

# THE SAFEST SCANDINAVIAN

Vassilios  
Kotronias

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# The Safest Scandinavian

A Black Repertoire with 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6

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*Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...♗d6*, Michael Melts, Russell Enterprises 2009

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Chess Informant  
New in Chess

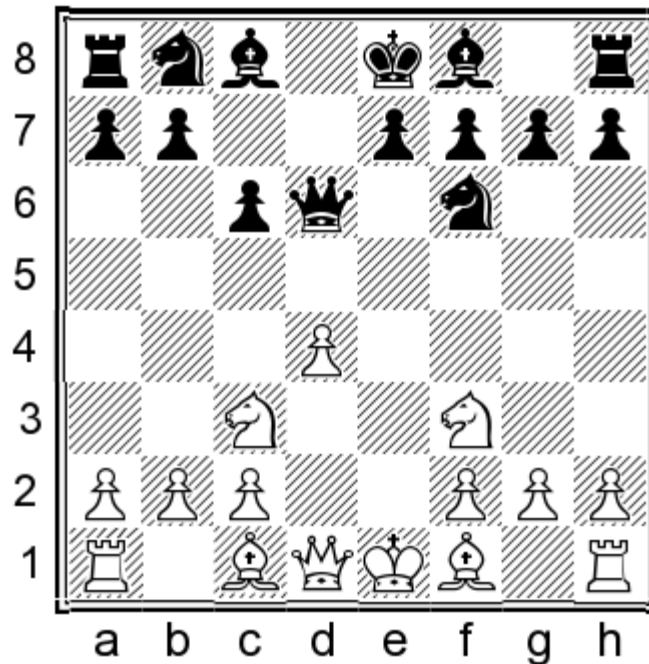
### Internet resources

The Week In Chess (chesscenter.com)  
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Chess Publishing (www.chesspublishing.com)  
Chess Today www.chesstoday.net

# Introduction

In the beginning of 2015 a good friend of mine, Mrs. Efi Georgopoulou, suggested to me to create an opening repertoire against 1.e4 that would be based on clear-cut plans while avoiding the tons of theory the Spanish and the Caro-Kann are associated with. Such a repertoire would be suitable for both professionals and amateurs only if it could combine asymmetric pawn structure (with the deriving from it complex play) with relative solidity. Thus I had basically no choice – my attention was immediately drawn to the 3...♚d6 Scandinavian:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6



Intense investigation and practical usage by GM Sergei Tiviakov have turned it into a respectable weapon known for its clear and strategically sound plans. I remember when Sergei chose this system for the first time back in 2006. Of course, it had been played before, but not against super grandmasters as Anand and Grischuk! And Black obtained the upper hand in both games ever since the opening – that was a real shock in the chess world. Anatoly Karpov and Vassily Ivanchuk also employed it in fast time controls in the last three years.

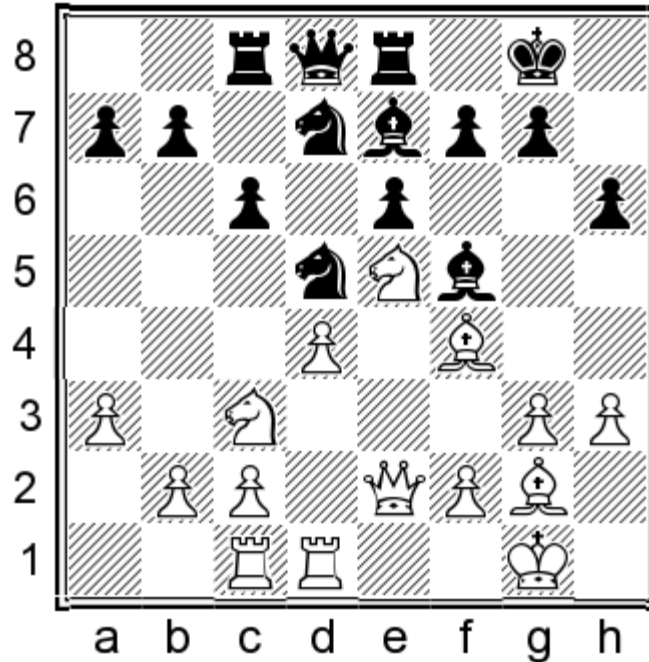
I have played the Scandinavian myself in about 40 tournament games, half of them on the White side, including one against Tiviakov! I have spent so many hours trying to find an advantage for White that finally I have learned all Black's tricks and the finest nuances of his set-up.

When I was young, I just could not believe that this opening could be any good. After all, Black gives the enemy free tempi and I have always valued time very much. However, from the experience I acquired afterwards, I realised that this time could not be easily exploited. The asymmetric pawn structure gives Black the important resource of turning the d5-square into a fortress. He would just need two further elements to achieve complete equality: develop the light-squared bishop outside the pawn structure, and find a good place for his queen. To be honest, in the beginning I thought, like almost every GM in the world, that the black queen should go to a5 to pin the c3-knight. But chess is evolving, and in the past years the games of Sergei Tiviakov and other strong players showed that perhaps 3...♚d6 could be after all the best option. It is certainly the safest flavour of the Scandinavian. All Black's forces exert a restraining effect on the enemy's centre. The queen pressurizes d4 thus enhancing the impact of the bishop sortie to g4. As a result, White is unable to build a mobile pawn pair c4+d4 and play often takes the Classical Caro-Kann shape.

Here are two typical scenarios:

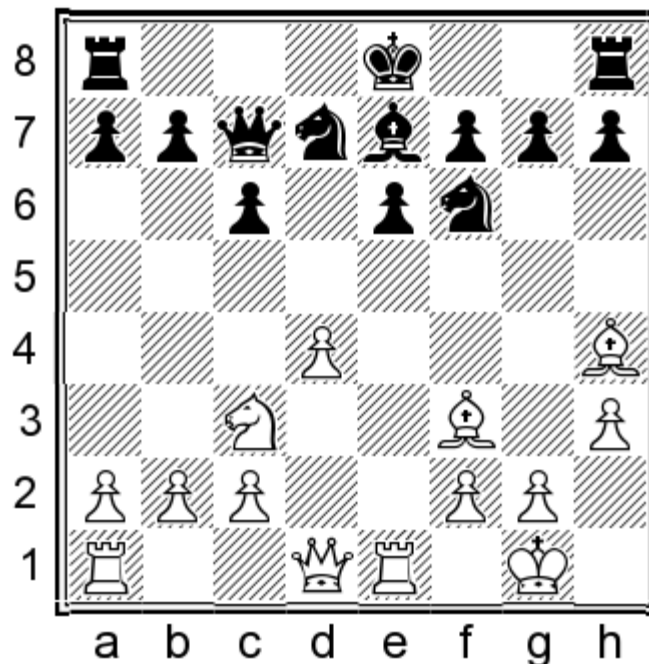
**M.Ali-Tiviakov**  
**Jakarta 2015**

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 c6 5.♘f3 ♟f5 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♟g2 e6 8.0-0 h6 9.a3 ♟e7 10.♟f4 ♚d8 11.♚e2 0-0  
 12.♞fd1 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♞e8 15.h3 ♘d5...



**Movsesian-Tiviakov**  
**Wijk aan Zee 2013**

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♟g4 (5...c6!) 6.♟e2 c6 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.h3 ♟h5 9.♟g5 e6 10.♟h4 ♟xf3  
 11.♟xf3 ♚c7 12.♞e1 ♟e7



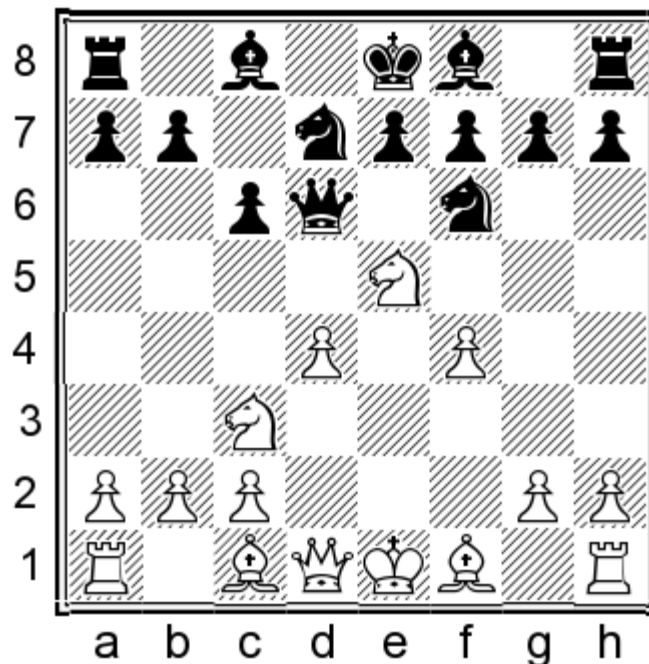
After the main move 4.d4, it is beyond doubt that White controls more space in the centre, but at the same time the pawn provides us with a target.

A look at the diagrams can lead to a few useful tips and conclusions about the type of play.

- This is surely a light-squared opening, so much will depend upon the effective development of the Bc8.
- White controls more space, so Black should seek exchanges to ensure more breathing space.
- The fight will mainly revolve around the two important squares d5 and e5.
- The d4 pawn could become a target to attack – directly, or with the breakthrough ...c6-c5 or ...e6-e5.
- The ♔d6 cannot be effectively attacked as it has many squares to flee to: c7, d7, d8, b4 or even e6. An important rule of thumb is that every exchange of a minor piece makes its position in the centre safer.
- White has a slight lead in development, which allows him to dictate the course of events and choose which side to castle. Black should try to hinder his plans by guerrilla tactics: a) offering a queen trade or exchanges in general and b) attacking certain weak points, which could be d4, c2, g2, to name a few.
- A bishop on c4 would almost certainly end up biting on granite after ...e7-e6, so this development is usually good news for Black.
- Endings are rarely better for White if nothing really catastrophic had happened to our pawn formation.

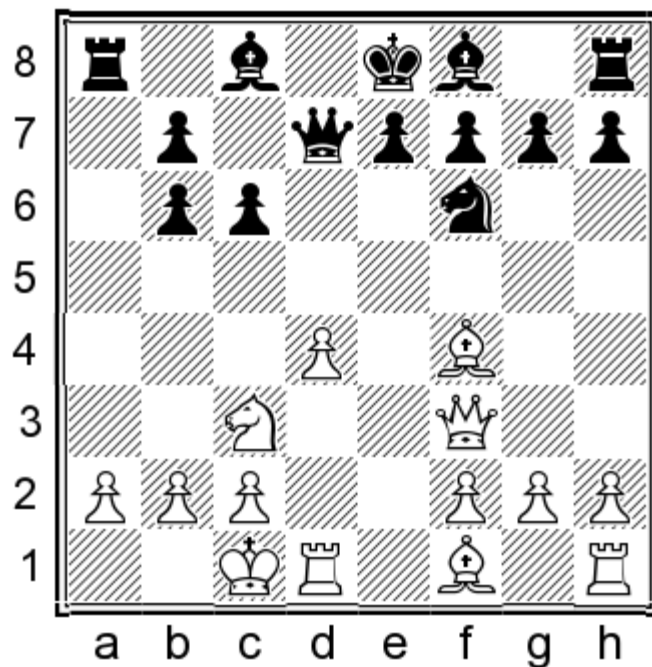
Several lines are very sharp and, in my opinion, critical.

5. ♘f3 c6 6. ♗e5 ♖bd7 7. f4!?



The Shirov plan is underestimated and its coverage by theoreticians and annotators is overall wrong. I devoted the better part of Chapter 7 to it where I present a new method of defence.

5. ♘f3 c6 6. ♗e5 ♖bd7 7. ♗c4 ♔c7 8. ♕f3 ♖b6 9. ♘f4 ♔d7 10. ♗xb6 axb6 11. 0-0-0, Kotronias-Tiviakov, 2011.



I got an edge in this game and that only confirmed my opinion that Black was struggling in this particular line. Until I discovered the right way to strike back! You'll find my novel analysis in Chapter 8. It goes well beyond move 30 and is really vital for Black.

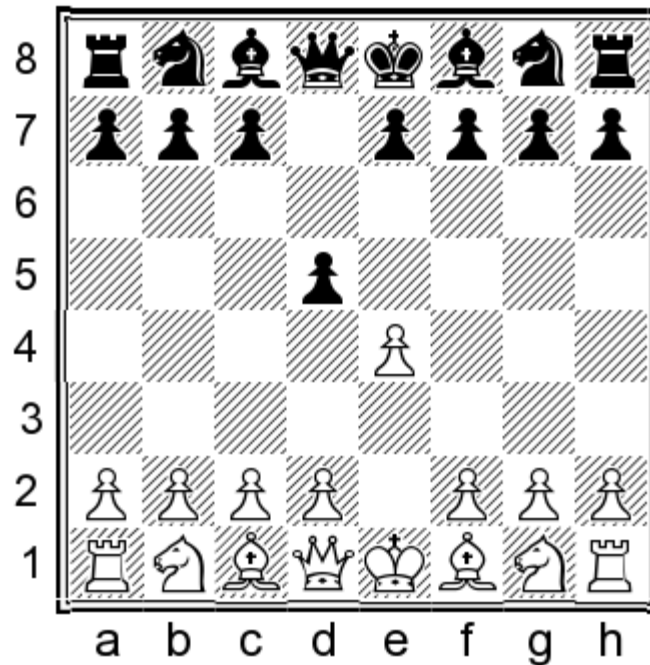
Today I believe that the 3...♔d6 Scandinavian is a safe and sound opening for all levels. I have spent so many hours trying to refute it, bashing my head against its solid walls, only to end up respecting it myself. The fruits of my work and analyses are presented below. I included games played before 20.1.2016.

I would like to thank my editor Semko Semkov for accepting my idea to create a repertoire based on this system, and then helping me with the analysis of some positions.

*Vassilios Kotronias  
Athens, January 2016*

# Chapter 1. 1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves Main Ideas

## 1.e4 d5

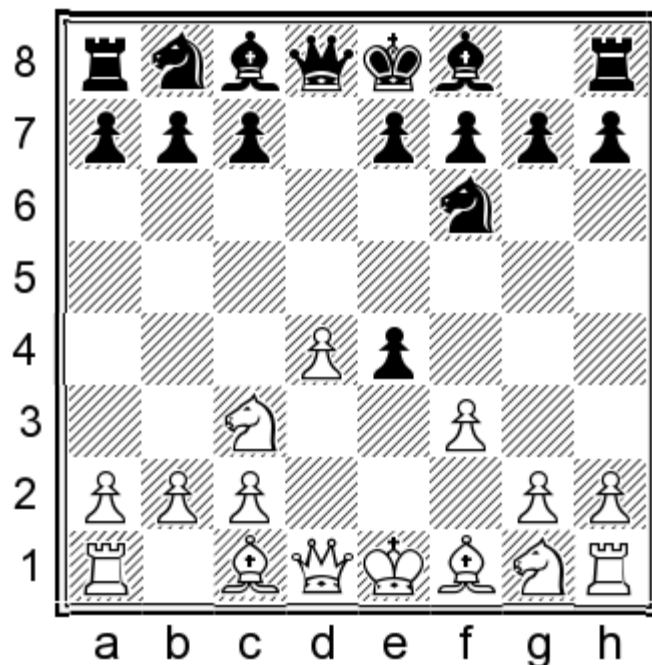


By hitting the unprotected e4 pawn right away, Black wants to achieve two objectives:

- create an asymmetric pawn structure;
- obtain free piece play in a position with open centre.

The main disadvantage of this plan is that in most lines the queen comes into the centre as early as on move two, which spells loss of time. So, it is automatically good news for us if White refrains from 2.exd5, as the biggest drawback of our scheme vanishes. We still have to know a few key points about White's rare second move alternatives. Let's begin with the gambit:

**A. 2.d4?!** Of course we should take the gift – 2...dxe4 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.f3!,



but here we should take an important decision. While it is clear that White's compensation would be quite arguable after 4...exf3, his position is not entirely devoid of resources. I did not want to invest a lot of time trying to refute this gambit, so I decided to rely on common sense. My suggestion is to avoid giving the enemy an initiative:

**4...♙f5!?** This natural developing move keeps the pawn wedge on e4. Gambiteers like open lines and fast-paced play so it is a good idea, for psychological reasons, to keep their pieces as much restrained as possible.

**5.fxe4**

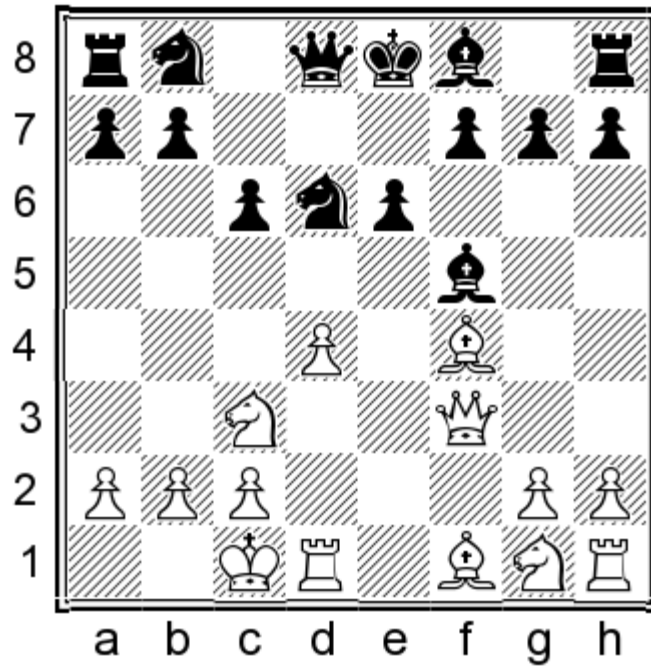
5.g4?! ♙g6 6.g5 neglects development and we can safely keep the extra pawn with 6...♘d5 7.fxe4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xe4.

5.♙g5 ♘bd7 6.♙c4 h6 7.♙h4 ♘b6 8.♙b3 e3!♞ is also better for Black. It will take White quite some time to capture this pawn and in the meantime we can prepare a strike at the centre with ...c7-c5. See the annotated **Game 1** Kurylo-Stankevicius, 2000.

**5...♘xe4 6.♚f3! ♘d6**

Not forced, but good enough. I prefer not to take on c3 and give the opponent a chance to unbalance the game even further.

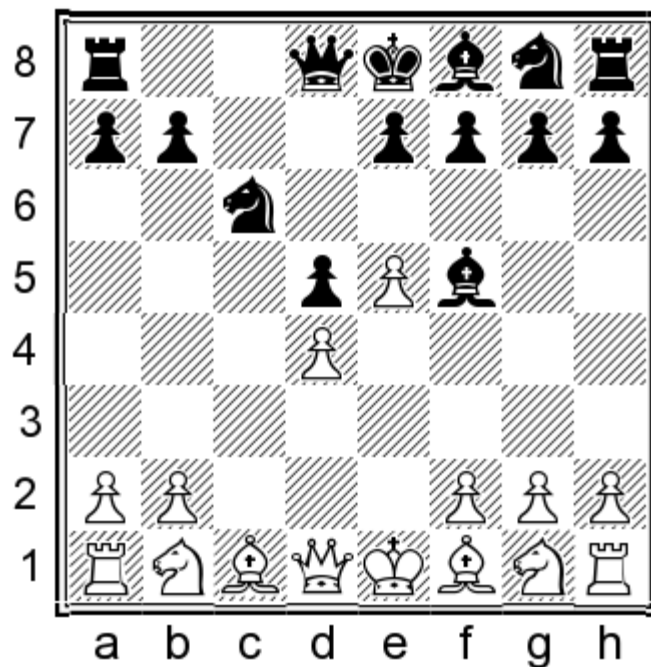
7.♙f4 e6 8.0-0-0 c6=



A quick glance at the position may be slightly misleading here as White seems to have nothing at all for his pawn. In fact, he can create enough play to hold the balance as shown by correspondence games. That may appear as a bit disappointing to all those who expect a clean advantage against the gambit. However, my aim is to suggest in this book a sound repertoire which should bring you decent practical results. For this reason, my strategy is to avoid deeply analysed lines unless they are absolutely necessary for our survival.

**B. 2.e5?!** gains space, but at the cost of a tempo. After 2...c5, White should choose a way of defending the advanced pawn.

a) The move **3.c3** followed by d2-d4 would create a juicy target on d4. 3...♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 ♕f5!

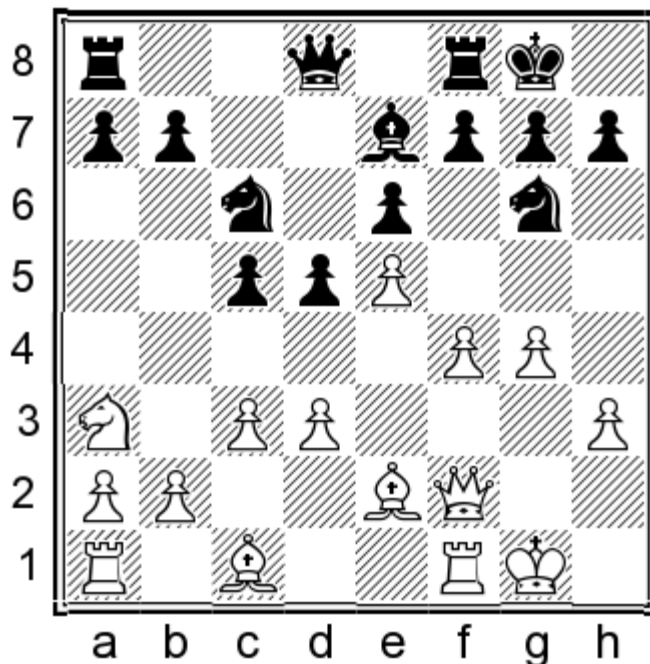


Black's game is easy – see **Game 3** Agdestein-Wang, Amsterdam 2008. His only problem is where to put the dark-squared bishop after ...♘g8-e7. If White plays ♕d3, the answer is obvious since the f5-square will be vacated after ...♕xd3 and the knight will occupy a striking position on f5. In the event of 6.♘c3 e6 7.a3 ♘ge7 8.♘f3, Black can

regroup his pieces with 8...♙g4 9.♙e2 ♘f5 10.♙e3 ♙e7.

b) **3.f4** has other drawbacks – it weakens the kingside. Black develops as in **Game 2** Punt-Landa, Vlissingen 2015: 3...♘c6 4.c3 ♙f5 5.♘f3 e6 6.♙e2 ♘h6! 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.d3 ♙g6! 9.♘a3 0-0 10.♘c2 f6! or leads the bishop to g4 in the event of:

4.♘f3 ♙g4! 5.h3 ♙xf3 6.♚xf3 e6 7.c3 ♘ge7. White's position lacks harmony. A possible continuation is 8.♘a3 (8.♙d3?! g5!♣ is a motif to remember, undermining White's centre.) 8...♘f5 9.g4 ♘h4! 10.♚f2 ♙e7 11.♙e2 ♘g6 12.0-0 0-0 13.d3



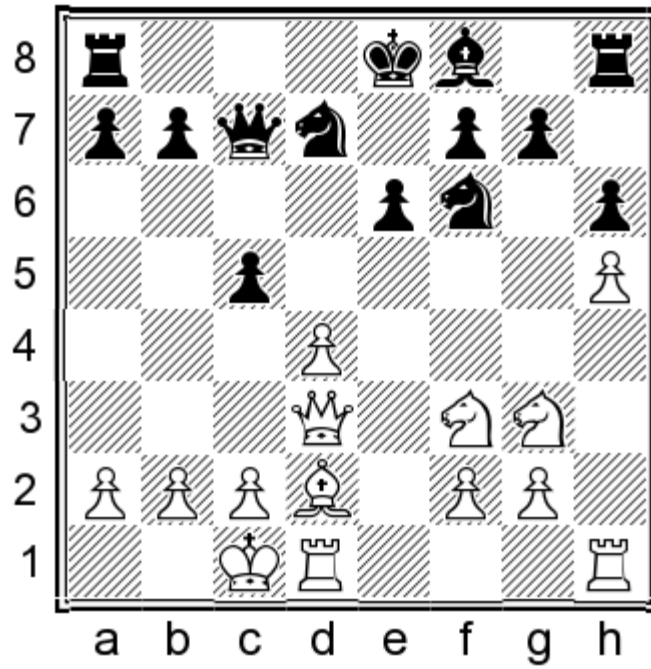
Now the thematic break 13...f6 14.exf6 ♗xf6! underlines the weakness of White's castling position. You should remember about this structure that Black's counterplay is based on either ...f7-f6, or ...g7-g5, depending on the circumstances.

C. 2.♘c3?! turns the tables and it is already Black who develops his pieces with tempo:

**2...dxe4! 3.♘xe4 ♙f5 4.♘g3 ♙g6**

As this is the classical line of the Caro-Kann albeit with an extra tempo, we do not have to invent the hot water.

**5.h4 h6 6.♘f3 ♘d7 7.d4 e6 8.h5 ♙h7 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♚xd3 ♘gf6 11.♙d2 c5! 12.0-0-0 ♚c7=** leads to the following critical position.

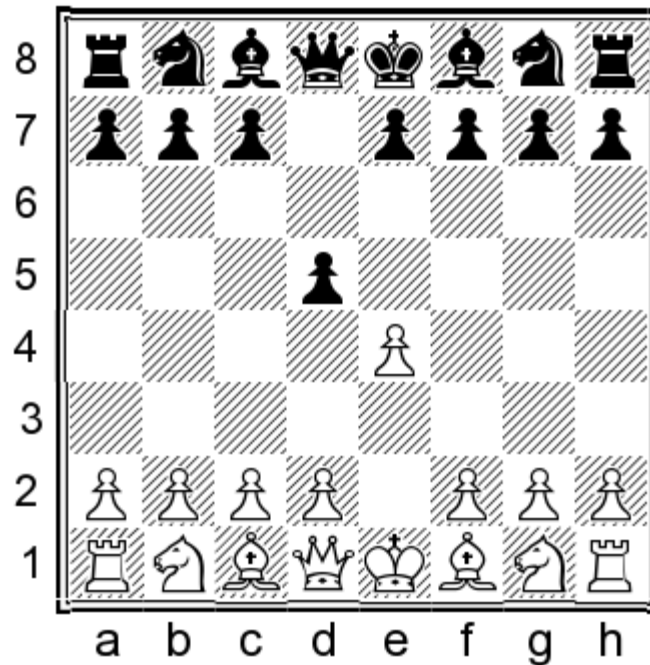


Black has two major plans here: to castle long or short. The latter seems risky, but it is undoubtedly more challenging. e.g. 13.♚e2 ♜e7! 14.♜b1 0-0! ♞.

The same idea is viable after 13.♞he1, but White should also reckon with 13...c4, although I do not see a compelling reason to remove the tension from the centre.

# Chapter 1. 1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves Step by Step

1.e4 d5



I consider in this chapter three minor alternatives to the main move 2.exd5:

**A.** 2.d4?!; **B.** 2.e5; **C.** 2.♘c3

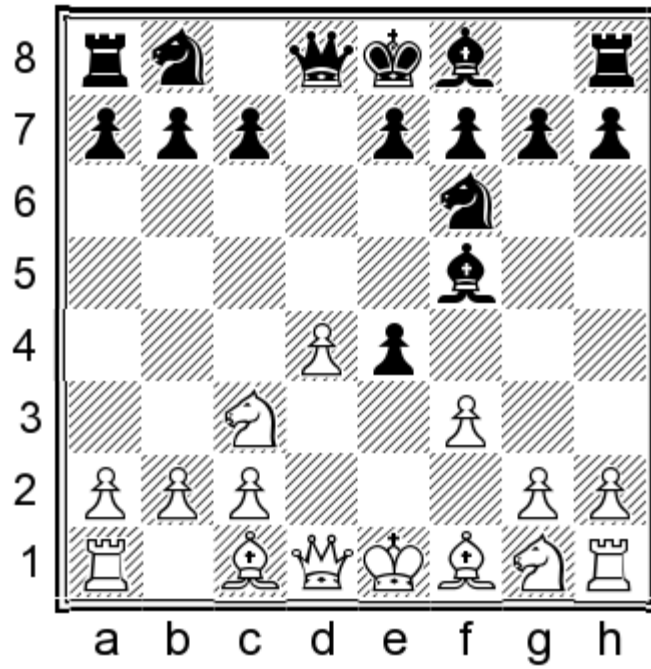
**A. 2.d4?!**

This is the dubious Blackmar-Diemer gambit. Black should accept it, of course:

**2...dxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.f3!**

Without this move White's central activity would have been entirely meaningless. White gains tempi for development and open files on the kingside. I feel that we should avoid playing on his territory. We should always consider returning the pawn whenever possible in order to acquire positional gains or obtain a counter-attack.

**4...♗f5!?**



By bolstering the e-pawn, we hamper White's smooth development. 4...exf3 is five times more frequent so it could be a little surprise.

### 5.fxe4

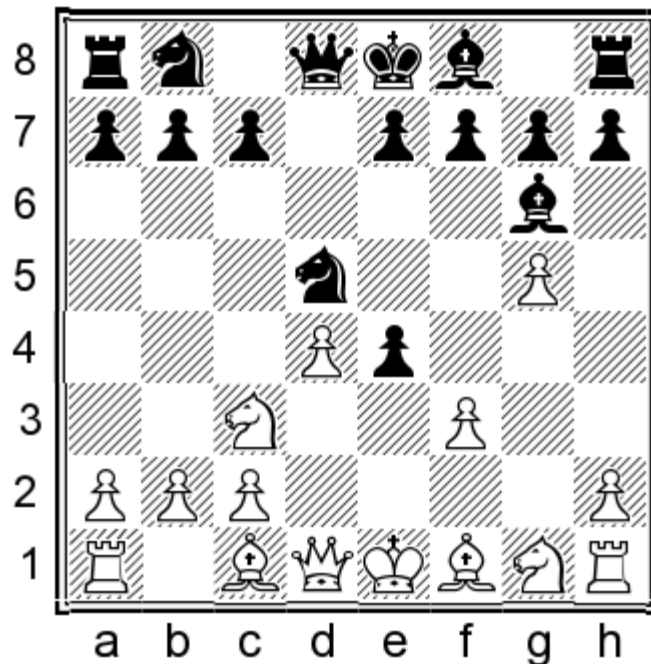
Gaining access to the f3-square for his forces. Other possibilities are:

a) 5.g4?! This is an attempt of grabbing space, but White is overextended on the kingside after:

5...♗g6 6.g5

6.h4?! h6! 7.♘h3 exf3 8.♙xf3 c6±; 6.f4?! e6±

6...♘d5



### 7.fxe4

7.♘xe4 e6 is better for Black. Play could continue 8.h4 ♗e7! 9.h5 (9.c4 ♘b6± creates an extra target for Black on

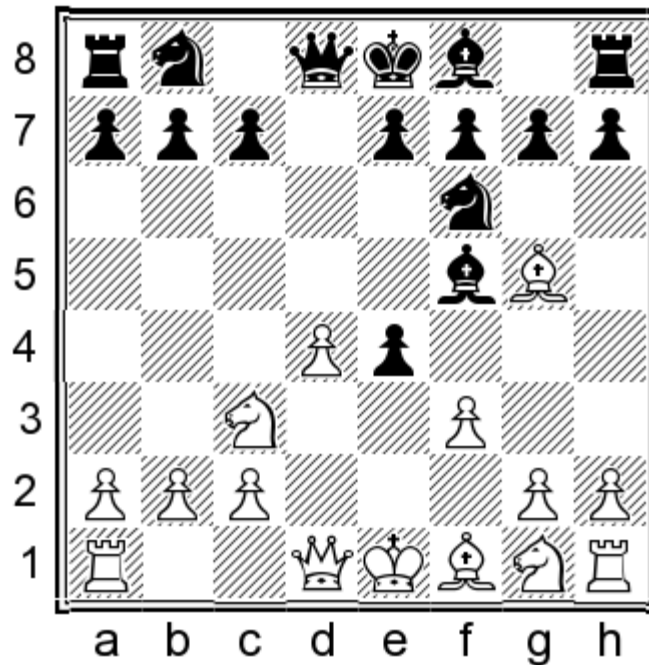
d4; 9.♔g2 h6! exposes White's kingside weaknesses; 9.♘e2 ♘c6 will transpose to 9.h5) 9...♙f5 10.♘e2 ♘c6 11.♘2g3 ♗d7! 12.c3 0-0-0 13.♙d2 (13.♙b5 a6 14.♙a4 ♘b6) 13...h6! 14.gxh6 gxh6 and it is clear that all the fun is for the second player.

7...♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xe4

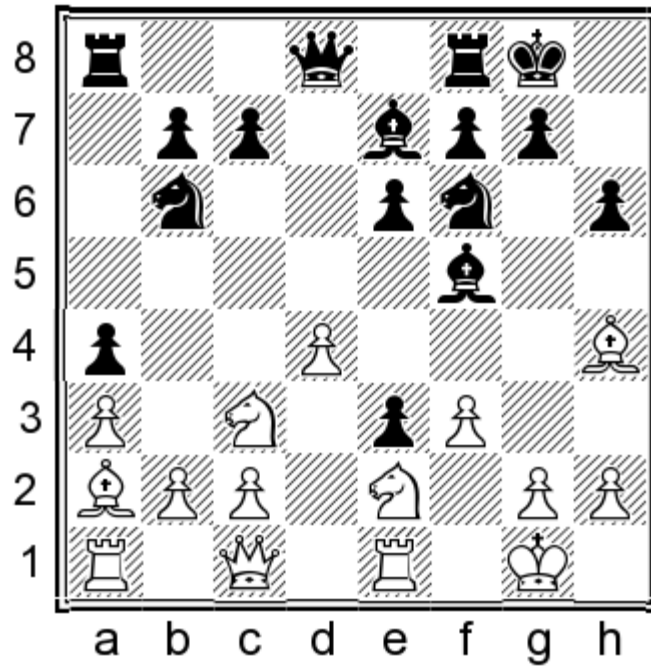
I have also analysed 8...e5. It aims to quickly open up the position and put the white king under pressure. Then 9.♘f3 exd4! 10.cxd4 ♙b4+! or 9.♗d3?! exd4! 10.cxd4 c5! 11.d5 (11.c3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♙b4+ 13.♙f2 ♘c6 14.♗b1 0-0) 11...♙d6 give Black overwhelming pressure in the centre. However, 9.♙g2! exd4 10.h4 f6 11.♘e2 dxc3 12.♗xd8+ ♙xd8 13.♙f4 ♘d7 14.0-0-0 leads to a balanced engine.

9.♘f3 ♗d5 10.c4 ♗e6 11.♙f2 ♗f5. Black's queen is so active that White should seek to trade it even though he is a pawn down.

b) 5.♙g5



This is a logical move which aims to make us take on f3. But we should not help White develop! 5...♘bd7! 6.♙c4 h6 7.♙h4 ♘b6! 8.♙b3 e3! Continuing the tactic of hindering the enemy's development. Now he will have to invest time in regaining the sacrificed pawn. Black is better after 9.♘ge2 e6. The correspondence **Game 1** Kurylo-Stankevicius, 2000, went on: 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♗e1 a5 12.a3 0-0 13.♗c1 a4 14.♙a2



It saw further 14...♙d6 and Black went on to win. Perhaps it was even better to open the centre with 14...c5.

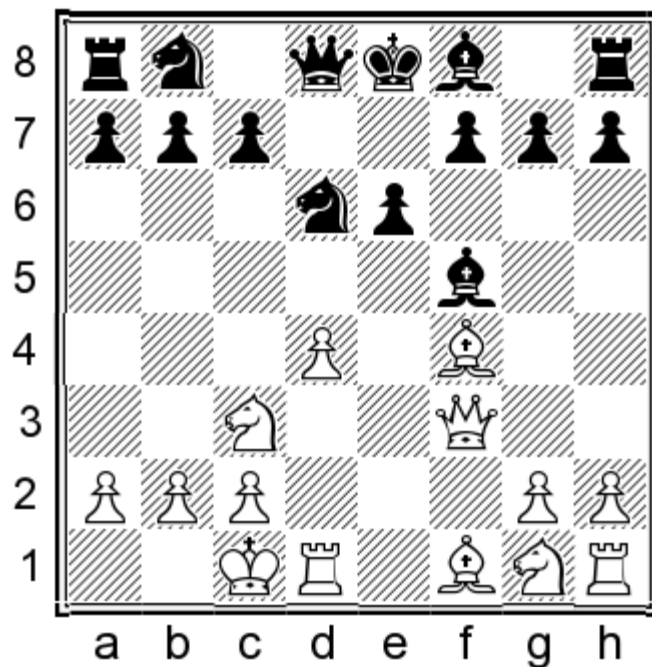
**5...♘xe4 6.♚f3!**

White brings the queen out with tempo and enables long castling. His only hope for success is to create concrete threats before Black consolidated. In correspondence chess the more conventional 6.♘f3?! e6 7.♙c4 ♙b4 8.0-0 had brought White a good amount of victories in the pre-computer years, but it has then faded out of fashion as White's compensation turned out to be insufficient. I recommend 8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♙xc3 10.♚b1 (10.♙a3 ♘c6 11.♚b1 ♘xd4 12.♚xb7 ♙e4 13.♚b1 ♘xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♚d4+-+) 10...♘c6! 11.♙e3 0-0.

**6...♘d6**

Combining defence of the b7-pawn and the f5-bishop. In addition the ♙f1 is denied the square c4.

**7.♙f4 e6 8.0-0**



**8...c6**

White would like to open lines with d4-d5, so the text is thoroughly logical. However, it could be even better to insert first 8...h5!? 9.h3 c6. This idea occurred in the correspondence game Diemer-Dahl, 1956. The variation's godfather lost it, but somehow 8...h5 has not caught up.

**9.g4 ♗g6=**

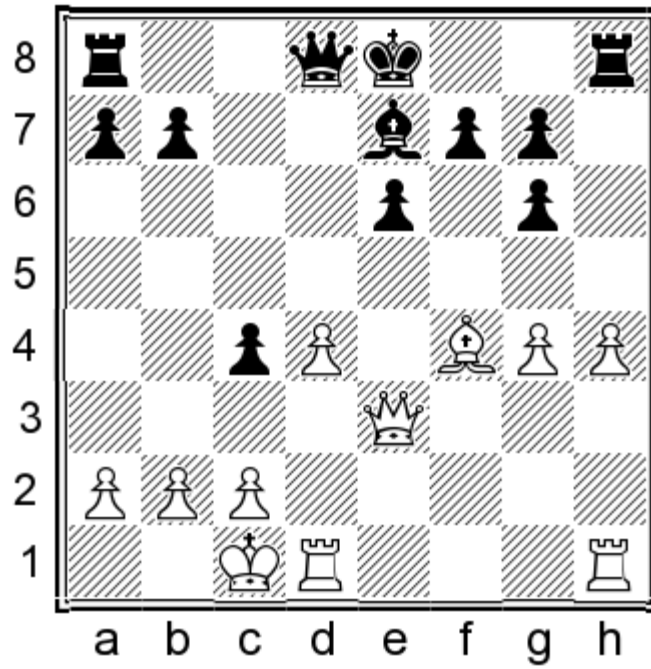
Having entrenched d5, we are now ready to continue our development with ...♞b8-d7-b6, ...♙f8-e7. Whenever White resorts to h2-h4 we might respond with ...h7-h5, creating new weaknesses in his camp, the f5-square in particular. Still, White has probably just about enough compensation for the missing pawn if he plays the best moves. The game jordache2-bosico, gameknot.com 2011, went:

10.h4 h5 11.g5 ♜a5 12.♙d3 ♙xd3 13.♞xd3 ♞a6 14.a3 ♞c4 15.♞e4 15...♞e1+ 16.♞d1 ♜a5 would have been a draw by repetition. Instead, Black fought on with 15...♞b4!? 16.♞b3 0-0-0.

White's most popular try is 10.♞e3 ♙e7 11.♞f3 ♞d7 12.h4

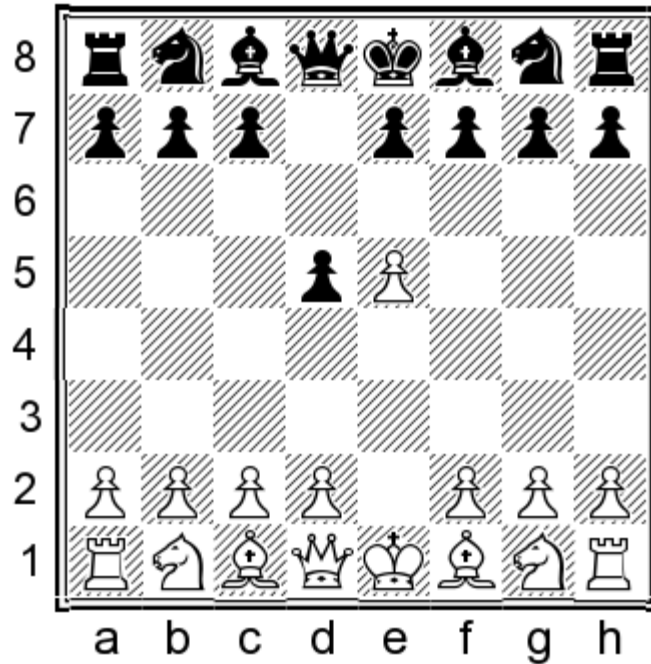
12.♞e5 ♞b6 13.h4 ♞d5 comes to the same thing.

12.d5 eliminates to a draw endgame after 12...cxd5 13.♞xd5 exd5 14.♙xd6 ♙e4 15.♙d3 ♙xd6 16.♙xe4 ♞b6. 12...♞f6 13.♞e5 ♞d5 14.♞xd5 cxd5 15.♞xg6 hxg6 16.♙d3 ♞c4 17.♙xc4 dxc4



18.d5! exd5 19.♞de1 ♔f8 20.h5 g5 21.♙e5 ♞h6 22.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 23.♚xe7 ♚xe7 24.♞xe7 ♞f6 25.♞d1= and the players agreed a draw in Leisebein-Jethan, corr. 2008.

### B. 2.e5



This move surrenders the control of f5 to Black. And loses time at that – not a good combination indeed! No wonder I consider it anti-positional, or in the best of cases completely harmless.

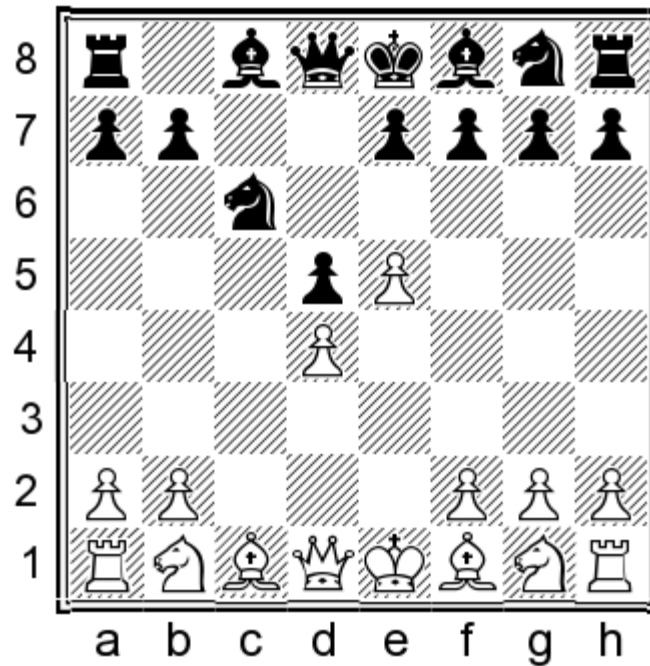
### 2...c5

First of all, we seize control of the centre. If White now goes for a set-up involving the moves c2-c3 and d3-d4, he will find himself with a weak pawn on d4, but without the prospects for a kingside attack which are so inherent to the French structures:

3.c3

The Scandinavian approach could be contagious – only that way can I explain the amazing number of games which saw 3.d4?! cxd4 4.♖xd4. After 4...♗c6 5.♖f4 g6, Black is already on top.

3...♗c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4



This position commonly arises after the Caro-Kann move order 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.e5 ♗c6 5.d4.

Black's best approach is:

5...♗f5!

The hasty 5...♖b6, intending 6.♗f3? ♗g4, fails to 6.♗c3! ♖xd4 7.♖xd4 ♗xd4 8.♗xd5.

6.♗d3

A difficult positional decision. White admits that he cannot make any progress on the kingside without this trade.

The alternative set-up is 6.♗c3 e6 7.a3 ♗ge7 8.♗f3 ♗g4 9.♗e2 ♗f5 10.♗e3 ♗e7 and the pressure against the d-pawn becomes annoying.

6...♗xd3 7.♖xd3 e6 8.♗f3 ♗ge7 9.0-0

The thematic 9.h4 was tried in Lie-Bu, ol. Dresden 2008. After 9...♖b6 10.♗c3 ♗f5 11.♗e3, Black had to take the pawn – 11...♖xb2! – not to win material as White can easily regain it, but because he is the strongest side on the left wing and he should gladly shift the game focus to that flank, e.g. 12.♖b1 ♖a3 13.♖xb7 ♗b4 14.♗d2 ♖c8.

9...♗f5 10.♗c3 ♗e7

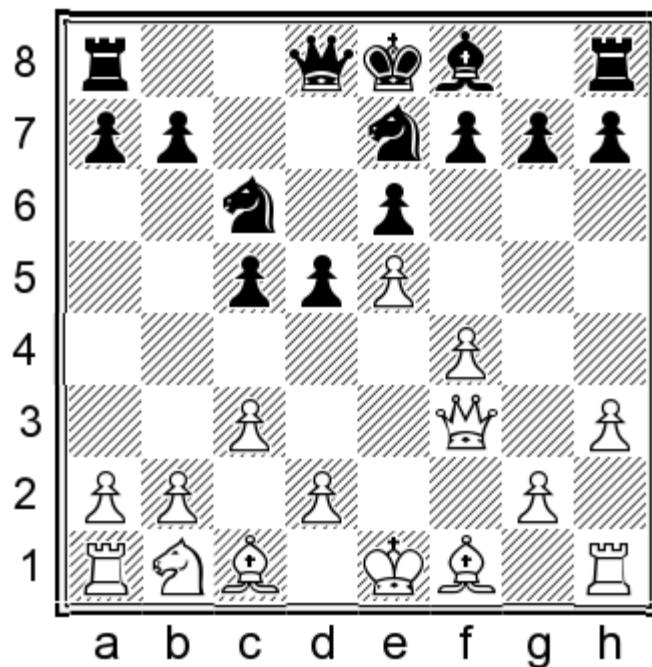
Black's task is easy – see **Game 3** Agdestein-Wang, Amsterdam 2008.

**3.f4 ♗c6 4.♗f3**

4.c3 ♗f5 5.♗f3 e6 6.♗e2 ♗h6! 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d3 ♗g6! 9.♗a3 0-0 10.♗c2 f6! 11.d4 ♖b6 was an example of excellent opening play. See **Game 2** Punt-Landa, Vlissingen 2015 for more details.

**4...♗g4! 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♖xf3 e6 7.c3 ♗ge7**

Black owns the centre and is visibly better as the position on the following diagram reveals:



The second player can continue with such typical moves like ...h7-h5, ...♘e7-f5, ...♙f8-e7 and perhaps even ...g7-g5 at a subsequent stage if White allows it. Achieving this thrust would open lines and highlight the slight disharmony in White's position.

### 8. ♘a3

The knight is heading for c2. White has not apparently abandoned the idea of playing d2-d4.

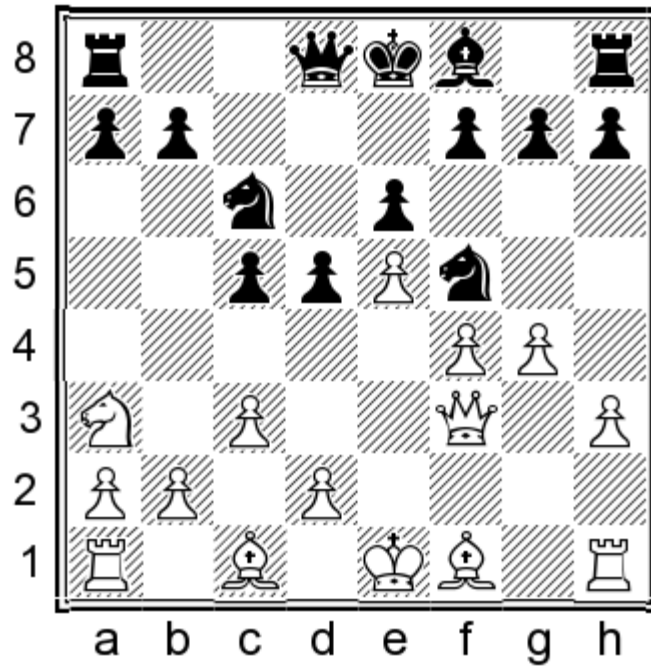
An awkward method of trying to prevent ...♘e7-f5 is 8. ♙d3?! to which 8...g5! 9.0-0 c4 10. ♙c2 ♘g6 looks like a good antidote.

8.d3 ♘f5 9.g4 is a position that has not occurred in practice according to my knowledge, but in any case Black has the more pleasant game after 9...♘h4 10. ♗f2 ♙e7 11. ♘d2 ♗b6.

### 8... ♘f5

8...g5!? 9. ♙b5 ♙g7 looks also excellent for Black.

### 9.g4



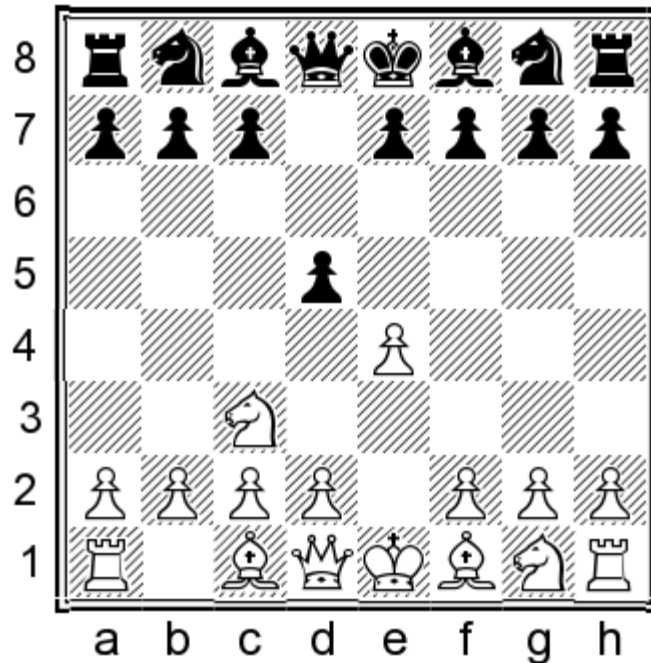
Here, Black did not react well in the game Pirisi-Bokros, Hungary 2007: 9...♖h4+?! and had to trade queens after 10.♗f2=. White's king was able to breath easier without the strongest pieces.

Correct was:

**9...♘h4! 10.♗f2 ♕e7 11.♕e2 ♘g6 12.0-0 0-0 13.d3 f6 14.exf6 ♖xf6**

Black has the better chances as the ♘a3 is too far away from the weak f4-pawn. For instance, 15.g5 ♖f8 16.h4 ♕d6, taking over the initiative.

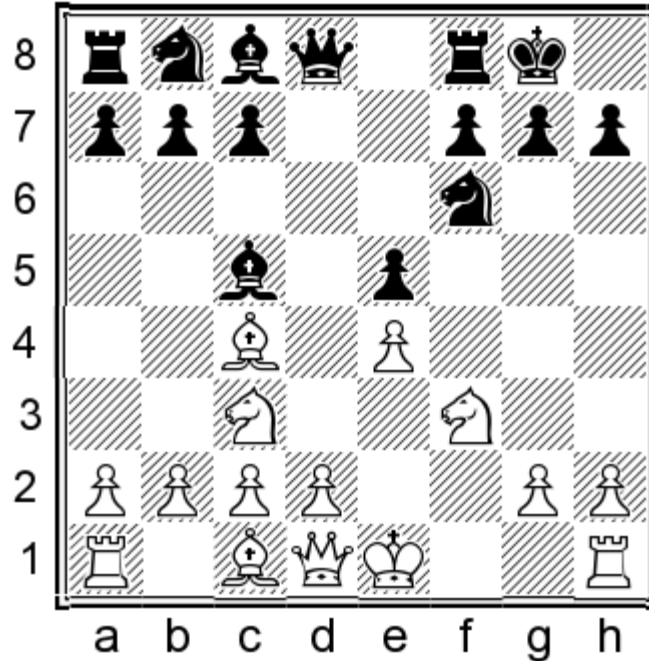
**C. 2.♘c3**



is yet another harmless move for us. It is not particularly bad, but it allows the second player to wrest the initiative in the centre. We could grab space with 2...d4 3.♘ce2 c5=, but the Scandinavian fans love free piece play. Therefore, I recommend to keep the position open.

## 2...dxe4 3.♘xe4

It seems most prudent for White to recapture the pawn. 3.♘c4 ♘f6 4.f3 is similar to the gambit from line A. The only difference is that White has saved a tempo by omitting the move d2-d4. My suggestion here is to avoid capturing on f3. We should continue development of our pieces, aiming for quick castling:  
4...e5!? After this move Black's position becomes slightly preferable. A possible continuation is 5.fxex4 ♘c5 6.♘f3 0-0 when Black has gotten a good version of the King's Gambit Declined.



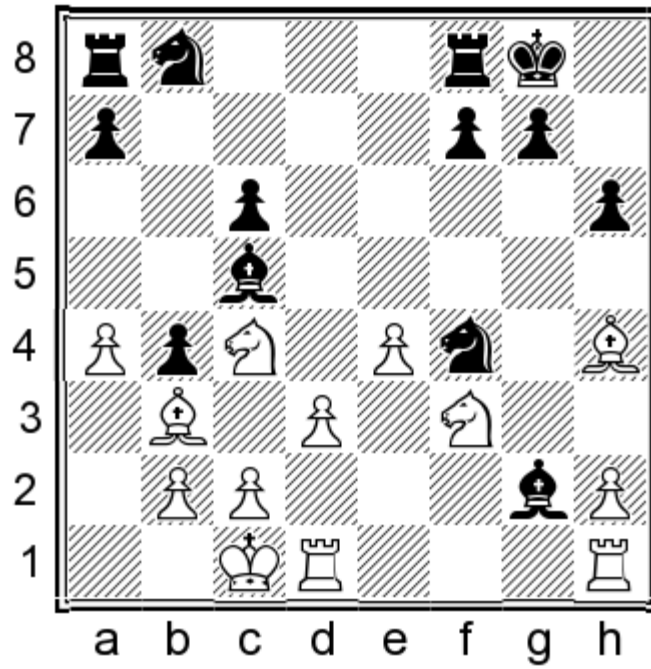
The game Domont-Vuilleumier, Switzerland 2011, continued 7.d3 c6!?

7...h6 may in fact be even stronger, but the human text move is also okay.

8.♘g5

8.a4! was a better move.

8...h6 9.♘h4 b5! 10.♘b3 ♖d6 11.a4 b4 12.♘b1 ♘h5! 13.♘bd2 ♘f4 14.♘c4 ♖g6 15.♘fxe5 ♖xg2 16.♖f3 ♘h3! 17.0-0-0 ♖xf3 18.♘xf3 ♘g2



19. ♖fe5?!

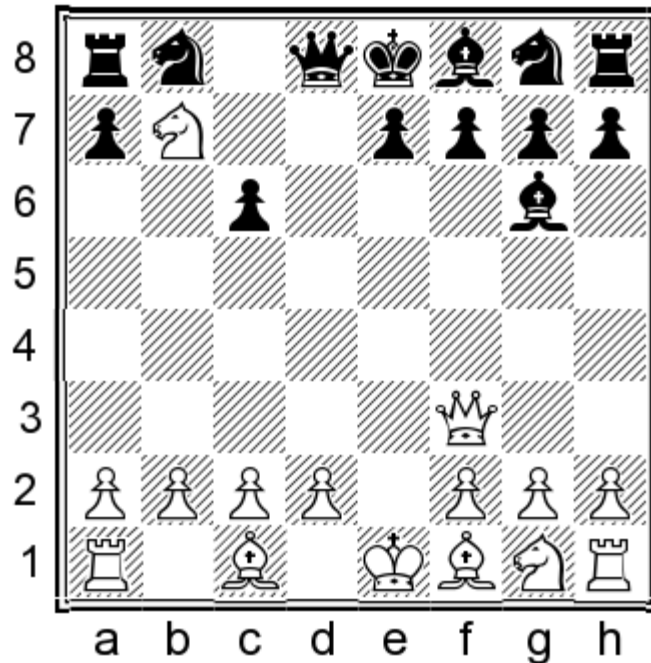
19. ♖hf1! ♜d7 20. ♜fe5 ♜xe5 21. ♜xe5 ♙xf1 22. ♖xf1 g5 23. ♙e1⚡ might have held.

19... ♙xh1 20. ♖xh1 ♜e2+ 21. ♜d1 ♜d4 22. ♙a2 b3 23. cxb3 ♜h7 24. ♖f1 f6⚡ 25. ♙e1?? fxe5 and Black got a well-earned point. Almost perfect play by Alexander.

3... ♙f5 4. ♜g3

Best. Unnatural seems 4. ♖f3?! ♙g6! 5. ♙c4

5. ♜c5? c6 6. ♜xb7?



6... ♖b6! 7. ♖b3 ♜d7 8. ♜f3 ♖b8 9. ♖xb6 axb6 10. ♙a6 ♖a8 11. ♙c4 ♖a7+

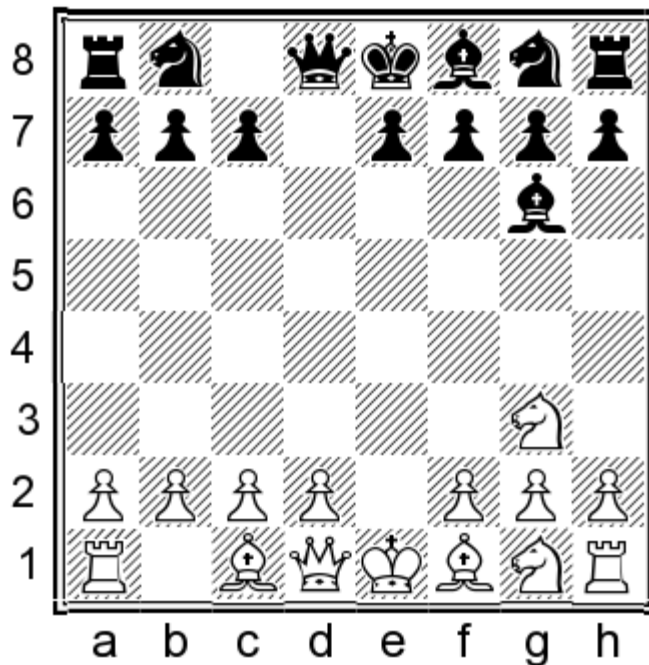
5... ♜d7! and the annoying threat ... ♜d7-e5 is already on the cards. A possible continuation is: 6. ♜g5

6.d4 ♜b6 would cost White a pawn as d4 hangs.

6...e6 7.d4 (7. ♖xb7?? ♖b8) 7...c5 (7...c6!?) 8.dxc5 ♙xc5↑ and Black is better. If 9. ♖xb7?! (9. ♜e2 ♖f6!⚡), then 9... ♖b8

10. ♖f3 (10. ♖c6 ♘e7+; 10. ♖a6 ♝b6+) 10... ♘gf6 with excellent compensation for the material.

4... ♘g6

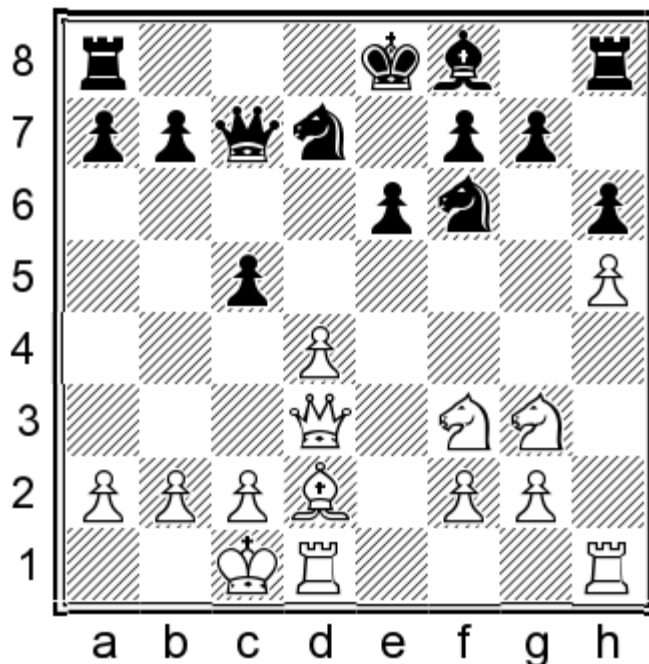


A typical Caro-Kann structure has arisen. Black has every reason to feel that he has gained something over that opening's main line as he can hit the centre with a direct ...c7-c5. Having said that, he should precede this idea with good preparatory moves. A sample line follows:

5. h4 h6 6. ♘f3 ♘d7 7. d4 e6 8. h5 ♘h7 9. ♘d3 ♘xd3 10. ♖xd3 ♘gf6 11. ♘d2

This is an appropriate moment for the afore-mentioned advance:

11...c5! 12. 0-0 ♖c7=



Black is ready to develop his bishop on d6, putting pressure on ♘g3. Then he may choose, according to his style of play,

short or long castling, with fully equal chances. Another idea is the positionally well motivated ...c5-c4, all the more so if it comes with a tempo. Such a move could establish a long term initiative by turning d5 into a stronghold for Black's pieces. White can oppose this scenario by different means.

13. ♖e2 discourages 13...c4 in view of the possible knight jumps

14. ♗f5 b5 15. ♗e3 or 14. ♗e5!? ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗d5 16. ♗e4. Instead, Black can castle long, but I believe that castling short is more challenging:

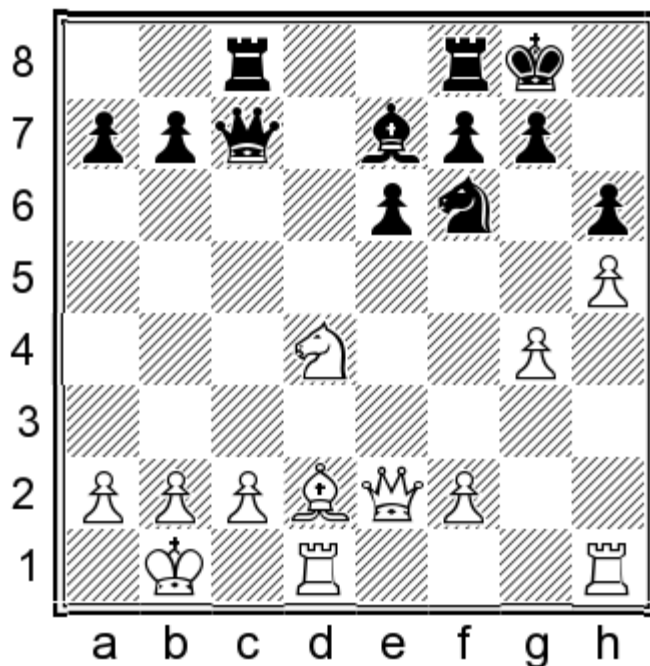
13... ♗e7! 14. ♖b1 0-0! ♞

After analysing a lot of such positions from White's point of view in a standard Caro-Kann, I think that with an extra tempo our king should be perfectly safe:

15. ♗e4

Or 15. ♗e5 ♜fd8 16. ♞he1 ♞b6 17. ♗e3 ♗d5.

15...cxd4 16. ♗xd4 ♗xe4 17. ♞xe4 ♗f6 18. ♞e2 ♞ac8 19.g4

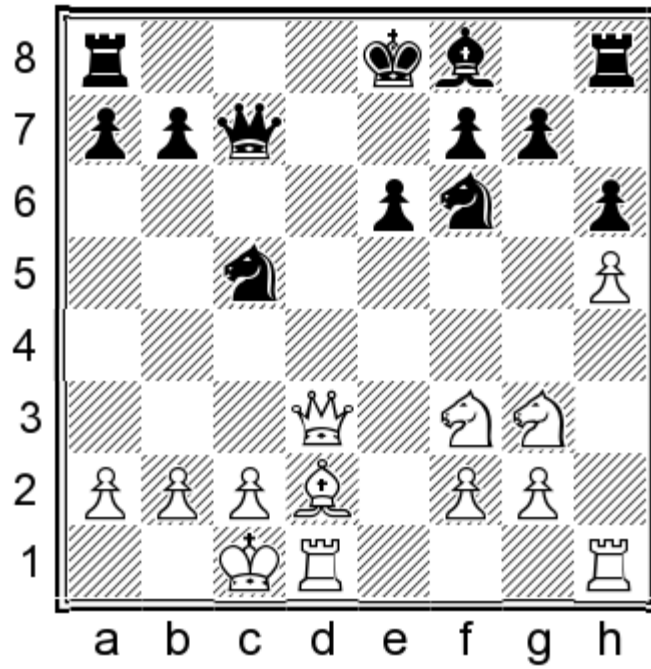


Black has strong counterplay in the centre: 19... ♗d5 20.c3 ♜fd8 21. ♞dg1 ♞b6.

Note that the plan with short castling is also possible after 13. ♞he1 when besides 13...c4, we have 13... ♗e7!? intending ...0-0. White could prevent it by 14.d5 ♗xd5 15. ♗f5, but then 15...0-0-0 16.c4 ♗f6 is equal.

The above analysis explains why White commonly opts for 13.dxc5 when 13... ♗xc5 14. ♗e4 ♗xe4 15. ♞xe4 0-0 is unclear.

13... ♗xc5 is certainly safer as it keeps the g3-knight before the g2-pawn.

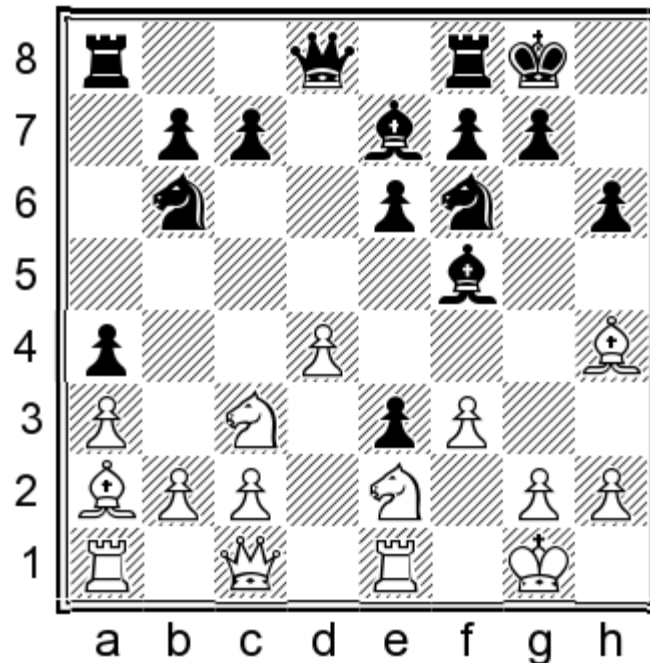


After 14. ♖b5+, Black can choose between 14... ♔d7 15. ♖c4 ♔d5= and the sharper 14... ♘cd7.

# Chapter 1. 1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves Annotated Games

1. Kurylo – Stankevicius  
Lithuania email ch, 2000

1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙f5 5.f3 ♗bd7 6.♙c4 h6 7.♙h4 ♗b6 8.♙b3 e3 9.♗ge2 e6 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♖e1 a5  
12.a3 0-0 13.♚c1 a4 14.♙a2



White's opening play has been rather unsound: the gambit pawn has not been recovered yet, the ♙a2 looks clumsy, the c2 pawn is under pressure.

14...♙d6

The break in the centre 14...♙h7! (or 14...c5 15.♚xe3 ♗bd5) 15.♗d1 c5 would have exploited the minuses of White's set-up in the best possible way. It is important to strike in the centre at the moment the opponent is disorganised while trying to regain his pawn. For example, 16.c3 cxd4 17.♗xd4 e5 18.♚xe3 ♖a5↑ with an excellent game for Black.

15.♗h1 ♖e8 16.♗d1 ♗bd5?!

16...g5!? 17.♙g3 ♗bd5, keeping the c2 pawn under pressure, looks more to the point, but it seems that Black wanted to play with a minimum of risk.

17.♙xd5! exd5 18.♗xe3 ♙e6 19.c3

19.♙g3!? would have been a better choice, trying to eliminate the dangerous d6-bishop. After 19...♙xg3 20.hxg3, White almost equalizes. It is important for the first player to deprive his opponent from the bishop pair.

19...c6 20.♚c2 ♙c8 21.♗f1 b6 22.♗g1?!

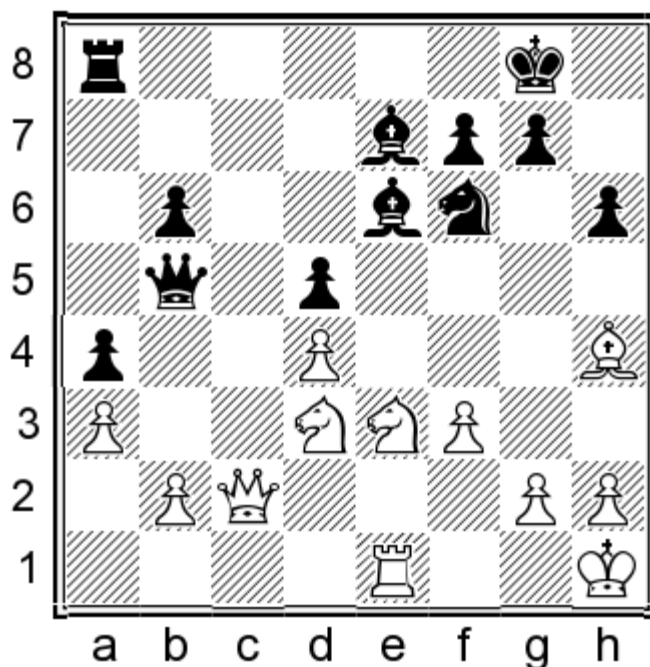
This is too passive. 22.♖ad1! was best, intending the fine manoeuvre ♗e2-c1-d3-e5. For example, 22...♖e6 (22...♙a6 23.♗c1 ♙xf1 24.♖xe8+ ♚xe8 25.♖xf1 ♗h5 26.♖e1 ♚d7 27.♗d3 ♚f5 28.♖e2=) 23.♗c1 c5 24.♖xe6 ♙xe6 (24...fxe6

25.♙g3 ♗f8 26.♘d3∞) 25.♘d3=. White has arranged his forces harmoniously.

22...♞e6 23.♞xe6 ♗xe6 24.♞e1 ♗e7 25.♘e2! (Albeit belatedly, White switches to the right plan.) 25...♞d7 26.♘c1 c5

The position needs to be opened up for the bishops and Black strikes in the centre at the first opportunity.

27.♘d3 ♞b5 28.♘e3 cxd4 29.cxd4



A semi-open, symmetric position has arisen. White's knights are not that bad anymore, but he still needs to be careful as long term factors are against him. The pawns d4 and b2 are weak and Black controls more space.

29...♞c8 30.♞b1 g5! 31.♙g3 ♘h5 32.♙f2

This is passive. 32.♙e5!? f6 33.g4! ♘g7 34.♙g3= should have been preferred.

32...♙d6 33.g3 ♘g7 34.g4 f5?!

34...h5!? 35.♙g3 ♙xg3 36.hxg3 hxg4 37.fxg4 ♘e8! looks a bit better for Black.

35.gxf5 ♙xf5 36.♘xf5 ♘xf5 37.♘e5 ♞f8 38.♘g4 ♔g7 39.♞c2?

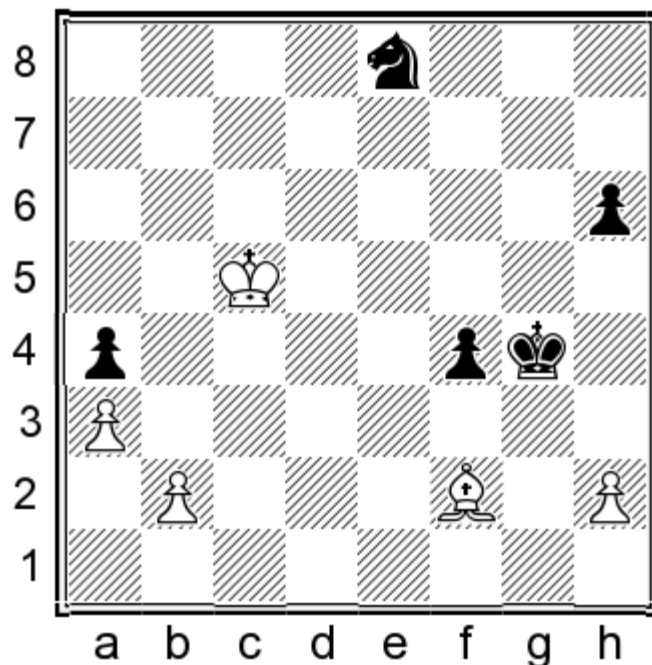
(39.♘e5=) 39...♙f4! 40.♔g2 ♞c4! 41.♞e2 b5!

Black has significantly improved the position of his pieces, relegating White into passivity. The prospect of a bad ending has already arisen for the first player.

42.♘e5 ♞xc2?!

42...♙e5!? 43.♞xc4 bxc4 44.♞xe5 ♔f6 45.♞xd5 ♞b8; 43.dxe5=.

43.♞xc2 ♞e8 44.♞c5 ♙xe5 45.dxe5 ♞xe5 46.♞xb5 ♔f6 47.f4 gxf4 48.♔f3 ♔g5 49.♞b4 ♞e4 50.♞xe4 dxe4+ 51.♔xe4 ♘d6+ 52.♔d5 ♘e8 53.♔c5 ♔g4



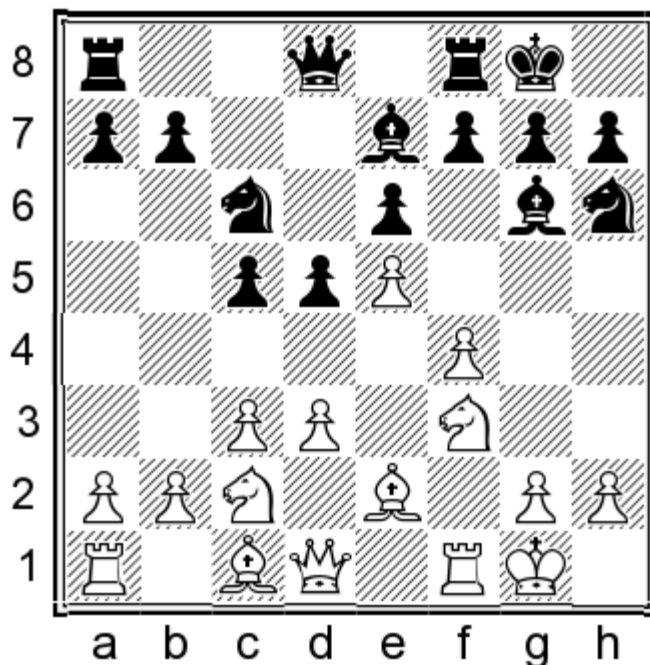
**54.h4?**

The decisive mistake. Losing time in a race is fatal. 54.♔b5!, immediately going for the pawn, would have saved the game. For example, 54...♞d6+ (54...♔h3 55.♔xa4 ♜xh2 56.b4 ♜g2 57.♙e1 f3 58.b5 comes to the same thing; 54...♔f3 55.♙c5 ♜g2 56.♔xa4 ♜xh2 57.b4 ♜g3 58.b5 ♞f6 59.b6 ♞d7 60.♔b5 ♞xb6 61.♙xb6 h5 62.a4 h4 63.a5 h3 64.♙g1 ♜g2 65.a6 ♜xg1 66.a7 h2 67.a8=♚ h1=♚ 68.♚a1+ ♜h2 69.♚h8+ ♜g2 70.♚g7+= is a draw, too.) 55.♔xa4 ♜h3 56.b4 ♜xh2 57.b5 ♜g2 58.♙e1 f3 59.b6 h5 60.♔b4! f2 61.♙xf2 ♜xf2 62.♔c5 ♞b7+ 63.♔c6 and the white king keeps harassing the knight.

**54...♞f6 55.♔b5 ♞e4 56.♙d4 ♜xh4+ 57.♔xa4 ♜g3 58.♔b4 h5 59.a4 h4 0-1**

**2. Punt – Landa  
Vlissingen 01.08.2015**

**1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.e5 ♞c6 4.f4 ♙f5 5.♞f3 e6 6.♙e2 ♞h6 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.d3 ♙g6 9.♞a3 0-0 10.♞c2**



It is decision time for Black. The engines suggest noncommittal moves like 10...♖c8 or 10...♚b6, but humans need a plan. That could be a pawn advance on the queenside with ...b5, but it is safer to undermine White's centre. Landa's next move is the most consistent continuation.

**10...f6 11.d4**

White's pieces are too passive for such an active set-up. Instead of offering Black a target, he should have taken on f6.

**11...♚b6 12.♙d3 ♙e4**

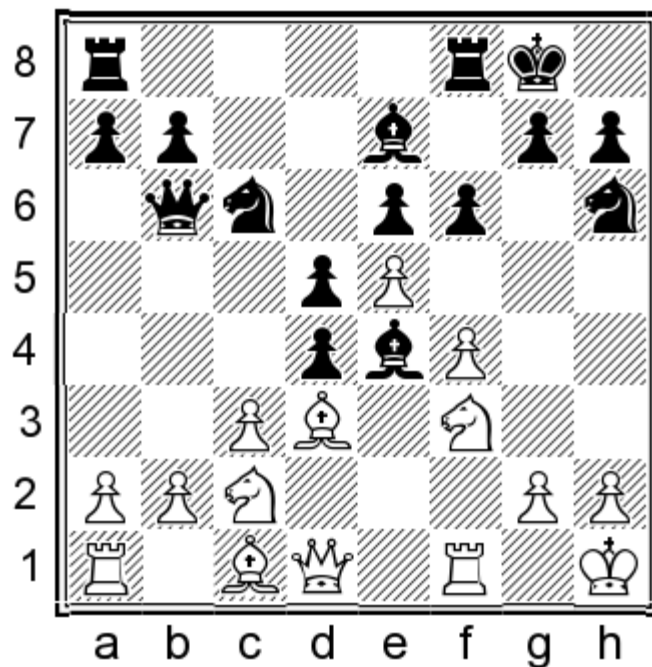
Black has played an excellent opening but now he chooses a wrong move order. He should have firstly defined the pawn structure with 12...cxd4!. The point is that after 13.cxd4 ♙e4♣ Black would avoid the line from my next note.

The alternative 13.♗cxd4 could be answered strongly by 13...♙xd3! 14.♚xd3 fxe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.fxe5 ♖xf1+ 17.♔xf1 ♗f5! 18.b3 (18.♗xf5 ♖f8 19.♙e3 ♖xf5+ 20.♔g1 ♙c5 21.♙xc5 ♚xc5+ 22.♚d4 b6♣) 18...♙c5 19.♙e3 ♗xe3+ 20.♚xe3 a5!↑.

**13.♔h1?!**

13.exf6!? ♖xf6 (13...♙xf6? 14.dxc5 ♚xc5+ 15.♙e3±) 14.♔h1 cxd4 15.♗fxd4♣ would have minimized Black's edge.

**13...cxd4**



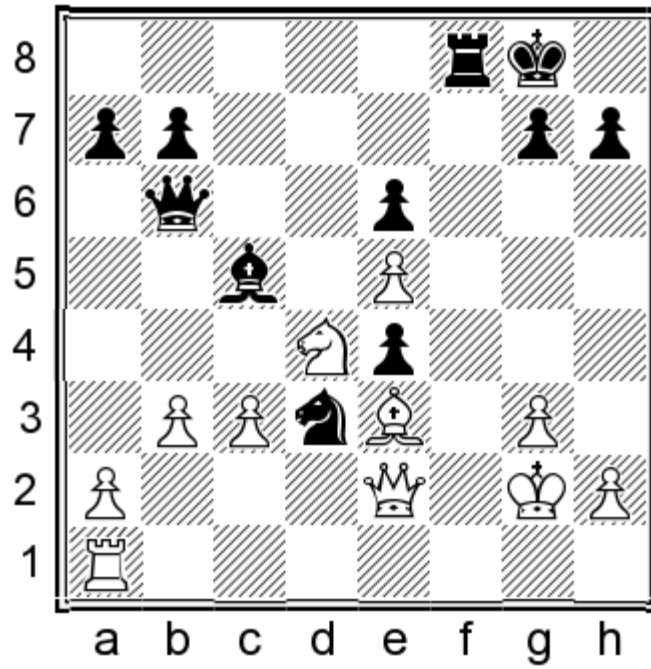
**14. ♖xc4?!**

After 14. ♖xe4! dxe4 15. ♗fxd4 ♗xd4 16. ♖xd4 ♖c6 17. exf6 ♖xf6 White is passive, but without serious weaknesses – 18. ♗e3 (18. ♖e1? ♗g4) 18... ♗f5 19. ♖d2

Black does not have real chances neither along the d-file, nor down the f-file: 19... ♖d8 20. ♗d4 ♖d5! 21. ♖ad1! (21. ♗xf5 exf5 22. ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 23. ♗xa7 ♖d2↑) 21... ♖xa2 (White holds easily after 21... ♗c5 22. ♗xf5 ♖xd2 23. ♗e7+ ♗xe7 24. ♖xd2 ♖xd2 25. ♗xd2 e5=.) 22. ♖e2 ♗xe3 23. ♖xe3 ♗c5 24. ♖xe4 ♗xd4 25. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 26. ♖xd4 ♖xb2 27. ♖xa7=. 19... ♖af8!? 20. ♗d4 ♖c4 21. b3 ♖a6 22. ♗f2 e5! 23. fxe5 e3! 24. ♗xe3 ♗g3+ 25. hxg3 ♖xf1+ 26. ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 27. ♗h2 ♖f7 28. ♗f3 ♖d8 29. ♖e2 ♖h5+ 30. ♗g1 a6 31. ♗d4 and with a stable bishop on d4 and two pawns for the exchange White is not worse at all.

**14... ♗xd4 15. ♗xe4 dxe4 16. ♗xd4 fxe5 17. fxe5 ♖xf1+ 18. ♖xf1 ♖f8 19. ♖e2 ♗g4!** (Black has very dangerous attacking chances now as White cannot cover the invasion point f2.) **20. g3 h5?!**

Improving the knight's position by 20... ♗f2+! 21. ♗g2 ♗c5 22. ♗e3 ♗d3 was simple and strong. 23. b3



23...♖a6!

Gaining a tempo over 23...♙xd4 24.cxd4 (24.♙xd4 ♖c6 25.♔g1 e3!? 26.♗xe3 ♖f2 27.♗xf2 ♘xf2 28.♔xf2 ♗e4 29.♞e1 ♗d3) is quite difficult for the first player.) 24...♗c6 25.♞f1.

24.♗g4 ♙xd4 25.cxd4 (25.♙xd4 e3! 26.♙xe3 ♘xe5+) 25...♗c6 26.♗e2 a5! (using the extra tempo to create a second weakness in the white camp, the other one being his unsafe king) 27.♞f1 ♞xf1 28.♔xf1 a4 29.♔g2 axb3 30.axb3 h6 31.h4 ♘b4 32.♗c4 ♘d5. Black has a strategically winning position.

21.♙f4 e3 22.h3 ♘f2+?!

Now Black is even slightly worse. 22...♘xe5! 23.♗xe3 (23.♙xe5? ♖f2 24.♗b5 ♗xb5 25.♘xb5 e2 26.♔g1 ♖f5) is better for Black) 23...♗xb2 24.♞e1 ♘g6 25.♗xe6+ ♔h7 26.♗d5 ♘xf4 27.gxf4 ♗xc3 28.♗xh5+ ♔g8 29.♗d5+ with perpetual check was the logical conclusion.

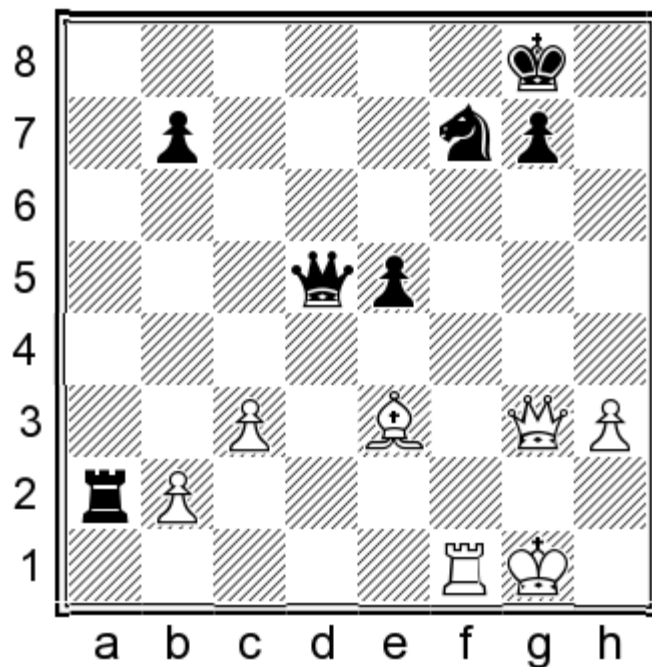
23.♔g2 ♘d3 24.♙xe3 ♘xe5 25.♙f4 (25.♞f1!?) 25...♙f6 26.♞e1 ♘f7 27.♙e3

27.♗c4!? e5! 28.♙xe5 ♞e8 29.♘f3 ♗xb2+ 30.♞e2 ♗b1 31.♙xf6 ♞xe2+ 32.♗xe2 gxf6 33.a4= was the safe path to equality.

27...h4!? (Black is trying to mix it up as a draw does not suit him.) 28.♞f1?! ♗d6?!

28...hxc3! was a bit better for Black; 29.♞xf6? wouldn't work then, in view of 29...gxf6 30.♗g4+ ♘g5 31.h4 ♗xb2+ 32.♘e2 ♗xa2 33.hxc3 ♗d5+ 34.♔xc3 fxc3 35.♙xc3 ♗f5! and Black should win the ending.

29.♗g4 ♗d5+ 30.♔g1 ♙xd4 31.♙xd4 e5 32.♙xa7 hxc3 33.♗xc3 ♞a8 34.♙e3 ♞xa2



**35.b4?**

35.♖f2 ♘d6 36.♔h2= would have kept the balance. White's mistake weakens the second rank and offers Black winning chances.

**35...♞c2! 36.♙c5 ♖c4 37.♗f3 ♞xc3 38.♗xb7 ♞g3+?**

38...♘g5! 39.♖c8+ ♔h7 40.♗f5+ ♔h6 41.♗xe5 ♞xh3 42.♗f4 ♖e2 43.♞f2 ♖e1+ 44.♞f1 ♖e8 45.♔f2 ♔h5 46.♞g1 ♞f3+ 47.♗xf3+ ♘xf3 48.♔xf3 g5+ would have offered excellent winning chances.

**39.♔h2 ♞xh3+ 40.♔xh3 ♗xf1+ 41.♔g3 ♗f4+ 42.♔g2 ♘g5 43.♗d5+ ♔h7 44.♗d3+ g6 45.♗e3? (45.b5!)=) 45...♗g4+ 46.♔f1 ♖d1+ 47.♔g2 ♖d5+ 48.♔f1 ♘e4 49.♔e1?! ♔g7 50.♔f1 g5 51.♔g1 ♖d1+ 52.♔h2?**

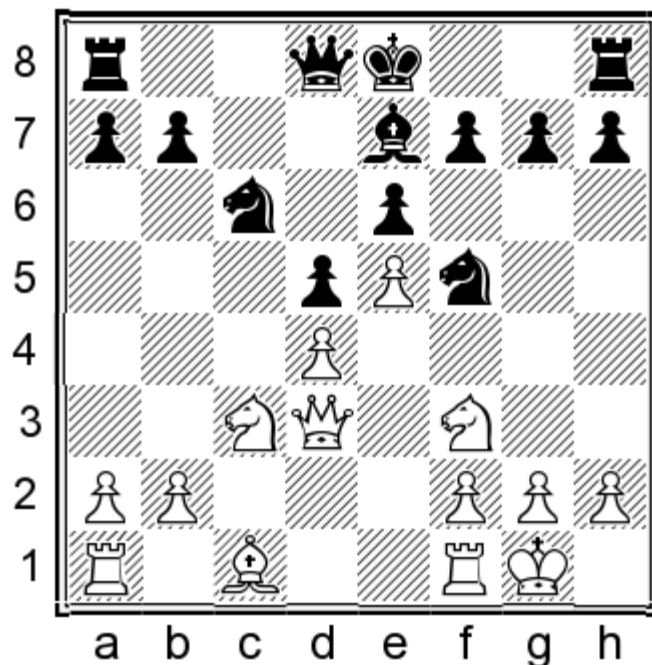
52.♔g2 ♖d5 53.♗f3 ♖a2+ 54.♔h3 ♘f6 55.♗f5 g4+ 56.♔g3 ♖b3+ 57.♔f2 ♖b2+ 58.♔f1 ♔f7 59.♗d3 was the only way to seek salvation.

**52...♗c2+! 53.♔g1 g4+ 54.♙d6 ♖d1+ 55.♔g2 ♗f3+! 0-1**

A great fight, where the stronger player kept pressing till the end and he was eventually rewarded.

**3. Agdestein – Wang  
Amsterdam 27.08.2008**

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.e5 ♘c6 5.d4 ♙f5 6.♙d3 ♙xd3 7.♗xd3 e6 8.♘f3 ♘ge7 9.0-0 ♘f5 10.♘c3 ♙e7



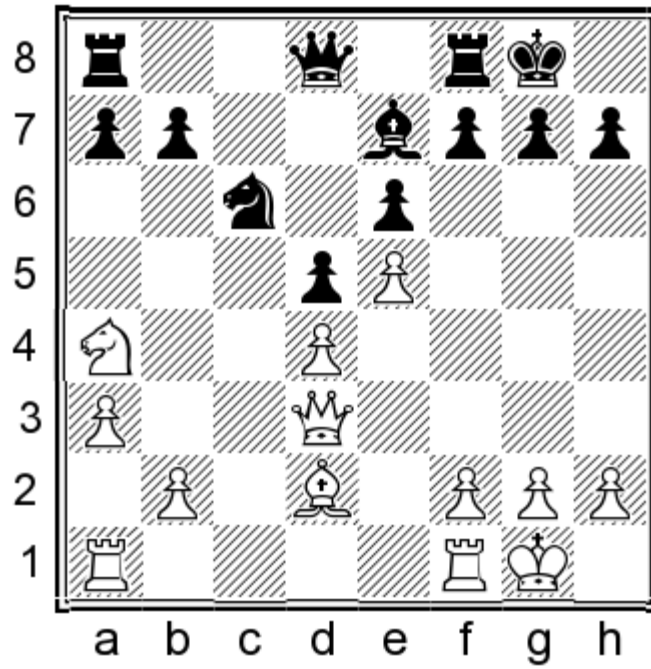
### 11.a3

White can get this position with a clear extra tempo via the modern variation 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.♗f3 e6 5.♙d3 ♙xd3 6.♚xd3 c5 7.c3 ♘c6 8.a3 cxd4 9.cxd4, but even then he should not be able to claim any edge. White's stable centre would have been a good precondition for an attack, weren't his pieces bound to the defence of the d4-pawn. It is obvious that the f5-knight must be somehow repelled from its excellent stand. That could be achieved by g4 or ♗c3-e2-g3. White should not linger with his plan since Black could hinder it with ...h5. So the most consistent try is: 11.g4 ♗h4 12.♗xh4 ♙xh4 13.f4 0-0. Now 14.f5? would stumble into 14...f6 so White should patiently start preparing his pawn advance with 14.♙e3. Black, for his part, will retreat his bishop to a safe place on e7 and he will be looking for the best timing for ...f6. This break should assure him of sufficient counterplay.

The other thematic idea is 11.♗e2! intending to meet 11...h5 by 12.♗g3. Perhaps Black should castle instead: 11...♚b6 12.♙d2 0-0 13.♙c3 a6 14.g4 ♗h4 15.♗xh4 ♙xh4 16.f4 ♙e7.

Agdestein's move 11.a3 is not a mistake, but it allows 11...h5. The game Bogoljubow-Pfeiffer, Dortmund 1951, saw further 12.b4 ♚c8 (12...g5 13.♗e2) 13.♙b2?! (13.♗e2) 13...g5 14.♗d1 g4 15.♗d2 ♙g5 16.♗e3 ♗ce7 with Black's initiative. Instead, Wang opts for an ultra-safe treatment. He simply tries to exchange everything.

**11...0-0 12.♙d2 ♗h4 13.♗xh4 ♙xh4 14.♗a4 ♙e7**



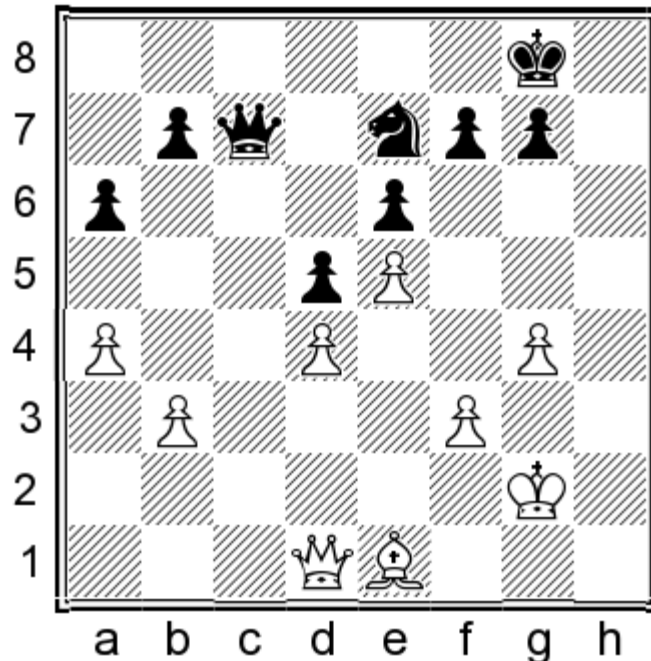
15.♖ac1

White keeps playing on “autopilot”. It made more sense to gain space with 15.b4 followed up by ♖fc1, or first to provoke a weakness on e6 with 15.f4 f6 16.b4.

15...♗d7 16.♘c5 (16.b4? ♘xd4) 16...♙xc5 17.♖xc5 ♖fc8 18.♖fc1 ♘e7 19.b3 ♖xc5 20.♖xc5 ♖c8 21.♖xc8+ ♗xc8=

Apparently both sides have achieved their mutual goal to suck the life out of the position and the rest of the game is of no interest to us.

22.g4 ♘c6 23.♔g2 a6 24.a4 ♗f8 25.♙c3 ♗e7 26.♔g3 ♗c7 27.♔g2 ♗b6 28.♗d1 ♗d8 29.♗d2 h5 30.h3 hxg4 31.hxg4 ♗h4 32.f3 ♗h7 33.♗d1 ♗h6 34.♙d2 ♗g6 35.♙e1 ♗g5 36.♙d2 ♗d8 37.♙c3 ♘e7 38.♙e1 ♗c7

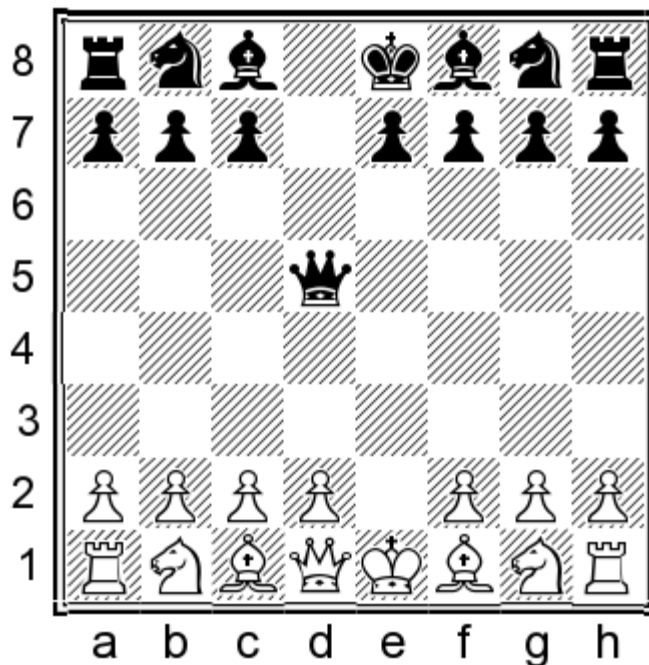


39.♗d2 ♘c6 40.♗d1 ♗e7 41.♙c3 ♗d8 42.♗d3 ♗c7 43.♗d2 ♗e7 44.♗d1 ♗h4 45.♙e1 ♗h6 46.♙d2 ♗h7 47.♙e1 ♗g6

48.♙c3 f6 49.exf6 gxf6 50.♙e1 f5 51.♙f2 ♖f7 52.♖g3 ♗e7 53.♜d2 fxg4 54.fxg4 ♗f5+ 55.♖h3 ♗d6 56.♜f4+ ♖e7  
57.♙h4+ ♖d7 58.♙g3 ♜h7+ 59.♖g2 ♜c2+ 60.♖h3 ♜h7+ 61.♖g2 ♜c2+ 62.♖h3 Draw.

## Chapter 2. White's Third Move Alternatives Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5



This is the proper Scandinavian, where Black regains his pawn at once and hopes that he would be able to gradually neutralise White's slight lead in development. The main option now is of course 3.♘c3, but alternative strategies, which involve leaving the c-pawn mobile, also have adherents. This is a flexible approach which leaves all White's option open. He can either repel the queen by c2-c4 later on, or play ♘b1-c3 when it would be more annoying for Black.

### Let's check first the set-up with c4.

The immediate 3.c4?! is a weak choice due to the awkward check 3...♛e4+!. It forces 4.♛e2 and Black is even better after it due to the hole at d4. It could be fixed with 4...♛xe2 5.♙xe2 ♘c6 6.♘f3 e5!±.

Remember the check on the e-file! It is also effective after 3.♘f3 ♙g4! 4.♘c3 ♛e6+!.

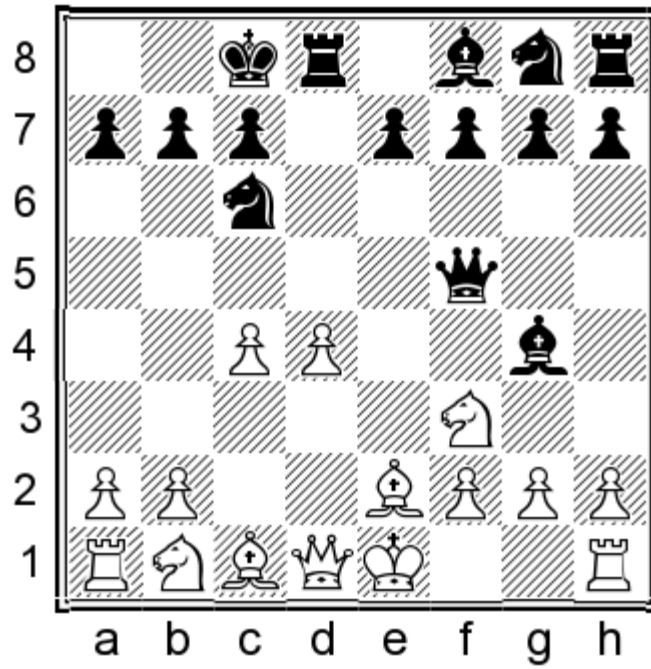
The possibility of those checks leads us to the more clever move order:

3.d4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 (4.♙e3 e5! 5.c4 ♛a5+!) 4...♙g4 5.♙e2 (5...♛a5+! 6.♙d2 ♛f5) 5...0-0-0 6.c4

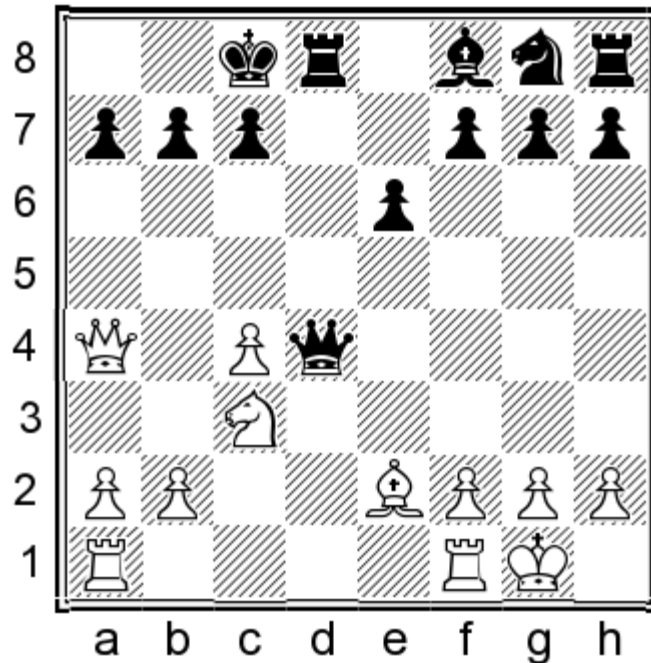
This move is characteristic for the type of fight that takes place in the Scandinavian, where one side often attacks the other in order to prevent being attacked by it! White forces his opponent to make an immediate decision about the future of his queen. The downside of c2-c4 is that the d4-pawn becomes vulnerable after:

### 6...♛f5!

Enabling the tactical motif ...♘c6xd4!. I advise you to memorise the following line as it is probably the only way for Black to equalize.

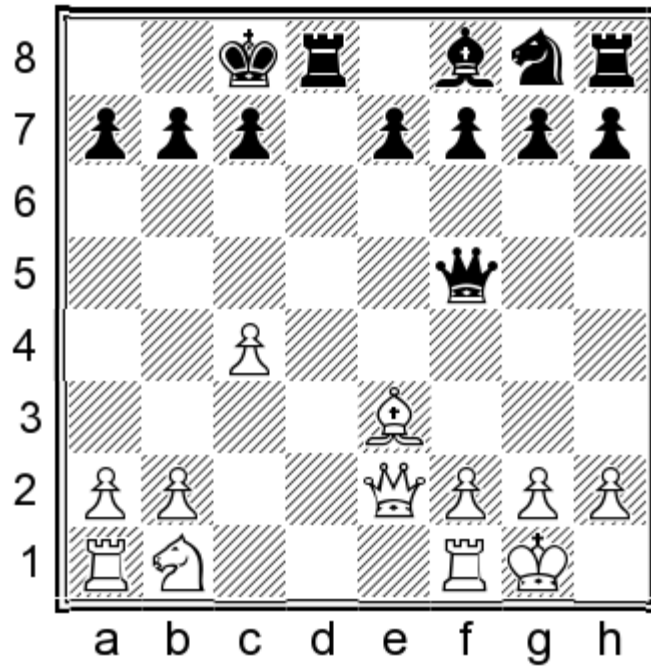


a) 7. ♘e3!? ♙xf3! 8. ♘xf3 ♘xd4! 9. ♘xd4 ♚e6+ 10. ♘e2 ♚e4! 11. 0-0! ♚xd4! 12. ♚a4 e6 13. ♘c3



Black should be able to tame White's attacking impulse and maintain equality with both 13... ♘d6!? (see **Game 12** D'Amore-Prié, Arvier 2007) and 13... ♚b6 (see **Game 11** Brandenburg-Tiviakov, Hilversum 2008). The latter option leads by force to a sharp endgame where you should not be afraid to play with a rook, bishop and a passed pawn against a lonely queen. The strongest piece is not too dangerous when it is not properly supported by the rest of the enemy's army.

b) 7. 0-0 ♘xd4! 8. ♘xd4 ♘xe2 9. ♚xe2 ♚xd4 10. ♘e3 ♚d8

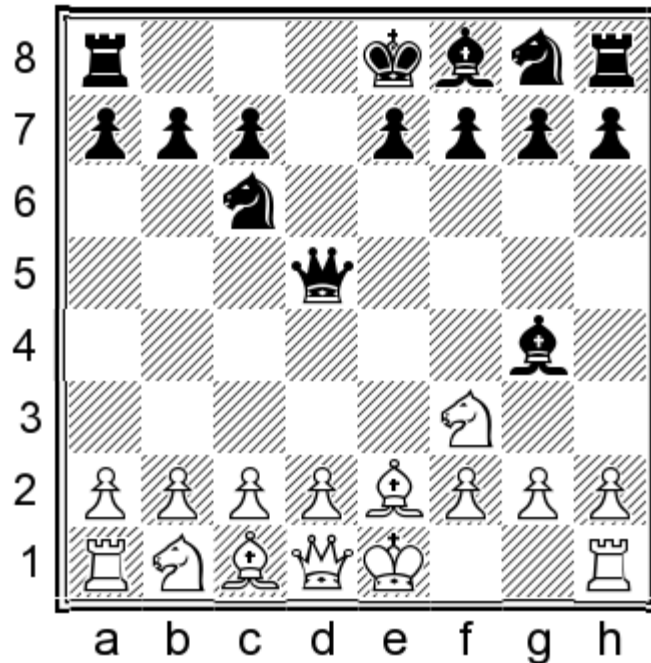


The key of our defence is that we can always give the a7-pawn without a risk for our king. After: 11.  $\text{d}c3$  (or 11.  $\text{e}xa7$   $\text{d}f6$  12.  $\text{d}c3$  e6) 11...  $\text{d}f6$  12.  $\text{e}xa7$  e6 13.  $\text{e}ad1$   $\text{e}b4$ , Black has caught up with White in development and the open d-file offers enough counterplay.

#### White refrains from early d4.

This is quite the opposite approach in comparison with the previous aggressive set-up.

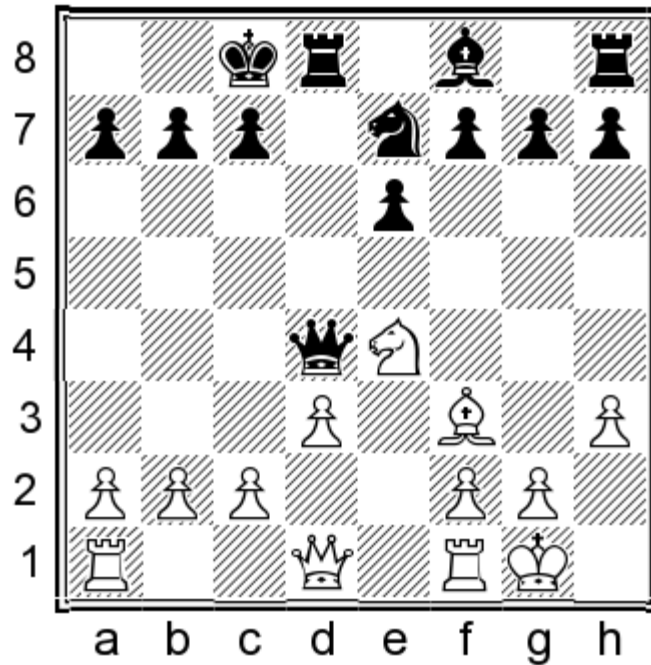
3.  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{e}g4!$  4.  $\text{e}e2$   $\text{d}c6$



White has avoided all the checks, but he may be unable to push d4 anymore.

**Remember!** If White does not play d4 in the first 4 moves, we keep our queen on the d-file in order to pressurize the centre:

5.  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}d7!$  6. h3  $\text{e}xf3!$  7.  $\text{e}xf3$  0-0-0 8. 0-0  $\text{d}d4$  9. d3 e6 10.  $\text{e}e3$   $\text{d}e7$  11.  $\text{e}xd4!$   $\text{d}xd4$  12.  $\text{d}e4$  [chesstouring.com](http://chesstouring.com)



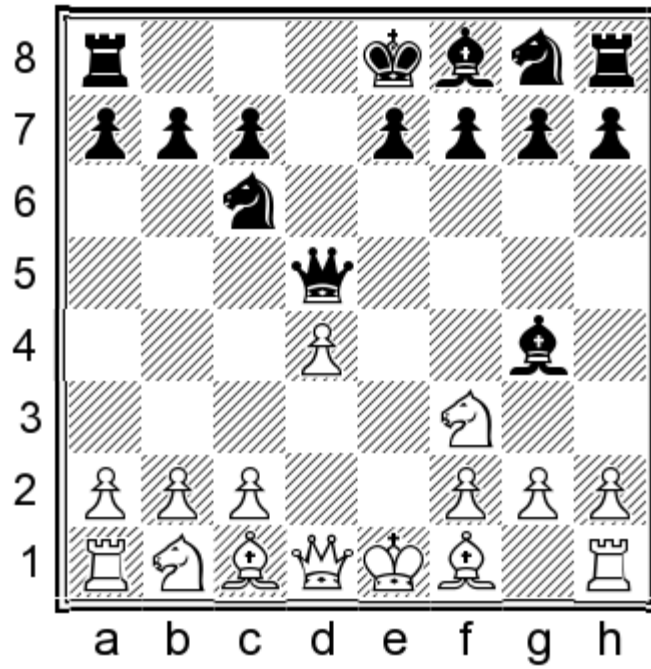
This is a line that players of all strengths could easily choose as White as it is simple and does offer them a chance to attack without compromising their position too much. It is known from the ABC book that opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker, so an important question is, who is attacking here? In this situation, I do not have an easy answer for you. The pawn shield in front of Black's king is intact, while h3 could be used as a lever. Moreover, the d4-queen is more active. On the other hand, White's bishop is hitting b7 while our one is still on f8.

Apparently, the balance could be tipped by Black's knight. It should come at a close range to the enemy king and 12...♞g6! would be a right step toward this goal. White could keep the bishop on the main diagonal by g3, but then ...f5, followed by ...h5-h4, generates enough threats. See my annotations to **Game 6** Vachier Lagrave-Tiviakov, Hoogeveen 2010.

### We'll now look at 3.d4.

I believe that this is a speculative line which counts mostly on the surprise effect. That does not mean, however, that it is deprived of venom. The ensuing positions differ considerably from the main line 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♞f6 5.♘f3 c6 where Black is ditching himself in the centre while after:

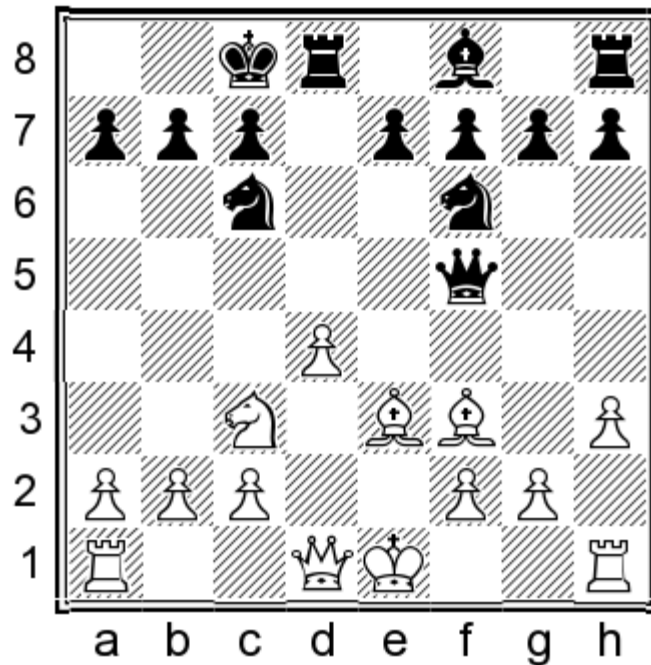
3.d4 ♞c6! 4.♘f3 ♙g4,



Black is entangled in concrete close combat. White's best bet here is:

5. ♖c3

5. ♖e2 0-0-0 6. ♖c3 offers Black the opportunity of retreating 6... ♖f5!, besides transposing to the main line with 6... ♖h5. The point is 7. ♖e3 ♖f6 8. h3 ♖xf3 9. ♖xf3

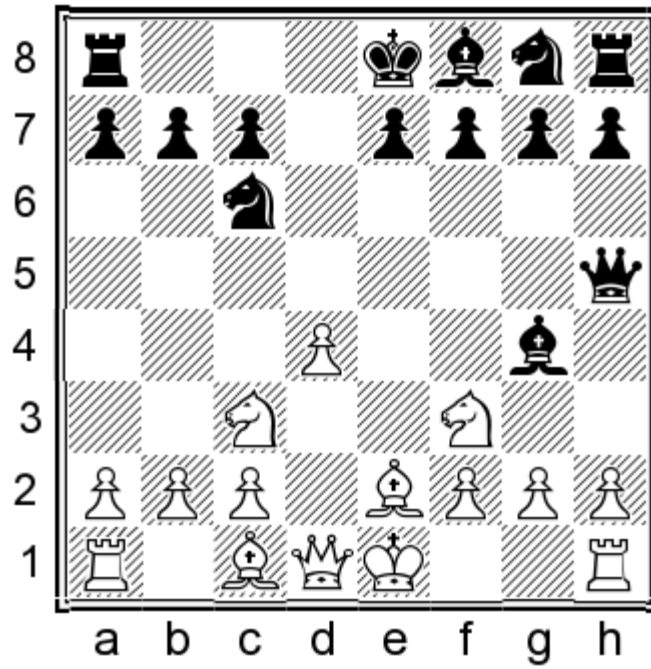


9... ♖xd4! (a thematic blow which is often met in this chapter) 10. ♖xd4 e5=.

Mundane development like 5. ♖e3 and 5. c3 let through 5... e5!.

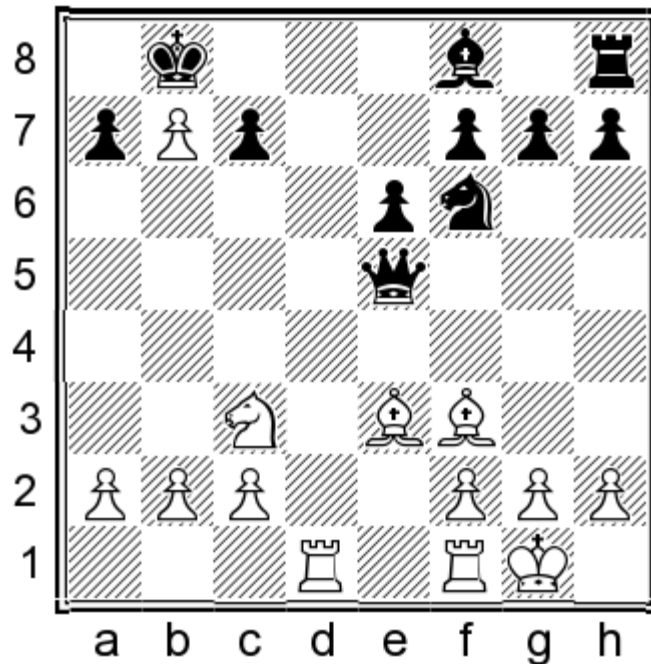
5... ♖h5! 6. ♖e2

(6. ♖b5!? ♖xf3 7. gxf3 e6 8. ♖f4 ♖b4!? 9. ♖xc6+ bxc6 10. ♖xc7 ♖e7=)



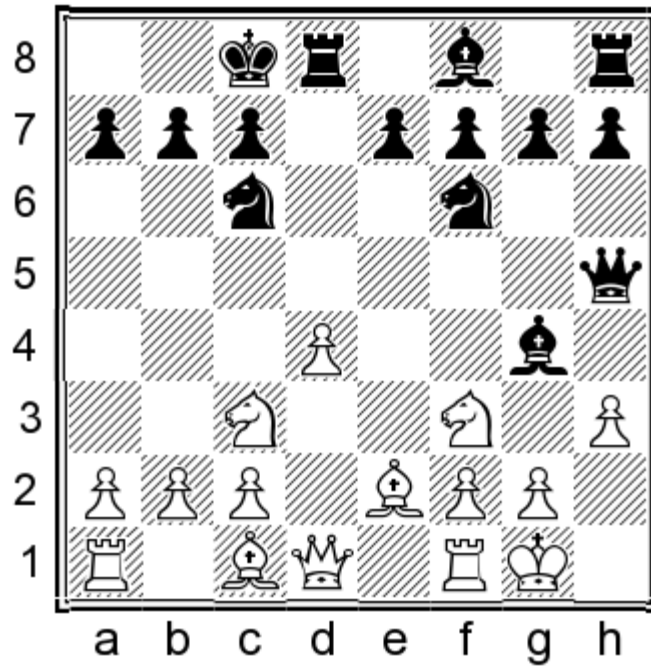
6...♖f6

6...0-0-0 is more consistent (threatening ...e7-e5), but you should know that this move order allows 7.d5!? when the safest answer is my novelty: 7...e6!! 8.♖g5 ♗xe2 9.♙xe2 ♙xe2+ 10.♕xe2 ♜e5! 11.dxe6 f6!. Instead, the frequently met 7...♗xf3 8.♗xf3 ♙e5+ 9.♗e3 e6 10.0-0 ♖f6 stumbles into 11.dxc6!! ♗xd1 12.cxb7+ ♕b8 13.♗axd1



*Komodo* will try to convince you even at depth 40 that the position is dead equal, but you better not believe it!

7.0-0 0-0-0 8.h3



8...♖xd4!

This hit again! Another tactical trick, 8...e5?!, could face the even more cunning 9.♙d2!±.

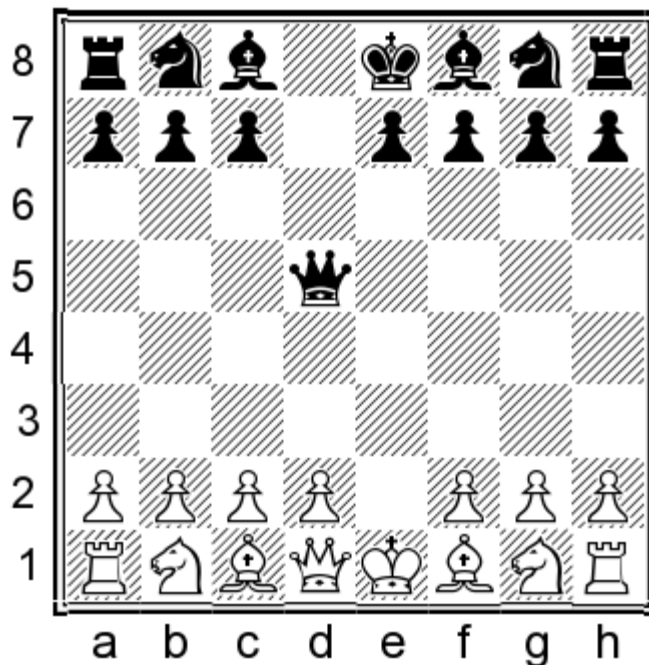
9.♖xd4 ♕xe2 10.♖cxe2 e5=.

Perhaps the most important thing you should remember from this chapter, is where to retreat the queen. I have made the following table for you:

3.♖f3 ♕g4 4.♙e2 ♖c6 5.♖c3 ♔d7!
3.d4 ♖c6 4.♖f3 ♕g4 5.c4 ♔a5+! 6.♙d2 ♔f5
5.♖c3 ♔h5
5.♙e2 0-0-0 6.c4 ♔f5
6.♖c3 ♔f5
6.♙e3 e5 7.c4 ♔a5+ 8.♙d2 ♕b4

## Chapter 2. White's Third Move Alternatives Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5



A. 3.c4; B. 3.♘f3; C. 3.d4

A. 3.c4?!

allows us to carry out favourable exchanges and obtain control of the centre:

3...♗e4+! 4.♗e2

It seems that it is practically forced for White to accept the queen trade.

a) Instead, 4.♙e2? ♗xg2 5.♙f3 ♗g6 6.d4 e5!♠ is clearly better for Black.

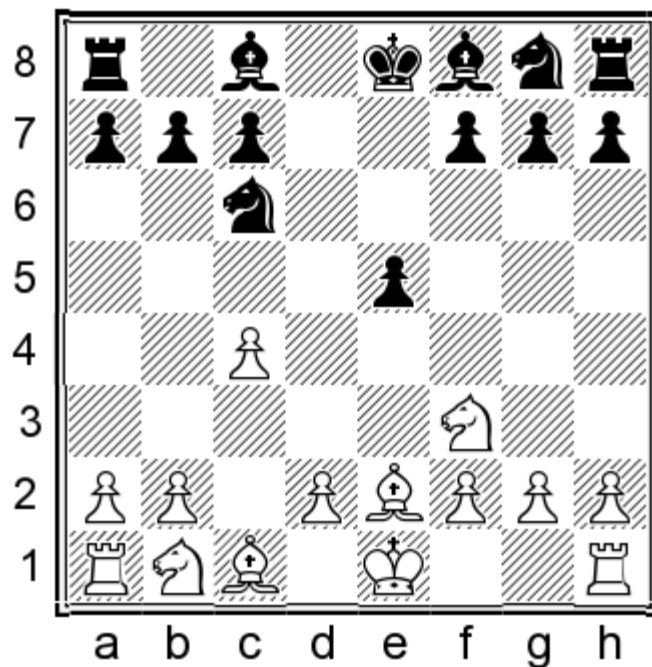
b) 4.♘e2?! ♗xc4! is a line I would like to call the Hesse variation as the only two games in my database were played in that German state. It is hard to believe that White has full compensation for the pawn. For example:

5.♘bc3 c6 6.d4 ♘f6 7.♙d2

7.♘f4 ♗b4 8.a3 ♗d6 9.♙c4 g6, and 7.a3 ♗e6 8.g3 g6 9.♙g2 ♙g7 10.0-0 0-0 also look inadequate.

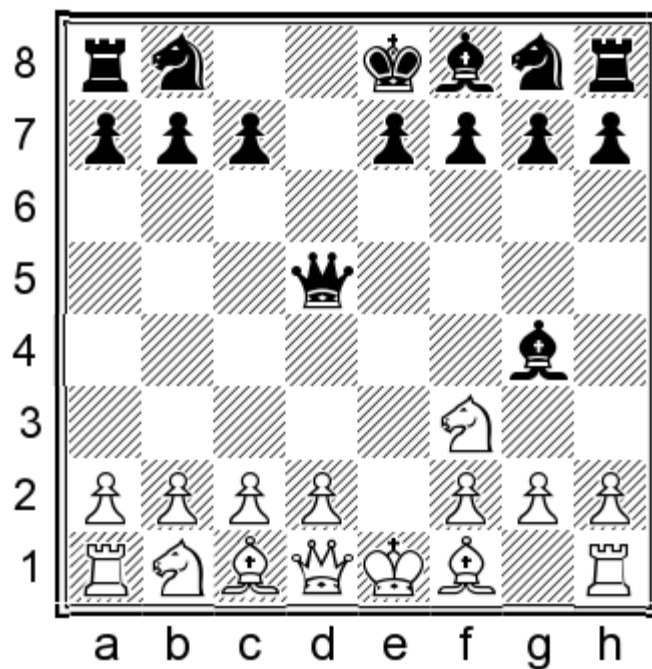
7...♘bd7 8.♗c2, Weyrauch-Romanow, Bad Sooden 2011, and at this point, after 8...♘b6♠, White has close to nothing.

4...♗xe2+ 5.♙xe2 (5.♘xe2 ♘c6! 6.d4 ♘b4!↑) 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 e5!♠



The weakness of the d4-square grants Black the advantage. The correspondence **Game 4** continued 7.♘c3 ♕f5 8.0-0 0-0 and White was fighting a lost cause in Valdas-Swahnberg, corr. 2006. Perhaps White could improve somewhere along this sequence, but my impression is that this line will be never repeated in correspondence chess as humans armed with strong computers will always punish such dubious experiments.

**B. 3.♘f3 ♕g4!**



will most likely transpose to 3.d4, but here we are going to examine some attempts by White to deviate from that line:

**4.♕e2**

Trying to keep Black guessing whether White will push his pawn to d3 or d4.

After 4.♘c3, Black already has 4...♙e6+! 5.♚e2 ♜xe2+ 6.♙xe2 ♘c6 with a roughly balanced position. For example, 7.h3! (7.a3= is too slow to cause us any discomfort.) 7...♙f5! 8.d3

8.♙b5 ♙d7! 9.d4 e6 10.♙f4 0-0-0 11.0-0-0 a6! 12.♙c4 (12.♙a4 ♘ge7=) 12...♘f6 13.a3 ♘e7 14.♞he1 ♙e8 15.♘e5 ♘fd5 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.♙g3 h5= is hardly a problem for Black either.

8...♘f6 9.♙f4 0-0-0 10.0-0-0 e6 11.♘h4 ♙g6 12.♘xg6 hxg6 13.♞he1 ♙e7 and a rather quiet position with approximately even chances has arisen in Slingerland-Langheinrich, Wolvega 2014.

#### 4...♘c6

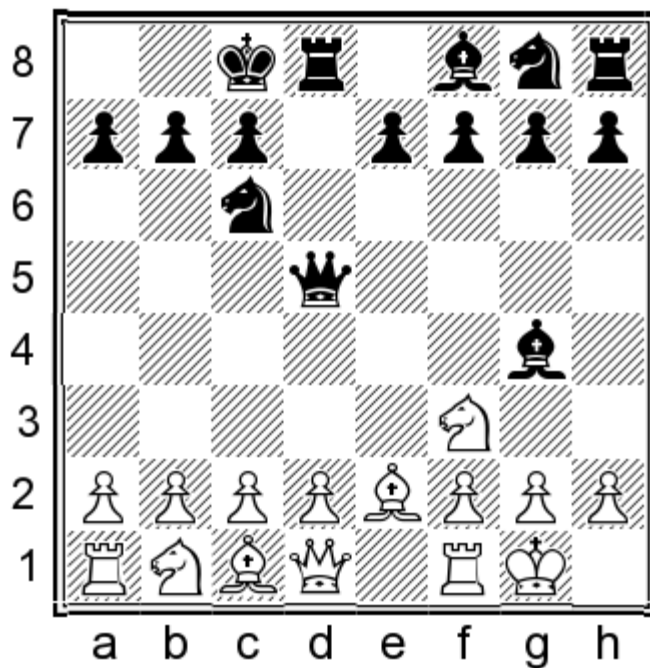
In this variation we opt for ...0-0-0 and quick pressure on the centre. In many cases White's d4-pawn will become the object of attack for our forces. Provided that the pawn reaches d4 at all, of course.

#### 5.♘c3

This is a logical way to deviate from line C. Alternatively:

a) 5.d4 is a direct transposition to 3.d4.

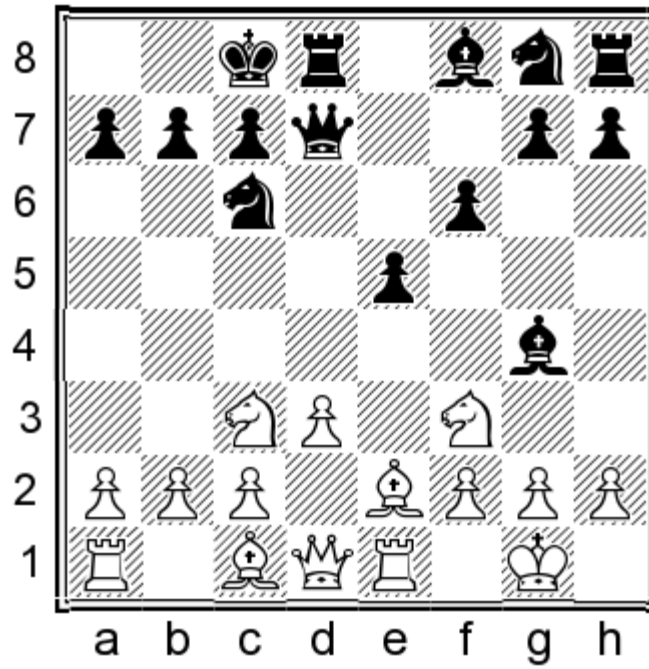
b) 5.0-0 0-0-0



leads to a position where we would like to secure control of the centre by playing ...e7-e5, if White allows us an opportunity.

6.h3!?

If 6.d3 e5 7.♘c3 ♚d7 8.♞e1 (8.h3 should be answered with 8...♙f5!= and not 8...♙h5? 9.♘xe5±), a typical reply is 8...f6!=



Now Black's centre is safe and he may contemplate a massive kingside pawn storm with such moves like ...h7-h5, ...g7-g5, etc. At some moment the ♕g4 will have to retreat to e6 in order to allow the further pawn advance.

6... ♕h5 7. ♖c3 ♜d7 8. d3

Or 8. b4?! ♗f6 9. b5 ♕xf3 10. ♕xf3 ♗d4.

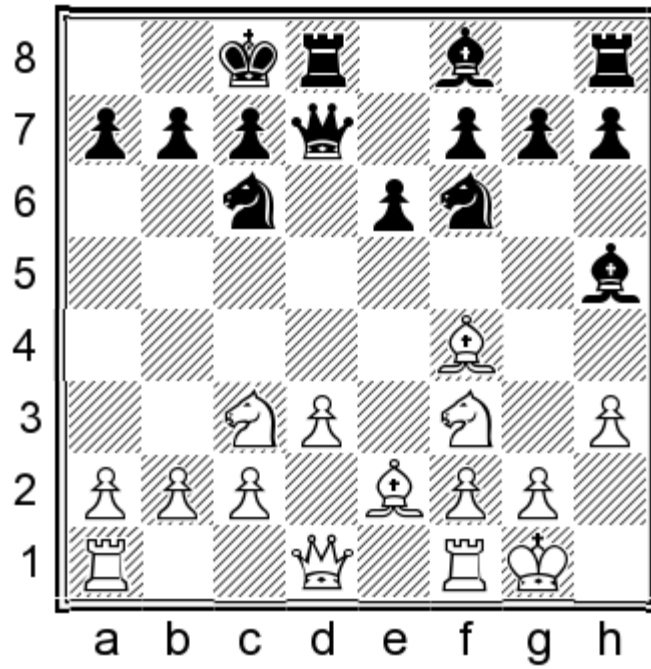
8... ♗f6

The two armies are not in contact yet, but the opposite castles promise some action very soon. White could consider something like a2-a3 followed by b2-b4, although the lack of weaknesses in the pawn shield of our king means that such an advance should not be too dangerous. Play is likely to continue:

9. ♕f4

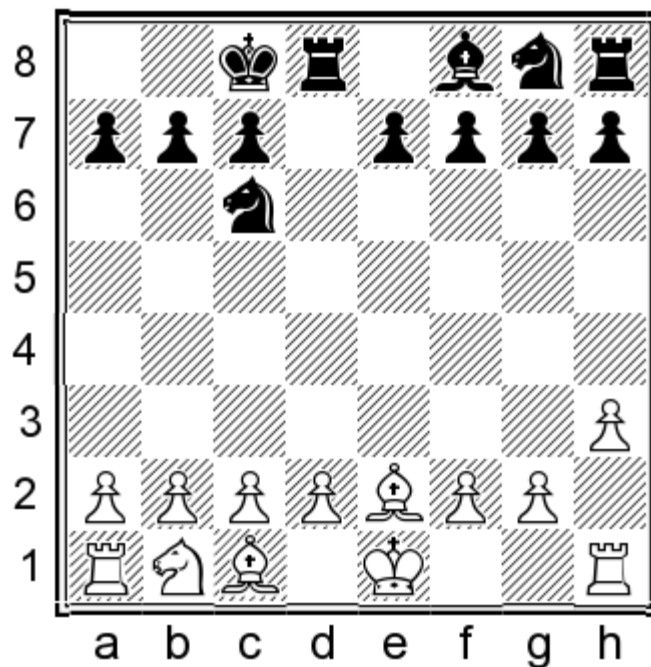
9. a3 e6 10. b4 ♕d6 11. ♞e1 occurred in Giffen-Amann, corr. 2009, and here I prefer to play in the centre – 11... ♖b8 12. ♕e3 ♗e7 with rather simple equality. Conversely, the flank stab with ...g5 is rather unclear – 11...h6 (or 11... ♕xf3 12. ♕xf3 ♕e5 13. ♕d2 ♕d4 14. a4 ♗e5 15. ♞b1 ♞hg8!? 16. ♗b5 g5 17. ♗xd4 ♜xd4 18. ♕e3 ♜c3±) 12. ♕b2 ♞hg8 13. ♗b5 ♕e7 14. c4 a6 15. ♗bd4 ♗xd4 16. ♗xd4 ♕xe2 17. ♜xe2 g5 18. ♗f5 g4∞.

9...e6



Now Black is ready to oppose the enemy bishop with ...♗f8-d6. Simplification with 10.♘e5 ♗xe2 11.♙xe2 ♘xe5 12.♙xe5 ♗d6 leads to equality.

c) 5.h3!? is yet another attempt to diverge from standard play in the centre. We can exploit the fact that White has not castled yet by playing 5...♗xf3 6.♗xf3 ♙e5+ 7.♙e2 (7.♗e2 ♘d4=) 7...♙xe2+ 8.♗xe2 0-0-0=

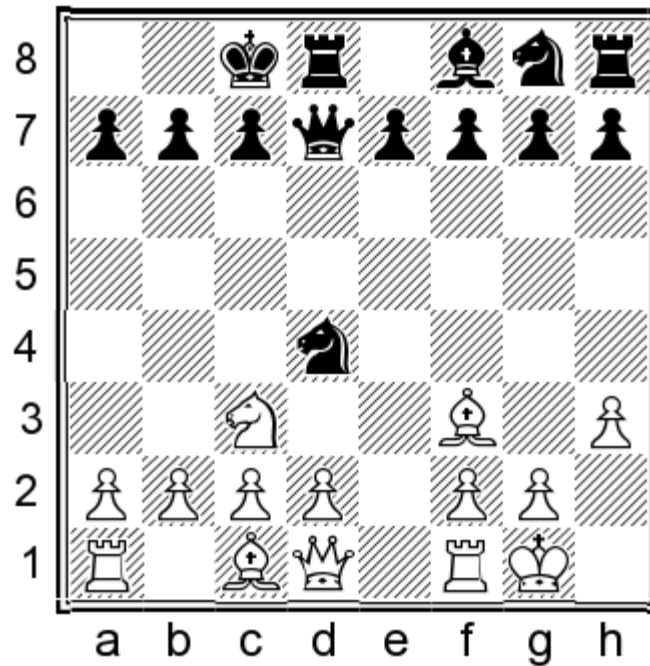


Our main plan in this position involves ...e7-e5, ...f7-f5, ...♘g8-f6, aiming to establish full control of the centre. Black's activity and good development seem to balance White's bishop pair advantage. Another idea worth keeping in mind is a possible exchange of dark-squared bishops via h6, for which Black will have to play ...g7-g6 first. I analyse in detail the diagram position in the annotations to Game 5 Panchanathan-S.Kasparov, Ranshofen 2012.

5...♙d7! 6.d4

White decides to play d2-d4 while it is still available.

6.h3 ♕xf3! 7.♕xf3 0-0-0 8.0-0 (In the event of 8.g3, a typically good answer is 8...h5=) 8...♘d4 is roughly equal as the following variations reveal:



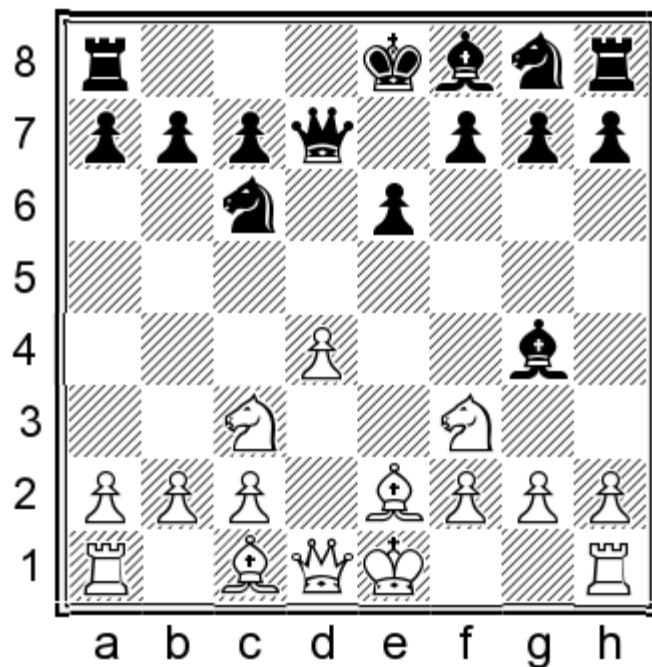
9.d3

This is slightly more poisonous than 9.♕d5 e6 10.♕b3 ♘f6 11.♘e2!? (11.d3 ♖b8= is excellent for Black as White's light-squared bishop does nothing on b3 and it also impedes the pawn storm.) I believe Black's best option is 11...♘f5!? 12.c3 g5! 13.d4 ♖g8 with very good counterplay.

9...e6 10.♕e3 ♘e7∞. I analyse this rich position in the annotations to **Game 6** Vachier Lagrave-Tiviakov, Hoogeveen 2010.

6.0-0 0-0-0 7.b4!? is an enterprising attempt to unbalance the game. (7.d3 e5 transposes to 5.0-0). Bauer considers only 7...♘f6∞, but 7...e5! 8.b5 ♕xf3 9.♕xf3 ♘d4∞ is a better retort.

**6...e6!**



The d4-pawn is still untouchable so we fix it as a future target. 6...0-0-0 7.d5 is a bit awkward.

**7. ♖e3**

7.h3? ♙xf3 8. ♙xf3 0-0-0 is bad for White.

**7...0-0-0**

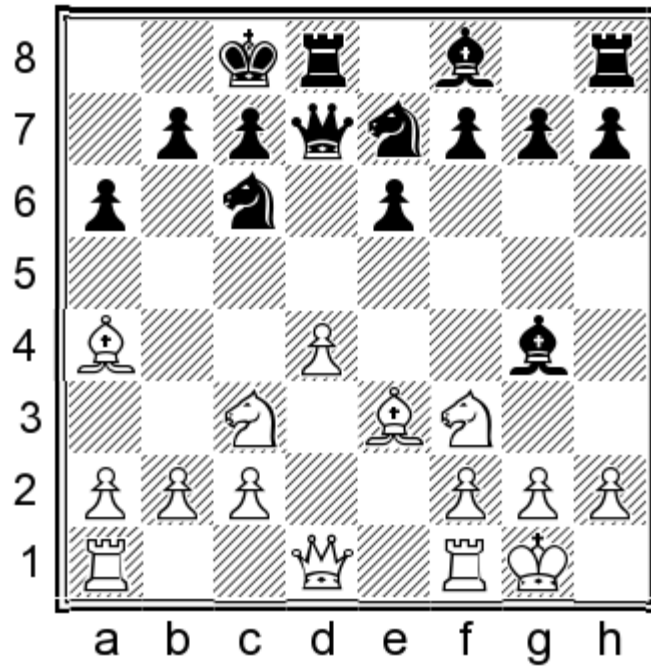
Black can postpone this move with 7...♘f6.

Then 8.♘e5 ♘xe5 9.dxe5 ♙xe2 10.♙xe2 ♘d5= was the continuation of Fritz-Blackburne, Breslau 1889. More testing is:

8.0-0 ♙b4 9.h3 ♙h5 10.♘a4 0-0 11.c3, consolidating the centre.

The text hits immediately d4.

**8. ♙b5 a6! 9. ♙a4 ♘ge7 10.0-0**



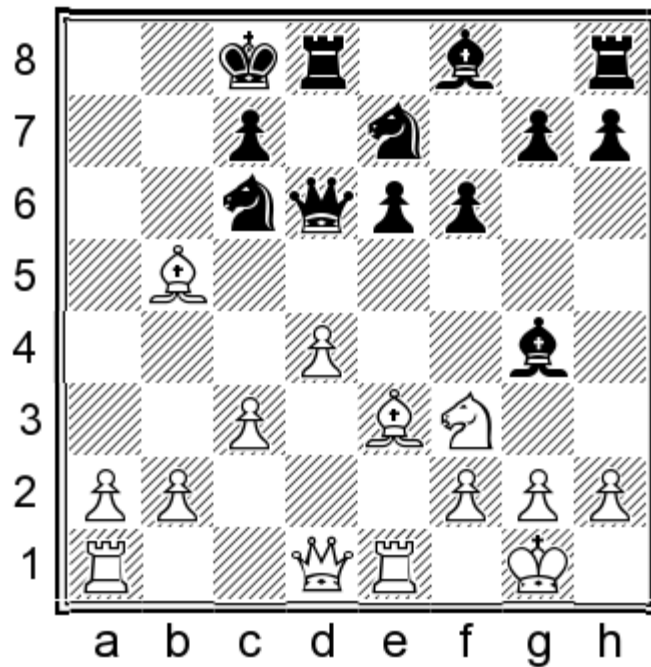
This position has never occurred in practice, but I have included it for illustrative purposes. Here Black has at his disposal an original idea based on the weakness of d4:

10...b5!?

Such ideas make me optimistic that chess is still far from exhausted!

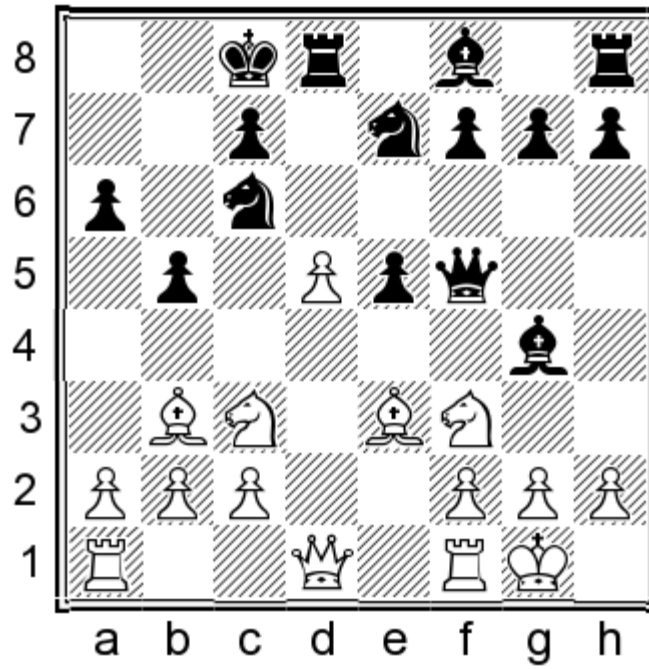
11.♙b3

11.♘xb5!? axb5 12.♙xb5 does give White full compensation for the piece, but it is sufficient only for a draw, e.g. 12...♚d5 (12...♚d6 13.c3 f6 14.♙e1 is risky for Black.



He does have a lot of defensive resources, but the cost of his mistakes is higher. A possible line is 14...g5 15.h3 ♙h5 16.♙a6+ ♔d7 17.♘e5+ ♘xe5 18.♚xh5 ♘5g6 19.♙f1 ♘d5 20.♙d2 ♔e7 21.g3 ♔f7 22.a3 c5 23.c4 ♘de7 24.d5∞) 13.c4 ♚f5 14.♙a6+ ♔d7 15.♙b5 with a draw – 15...♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♔e8 17.♚a4 ♚xf3=.

11...e5 12.d5 (12.dxe5? ♚f5±) 12...♚f5=.



The pressure on f3 and d5 is annoying enough to assure Black of at least equal chances. Probably White should try to bail out with 13. ♖h4 ♙xd1 14. ♗xf5 ♜xf5 15. ♞axd1 ♘a5 16. ♗e4 f6= (16... ♗d6=).

### C. 3.d4 ♗c6

This leads to extremely interesting play. D.Romero-Tiviakov, Antofagasta 2016 saw 3...e5 and Sergei even won the game, but it is too boring and not really necessary.

### 4. ♗f3

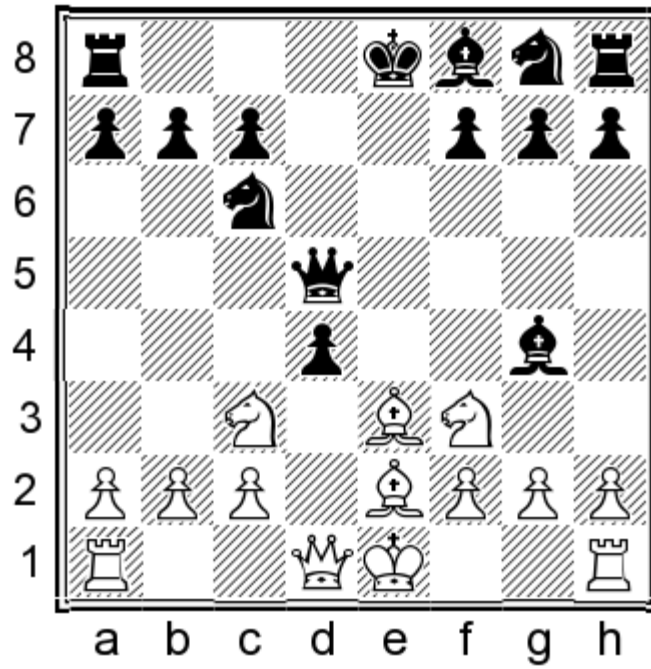
White combines defence of his pawn with natural development.

After the less principled 4. ♙e3 e5!,

Black should also be fine as the following lines shows: 5. ♗f3

5.c4!? (5. ♗c3?! ♙b4) 5... ♞a5+! 6. ♙d2 ♙b4 7.d5 ♗d4 [7... ♙xd2+ 8. ♞xd2! (8. ♗xd2 ♗d4 9. ♙d3 ♗f6 10. ♗e2 ♙g4= gave Black fair chances in C Hancen-Fries Nielsen, Aarhus 1981) 8... ♞xd2+ 9. ♙xd2 ♗d4 10. ♗c3 ♗e7 11. ♞e1 f6 12.f4 offered White some initiative in Varga-Savic, Neum 2002.] 8. ♗c3 ♙f5 9. ♞c1 ♗f6 10.a3 ♙e7 is balanced.

5... ♙g4 6. ♙e2 exd4 (7...0-0-0!? is sharper) 7. ♗c3

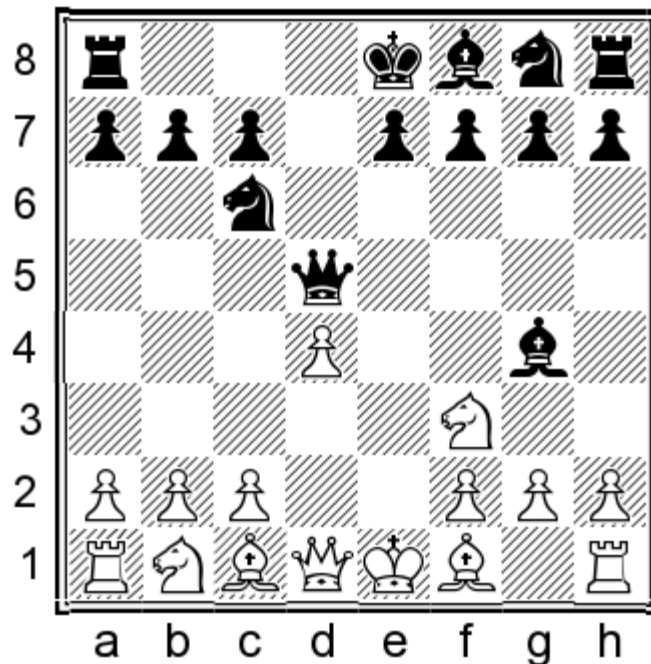


7... ♖h5 8. ♘d4 ♙xe2 9. ♚xe2 ♜xe2=. Black should easily hold the balance in this symmetrical position.

4.c3?! is obviously weak in view of 4...e5 5. ♘f3 ♘f6 6. ♙e2 e4!↑ and only Black can be better.

4. ♘c3?! ♜xd4 5. ♚e2 might give White some initiative for the pawn if Black defends with 5...e6 or 5...♙f5, but Bauer's suggestion 5...♜b6!? is rather sobering as White's best seems to be the pawnless endgame after 6. ♘d5 ♜a5+ 7. ♚d2 ♜xd2+ 8. ♙xd2 ♘d8.

4... ♙g4



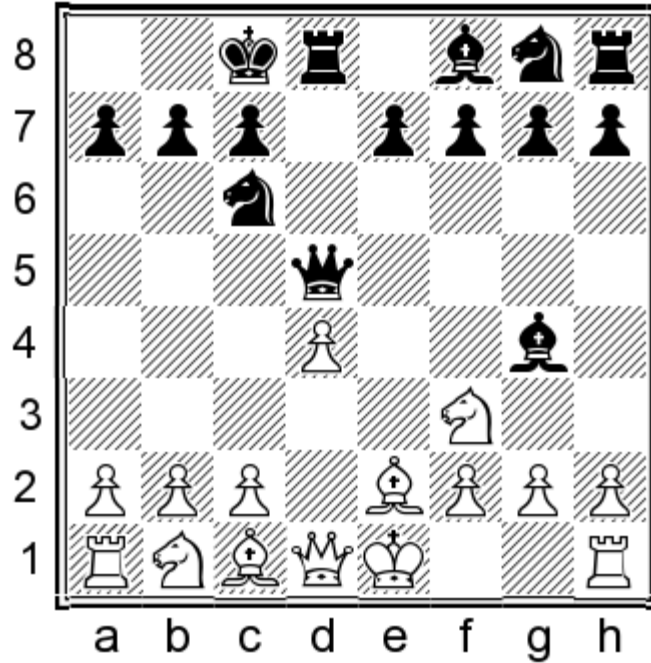
This is a critical position for our repertoire. It requires some memorization, but properly armed with concrete theoretical knowledge, Black should be fine.

**C1.** 5.♙e2; **C2.** 5.♘c3.

5.c4?! is a clearly inferior option. White fares rather poorly after 5...♞a5+ 6.♙d2 (6.♘c3 0-0-0 7.d5 e6 8.♙d2 exd5 9.♘xd5 ♙b4 leaves White way behind in development) 6...♞f5 7.♙e2 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♘xd4 9.♙xb7 ♘c2+ 10.♚e2! ♘d4+ 11.♚e1, when besides repeating moves, Black can keep playing with 11...♞d8! 12.♞a4+ ♞d7.

**C1. 5.♙e2 0-0-0**

White is at a juncture again:



**C11.** 6.c3!?!; **C12.** 6.♙e3; **C13.** 6.c4; **C14.** 6.♘c3

**C11. 6.c3!?! e5=**

This line does not present any problem.

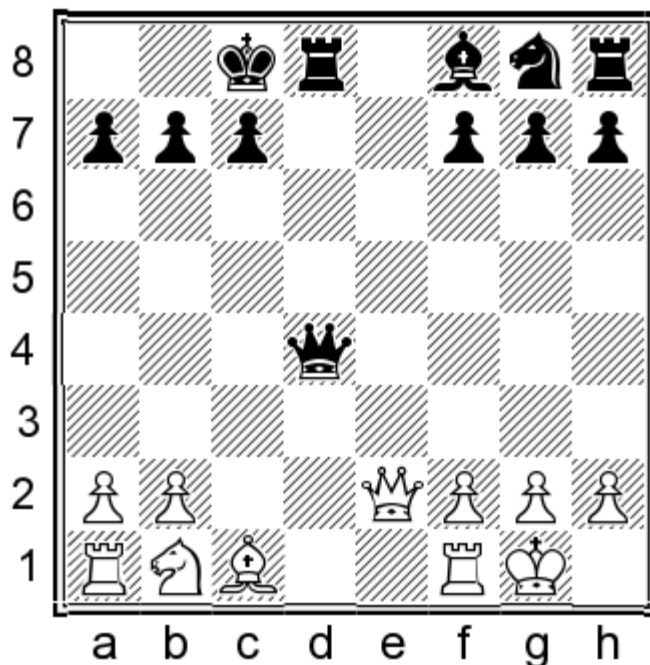
**7.♙e3**

The only decent alternative is 7.c4, when Black has at least 7...♞a5+ 8.♙d2 ♙b4 9.d5 ♙xf3, transposing to line C12.

There is absolutely no difference between the two lines as in the present one the white pawn uses two tempi to reach c4 while in the other one the bishop uses two tempi (♙c1-e3-d2) to reach d2. Other attempts can only be worse for White as the reader can witness by consulting the following moves:

a) 7.dxe5? is rather bad in view of the simple 7...♞xd1+ 8.♙xd1 ♘xe5+ and White will be saddled with doubled f-pawns, which spells suffering for the rest of the game.

b) 7.0-0?! exd4 8.cxd4 ♘xd4 9.♘xd4 ♙xe2 10.♞xe2 ♞xd4 leaves White a pawn down, for which he does not obtain full compensation.



For example: 11. ♖c3!

The weaker 11. ♙e3?! ♜e5! 12. ♘d2 was seen in Van der Wiel-Morozevich, Tilburg 1993, and here Black should have played 12... ♙c5! (12... ♘f6?! 13. ♘f3 ♜h5 14. ♙xa7!= allowed White to regain his pawn in the game) 13. ♘f3 ♜e7 14. ♜fe1 ♙xe3 15. ♜f1 ♘f6 16. ♜xe3 ♜b4⚡ depriving White from any real compensation for the pawn.

11... ♘f6!? (in practice only 11... ♙d6 has been seen, but White equalizes after it) 12. ♘b5!

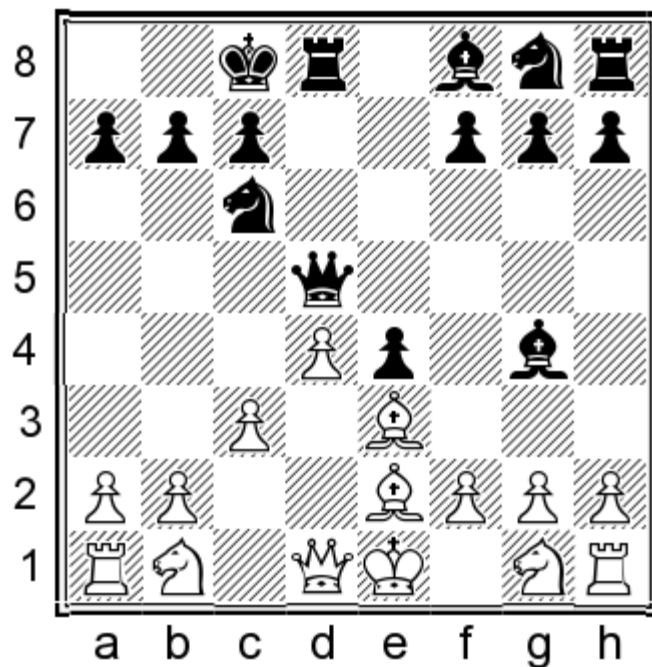
Inferior is 12. ♜d1 ♜g4! 13. ♜xd8+ ♙xd8 14. ♜d3+ ♙c8 15. h3 (15. ♙e3 a6⚡) 15... ♜d7 16. ♜c2 ♙d6 17. ♙g5 ♙e5⚡ and Black is a clear pawn up.

12... ♜d3 (12... ♜a4!/? 13. b3 ♜e4⚡ is also viable.) 13. ♘xa7+ ♙b8 14. ♜xd3 ♜xd3 15. ♘b5 ♘d5 16. ♙g5 ♙c5 17. ♜fd1 ♜xd1+ 18. ♜xd1 c6 19. ♘d4 ♜e8 20. ♙f1 f6 21. ♙c1 ♜e4⚡ and Black has some pressure in the ending, although admittedly, White has serious drawing chances.

c) 7. h3 is perhaps not so bad – it improves on 7.0-0. I recommend: 7... ♙h5 8.0-0 exd4 9. cxd4 ♘xd4 10. ♘xd4 ♙xe2 11. ♜xe2 ♜xd4. White has an “extra” *luft*, compared to line a2, which however, does not change the evaluation substantially – see Game 7 Pesonen-Voveris, 2007.

**7...e4!** (Matthias Wahls’ recommendation.) **8. ♘g1**

8. ♘fd2 ♙xe2 9. ♜xe2 ♘f6 (9... f5! looks more consistent.) 10. ♘b3 ♜f5 11. ♘1d2 ♙d6 12.0-0-0 was unclear in Gérard-Cosentino, corr, 2014.



8...♙xe2

8...♙f5!? 9.♘d2 ♘f6 10.♙c4 ♚d7 11.♘e2 h5 12.♚a4∞ was unclear in Esser-Stromer, Aachen 1988.

9.♘xe2 f5 10.♘d2 ♘f6

Wahls evaluates this position as slightly better for Black. I think that after 11.0-0 ♙d6⇒ the play is very complicated, with chances for both sides.

**C12. 6.♙e3 e5!? 7.c4!?**

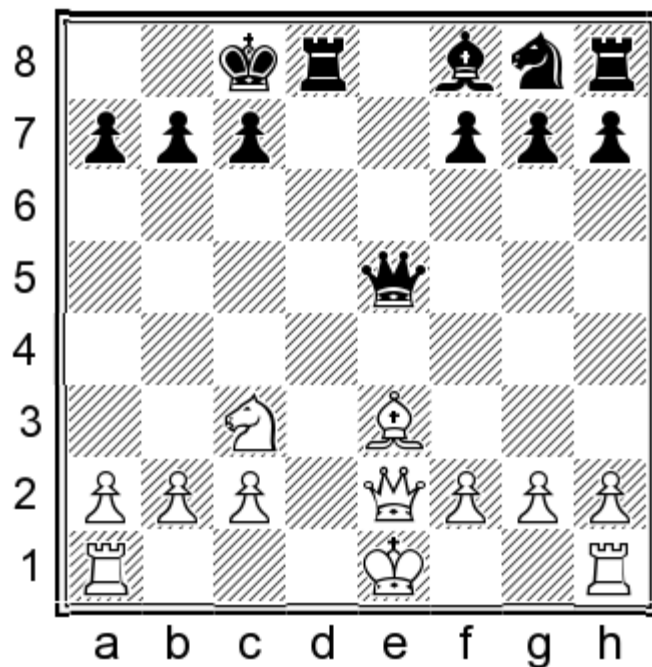
Black has an easy ride after 7.dxe5 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♚xe5=. A high level game confirmed this evaluation: 9.♘d2 ♙c5 10.♚e2?!

10.♙xc6! ♙xe3 11.♙xb7+ ♘b8 12.fxe3 ♚xe3+ 13.♚e2 ♚xe2+ 14.♘xe2 ♘xb7= was the only way to equality. 10...♙xe3 11.♚xe3 ♚xe3+ 12.fxe3 ♘b4! 13.♘d1 ♘f6 14.c3 ♘d3 15.♘c2 ♚he8♞ and White was struggling to draw in Leniart-Motylev, Warsaw 2012. This type of position, with a very strong base on e5 for our knight, is every chess player's dream. White is totally deprived of targets.

I also looked at 7.♘c3 ♚a5! 8.♘xe5 ♙xe2 9.♚xe2

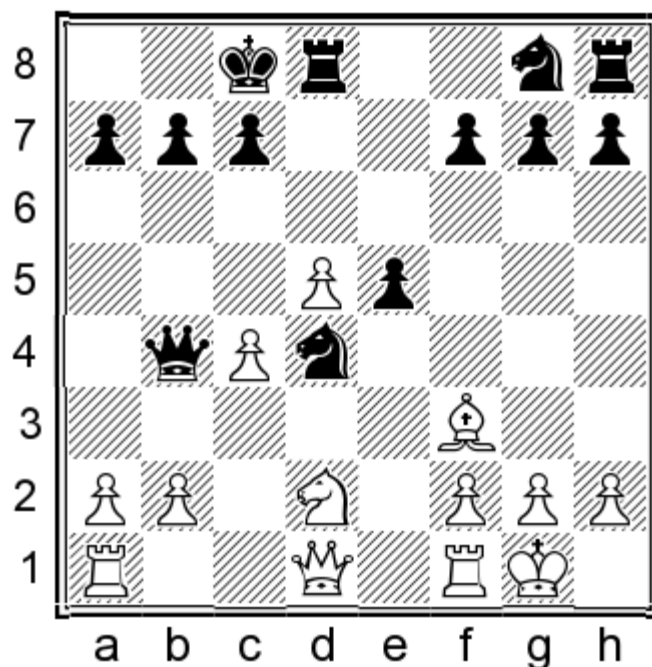
9.♘xc6?! ♙xd1 10.♘xa5 ♙xc2 11.♚c1 ♙d3 12.♘d2 ♙a6♞.

9...♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♚xe5= which has no other disadvantage except being very drawish.



For example: 11.0-0 (11.♖d1 ♜xd1+ 12.♔xd1 ♘f6= led to a quick draw a couple of moves later in Reinderman-Tiviakov, Hilversum 2008.) 11...♗f6 12.♞ad1 ♕c5 13.♙xc5 ♜xc5 14.♚f3 ♞he8 15.h3 a6 16.a3 ♜e5 17.g3 h5 18.♔g2=, Ferguson-Smerdon, Hinckley 2014.

7...♜a5+ 8.♙d2 ♙b4! 9.d5 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♙xd2+! 11.♗xd2 ♗d4 12.0-0 ♜b4!



This enables a safe evacuation of the black queen from the queenside where it could easily become a prey.

13.♞e1!?

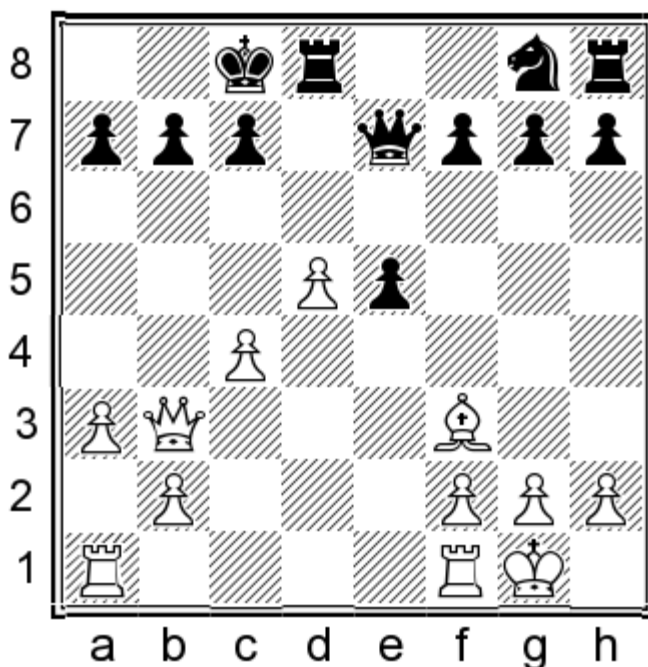
Andrew Greet considers this move to be best for White in his *Chessbase* notes to the game Areschenko-Almond, Port Erin 2007.

Alternatively:

13.a3 has not been tried, but it is very logical for White to sacrifice the b2 pawn in search of an attack down the b-file. We better return home with 13...♖e7 although:

13...♖xb2 14.♖b1 (14.♙e4? f5) 14...♖c2 15.♖xc2 ♗xc2 16.♙g4+ ♖b8 17.♙d1 ♗d4 18.f4 f6 19.fxe5 fxe5 20.♖f7 ♗f6∞ is probably also okay for Black.

14.♗b3!? (14.♖e1 f5) 14...♗xb3 15.♖xb3



15...e4 16.♖ae1 f5 17.♙d1 ♗f6∞. Black has a satisfactory game, but the position requires testing.

13.♗b3 is another logical move, to challenge the strong knight on d4. It comes at a price, though: 13...♖xc4! 14.♗xd4 ♖xd4 15.♖c2 (15.♖b3 e4?) 15...♗f6 16.♖fd1 ♖f4!? 17.d6 ♖d7 18.♖c5! ♖b8□ 19.dxc7+ ♖xc7 20.♖d6 ♖hc8 and White's compensation for the pawn was just enough to make a draw: 21.♖e1 ♗g4

21...g5!? 22.♖xe5 ♖xe5 23.♖xe5 ♖c1+ 24.♖e1 ♖xa1 25.♖xa1 ♖c2 26.♖b1 ♖c7= is the more testing, in my opinion.

22.♙g4 ♖xg4 23.♖xe5 f6 24.♖d6 ♖d7 25.♖g3 a6 26.h3 draw, Rogers-Matamoros Franco, Hamburg 1999. In the final position White may have a tiny edge, but obviously nothing substantial after 26...♖a7.

13.♖c1 is designed to evict the black queen without giving up any pawns. Then 13...f5 14.♖e1

14.♖c3!? ♖xc3 15.bxc3 ♗xf3+ 16.♗xf3 e4 17.♗d4 (17.♗g5 ♖d7 18.♗e6 ♗f6∞) 17...g6 18.a4 ♗f6 19.a5 a6 20.♖fb1 ♖d6 21.♖a2 ♗d7 22.♗e6 ♖e8 23.♖ab2 ♖dx6 24.dxe6 ♗c5 does not look worse for Black.

14...e4 15.♙d1 ♗f6 16.a3 ♖d6 leads to a sharp unbalanced position. See Game 9 Mamonova-Bedia, Poltavskaya 2010.

### 13...♗f6!

Almond played 13...f6?! which is passive and clearly outside the spirit of the position. The text completes Black's development and his active pieces guarantee him fair chances. See Game 8 Predojevic-Sermek, Portoroz 2005 for more details.

### C13. 6.c4

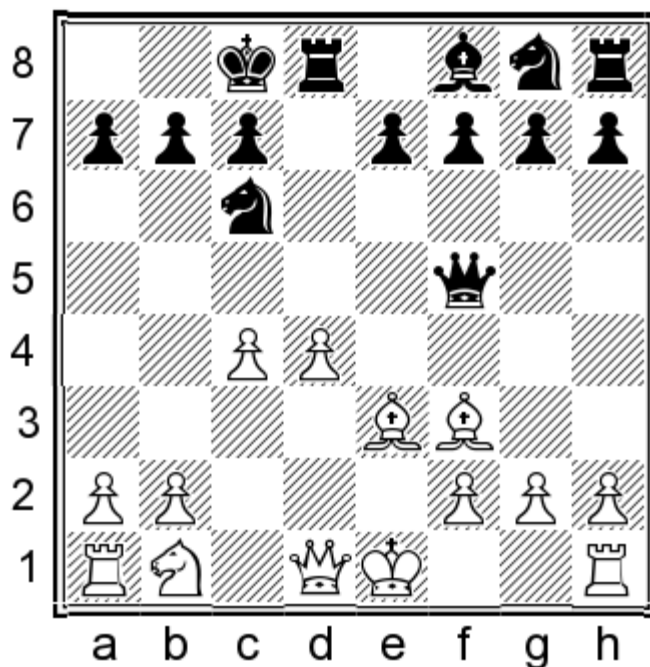
Black has to make a crucial decision now as his queen is attacked and he has to find a way to make its presence in the centre meaningful:

### 6...♖f5!

A very important move, which enables the hit ...♖c6xd4! in many lines. This tactical idea is unavailable with Black's queen on h5 as you'll realise from my further analysis.

**7.0-0**

We see the point of our 6th move after 7.♙e3!? ♗xf3! 8.♙xf3



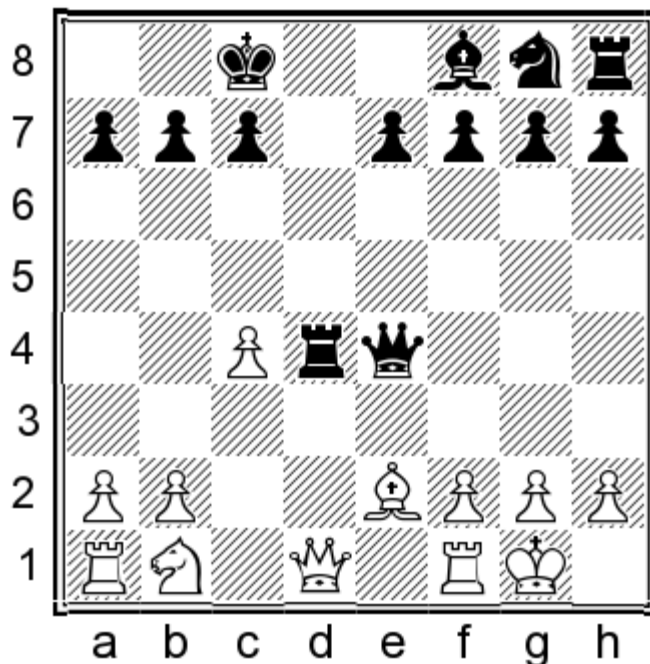
and now 8...♗xd4! 9.♙xd4 (9.♙g4?! ♗c2+∞ is a very important detail) 9...♜e6+ 10.♙e2 we have nothing to fear as the move 10...♜e4! regains the piece. But do not underestimate White's threats! With best play, we have nothing more than equality:

11.0-0!

After 11.♗c3?! ♜xd4, White's queen cannot flee anymore to a4: 12.♜a4?? ♜d2+ and Black wins a piece.

11...♜xd4!

11...♗xd4? fails to:



12. ♖a4!! ♜xe2 13. ♜xa7 with a tremendous White attack, e. g. 13... ♜xb2 14. ♘a3 ♜d3 15. ♘b5 ♘f6 16. ♜a8+ ♔d7 17. ♜xb7.

12. ♖a4

The black king is vulnerable in the absence of defenders in front of it so Black should try to develop his kingside as quickly as possible in order to bring in some forces.

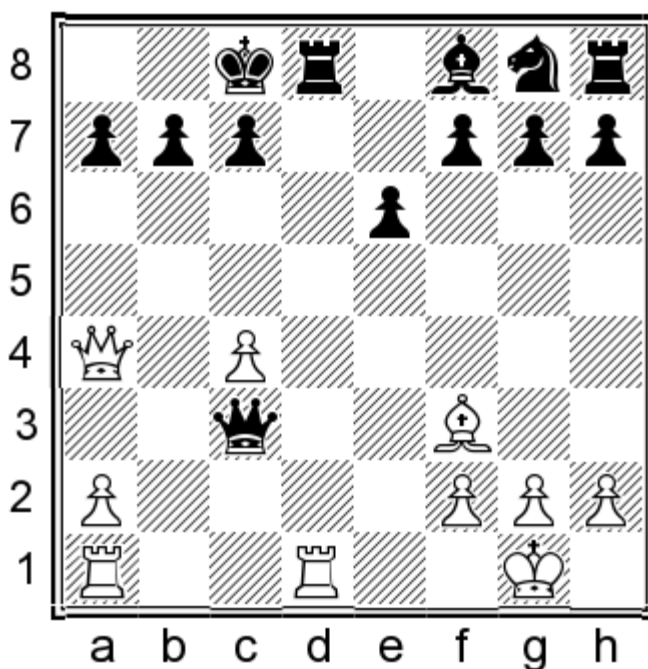
12...e6

We have to cover some light squares and defend the important d5-point in particular. But most importantly, the f8-bishop now controls b4, which means that an offensive based on a pawn storm is slowed down.

13. ♘c3

Quick development seems promising for White, but there are a couple of alternatives which I looked at:

a) The hyper-aggressive move 13. ♜d1!? was played first in Lyell-Calvert, Hastings 2008, but White linked it with a wrong idea. After 13... ♜xb2, he followed up with 14. ♘d2? when 14... ♜a3! 15. ♜c2 ♘f6+ would have left him with meagre compensation for the two missing pawns. Instead, he had the stunning 14. ♘c3!! ♜xc3 15. ♔f3!

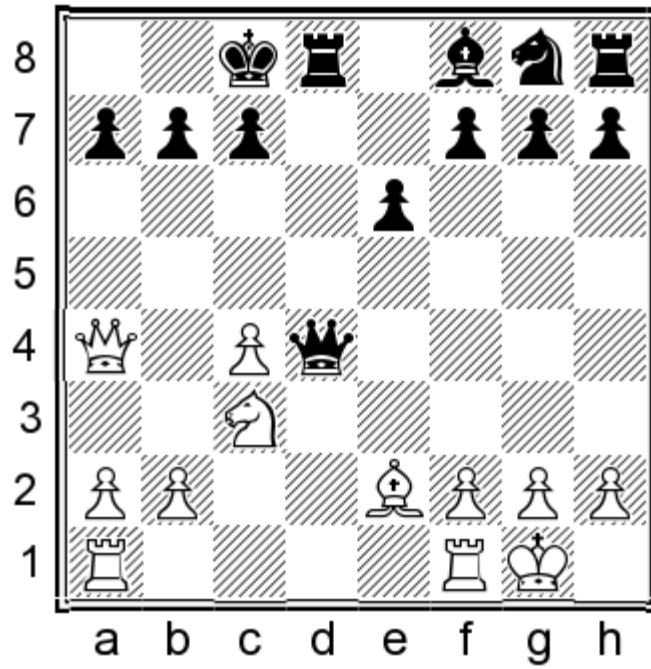


when the combined force of his pieces is enough to enforce a draw.

Instead of opening files with 13... ♜xb2, Black could keep the tension with 13... ♜e5!? – see **Game 10** Englmaier-Remek, freechess.de 2012.

b) 13. ♔f3 has not been tried yet. I recommend 13... ♘f6 14. ♘c3 when 14... ♜b6 15. ♘b4 ♜xb4 16. ♜xa7 ♔c5 17. ♔xb7+ ♔d7 18. ♜a4+ ♜xa4 gives Black the slightly better endgame. Even more challenging is 14... ♔e7!? 15. ♘b5 ♜b6 16. ♘xa7+ ♔b8 17. ♘b5 ♜d2↑.

We now turn our attention back to 13. ♘c3:



The position is extremely sharp and I would not like to burden you with many variations in this section. It is enough to remember that both 13...♙d6 (see **Game 12** D'Amore-Prié, Arvier 2007) and 13...♚b6 (see **Game 11** Brandenburg-Tiviakov, Hilversum 2008) lead to a balanced game.

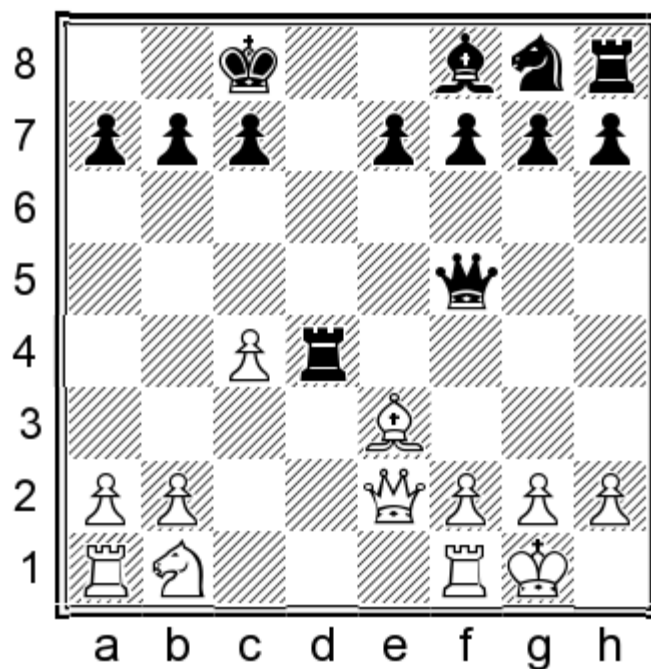
7...♘xd4!

This tactical shot works again.

8.♘xd4 ♙xe2 9.♚xe2

Obviously, with the queen on h5 instead of f5, we would lose a piece here. That explains our choice on move 6.

9...♞xd4 10.♙e3



10...♞d8

10...♖d7!? is another possible retreat square for our rook. After 11.♙xa7 ♜f6 13.♞ad1 ♞xd1 14.♞xd1 ♙d6 15.♜b5 ♞d8 16.♞a4 b6! 17.♞a6+ ♜d7 18.♜xd6 ♜xd6 19.b4 ♞d3! 20.a4 ♜e4 21.a5 ♜d2 22.♞e1 ♞xc4 23.b5! ♞a4 24.axb6 ♞xa6 25.bxa6 cxb6 26.♙xb6 ♞a8 27.♞d1 ♜c6 28.♙d4 ♜c4 29.♞c1 ♜d5 30.♙xg7 ♞xa6, a draw was agreed in Büttiker-Nicotera, corr. 2011. A very interesting game. It was particularly intriguing for me to see that the king on d7 was safe in the centre, despite appearances.

**11.♜c3** (11.♙xa7 ♜f6 12.♜c3 e6 will most likely transpose) **11...♜f6** (11...a6?! 12.c5) **12.♙xa7**

Putting a rook on d1 simplifies to an even game after 12.♞fd1 (12.♞ad1 ♞xd1 13.♞xd1!? e6 14.♙xa7 transposes to the correspondence game seen under 10... d7) 12...♞xd1 13.♞xd1 e6! 14.♙xa7 ♙b4=.

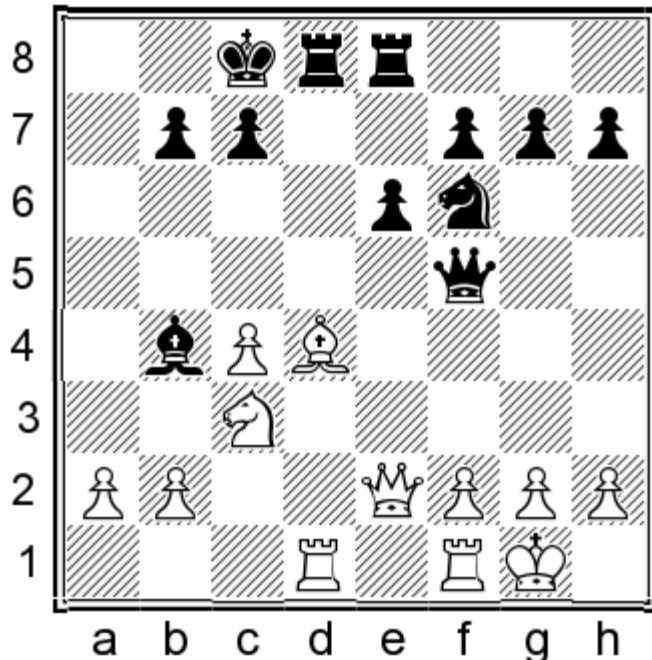
**12...e6 13.♞ad1 ♙b4**

Alternatives are:

13...♙e7 14.♙d4 ♞d7;

13...♙d6 14.♜b5 ♙e5.

**14.♙d4 ♞he8**



**15.♙e5!?**

15.a3?! e5 is good for Black according to Wahls and Ftacnik.

15.♜b5 ♞e4! 16.♙e3 ♙c5 17.♜c3 ♞e5 18.♙xc5 ♞xc5= is about equal.

**15...♙c5 16.h3!**

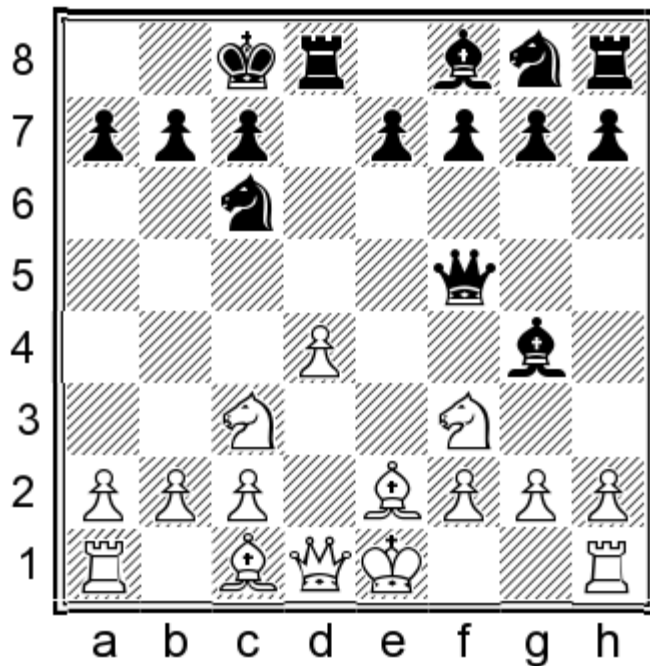
16.♙g3 ♜h5 gave Black an initiative in Rueppel-Motzer, corr. 2001.

After the text, 16...♞xd1 17.♞xd1 ♙xf2+ 18.♞xf2 ♞xe5 19.♞a7 c6 20.♜a4 ♞e2 21.♞f1 ♞d8 22.♞a8+ ♜c7 23.♞a5+ ♜c8 24.♞a8+ leads to perpetual check.

To conclude, I can say that White has a temporary initiative in this line, but it should fade away if we focus on development and ignore the a7 pawn.

### C14. 6.♘c3 ♖f5!

6...♗h5 transposes to a sub-branch of line C2 – see 6...0-0-0.



### 7.♙e3

7.h3 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♗f6 (be careful not to drop the queen with 8...♘xd4?? 9.♙g4) 9.♙xc6 ♗xc6 10.0-0 ♘f6 11.♙e3 e6∞.  
7.d5 ♙xf3 (We definitely want to avoid 7...♘f6 8.♙d3 ♗h5 9.dxc6) 8.♙xf3 ♘f6 9.♙e3 e6 10.♗e2 exd5 11.0-0 ♗e6=.

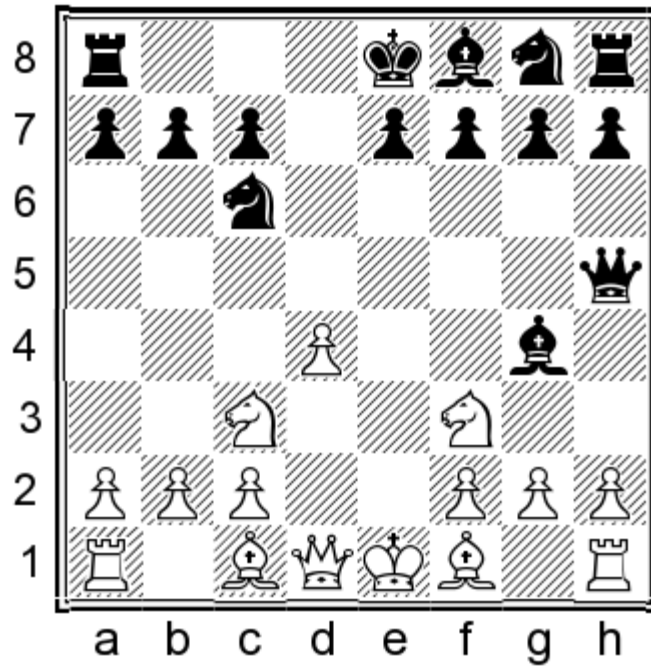
**7...♘f6 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♘xd4 10.♙xd4 e5 11.♘e2 exd4 12.0-0 ♙c5**

Black is a healthy pawn up.

### C2. 5.♘c3

Hitting the queen and forcing the game. This is the most critical line.

### 5...♗h5!



The best retreat after this particular move order. Now we are ready for long castling, with pressure on the sensitive points d4 and h2 (in the event White castles short).

### 6. ♖e2

The most natural reaction is to neutralise immediately the pin. The alternative is:

6. ♖b5!? ♗xf3 7. gxf3

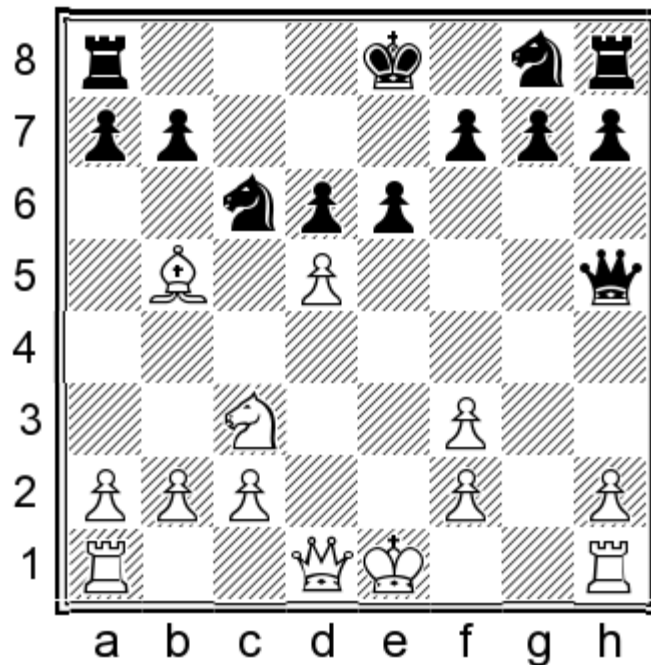
Black had no problems after 7. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 8. gxf3 0-0-0 9. ♗xc6 bxc6 10. ♗e3 e6 11. ♘e4 h6 12. ♖g1 ♗d5!? 13. ♘g3 ♘e7 14. c4 ♗d7 15. 0-0-0 a6 16. ♗c2 g6 17. ♗c3 ♘f5 18. ♘e4 ♗e7=, with an absolutely safe position in Klewe-Hausdorf, corr. 2012.

7...e6 8. ♗f4

8. ♗xc6+ bxc6 9. ♖d3 ♗b4 10. ♗d2 ♘e7 11. 0-0-0 ♖a5 12. a3 ♗xa3! 13. ♘a2 ♗b4! 14. ♗xb4 ♖xa2+ saw Black a sound pawn up in Hamann-Suren, Bad Königshofen 2007.

8... ♗b4!?

Or 8... ♗d6 9. ♗xd6 cxd6 10. d5!

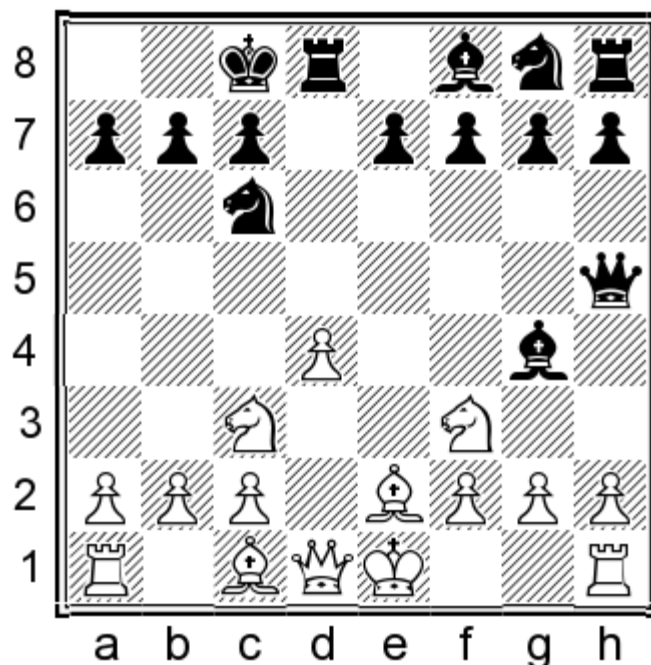


10...♔e5+ 11.♔e2 exd5 12.♘xd5 0-0-0 13.0-0-0 ♔xe2 14.♙xe2 ♘ge7=. The endgame is balanced as White's doubled f-pawns outweigh our weakness on d6 and the fact that he has a bishop-vs.-knight advantage. Actually, it is debatable how good can a bishop be with such a ruptured pawn structure, and in a practical game I would take Black here despite the small plus the engines assign to White.

9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.♙xc7 ♘e7♞ should be excellent for Black, as White's weaknesses provide him with lots of compensation for the pawn.

### 6...♘f6

It makes sense to develop the knight before castling in order to restrict White's choice. However, 6...0-0-0 is also possible (threatening ...e7-e5).

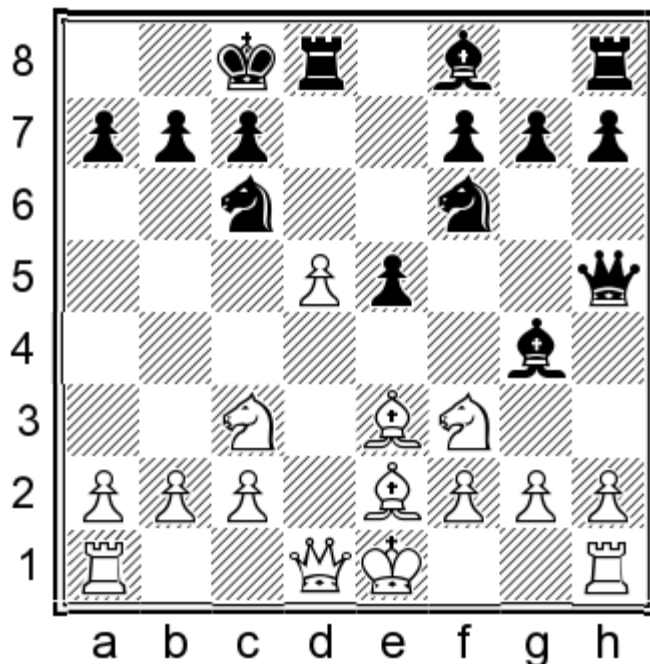


Now 7.0-0 ♘f6! (7...e5?! 8.h3 ♘f6 9.♙d2!) transposes to our main line.

After 7.♙e3?! e5 8.d5 (8.0-0 ♖f6 9.h3 exd4 faces White with difficulties.), the right move is 8...♗f6!.

The alternative 8...♙b4?! runs into 9.0-0 ♙xc3 10.h3!! (10.bxc3? e4 11.♗d4 ♙xe2 12.♖xe2 ♗xe2 13.♗xe2 ♖xd5+ is awful for White) 10...e4 11.hxg4 ♗xd5 12.♖xd5 ♖xd5 13.♗g5 ♖xg5 14.♙xg5 ♙xb2 15.♖ab1±.

With 8...♗f6! Black creates various threats such as ...e5-e4 or ...♗c6-b4 and it is clear that the ball passes to White's court. Perhaps White should play:



9.h3 in order to in order to resolve quickly the uncertainty along the h5-d1 diagonal as the alternatives look uninspiring:

- 9.a3 h6! (denying the ♗f3 the g5-square) 10.♖d3 e4! 11.♗xe4 ♗xd5 12.♗g3 ♗xe3 13.♖xe3 ♖a5+ 14.c3 happened in Sully-Bennett, corr. 1998, and at this point the simple 14...♙d6+ would have been better for Black.
- 9.♗g5 ♙xe2 10.♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 11.♗xe2 ♗d4+ 12.♗d3 ♖d7 13.f4 (Tanti-Roques, corr. 2008) is slightly better for Black after 13...♗c6 14.♗e2 exf4 15.dxc6 ♖e7! 16.cxb7+ ♗xb7 17.♗xf7 ♖xe3+ 18.♗d2 ♖g8 19.♖af1 g5 20.♖e1 ♙c5 21.♗d1 ♖f8 22.♗e5 ♖e4+.
- Finally, 9.0-0?! e4! has led to a number of losses for the White players. After the relatively best 10.♗d4 (On 10.♗g5??, the reply 10...♖xd5! practically terminates the fight immediately, one example being 11.♗xd5 ♙xe2 12.♖d2 ♙d6! 13.♗f4 ♙xf4 14.♙xf4 ♙xf1 15.♗xf1 h6 16.♗h3, Milnes-Seymour, Telfort 2003, 16...♖b5+-) 10...♗xd4 11.♙xd4 ♙xe2 12.♖xe2 ♖xe2 13.♗xe2 ♗xd5 14.♗g3 ♗b4!, Black was clearly better in Murawski-Maslowski, Brody Ilzeckie 2003, and he went on to win.

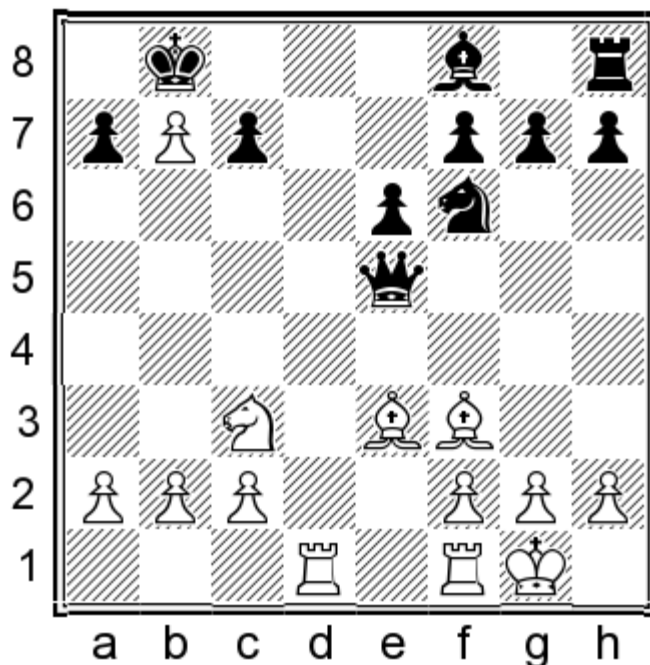
9...♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♖g6 11.0-0 e4+.

Pay special attention to 7.d5!?

This move has not been tested in OTB chess, but it has appeared in correspondence games. The best answer is my novelty:

7...e6!!

The frequently met 7...♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♖e5+ 9.♙e3 e6 10.0-0 ♗f6 stumbles into 11.dxc6!! ♖xd1 12.cxb7+ ♗b8 13.♖axd1



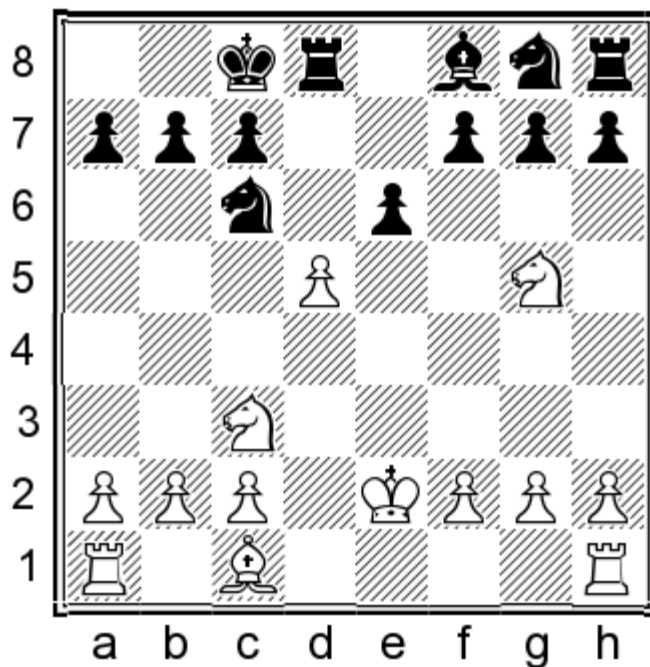
This is not even a sacrifice since White has obtained sufficient material equivalent of his queen. When I see a pawn on b7 and no obvious attack for the side with the queen, it is clear that any mistake will be fatal for Black. In fact, Black's defence is rather unpleasant and he could not oppose anything to the enemy attack in Wenzel-Remshagen, BdF-Schachserver 2013 – 13...♙d6 14.g3 ♖f5 15.♞d3 a6 16.♙g2 ♜g4 17.♞e4 ♗h5 18.h3 ♜xe3 19.fxe3± ♔a7?! (Black should have preserved his bishop to protect d8, e.g. 19...♙e7 20.g4 ♗b5) 20.♞xd6 cxd6 21.♞xd6 ♞b8 22.b4 ♗e5 23.♞d7 ♗c3 24.♞xf7 h5 25.♔h2 ♗xb4 26.♞f4 ♗c5 27.♞xg7 e5 28.♞h4 ♗xc2 29.♞xh5 ♗c5 30.h4 ♗xe3 31.♞hg5 1-0.

8.♞g5

8.0-0 ♜f6 9.h3 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♖f5 11.dxc6 ♞xd1 12.cxb7+ ♔b8 13.♞xd1 ♙c5=. Black is several tempi ahead here over the above game, and White had to recapture on d1 with the king's rook, which does not help him at all. A possible continuation is 14.♞d3 e5 15.♙e3 e4 16.♞xe4 ♜xe4 17.♙xe4 ♗xe4 18.♙xc5 a6=.

8...♙xe2 9.♗xe2 ♗xe2+ 10.♔xe2

Or 10.♞xe2 ♜b4 11.♞xf7 ♜xc2+ 12.♔d2 ♜xa1 13.♞xd8 ♔xd8 14.dxe6 ♜f6=.



10...d5! 11.dxe6

11.f4 h6 12.fxe5 hxg5 13.♙xg5 (13.dxe6 ♖e8 14.exf7 ♖xe5+ 15.♙e3 ♜h6=) 13...♙e7 14.♙xe7 ♜xe7 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♖ad1 ♜df8=;

11.♙f4 h6 12.♜xe6 fxe6 13.♙xe5 exd5=.

11...f6! 12.♜f7

It turns out that White is unable to hold his extra pawn. For example:

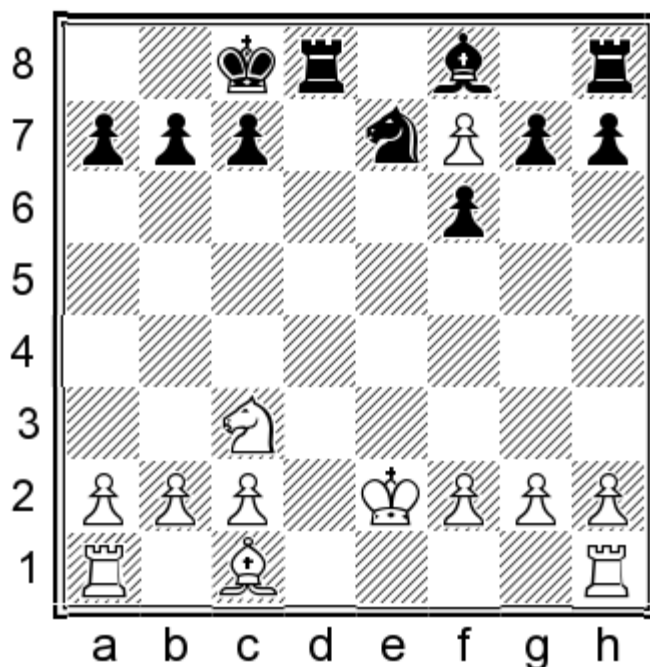
12.♜h3 ♜c6 13.♙e3 ♖e8=;

12.♜f3 ♜xf3 13.♙xf3 ♜e7 14.♙e3 ♜c6=;

12.f4 fxg5 13.fxe5 ♖e8 14.♙xg5 (14.♖f1 ♜h6 15.♙xg5 ♖xe6 16.♙d2 ♜g4 17.♖ae1 ♜xe5 18.♙c1 ♙d6=) 14...♖xe6 15.♖ae1 ♜e7 16.♙d1 ♜c6 17.♙f4 ♙c5=;

12.e7 ♜xe7 13.♜e6 ♖d6 14.♜xf8 ♖xf8=.

12...♜xf7 13.exf7 ♜e7



14.♙e3

14.♞d1 ♞xd1 15.♜xd1 ♝f5=;

14.♙f4 ♜g6 15.♙e3 (15.♙g3 ♞d7=) 15...♜e5 16.♞hd1 ♜xf7=

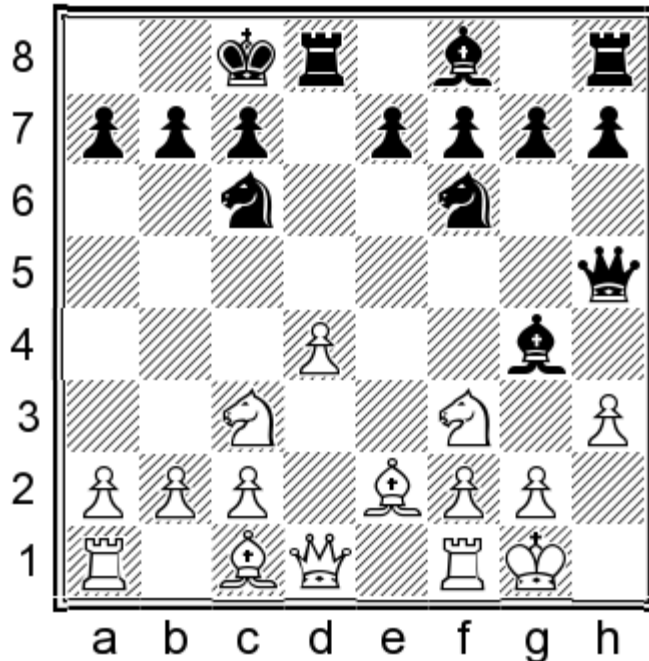
14...♜c6 15.♞ad1 ♙b4! 16.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 17.♞d1 ♞f8=

**7.0-0**

7.h3 0-0-0 8.♙e3 e5 9.d5 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♞g6 11.0-0 e4 is fine for Black.

7.♙e3 0-0-0 8.h3 (8.0-0 e5) 8...e5 9.0-0 exd4<sup>+</sup> faces White with difficulties.

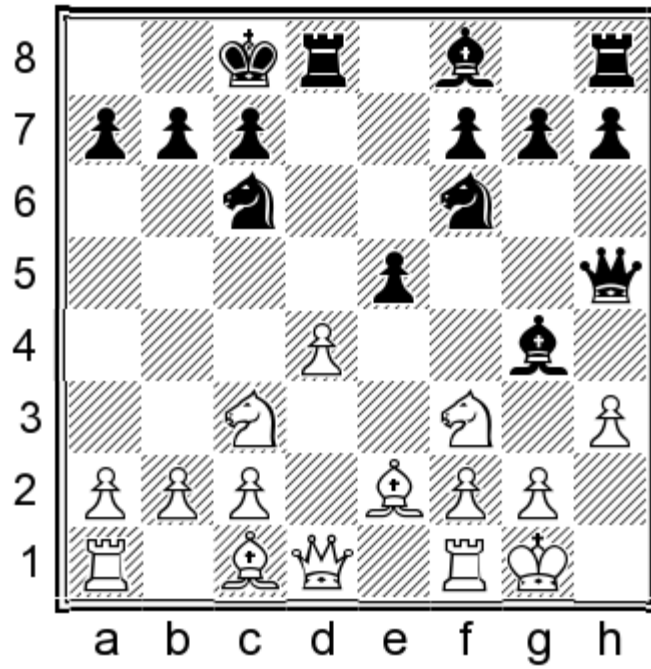
**7...0-0-0 8.h3**



**8...♜xd4!**

Black exploits the fact that White cannot capture the piece without consequences: 9.hxg4 ♜xg4 10.♙f4 ♜xf3+ wins the queen.

8...e5?! is a tricky line which is satisfactory for Black in the event of 9.hxg4 ♜xg4 and 9.d5 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♞g6!, but Bauer and all the engines recommend the sobering:



9. ♖d2! ♙xf3 10. ♙xf3 ♚f5 11. ♙xc6 exd4 12. ♚f3 ♚xf3 13. ♙xf3 dxc3 14. ♙xc3±. Although I believe that Black should be able to hold the draw here, the main line promises a better version of the same symmetrical pawn structure.

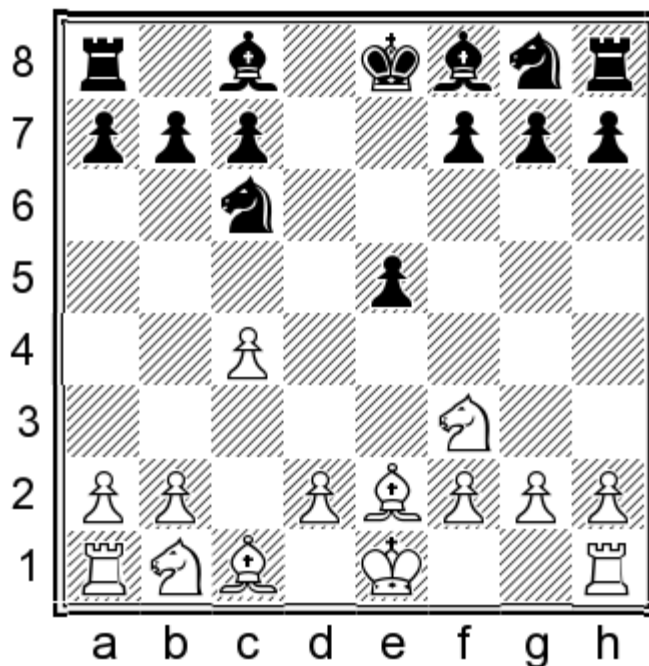
**9. ♜xd4 ♙xe2 10. ♜cxe2 e5=**

Black regains the knight in a symmetrical position. A possible continuation is 11. ♙e3 ♙c5 12. c3 ♚he8 13. ♚e1 exd4 14. ♜xd4 ♚g6, Malasquez-Alzola, ICCF 2014.

## Chapter 2. White's Third Move Alternatives Annotated Games

4. Valdas – Swahnberg  
W-ch WS/M/068 email ICCF 2006

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.c4?! ♜e4+! 4.♞e2 ♞xe2+ 5.♙xe2 ♘c6 6.♘f3 e5



7.♘c3?

This is a bad developing move. It looks nice, but in fact it does nothing to cover the holes in the centre. Imperative was 7.d3 ♙f5 8.0-0 0-0-0 (8...♘b4 9.♘c3 f6 10.♞d1 0-0-0 11.♘e1 ♘e7 12.♙e3 looks defendable) 9.♞d1, trying to set-up a defence along the d-file. After 9...♘ge7 10.♙e3 (10.♘a3 ♘g6 11.♘c2 ♘f4 12.♙xf4 exf4) 10...♙g6 11.♘h4 (11.♘c3 ♘f5) 11...♘b4 12.a3 ♘c2 13.♞a2 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♘b8 15.♘d2 ♘f5 16.♘xf5 ♙xf5 17.b4, White's position remains precarious, but at least he has chances to hold.

7...♙f5 8.0-0 0-0-0 9.♞e1 f6

White has landed into a strategically grim position in 9 moves only. Black is rock solid in the centre and the powerful threat ...♘c6-b4 is already looming, forcing further loss of time.

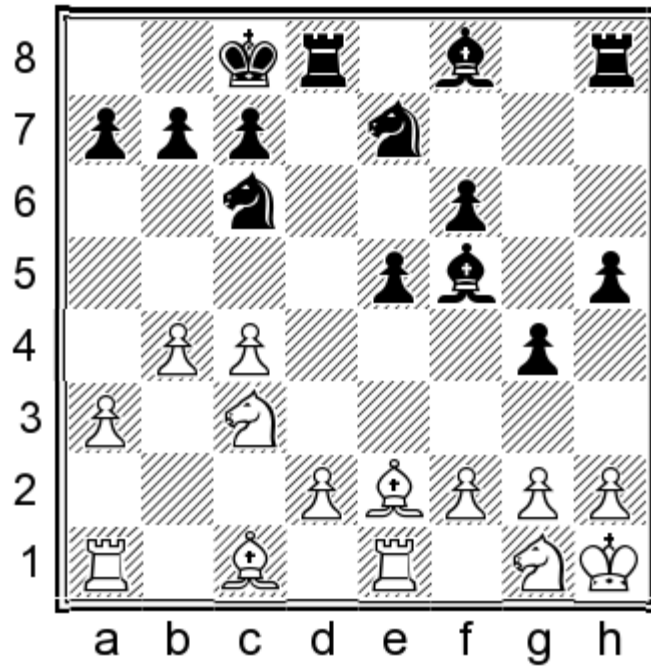
10.a3 g5!

The pawn storm on the kingside is logical and consistent. It combines further gain of space with occupation of the d4 square.

11.♙h1

A desperate attempt to keep the position closed. 11.h3 h5 12.b4 ♘ge7 13.♙b2 g4 14.♘h4 gxh3 15.♘xf5 ♘xf5 16.♘d5 hxg2 would have merely been a different way to lose.

11...♘ge7 12.b4 h5 13.♘g1 g4



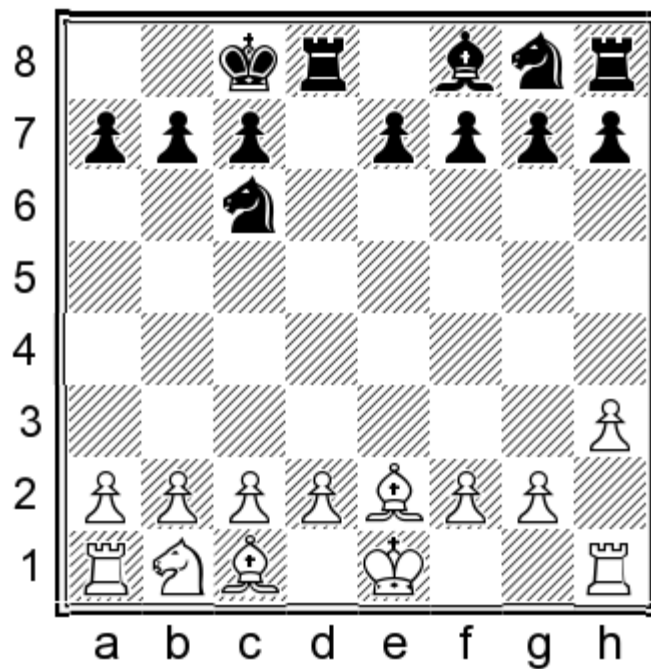
14.f3 ♘d4 15.♙d1 ♘c2-+

Simple and effective. Losing the vital light squared bishop in such a situation is more than White's position can withstand.

16.♙xc2 ♙xc2 17.♘e4 ♙g7 18.c5 gxf3 19.gxf3 ♖hg8 20.♘e2 f5 21.♘4c3 ♖d3 22.♙a2 ♙b3 23.♙b2 ♙c4 24.♘g1 e4 25.fxe4 fxe4 26.♙xe4 ♙d4! 27.♙xd4 ♙xd4 28.♘ge2 ♖d3 0-1

5. Panchanathan – S. Kasparov  
Ranshofen 09.08.2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘f3 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♘c6 5.h3 ♙xf3 6.♙xf3 ♖e6+ 7.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 8.♙xe2 0-0-0



This is a natural precaution, guarding both d4 and b4 against invasions of the black knight.

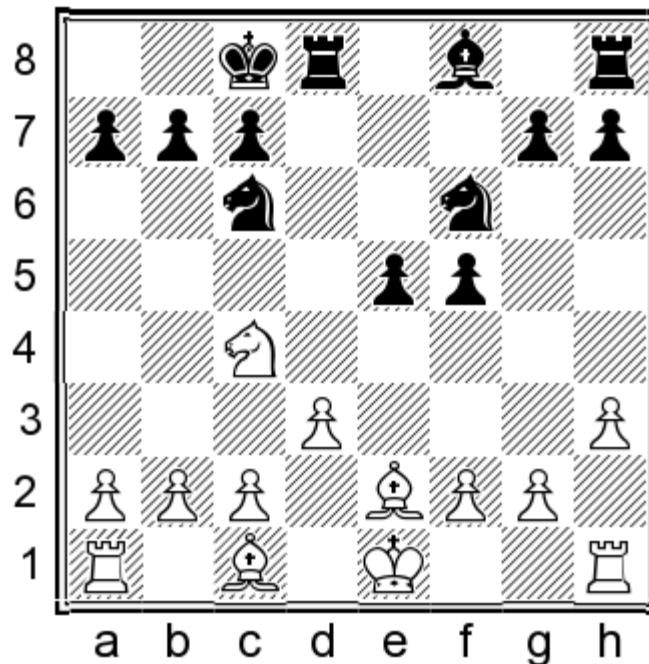
Alternatives are:

a) A rather incomprehensible move is 9.b3?! because White cannot keep his bishop after 9...g6 10.♔b2 ♖d4. Lamoureux-Prie, Nice 1994, saw further 11.♕xd4 ♜xd4 12.♗a3 ♕h6 13.♖c4 ♗f6 14.c3 ♞dd8 15.♕f3 ♗d5 (15...e5 would have been my preference) 16.♕xd5 ♞xd5 17.0-0 b5 18.♗e3 ♞d3 and Black had a slight initiative which he couldn't convert.

b) After 9.d3, Black may follow the recipe I mentioned above: 9...e5!

9...♗b4!? 10.♕d1 ♗f6 11.♗d2 e6 12.♗f3 ♕e7 13.a3 ♖c6 14.♕d2 ♗d5 15.♕e2 ♕f6 occurred in Zvjaginsev-Bocharov, Sochi 2015, when 16.c3!?± looks a tad better for White; his flexible and fluid pawn structure could be a problem for us in the future.

10.♗d2 f5 11.♖c4 ♗f6

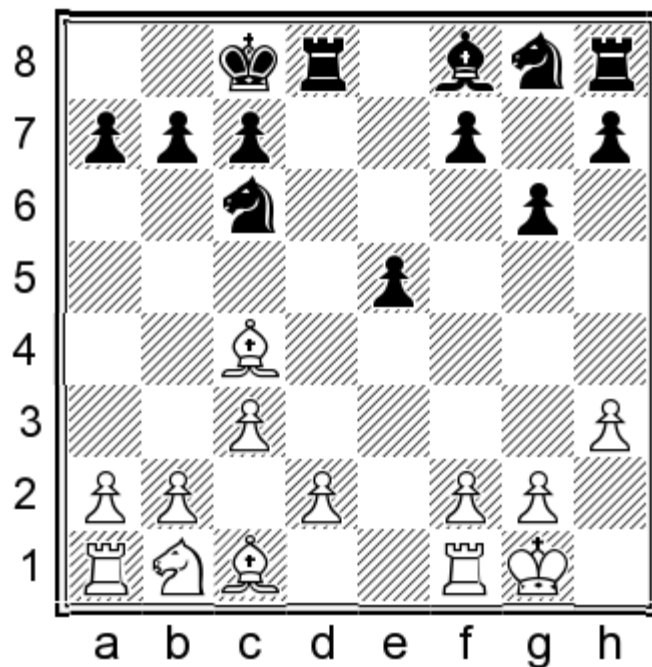


12.c3!

12.♕d2?! e4! 13.0-0 ♕c5 14.♗e3?! (14.♕e1) 14...g6 15.♞he1 ♞he8 16.g3 ♗d4 rewarded Black's excellent opening play with an initiative in Ramirez Garcia-Munoz Pantoja, Barbera del Valles 2014.

12...g6 13.0-0 ♕g7=.

c) White can also refrain from defining his pawn formation in the centre by playing 9.0-0 at this point. Then I like 9...g6!? 10.c3 (10.d3 ♕h6!= is my main idea) 10...e5 11.♕c4 (After 11.d3, the typical idea 11...♕h6! is good again.)



11...♞d7 12.♞e1 ♔h6 with an unclear position where Black's chances seem by no means worse. Also possible (and probably even better) is simply 11...f6 or 11...f5.

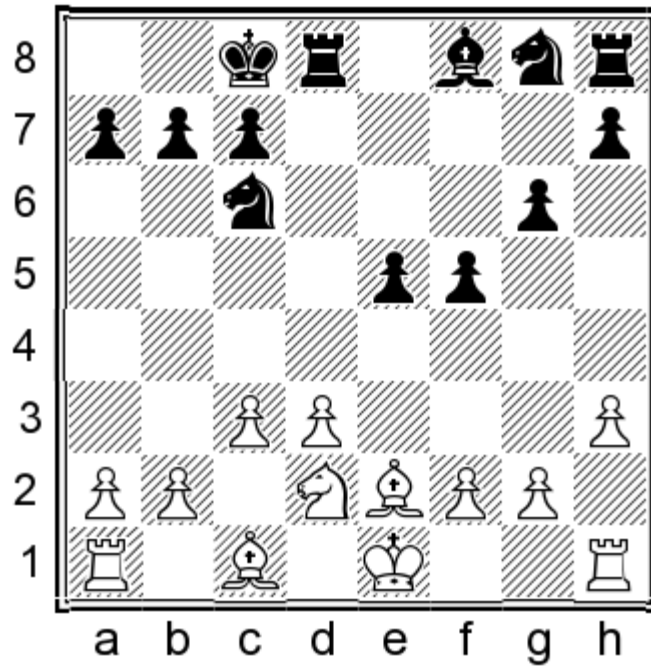
### 9...e5 10.d3 f5

Also quite spirited is 10...g6=, or 10...♘ge7 11.♘d2 ♘d5 12.♘b3 g6 13.♙d2 h5=, as played in Marinkovic-Hera, Budva 2009.

### 11.♘d2

After 11.0-0, Black has once more a pleasant choice between either 11...g6!?, (intending the strategically desirable exchange of dark-squared bishops), or 11...♘f6 12.♘d2 g6 13.♘c4 ♙g7, with equal chances in both cases. The latter option is undoubtedly the more double-edged of the two as Black is playing for space and will have to cope with an expansion involving the moves a2-a4 and b2-b4 later on. For this reason, my personal preference goes to 11...g6!?.

### 11...g6



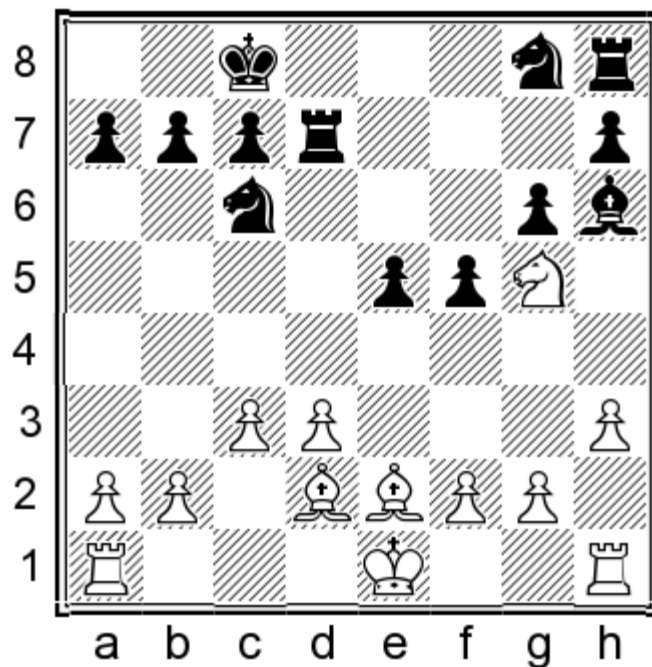
This plan is undoubtedly an important idea against the 3.♘f3, 4.♙e2 system. Trading dark-squared bishops via h6 deprives White of his main trump, the bishop pair.

### 12.♘f3

The knight development to f3 is less flexible here. It takes away that square from the ♙e2 and thus reduces White's attacking possibilities against the e5 pawn. 12.♘c4 or even 12.♔d1!? Δ♔d1-c2, were better options. But Black wouldn't be worse in these cases, either. An example of how play could unfold in the latter option is 12...♘f6!?

The standard 12...♙h6 13.♗c2 ♘ge7 14.♞e1! ♞d7 15.♙f1 ♘d5 16.g3± actually looks a bit better for White. 13.♗c2 ♘d5 14.♘c4 ♙c5! (exploiting the absence of the white monarch from the kingside) 15.♞f1 ♞he8 16.♙g5 ♙e7 17.♙d2 b5! 18.♘e3 ♘f4 19.♙f3 ♗b7 20.d4!? e4 21.♙d1 ♞f8 22.a4 a6 23.f3! ♙d6 24.b4 ♘e7 25.♗b3 ♞de8 26.♙c2 ♘ed5=. I guess that Chigorin would have rejoiced at the sight of the last position as the black knights are magnificently placed and Black has adhered to all the rules of the blockade to suppress the enemy bishop pair.

12...♙h6! 13.♘g5 ♞d7 14.♙d2



14...♙xg5! 15.♙xg5 f4!

The bishop is kind of trapped on g5, forcing White to weaken his pawn structure in order to save it.

16.♙h4 h6 17.f3 ♜ge7 18.g4 fxg3 19.♙xg3 ♜f8 20.0-0-0 ♞d5

Black has slightly the better game. The weakness of the f4-square is particularly annoying for White. His static pawn structure hinders him to activate the bishop pair.

21.h4 ♞f4 22.♙xf4 ♜xf4 23.♜dg1 ♜d6 24.♜g4 ♜df6 25.♙d1 ♞d7 26.♜e1 ♜xg4

26...h5! looks quite grim for White, but the game continuation also keeps him under pressure.

27.fxg4 ♜f4 28.♞d2 ♞d6 29.♞e3 ♞e7 30.♙f3 h5! 31.gxh5 ♞f5+ 32.♞e2 gxh5 33.♜g1 ♜xh4 34.♙xb7 ♞e7!?

The immediate 34...♜h2+! , forcing a rook trade right away, was even better.

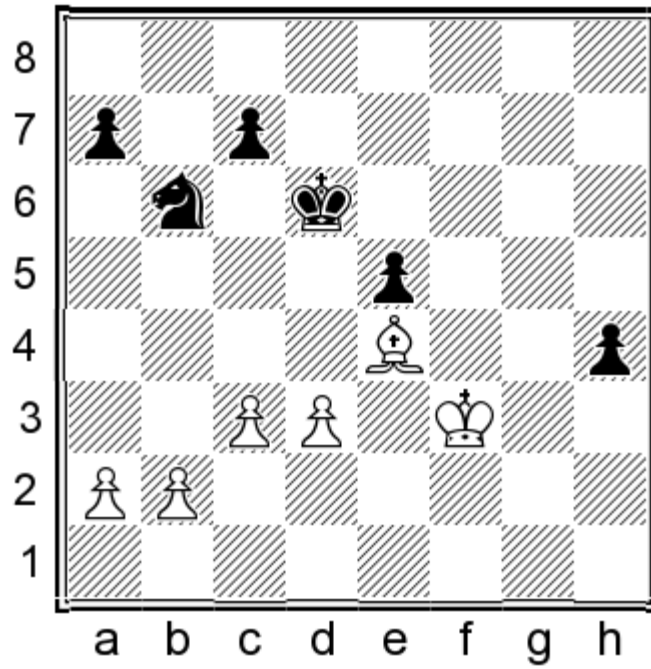
35.♙e4 ♜h2+ 36.♜g2 ♜xg2+ 37.♙xg2 ♞d5 38.♙e4 h4

The ending remains very difficult for White. His queenside is vulnerable as he is tied to Black's h-pawn.

39.♞f3

Also possible was 39.a3 the idea being 39...♞b6 40.b4 ♞d5 41.c4! (this move is not possible with the pawn on a2) 41...♞c3+ 42.♞f3= and White saves himself as he has built a wall on the queenside which the black king cannot penetrate.

39...♞b6!



40.c4??

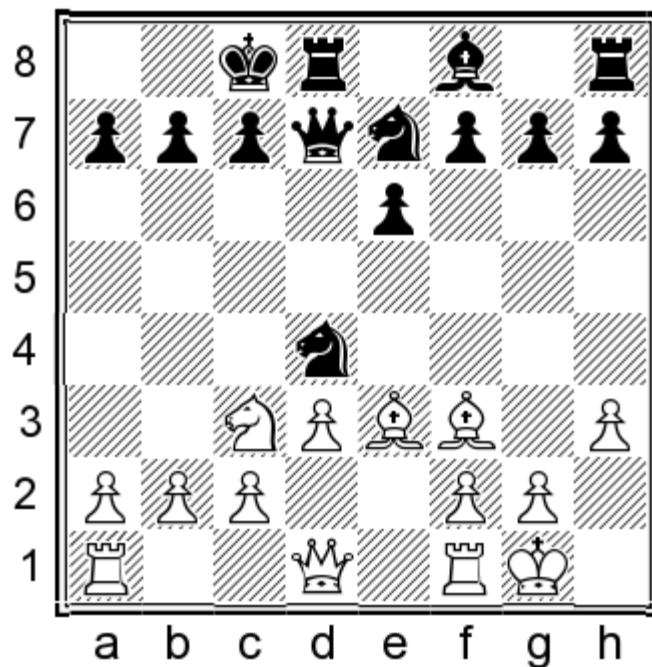
A bad mistake that may well have been the result of time pressure. It allows Black's pieces to penetrate after which the draw cannot be held anymore. 40.b3 would have saved White, as the pawn ending arising after 40...♖d5 (40...a5 41.♔g4 a4 42.♔xh4 a3 43.♔g4 ♖d7 44.♔f3 ♖c5 45.♔e2 ♖xb3 46.♔d1 is also a draw) 41.♙xd5 ♔xd5 42.♔g4 e4 can be held due to the intermediate check 43.c4+! ♔d4 44.dxe4 ♔xe4 45.♔xh4 ♔d4 46.♔g5 ♔c3 47.♔f6 ♔b2 48.c5 ♔xa2 49.♔e6 ♔xb3 50.♔d7 a5 51.c6 a4 52.♔xc7 a3 53.♔b7 a2 54.c7=

40...♔c5-+ 41.♙f5 ♖a4 42.b3 ♖c3 43.a3 ♔d4 44.b4 ♖a2 45.♔e2 h3! 46.♙xh3 ♖c1+ 47.♔d2 ♖xd3 48.c5 e4 49.♙f1 ♖e5 50.a4 ♖c4+ 51.♔e2 ♖e3 52.♙h3 ♖d5 0-1

An interesting game which shows how vital the Scandinavian can be even in one of its apparently calm forms.

**6. Vachier Lagrave – Tiviakov  
Hoogeveen 29.10.2010**

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♖f3 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♖c6 5.♖c3 ♗d7 6.h3 ♙xf3 7.♙xf3 0-0-0 8.d3 ♖d4 9.0-0 e6 10.♙e3 ♖e7



### 11. ♕xd4!

White should aim for opposite-coloured bishops, as it is known that they tend to favour the attacker. Here, White does have some slight prospects of a pawn storm.

### 11... ♖xd4 12. ♗e4

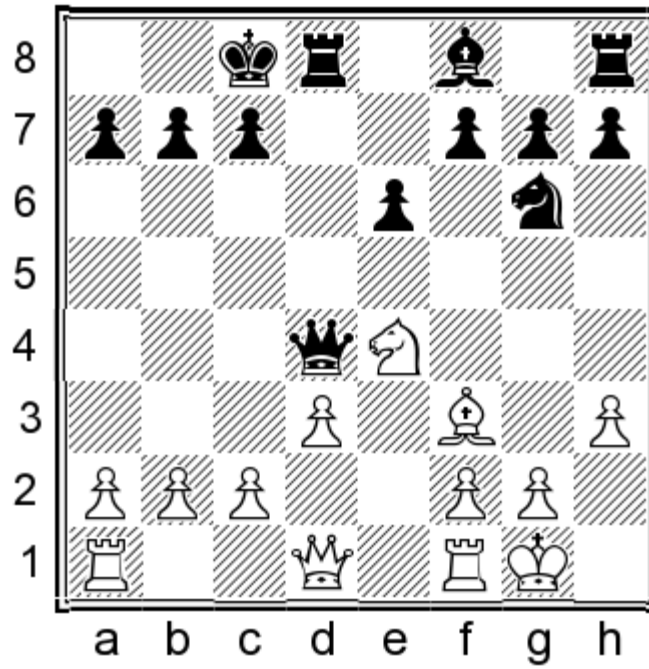
The white knight is eyeing both c5 and g5, and its removal from c3 signals White's intention to start rolling his queenside pawns. I also looked at 12. ♗e2!? which is indicated by the engines. I think that a worthwhile reply could be 12... ♗a4!? trying to hinder White's plans. The main idea is seen after 13.d4 ♗f5 and White has to allow an exchange of queens by 14.c3 ♖xd1= in order to save his d-pawn.

Besides, 12... ♖d7 13.d4 (13.b4 ♗f5↔) 13...g5 14.c4 ♗b8 15. ♖b3 ♖c8 16.a4 ♗f5 is also playable.

### 12... ♗c6?!

Gawain Jones mentions 12... ♗f5?! in his *Chessbase* notes, which I consider also inaccurate as Black is neither counterattacking with this move, nor gaining time.

After having pondered over the position for some 20 minutes, it dawned on me that if White could throw in g2-g3, he would have lasting pressure along the main diagonal. It is for this reason that Sergei should have played 12... ♗g6!. Black is threatening to attack from both e5 and (most importantly) h4. At the same time the knight is closer to the white king.



13.g3 allows Black to launch an attack first with 13...f5! 14.♖d2 (14.♗g5 ♜f6) 14...♙d6! with decent chances. For example, 15.♙g2

15.♗h1?! h5! leads to a strong attack for Black where having the knight on g6 is a nice asset;

15.♗c4 is answered with 15...♙xg3 16.c3 ♜h4 17.fxg3 ♜xg3+ 18.♙g2 ♗h4 19.♞e2 ♞xd3.

15...c6! 16.♗c4 ♙c7 17.c3 (17.♞e2 f4!) 17...♞f6 18.h4 f4 19.♞e2 ♞e7 20.h5 ♗f8 with fine counterattacking chances.

This analysis shows that perhaps White should brace himself for more resolute actions with 13.c3!? ♞xd3 14.♞a4!

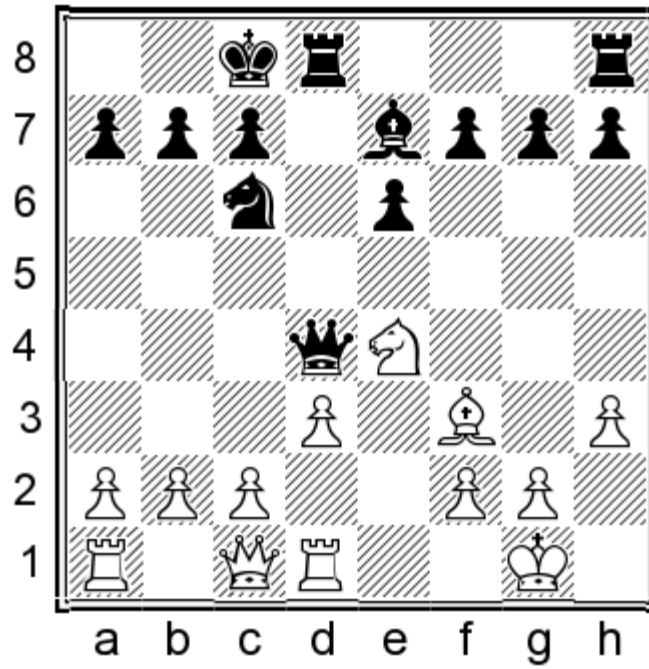
14.♞b3?! ♗h4 15.♞fd1 ♗xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♞a6 17.♞xd8+ ♗xd8 18.♗g5 ♗e8! 19.♞e1 ♙e7 can only be worse for White.

when 14...♞a6! 15.♞xa6 bxa6 16.♗g5 ♗e5 17.♙e2 ♙e7 18.♙xa6+ ♗d7! leads to an equal endgame.

### 13.♞c1!?

Vachier Lagrave tries to attack without weakening his castling position. 13.g3± was another possibility as the c6-knight doesn't support well f- and h-pawn marches. Besides, it is a target itself.

### 13...♙e7 14.♞d1



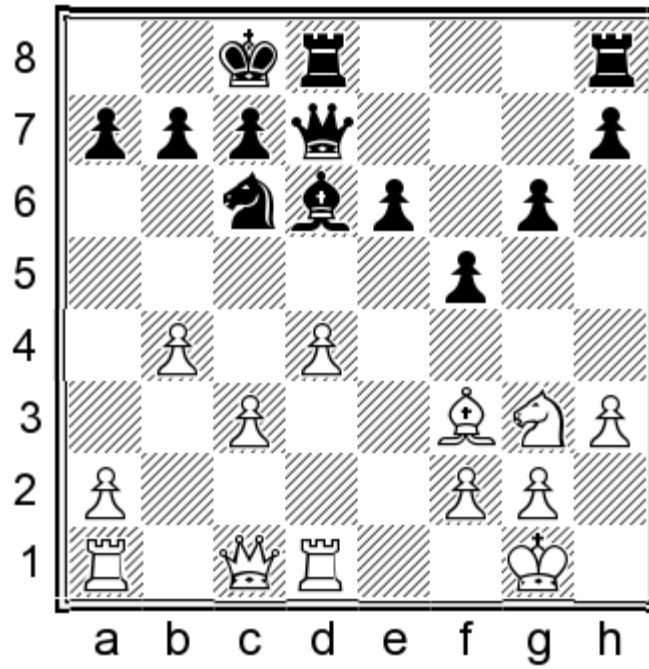
White is all fit for expanding in the centre with c3, d4 so Black should think about improving the stand of his unfortunate knight. Gawain Jones mentions 14...♖e5 15.♙e2 f5 16.c3 ♖b6!?, assuming that after 17.♘g3 ♗hf8 18.d4 ♘g6 (18...f4!? 19.♘e4 f3 20.dxe5 fxe2 21.♗e1 ♖b5 22.♗c2 ♗xe5 23.♗xe2 ♗f5 24.♗ae1± is better for White) 19.b4 the position still remains more pleasant for White. However, after 19...♘h4! 20.♙f1 f4 21.♘e4 ♗c6 22.f3 (22.♗e1 e5! 23.dxe5 ♗d5⇌) 22...♙b8∞, Black has serious counterplay, in my opinion. For instance, the ...e6-e5 break would underline the weakness of White's dark squares.

Tiviakov assigns his knight blockading functions.

**14...f5 15.c3 ♖d7 16.♘g3 g6?!**

Jones does not comment on this move, but I think it was a last chance for Black here to redeploy the passive ♘c6 – 16...♘e5! 17.♙e2 ♘f7! 18.d4 ♙b8 was a better try, although White retains the easier game.

**17.d4!± ♙d6 18.b4!**



**18...♙xg3 19.fxg3 ♖d6 20.b5!**

White correctly judges that a knight on a5 will not block his attack while 20...♘e7? 21.c4 ♔b8 22.♔h2 e5 23.c5 ♖e6 24.dxe5 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♖xe5 26.♖c1± would be even worse.

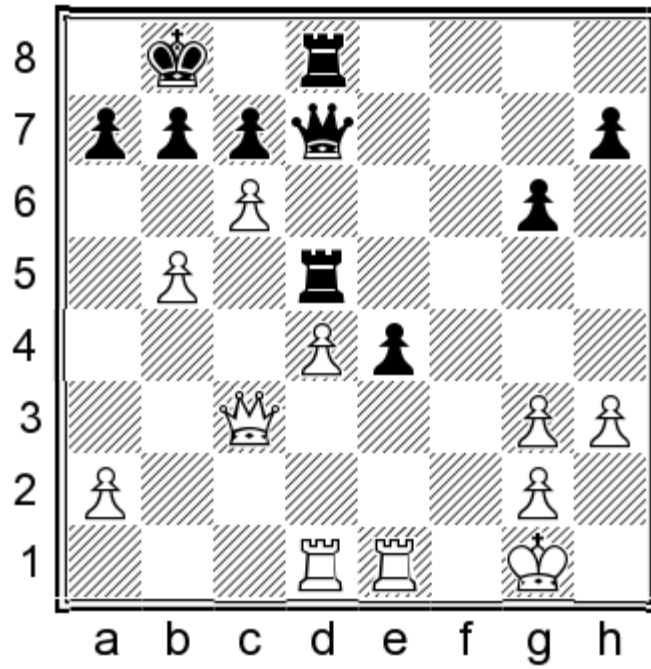
**20...♘a5 21.c4! e5! 22.c5**

22.♖c3 e4□ 23.♙xe4 ♘xc4 24.♙xb7+ ♔xb7 25.♖xc4 ♖he8∞ would have given Black enough for the pawn.

**22...♖e7 23.♖c3 e4 24.♙xe4**

In my opinion, White should have taken a pawn with 24.♖xa5!? exf3 25.♖e1! ♖d7 26.♖xa7 ♖xb5 27.♖a8+ ♔d7 28.♖a3 ♖he8 29.♖xf3± since the text allows 24...♖xe4 25.♖xa5 ♖xd4 26.c6 ♔b8 27.♔h2 f4 whereas Black is completely equal.

**24...fxe4?! 25.♖xa5 ♔b8 26.♖c3 ♖d5 27.♖e1 ♖hd8 28.♖ad1± ♖d7! 29.c6**

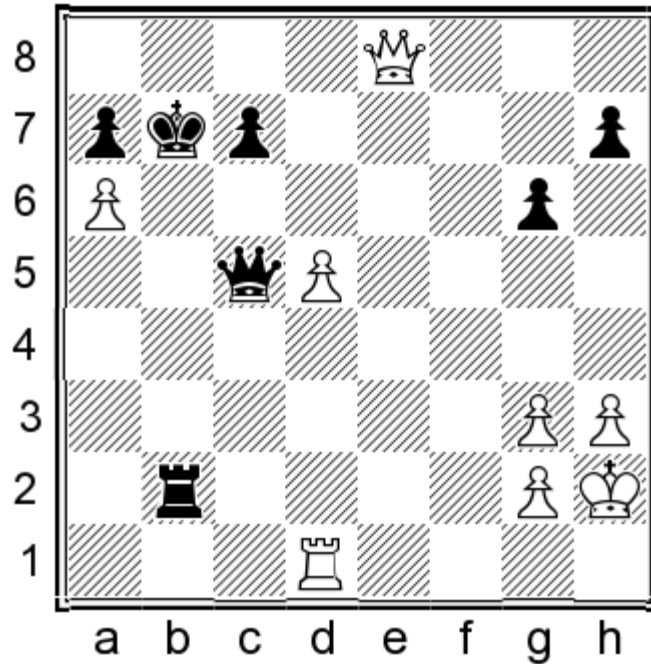


29...♔d6?!

This mistake seals Black's sentence.

The e-pawn had to be kept so 29...♕e6! was called for. After 30.a4 (30.cxb7 ♖xb5 31.♕c2 ♗e8 is also holding.) 30...b6, Black is planning ...a7-a5 and 31.a5?! ♖xb5 32.axb6 axb6 is far from clear despite the open a-file.

30.♖xe4 ♖xb5 31.cxb7 ♖xb7 32.d5!+- ♗b5 33.♔h2 ♕b6 34.a4 ♖b3 35.♕c4 ♖b2 36.♗e7 ♖f8 37.♕e4! ♖b4 38.♕e5! ♖b2 39.♗e8+ ♖xe8 40.♕xe8+ ♔b7 41.a5! ♕c5 42.a6+!



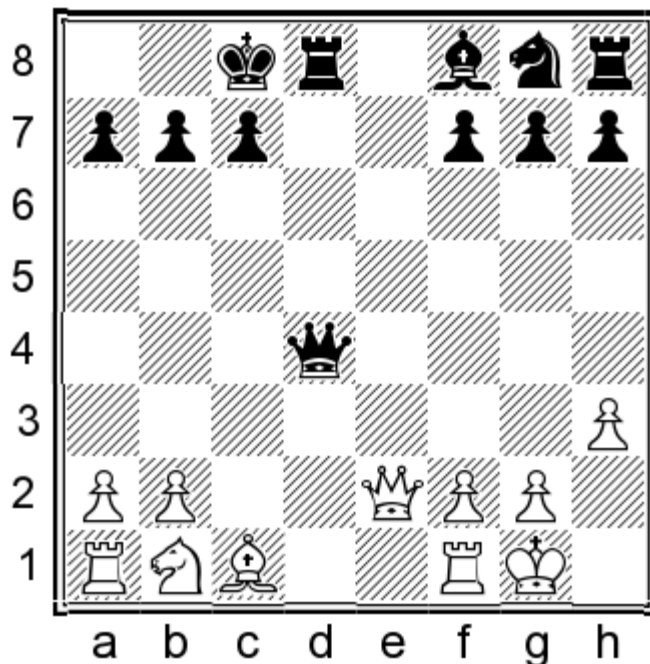
The king stands no chance of survival against the combined attack of the white forces.

42...♔xa6 43.♕c8+ ♔b5 44.♕b8+ ♕b6 45.♕e8+ ♔a6 46.♕c8+ ♔b5 47.♖c1 ♕e3 48.♕b8+ ♕b6 49.♕e8+ ♔b4 50.♕e4+ ♔a3 51.♖a1+ ♖a2 52.♕d3+ ♕b3 53.♕a6+ ♔b2 54.♕f6+ ♔a3 55.♕e7+ ♔a4 56.♖xa2+ ♕xa2 57.♕xc7 ♕xd5 58.♕xa7+ ♔b5 59.♕xh7 ♕e6 60.h4 ♔c5 61.♕h6 ♕e8 62.♕f4 ♔d5 63.g4 ♕e1 64.♕g5+ ♔d4 65.♕f6+ ♔d5 66.h5

gxf5 67.gxf5 ♖e8 68.♗f5+ ♔d4 69.h6 ♖b8+ 70.♔h3 ♖b3+ 71.g3 ♖b7 72.h7 ♗h1+ 73.♕g4 ♖d1+ 74.♕g5 1-0

7. Pesonen – Voveris  
FIN-LTU ICCF email, 2007

1.e4 e5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5 4.d4 ♘c6 5.♗f3 ♙g4 6.♙e2 0-0-0 7.h3 ♙h5 8.0-0 exd4 9.cxd4 ♗xd4 10.♗xd4 ♙xe2  
11.♗xe2 ♖xd4

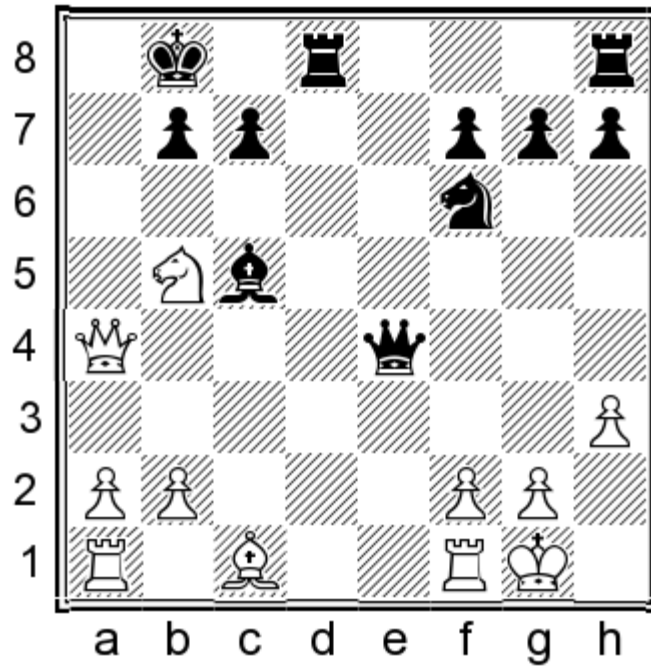


Surprisingly, the game has transposed from the Alapin to our Scandinavian line C1. White is struggling to draw as his compensation for the pawn is meagre

12.♗c3 ♖d3 13.♗g4+ ♖d7 14.♗c4!

Inferior is 14.♗g5?! ♗e7!. The main point is 15.♙d1 ♗f5! 16.♙xd8+ ♔xd8 17.♗e3 ♗c6 and White's initiative has evaporated.

14...♗e6 15.♗a4 ♙c5 16.♗b5 ♗f6 17.♗xa7+ ♔b8 18.♗b5 ♖e4!



White has regained his pawn, but Black's pieces are somewhat more active.

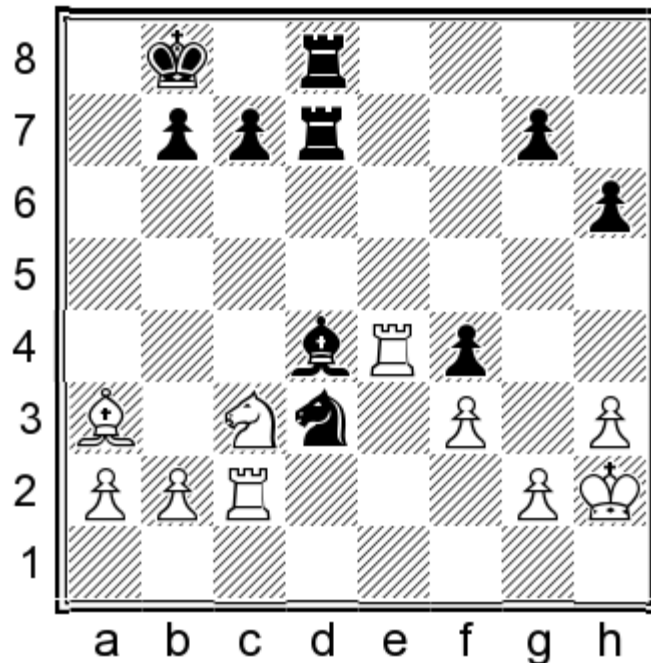
19. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 20. ♙f4 ♜d7 21. ♜ac1 ♙b6 22. ♝c2 ♜hd8 23. ♞e1 f5 24. ♜c3 ♙a5

24... ♜c5 25. ♙g5∞ is unclear; 24... ♜xc3!? 25. bxc3 ♙c5♣ would have been the Karpovian choice I believe, with a stable structural advantage for Black.

25. f3 ♜c5 26. ♙g5 ♜d3 27. ♞e6 ♜f8 28. ♜e2 f4 29. ♞e4 ♙b6+ 30. ♜h2 ♙e3 31. ♜c3 h6 32. ♙e7 ♜g8♣

White is still struggling, of course, but the presence of many pieces on the board gives him counterplay.

33. ♙a3 ♜gd8 34. ♜d1 ♙d4 35. ♜c3



35...c5?!

This move is questionable. 35...♔f2! would have cramped the white king considerably, giving Black excellent chances to play for a win. For example, 36.♖e7 (36.♖e6?? ♕g3+ 37.♔g1 ♖c5+) 36...♖xe7 37.♕xe7 ♖e8 (37...♖d7!? ) 38.♗d5 ♕g3+ 39.♔g1 c6 40.♗b4 ♖xe7 41.♗xd3 ♖e3 42.♖d2 ♔c7↑.

### 36.♖e6! ♖d6

36...♕f2? is just bad now due to 37.♗e4±.

### 37.♖xd6 ♖xd6 38.♗b5 ♖d7 39.♗xd4 cxd4 40.♖d2 ♗e5 41.b3 ♔c7 42.♕b2 ♗c6 43.g3 fxg3+ 44.♔xg3=

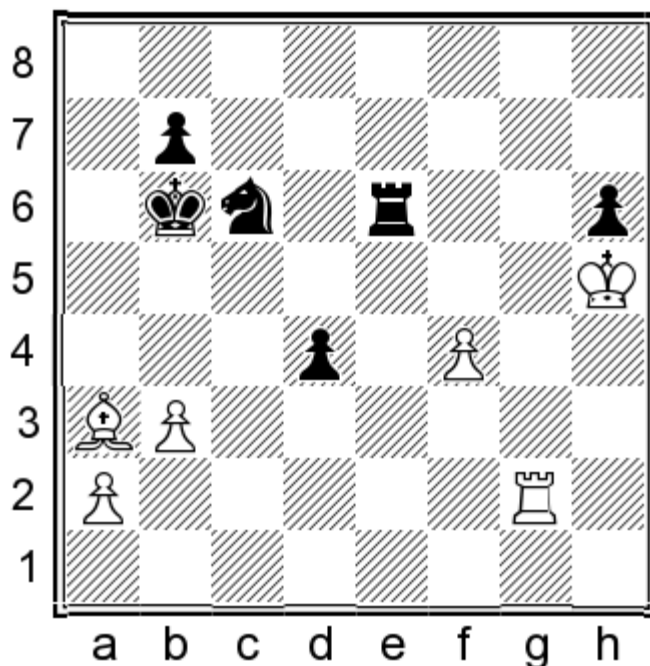
White has equalized and actually it is Black who has to be more careful from now on. The white bishop can become a very dangerous piece in such endings.

### 44...♔b6 45.♕a3 ♖d5 46.f4 ♖f5?!

46...g5= would have been the safest way to draw. Now Black's drifts into a worse position as his kingside becomes slightly vulnerable.

### 47.h4! g6 48.♖g2!± ♖f6 49.♔g4?!

(49.♔f3±) 49...♖e6! 50.h5 gxh5+ 51.♔xh5



### 51...♗d8?!

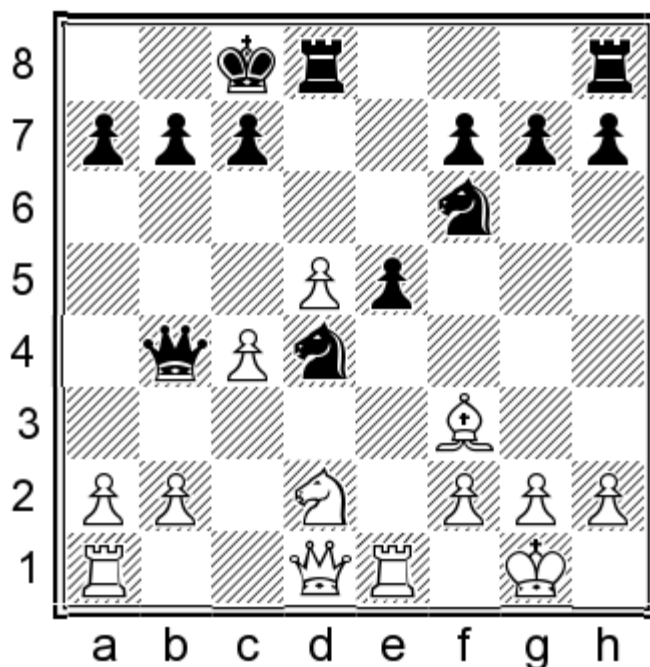
Incomprehensible. 51...♖e4! 52.f5 (52.♔g4 h5+ 53.♔g5 h4 54.♖h2 d3 55.♖d2 ♖e3 56.♔xh4 ♗d4) 52...♖f4 53.♔g6 ♗e5+ 54.♔f6 ♗g4+ 55.♔e6 ♗e3 is at least equal for Black.

### 52.f5 ♖e5 53.♔g6 d3 54.♕b2 ♖d5 55.♖d2 ♔c6 56.♕c3 ♔d7± 57.♖d1

57.♔xh6 ♖xf5 58.♖xd3+ ♔c7 59.♔g6 ♖f2 is of course a draw, White's extra pawn is only a nominal advantage with his king cut off.

### 57...h5! 58.f6 h4 59.f7 ♗e6 60.♔f6 h3 61.♖d2 ♗g5! (This secures the draw.) 62.f8=♖ ♗h7+ 63.♔g7 ♗xf8 64.♔xf8 ♔e6 65.♖h2 ♖h5 66.♕b4 ♖h7 67.♔g8 ♖h5 68.♔f8 ♖h7 69.♔g8 ♖h5 70.♔f8 Draw.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗f3 ♘g4 4.♙e2 ♗c6 5.d4 0-0-0 6.♙e3 e5 7.c4 ♗a5+ 8.♙d2 ♙b4 9.d5 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 ♙xd2+ 11.♗xd2 ♗d4 12.0-0 ♗b4 13.♙e1 ♗f6



### 14.b3

According to Andrew Greet's words, "14.♙xe5?! is well met by 14...♗xf3+ and Black is doing fine after 15.♗xf3 (or 15.gxf3 ♗xb2) 15...♗xc4 ". I have to agree with this comment, adding that 16.♙e7 ♙xd5 17.♗e1 ♙d7 18.♙xd7 ♗xd7 19.♙c1 ♗f4 looks in fact better for Black.

14.♗c1 deserves attention. The point is that after 14...♙he8 15.a3, Black's queen must go to a more passive place than in the game – 15...♗d6 16.♙d1, when it would be dangerous to tolerate White's centre so 16...c6!♗ should be thrown in.

### 14...♙he8 15.a3 ♗c3!

White hoped to follow up with b3-b4 so Sermek resorts to guerilla tactics to keep him occupied. The prospect of trading queens with ...♗c2 is very annoying. I consider this position already more than satisfactory for Black.

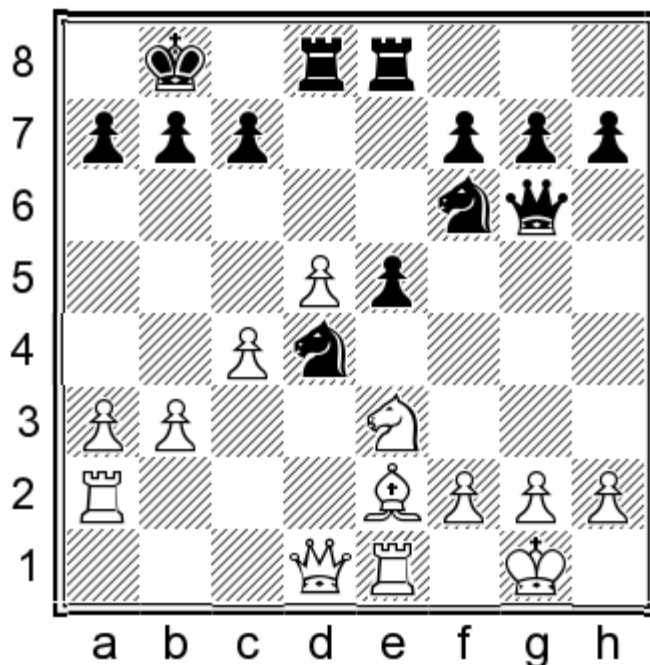
### 16.♙e4?!

16.♙e3 ♗c2 17.♗e1 ♗f5♗ looks excellent for Black.

16.♙a2 was suggested by Greet to prevent ...♗c2, but it looks artificial.

Christian Bauer notes in his book on the Scandinavian that the position after 16...♗d3 is equal. Andrew went on further in *Chessbase*, his main line being 17.♙e2! (the exclamation mark is his) 17...♗g6 18.♗f1

He also mentions 18.b4 e4 19.♙f1 ♗b8 20.a4! with the idea of activating the rook along the third rank, but I believe Black is not at all worse after either 20...♗g4, or 20...♗f5!?.  
18...♗b8 19.♗e3



when he thinks that White is close to achieving a little something. Actually I kind of disagree here as I think Black has a plethora of good continuations: 19...♖g5!. This is my favourite one. Black would like to follow up with ...g7-g6, ...♗f6-e4 and ...f7-f5, obtaining the better chances. To be honest, I cant even find equality for White after this move.

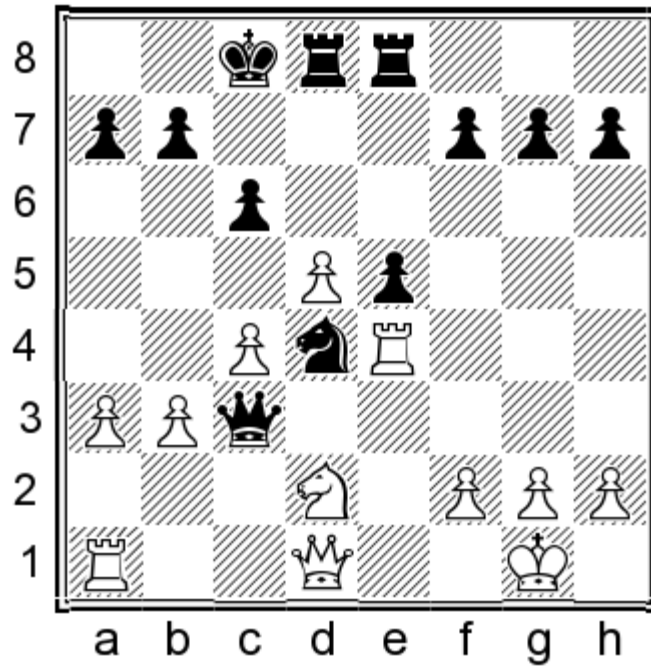
Andrew thought that 19...c6 was the critical reply, suggesting the queen sacrifice 20.dxc6 ♖f3+ 21.♙xf3 ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 e4 23.♙e2 bxc6 24.♖ad2 when White may have enough for the queen, indeed. However, after 24...♖g5 25.b4 ♖e5 26.c5 ♖c3 27.♖d6 ♗c7, it is hard to believe that Black can end up worse as he has a lot of activity.

Another continuation worthy of attention is 19...♗xe2+ 20.♖axe2 ♗h5! and again I would prefer Black as the knight is coming to the nice square f4 with a hope to invade d3.

Returning to 19...♖g5!, the engines find nothing better than 20.♖b1, but then 20...♗d7! paves the way for the f-pawn while also toying with the idea of ...e5-e4 followed by a knight invasion to d3.

After 16.♖a2 ♖d3, White could also chose Predojevic's move, e.g. 17.♙e4 ♗xe4 18.♖xe4. While it is definitely an improved version of what he got in the game, the assessment does not seem to change drastically as 18...♗b8 19.♖e3 ♖g6 20.♖g3 ♖f6 21.♗e4 ♖h6 22.♖h3 ♖g6 23.♗c3 f5 leaves Black more than okay. A nice point is 24.f4?! c5! and the knight on d4 becomes very strong.

**16...♗xe4 17.♖xe4 c6↑**



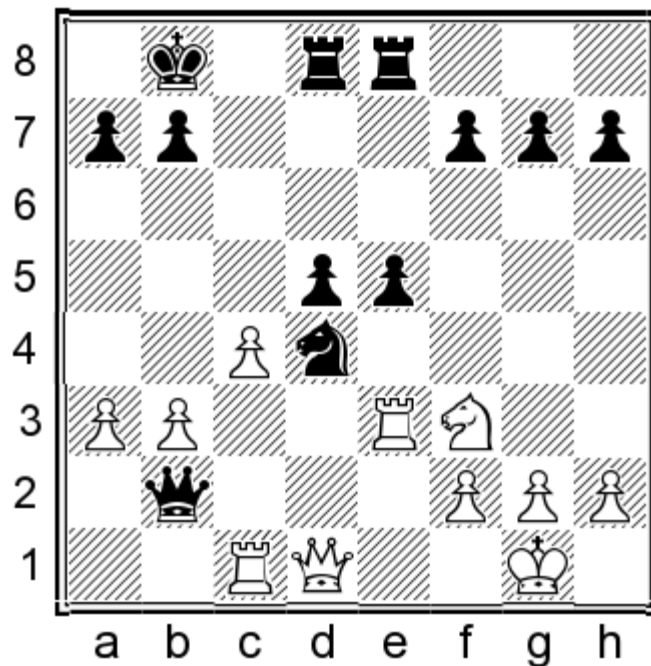
This undermining move probably caused White a severe headache as his centre is about to crumble. The fact that a great defender like Borki Predojevic failed to hold up, underlines Black's set-up's vigour.

18. ♖c1 ♜b2 19. ♖e3 ♔b8

Now the threats to a3 and d5 become quite tangible.

20. ♘f3 cxd5

20... ♗xf3+!? 21. ♖xf3 cxd5 22. c5 d4↑ is also bad for White as the black central pawns are marching forwards.



21. cxd5?

This is equivalent to capitulation.

21. ♗xe5 was the only chance. However, after 21... ♖xe5! (21... dxc4 22. ♗d7+! ♔c7 23. ♖xc4+ ♗c6 24. ♖xe8 ♖xe8

25.♖c5 ♖d8 26.♗c1 ♗xc1+ 27.♝xc1 ♞ looks defendable) 22.♝xe5 ♜xb3 23.♞b1 ♗xe5 24.♗xb3 ♖d7 25.c5 ♝c7 26.h3 d4 27.c6 b6 28.♝c1 ♗d6, White should not have many hopes for salvation.

21...♝xd5 22.♜xd4 ♝xd4 23.♗e1 f6

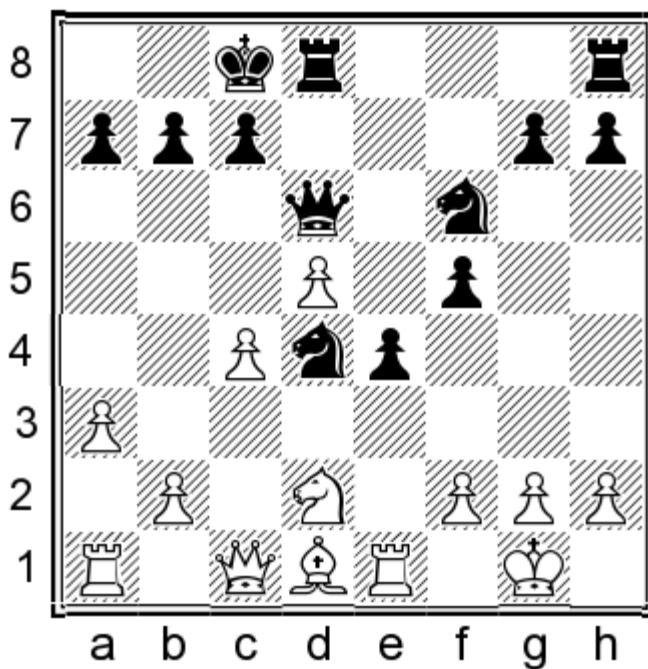
White has ended a pawn down without a shred of activity. The rest is pure technique.

24.h3? ♗xa3+ 25.♗c3 ♗d6 26.♗c2 e4 27.g4 a6 28.♝c3 ♖d2 29.♝c8+ ♜a7 30.♗c5+ ♗xc5 31.♞1xc5 ♝xc8 32.♝xc8 ♖d3 33.b4 ♝xh3 34.♜g2 ♝f3 35.♝c7 g5 36.♝xh7 ♝f4 37.♜g3 e3 38.fxe3 ♝xb4 39.♝f7 ♖b6 40.e4 a5 41.e5 fxe5 42.♝f5 a4 43.♝xg5 a3 44.♝xe5 a2 45.♞a5+ ♞a6 46.♝xa6+ 0-1

A nice game by Sermek, who made the black position look as if it were playing itself. It is very rare to see Predojevic losing in such a way.

**9. Mamonova – Bedia  
Poltavskaya 2010**

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.d4 ♜c6 4.♜f3 ♞g4 5.♞e2 0-0-0 6.♞e3 e5 7.c4 ♗a5+ 8.♞d2 ♞b4 9.d5 ♞xf3 10.♞xf3 ♞xd2+ 11.♜xd2 ♜d4 12.0-0 ♗b4 13.♗c1 f5 14.♝e1 e4 15.♞d1 ♜f6 16.a3 ♗d6



**17.b4**

The most dangerous move was 17.♗c3!, putting the strong ♜d4 under pressure right away. 17...♜e6 18.♞c2 ♜f4!?

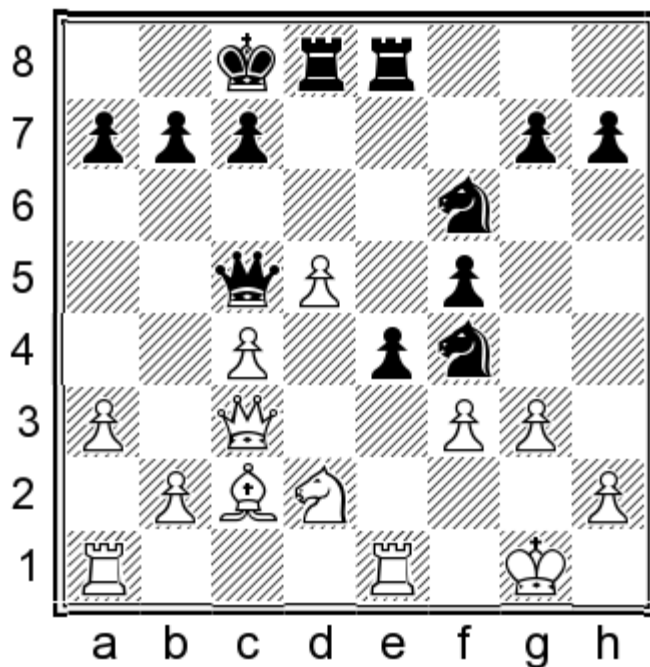
(18...♝he8 19.♜xe4±) 19.f3!?

A principled undermining move. Instead, 19.g3 ♜g4! 20.♞xe4 ♜h3+ 21.♜g2 fxe4 22.♜xh3 ♗g6 23.♜g2 e3 24.♝xe3 (24.fxe3 ♝hf8 25.♝e2 ♜xh2! 26.♝h1 ♗g4 27.♗d3 ♜f3∞) 24...♜xe3+ 25.♗xe3 ♝he8! 26.♗xa7 ♗c2∞ is a mess.

19...♝he8!! 20.g3!?

20.fxe4 ♜g4! 21.♜f3 ♗g6! 22.exf5 is answered with the brilliant 22...♞e2!! 23.♝xe2 ♜xe2+ 24.♜f1 ♗e8 25.♗d2 ♜e3+ 26.♜f2 ♜g4+=.

20...♗c5+ and here we have reached an important crossroads:



a) 21.♔h1 ♖h3!?

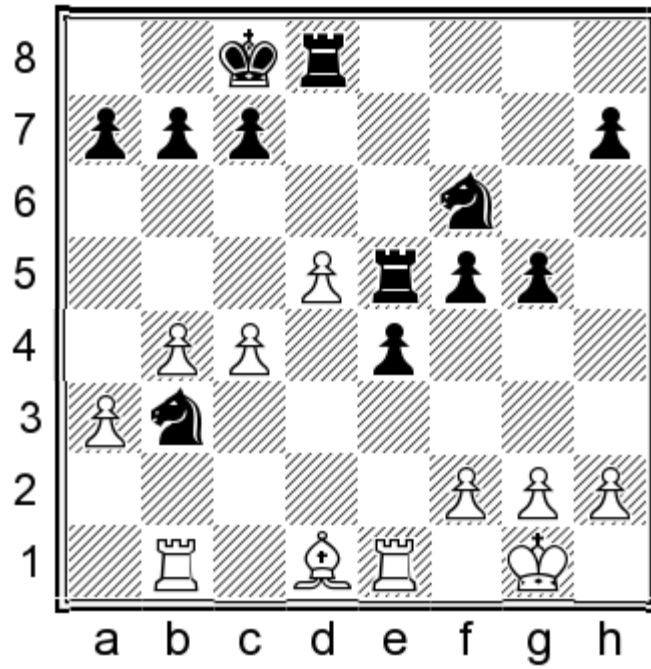
The ending reached after 21...♕f2 22.gxf4 e3 23.♙xf5+ ♔b8 24.♗e4 ♕xf3+ 25.♔g1 ♗xe4 26.♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 27.♗xe3 ♗d6 28.♗xe8 ♗xe8 29.♙d3 ♗e3 30.♗d1 ♗e4! is drawish in view of White's many weak pawns. 22.fxe4 ♗f2+ 23.♔g2 ♗2xe4 24.♗xe4 ♗xe4 25.♙xe4 ♗xe4=.

b) 21.♔f1 is answered strongly with 21...♗h3 22.♖e3

22.♔g2?? ♕f2+!! 23.♔xh3 g5 24.♗f1 (24.♖xf6 g4+--+) 24...♗xd5! 25.cxd5 ♗d6 26.♖g7 ♗g6 27.♖xh7 g4+--+ is a nice line which displays the tactical potential of Black's set-up. 22...♖xe3 23.♗xe3 c6±.

c) 21.♖e3 looks like the most sensible move. 21...♖xe3+ 22.♗xe3 ♗e6 23.fxe4 (23.♗ae1 b5! 24.fxe4 ♗d4) 23...♗d4= with approximate equality in the ending.

17...♗he8 18.♖b2 ♖e5 19.♗b1 g5 20.♗b3 ♗xb3 21.♖xe5 ♗xe5



22. ♖xb3

Perhaps White wanted to keep her bishop on d1 to prevent the plan ...h6-h5-h4 followed up by ♗h5-f4, but now the blow comes from the other flank:

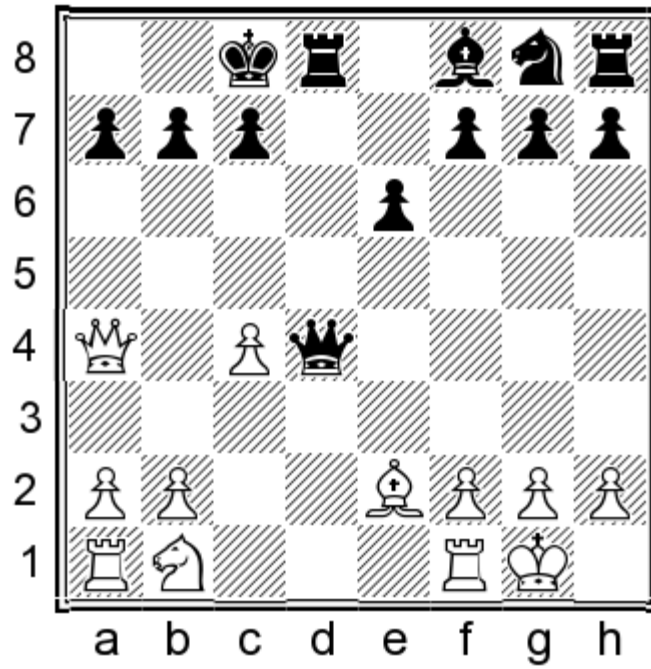
22...b5! 23.cxb5 ♜exd5 24.♙e2 ♜d2 25.f3 ♜c2?

Black has a stable edge which could have been fixed with 25...f4. The rest of the game is of little interest regarding the opening. Black went on to win after mutual mistakes.

26.fxe4 fxe4 27.♖g3 h6 28.♙d1 (28.h4!=) 28...♞a2 29.♞f1 ♗d5 30.♙b3 ♞e2 31.♙xd5? ♞xd5 32.♞h3 ♞dd2 33.♞g3 ♗b7 34.♞c1 ♞a2 35.♗f1 ♞f2+ 36.♗g1 ♞fd2 37.♞e1 e3 38.h3 ♞xa3 39.♞exe3 ♞xe3 40.♞xe3 ♞d4 41.♗f2 ♞xb4 42.♞e5 ♗b6 43.g4 ♞xb5 44.♞e6+ c6 45.♞xh6 a5 46.h4 a4 0-1

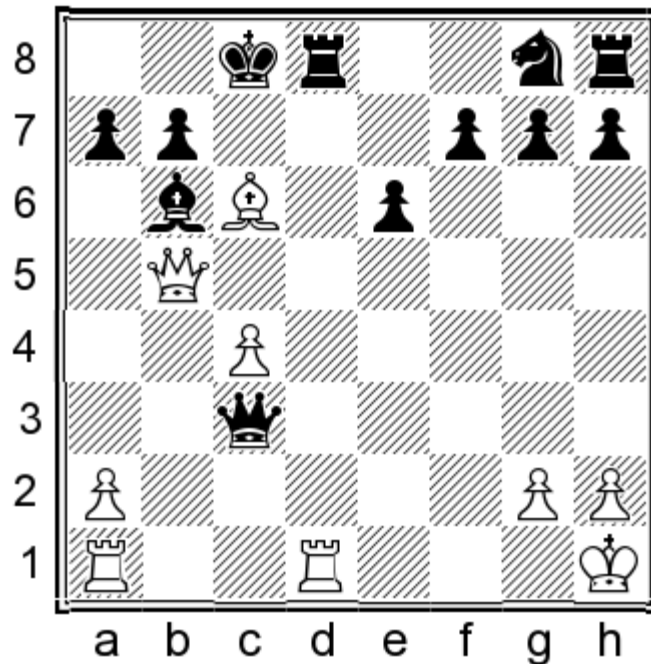
10. Englmaier – Remek  
corr. freechess.de, 21.06.2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♗f3 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♗c6 5.d4 0-0-0 6.c4 ♞f5 7.♙e3 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♗xd4 9.♙xd4 ♞e6+ 10.♙e2 ♞e4 11.0-0 ♞xd4 12.♞a4 e6



**13.Rd1 Qe5!?**

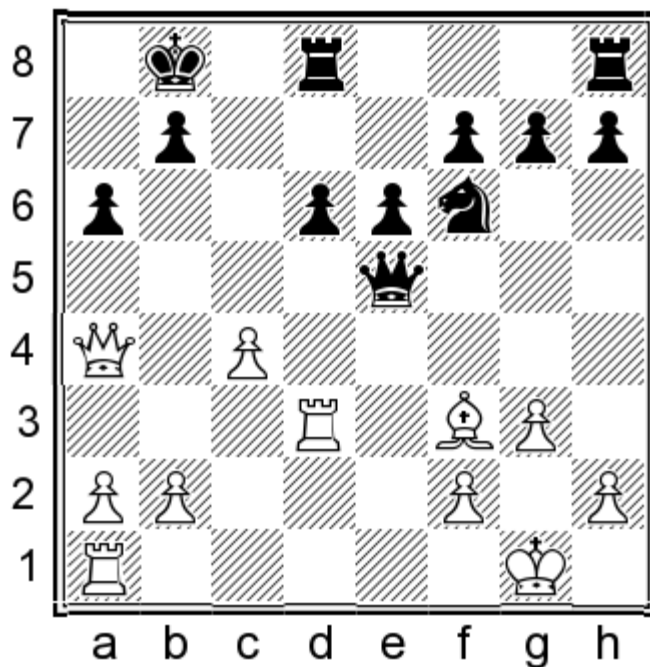
13...Rxb2 14.♘c3!! (14.♘d2? ♖a3) 14...Rxc3 15.♙f3 c6! 16.♙xc6! is a forced draw (but not 16.♖xa7? ♔c7! 17.♞db1 ♙b4+), for instance: 16...♙c5 17.♞b5 (17.♙xb7+ ♔xb7 18.♞b5+ ♙b6 19.♞d7+ ♞xd7 20.♞xd7+ ♔b8 21.♞d6+ ♔c8 22.♞c6+ ♔d8 23.♞d1+ ♙d4 24.♞d6+ ♔e8 25.♞c6+ ♔e7 26.♞c7+ ♔f6 27.♞f4+= is also a draw) 17...♙xf2+ 18.♔h1 (18.♔xf2?? ♞d2+-+) 18...♙b6



19.♙xb7+ ♔xb7 20.♞d7+ ♞xd7 21.♞xd7+ ♔b8 22.♞d6+! and Black has to admit the perpetual.

**14.♘c3 ♙d6 15.♙f3**

This position had arisen in several games via a different move order – White played 13.♘c3 first. All of them featured 15...♔b8 16.♘b5 a6 17.♘xd6 cxd6 18.♙f3 ♘f6 19.♞d3

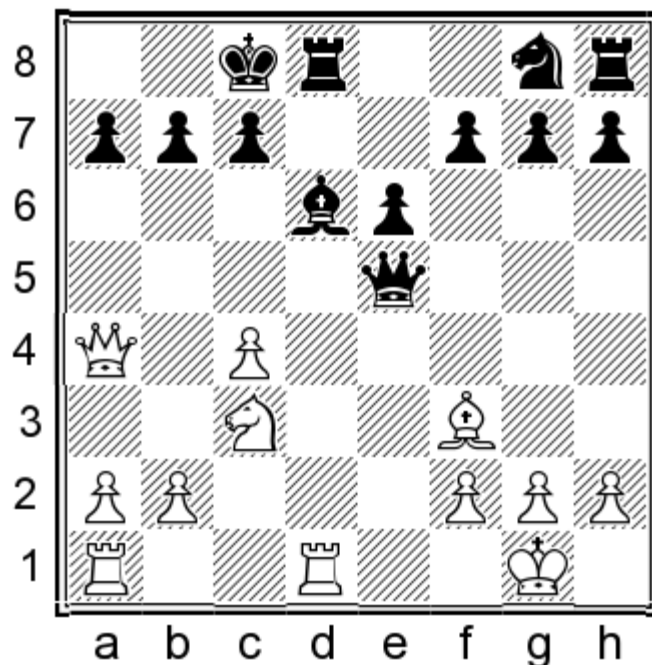


19...d5 cuts the white bishop from the queenside and ensures sufficient defence (what cannot be said about 19...♘d7?! 20.♖b4! ♗c5 21.♞ad1 ♞d7 22.♞e3 ♞f6 23.♞a3 preparing b2-b4). Barbero Senidic-Martinez Lopez, Lleida 2012, went 20.♞b3 ♞d6 (Another solid stand is 20...♔a8 21.♞c1 ♞c8 22.♞b4 ♞b8, but it just looks ugly!) 21.♞c1 (or 21.c5 ♞xc5) 21...♞c8 22.c5 ♞xc5 23.♞xc5 ♞xc5 24.♞xa6 ♞c7 25.♞a4 ♞d7 26.♞f4+ ♞c7 27.♞g5 ♞g8=.

With a hindsight, it seems more enterprising to keep our bishop, but 15...a6 as in Robson-Figler, Boca Raton 2008, provides a lever which could be exploit immediately with 16.c5 ♟xc5 17.♟xa6=. Robson's choice 16.♞ac1, having in mind 16...♗f6 17.b4, is anything but enticing for Black either.

The obliging computer suggests 15...c6 16.♞xa7 ♗f6, but somehow it looks to me against common sense. To soothe my conscience without spending much time on this line, I decided that even 17.♟f3 ♟c5 18.♞a4 followed up by ♟xc6 was enough for a draw.

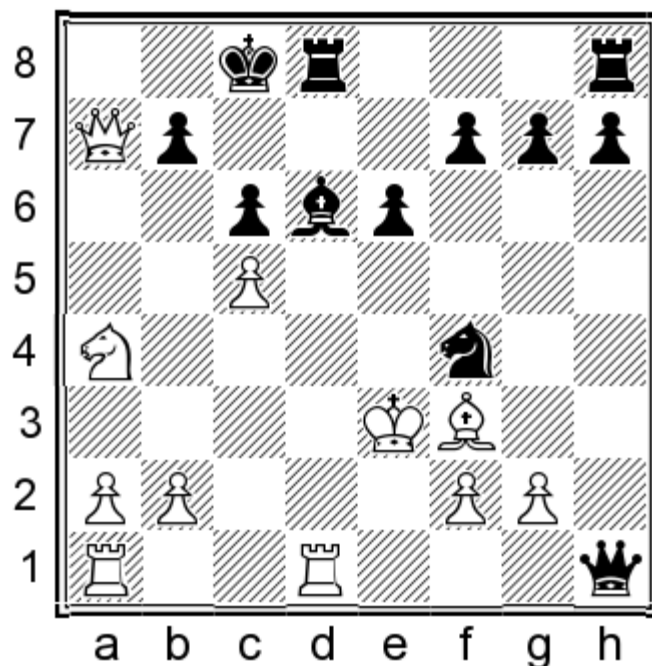
To take stock, 15.g3 ♔b8 is a decent line where White has just enough compensation for the pawn. 15.♟f3 is an attempt to face the opponent with concrete problems.



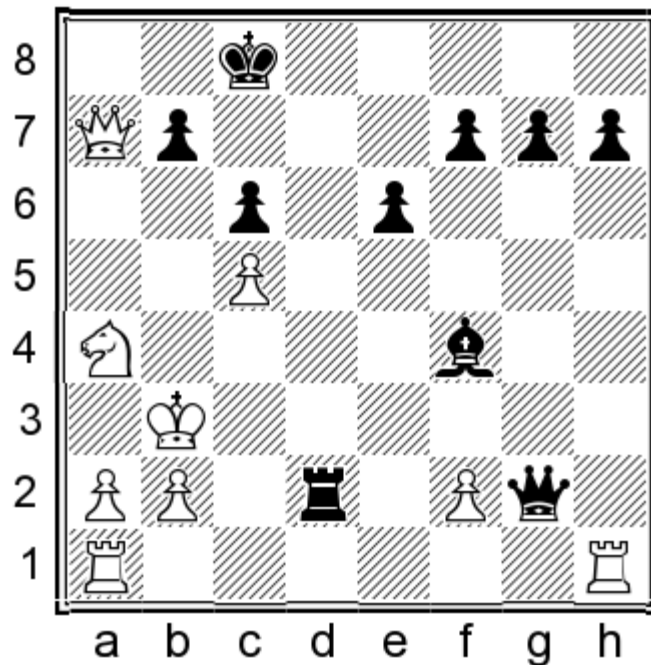
15...a6

Bruzon-Kurajica, La Laguna 2010, saw the greedy 15...♞xh2+? 16.♔f1 ♞e7 17.♞xa7 c6 18.♞a4 ♔c7?

Probably the decisive mistake. Correct was 18...♞g6! as pointed out by Jones. After 19.c5 (19.g3 ♞xg3) the brilliant solution is 19...♞h1+! (He gives instead 19...♞b8 20.♞b6+ ♔c7 21.♞a5 ♞e5 as best defence, but I believe that White should win after 22.♔e2±) 20.♔e2 ♞f4+ 21.♔e3



21...♞xg2+!! 22.♞xg2 ♞f4+!! 23.♔f3 ♞h2!!= when my engine shows 0.00, but this is almost impossible for a human to find in over-the-board play. In the last position Black has a multitude of tactical ideas based on the bad placement of the ♞g2 and the ♔d1, but the best part comes after the obvious 24.♞h1 ♞d3+ 25.♔e4 ♞xg2+ 26.♔xd3 ♞d8+ 27.♔c2 ♞d2+ 28.♔b3



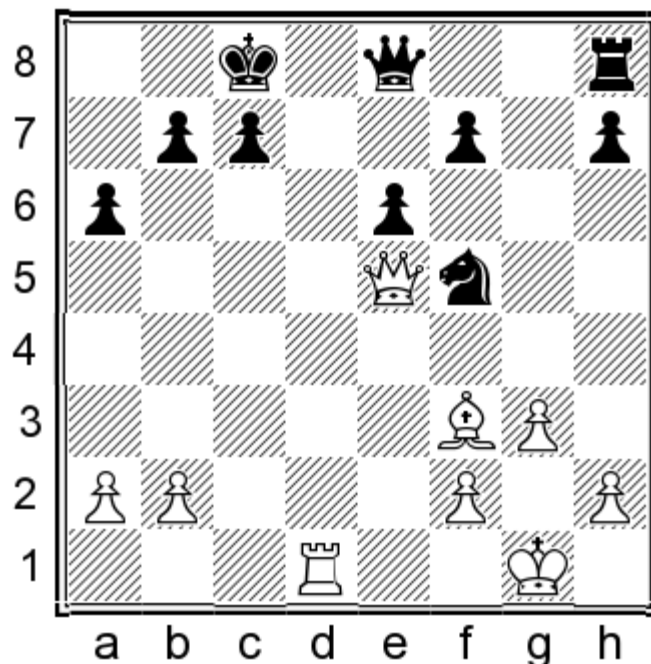
28...♖xb2+!! 29.♗xb2 ♕f3+ 30.♔a4 ♕e4+ 31.♔b3 ♕f3+= and the result is a stunning perpetual. I guess Bojan can be forgiven for not finding all this! Instead, he was lost after:

19.c5!+-.

16.c5 ♕xc5 17.♗e4 ♕b5 18.♗xd6+ ♖xd6 19.♕g4 ♖xd1+

I would prefer to have more pawns in the centre as in the line 19...♗e7!? 20.♖xd6 cxd6 21.♕xg7 ♕e8 22.♖c1+ ♔b8 23.g3 ♗g6 24.♙e4 ♕f8 25.♕d4 ♕d8=, planning ...d5 and ...e5. The point is that an ending with ♖♙:♖♗ would be worse for him.

20.♖xd1 ♗e7 21.♕xg7 ♕e8 22.g3 ♗f5 23.♕e5=



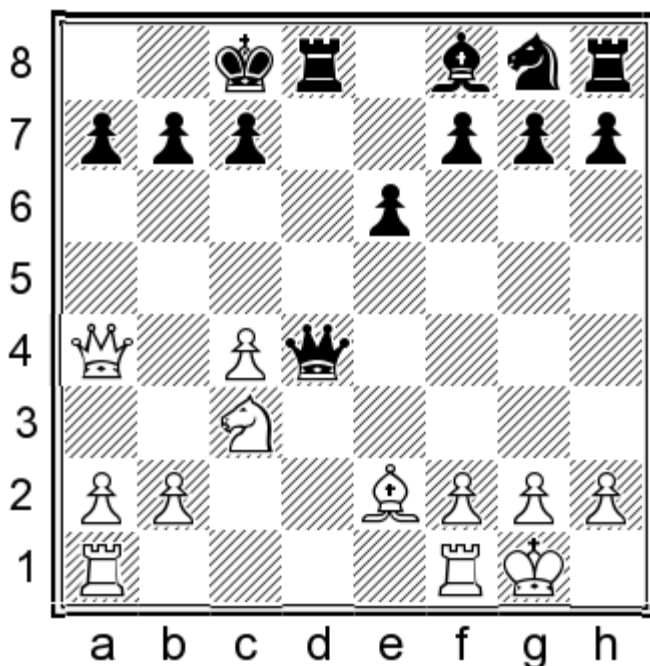
23...♕g8?

This horrible move could be explained only by a wrong assessment of the engine Black used for assistance. 23...♖d6 was safe and sound, and White does not have any plan for improvement. Only then can Black play ...♖g8, or ...h6, or any other reasonable move. The text simply drops a pawn which White eventually converted into a point.

24.♙e4 ♜d6 25.♙xh7 ♜h8 26.♙c2 ♜b8 27.h4 ♞d8 28.♜g2 ♞e8 29.h5 ♜h8 30.♞h1 ♞f8 31.b4 ♞h6 32.a4 ♞g8 33.♙d3 f5 34.b5 axb5 35.axb5 ♜c8 36.♙c4 ♞e8 37.♙b3 ♜b6 38.♞e3 ♞xe3 39.fxe3 ♜d7 40.h6 ♜c5 41.♙c2 ♜c8 42.h7 ♞h8 43.g4 fxg4 44.♞h6 ♜d7 45.♞h5 ♜d6 46.♞g5 1-0

**11. Brandenburg – Tiviakov**  
Hilversum 06.04.2008

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♜f3 ♙g4 4.♙e2 ♜c6 5.d4 0-0-0 6.c4 ♞a5+ 7.♙d2 ♞f5 8.♙e3 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♜xd4 10.♙xd4 ♞e6+ 11.♙e2 ♞e4 12.0-0 ♞xd4 13.♞a4 e6 14.♜c3

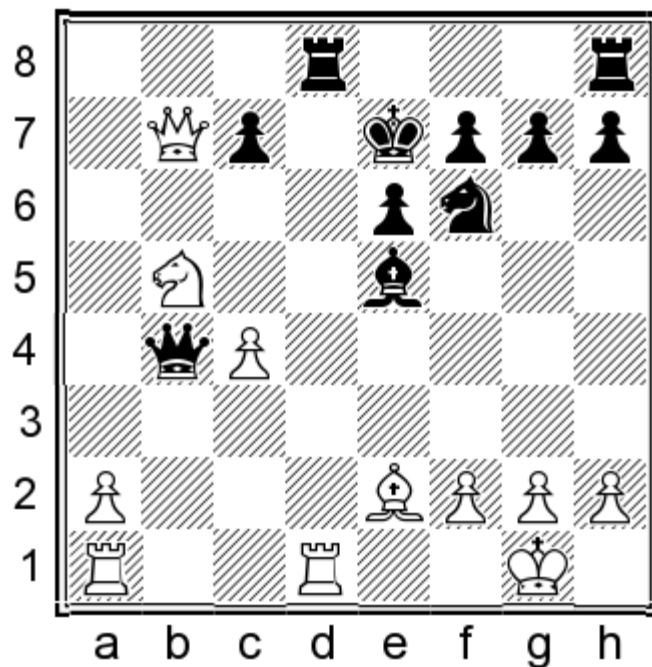


**14...♞b6**

Black moves his queen to a relative safety, as he wants to avoid being hit by ♜c3-b5 or ♞(any)d1 at a later stage. In addition, b4 is now discourage.

**15.♞ad1**

15.b4 has been dealt with expertly in the following game: 15...♞xb4 16.♞xa7 ♙c5! 17.♞a8+ ♜d7 18.♞fd1+ ♙d6 19.♞a7 ♜e7! 20.♜b5 ♜f6 21.♞xb7 ♙e5



Black is fully developed and with a safe king, Haba-L.Milov, Germany 2012 (with different move numbers). After 22.a3

In the event of 22.♞db1, Haba gives 22...♞d2 23.♘a7 23...♞xe2 24.♘c6+ ♔e8 25.♞b5! ♘d7 26.♞e1 26...♞b2 27.♘xe5 ♞xb5 28.cxb5 ♘xe5 29.♞xe5 ♞d5 30.♞xd5 exd5 31.♞d1 ♔e7 32.♞xd5 ♞a8 33.♞d2 ♞a5 as leading to equality in his Chess Informant notes.

22...♞xd1+ 23.♞xd1 ♞b2 24.♙f3 ♞d8! 25.♞xd8 ♔xd8 26.g3 ♔e7!= Black equalized and the game ended in a draw.

**15...♞xd1 16.♞xd1 ♘f6 17.b4!**

White would have been worse without this move. He takes advantage of the fact that we cannot capture the pawn with the queen as then a7 would fall. In this manner, he generates some sort of activity in a situation he seemed to have nothing.

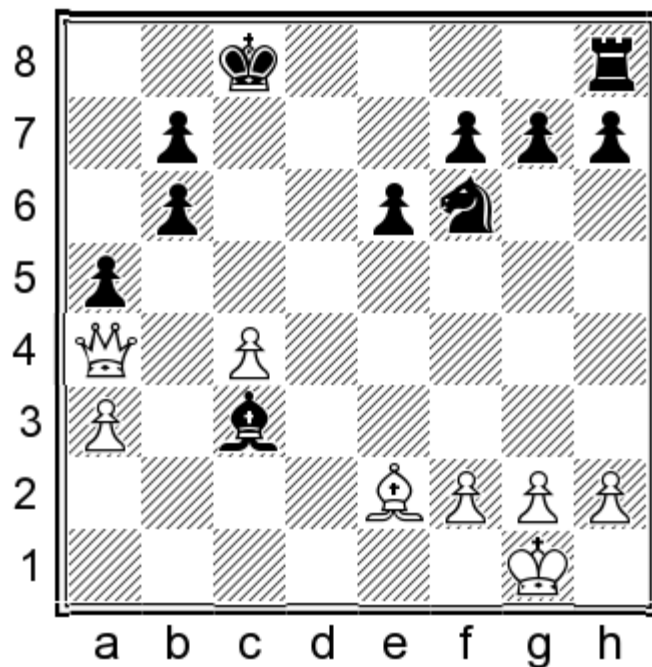
**17...♙xb4**

Obviously, this capture is only viable in conjunction with the queen sacrifice that follows. Such moves are hard to find during a game, as one can easily get intimidated by White's initiative.

**18.♞b1 a5 19.a3 ♙xc3!**

19...♞d4? 20.axb4 ♞xc3 21.bxa5+- is just awful, the king is doomed.

**20.♞xb6 cxb6**

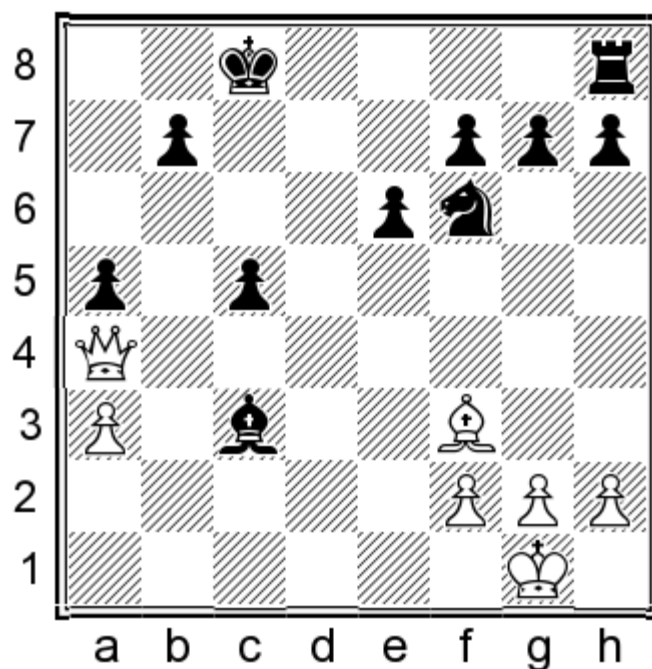


**21.c5!**

Weakening our king, but Black is still able to defend. White's multipurpose sacrifice deprives our bishop of the perfect stand c5 and underlines the vulnerability of the a5- and b7-pawns.

**21...bxc5 22.♙a6**

This forces a draw. Critical for the 14...♗b6-line is 22.♙f3!,



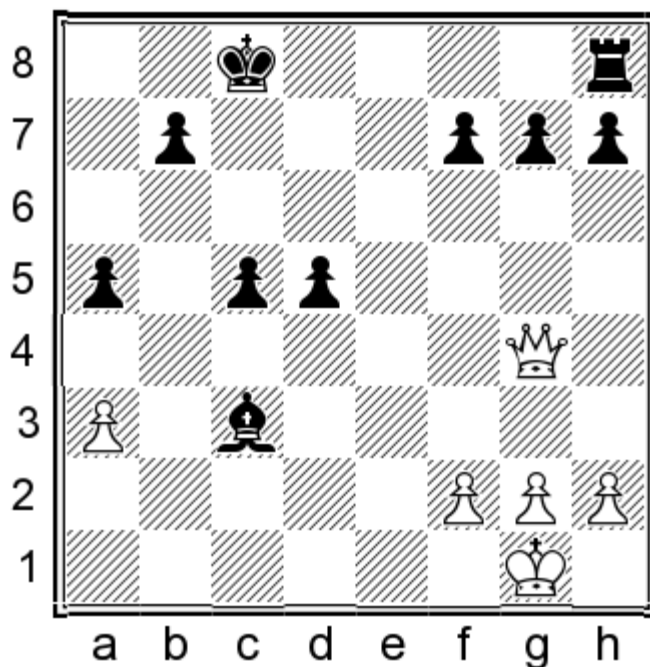
when 22...♘d5! saves the day, as far as I'm concerned. I believe it is positionally well founded as it keeps Black's main trump in the impending battle – the c-pawn.

Tiviakov also mentions 22...♞d8 23.♗b5 ♘d5 24.♗xc5+ ♔b8 as equal, but I have my doubts about this position as White has a strong bishop and we lost our precious passer. So, let us follow his other recommendation in *Chess Informant 103*:

23. ♔xd5

Here I would like to add that 23. ♖b5 shouldn't bother us in the least as the a5-pawn is absolutely expendable: 23... ♔d4 24. ♔xd5 (24. ♖xa5?! ♚d8 25. ♖a8+ ♕c7 26. ♖a5+ ♜b6 27. ♖a7 ♝b8 can only be better for Black who can start pushing his kingside pawns to cramp the f3-bishop. For the moment, ... ♔d4-c3 should be his primary thought, caging in the a7-queen) 24... exd5 25. ♖xa5 ♚d8 26. ♖a8+ ♕c7 27. ♖a5+ b6 28. ♖a7+ ♕c6 29. ♖xf7 c4 and it is clear that White is struggling for a draw.

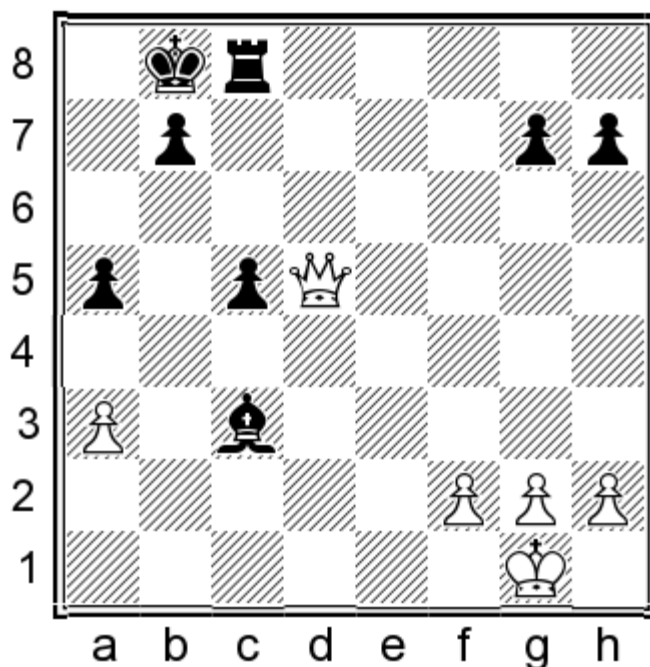
23... exd5 24. ♖g4+



24... f5!!

The key of Black's defence. Displacing the enemy queen allows us to stabilise the position. I awarded two exclamation marks as I find the move aesthetically pleasing, but strictly speaking it is just a link of a forced sequence. Otherwise Black would have to resign.

25. ♖xf5+ ♕b8 26. ♖xd5 ♚c8



Tiviakov gives 26...♖e8, but the rook should support the passed pawn. In such endings, both sides have chances. White does not possess a passer of his own, while our queenside pawns could become dangerous later on.

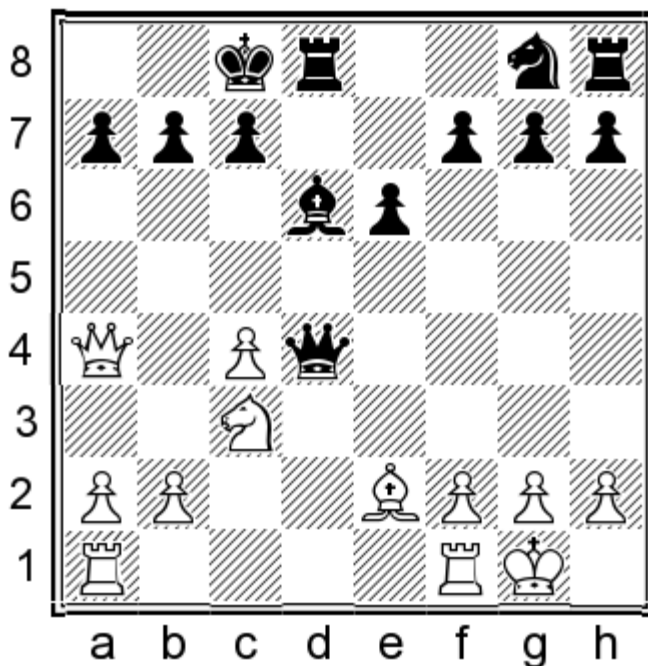
I believe that the position is objectively equal and that all three results are possible in a practical game. A plausible continuation is:

27.♖f1 c4 28.♗d6+ ♖a7 29.♗e6 ♖b8 30.♖e2 ♗f6 31.♖d1 c3 32.♖c2 ♗d8. The engines will stubbornly claim a small advantage for White, but in fact he does not have a plan for improvement. And any mistake could cost him a full point.

22...bxa6 23.♗c6+ ♖b8 24.♗b6+ Draw.

12. D'Amore – Prié  
Arvier, 2007

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♘f3 ♗g4 4.♗e2 ♘c6 5.d4 0-0-0 6.c4 ♗f5 7.♗e3 ♗xf3! 8.♗xf3 ♘xd4 9.♗xd4 ♗e6+ 10.♗e2 ♗e4 11.0-0 ♗xd4 12.♗a4 e6 13.♘c3 ♗d6



14.♘b5

This move is critical, of course, as it removes the potentially dangerous bishop from the board.

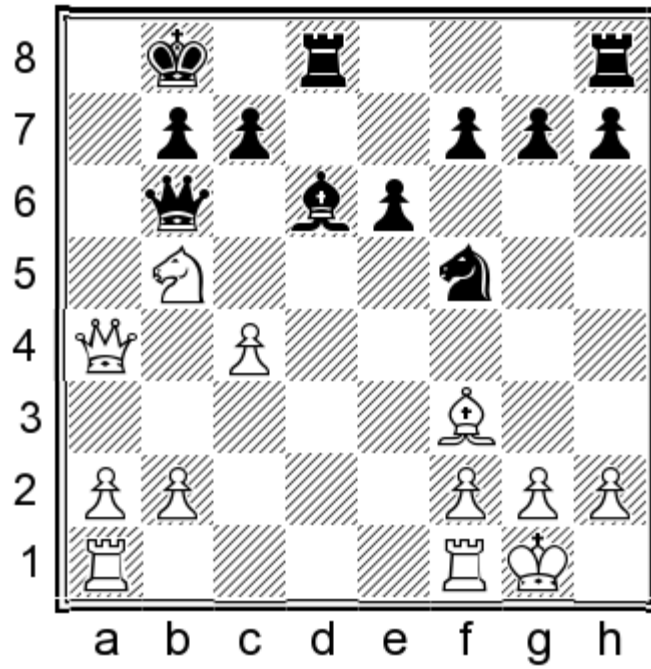
14.♗f3!? has been played by the strong Cuban GM Lazaro Bruzon. It is very principled as White is pointing another piece at Black's king. Gawain Jones is very enthusiastic about this move in his *Chessbase* notes to the game Bruzon-Kurajica, La Laguna 2010, but in fact the position is rather unclear in spite of White's impressive concept.

As we know from **Game 10** Englmaier-Remek, 14...♗f4 is balanced after 15.♗fd1 a6!.

14...♗b6!? is also worth analysing, e.g. 15.b4 ♗e5 16.♗ad1 ♘f6 17.c5 ♗a6 18.c6 ♗xa4 19.cxb7+ ♖b8 20.♘xa4 ♘d5 21.a3 ♖xb7 22.♘c5+ ♖c8∞ and there is nothing concrete for White.

Best is, however:

14...♘e7! 15.♘b5 ♗b6 16.♘xa7+ ♖b8 17.♘b5 ♘f5

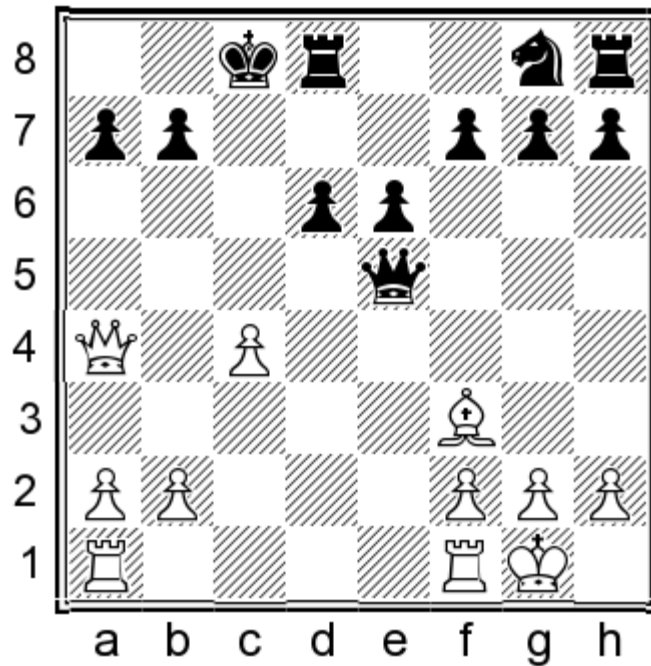


White has regained the pawn, but our pieces are better coordinated. That promises us some initiative:

18.b4 ♔e7!? (or 18...♔e5 19.♖ae1 ♔f6 20.c5 ♗a6) 19.c5 ♗a6 20.♗xa6 bxa6 21.♘a3 ♘d4 or 18.♘d6 ♖xd6 19.b4 ♘d4 20.♗a3 ♖d7.

14.♖fd1 is another logical continuation, when I recommend 14...♗e5 15.♔f3!? a6! reaching once again **Game 10**.

**14...♗e5 15.♘xd6+ cxd6 16.♔f3**



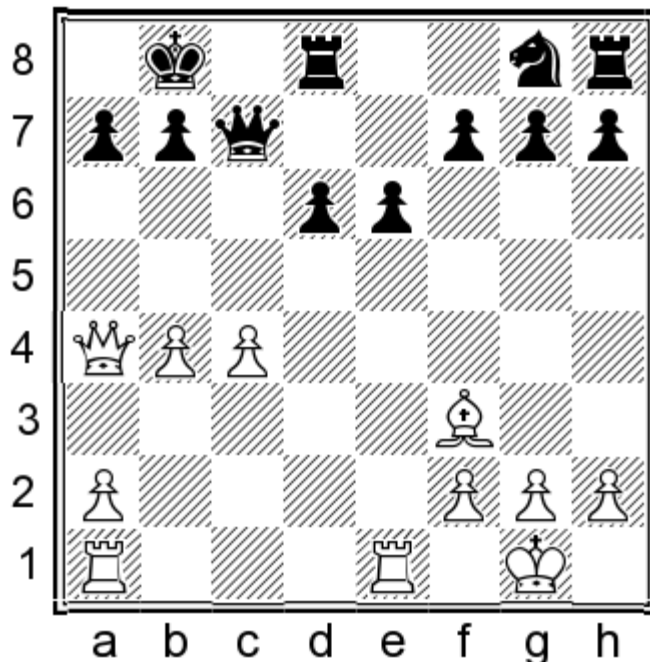
It is quite obvious that the loss of our bishop and the presence of the powerful ♔f3 give White enough attacking chances here. The question is whether these chances are worth more than a pawn.

**16...♔b8 17.♖fe1**

17.♖ad1 ♘f6 18.♖d3 should be met again by 18...d5= while, as Jovanka Houska mentions, “White cannot open files

easily with 17.b4 ♖e7 18.b5, as Black can ward off the initiative with 18...♞c8 19.♞ab1 ♚c5 20.♞fc1 ♚b6 21.♚b4 ♖f5 22.a4 ♚c5”.

17...♚c5 18.b4 ♚c7



19.♞ac1

The game Ootes-Lubbe, Netherlands 2015, saw 19.c5 ♖e7 20.♞ab1 ♖f5! 21.g3 ♖d4 22.♙g2 when 22...h5? could have stumbled into the instructive tactical trick 23.c6!, exploiting the pin on the c-file in the event of 23...♖xc6 (23...b6 would not help either as White can open the a-file with 24.♚d1! e5 25.a4 h4 26.b5 hxg3 27.hxg3 ♞h6 28.a5→) 24.♞ec1↑. Black had to answer 22...♚d7!♞ to reduce the consequences of c5-c6.

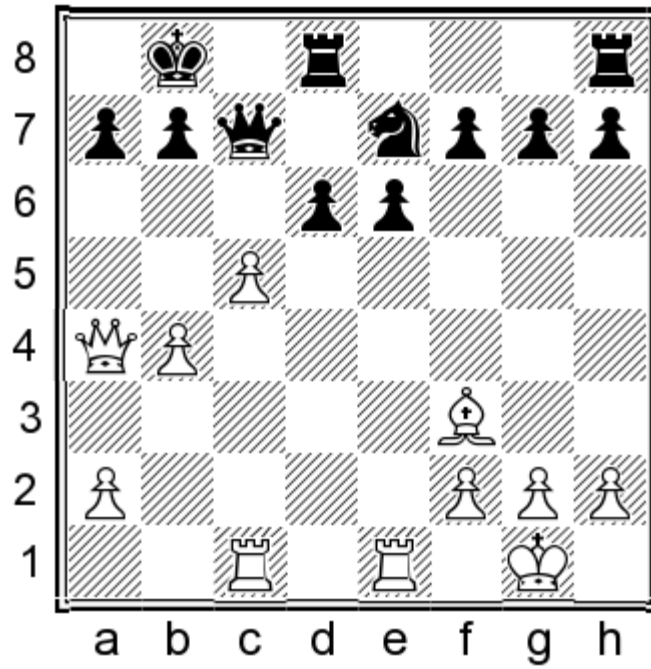
19.♞ec1!? has been played as well. After 19...♚d7 20.♚a5 (20.b5 requires examination here; a quick glance at my engine shows 20...♖f6 21.♞c3 ♚c7 22.b6 axb6 23.♞a3 ♖c8 24.♞b1 ♖d7 25.♚b5 ♚c5 26.♙xb7+ ♖xb7 27.♚a6+ ♖c7 28.♚a7+ ♖c6 29.♚a4+ ♖b7 30.♚a6+ with a draw by perpetual check) 20...♖e7 21.♚g5 (21.c5 ♞c8 underlines the drawbacks of 19.♞ec1. White has nothing better than 22.♞d1 d5♞) 21...♖g6 22.♞c3 f5! 23.♚e3 d5 24.cxd5 exd5 25.♚d4 ♞he8 26.♞a3 b6 – the game was about even in Milov-Lauer, Germany 2014, and it soon ended in a draw.

19...♖e7

The knight approaches its king to control the c6-square.

20.♞e3

A critical choice. 20.c5 was an obvious alternative:

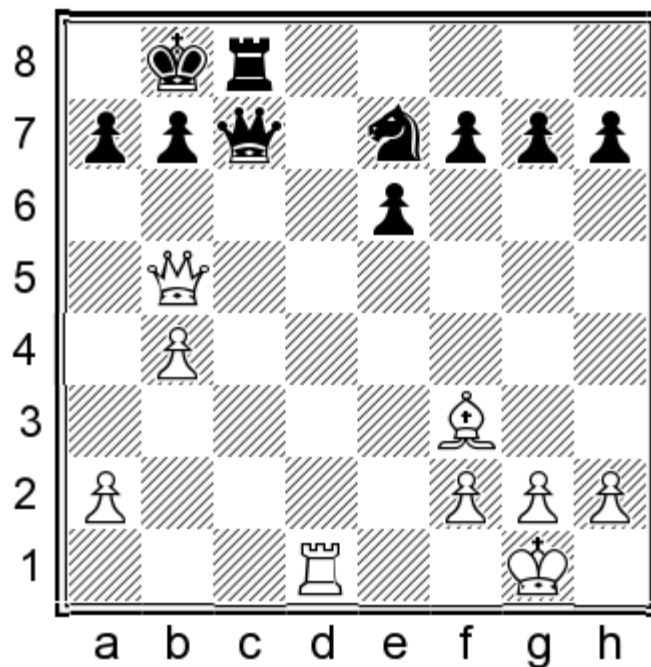


Black has a wide choice and several games have seen him maintaining the balance. His only loss was after:

a) 20...dxc5 21.bxc5 ♖d5 22.c6 b6 23.♚b5 ♜d6 24.♞c4, Hossain-Chatterjee, Dhaka 2014. While the engines claim equality, White's initiative is beyond doubts. That offers him good practical chances.

b) Another asymmetrical line is 20...♗f5 21.c6 ♗d4 22.♞e3 (or 22.♚d1 e5 23.cxb7 ♗xf3+ 24.♚xf3 ♚xb7 25.♚d3 ♜d7= intending ...♞c8) 22...♞c8 23.b5 ♚b6 24.♚d1 ♞c7 25.a4 ♜d8 26.♞ec3 e5 27.♞c4 f5 28.♔h1 ♚a5 29.♞b1 g5 30.h3 h6 draw, Zakharov-Peschke, ICCF 2011.

c) The most natural response is 20...♞c8 21.♞c3 dxc5 (it takes nerves of steel to enter the engine line 21...d5 22.♞a3 a6) 22.♞xc5 (The point is that 22.bxc5 ♗d5 is with tempo which tips the balance in such a sharp position.) 22...♚f4 23.♚b5 ♞c7 24.♜d1 ♞hc8 25.♞xc7 ♚xc7



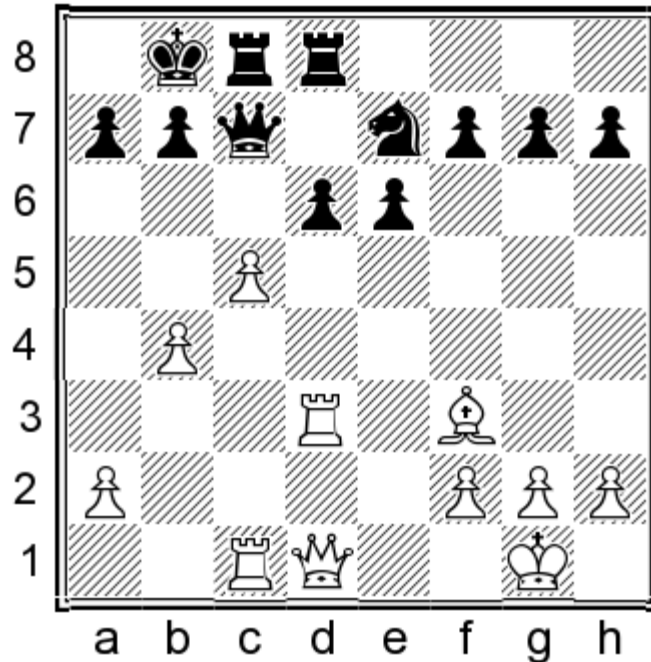
White achieved a nice draw after 26.g3 a6 27.♚e2 ♗f5 28.♚e4 g6 29.a4 ♚c6 30.♚e5+ ♚c7 31.♜d7 ♚xe5 32.♞xb7+

♔a8 33.♞c7+, Johansson-Montgomery, corr. 2010.

**20...♞d7!**

Designed to push the queen back from its fine attacking position.

**21.♞d1 ♞c8 22.c5 ♞hd8 23.♞d3 ♞c7!**



Black already has a pleasant position. He has kept his extra pawn and White is lacking direct threats. That said, the first player should be able to hold as his long-range bishop is a useful asset.

**24.♞a4?!**

It was better to make a *luft* with 24.h3 or 24.g3.

**24...dxc5!**

Black grasps the valuable opportunity to trade off some pieces.

**25.♞xd8**

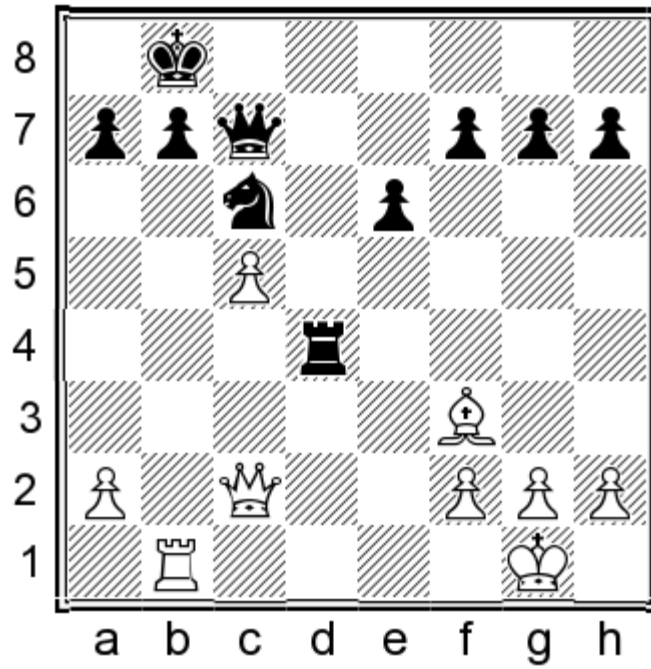
25.♞a3? ♞b6+ only helps Black.

**25...♞xd8 26.bxc5 ♞c6 27.♞b1 ♞d4!**

A strong centralisation after which Black's advantage becomes obvious.

**28.♞c2**

28.♞xc6? ♞d1+!



**28...♖h4?**

Prie likes this move, but I am sceptical about it. Simple and strong was 28...g6! 29.g3 e5 30.♖e2 ♘d8, preparing to cut off the enemy bishop with ...e5-e4.

**29.♙xc6!**

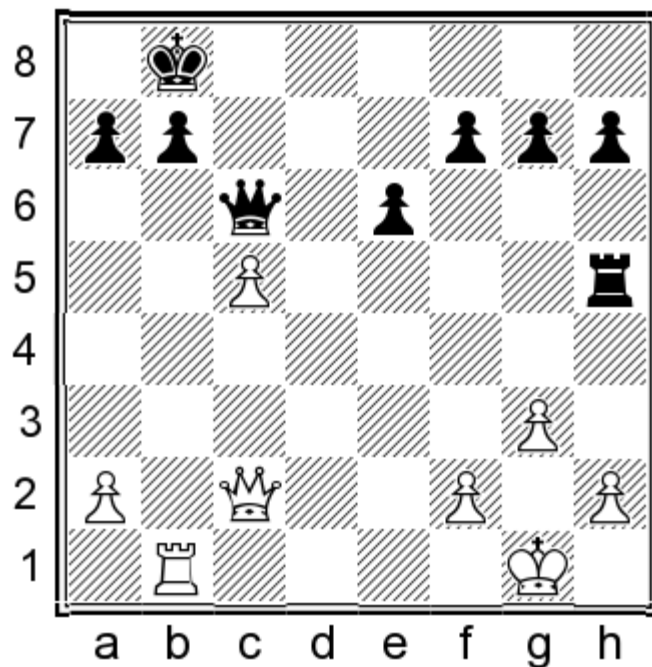
Correct evaluation! After 29.g3?! Prie gives 29...♘d4 30.♖d3 ♘xf3+ 31.♗xf3 ♖c4. In my opinion a bit more accurate is 31...♗d4!? 32.c6 b6. I dont like 31... c4 in view of 32.♖d3! ♗xc5 33.♖d8+ ♗c8 34.♗g5! g6 35.♗d1!! and the position looks like a dead draw in spite of Black's two extra pawns. For example, 35...♖c5 36.♗f4+ ♖c7 37.♗f6 ♗d7 38.♗e5+ ♖c7 39.♗f6=.

**29...♗xc6 30.g3?**

This move throws the half point away. 30.♗c3!, taking aim at g7, equalized at once, e.g. 30...♗g4 31.g3 and Black loses either the g7-pawn, or the d-file after 31...f6 32.♗d1.

30.♗d3 was also possible – threatening a check from g3 while improving the queen's position. Then 30...♗h5 (30...♙c8 31.h3! ♗e4 32.♗b5 ♗c6 33.♗d3=) 31.♗d8+ ♗c8 32.♗d6+ ♙a8 leads to a picturesque draw after 33.c6! bxc6 (33...b6 34.♗e7 ♖c5 35.♗xf7 ♖xc6 36.g3 gives White sufficient compensation.) 34.♖b8+! ♗xb8 35.♗xc6+ ♗b7 36.♗e8+=.

**30...♗h5!♠**



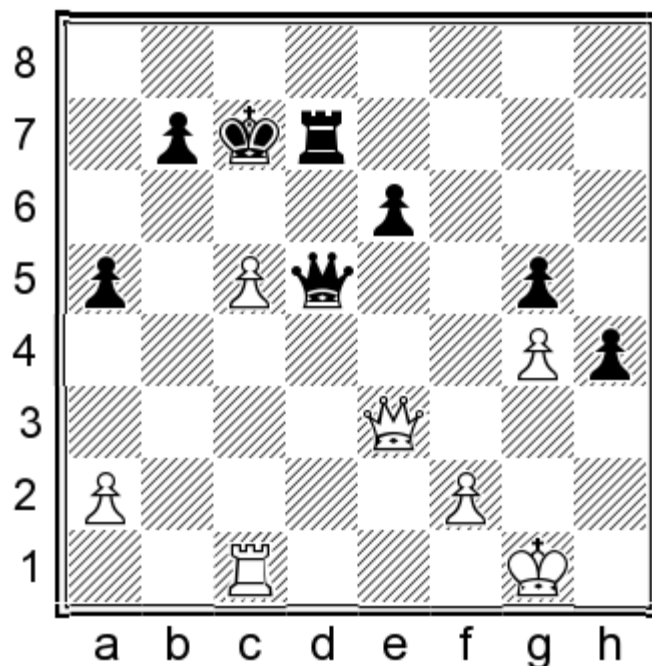
Now the rook reconnects with the rest of Black's army and converting the pawn becomes a matter of technique.

**31. ♖d3 ♔c8! 32. ♜a3 a6 33. ♝c1 ♞f5! 34. ♞c3 f6 35. ♞e3 h5!**

White is deprived of counterplay, so Black grinds down the enemy defence by creating threats against the white monarch.

**36. h4 ♔b8 37. ♞d4 ♞d5 38. ♞e3 ♔a7 39. ♞a3 g5! 40. ♞b4 ♞e5 41. hxg5 fxg5 42. ♞d4 ♞d5 43. ♞e3 h4 44. g4 ♔a8 45. ♞c3?!**

45. ♔h2!? ♚ was more resilient. Then Black would have to resort to a *zugzwang* to win, e.g. 45... ♔a7 46. ♔g1 a5! 47. ♔h2 ♔b8 48. ♔g1 ♔c7! 49. ♔f1 (49. ♔h2?! ♞a4!-+) 49... ♞d7! 50. ♔g1 ♞d5



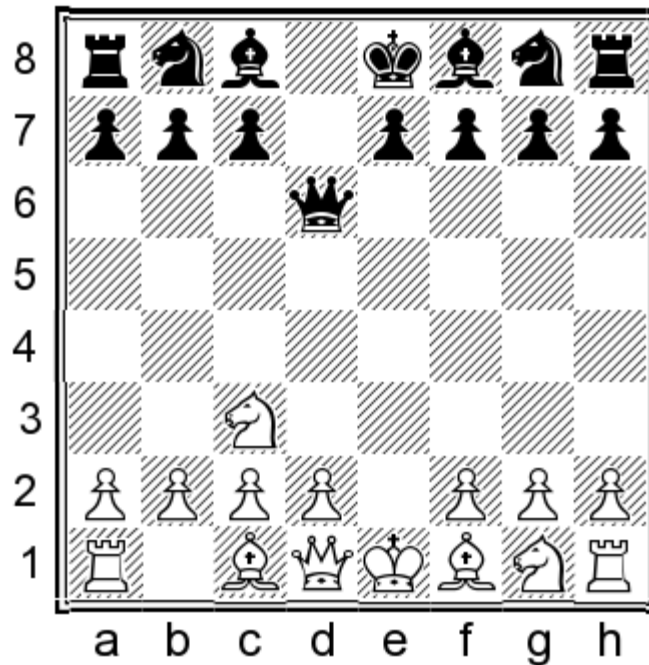
51. c6 ♚ 51... bxc6 52. ♞a7+ ♔d8 53. ♞b8+ ♔e7 54. ♞g8 ♞d8 55. ♞g7+ ♔d6 56. ♞f6 ♔c7 57. ♞c3 a4 58. ♞b1 e5 59. ♞e1

♖d4 60.♗a5+ ♘c8 61.♗a6+ ♘d7 62.♗e2 (62.♗b7+ ♘d6 63.♗g7 ♗xg4+ 64.♘f1 ♗c4+ 65.♘g1 ♗d5—+) 62...♘c7  
63.♗xe5+ ♗xe5 64.♗xe5 ♗d5 65.♗e4 c5! 66.♗xa4 ♗d4—+.

**45...e5!—+ 46.♗e3 ♗d4 47.f3 ♗f4 48.♗c3 e4! 49.♗c4 ♗xf3 50.♗xg5 ♗d7! 51.♗c1 ♗d4+ 52.♘h1 ♗d3 53.♗g8+ ♘a7  
54.♗b3 ♗h3+ 55.♘g2 ♗g3+ 56.♘h1 ♗d2 57.♗c2 ♗h3+ 58.♘g1 ♗e3+0-1**

## Chapter 3. 3.♘c3 ♔d6 without 4.d4 Main Ideas

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♔d6



Any chess ABC book states that we should not lead the queen out early in the opening. I have always been a fan of classicism and I still believe in chess principles, but somehow I am getting used to the fact that rules can have their exceptions. By using the Scandinavian, Black essentially adopts a central strategy from move one, seeking clarity and more or less geometric play in an open board. This is achieved at the cost of tempi, but after all the queen is a piece as any other – it still needs to be developed. The queen retreat to d6 complies with our original strategy in the best possible way: the queen remains developed and there is no good way to further harass it as it has access to both sides of the board. We do keep pressure on the d-file which could be increased by long castling.

Reading the introduction of Michael Melt's book "*Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...Qd6*", I had a chance to become acquainted with the history of the 3...♔d6 Scandinavian and its pioneers. I had only known Karpov-Lutikov, USSR 1979, as the system's stem game, but I did not know about William Potter who was the first to recommend the line, and Samion Gubnitsky, who was the first correspondence player to use it with success. Ironically, the man who cast a doubt on the system by winning the above-mentioned game, the 12th World Champion Anatoly Yevgenyevich Karpov, has been using it with considerable success lately as Black in his rapid games. This has a twofold meaning according to my understanding: first and foremost, the opening is not bad at all. Second, Karpov's choice means that it is a rather clear-cut and easy to learn opening, since he has withdrawn from competitive chess nowadays and plays only in fun events. Does this mean that the line should be christened the Karpov Scandinavian? Well, actually no, in spite of the huge contribution of the ex-world Champion to our game. If there were someone entitled to lend his name to the opening, that would be unquestionably GM Sergei Tiviakov. He was the first to popularise it by beating strong opponents and thus elevating its theoretical status. I believe that without his games no one would have understood the merits of the system and how poisonous it could be.

Let us return to the position after 3...♔d6. It is now White's turn to define his plans. Obviously, the main continuation is 4.d4 and it will be examined in detail in the next chapters. I feel that White can gain nothing special by delaying on

omitting this move. Still, players who are not confident in his opening preparation use this approach hoping to deviate from Black's home analyses.

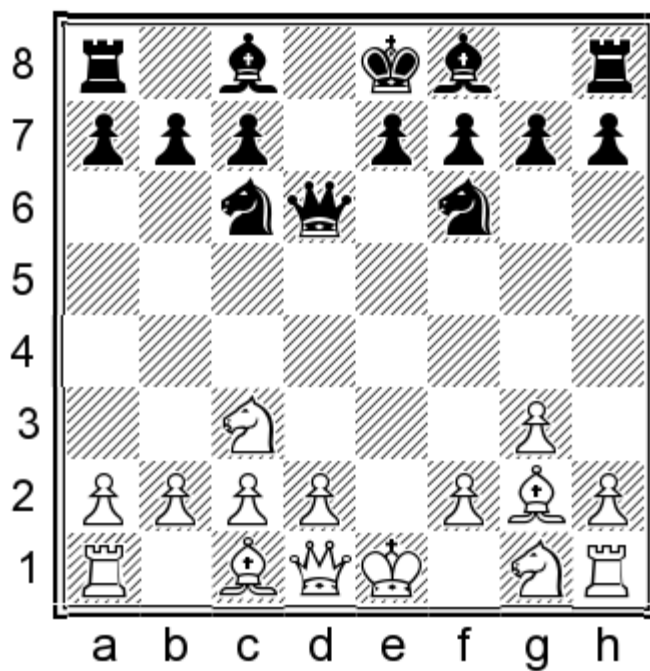
I will deal in this chapter with **A. 4.g3** and **B. 4.♘c4**.

**A. 4.g3** was Topalov's experimental way of meeting the Scandinavian. He used this idea in a game against Nisipeanu and albeit obtaining a very slight opening advantage, he eventually lost. As it often happens, the loss of a top player has dealt a serious blow to the variation's popularity.

I believe that Black should meet the fianchetto against the Scandinavian with due respect, but I have a sharp suggestion against White's particular move order:

**4...♖f6 5.♗g2 ♗c6!**

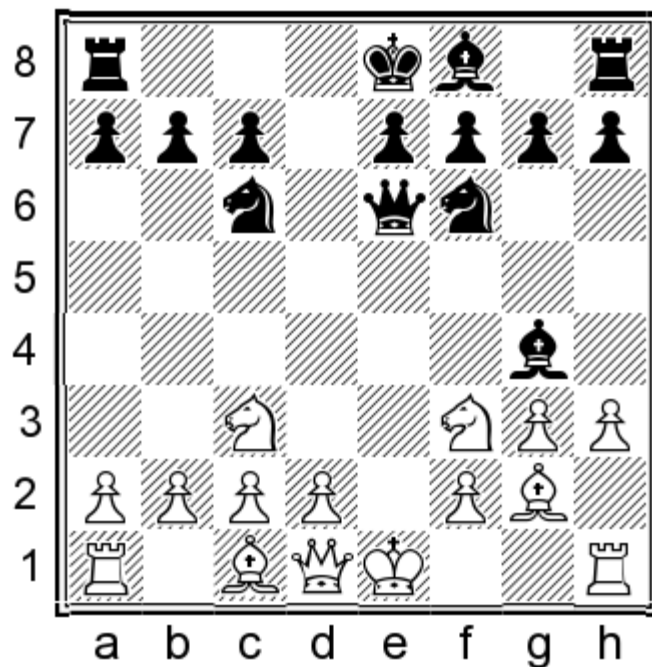
Kovalenko's move. Normally, Black should try to block the scope of the ♗g2 with a pawn on c6, but here White has not castled yet and circumstances call for dynamic play.



**6.♖f3 ♗g4**

As a result of the tempo spent on the fianchetto, Black has caught up in development. As 7.0-0 ♗d4 would be equal, White should try:

7.h3, but 7...♞e6+! throws a spanner into the works.



That's it! Black is already fighting for the initiative:

8. ♖e2 ♙xf3 9. ♙xf3 ♜f5 10. ♙g2 e5 11. 0-0 0-0-0∞;

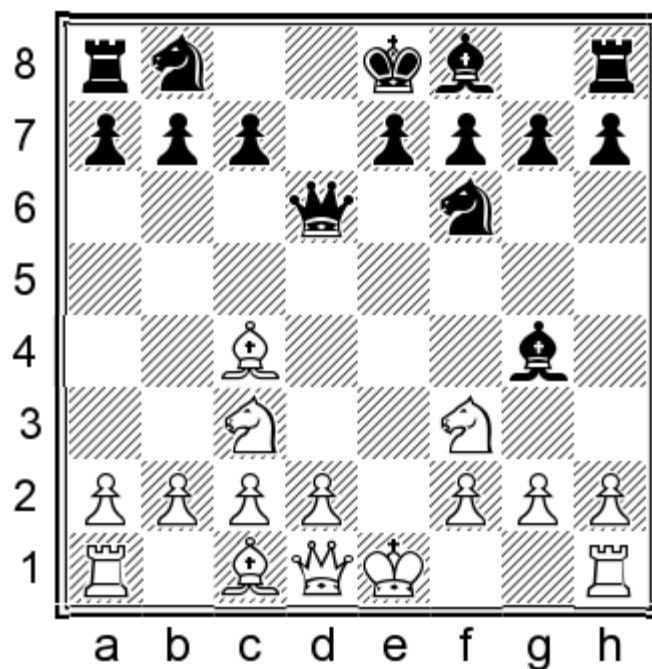
8. ♜e2 ♙xf3! 9. ♜xe6 ♙xg2! 10. ♜b3 0-0-0∞;

8. ♙f1 ♙h5 9. d3 0-0-0 10. ♙e3 h6 – see **Game 13** Mamedov-Kurajica, Sarajevo 2010.

#### B. 4. ♙c4 ♖f6 5. ♖f3

5. ♖ge2 a6! looks like an introduction to an extended fianchetto, but it is also a trap – Black is threatening the double attack ...♜c6. Actually, I recommend to refrain from eating the pawn after 6.d4 (play 6...b5 instead!) due to practical reasons, but it cannot be refuted with concrete analysis.

#### 5... ♙g4

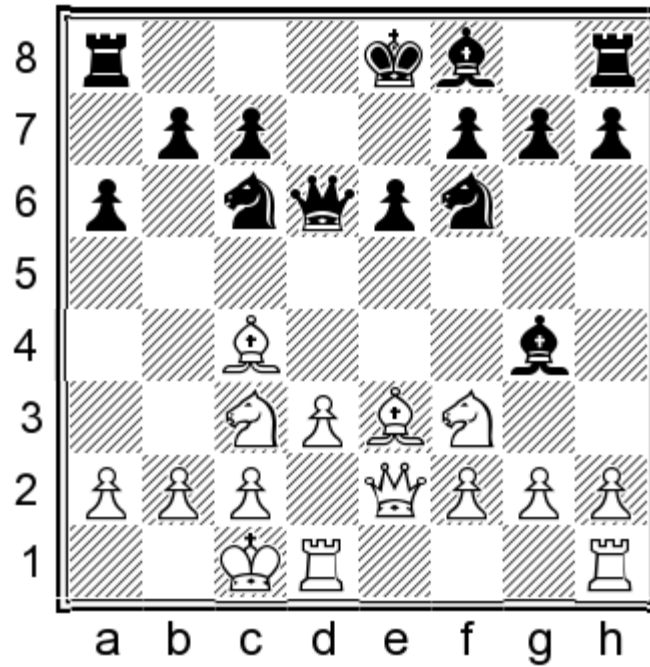


When White does not prevent the pin, we should go for it of course. To get rid of it, he will have to resort to h2-h3 and

g2-g4, weakening his kingside, e.g. 6.d4 c6 7.♙e3 ♘bd7 8.h3 ♙h5=.

White's most interesting plan is to castle queenside, and we can boldly pick up the gauntlet by castling on the opposite wing:

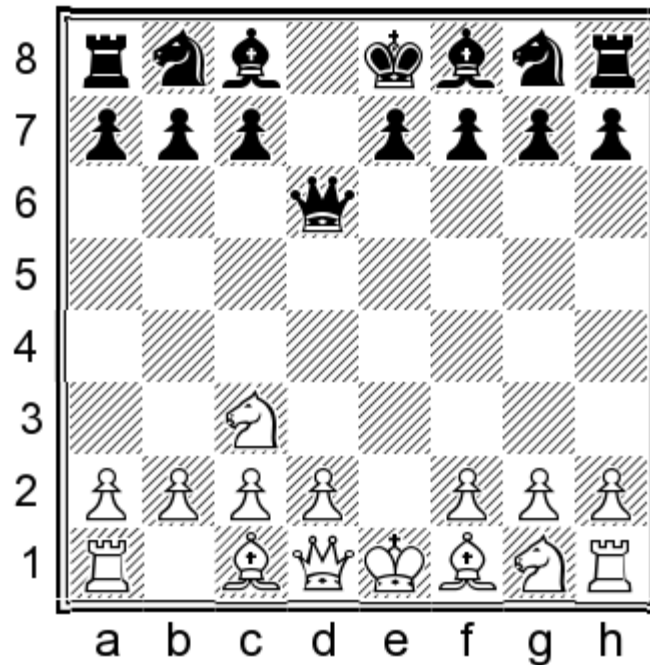
6.d3 ♘c6 7.♙e3 e6 8.♚e2 a6 9.0-0-0



My main line goes from here 9...♙e7 10.h3 ♙xf3!? 11.♚xf3 0-0 12.d4 ♘a5, but 9...♘e5!? 10.h3 ♙xf3 11.gxf3 ♚c6= is also interesting.

## Chapter 3. 3.♘c3 ♔d6 without 4.d4 Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♔d6



3...♕a5 and 3...♕d8 are beyond the scope of this book.

The main continuation in the diagram position is 4.d4. In this chapter, I will deal with two alternatives: **A.** 4.g3 and **B.** 4.♗c4.

### **A. 4.g3**

has been tried by Topalov and deserves attention. After:

**4...♘f6 5.♗g2**, I like best **5...♘c6!** as played by Kovalenko.

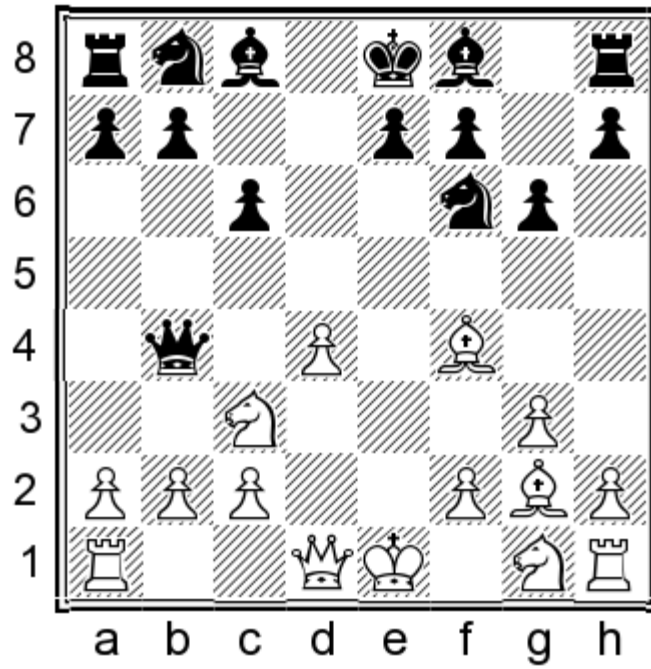
A decent alternative is 5...c6!? 6.d4 g6?!

If Black wants to fianchetto his bishop it seems better to do it on the previous move, keeping his c-pawn on its initial square. With ...c7-c6 already played, 6...♗f5∞ seems more to the point.

7.♗f4

7.♘f3 looks more natural

7...♕b4



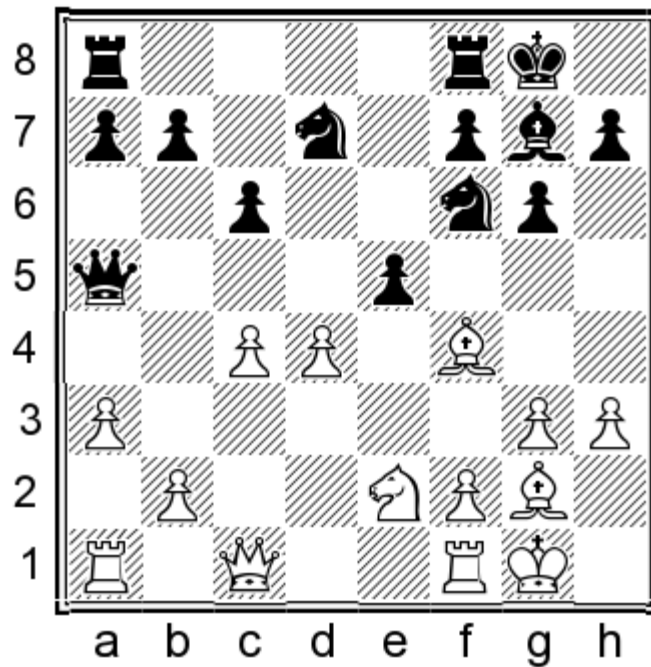
8. ♖ge2 ♙g7 9. ♚c1?!

Better was 9. a3± as 9... ♚xb2? 10. ♙c7+— would entrap the black queen.

9... 0-0 10. 0-0. Black can now get rid of the piece that traditionally does not have good prospects in formations with ...g7-g6: 10... ♙g4!? 11. a3 ♚a5 12. h3 ♙xe2 13. ♖xe2 ♖bd7 14. c4

In the event of 14. b4 ♚a6 15. ♗e1 ♚c4!? (15... ♖b6 16. ♙f1 ♖c4 17. ♖c3±) 16. c3 a5! 17. ♗b1 axb4 18. ♗xb4 ♚a6 19. c4 ♖h5! 20. ♙e3 e5 the position is unclear.

14... e5!

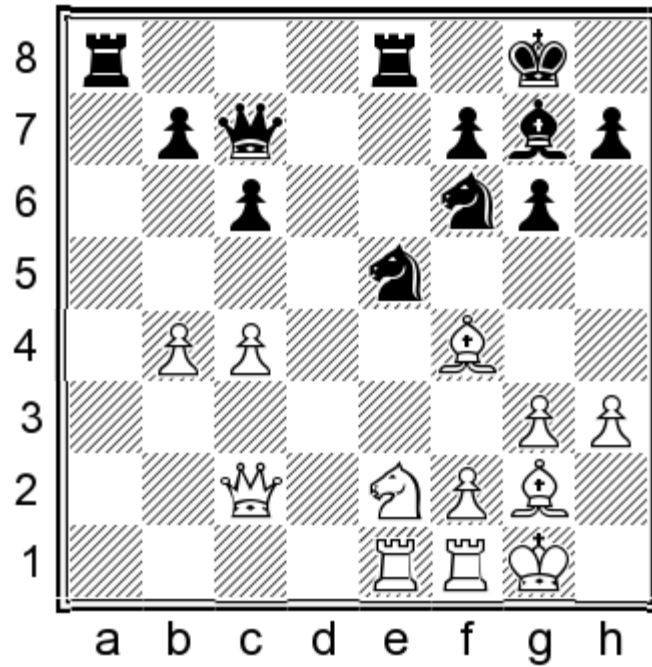


It transpires that the ♙g7 has obtained good prospects and Black is close to equality. Topalov-Nisipeanu, Sofia 2007, went:

15. b4 ♚c7 16. dxe5 ♖xe5 17. ♚c2 a5!

Activating the rook. Nisipeanu points out that this move comes at the right moment, when White cannot answer it with b4-b5.

18.♖ae1 axb4 19.axb4 ♜fe8

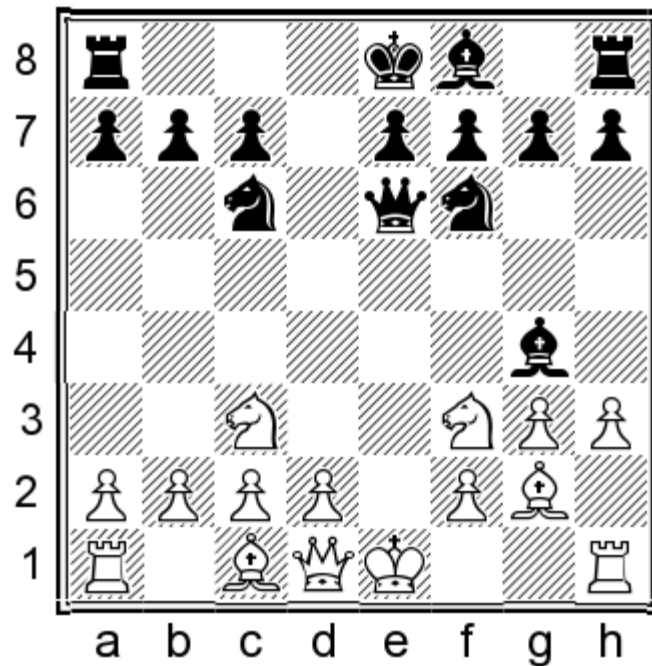


Black had a very good game and eventually prevailed.

6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.h3

Black does not have any problems after 7.0-0 ♘d4.

7...♞e6+!



This check disrupts White's development. The only challenging retort is:

8.♘e2

a) 8.♞e2 was played in the game Tazbir-Kovalenko, Trzcianka Dziedzic Memorial 2013, when Black missed 8...♗xf3!  
9.♞xe6 (9.♗xf3?? ♘d4+) 9...♗xg2! which seems to offer him at least equality after 10.♞b3 0=0-0sstouring.com

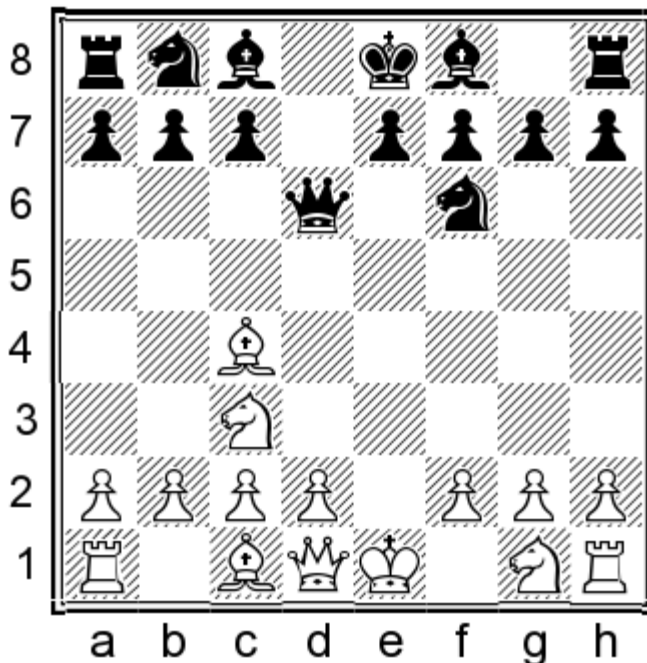
10...♙xh1 11.♚xb7 ♖b8 12.♚xc7 ♗d8 is a risky attempt to play for a win.  
 11.♖g1 ♜d4 12.♖xg2 ♜xb3 13.axb3 a6=.

b) 8.♙f1 is answered by 8...♙h5 9.d3 0-0-0 10.♙e3 h6 11.♚d2 ♙xf3 12.♙xf3 ♜e5 – see **Game 13** Mamedov-Kurajica, Sarajevo 2010.

**8...♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♚f5 10.♙g2 e5 11.0-0 0-0-0**

This unexplored position offers chances to both sides.

**B. 4.♙c4 ♜f6**



White's forth move is waiting for the opponent to define the pawn structure. Then he can decide where to push the d-pawn. Besides, 4.♙c4 enables an original set-up with ♜g1-e2 which renders the typical pin ♙c8-g4 pointless. Furthermore, the e2-knight allows to win a tempo with ♙f4.

**B1. 5.♜ge2 B2. 5.♜f3**

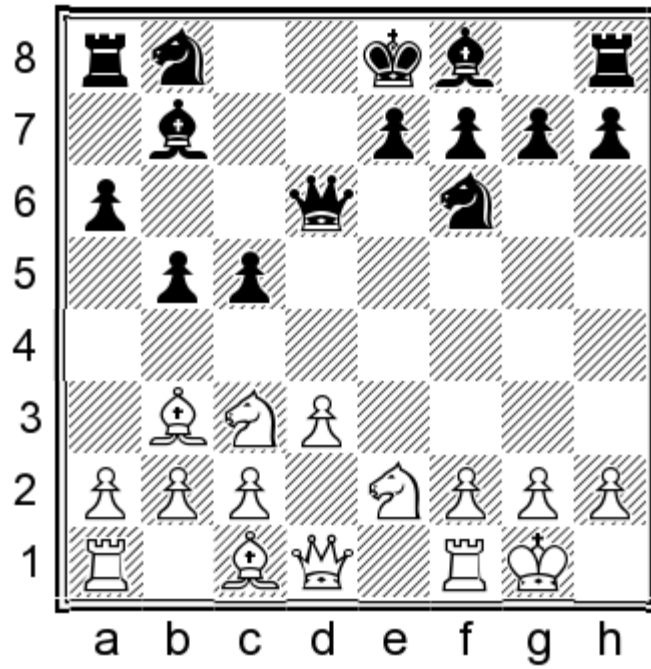
**B1. 5.♜ge2 a6!**

The presence of the white bishop on c4 suggests the idea of an extended fianchetto with ...b7-b5 and then ...♙c8-b7 or ...c7-c5.

**6.d4**

White cannot hinder our plans with a2-a4 due to the double attack ...♚d6-c6!?, hitting the ♙c4 as well as the unprotected g2-pawn.

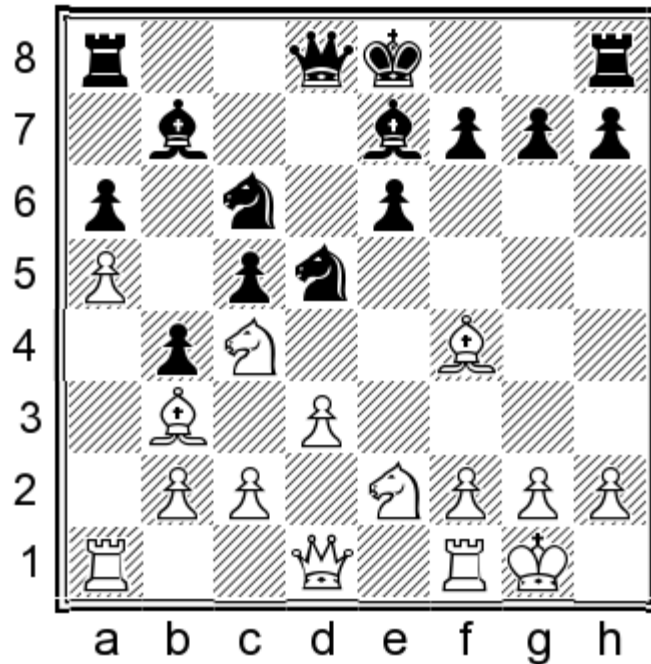
A more reasonable alternative is 6.0-0 b5 7.♙b3 c5 8.d3 ♙b7



9.a4!? (9.♙f4 ♖c6 10.f3 e6̄) 9...b4 10.♗b1 ♗c6 11.a5

Worse is 11.♗d2 ♗a5!? 12.♗c4 ♗xc4 13.♙xc4 ♖c6 14.f3 e6̄.

11...e6 12.♗d2 ♙e7 13.♗c4 ♖d8 14.♙f4 (14.♗b6 ♞a7) 14...♗d5=

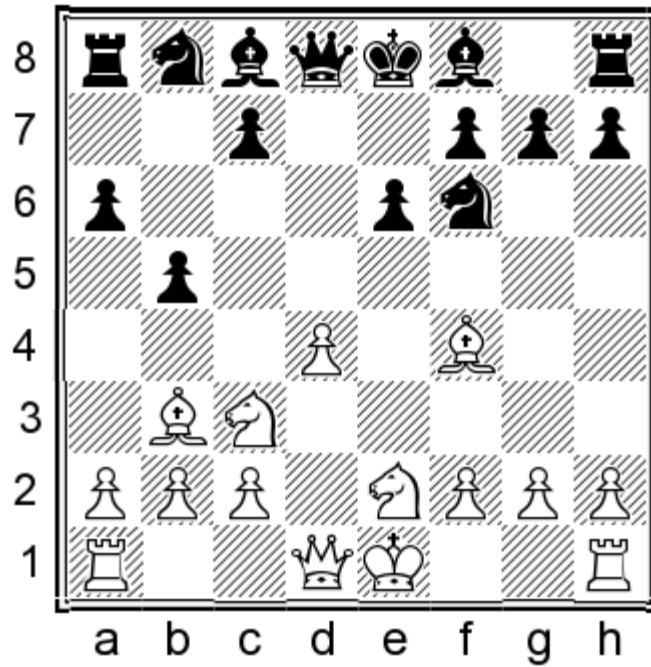


Black may have lost a few tempi with his queen, but now he regains one by hitting the bishop on f4. In addition, the a5 pawn is somewhat vulnerable, binding the ♗c4 with its defence.

### 6...b5

Black relies on sound development. This is the standard, human method of treating such positions. However, grabbing a pawn with 6...♖c6!? is a very interesting, albeit risky alternative. It is indicative that in OTB games White scores 59% which reflects the higher cost of Black's mistakes. On the contrary, correspondence practice strongly favours Black with 72%! I analyse this sharp line in **Game 14** Lewis-Nicholls, corr. 2009.

7.♘b3 e6 8.♘f4 ♖d8



This position may at first create the false impression that White is much better due to his lead in development. In fact, we should also assess the lack of prospects before White's pieces, especially the ♘b3.

For his part, Black has a clear plan of undermining the centre with ...c7-c5. That promises him excellent chances of equalising.

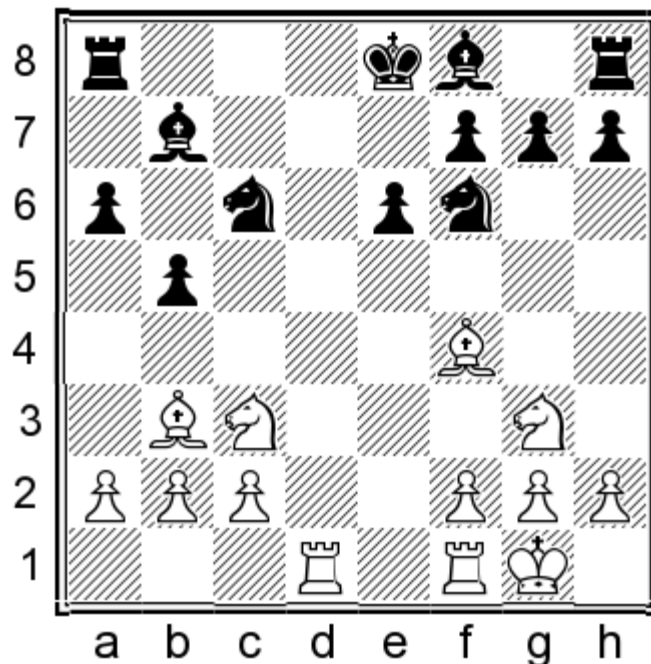
### 9.0-0

We are not afraid of 9.d5 in view of 9...c5! 10.dxc6 ♖xd1+ 11.♖xd1

The manoeuvre 11.♘xd1 ♘xc6 12.a4 b4 13.a5 ♘b7 14.♘e3 was not a significant improvement – see **Game 15** Aravindh-Rakhmanov, Doha 2014.

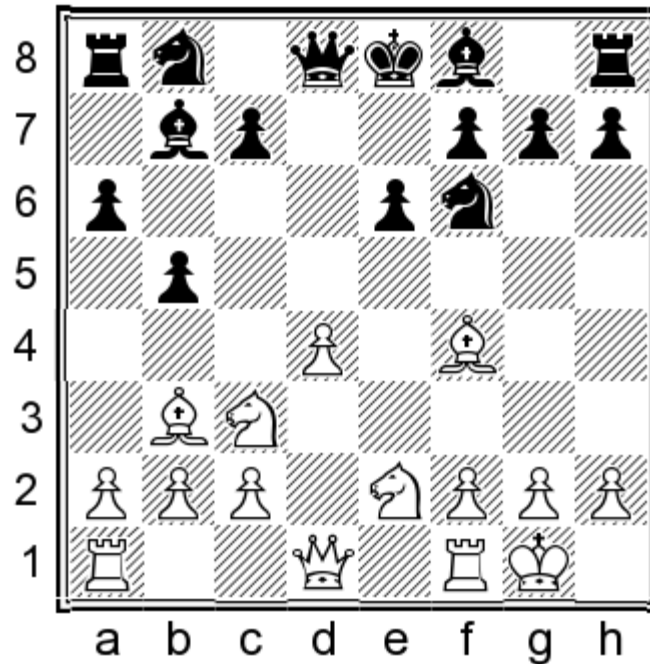
11...♘xc6 12.0-0 ♘b7 13.♘g3

White cannot use his better development to invade our camp:



13...♖a5 14.♞fe1 ♕e7 15.♗ce4 ♗xe4 16.♗xe4 ♗xb3 17.axb3 ♞c8 18.c3 0-0 19.♕d6 ♞fd8! 20.♕xe7 ♞xd1 21.♞xd1 ♕xe4= and Black had comfortable equality in the game Vallejo Pons-Kurajica, Villarrobledo 2001.

9...♕b7



We are ready to carry out ...c7-c5 under the best possible circumstances and White can do little about it. The pawn sacrifice 10.d5 is best answered with 10...c5! when 11.dxe6 loses a piece to 11...♞xd1 12.exf7+ ♔e7 13.♞axd1 c4=.

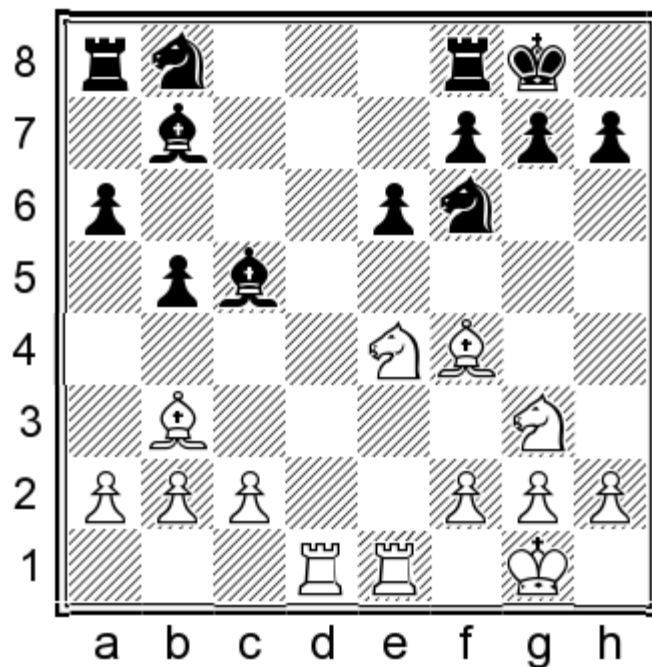
10.♞e1 c5! 11.a4

I did not find any games with this move, but it looks like the only way to fight for the initiative. Of course, this is not a choice for the fainthearted as White's bishop will be doomed to passivity for quite some time.

Black breathes easier after 11.dxc5 ♞xd1 12.♞axd1 ♕xc5 13.♗g3 0-0

13...♗bd7 14.♗ce4 0-0-0 15.♗d6+ ♕xd6 16.♕xd6 ♗b6 17.♕e5 ♞xd1 18.♞xd1 ♞d8 19.♞xd8+ ♔xd8= was not bad for Black either in Fabre Massana-Mellado Trivino, La Pobra de Lillet 2006.

14.♗ce4



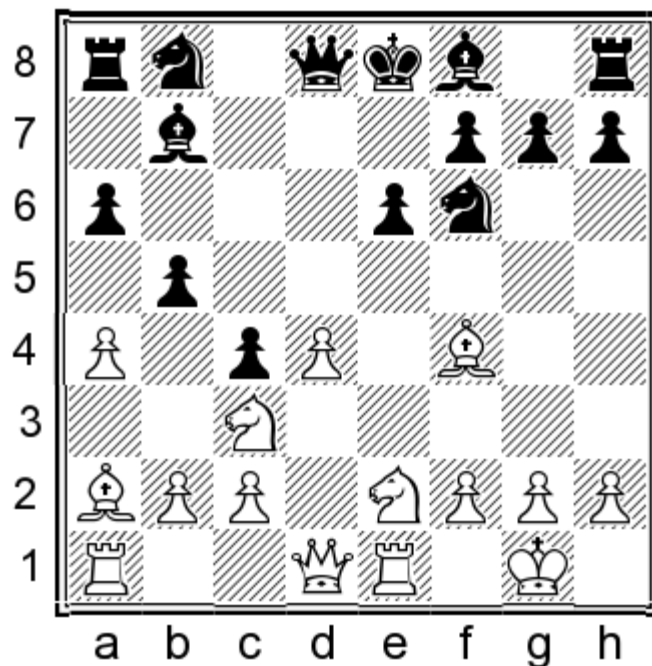
14...♖bd7! 15.c3 ♘a7 16.♗d6 ♘c6 17.♗xf7 ♗g4! 18.♗h1! ♖xf7 19.♘xe6 ♗c5 20.♘xf7+ ♔xf7∞.

This queenless middlegame is more complicated than it looks and it offers chances to play for a win to either side.

### 11...c4

11...b4? would have been good were it not for the terrible blow 12.d5!! It is an unpleasant shock for Black – 12...bxc3 13.♗xc3 ♘e7 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♖xe6 ♗xd1+ 16.♖xd1 ♗c6 17.♖de1 ♔d7 18.♗b5!!± and suddenly all the white forces are gathering around the helpless black monarch. I am in no mood to search for a defence for Black here, and most probably, it does not exist.

### 12.♘a2



A crucial moment. If Black gets a chance to play ...♗b8-d7 followed by ...b5-b4, he will obtain full control of the long diagonal and White will end up with a worse position. These considerations suggest that we should protect the b5 pawn

by our queen. However, it is not simple to extinguish White's activity in those lines as you could see below. Fortunately, we possess a simple solution:

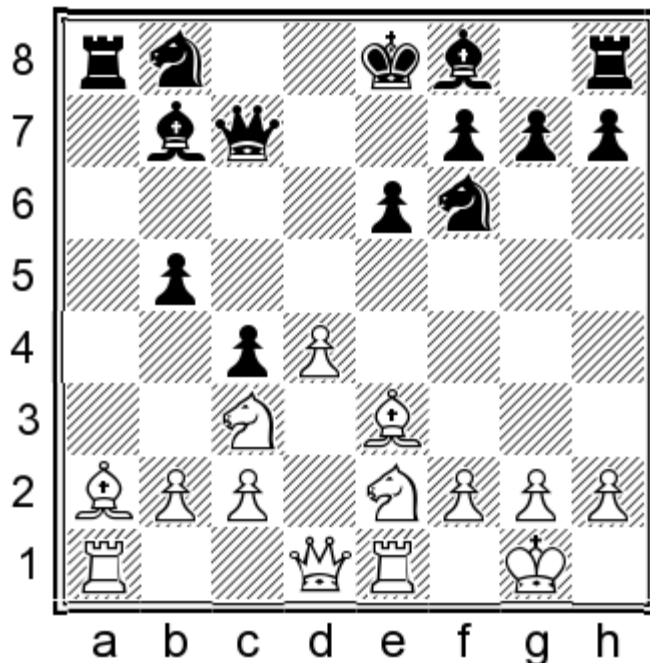
a) 12...b4 13.♖b1 ♔d5 14.f3 ♗c6 15.♘d2 ♘xd4 16.♙xc4 ♚d8=.

b) 12...♚d7 13.f3 ♙e7 14.axb5 axb5 15.♙xc4 ♜xa1 16.♚xa1 bxc4 17.♙xb8 0-0, with full compensation for the pawn, is a purely computer's line which looks too artificial to me.

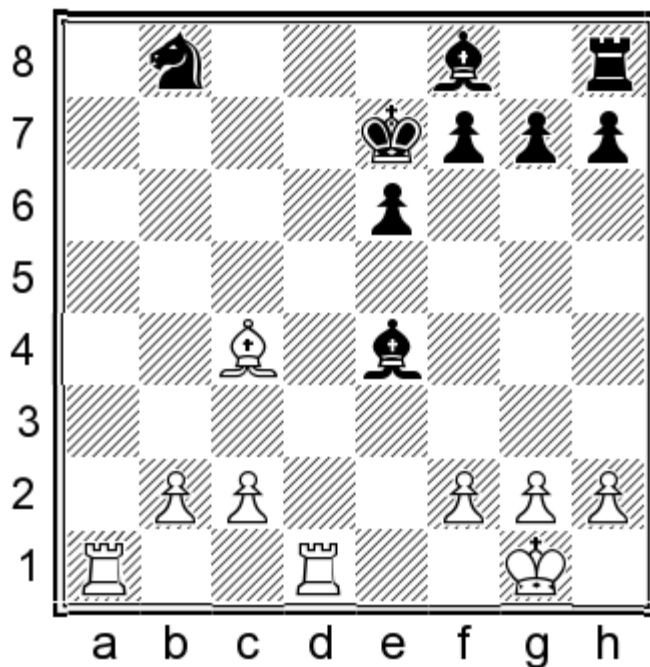
c) 12...♚b6!?. I was attracted by this move since it prevents the tactical trick ♙xc4, seen in the previous line, as the b8-knight will be protected at the end. White has other resources though:

13.♙e3 b4

13...♚c7?! stumbles into 14.axb5 axb5



15.d5! Maximizing the scope of all the pieces on the e-file. 15...♘xd5 16.♗xb5 ♚c6 17.♗ed4! ♗xe3 18.♗xc6 ♗xd1 19.♜exd1 ♙xc6 20.♗c7+ ♗e7 21.♗xa8 ♙xa8 22.♙xc4 ♙e4



As a rule, the rook is much stronger in such positions which often arise from the Sicilian. For example, 23.♙d3 is a solid approach. Even stronger is 23.♙b5!, with domination.

14.d5 ♘c5 15.a5

15.♘f4 bxc3 16.dxe6 0-0 17.bxc3 ♘xe3 18.♖xe3 fxe6 19.♖b1 ♚d8 turns out to be balanced.

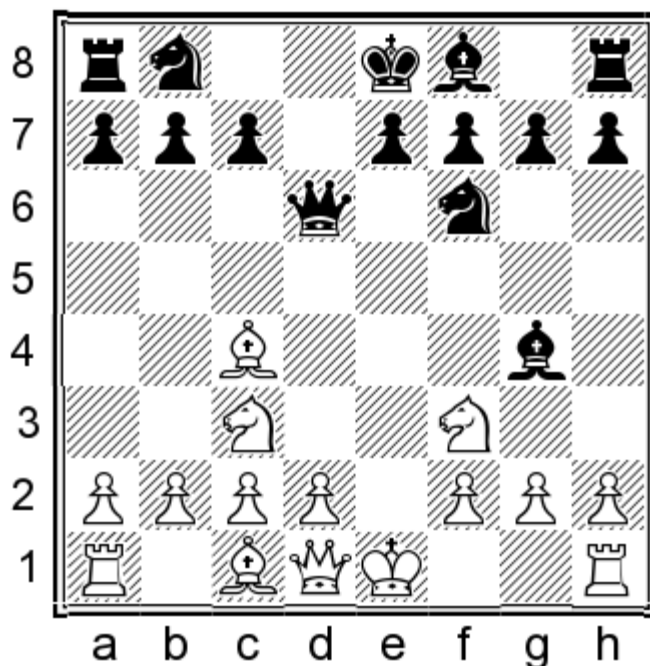
15...♚c7 16.♙xc5 ♚xc5 17.♘a4 ♚d5 18.♚xd5 ♙xd5 19.♘f4 0-0 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.♘b6 ♘c6!

The exchange sac keeps all three results possible.

22.♘xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖ad1 ♔f8∞.

It is still a mystery how White's bishop could enter play. c2-c3 does not solve it as Black always has ...g6.

## B2. 5. ♘f3 ♙g4



Pinning the white knight leads to positions which remind Chapter 2, but the bishop on c4 makes the pin more awkward. If the first player now chases the bishop by h2-h3 followed up by g2-g4, then it will end up on g6 and White could

restrain it by playing d2-d3. Even then, however, Black is not worse because he can continue with ...a7-a6, ...♖b8-c6 and ...0-0-0, obtaining good play.

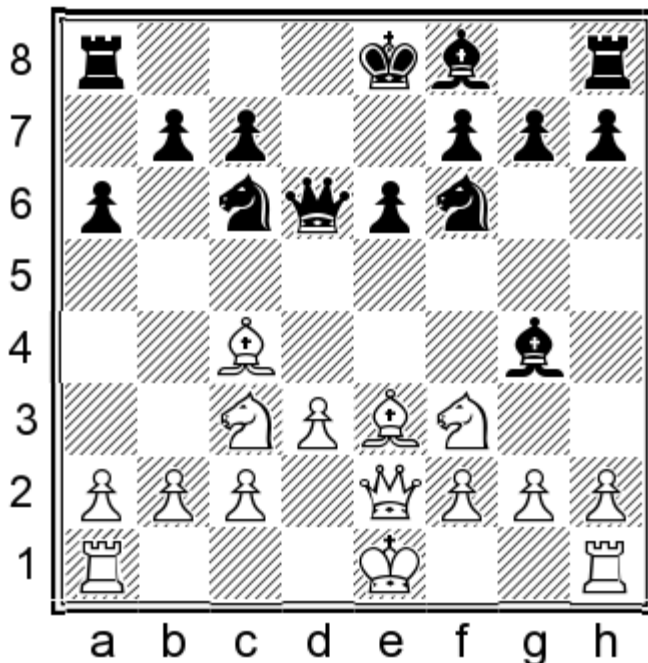
### 6.d3

6.d4 c6 7.♗e3 (7.0-0 e6 8.♗e2 ♖bd7 9.h3 ♗h5=) 7...♖bd7 8.h3 ♗h5 and Black has comfortable equality.  
6.♞e2 ♖c6! forces play favourably for Black – see **Game 16** Massoni-Tiviakov, Bastia/Ajaccio 2008.

### 6...♖c6 7.♗e3 e6

A terrible blunder would be 7...♗e5?? 8.♖b5 ♖xf3+ 9.gxf3 ♞c6 10.♖d4+— and White wins a piece.

### 8.♞e2 a6



This is a typical Black set-up against a pawn on d3. White could also get the same position with the black bishop on g6 and the white pawns on h3 and g4.

### 9.0-0-0 ♗e7

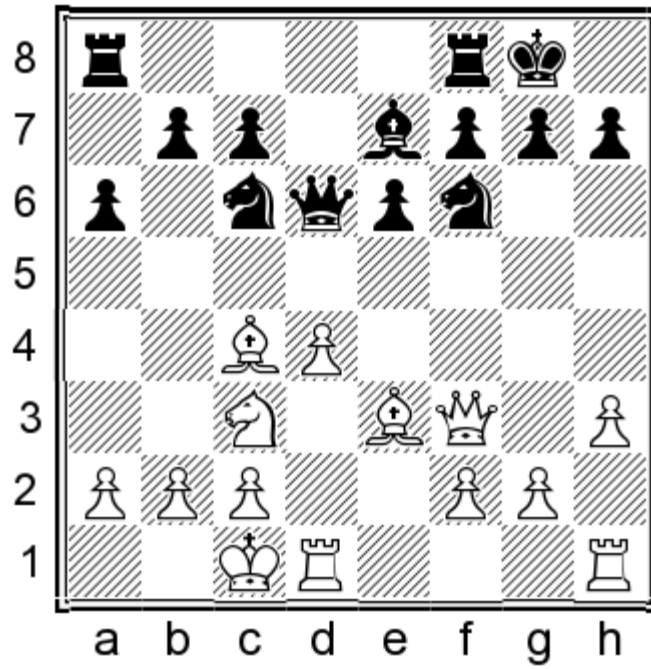
9...♗e5!? 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.gxf3 ♞c6= is also interesting.

### 10.h3

This position occurred in the game Holgado Maestre-Gofshtein, Navalmaral 2007. Black pulled back his bishop to h5 to obtain a fully satisfactory position after 10...♗h5 11.g4 ♗g6 12.♖h4 ♖d5=.

Black could also try to exploit White's delay in playing h2-h3 with:

### 10...♗xf3!? 11.♞xf3 0-0 12.d4



12...♞a5!

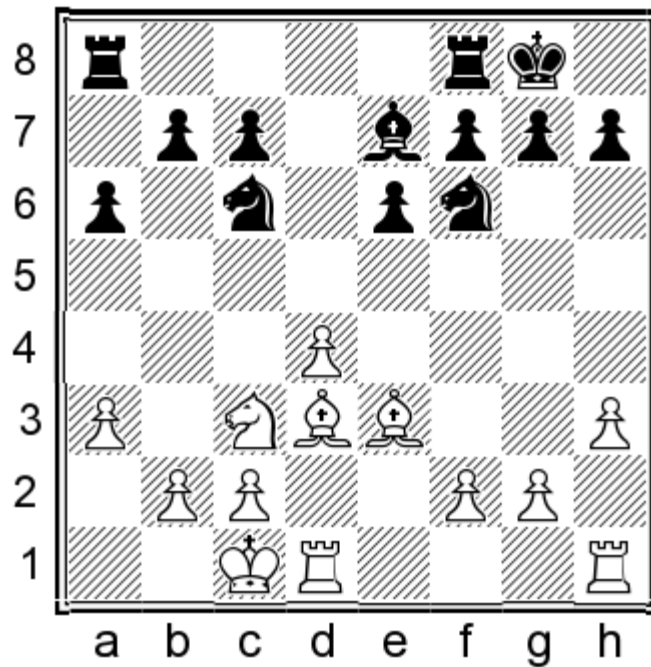
12...♞b4 is dubious due to 13.♙b3! (13.♙d3 ♜fd8=) 13...♞a5 14.d5 ♞xb3+ 15.axb3 e5!

15...exd5 is answered with the stunning 16.♞xd5!! (16.♞d4 ♞d6 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5 18.♞xd5 ♞c6=) 16...♞xd5

17.♞xd5 ♞d6 18.♙f4 ♞d7 19.♞d1±.

16.g4± and White enjoys some pressure as he has more room and the black queen is misplaced.

13.♙d3 ♞c6! 14.♞xc6 ♞xc6 15.a3



White's last move is designed to stop ...♞c6-b4-d5, but after 15...♙d6!, the knight takes the other route – 16.g4 (16.♞e2 b5=) 16...♞e7=.

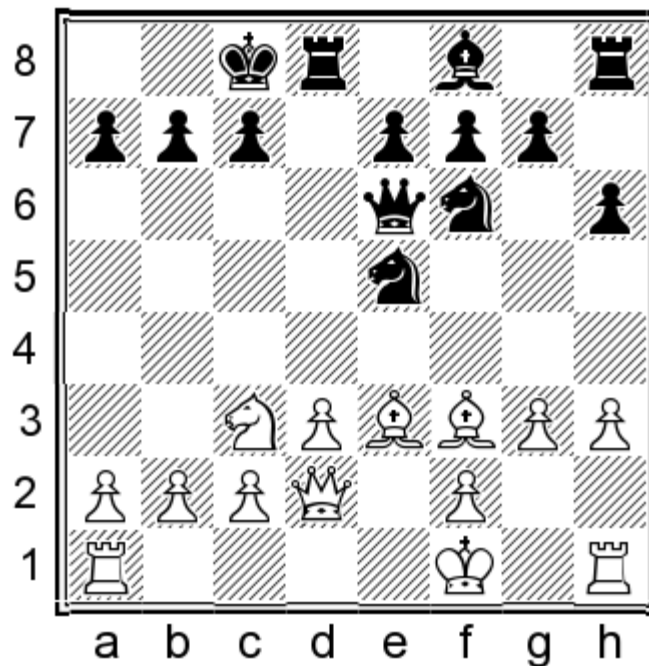
## Chapter 3. 3.♘c3 ♔d6 without 4.d4 Annotated Games

**13. Mamedov – Kurajica  
Sarajevo 2010**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6 4.♗f3 ♘f6 5.g3 ♙g4 6.♙g2 ♘c6**

I prefer this move because Black should contend for d4. This approach is more aggressive than putting the pawn on c6 so we should grab the chance with both hands. Its adoption by GMs Kovalenko and Kurajica speaks for itself.

**7.h3 ♗e6+ 8.♔f1 ♙h5 9.d3 0-0-0 10.♙e3 h6 11.♗d2 ♙xf3 12.♙xf3 ♘e5**



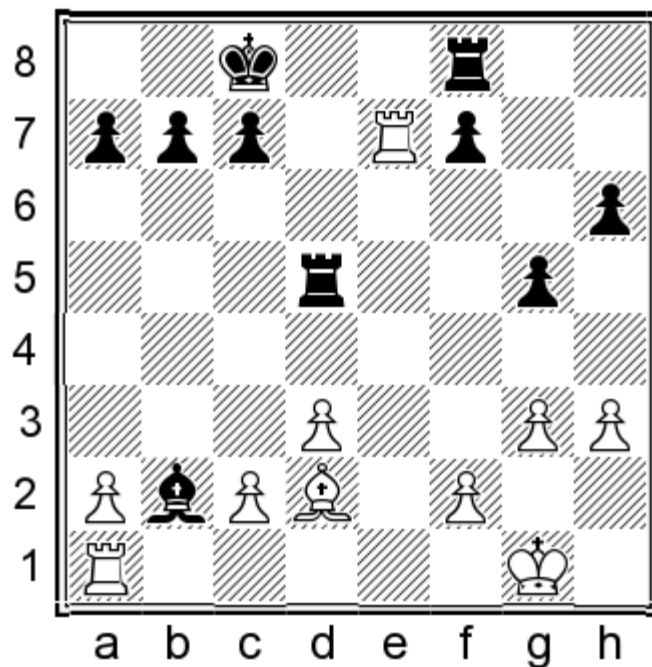
**13.♗e2 ♘xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘d5 15.♔g2 g5?!**

This is a bit too much. 15...♗f6! leads to complete equality, for instance: 16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.a4 a5!= or 16.♗e4 ♗c6 17.♘xd5 (17.♙h1 e6=) 17...♗xd5=.

**16.♙h1?!**

This rook was needed on the kingside to exploit the weakness created by Black. 16.♙ae1! ♗c6 17.h4! ♙g8 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.♘xd5 ♗xd5 20.♙h7 ♙g7 21.♙d2± gives White all the trumps.

**16...♗c6 17.♔g1 ♙g7 18.♙d2 ♙hf8 19.♘xd5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd5 ♙xd5 21.♙xe7 ♙xb2=**



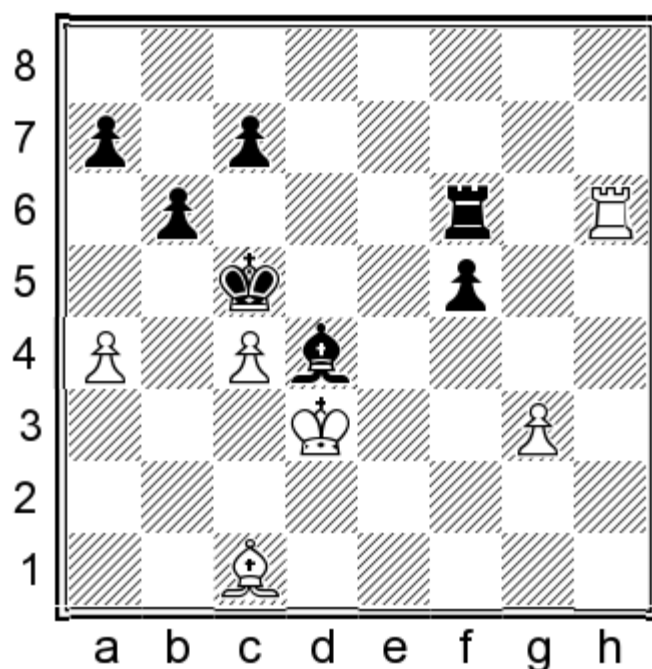
The ending is level. The players drew it after a long struggle, not devoid of inaccuracies.

22.♞ae1 ♕a3 23.♞7e4 ♔d7 24.♔g2 ♕d6 25.h4 f6 26.a4 b6 27.hxg5 hxg5 28.♞h1 ♞f7 29.♞h5 ♕e7?!

29...♞e7!= is more to the point. After 30.♞c4 ♞c5, one pair of rooks would be gone and the pressure would be completely relieved.

30.♔f1 ♕d8 31.♔e2 ♞d6 32.f4! f5 33.♞e5 gxf4 34.♕xf4± ♞e6 35.d4?! (35.♔f3±) 35...♕f6 36.♞xe6 ♔xe6 37.♞h6 ♔d7?!

37...♔d5! 38.♔d3 ♕xd4! 39.c4+ ♔c5 40.♕c1 ♞f6!



41.g4!! ♞xh6 42.♕xh6 fxg4 43.♕f8+ ♔c6 44.♔xd4 a6= is a simple draw, but the moves leading to it were not simple at all.

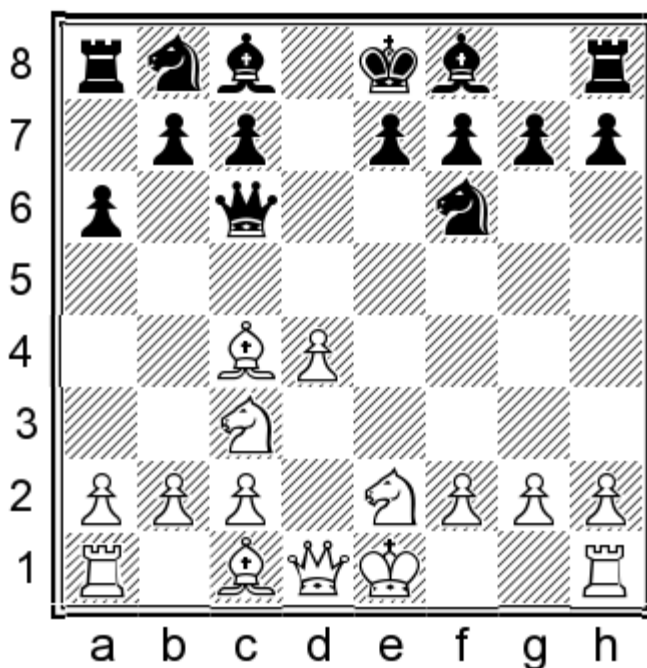
### 38.♔d3±

From now on White keeps a permanent pressure due to his space advantage, but lacks a knock-out blow.

38...♙e7 39.♗c4 a6 40.c3 c6 41.♙e5 b5+ 42.♗b3 ♖f8 43.c4 bxc4+ 44.♗xc4 ♖c8 45.♙f4 a5 46.♙e5 ♙b4 47.♙f4 ♖e8 48.♙e5 ♖c8 49.♖g6 ♙e7 50.♙f4 ♙b4 51.♖g7+ ♗e6 52.♖a7 ♙e1 53.♖a6 ♗f7 54.♙e5 ♙b4 55.♖a7+ ♗e6 56.♙f4 ♙e1 57.♖h7 ♙b4 58.♖h6+ ♗d7 59.♖h7+ ♗e6 60.♖g7 ♗f6 61.♖b7 ♗e6 62.♙e5 ♙e7 63.♖a7 ♙b4 64.♖h7 ♙e7 65.♙f4 ♙b4 66.♖h6+ ♗d7 67.♙e5 ♙e7 68.♖h7 ♗e6 69.♖g7 ♙b4 70.♖a7 ♙e1 71.♖a6 ♙b4 72.♙f4 ♗f7 73.♖a7+ ♗e6 74.♙c7 ♖g8 75.♖a6 ♗d7 76.♙f4 ♖c8 77.♖b6 ♙e7 78.♖b7+ ♗e6 79.♖b2 ♗d7 80.♖e2 ♙f6 81.♖e3 ♖e8 82.♖xe8 ♗xe8 83.♙c7 ♙e7 84.♙xa5 ♙d6 85.♙e1 ♗d7 86.♗d3 ♗c7 87.♗e3 ♗b6 88.♗d3 ♗a6 89.♗e2 ♗b6 90.♗d3 ♗a6 91.♗c4 ♗b6 92.♗b3 ♗a6 93.♗c4 ♗b6 94.a5+ ♗a6 95.♗d3 ♗b5 96.♗e3 ♙b8 97.♗d3 ♙c7 98.♗e3 ♙b8 99.♗f3 c5 100.dxc5 ♗xc5 101.♙d2 ♙xg3 102.♗xg3 f4+ 103.♗xf4 ♗c6 104.♗e5 ♗b7 105.♗d6 ♗a8 106.♗c6 ♗b8 107.♗b6 ♗a8 108.a6 ♗b8 109.a7+ ♗a8 110.♗a6 Draw.

### 14. Lewis – Nicholls ICCF 2009

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♖d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♙c4 a6 6.♗ge2 ♖c6!?

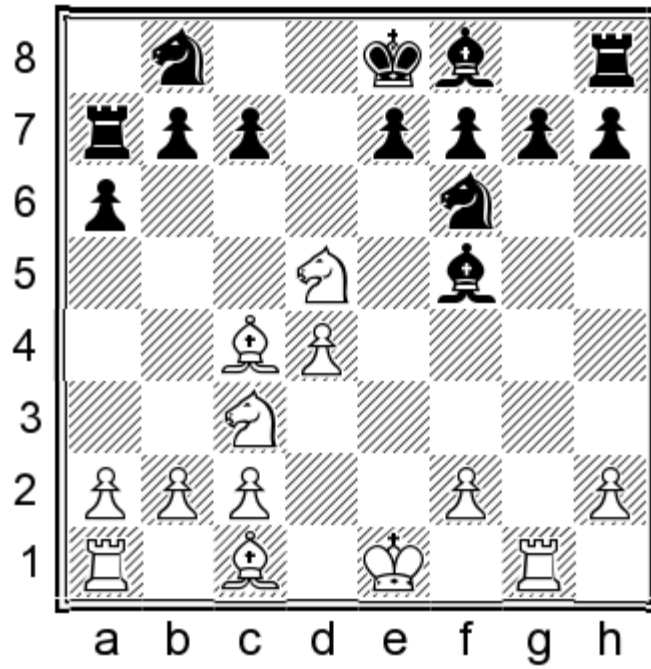


Objectively, 6...b5 is the better option, but grabbing a pawn looks appealing to numerous players. My analysis suggests that if both opponents were perfectly prepared, the game should logically end peacefully. However, White has the draw in the pocket in the main line. That means, Black would be playing for two results only.

### 7.♙b3!

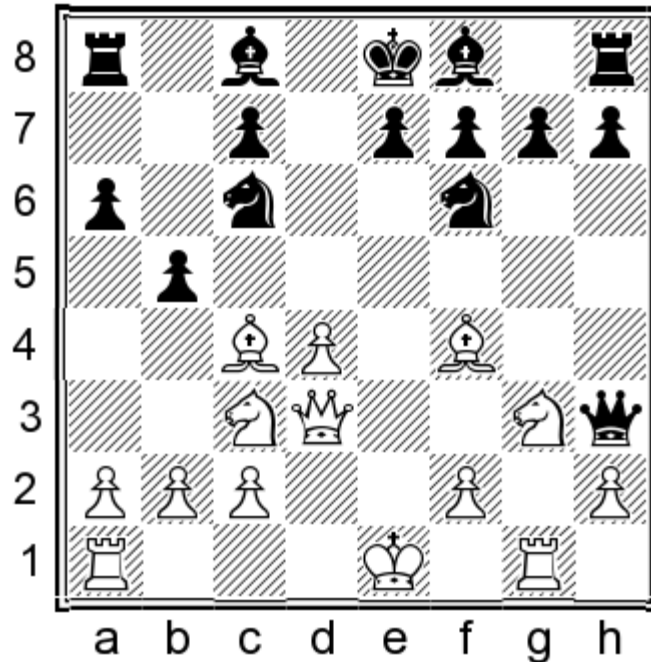
After 7.♖d3 ♖xg2 8.♖g1 ♖h3, we are at a crossroads where White will most likely try to keep the queens and castle quickly.

a) 9.♖xh3 should be a relief even though White gains a few tempi – 9...♙xh3 10.♗f4 ♙f5 11.♗fd5 ♖a7!?. This has not been tried so far. (11...♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♗d7 13.♙f4 b5 14.♙b3 ♖a7 15.♗e3 ♙g6 16.a4± was Ahmed-Onkoud, Doha 2011.)



12. ♖f4 (12. ♜xc7+ ♔d8 13. ♜7d5 b5 14. ♖b3 ♜c6 15. ♖e3 ♜g4∞ is unclear) 12...b5 13. ♖b3 ♜c6 14. ♜xc7+ (14.0-0-0 ♜h5!?) 14...♔d7 15. ♜7d5 ♜xd5 16. ♖xd5 e6 17. ♖h1 ♖d6 18. ♖xd6 ♔xd6 19.0-0-0 g6 20.d5 ♜e7 21.dxe6+ ♔xe6=.

b) 9. ♜g3 The knight looks displaced here. I believe it belongs to f4. A possible continuation is 9...♜c6 10. ♖f4 b5



11. ♖b3

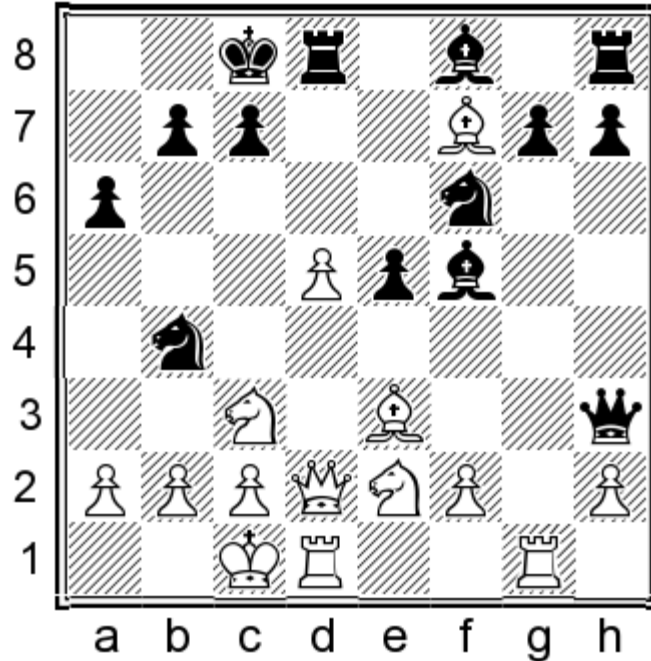
11. ♖d5? ♜b4 12. ♖f3 ♜xc2+ 13. ♔d2 ♜xd4 14. ♖e3 c6 15. ♖xd4 ♜xd5 16. ♜xd5 cxd5∞ is given by Melts.

11...♖b7 12.0-0-0 ♜a5 13. ♖xc7 ♜xb3+ 14. axb3 ♖c8 15. ♖e5 ♜d5, when Melts believes that White is slightly worse but I am not sure what the evaluation should be. Play could continue 16. ♖ge1 e6!

16...f6 17. ♖d6 g6 18. ♔b1 ♔f7 19. ♜xd5 ♖xd5 20. ♖c5± should be avoided as the bishop is very strong on c5 and we have no counterplay.

17. ♜xd5 ♖xd5 18. ♖e3 ♖h6 19. ♜e2 f6 20. ♖g3 ♖g6 21. ♖xg6+ hxg6 22. ♜f4 ♔f7 23. ♜xd5 exd5∞ with a very unclear ending.

c) 9.♔e3 ♕f5 10.♚d2 ♖c6 11.0-0-0 0-0-0 12.♔xf7 e5 13.d5 ♗b4



is a tangled position where Black's king is safe enough which cannot be said about its white opponent. After 14.f4 ♗xc2 15.♖g3 ♚h6, White's dark-squared bishop lacks good squares.

**7...♚xg2 8.♖g1 ♚f3 9.♔f4**

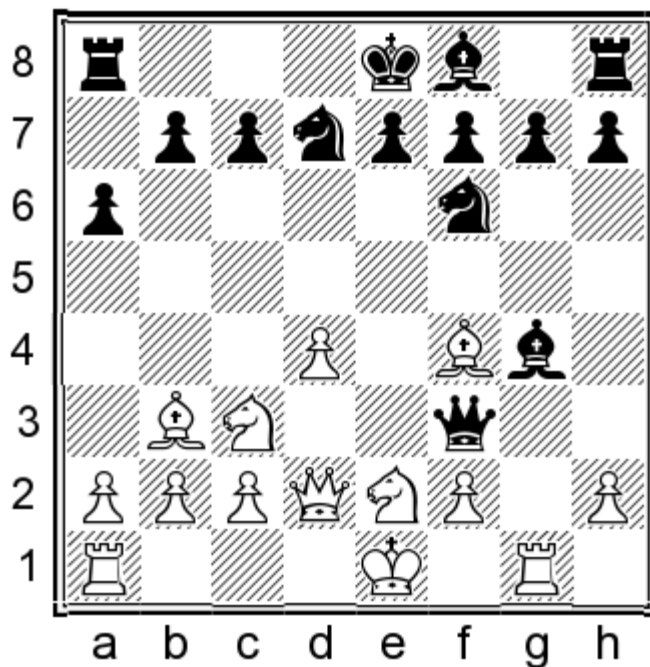
After 9.♖g3, Black has at least a draw with 9...♚h1+ 10.♖g1 ♚f3=.

**9...♔g4 10.♔xc7?**

This regains the pawn, but loses time and allows Black to catch up in development.

10.♚d2! is the critical test. It looks really scary for the defender here and at one moment I couldn't help but ask myself, would you really ever consider playing this as Black? Well, the truth is that White's position looks easier from a practical standpoint, but I haven't been able to find anything concrete for him. My analysis goes:

10...♗bd7 This has to be played, and now White can basically choose between two continuations:



a) 11.d5!? 0-0-0 12.d4!?

After 12.0-0-0 ♖xf2 13.♞df1 ♜h4! (13...♜a7 14.♙e3± throws the black queen out of play) 14.♙g5 (14.h3 ♙xe2 15.♜xe2 ♘c5 16.♜e5 ♞d7∞) 14...♜xh2 15.♙f4 ♜h5 16.♘g3 ♜g6 17.♙c4! ♘c5! 18.b4 e6! 19.bxc5 ♘xd5 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.♙e2 ♙xe2 22.♘xe2 ♜c6∞. Black has just enough for the piece.

12...♜h3 13.♙xc7! (13.f3 e5! 14.dxe6 ♙xe6∞) 13...♙xc7 14.♜f4+

14.♘db5+ axb5 15.♘xb5+ ♙b6□ 16.♜b4 e6 17.d6 ♜h5 18.♘c7+ ♙a7 19.♜a4+ ♙b6 20.♜b4+= leads to a draw.

14...♘e5□ 15.♜xe5+

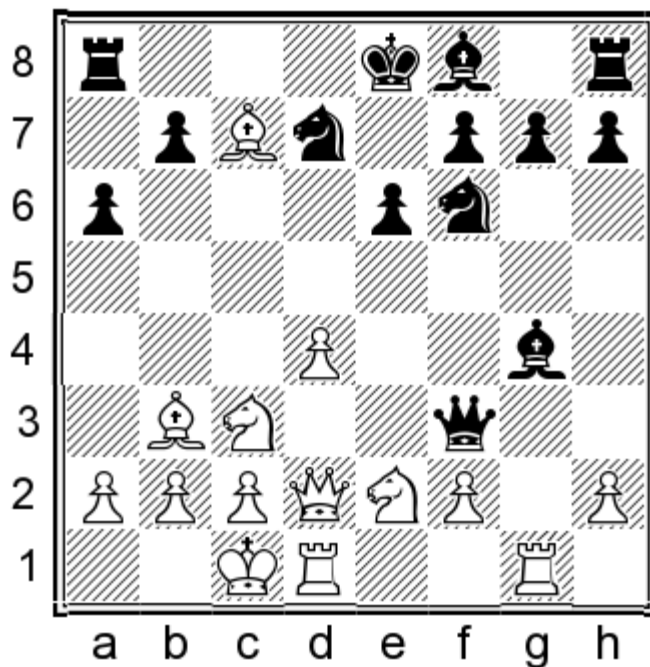
15.f3 ♘fd7!? 16.fxg4 ♜h4+ 17.♞g3 g6 18.♜f2 ♙b8 19.0-0-0 ♙g7 20.♙b1 ♜f6∞.

15...♞d6 16.♘cb5+ axb5 17.♞g3 ♜h5 18.♘xb5+ ♙d7! 19.♜d4 (19.♜c3? ♘xd5⊖) 19...♜xh2 20.♞xg4 ♜h1+ 21.♙d2 ♜h6+ 22.♙e2

22.♙d3 ♘xg4 23.♜xg4+ ♙d8 24.♘xd6 exd6∞.

22...♜h5=.

b) 11.0-0-0 This move has been tested in correspondence chess. 11...e6! 12.gxc7! (12.d5? e5⊖) and Black has a choice between a drawish ending and ultra sharp play:



b1) 12...♙b4 13.a3 ♘e4 14.♚d3 ♕xc3 15.♘xc3 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♖c8 17.♙d6 ♖xc3 18.♚xf3 ♕xf3 19.♖de1 ♖c6 20.♙b4 ♘f6 21.c4

21.♖xg7 ♙d5 22.♔b2 b6 23.♙a4 b5 24.♙b3 ♕xb3 is likely to transform into 4-rook ending with just a slight initiative for White.

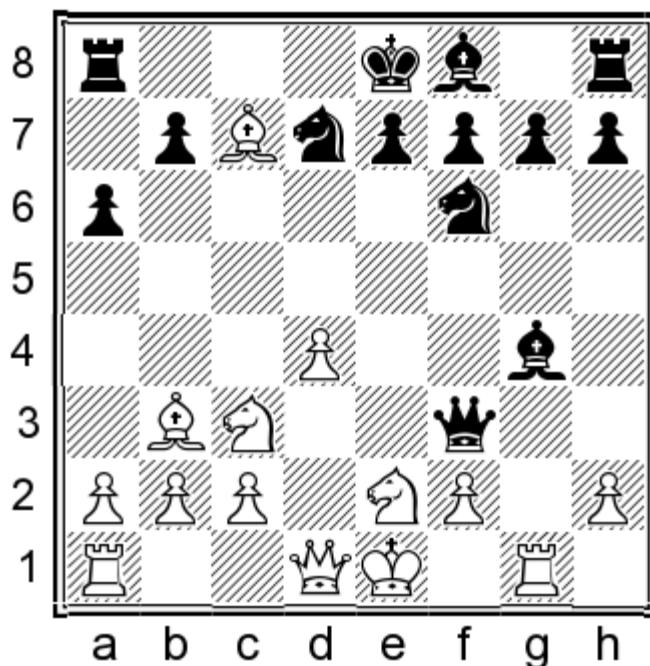
21...b5 22.♔d2 bxc4 23.♙a4 g6 24.♖c1 ♙d5 25.♙xc6+ ♕xc6 26.♖xc4 ♔d7 27.♖gc1 ♖c8. Black seems to have a fortress here. I couldn't find anything for White.

b2) 12...♖c8 13.d5!

13.♙e5 ♙b4 14.♙xf6 ♘xf6 15.d5 e5 16.♚g5 0-0∞ Burkett-Fels, corr. 2003.

13...♖xc7 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♘d4 ♚h3 16.♖xg4! ♚xg4 17.f3 ♚h5 18.♘xe6 is too scary for my own taste although 18...♚a5 19.♖e1 ♙e7 20.♘xg7+ ♔d8 21.♘e6+ might be only a draw.

10...♘bd7



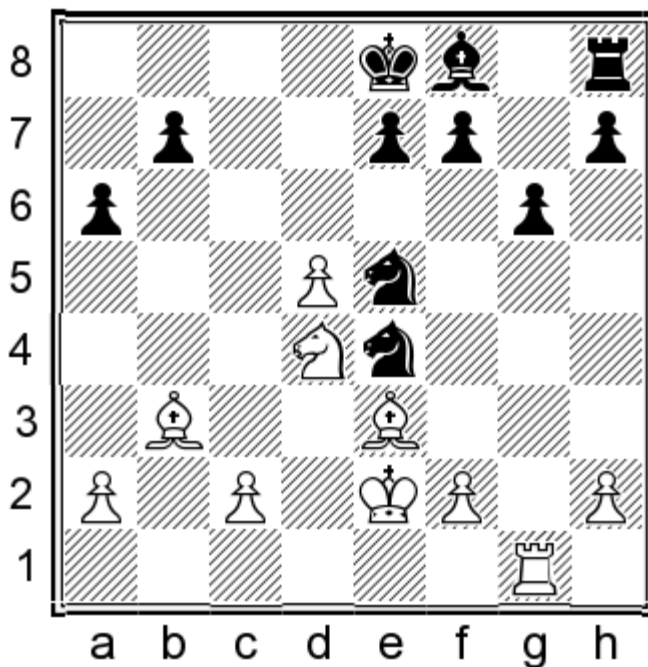
## 11.d5?!

Overambitious. 11.♖d2∞ maintained the tension.

11...♞c8 12.♙f4 ♞xc3! 13.bxc3 ♜e4

Suddenly Black got a huge initiative. White has to return the exchange and even surrender a pawn to tame it, but he lands in a bad ending nonetheless.

14.♙e3 ♜e5 15.♜d4 ♞xd1+ 16.♞xd1 ♙xd1 17.♙xd1 ♜xc3+ 18.♙d2 ♜e4+ 19.♙e2 g6



The remainder is not important from a theoretical standpoint as it is clear that Black has won the opening battle.

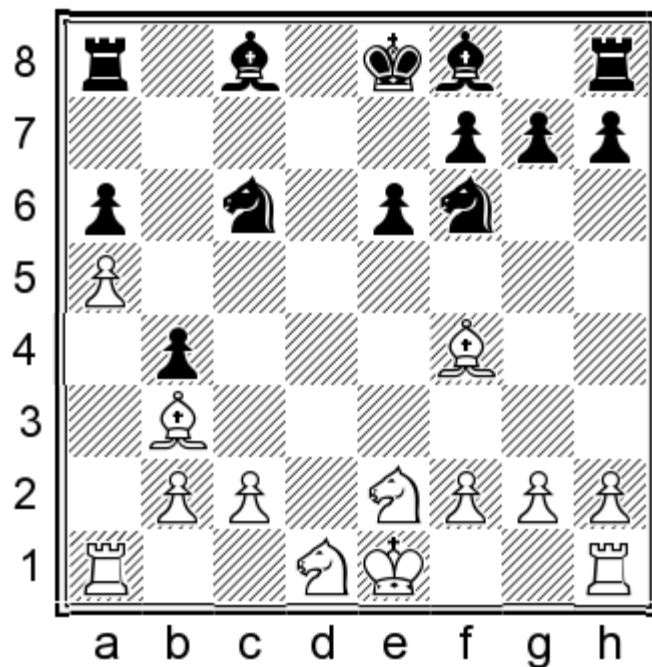
20.f4 ♜d7 21.♙f3 ♜ec5 22.h3 ♙g7 23.c4 e5 24.fxe5 0-0 25.♙g2 ♙xe5 26.♙c2 ♞e8 27.♙f2 ♙d6 28.♜f5 ♙b8 29.a3 f6 30.♙d4 ♜e4+ 31.♙xe4 ♞xe4 32.♞g4 ♞xg4 33.♜h6+ ♙g7 34.♜xg4 h5 35.♜e3 ♙e5 36.♙xe5 ♜xe5 37.♙g3 b6 38.d6 ♙f7 39.♜d5 ♙e6 40.♜xb6 ♙xd6 41.a4 ♙c5 42.♜d5 ♜xc4 43.♜xf6 ♙b4 44.♙f4 a5 45.♙e4 ♙xa4 0-1

15. Aravindh – Rakhmanov  
Doha 29.11.2014

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♜c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♜f6 5.♙c4 a6 6.♙b3 e6 7.♜ge2 b5 8.♙f4 ♞d8 9.d5?!

This comes too early, practically giving away any chance for an edge. I would dare say that Black is even slightly more comfortable after it.

9...c5! 10.dxc6 ♞xd1+ 11.♜xd1 ♜xc6 12.a4 b4 13.a5



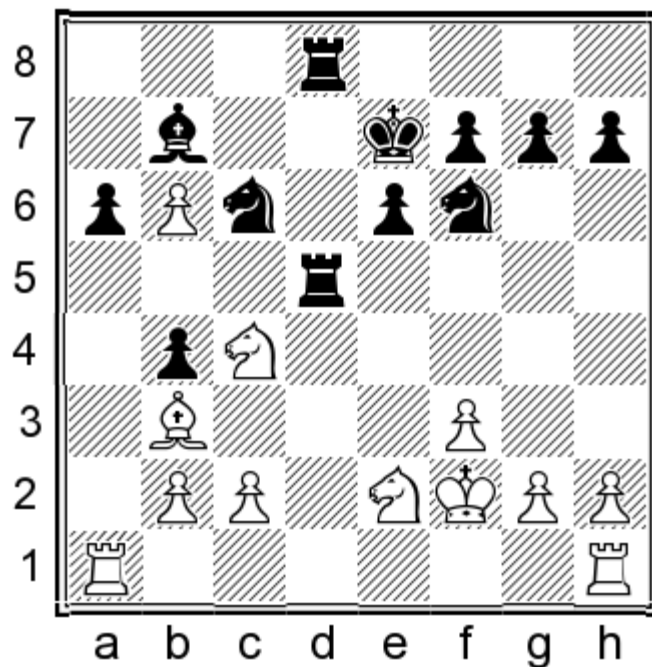
White plans  $\text{d1-e3-c4}$ , hoping to exploit the weakness of the b6-square.

**13... $\text{b7}$  14. $\text{d3}$   $\text{d8}$  15. $\text{c4}$   $\text{d5}$**

It is not clear whether  $\text{f4-c7}$  had to be prevented.  $15...c5!?$  is another natural choice. After  $16.c7$   $\text{d7}$   $17.b6$   $\text{xb6}$   $18.\text{axb6}$ !

$18.\text{xb6}$   $\text{d8}$   $19.\text{f3}$   $\text{e7}$   $20.\text{c1}$   $\text{d6}$   $21.\text{c4}$   $\text{d5}$   $22.\text{d3}$   $\text{d7}$   $23.0-0$   $\text{c5}$  was more than fine for Black in Novoselski-Ostojic, Valjevo 2011.

$18...e7$   $19.\text{f3}$   $\text{hd8}$   $20.\text{f2}$   $\text{d5}$



The game is balanced, and according to my feeling, easier for Black to conduct. This is due to the fact that an exchange of the dark-squared bishops actually suits Black's aims – he gets the c5-square for his pieces, and his king is very safe on e7.

16.♔g3 ♕c5 17.0-0 h5 18.h4 ♖ce7

18...f6!? 19.♞ad1 ♜f7 was another interesting possibility. The ♔g3 is potentially a bad piece.

19.♔a4+! ♕c6 20.♔xc6+ ♖xc6 21.♞fd1 ♖ce7 22.♖b6 f6?!

Black underestimates White's counterplay. 22...♖xb6! 23.♞xd8+ ♜xd8 24.axb6 ♜c8! 25.♞xa6 ♜b7 26.♞a7+ ♜xb6 27.♞d7 ♞c8= was the right way to mobilise all his pieces, with a slight advantage for Black. This variation illustrates perfectly the meaning of the piece of wisdom "the king is a strong piece – use it!"

23.♞d3! ♜f7 24.♞ad1↑

Suddenly the tide has turned and it is Black who has to be careful in order to maintain equality.

24...♞de8 25.♖xd5 ♖xd5?!

Surprisingly, 25...exd5!= was the better choice at this point, keeping contact with the f5-square and maintaining equal chances. In the event of 26.c3 (26.♖f4 d4! 27.c3 bxc3 28.bxc3 dxc3 29.♞xc3 ♞c8= is equal, too), Black should play the cool 26...♞c8 and nothing much is going on.

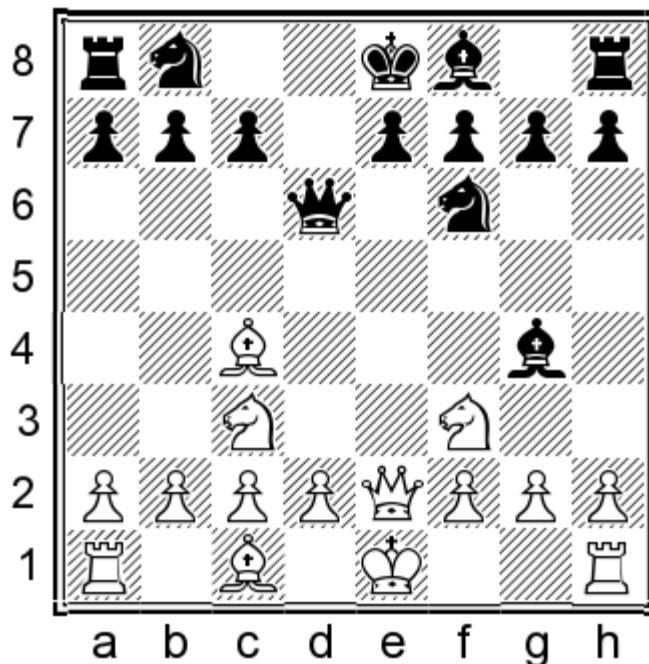
26.c4! bxc3 27.♖xc3 ♖xc3 28.♞xc3 ♕b4! 29.♞c6 ♕xa5 30.♞d7+ ♜g6 31.♞xa6 ♕b4 32.♞aa7 ♞hg8 33.♞ab7 ♕f8!

34.♕f4! e5 35.♕e3 ♜f5 36.b4 ♞c8 37.g3 ♜e6 38.b5 (38.♞d1!?±)

38...♕c5! 39.♕xc5 ♞xc5 40.b6 ♞b5= 41.♞xg7 ♞xg7 42.♞xg7 ♞xb6 43.♞h7 ♜f5 44.♞xh5+ ♜g4 45.♞h8 ♜h3 46.♜f1 ♞b1+ 47.♜e2 ♜g2 48.h5 ♞b2+ 49.♜e3 ♞b3+ 50.♜e4 ♜xf2 51.h6 ♞e3+ 52.♜d5 ♞d3+ 53.♜e6 ♞xg3 54.♞f8 e4 55.h7 ♞h3 56.h8=♞ ♞xh8 57.♞xh8 e3 58.♞h2+ ♜f3 59.♜xf6 e2 60.♞h1 ♜g2 61.♞a1 ♜f3 62.♜f5 ♜e3 63.♜e5 ♜f2 64.♜f4 e1=♞ 65.♞xe1 ♜xe1 Draw.

16. Massoni – Tiviakov  
Bastia/Ajaccio 26.10.2008

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♖f3 ♕g4 4.♖c3 ♞d6 5.♕c4 ♖f6 6.♞e2



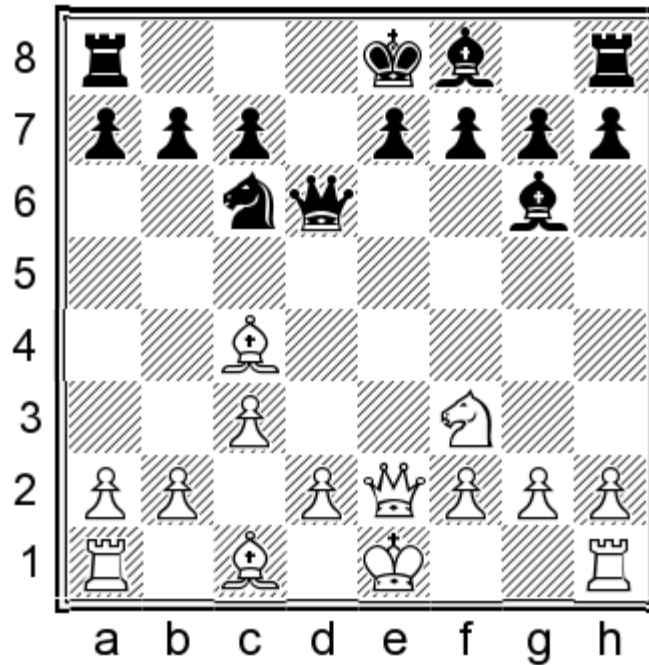
This move doesn't feel right when the moves h3 ♕h5 have not been inserted. 6.d3= and 6.h3= are better continuations.

6...♖c6! 7.♖e4 ♖xe4 8.♞xe4 ♕h5

8...f5! 9.♞e3 e5 was an excellent way to play. Black is even slightly better since the bishop on g4 is much more

aggressive than its counterpart on c4 which strikes at nothing.

9.c3 ♖g6 10.♗e2



10...♗a5! 11.d4 ♗xc4 12.♗xc4 c6 13.0-0 e6 14.♗e5 ♗d5 15.♗a4 ♖e7 16.♞e1 ♖f5 17.♖e3

17.♗b3! ♗xb3 18.axb3 was equal while now Black can only be better, provided the position opens up for his bishop pair.

17...0-0 18.c4 ♗d6 19.a3 ♞fd8

Black is too cautious. 19...f6! 20.♗f3 ♖d8!♣ would have given him the edge.

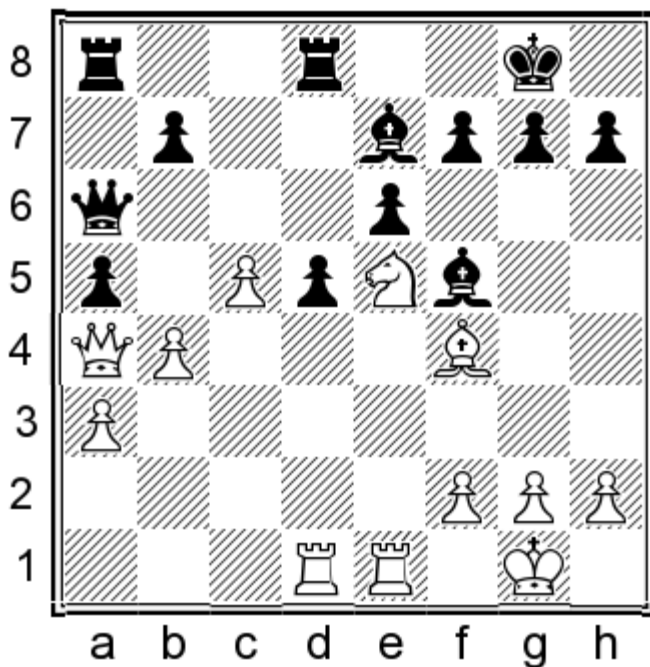
20.♞ad1 ♗c7 21.♖f4 ♗b6 22.b4 a5 23.c5 ♗a6 24.d5?

Playing for complications is acceptable tactics in rapid chess and here it pays off against a superior opponent.

Objectively though, better was 24.g4 ♖g6 25.♗xg6 hxg6 26.♖c7 ♞d5 27.♗xa5 ♗xa5 28.♖xa5∞.

24...cxd5?!

24...♞xd5! 25.♞xd5 exd5 26.♗xc6 ♗xc6! 27.♗xc6 bxc6 28.♞xe7 axb4 29.g4 ♖e4 30.f3 ♖xf3 31.axb4 ♖xg4♣ would have called White's bluff. Now the play remains complex.



25.b5 ♖a7 26.c6 26...♙c5 27.♙g3?

27.♞d2! ♖ would have defended f2 with the right piece as the ♙f4 should retain the option of moving to e3 later on, to challenge the strong ♙c5.

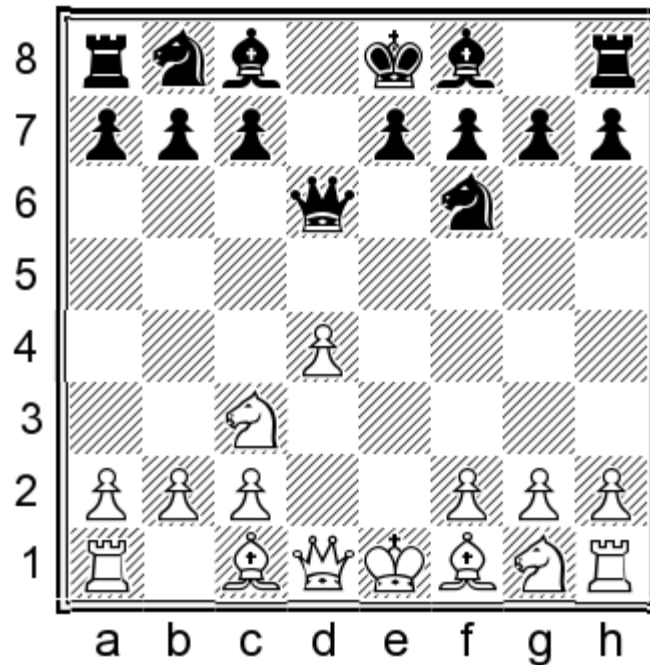
27...♞dc8! 28.♞c1 bxc6 29.bxc6 ♙e7

29...♞e7! ♖/♗ was best as 30.♘d7! ♙xa3 31.♞a1 ♙b4 32.♞ec1 ♙d2! 33.♞d1 ♙c3 gives Black some winning chances.

30.♘d7 ♙d3 31.♘e5 ♙f5 32.♘d7 ♙d3 33.♘e5 ♙f5 34.♘d7 Draw.

## Chapter 4. 4.d4 ♘f6 without 5.♘f3 Main Ideas

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6



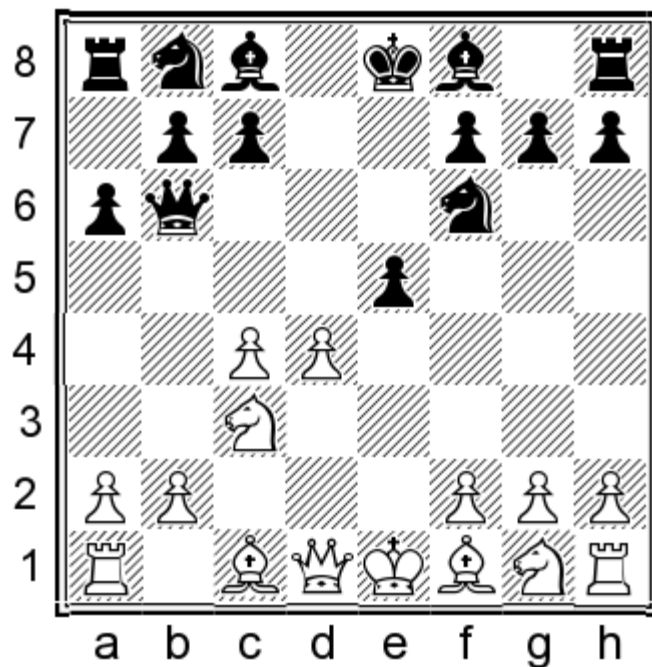
We are gradually approaching the most popular lines of the 3...♜d6 Scandinavian. White adheres to the classical rule that the centre should be occupied with pawns. However, this very pawn which just landed on d4, is not only an asset. It will also provide Black with opportunities for counterplay. Our whole strategy will revolve to a very large extent around blocking, using the squares in front of it, attacking, or liquidating it.

Black's last move is more flexible than 4...c6. It prevents 5.♘e4 while keeping the options of 5...a6 and 5...g6 open. It is now White's turn to reveal his plans. Practice suggests that his choice is not easy to make – first players have tried more than 11 different moves in the diagram position! Experience has shown that White should in principle try to make use of the e5 outpost and the h2-b8 diagonal to further restrict us. He should avoid trading pieces as that would give us more room. Especially challenging would be positions with opposite castled kings and they should be the critical test for our set-up. Finally, one major idea for White is to restrain our light-squared bishop behind our pawn formation or force its exchange for the king's knight. However, the latter is effective if White could keep the bishop pair for a long time since a subsequent exchange of the dark-squared bishops would considerably minimize his advantage. I believe that only 5.♘f3 could be of any concern to us, a move that immediately takes e5 under control. However, a lot of players opt for alternatives, mainly because they prefer to avoid well trodden paths or because they don't want to allow the ...♙c8-g4 pin.

This chapter is dedicated to 6 relatively rare 5th moves.

The most straightforward attempt is 5.♘b5 – after all, 3...♜d6 is “begging” for it.

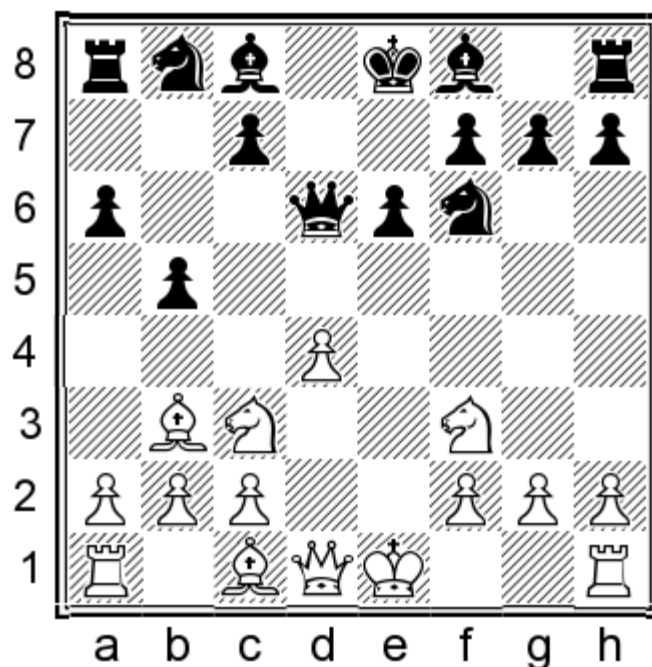
We answer 5...♜b6! and it turns out that 6.c4 a6! 7.♘c3 e5! passes the initiative to Black.



For example, 8.dxe5 ♖g4 9.♗h3 ♕c5.

Remains 6.♗f3, but then 6...♕g4!? 7.h3 ♕xf3 8.♖xf3 c6 9.♗c3 ♗bd7 is balanced.

The next most aggressive move is **5.♕c4!?**. In Chapter 3, I recommended to meet ♕c4 by ...a6. The same retort is good here – **5...a6 6.♕b3!?** e6 7.♗f3 (7.♗ge2 b5) 7...b5



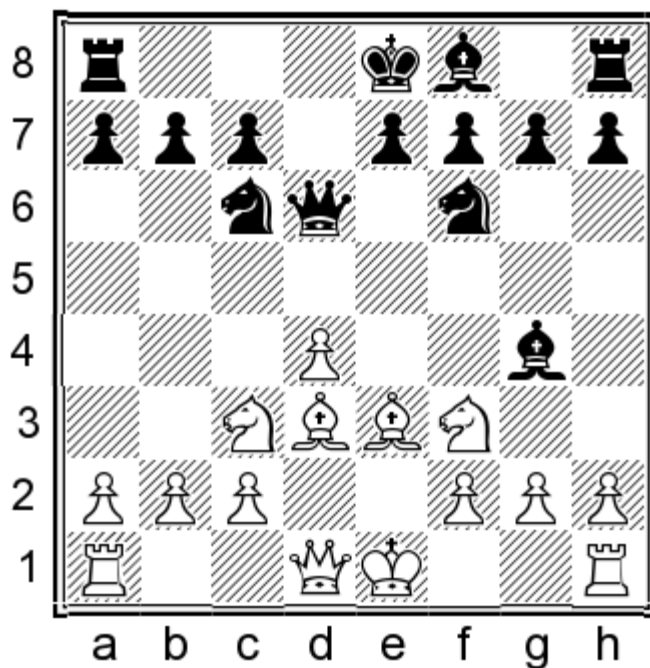
The point of our set-up is the ...c5 break that tactically exploits the placement of the bishop on b3. For instance: 8.d5 c5!; 8.0-0 ♕b7 9.♖e1 c5! =.

The more passive **5.♕d3** allows the thematic answer **5...♕g4!**

At the risk of becoming boring, I will stress once more that if the bishop sortie to g4 does not stumble into a tactical refutation, then it should be by far our main priority in the 3...♖d6 Scandinavian. The idea is: development, development, development! Similarly, we should aim to lead out our queen's knight to c6 which is the ideal place for this piece as from that square it helps pressurize d4. Thus ...♗b8-c6 and ...♕c8-g4 harmoniously fit in together. Of

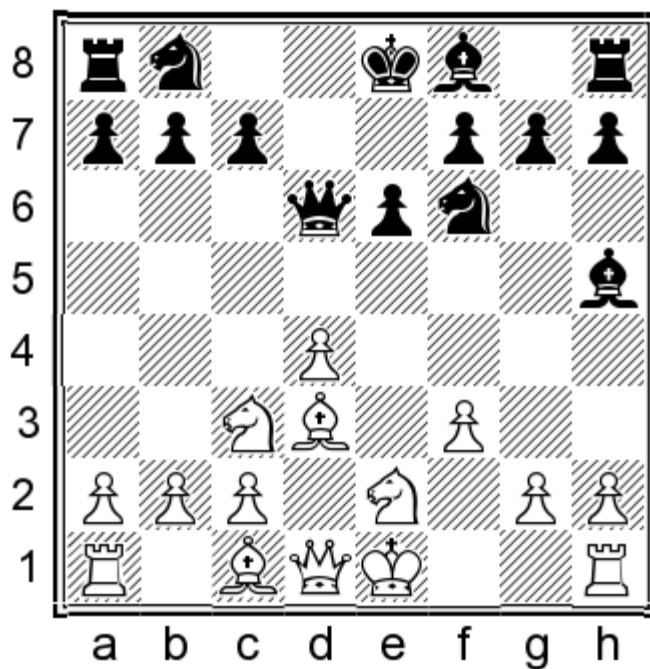
course, before resorting to this type of development for our knight, we should always consider the consequences of such replies like  $\text{♞c3-b5}$  or  $\text{d4-d5}$  as they could be dangerous.

A model to follow is  $6.\text{♞f3} \text{♞c6} 7.\text{♞e3}$ ,



when simplest is  $7...e5 8.\text{dxe5} \text{♞xe5}$ .

The other White's set-up is  $6.\text{♞ge2} e6 7.\text{f3} \text{♞h5}$



The safest approach for Black is to develop the queen's knight to c6 and castle on the same wing as White:

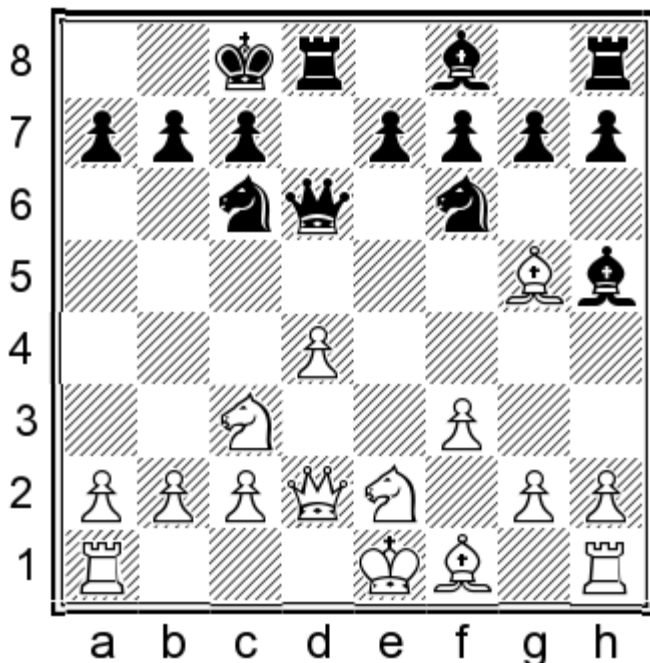
$8.\text{♞f4} \text{♞d7} 9.\text{♞d2} \text{♞c6} 10.0-0-0 0-0-0$ , see **Game 18**.

Or

$8.\text{♞g5} \text{♞e7} 9.\text{♞d2} \text{♞g6} 10.0-0-0 \text{♞c6!}$ , **Game 19**.

Another line where the stab  $...♞c8-g4$  shines is  $5.\text{♞g5} \text{♞g4!}$  It is always good to lure White into f2-f3 if we can escape unscathed.  $6.\text{f3}$

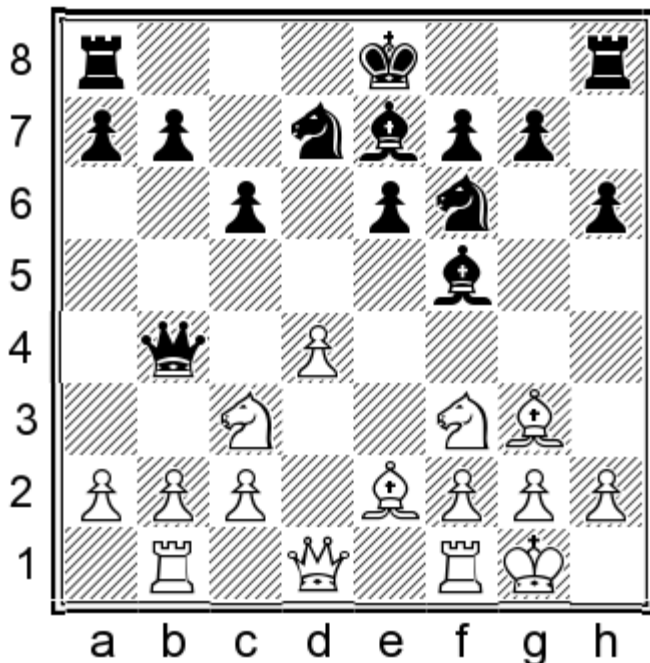
6. ♖d2 does not change our plans since 6... ♟c6 7. d5 ♟b4 8. ♙xf6 gxf6 9. a3 meets 9... ♙h6!! with complications.  
 6... ♙f5 7. ♖d2 ♟c6 8. ♟ge2 0-0-0



In the Scandinavian, if we castled comfortably, things are fine for us. The queen can look after itself and 9. 0-0-0 h6 10. ♙f4 will only activate it further after 10... ♖b4!.

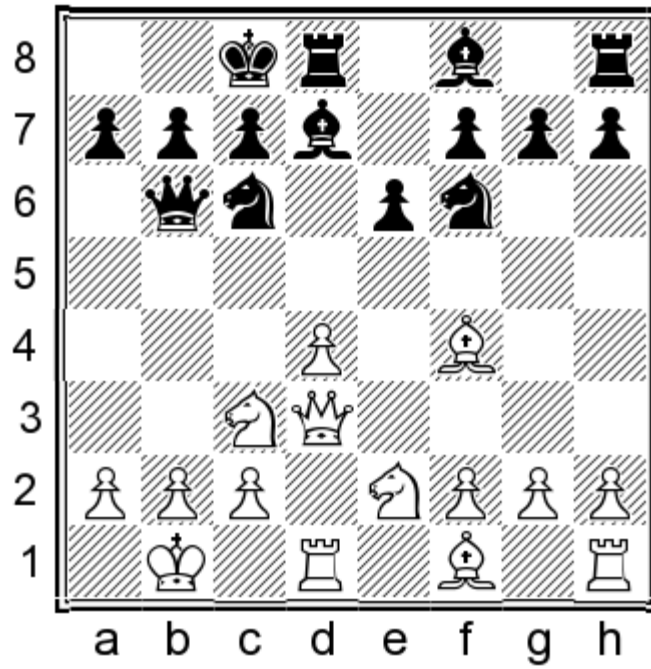
The possibility of ... ♙c8-g4 could easily baffle White, so don't be surprised if he decides to control g4 by a piece or a pawn. That is what happens in the following lines:

5. ♙e2 c6 6. ♙g5 Does White think he is fighting against the King's Indian? Well, possibly not, but in any case I am tempted to call this the Averbakh system in view of the configuration of the white pieces. 6... h6!? 7. ♙h4 ♙f5 In this line ... ♙g4 may be impossible, but the backup option ... ♙f5 is still available! 8. ♟f3 ♟bd7 9. 0-0 e6 10. ♙g3 ♖b4 11. ♖b1 ♙e7=



This is a typical situation (note the queen at b4!) where Black has accomplished his opening strategy and can play for a

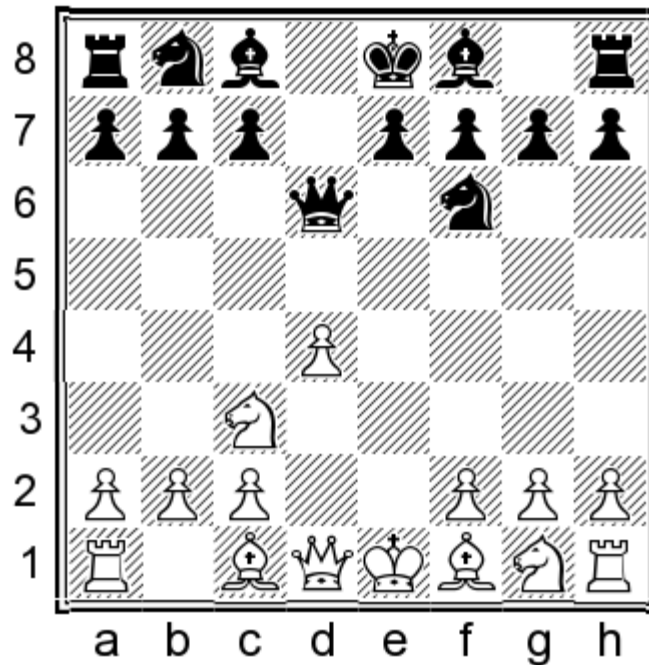




Our set-up underlines the awkward stand of  $\text{♞e2}$  and  $\text{♜f1}$ . As for our further plan, we should remember that the Scandinavian is a light-squared enterprise. Accordingly, we should envisage manoeuvres like  $\dots \text{♞c6-e7-d5}$ ,  $\dots \text{♜c6}$ .

## Chapter 4. 4.d4 ♘f6 without 5.♘f3 Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6



This chapter covers rare alternatives to the main answer 5.♘f3:

A. 5.♘b5; B. 5.♙c4; 6. C. 5.♙d3; D. 5.♙e2 E. 5.♙g5; F. 5.h3; G. 5.♘ge2.

**A. 5.♘b5**

is not very popular in GM chess, but I think it deserves some scrutiny. In fact, it is the only way to “punish” Black for not having played ...c6 or ...a6. White’s idea is to build a pawn centre by playing c2-c4.

I feel that the usual queen retreat to d8 is passive. I opt for the alternative solution:

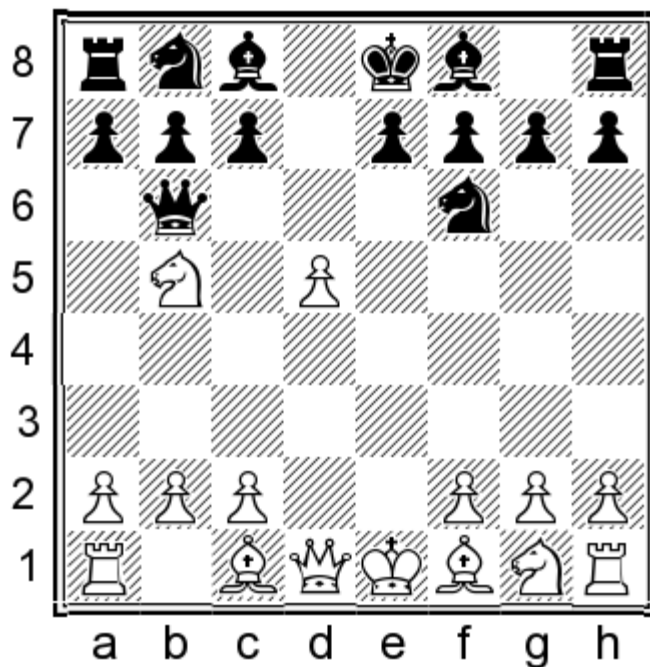
**5...♜b6!**

Black should keep the queen active. It is eyeing both d4 and b2 and faces White with concrete problems.

**6.♘f3**

Developing according to the classical principles. After all, the conflict in the 3...♜d6 Scandinavian is the chess version of the fight of God vs Devil, isn’t it? Or at least, this is what I thought when I saw this opening for the first time.

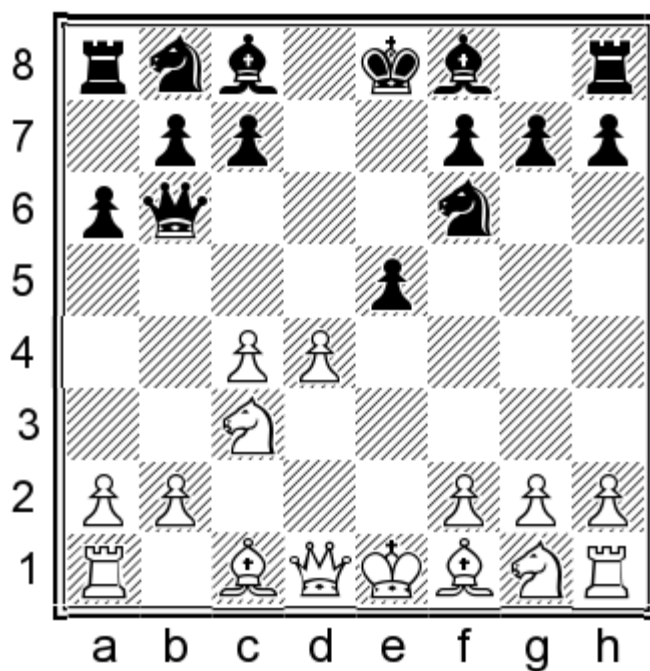
a) 6.d5?! neglects development and offers Black at least equal chances.



A swift miniature from this position saw: 6...e6 7.♞e3 ♞c5 8.♞xc5 ♞xc5 9.d6 ♭a6 10.dxc7 0-0 11.c3 ♞d7 12.♞d4?  
 12.♞d6 ♞xb5 13.♞xc5 ♭xc5 14.♞xb5 ♞ac8= was the normal continuation.

12...♭xc7 13.♞gf3 e5 14.♭b3 ♞e7 15.♞e2 ♭f5 16.0-0 ♭f4 17.♭e1 ♞ad8 18.♞c2 ♞f6 19.♞f3 ♞f5 20.♞e4 ♭h3+! and White resigned in Armbrust-Tiviakov, Pfalz 2009.

b) White's main positional idea of 6.c4 should be answered with 6...a6! 7.♭c3 e5! when Black is at least equal. The following lines provide some evidence:



8.dxe5 An obvious move, but Black gets a great initiative after it. Instead:

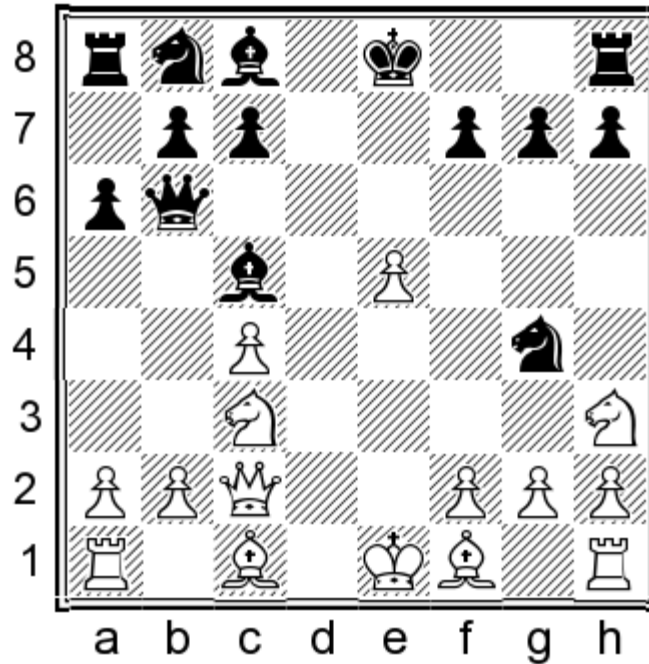
8.d5?! ♞c5 9.♞c2 (Rozenalis-Caspi, Israel 2008) 9...0-0;

8.♞e2?! ♞xd4 9.♭f3 ♞c5 10.♭xe5 ♞e7+ looks acceptable for Black according to Gawain Jones in his *Chessbase* commentary. I would dare say that Black is already better;

8.c5 ♖e6 9.d5 ♗g4 10.♙e3 ♗xd1+ 11.♗xd1 ♖g4 12.d6 cxd6 13.♖d5! (13.cxd6?! ♖xe3 14.fxe3 ♙e6 is given by Michael Melts as

better for Black.) 13...♖xe3 14.fxe3 ♗a7 15.♖f3 ♖d7 16.♖c7+ ♔d8 17.cxd6 ♙xd6 18.♖d5 b5∞ is tenable, both sides having their strengths and weaknesses;

8...♖g4 9.♖h3 ♙c5 10.♗c2

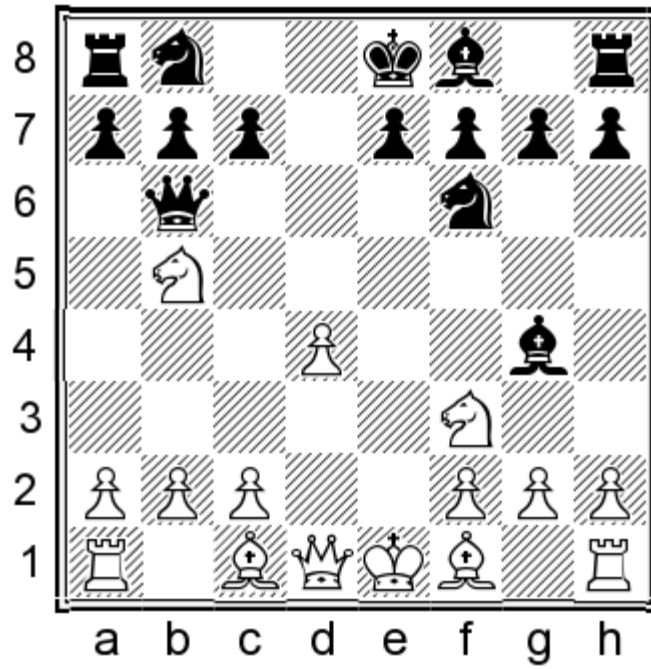


This position occurred in Gavric-Kurajica, Neum 2005. The Bosnian GM should have played here 10...♙e6! with compensation for the pawn. Melts analysed this position, concluding that Black has good play. One line of his is 11.♖d5

Or 11.♖a4 ♙b4+ 12.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 13.♗xd2 ♗c6∞.

11...♙xd5 12.cxd5 ♖d7 13.f4 ♙b4+ 14.♔d1 0-0-0 15.a3 (15.♙e2? ♖dxe5+) 15...♙c5 16.♙c4 g5 17.♗e2 h5. In my opinion, the final position is very annoying for White in view of his shaky king.

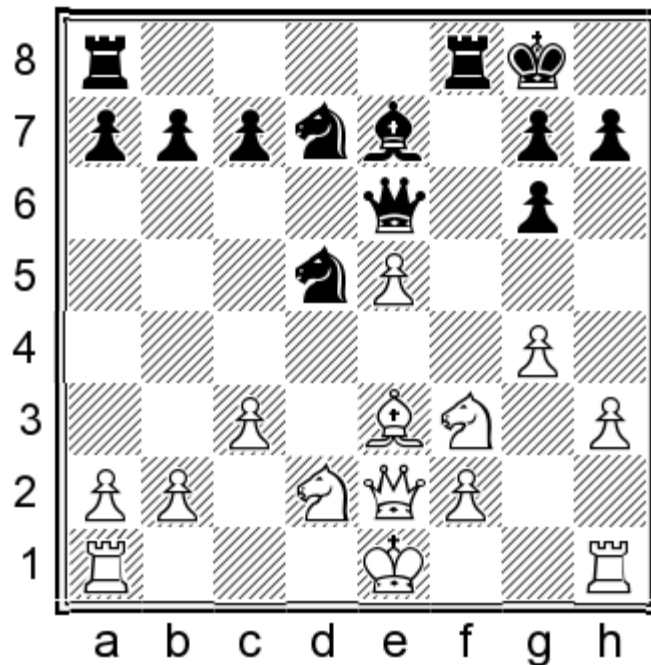
6...♙g4!?



This aggressive bishop sortie is typical and justified here. White is temporarily weak on d4, so Black should put pressure on it. 6...c6 7.♞a3! only shifts the knight to a fine position on c4.

### 7.♞a3!?

7.c3 ♞bd7 8.♞a3 e6 9.♞c4 is the most solid continuation. Black has reserved the c6-square for his queen which is a good way to meet the ♞b5-a3-c4 manoeuvre. A well played correspondence game continued 9...♞c6 10.♙d3 ♙e7 11.♙e3 0-0 12.♞cd2 e5 13.dxe5 ♞d5 14.♞e2 ♞e6 15.h3 ♙h5 16.g4 ♙g6 17.♙xg6 fxg6



18.♞c4 a6 19.0-0 ♞xe5 20.♞xe5 b5 21.♞e4 ♞f6 22.♞f4 ♞d7 23.♞e4 ♞xe5=, Bonsack-Tracz, corr. 2010.

7.h3 ♙xf3 8.♞xf3 c6 9.♞c3 is balanced – 9...♞bd7 (9...e6=) 10.♞f4  
 10.♞d3 e5±;  
 10.d5 ♞xd5 11.♞xd5 cxd5 12.♞xd5 e6 13.♞b3 ♞c7=.

10...e6 11.♔d3 ♕e7

11...c5 12.dxc5 ♕xc5 13.0-0 0-0 14.♖a4 ♔c6 15.♗xc5 ♗xc5 16.♕e2±.

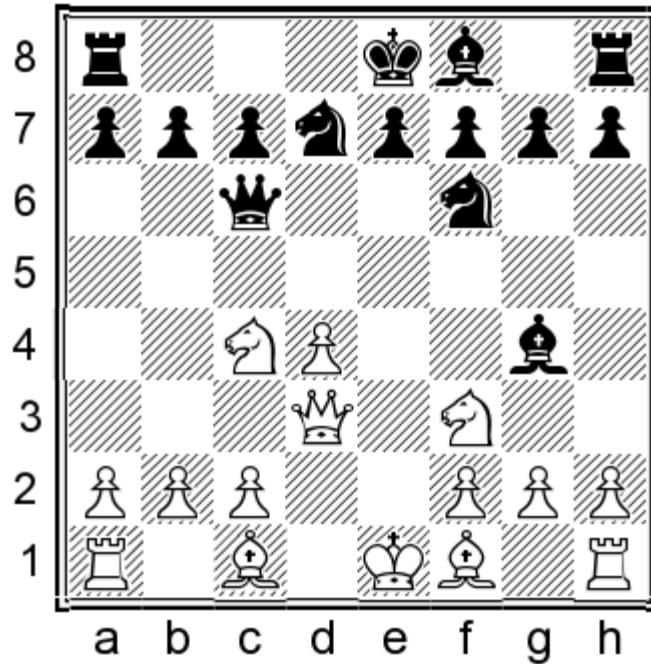
12.0-0 0-0 13.♞e1 ♞ad8=.

The surprising knight retreat aims to transpose to 6...c6 7.♗a3! which I mentioned on the previous turn. We know the antidote from the 7.c3 line above – c6 should be reserved for the queen:

7...♗bd7!? 8.♗c4

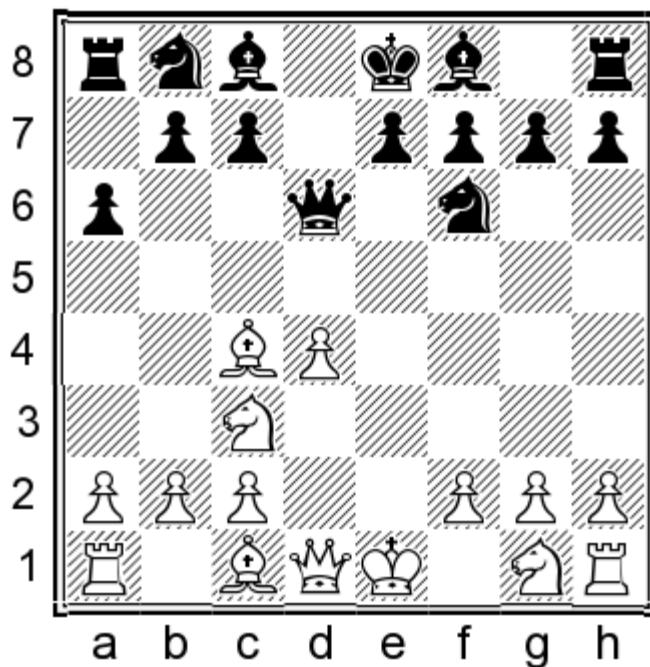
Or 8.c3 e6 9.♗c4 ♔c6±.

8...♔c6 9.♔d3



9...♕xf3 10.gxf3 g6 11.♕g5 ♕g7 12.0-0-0 0-0∞

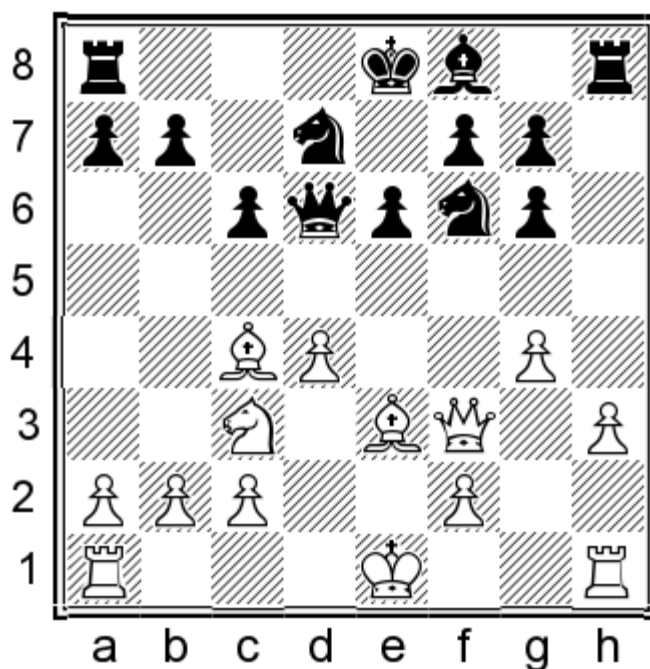
B. 5.♕c4 a6!?



Another possible set-up involves 5...g6, but I chose to recommend 5...a6 for the sake of consistency with Chapter 3 where I recommended this plan against 4...c4.

On the opposite, 5...c6 looks inferior. With this move Black starts building the usual fireproof construction in the centre, but White has an aggressive plan in his disposal: 6.dge2!

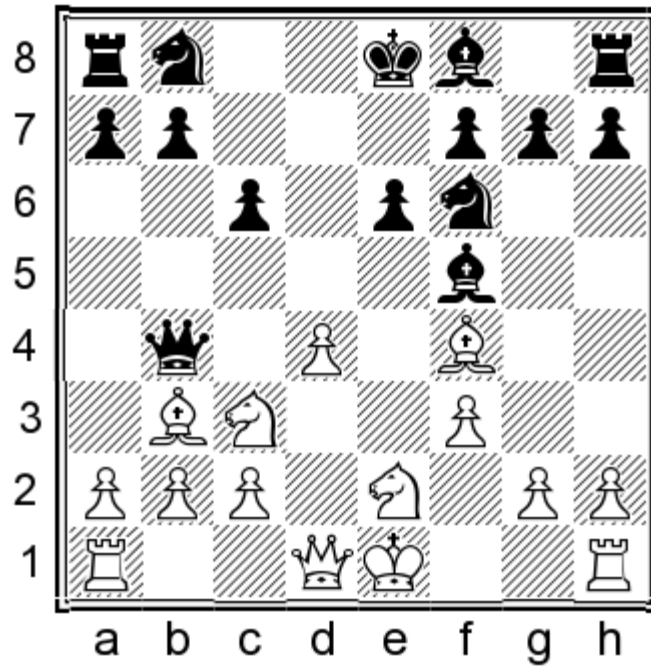
In the event of 6.f3 g4 7.e3 (7.0-0 e6 8.e2 d7 9.h3 h5=) 7...d7 8.h3 h5, Black has comfortable equality. It would be dubious for White to expand by playing 9.g4?! g6 10.h4 e6 11.xg6 hxg6 12.f3,



because after 12...d5! he loses his dark-squared bishop and lands into a slightly worse position. An attempt to keep the bishop pair by 13.d2?! d4 14.0-0-0 would simply lose a pawn without compensation: 14...xd4!

15.e2 e5 16.e4 c5 and Black has all the chances.

6...g4 7.f3 g5 8.f4 b4 9.b3 e6



10.g4! ♖g6 11.h4 h6 12.♚d2! ♜d5 13.0-0-0 ♞d7 14.♙g3 and Black cannot castle long in view of 14...0-0-0 15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♚f4.

### 6.♙b3!?

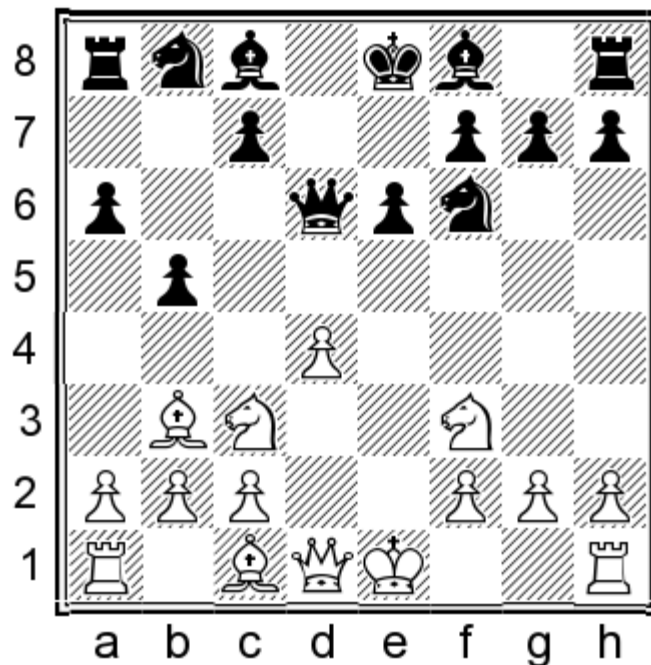
Setting up the positional trap 6...b5? 7.♚f3. This move order is especially important for White if he wants to castle long. The point is to provoke 6...e6 as otherwise Black might find more useful options. For instance, 6.♞f3 b5 7.♙b3 ♙b7 8.♚e2 (8.0-0 e6 transposes to the main line.) 8...♞c6!? is awkward in view of 9.♙g5 ♞xd4.

6.♞ge2 transposes to Chapter 3/line B1 when 6...b5 and 6...♚c6 are both possible.

### 6...e6 7.♞f3

7.♞ge2 b5 – Chapter 3

### 7...b5



## 8.0-0

8.d5 c5!;

8.♙g5 ♗b7 9.♚e2 deserves attention.

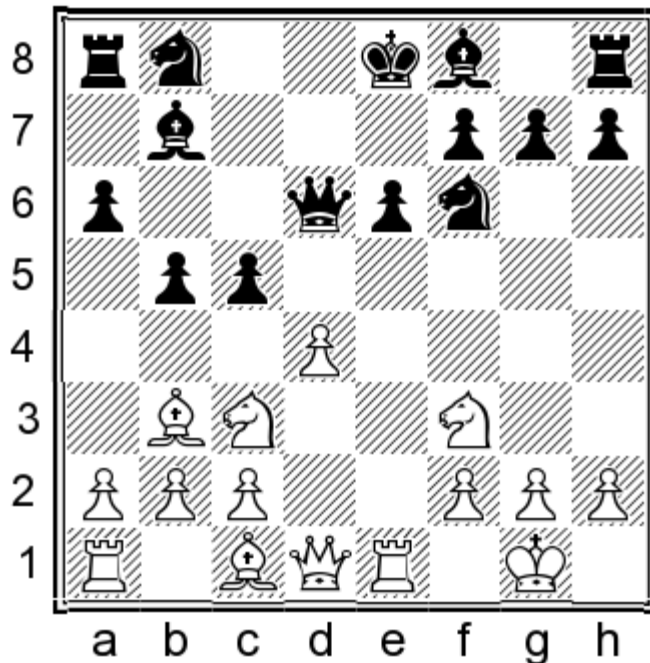
9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♚e2 ♖d7 11.0-0-0 0-0-0 is balanced.

9...♗bd7

9...b4 10.♗a4 ♗e4 (intending 11.♙h4 ♙e7) was successfully tested in several games, but I do not see any positional reason to trade dark-squared bishops.

10.0-0-0 ♗d5 11.♗xd5 ♙xd5 12.♙b1=.

## 8...♙b7 9.♚e1 c5



In Chapter 3 I considered a similar position with White's knight on e2. The same idea is effective here.

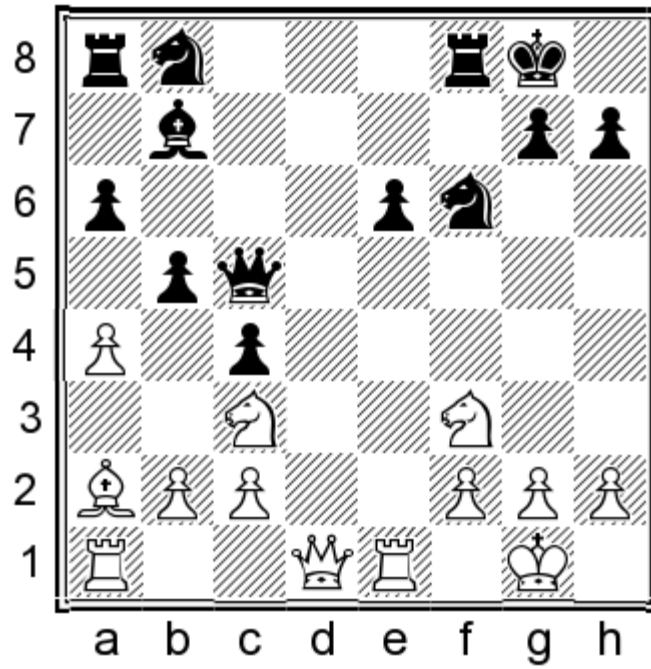
## 10.a4

10.♙xe6 fxe6 11.♗g5 is bold, but not entirely correct due to 11...♚xd4! 12.♙xe6+ ♙e7 13.♚e2 ♗c6 14.♙e3 when both 14...♚c4 and 14...♚b4! 15.♙xf6 0-0-0! are in Black's favour.

The endgame 10.dxc5 ♚xd1 11.♙xd1 ♙xc5 is pleasant for Black.

## 10...c4 11.♙a2 ♚b6!

Now 12.♙e3 ♚c6 leaves White with his bishop stranded on a2 so he should probably try 12.d5 ♙c5 13.♙e3 0-0 14.♙xc5 ♚xc5 15.dxe6 fxe6,



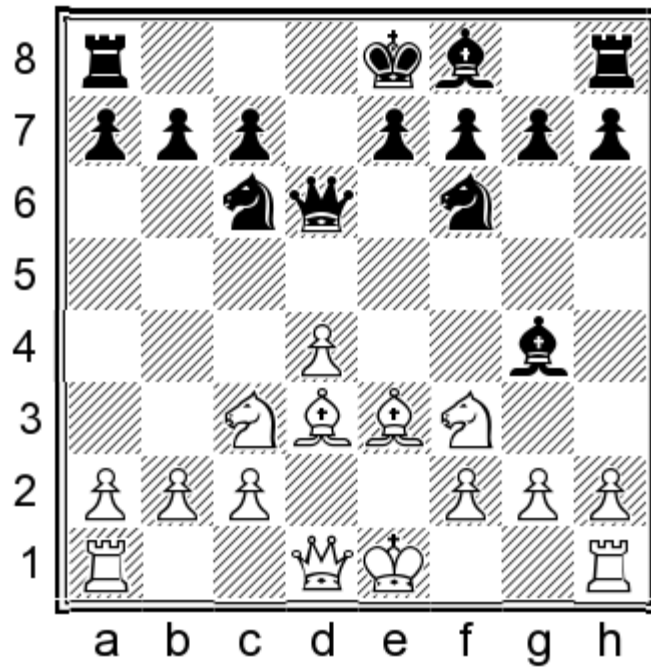
when 16.♞xe6 ♜bd7 17.♚d6 ♙xf3 18.gxf3 ♖f5 obviously offer Black full compensation for the pawn.

**C. 5.♙d3 ♙g4!**

Trying to provoke a weakening.

**6.♞ge2**

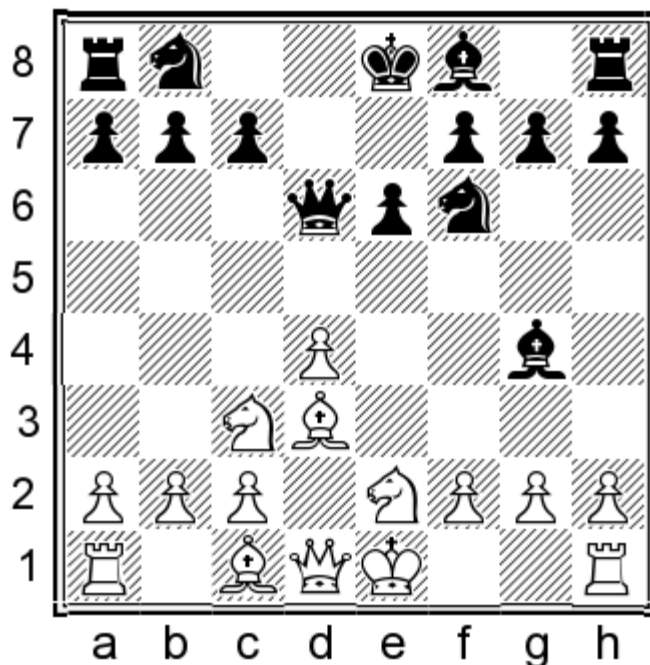
After 6.♞f3 ♜c6 7.♙e3,



Black has, among others, the simplifying 7...e5 8.dxe5 ♞xe5=.  
6.f3 is typically answered with 6...♙h5 7.♞ge2 e6= transposing to 7.f3 below.

**6...e6**

Our favourite position. It is rather easy to play since our light-squared bishop is before the pawn chain and the white knight on e2 is passive.



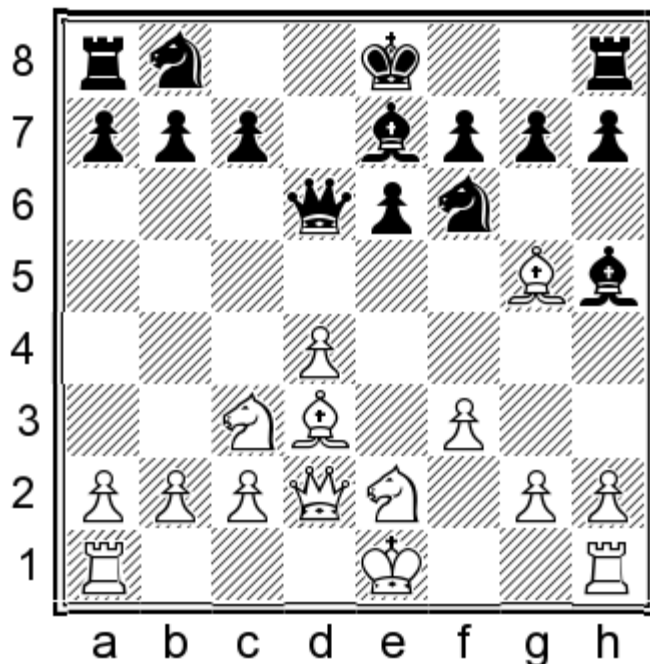
### 7.f3

After 7.0-0 ♕e7 8.♗f4 ♜xf4 9.♘xf4 ♕xd1 10.♞axd1 c6 11.♞fe1 ♘bd7 12.♘e4 ♘d5 13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.♘d2 0-0-0, Black had comfortable equality in the game Savchenko-Vachier-Lagrave, Moscow 2010.

### 7...♗h5 8.♗g5

Another possibility is 8.♗f4. This logical developing move was played by Elizabeth Paehtz against variation's *guru* Sergei Tiviakov, Douglas 2014 – 8...♜d7 9.♜d2 ♘c6 10.0-0-0 0-0-0=, see **Game 18**.

### 8...♗e7 9.♜d2



## 9...♖g6

Bishops opposition on the b1-h7 diagonal is almost always a sure sign that Black has equalized.

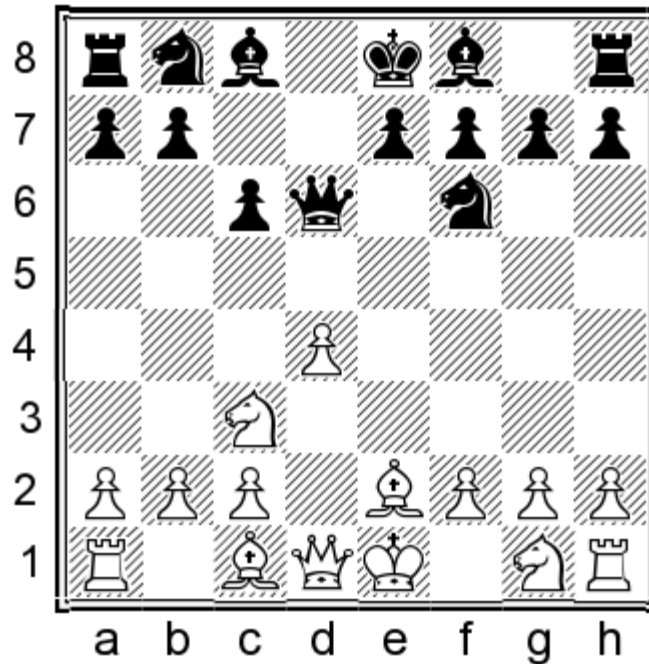
## 10.0-0-0

This position arose in **Game 19** Kislinsky-Babula, Kouty nad Desnou 2012. Best now was 10...♗c6!=.

Black has practically saved a tempo because he did not have to play the move ...a7-a6. Castling long is once more a very realistic possibility, just like in Tiviakov's game.

## D. 5.♗e2 c6

5...♗f5 seems more consistent, but I would like to avoid 6.♗b5 when the method from line A is ineffective due to 6...♗b6 7.c4 a6 8.c5 and we do not have a check from e6.



## 6.♗f3

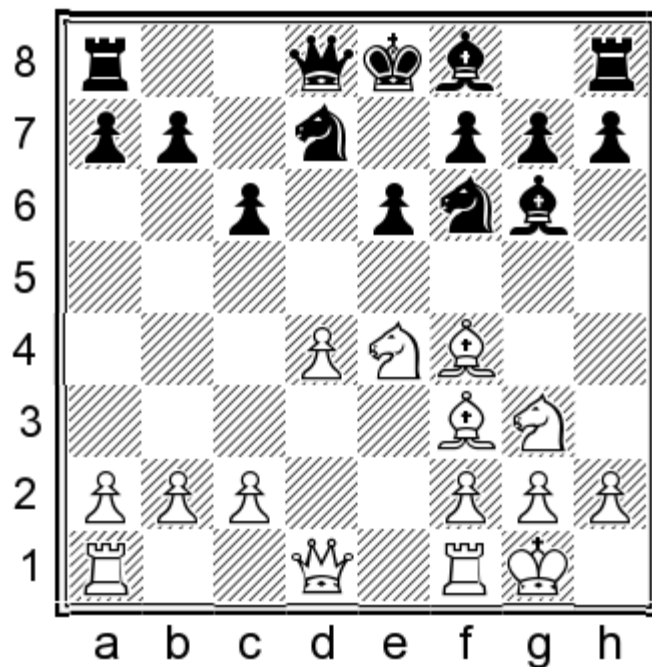
6.♗g5 is designed to develop without allowing ...♗c8-g4 ideas. I recommend the untried 6...h6!? 7.♗h4 ♗f5 8.♗f3 ♗bd7 9.0-0 e6 10.♗g3 ♗b4 11.♖b1 ♗e7= and I cannot see any particular point in White's set-up. Black has reached comfortable equality.

6.♗f3 looks time consuming, allowing Black to catch up in development with 6...♗f5 7.♗ge2 e6 8.0-0

8.♗f4 ♗d8 9.♗g3 ♗g6 10.h4?! h6 11.h5 ♗h7 12.♗d2?! ♗b4 13.a3 ♗a5 14.b4 was a reckless weakening by White.

After 14...♗c7 15.♗ce2 ♗xf4 16.♗xf4 0-0 17.♖d1 a5! 18.0-0 axb4 19.♗xb4 b5 20.c3 ♖a4 21.♗b2 ♗d6+, he was already lost in Runic-Milanovic, Belgrade 2006.

8...♗d8 9.♗g3 ♗g6 10.♗ce4 ♗bd7 11.♗f4



11...dxe4

Some engines recommend 11...h5!? with equality, but perhaps I'm not brave enough to play such a move as then Black will probably have to castle long.

12. dxe4 e4 13. e4 f6 14. f3 d6=.

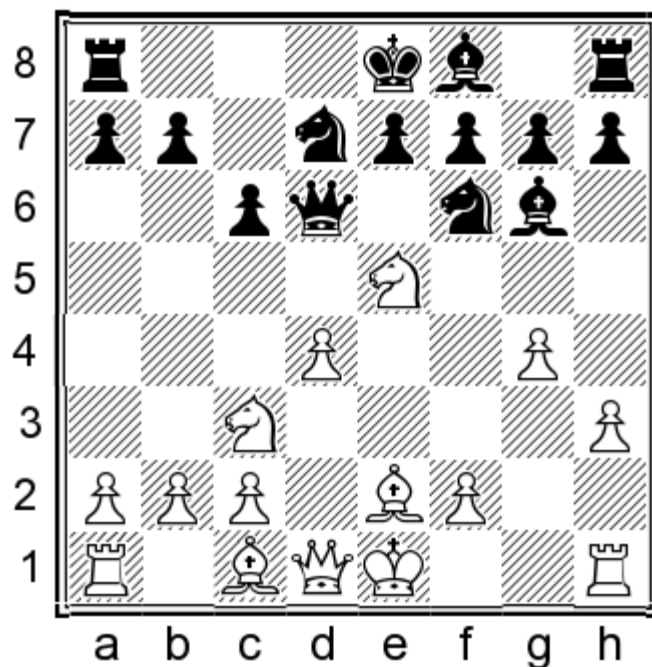
6...g4

5...f5 is also in the spirit of our system.

7.0-0

If White decides to insert 7.h3, he must also reckon with 7...xf3 8. xf3 e6 as played by Karpov. The more complex retreat to h5 allows the following sharp line:

7...h5 8.g4 g6 9. e5 bd7



a) 10.f4 e6 11.h4

In typical Scandinavian fashion, the ♔g6 begins to feel the heat, but my analysis indicates that Black should be okay. 11.♙f3 ♖d5 transposes.

11...♖d5 (or 11...♖e4) 12.♙f3

After 12.h5 the bishop flees away from danger by 12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♙e4 14.0-0 g6=.

12.♖c4 ♗c7 13.f5 exf5 14.h5 ♙b4 15.hxg6 fxg6! 16.♗d3 b5! 17.♖a3 (17.♖e3 ♖f4↑) 17...0-0↑ offers Black a strong initiative for the sacrificed piece.

12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 f6 14.h5 fxe5 15.hxg6 exf4 16.gxh7 0-0-0 with a tangled position.

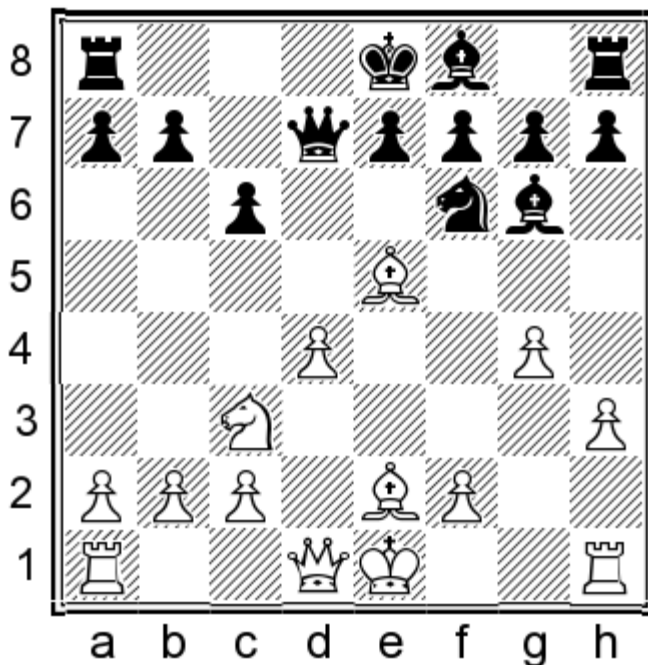
b) 10.♖xg6 hxg6 11.♙e3 offers White nothing as Black has excellent control over d5 after 11...♖b6 12.♗d2 0-0-0, Petrenko-Lomineishvili, Kutaisi 2015.

c) 10.♙f4 ♖xe5 11.♙xe5

After 11.dxe5, I'd rather prefer the solid 11...♗xd1+ (11...♗b4 12.♙d2 ♖e4 13.♖d5 ♗xd2+ 14.♗xd2 ♖xd2 15.♖c7+ ♖d7 16.♖xa8 ♖e4∞ is given as unclear by Melts) 12.♗xd1 ♖d7! (12...♖e4? 13.♖b5! should be avoided) 13.0-0 e6= with a safe and sound ending for Black.

11...♗d7

Fleeing to the open plain by 11...♗b4!? is the usual alternative.



12.f4?!

This rash step won't succeed. Melts gives 12.♗d2 e6 13.0-0-0 0-0-0(?)± but I think it is better for Black to go 13...♖d5!? instead, e.g. 14.h4 (14.♖xd5 cxd5=) 14...f6 15.h5 ♙f7 16.♙g3 ♙b4 17.♗d3 ♖xc3 18.bxc3 ♙a3+↗. Even simpler is to trade knights immediately by 12.♗d2 h5! 13.g5 ♖e4 14.♖xe4 ♙xe4 15.f3 ♙f5 16.0-0-0 f6 17.♙f4 e6=.

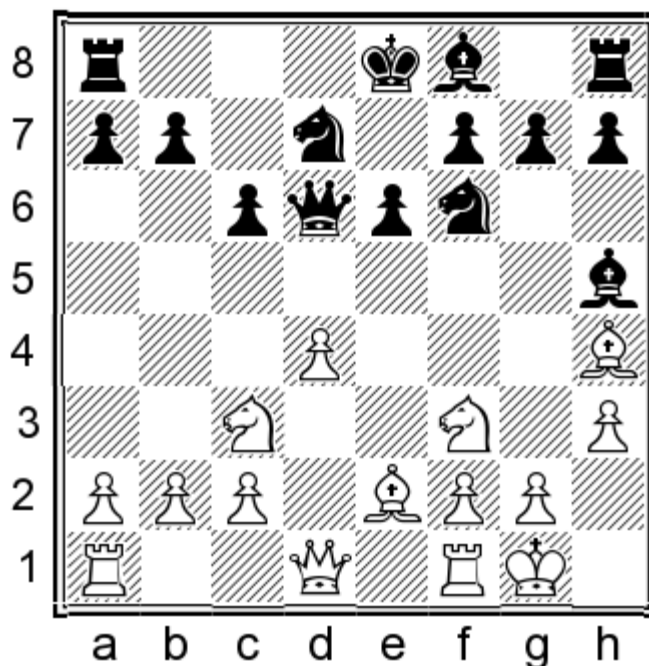
12...e6 13.0-0 h5 (13...♖e4!↗) 14.g5, T.Kosintseva-Zatonskih, Tbilisi 2012. Black is already more than fine and the most accurate continuation was 14...♖g8↗. The ♙e5 is a serious liability and White will find it difficult to justify her strategy. For example, 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♗xd3 f6 17.d5 exd5 18.♙d4 ♙d6 and White is struggling to prove compensation.

7...♖bd7 8.♙e1

8.h3 ♙h5! is similar to the main line – 9.♙g5

9.♙e3 e6 10.♚d2 ♛c7 11.♞ad1 ♜d6 12.♞g5 ♙xe2 13.♚xe2 0-0 14.♞ge4 ♙e7 15.♚f3 ♞d5=, Haavamae-Karpov, Puhajarve 2013.

9...e6 10.♙h4!? Aiming to disturb the black queen on d6.

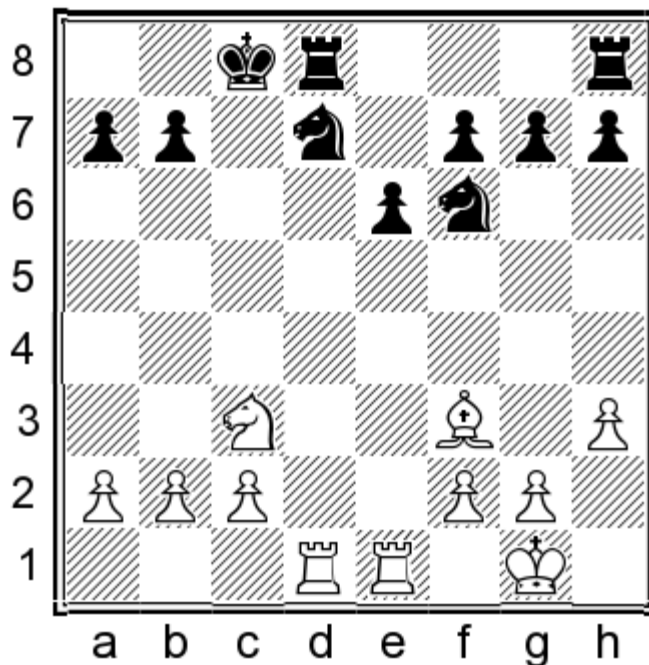


10...♙xf3

Now this exchange is well-timed, preparing to withdraw the queen to c7 and oppose White's dark-squared bishop once it reaches g3. Besides, 10...♙e7 11.♙g3 ♛b4 is also perfectly viable for Black, if he wants to reach a more complicated middlegame.

Black can also play as in the main line – 10...♛c7!?

11.♙xf3 ♛c7 12.♞e1 ♙e7 13.♙g3 ♜d6 14.♙xd6 ♛xd6 15.d5!? White correctly opens the centre in order to prolong the diagonal to his bishop, but the endgame is easy for Black. 15...cxd5 16.♞xd5 0-0-0 17.♞c3 ♛xd1 18.♞axd1



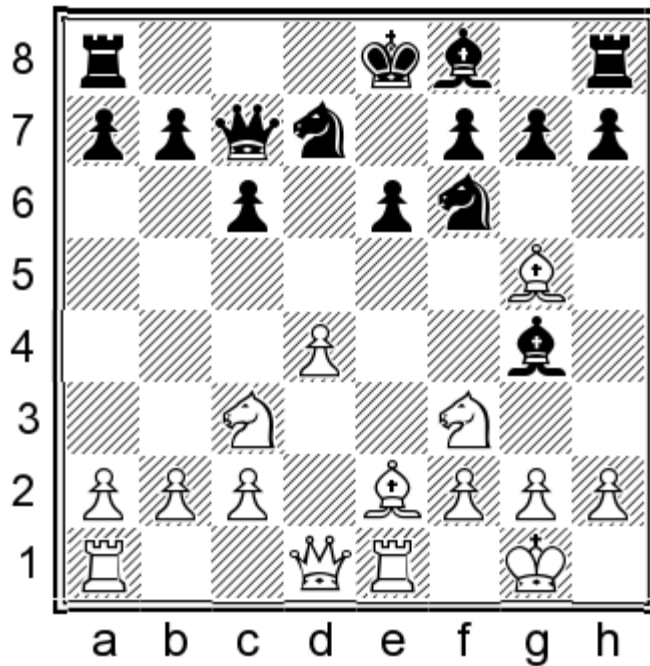
18...a6 19.♞d4 ♞b6 20.♞b4 ♞bd5 21.♞b3 ♞d7 22.♞xd5 ♞xd5 23.♞d1 b5 24.♙xd5 ♞xd5 25.♞xd5 exd5= 26.♞a3 ♝b7 27.♞e3 ♞c8 28.c3 ♝c6 29.♝f1 ♝d6 30.♝e2 b4 31.♝d2 a5 32.cxb4. At this point the players decided to call it a draw in

Movsesian-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

**8...e6 9.♗g5**

9.♗e5 ♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♖xd1 11.♗xd1 ♗xd1 12.♖xd1 ♜d7 13.♗f4 0-0-0 14.♗e4 h6 was equal in Moroz-Labensky, Rovno 2000.

**9...♖c7!**

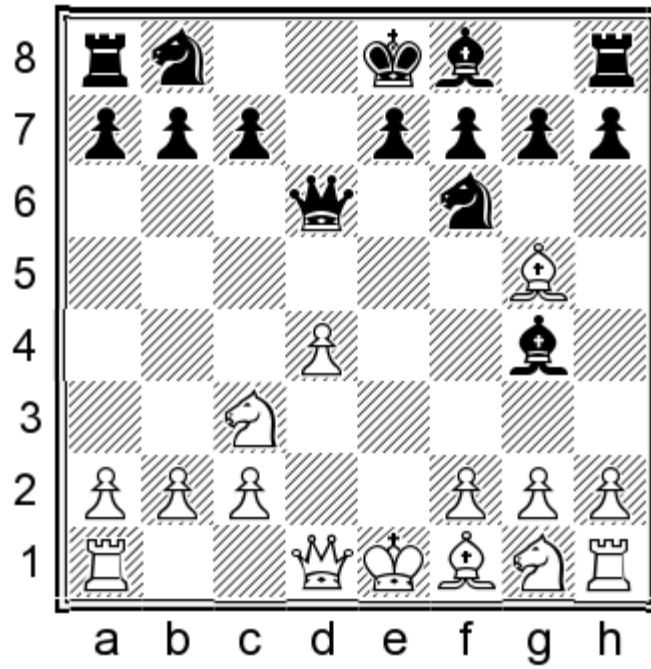


Note this retreat! Black vacates the d6-square for his bishop. Now he can meet 10.♖d2 by 10...h6 11.♗f4 ♗d6=.

**E. 5.♗g5**

This is a natural developing move. White is planning to castle long after ♖d1-d2. We have a good reply:

**5...♗g4!**



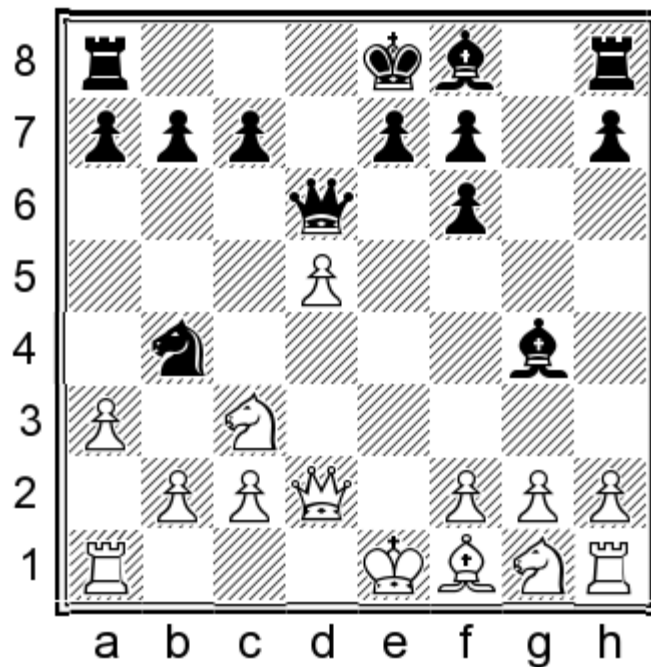
### 6.f3

6. ♖d2, with the idea h2-h3 or even ♕g5-f4, is possible. After 6...♖c6 7.d5

If 7.h3, then 7...♕f5 7...♕h5 8.♖b5 ♖e6+! 9.♕e3 0-0-0 10.c4 a6 11.d5 ♖xd5 12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13.♕c4 ♖xd2

14.♕xe6+ fxe6 15.♖xd2 axb5 is approximately balanced), when 8.♖b5?! ♖e6+ 9.♕e3 0-0-0 10.c4 gives Black a crushing attack – 10...♖e4 11.♖c1 ♖f6.

7...♖b4 8.♕xf6 gxf6 9.a3



9...♕h6!! 10.♕b5+ c6

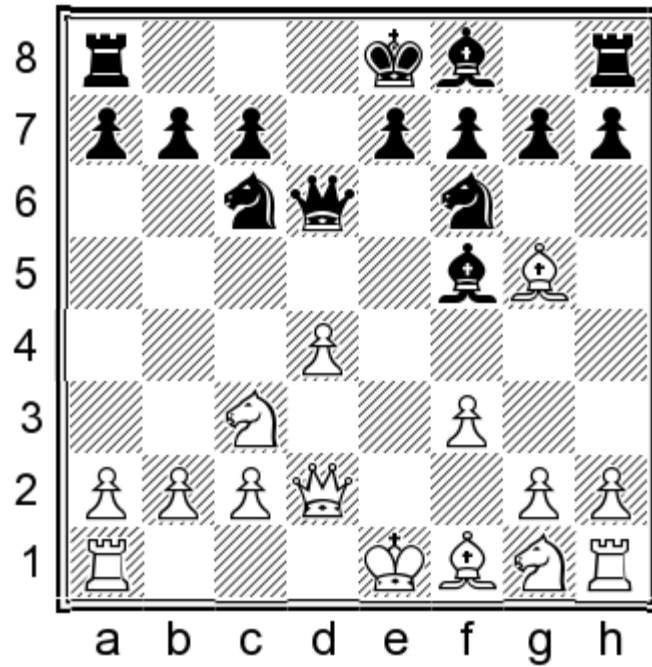
10...♖d8?? 11.♖xh6 ♖xc2+ 12.♖f1 ♖xa1 13.♖g7+–.

11.♖xh6 ♖xc2+ 12.♖f1 cxb5 13.♖g7 ♖f8 14.♖xg4 ♖xa1 15.♖d1 0-0-0 16.♖xa1 a5 17.♖xb5 ♖xd5 18.♖c1+ ♖b8 19.♖c7+ ♖a8 20.♖xa5+ ♖b8 and White has nothing better than to take a draw by perpetual.

6.♕e2 complies with our striving for exchanges. We can proceed with 6...♕xe2 7.♖xe2 ♖bd7 followed up by...c6,

...♙e7, ...♘d5.

6...♙f5 7.♚d2 ♘c6



The pressure against d4 reduces White's options.

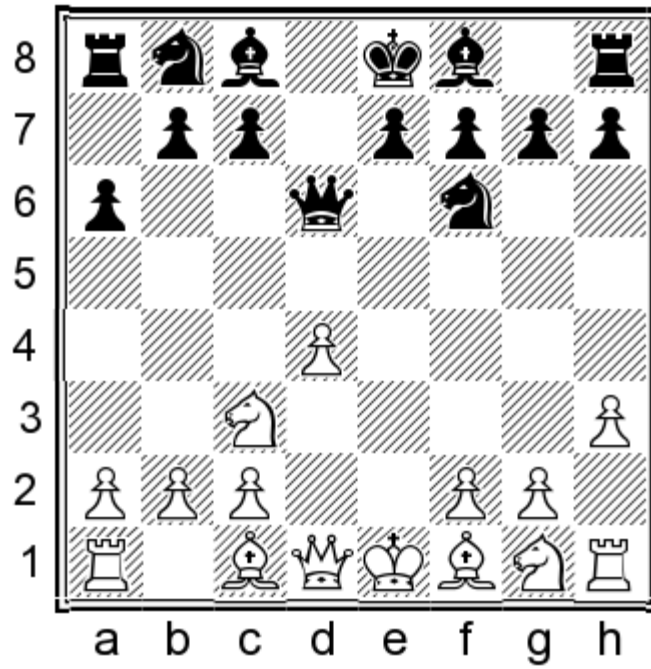
8.♘ge2 0-0-0 9.0-0-0 h6 10.♙f4 ♚b4!

A thematic motif! The queen escapes into the open plain!

11.a3 ♚a5 12.♚e3 e6 13.♘g3 ♙h7↑

Black's advantage was more than obvious in the game Eliseev-Kovalenko, Moscow 2013. Even better was 13...♙xa3!.

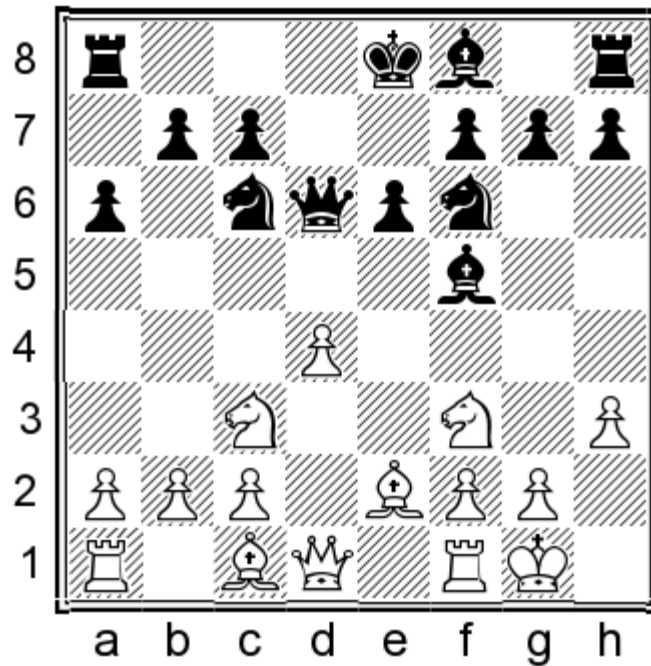
F. 5.h3 (Preventing the annoying ...♙c8-g4) 5...a6!?



White has denied ...♙c8-g4 and we reply in style with the reciprocal ...a7-a6!?, so that the white knight won't be able to disturb us with intrusions on b5. Besides, we want to be ready for ♙f1-c4, which can now be answered with the thematic ...b7-b5.

### 6. ♙d3

After 6. ♙f3, the black knight can go to c6 without fearing d4-d5: 6...♘c6 7. ♙e2 (7. ♙e3 e5=) 7...♙f5 8. 0-0 e6=.



In this position, the possibility of castling long is not out of question in view of White's rather passive set-up. However, intuitively, I would rather choose the safer kingside castling, for example:

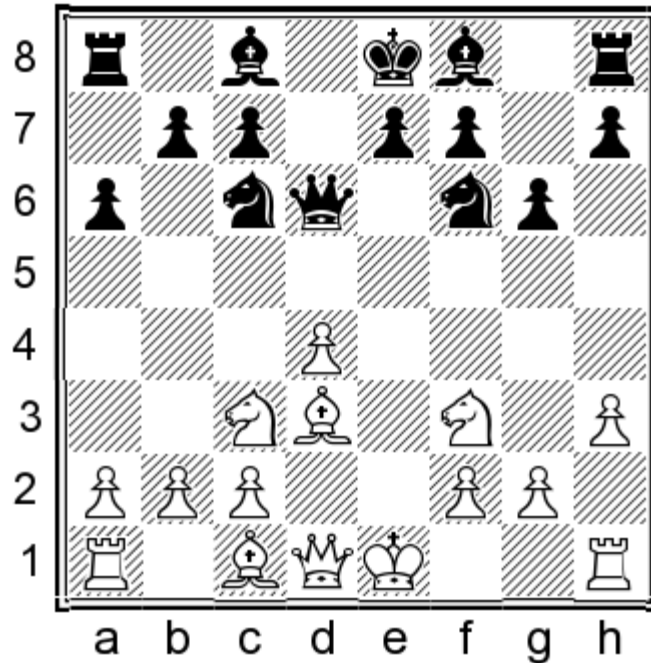
9. ♙e3 ♙e7 10. ♙d3 ♙xd3 11. ♙xd3 ♘b4 12. ♙e2 0-0= when not much is going on. Black's control over d5 grants him an even game.

### 6...♘c6 7. ♙f3

7.♘ge2 enables the typical breakthrough 7...e5! which should give Black an excellent game. Indeed, after 8.dxe5 ♘xe5 9.♙f4 ♘xd3+ 10.cxd3 ♚d8 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♘g3 0-0 13.♚f3 c6 14.♞fe1 ♙e6=, Black was fine in **Game 20** Savic-Ostojic, Vrnjacka Banja 2009.

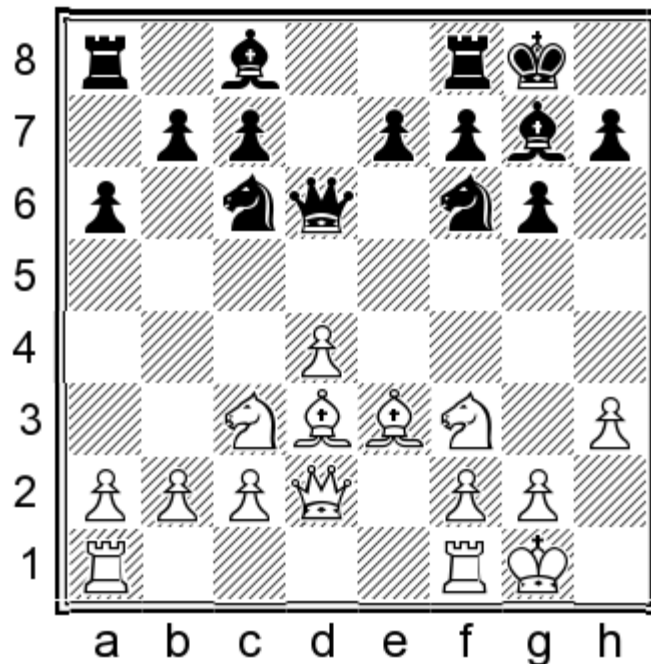
**7...g6!**

White has invested time on preventing ♙g4 and we can use it to fianchetto our king's bishop. Actually, developing the bishop on g7 is principled and it may well be strategically imperative here as the d4-pawn is a target.



**8.0-0 ♙g7 9.♙e3 0-0 10.♚d2**

I have been following the game Niering-Packroff, Germany 2005. At this point I would like to suggest the following continuation:



## 10...e5!=

Liquidating the centre may not be to everyone's taste as the resulting position is rather drawish, but I prefer an equal position to a worse one!

The only reasonable alternative is 10...♙e6 aiming to trade bishops with ♖d7, ♙f5.

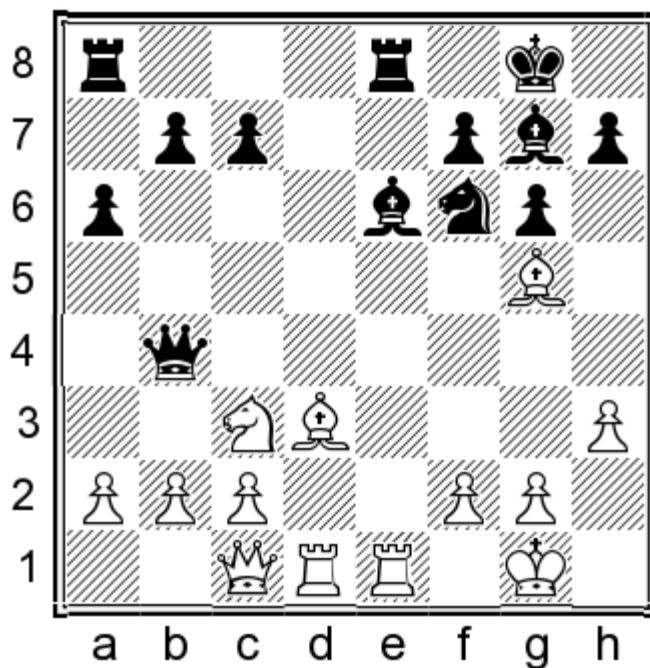
## 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♙xe5 13.♞fe1

In this symmetrical position we need only a couple of accurate moves to complete development:

## 13...♙e6

(or 13...♙d7 14.♞ad1 ♙c6=)

## 14.♙g5 ♙d4 15.♞ad1 ♞fe8 16.♙c1 ♙b4!



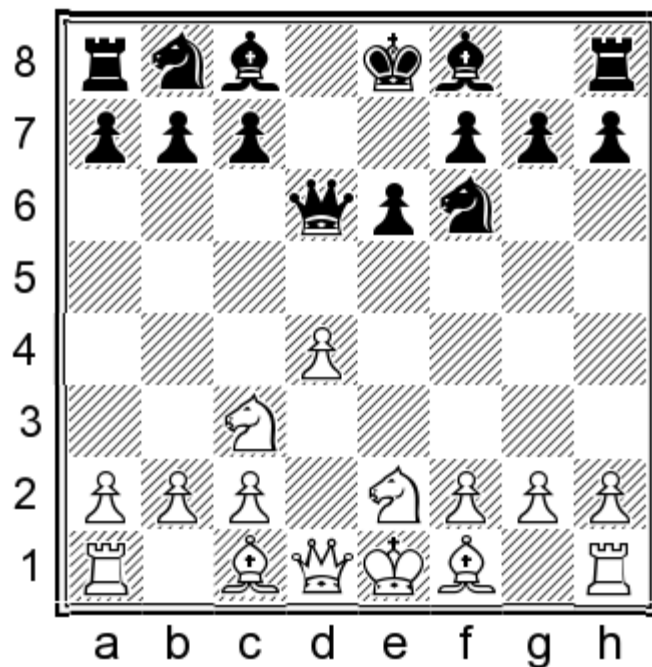
The queen keeps on treading the board, only this time with a deeper idea, to retreat to f8 and enable ...h7-h6, pushing back the annoying ♙g5. Black has completely equalized here.

## G. 5.♘ge2

This move has a clumsy appearance, but it should not be underestimated.

## 5...e6!

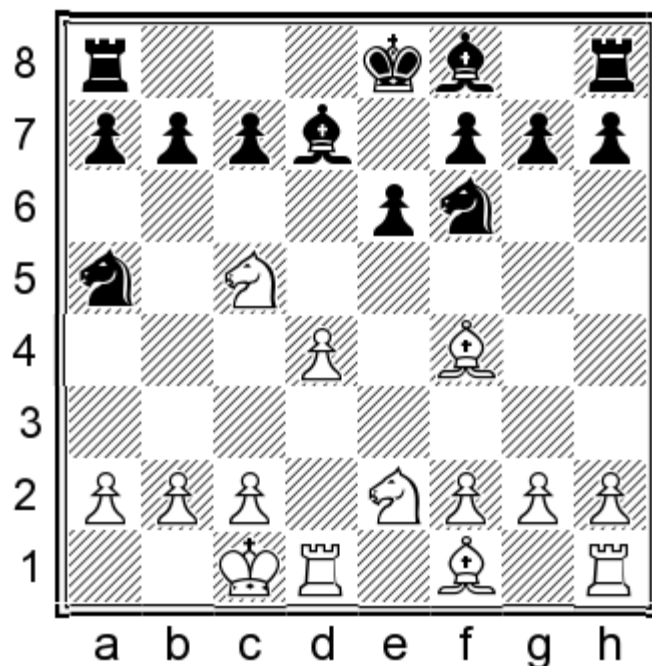
It is of course possible to play ...♙c8-g4, but the text is even better in this particular line. Black's plan is to castle long quickly.



**6. ♖d3**

In the event of 6. ♕f4 ♜b6!? 7. ♜d2 ♕d7! 8. 0-0-0 ♘c6, Black's position looks excellent. A sample line follows:  
 9. ♗a4 ♜a5 10. ♜xa5 ♗xa5 11. ♗c5!?

The greedy 11. ♕xc7? is actually a mistake in view of 11... ♗g4! 12. ♕xa5 ♗xf2 13. ♗ec3 (13. ♗c5 ♕xc5 14. dxc5 ♗xh1 15. ♕e1 0-0-0) 13... ♗xd1 14. ♕xd1 b6 and Black is at least slightly better as he ends up an exchange up.

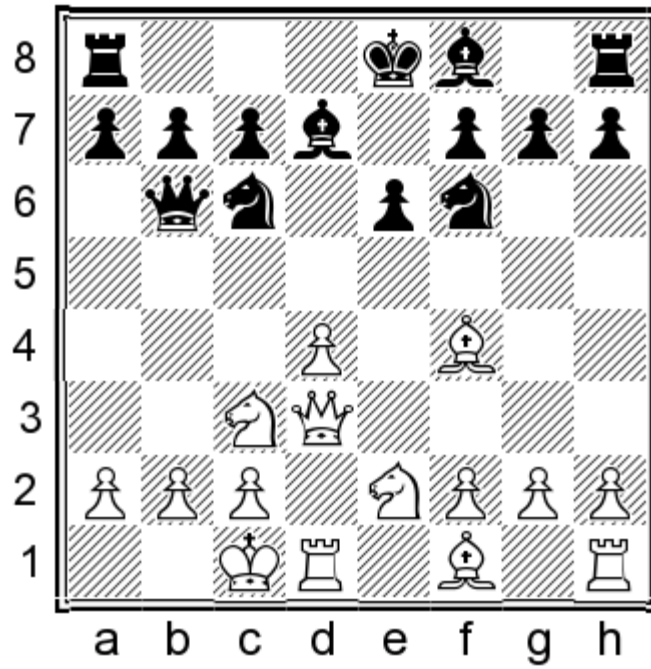


11...0-0-0!?

11... ♕xc5 12. dxc5 0-0-0 13. ♗c3 ♗c6∞ is also playable.

12. ♗xd7 ♜xd7 13. ♕d2 (13. ♗c3 ♕b4=) 13... ♗c6 14. c3 ♕d6 15. ♗g3 ♗e7 and Black should be able to attain equality by either exchanging dark-squared bishops on f4, or carrying out ...c7-c5.

**6... ♕d7 7. ♕f4 ♜b6 8. 0-0-0 ♘c6**



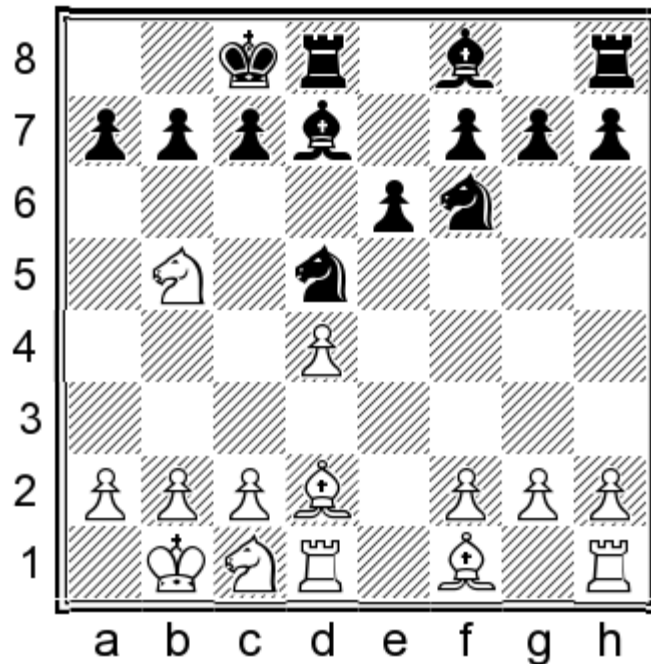
9.♔b1 0-0-0 10.♖b5 ♜xb5 11.♗xb5 ♘e7!

A beautiful tactical idea that assures Black of the advantage. It is much better than the pedestrian 11...♗d5.

12.♗c1

12.♗xc7? ♗g6 13.♙g3 ♗e4+ is the not so obvious point.

12...♗ed5 13.♙d2



13...♗e4 14.♙e1 a6!

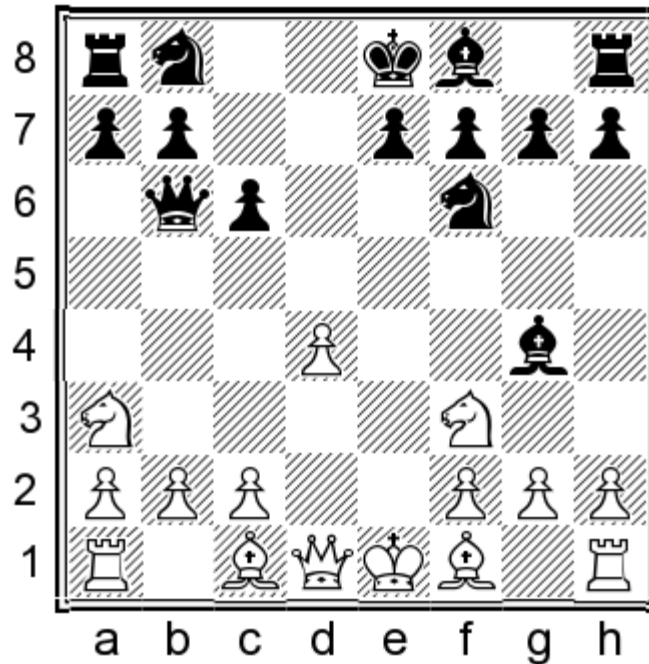
Now White will be saddled with doubled pawns, a weakness that Black exploited impeccably in the game Kosiorek-Malaniuk, Kowalewo Pomorskie 2006. It went 15.♗c3 ♗dxc3+ 16.bxc3 ♙e7 17.♙d3 ♗d6 18.c4 ♙f6 19.c3 ♙c6 20.f3 b5! Converting one advantage into another! Black straightens out the enemy pawn chain in order to conquer the c4-

square for his own pieces! 21.cxb5 axb5 22.♖b3 ♕d5 23.♗g3 ♜c4. Black has a considerable edge and Malaniuk went on to win.

## Chapter 4. 4.d4 ♖f6 without 5.♘f3 Annotated Games

17. Cornejo – M.Zapata  
Mar del Plata 21.06.2009

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♙g4 6.♘b5 ♞b6 7.♘a3 c6



We already know from the “Step by Step” section that Black should keep c6 for his queen in this line. Still, he does not face serious problems even after the text move. I chose this game because it sheds some light on the typical symmetrical structure which arises when Black pushes ...e5.

8.c3 ♘bd7 9.h3 ♙h5 10.♙e2 e6 11.♘c4 ♞c7 12.0-0 ♙xf3?!

This does not make much sense to me. A valuable rule of thumb is “exchange this bishop for the ♘f3 only when you are certain of trading dark-squared bishops as well”. To which I would like to add: “...or if you are absolutely forced to”.

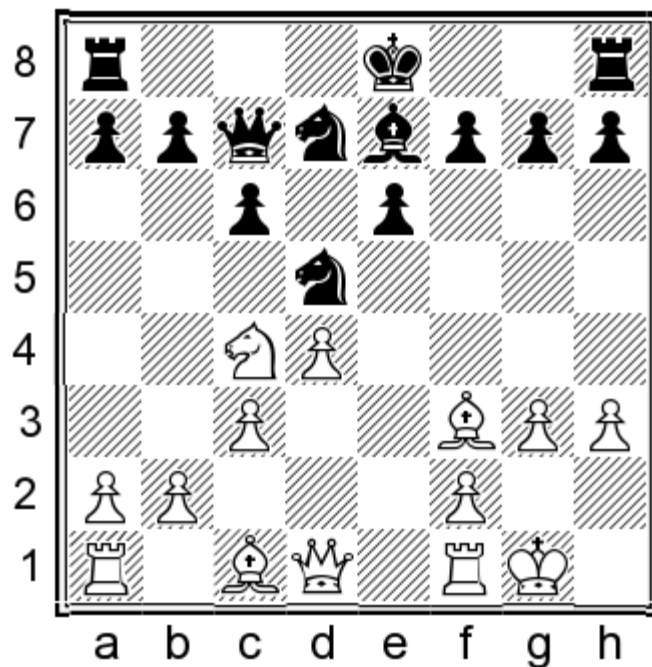
12...♘d5!= was nice and flexible, controlling f4 and preparing to bring the bishop out to e7. If then 13.♙g5,

13.♞e1 ♙e7 14.♘fe5 ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♙d6= is excellent for Black.

Black unloads the position by 13...♙e7 14.♙xe7 ♘xe7 15.♘fe5 ♙xe2 16.♞xe2 0-0 17.♞ad1 ♞ad8 18.♞fe1 ♘xe5

19.♞xe5 (19.dxe5 ♞d5=) 19...♞d7 20.♞h5 ♘g6 21.g3 ♞d5 22.♞e2 c5 23.h4 h6=.

13.♙xf3 ♙e7 14.g3 ♘d5±

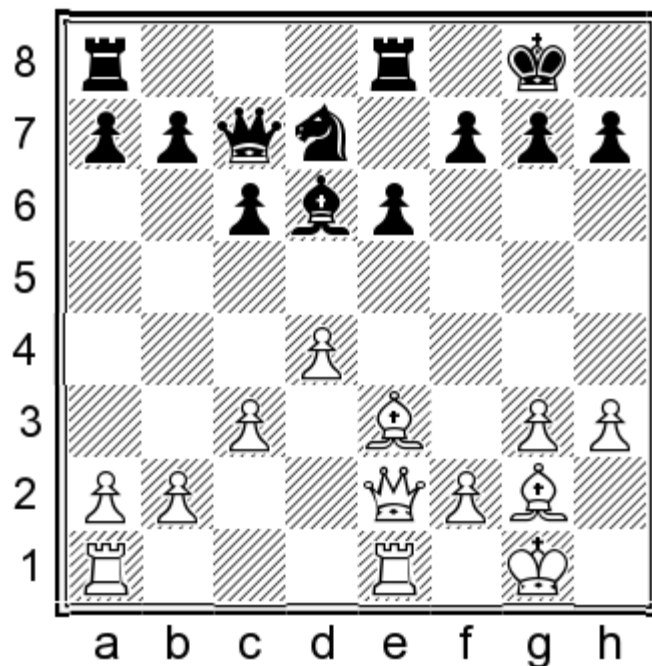


White maintains a slight pull in view of his bishop pair.

15. ♖e2 0-0 16. ♘e3

This exchange seems wrong. I prefer 16.a4 ♜ad8 17. ♖e1 ♘7f6 18. ♘e5 c5 19.dxc5 ♙xc5 20. ♔g2 ♙d6 21. ♙d2 ♜fe8 22. ♜ad1±.

16... ♘xe3 17. ♙xe3 ♜fe8 18. ♙g2 ♙d6 19. ♜fe1



19...e5?!

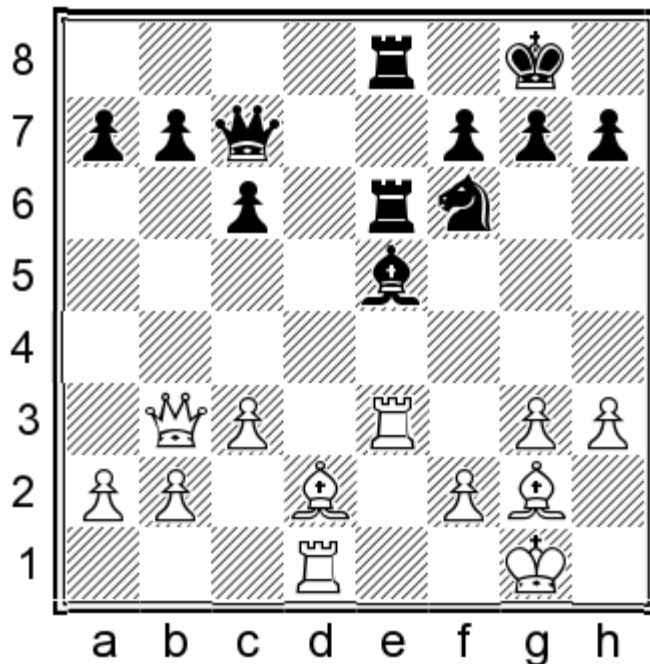
I do not like this so much. When the enemy has a bishop pair, it is better to keep the centre closed. The standard way to treat this structure is 19... ♘f6 20. ♜ad1 b5!? 21.b3 ♜ac8±, when White is slightly better but Black does not have weaknesses.

20.dxe5 ♖xe5 21.♞ad1 ♜f6 22.♞c4 ♞e6 23.♞a4

23.h4 ♞ae8 24.♙h3 ♞6e7 25.♙c5? is strongly met by the brilliant shot 25...♙d4!!—+;

23.f4! ♙d6 24.♙d4 ♞ae8 25.♞xe6 ♞xe6 26.♙f3!± was the way to maintain the grip. In a symmetrical position with a bishop pair you just have to improve your pieces and wait for the opponent's mistakes. Exchanging a pair of rooks would have been a valuable first step, depriving Black of any counterplay.

23...♞ae8 24.♙d2 ♞b6! 25.♞b3 ♞c7 26.♞e3



26...♙d6?!

26...h5!↑ looks slightly favourable for Black now.

27.♞xe6 ♞xe6 28.♞e1 ♞xe1+ 29.♙xe1=

Black has succeeded in exchanging all the rooks and that makes the position a trivial draw.

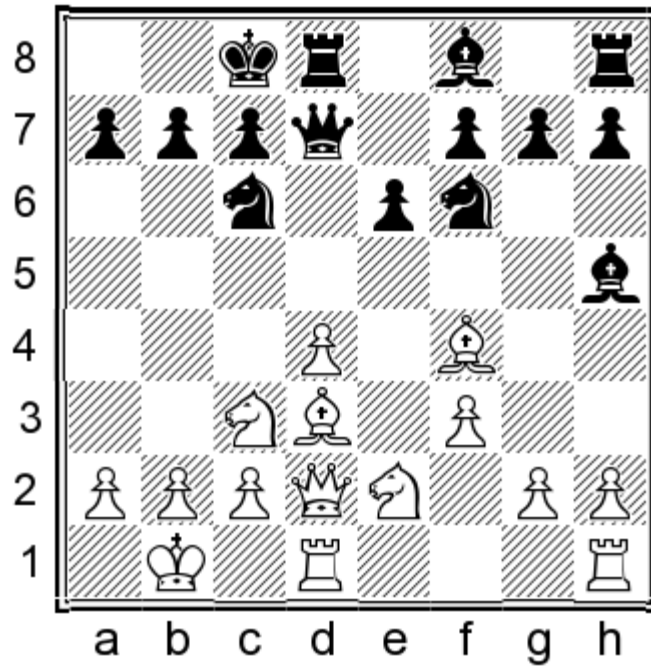
29...♙c5 30.♞c4 ♙b6 31.♞d3 ♞e7 32.♙f1 ♜d7 33.♞e4 ♞xe4 34.♙xe4 g6 35.♙e2 f5 36.♙c2 ♙f7 37.b4 ♜f6 38.♙b3+ ♙e7 39.a4 ♜e4 40.f3 ♜f6 41.g4 fxg4 42.fxg4 ♜d5 43.♙f3 ♙c7 44.c4 ♜f4 45.h4 ♜d3 46.♙c3 ♜e5+ 47.♙xe5 ♙xe5 48.♙e4 Draw.

18. E.Paehz – Tiviakov  
Douglas 06.10.2014

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♜c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♜f6 5.♙d3 ♙g4 6.♜ge2 e6 7.f3 ♙h5 8.♙f4 ♞d7

An important reaction, preparing to castle long. The queen is beyond the scope of White's knights as they cannot reach e5.

9.♞d2 ♜c6 10.0-0-0 0-0-0 11.♙b1



### 11...♙b4!?

Black should, of course, avoid 11...♗xd4?? 12.g4!+-, but other moves are possible:

11...♗b4?! is actually one I do not like so much in view of 12.♙c4!

12.♗b5 ♗xd3 13.♚xd3 a6!= Δ 14.♗xc7?! ♙d6 15.♗a8 ♗d5; 12.♙b5 c6 13.♙a4 ♙g6=.

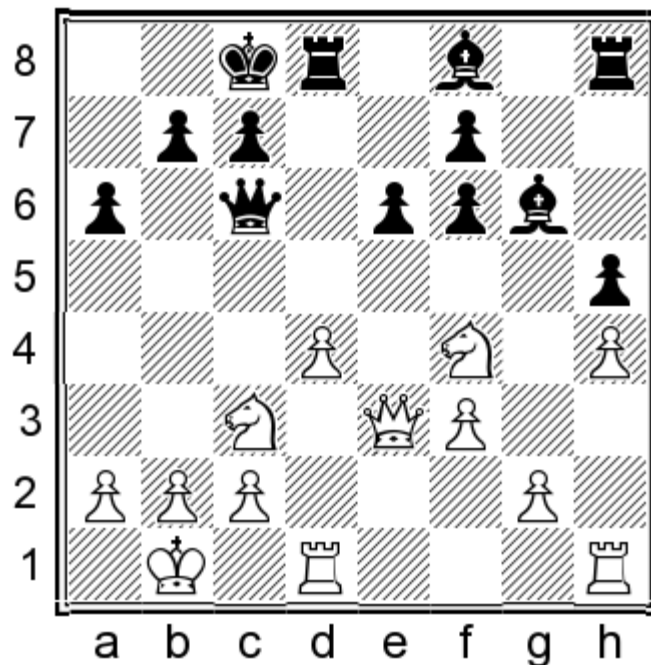
12...♙g6 13.♙b3 ♗b8 14.h4 h6 15.♙e5±.

On the contrary, 11...♙g6 looks excellent. For example, 12.a3 (12.♙c4 ♙d6=) 12...♙d6 13.♙b5 a6 14.♙a4 ♙xf4 15.♚xf4 ♚d6=.

### 12.♙b5

This pin is not dangerous here as White has no way to increase the pressure on c6.

12...a6 13.♙a4 ♙g6 14.♙g5 ♚d6 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♙xc6 ♚xc6 17.♚f4 ♙e7 18.h4 h5 19.♚e3 ♙f8 20.♗f4



20...Rg8

Black seeks to avoid excessive simplification. Simpler was 20...h6 21. gxg6 ex3 22. e7+ with equality.

21.d5!

White does not miss her chance to weaken Black's pawn structure.

21...exd5 22. fxd5 c5

22...b5!? is an interesting method to bring the king to safety and gain space. After 23.a3 b7 24. f4 d6 25. xf6 c4!, Black has considerable compensation for the pawn, one nice point being 26. d4?! xc2+! 27. a1

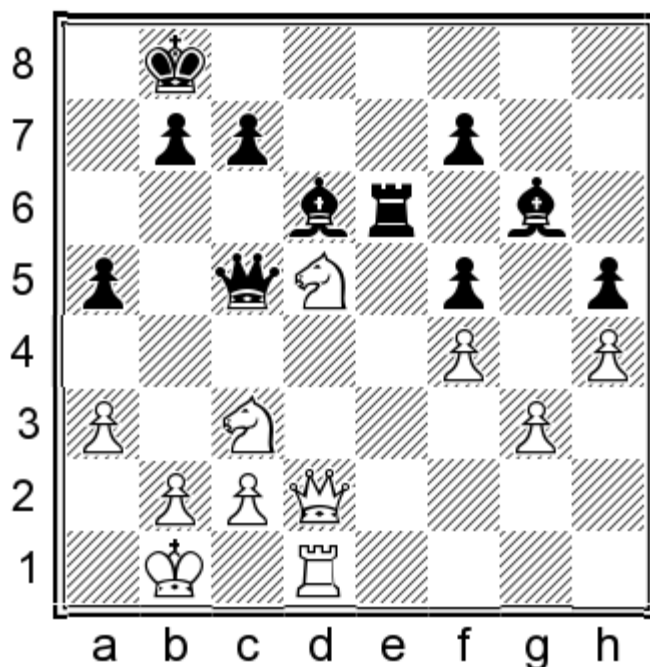
27. xc2? Rxc2+ 28. c1 Bb3 29. d2 Rxd2 30. xd2 Rg8.

27...Bc6 28. Rc1 b3 and Black has the more pleasant game.

23. f4 f5 24. Rhe1

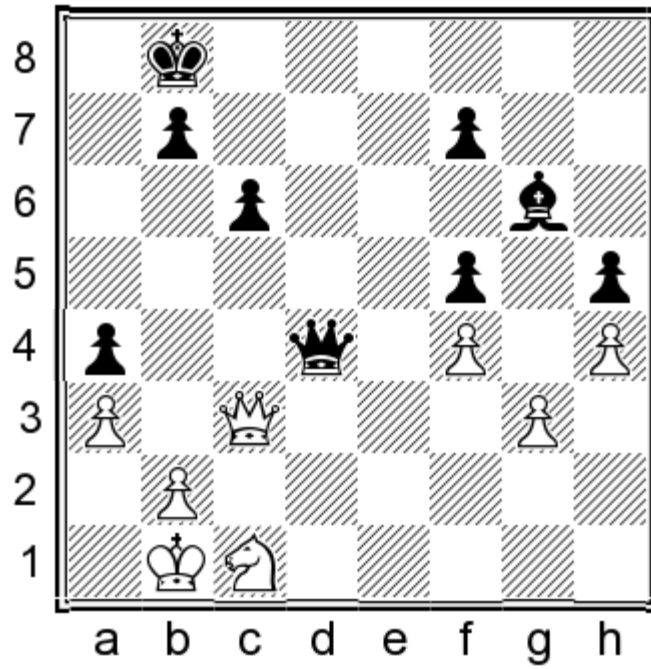
24. d3! d7 25. Rhd1± would have been better.

24...Rge8 25. Bg5 b8 26.a3 a7 27. Rxe8 Rxe8 28. Bf4 d6 29. Bb4+ b8 30.f4 Re6 31.g3 Bc5 32. Bb2 (32. Bh8+!? a7 33.b4!?!±) 32...a5! =



Black has already a slight initiative, but the final result is a draw anyway.

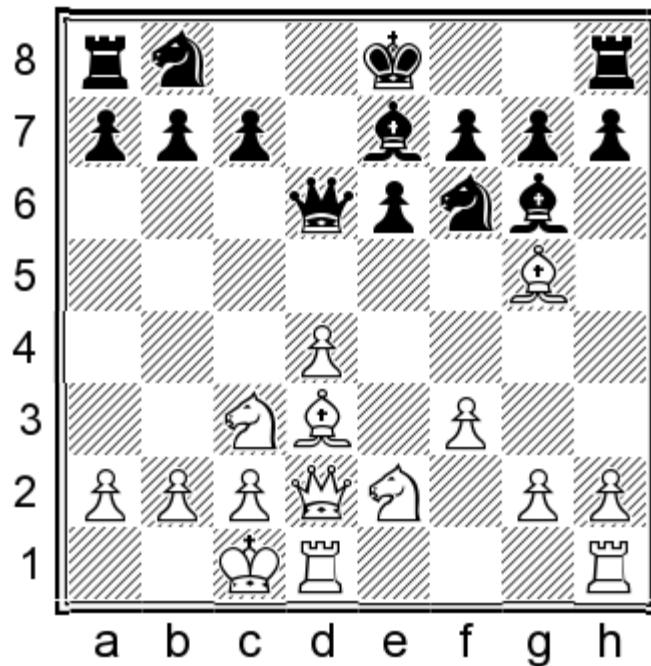
33. e2 c6 34. dc3 c7 35. d4 Re8 36. ce2 b6 37.c3 Bc4 38. c1 a4 39. Re1 Rxe1 40. Bxe1 exd4 41.cxd4 Bxd4 42. Bc3



42...♖xc3 (42...♗e4+!? 43.♔a1 ♕c8!?) 43.bxc3 f6 44.♗d3 b6 45.♗b2! b5 46.c4 ♖b7 47.♕c2 ♖b6 48.♕c3 ♗f7  
 49.cxb5 ♕xb5 50.♗d1 ♕c5 51.♗e3 ♗e6 52.♕d3 ♗a2 53.♕c3 ♗b1 54.♗c4 ♗c2 55.♗e3 ♗e4 56.♗c4 ♗d5 57.♗e3 ♗e6  
 58.♕d3 ♕d6 59.♗d1 c5 60.♗c3 ♗b3 61.♗b5+ ♕c6 62.♗c3 Draw.

19. Kislinsky – Babula  
 Kouty nad Desnou 16.05.2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♗c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗d3 ♗g4 6.♗ge2 e6 7.f3 ♗h5 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♗d2 ♗g6 10.0-0-0



10...♗xd3?!

Vlastimil is a strong positional player, but this is an inaccuracy. It helps White improve his queen and encourages a capture on f6 later on.

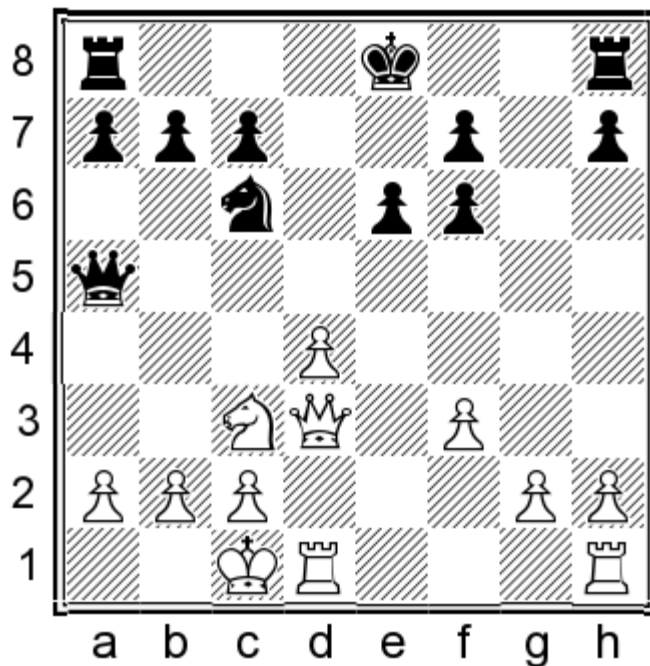
10...♗c6! = is best. Then 11.♗xg6 hxg6 12.♗xf6 would be rather pointless due to 12...gxf6! 13.d5 ♗e5⇒.

11. ♖xd3 ♜c6 12. ♕xf6! ♕xf6

White gets an unpleasant initiative as Black could not recapture with the pawn – 12...gxf6? 13.d5 ♜e5 (13...exd5 14. ♖xd5± leaves Black with a gaping hole on f5.) 14. ♖b5+ c6 15. ♖xb7 ♜b8 16. ♜e4!± highlights the drawback of Black's move 10. It was bad to drag White's queen to d3.

13. ♜e4 ♖e7

Better was 13... ♖d5!? 14. ♜2c3 ♖a5 15. ♜xf6+ gxf6

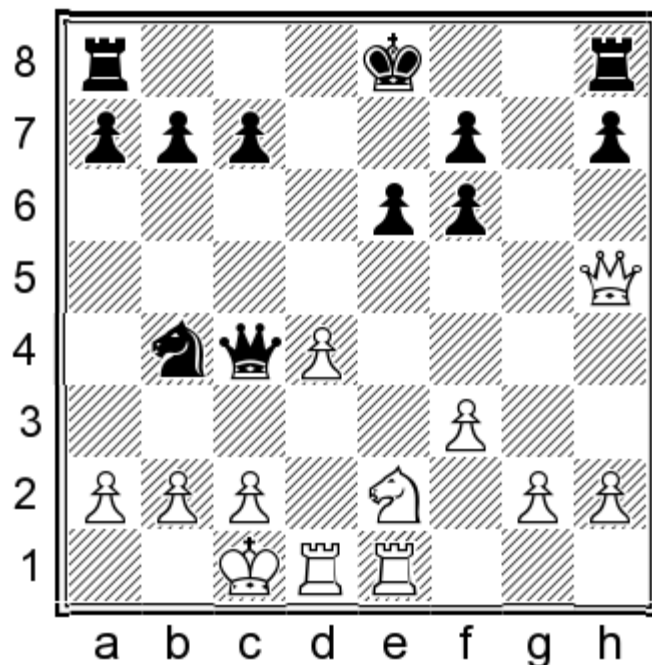


16.d5 0-0-0 17.a3 ♜e7 18. ♖d4! ♜xd5 19. ♜xd5 ♖xd5 20. ♖xa7 ♖g5+ 21. ♜b1 c6 22.g3± with just a small edge for White.

14. ♖b5

14.c3!± makes the bishop look awkward on f6. It would have definitely been my choice in this position because it also kills any counterplay against the white king.

14... ♖b4 15. ♜xf6+ gxf6 16. ♖h5! ♖c4 17. ♜he1 ♜b4



Black was undoubtedly counting on this attack, but White could have obtained an advantage here with 18.c3!! For example, 18...0-0-0

18...♞xa2+? 19.♠b1± is bad for the second player as both ♖h5-a5 and d4-d5 are threatened.

18...♞d3+?? is even worse due to 19.♞xd3 ♖xd3 20.♞f4+-.

19.b3 (19.♖xf7!? ♞d6!?) 19...♞d3+ 20.♠b1 ♖a6 21.♞g1 ♞e5 22.c4 ♞g6 (22...♞xc4 23.bxc4 ♖xc4 24.♞d2±) 23.♖h6± and Black is worse as the ♞g6 is misplaced while at the same time White controls more space.

After the text, the game continued:

18.♞c3?! ♞xa2+

Now the game rolls away to a draw.

19.♞xa2 ♖xa2 20.♖b5+ c6 21.♖xb7 0-0 22.♖e7 ♞ab8 23.♖a3 ♖xa3 24.bxa3= Draw.

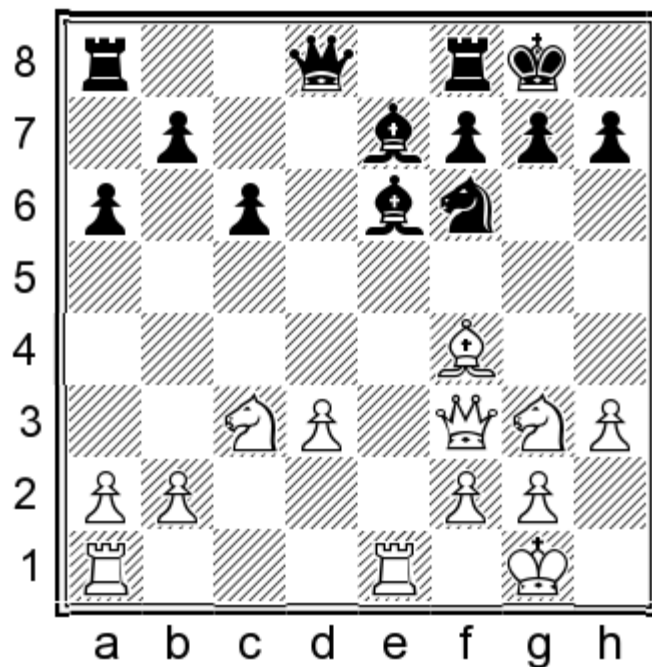
The players decided not to test each other's technique.

**20. Savic – N. Ostojic**  
**Vrnjacka Banja 11.11.2009**

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♞c3 ♖d6 4.d4 ♞f6 5.h3!? a6!? 6.♞d3

I believe we should not fear this move as now we have the chance to play for ...e7-e5.

6...♞c6! 7.♞ge2 e5! 8.dxe5 ♞xe5 9.♞f4 ♞xd3+ 10.cxd3 ♖d8 11.0-0 ♞e7 12.♞g3 0-0 13.♖f3 c6 14.♞fe1 ♞e6=



Black has completely equalized. He has the bishop pair and d3 is weak. White balances that with pressure down the e-file and a more active queen.

**15. ♖e2!**

The immediate 15. ♗e5 allows 15... ♘d7!

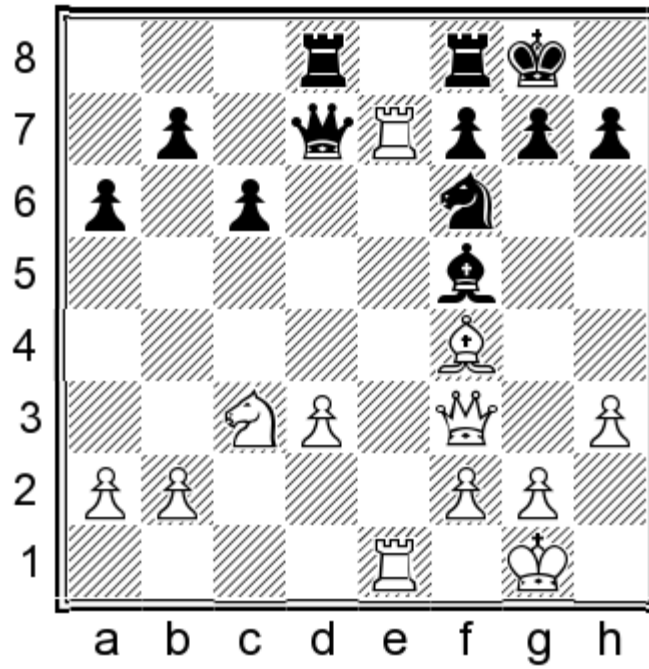
**15... ♗d7 16. ♖ae1!**

16. ♗e5 ♖ad8 17. d4 ♘d5 18. ♖ae1 is answered by 18... f6! 19. ♗b8! ♗f7 20. ♘f5 ♗b4! 21. ♗g3 ♗g6 22. ♘xd5 ♖xd5 23. ♘e7+ ♗xe7 24. ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 25. ♖xe7 ♖f7 26. ♖e8+ ♖f8 27. ♖8e7 7=.

**16... ♖ad8!**

16... ♖ae8 17. ♗e5 leaves Black slightly cramped.

**17. ♘f5 ♗xf5 18. ♖xe7**



### 18...♖xd3?

A critical moment of the game. After a perfectly played opening, Black slips gravely. As easy as 18...♖fe8!= seems, we could just as easily overlook it. White has nothing better than 19.♖xd7 ♖xe1+ 20.♔h2 ♖xd7 21.♙g5 (21.♙d2?! ♖xd3!?) 21...♙g6 22.♗f4!?

22.♙xf6 ♖xd3±;

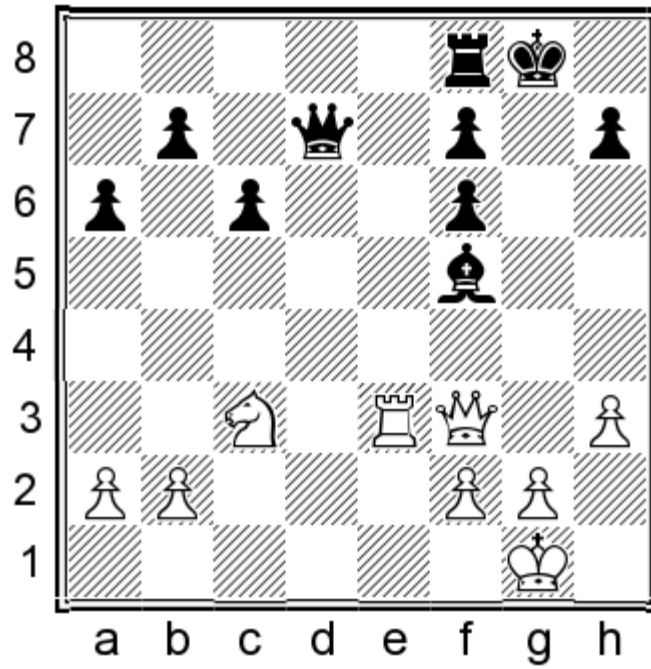
22.♗g3 ♔h8=.

22...h5 23.♙xf6 gxf6 24.♘e4 ♙xe4 25.dxe4 ♔g7 26.♗h4 ♖e2 27.♗xh5 ♖dd2=.

### 19.♖1e3↑

Now White obtains a lasting initiative which he eventually converted into a full point. 19.♗xd3 ♙xd3 20.♖xb7± is also not a trivial draw because of Black's weak pawns.

19...♗c2 20.♖e2 ♗d3 21.♖7e3 ♗d7 22.♙g5!?! ♖de8 23.♙xf6 ♖xe3 24.♖xe3 gxf6



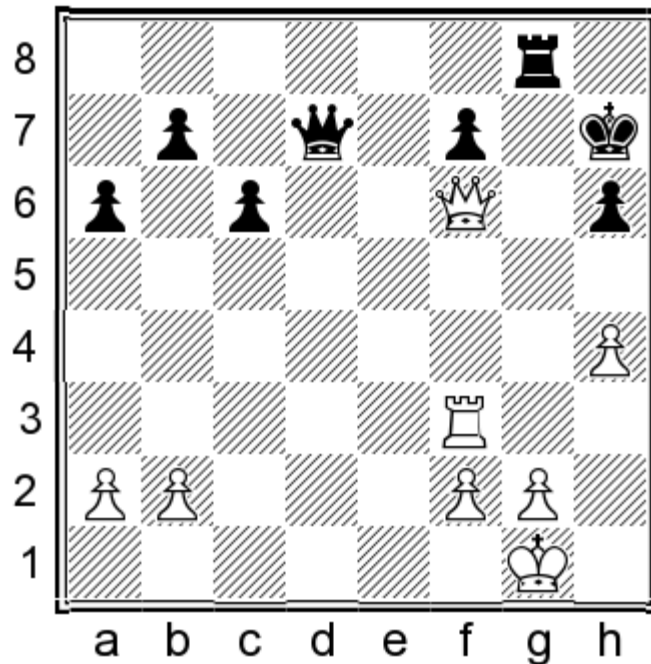
**25.h4!?**

Objectively stronger was 25.g4 ♔g6 26.♚xf6 ♖e8 27.♗xe8+ ♚xe8 28.h4 h6 29.♔g2±.

**25...h6 26.♚f4 ♔h7 27.♗f3 ♔g6?**

27...♔g4!= would have held. White cannot play 28.♖e4? in view of 28...♚d1+ 29.♔h2 ♔xf3 30.gxf3 ♖d8±.

**28.♖e4! ♔xe4 29.♚xe4+ ♔g7 30.♗g3+ ♔h8 31.♚f4 ♔h7 32.♚xf6 ♖g8 33.♗f3!±**



This move completely ties Black and forces a won ending.

**33...♖g7 34.♔h2! ♚d5 35.a4! ♚e4 36.a5**

Petrifying the other flank, too.

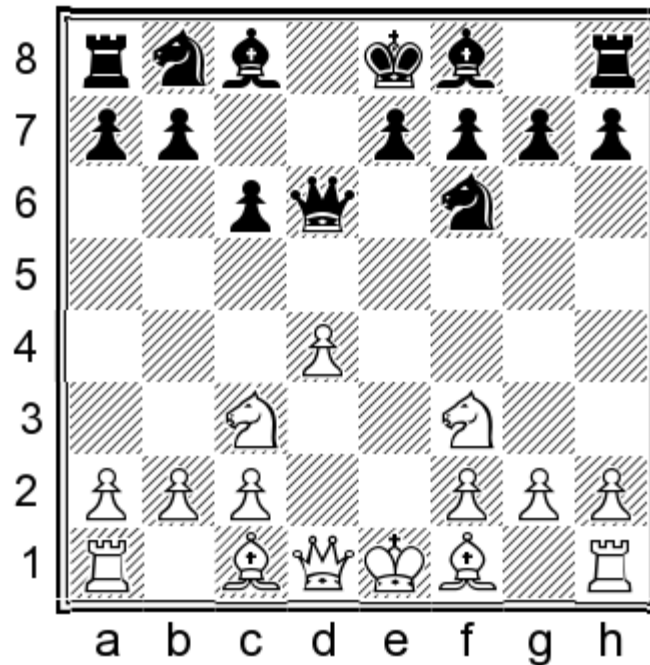
36...♖g6 37.g3 ♗xf6 38.♖xf6

It is hard to believe, but Black is really helpless owing to the tremendous activity of White's rook (or Black's passivity, if you prefer putting it that way!).

38...h5 39.♔g2 ♔g8 40.♖f5 ♖g6 41.♖xh5+- ♖d6 42.♖g5+ ♔h7 43.♖g4 ♖d5 44.♖b4 ♖xa5 45.♖xb7 ♔g7 46.g4 c5 47.♔g3 ♖a4 48.b3 ♖d4 49.♖a7 ♖d3+ 50.♔f4 ♖xb3 51.♖xa6 ♖b4+ 52.♔g5 ♖d4 53.f4 c4 54.♖c6 f6+ 55.♔f5 ♔f7 56.♖c7+ ♔e8 57.h5 ♔d8 58.♖c5 ♔d7 1-0

# Chapter 5. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 Rare 6th Moves Main Ideas

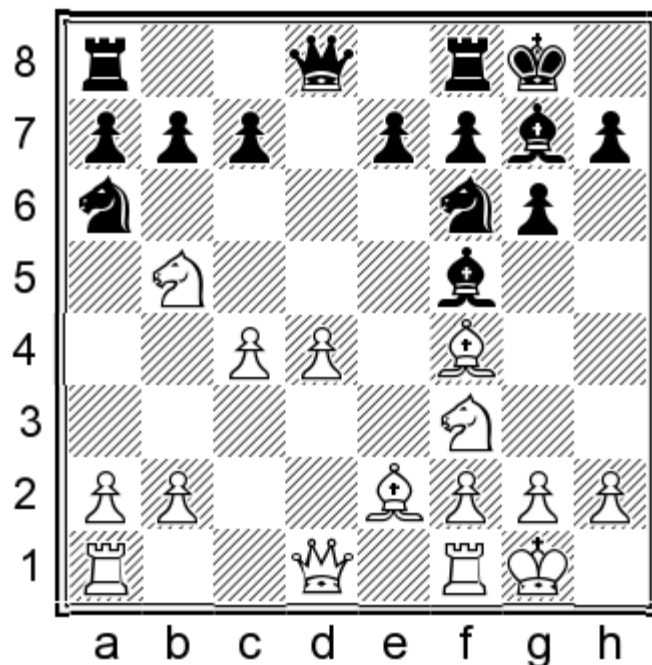
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6



We are now in the 3...♜d6 main line. I decided to suggest this system because it is natural and safe. I did not want to build a repertoire based on 5...a6 because I intuitively felt we should bolster the d5 square and shorten the h1-a8 diagonal.

Since White did not waste any time on prophylactic moves, I thought that we could not afford the risk to play ...♘b8-c6 anymore. Thus our normal developing moves should be ...♙c8-g4(f5) and ...♘b8-d7, followed up by ...e6.

Recently the set-up with 5...g6 has become very fashionable. After 6.♘b5! ♜d8 (6...♜b6 compares unfavourably to Chapter 4/line A since the insertion of ♘f3 g6 deprives Black of his main counterattacking resource ...e5) 7.♙f4 ♘a6 8.c4 ♙g7 9.♙e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♙f5,



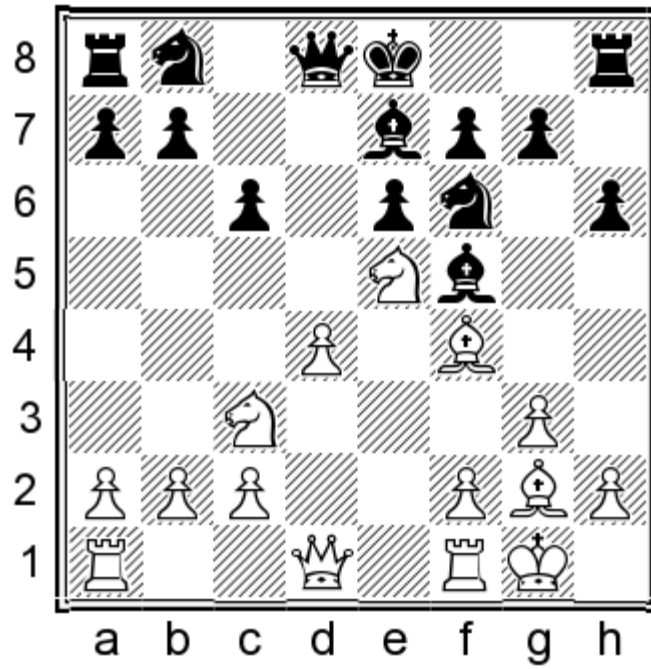
Black will soon play ...c6 to reach a seemingly similar pawn structure with our first diagram. A closer look, however, will discover significant distinctions. Black's dark-squared bishop looks active on g7. Moreover, it protects well the kingside thus eliminating White's most aggressive plans with f4+g4. The flipside is a passive stand on the queenside. My suggested repertoire is more double-edged and offers chances for active counterplay. It is based on a fight for the central light squares and pressure down the d-file. The strategic motifs may vary from a pure blockade with ...b5 to well timed pawn breaks.

After 5...c6, White's main choices are 6.h3 and 6.♘e5. I devoted to them the next three chapters. We will deal here with some lesser options which are by no means to be underestimated. In fact, understanding how to deal with them is a useful tool for understanding the Scandinavian in general.

### A. 6.g3 ♘f5!

You may ask: "why not 6...♘g4"? Indeed, this is our weapon of choice against the Scandinavian, but it is not effective against White's fianchetto. The reason is that h3+g4 and probably f4 would be awkward for us. Conversely, if White had ♘d3, then h3+g4 would only help us trade the enemy bishop.

7.♘g2 h6! 8.0-0 e6 9.♘f4 ♚d8 10.♘e5 ♘e7



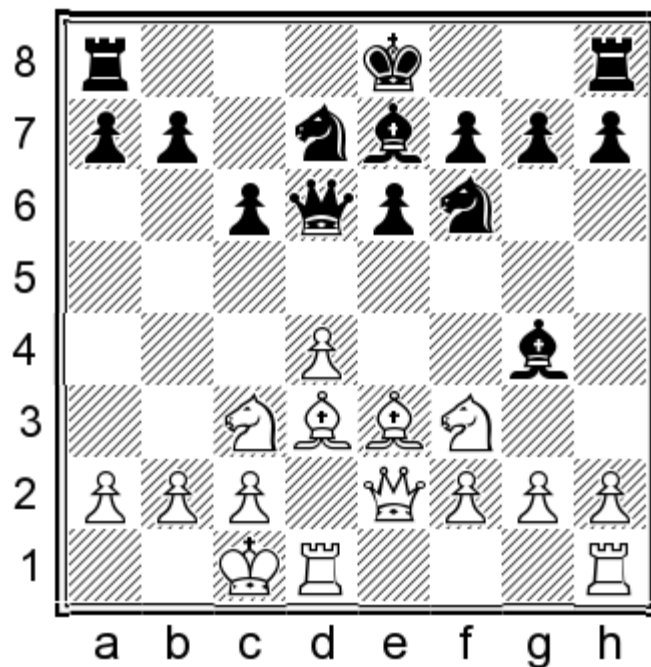
We see a typical Scandinavian position – slightly cramped, but sturdy. I guess that around here most White’s players get annoyed with their ♖g2 biting on granite. Look at **Game 21** Ali-Tiviakov, Jakarta 2015, and **Game 22** Mannion-Tiviakov, to get a better idea.

Perhaps the only concrete line you should memorize is 11.g4 ♕h7 12.♕g3 ♖bd7 13.f4 when 13...♗xe5! 14.fxe5 ♗d5 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♚e2 0-0 is equal.

**B. 6.♕d3 ♕g4! 7.♕e3**

We should not hesitate to take the pawn after 7.h3!? ♕xf3 8.♚xf3 ♚xd4 9.♕e3 ♚b4 – see **Game 23** Areshchenko-Karpov, rapid Kiev 2013.

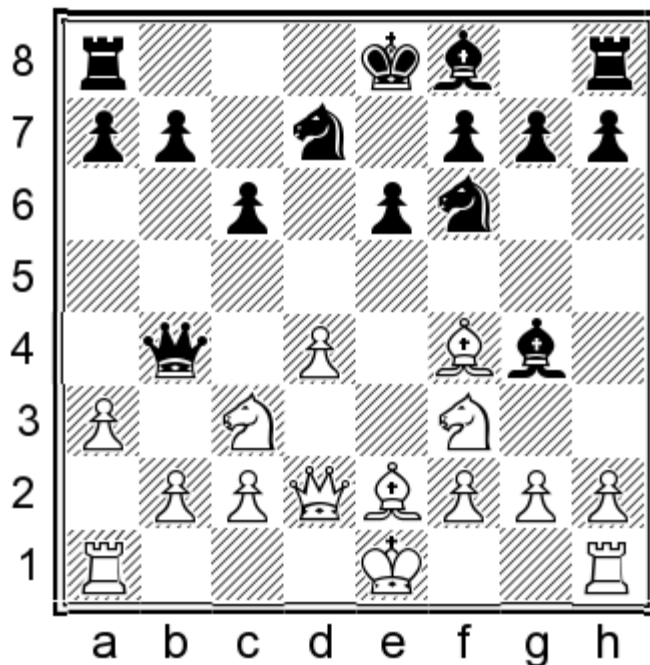
**7...♗bd7 8.♚e2 e6 9.0-0 ♕e7**



We have escaped most opening's landmines and our future plan includes trading a couple of minor pieces and castling long – in this order! We can also strengthen our control over the light squares by ...b5.

Note that in the event of 10.♖b1 ♘d5! 11.♘xd5, we should recapture by 11...♙xd5! in order to keep our pawn chain more flexible and cripple the enemy's kingside with ...♙xf3.

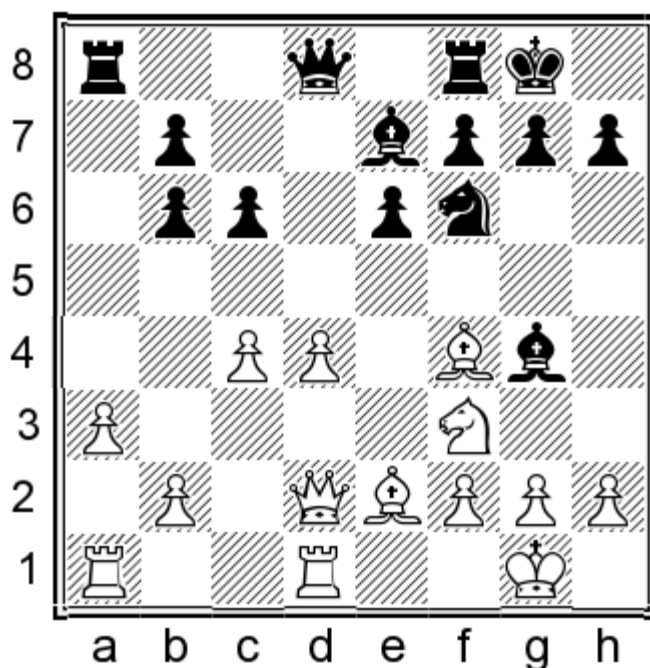
C. 6.♙g5 ♙g4! 7.♙e2 ♘bd7 8.♙d2 e6 9.♙f4 ♙b4 10.a3 (or we'll play ...♙d6)



A critical position. Both retreats are possible and the choice should depend on your taste.

Perhaps simplest is 10...♙a5 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♙fe1 0-0 13.h3 ♙h5 14.b4 ♙d8 15.♘a4 when 15...♘d5! 16.♙h2 ♙xf3! equalises – see **Game 24** Al. Kovacevic-Radibratovic, Herceg Novi 2001.

10...♙b6 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♘a4! ♙d8 13.c4 0-0 14.♙fd1 ♘b6 15.♘xb6 axb6!? is my main line.

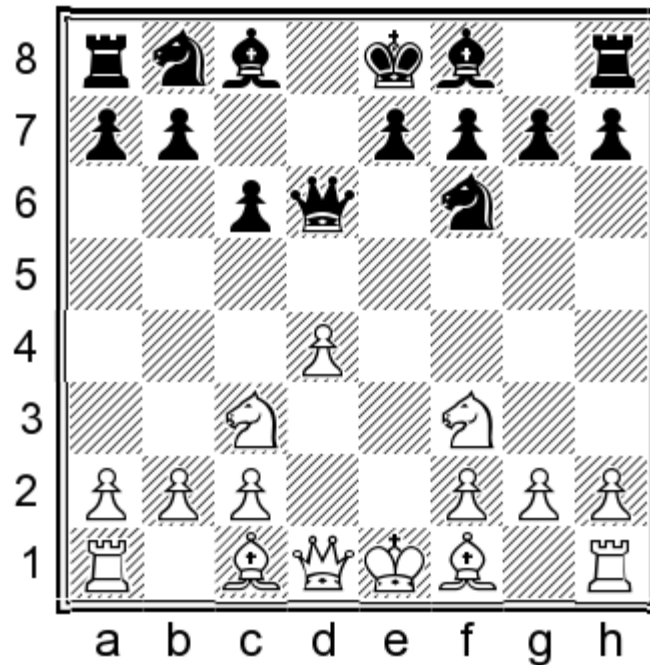


It is based on a future ...b5, gaining control over the centre. In many lines Black obtains nice play against an isolated d4-

pawn even at the cost of a small material deficit.

# Chapter 5. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 Rare 6th Moves Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♘c3 ♖d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6



This prophylactic move controls both critical squares b5 and d5 and prepares to bring the bishop out to g4. Also possible is the system with ...a7-a6. In my view however, White can then reply with g2-g3 and obtain a slight advantage.

A. 6.g3; B. 6.♗d3; C. 6.♗g5;

6.♗c4 ♗g4 transposes to a note to 5.♗c4 from the previous chapter – 7.♗e3 (7.0-0 e6 8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.h3 ♗h5=) 7...♘bd7 8.h3 ♗h5.

6.♗e2 ♗g4 transposes to Chapter 4/ line B.

A. 6.g3

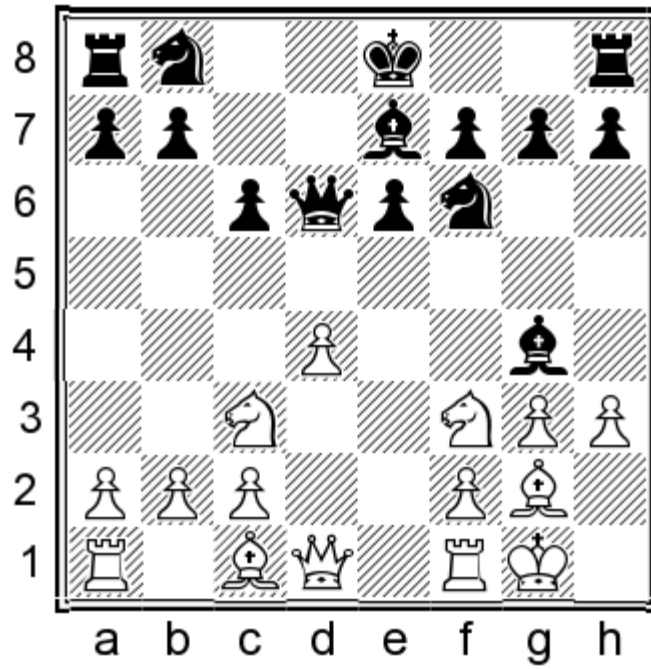
is a move we shouldn't be afraid of as the pawn on c6 already presents an obstacle to White's intended activity along the h1-a8 diagonal. Play could proceed as follows:

6...♗f5

Tiviakov has recently switched to this move, and I believe it to be best. 6...♗g4 is also possible. 7.♗g2 e6

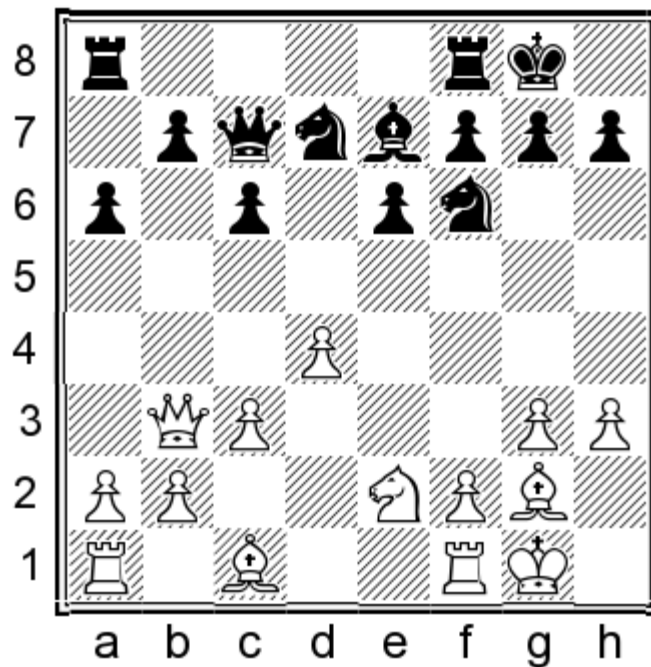
7...g6!? 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.♗f4 ♗d8± is another possibility, but White still keeps a slight pull.

8.0-0 ♗e7 9.h3

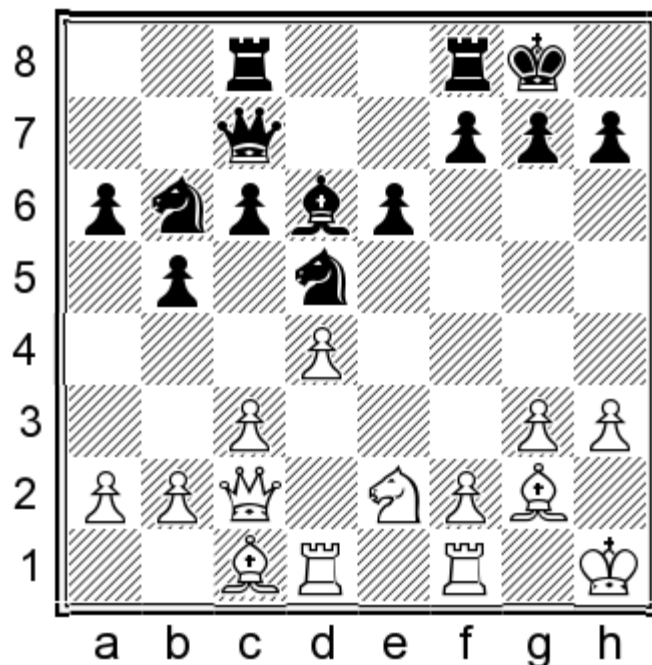


9...♙xf3 10.♙xf3 0-0 11.♘e4!

Favoured by the engines and best, in spite of the fact that exchanges relieves Black's defence. 11.♘e2 has been a popular retort, but I consider it less efficient. After 11...♚c7 12.c3 ♘bd7 13.♙g2 a6 14.♚b3, White still has the bishop pair, but he lacks clear targets.



14...b5!? 15.♙d2?!. Too slow. (15.a4! ♘b6 16.♙f4 ♙d6 17.♙xd6 ♚xd6 18.axb5 axb5 19.♘f4 would have been more to the point, eyeing the weak square c5. However, even then, after 19...♘fd5 20.♘d3 g6±=, it is really very hard for White to make progress.) 15...♘b6 16.♚c2 ♚ac8. Black has removed any potential target from the long diagonal. 17.♚ad1 ♘fd5 18.♙c1 ♙d6 19.♖h1



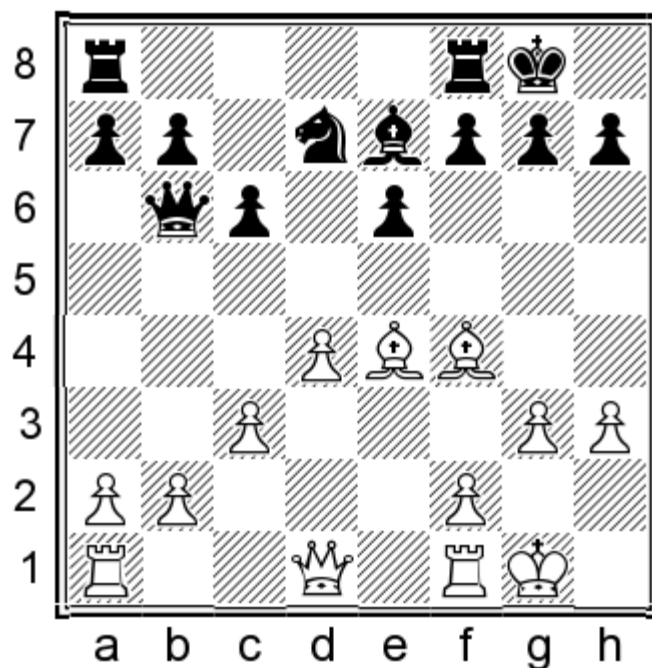
19...c5 20.dxc5 ♖xc5=. Black had the more comfortable side of equality in Van Kampen-Tiviakov, Montreal 2014.

11...♗xe4 12.♙xe4 ♗d7 13.♙f4!

The most annoying move. After 13.c4?! as played in Stefansson-Danielsen, Reykjavik 2013, best seems 13...♞ad8 14.♙f4 ♜b4 15.b3 ♗f6 16.♙c2 c5⇒ and Black's central counterplay is just in time.

13...♜b4 14.c3! ♜b6

14...♜xb2? 15.♞b1 ♜xc3 16.♞b3 ♜a5 17.♞xb7 ♗f6 18.♙xc6± is bad.



15.♙c2!?

A strong computer move. 15.♜b3 ♗f6 16.♙f3 ♗d5 17.♙d2 ♞fd8 18.♞fe1 ♞d7 19.♜xb6 axb6 20.a4 g6= is okay for Black.

15...♗f6 16.♜d3 ♞fd8 17.♙e5 g6 18.♞ab1

I spent a few hours on this position, but I could not find full equality. White's bishop pair gives him a pull. The

best I could recommend for Black was:

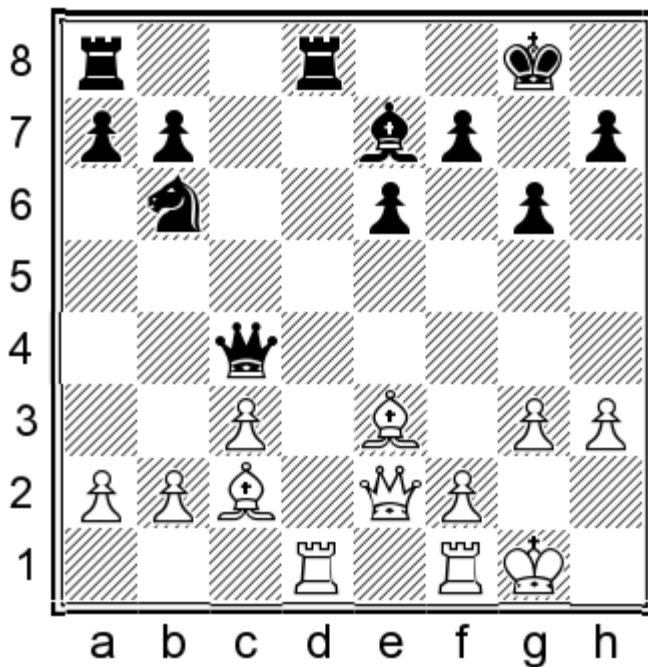
18...c5

18...♞d5 is less good because after 19.♞f3 ♞a5 (19...f6 20.♞f4 ♞xf4 21.♞xf4 ♞g7 22.♞fe1 ♞d6 23.♞f3↑ and White will start pushing his h-pawn.) 20.♞b3 ♞d6 21.♞fe1↑. White has a dream attacking position with his h-pawn ready to march.

19.dxc5 ♞xc5 20.♞e2 ♞d7 21.♞d4 ♞c7 22.♞e3! ♞b6!?

22...♞f6 23.♞bd1 ♞d5 24.♞c1± is a position I would like to avoid as the bishops might show their strength on an open board.

23.♞bd1 ♞c4 (23...♞c4 24.♞f4! e5 25.♞c1 is better for White), but even here,



after 24.♞f3! (24.♞xc4 ♞xc4 25.♞c1 f5= is close to equal) 24...♞xa2 25.♞xb7 ♞f6 26.♞f3 ♞g7 27.♞e4±, White has annoying pressure and Black faces an uphill struggle to draw. I believe that Tiviakov has felt or discovered all this and that was the reason he has switched to 6...♞f5!.

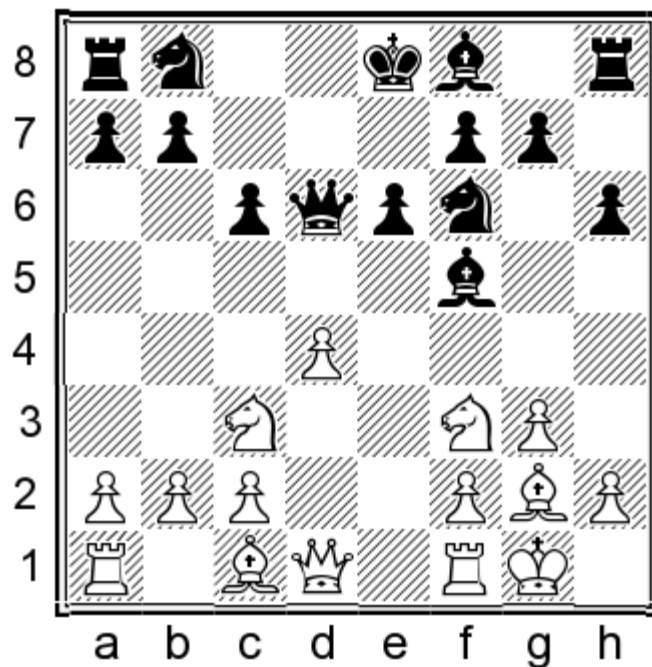
### 7.♞g2

The plan with long castling is double-edged – 7.♞f4 ♞d8 8.♞d3 ♞xd3 9.♞xd3 e6 10.0-0-0 ♞e7 11.♞b1 0-0 12.h4 ♞bd7 13.h5 when we should not offer White a lever with ...h6. Instead, we can launch a counter-offensive with 13...a5.

### 7...h6!

This is more accurate than 7...e6 8.♞h4!?! ♞g4 9.♞d3 ♞e7?! (I prefer 9...♞a6! to force a3, gaining a tempo on development.) 10.h3 ♞h5 11.g4 (11.♞f4!) 11...♞g6 12.♞xg6 hxg6 13.♞d2, Palac-Jovanovic, Porec 2016, when 13...♞bd7 14.♞e2 ♞c7 15.0-0-0 b5 reaches a typical safe position.

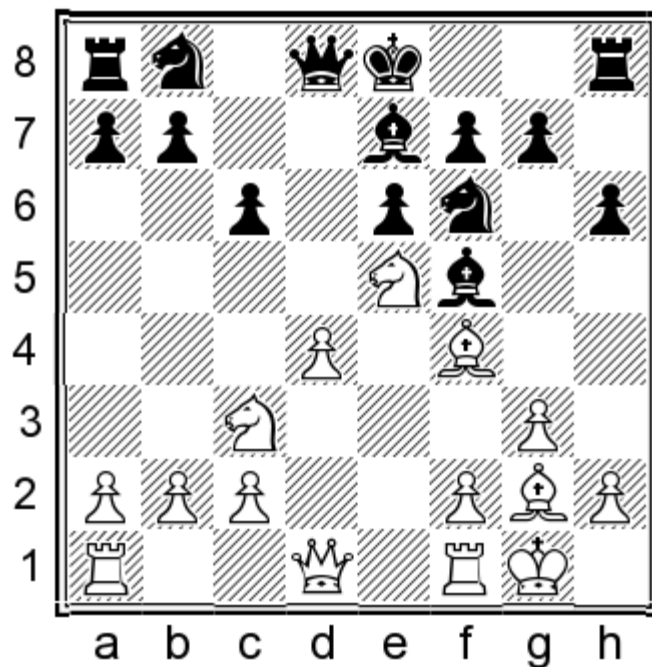
### 8.0-0 e6



9.♙f4

Sergei recently faced 9.a3 which is apparently meant to prevent ...♗b4, but in this particular case we retreat to d8 anyway since White has already castled short. **Game 21** Ali-Tiviakov, Jakarta 2015, went 9...♙e7 10.♙f4 ♗d8 11.♗e2 0-0 12.♖fd1 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♗c8 14.♗ac1 ♗e8 15.h3 ♘d5=.

9...♗d8 10.♘e5 ♙e7

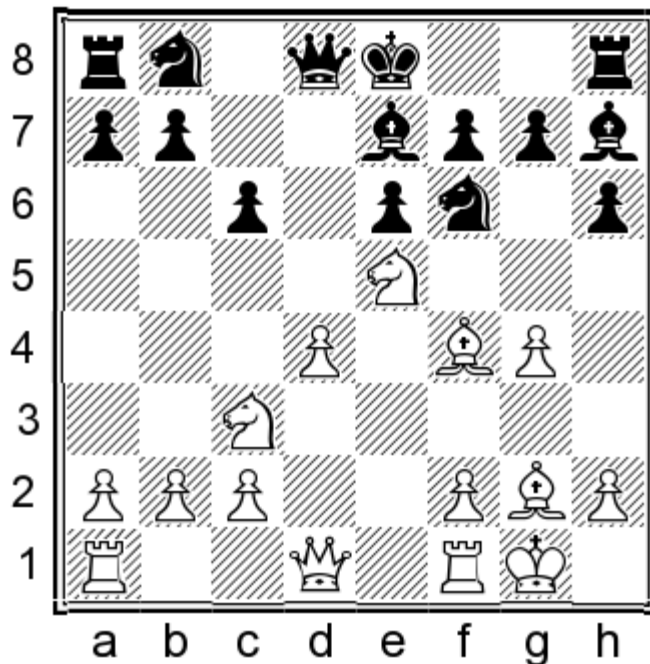


11.♗d2

Alekseev's choice, but it does not strike me as anything special. In fact the position is more or less balanced. Tivi obtained another victory after 11.♗e1 0-0 12.h3?! ♘bd7, see **Game 22** Mannion-Tiviakov, Douglas 2014. It is clear that Black is already better in view of his superior centre and the powerful ♙h7.

11. ♖e2!? is just a trap, the point being 11... ♜xd4? 12. ♝ad1 (12. ♘b5!?±) 12... ♜b6 (12... ♜c5 13. g4 ♙h7 14. ♘c4+-) 13. ♘c4 ♜a6 14. ♙d6 ♘bd7 15. ♙xe7 ♙xe7 16. b4 ♘b6 17. b5 cxb5 18. ♘d6±. Correct is 11... 0-0 12. ♝ad1 ♘bd7=.

Sharpest alternative is 11. g4 ♙h7



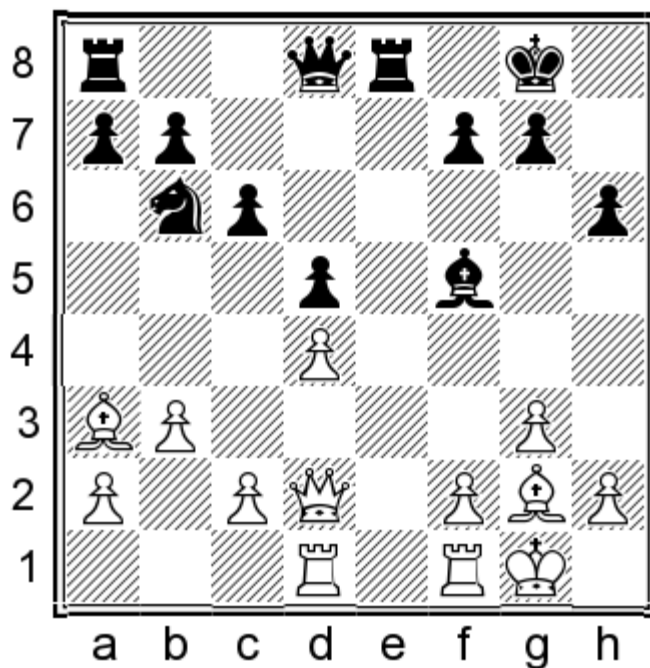
12. ♙g3

Preparing f2-f4. White's set-up resembles the Shirov plan from Chapter 7, but with a tempo down on g2-g3-g4.

Besides, the ♙h7 defends well Black's kingside. Instead, 12. h3 0-0 13. ♜d2 ♘bd7 14. ♝ad1 lacks any positional sense. Black would be fine with 14... ♙b4 or 14... ♘xe5.

12... ♘bd7 13. f4 ♘xe5! 14. fxe5 ♘d5 15. ♘xd5 exd5 16. ♜e2 0-0=. Black is planning to trade dark-squared bishops with ... ♙h4 and White cannot prevent it with 17. ♜f2?! due to 17... f6!±.

11... 0-0 12. ♝ad1 ♘bd7 13. ♘c4 ♘d5 14. ♘xd5 exd5 15. ♘d6 ♙xd6 16. ♙xd6 ♝e8 17. ♙a3 ♘b6 18. b3=



The stem game went 18... ♜d7 19. ♝fe1 ♙h3 20. ♙h1 ♜f5 21. f3 h5 22. ♙f2 ♘d7= and the players drew after a long

struggle in Alekseev-Tiviakov, St Petersburg 2012. An endgame would be totally equal so 18...♔g5 deserved attention.

### B. 6.♕d3

is a very logical continuation. The bishop is eyeing both flanks from d3 and it leaves e2 free for the queen. Thus White could castle long.

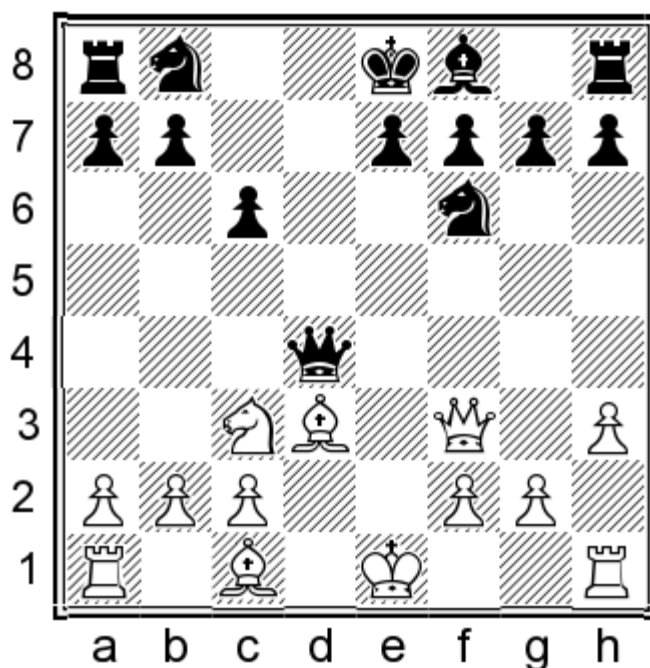
### 6...♕g4

Highlighting the only disadvantage of White's last move as d4 is now hanging.

### 7.♕e3

Preparing ♖d1-e2 and 0-0-0.

It is also possible to sacrifice the d-pawn by 7.h3!? ♕xf3 8.♖xf3 ♗xd4 but I think Black is not worse in this position.



For example, 9.♕e3

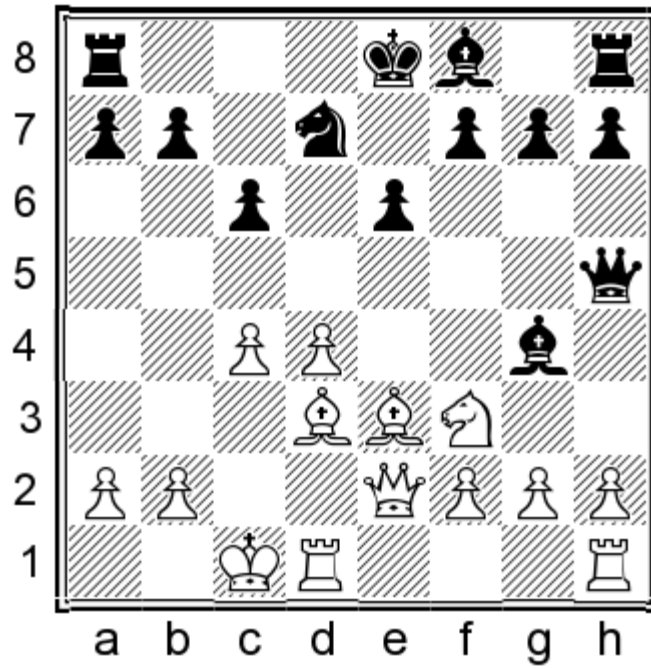
After 9.0-0 ♖bd7 10.♕e3 [10.♖d1 can be simply met by 10...e6! because 11.♕g6!? (11.♕f4 ♕e7 12.♕xh7 ♗b6 13.♕e4 ♖d8 is also unclear) 11...♖e5! 12.♗g3 ♗b4 13.♕xh7 ♖xh7 14.♗xe5 ♖h5 15.♗e2 ♕c5⇒ is just a complicated position with chances for both sides] 10...♗h4! 11.♖ad1 e6 12.♕f4 ♕e7 13.♖fe1 0-0∞ White has some compensation for the pawn, but it shouldn't terrify us. In fact the position seems easier to play for Black who is, after all, a pawn up.

9...♗b4 Black should gradually tame White's initiative. See **Game 23** Areshchenko-Karpov, rapid Kiev 2013.

### 7...♖bd7 8.♗e2 e6 9.0-0-0 ♕e7

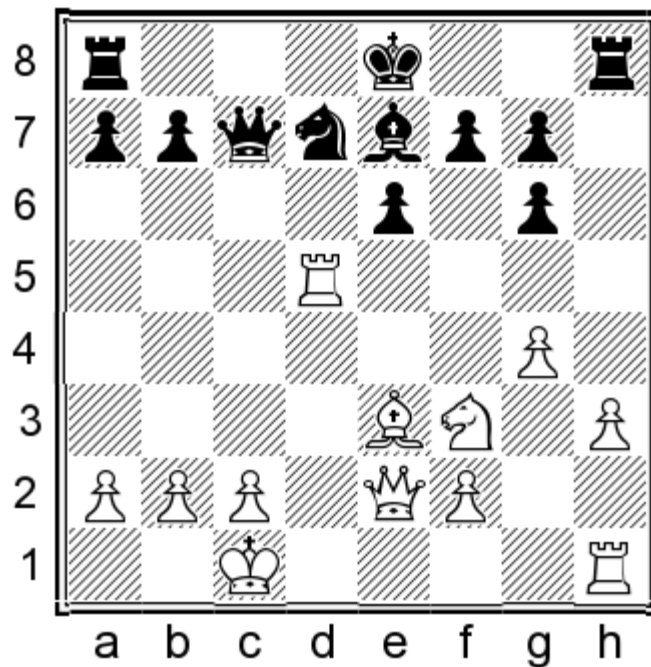
9...♖d5 10.♖xd5!? (10.♖e4 ♗c7 should transpose to the main line.) 10...cxd5?! 11.h3 offers White the better pawn chain since his imminent pawn expansion on the kingside is well supported by pieces. Therefore, Black should recapture by queen:

10...♗xd5 11.c4 ♗h5



This position has not been tested yet. Black seems to be in predicament since he is horribly lagging behind in development, but his queen is really ubiquitous and keeps the whole construction from falling apart. For instance, after 12.♕e4 it helps trading light-squared bishops by 12...♕f5, and in the event of: 12.d5! ♖e5 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♕e4 ♕c5, it ensures the exchange of the other bishop. Still, the last line leaves us struggling for two results only after 15.h3 ♕xf3 16.♕xf3 ♔e5 17.♕xc6+ bxc6 18.♖he1.

9...♗c7!?, intending ...0-0-0, ...♕d6 or ...♕b4, is an active plan. I recommended it against ♕e2 in the previous chapter. It is indicative that Tiviakov opted for it against Boros, Kemer 2007. At first sight, the critical position for it arises after 10.h3 ♕h5 11.g4 ♕g6 12.♕xg6 hxg6 13.d5! ♖xd5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♖xd5 ♕e7

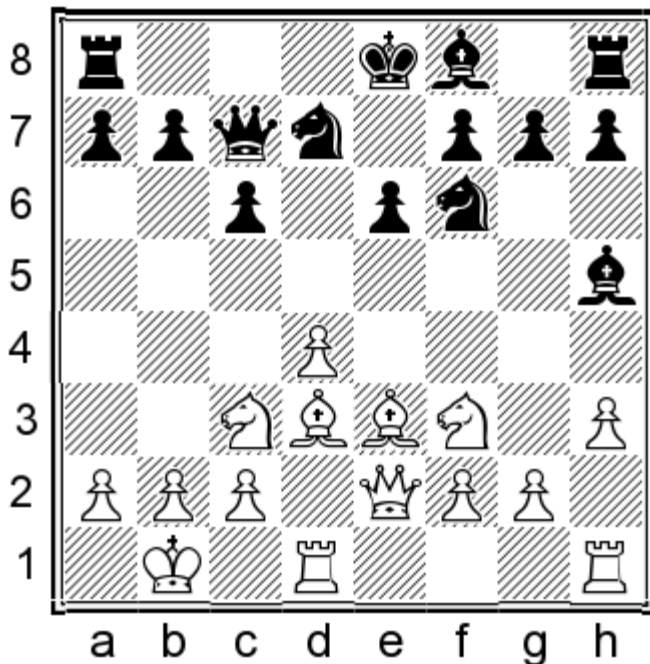


It looks dangerous for Black in view of the doubled g-pawns which could be attacked after a short castle. However, the manoeuvre ...♗d7-f6-d5 installs a very strong piece in the centre which effectively neutralises the enemy activity. Both games in my database saw 16.♖d3 when instead of the passive ...a6 and ...♖d8 (which was still good for two

draws), Black could fight for the initiative with 16...♘f6, then ...♞c8.

A more challenging retreat is 16.♞d4!?. White defends g4 and enables ♕f4. Still, 16...♞c8 is double-edged.

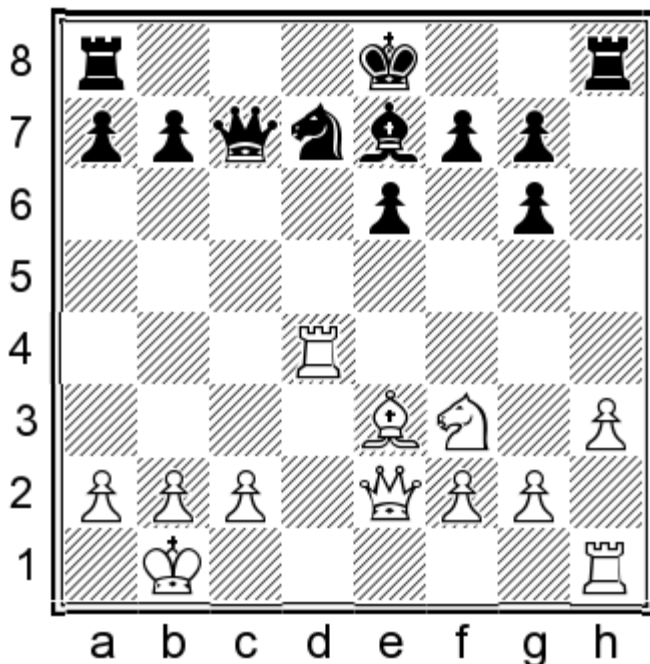
When I went deeper in my analysis, I discovered that instead of forcing events with d4-d5, White had the cunning 11.♔b1



The tactical point behind it is that 11...0-0-0?! stumbles into 12.g4 ♕g6 13.♕xg6 hxg6 14.♘e5 and the pawn is immune owing to 14...♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♞xd1+ 16.♞xd1 ♜xe5 17.♞d8+!! winning the queen.

11...♕b4 and 11...♕d6 also have drawbacks so we should probably enter a slightly modified version of the game Boros-Tiviakov with:

11...♕g6!? 12.♕xg6 hxg6 13.d5 cxd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♞xd5 ♕e7 16.♞d4



Instead of g4, White has made the more useful move ♔b1. Still, Black retains fair counterchances after 16...♞c8. For example, 17.♕f4 ♜c5 18.♞d3 ♕f6 19.♕g5 ♜e7 20.♕xf6 ♗xf6 21.♞hd1 0-0∞.

The bottom line is, 9...♖c7 is a viable plan, but be prepared for sharp play with opposite castles.

### 10.♖b1

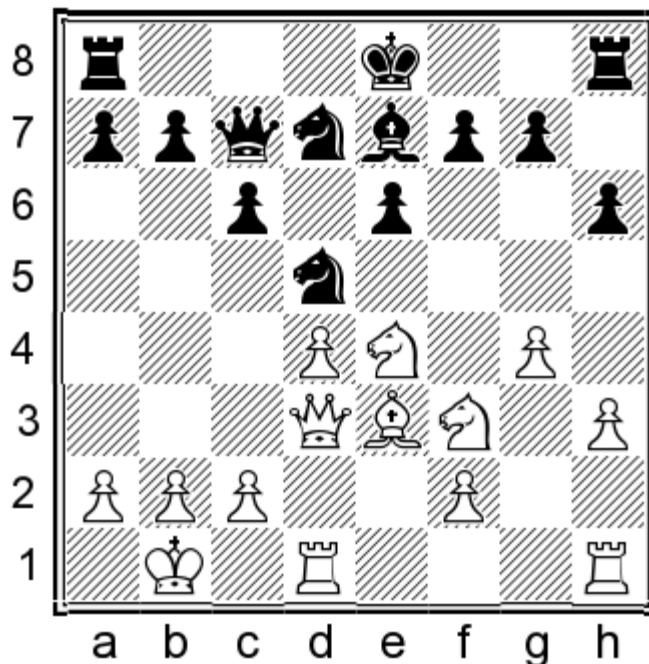
10.h3 ♗h5 11.g4 ♗g6 12.♗xg6 hxg6 13.♖b1 b5! 14.♘g5 ♘b6∞.

### 10...♘d5!

This looks better than 10...0-0-0 11.h3 ♗h5 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♗xg6 hxg6 14.♘g5 ♞hf8 15.♗c1± with just an edge for White in Mamedov-Vysochin, St. Petersburg 2006.

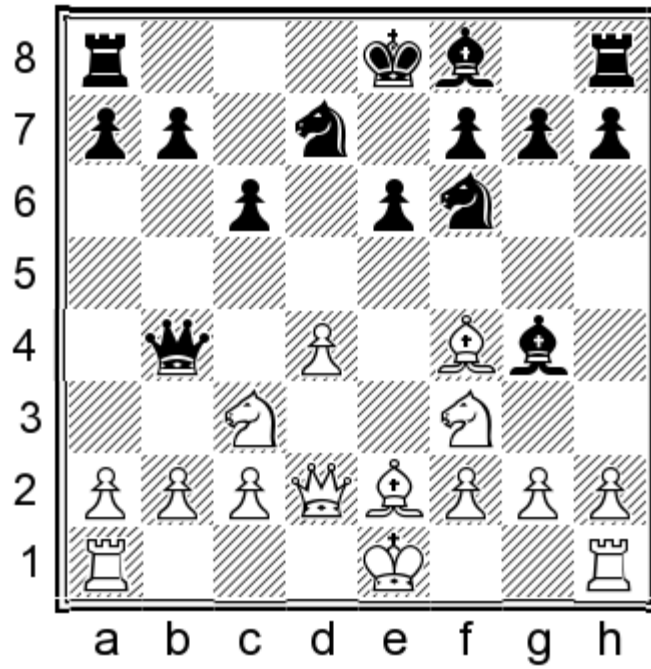
### 11.♘e4 (11.♘xd5 ♞xd5!) 11...♞c7= 12.h3 ♗f5

We are only one move shy of castling (with both options open!) and White is unable to attack anything. 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♘eg5 ♗xd3 15.♞xd3 h6 16.♘e4



offers us a fair choice: 16...b5 17.c3 0-0-0= or 16...0-0-0 17.c4 ♘xe3 18.fxe3 ♞hf8! 19.♞hg1 (19.h4 f5 20.gxf5 exf5 21.♘c3 ♖b8 22.h5 ♗f6=) 19...g5!?= The ...f7-f5 idea should guarantee Black good play. If White prevents it by 20.♘g3 (20.♞c2 f5 21.gxf5 ♞xf5!≠), then 20...♖b8 21.e4 c5 22.d5 ♗d6 23.♘e2 ♘e5 24.♘xe5 ♗xe5≠ would be excellent for Black.

### C. 6.♗g5 ♗g4! 7.♗e2 ♘bd7 8.♞d2 e6 9.♗f4 ♞b4



### 10.a3

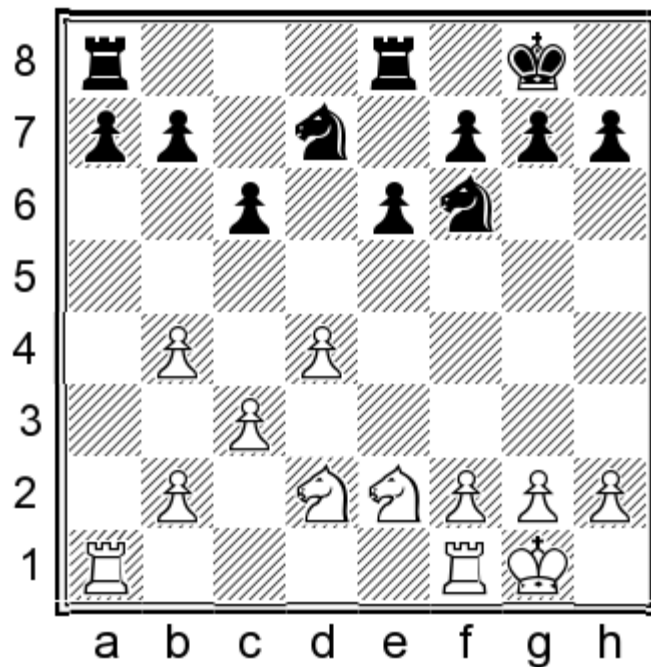
10.0-0 allows us to trade bishops with 10...♔d6!?

10...♔e7 11.h3 ♔h5 12.a3 ♖a5 13.♗fe1 0-0 transposes.

11.a3 ♔xf4 12.axb4 ♔xd2 13.♘xd2 ♔xe2!

13...♔f5 14.♗fc1 a6 15.♘c4 0-0 16.♘a5 ♗ab8 17.♘a4±.

14.♘xe2 0-0= 15.c3 ♗fe8



This endgame is equal because Black has no weaknesses and he has exchanged enough pieces to minimize the impact of the enemy's space advantage:

16.♗fe1 e5 17.♘c4 exd4 18.♘xd4 ♗xe1+ 19.♗xe1 c5 20.bxc5 ♘xc5=;

16.f4!? ♘d5 17.♘c1 f6 18.♘d3 e5 19.fxe5 fxe5 20.♘c5 ♘e3! 21.♘xd7 (21.♗f3 exd4! 22.♘xd7 ♗ad8=) 21...♘xf1

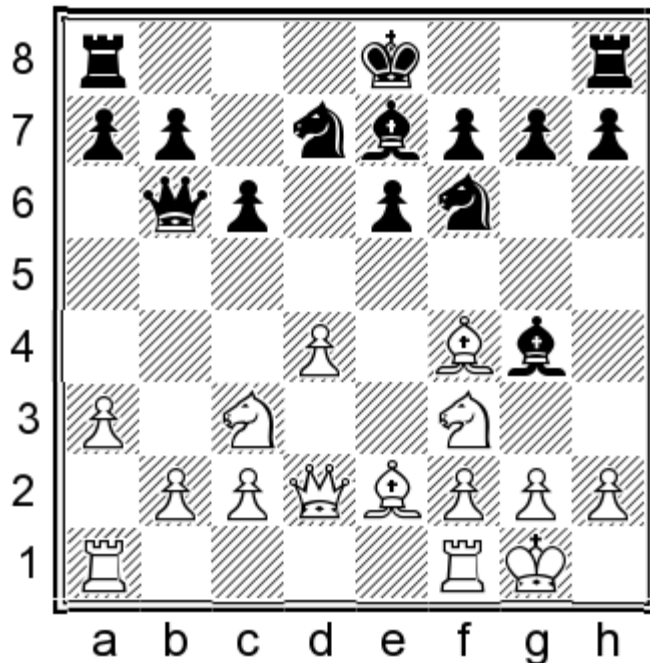
22.♔xf1 exd4⇌.

10...♖b6

10...♖a5 is also possible – see **Game 24** Al. Kovacevic-Radibratovic, Herceg Novi 2001.

11.0-0 ♗e7

This is a typical set-up for Black. It is very solid and offers fair chances to play for a win provided that Black is patient.



12.♗a4!

I wonder if this is a good argument in favour of 10...♖a5 instead of 10...♖b6. I will let readers decide for themselves. I am satisfied with the position reached below.

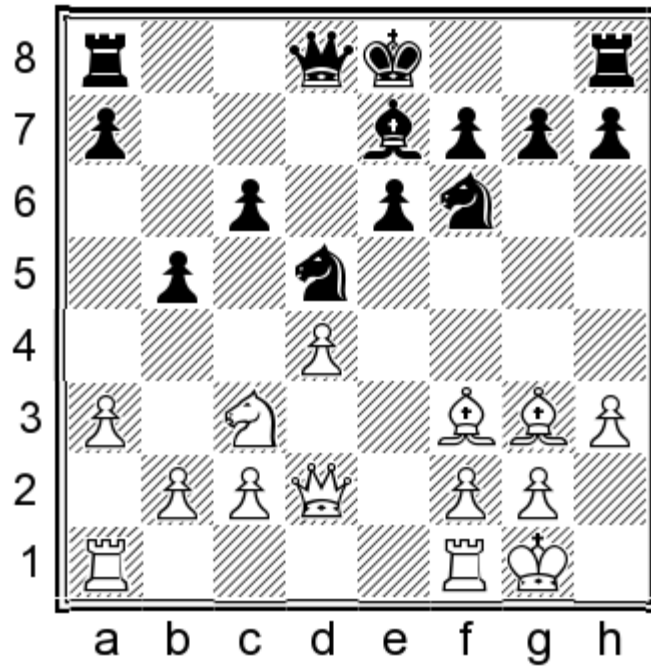
12...♖d8 13.c4

Cinar-Ushenina, Konya 2011, saw 13.h3 ♗h5 14.c4 0-0 15.♠ad1 ♗b6 16.♗xb6 ♖xb6.

I recommend the more straightforward line 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗d5 15.♗g3

15.♗h2 ♗g5!? 16.♖e2 ♗f4 17.c4 ♗xh2+ 18.♗xh2 ♗5b6 19.♗xb6 ♗xb6 is simple equality.

15...b5 16.♗c3 ♗7f6



17.b3!?

Obviously, c4 is the only sensible resource of White. 17.♖xd5 cxd5 18.♕d3 ♕d7 alters the pawn structure in Black's favour.

17...♞c8 18.♗e2 ♙d6! 19.c4 (19.♙h4 ♗e4=) 19...bxc4 20.bxc4 ♗e7 21.♞ab1 (21.♙h4 ♗g6) 21...0-0 22.♞b7 (22.♞fd1!?) 22...♗f5 23.♙xd6 ♗xd6 24.♞xa7 ♗xc4 25.♞c2 ♞b6!?

25...♗d6 forces further simplifications – 26.♞a6 ♗f5 27.♞xc6 ♗h4 28.♙e4 (28.♞xc8 ♗xf3+ 29.gxf3 ♞xc8 30.♞xc8 ♞xc8=) 28...♞a8 29.♞c3 ♗xe4 30.♞xe4 ♗f5 31.♞b1 ♞a5 32.♞b4 ♗e7 and Black has enough for his investment in view of White's weak pawns. The game should be ultimately drawn.

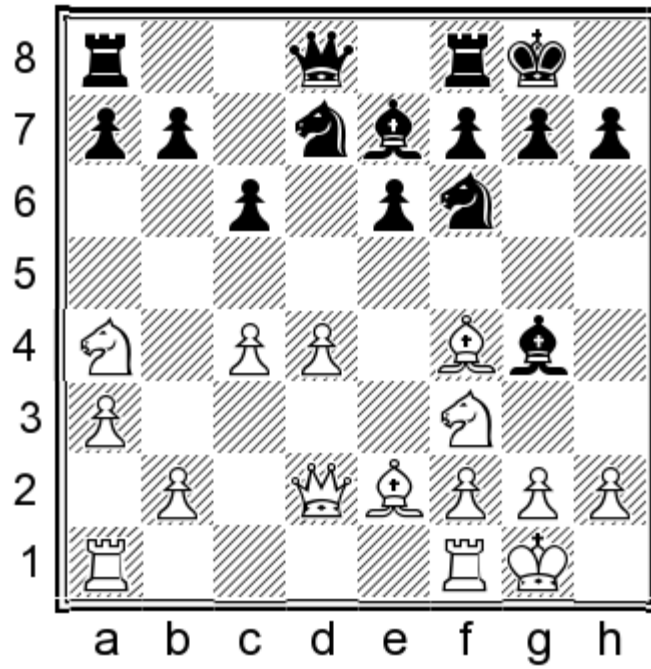
26.♞a4 ♗d6 27.♞b1 ♗b5=.

### 13...0-0

13...♗f8!? 14.♗c3

14.♗e5? ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 ♞xd4±; 14.h3 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♗g6 16.♙g3 ♙d6=.

14...♗g6 15.♙e3 0-0 16.h3 ♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♗h4 18.♙d1 ♗f5 19.♙c2 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 g6= is a fighting continuation for those who want to experiment. It looks okay to me.



**14. ♖fd1**

Similar is 14. ♖ad1 ♗b6 15. ♘xb6 axb6!?= with full equality. Tiviakov played instead 15... ♗xb6 16. ♗e5 ♕xe2 17. ♗xe2 ♖ad8, but I believe White is a bit better here after 18. ♖fe1!?

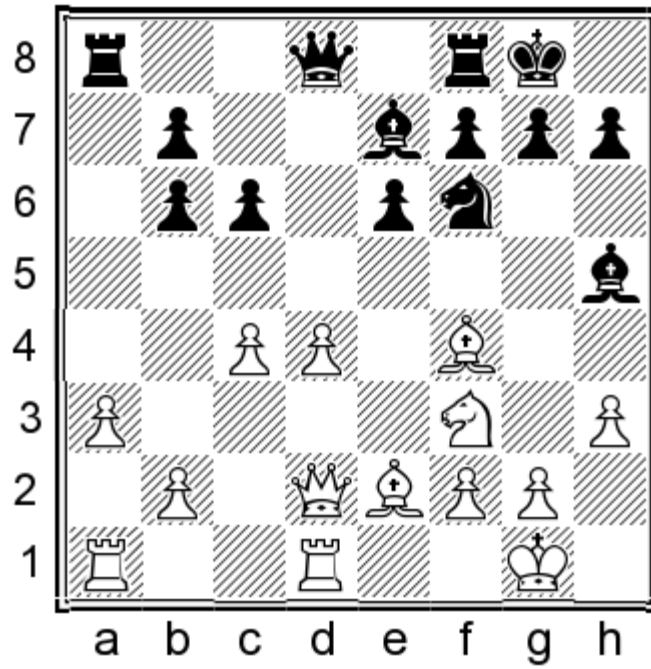
One of Sergei's games continued 18. ♕e3 ♗c7 (18... ♗a6!? 19. ♕g5!±) 19. ♕f4 ♗b6 20. ♕e3 (20. ♖fe1!? c5 21. dxc5 ♗xc5 22. b4 ♗c8 23. g3± still transposes to my recommendation for White) 20... ♗c7 21. ♕f4 with a draw, Glek-Tiviakov, Benidorm 2009.

18...c5 19. dxc5 ♗xc5 20. b4 ♗c8 21. g3 h6 22. ♕e3 a5 23. bxa5 ♕xa3 24. ♕b6±. Even this is nothing special and Black should be able to draw.

**14... ♗b6 15. ♘xb6**

White is no better after 15. ♗c5 ♕xf3! 16. ♕xf3 ♗xc4 17. ♗c3 ♗d5 18. ♗xc4 ♗xf4 19. ♗xb7 ♗b6 20. ♗xc6 ♗xb2=.

**15... axb6!? 16. h3 ♕h5!?**



It is probably good to keep the bishop. 16...xf3 17.xf3 d6 18.e3! is pleasant for White.

18.g5 h6 19.h4 g5 20.g3 xg3 21.fxg3 d6∞;

18.e5 e7 19.f4 fd8=.

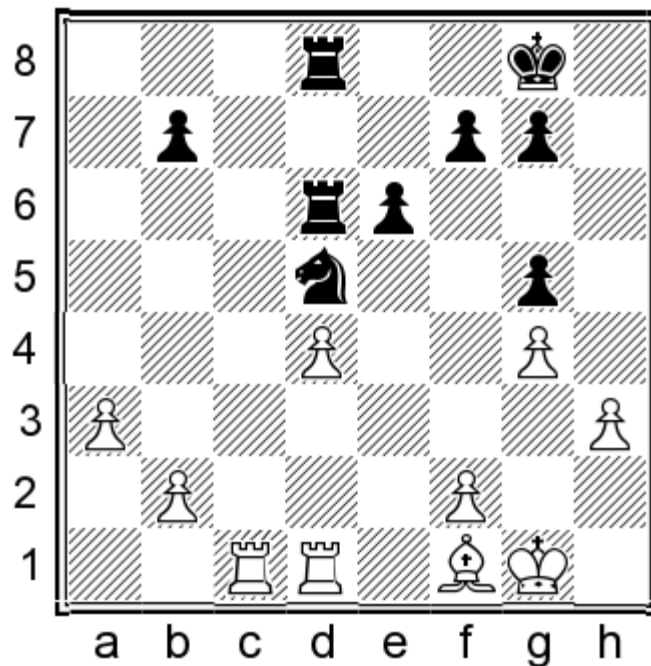
18...e7 19.d5!± exerts pressure on b6.

### 17.e5

17.g4!? g6 18.e5 d6 (18...e4 19.e3 h4 20.f1±) 19.e3 b5!? is unclear, e.g. 20.xg6 hxg6 21.xd6 xd6 22.cxb5 cxb5 23.e5

23.xb5 ac8 24.e5 b6 25.ac1 fd8∞.

23...fd8 24.xd6 xd6 25.xb5 g5 26.ac1 d5 27.f1 ad8



This should be a draw:

28.c5 b6 29.b5 c7!;

28.♔h2 b6 29.♕g3 ♖e7 30.♞c7 ♗c6 31.d5 ♗e5 32.f4 gxf4+ 33.♕xf4 f6.

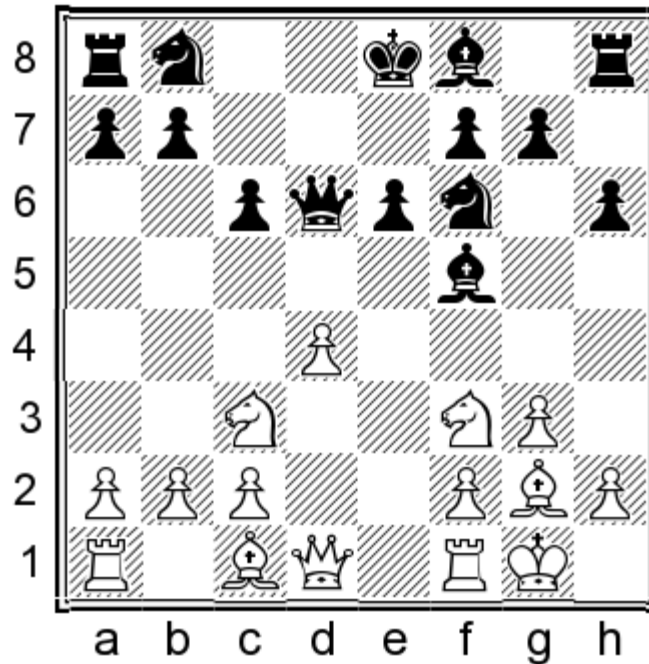
**17...b5!?** **18.cxb5 cxb5** **19.♞d3** (19.g4 ♗g6 20.♗xb5 h5⇒) **19...b4!** **20.axb4 ♗d5** **21.b5 ♞d7** **22.♗g3 ♞fc8** **23.♗e5 ♗xe2**  
**24.♞xe2 ♞e8**

Black's active pieces compensate for the doubled extra pawn.

# Chapter 5. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 Rare 6th Moves Step by Step

21. Muhammad Ali – Tiviakov  
Jakarta 16.04.2015

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 c6 5.♘f3 ♙f5 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♙g2 e6 8.0-0 h6



I feel that this position is safe for Black and White cannot exploit his lead in development.

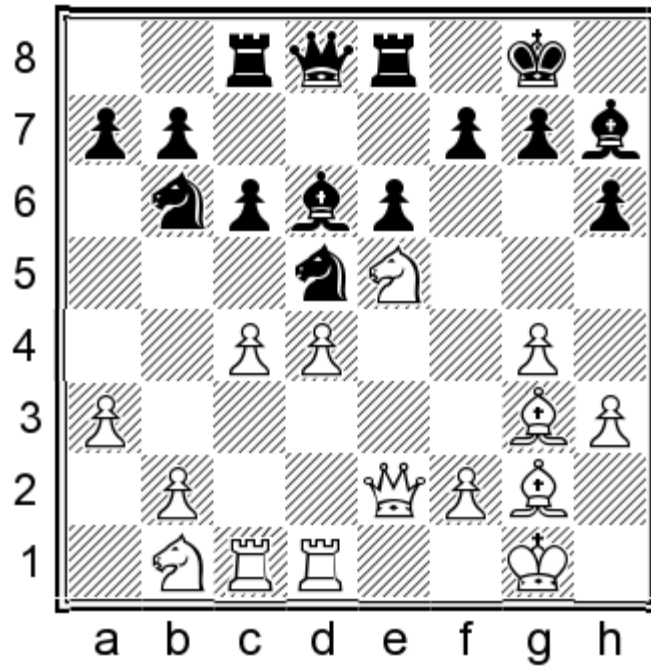
9.a3 ♙e7 10.♙f4 ♜d8 11.♜e2 0-0 12.♞fd1 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♞e8 15.h3 ♘d5

The common sense choice, exchanging some wood. A combative alternative is 15...♘b6!? 16.g4 ♙h7 17.♙g3 ♙d6!

17...♘bd5 18.♘b1!±;

17...♘fd5 18.♘e4±.

18.♘b1! ♘fd5! 19.c4



19...f6! 20.cxd5

20.♖d3 ♘xd3 21.♙xd3 ♘f4 22.♙xf4 ♘xf4 23.♞c2 f5! 24.gxf5 ♙g5 25.♘c3 exf5 26.c5 ♘d7∞.  
 20...exd5 21.f4 fxe5 22.dxe5 g5! 23.♘d2 gxf4 24.♙xf4 ♘d7 25.♘f3 ♙c7∞.

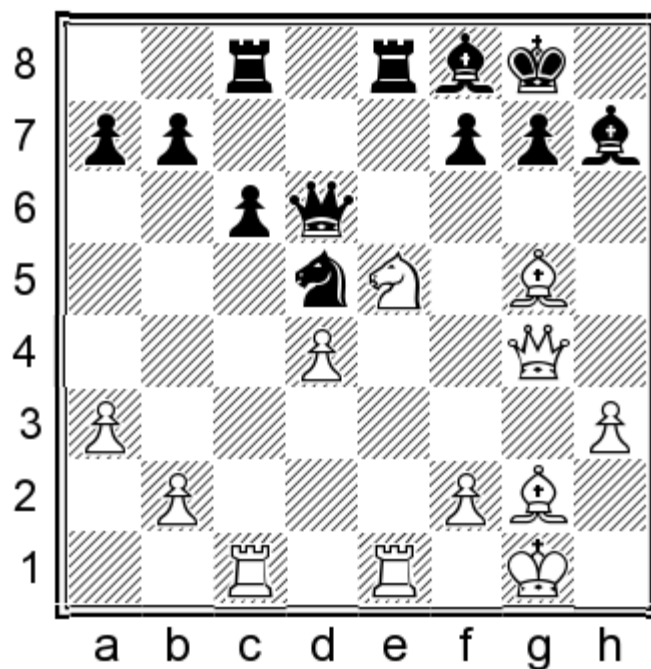
**16.♘xd5 exd5!**

Bringing a second pawn on the main diagonal. 16...cxd5?! is a mistake owing to 17.c4±.

**17.c4! ♘f6 18.g4 ♙h7**

I would consider 18...♙e4= in order to reduce the scope of the ♙g2 or exchange it. Tiviakov's move is riskier.

**19.♞e1 ♙f8 20.g5! hxg5 21.♙xg5 ♙d6 22.cxd5 ♘xd5 23.♙g4!**



White has played purposefully in the last few moves, opening lines and concentrating forces on the kingside. Boom

Black's position is solid enough to withstand the pressure.

**23...♖c7 (23...♖a8!?) 24.h4**

An unclear position would have arisen after 24.♗c4 ♖xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♗d7 26.♗g3 f6∞.

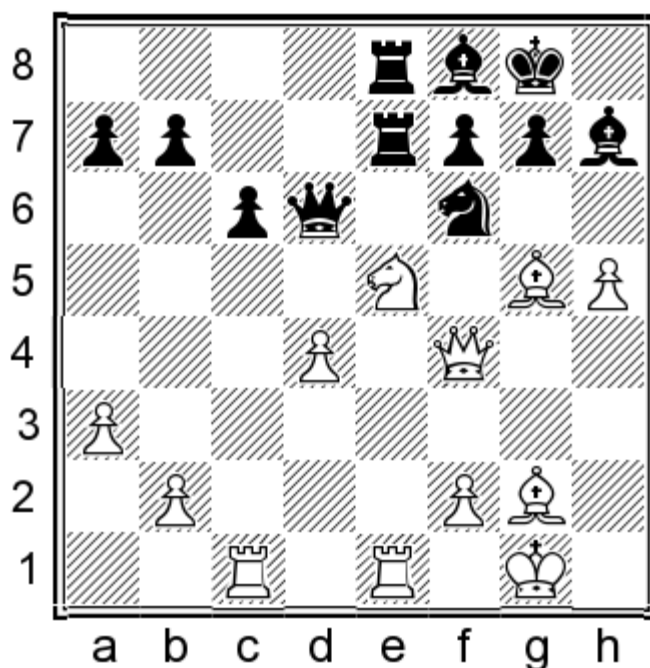
24.♖e2!? f6 25.♗c4 ♗d8 26.♖xe8 ♗xe8 leads to a spectacular draw after 27.♗e5! ♗d8 28.♗e6+ ♔h8 29.♗xd5 cxd5 30.♖xc7 ♗xc7 31.♗f7+ ♕g8=.

**24...♗f6 25.♗f4 ♗d5 26.♗g4 ♗f6 27.♗f4= ♖ce7?!**

Having +260 Elo points in his favour, Tiviakov naturally wants to fight on. A brave decision, but perhaps not objectively justified.

**28.h5!?**

8.♖e3 was also promising.



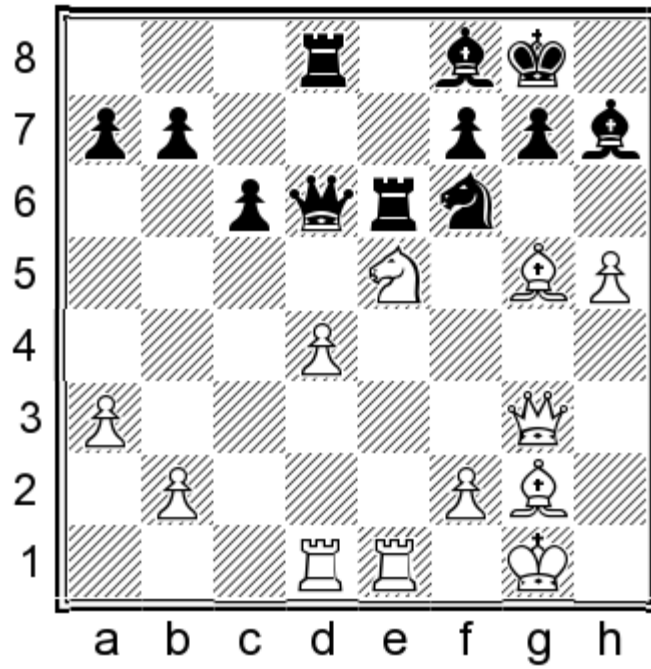
**28...♗xh5**

28...♖d8!? was more resilient. White would have to find 29.♗g3!

29.♖c4 ♗xh5 30.♗xe7 ♗xf4 31.♗xd6 ♖xd6 32.♗e4 f6 33.♗xh7+ ♕xh7 34.♗f3 ♖d8 35.♖c3 g5 looks nicely balanced.

29...♖e6 30.♖cd1!

30.h6 ♗xd4 31.♗h3 ♖ed6 32.hxg7 ♗xg7 33.♖c4 ♗xb2 is not so clear, in spite of White's dangerous attacking chances; 30.♗h3 ♖ee8□.



30...♖de8 31.♚f4! c5 32.♞e3!

Black is struggling as the pressure against f7 is very annoying.

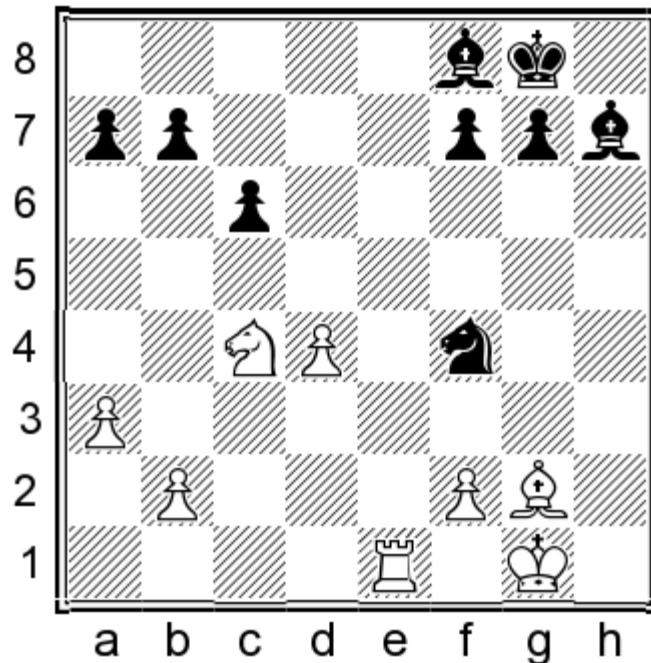
29.♙xe7 ♜xf4??

29...♚xe7 30.♚f3 ♜f6 31.♙f1 ♜d5 32.♙d3± is not ideal for Black, but it is certainly playable.

30.♙xd6 ♙xd6 31.♜c4!+-

Black can resign. Instead, he goes on playing and even wins (!) profiting from a long series of mistakes by his opponent.

31...♞xe1+ 32.♞xe1 ♙f8



33.♙e4 (33.♞e8+-) 33...f5 34.♙c2 g6 35.♙b3 ♜g7 36.♜a5 c5 37.♜xb7?!

37.dxc5 ♖xc5 38.♟xb7 ♖d4 39.♞e7+ ♜h6 40.♟d6±.

37...cxd4 38.♟d8 d3! 39.♟e6+? (39.♜f1±) 39...♟xe6 40.♖xe6 d2! 41.♞d1 ♜f6!

White had probably overlooked this. Now Black can support his advanced pawn.

42.♖b3 ♖h6 43.♜g2 ♖f4 44.♞h1 ♜g7 45.♞h3? ♖g8 46.♖d1 ♜f6 47.♞c3 ♖d5+ 48.♜f1 g5 49.♞c5 ♜e6 50.♞a5 ♖c4+ 51.♜g1 a6 52.♞c5 ♖d5 53.♞a5 ♖c4 54.b4?! ♖d6 55.♖c2 ♖b5 56.a4 ♖xb4 57.axb5 ♖xa5 58.bxa6 ♖b6 59.♜f1 g4 60.♜e2 f4 61.♜xd2 ♖xf2 62.♜e2 ♖a7 63.♖e4 ♜f6 64.♖c6 ♜g5 65.♜d3 ♜h4 66.♜e4 f3 67.♜f4??

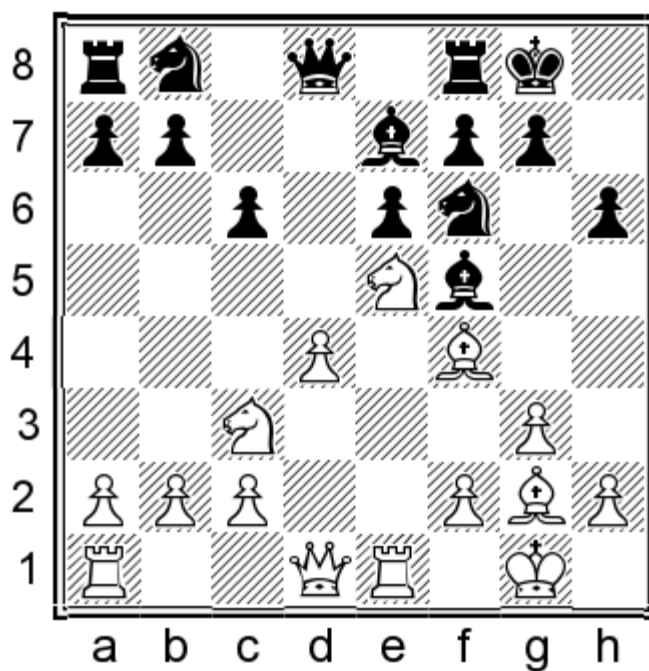
67.♖d7 ♜g3 (67...f2 68.♖b5 ♜h3 69.♖f1+=) 68.♜f5!= would have kept the pawns under control.

67...♖b8+ (Suddenly White loses.) 68.♜e4 ♜h3 69.♜e3 ♖a7+ 70.♜f4 f2 71.♖b5 g3 0-1

A tragedy for White, or, if you look at it from a different standpoint, luck favours the strong.

22. Mannon – Tiviakov  
Douglas 04.10.2014

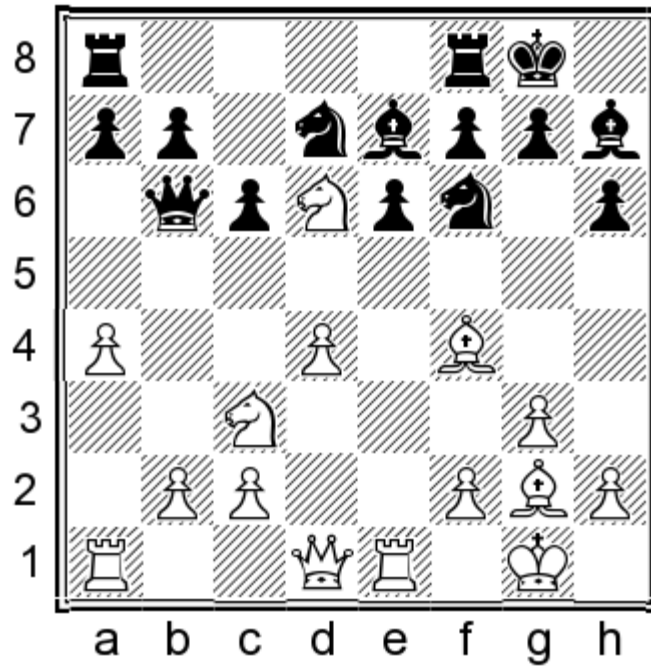
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♟c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♟f6 5.♟f3 c6 6.g3 ♖f5 7.♖g2 e6 8.0-0 h6 9.♟e5 ♖e7 10.♖f4 ♞d8 11.♞e1 0-0



12.h3?!

Too slow. Black seizes the initiative after this.

12.♟c4! ♖h7 13.a4= was better. It should discourage Black from developing his knight to d7 in view of the reply ♟c4-d6. The engines nevertheless insist on 13...♟bd7 (13...♟a6!? looks like a more human reaction), evaluating the position arising after 14.♟d6 ♞b6 as dead equal on the ground of:

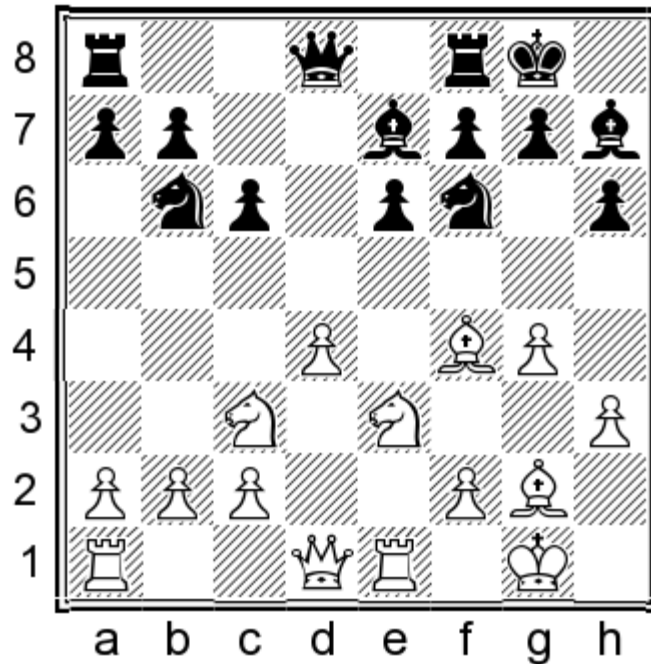


15.a5 ♖xb2 ♜ce4 ♞d5 17.♞b1 ♜a3 18.♞a1=. Other moves allow Black to play ...a5, e.g. 15.b3 a5, 15.♜ce4 ♞xe4 16.♞xe4 a5=, or even take on b2 after 15.♞a3 ♖xb2 16.♞b3 ♖xc2 17.♖xc2 ♜xc2 18.♞xb7 g5! 19.♜e5 ♞xe5 20.dxe5 ♜xd6 21.exd6 ♞fd8.

12...♞bd7

The shortcomings of White's last are apparent as Black can now develop his knight without fearing invasions on d6.

13.♞c4 ♞b6 14.♞e3 ♜h7 15.g4?!



15...♜d6!↑

An instructive moment. After exchanging dark-squared bishops, Black is slightly, yet clearly better, because White is exposed in the centre and on the kingside.

16.♙e5 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 ♘fd5

17...♘fd7!? 18.♚d4 ♚c7 19.f4 ♜ad8

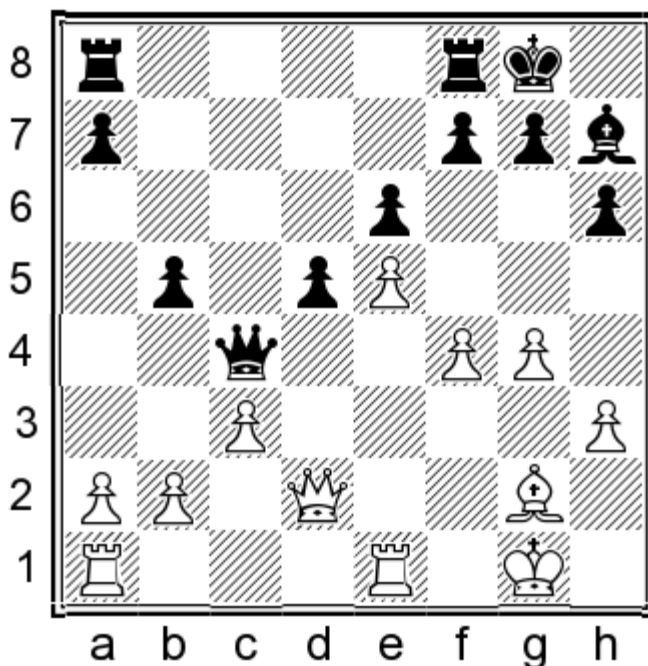
18.♘xd5 cxd5 19.c3 ♚c7?

Starting with this move, Sergei begins to lose the thread. Black's further play should be based on the break ...f5 – not only because it will underline the weakness of White's king, but in order to prevent f2-f4-f5 from White as well. Thus, 19...f5<sup>3</sup> or 19...♞c8, intending ...f5, ...♞h4, was mandatory.

20.f4 ♘c4

20...♞fd8 21.♚d4 ♘c4 22.♘xc4 dxc4 23.♚f2 ♞d3 would have offered Black some initiative, but it is hard to believe that he could win the game with his bishop out of play.

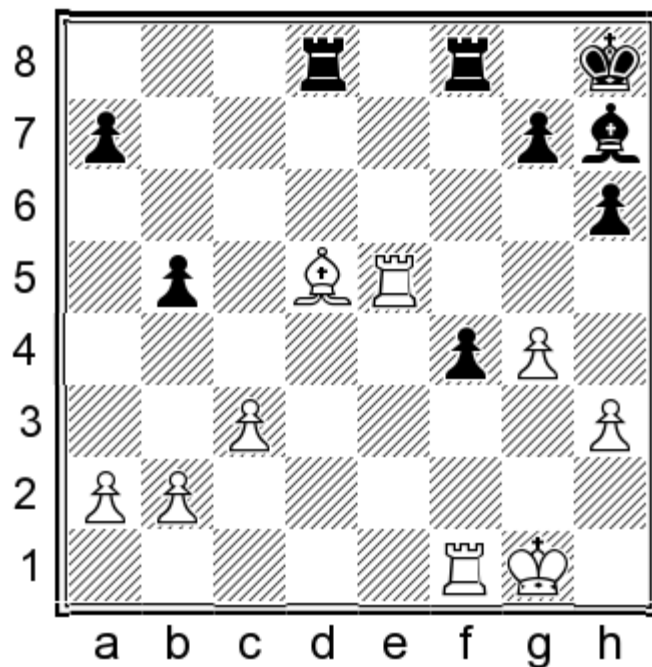
21.♘xc4 ♚xc4 22.♚d2 b5



23.f5

In principle, this is a good plan, but White could have prepared it with ♞ed1, ♚f2. The text leads to a balanced endgame. In the remainder of the game, Tiviakov prevailed after mutual mistakes.

23...exf5 24.♚xd5 ♞ab8 25.e6! fxe6 26.♞xe6 ♚xd5 27.♙xd5 ♜h8 28.♞f1! ♞bd8 29.♞e5 f4



30.b3?!

30.h4! would have stuck a bullseye on the f4-pawn.

30...♖c8 31.c4 ♗d3?!

Black should seek salvation in rooks endgame with 31...bxc4 32.bxc4 ♗g8!=.

32.♖c1 bxc4 33.♗xc4?! (33.bxc4! ♖c5 34.♖c3±) 33...♖fd8 34.♖d1 ♗xc4 35.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 36.bxc4 ♖d3 37.♔g2 ♖a3 38.♖f5 g5 39.♖f7?!

An easy draw arises after 39.h4= ♖g3+ 40.♔h2 ♖xg4 41.hxg5 hxg5 42.c5 ♖g3 43.c6 ♖c3 44.♖xg5 ♖xc6 45.♖a5.

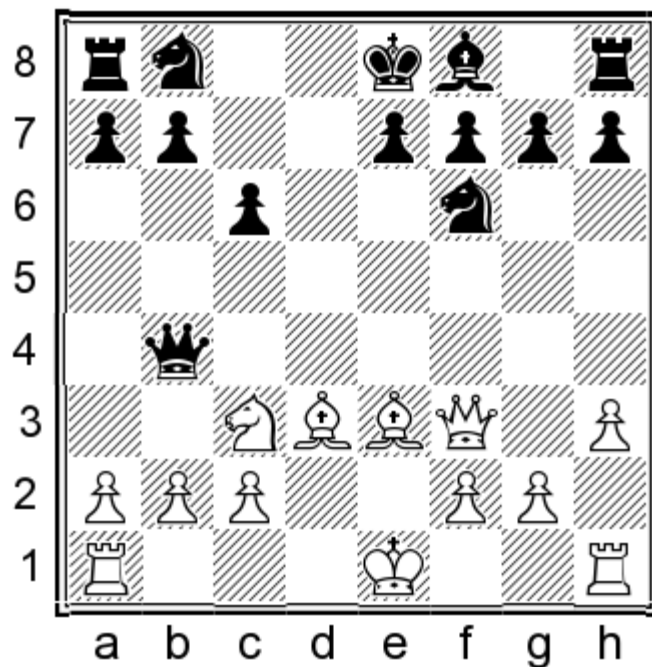
39...♔g8 40.♖b7 ♖xa2+ 41.♔g1?! ♔f8 42.♖h7 a5 43.c5 ♔e8 44.c6 ♔d8 45.h4 a4 46.♖xh6??

The final mistake. White practically resigns while he still had a draw with the insertion of 46.c7+! ♔c8 and only now 47.♖xh6 a3 48.hxg5! when 48...♖b2?! 49.♖a6 a2 does not win owing to 50.g6!. Or 48...♖a1+ 49.♔h2 ♔xc7 50.♖a6 f3 51.♔g3 a2 52.g6 ♖g1+ 53.♔xf3 a1=♖ 54.♖xa1 ♖xa1 55.♔e4 ♔d6 56.g7 ♖a8 57.♔f5 ♔e7 58.♔g6=.

46...a3+ 47.hxg5 ♖b2 0-1

**23. Areshchenko – Karpov**  
Kiev 07.06.2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♖d6 4.d4 c6 5.♗f3 ♗g4 6.♗d3 ♗f6 7.h3!? ♗xf3 8.♖xf3 ♖xd4 9.♗e3 ♖b4



10.♙d2

Alternatively, 10.0-0 ♖bd7 11.♙b1

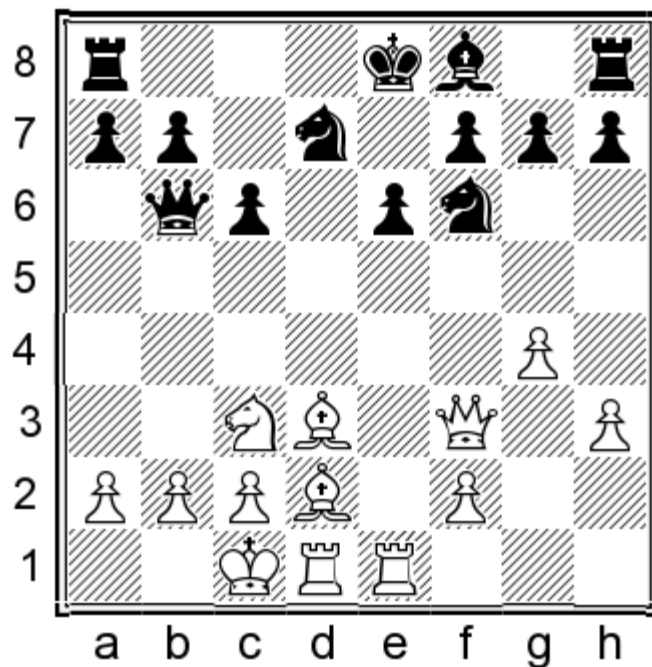
11.♞he1 e6 does not change much.

11...e6 12.♞g3

12.♙e2 ♜a5 13.♙d2 ♙b4 14.a3 ♙xc3 15.♙xc3 ♞c7 16.g4 0-0 17.h4 ♘d5 18.h5 ♜f6 is another possibility.

12...g6 with a messy position, quite hard to evaluate.

10...♞b6 11.0-0 ♖bd7 12.♞he1 e6 13.g4!



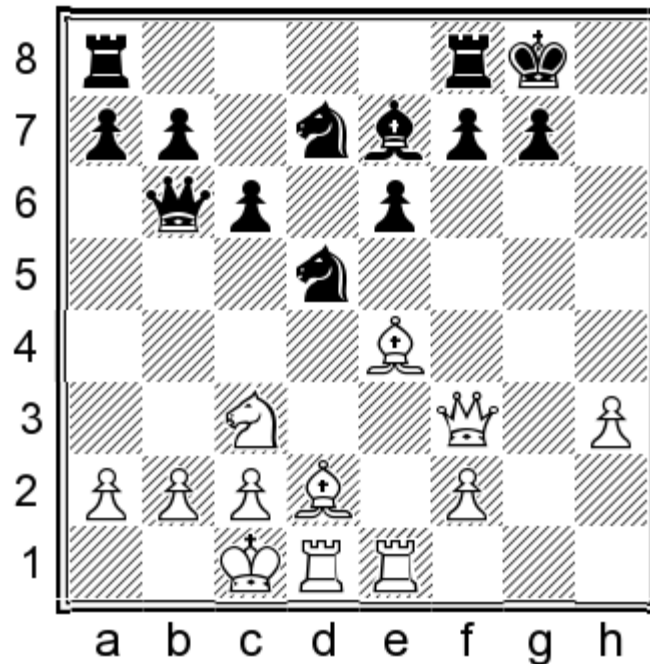
13...♙e7

Also interesting is 13...♘c5 14.♙e3 ♙e7.

## 14.g5

14.♙c4 ♘c5 15.g5 ♗d5 16.♙xd5 cxd5 17.♙f4 ♖d8 18.♙e5 0-0 19.♙f6 happened in Janev-Vatter, France 2008, and here simply 19...♙xf6 20.gxf6 g6♣ was better for Black.

14...♗d5 15.g6! hxg6 16.♙xg6 0-0 17.♙e4



17...♗f6

The most accurate defence now is 17...♞fe8!, intending to put the bishop on f6. Objectively, White does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

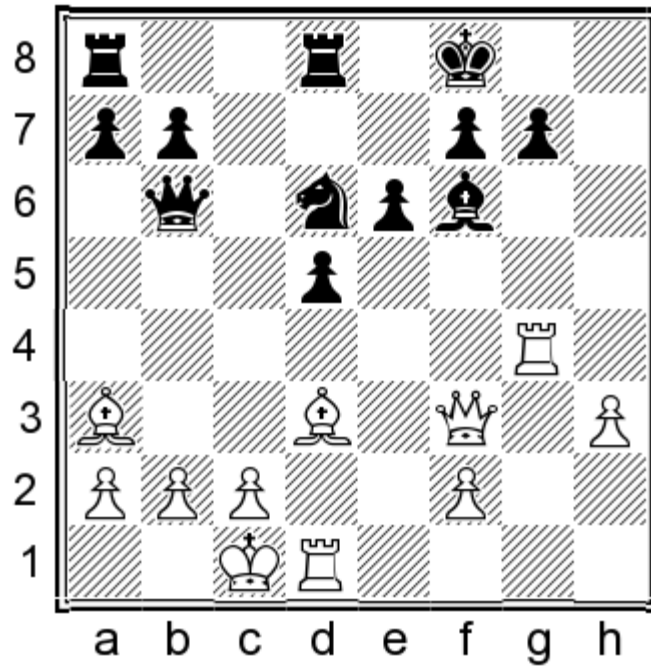
18.♞g1 ♞fd8 19.♗xd5

19.♙h6 ♗xc3 20.♞xg7+ ♔h8 21.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 22.♞xc3 ♞xf2 23.♞h7+ ♔g8 24.♞g7+= is a draw; 19.♙d3 ♗b4∞.

19...cxd5 20.♙d3 ♗e8?!

20...♔f8÷ and 20...e5÷ look more natural.

21.♙c3 ♔f8 22.♞g4 ♙f6 23.♙b4+ ♗d6 24.♙a3

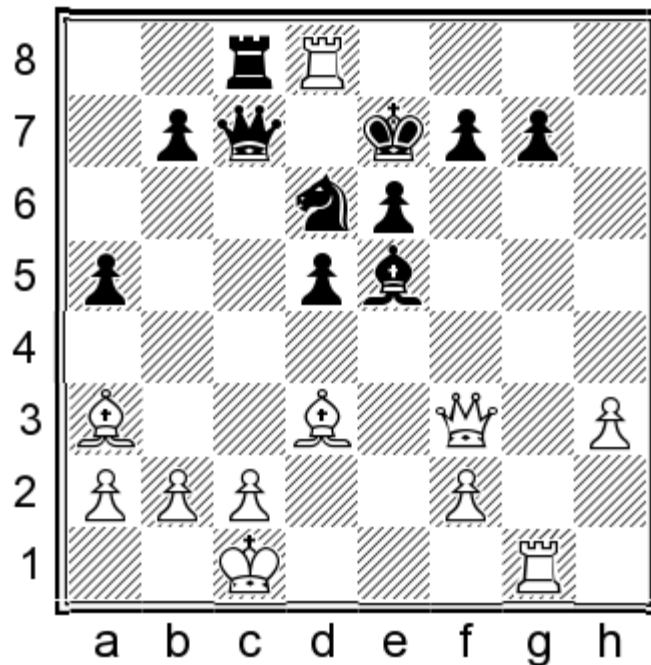


White has retained some pressure, which is aggravated by the fast time control.

**24...a5**

24...♖ac8 25.h4 ♗c5!? 26.h5 ♗a5 was an interesting defensive idea, trying to eliminate the ♗a3.

**25.♗dg1 ♖c7 26.♗f4! ♗e5 27.♗h4 ♗ac8 28.♗h8+ ♖e7 29.♗xd8**



**29...♗xd8**

29...♖xd8! was best, unpinning. After 30.♗xd6 ♖xd6 31.♖xf7 ♖e7, Black would have had serious chances in the ending in view of his better pawn chain.

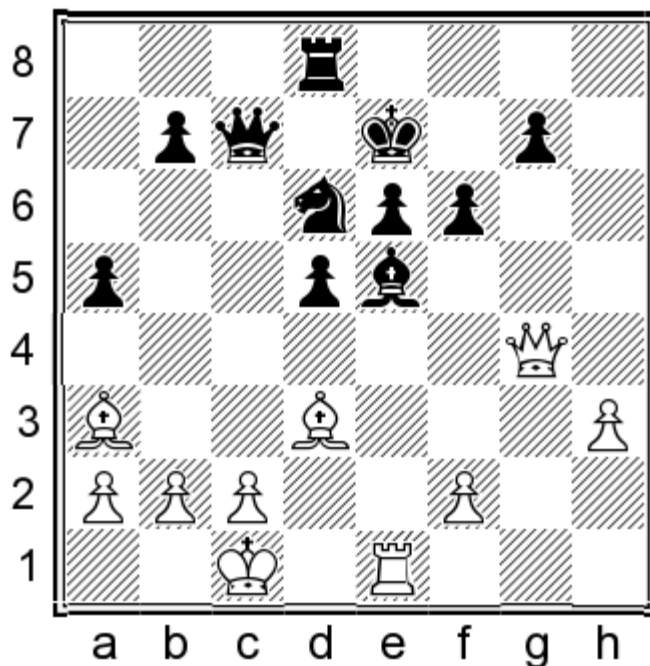
After Karpov's mistake, White's compensation suddenly takes on dangerous proportions.

**30.♗e1! f6?!**

This is a sure sign of time pressure. A player of Karpov's calibre would never play in this way in a normal time control. 30...♙f6! 31.♖xd5 ♔d7! 32.♗h5 ♕c8 33.♕b1 ♕b8= was best, running out of the zone of danger. White would still have some compensation for his worse pawn structure in the bishop pair, a fact that renders the position approximately equal. For example, 34.♗c5!?

34.♗e2?! ♖b6 35.♖g1 ♕a7 36.c4 ♙d4 (36...♗f5?) 37.♖g5 ♗c7 38.h4 b6 39.h5 ♗b7. 34...g6 35.c3 ♗f5 36.♙e4 ♗xc5 (36...♖d2 37.♗f8+) 37.♙xc5 ♕c7 38.♕c2 b6 39.♙e3 ♗xe3+ 40.♖xe3=.

**31.♗g4!**

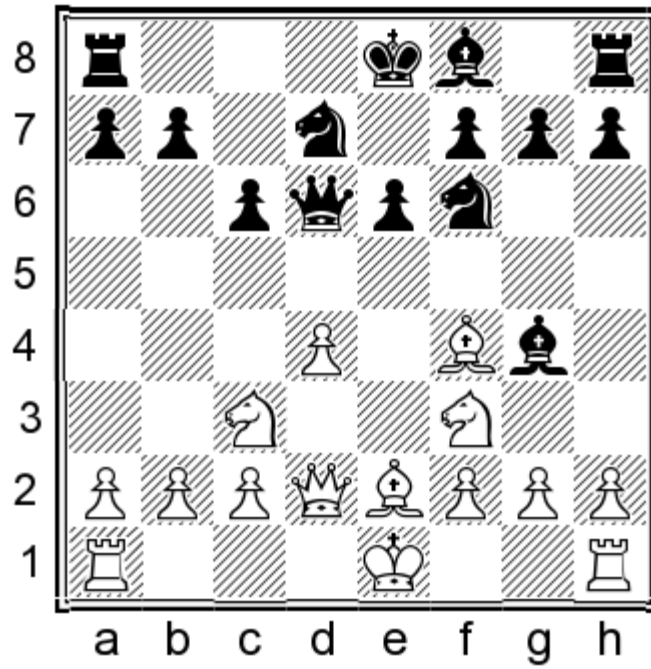


Now Black cannot cope with White's numerous threats and the game is soon decided.

**31...g5?! 32.h4!± ♙f4+?! 33.♕b1 e5 34.hxg5 fxg5 35.♖h1+- ♖f8 36.♖h7+ ♖f7 37.♖h6 ♖f6 38.♖h8 e4**  
 (38...♖f8 39.♖h6 ♖f6 40.♙g6!+-)  
**39.♙b5 ♖f7 40.♖e8+ ♕f6 41.♖e6+ ♕g7 42.♗h5 ♗d8 43.♗g6+ ♕f8 44.♖xd6 1-0**

**24. Al.Kovacevic – Radibratovic**  
**Herceg Novi 2001**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♗c3 ♗d6 4.d4 c6 5.♗f3 ♙g4 6.♙e3 ♗d7 7.♙e2 ♗gf6 8.♗d2 e6 9.♙f4**

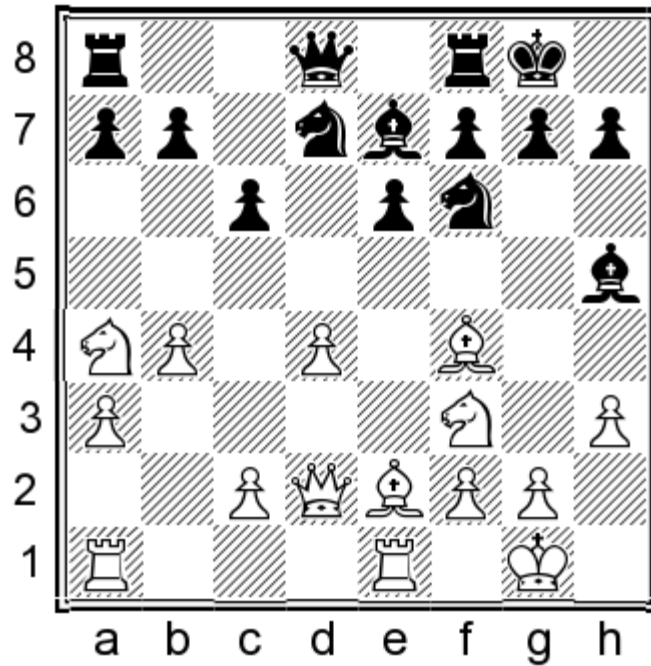


We examined this position under the move order 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♙g5 ♙g4 7.♙e2 ♘bd7 8.♗d2 e6 9.♙f4.

9...♗b4 10.a3 ♗a5

Retreating the queen to b6 allows a plan with ♘c3-a4, c2-c4.

11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♗fe1 0-0 13.h3 ♙h5 14.b4 ♗d8 15.♘a4



White insists on the same idea, but it shouldn't have brought him an edge, considering the weaknesses created by b2-b4.

15...b5?

This is a mistake. 15...♘d5! 16.♙h2 (16.♙g3 ♘7f6⇒) 16...♙xf3! 17.♙xf3 ♙g5! 18.♗e2 ♙f4 is an equalising motif worth remembering. After 19.c4 ♙xh2+ 20.♗xh2 ♘e7 21.♗ad1 a5 22.♘c5 (22.b5 cxb5 23.cxb5 ♘f6∞) 22...axb4 23.axb4

♖c7+ 24.g3 ♜ad8 25.♗e4 ♗b6=, Black's position is very solid and there is little to worry about.

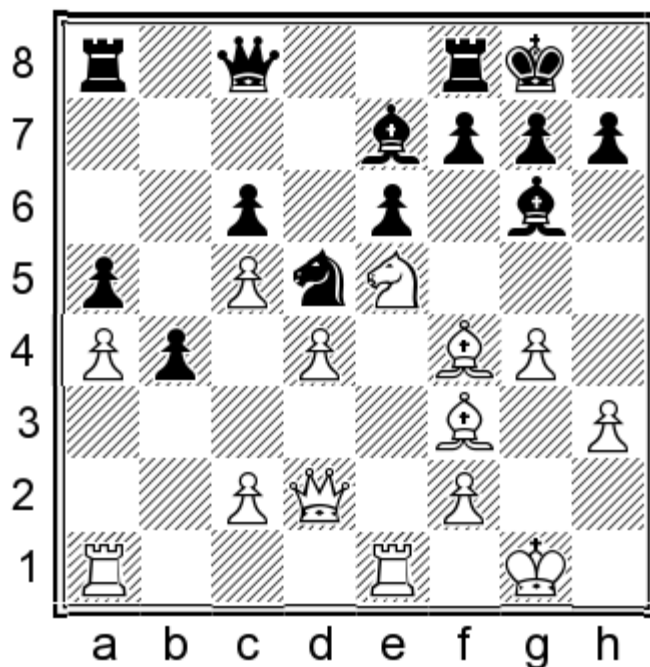
16.♗c5 ♗xc5 17.bxc5±

Now c6 is a terrible weakness. With his next move Black makes matters worse.

17...a5?

17...♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♖d7 was imperative, getting rid of the white knight, which is the ideal piece for exploiting the c-pawn's weakness. Now Black is doomed.

18.a4! b4 19.♗e5! ♖c8 20.g4 ♗g6 21.♗f3 ♗d5



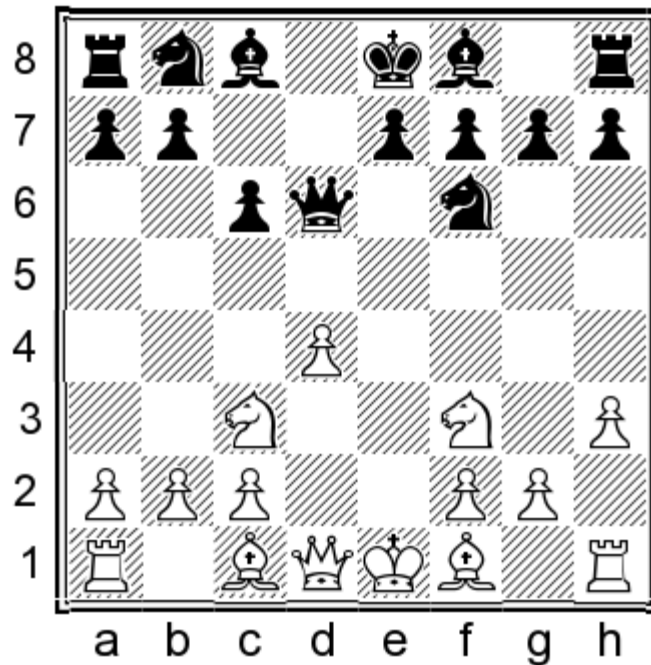
22.♗xd5 cxd5 23.♗xg6 hxg6 24.c3!+-

Game over. The b-file opens and Black's position collapses. The remaining moves were:

24...bxc3 25.♖xc3 g5 26.♗g3 ♗d8 27.♞ab1 ♗c7 28.♞b5 ♞e8 29.♞eb1 ♗xg3 30.♖xg3 ♖c6 31.♖e3 e5 32.dxe5 d4 33.♖xd4 ♞ad8 34.♖c3 ♖e4 35.♞e1 ♖xa4 36.♞xa5 ♖f4 37.c6 ♞d2 38.♞f1 ♞d4 39.♞c5 ♞xe5 40.c7 ♞xc5 41.♖xc5 1-0

## Chapter 6. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 Main Ideas

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3!?



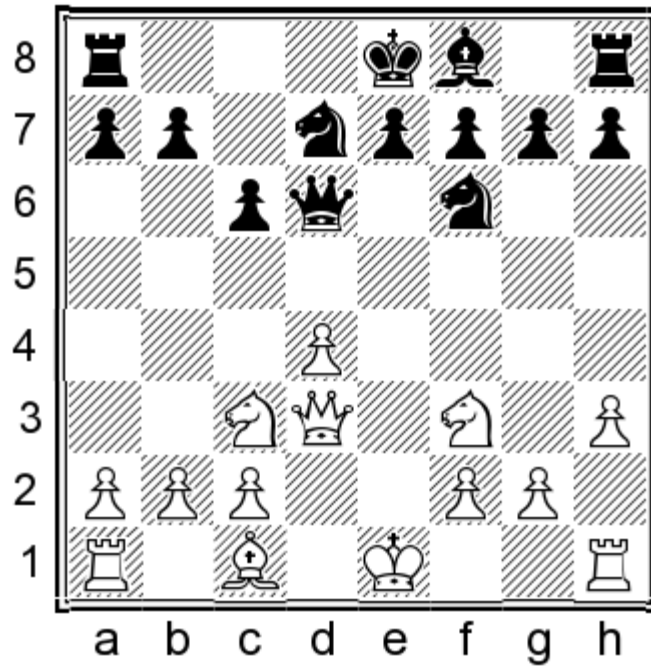
This line does not occupy much space in the book, but it has a sound positional foundation. It looks at the surface that White simply denies g4 to our bishop. That would not scare us, since f5 is often as good a place as g4. Here comes the hidden part of White's plan. On f5 our bishop could be further restricted with ♘e5, g4, f4 (or h4). In many ways, the idea of 6.h3 is closely related to the Shirov plan which we'll cover in the next chapter. As a whole, this is perhaps the most aggressive approach to the ♚d6 Scandinavian.

Now that our pawn is already on c6, we lack counterplay based on ...♘b8-c6 so we must find another means of opposing the enemy's expansion.

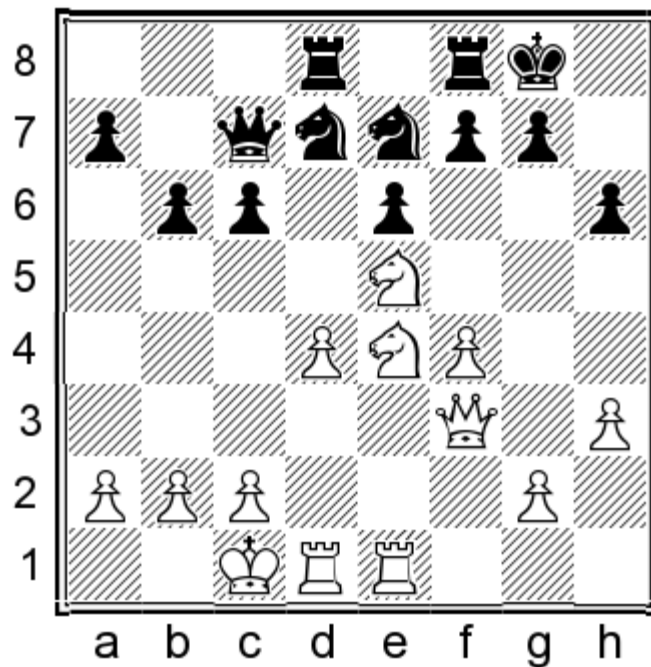
**6...♗f5 7.♘e5**

Let us consider briefly alternative developments.

7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♚xd3 ♘bd7

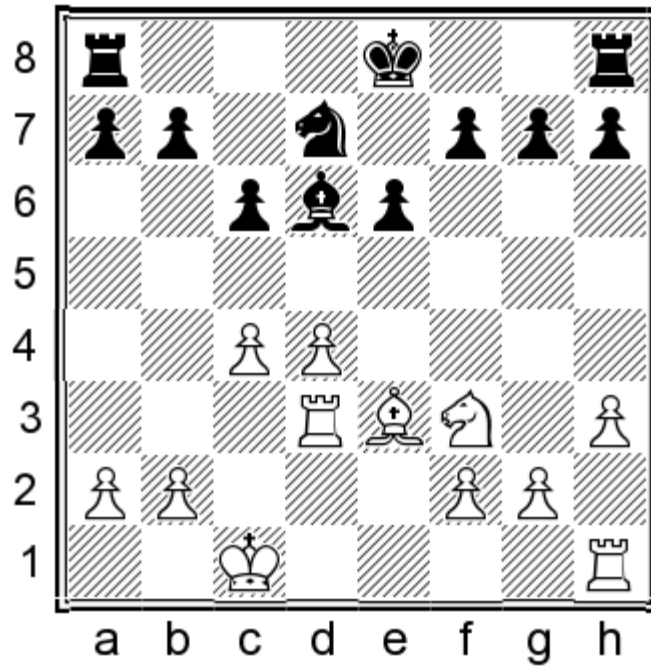


is a position which should make us happy because we got rid of a piece (♙f1) meant to control the central light squares. On the other hand, White has accelerated his development and he will opt for long castling. Thus a question arises: is our structure solid enough to withstand any kind of attack? I will give just the main line here: 9.♙g5 e6 10.0-0-0 (10.♙h4 ♜c7! 11.♙g3 ♙d6 12.♙xd6 ♜xd6=) 10...♙e7 11.♞he1 0-0 12.♘e5 ♞ad8! 13.f4 h6 14.♙h4 ♘d5! 15.♘e4 ♜c7 16.♙xe7 ♘xe7 17.♞f3 b6±.



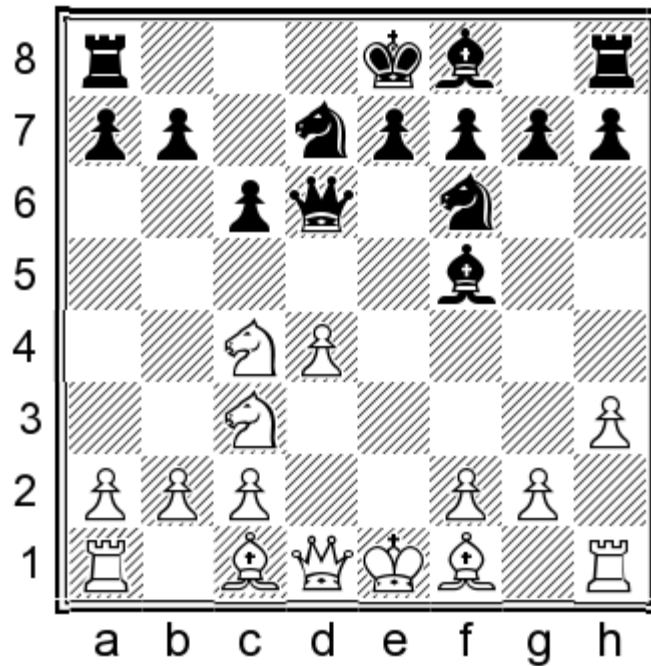
The exchange of bishops has significantly reduced White's pressure. Counterplay will soon come in the shape of ...c6-c5, opening a file against the enemy's king. Further exchanges in the centre would underline the weakness of the pawn formation f4-g2-h3 which could be sensitive in any ending that includes knights.

Another possibility for White is 7.♙e3 ♘bd7 8.♞d2, Faber-Kotronias, Kavala 2004, when I should have played 8...e6 9.0-0-0 ♘d5 10.♘xd5 ♜xd5 11.c4 ♞e4 12.♙d3 ♜xd3 13.♞xd3 ♙xd3 14.♞xd3 ♙d6=,

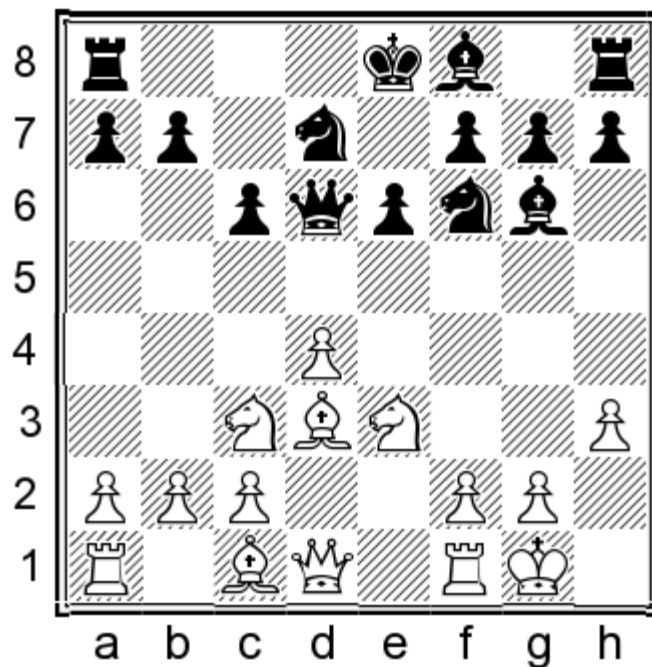


with an equal ending, quite typical for the Caro-Kann opening structure.

7...♖bd7 8.♘c4

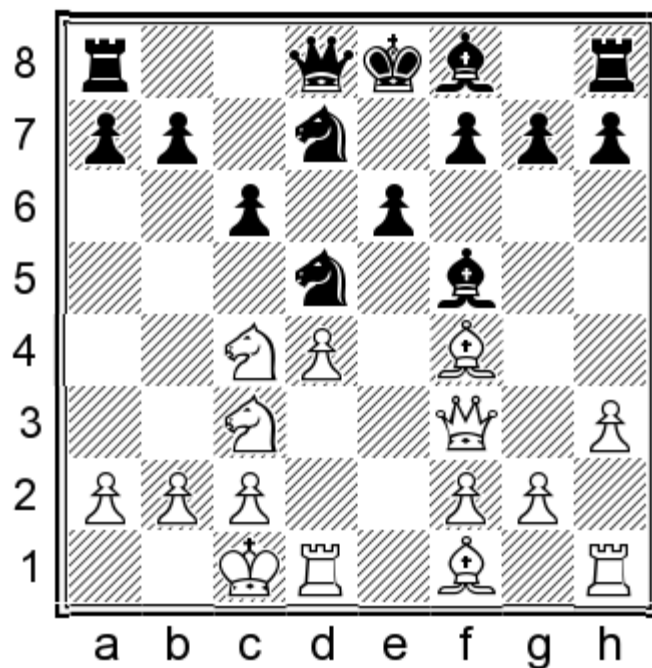


Here everybody automatically plays 8...♖c7, but my novelty 8...♖e6+!? might be a simpler solution. It disturbs White's natural development and aims to chase his knight with ...♗b6 (and back to d7 if it returns to e5). 9.♘e3 (9.♙e2 ♗b6!) 9...♙g6 10.♙d3 ♖d6 11.0-0 e6



See my **Game 27** NN-Kotronias, Internet, 2015.

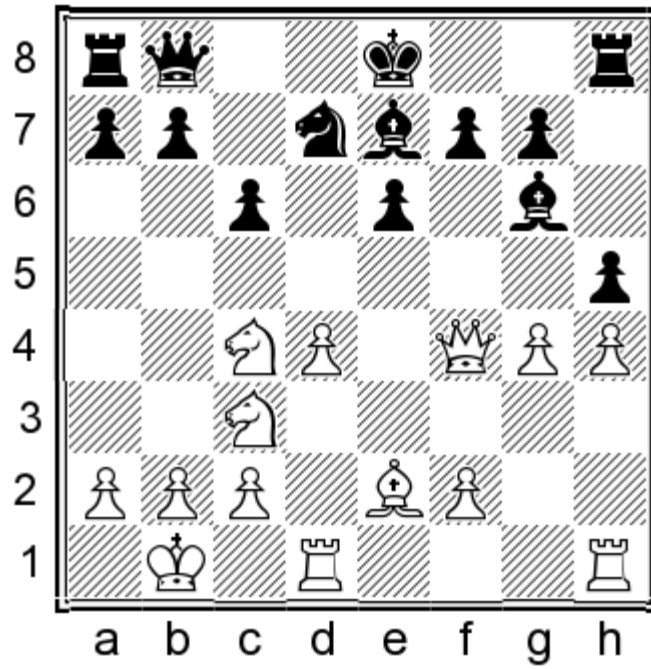
**8...♖c7 9.♚f3 e6 10.♙f4 ♚d8 11.0-0! ♘d5!** is the other critical position.



It transpires that 12.♘d6+ ♙xd6 13.♙xd6 ♗7b6!= and 12.♘d5 cxd5 13.♘d6+ ♙xd6 14.♙xd6 ♜c8 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♜xd3 ♜c6 17.♚g3 ♚f6 do not set problems to Black, so White should probably turn to the plan with a pawn storm on the kingside. It could be launched either immediately:

12.g4 ♙g6 13.h4 h5 14.g5 ♙e7 15.♘d6+ ♙xd6 16.♙xd6 ♗7b6 17.♙e5 ♗xc3 18.♚xc3∞, Van Damme-Gudichsen, ICCF 2014, or after the prophylactic:

12.♙b1 (awaiting for the bishop to go to e7) 12...♗xf4 13.♚xf4 ♙e7 14.g4 ♙g6 15.h4 h5 16.♙e2 ♚b8! (without the interpolation of ♙b1 – ♙e7, Black could have now captured the h4-pawn)



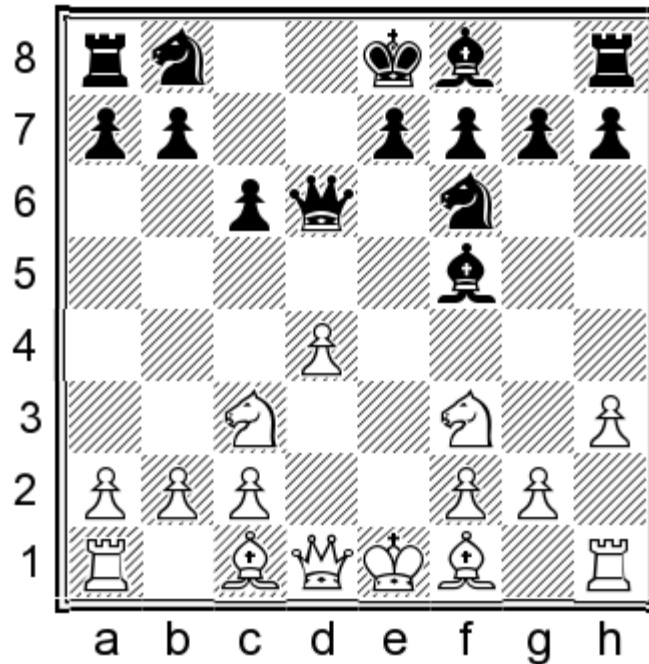
17. ♖e5 ♜xe5 18. dxe5 ♙f6!, see **Game 28** O.Hansen-Peschke, corr. 2012.

## Chapter 6. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♗c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3!?

This could well be one of White's best options against the 3...♞d6 system. I say this because my research showed that Black's path to equality is rather narrow.

6...♗f5

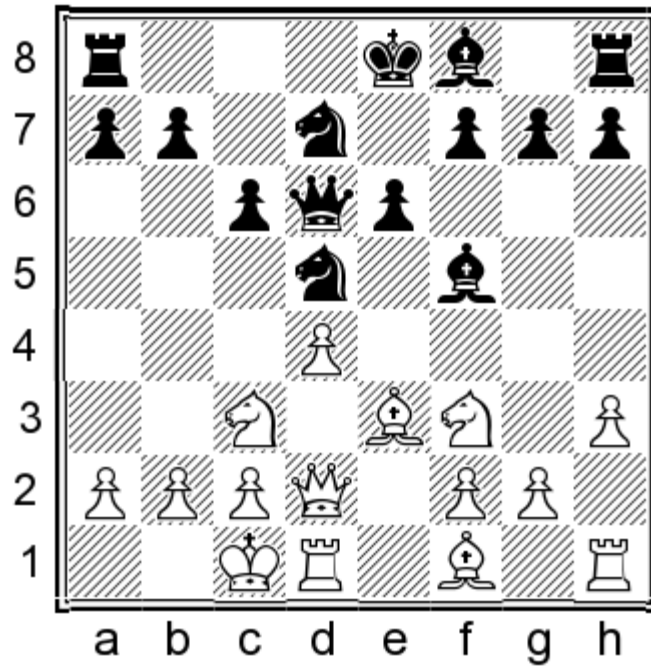


A. 7.♗d3; B. 7.♗c4; C. 7.♗e5

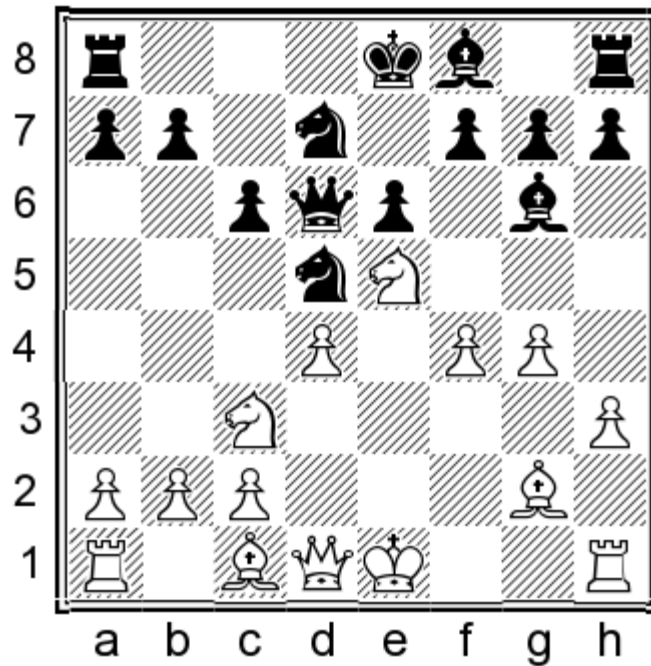
Minor alternatives are:

7.♗e3 ♗bd7 8.♞d2

This logical deployment of the white forces occurred in my game Faber-Kotronias, Kavala 2004. Now I should have continued 8...e6 9.0-0-0 (9.♗h4 ♗e4=) 9...♗d5 (Or 9...♗e4!? 10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.♗f4 ♞b4 12.♞e2 ♗g6=)



10. ♖xd5 ♜xd5 11. c4 ♜e4 12. ♙d3 ♜xd3 13. ♜xd3 ♙xd3 14. ♞xd3 ♙d6 with a completely level ending.  
 7. g4 ♙g6 8. ♗e5 ♗bd7 9. f4 e6 10. ♙g2 ♗d5 neutralises White's pawn storm.



Black could proceed with ...f6 or even ...f5, for example:

11. ♗xg6 hxg6 12. 0-0 f5;

11. h4 f6 (or even 11... ♗xc3 12. bxc3 f6 13. ♗xg6 hxg6 14. ♜d3 0-0-0!? 15. ♜xg6 ♗b6 with a counterattack) 12. ♗xg6 hxg6 13. ♜d3 f5.

**A. 7. ♙d3 ♙xd3 8. ♜xd3**

This contradicts chess principles since White voluntarily exchanges Black's most problem piece and reduces the significance of his spatial advantage. I really do not understand how this could be the most popular option on move 7!

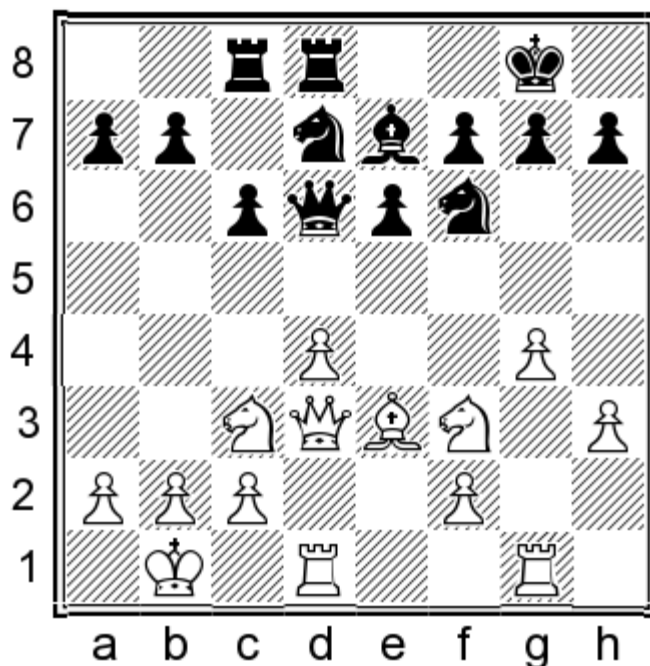
The only explanation is that White puts his hopes in his slight lead in development.

8...♖bd7 9.♙g5

This aggressive deployment of the bishop is clearly the most principled follow up.

Worse is 9.♙e3 e6 10.0-0-0 ♙e7 11.♖b1 0-0 12.g4 b5!= and Black secures d5 for his knight in anticipation of the g4-g5 pawn push, followed by ♗c3-e4.

Instead, 12...♜fd8 13.♞hg1 ♜ac8

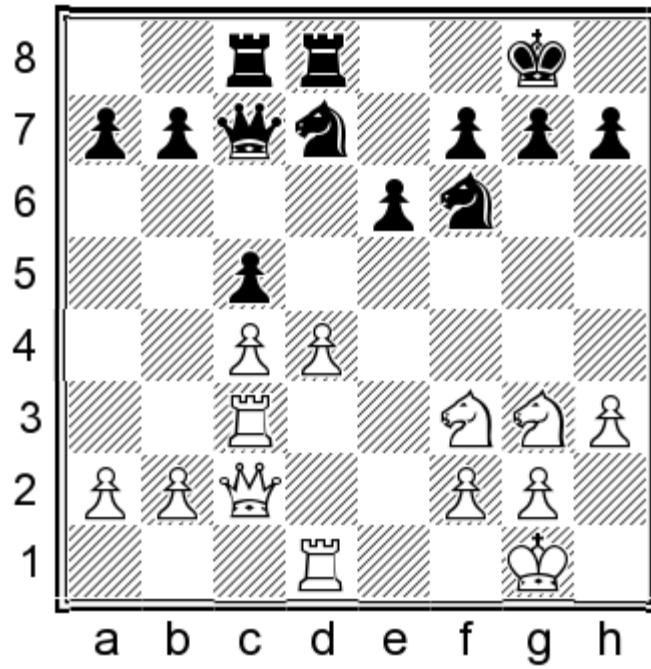


has been is suggested by Crouch, yet 14.g5 ♗d5 15.♗e4 ♞c7 16.c4! ♗xe3 17.♞xe3 c5 (17...b5 18.c5!±) 18.d5 exd5 19.♞xd5 leaves Black facing unpleasant pressure on the kingside.

13.g5 ♗d5 14.♗e4 ♞c7⇒ Black is ready to play ...c6-c5 and is certainly no worse with his proud knight on d5.

9.♗e4 also plays into our hands and is a line I would certainly not play with White. First player's only chance for an advantage is a sharp middlegame, but the text move allows to simplify with 9...♗xe4 10.♞xe4 ♞g6! Black gets a nice solid pawn formation and excellent control over d5. Play might continue: 11.♞xg6 hxg6 12.♙f4 e6, see **Game 26** Wiczorek-Kulicov, Marianske Lazne 2008.

9.0-0 renounces the idea of castling long. Thus Black is no longer running the risk of falling under attack. After 9...e6 10.♗e2 ♞c7 11.c4 ♜d8! 12.♞c2 ♙e7 13.♙f4 ♙d6 14.♙xd6 ♞xd6 15.♜ad1 0-0 16.♜d3 ♞c7 17.♜fd1 ♜c8! (an excellent move, intending ...b7-b5) 18.♜c3 ♜fd8 19.♗g3 c5, Black has achieved all his strategic objectives in the opening and has completely equalized in Molner-Engqvist, Budapest 2014.



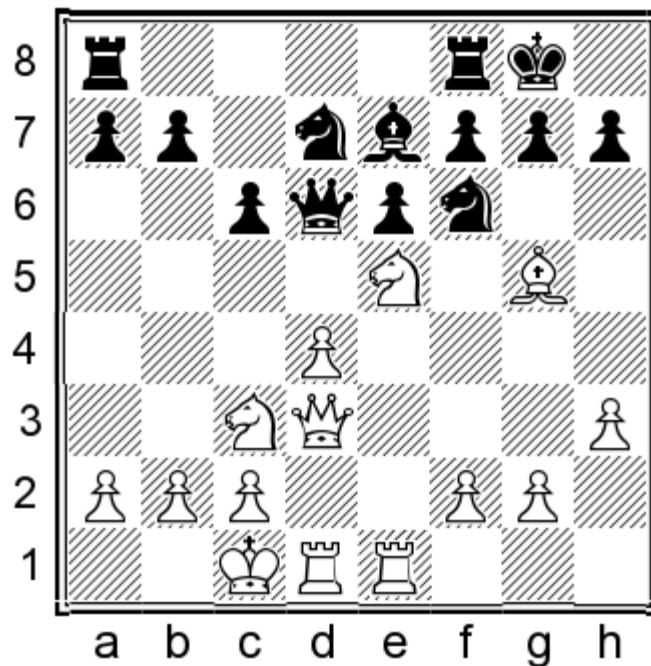
The game concluded peacefully after 20.♖cd3 cxd4 21.♖xd4 ♖b8 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♖xd8+ ♜xd8 24.b4 a5! 25.a3 ♖a6 26.♜a4 axb4 27.axb4 h6 28.♜b5 ♜e7 29.c5 ♜d7 30.♜a5 ♖d5 31.♖e5 ♜c7 32.♜xc7 ♖axc7 33.♖d3 b5 34.cxb6 ♖xb6 35.♖e4 ♖bd5 36.♖ec5 ♖f8 37.f4 when a draw was signed.

**9...e6 10.0-0-0**

Or 10.♗h4 ♜c7! 11.♗g3 ♗d6 12.♗xd6 ♜xd6= and the position is rather balanced.

**10...♗e7 11.♖he1 0-0 12.♖e5**

At this point Black should relieve his slight cramp by exchanges and try to carry out ...c6-c5:



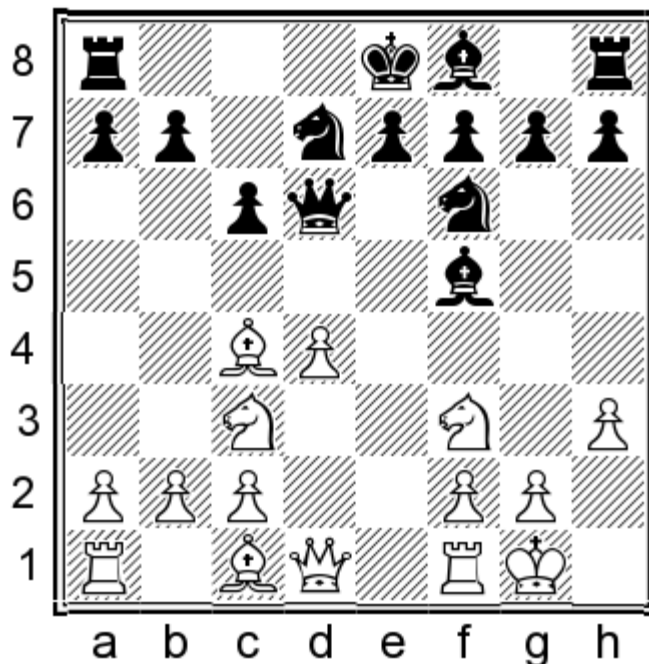
**12...♖ad8! 13.f4 h6 14.♗h4 ♖d5! 15.♖e4 ♜c7 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.♜f3 b6⇌**

Black is restricted to three ranks only yet he is perfectly safe. As soon as he plays ...c6-c5 and the position opens up,

some of the weaknesses in White's camp, such as the pawn on f4, will start to tell.

**B. 7.♙c4 ♘bd7 8.0-0**

(8.♘h4 ♙e6)



**8...e6**

You should prefer the move order with 8...h6!? if you must win. It was played in only one game which Black lost. It preserves the f5-bishop thus keeping more tension than 8...e6 9.♘h4 ♙g6 10.♘xg6 hxg6. This line does not bother us as we play ...♙c7, ♙d6=. However, it is difficult to win against a bishop pair in such position although the plan with ...0-0-0 could throw some oil into the fire.

In Adhiban-Alonso Moyano, Linares 2014, White tried to exploit the delay of ...e6 by 8...h6 9.♘e2!?

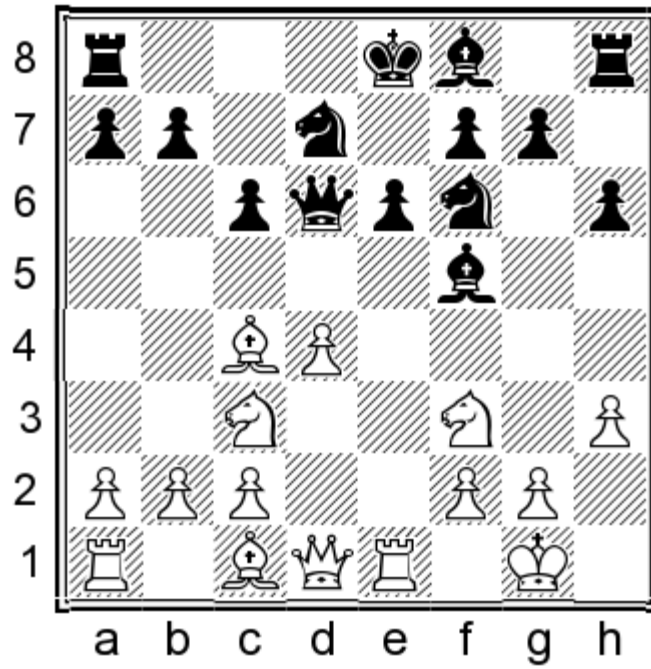
This would have been senseless if the pawn were on e6 since Black would simply answer ...♙c7.

9...e6 10.♙f4 ♙b4 11.♙b3 ♙e7 12.c4 (12.♙c7 ♙c8) 12...♙b6 and White has not achieved any particular success.

**9.♙e1 h6**

The same logic applies here. 9...♙e7 10.♘e2 (10.♘h4!?) is the usual line.

9...♙c7 10.♘h4 ♙g6 11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.♙f3 occurred in an email game. Then 12...0-0-0 deserves attention.



10. ♖e2

What else?

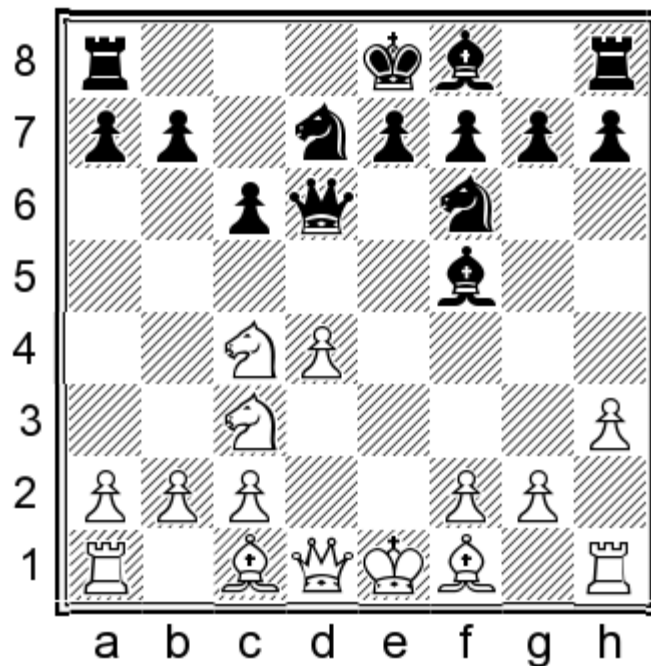
10. ♕d3 ♕xd3 11. ♖xd3 ♖c7=;

10. d5 cxd5 11. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 12. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13. ♕xd5 0-0-0= is a complex queenless middlegame.

10... ♖c7 11. ♖g3 ♕h7 12. ♕d3 ♕xd3 13. ♖xd3 ♕e7

Black has a nice position. His further counterplay should be based on ...c6-c5.

C. 7. ♖e5 ♖bd7 8. ♖c4



8... ♖c7

I have introduced the novelty 8...♞e6+!? in a blitz game. It is possible that this move is Black's best defence, but it needs practical tests. I offer a detailed analysis in **Game 27** NN-Kotronias, Internet 2015.

### 9.♞f3 e6

The most solid continuation. Far more risky is 9...♙e6 10.♙f4 ♞d8 11.0-0 g6!? 12.♘e3!

After 12.d5!? ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.♘e3 (14.♞c3 ♞g8∞) 14...d4 15.♞xd4 ♙g7, Black looks okay.  
12...♙g7 (12...♘b6? 13.d5+) 13.d5 cxd5 14.♘cxd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 0-0 in view of 16.♙b5!± and White has annoying pressure along the central files.

Instead, the alternative 16.♘c7 ♞c8 17.♘xe6 fxe6± is suddenly unclear as Black has pressure on f4 and b2 and this compensates for his static weaknesses.

16...♘e5!?

16...♞c8 17.♞he1 ♘c5 18.♘c7! ♙d7 19.♙xd7 ♘xd7 20.♞d3 e5 21.♞xd7 exf4± leaves Black struggling in a difficult ending.

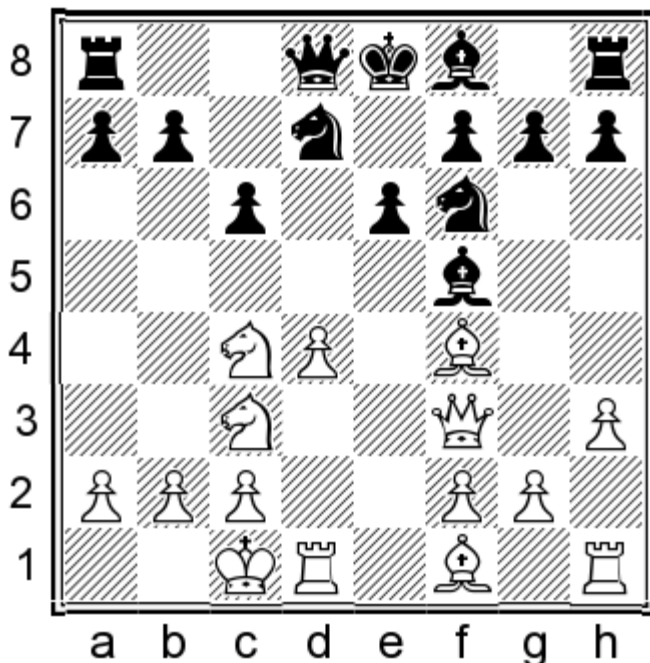
17.♙xe5 ♙xe5 18.♘f6+ ♙xf6 19.♞xd8 ♞fxd8 20.♞d1 a6, but obviously there is no guarantee of drawing this.

### 10.♙f4 ♞d8

The queen has retreated to its initial square and this is undoubtedly a small success for White. However, Black's excellent control over d5 and his sound development mean that he should be able to repel any rash onslaught and eventually obtain counterplay.

### 11.0-0!

White cannot afford to give the c2 pawn. He does not have serious compensation after either 11.♙d6? ♙xc2±; nor 11.♘d6+?! ♙xd6 12.♙xd6 ♙xc2±.



11...♘d5!

After 11...♘b6, Black controls d5, but the development of his kingside has been delayed and this means he should handle the situation with extreme precision. Let us highlight some of his problems.

12.♘e3!

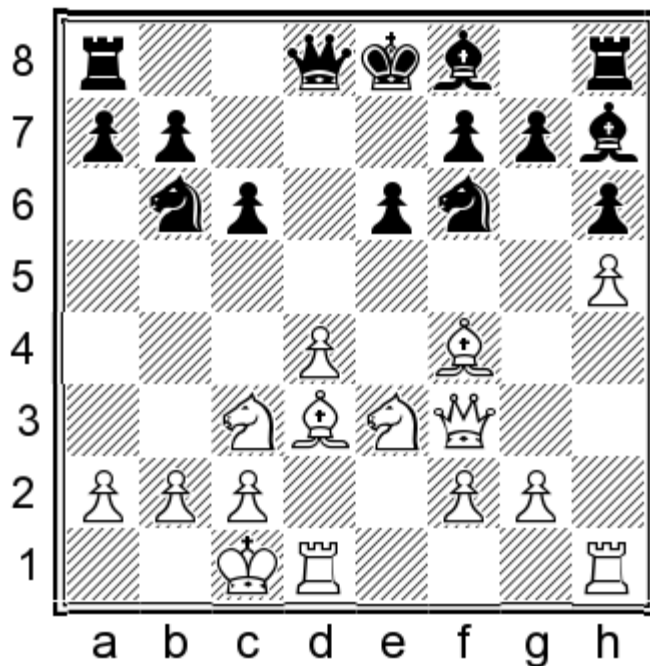
This move is eyeing the critical d5-square and it gains time by attacking the ♙f5. Black stands well after 12.g4!? ♙g6 13.♘e5, Schmid-Kreindl, Austria 2014, 13...♘fd5 14.♘xd5 ♞xd5 15.♞xd5 ♘xd5 16.♙d2 ♙d6 17.c4 ♘e7=.

12...♙g6 13.h4!? h6

Computers say 13...h5 is better, but in my opinion, the g5 square has to be protected.

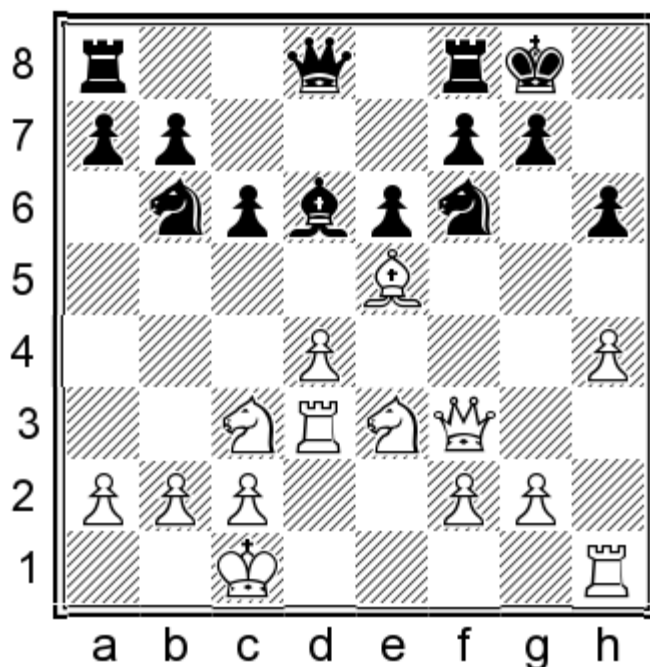
14.♙d3

It is wise to avoid a blockade of the kingside pawns in order to keep handy the idea of g2-g4-g5. I also looked at 14.h5 ♙h7 15.♙d3



15...♙xd3 16.♞xd3 ♙e7 17.♞g3 [After 17.♙e5 ♖bd5 18.♗b1 0-0 19.♘g4 ♗h8 20.♘xf6, the clever intermediate move 20...♗xc3+! (20...♙xf6 21.♗e4±) 21.♞xc3 ♙xf6= gives Black full equality.] 17...♗bd5! 18.♗cxd5 cxd5 19.f3 (19.♞xg7?? ♞g8 20.♞xh6 ♙f8—) 19...♞c8 20.♗b1 ♞c6. Black will have to make an artificial castle by transferring his king to h7, but I cannot see a way for White to exploit this loss of time. The position is quite unclear.

14...♙xd3 15.♞xd3 ♙d6 16.♙e5 0-0



White has an initiative here. I present a few lines in favour of this assessment:

17. ♖g4!

17.g4 ♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♜fd7 19.♖g3 ♜c7 20.f4 ♜c5 should be defensible for Black;

17.♖g3 ♙b8! 18.♜g4 ♜xg4 19.♖xg4 ♙xe5 20.dxe5 f5!;

17.♙b1 ♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♜fd7 19.♖g3 f5 20.exf6 ♖xf6± is similar to 17.♜g4.

17...♜xg4 18.♖xg4 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 f5! 20.exf6

20.♖b4!? ♜c7 21.♞d6 ♜e7 22.♖b3 ♞ae8 23.♜e2 ♜c8 24.♞dd1 f4± is worse for Black, but probably not that much as his knight is about to reenter the game via b6 and d5.

20...♖xf6 21.f3±. White has some pressure due to the weakness on e6, but Black should be able to hold.

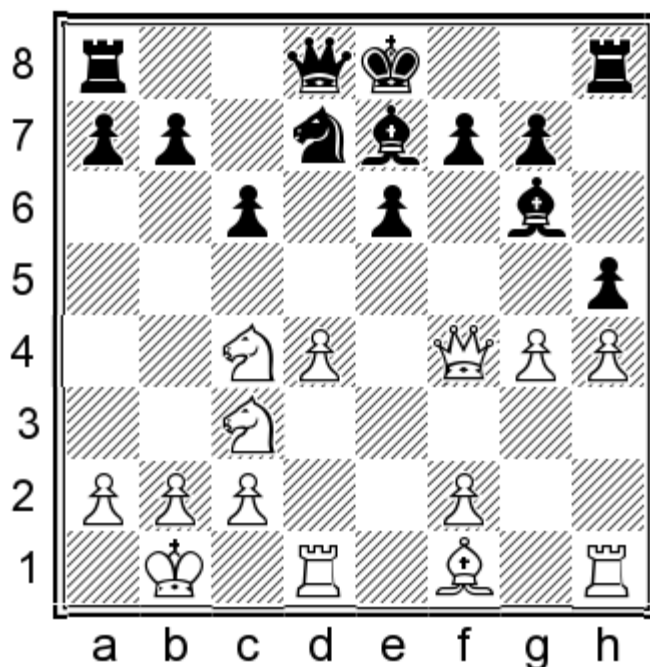
## 12. ♙b1

12.♜d6+ ♙xd6 13.♙xd6 ♜7b6!= 14.♙a3 ♖g5+ 15.♙b1 ♜xc3+ 16.♖xc3 0-0-0 is not a problem for Black;

12.♜xd5 cxd5 13.♜d6+ ♙xd6 14.♙xd6 ♞c8 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♞xd3 ♞c6 17.♖g3 ♖f6 also looks balanced. Our king could go to c8.

12.g4!? ♙g6 13.h4 is probably the most challenging continuation. Then 13...h5 14.g5 ♙e7 15.♜d6+ ♙xd6 16.♙xd6 ♜7b6 17.♙e5 ♜xc3 18.♖xc3 is unclear, Van Damme-Gudichsen, ICCF 2014.

12...♜xf4 13.♖xf4 ♙e7 14.g4 ♙g6 15.h4 h5



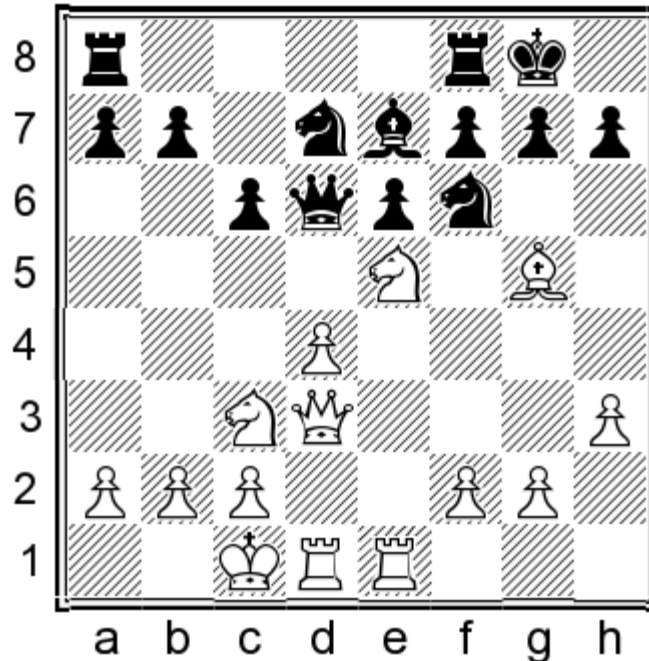
16. ♙e2 ♖b8!

Black neutralised the enemy's initiative in **Game 28** O.Hansen-Peschke, corr. 2012.

## Chapter 6. 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 Annotated Games

25. Slobodjan – Muse  
Bundesliga 09.12.2006

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 ♗f5 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♖xd3 ♘bd7 9.♗g5 e6 10.0-0-0 ♗e7  
11.♖he1 0-0 12.♗e5



12...♗b6?

An instructive mistake. This knight is required to stay where it is in order to challenge the ♗e5 and support the ...c6-c5 break. Black needs to oppose counterplay in the centre to White's impending kingside attack. The correct reaction is 12...♗ad8! 13.f4 h6 14.♗h4 ♗d5=.

13.♗xf6!

This exchange deprives Black of any counterplay and turns the ♗e5 into a monster. The resulting position is really bad for Black.

13...♗xf6

Black is also suffering after 13...gxf6 14.♗g4! (14.♗e4 ♖d8 15.♘f3 ♖d5±) 14...♔h8 15.♔b1 ♗d5 16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♖e3!± as 17...♗g8 is strongly answered by 18.♗h6!.

14.♗e4 ♖d8 15.f4 ♗c8 16.h4 ♗d5 17.♔b1?!

Slightly odd. 17.g3± was the normal move.

17...b5

17...♗xf4! had to be played. White would have several ways to maintain the initiative, but nothing clear.

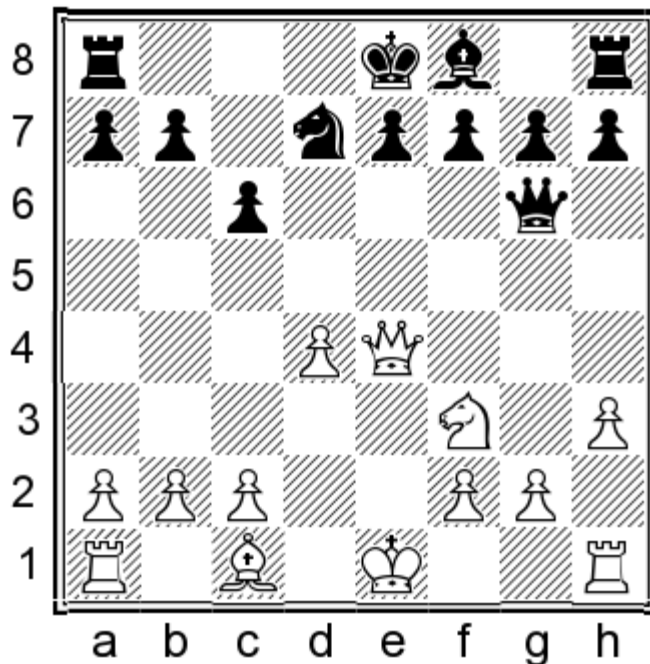
## 18.g3±

Now White is back on the right track and there is almost nothing Black can do.

18...♙e7 19.♘g5 g6 20.c3! ♘b6 21.♘gf3! ♚d5 22.h5+- (Black's position is hopeless. The remainder requires no comments.) 22...f6 23.hxg6 fxe5 24.gxh7+ ♔h8 25.♘xe5 ♙f6 26.♘g6+ ♔g7 27.g4 ♔f7 28.♘xf8 ♖xf8 29.f5 exf5 30.♖f1 ♚e4 31.♚xe4 fxe4 32.♖xf6+ 1-0

## 26. Wieczorek – Kulicov Marianske Lazne 21.01.2008

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 ♙f5 7.♙d3 ♙xd3 8.♚xd3 ♘bd7 9.♘e4 ♘xe4 10.♚xe4 ♙g6! =



An important move. Black has good chances without queens.

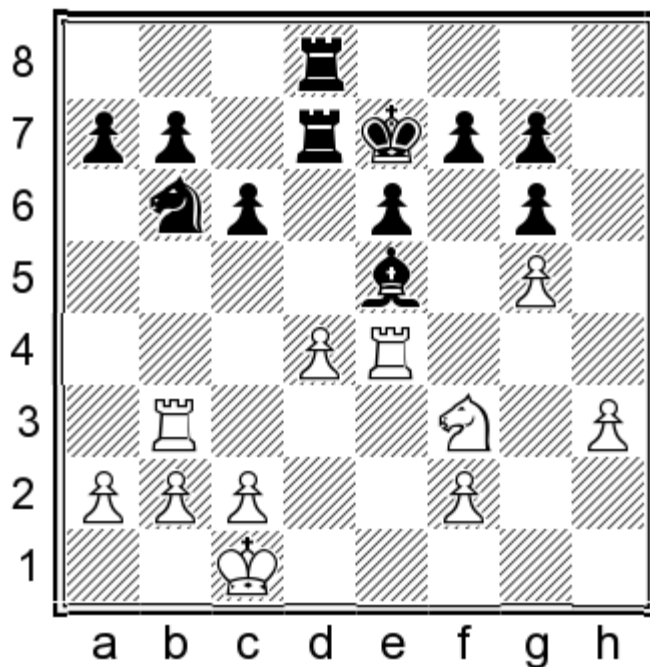
11.♚xg6 hxg6 12.♙f4 e6 13.0-0-0 ♙e7 14.♖he1 ♘b6 15.♙e5 ♙f6 16.♖e4 ♔e7 17.♖d3 ♖hd8 18.♖b3 ♖d7 19.g4 ♖ad8

White players are often at a loss what to do in this type of positions. Wieczorek loses patience and offers Black considerable winning chances.

## 20.g5?!

20.♖d3 was preferable. If then 20...g5, White has 21.h4! gxh4 22.g5 ♙xe5 23.♘xe5 ♖d5 24.♖f4 f6 25.gxf6+ gxf6 26.♘g6+ ♔f7 27.♘e5+ ♔e7 =.

## 20...♙xe5



**21. ♖xe5?!**

21. ♖xe5 f6 (21... ♗c4 22. ♖e1 ♖h8!?) 22. ♖e1 ♗d5⚡ would have also been worse for White, but not as much as in the game.

**21... ♖xd4 22. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 23. ♖f3**

White counted on this move, but Black's reply is quite strong.

**23... ♖e4! 24. ♗xf7 ♗c4!**

The mate threat forces great concessions from White.

**25. c3 ♖e2**

A bit stronger was 25... a5! as White has to play b2-b3 anyway: 26. b3 ♖e1+ 27. ♕c2 ♗e5 28. ♗xe5 ♖xe5⚡ Having thrown in the move ...a7-a5, Black has gained a tempo over the game continuation.

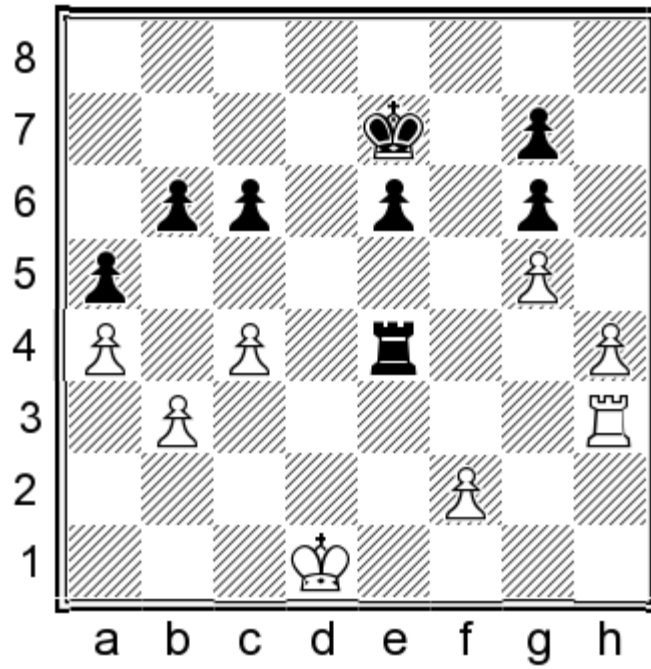
**26. b3 ♗e5 27. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 28. h4 ♖e2 29. a4 a5 30. c4 b6**

White is still under heavy pressure of course. It is not easy to draw this position with such a bad king.

**31. ♕d1?!**

31. ♖f4⚡ might have been easier to hold. The idea is seen after 31... e5 32. ♕d1! and the Black rook has no access to e4. After 32... ♖b2 33. ♖f3 ♖b1+ 34. ♕d2 ♖h1 35. ♖e3, Black has no real winning chances.

**31... ♖e4! 32. ♖h3**



Now the White rook is doomed to passivity.

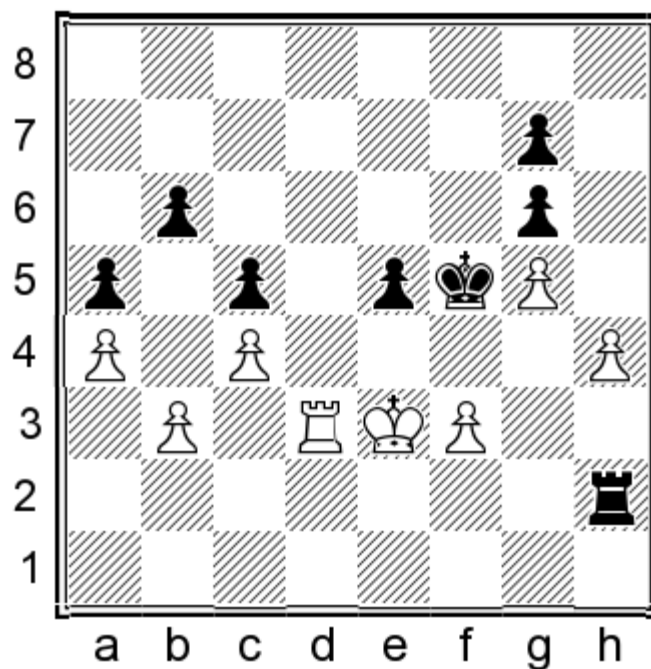
**32...♔d6 33.♔d2 ♚g4 34.♞d3+ ♔e7 35.♞h3 ♔d6 36.♞d3+ ♔e7 37.♞h3 e5 38.♔e3 ♔e6 39.♞h1 ♔d6 40.♞d1+ ♔e7 41.♞h1 ♔e6 42.f3 ♞g2**

42...♞f4 43.♞h2 ♔f5 44.♞h1 ♞d4 45.♞h2 c5 46.♞h1 e4 47.fxe4+ ♞xe4+ 48.♔d3 ♞e7= would have been a better try.

**43.♞d1! ♞b2 44.♞d3 ♔f5 45.♞c3 ♞h2 46.♞d3**

46.c5 bxc5 47.♞xc5 ♞xh4 48.♔d2! (48.♞xa5 ♞b4=) 48...♞f4 49.♞xa5 ♞xf3 50.♔c2= is equal according to the engines, but it was not an easy decision for White.

**46...c5**



**47.♞c3?**

The decisive mistake. 47.♞d6 ♜h3 48.♞xb6 e4 49.♞b7 ♞xf3+ 50.♔e2= was still equal.

47...♞xh4 48.♞d3 ♜h1? (Returning the favour. 48...♞d4+ was an easy win.) 49.♞c3? (49.♞d6!)= 49...♞b1+ 50.♞d3 ♔xg5 51.♞c3 ♞d1 0-1

**27. NN – Kotronias  
Internet, 2015**

This is a 5 min. blitz game I recently played on the internet.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♗c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 c6 6.h3 ♕f5 7.♗e5 ♗bd7 8.♗c4 ♞e6+!?

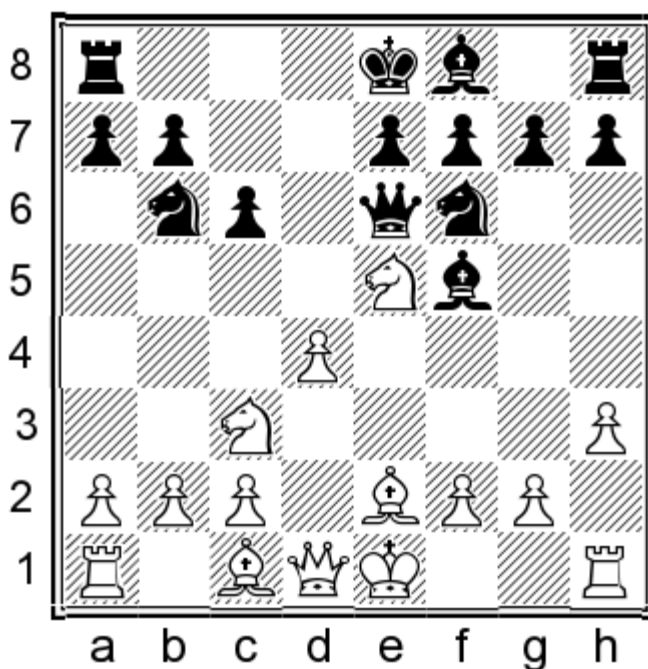
I decided to test this new move in search of an alternative to the common 8...♞c7. Analysing the game afterwards, I realised it may well be fully playable.

9.♗e3

The engines like more 9.♕e2, but I think that after 9...♗b6! their enthusiasm is overly exaggerated. For example:  
10.♗e5!?

10.♗xb6 axb6∞;

10.♗e3 ♕g6 11.a4 a5 12.♞a3= also looks okay for Black after 12...♞d7 13.♞b3 ♞c7.



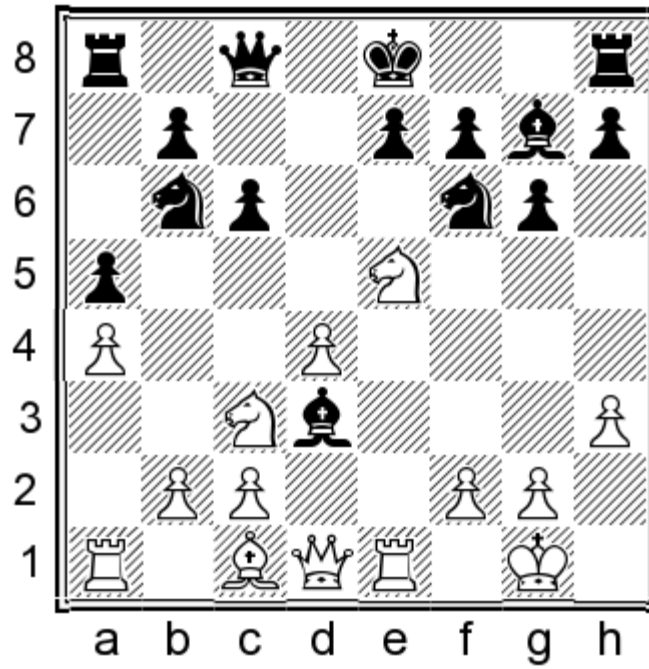
a) 10...♞c8

a1) 11.a4 a5 12.0-0 g6! 13.♞e1

13.g4?! ♕e6 14.f4?! h5! should rebound on White;

13.♗c4 ♞c7! does not seem to pose any great problems either, e.g. 14.♞e1 ♕g7 15.♗xb6 ♞xb6 16.♕c4 ♞d8↗.

13...♕g7 14.♕d3 (14.♞a3 0-0 15.♞b3 ♞d8=) 14...♕xd3 and we are at another crossroads:



15. ♖xd3

This looks like the more natural capture. After 15. ♖xd3 e6 16. ♕f4 [16. ♖e4!? ♖xe4 17. ♖xe4 0-0 18. c3 ♖d5 19. ♕g5 b6 20. ♖d2 ♖a6! (20...c5?! 21. dxc5 bxc5 22. ♖c4±) 21. ♖c1 ♖c4!? 22. ♖c2 ♖ac8 23. b3 ♖a6 24. c4 h6 25. ♕h4 ♖b7!∞] 16...0-0 17. ♖e2 (17. ♕e5 ♖c4±) 17...♖d8 18. ♕e5 ♖e7 19. ♖ad1 ♖bd5±/=, Black has good centralisation and a safe king.

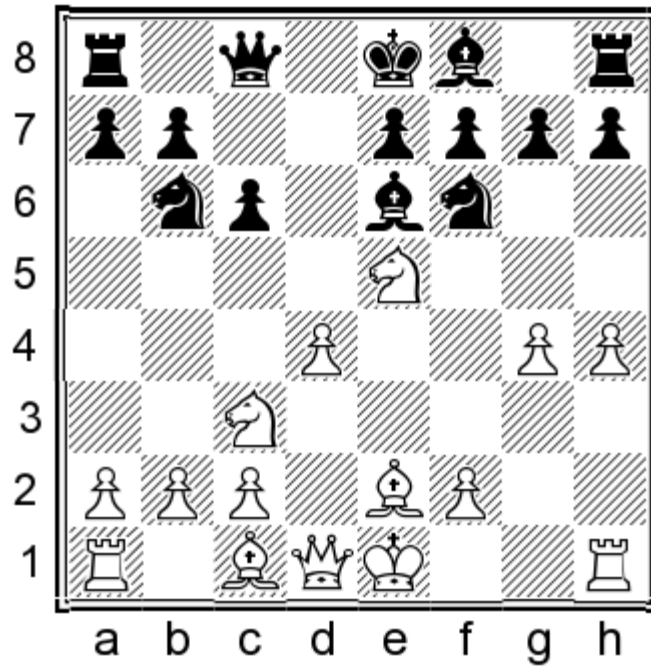
15...0-0 16. ♕g5

I also checked 16. ♖e4 ♖xe4 17. ♖xe4 ♖e6∞;

16. ♕f4 ♖d8 17. ♖ad1 c5! 18. ♖b5 (18. ♖b5 ♖xd4 19. ♖xb6 ♖xf4) 18...♖fd5 19. ♕g3 ♕xe5!? 20. ♕xe5 c4 21. ♖a3 ♖d7! 22. ♖e4 f6 23. ♕g3 ♖e8 24. ♖de1 ♖xa4!! 25. ♖xa4 ♖b6 26. ♖a3 ♖xb5 27. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 28. ♖xe7 ♖d5 29. ♖e6+ ♖g7= with equality.

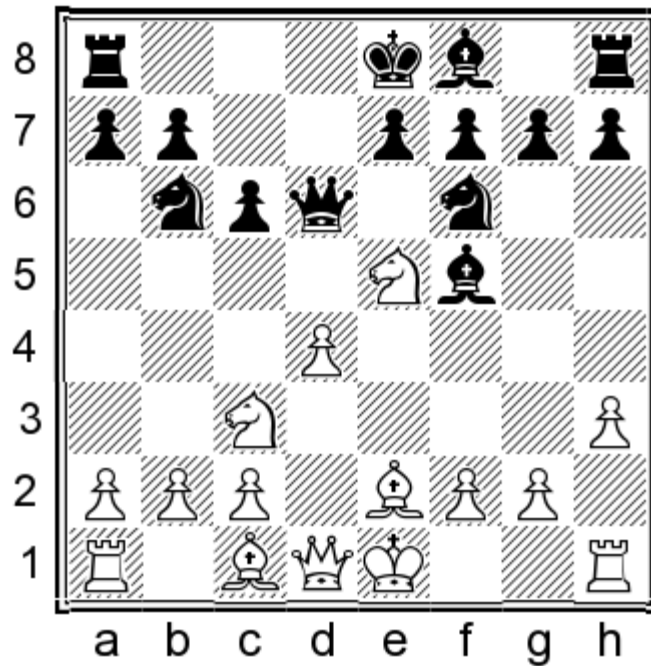
16...♖d8 17. ♖ad1 ♖f5! 18. ♖xf5 gxf5. This is a normal opening position. Black is close to equality.

a2) 11. g4 ♕e6 12. h4



White's initiative looks overwhelming, but in fact it is bound to fade out after a few moves – 12...♘bd7 13.♘d3 h6 14.♖g1 g6 15.♙f3 (15.a4 a5 16.♙e3 ♘b6) 15...♚c7 16.♙f4 ♚a5. Our position is like a coiled spring. The last line suggests that our queen should probably stay on d6 to pressurize d4 and to enable ...♙d8.

b) 10...♚d6!?



Now 11.g4 ♙e6 is similar to the Shirov plan from Chapter 7, but the bishop is on e2 instead of g2. That dramatically changes White's options since his king would be too weak for plans with f4-f5 after 12.f4 ♙d8 13.0-0 g6.

12.0-0 is also risky owing to 12...h5 13.♙f4 ♚d8. Therefore, White's pawn storm is not effective and he should seek quieter deployments:

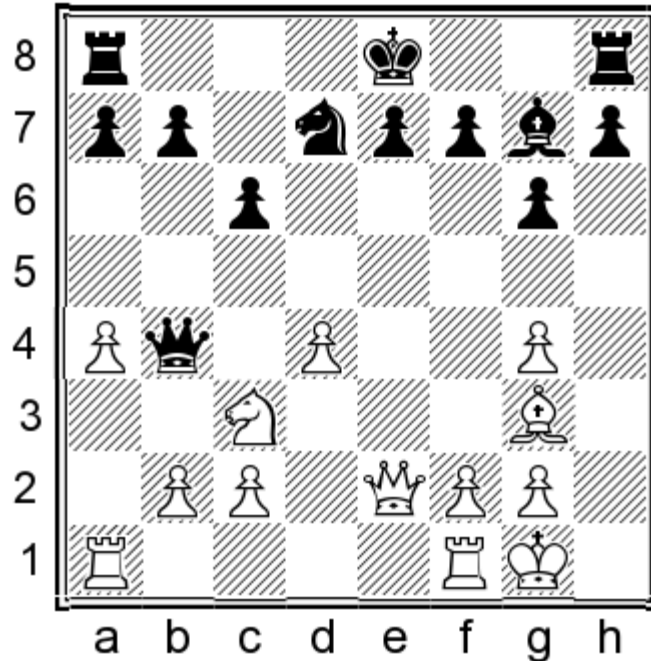
11.a4 ♘bd7!

It might seem that it is clever to interpolate 11...♙d8 12.a5 ♘bd7, but in some lines Black will suffer from the lack

of the option of castling queenside. For example: 13. ♖f4 ♜xe5 14. ♖xe5 ♞d7 15. ♖f3 e6 16. ♞e2 ♙d6 17. g4 ♙g6 18. h4 h6 19. h5 ♙h7 20. g5 hxg5 21. a6. Another point is that Black's queen could not jump to b4, but had to retreat to d7.

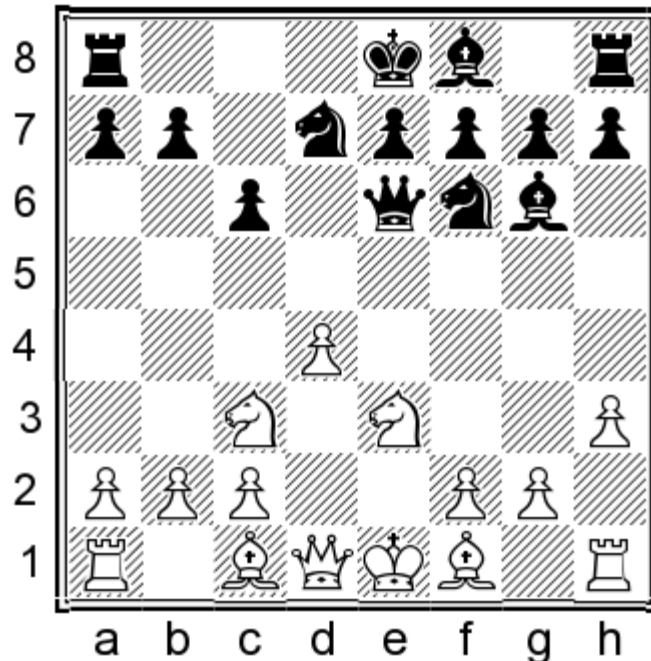
Let us see what this difference gives us:

12. ♖f4 ♜xe5 13. ♖xe5 ♞b4!? 14. 0-0 ♜d7 15. ♖g3 g6 and we can calmly complete development. White may try to gain some minor positional pluses with 16. ♖g4 ♖xg4 17. hxg4 ♖g7 18. ♞e2,



but the simple 18...0-0 offers us a typical robust position. I admit that I have not even checked deeper the captures 18... ♞xb2 and 18... ♖xd4 which certainly do not lose on the spot.

9... ♖g6

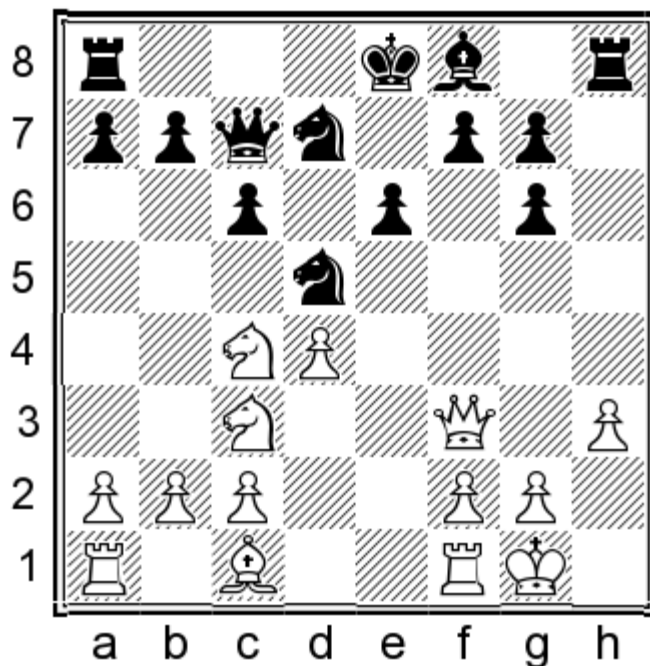


10. ♖d3

After 10. ♖e2, we can play 10... ♞d6= as ♜e3-c4 is not dangerous. The point is that the white queen cannot be developed

to f3 anymore, so the annoying ♖c1-f4 would not be a threat. For this reason, I intended to meet 10.a4 by 10...♠d8! (10...♜d6 11.♘c4 ♜c7 12.♞f3↑ gives White the usual type of initiative.) For example, 11.♙e2 (11.a5 ♘c5! 12.♙e2 ♜c8!) 11...♜d6 12.♘c4 ♜c7 13.0-0 e6=.

10...♜d6 11.0-0 e6 12.♙xg6 hxg6 13.♘c4 ♜c7 14.♞f3 ♘d5!?



An interesting move which prevents ♖c1-f4.

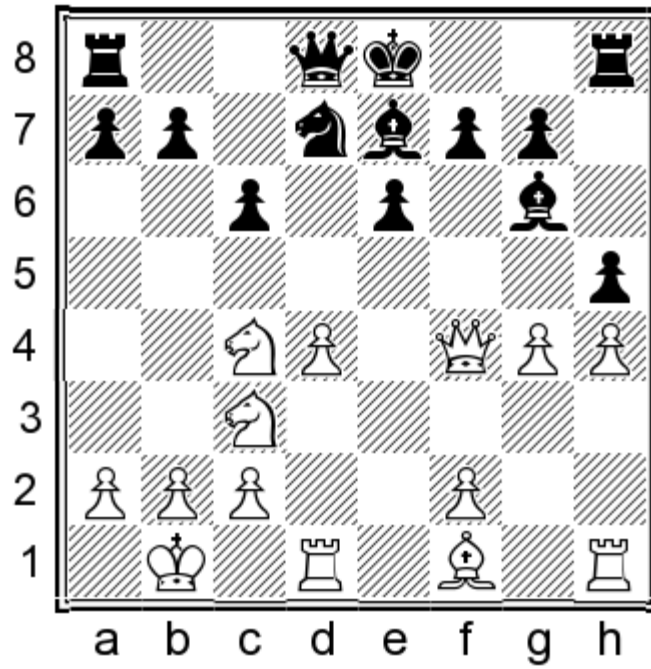
15.♙g5! b5 16.♘d2 ♙b4 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.c3 ♙d6 19.a4! bxa4 20.c4 ♞h5! 21.h4 ♙h2+! 22.♙h1 ♙f4 23.♞xf4 ♞xf4 24.♙xf4 ♞xh4+ 25.♙h2 ♞xd4 26.♞fd1 dxc4 27.f3=.

The position is now equal. An important tactical detail is 27.♞xa4?? ♘b6+ and White loses as he will be pinned next with ... a8-d8.

The rest of the game saw a **draw** after mutual blunders so I will not present it here. It is of course not easy to predict what the future has in store for my novelty, but for the time being I have not found anything like a refutation.

28. N.Ole Hansen – Peschke  
WS/GMN/033 ICCF, 10.02.2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.h3 ♙f5 7.♘e5 ♘bd7 8.♘c4 ♜c7 9.♞f3 e6 10.♙f4 ♜d8 11.0-0-0 ♘d5! 12.♙b1 ♘xf4 13.♞xf4 ♙e7 14.g4 ♙g6 15.h4 h5



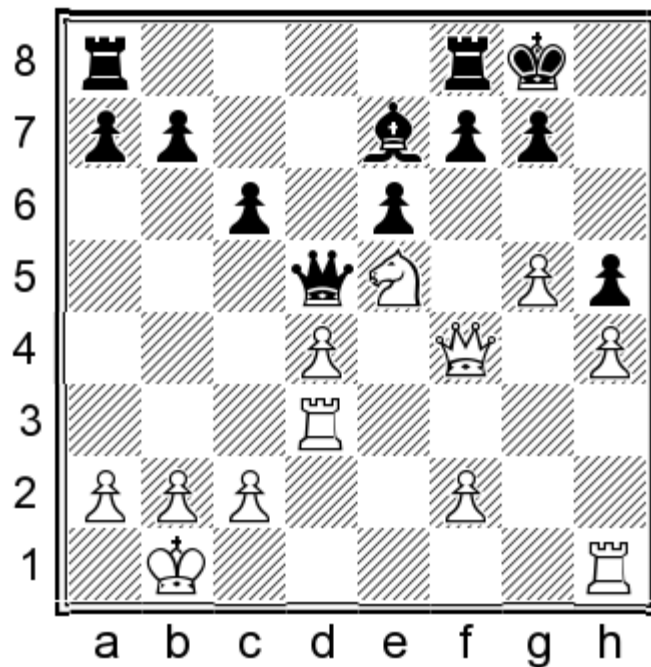
16.♔e2

Keeping the kingside fluid.

16.g5!?. is an interesting idea, but Black should be fine after 16...0-0 17.♔d3! ♕xd3 18.♖xd3 ♜b6! 19.♞e5 ♞d5. This manoeuvre is important as the ♞c3 has to be terminated before it reached e4. 20.♞xd5

Or 20.♞e4!?. ♔d6 21.f4 ♞xc3+ 22.♖xc3 ♔xe5 23.fxe5 ♞d5 24.♞xd5 exd5 25.♖f1 ♜h7=.

20...♞xd5



White has now a bunch of rook moves, but Black should be fine with careful defence:

21.♖hd1

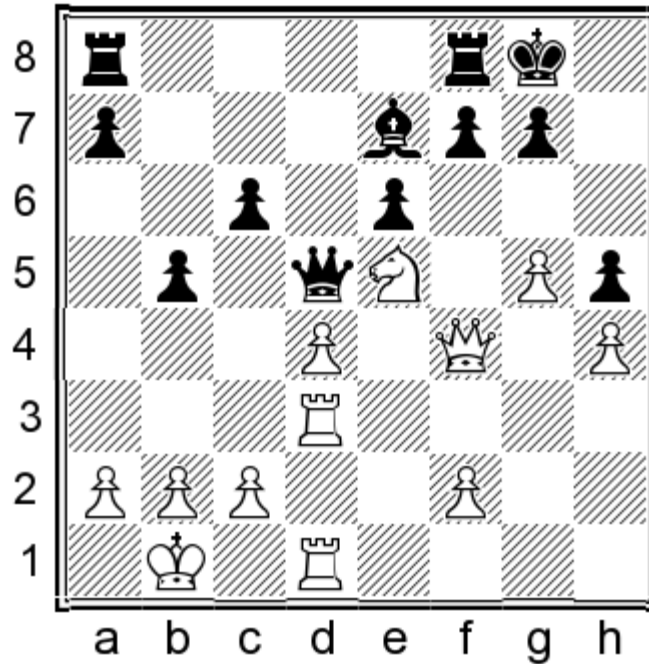
This one looks like the most dangerous. Against the alternatives, the recipe is to put the bishop on d6:

21.♖g1 ♔d6 22.♞e3 ♖ad8 23.f4 g6=;

21.♖e1 ♔d6 22.♞d2 ♔xe5! 23.dxe5 ♞g2! White seems to be better, but in all endings he will have to watch for his

kingside pawns. Here are some sample lines: 24.♖d7 (24.a3 ♖h2! 25.♖d4 c5⇒; 24.♖d1 ♖h2! 25.♖e3 c5! 26.♖g3 ♖xg3 27.fxg3 b5=) 24...♖g4⇒ (24...c5⇒).

21...b5!/? Solidifying the position of the queen should give Black good prospects here. (21...♗d6 is another possibility.)



22.♖d2

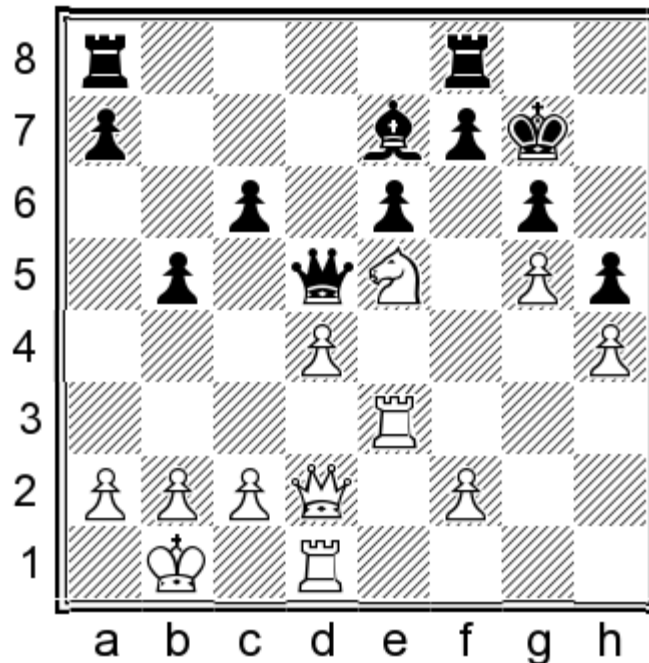
This hides a lot of venom, but Black possesses a defence. 22.g6 fxg6 23.♖e3 ♖f5! 24.♗xg6 ♗f6∞ is unclear; 22.♖g3 g6=.

22...g6 23.♖e3!/?

After 23.♖f3, Black defends by 23...♗d6 as ♗e5-d7 is not possible because of the hanging state of the rook.

23.♖a5 ♖fc8! is nothing special for White as 24.♖f3 ♗d6! does not work for him.

23...♗g7! Carefully anticipating ♖d2-d3 ideas. After this move, I cannot see any danger for Black:



24.♖e2 ♖ad8 25.f4 ♗d6;

24.♖c3 ♖ac8;

24. ♖d3 ♕d6! (the only defence, otherwise ♜e3-f3 wins) 25. ♜d7 ♜fd8 26. ♜f6 ♜f5 27. ♜e2

Or 27. ♜xf5 gxf5! =;

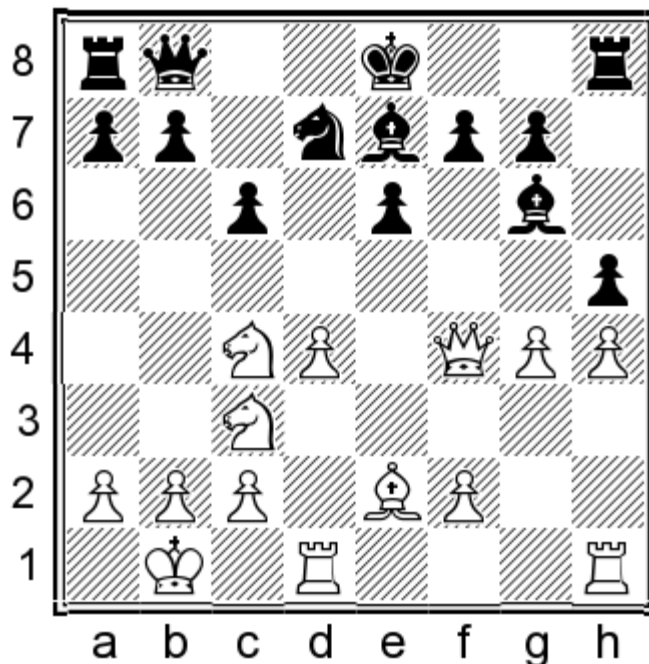
27. ♜c3 b4! 28. ♜xc6 ♜xf2 29. ♜f3 ♜e2 ♞.

27... ♕f4! 28. ♜e4!?

28. ♜f3 e5 ♞; 28. ♜c3 b4! 29. ♜xc6 ♜h3 ♞.

28... b4! (freeing b5 for the queen and discouraging White from making a *luft*) 29. ♜d3 ♕c7 30. ♜f3 ♜b5 ∞.

**16... ♜b8!**



Challenging the strong ♜f4 is the key to Black's defence and forces developments.

**17. ♜e5 ♜xe5 18. dxe5 ♕f6!**

The point. The only way for White to stave off the loss of his e-pawn is to sacrifice the exchange or accept an immediate draw.

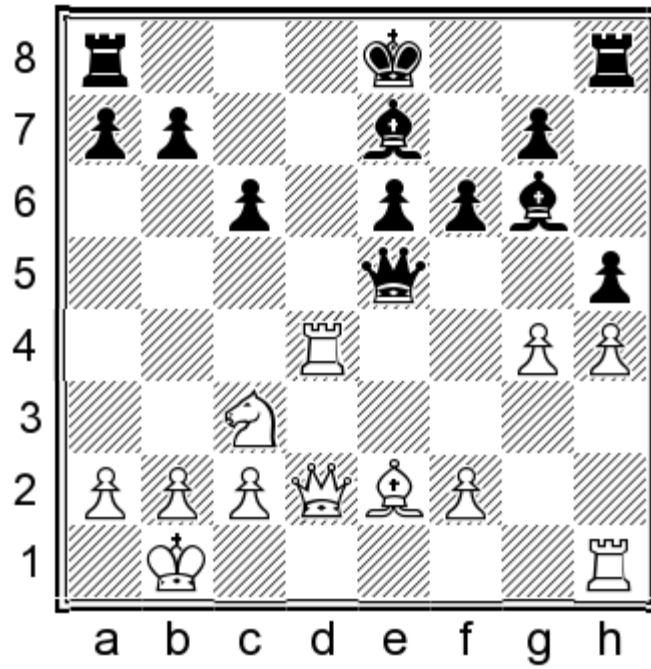
**19. ♜d6 ♕e7 20. gxf5**

20. ♜hd1 is another dangerous-looking move, but we keep a cool head: 20... hxf4 21. ♕xf4 (21. ♜d7 ♕f6 =) 21... ♜xh4 22. ♜d7 ♕f6 23. ♜7d6 ♕e7 =.

20. ♜d4 defends the white queen. Black should probably play 20... f6!?

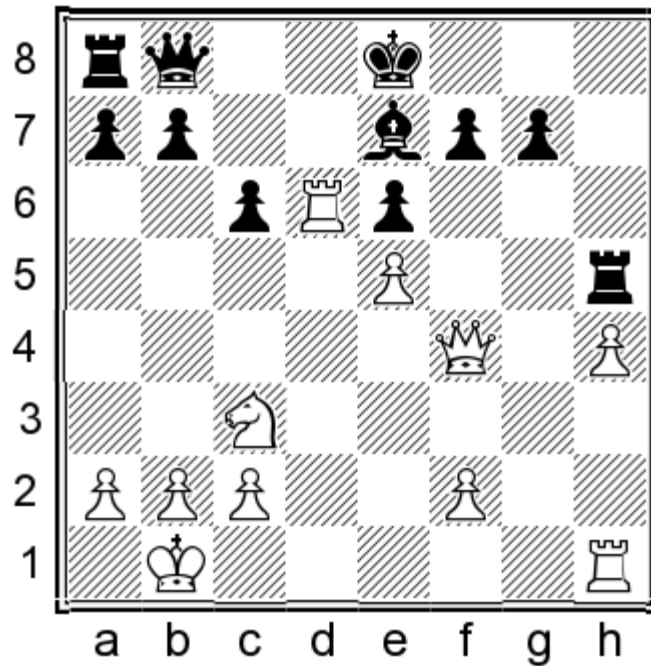
More difficult to handle is 20... hxf4 21. ♜g3 ♜c7 22. ♕xf4 ♜d8 23. ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 24. ♜d1 ♜c7 25. h5! (25. ♕xe6 ♕xh4! 26. ♜g4 ♜xe5 27. ♕d7+ ♜f8 28. ♜b4+ ♜e7 29. ♜xb7 ♕h5! =) 25... ♕xh5 26. ♜h1 g6 27. ♜e4 ∞.

21. ♜d2! (21. ♕d3 ♕f7! =) 21... ♜xe5



22. ♖c4  
 22.gxh5 ♙xh5 23. ♖e1 ♙xe2 24. ♜xe2 c5! ♞ highlights the weakness of the h4-pawn.  
 22...hxg4 23. ♖e1 ♚c7 24. ♙xe6 ♜d8∞ with an immensely complicated struggle and chances for both sides.

20... ♙xh5 21. ♙xh5 ♜xh5



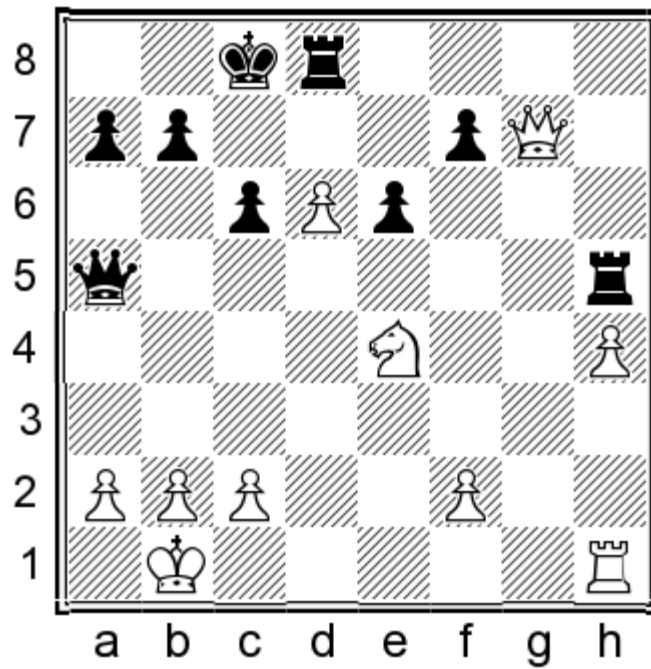
All the engines give an advantage to White here, but actually his initiative is temporary.

22. ♜e4 (The only way to fuel the fire.) 22... ♚c7! (By defending f7, Black is ready to take on d6.

23. ♚g3! ♙xd6 24. exd6

24. ♜f6+ ♜f8 25. exd6 ♚a5 26. ♜xh5 ♚xh5 27. d7 is strongly answered by 27... ♜e7! =. Black will follow up with ... ♜a8-d8 and capture the dangerous pawn.

24...♙a5 25.♚xg7 0-0-0



26.♙xf7 ♜xh4! 27.♙xe6+ ♔b8 28.♙g1 ♜hh8 29.b3

After 29.f3 ♚d5 30.♙e7, 30...♔a8! kills all White's hopes for an edge.

29...♙d5 30.♙e7 ♔a8! 31.♙e1

31.♙g7 ♜h1+ 32.♔b2 ♜b8 33.d7 ♙e1 34.f3 ♚d1 35.♙g8 ♚c1+ 36.♔c3 ♙e3+ 37.♔b2 ♚c1+= is a perpetual.

31...♙f5 32.a3 ♙d7=

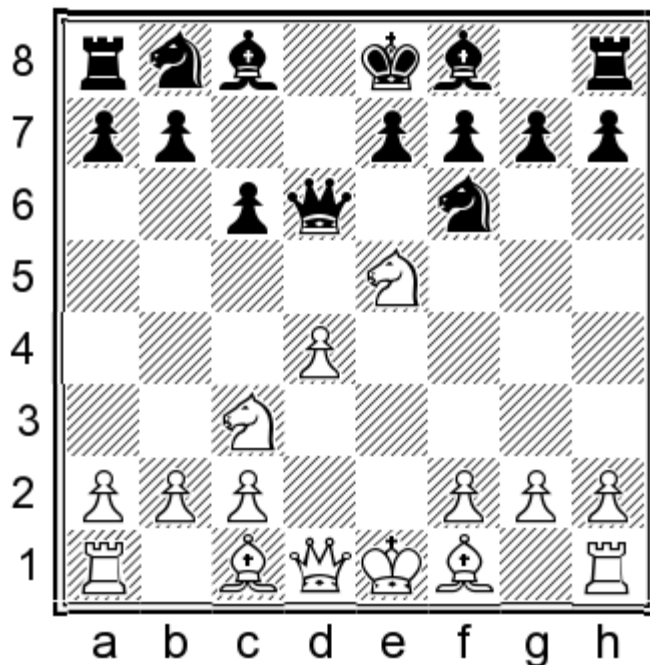
The white queen is trapped and has to be exchanged for its counterpart. Then the draw is trivial.

33.♙g5 ♙xg5 34.♔xg5 ♔b6 35.♙e6 ♜f8 36.♔e4 ♜df7 37.♔b2 Draw.

A very important game for the theory of the 3...♙d6 Scandinavian.

# Chapter 7. 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♙f4 and the Shirov plan 7.f4 Main Ideas

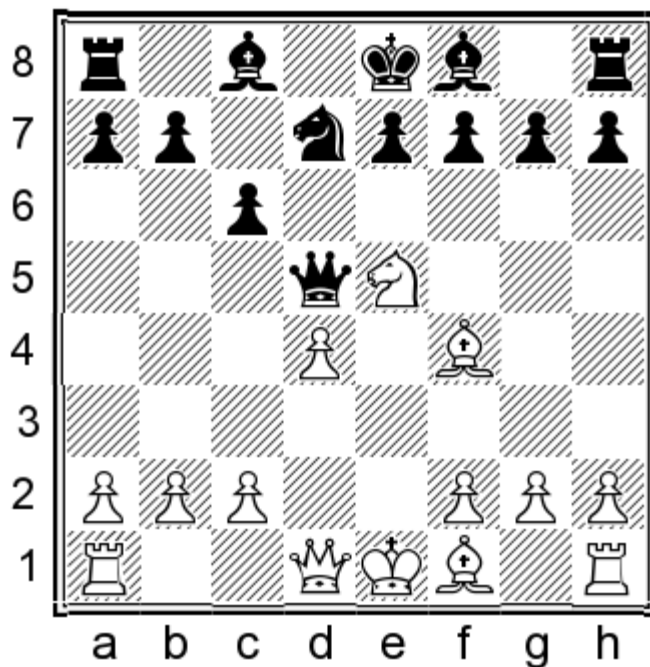
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5



Finally we have reached the most important position in the whole 3...♚d6!? Scandinavian. 6.♘e5 is more popular than all the other 6th move alternatives together. Black's answer 6...♘bd7 is natural and then White has three reasonable options.

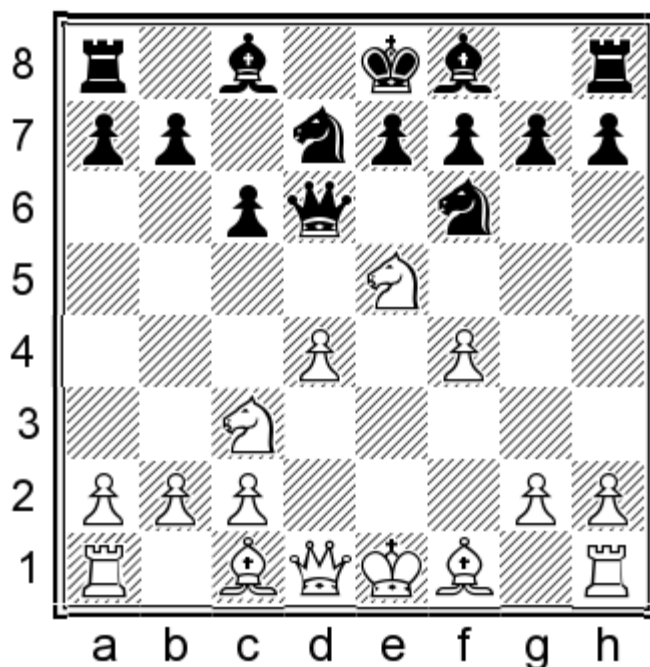
In this chapter I will cover 7.♙f4 and Shirov's pet line 7.f4, while 7.♘c4 is the subject of the concluding chapter.

The pawn structure d4 vs. c6 defines a spatial advantage for White so he should avoid exchanges. Besides, the slightly exposed queen on d6 suggests moves like 7.♙f4. However, it stumbles into the double attack 7...♘d5! which trades a pair of knights – 8.♘xd5 ♚xd5.



Obviously, White cannot afford further exchanges, so he chooses from: 9.♘f3, **Game 30** Ivanchuk-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2010, and 9.♘c4 ♖e4+ 10.♙e3 ♜f6 11.♚d2 g6 12.0-0-0 ♚d5 13.♜b1 ♙e6=. The sharper option 9.♙e2?! is dubious in view of 9...♜xe5 10.♙xe5 ♚xg2 11.♙f3 ♚g6 – see **Game 29** Anand-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

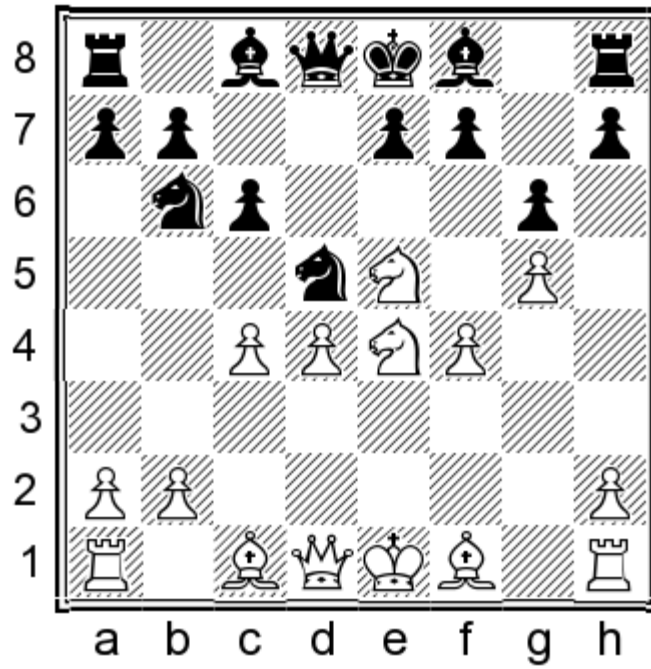
7.f4!? is another opera.



**I would like to get your full attention now!** This is a relatively new idea so it is 4 times less popular than 7.♘c4, but it is the toughest nut to crack. It is not a coincidence that White has scored the disturbing 67%. In my opinion, Black's attempts to deal with it have been totally wrong so far.

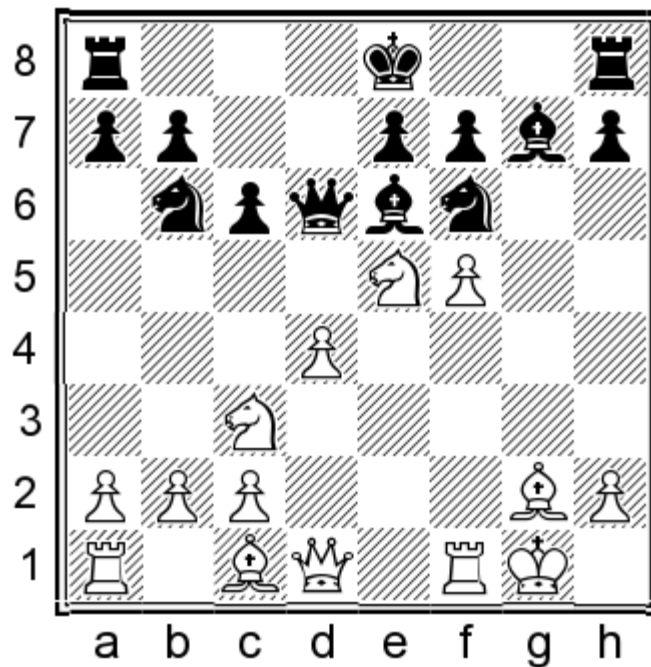
When Shirov introduced this plan at high level in 2007, he connected it with the advance g2-g4-g5, apparently aiming to grab as much space as possible:

7.f4 ♜b6 8.g4 g6 9.g5?! ♜fd5 10.♘e4 ♚d8 11.c4, Shirov-Nisipeanu, Foros 2007.



However, this approach is double-edged, as it leaves gaping holes on the kingside light squares. Next year Shirov corrected his idea by pushing f5 instead of g5:

7.f4 ♖b6 8.g4 ♙e6 9.♙g2 g6 10.0-0 ♙g7 11.f5! gxf5 12.gxf5, Shirov-Tiviakov, Benidorm 2008.

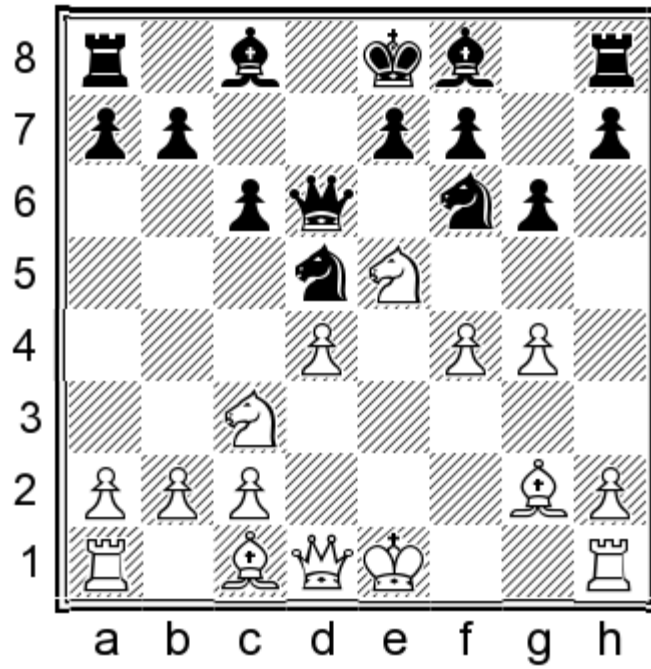


After 12...♙c4, White can answer 13.♙e1! with domination all over the board (a4, b3 is coming).

What can Black do against White's pawn storm? My answer drastically differs from current theory and practice: **Nothing!** 7...♖b6?! is a mistake.

I offer my arguments in the annotations to **Game 32** Barrientos Chavarriaga-Tiviakov, Bogota 2010 and **Game 31** Wan, Yunguo-Tiviakov, Moscow 2011. To summarise them:

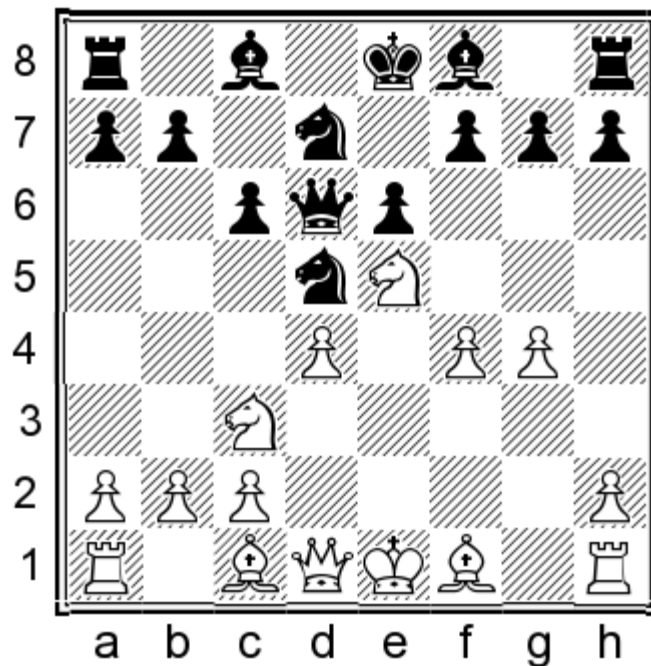
Sergey Kasparov's recommendation 7.f4 ♖b6?! 8.g4 ♖bd5 9.♙g2 g6



is unsatisfactory owing to 10.0-0 (he only mentions 10.g5?!) 10...♔g7 11.f5! – my novelty. Its strategic background is to leave Black with a useless light-squared bishop. This idea is very effective against any Black’s plan based on short castling.

I have also investigated Watson’s suggestion 7.f4 ♖b6?! 8.g4 ♕e6 9.♔g2 g6 10.0-0 0-0-0, but 11.♙f3! assures White of a terrible attack.

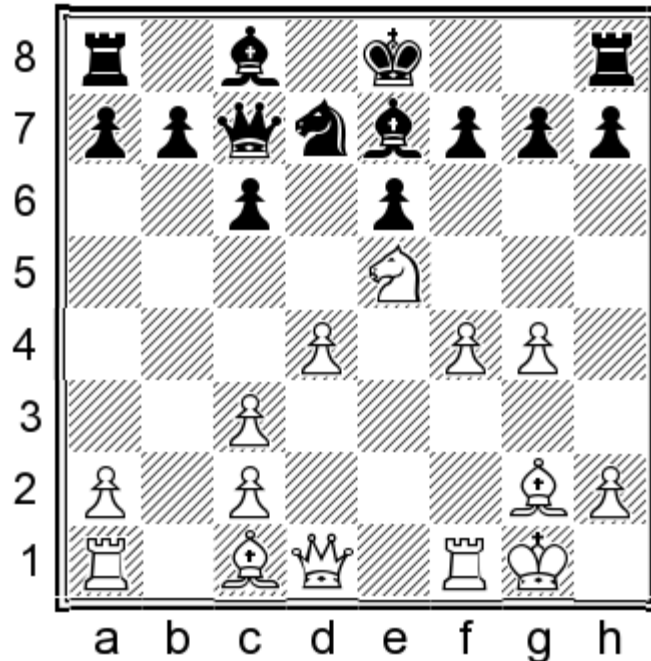
Evidently, Black’s defence needs a capital repair. First, we should understand the origins of our problems after 7...♖b6?!. That’s the easy part – Black loses time and removes control over the raging beast on e5. So we should develop, but how? I think that both 7...e6 and 7...g6 are playable, but the former involves a more passive set-up. Look at 7...e6 8.g4! ♖d5!



I had to develop this completely new line since the known alternatives were pretty grim. The tactical justification of my idea is the variation 9.♖e4 ♙b4+ 10.c3 ♙b6 11.c4 ♕b4+ 12.♙f2 ♖5f6 13.♖g5 0-0 where 14.♖gxf7 ♗xf7 is extremely

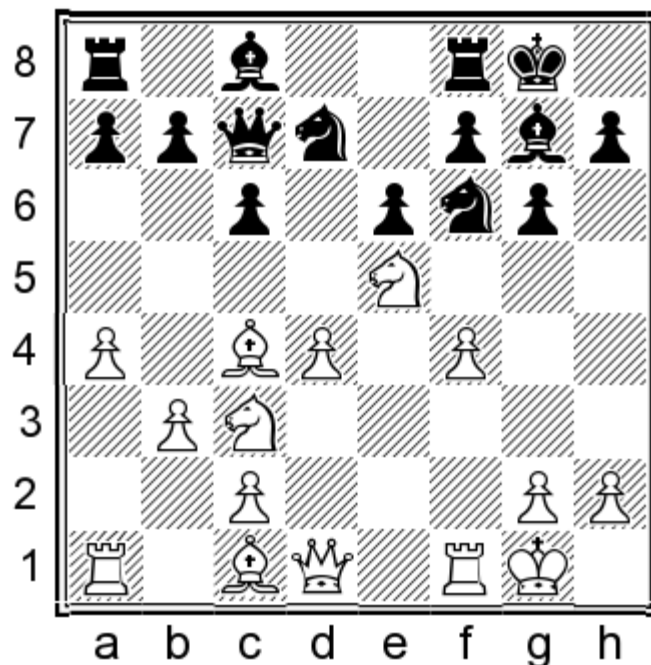
interesting to play with both sides. However, if White continues in a positional manner:

9.♙g2 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♙e7 11.0-0, even the best try 11...♚c7! leaves White with the more active pieces:



Let us compare this position with:

7...g6! 8.♙c4 e6 9.0-0 ♙g7 10.a4 0-0 11.b3 ♚c7



Black's king is much safer here. White's c4-bishop does not hinder our queenside activity with ...c5 (or ...b5), exchanging the d4-pawn.

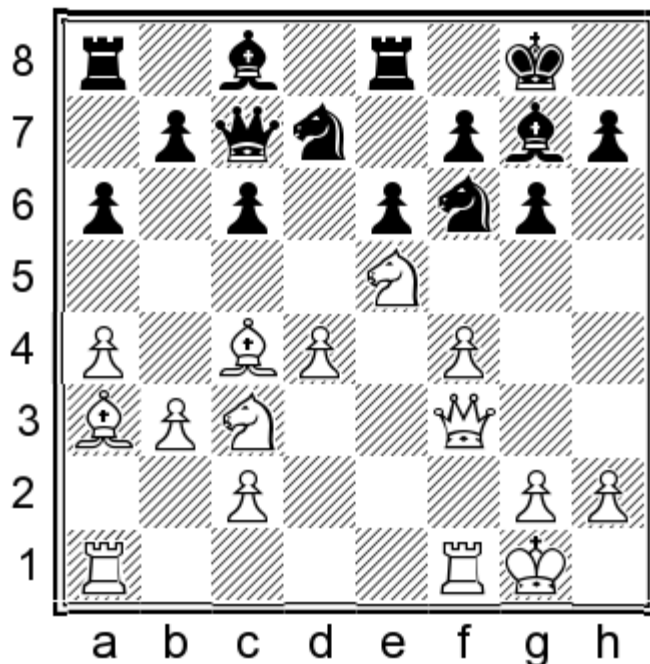
It is funny to read Sergey Kasparov's explanation of how he reached to the idea of 7...g6! in his game against Svetushkin, Vrachati 2011:

"During my preparation for this game late the night before, I had correctly guessed that this variation would be played. However, in the morning I was tired and mixed up the move-order at the board." – *Understanding the Scandinavian, Gambit 2015*. So he wanted to play 7...♘b6?! first, but messed up the moves! However, the mistake is right! I

recommend 7...g6 in full conscience and after a thorough analysis of the Shirov plan. Let us look a little further:

12.♙a3 ♖e8 13.♚f3 a6!

Both S. Kasparov and, subsequently, J. Alvarez in a correspondence game, played instead 13...♘7b6?! and White was clearly better. As I have already mentioned, Black needs his knight on d7 to control White's best piece.



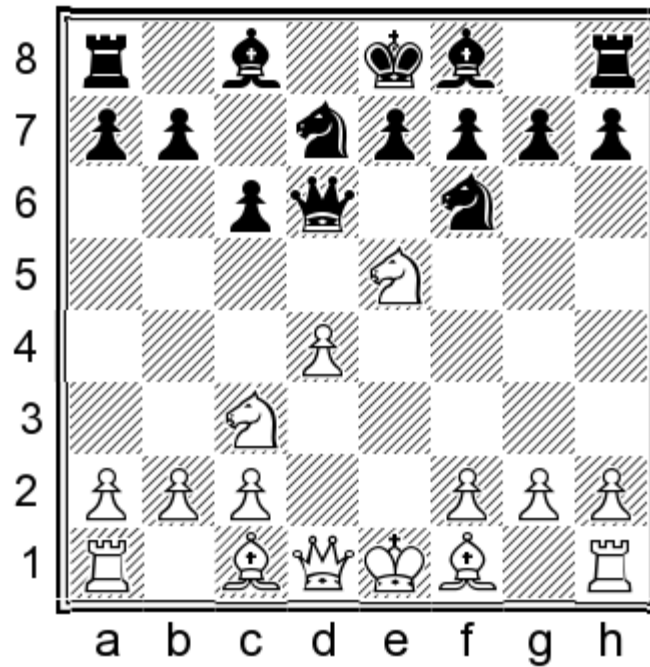
Black's plan is to counter-attack on the queenside by pushing ...b5 or ...c5. He is still lagging behind in development, but White's pieces do not have clear targets. We should gradually level the game.

### Conclusion

The Shirov plan is still underestimated. I suppose that we'll witness major developments in this line very soon. In my opinion, Black should fight it with solid development, postponing counterplay for the middlegame. Fianchettoing the bishop to g7 seems the best way to neutralise White's attacking momentum. Your opponent will hardly expect it at all!

# Chapter 7. 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♙f4 and the Shirov plan 7.f4 Step by Step

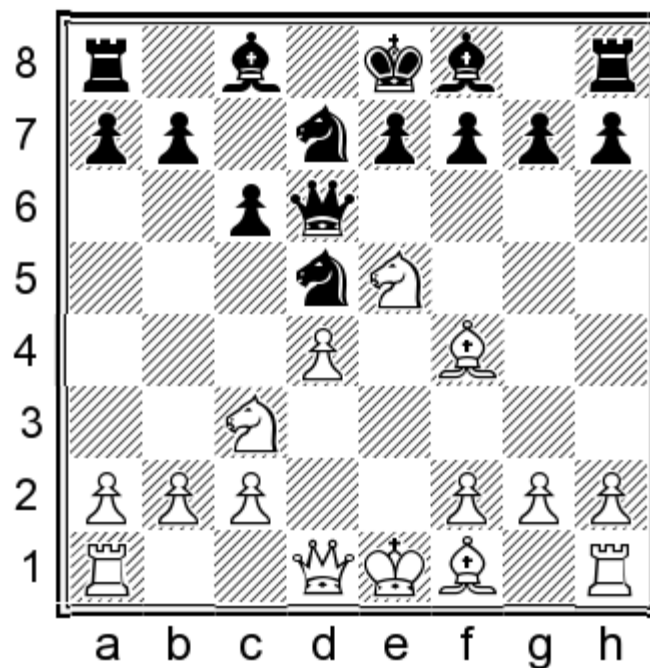
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7



A. 7.♙f4; B. 7.f4.

A. 7.♙f4 ♘d5

This move allows us to trade a knight and deflect all the threats:



8.♘xd5

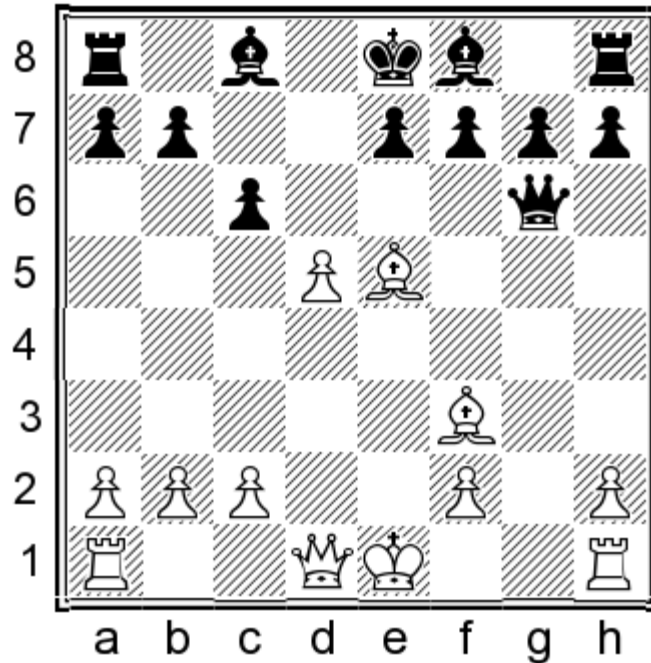
I do not see anything better for White:

a) The attempt to avoid exchanges by resorting to 8. ♖e4?! rebounds on White after 8... ♗e6! 9. ♗f3 (9. ♕g3?! f6!±; 9. ♗g5?! ♗f6±) 9... ♗xf4 10. ♗xf4 ♗xe5 11. dxe5 ♗f5± and in view of his bishop pair only Black can be better.

b) Also harmless for us is 8. ♕g3 ♗xc3 9. bxc3 ♗xe5 10. ♕xe5 ♗g6∞.

### 8... ♗xd5 9. ♗c4

The pawn sacrifice 9. ♕e2?!, aiming to place the bishop on the long diagonal with tempo, led to an inferior position for White after 9... ♗xe5 10. ♕xe5 ♗xg2 11. ♕f3 ♗g6 12. d5



12... ♕g4!± in **Game 29** Anand-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2006. A wonderful tactical shot which shows the resilience and the hidden counter-attacking resources of Black's set-up.

9. ♗f3!? keeps more pieces – see **Game 30** Ivanchuk-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

9... ♗e4+ 10. ♕e3 ♗f6 11. ♗d2 g6 12. 0-0-0 ♗d5 13. ♖b1 ♕e6=

Black is ready to castle and he shouldn't face problems in the ensuing fight.

### B. 7.f4

Shirov's move. White decides to keep his knight on e5 and bolsters it up.

At first, I was impressed by White's idea, but just like almost everything in this world, there is a price to pay for the advantages it offers. For instance, we could provoke hazy complications which prove to be a tough nut to crack even for modern engines. I analyse them in line **B1.** 7... ♗b6?!. Another very sharp option is **B2.** 7...e6!?. The safest approach, however, is **B3.** 7...g6!.

### B1. 7... ♗b6?!

Black abandons the idea of an exchange on e5 and from now on focuses on contesting the weakened light squares in the centre. This move, however, loses time. With bold and inspired play, White can develop strong pressure. To be fair, in

the lines with opposite castles the play is extremely sharp and one hesitant step might turn the tables. I spent more than three days with Komodo 9.3 and I used several cloud engines as well. There were hundreds of options literally speaking, and at some moments only moves were needed. When it comes to endings and king safety, engine evaluations are not too reliable. I often had to interfere and guide the machine.

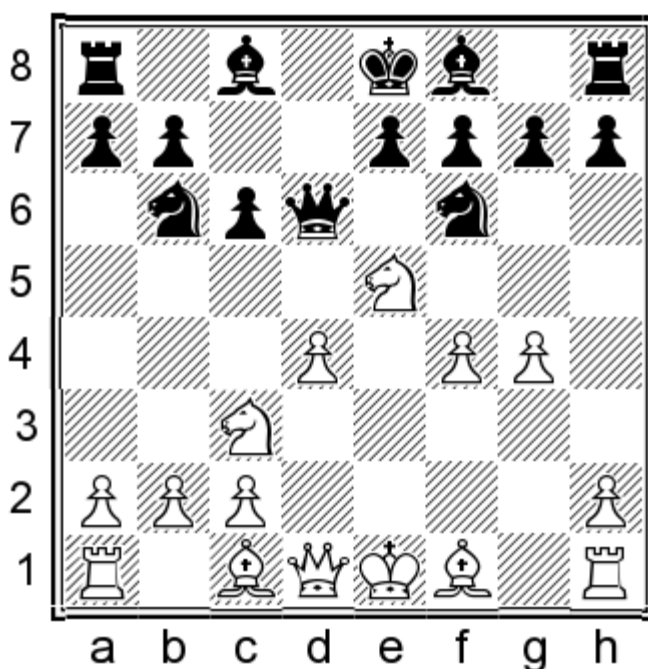
I'm far from claiming that I have reached a final verdict, but objectively, White's initiative is tremendous. Unfortunately, Sergey Kasparov's recent book is not of any help as he omits all the critical points.

### 8.g4!

A move in the style of the Sicilian Keres Attack. White gains space and prepares either to evict the  $\text{♞f6}$  from its present position with  $\text{g4-g5}$ , or to plug our light-squared bishop with  $\text{f4-f5}$ , according to circumstances.

Another version of this plan is  $8.\text{♙e2}$   $\text{g6}$   $9.\text{g4}$ , when I prefer  $9...\text{♙e6}$   $10.\text{g5}$   $\text{♞fd7}$   $11.\text{♞e4}$   $\text{♚c7}$  and Black's pieces stand comfortably.

$8.\text{♙e3}$  does not make any sense since Black would be glad to trade a pair of knights with  $8...\text{♞fd5}$  or  $8...\text{♞bd5}$ .



**B11.**  $8...\text{♙e6}$ ; **B12.**  $8...\text{g6}$

Or  $8...\text{♞bd5}$  when:

a)  $9.\text{♙g2}$   $\text{g6}$  transposes to line B12.

b) Play may take an independent course after  $9.\text{♙c4}$ , but it is a wrong place for the bishop. Tiviakov gives  $9...\text{♙e6}$   $10.\text{g5}$ ? (Better is  $10.\text{♙b3}$   $\text{g6}$   $11.0-0$   $\text{♞xc3}$   $12.\text{bxc3}$   $\text{♙g7}$ = when  $13.\text{f5}$   $\text{gxf5}$   $14.\text{gxf5}$   $\text{♙xb3}$   $15.\text{axb3}$  achieves nothing due to  $15...\text{♞g8}$ )  $10...\text{♞xc3}$   $11.\text{bxc3}$   $\text{♙xc4}$   $12.\text{gxf6}$   $\text{gxf6}$   $13.\text{♞xc4}$   $\text{♚d5}$   $14.\text{♞f2}$   $\text{♚xc4}$  with a strategically winning position in Kodentsov-Tiviakov, Waalwijk (rapid) 2007.

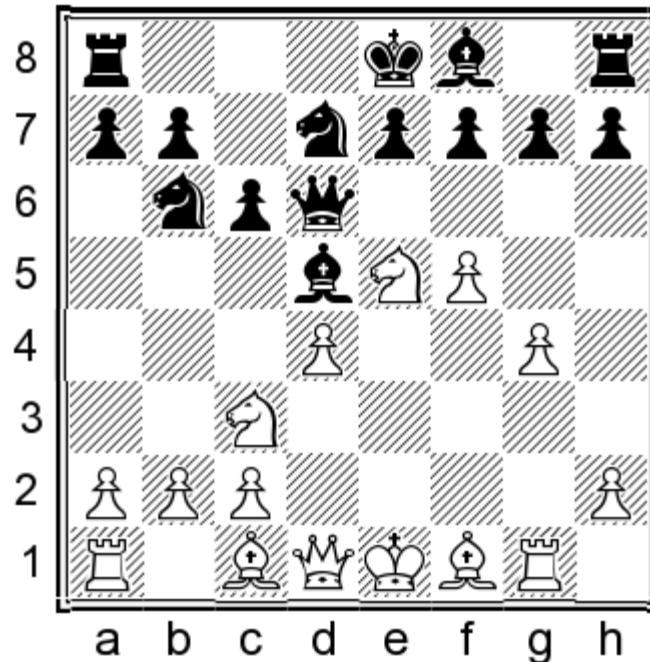
c) Also good for Black is  $9.\text{g5}$   $\text{♞xc3}$   $10.\text{bxc3}$   $\text{♚d5}$   $11.\text{♞g1}$   $\text{♞d7}$   $12.\text{♙c4}$   $\text{♚e4}$   $13.\text{♚e2}$   $\text{♚xe2}$   $14.\text{♞xe2}$   $\text{♞xe5}$   $15.\text{fxe5}$   $\text{g6}$ = . According to Tiviakov, he stands fine in the ending.

### B11. $8...\text{♙e6}$

A weird place for this bishop, but now the squares  $\text{d5}$  and  $\text{c4}$  are under good control and, most importantly, we can castle long. The  $\text{♙f8}$  will go to  $\text{g7}$  anyway.

## 9. ♖g2

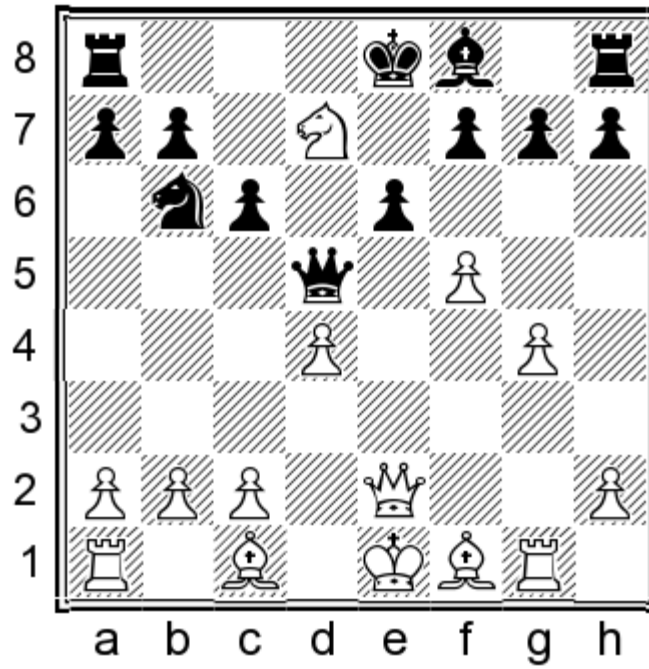
9.f5 is a principled retort as it puts the black minor pieces under pressure. Black has to rearrange his forces in the best possible way in the small amount of space at his disposal. 9... ♗d5 10. ♖g1 ♘fd7! A typical prophylactic move. The knight retreats to d7 in order to challenge its counterpart on e5 before White played ♗c1-f4 or g4-g5. Exchanges are imperative from Black's point of view in order to defuse White's pressure.



## 11. ♗e2

An interesting point is that in the event of 11. ♗f4, Black completely ignores the threatened discovery by playing 11...f6!!. After this "rude" move, White has nothing better than 12. ♘d3 (If 12. ♘g6, then 12...e5!!) to which the retort 12...e5 13.fxe6 (13.dxe5 ♘xe5=; 13. ♗g3 0-0-0) 13... ♗xe6+ 14. ♗e2 0-0-0 15.0-0-0 ♗xe2 16. ♗xe2 ♗f7∞ should suffice for approximately balanced chances.

11...e6 12. ♘d5 ♗xd5 13. ♘d7 White has nothing better than to allow a second exchange, something that leads the game closer to equality. Black's next move is typically Scandinavian and reveals the free way of thinking one needs to play this opening:



13...♔xd7! A harmonious recapture! It prepares the rook's entrance into the game via e8. 14.fxe6+ ♖xe6 15.♗xe6+ fxe6!=. Another typical move. Black keeps d5 well protected and opens the f-file for his rooks. Chances are about even.  
**9...g6 10.0-0 0-0-0**

Watson's suggestion. I analyse 10...♖d8 in the annotations to **Game 32** Barrientos Chavarriaga-Tiviakov, Bogota 2010. I discarded this option in view of 11.f5! and Black's king is doomed to remain in the centre. As a matter of fact, the king is hardly better off on c8 as we'll soon witness.

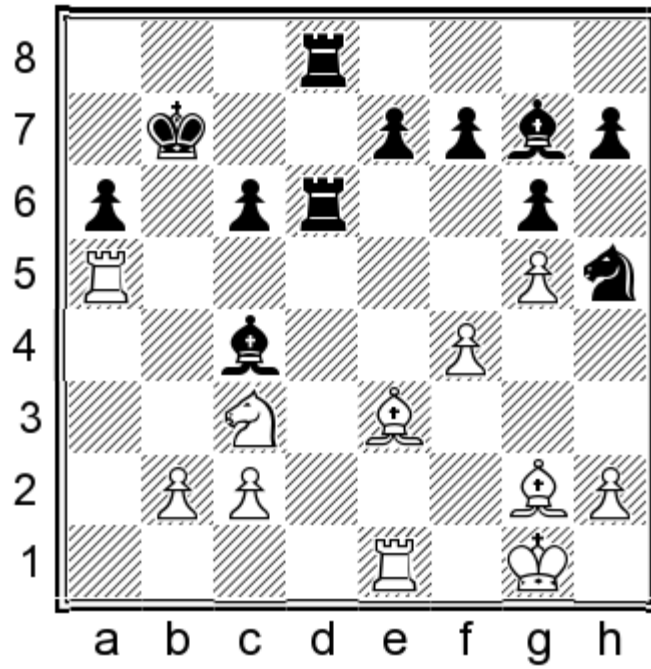
10...♗g7 does not help owing to 11.f5! gxf5 12.gxf5 ♗c4 13.♖e1!.

### 11.♗f3

Also possible is 11.a4!? ♗xd4+ 12.♗xd4 ♖xd4 13.a5 ♖bd7 14.♗e2 ♖d6 15.g5 ♖h5 16.a6 ♗g7 17.axb7+ ♔xb7 18.♗e3 a6 Undoubtedly, White has compensation for the pawn, but Black is holding his own even after the strongest: 19.♖a5!

19.♗c3 ♖b8! 20.♗e4?! (20.♖a5 ♔c7=) is dubious owing to 20...♗xe5 21.fxe5 ♖d5.

19...♗b6 20.♗c3 ♗c4 21.♗xc4 ♗xc4 22.♖e1 ♖hd8 with a complex ending.



Play may continue:

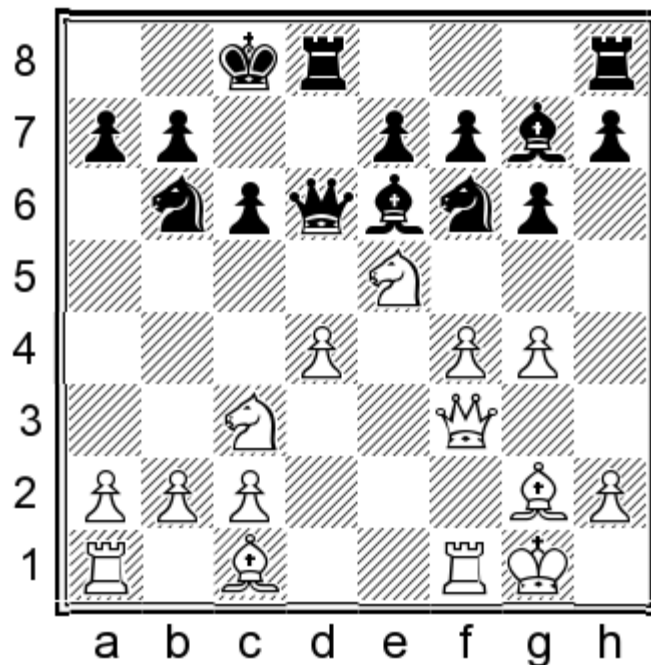
a) 23.♖c5!? ♕e6 24.♙f3 ♕d4 25.♙xd4 ♖xd4 26.f5! ♕d7 27.♖xe7 ♜b6 28.♖ce5 f6! 29.gxf6 ♜xf6 30.fxg6 hxg6 31.b3 ♜c7 32.♖a5 ♜b6 33.♖a4 ♖d2 34.♖b4+ (34.♖f4 ♜d5 35.♜xd5+ cxd5 36.♖f6+ ♜c5 37.c3 a5 38.♖a6 ♖d3=) 34...♜c7 35.♖c4 ♜b8=;

b) 23.♙f3! ♖e6 24.♜e4 ♜c7 25.c3 ♕d5 26.♙xh5 ♖xe4 27.♙f3 ♖e6 28.♙g4 ♖e4 29.♖xa6 ♖b8 30.♙f3 ♖c4 31.♙e2 ♖e4 32.♙d3 ♖xe3 33.♖xe3 ♖xb2 34.♖xe7+ ♜d6 35.♖e2 ♖xe2 36.♙xe2 ♙xc3 37.♜f2 ♕d2 38.♖a4 ♜c5! =.

### 11...♙g7

At last Black completes development and now he hopes to launch an attack with ...h5.

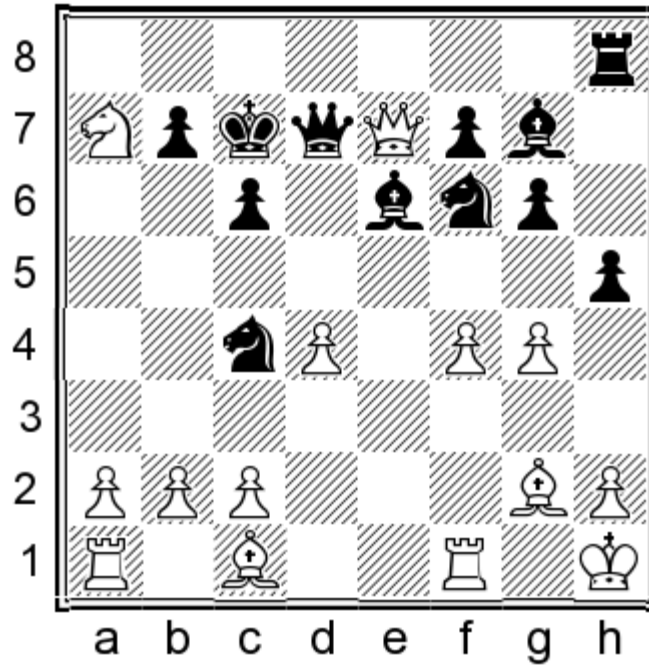
Watson gives 11...a6 12.♖d1 h5, but here the simple 13.g5 (13.h3!?) 13...♜g4 14.h3 ♜xe5 15.dxe5 ♖c7 16.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♙e3 ♙g7 18.♖d1± gives White powerful pressure.



## 12. ♖b5

White has a number of interesting alternatives:

- a) 12.h3?! (aimed against 12...h5 13.h3 ♗g4) 12...♗c4 13.♖h1 ♚c7 14.f5 gxf5 15.gxf5 ♜xd4 16.fxe6 ♞xe5 17.♙f4 ♞h5 18.♞g3 ♞g6 19.exf7 ♞xg3 20.♙xg3 ♗e3=.
- b) 12.a4!? a6 13.g5 ♗h5 14.♗e4 ♞c7 15.a5 ♗c4 16.♞f2 ♙d5 17.♗c5↑.
- c) 12.♖h1!? h5 13.♗b5! ♞d5 14.♗xa7+ ♖c7 15.♞a3! ♗c4 16.♞xe7+ (16.♗xc4 ♞xc4 17.♞a5+ b6 18.♗b5+ ♞xb5 19.♞a7+ ♖c8 20.♞a8+=) 16...♞d7 17.♗xd7 ♞xd7



18. ♞xd7+!

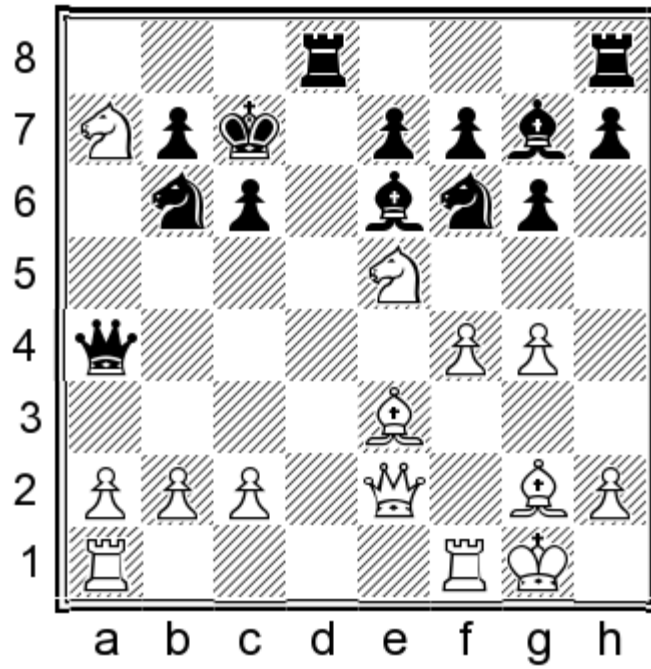
18. ♞c5 ♙d5! 19. ♙xd5 [19. ♗b5+ ♖d8 20. ♙xd5 ♗xd5 21. ♞xc4 (21.b3 ♗cb6∞; 21. ♗c3 hxg4°) 21...hxg4 22. ♞g1 cxb5 23. ♞e2 ♞c6 24. ♞g2 ♞e8 25. ♞d1 f5 26.c3 ♞e4 27. ♙d2 ♙h6 28.a4 ♙xf4 29.axb5 ♞xb5=] 19...♞xd5+ 20. ♞xd5 ♗xd5 21.f5 g5! 22. ♙xg5! ♙xd4 23. ♙f4+ ♖b6 24. ♞ae1 hxg4 25. ♞e4 ♗ce3! keeps the balance.

18...♙xd7 19.f5! hxg4 20. ♙f4+ ♖b6 21.fxg6 fxg6 22. ♞ae1 g5! 23. ♙xg5 ♗h5 24.c3! ♖xa7 25. ♞e7 ♙c8 26. ♖g1 assures White of the better game since the h5-knight at the edge is really not a gem.

**12... ♞d5 13. ♗xa7+ ♖c7 14. ♞e2!**

Or: 14. ♞a3 ♞d6!; 14.f5 ♞xf3 15. ♙xf3 gxf5 16.gxf5 ♙c4 17. ♞e1 ♞hg8 18. ♖f2 ♗fd5 19.b3 ♙a6∞.

**14... ♞xd4+ 15. ♙e3 ♞a4**



**16. ♖axc6!**

16.f5 gxf5 17.gxf5! (17.♖f4 ♚xa7 18.♖b4 ♜fd5 19.♙xd5 ♖xd5) 17...♙d5 18.c4! ♙xg2 19.♜xg2 ♖hg8!? is unclear.

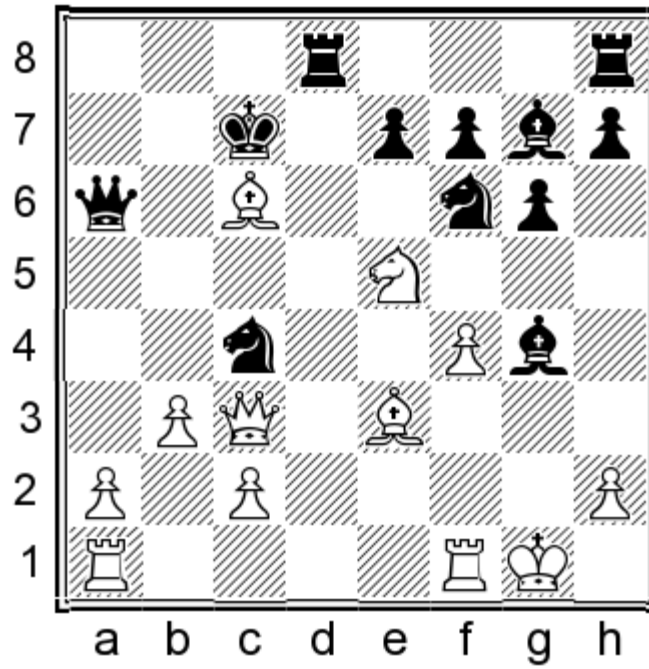
**16...bxc6 17.♙xc6 ♙xg4! 18.♚e1!**

Or 18.♜xg4? ♚xc6+; 18.♙xa4? ♙xe2+; 18.♙xb6+ ♜xb6 19.♙f3 ♙e6∞.

**18...♚a6 19.c4!**

19.♚c3 is not winning due to 19...♜c4! 20.b3

After 20.a4!?, I found the following defence: 20...♙e2! 21.♖f2 ♜g4! 22.♙b5 ♜gxe5 23.fxe5 ♙xe5 24.♚b4 ♚d6 25.♙c5 ♚d2! 26.♚xd2 ♖xd2 27.♙xc4 ♙xb2! 28.♖b1 ♖d1+ 29.♖xd1 ♙xd1 30.♙d5 ♖d8 31.c4 ♙c3! 32.♖xf7 ♖d7 33.♙e6 ♙d4+ 34.♙xd4 ♖xd4 35.♖xe7+ ♜b6 36.♖d7 (36.♖xh7 ♙xa4 37.♖g7 ♖d6 38.♙d5 ♙c6 39.♙xc6 ♖xc6 40.♜g2 ♖xc4 41.♖xg6+ ♜c7 42.♖e6 ♜d7 43.♖e3 ♖c8=) 36...♖xd7 37.♙xd7 g5! 38.♜f2 h5=.



20...♘d5! A major point, forcing the exchange of queens. 21.♙xd5 ♜xd5 22.bxc4

22.♞xc4+ ♞xc4 23.bxc4 ♙xe5 24.fxe5 (24.cxd5?! ♙xa1 25.♞xa1 ♔d6 26.c4 ♙e2) 24...♞a5 transposes.

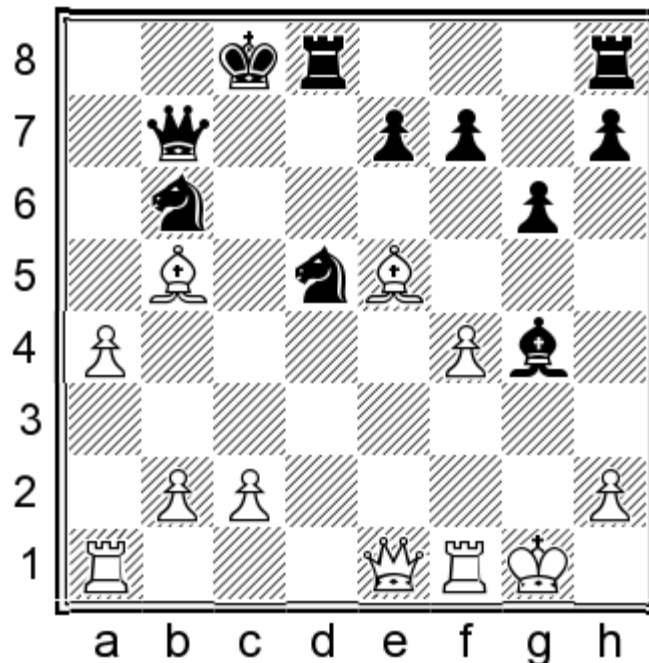
22...♙xe5! 23.fxe5 ♞a5! The white queen is trapped and it is forced to accept an exchange. 24.♞xa5+ ♞xa5 25.♞xf7 ♔d7. Black is two pawns down in the ending, but the opposite coloured bishops and White's ruptured queenside are major drawing factors. I analysed this position and came to the conclusion that Black's activity should keep him safe.

19.a4!? also looks very dangerous but things are not simple at all – after 19...♘fd5! 20.♙b5 ♞b7 21.♙d4!

21.a5 ♘xe3 22.♞xe3 ♘c8 23.♞c5+ ♔b8 24.a6 ♙xe5 25.axb7 ♙d4+ 26.♞xd4 ♞xd4 27.bxc8♞+ ♞xc8=;

21.♘g4 ♘xe3 22.♘xe3 ♙xb2 23.♞b1 ♙d4 24.♞f2 ♞e4↑.

21...♙xe5 22.♙xe5+! (22.♞xe5+ ♔c8 23.♞e1 ♘c7) 22...♔c8, we reach a very complicated, dynamic position:



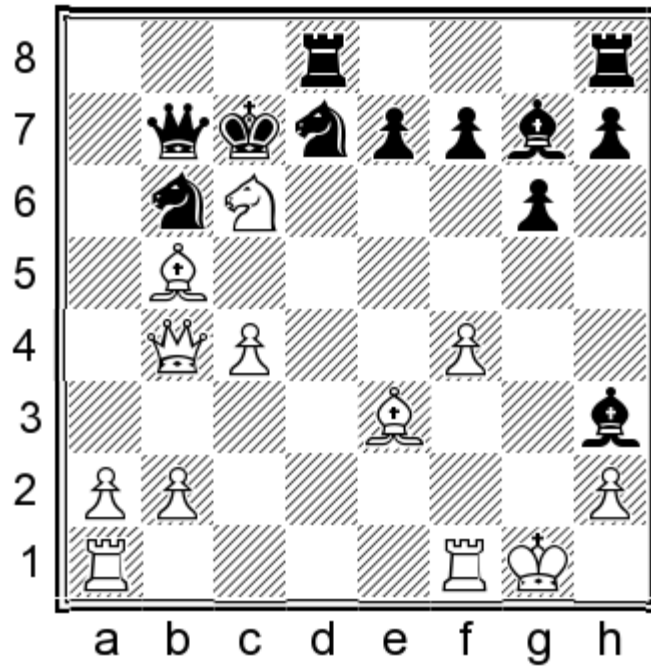
23.c4!

23.♞a3!? ♘a8!! holds on – 24.♙xh8 ♞a7+ 25.♞f2 ♞xf2+ 26.♞xf2 ♞xh8 27.♞b3!. White maintains an initiative,

but Black can defend with successful manoeuvring: 27...♖dc7! (preventing the dangerous check on a6) 28.♙c6  
 ♙e6! with serious counterplay.

23...♗c7 24.a5 ♗d7 25.♙xh8 ♖a7+ 26.♗f2 ♗xh8 27.b4! ♗b8!±.

19...♙h3 20.♖b4 ♗fd7 21.♙b5 ♖b7 22.♗c6!!



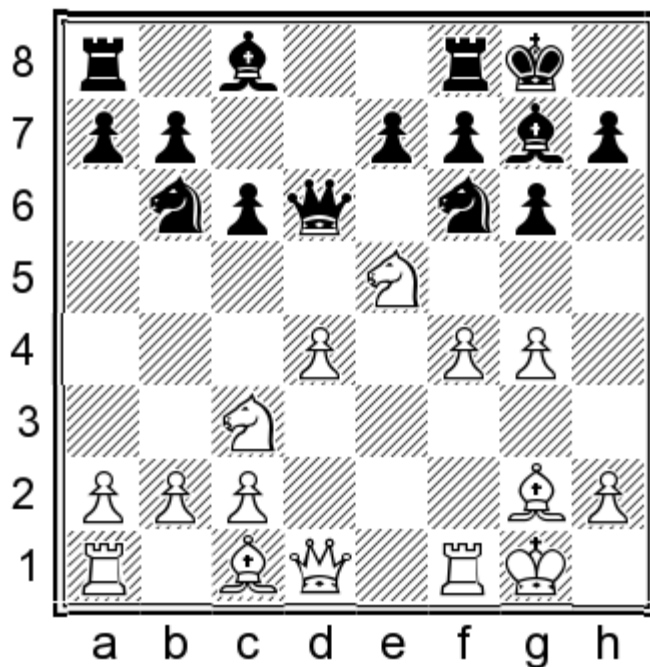
An amazing position. White is threatening to push a2-a4-a5 and the extra rook is not much of a help. Naturally, all this line is very sharp and can be tried in blitz, but I do not believe it can hold in correspondence chess.

**B12. 8...g6 9.♙g2**

9.g5 ♗h5!? 10.♗e4 ♖d8 looks okay for Black.

**9...♗bd5**

9...♙g7 10.0-0 0-0 does not set any problems to White.



He can choose an active plan without having to think about defending the d4-pawn. Naturally we are left without counterplay in a passive position. White's best is:

11.a4! a5

11...♙e6?! 12.f5! (12.a5 ♜bd5 13.f5 ♜xc3 14.bxc3 ♙d5=) 12...♙d5 13.♜xd5 ♜fxd5 14.♙h1!±.

12.f5! and every black move seems to have a flaw. For example: 12...♙d8

12...♙d8 13.♜e2± is better for White as we weakened f7 without reason;

12...♜fd7 13.♜e4 ♙c7 14.♜xd7 ♙xd7 15.c3 gives White dangerous pressure in view of the queen lift ♙d1-d3-h3, followed up by ♙c1-h6;

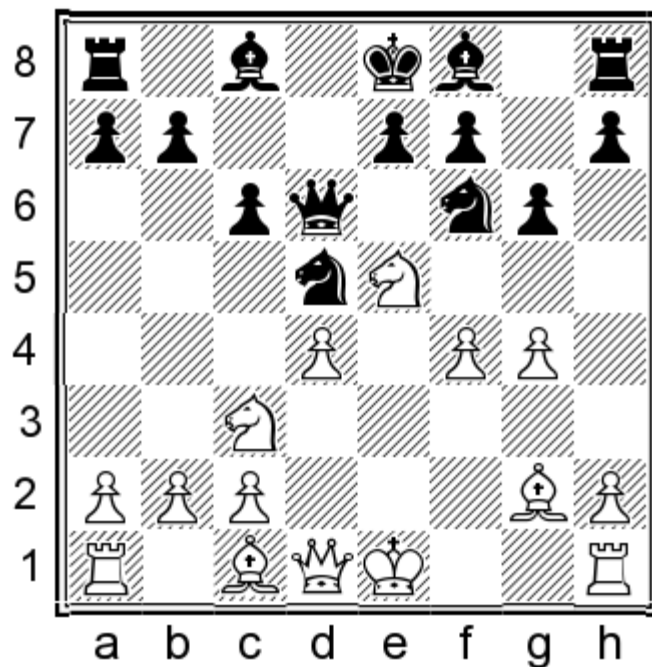
12...gxf5 13.gxf5 ♙d8 14.♙h1! ♙xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4 16.♙e3 ♙b4 17.♜d3!± wins the exchange.

13.♙h1!

13.♙d3 ♜bd7 14.h3 gxf5 15.gxf5 ♙h8 16.♙g5 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 ♙xd3 18.cxd3 ♜g8 19.f6 exf6 20.exf6 ♙h6

21.♙xh6 ♜xh6 22.♙ae1 ♙f5∞.

13...♜e8 14.♙d3 ♜d6 15.♙h3 and Black is binds.



### 10.0-0!

10.g5?! was played by Shirov and Svidler, but I feel that this approach creates too many weaknesses on the light squares. **Game 31** Wan, Yunguo-Tiviakov, Moscow 2011, gives you a detailed picture of the events after 10...♖xc3 11.bxc3 ♘d7.

Unfortunately, the text move, connected with further f4-f5, casts doubt on Black's opening play. S. Kasparov does not even mention it in his recent book.

### 10...♗g7

Black does not manage to develop his bishop on e6 since 10...♗e6 would stumble into 11.♘a4 while 10...♖xc3 11.bxc3 ♗e6 12.♞b1 is also awkward for him. White's next move robs the e6-square altogether.

### 11.f5!

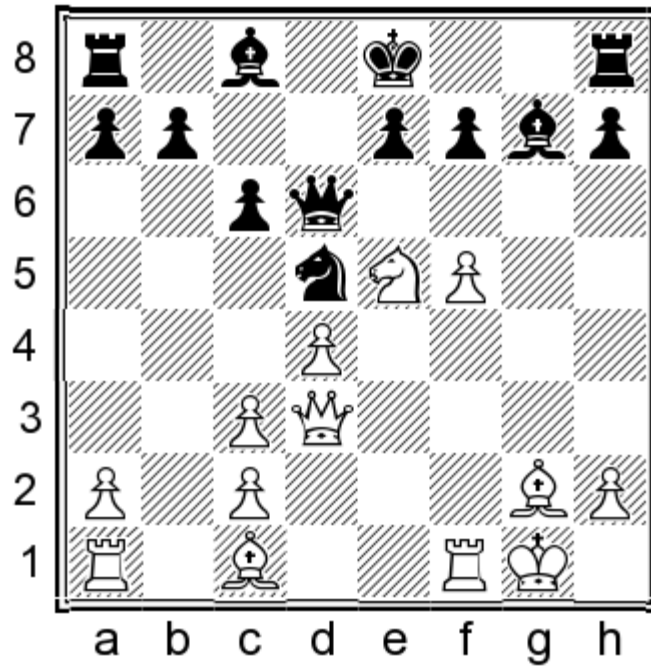
This novel idea underlines the murky prospects before the c8-bishop. In my opinion, it effectively kills the plan with ♘d7-b6-d5 which spends two precious tempi for nothing.

Black is now faced with a difficult choice:

### 11...0-0

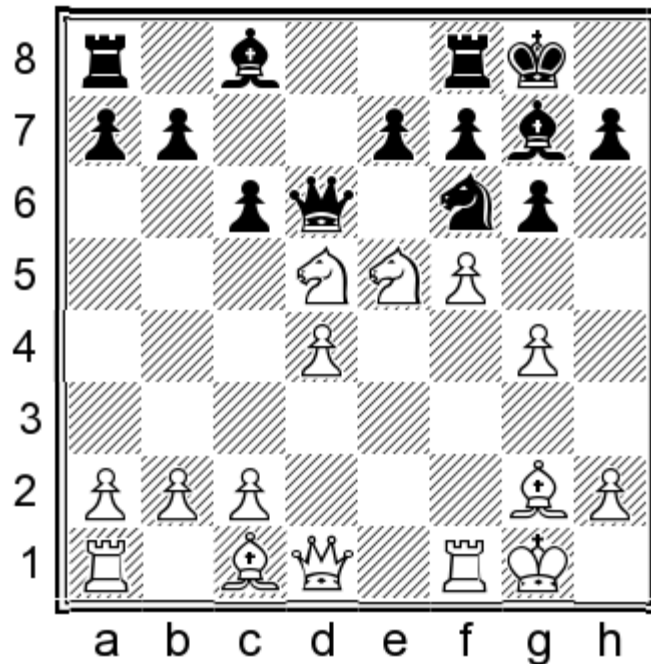
a) 11...♖xc3 12.bxc3 0-0± is possible, but it surrenders too much space plus an open b-file.

b) 11...gxf5?! 12.gxf5 ♖xc3 13.bxc3 ♘d5 14.♙d3!



White's space advantage is overwhelming, but grabbing a pawn is not a solution: 14...♙xe5 15.dxe5 ♖xe5 15...♗c5+ 16.♔h1 ♜xc3 17.♙xd5 ♜xd3 18.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 19.e6+ ♔e8 20.cxd3+-. 16.♙d2 b5 is much better for White after either 17.c4±, or 17.a4±.

12.♘xd5! (12.♔h1!± also seems a nice option.)



Black is now somewhat worse after either recapture:

12...♘xd5 13.c4 ♘f6 14.♙f4↑;

12...cxd5 13.♗e1± ♘d7 14.♙f4 ♘xe5 15.♙xe5 ♙xe5 16.dxe5!.

## B2. 7...e6

This is certainly more sound than 7...♘b6 as it helps development. Then 8.♘c4?! ♗c7 9.♙d3 a6! intending 10.0-0 c5 or

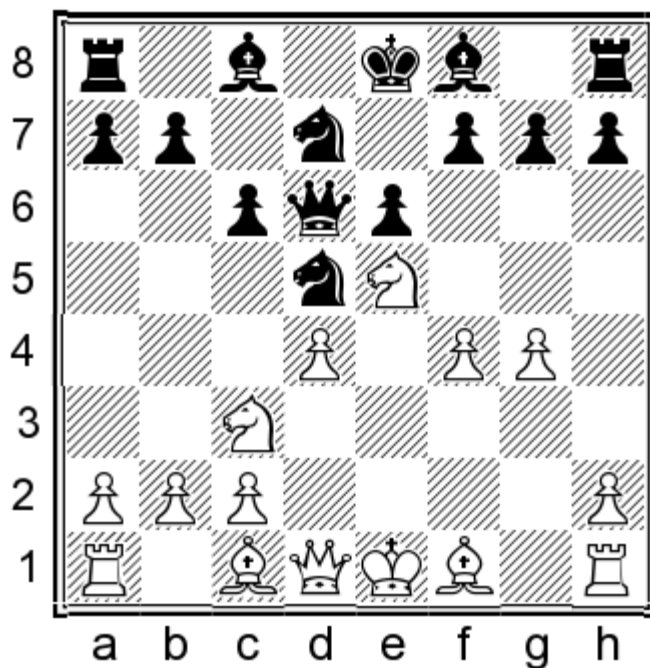
10...b5 11.♘e5 c5 is fine for Black. Also harmless is 8.♙e3 ♘d5! or 8.♙e2 ♙e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4 ♚c7 11.♙f3 a6 12.♚e2 c5.

The acid test for 7...e6 is:

**8.g4!**

Practical results have been awful for Black, so I attempted to revive this line with my novelty:

**8...♘d5**



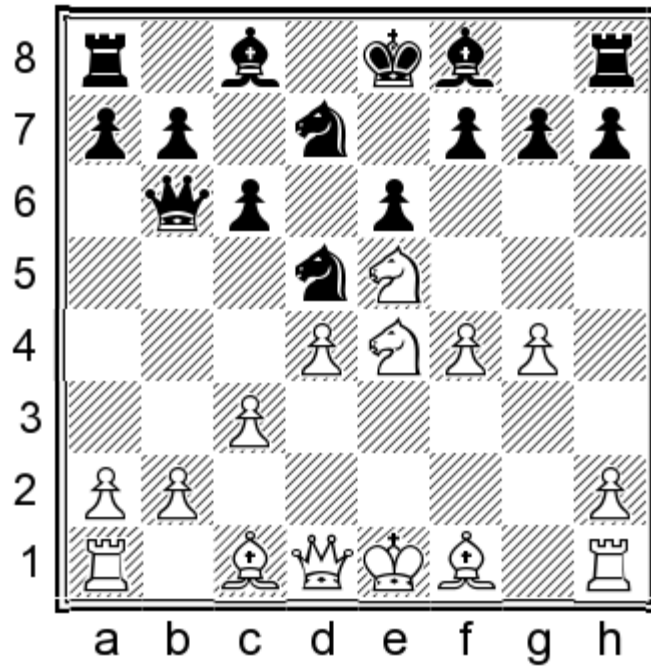
This is my novelty. 8...c5?! is clearly inferior due to 9.♙e3! or even 9.g5 ♘d5 10.dxc5! ♚xc5 11.♘xd5.

My analysis branches here to the sharper approach **B21**. 9.♘e4 and the positional **B22**. 9.♙g2!

**B21. 9.♘e4**

White wants to smash down our defence line by brute force. White's initiative looks menacing after:

**9...♚b4+ 10.c3 ♚b6**



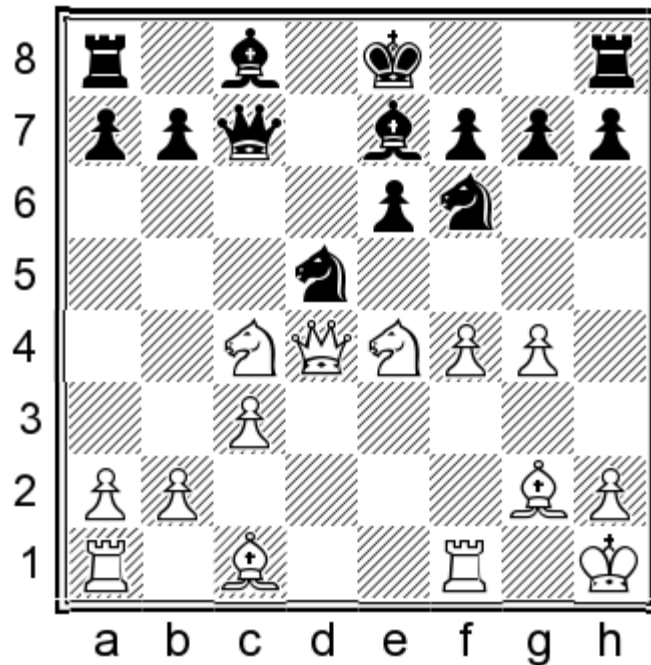
**11.c4!?**

Black has nothing to fear after 11.♙g2 c5! 12.0-0 cxd4 13.♘c4

13.cxd4 ♕e7 14.♖f3 [14.♘c3 0-0 15.♘c4 ♜c6! 16.♘xd5 (16.♜b3 ♘7b6∞) 16...exd5 17.♘e3 ♘f6 18.g5 ♘e4]

could be disturbing when you realise that castling would be fatal after g5, ♖h3. The solution is to leave the king in the centre for a while. For instance: 14...a5 15.♖b3 (15.♘c3 ♘xe5 16.fxe5 ♙d7 17.♘xd5 exd5 – White’s king is too compromised.) 15...♜d8 16.g5 a4 17.♖f3 (17.♖h3 ♘xe5 18.fxe5 ♙d7⇌) 17...♜b6∞.

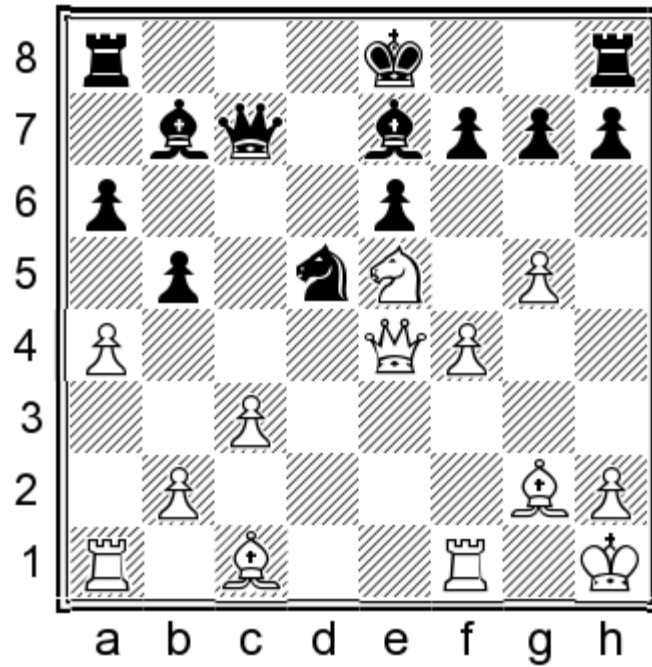
13...♜c7 14.♜xd4 ♘7f6 15.♔h1 ♙e7



**16.♘xf6+**

16.g5 ♘xe4 17.♜xe4 b5! (17...0-0 18.f5 exf5 19.♜xd5 ♙e6 20.♜xb7 ♜xb7 21.♙xb7 ♙xc4 22.♙xa8! is slightly better for White.) 18.♘e5 (18.♘e3 ♙b7 19.f5 ♖d8 20.fxe6 0-0∞) 18...♙b7 19.a4 (19.♘f7?! ♔xf7 20.f5 ♖ad8; 19.f5 exf5 20.♜xf5 0-0 21.g6 hxg6 22.♘g6 fxg6 23.♙xd5+ ♙xd5+ 24.♜xd5+ ♔h7 25.♙f4 ♖ad8=; 19.♙e3 0-0

20.♙d4 ♘d6!?⇒) 19...a6



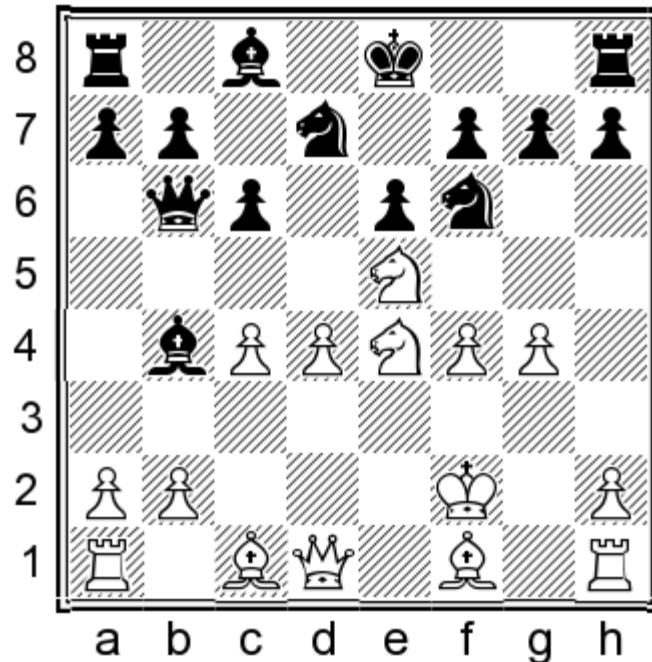
20.axb5 (20.♗xf7!? ♗xf7 21.f5 ♖e8 22.axb5 axb5 23.♞xa8+ ♙xa8 24.f6 ♞c4=) 20...axb5 21.♞xa8+ ♙xa8 22.f5 (22.♞d3 0-0 23.♞xb5 ♘d6⇒) 22...0-0 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.♞xf8+ ♙xf8 25.g6 hxg6 26.♗xg6 ♞f7=.

16...♙xf6 17.♗e5 0-0. Black is close to completing development. A sample line is: 18.g5 ♘e7 19.c4 ♙c5 20.♞e4 ♗e7 21.b3 ♗f5 22.♙b2 ♗h4.

11...♙b4+ 12.♗f2

Or 12.♗e2 0-0! 13.♗xd7 ♙xd7 14.cxd5 exd5⇒.

12...♗5f6



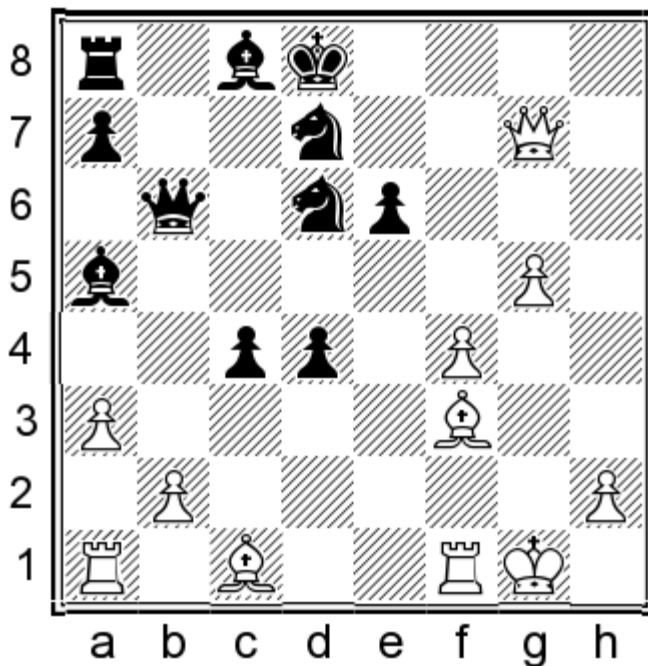
13.♗g5

Or 13. ♖xf6+ gxf6! 14. ♜xd7 ♜xd7 15. c5 ♞d8∞.

13...0-0 14. ♜gxf7 ♞xf7 15. ♜xf7 ♜xf7 16. g5 ♜e4+ 17. ♜g2 c5! 18. ♜d3 (18.a3 ♜d2!) 18...♜d6 19. ♞h5+ ♜e7 20.a3 ♜a5 21. ♞xh7

White's attack looks totally winning, but in fact the tables are about to turn very soon! Black's counter-attack is unexpectedly swift:

21...cxd4 22. ♞f1 ♞c6+ 23. ♜g1 b5! 24. ♜e2 bxc4 25. ♜f3 ♞b6 26. ♞xg7+ ♜d8



I'd be happy to have such a position with Black. Our king will be safe on c7 and the minor pieces will be able to unleash their attacking power:

a) 27. ♜xa8 d3+ 28. ♜g2 ♜b7+ 29. ♜xb7 ♞xb7+ 30. ♜h3 ♞b3!. It is White's turn to think how to survive here with the clock ticking;

b) 27. ♞h8+ ♜c7 28. ♜xa8 d3+ 29. ♜g2 d2 (29...♜b7+!? 30. ♜h3 d2∞) 30. ♜xd2 (30. ♜f3 ♜f5∞) 30...♜xd2 31. ♞ad1 ♜b7+ 32. ♜xb7 ♞xb7+ 33. ♞f3 ♜xf4 34. ♞d4 ♜e5∞.

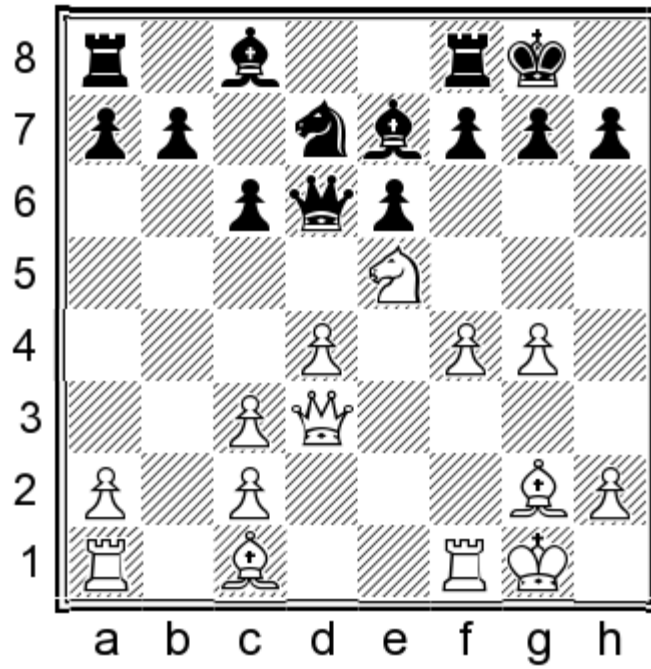
**B22. 9. ♜g2! ♜xc3 10. bxc3 ♜e7**

10...f6 11. ♜d3 c5 fails to 12. ♜e3! when 12...c4 is a positional surrender.

**11.0-0 ♞c7!**

This cunning move deprives the enemy of his most dangerous set-up. You'll understand my idea when you look at the alternative:

11...0-0 12. ♞d3!



The threat is 12...c5 13.♞f3 ♞b8 14.♞h3 g6 15.♚e3↑.

12...f6 does not repel the knight because White has 13.♙e4 f5 14.♙g2↑ when 14...c5 is bad due to 15.♙a3.

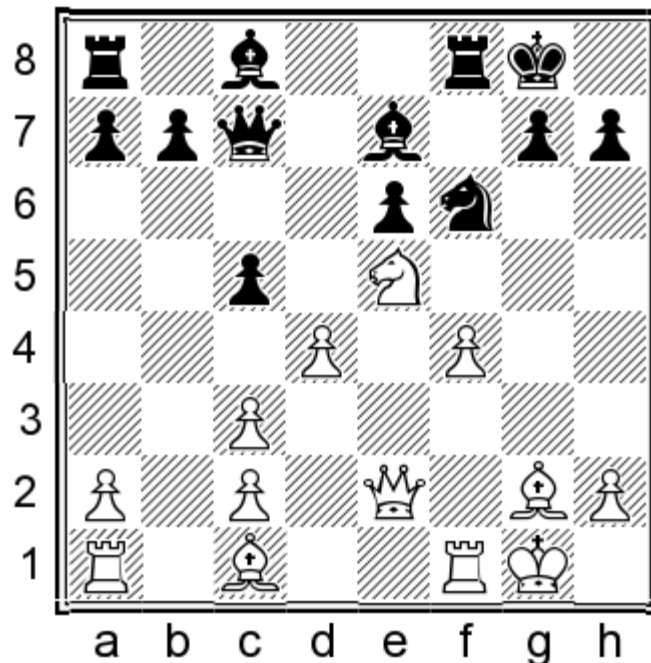
After the text, 12.♚d3 could be

answered by 12...f6 when neither ♙e4, nor ♘d3 works. The attempt to change the move order with 12.♞f3 would face 12...c5.

The inclusion of 12.♞b1 ♞b8 can only be in Black's favour.

White could put his queen to e2 which is a more passive place for it:

12.♚e2 0-0. In my opinion, Black can hold this position. His plan includes ...c5 followed up by ...♘f6, or ...f6. I checked 13.♙e4 f5 14.♙g2 fxg4 15.♘xg4 ♘f6 16.♘e5 c5



I mentioned above a similar position where Black's queen was on d6. 11...♚c7! has enabled 16...c5.

17.♞b1 ♞b8 and we could solve the problem of how to develop the c8-bishop by the exchange sacrifice 18.♞f2 b6!

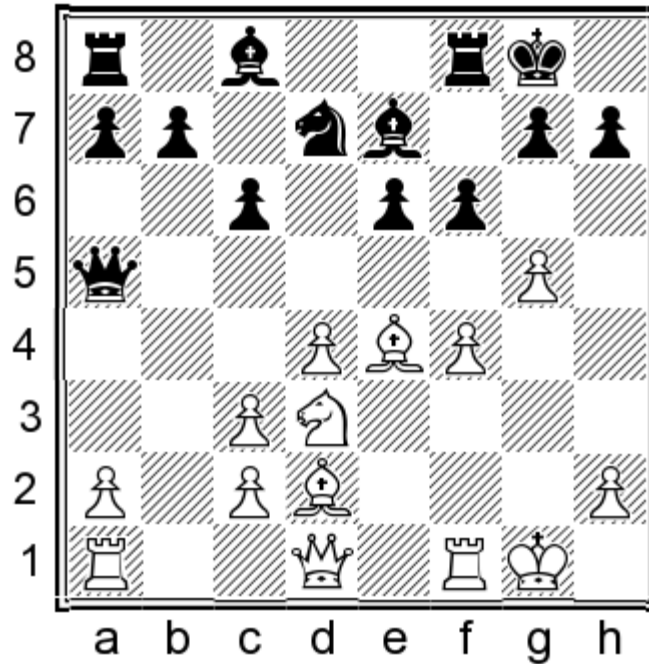
19. ♖c6 ♜b7 when White would be on the losing side if he took it.

### 12. ♙e4 f6

12...0-0 13. ♚d3 f5 14. ♙g2 fxg4 15. ♖xg4 ♗f6 16. ♗e5 c5 is “nearly” the same position as you see on the last diagram, but the queen is much better on d3 since it defends the c3-square. Although 17.a4 ♙d6 is playable, White maintains a small plus.

I prefer to let the enemy seek how to break our defence.

### 13. ♗d3 0-0 14.g5 ♜a5 15. ♙d2



### 15...fxg5 16.fxc5 ♜xf1+ 17.♖xf1 ♙xg5 18.♚h5 ♗f6 19.♙xh7+ ♖h8 20.♚xg5 ♜xg5 21.♙xg5 ♖xh7 22.♞e1 b6

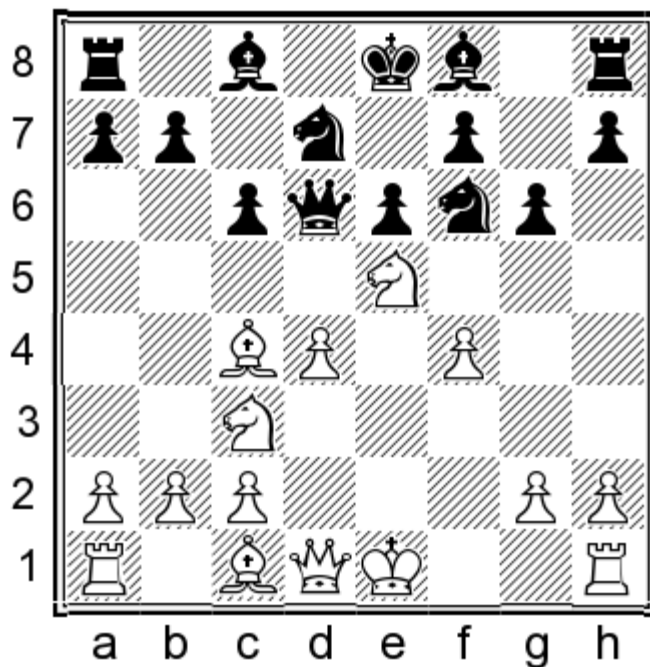
White stands pretty, but the limited material and the opposite coloured bishops suggest a probable draw – 23.♖f2 ♙d7 24.♗e5 ♙e8±.

### B3. 7...g6! 8. ♙c4

The plan with 8.g4 ♙g7 9. ♙g2 has no venom owing to 9...c5 and White’s centre crumbles down.

### 8...e6

The moral of line B1 was that Black could not afford the luxury of delaying development for long. My lengthy analyses of the manoeuvre ...♗d7-b6-d5 has taught me a lesson – we should arrange quick short castling.



Of course, the set-up I recommend has an obvious flaw. We must abandon the most important strategic idea of the Scandinavian – to lead out or light-square bishop to the kingside since 8...♘d5 is dubious owing to 9.♚f3!. However, we have seen that against 7.f4 this bishop did not have a bright future on the c8-h3 diagonal anyway. We should seek to accommodate it on the main diagonal with ...b5 or ...b6. Forget about ...♘d7-b6. The task of this knight is to kill the enemy's strongest piece on e5. Finally, the d6-queen will retreat to c7.

### 9.0-0

My main idea is that the ominous plan with 9.g4 bounces back after 9...b5! 10.♙e2 b4 11.♘a4 ♚c7 with an imminent counter-attack.

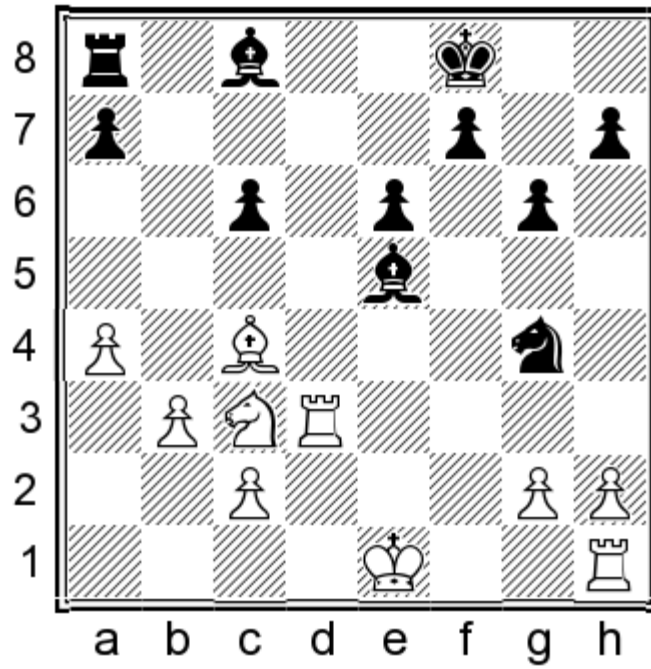
I do not see much sense in 9.♚e2 either. The game Barrientos-Rios, Medellin 2011, saw further 9...♘b6 10.♙b3 ♙g7 11.g4. I did not even analysed it seriously although White's advance looks suspicious to me. My general plan is not connected with ...♘b6 so I looked at the consistent:

9...♙g7 10.g4 b5!? 11.♙b3 a5 12.f5 (12.a3 a4 13.♙a2 ♙a6) 12...0-0 13.♘xf7 ♚xd4 14.fxe6 a4 15.♙e3 ♚xg4 16.exd7 ♚xe2+ 17.♙xe2 ♙xd7 18.♘h6+ leads a bit unexpectedly to a perpetual.

We have more ambitious options though: 11...b4! 12.♘a4 0-0.

9.a4!? would be a logical novelty – it prevents 9...b5 and enables two unpleasant strategic plans – a4-a5 or b3, ♙a3. It is not simple to offer an unequivocal advice. The most principled answer is:

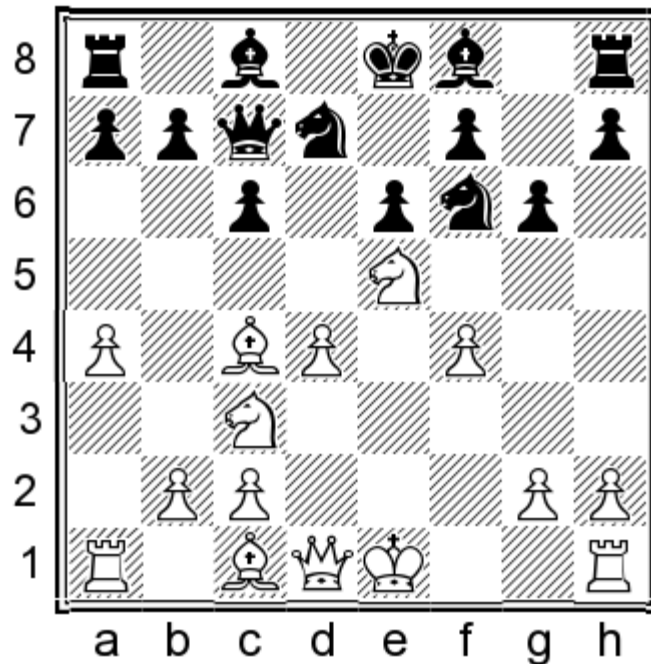
a) 9...♙g7 10.b3 0-0 as in the main line. However, the forced line 11.♙a3 c5 12.dxc5 ♚xd1+ 13.♙xd1 ♘xe5 14.fxe5 ♘g4 15.c6 ♙xe5 16.♙d3 bxc6 17.♙xf8 ♙xf8 might put off some players.



I have seen many Sicilian games which feature the same structure and Black was commonly comfortable in them. Mathematically, White has a slight material advantage, but we control all entry points and our dark-squared bishop has no opponent.

Alternatively, we can try to anticipate the enemy's plans with:

b) 9... ♔c7!?



White has a very wide choice now:

b1) 10. ♔e2 (forcing the manoeuvre we wanted to avoid, but the arising position is less dangerous than in line B.) 10... ♖b6 11. ♕d3 ♗bd5 12. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 13. g3 f6!? 14. ♗f3 ♕d7. We have fair chances here as we have good control of the centre. Our counterplay is based on ...c5! and (note!) long castling. Then White's king will start feeling the draught.

For example:

15.0-0 0-0-0! 16. ♕d2 c5 17. c4 ♗b4 18. ♕xb4 cxb4 followed by ...♕g7, ...♗he8;

15.♙d2 0-0-0! 16.0-0-0 c5.

b2) 10.♜f3 ♘g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.g4 looks pretty senseless. We can choose between a counter-attack on the kingside with 12...♗d5 13.a5 ♗xe5 14.dxe5 f6 or on the opposite flank with 12...c5 or 12...b6.

b3) 10.a5 does not hinder our plans at all since we can still play ...♖b8 and ...♙b7, for instance: 10...♘g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♜f3 ♗d5 13.♙d2 ♖b8.

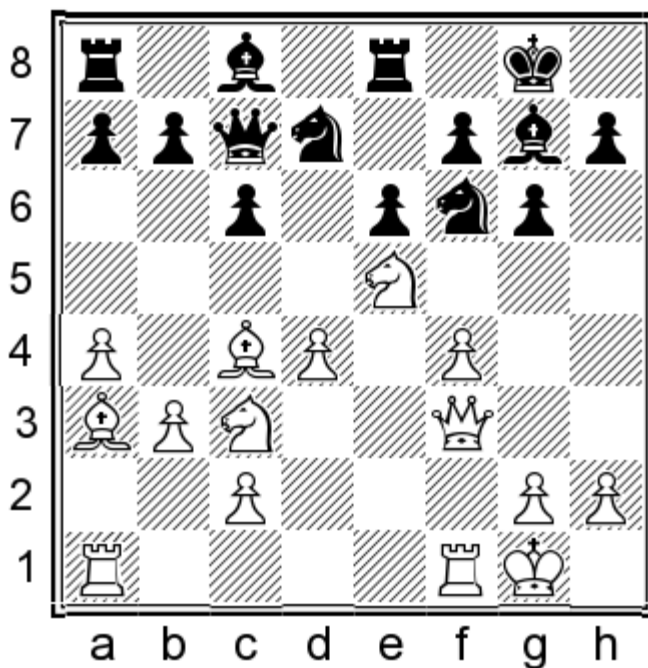
b4) 10.b3 is already unimpressive in view of 10...♗d5 (or even 10...♙b4) 11.♙d2 ♘g7.

### 9...♘g7

9...b5 is also possible since 10.♙b3 ♘g7 11.f5 gxf5 12.♗xf7 ♕xf7 13.♖xf5 ♜e7 is balanced. Still, 11.♜f3 might be a bit more pleasant for White. I do not pay more attention to this line as White can sidestep it with the clever move order 9.a4 followed up by 10.0-0.

### 10.a4 0-0 11.b3 ♜c7 12.♙a3 ♖e8 13.♜f3

White may try to exploit the square d6, but we can always counter that by ...♙f8 – 13.♙e2 b6 14.a5 ♖b8 15.axb6 axb6 16.♗c4 ♙f8 17.♙xf8 ♖xf8 18.♜d2 b5 19.♗e5 b4 20.♗xd7 ♜xd7 21.♗a4 ♖d8 22.♖fd1 ♜d6=. It is true that our bishop is still on c8, but the activity of all the other pieces compensates for that.



### 13...a6!

The diagram position was reached first in Svetushkin-S.Kasparov, Vrachati 2011, and one year later, in a correspondence game. In both of them Black played 13...♗b6 14.♙d3 ♗bd5. Although White scored only one draw, his position looks slightly better. I repeat once again, the manoeuvre ...♗d7-b6-d5 only wastes time and should be employed only in the event of a direct White's threat on e6.

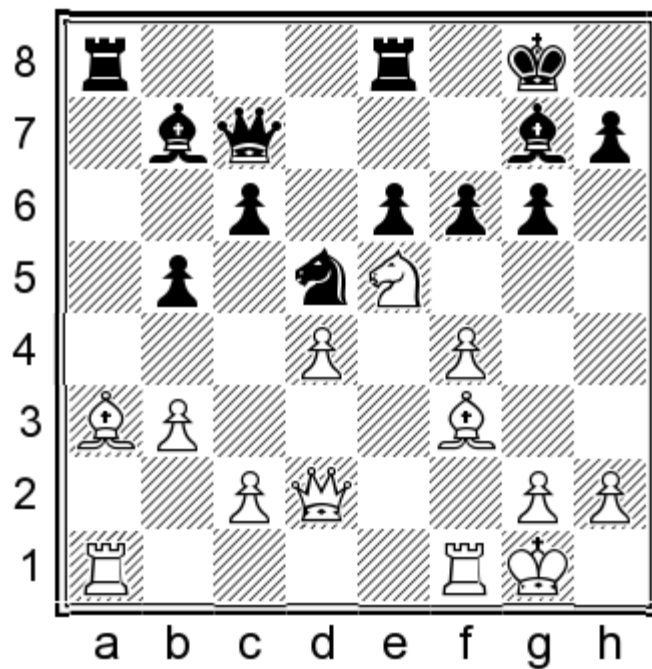
My novelty prepares the ground for queenside activity with ...b5 or ...c5. Black may look passive, but he has no weaknesses and I see nothing dangerous for him in near future. He can always play ...f6 to put e5 under control.

White's most aggressive plan is:

14.g4, but then 14...b5! 15.♙e2 ♙b7 16.♜e3 c5 takes over the initiative.

Alternatively:

14. ♖e4 ♜xe4 15. ♙xe4 b5= 16. axb5 axb5 17. ♙e2 ♙b7 18. ♙f3 ♜f6 19. ♙e2 ♜d5 20. ♙d2 f6!



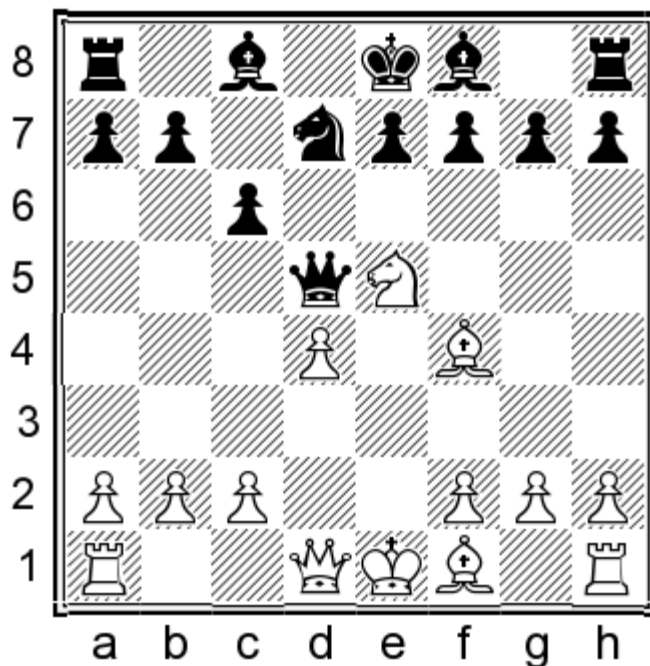
21. ♜d3 ♙h6

This line reveals two key points of Black's plan – to repel the e5-knight with ...f6, and to attack the f4-pawn. I'd like to see practical tests of my idea.

# Chapter 7. 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♙f4 and the Shirov plan 7.f4 Annotated Games

29. Anand – Tiviakov  
Wijk aan Zee 2006

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 c6 6.♗e5 ♗bd7 7.♙f4 ♗d5! 8.♗xd5 ♖xd5



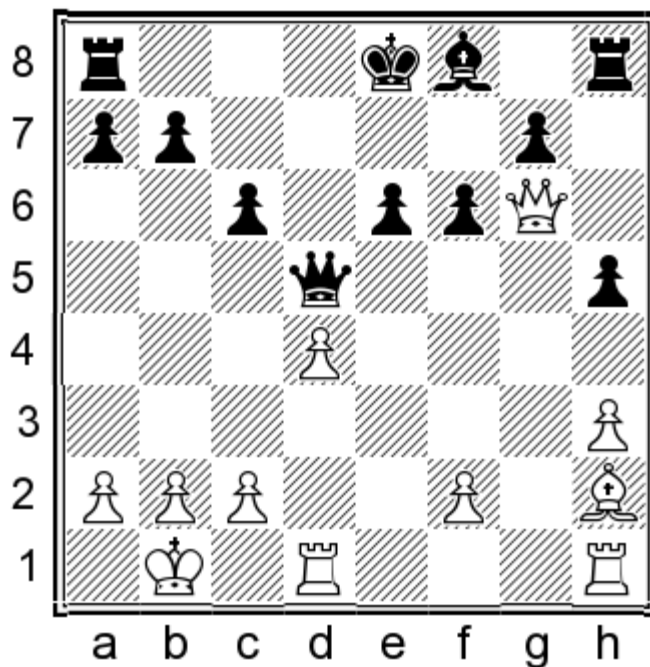
9.♙e2

White offers a pawn sacrifice which Black should accept, otherwise he is simply worse.

9...♗xe5 10.♙xe5 ♖xg2 11.♙f3 ♖g6 12.d5

Anand condemned this move in his *Chess Informant* notes. Instead he suggested 12.♖e2!?, yet after 12...h5!, Black enables the move ...♗c8-g4 and should be fine. For example: 13.h3. It makes sense to avoid an exchange of the light-squared bishops.

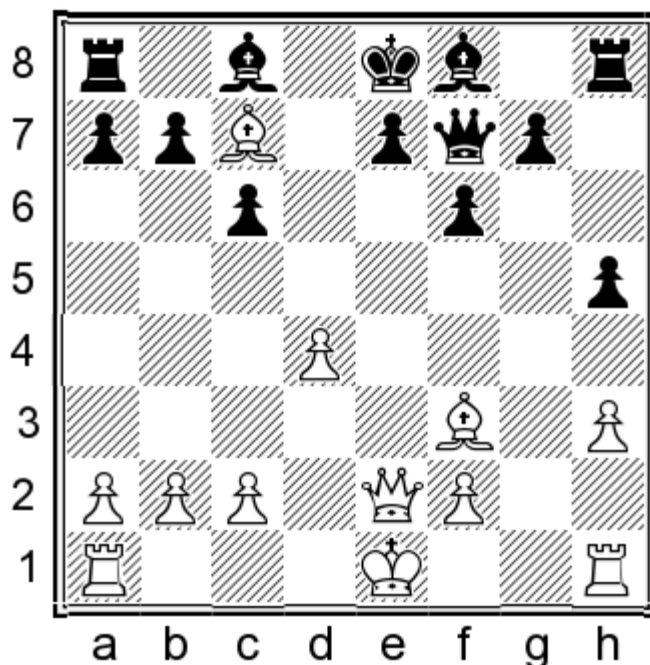
After 13.0-0-0 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♖xf3 ♖e6! 16.♔b1 f6 17.♗h2 ♖d5 18.♖d3 e6 19.♖g6+, Black should be fine after either king move.



I prefer 19...♔e7!? (19...♔d7∞ was played in Abrahamyan-Kosteniuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2012) 20.♖he1 (20.♙f4 ♗f5) 20...♗h6! [20...♗d8 was Caruana-Milanovic, Budva 2009, but it looks dubious in view of 21.c4! ♗xc4 22.d5! cxd5 (22...♗xd5?? 23.♗xe6+!+-) 23.♗c1 ♗h6 24.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 25.♗e1+ ♗e4+ 26.♗xe4+ dxe4 27.♗xe4+ ♔f7 28.♗xb7+±] 21.♗g3 ♔f7! 22.♗c7+ ♙e7 23.♗xb7 ♗d8±. Black has completed his development and stands very well. A possible conclusion could be 24.c4!? ♗xc4 25.d5! cxd5 (25...♗xd5?? 26.♙d6+-) 26.♗xe6 ♔xe6 27.♗e1+ ♔f5 28.♗xe7 ♗d3+ 29.♔a1 ♗d2 30.a3 ♗hh8 31.♗e6+ ♔g6 32.♗g1+ ♔h7 33.♗f5+ ♔g8 34.♗e6+ (34.♗xf6 ♗c1+ 35.♔a2 ♗c4+=) 34...♔h7 35.♗f5+=.

Let us now resume our analysis of 13.h3:

13...f6! Harassing the e5-bishop as it does not have many good squares along the h2-b8 diagonal. 14.♙c7 (14.♙h2 ♙xh3!∞) 14...♗f7



15.d5!? This recommendation of Houska should probably lead to a draw.

Instead, 15.0-0-0? ♗xa2 16.d5 (16.♙xh5+ ♔d7 17.♙g3 ♗a1+ 18.♔d2 ♗a5+-+ is given by Houska) 16...g6!± led

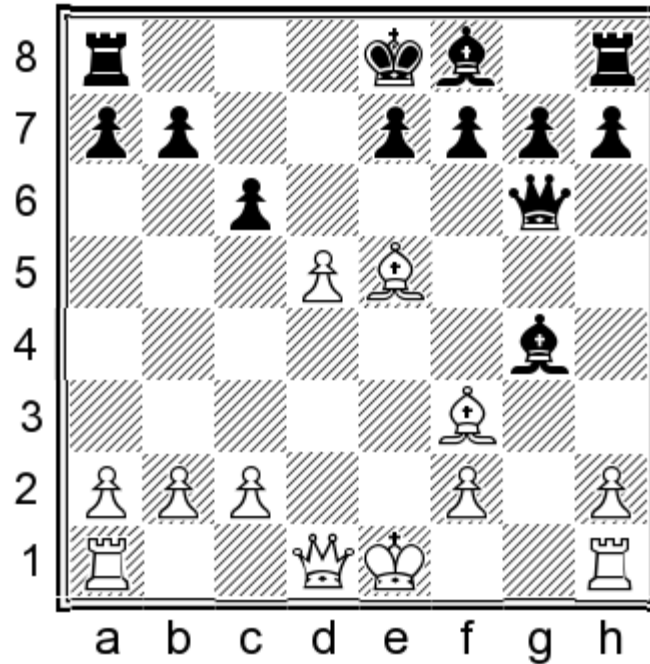
to a quick rout for White in the game Milliet-Kosteniuk, Corsica (rapid) 2009, after 17.dxc6?? ♕h6+ 18.♖d2 ♜a1#.

15...e5 Safest.

15...cxd5 16.0-0-0 e6 17.♕a5 ♕e7 18.♖he1 ♔f8 19.c4 dxc4 20.♗xc4 g5 is certainly not a position for the faint-hearted.

16.dxc6 ♗xc7 17.cxb7 ♕xb7 18.♗b5+ ♔e7 19.♕xb7 ♖b8 20.♗b4+=.

12...♕g4!☞

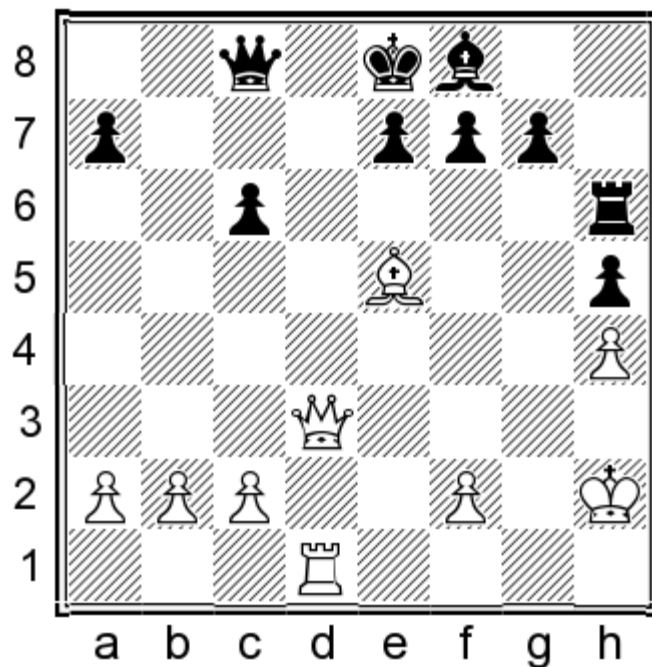


Exchanging White's powerful bishop. Since Black is a pawn up, the ball passes to White's court from now on. Anand himself already considers the position as slightly better for Black in his *Informant* notes.

13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♗e2 ♕xf3 15.♗xf3 ♖d8 16.♖d1 ♗e6 17.0-0 ♖xd1 18.♖xd1 h5 19.♗d3 ♗c8!

Vishy's mark. He also mentions 19...f5 20.f4 ♖h6 21.b4 ♔f7 22.c4 with compensation for White.

20.h4!? ♖h6 21.♔h2



### 21...Rg6

In my opinion, 21...Rg6! was better for Black at this point. Anand gives 22.g3 g6 23.Wd4 but fails to spot 23...f5!↑ when Black coordinates his forces and can play for a win. The main point is seen after 24.Wxa7

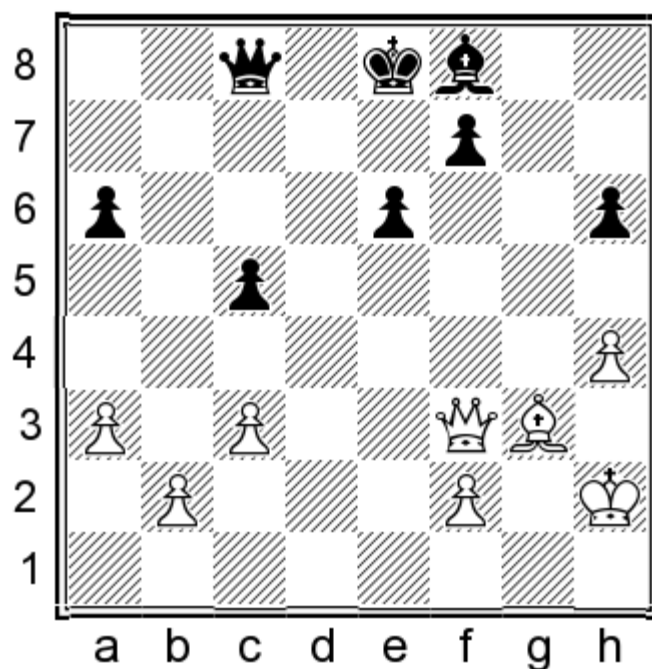
24.Wxa7 Rxe2 25.g5 f4! 26.g7 Qf7 27.g6 Rxf2+ 28.Qg1 Wg4+ 29.Qxf2 gxh6 30.Wxh6 Wxd1 31.Wxf4+ Qg8.

24...Rxe2 and Black prepares to bring his queen to e6 and the bishop to g7, activating all his pieces.

### 22.g3 Rg4!?

According to Vishy, a prelude to ... g4-b4-b7, which his next move aims to prevent.

23.a3 a6 24.Re1 c5 25.c3! Rg6 26.Re5! e6 27.Rxh5 Rh6 28.Rxh6 gxh6=

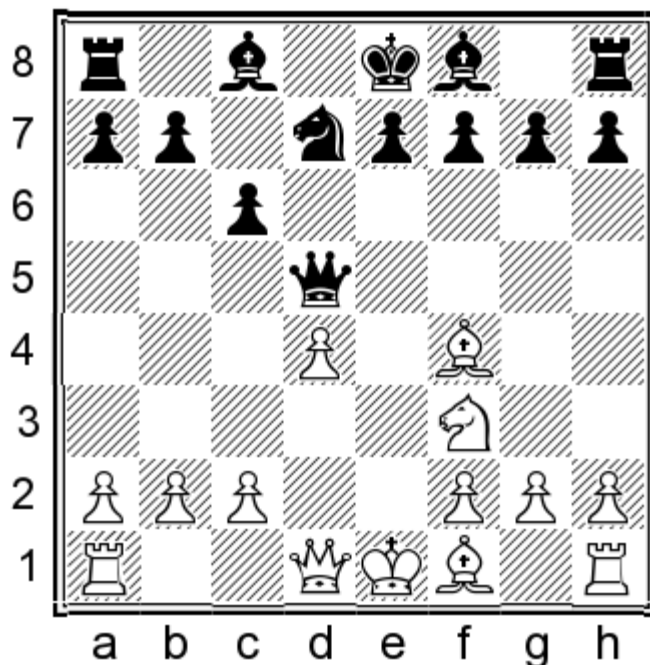


After the exchange of rooks there is not much going on. The remaining moves were:

29. ♖f3 c4 30. ♗f4 ♖c5 31. ♗a8+ ♗e7 32. ♗g1 ♖f5 33. ♗g3 ♖b1+ 34. ♗h2 ♖xb2 35. ♖xa6 ♗f6 36. ♖xc4 ♖xa3 37. ♖d4+ ♗e7 38. c4 ♗e8 39. ♖b6 ♖c5 40. ♖xc5 ♗xc5 41. h5 ♗d4 42. ♗g2 ♗d7 43. ♗f4 ♗g7 44. ♗e3 ♗d6 45. ♗f1 e5 46. ♗e2 f5 47. f3 ♗c6 48. ♗d3 ♗f8 49. ♗c1 ♗g7 50. ♗a3 ♗f6 Draw.

**30. Ivanchuk – Tiviakov  
Wijk aan Zee 2010**

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♖xd5 3. ♗c3 ♖d6 4. d4 ♗f6 5. ♗f3 c6 6. ♗e5 ♗bd7 7. ♗f4 ♗d5 8. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 9. ♗f3!?



I emphasized on 9. ♗c4 and 9. ♗e2 in the theoretical sections. The text move is designed to avoid exchanges.

9... ♗b6 10. ♗e2 ♗f5 11. c3

11. 0-0? would lose a pawn after 11... ♖e4! 12. ♗c7 ♖xc2 13. ♗xb6 ♖xd1 14. ♖fxd1 axb6 15. d5 g6! 16. dxc6 bxc6 17. ♖ac1 ♗g7 18. ♖xc6 0-0 19. ♖xb6 ♖xa2 20. ♗d4 ♗e4+ with the better position for Black. In Parligras-Tiviakov, Germany 2008, White blundered with 21. ♗c4?? and after 21... ♖a4! 22. b3 ♖xc4! 23. bxc4 ♖d8 24. c5 ♗xd4 25. ♗f1 e5, Sergei went on to cash in the point without problems.

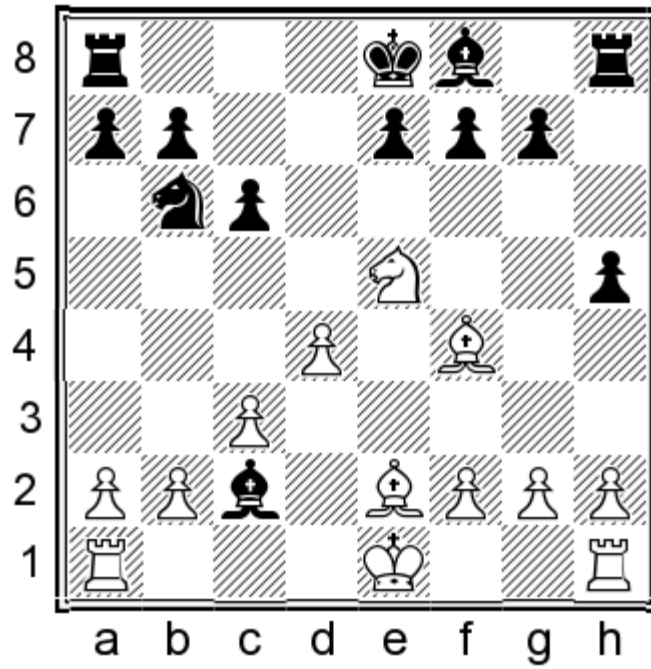
11... ♖e4

Now Black is ensured of a pretty equal ending, in my view.

12. ♖d2

12. ♗g3 didn't change much after 12... ♖c2 13. ♖xc2 ♗xc2 14. 0-0 e6 15. ♗e5 (15. a4 is nothing after the accurate reply 15... a5! =) 15... ♗e7 16. ♗d3 ♗xd3 17. ♗xd3 a5! 18. ♖fe1 0-0 19. ♗c5 ♖a7 20. ♖ad1 a4 = and Black stood fine in Deepan Chakkravarthy-Tiviakov, Leiden 2011.

12... ♖c2 13. ♖xc2 ♗xc2 14. ♗e5 h5



15.0-0 e6 16.♖fe1 ♗e7 17.h3 ♜d8 18.g3

18.♞ac1 ♗f5 19.♗d3= was preferable.

18...♗d6 19.♗e3 ♘d5 20.♗d2 h4 21.♞ac1 ♗h7 22.♗f3 hxg3 23.fxg3 0-0

23...♗f5!?! 24.g4 ♗h7 was probably a tad better for Black, forcing a weakening of the f4-square.

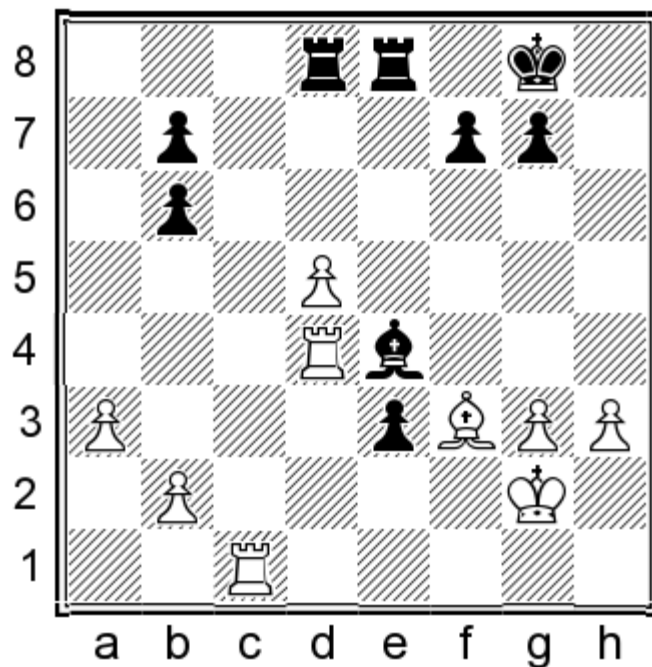
24.♔g2 c5 25.a3 cxd4 26.cxd4 ♞fe8 27.♘c4 ♗c7 28.♘e3! ♘xe3+ 29.♗xe3 ♗b6?!

Starting with this move, Sergei slightly mishandles the ending, giving his opponent unnecessary chances. 29...♞e7= was more accurate.

30.d5 e5?!

(30...♗xe3 31.♞xe3 ♔f8!?)

31.♗xb6 axb6 32.♞ed1 e4 33.♗e2 e3 34.♗f3 ♗e4 35.♞d4±



White is better from now on, but the eventual result is nevertheless a draw. The remaining moves were:

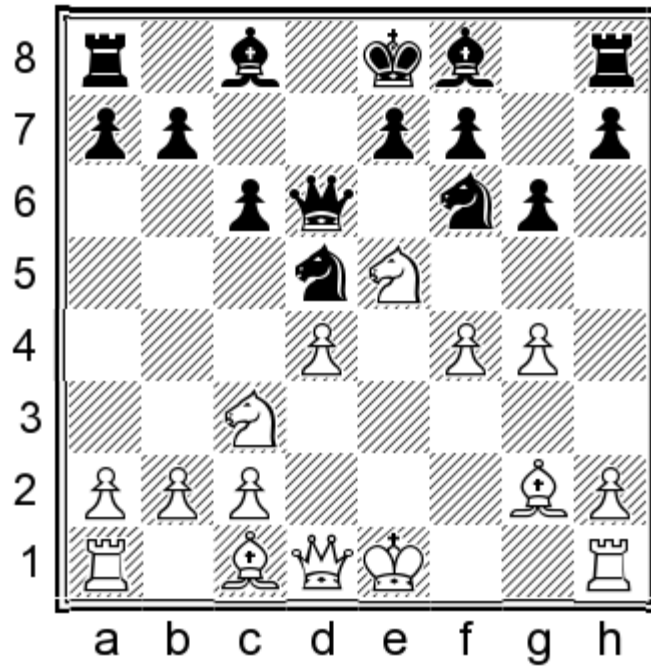
**35...♙xf3+ 36.♚xf3 ♖d6 37.♗e1 ♜f6+ 38.♞f4 ♞d6 39.♞xe3 ♞xe3+ 40.♚xe3 ♞xd5 41.♞d4 ♞e5+ 42.♚d3 ♞f5 43.♚c4 b5+ 44.♚b4 ♞f3 45.♞g4 f6 46.♚xb5 ♞b3+ 47.♞b4 ♞xg3 48.h4 ♞d3 49.a4 f5 50.♚b6 ♞d7 51.a5 ♞f7 52.♞f4 ♚h7 53.b4 g5 54.hxg5 ♚g6 55.b5 ♚xg5 56.♞f1 f4 57.a6 Draw.**

**31. Wan, Yunguo – Tiviakov  
Moscow, 2011**

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.f4 ♘b6 8.g4 ♘bd5**

Tiviakov and S.Kasparov use this line against the Shirov plan with f4, but I'd rather avoid it. I think it is dubious to move the knight 3 times in 8 moves having already spent a tempo with the queen.

**9.♙g2 g6**



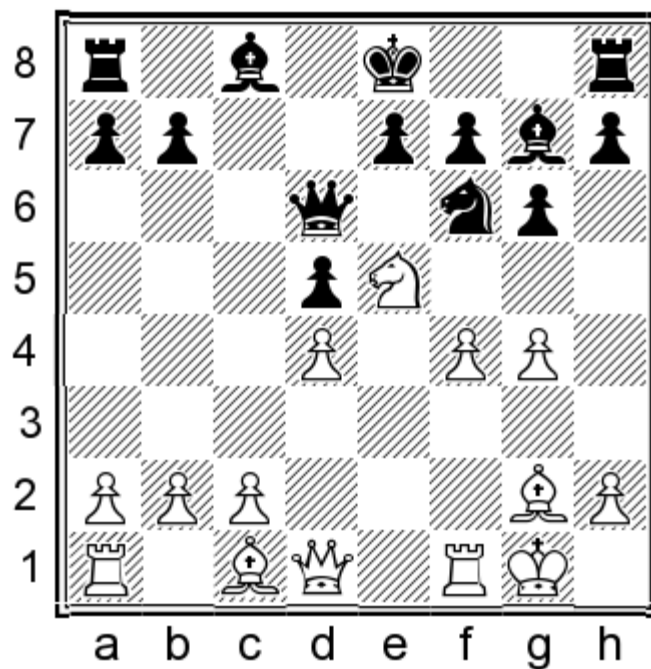
### 10.g5?!

Practical experience has seen this move in 90 percent of the games, but the real danger for Black is 10.0-0 ♔g7 11.f5! – as explained in the “Step by Step” section. I have also analysed:

10.♖xd5 cxd5!

Instead, 10...♖xd5 11.c4 ♖c7 12.c5 ♗d8 13.♗b3 ♖d5 is given as unclear by Tiviakov, but I believe Black is just worse after 14.0-0 f6 15.♖c4 ♔xg4 16.♗e1! (16.♗xb7 ♗c8 17.♗xc8+ ♔xc8∞) 16...e6 17.♗xb7 ♗c8 18.♗xc8+ ♗xc8 19.♖e3 ♖xe3 20.♗xe3! as the ending with weaknesses at c6 and a7 will be very difficult to defend.

11.0-0 ♔g7 and Black looks okay.



For example: 12.c3

12.g5 ♖e4 13.c4 ♗a6! 14.cxd5 ♖d6∞;

12.f5 gxf5 13.gxf5 ♖e4! 14.♔f4 ♗b6∞;

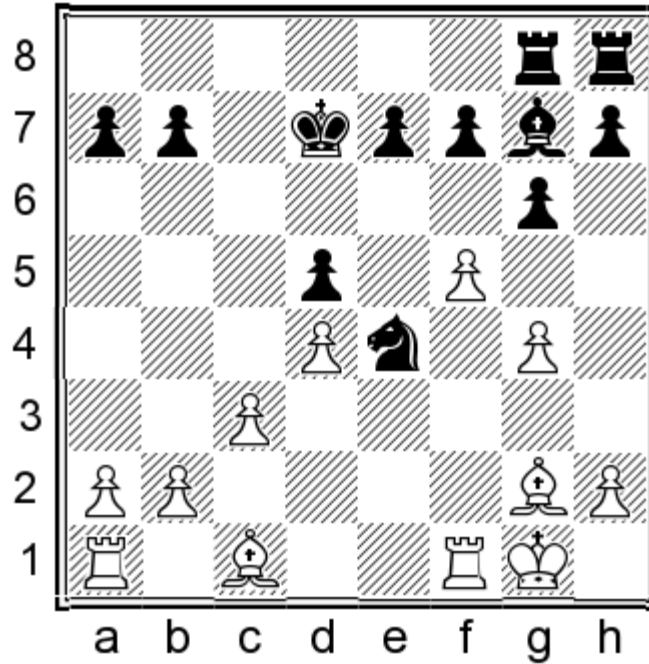
12. ♖e2 ♜b6 13. c3 (13. c4 dxc4 14. g5 ♘d7 15. ♙e3 ♗xe5 16. dxe5 ♙g4!?) 13... ♗e4!? 14. ♙xe4 dxe4 15. ♜xe4 ♜c7  
 16. ♜f3 h5 17. g5 0-0 18. b3 b5!≡.

12... ♗e4! 13. ♜a4+ (13. c4 0-0≡) 13... ♙d7 14. ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 15. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 and Black should draw this ending by active play. If this sounds vague, play through the following illustrative lines:

16. f5!

Otherwise Black will push ...f7-f5 himself. 16. ♙xe4 dxe4 17. f5 is similarly met by 17... ♜ag8!.

16... ♜ag8!



17. ♙e3

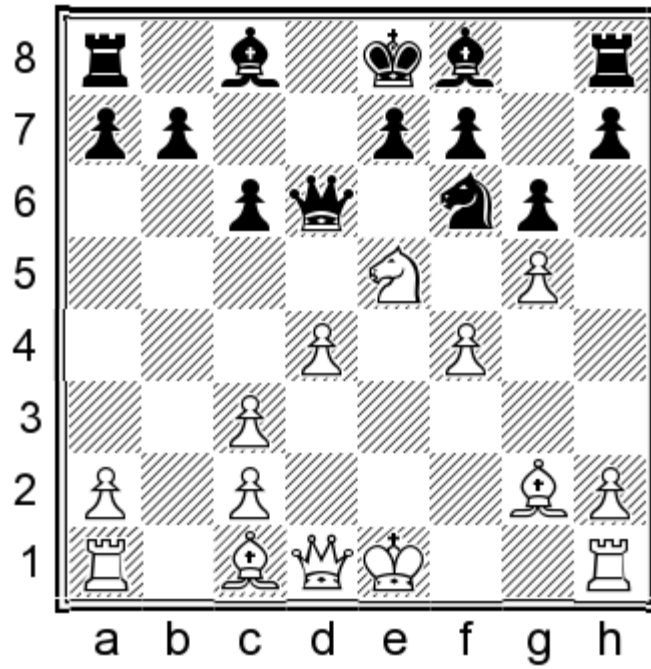
After 17. fxg6 hxg6 18. ♜xf7?, the cool 18... ♙f6 traps the rook.

17... ♙f6! 18. ♖h1 gxf5 19. ♜xf5 e6 20. ♜f4 ♙g5! 21. ♜xf7+ ♖e8 22. ♜xb7!?

22. ♜f3 h5! 23. ♙xg5 hxg4 24. ♜f4 ♜xg5 25. ♙xe4 dxe4 26. ♜g1 ♜gh5 27. ♜f2 ♜f5! 28. ♜e2 ♜f4=.

22... ♙xe3 23. ♙xe4 dxe4 24. ♜e1 ♙g5! 25. ♜xe4 ♜g6 26. ♜xa7 (26. d5 ♜f8 27. ♜xh7 ♜f4 28. ♜xe6+ ♜xe6 29. dxe6 ♙e7 30. h3 ♜e4=) 26... ♙d8= intending ...h7-h5.

10... ♗xc3 11. bxc3



### 11...♞d7

Note this retreat! Black has less space so he should seek exchanges. 11...♞d5? is a blunder which hands the opponent tempi for a decisive breakthrough: 12.c4 ♞c7 13.c5 ♚d8 14.d5!! cxd5 15.c4! e6 16.♙b2 ♙g7 17.♞c6! bxc6 18.♙xg7 ♜g8 19.♙e5 ♙d7 20.0-0. White had a crushing advantage in Shirov-Tiviakov, Hoogeveen 2010.

### 12.0-0 h6?!

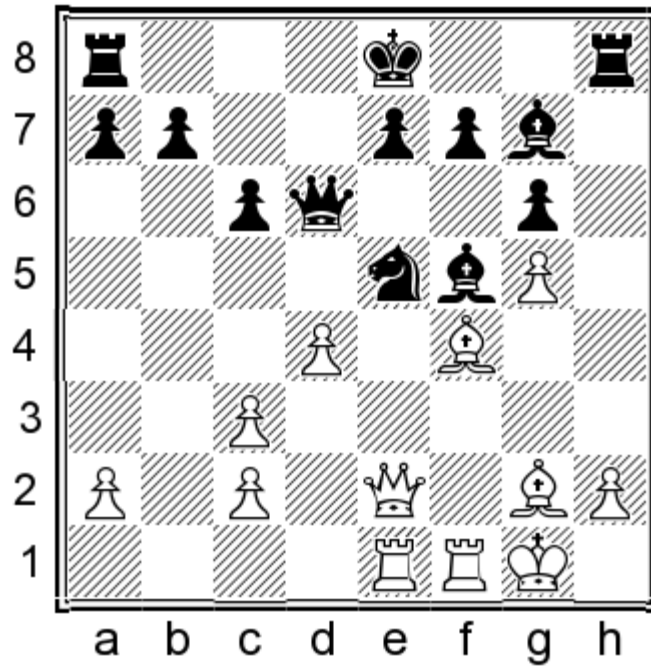
Natural, but bad. 12...♞xe5! 13.fxe5 ♚c7 14.♚f3 (14.♙e4 h6?) 14...♙f5= is simple and strong, with an excellent game for Black.

### 13.♚e2?!

The subsequent improvement 13.♚f3! ♞xe5

13...hxg5 14.♞xf7! ♜xf7 15.fxg5+ ♜e8 16.♚f7+ ♜d8 17.♙f4 e5 18.♙g3! leads to a very dangerous white attack. 14.fxe5 ♚e6 15.a4 hxg5 16.♙xg5 ♙h6 17.♙xh6 ♜xh6 18.a5 a6 19.♜ab1 ♜h5 20.♚f4 ♜f8 21.♜f3 ♜g8 22.♜bf1 ♜h7 23.♙g3 gave White a big edge in Svidler-Zolotukhin, Russia 2011.

### 13...hxg5 14.fxg5 ♞xe5 15.♙f4 ♙g7 16.♜ae1 ♙f5!?

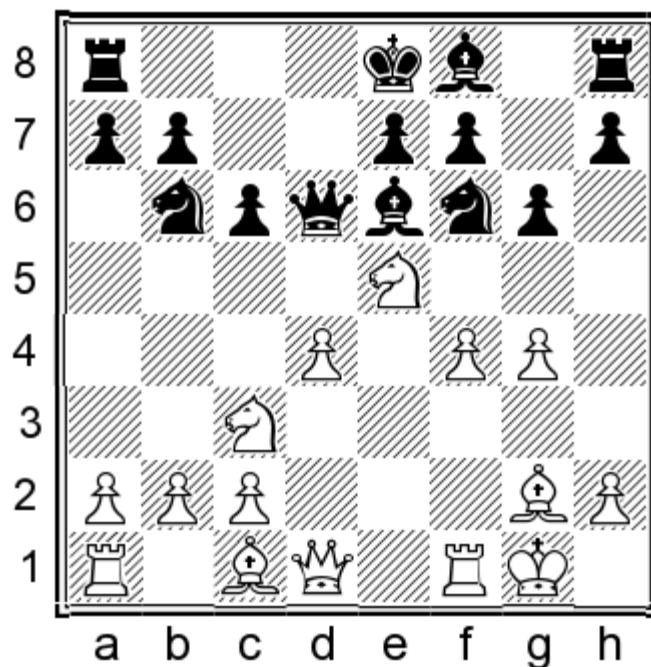


Black has the more pleasant game now. I will not comment on the rest as this game was mainly included to demonstrate some opening nuances.

17. ♖f2 ♗a3 18. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 19. ♞xe5 ♞xc3 20. ♞c5 ♞b2 21. ♞xc6 0-0 22. ♞c5 ♞ac8 23. c4 ♞xf2+ 24. ♞xf2 ♞xc5 25. dxc5 ♞c8 26. ♞b2 ♞xc5 27. ♞xb7 a6 28. ♞xe7 ♙e6 29. ♙d5 ♙xd5 30. ♞e5 ♞xc4 31. ♞xd5 ♞c1+ 32. ♙g2 ♞c2+ 33. ♙g3 ♞xa2 34. ♞d8+ ♙g7 35. ♞a8 ♞a3+ 36. ♙g4 a5 37. h4 ♞a1 38. ♙g3 a4 39. ♙g2 f5 40. gxf6+ ♙xf6 41. ♞a5 a3 42. ♙h2 ♙e6 43. ♙g2 ♞a2+ 44. ♙g3 ♞a1 45. ♙g2 ♙d6 46. ♞a6+ ♙c5 47. ♞xg6 ♞c1 48. ♞a6 ♙b4 49. h5 ♞c2+ 50. ♙g3 a2 51. h6 ♞c3+ 52. ♙g2 ♞a3 0-1

32. Barrientos – Tiviakov  
Bogota 05.12.2010

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3. ♘c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5. ♘f3 c6 6. ♘e5 ♘bd7 7.f4 ♘b6 8.g4 ♙e6 9. ♙g2 g6 10.0-0



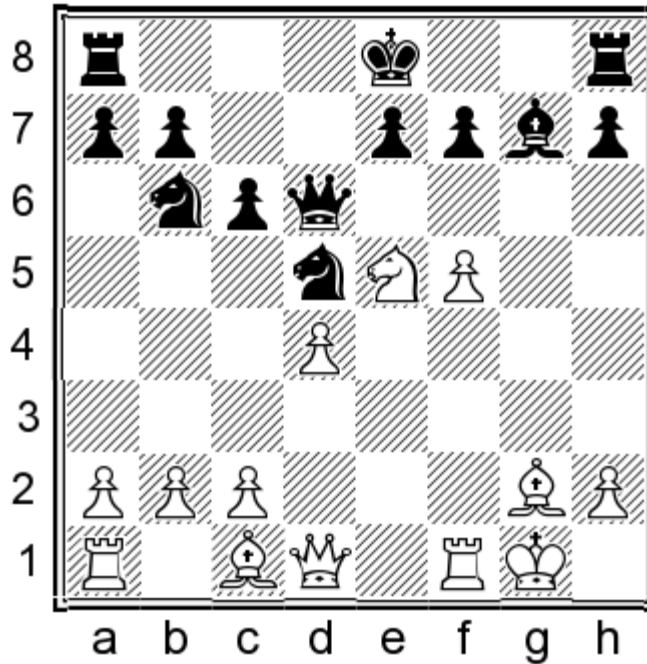
White can also choose the move order 10.a4 ♖g7 (10...a5? 11.0-0 ♖g7 12.f5 gxf5 13.gxf5 ♙d5 14.♞f2!± is better for White.) 11.0-0.

Instead, 11.a5 ♗bd5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗a4 (13.f5 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♙d5∞) 13...b5! 14.♗c5? (14.axb6 axb6 15.c4 b5!∞) is met by the thunderbolt 14...♙xg4!—+

## 10...♞d8

In principle, Black should hit d4 in order to restrict the opponent's options. It is not enough for equality, but the alternative 10...♙g7 11.f5! gxf5 12.gxf5 is in White's favour after 12...♙c4

Black suffers also in the event of 12...♙d5 13.♗xd5! (13.♞f2 ♙xg2 14.♞xg2 ♗h5! 15.♙g5 h6 16.♙h4 ♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♞xd1+ 18.♞xd1 ♞d8 19.♞e1 ♞d4 20.♙f2 looks about equal after 20...♞c4 21.♙e3 ♗f4↔) 13...♗fxd5 as the bishop pair is dangerous in an open position. For example:



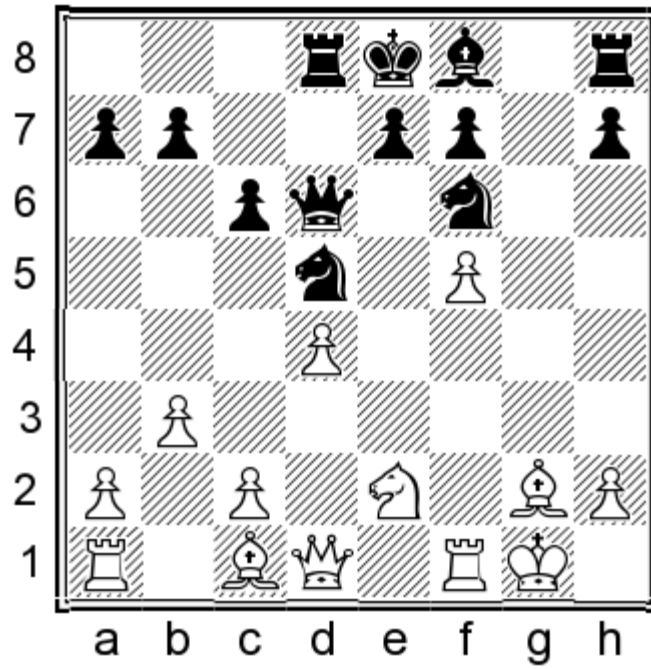
14.♞e2 [14.f6!? ♗xf6! (14...♙xf6? 15.♗xf7! ♗xf7 16.♞h5+ ♗g8 17.♙h6! ♙xd4+ 18.♗h1 ♞g6 19.♙h3!!+—) 15.♙f4±] 14...♙xe5 15.dxe5 ♞c5+ 16.♗h1 0-0-0 17.b3! ♞d4 18.♙h6±.

13.♞e1!, intending a2-a4. If 13...♞d8 then White plays 14.a4! anyway and Black has a bad position because his bishop must retreat to a6. For example, 14...♙a6 15.a5 ♗bd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗h1± with a much better game for White as his a1 rook can join the attack via a3.

Instead, Shirov-Tiviakov, Benidorm 2008, saw 13.♗xc4 ♗xc4 14.♞d3?! (14.♗e2! ♗g4 15.♙f4 e5! 16.fxe6 ♞xe6 17.d5! cxd5 18.♞xd5 0-0 19.♞xe6 fxe6 20.♙xb7± is a sharp ending where White may have the tiniest of edges due to his bishop pair.) 14...♗g4!±.

## 11.a4

The best plan is 11.f5!. It immediately gives White the upper hand: 11...gxf5 12.gxf5 ♙c4 13.♗xc4 ♗xc4 14.b3 ♗b6 15.♗e2 ♗bd5



16. ♖f3!!

16.h3 ♗h5 17.c4 ♗df6⇌ leaves Black in good shape on the kingside in view of the imminent ...♖h8-g8. Delaying the development of the bishop to g7 is helpful in this line. I will give a couple of variations to illustrate what I mean: 18.c5!?! (18.♙e3 ♖g8 19.♗h1 ♗g3+ 20.♗xg3 ♗xg3 21.♗f3 ♗h5! 22.♖g1 ♗xf3 23.♙xf3 ♖g3!! 24.♖af1 ♖xh3+ 25.♗g2 ♖g3+ 26.♗f2 ♖xg1 27.♖xg1 ♗f6=) 18...♗c7 19.♗d3 ♖g8 20.♙d2 ♗d5 21.♖ae1 ♗g3 22.♖f3 ♗xe2+ 23.♗xe2 ♙g7 24.♗f2 ♙f6 25.b4 ♗d7! 26.♗h1 ♗c8 27.a4 ♙g5 28.b5 ♙xd2 29.♗xd2 ♖g3⇌. This analysis shows that the weakness of the g3-square is the key in Black's counterplay. Therefore, White uses a more subtle way of neutralising ...♗g4.

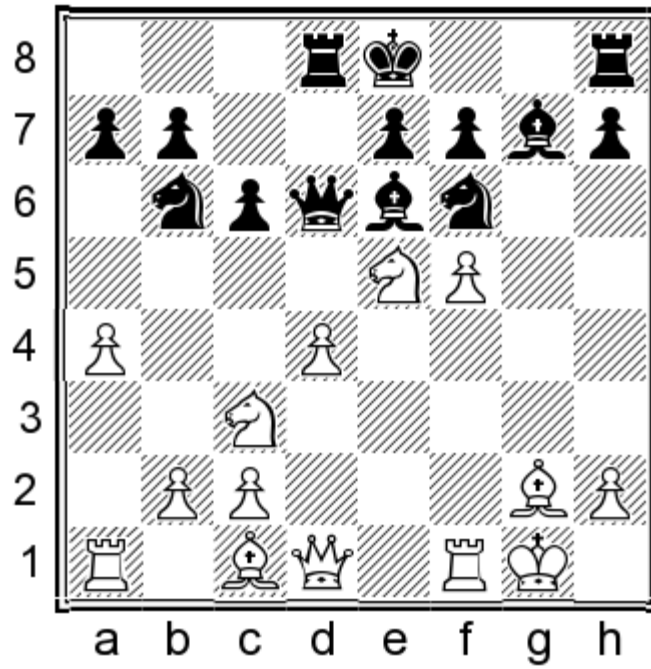
16...♗g4 17.♖g3 ♖g8 18.c4 ♗df6 19.h3 (19.♗d3 ♙h6=) 19...♗h6 20.♖f3!!

Now that the knight is on the passive square h6, White returns to his central play. 20.♖xg8 ♗fxg8⇌ would have been a mistake as the f-pawn is hanging.

20...c5 21.d5 ♗e5 22.♙f4 ♗xf5 23.♗f1! ♗g6 24.♗h1 ♗e4 25.♖e1! ♗f5 26.♖d3! ♗h4 27.♗g3 ♗f2+ 28.♗xf2 ♗xg2 29.♖e4 ♗xf4 30.♗xf4 h5 31.♗f2± and White holds all the trumps.

11...♙g7 12.g5?!

A positional mistake. 12.f5! was again the correct breakthrough – 12...gxf5 13.gxf5



13...♔d5

(13...♔c4? 14.♖e1 ♔a6 15.a5±)

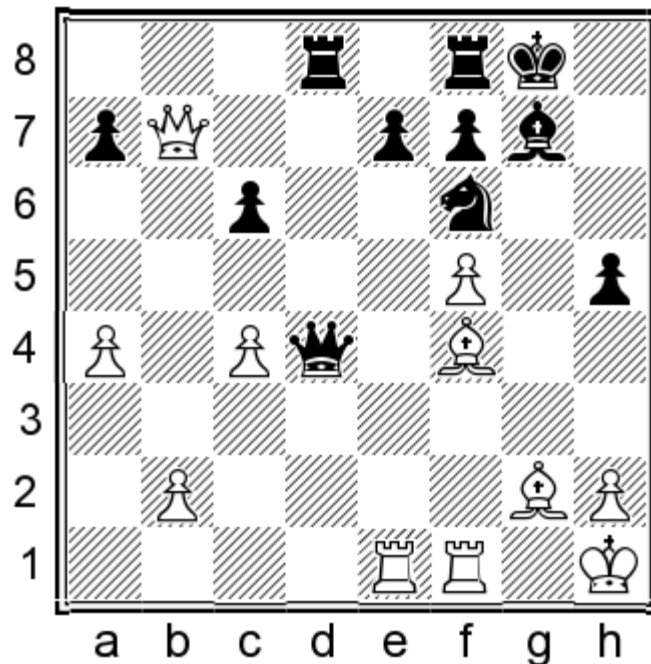
14.♘d5 ♘bxd5 15.♙e2!

Alternatives are:

15.♖a3 h5! 16.♖g3 (16.♖h3 c5!∞) 16...♘g4! 17.♘xg4 hxg4 18.♙xg4 ♔f6 19.c3 ♔d7⇒ gives Black excellent play for the pawn;

15.c4 ♘b4 16.♔e3 c5 17.♙b3 a5 18.♖ad1 ♙c7⇒ is also fine for him;

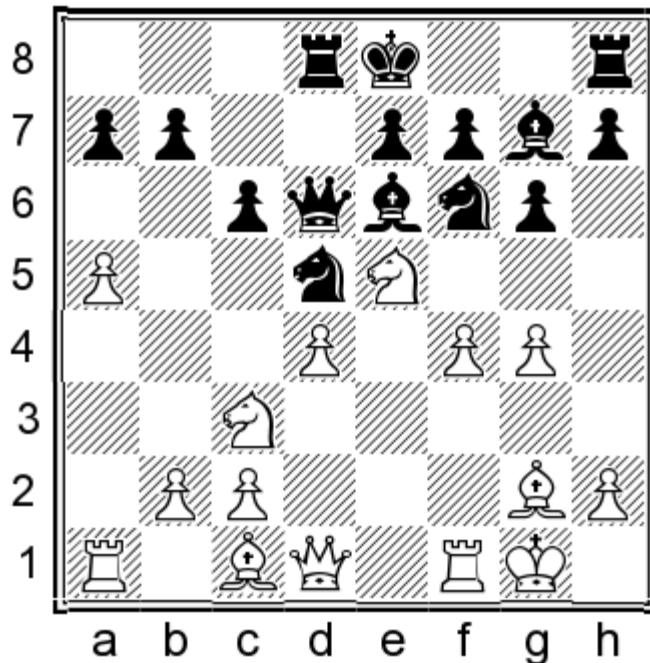
15.♔h1 h5!? 16.c4! ♘b4 17.♙b3! ♙xd4 18.♙xb4 ♙xe5 19.♔f4 ♙d4 20.♙xb7 0-0 21.♖ae1



21...♘g4 22.♔g3 ♔f6! Black's control over the dark squares gives him strong counterplay. White should aim to trade queens, perhaps with 23.♙b3 as 23.h3 h4!! 24.♖e4? ♙xe4!! 25.♔xe4 hxg3 26.hxg4 ♖d2 27.♔g2 ♔g7 28.♖f4 ♖h8+ 29.♔g1 ♖h2—+ even loses.

15...h5 16.c4 ♘b4 17.♖d1 ♘g4 18.♔f4 ♙f6 19.♔e4± with a full control.

Another interesting possibility is 12.a5!? ♖bd5

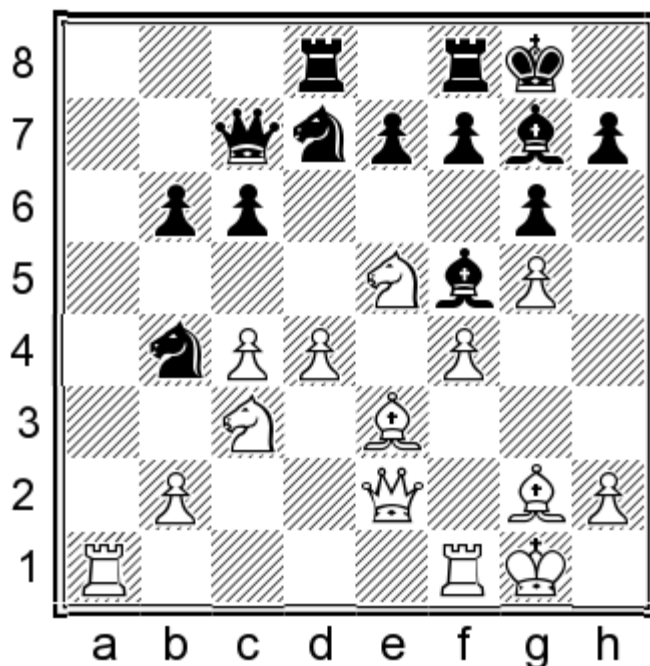


when 13.f5! gxf5 14.gxf5 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♕d5 16.♙a3! ♖c7 17.♗e2 is strategically won.

12...♗fd7

After White's mistake, the game enters a one way street. Black has a good blockade on the light squares and the first player lacks a clear plan.

13.a5 ♗d5 14.♗e4 ♖c7 15.♗e2 0-0 16.c4 ♗b4 17.♙e3 b6 18.axb6 axb6 19.♗c3 ♙f5



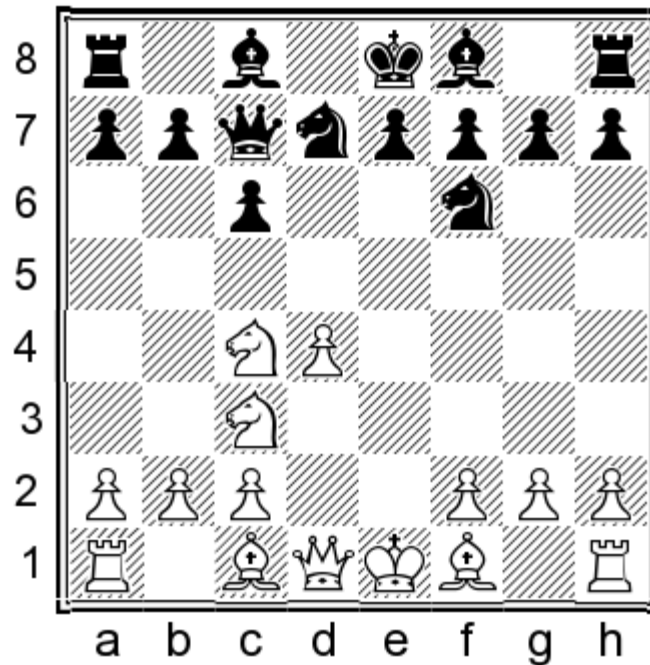
20.♗fc1?!

20.♗a2! had to be played, having in mind 20...♗xe5 21.♗xb4 ♗g4 22.♗xc6 ♗xe3 23.♖a7! maintaining the balance.

20...♗xe5 21.dxe5 f6!± (White is overextended and now he gets the bill) 22.♞a4 ♗d3 23.♞ca1 fxe5 24.♞a7 ♞d6  
25.fxe5 ♞xe5 (25...♗xe5!± was more accurate) 26.♗xc6? ♗g4 27.♞d2 ♗xb2 28.♗d5+ ♔h8 29.♞a8 ♗xc4 Here White  
resigned. A brilliant game of Tiviakov. **0-1**

## Chapter 8. The Main Line 7.♘c4 Main Ideas

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♚d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 c6 6.♗e5 ♗bd7 7.♘c4 ♚c7

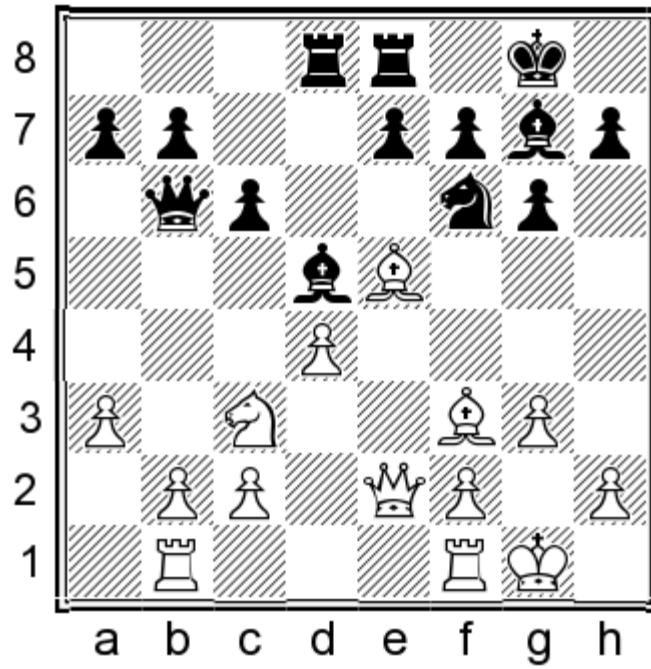


Fashion has brought this variation into the limelight. It does look consistent to preserve more pieces, but the knight makes already a third move in a row. That would not make sense if White had not in mind the aggressive set-up ♗f3, ♗f4, 0-0-0. Any other mundane development would allow Black to fulfil his general Scandinavian plan:

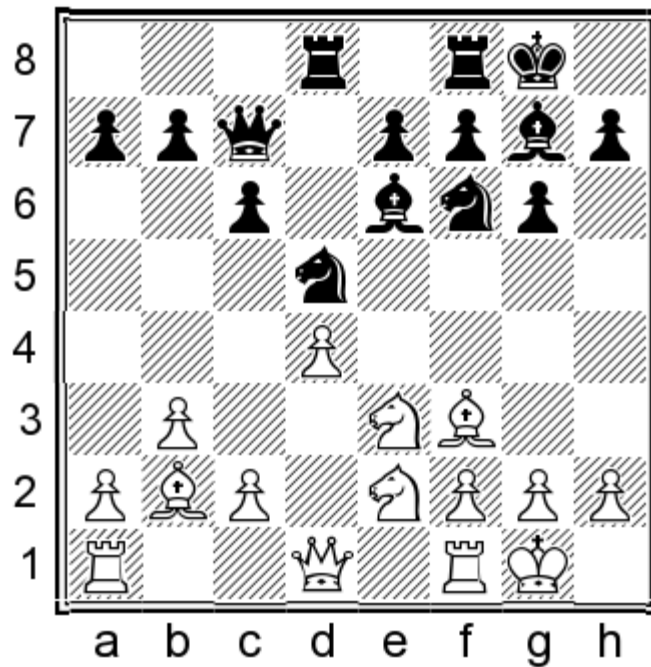
1. to fianchetto the dark-squared bishop;
2. to lead out the other one to e6 or g4.
3. to pursue exchanges of minor pieces.

Here are three models to follow:

8.♗e2 g6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.♗f3 0-0 11.g3 ♗b6 12.♗f4 ♚d8 13.♘xb6 ♚xb6 14.♖b1 ♗e6 15.♗e5 ♖ad8 16.♚e2 ♗fe8 17.a3 ♗d5, Kochetkova-Tiviakov, rapid Warsaw 2009.



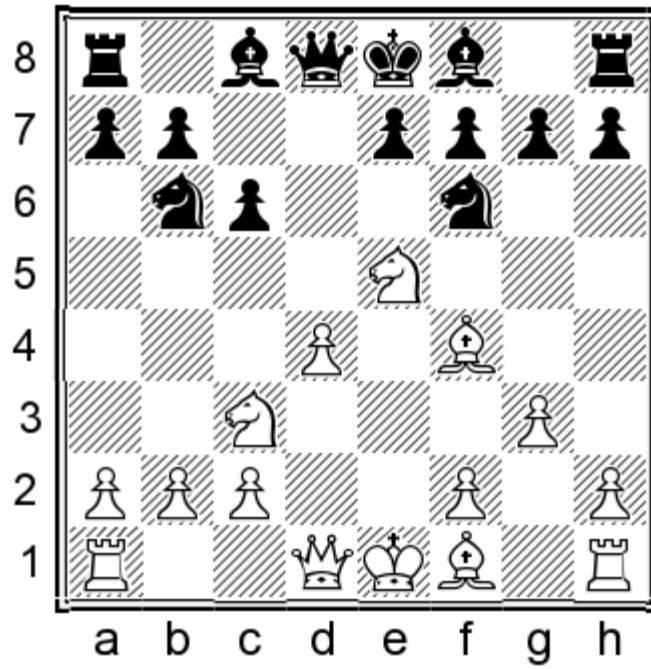
Or: 8.  $\text{♙e2}$   $\text{♜b6}$  9.  $\text{♞e3?!}$   $\text{♜e6}$  10. 0-0  $\text{g6}$  11.  $\text{♙f3}$   $\text{♞d8}$  12.  $\text{b3}$   $\text{♜g7}$  13.  $\text{♙b2}$  0-0 14.  $\text{♞e2}$   $\text{♜bd5}$



15.  $\text{c4}$   $\text{♞xe3}$  16.  $\text{fxe3}$   $\text{♞g4}$  17.  $\text{♙xg4}$   $\text{♜xg4}$  18.  $\text{h3}$   $\text{♜xe2}$  19.  $\text{♞xe2}$   $\text{e5}$ , A.Roos-S.Kasparov, Bergamo 2012.

As you see, Black's play is simple and logical. Any piece trade minimizes the impact of White's spatial advantage.

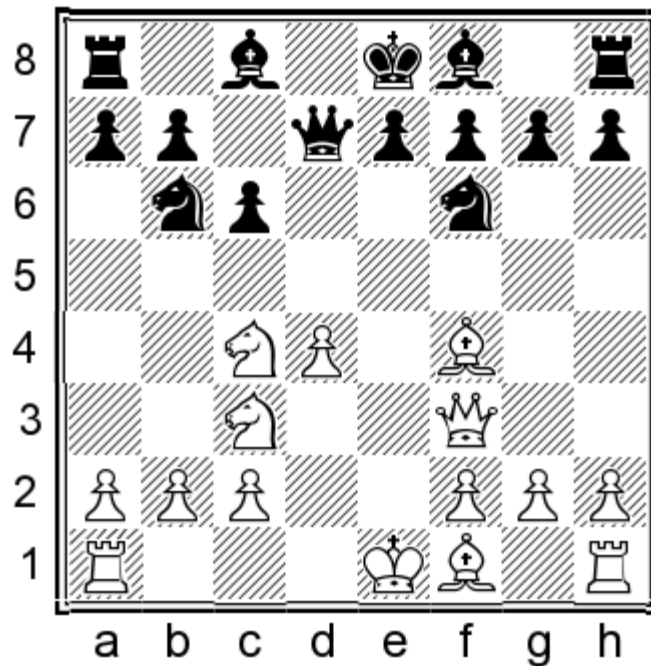
8.  $\text{g3}$   $\text{♜b6}$  9.  $\text{♙f4}$   $\text{♞d8}$  10.  $\text{♞e5}$



10...Nfd5!?

Obviously, White needs much more energetic play:

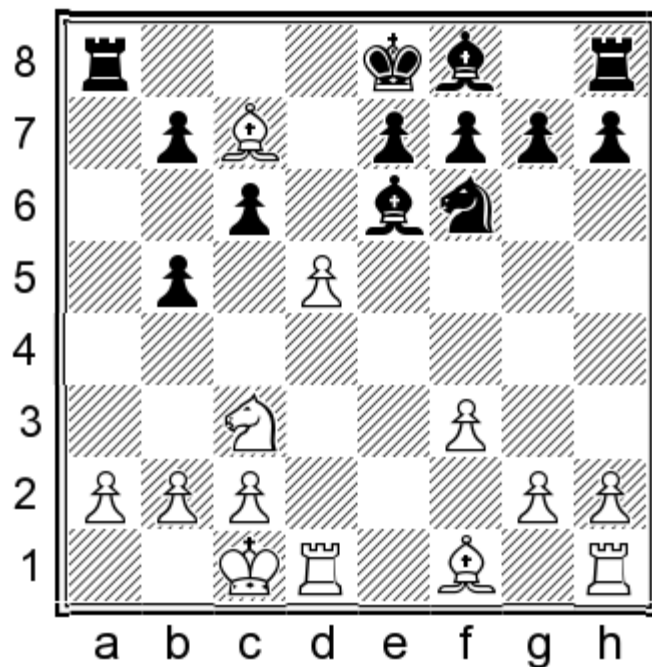
8. Qf3 Nb6 9. Qf4 Qd7!?



First important moment. Do not think that d7 is a good place for the queen in general! On the contrary – we always retreat to d8 except for this particular line. It has a tactical justification. Black is threatening ...Qg4, attacking d4 on the way.

The game takes now a tactical course and I'm afraid that you'll need more than bare "main ideas" in order to survive.

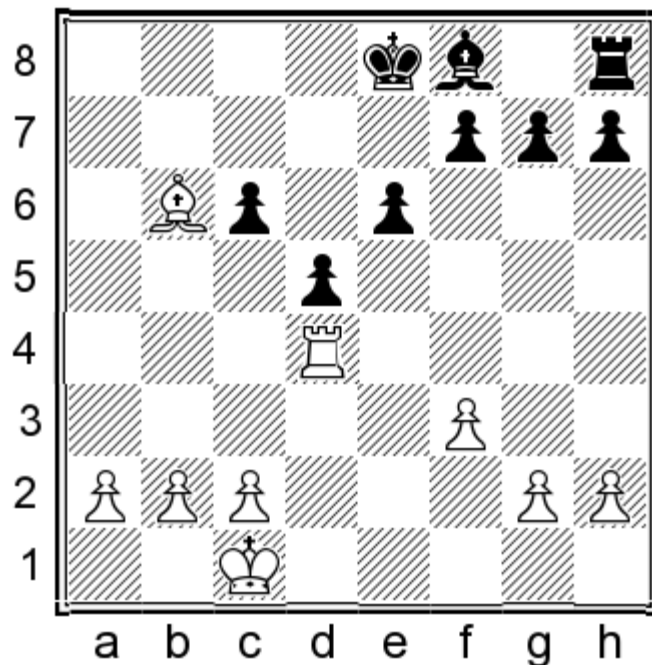
A. 10.0-0-0 Qg4! 11. Qxg4 Qxg4 12. f3 Qe6 13. Nxb6 (13. Na5 0-0-0) 13...axb6 14. Qc7!? b5 15. d5!



15...♖xd5! 16.♗xd5 ♕xd5 17.♞xd5 ♞c8!

This *intermezzo* saves us, but it is not the end of the forced sequence. The email game Cinca-Peschke, ICCF 2012, shows that it goes all the way up to move 30:

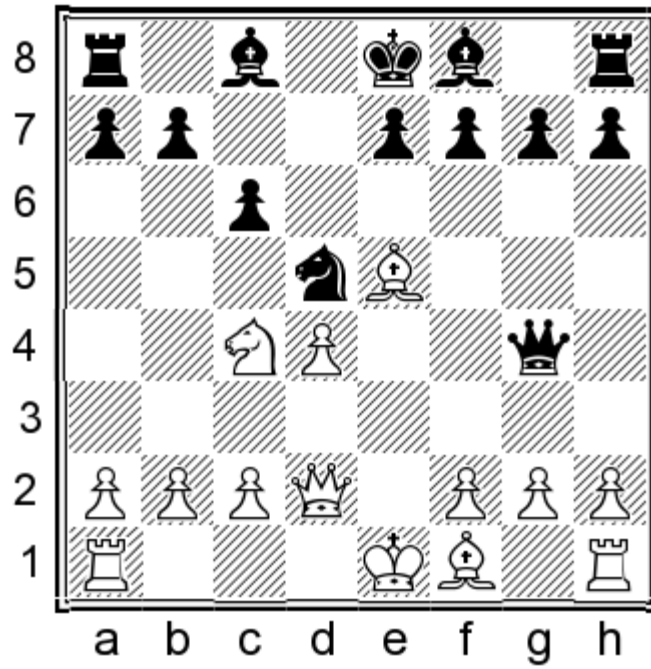
18.♕b6 cxd5 19.♕xb5+ ♞c6 20.♞d1 e6 21.♕xc6+ bxc6 22.♞d4!



22...c5! 23.♞a4 ♖d7 24.♞a7+ ♖c6 25.♕a5 ♕d6 26.♞xf7 ♞a8 27.♕c3 ♕xh2 28.♞xg7 ♞xa2 29.♖b1 ♞a8 30.♞xh7 ♕f4

Black's centralised king and the potential d-passer fully compensate for the pawn.

B. 10.♕e5 ♞g4! 11.♞e3 ♗fd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♞d2



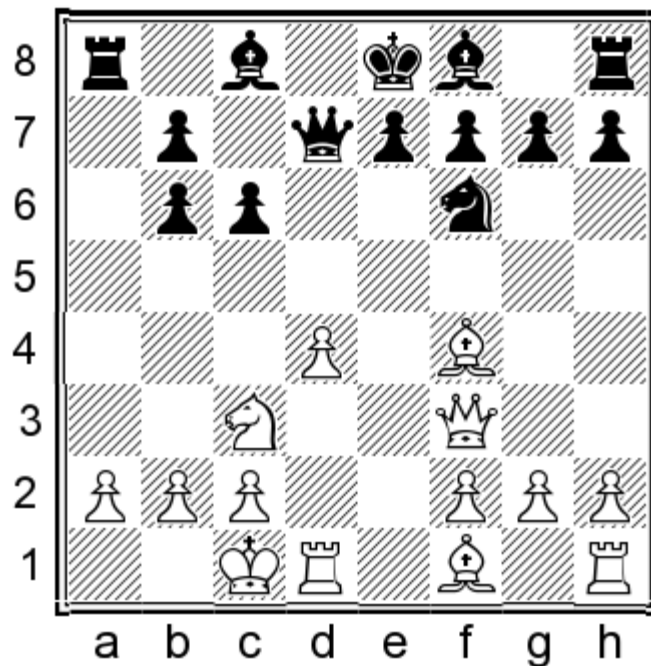
13...Qf5!

Tiviakov played 12...h5?! and S.Kasparov also recommends this move, but it is insufficient. The bishop's development is natural and strong. After:

14.f3 Qg6 15.0-0-0,

we have a pleasant choice: 15...h5 16.Δe3 Δxe3 17.♚xe3 ♘xc2 18.♖d2 ♕f5 is sharp and risky while 15...f6 16.♕g3 ♚h6! trades queens in a safe position.

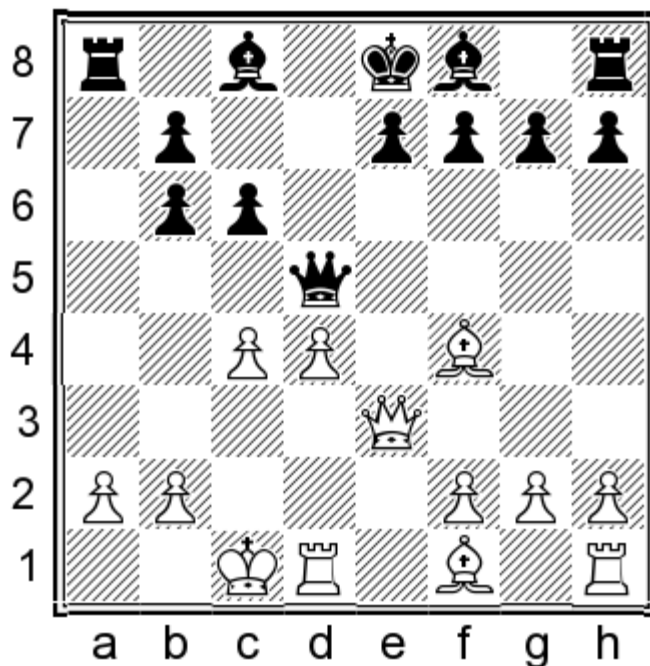
C. 10.Δxb6!? axb6 11.0-0-0!



Back in 2011 I thought White was clearly better and Tiviakov's choice against me – 11...e6?!, only confirmed my opinion. You can look at **Game 34** Kotronias-Tiviakov, Vrachati 2011. My later analysis, however, converted me into a

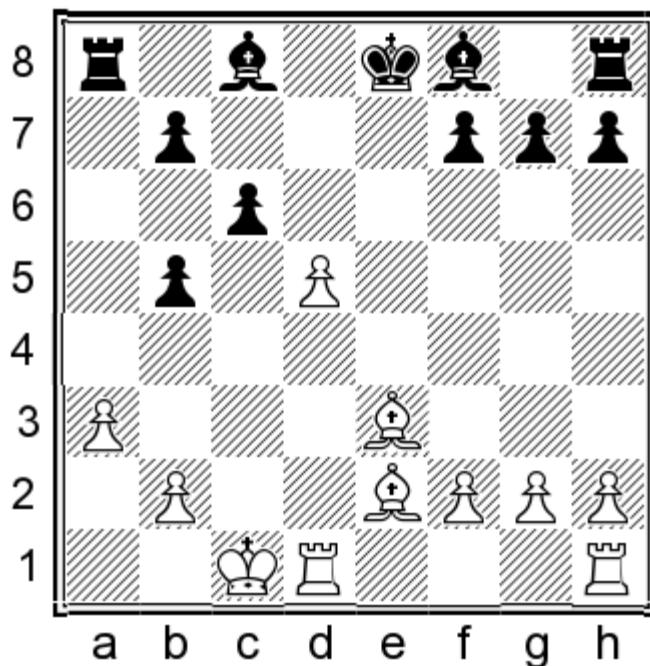
fan of Black's cause. We should play:

11...♙d8! 12.♚e3 (12.h3 e6) 12...♘d5! 13.♘xd5 ♜xd5 14.c4



This position has been evaluated in White's favour on the ground of the game Rublevsky-Zolotukhin, Olginka 2011, which saw 14...♚a5 15.a3, 15...♗g4? 16.f3 ♘d7 17.d5. Instead, 15...b5! holds on, but simplest is:

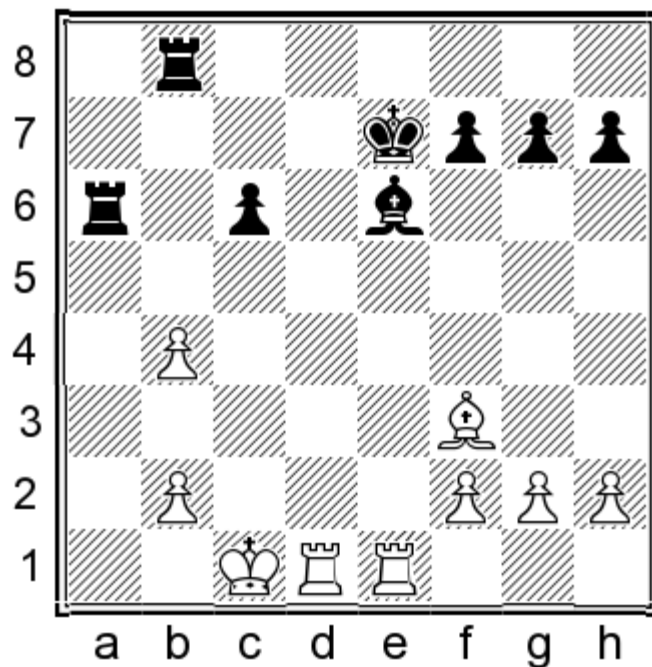
14...♚e6! 15.a3 ♜xe3+ 16.♗xe3 e6 17.d5 exd5 18.cxd5 b5 19.♗e2



19...b4!

A passive stand would be hopeless.

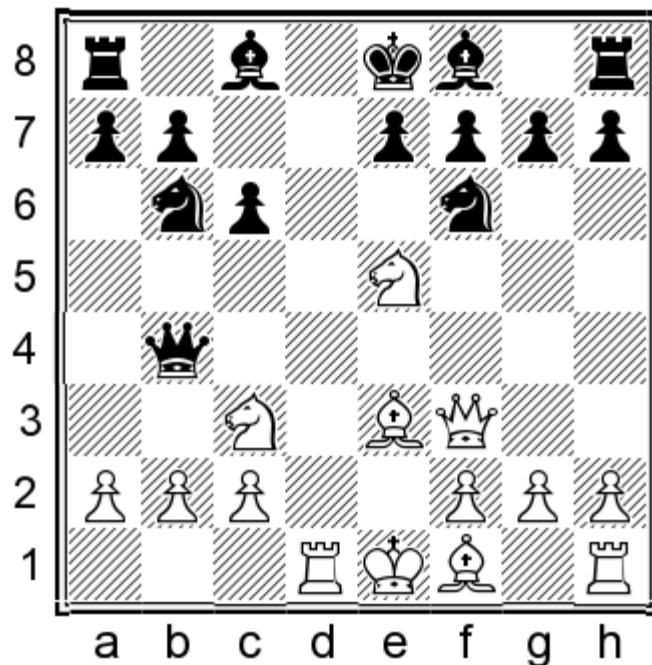
20.dxc6 bxc6 21.♗f3 ♜a6 22.♚he1 ♗e6 23.♗g5 ♗e7 24.♗xe7 ♜xe7 25.axb4 ♜b8!



Black has a forced draw. The key point is 26.♖d4 c5! or 26.♞e4 f5 27.♖h4 c5! =.

Now I'll examine plans where White sacrifices the d4-pawn. Luckily, they are rather harmless and give us fair chances to play for a win!

**D. 10.♘e5 ♚xd4 11.♖d1 ♚b4 12.♙e3**



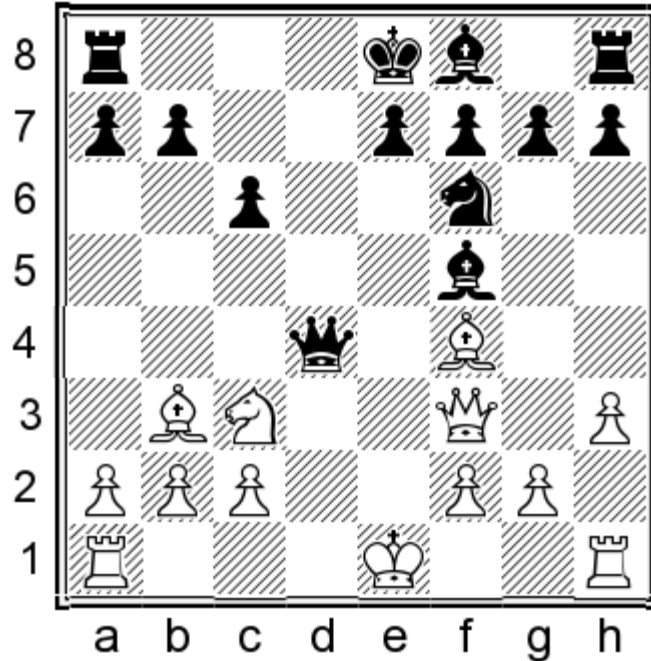
**12...♚a5!?**

I see no reason to give White more tempi with 12...♚xb2 13.♙d4 ♚b4 14.♙e2 h5. I provide enough evidence that Black is not worse here, but White has forced draws in many lines.

**13.♙d4 ♙e6 14.a3 ♘bd7**

After exchanging the e5-knight, we can castle queenside and enjoy our extra pawn in the centre. [chesstouring.com](http://chesstouring.com)

E. 10.h3 ♖xc4 11.♙xc4 ♜xd4 12.♙b3 ♙f5!?



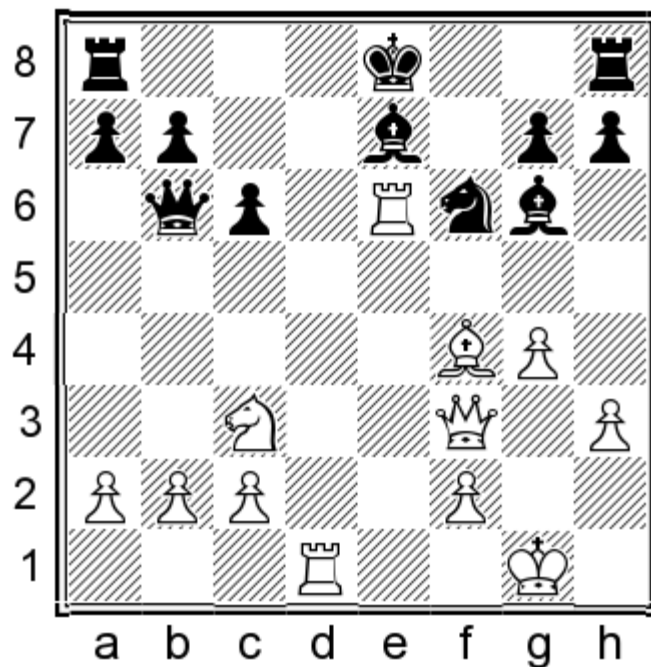
12...e6 13.♞d1 is grim for Black. It is not worth to suffer all the game long in a passive position. In the diagram position, White has two ways to exploit the bishop's sortie:

1. to regain the pawn at the expense of his dark-squared bishop:

13.♙e3 ♜d7 14.♞d1 ♜c8 15.♙d4 e6 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.g4 ♙g6 18.♜xf6 ♞g8 with mutual chances. See **Game 38** Rybka-Houdini 2011.

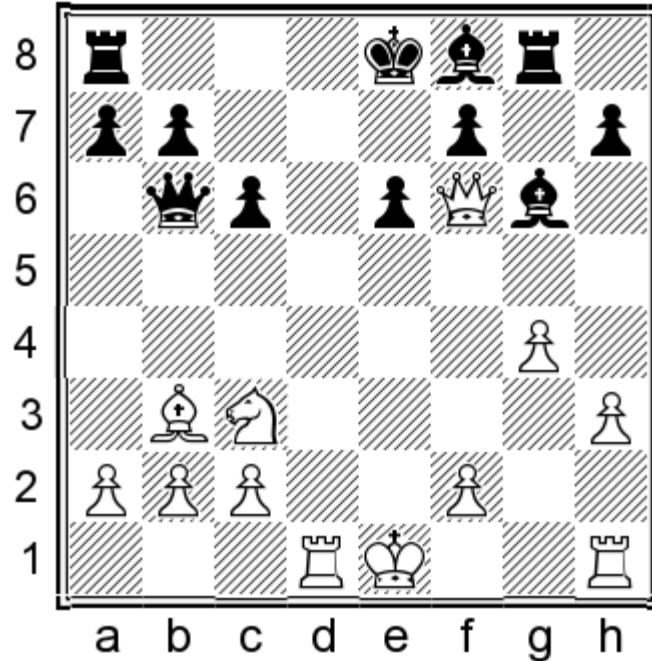
2. to sacrifice the bishop on e6. This idea appears in different versions and should allow White to keep the balance, but he must find a series of only moves while Black's defence is more or less obvious.

13.0-0 e6 14.♞fe1 ♙e7 15.♞ad1 ♜b6 16.g4 ♙g6 17.♙xe6! (17.h4 h6!) 17...fxe6 18.♞xe6



18...♞d8 (18...♙f7 19.g5!? ♞ad8 20.♞xe7 ♜xb2=) 19.♞de1 0-0 20.♞xe7 ♜xb2=.

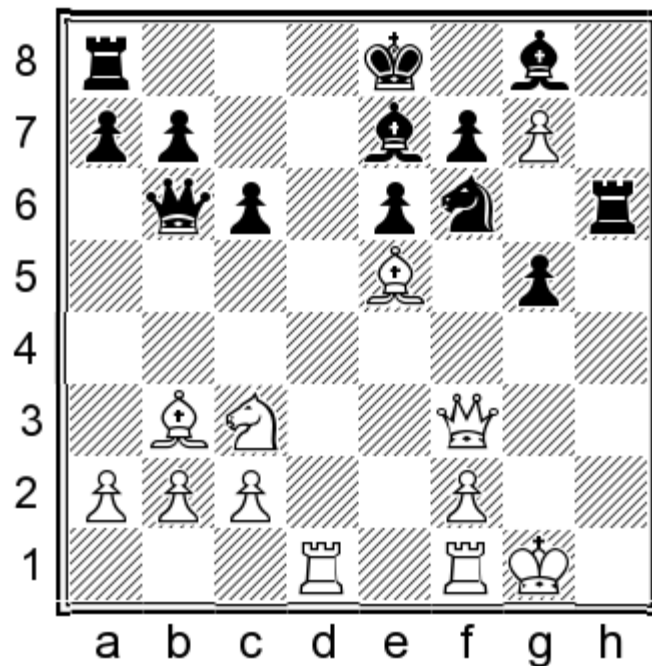
A curious combination of the two plans is 13.♖d1 ♜b6 14.♙e5 e6 15.g4 ♙g6 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♜xf6 ♜g8



18.♙xe6! ♙e7 19.♙d7+ ♜f8=, see the annotated **Game 37** Yildiz-Kosteniuk, Astana 2013. Black won it convincingly, but White missed a chance to equalize.

Finally, I would like to bring your attention to the following weird position:

13.♖d1 ♜b6 14.0-0 e6 15.g4 ♙g6 16.h4 h6 17.♙e5 ♙e7 18.h5 ♙h7 19.g5 hxg5 20.h6 ♙g8 21.hxg7 ♜h6∞



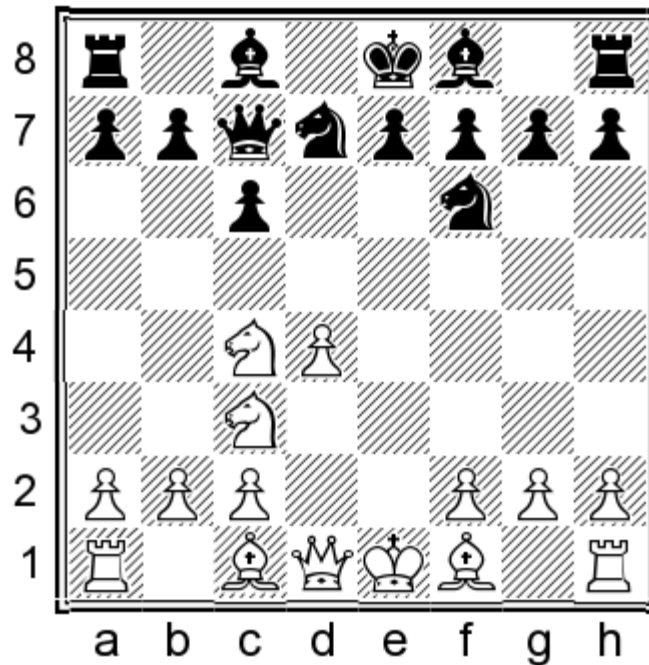
One possible threat is g5-g4-g3 to open the g-file.

We see that Bologan's 10.h3 does not pose any theoretical problems. Moreover, it leads to lively play with chances for both sides.

Unfortunately, that is not the case with 10.♘xb6!? where we have to follow a narrow path to the draw.

## Chapter 8. The Main Line 7.♘c4 Step by Step

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♗e5 ♘bd7 7.♘c4 ♗c7



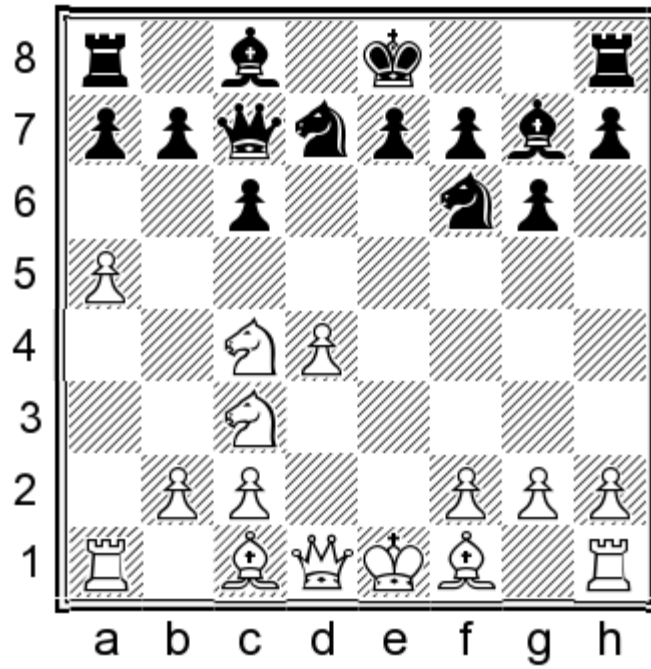
### 8.♗f3

Rare alternatives are:

a) 8.a4 is a decent positional move, which aims to cramp our queenside. We know from the previous chapter that in such positions we should fianchetto our bishop – 8...g6! (8...♘b6 9.♗e5 a5 10.♗f4 looks better for White.) 9.a5!?

This is the most consistent follow up of White's previous move, but he can always return to other common plans as 9.g3 ♘b6 (pursuing exchanges while the b6-square is still available!) 10.♗f4 (10.♘xb6 axb6 11.♗f4 ♗d8 12.♗g2 ♗g7 13.0-0 ♗e6 14.♞e1 ♗d7 15.♗e5= was level in Perunovic-Milanovic, Kragujevac 2011, and the players decided to split the point here. The b6-pawn makes the queen feel safe on d7 as it fences off annoying knight invasions on c5.) 10...♗d8 11.♗e5 ♘bd5 12.♗d2 a5 13.♗g2 ♘b4! 14.♗e2 ♗f5. The weakness on c2 forces White to part with his bishop since 15.0-0 ♗xc2 16.♗c1 ♗e4 17.♗xe4 ♘xe4 18.♗xb4 axb4 19.♘xc6 ♗b6 20.♗e5 ♗g7 21.♗f4 ♘d6 22.♞fc1 ♗a6! is absolutely safe for Black.

9...♗g7

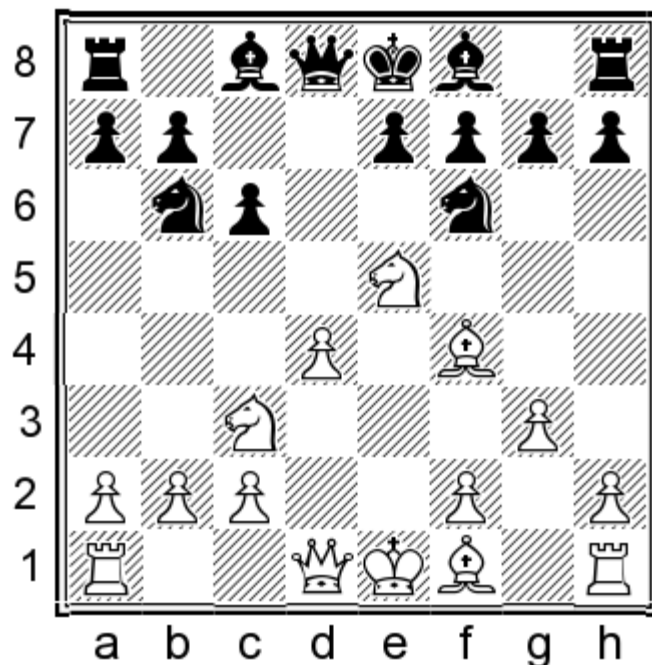


10.g3

I also looked at 10.♟f3 ♞f8! when Black gets counterplay against d4 and he should be fine, e.g. 11.♙f4 ♜d8 12.♙e5 (12.a6 ♞e6! 13.axb7 ♙xb7 14.♞a5 ♞xd4 15.♜d1 ♞h5! 16.♙e3 ♞b8! 17.g4 ♙a8! 18.♙xd4 ♙xd4 19.gxh5 ♜b6 20.♞c4 ♙xf2+ 21.♞d2 ♜d4+ 22.♞c1 c5∞) 12...♞e6 13.♞d1 0-0 14.♙e2 ♞d5 15.♙xg7 ♞xg7 16.0-0 ♞ef4 17.♞fe1 ♙f5 18.♞xd5 ♞xd5 19.c3 ♜c7= with a balanced game as the weakness of the a5- pawn limits White's options.

10...♞d5 11.♙g2 ♞7f6 12.♞xd5 ♞xd5 13.0-0 0-0 14.♞e5 ♙f5. Black has equalized in Baklan-Epishin, Porto San Giorgio 2009. The game went on 15.c4 ♙xe5!=. Instead, 15.c3!? ♞ad8! (15...♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♜xe5 17.♞e1 ♜d6 18.♙g5!↑ gives White a strong initiative) reaches a typical position where Black gradually equalizes with patient play. At an opportunity, he can push ...c5, but this breakthrough is always double-edged as it prolongs the diagonal to the g2-bishop.

b) 8.g3 kills two birds with one shot as it prepares the development of both bishops on good squares. I recommend 8...♞b6 9.♙f4 ♜d8 10.♞e5



and here 10...d5! is probably best as Black can follow up with ...c8-e6 and even ...f7-f6 in some positions, driving the d5 back.

Instead, 10...g6 11.g2 g7 12.0-0 0-0 13.e1 e6 14.d2 e8 15.ad1 c8 happened in Solleveld-Tiviakov, Netherlands 2014, but here I don't like so much the look of 16.e2!±, preventing exchanges taking place on c4 or g4 and leaving us with a relatively passive position.

11.f3

11.d5? xd5 12.g1 f6.

11.d2 xc3 12.xc3 d5 was pleasant for Black in Groszpeter-Babula, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1995.

11...e6 12.e4 xf4 13.xf4 f6=, Coenen-M.Gupta, Germany 2015.

c) 8.d5 throws off White's structural advantage, defined by the pawn pair d4 vs. c6. That might have been justified if he had a big lead in development, but the simple 8...xd5

8...b6 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.f3 dbd5 is also balanced.

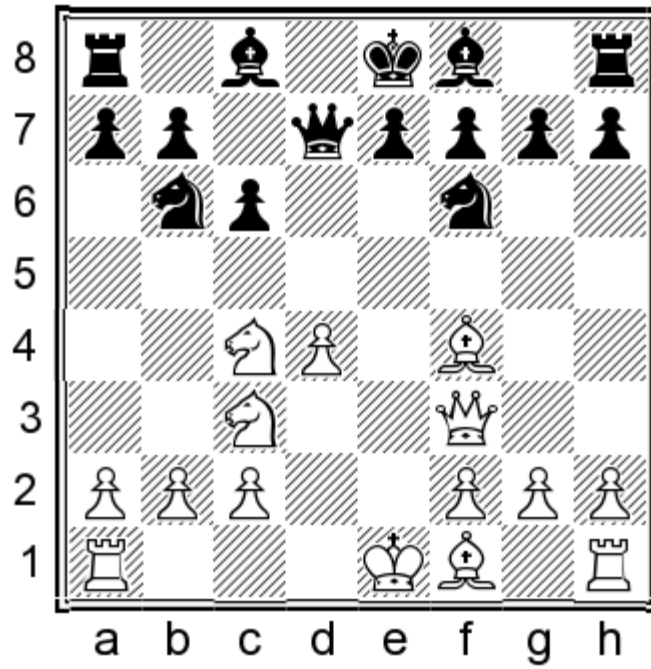
9.dxd5 dxd5 10.xd5 e6 actually helps Black developing. (Or 10...d6 11.g5 h6 12.e5 xe5 13.dxe5 a6=.) The game could take a fresh course after 11.f3 e7 12.f4 e5 13.g3 0-0 14.0-0-0 f6.

### 8...b6 9.f4

9.e5 allows us to develop our bishop with 9...e6! and after 10.f4 the best answer is 10...d8 11.0-0-0 g6. This way we complete successfully development and the firm grip on the d5-square protects us from tactical shots. See my **Game 33** Kotronias-Zatonskih, Port Erin 2003.

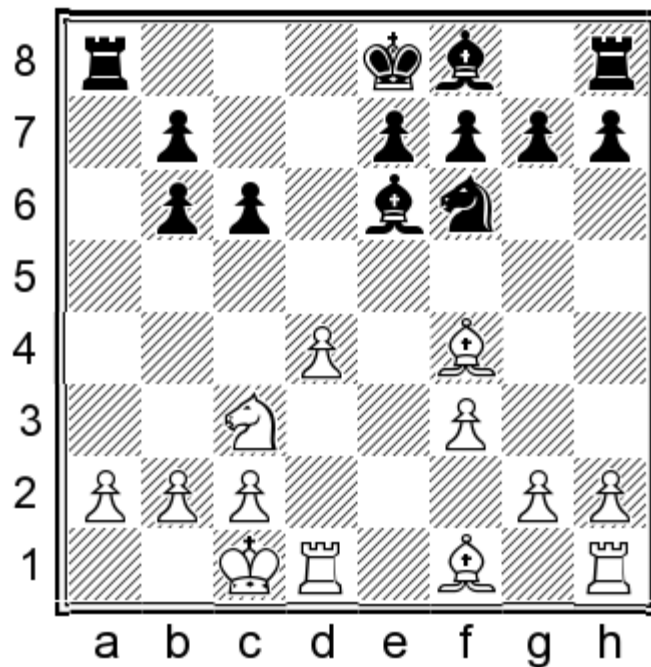
9...d7!?

9...d8 is often played by fellow GM Yannis Nikolaidis among others. It is fully possible, but I'd like to recommend the more active option.



This fresh idea was introduced in the game Brandenburg-Lysyj, Hengelo 2007, then Tiviakov took on it and further developed it. The reason behind the strange queen retreat is to meet White's most aggressive plan 10.0-0-0 by 10...♙g4. I will consider the following continuations from the diagram position: **A.** 10.0-0-0; **B.** 10.♙e5; **C.** 10.♘xb6; **D.** 10.♘e5 **E.** 10.h3.

**A. 10.0-0-0 ♙g4! 11.♙xg4 ♙xg4 12.f3 ♙e6 13.♘xb6**  
 (13.♘a5 0-0-0)  
**13...axb6**

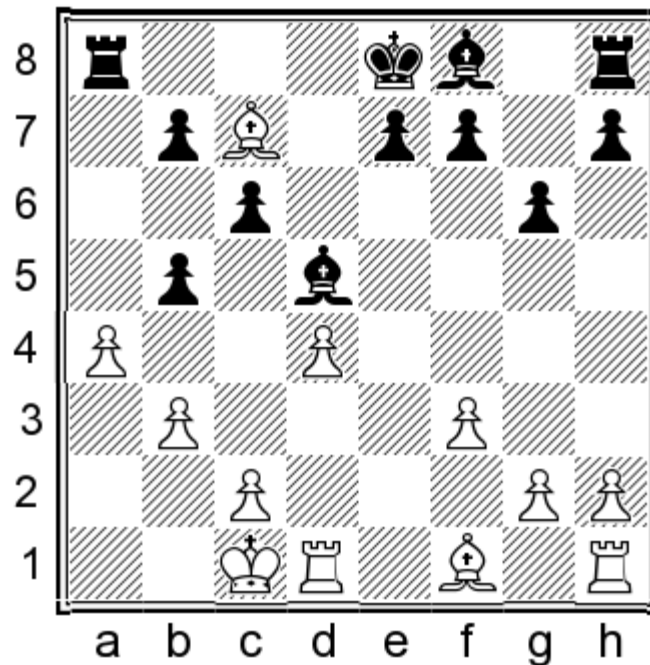


**14.♙c7!?**

This is the only chance to shake the blockade on d5. Instead, 14.a4 gives us a choice between plans with short or long castling:

a) 14...g6 15.b3

15.♙c7 ♘d5 16.♗xd5 ♙xd5 17.b3 b5! = is perfect for Black as the capture of the b5-pawn allows the following continuation:



18.axb5 ♖a1+ 19.♗d2 ♙h6+ 20.♗e1 ♖a2 21.♙d3 0-0 22.bxc6 ♖c8! 23.♙g3 (23.cxb7 ♙xb7 24.♙g3 ♖xc2! 25.♙xc2 ♖xc2) 23...♙xc6 with full compensation. The plan of ...♙c6-d7-f5, exchanging the key defender on d3, gives Black sufficient counter-chances.

15...♙g7 (15...0-0-0 switches to plan b) 16.♙c7 ♘d7 17.♗b2 0-0 18.♙e2 ♖fc8 and Black went on to hold in the correspondence game Crlie-Montgomery, ICCF 2014.

b) 14...0-0-0 Castling long insures the defence of the b6-pawn, but allows White to take a more active stand on the queenside as he does not have to think of a possible breakthrough with ...b5 – 15.♙d3 g6 16.♗e2 ♘d5 17.♙d2 ♙g7 18.c4 ♗c7 19.♙c3.

Both set-ups offer Black fair chances. Perhaps plan b is easier to play, but that holds true for both sides.

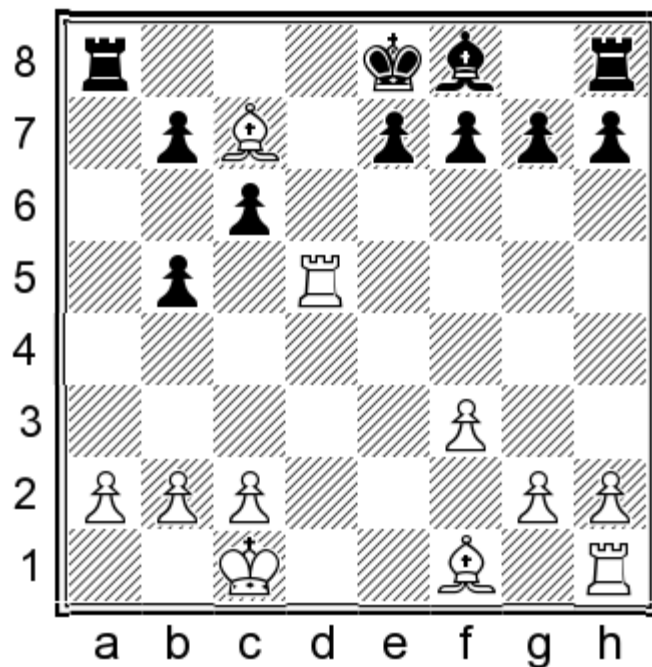
### 14...b5

At this point White has a nice tactical possibility to stir up some action.

### 15.d5! ♗xd5

Lysyj played in the source game 15...♙d7 16.a3 e6 17.dxe6 fxe6±, but two years later Tiviakov has shown a cool way to equalize. Be sure to keep the following line in mind!

### 16.♗xd5 ♙xd5 17.♖xd5



Oops! Should we resign?

**17...Rxc8!**

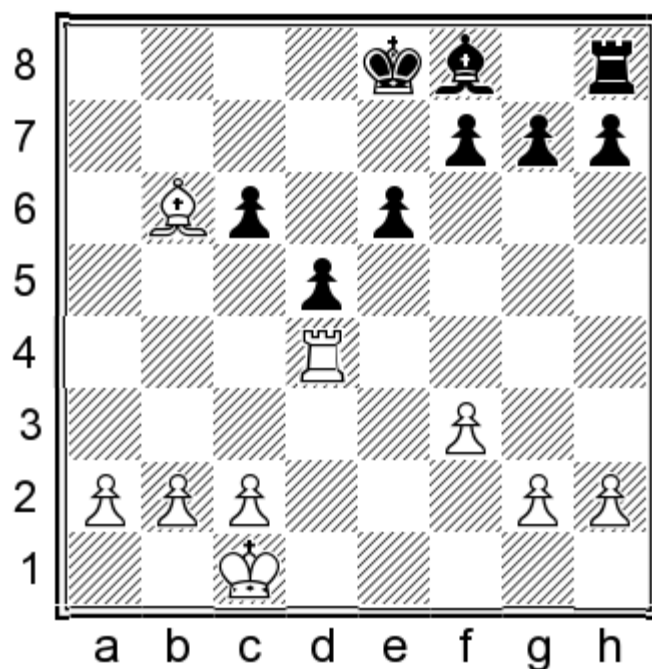
Not yet! The only move to save Black, but it is quite sufficient. Of course we would get mated if we captured the rook, but the insertion of the *intermezzo* 17... c8! brings something to interpose on c6:

**18. Qb6**

18. Qxb5 e6! 19. Rdd1 Rxc7= is more than satisfactory for Black.

Vokarev-Tiviakov, Bhubaneswar 2009, saw 18. Qa5 cxd5 19. Qxb5+ Rxc6 20. Rd1 e6 21. Rd3 Qd7 and Black made an easy draw. However, White is still hiding a trump up his sleeve.

**18...cxd5 19. Qxb5+ Rxc6 20. Rd1 e6 21. Qxc6+ bxc6 22. Rd4!**

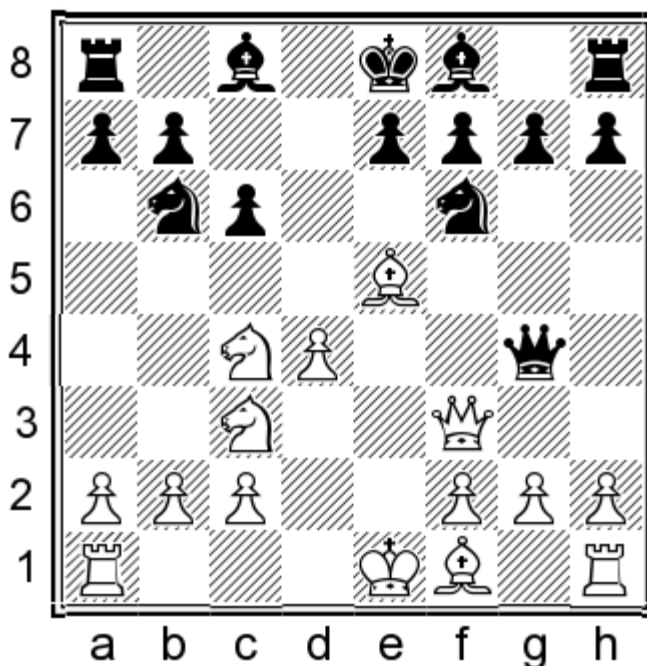


It looks that White's rook invades the seventh rank decisively, but the email game Cinca-Peschke, ICCF 2012, proves that Black remains the more active side:

**22...c5! 23.♖a4 ♕d7 24.♖a7+ ♕c6 25.♙a5 ♙d6 26.♖xf7 ♖a8 27.♙c3 ♙xh2 28.♖xg7 ♖xa2 29.♕b1 ♖a8 30.♖xh7 ♙f4**

Black's centralised king and the potential d-passer fully compensate for the pawn. The game went 31.♖h8 ♖a7 32.♖e8 ♕d6 33.♖d8+ ♕c6 34.♖c8+ ♕b5 35.♙f6 ♖f7 36.♙h4 d4 37.♖g8 c4 38.♙g5 ♙xg5 when suddenly my database record shows 0-1. In fact, it looks like a draw after the possible 39.♖xg5+ ♕c6 40.b3 cxb3 41.cxb3 ♕d6=.

**B. 10.♙e5 ♖g4!**



White has to lose important time and part of the harmony of his position in order to avoid queen trade:

**11.♖e3**

11.♖xg4 ♙xg4= hardly deserves much attention.

**11...♗fd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♖d2 ♙f5!**

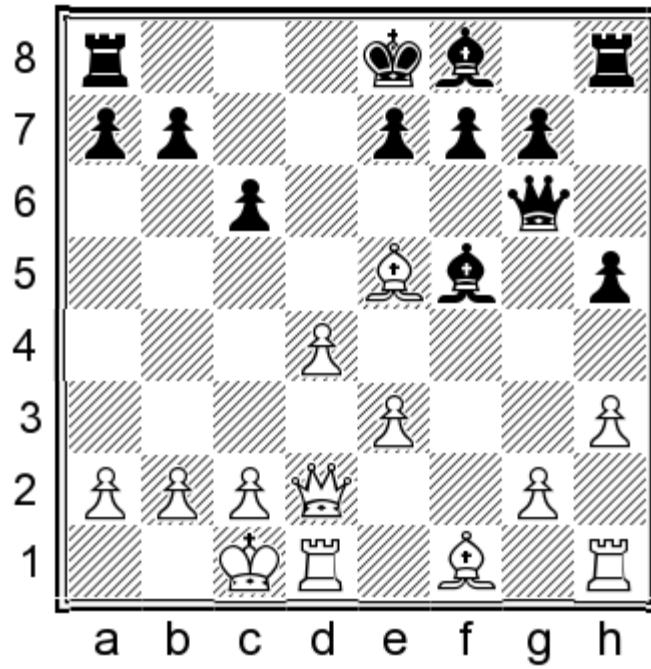
Tiviakov beat Swiercz with:

13...h5?!. It is an overambitious move, with a twofold purpose. It deprives the e5-bishop of a retreat to g3 by creating the threat of h4, but most importantly, it establishes a base on f5 for the black pieces. However, it wastes yet another tempo and White's lead in development becomes overwhelming. Swiercz rightly felt that the position was ripe for sacrifices, but he missed the best answer:

14.♙d3!

Instead, he shed a pawn with 14.♙e2?! ♖xg2 15.0-0-0 f6 16.h4?? fxe5 17.♗xe5 g6 18.♕b1 ♙h6-+.

Note that 14.h3 ♖g6 15.0-0-0 ♙f5 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.fxe3



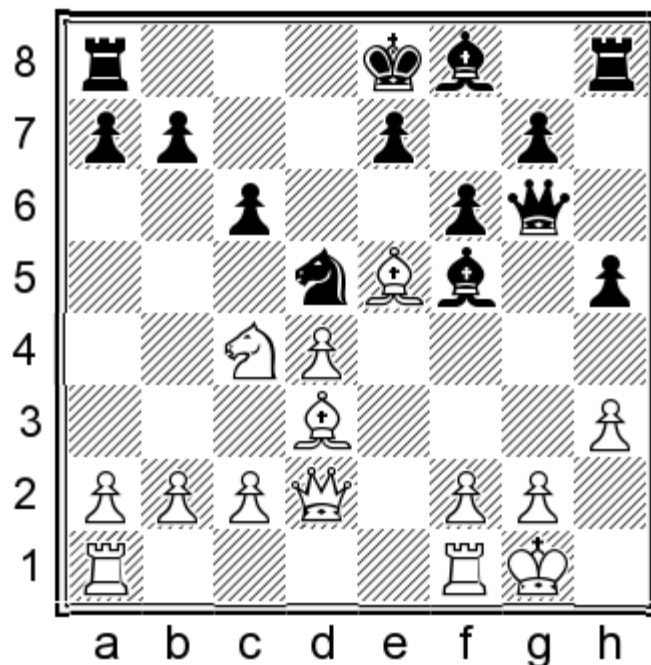
17...f6! 18.♔h2 e6 19.♙c4 is too slow. Black can now gain space and attacking possibilities on the queenside by playing 19...b5!? 20.♙b3 a5 21.a4 bxa4 22.♙xa4 ♔f7!→. White's king is the more exposed of the two as a well prepared ...c6-c5 is going to open new files on the queenside. His black counterpart is well-covered at f7 behind his pawn shield, while at the same time Black's control over e4 does not allow White to open lines for his own attack by pushing his e-pawn.

14...f6

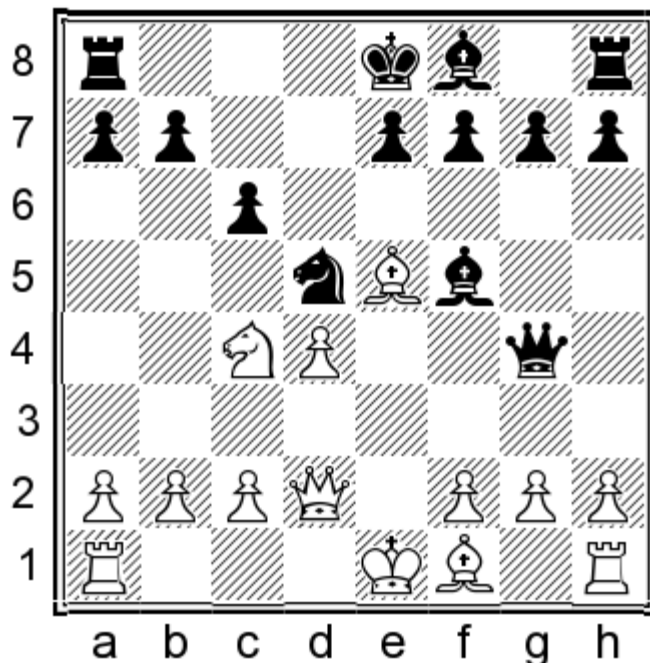
14...♖xg2? is bad since the d3-bishop controls the retreat square g6. After 15.0-0-0, 15...f6 would be horrible due to 16.♜hg1 ♖h3 17.♙g6+.

14...♙f5 15.0-0 ♙xd3 16.♖xd3 ♘f4 17.♙xf4 ♖xf4 allows Black to trade two minor pieces, but the remaining White's forces exert full control over the centre. It is possible to launch a direct attack with 18.g3!? ♖c7 19.f4 followed up by 20.f5.

15.0-0 ♙f5 16.h3 ♖g6



Sergey Kasparov suggests this line claiming that it leads to “quieter play”, but 17.♔xf5 ♚xf5 18.♔g3 is obviously better for White due to his imminent pressure down the e-file.



### 14.f3

After 14.♔e2 ♚xg2 15.0-0-0 ♚h3 or 15...f6 16.♔g3 h5, White is yet to prove that his initiative is worth a pawn.

### 14...♚g6 15.0-0-0

Or 15.♘e3 ♘xe3 16.♚xe3 e6 17.0-0-0 ♔xc2 18.♞d2 ♔b1 19.♚b3 0-0-0=.

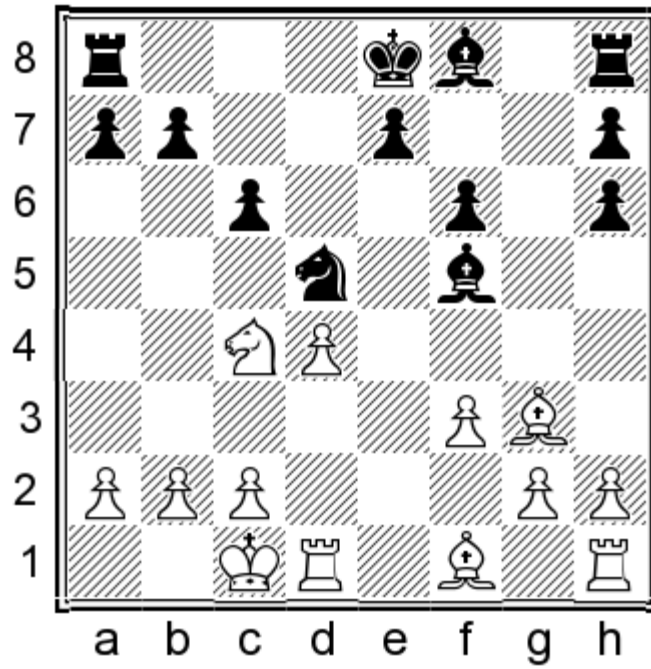
### 15...f6

15...h5!?, refraining from making weaknesses on the light squares, may be the best move here. Then 16.♘e3 ♘xe3 17.♚xe3 ♔xc2 18.♞d2 ♔f5 looks too risky, but Black's counterplay turns out to be amazingly strong after 19.d5 a6 20.d6 exd6 21.♔xg7+ ♔d7 22.♔xh8 ♔h6.

### 16.♔g3 ♚h6

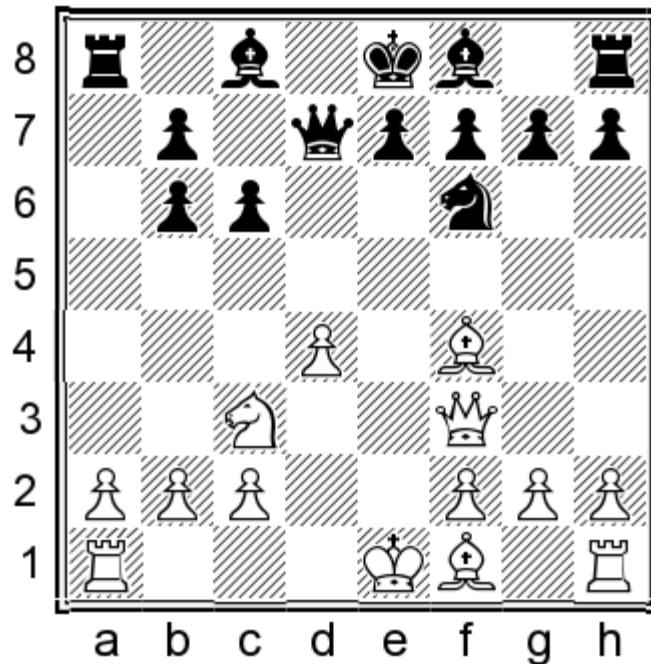
S. Kasparov's suggestion 16...h5 is dubious owing to 17.♘e3 ♘xe3 18.♚xe3 ♔xc2 19.♞d2 ♔f5 20.♔c4 ♚h6 21.♔f4 g5 22.♚b3.

### 17.♚xh6 gxh6



Black has solved the opening problems. Play might continue 18. ♕f2 h5 19. g3 e6 20. ♖e1 ♔f7= or 18. ♕d3 ♕xd3 19. ♖xd3 h5 20. ♘a5 h4! =.

**C. 10. ♘xb6!? axb6**



**11.0-0-0**

The advance 11. d5 leads White nowhere after 11... ♘xd5 12. 0-0-0 e6 13. ♘xd5 13. ♕b5 ♕e7! 14. ♖xd5 exd5 15. ♘xd5 ♖xa2 16. ♖b1 0-0. 13... exd5 14. ♗g3 f6. Black's position is as solid as the rock of ages and his king may find shelter on f7, if needed. 11. ♕d3 bars the d-file and basically does not threaten anything. That gives us time for 11... g6 On the safer side, we could trade queens with 11... ♗g4 12. ♗xg4 ♕xg4 13. 0-0 e6 14. a4 ♔d7! 15. ♕e5 ♕h5 16. f4

♘g4.

12.0-0 ♗g7 13.♙e5 0-0.

11.♙e2 is a bit more logical since it controls g4 and defends the queen at f3. The latter allows White to meet 11...♗g4 by 12.d5 although 12...♗xf3 13.♙xf3 ♗d7 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 15.♕e2 e6 is still fairly equal. Again, 11...g6 is possible – 12.d5!? (12.♙e5 ♗g7 13.♘e4?! 0-0; 12.0-0 ♗g7 13.♖ad1 0-0 14.a3 ♗f5 15.♙d3 ♗a5 16.h3 ♙e6=) 12...♗g7 13.0-0 0-0 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♙f3 ♙d7! 17.♖he1 e6=.

11.♖d1 ♗g4 12.♗e3 (12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 13.f3 ♙f5=; 12.♙e2 ♗xf3 13.♙xf3 e6=) 12...♗e6 13.♙d3 ♗xe3+ 14.fxg3 b5 15.a3 g6 is fine for Black.

### 11...♗d8

Now Black must restore the coordination of his forces and the queen retreat is the appropriate way to do so. Fortunately for Black, the threat of ...♙c8-g4 gains valuable time.

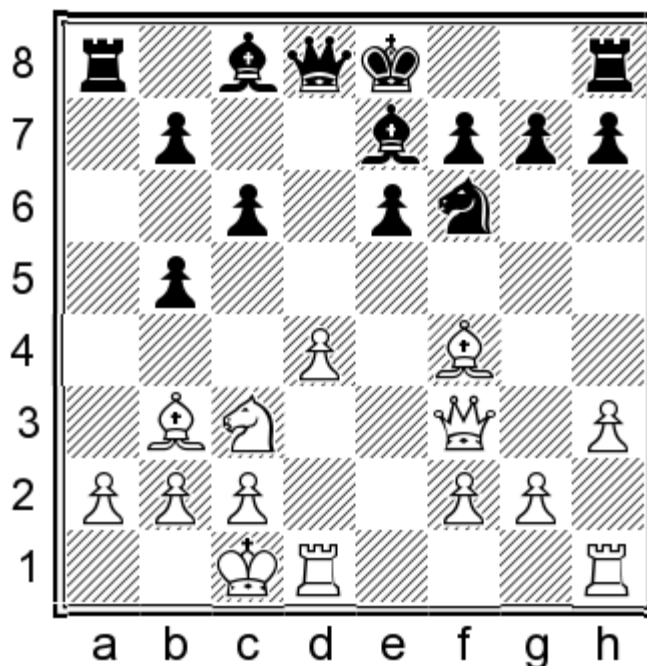
No one has tried 11...♘d5 12.♘xd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 cxd5 14.a3 ♙f5 15.h4 ♖c8 16.c3 h5. Frankly, I cannot imagine a way for White to break through Black's defence. Moreover, this is a simple and straightforward approach. Still, the text is certainly more enterprising. Black aims to shift the enemy queen first in order to keep the current pawn structure which offers more chances for active counterplay.

Tiviakov used 11...e6 against me, but Black's position is rather passive and difficult to handle mostly because the queen on d7 does not fit in well with his set-up. See **Game 34** Kotronias-Tiviakov, Vrachati 2011.

### 12.♗e3

Ignoring the skewer by 12.d5 does not pay any dividends in view of 12...♙g4 13.dxc6 ♙xf3 14.♖xd8+ ♕xd8! 15.c7+ ♕c8 16.gxf3 e6 17.♙c4 ♙e7 18.♖d1 ♘h5 19.♙e3 ♙c5 20.♘b5 ♖a4 21.♙b3 ♙xe3+ 22.fxg3 ♖a5 23.♘d6+ ♕xc7 24.♘xf7 ♖e8 25.♙c4 ♖e7 26.♘d6 ♖e5 27.♘b5+ ♕c8 28.♘d6+ ♕c7=. This variation looks almost forced from White's point of view, but Black has probably more ways to force equality.

After 12.h3 e6, Black has practically won a tempo as the queen stands much better on d8. Play could continue 13.♙c4 (13.♙e5 b5!) 13...b5 14.♙b3 ♙e7



This is a rich and interesting position with mutual chances. Black can always play ...f6 to protect his king. I have

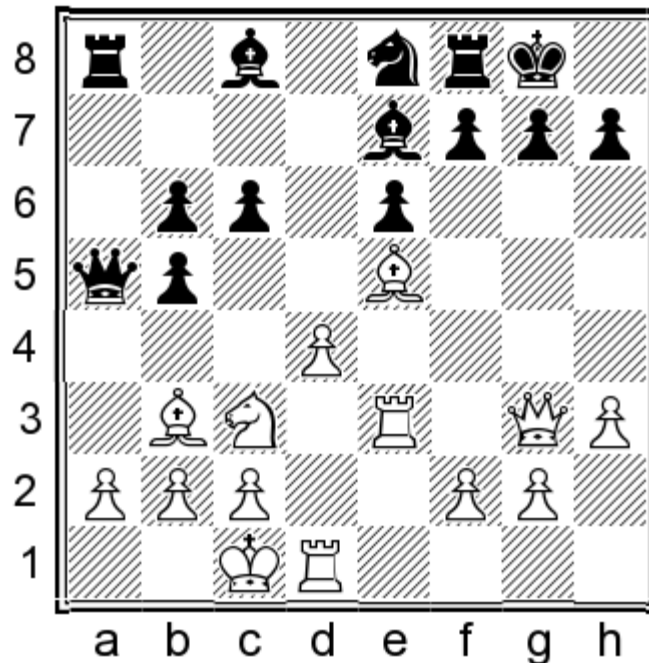
analysed:

15.♙e5

15.♙b1 ♘d5 16.♙e5 0-0 17.♘e4 f6 18.♙h2 b6 19.♞he1 (19.g4 ♙b7 20.♞he1 c5! 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.c4 bxc4 23.♙xc4 ♞a4! 24.b3 f5!! 25.bxa4 fxe4 26.♞b3 ♞a8∞ is a total mess.) 19...♞e8 20.g4 ♙b7 is wild, but I do not believe Black is worse.

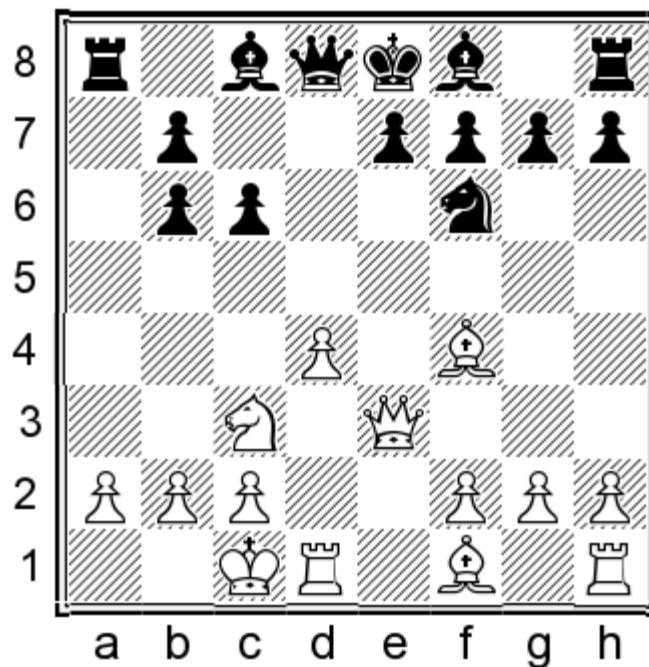
15...0-0 16.♞g3! ♘h5 17.♞g4 ♘f6 18.♞g5 ♘e8!

Now that our queen is eyeing a5, this is not bad. 18...h6?! 19.♞g3 ♘h5 20.♞f3 ♘f6 21.g4 would be weaker. 19.♞g3 ♞a5! (19...f6 20.♙f4±) 20.♞he1 b6 21.♞e3



21...c5 22.d5 c4 23.d6 ♙f6 24.♙xc4 bxc4 25.d7 ♙xd7 26.♞xd7 ♞d8∞. There are other lines of course, but Black's general plan is to find the best timing for the break ...c6-c5.

In the final position, play could go on 27.♞xd8 ♙xd8 28.a3 b5 29.♙d4 b4 30.axb4 ♞xb4 31.♞e5 (31.♘e4 ♞a5 32.♙b1 f5∞) 31...♙c7 (31...♙f6 32.♞c5 ♞b7 33.♘e4 ♙xd4 34.♞xd4±) 32.♞c5 ♞b7 33.♞e4 h6∞.



## 12...♗d5!

Tiviakov had mentioned 12...e6?! in *Chess Informant*, but he probably missed 13.d5!! ♕c5 (13...♗xd5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♕b5+ ♕d7 16.♖xd5+-) 14.♚e5! ♚e7 15.d6 ♚d8 16.♕g5 h6 17.♕h4 and White has the better game although Black could resist with 17...♖a5□.

## 13.♗xd5 ♚xd5 14.c4

14.a3 would give us time to prevent c4 for good with 14...b5! 15.♕d3

After 15.♕e2 ♕f5 16.♕f3 ♚c4 17.♕e4 ♕xe4 18.♚xe4 e6⇒, I do not see any problems for us, all the more so as ...b5-b4 is an annoying possibility.

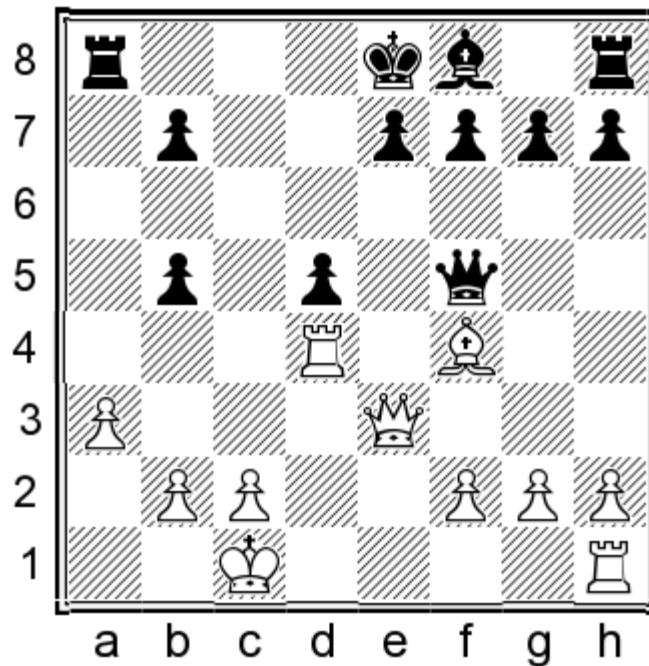
15...♕f5

Our queen has nothing to do on a2.

16.♕xf5 ♚xf5 17.d5!

I would play this even with eyes shut! Quieter alternatives hide no venom.

17...cxd5 18.♖d4! and a sharp situation has arisen:



a) 18...g5 is a nontrivial way to activate the kingside pieces quickly. Its long-term drawbacks are that the king remains in the centre. That forces us to accept endgames which may be drawish, but without winning chances for us.

19.♕xg5 ♖g8 20.h4

Or 20.♕f4 ♖xg2 21.♕g3 ♕g7 22.♖e1 ♚f6∞.

20...h6 21.♕f4

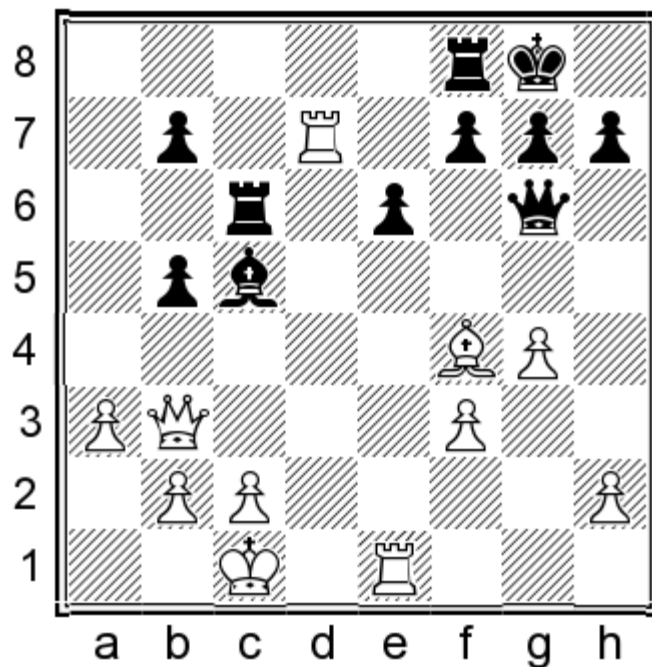
21.♕xh6 ♖c8 22.♖d2 ♖xg2 23.♕xf8 ♗xf8 24.♗b1 e6 25.h5 ♗g7 26.♚b6 ♚f4 27.♖e2 (27.♖hd1 b4 28.axb4 ♗h7∞) 27...b4∞ is extremely complicated. Black does not seem to be any worse as the h-pawn covers his king.

The ending arising after 21.g4 ♚e6! 22.♚xe6 fxe6 23.♕d2 ♖a4! seems unclear, too: 24.♕b4 ♕g7 25.♖d3 ♕e5!

26.f3 h5 27.g5 ♕d6 28.c3 (28.♕xd6 exd6 29.♖b3 b4 30.♖xb4 ♖xb4 31.axb4 ♖f8 32.♖h3 ♖f4 33.c3 b5∞) 28...♗f7 29.♖e1 ♖c8∞.

21...b4!? A dynamic pawn sacrifice, designed to trade queens. After 22.♖xb4 e5! (22...♖c8? 23.♚b3!) 23.♖d4! f6 24.♕g3 ♕c5 25.♚d3 ♚xd3 26.♖d3 ♖d8 27.♖hd1 d4∞ Black has good compensation thanks to his active rooks. For example, 28.♖e1 ♗f7 29.f4 exf4 30.♕xf4 ♖xg2 31.♖b3 b6 32.♕xh6 ♖h8 33.♕f4 ♖xh4 34.♕c7 ♖h8=.

b) 18...♖c8!? 19.♚b3 e6 (19...♖c6 20.g4 transposes) 20.g4 ♚g6 21.♖e1 ♖c6 22.♖xd5 ♕c5 23.f3 0-0 24.♖d7



Black's heavy pieces will generate a lot of threats based on White's weak first rank. Such a statement might sound strange, but White's king cannot hide through b1-a2 because of ...b5-b4. It suffices to trade a pair of rooks and break through the kingside. The best shaping of all this is:

24...h5! (making a *luft* besides everything else) 25.h3

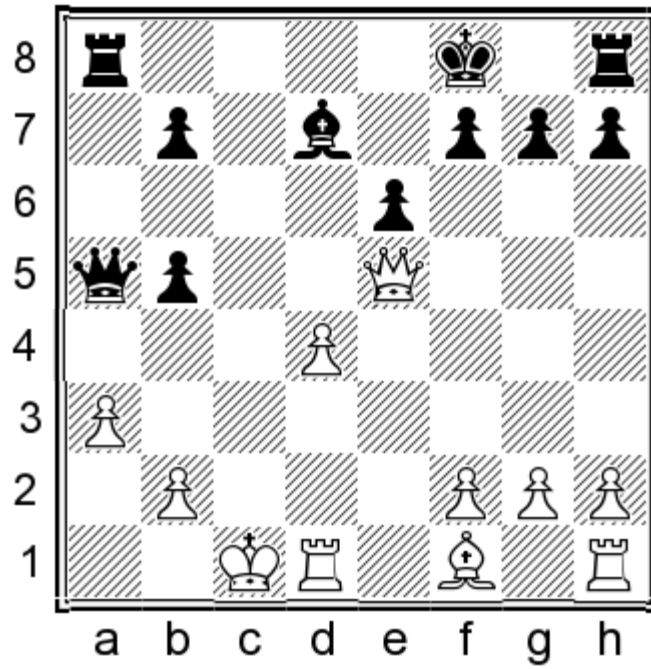
25.gxh5 ♖xh5 26.♖xb7 b4! 27.axb4 ♕f2 28.♞e5 ♗h4 29.♞e4 ♜d8! shapes the general talk of the above paragraph into variations.

25...♗f6!?∞ planning 26.♙g3 ♜d8 27.♞ed1 ♜dc8 28.♚b1 b4! 29.axb4 ♕f8 30.♞1d2 ♞c4.

I'm not sure this is the best move as Black has another enticing alternative – 25...♞fc8, intending 26.♚b1 b4. I'll leave the analysis to you. The position is very tangled and very Sicilian! Beyond doubt, line b is the perfect way to face your opponent with difficult tasks.

#### 14...♗e6

This looks more simple and straightforward than 14...♗a5 15.a3 b5! 16.cxb5 cxb5 17.♙d6 e6 18.♙xf8 ♚xf8 19.♗e5 ♙d7

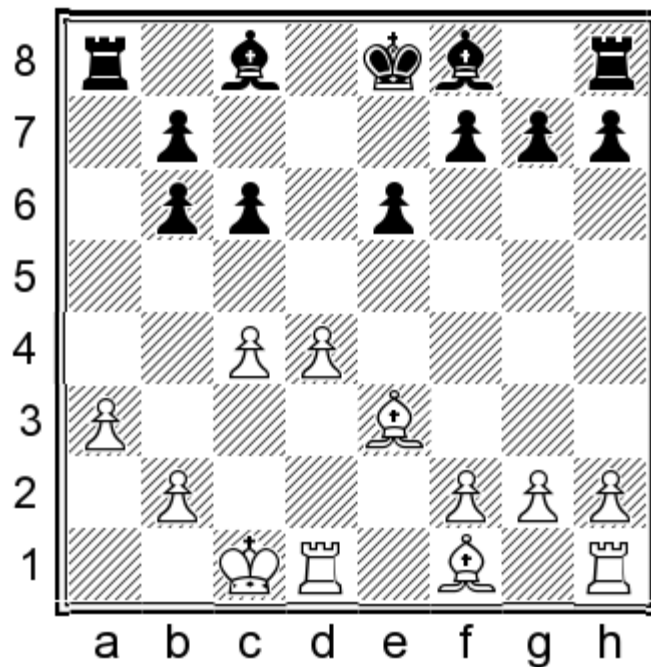


I have extensively analysed this position and found that it leads by force to a slightly better endgame for White which should be drawn. See **Game 35** Pommrich-Gudichsen, ICCF 2012. It is a solid backup line of our repertoire.

### 15.a3

White has no reason to keep the queens as opposite castles are always double-edged. For instance, 15. ♖b3 g6 16.a3 ♘g7 17. ♗xb6 ♗e4 18. ♙e3 0-0∞.

15... ♗xe3+ 16. ♙xe3 e6



### 17.d5

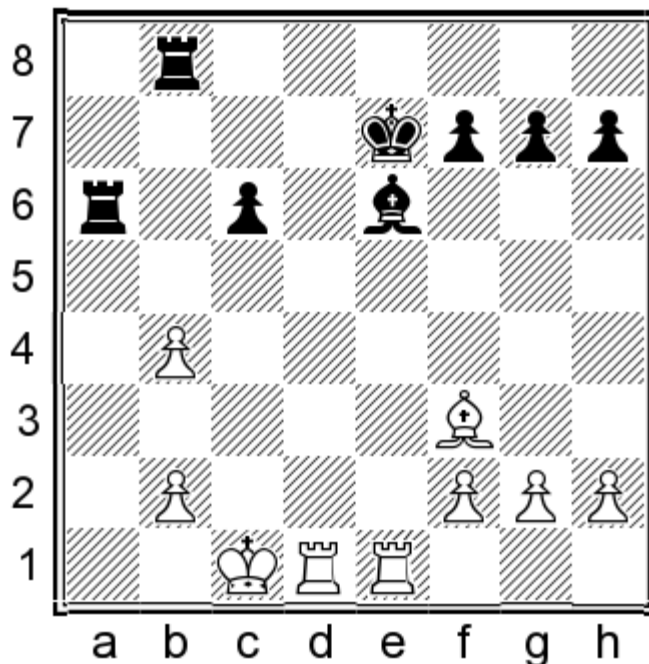
Here is the last chance for White to try to rip dividends from his better development. 17. ♙e2 ♘d6 18.h4 ♙d7 is

obviously harmless as Black would be already able to meet d5 by ...exd5 followed up by ...c5.

17...exd5 18.cxd5 b5 19.♙e2

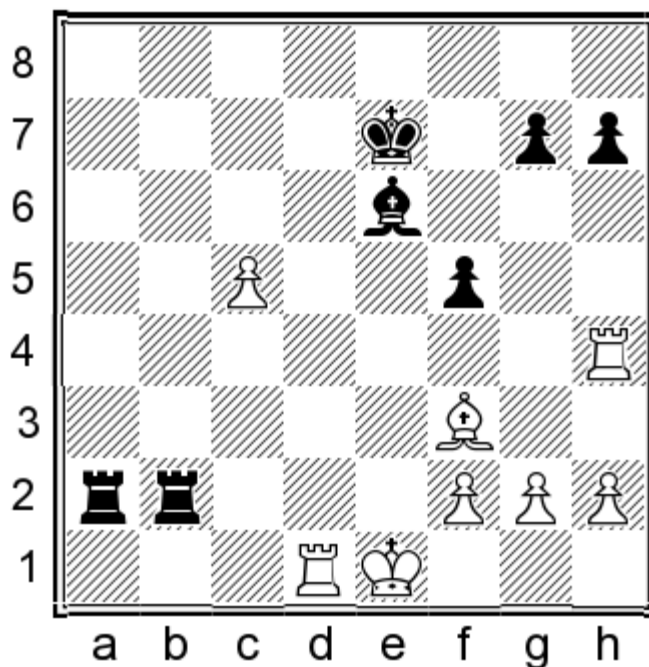
19.♙d3 ♙e7 20.♞he1 0-0 21.♙d4 ♞fe8 defends everything. 22.d6 is then harmless due to 22...♙g5+ 23.♚c2 ♙e6=.

19...b4! 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.♙f3 ♞a6 22.♞he1 ♙e6 23.♙g5 ♙e7 24.♙xe7 ♚xe7 25.axb4 ♞b8!



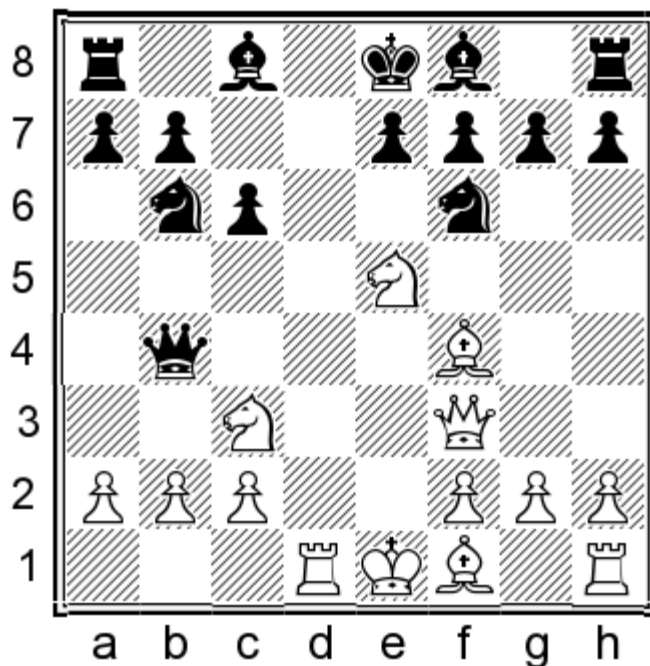
This is a critical position for the 14...♞e6 line. White has won a pawn, but we have a forced draw. The key point is that White cannot defend b4 with 26.♞d4 in view of 26...c5!. This hit is effective in the main line, too:

26.♞e4 f5 27.♞h4 c5! 28.bxc5 ♞a1+ 29.♚d2 ♞xb2+ 30.♚e1 ♞aa2



I cannot refrain from adding another diagram here! It is rare to see a full second rank domination. Black is absolutely safe. An illustrative line could run 31.♞xh7 ♙c4 32.♞c1 ♙d3 33.♞xg7+ ♚f6 34.♞d7 ♙e4 35.♞cd1 ♙xf3 36.♞1d6+ ♚e5 37.gxf3 ♞xf2 38.♞d2 ♞xh2=.

D. 10.♘e5 ♖xd4 11.♞d1 ♜b4



Now the mundane 12.♙e2?! g6! 13.♘d3 (13.♙d2 ♜c5) 13...♜a5 is in Black's favour, so White should probably try:

**12.♙e3**

with the cunning idea of meeting 12...g6? by 13.♙xb6 ♜xb6 (13...axb6 14.♘xc6) 14.♙c4±.

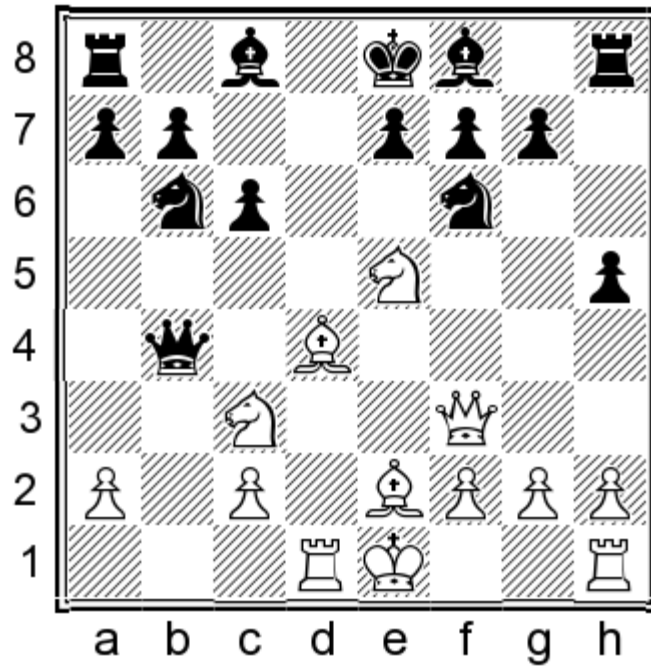
However, we have a pleasant choice between two other moves – the safest 12...♜a5! and the provocative 12...♜xb2.

The former one allows to play normal chess in a balanced position and it would be my first weapon.

Capturing the second pawn is not too risky, but it proclaims that the game enters a purely calculating stage where your positional skill might have little impact. I have reached in my analysis a lot of forced draws by perpetual.

**12...♜a5!?**

12...♜xb2 13.♙d4 ♜b4 14.♙e2 h5! is given as dynamically balanced by S.Kasparov.



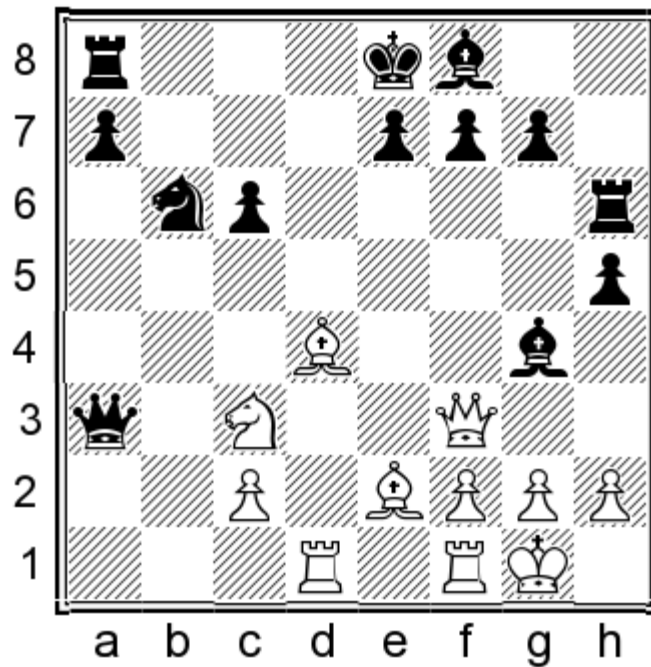
Black's last move is annoying for White in view of the threat ♖c8-g4. It also enables an activation of the h8-rook via h6 in some variations. I would like to take this line a little further:

15. ♖xc6

15.a3! ♜a5 ♘a5 ♙ 16. ♖xc6 bxc6 17. ♗xf6 transposes and it is perhaps the better move order.

15...bxc6 16.a3!

16. ♗xf6?! ♗d7 17. ♗d4 ♜h6! favours Black – 18.a3 (18.0-0 ♗g4 19. ♜g3 ♗xe2 20. ♖xe2 ♗d6 21.c3 ♜c4 22. ♖f4 c5) 18...♜xa3! 19.0-0 ♗g4! when I cannot see full compensation for White.



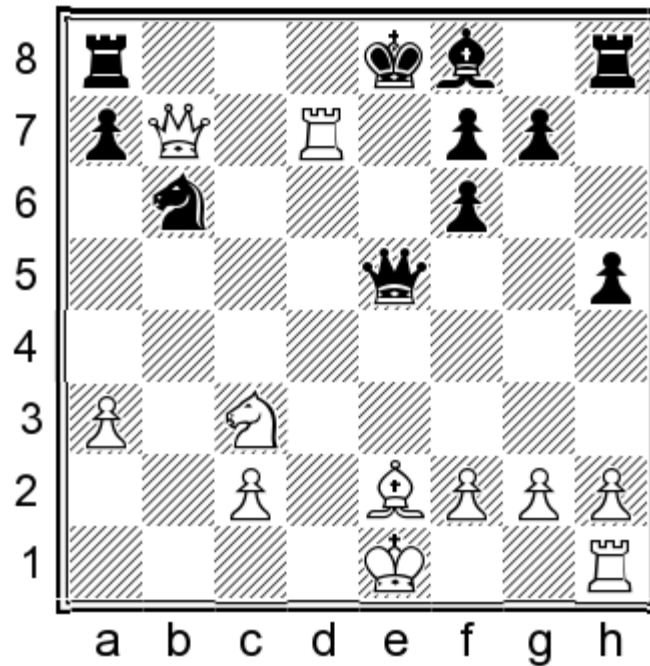
The most likely continuation is 20. ♜d3 (20. ♜f4 ♗xe2 21. ♖xe2 ♖d5 22. ♜f5 ♗d8 is also better for Black.)

20...♗d8! and Black is better in all lines, e.g. 21.f3 e5 (21...e6 22.fxg4 ♗xd4 23. ♜f3 ♗f6 24. ♜xc6+ ♗e3 ♗c8 23. ♖h1 [23. ♗xb6 ♗xd1 24. ♗xd1 axb6 25. ♜xe5+ ♜e7 26. ♜b8 ♜b7 27. ♜e5+ ♗e6 28. ♜f4 (28. ♜xh5? ♜e7! 29. ♖e4 ♗h6 30. ♜g5 ♜xg5 31. ♖xg5 ♗c5+)] 28...♗e7) 23...♗e6 24. ♗xb6 ♗xd1 25. ♗xd1 axb6 26. ♜xb6 (26. ♗c4 ♗c5) 26...♗d6! 27. ♜b8 (27. ♖d5 cxd5! 28. ♗b5+ ♖e7! 29. ♜c7+ ♗d7 30. ♗xd7 ♖f6!!) 27.h ♗xd1+ 28. ♖xd1 ♖d8

29. ♖xe5 ♜c5 ♞.

16... ♜a5 17. ♙xf6 ♙d7!

After 17... ♜f5?! 18. ♜xc6+ ♙d7 19. ♜b7! exf6 20. ♜xd7 ♜e5,

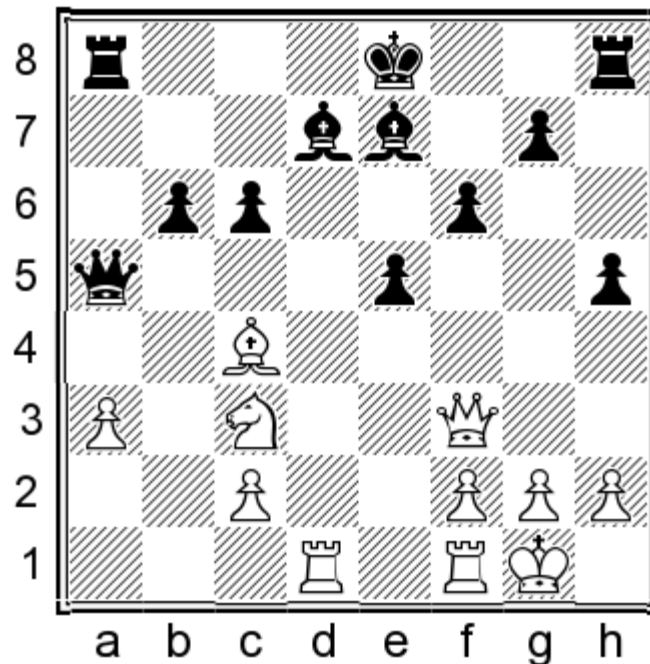


White has the brilliant 21. ♜d4!!↑ (21. ♜c6 ♜xd7 22. ♜xa8+ ♜b8 23. 0-0 ♙d6=; 21. ♜d3 ♙c5=), intending 21... ♙e7 (21... ♜xd4? 22. ♙b5+ ♜d8 23. 0-0 ♙d6 24. ♜d1 ♜c5 25. ♜xf7±) 22. ♜d5 ♜f8 23. ♜xb6 ♜a5+ 24. ♜d2 axb6 25. 0-0 ♜a7 26. ♜d7 (26. ♜c6 g6 27. ♜d7 ♜xa3) 26... ♜xb7 27. ♜xb7 g6 28. ♙c4±.

18. ♙d4 e5 19. ♙xb6 axb6 20. 0-0

20. ♜xd7 ♜xd7 21. ♜xf7+ ♙e7 22. 0-0 ♜xc3 23. ♜d1+ ♜c8 24. ♜xe7 ♜c5 25. ♜d6 ♜b8 26. ♜d8+ is a perpetual.

20... ♙e7 21. ♙c4 f6∞

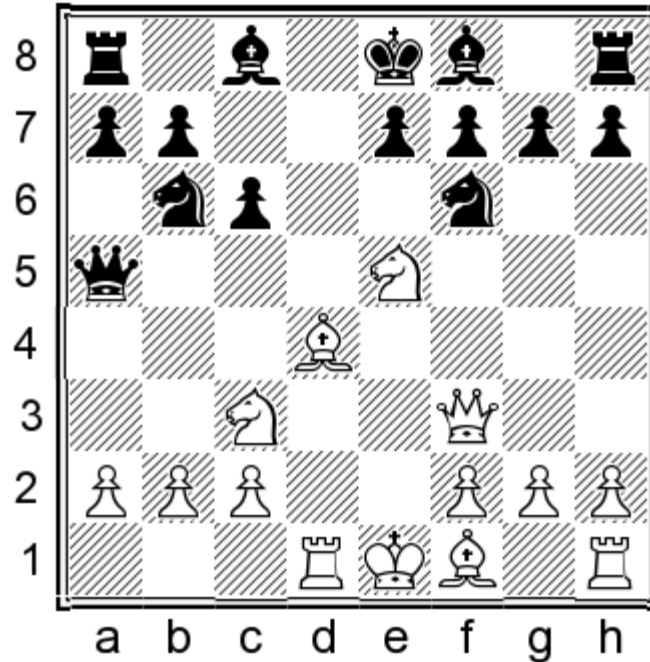


White certainly has good compensation for his pawn and in a practical game Black may feel a bit uncomfortable as his king will never find a safe haven. Objectively, White has a number of forced draws based on Black's weak light squares.

### 13.♙d4

13.♙g3 ♖bd5 14.♙d4 ♙f5±;

13.♙f4 e6 14.♙g5!? (14.♙d2 ♖bd5 15.♖xd5 ♙xd5∞) 14...♖bd5 15.♙d4 ♙c7 16.♙d3 h6 17.♙g3 ♙b4 18.a3 (or 18.0-0 19.♖xd5 cxd5) 18...♙xc3+ 19.bxc3 0-0 20.c4 ♖h5 21.♙f3 ♖df4 22.♙c3 f6 23.g3 ♖xd3= should be about equal after 24.♙xd3 while 24.♖xd3? ♙f7 25.g4 does not win a piece due to 25...e5 26.gxh5 e4.

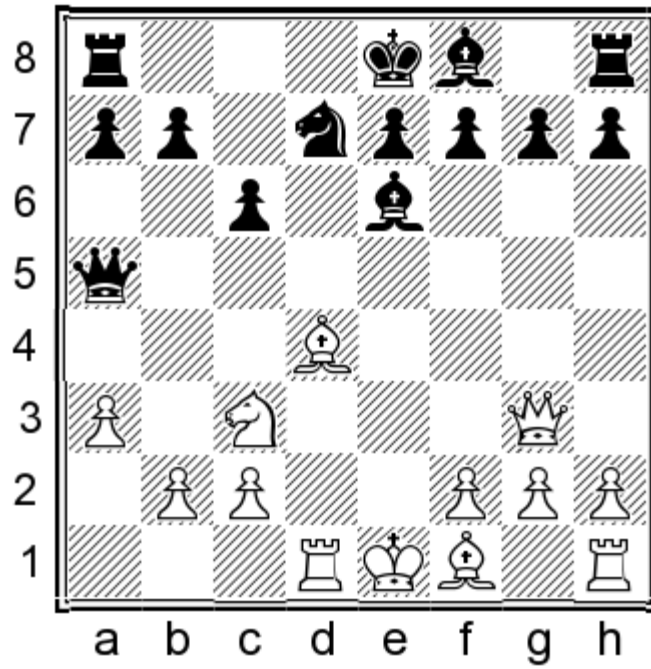


### 13...♙e6! 14.a3!

White must be careful as his pieces would be hanging after the “normal” 14.♙e2 ♙d8± threatening ...♙xd4. The point of 14.a3 is the funny mate 14...♙d8?? 15.b4 ♙xa3 16.♖d5 ♙xf3 17.♖c7#.

### 14...♖bd7! 15.♖xd7

White is balancing on the edge. 15.♙g3 ♖xe5 16.♙xe5 ♖d7 17.♙d4 does not give him full compensation.



Once again the thematic 17...h5! solves all our problems.

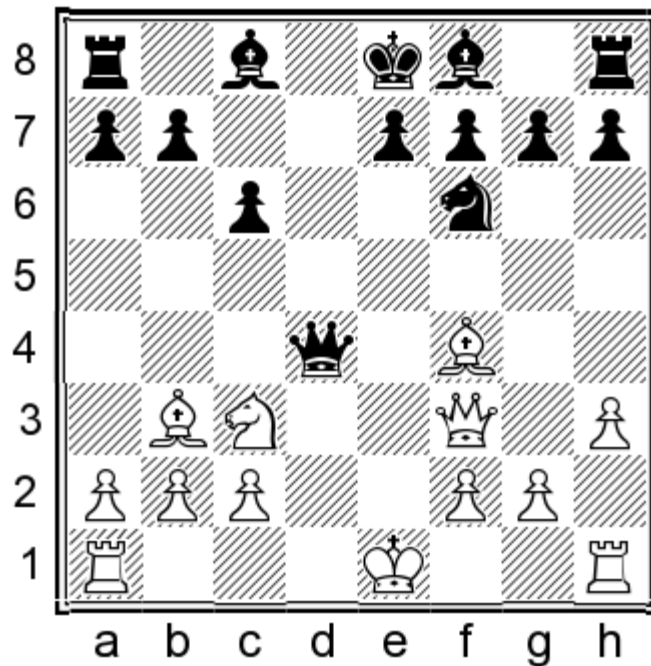
15...♙xd7 16.♚g3 0-0-0 17.♙e2 ♘e4 18.♚f4 e5!

Black already has some initiative.

**E. 10.h3 ♘xc4 11.♙xc4 ♚xd4**

This pawn sac is a brainchild of Bologan. Black should plunge into the complications without hesitation. Why not to grab a central pawn with tempo?!

12.♙b3



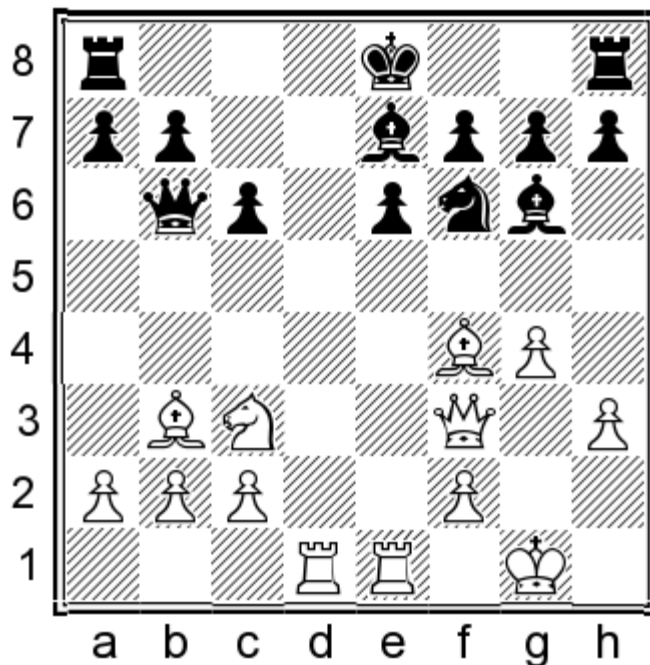
12...♙f5!?

Developing the bishop outside the pawn structure bears some risks, but it is certainly more challenging than hiding it behind with 12...e6?! 13.♖d1!. I analyse this line in the annotations to **Game 36** Dzhumaev-Tiviakov/Mashhad 2011. The bottom line of my analysis is that White obtains a long-term initiative and lasting dominance over the dark squares.

### 13.♖d1

The immediate 13.0-0 e6 14.♖ad1 transposes to 13.♖d1.

I also looked at 14.♖fe1!? ♕e7 15.♖ad1 ♜b6 16.g4 ♕g6



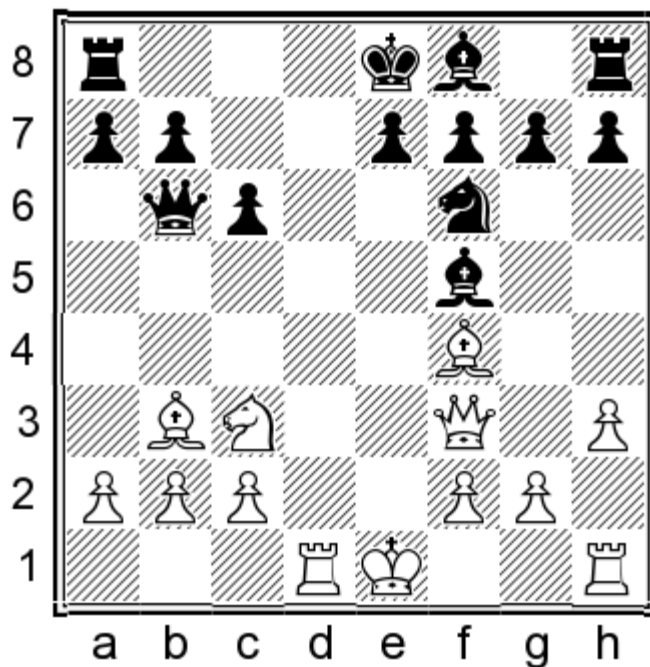
### 17.♕xe6!

The insertion of 17.h4 h6! hardly improves the sacrifice as the g4 pawn might prove weak and the h6-pawn controls g5 – 18.h5 (18.♕xe6 fxe6 19.♖xe6 ♖d8) 18...♕h7 19.♕xe6 fxe6 20.♖xe6 ♔f7 (Black can play on with 20...0-0!? 21.♖xe7 ♕xc2 22.♖d2 ♜b4) 21.♖xe7!+ (or 21.♖de1? ♖he8 22.g5 hxg5 23.♕xg5 ♜d4 24.h6 ♕f8 and Black went on to win in Nevednichy-S.Saric, Hungary 2015.) 21...♔xe7 22.♜e2+ ♔f7 23.♜c4+ ♖d5 24.♖xd5 ♜b5 25.♜c3 cxd5 26.♜c7+ ♔e6 27.♜d6+=.

17...fxe6 18.♖xe6 ♖d8 (18...♔f7 19.g5!? ♖ad8 20.♖xe7+ is probably a draw.) 19.♖de1 0-0 20.♖xe7 ♜xb2 21.♖b1 (21.♜e3 ♖de8=) 21...♜xc2 22.♖xb7 ♖d3 23.♖xg7+ ♔h8 24.♜xc6 ♜xc3 25.♜xc3 ♖xc3 26.♕e5 ♖xh3 27.♖xa7 ♕e4 28.f4 h5! =. At the end of the day, its a draw again.

13.♕e3!? ♜d7 14.♖d1 ♜c8 15.♕d4 e6 16.♕xf6 gxf6 17.g4 ♕g6 18.♜xf6 ♖g8 is an interesting position with mutual chances. See **Game 38** Rybka-Houdini 2011.

### 13...♜b6



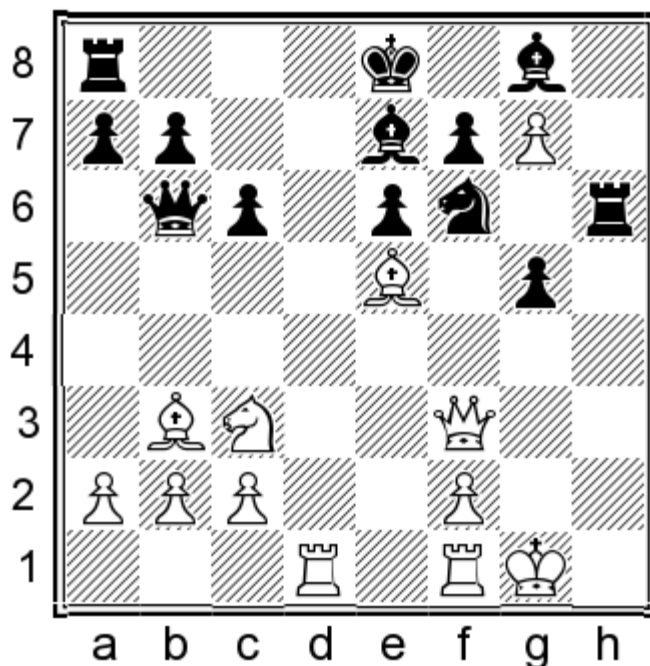
White has made only 0.5/4 points from this position. And I have not seen yet a single correspondence game. Apparently, the ball is in White's court. Note that the retreat 13...♔c5 has also been tried, but it might offer White tempi for the attack, e.g. 14.0-0 e6 15.♖fe1 ♕e7 16.♞e5, although the position remains unclear after 16...♞b6.

#### 14.0-0

14.♕e5 e6 15.g4 ♕g6 16.♕xf6 gxf6 17.♞xf6 ♞g8 18.♕xe6 ♕e7 19.♕d7+ ♖f8 is roughly equal, see **Game 37** Yildiz-Kosteniuk, Astana 2013.

#### 14...e6 15.♖fe1

It would be interesting to test 15.g4 ♕g6 16.h4 h6 17.♕e5 ♕e7 18.h5 ♕h7 19.g5 hxg5 20.h6 ♕g8 21.hxg7 ♞h6∞



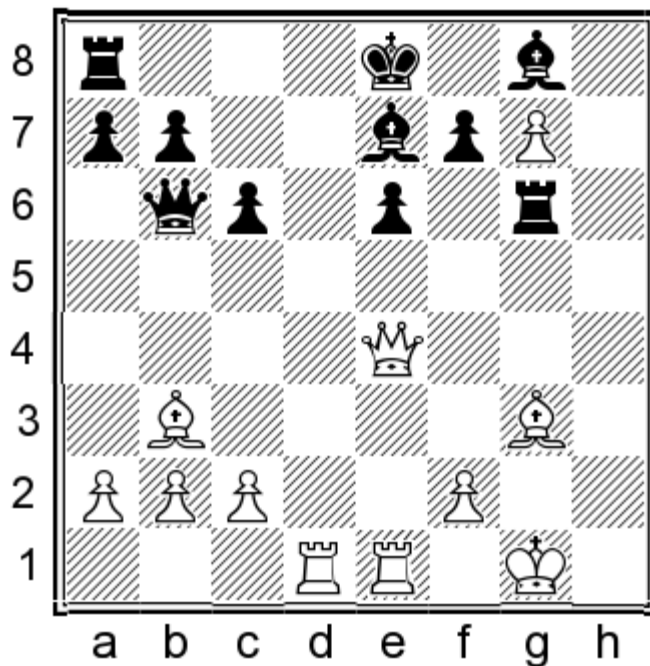
A highly unbalanced position! All of a sudden Black's rook receives a power boost. One possible threat is g5-g4-g3 to

open the g-file. I especially like the following line:

22.♖fe1

22.♗e4 ♗xe4 23.♝xe4 ♝c5 24.♞fe1 ♞h4 25.♞e2 g4 26.♞d3 ♞h5∞.

22...g4 23.♞g3 (23.♞f4 g3!) 23...♞h3 24.♞g2 ♞h6 25.♗e4 ♗xe4 26.♝xe4 g3!? 27.♞xg3 ♞g6



28.♞xg6!! fxg6 29.♞xe6 ♝b4 30.♔h2 ♞g4 31.♞de1 ♞xe6 32.♞xe6 ♝xe6 33.♞xe6 ♔f7 34.♞e3 ♞f6 35.♞d3 ♔e6=.

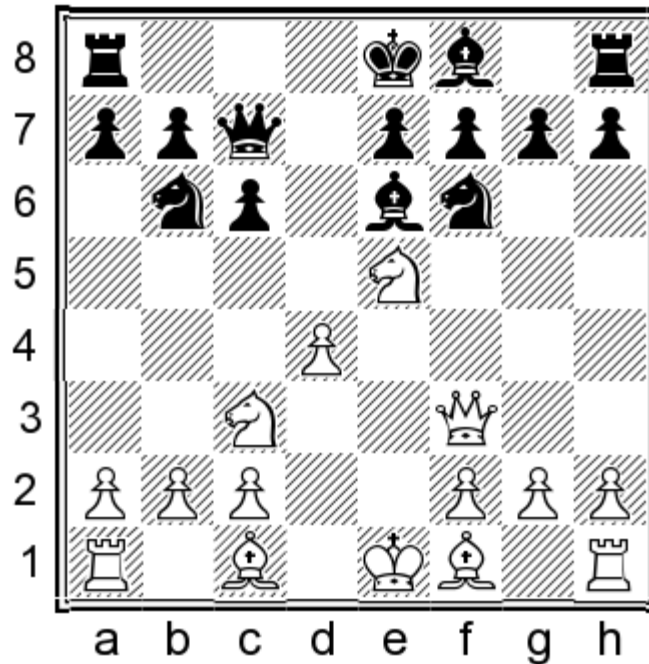
15...♞d8!? (15...♞e7=) 16.♞xd8+ ♝xd8 17.♞e3 ♞b4 18.♞xa7 ♝c8=

Black had no particular problems in Nenad Ristic-S.Saric, Vrbas 2015.

## Chapter 8. The Main Line 7.♘c4 Annotated Games

**33. Kotronias – Zatonskih**  
Port Erin 27.09.2003

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 c6 6.♗e5 ♗bd7 7.♘c4 ♜c7 8.♞f3 ♗b6 9.♗e5 ♕e6!



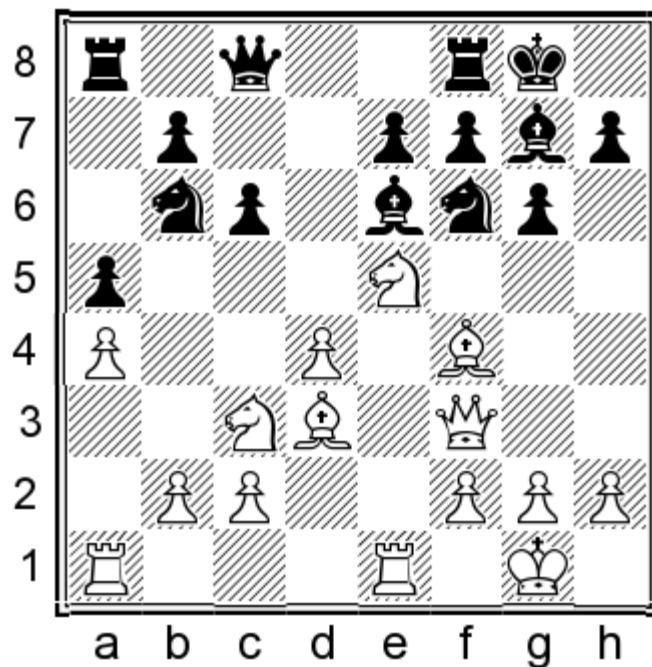
Black enforces a solid grip over the d5-square.

**10.♕f4**

10.a4 is an interesting possibility which has not been tried yet. I recommend 10...a5! since White cannot attack the weakened b6-square. 11.♕d3

11.♕f4 ♗bd5 12.♗xd5 (It is risky for White to castle long after a4 – 12.0-0-0 g6!? 13.♗xd5 ♕xd5 14.♞c3 ♗h5; 12.♕g3 ♞b6 13.0-0-0 ♗xc3 14.♞xc3 ♗d5 is at least equal for Black.) 12...♗xd5 13.♗g6 (13.♕g3!? ♞b6 14.♕d3 g6! is quite okay for the second player) 13...♗xf4 14.♗xf4 ♕f5= is roughly equal.

11...g6 12.♕f4 ♞c8 13.0-0 ♕g7 14.♞fe1 0-0



The opening has not brought anything to White and he should start manoeuvring now. For instance:

15.h3 ♖d8 16.♗e2 ♗fd7 17.b3 ♗d5 18.♞ad1 ♗b4=;

15.♞e2 ♞d8

15...c5 16.dxc5 ♞xc5 17.♙b5 ♗fd5 18.♗xd5 ♗xd5 19.♙g3 ♗c7 20.♙d3 ♞ad8 is also possible.

16.♗f3 ♗bd5 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 18.♙e5 ♙xe5 19.♞xe5 ♞c7 20.c3 ♞xe5 21.♗xe5 ♞ac8 with balanced play.

**10...♞c8!?**

This is interesting, but probably not best.

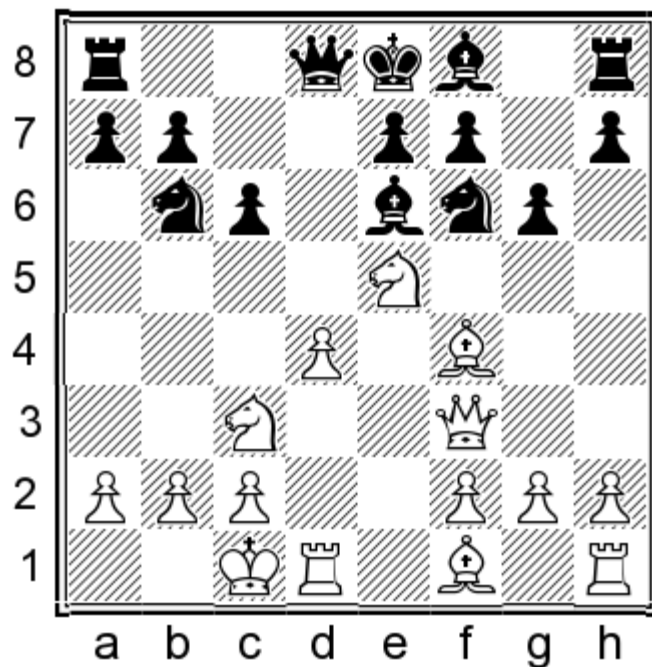
10...♗bd5?! is dubious as it lets the white bishop on c4 – 11.♙g3!

Inferior is 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♙g3 ♞b6! 13.0-0-0 [13.♙d3 g6 14.♗c4 (14.0-0 ♙g7 15.c4 ♗b4 16.♞ad1 0-0 17.♙e2 f6⇒) 14...♞b4+ 15.♙f1 ♗b6 16.a3 ♗xc4 17.axb4 ♗d2+ 18.♙e2 ♗xf3 19.♙xf3 ♙d5+ 20.♙e4 ♙xe4+ 21.♙xe4 f6= looks roughly equal] 13...g6 14.a3 a5! 15.h4 h5 16.♙c4, Alexander-Thomas, Margate 1937, when simplest was 16...♙g7=.

11...♞b6 12.0-0-0 g6 13.♙c4!± White was more active in Severiukhina-Ponkratov, Izhevsk 2009.

10...♞d8! is my favourite. After:

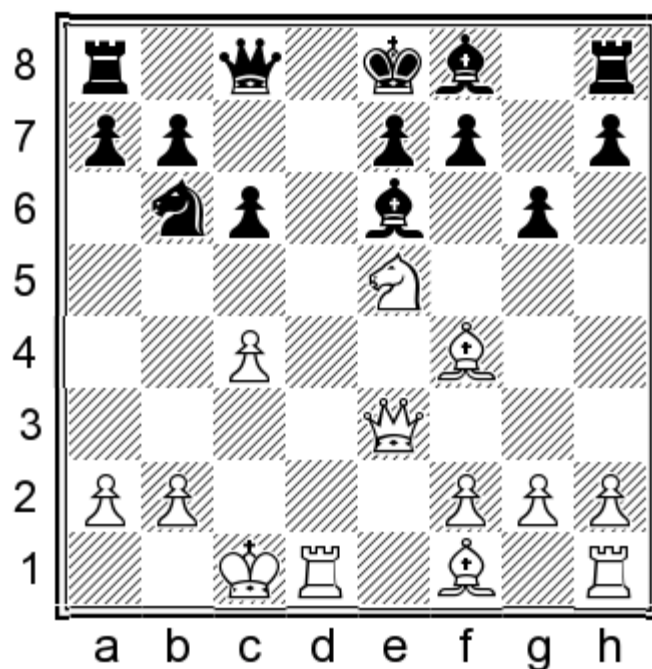
11.0-0-0 g6, praxis has seen:



a) 12.♔d3 ♕g7 13.h4 ♖bd5!. As usual, exchanges facilitate Black's task. 14.♕c4 ♗xf4 15.♚xf4 ♕xc4 16.♗xc4 ♖d5 17.♚f3 (17.♗xd5 ♚xd5∞ was a better try) 17...♗xc3 18.bxc3, Sveshnikov-Tiviakov, Moscow 2011. The safest way to a Black's advantage now is 18...h5!.

b) 12.d5!? ♖bxd5!

12...♗fxd5 13.♗xd5 ♕xd5! 14.♚e3 ♚c8 15.c4 ♕e6∞ is also possible, as in Ponkratov-Tiviakov, St. Petersburg blitz 2012.

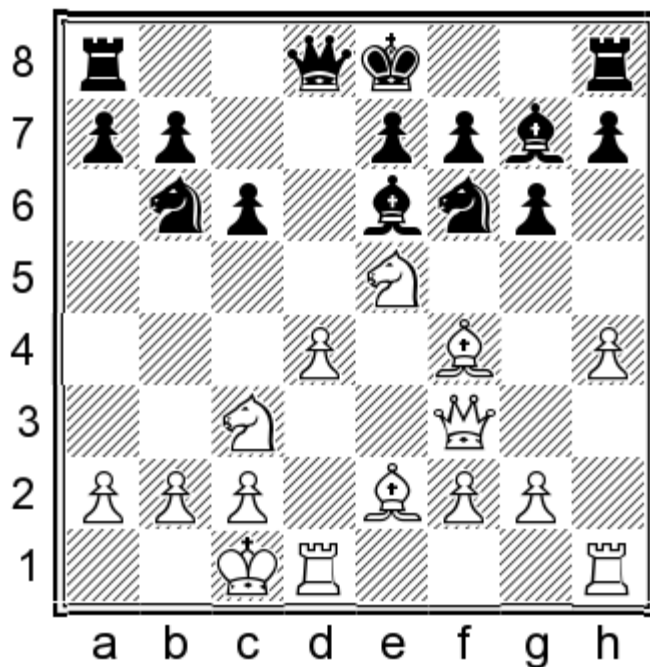


White blundered here with 16.♕h6? f6!, but even after 16.♕d3 ♕g7 17.♕h6, Black has no serious problems. For example, 17...♕xh6 (17...♕f6!? is worth examination as well) 18.♚xh6 ♚c7 19.♗xg6 fxg6 20.♕xg6+ ♕f7! (20...hxg6 21.♚xh8+ ♖f7 22.♚h7+ ♖f6 23.♚h4+ ♖f7 24.♖he1) 21.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 22.♚h5+ ♖g7 with a perpetual check.

13.♗xd5 ♕xd5 14.♖xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗xf7 ♚a5 16.♕c4 ♕g7! 17.♗xh8 ♚b4 18.b3 ♕xh8 19.♕xd5 cxd5 20.♖d1 ♖d8=.

imminent ...♖b4-c3 will simplify to an ending where Black is not worse.

c) 12.h4!? ♕g7 13.♙e2



White wants to play ♖f3-g3 followed by h4-h5.

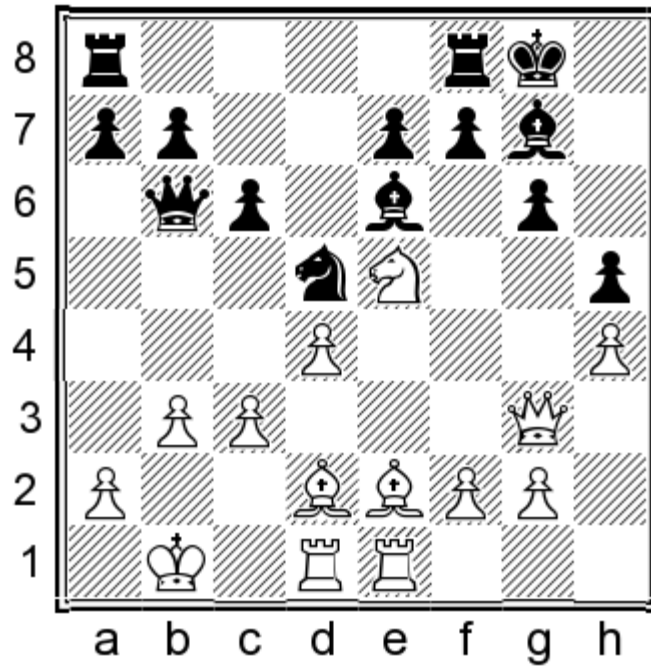
13...h5!?

This one appears a little too radical, but it is the best chance to play for all the three results. Instead, 13...♗fd5 14.h5! ♗xc3 15.♖xc3 ♗d5 16.♖f3 ♗xf4 17.♖xf4 ♖d6 18.h6!? ♕f6 19.a3 0-0-0 (19...0-0 20.♖e3±) 20.♙g4 ♖hf8 21.♗he1 ♙xg4 22.♖xg4+ ♗b8 23.f4 left Black under slight pressure in Josefsson-Fels, corr. 2011.;

Having in mind the above game, I considered 13...♗bd5 14.♗xd5 ♖xd5, but White still maintains a slight edge with 15.♖a3.

14.♗he1

14.♖g3 0-0 15.♙d3 ♗fd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 (16...♖xd5!? 17.c4 ♖a5) 17.♙d2 ♖c8 18.♗he1 b5 looks quite unclear. 14...0-0 15.♖g3 ♗fd5 16.♗xd5 ♖xd5 17.b3 ♖a5 18.♗b1 ♗d5 19.♙d2 ♖b6 20.c3 (20.♙xh5 ♖xd4)



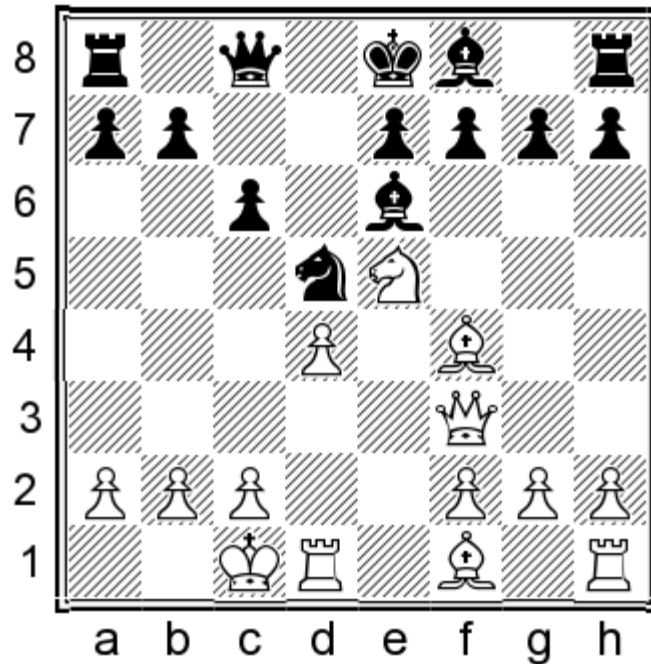
The safest approach now is to strike in the centre with 20...♖f6 21.♗b2 c5 22.dxc5 ♜xc5 23.♙e3 when 23...♜xc3+ 24.♗xc3 ♖e4+ 25.♗d4 ♖xg3 26.fxg3 ♙f5 27.♙f4 f6 levels the game.

A sharper option is the flank thrust 20...a5!? 21.♙d3 (21.♙xh5 ♙f5+ 22.♗b2 a4⇌) 21...c5∞.

### 11.0-0 ♖fd5

11...g6? allows 12.d5! ♖bx5 13.♖xd5 ♖xd5 14.♙xd5! with a clear advantage for White.

### 12.♖xd5 ♖xd5



### 13.♙e2

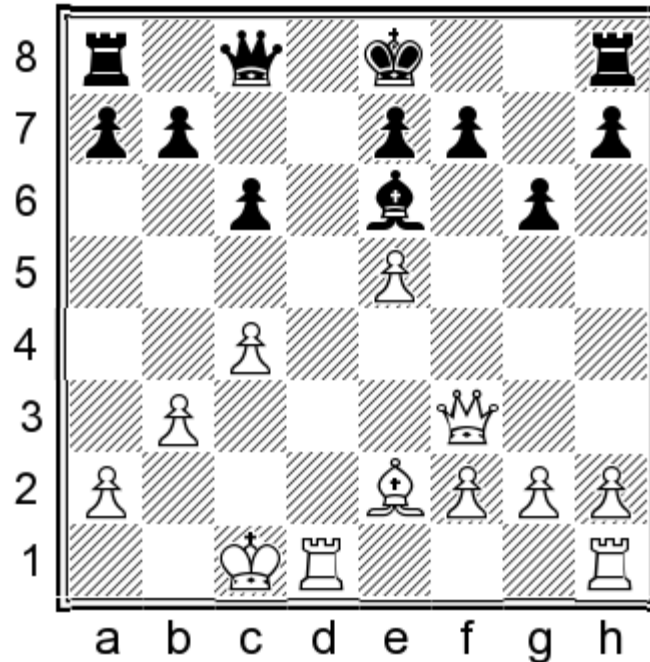
Throwing away whatever chances existed in the position. 13.♙d2 f6 14.♖c4 b5 (14...♙g4 15.♜e4 ♗f7 16.♙e2±) 15.♖e3 ♖xe3 16.♜xe3 ♙d5 17.♙d3 e6 was not much either as White cannot hinder the long castling.

13.♞e1! ♜xf4 14.♞xf4 ♞c7 15.♙d3 f6 16.♜g6 gave a very slight edge, but perhaps 14...♞b8!? intending 14...♞d6 and ...0-0-0 or ...g6 equalized.

13...g6 14.♙d2 ♙g7 15.c4 ♜b6 16.b3 ♜d7!

Black adheres to the principle to trade pieces in cramped positions.

17.♙f4 ♜xe5 18.♙xe5 ♙xe5 19.dxe5



19...♞c7

19...a5!= was simple and strong.

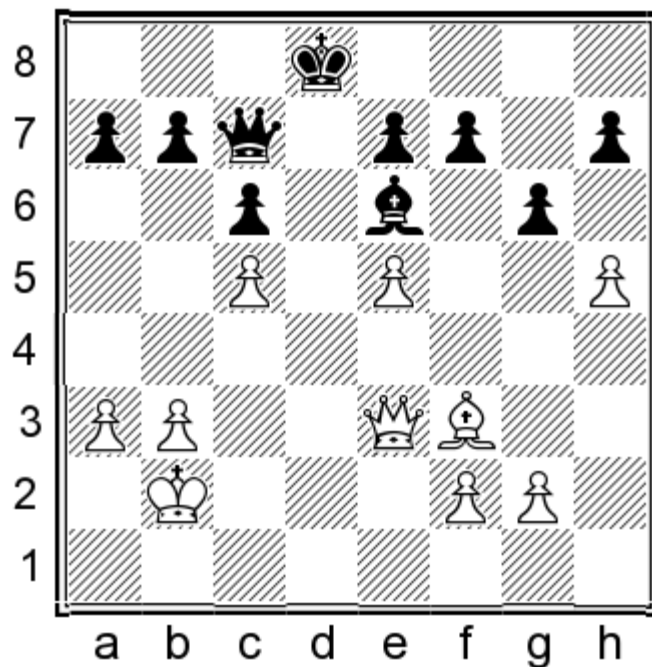
20.♞e3 ♙d7?! 21.♙f3?!

21.f4 ♞a5 22.♜b2 0-0-0 23.g4 gave some space advantage.

21...♞a5 22.♜b2 0-0-0 23.h4 ♙e6 24.h5 ♞xd1 25.♞xd1 ♞d8 26.♞xd8+ ♜xd8 27.a3 ♞b6?! (27...♜c8=) 28.c5?!

Now there is simply nothing going on. 28.♞xb6+ axb6 29.h6!± would have placed Black under some pressure although the position probably remains a draw.

28...♞c7



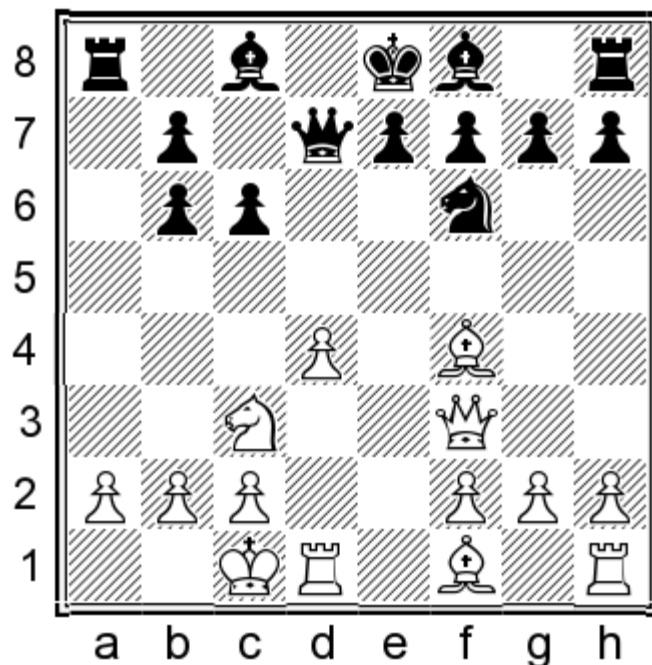
The game is totally level. Later I overreached in trying desperately to play for a win, but my opponent did not make the best of her chances and the game was eventually drawn. I present the conclusion without comments as it is irrelevant to the opening:

29.♙e2 ♚d7 30.h6 ♜c8 31.f3 ♛d8 32.g4 ♛d7 33.♙d3 ♜b8 34.♙c2 ♜c8 35.♜c3 ♛d8 36.b4 ♛d5 37.♜b2 ♛a2+  
 38.♜c1 ♛a1+ 39.♜d2 ♛f1 40.♙d1 ♜c7 41.♙e2 ♛a1 42.♙d1 ♛b2+ 43.♙c2 ♛a1 44.a4 a6 45.g5 ♙d5 46.f4 ♛b2  
 47.♛c3 ♛xc3+ 48.♜xc3 e6 49.♜d4 ♜d7 50.♙d1 ♙a2 51.♙c2 ♙d5 52.♙d1 ♙a2 53.♜c3 ♙d5 54.♜d3 ♜c7 55.♜e3  
 ♜d8 56.♙c2 ♙a2 57.♙d1 ♙d5 58.♜d2 ♜c8 59.♜e2 ♜d8 60.♜f2 ♜c8 61.♜g3 Draw.

**34. Kotronias – Tiviakov  
 Vrachati 22.08.2011**

In this game played in the Vrachati resort near Korinthos, I face as White the 3...♛d6 Scandinavian's most famous protagonist, Sergei Tiviakov. At the time, I considered this opening just bad for Black, but subsequent analysis has forced me to reassess my opinion.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♛xd5 3.♘c3 ♛d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♘c4 ♛c7 8.♛f3 ♘b6 9.♙f4 ♛d7 10.♘xb6!? axb6  
 11.0-0



I invested a lot of time on this line while preparing for the game. I felt that playing in such a manner was a concession because the open a-file was certainly an asset for the black rook and the pawn on b6 controlled the important c5-square, but on the other hand, White gained time. The position is double-edged and demanding concrete knowledge by both sides. The best move here is the rare 11...♔d8!

### 11...e6?!

This move is suspicious, but in a practical struggle it is not easy to refute it.

### 12.♙e5!

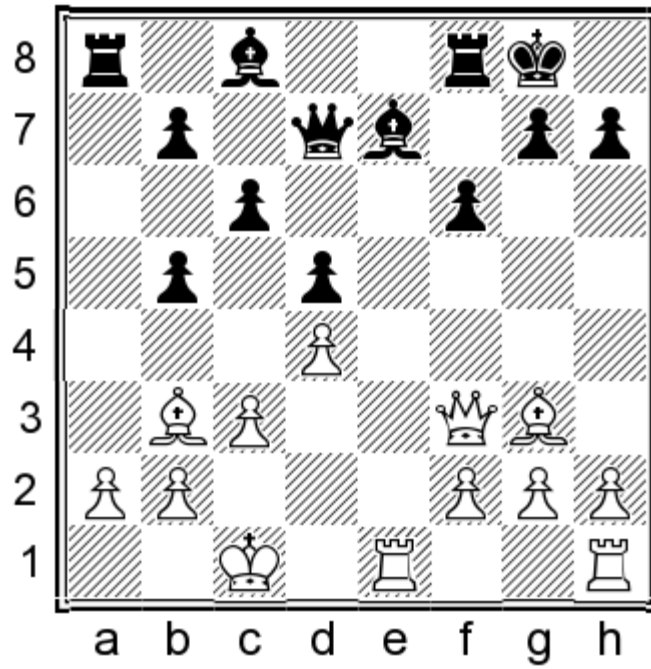
Black's task is by no means easy after 12.♙c4 either. Play may continue 12...b5 13.♙b3 ♘d5!? 14.♙e5!

After 14.♘xd5?! exd5 15.♖he1+ ♙e7 16.♙g5 f6 17.♖e3 fxg5! 18.♖de1 h6 19.♗h5+ ♔d8 20.♖xe7 ♗xe7 21.♖xe7 ♔xe7=, the position is equal as the ♙b3 cannot help its queen to generate threats.

14...f6 15.♙g3 ♙b4!

15...♙e7 16.♖he1 0-0? 17.♖xe6!+- underlines the bad placement of the queen at d7.

16.♘xd5 exd5 17.c3 ♙e7 18.♖de1 0-0



19.a3!

Activating the b3-bishop. 19.♖e3 ♜d8 20.♞he1 ♕f8 21.a3 ♞f7= is equal as Black will follow up with ...♗c8-d7 and mass exchanges on the e-file.

19...♞e8 20.♗c2 ♞g4 21.♞d3± and White maintains some pressure, although the black position is solid.

### 12...♞d5

12...♗e7 13.♞g3! is also problematic for Black as his knight would never reach d5 – 13...0-0 14.♗c4!?

14.♞e4! ♞e8 15.♗c4 is the most precise way to an advantage, but I chose the 14.♗c4!? move order to show an interesting technique of provoking weaknesses.

14...b5 15.♗b3 ♞h5

15...♞e8 is extremely clumsy as the queen on d7 does not have an outlet to a5.

16.♞g4 ♞f6 17.♞g5! h6?!

17...♞e8! 18.♞g3 b6 is the only way to keep White's advantage under restraint.

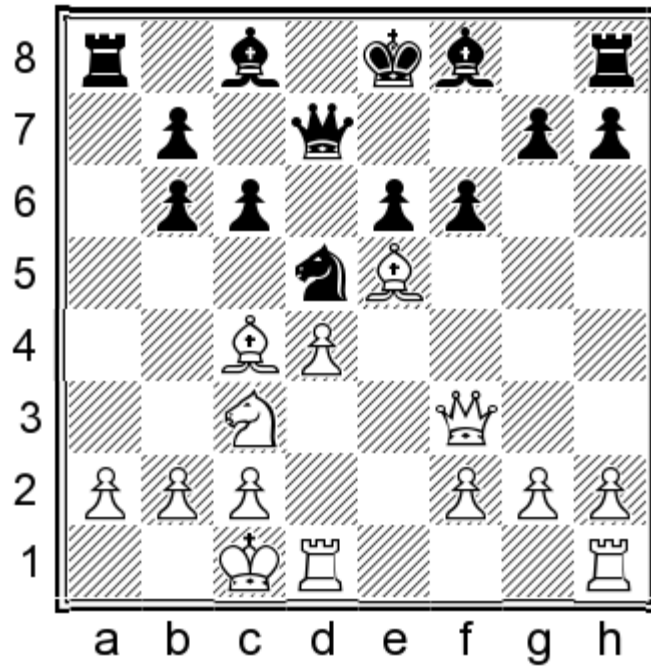
18.♞g3 ♞h5 19.♞f3 ♞f6 20.h4 ♞d5 21.g4→.

### 13.♗c4

The critical move. After 13.♞b1 ♞xc3+ 14.♞xc3 f6 15.♗f4 b5, the black queen is about to settle on d5, and Black can count on full equality. Centralisation is the language we all speak I guess.

### 13...f6

Black is behind in development and he is forced to weaken his position. The stronghold on d5 is some consolation, but only one good square is insufficient to fence White's forces off.



#### 14. ♕f4

14. ♕g3! looks like a good improvement over my game. The following lines provide ample evidence of the nature of problems Black faces:

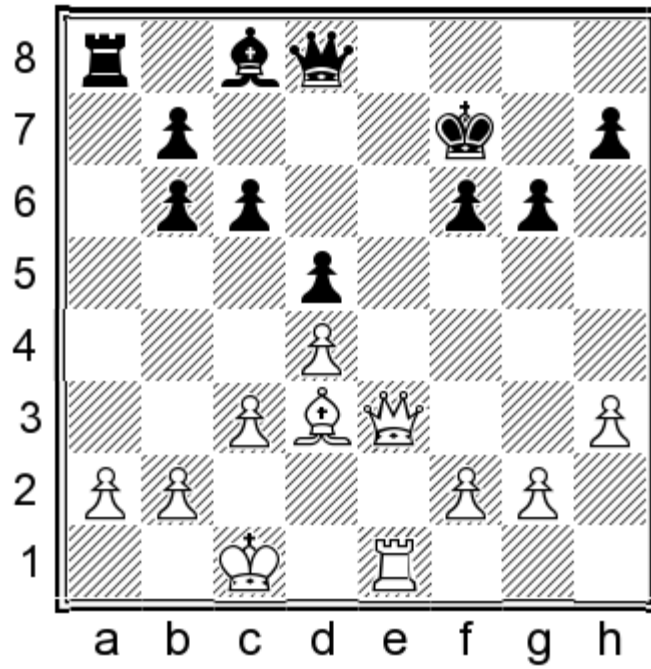
14... ♖b4 15. ♗xd5 exd5 16. ♕d3!

This strong move was originally played by Solodovnichenko. The bishop joins in the attack. Instead, 16. ♖b3 dxc4! (16... ♕e7 17. ♕d3±) 17. ♖xb4 b5 18. ♖he1+ ♔f7 19. a3 ♖e8 20. ♖xe8 ♗xe8 21. ♖e1 ♕e6 offers White nothing special.

Or 16. ♕b3 ♗g4! 17. ♖e3+ ♔f7 18. f3 ♗g5 19. ♕f4 ♗xg2 20. ♖hg1 ♗h3 21. c3 ♕f8! and Black is remarkably solid. 16...0-0

16... ♖xa2 hardly works with the bishop standing on g3 in view of 17. ♔b1! ♖a8 18. c3 ♕e7 19. ♖h5+ ♔f8 20. h3 and Black has scarce chances to hold the position with his shaky king. The only move that offers hope is 20... ♖e8 (20... ♕d6 21. ♖he1 ♕xg3 22. fxg3 ♗f7 23. ♖h4 ♕d7 24. ♖f4 ♖e8 25. g4! looks depressing), yet I would not like to be in his shoes after 21. ♖f3 ♗f7 22. ♖de1 g6 23. ♖e3 ♔g7 24. ♖he1 ♕f8 25. ♖e8 ♕g4 26. ♖xf8 ♕xf3 27. ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 28. gxf3±.

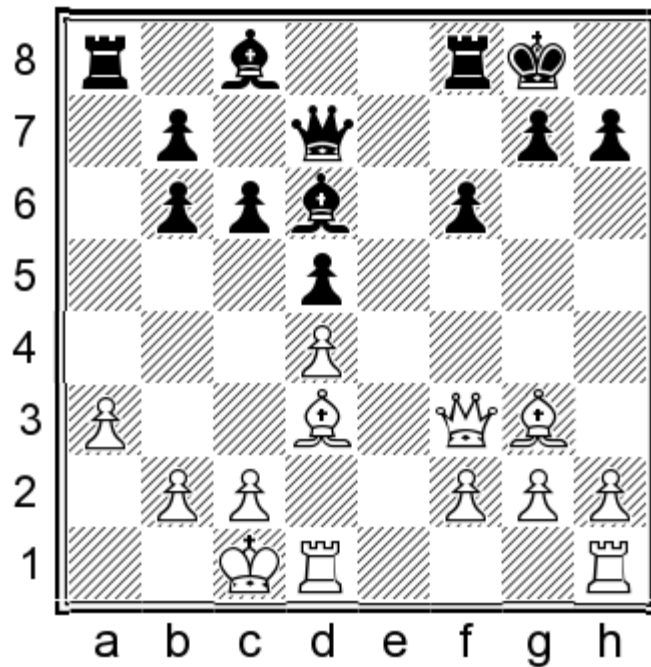
16... ♗g4 was S.Kasparov's original attempt to defend Black's position. 17. ♖e3+ ♔f7?! (17... ♖e6 18. ♖f4! 0-0 19. a3 ♖e7 20. ♖c7! ♖f7 21. ♖xb6 ♕a5± would be a slow death.) 18. h3 ♖e6 19. ♖f3 g6 20. c3 ♕d6 21. ♖de1 ♗d7 22. ♖e3 ♕xg3 23. ♖xg3 ♖e8 24. ♖he1 ♖xe3 25. ♖xe3 ♗d8



26.h4! ♔d7 27.h5+-. Unsurprisingly, Black is completely lost, Solodovnichenko-S.Kasparov, Padova 2012.

17.a3! ♕d6

17...♖e7!? is a stunning recommendation by some engines, the point being 18.axb4? ♜a1+ 19.♔d2 ♖xb4+ 20.c3 ♖xb2+ 21.♕c2 ♜a2 with enough compensation for at least a draw. However, 18.♕f4 forces the retreat 18...♕d6 with clear positional edge after 19.♞de1. Moreover, after 18.♖h5 g6 19.♕xg6 ♕xa3 20.♖xh7+ ♖xh7 21.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 22.bxa3 ♜xa3 23.♕d6 ♜a1+ 24.♔d2 ♜xd1+ 25.♞xd1 ♞g8 26.♕g3, the opposite coloured bishop ending will be a torture for Black as his queenside pawn mass lacks mobility.

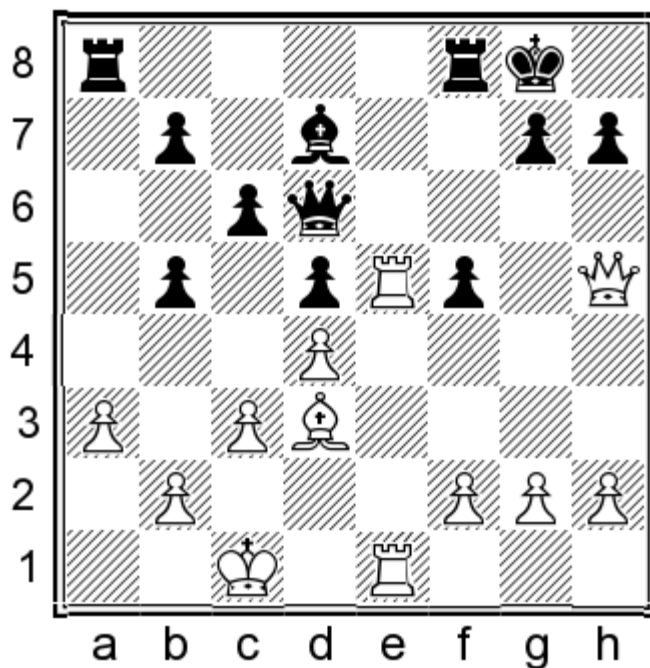


18.♞de1!

S. Kasparov does not mention this in his book. Obviously, if White trades dark-squared bishops and deprives Black of counterplay, his advantage would be overwhelming. The text shows the right way of achieving it. Carlstedt-S.Kasparov, Aarhus 2015, saw instead 18.♖h5?! f5 19.♞de1 g6 20.♖h6 f4 21.♕h4 ♖f7 22.♕g5 which is at least equal for Black after 22...c5!↗. White's mistake was that he missed to trade bishops. [chessstouring.com](http://chessstouring.com)

18...b5

18...f5 19.♙e5! b5 20.c3 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5 ♔d6 22.♗he1 ♙d7 23.♚h5± transposes.  
19.c3 ♗d8 20.♚h5 f5 21.♙xd6 ♗xd6 22.♖e5 ♙d7 23.♗he1±.



Black is doomed to suffer for the rest of the game, Kravtsiv-Ivanchuk, World Blitz, Berlin 2015.

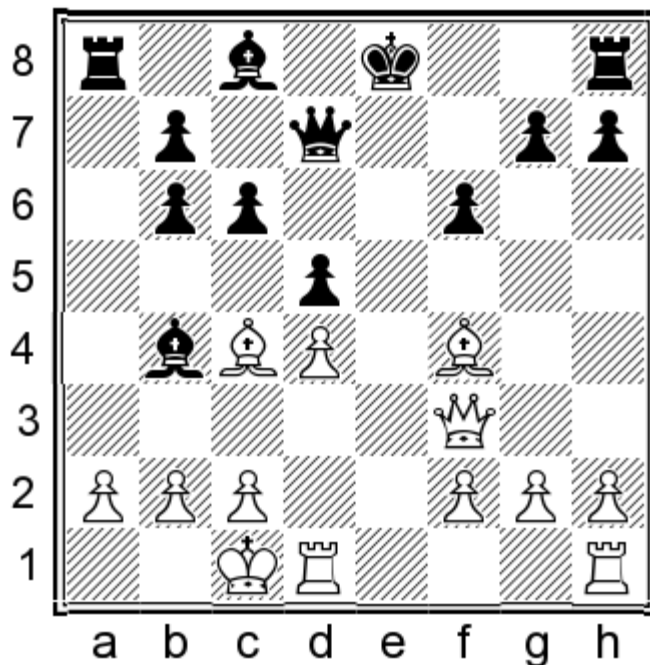
14...♙e7?!

Now Black's situation becomes critical. 14...♙b4! was imperative. Black would have chances to resist after 15.♘xd5

15.♙d2 0-0=;

15.♘e4 0-0 16.♖b1 b5 17.♙b3 b6=.

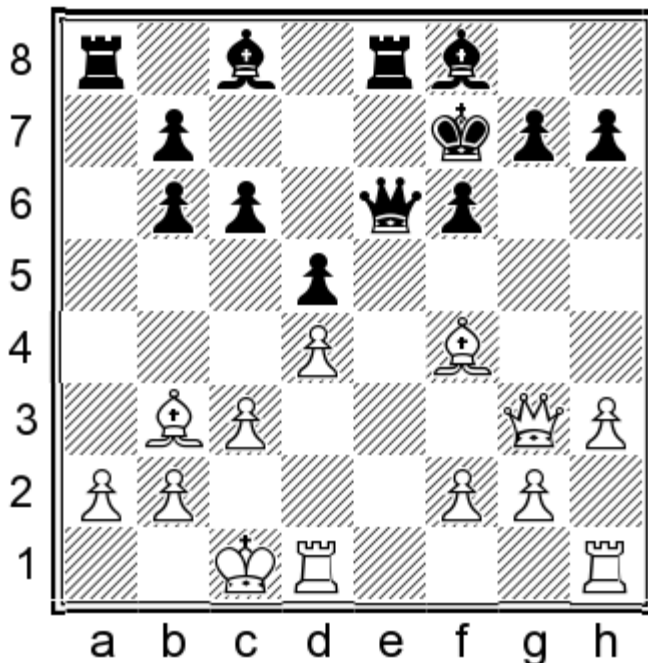
15...exd5!



16.♙b3

16.♙d3!? ♖xa2 17.♗he1+ (After 17.♖b1 ♖a8 18.c3 ♙e7 19.♚h5+ ♖f8 20.h3, Black can exploit the fact that the

bishop stands on f4 and reduce the pressure by 20...♔d6! 21.♕xd6+ ♖xd6=) 17...♕xe1 18.♖xe1+ ♔d8 19.♔b1 ♖a8 20.♗g3 ♗f7 21.♕b8 ♖xb8 22.♗xb8 ♗d7 23.h4= is unimpressive.  
 16...♗g4 17.♗e3+ ♔f7 should be able to gradually neutralise White's slight initiative. An important factor of Black's defence is that White has to spent a considerable amount of time to bring the ♕b3 back into play as the following variation shows:  
 18.h3 ♗e6 19.♗g3 ♖e8 20.c3 ♕f8



21.♕c2

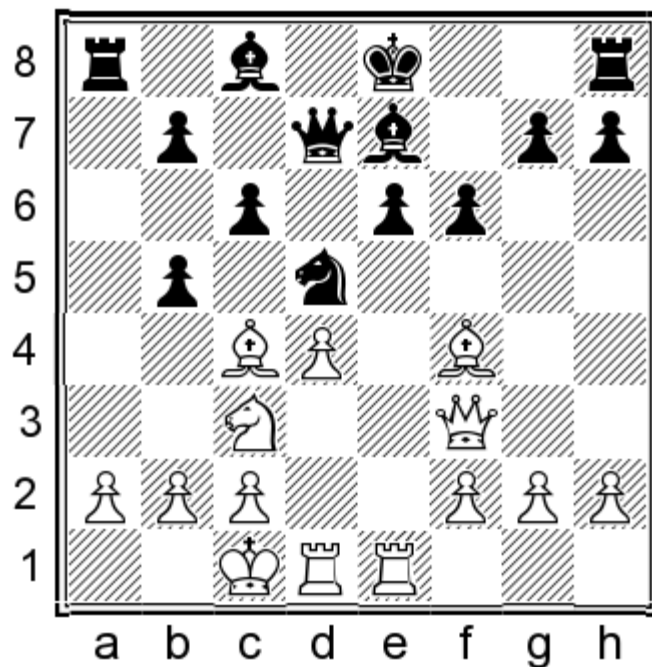
Or 21.♖d3 ♔g8 22.♖e3 ♗f7 23.♖xe8 ♗xe8 24.♗d3 ♕e6=.

21...♔g8 22.♔b1 (22.♗d3 g6 23.a3 ♕d7=) 22...♕d7. Black has fulfilled the artificial castling and his position looks already out of danger.

### 15.♖he1

15.♖de1! was proposed by Milos Pavlovic in his *Chessbase* commentary to the game and it is by far the best move. After 15...b5 16.♔xd5 exd5, the key point is 17.♕d3! directing the bishop's fire to the kingside. Milos continues his line with 17...♖xa2 18.♔b1 ♖a4 19.♖e3 0-0 20.♖he1 ♖f7 21.♗h5 f5 22.♕g5 ♕xg5 23.♗xg5 ♗d6 24.♖e8+ ♖f8 25.♖1e7 ♗g6 26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♗e3 concluding that White is winning. Indeed, after 27...♖a8 28.♗e5 ♗f6 29.♗xf6+ gxf6 30.♖xh7 ♔g8 31.♖c7+- there is no defence.

### 15...b5



16. ♖b3

This looks safer, but with my bishop stuck on b3 I cannot really hope to get something out of the position. 16. ♗xd5! exd5 17. ♕d3! was the only way to maintain some pressure.

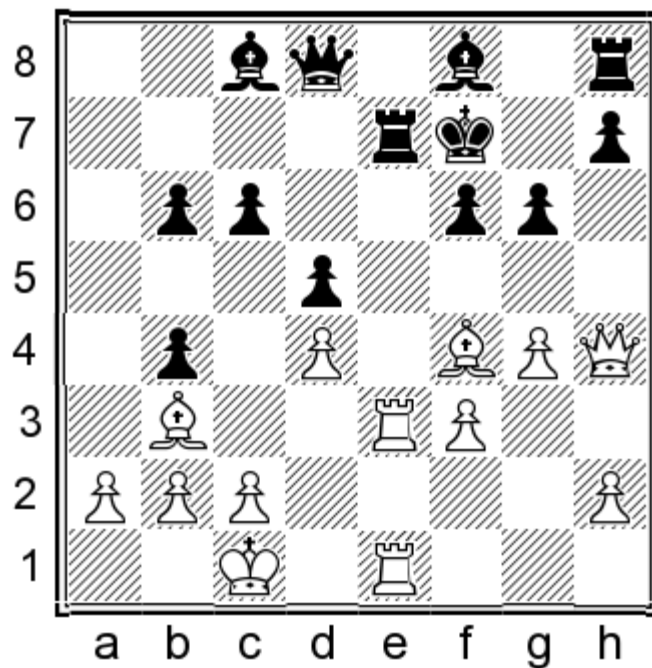
16...b4! 17. ♗xd5 exd5 18. ♖h5+

Or 18. ♖d2 0-0 19. ♖de2 ♖f7 20. h4 ♕f8 21. h5 b6∞.

18...g6 19. ♖h6 ♔f7 20. f3 b6 21. g4 ♖a7

21...♕f8!? 22. ♖h4 h5 23. g5 ♖h3↗ was also possible.

22. ♖d3 ♖d8 23. ♖de3 ♕f8 24. ♖h4 ♖e7=



Black has reached equality. At some point I went too far and almost lost:

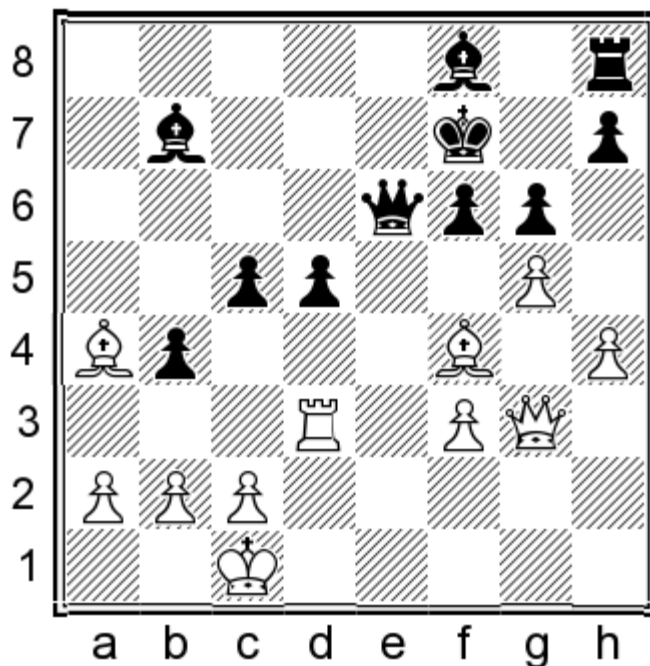
25. ♖g3 ♜xe3 26. ♞xe3 ♚d7 27. h4 c5 28. dxc5 bxc5 29. ♞d3 ♜b7 30. g5 ♞e6?!

A slight slip which I failed to exploit.

30... ♜e7= was simply excellent.

31. ♞e3

31. ♜a4!± was very strong, finally enabling me to activate the ill-fated bishop. In the heat of the battle I completely missed it!.



After 31... ♜c6

Or 31... ♞a6!? 32. b3!± Δ ♞d3-e3;

31... ♜g7? 32. ♞e3 ♞a6 33. ♜d7+-

31... ♜e7? 32. ♞e3 ♞f5 33. ♜d6+-.

32. ♞e3 ♞d7 33. ♜xc6 ♞xc6 34. gxf6 c4 35. ♜b1 ♜c5 36. ♞e2 ♞e8 37. ♞xe8 ♞xe8 38. ♜g5 ♜f8 39. ♞c7+ ♜g8 40. ♞b7 ♞e1+ 41. ♜c1 ♞e5 42. a3 bxa3 43. bxa3, Black is tied up with the defence of the d5-pawn and the passer on the a-file offers White excellent winning chances.

31... ♞d7 32. ♜e5??

A stupid sacrifice, which can be explained only by a desire to win at all costs. 32. ♞d3 ♜e7= was normal.

32... fxe5 33. ♞xe5 c4??

Returning the favour. 33... ♜g8 34. ♞d3 h5+- wins.

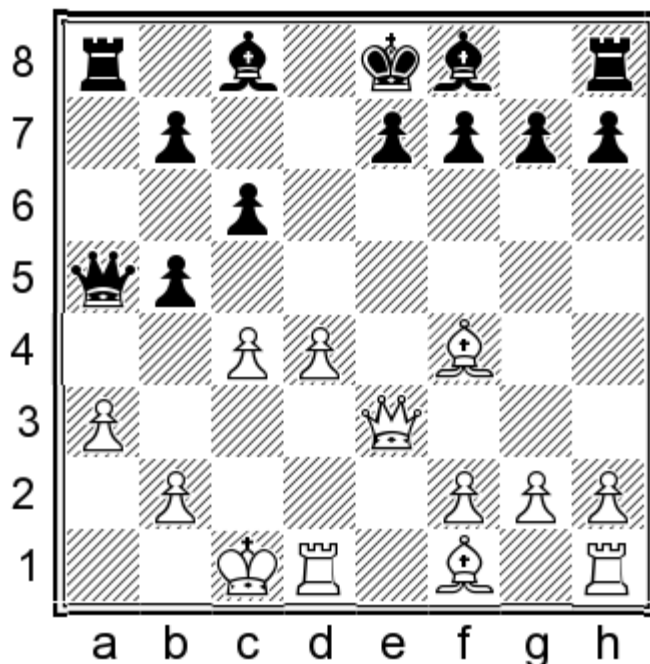
34. ♜a4= ♞xa4 35. ♞e6+ ♜g7 36. ♞e5+ ♜g8 37. ♞e6+ ♜g7 38. h5 gxh5 39. ♞f6+ ♜g8 40. ♞e6+ ♜g7 Draw.

35. Pommrich – Gudichsen  
WS/M/380 ICCF 2012

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♞xd5 3. ♜c3 ♞d6 4. d4 ♜f6 5. ♜f3 c6 6. ♜e5 ♜bd7 7. ♜c4 ♞c7 8. ♞f3 ♜b6 9. ♜f4 ♞d7 10. ♜xb6 axb6 11. 0-0-0 ♞d8! 12. ♞e3 ♜d5 13. ♜xd5 ♞xd5 14. c4 ♞a5

This move has been tested in several email games. They show that Black is able to hold his own, but the play is considerably more complex than after 14...♖e6

### 15.a3 b5!



Black desperately needs counterplay against White's king, even at the expense of a further delay of the kingside development. 15...♗g4 16.f3 ♗d7 17.d5 e6 18.d6 was grim in Rublevsky-Zolotukhin, Olginka 2011.

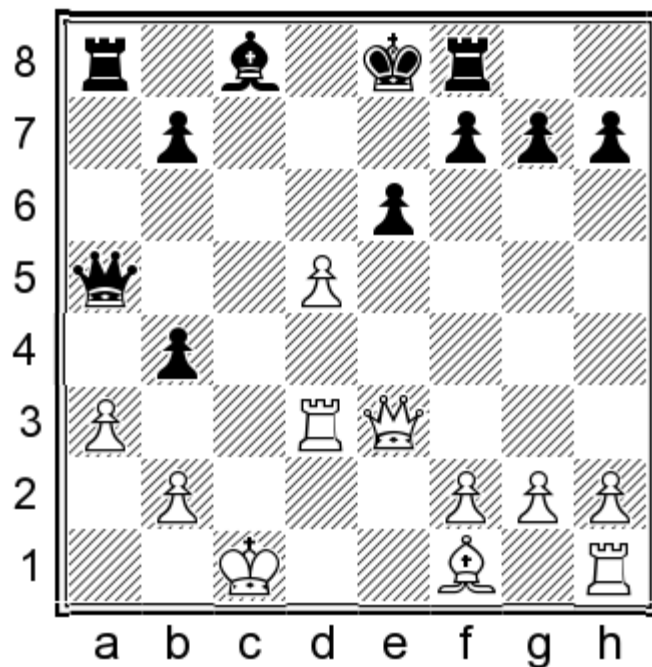
### 16.♗d6

It looks logical to saddle Black with a weakness on b5 with 16.cxb5 cxb5, but then 17.♗d6 will transpose to the game. Only 17.♖b3 would be of independent significance and after 17...♗d7 18.d5 g6 19.♗d3 b4!? 20.♖xb4 ♖xb4 21.axb4 ♗g7 the position is very close to equal.

16.d5 has been untried in practice, but I decided to look at it as it is a natural human move. White is playing for the initiative without opening the c-file. After 16...b4! 17.♗d6 e6 18.♗xf8 ♔xf8 19.d6 bxa3 20.bxa3 ♗d7, it is rather White who is more exposed as the black king can be accommodated at f7 after ...f7-f6 while the d-pawn is not a real threat. Still, the position remains interesting for both sides and Black shouldn't relax thinking that he suddenly became better, as this is actually not the case.

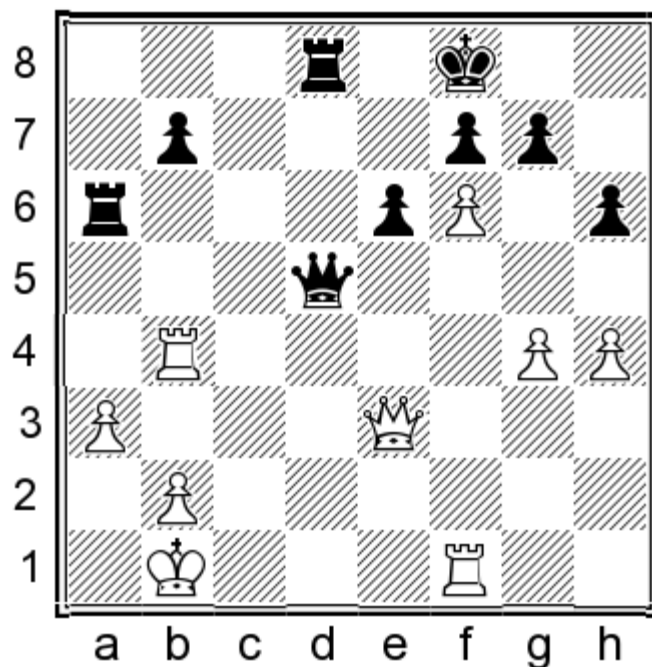
### 16...e6 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8

I also looked at the somewhat unnatural 17...♗xf8 and I can say that the Black position is not as bad as it looks. After 18.cxb5 cxb5 19.d5 b4 20.♗d3!,



the only correspondence game from this position continued 20...f6!?

20...♔d7 is not entirely out of question, e.g. 21.♖b1 ♕b5 22.♞b3 (22.dxe6 ♕xd3+ 23.♕xd3 bxa3 24.exf7+ ♔xf7 25.♕c4+ ♔g6 26.♕d3+=) 22...♕xf1 23.♞xf1 ♞xd5 24.♞xb4 ♔e7 25.♞b3 (25.h4 h6 26.f4 ♞fd8! 27.f5 ♞a6! 28.g4 ♔f8 29.f6



29...♞ad6 30.g5 g6 31.gxh6 ♔g8 32.♞f3 may be worth a try. I hope I have not scared too many readers with this line. Living dangerously is not exclusively a privilege of the Sicilian players. Actually, in almost every Black repertoire there are certain lines where one has to cope with danger, no matter how solid that repertoire is.)

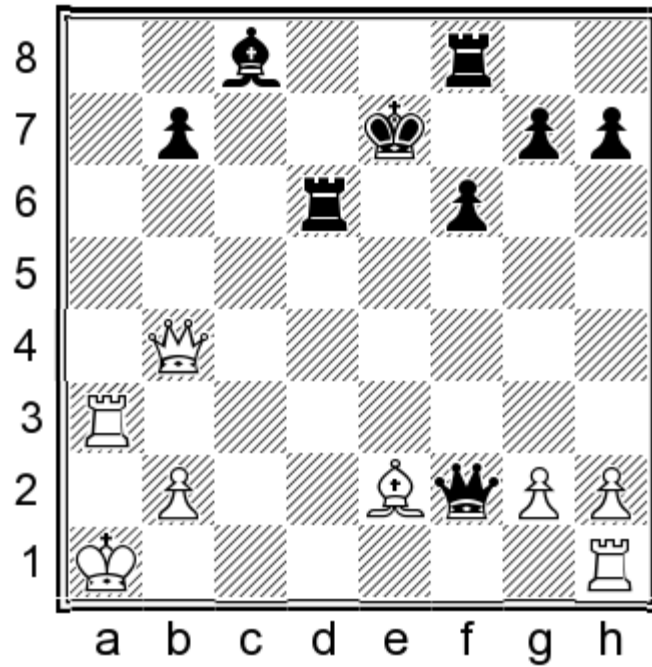
25...♞xb3 26.♞xb3 ♞a7 27.♞c1 ♞d8 and the ending seems defensible.

Returning to 20...f6!?, the correspondence game Cuccumini-Nicotera, corr. 2012, went on:

21.dxe6 ♔e7 22.♞b3 An attempt to clarify the issue on the queenside.

22.♕e2 allows 22...♞a6! and Black suddenly consolidates. For example, 23.♔b1 bxa3 24.♞xa3 ♞f5+ 25.♔a1 (25.♕d3 ♞xa3 26.bxa3 ♞d5=) 25...♞xe6. This pawn commonly covers our king, but we have a concrete tactical

reason to capture it: 26.♖d2 ♜xf2! 27.♖b4+ ♜d6!

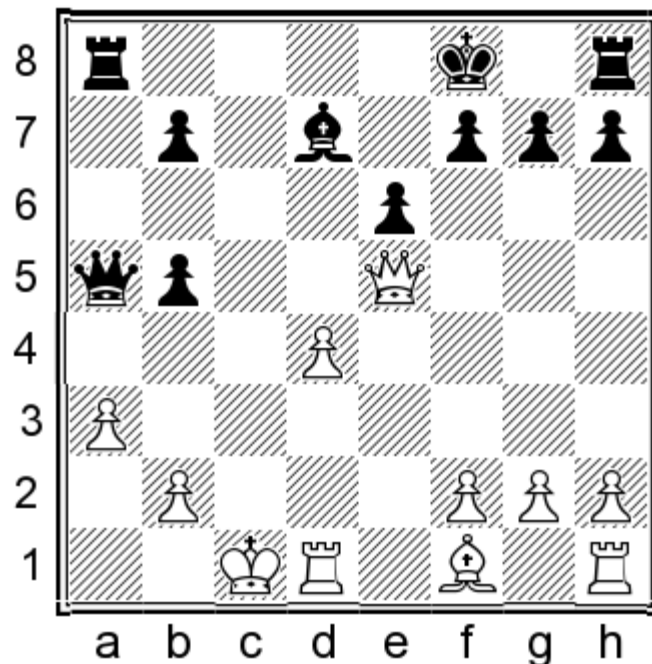


28.♞e1 [28.♙c4 ♜d2 29.♞c5 (29.♞e1+?! ♔d8) 29...b6 30.♞a7+ ♙d7 31.♞f5 ♔d8 32.♞xh7 ♞xg2 33.♞c1 ♜d4 34.♙b3 ♞e8 is a mess.] 28...♔f7 29.♙c4+ ♔g6 30.♞g3+ ♔h6 31.♞e4 ♞a7+ 32.♔b1 ♜d1+ 33.♔c2 ♜d4 34.♞a3! ♞xa3 35.♞xa3 ♞xe4 36.♞xf8 ♞xc4+= and the ending should be drawn.

After 22. b3, Black obtained equality within his grasp:

22...bxa3 23.bxa3 ♞e5 24.♔b1 ♜d8 25.♙e2 (25.♙c4 b5!) 25...♞xe3 26.♞xe3 ♞a5 27.♜d1 ♞xd1+ 28.♙xd1 ♞a6 29.♙c2 h6 30.♙f5 ♞a5 31.g4 ♞e5 32.♞xe5 fxe5 33.♔c2 ♙xe6 34.♔d3 ♙b3 and a draw was agreed.

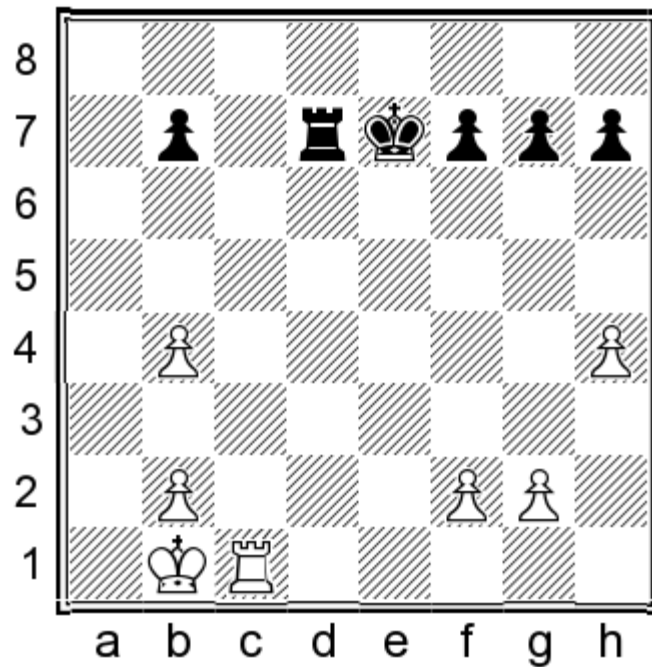
18.cxb5 ♙d7 19.♞e5 (Centralisation!) 19...cxb5



20.♞d6+

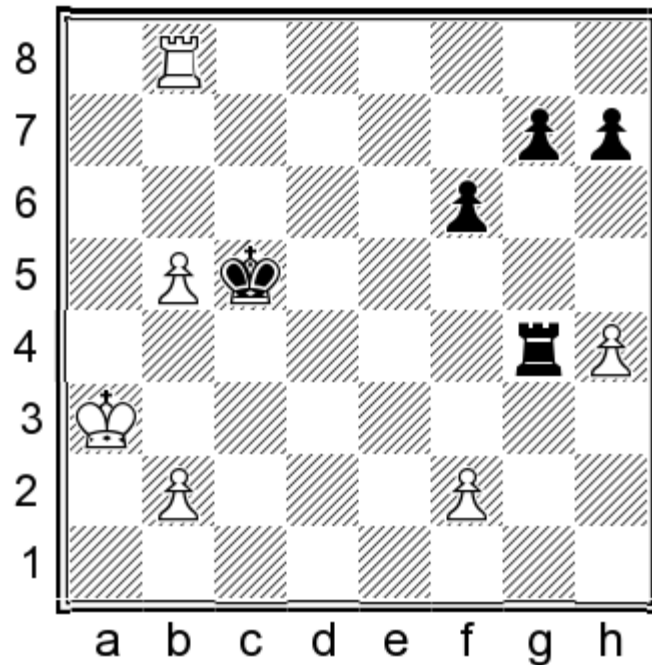
This should be the most critical continuation. After 20.d5 ♞c8+ 21.♔b1 ♞c7! the queens have to leave the board and Black should be able to hold the ending after 22.♞xc7 ♞xc7:

a) 23.h4!? exd5 24.♖xd5 b4 25.axb4 ♔e7 26.♙d3 ♜hc8 27.♞e1+ ♔f8 28.♞xd7+ (28.♞de5 g6 29.h5 ♔g7=) 28...♞xd7 29.♙f5 ♞cd8 30.♙xd7 ♞xd7 31.♞c1 ♔e7



At first I thought that Black had an easy draw, since the doubled extra pawn did not seem dangerous (we can even trade rooks if our king reaches d5!), but then I found a plan for White:

1. White's rook occupies the 4th rank with 32.♔c2! ♞d4 33.♔b3 ♔d6 34.♞c4 ♞d2 35.♞f4 f6 36.♔c3 ♞e2.
2. White prepares to take the b-pawn: 37.g4 ♔e6 38.b5 ♞e5 39.♔b4 b6 40.♞c4 ♔d5 41.♞c6 ♞e4+ 42.♔a3 ♞xg4 43.♞xb6 ♔c5 44.♞b8

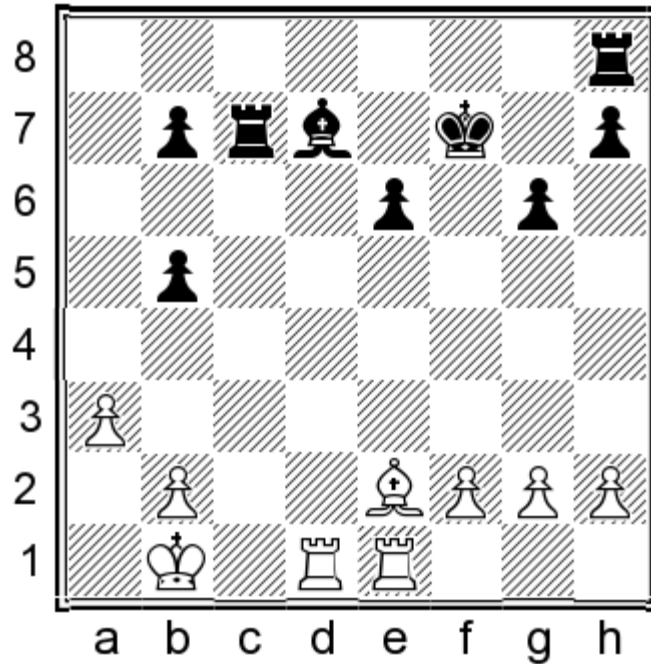


3. Now White hopes to break our king's contact with the b5-pawn by b4+ and promote the b-pawn, but we still have a draw with accurate play after 44...♞g1! 45.h5 h6. As you see, Black's defence is not trivial.

b) 23.♙e2 g6! 24.dxe6  
24.d6 ♞c8 25.♙f3 ♔g7! 26.♙xb7 ♞b8 27.♙f3 b4 28.axb4 ♞xb4∞ gives Black excellent compensation for the

pawn.

24...fxe6 25.♖he1 ♔f7 (25...♔e7!?)



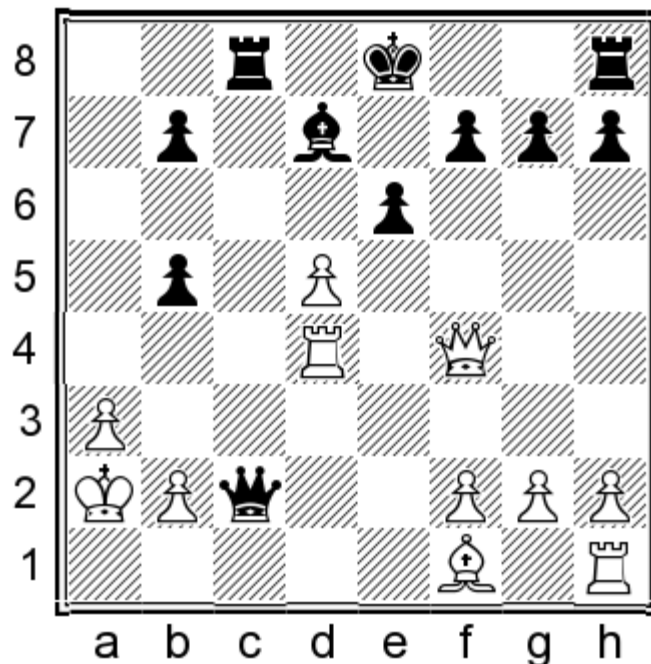
26.♞d2

26.♞d3!? ♜f8 27.♙g4 (27.♜f3+ ♔e7 28.♞xf8 ♔xf8 29.♞c1 ♙c6! 30.f3 ♞d7 31.♞d1 ♞xd1+ 32.♙xd1 ♔e7 33.♔c2 ♔d6 34.♔c3 ♔c5 Δ...e6-e5, is also a draw.) 27...♔e7 28.f3 b4! 29.axb4 ♜f4 30.♞de3 ♞c6 31.♞e4 ♞xe4 32.♞xe4 h5 33.♙h3 g5= leaves no doubts about the final outcome.

26...♙c6 27.f3 ♔e7 28.♞ed1 ♞a8 29.♞d3 ♙d5 30.♞e3 ♞d8= and the game was soon drawn in Ramsden-Gudichsen, corr. 2011.

**20...♔e8 21.d5 ♞a6! 22.dxe6**

A bit more critical is 22.♞f4!?. Then 22...♞a4 23.♞d4 ♞c8+ 24.♔b1 ♞c2+ 25.♔a2 made me skeptical at first as I thought that White had the safer king and it would be hard to find counterplay.



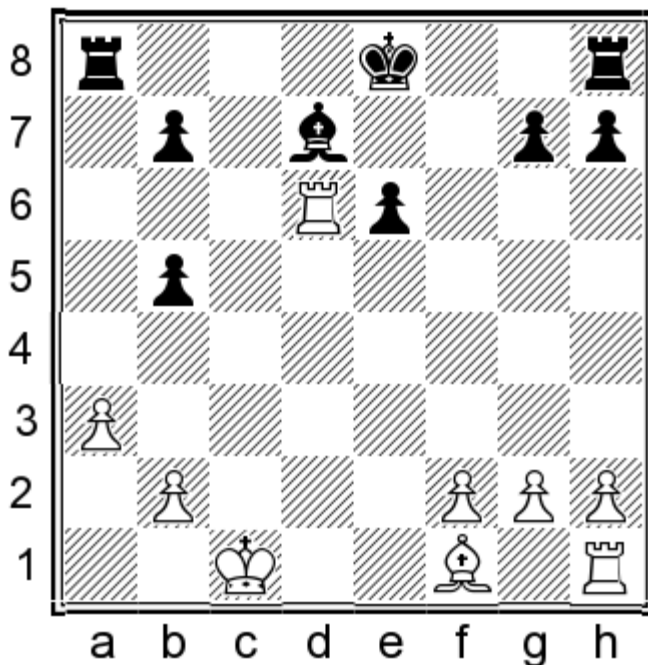
However, 25...f6! proves to be sufficient to keep the balance – 26.♙d3

26.♚e3 ♖f7 27.♙d3 ♚c5 looks also okay.

26...♚c5 27.dxe6 ♙xe6+ 28.♖a1 ♖f7 29.♞e1 ♞hd8! (relieving the central pressure at the cost of a pawn, but Black will get enough activity for it) 30.♞xd8 ♞xd8 31.♙xh7 ♚c4 32.♚xc4 bxc4 33.♙e4 b5 34.♙c6 ♞d2. The rather forced sequence of moves has produced an ending that Black should be able to hold without much difficulty, e.g. 35.♙xb5 ♞xf2 36.♙c6 g5 37.a4 ♞d2 38.♙b7 g4 39.a5 c3 40.bxc3 ♞a2+ 41.♖b1 ♞xa5=.

I also looked at 22.♚g3 ♖f8 23.♖b1 when 23...♚b6, intending ...b5-b4, reminds that White's king is also vulnerable. If 24.♞d3, then 24...h5! and Black will develop no matter what White does.

**22...♚xd6 23.♞xd6 fxe6**



Black's pawn structure is ruptured, but his pieces have good coordination.

**24.♙e2**

24.♞b6 ♖d8! 25.♞xb7 ♖c8 is an important nuance.

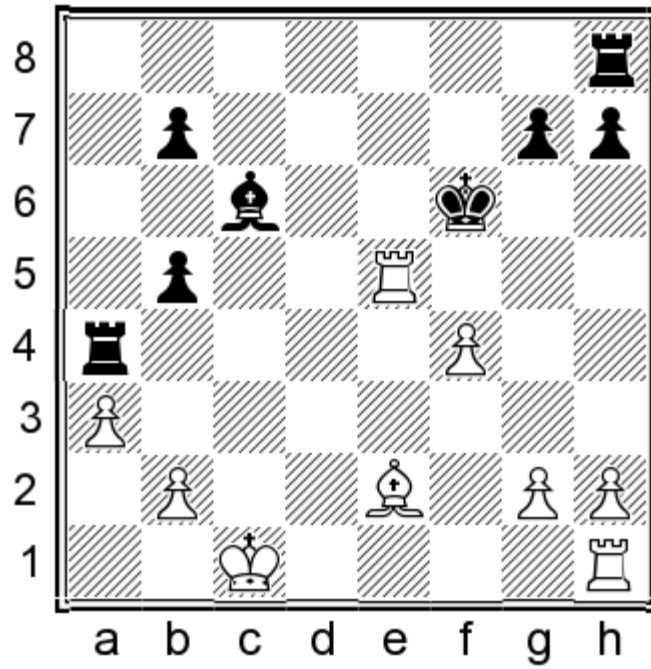
**24...♙c6! 25.♞xe6+ ♖f7 26.♞e5**

Black has temporarily given up a pawn, but his pieces are tremendously active and the draw is in sight. Yet the manner he achieves it is the best advertisement for king activity in endgames.

**26...♖f6! 27.f4**

(27.♞e3 ♙xg2= is obviously not a problem.)

**27...♞a4!** (Attacking the rook's supporter forces the events.)



28.♙d3! ♜xf4 29.♞he1 ♜xg2

Bluntly taking the pawn. It looks risky but Black and his computer has calculated the consequences.

30.♞e6+ ♔g5 31.♞g1 ♞g4! 32.♞e5+ ♔f4!

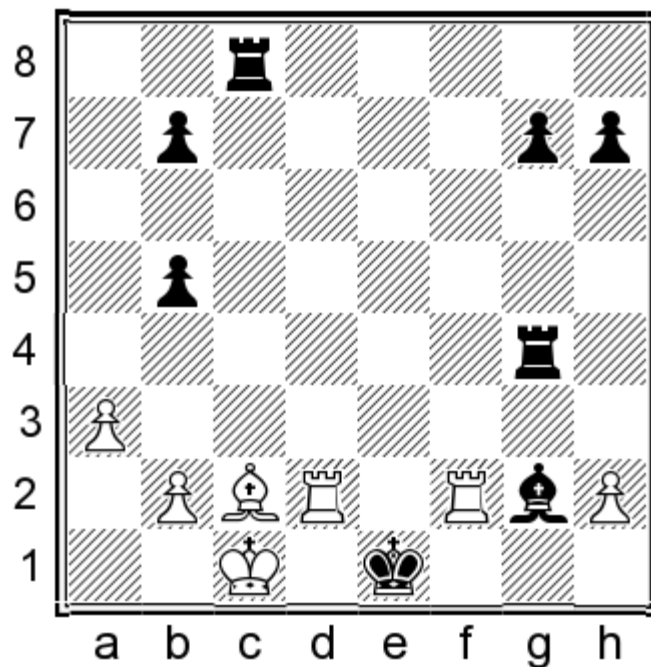
32...♔h4?? is a sure loser in view of 33.♞e2+— and an exchange falls.

33.♞xb5

33.♞f5+ ♔e3 34.♞c2 looks very dangerous for Black, yet a study-like defence saves the day:

34...♞c8 35.♞e1+ ♔d4 36.♞d1+ (36.♔b1 ♞xc2 37.♔xc2 ♞e4+=) 36...♔e3 37.♞d3+ (37.♞e5+? ♞e4±) 37...♔e2 38.♞d2+ ♔e1! 39.♞ff2

39.h3!?! ♞g3 40.♞e5+ ♔f1 41.♔b1 ♔g1 42.♞xh7 g6= maintains the draw.



39...♔f1!!=. A brilliant point I will never forget.

33...♖e3! 34.♞e1+! ♕f2□

(34...♕xd3?? 35.♞b3+ ♕c4 36.♞b4+-)

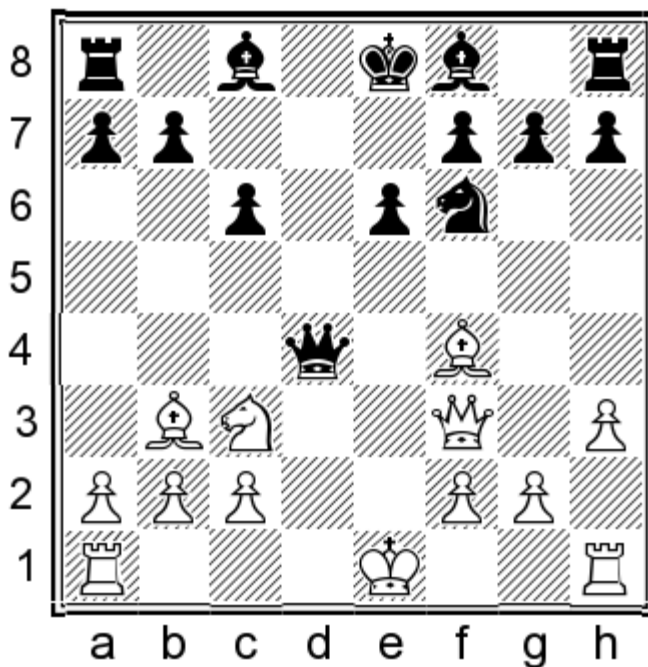
35.♞be5 ♔f3□

After a few “only” moves the king has reached safety. The rest is clear.

36.♞f1+ ♕g2 37.♞c5 ♞f4! 38.h4 g6 39.h5 ♞d4 40.♞c2+ ♕g3 41.♞c3 ♔xh5 42.♔e4+ ♕h4 43.♔xb7 ♔g4 Draw.

36. Dzhumaev – Tiviakov  
Mashhad 2011

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♗c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 c6 6.♗e5 ♗bd7 7.♗c4 ♞c7 8.♞f3 ♗b6 9.♔f4 ♞d7 10.h3! ♗xc4  
11.♔xc4 ♞xd4 12.♔b3 e6?!



This is a bit too laborious for my taste. I do not like my bishop hemmed in by his own pawns.

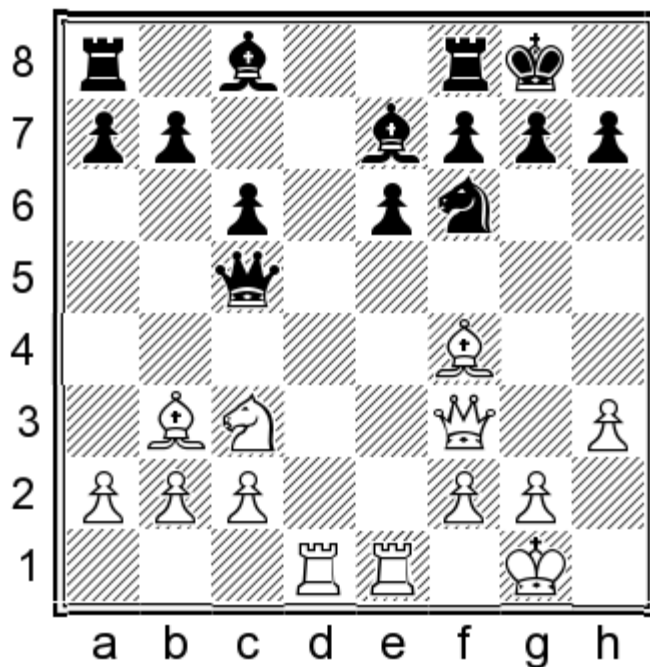
Let us make a stop and assess the situation. Black has won a pawn and has a solid structure, but White is enjoying a considerable lead in development. It will require extreme accuracy from Black to develop his own side as the ♔c8 is problematic. On the other hand, White has a similar concern as the ♔b3 bites on granite and it should be redeployed somehow in order to help the attack.

13.♞d1 ♞b6

This has been played by Tiviakov, but he also recommended 13...♞c5. Actually, this seems to preserve more mobility for the black queen, but White retains lasting pressure. After 14.0-0 ♔e7, White continues calmly with 15.♞fe1!

The immediate 15.♗e4 ♗xe4 16.♞xe4 ♞h5 17.♔d6 ♔xd6 simplified Black’s task in Milde-Gudichsen, corr. 2011. 15...0-0!

White is better after 15...♞h5?! 16.g4 ♞g6 17.♔c4! h5 18.g5 h4 19.♕h2! because Black has allowed the activation of White’s light squared bishop.



16. dxe4!

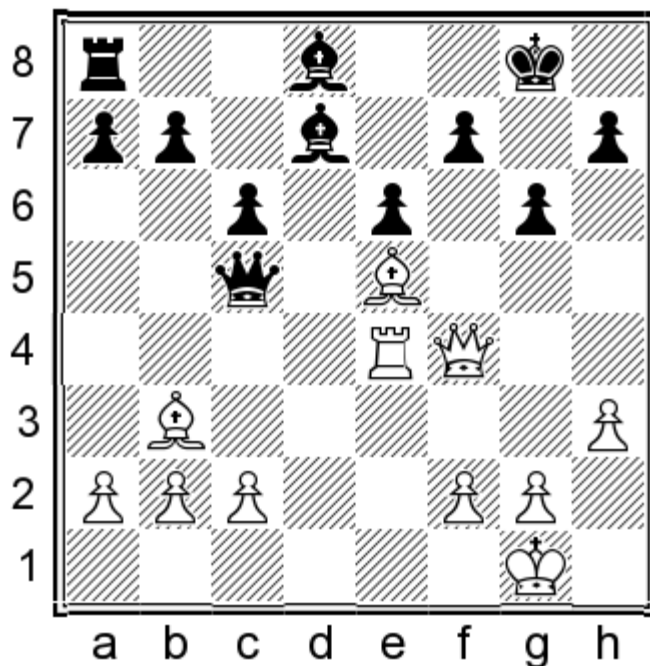
16. Re5 Bb6 17. Ba4 Bb6 18. Bc5 Bb6 19. Ba4 Bb6= was equal in Melia-Mikadze, Georgia 2011.

16... dxe4 17. Bxe4!

17. Bxe4 Bb5 (17... a5 18. a4 Bb5 19. Be5 Bg6 20. Bc3) 18. Be5 is less energetic although White's game is easier since Black lack a clear plan of develop the queenside.

17... Bc8 18. Bxd8+ Bxd8 19. Be5 Bc7 20. Bg3 g6 21. Bf4!

21. h4 Bb7 22. Bc3 (22. Bg4 f6) prepares to set-up a battery on the long diagonal, but Black can probably counter this plan sufficiently with 22... Bc8 23. h5 (23. Be5 f6 24. Bf4 c5 25. a4 Bc6!?) 23... Bc7 24. Bb3 e5!

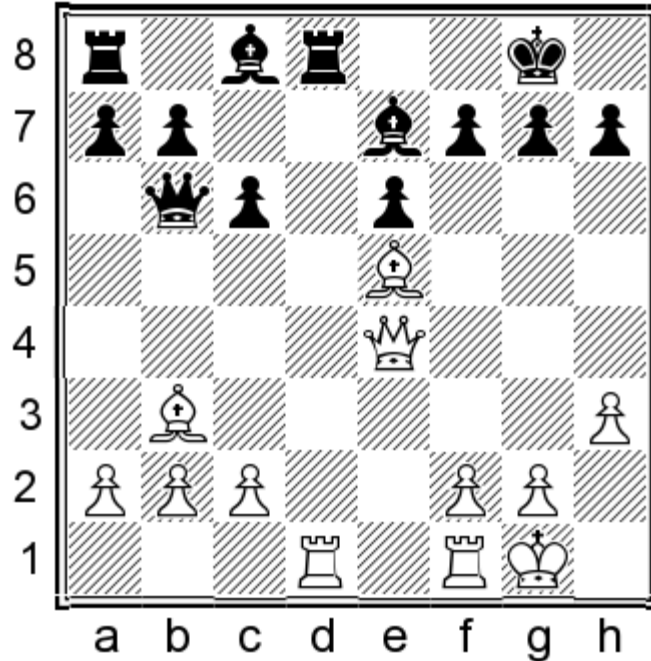


Black cannot defend his dark squares for long. For instance:

21... Bc8 22. Bc3 Be8 23. c3 Bg5 (23... f6 24. Bc6 Bb7 25. Bb3 Bf7 26. Bb6) 24. Bxd8;

21... Be7 22. Bc4 Bb6 23. Bc3 Be8 24. Bb6 Bf8 25. Bg5 Bg7 26. Bxg7 Bxg7 27. Bb4 Bc8 28. c3 Bg8 when 29. Bb4!? Bc7 30. Bxb7 gives White a 3:2 pawn majority in the endgame.

14.0-0 ♕e7 15.♗e4! ♖xe4 16.♚xe4 0-0 17.♗e5 ♜d8

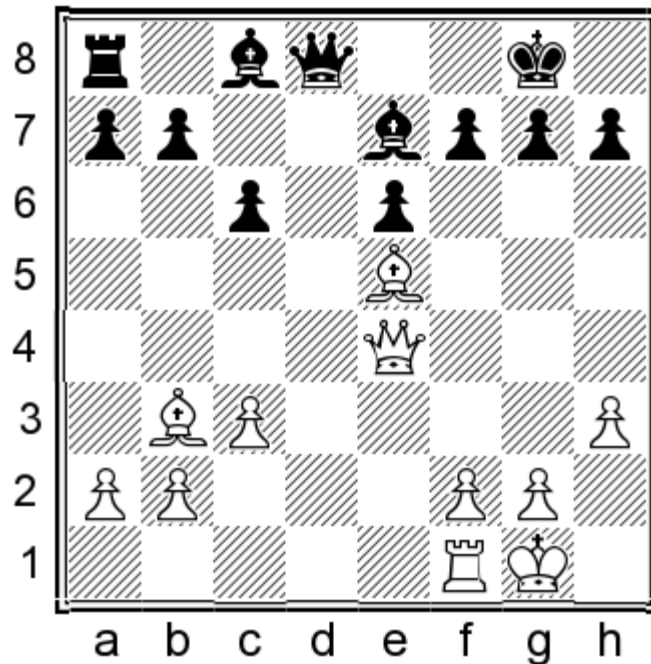


Introducing a defence based on the ...♜d8-d7 idea. Black should hold here, but the defence requires great accuracy.

18.♗c4

White has other promising alternatives:

18.♜xd8+!? ♚xd8 19.c3↑, planning ♜f1-d1-d3.



The point of my idea is that Black is unable to develop the bishop. For instance:

19...♗d7? 20.♜d1 ♚e8 21.♚d4 is a double attack.

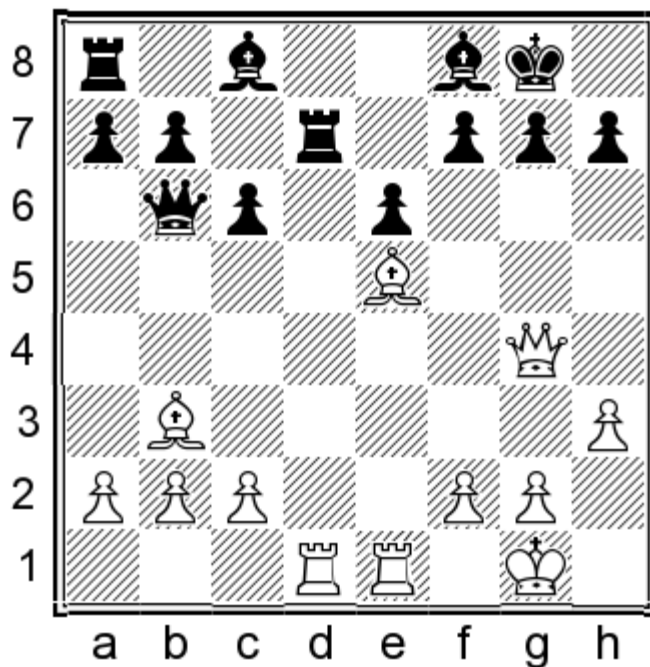
19...♚e8 20.♜d1 b6?! is also dubious owing to 21.♜d3 ♗a6 22.♜g3 g6 23.h4.

18. ♖g4 ♕f8 19. ♖fe1 occurred in the game Filippov-Vakhidov, Tashkent 2013.

White should bring as many pieces as possible into the attack. He has nothing convincing after 19. ♕f6 ♖d7 or

19. ♖g3 ♖d7 20. ♖xd7 ♕xd7 21. ♖d1 ♕e8 22. ♖d4 ♖c5 23. c3 ♖e7=.

19... ♖d7! A key move. The black queen is heading for e7 via d8.



20. ♖e3

A multipurpose move. White would like to double his rooks on the d-file or attack g7 according to circumstances.

Instead, the alternative 20. ♕c4 ♖b4 21. a3 ♖e7 seems to lead nowhere.

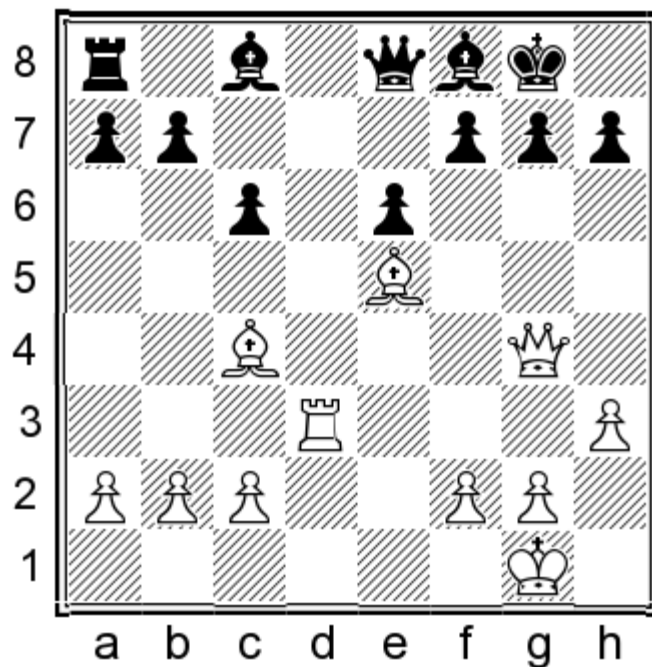
20... ♖b4 21. c4. The stem game saw further 21... ♖e7 22. ♖ed3±. S. Kasparov recommends as an improvement

21... ♖xd1+ 22. ♖xd1 ♖c5. In my opinion, it does not change the overall assessment that White's game is easier despite the missing pawn, e.g. 23. ♕c2 b6 24. b3.

**18... ♖d7 19. ♖g4?!**

19. ♖d3 ♖xd3 20. ♕xd3 g6 Δ... ♕d7-e8 is given as equal by Tiviakov.;

19. ♖fe1! ♖d8 20. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 21. ♖g4 ♕f8 22. ♖d1 ♖e8 23. ♖d3! fixes White's advantage.

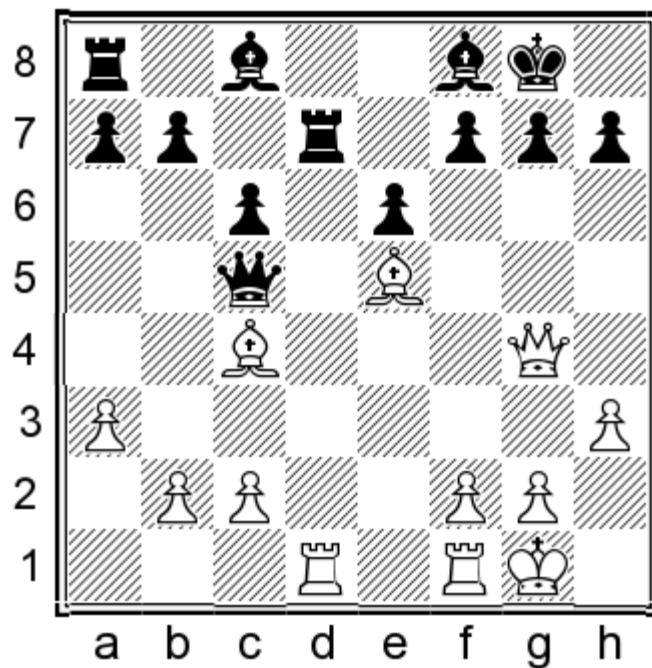


For instance, 23...b5 24.♖g3 g6 25.♚f3 ♘g7 26.♙xg7 ♔xg7 27.♙xb5 regains the pawn with a stable edge.

**19...♙f8 20.a3**

20.♖xd7?! ♙xd7 21.♖d1 ♙e8; 20.♙d3 g6; 20.♖fe1!? ♚c5∞ was probably best.

**20...♚c5! =**



Now the black queen is inching closer to the kingside and Black has completely equalized.

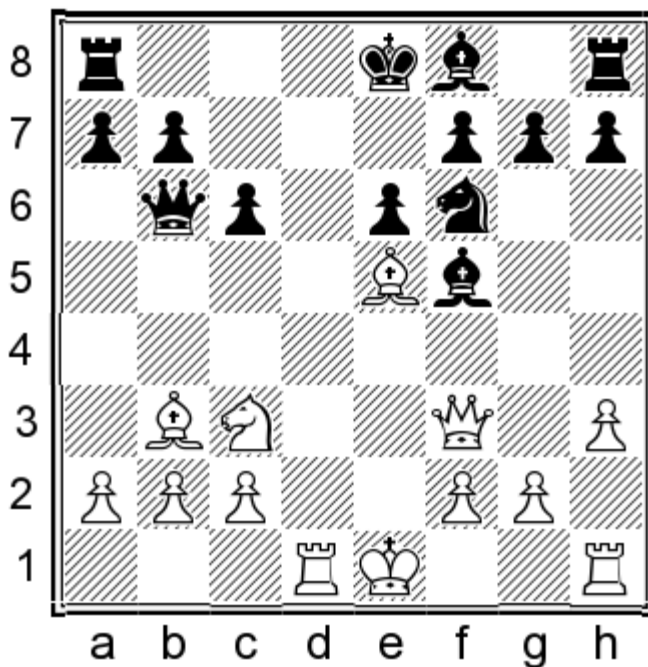
**21.♚e4 g6 22.b4 ♚e7 23.h4 h5!**

In the remainder of the game Black gradually outplays his opponent and wins. I will not comment on it as it is irrelevant to the opening.

24.♞xd7 ♟xd7 25.♞f4 ♟e8 26.♟f6 ♞d6 27.♟e5 ♞e7 28.♟f6 ♞d6 29.♟e5 ♞d8 30.♟f6 ♟h6 31.♞f3 ♞d2 32.♟b3 ♞f4  
 33.♞c3 ♞c8 34.♞e1 c5 35.♞xe6 fxe6 36.♟xe6+ ♔h7 37.♟xc8 ♞c1+ 38.♔h2 ♟f4+ 39.g3 ♟c6 40.♞a1 ♞d2 41.♞g1 ♟e3  
 42.♟g5 ♟xg5 43.hxg5 cxb4 44.axb4 ♞xb4 45.♞a1 ♞e4 46.♟h3 a5 47.♞d1 a4 48.f4 ♞e3 49.♟f5 gxf5 50.♞xh5+ ♔g7  
 51.♞h6+ ♔f7 52.g6+ ♔e7 53.♞g7+ ♔d6 54.♞f8+ ♔c7 55.♔h3 ♞e6 56.♞g7+ ♔b6 57.♔h4 ♔a6 58.♔g5 ♟e8 59.g4  
 ♞xg6+ 0-1

37. Yildiz – Kosteniuk  
 Astana 05.03.2013

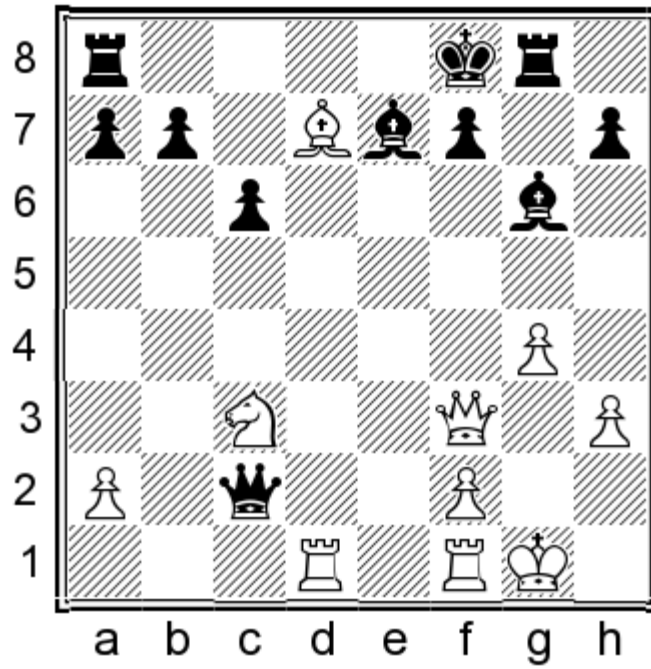
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♘c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♘c4 ♞c7 8.♞f3 ♘b6 9.♟f4 ♞d7 10.h3 ♘xc4  
 11.♟xc4 ♞xd4 12.♟b3 ♟f5 13.♞d1 ♞b6 14.♟e5 e6



15.g4

White tries to recover her sacrificed pawn, but loses a precious bishop in the process.

15...♟g6 16.♟xf6 gxf6 17.♞xf6 ♞g8 18.♟xe6 ♟e7! 19.♟d7+ ♔f8 20.♞f3 ♞xb2 21.0-0 ♞xc2



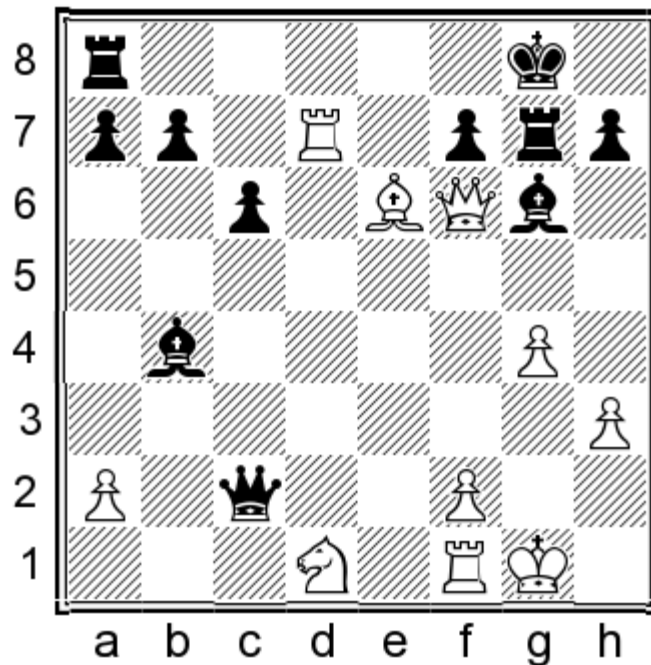
All this was probably the result of Kosteniuk's home preparation. She is a prominent fan of the 3...♘d6 Scandinavian. Black is still a pawn up but she has lost castling rights. Yet she does not seem to suffer so much as her two bishops provide a good cover.

### 22.♞fe1?

Overlooking a nice tactical point. 22.♙e6! was a must when Black should play as in the game – 22...♘b4!

White does not risk anything after 22...♞d8 23.♞xd8+ ♙xd8 24.♙b3 ♞b2 25.♞d1 ♔g7 26.♞d7.

23.♞d7 ♞g7 24.♞f6! ♔g8 25.♙d1! was a nice sequence which would have assured White of adequate compensation.

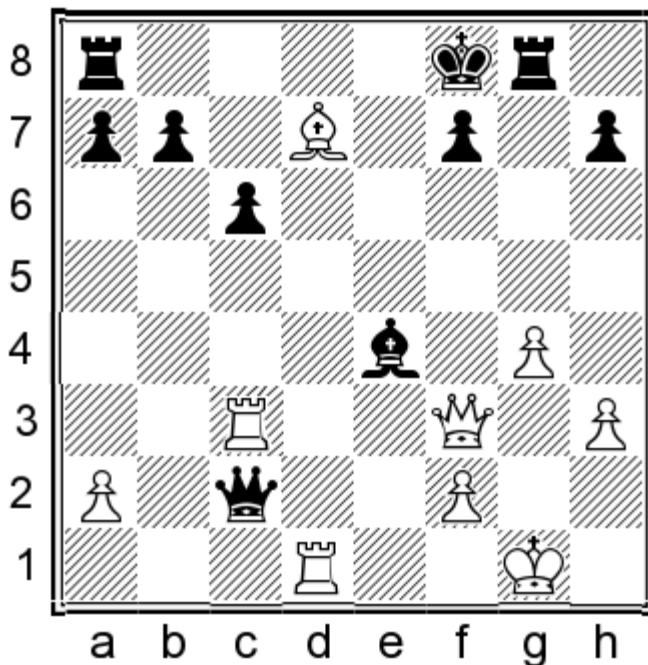


Black can force a draw with 25...h5 26.♙b3 ♞e4 27.♙e3 ♙c5 28.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 29.♙f5 ♞xg4+, but I do not see a compelling reason for such a hasty decision. He can play on instead with 25...♞f8 26.♙b3 ♞c5 27.♞xb7 h5 28.♙e3 hxg4 29.♙xg4 ♙h5 30.♙h1 ♙c3=.

22...♙b4!♠

Now White is suddenly lost. She is forced to trade queens remaining without compensation for the missing pawn.

23.♞e3 ♙xc3! 24.♞xc3 ♙e4!



The point – a classical example of an overloaded queen.

25.♞xc2 ♙xf3 26.♞e1 h5 27.♙h2 hxg4 28.♙g3 ♞d8 29.♙f5?

29.hxg4 ♞xd7 30.♙xf3 ♞g6♠.

29...♞d5

Good enough, but more precise was 29...♙d1! 30.♞c3 gxh3+ 31.♙xh3 ♞d6--.

30.♙c8?

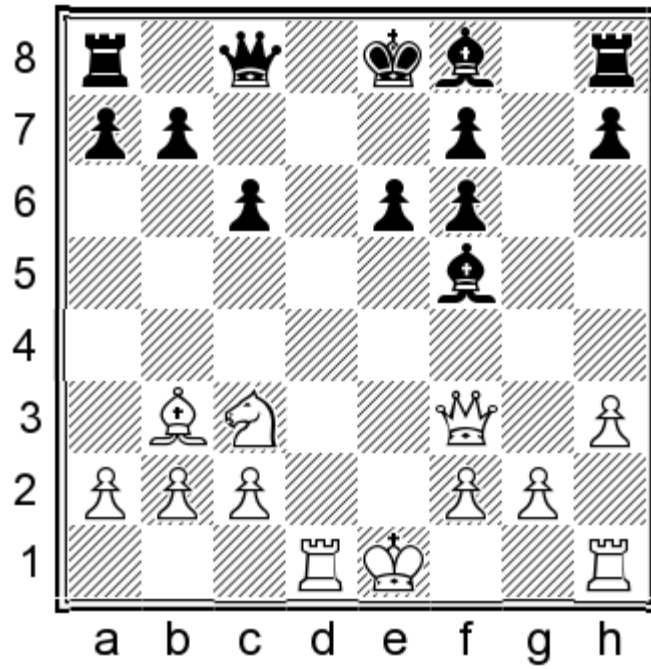
White chooses to lose quickly. There was no hope in 30.♙xg4 ♙d1 31.♞c4 f5 32.♞f4 ♙f7 33.♙h4 ♙xg4 34.hxg4 ♞xg4+ 35.♞xg4 fxg4 36.♙xg4 ♞d2 either.

30...♞d3 31.♞e3 ♞xe3 32.fxe3 ♙e4 33.♞c4 gxh3+ 34.♙xh3 ♙g2+ 35.♙h2 ♙d5 36.♞a4 ♞g2+ 37.♙h3 ♞xa2 0-1

38. Rybka 4.0 – Houdini 1.5a  
S1 www.tcec-chess.org 2011

This chapter ends with a marathon contest between computers. The truth is, their calculating power and sometimes stunning evaluations are invaluable in modern chess preparation, but remember, chess is a game for humans – to play, analyse and enjoy it! Battles between computers leave me somehow indifferent, no matter how flawless they could be.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 3.♘c3 ♞d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♘c4 ♞c7 8.♞f3 ♘b6 9.♙f4 ♞d7 10.h3 ♘xc4 11.♙xc4 ♞xd4 12.♙b3 ♙f5 13.♙e3 ♞d7 14.♞d1 ♞c8 15.♙d4 e6 16.♙xf6 gxf6



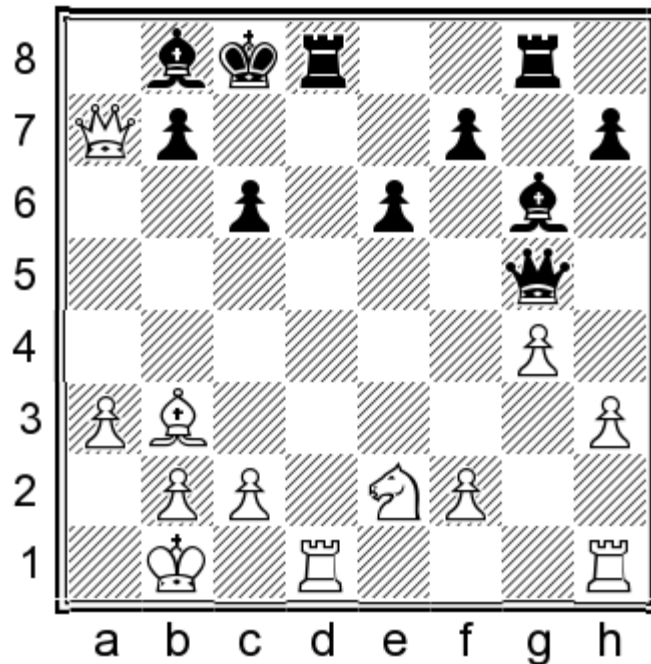
17.g4 ♖g6 18.♟xf6 ♜g8 19.♞e5 ♞b8 20.♞e3 ♜e7

There's a humorous touch in this position as very soon both sides will manage to castle long!

21.♔d2! ♜d6 22.♘e2 ♞c7 23.♔c1 0-0-0! 24.♟xa7 ♞e7

The bishop pair and the dozing white bishop provide sufficient compensation for the pawn.

25.a3 ♞g5+ 26.♔b1 ♜b8



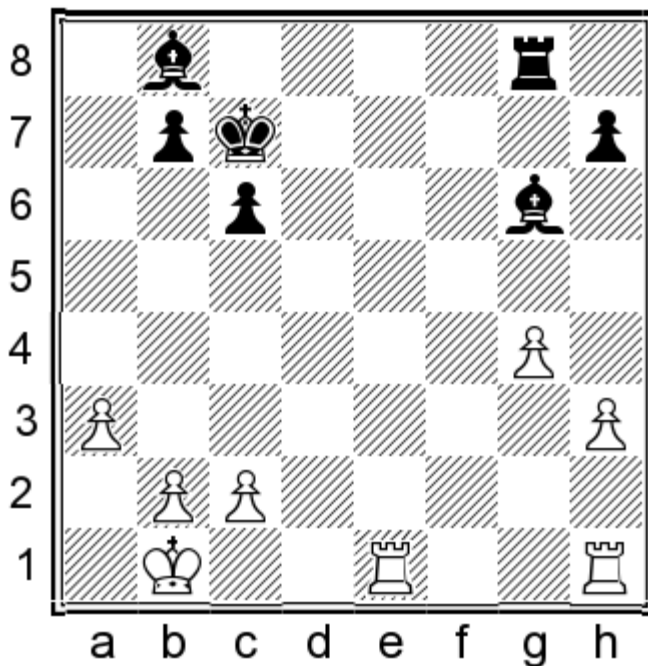
27.f4

27.♟a4 ♜xd1+ 28.♜xd1 ♜d8 29.♜xd8+ ♞xd8 30.♘f4 ♞d1+ 31.♔a2 ♜xf4 32.♟xf4 ♜xc2 is a draw.

27...♟xf4 28.♘xf4 ♜xa7 29.♞de1 ♜b8

Simplest would have been 29...h5, but the material transformation that followed in the game also keep Black on the safe side.

30. ♖xe6 fxe6 31. ♗xe6+ ♔c7 32. ♗xg8 ♜xg8=



Black may be lost without rooks, but White cannot achieve the desired trade without an active “help” by his opponent. Since it is a computer, we could safely claim that it is an easy draw.

33.a4 ♔b6 34.b3 ♗g3 35.♞e2 ♗h4 36.♞f1 ♞d8 37.♔b2 ♔c7 38.b4 ♞d5 39.♔b3 ♞d7 40.♔c3 ♗f7 41.♞f5 b6 42.♞ee5 ♗g3 43.♞e2 ♗d6 44.h4 ♔b7 45.♞e3 ♗f8 46.♞d3 ♞c7 47.♞f4 ♗g7+ and the game went on for 85 more moves until the draw was fixed.

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