positions which are closer to the Anti-Meran, the Tarrasch Defence or even the Panov Attack. The focus of the battle is often shifted towards middlegame plans. In general Black needs to adjust his play to White's setup and calmly complete development before choosing where to break in.

The godfather of the opening himself employed the e3 -system as White: $5.\text{Nf3}$ $0-0$ $6.\text{Bb3}$



The game Gruenfeld-Steiner, Vienna 1923, went 6...c6 7.♔d2 dxc4 8.♔xc4 ♖bd7 9.0-0 ♖b6 10.♔e2 ♔e6 11.♞c2 ♔f5 12.e4 and White was better.

One of the greatest visionaries in opening theory, Rubinstein, also preferred the e3 system. Look at his miniature against the future world champion: Rubinstein-Alekhine, Vienna 1922: 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗f3 ♔g7 4.♗c3 d5 5.e3 0-0 6.cxd5 ♗xd5 7.♔c4 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 c5 9.0-0 ♗c6 10.♔a3 cxd4 11.cxd4 a6 12.♞c1 b5 13.♔xf7+ ♞xf7 14.♞xc6 ♔b7 15.♞c5 ♔d5 16.♞c2 e6 17.♞c1 ♔f8 18.♗e5, with a huge advantage.

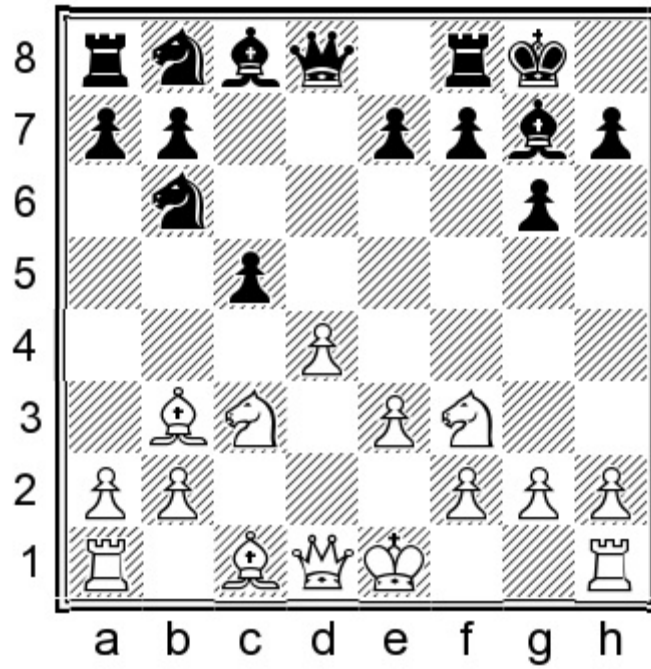
Later Rubinstein migrated to 6.♞b3 and 6.♔d2. The real boom of the e3-system, however, came in the 50s, when the Russian master Makogonov introduced the plan with b2-b4. It is still bringing White a positive score and we should be well prepared for it.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

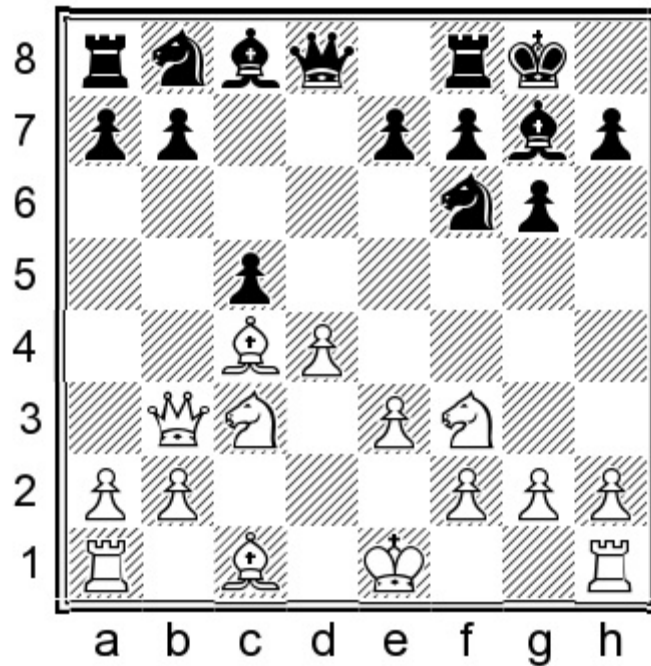
A. White allows an early ...c7-c5

We should always prefer the active plan with...c7-c5 to the solid, but passive ...c7-c6. However, to make this break work, we should not reinforce White's centre by exchanging on c3. Typical examples are:

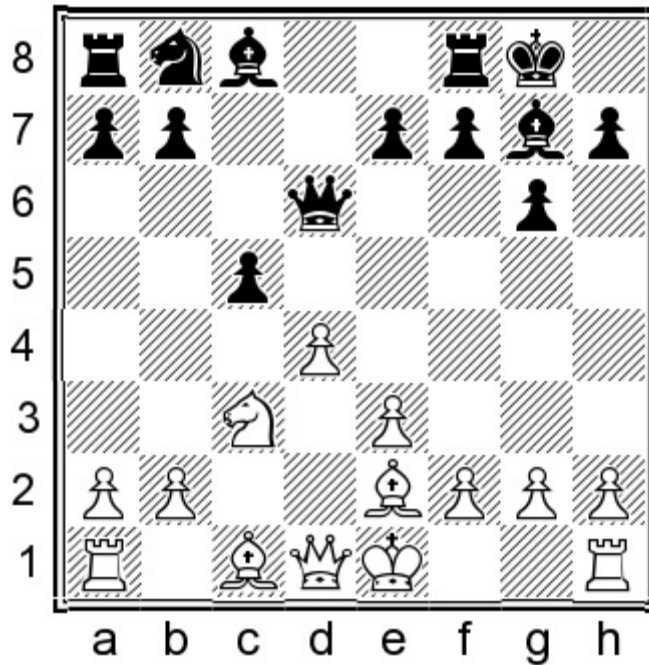
5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♔c4 ♗b6! 7.♔b3 0-0 8.♗f3 c5,



or 5. ♖b3 dxc4 6. ♗xc4 0-0 7. ♘f3 c5,

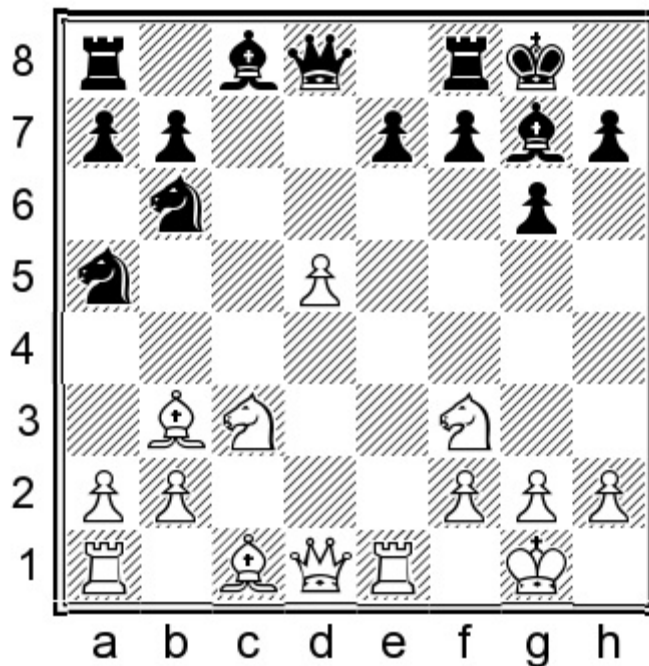


or 5. cxd5 ♘xd5 6. ♘xd5 ♖xd5 7. ♘e2 0-0 8. ♘c3 ♖d6 9. ♗e2 c5!? (this is not a blunder as 10. ♘e4 ♖c6 11. ♘xc5 e5 seizes the initiative).



In this structure White can aspire to the advantage only by gaining space in the centre with d4-d5. Let us examine a few instructive examples:

Ehlvest-Kamsky Philadelphia 2010



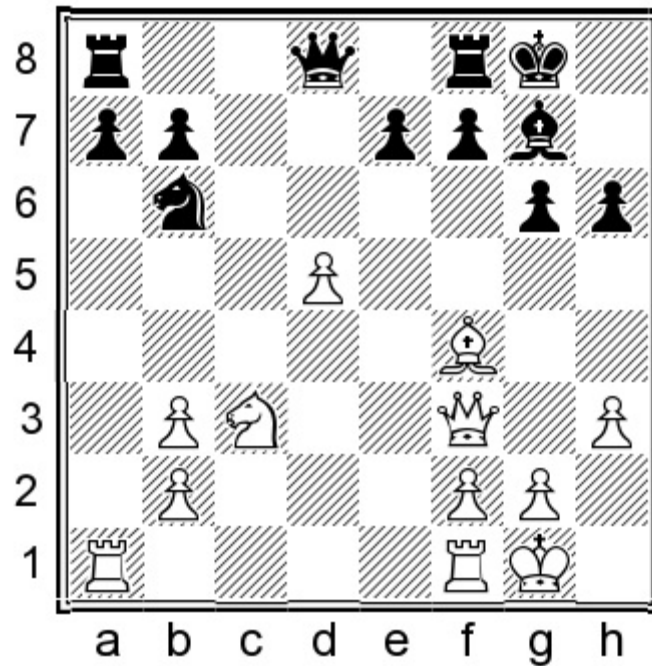
White has a huge spatial advantage, so any exchange of minor pieces should be helpful:

12... Nxb3 13. axb3 Bg4 14. h3 Bxf3 15. Wxf3 Re8 16. Be3 Bxc3!. A timely exchange operation! White was ready to support the d5-pawn with a rook from d1. Then his more active heavy pieces would be able to join in a kingside attack.

17. Bxb6! Wxb6 18. bxc3 Wxb3 19. Bxb1 Wxa3 20. Bxb7 Bxc8 with a quick draw.

chesstouring.com

Gligoric-Portisch 1972

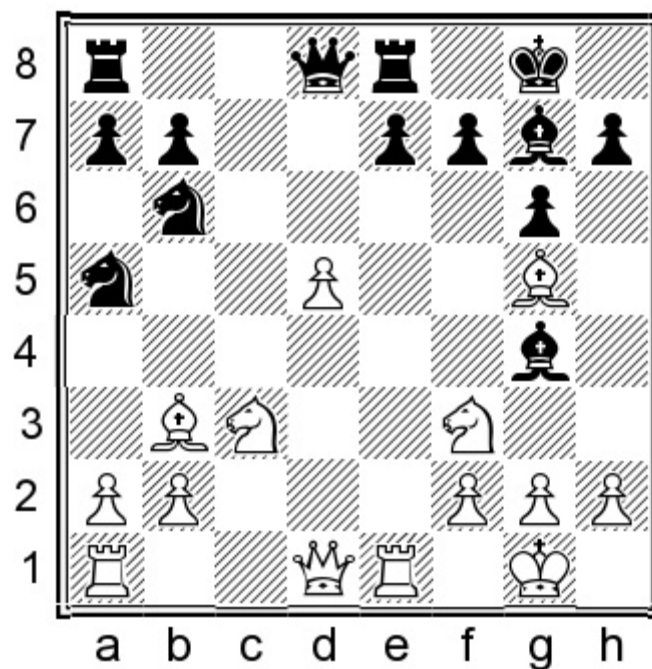


Here White had played ♕g5 to provoke the weakening move ...h7-h6. Black could have answered with ...♖e8 as in the next example, but he had in mind the simplification arising after:

16...♕xc3! 17.bxc3 ♜xd5 18.♞xd5 ♘xd5 19.♕xh6 ♜fd8 20.c4 ♘b4 with a roughly equal ending.

Tregubov-Kurnosov

Moscow 2008



You should also remember the following tactical skirmish:

14.d6!? ♖xd6

It is too late for 14...♗xb3? 15.♙e7+–, Delchev-Gupta, Sort 2008.

15.♙xf7+ ♖xf7 16.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 17.♙xe7 ♖xe7

The game went 18.♗b5?! ♖f8! and White was eventually outplayed. However, even the best continuation:

18.♗d5+ ♖f8! does not give him any winning chances after 19.♞d2 ♙xf3 20.♗c7 ♙c6 21.♞xa5 ♖g8 22.♗xe8 ♞xe8 23.♞e1 ♞f8!. With rooks on board, Black keeps the initiative.

B. White prevents ...c7-c5

5.♗f3 0-0 6.b4

White can play 6.♙d2 as well. It also discourages 6...c5, but the bishop has no future on d2. I answered 6...e6, obtaining something similar to the Nimzo, where Black has saved the useless bishop walk to b4. See **game 12** G. Rodriguez-Delchev, La Massana 2011.

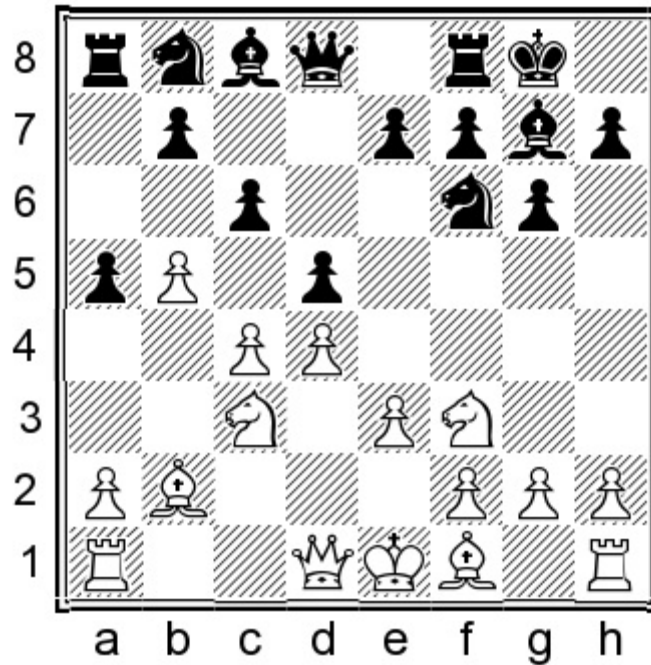
6...c6!

The plan with ...c7-c5 is no longer attractive since after ...b6 and ...c5 White will open the queenside in his favour. I prefer to prepare counterplay with ...a7-a5.

7.♙b2

7.c5 gains space on the queenside, but it allows the breakthrough ...e7-e5: 7...♗bd7 8.♙b2 e5 9.♙e2 exd4 10.♗xd4 ♗e5, Rustemov-Svidler, Germany 2006.

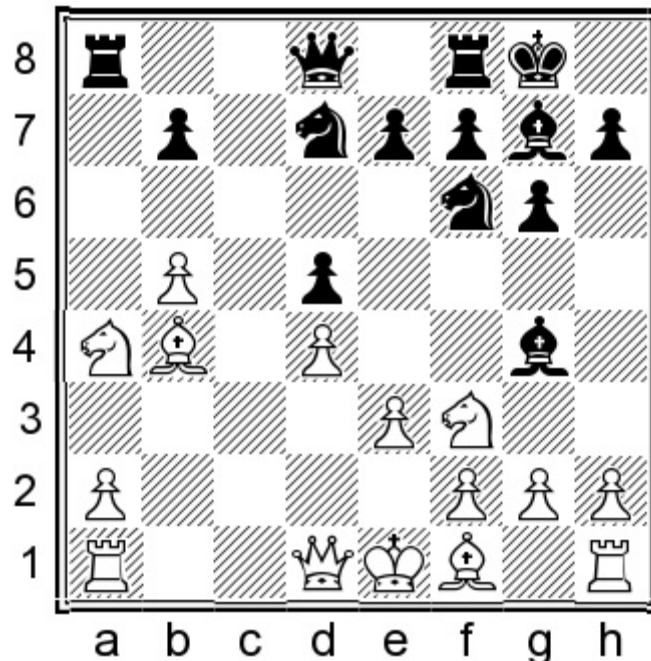
7...a5 8.b5



8...a4!

Black has clear counterplay on the queenside. He is going to exchange on b5 and send a knight towards c4 via d7-b6. Any White's attempt to grab the a4-pawn is unreasonable: 9.bxc6 bxc6 10.♞xa4 ♚a5+ 11.♞c3 ♜a6! or 9.♜a3 cxb5 10.cxb5 ♜g4 11.♜b4 ♞bd7 12.♞xa4?:

Akobian-Perelshteyn
Stillwater 2007

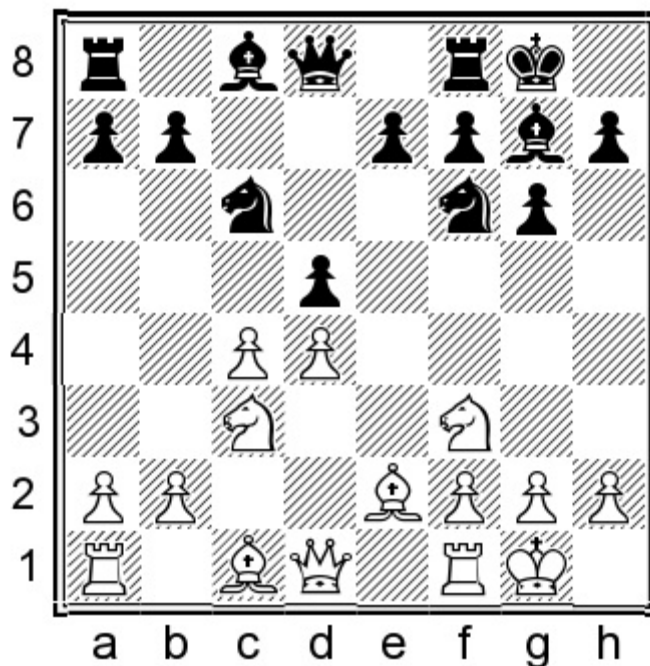


12...e5!! 13.♜e2 (13.♜xf8 ♜xf8) 13...♞e8 14.dxe5 ♞xe5 15.♞c5 ♞xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♜h3. The stem game did not last long: 17.♜c3 b6 18.♞b3 ♞xe3!! 19.♜d4 ♞xe4 20.fxe4 ♜xc3+ 19...♞e8 20.♞g1 ♞h5

21. ♖d2 ♜a4 22. 0-0-0 ♜c8+ 23. ♔b1 ♟f5+ 24. ♔a1 ♜c2 and White resigned.

C. White hurries to castle

5. ♘f3 0-0 6. ♟e2 c5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 ♘c6



This is the Tarrasch Defence with colours reversed – 9. h3 dxc4 10. ♟xc4 ♘a5 11. ♟e2 ♟e6 12. ♘e5 ♜c8.

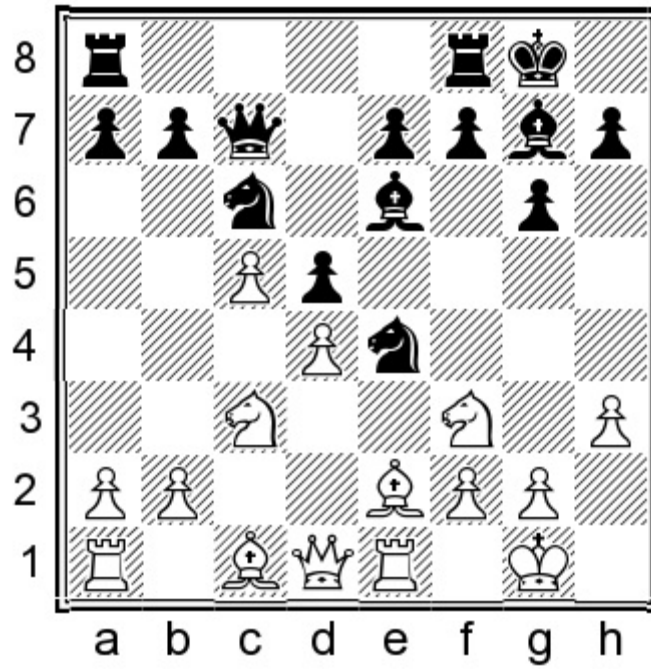
Should White prevent this plan by c4-c5, we can easily undermine his pawn centre, for instance:

9. c5 ♘e4 10. ♟e3 b6! 11. ♜a4 ♘xc3 12. bxc3 ♟d7 or:

9. ♞e1 ♟e6! 10. c5 ♘e4 11. h3 ♜c7!:

Franic-Delchev

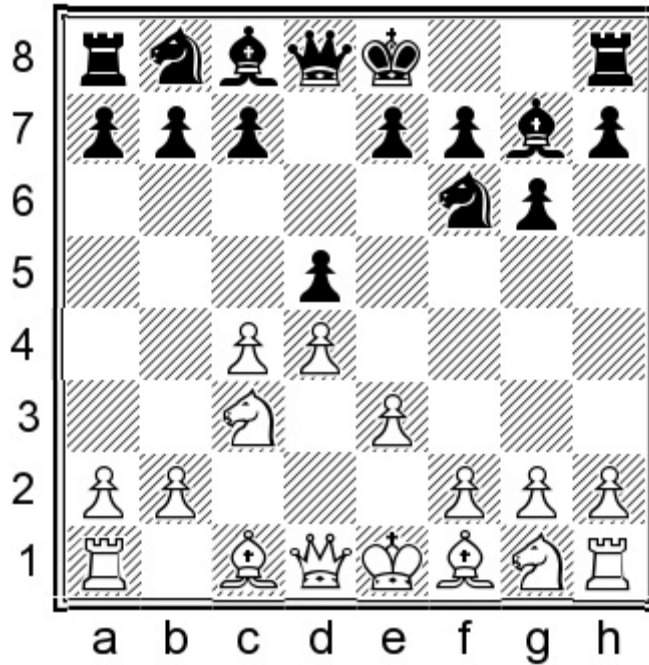
Zadar 2009



12. ♖b5 ♜ad8 13. ♚a4 ♙f5 14. ♞e2 e5!. I got a lasting advantage after 15. ♙xc6 bxc6 16. ♙e3 f6.

Chapter 4 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.e3 ♕g7



A. 5.cxd5; B. 5.♜b3; C. 5.♘f3

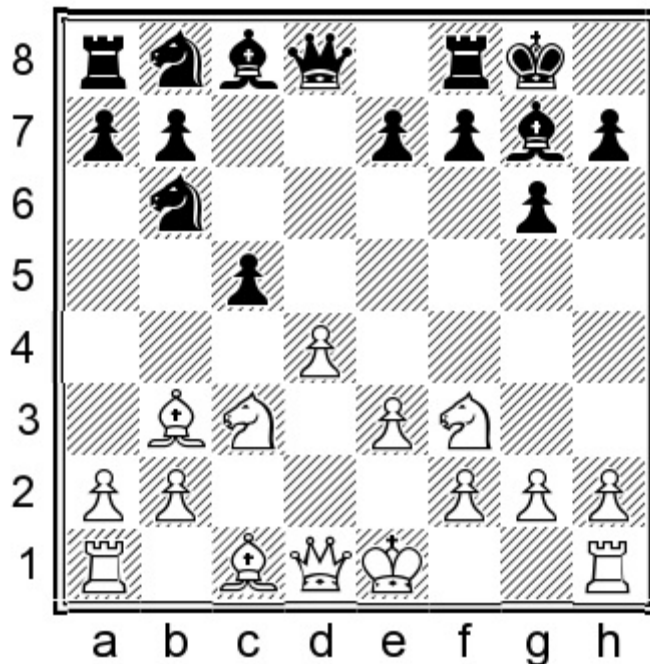
A. 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘xd5

This has been the most popular move lately. White drags the queen to d5 in order to gain a tempo later with ♘g1-e2-c3. The alternative:

6.♕c4 yields Black a positive score after 6...♘b6!

In my opinion 6...♗xc3 7.bxc3 0-0 8.♘f3 c5 9.0-0 leaves more chances to White. He can develop his pieces on good squares: ♕b2, ♜e2, ♞fd1, ♞ac1 and next e3-e4 with a strong centre.

7.♕b3 0-0 8.♘f3 c5



9.0-0

9.dxc5?! deprives White of the advantage in the centre and opens the main dark-squared diagonal. Black can fight for the initiative with 9...♘6d7 (9...♙xd1+ 10.♙xd1 ♘6d7 is only equal.) 10.♘e4 (10.♙d5 ♙c7 11.0-0 ♘xc5 12.♙g5 ♞e8 13.♘d5 ♙d6 14.♞d1 ♘xb3 15.axb3 ♘c6 16.e4 h6 17.♙h4 g5) 10...♘a6 11.c6 bxc6 12.0-0 ♘dc5 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.♙c4 ♙xd1 15.♞xd1 ♙g4.

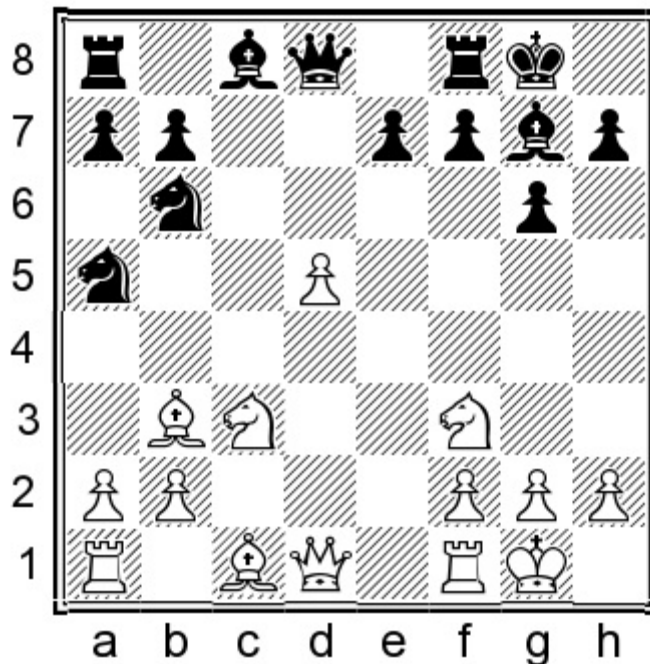
9...cxd4

9...c4 does complicate things, but it is hardly recommendable. White's setup looks more natural after 10.♙c2 ♘c6 11.h3! a6 12.♙e2 ♙c7 13.♞d1 ♞d8 14.a3 ♙e6 15.a4.

10.exd4

10.♘xd4 ♘c6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙f3 is in Black's favour. He can simply ignore the threat on c6 with 12...a5!, e.g. 13.♙xc6 a4 14.♙c2 a3 15.♙b3 ♙a6.

10...♘c6 11.d5 ♘a5



12. Rxe1!

The d5-pawn is already hanging, so White should oppose counterpressure on e7. He can achieve that also with 12. g5. Then 12...h6 13. f4 g4 14. h3 f3 15. Wxf3 Bxb3 16. axb3 fxc3 17. bxc3 Wxd5 18. Wxd5 Bxd5 19. f6 Bfd8 eliminates to a drawish endgame, but still White can claim that he has a bishop vs. knight. Probably 12...Bxb3 13. axb3 Re8, transposing to the main line, is the better continuation.

12... g4

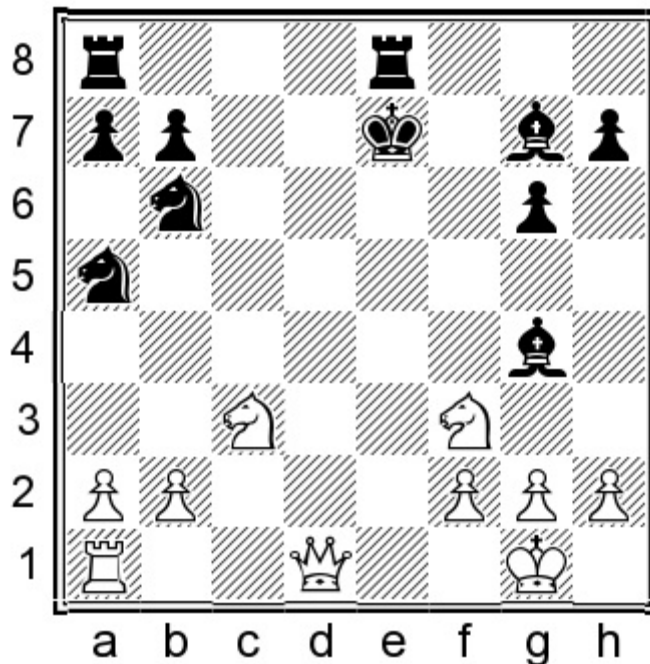
12... Bxb3 avoids the complications of the main line, but after 13. Wxb3!? (13. axb3 g4) 13... fxc3! 14. bxc3 Wxd5 15. Re7 Wxb3 16. axb3 Bd5 17. Re5 Bxc3 18. f2 f6! 19. Ree1 Bd5 20. Rad1 Bb4 21. Rd6 the game is a dead draw according to the chip, and even a little unpleasant for Black from practical point of view.

12... Re8 is sneaky, intending to meet 13. g5 by 13... g4. White should spend instead a tempo on 13. h3! =.

13. g5!?

13. h3 f3 14. Wxf3 Bxb3 15. axb3 Re8 16. f3 fxc3 17. fxb6 Wxb6 18. bxc3 Wxb3 19. Rab1 Wa3 20. Rxb7 Rac8 was a quick draw in Ehlvest-Kamsky, Philadelphia 2010.

13... Re8 14. d6 Wxd6 15. f7+ Qxf7 16. Rxe7+ Wxe7 17. fxe7 Qxe7



Only Black can play for a win here. In the stem game Tregubov-Kurnosov, Moscow 2008, White immediately erred with 18. ♖b5? and after 18... ♔f8 19. ♕d6+ ♔g8 20. ♗c7 ♜ed8 21. ♖b4 ♜ac8 he ended up without material. More interesting is 18. ♗d5+! ♔f8! 19. ♕d2 ♙xf3 20. ♗c7 ♙c6 21. ♖xa5 ♔g8 22. ♗xe8 ♜xe8 23. ♜e1 ♜f8!. With rooks on board, Black keeps the initiative.

6... ♖xd5 7. ♗e2 0-0 8. ♗c3 ♕d6

Everybody retreats on d6 lately, but my suggestion from the previous edition is of equal worth:

8... ♕d8 9. ♙e2 c5!?

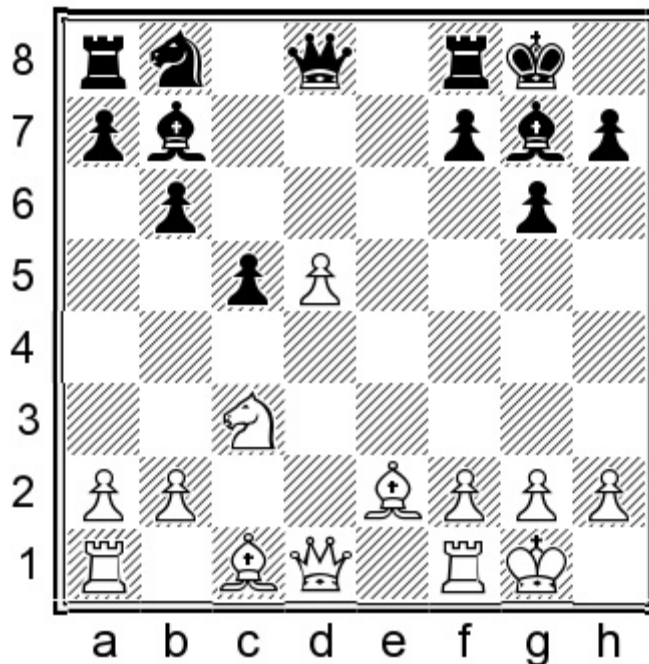
This is the standard Grünfeld approach. Some Meran fans prefer 9...c6 10.0-0 e5. Still, White is usually slightly better in such a pawn structure. Play can continue with 11.dxe5 ♙xe5 12.e4 ♖e7! 13. ♙e3, preparing f4.

10.d5 e6 11.e4 exd5 12.exd5. With a hindsight, I wish our queen was on d6, but even now Black is not worse at all:

12...b6

The position after 12... ♙f5 13.0-0 ♗a6 14. ♙e3 is similar to the fianchetto system, but the white bishop favourably covers the d3-square: 14... ♖a5 15. ♜c1 ♜fe8 16. ♖b3 ♗b4 17. ♜fd1±, Salgado Lopez-Fercec, Rijeka 2010.

13.0-0 ♙b7



The placement of the bishop on e2 has its drawbacks, too. The d5-pawn is hanging. Navara tried to solve this problem by thrusting it further, but without success – 14.d6

14.♙f3

This is a semi-automatic reaction, but in my opinion White should not take a passive stand. Decent alternatives are:

14.♚b3!? a6 (14...♘d7!? 15.♙f4 a6 16.a4 ♖e8 17.♗fe1 ♙d4 18.♙c4 ♘e5 19.♙xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♙xe5 21.♗e1 ♚c7 22.g3 ♗d8 is also fine for Black.) 15.♙e3 ♚d6 16.♗ad1 f5. The queen turns out to be a perfect blocker here!

After 14.♙f4, the human move is 14...♘d7 15.♚d2 a6 16.a4 ♖e8, Salem-Cheparinov, rapid Khanty-Mansiysk 2013. In a correspondence game Black snatched the central pawn, and had no problems following 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙xd5 16.♗e1 ♙c6, Mielke-Morozov, ICCF 2014.

14...♘d7 15.d6 (15.♗e1 ♘e5 16.♙e2 ♚d6!) 15...♙xf3 16.♚xf3 ♚f6. The d6-pawn is more of a weakness than an asset.

9.♙e2 c5!?

This is an attempt to seize the initiative at once.

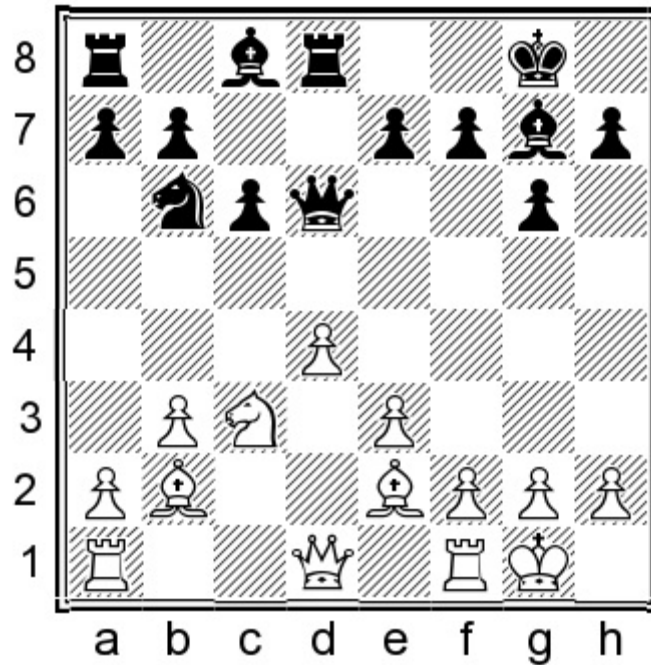
9...c6 10.0-0 ♘d7 is much more popular, probably because it offers Black easy play with a clear plan to push ...e5. White's smartest approach is to solve quickly the problem with the development of his dark-squared bishop with:

11.b3 ♗d8!?

Keeping more tension. Black postpones ...e5 in favour of typical queenside play with ...a5.

11...e5 12.d5 ♘f6 is less precise owing to 13.♙b2!, the point being 13...cxd5 14.♘b5.

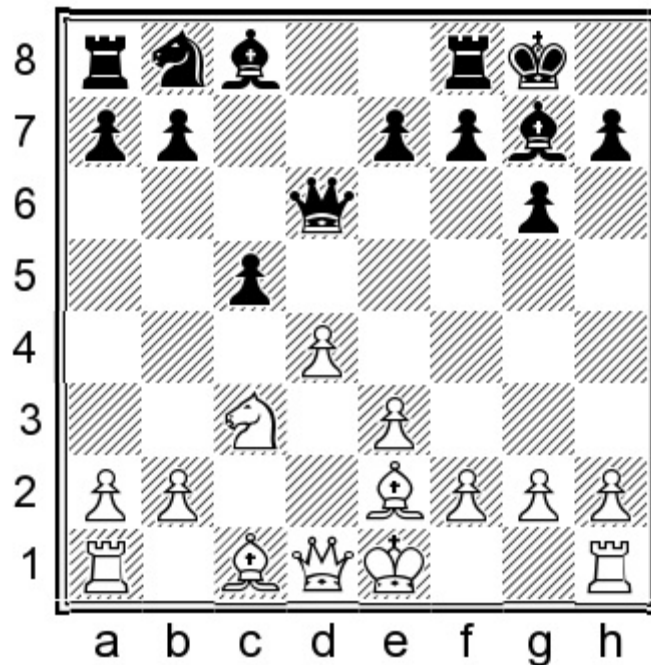
12.♙b2 ♘b6



13. Nxe4

13. Re1 Qf5 14. Qc1 a5 was balanced in Kolpak-Grammatica, ICCF 2017.

13... Qc7 14. Qc1 Qf5 15. Nc5 Nd7=, Kunte-Gopal, New Delhi 2010, when 16. e4?! Nxc5 17. exf5 Nd7 could be only in Black's favour.



10. d5

After 10. d5 e6 11. e4 we should define the centre right away with 11... exd5 (Safarly played 11... a6, but it weakens b6 and following 12. 0-0 exd5 White could take by knight.) 12. exd5 Re8 13. 0-0 Qf5 14. Qe3 Nd7 15. Qd2 a6 with a standard Grünfeld position.

10... Qc7 11. Nxc5 e5 12. 0-0

White could keep the extra pawn with 12.♖b3 ♜d8 13.d5, but at a high price – 13...e4! 14.f3 ♚e5.

12...♜d8

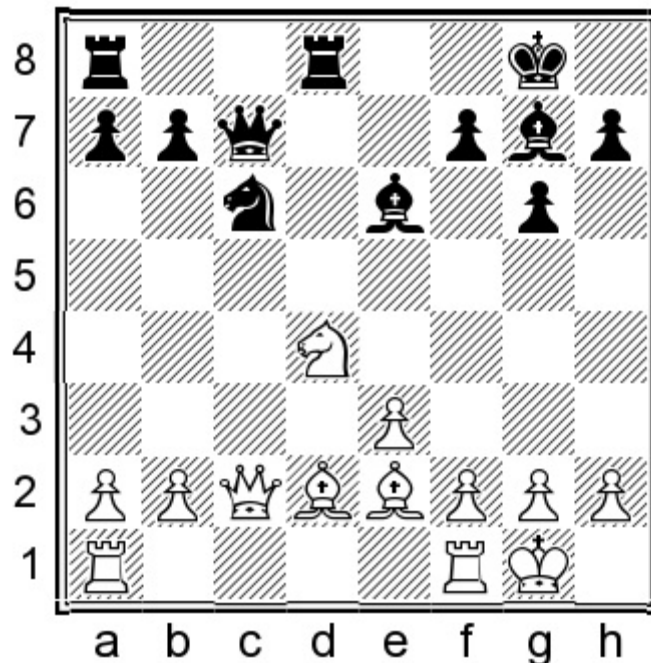
A critical position for the pawn sacrifice on move 9. It is practically unexplored.

13.♗d3

This looks the most solid. The stem game Ashwath-Sarana, Karlsruhe 2019, went:

13.♗b3, when best is to include 13...a6 14.a4 in order to shake the position of the b3-knight. Black would then have an initiative after 14...♙f5. Besides, the game saw a spectacular finish:

13...♗c6 14.♚c2 ♙e6 15.♙d2 exd4 16.♗xd4



16...♗xd4!! 17.♚xc7 ♗xe2+ 18.♙h1 ♜xd2 19.♚xb7 ♜ad8 20.♚xa7 ♙xb2 21.♞ae1 ♗c3 22.e4 ♙c4 23.♞g1 ♗d1 24.♞xd1 ♞xd1 25.h3 ♙e5 0-1.

13.♙d2 exd4 14.♞c1 dxe3 15.♗e6 ♚d7 16.♗xd8 exd2 17.♞xc8 is totally equal.

13...exd4 14.e4 ♜e8 15.f3 ♗c6

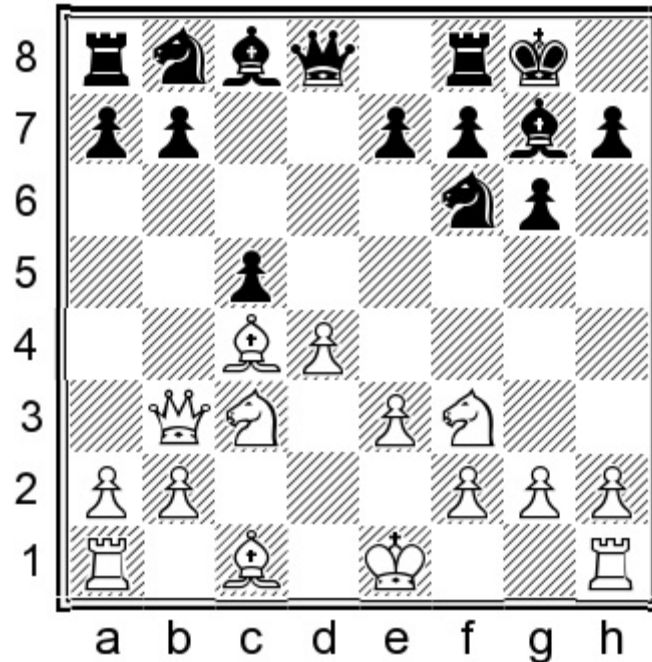
Our passed pawn is well blocked, but it still ensures some space advantage. Of course White has no weaknesses, so play is balanced.

B. 5.♚b3 dxc4

5...e6 is a solid variation. I prefer the text as it leads to more unbalanced play.

chesstouring.com

6.♙xc4 0-0 7.♘f3 c5



8.d5

Obviously, 8.0-0 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♖bd7 10.♞d1 a6 11.♙d2 e5 does not set any problems.

8.dxc5 is more ambitious, but Black has good play after 8...♞a5:

a) 9.♗e5 ♗e4! 10.♙xf7+ ♖h8 11.f4 ♙xe5 12.fxe5 ♗xc5 13.♞c4 ♙f5 14.0-0 ♗c6 15.♙d2 ♞fd8 16.♙e1 ♗xe5 17.♗e4 ♗xc4 18.♙xa5 ♗xa5 19.♗xc5 ♞d2=.

b) 9.♞b5 ♞c7 10.♗d5 ♗xd5 11.♙xd5 ♞d8 12.e4 e6 13.♙c4 ♙d7=.

c) 9.♙d2 ♞xc5 10.♗b5 ♗c6 11.♞c1 ♞h5! (11...♞b6!? 12.0-0 ♙g4=) 12.h3 ♗e4, with active pieces.

8...a6!?

The inclusion of ...a6 a4 weakens b6, but its pluses outweigh this small drawback. If you want to impose sharper play, you can choose:

8...♗e8 9.e4

White has to commit himself as 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.♙e2 ♙g4 is comfortable for Black.

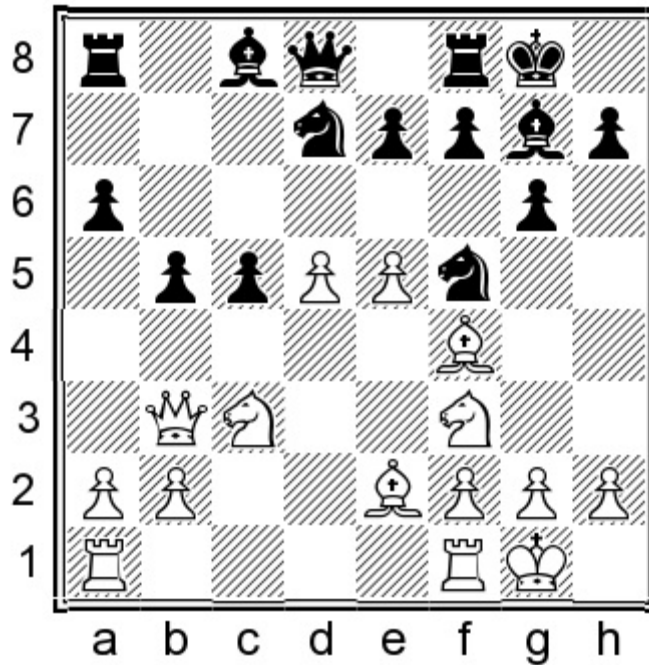
9...♗d6 10.0-0 a6 11.e5

11.a4 is not possible anymore owing to the trick 11...b5! 12.♙e2 b4.

11...♗f5 12.♙f4

The only way to preserve the centre as 12.♞e1 b5 13.♙f1 ♙b7 14.♙f4 ♗d4 15.♞d1 b4 16.♗a4 ♗xf3+ 17.♞xf3 ♙xd5 destroys it.

12...b5 13.♙e2 ♗d7



A creepy position for both sides! Objectively White can keep a slight initiative, but one mistake could cost him a pawn. Black's counterplay is based on ...♘d4.

14.♞ad1

14.♞fe1 ♘d4 15.♞d1 ♞b6 16.♙f1 ♙b7 17.a4 e6 18.axb5 axb5 19.♞xa8 ♙xa8 20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.♘xb5 ♙xd5 22.♞xd4 ♞xd4 23.♘xd4 ♞b8 eliminates to a draw endgame.

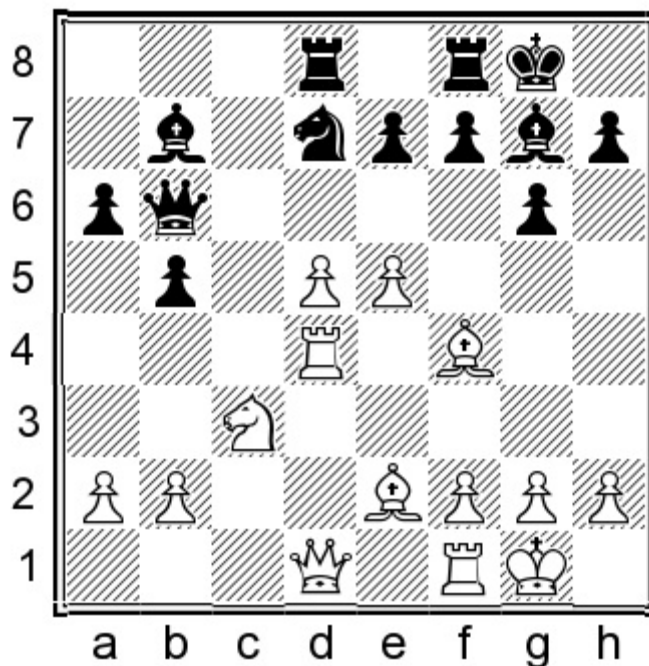
14...♞b6 15.♞d2

15.♞fe1 ♙b7 16.♞d2 ♞ad8 17.♞d1 f6∞ (or 17...c4 18.♙f1 ♘c5∞).

15...♘d4 (15...g5!?) 16.♞d1 ♙b7 17.♘xd4

17.♞e1 b4 18.♘a4 ♘xe2+ 19.♞exe2 ♞b5 20.b3 ♞ac8 21.h4 e6 22.dxe6 fxe6∞.

17...cxd4 18.♞xd4 ♞ad8

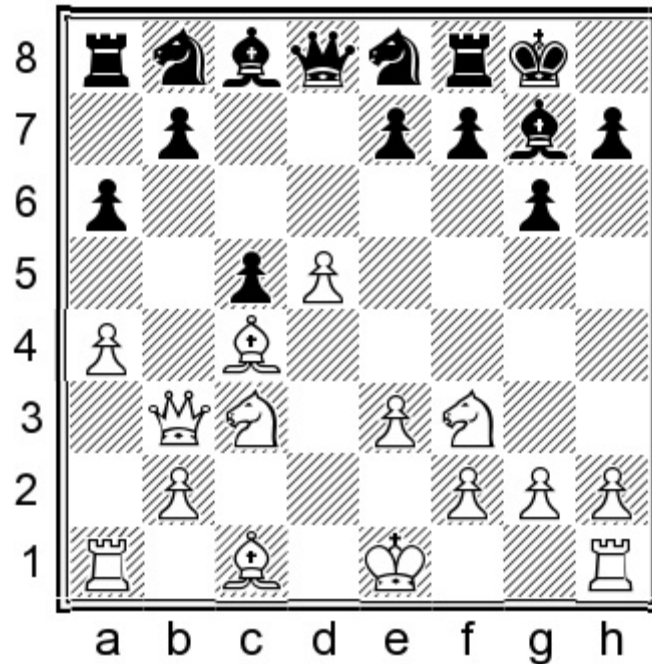


White is unable to defend his centre anymore. The best he could do is to try something on the

queenside, but Black gradually neutralises his initiative:

19.a4 b4 20.♘e4 ♘xe5 21.♙e3 ♚a5 22.d6 e6 23.♚c2 ♜c8 24.♚d2 ♙d5 25.♞d1 ♙b3! (25...♘c6 26.♞xd5 exd5 27.♚xd5±) 26.d7 ♞cd8 27.♞c1 ♙d5 28.♘c5 ♘xd7 29.♚xb4 ♚xb4 30.♞xb4 a5 31.♞b5 ♘xc5 32.♞cxc5 ♞b8 33.b3 ♙xb3 34.♞xa5 ♞fd8. The simplest defence for is to keep one rook and trade any bishop, e.g. 35.♞cb5 ♞xb5 36.axb5 ♙d4=.

9.a4 ♘e8!



10.0-0

10.e4 ♘d6 11.e5 ♘xc4 12.♚xc4 ♘d7 13.♙f4 stumbles into the thematic stab 13...b5.

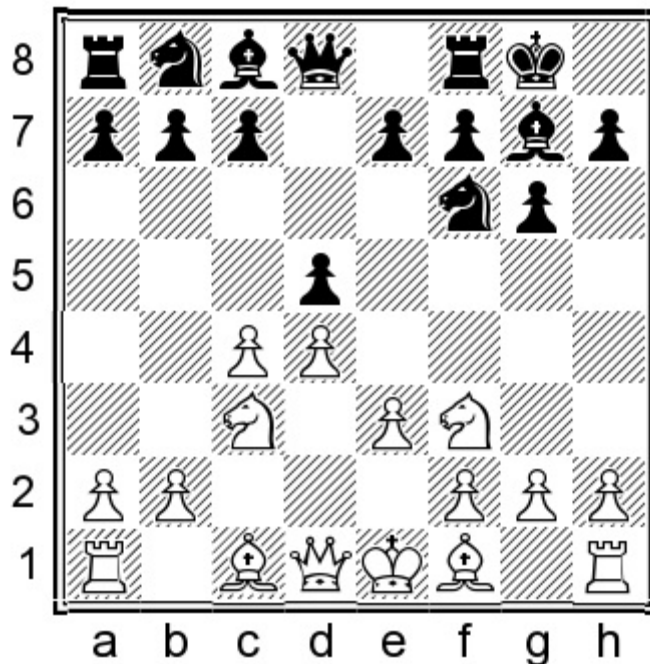
10...♘d6 11.a5

White had to prevent ...b5, which was possible after 11.♞e1 or 11.e4.

11...b6 12.axb6 ♘d7 13.e4 ♚xb6 14.♚xb6 ♘xb6 15.♙d3 c4 16.♙c2 f5! 17.e5 ♘b5 18.♘xb5 axb5 19.♞xa8 ♘xa8 20.♞d1 ♘b6=

White's advanced pawns are not supported by pieces.

C. 5.♘f3 0-0



I consider here:

C1. 6.b4 and **C2.** 6.♙e2.

Alternatively:

6.cd5 ♖xd5 7.♙c4 ♗b6 8.♙b3 c5 transposes to a position which I mentioned in line A.

6.♞b3 dxc4 7.♙xc4 c5 8.d5 a6 is line B.

6.♙d2 is another way to prevent ...c5, without committing oneself with b4. I answered it with 6...e6! – see **game 12** G. Rodriguez-Delchev, La Massana 2011.

C1. 6.b4 c6

Preparing counterplay with ...a7-a5. Another safe continuation aimed at equalising is:

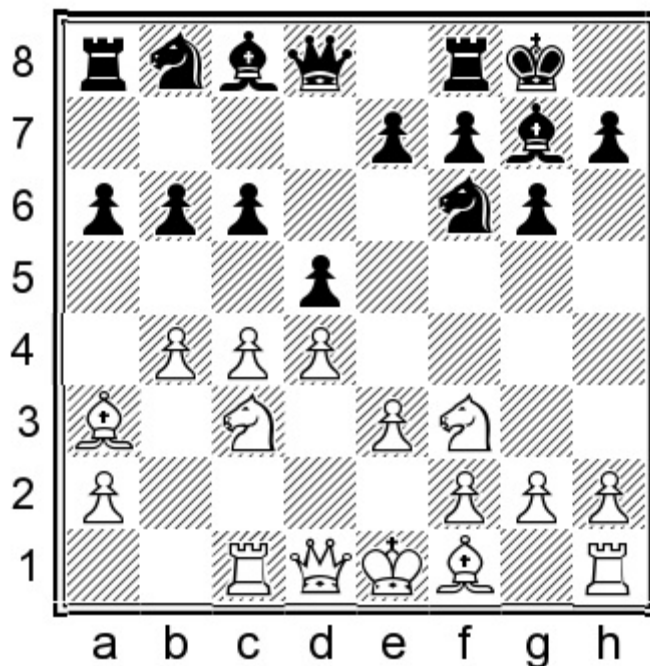
6...b6, reviving the threat of ...c5. White can try to discourage it with 7.♙a3.

7.♞b3 c5 8.bxc5 (8.cxd5 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♙b7) 8...bxc5 9.cxd5 ♗bd7 10.♙e2 ♞b8 11.♞a3 ♙b7 gives Black sufficient counterplay, for instance: 12.0-0 ♗xd5 13.♙d2 cxd4 14.♗xd4 e5 15.♗f3 e4 16.♗d4 ♗f4!?∞, Akobian-Ponomarev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, or 12.♞b1 ♙xd5.

7...c6!

After 7...c5 8.bxc5 bxc5 9.♞c1 White retains a slight pull: 9...♗e4 10.♙xc5! ♗xc5 11.dxc5 ♞a5 12.♞d2 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♗c6 14.♗d5 ♞xd2+ 15.♗xd2.

8.♞c1 a6!



9.cxd5 cxd5 10.b5 axb5 11.♖b3 (11.♘xb5 ♕d7 12.♖b3 ♘c6 13.♖b2 ♜a4!) 11...b4! 12.♙xb4 ♘c6
 13.♙e2 ♘xb4 14.♖xb4 ♘e4 15.a3 (or 15.a4 ♘xc3 16.♞xc3 ♕d7 17.♙b5 ♙xb5 18.♖xb5 ♜a5 19.♖b4
 ♖d7 20.♖xb6 ♞xa4 21.0-0 ♞c4=) 15...♙g4 16.0-0 (16.h3 ♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♘xc3 18.♞xc3 ♖d7 19.0-0 e6
 20.♖xb6 ♞fb8) 16...e6 with a balanced game.

7.♙b2

7.c5 gains space on the queenside, but allows the breakthrough ...e7-e5: 7...♘bd7 8.♙b2 e5 9.♙e2 exd4
 10.♘xd4 ♘e5 11.0-0 ♞e8=, Rustemov-Svidler, Germany 2006.

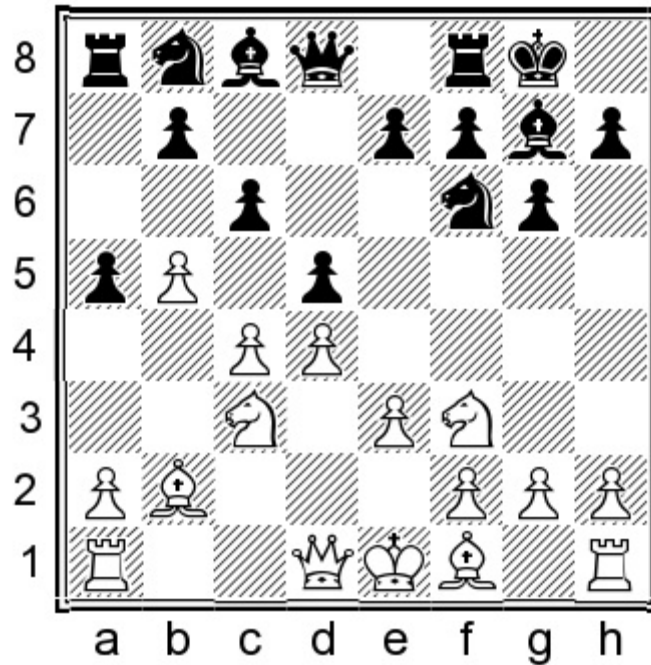
After 7.♖b3 we could follow our main plan: 7...dxc4!? 8.♙xc4 b5 9.♙e2 a5 10.a3 (or 10.0-0 ♙e6
 11.♖b2 axb4 12.♖xb4 ♘a6 13.♖b2 b4 14.♘a4 ♖a5 15.♖c2 ♙f5 16.♖b3 ♘e4, Troianescu-Botvinnik,
 Budapest 1952) 10...axb4 11.♖xb4 ♖a5 12.♖xa5 ♞xa5 13.♙d2 ♞a7 14.0-0 ♙f5 15.♘e5 ♘e4=,
 Kempinski-Lagowski, Warsaw 2004.

7...a5

The choice here is a matter of taste. I suggest a clear plan which generates counterplay at once.
 7...♙g4 is a decent alternative.

8.b5

White could also keep the clamp on c5 with 8.a3 axb4 9.axb4 ♞xa1 10.♖xa1, but then the b4-pawn is a
 good target: 10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 b5 12.♙d3 ♘a6.



8...a4!

It would have been premature to define the pawn structure on the queenside with 8...cxb5 9.♞xb5 a4. White was slightly better in Tomashevsky-Evdokimov, Pardubice 2006, after 10.♞c1 ♞c6 11.♙e2 ♙e6 12.cxd5 ♞xd5 13.0-0.

9.♙a3

If White grabs the pawn with 9.bxc6 bxc6 10.♞xa4 ♚a5+ 11.♞c3, he should be ready to face 11...♙a6! Even with two extra pawns in the endgame, he'll have to find only moves to equalise following:

12.cxd5

Or 12.♙e2 ♞bd7 13.♞d2 ♞fb8 14.♞b3 ♚b4 15.cxd5 ♙xe2 16.♞xe2 cxd5; 12.c5? ♙xf1 13.♞xf1 ♞bd7.

12...♙xf1 13.♞xf1 cxd5 14.g3 ♞e4! 15.♚b3

15.♞xe4 loses a piece to 15...dxe4 16.♞d2 ♚b5+.

15...♞c6 16.♚xd5 ♚xd5 17.♞xd5 ♞fb8 18.♙c1 e5.

The immediate 9.♞xa4 does not actually win a pawn since Black regains it by force: 9...cxb5 10.cxb5 ♚a5+ 11.♞c3 ♞e4 12.♞c1 ♙f5 13.♙d3 ♚b4 14.♚b3 ♚xb3 15.axb3 ♞xc3 16.♞xc3 ♙xd3 17.♞xd3 ♚a5=.

To 9.♞c1 ♚a5 10.♙d3, Aronian-Svidler, Morelia/Linares 2007, simplest is 10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 cxb5 12.♙xb5 a3 13.♙a1 ♙e6=, while 10...cxb5 11.cxb5 ♙f5! is more ambitious.

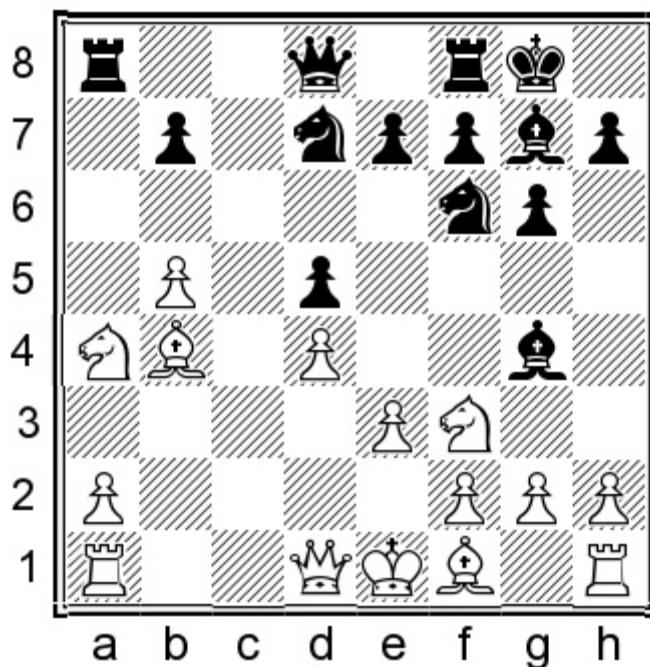
9...cxb5 (9...♙f5=) 10.cxb5

Or 10.♞xb5 ♞c6 11.♙e2 ♙e6 12.cxd5 ♚a5+ 13.♚d2 ♞xd5 14.0-0 ♞fc8 15.♞fc1 ♙f5=.

After the text Black has good chances due to the weak square c4. He can direct his knight towards it with:

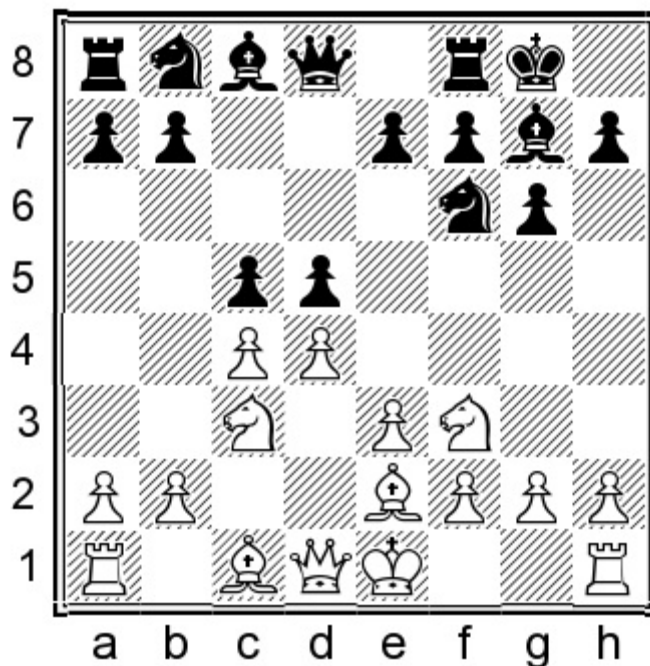
10...♞bd7 11.♙e2 ♞b6 12.0-0 ♚f5=, or firstly develop the bishop:

10...♙g4 11.♙b4 ♞bd7. The tactical background of the latter variation is seen in the game Akobian-Perelshteyn, Stillwater 2007, which went 12.♞xa4?



12...e5!! 13.♙e2 (13.♙xf8 ♙xf8+) 13...♞e8 14.dxe5 ♞xe5 15.♞c5 ♞xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♙h3. Black has terrific compensation for the pawn. The source game did not last long: 17.♙c3 b6 18.♞b3 ♞xe3!! 19.♙d4 (19.fxe3 ♞e4 20.fxe4 ♙xc3+) 19...♞e8 20.♞g1 ♞h5 21.♞d2 ♞a4 22.0-0-0 ♞c8+ 23.♞b1 ♙f5+ 24.♞a1 ♞c2 and White resigned.

C2. 6.♙e2 c5



C21. 7.dxc5; C22. 7.0-0.

C21. 7.dxc5 dxc4!?

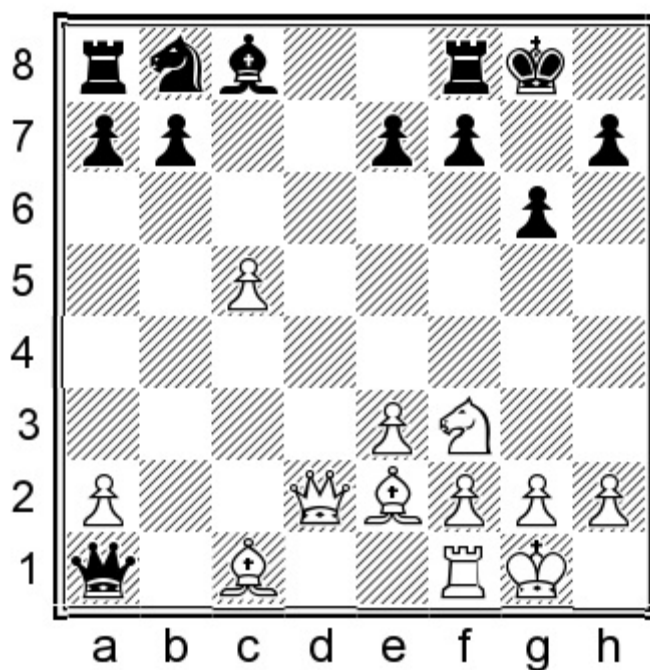
7...♖a5 is considered the main line, but it leads to forced play which needs deep study. It is also possible to run into home preparation:

8.cxd5! ♜xd5 9.♞xd5 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3!

10.♙d2 ♜d8 does not fare well for White after 11.♙xc3 ♞xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♜xd5 13.♞d1 ♜xc5 or

11.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 12.♙xc3.

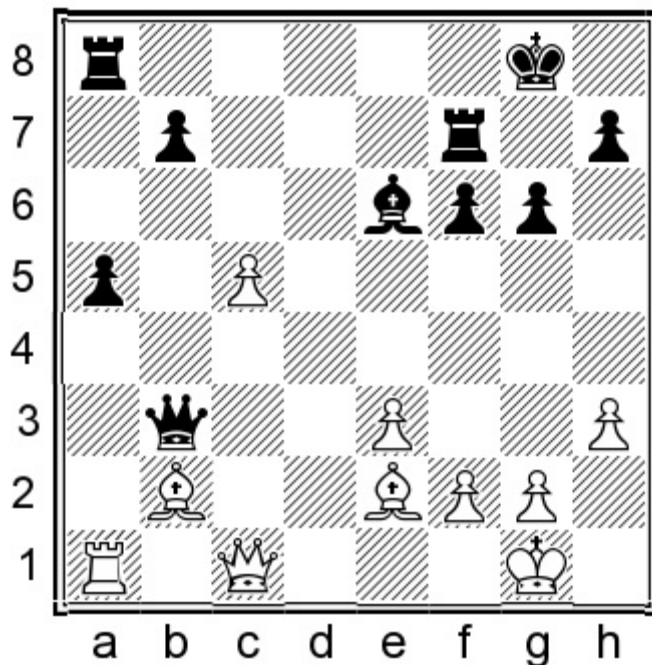
10...♞xc3+ 11.♞d2 ♞xa1 12.0-0



White has a dangerous initiative for the exchange. In the first edition I recommended 12...♙e6!?, when

13.♙b2 ♖xa2 14.♘g5 f6 15.e4! (15.♙f3 ♙c4! 16.♙xb7 ♘a6 slightly favours Black.) 15...♙c4 16.♞a1 ♜b3 17.♞a3 ♜b5 18.♞a5 forces a draw.

Avrukh praises 12...♘c6 13.♙b2 ♖xa2 14.♜c3 e5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♜xe5 f6 17.♜c3 ♙e6, evaluating the position in Black's favour. In fact, it may be balanced, but White owns the initiative, so he has the better practical chances – 18.♞a1 ♜b3 19.♜c1 ♞f7 20.h3 a5



The game Bialas-Groth, ICCF 2013, went 21.♞a3 ♜b4 22.♞d3 a4 23.♙a3 ♜e4 (or 23...♜a5 24.♞d6 ♙b3 25.h4=) 24.♞d4 ♜e5 25.♜d2=.

21.♙d4 a4 22.♞b1 ♜d5 23.♙f3 ♜c4 24.♜d2 a3 25.♞b4 is also balanced – 25...♜a6 (25...♜a2 26.♜d3 ♙f5 27.♜c3 ♜c2 28.♜xc2 ♙xc2 29.♙d5 ♘g7 30.♙xf7 ♘xf7 31.♞xb7+ ♘e6 32.♞b6+ ♘d5 33.♞xf6 a2=) 26.♞b6 ♜a5 27.♜xa5 ♞xa5 28.♞xe6 a2 29.♞b6=.

The bottom line is that 7...♜a5 does not have any analytical advantage over 7...dxc4, but the latter is simpler and leads to a typical position.

8.0-0

Black has some initiative in the endgame after 8.♜xd8 ♞xd8 9.♙xc4 ♘bd7 (9...♘fd7) 10.c6 bxc6 11.0-0 ♘b6 (It would be interesting to try 11...♘e8!? 12.♙d2 ♞b8 13.♘a4 ♘b6 14.♙a5 ♙g4=) 12.♙e2 ♘fd5=.

8.♜a4 offers a wide choice of decent moves. Simplest is 8...♘a6.

Engine games feature 8...♘d5, e.g. 9.0-0 ♙xc3 10.bxc3 ♘xc3=.

9.♜xc4 (9.c6 bxc6 10.♜xc4 ♞b8! 11.0-0 ♞b4↑) 9...♙e6 10.♜h4 ♘xc5 11.0-0=, Allan-Adorjan, Szirak 1987.

8...♜a5 9.♙xc4

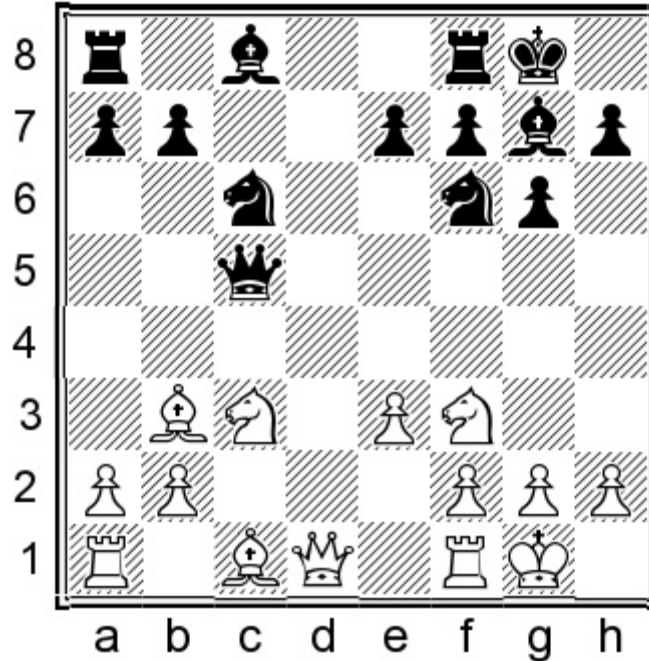
White has also tried 9. ♖d4.

Then the natural 9... ♗e6! 10. ♘g5 ♘c6 11. ♗h4 ♘d7 12. ♗xc4 ♘e5 13. ♗d4 ♘c6 repeats moves. We could play on with:

9... ♘fd7 10. ♗xc4 ♗xc5 (10... ♘c6 11. ♗h4) allows 11. ♗h4 ♘c6 12. e4 ♘de5 13. ♘d5 ♘xf3+ 14. ♗xf3 ♗e6, or with:

9... ♘bd7 10. ♗xc4 ♗xc5 11. ♗h4 h6=, having in mind 12. e4?! g5!.

9... ♗xc5 10. ♗b3 ♘c6



The position is similar to the ♗f4 system, but White still has to work to develop his dark-squared bishop:

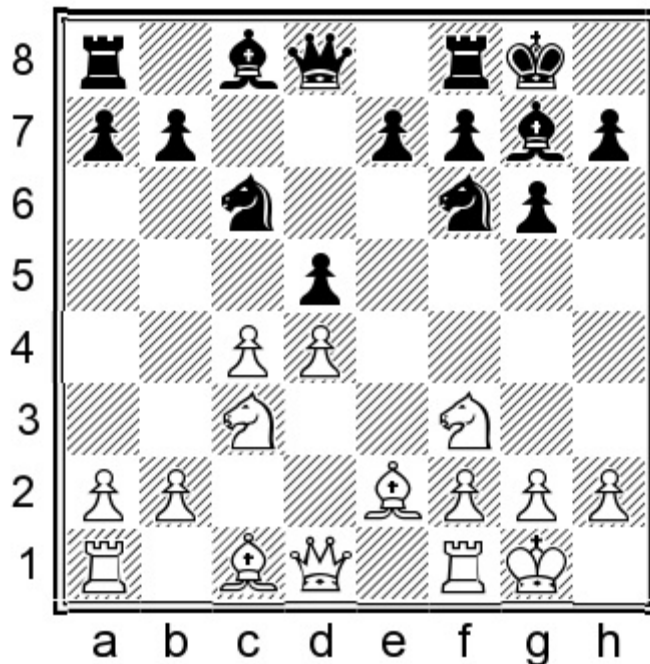
11. e4 ♗g4 12. ♗e3 ♗a5

Of course the queen will be also safe on h5: 12... ♗h5 13. h3 ♗xf3 14. ♗xf3 ♗xf3 15. gxf3 ♘d7=.

13. h3 ♗ad8 14. ♗e2 ♗xf3 15. ♗xf3 ♘d4! 16. ♗xd4 ♗xd4

The opposite-coloured bishops hint for equality, but there is a slight difference in Black's favour – he can limit the scope of the b3-bishop with ...e6.

C22. 7.0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 ♘c6



We have reached the Tarrasch Defence with colours reversed. Black can choose most of the typical White plans, linked with a light-squared blockade in the centre.

9. ♖f4

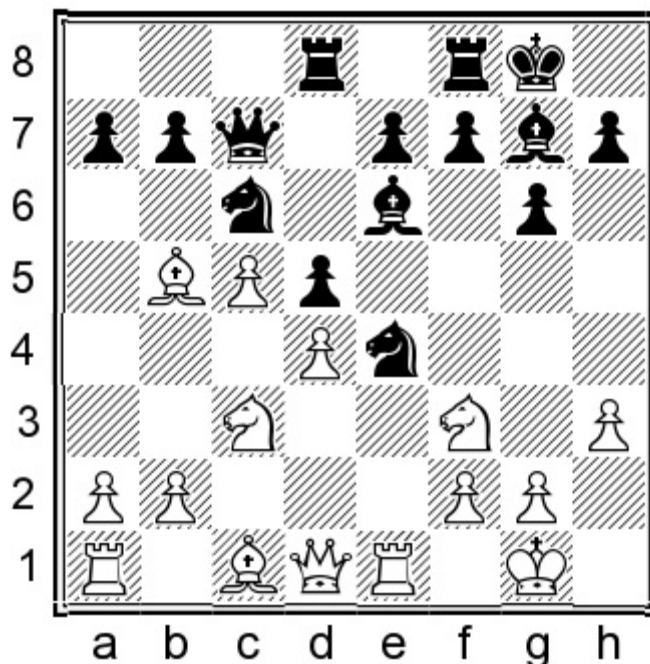
This was Ivanchuk's attempt to revive the variation.

Alternatives are:

9.h3 dxc4 (Or 9...♙e6 10.♙g5 ♘e4 11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.d5 exf3 13.♙xf3 h6 14.♙e3 ♙d7 15.dxc6 ♙xc6=.)
 10.♙xc4 ♘a5 11.♙e2 ♙e6 12.♞e1 (12.♘e5 ♞c8 13.♙f3 ♘d5 14.♘e4 ♘b4) 12...♞c8 13.♙g5 ♘c4 14.b3
 ♘d6 15.♞c1 h6=.

If White saved h3, we could pin the knight: 9.♞e1 ♙g4

I played 9...♙e6!? 10.c5 (10.♙g5? dxc4 11.♙xf6 ♙xf6 12.d5 ♙xc3-+; 10.♘g5 ♙f5 11.♙e3 dxc4
 12.♙xc4 ♘a5 13.♙f1 ♘d5 14.♘f3 ♘xe3 15.fxe3 ♞c8 16.h3 ♙e6 17.♚d2 ♙c4 18.♞ad1 e6=, Vera
 Gonzalez-Ernst, Thessaloniki 1988) 10...♘e4 11.h3! (11.♙e3?! ♘xc5 12.dxc5 d4) 11...♚c7
 12.♙b5 ♞ad8.



The battleplan is to reinforce the d5-pawn, then play ...f6 and break through in the centre with ...e7-e5. Franic-Delchev, Zadar 2009, went 13.♖a4 ♕f5 (13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♕f5 15.♕d2 f6 16.c4! ♕e4 17.cxd5 ♕xd5 18.♕c4=) 14.♗e2 e5! 15.♕xc6 bxc6 16.♕e3 f6.

10.c5

10.cxd5 ♗xd5 11.h3 ♕e6 12.♕f1 ♖c8 13.♕g5 h6 14.♕e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 f5.

10...♗e4 11.♕e3 e6 12.♗d2 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♕xe2 14.♖xe2. Black should now prepare ...b6, or push it at once, with some initiative.

Finally, 9.c5 ♗e4 10.♕e3 b6! takes the command 11.♖a4

Or 11.♕b5 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♗a5; 11.cxb6 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 axb6.

11...♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♕d7 13.♖b3 bxc5 14.dxc5 ♕g4 15.h3 ♕xf3 16.♕xf3 e6. Black is already slightly better.

9...♕g4 10.c5 ♗e4 11.♖c1 e6

White is already experiencing some difficulties – 12.♗e5 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♗a5 with the positional threat ...b6.

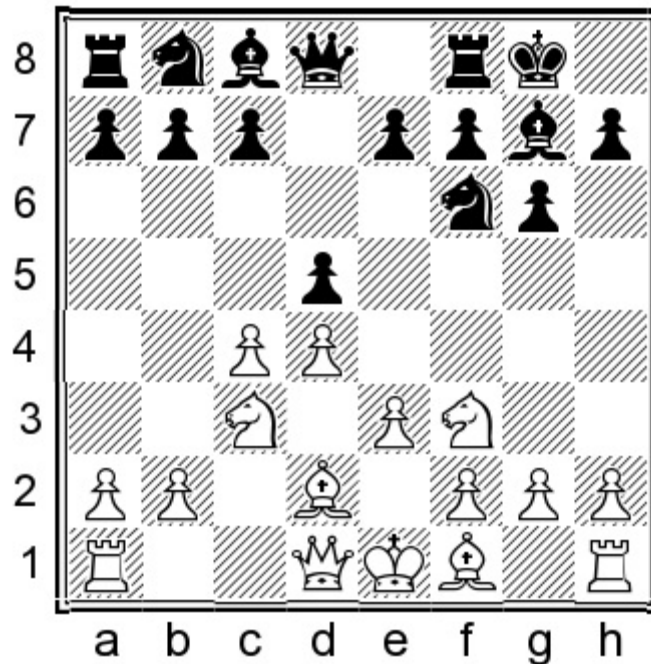
Chapter 4

Complete Games

12. G. Rodriguez-Delchev

La Massana 04.01.2011

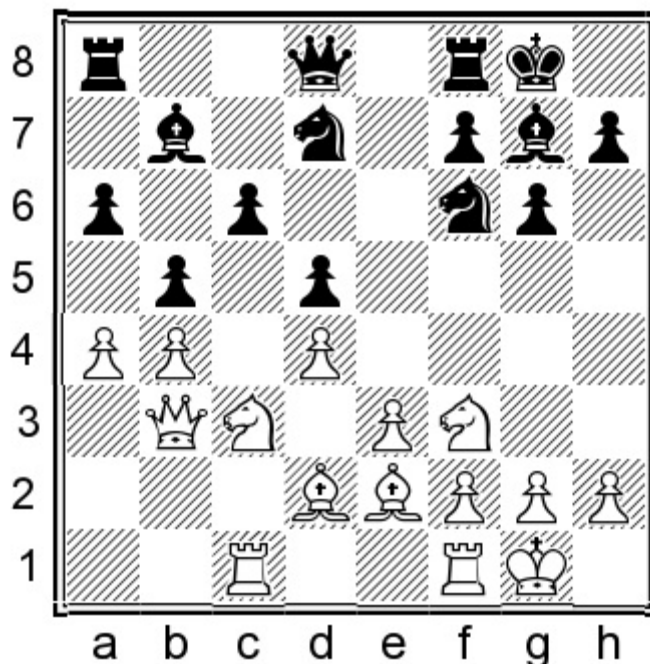
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♗c3 d5 5.e3 0-0 6.♗d2



White aims to prevent ...c5. Some Grünfeld adepts feel ill at ease when they cannot break through White's centre. However, I have enough practice in Queen's Gambit/Slav positions so I was aware that the bishop had no prospects on d2. In the event of pawn exchanges in the centre this piece would only be hampering the coordination of White's pieces. By all means it would have been better placed on c1. I decided to follow up with simple developing moves:

6...e6 7.♖c1 b6 8.♗e2

8.cxd5 leads to similar positions: 8...exd5 9.b4 a6! (It is better to avoid b5 which hits c6.) 10.♗b3 ♗b7 11.♗e2 ♘bd7 12.0-0 b5! 13.a4 c6



This is a typical defensive setup against White's minority attack. As a rule, Black is fine here if he succeeds in manoeuvring a knight to d6. From there, it controls e4 and it can also plug the c-file from c4. The game Zimmerman-Van der Weide, Triesen 2006, went 14.♖fd1 (14.a5! was necessary, but after 14...♗e4! 15.♖fd1 ♗d6 Black would have the easier game.) 14...♗b6! 15.♗e5 ♗fd7! 16.♗xd7 ♕xd7 17.♗c2 f5 18.♙e1 ♜ae8, with a clear positional advantage

8...♙b7 9.0-0 ♖e7!

9...♗bd7?! is imprecise due to 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗b5!

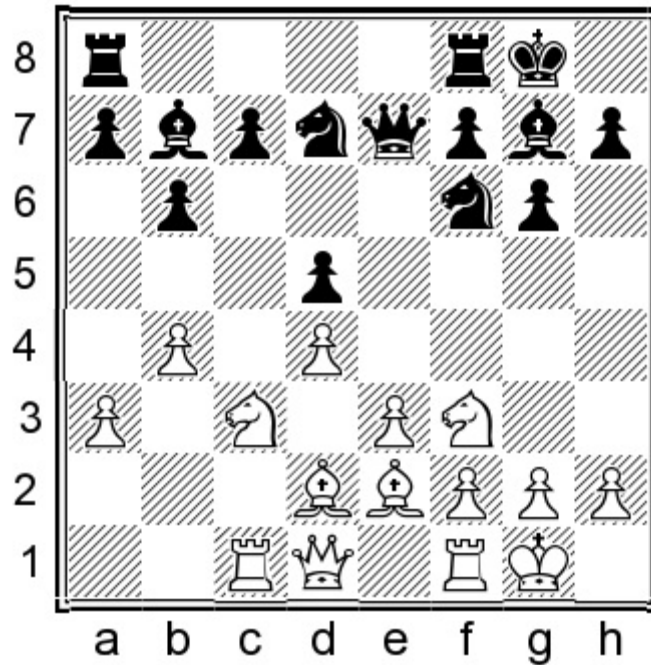
10.a3?!

A strange move that only loses time. It looks that White was not sure what plan to choose. Or he was setting the positional trap 10...c5?! 11.cxd5 exd5 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.b4!.

He could have played immediately 10.b4!, threatening to gain space on the queenside with c5. So I should take 10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 and counterattack in the centre with 11...c5! 12.dxc5 (12.bxc5 bxc5 13.dxc5 ♗bd7=) 12...bxc5 13.b5 a6 14.a4 axb5 15.axb5 ♗bd7=.

Another option was 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b4 c6! 12.♗b3 ♗bd7 13.♞c2 ♞fc8 14.♞fc1 ♙f8 15.a3 b5!, achieving the setup I mentioned before.

10...♗bd7 11.cxd5 exd5 12.b4



In this typical pawn structure White commonly tries to push b5 and activate or exchange his dark-squared bishop from a3. But it is now on d2, so this plan does not work here. On the contrary, I will attack the queenside myself.

12...♖fc8 13.♙b3 ♕f8!

My bishop also was on the wrong diagonal, but it takes an important step in the right direction. Now White's queenside pawns are stopped. I hoped to complete the regrouping by bringing the bishop to d6, where it belongs.

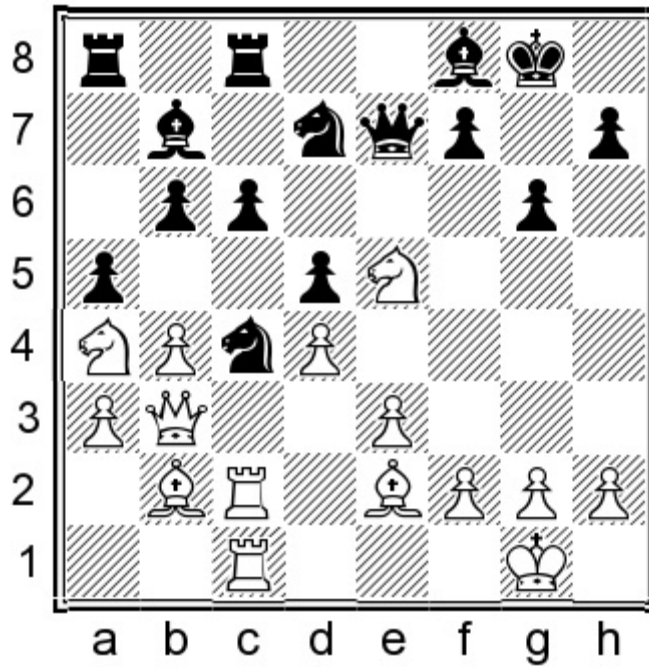
14.♖c2 c6

I was planning ...b5, ...♗b6, ...a5, so White anticipated it with:

15.♗a4 ♗e4 16.♕c1 ♗d6 17.♕b2 ♗c4 18.♖fc1 a5!

So far so good. White's queenside begins to crumble.

19.♗e5



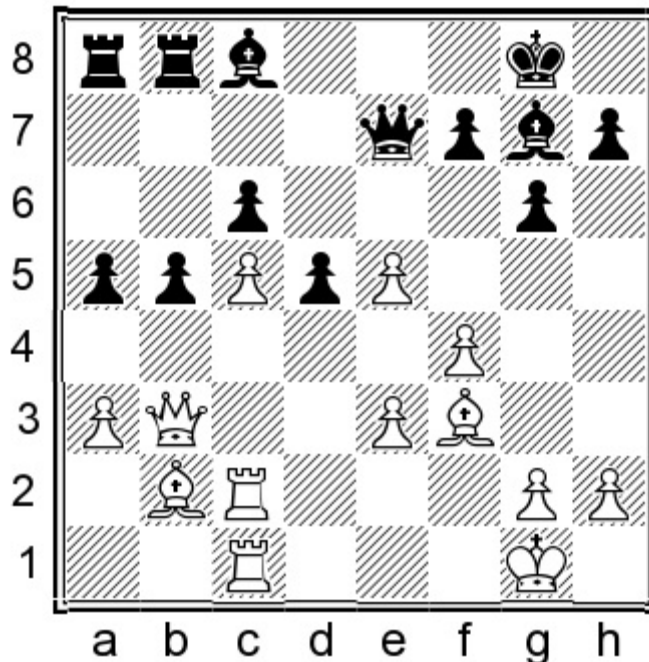
19...b5

I had better options here. For instance, 19...axb4 20.♘xd7 ♔xd7 21.axb4 ♖a7! or 19...♘dx5 20.dxe5 axb4 21.axb4 ♖a6 would have earned me a clear edge.

20.♘c5 ♘xc5 21.bxc5 ♘xe5 22.dxe5 ♙g7?!

I provoke f4, which is obligatory anyway. 22...♞cb8, with the idea of ...♙c8-f5 and ...b5-b4, was slightly better for Black.

23.f4 ♞cb8 24.♙f3 ♙c8



I am ready to push ...b4. Then White cannot close the queenside with a4 because I would have ...f6 (after due preparation). It is clear that White should seek an active plan, too. It should be based on 25.e4!, when my only reasonable answer would be 25...d4! 26.♟xd4 b4, with compensation for the pawn. For instance:

27.a4 (27.♞e3 ♟e6 28.♞b2 bxa3 29.♞xa3 ♞xb2 30.♞xb2 a4 31.♞a1 ♟b3) 27...♟e6 28.♞e3 ♞d8.

White decides to deprive me of this option, but tempi are important in this sharp position and I seized the initiative:

25.♟d4 b4 26.axb4?!

This is too cooperative. 26.♞a4! ♞c7 27.e4 bxa3 28.♞xa3 dxe4 29.♟xe4 ♟e6 would have been unclear. After the text I could have fixed a clear edge by 26...axb4! when White is unable to stop my pawn from further advancing. 27.e4 would lose outright to 27...♟h6! 28.g3? ♞a3. However, in the time trouble I wanted everything to be with tempi, so I chose:

26...♞xb4?! 27.♞a3 f6?!

Playing on the flank where the opponent is stronger. Of course 27...♞b7! looks more natural.

28.♞b2?!

28.♟c3! would have left me struggling for the draw, probably with 28...♞bb8 29.e4 dxe4 30.♟xe4 fxe5 31.♟xc6 ♞a6 32.♟d5+ ♟e6. The text, and especially the next mistake, quickly finish the game in my favour.

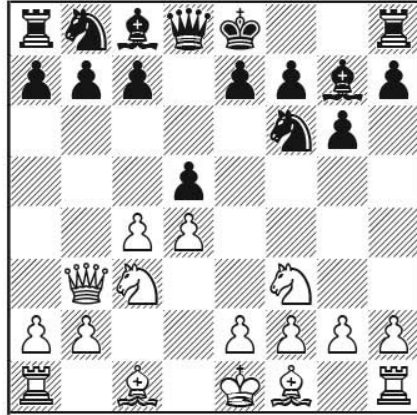
28...♞ab8 29.♞cb1? fxe5 30.♟xe5

White finally noticed that 30.fxe5 ♟xe5 31.♞xb4 axb4 32.♞xb4 loses to 32...♟xh2+! 33.♟xh2 ♞h4+ 34.♟g1 ♞e1+.

30...♟xe5 31.fxe5 ♞xe5 32.♞xb4 axb4 33.♞b3 ♟f5 34.♞d1 ♞c3! 35.♟xd5+ cxd5+ 36.♞xd5+ ♟h8 37.e4 ♞e3+ 38.♟h1 ♞xe4 39.♞d6 ♞e8 40.♞f6+ ♟g8 41.♞f1 ♞e5 42.♞b6 ♞b8 0-1

The Russian System

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♚b3



Main Ideas

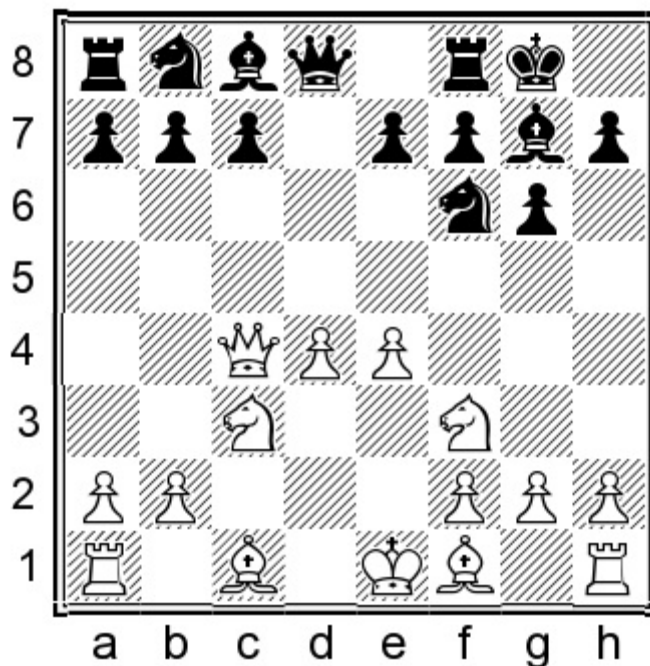
Objectives and Move Orders

White has tried several setups with ♚b3, but only the move order of the so-called Russian System poses some problems:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♚b3

4.♚a4+ ♙d7 5.♚b3 c5! and 4.♚b3 dxc4 5.♚xc4 ♙e6!? 6.♚b5+ ♙d7 7.♚b3 c5 8.d5 b5 allow a direct attack on the white centre.

5...dxc4 6.♚xc4 0-0 7.e4



In the first edition I recommended Smyslov's plan 7...♞c6 8.♙e2 ♞g4, but Black remains somewhat cramped after 9.d5. Now I prefer to destroy the enemy centre as quickly as possible. One decent way to achieve it is 8...e5! 9.d5 ♞d4 – See **game 13** Slawinski-Tomczak, ICCF 2017.

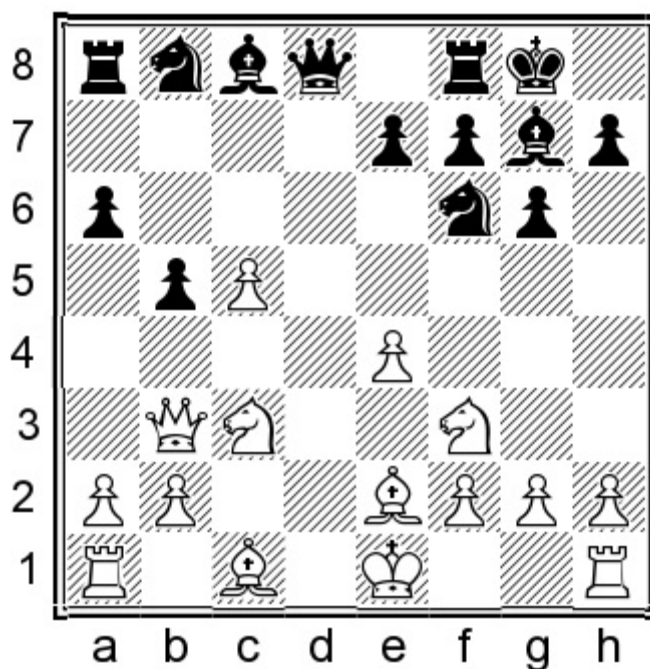
As a main repertoire I analyse the Hungarian Variation:

7...a6

It tries to exploit the advanced position of White's queen to gain a tempo with ...b5, followed up by ...c5.

In older games White tested sharp lines with 8.e5 ♞fd7 9.e6 or 9.♞g5 ♞c6! 10.♞xf7, but it turned out that Black's counterattack is rather effective. Thus the main theoretical battleground became:

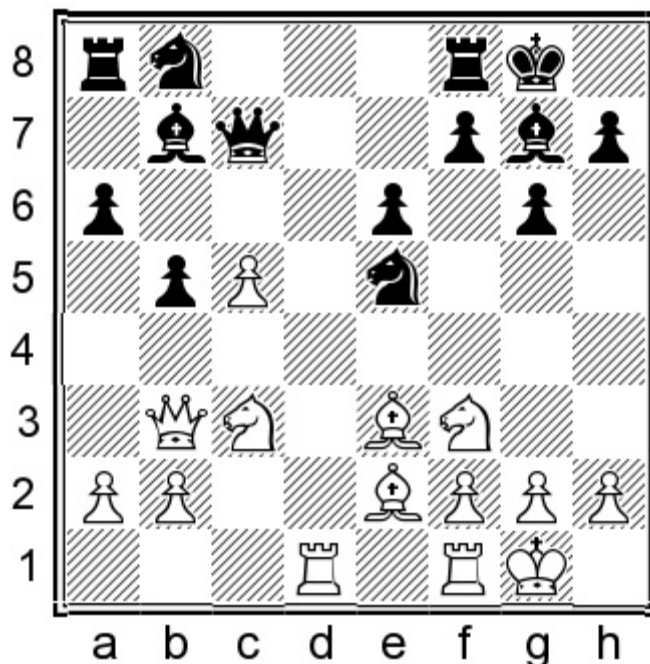
8.♙e2 b5 9.♚b3 c5 10.dxc5



Again Black faces a dilemma. The safest way is to regain the c-pawn with 10...♙e6 11.♚c2 ♞bd7,

consenting to a symmetrical pawn structure. If you seek complications, you should target the e4-pawn:
10...♙b7!?

If White pushes it further, we fix the centre with 11.e5 ♖fd7 12.♙e3 e6! and pile hits on e5 – 13.0-0 ♙c7 Then we take on e5:



Our plan is to stay passive on the queenside – we meet a4 by ...bxa4, ...♞b8, ...♞c6. At the same time we aim to exchange the dark-squared bishops through d4. Then the c5- and f4-pawn would become sensitive. This plan was tested in several correspondence games and Black did not experience any problems.

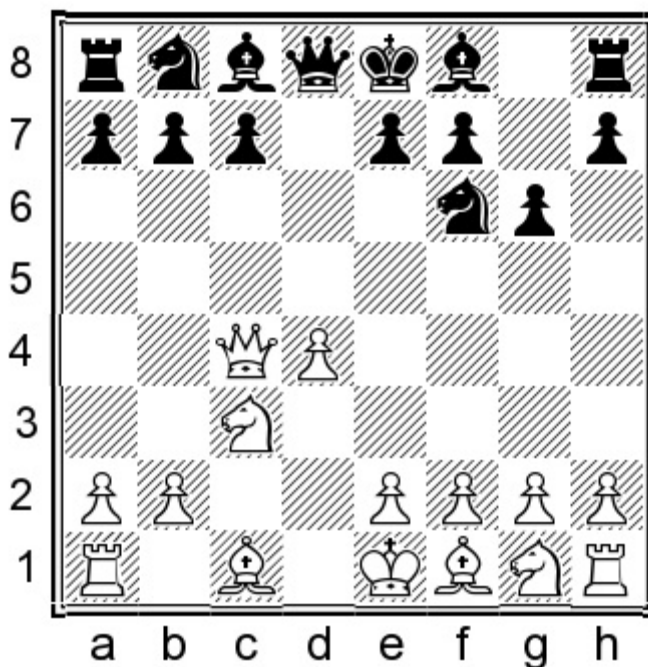
Theoretical Status

The Hungarian Variation has always been regarded as the most reliable weapon against the Russian System. Although 10 years ago ...♞c6+...♙g4 attracted me (and Avrukh also chose it as a main repertoire in his book), I must admit that it is safer to destroy White's centre rather than block it. Statistics also confirm this conclusion. A sharper and strategically unbalanced alternative is 7...♞a6 8.♙e2 c5, but it is considerably more risky – in computer and correspondence games White achieves about 10% more than against 7...a6.

Chapter 5 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.♖b3

Occasionally White tries to save ♗f3 – 4.♖b3 dxc4 5.♖xc4



5...♗e6!?

5...♗g7 6.e4 0-0 does not transpose to the main line since White has 7.♗e2 a6 8.♗f4. Black can sacrifice a pawn with 8...b5 9.♖xc7 ♖xc7 10.♗xc7 ♗b7 11.f3 ♗c6 12.d5 ♗d4 13.♗d3 ♗d7.

Correspondence games prove that Black's bishop pair is enough to hold the draw, but he must remember the following line: 14.♞d1 ♗c5 15.♗a5 b4 16.♗ce2 ♗xd3+ 17.♞xd3 ♗c2+ 18.♔d2 ♞ac8 19.♗h3 (19.b3? f5) 19...f5! 20.exf5 ♞xf5 21.♞c1 ♞c5 22.♗b6 ♞b5 23.d6 exd6 24.♞xd6 ♗f8 25.♞d8 ♞xb6 26.♔xc2 ♞c6+ 27.♔b1 ♞d6, Salgado Allaría-Armani, ICCF 2018. White cannot convert the extra pawn. I admit that all this is not rewarding, but perhaps it could work in rapid game.

6.♖b5+ ♗d7 7.♖b3 c5 8.d5 b5 9.♗xb5 ♗xb5 10.♖xb5+ ♗bd7 11.g3 ♗xd5 12.♗g2 e6. Black has active pieces and an easy game, Dunlop-Eljoseph, ICCF 2017.

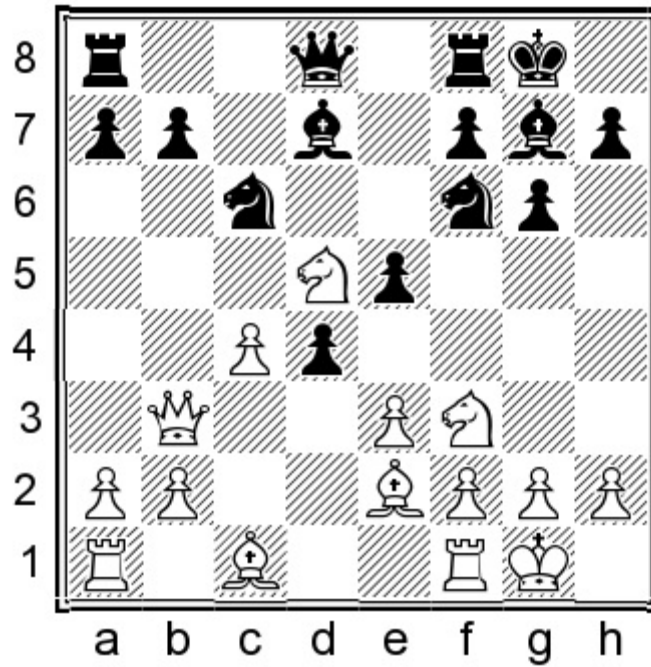
Another tricky move order is:

4.♖a4+ ♗d7 5.♖b3.

Here 5...dxc4 6.♖xc4 ♗g7 is well tested.

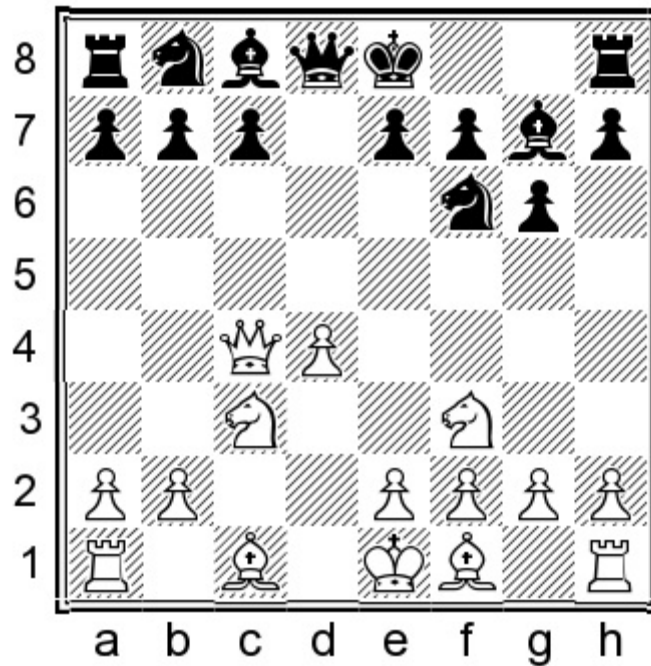
5...♗c6!? 6.♗f3 ♗a5 7.♖c2 c6= is perhaps the safest approach. The most challenging and sharp line is:

5...c5! 6.♗xd5 cxd4 7.♗f3 ♗c6 8.e3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 e5 10.0-0 0-0



White should be careful to maintain the balance. After 11.♖d1 ♜e8 12.exd4 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♙d3 we can choose between 15...b6 and 15...♞f6 16.♞xb7 ♙g4 17.♞f1 ♙f5 with an initiative.

5...dxc4 6.♞xc4



6...0-0

This move has passed the test of time, but it is not the only way to go.

6...♙e6!? is a decent alternative:

7.♞b5+

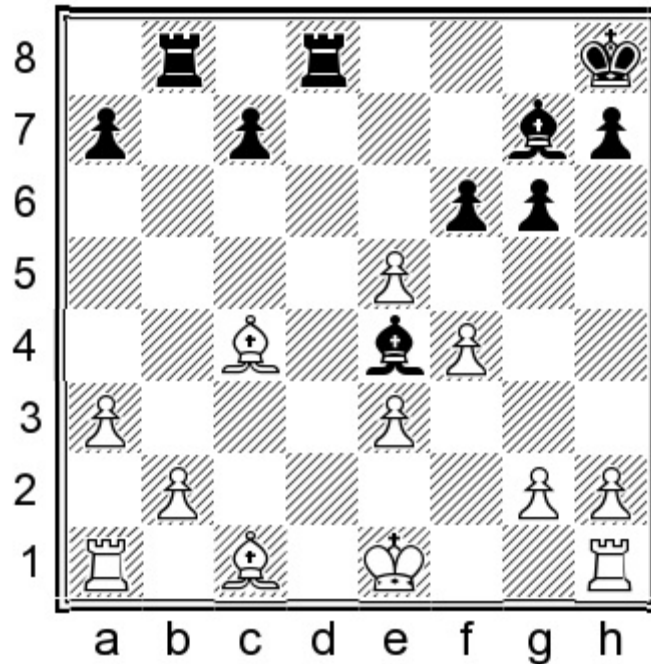
7.♞a4+ ♙d7 8.♞a3 ♙c6 9.e3 ♘bd7 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0 e6 12.♖d1 ♘e4= gains control of the light

squares.

7.♖d3 hands the initiative to Black – 7...c5 8.e4 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♕d7 10.e5 ♗g4 11.f4 ♗c6 12.h3 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 ♗h6 14.g4 f6.

The text enters a “tunnel” variation, which leads to a drawn endgame:

7...♕d7 8.♖xb7 ♗c6 9.♖b3 ♖b8 10.♖d1 ♕f5 11.a3 0-0 12.e3 e5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♗e4 15.♖xd8 ♖fxd8 16.♗xe4 ♕xe4 17.f4 f6 18.♕c4+ ♖h8



White is unable to keep his extra pawns. Ovcjak-Benko, ICCF 2018, went 19.exf6

Or 19.e6 f5 20.♖a2 ♕b1 21.♖a1 ♕e4 22.♖f1 ♕xb2 23.♕xb2+ ♖xb2 24.♖f2 ♖xf2 25.♗xf2 ♖g7=.
19...♕xf6 20.0-0 ♕xb2 21.♕xb2+ ♖xb2 22.♖f2 ♖xf2 23.♗xf2 ♖d2+ 24.♕e2 ♕xg2=.

7.e4

7.♕f4 is seldom met, probably because Black has a wide choice of decent answers. Before all, the threat on c7 is not dangerous and we could generously offer a pawn:

7...♕f5 8.♖xc7 (8.e3 c6) 8...♗c6 9.♖xb7 (9.e3 ♗fd5 and Black invades through the c-file) 9...♗xd4 10.♗xd4 (10.0-0-0 ♗e4!?) 10...♖xd4 11.e3 ♖c5 12.♖b5=.

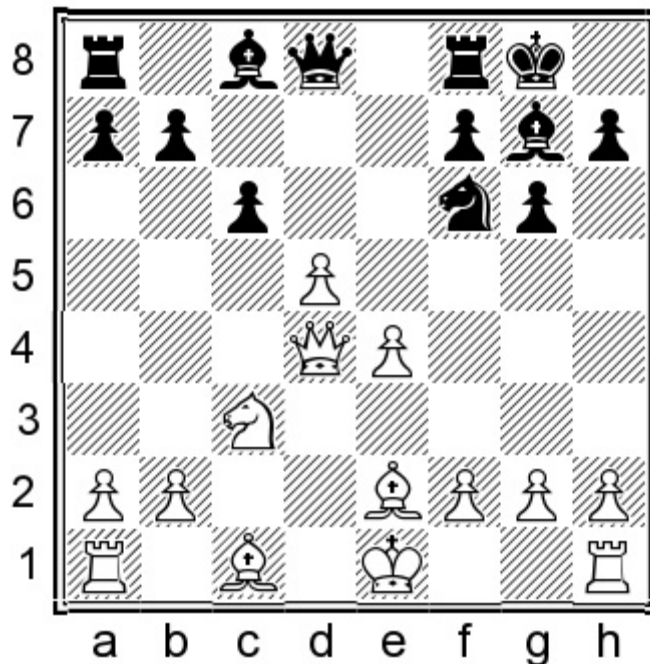
It is not obligatory to sacrifice the pawn:

7...c6 8.e4 a5 or 8...b5 9.♖b3 a5 also assure Black of counterplay.

Finally, 7...♗a6! 8.e4 c5! 9.dxc5 ♕e6 10.♖b5 ♕d7 11.♖xb7 ♗xc5 12.♖b4 ♗e6 13.♕e5 a5 14.♖a3 ♖b6 15.♕c4 ♖fc8 (Topalov-Kasparov, Sarajevo 1999) or 15...♗g4 16.♕g3 ♖b4 (Bacrot-Sutovsky, Albert 2001) give Black ample compensation for the pawn.

7...a6

7...♗c6 8.♕e2 (8.h3 e5!) 8...e5!? 9.d5 ♗d4 10.♗xd4 exd4 11.♖xd4 c6 is a reliable backup line. chesstouring.com



See **game 13** Slawinski-Tomczak, ICCF 2017.

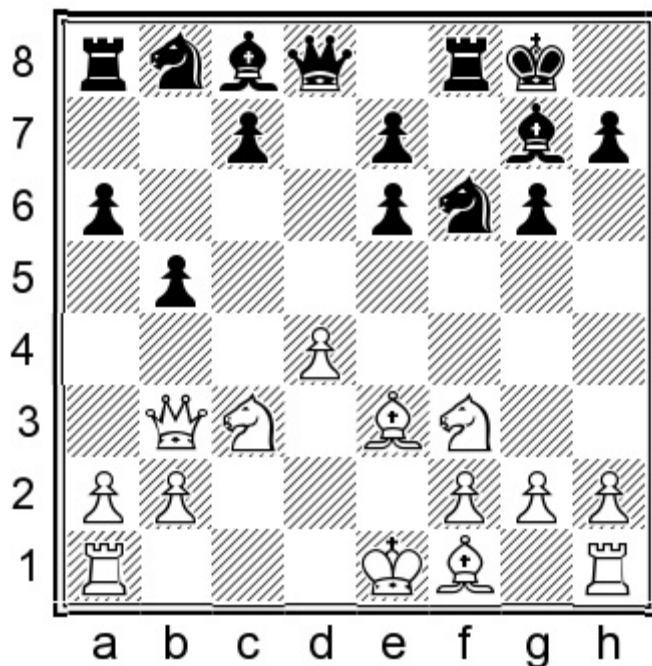
I have also checked 7...♙e6, but it compares unfavorably to 6...♙e6!? since White has 8.d5! ♙c8 9.e5! ♘fd7 10.e6 fxe6 11.dxe6 ♘b6 12.♚h4 ♘c6 13.♙e2. Here 13...♘d4 14.0-0 ♘xe2+ 15.♘xe2 ♜xf3 16.gxf3 ♙xe6 17.♞e1 ♙d5 is assessed by some commentators as unclear, but 18.♙g5! ♚f8 19.♘f4 takes over the initiative.

8.♙e2

Nobody from the top seems to be playing 8.e5 anymore. The sharp line:

8.e5 b5 9.♚b3 ♘fd7 10.e6

10.♘g5 ♘c6 (10...c5 11.e6) 11.♙e3 (11.♘xf7 ♜xf7 12.e6 ♘xd4 13.exf7+ ♔f8 14.♚d1 ♘e5 15.♙e2 ♙f5 16.0-0 b4) 11...♘a5 12.♚d1 ♘b6 13.h4 h6 14.♘f3 ♘ac4 15.h5 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 g5 17.♘xg5 (17.♙d3 ♙g4∞; 17.♚c2 f5 18.♘xg5 hxg5 19.h6 ♙xe5 20.dxe5 ♔h8) 17...hxg5 18.h6 ♙xe5=.



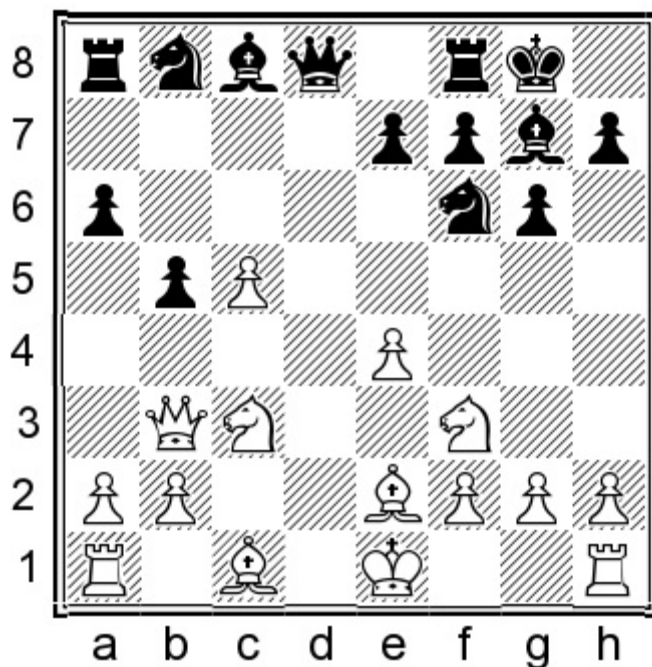
10...fxe6 11.♔e3 ♖f6 is balanced:

12.a4

Or 12.h4 ♗c6 13.0-0-0 ♜b8! (13...♞d6∞) 14.♕b1 b4 15.♘a4 ♗a5 16.♞c2 b3∞, Cardelli-Van Leeuwen, ICCF 2015.

12...bxa4 (or 12...b4!?∞) 13.♞xa4 ♘d5∞.

8...b5 9.♞b3 c5 10.dxc5



10...♔b7

10...♔e6 is simpler for both sides as it does not allow any lines with e4-e5-e6:

11.♞c2 ♗bd7 12.♔e3 ♜c8 13.♞d1 b4 14.♘d5 ♔xd5 15.exd5 ♗xc5 with satisfactory play for Black.

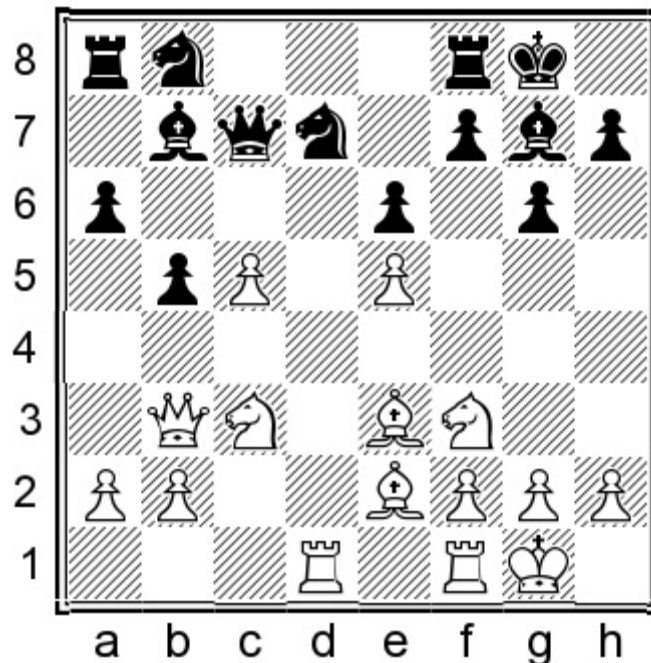
11.e5

11.0-0 ♗xe4 12.♗xe4 ♘xe4 13.♙f4 ♘d5 14.♚e3 ♘xb2 15.♞ad1 e6 16.♗e5 ♗d7 17.♗d3 ♘g7 18.♗b4 ♗f6 19.♘f3 ♞c8 20.c6 ♚a5 has been known since the game Leko-Anand, m Miskolc (5) 2009. White went on to lose after 21.♚c5?. A correspondence game offered an improvement: 21.a3, when 21...♘xf3 22.♚xf3 ♚b6 is about balanced.

11...♗fd7 12.♘e3 e6!

Do not let the white knight to d5!

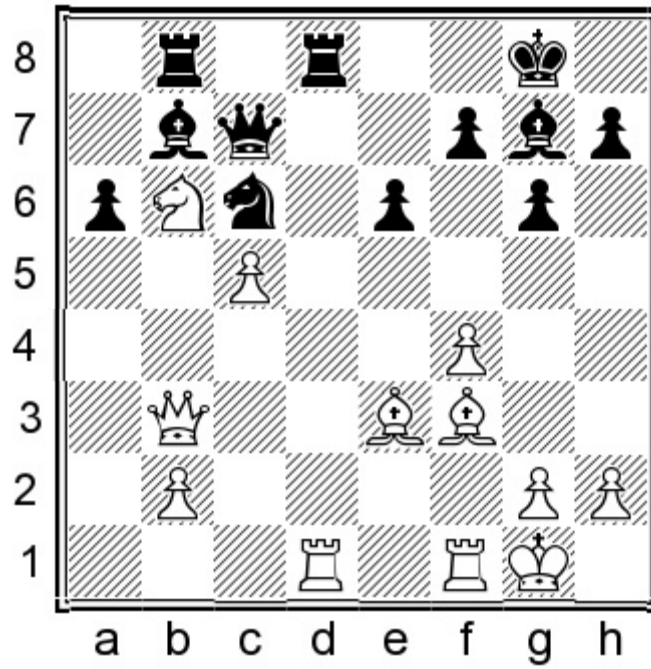
13.0-0 ♚c7 14.♞ad1



This position seems equal after both captures:

14...♗xc5 is the safest approach as it maintains a symmetrical pawn structure – 15.♚a3 ♗cd7 16.♚e7 ♞c8 (16...♚d8 17.♚d6 ♚c8 18.a4 b4= Pannekoek-Pepermans, ICCF 2013) 17.a4 (17.♗g5 ♗f8=) 17...bxa4! 18.♗xa4 h6=.

14...♗xe5!? is more double-edged – 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.f4 ♘g7 17.a4 bxa4 18.♗xa4 ♗c6 19.♘f3 ♞ab8 20.♗b6 ♞fd8



Black's play is based on the somewhat weakened central dark squares. Several games saw 21. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 22. ♘c4 ♙d4 with mutual chances.

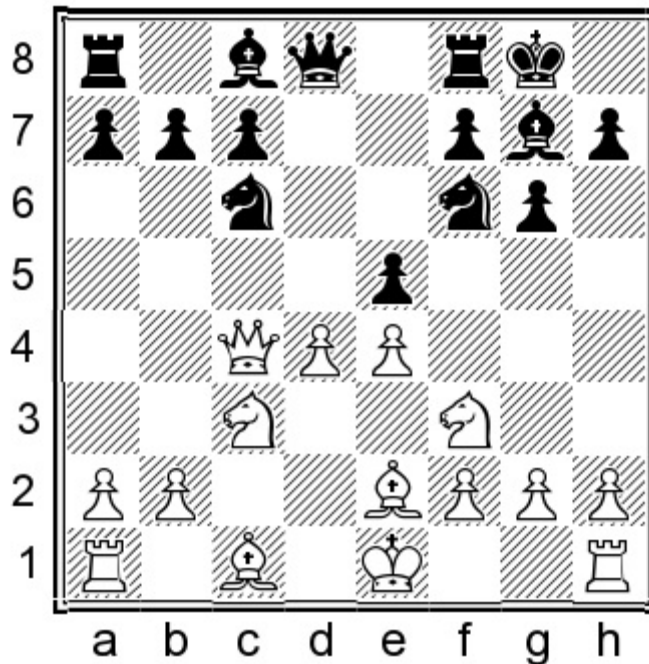
Chapter 5

Complete Games

13. Slawinski-Tomczak

ICCF 2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♕g7 5.♚b3 dxc4 6.♚xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♙e2 e5



This is our backup line. Black sacrifices a couple of pawns to seize the initiative. Since the main lines are rather drawish, White sometimes seeks deviations which turn badly for him. That could explain his bad tournament results.

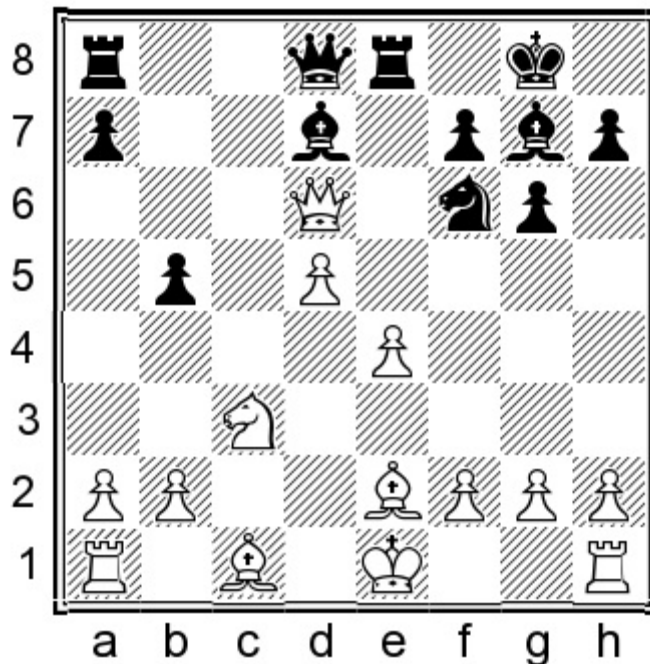
9.d5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♚xd4 c6 12.♚c4!

This strong move was discovered by Uhlman in 1965 and was forgotten until recently. After 12.d6 ♖e8! the overextended pawn is an easy prey. 13.♚d3 b5 14.a3

14.f3 ♖e6 picks up the d6-pawn because 15.♙f4 fails to 15...♘h5.

14...♙e6 15.f3 ♙c4 16.♚d1, Nguyen-Ragunandan, Hanoi 2018, and now 16...♖e6 17.♙xc4 bxc4 18.♚e2 ♖xd6 19.♚xc4 ♘h5 promises Black lasting pressure.

12...b5! 13.♚xc6 ♙d7 14.♚d6 ♖e8



The critical position for 8...e5. White has three defences of e4:

15.♔d3 looks natural as it avoids weakening of the dark squares. Its only drawback is that, in contrast to 15.f3, it leaves g4 unguarded and we could use that to attempt an attack on the dark squares with: 15...♘g4!?

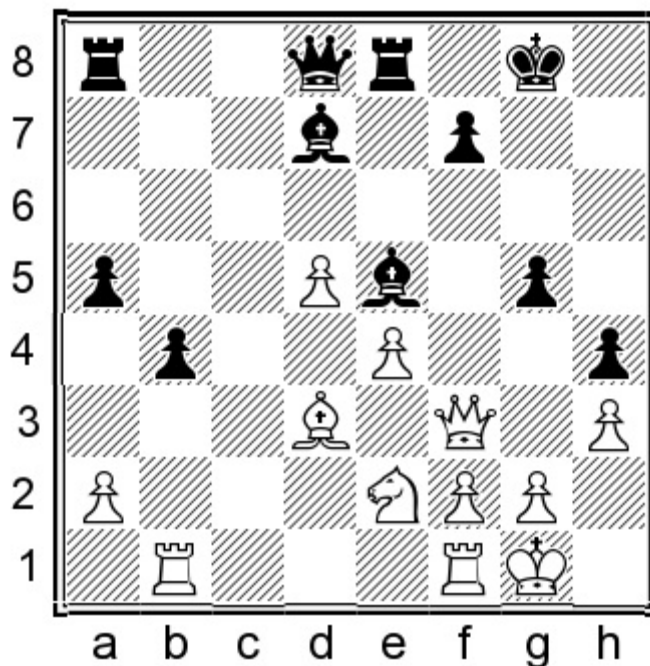
This is more logical than 15...a5 16.f3 b4 17.♘e2, Navara-Vachier-Lagrave, Germany 2018.

16.♚g3 b4 17.♘e2 h5!. Instead of trying to regain the pawns, Black plays for domination.

18.♔f4

Or 18.h4 a5 19.♞b1 ♘e5 (19...f5∞) 20.♔g5 ♚b6 21.0-0 ♘xd3 22.♚xd3 ♔b5 23.♚f3 ♚a6 24.♞fe1 ♔d3 25.♞bd1 ♔xe4∞.

18...h4 19.♚f3 g5 20.h3 ♔xb2 21.♞b1 (21.♞d1 ♘xf2) 21...♘e5 22.♔xe5 ♔xe5 23.0-0 a5



Black's queenside pawns provide full compensation, Dothan-Hebels, ICCF 2014.

15.f3 ♘h5 16.♙e3

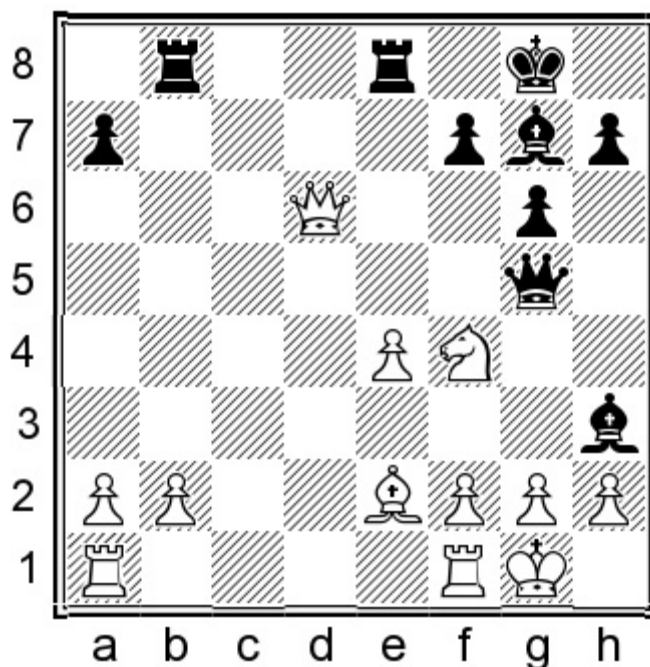
Or 16.g3 f5 17.0-0 ♙e5 18.♚c5 ♜c8 19.♞f2 b4∞.

16...f5! 17.♞d1 (17.0-0 ♙e5 18.♚c5 ♞h4=) 17...fxe4 18.f4 ♞h4+ (18...♞b8 19.0-0 b4∞) 19.♔d2 exposes White's king for just a pawn, but 19.g3?! ♘xg3 20.♙f2 ♘f5 21.♞xd7 ♞h3→ is worse. The third defence is safer:

15.♙g5 b4

Giri-Mamedyarov, Wijk aan Zee 2019 saw 15...♞b8?! and Black easily drew after 16.a3 a5. However, 16.♞f4 b4 17.♘d1 would be more testing.

16.♞xb4 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♞xg5 18.0-0 ♞ab8 19.♞d6 ♙h3 20.♘f4



20...♙g4! 21.♙xg4 ♙e5 22.♞d7 ♞xf4 23.g3 ♞f6 24.♞ad1

24.♞ab1 h5 25.♙e2 ♙d4! was similar, Brasier-Abramov, ICCF 2016.

24...♞ed8 25.♞xa7 ♙d4 26.♞c7 ♞xb2

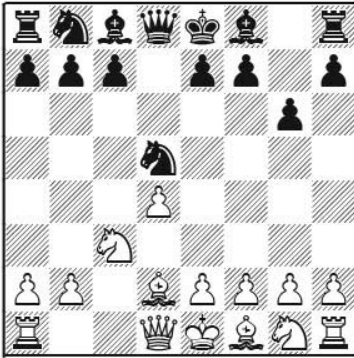
The opposite-coloured bishops attack balances the material deficit, so White takes a course towards a draw. Obviously, 27.♞f4 or 27.♞c4 ♞xf2 do not offer any winning chances.

27.e5 ♙xf2+ 28.♔h1 ♞xd1 29.♙xd1 ♞a6 30.♞d8+ ♔g7 31.♞f6+ ♞xf6 32.exf6+ ♔f8 33.♙b3 ♙d4 34.♞c1 ♙xf6 35.♞c8+ ♔g7 36.♞c7 g5 37.♞xf7+ ♔g6 38.♞c7 ♙d4 39.♞c4 ♙a7 40.♞c2 ½-½

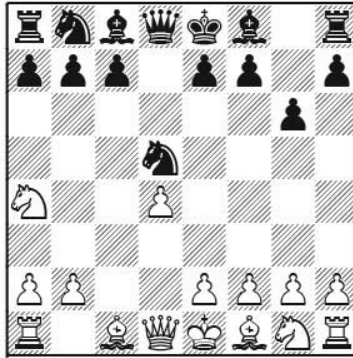
Rare Lines Deviations on move 5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

5.♙d2



5.♘a4



5.♚b3



Main Ideas

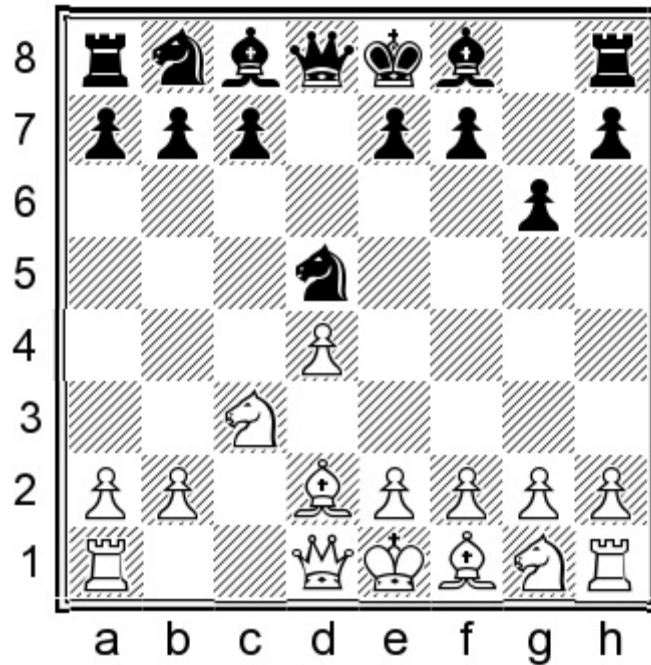
In this chapter I examine rare lines where White takes on d5, but then refrains from immediate e2-e4:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

A. 5.♙d2, B. 5.♘a4, C. 5.♚b3, D. 5.♙g5.

The first three moves contradict the principle of quick development and often lead to a loss of tempi. However, Black should not think that he will automatically obtain some advantage. On the contrary, he still has to play for equalisation first, because White's noncommittal play does not give him many options for a sharp counterattack.

A. 5.♙d2



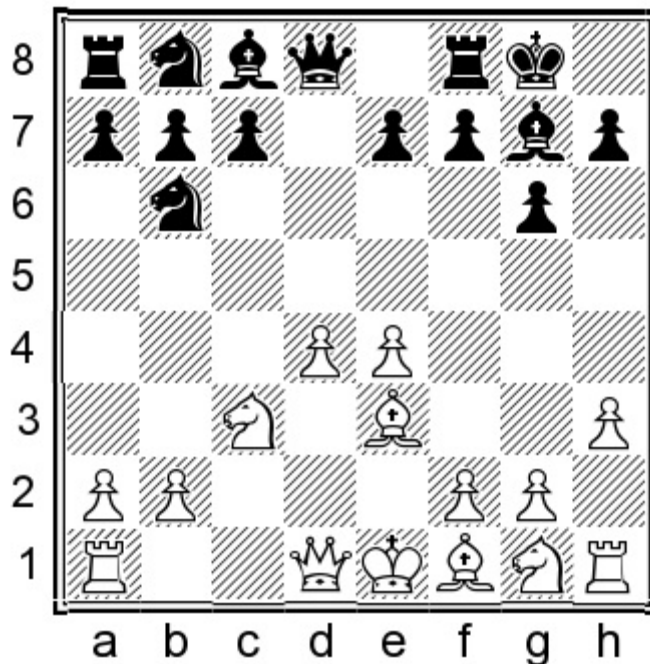
Introduction

This “ugly” move aims to cut across Black’s main plan in the Grünfeld. White will recapture on c3 by piece, thus avoiding the chronic weakness of the c4-square and tactical motifs on the long diagonal. Presumably, breakthroughs like ...c5 and ...e5 become less effective, as well as queenside counterplay in general.

5.♘d2 was the pet line of the great Grünfeld expert Smyslov. In the 80s it was popularised by Moskalenko. In the recent years Dreev and Gleizerov often use it to achieve solid strategic play where positional factors prevail. As a rule, White resorts to 5.♘d2 in order to evade theoretical battles in the main variations.

Objectives and Move Orders

White’s main aim is to build up a strong centre, keeping more minor pieces on board: 5...♘g7 6.e4 ♘b6 7.♘e3 0-0 8.h3!



Avoid this position! White is slightly better after 8...e5 9. Nf3 exd4 10. Qxd4 or 8...Nc6 9. Nf3.

The simplest way to disturb White's plan is to hit d4 immediately:

5...Nc6. Then White should decide what to do with his dark-squared bishop.

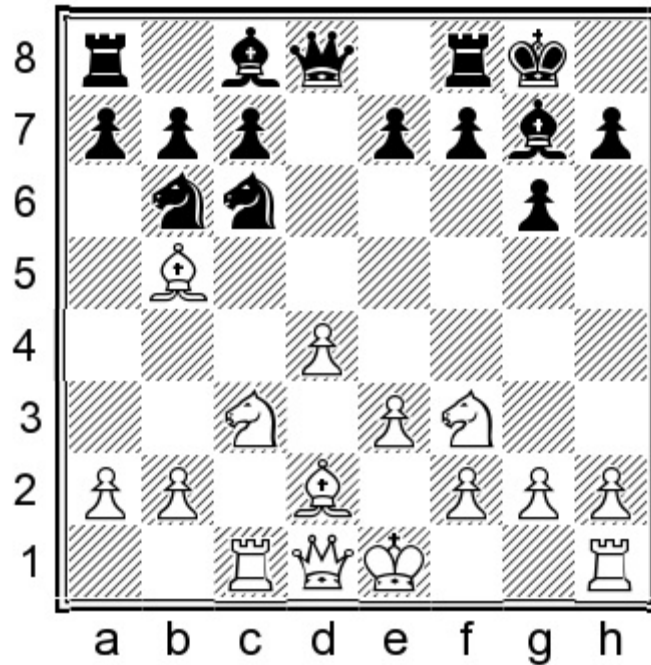
a) He can opt for a quick development with Nf3, e3, leaving the bishop very passive on d2. We meet it by ...Nc6, aiming for ...e7-e5.

b) He can make a second move with the bishop to f4 or g5. This is the more ambitious approach, but we can exploit the loss of tempo by switching to aggressive play with ...c7-c5.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

Marcelin-Sasikiran

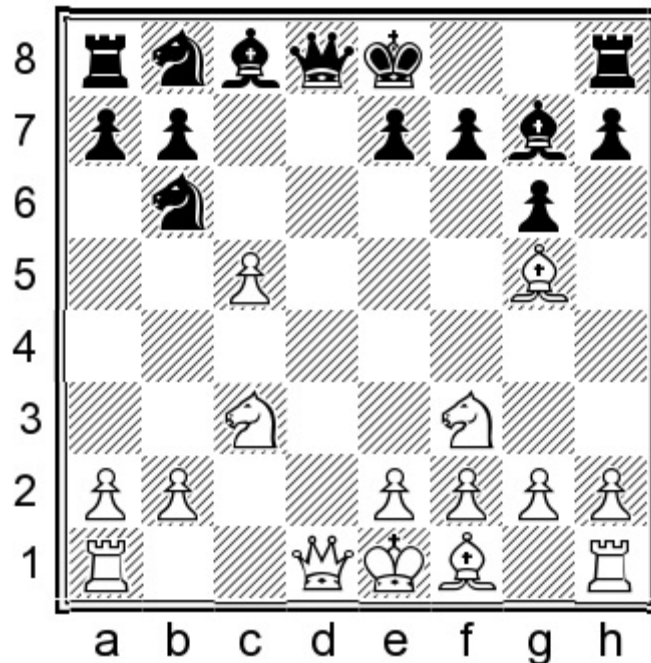
France 2008



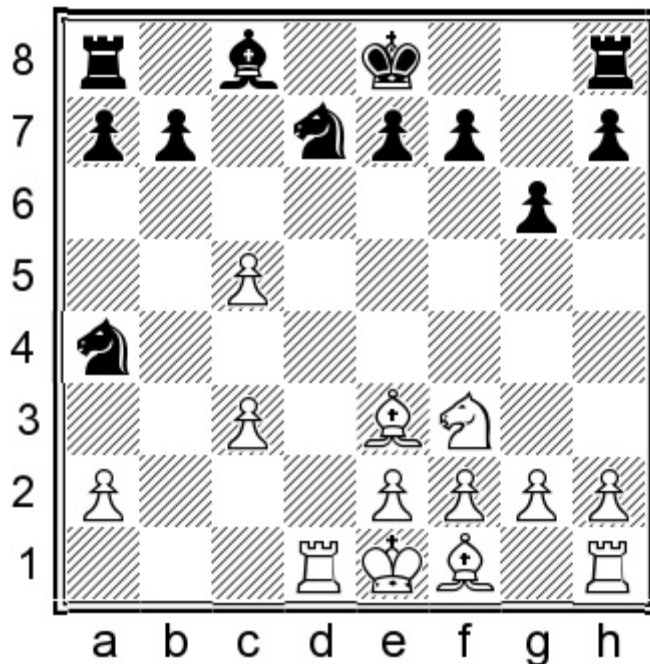
The tactical foundation of Black's plan is the possibility of 9...e5! 10.♙xc6 exd4, so Black is not losing a pawn. The game went on with 11.♘xd4 bxc6 12.♗ce2 ♚d5 13.0-0 c5. Black has the more active pieces.

After 6.♙g5 ♙g7 7.♗f3 c5! 8.dxc5 we reach the following extremely important position:

Oleksienko-L'Ami
Rijeka 2010



Now Black executes his main positional motif in the ♙d2-system:
8...♙xc3+! 9.bxc3 ♚xd1+ 10.♖xd1 ♘a4 11.♙e3 ♗d7

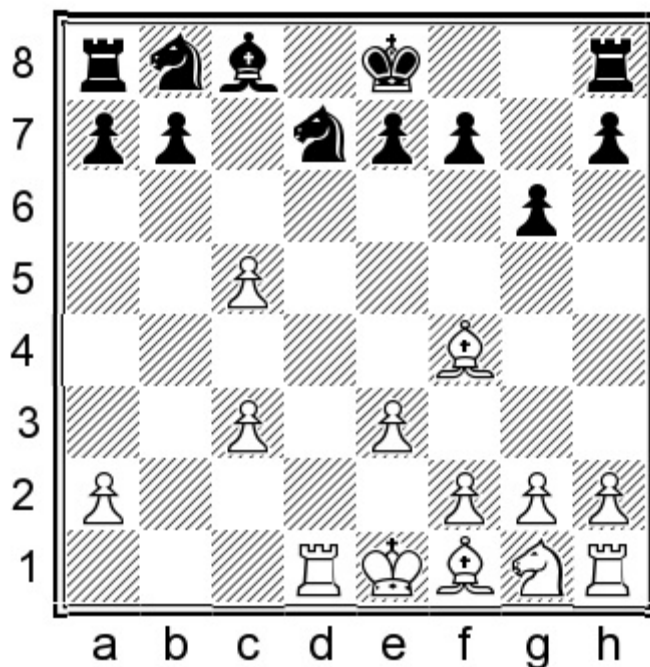


We'll be meeting this pawn structure time and again in various settings. Perhaps you should remember that Black is OK if he has not castled yet. The point is that he should play sooner or later ...f6 and it is important that White's retort ♕h6 would be without a tempo.

In our example play continued with 12.g3 (12.h4 f6!) 12...♖dxc5 13.♗d4 ♕d7 14.♕g2 ♜c8 15.♞c1 e5 16.♗b3 b6 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♕h6 ♜g8 19.♕g5 ♕e6 20.0-0 ♗d7 21.a4 f6 22.♕e3 ♗c5.

The same idea also works with a white bishop on f4: 6.♕f4 ♕g7 7.♗f3 c5! 8.dxc5 ♕xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♜xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♗a4 11.e3 (11.♕e3 f6! 12.g3 ♗xc3) 11...♗xc5.

Even after 6.♕f4 ♕g7 7.e3 we can play 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♕xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♜xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♗6d7, although it is a pawn sacrifice:

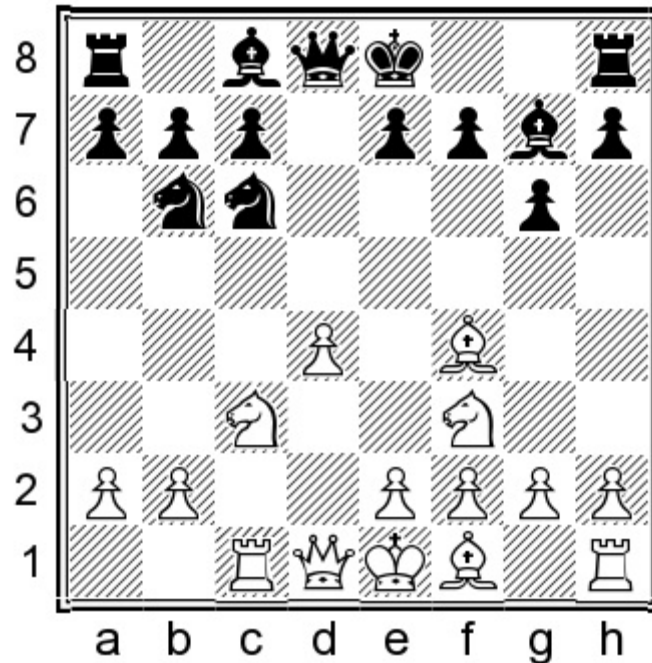


11.♕xb8 ♞xb8 12.♕b5 e6 13.♗f3 ♕e7 14.♕xd7 ♕xd7 15.♗e5=.

Typical Tactical Motifs

De Jong-Sasikiran

Kemer 2007



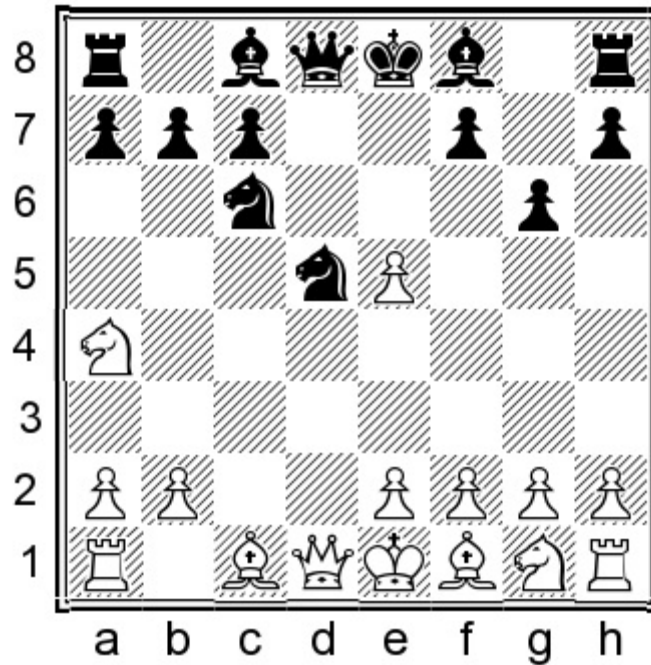
In this example White mixed up the move order. He firstly played ♞c1 in order to discourage $\dots\text{c5}$. His last move was $8.\text{♕f4}$, hoping to transpose to the main line with $8\dots\text{0-0}$ $9.\text{e3}$. However, Black has the fork:

$8\dots\text{♜xd4!}$ $9.\text{♞xd4 e5!}$ $10.\text{♞cb5 0-0}$ $11.\text{♕g3 c6!}$ with the better piece play.

B. $5.\text{♞a4}$

This strange move had been the favourite weapon of GM Lysyj until 2011, and recently GM Xiong tried to revive it. Its main idea is the same as in the ♕d2 -system – to take over the centre by e2-e4 without having to recapture on c3 by pawn. However, its drawbacks overweigh any positive sides it may have.

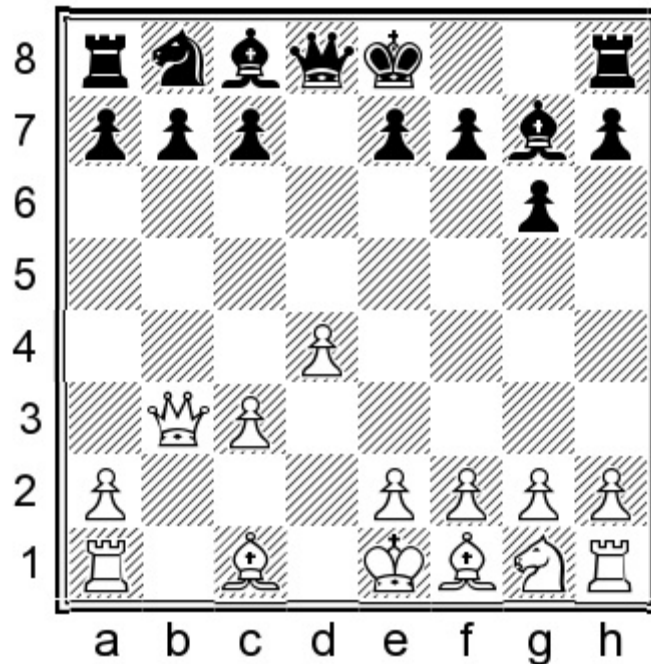
The simplest solution is $5\dots\text{e5}$ $6.\text{dxe5 ♞c6}$, threatening $\dots\text{♕b4+}$.



This break ...e5 would have been impossible if White chose the move order 4. ♖f3 ♜g7 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6. ♘a4. In that event we could cut across White's plan with 6...♙f5!?

7. ♘h4 ♙d7 8.e4 e5.

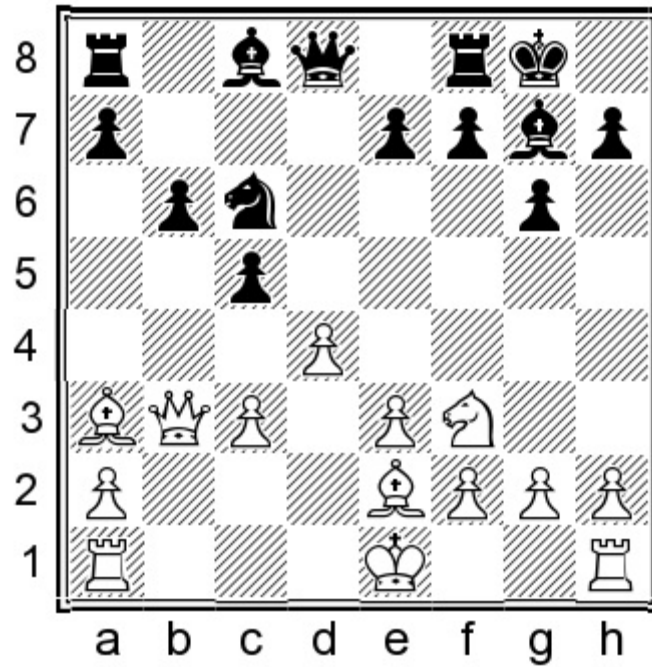
C. 5. ♙b3 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7



Objectives and Move Orders

I'm not too sure what exactly White wanted to achieve with his fifth move, except for deviating from the main lines. If he aimed to restrain Black's counterplay with 7. ♙a3?!, he evidently missed the goal since we'll play ...b6!, and ...c5 will be on the agenda again, while the bishop will be a ridiculous sight

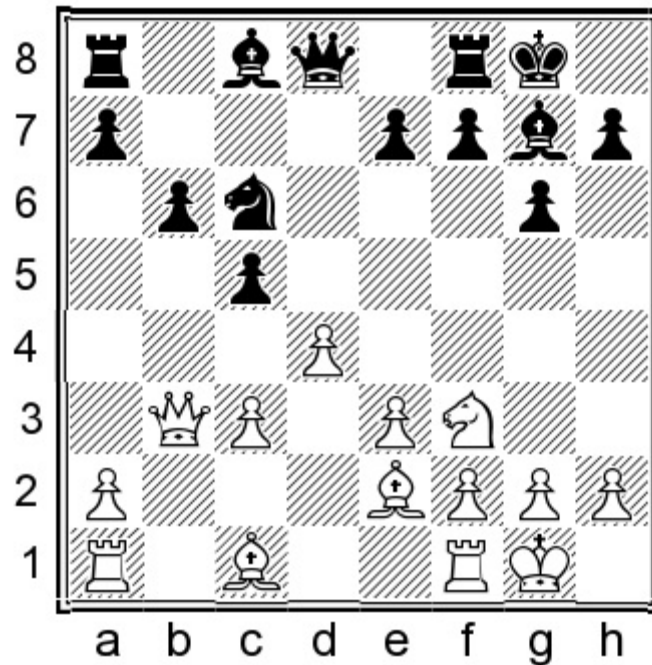
on a3: 7...0-0 8.♘f3 (8.e4 b6!) 8...b6! 9.e3 c5 10.♗e2 ♘c6!



The knight is heading for a5, the light-squared bishop takes the other main diagonal, and Black obtains a good game.

7.♘f3 0-0 8.e3 c5 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.0-0 b6!

Black has comfortable development.

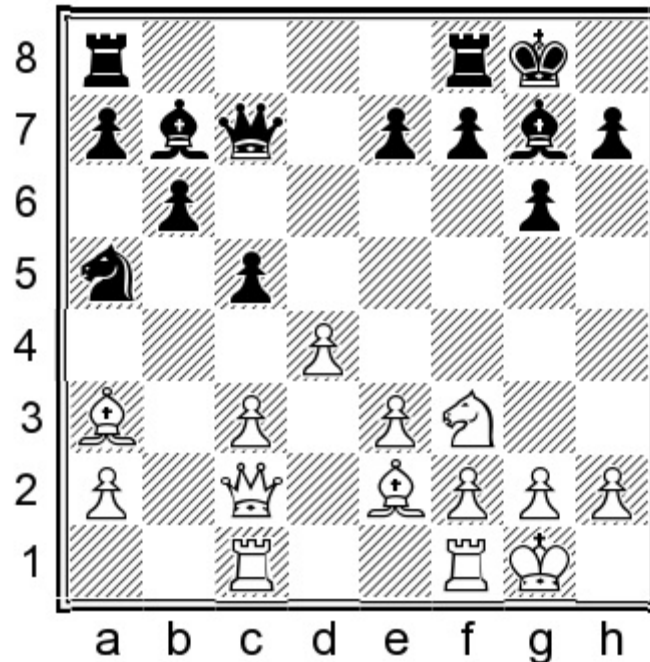


We have reach a position similar to the previous diagram. Black has nice play on the queenside.

Basic Plans and Pawn Structures

When White plays ♔a3 early, he is likely to reach the following position:

Smejkal-Ribli
Budapest 1975

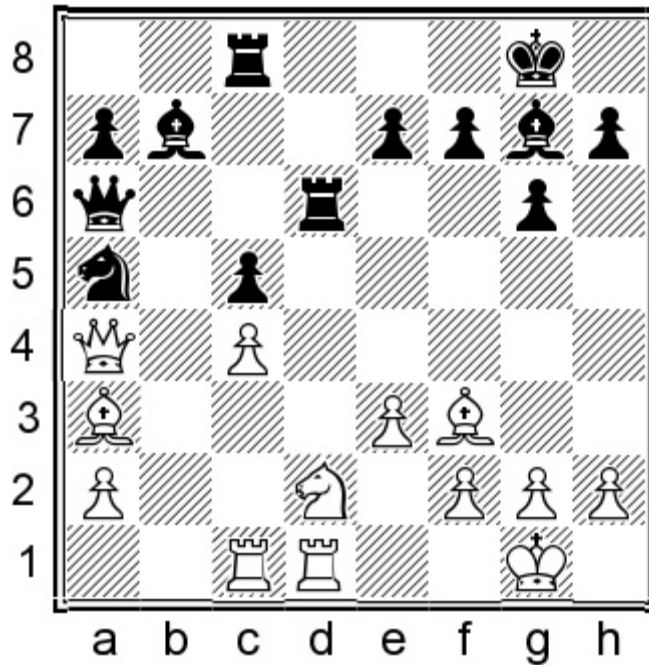


It is difficult to find an active plan here. White would like to advance in the centre, but 14.♖fd1 would be met by 14...♗fd8 and d5 would be still impossible. So Smejkal opts for a symmetrical structure with: 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.c4 ♖fd8 16.♖fd1 ♗ac8.

The position is roughly equal, but White should not forget that his bishop is misplaced at a3. It would be wise to exchange it with 17.♔b2!? ♔xb2 18.♙xb2 ♔xf3! 19.♔xf3 ♖xd1+ 20.♔xd1, but White stubbornly tried to justify his previous play and embarked on a wrong plan:

17.♘d2?! ♙c6 18.♔f3 ♙a6 19.♙a4 ♖d6!

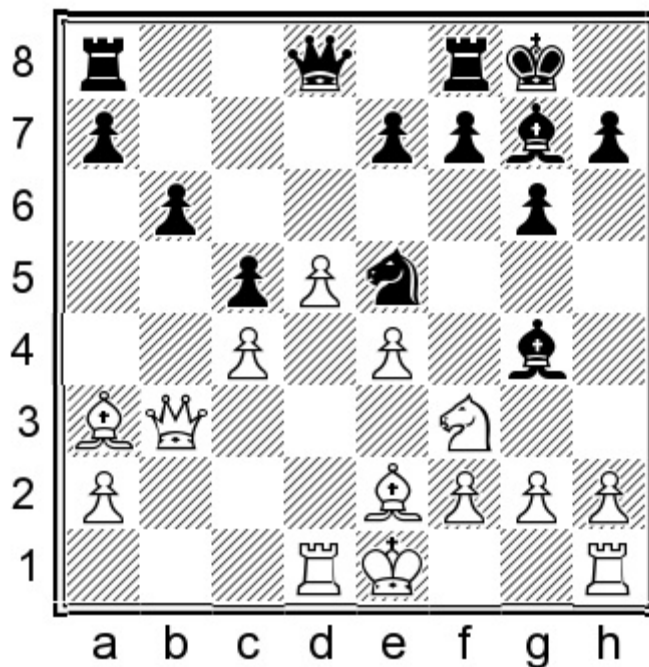
It turns out that the a3-bishop is much more shaky than the c5-pawn. White went on to lose quickly:



20. ♖e4?! ♜xd1+ 21. ♜xd1 ♘c6 22. ♛c2 ♘xc4 23. ♙e2 ♘xa3 24. ♙xa6 ♘xc2 25. ♙xc8 ♙xe4+.

White can also combine the early ♙a3 with an expansion in the centre with e4, followed by d5:

Example



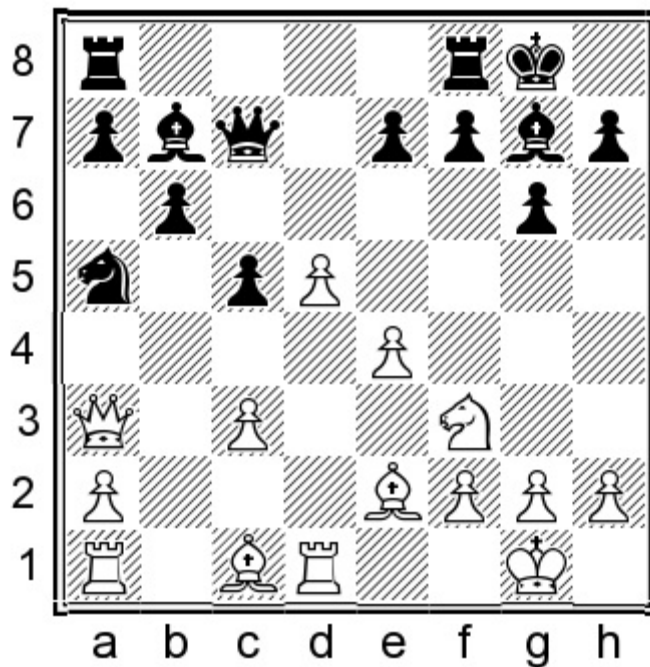
Black commonly attacks White's centre with 13...f5!.

This move is good here because White is behind in development. He has not castled yet and that tells in a number of variations:

14. ♘xe5 ♙xe2 15. ♜d2 ♙xe5 16. ♜xe2 when Black can choose between the blocking 16...f4 17. ♙b2 ♛c7 18.f3 ♙d4! or the simplifying 16...♛d6 17.exf5 ♜xf5 18. ♙b2 ♜af8 19.h3 ♙xb2 20. ♛xb2 e6!?

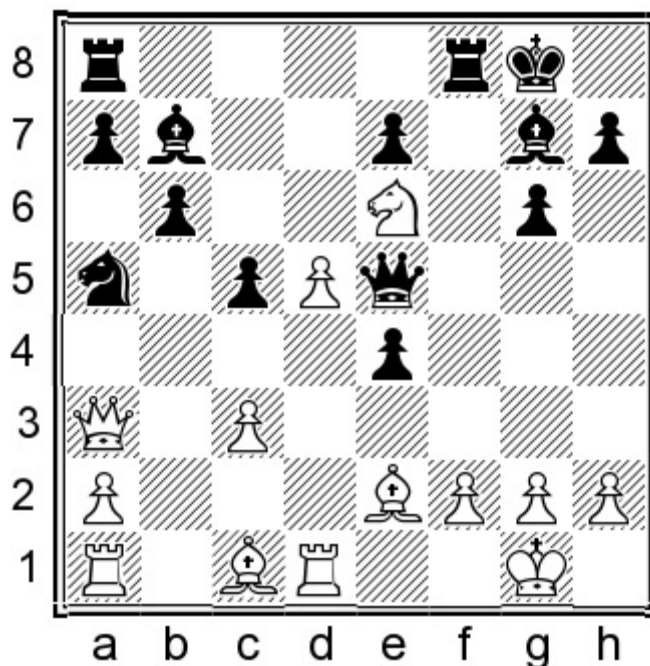
21.♞xe6 (21.dxe6 ♞e8) 21...♞f4 22.0-0 ♞xc4=.

Example



Here the bishop is on c1, but again, Black is ahead in development. That allows him to destroy the enemy centre by 14...e6!? or follow the previous example:

14...f5!? 15.♘g5 ♞e5 16.♘e6 fxe4!?



Grabbing a pawn with 16...♞xc3 17.♘g7 ♞xa3 18.♙xa3 ♔xg7 would offer White some compensation while the text gives Black firm control over the centre after:

17.♘xf8 ♞xf8 18.♙e3 ♙xd5 19.♞ac1 ♞e6 20.♞d2 ♞f7.

D. 5.♔g5

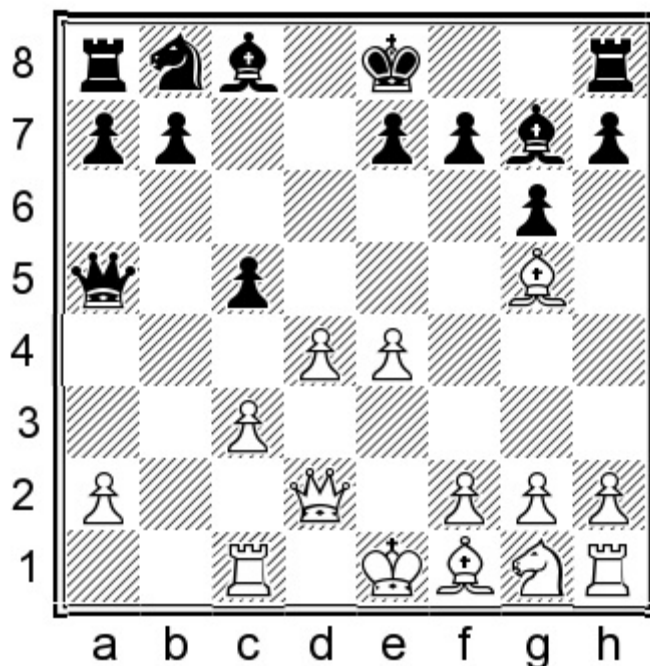
Nakamura drew attention to this system by using it many times against Vachier-Lagrave in a blitz match in 2018. It turned out that it hides a lot of venom. On the other hand, it leads to double-edged play with mutual chances, so we should not complain:

5...♔g7 6.e4

6.♘f3 c5 7.♖c1 h6 8.♙h4 ♘c6!

6...♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.♖c1 ♚a5 9.♚d2

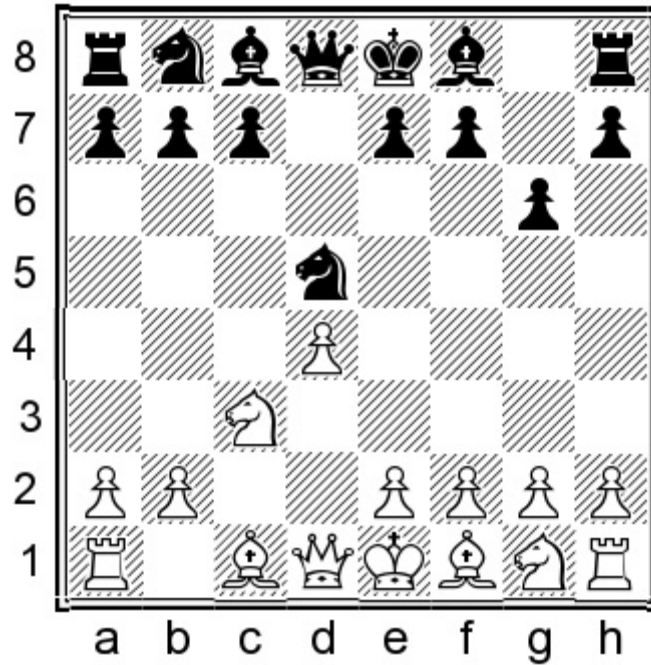
I analyse this line in Chapter 11, via a different move order.



If you want to bypass all the theory, you can play here 9...f5!? 10.exf5 ♔xf5 11.♘f3 ♘c6 with lively play in the centre. A more provocative approach is 9...0-0 10.♘f3 (10.d5 e6!) 10...♔g4 11.d5 e6 12.c4 ♚a3, followed up by ...♘a6-♘b4. We can expect new theoretical duels in this system.

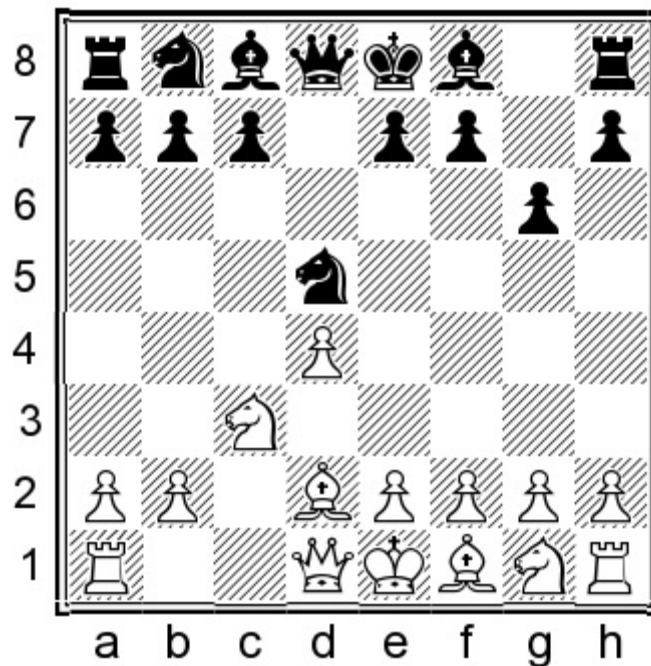
Chapter 6 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5



A. 5.♗d2; B. 5.♗a4; C. 5.♙b3; D. 5.♗g5!?

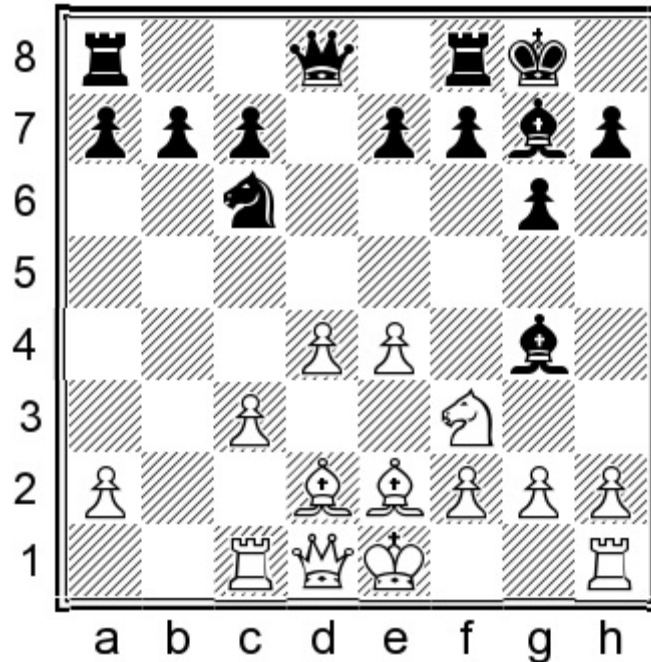
A. 5.♗d2



The other move order 4.♗f3 ♗g7 5.cxd5 ♗d5 6.♗d2 offers us an additional plan – to pin the f3-knight

with:

6...0-0 7.e4 ♖xc3 8.♙xc3 ♙g4. Another option is 7.♞c1 ♗c6! 8.e4 (8.e3 ♗b6! 9.♙b5 e5 10.♙xc6 exd4! or 8...e5 9.♗xd5 ♞xd5 10.♙c4 ♞e4! 11.d5 ♗d4) 8...♗xc3, when in Naumkin-Delchev, Cappele la Grande 2011, my opponent surprised me with 9.bxc3!?. I followed the general plan with 9...♙g4! 10.♙e2



10...♙xf3! 11.♙xf3 e5 12.d5 ♗e7! 13.c4 c5 and quickly equalised: 14.♞b3 ♞c7 15.0-0 ♗c8 16.a4 ♗d6=. Black has achieved the perfect blockade – a strong knight on d6 and a very passive white bishop on f3. I cannot speak of a Black's advantage though since White has no weaknesses and his pawn centre should serve as a sufficient protection against active attempts from Black.

Still, the simplest retort to White's move order is:

6...c5! 7.♞c1 ♗xc3 8.♙xc3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 0-0 10.e3 e5, and White has scored only 33% from here!

5...♗b6

Underlining the downside of White's last move. The d4-pawn is hanging so White should either lose a tempo on a second move with the bishop or allow the pin on the f3-knight. Practice has seen Black also equalising after:

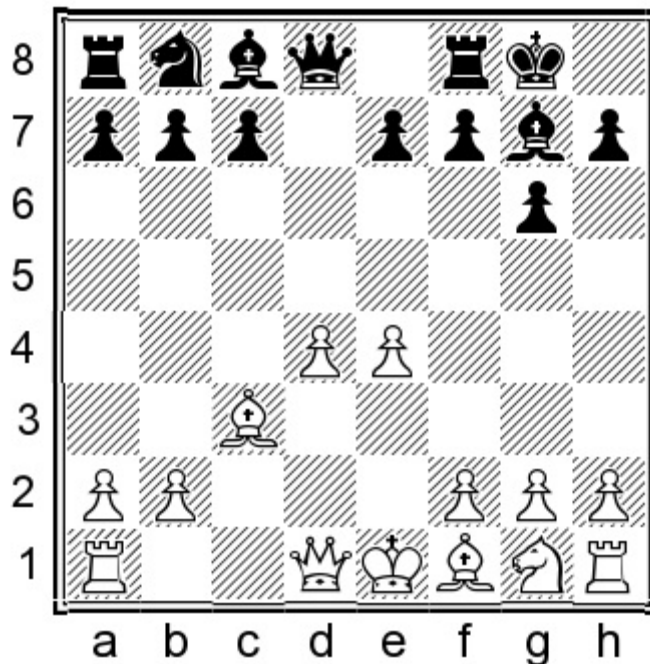
5...♙g7 6.e4 (6.♗f3 c5!) 6...♗xc3

6...♗b6 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♙b5 ♙e6 9.♗f3 is more complicated.

a) 9...♗c4 10.♙xc4 ♙xc4 11.♞a4 ♙a6 12.h4 promises White an initiative. Korobov-Maghsoodloo, Moscow 2018, went 12...h6 13.h5 g5 14.♗xg5, when Flear's suggestion 14...b5 might not be enough after 15.♞b4 ♗c6 16.♞c5.

b) 9...♙g4 might be stronger. 10.e5 ♗d5 11.h3 ♗xe3 12.fx3 ♙e6 holds well in email chess, so the trend is to play 10.a4 and White won both 2019 games.

7.♙xc3 0-0



White has a wide choice here:

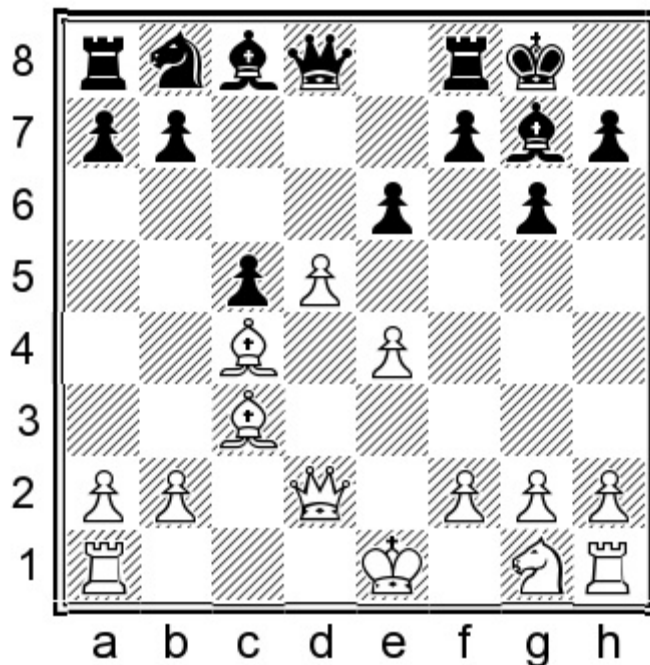
a) 8. ♖d2 c5

8... ♘c6!? 9. ♘f3 ♙g4 10. d5 ♙xf3 11. ♙xg7 ♚xg7 12. gxf3 ♘e5 13. 0-0-0 came to the fore after the world title match Anand-Carlsen, Sochi 2014. It is playable, but certainly risky for Black who should be very precise in his defence.

9. d5 e6

9... ♙xc3 10. bxc3 ♖d6! is also good. 11. f4 (11. ♘f3 ♙g4) 11... e6 12. ♙c4 exd5 was drawn in a game between engines. Dominguez found a more enterprising option – 12... b5!? 13. ♙xb5 exd5 with full compensation for the pawn.

10. ♙c4



10...♙xc3 11.bxc3 exd5 12.♙xd5 ♖d7 13.♗f3 ♗f6 14.0-0 ♙g4 15.♗g5 ♚d7 16.h3 ♙e6 17.c4 ♙xd5 18.exd5 b5 19.d6 bxc4 with even chances, as two correspondence games have shown.

b) 8.♖c1 c5 9.d5 ♙xc3+ 10.♖xc3 e6 obtains counterplay – 11.♙c4 exd5 12.♙xd5 ♗d7 13.♗e2 ♗f6 14.0-0 ♗xd5 15.exd5 b6=.

c) 8.♗f3 ♙g4 9.♙e2 c5 10.d5 ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♙xf3! 12.♙xf3 ♗d7 13.0-0 ♚c7 14.c4 ♖ad8 15.♚b3 e5=. The dark-squared strategy could be completed with the blockading manoeuvre ♗d7-f6-e8-d6.

d) 8.h4!? c5 9.d5 e6 is double-edged.

In practice White has tried to keep the centre closed with 10.d6?!, but 10...e5! gave Black an edge in Auzins-Weissleder, ICCF 2014. Perhaps he should test:

10.♙xg7 ♗xg7 11.♚d2 exd5 12.exd5 ♖e8+ 13.♗e2 h5.

e) 8.♙c4 c5 9.d5 ♙xc3+

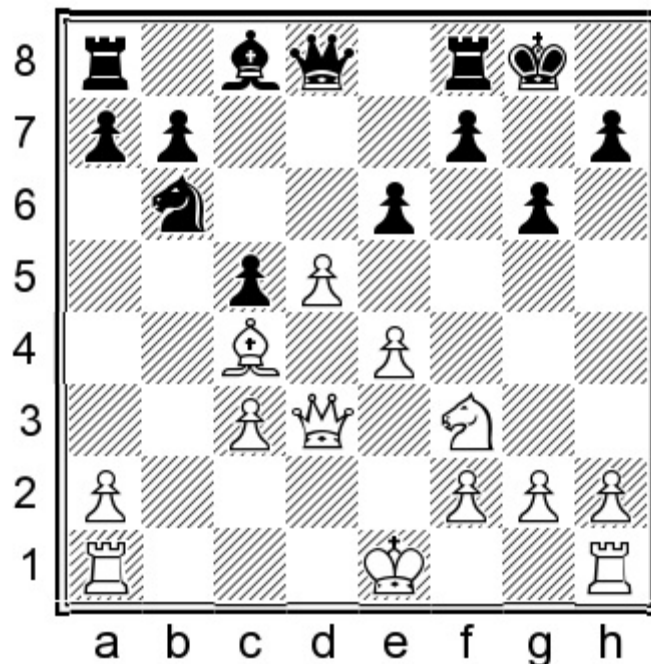
9...♗d7!?, intending 10.♗e2 ♗e5 11.♙b3 b5 is fine, too.

10.bxc3 ♗d7

Or 10...♚d6, taking control of e5 and threatening to counterattack with ...f7-f5 – 11.♗e2 ♗d7

12.♙b3 b5 13.0-0 a5 14.c4 bxc4=.

11.♗f3 (11.♗e2 f5) 11...♗b6 12.♚d3



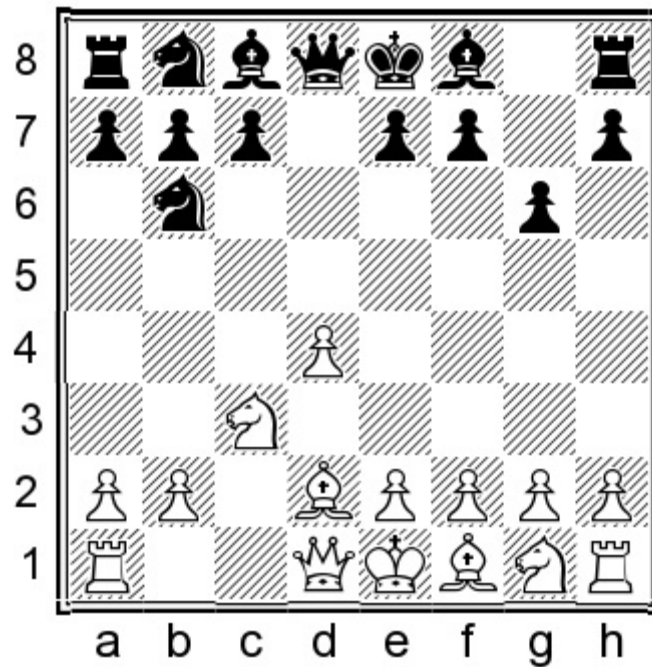
12...e6!. This break gives Black a comfortable stand on f5 for the bishop.

13.0-0 exd5 14.♙xd5 ♗xd5 15.♖ad1 (15.exd5 ♙f5 16.♚d2 ♙e4) 15...♙f5 16.exf5 ♗f6=, Mirkowski-Tomczak, ICCF 2018.

Conclusion:

5...♙g7 is a reliable option.

Let us return now to the main line.



A1. 6. ♘f3, A2. 6. ♖g5, A3. 6. ♖f4, A4. 6.e3

A1. 6. ♘f3 ♖g7 7. ♚c1!?

If White boxes in his bishop with 7.e3, we should aim at achieving ...e5, for instance: 7...0-0 8. ♖e2 ♘c6 9.0-0 e5=.

7. ♖g5 is considered in line A2.

7. ♖f4 0-0 8.e3 c5 – see line A3.

7.e4 deserves attention. Accepting the sacrifice by:

7... ♖xd4 8. ♘xd4 ♚xd4 is unclear: 9. ♚c2 c6 10. ♖h6 ♖e6 11. ♖d1 ♚e5 12.f4 ♚a5 (12... ♚c5 13. ♘d5) 13. ♖e2 ♘8d7 14.0-0 0-0-0, so I prefer:

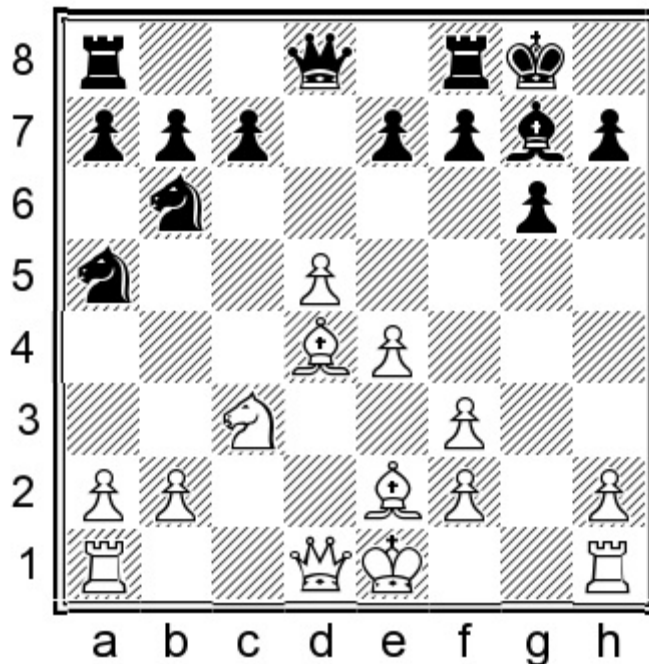
7...0-0 8. ♖e3

Following 8.h3, we could already eat the pawn, 8... ♖xd4 9. ♘xd4 ♚xd4 for instance: 10. ♖h6 ♖d8 11. ♚xd4 ♖xd4 12. ♖e3 ♖d8 13. ♘b5 ♘a6 or 10. ♚c2 ♚e5 11. ♘b5 ♘a6 12. ♖c3 ♚f4.

8... ♖g4 9. ♖e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♖xf3 11.gxf3

Or 11. ♖xf3 ♘e5 12. ♖e2 ♘ec4 13. ♖c1 c6.

11... ♘a5 (11... ♘e5 12. ♚b3±) 12. ♖d4



12...♖d6! 13.♗xg7

13.f4 ♗xd4 14.♖xd4 e6=.

13...♔xg7 14.♖d2 (14.♖c1 c6) 14...♖f6! 15.b3 (15.f4 c6! gives Black an initiative.) 15...e6!. This novelty assures Black of a good game. I have analysed:

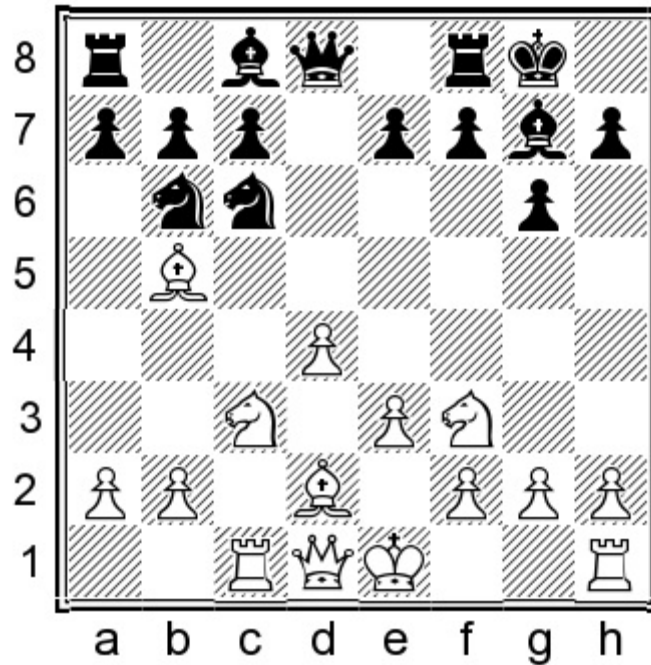
16.♖d1 (16.0-0-0 ♖ad8 17.♔b1 ♖c6) 16...♖ad8 17.0-0 (17.♖c1 exd5 18.exd5 c6) 17...♖c6 (or 17...exd5 18.exd5 ♖c6 19.♖e4 ♖e5) 18.f4.

Black has now several good options, as 18...♖e7 19.♗f3 exd5 (19...e5 20.♖e2 c6 21.♖c3 exf4 22.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 23.dxc6 ♖xc6=) 20.exd5 ♖h4 21.♖fe1 ♖f5 or 18...exd5 19.exd5 ♖e7 20.♗f3 (20.♖e4 ♖f5) 20...♖h4.

7.♖c1 anticipates the thematic break ...c5, but Black obtains enough play after 7...♖c6 8.e3

8.♗f4 ♖xd4 9.♖xd4 e5 10.♖cb5 passes the initiative to Black after 10...0-0 11.♗g3 c6!, De Jong-Sasikiran, Kemer 2007.

8...0-0 (or 8...e5 9.♗b5 0-0!) 9.♗b5. White has prevented ...c5, now he tries to discourage the other breakthrough in the centre. But it is nevertheless possible:

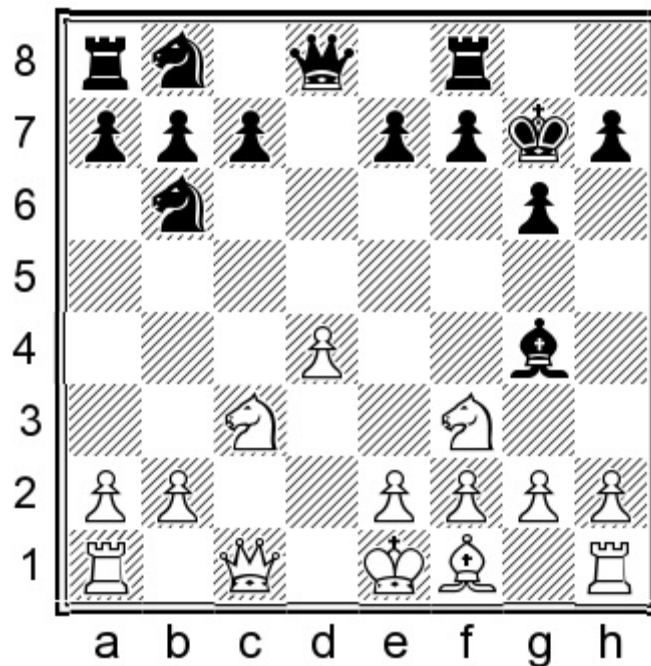


9...e5! 10.♗xc6 exd4 11.exd4

11.♘xd4 bxc6 12.♘ce2 ♖d5 13.0-0 c5 14.♘f4 ♗d6 15.♘b5 ♗e7! with active pieces.

11...bxc6 12.0-0 ♗g4=.

7...♗g4 8.♗h6 0-0 9.♗xg7 ♖xg7



10.♗f4

10.e3 ♘8d7 11.♗e2 ♗xf3 12.♗f3 e5 13.♗d2 is balanced – 13...c5 (13...c6 is more risky in view of 14.h4) 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♗e2 ♗xd2+ 16.♖xd2 f5 17.♖hd1 f4=.

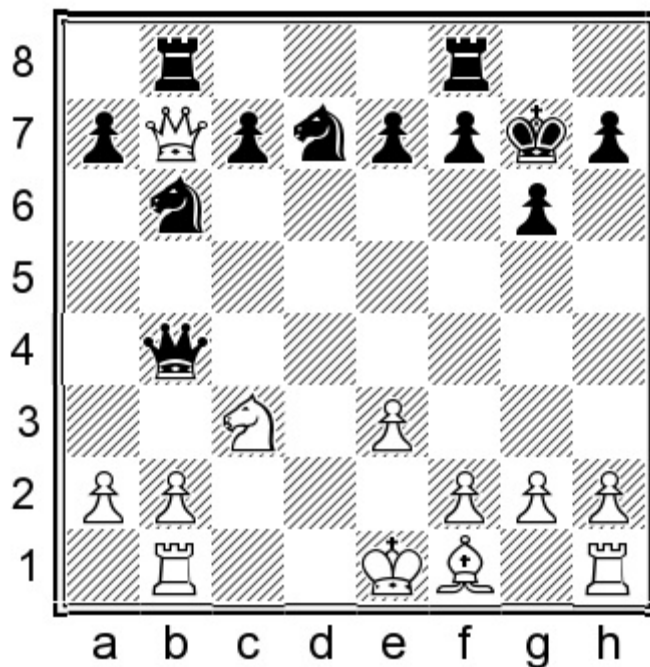
10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3

11.gxf3 ♔d6!? 12.♕xd6 cxd6 13.e3 ♘c6 was very comfortable for Black, Khenkin-Leko, Dortmund 2013.

11...♕xd4!

Khusnutdinov did not take the pawn against Ivan Sokolov, but his choice 11...♘c6 12.e3 e5 13.dxe5 ♘d7?! is dubious owing to 14.♕h3.

12.♕xb7 ♘8d7 13.e3 ♕b4 14.♖b1 ♖ab8

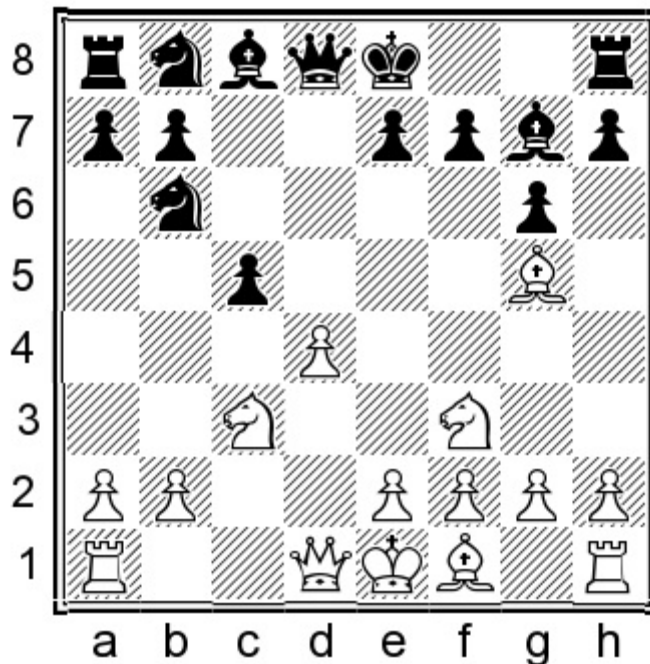


Black has an initiative. The game Texel 1.05-NirvanaChess 2.2, 2013, went 15.♕xa7 ♘d5 16.a3 ♕xc3+! 17.bxc3 ♖xb1+ 18.♔e2 ♘xc3+ 19.♔f3 ♘e5+ with a winning attack.

A2. 6.♙g5 ♙g7 7.♘f3

Delaying development is dangerous – 7.e3 allows 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕xd1+ 10.♖xd1 ♘6d7 11.♙b5 ♘c6. In this typical position Black has good counterplay due to the crippled white queenside pawns. The tactical background of this idea is seen in the variation 12.♖d5 f6 13.♙f4 e6 14.♖d6 ♘xc5! 15.♖xc6 bxc6 16.♙xc6+ ♔f7 17.♙xa8 ♘d3+ 18.♔e2 ♙a6 and White should think about salvation.

7...c5!



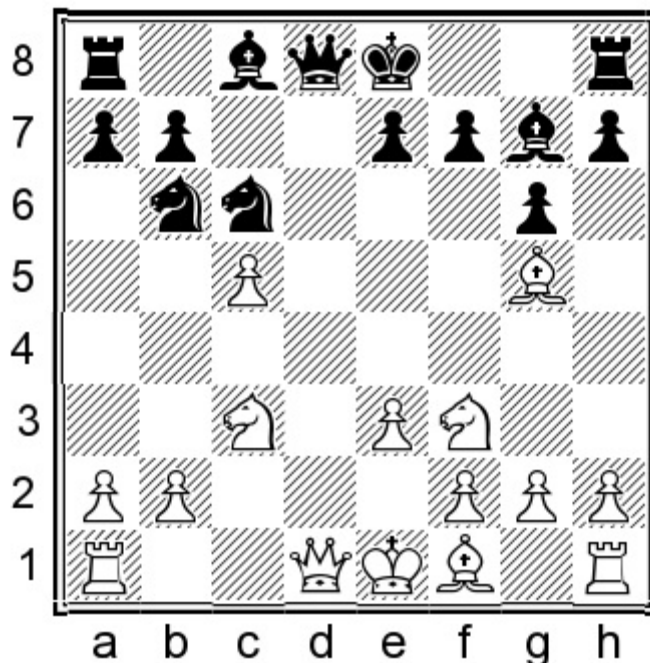
8.dxc5

Karpov chose against Shirov the solid 8.e3.

Then 8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♕d7 10.♙e2 ♘c6 11.♘b3 ♘e5 12.0-0 was agreed drawn, Vaissier-Krasenkow, Mulhouse 2011. More testing is:

8...♘c6!? 9.dxc5

9.♙b5 ♙g4 10.dxc5 could be met by the same idea as in the previous note: 10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♜xd1+ 12.♞xd1 ♘d7 13.h3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♘xc5 15.e4 ♞c8 16.♙e3 a6!, and again, White does not have even a trace of an edge.



9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♜xd1+ 11.♞xd1 ♘a4 12.♙h6

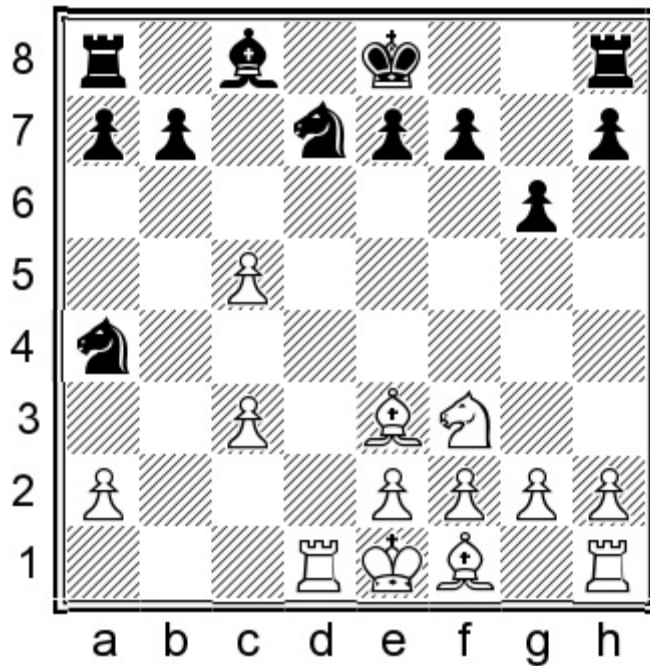
Or 12.♞c1 ♘xc5 13.♙b5 ♕d7 14.0-0 f6 15.♙h4 ♘e5! 16.♙e2 ♘xf3+ 17.♙xf3 ♞c8, with a clear

edge, Paprocki-Vovk, Warsaw 2008.

12...f6!=. The point is that 13.♙c4 fails to 13...♘b2 14.♙g7 ♘xc4 15.♙xh8 ♔f7.

8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♚xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♜a4 11.♙e3 (11.♙h6 f6) 11...♘d7

Fridman-Bok, Rosmalen 2014, saw 11...f6!? 12.♘d4?!, when 12...♘xc3 would favour Black.



Black is one step away from restoring the material balance. Then he can start molesting White's weak pawns. The game Oleksienko-L'Ami, Rijeka 2010, continued:

12.g3 (12.h4 f6!) 12...♘dxc5 13.♘d4 ♙d7 14.♙g2 ♞c8 15.♞c1 e5 16.♘b3 b6 17.♘xc5 ♘xc5 18.♙h6 ♞g8 19.♙g5 ♙e6 20.0-0 ♘d7 21.a4 f6 22.♙e3 ♘c5.

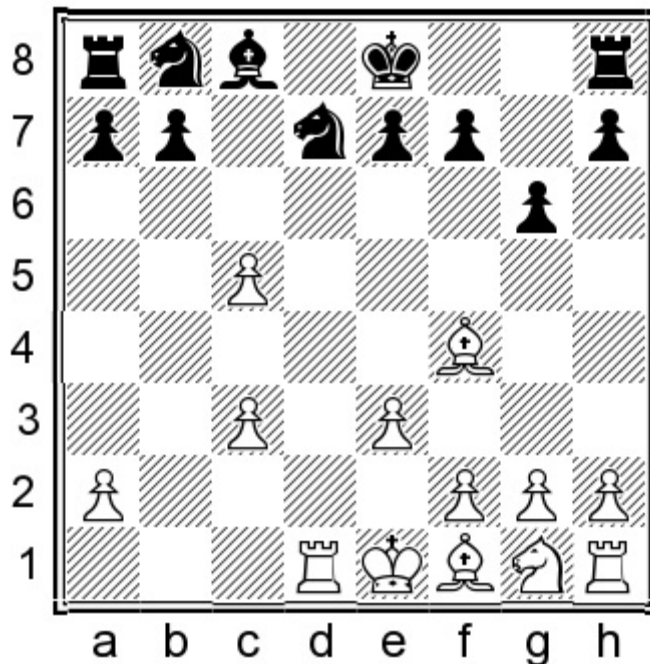
A3. 6.♙f4 ♙g7 7.e3

We could routinely meet 7.♘f3 by 7...c5 (7...0-0 8.e3 c5 transposes) 8.dxc5 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♚xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♜a4, for instance, 11.g3 f6 12.♙g2 ♘xc3=.

7...c5!?

I offer the immediate break as a main line mostly to be consistent with the recommendation against 7.♘f3. Another positive feature is that it is a decent way to avoid the long draw variation which may arise after the more popular 7...0-0 8.♘f3 c5 – see **game 14** Dreev-Karavade, Reykjavik 2010.

8.dxc5 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♚xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♘6d7



11. ♖xb8

11. ♖b5 a6 12. ♖a4 ♘c6 13. ♖c7 0-0 14. ♖b6 ♘ce5. The c4-square is as weak as ever, and White lacks targets. Now 15. ♗d4 ♘xb6 16. cxb6 ♖e6= would give Black easy play on the c-file, so in the game M. Muzychuk-Bok, Wijk aan Zee 2010, White preferred 15. ♘f3 ♘xb6 16. cxb6 ♘c4 17. ♗b1 ♖f5 18. ♗b4 ♗fc8 19. ♖b3 ♘d6. Black is in command.

11. h4!? is not dangerous without queens. Black could meet it by 11...h5 or 11...♘xc5 12. h5 ♗g8.

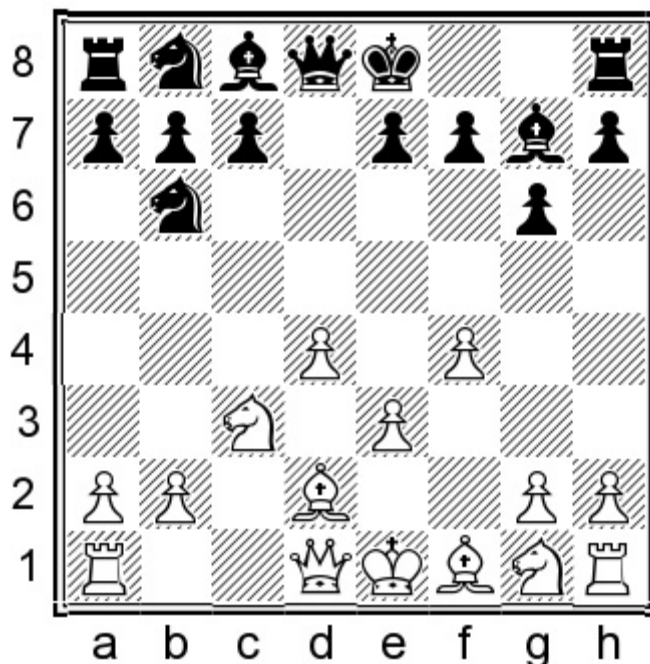
11... ♗xb8

11... ♘xb8 12. ♘f3 0-0 13. ♘d4±.

12. ♖b5 e6 13. ♘f3 ♖e7 14. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 15. ♘e5=

Black should be safe after both 15... ♖c6 and 15... ♖e8.

A4. 6.e3 ♖g7 7.f4



This idea was introduced by Svidler only in 2013, so I did not mention it in the first edition. Perhaps the simplest approach was shown by the same Svidler, this time with Black:

7...0-0

It is possible to start with 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♘8d7 9.♗e4 ♙xb2 10.♖b1 ♙g7 11.♙c4 0-0 12.♗f3, transposing to the main line.

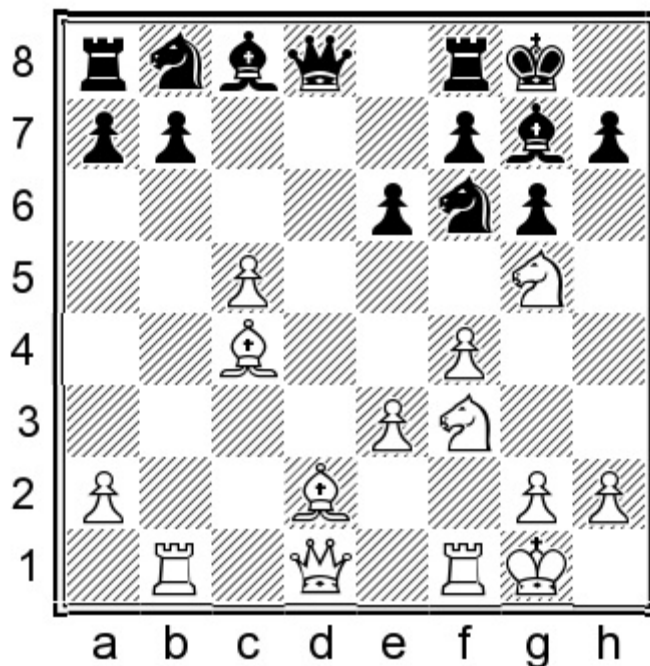
8.♗f3 c5 9.dxc5 ♗6d7 10.♗e4 ♙xb2 11.♖b1 ♙g7 12.♙c4 ♗a6

Now White is forced to give up his bishop and that deprives him of any active options. He remains with an extra passer on c5, but without chances to progress.

A sharper alternative to play for a win is 12...♗f6!? 13.♗eg5 (13.♗xf6+ exf6=) 13...e6 14.0-0

14.♗e5 offers a wide choice. 14...♗c6 and 14...♙c7 deserve attention.

Fogarasi chose 14...♗d5, when 15.e4 ♙xe5 forces a draw – 16.fxe5 ♗c3 17.♙xc3 ♙xg5 18.♙f3 ♗d7 19.♙f2 ♗xc5 20.♙xc5 ♙xg2 21.♖f1 ♙xe4+ 22.♗f2 ♙f4+ with a perpetual check.



14...♔c7!?

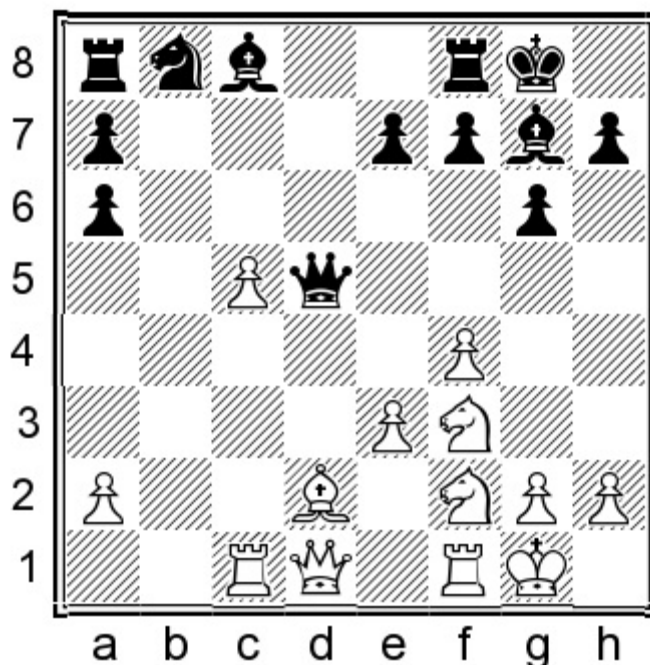
The source game Tomashevsky-Radjabov, Baku 2014, saw the unnecessarily provocative 14...h6 15.♗xf7! ♖xf7 16.♗e5, when Tomashevsky recommends 16...♗c6 17.♗xf7 ♔xf7 18.f5 with pressure.

15.♗e5 ♗c6 16.♔c3

16.♗xc6 ♔xc6 17.♔c1 ♔c7 18.♔c3 h6 19.♗f3 ♗e4=.

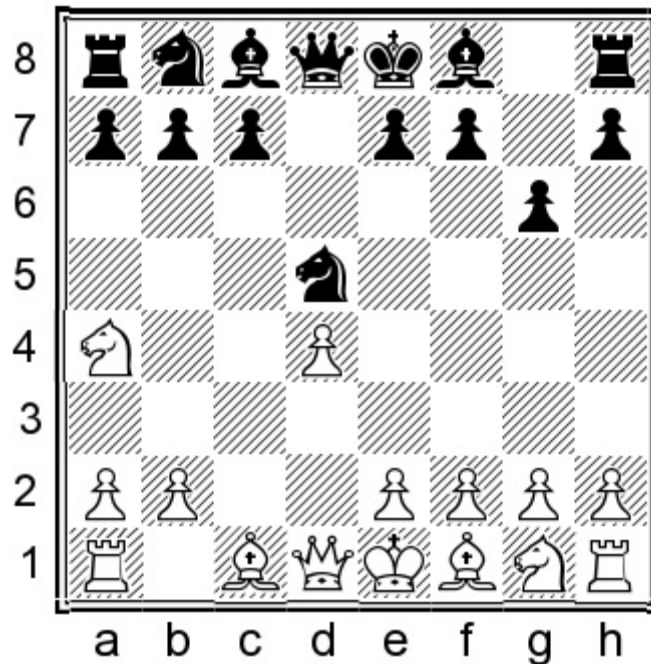
16...♗xe5 17.fxe5 ♔h6 18.exf6 ♔xg5 19.♖e1 ♔h4= (or 19...♔d7=).

13.♔xa6 bxa6 14.♖c1 ♗b8 15.0-0 ♔d5 16.♗f2



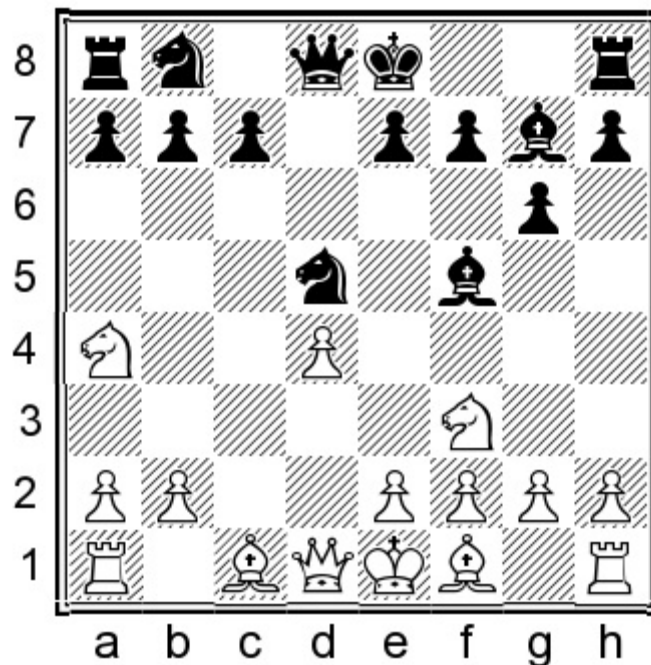
We have been following Riazantsev-Svidler, St Petersburg 2017. Instead of 16...♔b7, 16...♗c6 equalises easily – 17.♔a4 ♖b8 18.♔c3 ♔xc3 19.♖xc3 ♖b4 20.♔a3 ♖c4=.

B. 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♗a4



5...e5

This break would be impossible if White chose the move order 4.♗f3 ♗g7 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♗a4. In that event we could either opt for the backup repertoire with 6...0-0 7.e4 ♗b6 or choose: 6...♗f5!?



7.♗h4

7.♗c5?! b6 8.e4 bxc5 9.exf5 cxd4 10.fxc6 hxg6 11.♗xd4 ♖d6! 12.♗f3 ♗c6 puts White on the defensive.

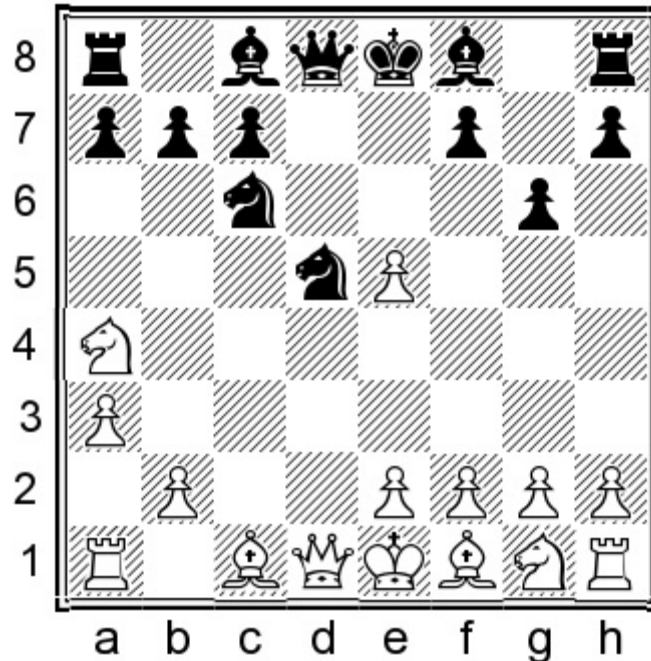
7...♗d7 8.e4 e5 9.♗f3 exd4 10.exd5 0-0!? 11.♗e2 d3! 12.♖xd3 (the point being 12.♗xd3 ♖e8+)

12...♙xa4=, Li Chao-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2016.

5...♙g7 is by far the most frequent answer. The critical line is 6.e4 ♖b6 7.♗f3 0-0 8.♙e3 ♙g4 9.♗c5 ♗c6 with complications – see **game 15** Senpai-Deep Fritz 14, CCRL 2014.

6.dxe5 ♗c6 7.a3

7.♗f3 ♙b4!+ (7...♗db4 8.a3) 8.♙d2 ♚e7 9.a3 ♙xd2+ 10.♚xd2 ♗b6 11.♗xb6 axb6 12.♚f4 ♜a5= regains the pawn.



7...♗xe5

This is the safest continuation. Black could keep more tension with 7...♙f5!?, 8.♗f3 ♚d7 9.e3

9.g3 0-0-0 10.♙g2 ♚e8 (10...♙h3 11.e6 ♙xe6 12.0-0) 11.♙d2 ♗xe5 was level in Ahlander-

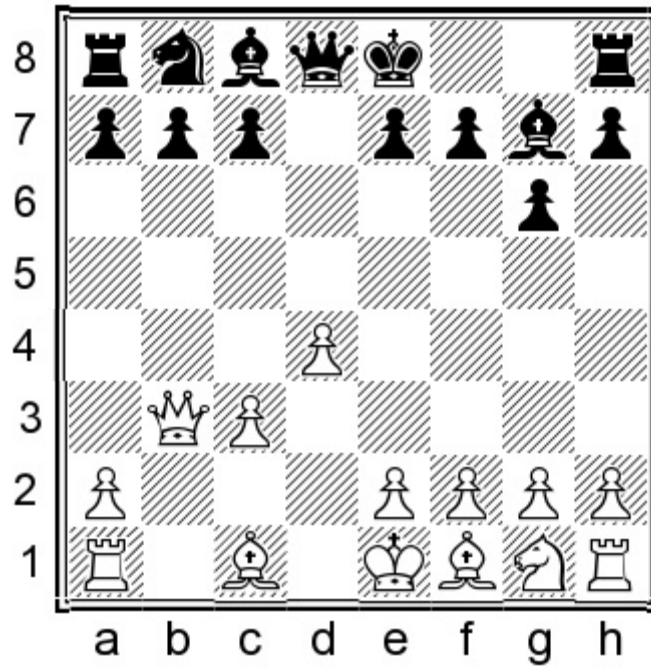
Moberg, Sweden 2013. For instance: 12.♗xe5 ♚xe5 13.♚b3, or 12.0-0 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♗f6.

9...0-0-0 10.♙d2 ♚e7 11.♙e2 ♗xe5 12.0-0 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3, Lysyj-Dominguez Perez, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, 13...♙e4 14.♜c1 ♚e5=.

8.e4 ♗b6 9.♚xd8+ ♘xd8 10.♙g5+ ♙e7

We have been following the game Vachier Lagrave-Caruana, Shamkir 2015. White is in no way better. Perhaps safest is 11.♜d1+ ♙d7=.

C. 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♚b3 ♗xc3! 6.bxc3 ♙g7

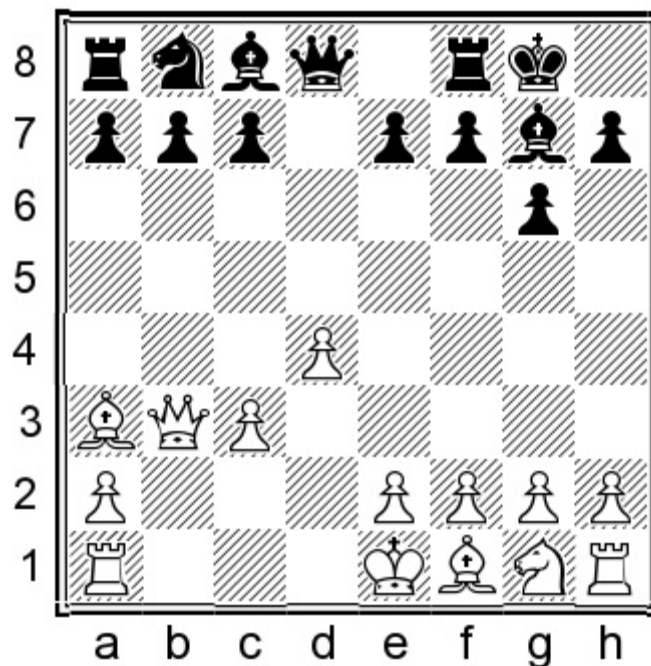


C1. 7.♙a3; C2. 7.♘f3.

C1. 7.♙a3

This is an attempt to prevent ...c5, but it does not achieve its goal. We'll only have to prepare it with ...b6. Then we'll offer a pawn sac on c5, which White should not accept. In that scenario the a3-bishop will look very clumsy.

7...0-0



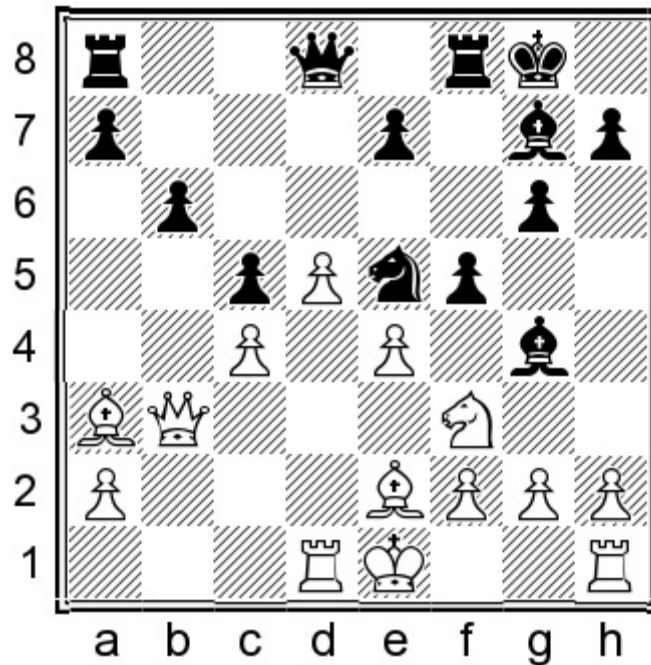
8.♘f3

8.♖d1 does not stop 8...♗d7 9.♗f3 c5 with excellent play – 10.e3 ♕c7.

8.e4 does not fit in with the placement of the bishop on a3:

8...b6! 9.♗f3 c5 10.♖d1

It would be pointless to take on c5 – 10.dxc5 ♖e6 11.♗c4? ♗xc4 12.♕xc4 b5 13.♕b3 ♕d3.
10...♗c6! 11.♗e2 ♗g4 12.d5 ♗e5 13.c4 f5!



Black owns the initiative, for example, 14.♗xe5 ♗xe2 15.♖d2 (15.♗xe2 ♗xe5→) 15...♗xe5 16.♖xe2 f4 17.♗b2 ♕c7 18.f3 (18.0-0 f3 19.♗xe5 ♕xe5 20.gxf3 ♖f4↑) 18...♗d4³.

8.e3 b6 is likely to transpose to the main line.

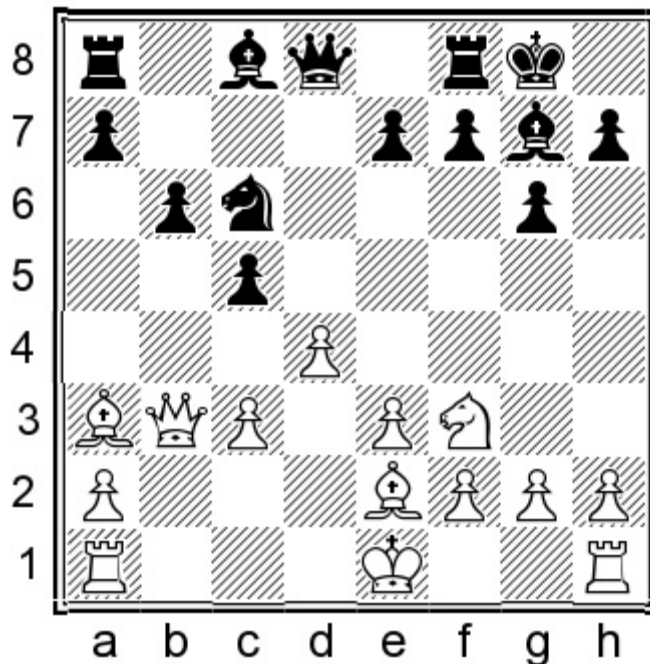
8...b6! 9.e3

White intends to finish development with ♗e2, 0-0, ♖ac1 and ♖fd1, then start rolling his central pawns. We should prepare to meet this plan with ...f5!

9...c5 10.♗e2

Or 10.dxc5? bxc5 11.♗xc5 ♕c7.

10...♗c6!



The knight would be much better placed on a5 than on d7.

11.dxc5? is still bad due to 11...♙e6 12.♚b2 bxc5 13.♙xc5 ♚a5 14.♙d4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♖ab8 16.♚d2 ♜fc8 17.0-0 ♙xd4 18.♚xd4 ♖b2 19.♙f3 ♜c4 20.♚d1 ♜xc3.

11.0-0 ♘a5 12.♚c2

12.♚b2 places the queen in the firing range of the g7-bishop. Play might continue 12...♚c7! 13.♜fd1 (discouraging ...♙e6) 13...♙e6! 14.d5 ♙f5. Black lost a tempo, but prolonged the diagonal to the beast on g7. The next step will be to open up the centre in order to stress the ridiculous position of the a3-bishop: 15.♘h4 ♙d7 16.♚c2 e6! 17.d6 (17.e4 exd5 18.exd5 ♚f4 19.g3 ♚a4) 17...♚c6 18.♙f3 ♚a4!

12...♚c7 13.♜ac1 ♙b7 14.dxc5

White cannot advance his central pawns anyway – 14.♜fd1 ♜fd8!

14...bxc5 15.c4 ♜fd8 16.♜fd1 ♜ac8

All White has achieved is a symmetrical position where Black has the better bishops.

C2. 7.♘f3 0-0 8.e3

8.e4?! is an obvious mistake, because it destabilises White's centre. After 8...c5 9.d5 ♙g4! 10.♙e2 ♘d7 11.0-0

11.♜b1?! c4 12.♙xc4 ♘c5 13.♚c2 ♘xe4.

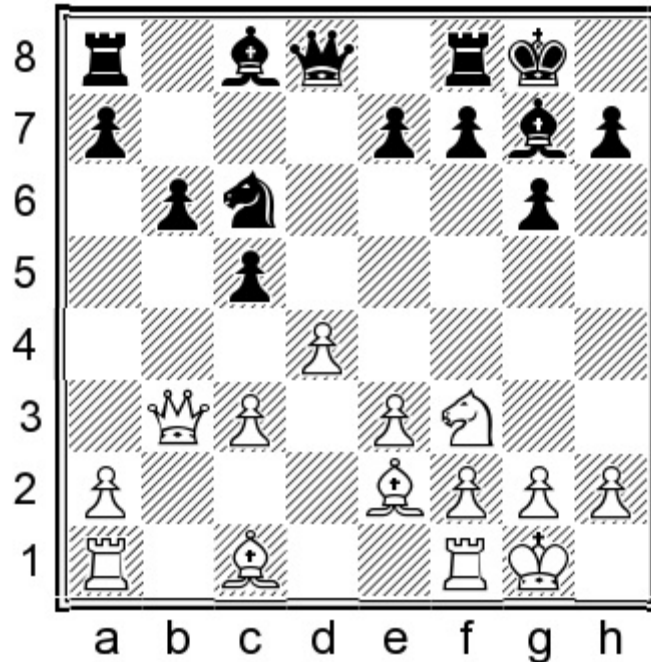
11...♚a5 12.♙d2 Black can launch a strong attack with the typical pawn sac 12...c4! 13.♙xc4 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♜ac8 15.♜fc1

Or 15.♞ab1 ♘c5 16.♚c2 ♜c7 17.♙e2 ♙e5 18.h3 b6 19.♙e3 f5=.

15...♘c5 16.♚b5 ♜c7 17.♙f1 ♙e5 18.h3 f5↑.

8...c5 9.♙e2 ♘c6 10.0-0 b6

10...♘a5!? 11.♚a3 b6 is another good option.



11.♞d1

The only sensible plan of White is to push e4. Alternatives pass the initiative to Black:

11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♙a3 ♚a5;

11.♙b2 ♘a5 12.♚c2 ♙b7 13.♞ad1 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♖c8 15.♚b1 ♚d6! 16.e4 ♚b4 17.♙d3 ♘c4 18.♙a1 ♚xb1 19.♞xb1 e6 with a better endgame in Barlov-J.Horvath, Tivat 1995.

11...♚c7 12.e4! ♘a5 13.♚a3

Or 13.♚b1 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♙b7 15.♙e3 ♞ac8 16.♞c1 ♚d6=.

13...♙b7

This was my recommendation from 2012. It was tested in Kuhne-Z.Ivanovic, ICCF 2015 – 14.♙d3 f5 15.exf5 ♙xf3 16.gxf3, draw agreed!

14.d5 e6 (14...f5!?) 15.♙g5

15.♞b1 exd5 16.exd5 ♚e7 17.♙e3 ♚e4!⚡.

15...♚d7 16.♞ab1 exd5 17.exd5 c4⚡.

D. 5.♔g5!? ♔g7 6.♗f3

6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.♖c1 is covered in Chapter 11 as a SOS line D.

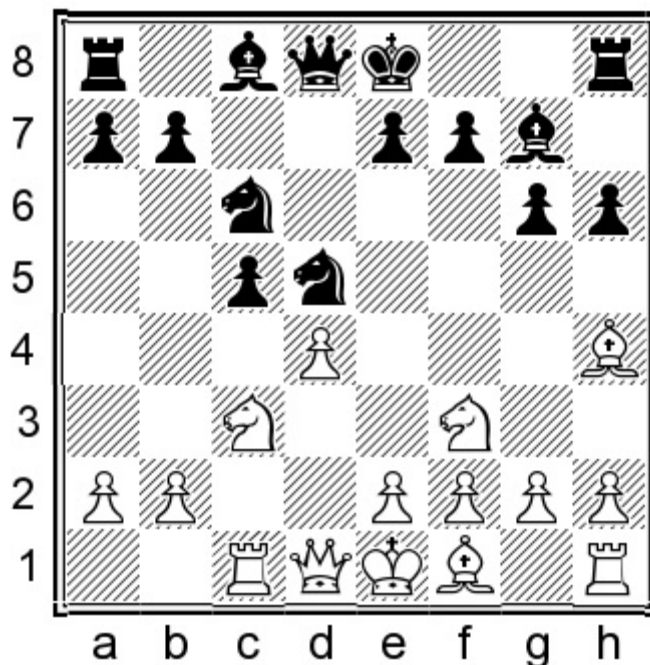
6...c5 7.♖c1

7.e3 cxd4 8.exd4 0-0 gives Black a pleasant version of an isolated queen's pawn position.

7...h6!

Shifting the bishop from the c1-h6 diagonal. 7...♗xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.e3 ♔e6 is also playable.

8.♔h4 ♗c6



Now the only sensible option is 9.♗xd5 (9.dxc5 ♔e6) 9...♙xd5 10.♖xc5 ♙xa2 11.e3 ♙xb2, and White is still to prove enough compensation. Mamedyarov-Ivanchuk, blitz, Beijing 2014, went 12.♔c4 ♙b4+ 13.♗d2 0-0 14.0-0, when 14...e5 would have tipped the balance in Black's favour. Perhaps 12.♔d3 is more to the point – 12...e5=.

Chapter 6

Complete Games

14. Dreev-Karavade

Reykjavik 2010

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♙d2 ♗b6 6.♙f4 ♙g7 7.e3 0-0 8.♗f3

8.♞c1 looks pointless as it does not prevent 8...c5 – 9.dxc5 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 10.♞xc3 ♞xd1+ 11.♕xd1 ♗a4↑) 10...♞xd1+ 11.♞xd1 ♗6d7 12.♙b5

12.♙h6 ♞e8 13.♙b5 a6 14.♙a4 ♗c6 15.♗f3 ♗xc5 16.♙xc6 bxc6 17.♗d4 e5 18.♗b3 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♙e6 20.b4 a5=, Dreev-Shirov, blitz, Moscow 2007.

12...♗c6 13.♞d5 ♗f6 14.♞d1 ♗e4 15.♗e2 ♗xc5 16.0-0, Dreev-Ponomarev, blitz, Moscow 2007, 16...♙e6 17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.cxd4 a6 19.♙e2 ♗e4 20.♙f3 ♙d5=.

8...c5

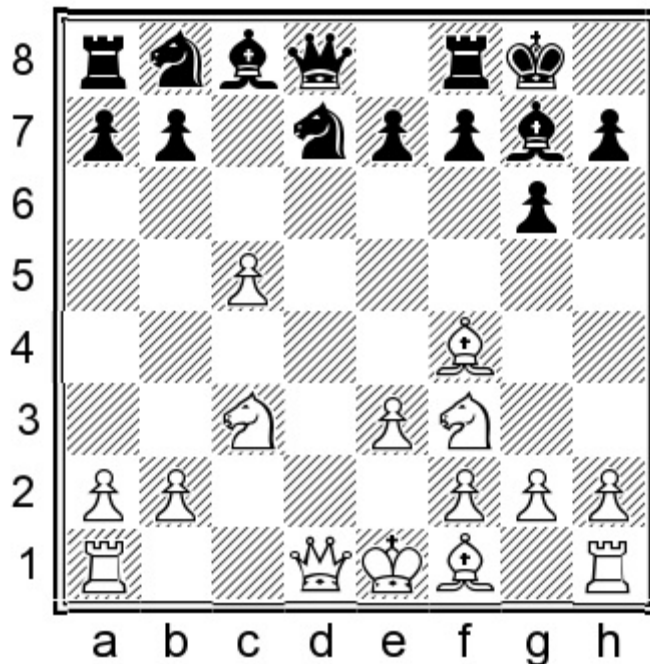
This is the established equaliser. It enters a long “tunnel” variation which ends with a draw endgame. Black might deviate with 8...♙g4 9.♙e2 c5 10.dxc5 ♙xc3+

Or 10...♗6d7 11.♞c1 ♗xc5 12.0-0 ♗c6 13.♗d5 ♗e4 14.h3 ♙f5 15.g4 e5 16.gxf5 exf4 17.♗xf4 gxf5.

11.bxc3 ♞xd1+ 12.♞xd1 ♗a4 13.♞d4! (threatening ♙h6) 13...♙xf3 14.♙xf3 ♗xc5. Although White enjoys two bishops, it is unclear how he could break in.

9.dxc5 ♗6d7!

The thematic 9...♙xc3+?! is not so good here because Black has already castled. That gives White a critical tempo for ♙h6, for instance: 10.bxc3 ♞xd1+ 11.♞xd1 ♗6d7 12.♙g5! ♞e8 (12...f6 13.♙h6 ♞e8 14.♙c4+ e6 15.♗d4 ♗xc5 16.♗b5 ♗ba6 17.0-0 ♙d7 18.♗d6±; 12...♗c6 13.♗d4!) 13.♙b5 a6 14.♙a4 ♗c6 (14...f6 15.♙h6 ♗c6 16.♙b3+ e6 17.♗d4 ♗xc5 18.♙c2 ♗e7 19.e4 ♞d8 20.♙e3 b6 21.♞b1 ♞d6 22.♗f3 e5 23.♙xc5 bxc5 24.♙b3+ ♕f8 25.♗d2 ♞b8 26.♗c4 ♞d8 27.♕e2 ♙d7 28.♞hd1 ♙b5 29.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 30.a4 ♙e8 31.♙c2±, Khalifman-Kojovic, Budva 2009.) 15.♞d5!±.



10. ♖d5

White's only hope for an advantage is to grab something while Black is still undeveloped. The tentative 10. ♕c4?! ♜xc5 11. ♚e2 ♞c6 12. 0-0 allows 12... ♕e6 and White's light squares are very weak: 13. ♘g5 (13. ♖fd1 ♚b6 14. ♕xe6 ♞xe6 15. ♖d5 ♞xf4 16. exf4 ♚xb2=) 13... ♕xc4 14. ♚xc4 ♞d3 15. ♚b5 ♚d7! 16. ♖fd1 ♖ad8 17. ♘ge4 ♞cb4.

10... ♞xc5! 11. ♖ac1

Alternatively:

11. ♕c7 ♚d7 12. ♖c1 ♞ba6 13. ♕e5 ♖d8 14. ♕xg7 ♜xg7 15. ♚d4+ f6=.

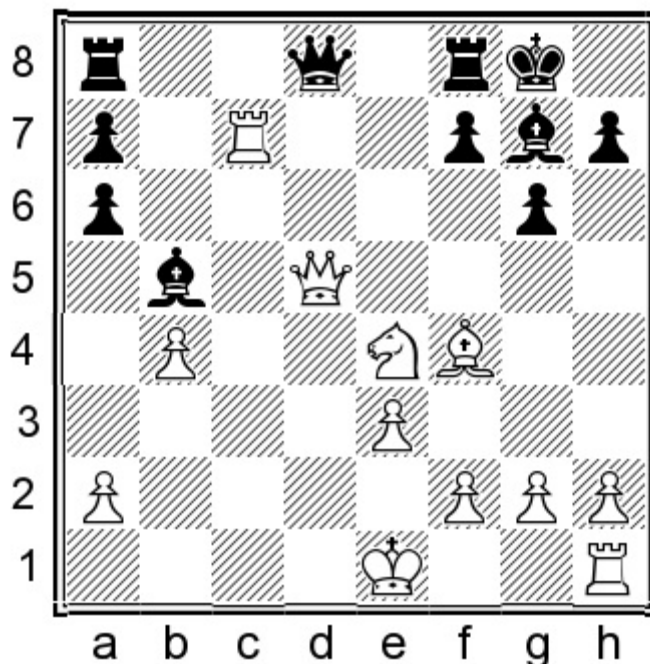
11. ♞c7 ♕xb2 12. ♚xd8

12. ♕e2 ♞e6 13. ♞xa8 ♞xf4 14. exf4 ♕xa1 15. ♚xa1 ♕g4 16. ♚d1 ♚c8 17. 0-0 ♞c6.
12... ♖xd8 13. ♖d1 ♕c3+ 14. ♜e2 ♕d7=

11... ♞ba6 12. b4! ♞e4 13. ♕xa6 bxa6 14. ♖c7 (14. 0-0 ♕b7) 14... ♕d7! 15. ♘g5

15. ♚d3 e6 16. ♚xe4 exd5 17. ♚xd5 ♕e6 should be safe for Black.

15...e6 16. ♞xe4 exd5 17. ♚xd5 ♕b5



This is a critical position for our repertoire against 6.♘f4. It first occurred in the game Grandelius-Gupta, Wijk aan Zee 2010. White decided to keep the queens with 18.♙d6?!, but after 18...♖c8 19.♗xc8 ♜xc8 20.♙xf8 ♜g4! (20...♜c1+ 21.♜d1 ♙c3+ is a draw) he had to find the only move 21.♜d1!. Then 21...♜xg2 22.♙xg7 ♜xh1+ 23.♔d2 ♜xe4 24.♙d4 should be a draw. Instead he stumbled with 21.♜d2?! ♜xg2! 22.♔g3 ♙xf8 23.a3 a5 24.bxa5 h5 25.f4 ♜f3, and Gupta went on to win.

18.♜xd8 ♖fxd8 19.f3

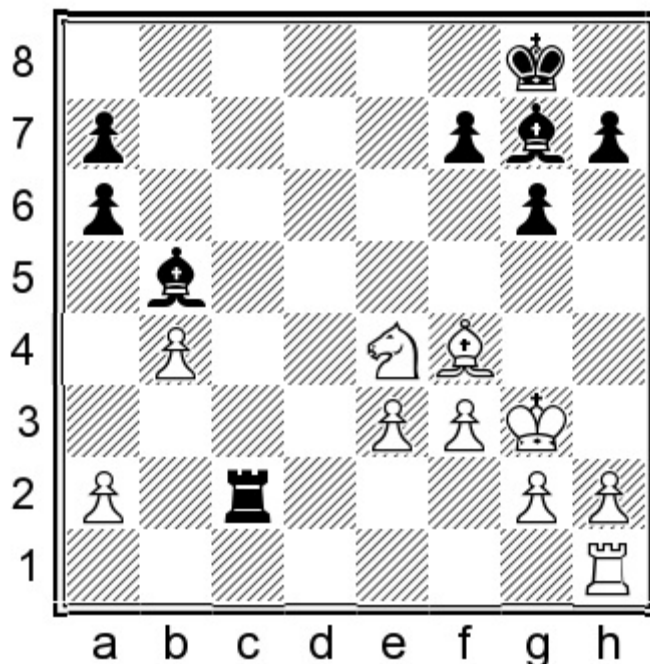
Bacrot-Robson, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, saw 19.♘d6 ♙f8 20.♘xb5 axb5 21.♔e2, when a draw was signed.

19...♖ac8 20.♔f2

Only 20.♖c5 ♖xc5 21.bxc5 limits the activity of Black's rook – 21...♖d5 22.c6 ♙xc6 23.♔f2 f5 24.♖c1 ♙d7 25.♘c5 ♙b5=.

20.♖xc8 ♖xc8 21.♔f2 transposes.

20...♖xc7 21.♙xc7 ♖c8 22.♙f4 ♖c2+ 23.♔g3



Dreev wants to play a safe position with a small but lasting advantage after 23...♞xa2 24.♞c1 h6 25.h4. In this variation White is the more active side. He will eventually win the f7-pawn and the black king will be under attack. I analysed further and it seems that Black has just enough counterplay against g2, for instance: 25...♙d3! 26.♞c8+ ♔h7 27.♞c7 ♙f1 28.♔h2 ♞xg2+ 29.♔h1 ♞e2.

Similarly, 23...f5 24.♘d6 ♙c3 25.a3 ♙b2 26.e4 fxe4 27.♘xe4 ♙xa3 28.♙d6 leaves White with some initiative.

Karavade takes a more practical decision to keep White's rook caged in his half of the board.

23...♙e2 24.a4 f5 25.♘d6 ♙f8 26.e4

After this move the game is completely balanced. White had two other attractive options:

26.h4!? ♞d2 27.♞e1 ♙d1

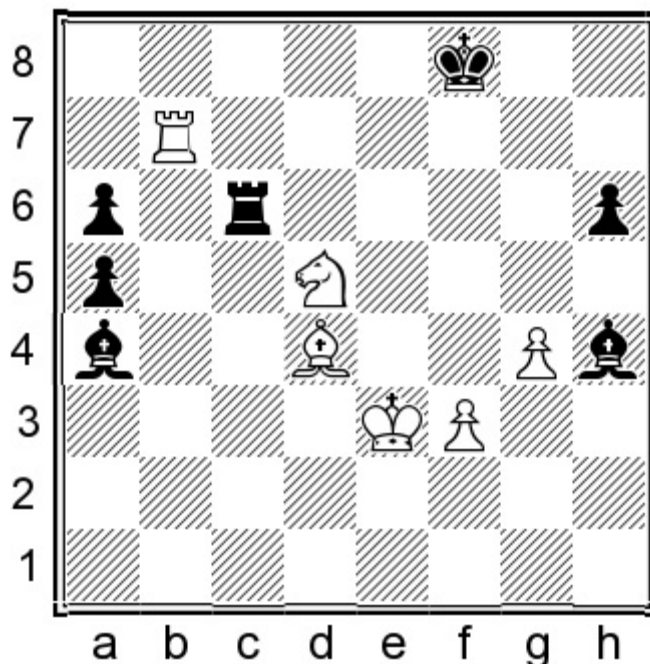
The rook endgame after 27...♙d6 28.♙xd6 ♙xf3 29.gxf3 ♞xd6 30.♞c1 ♞b6 should be a draw. 28.e4 ♙xd6 29.e5 ♙xe5 30.♞xe5 ♞d7, when White has a nice advantage which, however, cannot be converted;

26.♞b1 g5!

26...♞d2 27.♘b7 ♙d3 28.♞c1 ♙xb4 29.♞c8+ ♔f7 30.♘d8+ ♔f6 31.♞c7±.

27.♙e5 ♞d2 28.♘b7 (28.♞e1 ♙d1 29.♘xf5 ♙xb4 is unclear) 28...♔f7=. The bishop pair neutralises White's extra pawn.

26...fxe4 27.♘xe4 ♙xb4 28.h4 ♞c6 29.♙e5 a5 30.h5 gxf5 31.♞xf5 ♙d3 (31...♙d1) 32.♙d4 a6 33.♞d5 h6 34.♞d7 ♞g6+ (34...♙c2) 35.♔f2 ♙c2 36.♘f6+ ♔f8 37.♞b7 ♙xa4 38.g4 ♙e7 39.♘d5 ♙h4+ 40.♔e3 ♞c6



The rest is irrelevant. Dreev took some risks, trying to complicate things, but it all ended with the logical outcome.

41.f4 ♔d1 42.g5 hxg5 43.f5 g4 44.♙g7+ ♚g8 45.f6?! (45.♙e5 ♙f3=) 45...♙g5+ 46.♚e4 ♙f3+

Or 46...♙c2+ 47.♚e5 ♜c5 48.♞b8+ ♚f7 49.♚d6! ♞xd5+ 50.♚xd5 g3 51.♙f8 g2 52.♙c5 ♙xf6=.

47.♚f5 ♙xf6 48.♜xf6+ ♞xf6+ 49.♙xf6 ♙xb7 50.♚xg4 ♚f7 51.♙c3 a4 52.♚f5 a3 53.♚e5 a2 54.♙a1 ♚e7 55.♚d4 ♚d6 56.♚c3 ♚c5 57.♚b3 ♙d5+ 58.♚a3 ♙c4 1/2-1/2

15. Senpai 1.0 - Deep Fritz 14

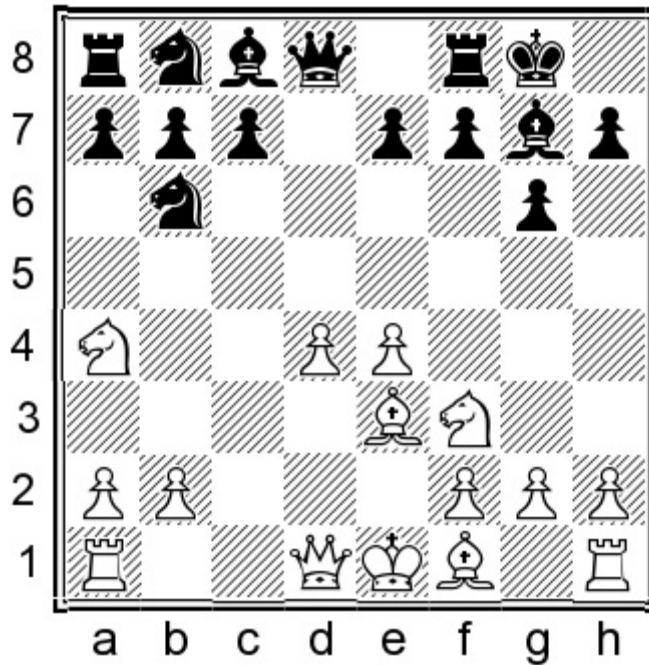
CCRL 40/40 20.10.2014

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘a4 ♙g7 6.e4 ♘b6 7.♙e3 0-0

Black's development is almost complete. Its next step will be to attack the enemy centre, but that will depend on White's next move:

8.♘f3

8.♞c1 wastes yet another tempo and we should be even better after 8...♘c6 9.d5 ♘xa4 10.♞xa4 ♘e5 11.h3 e6. The same applies to 8.♘c3 ♘c6!.



8...♘g4

8...♘c6!? may be objectively best. Then the only challenging option is 9.♙b5 (9.♙e2 ♘g4 transpose to 8...♘g4) 9...♘g4 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.♘c5 ♘c4 12.♚c2 ♘xe3 13.fxe3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 e5 15.dxe5, Xiong-Salem, chess.com 2019, when 15...♚h4+ levels the game – 16.♙e2 (16.♚f2 ♚e7 17.♞c1 ♙xe5) 16...♙xe5 17.♘d3 ♞fe8=.

9.♘c5

9.♙e2 is timid – 9...♘c6 10.d5

10.♘xb6?! weakens White's queenside: 10...axb6 11.d5 ♘b4! 12.♚b3 ♘a6 13.0-0 ♘c5 14.♚c2 ♚d7 15.♞fd1 ♚a4!±.

10...♘e5 11.♘xe5

Evidently, 11.♘xb6 axb6 12.♘xe5 ♙xe2 13.♚xe2 ♙xe5 14.0-0 ♚d7 15.a3 e6 (15...f5!? is more entertaining – 16.f4 ♙g7 17.♞ad1 fxe4=) 16.♞ad1 is not more than equal, Legky-Mikhalevski, Montreal 2003.

11...♙xe2 12.♚xe2 ♘xa4 13.f4 e6 14.dxe6

This is a draw offer, but 14.0-0 exd5 15.♞ad1 ♘b6 is clearly in Black's favour.

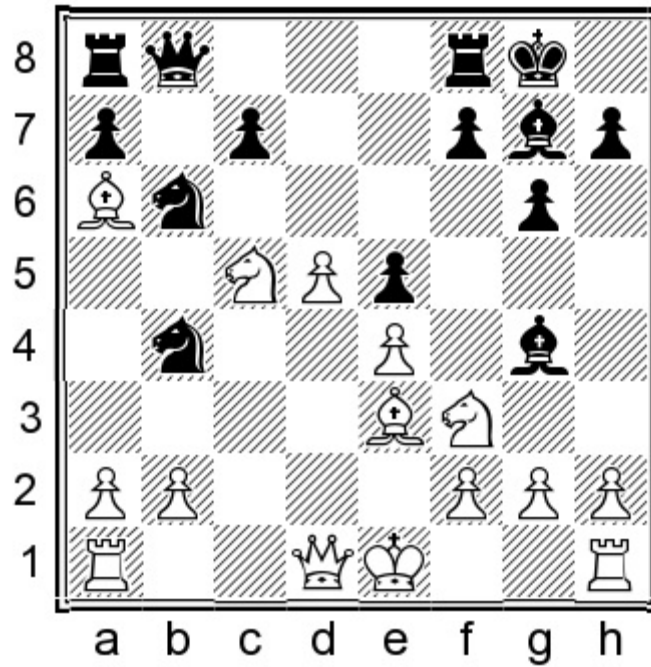
14...♙xe5 15.exf7+ ♞xf7 16.fxe5 ♚h4+

Black could deviate from the repetition of moves with 16...♚e7!?

17.♙f2 ♞xf2 18.♚xf2 ♚xe4+ 19.♚e2 ♚b4+ 20.♚d2 ♚e4+=.

9...♘c6 10.♘xb7 ♚b8 11.♙a6 ♘b4

Flear mentions 11...e5 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♘c5

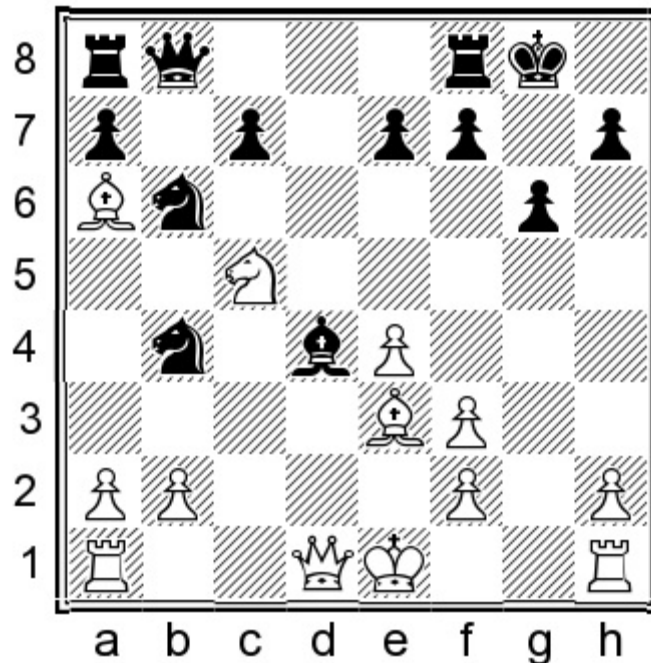


13...♖6xd5 14.exd5 e4 15.♗xe4 ♘xa6 16.0-0 ♜xb2 “with chances for both sides”. The problem is that after 17.♙d4 ♞xd4 18.♞xd4 ♕xd4 19.♗xd4 ♔g7 20.f3 the chances for a win, albeit not high, are only for White.

12.♗c5 ♕xf3

12...♗xa6 13.♗xa6 ♞c8 14.♗c5! ♜d8 15.0-0 returns the extra pawn with obvious positional gains.

13.gxf3 ♕xd4



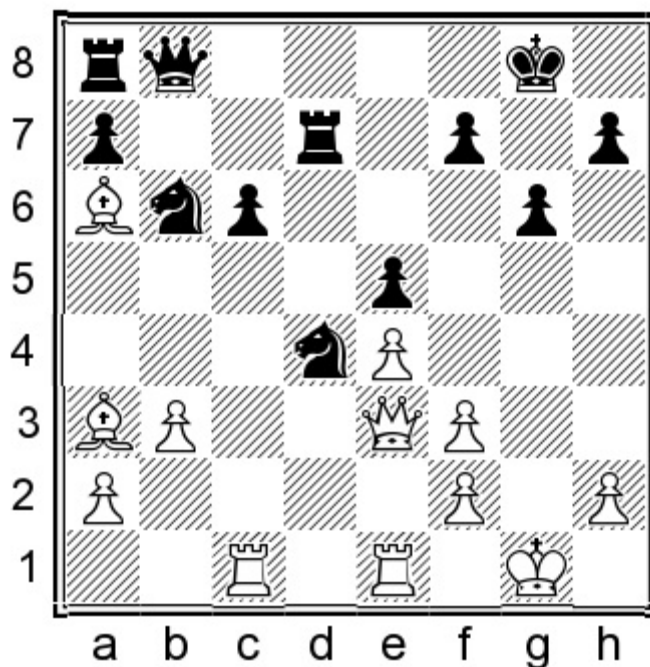
14.♙e2!

OTB practice has only seen 14.♙xd4 ♜d8 15.0-0 ♘xa6 16.♘xa6 ♚c8 where Chatalbashev twice proved that Black was OK.

14...♜d8 15.♚b3 ♙xc5 16.♙xc5 ♘c6 17.♞c1 ♘d4 18.♚e3 e5 19.0-0 ♘a4 20.♙a3 ♜d7 21.b3 ♘b6 22.♙a6 c6

Black should transfer the queen to the kingside, but 22...♚d8 was premature owing to 23.f4.

23.♞fe1



23...♚c7

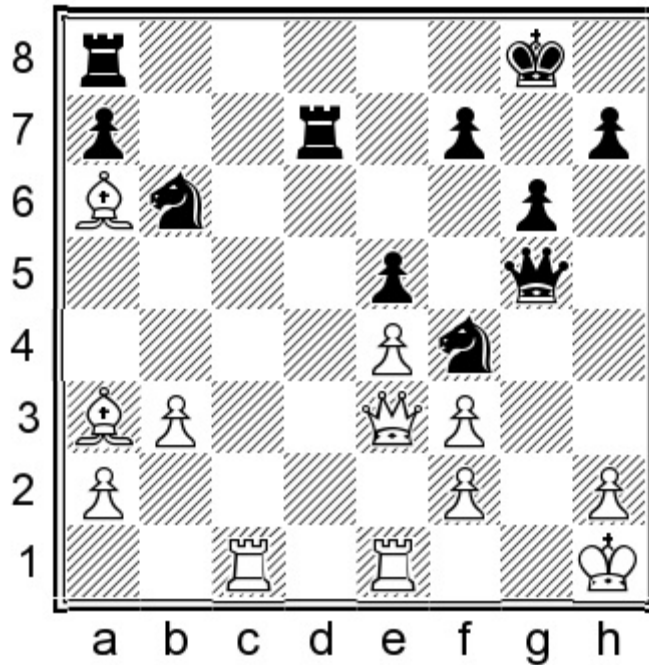
At this point Black begins to make subtle positional mistakes, allowing the opponent to activate the light-squared bishop from h3. The engine adopts a passive stand which eventually cracks down. It should have prevented the manoeuvre ♙f1-h3 at all cost. I believe that 23...♘e6!? 24.♞xc6 ♚d8, heading for h4, should give Black fair chances. His counterplay is based on White's weak first two ranks. For instance:

25.♙h1

Or 25.♚h6 ♜d1 26.♞f1 ♚d7 27.♞c2 ♜d8 28.♙c1 ♞xf1+ 29.♙xf1 ♚d1.

25...♘f4 26.♞cc1 ♚g5

26...♚h4 27.♙b5 ♜d2 allows 28.♙e7 ♚xf2 29.♚xf2 ♞xf2 30.a4±. The bishop pair is superior without queens.



27.♖g1 (27.♙f1 ♜ad8↑) 27...♚h5 28.♖g4 ♜ad8 29.♞e1 ♞d1 30.♙f1 ♜8d4 with counterplay. The point is 31.♙c5 (31.♙b2 ♞d6) 31...♜4d3.

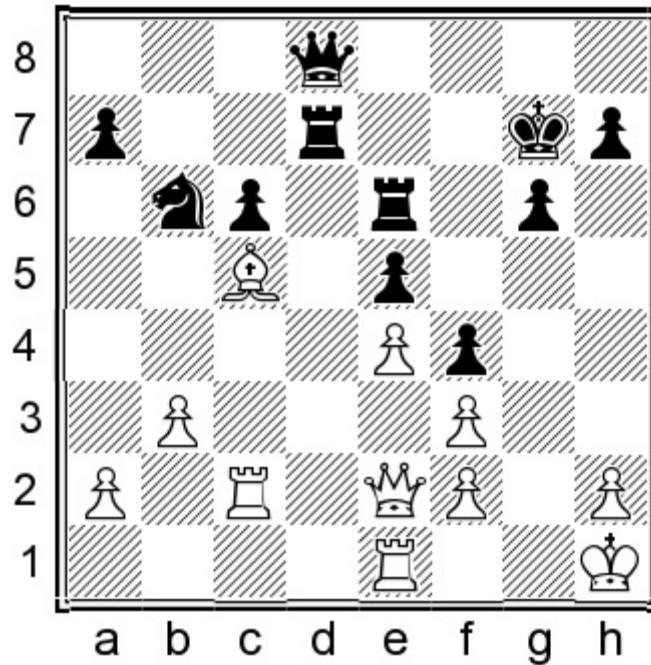
24.♙f1 ♞e8 25.♙c5?!

Black intends ...♞dd8, ...♜b6-d7-f8-e6, or ...f5. The natural 25.♙h3 is not good in view of 25...♞dd8 26.♙h1 ♜d7, when 27.f4 runs into 27...♜b5. The solution is perhaps 25.♙h1!?, and if 25...♞dd8, then 26.♞ed1 ♜d7?! 27.♙b2. 25...♜e6 does not fully equalise either because of 26.♙b2 ♞ed8 27.a4 ♞d2 28.♙c3.

25...♜e6 26.♙h3 ♚d8?!

Why not 26...♜xc5 27.♞xc5 ♞d6= ?!

27.♙xe6 ♞xe6 28.♞c2 f5 29.♚e2 ♙g7 30.♙h1 f4

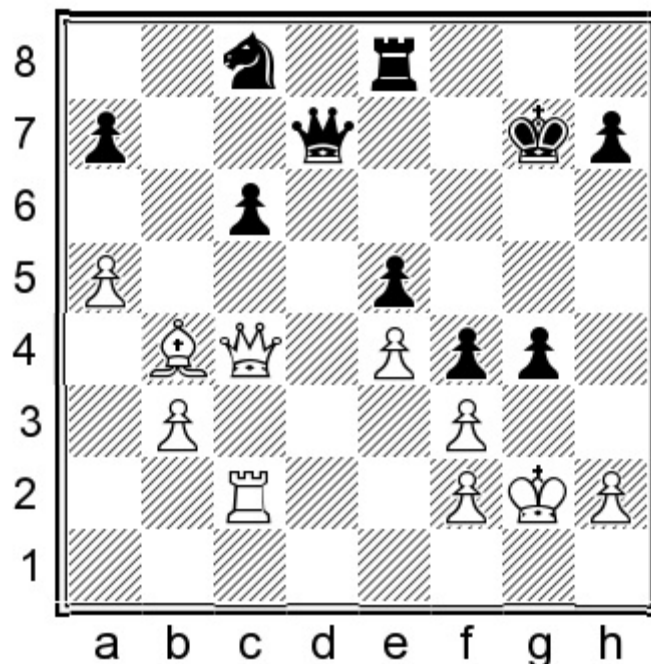


It is embarrassing to criticize an engine with 3100 rating, but its strategy has been a failure. White's kingside is now absolutely safe, while on the opposite wing its advantage is obvious. Black's biggest problem is the weakness of its king.

31.a4 ♖f7 32.♙a6 ♚c8?

More of the same passive strategy! 32...♙h4 offers more chances to save the game.

33.♙f1 ♚c7 34.a5 ♘c8 35.♙d1+- ♙e8 36.♙c4+ ♖g7 37.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 38.♖g2 g5 39.♙b4 g4



40.♙d2! gxf3+ 41.♖xf3 ♙c7 42.♖e2 ♖f6 43.♙c3 ♙b7 44.♙a3 c5 45.♙c4 ♙c6 46.♙xc5 h6 47.♙d5 ♙e6 48.♙xe6+ ♖xe6 49.b4 a6 50.b5 axb5 51.a6 h5 52.♙d5 ♙g8 53.a7 ♘xa7 54.♙xa7 ♙a8 55.♙c5m

♞a4 ♖56.♙d3 ♜4 ♞57.♞d6+ 1-0

Rare Lines Deviations on move 7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7

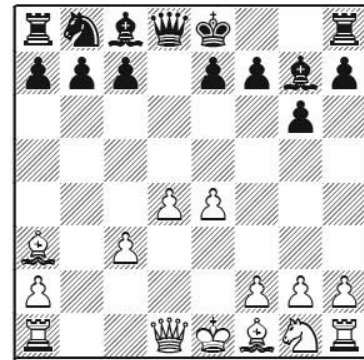
7.♙b5+



7.♙a4+



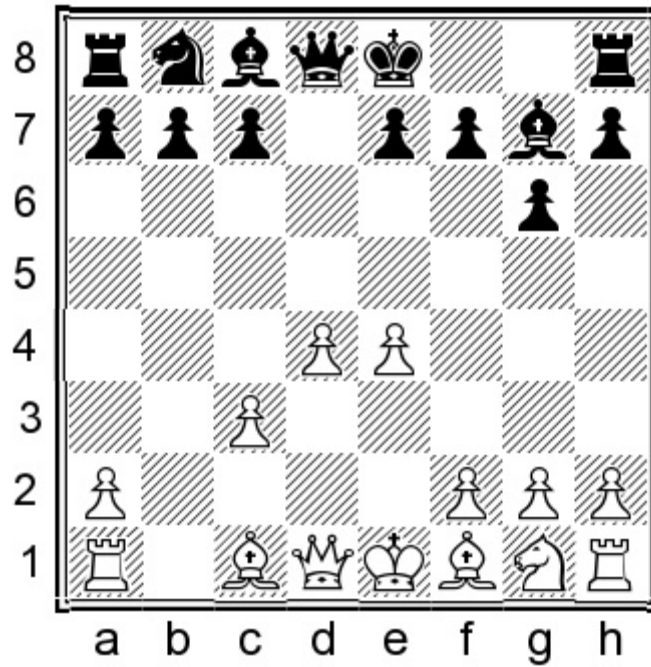
7.♙a3



Main Ideas

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7

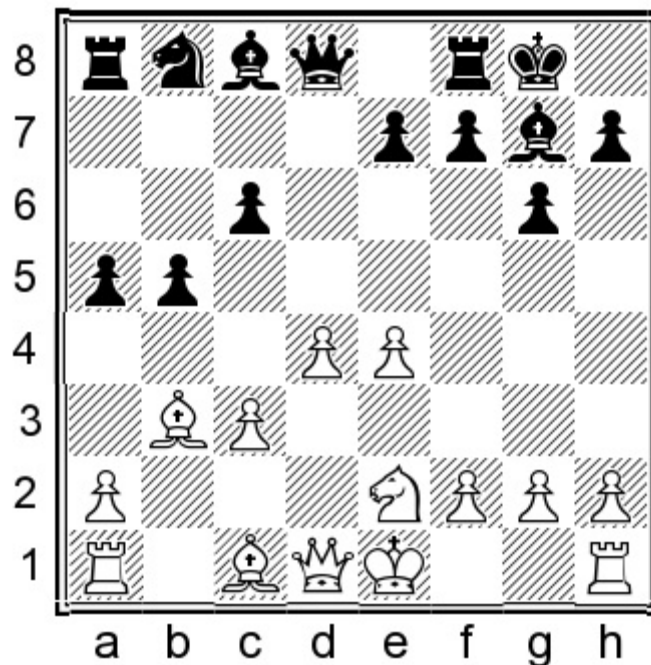
In this chapter we get closer to the main lines of the Exchange System, but still deal with offbeat variations which have mostly surprise value.



A. 7. ♖b5+; B. 7. ♔a4+; C. 7. ♙a3.

I consider 7. ♙g5 in Chapter 11.

A. 7. ♙b5+ c6! 8. ♙a4 0-0 9. ♘e2 b5!? 10. ♙b3 a5



Our plan is to gain total control over the light squares by ...a4, ...♘d7-b6, ...♙e6, while restricting the mobility of the enemy's central pawns with ...♔e8 and ...e5, or first ...f6, ...♙e6 and ...e5 later.

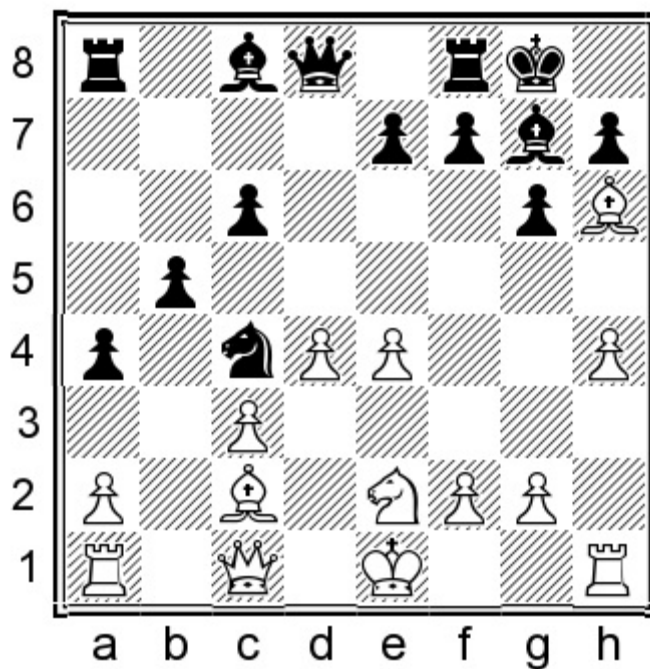
Evidently, White has to generate some threats against our king, or he will come out of the opening with an inferior position.

Vaisser-Jansa

Arco 2010

11.♔e3 ♖d7 12.h4

White opts for a direct assault. Black does not have to change his general plan – 12...a4 13.♕c2 ♖b6 14.♗c1 ♗c4 15.♕h6

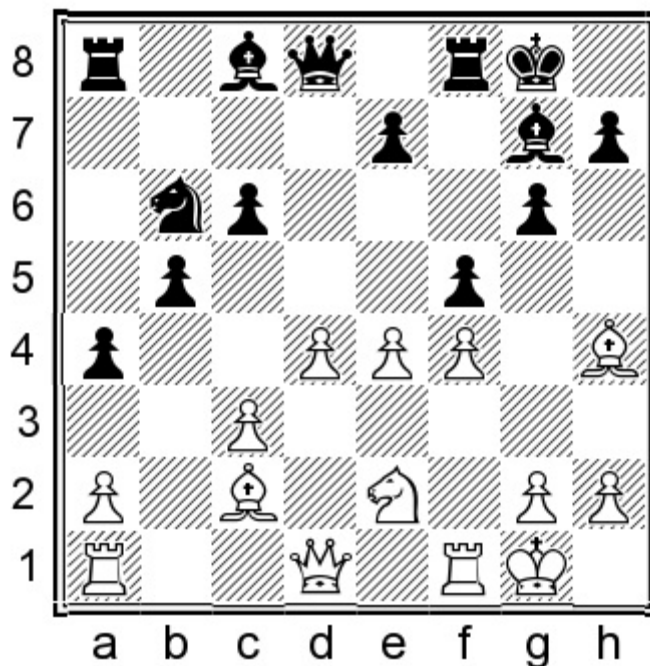


15...e5! 16.♕xg7 ♖xg7 17.h5 ♗e7 18.♕d3 ♕e6.

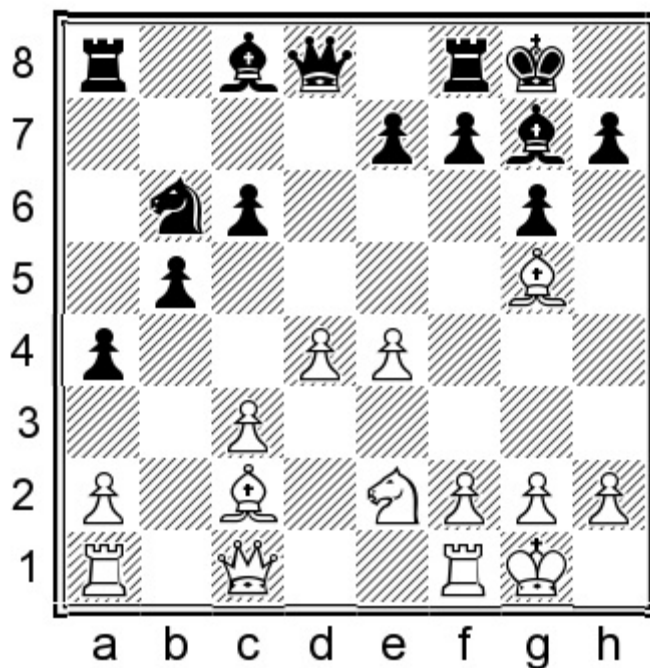
The first wave of the attack has passed by without causing any harm.

The other logical way to break through Black's defence is to use the f-pawn. We can simply stop it by ...f5:

11.0-0 ♖d7 12.♕g5 a4 13.♕c2 ♖b6 14.f4 f6 15.♕h4 f5



11.0-0 ♖d7 12.♙g5 a4 13.♙c2 ♖b6 14.♚c1

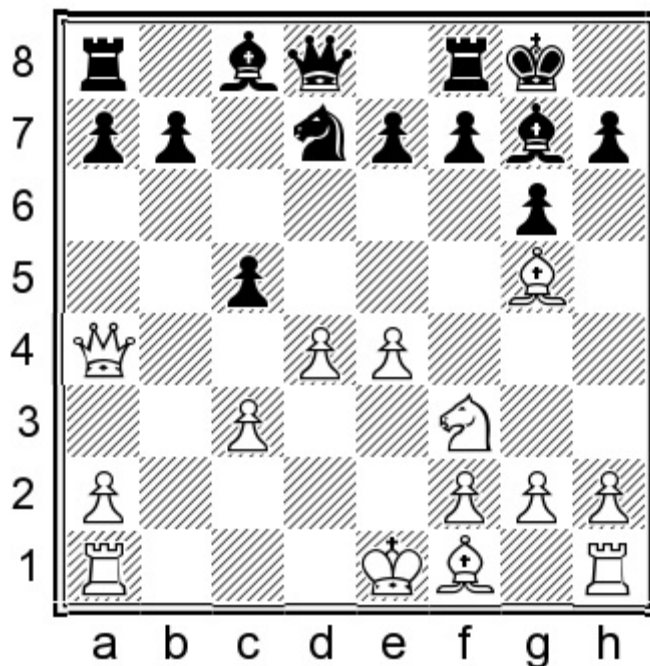


14...f6 15.♙h6 e5 16.♙xg7 ♖xg7 17.h3 (17.f4 ♙g4) 17...♙e6 18.f4 ♙c4.

The bottom line is that Black's play is thematic and easy – he aims for ...e5 (or even ...c5 at an opportunity), while White has not shown yet any dangerous plan.

B. 7.♚a4+ ♖d7 8.♖f3 0-0 9.♙g5 c5

You should aim for the following setup:

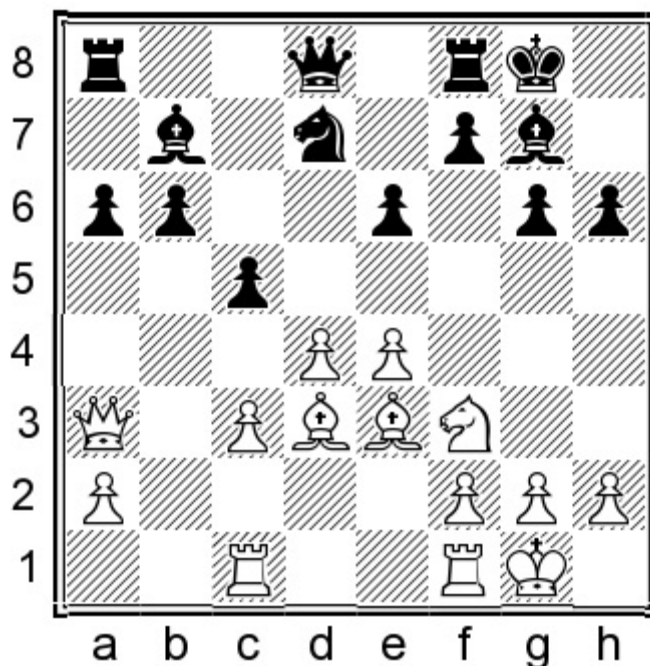


1. Expel the bishop from the active position on g5 with ...h6.

2. Fianchetto the bishop to b7 with ...a6, ...b5, if possible, or ...b6 if White met ...a6 by ♔a3.

3. Take d5 under control with ...e6 and bring both rooks in the centre.

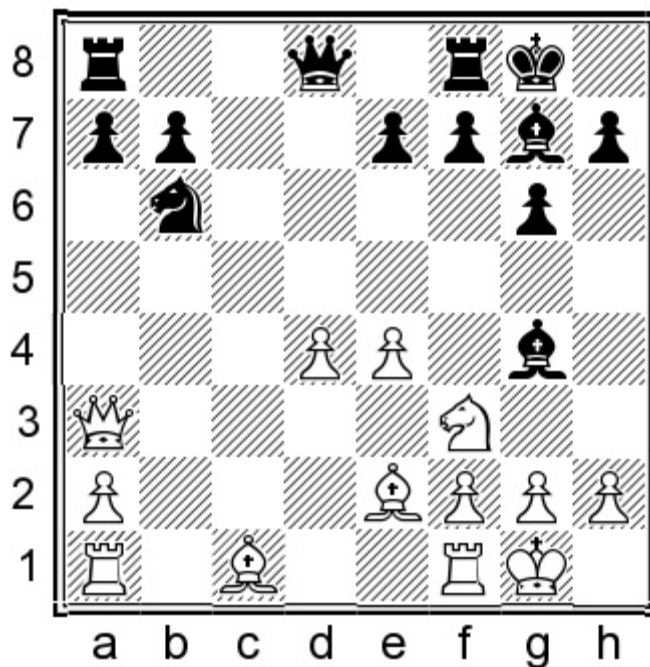
10.♖c1 h6! 11.♙e3 a6! 12.♚a3! (12...♙e2 b5) 12...b6 13.♙d3 e6 14.0-0 ♙b7



Our further play is self-evident – ...♚c7, ...♘f6, ...♖ac8. On the contrary, White lacks an active plan since his queen has purely defensive functions. His best approach is to return it home via b3-d1-d2.

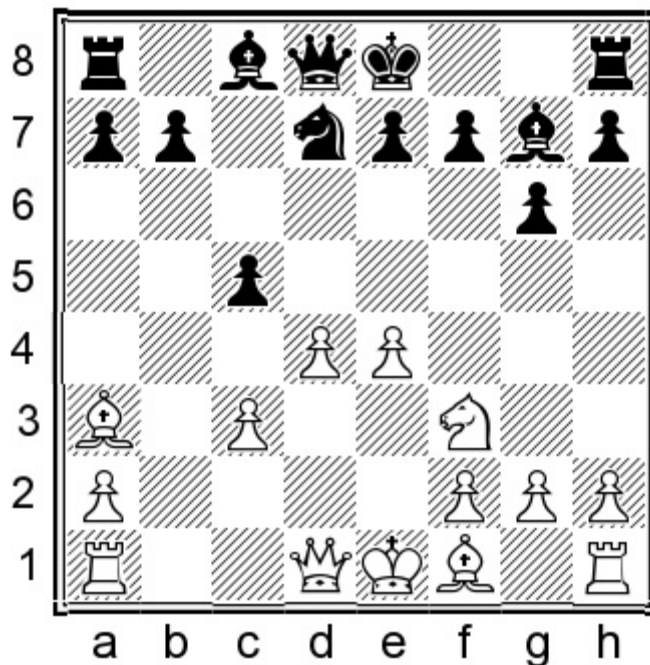
Another popular line is 9.♙e2 c5 10.0-0, where the established equaliser is 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c5,

while I suggest to try 10...♖b6!? 11.♙a3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♕g4



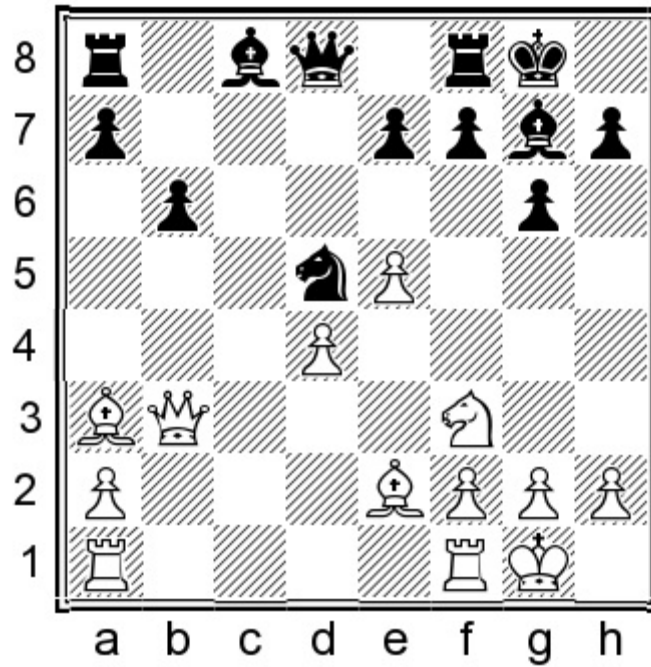
The hit on d4 should level the chances.

C. 7.♕a3 does not really stop ...c5 – 7...♘d7 8.♘f3 c5!



White's main problem here is that the a3-bishop is hanging, for instance, after 9.♕c4 cxd4 10.cxd4?? ♙a5+. So he must protect it:

9.♙b3 0-0 10.♕e2 (10.♕d3 b5!?) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘f6 12.e5 ♘d5 13.0-0 b6

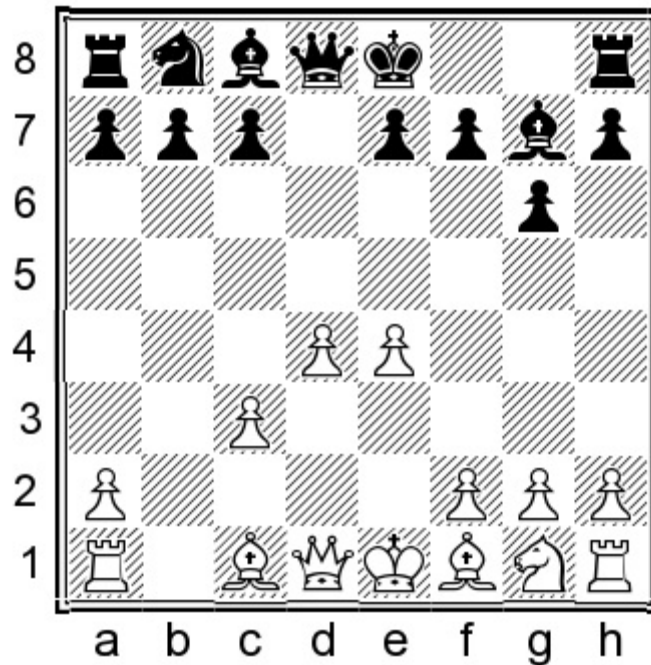


Black is fine here. The only sharp attempt is 14. ♖g5!? h6! 15. ♙f3 ♘b7 16. ♗e4 ♚d7=, Atalik-Lin Weiguo, Beijing 1997.

All these rare lines may be offbeat, but White's impotence in the main systems might drag them from the back stage in future.

Chapter 7 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7



In this chapter I continue the survey of rare systems which are often stored in White's repertoire as backup lines of the main variations. I'll focus on:

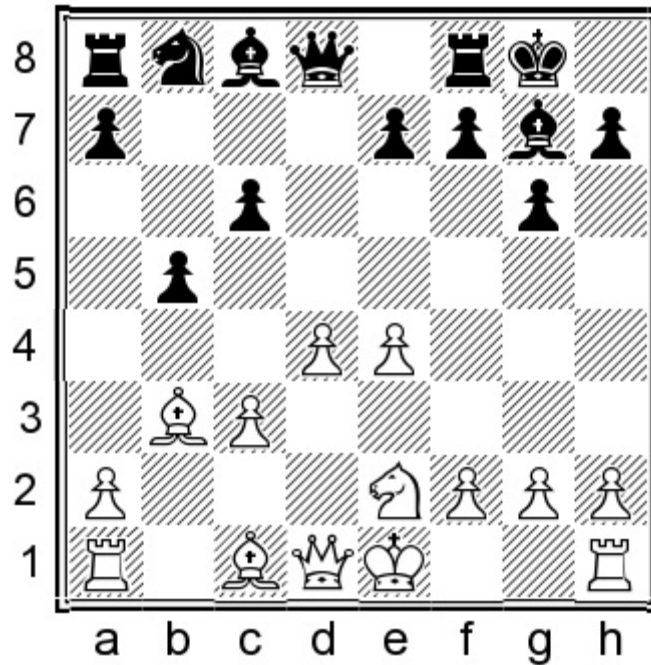
A. 7.♙b5+; B. 7.♚a4+; C. 7.♙a3; D. 7.♙g5

A. 7.♙b5+ c6! 8.♙a4 0-0 9.♗e2

We have a wide choice here as 9...c5 or 9...e5, but I recommend the most consistent and straightforward:

9...b5!? 10.♙b3

The bishop would be too passive on c2. After 10.♙c2 we can play immediately 10...c5! 11.♙e3 (White cannot develop the bishop to the more active square g5 because he should defend d4 against ...b4.) 11...♗d7 12.0-0 ♗b6! 13.♙d3 (13.dxc5 ♗c4↗) 13...♗a4! 14.♙xb5 (14.♚c2 ♙d7; 14.♚d2 b4) 14...♗xc3 15.♗xc3 cxd4=.

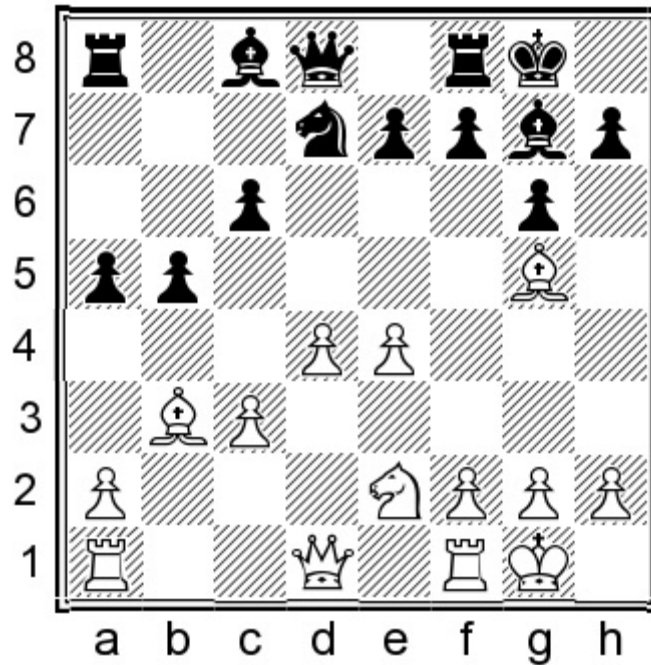


10...a5!? 11.0-0

White can prevent the positional bind on the queenside by 11.a4, but this move would help us open the a6-f1 diagonal. Practice has been satisfactory for Black after 11...b4, but Agrest suggested a slightly different move order: 11...♙a6!, intending to meet 12.0-0 with 12...b4. If White chooses 12.axb5 cxb5 13.0-0, then 13...♞c6 14.♙e3 a4 15.♙d5 (15.♙a2 b4; 15.♙c2 ♞a5 16.♙d3 ♚d7) 15...♞c8 16.♞e1 e6 17.♙a2 ♞a5 with an edge.

11...♞d7 12.♙g5

12.♙e3 has no bite: 12...a4 13.♙c2 ♞b6 14.♙d3 (14.♞f4 e5 15.dxe5 ♞c4=) 14...♙e6 15.♞f4 ♙c4 with a total light-squared domination.



Black has here at least two decent plans: **A1.** 12...a4 and **A2.** 12...c5.

A1. 12...a4! 13.♙c2 ♘b6

Our idea is clear – we aim to restrict the mobility of the enemy’s central pawns with ...♙e8 and ...e5, or first ...f6, ...♙e6, and later ...e5. White finds it difficult to come closer to our king, for instance:

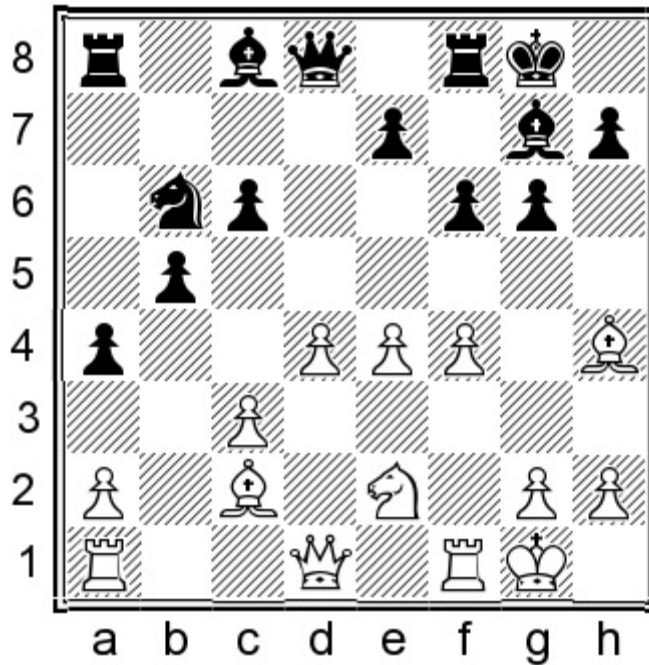
14.♙d3 ♙e6 15.♘f4 ♙c4 16.♙xc4 ♘xc4 17.♘d3 ♙c7 18.e5 c5!.

14.♘c1 c5 (14...♙e8 15.♘d3 e5 16.dxe5 ♘c4) 15.dxc5 ♘c4 16.♙xd8 ♙xd8 17.♘e2 f6 18.♙c1 e5, intending ...♙f8.

14.♙c1 f6 15.♙h6 e5 16.♙xg7 ♙xg7 17.♙d3 ♙e6 and Black went on to win, billmerrell-breughel, Slow Ladder 2012.

Perhaps White should try to open the f-file with:

14.f4 f6 15.♙h4



15...f5!

15...♘c4 16.♙d3 f5 is also possible.

16.e5

16.♘g3 b4 17.e5 ♘d5 18.cxb4 ♘e3 and 16.♙h1 ♘c4 17.♙c1 fxe4 18.♙xe4 ♙d6 19.♙g5 ♙e6 20.♘g3 ♙d5 could not appeal to White.

16...♙e6 17.♙f2 ♙c4 18.♙d2 ♘d5 19.♙f3 ♙c8

Nimzowitsch would have been happy to see this blockade. Black is in total command.

A2. 12...c5

This move is based on a plan with ...♙c7, ...e5. It could lead to a closed centre if White answered with d5.

13.♙d2

Alternatively:

13.♙b1 ♙a6! 14.♙e1

Or 14.e5 h6 15.♙e3 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♘b6↗.

14...h6 15.♙e3 e6 16.♘f4 ♙e7, when 17.e5 ♙fd8 18.♙f3 b4 undermines the base of the pawn chain;

13.♙d5 ♙b8;

13.d5 ♘e5↗;

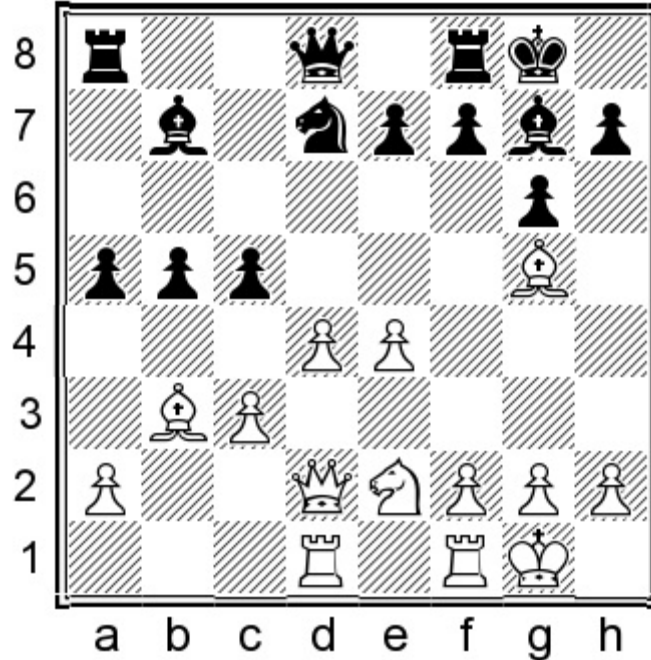
13. ♖c1 ♗a6.

13... ♗b7! 14. ♖ad1!?

The alternatives are passive:

14. f3 ♗a6!? 15. ♖ab1 b4;

14. ♗e3 ♖c8 15. ♖ab1 b4 16. cxb4 cxb4 17. ♖fc1 ♗b6=.



14... ♗c7!?

The game Stoczek-Evdokimov, Travemuende 2009, saw:

14... cxd4. In my opinion Black should exchange on d4 in the Grünfeld only if he gets concrete benefits, but this move is fine on the concrete situation – 15. cxd4 ♖c8 (15... ♖e8!? 16. f3 ♗b6=) 16. d5

The game actually went 16. ♗c3?! a4 17. ♗d5 ♗a6.

16... a4 17. d6 (17. ♗c2 ♗e5) 17... ♗f6 18. ♗d5 ♗xd5 19. ♗xd5 ♗xg5 20. ♗xg5 e5!. Black's queenside pawns could be more dangerous than the securely blocked d6-pawn.

My idea is to prepare ...e5, which would be quite good in the event of 15. ♗e3 e5 16. d5 c4 17. ♗c2 f6 18. ♗h4 ♗c5 19. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 20. f3 ♖fc8 21. ♖b1 ♗a6 22. ♗f2 ♗f8.

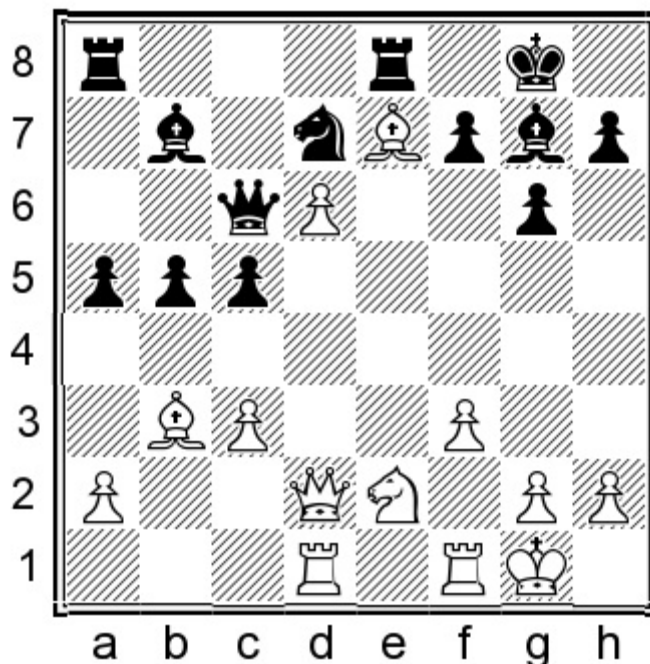
White should take the pawn:

15. ♗xe7 ♖fe8 16. d5

Or 16. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 17. dxc5 ♖xe4 18. ♗d7 ♖e7 19. ♗xc7 ♖xc7 with a pleasant endgame.

16... ♗e5 17. d6 ♗xe4 18. f3 ♗c6

18... ♗f5 19. ♗c2 ♗e6 is also possible.



At first White's position looks overwhelming, but we need only two moves (...c4 and ...b4) to produce our own passer. Play might continue with 19. ♖h1 c4 20. ♙c2 ♚c5 21. ♜fe1 b4 22. ♜f4 bxc3 with sharp balanced play.

B. 7. ♜a4+ ♘d7

White's check was aimed against our thematic plan with ...c7-c5 and ...♘c6, so our suggested answer looks like a concession. However, I think that this is the best way to achieve rich dynamic play. After all, the knight supports ...c5 and can be quickly redeployed to f6 or b6 with a tempo. Let us consider the alternatives:

7...c6 seems illogical as after 8. ♘f3 0-0 9. ♙e2 c5 10. 0-0 ♘c6 11. ♙e3 White is a clear tempo ahead with ♜a4. On the other hand, it is arguable that the queen is so much better placed on that square. After 11...♜a5 12. ♜xa5 ♘xa5 Black should not have serious problems.

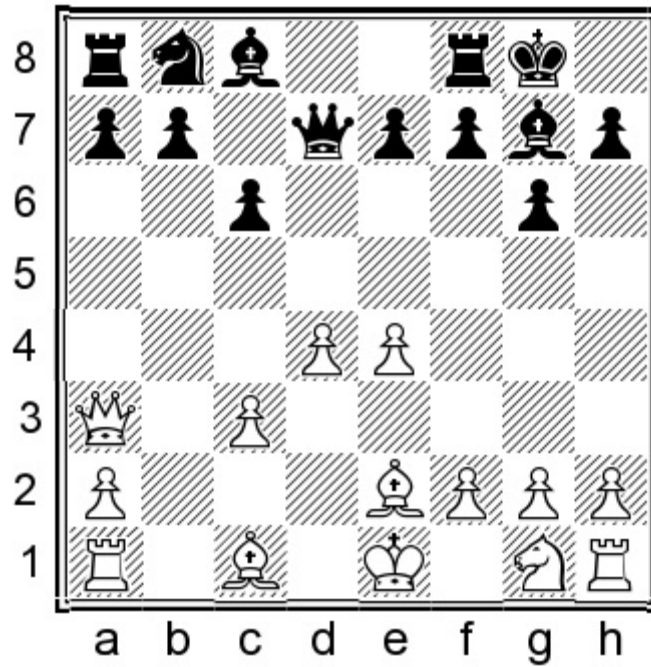
7...♙d7?! 8. ♜a3! is not quite in the spirit of the Grünfeld as ...c5 begins to look like a distant mirage.

7...♜d7 may be as good as the text. Then 8. ♙b5 has been topical lately.

Or 8. ♜b3 0-0 9. ♙e3 c5 10. ♘f3 (10.d5?! b5! 11. ♙xc5 ♜c7 12. ♙d4 ♙xd4 13.cxd4 ♜a5+ forces the awkward 14. ♖d1.) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c6 12. ♜d1 ♜d6=.

8. ♜a3 b6! 9. ♘f3 ♙b7 10. ♙d3 c5 11. ♙e3 0-0 12. 0-0=.

8...c6 9. ♙e2 0-0 10. ♜a3

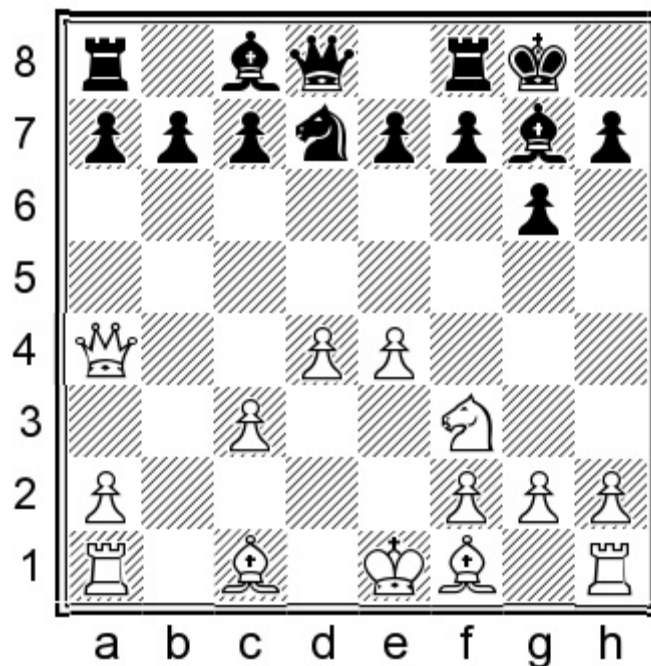


10...b6 11.♘f3 c5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♕b7 14.♚e3 ♞c6=, Bartholomew-Ding Liren, chess.com 2019.

8.♞f3

Another setup is 8.♔g5 0-0 9.♖d1. Black obtains a pleasant flexible position without any weaknesses with 9...c5 10.♚a3 ♚c7 11.♞f3 ♞f6 12.♔d3 ♔g4 13.0-0 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♖fc8. The f6-knight is eyeing the square f4.

8...0-0



B1. 9.♔e3; **B2.** 9.♚a3; **B3.** 9.♔g5; **B4.** 9.♔e2.

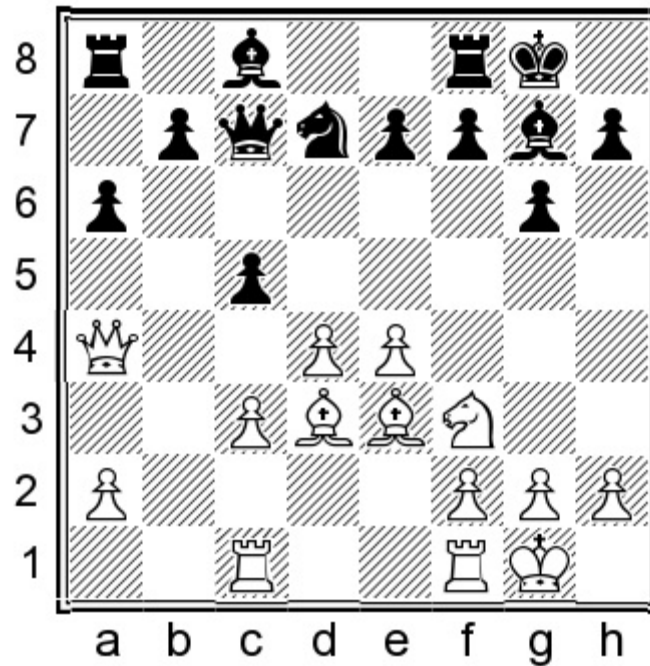
B1. 9.♙e3 c5 10.♞c1

If White put his rook on d1, we would open the c-file – 10.♞d1 ♖b6 11.♜b3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♜d6. On the opposite, against ♞c1, we keep it close for a while:

10...♜c7

Actually, 10...♖b6 11.♜d1 ♙g4 and 10...a6 11.♜a3 b6 are decent alternatives.

11.♙d3 a6 12.0-0



12...b5 13.♜d1 ♙b7 14.♜d2 e5=

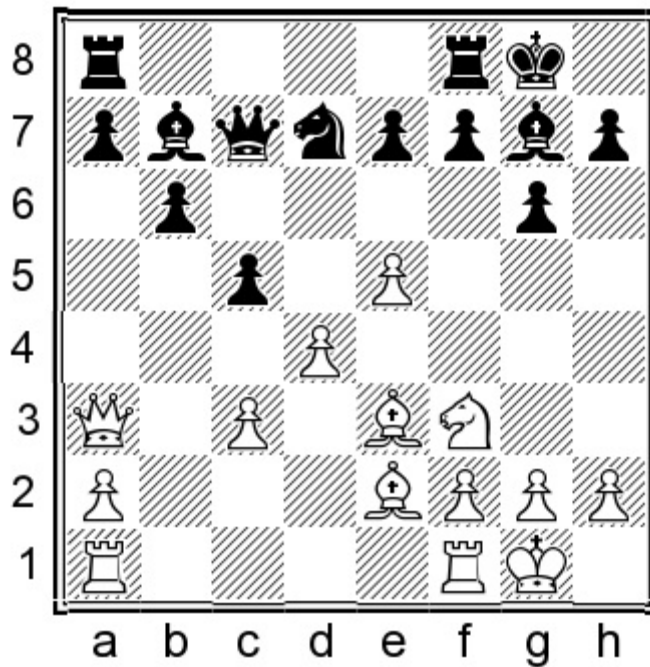
White's queen's roaming has provided us with tempi to treat this thematic position aggressively. Cuadrado-Hyde, ICCF 2016, went 15.♙h6 exd4!? 16.♙xg7 ♖xg7 17.cxd4 c4 18.d5 ♜b6 with sharp play.

B2. 9.♜a3 c5

Vachier-Lagrave stubbornly but not too successfully defended the plan with 9...b6 10.♙d3 ♙b7 11.♙c2 e5 in his 2016 blitz match against Nakamura.

10.♙d3

Another typical structure arises after 10.♙e2 b6 11.0-0 ♙b7 12.e5 ♜c7 13.♙e3. It is not dangerous since White's queen has purely defensive functions on a3. Obviously, we should expand on the queenside:



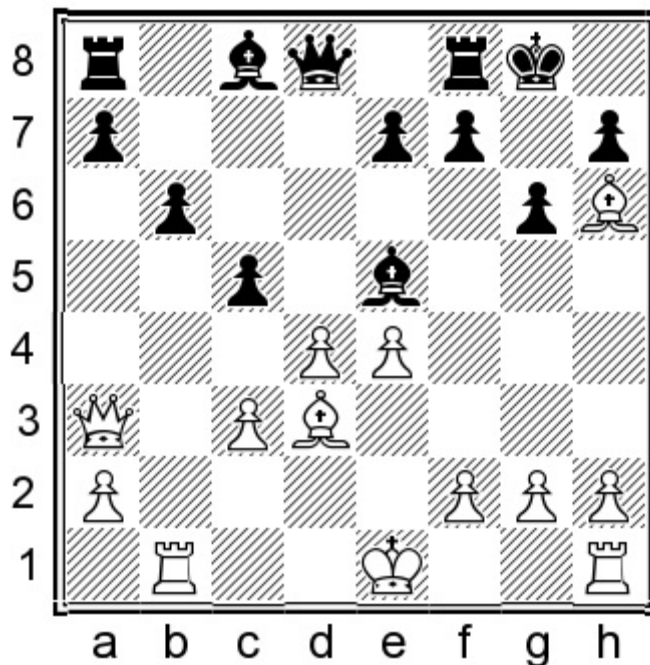
13...a6 14.♖b2 ♜fc8

14...e6 15.h4 b5 16.h5 ♜fc8 17.♞ac1 ♕d5 18.♘g5 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♖b7 deserves attention. 15.♜fc1=, Najer-Inarkiev, Ekaterinburg 2013.

10...b6 11.♞b1 ♘e5!?

The standard setup is 11...♖c7 12.0-0 ♕b7 13.♞e1 e6, but why not to exploit the hanging ♕d3.

12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.♕h6=



Both games I know were drawn from here:

a) 13...♙g7 14.♙xg7 ♖xg7 15.d5 e6 16.c4 exd5 17.cxd5 f5 18.♚c3+ ♗h6 19.♚d2+ ♖g7 20.♚c3+ ♗h6 21.♚d2+ ♖g7 22.♚c3+ ♗h6 ½-½, Just-Wister, ICCF 2017.

b) 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 ♚xd4 15.♙xf8 ♖xf8 16.0-0 ♙e6 17.♞fd1 ♙g4 18.♙e2 ♚xe4 19.♙xg4 ♚xg4 20.♚d3 ♞c8 21.g3 ♙d6 22.♞bc1 ♙c5 23.♖g2 ♞c6 24.f3 ♚e6 25.♞c2 ♚f6 26.♚a6 ♞c7 27.♚d3 ♖g7 28.♚c3 ♚xc3 29.♞xc3 e5 ½-½, Löffler-Hempel, ICCF 2016.

B3. 9.♙g5 c5 10.♞c1

The c-file will be probably open in future, so the rook's most natural place is on c1.

10.♞d1 h6! faces White with a difficult choice:

11.♙h4?! maintains the hit on e7, but the bishop will be missing from the centre – 11...♗f6!

12.♙d3 (12.e5 ♗d5 13.dxc5 ♗xc3 14.♞xd8 ♗xa4 15.♞d4 ♗xc5 16.♙xe7 ♗e6) 12...♙g4 13.0-0 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♗h5.

11.♙e3, on the other hand, leads to nearly the same position as in the event of 9.♙e3. Black follows the same recipe:

11...cxd4 12.cxd4 ♗b6 13.♚b3

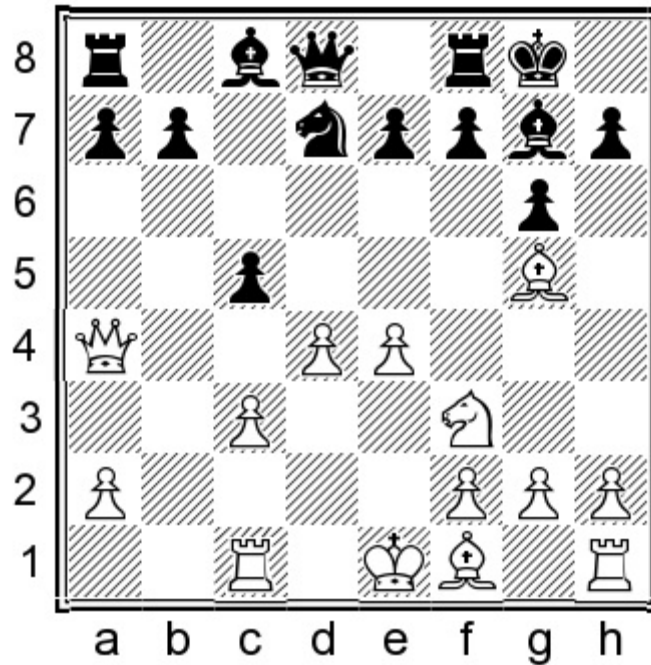
13.♚a3 ♚d6! 14.♚xd6 exd6 15.♙d3 f5! 16.0-0 (16.e5 ♞d8) 16...g5 17.d5 ♗a4, Jacobsen-Petrosian, Gibraltar 2008. Black is already slightly better.

13...♙d7 (13...♚d6 14.♞c1 ♙g4=) 14.♞c1

10.♙e2?! again is dubious, but this time things are more complicated than in the note to White's ninth move:

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗c5! 12.♚a3 ♗xe4 13.♙xe7 ♚b6 14.♙xf8 ♙xf8 with terrific compensation, for example: 15.♚e3 ♙b4+ 16.♖f1 ♙f5, followed by ...♞e8. A simpler and probably stronger option is:

10...♗f6 11.♚c2 ♚c7.



10...h6! 11.♘e3

The game Dreev-Gulko, New York 1989 saw 11.♘h4?!. According to the computer, Black should punish it with 11...g5 12.♘g3 g4, but my human advice is 11...♘f6!. Then White should part with his dark-squared bishop with 12.♘xf6 as 12.♘d3 ♘h5! would be quite awkward for him.

11...a6 12.♙a3!

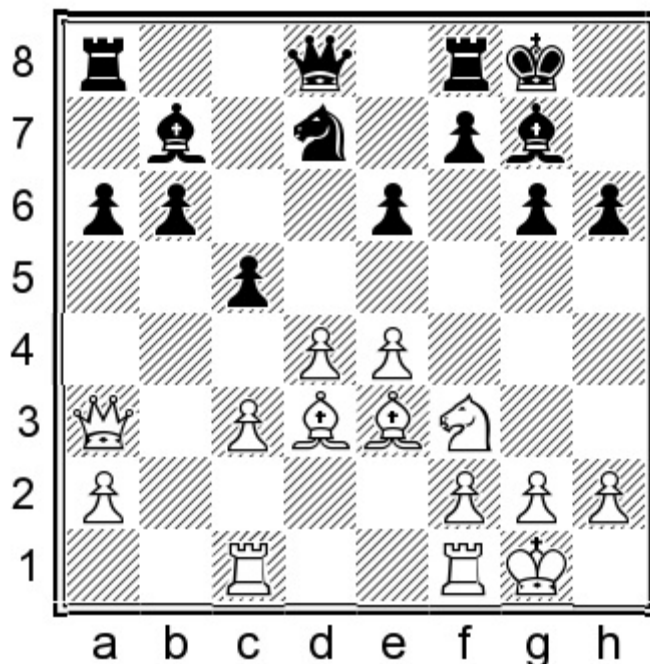
Or 12.♘e2 b5 13.♙a3 ♘b7; .

12...b6 13.♘d3 e6

It is good to restrain White's d4-pawn. 13...♘b7 14.0-0 ♘f6 15.d5 is better for White since the only counterplay with 15...♘g4 16.♘d2 f5?! can be met by 17.♖fe1! and play opens in White's favour.

14.0-0 ♘b7

This position would have been pleasant for White, stayed his queen on d2 or e2. It has nothing to do on the left flank which is, in principle, a Black's domain.



The game Serper-Chuchelov, Novosibirsk 1989, went 15.♖fd1 ♔c7 16.♘d2 ♖fd8 17.♙b1, when Black should have displayed activity with 17...b5!.

Instead he removed his knight from the main battleground with 17...♞f6?! 18.f3 ♖ac8? (19...c4) 19.dxc5! bxc5 20.♘c4 and unexpectedly White's knight obtained a dominating stand.

Najer-Shomoev, Warsaw 2005, saw a more logical idea: 15.♙b3 ♔c7

The computer proposes 15...b5 16.dxc5 ♖b8 17.a3 ♔e7 18.c4 bxc4 19.♙xc4 ♖fc8 20.♙b1 a5 with an unbreakable position, but all this is not very intuitive, is it.

16.♙d1 (16.♖fe1 c4). The queen is already closer to the kingside so here 16...♞f6 is already a reasonable move.

In the game, Black ruined his position with 16...f5? 17.♙c4 ♖ae8 18.exf5 gxf5 19.a4±. He should have stayed passive on the kingside.

After 17.♘d2 ♖ac8 18.a4 ♖fd8 I do not see how White could improve his setup since 19.♙e2 is hardly good due to 19...cxd4. Besides, Black has the more active 17...b5!?

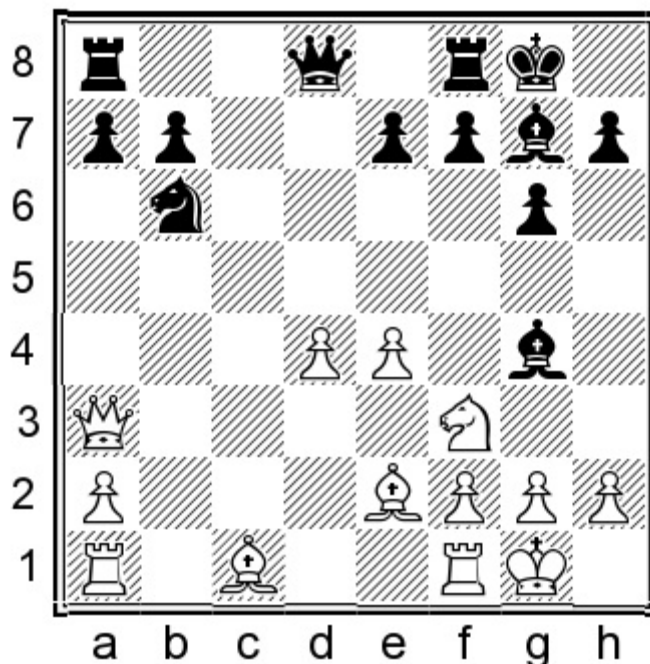
B4. 9.♙e2

This allows us to exploit the pin along the main diagonal:

9...c5 10.0-0 cxd4

This line was well tested in correspondence chess, where it has even brought Black more than 50%. However, you should memorize the forced main line and accept a draw at the end of it. One reasonable way of playing for a win is:

10...♞b6!? 11.♙a3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♙g4



13. ♖g5

13. ♖d1 ♕xf3 14. gxf3 is another frequent line [Actually, 14. ♕xf3 looks more unpleasant to me as 14... ♕xd4 15. ♖g5 ♜c4 (perhaps you can try 15... ♕xa1!?) 16. ♖b4 b5 17. ♕xe7 ♖b6 18. ♕xf8 ♕xa1! 19. ♕c5 ♕c3 20. ♕xb6 ♕xb4 21. e5 ♖c8 22. ♖g4 ♖e8 23. ♕xa7 ♜xe5= is rather barren.] 14... e6! 15. ♕e3 ♖h4 with mutual chances, Biedermann-Fass, ICCF 2018.

13... ♕xf3

13... ♖e8 14. ♕b5 ♕d7 15. ♖ab1 ♕xb5 16. ♖xb5 ♕xd4 17. e5 a6 18. ♖bb1 ♖d5 19. ♖fd1 ♖c5 20. ♖xc5 ♕xc5 21. ♖dc1 ♜a4 22. ♖xb7 ♖eb8 is playable.

14. ♕xf3 ♖xd4 15. ♖ad1 ♖e5 16. ♕xe7

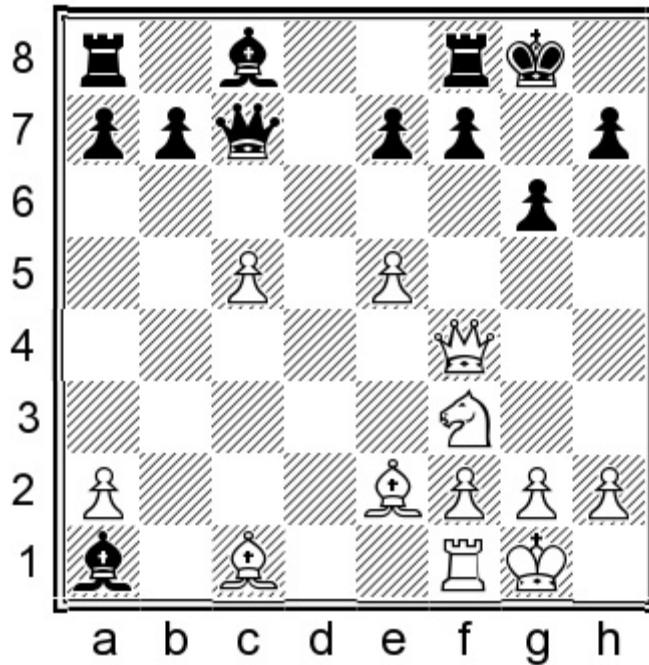
After 16. ♖xe7 both 16... ♖xe7 17. ♕xe7 ♖fe8 and 16... ♖ae8 17. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18. ♕f4 ♖a5 have proved to be comfortable for Black.

16... ♖fc8 17. ♕d6 ♖e8=.

11. cxd4 ♜c5 12. dxc5

Or 12. ♖c2 ♜e6 13. ♕e3 ♜xd4 14. ♜xd4 (14. ♕xd4 ♕xd4 15. ♖ad1 e5 16. ♜xe5 ♖b6) 14... ♕xd4 15. ♖ad1 e5 16. ♕xd4 exd4 17. ♖b2 ♕e6 18. ♖xb7 ♖b6=, Miton-Ivanchuk, Havana 2007.

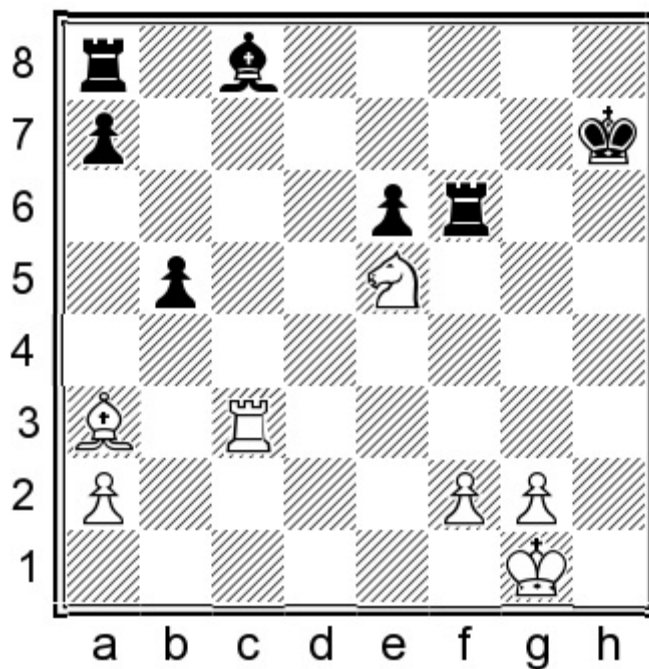
12... ♕xa1 13. e5 ♖c7 14. ♖f4



Black's king looks in peril, but it all should end peacefully.

14...♙c3 15.♚e3 ♚a5 16.♜h6 f6 17.♙c4+ e6 18.h4 ♚xc5 19.h5 ♚xc4 20.hxg6 ♚c7 21.♙a3 ♚g7
22.gxh7+ ♔h8 23.♚xg7+ ♔xg7 24.♙xf8+

Previous games have dug the line 24.♞c1 ♞f7 25.♞xc3 ♔xh7 26.exf6 ♞xf6 27.♘e5 b5! to a draw end:



28.♞c7+ ♔g8 29.g4 ♙a6 30.f3 ♞h6 31.♘c6 ♞h7 32.♘e7+ ♔f7 33.g5 ♞g8! 34.♘xg8+ ♔xg8 35.♙e7 ♔f7
36.♔f2 ♔g6 37.a3 ♙c8 38.♔g3 ♞f7 ½-½, Nataf-Laghetti, ICCF 2016.

24...♔xh7 25.♞c1 ♙xe5=

The latest test of this ending was Dambacher-Chatalbashev, Germany 2019 – 26.♖xe5 fxe5 27.♞c7+ ♕g6 28.g4

Or 28.♞g7 e4 and a draw was signed on move 42 in Fischer-Löffler, ICCF 2017.

Now 28...e4, intending to free the bishop with ...e5, is an easy draw – 29.♞g7+ ♕f6 30.g5+ ♕f5 31.♞c5 e5 32.♞e3 ♞e6=.

Of course 28...b6 29.♕h2 is also a draw after 29...♞a6 30.♞d6 ♞c8 to activate the pieces. The only thing Black must not do is to fall into a mating net as Chatalbashev did with 29...♞b7? 30.♞g7.

C. 7.♞a3 ♖d7

We know from the previous chapter that a white bishop on a3 is not a serious barrier before our favourite breakthrough ...c7-c5. I recommended ...b6, followed up by ...c5. However, here White has saved a tempo on ♖b3. With 7...♖d7 we try to exploit the drawbacks of White's move order. The bishop on a3 is unprotected which enables the threat ...c7-c5xd4, ♖a5+.

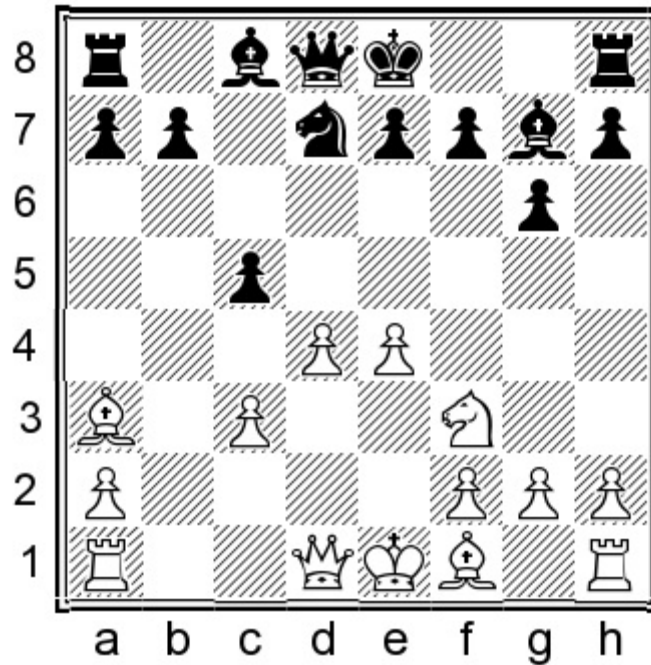
That does not mean 7...b6 is bad. In fact, it is a valuable alternative: 8.♞c4 ♞b7, and here the aggressive 9.♖f3!? is probably too committal: 9...0-0 10.h4! ♖d7! 11.h5 ♖f6 12.hxg6 hxg6 with a sharp position.

8.♖f3

8.♖b3 would obtain a somewhat better version for White of Chapter 6/ line C1, because on d7 the knight is more passive than on c6. Still, Black is fine after 8...c5 9.♞d1 0-0 10.♞e2 ♖a5 11.♖f3, Milov-Mikhalevski, Biel 2002, whereas Kogan suggests 11...♖f6! 12.♞d3 ♞e6 13.♖b2 b6 14.0-0 ♞g4.

8.♞c4 c5 9.♖b3 0-0 10.♖f3 can be attacked by 10...b5! 11.♞d5 ♞b8↑.

8...c5!

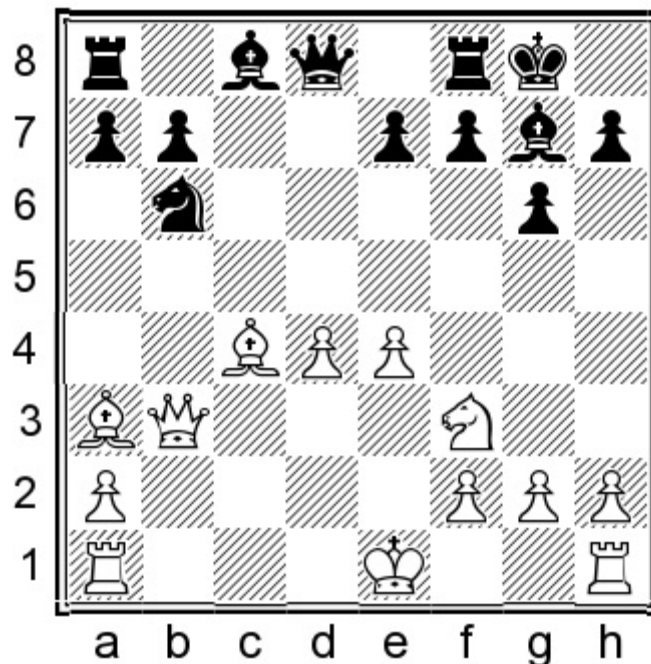


9. ♖b3

9. ♘c4 cxd4 10. ♗b3

10.0-0 dxc3!? 11. ♘xf7+ ♔xf7 12. ♖g5+ ♔e8 13. ♖e6 ♗a5 14. ♖xg7+ ♔f7.

10...0-0 11.cxd4 ♖b6 leads to the following position:



Now 12. ♘e2 ♘e6! 13. ♗b4 ♖c8! would give Black full compensation in the event of 14. ♗xe7 ♗xe7 15. ♘e7 ♖fe8 16. ♘d6 (16. ♘g5 ♘c4 17.e5 f6!; 16. ♘a3 ♘c4 17.e5 f6!; 16. ♘h4 ♘g4 17.e5 f6!) 16...♘c4!, while 14.0-0 ♘c4 15. ♖fe1 ♘xe2 16. ♖xe2 ♖c4 17. ♖d1 ♗d7! 18. ♘c1 a5! passed the initiative to Black in Akobian-Xiong, Saint Louis 2018.

12.0-0 ♖xc4 13. ♗xc4 ♘g4. Black has a pleasant game with the bishop pair advantage and no weaknesses – 14. ♖e5 ♘e6 15. ♗b4 ♗b6!.

9...0-0 10.♔e2

White has also tried:

10.♔d3. On this square the bishop provokes 10...b5!? (Kogan), when White cannot simply castle due to the fork at c4. After 11.♖xb5 ♜b8 12.♗a4 ♘b6 13.♗c2 cxd4 14.♘xd4 (14.cxd4 ♕g4↑) 14...♔d7 15.0-0 ♜c8, Black has enough compensation for the pawn. Furthermore, Black can calmly prepare ...b5 with 10...♜b8! 11.0-0 b5, when either the b3-queen or the d3-bishop should retreat. Then Black has many useful moves on the queenside as ...♗c7, ...a6, ...♔b7, while White seems to lack an active plan.

10.♔c4. This is really begging for 10...b5! 11.♔d5 (or 11.♔xb5 ♜b8 12.♗a4 ♘b6 13.♗d1 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♔b7↑) 11...♜b8↑.

10.♔b5?! cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘f6 12.♔d3 ♕g4̄.

10.♞d1 does not prevent ...b5 either – 10...♗c7 11.♔e2 b5!

10...cxd4

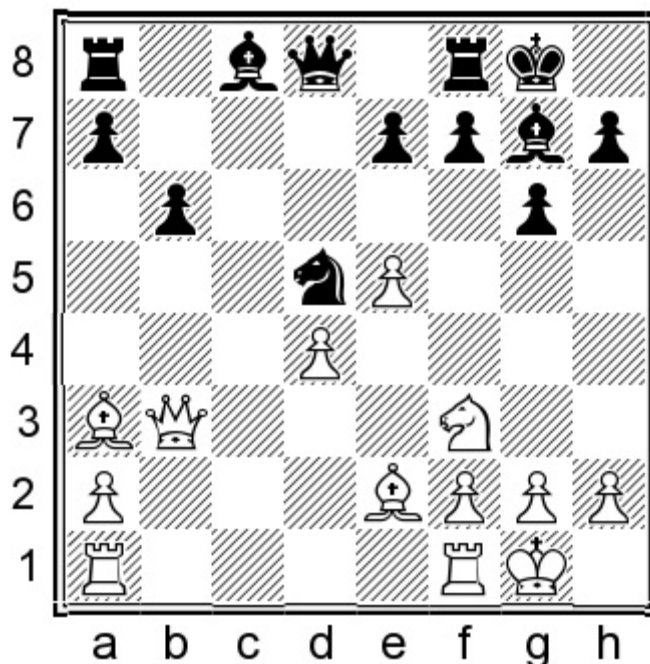
11...♜b8!?, enabling ...b5, looks a valuable alternative.

11.cxd4 ♘f6 12.e5 ♘d5

12...♔e6 13.♖xb7 ♘d5 14.0-0 ♜b8 may lead to a repetition of moves.

13.0-0 b6

It looks like Black is already better due to his control over the d5-square, but White has some threats, connected with:



14. ♘g5!

Now 14... ♖b7 would allow 15. e6! f6 16. ♘f7 ♜c8 17. ♜fe1 ♜c3 (17... ♜xe6 18. ♙c4) 18. ♙f3±, so:

14... h6! 15. ♙f3 ♙b7 16. ♘e4 ♜d7

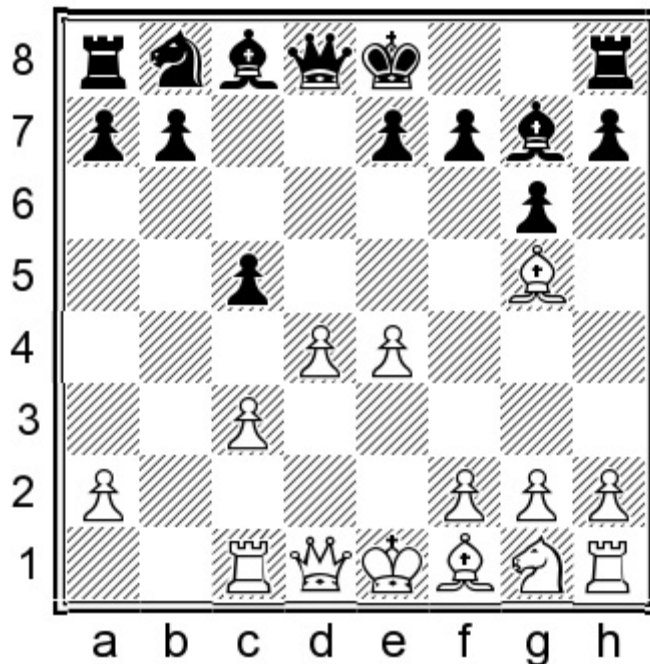
Black has consolidated his pieces. In Atalik-Lin Weiguo, Beijing 1997, White sought counterplay with 17. ♜fe1 ♜ac8 18. ♜ad1 ♜fd8 19. e6 fxe6 20. ♙g4 ♜c6 21. ♙c1, with some compensation.

Perhaps Black should deprive the enemy of that resource by 18... ♜c7 when 19. e6 fxe6 20. ♙g4 ♘f4 would be outright bad.

D. 7. ♙g5

This bishop development is less popular than ♙e3, although it is not deprived of venom. I recommend to let White push d5, and we could destroy its centre later with ...e6 or ...f5. First we should take control of the dark squares:

7... c5 8. ♜c1



Vachier-Lagrave adhered almost exclusively to the most principled retort – 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♖c6 10.d5 ♗d4 11.♙e3 e5, but more than a dozen games from his blitz match against Nakamura showed that 12.♙c4 0-0 13.♗e2± favoured White. So, no simple solution exists.

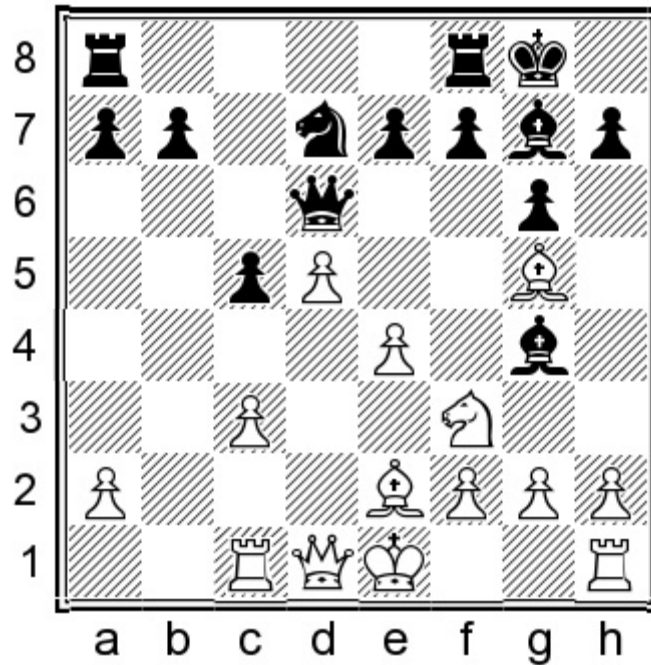
I will analyse two good options from here:

the easier to play **D1**. 8...0-0!?, and the typical double-edged Grünfeld plan **D2**. 8...♙a5.

D1. 8...0-0!? 9.♗f3

9.d5 ♙d6 10.♗f3 ♙g4 transposes, while 9...f5 10.♙c4 ♖h8∞ is sharper but risky.

9...♙g4 10.d5 ♙d6 11.♙e2 ♗d7



12.0-0

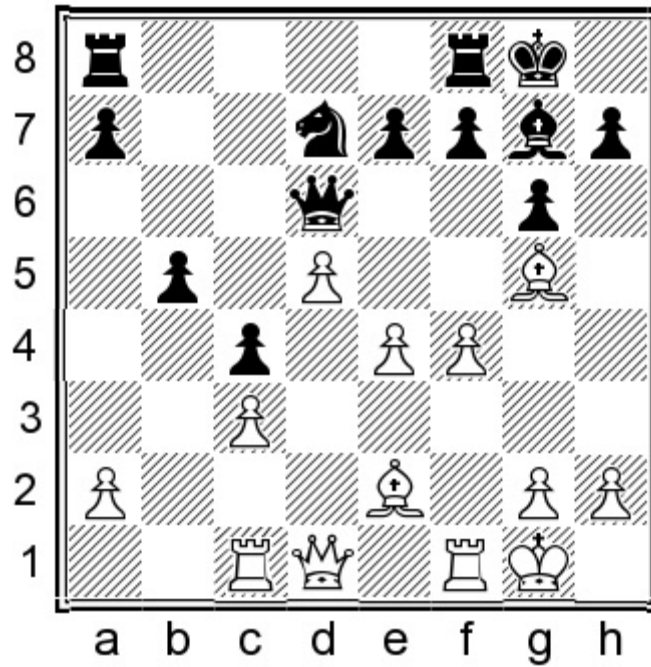
12.c4 might be premature as it offers us all the central dark squares after 12...♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♗d4 14.0-0 ♘e5. Avotins-Rawlings, ICCF 2014, went 15.♙e2 (or 15.♙h6 ♜fe8 16.♙e2 e6 17.♖h1 f5 18.exf5 exf5) 15...f5 16.exf5 ♜xf5 17.♞d2 ♜af8 18.♙e3 ♞f6 19.♖h1 ♙xe3 20.♞xe3 b6 21.h3 ♜f4 22.g3 ♜d4 23.f4 ♘f7 24.♜fe1 ♘d6 25.♙d3 g5 26.♞f3 ♞h6 ½-½.

12...♙xf3 13.♙xf3 b5

Black fixes his superiority on the queenside and proceeds with undermining the centre. For instance:

14.♞d2

14.♙e2 c4 15.f4



15...e6

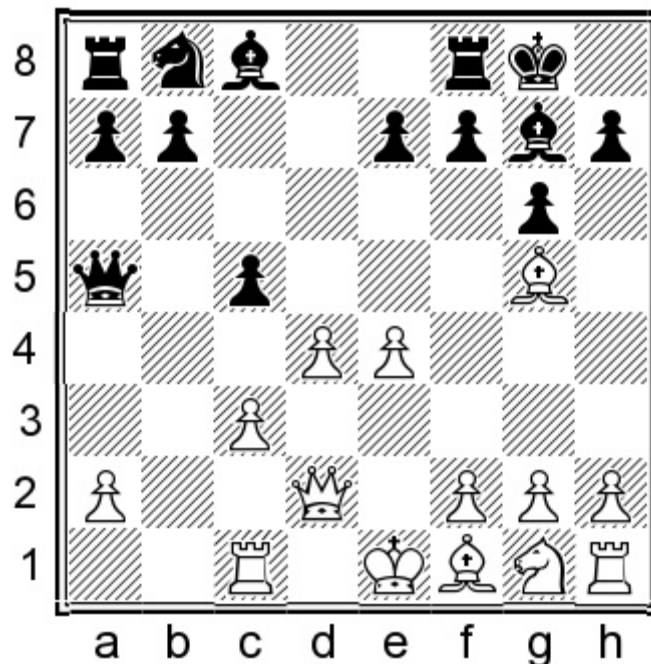
15...f6 16.♘h4 ♞c5 17.♚d4 e5 is also possible.

16.e5 ♚c5+ 17.♙h1 exd5∞, Goganov-Nepomniachtchi, St Petersburg 2018.

14...c4 15.♖fd1 ♞c5=

D2. 8...♚a5 9.♚d2 0-0

9...f5 10.exf5 ♙xf5 11.♞f3 ♞c6 looks playable, but lately White plays successfully in the structure which arises following 10.e5!?.



10. ♖f3

10.d5 is more critical, but Black gets plenty of counterplay with 10...e6 11.d6

11.c4 ♜xd2+ 12.♔xd2 ♘d7 13.♗f3 h6 14.♙e3 b6. Black will complete development and undermine the enemy centre with ...f5.

11...♜a4

11...b5 12.♙d3 ♘d7 13.♗f3 is also tangled.

12.♙d3

We could meet 12.f3 the same way – 12...f6 (12...♘d7 13.♙e7 ♜e8 14.h4 ♞b8 15.h5 b5 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.♗e2 b4 18.c4 ♙b7 looks rather provocative.) 13.♙f4 e5 14.♜d5+ ♔h8 15.♙e3 ♘d7 16.h4 ♘b6 17.♜xc5 ♞d8 18.h5 g5, and White is already worse.

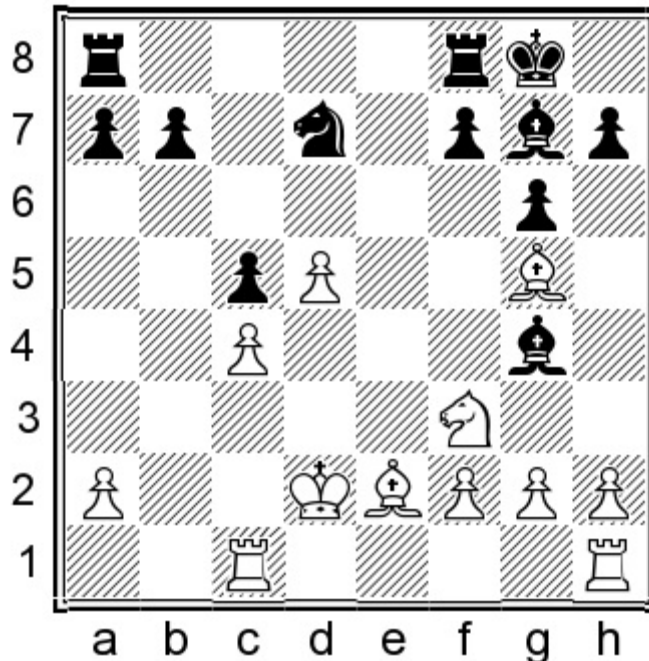
12...f6 13.♙h6 e5.

10...♙g4!

Keeping the tension. 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♜xd2+ 12.♔xd2 ♙g4 13.♔e3 ♙xf3 14.♔xf3 is not pleasant to defend.

11.d5 e6 12.c4

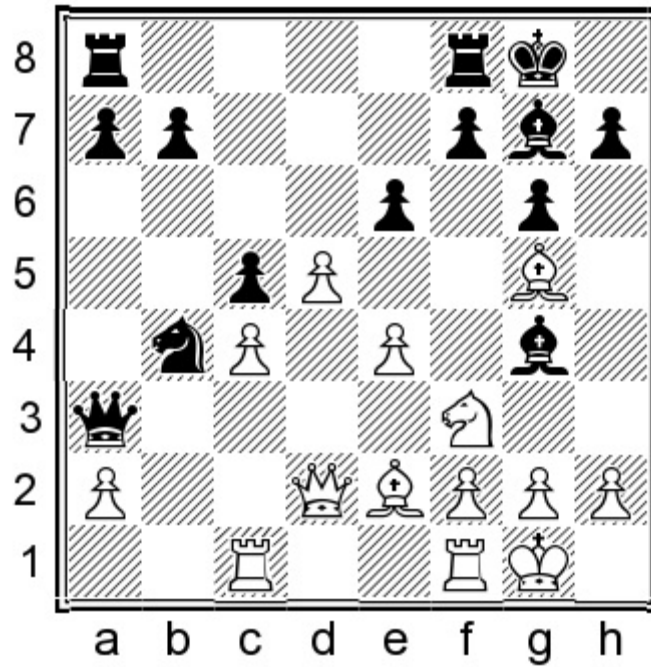
12.♙e2 allows us to open the e-file – 12...exd5 13.exd5 ♘d7 14.c4 ♜xd2+ 15.♔xd2



Now we can destroy the enemy centre with ...b5, e.g. 15...♞fe8 16.♞he1 h6 17.♙e3 b5 18.cxb5 ♘f6 19.♙c4 ♘xd5 20.♙xd5 ♞ad8 21.♞xc5 ♙f8 22.♞c4 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 ♞xd5+ 24.♔e2 ♞xb5=, or play for a win with:

15...h6! 16.♙e3 f5 17.g3 ♞f6= (17...g5=), planning ...♞a6.

12...♜a3! 13.♙e2 ♘a6 14.0-0 ♘b4

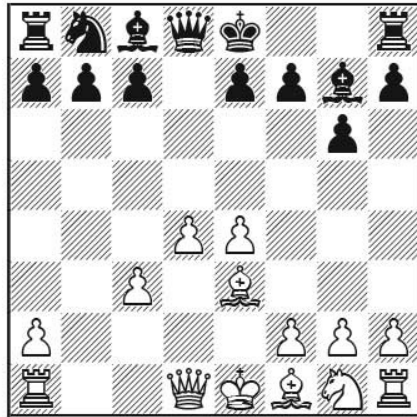


Black has sufficient counterplay. The stem game Gyimesi-Mikhalevski, Austria 2010, went further: 15. ♖e7 ♜xa2 16. ♞g5? ♜fe8 17. ♙xc5 ♙xf3 18. ♙xf3 ♘d3. More precise was 16. ♞f4 ♙xf3 17. ♞xf3 with a messy position. Still, Black's chances are at least not worse even after 17... ♙d4, and he also has 17... ♜fc8 or 17... ♘c2!? 18. ♙xc5 ♖b6 19. ♙d1 ♖xc5 20. ♜xc2 ♞a1 21. g3 ♜ab8=.

Chapter 8

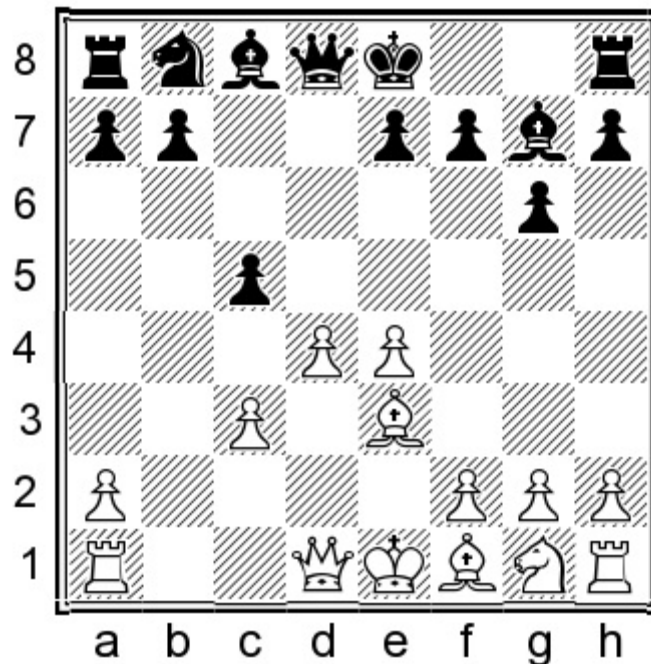
The Exchange System 7.♙e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3
6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♙e3



Main Ideas

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♙e3 c5

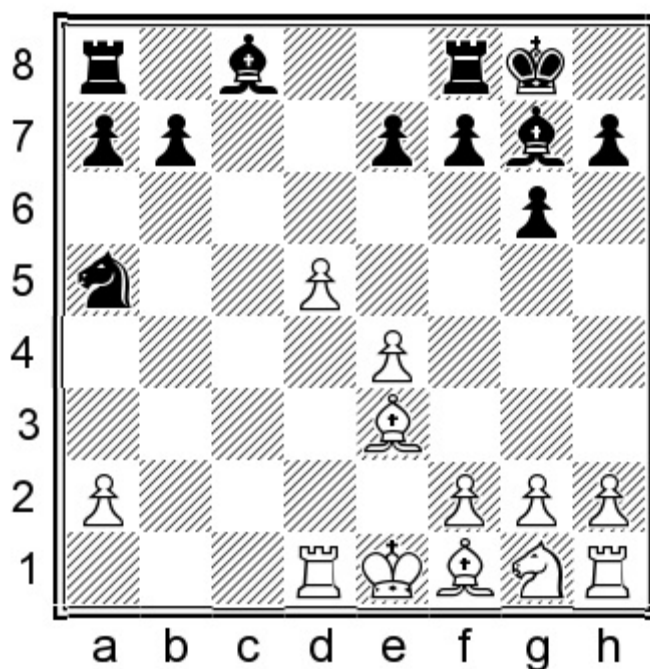


By firstly developing the bishop, White hopes to get the best of the 7.♘f3 system while sidestepping the pin from g4. This move order is often adopted by players who love endgames. Their favourite line is 8.♚d2 ♚a5 9.♞c1 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♚xd2+ 11.♔xd2 with an active king and a safe position. I propose to complicate their task with the relatively rare setup:

A. 8.♚d2 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6 10.♞d1 0-0

Now White can trade queens with 11.d5 ♚a5 12.♚xa5 ♘xa5, but his rook is not on the open c-file, and more importantly, his centre has lost its flexibility and can be attacked with ...f5:

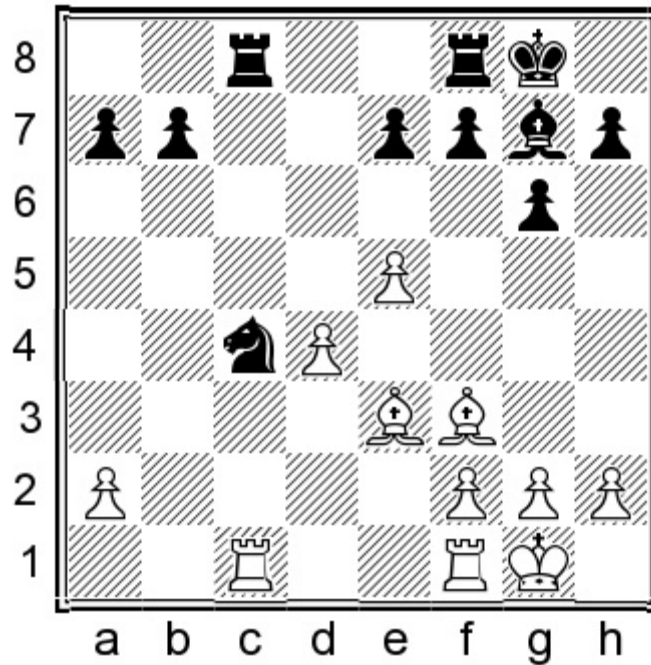
Dumitrache-Vokarev
Bucharest 1998



13.♚d2 b6 14.♚b4 f5! 15.♚d3 fxe4 16.♚xe4 ♚b7.

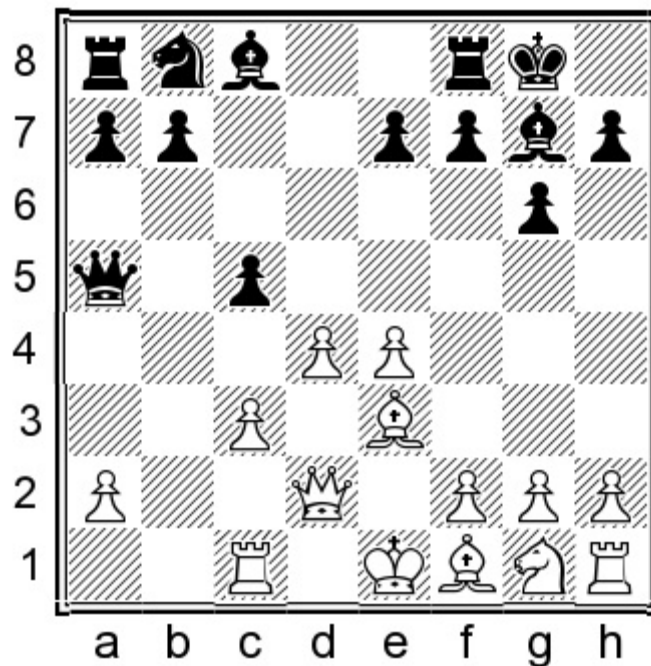
In most games White prefers to develop the knight, but then our favourite plan with ...♚g4 works fine:

11.♘f3 ♚g4 12.♚e2 ♚a5 13.0-0 ♞ac8 14.♚xa5 ♘xa5 15.♞c1 ♚xf3 16.♚xf3 (16.gxf3 ♘c6) 16...♘c4 17.e5



It is true that Black has no chances to win this position, but on the other hand, 17...b5! 18.♗b7 ♜b8 19.♗d5 ♜fc8 20.e6 ♜b6 21.exf7+ ♔f8 22.a4 e6 looks like an easy draw.

B. 8.♞c1 ♚a5 9.♚d2 0-0

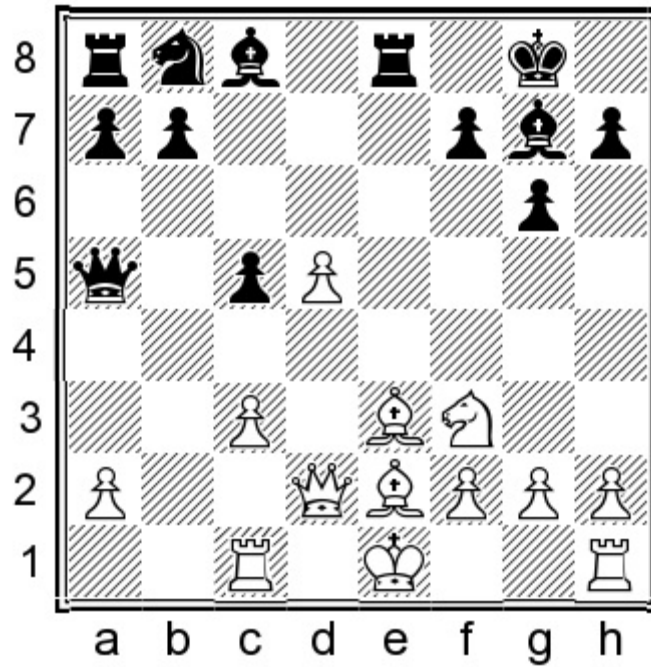


This leads to original and interesting positions. Since White's rook is already on c1, we'll not hurry to open the c-file. Instead we'll switch on an X-ray against the queen on d2 by bringing our rook to d8.

10.♞f3

10.d5 is more principled, but the arising pawn structure with an open e-file is good for Black: 10...e6

11.♘f3 exd5 12.exd5 ♖e8 13.♙e2:

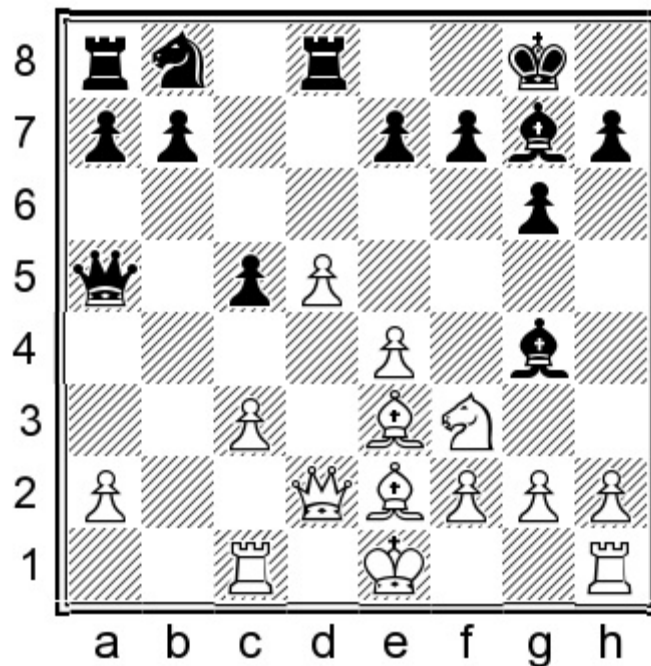


Karpov-Kasparov, Lyon/New York 1990, continued 13...♙f5 14.0-0 ♘d7 15.h3 ♘b6 (15...♘f6=) 16.g4 ♙d7 17.c4 ♗xd2 18.♘xd2 ♘a4=.

10...♖d8

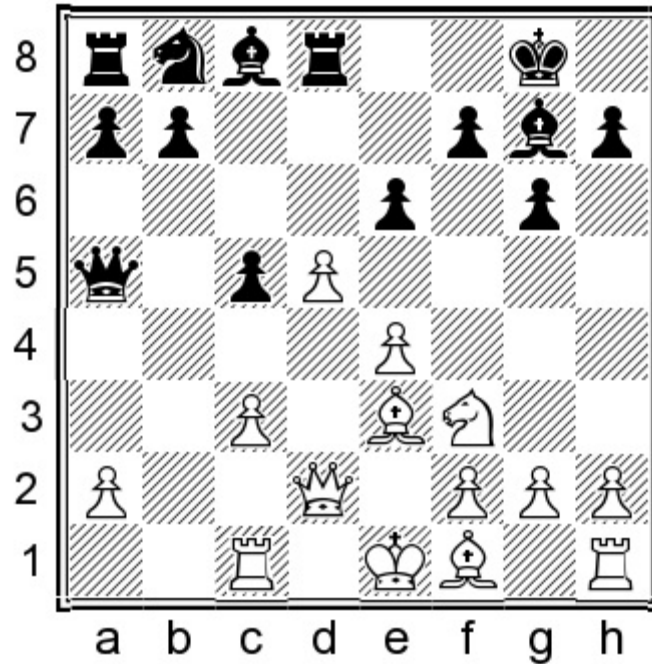
The whole White's setup is devised to support d5, followed by c4. He can play it now or on the next move.

11.♙e2 ♙g4! 12.d5

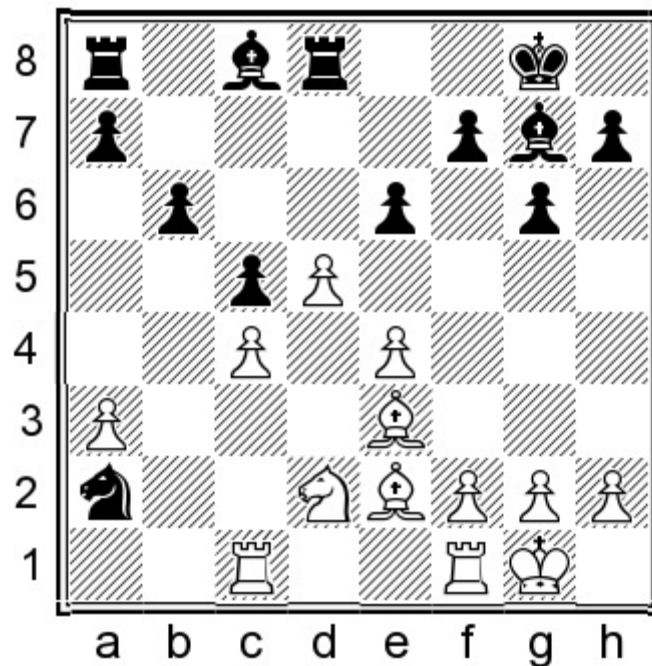


12...c4! is pleasant for Black so the main danger should be:

11.d5 e6!



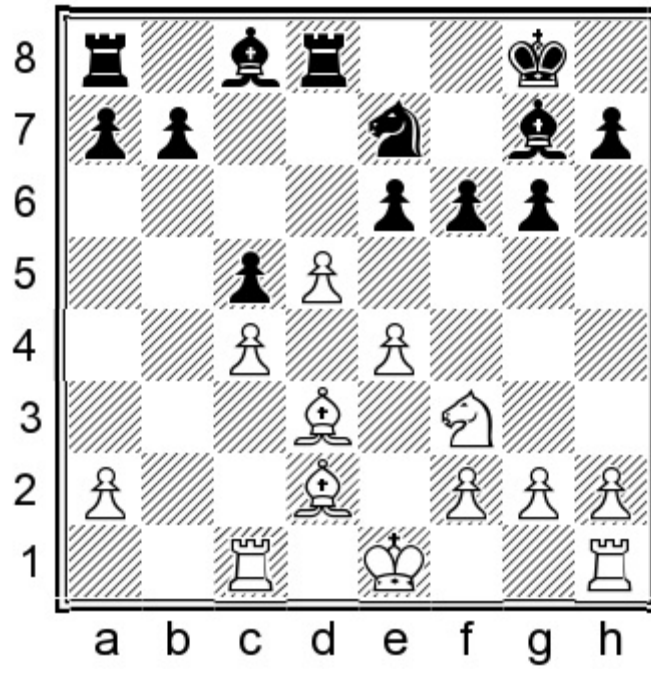
Now White can finally play 12.c4, but after 12...♙xd2+ he faces an unpleasant dilemma. If he recaptures with the king, it will feel in the draught on the open d-file: 13.♔xd2 ♖a6 14.a3 f5!? 15.exf5 exd5. In the event of 13.♗xd2 b6 14.♕e2 ♖a6 15.0-0 ♖b4 16.a3 ♗a2, his pieces lack coordination:



See **game 16** Tunik-Timofeev, St. Petersburg 2002.

12.♕g5 f6! 13.♕e3 ♗c6 14.♕d3 ♗e7. This gives Black more chances to win than 14...exd5 15.exd5 c4!
16.♕xc4 ♕e6 17.♞d1 ♗e7 18.dxe6! =.

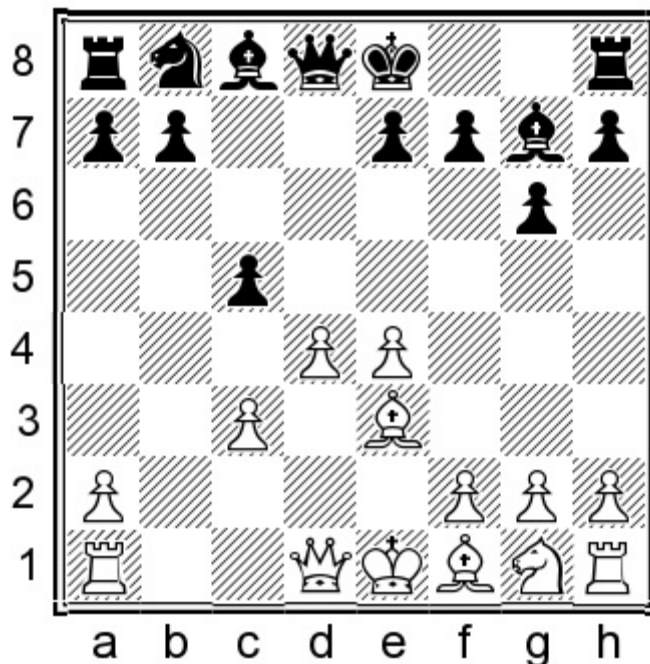
15.c4 ♙xd2+ 16.♕xd2



16...b6 17.0-0 ♗d7=.

Chapter 8 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 c5



A. 8.♙d2; B. 8.♞c1.

8.♗f3 and 8.♞b1 ♗c6! 9.♗f3 ♙g4 transpose to Chapter 9/line D.

8.♙c4 ♙a5 9.♙d2 ♗c6 10.♗e2 0-0 11.♞d1 does not set Black any problems. He can trade queens by 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 ♙xd2+ 13.♞xd2 ♗a5 14.♙d3 ♙d7 15.0-0 ♞fc8=.

A. 8.♙d2

This move is by far the most popular choice of White. Most often Black answers with 8...♙a5 9.♞c1 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♙xd2+ 11.♗xd2, when White's king is quite active in the endgame.

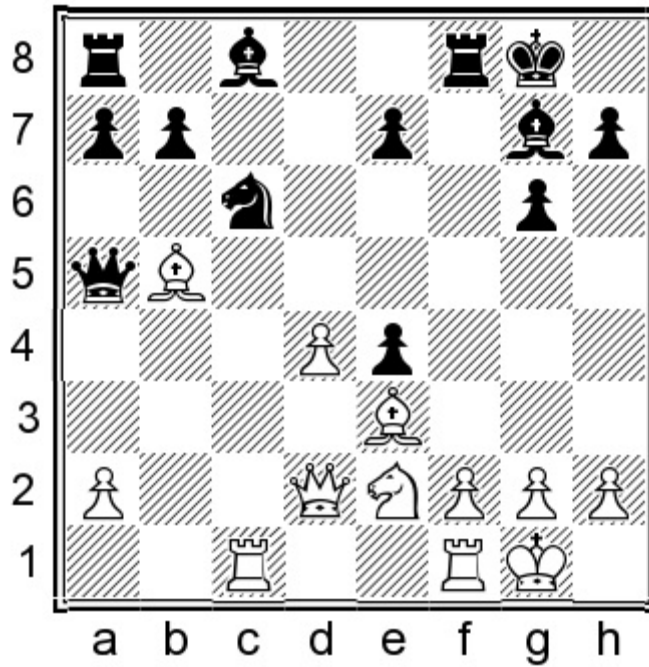
I chose for our repertoire a more straightforward and universal approach, which is efficient in a wide variety of variations:

8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗c6 10.♞d1

10.♙b5 deserves attention.

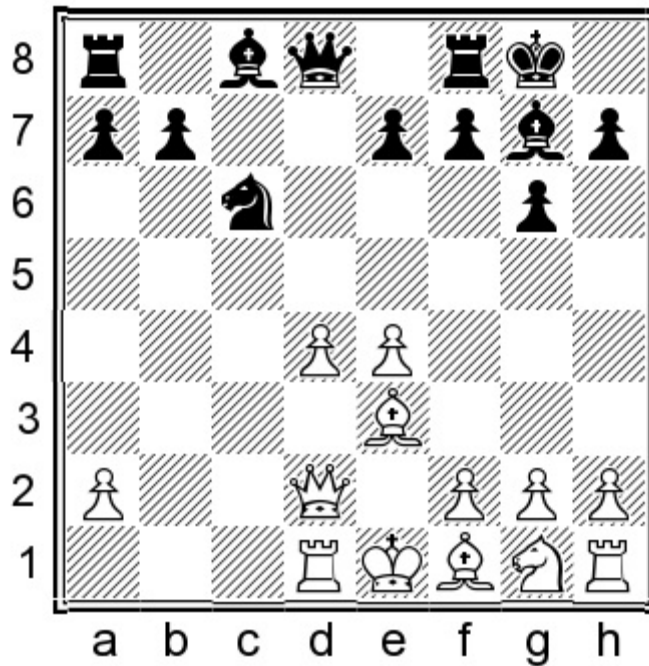
Then 10...0-0 is a bit passive – 11.♗e2 ♙a5 12.♙xa5 ♗xa5 13.♞c1 a6 14.♙d3. Several correspondence games showed that Black has counterplay after:

10...f5! 11.♗e2 fxe4 12.0-0 0-0 13.♞ac1 ♙a5



14.♙c4+ ♔h8 15.♜b2 ♚d8 16.a3 ♚d6 17.♞fd1 ♞b8 18.♘c3 ♙f5 19.h3 ♜d7 20.♙d5 ♞bc8 21.g4 ♙xg4= 22.hxg4 ♜xg4+ 23.♕f1 e5 24.♙xc6 exd4 25.♙xd4 ♙xd4 26.♞xd4 ♜h3+ 27.♕g1 ♜g4+ 28.♕f1 ♜h3+ 1/2-1/2, Freeman-Casabona, ICCF 2013.

10...0-0



11.♘f3

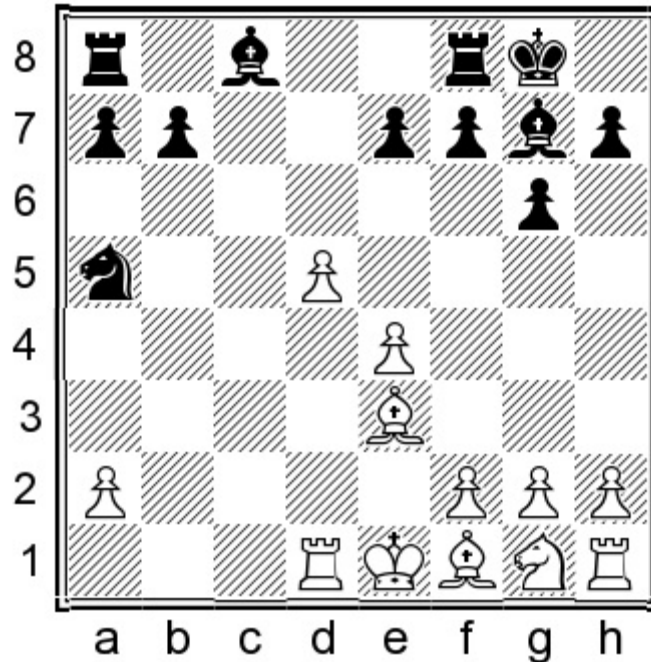
Alternatives allow counterplay in the centre:

11.d5 ♜a5 12.♜xa5

It is dubious to move again the rook because Black's knight will be very active on d4: 12.♞c1 m

♖xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♘d4 14.♙e3 a6!=. The last move aims to ensure protection for the centralised knight, should it retreat to b5. The immediate 14...f5 is also possible, but the sharp endgame after 15.e5! ♙xe5 16.♖c4 ♘b5 17.♘f3 ♙c3+ 18.♙d1 ♙f6 19.♖xc8 ♖axc8 20.♙xb5 ♖fd8 21.♙e2 ♖c2+ 22.♘d2 ♖xa2 23.♖b1 looks dangerous for Black.

12...♘xa5



It transpires that White's rook missed its best square – c1. The pawn centre also lost its flexibility and can be attacked now with ...f5 as in the event of 13.♙b5 f5. Instead Dumitrache-Vokarev, Bucharest 1998, went 13.♙d2 b6 14.♙b4. Here the thematic 14...f5 took over the initiative: 15.♙d3 fxe4 16.♙xe4 ♙b7 17.f3. Now the simple 17...♙f6 would have fixed Black's edge.

Best is:

13.♘f3 ♙g4 14.♙d2 b6 15.♙a6 ♙c8 (15...f5 16.h3☞) 16.♙e2 ♘b7=.

11.♙e2 may be preventing the pin from g4, but it lets in 11...e5 12.d5 ♘d4. The game Gelfand-Svidler, Ohrid 2009, saw further 13.♘f3 ♘xe2 14.♖xe2 ♖a5+ 15.♙d2 ♖a4= (Stockfish prefers 15...♖a3).

15...♖xa2 16.0-0 f5 is sharper, but risky.

11...♙g4 12.♙e2 ♖a5 13.0-0

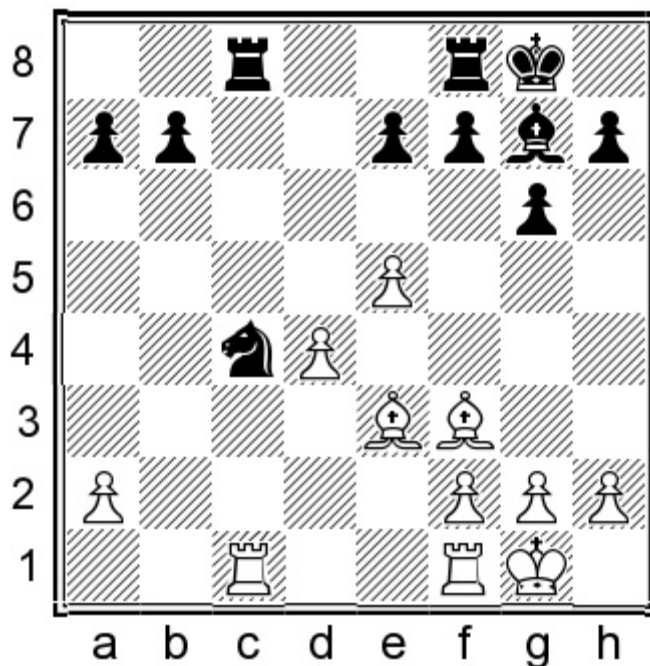
13.♖xa5 ♘xa5 14.♘d2 ♙xe2 15.♙xe2 facilitates Black's task.

13...♖ac8 14.♖xa5

14.h3 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♖xd2 16.♖xd2 ♘a5 17.♙g5 ♘c4 is evidently safe for Black.

14...♘xa5 15.♖c1 ♙xf3 16.♙xf3 (16.gxf3 ♘c6) 16...♘c4 17.e5

This position has occurred in several games which all ended in a draw. White hopes for some tiny advantage despite the opposite-coloured bishops. Perhaps the most precise move is:



17...b5!

The blindfold game Ivanchuk-Svidler, Nice 2010, went instead 17...♘xe3 18.fxex3 ♙h6 19.♔f2 b5 20.♔e2 e6 21.♙b7 ♞c4 22.♞xc4 bxc4=.

18.♞fd1

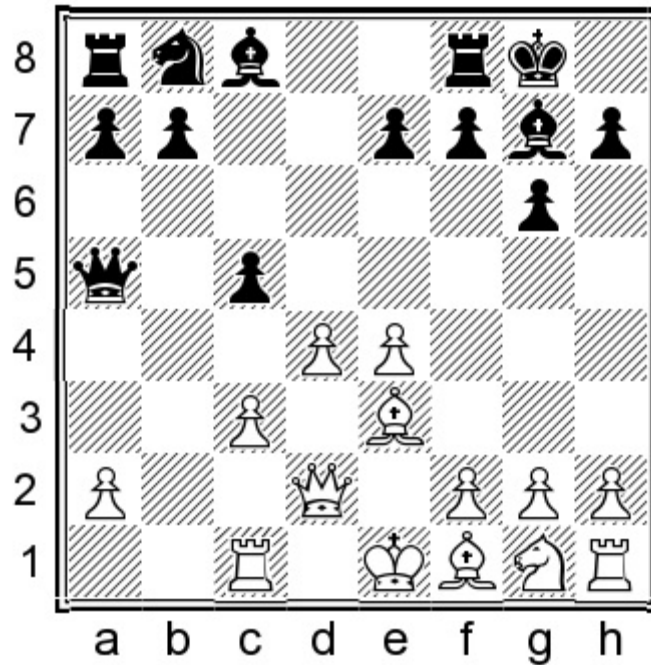
Or 18.♙b7 ♞b8 19.♙d5 ♞fc8 20.e6 ♞b6 21.exf7+ ♔f8 22.a4 e6=.

18...e6 19.♙f4 h6 20.h4 a5 21.g3 b4=

The latest correspondence game concluded with 22.♔f1 ♞fd8 23.♙e2 ♘b6 24.♞xc8 ♘xc8 25.♞c1 ♘b6 26.♞c6 ♘d5 27.♙d2 ♘c3 28.♙xc3 bxc3 29.♞xc3 ♞xd4 30.♞c8+ ♙f8 31.f4 ½-½, Isigkeit-Jankowiak, ICCF 2016.

B. 8.♞c1 ♞a5 9.♞d2 0-0

There is no need to hurry with the exchange on d4, although it also leads to a balanced game. Let us give the enemy more options to err...



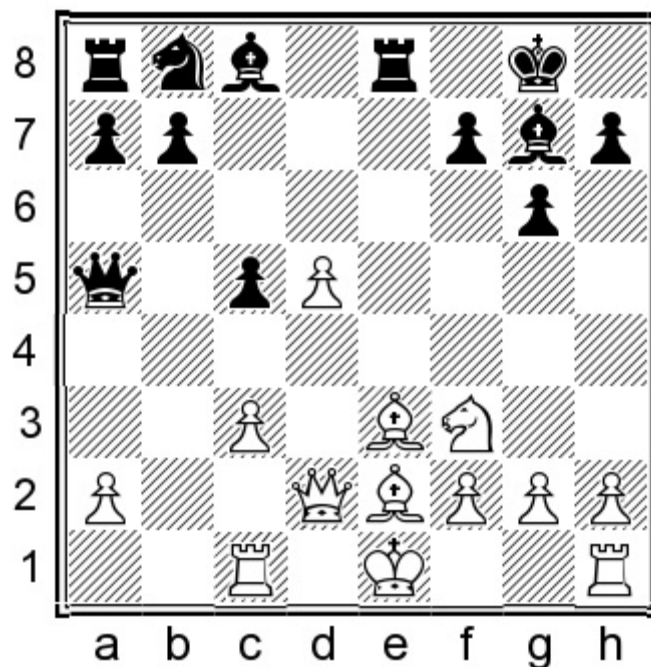
10. ♖f3

10. ♕c4 does not fit in with White's scheme. A possible retort is 10... ♖c6 11. ♘e2 ♜d8.

10.d5 is more principled. We should attack the centre with 10...e6, using the fact that White's king is far from safe in the middle of the board after:

11.c4?! ♜xd2+ 12. ♕xd2 b6, followed up by 13...f5. So White usually prefers:

11. ♖f3 exd5 12.exd5 ♜e8 (or 12... ♘d7 13. ♕e2 ♜e8) 13. ♕e2 (13.c4 ♜xd2+ 14. ♕xd2 b6=).



Black's pieces are active and compensate for the enemy passed pawn in the centre. In the world championship match, Kasparov continued against Karpov, Lyon/New York 1990:

13... ♕f5

13...♖d7 is equally good: 14.0-0 ♗f6 15.c4 ♜xd2 16.♗xd2 ♙d7 17.♞fe1 b6 18.h3 ♙a4 19.♙d1 ♙xd1 20.♞exd1 ♗d7 21.♞e1 ♗e5=.

14.0-0 ♗d7 15.h3

Alternatively:

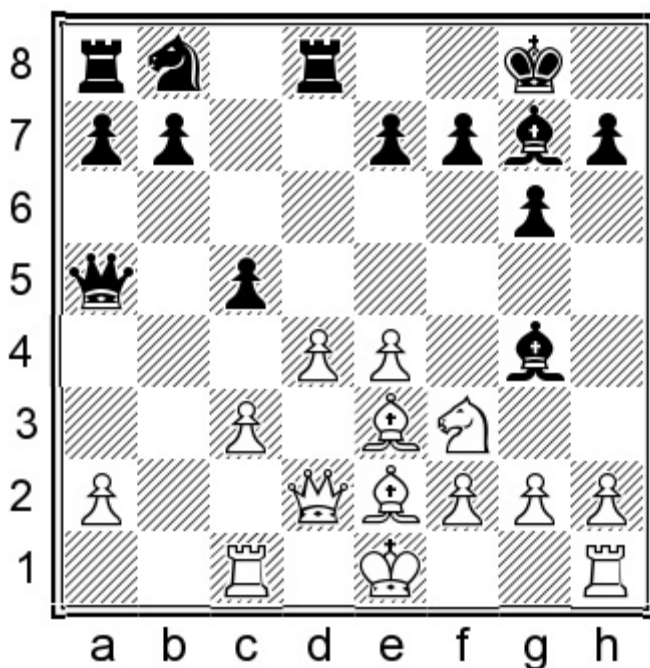
15.c4 ♜xd2 16.♗xd2 ♙b2 17.♞ce1 ♙c3 18.♞d1 ♙d4 19.♙xd4 cxd4 20.♙f3 ♙c2 21.♞c1 d3⚡;
 15.♞b2 ♗f6 16.♙c4 ♞b6 17.♞a3 ♙f8 18.♞cd1 ♙d6 19.h3 a6 20.♙h6 ♞c7⚡.

15...♗b6 (15...♗f6=) 16.g4 ♙d7 17.c4 ♜xd2 18.♗xd2 ♗a4=.

10...♞d8 11.d5

This way White anticipates 11...♙g4 because he can meet it by 12.c4 ♜xd2+ 13.♗xd2.

11.♙e2 ♙g4! is already good.



This position occurs occasionally, so I'll pay it some attention. After 12.d5 Black has a wide choice. In practice he fares best with 12...♗d7, but this move allows 13.c4 with a space advantage. I like the more challenging:

12...c4!

Now 13.♙xc4 ♞c8 equalises at once. 13.♗d4?! is outright bad in view of 13...♙xe2 14.♗xe2 (14.♞xe2 e6) 14...e6 15.0-0 exd5 16.♞fd1 ♗c6 17.exd5 ♗e5 18.♗f4 ♗d3 19.♗xd3 ♞xd5⚡. We'll focus on:

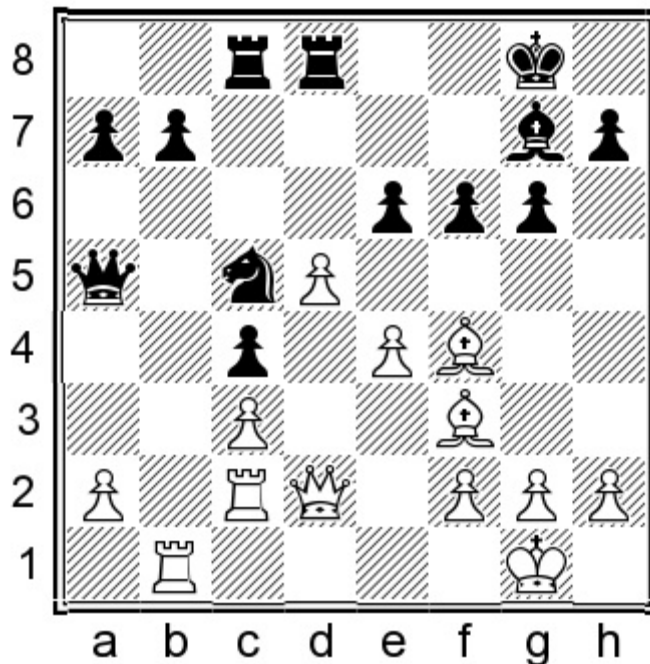
13.0-0 ♙xf3!

13...♗d7 14.♙g5 ♙xf3 allows 15.gxf3!? ♞c5 16.a4 with some pressure.

14.♙xf3

14.gxf3 is less convincing owing to 14...b5 15.♙g5 ♞a3.

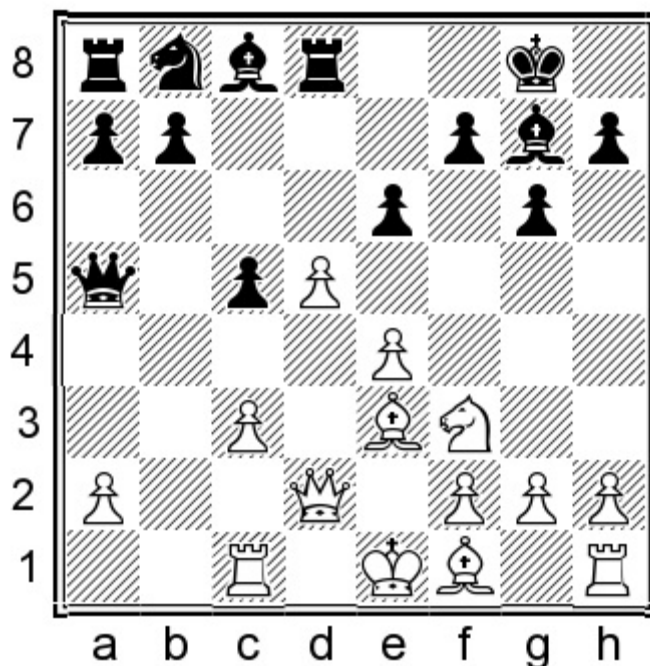
14...♗d7 15.♞c2 e6 16.♙g5 f6 17.♙f4 ♗c5 18.♞b1 ♞ac8



Black's pieces stand comfortably. The game Moll-Kögler, ICCF 2016, went 19.g3 ♖a6 20.♞e2 exd5 21.exd5 ♘d3 22.♞e6+ ♞xe6 23.dxe6 ♘xf4 24.gxf4 ♞c7 25.♞xb7 ♞xb7 26.♞xb7 ½-½.

Finally, 11.♞h6 hardly deserves attention because the whole idea to trade dark-squared bishops is strategically unsound. In many Grünfeld endgames Black finds it difficult to activate his g7-bishop while the white one could be rather nasty to our queenside. We should grasp the opportunity and quickly exchange the queens: 11...cxd4 12.♞xg7 ♖xg7 13.cxd4 ♘c6 14.♞xa5 ♘xa5 15.♖d2 ♞e6! 16.d5 f5! 17.♘d4 ♞g8 18.f3 fxe4 19.fxe4 e6 and White's centre is crumbling down.

11...e6!

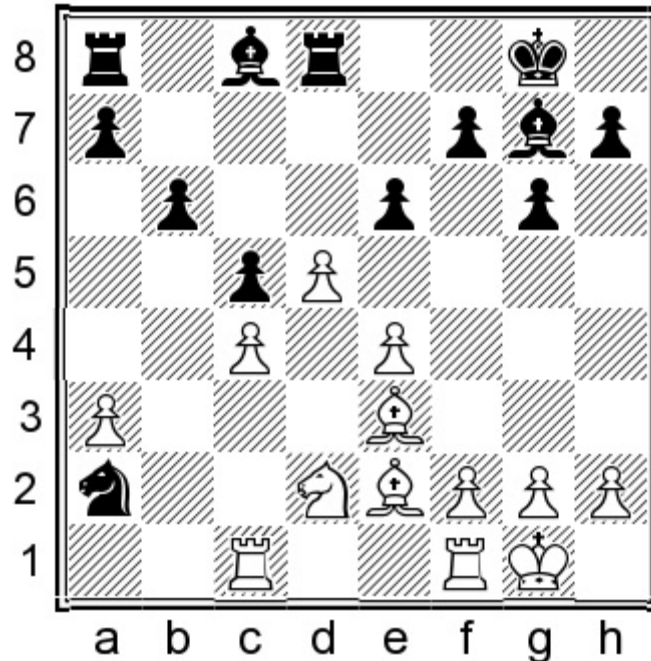


12.♞g5

After 12.c4 ♖xd2+ White is at a crossroads.

a) 13.♔xd2 ♜a6 14.a3 (14.♔c2 f5) looks more testing, but the centralised king is a good reason for busting the white pawn formation with 14...f5!? 15.exf5 exd5 16.fxg6 hxg6 17.cxd5 ♜c7 18.♙d3 ♜xd5. White's king is in the draught on the open d-file. This sharp position is yet to be tested in practice.

b) Much more popular is 13.♜xd2 b6 14.♙e2 ♜a6 15.0-0 ♜b4 16.a3 ♜a2. Black's knight is incredibly jumpy.



White seems unable to set up coordination between his pieces. See **game 16** Tunik-Timofeev, St. Petersburg 2002, for more details about this line.

12.♙e2 exd5 13.exd5 b5!? 14.♙g5

14.c4 ♖xd2+ 15.♜xd2 bxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙b7 and 14.♙xc5 ♙b7 15.c4 ♖xd2+ 16.♜xd2 bxc4 17.♙xc4 ♙xd5, Brunner-Rodshtein, La Bordeta 2010, completely level the game.

14...♞e8 15.0-0 ♜d7. A number of correspondence games have tested from here 16.♞fe1 ♙b7 17.d6 ♞e4, and all of them finished in a draw.

12...f6! 13.♙e3

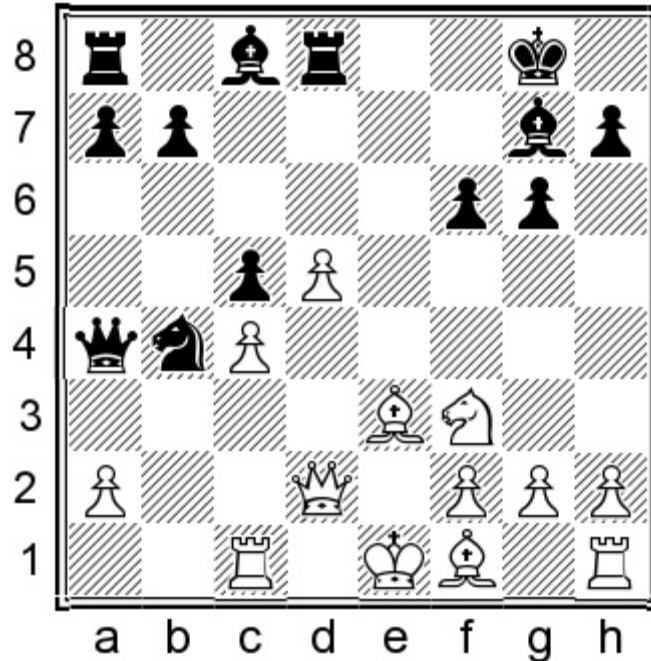
13.c4 does not save a tempo on retreating the bishop due to 13...♜c6! 14.♖xa5 ♜xa5 15.♙d2 b6 16.♙d3 ♜b7 17.0-0 ♙d7

A later game saw 17...♜d6 18.♞fe1 ♙d7 19.h3 ♞ac8 20.♞b1 ♞e8= 21.♙c3?! exd5 22.cxd5 ♙a4 with an initiative, Petrosyan-Artemiev, Sharjah 2018.

18.♞fe1 ♞e8 19.♙c3, Melkumyan-Sasikiran, Moscow 2010. Here 19...exd5! 20.exd5 (20.cxd5 b5↑) 20...♜d6 21.♜d2 ♔f7 would have easily equalised.

13.♙f4 ♖a4! 14.c4 has faded out of fashion.

14.♚c2 is too timid and gives Black an easy game after 14...♜xc2 15.♞xc2 exd5 16.exd5 ♙f5 17.♞b2 ♙e4 18.c4 ♙xf3 (18...g5!? 19.♙e3 b6 keeps more tension.) 19.gxf3 ♞e8+ 20.♚d2 b6= 14...♞c6. Critical now is 15.♙e3 (15.♙d3 ♞b4 16.♙b1 b5!±; 15.♙e2 exd5 16.exd5 ♞b4±, Zubov-Cheparinov, Gjakova 2016) 15...exd5 16.exd5 ♞b4!



Black has lured the opponent into a home analysis and brilliantly won an extremely important game at the Olympiad. See **game 17** Sargissian-Svidler, Khanty-Mansiysk, 2010. Of course the diagram position is far from clear, but Black's threats are more direct and menacing.

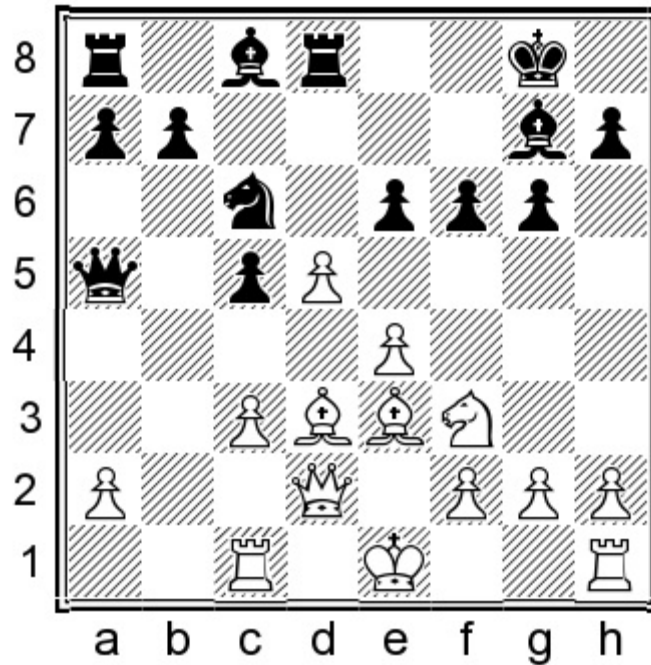
13...♞c6!

Kramik-Howell, London 2010, saw 13...exd5 14.exd5 ♞a6 15.♙e2 ♙e6 16.c4 ♜xd2+ 17.♞xd2 ♙d7, and it turned out that Black has lost a tempo. The correct retort 13...♞c6 was shown a week later in Potkin-Svidler, Moscow 2010. White tried to expel the knight with:

14.♙d3

Or 14.♙e2 exd5 15.exd5 ♞e7!? (15...c4=) 16.c4 ♜xd2+ 17.♞xd2 b6 18.g4 f5 19.g5 ♞e8 with a level game, Bacrot-Timofeev, Moscow 2010.

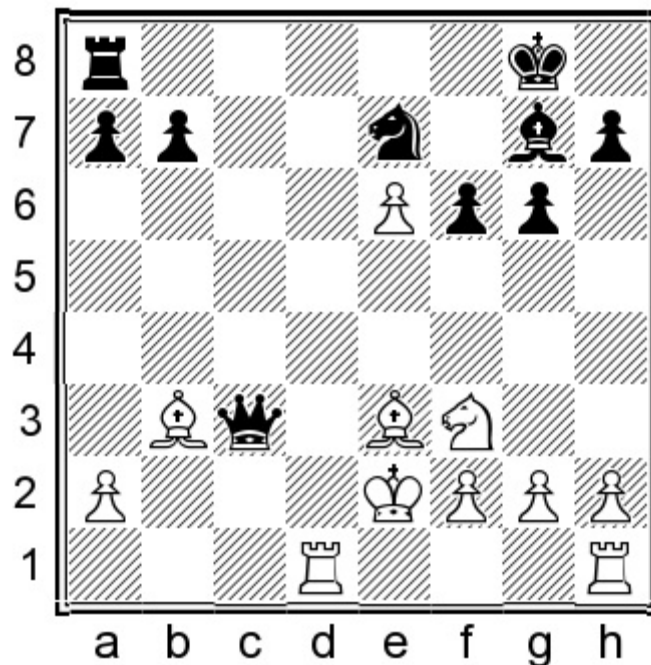
A sharper approach is 14.h4 exd5 15.exd5 ♙g4 16.♙e2, when the standard sac 16...c4 17.♙xc4 ♙xf3 18.gxf3 ♞e5 gave Black enough counterplay, e.g. 19.♙e2 ♞ac8 20.h5 ♞c4 21.♙xc4 ♞xc4 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♜d3 ♜xd5 24.♜xg6 ♞xc3 25.0-0=, Holroyd-González Rabago, ICCF 2018.



14...♘e7!

Preventing any queen sacrifices in future. 14...exd5 15.exd5 c4! 16.♙xc4 ♘e6 has also proved to be level – 17.♞d1

Or 17.♚b2 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5+ ♚xd5 19.♚xb7 ♞ab8 20.♚a6 ♞b2 21.0-0 ♞xa2 22.♚b7 ♞a4 23.h3=. 17...♘e7 18.dxe6 ♞xd2 19.♞xd2 ♚xc3 20.♙b3 ♚c1+ 21.♞d1 ♚c3+ 22.♙e2



Svidler and Topalov tried here 22...a5, but recent correspondence games showed that piece play with 22...♚b4 or 22...♞c8 was safer. See **game 18** Carolei-Moskvichev, ICCF 2015. Still, the cost of Black's mistakes is higher in such positions.

15.c4 ♚xd2+ 16.♙xd2

16. ♖xd2 b6 17. 0-0 h6 18. ♖fd1 f5 19. f3 g5 20. ♖b1 fxe4 21. fxe4 ♖g6 was even more pleasant for Black, Onischuk-Svidler, Tbilisi 2017.

16...b6 17.0-0 ♗d7 18.♖fe1 ♜c8 19.e5 exd5 20.cxd5 fxe5 21.♜xe5 ♜d6 22.♗g5 ♗xe5 23.♗xd8 ♗f4 24.♗c7 ♗xc1 25.♖xc1 ♜e8=

In this position the d7-bishop should be activated from b5, so 25...♗b5! was simplest.

26.♗e5 ♖d8 27.f3

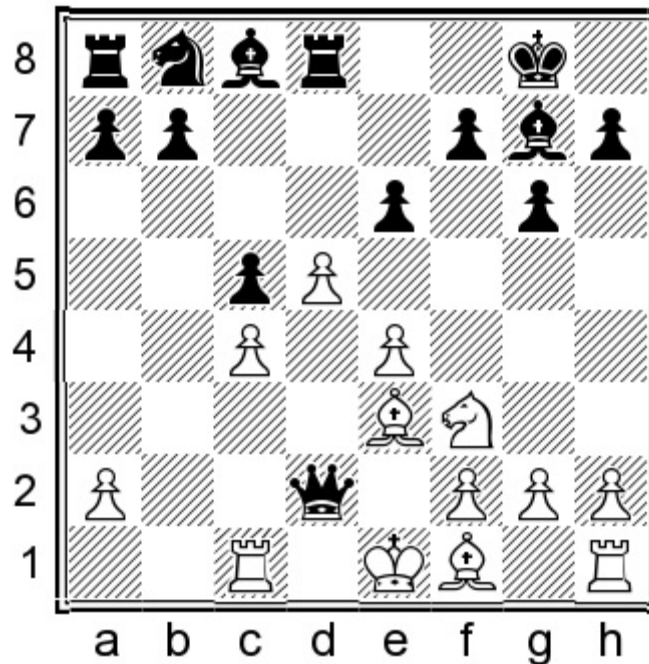
We have been following Yu,Y-Svidler, Shenzhen 2018. Now best is 27...♗a4 28.g4 ♜f7 29.g5 ♜d6 30.♜f2 ♗b5 31.♗c2 ♖d7 32.♖d1 ♗c4 33.a3 ♜c8= (33...♗a2=).

Chapter 8 Complete Games

16. Tunik-Timofeev

St. Petersburg 2002

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 c5 8.♞c1 ♚a5 9.♚d2 0-0
10.♗f3 ♞d8 11.d5 e6 12.c4 ♚xd2+

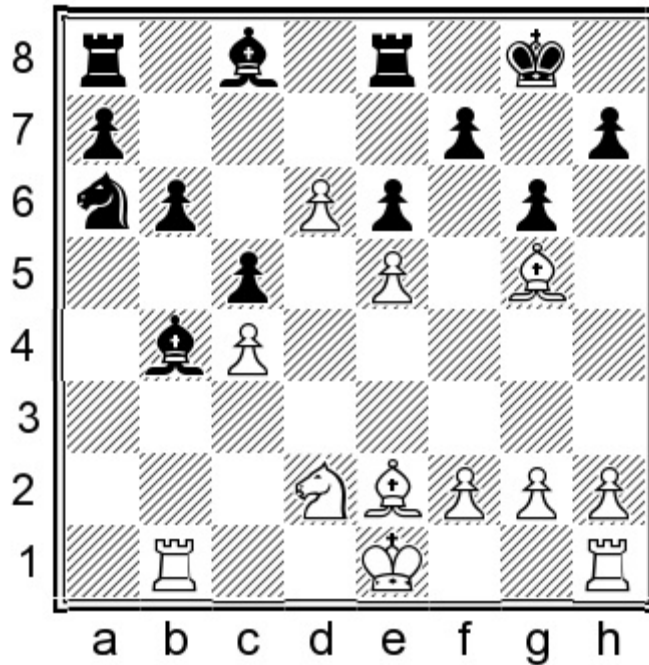


13.♗xd2

When White chose 7.♙e3, he was planning to play an endgame with his king remaining in the centre. Meanwhile, Black has put a rook on d8, and now White finds it reasonable to reconsider his intention. Evidently, he was not ready for a theoretical battle in the sharp (but roughly equal) variation 13.♚xd2 ♗a6 14.a3 f5 15.exf5 exd5.

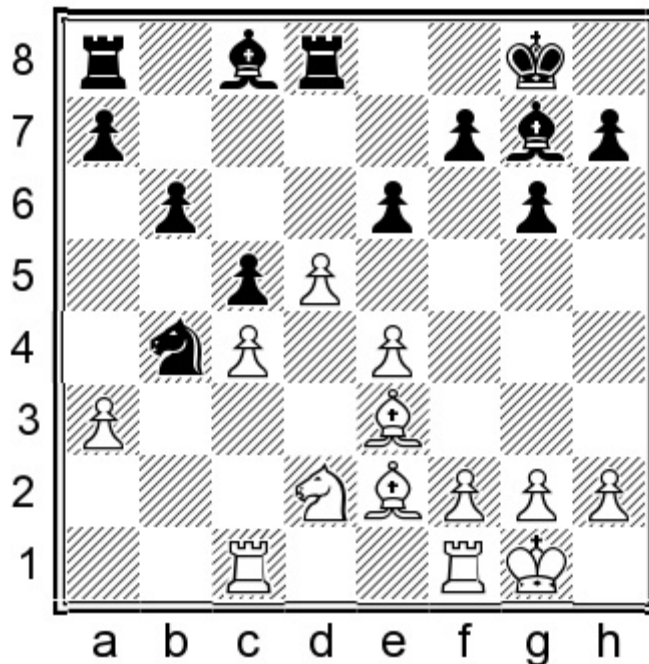
13...b6 14.♙e2 ♗a6 15.0-0

Following the same “safe” strategy, started on move 13. Instead White could have attempted a redeployment of the awkward knight on d2: 15.♗b1, but again 15...f5 is strong. 16.f3 (16.exf5 exd5 17.cxd5 ♗b4 looks out of question) 16...fxe4 17.fxe4 ♙b2 18.♞d1 (18.♞c2 ♙d4) 18...♗b4! does not give White time for castling (19.0-0 ♗xa2!), so the whole idea with 15.♗b1 turned out to be dubious. This example and the course of the game suggest that perhaps White should restrain the enemy beast from jumping to b4 with 15.a3. White loses a pawn after 15...♙b2 16.♞b1 ♙xa3, but activates his passed pawn with 17.♙g5 ♞e8 (17...♞d7 18.♙d1!) 18.d6 ♙b4 19.e5



It seems that Black's greediness will be punished, but the unfortunate stand of the knight on d2 once again ruins White's game. Black has 19...♙b7! 20.d7 ♜ed8 21.♙xd8 ♜xd8 22.♙f3 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 ♜xd7 24.♞d1 ♙c3, collecting a good pawn harvest. If White does not take the exchange, he will be bound to struggle without a pawn after 20.♙f3 ♙xf3 21.gxf3 ♞b8 22.♞e2 ♙xd2 23.♞xd2 ♞d7 24.♞he1 f6 25.exf6 ♞f7.

15...♞b4 16.a3



16...♞a2!

This incredible knight makes all the difference! It is treading on the enemy position, racing all over the queenside along the route b8-a6-b4-a2-c3-a4-b2.

17.♞c2 ♘c3 18.♙d3

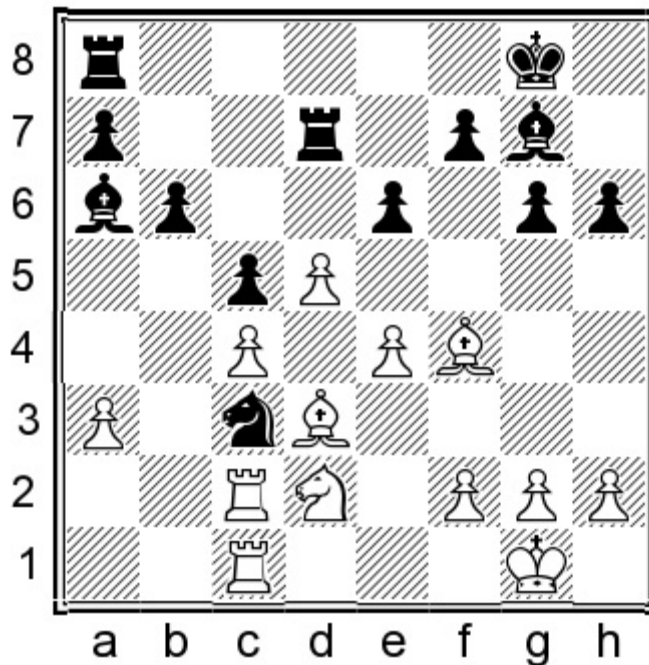
The bishop will be hanging on this square, but White is firmly decided to expel the c3-knight back to the rim or eat it. His attitude is easy to understand since 18.♞e1 ♘xe2+ 19.♞xe2 exd5 20.cxd5 ♙a6 21.♘c4 f5 22.f3 ♞d7 23.♞e1 fxe4 24.fxe4 ♞e8 is gloom for him, e.g. 25.♙f2 ♞de7 26.♘d6 ♞f8 when White lacks good moves.

As a matter of fact, White can maintain the balance with the solid 18.♙f3 exd5 19.exd5! (19.cxd5 ♙a6 20.♞fc1 ♘e2+ 21.♙xe2 ♙xe2 22.f3 ♙d3 23.♞a2 f5 24.♙g5 ♞d7 25.a4 ♞e8–+) 19...♙f5 20.♞cc1, gripping for the tactical straw 20...♘a2 21.♞a1!=. Still, Black might be a little bit better after 20...♞e8. However, if White was to cling to such variations, it would have been wiser to make a better choice much earlier!

18...♙a6 19.♙g5 ♞d7

It is senseless to force play with 19...exd5 20.♙xd8 ♞xd8 21.exd5 ♘xd5 22.♞e1 ♘f4 23.♙f1 and as passive as White is, he is nevertheless the exchange up, e.g. 23...♘e6 24.♘b3 ♙b7 25.♞d2.

20.♞fc1 h6 21.♙f4

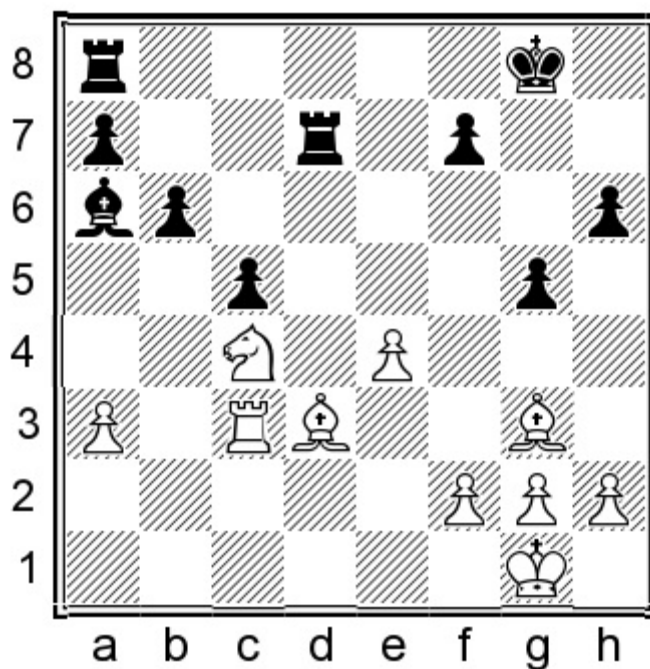


The critical position for 18.♙d3. It has arisen in several games! Now 18...♘a4 or 18...g5 would be about equal, but Black has a tactical solution:

21...exd5! 22.♞xc3 ♙xc3 23.♞xc3 g5

The two minor pieces that caused nightmares to White have disappeared, but the heavy artillery comes in place.

24. ♖g3 dxc4 25. ♗xc4



25... ♖d4!?

A computer would have chosen 25... ♖d3 with a pawn up, but the opposite-coloured bishops depreciate the advantage. Over the board, the initiative is often a bigger advantage, than a pawn. As a rule, a rook + pawn in an endgame are not weaker than a knight+bishop. If we throw in the bad coordination of White's pieces, Black's edge becomes substantial.

26. ♖f1 ♖ad8 27. f4?

White breaks up too easily. 27. f3 offers good chances for survival: 27... ♖d1 28. ♖f2 b5 29. ♖e2 ♖a1 29... ♖1d4!/? might be a better try: 30. ♗a5 ♖a4 31. ♖c2 ♖c8 32. ♗b3 ♖xa3 33. ♗xc5 b4 34. ♖d6 ♖xe2 35. ♖xe2 b3 36. ♖c1 ♖a6 37. e5 ♖ac6 38. ♖d3 b2 39. ♖b1 ♖xc5 40. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 41. e6 ♖d5+! 42. ♖c3 ♖b5! 43. e7 ♖e5 with an extra pawn and practical chances.

30. ♗d6 b4 31. ♖xc5 ♖a2 32. axb4 ♖xe2 33. ♖g1 a6. White's pieces are very active. After the text White's material quickly evaporates:

27... ♖xe4 28. ♗b2 ♖xf1 29. ♖xf1 ♖d2 30. ♗c4 ♖d1+ 31. ♖f2 gxf4 32. ♖h4 ♖dd4 33. ♗b2 f3 34. ♖f6 ♖d2+ 35. ♖xf3 ♖e6 0-1

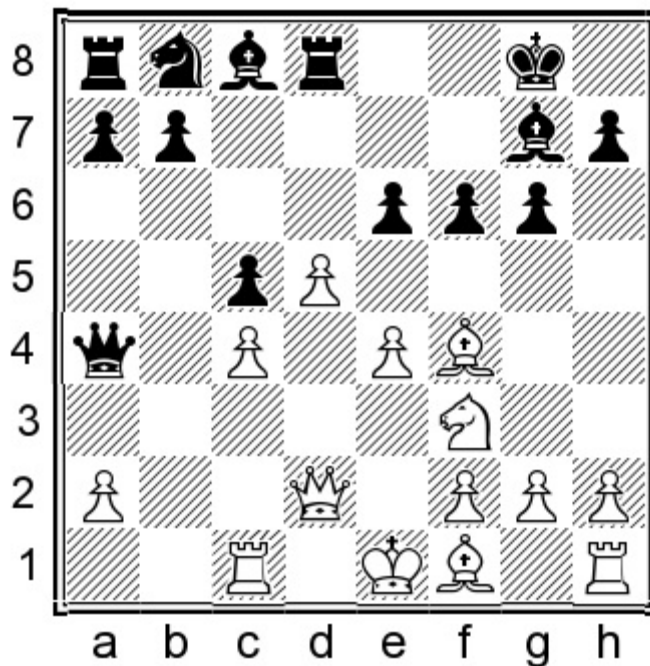
17. Sargissian-Svidler

Khanty-Mansiysk 30.09.2010

This game was extremely important for both opponents. It took place in the ninth round of the Olympiad in Russia. The Armenian team was, as usual, one of the main contenders for the gold, so the

fight was ferocious. Undoubtedly, both sides came armed with the most advanced theoretical preparations of their team and clubs. The rigid opening tastes of Svidler did not leave much room for uncertainty – White was sure to face the Grünfeld.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 c5 8.♞c1 ♚a5 9.♙d2 0-0
10.♗f3 ♞d8 11.d5 e6 12.♙g5 f6 13.♙f4 ♚a4 14.c4



14...♗c6

This is a novelty. Two weeks earlier the game Navarro Molina-Alsina Leal, El Sauzal 2010, saw 14...exd5 15.exd5 ♘a6 16.♙e2 ♘b4 17.0-0 ♙xa2 18.♙e3 ♙f5 19.♙xc5 ♘xd5 20.cxd5 ♙xe2 21.♞fe1 ♙a2 22.d6 ♞ac8 and Black went on to win this tangled position. A week after Svidler's resounding win in Khanty-Mansiysk, Ernst-Gustafsson, Baden-Baden, 09.10.2010, featured 22.♙b5 ♙a6 23.♙b3 ♙b6 24.♙a2 ♙a6 25.♙b3 ♙b6 26.♙a2 ♙a6 27.♙b3, draw by repetition.

We see that the idea of ...♘b4, hitting the a2-pawn, was not completely new. Svidler's finesse is that he refrains from opening the centre. Thus, in the event of 15.♙e2, he could continue with 15...♘b4 16.0-0 ♙xa2 17.♙e3 e5 18.♙g3 ♙a5∞. White should also reckon with 15...e5 16.♙e3 ♘d4 17.♙d1 ♙a3 18.0-0 ♞d6!?. I prefer White's game here, but Svidler had tried a similar rook lift against Topalov, so Sargissian could not be sure what his opponent really had in mind.

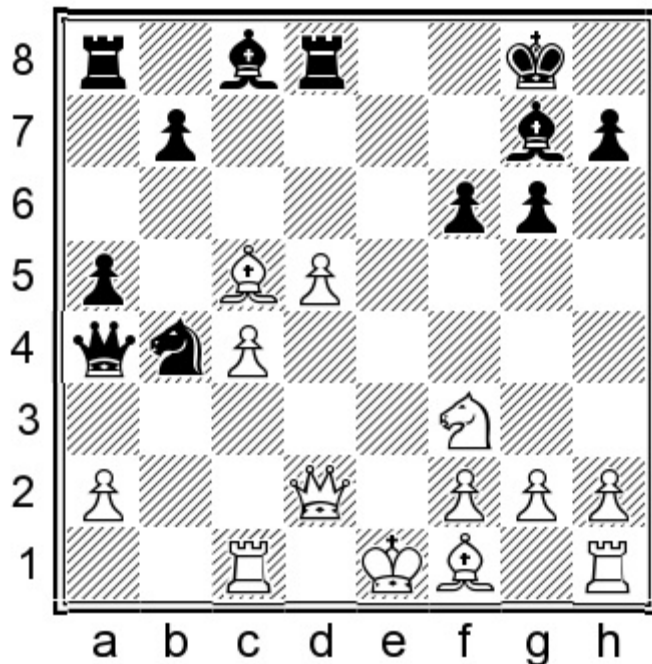
Let us note that after 15.♙e2 Black could not simply transpose to the previously known game by 15...exd5 because White has the *zwischenzug* 16.♙d1, e.g. 16...♙b4 17.exd5 ♙xd2+ 18.♙xd2 b5 19.cxb5 ♞xd5+ 20.♙e2 ♘a5 21.♞e1 where Black has more weaknesses. Sargissian goes for the most testing move:

15.♙e3 exd5 16.exd5 ♘b4

I doubt that Svidler had even thought about 16...♙f8. At the same time, it is not easy to prove any

White's advantage there: 17. ♖c2 ♜xc2 18. ♝xc2 ♘f5 19. ♝b2 ♘a5 20. ♙e2 b6 21. 0-0 ♜e8 22. ♘h4 ♙d7 23. g3 ♘b7=.

17. ♙xc5 a5!

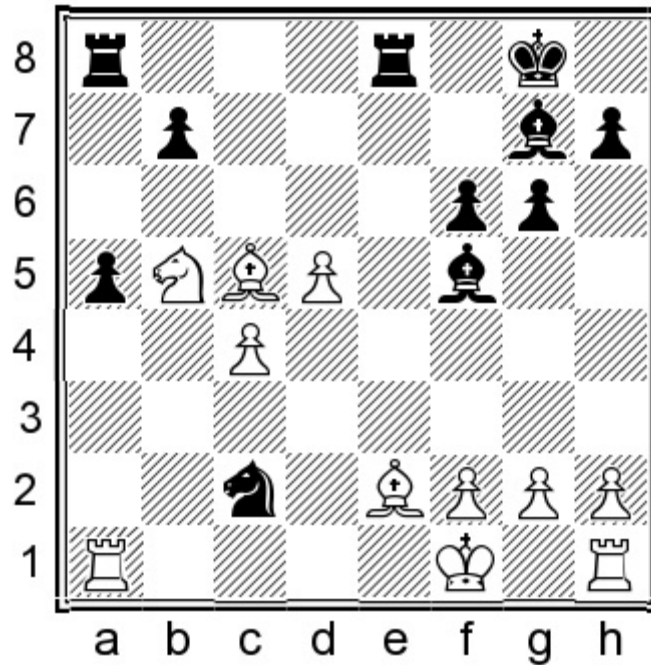


The first critical position in the game.

Some commentators assessed Sargissian's next move as dubious. 18. ♙e2 was allegedly better and should lead to a balanced game. The latter is almost true: 18... ♜xa2 19. ♙e3 (after 19. ♝c3 Black can repeat moves with 19... ♜b1+ 20. ♝c1 ♜a2) 19... ♜xd2+ 20. ♚xd2 b5!?! (20... ♙f8 21. ♘d4 ♙d7 22. ♘c2 b5 23. ♙d4) 21. cxb5 ♝xd5+ 22. ♚e1 ♘d3+. Still, Black's distant passer looks more dangerous. We see, however, that in many variations the break ...b5 is awkward for White. Understandably, he wants to discourage it with:

18. ♘d4 ♜e8+ 19. ♙e2 ♜xa2 20. ♘b5 ♙f5 21. ♜xa2 ♘xa2 22. ♝a1 ♘b4

The second critical position. Svidler said he had reached it in his home analysis. White has 23. ♚f1 ♘c2:

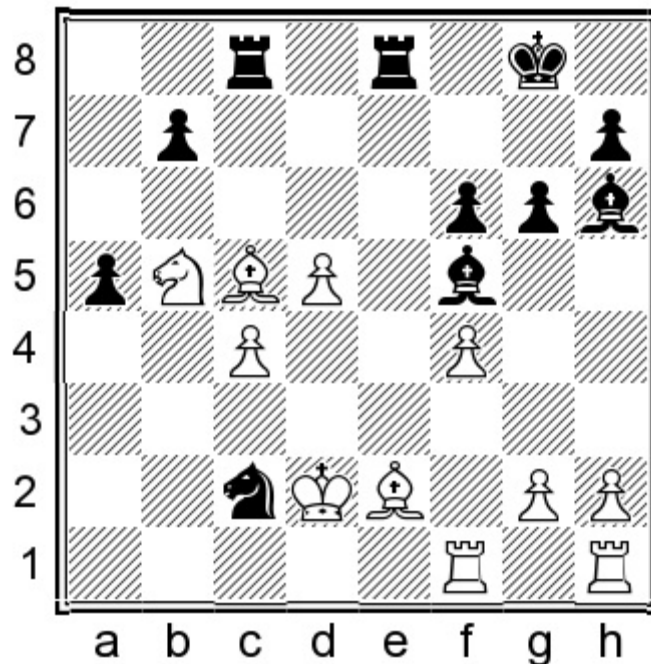


Now 24. Rxc1 is risky because ... ♔h6 will be with tempo: 24... ♖ec8 25. ♕e7 a4 26. g4 ♕h6 27. ♖d1 ♕e4 28. ♖g1 ♖f7, with an initiative.

Remains: 24. ♖a2 ♕d3! 25. ♕e3 ♜xe3+ 26. fxex3 ♖xe3 27. ♕xd3 ♖xd3 28. ♖e2 ♖b3 29. ♜c7 ♖c8 30. d6 b6=. White does not risk anything here with a strong passer and an active king.

Sargissian opts for the more consistent and ambitious:

23. ♖d2!? ♜c2 24. ♖af1 ♕h6+ 25. f4 ♖ac8



26. ♕d6?

“White has such a healthy structure that if he manages to consolidate, even giving up a full exchange with check, then all the same I’d have a very difficult technical task.” – Svidler. Indeed, he should have

made way to his d-pawn with 26.♖b6 ♕f8 27.d6 when Black should decide how to make a draw. He could choose opposite-coloured bishops after 27...♕d7 28.♕f3 ♖xb5 29.cxb5 ♕xd6 30.♖xb7 ♕b4+ 31.♔d1 ♖b8 32.♕d5+ ♔g7 33.♔xc2 ♖e2+ 34.♔b3 ♖xb6 35.♕c6 ♖e3+ 36.♔c4 ♖c3+ 37.♔d4 ♖b8=, or a bishop+2 pawns:rook after 27...♖xe2+ 28.♔xe2 ♖xc4 29.♖c1 ♕d7 30.♔d2 ♖xb5 31.♖xc2 ♕xd6 32.♖xc4 ♕xc4 33.g3 a4 34.♖c1 ♕d5=.

26...♕e3 27.♕c7?

This is too much. Evidently, Sargissian has lost the thread of the game. He could have put up resistance with 27.c5.

27...♕xf1+?!

Black returns the favour. He should have stayed active with 27...♖e4! 28.c5 ♕xg2. He needs the knight which is a very important piece for the attack. Nevertheless, Svidler showed good technique and won convincingly:

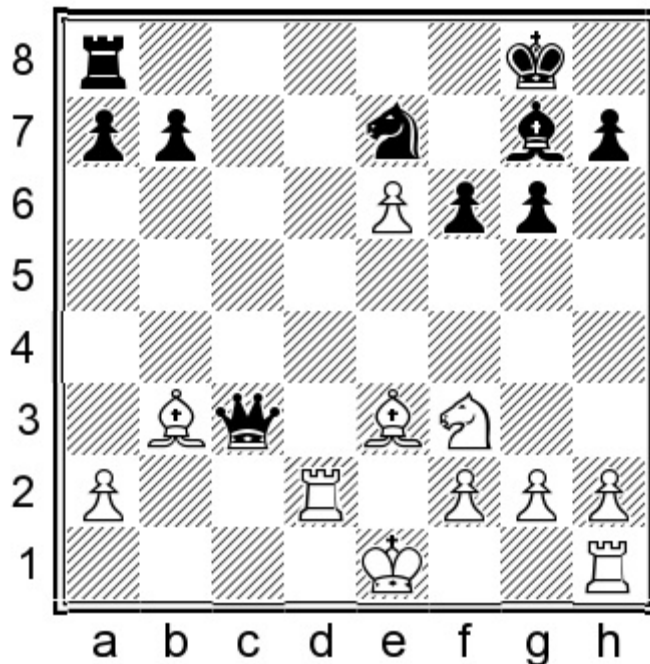
28.♖xf1 ♖ed8 29.♕b5 ♕f8 30.♕xf8 ♔xf8 31.g4 ♕d7 32.♕d6 ♖c7 33.f5 gxf5 34.gxf5 b5 35.cxb5 ♖c5 36.♕c4 ♖xb5 37.♕xb5 ♖xc4 38.♔d3 ♖c5 39.♕c3 ♖dc8 0-1

According to Svidler, his opponent thought he was much better after the opening, and broke up when he faced concrete problems.

18. Carolei-Moskvichev

VWC6/sf06 ICCF 2015

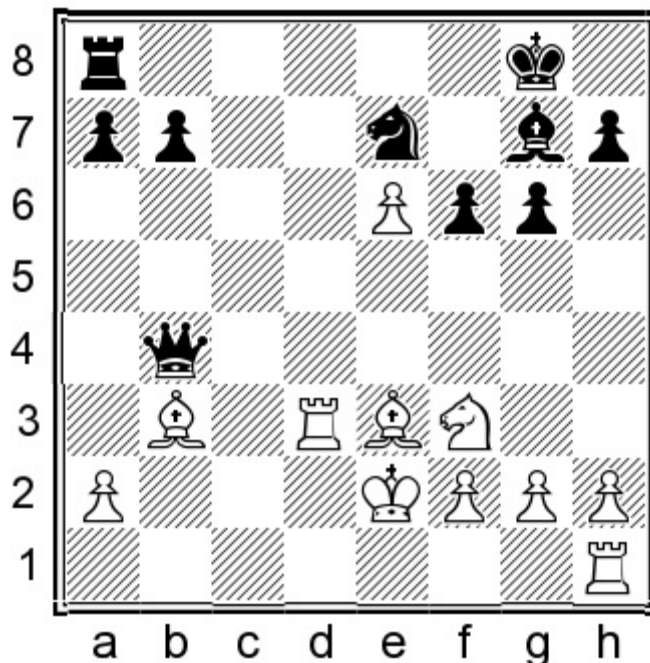
1.d4 ♕f6 2.c4 g6 3.♕c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♕xd5 5.e4 ♕xc3 6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♕f3 c5 8.♕e3 ♖a5 9.♖d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♖d8 11.d5 e6 12.♕g5 f6 13.♕e3 ♕c6 14.♕d3 exd5 15.exd5 c4 16.♕xc4 ♕e6 17.♖d1 ♕e7 18.dxe6 ♖xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖xc3 20.♕b3



20...♔c1+ 21.♖d1 ♕c3+ 22.♔e2 ♖b4!

Improving on the stem game Potkin-Svidler, Moscow 2010, which saw 22...a5 23.♖d7 a4 24.♖c1 ♕b2+? (24...♖b4!) 25.♖c2 ♕b1 when instead of 26.♘d2, White could have gained some edge with 26.♖d1 ♕xd1+ 27.♔xd1 axb3 28.axb3±.

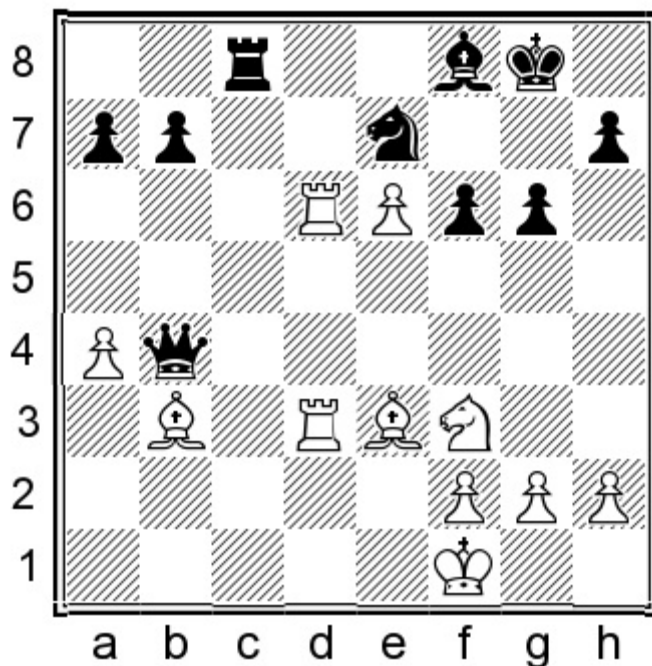
22...♖b4 was introduced in Pashikian-Cornette, Aix-les-Bains 2011. It saw further: 23.♖d3
 Cornette's idea is seen in the variation 23.♖d7 ♕b5+!. This check is awkward to White. Following 24.♔d2 a5 25.♖c1 a4 26.♙c4 ♕b2+ 27.♖c2 ♕b4+ 28.♔c1 b5 29.♙d3 ♖e8, Black is better.



23...a5 24.♖c1 a4 25.♖c4 ♕b5 26.♖c5 ♕b4 27.♖c4 ♕b5 28.♖c5 ♕b4 29.♙c4?. White avoids the repetition of moves, but now 29...♙h6! would have tipped the balance in Black's favour. Later in the

game, White again deviated from repetition, trying to win (or lose!), but eventually everything finished in peace.

I should add that the latest word in this line was 22...♖c8 23.♖d3 ♔a5 24.♖hd1 ♔b5=, Dannehr-Traut, ICCF 2017. The game went 25.a4 ♔a6 26.♔e1 ♕f8 27.♖d6 ♔a5+ 28.♔f1 ♔b4 29.♖1d3

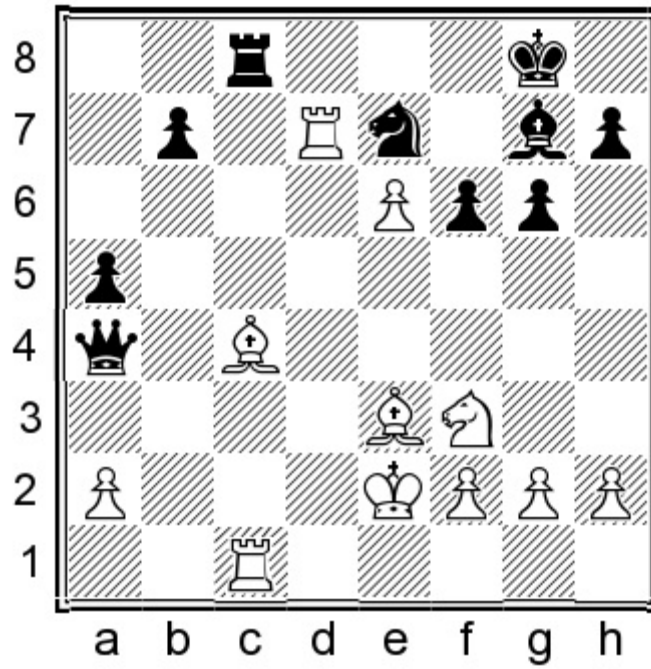


29...b5 30.♖6d4 ♔a5 31.♕d2 ♔a6 32.a5 b4 33.g4 ♔h8 34.♖d7 ♔xa5 35.g5 ♔f5 36.gxf6 ♔xf6 37.♖xa7 ♔f5 38.♖ad7 ♔h3+ 39.♔e2 ♔f5 40.♔f1 ½-½.

23.♖d4 ♔b5+ 24.♕c4 ♔a4 25.♖hd1 a5 26.♕b3

26.♖d8+ ♖xd8 27.♖xd8+ ♕f8 28.♕h6 is ineffective on account of 28...♔xc4+ 29.♔d1 (or 29.♔e1? ♔xe6+ 30.♔d1 ♔h8!) 29...♔a4+ 30.♔e1 ♔b4+ 31.♖d2 ♖c6.

26...♔b5+ 27.♕c4 ♔c6 28.♖c1 ♖c8 29.♖d7 ♔a4

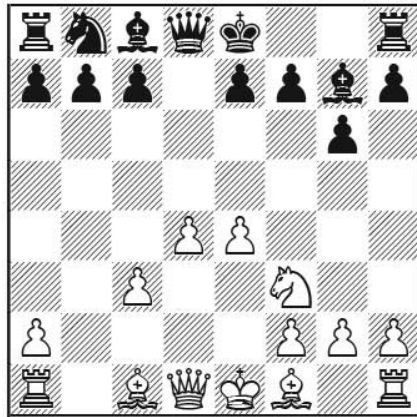


30. ♖b3 ♚b5+ 31. ♔d2 ♚b4+ 32. ♔e2 ♚b5+ 33. ♔d2 ½-½

Chapter 9

The Exchange System 7.♞f3

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4 ♞xc3
6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♞f3

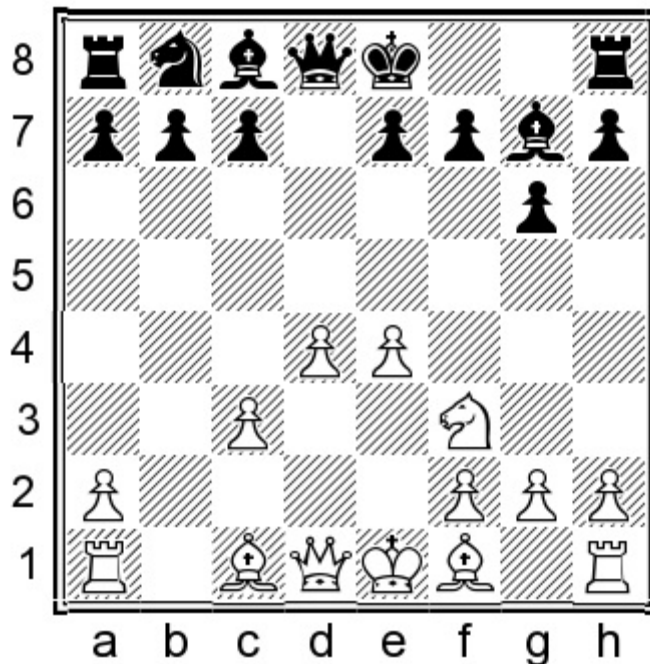


Main Ideas

Introduction

In this chapter I examine White's setup with:

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4 ♞xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♞f3



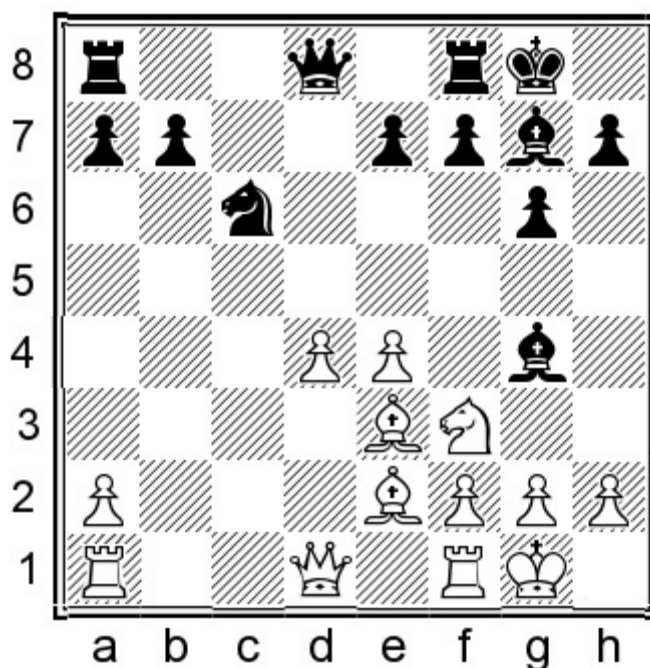
Perhaps this is the most natural development. White is following the classical principles – he seized the centre, then leads out the knights, and the bishops have excellent places on e2 and e3.

Nevertheless Botvinnik considered 7.♘f3 to be insufficient for achieving an opening advantage and devoted only short notes on this variation in his book.

The reason for that is the square d4. The c8-bishop, which is usually the only problem minor piece in Black's army, begins to exert a strong impact on the centre by the possibility of reaching g4. The mere threat of that sortie upsets White's plans.

White's dream after 7.♘f3 is to achieve the following position:

7...0-0?! 8.♙e2 c5 9.0-0 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♞c6 11.♙e3 ♙g4



12.d5!±

Black's best retort is to attack immediately d4 with:

7...c5

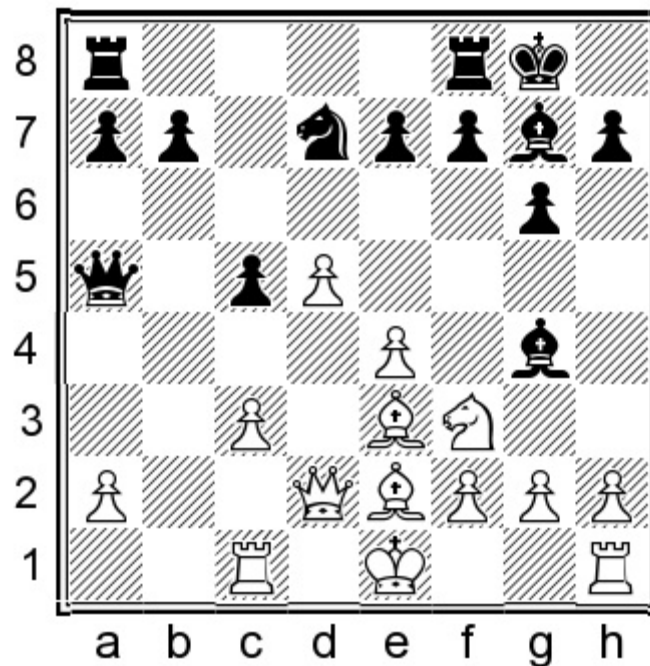
Remember! Unlike the 7.♘c4 system, the move order is important here! We should not waste a tempo on castling.

White's only way to exploit our early break is 8.♙b5+, but 8...♘d7 equalises smoothly, as shown in line A. Note that 8...♞c6 has proved to be not so easy as previously thought.

Ever since the early days of the Grünfeld, it has been established that 8.♙e2 ♞c6! 9.♙e3 ♙g4! wins the battle for the d4-square.

8.♙e3 ♙g4! 9.♞c1 is not a significant improvement, but we should adjust our tactic a little. Since White has removed his rook from the long diagonal, he is ready to meet the pressure on d4 by d4-d5. We cannot prevent it, but we have a clever way to deny the subsequent c3-c4:

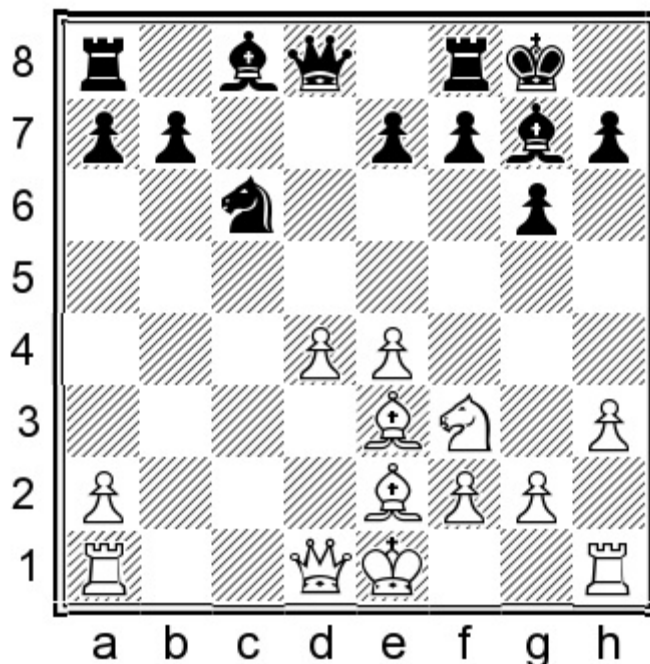
9...0-0 10.♙e2 ♚a5 11.♞d2 ♞d7 12.d5



12...c4!. This pawn sac has been tested in many Grünfeld lines, and it yields, as a rule, excellent practical results. Black's game plays itself – ...♞d7-c5-a4, ...♙xf3, ...b5.

The lines where Black puts his bishop on g4 demonstrate that White is unable to keep a mobile centre. So the first players began to seek ways of preventing the bishop's sortie.

8.h3 looks consistent, but this prophylactic move puts White behind in development. Black typically uses the tempo for undermining the enemy centre by ...f7-f5: 8...0-0 9.♙e2 ♞c6 10.♙e3 cxd4 11.cxd4



11...f5!, with fair counterplay.

Only in the 80s did White find the sneaky move:

8.♖b1! It brought the burst of popularity of the 7.♘f3 variation. With this multipurpose move White:

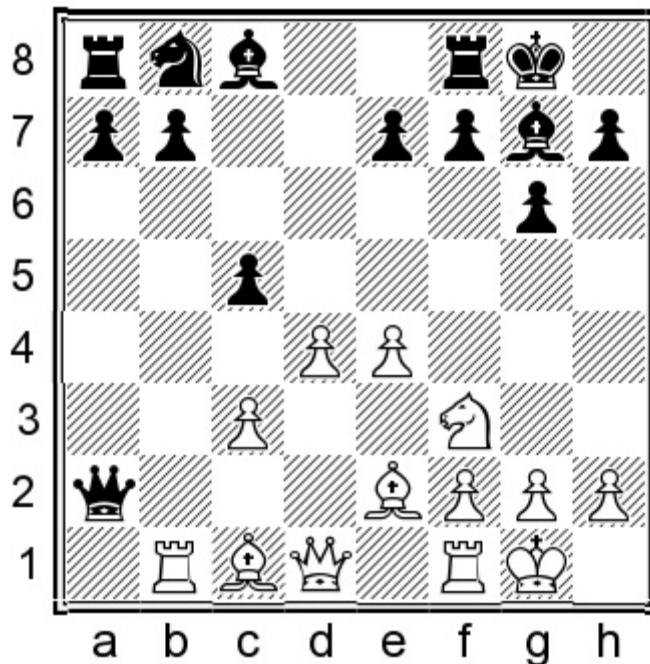
1. Discourages ...♗g4 due to the attack on b7.

2. Removes the rook from the long diagonal so the d4-d5 advance becomes an option, regardless of the fact that the c3-pawn may be left *en prise*.

This setup was introduced by Viacheslav Eingorn, but became really popular thanks to the practical successes of Boris Gelfand and Alexander Khalifman. It has been quickly discovered that the thematic ...♗g4 does not work well against 8.♖b1.

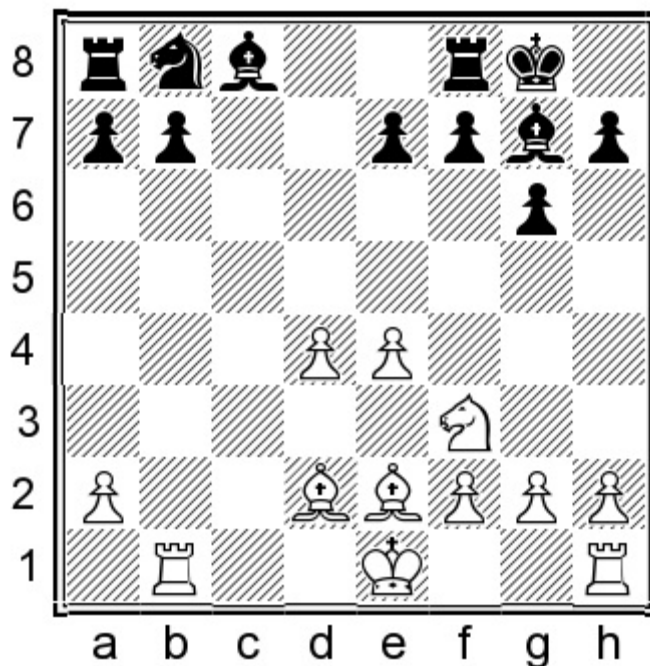
Then the prominent Grünfeld expert for both colours – Tukmakov, was the first to spot one of the drawbacks of 8.♖b1. The a2-pawn was hanging, and he had the courage to grab it twice against one of the best players of the 80s – Jussupow, in Yerevan 1982 and Moscow 1983.

After 8...0-0 9.♗e2 ♖a5 10.0-0 ♗xa2,



Black won a pawn, but he was to survive a dangerous initiative: 11. ♖g5 ♗e6 12. e5 ♜d8 13. ♚a4. Tukmakov was crushed in the first game, but convincingly won the second duel. Later practice proved that Black should firstly exchange on d4 by 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♗a5+, but then White can simply defend the pawn with 11. ♗d2 ♗xd2 12. ♖xd2

Lputian-Tukmakov Riga 1985



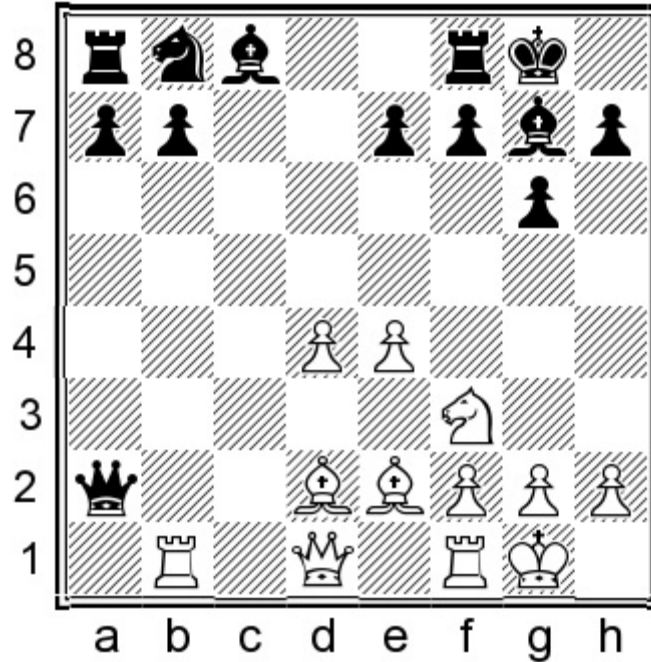
Tukmakov showed that Black should not be afraid of this endgame: 12...e6! 13.0-0 b6 14. ♜fd1 ♖b7 15.d5 exd5 16.exd5 ♜d7 17. ♖b4 ♜fc8 18. ♖b5 ♜f6 and White had to think about equalising. Since that game it has been clear that White should seek improvements in the pawn sac line: 11. ♖d2

♞xa2 12.0-0.

Perhaps the next milestone in the theory of this system was:

Kamsky-Anand

Las Palmas 1995



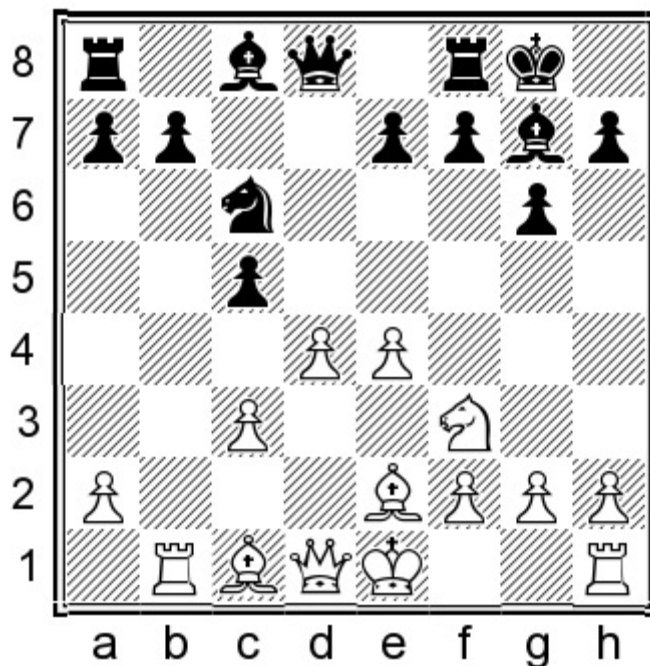
12...♞g4!. At last Black can safely develop his bishop! 13.♞g5 h6 14.♞e3 ♘c6! 15.d5 ♘a5 16.♞b4 ♞xf3 (16...b6) 17.♞xf3 ♘c4 18.♞d4 ♘d2 19.♞b2 ♘xf3+ 20.♞xf3 ♞a6 21.♞xg7 ♔xg7 22.♞c3+ ♔g8 23.♞c7 and now Anand came up with an improvement over his previous game: 23...♞d6! (23...♞fe8 24.♞xb7 ♞d3 25.♞e5 a5?? 26.♞xe7+- Vaisser-Anand, Paris 1994) and Black achieved a draw ending.

Still, I think that the line with taking the a2-pawn completely hands over the initiative to White. Black is on the defensive and, as you just saw, he often has to find only moves to save the day!

Black can avoid the sharpest lines with the modest 8.♞b1 0-0 9.♞e2 b6, but lately White has found a dangerous and energetic idea to attack with a pawn sacrifice.

Thus my preferred choice is the double-edged variation:

9...♘c6

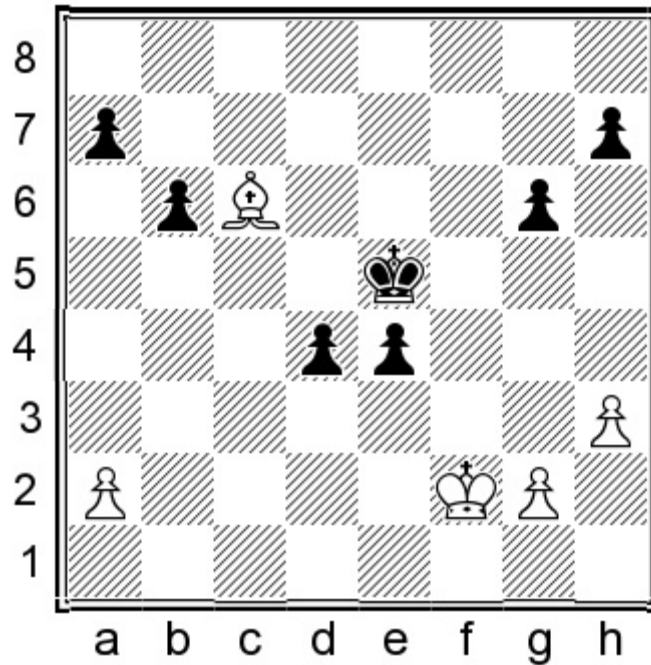


It was considered as the main line in the early 80s. The new system quickly grew up and accumulated a tremendous bulk of theory. Some sharp variations were analysed at home up to bare kings. The most notorious example was probably:

Novikov-Tukmakov

Lvov 1984

10.d5 ♖e5 11.♗xe5 ♙xe5 12.♚d2 e6 13.f4 ♙g7 14.c4 ♜e8 15.e5 f6 16.d6 fxe5 17.♙b2 exf4 18.♙xg7 ♜xg7 19.0-0 ♜f8 20.♞xf4 ♞xf4 21.♚xf4 ♚f6 22.♚e4 ♜b8 23.♞f1 ♚d4+ 24.♚xd4+ cxd4 25.♞b1 ♙d7 26.♙f3 b6 27.c5 ♞c8 28.c6 ♙xc6 29.♞c1 ♙d7 30.♞xc8 ♙xc8 31.♙c6 ♜f6 32.d7 ♙xd7 33.♙xd7 e5? 34.♜f2 e4 35.♙c6 ♜e5



36.h4! and White went on to win this endgame. Years later Kasparov revealed in his book the improvement 33...♙e5!.

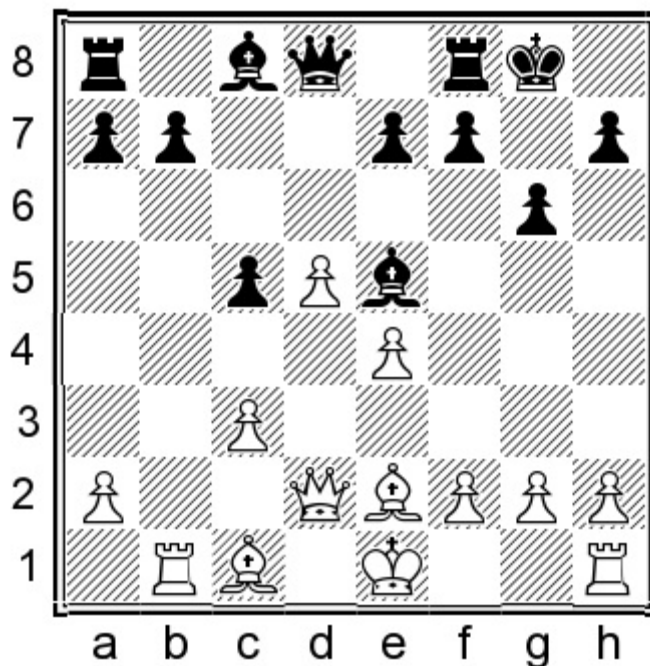
In the pre-computer era the big learning overhead of the 8.♞b1 system repelled many Grünfeld fans from their favourite opening.

Nowadays the engines helped to neutralise White's most dangerous lines and 7.♘f3 gained precedence over the 7.♙c4 system.

Objectives and Move Orders

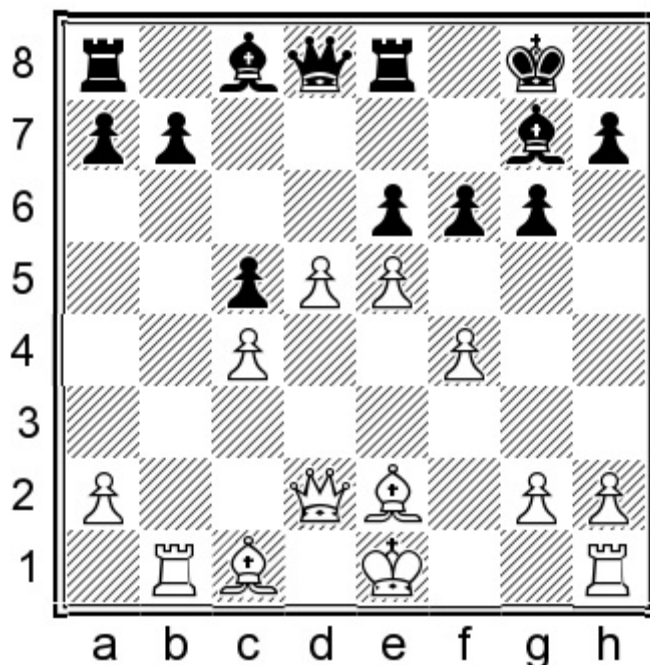
Let us consider:

7.♘f3 c5 8.♞b1 0-0 9.♙e2 ♘c6!? 10.d5! (10.♙e3 ♙g4=) 10...♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♙xe5 12.♚d2!



12.c4 would cost a pawn without compensation after 12...♙a5+, while 12.♞b3 c4! would ban c3-c4 at least for a while. 12.♙d2 also does not work due to 12...♙d6! followed by ...f5.

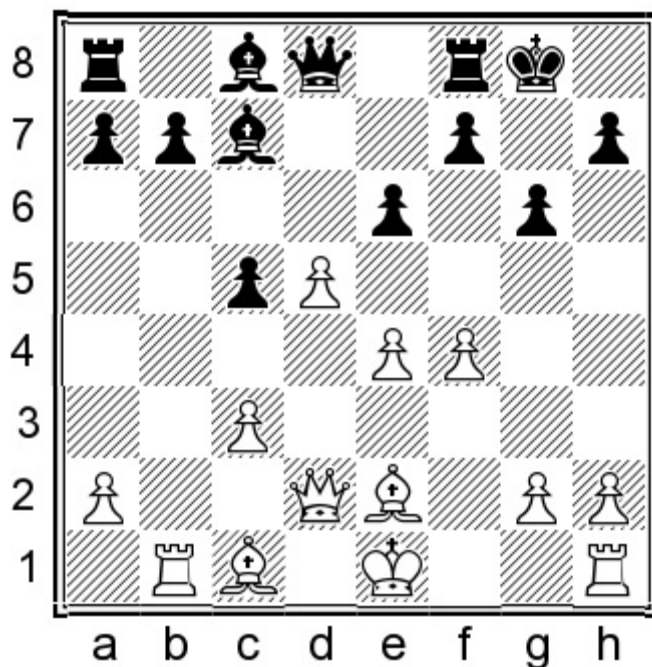
After 12.♙d2!, White's plan becomes clear. He will try to push his whole central cluster one step further, even if it cost him a pawn, as in the following example:



16.d6! This pawn will be a constant source of concern for Black even though practice suggests that he can hold this position. In this example White managed to play c3-c4, thus enabling the activation of his dark-squared bishop on the main diagonal. I do not like such type of positions where I should be only defending for many moves ahead. That is why I recommend to actively disturb the enemy plan and focus our attention on preventing c3-c4. Let us move forward in small steps now:

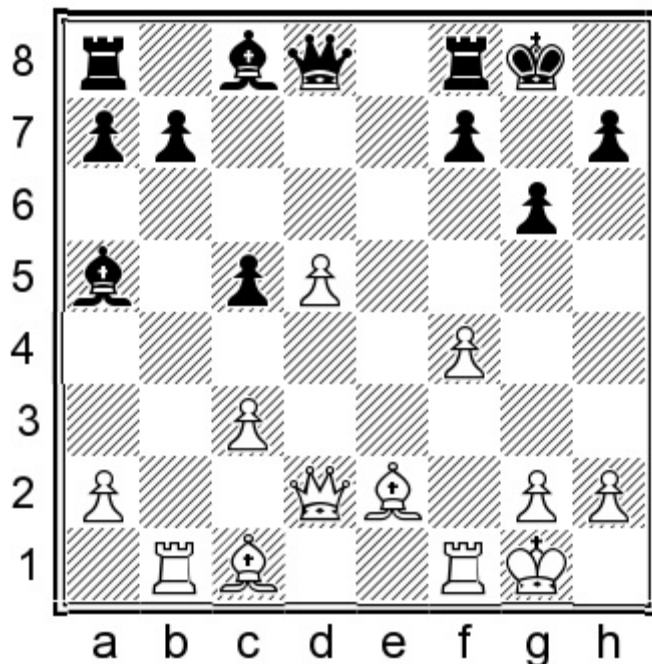
12...e6 13.f4 ♙c7!?

This amazing idea was revealed for the first time in the world championship match Alexandria-Chiburdanidze in 1981.



Its main (and only!) objective is to prevent White from playing c3-c4. As a result, White will have to recapture on d5 by the e-pawn and the e-file will open up in Black's favour. On the flip side, our king remains without defenders, and we should not spare any effort to keep the enemy dark-squared bishop out of play. Once we neutralised the positional threat of c3-c4, the only other way to activate the c1-bishop will be with g2-g4 and f4-f5. However, that would uncover White's king and we should seek then an opportunity to counterattack. The next few moves are critical:

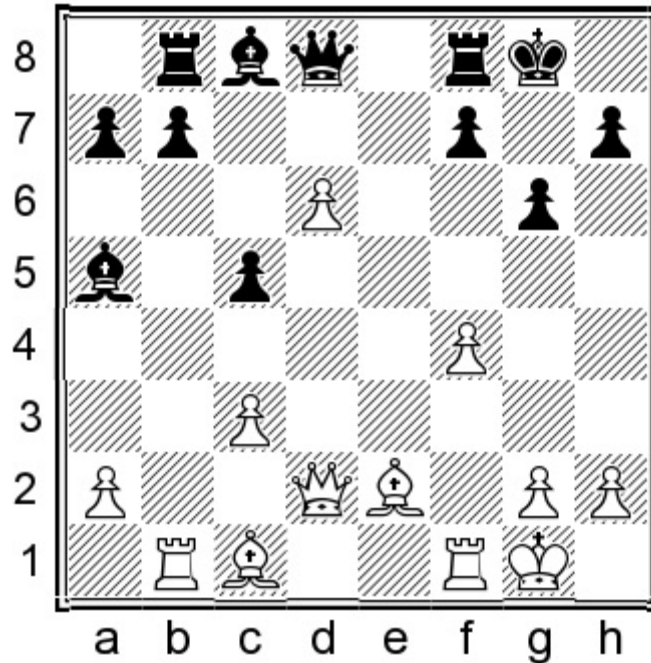
14.0-0 exd5 15.exd5 ♖a5!



16.d6

White has many other continuations, but none of them sets serious problems. We'll examine some examples later. The general principle of Black's defence is counterattack using the e-file. He can also target the c3-pawn by ...♔f6 or generate counterplay on the queenside with ...c4 or ...a6 and ...b5.

16...♖b8!



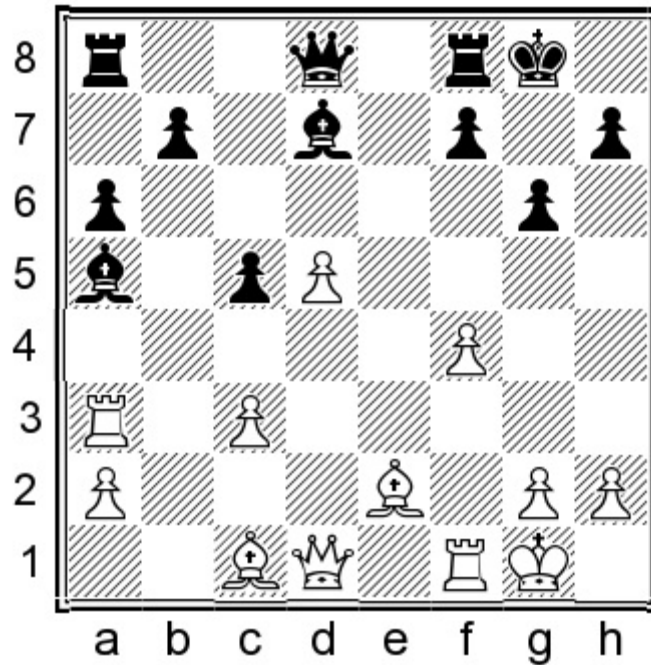
This looks like the critical position for the 13...♕c7 line. White has focused his attention mainly on 17.♖b5 b6 and 17.♕a3 ♕f5 18.♖bd1 ♖c8, but Black firmly holds his own. I analyse further these lines in the “Step by Step” section.

I'll offer now some examples of the basic plans of both sides.

Black's main strategic aim is to expand on the queenside where he has a pawn majority.

Dannevig-Svidler

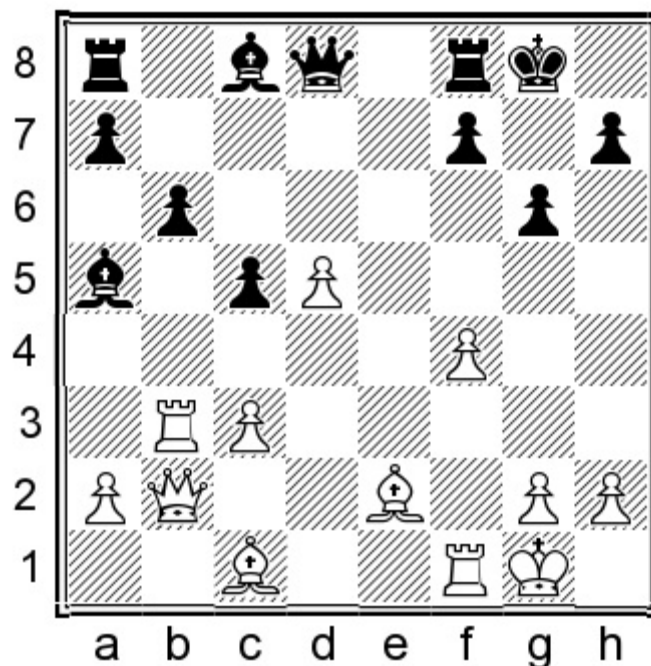
Gausdal 1992



Black can continue with 18...b5, but then 19.c4 would open the main diagonal. It is safer to keep it close or gain control of it:

18...c4! 19.♘xc4 ♜c8 20.♘d3 ♘xc3. Black has won the opening battle. The passive bishop on a5 transformed into the most powerful piece on the board. Svidler easily won after 21.♔h1 ♘b4 22.f5 ♚h4! 23.♘b1 ♘xa3 24.♘xa3 ♘b5 25.g3 ♚g5 26.♞f4 ♞fe8 27.♘e4 ♞c4 28.♚f3 ♚h5 29.g4 ♚h4 30.fxg6 hxg6 31.♔g2 ♚e1 0-1.

Pelletier-Ashley Bermuda 1999



In this example Black chose a more passive setup with ...b6 and now White's threat of c4 is very

dangerous. It should be prevented even at a cost:

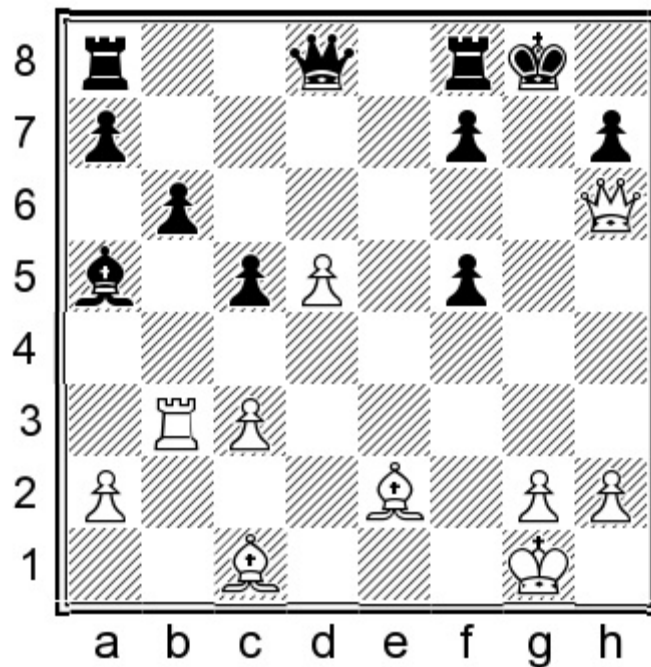
17...♙xd5! 18.♘f3 ♚c4 19.♙xa8 ♘a6 20.♞e1 ♞xa8.

Black has full compensation due to the split enemy pawns on the queenside. In Almasi-Peng Xiaomin, Las Vegas 1999, White also ceded the d-file and after 21.♞a3 ♞d8 22.h3 ♙c8 23.♕h2 ♙e6 24.♙e3 h5 Black was in total control.

21.♙d2 ♚d3! 22.♙xd3 ♙xd3 23.♞a3 ♞d8 24.♙e3 ♞d5 25.g4 f5 26.♞d1 c4=. Black is not worse in this endgame.

Aubel-Finkel

Dieren 1997

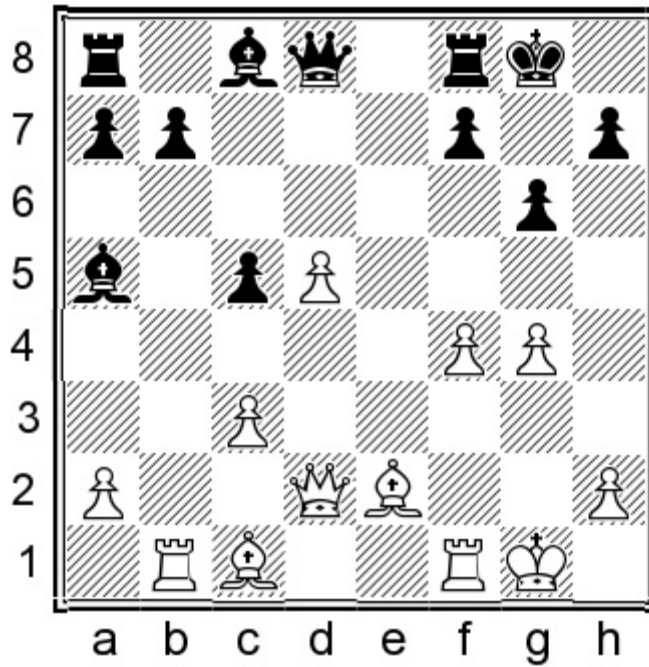


Here White sacrificed a pawn on f5, then the exchange. His attack looks horrifying, but 19...c4! again helps Black to save the day: 20.♙xc4 f6 21.♙a3 ♚c7 22.♙h4 ♞fc8. White still has a perpetual by 23.♙xf6.

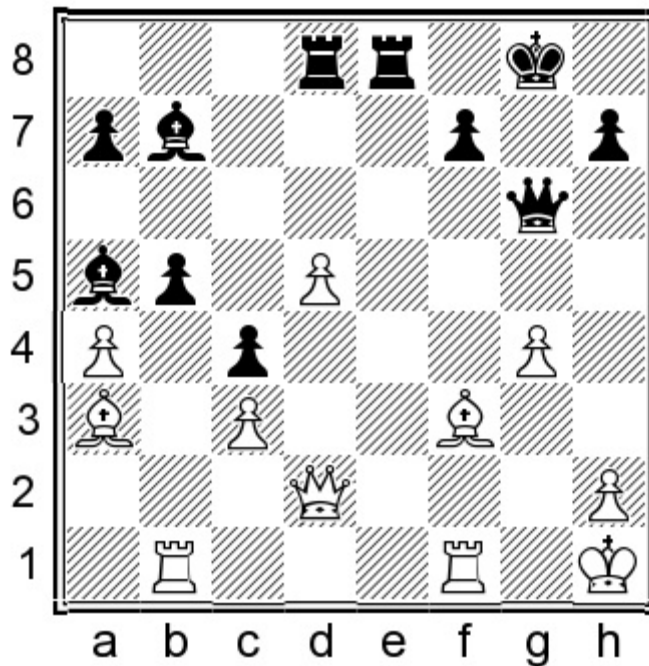
However, he erred with 23.♙a6, when Black could have launched a powerful counterattack: 23...♙e5! The safest way to meet White's attack with g4 is to bind him with defence of the c3-pawn by ...♙f6:

I.Rajlich-Boros

Budapest 2006

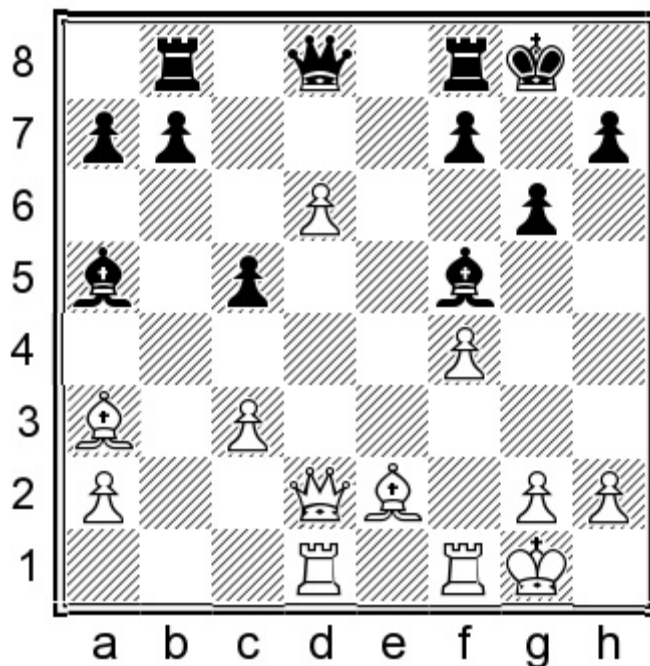


16...♖f6 17.♗b2 c4! 18.f5. Now best is 18...b5, for instance, 19.fxg6 ♜xg6 20.♔h1 ♞e8 21.♗f3 ♗b7=. The game might end in the style of the old masters: 22.a4 ♞ad8! 23.♗a3!



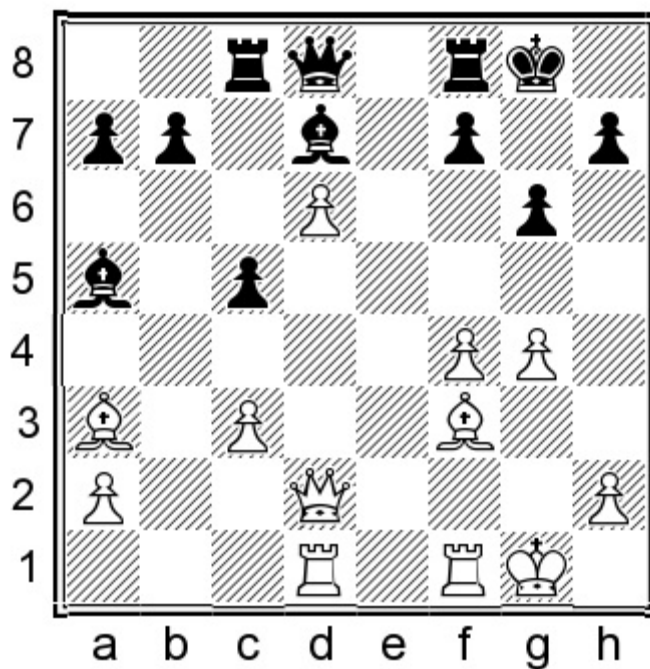
23...♞xd5! 24.♗xd5 ♞e2!! 25.♞be1!! ♜e4+!! 26.♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 27.♔g1 ♗b6+ 28.♜d4 ♗xd4+ 29.cxd4 ♞g2+ 30.♔h1 ♞e2+ with a perpetual check with the only two pieces which have survived.

Mikhalevski-Ftacnik
Bellevue 2006



18...♕f6 (18...♖c8!? is the sharper option) 19.♗xc5 ♗xc3 20.♗d4 ♗xd4+ 21.♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 22.♖xd4 b5 with a balanced endgame.

Learte Pastor-Koronowski
corr. ICCF 2008

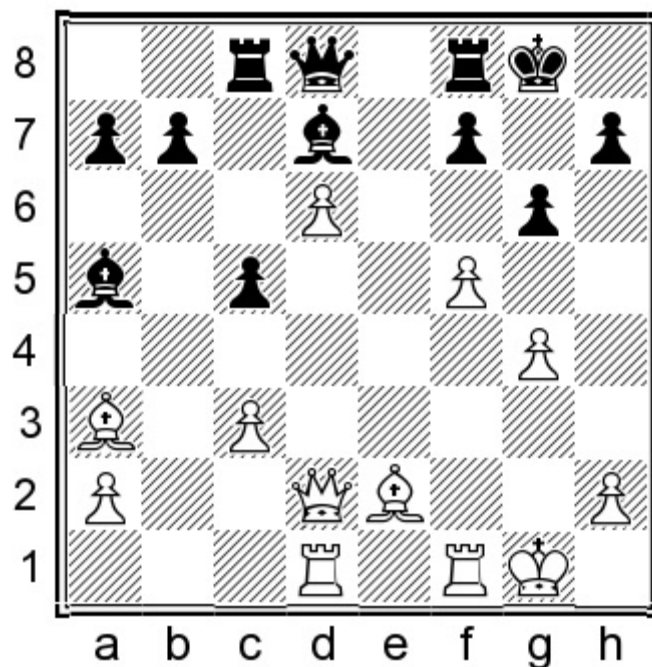


20...♕f6 21.♗b2 c4! 22.♖h1 ♗a4 23.♖c1 ♖fd8 24.♗a3 ♗c7! 25.♖cd1?! (25.g5=) 25...♗xd1 26.♖xd1 b5 27.♗b7 ♗xd6 28.♗xd6 ♖b8 29.♗d5 ♖xd6 30.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 31.♕xd6 ♕xd6 32.♖xd6 b4.

One thing Black should remember to avoid: taking on f5 by pawn is generally a bad idea. It opens not only the g-file, but also the b1-h7 diagonal:

Engelhardt-Atakisi

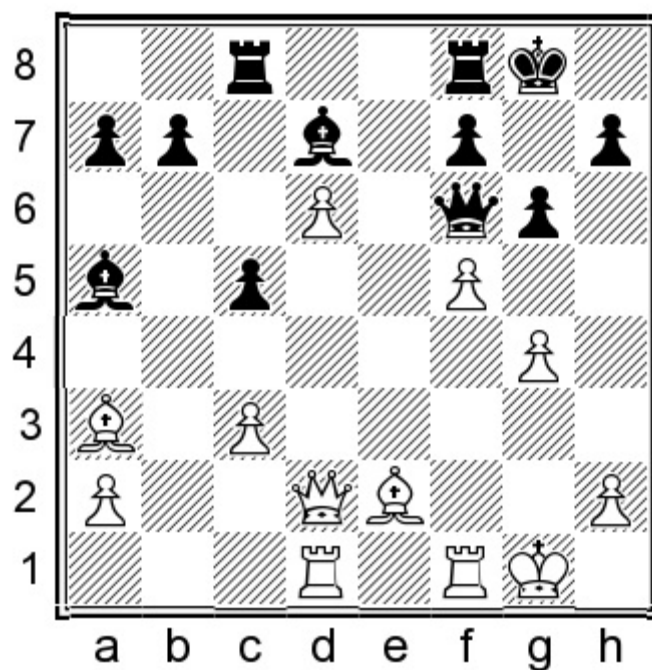
corr. ICCF 2006



20...gxf5? (20...♔h4 or 20...Qf6 are much better options.) 21.♕d3! f×g4. Here White could have fixed his advantage with 22.♖de1!, going to e7.

Ushenina-Sutovsky

Batumi 2018

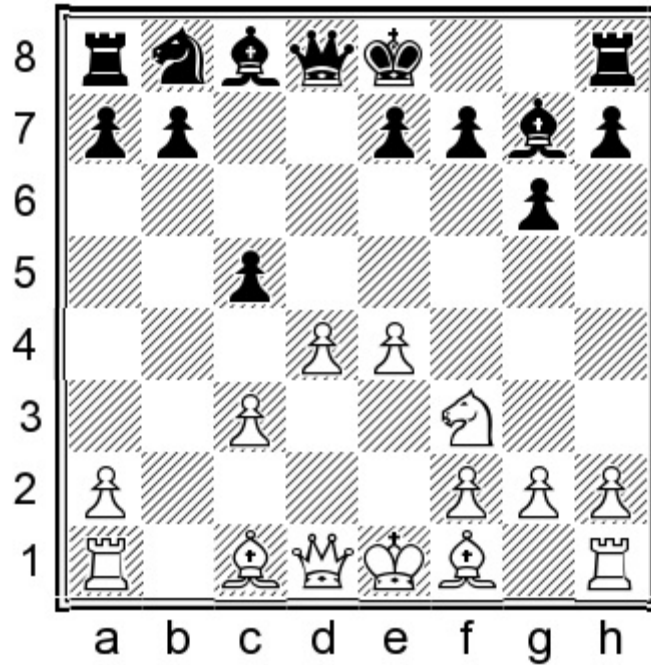


21.f×g6 ♔×g6. The split pawns are not a problem as White's position is also compromised 22.♕f3 (or

22. ♖h1 ♔g7 23. ♘b2 ♚ce8 24. ♙f3 b5 with a tangled position.) 22... ♔g7 23. ♚c1 ♙d8 24. ♗f2 ♙g5
25. ♚ce1 ♙f6 26. ♙xb7 ♙xc3 27. ♙xc8 ♚xc8=.

Chapter 9 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♔g7 7.♗f3 c5

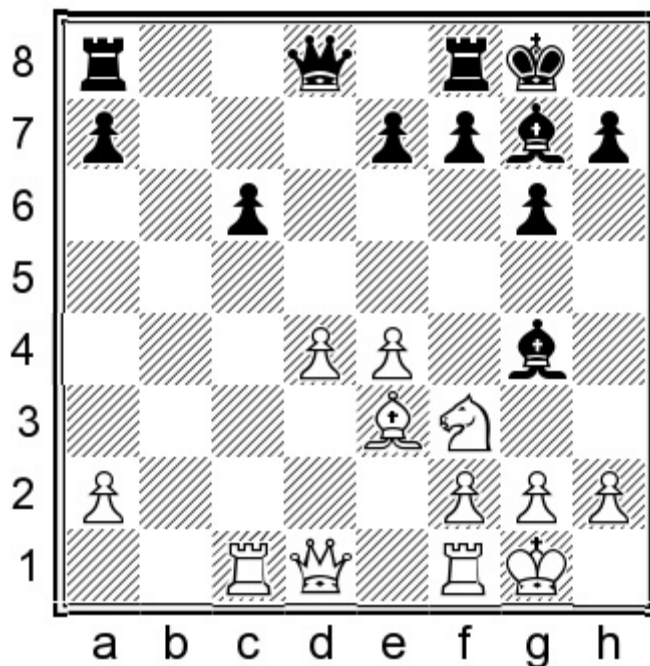


A. 8.♗b5+; B. 8.♗e2; C. 8.h3; D. 8.♗e3; E. 8.♖b1.

A. 8.♗b5+ ♔d7

8...♗c6 has always been considered as a safe equaliser to White's check, but I see some practical problems for Black in the main tabiya, which arises after:

9.0-0 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.♗e3 ♔g4 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♖c1



a) 13...Qa5 14.Qe2

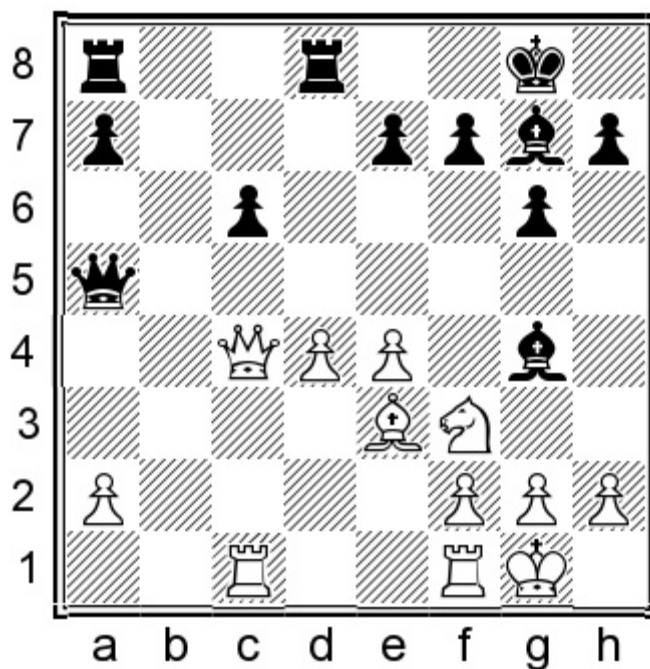
Alternatively:

14.Qd2 Qxd2 15.Nxd2 Bfd8 16.Nb3 a5 17.Bxc6 a4 18.Nc5 Qe2 19.Re1 Qxd4=, Komarov-Svidler, France 2009.

14.Bxc6 Qxa2 15.Bc7 Qe6 16.h3 Qd6 17.Bc5 Qxf3 18.Qxf3 a5=, I.Sokolov-Leko, Sarajevo 1999.

14...Bfd8 15.Qc4! The latest word in this line, introduced by the game L'Ami-Tari, Wijk aan Zee 2017.

15.Bc5 Qa3! is level – 16.Qc4 Qe6 17.Qc1 (17.d5?! cxd5 18.exd5 Qf5) 17...Qxa2 18.Bxc6 a5 19.Qh6 Qg4=.



15...Qb5

15...Qxf3 16.gxf3 Qh5 17.Qg2 Bxb8 is a principled line. Perhaps L'Ami had prepared 18.h4 (to limit the enemy queen) 18...Qxh4 (18...Qh6 19.Qc5) 19.Bh1 Qf6 20.e5 Qf5 21.Qxc6 with slight

pressure owing to the better centre.

16.a4 ♖xc4 17.♞xc4 ♞ab8 18.h3!?

The stem game actually went 18.♞fc1 ♕d7 (Black should draw following 18...c5!? 19.d5 ♕b2 20.♞e1 f5 21.♕xc5 ♞bc8 22.♕xe7 ♞xc4 23.♕xd8 fxe4) 19.♜e5 ♕e8± (19...♕xe5 20.dxe5 a6 21.a5±).

18...♕d7 19.♜e5±.

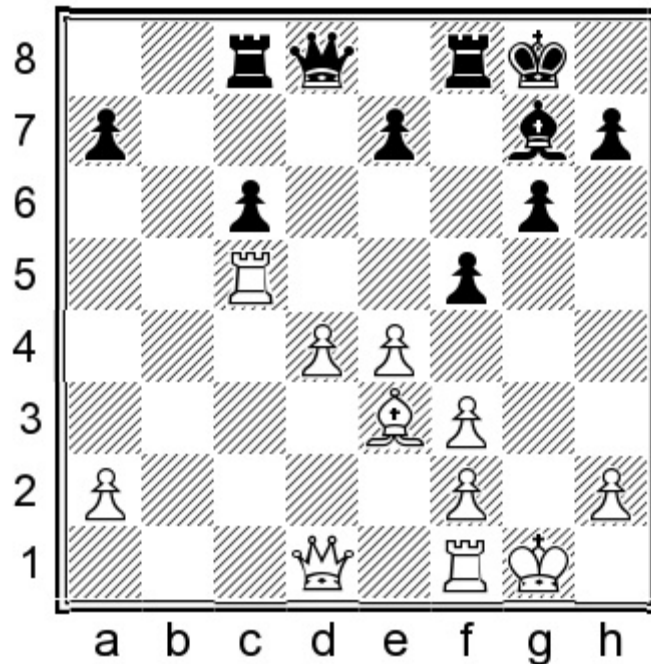
b) 13...♞c8!? 14.♞c5!

Or 14.e5 ♕e6 15.♞a4 ♕d5 16.♜d2 ♞d7 17.f3 f6±.

14.♞a4 ♕xf3 15.gxf3 ♞d7 16.♜g2 f5 17.h3 f4 18.♕d2 ♕xd4 19.♞fd1 e5 20.♕c3 ♞fd8=, Feller-Negi, Evry 2009.

14...♕xf3 15.gxf3 f5

15...♞d7 16.♜g2! f5 17.♞b3+ ♜h8 18.♞c2 favours White.



16.e5!. White keeps the more active pieces, e.g. 16...f4 17.♕c1 ♞d7 18.♜g2, or 17...e6 18.♞c2 ♞g5+ 19.♜h1 ♞h4 20.♞g1 ♞fd8 21.♞xc6.

8...♜d7 preserves more pieces on the board, but I suspect that White opts for 8.♕b5+ exactly in the hope to see 8...♜d7. From this square the knight misses its primary target – the d4-pawn. That dooms Black to a passive defence:

9.0-0 0-0 and now:

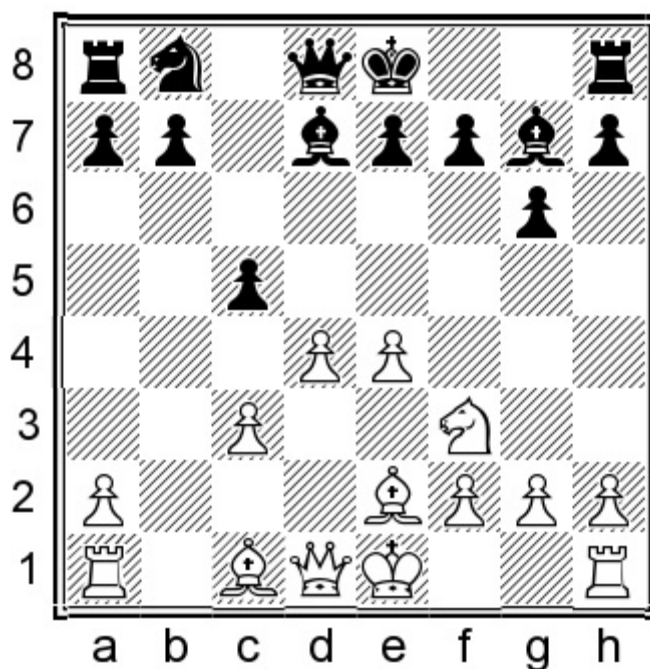
a) 10.♕g5 h6! 11.♕f4 ♞a5 12.♞b3 g5 13.♕e3 ♜f6 14.♕d3±.

b) 10.a4 ♞c7 (10...a6 11.♕c4 ♞c7 12.♞e2 b6 13.e5 e6 14.♕g5 ♕b7 15.♞fc1 ♞c6 16.h3 ♞fc8 17.♕d3 c4 18.♕c2 b5 19.a5!) 11.♞e2 ♜f6 12.h3 b6±.

c) 10.♖e1!? a6 11.♙f1. Black's only counterplay is 11...b5, but 12.a4 b4 13.cxb4 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♖b6 15.♙e3 ♗xb4 16.♘c6 ♗xe4 17.♖c1 was disastrous for him in Steingrímsson-Navara, Reykjavik 2010.

9.♙e2!?

9.♙xd7+ ♗xd7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♙e3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♘c6 (Black obtains better practical results with 12...e6!? 13.♖c1 ♘c6, but nobody has answered 14.d5.) 13.d5 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 ♙xe5 15.♖c1 ♖fc8 16.♗b3 b6 17.f4 ♙g7= is drawish.



9...♗a5

You should attack c3 before castling since 9...0-0 10.0-0 enables 10...♗a5 11.♙e3.

10.♙d2 0-0

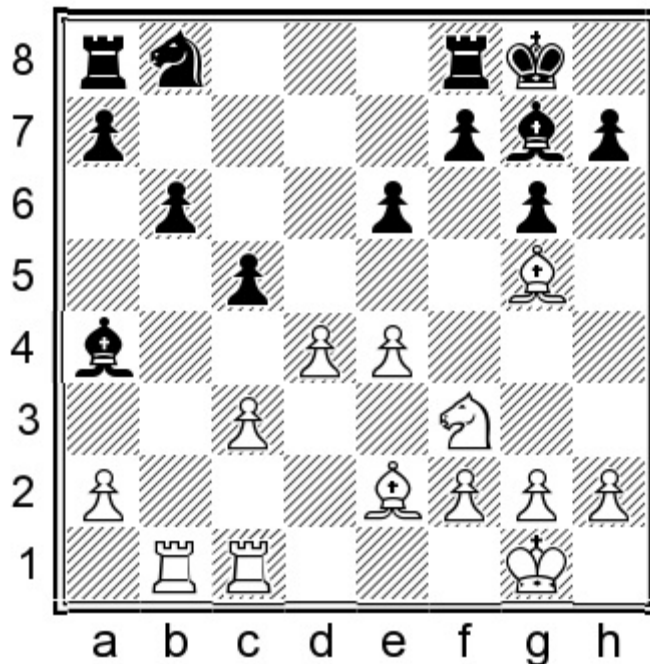
If you do not like the line 11.a4 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♗c7 13.♖c1 ♘a5 14.♖b1 ♖ac8 15.h3 ♖fd8 16.♖e1 h6 17.♙e3 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♗c2 19.♗xc2 ♖xc2=, you could play 10...♗a4 immediately.

11.0-0 ♗a4! 12.♖b1

12.♙g5 does not really threaten e7. Moiseenko-Svidler, Germany 2018, was drawn following 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 h6 14.♙e3 ♖c8 15.♗d2 ♖c2 16.♙d1 ♖xd2 17.♙xa4 ♖b2 18.♙xd7 ♘xd7 19.♖fb1 ♖b6 20.a4 ♖c8 21.a5 ♖xb1+ 22.♖xb1 ½-½.

12...b6 13.♙e3

Instead 13.♙g5 ♗xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♙a4 15.♖dc1 e6 is level.



The key point is that Black always meet dxc5 by ...♞d7 with typical compensation, e.g. 16.dxc5 ♞d7 17.cxb6 axb6 18.♞d2 ♟c6.

Another try is 16.♞d2 ♟c6 (or 16...♞d7 17.♟e3 f5 18.f3 fxe4 19.fxe4 ♞f6) 17.♟e3 ♞d8 18.dxc5 ♞d7=.

B. 8.♟e2 ♞c6!

White's last move looks very natural, but in fact it loses the battle for the d4-square. We should play concretely to avoid ending up in a passive position, for instance: 8...0-0?! 9.0-0 cxd4 (9...b6 10.♟g5! ♟b7 11.♞d3±) 10.cxd4 ♞c6 11.♟e3 ♟g4 12.d5 ♞e5 (12...♟xa1 13.♞xa1 ♞a5 14.♟h6±) 13.♞xe5 ♟xe2 14.♞xe2 ♟xe5 15.♞ab1±.

9.♟e3

9.d5 is inefficient since Black can favourably return the exchange after 9...♟xc3+ 10.♟d2 ♟xa1 11.♞xa1 ♞d4 12.♞xd4 cxd4 13.♞xd4 0-0!

13...f6 is also seen. White has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

14.0-0!

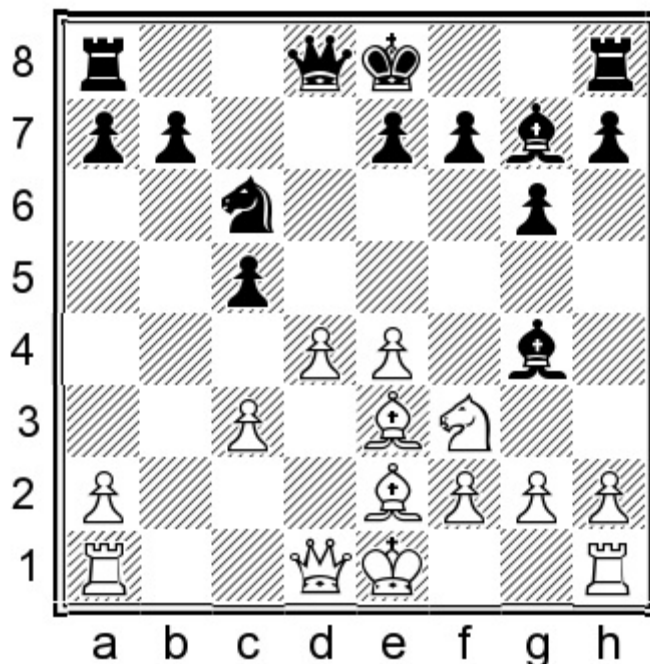
14.♟h6 ♞a5+ 15.♞f1 f6 16.♟xf8 ♞xf8 17.g4 ♟d7=.

14...♞b6 15.♞c3 ♟d7

A solid approach. 15...♞f6 16.e5 ♞h4 17.♞e3 ♟f5 18.f4 is unclear.

16.♟h6 f6=, Grischuk-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2019.

9...♟g4!



White is forced to a major strategic concession since 10.♞b1 ♕xf3 11.♕xf3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♕xd4 13.♕xd4 ♖xd4 14.♞xb7 loses a whole rook after 14...♗xf3+.

10.e5 0-0

Gupta confidently trades queens with 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖a5+ 12.♗d2 ♖xd2+ 13.♗xd2 ♕xe2 14.♖xe2 0-0, but I do not see any harm in keeping more pieces.

11.0-0 ♞c8

White does not have any active plan, while Black could expand on the queenside.

C. 8.h3

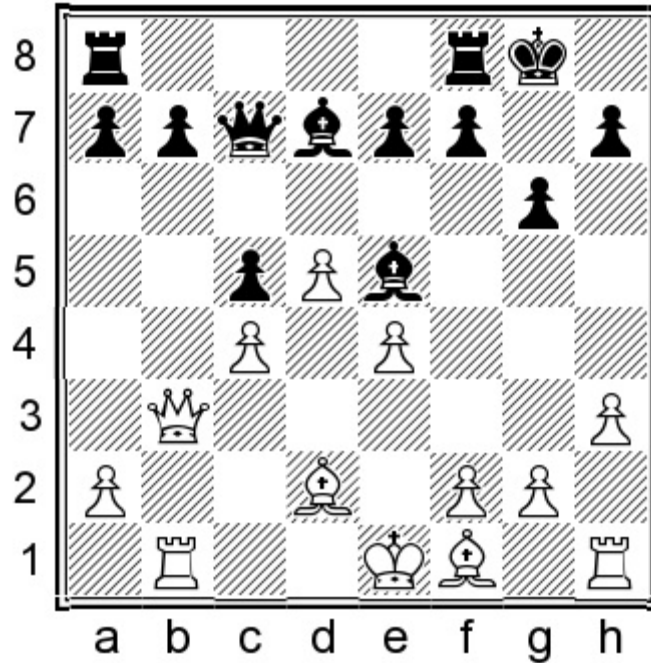
This prophylactic move lived its moment of glory in 2000 when Kramnik employed it against Kasparov in Linares. Its idea is crystal clear – to prevent the annoying pin and to keep a mobile pawn centre. However, the tempo tells, and Black has several decent ways to achieving a good game:

8...0-0 9.♕e2

9.♕e3 offers Black a wider choice. 9...♗c6 10.♕e2 transposes, while 10.♗d2 ♖a5 11.♞c1 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♞d8 has proved to be in Black's favour. Of course White could play 11.♞d1, but from that square the rook does not defend c3. Thus d4-d5 is not an imminent threat, and Black can develop his bishop on a nice place – 11...♕e6!?, threatening ...f5 and eventually ...♖xa2.

An alternative line arises after 9.♕e3 ♖a5!? 10.♕d2 ♗c6 11.♕e2

11.d5 does not have many followers, although it deserves attention – 11...♘e5 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5
 13.♚b3 ♕d7 14.c4 ♚c7 15.♙b1



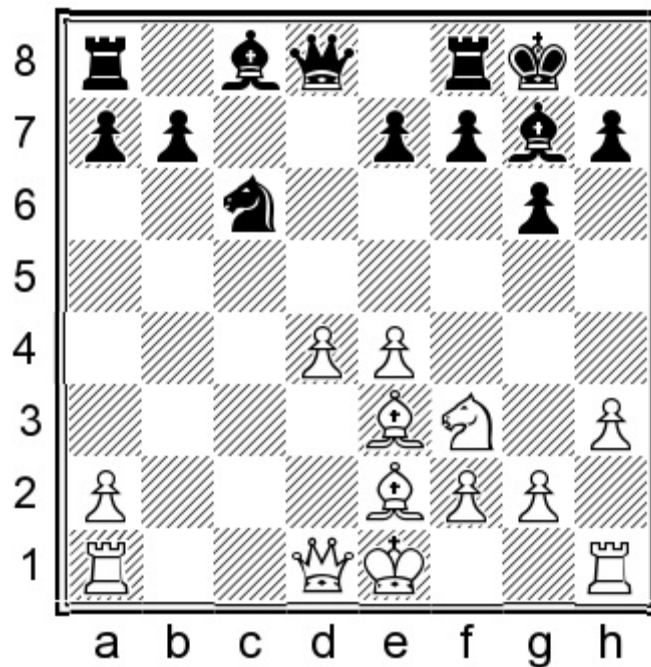
15...e6 (15...f5!? 16.♕d3 ♕d4∞ is also possible) 16.♕d3 exd5 17.exd5 ♕d4 18.0-0 ♕xh3 19.♕xg6
 fxg6 20.♚xh3 ♜ae8=.

11...cxd4

Vachier-Lagrave chose in 2017 11...♚d8, but White keeps an initiative following 12.d5 ♘e5
 13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.0-0 f5 15.f4 ♕g7 16.e5! ♚xd5 17.♕e3.

12.cxd4 ♚a3, transposing to **game 21**.

9...♘c6 10.♕e3 cxd4 11.cxd4



11...f5

11...♔a5+ 12.♙d2 ♔a3= has been analysed to an absolutely safe position. It also demands higher precision from both sides. See **Game 21** Acevedo Villalba-Petrolo, ICCF 2017.

12.♙c4+

12.exf5 ♔a5+ is awkward for White who should move back the bishop to d2 and struggle to keep the balance.

12.0-0 would transpose after 12...f4. Black could also try 12...fxe4 13.♙c4+ e6=.

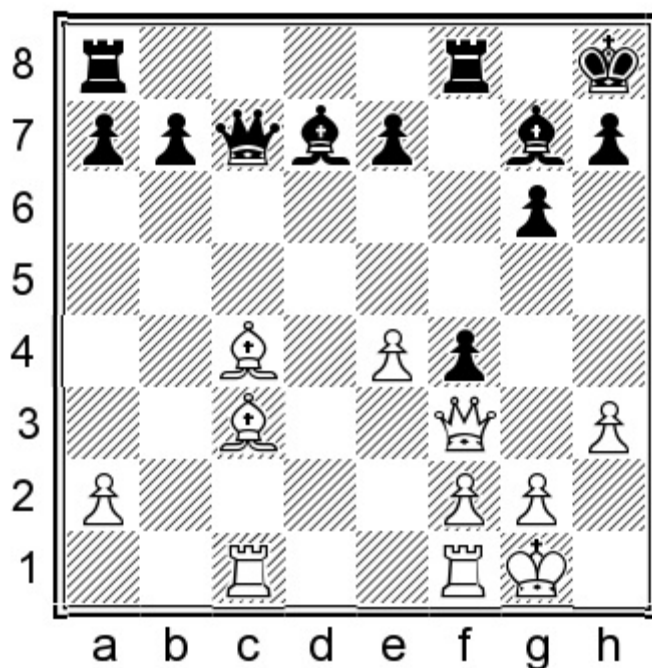
12...♔h8 13.0-0

Black has the initiative after 13.e5 b5 14.♙b3 f4. He can develop it with 15.♙d2 a5 16.0-0 ♙f5.

13...f4 14.♙d2 ♖xd4 15.♙c3 ♖xf3+

Avrukh's recommendation 15...♙e6 16.♙xe6 ♖xe6 is dubious owing to 17.♙xg7+ ♖xg7 18.♔a4 and White won both tournament games.

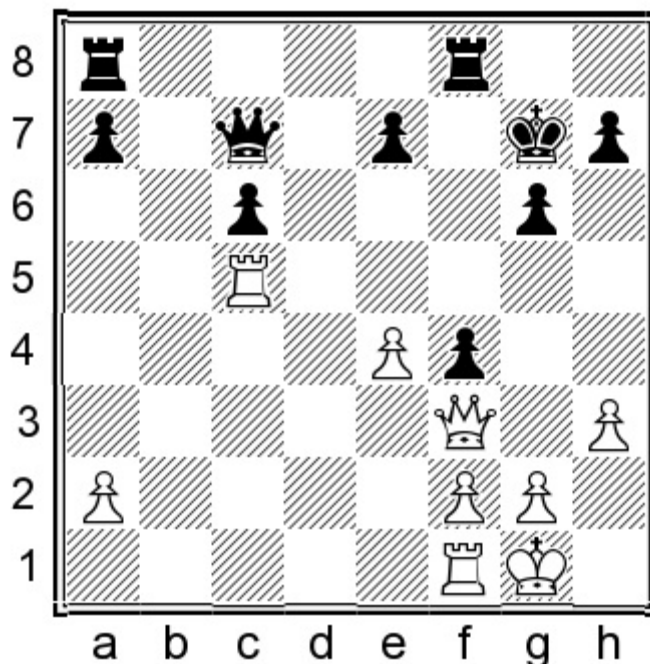
16.♔xf3 ♔c7 17.♖ac1 ♙d7



White has just enough compensation to make a draw. Here are some examples:

18.♖fd1 ♙c6 19.♙d5 ♖ad8 20.♙b4 a5 21.♙e1 ♖d6 22.♔a3 ♖a8 23.♖c5 a4 24.♖dc1 h5 25.♙c3 e5 26.♔b2 a3 27.♔b5 (27.♔a1 ♔e7) 27...♔d7 28.♔b3 ♙xd5 29.♖xd5 ♖c8 30.♖e1 ½-½ Napalkov-Ylönen, ICCF 2015;

18.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 19.♙b5 ♙c6 20.♙xc6 bxc6 21.♖c5



21...Rac8

21...Rad8!? 22.♖c3+ ♜f6 23.e5 ♜f5 24.♞e1 ♞d7 25.♞xc6 ♞d2 26.♞xd2 ♞xd2 27.♞c7 ♞xa2

28.♞xe7+ ♞f7 29.♞e8 ♞c7 30.e6 ♞cc2 31.♞a8 ♞xf2 32.♞xa7+ ½-½ Gefenas-Murray, ICCF 2015.

22.♞fc1 ♞d6 23.♞c3+ ♞f7 24.h4 ♞f6 25.♞xf6+ exf6 26.♞xc6 ♞xc6 27.♞xc6 ♞e8 28.♞a6 ♞xe4

29.♞xa7+ ♞e6 30.h5 gxh5 31.♞xh7, ½-½ Wagner-Svidler, Caleta 2015.

D. 8.♙e3 ♙g4!?

The well trodden path is 8...♞a5, when 9.♞d2 0-0 10.♞c1 converts to Chapter 8/ line B.

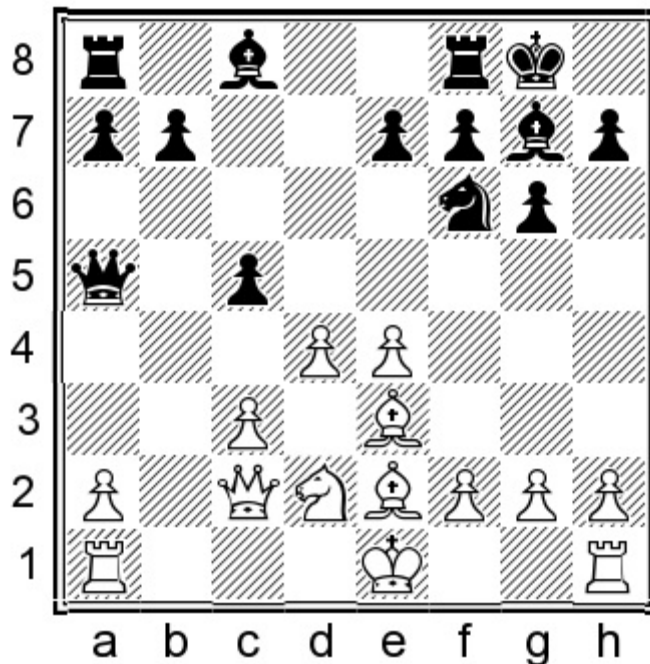
Recently 9.♘d2 has become trendy.

The idea is to meet 9...cxd4 by 10.♘c4 ♞d8 11.cxd4 0-0 12.♞b1, but Black exploits the absence of the knight from the kingside with the break 12...f5!. I tried with White 13.♘e5 ♙xe5 14.♙c4+ ♞g7 15.dxe5 ♞xd1+ 16.♞xd1 to discover that all this is rather drawish. More interesting is:

9...♘d7!? 10.♞c2

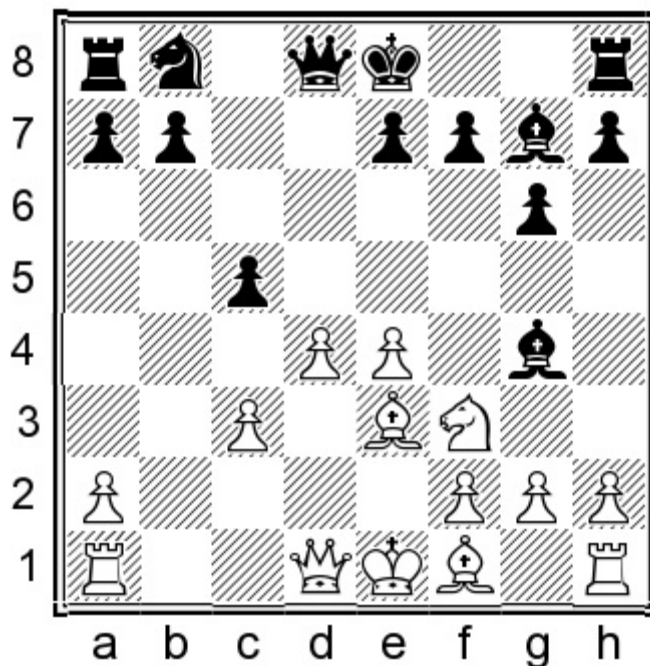
10.♘b3 is an attempt to sign a draw after 10...♞xc3+ 11.♙d2 ♞b2. Black can keep fighting only with 10...♞c7!?, e.g. 11.♙b5 0-0 12.0-0 ♘f6 13.f3 a6 14.♙e2 c4 15.♘d2 b5∞. This approach is certainly risky, but the position is strategically unbalanced, with all three results possible. In fact, both Tukmakov and Cheparinov won their games with Black.

10...0-0 11.♙e2 ♘f6



12.0-0 (or 12.h3 cxd4 13.cxd4 b6 14.0-0 ♔a6) 12...cxd4! (an improvement over Svidler's 12...♔d7) 13.cxd4 ♖g4 14.♕f4 e5 15.♗c4 ♚c7 16.♕g3 b5 17.h3. At this point Black made a mistake in Laznicka-Kulaots, Caleta 2012, – 17...♗xf2?. Critical was 17...♗h6! 18.♗e3 ♚xc2 19.♗xc2 exd4 20.♕xb5 d3 21.♕xd3 ♕xa1 22.♖xa1. I do not see any danger for Black here.

I recommend a more straightforward setup, based on quick development. In practice White has been floating after 8...♕g4!?. He has tried no less than 8 different continuations:



9.♖c1

9.♖b1 ♗c6! is the tactical point behind 8...♕g4.

It is more ambitious than 9...♕xf3 10.gxf3 ♗c6 11.♖xb7 (Or 11.e5 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♚a5+ 13.♚d2

♖xd2+ 14.♔xd2 0-0-0 15.♔c3, Kir.Georgiev-Leko, Dubai 2002, 15...♞d7=.) 11...0-0 12.♙b5
 (Stayed the bishop on g4, this move would have lost to 12...♗a5 and the d7-square is covered.)
 12...cxd4 13.♙xc6 dxe3 14.♞d7 ♖a5 15.♙xa8 ♗xa2 16.♞e2 ♙xc3+!

10.♞xb7

10.♙b5 0-0 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♞d7 leaves White wondering why did he put his
 rook on b1.

10...0-0 11.♙e2 ♙xf3 12.♙xf3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♙xd4 14.♙xd4 ♗xd4 15.0-0 ♞d6=.

9.♙e2?! ♗c6! 10.d5?! (10.e5∞) 10...♙xc3+ 11.♔f1 ♙xf3 12.gxf3 ♙xa1 13.♞xa1 ♗d4 14.♙b5+ ♔f8
 15.♙xd4 cxd4 16.♞xd4 f6 17.♔g2 ♞d6=, Zhu Chen-Van Wely, Batumi 2001.

9.♞d2 ♙xf3 10.gxf3 does not look pretty.

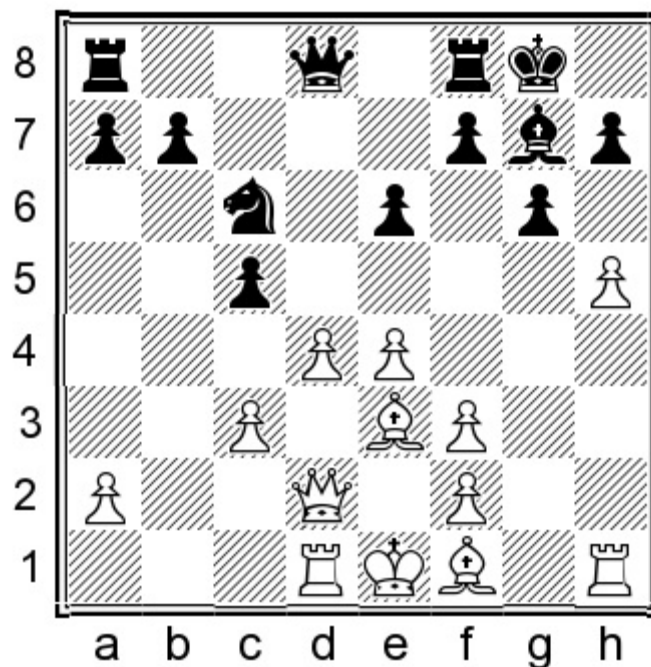
Then 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗c6 12.♞d1 (12.♙b5 0-0 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.0-0 c5=) 12...0-0 13.d5
 (13.f4!? e6 14.d5 ♗e7 15.d6 ♗f5=) 13...♗e5 14.♙e2 ♞c8 15.0-0= was tested in Doettling-Svidler,
 France 2002.

Perhaps Black should postpone ...♗c6, for example:

10...e6 11.♞d1

11.♙e2 cxd4 12.cxd4 0-0 13.h4 ♗c6 14.♞d1 ♞e7∞.

11...0-0 12.h4 ♗c6 13.h5



Ramming Black's castling position with the h-pawn is the only justification for the split pawn structure.
 However, Black can simply trade queens with:

13...♞a5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♙e2 ♞ac8 16.♔f1 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♞xd2 with an initiative on the queenside.

9.♙b5+ ♗c6 10.0-0 0-0!? is comfortable for Black.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 0-0 12.♙xc6 bxc6= transposes to line A.

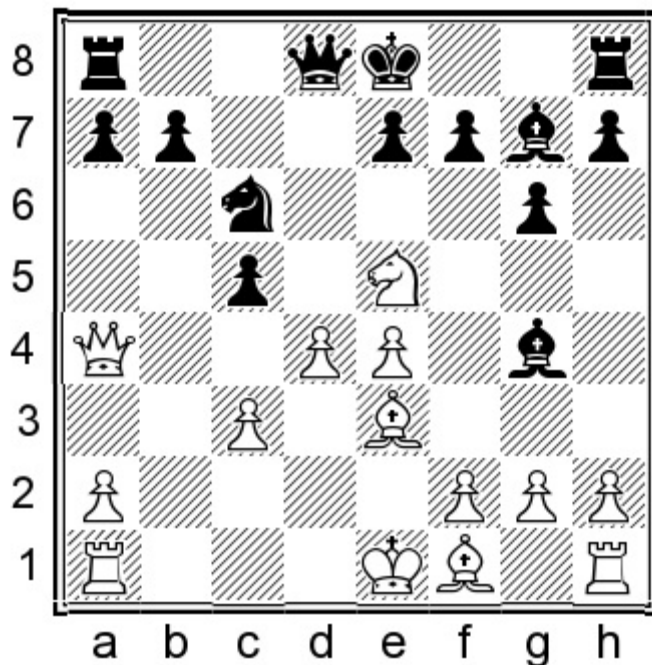
11.d5 ♗e5 12.♙e2 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙xf3 14.♞xf3 ♙xc3 15.♞ab1 b6 16.♙xc5 ♞c8=, Liu Yan-Bai Jinshi,

Hangzhou 2019.

9. ♖a4+ ♜c6

A similar idea is 9... ♜d7!? 10. ♜e5 cxd4 11. cxd4 ♙xe5! 12. dxe5 0-0 13. f4?! ♜c8, and Black seized the initiative, Kozul-Li Chao, Karlsruhe 2016.

10. ♜e5. It is amazing how often in the Grünfeld Black can favourably part with his otherwise most useful piece:



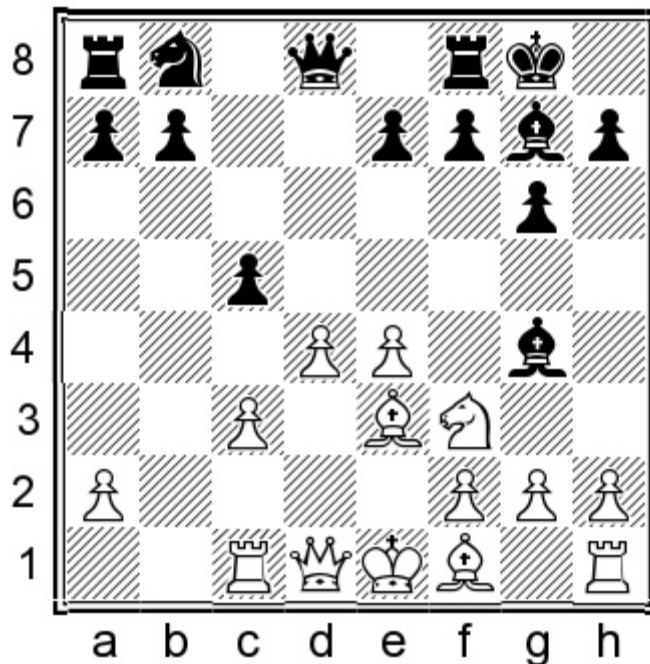
10... ♙xe5!. White's pawn weaknesses and bad development do not give him time for organising an attack:

11. dxe5 0-0 12. h3

Or 12. f4 ♜c7 13. h3 ♙d7=.

12... ♙e6 13. f4 ♜c8 14. ♙e2 ♖a5 15. ♖xa5 ♜xa5 16. ♜f1 f5= (16... ♜fd8!?), Grischuk-Svidler, Amber rapid, Nice 2010.

9...0-0



10. ♕e2

10.d5 ♘d7! assures Black of rich play thanks to the typical pawn sac c5-c4. Kornev misses this move altogether in his White repertoire book.

11. ♕e2 ♖a5 12. ♗d2

Perhaps 12.0-0 is wiser. Black can take the pawn, but he cannot improve following 12... ♕xc3 13. ♗b3 ♕xf3 14. ♕xf3 ♕b4 15. ♖c2 b5 16. ♖b1=.

12...c4! 13.0-0 ♘c5 14. ♗c2 ♘a4

Gupta won a game with 14... ♖ac8!? 15. ♕xc4 ♘a4 16. ♗b3 ♕xf3 17. gxf3 ♘xc3∞ (17... ♘c5 18. ♗c2 ♘a4 draws).

15. ♘d4 ♕xe2 16. ♘xe2 ♖ad8 17. ♖fd1 ♖d6 18. g3 ♖e8 19. ♔g2 e6 20. ♘f4 e5 21. ♘e2 b5∞, Pflaesterer-Glembek, ICCF 2018.

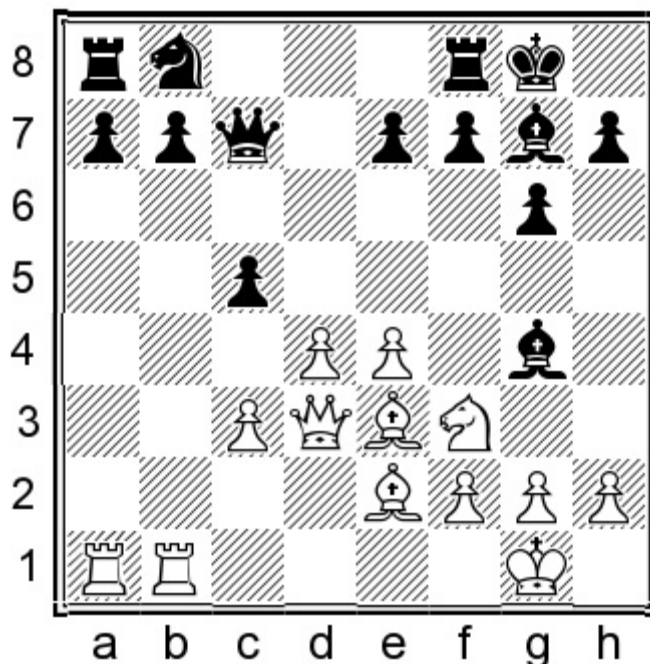
10. ♗d2 ♕xf3 11. gxf3 is highly committal. We should not open the c-file with ...cxd4. Instead 11...e6!? 12.d5 (but 12.h4 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘c6 is already fine) 12... ♘d7 13.c4 ♘e5 leads to a tense fight.

10... ♗a5 11. ♗d2

11.0-0 is less popular on account of 11... ♗xa2 12. ♖a1 ♗b2!

The queen retreats on the dark squares. 12... ♗e6 13.h3 ♕xf3 has been slightly better for White in correspondence games.

13. ♗d3 ♗b6 14. ♖fb1 ♗c7



White has compensation for the pawn, but it is just enough to maintain the balance:

15. ♖c4 (15. h3 ♙xf3 16. ♙xf3 ♘c6 17. e5 ♜fd8∞) 15...b6 16. h3

The stem game for this line has been Vachier Lagrave-Caruana, Tromsøe 2013, which saw

16...♙c8 17. dxc5 with some pressure. A logical improvement is to keep the position closed with:
 16...♙d7! 17. dxc5 b5 18. ♖d3 a6 19. ♘d4 ♘c6, e.g. 20. ♜d1 ♘a5 21. ♖d2 ♜fd8 22. ♙g5 ♘b7 23. e5 ♘xc5
 24. ♙xe7 ♜e8 25. ♙d6 ♖b6∞.

11...♘d7

Another decent option is 11...e6 12. d5 exd5 13. exd5 c4!?, which is similar to the main line.

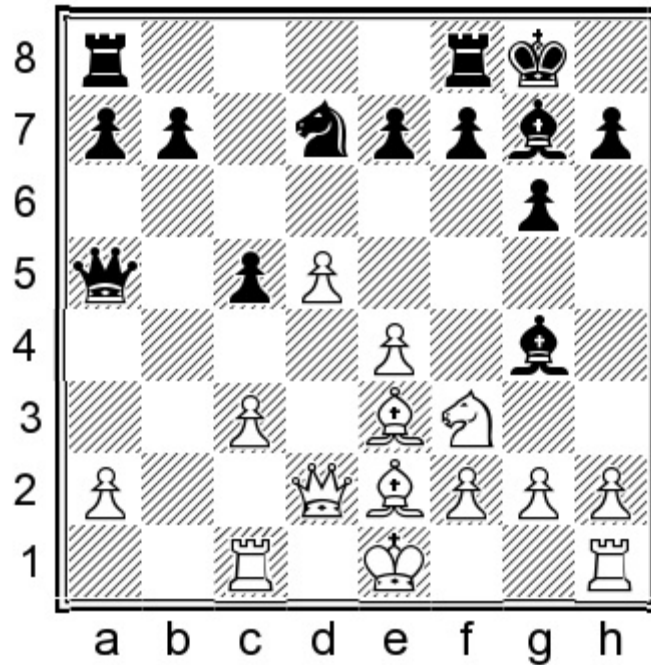
13...♘d7 14. c4 ♖xd2+ 15. ♙xd2 ♘f6 is “only” equal – 16. ♙d3 b5 17. ♘e5 ♜fd8 18. ♘c6 ♜d7
 19. ♘e5=.

14. 0-0 ♘d7 15. ♙xc4 ♜ac8 16. ♙b3 ♙xc3 17. ♖c2 ♙f5 18. ♖d1 ♘c5 19. ♙c2 ♙d7∞.

11...♘c6 is a bit provocative in view of 12. d5, although Black scores more than 50% in the complications.

12. d5

12. 0-0 is extremely rare. It may lead to a balanced endgame after 12. 0-0 ♙xf3!? 13. gxf3 cxd4 14. cxd4
 ♖xd2 15. ♙xd2 ♙xd4=, Dunlop-Benz, ICCF 2018.



12...c4!

This pawn sac has been tested in many Grünfeld lines, and it yields, as a rule, excellent practical results. The computer may claim that play is balanced, but OTB encounters unfold under strict Black's control. Here are two examples:

Drnovsek-Gupta, Pardubice 2017: 13.0-0 ♖c5 14.♙c2 ♜ac8 15.♙xc4

(15.♘d4 ♙xe2 16.♘xe2, Loiseau-Van Foreest, Teplice 2019, 16...e6!?) 15...♘a4 16.♙b3 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♘xc3 (17...♘c5 18.♙c2 ♘a4=) 18.a4 ♘xa4 19.♙xb7 ♘c3 20.♙d3 ♜c7 21.♙b3 ♜cc8 22.♙b7 e6

23.♙xa7 ♙d8 24.f4 ♙h4 25.♙h1 ♙h3 26.d6 e5 27.f3 ♜a8 28.♙e7 ♜a2 29.♜f2 ♜xf2 30.♙xf2 ♙xf3+-+.

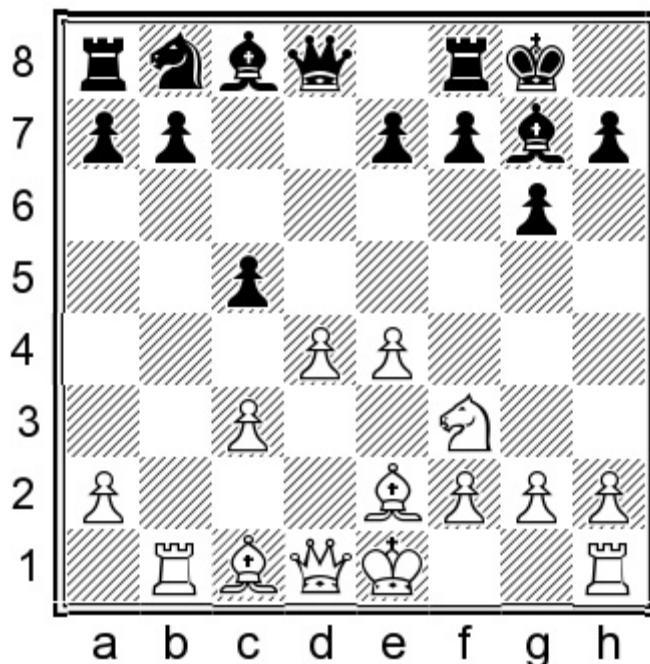
Krishna Teja-Lorparizangeneh, Manavgat 2018: 13.♙d4 ♙xf3 14.♙xf3 ♙xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙c5 16.♙d2 b5 17.0-0 ♘e5 18.♙d1 e6 19.♙c2 exd5 20.exd5 ♜ad8? 21.♜cd1 ♘d3 22.♙xd3 ♙xd5 23.♜fe1 cxd3-+.

E. 8.♜b1! 0-0 9.♙e2

9.♙e3 ♘c6 10.♙d2

10.♙e2 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♙a5+ is awkward as 12.♙d2 loses a tempo and 12.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♜d8 14.♙c3 is plain ugly.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♙g4 12.d5 ♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♘e5 14.♙e2 ♙c8 ensures good counterplay on the kingside.



9...dxc6!

The old main line was 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♖a5+ 11.♔d2 ♜xa2 12.0-0 ♘g4 13.♙g5 h6 14.♙e3 ♘c6 15.d5 ♘a5, but it seems that White does not risk anything in this position, and he too often succeeds in converting the activity of his pieces into a full point.

9...b6 was proposed by Agrest in the first edition. However, 10.0-0 ♜c7 (10...♙b7?! 11.d5 ♙xc3 12.h4 favours White) 11.♙g5 ♘c6 12.♜d2 ♙g4 13.d5 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 ♙xe2 15.♘xg6 hxg6 16.♜xe2 ♙xc3 17.f4 offers White a strong initiative on the kingside.

10.d5

10.♙e3 ♙g4= is considered in line D. However, Black could also play 10...cxd4!? 11.cxd4 ♜a5+ 12.♔d2 (12.♜d2 ♜xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♞d8 14.♞hc1 ♘xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4 16.♘xd4 ♞xd4+ 17.♙e3 ♞a4) 12...♜xa2 13.d5 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 ♙xe5 15.0-0 ♔d7! 16.♞xb7 ♙a4 17.♜e1 ♞fb8 18.♞xb8+ ♞xb8 with better pieces and a strong passer.

10...dxe5 11.♘xe5

11.♘d2?! wastes a tempo. We should attack by ...f5 immediately or a couple of moves later: 11...e6 12.f4 ♘d7 13.c4 ♘b6 14.0-0 f5 15.♙b2 ♙xb2 16.♞xb2 ♞e8= or 11...f5 12.0-0 (12.c4 fxe4 13.0-0 b6 14.♞b3 ♘d3=) 12...fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♙f5.

11...♙xe5 12.♜d2

Another way to defend the c3-pawn is 12.♞b3, when the typical sac 12...c4 (12...e6!?) 13.♙xc4 ♜c7 ensures enough counterplay – 14.♙e2 (14.♜e2 ♙g4 15.♜xg4 ♜xc4 16.♔d2 b6 17.♜e2 ♞fc8 18.f4 ♙g7

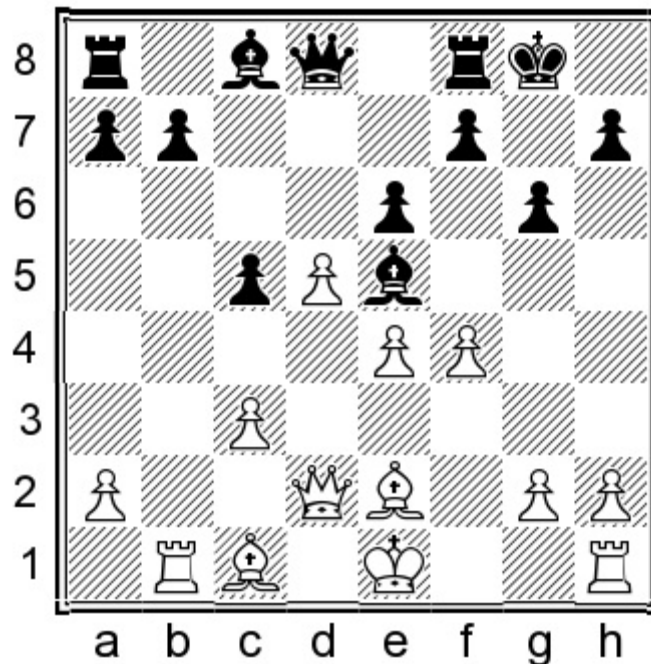
19.♖f2 ♖a4=, Shulman-Kamsky, Saint Louis 2009) 14...♙xc3+ 15.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 16.♚xd2 ♚e5 17.♞e3 ♙d7=.

12.♙d2 is bad due to 12...♚d6 13.h4 f5.

12.c4 ♖a5+ 13.♙d2 is outright dubious. Without knights Black is not cramped, and he can safely grab the a2-pawn: 13...♚xa2 14.0-0 ♙d4 15.♙h6 ♞e8 16.♖h1 e6 17.f3 b6 18.♙d3 ♙d7 19.♚c1 ♚a6=, Wirig-Atakisi, Antalya 2009.

Recently Esipenko attempted to revive 12.0-0 ♙xc3 13.♙h6. Black played all the most natural moves and took a comfortable edge after 13...♙g7 14.♙xg7 ♖xg7 15.♚c2 b6 16.♚c3+ f6 17.f4 e6.

12...e6 13.f4



13...♙c7

This weird retreat is aimed against c3-c4. If needed, Black will sac his c5-pawn by ...c5-c4 to keep the pawn on c3. The older:

13...♙g7 is in a crisis, according to latest correspondence games:

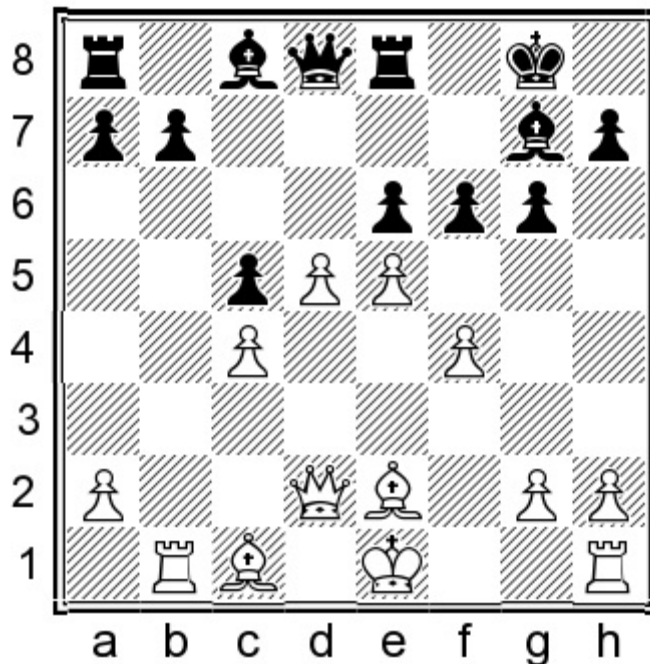
14.c4!

Black's task is easier after 14.d6 b6 15.0-0 e5 16.fxe5 ♙b7 17.♚f4 ♚e8 18.♙c4 ♙c6! 19.♚g3 ♙xe5 20.♙f4 ♙xf4 21.♞xf4 b5 22.♙b3 c4 23.♙c2 f6 24.♞f5 ♙d7=.

14...♞e8! 15.e5!

The pawn structure after 15.0-0 exd5 16.exd5 ♙d4+ 17.♖h1 b6 is favourable to Black, due to his control of the e-file and the weaknesses of White's second rank: 18.♙d3 ♙f5!? 19.♙b2?! ♙xb2 20.♞xb2 ♚f6=.

15...f6



16.d6

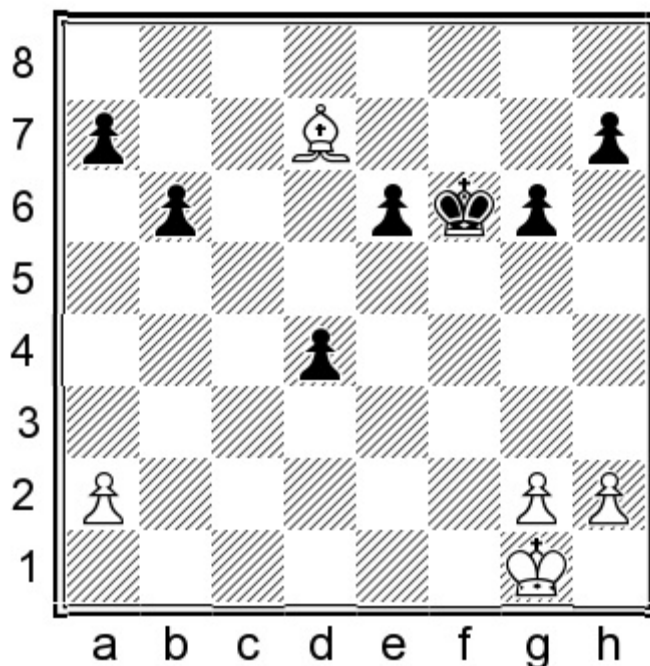
Or 16.0-0 fxe5 17.fxe5 exd5 18.cxd5 ♖xe5 19.♗b2 ♖xb2 20.♞xb2 b6 21.d6 ♗e6 22.♗b5 ♞f8 23.♞f4 ♞f5=.

16...fxe5 17.♗b2 exf4 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.0-0 ♞f8 20.♞xf4

20.♞bd1 ♗d7 21.♞b2+ ♔g8 22.♞xb7 offers enough compensation, but still White is a pawn down: 22...♗a4 23.♞d3 ♞d7 24.♞c7 ♗c6 25.♗g4 h5 26.♗h3 ♞ac8 27.♞a5 ♗e4 28.♞dd1 ♗f5=.

20...♞xf4 21.♞xf4 ♞f6 22.♞d2!

22.♞e4!? ♞b8 23.♞f1 ♞d4+ 24.♞xd4+ cxd4 25.♞b1 ♗d7 26.♗f3 b6 27.c5 ♞c8 28.c6 ♗xc6 29.♞c1 ♗d7 30.♞xc8 ♗xc8 31.♗c6 ♔f6 32.d7 ♗xd7 33.♗xd7



33...♔e5 This move improves on 33...e5? It was mentioned by Kasparov and tested in Shulman-Marin, Reykjavik 2009: 34.♔f2 ♔d5 35.♔e2 e5=.

introduced new problems – 35.♔a4! and Black went on to lose after 35...e5 36.♙b3+ ♕e4 37.♙g8 h6 38.♕e2 g5 39.♙c4 h5 40.a3 h4 41.a4 a5 42.g3 hxg3 43.hxg3 ♕f5 44.♕d3 ♕g4 45.♕e4 ♕xg3 46.♕xe5 g4 47.♕xd4 ♕f2 48.♙d5 g3 49.♕c4 1-0.

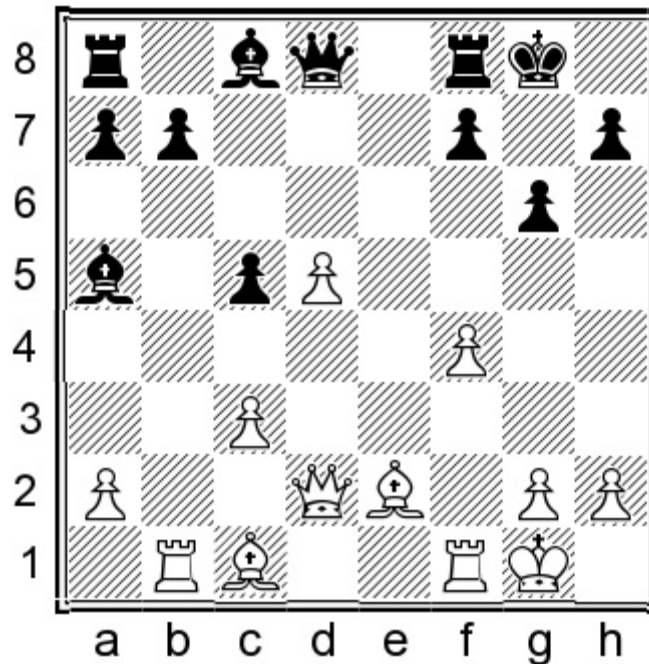
22...b6 23.d7 ♙b7 24.♖f1 ♕d4+ 25.♗xd4+ cxd4 26.♙g4 d3 27.♙xe6 d2 28.♖d1 ♕f6 29.♖xd2 ♖d8 30.♙h3 ♕e7 31.♖e2+ ♕f7 32.♖e3 ♙c6 33.♖a3 a5 34.c5 bxc5 35.♖xa5 ♙d5 36.♖xc5 ♙xa2 37.♖c8 ♕e7 38.♕f2 ♙d5 39.g3 1-0, Koelewijn-Suárez Rodríguez, ICCF 2017.

14.0-0

14.♙c4?! wastes a tempo in a sharp position. White will be walking on the edge of the abyss: 14...a6 15.a4 (After 15.dxe6 ♗xd2+ 16.♙xd2 fxe6 17.0-0 b5 the black queenside pawn majority has more potential.) 15...b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♙xb5 exd5 18.♙c6 ♖a6 19.♙xd5 (Or 19.exd5 ♙f5 20.♖b2 ♖xc6 21.dxc6 ♖e8+ 22.♕f2 ♗h4+ 23.g3 ♗h3, with a terrific attack. Even if White repels the first wave, his king will be permanently in danger.) 19...♖d6 20.0-0 ♙f5 21.♗c2 ♖xd5=, Smirin-Neven, Calgary 1996.

14...exd5 15.exd5 ♙a5!

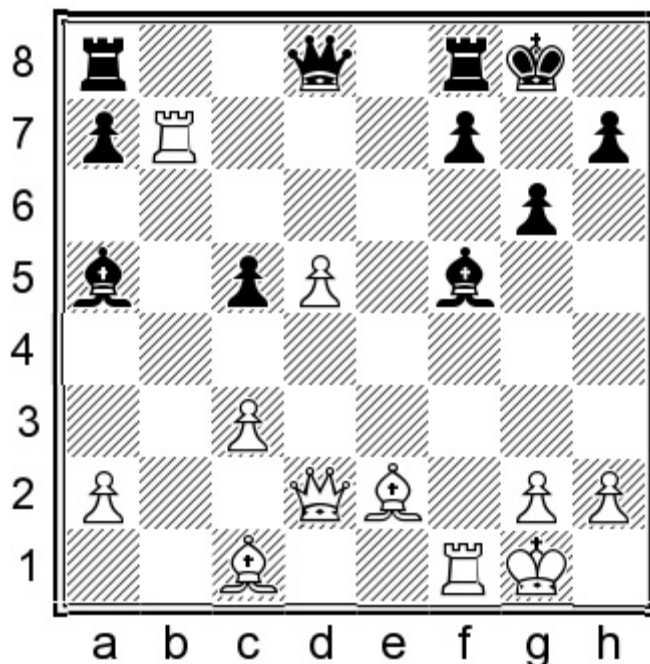
The point of Black's plan. c3-c4 should be prevented at any cost.



Play has been more or less forced so far, but now we should examine a great number of branches:

16.d6

The only serious alternative is 16.f5!? ♙xf5 17.♖xb7. This variation is a little underestimated. White discards the plan for a kingside attack and stakes his hopes on the strong d-pawn. Most endgames should be better for him, mostly due to the misplaced bishop on a5.



Black's task is not easy. For instance, 17...♖f6 is often met, but then critical is 18.g4 ♕xc3 19.♗b2 ♕xd2 20.♕xf6. The d6-pawn is very dangerous so 20...♕c8 is the only move, whereas 21.♞b2 keeps some initiative.

17...♜d6 18.♕c4

18.♞b5 ♕c7 19.g3 (19.♜h6 ♜e5 20.♞b7 ♕a5 21.c4 ♕c3) offers Black a choice: 19...c4 allows a draw by perpetual after 20.♞xf5 gxf5 21.♕a3, while 19...♞ae8 20.c4 is unclear.

18...♞fb8

18...♕c8 19.♞b3 ♕a6 20.♜d3 ♕xc4 21.♜xc4 ♞fd8!? is another option. (21...♕b6 22.♕f4 soon ended in a draw in Smith-Sutovsky, Rogaska Slatina 2011, but the "big pawn on b6 does not decorate Black's position.)

22.♞d1 ♕c7 23.g3 ♜d7 24.♞b2 ♞e8 25.d6 ♕b6. Again, it should be a draw, but Black is struggling for it.

18...♜e5 19.♞f3 (19.♞e1 ♜f6!?, with good counterplay, has been tested twice by Sutovsky.)

19...♞fb8 (19...♜e4 20.♜f4± trades queens in a favourable situation.) 20.♞xb8+ ♞xb8 21.d6 ♕e6 22.♞e3 ♜f5 23.♞f3 ♜e5 24.♕xe6 fxe6 25.♜f4 ♜xf4 26.♕xf4 c4 27.♞f2 ♕b6+ 28.♞g3± turned out to be not so easy for Black in Pavlidis-Kakousatze, Achaea 2012.

19.♞b3

19.♞xb8+ ♞xb8 20.♜g5 ♞b1 was peaceful in Bacrot-Sutovsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

19...♜e5 20.♜e3 ♞e8 21.♜xe5 ♞xe5=.

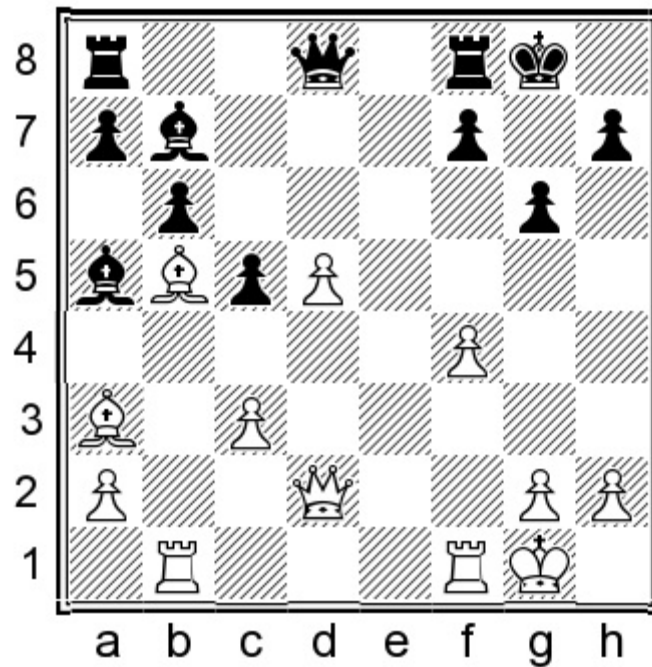
Minor lines are:

16.♕a3 b6 17.♕b5

Aiming to prevent Black's main counterplay with ...♞e8. Instead, 17.♕b4 ♕xb4 18.cxb4 ♜d6 is equal.

17.♞bd1 ♜d6 18.♕b2 ♕d7 19.♜c2 c4! is also balanced, Nickl-Khodadadi, Dortmund 1993.

17...♙b7



Now 18.♖bd1 a6 19.♙e2 ♖e8 would make White's 17th move pointless, so he should try:
 18.d6 ♗f6 19.♙b2 ♖ad8 20.♖bd1 a6 21.♙e2 ♖fe8 22.f5. Here the simple 22...g5= is enough to repel the attack.

16.g4. White is unable to activate his dark-squared bishop through the main diagonal, so he tries to break it loose with f4-f5. We must anticipate that with:

16...♗f6 17.♙b2 c4 (Safest, but 17...♗d6 18.f5 ♖e8 is also OK.) 18.f5 b5

In this variation 18...gxf5 seems to be always dubious as it opens up either the b3-h7 diagonal or the g-file: 19.♙xc4 ♗h4 20.♔h1!± fxg4 21.♙a3, with a rout.

19.fxg6 ♗xg6 20.♔h1 ♖e8 21.♙f3 ♙b7=.

16.♖b5. A bold attempt to win by a direct attack.

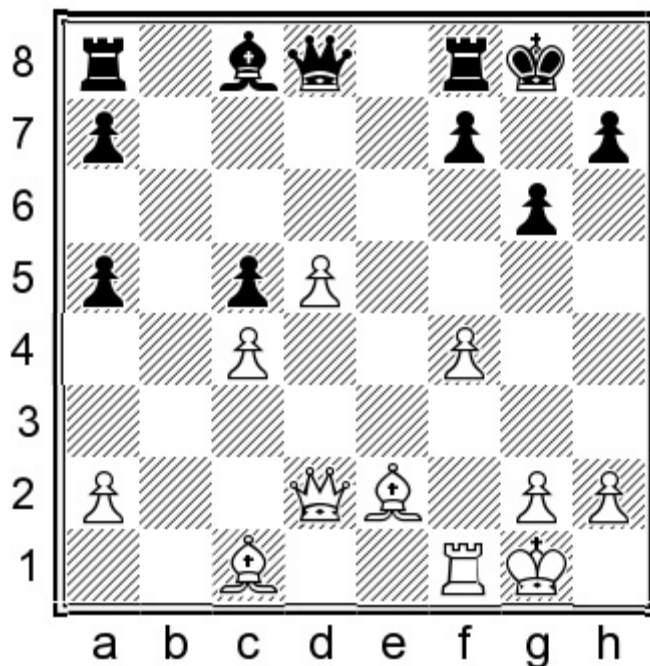
16...b6 17.♖xa5

17.♙b2 could be neutralised with 17...♖e8 18.♖xa5 bxa5 19.c4 ♖b8.

17...bxa5

White has compensation for the exchange, but the most straightforward tries to mate Black's king do not work – 18.♙a3 ♗d6! 19.♗e3 (19.c4 ♖e8 20.♙d3 ♗e7 21.♗f2 ♗e3 22.♖d1 ♗xf2+ 23.♔xf2 ♙g4 24.♖b1 ♖ab8±) 19...♗xd5 20.♙xc5 ♗e6 21.♗d4 ♗xe2 22.♙xf8 ♔xf8 23.♗d5 ♗e3+ 24.♔h1 ♙b7 25.♗xb7 ♖e8=.

18.c4



18...♖e8! (or 18...♚d6 19.♙d3 f6) 19.♙d3 ♖b8 20.♚c3 f6.

16.♖b3 a6

For consistency sake, you may choose the thematic 16...♚d6, blocking the d-pawn. Then 17.♚d1 (to unpin the c-pawn) does not reach its goal on account of 17...♙d7 18.♖xb7 ♙xc3.

17.f5

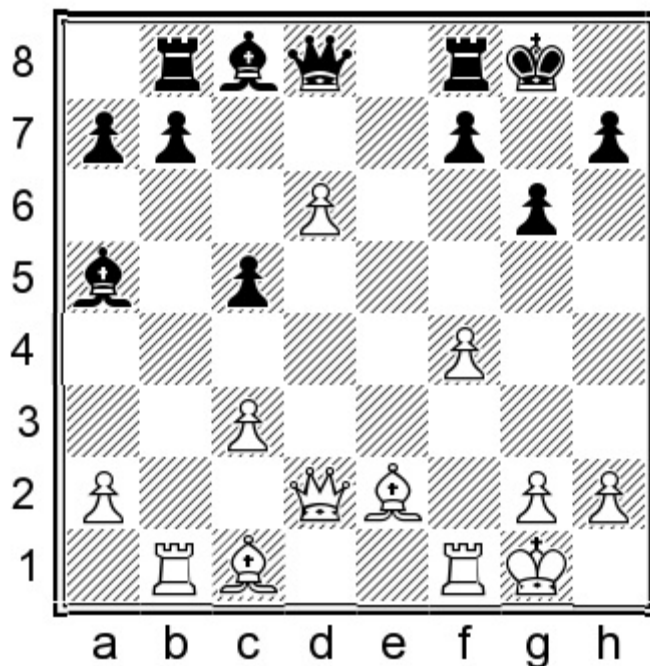
17.d6!? b6 18.♖d1 ♖e8 is balanced.

In Dannevig-Svidler, Gausdal 1992, Black seized the initiative after 17.♚d1 ♙d7 18.♖a3 c4! 19.♙xc4 ♖c8.

17...♙xf5 18.♖xb7 ♚d6 19.♙c4 ♖ae8!

This is the difference in comparison with 16.f5. The a7-pawn is not hanging and Black takes control of the e-file.

16...♖b8!



16...b6 is less precise because Black's b-pawn's best place is on b5 and not on b6. Another point in favour of 16...♖b8 is that the weakness of the c6-square could be vital in some endgames, for example: 17.♙f3 ♙f5?! 18.♙xa8 ♙xb1 19.♙c6 ♚f6 20.♙b2 ♙xa2 21.c4! ♙xd2 (21...♚e6 22.f5!!+-) 22.♙xf6± .

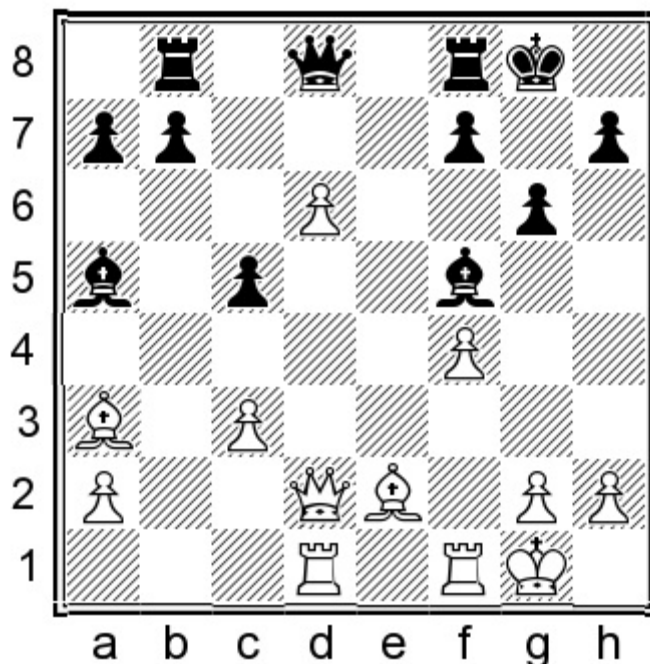
17.♖b5

The only serious alternative is the older 17.♙a3.

17.♙f3 b5 allows Black to fulfil the main idea of his previous move. See **game 22** Xu Jun-Ni Hua, Wuxi 2006.

17...♙f5 18.♖bd1

18.♖b5 is pointless in view of 18...a6!. Then 19.♖xc5 ♙b6 20.♙h1 ♙xc5 21.♙xc5 does not offer full compensation, see **game 20** Gajewski-Sutovsky, Rijeka 2010.



18...♖c8

18...♜f6 led nearly by force to a drawish endgame in Mikhalevsky -Ftacnik, Bellevue 2006.

19.g4!

19.♘f3 ♜f6! equalises outright.

19...♙d7 20.f5! ♜h4

20...gxf5? 21.♙d3! gives White a terrific attack.

20...♜f6 21.fxg6 ♜xg6 was tested in Ushenina-Sutovsky, Batumi 2018 – 22.♔h1 (22.♘f3 ♜g7 23.♖c1 ♙d8 24.♜f2 ♙g5 25.♞ce1 ♙f6 26.♙xb7 ♙xc3 27.♙xc8 ♞xc8 28.♜f4 ♙xe1 29.♞xe1 ♜xg4+ is a draw.) 22...♜g7 23.♙b2 ♞ce8 24.♘f3 b5∞.

21.♘f3 ♞fe8. Black is holding in this sharp line. He should control the e7-square and refrain from taking on f5. See **game 19** Souza-Barbosa, ICCF 2008 for a detailed analysis.

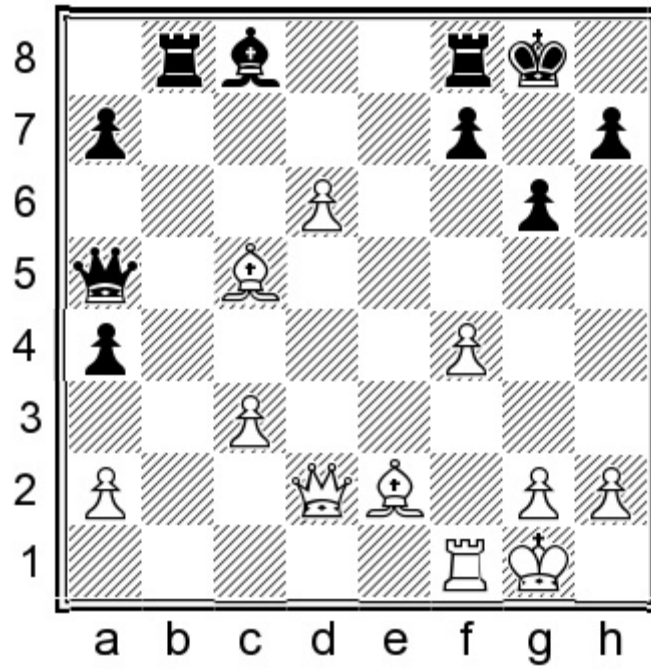
17...b6

17...♙d7 also defends: 18.f5 ♙xb5 19.♙xb5 ♜h4 20.♞f4 ♜h5 21.♞f3 ♜h4 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♞h3 ♜f6 24.♜h6 ♜g7 25.♜xg7+ ♔xg7 26.♙h6+ ♔f6=, e.g. 27.♞f3+ ♔e6 28.♞e3+ ♔d5 29.d7 a6 30.♞d3+ ♔e6 31.♙c4+ ♔e7 32.♙f4 b5 33.♙d6+ ♔xd7 34.♙xf8+ ♔e8 35.♙d6 ♞d8 36.♞e3+ ♔d7 37.♙xb5+ axb5 38.♙xc5 ♞c8 39.♙d4 ♞c4=.

18.♞xa5 bxa5 19.♙a3 a4

Making room for the queen at a5. 19...c4 20.♜d4 ♜b6 21.♙c5 ♜c6 should hold, too – 22.♘f3 ♜d7 23.f5 ♜xf5 24.♙e4 ♜g4 25.h3 ♜g5.

20.♙xc5 ♜a5



21. ♔d4

21. ♕a3 ♖b6+ 22. ♜f2 ♜e8 23. ♕d3 ♕d7 24. f5 ♜e5 25. fxg6 fxg6=

21... ♕d7 22. ♕b4 ♖b6 23. ♕c5

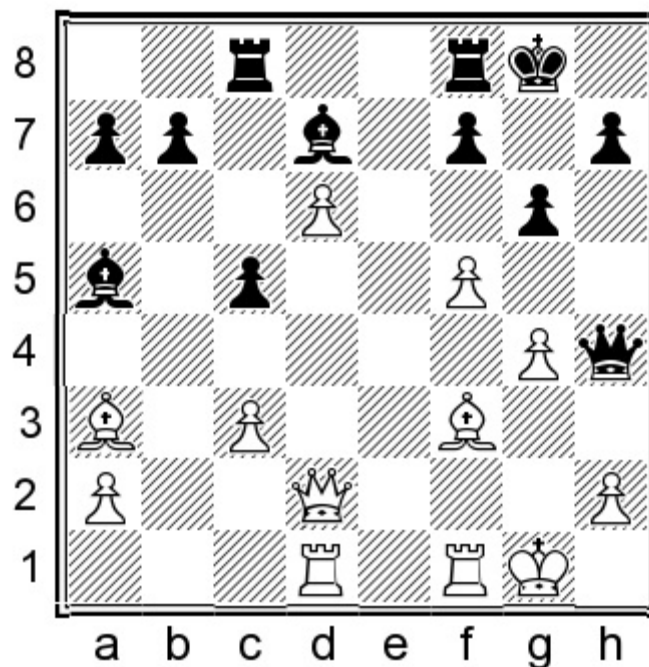
Here a draw was signed in Diermair-Barbosa, Graz 2014.

Chapter 9 Complete Games

19. Souza-Barbosa

ICCF 2008

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♖g7 7.♗f3 c5 8.♞b1 0-0 9.♙e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♙xe5 12.♚d2 e6 13.f4 ♙c7 14.0-0 exd5 15.exd5 ♙a5 16.d6 ♞b8 17.♙a3 ♙f5 18.♞bd1 ♞c8 19.g4 ♙d7 20.f5 ♞h4! 21.♙f3



21...♞fe8

21...b5 looks a viable alternative:

22.♞de1 (or 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♞de1 ♙e6=) 22...♙d8!?

An original way to take the critical square e7 under control. The passive bishop on a5 will soon become very active:

23.♙h1 ♙g5 24.♞g2 ♞fe8 25.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 26.♙xc5 ♙f4 27.♞f2 ♞xf2 28.♙xf2 a6

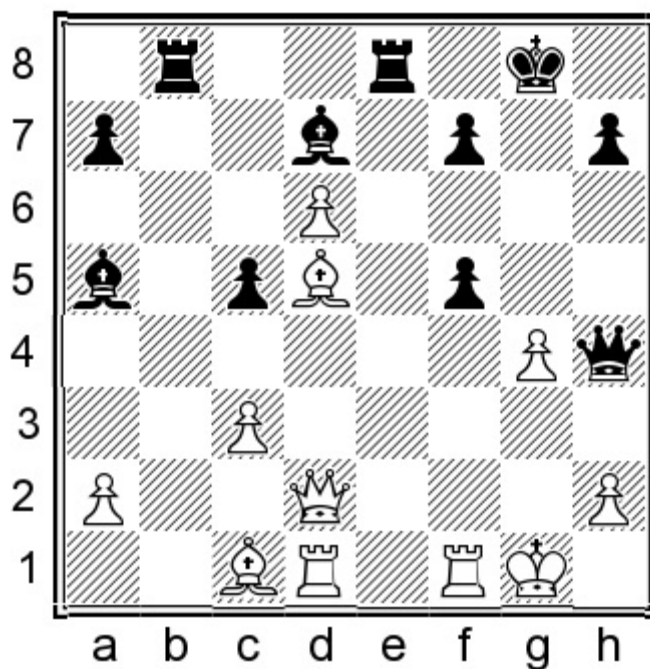
This game provides yet another proof that Black's active pieces and a better pawn structure on the queenside balance White's extra pawn in a wide range of Grünfeld endgames.

29.fxg6 hxg6 30.♙c5 ♞e6 31.♞d1 ♙e3 32.♙a3 ♙b6 33.♙g2 ♞e3 34.♞d2 a5 35.♙b2, draw, Meyer-Bauer, ICCF 2007.

22.♞fe1

This line has been extensively tested in correspondence chess. Many games saw 22.♙c1 gxf5 23.♙xb7

♖b8 24.♙d5



Now 24...♙xg4 is level. Instead Moiseev-Moll, ICCF 2017, was drawn after 24...♔h8 25.♙d3 f6 26.♙f4 c4 27.♙d2 ♙b6+ 28.♔h1 ♙xg4 29.♙f3 ½-½.

The endgame after 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♙f2 ♙xf2+ 24.♖xf2 ♙xc3 25.♙xb7 ♙d4 is also drawish. I looked at:

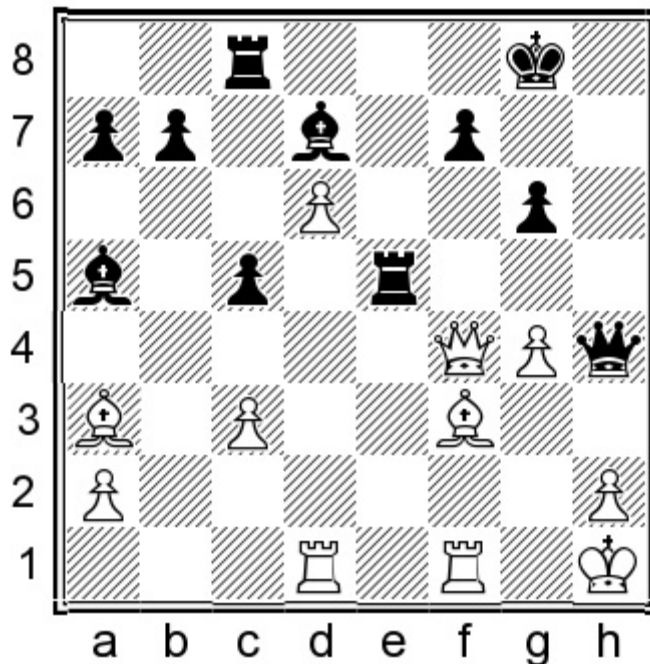
22.♔h1 ♖e5

22...b5 23.fxg6!? hxg6 24.♙d5.

23.fxg6

23.♙b2 c4 24.♖de1 ♖ce8 25.♖xe5 ♖xe5 26.fxg6 hxg6 27.♙f4 ♖e1 28.♙d5 ♙f5 29.♙xc4 ♖xf1+ 30.♙xf1 ♙xg4.

23...hxg6 24.♙f4



An important position. 24...♔g5? fails to 25.♔g3, but 24...♖f5! apparently solves the problems: 25.♔g3 25.♔e3 ♖e8 26.♔xe8+ ♗xe8 27.gxf5 ♗b5 28.♖g1 ♔f4 29.♖g3 ♔xf5. 25...♔xg3 26.hxg3 ♖xf3 27.♖xf3 ♗xg4 28.♗g2=.

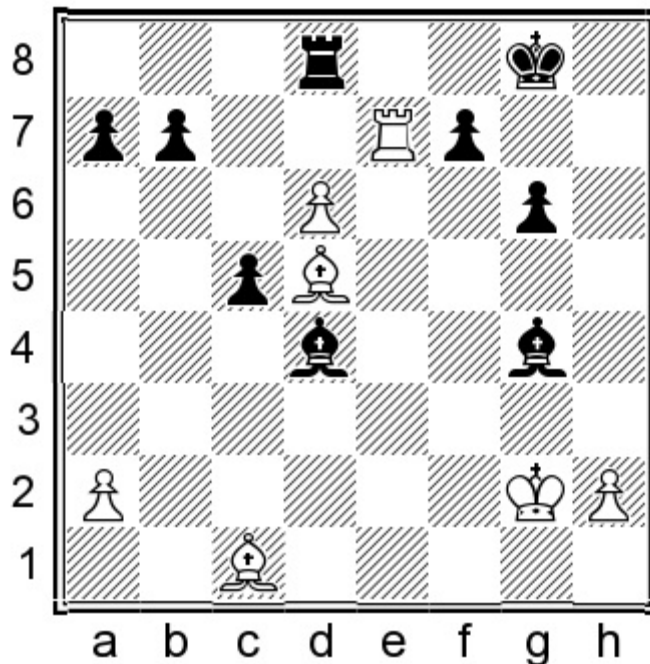
22...♔h3!

The alternatives are worse:

22...c4 23.♖e7!;

22...b5?! 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.♗xc5 gxf5 25.gxf5 ♔f6 26.♗d4 ♔xf5 27.♔g2+ ♔g6 28.♗h5 ♔xg2+ 29.♗xg2±.

23.♔g2 ♔xg2+ 24.♗xg2 ♖xe1 25.♖xe1 ♗xc3 26.♖e7 ♖d8 27.♗d5 ♗d4! 28.fxg6 hxg6 29.♗c1 ♗xg4 1/2-1/2

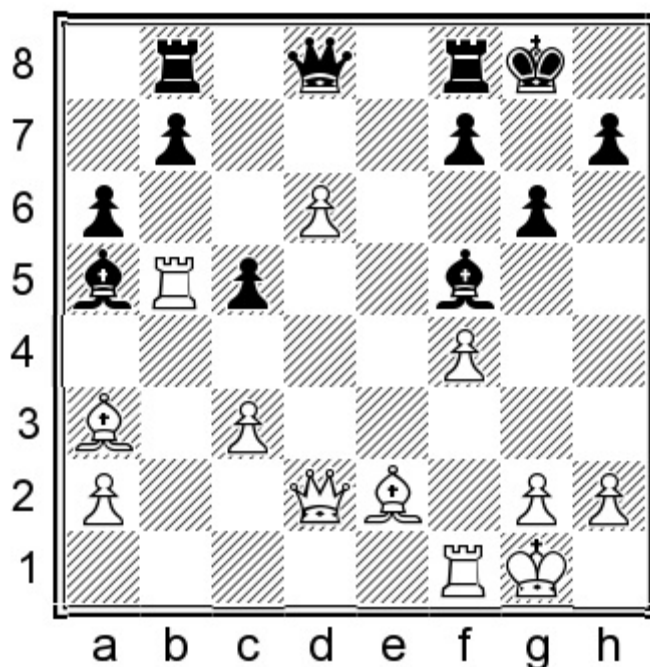


It seems that the position is still unclear, but in a correspondence game it is easy to check that after 30. ♖xf7+ ♜h8 31. ♙f4 g5 32. ♙g3 b5 33. ♞e8+ ♞xe8 34. ♙xe8 c4 35. d7 ♙b6 36. ♙f2 ♙d8 37. ♙xa7 ♜g7 neither side can make progress.

20. Gajewski-Sutovsky

23.01.2010 Rijeka

1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♘f3 g6 3. c4 ♙g7 4. ♘c3 d5 5. cxd5 ♘xd5 6. e4 ♘xc3 7. bxc3 c5 8. ♞b1 0-0 9. ♙e2 ♘c6 10. d5 ♘e5 11. ♘xe5 ♙xe5 12. ♚d2 e6 13. f4 ♙c7 14. 0-0 exd5 15. exd5 ♙a5 16. d6 ♞b8 17. ♙a3 ♙f5 18. ♞b5 a6!



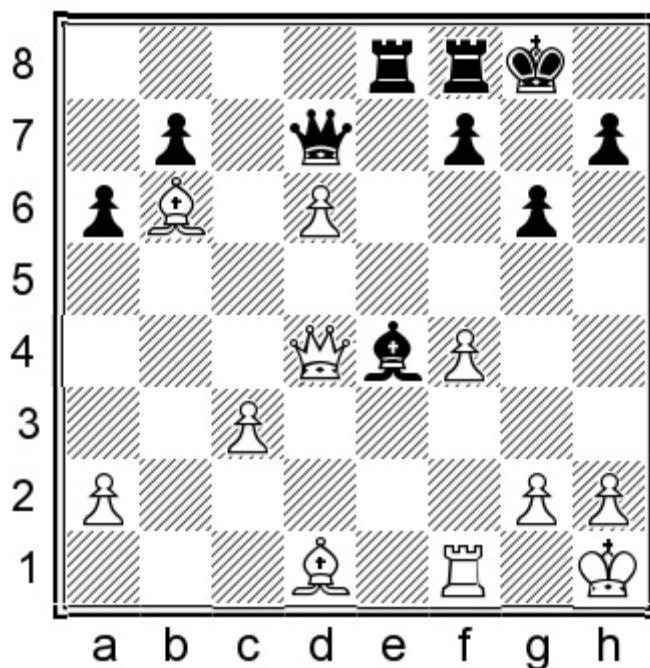
This improves on the game Fahnenschmidt-Mark Tseitlin, Bad Homburg 2005, which saw 18...b6 19.♖xa5 bxa5 20.♙xc5. The two connected pawns in the centre, backed by the bishop pair, are very strong, although White quickly lost.

19.♖xc5

White can try 19.♖b3, intending to grab a pawn after 19...b6 20.♙xa6 ♖f6 21.♞d1 ♙g4 22.♙e2 c4 23.♖b4 (23.♖bb1 ♙xc3) 23...♙xe2 24.♞xe2, when Black is not obliged to take the exchange. Instead he has 24...b5 25.♖bb1 ♖fe8 with active play.

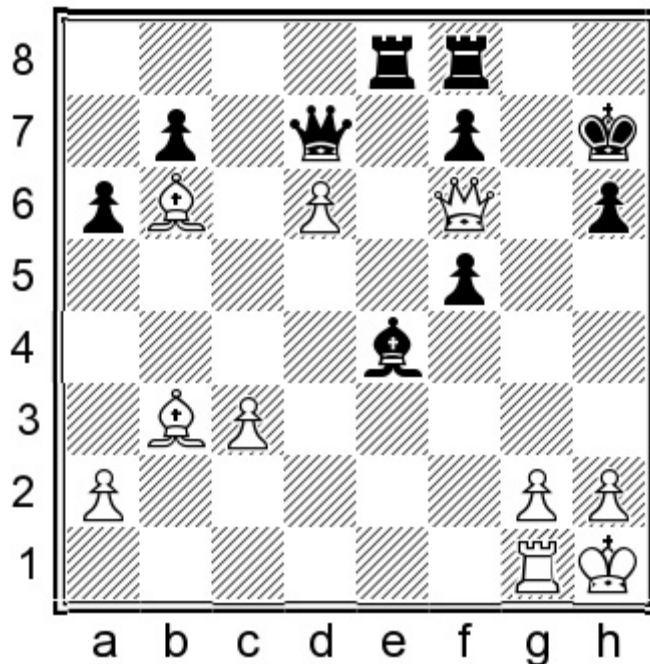
Even simpler is 19...♞c8 20.♙f3 b5 21.♞e1 c4 22.♖b2, Pihlajamäki-Gíslason, ICCF 2012, when 22...♞e8 23.♖e7 ♖xe7 24.dxe7 ♞e6 would have been clearly better for Black.

19...♙b6 20.♔h1 ♙xc5 21.♙xc5 ♞d7 22.♙b6 ♙e4 23.♞d4 ♖be8 24.♙d1

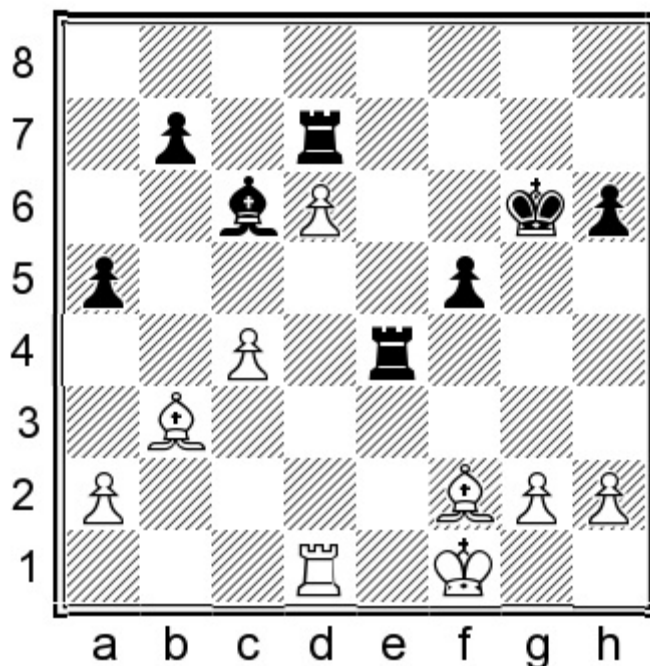


White's venture turned into a failure. He does have a strong passed pawn, but his pieces lack coordination. Now Black could have fixed his advantage by returning the exchange with 24...♞e6 25.♙c7 ♞c6 26.♞d2 ♖d8, but we would have missed the instructive endgame that followed:

24...♙c6? 25.f5! gxf5 26.♙c2 ♙e4 27.♙b3 h6 28.♞f6 ♔h7 29.♖g1



29...♖g8 30.♗xf7+ ♖g7 31.♗xd7 ♖xd7 32.♞d1 ♘c6 33.♔g1 ♞e2 34.♙f2 ♔g6 35.♔f1 ♞e4 36.c4 a5



A critical position. White should have fixed the pawn at a5 where it would be a target for the dark-squared bishop. After 37.a4 ♞e6 38.c5 ♞e4 39.♙d4 ♖f4+ 40.♔e2 White is holding. The only sensible plan could be 40...b6, but after 41.cxb6 ♖xd6 42.♙c3 ♖xd1 43.♔xd1 White's passed pawns balance Black's extra exchange. Play might continue 43...♖f1+ 44.♔c2 ♙xg2 45.♙xa5 f4 46.♙d2 ♙e4+ 47.♔c3 f3 48.♙e3 f2 49.♙c4=.

White allows the enemy to pin his pawn to a3. Then the plan with ...b6 is winning, because the white bishop will be overcharged with the defence of two pawns – on a3 and b6.

37.a3 ♔f6 38.♞d2 a4 39.♙a2 b5?

This pawn should be used for undermining the c5-pawn. The right plan was 39...♔e5 40.c5 b6!±. Now White is fine.

40.c5 b4 (40...♔e5!)= 41.♙d4+?

After 41.axb4 ♖xb4 42.♙d4+ ♕g5 43.g3± only White can play for a win.

41...♖xd4! 42.♖xd4 bxa3 43.♖b4 ♕e5 44.♖b6 ♙e4 45.♔e1?

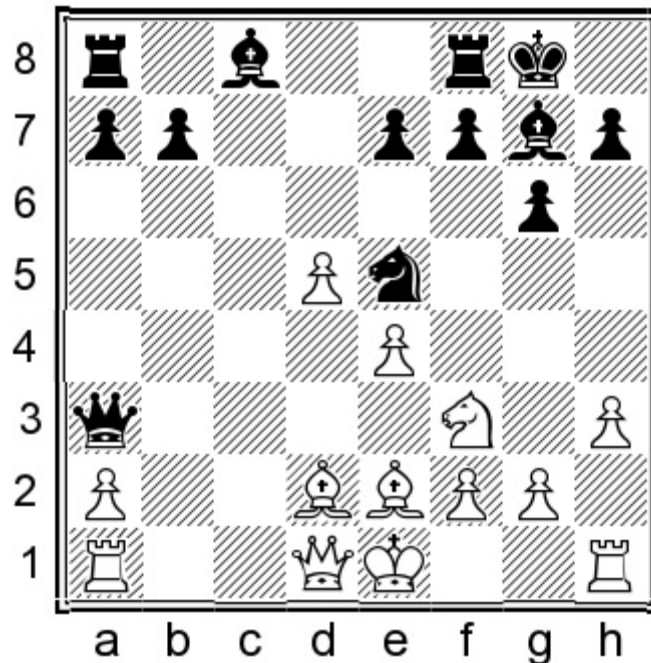
This strange move loses the g2-pawn and the game. White should have waited with 45.♖b4 ♖a7 46.g3.

45...♖a7 46.♖b4 ♙xg2 47.♖c4 ♙c6 48.♖c3 ♕d4 49.♖c4+ ♕d3 50.♖b4 ♖g7 51.♖b6 ♕e3 52.♔f1 ♙g2+ 53.♔e1 ♙e4 0-1

21. Acevedo Villalba - Petrolo

ICCF, 26.06.2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.h3 ♘c6 9.♙e3 ♖a5 10.♙d2 0-0 11.♙e2 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖a3 13.d5 ♘e5



14.♖b1

The exchange sacrifice 14.0-0 is correct, but not dangerous – 14...♘xf3+ (Besides, 14...♙d7!? 15.♘xe5 ♙xe5 is safer.) 15.♙xf3 ♙xa1 16.♖xa1 f6 17.♖b1 ♖f7 (17...♖d3 18.♙b4 ♖f7=) 18.♙b4 ♖a6 19.e5 fxe5 20.♖xe5 ♖f6 21.♖e3 ♙xh3 22.d6 ♙f5=.

14. ♖xe5 ♙xe5 15.0-0

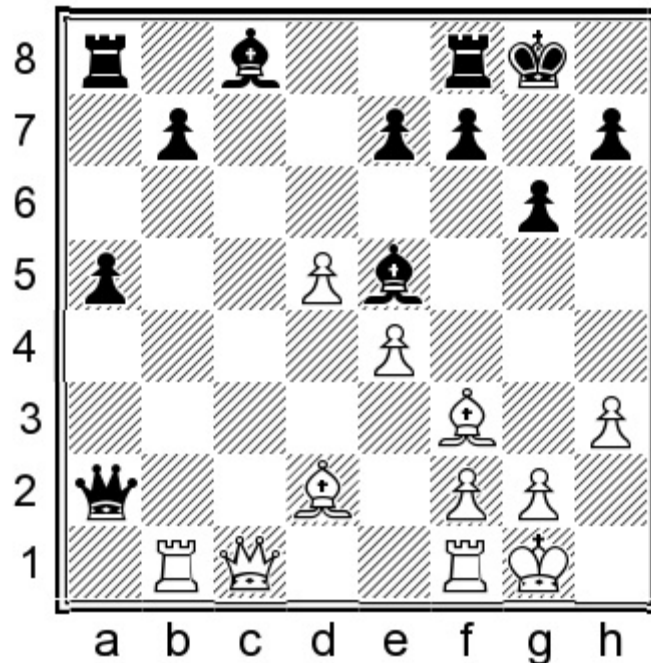
15. ♖b1 ♚xa2 16.0-0 ♙d7! 17. ♖xb7 ♙a4 18. ♚e1 ♖fb8 intercepted the initiative in Lazarev-Dvoirys, Geneve 2001.

15... ♙d7!? (15... ♙xa1=) is also OK.

14... ♚xa2 15.0-0 ♖xf3+ 16. ♙xf3 a5! 17. ♚c1 ♙e5!?

17... ♚a4, aiming to support ...b5, is another interesting option – 18. ♖d1 b5 19. ♙g5 b4 20. ♙xe7 ♖e8 21. d6 ♙e6 22. e5 ♖ac8. Although White's d6-pawn looks frightening, the computer claims that Black is holding. In the worst case he could take on e7, keeping the bishop pair and a strong passer.

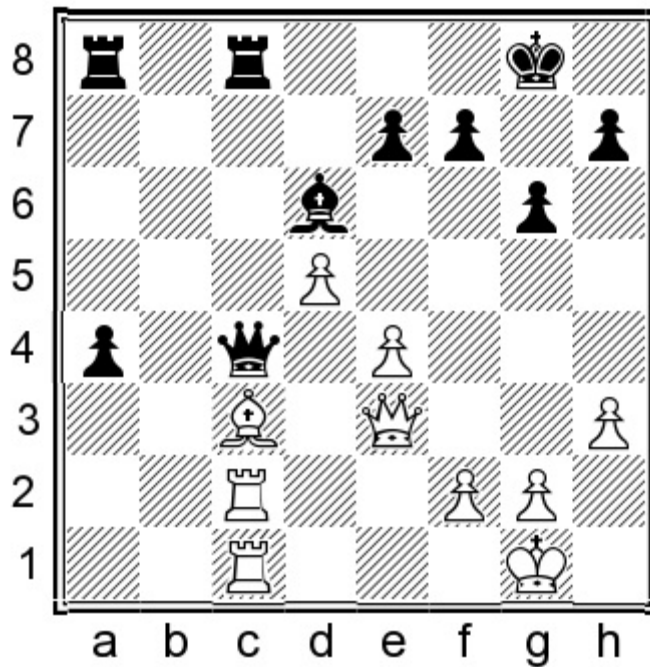
17... ♖e8 18. ♙d1 a4 19. ♙e2 b5 20. ♙xb5 ♙a6 21. ♙xe8 ♙xf1 22. ♙xa4 is not an easy draw in view of 22... ♚xa4 23. ♖b4!.



18. ♙d1

Taking control of the a4-square. In the event of 18. ♙g5 ♖e8 19. ♖d1 ♚a4 Black's queen finds its way home in case of danger.

18... a4 19. ♙e2 b5 20. ♙xb5 ♙a6 21. ♙xa6 ♖xa6 22. ♙c3 ♙d6!= 23. ♚e3 ♖c8 24. ♖fc1 ♖aa8 25. ♖b2 ♚c4 26. ♖bc2



26...f6

26...♖a6 27.e5 ♔a3!= was possible.

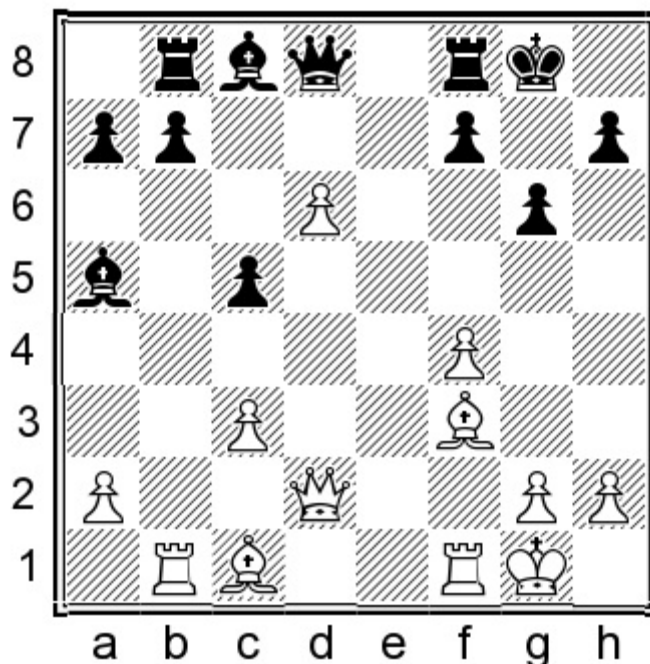
27.♔xf6 ♖xc2 28.♖xc2 ♖xc2 29.♔d4 a3 30.♖h6 e5 31.dxe6 ♖c7 32.e7 ♖xe7 33.♖g5 ♖f7 34.♖d5 ♖d8 35.♖b3 ♔c7 36.♔c3 a2 ½-½

22. Xu Jun - Ni Hua

Wuxi 2006

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♔g7 4.♘c3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.♖b1 0-0 9.♔e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♔xe5 12.♖d2 e6 13.f4 ♔c7 14.0-0 exd5 15.exd5 ♔a5 16.d6 ♖b8 17.♔f3

The idea of this move is to delay ...♔f5. Perhaps White thought that 17...b5 would weaken c5...



17...b5 18.♔a3

18.♔b2 ♕f5 19.♖bd1 c4! allows Black to clog the white bishop – 20.♖fe1

20.♗d5 ♜f6 21.♔e4 ♔xe4 22.♜xe4 ♖fe8 23.♗d5 ♗e2.

20...♔d3 21.♔a3 b4! 22.♔xb4 ♔xb4 23.cxb4 ♜xd6 24.a3 a5 25.♔e4 axb4 26.♔xd3 cxd3 27.♜xd3 ♜b6+ 28.♔h1 b3⚡, Rubio Mejia-Mekhitarian, Madrid 2008.

18...♔f5!

18...b4 would have unnecessarily opened the main diagonal – 19.cxb4 cxb4 20.♔b2 b3 21.♗d5 bxa2 22.♜xa2 ♔b4 23.♖bd1 ♔xd6 24.♔h1 ♜c7 25.♗a1☞.

19.♖bd1 c4

19...b4 20.cxb4 ♔xb4 21.♔xb4 ♖xb4 22.♜c3 ♜b6 was good and safe. Perhaps Ni Hua overestimated the importance of the square d3 for his bishop.

20.♖fe1

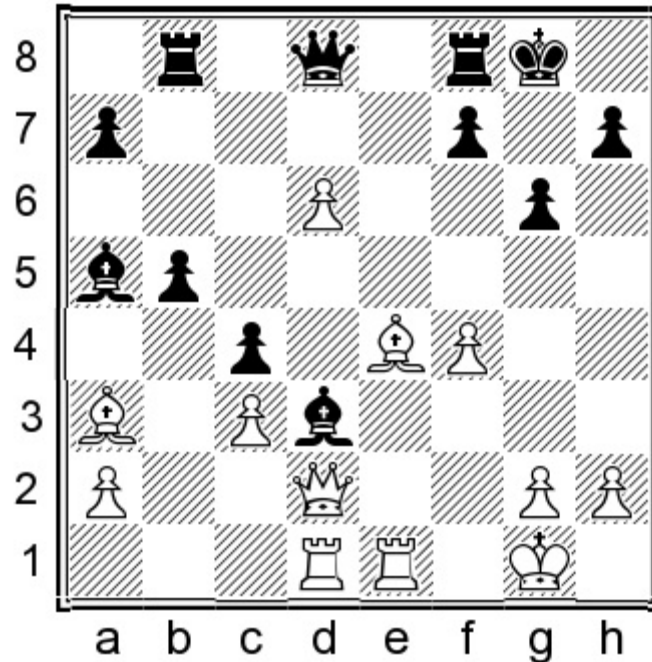
Black was threatening with ...♜f6. White was unable to prevent it with 20.♗d4?? due to 20...b4. 20.d7 was also dubious in view of 20...♜b6+ 21.♜f2 ♖fd8.

20...♔d3?! 21.♔e4?

It looks like White miscalculated something.

Naturally, 21.♔d5 ♖b6 22.♔h1 ♖xd6⚡ or 21.d7 b4 22.cxb4 ♔b6+ 23.♔h1 ♜xd7 24.♔b2 ♔d4 25.♖e4 ♔xb2 26.♖xc4 ♔a3 are fine for Black, but:

21.♞e5! would have set problems to him. Then 21...♛f6 is not a threat so White could choose from 22.d7, 22.♞de1! and even 22.♔h1. Perhaps Black should switch to a struggle for the draw with: 21...b4 22.cxb4 ♘b6+ 23.♔h1 ♛xd6 24.♙b2 ♞be8 25.♞xe8 ♞xe8 26.♛c3 ♜f6 27.♛xf6 ♛xf6 28.♙xf6 ♞e3. This sad necessity teaches us that the white dark-squared bishop should be restricted by all possible means, and the sooner the better.



21...♛f6!

This hit on c3 saves Black often in this line. Here it gains the edge.

22.♞c1 ♞fe8 23.♙xd3 ♞xe1+ 24.♛xe1 cxd3 25.d7?!

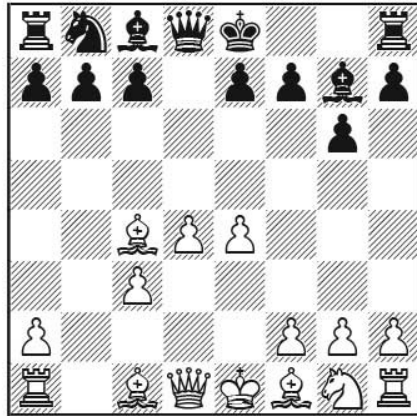
White had to pull himself together for a stubborn defence with 25.♛d2 b4 26.cxb4 ♛d4+ 27.♛f2 ♛xd6 28.bxa5 ♛xa3 29.♛e3. Instead he errs again:

25...♛c6 26.♛e5 ♙c7 27.♛e7 ♞d8 28.♙c5 ♛xd7 29.♛f6?? d2 0-1

Chapter 10

The Exchange System 7.♔c4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3
6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♕c4

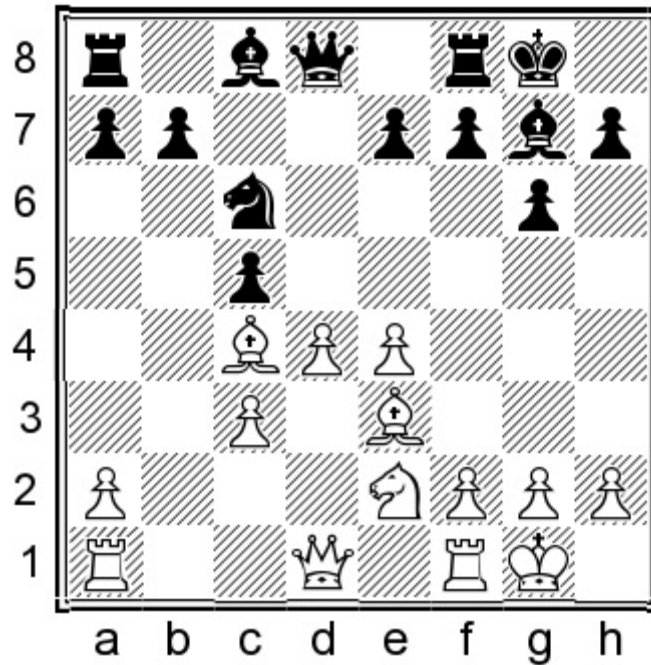


Main Ideas

Introduction

In this chapter we are going to study White's most popular and aggressive plan – the king's bishop goes to c4 while the knight takes a stable stand on e2. This setup ensures a secure defence of the d4-pawn and allows White to preserve a mobile pawn centre. It was popularised in the 50s and the 60s by the great attackers Bronstein, Spassky, Geller.

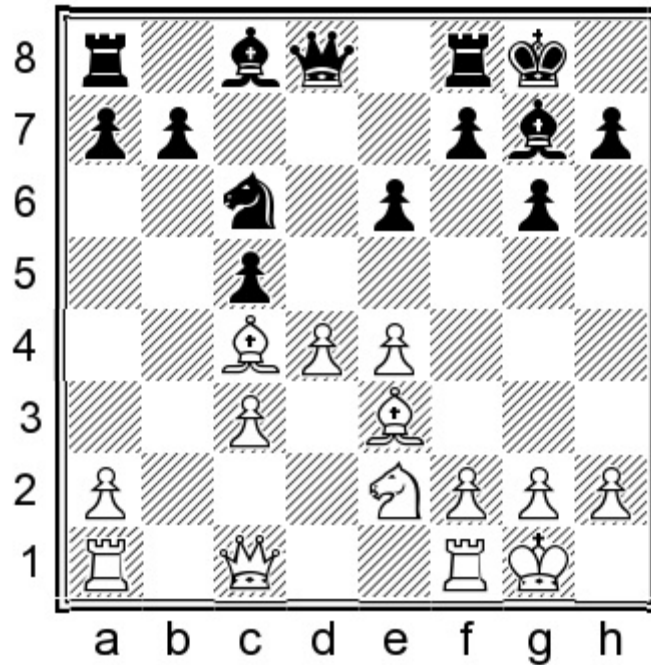
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♕c4 0-0 8.♗e2 c5 9.♕e3 ♗c6 10.0-0



Black tried at first the direct attack on the d4-pawn: 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖a5 12.♗d3 ♜c6!?. A draw proposition which White can decline by 13.♗b5. This line is playable, but Black has little chances to entangle the opponent in a messy unbalanced struggle that most Grünfeld players like.

Another straightforward approach is 10...♗g4 11.f3 ♖a5 12.♗d3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗e6. Here both 14.♞c1 ♗xa2 and 14.d5 ♗xa1 have stood the test of time. Critical for this line is 12.♗xf7+!?. In practice Black copes well, but in engine games White ruthlessly squeezes the opponent to achieve more than 60% with almost no losses.

In the 60s the focus began to shift to a more flexible setup where Black aims first to complete development with ...♞c7, ...♞d8, ...b6, ...♗b7 and only then to seek counterplay. This plan was regularly used by world champions Botvinnik, Smyslov and Fischer. Eventually it transpired that 10...♞c7 and ♞d8 could be harassed by White's bishop – ♗f4 and ♗g5, so Black began testing setups where his queen remained on d8 – 10...e6 11.♞c1

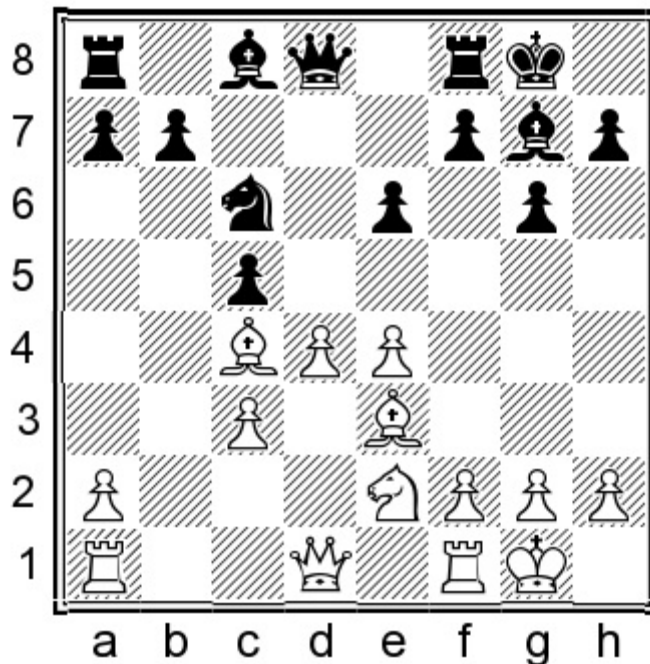


It has been discovered that the c5-pawn could be sacrificed: 11...b6!? 12.♙b5 ♘b7 13.dxc5 ♚c7! 14.cxb6 axb6. In such positions Black enjoys sufficient compensation, mostly due to the passive white knight on e2. See **game 25** Tikkanen-Giri, Malmo 2011.

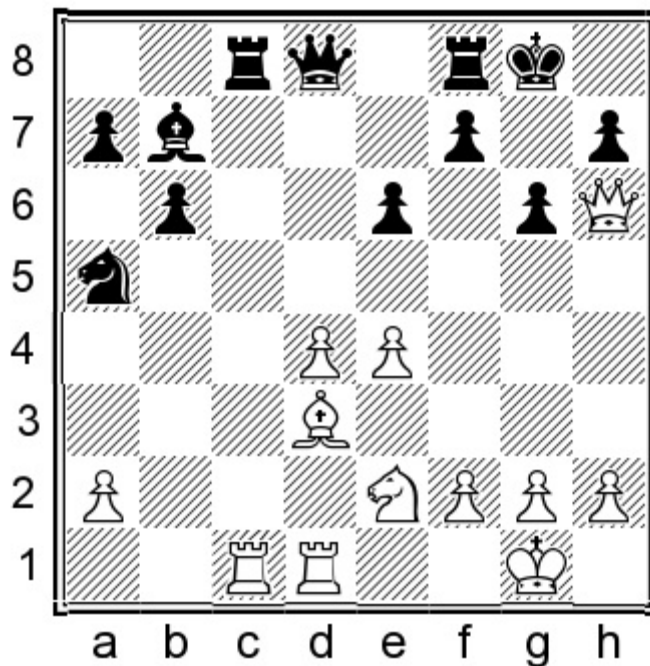
Another version of this sacrifice is when Black does not play ...b6, but tries to regain the pawn with ...♙g7-f8xc5. My main proposition combines both ideas. I also consider several alternatives in the “Complete Games” section. From them, **game 23** Onischuk-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty-Mansiysk2010, which features 10...♚c7 11.♞c1 e6!?, is closest to the spirit of the main repertoire. 10...b6!? also could transpose.

Objectives and Pawn Structures

We start with 10...e6.

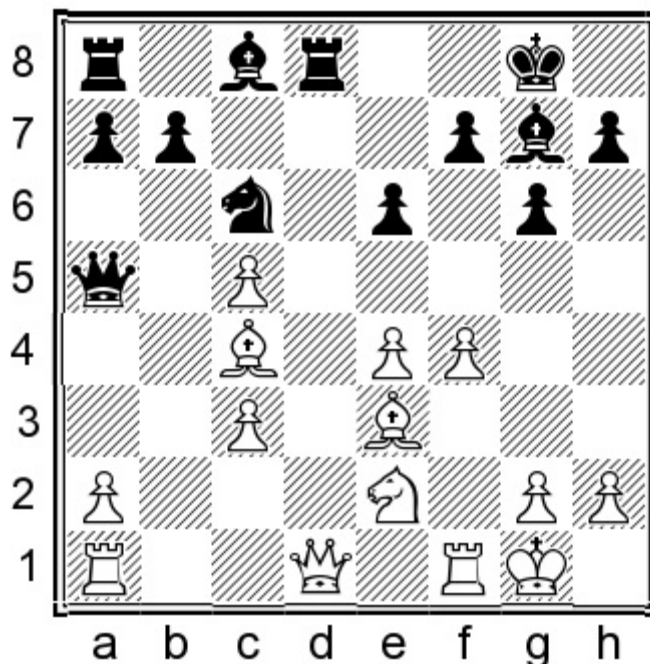


This move is practically unexplored, so your opponent will most likely be surprised to see it. The main purpose is to discourage d4-d5. At the same time the queen gets a comfortable stand on e7, closer to its king. Black's plan is to fianchetto the bishop on b7, open the c-file, and trade rooks. Then he could think about putting his queenside pawn majority in motion. If White played 11.♖d2, ♗g5 or ♗h6, we would be glad to exchange dark-squared bishop with ...♗f6 or ...♗xh6.



Ivanchuk-Grischuk, Beijing 2014, went 17...♖xc1 18.♖xc1 ♘c6 19.♗e3 ♗d6=.

If White takes 11.dxc5, we easily even the material with 11...♗a5! 12.f4 ♖d8



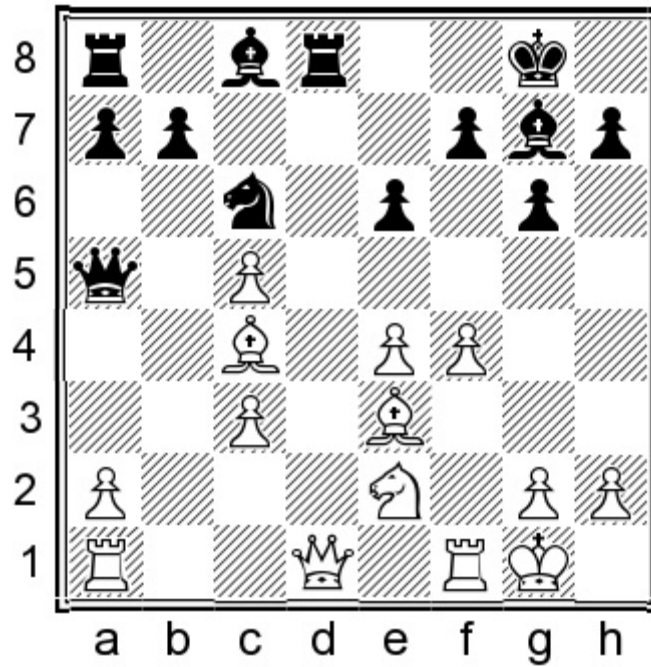
13. ♖b3 ♜f8=.

Finally, 11. ♖c1 is met by 11...b6, keeping the c-file closed until we finish development.

Theoretical Status

While the Exchange System with 7. ♘c4 has been the most explored variation against the Grünfeld, 10...e6 remains obscure. It was recommended by Nigel Davies in his book from 2000, when he won a couple of games with Black, but the novel idea has not caught up. At this time Black was fervently exploring other, more straightforward lines. In 2006 Chess Stars published a hefty book on the 7. ♘c4 variation by Sakaev. He devoted enough space on 10...e6, but he completely ignored 11. ♖d2 (Sakaev's recommendation) 11...b6!. This move was introduced only in 2010 in the game Svetushkin-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. White has not invented anything significant ever since.

In 2016 Flear suggested in Chess Publishing 11.dxc5, briefly noting that 11...♖a5 12.f4 ♜d8 “looks plausible enough, but Black hasn’t scored well against various White queen moves...”

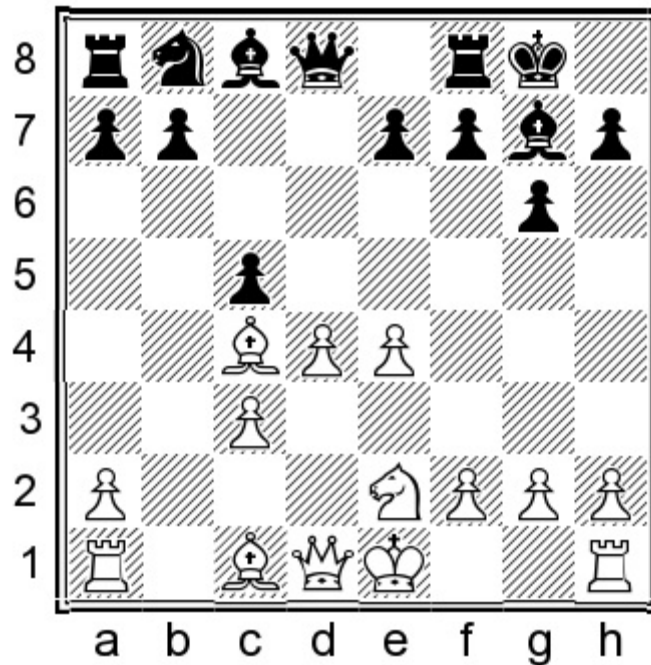


In fact only L'Amie won two games with 13.♙b3 ♘f8 14.f5 ♘xc5 15.♞d4 ♞xd4 16.cxd4, but the accurate 16...♞xd4! 17.fxe6 ♞xe4! is a draw, as pointed out by L'Amie himself in 2012 in his notes to the game L'Ami-Harika, Wijk aan Zee 2012. His analysis was confirmed by Abramov-Ryzhkov, ICCF 2018.

Thus the ball is in White's court.

Chapter 10 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♗e2 c5

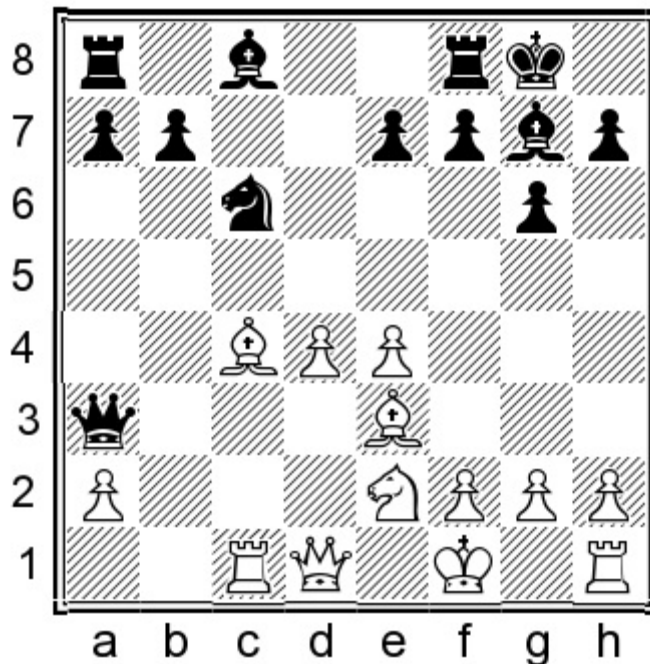


I do not advocate slow development like 8...b6 or 8...♘c6, because they offer the enemy extra options.

9.♙e3 ♗c6 10.0-0

10.♖c1 was popularised by Polugaevsky in the late 80s, but it has drifted out of fashion in the last decade. White's idea is to refrain from castling and ram the enemy king's position with the h-pawn. The decline of this line began in 1992 when Kudrin found a convincing setup against it. The last blow was dealt in the Kamsky-Anand candidates match for the PCA world title in 1995. After this game 10.♖c1 has disappeared from top level practice. Black answers:

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♚a5+ 12.♔f1 (12.♙d2 ♚h5=) 12...♚a3!



Black vacates the a5-square for his knight and keep an eye on the e3-bishop, thus hampering f3. That is essential in the variations:

13.h4 ♕g4! (f3 is impossible!) 14.h5 ♕xh5!, the point being 15.♖xh5 gxh5 16.♘g3 ♕xd4 17.♕xd4 ♘xd4 18.♘xh5 ♖d6 and 13.e5 ♕g4 14.♗b3 ♖xb3 15.axb3 ♘a5 16.f3 ♕d7.

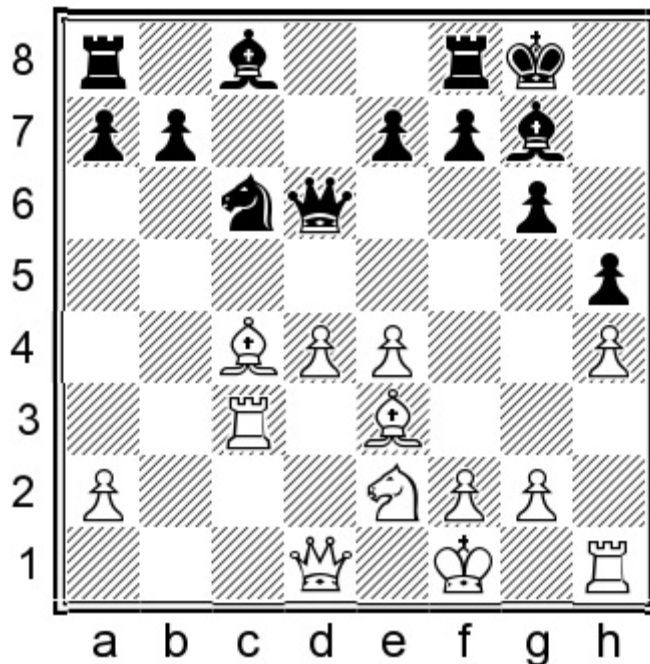
13.d5?! is also bad as White is lagging behind in development: 13...♘a5 14.♕d3 ♕d7 15.♕c5 ♖xa2 16.♕xe7 ♖fc8→.

Another dubious try is:

13.♗d2?! ♖d8! (hitting d4) 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♕b5 b6! 16.f4 (16.♕d4 ♕a6 17.♕xa6 ♖xa6 gives Black the initiative. Sakaev also mentions 16.♗c3 ♖xc3 17.♘xc3, but Black's pieces are more active after 17...♕b7 18.♔e2 ♖ac8.) 16...♘g4 17.♕d4 e5! 18.♕b2 ♖xa2 19.♖a1 ♖b3 20.♕c6 ♖b8 21.♖xa7 ♘e3+ 22.♔f2 ♘c4 23.♗c3 ♖xb2 24.♗xc4, Ftacnik-I.Gurevich, Biel 1993, 24...exf4.

The only reasonable moves for White in the diagram position are:

a) 13.♖c3!? ♖d6 14.h4 (14.f3 ♖d8 15.♔f2 ♘xd4) 14...h5!. In my opinion, Black should not allow h4-h5.



15. ♕d2

The game Hawkins-Gormally, Liverpool 2008, saw 15. f3 ♘e6 16. ♘xe6 ♗xe6 17. ♖b1 ♗d7 18. e5 e6 19. ♔f2 ♖e7. Or 15. ♕d3 ♗d8 16. e5 ♖b4 17. e6 ♖e5 18. exf7+ ♔f8 19. ♕c2 ♖xc4 20. ♗xc4 ♗d6 21. ♗c5 b6.

15. ♗c1! ♘d7 16. e5 ♖a3! 17. ♕d3 ♗xd3 18. ♘xd3 ♗ac8= is safe for Black.

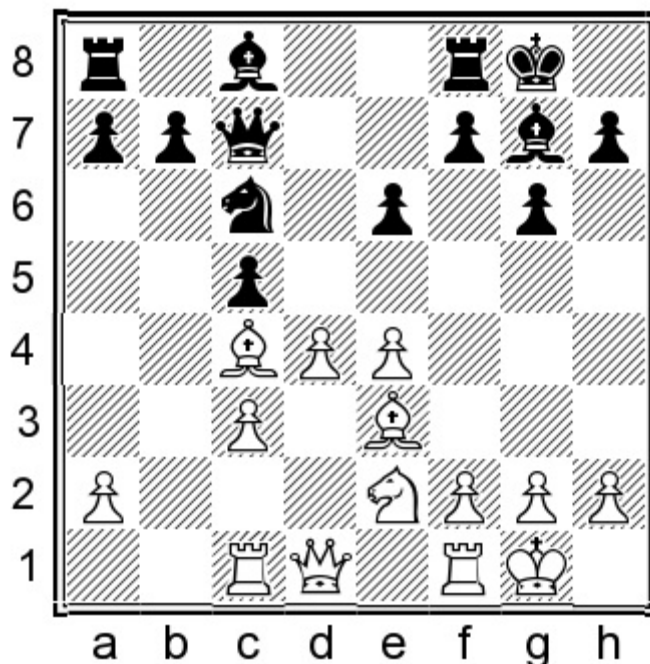
15... ♗d8! with an initiative.

b) 13. ♖b3 ♗d6!?. Sakaev's recommendation. Black is fine in the arising complex positions: 14. ♘d5 ♖a5 15. ♖b5 e6 16. ♗xa5 b6 17. ♕d2 exd5 18. e5 ♗e6; 14. ♗c3 ♘e6=; 14. e5 ♗d8 15. ♖a3 ♘f5 16. f3 ♖a5 17. ♔f2=.

10...e6!?

Another version of the same approach is:

10... ♗c7 11. ♗c1 e6!?

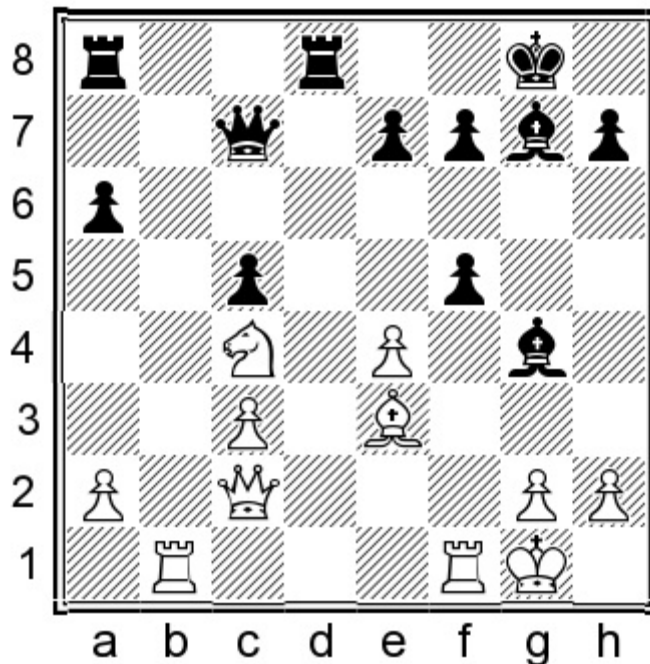


I do not know why this move is so rare in practice. To me, it could easily serve as even a main repertoire. It's goal is to discourage d4-d5 and prepare ...b6, ...♘a5. At the same time it improves on 11...♞d8 since White would not have ♔g5 with a tempo. Another point in its favour is the possibility of meeting 12.♙f4 by 12...♚e7 and 12.dxc5 by 12...♞e5 13.♙b3 ♞g4. Look at **game 23** Onischuk-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty-Mansiysk2010 for details.

Lately 10...b6 has been very topical.

After 11.♚d2 ♙b7 12.♞ac1 e6 play is similar to line C. Or 12.♞ad1 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♞c8 14.♙h6 ♞a5 15.♙d3 ♞c4 16.♙xc4 ♞xc4 17.♙xg7 ♚xg7 18.♞g3 e6=, Navara-Ding Liren, Prague 2019.

Whenever Black plays ...b6, he should consider dxc5, so critical is 11.dxc5 ♚c7 12.♞d4 ♞e5 13.♞b5 ♚b8 14.♙e2 bxc5 15.♞b1 a6 16.♞a3 (16.♞d4 ♚c7 17.♞b3 ♞d8 18.♚c2 c4 19.♞c5 ♙g4 20.f3 ♙d7=, Tudor-Morozov, ICCF 2019) 16...♚c7 17.f4 ♞d8 18.♚c2 ♞g4 19.♙xg4 ♙xg4 20.f5 gxf5 21.♞c4



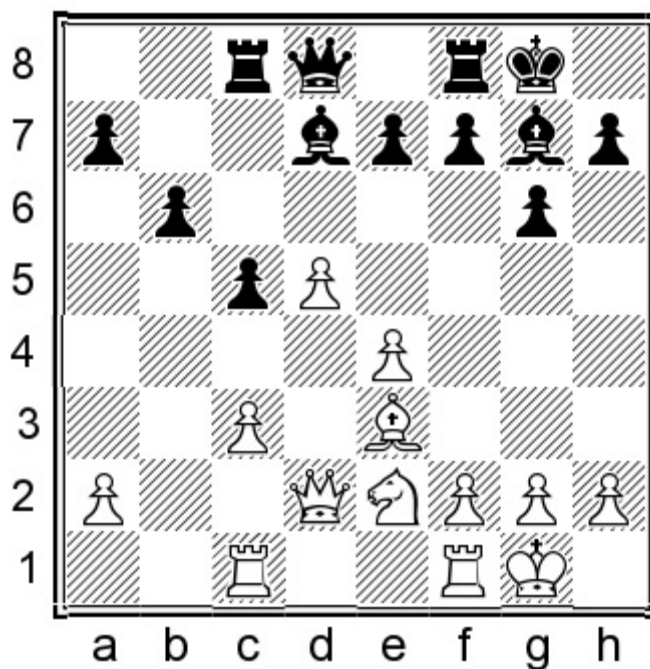
Karjakin chose this against Vachier Lagrave in Stavanger 2018, and went on to win after 21...e6 22.h3 ♕h5 23.exf5, although the position is rather unclear. Two correspondence games show a safer way for Black: 21...♖ab8 22.♖be1 fxe4 23.♔xe4 ♕e6 24.♕f4 ♗b7 25.♕xb8 ♗xe4 26.♖xe4 ♖xb8= with enough compensation for the exchange.

The other attempt to punish 10...b6 is based on seizing space with d5:

11.♕b5 ♕b7 12.♖c1

Or 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♘f4 c4 14.♖b1 ♗d6 15.♗e2 ♖ac8 or 15...♕c8∞.

12...♖c8 13.♕xc6 ♕xc6 14.d5 ♕d7 15.♗d2



Here 15...e6 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.♕g5 ♗c7 18.h4 c4 19.dxe6 ♕xe6 20.h5 was unclear in Oreopoulos-Elyoseph, ICCF 2018, although in the game White quickly obtained a huge edge.

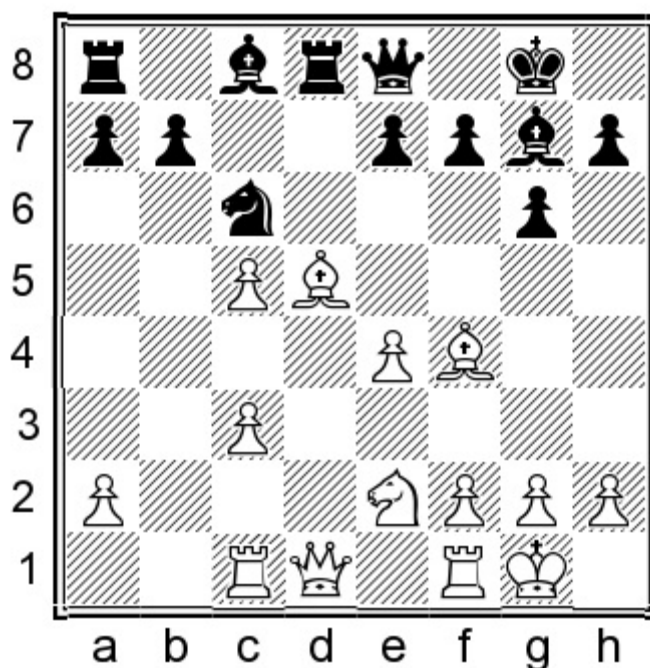
10...♕g4 11.f3 ♕d7 has been one of the most popular system lately. It has accumulated a lot of theory,

but I still do not see an established equaliser. The point is that the bishop is a bit passive on d7, although it helps in the defence. Look at **game 26** Oreopoulos-Daus, ICCF 2015.

10...♘a5 had its splash of popularity in 2010-2011 and I have seen attempts to revive it in the last year. The main problem with this system is that it requires a deep preparation and an exceptional memory. Even Anand, in the 2010 match for the world title against Topalov, fell victim of a home analysis, to lose without any fight. You can find a detailed survey on this system in the comments to **game 24** Aronian-Mamedyarov, Stavanger 2018.

Finally, 10...♙c7 11.♞c1 ♞d8 is one of the oldest systems against the Exchange Variation. It was employed by World champions Botvinnik and Fischer, but it has practically disappeared from top level games in the last decade. Frankly, I do not know the reason for that. If we look into the database, we could guess that Black did not like the line 12.♙f4 ♙d7

12...♙e5 13.♙xe5 ♘xe5 14.♙b3 ♘g4 (14...a5 15.a4 b6 16.f4±) 15.♘g3 ♙f4 16.♙e1 b6 17.h3 ♘f6 18.e5 ♘d5 19.♙xd5 ♞xd5 20.c4 ♞d8 21.d5 ♞b8 22.♙e2±.
13.dxc5! (13.d5 ♘a5 14.♙d3 b5) 13...♙e8 14.♙d5



This position is not bad for Black at all! Actually, two recent correspondence games finished in a draw: 14...♘e5! (fencing off the threat 15.♙xc6)

14...♙d7 is worse – 15.♙d2 e6 16.♙b3 ♘e5 17.♙g5!, when 17...♙b5 18.♙xd8 ♞xd8 does not ensure adequate compensation – 19.♙c2 ♙d3 20.♙b2±.

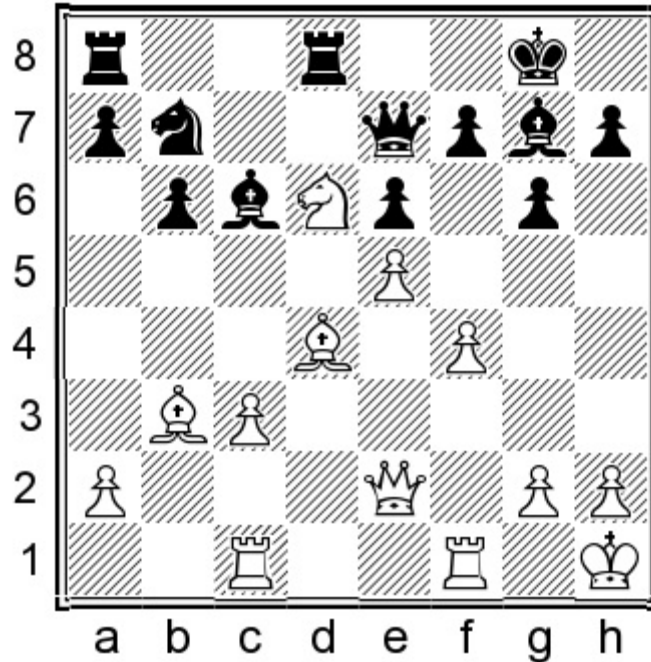
15.♘d4 e6 16.♙b3 ♙e7 17.♙h1

Lahdenmäki-Wiesinger, ICCF 2018, went 17.♙e3 b6! 18.cxb6 ♙a6 19.h3 axb6 20.f4 ♘c4 21.♙xc4 ♙xc4 22.♘c6 ♙c7 23.♘xd8 ♞xd8 24.♙f3 ♙xf1 25.♙xf1 ♙f8 26.♙f2 b5 27.♞c2 ♙h6 28.e5 ♞d1+ 29.♙h2 ♙c4 30.♙h4 ♙d3 31.♞c1 ♞xc1 32.♙xc1 ♙f8 33.♙e1 ♙b1 34.♙d2 ♙g7 35.♙e3 ♙xa2 36.♙d3 ½-½.

17...♙d7 18.♙e2

18.♙xe5 ♘xe5 19.f4 ♙f6 20.f5 ♖ac8 holds on – 21.c6 bxc6 22.fxe6 ♙xe6 23.♙xe6 fxe6 24.♚a4 ♙xd4 25.cxd4 c5=.

18...♚xc5 19.♙e3 ♚e7 20.f4 ♘c6 21.♘b5 b6 22.e5 ♘a5 23.♘d6 ♙c6 24.♙d4 ♘b7



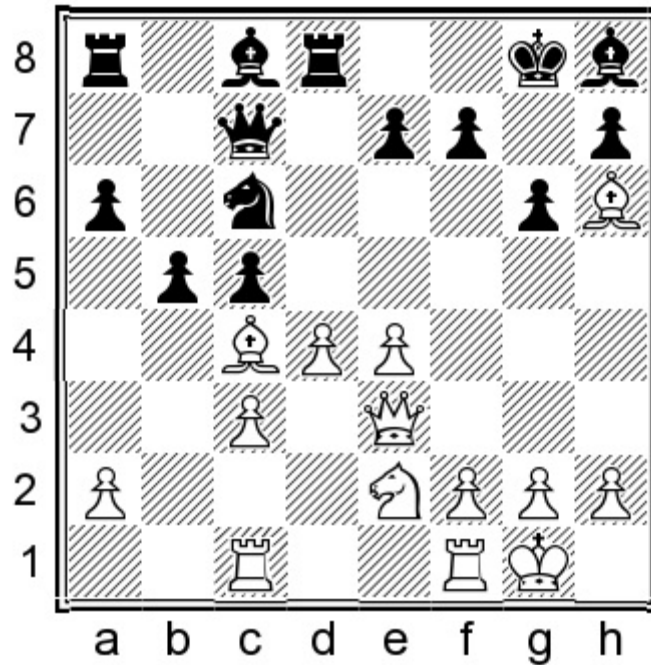
In Korovnik-Köstner, ICCF 2018, White poured more oil into the fire: 25.f5!? gxf5 26.♘xf5 exf5 27.♖xf5 ♙e8 28.♖cf1 ♘c5 29.e6 f6 30.♙c2, when:

30...♖xd4 31.cxd4 ♘b7 32.♚g4 h5 leveled the chances.

30...♙g6 was more forcing and spectacular – 31.♖xf6 ♖xd4 32.♖xg6 ♖h4 33.♖f7 ♖xh2+! 34.♔g1 ♖h1+ 35.♔f2 ♘d3+! 36.♔f3 ♖f1+! 37.♚xf1 ♘e5+ 38.♔e4 ♘xf7 39.♚xf7+ ♚xf7 40.exf7+ ♔xf7= with total exhaustion of forces.

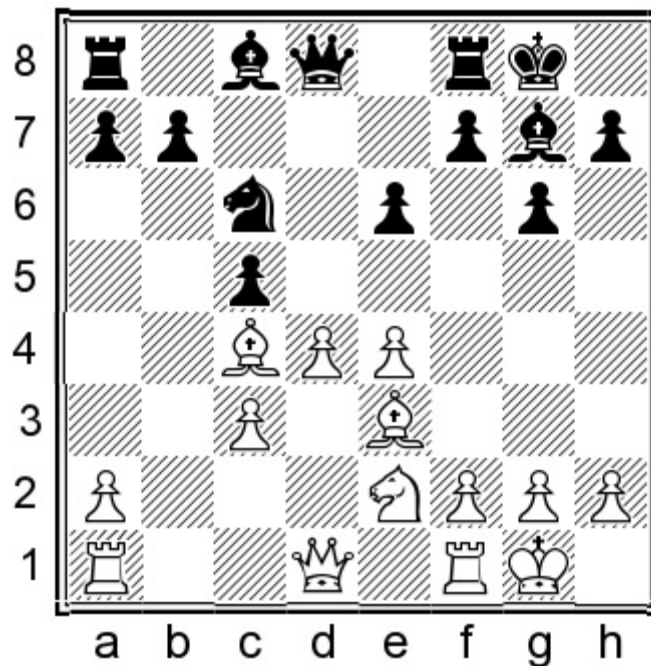
Thus we see no evidence that 12.♙f4 is even close to a refutation of the 10...♚c7 11.♖c1 ♖d8 variation.

The other candidate could be 12.♚d2 a6 13.♙h6 ♙h8! 14.♚e3 b5



In practice Black is doing fine after 15.♙b3 ♘a5!?. A bit annoying is:
 15.♙d5!? e6 16.♙f4 ♖b7 17.♙xc6 ♗xc6 18.h4 ♙b7 19.f3 ♜ac8 20.h5, but 20...cxd4 21.cxd4 ♖b6 22.h6
 ♙xd4 23.♘xd4 ♗xd4 24.♗xd4 ♜xd4 25.♜xc8+ ♙xc8 26.♙e5 ♞d7 should be a draw.

Let's now return to 10...e6:



A. 11.dxc5; B. 11.♞c1; C. 11.♗d2

11.♞b1 is pointless as the rook will be misplaced after 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 b6. Black equalised easily in
 Dzenis-Popescu, ICCF 2015:

13.♗a4 ♙b7 14.♞fd1 ♗h4 15.f3 ♘a5 16.♙b5 ♜fc8 17.♙d3 ♙h6 18.♙f2 ♗e7 19.♙e1 ♙c6 20.♗b4 ♗xb4
 21.♞xb4 ♙e8 22.♙f2 ♙g7 23.♞bb1 ½-½.

11.f4?! cd4 12.cd4 b6 13.♖c1 ♘a5 14.♙d3 ♗b7 15.f5?! exf5 16.exf5 ♞e8 favours Black.

11.♙c1 is similar to 11.♙d2 only at the surface. In fact White prepares ♖d1 or ♙a3.

11...♘a5 12.♙d3 b6 13.♖d1 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♗b7 15.♙a3 ♙d7 was level in Miljkovic-B.Socko, Graz 2016.

We could also start with 11...b6, when 12.♙b5 (12.♖d1 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘a5) 12...♗b7 13.dxc5 ♙c7 14.cxb6 axb6 gave Black enough compensation. See the instructive **game 25** Tikkanen-Giri, Malmo 2011.

A. 11.dxc5

This pawn structure is commonly safe for Black if the pawn is still on a7 and the b6-square is not weakened. Black should continue with:

11...♙a5!

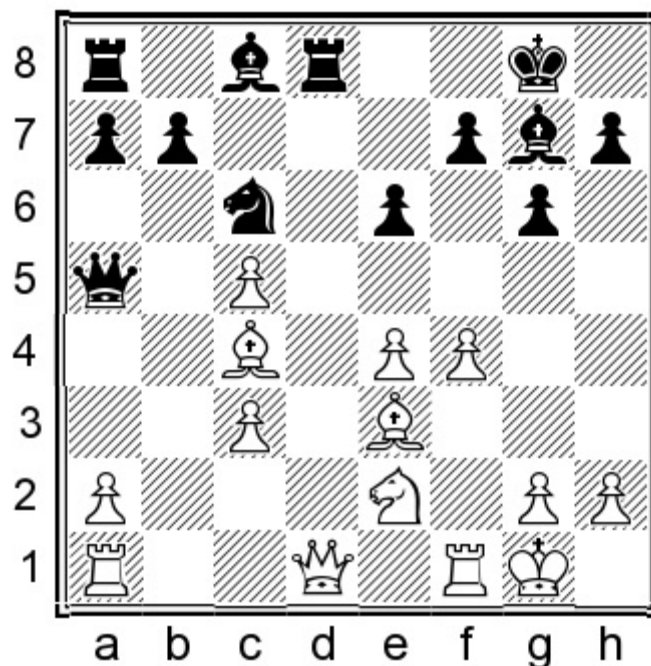
The threat is 12...♖d8, then ...♙g7-f8xc5.

12.f4

12.♙c2 does not set problems due to 12...♘e5 13.♙b3 ♘g4.

The thematic move in such structures 12.♘d4 is innocuous here in view of the simple 12...♙xc5.

12...♖d8



13.♙b3

After 13. ♖c2 ♙f8 14. f5 (14. ♗d4 ♖xc5) 14... ♙xc5 15. ♗d4 we cannot copy the main line since:

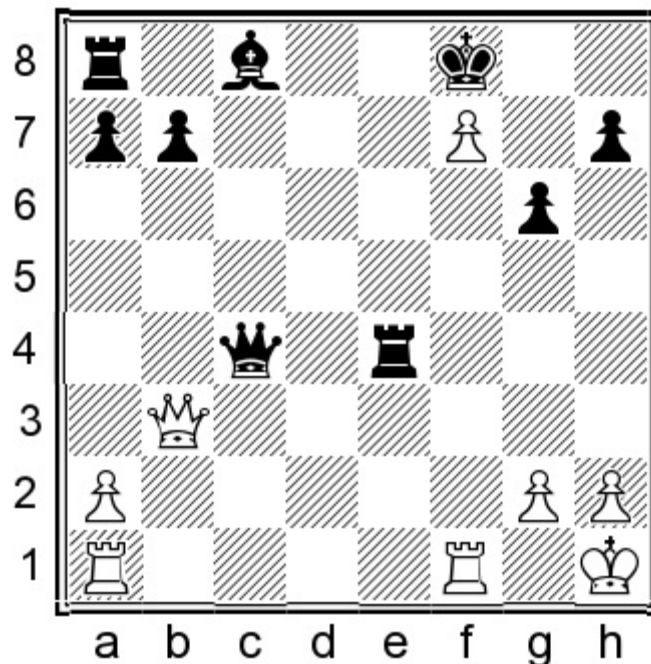
15... ♗xd4 16. cxd4 ♖xd4 already loses to 17. fxe6 and e4 is protected. Correct is:

15... ♗e5 16. fxe6 (16. ♙e2 ♗c6=), when 16... ♙xe6 is level, while 16... ♗xc4 17. exf7+ ♔g7 18. ♖f2 ♗xe3 is a perpetual.

13... ♙f8 14. f5 ♙xc5 15. ♗d4 ♗xd4 16. cxd4 ♖xd4! 17. fxe6

17. ♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 18. ♔h1 ♙xa1 19. fxe6 ♙xe6 20. ♙xe6 fxe6 21. ♖xe6+ ♔h8 22. ♖xa1 ♖f8=.

17... ♖xe4! 18. exf7+ ♔f8 19. ♙xc5+ ♖xc5+ 20. ♔h1 ♖xc4



White has just enough threats to draw – 21. ♖b2 ♖f4 22. ♖h8+ ♔xf7 23. ♖fc1 (Or 23. ♖xh7+ ♔f6 24. ♖xf4+ ♖xf4 25. ♖h8+ ♔f7 26. ♖e1 ♖f6 ½-½, Harabor-Lewis, ICCF 2018.) 23... ♖d3 24. ♖d1 ♖f5 25. ♖ac1 ♙d7 26. ♖xa8 ♙c6 27. ♔g1 ♖f2 28. ♖xc6 ♖xg2+ with a perpetual, Abramov-Ryzhkov, ICCF 2018.

B. 11. ♖c1 ♖e7

Another interesting approach is 11... ♖a5 12. ♖b3 ♖c7

Dominguez beat Ivanchuk with 12... b6, but his idea to trade bishops with ... ♙a6 is parried by 13. a4 ♙a6?! 14. ♙b5.

13. ♖b5

After 13. ♖b2 Black could think about closing the queenside with 13... a6 14. h4 b5 15. ♙b3 c4 16. ♙c2 f5 since White's queen is cut off from the kingside.

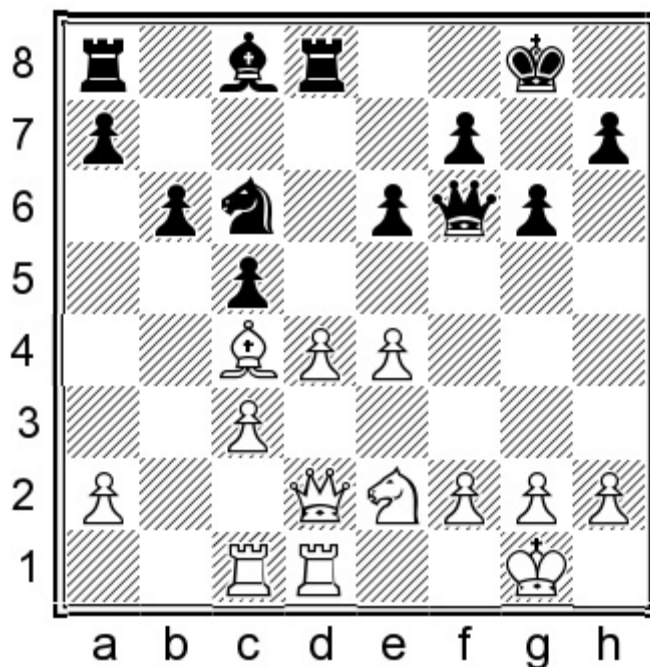
13... ♗a5 14. ♙d3 ♙d7 15. ♖b2 ♖ac8 16. h4 b5 17. h5 ♗c4 18. ♙xc4 bxc4 19. h6 ♙f6 20. ♖d2 ♖d8 21. ♗f4

cx d4 22.cxd4 ♖e7 and Black held on in Zhak-Belka, ICCF 2015.

12.♚d2 ♜d8

It is not a good idea to keep the dark-squared bishops with 12...b6 13.♙g5 f6 14.♙e3 ♞a5 15.♙d3 ♙b7 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8, Nguyen-Deepan, Kuala Lumpur 2012, since ♙g7 would be passive.

13.♙g5 ♙f6 14.♙xf6 ♚xf6 15.♞fd1 b6



16.♚e3 ♙b7

Black was fine in Strelnikov-Arnaudov, Bansko 2010, after 17.e5 ♞h4 and went on to win. 17.dxc5 ♞e5 18.♙b3 bxc5 19.f4 ♞g4 20.♚g3 h5 is also harmless.

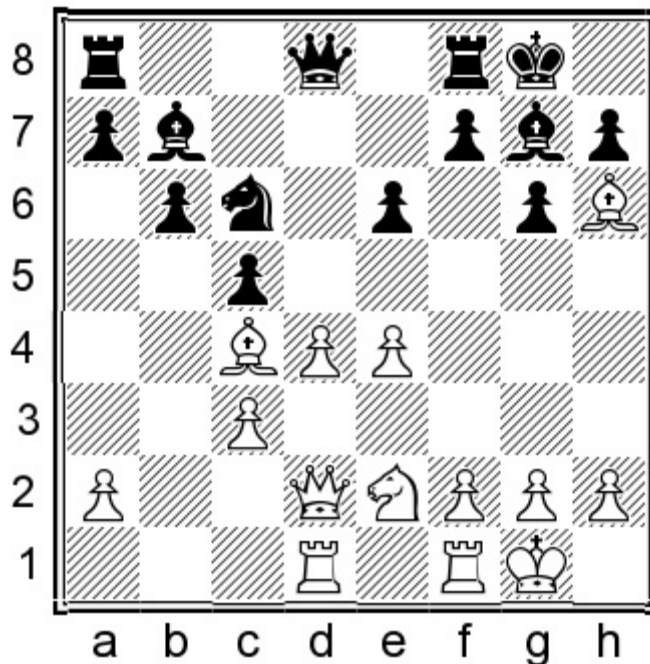
C. 11.♚d2 b6!

11...♚a5 makes sense only if White had taken on c5. Otherwise we should keep this square for the knight.

12.♞fd1

Korobov adheres to 12.♞ad1, counting on a kingside attack after 12...♙b7 13.♙h6

Or 13.dxc5 ♚xd2 14.♞xd2 ♞e5 15.♙b3 bxc5=.

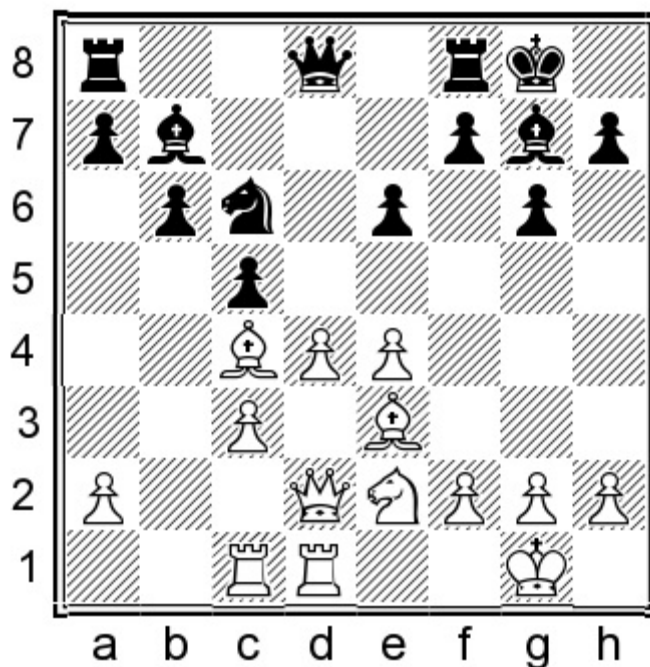


A good policy in such positions is to keep the queen on e7 or d6. For instance: 13...♙e7 14.♙xg7 ♔xg7 15.f4 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♗b4 17.♙d3 ♘a5 18.♙b3 ♖fe8!. Now f4-f5-f6 is not dangerous as Black controls the squares e3 and d2 from where White's queen could reach h6, e.g. 19.♘g3 ♗ac8 20.f5 exf5 21.exf5 ♘xb3 22.f6+ ♔f8!?.

12...♙b7 13.♖ac1

13.f3 ♗c8 14.♖ac1 allows Black to show the main idea of his setup – to trade all the rooks along the c-file:

14...♘a5 15.♙d3 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♗d7 17.h4 ♗xc1 18.♗xc1 ♗c8 19.♗xc8+ ♗xc8 with comfortable play.



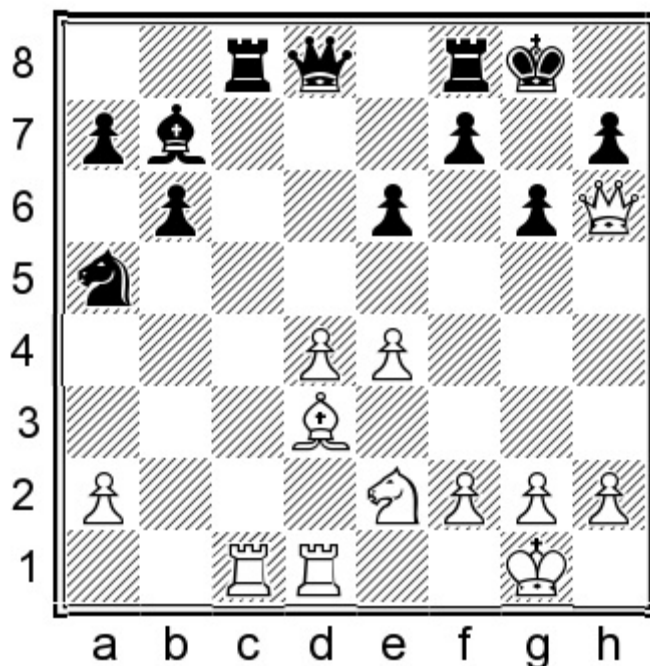
13...♗c8

The stem game for the 11...b6 line was Svetushkin-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. It saw 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 ♖a5 15.♙d3 ♜c8 16.h4!?. Although the recent encounter Kir.Georgiev-Xu Xiangyu, Konya 2017, showed that 16...♙xh4! 17.♙g5 ♚g4 18.f3 ♙h5 19.e5 ♜xc1 20.♜xc1 f6! was balanced, it is simpler to keep the knight in the centre for one more move. After 13...♜c8, 14.h4? would just hand a pawn without any compensation.

14.♙h6

14.♙g5 ♚d7 (14...♙f6!? 15.h4) 15.h4 e5 deserves attention.

14...♙xh6 15.♙xh6 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♖a5 17.♙d3=



The queen is actually misplaced on h6 and Black should not fear an attack. Ivanchuk chose against Grischuk 17...♜xc1 18.♜xc1 ♖c6 19.♙e3 ♚d6=. Another possibility is to provoke h4 – 17...♙e7 18.h4 ♜xc1 19.♜xc1 ♖c6 20.h5 ♚d6 21.hxg6 hxg6 22.♜c4 ♜c8 23.♙g5 ♚d8 24.♙e3 and start pushing the queenside pawns – 24...a6 25.♜c3 b5 26.♙c2 a5.

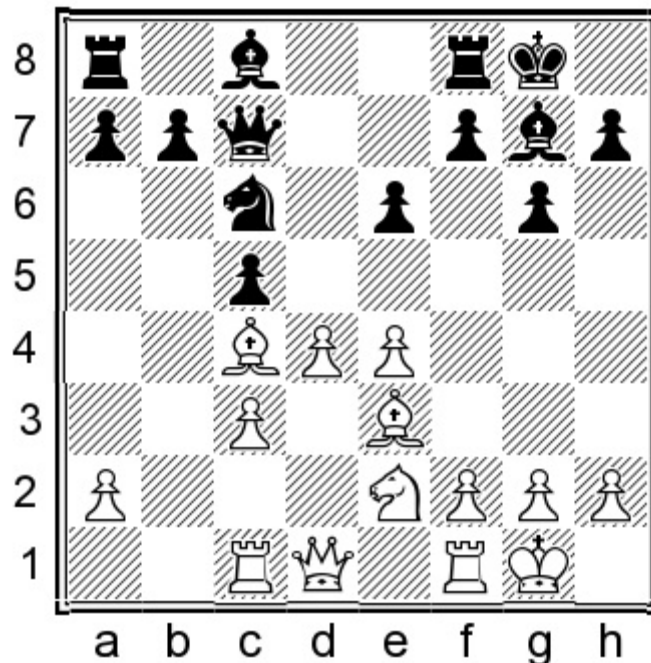
Chapter 10 Complete Games

23. Onischuk-Zhou Jianchao

Khanty-Mansiysk 29.09.2010

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.♙e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♖c7 11.♞c1 e6

This is the backup line to our main repertoire.



12.♙d2

I have also considered:

12.f4?! b6 13.♙d3 ♙b7 14.f5 exf5 15.exf5 ♞ae8 16.♙d2 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♙d6.

12.♙f4. This otherwise typical move looks pointless here as the queen has an excellent retreat square:
12...♙e7 13.♙d2 ♞d8

13...b6 looks consistent, but White has the annoying 14.d5! (14.♙h6 ♙xh6 15.♙xh6 ♙b7) when Black must play very precisely: 14...♞d8 15.♙b3 ♙a6! 16.c4 ♗d4 17.♗xd4 cxd4 18.e5 exd5 19.♙g5 ♙xe5 20.♙xd8 ♞xd8 21.♞fe1 ♙d6 22.cxd5 ♙b7 23.♙c2 ♙xd5 24.♙c7 ♙xc7 25.♞xc7 ♙xb3 26.axb3 d3 27.♞d1 a5=. Nothing can prevent ...♙f8-b4 or a similar draw stand.

14.♙g5 ♙f6 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♞fd1 b6 17.♙e3 ♙b7=. Here, in the game Strelnikov-Arnaudov, Bansko 2010, White tried 18.e5, but Black had good counter-chances after 18...♙h4!.

12.d5 ♖e5!

The standard 12...♖a5 13.♙d3 c4 14.♙c2 b6! (14...exd5 15.exd5 b6=) is also good enough:

15.♚d2 exd5 16.exd5 ♙b7 17.♞fd1 ♞ad8 18.♙e4 ♞fe8 19.♙f3 ♙e5=.

13.♙f4! (13.♙b3 c4 14.♙c2 exd5 15.exd5 ♞d8 16.h3 ♖d3 17.♙xd3 ♞xd5 18.♙d4 cxd3 19.♚xd3 ♙e6=)

13...♞d8 14.♚b3 ♞d6! 15.♙xe5 ♙xe5 16.f4 ♞b6 17.♚c2 ♙g7 18.♖g3 e5 19.f5 ♞d6=.

12.dxc5 ♖e5 13.♙b3 ♖g4 14.♙f4 is met simply by 14...♖e5 15.♖d4 ♚xc5 16.♙e3 ♚e7 17.f4 ♖d7 (17...♖c6=).

12...b6!

Dvoiryys played 3 times 12...♖a5 13.♙d3 b6, but in my opinion it is better to keep the knight in the centre for a while.

13.♞fd1

The most popular plan is 13.♙h6. It aims to gain control over the dark squares with h4-h5 and eventually h6. Then Black's last rank will be quite sensitive, especially after the imminent trade of rooks on the c-file. Play might continue:

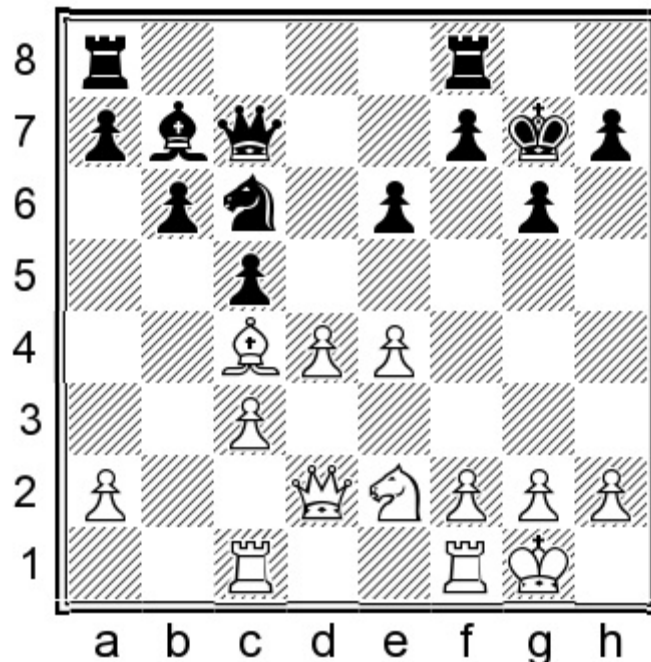
13...♙b7

13...♞fd8 14.♙g5 ♞d7 and 13...♚e7 14.♙xg7 ♖xg7 15.f4 f5 are decent alternatives.

14.♙xg7

Or 14.♞fd1 ♚e7 15.♙g5 ♙f6 16.h4 ♞fd8 17.♚f4 ♙xg5 18.hxg5 e5 19.♚e3 cxd4 20.cxd4 ♖xd4 21.♖xd4 exd4 22.♞xd4 ♞xd4 23.♚xd4 ♞c8=.

14...♖xg7



15.♖e3

Alternatively:

If White pushes the d-pawn, we could block it with ...♗d6, e.g. 15.♘f4 ♖d6 16.d5 ♘e5 17.♙e2 exd5 18.exd5 ♞ae8 (18...c4 19.♗d4 ♞ac8) 19.c4 ♙c8=.

15.h4 is slightly premature due to 15...♗e7 16.h5 ♗h4.

15.♞fd1 ♞fd8 16.♗e3 ♞ac8 17.h4 ♗e7 18.h5 ♘a5 (it is good to repel the bishop from the a2-g8 diagonal in order to avoid tactical hits on e6 after 18...♗h4 19.g3 ♗xh5 20.♘f4) 19.♙d3 ♗h4 20.♘g3 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♞xc1 22.♞xc1 ♘c6.

15...♞fd8 16.f4 ♗e7 17.♗f2 f5=, Bacrot-Vachier Lagrave, Nancy 2012.

Brunner-Jo.Horvath, Vaujany 2010, saw 13.♙d3 ♙b7 14.d5 exd5 15.exd5.

I do not completely understand White's idea, since it is well known that this structure with an open e-file is about equal – 15...♘e5 16.c4 ♗d7, waiting an opportunity for ...b5.

However, in the game Black opted for the thematic pawn sac:

15...c4!? 16.♙xc4 ♘e5 17.♙b3 ♘c4, and even White should be careful after 18.♙xc4 ♗xc4 or 18.♗d3 ♘xe3 19.fxe3 ♗c5.

13.♙f4 is best met by 13...♗d7 14.♞fd1 ♙b7, not fearing 15.dxc5 ♗xd2 16.♞xd2 ♘e5=.

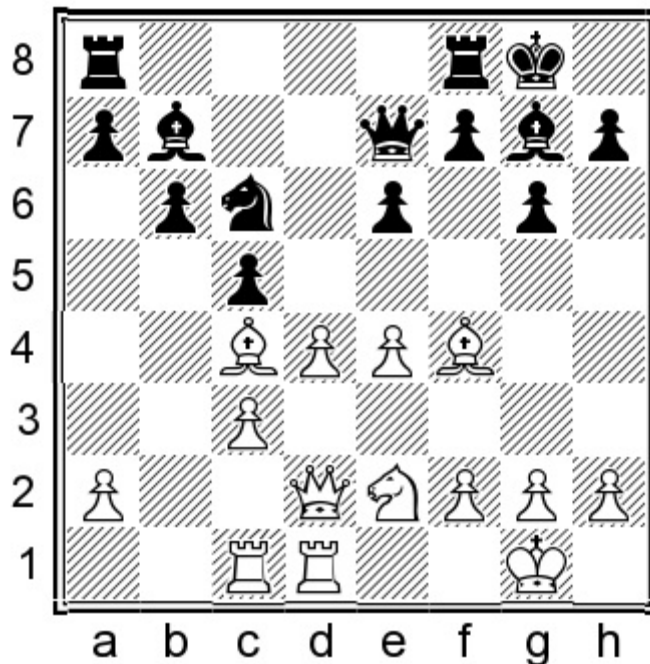
Finally, 13.h4!? ♙b7 14.h5 ♗e7 15.♙g5 also deserves a test.

13...♙b7 14.♙f4

14.d5 is again dubious:

14...♘a5 15.♙b3 ♘xb3 16.axb3 exd5 17.exd5 c4!.

14...♗e7



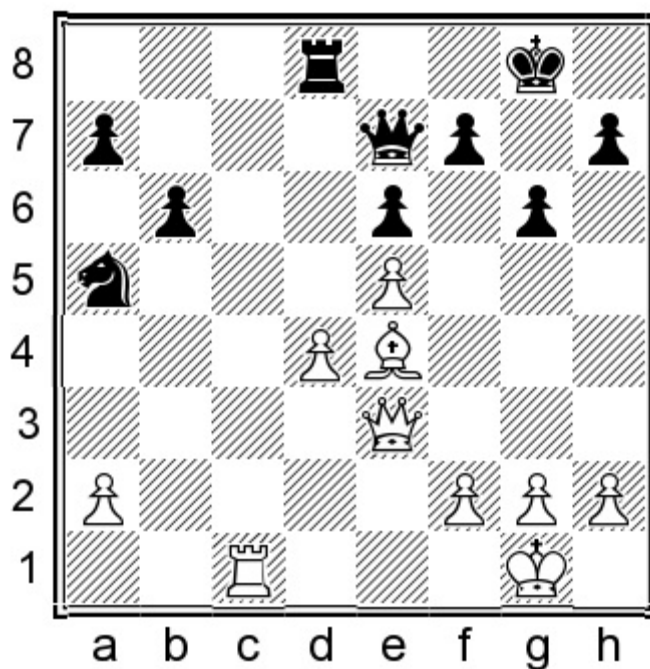
15. ♕g5

Or 15.d5 ♘a5 16.d6 ♚d7 17.♚d3 e5 18.♕g5 ♘xc4 19.♚xc4 b5 20.♚xc5 ♚g4.

15... ♕f6 16. ♕xf6 ♚xf6 17. ♚e3 ♘a5 18. ♕d3 ♖ac8

While Black's play is clear and easy – to hit d4 with ... ♖fd8, ... cxd4, ... ♖xc1, ... ♘c6, White lacks an active plan. That is why Onischuk decides to fix the dark-squares:

19.e5 ♚e7 20. ♘g3 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♕d5 22. ♘e4 ♕xe4 23. ♕xe4 ♖xc1 24. ♖xc1 ♖d8



Black has the better pawn formation, so White should be careful to maintain the balance. www.chessstouring.com

25.g3 ♖d7 26.♙f3 b5! 27.♞d1 ♚e7

Black plays it safe. 27...♞c4 allows 28.♙g5 when some regrouping would be needed: 28...♙c7 29.h4 ♞d7 30.h5 ♙d8 31.♙f4 ♞b2=.

28.d5 exd5 29.♙xd5 ♞c4 30.♙b3 ♞xe5 31.♙xb5 ♙g7=

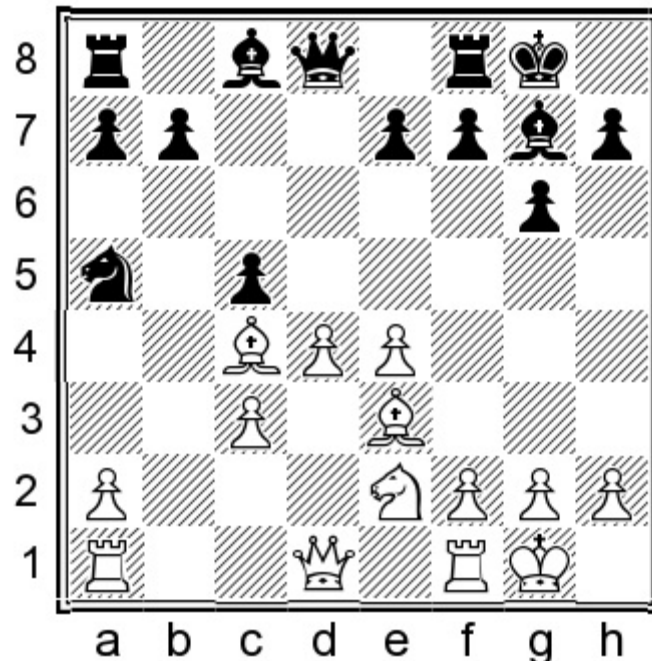
The rest of the game is not interesting.

32.♙e2 ♙f6 33.♙g2 ♞xd1+ 34.♙xd1 h5 35.♙e2 ♙d6 36.♙b2 ♙g8 37.♙b3 ♞g4 38.♙f3 ♙d4 39.♙c2 ♞e5 40.♙g2 ♞d3 41.♙d2 h4 42.♙f1 ♙a1+ 43.♙d1 ♙d4 44.♙e2 ♙xf2+ 45.♙xd3 ♙xh2 46.gxh4 ♙xa2 47.♙e3 ♙e6+ 48.♙f2 ♙f6 49.♙g3 ♙e5+ 50.♙g2 ♙g7 51.h5 1/2-1/2

24. Aronian-Mamedyarov

Stavanger 01.06.2018

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4 ♞xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♞e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♞c6 10.♙e3 ♞a5



This system came to the fore after Topalov-Kamsky match in 2009. Carlsen, Anand, Caruna, Svidler, Shirov, to name a few, occasionally also put their faith in it. Black did take some ferocious beating at first, but then apparently fixed all the holes. Around 2012 the main lines were deeply studied almost to a draw and suddenly Black stopped choosing it at highest level. That was until 2018, when we witnessed its (not so glorious) return. The current game seems the latest word for White so far.

chesstouring.com

11.♙d3

11.♙b5 could be put to serious testing in future.

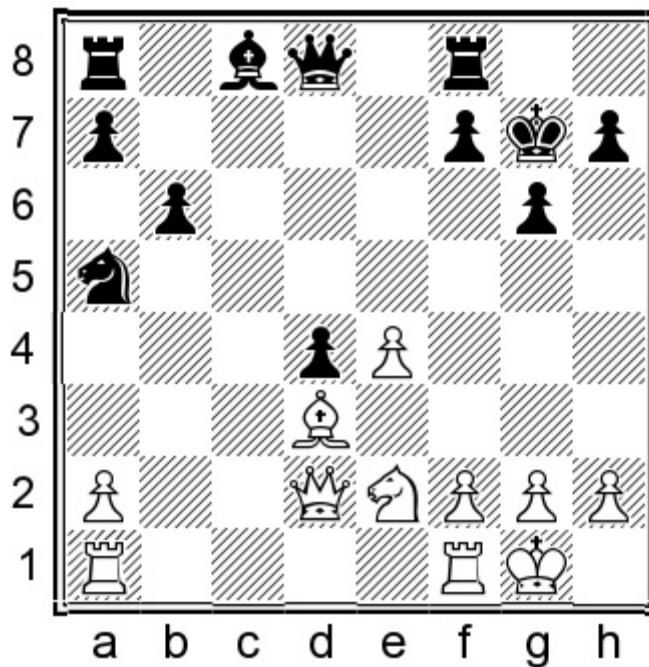
11...a6 12.♙d3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖c6 14.e5 ♙e6 remains unclear, Black has also tested successfully 12...♙d7 13.♞b1 b5. Strong players prefer:

11...b6 12.♞c1 ♙b7, when the white bishop is hardly any better on b5 than on d3.

11...b6 12.♞c1

12.♚d2 e5 12...♙b7 13.♞ac1 e6!?) 13.♙h6 is a line where one must know his lesson by heart to reach a drawish position around move 30:

13...cxd4 14.cxd4 exd4 15.♙xg7 ♜xg7



16.f4

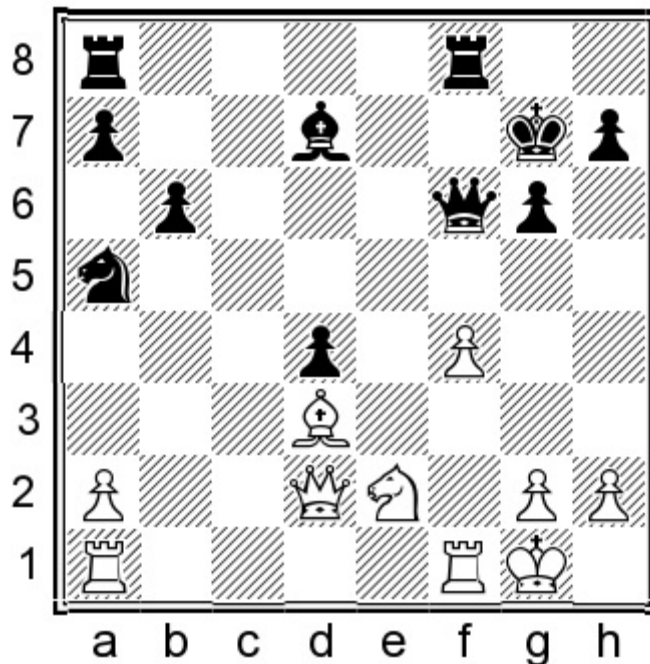
Here Black must develop his bishop on d7. On the contrary, after 16.♞ac1 he must answer 16...♙b7 17.f4 ♞c8 18.f5 ♞xc1 19.♚xc1 ♖c6 20.f6+ ♜h8 21.♚g5 ♚d6 22.♞f4 ♞e8 23.♞h4 ♚f8 24.♜f4 ♜e5 25.♜h3 ♜d7 26.♚f4 ♜g8 27.♜g5 h5 28.♞xh5 gxh5 29.♜h7 ♜xh7 30.♚f5+ ♜h6=, Amico-Laghetti, ICCF 2014.

16...f6 17.e5

17.f5 ♖c6 18.♙b5 ♜e5 19.♜xd4 gxf5 20.exf5 ♜h8=.

17.♞ac1 ♙g4 18.f5 (18.♜g3 ♞c8!? 19.f5 ♖c6 20.♙a6 ♞c7 21.h3 ♙h5) 18...♙xe2 19.♚xe2 ♚d6=.

17...♙d7! 18.exf6+ ♚xf6=



19.♖g3 (19.f5 ♔e5) 19...♕h8 20.f5 gx5 21.♗xf5 ♗xf5 22.♝xf5 ♔d6 23.♞af1 ♘c6 24.♗e4 ♔e7=, Topalov-Kamsky, Sofia 2009.

12.♞b1 should be innocuous as it misplaces the rook:

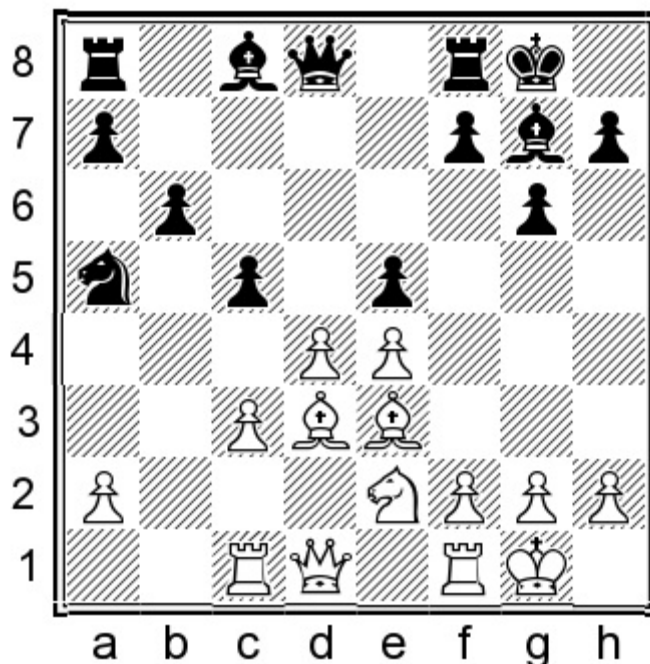
12...cxd4 13.cxd4 e6 14.♔a4 ♗b7 15.♞fc1 (15.♞fd1 ♔e7) 15...♞c8=.

12.dxc5?! bxc5! 13.♗xc5 ♔c7

offers Black an excellent compensation: 14.♗d4 e5 15.♗e3 ♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♔xc4 17.♔d5 ♔xd5 18.exd5 ♗a6 19.♞fe1 ♞fd8 20.♞ad1 ♗c4=, Nikolaev-Yandemirov, St. Petersburg 1998.

The main game offers an improved version of the same idea.

12...e5



13.dxc5

Modern development of this variation began with the game Topalov-Svidler, Morelia/Linares 2006. In his comments Krasenkow assessed 12...e5 as dubious. Sakaev also claimed an advantage to White. However, the current state of this variation is satisfactory for Black. In practice first players score even below 50%.

Note that the alternatives have no bite at all:

13.d5?! f5! 14.exf5 (14.f3 c4 15.♙c2 f4 leaves White without a plan – 16.♙f2 ♖f7 17.♞b1 ♙f8) 14...gxf5 15.c4 e4! 16.♙b1 ♙a6, Krush-Ganguly, Gibraltar 2009.

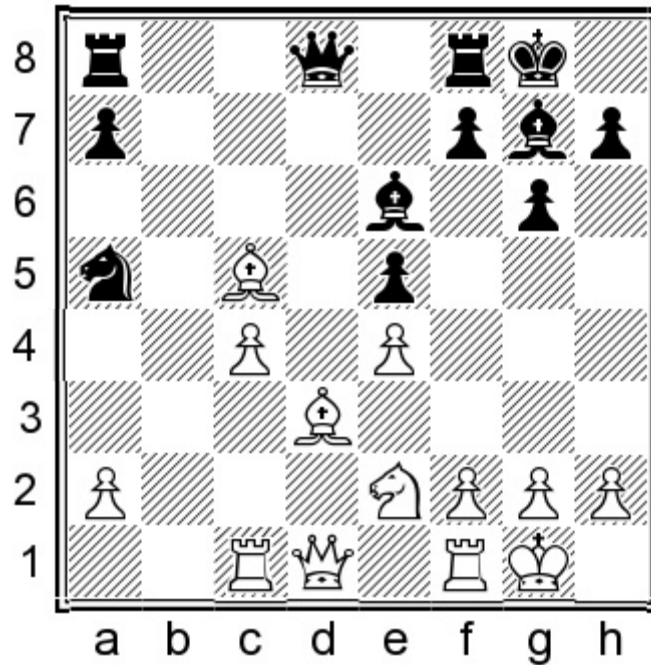
13.dxe5 ♙e6! A pawn sacrifice for domination on the light squares. After 14.f4 ♘c4 15.♙xc4 ♙xc4 he has some edge, e.g. 16.♞c2 ♚d3 17.♚xd3 ♙xd3 18.♞d2 ♙xe4. Even more enterprising is 14...♙xa2 15.c4 ♙b3 16.♚d2 ♚d7 17.♞c3 ♞ad8 18.♚b2 ♚xd3 19.♞xd3 ♞xd3 with a fine compensation for the queen.

13.♚a4 ♙d7 14.♚a3 ♙e6! 15.d5 ♙d7, game 22 Sasikiran-Kamsky, Dresden 2008. Black has achieved the ideal blockading position, with his rook on f8 and the enemy queen far from the kingside.

13...♙e6 14.c4!

White bases his hopes for an opening advantage with an occupation of the d5-square with the manoeuvre ♘e2-c3-d5. The immediate 14.cxb6 axb6 brings about a typical structure, in which White's extra pawn is irrelevant. Black is just in time for preventing the crucial c4-c5 which would break loose the "big pawn" on d3: 15.c4 ♚b8! 16.♞c3 ♞c8 17.♚c2 ♙f8! 18.♞b1 ♙c5 19.♙xc5 ♞xc5 20.♘c1 ♚c7 21.♘b3 ♞c6=, Van Wely-Eljanov, Foros 2008.

14...bxc5 15.♙xc5



15...♙h6!

A very important *zwischenzug* of Eljanov which revived the whole system. Previously Black had been suffering after 15...♞e8?! 16.♙e3! ♞e7 17.♚c2 ♞d7 18.♞fd1 ♘c6 19.a3 ♚a5 20.♘c3!, Topalov-Svidler, Morelia/Linares 2006.

16.♞c3

White has also tried:

16.♙xf8 ♙xc1 17.♘xc1 (17.♙b4 ♙g5 18.c5 ♘c6) 17...♔xf8! 18.♘b3 (18.♚a4 ♞c8) 18...♙xc4 19.♘xa5 ♚xd3 20.♘xc4 ♚xc4 21.♚d6+ ♔g8=.

16.♞c2 ♞e8 17.♘c3 ♞c8! 18.♙xa7 ♞e7 19.♙e3 ♙xe3 20.fxe3 ♘xc4 21.♘d5 ♙xd5 22.♙xc4 ♙xe4= Williams-Kurnosov, Dresden 2007.

16.f4 ♞e8 17.f5!? ♚c7 18.♙f2! ♙xc4 19.♙xc4 ♘xc4 20.♘c3!?, Harikrishna-Sutovsky, Montreal 2007, 20...♙xc1!? 21.♘d5 ♚d8 22.♚xc1 ♘d6 23.♚e3=.

16...♞e8 17.♚c2

17.♙e3 ♙xe3 18.fxe3 ♞b8

Play is not forced and both sides have a wide choice, but Black's activity levels the chances. In Giri-Danin, Bussum 2009, he preferred to keep the queen on the kingside: 18...♚g5 19.♚c1 ♞d8 20.♔h1 ♘b7 21.c5 ♘xc5 22.♞xc5 ♞xd3 23.♘f4 ♞d6 24.♚a1 ♞ad8 25.♞xe5 ♚g4 26.h3 ♚g3 27.♚e1=.

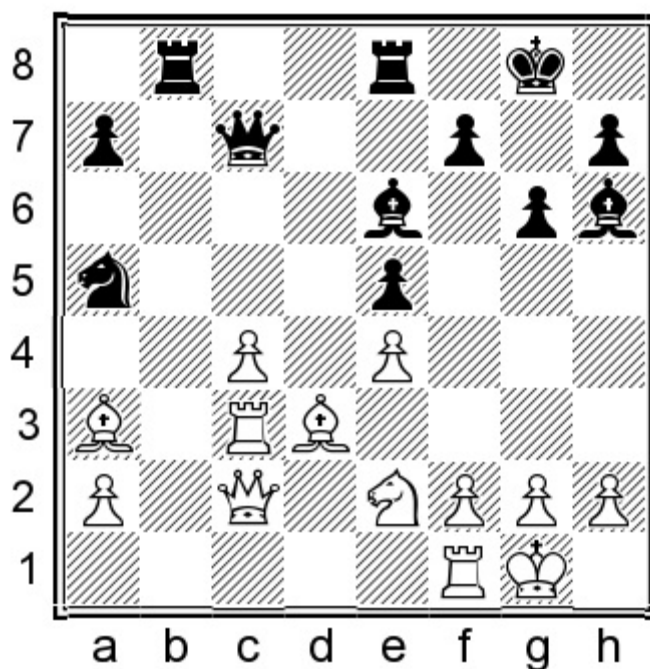
19.c5

19. ♖a4 ♜e7 20. c5 ♜b2 21. ♖a3=, Prohaszka-Rodshtein, Rijeka 2010. Or 19. ♘c1 ♚g5 20. ♚d2 ♜ed8 21. ♚e2 ♜dc8 22. ♘b3 ♚d8 23. ♜fc1 ♜c6=, Harabor-Sanchez, ICCF 2018.

19... ♚c7 20. ♖a4 ♜ed8 21. ♘c1 ♜b2! 22. ♜f2 (22. c6 ♚b6! =) 22... ♘d7 23. ♖a3 ♜xf2 24. ♘xf2 ♘c6. White's structural defects are hampering him to convert the extra pawn, Cheparinov-Maslak, Rijeka 2010.

The bottom line is that White keeps an extra pawn, but his winning chances are very slim.

17... ♚c7 18. ♘a3 ♜ab8



19. h3!?

In order to understand this move, let us consider 19. ♘c1 ♘f8 20. c5 ♘c6 21. ♘c4? ♘d4 22. ♘xd4 exd4, when 23. ♘xe6 simply loses the exchange. So White makes a useful move, awaiting ... ♜d8. Then ♘g5 will drag the rook to d7, when ♘xe6 will hit it, giving White an edge.

Obviously, it is impossible to play for a win with 19. c5 ♜ed8 20. ♘c1 ♘xc1 21. ♘xc1. Black's pieces are very active after 21... ♘c6 22. ♖a4 ♜d4 23. ♖a3 ♘b4, Korotylev-Timofeev, Moscow 2009.

19... ♜ed8

19... ♜ec8 looks more logical.

Then 20. ♘c1 ♘f8 21. c5 ♘c6 22. ♘c4 ♘b4 23. ♖a4 ♘xc4 24. ♜xc4 ♘d3 25. ♜d1 ♘xc5 equalises because White cannot convert the pin on the c-file – 26. ♚c2 ♖a5 27. ♘e3 ♖a6 28. ♜c1 ♜c7=.

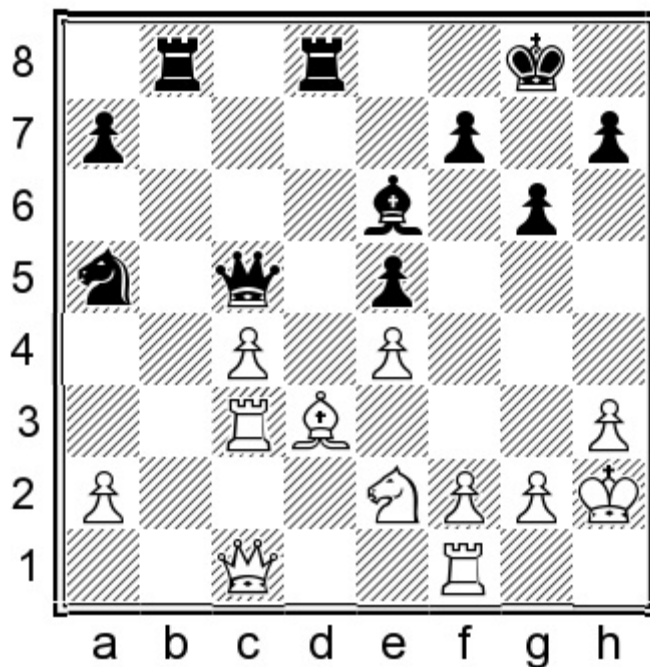
Perhaps White should take instead the d-file with:

20. ♜fd1.

20. ♘c1 ♘f8

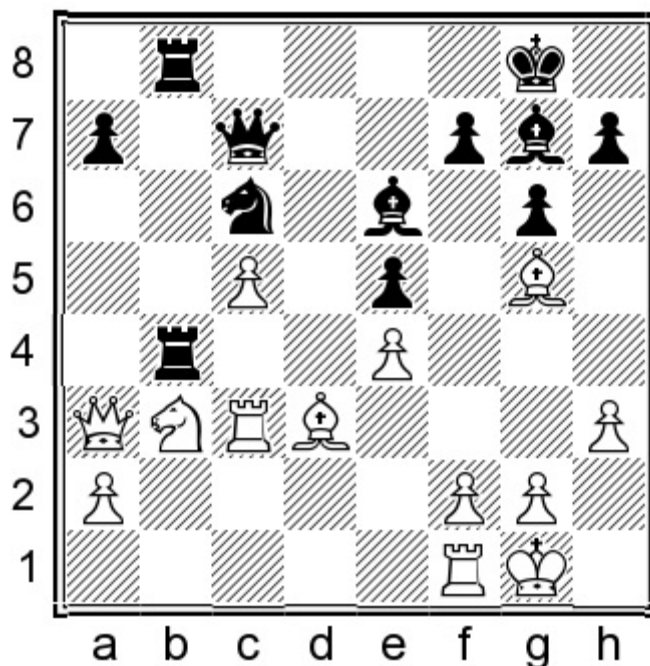
Sumets suggests 20... ♘xc1 21. ♚xc1 ♚c5 22. ♘g3, claiming that Black has good chances to level the

game. However, White possesses a more aggressive plan – 22.♔h2!



22...♗c6 23.f4 exf4 24.♗xf4 ♕e5 25.♔h1 a5 26.♗xe6 fxe6 27.c5. White's bishop has sprung to life, e.g. 27...♞f8 28.♞xf8+ ♞xf8 29.♙c4 ♗d4 30.♚d2 ♞f4 31.♞c1 ♞xe4 32.♙d3±.

The only other game which featured 19.h3 saw the seemingly incomprehensible retreat 20...♙g7!?. The idea is to meet the thematic 21.♙g5 ♞dc8 22.c5 ♗c6 23.♙c4 by 23...♗d4, when 24.♗xd4 is not so good with the g7-bishop supporting the pawn. Instead 24.♚d2 ♚xc5 25.♙xe6 ♗xe2+ 26.♚xe2 ♚xc3 27.♙xc8 ♚xc8 28.♞c1 ♚b7 should also be drawn. So White answered 23.♚a4 ♞b2 24.♗c1 ♞b4 25.♚a3 ♞cb8 26.♗b3 and kept the extra pawn up to the end, but could not convert it:



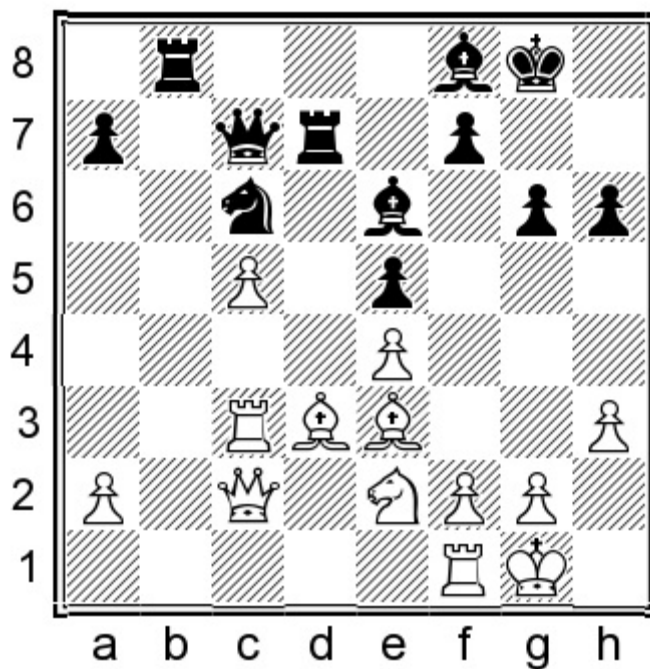
26...♙f8 27.♞fc1 a5 28.♔h2 ♞a8 29.♙c4 ♗d4 30.♙d2 ♚c6 31.♗xa5 ♚a4 32.♚xa4 ♞xa4 33.♗b3 ♞xa2 34.♗xd4 exd4 35.♞d3 ♙xc4 36.♞xc4 ♞a4 37.♞c1 ♞xd2 38.♞xd2 ♙h6 39.♞dd1 ♙f4+ 40.♔g1 ♙xc1

41.♞xc1 d3 42.f3 ♞a2 43.♞d1 ♞c2 44.♞xd3 ♞xc5=, Romm-Jedrzejowski, ICCF 2018.

21.♙g5 ♞d7 22.c5 h6

22...♘c6 23.♙c4 ♘d4 (23...♘b4 24.♚a4 ♙xc4 25.♞xc4 ♘d3 26.c6) 24.♘xd4 exd4 25.♙xe6 favours White.

23.♙e3 ♘c6



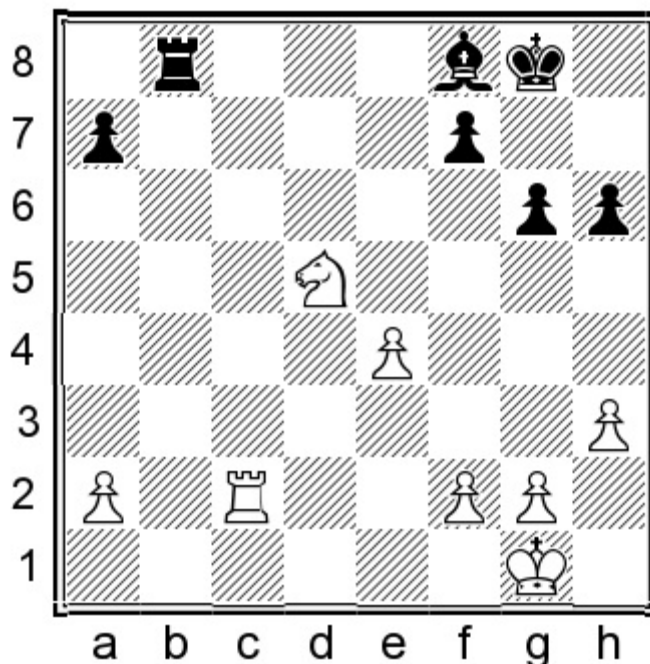
24.♙c4!

As a rule in this line, White is better if he achieves ♙c4. Of course it will be difficult to remove the blockade on c6, but Black is doomed to struggle without a pawn.

24...♘d4 25.♙xd4 exd4 26.♙xe6 dxc3

Or 26...fxe6 27.♞b3± (27.c6±).

27.♙xd7 ♞xd7 28.♘xc3 ♞d4 29.c6 ♞c4 30.♞c1 ♞xc6 31.♘d5



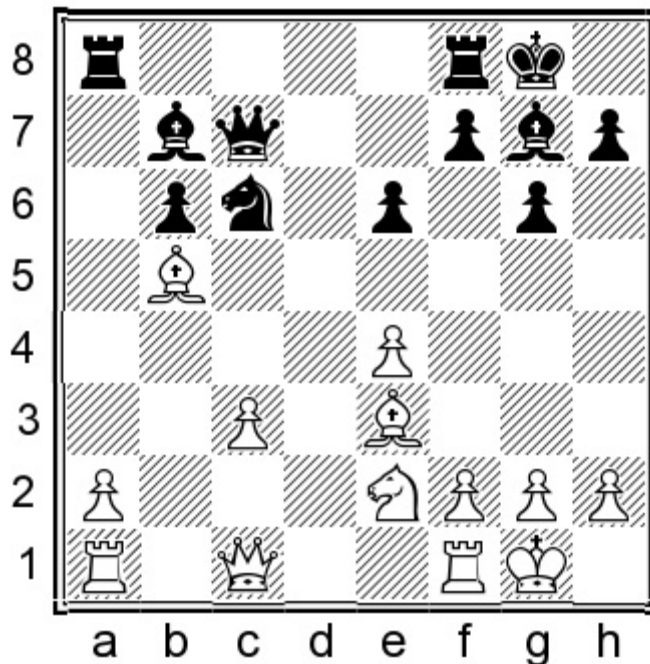
The rest is a matter of technique. The bishop promises Black considerable chances to draw, but this endgame is beyond the scope of the book.

31...♙xc2 32.♞xc2 ♜b1+ 33.♔h2 ♘g7 34.f4 ♞e1 35.e5 g5 36.g3 ♞d1 37.♘e3 ♞d3 38.♘g4 ♙e7 39.f5 ♙d8 40.f6+ ♔h7 41.e6 fxe6 42.♞f2 ♙c7 43.f7 ♙xg3+ 44.♔g2 ♙d6 45.f8♙ ♙xf8 46.♞xf8 ♞a3 47.♞f2 ♔g6 48.♞e2 ♔h5 49.♘f6+ ♔g6 50.♘e4 e5 51.♞c2 ♔f5 52.♘g3+ ♔e6 53.♞f2 ♔d5 54.♘f5 ♞a6 55.♔f3 ♞a3+ 56.♔g4 h5+ 57.♔xh5 ♞xh3+ 58.♔xg5 e4 59.♔g4 ♞a3 60.♞e2 ♔e5 61.♘g3 ♞a4 62.♔h3 ♔f4 63.♔g2 e3 64.♞b2 ♞a3 65.♘e2+ ♔e4 66.♔f1 ♔d3 67.♔e1 ♞a6 68.♔d1 ♞h6 69.♞b3+ ♔e4 70.♞b4+ 1-0

25. Tikkanen-Giri

Malmö 13.06.2011

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♘e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♙e3 e6 11.♞c1 b6 12.♙b5 ♙b7 13.dxc5 ♞c7 14.cxb6 axb6



This pawn sacrifice is the pivot of Black's strategy in many lines after 7...c4. Its positional foundation is the weakness of the c4-square and the possibility of putting pressure on a2 and c3. Grünfeld adepts do not even calculate its consequences since practice has proved that Black rarely lose in this structure. On the negative side, it is also very unlikely to win...

Black's plan assumes ...d5, ...a6. 15.f4 could be met by 15...e5, and 15.d1 d5 16.f3 a6 is also comfortable.

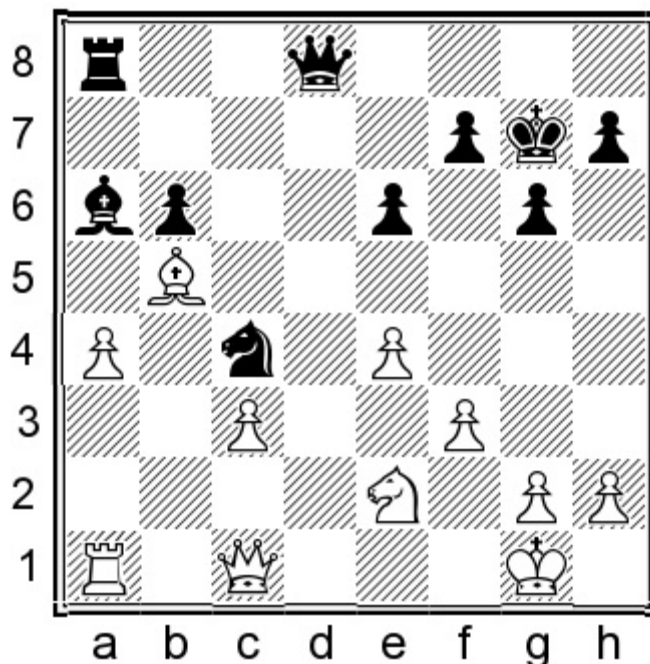
To sum up, Black is ready to trade any minor piece except the "bad" knight on e2, but the hunt on the white light-squared bishop has highest priority.

15.f3 d5 16.f4 d4 17.a4 f8

It was more natural to trade light-squared bishops with 17...a6= or 17...e5 18.f2 a6 or even 17...f8 18.f2 a6.

The text allows 18.fxc4 fxc4 19.f2 d7 20.fxb6 fxa4 21.fxa4, but of course that is a draw.

18.d1 a6 19.fg7 fg7 20.fxd8 fxd8



21. ♖d1

The last try could be 21. ♘a6 ♜xa6 22. ♞d4 in order to activate the knight. However, after 22... ♔a8 23. ♚c2 ♜a7 24. ♚b3 ♚c8 25. ♞d1 ♚c5= White cannot improve his position.

21... ♘b5 22. ♚xd8 ♜xd8 23. axb5 ♞d2 24. ♔f2 ♞b2

The endgame is naturally a draw.

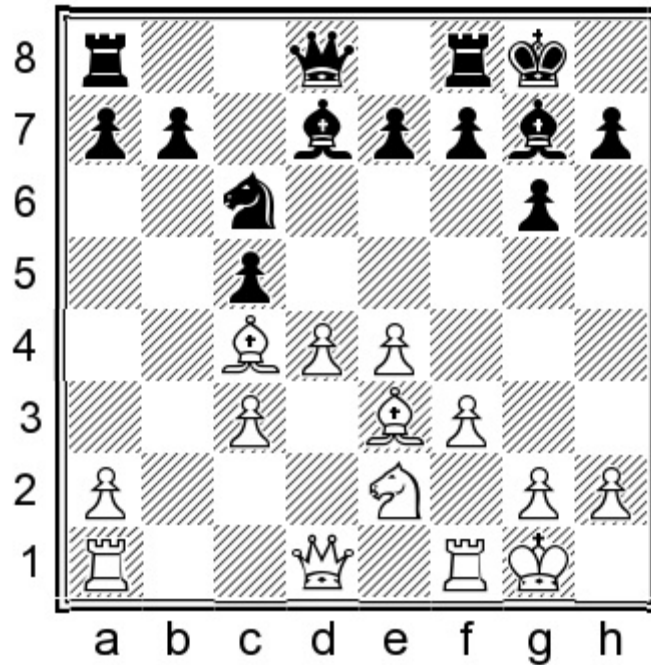
25. ♞a4 ♞e5 26. ♔e3 ♞xb5 27. ♞b4 ♞a5 28. f4 ♞d7 29. ♞d4 ♞a7 30. g3 ♔f8 31. ♞c1 e5 32. ♞b4 ♞c7 33. ♞b3 exf4+ 34. gxf4 ♞c5 35. ♞d3 ♞h5 36. ♞b2 ♔e7 37. ♔d4 ♞a5 38. ♞b4 ♔d6 39. c4 ♞a4 40. e5+ ♔c7 41. ♞d5+ ♔c6 42. ♞e7+ ♔c7 43. ♞d5+ ♔c6 44. ♞e7+ ♔b7 45. ♞d5 ♔c6 ½-½

26. Oreopoulos-Daus

ICCF, 15.04.2015

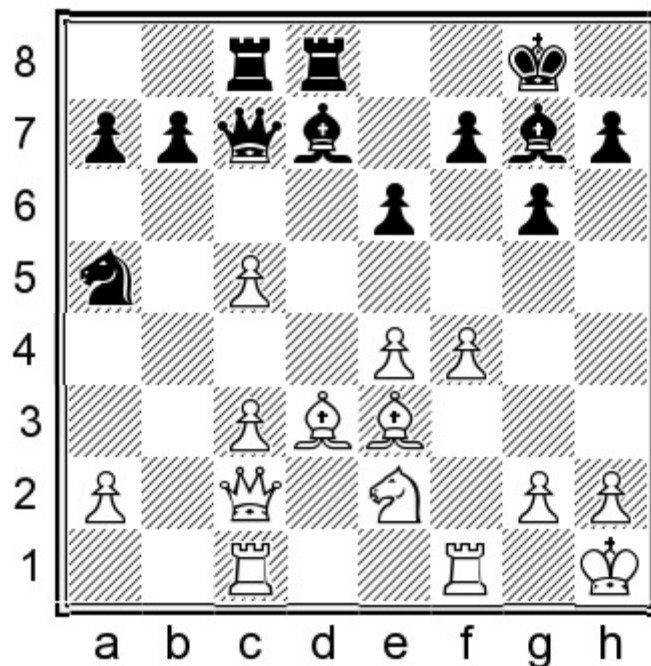
1. d4 ♞f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♞c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♞xd5 5. e4 ♞xc3 6. bxc3 ♞g7 7. ♞c4 c5 8. ♞e2 ♞c6 9. ♞e3 0-0 10. 0-0 ♞g4 11. f3 ♞d7

Kasparov in his match against Karpov was the first to face the practical difficulties awaiting Black after 11... ♞a5 12. ♞xf7+. In the last decade computers and correspondence games proved White's slight edge in this line.



12. Rb1

12. Rb1 puts the rook on a closed file, so it is not too logical. After 12... Rc8 White has tried:
 13. dxc5 Qc7 14. f4 Rfd8 15. Qc2 e6 16. Kh1 Na5 17. Qd3



17... b6!

Black does not have time for 17... Qf8. White's attack is quick and natural after 18. f5 Nc6 19. Nd4 Ne5 20. fxg6 hxg6 21. Wf2 Wxc5 22. Qe2 We7 23. Wg3 Qg7 24. Qf4 Wc5 25. h4 Qe8 26. Qg5 Rd7 27. h5 gxh5 28. Qxh5 Nc4 29. Rf4 We5 30. Nf3 1-0 Kibalnichenko-Romero, ICCF 2017.

18. cxb6 axb6 19. Qd4 Nc4. Black has good compensation. If White put a piece on d4, ...e5 will gain control of the centre. For instance:

20. Ng1

Or 20.♙xg7 ♖xg7 21.♜f3 ♚c5 (21...e5 22.f5) 22.♞d4 e5! 23.♞b3 ♚e7 24.f5 f6 25.♚e2 b5 26.♞h3
 ♙e8 27.a4 ♚a3 28.♞b1 bxa4 29.♙xc4 axb3 30.♙xb3 ♞b8.

20...e5 21.fxe5 ♙e6 22.♚f2 ♞xe5 23.♙e2 ♞d6 24.♚g3 ♞dd8 25.♞f3 ♞xf3 26.♚xc7 ♞xc7 27.♙xb6
 ♞cc8 28.♙xd8 ♞d2 29.♙g5 ½-½, Eldridge-Rawlings, ICCF 2016.

12...♚c7 13.♚d2

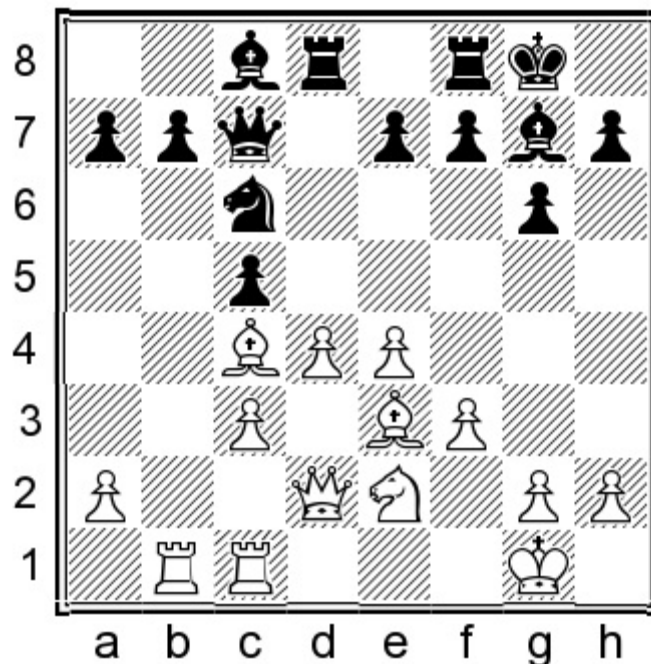
Perhaps the new trend in this line will be 13.♙d3!? ♞ad8 14.♖h1, followed by ♚c2. It all depends on how drawish the capture on d4 after 13.♚d2 will turn to be.

The older main line 13.♙f4!? is still topical. White retains a slight pull after both 13...e5 14.♙g3 cxd4
 15.cxd4 ♞ac8 16.♙d5 b5!? 17.♖h1 and 13...♚c8 14.♞c1!.

13...♞ad8

The critical test of White's setup is 13...cxd4!? 14.cxd4 ♞xd4 15.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 16.♙xd4 e5 17.♙e3 ♙e6
 18.♞c3 ♞d8 19.♞d5 ♙xd5 20.exd5. The only OTB game, Cvitan-M.Rajkovic, Veliko Gradiste 2018,
 was interrupted here by a draw deal, but White could still play on!

14.♞fc1 ♙c8



A critical position for 13.♚d2. White aims to consolidate his pawn centre before defining a clear plan. He has tried 11 moves here, but probably only 2 of them deserve more attention.

15.♚e1

Correspondence players prefer 15.♙f2!?, making room for the queen on e3 – 15...b6 16.♚e3 ♞a5
 17.♙d3 e5 18.dxc5 ♙e6 19.cxb6 axb6 20.c4 ♞xc4 21.♙xc4 ♙xc4 22.a4. Black is struggling for the

draw.

15...♖a5

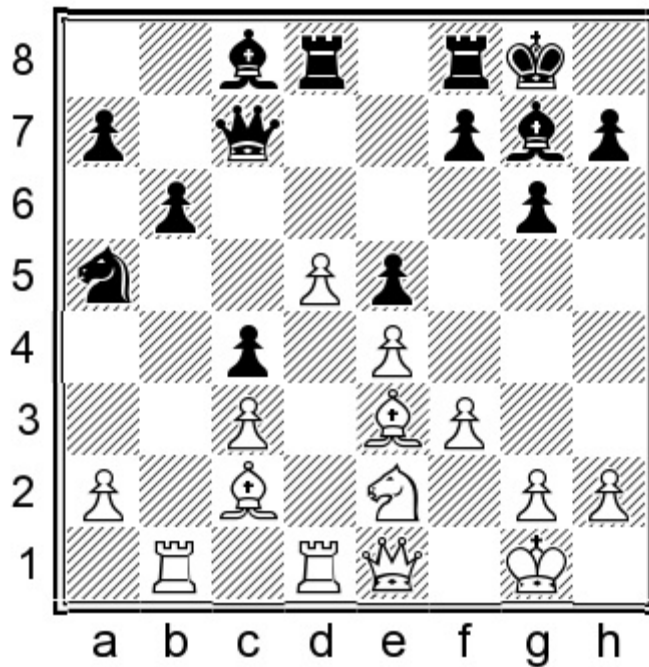
15...b6 is best met by 16.♙b5!±.

Instead 16.♞d1 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♘xd4! evens the chances – 18.♙xf7+ ♚xf7 19.♘xd4 ♙d7 20.♞bc1 ♜e5 21.♘e2 ♙a4 22.♞d4 ♙b5=.

16.♙d3 e5

16...b6 maintains the pawn structure fluid, but after 17.♘f4 Black remains without its main plan, namely ...e5.

17.d5 c4 18.♙c2 b6 19.♞d1



This pawn structure is well known mostly from the line 11...♚c7 12.♞c1 ♞d8. It had been believed that Black should be OK in it, provided that White can not quickly push f4. Modern engines slightly altered this evaluation. They show that even without f4 White maintains a slight, but lasting pull, practically playing with a draw in the pocket. It turns out that the space advantage, imposed by the passed d5-pawn, is a very stable factor, which secures White against grave mistakes.

This game shows that even with a computer help Black cannot easily hold the balance. His most sensitive point is the c4-pawn.

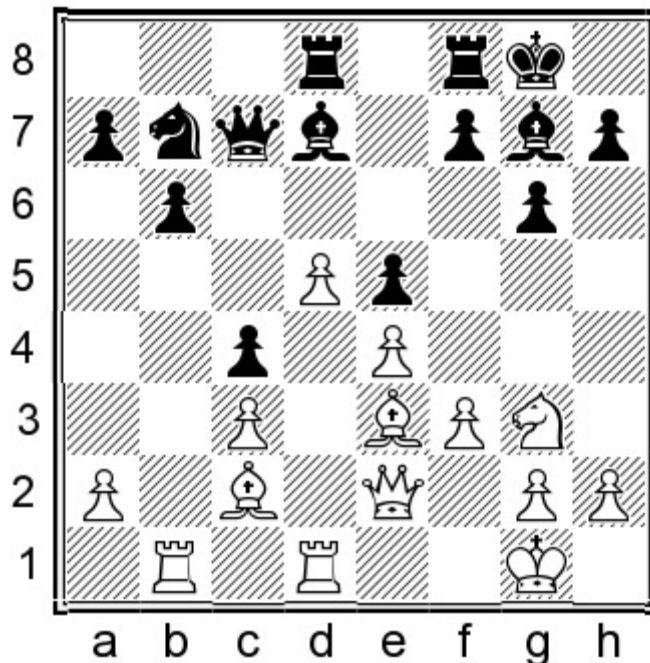
19...f6

In Hildebrand-Jankowiak, ICCF 2018, Black refrained from ...f6:

19...♘b7!?

Discouraging 20.g4 in view of 20...f5!, e.g. 21.exf5 gxf5 22.♚h4 ♞d6 23.♘g3 ♞g6 24.♘h5 ♘d6

25.♖f1 ♜f7 26.♘xg7 ♜xg7 27.♔h1 ♙b7∞.
 20.♘g3 ♙d7 21.♞e2!



Pinpointing the weakness on c4. White is able to bring more hits with ♘g3-f1-d2, ♞b4.

21...♘d6 22.a4! f5 does not work owing to 23.exf5 gxf5 24.♘h5. It is difficult to recommend:

21...b5 22.a4 a6, but it might be not such a bad idea. Instead Hildebrand-Jankowiak, ICCF 2018, went:

21...♞c8 22.a4! ♞fe8 23.♘f1 ♙f8 24.♔h1 h5 25.♘d2 ♙c5 26.♖f1 ♙xe3 27.♞xe3 ♞c5 28.♞h6 ♞f8
 29.♞g5 ♞e7 30.f4±.

20.g4

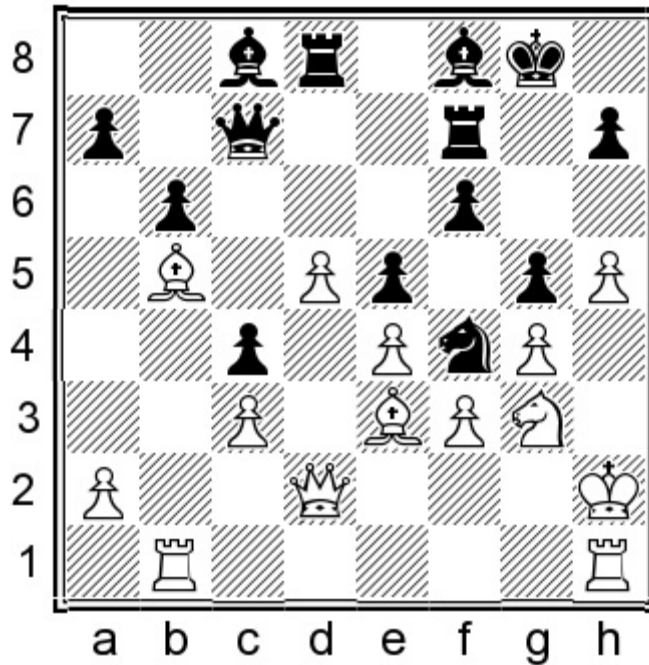
I have always thought that White should build his play on f4, followed by ♘e2-g1-f3. 20.g4 effectively kills any possible counterplay, but still it looks too committal. Instead White could opt for the plan shown in the above commentary.

20...♞f7 21.♘g3 ♙a6

Black anticipates the attack on c4, but leaves f5 without control. In Percze-Rawlings, ICCF 2017, Black chose a more active defence – ...♞c7-d6-a3 and held on. Perhaps White should anticipate it by:

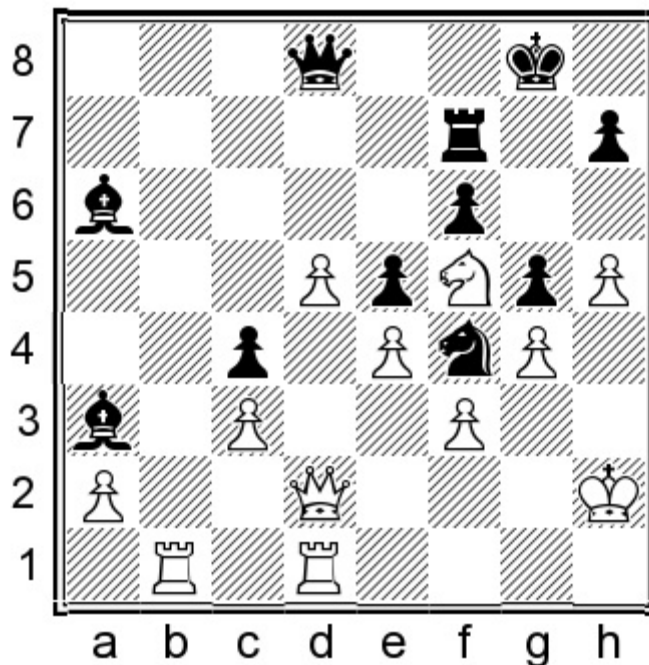
21...♞d6 22.♞a1!? (22.♞b4 ♙f8) 22...♞a3 23.♙c1.

22.h4 ♙f8 23.♔g2 ♘b7 24.♞d2 ♘c5 25.♞h1 ♘e6 26.h5 g5 27.♙a4 ♘f4+ 28.♔h2 ♙c8 29.♙b5



Black's strategy has been a disaster. Obviously, the computer was not too helpful in this case. The c4-pawn is weak as ever. White is threatening with ♖g3-f1-d2, ♕f2-f1. Something like ...a6 does not work because of the weakness on b6. The fact that Black did not find anything better speaks for itself:

29...♙a3 30.♖hd1 a6 31.♙xa6 ♙xa6 32.♙xb6 ♕b8 33.♙xd8 ♕xd8 34.♘f5



White is dominating the board and easily won after:

34...♞a7 35.♕e3 ♕a8 36.d6 ♙c8 37.♘e7+ ♞xe7 38.dxe7 ♙xe7 39.♞d2 ♔f7 40.a4 ♘e6 41.♕b6 ♕xa4 42.♕b8 ♕c6 43.♞a1 ♕c5 44.♞aa2 1-0

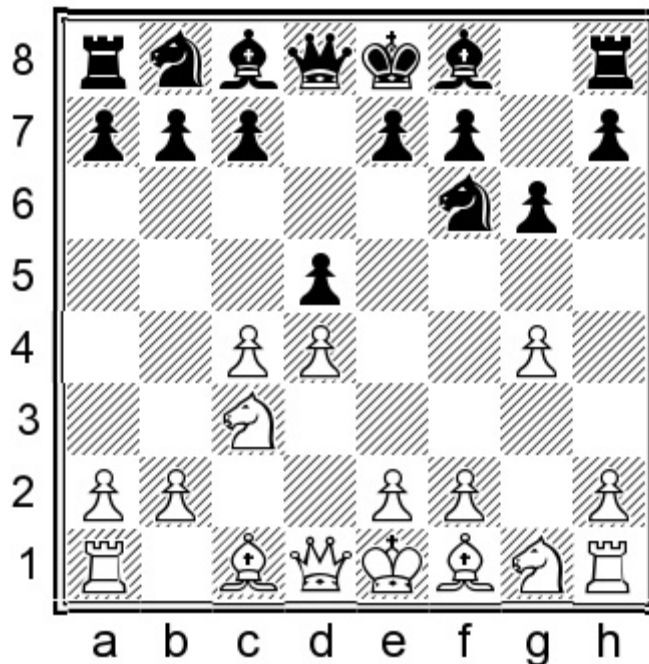
Chapter 11

Step by Step

I'll consider shortly several dubious or offbeat variations called SOS systems after the New in Chess series SOS. Every adept of the Grünfeld enjoys them very much as they commonly lead to sharp original play which perfectly fits in the profile of the players that opt for this opening. There are only a few key points to remember.

A. 4.g4?!; **B.** 4.h4?!; **C.** 4.♘f3 ♕g7 5.h4!?!; **D.** 4.♗g5 ♘e4 5.♚c1/5.h4; **E.** 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g5

A. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.g4?!



Even in the Meran, the Bayonet attack sets more problems to White, than to Black. Here it is outright dubious and should cost White the natural advantage of the first move. Bulgarian master Pantaleev used to play it a lot 40 years ago, but in our databases times the surprise effect can work in one game only. The idea of 4.g4 is to create chaos on the board after 4...♗xg4?! 5.♚b3 dxc4 6.♚xb7, although it is arguable that White is any better after 6...♘bd7 7.♘b5 ♜c8 8.♗f4 e5 9.dxe5 ♘h5 10.♗g5 ♘c5. However, we have more challenging options:

4...dxc4!

White was threatening to win the d5-pawn so it is consistent to save it with interest!

I found only two games with 4...c5, yet this is the obvious retort to all SOS tries. White should struggle to equalise after 5.dxc5 (5.g5 cxd4 6.♘b5 dxc4!) 5...d4 6.♘b5 (6.g5 dxc3 7.♚xd8+ ♔xd8 8.gxf6 exf6 9.b4 a5) 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 ♕g7 8.♗f4 (8.♘fxd4 a6 9.♘xc6 ♚xd1+ 10.♔xd1 axb5 11.♘e5 ♘e4) 8...0-0.

5.h3

Or 5.g5 ♖d5 6.♙g2 (6.e4 ♖b6 7.♙e3 ♙g7) 6...c6 (6...♖b6) 7.♚a4 ♖b6 8.♚a5 ♙g7 9.♗f3 0-0.

5...♙g7

The thematic manoeuvre 5...♖d5 6.e4 ♖b6 is unclear: 7.♙e3 ♙g7 8.f4, Obsivac-Pribyl, Czechia 1998.

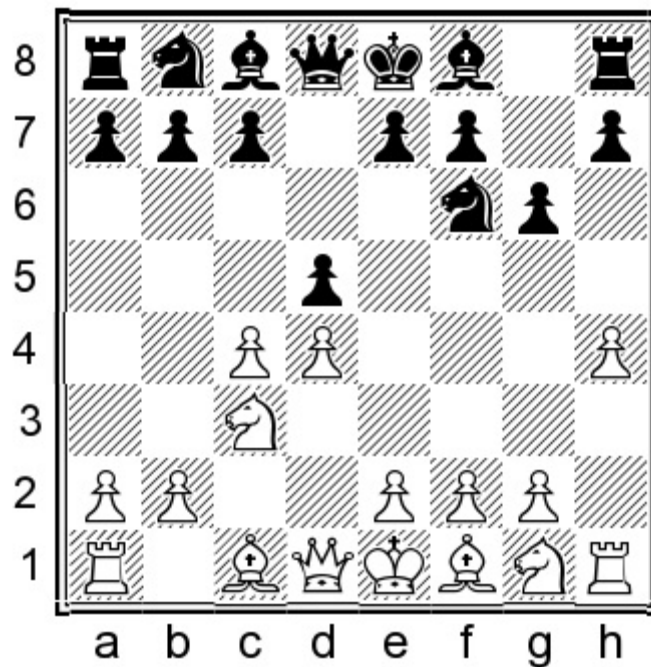
6.e4 c5 7.dxc5

7.d5 b5 8.g5 ♖h5 9.♗xb5 ♚a5+ 10.♗c3 ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♚xc3+ 12.♙d2 ♚e5.

7...♚xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♖a6 9.♙e3 ♙e6

White has problems here.

B. 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.h4?!



4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.h4 c5 transposes to 4.h4 c5 5.cxd5.

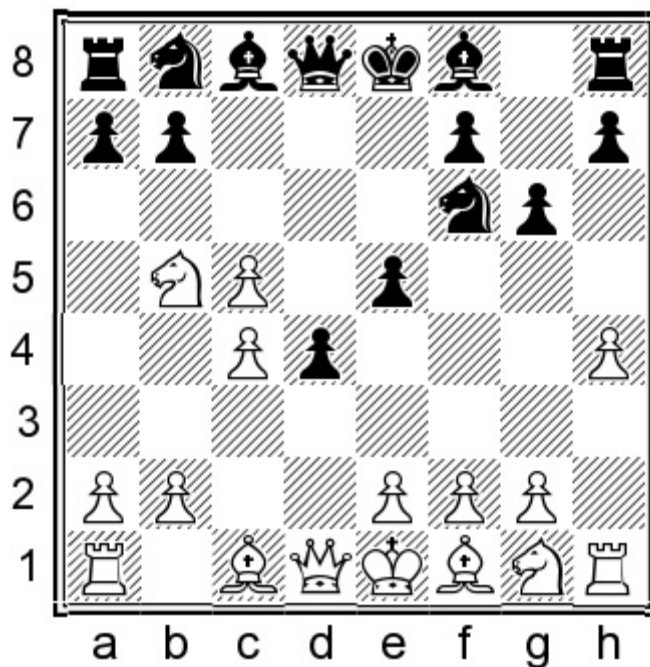
4...c5!

Thematic and strong!

5.cxd5

5.dxc5 d4! 6.♖b5 e5! is amazingly popular, if we take into account that Black is frankly better, and that

on move 6!



7.e3

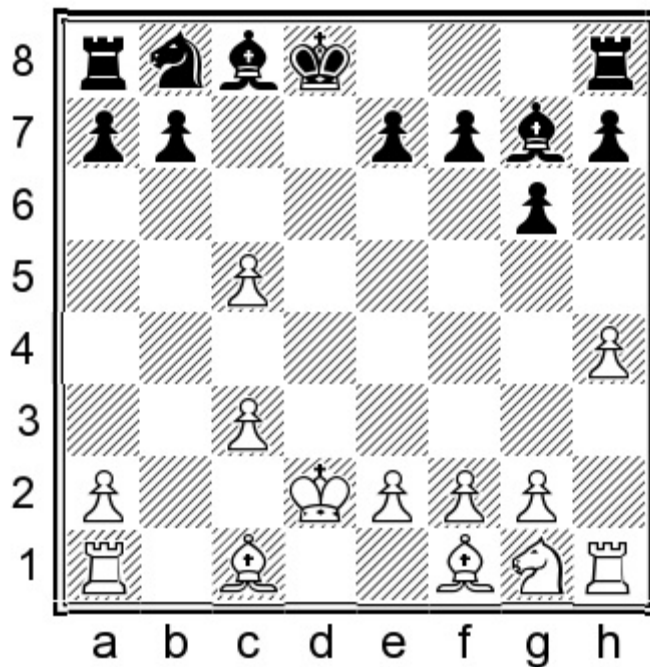
7.b4 a6 8.♖a4 ♕d7 9.♗g5 ♜c6! 10.♞d6+ ♗xd6 11.cxd6 h6 12.♗xf6 ♜xf6 13.c5 e4 should end up with a debacle.

7.♞f3 ♗xc5 8.♞xe5 a6-+.

7...♗xc5 8.exd4 exd4 9.♞f3 0-0 10.♗e2 ♜c6, Cebalo-Riazantsev, Biel 2009. Without h4, White would have been only slightly worse. As things are now, he is a big underdog.

5...♞xd5 6.h5

Trying to justify the forth move. 6.dxc5 ♞xc3 7.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 8.bxc3 ♗g7 9.♔d2



9...♖a6

Suggested by Jeroen Bosch in his SOS book. 9...♙f5 allowed White to equalise after 10.f3 ♘d7 11.e4 ♙e6 12.c6 bxc6 13.♗e2=, A.Zaitsev-Smyslov, Sochi 1963.

9...♗d7, heading for f6, is also in Black's favour.

10.♙a3 ♙f5 11.f3 ♙h6+ 12.e3 ♖c7 13.♙xa6 ♜ad8+ 14.♖e1 bxa6.

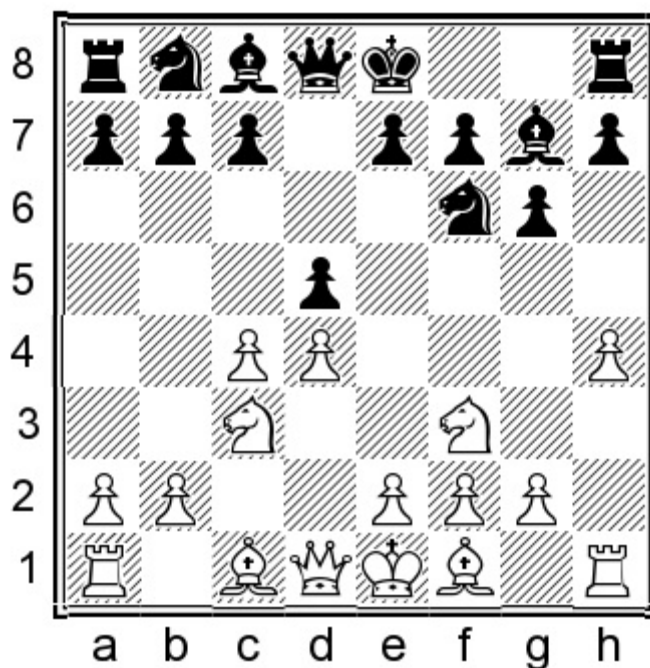
6...♙g7 7.♗f3

Or 7.e3 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗c6 9.♗f3 ♙g4 10.♙c4 e6.

7...cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♗c6 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♝xh8+ ♙xh8 12.e3 ♚a5

Black is in command, Riazantsev-Wei Yi, blitz Doha 2016.

C. 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♙g7 5.h4!?



Why not!?! The AI Alpha Zero also likes the march of the h-pawn against g6 in almost any variation. Another indication that we have to pay special attention to this move is White's score – 58.3%, best of all 5th moves! Add to that Kasparov's authority, who picked it up at his return on the chess scene in 2017.

A great feature of this variation is that it offers enormous choice and leads to fresh tangled positions.

C1. 5...c6; C2. 5...dxc4!?

I thoroughly checked the most principled retort to White's "arrogant" approach – 5...e5. However, after

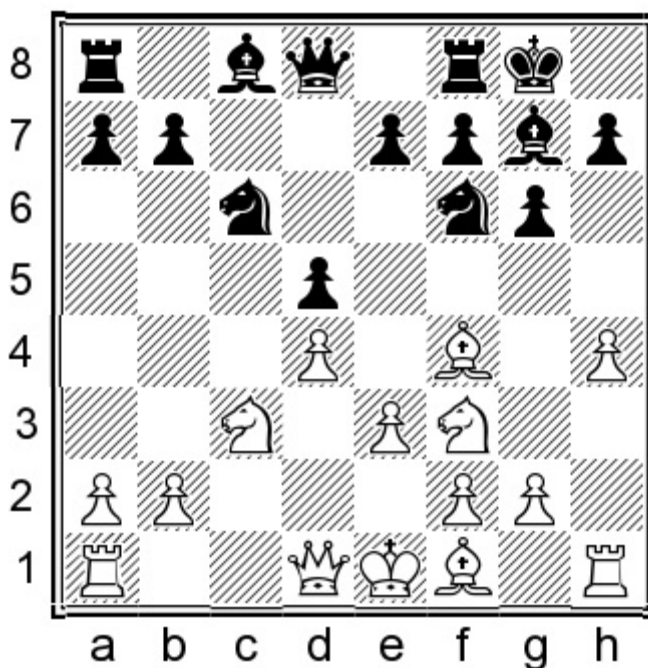
6.dxc5 0-0 7.cxd5 ♖a6 White can remain with a healthy extra pawn in a safe position with both 8.g3 ♕f5 9.♗g2 or 8.♗e3!? ♜a5 9.♘d2! ♘g4 10.♘b3 ♘xe3 11.♘xa5 ♘xd1 12.♞xd1 ♘xc5 13.g3.

The above line explains why Black most often prefers the more restrained, but solid:

C1. 5...c6 6.♗g5

This was Kasparov's choice against Nepomniachtchi in St Louis. He obviously was not afraid of sacrificing the c4-pawn after 6...dxc4 7.e4. Still many players prefer the safer 6.cxd5!? cxd5 7.♗f4 ♘c6 8.e3 0-0

This position displays the main drawback (or advantage – depending on your fighting spirit!) of 5...c6. The centre is solid, and both sides are comfortably developed. White can even pose some problems with:



9.♞b3! (9.♘e5 ♘xe5 10.♗xe5 ♘e4!)=) 9...♘a5 10.♞a3 ♕f5

I also considered 10...b6 11.♞c1 ♗b7 12.♗e2 ♘c4 13.♞b3 ♞c8 14.0-0 a6 15.a4 e6, which led to a draw in Xiong-Ipatov, Saint Louis 2017.

11.♗e2 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 (12.h5 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♞c8 14.hxg6 hxg6=) 12...♗xe4 13.b3 ♘c6 14.♞c1 h5=, Remiss-Fernández-Ziese, ICCF 2017.

6...0-0!?

I do not recommend to take a passive stand, clinging to an extra pawn. If you wanted to take on c4, it was better to do it on the previous turn in order to have ...c5.

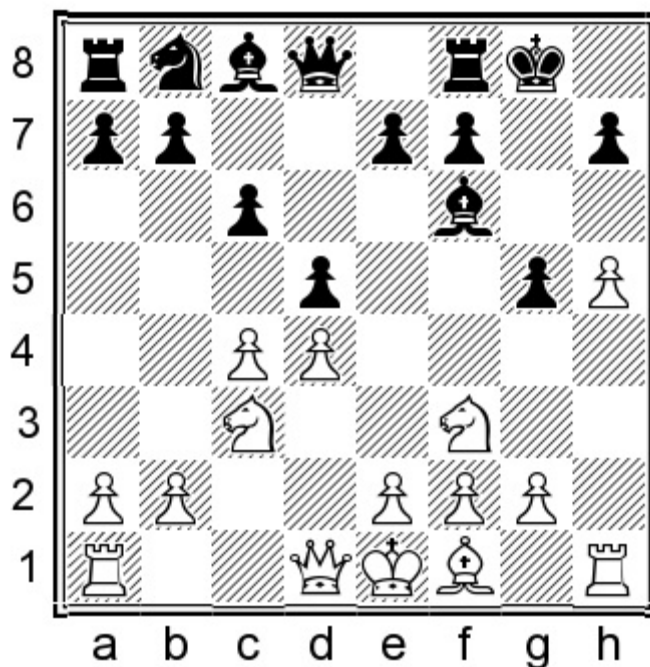
7.♗xf6

I regard this exchange as a small victory for us as we should not fear a quick attack any more.

The reason White hurries to trade the bishop is that 7.e3 ♘h5! traps the bishop. For instance, 8.♘d2 h6

9.g4 ♖g3 10.fxg3 hxg5♣.

7...♔xf6 8.h5 g5



9.h6

Otherwise Black's castling position would become unassailable after ...h6. For instance:
9.e4 dxe4 10.♖xe4 h6 11.♖xf6+ exf6 12.♔d2 ♜e8+ 13.♔e2 ♔g4♣.

9.e3 h6 10.♔b3

Or 10.♔d3 ♔g7 11.♞c1 dxc4 12.♔xc4 ♔f5 or 12...♔g4=.

10...e6 11.0-0-0 ♖d7 12.e4?!, Forcen Esteban-Ponomariov, Madrid 2016, when 12...♔g7 was good enough for an edge, but the computer finds the more punishing 12...g4! 13.♖h2 c5!♣.

9...g4!?

It is easy to offer sharp stabs, sitting behind the computer. In practice Black opts for the sturdy 9...♔f5 10.e3 e6 11.♔d3 ♔g6, e.g. 12.♔e2 ♖d7 13.♞d1 ♔e7= or 12.♔xg6 hxg6! =. The text aims to take over the initiative.

10.♖e5 dxc4!

The immediate 10...♔xe5 allows 11.dxe5 dxc4 ♔xd8.

11.♞h5

Or 11.e3 ♔xe5! 12.dxe5 ♔e6

11...♙xe5 12.♞xe5 f6 13.♞h5 ♔h8

White is yet to prove full compensation for the pawn.

C2. 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.d5

After 7.♙xc4 cxd4 8.♞xd4 ♞xd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xe4 10.♘db5 White can only struggle to keep the balance –
 10...♘xc3 11.♘c7+ ♔d8 12.♘xa8 ♘c6 13.♙e3 ♙e6 14.♙xe6 fxe6 15.bxc3 ♙xc3+ 16.♔e2 ♙xa1
 17.♞xa1 ♔c8=.

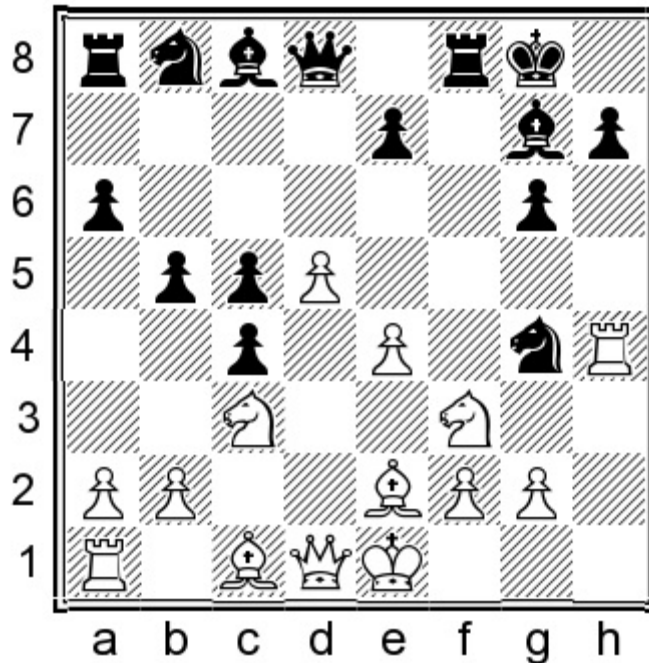
7...b5 8.h5 0-0 9.hxg6 fxg6 10.e5

Two games in 2019 tested 10.♞h4.

It aims to defend e4 so that White could meet 10...b4 by 11.♘a4. The attempt to intercept the initiative with:

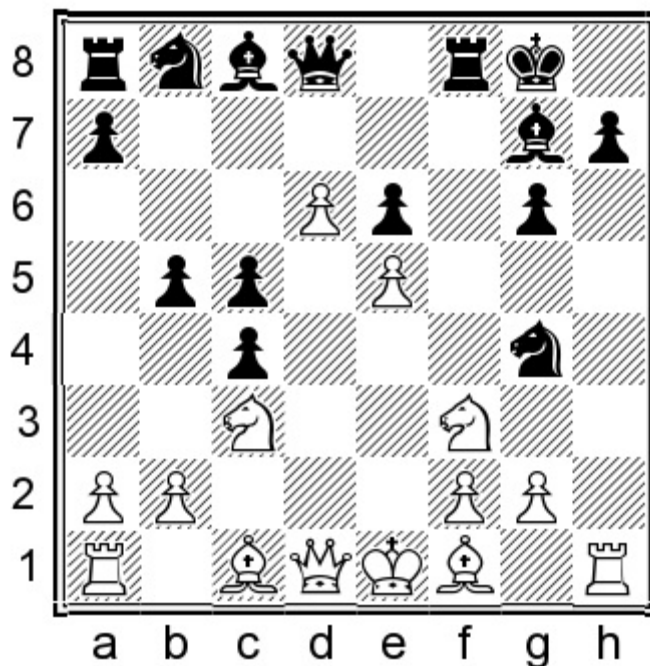
10...h5! (preventing ♞xh7 in some lines and bolstering the g4 square for the f6-knight) 11.♘xb5 (11.♘e5 ♞e8) 11...♞a5+ 12.♘c3 ♘g4 13.♙d2 (13.♞d2 ♘d7 14.d6 e6 15.♙xc4 ♘de5∞) 13...♙d4 is risky owing to 14.♞xg4! ♙xg4 15.♙xc4 with an initiative in a sharp position. Perhaps we could await White to define his plan with:

10...a6, e.g. 11.♙e2 ♘g4



12.♞xh7 (what else?!) 12...♔xh7 13.♘g5+ ♔g8 14.♙xg4 ♙d4! 15.♙e6+ ♙xe6 16.♘xe6 ♞d6 17.♘xf8 ♞f6!∞.

10...♘g4 11.d6 e6



12. ♖xh7

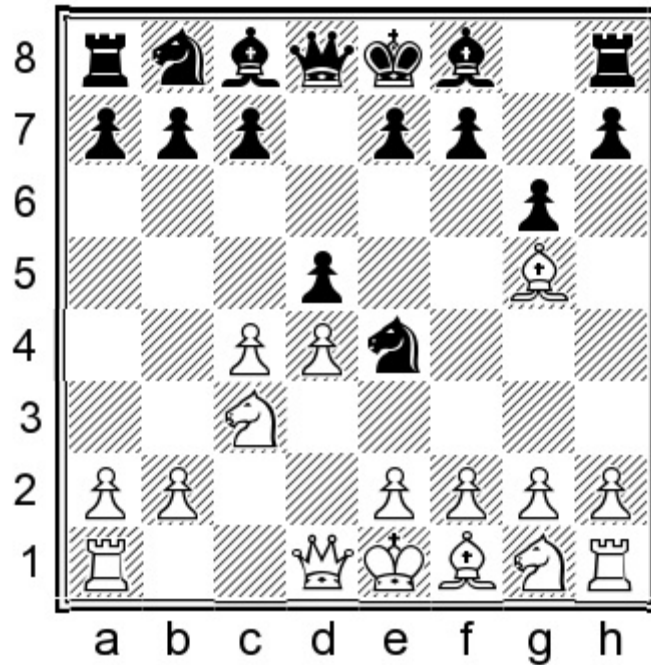
12. ♖xb5?! runs into 12... ♖c6! 13. ♖c7 ♖cxe5 with a terrible attack – 14. ♖xe5 (14. ♖xa8 ♖b7) 14... ♖xf2 15. ♖c6 ♜f6 16. ♜f3 ♖xh1 17. ♖e7+ ♔h8 18. ♜xf6 ♖xf6, when 19. ♖xa8 does not win a piece owing to 19... ♖xh4+ 20. ♔d2 ♖b7 21. ♖xc4 ♖xa8.

12. a4 ♖d7 13. ♖g5 ♜b6 14. axb5 ♖gxe5 15. ♖e2 ♖xf3+ 16. ♖xf3 ♖e5! is also more risky for White than for Black.

12... ♜f5! 13. ♖h3 ♖c6

The chances are balanced, and the position is still full of life. See **game 27** Papenin-Begliy, ICCF 2016.

D. 1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♖c3 d5 4. ♖g5 ♖e4



I devoted Chapter 3 to this system, but decided to examine two rare moves separately in this chapter:

D1. 5.♔c1?!; **D2.** 5.h4!?.

D1. 5.♔c1?! c5!

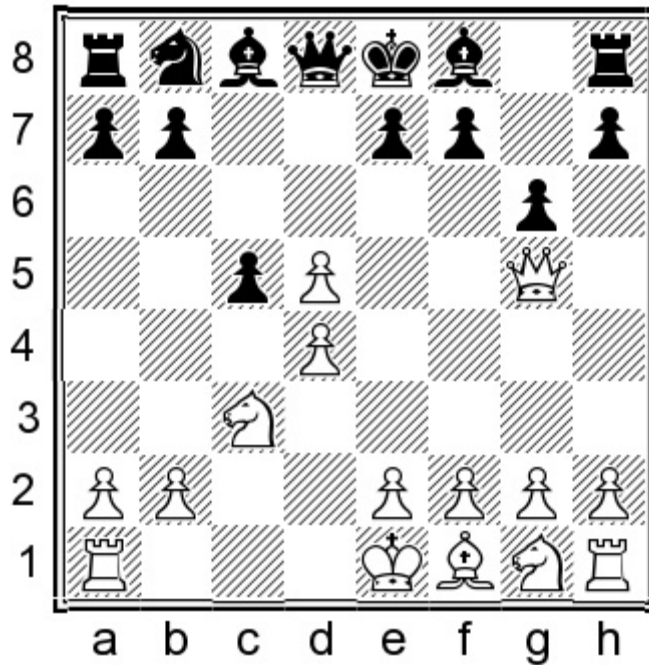
After 5...♘xg5 6.♚xg5 dxc4 7.♚e5 f6 8.♚b5+ c6 9.♚xc4 Black's pawn formation is seriously compromised.

6.cxd5?

Or 6.♘xd5 cxd4.

Best is 6.♘xe4 dxe4 7.d5, but even here Black is to be preferred after 7...♙g7.

6...♘xg5 7.♚xg5



7...cxd4!

7...♖b6 8.♕d2! cxd4 9.♘a4 ♜f6 10.♘f3 ♙g7 11.♞d1 ♙d7 is only slightly worse for White.

8.♜e5 ♜b6!

Rogers considers only 8...dxc3! 9.♜xh8 f6, with just enough compensation for the exchange – 10.bxc3! (10.♜xh7 ♙f5 11.bxc3 ♜a5; 10.0-0-0 ♜a5) 10...♜a5 11.♞d1 ♙f5.

The text is winning!

9.♞d1 dxc3 10.♜xc3 ♘d7 11.♜xh8 ♘f6 12.e3 ♙d7 13.♘f3 0-0-0+

White's queen is hopelessly trapped.

D2. 5.h4!? ♙g7

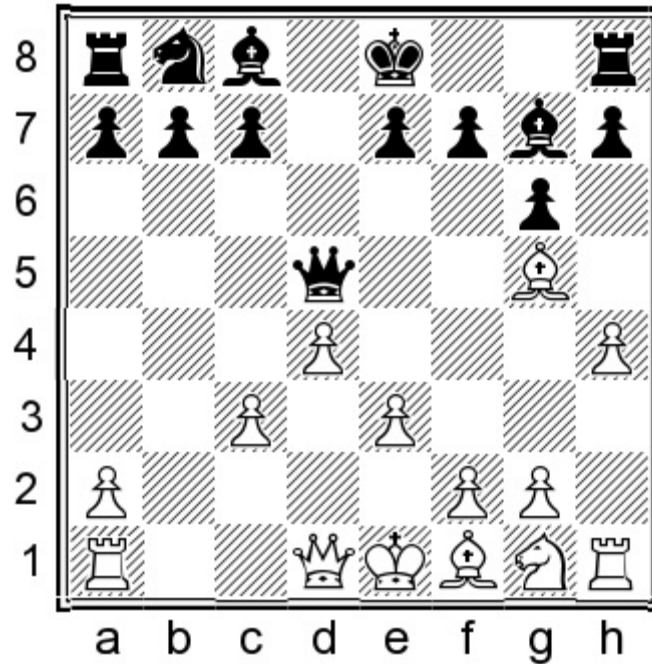
A decent alternative is 5...c5 6.cxd5 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♜xd5 8.e3 ♘c6 9.♜f3 ♜xf3 10.♘xf3 cxd4 11.exd4=. Note that 11.cxd4 f6 12.♙f4 e5 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.♙g3 ♙b4+ was in Black's favour, Sjugirov-Gordievsky, Kolomna 2016.

5...♘xc3?! 6.bxc3 dxc4 7.e4↑ is better to avoid.

6.cxd5

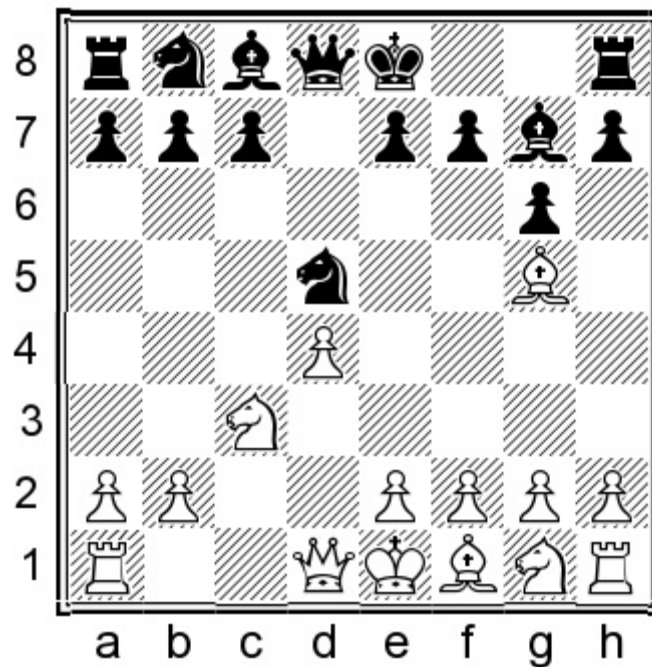
Or 6.e3 c5 7.cxd5 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♜xd5 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♙e2 ♜a5+ 12.♜d2 ♜xd2+ 13.♘xd2 e5=.

6...♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♔xd5 8.e3



8...♔a5!? 9.♔d2 e5 10.h5 h6 11.♕h4 g5 12.♕g3 ♜d7=.

E. 1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♜c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.♕g5!? ♕g7



6.♜f3

6.e4 ♜xc3 transposes to Chapter 7/ line D.

6...c5 7.♞c1

7.e3 cxd4 8.exd4 0-0 gives Black a pleasant version of an isolated queen's pawn position.

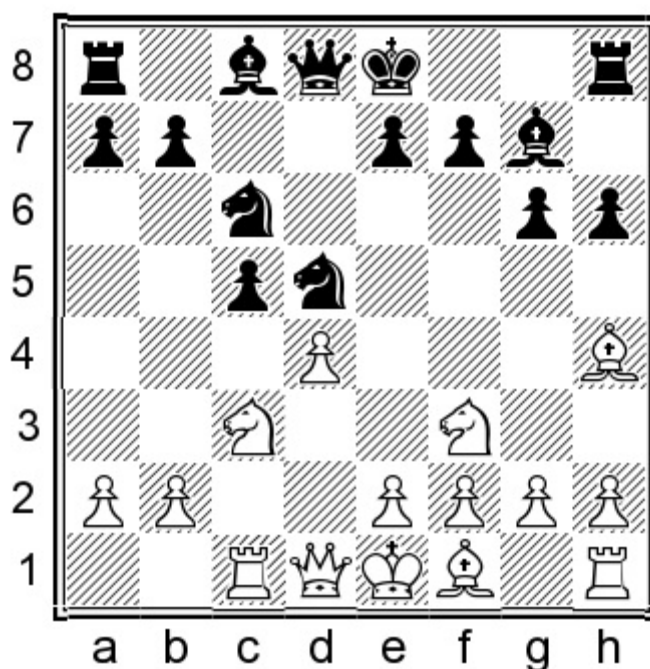
7...h6

Shifting the bishop from the c1-h6 diagonal. 7...♘xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.e3 (or 9.e4 ♔g4) 9...♙e6 is also playable.

8.♙h4

8.♙d2 ♘xc3 9.♙xc3= may be more realistic.

8...♘c6



Now the only sensible option is:

9.♘xd5 ♙xd5 10.♖xc5 ♙xa2 11.e3 ♙xb2

White is still to prove enough compensation. Mamedyarov-Ivanchuk, blitz, Beijing 2014, went 12.♙c4 ♙b4+ 13.♘d2 0-0 14.0-0, when 14...e5 would have tipped the balance in Black's favour. Perhaps 12.♙d3 is more to the point – 12...e5=.

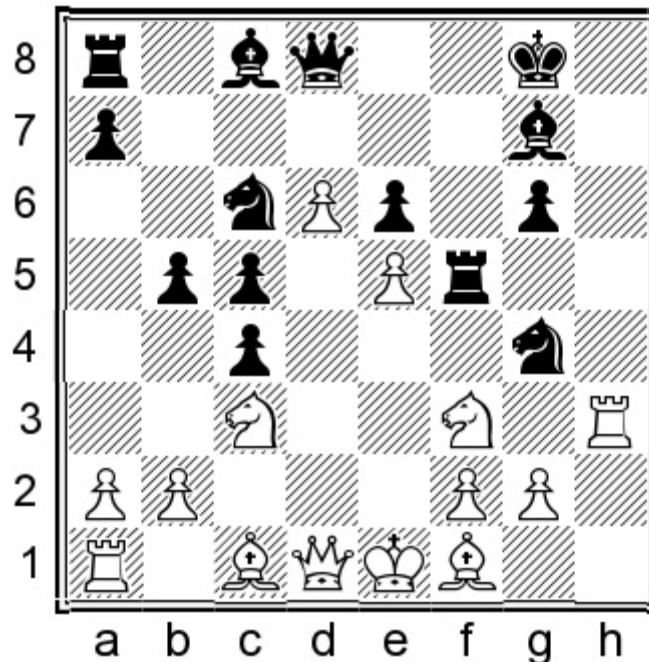
Chapter 11

Complete Games

27. Papenin–Begliy

ICCF 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♖f3 ♕g7 5.h4 dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.d5 b5 8.h5 0-0 9.hxg6 fxg6 10.e5 ♗g4
11.d6 e6 12.♖xh7 ♖f5 13.♖h3 ♗c6



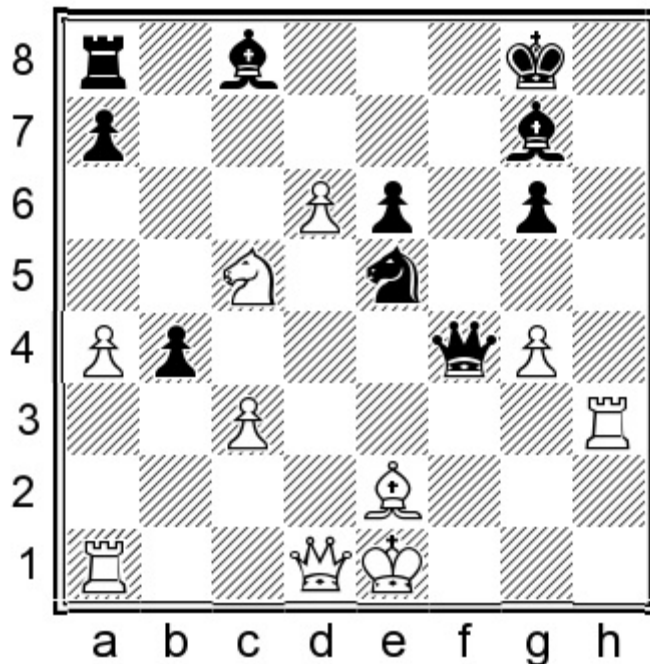
Play has been more or less forced so far, and White is the first to make a critical choice.

14.♗xb5

14.♗e4? ♕b7 15.♗fg5 was bad owing to 15...♗xf2! 16.♗xf2 ♖xg5, and White's centre crumbles down.

14.a4 tries to get an improved version of the 14.♗e4, with the c4-pawn doomed to fail.

Actually, I could not find any serious problem for Black after 14...b4!? 15.♗e4 ♗cxe5 16.♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.g4! ♖f7 18.f4 ♖f8!. Black sacrifices on f4 and takes over the initiative, e.g. 19.♕e2 ♖xf4 20.♕xf4 ♖xf4 21.♗xc5 c3 22.bxc3

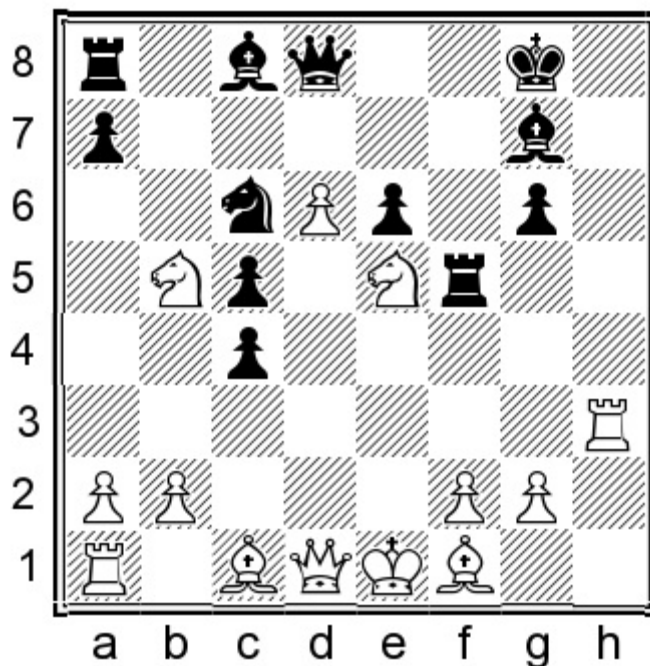


The computer says it is equal, but White's king is more exposed, so only Black could win here in an OTB game after 22...bxc3 (22...♖xg4 23.♙xg4 ♕xc3+ 24.♖xc3 bxc3 25.♚e2 ♜g3+ 26.♔d1 ♜g1+ 27.♔c2 ♜xa1 is a perpetual.) 23.♚c1 ♜b4.

However, correspondence players trust more:

14...♗gxe5 15.axb5 ♗d4 16.♙e3 ♗exf3+ (16...♙b7!? 17.♗xd4 cxd4 18.♙xd4 ♜xd6∞) 17.gxf3 ♜xd6. All three games finished in a draw.

14...♗gxe5 15.♗xe5



It is now Black's turn to scratch his head. 15...♖xe5+ 16.♙e3 ♗d4 17.♙xc4 ♗xb5 18.♚d3 is a perpetual – 18...♗d4 19.♚xg6 ♜f6 20.♚e8+ ♜f8. So we play on with:

15...♖xe5 16.g4

Black could also start with 16.f4.

Then 16...♖b8 17.♘c3 ♗f8 18.♙e2 ♘d3+ 19.♙xd3 cxd3 20.♗xd3 c4 21.♗xc4 ♗xd6 was quickly drawn in Anikeev-Grammatica, ICCF 2014 – 22.♘e4 ♗e7 23.♙d2 ♙d7 24.♖c1 ♖d5 25.♗c7 ♖d8 26.♗b7 ♖b5 27.♗a6 ♙e8 28.♖c8 ♖b6 ½-½.

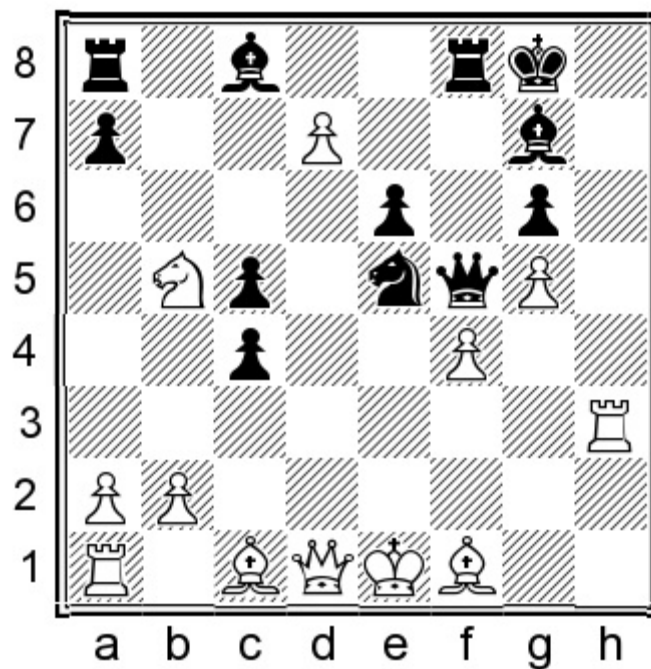
I think that we could try:

16...♙d7!? with the trick:

17.♘c3 ♗f6 18.♙e2 ♖af8 in mind.

17.♘c7 ♖b8 is also playable – 18.fxe5 ♖xe5+ 19.♙f2 ♖e4 with attack.

16...♖f8 17.f4 ♗f6 18.g5 ♗f5 19.d7!



Only this move saves White. The d6-square for the knight is more important than the pawn. ♘ow Black cannot avoid the queen trade.

19...♗e4+

19...♘xd7 is too risky, because besides 20.♙g2 c3 21.bxc3 ♙e5 22.♘d6, White also has 22.♗d3, exchanging the queens in a more favourable circumstances than in the game.

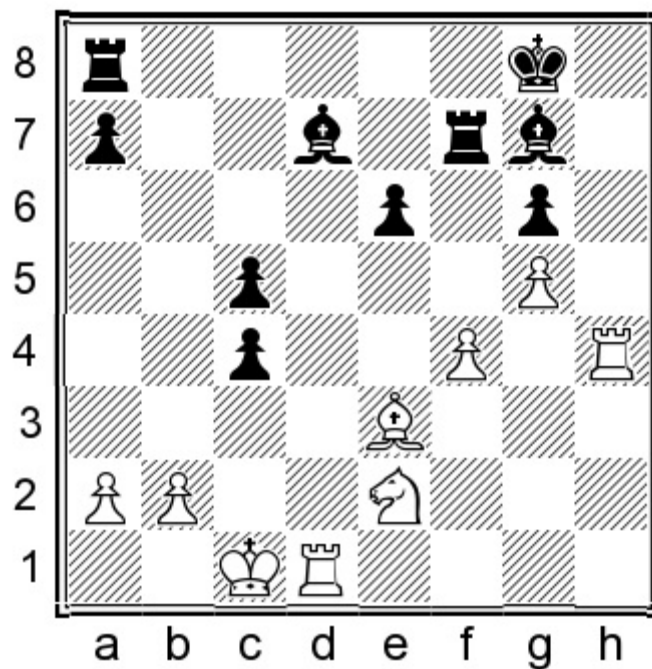
20.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 21.♙xe2 ♙xd7 22.♘c3

Black is better developed, but in an email game White was able to hold on. Now 22...♘d3+ 23.♙xd3 cxd3 24.♖xd3 ♙d4 deserved attention.

22...♘c6 23.♙e3 ♘d4

The last chance was 23...♔d4 24.0-0-0! e5.

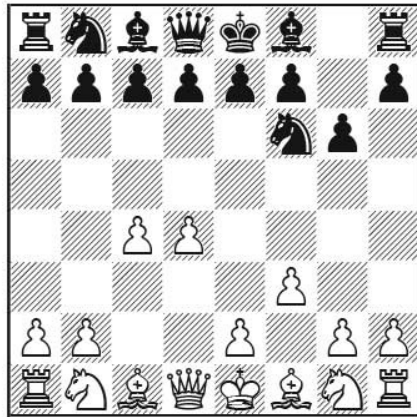
24.0-0-0 ♖xe2+ 25.♗xe2 ♜f7 26.♞h4



26...♞c8 (26...e5 27.fxe5 ♜e8!?) 27.♗c3 ♔c6 28.♞d6 ♜b7 29.♞xe6 ♔e8 30.♗d1 ♜d8 ½-½

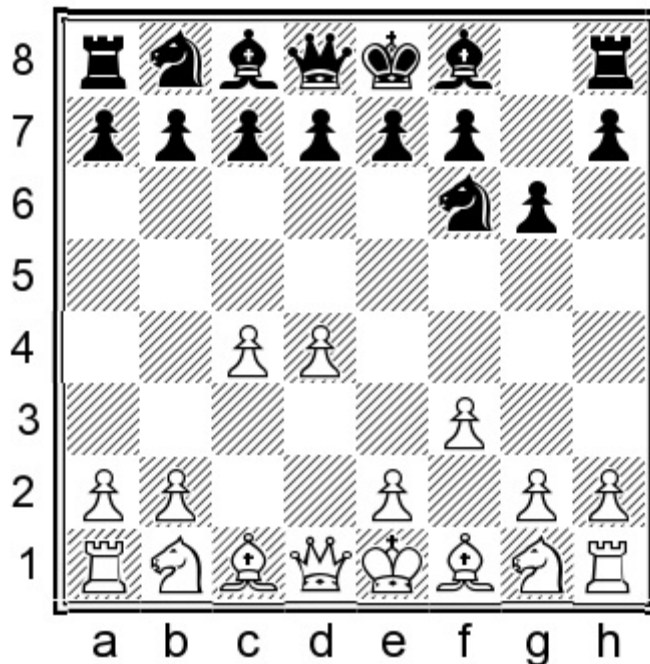
The Sämish Anti-Grünfeld

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



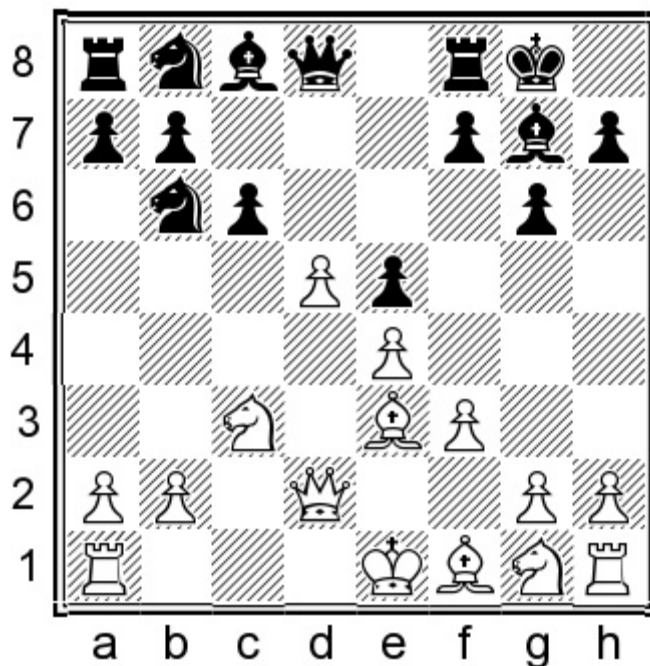
Main Ideas

Would you guess which is the best scoring third move of White after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6? Right – 3.f3!
Four percent better than 3.♘f3 or 3.♘c3.



I wrote these words in 2011, and 8 years later the stats remain the same. Despite the increasing popularity of the variation and the feverish research from the best chess minds, including AI! Let us go further. Following 3.f3 d5, White achieves an even higher percentage. Does that mean that it is wrong to insist on playing the Grünfeld against 3.f3? Should we admit that White has tricked us by the move order and we have to switch to the Sämisch or Modern Benoni? Not at all. In fact I feel that **3...d5** is objectively the best retort. Black has to learn by heart several long variations, but in general his play is typical and straightforward. It demands less strategic decisions.

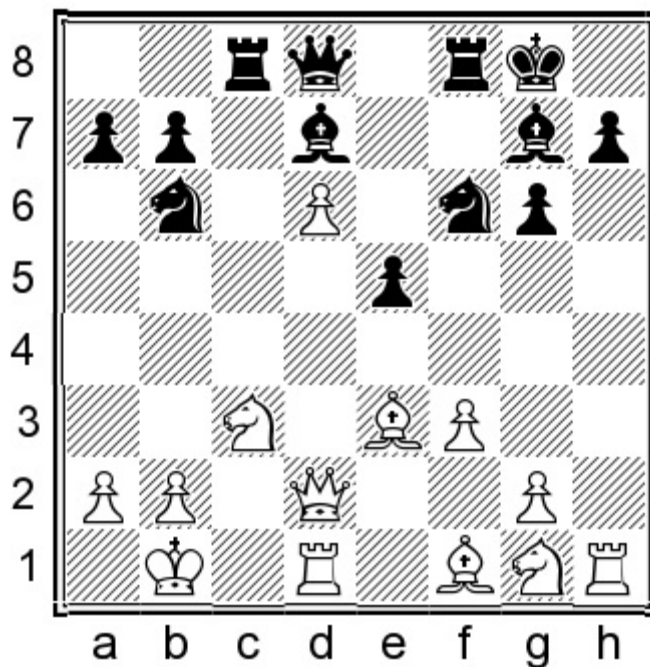
I propose to limit our attention to **4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♜b6 6.♘c3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♚d2 e5 9.d5 c6**



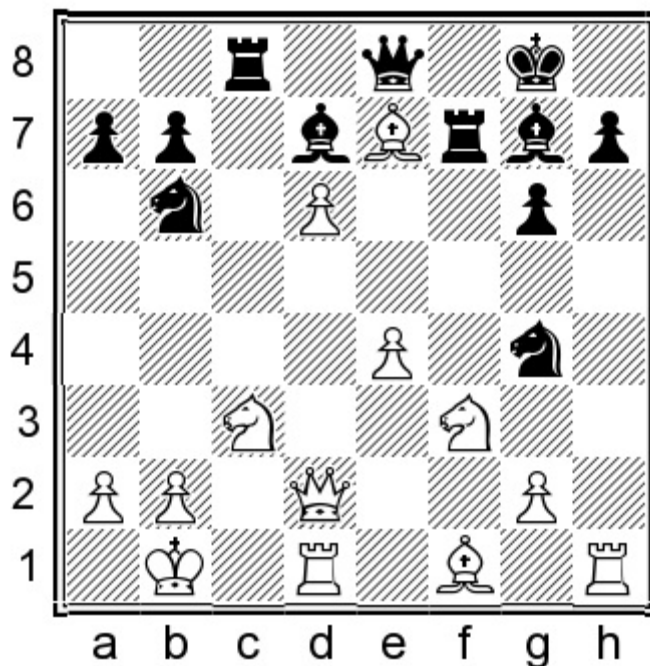
A critical position.

At first White players were trying to crush Black's defence in the most straightforward manner – **10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♜8d7 12.h5 ♜f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.0-0-0 ♙d7 15.♚b1 ♜c8 16.d6**, combining attack on the

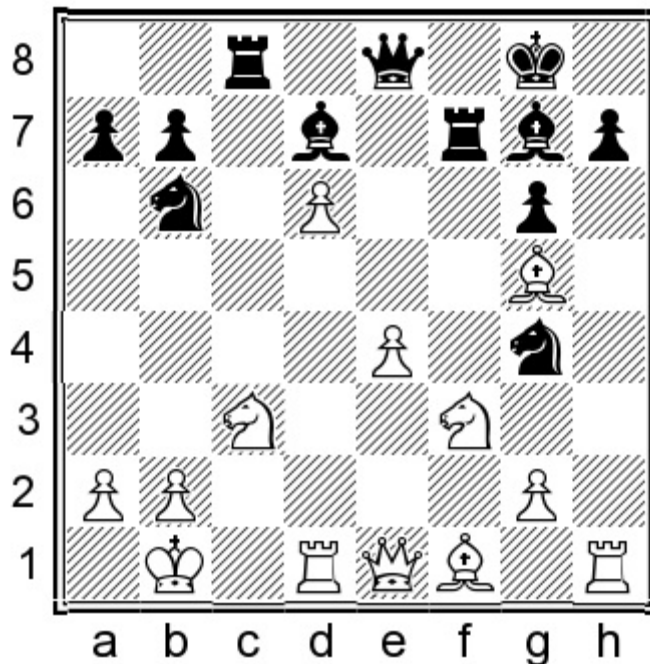
h-file with the power of the d-pawn.



Then Navara introduced the pawn sac 16...e4!, and this break has become the automatic counterstrike against White's plan. After 17.fxe4 ♘g4 18.♙g5 ♚e8 19.♘f3 ♜f7 the d6-pawn is safely blocked, while nothing can stop us from destroying White's castling position by taking on c3 – 20.♙e7



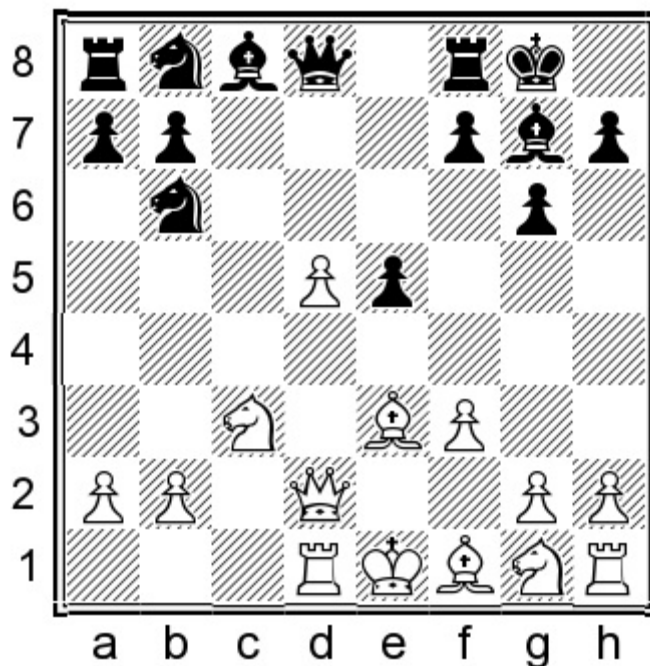
20...♜xc3! 21.bxc3 ♚c8, or 20.♚e1



20...xc3! 21.bxc3 ♖a4 with sufficient counterplay. The same method proved effective also against 16.♔a1 – 16...e4! (Gelfand) and 16.♘h3!? – 16...e4! (Roiz). I must admit that the lines are neither simple nor intuitive, but they are rather forced, and you can learn them from the “Step by Step” section.

The next wave against Black’s setup was generated by Chess Stars book *The Ultimate Anti-Grünfeld*. In it Svetushkin recommended the positional approach:

10.♞d1!, keeping the king out of the reach of the terrible g7-bishop. After **10...cxd5 11.exd5** Black has tried the universal solution



11...♘d7 12.♘h3! e4!?, but I suspect that Black’s compensation might prove to be not enough for a full equality. My proposition is:

11...♞e8!

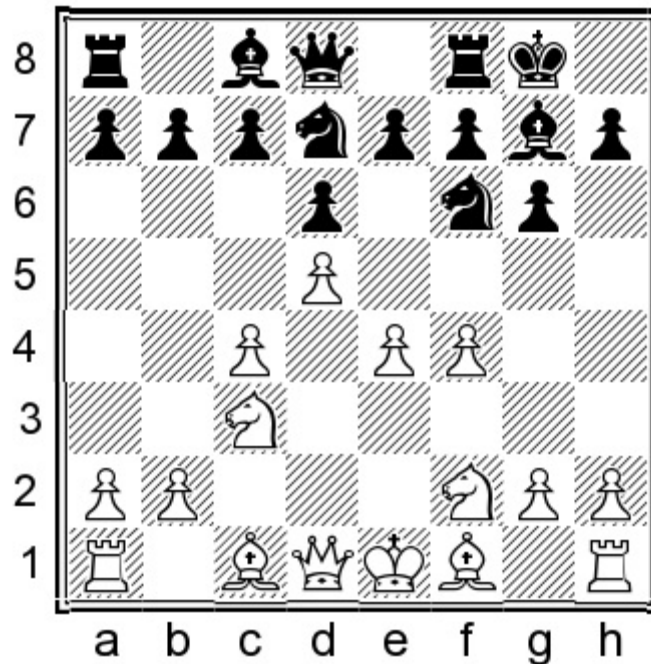
This move should be a big surprise for your opponents as it occurred in only one OTB game from 2016. The points behind it are:

- Black prepares counterplay in the centre with ...e4 in the event White pushes h4.
- In consequence, the b8-knight could go to a6, maintaining the hit on h3.
- If White moves his pawn to d6, Black can brutally attack it with ...♖e6 and ...♙f8. The idea of encircling and eating the dreadful pawn on d6 seems to be all new and fresh!

In conclusion, 3...d5 is fully alive and it remains the sternest test of 3.f3.

The Alternative

3...♘c6 was my proposition from 2011. Its theory was very scarce at that time and you could study most of the games in your database in an hour. On the opposite, in 2019 this line has become incredibly topical. Furthermore, it was analysed a lot, and Kotronias chose it for a main weapon against the Sämish in his book. However, I found that his line was unconvincing. Even more, the whole plan with 4.d5 ♘e5 5.e4 d6 6.♘c3 ♙g7 7.f4 ♘ed7 8.♘h3 0-0 9.♘f2



9...♘c5 looks very dangerous to me in view of 10.♙e2 e6 11.dxe6! fxe6 12.♙e3 b6 13.♙c2 ♙b7 14.0-0-0!

I decided to cut across White's idea by attacking c4:

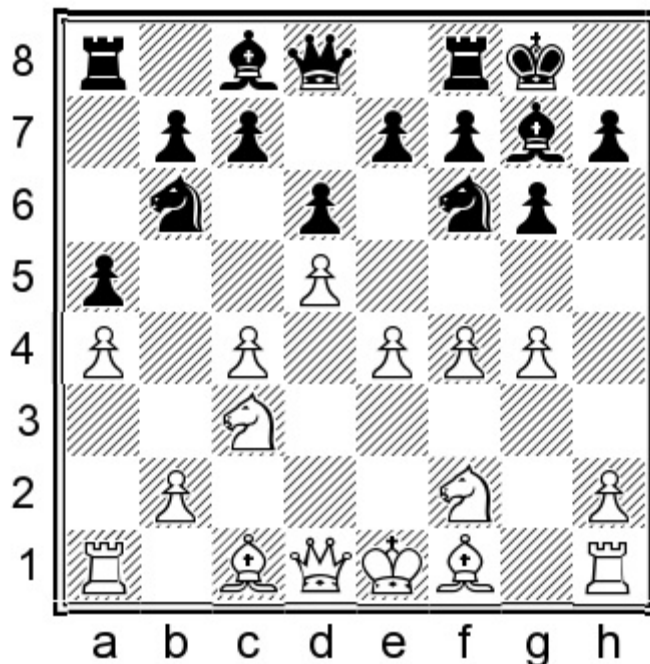
9...♘b6!?, the point being 10.♙e2 e6 11.dxe6?! ♙xe6!

Another attractive feature of ...♘b6 is that the knight is not hanging from ♙e3, as is often the case with ...♘c5. Thus the trivial White's plan is harmless:

10.♙e2 e6 11.0-0 exd5 12.cxd5 c6 13.dxc6 bxc6. Black will destroy the enemy centre with ...d5 and ...f6.

I'm afraid that not all would be moonlight and roses though.

I'm mostly scared by **10.a4** (to enable the rook lift ♖a1-a3-g3) **10...a5** **11.g4!?**



This is the price we have to pay for avoiding $9...♞c5$ – we do not attack e4, which gives White a free hand on the flank. A sharp play is ahead after $11...♞fd7!?$, intending to meet $12.g5$ by $12...f5!$ $13.gxf6$ $exf6$.

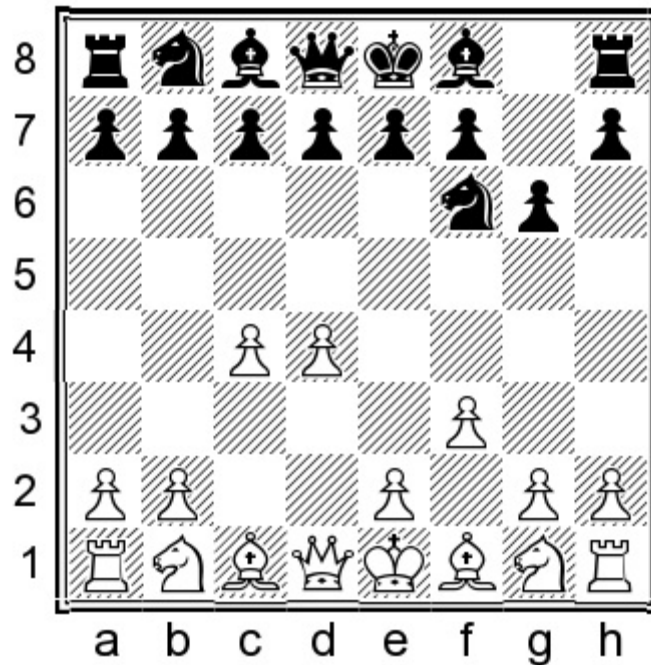
To reassure you, I want to stress that the above-mentioned attack is effective only after $9.♞f2!$ while almost everybody plays $9.♞e2$ first, and that the position of the last diagram has never appeared in practice.

As long as the engines do not consider g4 too dangerous and do not show any refutation of Black's play, we could boldly accept the risk.

A significant plus of $3...♞c6$ is that it requires less memorization. The choice is yours!

Chapter 12 Step by Step

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



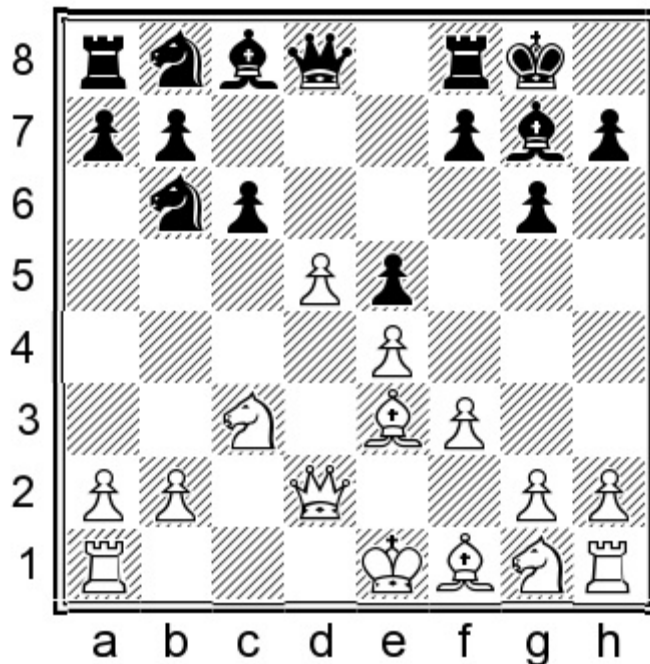
Black has three reasonable ways to avoid Modern Benoni structures that arise after 3...c5 4.d5 e6, and the Sämisch variation 3...♙g7 4.e4.

The most popular by far is **A.** 3...d5. People who play 3.f3 are usually best prepared for it, but I propose a straightforward equaliser, which is easy to learn. Lately Black tested 3...e6 occasionally, but the most contemporary retort to White's sneaky move order is the even more tricky **B.** 3...♞c6. The choice is up to you.

A. 3...d5 4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4 ♞b6 6.♞c3 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♚d2 e5

The only reasonable alternative is 8...♞c6 9.0-0-0 ♚d6 10.♙b1 ♜d8 11.♞b5 ♚d7 12.d5 a6 13.♞c3 ♚e8 14.♚c1 ♞a5!, but while Black manages to hold the draw in email games, over the board he crashes every too often. Obviously, the cost of his mistakes is higher. After the text the roles are reversed – the initiative commonly goes to Black.

9.d5 c6



A1. 10.h4; A2. 10.♖d1!.

A1. 10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.h5 ♘f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.0-0-0 ♙d7

14...♚d6 15.♔b1!? ♙f5+ only looks active. In fact, after 16.♔a1, followed by g4, White is in command.

15.♔b1

15.d6 ♖c8 16.♔b1 transposes.

15...♖c8 16.♘h3!?

The position is very sharp, and the next few moves could be decisive for the outcome of the game.

Black must include his g7-bishop in the attack before he gets mated. Thus:

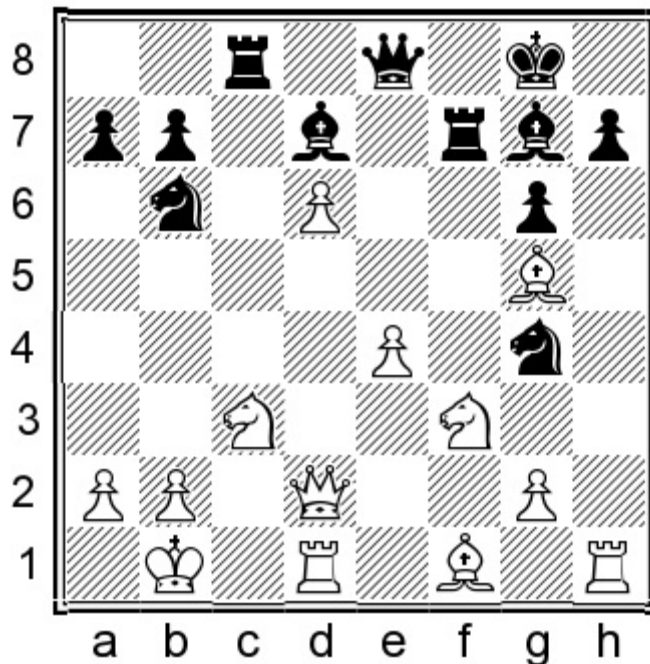
16.d6 should be countered by 16...e4!, for instance:

17.fxe4

After 17.♔a1 Black could remove the only white defender with 17...♖e8 18.♘h3 ♘a4.

17...♘g4 18.♙g5 ♚e8 19.♘f3 ♖f7!

Anticipating both ♙e7 and a check on the weak diagonal. 19...♖xc3 is premature due to 20.bxc3 ♚xe4+ 21.♙d3 ♚c6 22.♙c2, going to b3 with check!



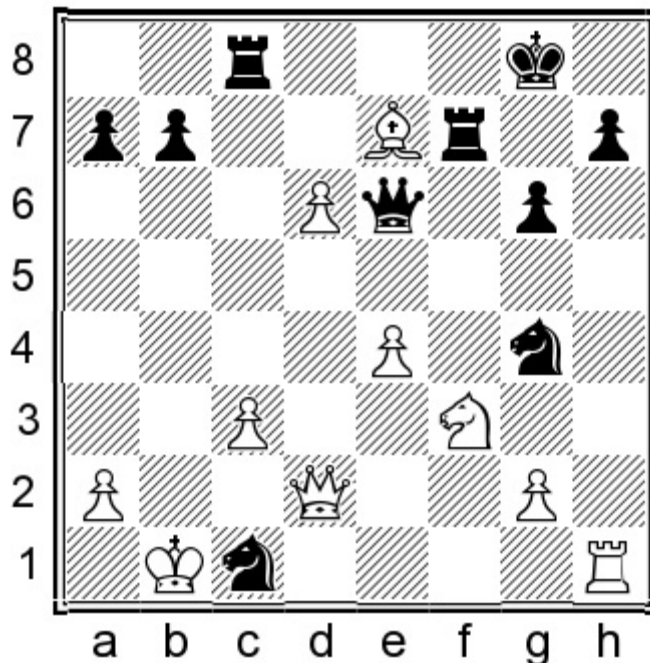
20. ♖e1

20. ♗e7 ♜xc3! is already good – 21. bxc3 ♜c8 22. ♞c1 ♘a4 23. ♙g5 ♜c5 with a draw after 24. ♘xf7 ♘xc3+ 25. ♞xc3 ♗xc3 26. ♜e2 ♜b4+ 27. ♚c1 ♜a3+, or 24. ♜d5 ♜xd5 25. exd5 ♞f2 26. ♞h3 ♘xc3+ 27. ♞xc3 ♞xf1+ 28. ♚c2 ♗xc3 29. ♞xc3 h6 30. ♙e4 ♗f5 31. ♚d2 ♞f4 32. ♞c4 g5 33. g3 ♘e5=.

20... ♗xc3!

The thematic exchange sacrifice 20... ♞xc3 is ineffective here in view of 21. bxc3 ♜c8 (21... ♗e6 is relatively stronger) 22. ♞d4.

20... ♞c5?! 21. ♗d2 ♗e6 22. e5 ended badly for Black in Ding Liren-Mamedyarov, Stavanger 2019. 21. bxc3 ♘a4 22. ♞c1 ♘c5 23. ♗c4 ♗e6 24. ♗xe6 ♜xe6 25. ♗e7 ♘d3 26. ♜d2 ♘xc1



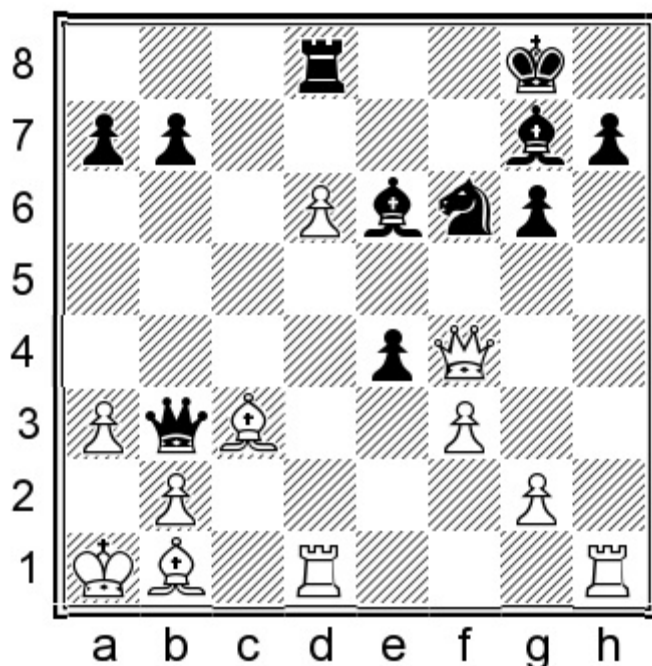
The engines claim a small advantage for White, but the following forced variation leads to a positional draw:

27.♖g5 ♔xa2+ 28.♚xa2 ♜xa2 29.♜xf7 ♜xc3+ 30.♔a1 ♜xf7 31.d7 ♞a8 32.♞xh7+ ♔e6 33.d8♚ ♞xd8 34.♙xd8 ♜xe4 35.♞xb7 ♜e3 36.♞b2 ♔d5! 37.♙c7 ♔c4! =, Grayland-Eastoe, ICCF 2015. The white king cannot come in contact with the g2-pawn to protect it.

16.♔a1 is a useful prophylactic move, but Gelfand's novelty against Anand in the world title match in 2012 offers a good model to follow:

16...e4! 17.♙d4

17.d6 ♜a4 18.♜ge2 (18.♜xa4 ♙xa4 19.♞c1 ♞xc1+ 20.♚xc1 b5! 21.♜e2 ♞e8 with rich balanced play) 18...♚a5 19.♙d4 ♜xc3! 20.♜xc3 ♙e6. This line was proposed by Svetushkin, who evaluated it as unclear. I completely agree. Look at the following incredible variation, which reveals Black's attacking possibilities – 21.a3 ♞fd8 22.♚f4 ♞xc3! (22...♜h5!?∞) 23.♙xc3 ♚a4 24.♙d3 ♚b3 25.♙b1



25...♚xc3! 26.bxc3 ♜d5 27.♚d2 ♜xc3 28.♙c2 ♜xd1+ 29.♔b1 ♜c3+ 30.♔c1 ♙e5 31.♚e1 ♜a2+ 32.♔b1 ♜c3+ 33.♔c1 with a perpetual.

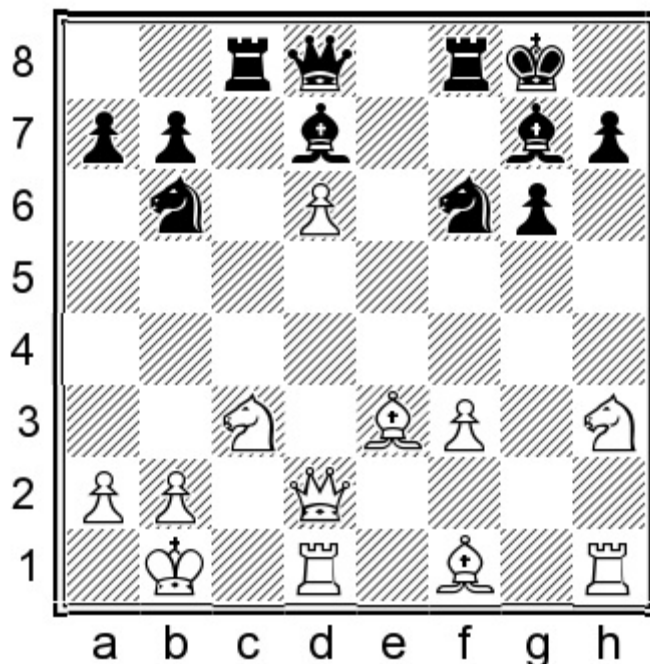
17...♜a4

The engines suggest here 17...♚e7 18.♜h3 ♞fe8 =, threatening e3. Anyway, 16.♔a1 has disappeared from tournaments after Black discovered an improvement on Gelfand's play:

18.♜ge2 (18.♜xe4) 18...♚a5 19.♜xe4 ♚xd2 20.♜xf6+ ♞xf6 21.♞xd2 ♞f5 22.♙xg7 ♔xg7 23.d6, when 23...♜b6! 24.♜c3 ♞d5! (Flear) is a draw.

16...e4 17.d6 exf3 18.gxf3

This position occurred in two OTB games so far, both from 2018, and White won them quickly!



Especially spectacular was Sanikidze-Duzhakov, Batumi 2018 – 18...♖fd5 19.♗xd5 ♕f5+ 20.♕a1 ♜c2 21.♗e7+ ♜h8 22.♞d4! ♗d7 1-0.

In Adhiban-Mikhalevski, Stockholm 2016, Black also fell victim of a check along the a2-g8 diagonal – 18...♗a4 19.♗xa4 ♕xa4 20.♗g5! ♕xd1 21.♞xd1 ♞a5 22.♞b3+ ♜h8 23.♕d3+-.

Meanwhile, the solution was well known from email games:

18...♗c4! 19.♕xc4+ ♜xc4 20.♕h6

20.♗g5 is pointless here owing to 20...♞a5. The text demands a strong medicine:

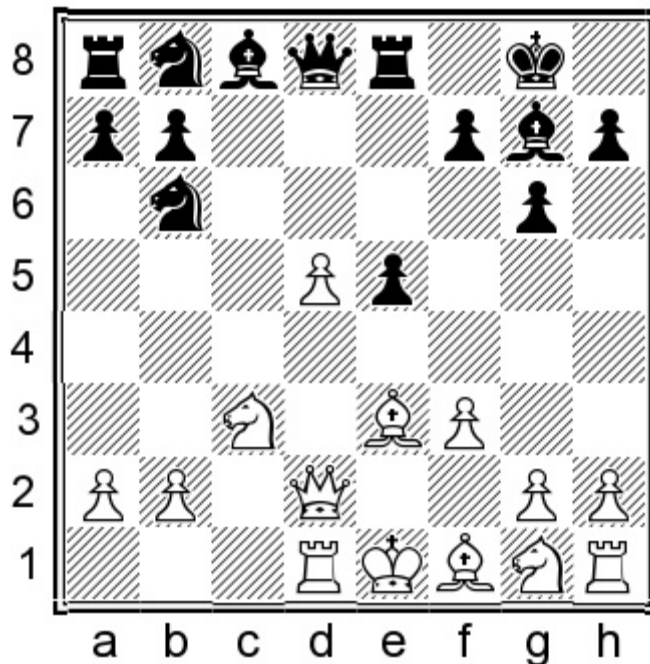
20...♜xc3! 21.bxc3 ♕xh6 22.♞xh6 ♞a5

Black forces a draw. The latest test was Leimgruber-Parsons, ICCF 2017 – 23.♜c1 ♕e6 24.♞h2 ♜c8 25.♗g5 ♕f5+ 26.♗e4 ♜xc3 27.d7 ♜xc1+ ½-½.

A2. 10.♞d1

This move was recommended by Svetushkin in Chess Stars book *The Ultimate Anti-Grünfeld*, and it lived up to become the second most popular continuation today. White's reasoning is that the queenside is a windy place for his king and short castling is safer. However, White is unable to develop his king's knight. Its natural place is h3, but this square is currently surveyed by the c8-bishop. So White makes a useful move, awaiting Black to define the future of his b8-knight. ...♗a6 would divert it from the kingside and h4 would launch a dangerous attack.

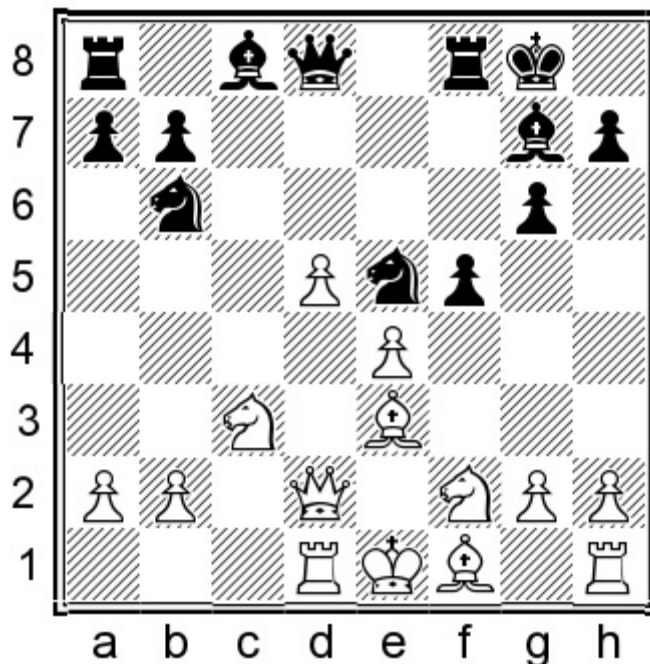
10...cxd5 11.exd5 ♜e8!?



11...♖8d7 12.♜h3! (12.h4 ♜f6 13.h5 ♜xh5 14.♙h6 is ineffective on account of 14...f5 15.♙xg7 ♜xg7.) looks not entirely satisfactory to me. The theoretical discussion has focused on:

12...e4!? 13.fxe4 ♜e5 14.♜f2 f5

14...♜bc4 15.♙xc4 ♜xc4 16.♚e2 ♜xe3 17.♚xe3 is currently assessed as better for White on the ground of the game Bologan-Cheparinov, Poikovsky 2013.

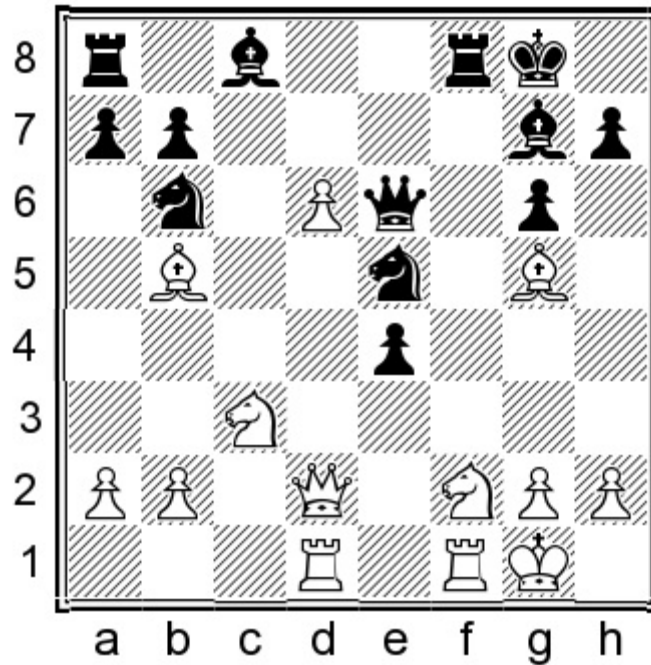


This is the critical position for the pawn sacrifice 12...e4. Aronian tried against Vachier-Lagrave 15.♙c5 ♜f7 16.♙e2, but 16...f4 gave Black full compensation. Krasenkow writes that:

“15.b3 looks the most appropriate”. However, 15...fxe4! 16.♜cxe4 ♙g4 17.♙e2 ♙xe2 18.♚xe2 ♜xd5 regains the pawn and Black gradually tames White’s initiative – 19.0-0 ♚d7 20.♙c5 ♜fd8 21.♙d6 ♚c6 22.♜c1 ♚b6 23.♜fd1 ♜f4 24.♚c2 ♜e6=.

I’m mostly afraid of:

15.♔g5! ♚e8 16.d6! fxe4 17.♗b5 ♚e6 18.0-0



White has castled and his king is already safer. I believe that his chances remain preferable. For instance:

18...♗bc4 19.♚c1 ♗xd6

19...e3 20.♗xe3 ♗xe3 21.♚xe3 is a nice queen sacrifice – 21...♗f3+ 22.♚xf3 ♗xf3 23.d7! ♗f8 24.d8=♚ ♗xd8 25.♗xd8+ ♗f8 26.♗h1! with a firm mating net, e.g. 26...♚b6 27.♗e8 ♗g7 28.♗fe4 ♗b4 29.♗c4 ♚d4 30.♗f7+ ♗h6 31.♗f6 ♚xc4 32.♗xh7+ ♗g5 33.♗fe4+ ♗f5 34.h3 ♗e6 35.♗xa8±. 20.♗a4 ♗h8 21.♗b3! (21.♗fxe4 ♗xf1+ 22.♗xf1 ♗df7 23.♗g1 ♚a6 24.♗e3 ♗f5=) 21...♗dc4 22.♗cxe4 b5 23.♗d6! (23.♗h6 ♚e7 24.♗xg7+ ♚xg7 25.♗xc4 bxc4 26.♚c3 ♗e6 27.♗fe1 ♗g8 28.♗d6 ♗c6 29.♗d2±) 23...♚f5 24.♗g3 ♚f7 25.♗d3 ♗f5 26.♗xf5 gxf5 27.♗xe5 ♗xe5 28.♗f4 ♗xd6 29.♗xd6± ♗fe8?! 30.♗b4.

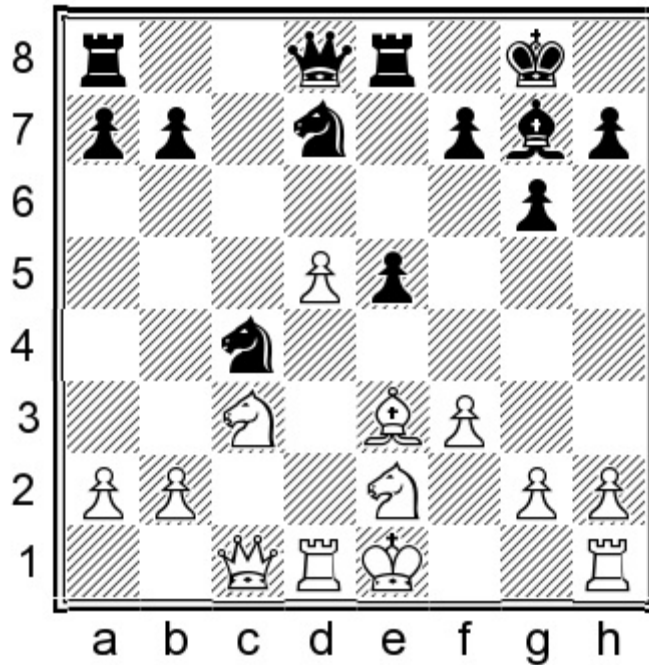
Or 18...♗ec4 19.♚c2 e3 20.♗fe4 ♗xf1+ 21.♗xf1 ♗xd6 22.♗f6+ ♗h8 23.♗f4±.

12.♗e4

I had the chance to test my recommendation in July 2019. It was a morning round with the temperature close to 30 degrees and no air conditioning in the playing hall. When faced with 11...♗e8, my opponent Barrish dozed for 35 minutes, then suddenly came up with the weird idea 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.♗xd7?!

Of course White should have preserved the bishop, which controls c4. Correct was 13.♗e2 – White has denied ...♗d7. 13...♗a6 (13...♚h4+ 14.g3 ♚b4 also deserves attention) 14.h4 e4 (14...♗c8!? 15.h5 ♗c5) 15.h5 exf3 16.♗xf3 ♚e7 17.♗f2 ♗c5 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♗d4. Now 19...♗ba4 20.d6 ♚xd6 21.♗xg7 ♚xd2 22.♗xd2 ♗xg7 23.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 24.♗xa4 leads to a balanced endgame – Black's rooks have many open files. Another option is 19...♗e4+ 20.♗xe4 ♗xd4+.

13...♗8xd7 14.♗ge2 ♗c4 15.♚c1



I was already better, and should have sought a tactical solution. Instead of 15...♖xe3 (which is of course not bad at all), 15...e4!? or 15...b5!? 16.0-0 b4 17.♗e4 f5 would have been positionally decisive as 18.♗d6? loses to 18...♗f8.

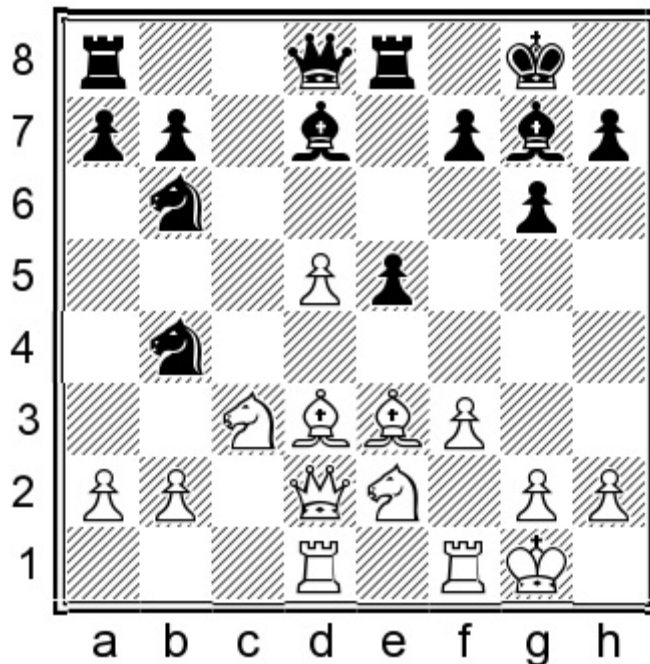
12.♗d3 ♖a6 occurred in Schramm-Holroyd, ICCF 2015.

12...♗f5 also deserves attention, the point being 13.♗xf5 ♖c4! 14.♗g5 ♗xd2 15.♗xd8 ♗c4 16.♗d3 ♗xb2 17.♗g5 e4 18.♗xe4 ♗xd3+! 19.♗xd3 f5 20.♗e3 fxe4 21.♗xe4 ♗d7=, regaining the pawn.

13.♗ge2 ♗b4 14.0-0

Or 14.♗b5 ♗d7 15.♗xb6 axb6 16.♗xd7 ♗xd7 17.a3 ♗a6 18.♗c2 ♗c5 19.0-0 ♗ed8 20.b4 ♗a4=. 14...♗d7

Both sides have completed development. The d5-pawn is powerful, but right now it needs protection. The stem game went:



15.♔g5 f6 16.♕e3 ♖xd3 17.♙xd3 f5 18.d6 ♕e6 19.b3 ♜c8 20.♚h1 ♛d7=. Black is threatening to encircle the d6-pawn.

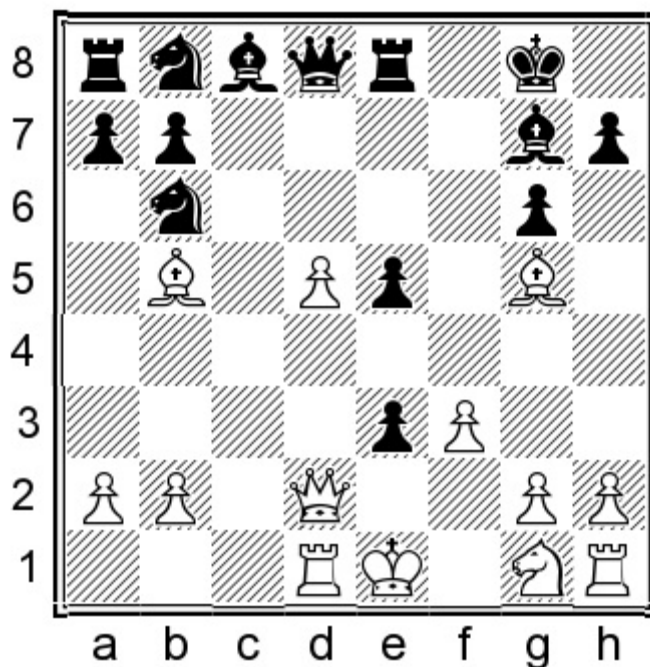
12...♘a6

In Postny-Sarkar, Sitges 2016, Black played 12...♘8d7, but that allowed 13.♘h3 ♘f6 14.♘hf2 ♘xe4 15.fxe4 f5 16.♕e2 f4 17.♕c5 with a stable centre. Perhaps that left the game unnoticed.

Besides, Black could put White's idea to the test with 12...f5!?. The point is 13.♕b5

13.♘c5 lets in 13...e4.

13...fxe4 14.♕g5 e3!



This *intermezzo* deflects the queen from the a5-e1 diagonal thus winning a second piece for the rook after 15. ♖xe3 ♜d6 16. ♙xe8 ♜f8∞.

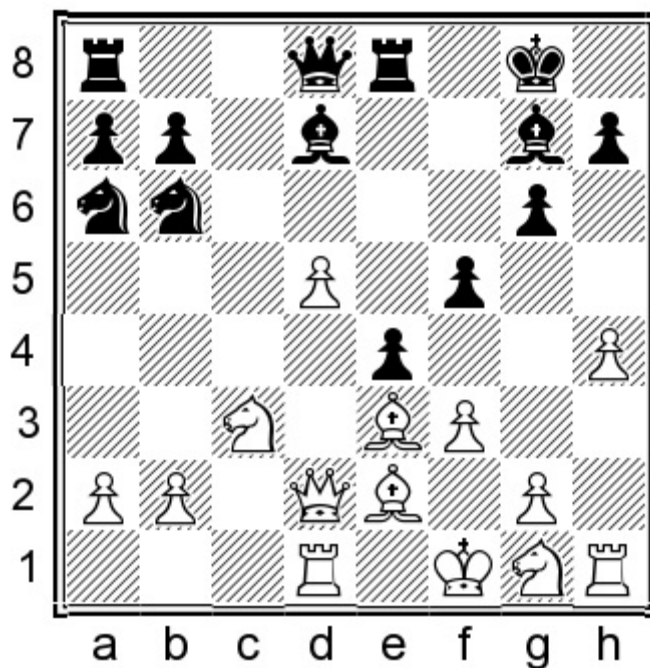
13.d6

13.h4 looks inconsistent since 13...f5! would be with a tempo.

Then 14. ♙g5 ♜d7 15. ♘f6+?! ♙xf6 16. ♙xf6 ♜d6 17. ♙g5 f4 seizes the initiative, so the knight should return:

14. ♘c3 e4 15. ♙e2 ♙d7 16. ♙f1

16.h5 f4! 17. ♙xb6 ♜xb6 18. ♘xe4 ♘xc5 is horrible to defend with White.

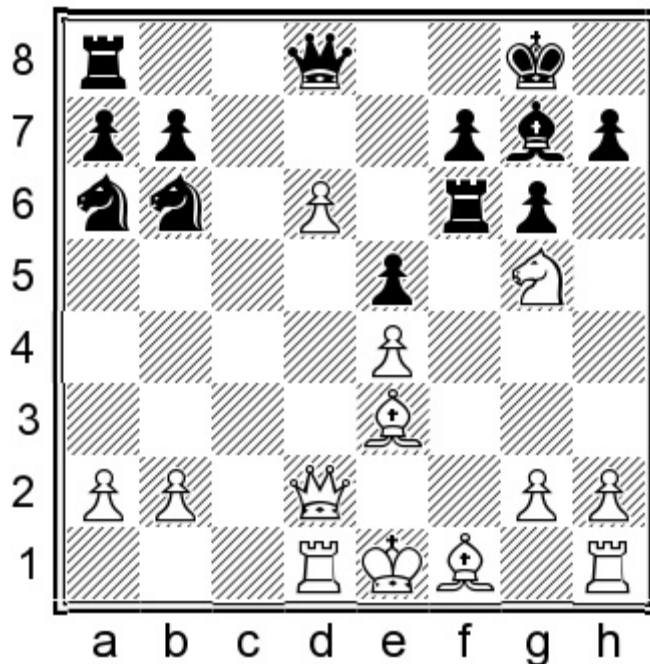


Play may be balanced, but I like the rich choice we have. We could slow down the pace of the game with 16...h5!?, securing our king. Another approach is 16...♖c8 17.h5 ♘c5. Also reasonable is 16...♜e7 17.d6 ♜e5. Finally, the computer hints that we could even eat the central pawn with 16...♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♙a4∞.

13...♙f5

Development before all! We drop the idea of breaking through with ...e4 and trigger plan B – to capture the d6-pawn. The idea is to meet 14.h4 by 14...♙xe4 15.fxe4 ♜e6.

14. ♘h3 ♙xe4 15.fxe4 ♜e6 16. ♘g5 ♜f6

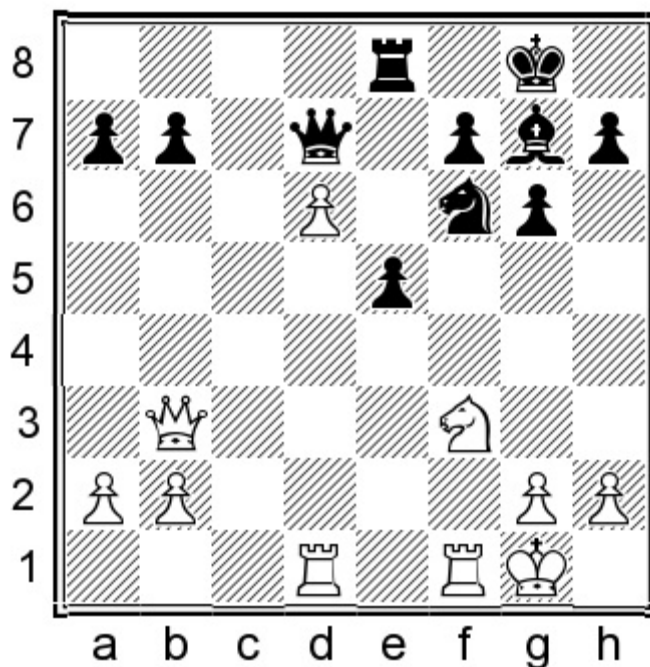


The position is balanced, and both sides have their chances. The obvious threat is ...♙f8, e.g. 17.♙e2 ♙f8 18.♞f1 ♞xd6 19.♚c2 ♞c8 20.♚b3 ♞xd1+ 21.♙xd1 ♖c4 22.♞xf7 b5! =.

17.♖f3 is even more tangled – 17...♚d7 18.♙g5 ♖c5 19.♙xf6 ♖xe4 20.♚b4

20.♖xe5 ♚e6 21.♚e2 ♖xf6 22.♖c4 ♚f5 23.♖xb6 axb6 24.♚f3 ♚a5+ 25.♚c3 ♚g5∞.

20...♖xf6 21.♙c4 ♖xc4 22.♚xc4 ♞c8 23.♚b3 ♞e8 24.0-0∞



Black wins by force the d6-pawn with 24...h6! 25.♖d2 ♞e6 26.♖c4 b5 27.♖e3 ♖e8, or with 24...e4 25.♖d4 ♚xd6.

Finally, 17.♙xa6 bxa6 18.d7 could lead to a funny perpetual after 18...♖c4 19.♚d5 ♖xe3 20.♚xa8 ♖xg2+ 21.♙e2 ♖f4+ 22.♙e1 =.

B. 3...♘c6

Our aim is to push ...e5. It seems that we'll get some sort of the Sämisch with ...♘c6, but the position has an important peculiarity – our bishop is still on f8 and it can pop up on c5. For instance: 4.e4 e5 5.d5 ♘d4 6.♙e3 ♙c5! 7.♙f2 ♚e7.

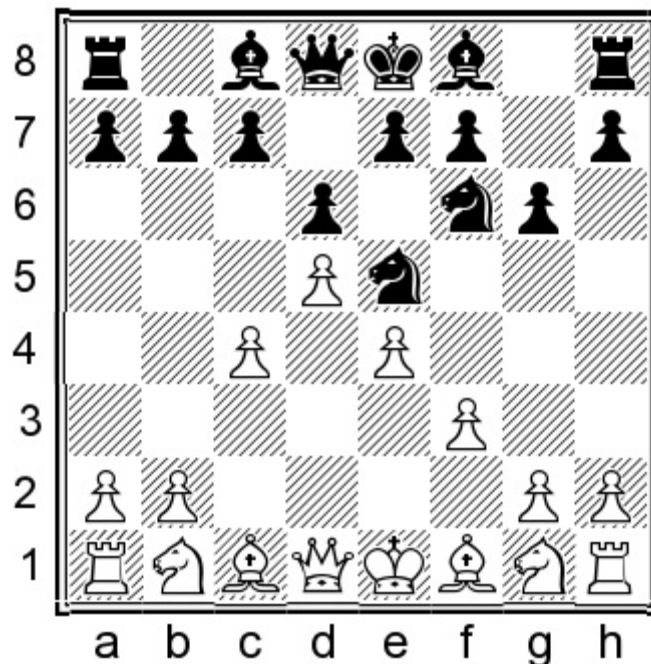
Our approach is flexible and we have other plans besides ...e5. In the event of 4.♘c3 we switch to the Grünfeld approach with 4...d5, exploiting the fact that we can exchange on c3 after 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4. Finally, 4.d5 is not so crushing as it may seem at a first glance. The gaping main diagonal and the general weakness of the dark-squares in White's camp assures Black of good counterplay. In the Four Pawns Attack against the King's Indian Black tries sometimes ...♘c6, hoping to provoke d5. White's best answer then is e5, but not d5! In our case the f-pawn is only halfway to f4, so he will probably spend later a tempo on advancing it.

B1. 4.d5; **B2.** 4.♘c3; **B3.** 4.e4.

B1. 4.d5 ♘e5 5.e4

5.♚a4 is a curious idea to cut off retreat to d7 by pinning the d7-pawn. Black should strike back energetically to avoid being suffocated after f4, h3, g4 – 5...c6 6.f4. Here Kotronias gives 6...b5! 7.cxb5 cxb5, the point being 8.♚xb5 ♚c7 9.♘a3 ♖b8 with an initiative. I also like 6...♘eg4 7.h3 ♘h6 8.g4 ♘e4 9.♙g2 f5 10.♙xe4 fxe4 11.♘c3 ♙g7.

5...d6



6.♘c3

6.♘e2 ♘g7 7.♘ec3 0-0 8.♙e2 ♚e8!? leads to balanced play.

Or 8...e6 9.0-0 exd5 10.cxd5 c6 11.dxc6 bxc6↗, Mamedyarov-Carlsen, Wch. blitz, Moscow 2009.

9.0-0 e6 10.♙e3 exd5 11.cxd5 c6!. Black's setup is more flexible.

6...♙g7

6...c6!? is more challenging, but committal. Black defines his plan in the centre too early:

7.f4 ♘ed7 8.♙e3!

After 8.♘f3, 8...♚a5 is an awkward pin (8...♙g7 9.♙e2 is considered in line C2.) 9.♙d3 ♘c5 10.0-0 cxd5 11.cxd5 ♘xd3 12.♚xd3 ♙g7=.

8...♚a5 This is not so efficient already as White has 9.♚d2. Still, the position after 9...♘c5 10.♚b1 ♚b6 11.♘a4 ♚c7 is unclear.

7.f4

Lately the tricky move order 7.♙e2!? has yielded White nice results.

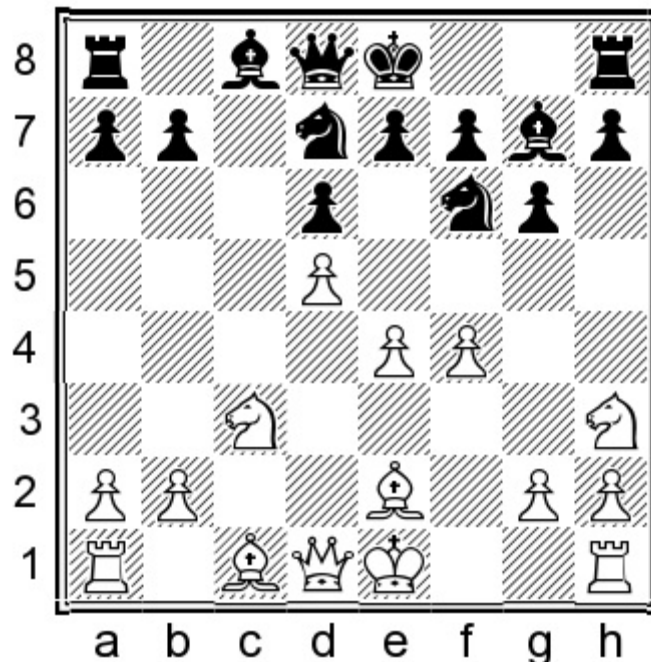
White's idea is to develop firstly the bishops, keeping both options ♘f3 and ♘h3 open. For instance: 7...0-0 8.f4 ♘ed7 9.♙e3 e6 10.dxe6 fxe6 11.♘h3 ♚e7 12.0-0 b6 13.♙f3 ♚b8 14.♚c2 ♙b7 15.♚ae1±, Nakamura-Xiong, Saint Louis 2016. It is stronger to open the e-file with 9...♚e8! 10.♘h3 e6 11.dxe6 ♚xe6, but I still prefer White after 12.♘f2, followed by ♙f3.

The only way to exploit the bishop move looks the pawn sacrifice ...b5:

7...c6! 8.f4 ♘ed7 9.♘h3

The same ideas is possible after 9.♙e3 cxd5 10.cxd5 ♚a5 11.♚d2 b5!.

9...cxd5 10.cxd5



10...b5! 11.♙xb5

Stockfish recommends 11.a3 ♚b6 12.♘f2 0-0 13.0-0, but 13...a5 14.♙d2 ♙a6 passes the initiative

to Black.

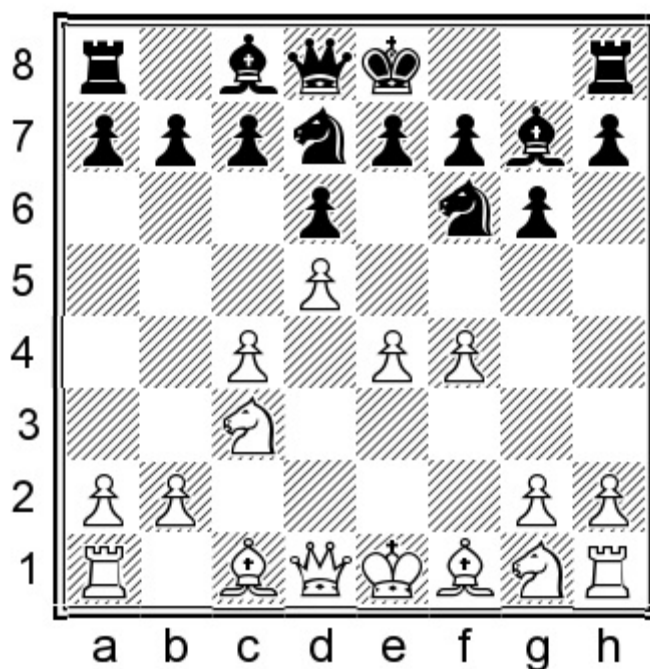
11...0-0 12.♘f2 ♖b8 13.0-0 ♗c5 14.♙c6 ♚a5 15.♞e1 ♜fd7 16.a3 ♞b3∞. Black is threatening ...♗b8, ...♞xc3. At any rate his game is not worse.

Other developments also offer Black good counterplay on the queenside:

7.♙g5 c6 8.♚d2 0-0 9.♞d1 ♚b6 10.♙e3 ♚b4 11.b3 ♜fg4 12.♙d4 ♙h6 13.♚b2 c5, Dreev-Sutovsky, Internet ICC 2002.

7.♜ge2 0-0 8.♜g3 c6 9.♙e3 (9.♙e2 ♚b6) 9...a6 10.♙e2 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.dxc6 b4 13.♜d5 ♜xc6 14.0-0 ♜xd5 15.exd5 ♜e5↗.

7...♜ed7



Black should attack d5 with both pawns – ...c6 and ...e6. It is still difficult to say in what order, but probably starting with the king's pawn is safer. White cannot allow two exchanges on d5 because such a pawn structure is generally good for Black. Therefore he should be ready to take on c6 or e6 and reinforce the remaining pawn on e4.

8.♜h3

A Grischuk's idea. The knight hurries to f2. From there it will bolster the pawn centre so that White's space advantage could begin to tell.

The older 8.♜f3 0-0 9.♙d3 has faded out of fashion.

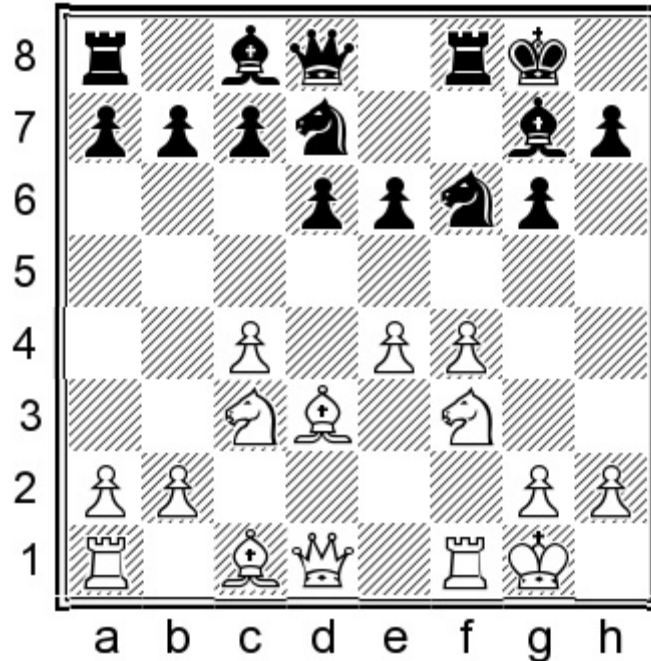
White's bishop on d3 gives Black a tempo for ...♗c5, so the plan with ...c6 looks attractive: 9...c6 10.0-0 ♗c5 11.♙c2 cxd5 12.cxd5 e6! 13.dxe6 ♙xe6 14.♙e3=, Donchev-Ermenkov, Sofia 1984.

Even more tempting is to open the e-file, since White cannot protect e4 with ♜f2:

9...e6!?

Here White has always responded with 10.0-0?!, when 10...exd5 11.cxd5 c6! 12.dxc6 bxc6

creates the threat ...♙b6+ and ...♘g4. A logical improvement is:
 10.dxe6! fxe6 11.0-0, but Black can easily complete development with:



11...♘c5 12.♙c2 b6 13.♙d2 ♙b7 14.♙e2 d5! ♞.

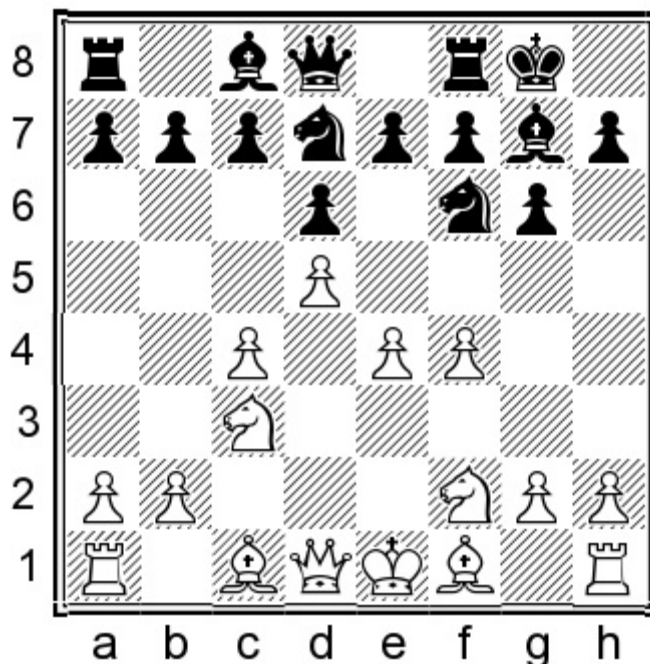
The tricky move order 8.♙e3!? 0-0 9.♙e2 fares fantastically for White. The idea is to meet:

9...e6?! by 10.dxe6 fxe6 11.♘h3 with a nice edge. 9...♘b6 does not make much sense as White's knight can go to f3 instead of h3. We should open the e-file with:

9...♞e8! 10.♘h3 ♘b6 11.♘f2 e6 12.0-0 exd5 13.cxd5 c6 and play may transpose to our main line.

8...0-0 9.♘f2!

9.♙e2 cuts off White's most dangerous plan with g4. We transpose to the main line with 9...♘b6!, attacking the d5-square.



We are faced here with a very difficult choice. Practice hints that the obvious choice is the plan with: 9...♘c5 10.♙e2 (10.g4 would be dubious owing to 10...e6 11.g5 ♘h5 12.♙e2 exd5 13.cxd5 ♖e8) 10...e6. However:

1. 11.dxe6! fxe6 12.♙e3 b6 13.♚c2 ♙b7 14.0-0-0! looks very dangerous to me;

2. After 11.0-0 exd5 12.cxd5 c6 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♙f3 Black has drawn all the games with ...♞b8. However, my feeling is that White could preserve some pull without apparent risk. See a detailed analysis of this line in **game 28** Galjé-Revell, ICCF 2017.

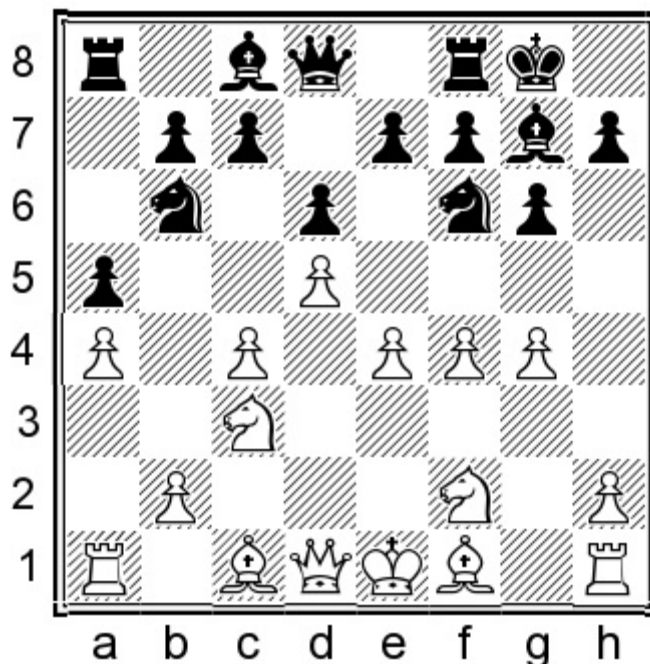
To be sure, the alternative 9...♘b6 might also turn to be rather risky. But it looks more rewarding to me since it is practically unexplored. Let's delve deeper:

9...♘b6!? 10.♙e2

This innocuous move transposes to a well known position with a favourable score for Black.

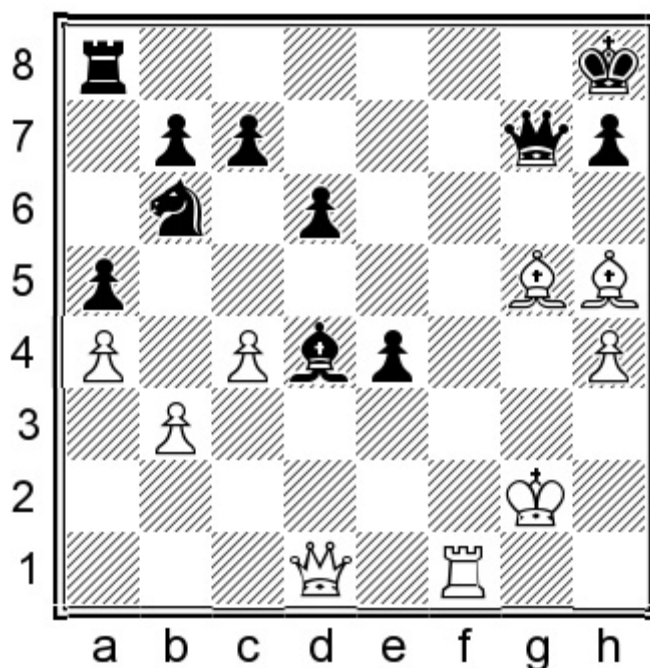
My greatest concern is the march of the g-pawn, after the insertion of:

10.a4! (enabling the rook lift ♖a1-a3-g3 in some critical lines) 10...a5 11.g4!



We are already on uncharted territory. Stockfish is not of any help as it dangerously underestimates White's threats. Its deep analysis runs:

11...e6 12.g5 (12.dxe6 ♙xe6 13.f5 ♙xc4 14.g5 ♘fd7 15.f6 ♘xf6 16.gxf6 ♚xf6 17.♙xc4 ♘xc4 18.♘d5 is also interesting) 12...♘h5 13.♙e2 f5 14.gxf6 ♘xf6 15.h4 ♘fd7 (15...♚e7!? 16.h5) 16.dxe6 (The idea of Black's previous move was to meet 16.h5 by 16...e5.) 16...♘c5 (with roughly equal chances). However, if we start making the pretty obvious moves 17.f5 gxf5 18.♙g5 ♚e8 19.e7 ♜f6 20.♘d3 ♘xe4 21.♘xe4 fxe4 22.♘f4 ♜xf4 (22...♚xe7 23.♘h5) 23.♙xf4 ♚xe7 24.♜a3! (Remember the inclusion of 10.a4!) 24...♔h8 25.♜g3 ♙e6 26.♙g5 ♚d7 27.b3 ♙e5 28.♜g2 ♚g7 29.0-0 ♙d4+ 30.♔h1 ♙h3 31.♙h5 ♙xg2+ 32.♔xg2, we reach the following position:



The threat 33.♜f7 is impossible to neutralise. Stockfish keeps claiming that Black is OK, but the line 32...♙e3 33.♜f7 ♚b2+ 34.♔h1 ♙xg5 35.hxg5 ♚e5 36.g6 ♜d8 37.♚g4 ♚a1+ 38.♔g2 ♚b2+

39.♔h3 ♚c3+ is not a perpetual, but a forced win – 40.♔h4 ♚e1+ 41.♔g5 ♚e3+ 42.♔f5!! ♚c5+ 43.♔xe4 ♚e8+ 44.♔d3+–. This analysis is not encompassing, but it shows that Black's defence is not trivial at all.

After painful doubts, I decided that it is safer to enable ...f5 with:

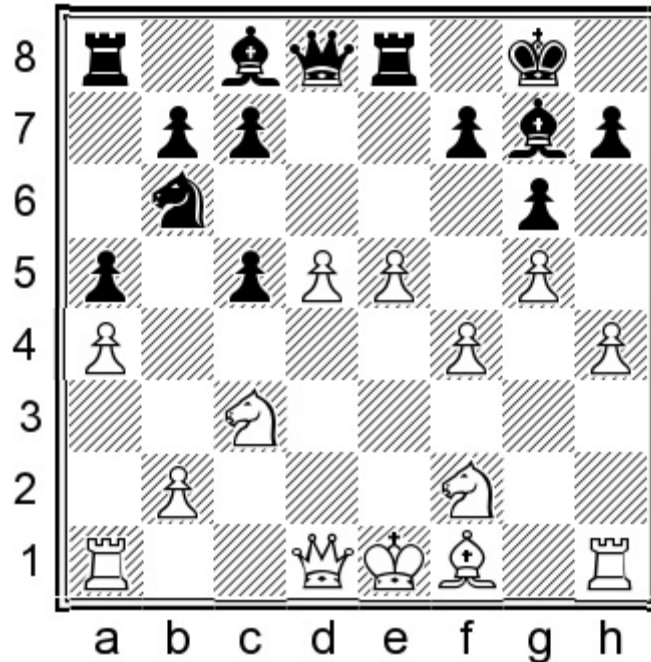
11...♘fd7!?

Now 12.g5 f5! 13.gxf6 exf6 displays the reason behind 11...♘fd7, so I turned to:

12.h4 e6 13.♙e3 ♘c5 14.g5 exd5 15.cxd5 ♚e8 16.♙xc5

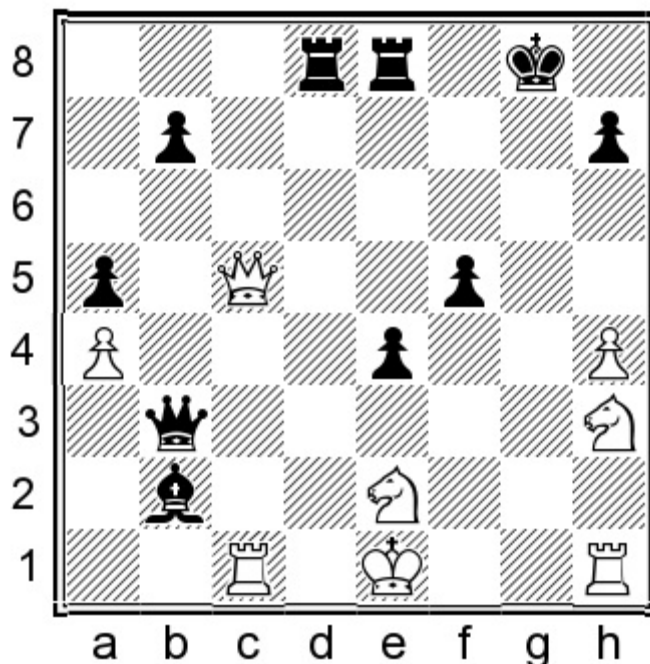
16.♙g2 c6 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.e5 ♘d5 19.♘xd5 cxd5∞.

16...dxc5 17.e5 (17.♚c2 ♙xc3+)



17...f6! (The point of Black's previous play.) 18.gxf6 ♚xf6 19.♙b5 ♙d7 20.♘e2 ♚e7∞. The d5-pawn is practically doomed, so Black has clear counterplay. I would have stopped here, if the engines did not offer misleading judgment again. They give:

21.♙xd7 ♚xd7 22.d6 ♚ad8 23.♚c2 cxd6 24.♚b3+ ♚f7 25.♚xb6 dxe5 26.f5 gxf5 27.♚xc5 e4 28.♘h3 ♚b3 29.♚c1, when 29...♙xb2 may lead to sharp endgames which look easy draws to me, but for the engines they are better for White (due to his extra piece!). For instance:



30. ♖c4+ ♜xc4 31. ♞xc4 ♞c8 32. ♞g1+ ♔f7 33. ♞xc8 ♞xc8 34. ♞g5 ♞c5 35. ♞h5 b5 36. ♞xh7+ ♔g8 37. ♞b7 ♞c3+ 38. ♜xc3 ♞xc3 39. ♜f4 bxa4 40. ♞b5 ♞c2 41. ♞xa5 ♞h2 42. h5 ♞h4 43. ♜d5 ♔g7= (still +0.95 according to Stockfish!).

Or 30. ♞b1 b6 31. ♜c7 ♞c8 32. ♜g3+ ♜xg3+ 33. ♜xg3 ♞c2 34. ♔d1 ♞g2 35. ♞g1 ♞d8+ 36. ♔e1 ♞c3+ 37. ♔f1 ♞xg1+ 38. ♜xg1 ♞e5 39. ♜1e2 ♞d3 40. ♜h5 ♞d6 41. ♜f6+ ♔f7 42. ♜xh7 ♔g6 43. ♜g5 ♔h5 44. ♜f7 ♞c7 45. ♞b5 ♔xh4 46. ♞xf5 b5 47. ♜g5 bxa4 48. ♜xe4 ♞e3 49. ♜4c3 a3 50. ♞c5 ♞e5 51. ♔f2 ♞xc3= (+0.90 according to Stockfish).

You might never have to deal with this sharp approach, but you must be prepared for it nevertheless.

10...e6 11.0-0

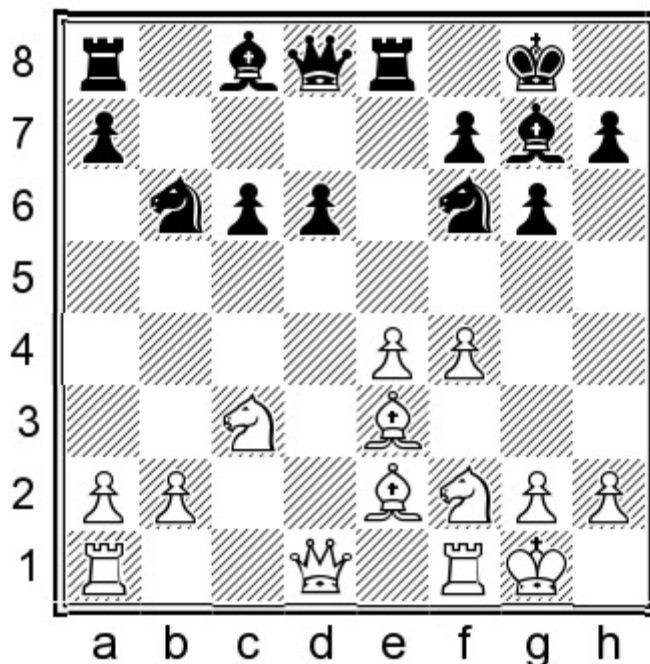
A big advantage of ...♜b6 over ...♜c5 is that 11.dxe6 runs into 11...♞xe6, hitting c4.
Or 11.♞e3 exd5 12.cxd5 ♞e8 13.0-0 c6.

11...exd5 12.cxd5 (12.exd5 ♞e8) 12...c6 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♞e3

Another possible setup is 14.♜c2. Then our main plan works fine – 14...d5! 15.e5 ♜e8, followed by ...f6.

Also interesting is 14...♞e8 15.♞d2 (Postny blundered once with 15.b3? ♜xe4 16.♜fxe4 when strongest is 16...♜d5!, followed by 17...♞f5) 15...♞e6 16.g4 gives White some initiative, although 16...d5 17.e5 d4 is double-edged.

14...♞e8



Black's design is to push ...d5 and then undermine the e5-pawn with ...f6. Besides, he could also play ...♟b7, ...c5. Of course that does not exclude ...d5 at some point.

15.♞c1

15.♞d2 allows the immediate 15...d5 (although 15...♟e6 16.b3 d5 17.e5 ♞fd7 18.♟f3 f6 19.exf6 ♞xf6 20.♞ac1 ♞ac8 is also possible) 16.e5 ♞fd7 17.♞ae1 f6 18.exf6 ♞xf6 19.b3 (19.♟d4 ♞e4) 19...♞d6 (19...♟f5 20.♟c5) 20.♟d4 ♞e4 21.♞e3 ♟xd4 22.♞xd4 ♞f6=.

15...♟b7!?

Black is a bit cramped after 15...♟e6 16.♟a6.

16.♟f3

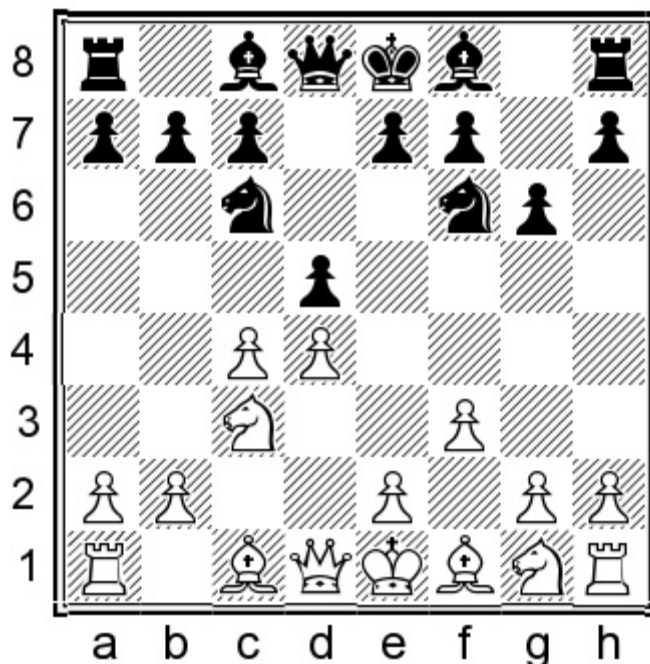
16.♞d3 allows 16...d5 or 16...♞e7 17.♟f3 d5.

16...♟a6!?

16...♞c4 at once is also possible – 17.♟d4 c5.

17.♞e1 ♞c4 18.♞a4 ♟b5 19.♞xb5 cxb5 20.♞b3 ♞d7 with mutual chances.

B2. 4.♞c3 d5



5.cxd5

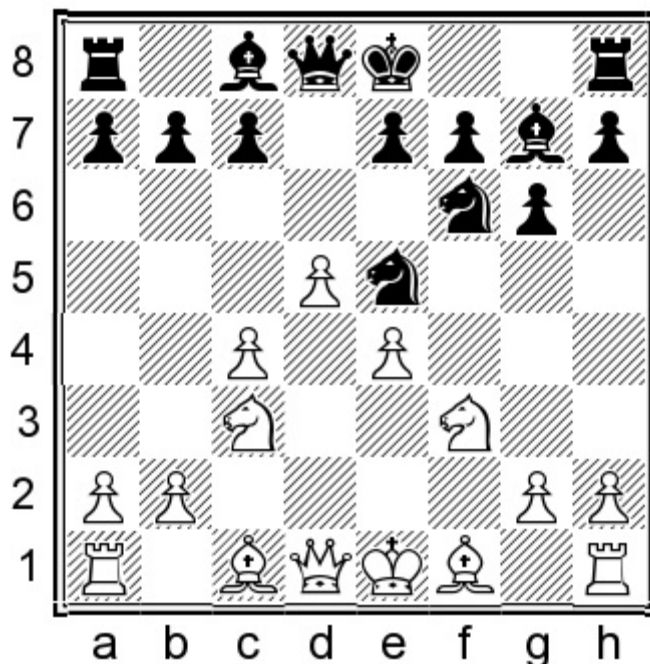
In Nice 2010 Kramnik surprised Dominguez with 5.♙g5?! ♙g7 6.e3. Black lacked the courage for 6...0-0! (choosing the passive 6...e6 instead) 7.♙xf6 (7.♚d2 ♖e8 8.cxd5 ♜xd5) 7...exf6 where Black will quickly develop an overwhelming initiative:

8.cxd5 ♞e7 9.e4 (9.♙c4 ♞f5) 9...f5 10.♚d2 fxe4 11.fxe4 c6;

8.♞xd5 ♖e8 9.♞e2 (or 9.♙f2 f5 10.f4 b5) 9...f5 10.♚d2 b5→ 11.♞ef4 bxc4 12.♙xc4 g5 13.♞e2 ♙e6 14.♞ec3 ♞a5.

5.e4!? is an enterprising idea which attracted the attention of several super GMs. After 5...dxe4 6.d5 ♞e5 7.fxe4 ♙g7 (7...c6?! 8.♞f3) 8.♞f3 we reach a critical position.

One of the first games that featured this position, Rodshtein-Bykhovsky, Rishon le Zion 2004, went:



8...♖fd7 9.♙e2 0-0 10.♙f4 (10.♙e3! ♜g4 11.♙g5) 10...c6 11.♚d2 ♜b6 12.♙e3 ♜b4!, with counterplay. White should have played 12.0-0-0 though.

It is more simple to trade knights:

8...♜xf3+ 9.gxf3 0-0 10.♙e3 e6!, opening the centre. Vallejo Pons-Swiercz, rapid, Berlin 2015, went 11.♚d2 exd5 12.cxd5 c6 13.dxc6 ♜e7 14.0-0-0 bxc6 15.♚d6, when Kotronias' suggestion 15...♜b7 should be fine.

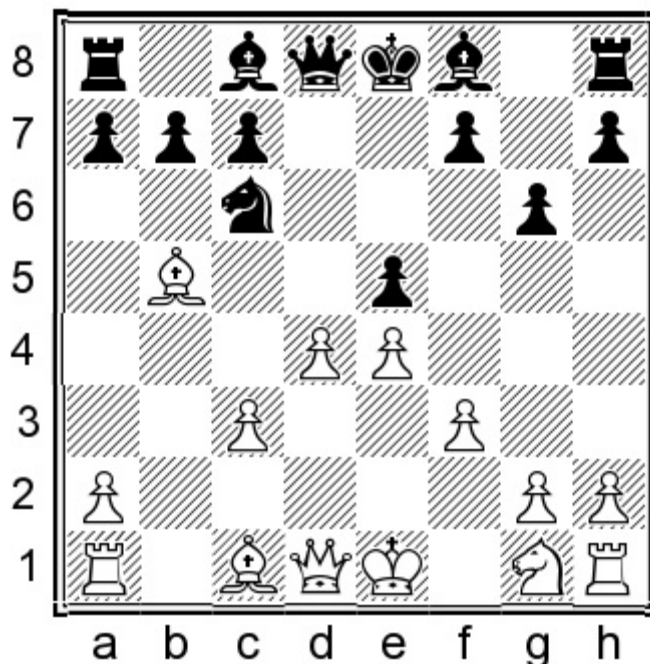
Kotronias also analyses 11.♚d3 ♜d6 12.♜b5 ♜e5 13.♙d4 ♜f4 14.♚e3, but I do not see any reason to trade queens in this rich position. Instead Black can take over the initiative with 11...exd5 12.cxd5 c6 13.dxc6 ♜c7! 14.cxb7 (14.♜b5 ♜e5) 14...♜xb7∞.

5...♜xd5 6.e4 ♜xc3 7.bxc3 e5!

This is the right plan so Black has no reason to delay it. Still, 7...♙g7 8.♙d3 0-0 9.♜e2 e5!? is also possible, as in the game Ward-Seel, Catalan Bay 2004. It went 10.d5 ♜a5 11.♙a3 ♜e8 12.♙b4 b6 13.♙b5 ♙d7 14.♙xd7 ♚xd7 15.♙xa5 bxa5 16.0-0 ♜ab8 17.♚c2 ♙f8, with an easy game for Black.

8.♙b5!

8.d5 ♜a5 does not set Black any problems.



8...♙g7!

This early novelty is safest in my opinion. The common 8...♙d7 9.♘e2 ♙g7 10.♖b1 offers White an initiative after 10...♗a5 11.f4 or 10...0-0 11.h4!?. More importantly, I do not see any reason to play 8...♙d7. The only way to exploit Black's provocative approach is:

9.d5 a6 10.♙a4 ♖b8

It now transpires that 11.dxc6? axb5 12.♙xb5 b6 13.♗e2 ♗a8 14.c4 ♙e6 promises Black tremendous activity on the queenside. So he should beat the retreat:

11.♙e2 b5 12.♙a3 ♙f8 13.♙b2 ♗a5 14.a4 c6 with counterplay.

B3. 4.e4 e5 5.dxe5

Alternatively:

a) 5.d5 ♗d4 6.♗e2 (6.♙e3 ♙c5! 7.♙f2 ♙e7 or 6.♗c3 ♗h5 7.♙e3 ♙c5 8.♙f2 d6 9.a3 0-0 10.b4 ♙b6 11.♗a4 f5, Abdelmoumen-Van Bommel, IECG 1999.) 6...♙c5 7.♗xd4 ♙xd4 8.♗c3 (8.♗a3 ♗h5 9.g3 d6 10.♗c2 ♙b6 11.♙e3 f5!)=) 8...♗h5 9.g3 d6 10.♙d3 c6!↑, A.Kuzmin-Kurnosov, St. Petersburg 2004.

b) 5.♗e2 exd4 6.♗xd4 ♙g7 7.♗xc6

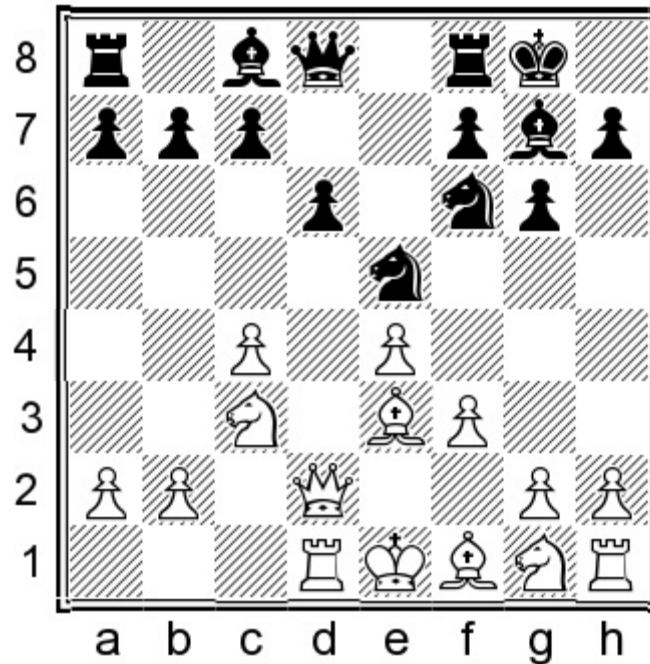
7.♙e3? loses to 7...♗xe4 8.fxe4 ♙h4+ 9.♙f2 ♙xe4+ 10.♗e2 ♗b4.

7...bxc6 8.♗c3 0-0 9.♙e2 d5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.exd5 ♙b7 12.0-0 ♗xd5 13.♗e4 c5, with an edge for Black in Bercys-Shabalov, rapid, USA, 2009.

5...♗xe5 6.♗c3

This noncommittal development is the latest trend.

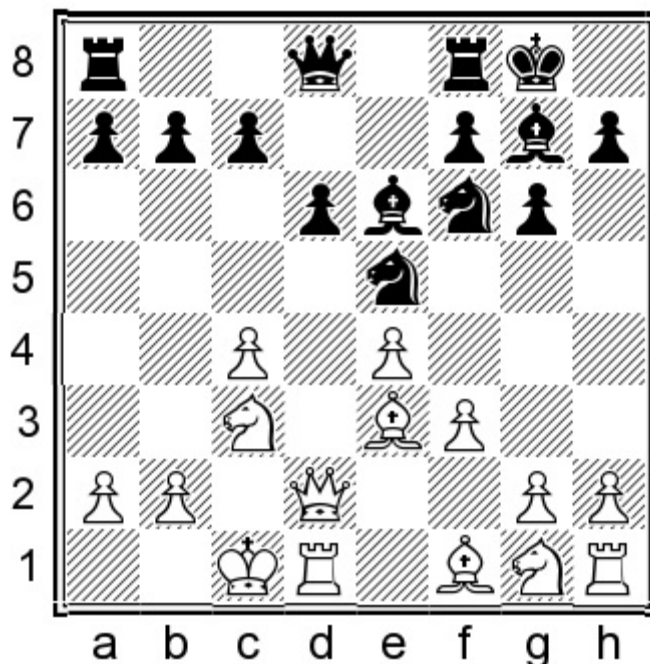
6.♙e3 ♘g7 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♚d2 d6 9.♖d1 occurred in Laznicka-Dvoirys, Pardubice 2007.



Black offered a typical for the King's Indian pawn sac: 9...c6?! 10.b3 (White had to accept it: 10.♚xd6!? ♚xd6 11.♖xd6 ♙e6 12.c5 ♖fd8=.), and another one: 10...d5!? (10...♚a5!? 11.♘a4 ♚xd2+ 12.♖xd2 d5) 11.♘ge2 ♚a5! 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.exd5 ♖e8↗.

However, in the diagram position 9...♖e8! 10.b3 a6! would have been even better since White cannot complete development. For instance, 11.c5 will be met by 11...d5 while 11.♘ge2 is not any better due to 11...b5! 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♘xb5 d5.

White has also tested the plan with long castling, but the weakness of the c4-pawn mars his position: 9.0-0-0 ♙e6



10.c5

After 10.♔h6 Black can intercept the initiative with 10...♙xh6!? 11.♖xh6 ♔xc4 12.♙xc4 ♘xc4 13.h4 ♗e7 14.h5 d5!!.

Or 10.♘d5 b5! (10...a6!? 11.♚b1 b5) 11.cxb5 a6 12.b6 cxb6↑.

10...♞b8!!

10...dxc5 11.♙xc5 ♗xd2+ 12.♞xd2 ♔h6 is also pleasant for Black, but the text launches a terrible attack:

11.cxd6 b5! 12.dxc7 ♗xc7 13.♗d6 ♗xd6 14.♞xd6 b4 15.♘d5 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♞bc8+ 17.♚d1 ♞fd8-+.

6...♙c5!?

Thus we force the opponent to castle long, which promises double-edged play.

7.♙f4

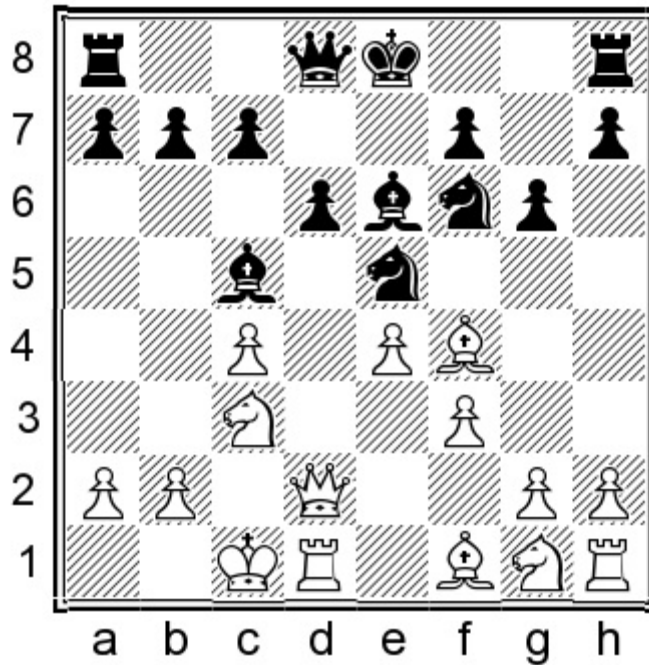
White may consider 7.♙g5 h6 8.♙d2, but the weakness on h6 is hardly important. We are going to castle on the queenside anyway.

7...d6

Ponkratov-Zakharov, Moscow 2019 saw 7...♗e7, which is not a mistake, but not obligatory either. The game went:

8.♗d2 d6 9.0-0-0 ♙e6, when instead of 10.♘a4 0-0-0, White should have grab space with 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♙d7 12.♘e2.

8.♗d2 ♙e6 9.0-0-0



This line is yet to be tested. Black should not take the Greek gift as it would weaken his dark squares – 9...♖xc4? 10.♗xc4 ♗xc4 11.♘a4∞.

His primary task should be to reinforce the e5-square – 9...♗fd7! 10.♘a4 ♔e7 11.♕c3 f6, but even better is to keep the dark-square blockade with:

11...♗f2! 12.♗e2 0-0-0 13.♗d4 g5 with the better coordinated pieces.

Chapter 12

Complete Games

28. Galjé - Revell

ICCF, 15.06.2017

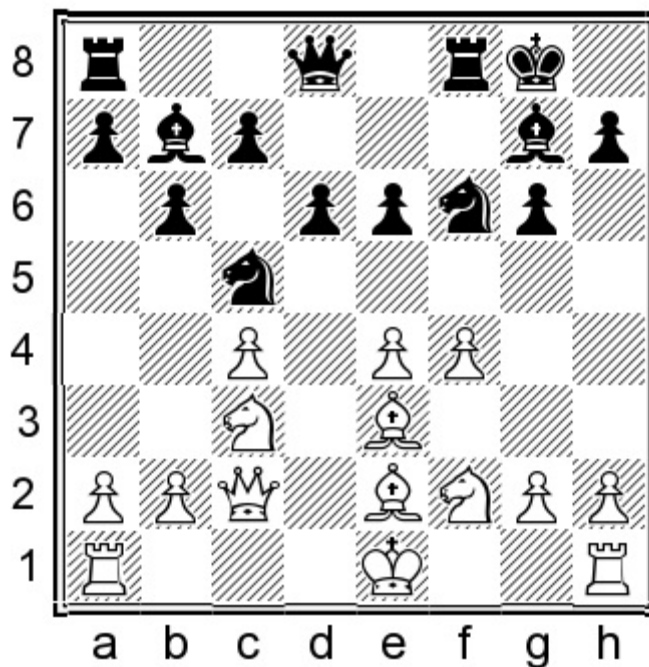
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 ♘c6 4.d5 ♘e5 5.e4 d6 6.♘c3 ♙g7 7.f4 ♘ed7 8.♘h3 0-0 9.♙e2 ♘c5 10.♘f2 e6

It looks sensible to neutralise White's spatial advantage as quickly as possible. After 10...♙e8 11.0-0 e5 12.dxe6 ♙xe6 13.♚c2 ♙d7 14.♙f3 ♙c6 15.♙d2 a5 16.♙fe1 White consolidated while retaining some pull, Grischuk-Kurnosov, Moscow 2010.

11.0-0

11.dxe6! is another problem variation. White aims to keep the central files closed and launch an attack on the h-file:

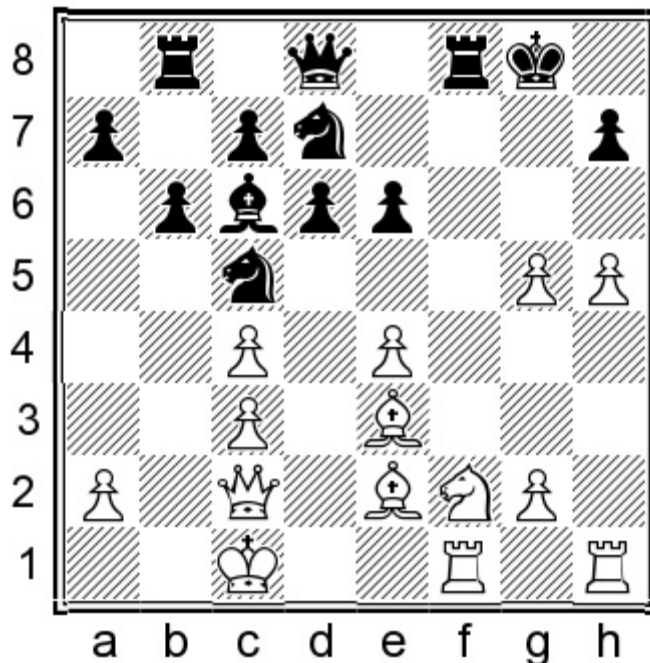
11...fxe6 12.♙e3 b6 13.♚c2 ♙b7



The latest high-level game, Cheparinov-Najer, Kocaeli 2017, went: 14.0-0-0! ♘fd7 15.h4 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 e5?! 17.f5 gxf5

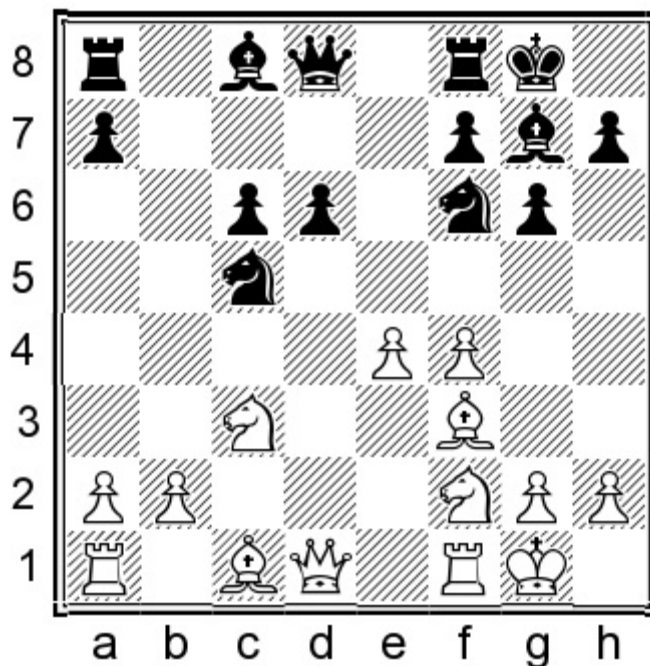
The game Remis Fernandez-Rawlins, ICCF 2017, featured 17...♘f6 18.fxg6 ♘fxe4 19.♘g4 ♘g3 20.♙f3 ♙e4 21.♙xe4 ♘cxe4 22.h5 and White eventually won a sharp and complex game. 18.exf5 ♙b8 19.♙h3 ♙c6. Now instead of 20.♙h6 ♘h8, which is tangled, 20.♙g1! b5 21.♙f3 ♙xf3 22.gxf3+ ♘h8 23.cxb5 ♙xb5 24.♙g5 would have been unpleasant to Black.

I agree with Kotronias that Black should seek counterplay with 16...♙c6!? (instead of 16...e5). However, it is still insufficient after 17.♖df1! ♜b8 18.h5 g5 19.fxg5



Now 19...b5? does not work owing to 20.cxb5 ♙xb5 21.♙xb5 ♜xb5 22.♘g4±, but:
 19...♘e5 20.g6 ♜xf2 21.gxh7+ ♔xh7 22.♙xf2 ♙xe4 23.♚d2 leaves the white king better protected.
 The onus is on Black in this line.

11...exd5 12.cxd5 c6 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♙f3



14...♜b8

The stem game for this line, Grischuk-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2011, saw 14...♚e7 15.♙e3 d5 16.e5 ♘fd7, but later Svetushkin pointed out that 17.♖e1 was in White's favour. Kotronias added 17.♖c1², so we can

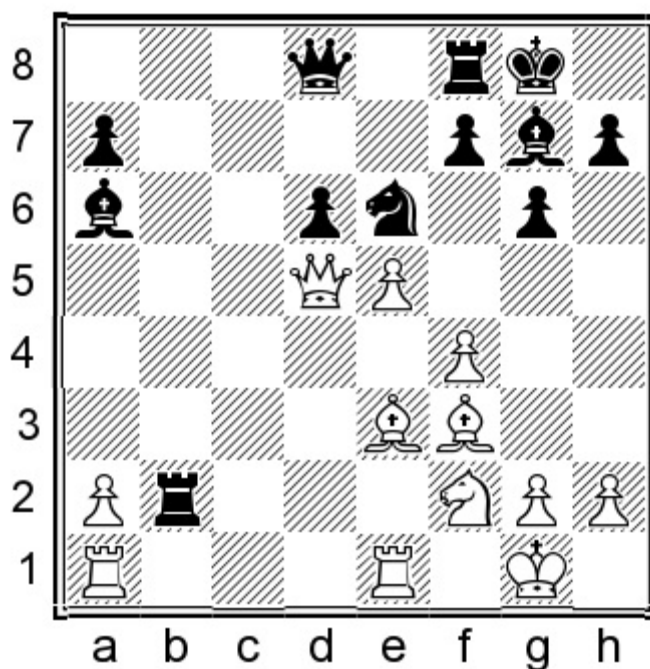
bury 14...♔e7. The text is Black's new hope to solve the opening problems. However, I think that the move order:

14...♕a6 15.♖e1 ♜b8 is more precise since it cuts off the option 16.♞b1 which would stumble into 16...♘g4!.

The immediate 14...♞b8 allows 15.♞b1!?, reviving the threat ♕e3. Then 15...♖e8 16.♕e3 ♘cxe4 does not solve all the problems – 17.♘cxe4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 d5 19.♕xa7 ♞a8 20.♕c5 dxe4 21.♞xd8 ♞xd8 22.♕xe4. White is still a pawn up.

15.♕e3 ♕a6 16.♖e1 ♞xb2 17.e5 ♘d5 18.♘xd5 cxd5 19.♞xd5 ♘e6

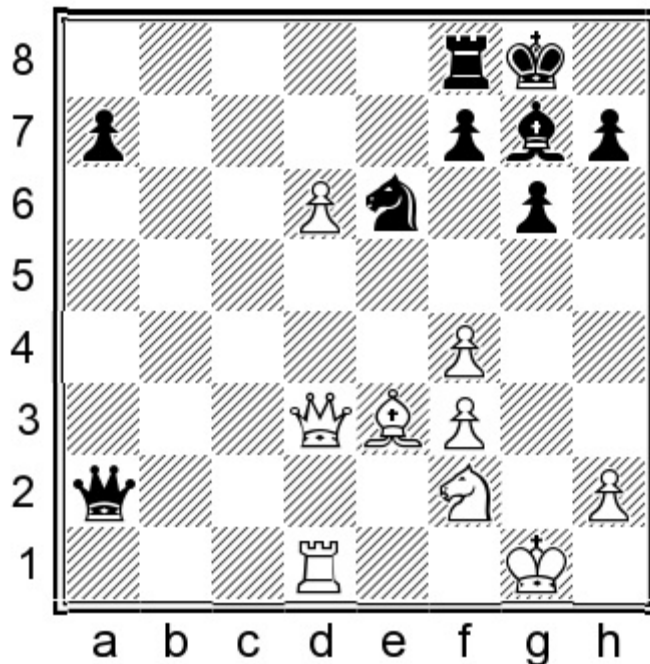
We have reached another critical position.



Kotronias mentions only a long, dubiously-looking line, starting with:

20.♞c6 ♕b7 21.♞c1 ♞b4 22.a3 ♞b3 23.♞c4 ♞xe3. I would not go into details as I do not like Black's position at all (one possible improvement is 22.♘d3). Instead 20...♞a5! 21.♞xd6 ♞xa2= has been tested successfully in email chess.

The most challenging continuation is the yet untried capture 20.exd6!? ♕b7 21.♞d3 ♕xf3 22.gxf3. Of course Black will regain the pawn with 22...♞a5, but 23.♞eb1 ♞xa2 24.♞xa2 ♞xa2 25.♞d1 maintains some pressure.

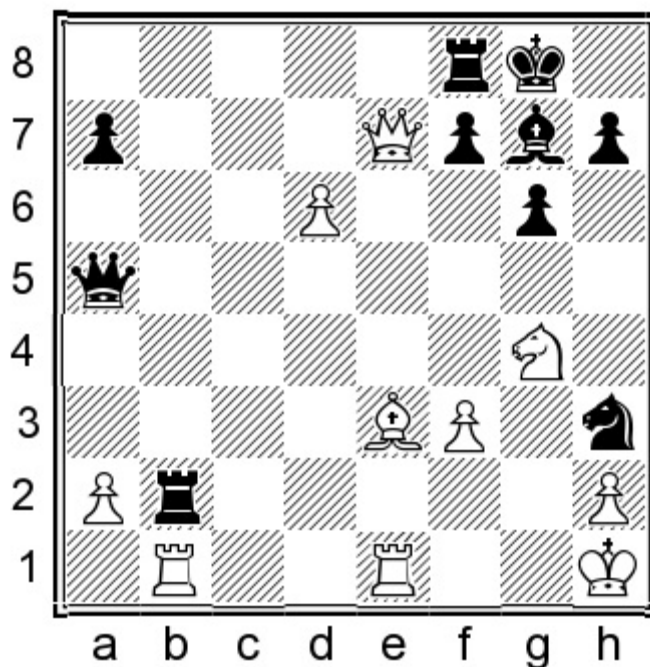


Perhaps Black can defend thanks to the tactical trick 25...♖d8 26.♘e4 a5 27.d7 ♘d4!? 28.♙xd4 ♖xd7 29.♚c3 ♚d5 30.♜g2 ♙xd4 31.♞f6+ ♙xf6 32.♞xd5 ♙xc3 33.♞xd7 f5 with a probable draw, but in rapid games White preserves some chances in the diagram position.

Instead of 22...♚a5 Black could force play with 22...♚h4:

a) 23.♚e4 ♖d8 24.♞ad1 ♖xa2 25.f5 ♚xe4 26.fxe4 ♘f8 27.♙g5 f6 28.♙h4 threatens e4-e5. 28...gxf5 29.exf5 ♖a5 30.♞e7 ♖xf5 loses to 31.d7. Correct is: 28...♞a4! 29.♙g3 ♘d7 and Black holds the blockade.

b) 23.♞ab1!? ♘xf4 24.♚e4 ♚g5+ 25.♘g4 ♘h3+ 26.♜h1 ♚a5 27.♚e7



It may seem that Black is the active side, but that is an optical illusion. The d6-pawn is close to conversion, so Black should seek salvation.

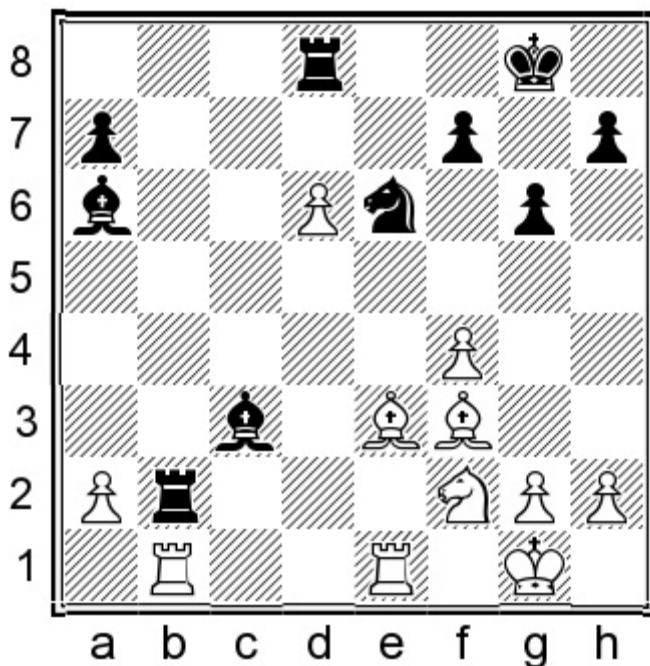
27...h5

27...♖xb1 28.♖xb1 ♔f5 29.♔e4 ♔xe4 30.fxe4 h5 31.♘f2 ♘xf2+ 32.♙xf2±
 28.♘f6+ ♙xf6 29.♔xf6 ♖fb8 30.♖bc1 ♔xa2 31.♔e5 ♖h7 32.d7 ♖d8 33.♙d4 ♘f2+ 34.♙xf2 ♖xf2
 35.♖c8 ♔d2 36.♖xd8 ♖xh2+ with a perpetual.

20.♔xd6 ♔xd6 21.exd6 ♖d8 22.♖ad1

The other way to defend the d6-pawn was 22.♘e4 ♘d4 23.♖ab1 ♖xa2 24.♙f2 (heading for h4) 24...♙d3
 25.♙h4 ♘xf3+ 26.gxf3 ♙xe4 27.♖xe4 f6=.

22...♙c3 23.♖b1



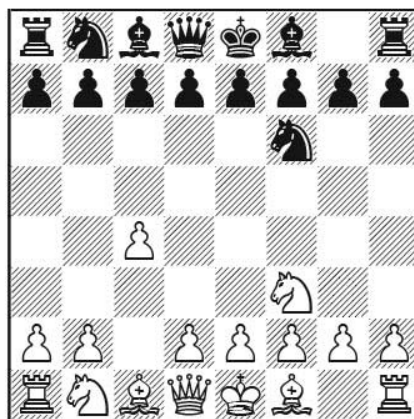
23...♖xb1 24.♖xb1 ♙d4 25.♙xd4 ♘xd4 26.♘e4 ♘xf3+ 27.gxf3 f5 28.♘c5 ♖xd6 29.♖b8+ ♖g7 30.♖a8
 ♙c4 31.♖xa7+ ♖h6 32.a4 ♖d4 33.♖b7

Galjé already had this position in an earlier game!. His opponent Rawlings had opted for 23...♙g8 and a draw was signed a couple of moves later.

33...♖d2 34.a5 ♖a2 35.♖b4 ½-½

The English Anti-Grünfeld

1.c4 ♞f6 2.♞c3; 2.♞f3

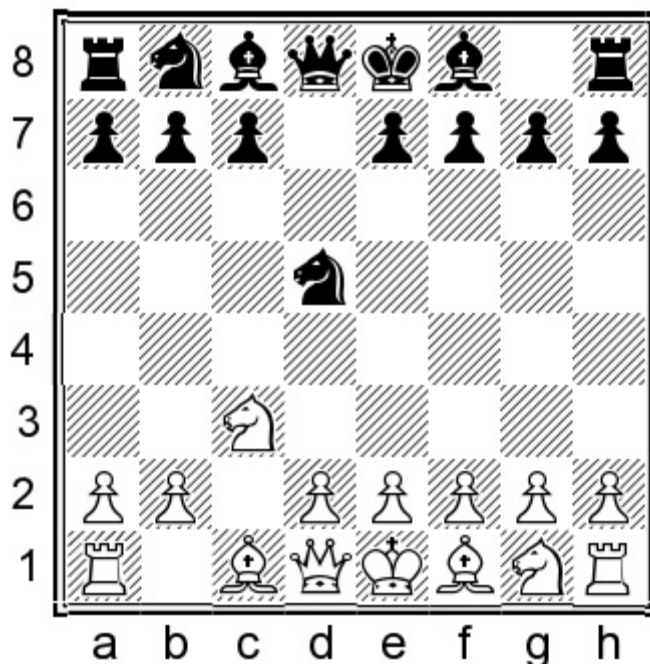


Main Ideas

This chapter aims to serve you as a guide in some of the most popular Anti-Grünfeld systems based on 1.c4. It cannot present a full move-by-move repertoire as we should have dealt with a good half of the theory of closed openings.

In principle the most challenging retorts to 1.c4 should be 1...c5 or 1...e5!. That is why White often prefers the move order with 1.♞f3. Then 1...d5 2.d4 would throw us out of the Grünfeld, so we should answer (apart of 1...c5!?! of course) 1...♞f6 2.c4 g6 when White has various options. I examine the most important of them in line B.

I reserved line A for the event when White plays 1.c4 ♞f6 2.♞c3. It forces 2...d5 3.cxd5 ♞xd5

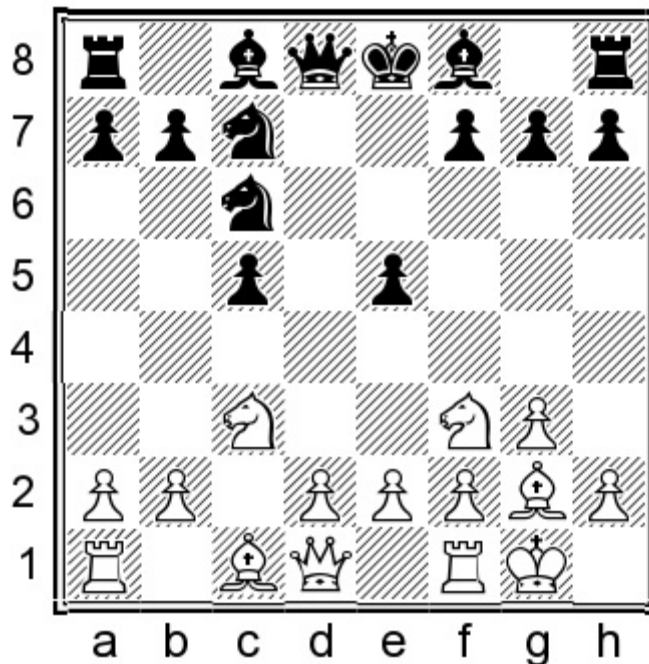


White can always play e4 and recapture on c3 by bxc3, but we should also consider the option of dxc3. The latter is generally slightly better for White if Black had committed his bishop to g7. That explains why I recommend taking on c3 **before** playing ...♔g7.

In the diagram position White could pose us concrete problems with **4.g3**. At this point we must decide what to do with our d5-knight when the opponent hits it with ♔g2. The natural answer would be 4...g6 5.♔g2 ♖xc3 6.bxc3 ♔g7, but the clever delay of ♗f3 enables some tricks, namely 7.♖b1 c5 8.♗xb7 or 7.h4, followed up by ♗h3.

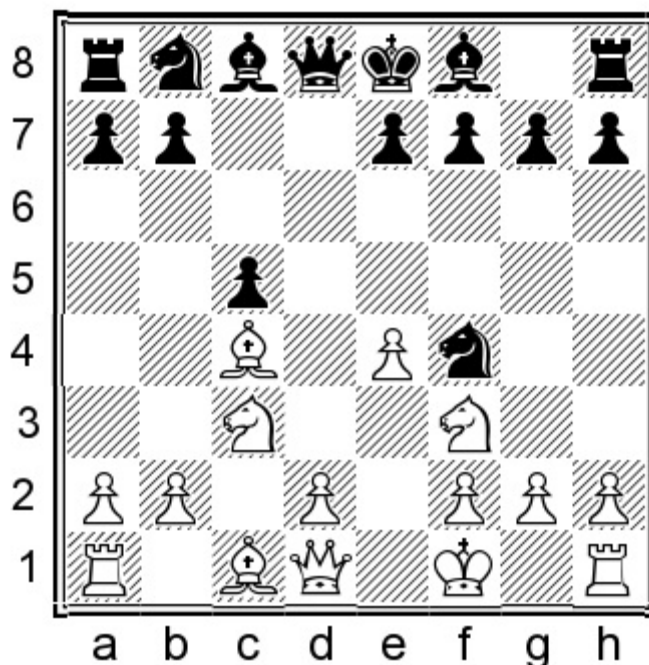
Next we could consider the retreat 5...♗b6. However, the knight lacks prospects from this square and hampers ...b6. I specifically do not like 6.h4.

White's early fianchetto has one obvious drawback though – it defines prematurely the placement of the bishop. That allows us to seize the centre with ...c5 and ...e5, achieving the Reversed Maróczy after 4...c5! 5.♔g2 ♖c7 6.♗f3 ♖c6 7.0-0 e5



The attacks on c5 or e5 have proved to be harmless, and the only plan with a positive White score remains a3+b4. It is easily parried with 8.a3 ♖b8! 9.♗b1 ♕e7 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 b5!. In that pawn structure we commonly defend e5 with ...f6. Note one exception! If White plays 7.a3 before castling, we get a tempo for 7...g6!.

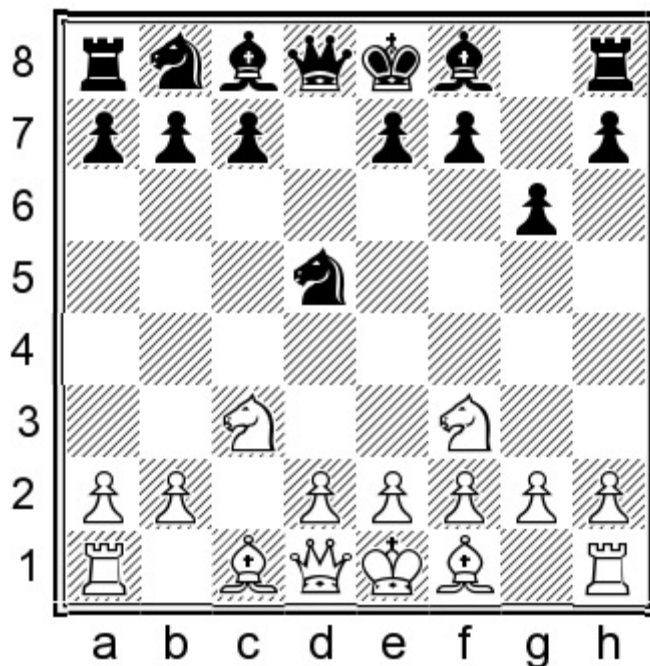
The other major line is 4.♘f3. It makes possible the Grünfeld approach – 4...g6, and I consider it in line B. However, I believe that the most exploitative retort is again 4...c5!. We are not afraid of 5.e3 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 g6 and 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♗g2 ♘c7, but we must study a new line for our repertoire to be complete – 5.e4!? ♘b4 6.♗c4 ♘d3+ 7.♕e2 ♘f4+ 8.♕f1



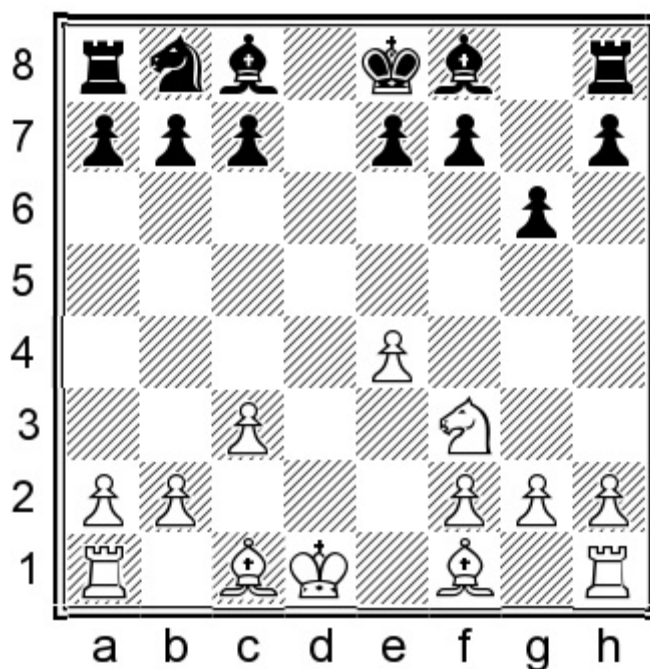
We obviously cannot play for a win by repeating moves with 8...♘d3 (which also could face the tangled 9.♗e2!), so I suggest 8...♘e6. This line has been topical for years, and both sides keep testing

new ideas. You just remember that 9.b4 should be met by 9...g6!, followed by quick castling. Thus you can start with 4.♘f3 g6 and add 4...c5 with time.

2.♘f3 poses other problems since we cannot meet e4 by an exchange on c3. That means 2...d5 would be a mistake. On the other hand, ♘f3 does not threaten e4, so we have a wide choice. If you liked the idea of playing the Reversed Maróczy, note that 2...c5 would involve learning several new systems, based on e3+d4 or g3+d3. That is a huge endeavour. It is relatively simpler to go for **2...g6 3.♘c3** (or we go on with ...♙g7, ...0-0) **3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5**



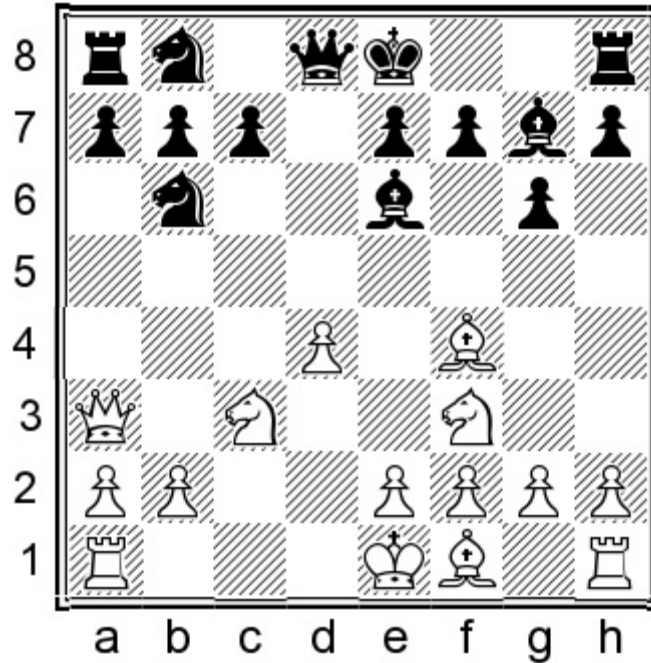
In contrast with line A, here Black is committed to g6 while White has not defined his king's bishop yet. That gives him plenty of choice. For instance, 5.♙a4+ ♘c6! 6.♘e5 ♙d6 7.♘xc6 ♙xc6 8.♙xc6+ bxc6 is drawish, as well as 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♙xd1+ 7.♔xd1



7...f6!, planning ...e5, ...♙c5.

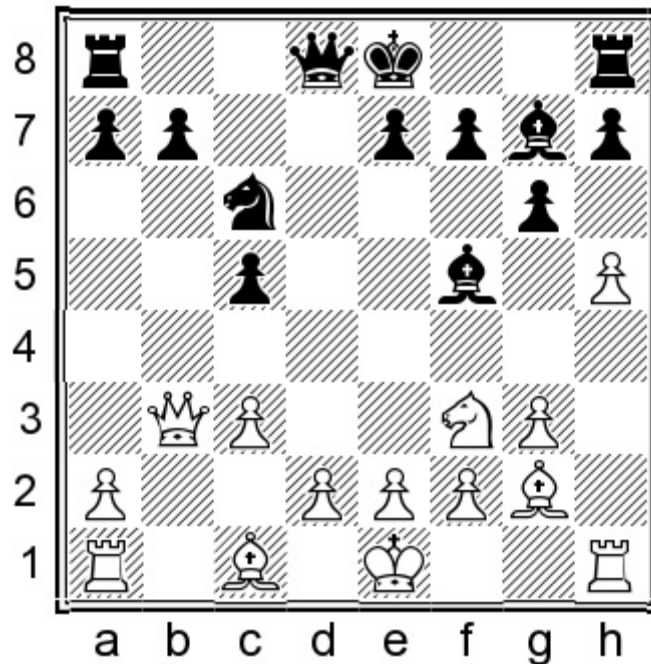
Two lines are really testing:

5.♚b3 ♖b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♙f4 ♙e6 8.♚a3



8...♖c6 or 8...0-0. See a detailed analysis in **game 29** Iturrizaga Bonelli-Cheparinov, Leon 2012.

5.h4!? ♖xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.h5 c5 8.g3 ♖c6 9.♙g2 ♙f5 10.♚b3



10...♚d7!. We can defend f7 with ...♖d8, keeping everything under control. White cannot find a good place for his c1-bishop.

Chapter 13

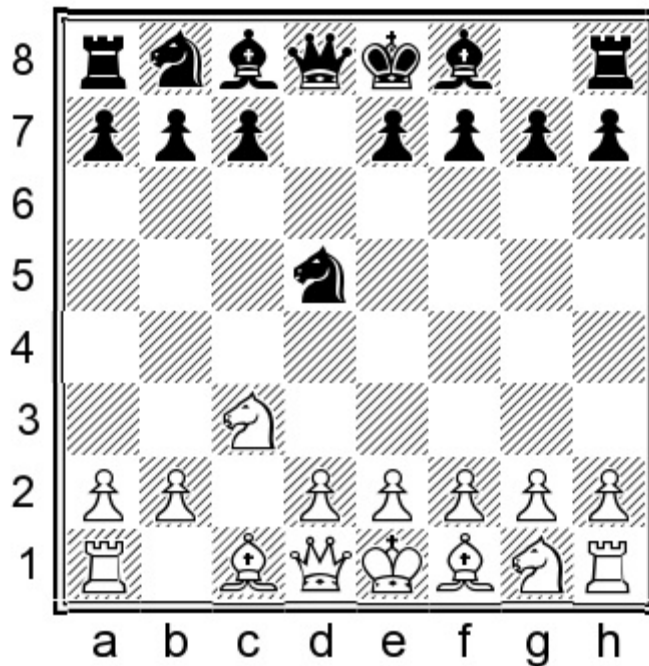
Step by Step

1.c4 ♘f6

A. 2.♘c3; B. 2.♘f3.

2.g3 could be met by 2...c6 3.♗g2 d5 4.♘f3, which is from the Reti domain. Another fine approach is 2...g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 c5.

A. 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5

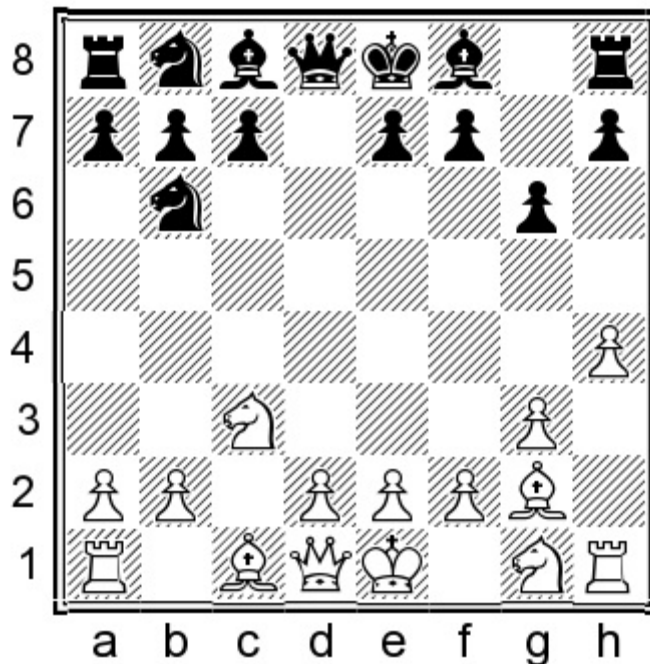


A1. 4.g3; A2. 4.♘f3.

A1. 4.g3 c5

Well, this plan leads us far from the Grünfeld, but lately I do not like the variation 4...g6 5.♗g2 ♘b6 6.h4!.

Perhaps I was influenced by the games of the AI Alpha Zero. It attacks structures with ...g6 by h4 at every opportunity. If White's pawn were on d4, we could counterattack in the centre, but here White gets a lasting initiative for free. For instance:



6...h6

6...h5 looks possible, but it would leave Black without his only active plan in future, based on ...f5. In such event g5 would be a gaping hole.

7.d3 ♖g7 8.♙e3!

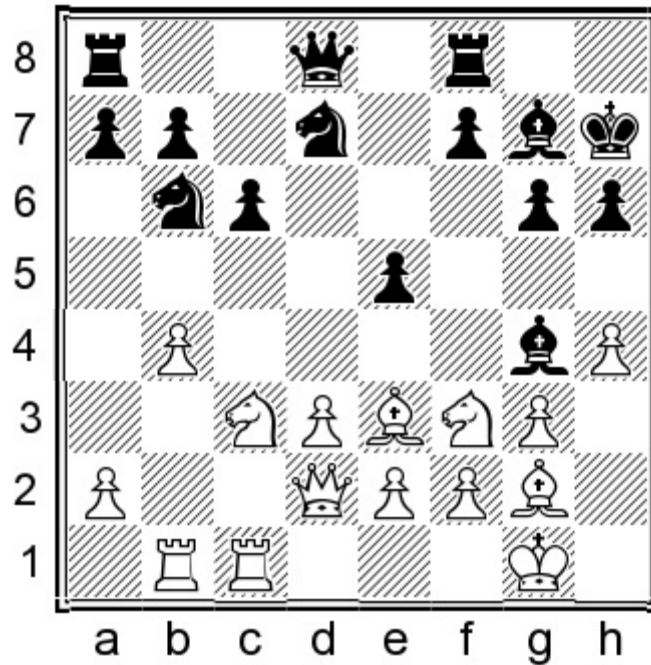
8.♙d2 0-0 9.♚c1 is more popular, but White's construction looks artificial. Black follows up with 9...♗h7 10.f4 h5 11.♘f3 ♘c6 12.♝b1 a5 13.♘e4 ♘d5∞.

9.b4 ♘c6 10.♝b1 e5 11.♘f3 ♙e6∞ is a typical reversed Sicilian.

8...c6 (8...♘c6 9.♙xc6+ is easier for White) 9.♘f3

It is possible that 9.♚c1 to prevent castling is stronger. I analysed 9...♘a6 10.♘f3 e5 11.0-0 ♚e7 12.a4! (12.a3 ♙d7 13.b4 also favours White) 12...♘d7 13.♝b1 ♘f6 14.b4 with an attack on the queenside.

9...0-0 10.0-0 ♙g4 11.♚d2 ♗h7 12.♝fc1 e5 13.♝ab1 ♘8d7 14.b4



White is way ahead in his offensive after 14...♘d5 15.b5!. The point is that 15...♘xc3 16.♙xc3 e4 17.dxe4 ♕xc3 18.♚xc3 gives White a lot of play for the exchange. One nasty idea is to build the battery ♕d2+♚e3.

These considerations may look too subjective and the above variation has not even occurred in practice, but I would not like to recommend something I do not trust in. Nowadays the Reversed Maróczy seems a better practical choice.

5.♕g2 ♘c7 6.♘f3

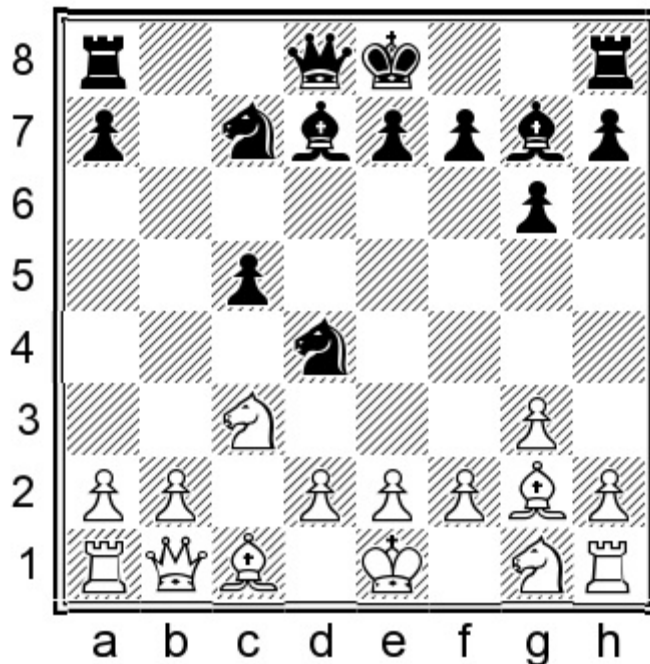
Modern attempts to pose concrete problems are:

6.♚b3 ♘c6 7.♕xc6+ bxc6 8.♚a4 (8.♘f3 f6! 9.♚a4 e5!) 8...♘e6!=.

6.♚a4+ ♕d7 7.♚b3

White can also take the c5-pawn – 7.♚c4 ♘c6! 8.♚xc5 ♘e6! 9.♚c4! ♘ed4 10.♕e4 ♖c8 11.♘f3 (11.e3 f5) 11...♘xf3+ 12.♕xf3 ♘e5=.

7...♘c6 8.♚xb7 ♘d4 9.♚e4 g6 10.♚b1 ♕g7!



White's queen is very clumsy and it is not clear how it could escape from the cage as e3 would weaken the a6-f1 diagonal. For instance: 11.e3 ♖c6 12.♗ge2 0-0 13.0-0 ♕f5 14.♕e4 ♚c8.

6.d3 e5 7.♕e3 (7.♗f3 transposes to the main line) 7...♕e7 8.♖c1 ♗d7 9.♗f3 0-0 10.0-0 ♜b8 11.♗d2 b6 (or 11...♗f6=).

6.e3 is a rare system where White wants to seize space with d4-d5. We have two plausible approaches:

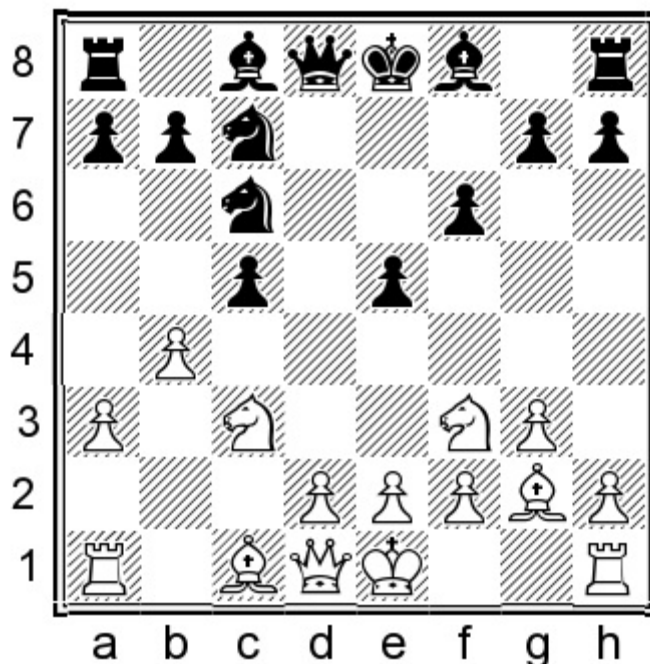
a) 6...e5 7.♗ge2 ♗c6 8.0-0 ♕e7 9.f4 0-0! 10.fxe5 ♗xe5 11.d4 ♗g6 or 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♗c4 – the knight goes to d6, the c8-bishop to e6. If 13.♔h1, we gladly trade bishops with 13...♕g5.

b) 6...g6 7.♗ge2 ♕g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10.exd4 ♗c6 11.d5 (or 11.♕e3 ♗e8 12.♚d2 ♗d6) 11...♗e5 12.♕f4 ♗e8 13.♖e1 ♗c4 14.b3 ♗cd6.

6...♗c6 7.0-0

A special attention deserves the immediate 7.a3.

It may seem that 7...e5 would transpose, but White can save ♜b1. After 8.b4 Black has to defend e5 with 8...f6.



Following 9.♖b1 ♕f5 10.b5! ♗xb1 11.bxc6 ♕f5 the game may be balanced for computers, but White owns the initiative.

The obvious drawback of 7.a3 is that White defines his plan too early. That offers us the possibility to adapt to it by rejecting ...e5 in favour of:

7...g6 8.h4!?

This has been the hottest line lately, but we'll soon see that the march of the h-pawn has its negative sides – it weakens the kingside! However, the alternatives do not set any problems:

8.b4 cxb4 9.axb4 ♕g7 10.♕a3 a6;

8.d3 ♕g7 9.♕e3 ♘e6 10.♖c1 0-0 11.♘d2 ♕d7 12.0-0 ♖c8 13.♘d5 ♘cd4 with a space advantage, Andersen-Dubov, Batumi 2018.

8...h6

Adhiban claims that 8...h5 is better, but he is alone in this assessment.

9.d3 ♕g7 10.♕e3 ♘e6 11.0-0

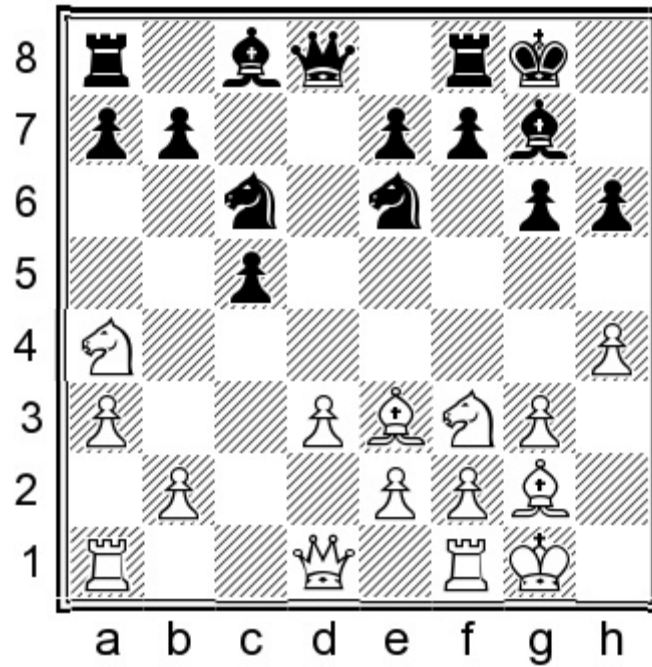
11.♖c1 ♕d7 12.0-0 ♖c8 13.b4! (13.♘a2 ♕xb2!? 14.♖b1 ♕f6 15.♖xb7 g5! could be dangerous for White as his pieces are scattered on the queenside.) 13...cxb4 14.axb4 ♘xb4 15.♗b3 a5 16.d4 0-0 17.♘e5. White has compensation for the pawn, but two correspondence games of 2017 showed that he has nothing decisive, e.g. 17...b6 18.♖fd1 ♗e8 19.f4 ♖c7. Besides, 17...♕xe5!? 18.dxe5 ♕c6 is also unclear. The point is 19.♕h3 ♘d4! 20.♗b2 ♘d3!! 21.exd3 ♘f3+ 22.♔h1 ♘xe5+, when 23.f3 ♘xd3 24.♗e2 ♘xc1 25.♖xc1 e6 26.♕xh6 ♗f6 27.♕g2 ♖fe8 could be risky for White.

11...0-0

Karjakin played in blitz 11...♕d7 12.♘e4 ♖c8 13.b4! turned out to be unpleasant.

A quiet alternative to the exchange sacrifice I propose below is 11...♕d7 12.♘e4 ♖c8 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.♕xc5 ♕xb2 15.♖b1 ♕g7 16.♗d2 b6 17.♕e3 h5= with castling next.

12.♖a4



12...b6!!

An incredible move for humans, yet it is the first “thought” of all the engines!

12...♗cd4 13.♖c1 ♔d6 14.♗d2 ♕d7 indirectly protects the c5-pawn, but after 15.♕xd4! ♔xd4 16.♗c3 ♖ab8 17.♗c4 ♕c6 18.♕xc6 cripples Black’s pawns. A correspondence game finished in a draw while Karjakin even won, but from a practical standpoint it is better to avoid such positions with static weaknesses.

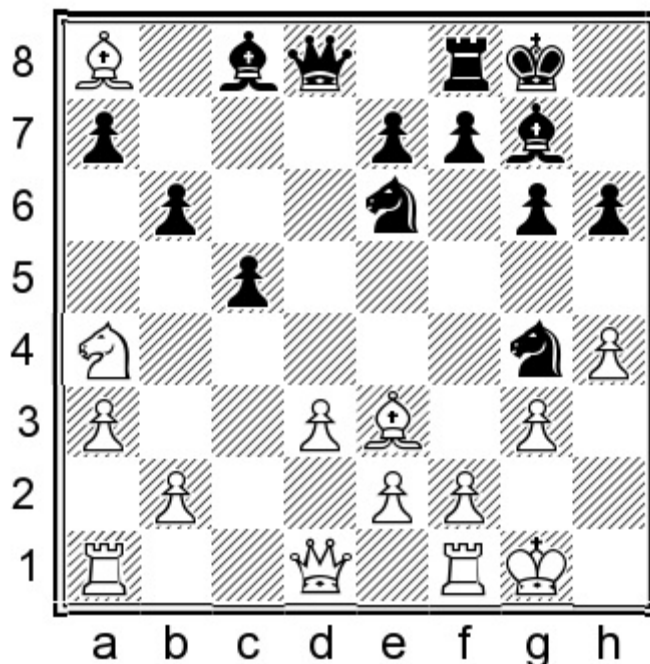
13.♗e5

Or 13.b4 cxb4 14.axb4 ♕b7.

White can win the exchange in another manner – 13.♔d2 ♖h7 14.♗g5+ hxg5 15.♕xc6 ♕d7!

16.♕xa8 ♔xa8 17.♗c3 gxh4 18.gxh4 ♗d4 19.♕xd4 ♕xd4 with compensation.

13...♗xe5 14.♕xa8 ♗g4



White is in for a difficult choice. After 15.♔f3 ♖xe3 16.fxe3 ♕e5 17.♖f2 ♜g7!! 18.♞g1 ♜f5 19.♕e4 ♜d6 20.♕xf5 ♜f6! 21.♜c3 ♜xf5+ Black wins the g3-pawn with a continuing attack.

However, after:

15.♕d2 ♜d4 16.♕g2 (16.e3 ♕e6+) 16...♕e6 17.♜c3 ♕b3 18.♞c1 ♖h7 White is almost in *zugzwang*. Only Black could try to improve, for instance, with ...c4. The engines may hold it, but OTB Black's task is easier.

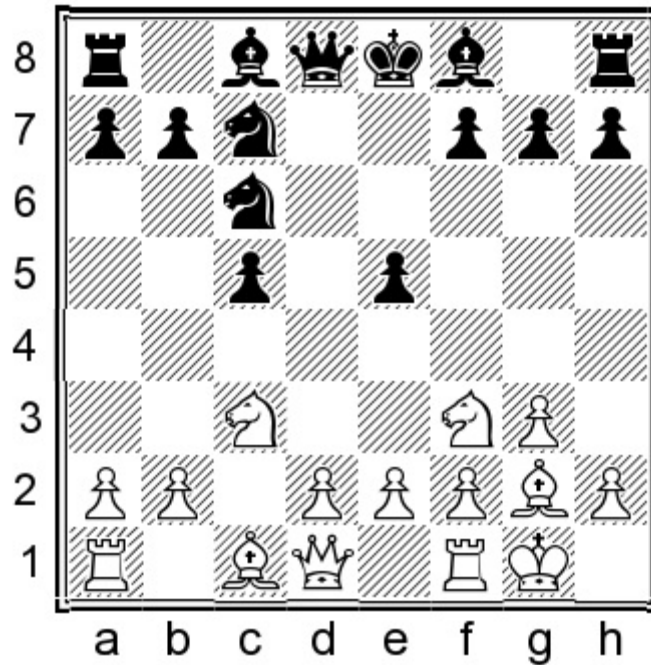
7.d3 e5 8.♜d2 ♕d7 9.0-0 transposes to the main line.

7.♞a4 ♕d7 8.♞e4 is a suspicious idea. It is true that White prevents ...e5, but such a centralised queen defies classical chess rules.

We could attempt to punish the opponent with 8...f5!? 9.♞c4 e5 10.d3 ♕d6∞, but:

8...g6 9.♜e5 ♕g7 10.♜xd7 ♜xd7 11.0-0 0-0= is much better tested – 12.a3 ♞ac8 13.♞b1 ♜e6 14.b4 ♞fd8 15.b5, Ehlvest-Milos, Sao Paulo 2009, when 15...♜a5! would have been pleasant for Black.

7...e5



8.d3

I won a nice game after 8.a3

8...f6 9.e3 ♔e7 10.d4 cxd4 11.exd4 exd4 12.♘e2 ♘e6 13.b4 d3 14.♘f4±, Delchev-M.Nikolov, Bankia 2011.

The best plan is:

8...♖b8! 9.♖b1 ♔e7 10.b4 cxb4!

M.Marín missed this simple answer in his book about the English Opening.

11.axb4 b5 with a comfortable position. The only sensible try is 12.♙c2 0-0!

Instead Svidler preferred to snatch a pawn with 12...♖b6?! 13.d4 ♘xb4 14.♙b2 f6, which is dubious. Black's pieces are scattered all over the board and opening the centre with 15.d4! would have been very dangerous for him.

13.♘xb5 ♘xb4 14.♖xb4 ♘xb5 15.♖b1 ♔e6=.

8...♔e7 9.♘d2

9.♔e3 0-0 10.♖c1 gives a wider choice between 10...♔d7, 10...♔e6 and even 10...♘e6. In practice White remains way lower than 50%.

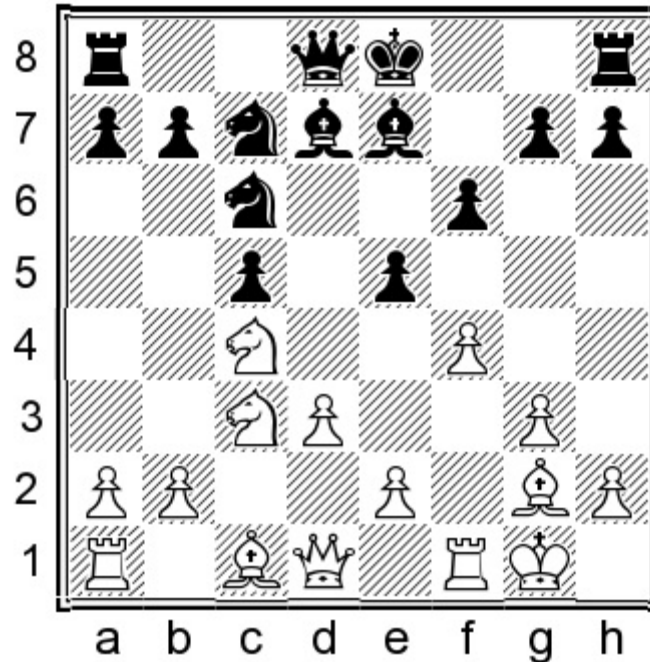
9...♔d7!

It is not obligatory to prevent ♔xc6, but I believe that it is easier to play with a flexible pawn structure. Still, 9...0-0 has its fans.

10.♘c4 f6

The pawn sacrifice 10...0-0 11.♔xc6 ♔xc6 12.♘xe5 ♔e8 became the main line in the 80ies, but nowadays Black is likely to suffer against a strong opponent.

11.f4



It was believed that White has a lasting initiative here. Indeed, 11...0-0?! 12.fxe5 and 11...exf4 12.♔xf4 would be in his favour.

11...b5!

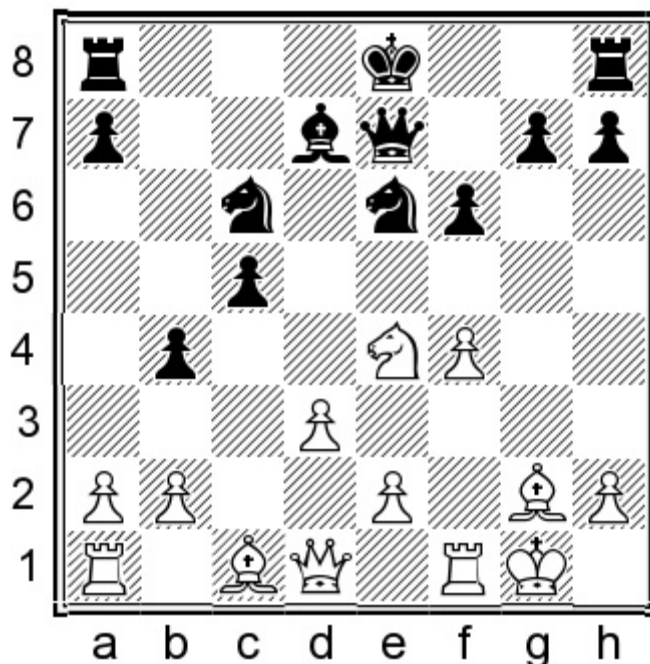
Breaking the contact of the c1-bishop with the f4-square. This move was played by Bulgarian master Kolarov, but passed unnoticed until Polugaevsky beat Ree with it in 1972. Still, the famous Soviet theoretician was not entirely happy with it and kept looking for new ideas in this line, to introduce the above-mentioned sacrifice 10...0-0 11.♕xc6 ♕xc6 12.♞xe5 ♕e8 in 1974.

12.♞e3 exf4 13.♞f5

This little trick at least gives White the bishop pair to compensate for the worse pawn structure. 13.gxf4 0-0 14.♞ed5 ♞xd5! 15.♕xd5+ ♔h8 16.♞xb5 ♖c8 17.♕g2 ♕g4 promises Black a strong initiative and pressure on the e-file.

13.gxf4 0-0 14.f5 ♖c8 consolidates.

13...b4 14.♞xe7 ♔xe7 15.♞e4 ♞e6! 16.gxf4



A critical position for the Reversed Maróczy. The big question is should Black allow f4-f5 or not. Email games suggest that 16...f5 is possible and 17.♘g3 0-0 18.e4 g6 is holding, e.g. 19.a3 bxa3. However, I do not see an urgent reason to give White a lever in the centre.

16...0-0!? 17.f5

The most principled continuation, yet it does not reach its goal to create ground for a kingside attack. Perhaps 17.♘g3 is stronger. We could answer as in the main line – 17...♖ac8 18.e3, when 18...f5= is already obligatory.

17...♘ed4 18.♘g3

18.♙e3 ♖ac8 followed by ...♗e8, ...♘e5 also gives Black pressure in the centre.

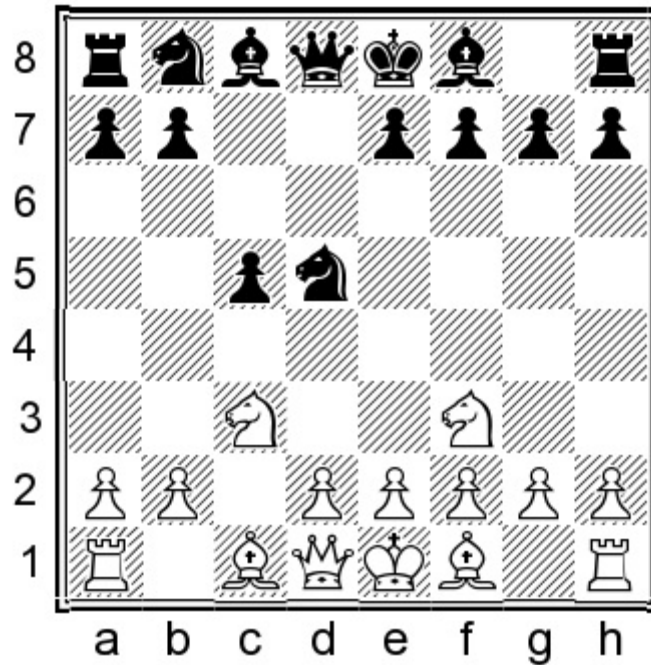
18...♖ac8 19.♗f4

White's pieces take defensive stands after 19.♙e4 ♔h8. We could advance further with ...♘e5, ...a5-a4.

19...g6!

The safest approach! 19...♗fd8 as in Minasian-Grosar, Pula 1997, is also good, but the text underlines the fact that White's activity on the kingside is short-lived. Black has the better game.

A2. 4.♘f3 c5!



4...g6 is the alternative line. It is covered in line B.

The text takes advantage of the fact that White missed to play d4. Besides, we already learned how to meet the most popular reply to 4...c5 – 5.g3 ♞c6 6.♙g2 ♞c7 transposes to line A1, while 5.d4 g6 6.e4 is a pure Grünfeld.

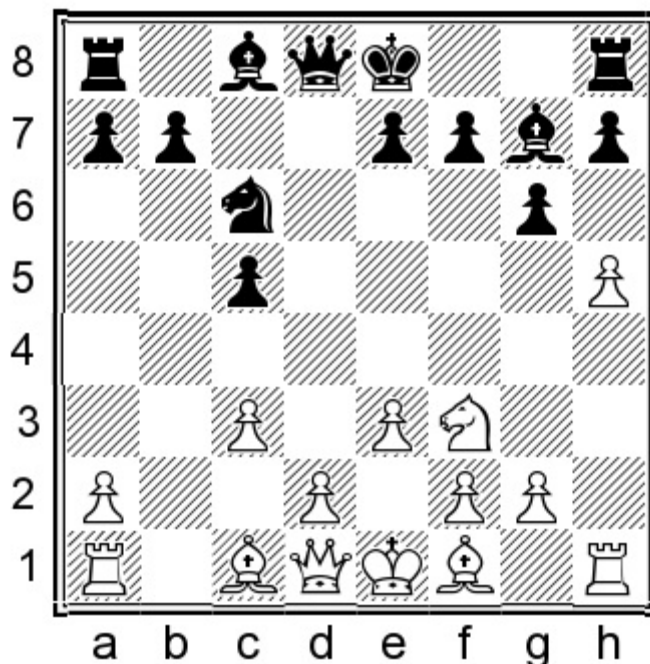
5.e4!?

5.e3 ♞xc3 6.bxc3 g6 should be easy to play for Grünfeld aficionados.

7.♙b5+ ♙d7 8.♙e2 (8.a4 ♙g7 9.d4 ♚a5=) 8...♙g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.d4 has occurred in several games of Vachier-Lagrave of 2018-2019. He obviously believes in the setup with 10...♙c6, while Nepomniachtchi in 2017 included 10...♚a5 11.♚b3 ♙c6 12.♙d2 ♞d7=.

The only non-standard attempt is:

7.h4!? ♙g7 8.h5 ♞c6



9.♙e2

The queen lift ♚d1-a4-h4 does not threaten anything.

9.♜b3 b6 10.♘b5 ♚c7 11.♞g5 is parried by 11...e6 12.d4 a6.

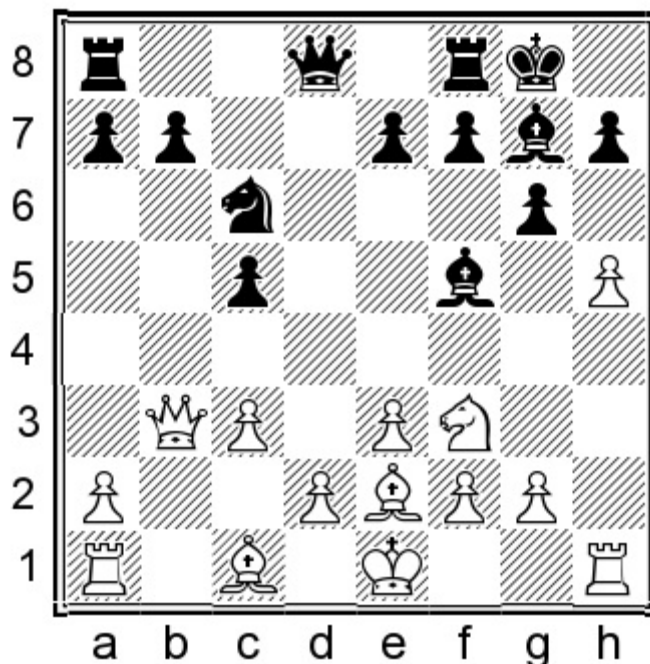
9.♘c4 only gives Black a tempo for ...♞a5 – 9...0-0 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♙a3 ♞a5.

9.♙a3 ♚a5 10.♞h4 is an ingenious try which brought White two victories. I suggest to attack it with 10...c4!, reviving the threat on ♙a3, but most importantly, enabling ...♚xh5 in some lines.

After 11.♘b4 (11.♘c1 ♘f6) 11...♞xb4 12.cxb4 ♚b6! 13.♘xc4 0-0 14.♞c1 ♘f6 we regain the pawn and enjoy a bishop pair in an open position.

9...♘f5 10.♚b3 0-0!

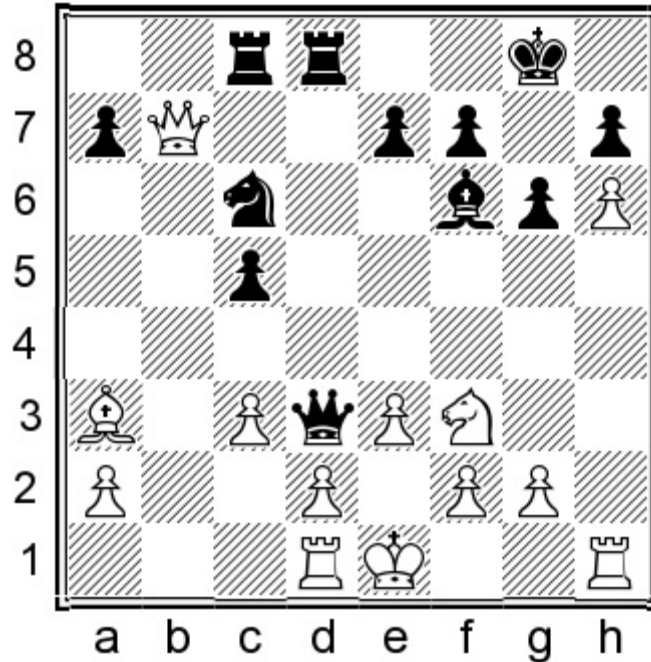
This move was mentioned by Kir.Georgiev and Semkov in their book *The Modern English* vol.2 in connection with the idea to sacrifice a pawn after:



11.hxg6 (11.♖xb7 ♜b4) 11...hxg6! (Parligras-Pultinevicius, Skopje 2019 saw 11...♙xg6, but why to give up our bishop following 12.♞h4!) 12.♖c4 (12.♙a3 ♖a5 13.♞g5 ♜ad8 14.♖xb7? fails to 14...♞xd2!) 12...e5 13.♖xc5 ♙d3 14.a4 ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 e4 16.♞d4 ♞c8 17.♖b5 ♞e8∞. I fully agree with this suggestion. I have also analysed:

11.h6!? ♙f6 12.♖xb7

Now 12...♞b4 13.cxb4 is pretty unclear to me. You could choose it to play for a win. Safer is: 12...♞c8, for instance, 13.♙a3 ♙d3 14.♙xd3 ♖xd3 15.♞d1 ♞fd8



16.♖b1 ♖c4 17.♖b3 ♖d3 18.c4 ♞a5 19.♖xd3 ♞xd3 20.♙c1 ♞xc4 21.♞e2 ♞d7 22.d3 ♞b6=.

5...♞b4 6.♙c4

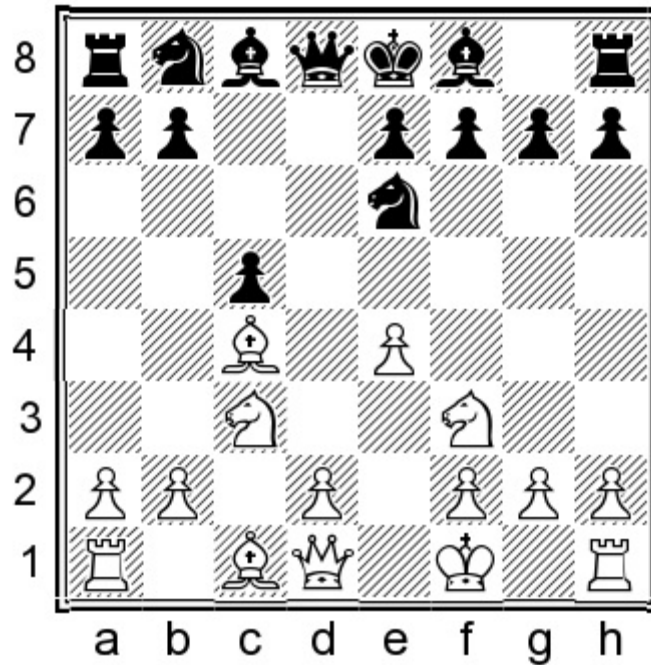
6.♙b5+ ♞8c6 7.d4 cxd4 8.a3 ♙d7=.

6...♞d3+ 7.♞e2 ♞f4+

7...♞xc1+ 8.♞xc1 a6 is also possible.

8.♞f1 ♞e6

8...♞d3 is topical. One small drawback of such repertoire is the possible repetition of moves after the “dumb” 9.♞e2. So let’s delve deeper into the older approach.



9.b4!?

It seems that the latest trend is to play 9.h4. Although the stats are very favourable to Black, things are far from simple. I suggest:

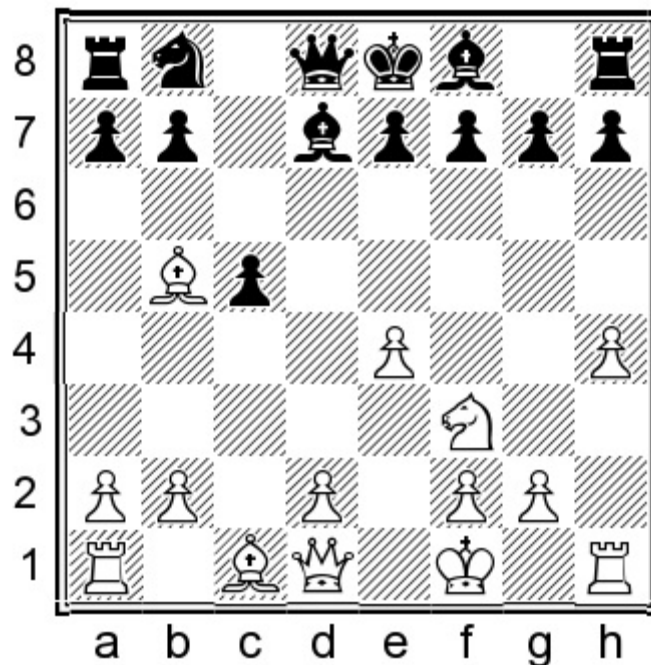
9...♞d4 10.♞b5!

Svidler-Vachier Lagrave, (5.4) Tbilisi 2017, saw 10.d3 e6 11.♙f4 a6 12.♞xd4 cxd4 13.♞e2 (13.♞b1!? ♞d7) 13...♞c6 14.a3 ♙d6=.

10...♞xb5

I do not like 10...♞dc6 11.d4 a6 12.d5 axb5 13.♙xb5 e6 14.♙e2 ♙e7 15.dxc6 ♞xc6 16.♞h3 with an initiative. White could take on c6 and enjoy a passed a-pawn.

11.♙xb5+ ♙d7



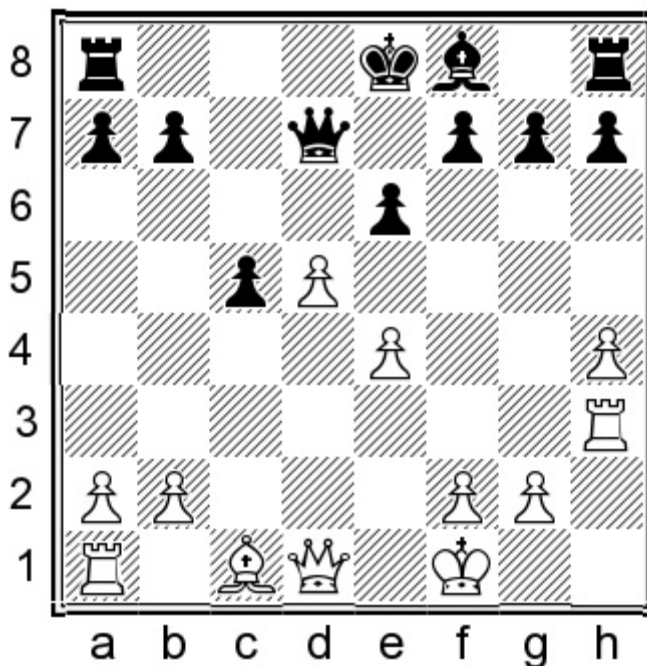
12.♙xd7+

12.♙e2 e6 13.b3 ♗e7 14.♙b2 0-0 15.h5 ♗xb5 16.♙xb5 also hides some venom. I'd trade queens quickly with 16...♙d7 [16...♙b6 17.♙c4 ♙d6 (17...♙d8 18.g4↑) 18.h6 g6 19.d4! cxd4 20.♙xd4 ♙xd4 21.♙xd4 ♖c6 22.♙g7! ♙fd8 23.e5! is a funny position where a mate would be hanging in the air as long as White has one rook living, e.g. 23...♖b4 24.g3 ♙ac8 25.♔g2 ♙c2 26.♖h2 ♙dd2 27.♖g4 ♖d3 28.♙ad1±.] 17.♙xd7 ♖xd7 18.♕e2 f6=.

12...♙xd7

12...♖xd7 13.h5 e5 14.d3 ♗e7 15.♙b3 ♙c7 16.♙e3 h6 17.g4 leaves White with the more active pieces.

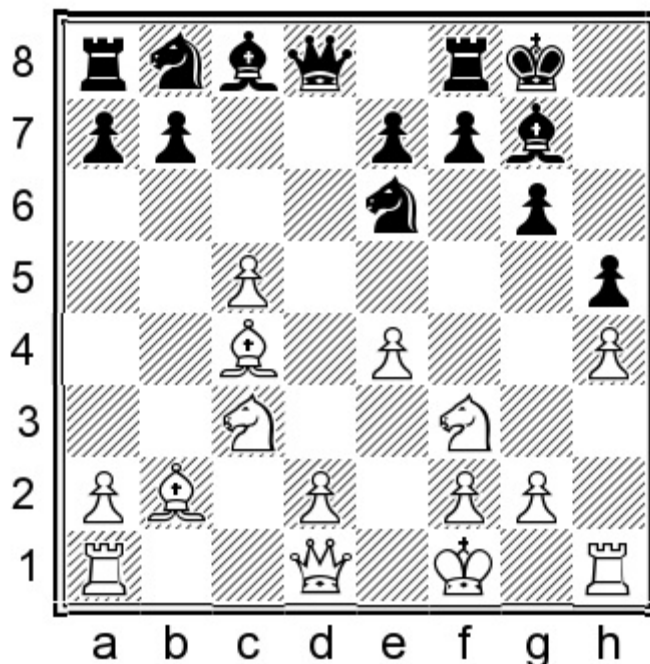
13.♖e5 ♙e6 14.d4 ♖d7 15.♖xd7 ♙xd7 16.d5 e6 17.♙h3



17...exd5

17...♙e7 18.♙f4 ♙d8 19.♙d3 exd5 20.exd5 0-0 21.d6 ♙f6 should hold too, but requires a few strong moves – 22.♙g5 ♙xg5 23.hxg5 ♙fe8 24.♙c1 b6 25.b4 ♙e5 26.bxc5 bxc5 27.f4 ♙f5 28.♙f3 ♙e4 29.♙xc5 ♙xf4=.

18.exd5 ♙e7 19.♙f4 0-0 20.d6 ♙f6 21.♙d5 ♙d4 22.♙e1 ♙fe8



This novelty is the point of our defence. Now the g7-bishop is protected, so the tricks with 13.d4 ♖xd4 14.♗d5 are ineffective.

13.♙xe6 ♗xe6 14.d4 is also dubious in view of 14...♙g4 15.♗e2 (Stayed the knight on c6, 15.d5 would have been with a tempo!) 15...b6!, undermining the enemy centre.

The result of our quick castling was that we did not cede any ground on the kingside. Our next task should be to avoid some tactical devices, based on the weakening of g6. Possible continuations are:

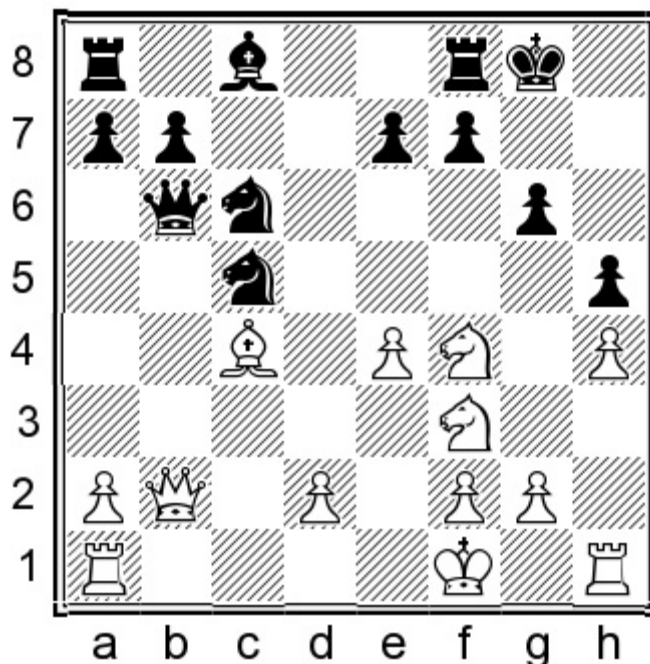
13.g4? hxg4 14.♗g5. White is undeveloped for such offense. We should counterattack – 14...♗c6! 15.d3 ♗f4 16.♙d2 ♗h5. White's attacking impulse has been tamed, while his king has remained uncovered.

13.♙e1 ♗c6 14.♙e3

Now 14...♗cd4 15.♙b1 ♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♙d4 17.♙h6 ♙g7 18.♙e3 is a draw, and we have several other decent options.

Perhaps safest is to kill the dangerous light-squared bishop with 14...♗a5 15.♙d5 ♗c7 16.d3 ♙b8 (preparing ...b6) 17.♙c1 ♙g4 18.♗h2 ♗xd5 19.exd5 ♙f5 20.♗f3 e6 21.d6 b6.

13.♙c2 ♗c6 14.♗d5 ♙xb2 15.♙xb2 ♗xc5 16.♗f4 ♙b6!



The threat $\text{N}xg6$ is harmless without queens – 17. $\text{Q}xb6$ $axb6$ 18. $\text{N}xg6$ $\text{R}d8$.

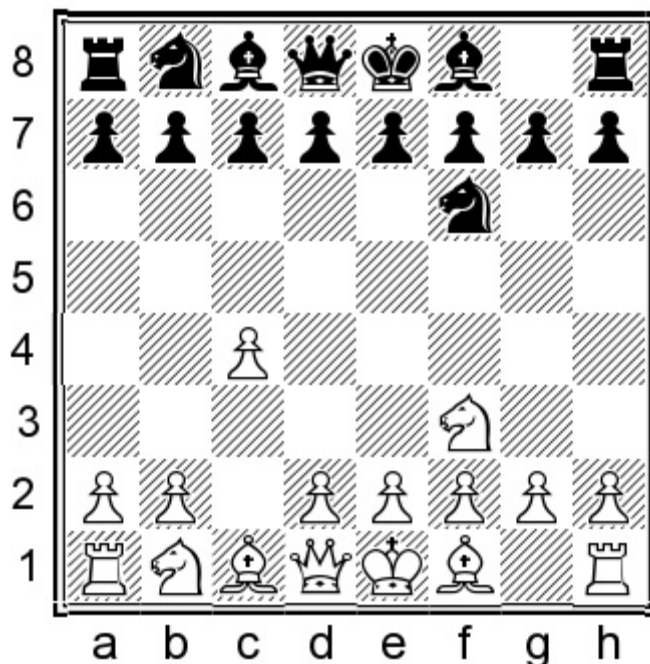
17. $\text{Q}c2$ $\text{N}b4$

Do not underestimate White's attack! 17... $\text{N}a5$ would stumble into 18. $\text{R}b1$ $\text{Q}c7$ 19. $\text{N}d5$ $\text{Q}d6$ 20. $e5$ $\text{Q}d8$ 21. $\text{N}xe7+$! $\text{Q}xe7$ 22. $\text{Q}xg6+$ $\text{K}h8$ 23. $\text{Q}h6+$ $\text{K}g8$ 24. $\text{Q}d5$ $\text{Q}d8$ 25. $\text{Q}g6+$ $\text{K}h8$ 26. $\text{Q}xh5+$ $\text{K}g7$ 27. $e6$ →.

17... $\text{N}e6$!? is only good for a draw – 18. $\text{N}xe6$ $\text{Q}xe6$ 19. $\text{Q}xe6$ $\text{N}d4$ 20. $\text{N}xd4$ $\text{Q}xd4$ 21. $\text{Q}c3$ $\text{Q}xc3$ 22. $\text{Q}xf7+$ $\text{K}xf7$ 23. $dxc3$ $\text{R}ac8$ 24. $\text{R}h3$ $\text{R}c4$ 25. $\text{R}b1$ $b6$ 26. $\text{R}b4$ $\text{R}fc8$ =.

18. $\text{Q}b1$ $\text{Q}g4$ 19. $d4$ $\text{N}ca6$. Play is double-edged, but Black is fine. The $g6$ -pawn is protected by the queen, 20. $a3$ $\text{Q}xf3$ 21. $axb4$ $\text{Q}c7$ is a double attack.

B. 2. $\text{N}f3$



This is a flexible move order which is a challenge to our repertoire so far. A good answer is 2...c5, but then we should be ready for tons of variations with g3 or e3. Still, the effort could be rewarding.

2...g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5

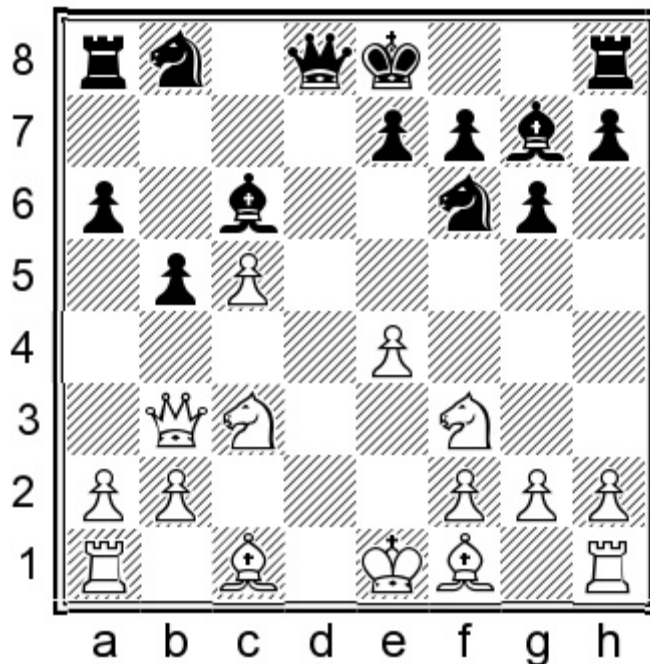
4.♙a4+ ♕d7 5.♚b3 dxc4 6.♚xc4 (or 6.♚xb7?! ♘c6 7.♘b5 ♘d5↑) has practically disappeared from tournaments. The known equaliser is 6...a6 7.d4 b5 8.♚b3

It may seem that the queen would stay better in the centre, but 8.♚d3 ♕g7 9.e4 b4! unleashes the “bad” bishop: 10.♘e2 (10.♘d1 ♕b5 11.♚c2 ♕xf1 12.♙xf1 c5! 13.dxc5 ♘c6) 10...♕b5 11.♚c2 0-0 12.♘f4 ♕xf1 13.♙xf1 ♚d7 14.♕e3 ♚b5+ 15.♙g1 ♘bd7.

8...♕g7 9.e4 c5! 10.dxc5

Alternatively, 10.e5?! ♘g4 11.h3 [11.♚d5?! cxd4! 12.♘xd4 (12.♚xa8 dxc3 13.♚e4 ♚c7±) 12...♕xe5 13.♕e2 e6!] 11...cxd4 12.hxg4 ♕e6!±.

10...♕c6 (10...0-0 11.♕e2 ♕c6 or 11...♕e6 also does the job)

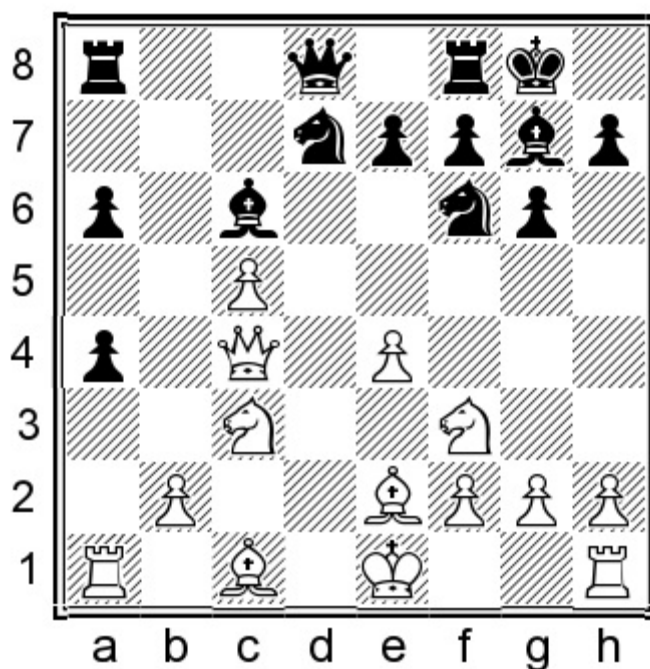


This position first occurred in the game Grischuk-Svidler, Moscow 2007.

White chose: 11.e5 ♘fd7 12.♙e3 (12.e6 ♘xc5 13.exf7+ ♔f8 14.♚b4 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♘d3+ 16.♙xd3 ♚xd3) 12...♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♙xe5 14.f4 ♙g7 15.♞d1 (15.♔f2 0-0 16.♞d1 ♘d7 17.♙e2 e5, Lalith,-Li, Puerto Madryn 2009) 15...♚a5 16.♔f2 e6 17.a3 0-0. Black's kingside is safer and that makes his game easier.

The other developing move, 11.♙e2, also returns the pawn: 11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♙xe4 13.0-0 ♙d5 (or 13...♚d5 14.♚xd5 ♙xd5 15.♞d1, Hungaski-Ganguly, Edmonton 2008, 15...e6=) 14.♚e3 ♘c6 15.♞d1 0-0 16.♞b1 ♞a7 17.b3 ♞d7 18.♙b2 ♙xb2 19.♞xb2 ♙xf3 20.♞xd7 ♚xd7 21.♙xf3 ♘d4=, Maksimenko-Areshchenko, Kallithea 2008.

11.a4 bxa4 12.♚c4 0-0 13.♙e2 ♘bd7



14.♘d4 (14.0-0 ♚c7 was unclear in Jankovic-Grandelius, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010) 14...♙xe4

15. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 16. ♖c6, but it turns out that Black obtains an initiative after 16... ♖c7 17. ♖xe7+ (17. ♖xe4 ♖xc5 18. ♖d5 ♖b3 19. ♖b1 ♖ad8! 20. ♖e4 ♖d6) 17... ♖h8 18. ♖d5 ♖e5 19. c6 ♖d6 20. ♖a2 ♖c5↑.

The most challenging continuation is probably:

11. ♖e5 0-0 12. f3 ♖fd7 13. ♖d3 (13. ♖xd7!?) 13... ♖b7 14. ♖e3, but Mislin-Lakatos, ICCF 2012, showed that Black's initiative is at least enough to keep the balance – 14... ♖c6 15. ♖b4 e6 16. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 17. ♖e2 ♖b8 18. a3 a5 19. 0-0 b4 20. axb4 ♖xb4 21. ♖c2 ♖c7 22. ♖fb1 ♖fb8. He could always even the material with ... ♖a7, ... ♖f8.

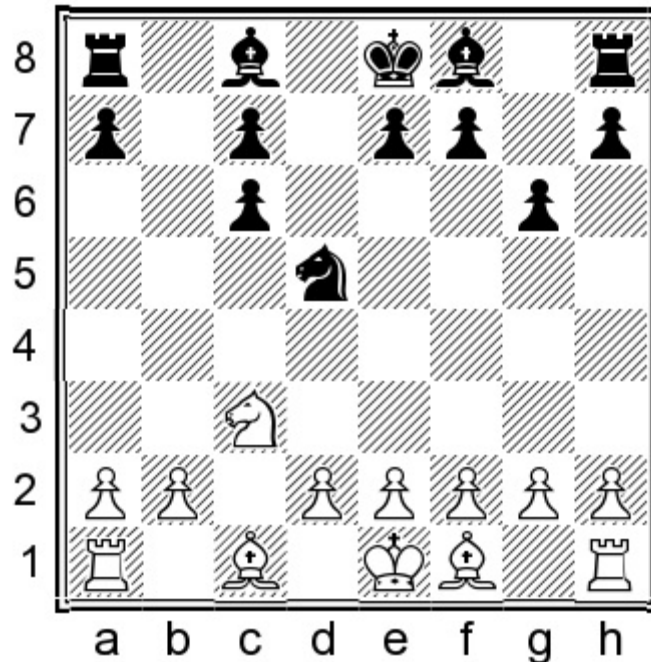
4... ♖xd5 5. h4

5. ♖a4+ has drifted out of fashion owing to 5... ♖c6!

5... c6 6. ♖xd5! ♖xd5 7. e4 ♖d6 8. d4 ♖d7 9. ♖e3 ♖b6 10. ♖c2 ♖g7 11. a4 favours White.

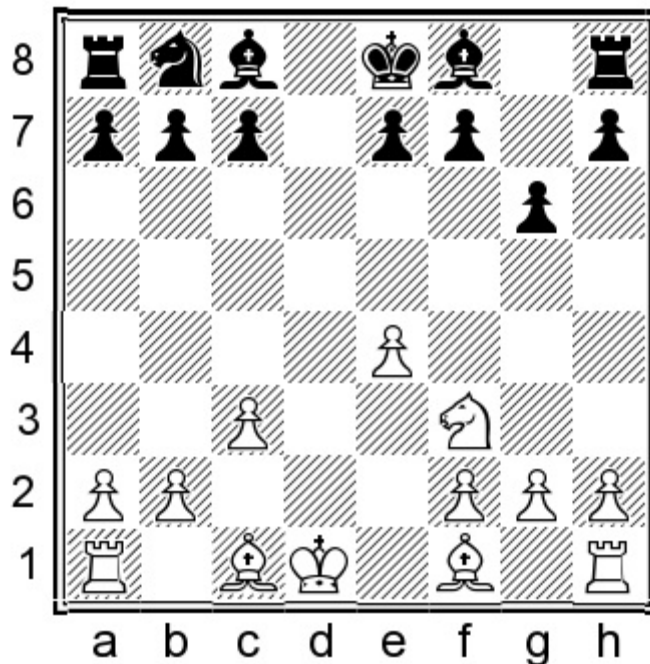
5... ♖d7 6. ♖h4 ♖xc3 7. bxc3! c5 8. ♖b1 ♖c7 9. ♖g3 ♖xg3 10. hxg3 is slightly annoying, too.

6. ♖e5 ♖d6 7. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 8. ♖xc6+ (8. ♖d4 ♖xc3!) 8... bxc6



At first sight White has the much better pawn structure. A closer look reveals that he cannot develop his dark-squared bishop without allowing Black to plug the c-file – 9. g3 ♖g7 10. ♖g2 ♖e6 11. b3 0-0-0 12. ♖b2 ♖xc3 13. ♖xc6 (13. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 14. dxc3 ♖d6=) 13... ♖d6 14. ♖f3 ♖a6 15. dxc3 ♖d8=. In both cases Black rules on the d-file.

There is little we can do if White decides to dry out play with 5. e4 ♖xc3 6. dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7. ♖xd1



It has been established that the best plan is:

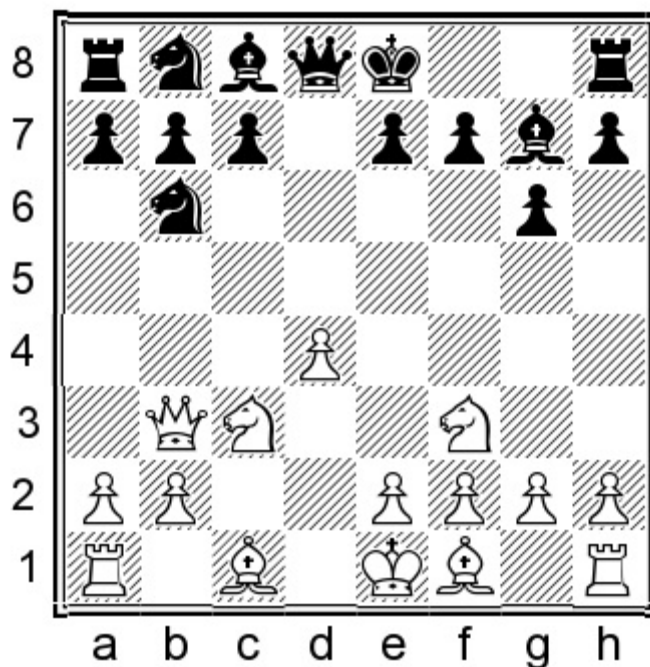
7...f6! 8.h4!?

Or 8.♞e3 e5 9.♘d2 ♖d7!, aiming to trade dark-squared bishops with ...♞c5 while keeping the other one.

8.♞c4 e5 9.♞e3 ♖d7 10.♙e2 ♞c5! 11.♞hd1 ♞xe3 12.♙xe3 ♙e7 13.♘d2 a5 14.f3 ♖b6 15.♞e2 ♞e6 16.♘b3 ♖c4+ 17.♞xc4 ♞xc4 18.♘c5 b6 19.b3 ♞e6, draw, Ivanchuk-Nepomniachtchi, Havana 2010.

8...♞g4 9.♙c2 e5 10.♞e3 ♖d7 11.♘d2 h5. Black will trade bishops through c5 (or h6 in the event of 12.b4) with a solid construction.

5.♙b3 ♖b6 6.d4 ♞g7

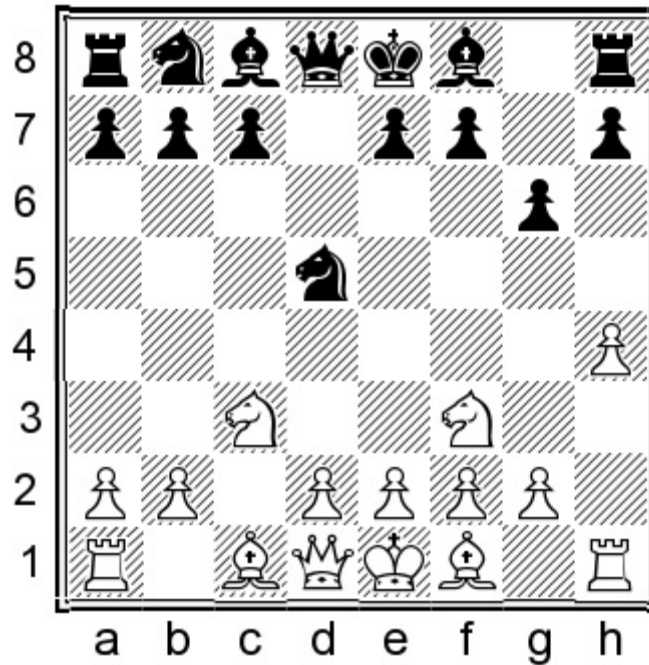


7.♙f4 ♘e6 8.♚a3 brings White good results.

The queen is misplaced on c2 – 8.♚c2?! ♘c6 9.e3 (9.♖d1 ♘b4 10.♚b1 ♘4d5 11.♘xd5 ♚xd5 12.e4 ♚xa2 13.d5 ♚xb1 14.♖xb1 ♘d7 15.♙xc7 0-0 16.♙d3 f5 17.0-0 fxe4 18.♙xe4 ♙f5, Berkes-Lupulescu, Balatonlelle 2002) 9...♘b4 10.♚d1 (10.♚c1 0-0 11.♙e2 c5 12.dxc5 ♘6d5 13.♘xd5 ♚xd5 14.0-0 ♖ac8) 10...0-0 11.♙e2 c5↑.

Perhaps after 8.♚a3 safest is:

8...♘c6, although 8...0-0 is more interesting. See a detailed analysis in **game 29** Iturrizaga Bonelli-Cheparinov, Leon 2012.



5...♘xc3

5...♙g7 6.h5 ♘c6 7.g3 ♙f5 8.♙g2 ♚d7 is dangerous. White gets strong pressure on the queenside following 9.♘xd5 ♚xd5 10.d3 ♚d7 11.♙e3 ♙xb2 (11...♙e6 12.♚a4 ♙d5 13.♖c1) 12.♖b1 ♙c3+ 13.♘d2.

6.bxc3

We have already discussed 6.dxc3 ♚xd1+ 7.♙xd1 f6 8.e4 (see 5.e4). Also possible is 7...h5 8.♙f4 c6.

6...♙g7

All the engines play only 6...h6. It also yields best practical results. Nevertheless I have some doubts about Black's chances in the Grünfeld with h4 h6 inserted. It looks in White's favour to me. Only future will tell the truth.

7.h5 c5 8.g3

8.e3 ♘c6 was analysed in line A2.

8.♖b1 should be met by 8...♗c6 9.e3 0-0.

8.♕a4+ ♕d7 9.♖h4 (9.♖c4 b6) 9...♙f6 10.♖f4 ♖f5= was Aronian-Kamsky, Nice 2009. It is more enterprising to keep the queens – 10...♗c6!? 11.g3 ♖g8 12.♙g2 b6 13.♗g5 ♙b7 14.♗xh7 ♙e5 15.♕a4 g5∞.

8.hxg6 hxg6 9.♖xh8+ ♙xh8 10.♕a4+ ♗c6 11.♖h4? is a wrong idea in view of 11...♙f6 12.♖h7 ♖d5!, followed by ...b6, ...♙b7.

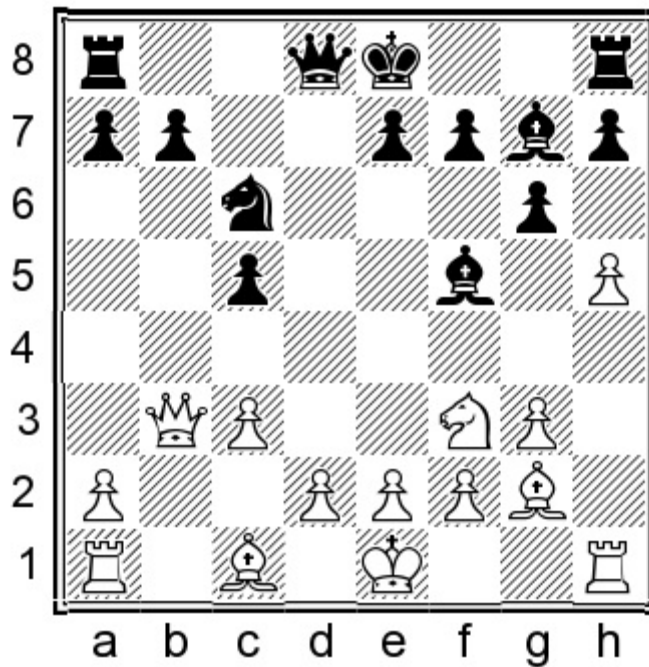
8...♗c6

8...b6 9.♙g2 ♙b7 10.d4! is in White's favour. The point is that:

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♙xd4? 12.♗xd4 ♙xg2 13.♖h4! gives White a terrific initiative, e.g. 13...♖d6 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♖b3.

10...♗c6 11.♕a4 ♕d7 12.h6 ♙f6 13.0-0 0-0 completes development, but the h6-pawn is a nasty thorn in Black's position.

9.♙g2 ♙f5 10.♖b3



10...♖d7!

We are well developed, so it makes sense to preserve the queens. Kamsky chose against Nepomniatchtchi 10...♖b6 11.♗g5 ♖xb3 and was slightly worse.

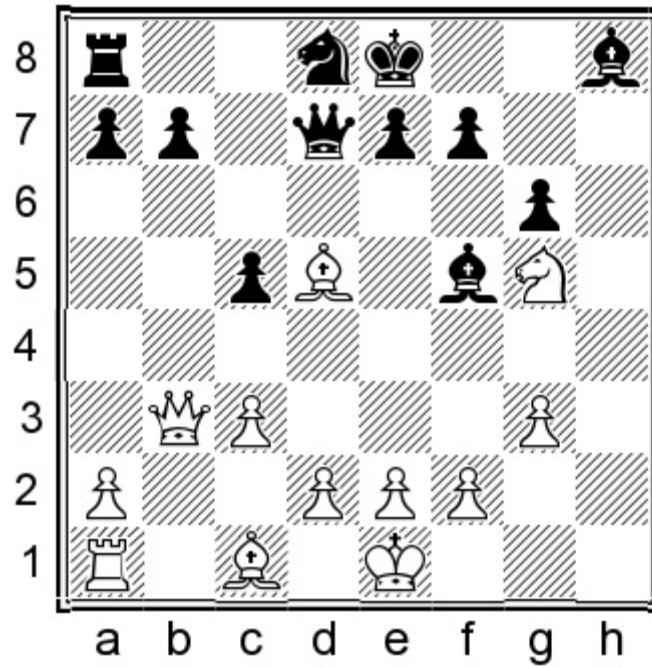
After the text the play is balanced. For instance:

11.♗g5 0-0 12.hxg6 ♙xg6 13.♕a4 ♖ab8 14.♖h4 ♗d4 15.cxd4? ♖xd4;

11.d3 ♖c8 sets up the trap 12.♙d2? c4!. Instead 12.♖b2 b6 13.♙d2 ♙g4 and 12.h6 ♙f6 13.0-0 ♙g4 (to

prevent ♔g5) 14.♙e3 b6 15.♖ad1 0-0 are unclear.

11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♖xh8+ ♔xh8 13.♘g5 ♘d8 14.♙d5



14...♙f6! 15.d3

The defence is based on the hit 15.♘xf7? ♙c2!

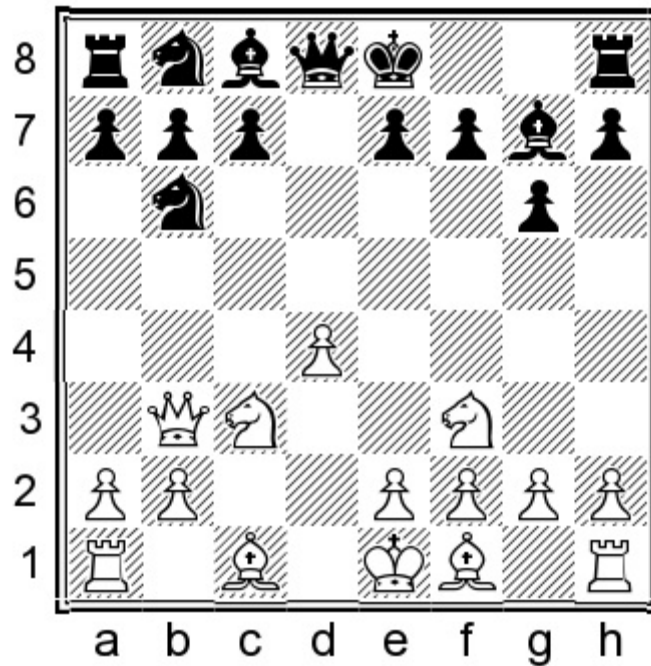
15...♙xg5 16.♙xg5 ♙e6=.

Chapter 13 Complete Games

29. Iturrizaga Bonelli-Cheparinov

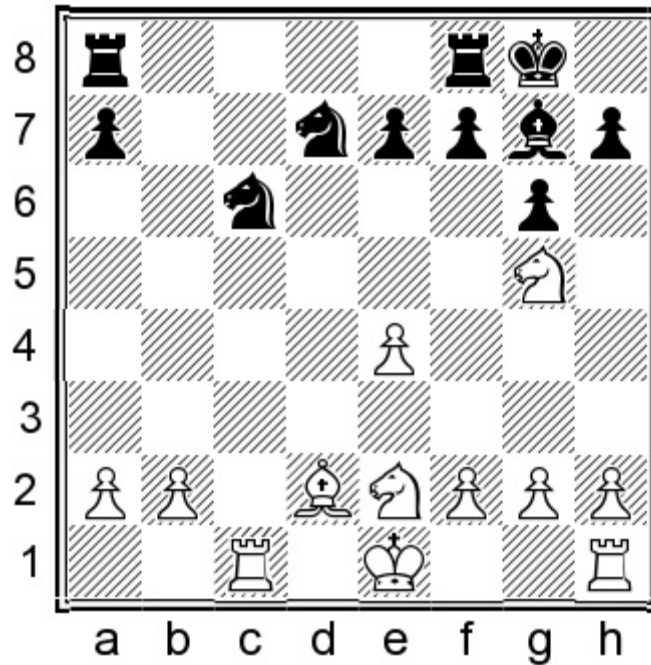
Leon (4.2), 08.11.2012

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♚b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♕g7



7.♕f4

7.e4 is less popular. We can attack d4 with 7...♕g4 (if 7...0-0 8.♕e3 ♕g4, White has 9.♖d1±) 8.♕b5 c6 9.♗g5 0-0 10.♕e2 ♕xe2 11.♗xe2, when a direct way to the draw is 11...c5 12.dxc5 ♗d7 13.♚xb7 ♚a5+ 14.♕d2 ♚a6 15.c6 ♚xc6 16.♚xc6 ♗xc6 17.♖c1



17...♞de5! 18.0-0 h6 19.♜f3 ♞xf3+ 20.gxf3 ♞e5 21.♔g2 ♞d3 22.♞c7 ♞fc8 23.♞xc8+ ♞xc8 24.♙e3 ♞xb2=.

An alternative is 8.d5 0-0 9.♙e2 c6 10.0-0 cxd5 11.exd5 ♞8d7 12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 ♞c8!= with a typical position. A knight on d6 would be the perfect blocker.

7.♙g5 h6 8.♙h4 ♙e6 9.♞c2 offers a choice:

9...♞c6 10.♞d1 (10.e3 ♞b4!) 10...♞b4! 11.♞b1 0-0 12.e4! (12.e3 ♙f5 13.e4 ♙g4 transposes, but 12...♞6d5 and 12...c5! are stronger.) 12...♙g4 13.d5 f5 14.a3 g5 15.♙g3 f4 16.axb4 fxg3 17.hxg3 ♞xf3! =;

9...g5!? 10.♙g3 g4 11.♞d2 c5!? 12.dxc5 ♞d5∞.

7...♙e6 8.♞a3 ♞c6

From here the knight exerts direct pressure on the centre, which limits White's options. 8...0-0!?, intending ...♞8d7, is more complicated:

a) 9.e3 ♞8d7 10.♞d1 c6 11.♞g5 (11.b3?! c5!) 11...♙d5 12.e4

Now 12...♙c4 13.♙xc4 ♞xc4 14.♞b3 b5?! allows 15.e5±, so the intermediary 14...e5! is called for

– 15.♞xc4 exf4 16.h4. Once we feel the necessity for ...e5, we can understand Svidler's invention:

12...e5!?

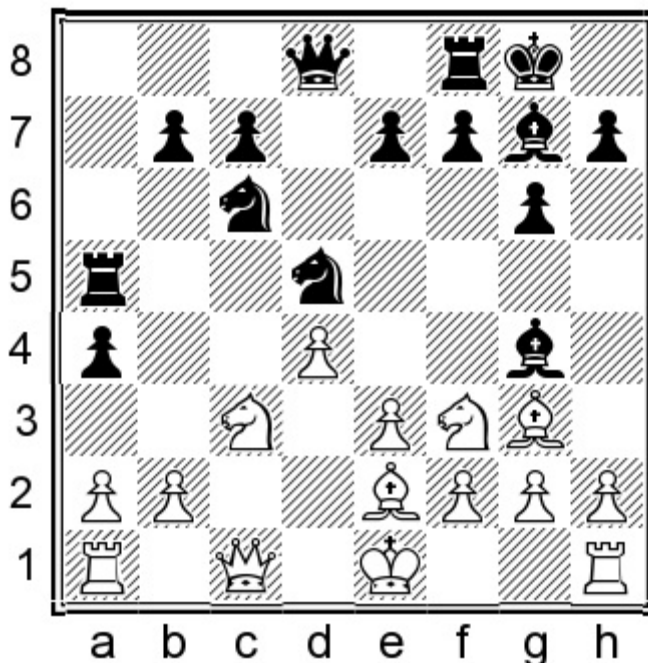
9.e3 a5 10.♙b5

10.♞c1 0-0 11.♙e2 is harmless. Black has two decent continuations:

11...♘c4 12.♞c5 ♘d6, when a correspondence game went 13.♙e5 (13.d5 ♙xc3) 13...f6 14.♙xd6 exd6 15.♞b5 ♘b4∞;

11...♘b4 12.b3 c5 13.0-0 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♙xd4 15.exd4 ♘6d5 16.♘xd5 ♙xd5∞.

10.♞c5 0-0 11.♙e2 a4 12.♘b5 ♘d5 13.♙g3 ♞a5 14.♞c1 ♙g4 15.♘c3

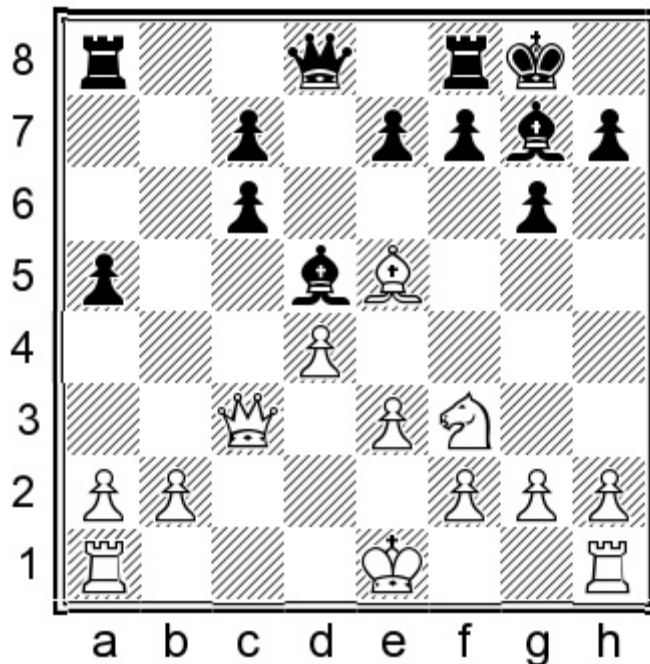


All three correspondence games saw here 15...a3 16.0-0 e5. It is also possible to prepare ...e5 with:

15...♞e8!? 16.h3 ♙f5, e.g. 17.0-0 e5 18.dxe5 ♘xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙xe5 20.♘xe5 ♞xe5 21.♞d2 ♞e7 22.f4 ♘xc3 23.fxe5 ♘xe2+ 24.♞xe2 ♞xe5∞. It is important not to take on e3 though. That would only free White's rooks. Instead 25.♞d2 c6 26.♞ad1 ♙e6 keeps the balance.

10...0-0 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.♞c5 ♘d5 13.♙e5 ♘xc3 14.♞xc3 ♙d5

The critical position for 8...♘c6. White has won two OTB games:



15.0-0 ♕xf3 16.gxf3 ♕xe5 17.dxe5, but it was not the opening's fault.

Black opted for 17...♖d5?! 18.♔g2 and White's king was relatively safe. The correct defence is: 17...e6! 18.f4 ♖d5 19.♖fc1 ♗a6 20.♖c2 ♗f3=. It is impossible to win with those weak light squares.

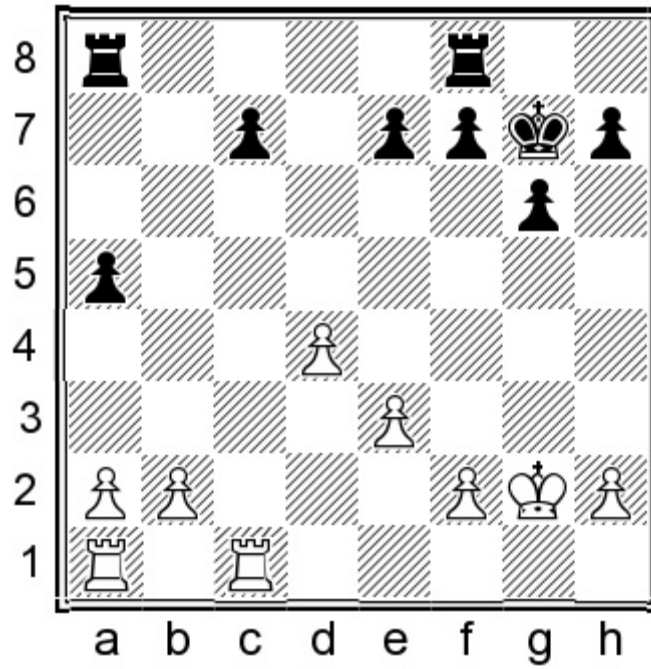
15.♕xg7 ♔xg7 16.0-0

16.♘d2? ♕xg2 17.♖g1 ♖d5, Lalith-Lin Yi, Xingtai 2019.

16...♕xf3 17.gxf3 ♖d5 18.♖fc1

Or 18.♔g2 ♖g5+ 19.♔h1 ♗a6=.

18...♖xf3 19.♖xc6 ♖g4+ 20.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 21.♔xg2



It is a clear draw now.

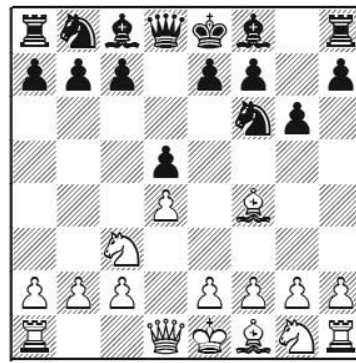
21...♖f8 22.b3 a4 23.bxa4 ♜xa4 24.♞xc7 e6 25.♞c2 ♜ba8 26.♔f3 ♜8a5 27.♞b2 ♜h5 28.♔g3 ♜g5+
 29.♔f3 ♜h5 30.♔g3 ♜g5+ 1/2-1/2

The Queen's Pawn Anti-Grünfeld

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♙g5 c5 – the Trompowsky

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 ♙g7 3.♞c3 d5 4.♙f4 – the Barry Attack

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♙f4 g6 3.♞c3 d5 – the Jobava Attack

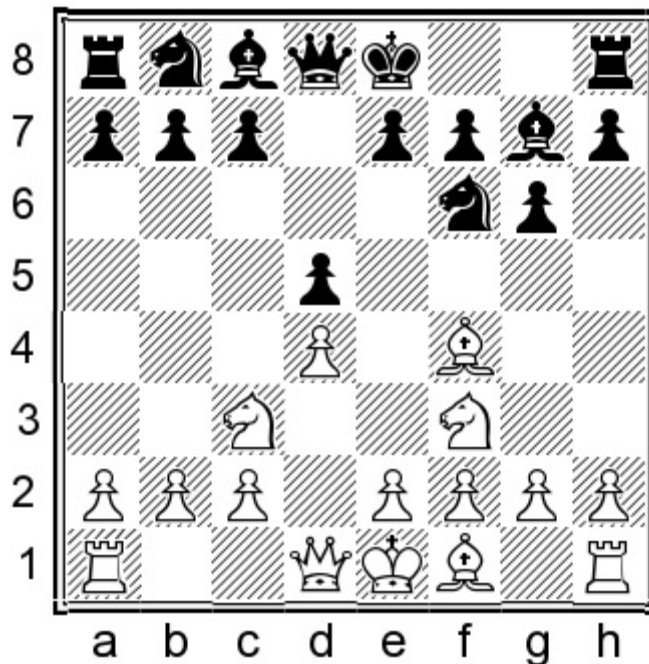


Main Ideas

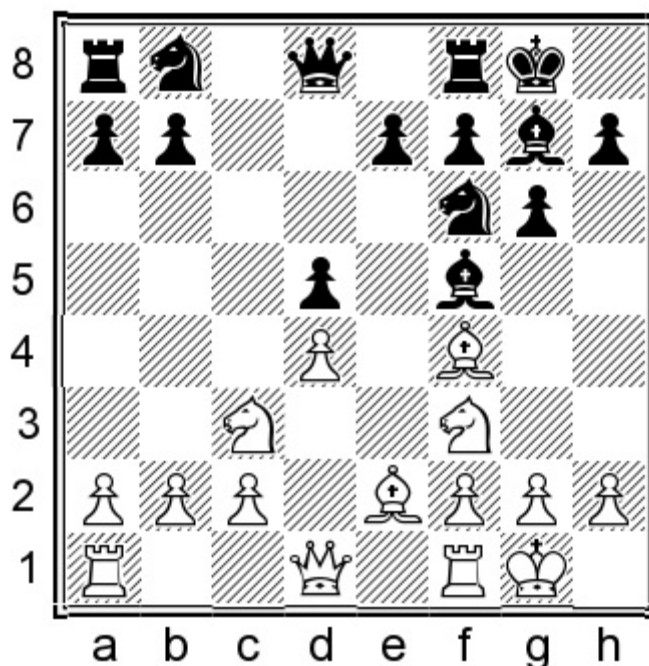
In this chapter I will briefly analyse lines where White does not play c4 at all. Thus the whole idea of the Grünfeld becomes pointless, but that does not mean that the Grünfeld setup should be bad.

After 1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 g6 3.♙f4 ♙g7 4.e3 we can calmly answer 4...d5, not ceding any space. Still, 4...d6 or ...c5 is more common, so White often forces ...d5 with:

3.♞c3 d5 4.♙f4 ♙g7



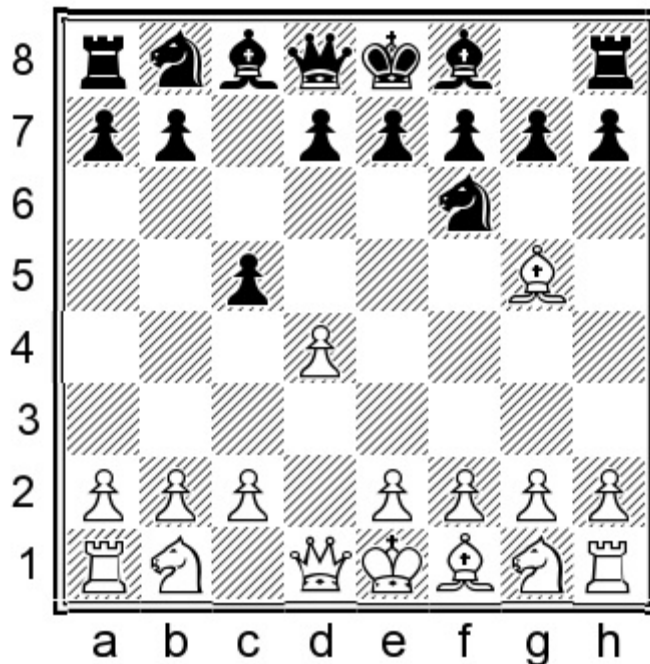
The so-called Barry Attack is not particularly dangerous – it yields about 50% in practice. At the same time it does not offend any positional rules, so we should not seek to place it under question with unfounded aggression. I propose a rare, but logical approach, where we relieve the tension in the centre and simply put our pieces on good places – 5.e3 0-0 6.♔e2 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 ♔f5



Our next goal is to trade as many minor pieces as possible, to create ground for a minority attack on the queenside – 9.♘e5 ♘bd7, then ...♖c8. White lacks a clear plan.

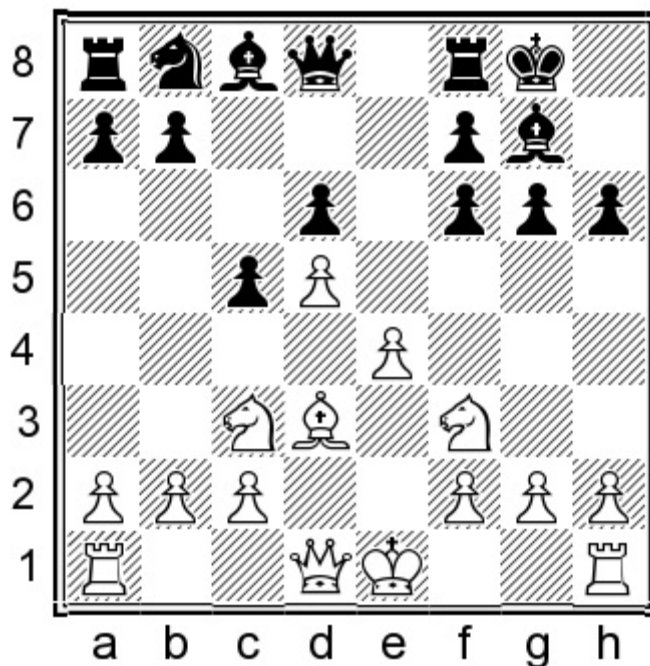
The Trompowsky is a different story.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♔g5 practically denies 2...g6 in view of 3.♔xf6. Instead I propose 2...c5.



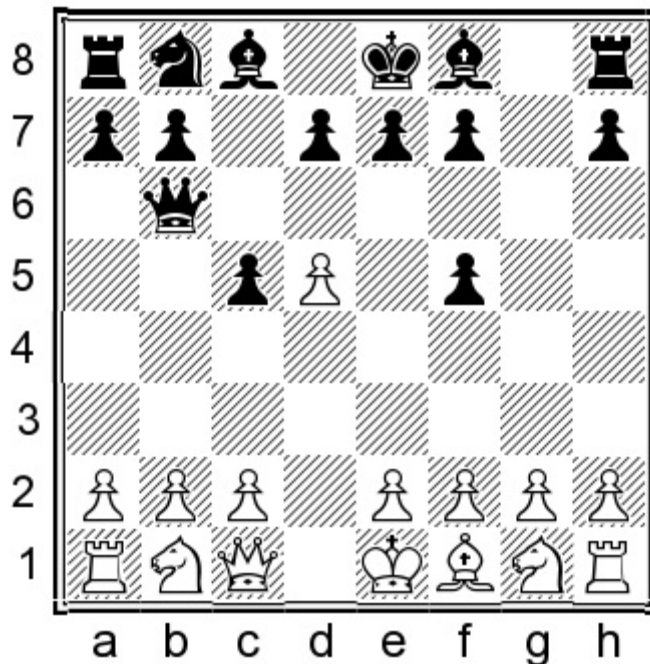
The idea is to provoke 3.d5, when ♙xf6 would not be so unpleasant as before. Our bishop on g7 would not be biting at granite on d4 and a timely ...f5 would unleash its power.

My idea is to answer 3...d6 4.♘c3 h6! 5.♙xf6 exf6! 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.♘f3 0-0



This position will probably be new to your opponent. And it is pleasant for Black! Both ...♘d7, ...a6, ...♖b8 and ...♙g4, ...♘d7-e5, ...♖c8, eventually ...f5, promise good chances.

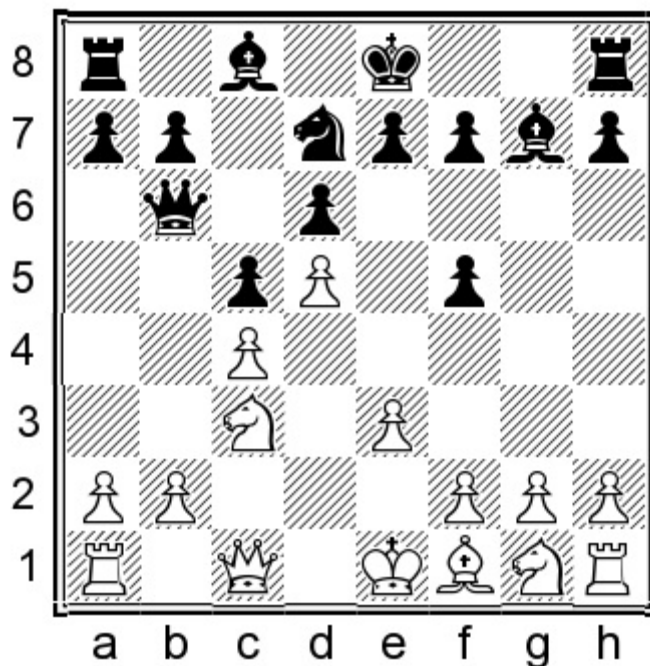
The immediate 3.♙xf6 is more sophisticated. Since the white pawn is still on d4, we should recapture 3...gxf6! 4.d5 ♖b6 5.♖c1 f5



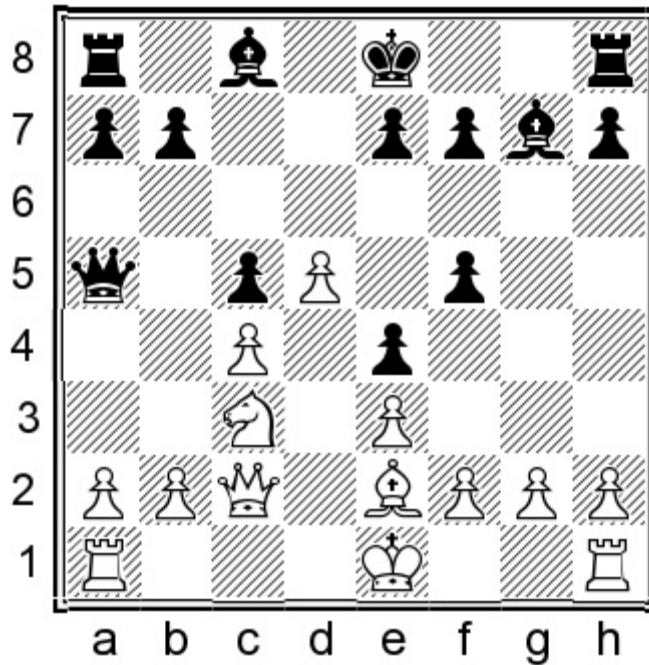
6.c4

If White refrains from this move, we build the same setup – ...♘d7-e5.

6...♙g7 7.♘c3 d6 8.e3 ♘d7

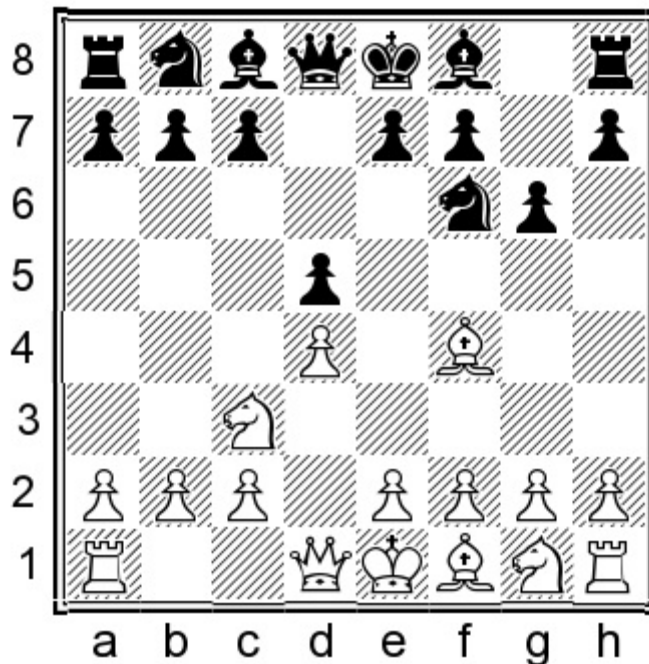


Our main plan here is to prepare ...b5 with ...♙a5, ...♘e5. Our e7-pawn should better stay there or on e6. Whenever White plays ♘f3, we trade it with ...♘e5. The point is to recapture on e5 by pawn! This option is neglected by Kryakvin in his recent book on the Trompowsky. We aim to reach the following pawn structure:

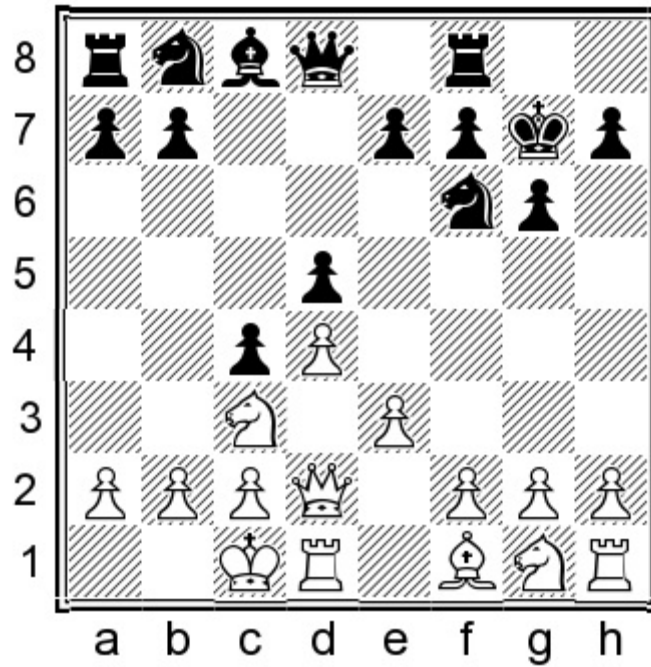


It is pleasant for Black, and gives chances to play for a win with ...0-0-0.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙f4 g6 3.♘c3 d5



The difference with the Barry Attack is that f3 is free and White uses it to put there a pawn. I play it successfully with White, but the direct attack is double-edged, to say the least. After 4.♙d2 ♙g7 5.♙h6 0-0 6.♙xg7 ♔xg7 7.0-0-0 c5 8.e3 c4! Black's attack is more dangerous!

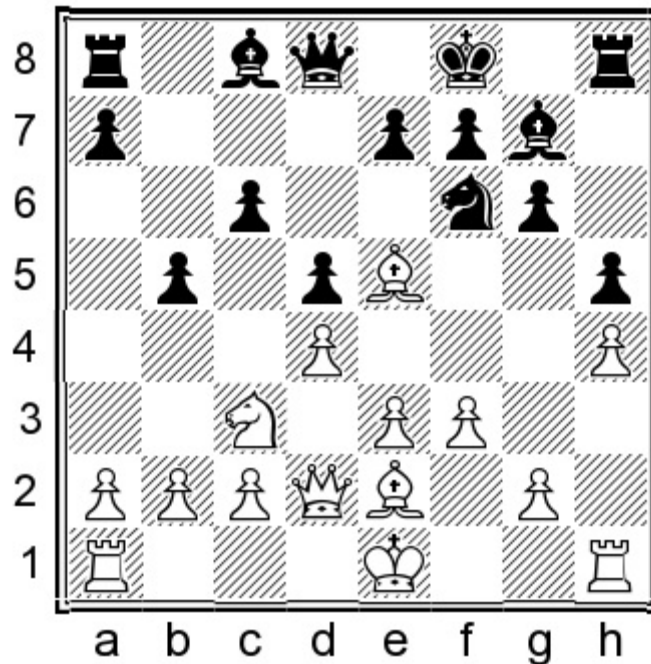


Our plan is ...♔a5, ...b5.

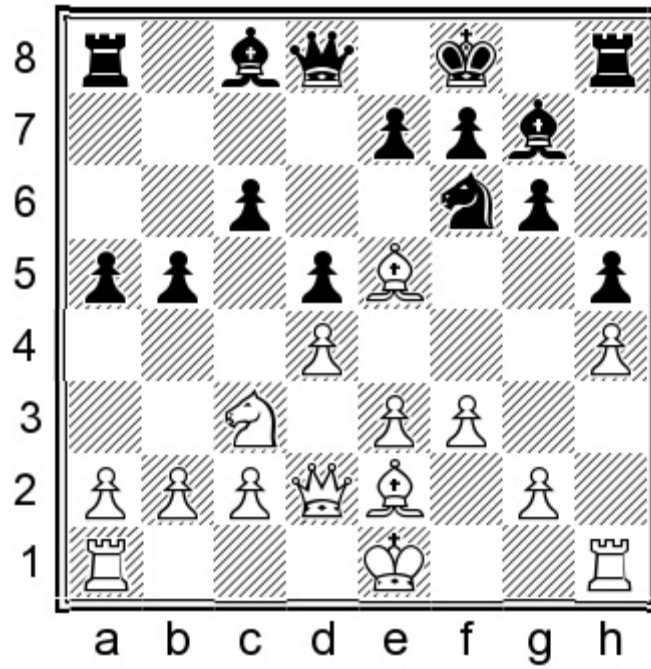
4.e3 ♘g7 5.h4 c6 6.♙e2 h5 is a natural way to stop the march of the h-pawn. Our positional goal is to trade White's active minor pieces.

Of course we do not castle! The rook on h8 protects us perfectly.

Typical positions are:



11...♘d7 12.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 13.e4 dxe4 or:



We can put our bishop on f5, the queen goes to b6. If we trade our bishops, we'll bolster the centre with ...e6. In both cases we do not risk to fall under attack.

Chapter 14

Step by Step

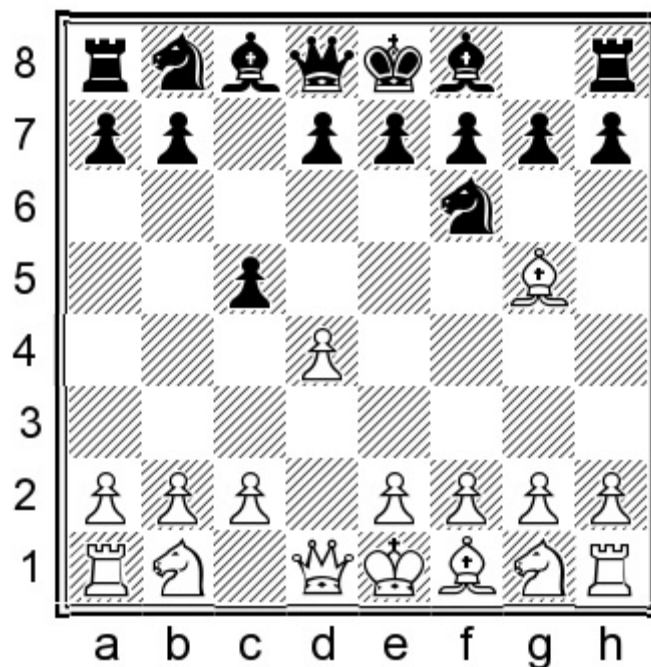
I'll discuss here several modern variations where White refrains from c4:

A. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5 c5;

B. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3

C. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙f4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

A. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5 c5



3.♙xf6

This is the most frequent and consistent follow up of ♙g5, but:

3.d5 is also seen.

Black commonly continues 3...♘e4 4.♙f4 ♚b6 (4...e6!? is another interesting line) 5.♙c1 g6 6.f3 ♘d6 7.e4. However, it is weird to play with such a knight. White has a lasting space advantage.

I'll offer instead a simple and straightforward way to solve the opening problems:

3...d6!? 4.♘c3

After 4.c4, 4...h6 is even stronger – 5.♙f4 (5.♙xf6 exf6!) 5...e5 6.dxe6 ♙xe6. Another fair retort is 4...♘e4 5.♙c1 g6 6.f3 ♘f6 7.e4 ♙g7. This is not exactly the Sämisch as the knight is not on c3, but 8.♘e2 e6! 9.♘ec3 a6! 10.a4 ♘h5! is fine for Black.

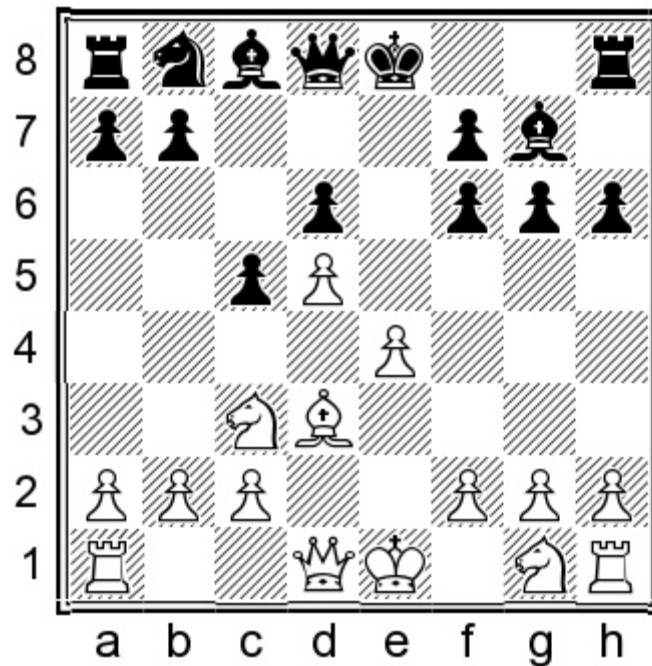
4...h6! 5.♙xf6

5.♙f4 is pointless in view of 5...e5.

You might think that White has gained a whole tempo in comparison to the main line 3.♙xf6, but

that is an optical illusion. The big difference is the pawn on d5, which leaves the main dark-squared diagonal wide open. If Black chose 3... gxf6 exf6?!, White would bolster the pawn on d4 with c3 and e3, rendering our bishop useless.

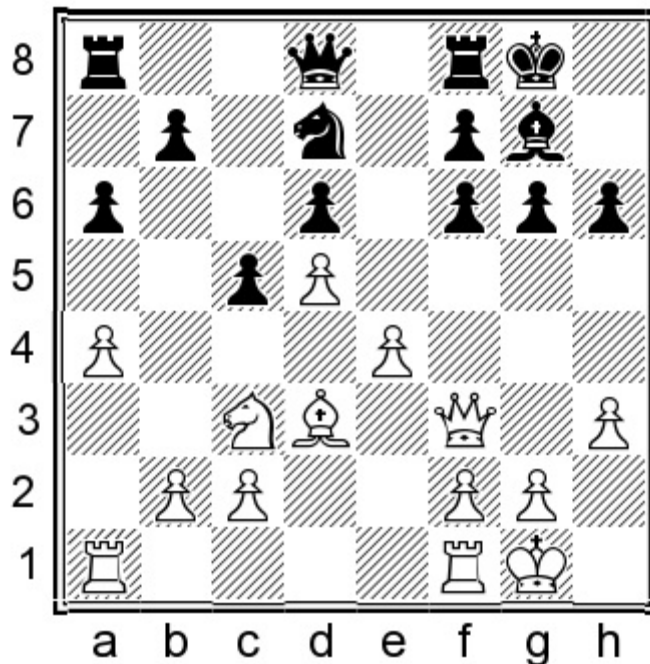
5...exf6! 6.e4 g6 7. gxd3 g7



This position is extremely easy to handle with Black. In fact we have several good setups, as you'll soon see. On the queenside Black's pawn structure is more active. We can play for ...c5-c4 or for ...b5. At the same time we are rock-solid on the kingside. Do not get nervous about the g7-bishop. It could easily be activated with ...f5 or even ...h5. On the opposite, White lacks a clear plan. Even better for us – he does not have a reliable source to look for an advice – only a couple of games have reached this position!

8. dxf3
 8. dge2 could make sense only in connection with f4, but 8... d7 9.f4 db6 ! 10.b3 (or 10. dg3 h5) stumbles into 10...f5! 11.exf5 h4+ 12.g3 f6 ! 13.fxg6 g4 ! 14. d2 0-0-0 and White is tied up and down.

8...0-0
 8... g4 ! is also very simple. We exchange the bishop to control the dark squares – 9.h3 xf3 10. xf3 a6 11.a4 d7 12.0-0 0-0



I checked first 13.a5 ♖e8 14.♔g3 ♜c8 (threatening ...c4) 15.♙c4 ♗e5 16.b3 (or 16.♙e2 f5 17.exf5 gxf5, followed by ...♔f6) 16...f5 17.exf5 gxf5 with active pieces.

Then I toyed with the regrouping manoeuvre:

13.♗b1 ♖e8 14.♗d2 ♗e5 15.♔g3 (or 15.♔e2 ♔d7 16.f4 ♗xd3 17.♔xd3 f5⇒) 15...c4 16.♙xc4 ♗xc4 17.♗xc4 ♖xe4 18.♗xd6 ♖e5 19.♗c4 ♖xd5=.

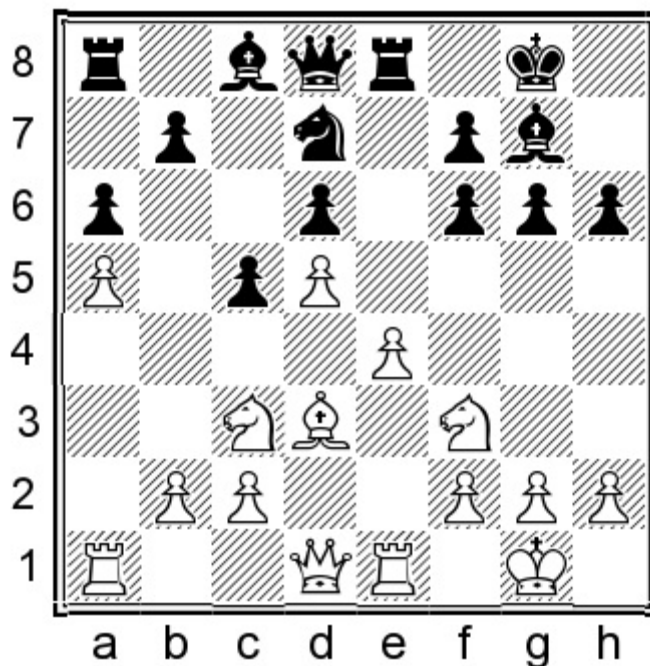
9.0-0 ♗d7 (9...♙g4) 10.a4

Or 10.♗d2 ♗e5 11.f4 ♗xd3 12.cxd3 f5 13.♗c4 a6 14.a4 b6 15.♖h1 ♜b8.

10...a6

10...♗e5 11.♗xe5 fxe5 and 10...h5 11.♙e2 (11.♗d2 ♗e5 12.f4 ♗xd3 13.cxd3 f5=) 11...♗e5 12.♗xe5 fxe5 are worthy alternatives, but play is more closed.

11.a5 ♖e8 12.♖e1



12...b6 13.axb6 ♖xb6 14.♚d2 ♘d7 15.h3 ♜c8 16.♜f4 c4 17.♙f1 ♚c5∞. We push ...a5-a4, ...♞b4 and double on the e-file. I do not see any constructive plan for White.

3...gxf6 4.d5

4.dxc5 surrenders the centre. We can regain the pawn with 4...♞a5+ or 4...e6. Computer chess also features the enterprising sacrifice 4...b6!? 5.cxb6 ♞xb6 with ample compensation.

4...♞b6 5.♚c1 f5

In this pawn structure we should adapt our plans to White's play. If he pushes c4, it would be natural to attack the base of the pawn chain with ...♞a5, ...♘d7, ...a6 and ...b5. The d7-knight belongs to e5. In contrast, if the c-pawn goes to c3, we should keep an eye on d5 with ...♘f6, ...e6.

In both cases we should not rush with castling. It is better to keep both options open, so leave the king in the middle for a while. Only when the centre opens up, should we decide where to castle.

6.c4

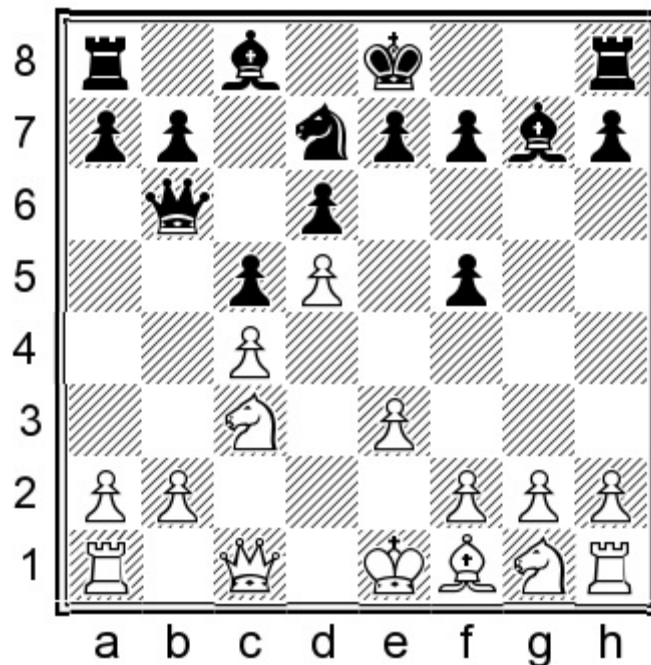
This natural move has become the standard lately. Before White has also tried 6.g3, 6.e3 and 6.c3, intending to neutralise the g7-bishop.

6.g3 ♘g7 7.c3 d6 8.♙g2 ♘d7 9.♘h3

Actually, the rare continuation 9.♘f3 is better – 9...♘f6 10.♘h4 ♘d7 (10...e6 11.♘d2) 11.♘d2 0-0∞.

9...h5! 10.♘d2 ♘e5∞.

6...♘g7 7.♘c3 d6 8.e3 ♘d7



9.♞c2

In February 2019 Duda beat Nacamura in blitz with 9.♘f3 e5 10.♗h4 ♖f8 11.g3 ♗g6 12.♗g2. Although Black is obviously the active side here, I suggest to always attack ♗f3 with: 9...♗e5!? 10.♗xe5 dxe5!. Black's mobile e-pawn is ready to move forth, which makes White's task difficult. For instance, 11.f3 would face 11...e4! 12.♕d2 exf3 13.gxf3 ♗d7.

9...♗a5!

Enabling ...b5. 9...e5 is also possible, but it is obviously less menacing.

10.♗f3

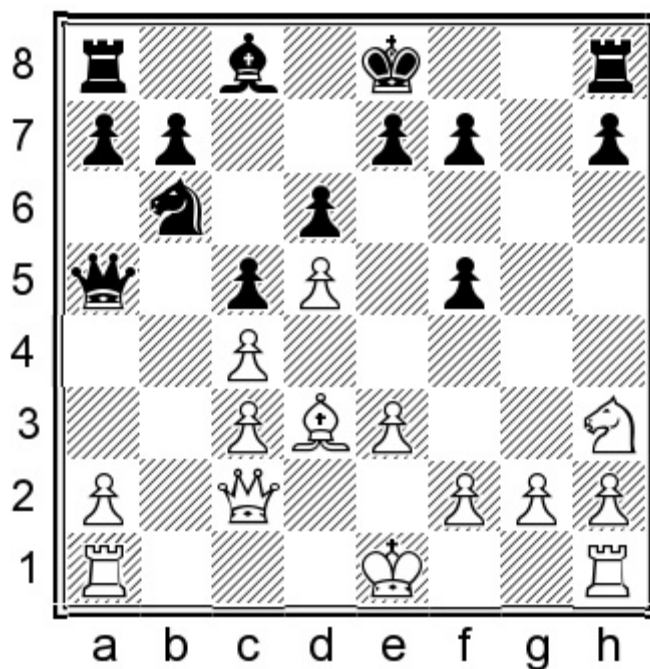
The main move. It was also recommended by Kryakvin in his recent book *Play the Trompowsky Attack*. The drawback of 10.♗h3 is that the knight cannot defend the c4-pawn.

A good answer is 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 e5, but I prefer:

10...♗b6 11.♗d3 ♗xc3+!

11...♗d7 12.a4! takes a4 away from Black's pieces.

12.bxc3



12...♗a4! 13.♗xa4 ♗xa4 14.♕d2 ♗d7. Black will castle long and will open the centre with ...e6.

10.♗d3 makes the plan with ...b5 more efficient. I like this break even without any preparation:

10...b5 11.♗xf5 ♗b6 (11...b4!?) 12.♗xc8 ♖xc8. However:

10...♗e5 may be objectively best – 11.♗e2 a6 12.♗h3 b5!? (12...♗d7∞) 13.cxb5 c4 14.bxa6 ♗d3+, or 11.♗ge2 b5 (or 11...a6, if you dislike the Benko).

10...♗e5! 11.♗xe5

If White preserves the knight the plan with ...b5 will gain in strength – 11.♖d2 ♕d7 12.♙e2 a6
 12...♗g6 13.0-0 f4 is also possible – 14.exf4 ♖xf4 15.♟fe1 ♕xc3 16.bxc3 0-0-0∞.

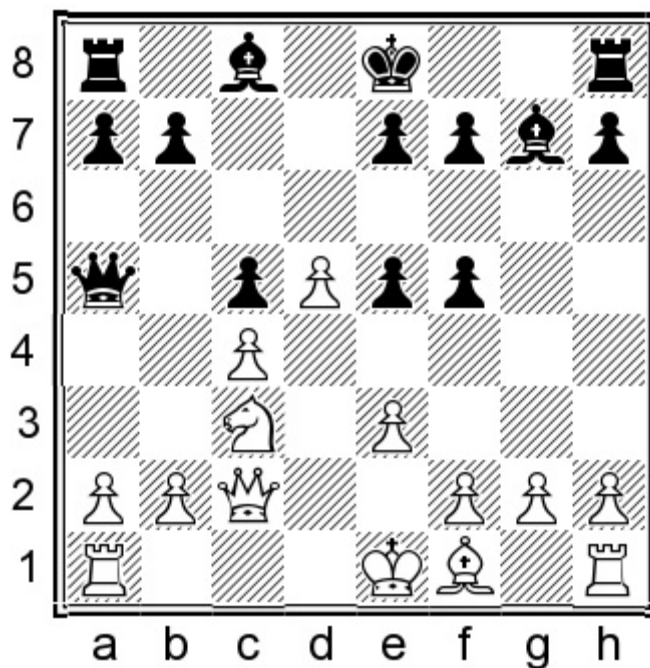
13.0-0

Or 13.f4 ♗g4 14.♞d3 b5.

White can prevent ...b5 only with 13.♗b3 to reject the queen – 13...♞c7 14.0-0, but then 14...♗g6 becomes stronger as the b3-knight is far from the kingside (and from everything). White must push 15.f4 and after 15...e6, followed by ...♗e7, Black has some initiative. In this scenario we castle long.

11...dxe5!

Kryakvin considers only 11...♙xe5. The text alters the pawn structure in Black's favour as he will be able to gain space with ...e5-e4. If White undermines our pawn with f3, play will open in favour of our bishop pair. M.Nielsen-L'Ami, Helsingor 2012, went:



12.0-0 ♕d7 13.♙e2

L'Amie played here 13...a6, but it is totally pointless. Besides weakening b6 and c5, Black does not really threaten ...b5. Instead his play is in the centre:

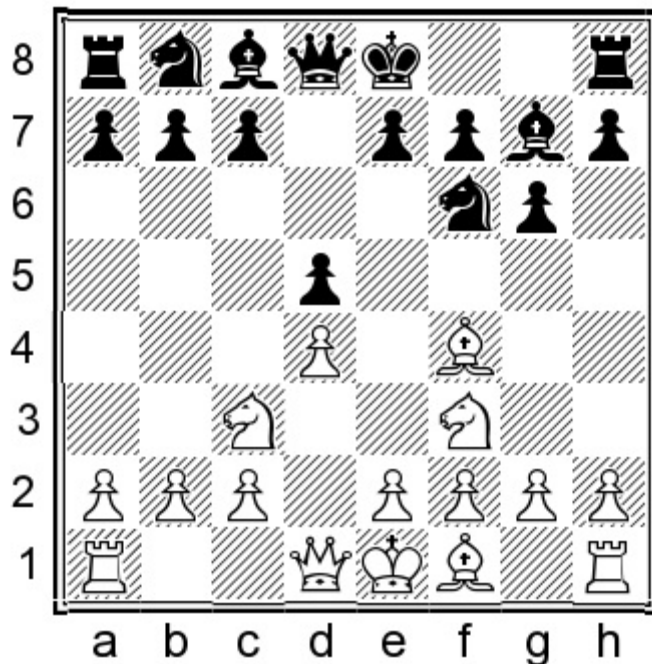
13...e4! (or 13...h5, followed by 14...e4) 14.f3 h5! 15.♟df1 exf3 16.♟xf3 0-0-0. Black enjoys the more active pieces.

B. 1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.♗c3

3.♙f4 does not have good reputation when Black has not played ...d5. After 3...♙g7 4.e3 0-0 5.♙e2 d6 White could only regret that he put his bishop on f4. 5...c5 fares even better. If you insist on 5...d5, the good news is that it is also perfectly playable. Kiril Georgiev analyses it in detail in his book *Fighting*

the London System. His suggestion is to meet 6.0-0 by 6...♘h5, and 6.h3 by 6...c5 7.c3 ♘c6 (or 7...b6 first) 8.♗bd2 b6! with a solid position.

3...d5 4.♗f4 ♗g7



5.e3

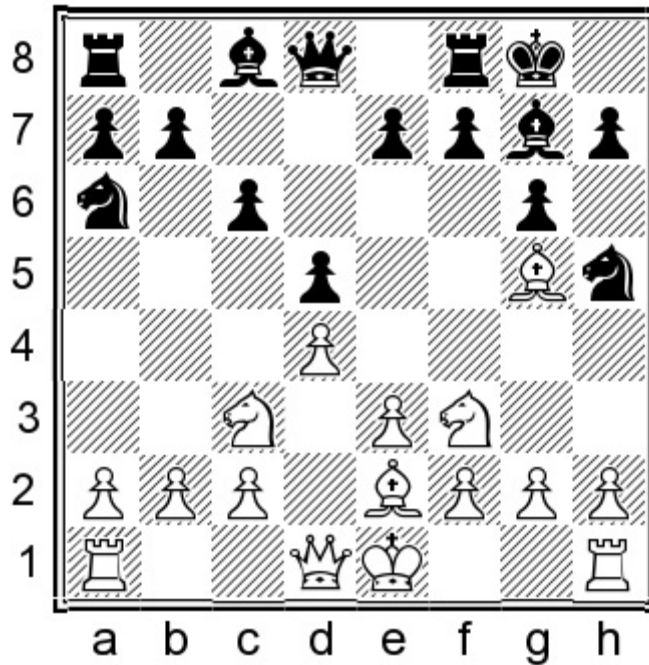
White has often played lately 5.♗b5 ♗a6 6.e3.

A typical course is 6...c6 7.♗c3 ♗c7 8.h3 0-0 9.♗e2. Instead I suggest to play aggressively in the centre with:

6...♗h5!? 7.♗g5

7.♗e5?! f6 8.♗g3 c6 9.♗c3 ♗xg3 10.hxg3 ♗c7 11.e4 e5̄.

7...0-0 8.♗e2 c6 9.♗c3



9...f6 10.♗h4 g5 11.♘d2 gxh4 12.♙xh5 e5 13.♘f3 h3 14.gxh3 ♖h8.

The plan with long castling is not dangerous. We should counterattack in the centre:

5.♚d2 0-0

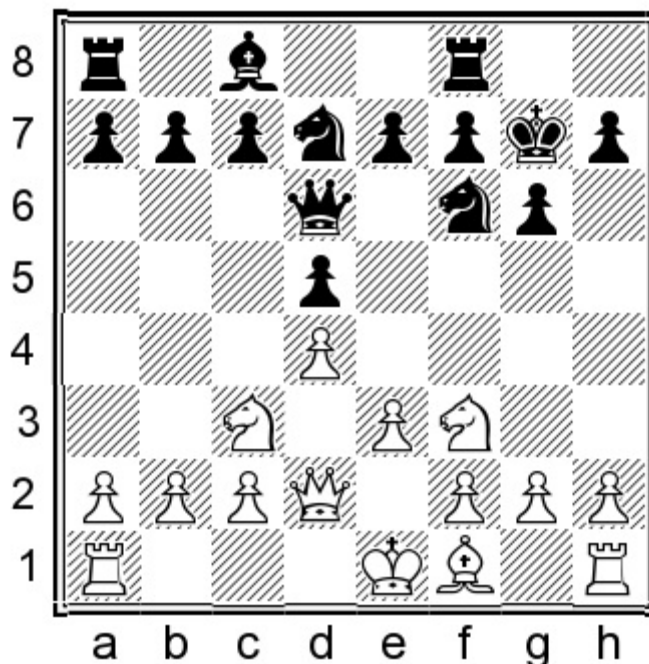
Kiril Georgiev suggests the double-edged 5...c6!?, intending to meet 6.♗h6 by 6...♗xh6 7.♚xh6 ♗f5. In practice White fares horribly against this line.

6.♗h6 ♚d6!

I proposed this move in the first edition, and I do not see any reason to change my mind. The idea is to counter 7.0-0-0 with 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♗xg7 ♖xg7 10.♘g5 ♚d5.

7.♗xg7 ♖xg7 8.e3 (8.♘e5 c5 9.e3 ♘c6 10.f4 ♗f5) 8...♘bd7!

More active than 8...c6 9.♗e2 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.♖fd1 b6 12.♗d3 ♗b7=.



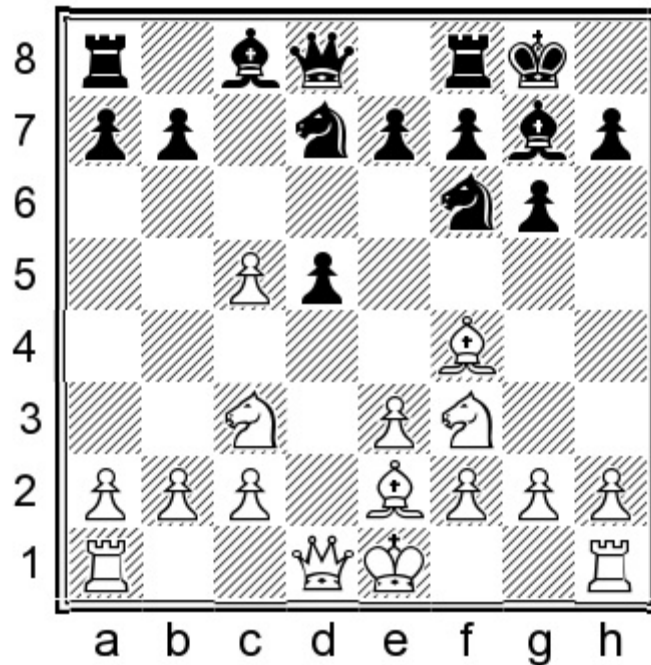
9.0-0-0 c6

White has defined the placement of his king, so it is already good to prepare ...b5.
10.h4 h5. Black's attacking prospects are better.

5...0-0 6.♘e2 c5 7.0-0

White often takes on c5:

7.dxc5 ♖bd7



a) 8.♗xd5 ♗xd5 9.♖xd5 ♘xb2

9...♖a5+! is safer – 10.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 11.♗xd2 ♘xb2 12.♖ab1 ♘f6=.

10.0-0 (10.♖b1 ♖a5+ 11.♗f1 ♘g7=) 10...♘xa1 11.♖xa1 ♖a5 12.♘h6 ♖xc5 13.♖b3 b6∞.

b) 8.♗b5 a6! (8...♗xc5 9.♗c7 ♖b8 10.♗b5=) 9.♘c7 (9.♗c7 ♖a7) 9...♖e8 10.♗bc3= (10.♗bd4 ♗xc5 11.0-0 ♗fe4=).

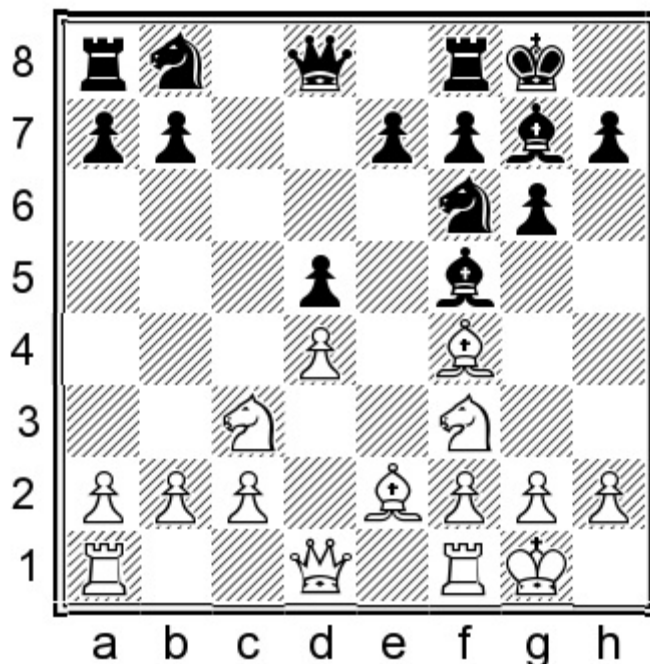
c) 8.0-0 ♗xc5 9.♘e5

9.♗b5 (9.h3 b6 10.0-0 ♘b7 11.♘e5 ♗cd7 12.♘h2 a6 13.♗bd4 ♖c8=, Izeta-Khalifman, Dos Hermanas 1993.) 9...a6 10.♘c7 ♖e8 11.♗c3 ♖c6 12.♘e5 e6 13.♗d4 ♖b6 14.♗b3 ♗cd7 15.♘g3 ♖d8 16.♘d6 ♖e8 17.a4 b6 18.a5 b5 19.♘f3 ♘b7 20.♖d2 ♗b6! 21.♘b4 ♗c4 22.♖c1 ♗d7=, Murshed-So, Guangzhou 2010.

9...b6 10.a4. White plays a sort of reversed Grünfeld, but with a passive bishop on e2! 10...b6 11.a5 bxa5 with a comfortable equality.

7...cxd4 8.exd4 ♘f5

I like this natural development. 8...♘g4 is more common, but 9.h3 ♘xf3 10.♘xf3 ♗c6 11.♗e2, as played by Carlsen in a blitz game, is slightly better for White.



9.♘e5 ♘bd7 10.♘xd7

Ratkovic chose against me 10.♙d3 ♙xd3 11.♚xd3?! ♘h5! and I was already slightly better. In a later game against Atalik he improved by taking on d7.

10...♚xd7 11.♙e5 ♞ac8 12.♙d3 ♙xd3 13.♚xd3 ♚c6!

Atalik opted for 13...e6 14.♘e2 ♞c6, but I think that it is better to pin the knight first.

14.♞fe1

The blitz game Bareev-J.Polgar saw 14.a4?! ♘e4.

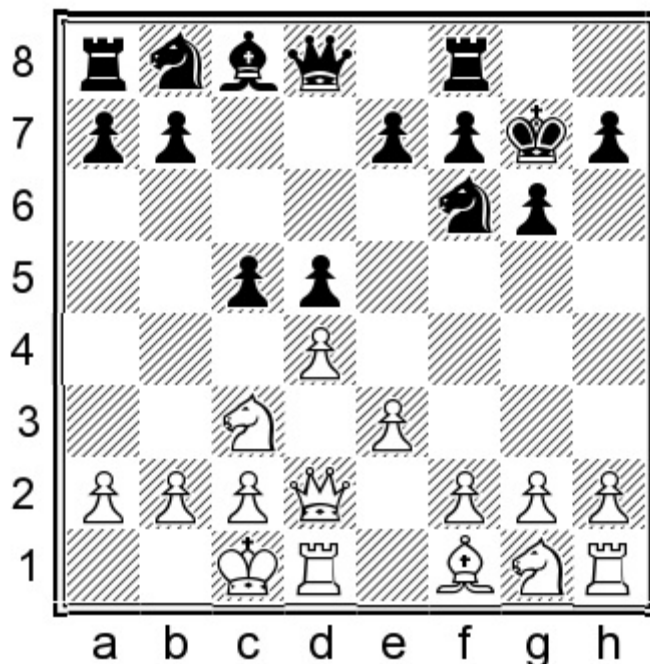
14...e6

Black has the more active pieces. He can gradually build a minority attack on the queenside. We should aim to trade bishops, for instance, 15.♞e2 ♘h5!.

15.♞ac1 is not any fun either. The mere fact that White must repeat moves after 15...♚b6 16.♞b1 ♚c6 is indicative. Instead I suggest to pursue the ♙e5 with 15...♘h5 16.♙xg7 ♘xg7 when our knight would be more active than ♘c3.

C. 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙f4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3

I play this line occasionally as White, but I prefer here the more direct approach with 4.♚d2 ♙g7 5.♙h6 0-0 6.♙xg7 ♘xg7 7.0-0 c5 8.e3 (8.dxc5 ♚a5)



It yields good results since Black commonly does not know what to do, but in fact White's setup is very dubious!

8...♞c6?! 9.dxc5 turns well for White.

I faced 8...♞a5 9.f3, Delchev-Zakhartsov, Paleochoira 2015, when instead of 9...b5?! 10.♙xb5 and I went on to win, Black could have transposed to 8...c4! with 9...c4!.

8...c4! 9.f3 ♞a5!

Black has excellent prospects for a strong attack.

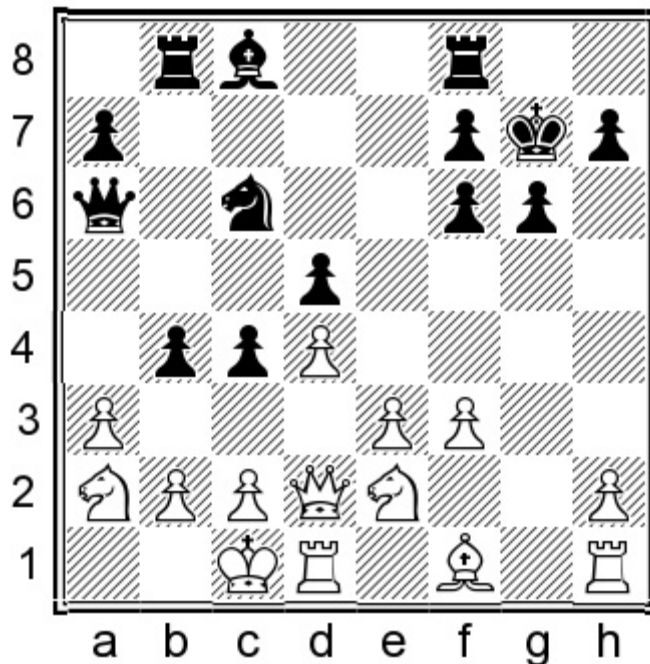
9...b5 10.♞xb5 ♞b6 11.♞a3 ♞c6 12.♙b1 ♞b8 13.c3 e5 14.♞e2 e4 15.♞g3 ♞e8 16.♙a1 allowed White to hold the draw in Burmeister-Vasselon, ICCF 2017.

10.a3

Perhaps 10.g4 ♙e6 11.e4 b5 12.g5 ♞h5 13.a3 is safer for White.

10...b5 11.g4 The only game which reached this position, Stolz-Milde, ICCF 2014, saw here:

11...♞c6 12.g5 b4 13.gxf6+ exf6 14.♞a2 ♞b8 15.♞e2 ♞a6

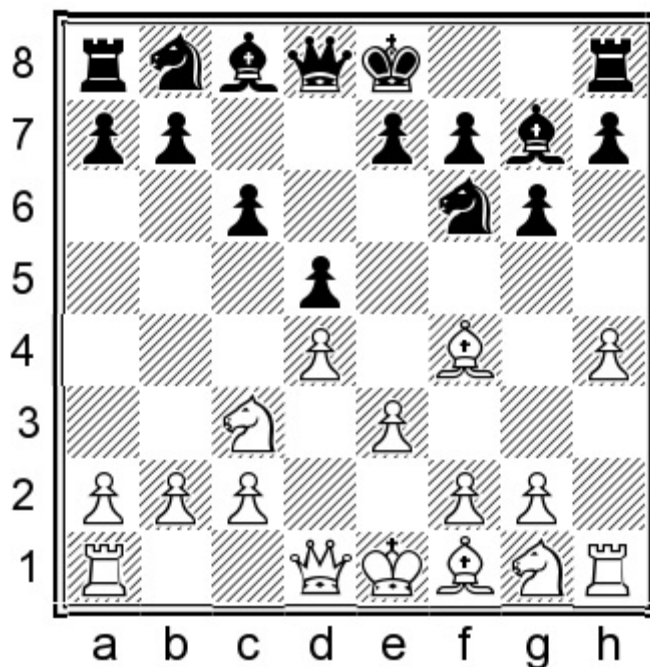


White cannot untie his pieces – 16. ♖f4 ♜d8 17. ♞g1 bxa3 18. b3 ♛b7 19. ♛c3 cxb3 20. cxb3 ♜d7 (20... ♜f5!) 21. ♔d2 ♛xb3 (21... ♞dc8!?). Somehow White managed to draw. Note that

11...b4!? 12.axb4 ♛a1+! 13. ♖b1 ♜xg4! also offers a fierce attack – 14.fxg4 ♜e4 15. ♛e1 a5 16. ♜g2 (16.b5 c3 17.bxc3 a4) 16...axb4 17. ♜xe4 c3 18.bxc3 dxe4 19. ♔d2 b3 20. ♞c1 ♜d7 and White will have to struggle for many moves ahead.

4...♜g7 5.h4 c6

Black may stop the h-pawn at once – 5...h5. The only drawback of this move is that it offers White a wide choice, for better or worse. You should consider 6. ♖b5, 6. ♖f3, 6. ♜e2, 6. ♛d2, and even 6. ♛f3 as Nisipeanu played recently.



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