

Beat the Najdorf & Taimanov Sicilians!

A Fighters Repertoire
Against
the Famous Sicilians



S.P. Sethuraman

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A Fighters Repertoire Against the Famous Sicilians

by
Grandmaster S.P. Sethuraman

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Key to Symbols

- ! a good move
- ? a weak move
- !! an excellent move
- ?? a blunder
- !?! an interesting move
- ?! a dubious move
- TM only move
- N novelty
- ‰ lead in development
- ⊙ zugzwang
- = equality
- ∞ unclear position
- ⊙ with compensation for the sacrificed material
- ² White stands slightly better
- ³ Black stands slightly better
- ± White has a serious advantage
- μ Black has a serious advantage
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- , with an attack
- f* with initiative
- „ with counterplay
- ... with the idea of
- ¹ better is
- ≤ worse is
- + check
- # mate

Foreword

I got to know Sethu more closely a few years back when we trained together a few times. I found him to be meticulous in his preparation and especially at home in complex positions. These qualities make him perfect for these two Sicilians and I am sure after reading this book, you (the reader) will be ready to confidently explore these two fascinating Sicilians.

Former World Champion Viswanathan Anand

May 2020

Preface

From the first moment (about a year ago) when Mr. Daniel Vanheirzeele from Thinkers Publishing contacted me about the possibility of writing an opening book, I was really excited about the prospect. Writing a chess book was a completely new direction for me, and anything new excites me and gives me a high. Then after some discussion we narrowed the topic down to 1.e4 (*'Best by test'*) and I found myself with a contract to cover two major variations within the Sicilian: the sharp Najdorf and the trendy Taimanov.

I actually already had a decent reputation as a dangerous theoretician on the white side of 1.e4, and in particular against these two openings. I had shown some interesting ideas in my games over the years which were the result of my real passion for opening knowledge, a trait which has stayed with me throughout my chess career.

From a very young age I had this incurable curiosity about intricacies in the opening. One memorable episode, of which I remain proud even today, occurred when I was 13 years old. I had been watching the game Karjakin – Anand at Wijk aan Zee 2006, in which Vishy unleashed a fascinating novelty with 24...Nc7. After watching that game I was unable to sleep and I began to analyze the crazy, razor-sharp English attack for hours and hours. I found some very interesting ideas and shortly afterwards I showed them to my coach GM R.B.Ramesh (a very famous, world-class trainer) in a training session. There were, in total, 20 pages of analysis based upon the game! He was stunned by the level of detail as it was not normal for a thirteen year old in those days to create such in-depth analysis (of course now it's a different story as people regularly become Grandmasters at the age of 13!).

From that time on I've been consistently cementing my reputation, especially among my fellow Indian Grandmasters, as an opening expert. I have real insights to impart from the many years of work and so it was a no-brainer for me to seize the opportunity to write a book and share my knowledge with the readers.

The only remaining hurdle was the time factor. Being an active and ambitious player, I had many tournaments lined up on my schedule and was not sure when I could find time to work on this project, since it was clear that it would be a sizeable undertaking. Second thoughts crept into my mind at some point, but once I got started on the work, I built up a lot of momentum. In both the openings, I've worked tirelessly to find new paths and provide fresh perspective.

Thanks are due to Mr. Vanheirzeele, a passionate chess lover, for giving me that extra time cushion when I needed it and for having great belief in my work. I would also like to thank GM Romain Edouard, the editor, for suggesting improvements. They truly helped me do my best work and I think the end result that you are holding contains a really impressive array of new ideas.

It gives me great pride to be writing these lines and signing my name at long last on this page. As they say, the first one is always special. I present to you my first opening book, which I really hope you enjoy!

S.P. Sethuraman

Chennai, May 2020

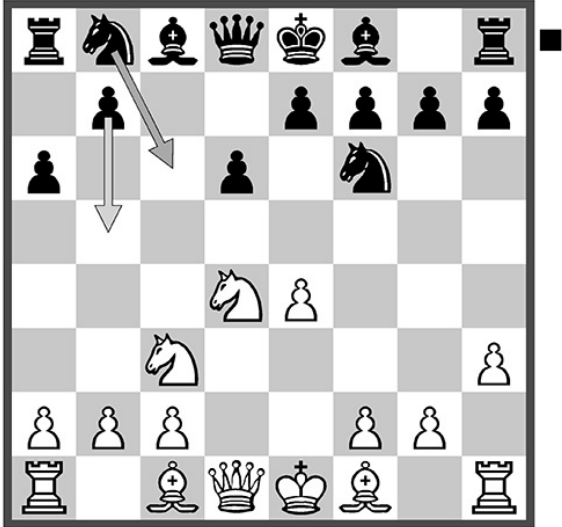
Part I

6.h3 Against the Najdorf

Chapter 1

6...Nc6 & 6...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3



Chapter Guide

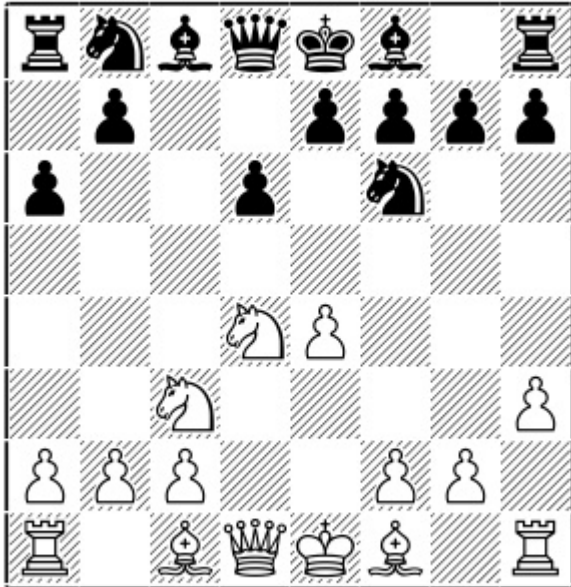
Chapter 1 – 6...Nc6 & 6...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3

- a) 6...Nc6 7.g4 --
- b) 6...Nc6 7.g4 g6
- c) 6...Nc6 7.g4 Qb6
- d) 6...b5

a) 6...Nc6 7.g4 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3



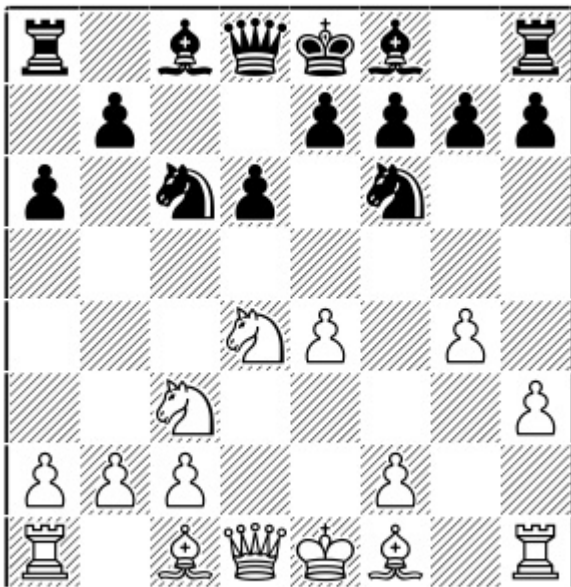
Position after: 6.h3

The Fischer system is one of the most reliable systems against the Najdorf. It is very flexible and can lead to either a positional or dynamic struggle.

6...Nc6

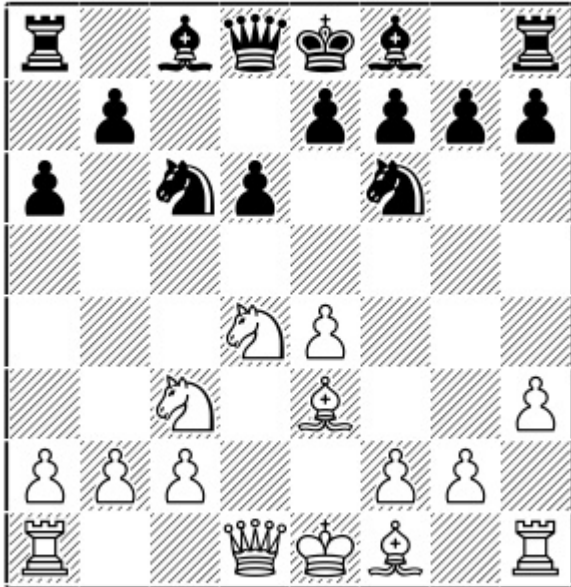
Playing a sort of Classical Sicilian with the moves h3 and ...a6 included.

7.g4



Position after: 7.g4

7.Be3!? With this move White isn't trying to punish Black for the move-order but just aims for a transposition to lines considered later.

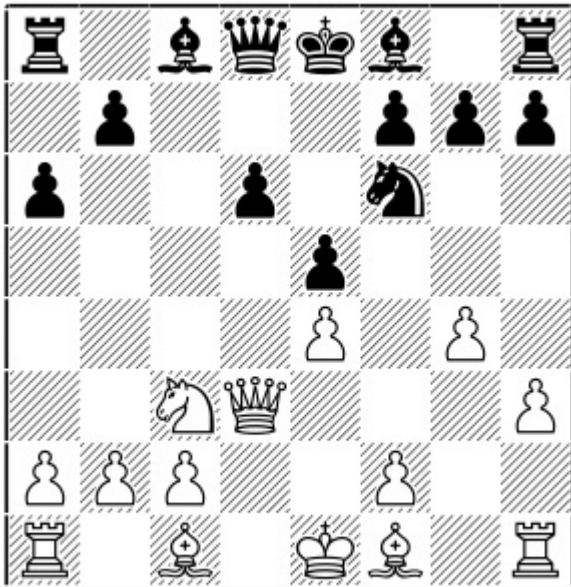


Position after: 7.Be3!?

Now: 7...e5 [7...g6 8.Qd2 Bg7 9.g4 is discussed under the 6.h3 g6 7.Be3 Bg7 8.g4 Nc6 9.Qd2 lines in the next chapter] 8.Nb3 Be6 9.Qf3 and we've transposed to 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.Be3 Nc6 9.Qf3.

7...h6

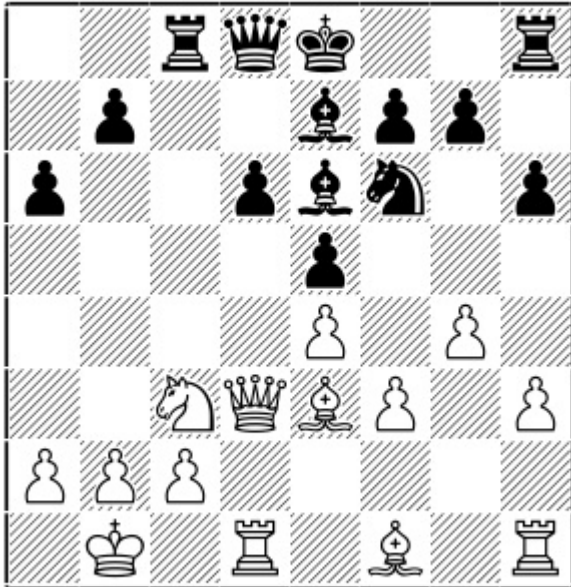
7...Nxd4 8.Qxd4 e5 9.Qd3!



Position after: 9.Qd3!

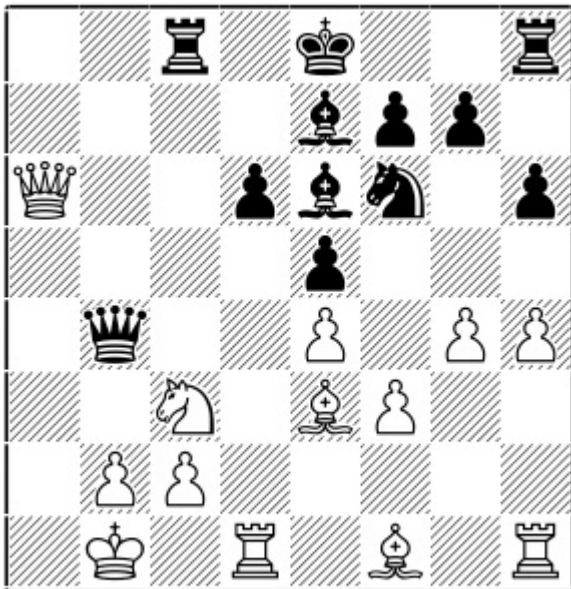
Making way for the dark squared bishop on c1.

A) 9...h6 10.Be3 Be6 11.0-0-0 Rc8 [11...Be7 12.Kb1 Rc8 13.f3 transposes to 11...Rc8.] 12.Kb1 Be7 13.f3!N



Position after: 13.f3!N

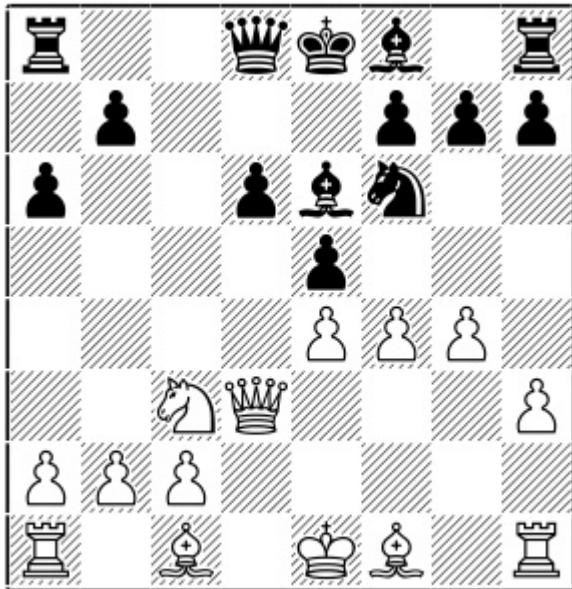
With the idea of h4. 13...Qa5 [13...Nd7 14.Nd5 Bg5 15.h4 Bxe3 16.Nxe3²] 14.a3 b5 15.h4! b4 [15...Rxc3 The typical exchange sacrifice is not effective here because of 16.Qxc3 Qxc3 17.bxc3 d5 Otherwise a4 may be next. 18.g5±] 16.axb4 Qxb4 17.Qxa6



Position after: 17.Qxa6

17...0-0 [17...Rb8 18.Bb5+ Bd7 19.Bxd7+ Nxd7 20.Kc1! Qxb2+ 21.Kd2±] 18.Qb5± Forcing the exchange of queens and with one extra pawn, White is winning.

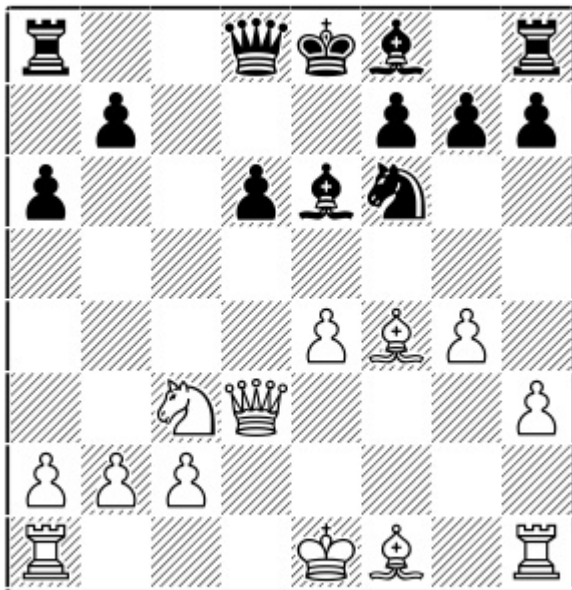
B) 9...Be6 10.f4!



Position after: 10.f4!

B1) 10...Rc8 11.g5 Nd7 12.f5 Bc4 13.Qf3 Nb6 14.Bxc4 Nxc4 15.f6! [15.b3 Nb6 16.Bd2± White was better in Korobov, A (2702) – Negi, P (2641) New Delhi 2012.] 15...gxf6 16.Rf1 Nb6 17.Bd2±

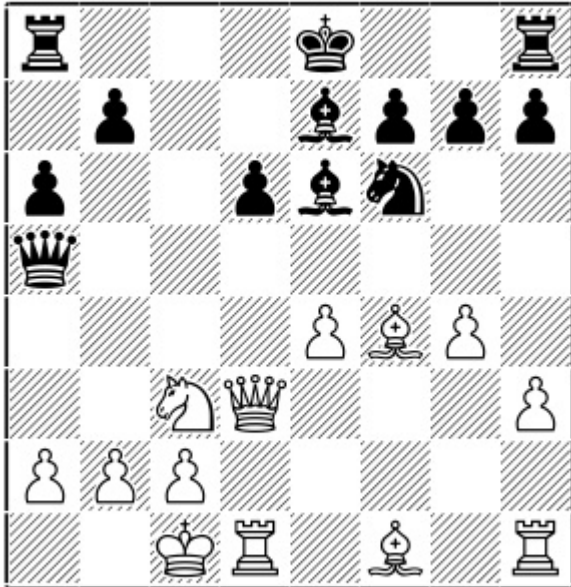
B2) 10...exf4 11.Bxf4



Position after: 11.Bxf4

B2.1) 11...d5 12.0-0-0 dxe4 13.Nxe4 Qxd3 14.Bxd3 [14.Nxf6+ gxf6 15.Rxd3 Rd8 16.Rxd8+ Kxd8 17.Be2± Also gives White a good advantage in the endgame.] 14...0-0-0 15.Ng5 Bd6 16.Nxe6 fxe6 17.Rhf1 Bxf4+ 18.Rxf4±

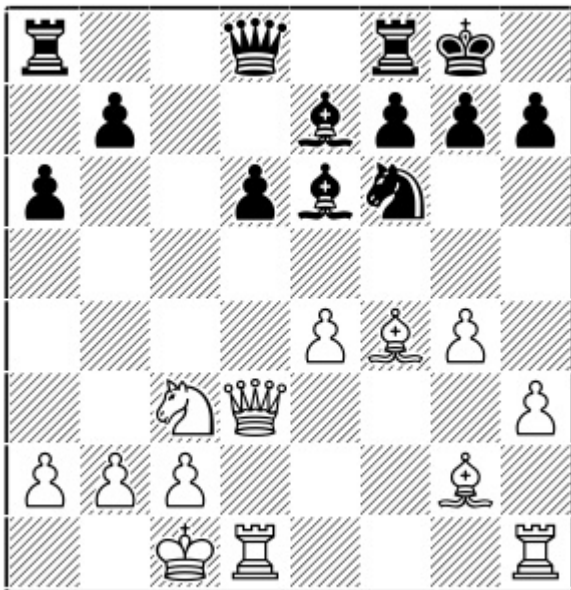
B2.2) 11...Qa5 12.0-0-0 Be7 [12...Bxa2 13.g5 Nd7 14.b3 Qa3+ 15.Kd2± and the black bishop is trapped on a2.]



Position after: 12...Be7

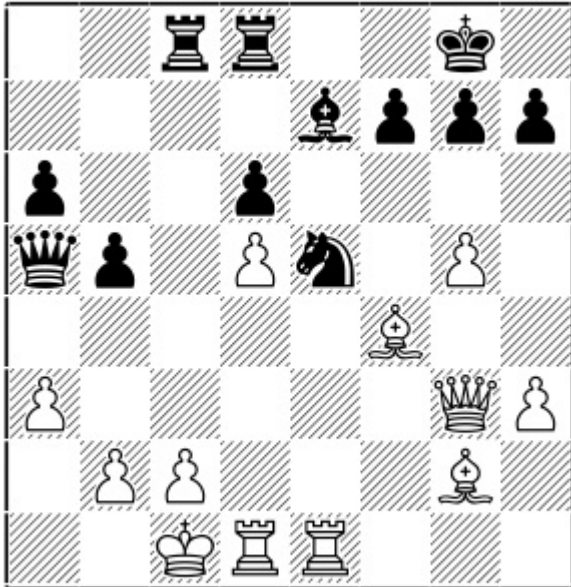
13.Kb1! [13.Bxd6 0-0-0 14.e5 Ne8,,] 13...0-0 14.Nd5± White gets his dream position; he has total control over the centre.

B2.3) 11...Be7 12.0-0-0 0-0 13.Bg2



Position after: 13.Bg2

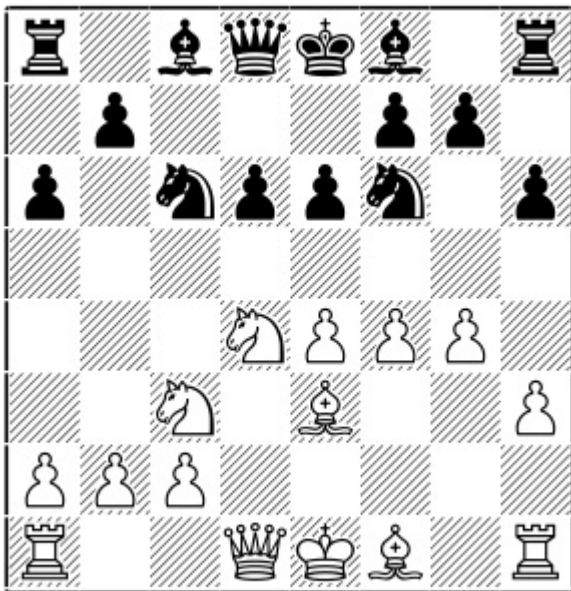
Black is too slow to carry out his idea with ...Nd7-e5 as the d6-pawn is hanging. 13...Qa5 14.a3 Rfd8 [14...Rac8 15.Bxd6 Bxd6 16.Qxd6 Now if 16...Rfd8 White can play 17.Qf4± with an extra pawn.] 15.Nd5! Bxd5 [15...Nxd5 16.exd5 Bd7 17.Be4±] 16.exd5 Nd7 17.g5! Restricting Black's pieces. 17...Ne5 18.Qg3 Rac8 19.Rhe1 b5



Position after: 19...b5

20.Be4! Bringing the other bishop into play. [20.Kb1 b4 21.axb4 Qxb4 22.Bd2 Qc5,,] 20...g6 [20...b4 21.Bd2±] 21.Bd2! Rerouting the bishop to a better square. 21...Qc7 22.Bc3 a5 23.Bxe5 dxe5 24.Kb1 Bd6 25.h4 b4 26.a4 Qd7 27.h5+- and White's attack triumphs.

8.Be3 e6 9.f4!

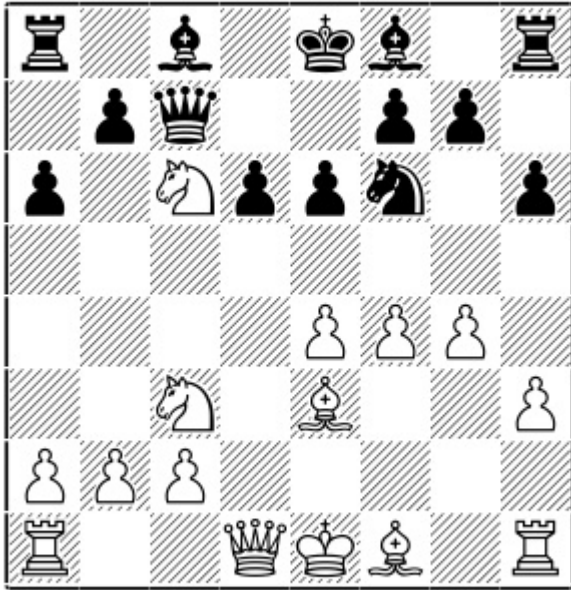


Position after: 9.f4!

9...Qc7

9...d5 10.Bg2 Bb4 [10...dxe4 11.Nxc6 bxc6 12.Qxd8+ Kxd8 13.Nxe4 Nd5 14.Bd2± and White has a great endgame advantage.] 11.e5 Nd7 12.0-0± Black's b4-bishop is clearly misplaced and a strong attack is coming.

10.Nxc6!

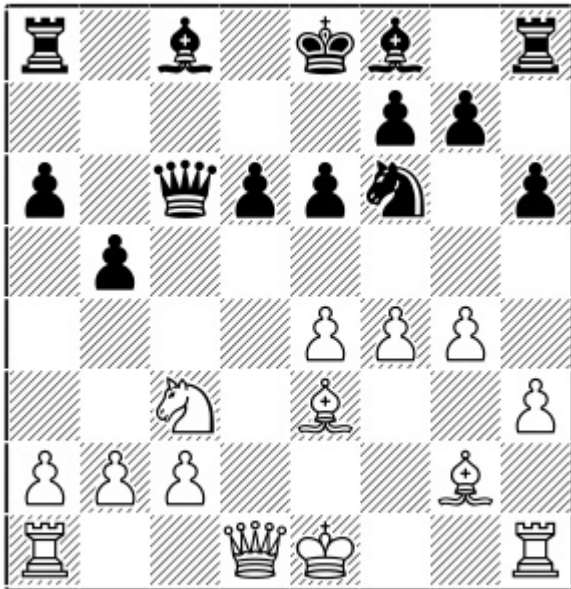


Position after: 10.Nxc6!

10...bxc6

10...Qxc6

A) 11.Bg2 b5

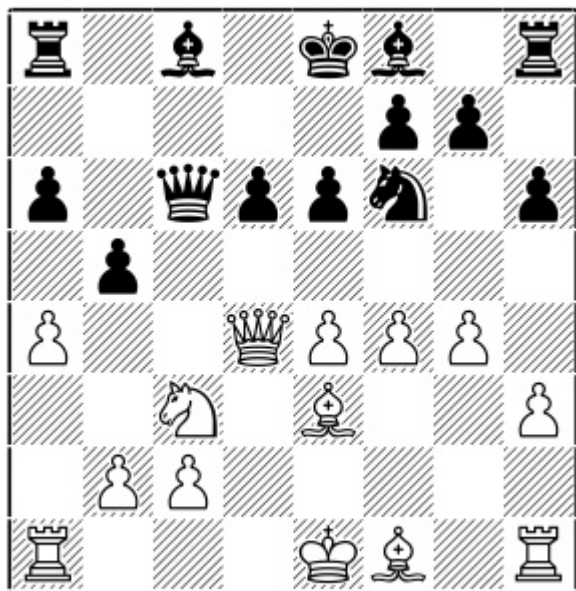


Position after: 11...b5

12.Rg1 [12.a3 Bb7 and Black is fine here.; 12.Qd4 Compared to 11.Qd4, here this looks slow and Black is in time to consolidate his position. 12...Bb7 13.a4 bxa4=] 12...b4 13.e5 d5 14.exf6 bxc3 15.fxg7 Bxg7 16.b3²

B) 11.Qd4! With this precise move White is waiting for Black to play ...b5 in order to then strike

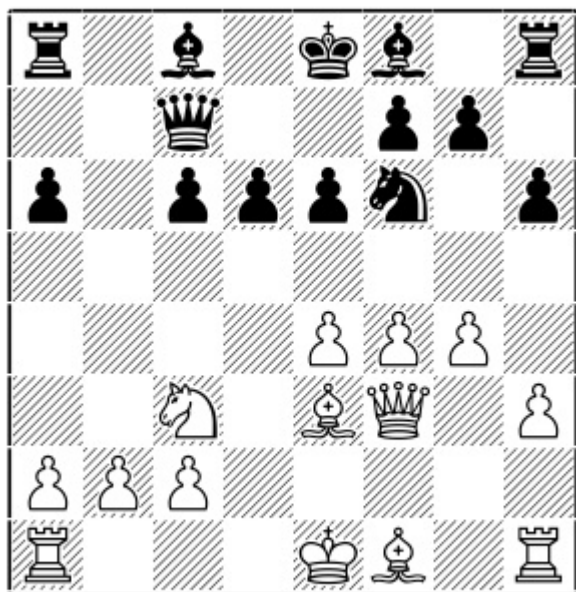
immediately with a4. 11...b5 12.a4



Position after: 12.a4

12...bxa4 [12...b4 13.Qxb4 d5 14.Qd4 dxe4 15.Bg2 Bb7 16.0-0-0±] 13.Rxa4 Be7 [13...Bb7? 14.Rc4 Qd7 15.Qb6+–] 14.g5 hxg5 15.fxg5 Nh5 16.Rg1± With Rc4 coming, White has a good position.

11.Qf3!N

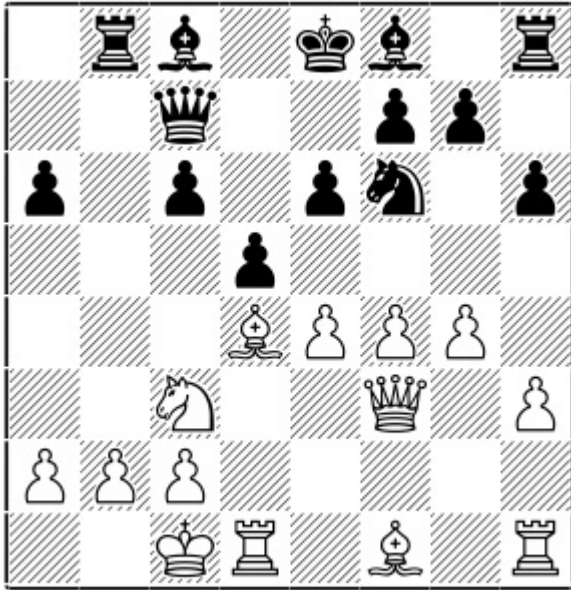


Position after: 11.Qf3!N

The best place for White's queen from a coordination perspective and also from here it plays a strong role in the attack.

11...d5

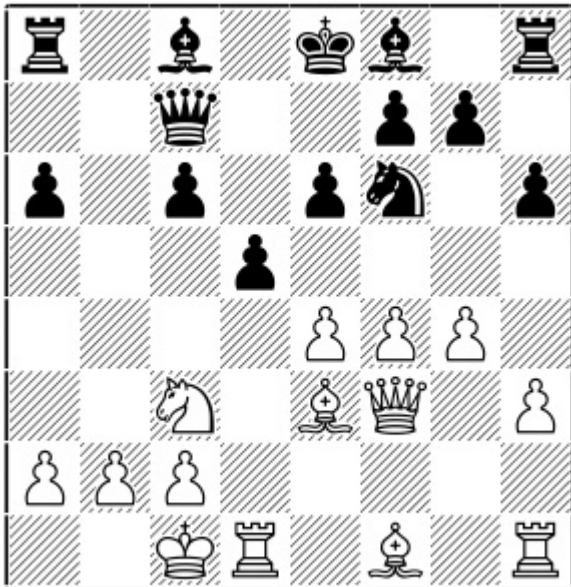
11...Rb8 12.0-0-0 d5 13.Bd4 White is threatening Be5 now.



Position after: 13.Bd4

13...Rb4 [13...Qa5 14.g5 hxg5 15.fxg5 Nd7 16.exd5 cxd5 17.Bg2± with a strong attack coming.] 14.Bg2 Bb7 15.Bxf6 gxf6 16.f5 Bd6 17.fxe6 Bf4+ 18.Kb1 fxe6 19.a3±

12.0-0-0



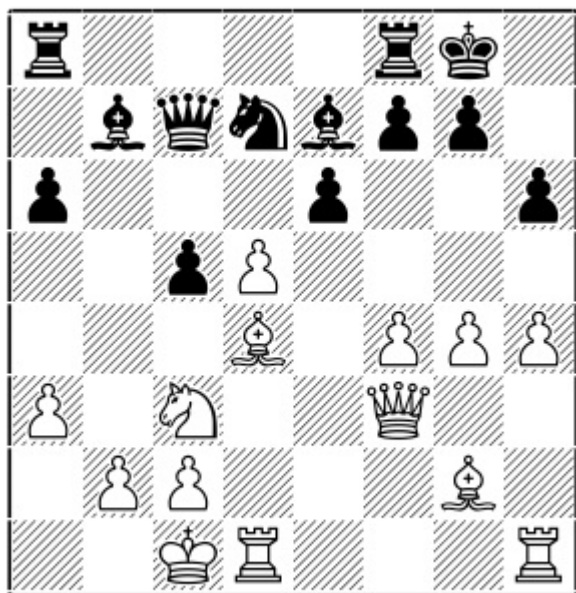
Position after: 12.0-0-0

12...Bb7

12...Be7 13.Bd4 Bb7 [13...0-0 14.Rg1± with a dangerous attack to follow.] 14.Bd3 0-0-0 15.exd5 cxd5 16.Qf2±

13.Bg2 Bb4 14.Bd4 0-0 15.a3 Be7 16.h4 Nd7 17.exd5 c5

17...cxd5 18.g5±

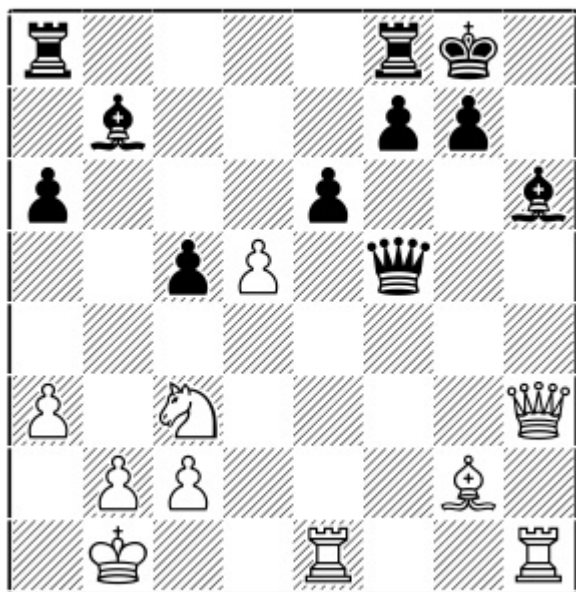


Position after: 17...c5

18.Be5

18.Bxg7!? Kxg7 19.g5 Rab8 20.Rhf1,

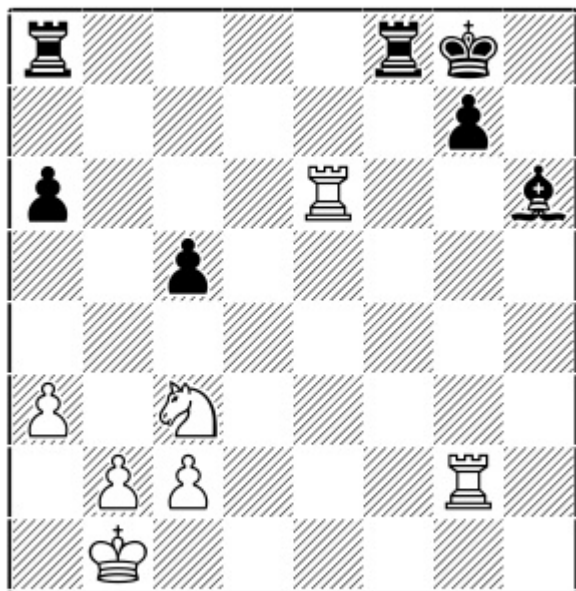
18...Nxe5 19.fxe5 Qxe5 20.g5 hxg5 21.hxg5 Bxg5+ 22.Kb1 Bh6 23.Rde1 Qf4 24.Qh3 Qf5



Position after: 24...Qf5

Black's king is vulnerable and so he is quite desperate to exchange queens.

25.Qh2 Qf4 26.dxe6 Qxh2 27.Rxh2 Bxg2 28.Rxg2 fxe6 29.Rxe6±

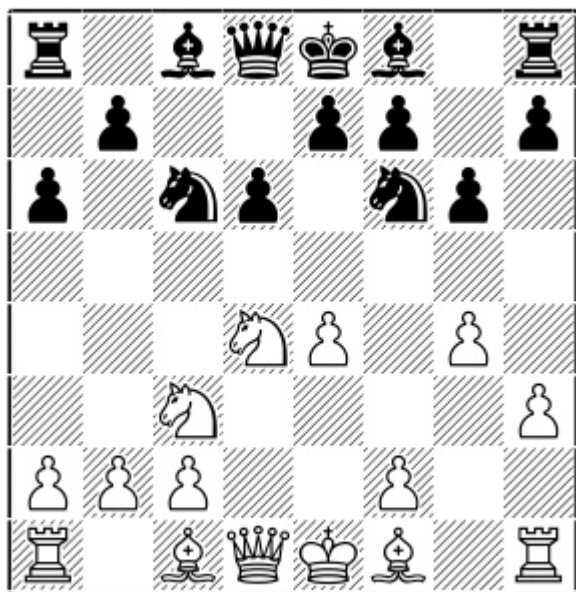


Position after: 29.Rxe6±

This endgame is clearly better for White since Black's pawns are scattered and weak, and the bishop on h6 is misplaced as well.

b) 6...Nc6 7.g4 g6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 Nc6 7.g4 g6!?



Position after: 7...g6!?

A very smart move order for Black.

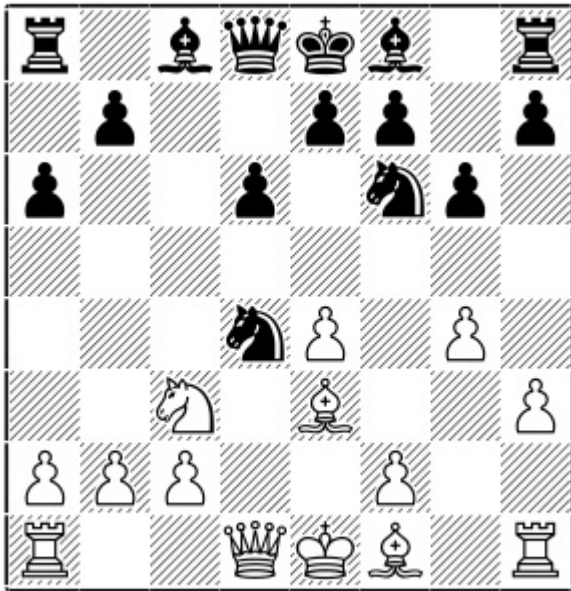
8.Be3

A) 8.Bg2 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Bg7 10.Be3 0-0 11.Qd2 Be6=

B) 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.e5 dxe5 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.Bc4 e6 12.Bd2 Nd5 13.0-0-0 a5 14.Rhe1 Kc7 15.Rxe5 Bg7,,

8...Nxd4!

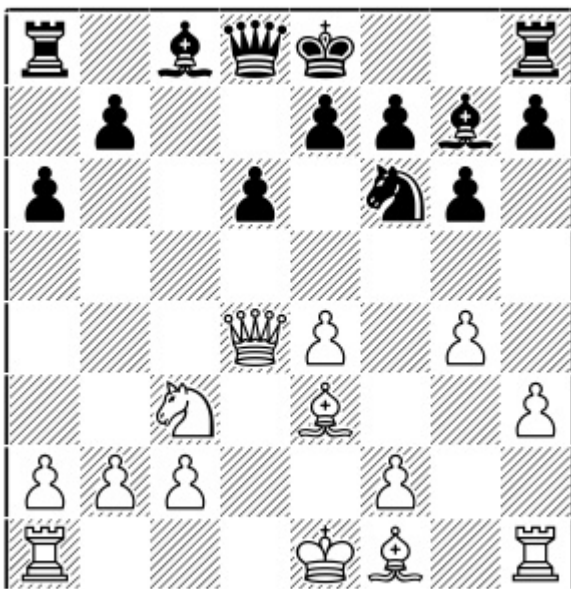
8...Bg7 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 transposes to 6.h3 g6 7.Be3 Nc6 8.Qd2 Bg7 9.0-0-0 0-0.



Position after: 8...Nxd4!

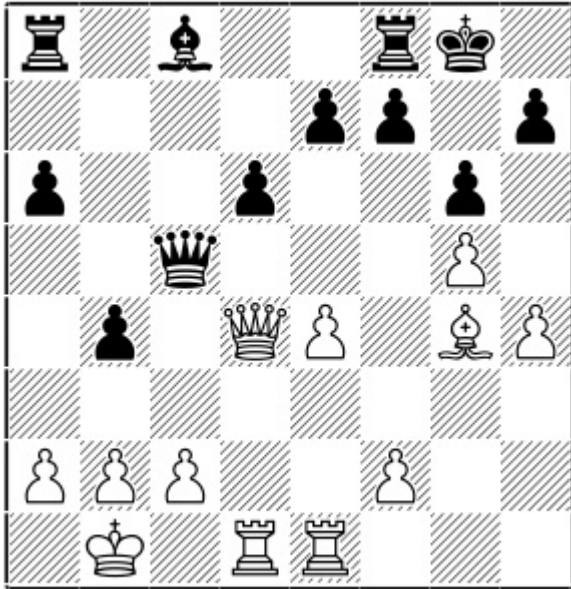
9.Bxd4

9.Qxd4 Bg7



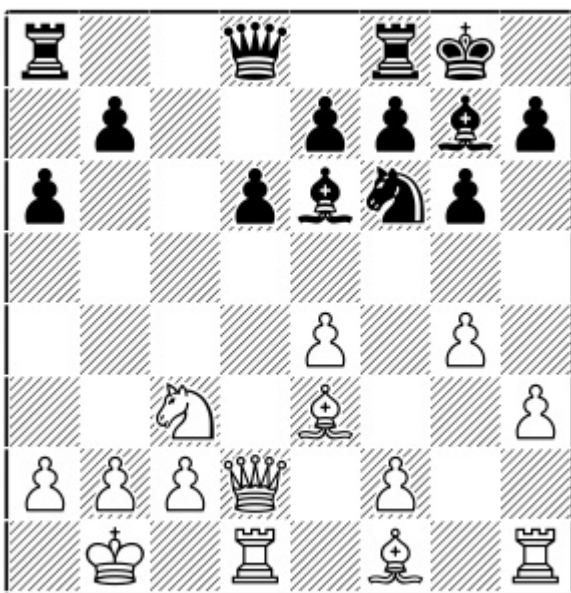
Position after: 9...Bg7

- A) 10.Qb4 0-0 11.0-0-0 Nd7! The key move, preventing White's 12.e5 thrust while also planning 12...b5. [11...b5?! allows 12.e5] 12.f4 b5 13.e5 Bb7 14.Rh2 Re8! 15.Rhd2 [15.exd6?! exd6³] 15...Rc8,,
- B) 10.0-0-0 b5! Seeking immediate counterplay. [10...0-0?! 11.e5! Nd7 12.f4 dxe5 13.Qb4!²] 11.g5 Nh5 12.Qd3 Bb7 13.Be2 Qa5 14.Bxh5 Bxc3 15.Bg4 Bg7 16.Bd4 Bxd4 17.Qxd4 0-0 18.Kb1 b4 19.h4 Qc5! 20.Rhe1 Bc8! = Black equalises thanks to the exchanges that will soon take place.



Position after: 20...Bc8! =

- C) 10.Qd2 0-0 [10...b5? 11.e5! dxe5 12.Qxd8+ Kxd8 13.Bg2 Rb8 14.0-0-0+ Nd7 15.Rd3±] 11.0-0-0 Be6! [11...b5?! 12.e5±] 12.Kb1

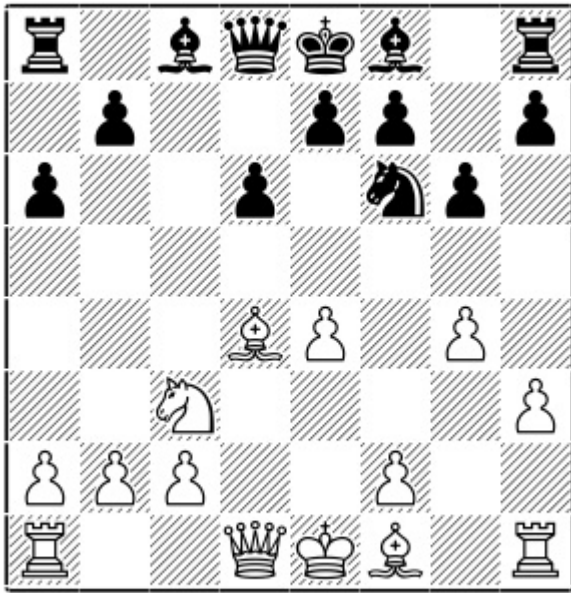


Position after: 12.Kb1

Here Black has two options and both of them lead to complex positions.

C1) 12...Qa5 13.f3 Rfc8 14.Nd5 Qxd2 15.Rxd2 Nxd5 [15...Bxd5 16.exd5 b5 17.h4 h5 18.g5 Nd7 19.f4²]
 16.exd5 Bd7 17.Bd3 b5 18.h4 b4 19.h5 a5,,

C2) 12...b5 13.f3 Rc8 14.Ne2 Qc7 15.Nd4 Bc4,,

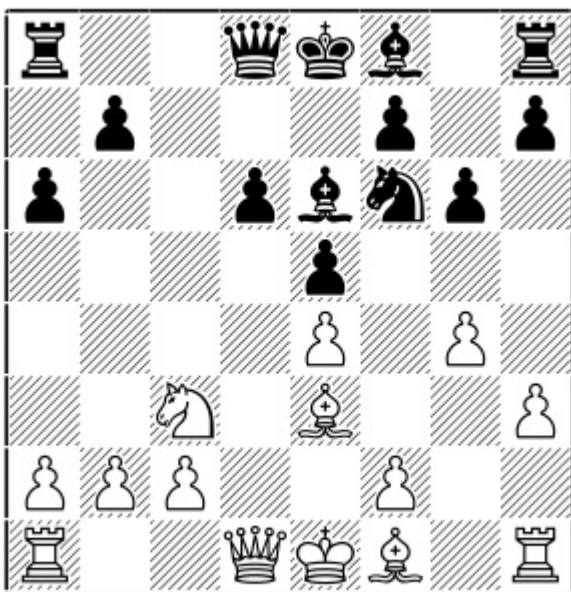


Position after: 9.Bxd4

9...Bh6!

Now White is not able to castle long as the black bishop on h6 prevents it.

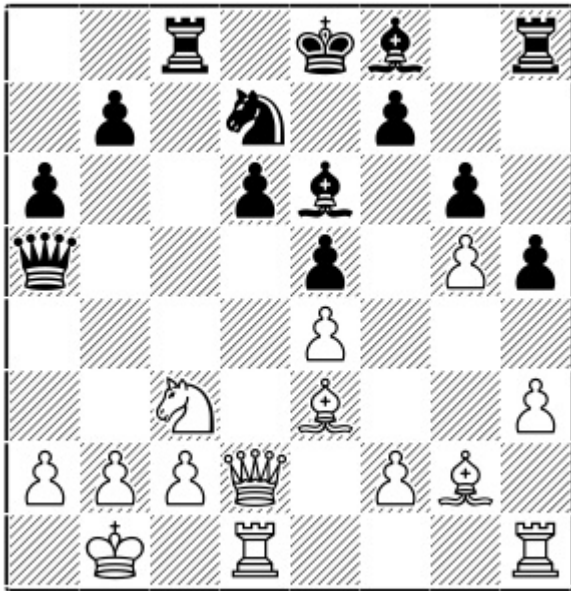
9...e5 10.Be3 Be6 [10...b5?! is premature: 11.a4! b4 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.Qxd5 Be6 14.Qc6+! Driving the bishop away from the post where it controls central squares. 14...Bd7 15.Qb7 Qc8 16.Qxc8+ Bxc8 17.0-0²]



Position after: 10...Be6

A) 11.Qd2?! d5! 12.exd5 Nxd5 13.0-0-0 Bb4 The point, exploiting the drawback of having the white queen on d2. This pin would not be possible after the main move 11.Qd3.

B) 11.Bg2!? also gives White a decent plus. 11...Rc8 12.Qd2 h5 13.g5 Nd7 14.0-0-0 Qa5 15.Kb1

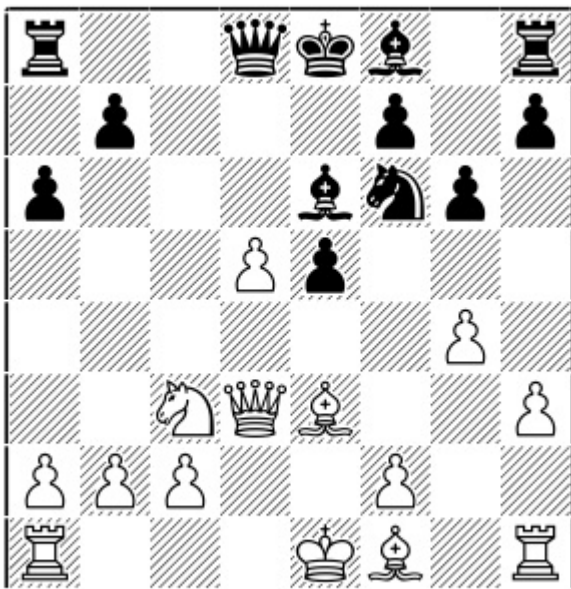


Position after: 15.Kb1

15...Be7 [15...Rxc3? does not work due to 16.Qxc3 Qxa2+ 17.Kc1+-; 15...Nb6 16.Nd5! Qxd2 17.Nf6+ Ke7 18.Bxd2 Bg7 19.Bb4 Rc6 20.Nd5+ Bxd5 21.exd5 Rc4 22.Bd2.] 16.Nd5 Qxd2 17.Rxd2

C) 11.Qd3!

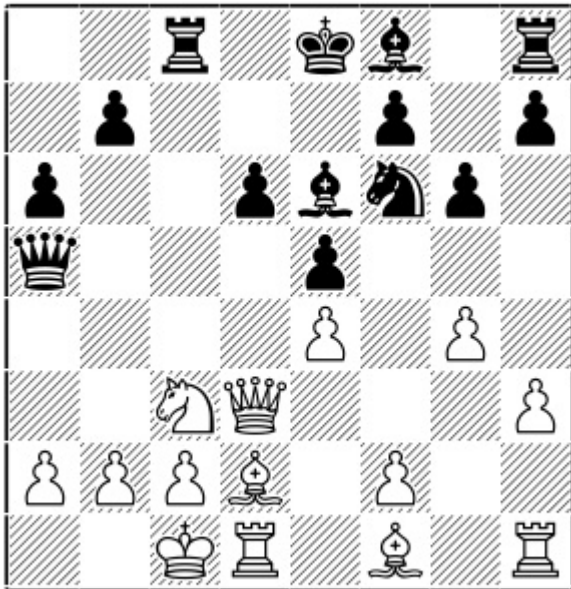
C1) 11...d5? 12.exd5



Position after: 12.exd5

12...Nxd5 [12...Bxd5 13.Bg5! Bxh1 14.Qxd8+ Rxd8 15.Bxf6 Rg8 16.Bxd8 Kxd8 17.Bxa6! bxa6 18.0-0-0+] 13.0-0-0±

C2) 11...Rc8 12.0-0-0 Qa5 13.Bd2!



Position after: 13.Bd2!

Preventing all the ideas based on ...Rxc3 as now White can take the rook on c3 with the bishop without disrupting his pawn structure.

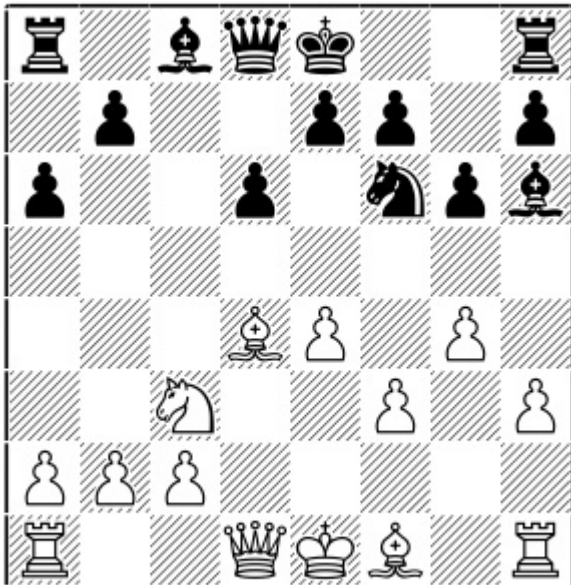
C2.1) 13...Nd7 14.a3 Nc5 15.Qe2 b5 16.Kb1 Qb6 17.Be3 Qb7 [17...b4? 18.Na4+-] 18.f3 b4 19.axb4 Qxb4 20.Bxc5 Qxc5 21.Qxa6±

C2.2) 13...Rxc3 14.Bxc3 Qxa2 15.f4! Nd7 16.Kd2 Be7 17.Bg2± and White is on top.

C3) 11...Qa5 12.Bd2 h5 13.g5 Nd7 14.Nd5 Qd8 15.Be3² With long castling to follow, and White has an ideal position.

10.f3

10.Qe2 b5,,



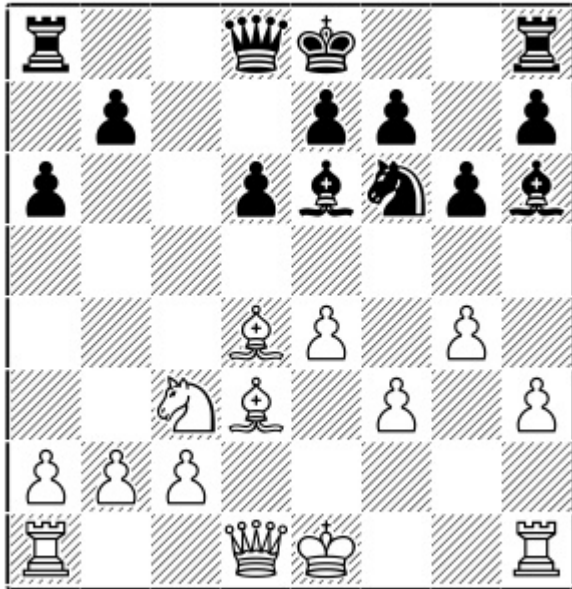
Position after: 10.f3

10...Be6

10...0-0 11.h4 Bf4 12.Ne2 Be5 13.Qd2 and the kingside looks vulnerable for Black. 13...Bxd4 14.Nxd4 e5 15.Ne2 Be6 16.0-0-0 Rc8 17.Kb1±

11.Bd3!

11.h4 Bf4 12.Ne2 Be5 13.Qd2 Qc7 14.Bh3 0-0 15.h5 d5 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.g5 Bxh3 18.Rxh3 Bxd4 19.Qxd4 Nh5 20.0-0-0 Nf4! 21.Nxf4 Qxf4+ 22.Kb1 Rad8,,



Position after: 11.Bd3!

11...Qa5!

The idea is that now the knight on c3 is pinned so that White cannot implement his plan with 12.h4 Bf4 and 13.Ne2.

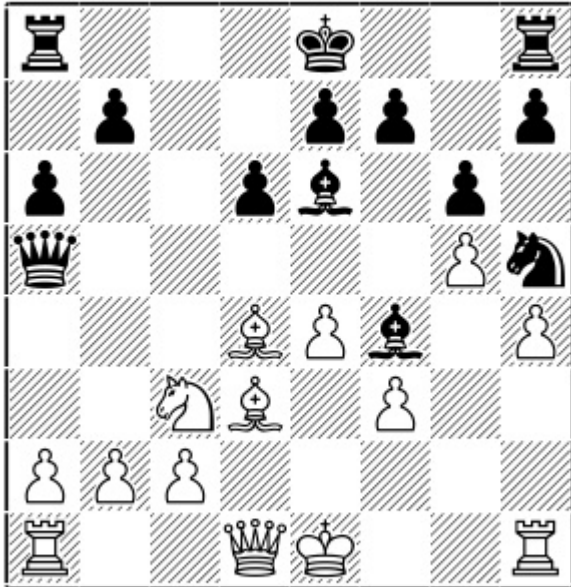
A) 11...Bf4 12.Ne2 Be5 13.c3 Rc8 14.Qd2 Qc7 [14...Qa5 15.f4 Bxd4 16.cxd4² White has a strong centre.] 15.Qe3 0-0 16.b3²

B) 11...0-0 12.h4 Bf4 13.Ne2 Be5 14.Qd2²

12.h4

12.Kf2 0-0 13.Qe1 Bg7=

12...Bf4 13.g5 Nh5



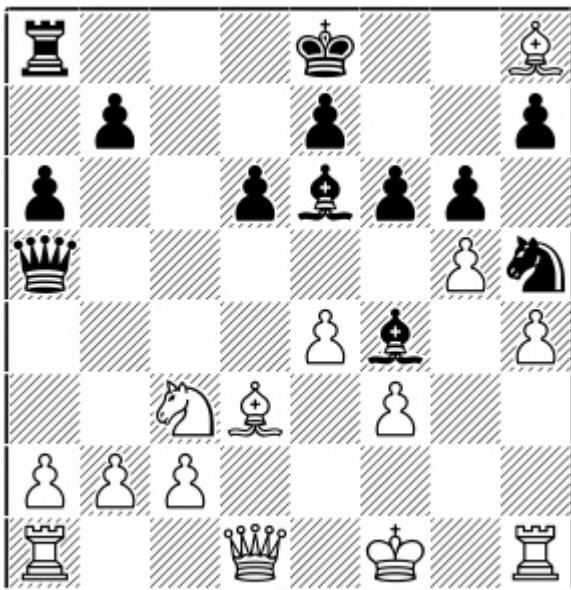
Position after: 13...Nh5

Thanks to this brilliant sacrifice, Black achieves a fair amount of counterplay.

14.Bxh8 f6! 15.Kf1!

Preparing the key idea (16.Ne2) to stabilize the position before Black can capture the White bishop on h8.

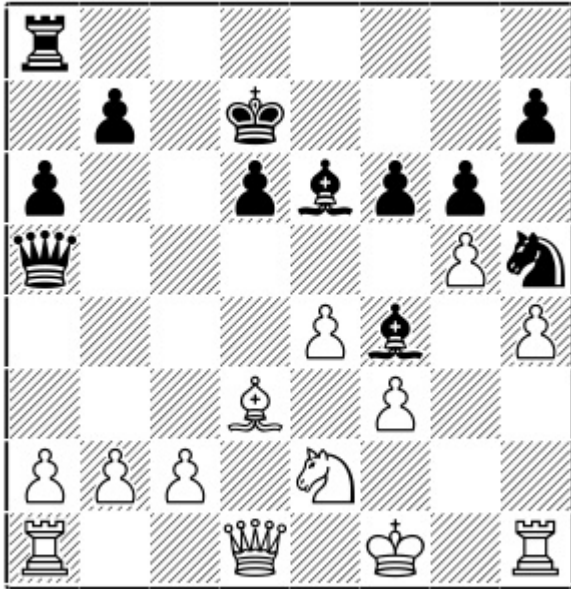
15.gxf6 Kf7,,



Position after: 15.Kf1!

15...Kf7

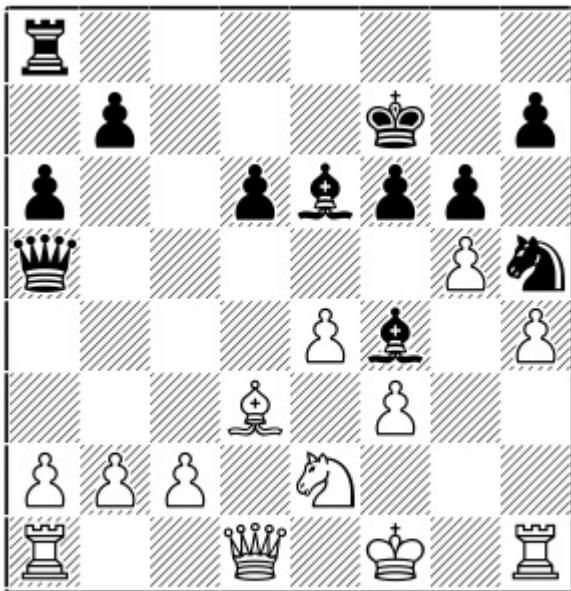
15...Kd7!? 16.Bxf6! [16.Bg7 Nxf6 17.Qe1 Nh5,,] 16...exf6 [16...Ng3+? 17.Kg2 exf6 18.Ne2±] 17.Ne2!



Position after: 17.Ne2!

17...Rf8 [17...Be3 18.Qe1 Qe5 19.Qc3 Ng3+ 20.Kg2 Nxh1 21.Rxh1 fxg5 22.Bc4 Bxc4 23.Qxc4 Rf8 24.Qb3 g4 25.Qxb7+ Ke8 26.Rf1 gxf3+ 27.Rxf3 Rxf3 28.Kxf3²] 18.Nxf4 Nxf4 19.Qe1 Qe5 leads to a complex 0.00 position.

16.Bxf6 exf6 17.Ne2

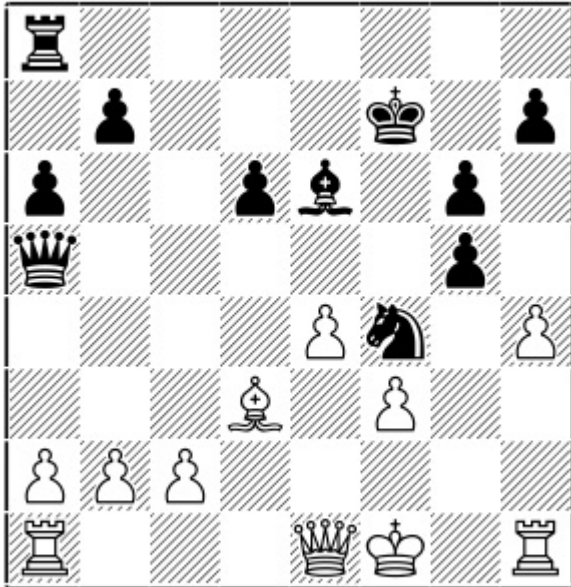


Position after: 17.Ne2

17...Qe5!

Centralizing the queen. Another option is 17...fxg5

A) 18.Nxf4 Nxf4 19.Qe1

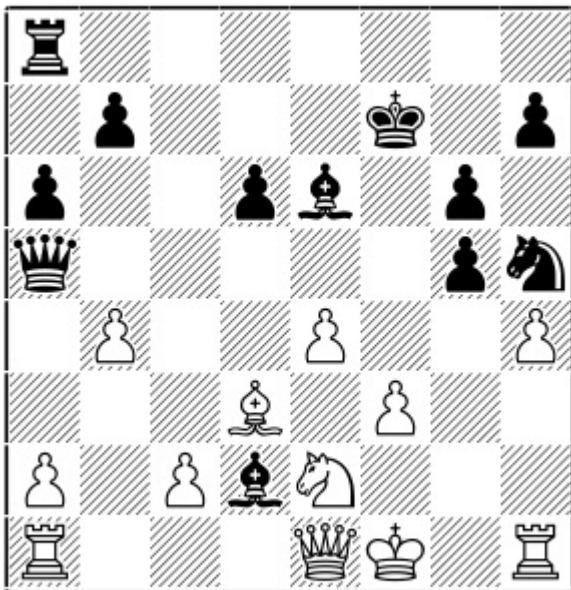


Position after: 19.Qe1

A1) 19...Bh3+?! 20.Rxh3! [20.Kf2?! Qe5 21.hxg5 Qxg5 22.Qd2 Bg2! 23.Bc4+ Ke8=] 20...Qxe1+ 21.Kxe1 Nxh3 22.Bf1 Nf4 23.hxg5±

A2) 19...Qe5 20.hxg5 Bh3+ 21.Rxh3 Nxh3 22.Qh4 Qh2 23.Ke1 Rc8! 24.Qxh7+ Ke8 25.Qxg6+ Kd8 26.Qf6+ Kc7 This is messy but Black is objectively fine.

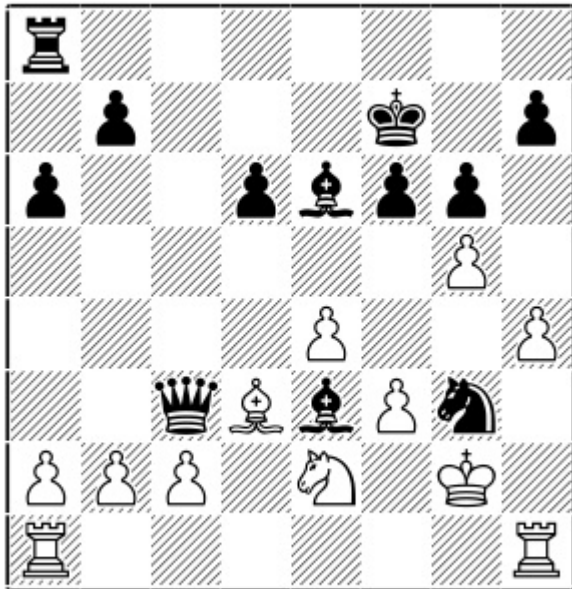
B) 18.Qe1! Bd2 [18...Qe5?! 19.Qc3±] 19.b4! The key trick.



Position after: 19.b4!

19...Bxb4 [19...Qxb4 20.Qb1!± and Black cannot escape the exchange of queens.] 20.c3 Bc5 21.hxg5²

18.Qe1! Be3 19.Qc3 Ng3+ 20.Kg2 Qxc3



Position after: 20...Qxc3

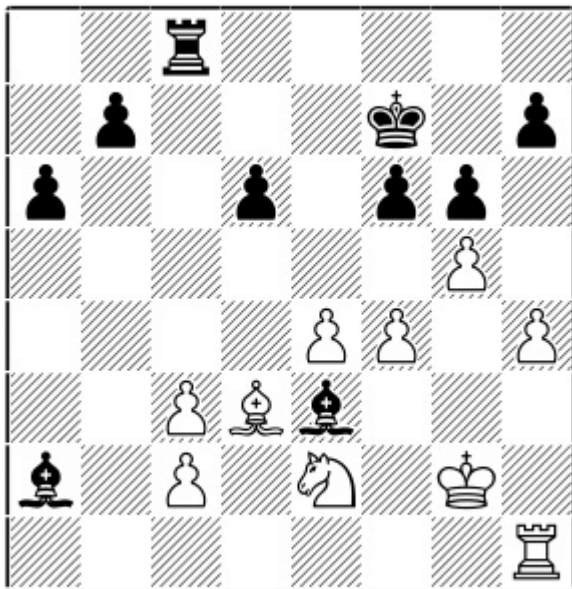
21.bxc3!

21.Nxc3?! Nxh1 22.Rxh1 fxg5 23.hxg5 Kg7= and with the knight on c3, White cannot carry out the f4 push.

21...Nxh1 22.Rxh1 Bxa2

22...fxg5? 23.hxg5 Kg7 24.f4±

23.f4 Rc8=

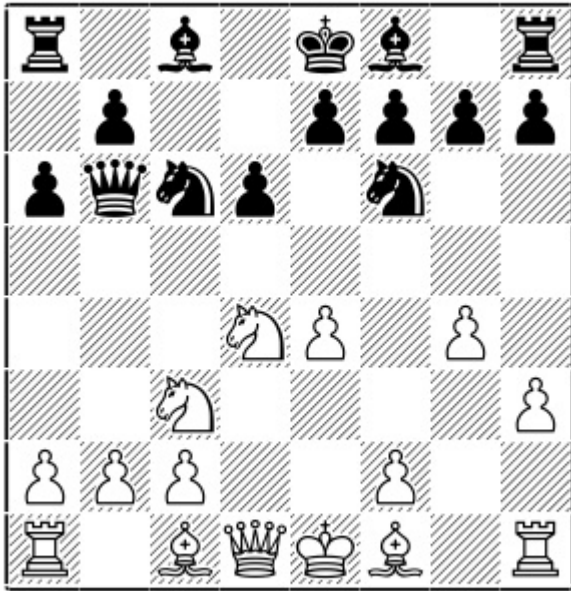


Position after: 23...Rc8=

After some precise play Black has equalized, but he has had to prove his mettle in order to get here, making the line a good pick for White in practice.

c) 6...Nc6 7.g4 Qb6

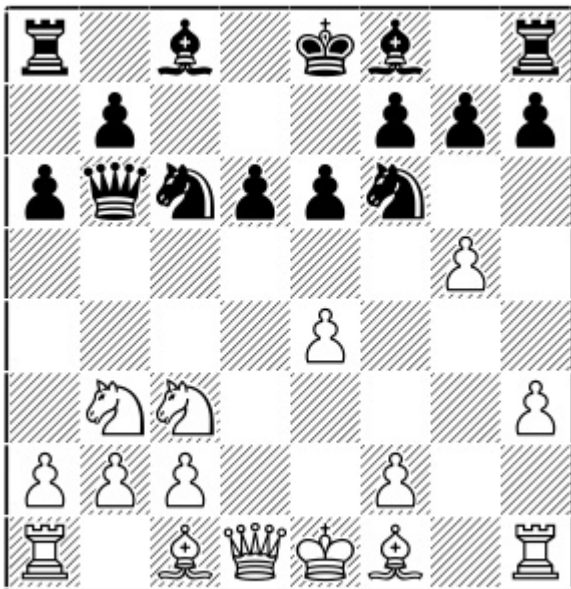
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 Nc6 7.g4 Qb6



Position after: 7...Qb6

This move is typical for the line; the idea is to disturb the knight on d4. The drawback is that after 8.Nb3 White gets a tempo to develop his c1-bishop to e3, attacking the black queen.

8.Nb3 e6 9.g5



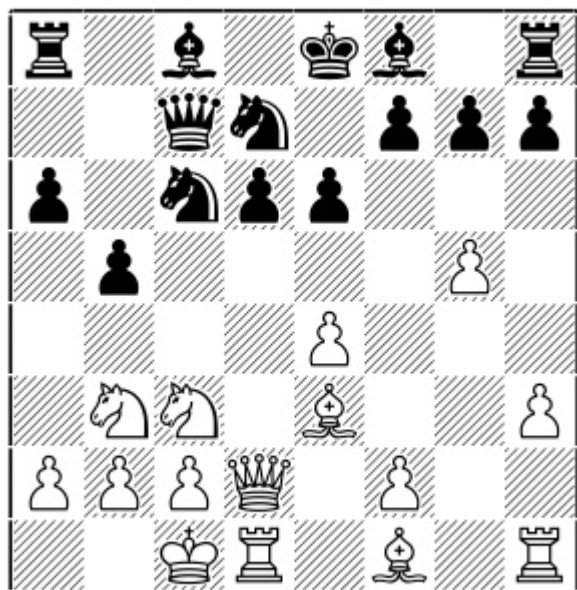
Position after: 9.g5

The race begins. White tries to expand on the kingside with the advances g5 and h4, while Black tries to create counterplay on the other side.

9...Nd7 10.Be3 Qc7 11.Qd2 b5

11...Be7 12.0-0-0 b5 transposes to 11...b5 12.0-0-0 Be7.

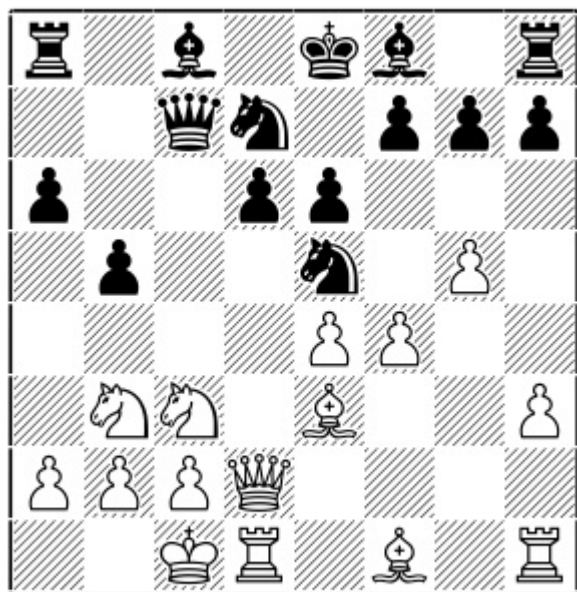
12.0-0-0



Position after: 12.0-0-0

12...Bb7

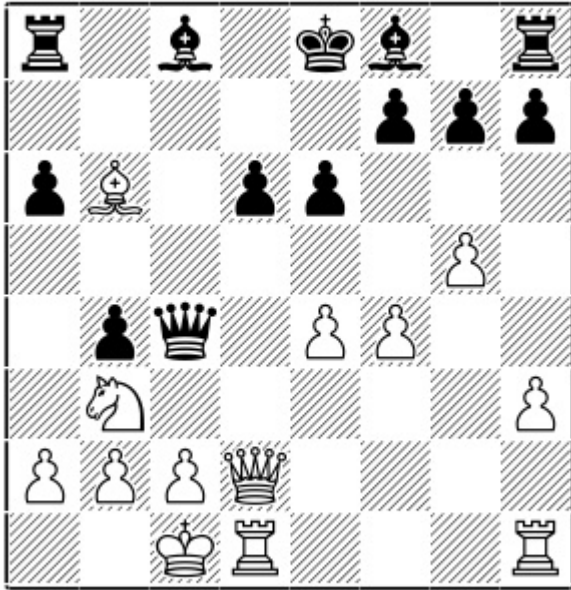
A) 12...Nce5 13.f4



Position after: 13.f4

A1) 13...Nc4 14.Bxc4 bxc4 15.Nd4 Rb8 16.f5 Qb7 [16...Nc5 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.Rhf1±] 17.b3 Ne5 18.Rhf1! Be7 19.f6± Black's position is dangerous as he will come under a strong attack.

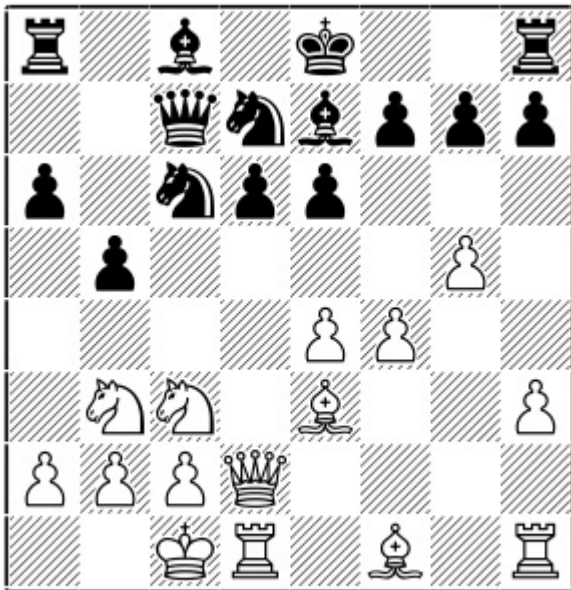
A2) 13...b4 14.Na4 Nc4 15.Bxc4 Qxc4 16.Nb6 Nxb6 17.Bxb6



Position after: 17.Bxb6

17...Be7 [17...Qxe4?! 18.Rhe1 Qc6 19.Ba5± and the b4-pawn will drop.] 18.Kb1 Qxe4 [18...Rb8 19.Qe3±] 19.Rhe1 Qc4 [19...Qb7 20.Ba5 Rb8 21.f5 exf5 22.Nc5 Qc6 23.Qe3+–] 20.f5 Qb5 21.Qg2! Rb8 22.Ba7 Rb7 23.Bf2 Rc7 [23...Qxf5?? 24.Qc6+–] 24.f6 gxf6 25.gxf6 Bxf6 26.Rxd6± and Black's king has no safety.

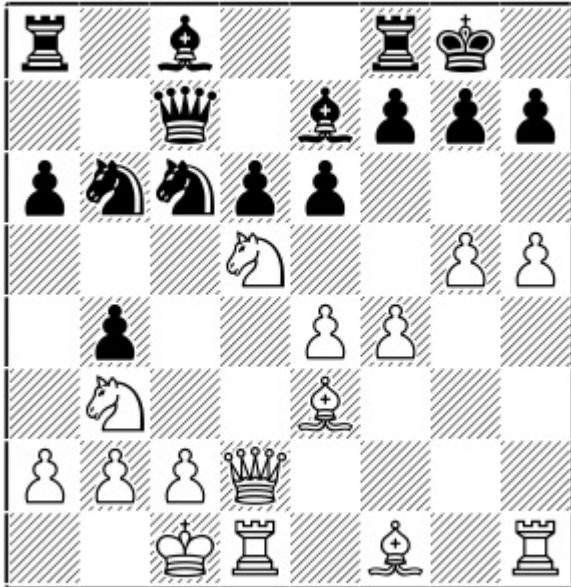
B) 12...Be7 13.f4



Position after: 13.f4

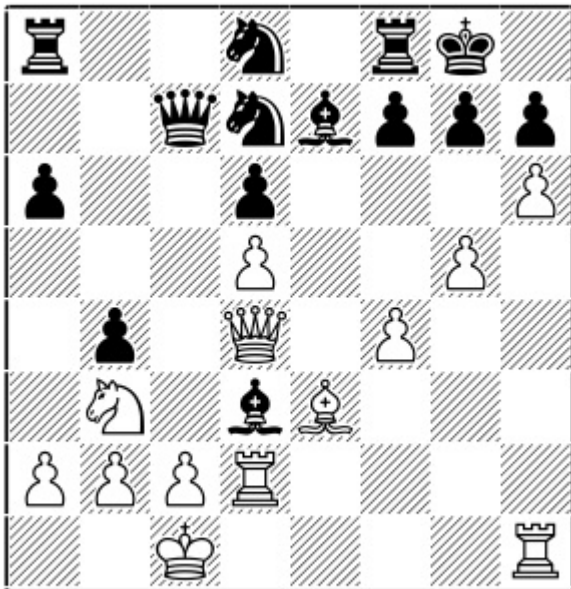
B1) 13...b4 14.Na4 Rb8 15.Kb1 0-0 [15...Nd8 16.Nd4 0-0 17.f5±] 16.h4 White's attack is stronger and faster. 16...Na5 17.h5 Bb7 18.Qxb4 Rfc8 19.Bd3±

B2) 13...0-0 14.h4 Nb6 15.h5 b4 16.Nd5!!



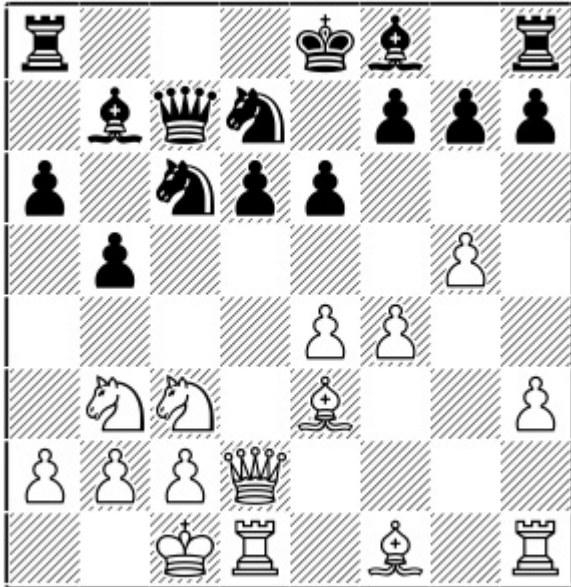
Position after: 16.Nd5!!

A nice positional sacrifice creating havoc in Black's camp. 16...exd5 17.exd5 Nd8 18.Qd4! Bf5 [18...Nxd5 19.Bd3! (Instead Qxd5 would be worse due to ...Bb7.) 19...Nxe3 20.h6 Bf6 21.Bxh7+! Kxh7 22.hxg7+- Complete destruction.] 19.Rd2 Nd7 20.Bd3! Bxd3 21.h6!



Position after: 21.h6!

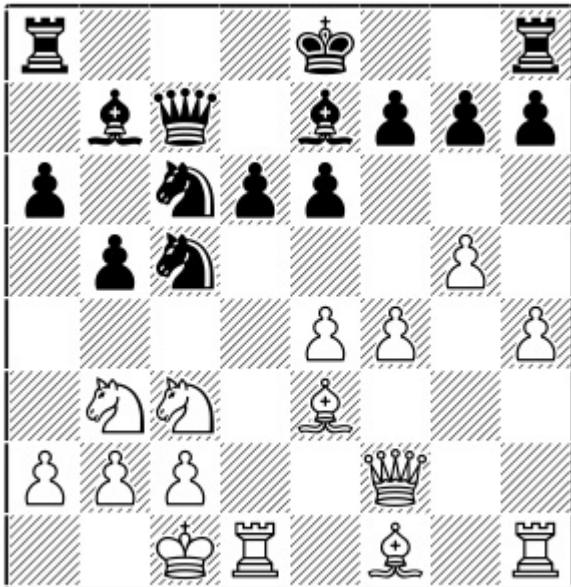
21...Bf6 [21...gxh6 22.gxh6 Bf6 23.Qxd3 Kh8 24.Rg2+- Black's pieces are not well enough co-ordinated to protect their king.] 22.Qxd3+- White is winning here and the threat is hxg7.



Position after: 13.f4

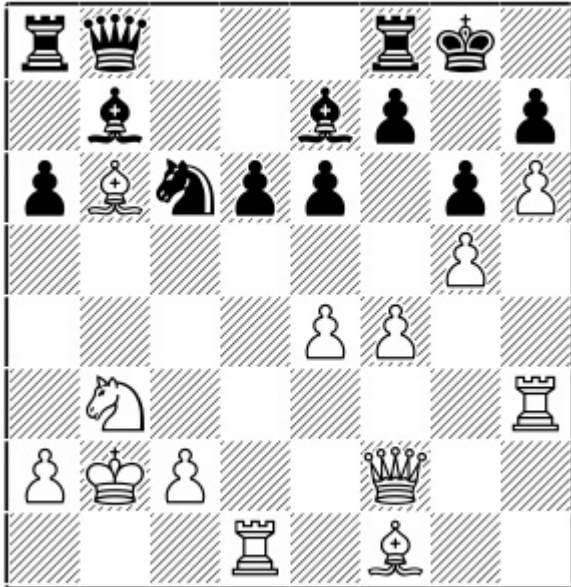
13...Be7

13...Nc5 14.Qf2 Be7 15.h4



Position after: 15.h4

15...0-0 [15...Rc8 16.Nxc5 dxc5 17.f5 Nd4 18.f6 gxf6 19.gxf6 Bd6 20.Rg1±] 16.h5 [16.f5!? b4 17.Nxc5 dxc5 18.Na4 exf5 19.exf5 Ne5 20.Rg1 Bf3 21.Be2 Bxe2 22.Qxe2²] 16...b4 17.Bxc5! bxc3 18.Bb6 cxb2+ 19.Kxb2 Qb8 20.h6 g6 21.Rh3!



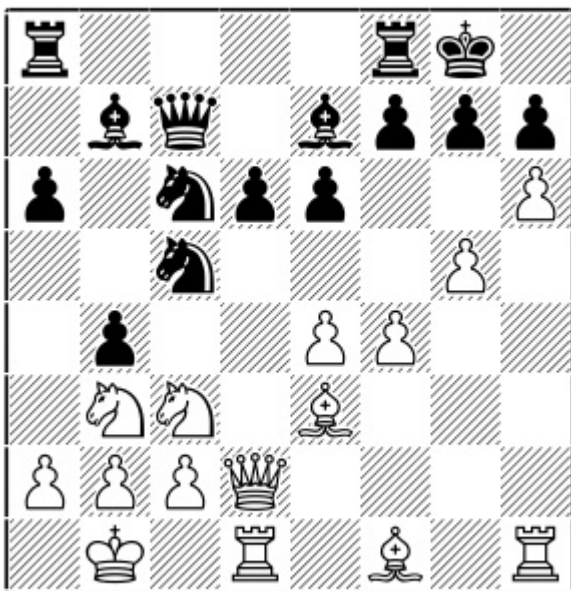
Position after: 21.Rh3!

With the kingside closed White swings the rook across to pose new problems on the queenside. [21...a5](#) [[21...f6](#) [22.Bc4](#) [Bc8](#) [23.gxf6](#) [Rxf6](#) [24.Rc3±](#)] [22.a4](#) [Ba6](#) [23.Rc3±](#)

14.h4

Here White has two promising options, of which this is the most precise. White is aiming for an immediate attack.

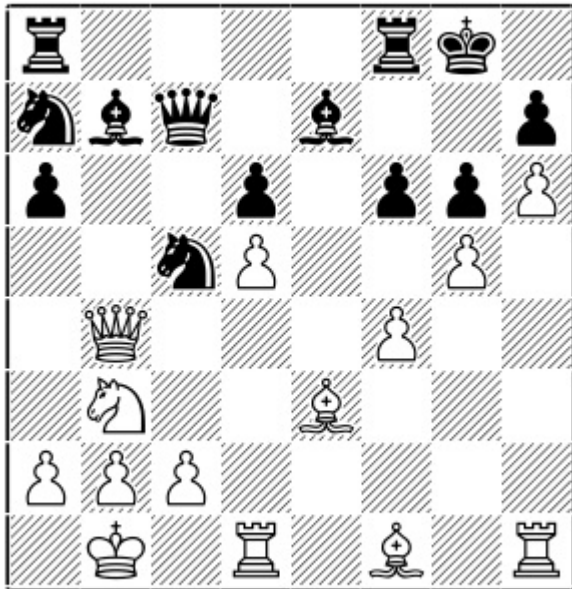
[14.Kb1](#) [0-0](#) [15.h4](#) [Nc5](#) [[15...Rfc8](#) [16.Bg2](#) [Nb6](#) [17.Bxb6!](#) [Qxb6](#) [18.f5](#) [b4](#) [19.Ne2±](#) And White's attack is stronger.] [16.h5](#) [b4](#) [17.h6!](#)



Position after: 17.h6!

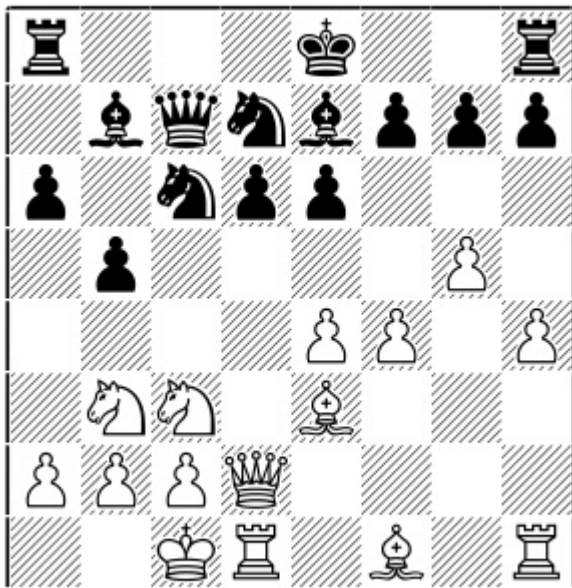
[17...g6](#) [[17...bxc3](#) [18.Qxc3+–](#) and Black will simply be unable to protect the g7-pawn.] [18.Nd5!?](#) [exd5](#)

19.exd5 Na7 20.Qd4 f6 21.Qxb4



Position after: 21.Qxb4

21...fxg5 [21...Nxb3 22.axb3 fxg5 23.fxg5 Bc8 24.Bd3 Bf5 25.Qd4 Bd8 26.c4, Black's position is doomed. The engines take some time to understand that this is, in fact, curtains for Black.] 22.fxg5 Rf3 23.Bxc5 dxc5 24.Qe4 Rff8 25.Qc4! Bd6 26.Bh3 Bc8 27.Be6+ Bxe6 28.dxe6f This also looks very scary for Black.

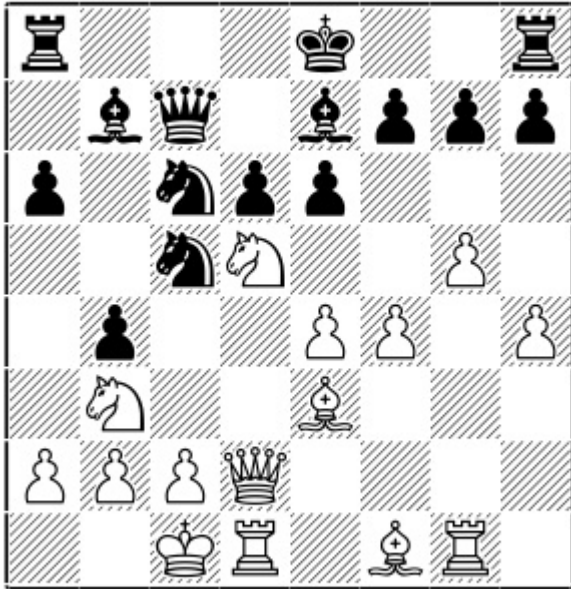


Position after: 14.h4

14...Rc8

A) 14...0-0 15.h5 Nc5 16.g6 b4 17.h6! White is just killing it. 17...fxg6 [17...bxc3 18.gxh7++-] 18.Nxc5 dxc5 19.Bc4+-

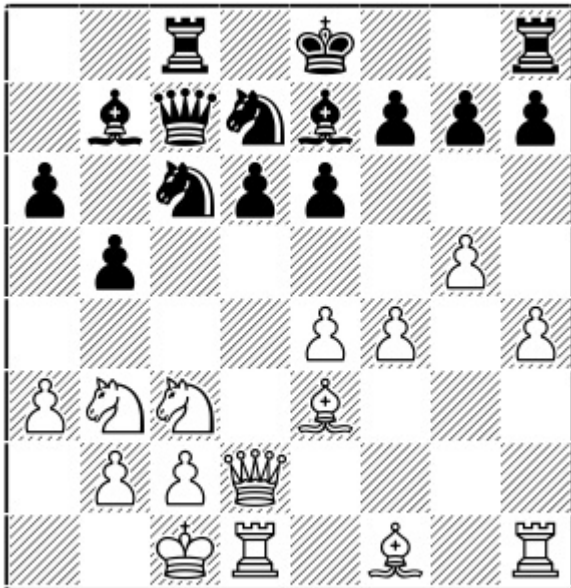
B) 14...Nc5 15.Rg1 b4 [15...0-0 16.h5 b4 17.Nd5! exd5 18.exd5 Nxb3+ 19.axb3 Na5 20.Kb1 and Black is positionally busted.] 16.Nd5! This typical sacrifice just destroys the co-ordination of Black's position.



Position after: 16.Nd5!

16...Nxb3+ 17.axb3 exd5 [17...Qa5 18.Kb1±] 18.exd5 Nb8 19.Bd4 0-0 20.Bxg7!! Kxg7 21.Qd4+ Kg8 22.Bd3+- White is two pieces down but Black has no means of preventing Qe4 followed by mate on h7.

15.a3



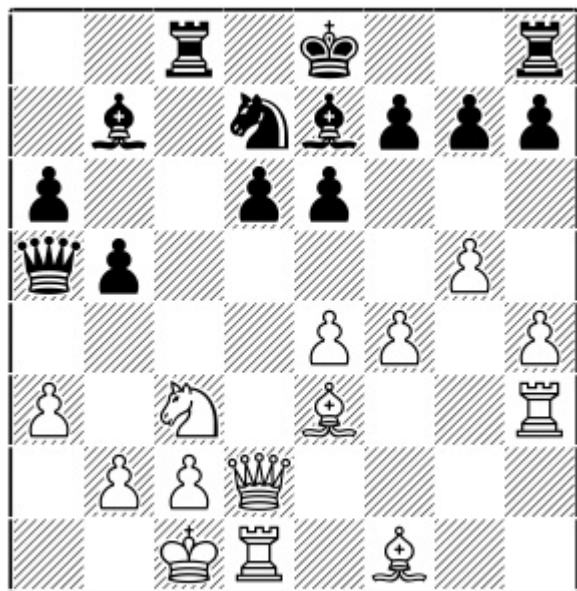
Position after: 15.a3

15...Na5

A) 15...b4 16.axb4 Nxb4 17.Kb1 0-0 18.h5± White threatens to play h6 followed by Qd4.

B) 15...0-0 16.h5 Na5 17.h6 Nxb3+ 18.cxb3 g6 19.Kb1 Nc5 20.Ka2 Bc6 (Black cannot take the e4-pawn as White will trade pieces there and then win with a Qd4 fork.) 21.Rg1±

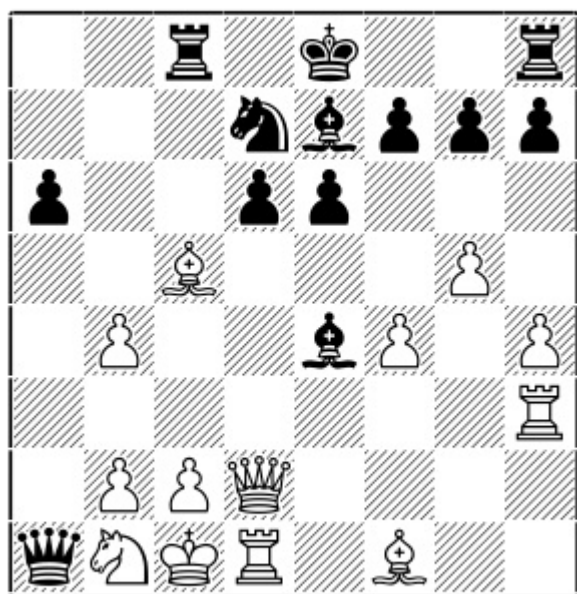
16.Nxa5 Qxa5 17.Rh3



Position after: 17.Rh3

Prophylaxis against Black's ...Rxc3.

17...b4 18.axb4 Qa1+ 19.Nb1 Bxe4 20.Bc5!±

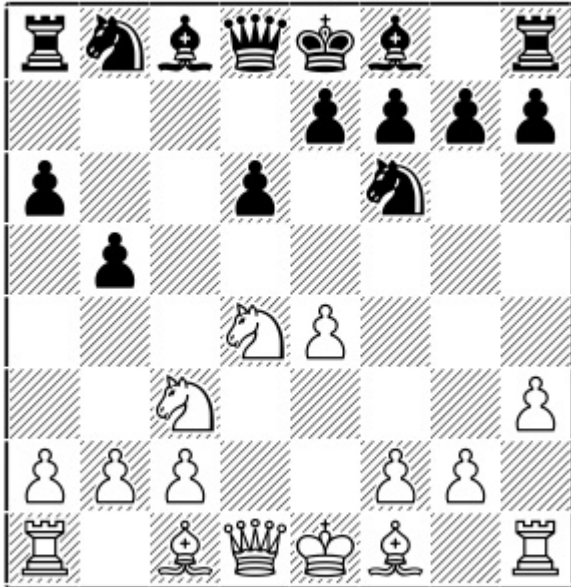


Position after: 20.Bc5!±

Threatening Ra3, which was the point of Rh3. Here White is clearly winning.

d) 6...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 b5



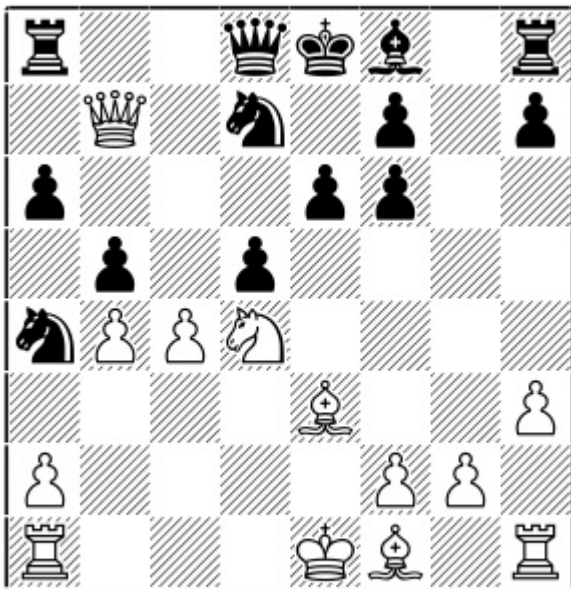
Position after: 6...b5

This system became popular very recently and is quite often played by young Russian Grandmaster Sarana. I managed to find a nice setup for White here.

7.a4!

Exploiting the premature push ...b7-b5.

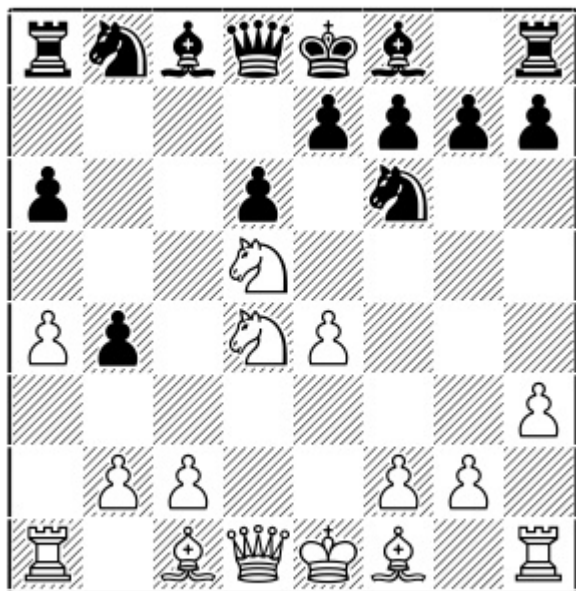
7.Nd5!? e6 [7...Nxe4?! 8.Qf3 Nc5 9.b4 Na4 10.Be3 e6 11.Qe4 Bb7 12.Nf6+ gxf6 13.Qxb7 Nd7 14.c4 d5



Position after: 14...d5

15.Nc6 Bxb4+ 16.Nxb4 bxc4 17.Nc6 Qc8 18.Rb1± and Black has not enough compensation for the piece.]
 8.Nxf6+ Qxf6 9.a4 transposes to the main line.

7...b4 8.Nd5

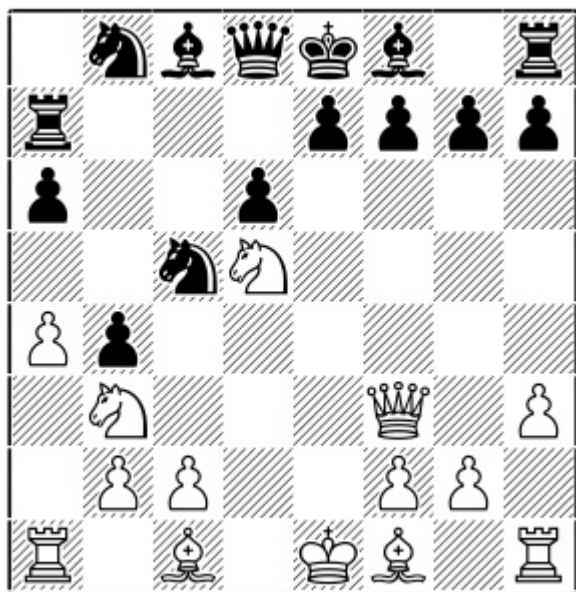


Position after: 8.Nd5

8...e6

8...Nxe4?!

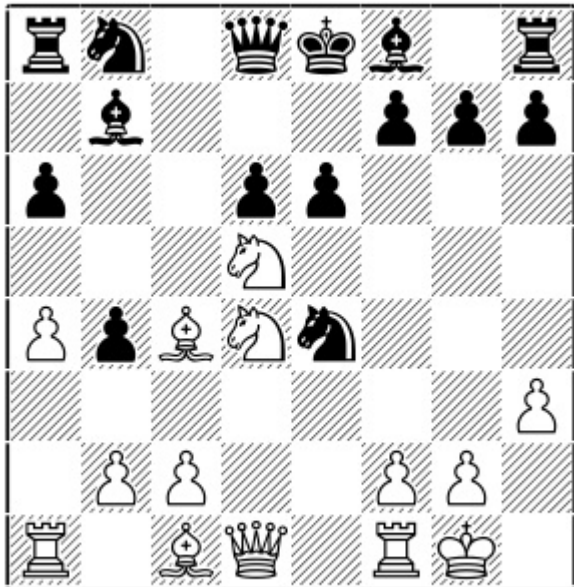
A) 9.Qf3 Nc5 10.Nb3 Ra7



Position after: 10...Ra7

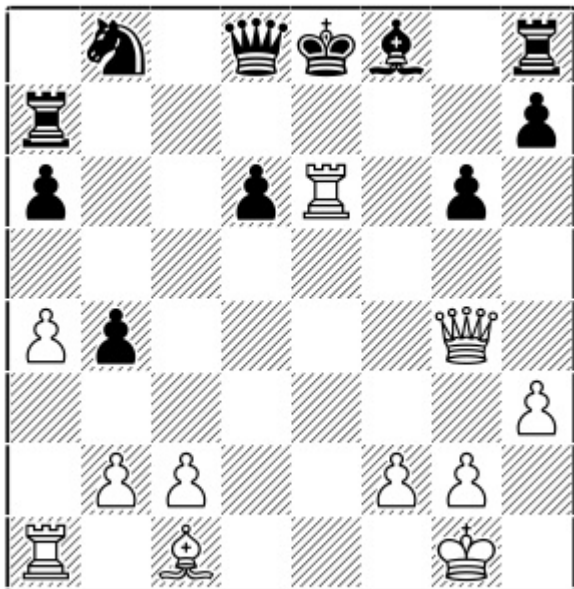
11.Bf4 [11.Nxb4 e6,,] 11...Rd7 12.Nxc5 dxc5 13.Bxb8 Bb7! [13...Rxd5? 14.Bc4 Bb7 15.0-0±] 14.Nc7+ Rxc7,, and Black has good compensation for the exchange.

B) 9.Bc4! e6 [9...Bb7 10.Qh5 Nc5 11.Bg5 Nbd7 12.0-0-0 g6 13.Qe2± with a huge advantage.] 10.0-0! Bb7



Position after: 10...Bb7

11.Nxe6! fxe6 12.Re1 Nc5 13.Qh5+ g6 14.Qg4 Bxd5 15.Bxd5 Ra7 16.Bxe6 Nxe6 [16...Be7 17.Bd5+–
And the vulnerable king on e8 makes Black’s position hopeless. White is winning here.] 17.Rxe6+



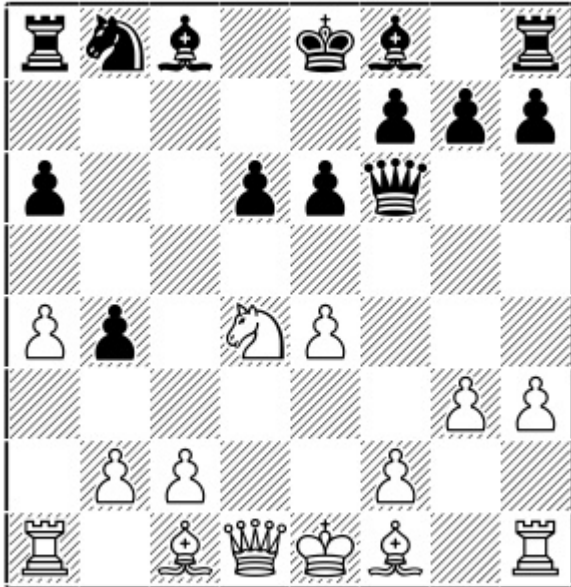
Position after: 17.Rxe6+

17...Be7 [17...Re7 18.Bg5 Qd7 19.Bxe7 Bxe7 20.Rd1+–] 18.Qd4+–

9.Nxf6+ Qxf6 10.g3!

The bishop is much better placed on g2 than on d3, as from there it can help set up the idea of pushing e5 (thanks to the black queen’s position on f6).

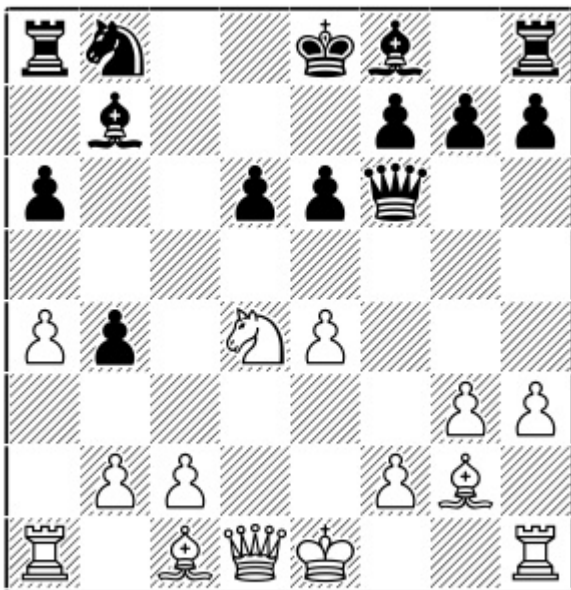
After 10.Bd3 Be7 11.0-0 0-0 12.Be3 Bb7 13.Qd2 a5 14.f4 Nd7 Black was fine in the correspondence game Matei, C (2439) – Szczepanski, Z (2505) ICCF email 2016.



Position after: 10.g3!

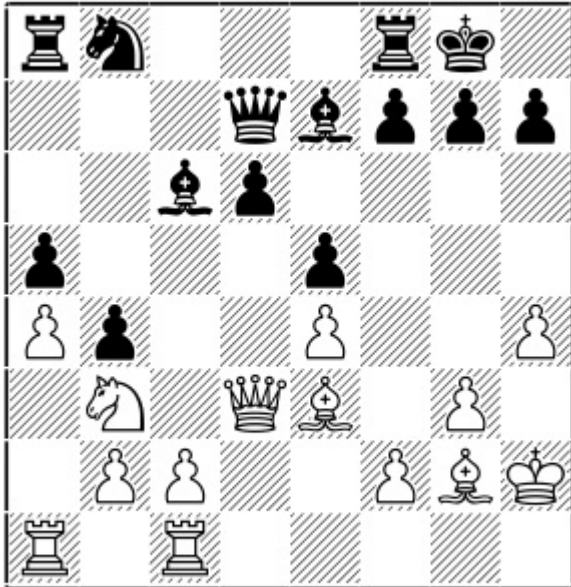
10...e5

10...Bb7 11.Bg2



Position after: 11.Bg2

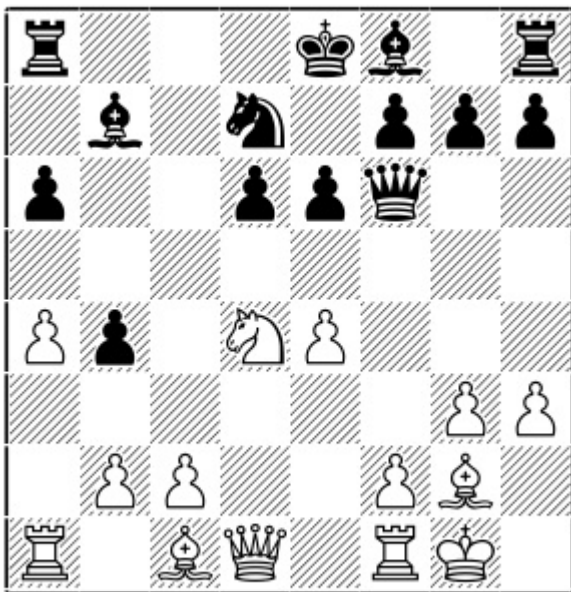
A) 11...e5 12.Nb3 a5 13.Qd3 Qd8 14.0-0 Be7 15.Be3 0-0 16.Rfc1 Bc6 Targeting the a4 pawn. [16...Nc6 17.Qb5 Qd7 18.c3 Ba6 19.Qd5 bxc3 20.bxc3²] 17.h4! Qd7 18.Kh2!!



Position after: 18.Kh2!!

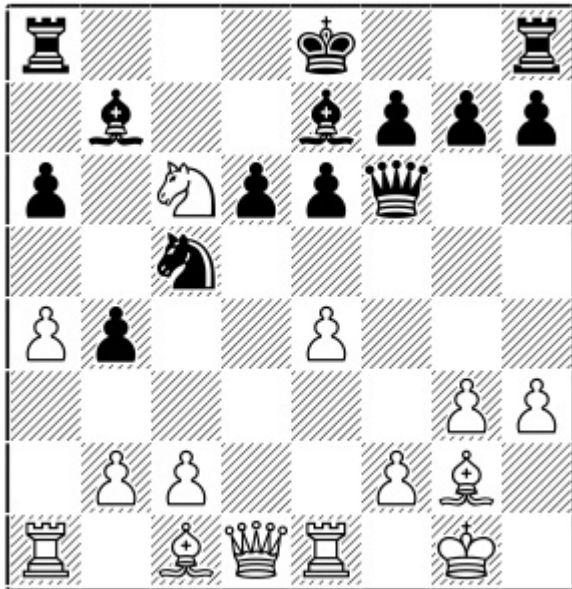
Preparing Bh3. 18...Bxa4 19.Bf1² The idea is to prevent Black playing ...Bb5, and the bishop cannot move elsewhere as the a5-pawn would hang. White intends to attack that pawn further with Ra2 followed by Rca1, leaving Black no choice but to give up the light squared bishop. That would create weaknesses on the light squares and make Black's position worse in the long run.

B) 11...Nd7 12.0-0



Position after: 12.0-0

B1) 12...Nc5 13.Re1 Be7 [13...e5 14.Nb3±] 14.Nc6! Quite an important tactic giving White the upper hand.



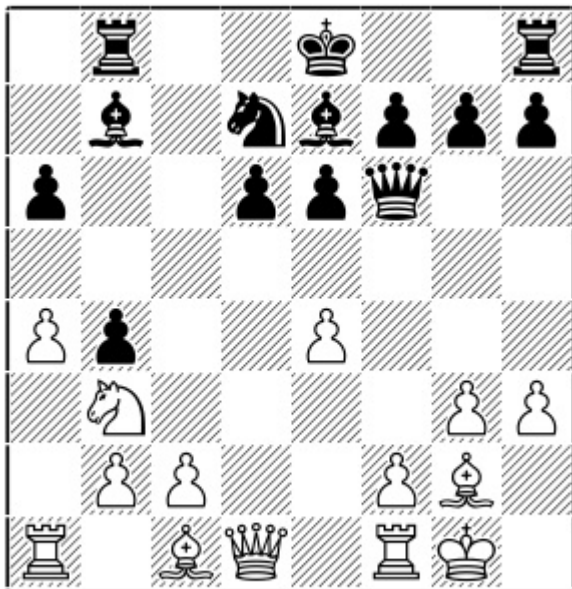
Position after: 14.Nc6!

14...0-0 [14...Bxc6? 15.e5+–] 15.Nxb4±.

B2) 12...Be7 13.Nb3 Threatening e5. [13.e5!? dxe5 14.Bxb7 Ra7 15.Bxa6 exd4 16.Bd3 0-0 17.Bd2 Ne5 18.Be4 Nc4 19.b3 Nxd2 20.Qxd2 Qe5 21.Rfe1²]

B2.1) 13...Qg6 14.Qe2 a5 15.Rd1 Ne5 [15...0-0? 16.Qb5±] 16.f4 Nc6 17.Kh2 0-0 18.Be3²

B2.2) 13...Rb8



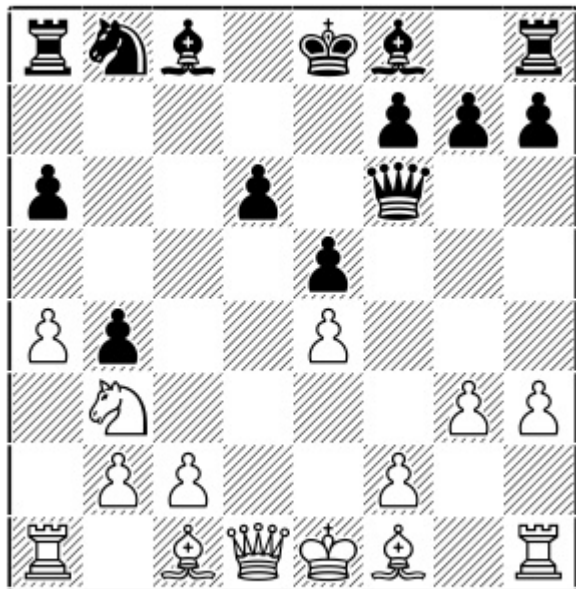
Position after: 13...Rb8

14.Bf4! [14.Qe2 0-0 15.Na5 Ba8 16.Qxa6 Rfc8 17.Nb3 Rxc2 18.e5 Nxe5 19.Bxa8 d5! 20.Nd4 Rcc8 21.Bb7 Rc4 22.Nc6 Nf3+ 23.Kg2 Bc5!]=] 14...e5 15.Bd2 Nc5 [15...0-0 16.Qe2²] 16.Qe2² with a pleasant edge as Black's pieces are completely misplaced.

11.Nb3!

The main advantage for White in this system is that the black queen is clearly misplaced on f6 and it takes time for him to consolidate his position.

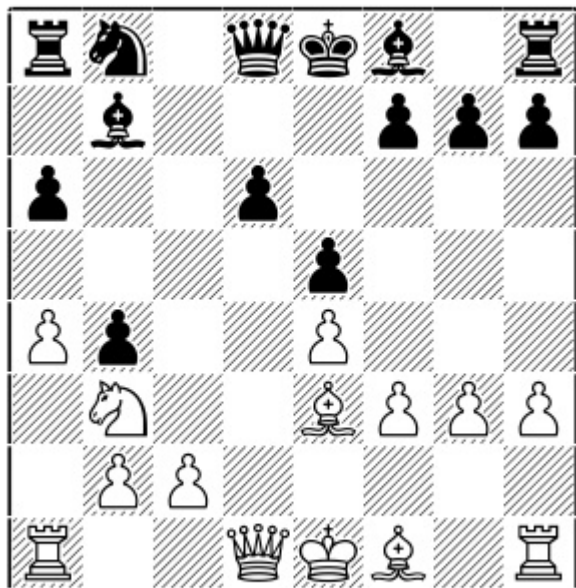
11.Nf5 Bb7 12.Bg2 d5 13.Ne3 [13.h4 Nd7 14.Bh3 g6 15.Nh6 d4 16.0-0 Qc6 17.c3 Qxe4 18.f3 Qd5 19.cxd4 f5 20.Bg2 0-0-0³] 13...d4 14.Nd5 Bxd5 and Black was fine in Volokitin, A (2639) – Sarana, A (2577) Batumi 2018.



Position after: 11.Nb3!

11...Be6

- A) 11...Qd8?! 12.Bc4 Bb7 13.Bd5±
- B) 11...Nd7?! 12.Be3 Bb7 13.f3 d5 14.exd5 Nb6 15.Bxb6 Qxb6 16.Qe2±
- C) 11...Bb7 12.f3 Qd8 13.Be3



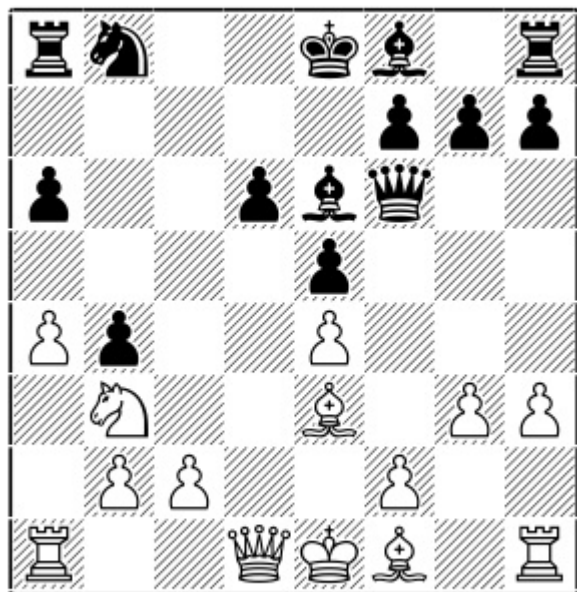
Position after: 13.Be3

13...Qc7 [13...Nd7 14.Qd2 a5 15.Bb5 Be7 16.0-0-0 0-0 17.Kb1±] 14.Qd2 Be7 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.Kb1 d5
17.exd5 Rd8 18.Bd3 Rxd5 19.Qe2 Nd7 20.Bc4 Rxd1+ 21.Rxd1 Nf6 22.a5±

12.Be3!

Keeping the options flexible for the f1-bishop. It may be developed either to e2 (preparing Bg4) or to g2.

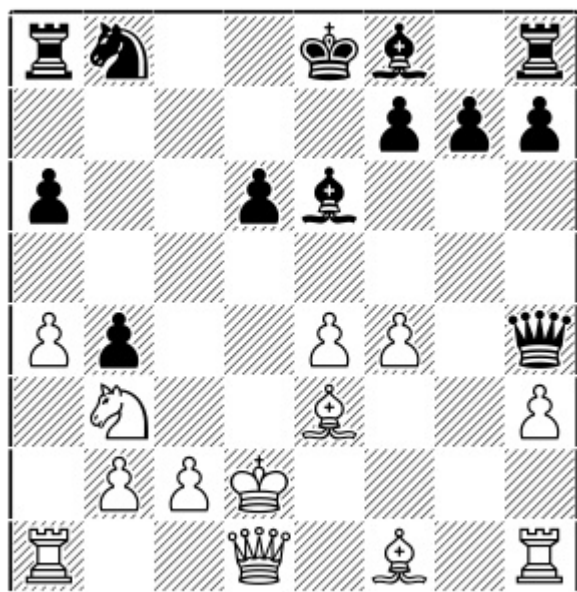
12.Bg2 Nc6 13.0-0 Qd8 14.Be3 Be7 15.f4 0-0 was Ponomariov, R (2675) – Fedoseev, V (2683) Hengshui 2019.



Position after: 12.Be3!

12...Be7

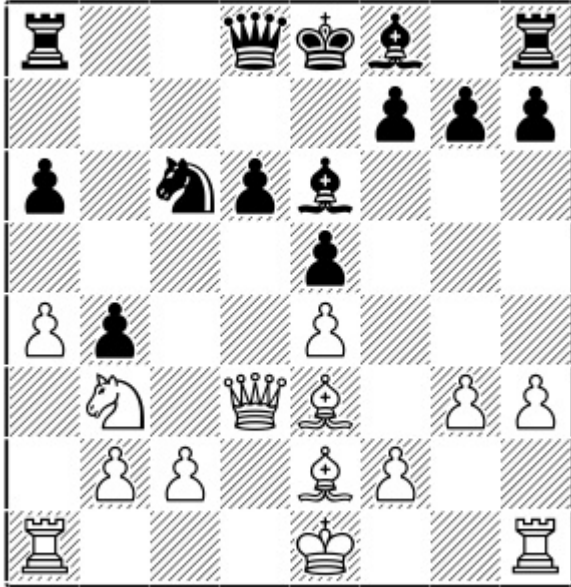
A) 12...Qd8 13.f4 exf4 14.gxf4 Qh4+ 15.Kd2



Position after: 15.Kd2

15...Nc6 [15...Nd7 16.Qf3 g5 17.Rg1 gxf4 18.Qxf4 Qxf4 19.Bxf4 h5 20.Nd4² Thanks to the active king on d2 and the dominating position of his pieces, White retains control of the centre with good co-ordination and his position is much better.] 16.Qf3! g5 17.e5 d5 18.Re1 gxf4 19.Bxf4 Bh6 20.Bxh6 Qxh6+ 21.Kd1± White's king is clearly safer than Black's here.

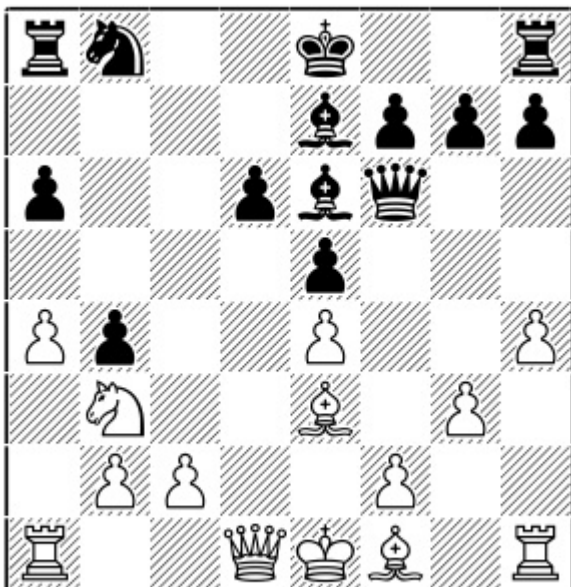
B) 12...Nc6 13.Qd3! Qd8 [13...Be7 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.f4±] 14.Be2!



Position after: 14.Be2!

The point of not rushing with 12.Bg2: this extra option is available. 14...Be7 15.Bg4 0-0 16.Bxe6 fxe6 17.0-0-0²

13.h4!



Position after: 13.h4!

13...h6

A) 13...0-0 14.Bd3 Nc6 15.Qe2²

B) 13...Qg6 14.Bd3 h5 15.Qe2 0-0 16.0-0-0 Nd7 17.Rhg1±

C) 13...h5 Now the bishop should be developed to g2. 14.Bg2 Qg6 [14...Nd7 15.Qe2 Bxb3 16.cxb3 Qe6 17.Bh3 Qxb3 18.0-0±] 15.Na5! Nd7 16.Qe2 0-0 17.Nc6±

14.f4 exf4 15.gxf4 Nc6 16.Nd4 Nxd4 17.Qxd4 Bg4

Stopping long castling, but White has:

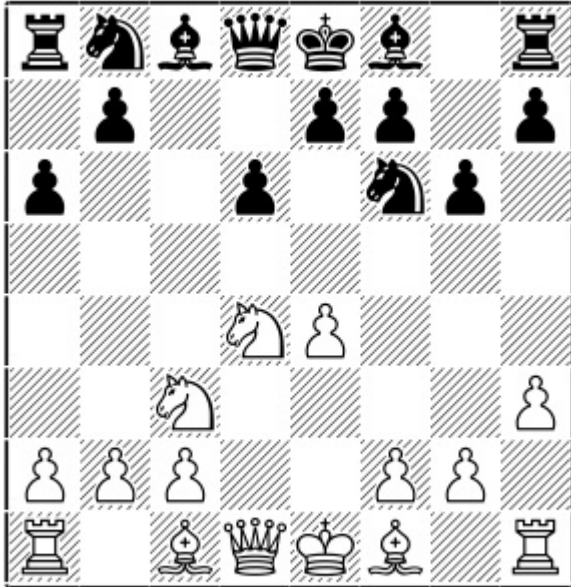
18.Kd2!?

White has complete control over the centre. He can follow up with Bc4 and his position is simply better.

Chapter 2

6...g6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 g6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 2 – 6...g6

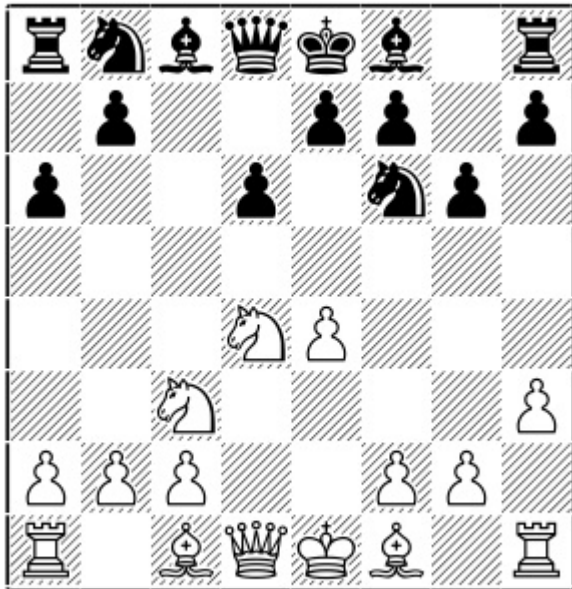
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 g6 7.Be3

a) 7...Nc6

b) 7...Bg7

a) 7...Nc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 g6

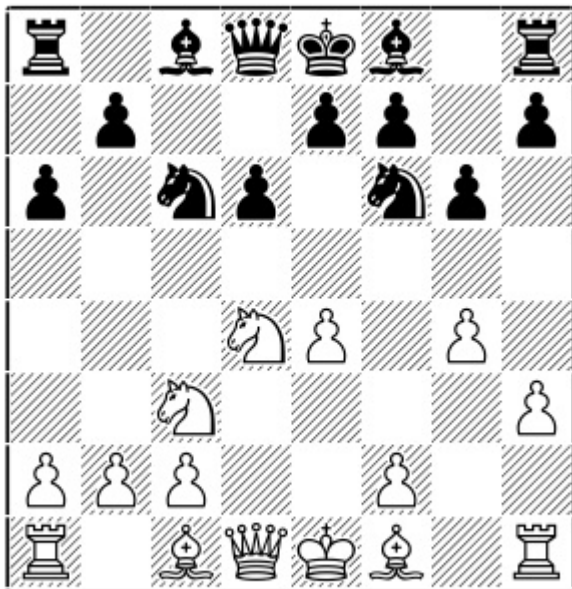


Position after: 6...g6

In Dragon style. The only difference here is that Black has committed to playing ...a6 and White likewise to h3. It is interesting to see which is more useful in what follows.

7.Be3!

7.g4 gives an extra option for Black starting with 7...Nc6



Position after: 7...Nc6

This is analysed under the 6...Nc6 move order (6.h3 Nc6 7.g4 and now 7...g6!!) but right here it's enough to say that White need not allow the option.

In short, after 8.Be3 Nxd4! 9.Bxd4 Bh6! 10.Qe2 b5! [10...0-0 Saric (2685) – Santos Latasa, J (2567) Ortisei 2018] 11.Bg2 Bb7 Black achieves good counterplay.

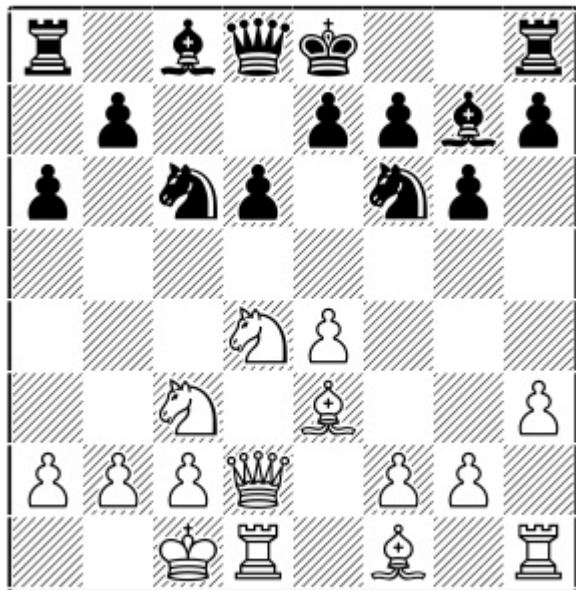
7...Nc6

7...Bg7 – see the next subchapter.

8.Qd2!

8.g4 Nxd4 9.Bxd4 Bh6 leads to the same line as 7.g4.

8...Bg7 9.0-0-0

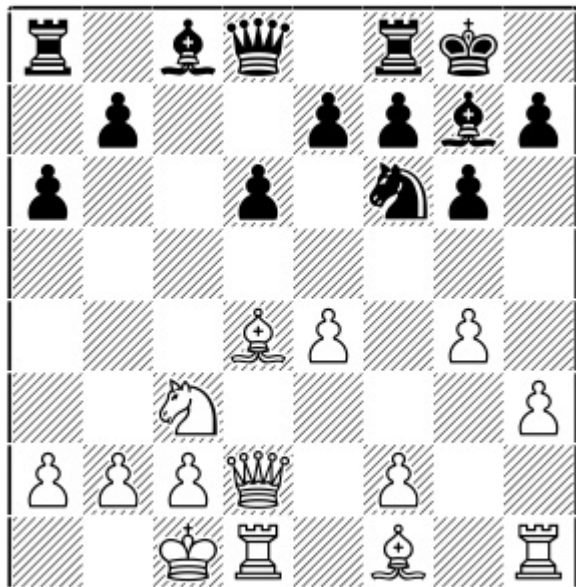


Position after: 9.0-0-0

9...Bd7

9...0-0 10.g4

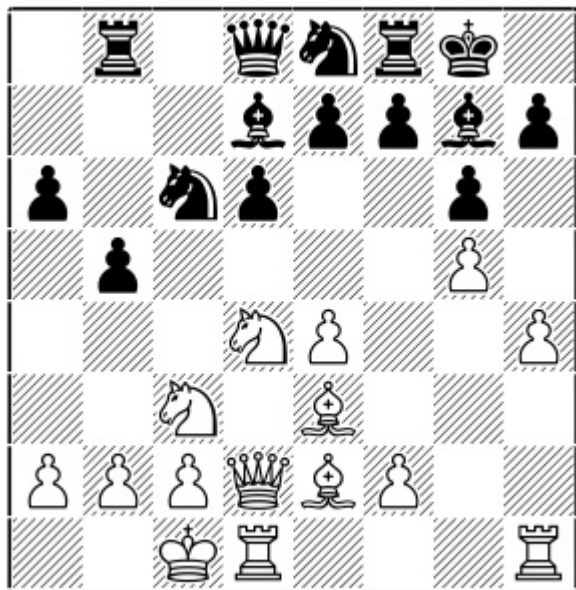
A) 10...Nxd4 11.Bxd4



Position after: 11.Bxd4

11...b5 [11...Qa5? 12.g5 Nh5 13.Nd5! Qxa2 14.Nxe7+±] 12.g5 Nh5 13.Bxg7 Nxg7 14.h4 Bb7 15.Be2 Qa5 16.Kb1 Rac8 17.h5 gxh5 [17...Rxc3 18.Rh3!+– An intermediate resource which means White can win the exchange without breaking up his pawn structure.] 18.Rh4± An important nuance protecting the e4-pawn against all kinds of ...Rxc3 shots and now White is free to strengthen his attack on the h-file.

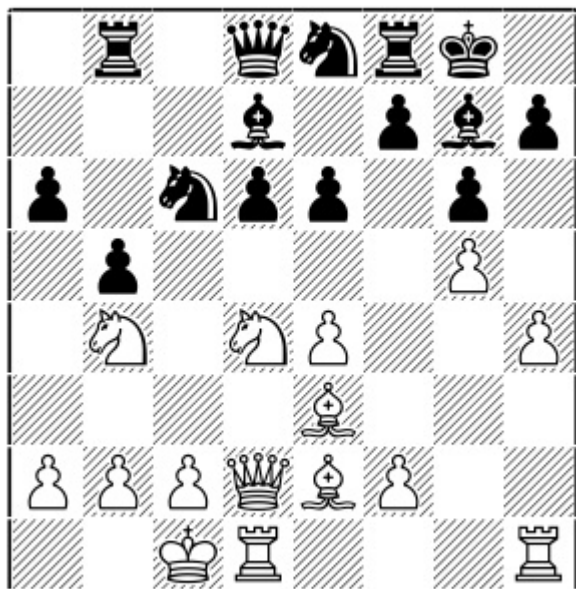
B) 10...Bd7 11.Be2 b5 12.g5 Ne8 13.h4 Rb8



Position after: 13...Rb8

B1) 14.h5 allows some counterplay after 14...b4 15.Nd5 e6 16.Nxc6 [16.hxg6 exd5 17.Nxc6 Bxc6 transposes] 16...Bxc6 17.hxg6 exd5 18.Rxh7 fxg6 19.Rdh1 Rb7! 20.exd5 Bd7 21.Bxa6 Rc7 22.Bd3 Qa8,, And Black is holding on by a thread.

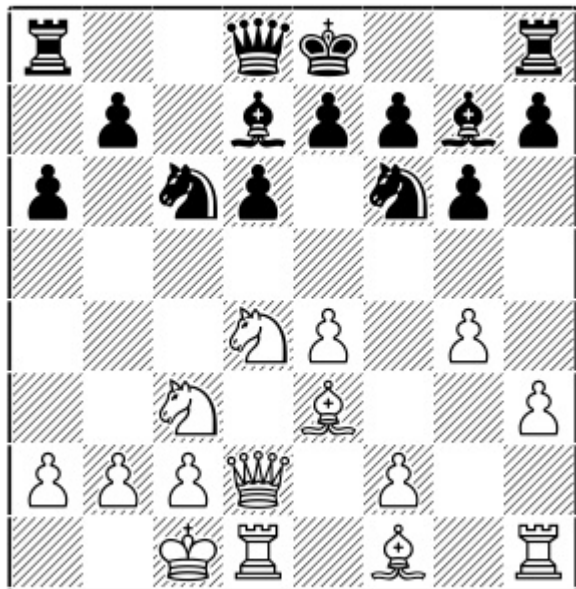
B2) 14.Nd5! e6 15.Nb4! The key idea of the immediate 14.Nd5.



Position after: 15.Nb4!

15...Nxd4 [15...Nxb4 16.Qxb4 a5 17.Qd2 a4 18.f4 b4 19.Kb1±] 16.Bxd4 Bxd4 17.Qxd4 a5 18.Nd3 b4 19.f4± and White has a strong attack.

10.g4

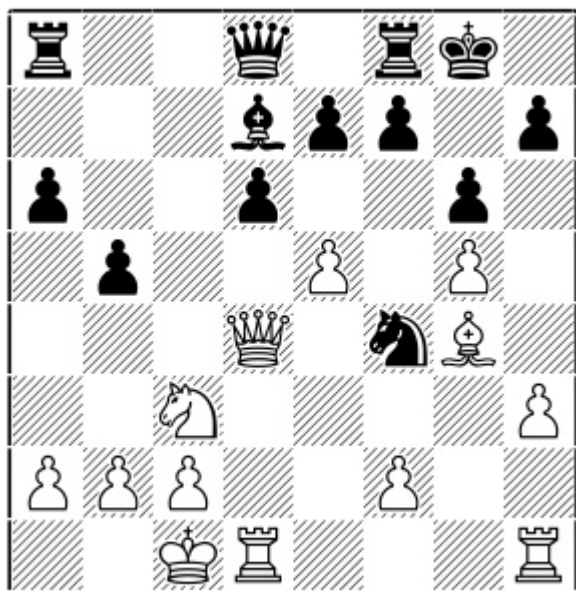


Position after: 10.g4

10...Rc8

A) 10...0-0 transposes to 9...0-0 10.g4 Bd7.

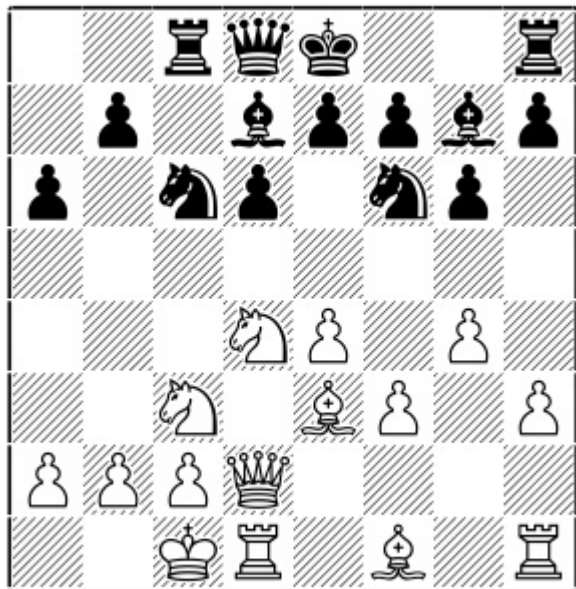
B) 10...b5 11.g5 Nh5 12.Be2 Nf4 13.Bg4 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 0-0 16.e5!



Position after: 16.e5!

16...Bxg4 [16...Ne6 17.Qe3 Bc6 18.Rhe1±] 17.hxg4 dxe5 18.Qxe5 Qb8 19.Qe3± and Black's position looks scary with the h-file open.

11.f3!



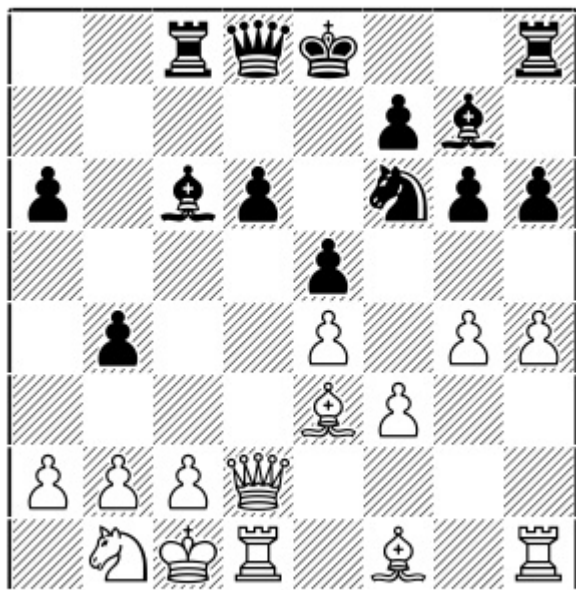
Position after: 11.f3!

Strengthening the centre and preparing for a strong attack with h4-h5.

11...0-0

11...b5 12.h4

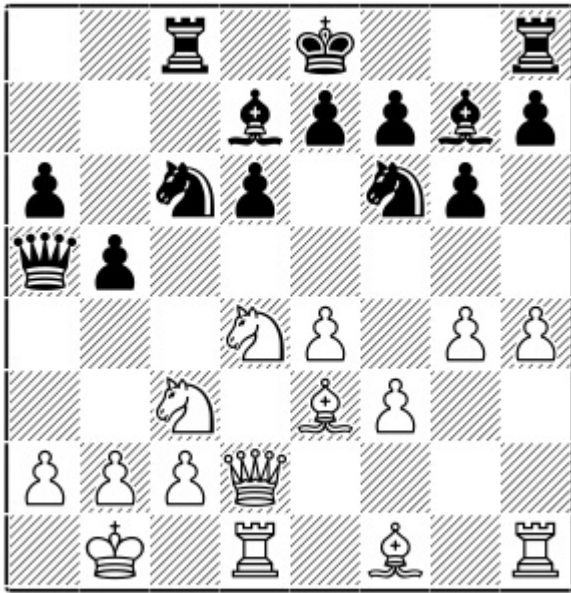
A) 12...h6 13.Nxc6 Bxc6 14.Bd4 e5 15.Be3 b4 16.Nb1!



Position after: 16.Nb1!

16...d5 [16...Nxe4 17.fxe4 Bxe4 18.Bd3 Bxh1 19.Rxh1+–] 17.Bxa6 Ra8 18.exd5 Nxd5 19.Bc4 Nxe3
20.Qxe3±

B) 12...Qa5 13.Kb1



Position after: 13.Kb1

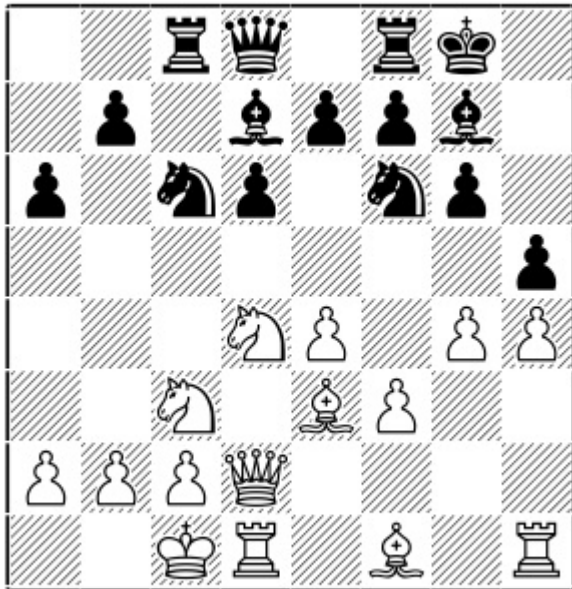
B1) 13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4 b4 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.exd5 [16.Bxg7? Nc3+μ] 16...Bxd4 17.Qxd4±

B2) 13...b4 14.Nce2 Ne5 [14...0-0 15.h5±] 15.Nc1 0-0 [15...h5 16.g5 Nh7 17.a3 Rb8 18.Na2±] 16.h5
Nxf3 17.Nxf3 Nxe4 18.Qh2 Bxb2 19.hxg6 Nc3+ 20.Kxb2 Nxd1+ 21.Ka1 h5 22.Bd4!± White's attack is
more powerful.

12.h4 h5!

White's plan was to attack the black king by pushing his h4-pawn to h5 and thus opening up the position, an idea Black has to prevent by any means.

12...b5? 13.h5 b4 14.Nd5 Nxd5 15.exd5 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Bxd4 17.Qxd4 Qc7 18.Bd3 Bb5 19.Be4+–



Position after: 12...h5!

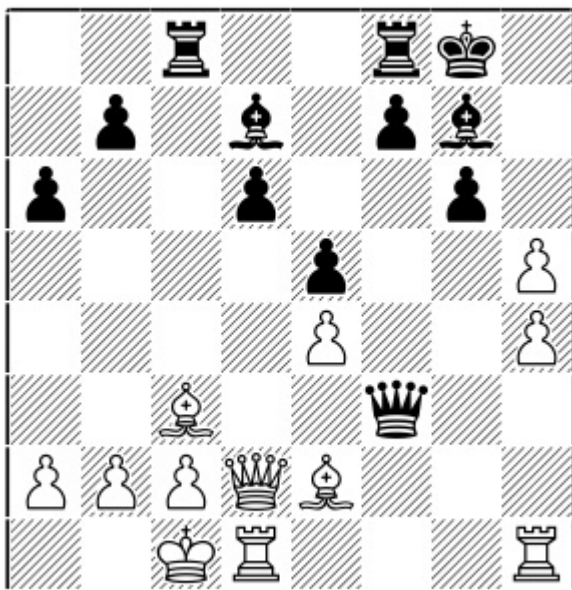
13.gxh5!

Opening up the g-file. It is important to open up one of the files in order to attack and make use of the weakened black king.

A) 13.g5 Ne8 14.f4 Nc7,,

B) 13.Nxc6 Rxc6 14.g5 Ne8 15.Bd4 b5,,

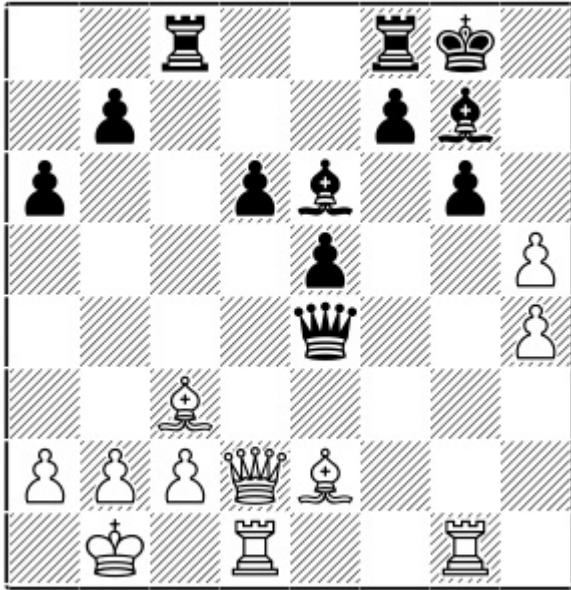
C) 13.Nd5!? e6! [13...hxg4 14.Nxf6+ Bxf6 15.Nxc6 Rxc6 16.h5 gxf3 17.Bd3±] 14.Nxf6+ Qxf6 15.gxh5 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 e5 17.Bc3 Qxf3 18.Be2



Position after: 18.Be2

At first instance this looks promising for White and his attack seems strong, but Black has an amazing

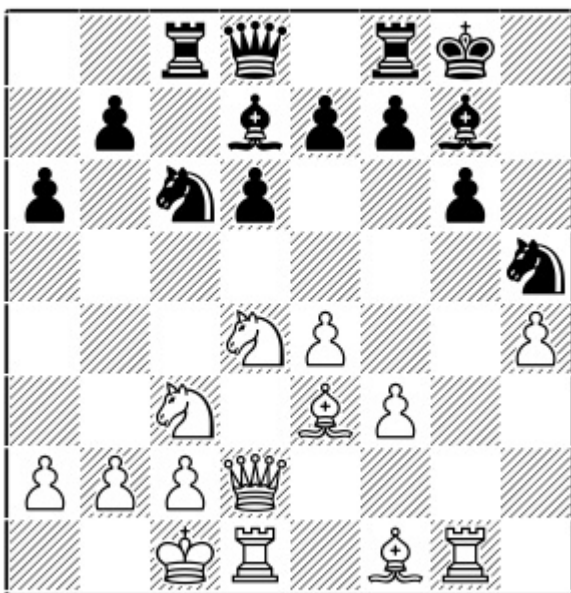
resource which holds the position. 18...Qxe4 19.Kb1 Black was threatening ...Qf4 to exchange queens so it was important to move the king. [19.hxg6 fxg6 20.Qxd6 Bf5 21.Bd3 Qf4+ 22.Kb1 Rc6,,; 19.Rhg1 Qf4 20.Qxf4 exf4 21.Bxg7 Kxg7 22.Rd4 Bf5 23.c3 Rfe8 24.Bf3 b5 25.Rxf4 Re5=] 19...Be6! [19...Bf5 20.Rhg1 Qf4 21.hxg6 Qxd2 22.gxf7+ Rxf7 23.Rxd2?] 20.Rhg1 [20.hxg6 fxg6 21.h5 Rxc3! 22.bxc3 Rf2 23.Qxd6 Bxa2+!]=]



Position after: 20.Rhg1

20...Rxc3! This typical sacrifice saves the position. [20...Qxh4 21.hxg6 f5 22.Qxd6 Rc6 23.Qa3?] 21.bxc3 Qa4 22.c4 e4 23.hxg6 f5 24.Qxd6 Bxc4 25.Bxc4+ Qxc4=

13...Nxh5 14.Rg1



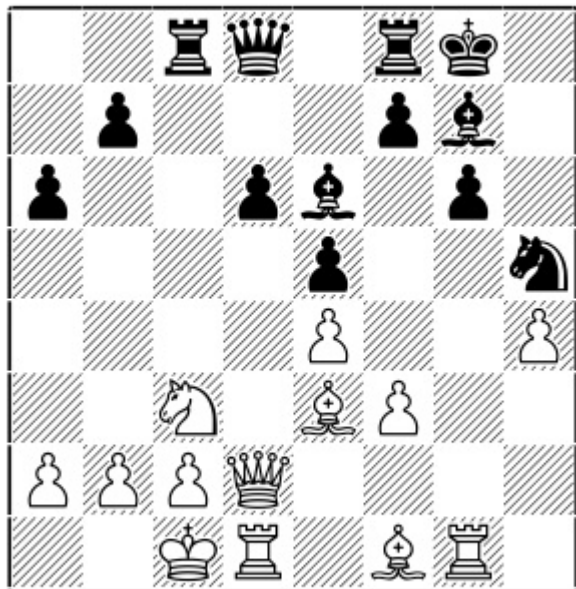
Position after: 14.Rg1

With the idea of Rg5.

14...Qa5

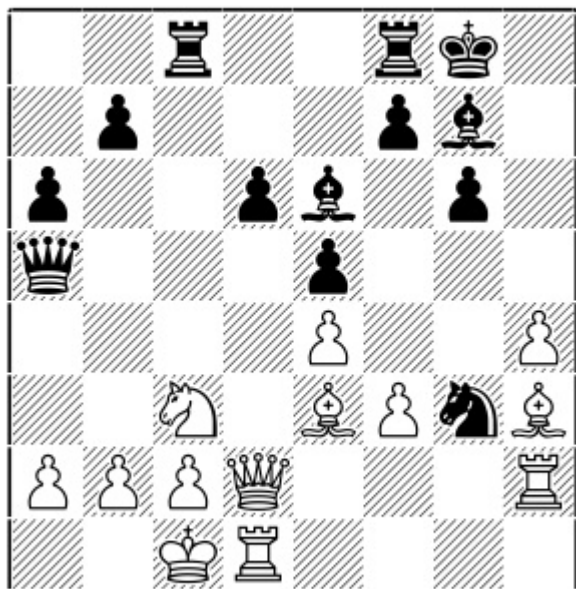
A) 14...b5?! 15.Kb1 Ne5 16.f4 Rxc3 [16...Nc4 17.Bxc4 Rxc4 18.f5+-] 17.fxe5!+-

B) 14...Nxd4 15.Bxd4 e5 16.Be3 Be6



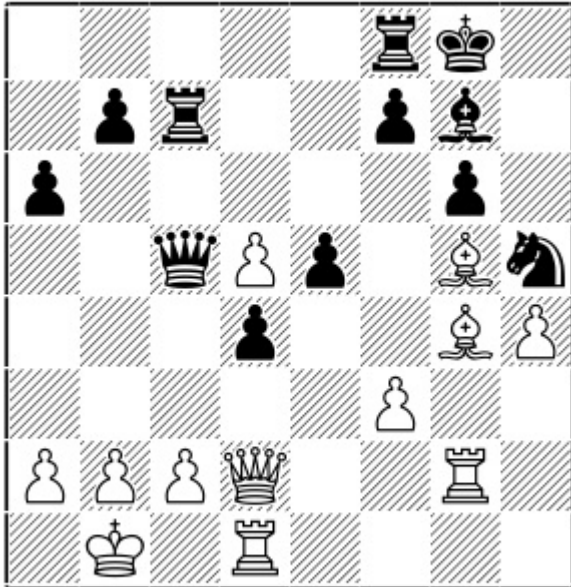
Position after: 16...Be6

17.Rh1! Protecting the h4-pawn and also planning Bh3. [17.Bg5 Qa5,,; 17.Rg5?! Bh6] 17...Ng3 18.Rh2 Qa5 19.Bh3! Exchanging one of Black's most important pieces.



Position after: 19.Bh3!

19...d5 20.Kb1 (Note White cannot move his knight immediately because the exchange of queens on d2 comes with check.) 20...d4 21.Nd5! Qc5 22.Bg5 Bxd5 23.exd5 Rc7 24.Rg2 Nh5 25.Bg4 Chasing the black knight and now Black is forced to give up the important piece which was defending against the attack on the kingside.



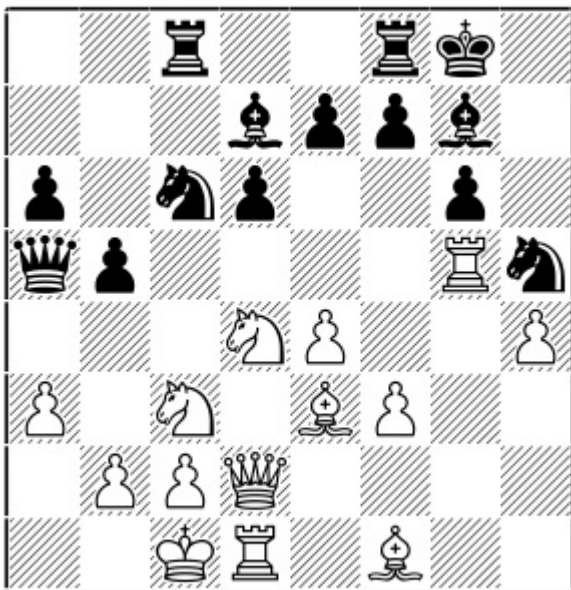
Position after: 25.Bg4

25...Nf4 26.Bxf4 exf4 27.Qxf4± with h5 and a strong attack to follow.

15.Rg5 b5

15...Ne5?! 16.Nb3±

16.a3

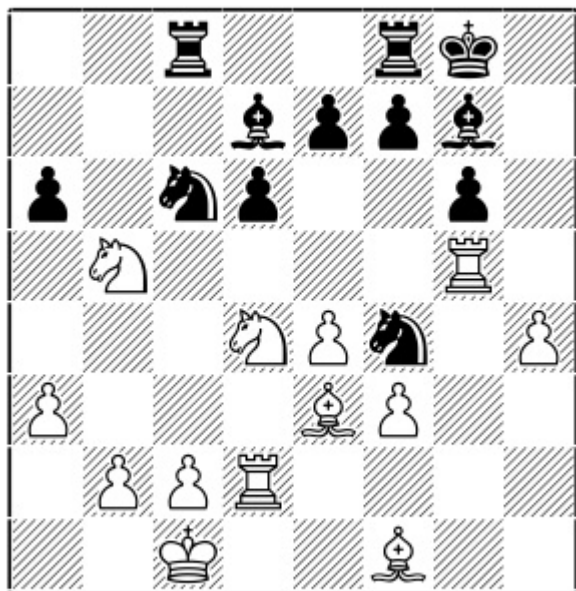


Position after: 16.a3

16...Nxd4

A) 16...Ne5 17.Nb3 Qd8 18.Be2 Bf6 19.Rgg1 Nc4 20.Bxc4 bxc4 21.Nd4±

B) 16...Nf4 17.Ncxb5! Qxd2+ 18.Rxd2



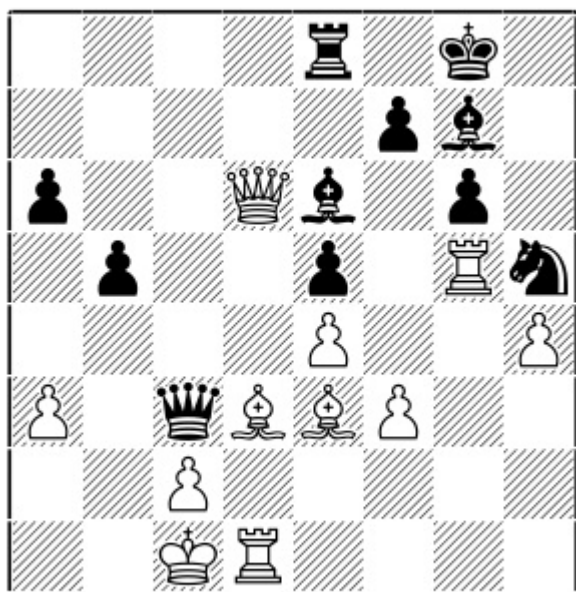
Position after: 18.Rxd2

18...Ne6 [18...axb5 19.Nxc6 Bxc6 20.Bxf4±] 19.Nxe6 fxe6 20.Nd4 Nxd4 21.Bxd4 e5 22.Bxe5! Bxe5 23.Rxe5 dxe5 24.Rxd7± and White is clearly better here as he has connected passed pawns on the queenside.

17.Bxd4 e5

17...Bxd4 18.Qxd4 Nf4 19.Nd5+–

18.Be3 Be6 19.Qxd6 Rxc3 20.bxc3 Qxc3 21.Bd3 Re8



Position after: 21...Re8

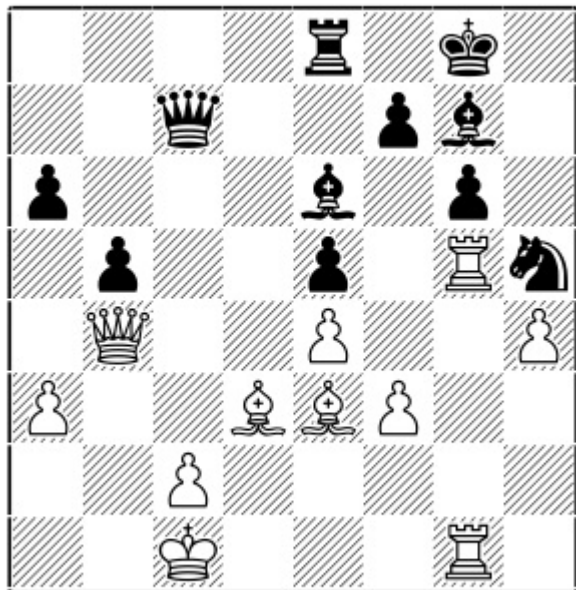
22.Qb4

22.Qc5 Qxc5 23.Bxc5 Bh6,,

22...Qc7

22...Qxb4? 23.axb4 Bh6 24.Rxg6++-

23.Rdg1²

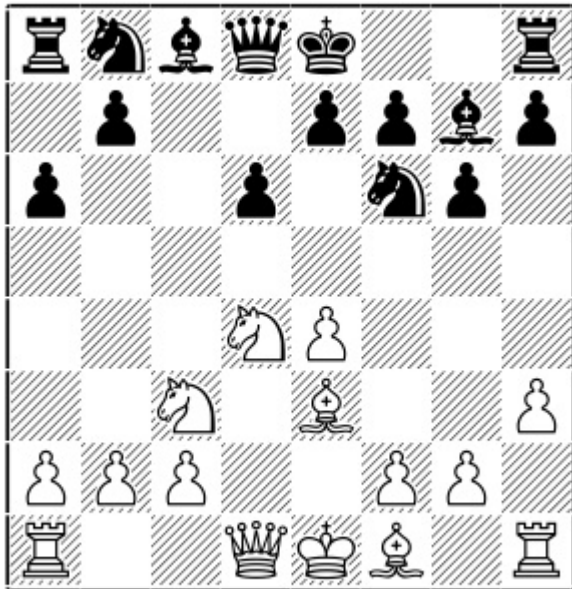


Position after: 23.Rdg1²

White will soon exchange queens with Qc5 and retain a considerable edge because of his extra exchange.

b) 7...Bg7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 g6 7.Be3! Bg7

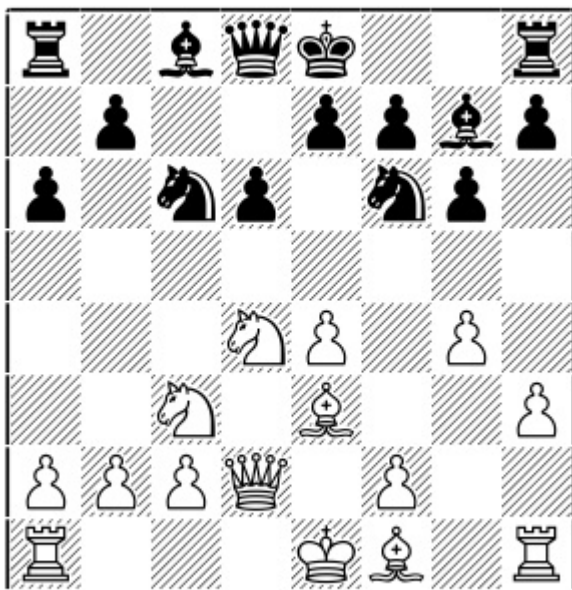


Position after: 7...Bg7

8.g4 0-0

Black keeps the option of ...Nc6 as well as possibilities of ...b5 ideas. In the previous subchapter Black showed his plan quite early by playing the immediate 7...Nc6, which allowed White to keep his bishop on f1 and go for a full-on kingside offensive with f3, h4-h5.

8...Nc6 9.Qd2



Position after: 9.Qd2

A) 9...d5 does not work because of 10.Nxc6! bxc6 11.0-0-0 Qc7 12.Bg2 Bb7 13.Bf4 e5 14.exd5 Nxd5 [14...exf4 15.d6+-] 15.Bxd5 cxd5 16.Nxd5 Bxd5 17.Qxd5 0-0 18.Be3± White is simply a pawn up with a clear advantage.

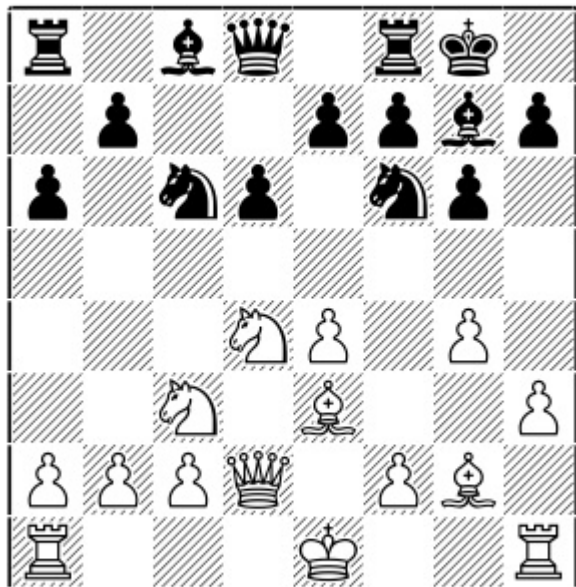
B) 9...0-0 10.0-0-0 transposes to 7...Nc6, with which we dealt in the previous subchapter.

9.Bg2

Now White is forced to commit his bishop to g2 to prevent ...b5 and ...d5, the key freeing moves for Black.

9.Qd2 allows 9...b5.

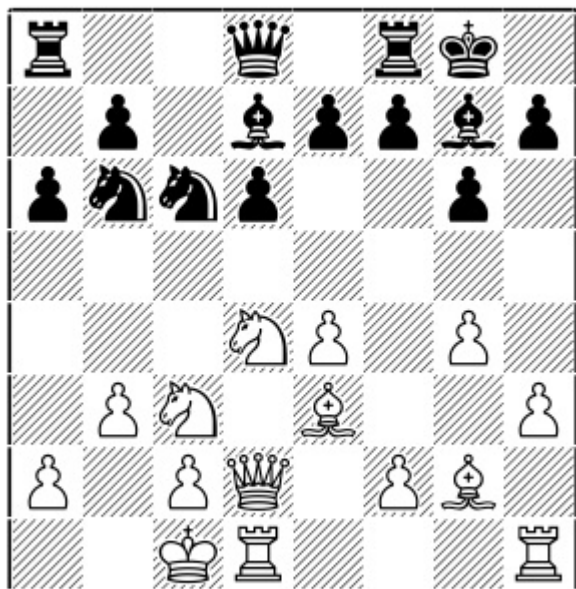
9...Nc6 10.Qd2



Position after: 10.Qd2

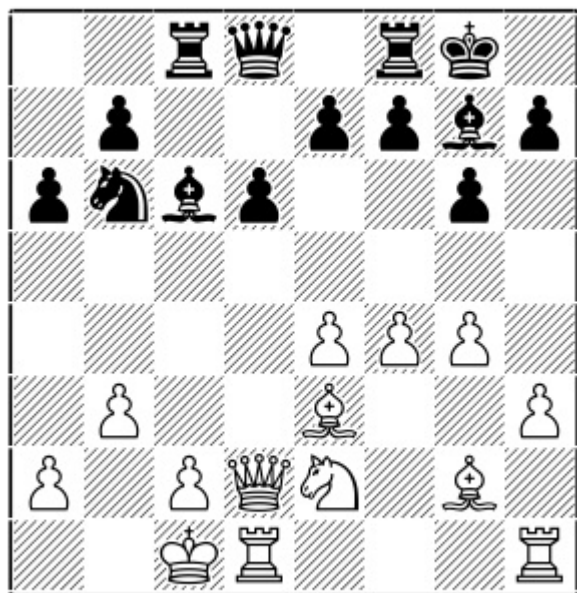
10...Bd7

- A) 10...h5? 11.0-0-0 Nxd4 [11...hxg4 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.e5+–] 12.Bxd4 hxg4 13.Nd5 e5 14.Bb6±
- B) 10...Ne5?! 11.b3 Nc6 12.0-0-0 Qa5 13.Nxc6! bxc6 14.Na4 Qc7 15.Bb6 Qb8 16.f4 Nd7 17.Ba5±
- C) 10...Nd7 11.0-0-0 Nb6 12.b3 Bd7



Position after: 12...Bd7

C1) 13.f4 also gives White a good edge, and was played in most of the games here. 13...Rc8 14.Nxc6 Bxc6 15.Bd4 [15.Ne2?!

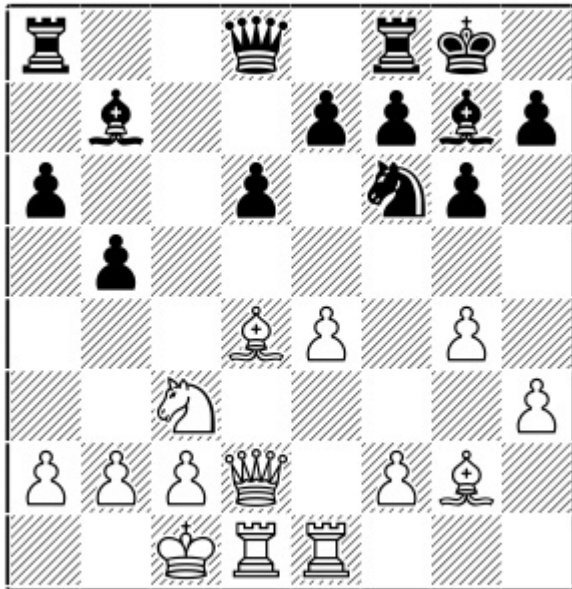


Position after: 15.Ne2?!

was played in Van Foreest, J (2598) – Petrov, M (2465) Karlsruhe 2019, when Black played 15...Qc7 16.Kb1 Rfd8 17.Bd4 e5, but 15...Nd7! would have been even stronger.] 15...e5 [15...Bxd4 16.Qxd4 Nd7 17.Kb2 b5 18.h4²] 16.fxe5 Bxe5 [16...dxe5 17.Bc5±] 17.h4± and White has a comfortable advantage as the d6-pawn is quite weak.

C2) 13.Nxc6!N 13...Bxc6 [13...bxc6? 14.Bh6 a5 15.a4±] 14.Bd4 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Nd7 16.h4 Qa5 17.Kb2 Qc5 18.Nd5²

D) 10...Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5 12.0-0-0 Bb7 [12...b4?! 13.Nd5 Nxd5 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 15.exd5 Qb6 16.Rde1±] 13.Rhe1!N [13.f4 allows 13...e5! 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.Be3 b4 Kovalev, V (2584) – Andriasian, Z (2611) Yerevan 2016]

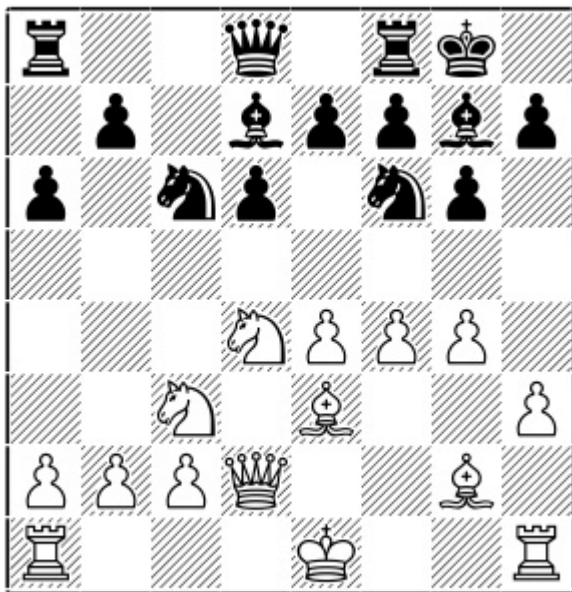


Position after: 13.Rhet1N

13...Rc8 [13...Qc7 14.a3 Nd7 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.f4 Nb6 17.Bf1² Preventing ...Nc4 and White has a solid edge.] 14.a3 Rc4 15.Qe3 b4 [After 15...e5 16.Bb6 Qb8 17.Ba5² White has stopped Black's counterplay and can slowly begin to focus on executing his own plans.] 16.axb4 Rxb4 17.e5! Bxg2 18.exf6 Bxf6 19.Bxf6 exf6 20.f3± The bishop on g2 is locked in.

11.0-0-0

11.f4!?

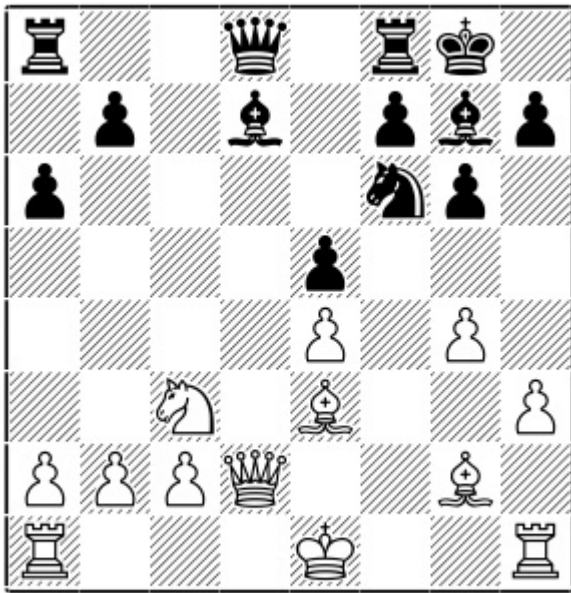


Position after: 11.f4!?

A) 11...Rc8 Here White has two options: he may transpose to the main line with 12.0-0-0, or try the following independent line: 12.Nde2 An interesting move that prevents the exchange of knights. 12...b5 13.a3 Na5 [13...b4 14.axb4 Nxb4 15.0-0 Bc6 16.Nd4²] 14.b3 Ne8 15.0-0± And now White changes his

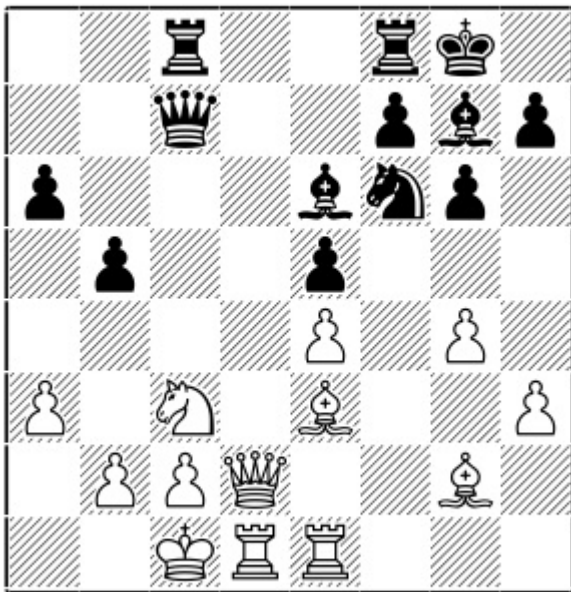
direction of castling as he is already positionally much better.

B) 11...Nxd4! 12.Bxd4 e5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.Be3



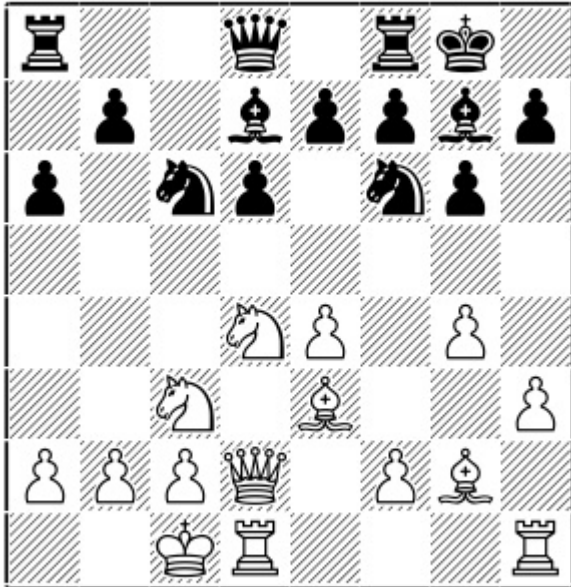
Position after: 14.Be3

14...b5 [14...Be6 15.0-0-0 Rc8 16.Nd5 Bxd5 17.exd5 Qd6 18.Kb1 b5 19.Rhe1² with a very slight edge.]
 15.a3 [15.0-0-0 b4,,] 15...Be6 16.0-0-0 Rc8 17.Rhe1 Qc7



Position after: 17...Qc7

[17...Qxd2+?! 18.Bxd2 Rfd8 19.g5 Nh5 20.Nd5 Bxd5 21.exd5 Nf4 22.Bxf4 exf4 23.d6±] 18.Qd6
 [18.Kb1?! Rfd8 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5 e4!,,] 18...Qb7 19.Qb6 Qxb6 20.Bxb6 Rc6 21.Ba5² White is slightly better but this isn't so clear.



Position after: 11.0-0-0

11...Rc8

Preparing ...b5 and also getting rid of the pin on the h1-a8 diagonal. The immediate 11...b5 failed because of this pin, and the concrete way White can exploit it there is shown below.

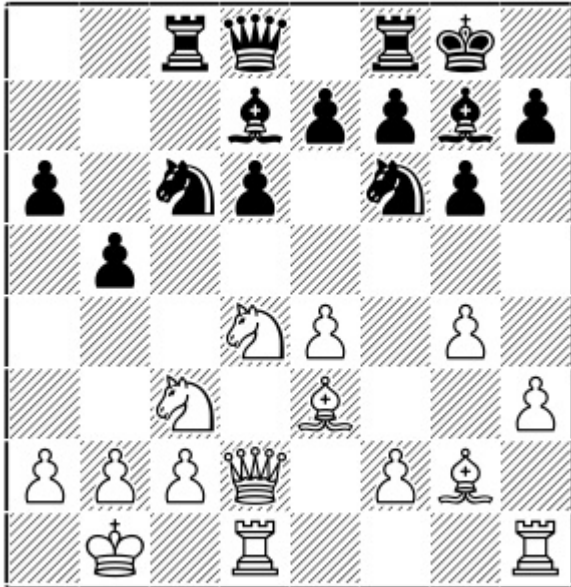
A) 11...Na5?! 12.b3 Nc6 13.Kb1±

B) 11...b5?! 12.g5! Nh5 [12...Ne8 13.Nxc6 Bxc6 14.Ne2! Nc7 15.h4±] 13.Bf3 Nxd4 [13...Bxd4 14.Bxd4 Nf4 15.Qxf4 e5 16.Bxe5+–] 14.Bxd4 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Because of the black rook on a8, Black is not in time to play ...Nf4 because of e5. 15...Ng7 16.h4 Rc8 17.h5 Rc5 18.Qe3±

12.f4!

A) 12.g5 Nh5 13.Kb1 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Nf4,,

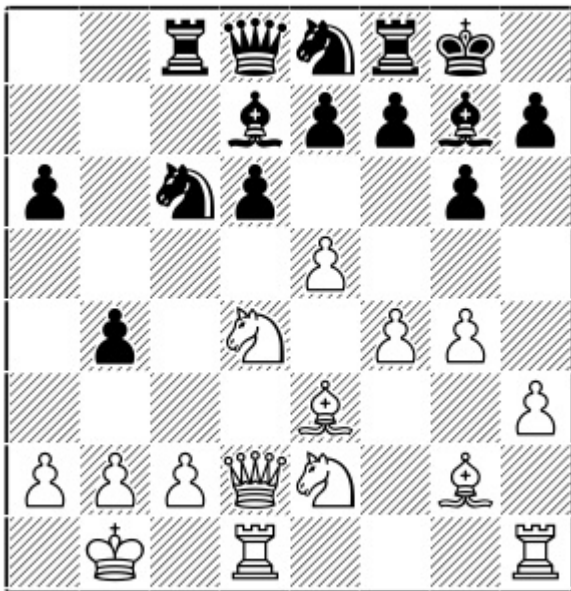
B) 12.Kb1 b5



Position after: 12...b5

13.g5 [13.Nde2 b4 14.Nd5 Qa5,] 13...b4! 14.Nce2 Nh5 15.Bf3 Ne5 16.Bxh5 Nc4 17.Qd3 gxh5 18.Bc1 Bb5 19.Nxb5 axb5³ and Black was better in the correspondence game Evgrafov, B (2343) – Toropov, M (2415) ICCF email 2015.

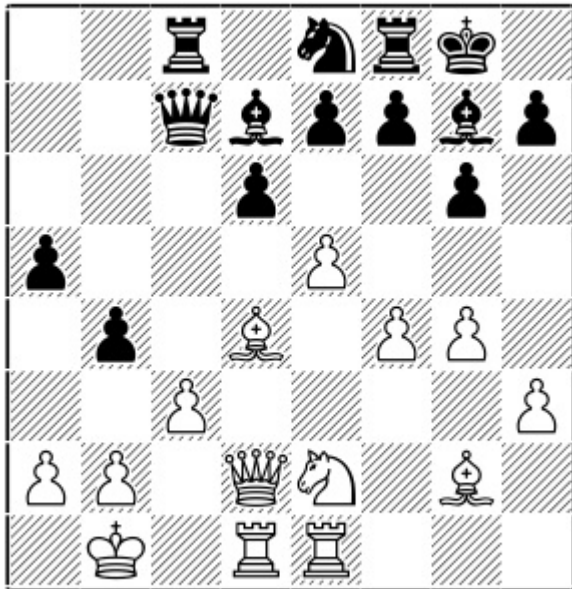
12...b5 13.e5 b4 14.Nce2 Ne8 15.Kb1



Position after: 15.Kb1

15...Qc7

15...Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Qc7 17.Rhe1 a5 18.c3



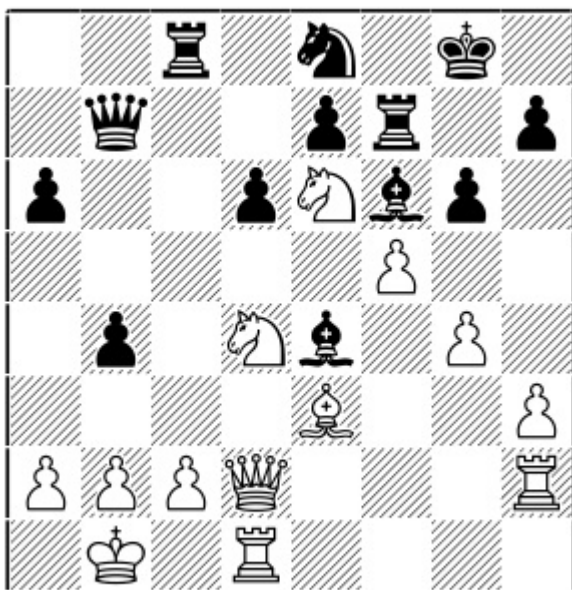
Position after: 18.c3

A) 18...Ba4 19.b3 dxe5 [19...Bc6 20.exd6 Nxd6 21.Bxg7 Kxg7 22.Bxc6 Qxc6 23.cxb4 Qe4+ 24.Kb2 axb4 25.Qd4+² and the b4-pawn will fall soon.] 20.fxe5 Bc6 21.Bxc6 Qxc6 22.cxb4 axb4 23.Nf4 Nc7 24.Qxb4 g5 25.Nh5 Ne6 26.Rd2²

B) 18...dxe5 19.Bxe5 Bxe5 20.fxe5 bxc3 21.Nxc3 Be6 22.Nd5 Bxd5 23.Bxd5² The strong bishop on d5 gives White a good edge.

16.Nb3

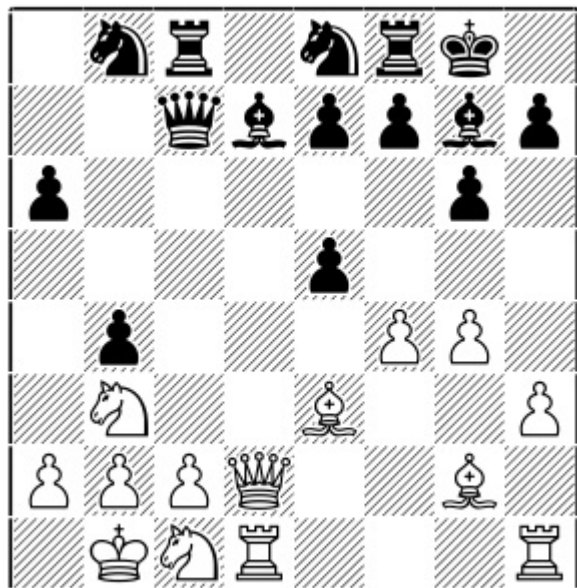
16.e6!? fxe6 17.Bxc6 Bxc6 18.Nxe6 Qb7 19.Rh2 Be4 20.N2d4 Rf7 21.f5 Bf6 and in this extremely complex position there have been a few correspondence games which showed that Black was doing completely fine.



Position after: 21...Bf6

22.Ka1 a5 [22...Nc7 23.Rf2 Bh4 24.fxg6 hxg6 25.Rxf7 Kxf7 26.Nxc7 Qxc7 27.Qxb4 Bf6 28.Rf1 Kg8= Polshchuk, N (2473) – Gerasimov, V (2476) ICCF email 2013] 23.Ng5 Bxg5 24.Bxg5 a4 25.Rf2 Nf6 26.Re1 Rc4 27.b3 Rc3 28.Rfe2 d5 29.bxa4 Rc4 30.Rb1 Qb6 The position was unclear in Romm, M (2445) – Martynov, A (2376) ICCF email 2014.

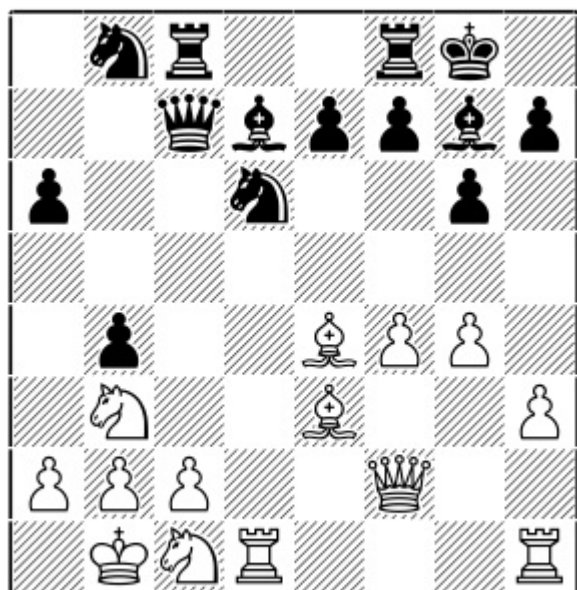
16...Nb8 17.Nec1! dxe5



Position after: 17...dxe5

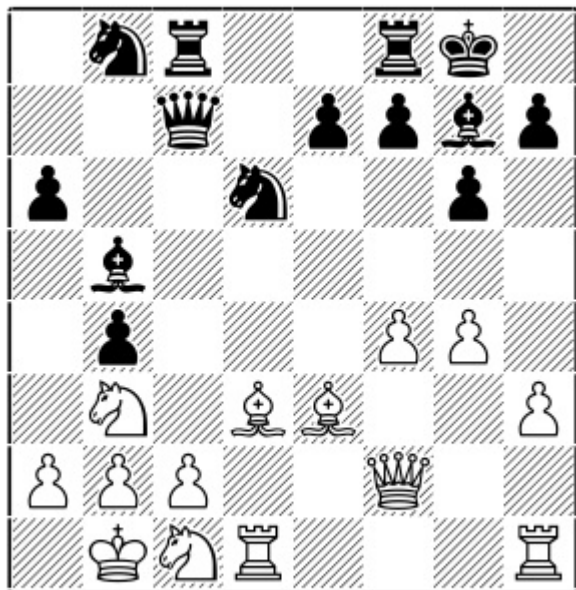
18.fxe5!?N

18.Qf2!? was the favored move in the correspondence world championships (!) but here I found 18...e4 to be unclear and a likely improvement over 18...exf4 which was played in all the games. 18...e4 [18...exf4 19.Bb6 Qe5 20.Nd3 Qg5 21.Nxf4 Bc6 22.Nd5 Bxd5 23.Rxd5 Qf6 24.Qxf6 Nxf6 25.Ra5 Nfd7 26.Be3² Rook, D (2477) – Gerasimov, V (2510) ICCF email 2015] 19.Bxe4 Nd6



Position after: 19...Nd6

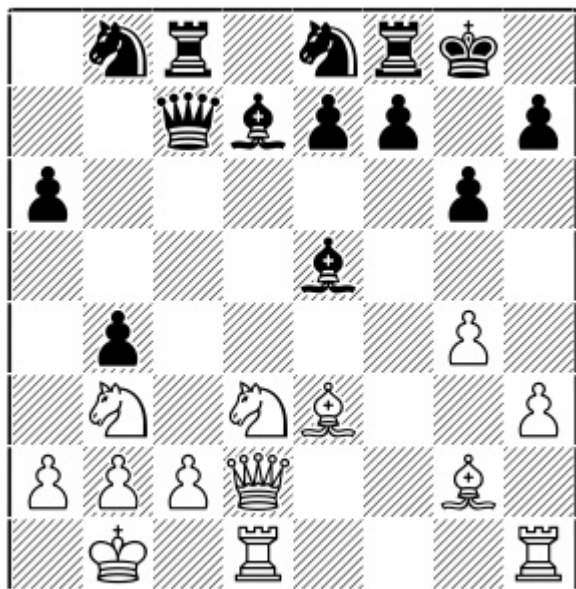
- A) 20.Bg2 Bc6 21.Bb6 Qb7 22.Na5 Qa8 23.Nxc6 Nxc6 24.Rhe1 [24.Bd5 a5,,] 24...Nc4,,
- B) 20.Bd3 Bb5! [20...Nb5 21..Bc5 a5 22.Bxb5 Bxb5 23.Bb6 Qb7 24.Nxa5 Qa6 25.Nab3±]



Position after: 20...Bb5!

21.h4 [21.Bb6 Qc6 22.Bxb5 Qxb5 23.Bd4 Bxd4 24.Nxd4 Qb6=] 21...Nd7 22.h5 Nc4 23.Bd4 [23.Bxc4 Bxc4 24.g5 Rfd8=] 23...e5 24.fxe5 Ndx5 with complex play.

18...Bxe5 19.Nd3



Position after: 19.Nd3

19...Bd6

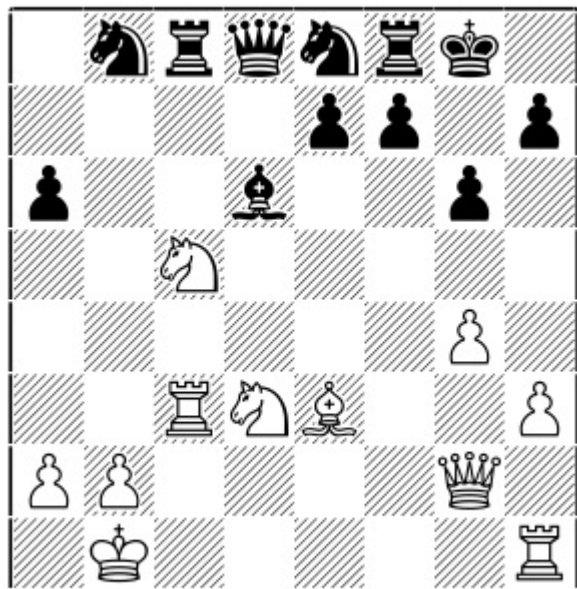
19...Bg7 20.Nxb4²

20.Rc1 Bc6

20...Nf6 21.g5 Nh5 22.Nxb4 Bxb4 23.Qxb4 Bc6 24.Bxc6 Nxc6 25.Qa4²

21.c3 Bxg2 22.Qxg2 bxc3 23.Rxc3 Qd8 24.Nbc5

White is a pawn down here but his pieces are extremely active and ideally placed. At first the computer says that it is quite equal but once you explore the position in depth, it prefers White. So I will give you a few sample lines to prove White's superiority.



Position after: 24.Nbc5

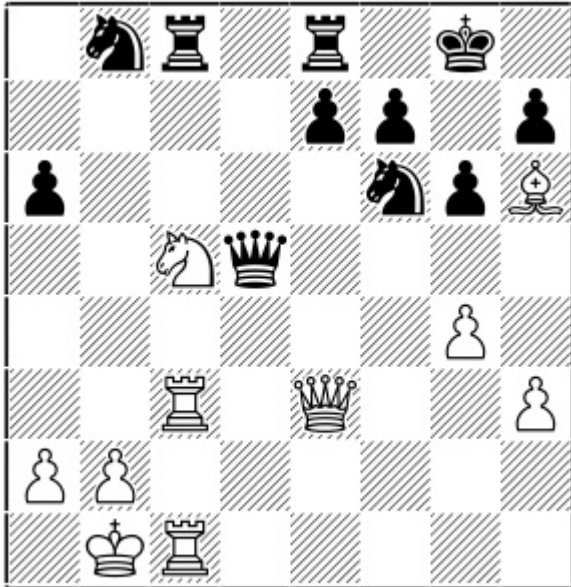
24...Nf6

24...Bxc5 25.Nxc5 Nf6 26.Rd3 Qc7 27.Rc1 Qc6 28.Qe2 Rfe8 29.Bh6 a5 30.Rd4 Qb6 31.Rdc4²

25.Bh6 Re8 26.Rhc1 Rc7

26...Bxc5 27.Nxc5 Nd5 28.Rc4 Nb6 29.R4c2 Qd5 30.Qe2²

27.Nb7! Qd7 28.Ndc5 Bxc5 29.Nxc5 Qd5 30.Qg3 Rcc8 31.Qe3²



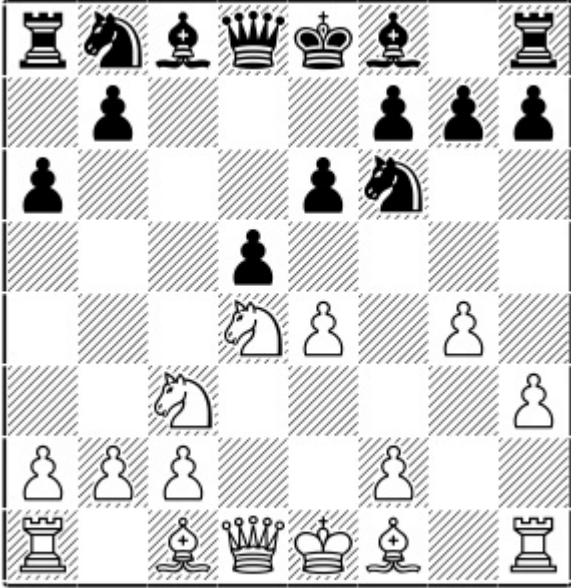
Position after: 31.Qe3

The powerful bishop on h6 and the active pieces compensate for the extra black pawn.

Chapter 3

6...e6 7.g4 d5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5



Chapter Guide

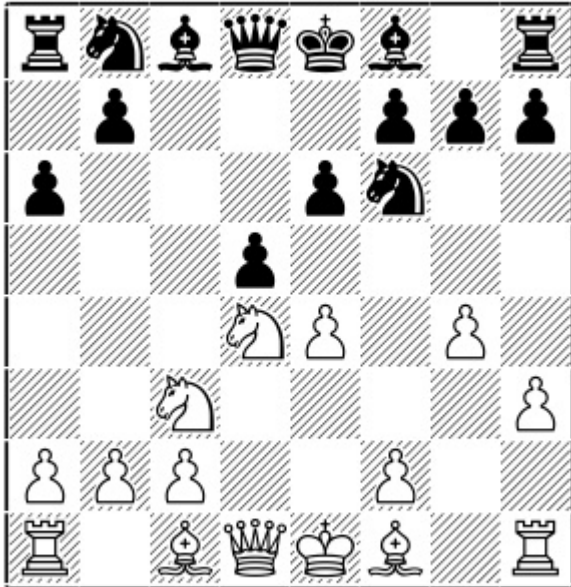
Chapter 3 – 6...e6 7.g4 d5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5 8.Nde2

- a) 8...--
- b) 8...Nxe4
- c) 8...Bb4

a) 8...--

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5

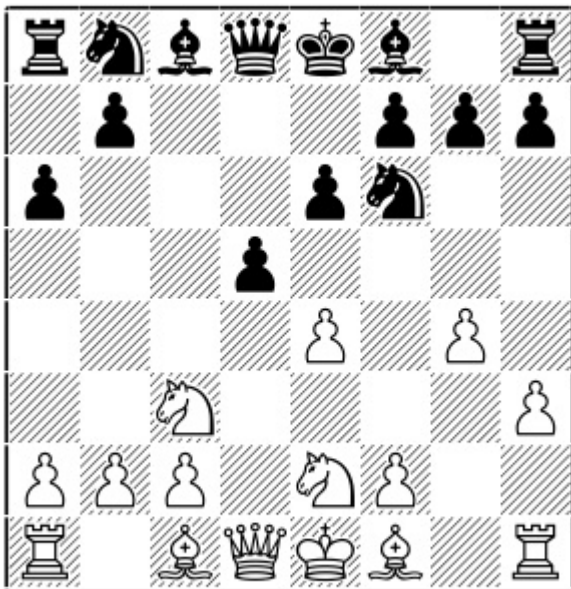


Position after: 7...d5

Resolving the status of the centre used to be quite popular in olden days.

8.Nde2!

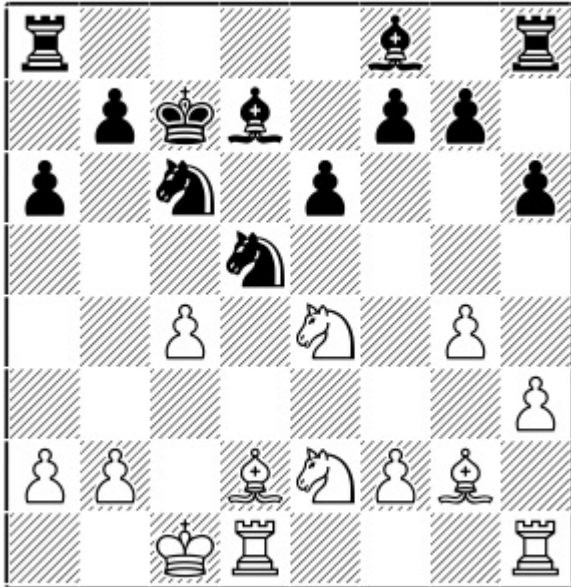
Let's examine some sidelines for Black here. [8.exd5 Nxd5](#) [9.Nde2](#) was the old main line but the text is stronger.



Position after: 8.Nde2!

8...Nc6

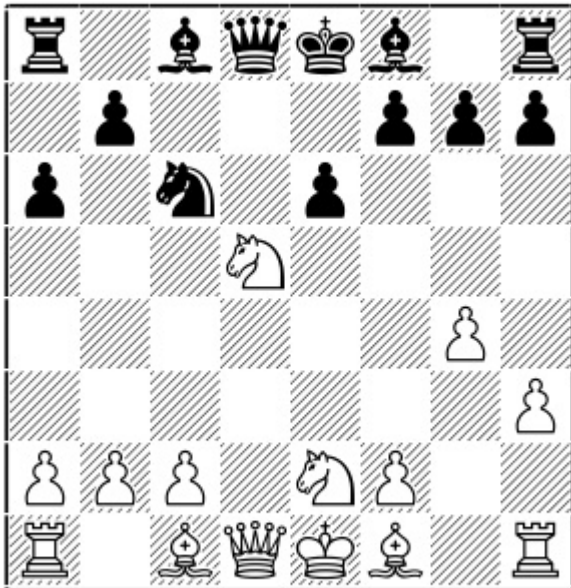
A) [8...dxe4?! 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.Be3 Nc6 11.0-0-0+ Kc7 12.Bg2 h6 13.Nxe4 Nd5 14.Bd2 Bd7 15.c4±](#) and Black is forced to go back with his pieces allowing White to gain a large advantage in the endgame.



Position after: 15.c4±

B) 8...Bc5 9.exd5 Qb6 10.Be3! Bxe3 11.fxe3 Qxe3 12.Bg2 exd5 13.Qd4 Qxd4 14.Nxd4 Nc6 15.0-0-0 Nxd4 16.Rxd4 Be6 17.g5² White exploits the weakness on d5 and he has a decent advantage here.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5

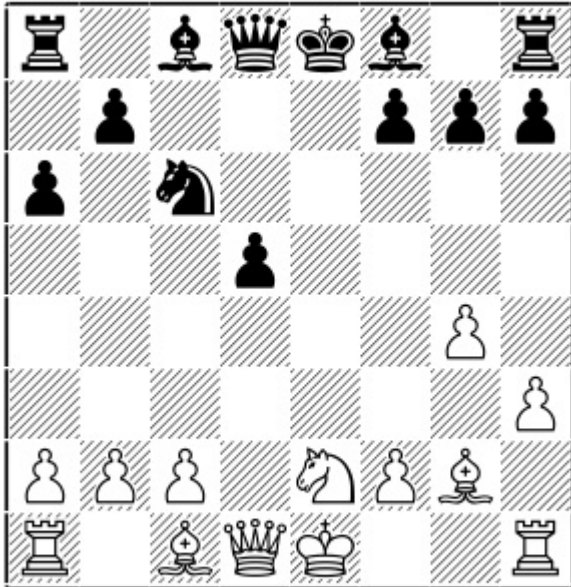


Position after: 10.Nxd5

10...exd5

10...Qxd5 11.Qxd5 exd5 12.Be3 h5 13.gxh5 Rxh5 [13...Nb4 14.0-0-0 Nxa2+ 15.Kb1 Nb4 16.Ng3±] 14.0-0-0 Bd6 15.Bg2± and the isolated pawn on d5 remains a weakness for the whole game.

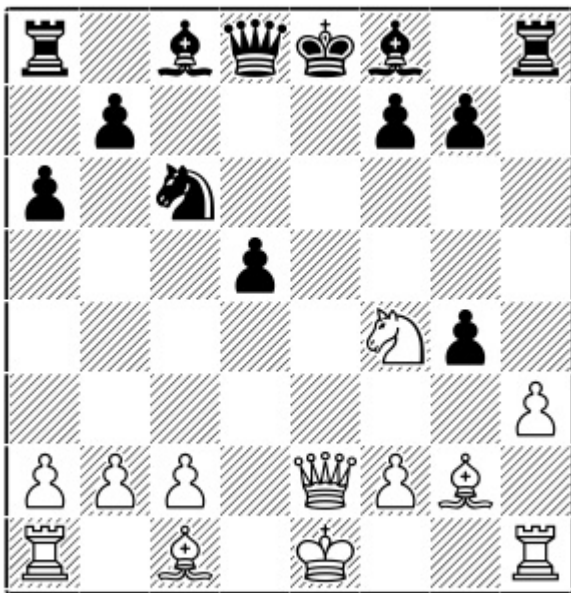
11.Bg2



Position after: 11.Bg2

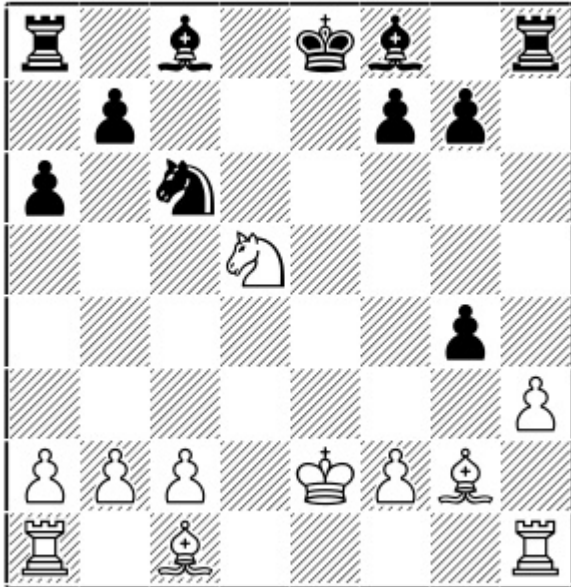
11...Be6

11...h5 Trying to create some counterplay, but White can answer with 12.Nf4! hxg4 13.Qe2+. This important *zwischenzschach* helps White to gain a better position.



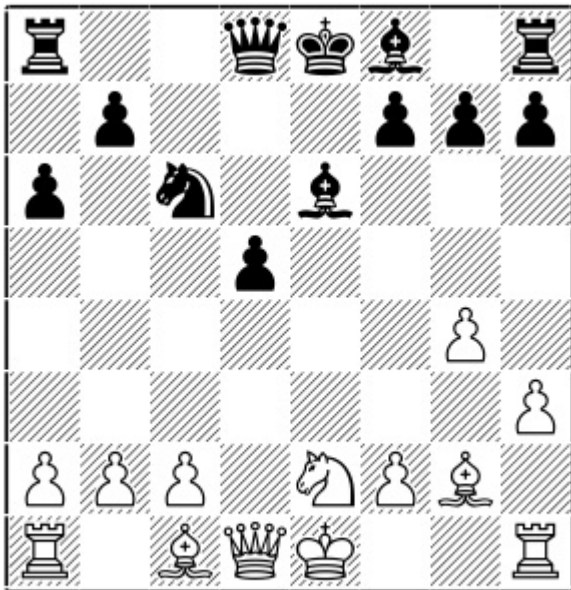
Position after: 13.Qe2+

13...Qe7 [13...Be7 14.hxg4 Rxh1+ 15.Bxh1²] 14.Nxd5 Qxe2+ 15.Kxe2



Position after: 15.Kxe2

15...Nd4+ [15...Bd6 16.Nb6 Rb8 17.Nxc8 Rxc8 18.hxg4±] 16.Kd3 gxh3 17.Be3! Nb5 18.c4±

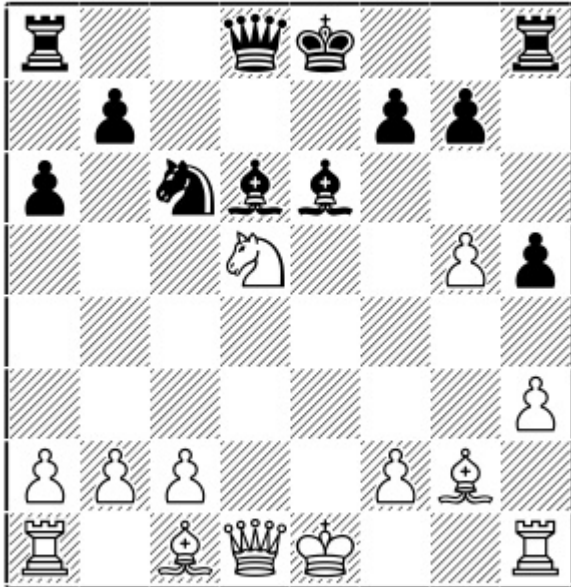


Position after: 11...Be6

12.0-0!

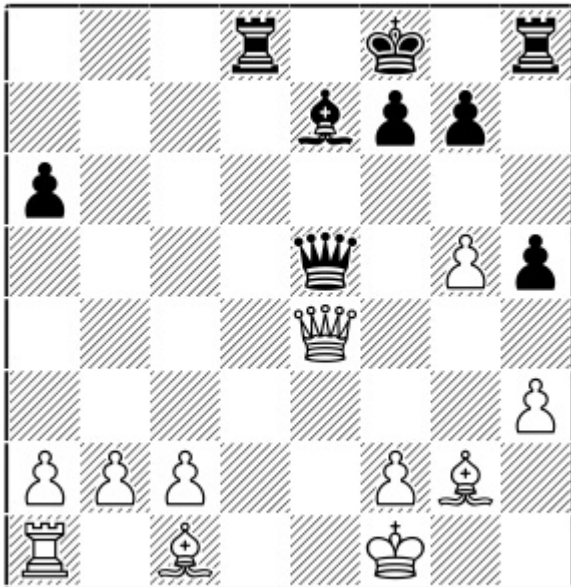
A) 12.Be3 h5 13.Nf4 hxg4 14.Nxe6 fxe6 15.Qxg4 Qf6 16.0-0-0 Rh4 17.Qg3 Be7 18.Kb1 Rb4! 19.Bc1 Nd4,, and Black brings back his knight to f5 to consolidate his position and gets good counterplay.

B) 12.Nf4!? Bd6 13.Nxd5 h5 14.g5



Position after: 14.g5

This wins a pawn but Black gets good compensation with correct play. 14...Ne7! 15.Nxe7 Qxe7 16.0-0 Rd8 17.Qf3 Bc4 18.Qxb7! Qe5 [18...Bxf1?! 19.Kxf1±] 19.Qe4 Bxf1 20.Qc6+ Kf8 21.Kxf1 Be7 22.Qe4



Position after: 22.Qe4

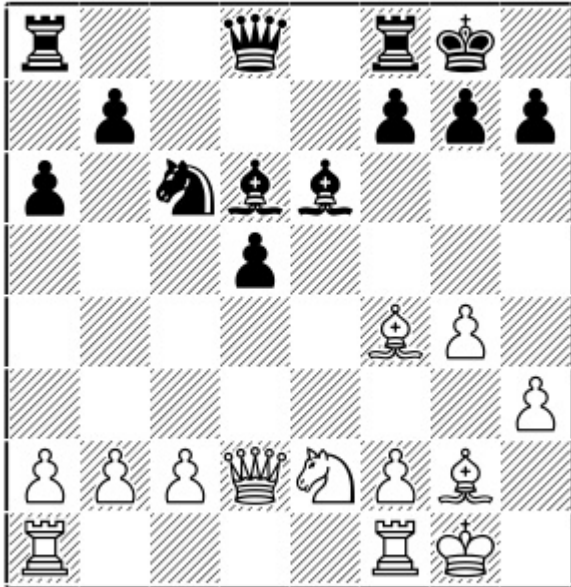
B1) 22...Qxe4 23.Bxe4 Rd1+ 24.Ke2 Rg1 25.b3 Bc5 [25...Bxg5?? 26.Ba3+-] 26.Rb1²

B2) 22...Qa5!,,

12...Bd6

12...h5? 13.Nf4±

13.Bf4 0-0 14.Qd2²



Position after: 14.Qd2

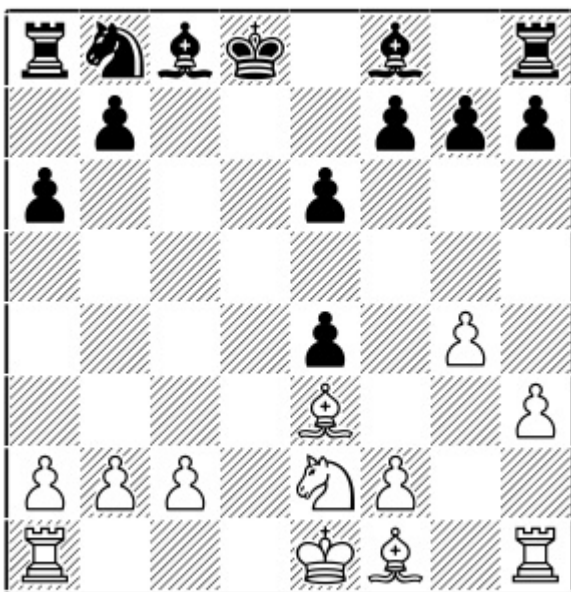
White has a solid edge.

b) 8...Nxe4

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5 8.Nde2! Nxe4 9.Nxe4 dxe4 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8

White has sacrificed a pawn for development and initiative, making use of Black's weak king.

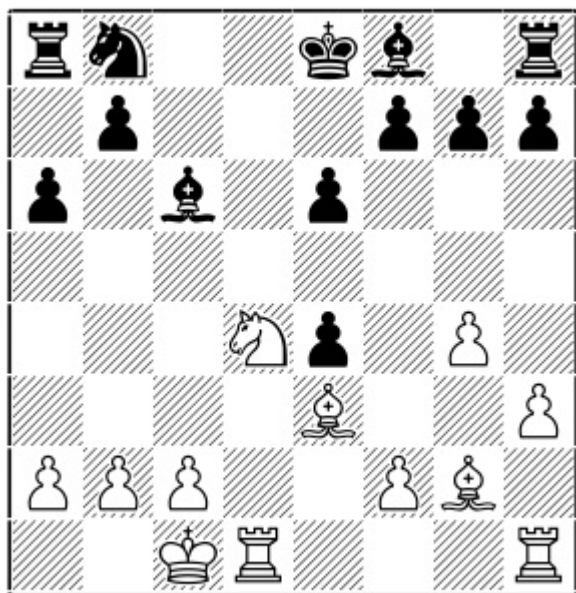
11.Be3!



Position after: 11.Be3!

11...Nc6

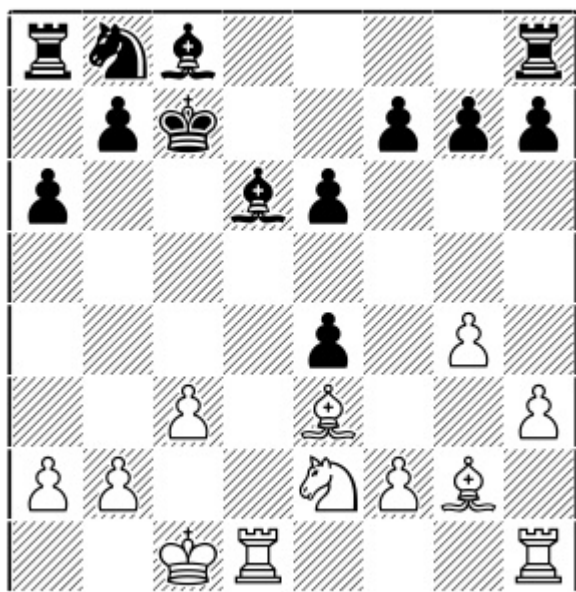
A) 11...Ke8?! 12.0-0-0 Bd7 13.Bg2 Bc6 14.Nd4



Position after: 14.Nd4

14...Bc5 [14...Bd5 15.c4! Bxc4 16.Bxe4 Nd7 17.Bxb7 Rb8 18.Bc6 Rc8 19.Kb1 e5 20.Rhe1± and everything falls apart.] 15.Rhe1 Bxd4 [15...Bd5 16.c4 Bxc4 17.Bxe4±] 16.Bxd4 e3 17.f3± The bishop pair is a major plus here.

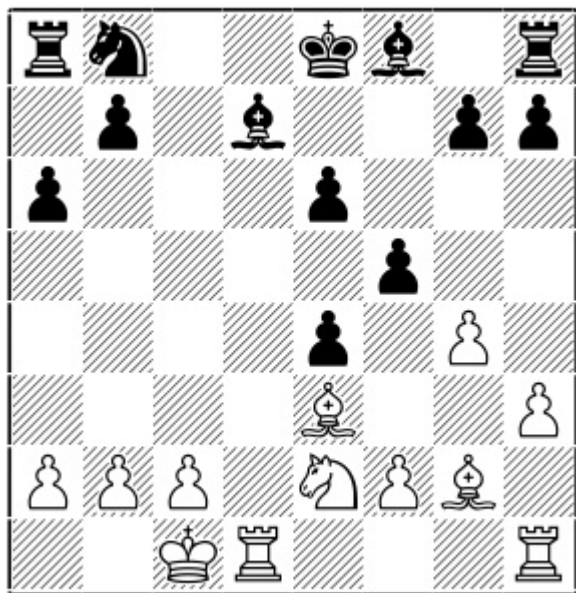
B) 11...Bb4+?! 12.c3 Bd6 13.0-0-0 Kc7 14.Bg2



Position after: 14.Bg2

14...Bd7 [14...Nc6 15.Bxe4 e5 16.Bd5±; 14...f5 15.gxf5 exf5 16.Nf4±] 15.Rd2 Bc6 16.Rhd1 Be5 17.Nd4 and White was clearly better in Volokitin, A (2623) – Duda, J (2706) Germany 2018.

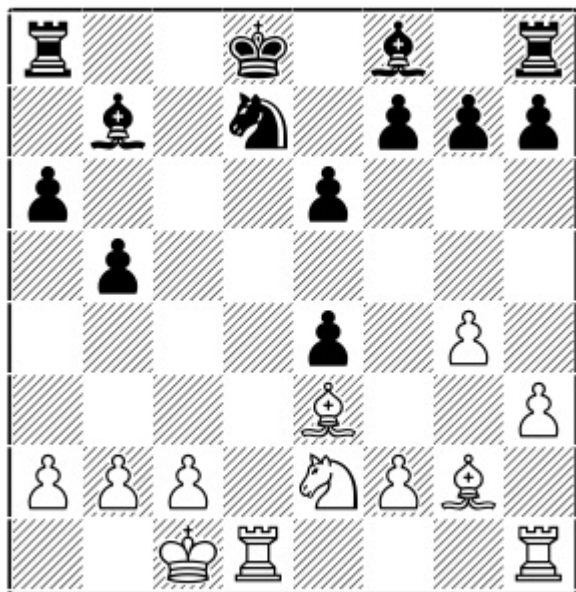
C) 11...Bd7?! 12.0-0-0 Ke8 [12...Kc8 13.Bg2 Bc6 14.Ng3 Be7 15.g5±] 13.Bg2 f5 Trying to be greedy by supporting the pawn on e4 but the drawback is that his pieces are under-developed and White's active pieces threaten Black's king and make his life difficult.



Position after: 13...f5

14.gxf5 exf5 15.Nf4 Be7 16.f3! exf3 17.Bxf3 Bc6 18.Rhf1 Bxf3 19.Rxf3 Nc6 20.Nd5± and Black's king is unsafe.

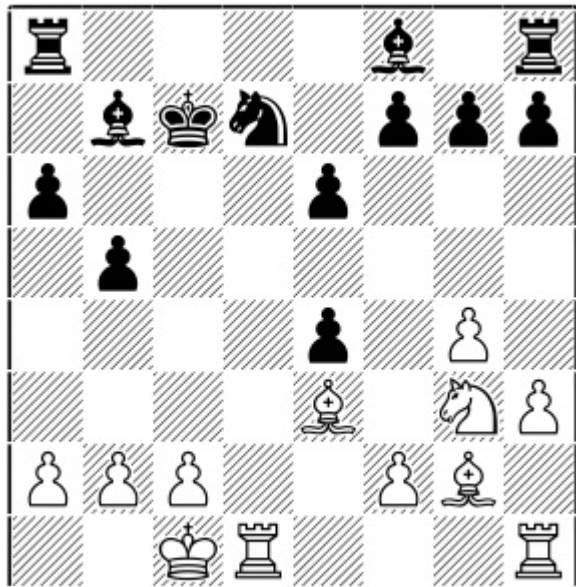
D) 11...b5 I played this myself with the black pieces long back in 2015 against Vallejo in Aeroflot. After the game I realized that the position is very dangerous for Black. 12.Bg2 Bb7 13.0-0-0 Nd7 [13...Ke8 14.Ng3 Nd7 15.Bxe4 Bxe4 16.Nxe4 Nf6 17.Nxf6+ gxf6 18.Bd4 Bh6+ 19.Kb1 Ke7 20.Bc5±±]



Position after: 13...Nd7

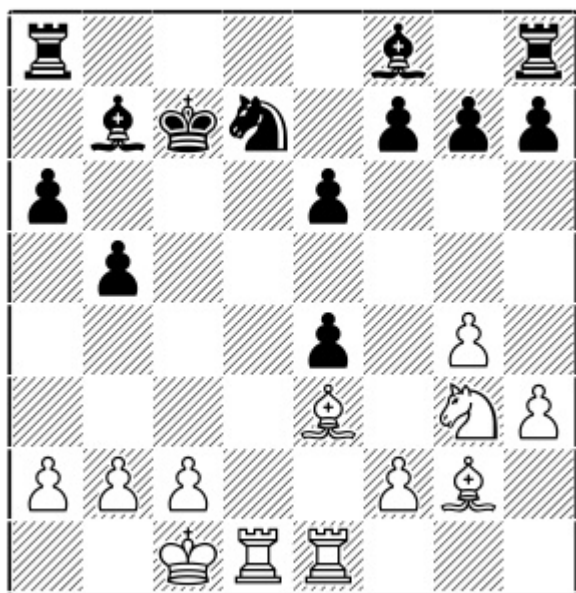
14.Ng3!N Preventing ...f5. [14.Nc3 was played by Vallejo against yours truly :) 14...f5! 15.gxf5 exf5

16.Nd5 Rc8,, and Black got good counterplay in Vallejo Pons, F (2708) – Sethuraman, S (2623) Moscow 2015.] 14...Kc7



Position after: 14...Kc7

15.Rhe1! White can take on e4 anytime, so first he brings all his pieces into action. [15.Nxe4 Rd8 16.Rd3 Be7 17.Rhd1 Bc6 18.Rc3 Nb8! and Black is slowly consolidating.; 15.Bxe4 Nf6! 16.Bf4+ Kb6 17.Bxb7 Kxb7 18.Be5 Nd5 19.Nf5 Rg8 and Black is fine.]

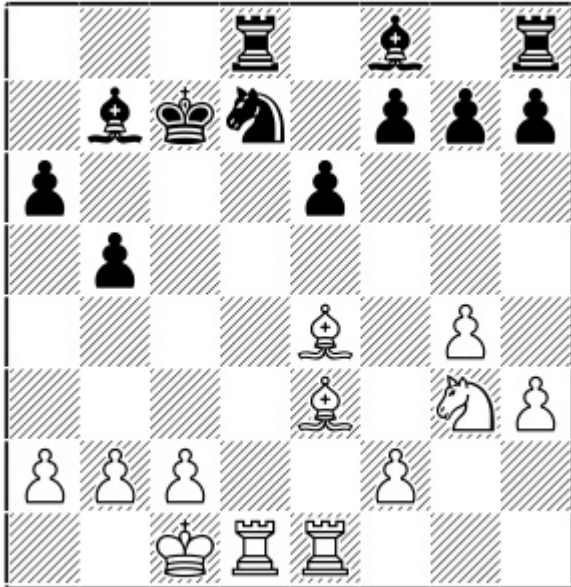


Position after: 15.Rhe1!

D1) 15...Be7 16.Bf4+! e5 17.Bxe4 Bxe4 [17...exf4 18.Bxb7 Rae8 19.Nf5 Bc5 20.Rxe8 Rxe8 21.Bxa6 Rb8 22.c4 bxc4 23.Bxc4 Bxf2 24.Nxg7±] 18.Rxe4 f6 19.Bd2² and White is threatening Ba5.

D2) 15...Bb4 16.c3 Be7 17.Bxe4 Bxe4 18.Nxe4 h5 19.g5² The strong e4-knight dominates the position.

D3) 15...Rd8 16.Bxe4



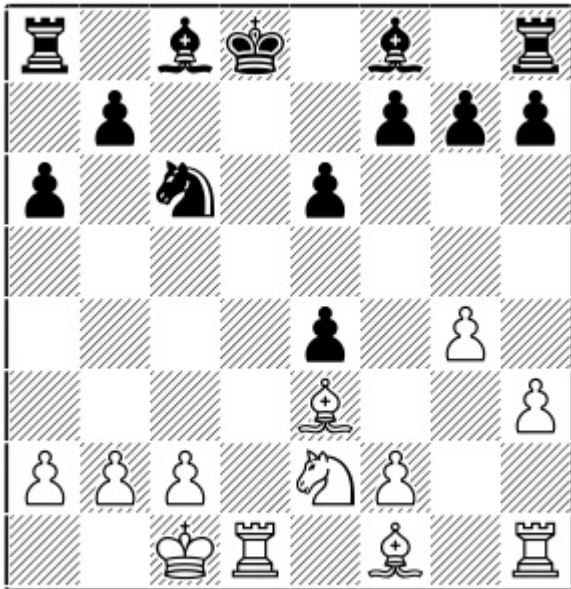
Position after: 16.Bxe4

D3.1) 16...Bb4 17.Bxb7 Kxb7 [17...Bxe1? 18.Bxa6±] 18.c3 Be7 19.Bd4²

D3.2) 16...Bxe4 17.Nxe4 Be7 18.Bf4+! e5 19.Ng5 Bxg5 20.Bxg5 f6 21.Bd2²

D3.3) 16...Be7 17.Bf4+ Kb6 18.Bxb7 Kxb7 19.Nf5² and slowly White is taking over.

12.0-0-0+



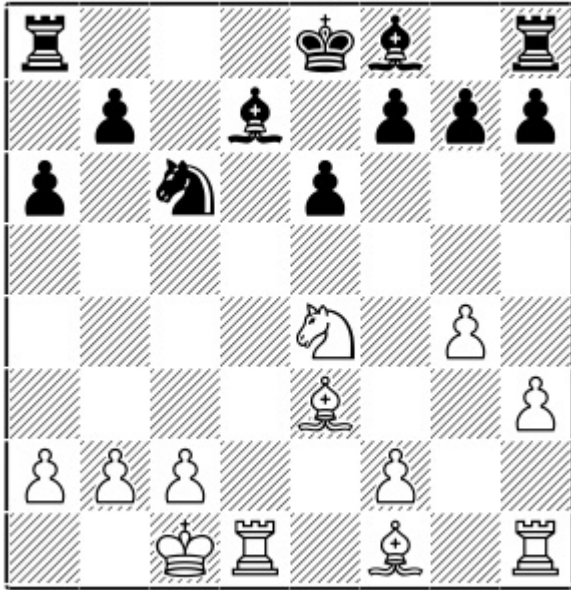
Position after: 12.0-0-0+

12...Ke8

A) 12...Bd7 13.Bg2 Kc7 14.Nc3! Ne5 15.Nxe4 Be7 16.Bf4 f6 17.Ng5! Bd6 18.Rxd6 Kxd6 19.Bxe5+ fxe5 20.Nf7+±

B) 12...Kc7 13.Nc3 h5 14.g5 Bb4 15.Nxe4±

13.Nc3 Bd7 14.Nxe4



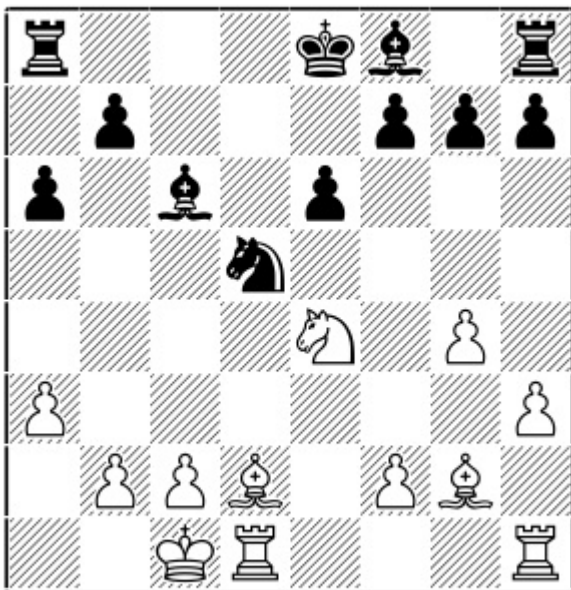
Position after: 14.Nxe4

14...Nb4

14...Rc8 15.Nc5 Bxc5 16.Bxc5 Ne7 17.b4±

15.a3 Nd5

15...Bc6 16.Bg2 Nd5 17.Bd2

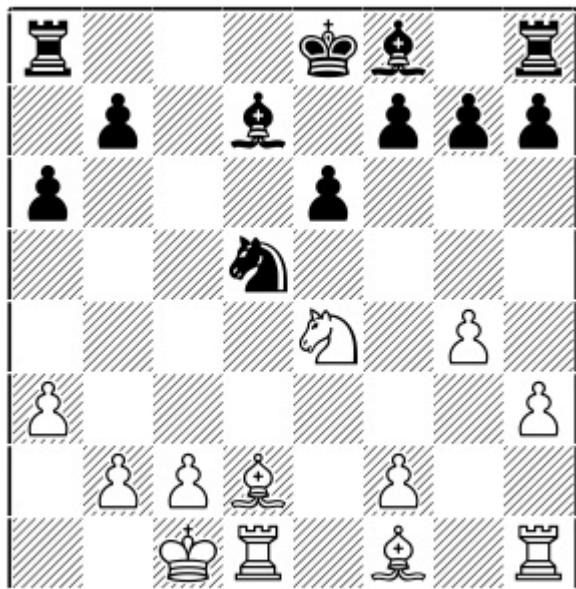


Position after: 17.Bd2

A) 17...f6 18.Nc3! Ne7 [18...Rd8 19.Nxd5 Bxd5 20.Ba5²] 19.Bxc6+ Nxc6 20.Rhe1² and Black is lagging behind in development.

B) 17...Be7 18.Rhe1 Rc8 [18...Rd8 19.c4 Nb6 20.Bc3! Rd7 21.c5²] 19.f4! f6 20.f5 e5 21.Ng3² with total control over the position. White has a huge space advantage as well.

16.Bd2



Position after: 16.Bd2

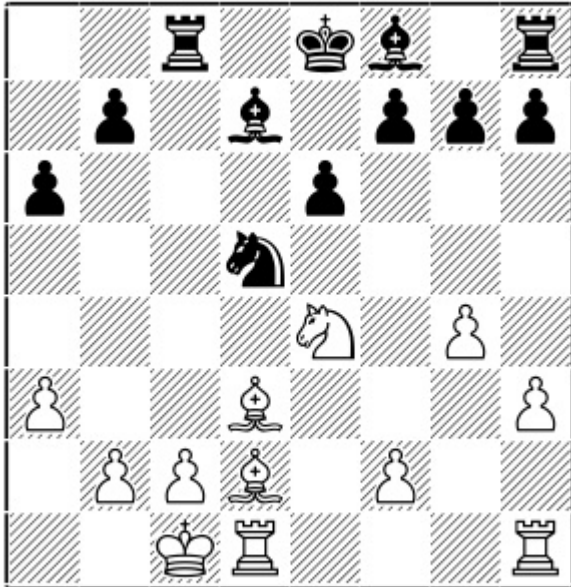
16...Rc8

A) 16...Bc6 17.Bd3 Be7 18.Rhe1 Rd8 19.f4±

B) 16...Be7 17.Bd3 Rc8 18.Rhe1 and all the white pieces are ideally placed. 18...f6 19.Kb1 b5 20.Nc3 Nxc3+ 21.Bxc3 Bxa3 22.Bf5 Ke7 23.g5²

17.Bd3

17.Bg2 also gives White a pleasant position. 17...Bc6 [17...h5?! 18.g5] 18.Rhe1 f6 19.g5 [19.Kb1 Be7 20.c4 Nb6 21.b3 Rd8 22.Bc3 Rxd1+ 23.Rxd1²] 19...Be7 20.f4²

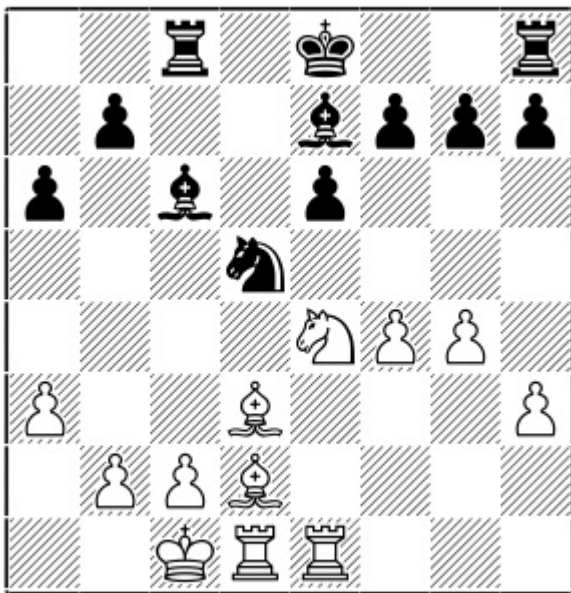


Position after: 17.Bd3

17...Bc6

17...f6 18.Kb1 b5 19.h4! To gain even more space. [19.Rhe1 Kf7] 19...Kf7 20.h5 Be7 21.f4 Bc6 22.Rde1²

18.Rhe1 Be7 19.f4!²



Position after: 19.f4!²

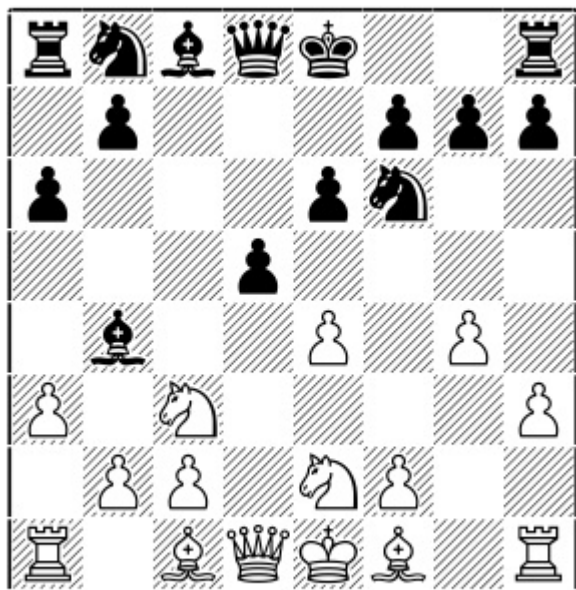
White was slightly better in the correspondence game Grayland, S (2404) – Abramov, S (2349) ICCF email 2012.

c) 8...Bb4

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5 8.Nde2! Bb4

Black tends to avoid the endgame with 8...Nxe4 as dealt with in the previous subchapter but this is not a great move either as it gives away the important dark squared bishop.

9.a3

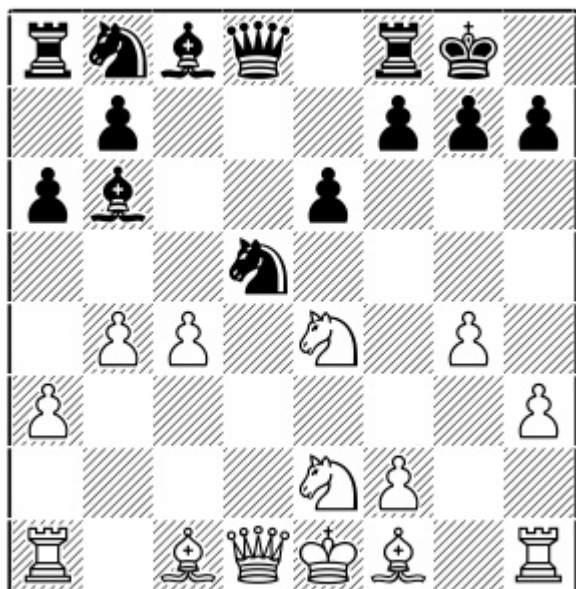


Position after: 9.a3

9...Bxc3+

A) 9...Bc5?! 10.Bg2 Qb6 11.0-0 Nxe4 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Bxe4 h5 14.g5± and Black's attack is simply stopped.

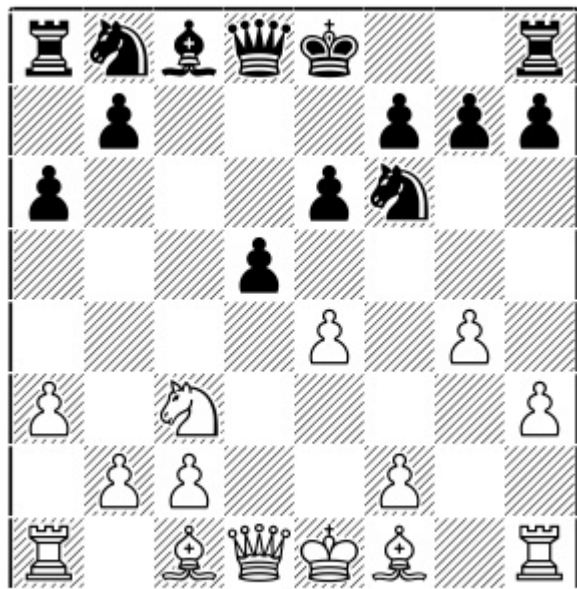
B) 9...Ba5?! 10.b4! Bb6 [10...Bc7 11.Bg2 Nxe4 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Qxd8+ Bxd8 14.Bxe4 Nd7 15.0-0²] 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Ne4 0-0 13.c4



Position after: 13.c4

13...f5 [13...Nf6 14.Qxd8 Bxd8 15.Nd6²] 14.gxf5 exf5 15.Ng5 Nf6 16.Qb3 Bc7 17.c5+ Qd5 18.Qxd5+ Nxd5 19.Bg2 Rd8 20.0-0± and White was clearly better in the correspondence game Andeer, S (2436) – Zarnescu, M (2413) ICCF email 2011.

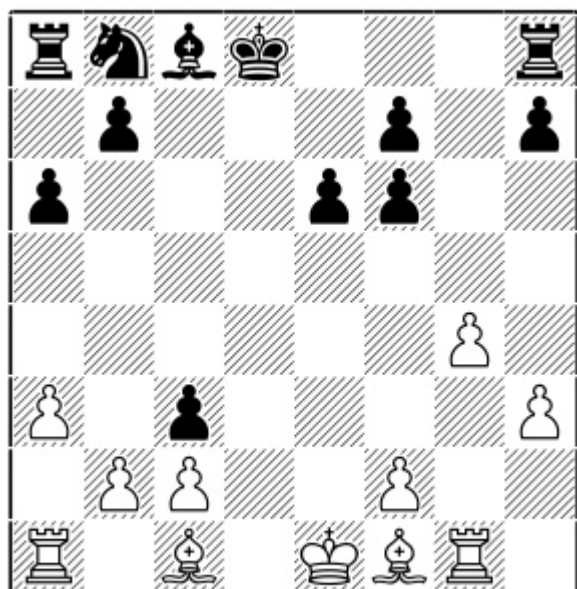
10.Nxc3



Position after: 10.Nxc3

10...Nc6

10...d4?! 11.e5! dxc3 12.Qxd8+ Kxd8 13.exf6 gxf6 14.Rg1! White's idea is to play Rg3 followed by Rxc3 to avoid spoiling the pawn structure.

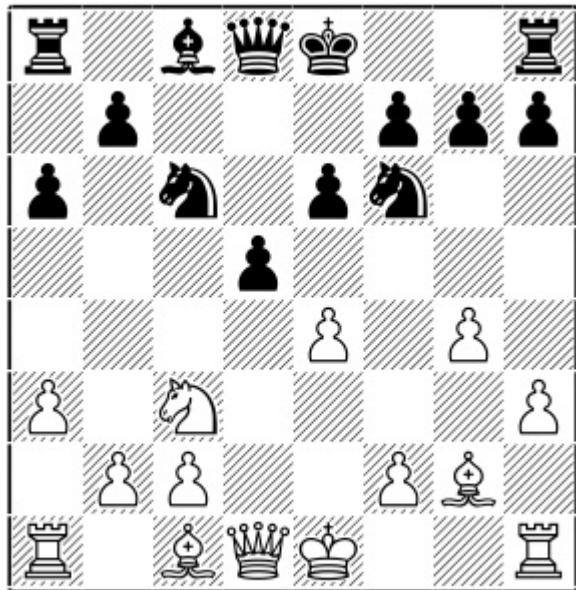


Position after: 14.Rg1!

14...e5 Black prepares to take on b2, something he could not do with the a1-h8 diagonal still open. [14...Bd7 15.Rg3! Forcing Black to take on b2, after which the b2-bishop's range will give White an advantage; likewise 14...cxb2 15.Bxb2 e5 16.g5±.] 15.bxc3 Be6 16.Rb1²

11.exd5

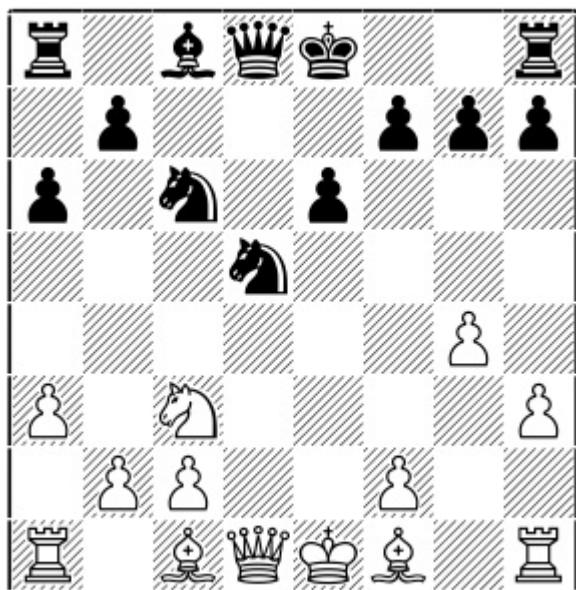
11.Bg2!?



Position after: 11.Bg2!?

11...Nxe4 [11...d4 12.Ne2 e5 13.c3 0-0 14.cxd4 exd4 15.0-0 Re8 16.Ng3² and now White can proceed to attack as he has consolidated his centre.] 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Qxd8+ Nxd8 14.Bxe4 Bd7 15.Rg1 Bc6 16.Bd3 e5 17.Bd2 Ne6 18.0-0-0 0-0-0 19.g5² White has a better endgame.

11...Nxd5



Position after: 11...Nxd5

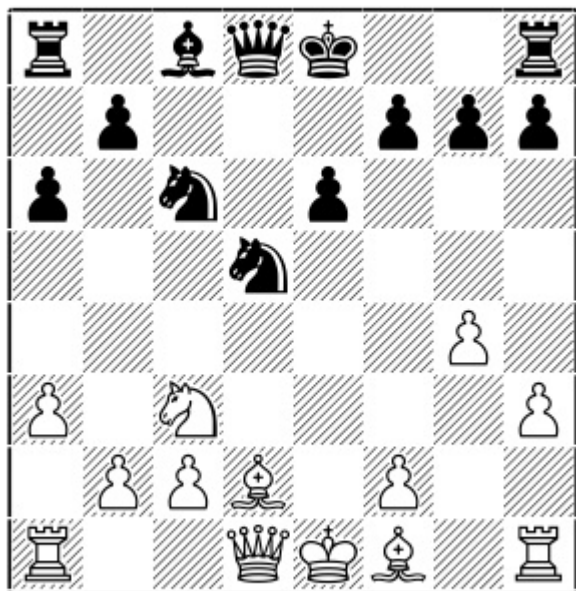
Here I found a nice idea for White.

12.Bd2!N

With the idea of 13.Qf3 and long castling.

A) 12.Nxd5 exd5 13.Bg2 Be6 14.Be3 h5,

B) 12.Ne4 b5! Preventing White's c4 and Black is fine here. [12...0-0 13.c4 Nf6 14.Qxd8 Rxd8 15.Nxf6+ gxf6 16.Be3² Demchenko, A (2610) – Raznikov, D (2465) St Petersburg 2012]



Position after: 12.Bd2!N

12...b5

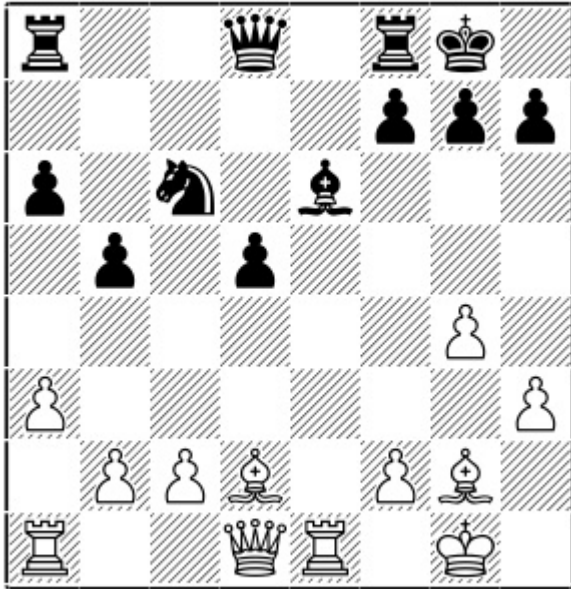
A) 12...0-0 13.Qf3! Nd4 14.Qd3 e5 15.Bg2 Be6 16.0-0-0±

B) 12...Qb6 13.Nxd5 exd5 14.Qf3 Be6 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.Qg3±

13.Bg2

13.Qf3?! Here this is not effective because of 13...Bb7 14.Nxd5 Nd4! 15.Nf6+ gxf6 16.Qxb7 Nxc2+ 17.Ke2 Nd4+ 18.Ke1 Nc2+= and Black forces a draw. Avoiding the repetition is not advisable for either player.

13...0-0 14.Nxd5 exd5 15.0-0 Be6 16.Re1²



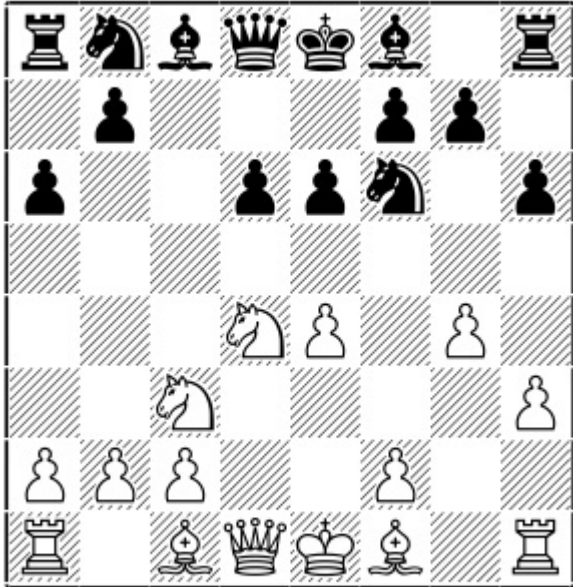
Position after: 16.Re1²

And again the weak isolated pawn on d5 gives White a superior position.

Chapter 4

6...e6 7.g4 h6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 4 – 6...e6 7.g4 h6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6 8.Bg2

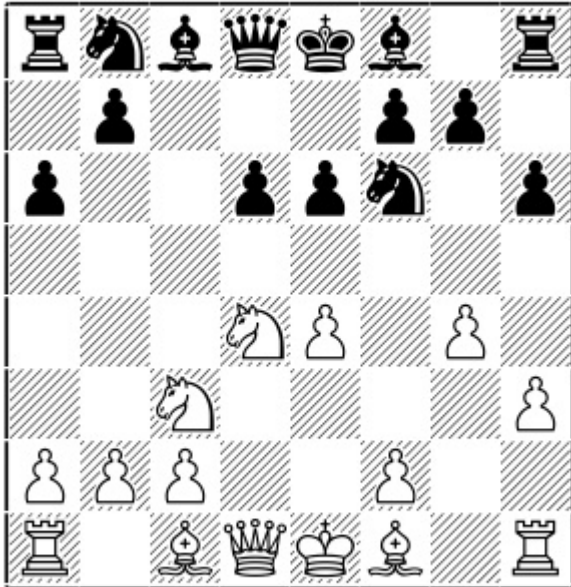
a) 8...--

b) 8...g5

c) 8...Be7

a) 8...--

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6

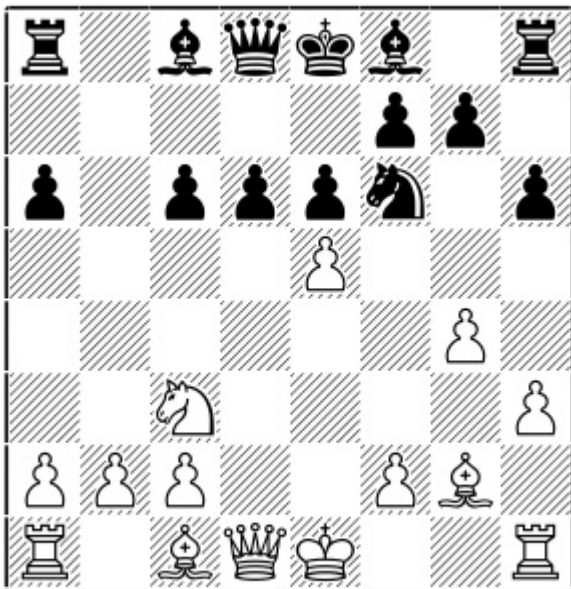


Position after: 7...h6

Preventing White's immediate kingside expansion with g5 and h4 is one of the main lines in the 6...e6 system.

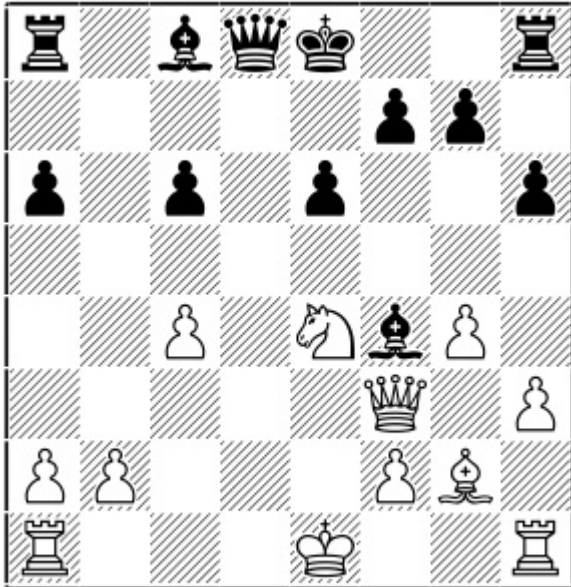
8.Bg2 Qc7

8...Nc6?! is not possible immediately because of the typical tactic 9.Nxc6! bxc6 10.e5:



Position after: 10.e5

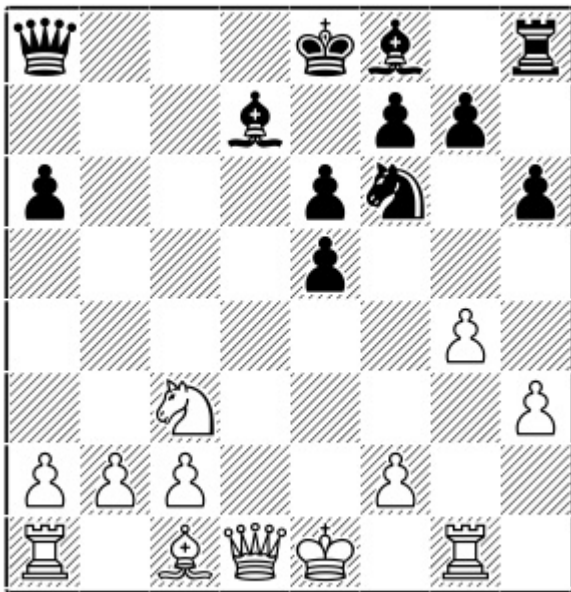
A) 10...Nd5 11.exd6 Bxd6 12.Ne4 Be5 [12...Bc7 13.0-0 0-0 14.c4 Nf4 15.Qxd8 Rxd8 16.Bxf4 Bxf4 17.Nc5² with a pleasant endgame.] 13.c4 Nf4 14.Bxf4 Bxf4 15.Qf3!



Position after: 15.Qf3!

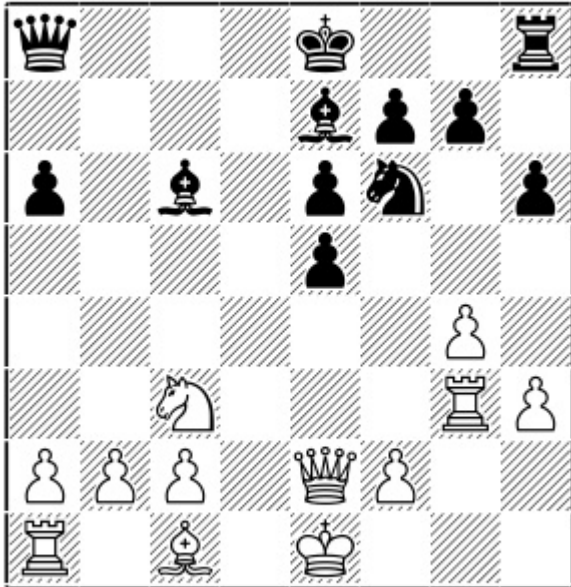
15...Be5 [15...Qc7 16.Nd6+! Ke7 17.Qxf4 Qxd6 18.Qxd6+ Kxd6 19.0-0-0+] 16.Nd6+!±

B) 10...dxe5 11.Bxc6+ Bd7 12.Bxa8 Qxa8 It looks like Black has compensation for the exchange but once White consolidates his position, the compensation vanishes. 13.Rg1



Position after: 13.Rg1

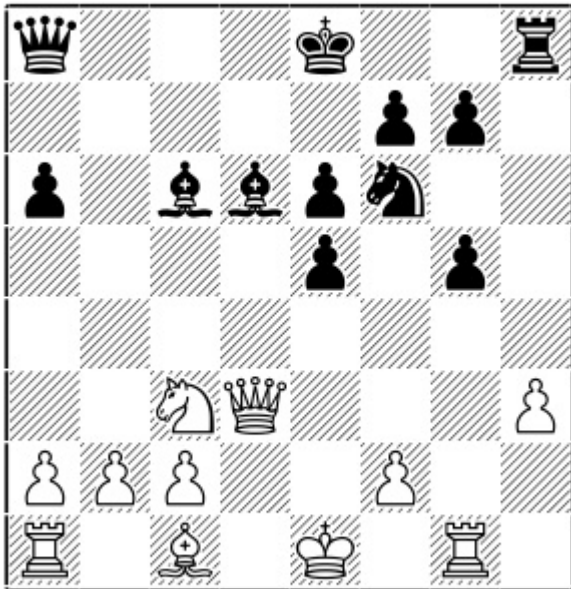
B1) 13...Be7 14.Qe2 Bc6 15.Rg3! The goal is not to take the pawn on e5 but to develop the pieces with Bd2 and 0-0-0 as now Black's ...Bf3 is no longer a threat. [15.Qxe5 Nd7+]



Position after: 15.Rg3!

15...Nd7 [15...0-0 16.g5±] 16.Bd2 and long castling is coming.

B2) 13...Bc6 14.Qe2 Bd6 15.g5 hxg5 16.Qd3!

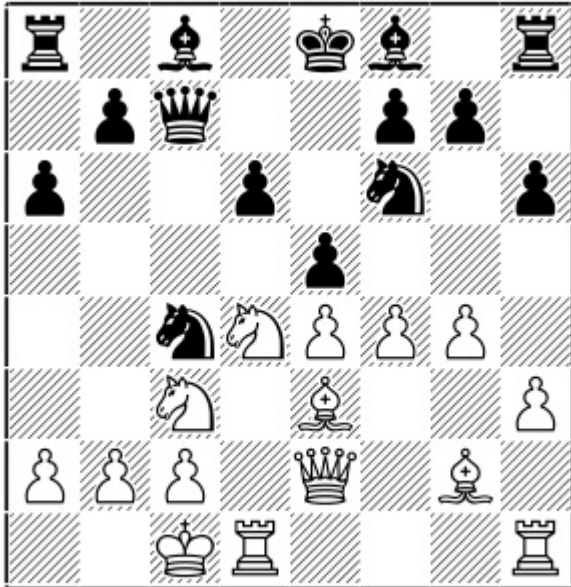


Position after: 16.Qd3!

16...Ke7 [16...Bc5 17.Bxg5 Bf3 18.Ne2±; 16...Be7 17.Bxg5 Bf3 18.Ne2 Rxd3 19.0-0-0±] 17.Bxg5 Bf3 18.Ne2 e4 19.Qd2 Qb8 20.0-0-0 Rc8 21.c3 Bh2 22.Rge1± 1-0 (65) Felicio, C (2335) – Hoffmann, F (2322) ICCF email 2014

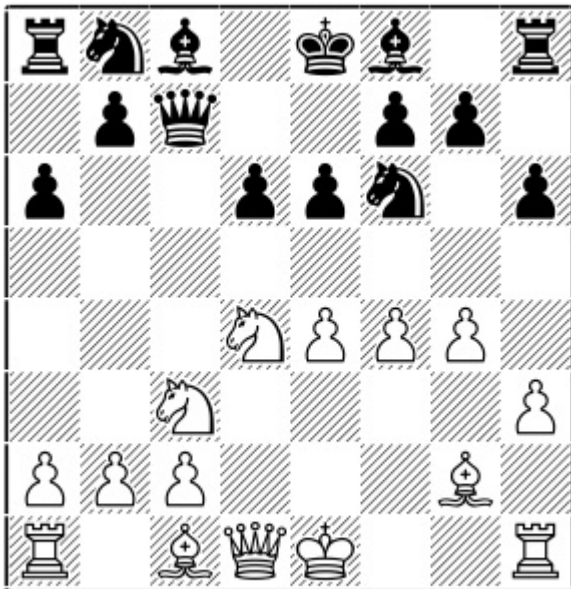
9.f4!

9.Qe2 Nc6 10.Be3 Ne5 11.f4 Nc4 12.0-0-0 e5



Position after: 12...e5

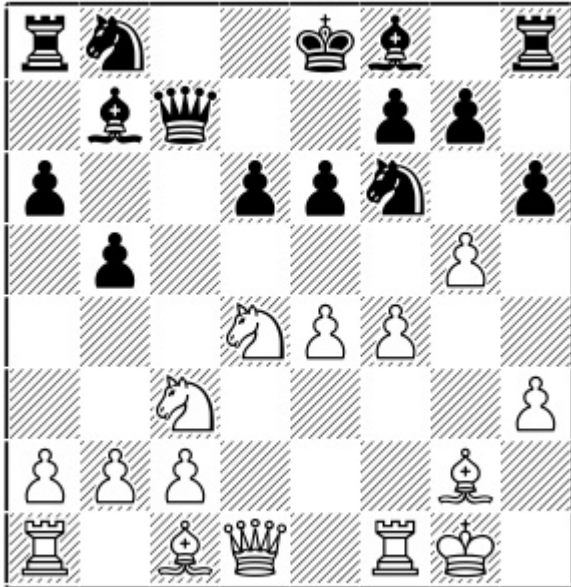
13.Nb3 [After 13.Rhe1 Nxe3 14.Qxe3 exd4 15.Qxd4 Be6 16.f5 Nd7! Black is in time to consolidate his position by sacrificing the piece back; while 13.Nf5 Be6 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.exd5 Bxf5 17.gxf5 Rc8 gives him counterplay.] 13...Bd7 14.Kb1 b5 with complicated play.



Position after: 9.f4!

9...Nc6

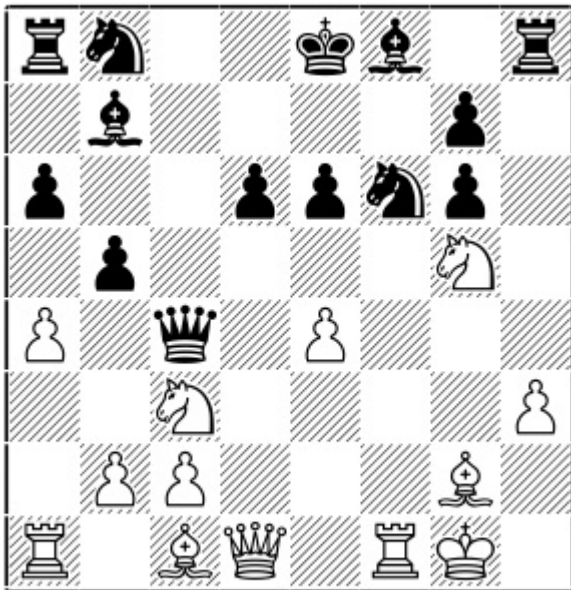
9...b5 10.0-0 Bb7 [10...b4? 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 Bb7 13.exf6 Bxg2 14.Kxg2 bxc3 15.Qf3+–] 11.g5



Position after: 11.g5

A) 11...b4 12.gxf6 bxc3 13.f5! e5 14.fxg7 Bxg7 15.f6 Bf8 16.Nf5 cxb2 [16...Rg8 17.bxc3±] 17.Bxb2 Nd7 18.Ba3 Rg8 19.Bxd6 Qc6 20.Re1 Nxf6 21.Bxf8 Kxf8 22.Qd2

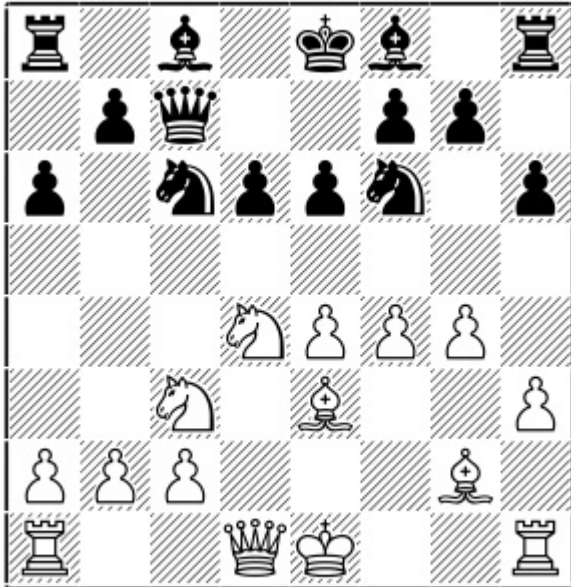
B) 11...hxg5 12.fxg5 Nh5 13.g6 Nf6 14.Nf3! A nice and concrete manoeuvre, which threatens Ng5. [14.Bg5!? Nbd7 15.gxf7+ Kxf7 16.Qg4 Re8 17.a3 Qc5 18.Rad1?] 14...fxg6 15.Ng5 Qc4 [15...Qd7 16.Ne2 e5 17.Nc3?] 16.a4!



Position after: 16.a4!

16...b4 [16...Be7 17.e5! Bxg2 18.Kxg2 b4 19.exf6 gxf6 20.Nce4 Qc6 21.Qg4 f5 22.Qf3 Kd7 23.Be3±; 16...Nbd7 17.axb5 axb5 18.Rxa8+ Bxa8 19.Qd3!² exchanging the defender of the crucial e6-pawn.] 17.Ne2 e5 18.Be3 Be7 19.c3 0-0 20.b3 Qc8 21.cxb4±

10.Be3

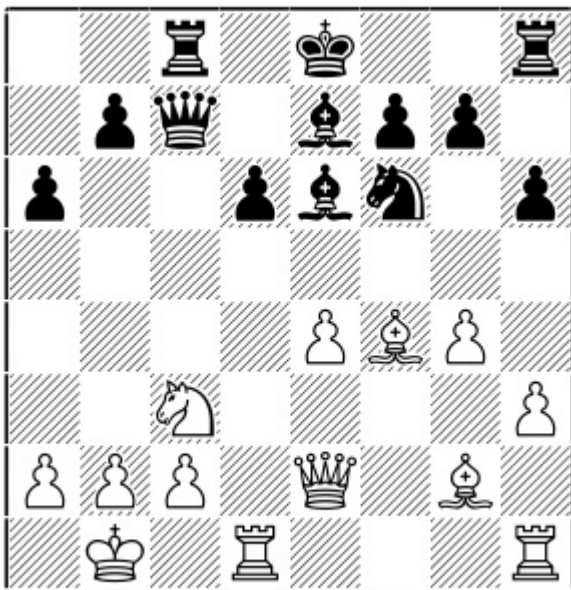


Position after: 10.Be3

The queen on c7 looks awkward here.

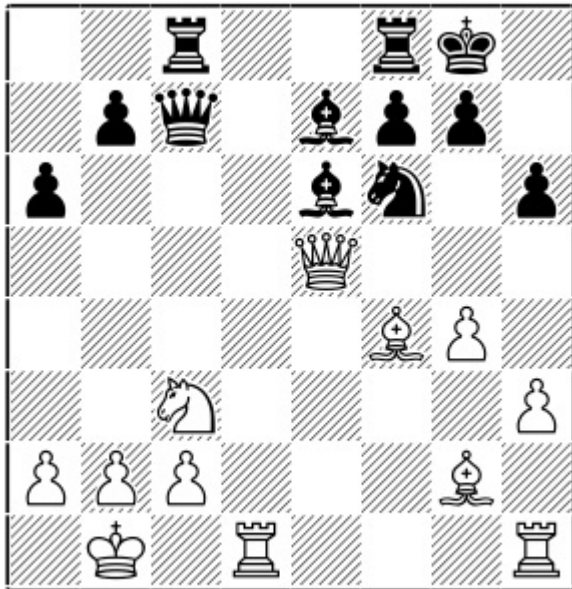
10...Bd7

10...Be7 11.Qe2 Nxd4 12.Bxd4 e5 13.Be3 Be6 14.0-0 Rc8 15.Kb1 exf4 16.Bxf4



Position after: 16.Bxf4

16...0-0 [16...Nd7 17.Nd5! Bxd5 18.exd5 Ne5 19.h4±] 17.e5! dxe5 18.Qxe5

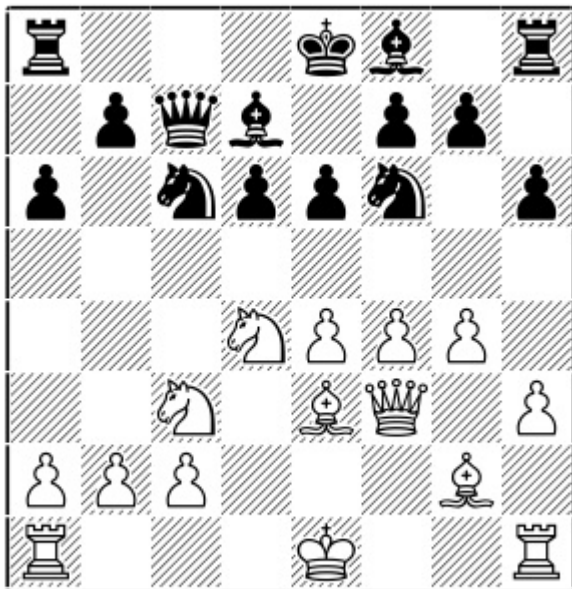


Position after: 18.Qxe5

A) 18...Qb6?! 19.Be3 Qc7 20.Qxc7 Rxc7 and here White can obtain a large advantage: 21.Bf4!N [21.Ne2 Bc8 22.Ng3? Svidler, P (2727) – Movsesian, S (2732) Kallithea 2008] 21...Rc4 22.Be5±

B) 18...Qxe5 19.Bxe5 b5 20.a3? and White has numerous threats here such as Bb7.

11.Qf3!

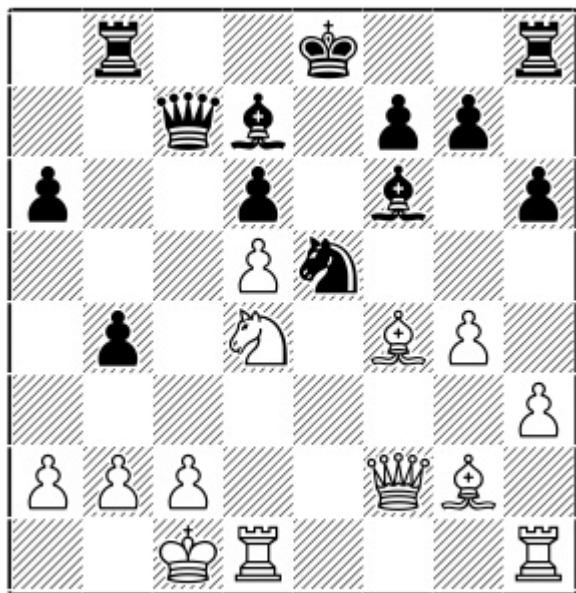


Position after: 11.Qf3!

11.Qd2 Rc8 This transposes to the text after 12.Qf2, but this way Black can choose options besides 11...Rc8 as well. It seems that extra ideas like ...Na5-c4 are possible for him in this order (to make use of the position of White's queen on d2), so I prefer routing the queen via f3 with 11.Qf3.

11...Rc8

11...Be7 12.Qf2 b5 13.0-0-0 Rc8 [13...b4 14.Nce2 Rc8 15.Kb1 and it is not easy for Black to castle with his pawn on h6, as White gets an easy attack starting with g5.] 14.Nb3! b4 15.Na4 e5 16.Nb6 exf4 17.Bxf4 Rb8 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.exd5 Ne5 20.Nd4 Bf6 [20...Ng6 21.Bg3 0-0 22.Kb1±]



Position after: 20...Bf6

A) 21.Nc6!? 0-0! This strong positional exchange sacrifice gives Black good counterplay [Instead White gets an overwhelming advantage after 21...Bxc6 22.dxc6 0-0 23.Bxe5 Bxe5 24.Bd5± based on his strong d5-bishop and far-advanced c6-pawn.] 22.Bxe5 Bxe5 23.Nxb8 Rxb8 24.Kb1 a5 25.Rhf1 Be8 26.Be4 a4 27.Qd2 a3 28.b3 g6 29.Rf3 Kg7©

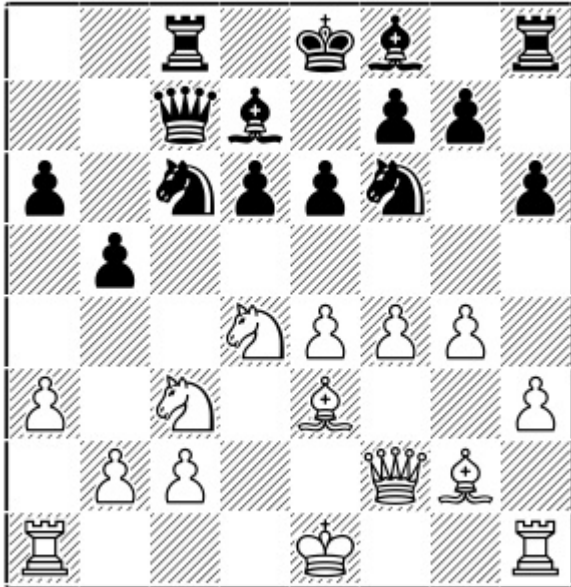
B) 21.Be4! Improving the position of the bishop for an attack on the black king. 21...a5 [21...0-0 22.Bxh6! Ng6 23.Be3±] 22.Rhf1± Black cannot castle yet because of 23.Bh6 and with the king in the centre Black's life becomes dangerous.

12.Qf2 b5

12...Nxd4 13.Bxd4 Bc6 14.Bb6±

13.a3

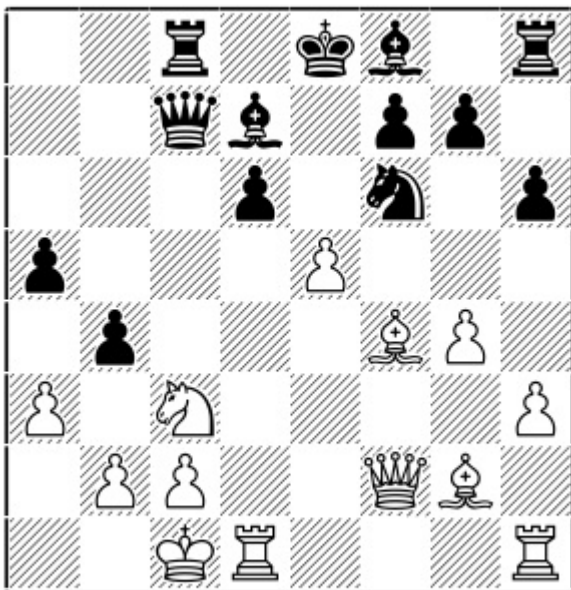
13.Nb3 b4 14.Na4 Nd4! The key trick. 15.Nxd4 Bxa4 16.0-0 e5 17.Nf5 g6,,



Position after: 13.a3

13...Be7

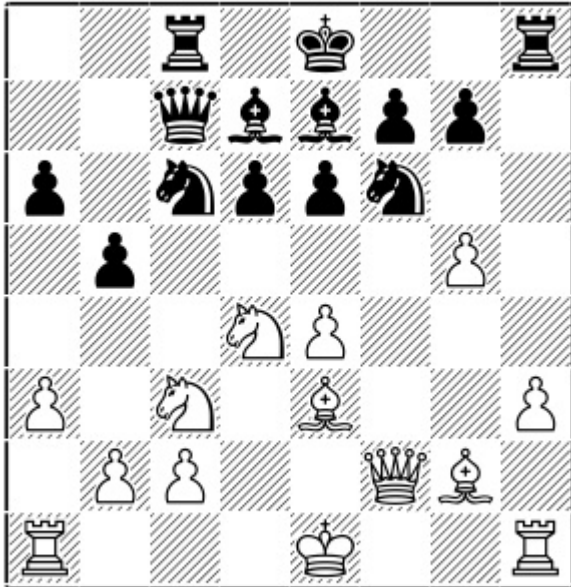
13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4 e5 15.Be3 exf4 16.Bxf4 a5 17.0-0 b4 18.e5!!



Position after: 18.e5!!

This tactical stroke helps White to build a great advantage. 18...bxc3 [18...bxa3 19.exf6 axb2+ 20.Kb1 Qxc3 21.fxg7 Bxg7 22.Bxd6+–] 19.exf6 Be6 20.b3±

14.g5! hxg5 15.fxg5

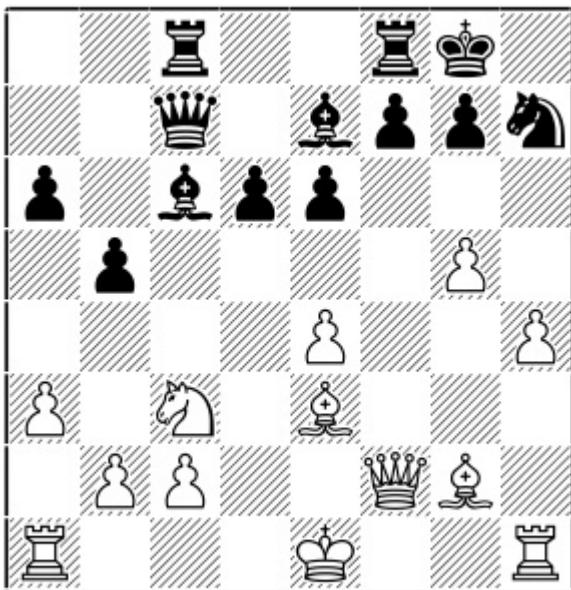


Position after: 15.fxg5

15...Nh7

15...Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Nh5 17.h4 e5 18.Be3 Be6 19.0-0-0± and Black's knight on h5 is stuck.

16.Nxc6 Bxc6 17.h4 0-0



Position after: 17...0-0

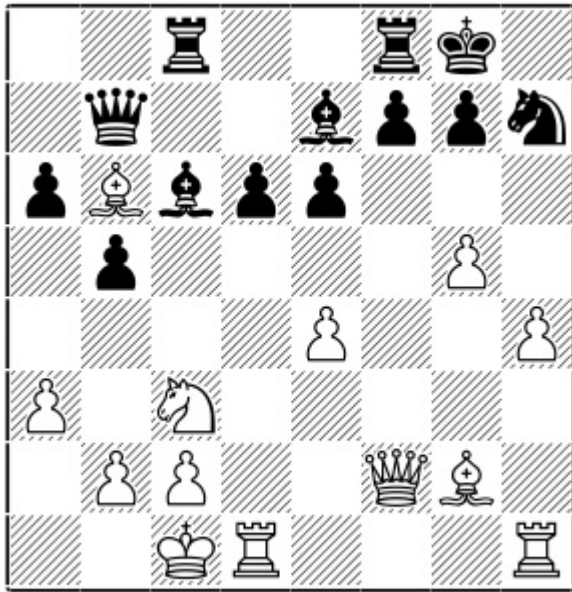
18.Bb6!

This strong move is the key to the queenside blockade that will ultimately cut out all Black's counterplay based on ...b4.

A) 18.0-0 a5 19.Qg3 Qb8 with the idea of ...b4.

B) 18.0-0-0 Rb8! with ...b4 next and Black is in time to create counterplay.

18...Qb7 19.0-0-0

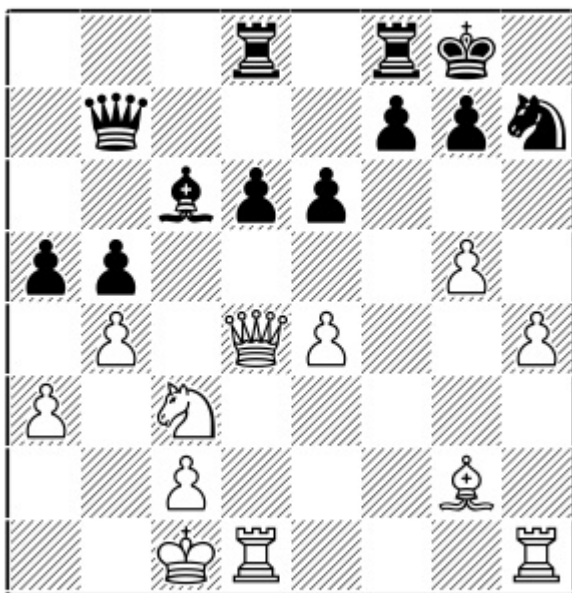


Position after: 19.0-0-0

19...Bd8

19...Rb8 20.Ba5! Bd8 21.Bb4 a5 22.Bxd6 b4 23.Ne2 bxa3 [23...Bc7 24.Bxf8 Nxf8 25.a4! b3 26.c3 Bxa4 27.h5+...] 24.Bxa3 Bb6 25.Qf3 Rfc8 26.Rd2±

20.Bxd8 Rxd8 21.Qd4 a5 22.b4!±

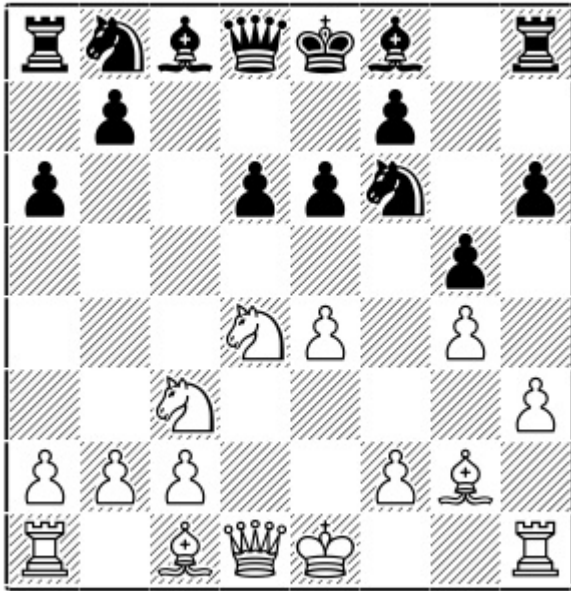


Position after: 22.b4!±

White has prevented ...b4, and the knight is clearly misplaced on h7.

b) 8...g5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6 8.Bg2 g5



Position after: 8...g5

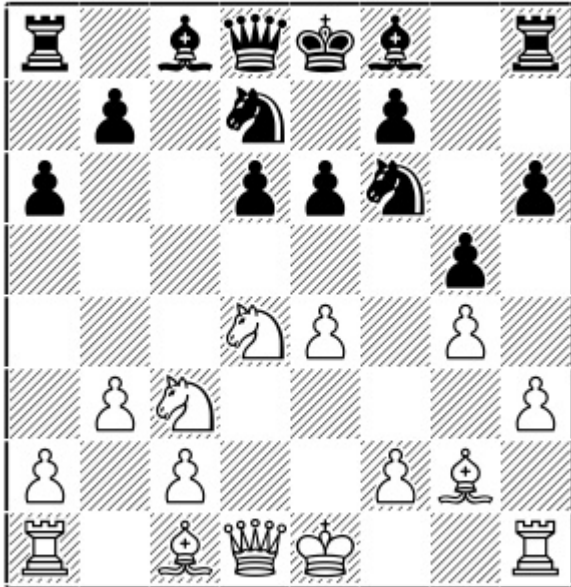
This thrust, with the twin ideas of preventing White's expansion of f4 and creating an important outpost for the black knight on e5, is quite typical in the Najdorf. Here in this particular position the drawback is that Black is way behind in development and the move creates weaknesses in Black's camp. Although it is not easy to break through by normal play (as we will see), White often does have concrete ways to penetrate into Black's position.

9.b3!

Generally the white bishop is placed on e3 but here he gets a chance to fianchetto it to b2 which is ideal. His plan is Qd2, 0-0-0, Rf1 and f4 and he need not worry about Black's ...Ne5.

9.Be3 Nbd7 10.Qe2 Ne5 11.0-0-0 Nfd7 12.h4 Rg8 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.Kb1 b5 15.f4 gxf4 16.Bxf4 Bb7 17.g5 Qb6 was Karjakin, S (2773) – Mamedyarov, S (2801) Saint Louis 2018. Although White was better in the game it was not so convincing.

9...Nbd7



Position after: 9...Nbd7

10.Qd2!

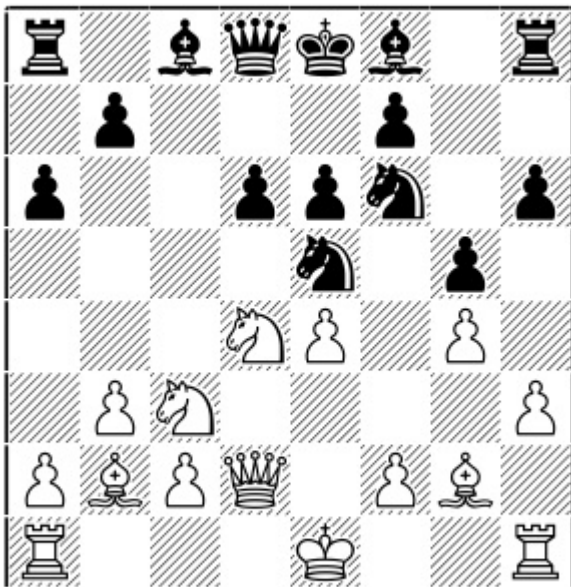
An important and precise move order.

10.Bb2 allows 10...h5 11.f3 hxg4 12.fxg4 Ne5 13.Qd2 b5 14.0-0-0 Bb7 15.Rhf1 Rc8 and the knight on e5 is just dominating.

10...Ne5

10...h5 11.f4! gxf4 [11...hxg4 12.fxg5 gxh3 13.Bxh3 Ng4 14.Qg2±] 12.g5 Ng8 13.h4±

11.Bb2

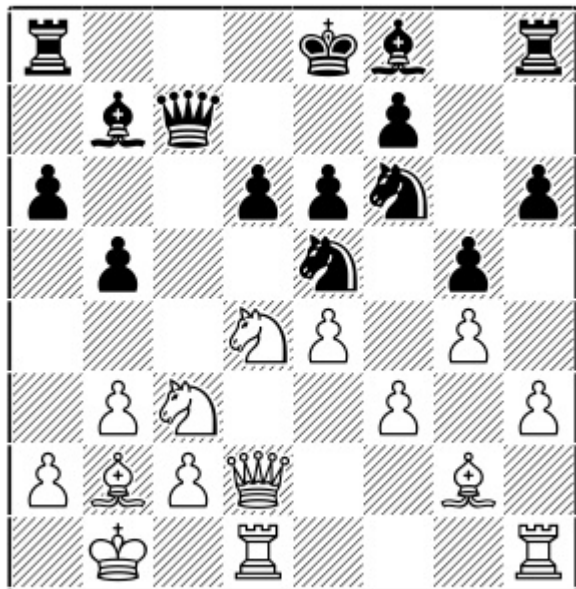


Position after: 11.Bb2

11...Bd7

11...b5 12.0-0-0 Bb7 13.Kb1N

A) 13...Qc7 14.f3!



Position after: 14.f3!

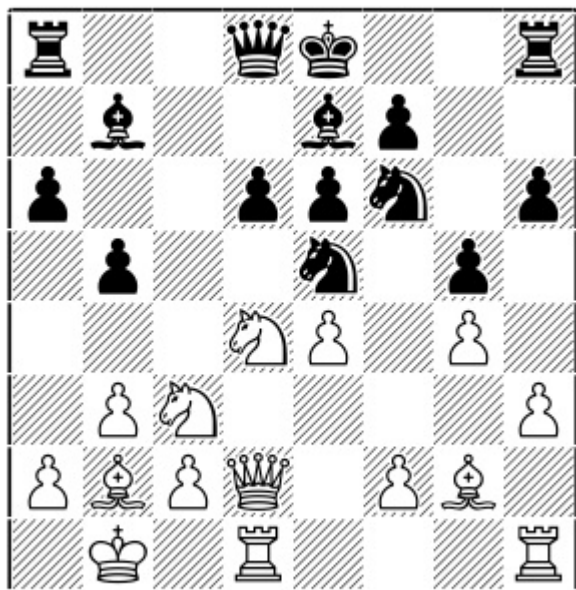
Preparing the h4 break as well as some Nxb5 tricks, since now White's e4-pawn is protected.

A1) 14...Ng6 15.h4! Nxh4 [15...gxh4 16.f4±] 16.Ncxb5 axb5 17.Nxb5 Qe7 18.Nxd6++-

A2) 14...Be7 15.Ndxb5 axb5 16.Nxb5±

A3) 14...Rc8 15.Ndxb5! axb5 16.Nxb5 Qc5 17.a4± [Rather than 17.Nxd6+ Bxd6 18.Qxd6 Qxc2+ 19.Ka1 Nfd7,,]

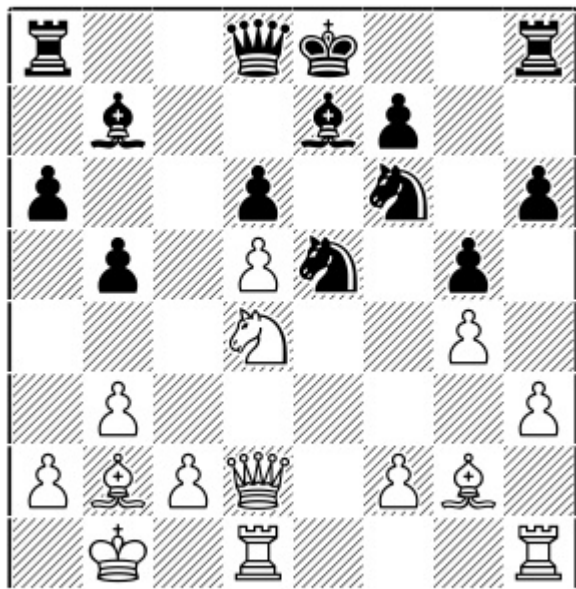
B) 13...Be7



Position after: 13...Be7

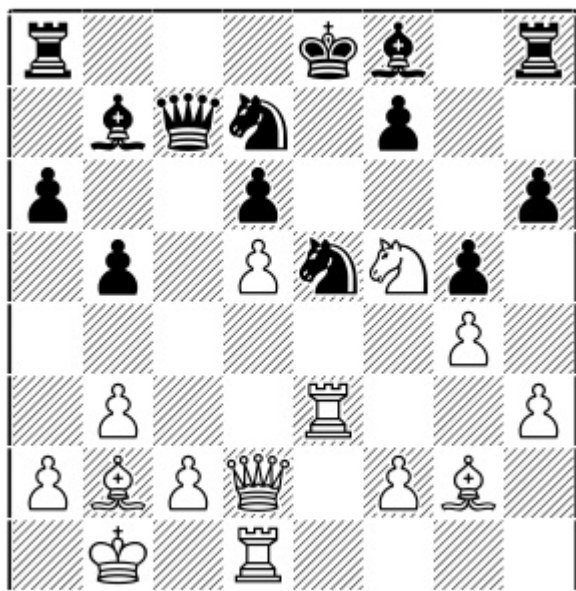
B1) 14.Nce2!? Qc7 [14...Bxe4 15.Bxe4 Nxe4 16.Qe3 Nf6 17.Nxe6+-; 14...Nxe4 15.Qe3+-; 14...Qb6 15.f4 gxf4 16.Nxf4 0-0-0 17.Qe2² with Nf3 to follow] 15.f4 gxf4 16.Nxf4 All the white pieces are perfectly placed and now you can see why the bishop is better on b2. 16...0-0-0 17.Rhf1²

B2) 14.Nd5!! Quite an important concrete way of breaking into Black's position. 14...exd5 15.exd5



Position after: 15.exd5

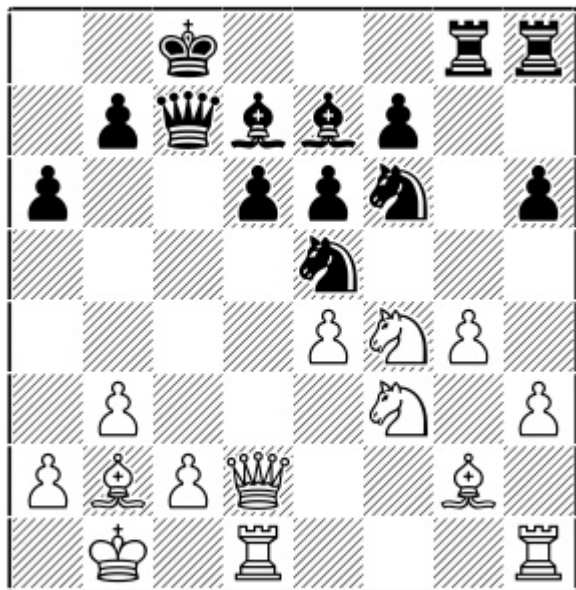
15...Qc7 [15...Bxd5 16.Bxd5 Nxd5 17.Nf5 Nf4 18.h4±; 15...Nfd7 16.Nc6 Qc7 17.h4 Rg8 18.Nxe5 Nxe5 19.Bxe5 dxe5 20.d6±] 16.Nf5 Bf8 [16...0-0-0? 17.Bxe5 dxe5 18.d6±] 17.Rhe1 Nfd7 18.Re3±



Position after: 18.Re3±

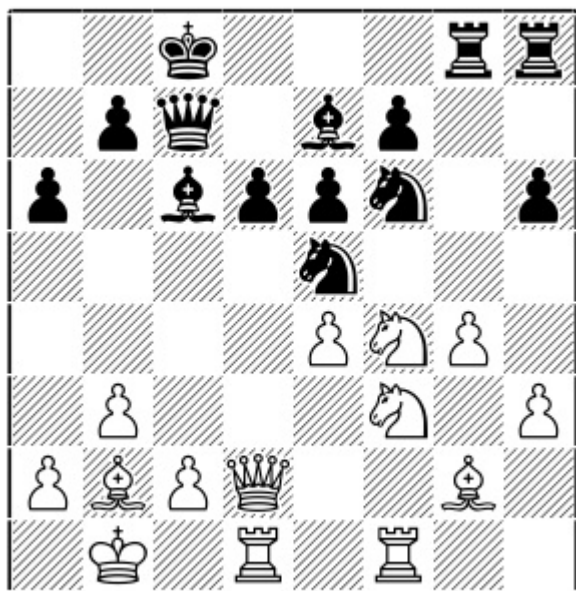
This looks positionally lost for Black.

16...Rdg8?! was played in the aforementioned game but the rook was better placed on d8. 17.Nf3! [17.Nd3 was unnecessary as the knight was placed perfectly on f4, preventing Black from breaking with ... h5. 17...Be8 18.Rhf1 Nfd7 19.Nf4 Kb8 20.Qe2 Rh7 21.Nh5 Rg6 Sethuraman, S (2624) – Korobov, A (2679) Douglas 2019]



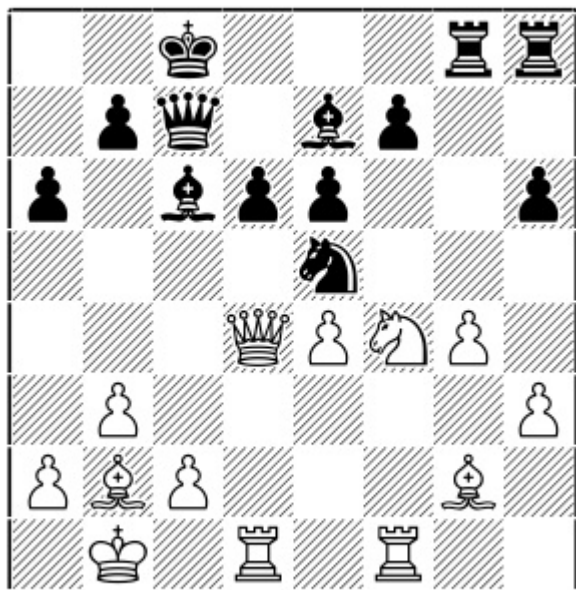
Position after: 17.Nf3!

- A) 17...Nxe4?! 18.Qe3 Nxf3 19.Bxf3 Nf6 20.Rhf1±
- B) 17...Nxf3 18.Bxf3 e5 19.Ng2 h5 20.g5 Ne8 21.h4 f6 22.Ne3 Be6 23.gxf6 Nxf6 24.Nf5?
- C) 17...Be8 18.Rhe1 Kb8 19.Ba3 Bc6 20.Bxd6 Bxd6 21.Qxd6 Qxd6 22.Rxd6 Nfd7 [22...Nexg4? 23.e5!+–] 23.Rd2±
- D) 17...Bc6 18.Rhf1!



Position after: 18.Rhf1!

18...Nfd7 [18...Nxe4? 19.Qe3 Nxf3 20.Bxf3±; 18...Ned7 19.Nd4! Bxe4 20.Bxe4 Nxe4 21.Qe3 Ndf6 22.Nh5 Nxh5 23.gxh5±] 19.Nxe5 Nxe5 [19...dxe5? 20.Nd5+–] 20.Qd4!



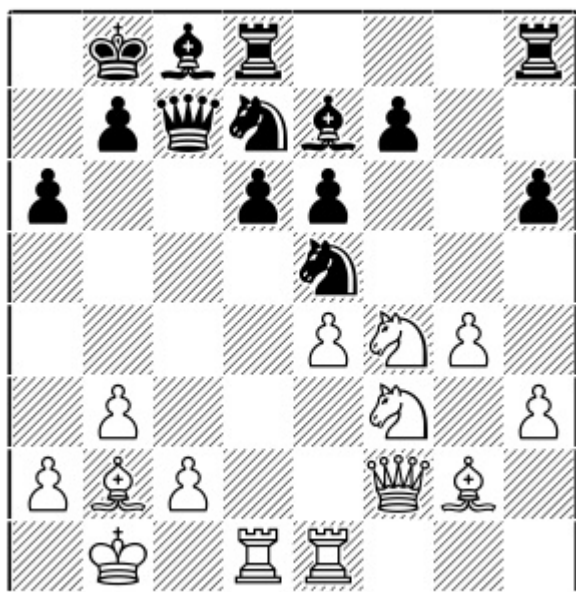
Position after: 20.Qd4!

Threatening to enter with Qa7. 20...Kb8 21.Nd3 Rg5 22.Bc1 Rgg8 23.Be3 Kc8 24.Qa7 Rh7 25.Rf2 Qb8 26.Qd4 Qc7 27.Nf4 Rhh8 28.a4 and White is gradually improving his position.

17.Rhe1

17.Nf3 Bc6 18.Nxe5 dxe5 19.Nd3 Nd7 20.Nb4 White is slightly better.

17...Bc8 18.Nf3 Nfd7 19.Qf2



Position after: 19.Qf2

19...Nxf3

19...Bf6 20.Rf1! A change of plans. 20...Nxf3 21.Bxf6 Nxf6 22.Qxf3 Nd7 23.Nd3 Rdf8 24.Qe2²

20.Qxf3

20.Bxf3 Bf6

20...Ne5

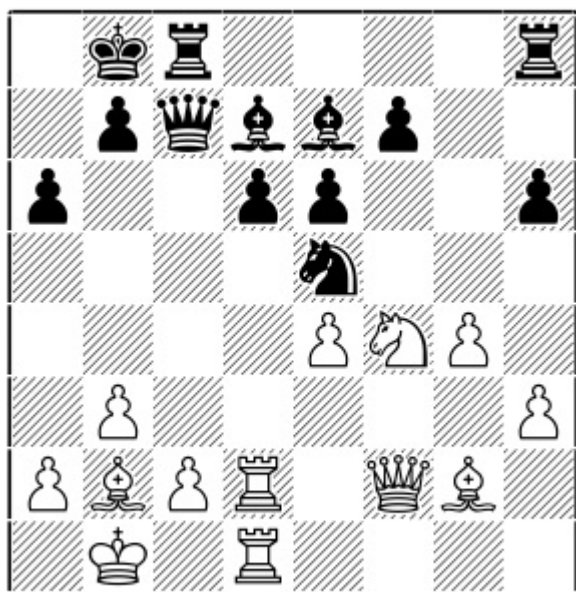
20...Bf6? 21.Bxf6 Nxf6 22.Nxe6±

21.Qf2 Bd7

21...Rdf8 22.Re2 Bd7 23.Red2 Bc6 24.Nd5!±

22.Re2 Rc8 23.Red2±

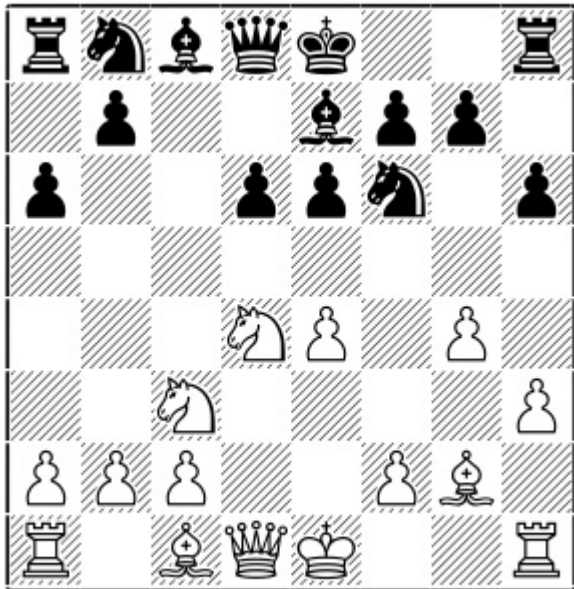
White is slowly outplaying Black. The main point of these kind of positions is not to allow counterplay and freeing breaks for Black.



Position after: 23.Red2±

c) 8...Be7

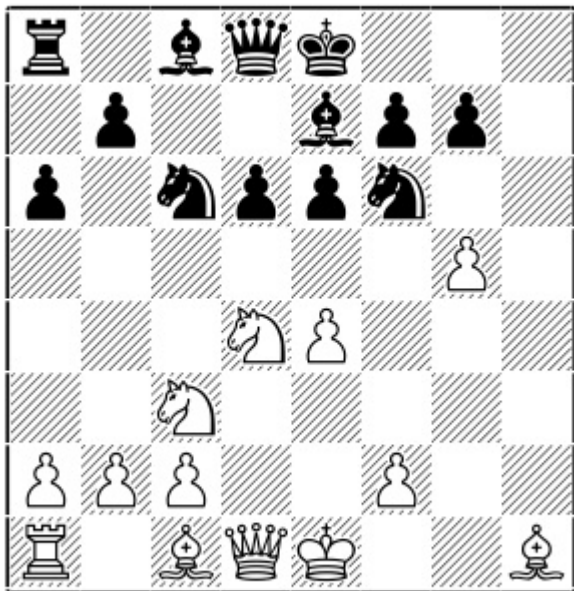
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6 8.Bg2 Be7



Position after: 8...Be7

One of the main lines. Here I suggest the direct approach for White:

9.h4!? Nc6 10.g5 hxg5 11.hxg5 Rxh1+ 12.Bxh1



Position after: 12.Bxh1

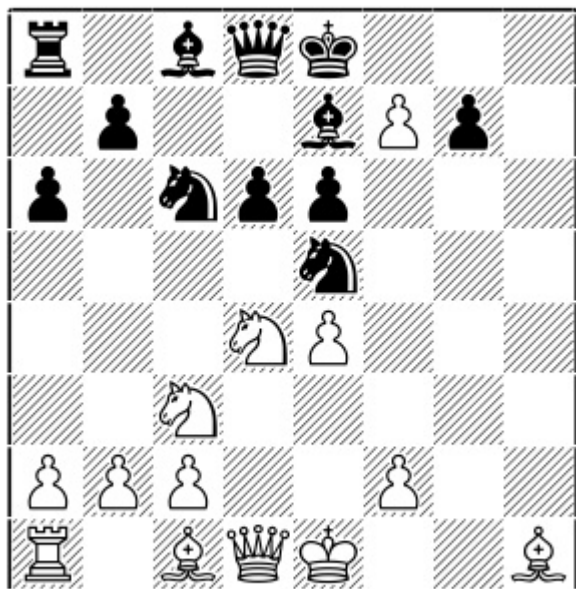
12...Nh7!

This move was introduced to elite play by Najdorf expert Vachier-Lagrave, in his game against Svidler in Biel 2016.

The idea is simple: White does not get to play 13.g6 because of the c8-bishop protecting the pawn on e6.

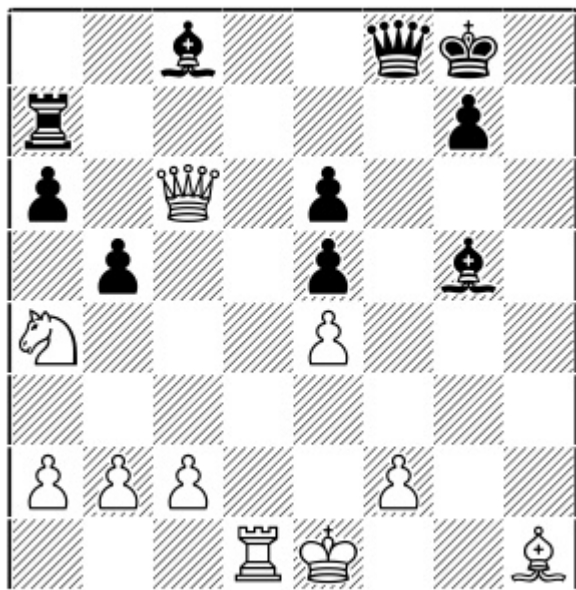
12...Nd7 is dubious and it allows White to play g6, since Black's e6-pawn is unprotected and he cannot

capture the white pawn on g6. 13.g6! Nde5 14.gxf7+



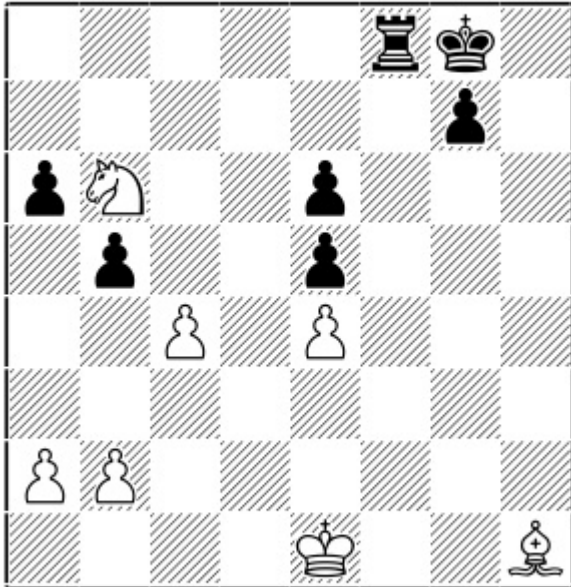
Position after: 14.gxf7+

A) 14...Kxf7 15.Qh5+ Kg8 16.Be3 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Bg5 Preventing White from castling long. 18.Rd1 Qf6 19.Bxe5 dxe5 [19...Qxe5? 20.Qe8+ Kh7 21.Rd3 Qh2 22.Bf3±] 20.Na4! b5 21.Qe8+ Qf8 22.Qc6 Ra7 [22...Bh4 23.Rd2 Ra7 24.Nc5 Rf7 25.Nd3²]



Position after: 22...Ra7

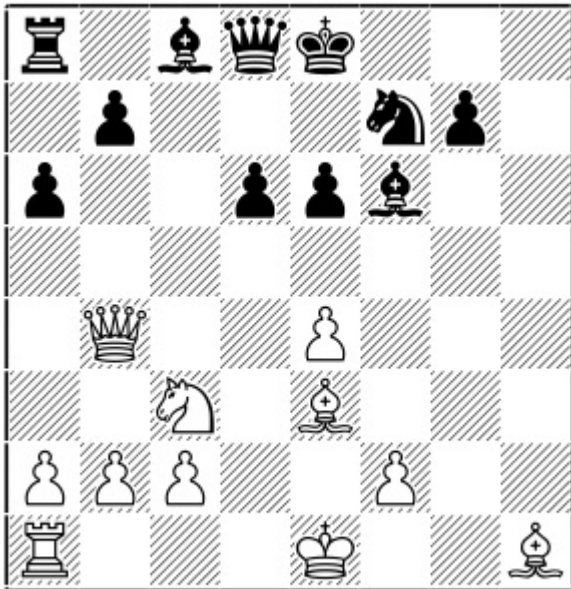
23.Nb6 [23.Nc5!? Rf7 24.Nd3²] 23...Bh4 24.Rd2 Rf7 25.Qxc8 Bxf2+ 26.Rxf2 Rxf2 27.Qxf8+ Rxf8 28.c4²



Position after: 28.c4²

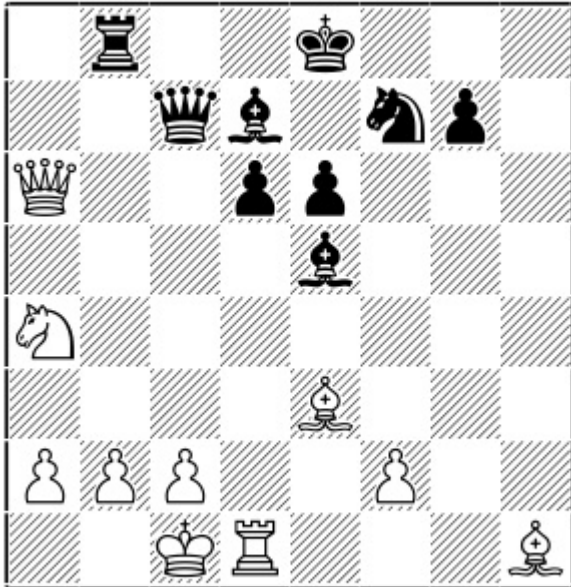
The two pieces are much preferable to the rook here, meaning White has good winning chances.

B) 14...Nxf7 15.Be3 Nxd4 16.Qxd4 Bf6 17.Qb4!



Position after: 17.Qb4!

17...a5 [17...Qc7 18.0-0-0 Bd7 19.e5!²] 18.Qb3 Bd7 19.0-0-0 [19.a4 Bg5,,] 19...a4 20.Qxb7 Rb8 21.Qa6 Qc7 22.e5! [22.Nxa4? Bb5-+] 22...Bxe5 23.Nxa4



Position after: 23.Nxa4

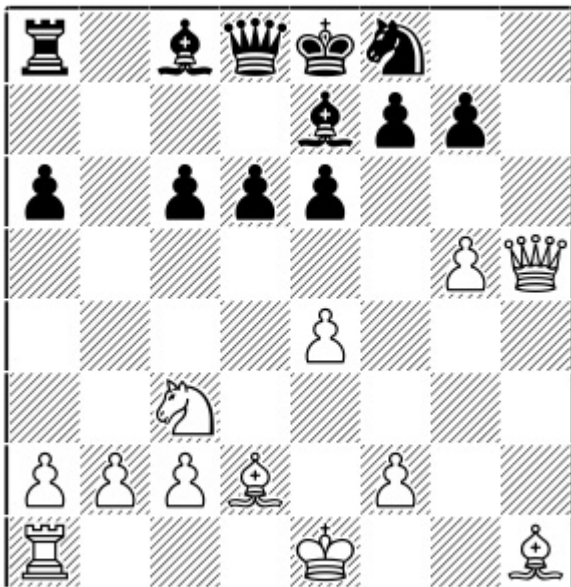
Since the h1-a8 diagonal is open, Black cannot trap the queen with 23...Bb5 as after 24.Qa7 there will be no skewer along the a-file. Thus 23...Rb4 24.b3 Bxa4 25.a3! Rh4 26.bxa4² and White is clearly on top because of some persistent factors: his bishop-pair, Black's king-safety issues, and the outside passed a-pawn.

13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Qh5!

White has good activity and his king is safe compared to Black's.

14.g6?! fxg6 15.Qd3 e5 16.Qc4 Bd7,, and Black enjoyed good counterplay in Svidler (2759) – Vachier-Lagrave (2798) Biel 2016.

14...Nf8 15.Bd2



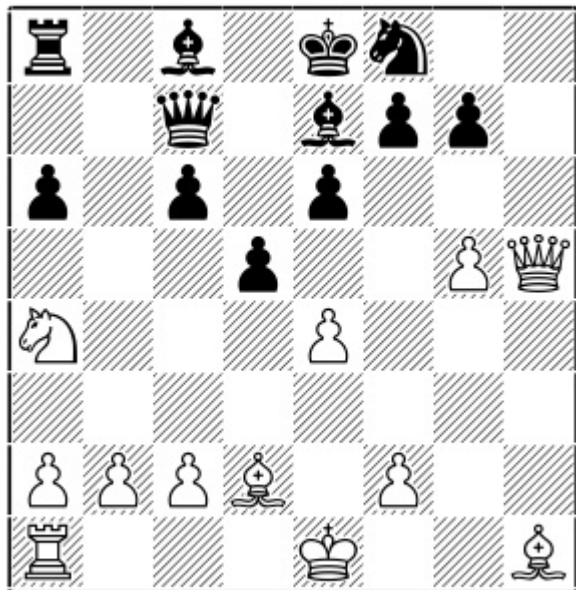
Position after: 15.Bd2

Once again reaching a position which, while not totally new, is played almost exclusively in correspondence.

15...g6

A) 15...e5 16.0-0-0 Be6 17.b3 a5 18.Na4² with good control for White.

B) 15...d5 16.Na4! [16.0-0-0 d4 17.Ne2 e5,,] 16...Qc7

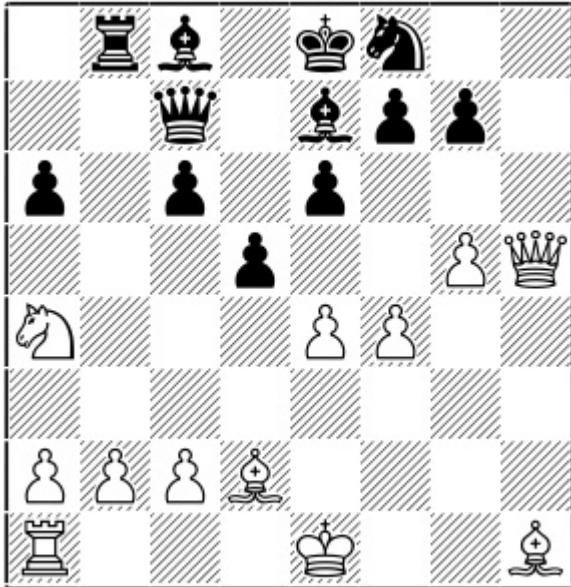


Position after: 16...Qc7

B1) 17.0-0-0 d4 18.b3 [18.e5 Rb8 19.b3 c5 20.Nb2 c4+] 18...e5 19.Bf3 Ba3+ 20.Kb1 c5 21.Be2 Be6 22.f4 c4 23.f5 d3 24.fxe6 dxc2+ 25.Kxc2 cxb3+,,

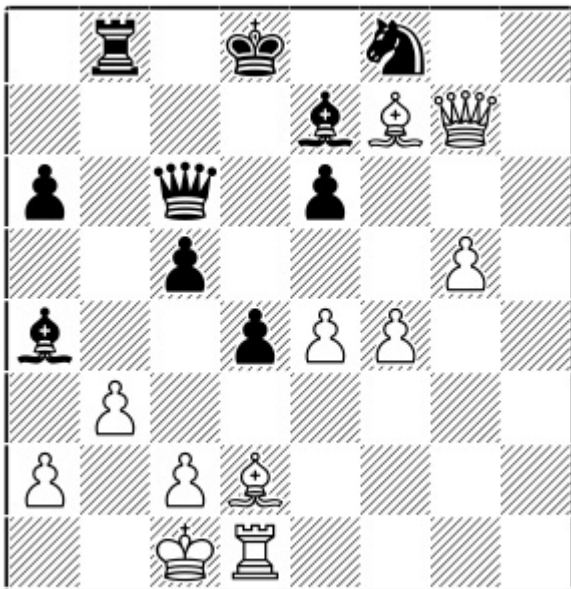
B2) 17.Qh8 Qe5,,

B3) 17.f4 Rb8



Position after: 17...Rb8

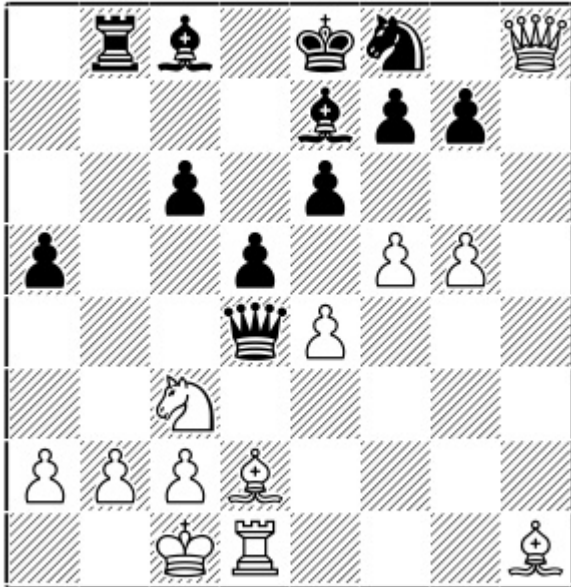
B3.1) 18.0-0-0!? is also a good try for White here as Black has to play extremely precisely in order to equalise. 18...d4 19.Qh8 c5! 20.Qxg7 Bd7 21.Bf3! Bxa4 22.Bh5 Kd8 23.Bxf7 Qc6 24.b3



Position after: 24.b3

24...Kc8!! Intending ...c4. It wasn't possible to push ...c4 immediately because the queen captures on d4 with check. [24...Qxe4? 25.g6 Kd7 26.Re1±] 25.Kb2 [Or 25.g6 c4, also leading to an unclear position.]

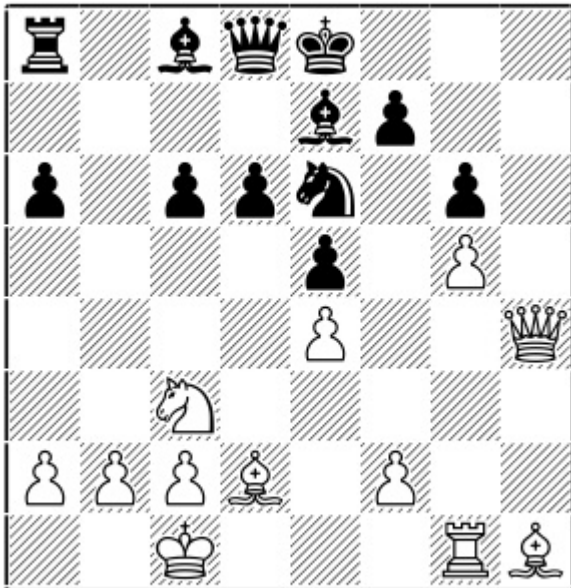
B3.2) 18.Qh8! Qa7 [18...Bd6 19.Qxg7 Bxf4 20.0-0-0 Qe5 21.Qxe5 Bxe5 22.Bf3 Ke7 23.b3 Ng6 24.Rh1² White has easy play in this endgame.] 19.0-0-0 Qd4 20.Nc3 a5 21.f5



Position after: 21.f5

21...Rb7 [21...Ba3 22.bxa3 Qc5 23.Rf1 d4 24.Qh2! Thanks to this resource, White gets a good advantage. 24...Rb7 25.Ne2 d3 26.Nc3 Qxa3+ 27.Kd1 dxc2+ 28.Ke2±] 22.fxe6 Bxe6 23.exd5²

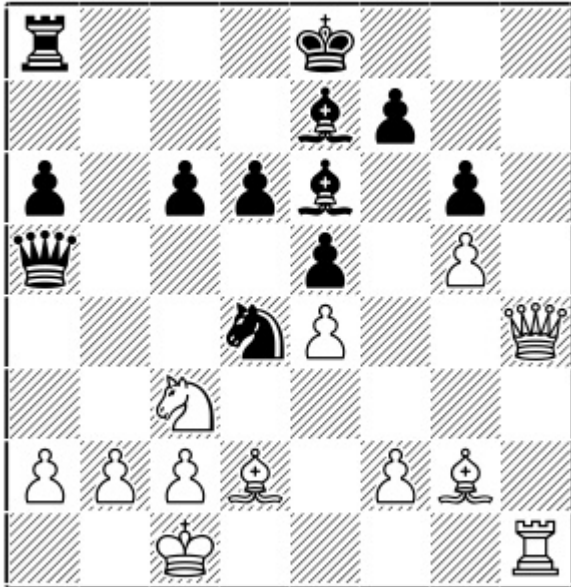
16.Qh4 e5 17.0-0-0 Ne6 18.Rg1



Position after: 18.Rg1

18...Rb8

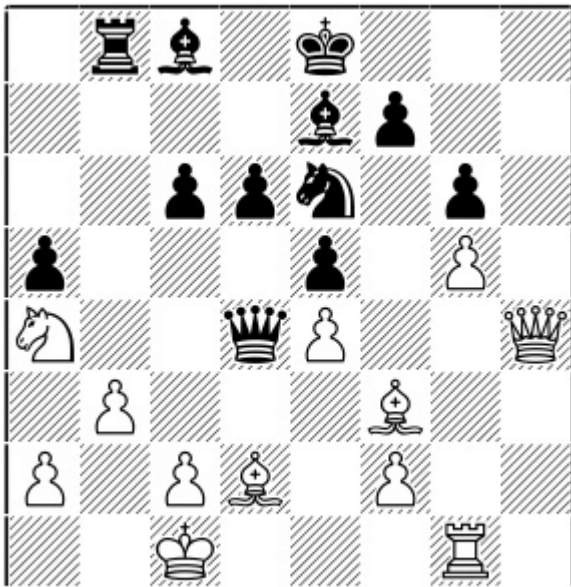
18...Nd4 19.Bg2 Be6 20.Rh1 Qa5



Position after: 20...Qa5

21.b3! [21.Qg3 Rb8 22.Rh8+ Bf8 23.Bf1 Bxa2! 24.Qh3 Ne6 25.Nd5 Qa4 26.Nc3 Qa5 27.Nd5= Pecka, J (2425) – Feletar, D (2352) ICCF email 2016] 21...Qc5 22.Bh3 0-0-0 23.Bxe6+ Nxe6 24.Kb1² In this complex position, I would definitely prefer White as Black's king is a bit vulnerable and his pawn structure is worse.

19.b3 Qb6 20.Bf3 a5 21.Na4 Qd4



Position after: 21...Qd4

22.c3!N

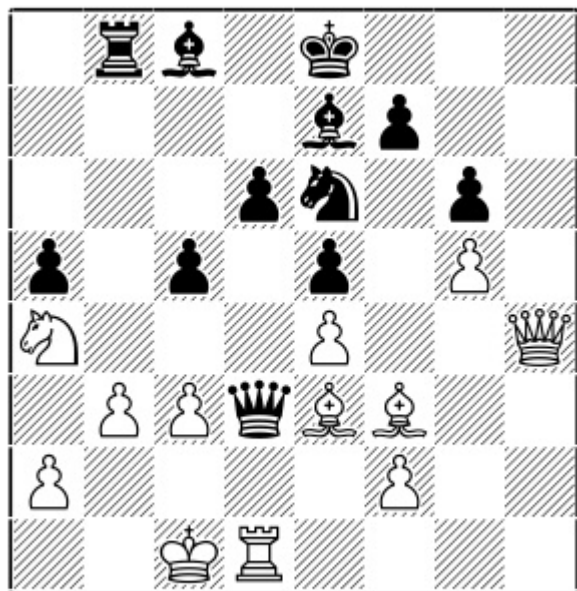
22.Bc3 Qa7 23.Bd2= was my game against Chinese GM Zhou Jianchao in the Binhai Chess Cup 2020, where I forgot my analysis and settled for a draw by repetition.

Instead 22.c3 is quite strong and gives White a good game.

22...Qd3

22...Qa7 23.Rd1 c5 24.Be2 Bd7 25.Qh8+ Bf8 26.Be3² And White has consolidated his position.

23.Be3 c5 24.Rd1



Position after: 24.Rd1

24...Qb5

24...Qa6 25.Bg4 Qc6 26.Bxe6 Bxe6 27.Qh8+ Bf8 28.Rxd6+–

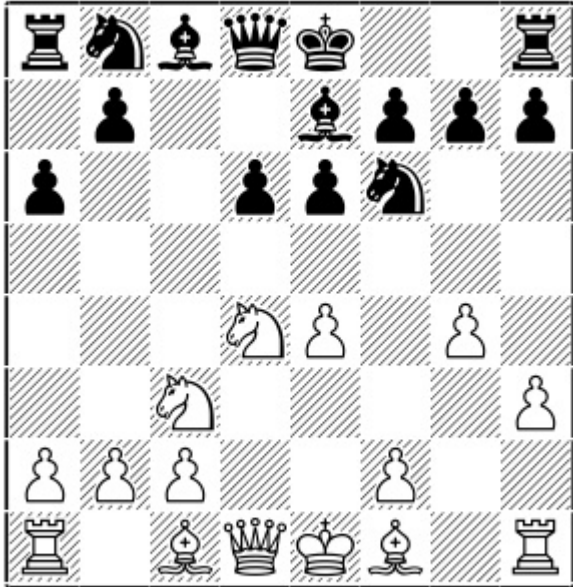
25.Bg4!²

White has a strong initiative.

Chapter 5

6...e6 7.g4 Be7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7



Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – 6...e6 7.g4 Be7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7 8.g5 Nfd7 9.Be3 b5 10.a3 Bb7 11.h4

a) 11...--

b) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 --

c) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0 --

d) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0 Rb8, 13...Nc5

a) 11...--

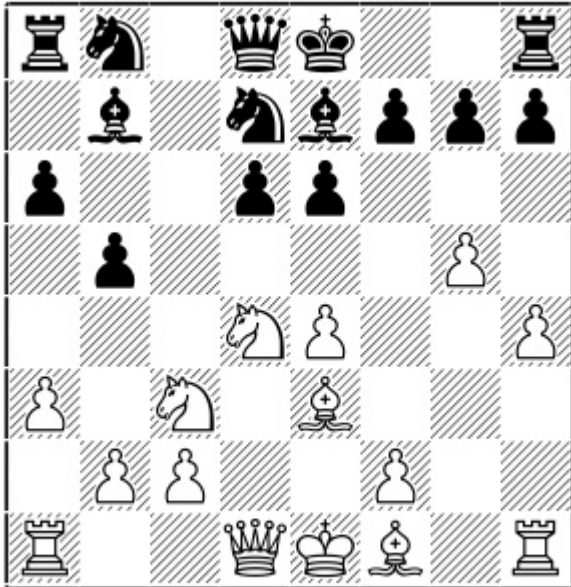
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7

Allowing White to push his kingside pawns, and in return Black will seek play on the other wing (after finishing his development). Here the race to land an attack first matters a lot.

8.g5 Nfd7 9.Be3 b5

9...Bxg5?? is a well-known blunder. 10.Nxe6+--

10.a3 Bb7 11.h4

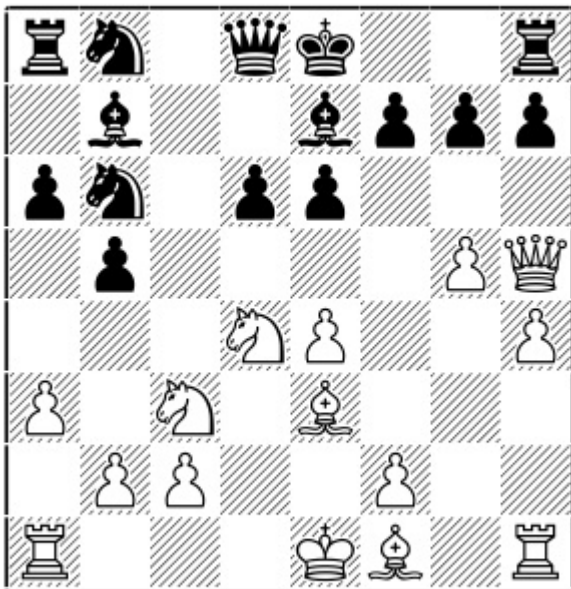


Position after: 11.h4

The critical variations of the whole system start from here. White attacks on the kingside whereas Black attacks on the queenside.

11...0-0

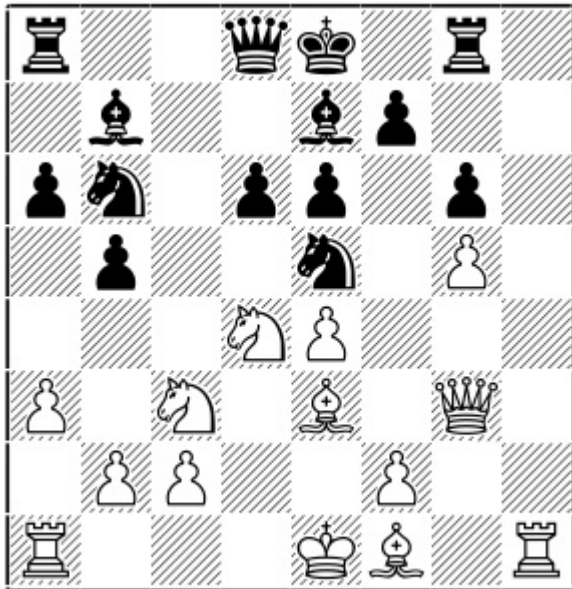
A) 11...Nb6 12.Qh5!



Position after: 12.Qh5!

A very strong idea threatening g6.

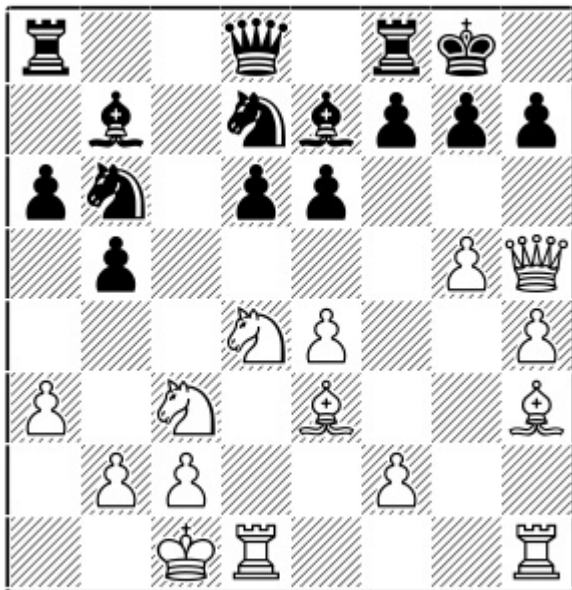
A1) 12...g6 13.Qg4 N8d7 14.h5 Ne5 15.Qg3 Rg8 [15...Rf8 16.f4 Nec4 17.0-0-0 Rc8 18.Bf2±] 16.hxg6 hxg6



Position after: 16...hxc6

17.Rh7! [17.0-0-0?! Rc8,, An improvement over 17...Na4, played in Vachier-Lagrave, M (2798) – Dubessay, B (2304) Ajaccio 2016.] 17...Rc8 18.f4 Nec4 19.0-0-0±

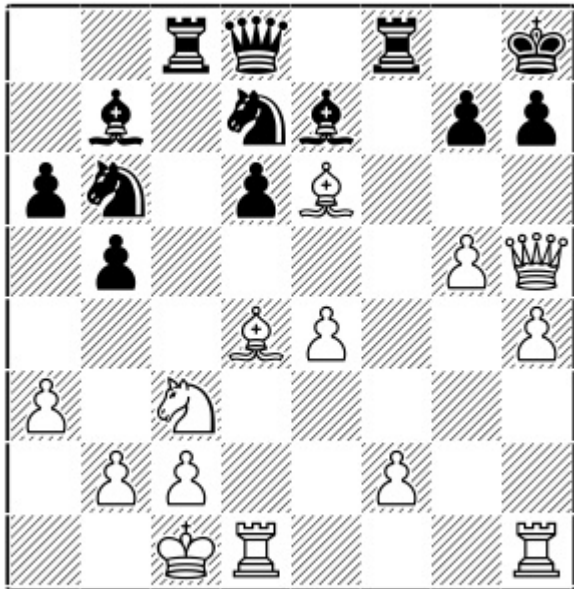
A2) 12...0-0 13.0-0-0 N8d7 14.Bh3!



Position after: 14.Bh3!

A2.1) 14...Nc5 15.Nf5! exf5 16.Bxc5 dxc5 [16...g6 17.Qe2 fxe4 18.Bg2±] 17.Rxd8 Raxd8 18.Qe2± 1-0 (35) Korabliov, A (2458) – Cordes, H (2314) ICCF email 2016

A2.2) 14...Rc8 15.Nxe6!! fxe6 16.Bxe6+ Kh8 17.Bd4

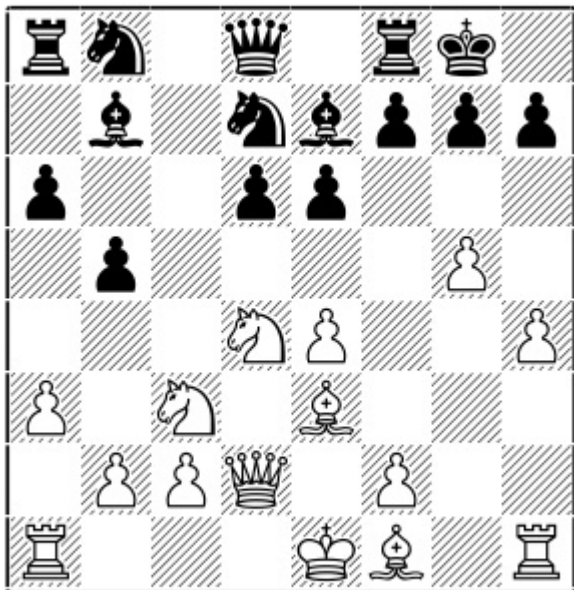


Position after: 17.Bd4

By now Oparin (as White) had obtained a simply crushing attack in his game. [17...Qe8](#) [18.g6](#) [Qxg6](#) [19.Rhg1](#) [Nf6](#) [20.Qxg6](#) [hxg6](#) [21.Bxb6](#) [Rxc3](#) [22.bxc3](#) [Bxe4](#) [23.Kb2+–](#) 1-0 (42) Oparin, G (2569) – Djurovic, G (2398) Bol 2015

B) 11...Nc6 is the main line and is dealt with in the next subchapters.

12.Qd2



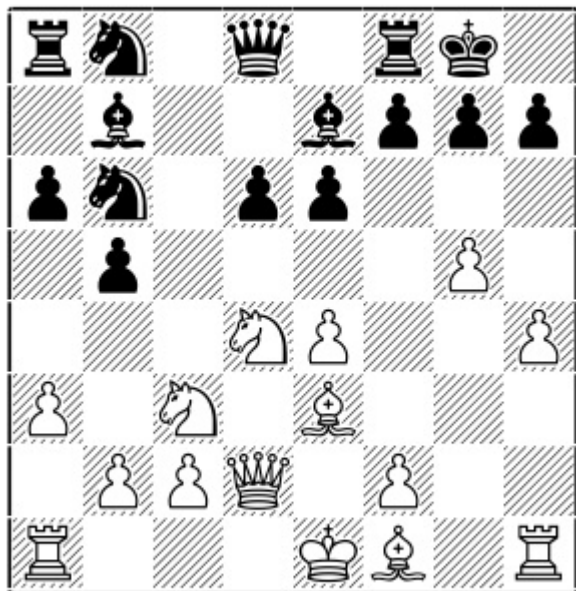
Position after: 12.Qd2

12...d5

Trying to immediately counter in the centre.

A) For 12...Nc6 see the last two subchapters.

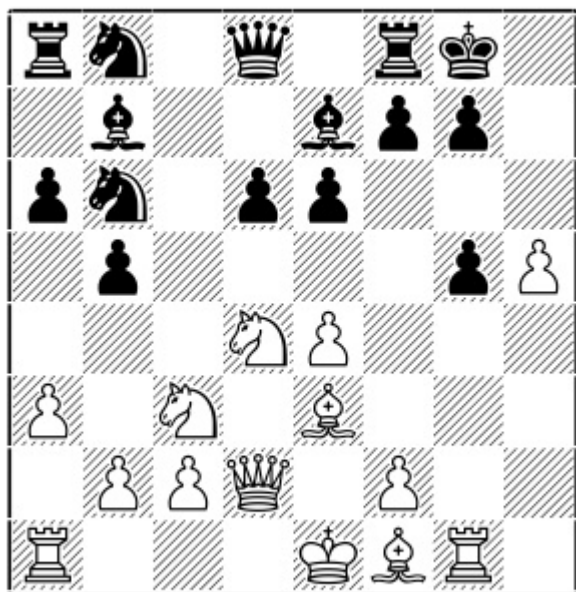
B) 12...Nb6?!



Position after: 12...Nb6?!

B1) 13.h5 also gives White a good advantage. 13...N8d7 14.g6 Ne5 15.0-0-0 Nbc4 16.Qe2! Not giving away the f1-bishop, as it might be needed for a future Bh3 targeting the e6-pawn. [16.Bxc4, which was inaccurate, was played in the game Karjakin, S (2760) – Topalov, V (2780) Moscow 2016.] 16...Bf6 17.Bh3±

B2) 13.g6! hxg6 14.h5 g5 15.Rg1

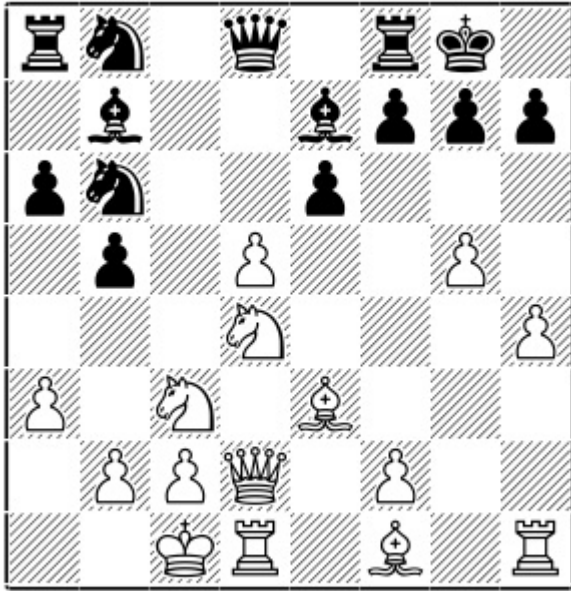


Position after: 15.Rg1

15...N8d7 [15...d5 16.e5 N8d7 17.Bxg5 Nxe5 18.Bh6 Bf6 19.Bxg7 Bxg7 20.h6 Qf6 21.hxg7±] 16.0-0-0 Rc8 17.Bxg5 Bxg5 18.Rxg5± And White has a strong attack.

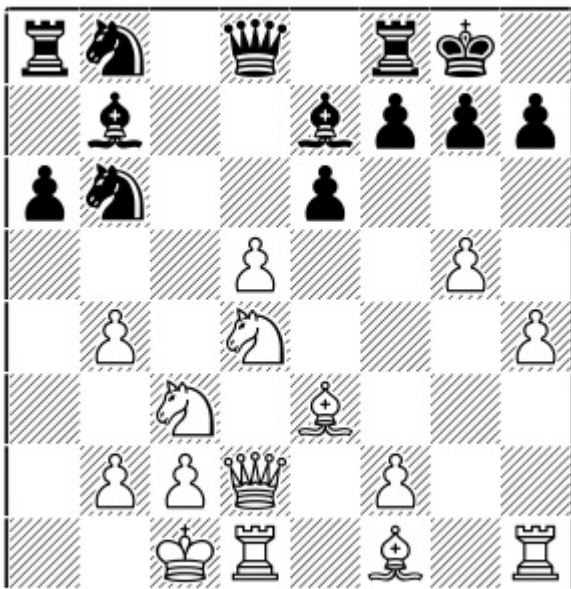
13.h5!

13.exd5!? In the first instance this looked more natural to me, but Black gets dynamic chances by walking a fine line as follows. 13...Nb6 14.0-0-0!



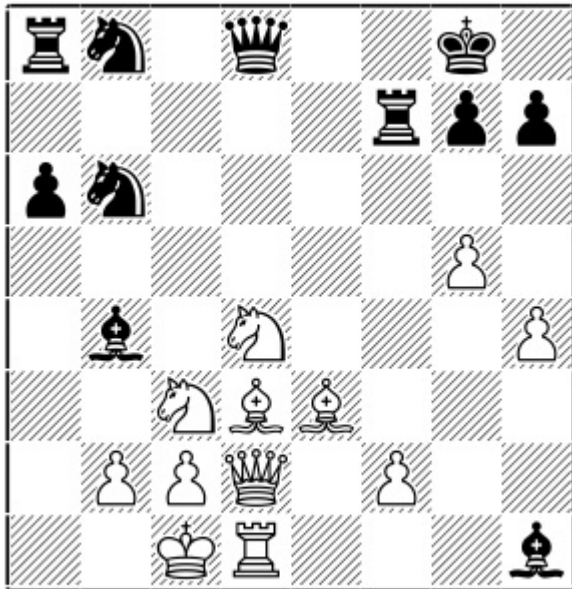
Position after: 14.0-0-0!

14...b4 [14...Nxd5? 15.Nf5 Nxe3 16.Qxe3 Nd7 17.Nxe7+ Qxe7 18.Rg1 Rfd8 19.Rg4 Rac8 20.h5 Nf8 21.Rxd8 Rxd8 22.Bd3 Qc7 23.Kb1± White had a nice advantage in the correspondence game Babic, D (2463) – Schuster, P (2451) email 2016.] 15.axb4



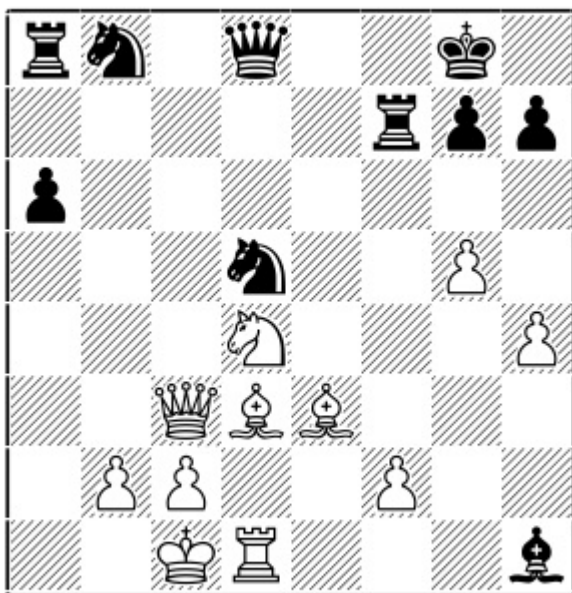
Position after: 15.axb4

15...Bxb4 [15...Nxd5 16.Nxd5 Qxd5 17.Bd3 Qa2 18.c3! Bxh1 19.Rxh1 a5 20.b5 a4 21.Be4 Ra5 22.Qc2±] 16.dxe6 Bxh1 17.exf7+ Rxf7 [17...Kh8 18.Ne6 Qxd2+ 19.Rxd2 Rxf7 20.Rd8+-] 18.Bd3! Here I provide some interesting variations to show the complexity of play.



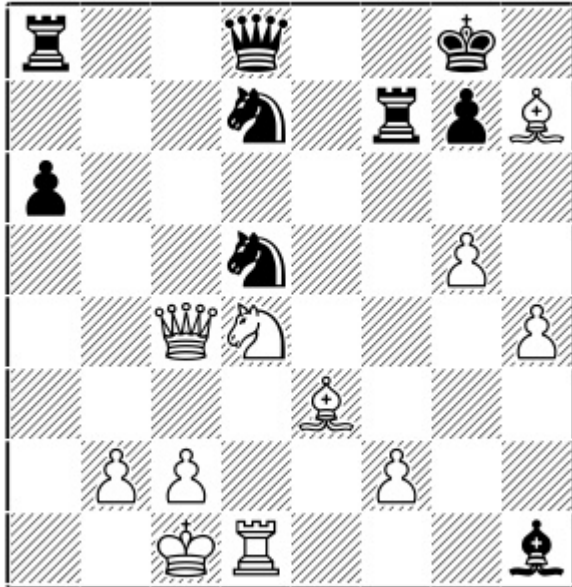
Position after: 18.Bd3!

- A) 18...Qd5 19.f3! Nc6 [19...Qa5 20.Nb3+–] 20.Rxh1 Nxd4 21.Bxd4 Qa5 22.Kb1 Nd5 23.Bxh7+ Kh8 24.Be4 Nxc3+ 25.Bxc3±
- B) 18...Bd5 19.Bxh7+ Kxh7 20.g6+ Kxg6 21.Qd3+–
- C) 18...Bxc3 19.Qxc3 Nd5



Position after: 19...Nd5

- 20.Qc4 [20.Bxh7+!? Kxh7 21.g6+ Kh8 22.Ne6 Qf6! 23.Qc8+ Rf8 24.Nxf8 Qc6 25.Qf5 Nf6 26.Nh7 Nbd7 27.Ng5=] 20...Nd7 [20...Nxe3! 21.Bxh7+! Kxh7 22.Qxf7 Nc6 23.fxe3 Nxd4 24.Rxh1 Qa5 25.Rf1! Qa1+ 26.Kd2 Qa5+ 27.c3 Ne6 28.Qxe6 Rd8+ 29.Ke2 Qb5+ 30.Ke1 Qxb2 31.Qe4+ Kh8∞] 21.Bxh7+!



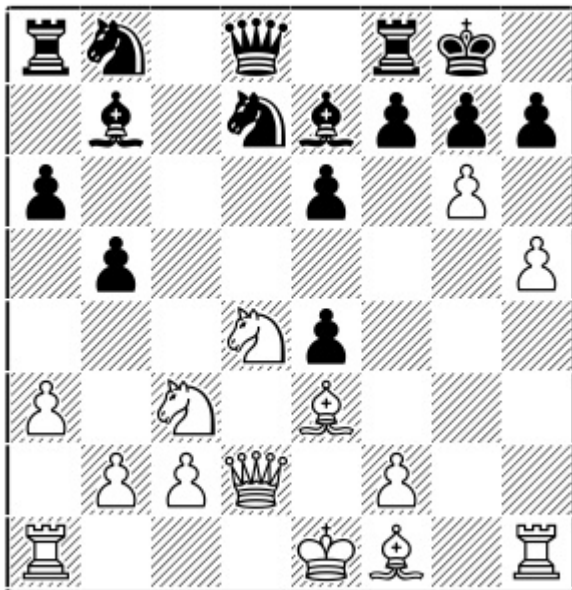
Position after: 21.Bxh7+!

21...Kh8 [21...Kxh7? 22.g6+ Kxg6 23.Qd3+ Kf6 24.Bg5+-] 22.Qe2! Nf8 23.Qh5 Nxh7 24.Qxf7 Nxe3,,

13...dxe4

13...e5 14.Nf5 d4 15.Bxd4! exd4 16.Qxd4 f6 17.g6 h6 18.0-0-0 and White is clearly winning, as Black is unable to cope with the attack on his king.

14.g6



Position after: 14.g6

14...Ne5!

14...Nf6 15.gxf7+ Rxf7 16.0-0-0 e5 [16...Nc6 17.Nxc6 Bxc6 18.Bh3 Qxd2+ 19.Rxd2 Bd7 20.Rxd7! Nxd7

21.Bxe6 Nf6 22.h6±] 17.Ne6! Qxd2+ 18.Rxd2 Nc6 19.h6 g6 20.Bh3± and White's pieces are active.

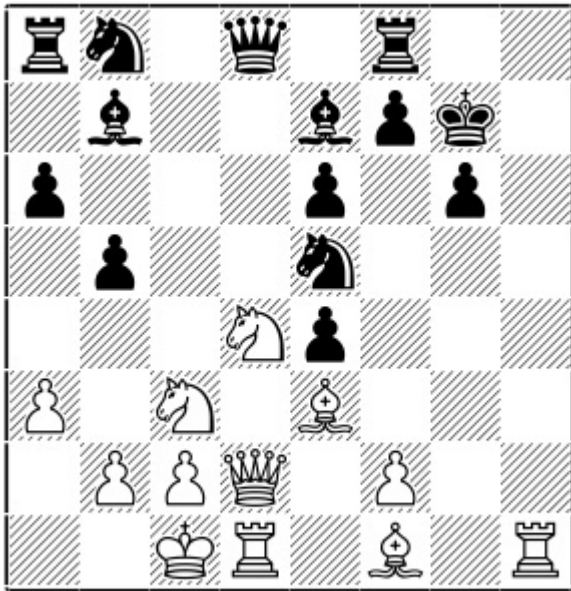
15.h6!N

15.0-0-0 was played in most of the correspondence games, but instead I prefer the text move, which I consider a very strong novelty for White, fighting for the initiative without delay. 15...Nbc6 16.gxf7+ Kxf7! „ [16...Rxf7 17.Nxe6 Qxd2+ 18.Rxd2²]

15...hxg6

15...Nxc6 16.hxg7 Re8 17.0-0-0 Nd7 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.Qxd7²

16.hxg7 Kxg7 17.0-0-0

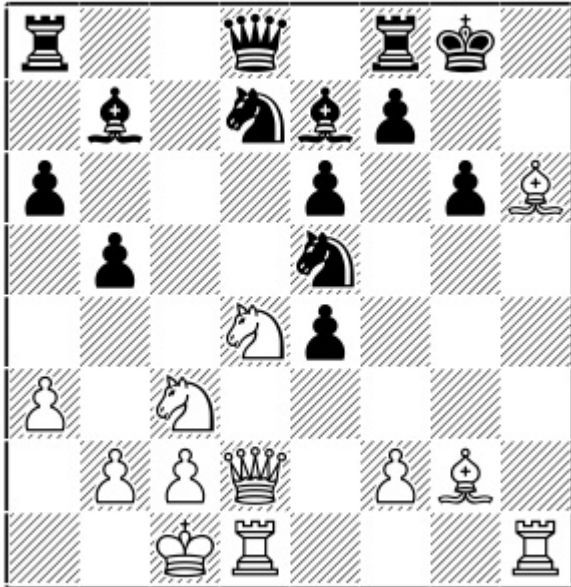


Position after: 17.0-0-0

17...Nbd7

17...Nbc6 18.Bg2! Nc4 19.Nxc6 Qxd2+ 20.Bxd2 Bxc6 21.Bh6+ Kg8 22.Bxf8 Rxf8 23.Bxe4 Bxe4 24.Nxe4 f5 25.Nc3² and I doubt Black has enough compensation for the exchange to equalize.

18.Bh6+ Kg8 19.Bg2



Position after: 19.Bg2

19...Nc5

19...Nc4 20.Qf4 Qb8 [20...e5 21.Qh2 exd4 22.Nxe4 Bxe4 23.Bxe4 Bd6 24.Qh3±] 21.Qg4±

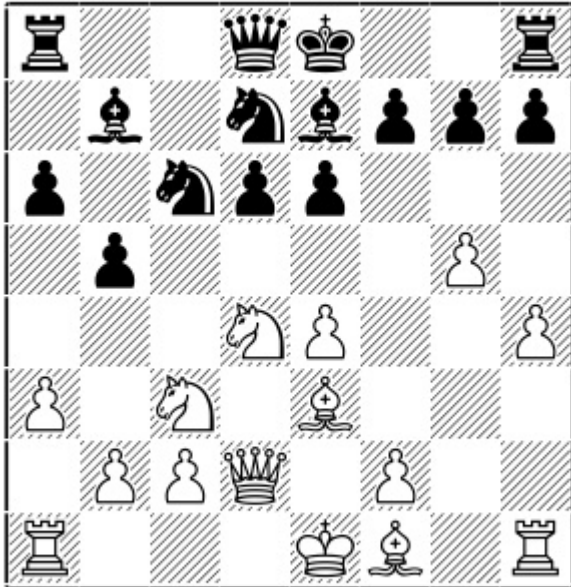
20.Kb1±

With a strong and enduring initiative for White.

b) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7 8.g5 Nfd7 9.Be3 b5 10.a3 Bb7 11.h4 Nc6 12.Qd2

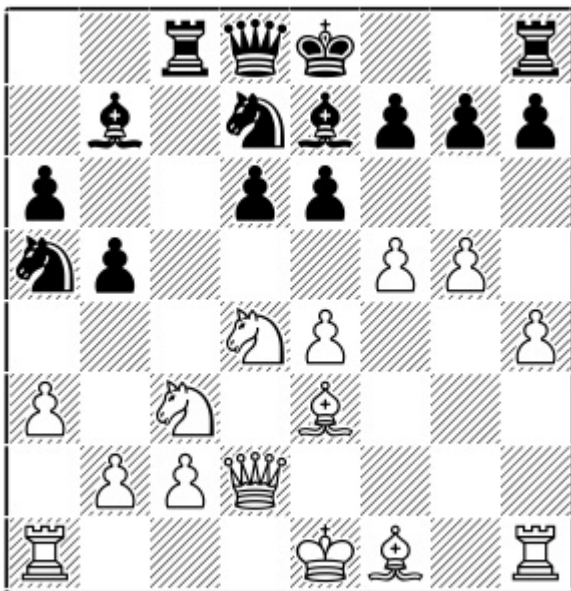
In this line White need not worry about exchanging the knight on c6 right away, as 12...Na5 (trying to jump with the knight to c4) turns out to be bad.



Position after: 12.Qd2

12...Rc8

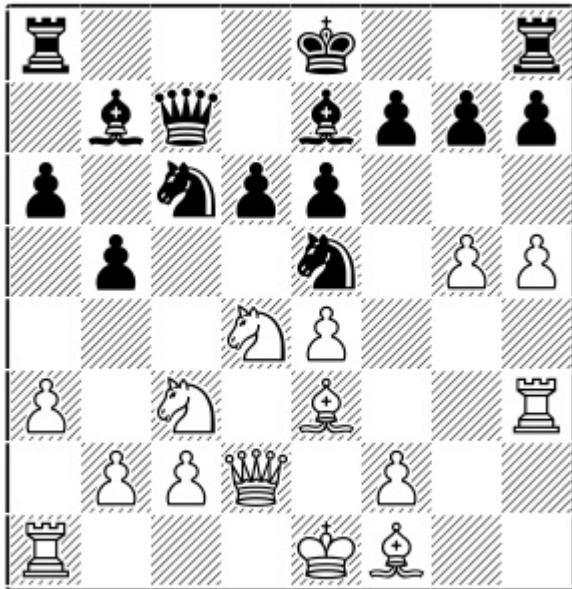
A) 12...Na5?! 13.f4! Rc8 [13...Nc5 14.Qg2 Nc4 15.Bxc4 bxc4 16.f5 e5 17.Nde2± and White was on top in (31) Jensen, C (2377) – Borisovs, L (2324) ICCF email 2014.] 14.f5



Position after: 14.f5

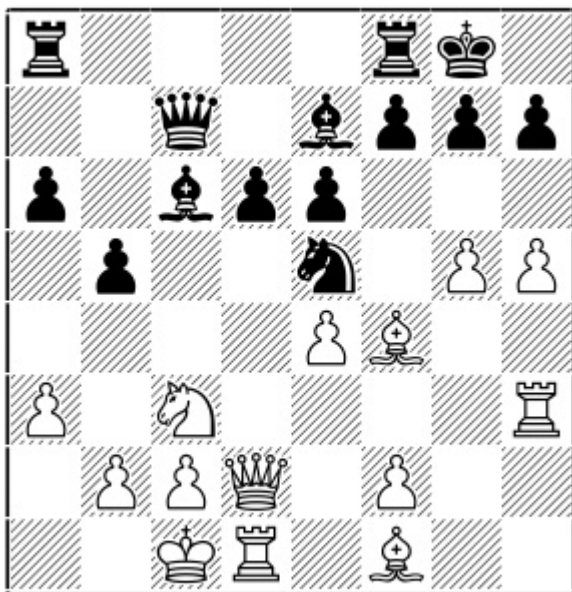
14...Nc5 [14...e5 15.f6 exd4 16.fxe7 Qxe7 17.Qxd4 0-0 18.0-0-0 Nc5 19.Qxd6 Qxd6 20.Rxd6 Nxe4 21.Nxe4 Bxe4 22.Rh2 Rfe8 23.b4±] 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.Bh3 Nc4 17.Qe2 Nxb2 18.0-0 Qa5 19.Nd5!+- White is just crushing.

B) 12...Qc7?! 13.h5! [13.0-0-0 allows 13...b4 14.axb4 Nxb4 15.Kb1 Nc5 16.f3 d5,,; 13.Nxc6 Bxc6 14.h5 Rb8,,] 13...Nde5 14.Rh3!



Position after: 14.Rh3!

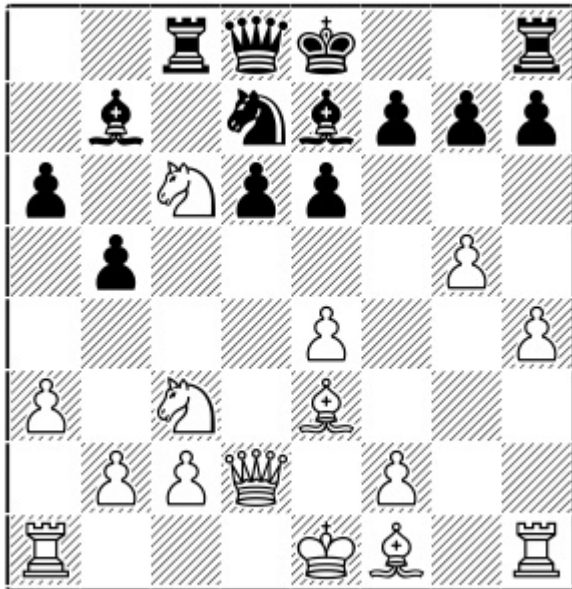
Taking care of forks on f3. 14...Ng4 [14...0-0 15.f4 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Nc4 17.Bxc4 Qxc4 18.h6 g6 19.b3 Qc6 20.0-0-0± And Nd5 trick is in the air.] 15.Nxc6 Bxc6 [15...Nxe3 16.Nxe7! Nxf1 17.Kxf1 Qxe7 18.h6 Rg8 19.Rd1±] 16.Bf4 Ne5 17.0-0-0 0-0



Position after: 17...0-0

18.Kb1 [18.Be3!? Ng4 19.f4 Nxe3 20.Qxe3²] 18...Rfb8 19.h6! g6 20.Qd4 a5 21.Bc1! White is threatening f4, attacking the e5-knight that is pinned against mate on g7. Thus Black should play 21...Bf8 [21...b4 22.f4!] 22.f4 Nd7, but White remains better after 23.f5².

13.Nxc6!



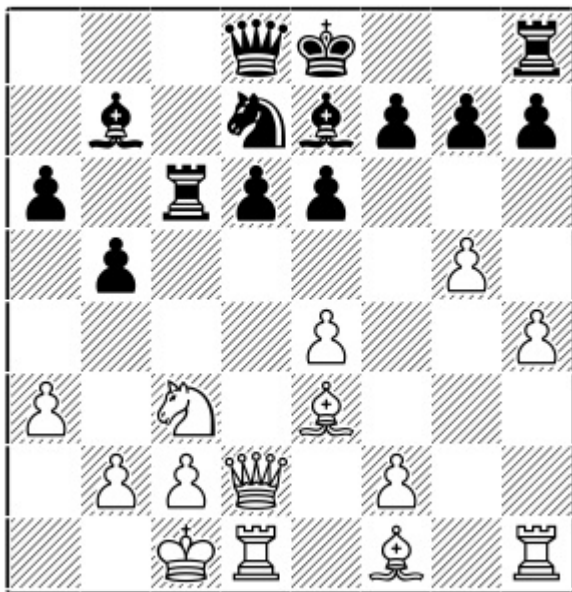
Position after: 13.Nxc6!

Now it's time to capture the knight on c6 as Black was already threatening to play ...b4.

13.0-0-0?! allows 13...b4! as now 14.Nxc6 fails to 14...bxc3+.

13...Bxc6

13...Rxc6 14.0-0-0

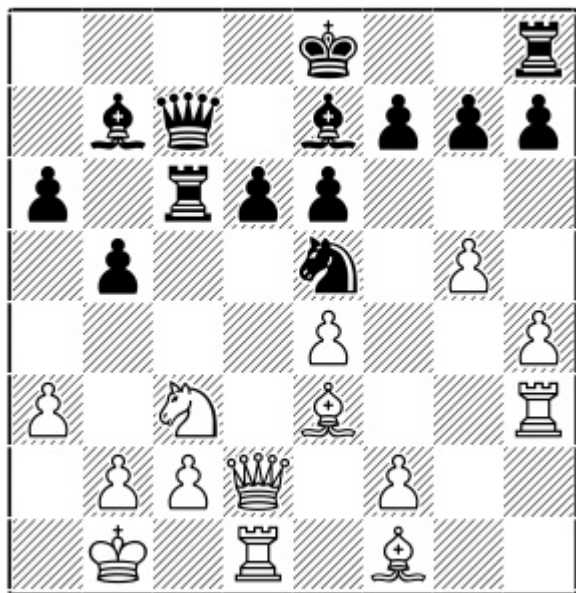


Position after: 14.0-0-0

A) 14...Qa5?! 15.Bd4 0-0 [15...e5 16.Be3 Rxc3 17.Qxc3 Qxc3 18.bxc3 Bxe4 19.Rg1 0-0 20.Bh3± and Black's compensation is not enough.] 16.Kb1 Rfc8 17.f4±

B) 14...0-0 15.Kb1 Ne5 16.Rh3! Nc4 [16...Qc8 17.Bd4] 17.Qe1 Nxe3 18.Rxe3 Qc8 19.f4 Bd8 20.f5± Nepomniachtchi, I (2703) – Grischuk, A (2752) Sochi 2016.

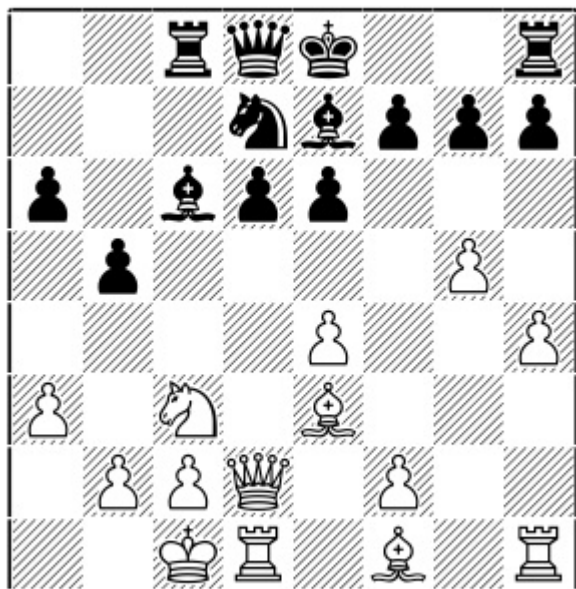
C) 14...Ne5 15.Kb1 Qc7 [15...0-0 16.Rh3 transposes to 14...0-0] 16.Rh3! An important and typical rook sortie, guarding the c3-knight against various tactical ideas like ...Bxa3 and ...Rxc3 and also holding the position together for a strong attack.



Position after: 16.Rh3!

16...Rxc3 [16...Nc4 17.Qe1 Nxa3+ 18.bxa3 Rxc3 19.Bb6 Qxb6 20.Rxc3 0-0 21.f4±] 17.Qxc3 Qxc3
 18.bxc3 Bxe4 19.Bd4 Bf5 [19...0-0 20.Bxe5 dxe5 21.c4±] 20.Rg3 0-0 21.Bxe5 dxe5 22.c4 bxc4 23.Bxc4±
 With the bishop misplaced on f5, the a6-pawn becomes vulnerable.

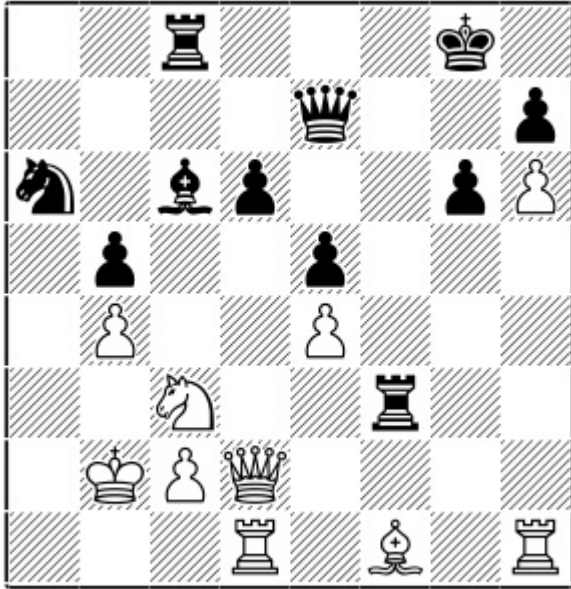
14.0-0-0



Position after: 14.0-0-0

14...Rb8!?

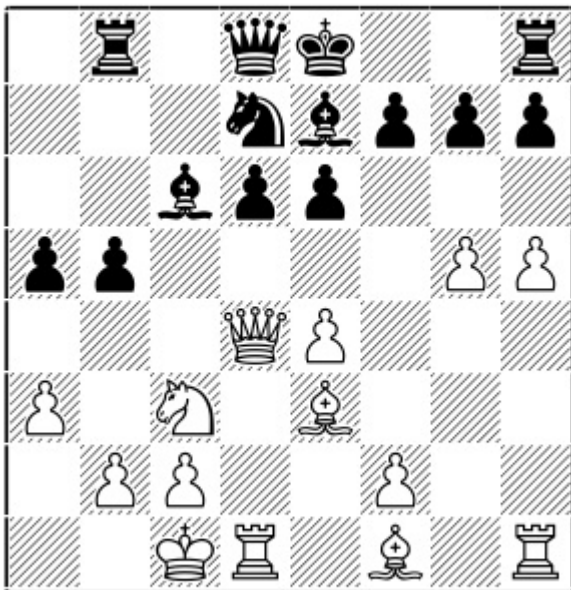
14...Nc5 15.f3 0-0 16.h5 a5 17.b4! Just stopping Black's attack. 17...axb4 18.axb4 Na6 19.h6 g6 20.Kb2 f6 [20...Nxb4?? 21.Qd4+–] 21.Bf4 e5 22.gxf6 Rxf6 23.Bg5 Rxf3 24.Bxe7 Qxe7



Position after: 24...Qxe7

25.Rh3! Rf7 26.Nxb5 Rb8 27.Ra3 Bxb5 28.Bxb5 Rxb5 29.Rxa6 d5 30.Ra8+ Rf8 31.Rxf8+ Qxf8 32.c3 d4 33.Kb3² White has a good position and his pawn on h6 keeps the black king firmly imprisoned.

15.h5 a5 16.Qd4!N



Position after: 16.Qd4!N

Provoking Black to play ...e5, after which White's knight can occupy the d5-square.

16.h6 g6 17.b4 was complex in Saric, I (2689) – Grandelius, N (2655) Batumi 2018.

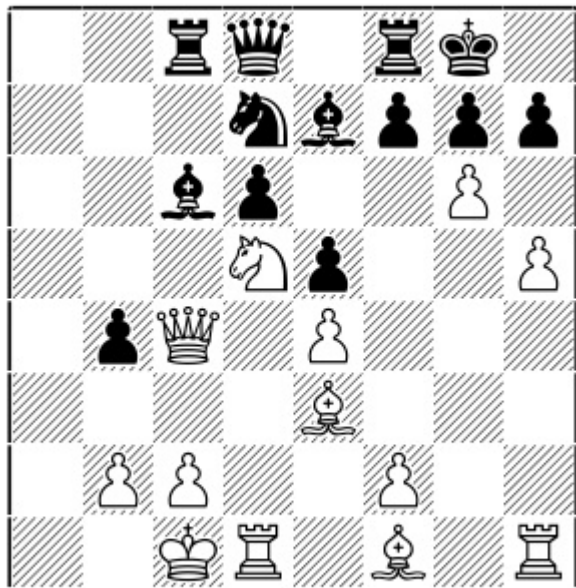
16...e5

16...b4 17.axb4 axb4 18.Nd5! exd5 19.exd5 Ba4 20.Qxg7 Rf8 21.b3 Bb5 22.f4±

17.Qd3! b4

17...0-0 18.Rg1 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.Nd5 Ra8

18.Qc4 Rc8 19.axb4 axb4 20.g6! 0-0 21.Nd5±

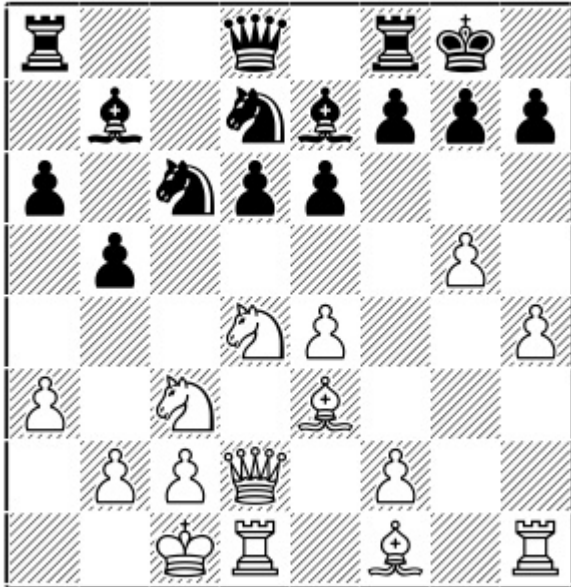


Position after: 21.Nd5±

White has a dominating knight on d5 and is simply better.

c) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0 --

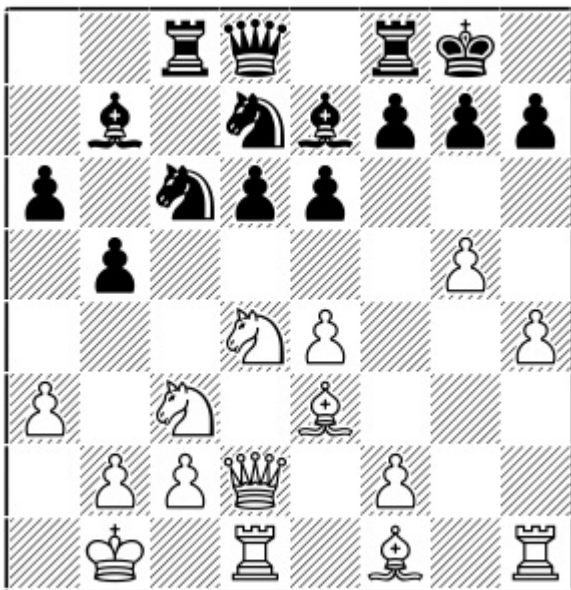
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7 8.g5 Nfd7 9.Be3 b5 10.a3 Bb7 11.h4 Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0



Position after: 13.0-0-0

13...Nxd4

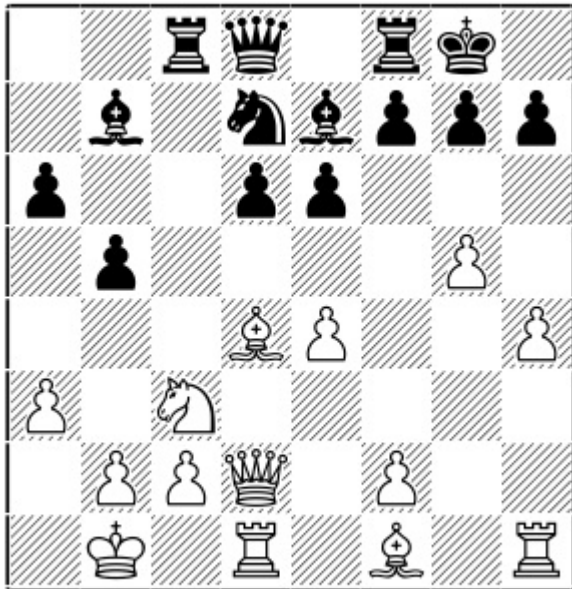
A) 13...Rc8?! Threatening ...b4. 14.Kb1! [14.Nxc6 Rxc6 transposes to 12...Rc8]



Position after: 14.Kb1!

A1) 14...b4?? 15.Nxc6 bxc3 16.Nxd8+- White is winning here as with the king on b1, Black cannot take the queen with check and that makes all the difference.

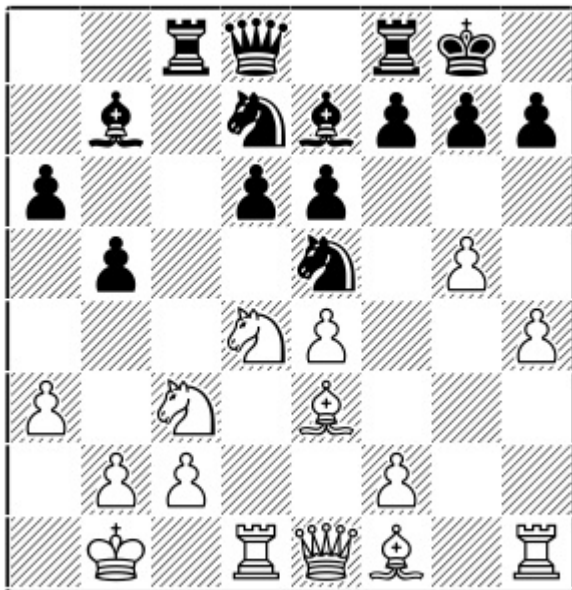
A2) 14...Nxd4 15.Bxd4



Position after: 15.Bxd4

15...Ne5 [15...e5 16.Be3 Rxc3 17.Qxc3 Bxe4 18.Rg1±] 16.Qe3 Nc4 17.Bxc4 Rxc4 18.f4 b4 19.axb4 Rxb4 20.f5! exf5 [20...e5? 21.Bc5] 21.Rhe1! Bringing all the pieces into play. 21...fxe4 22.Nxe4± Threatening Nf6+.

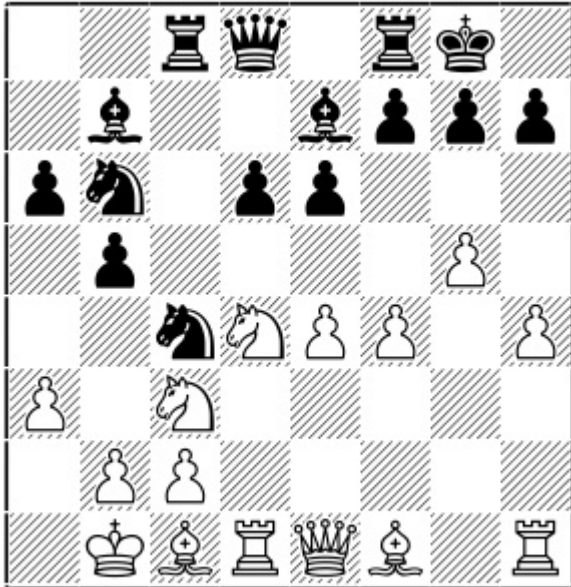
A3) 14...Nce5 15.Qe1 With this move White takes the sting out of ...Nc4.



Position after: 15.Qe1

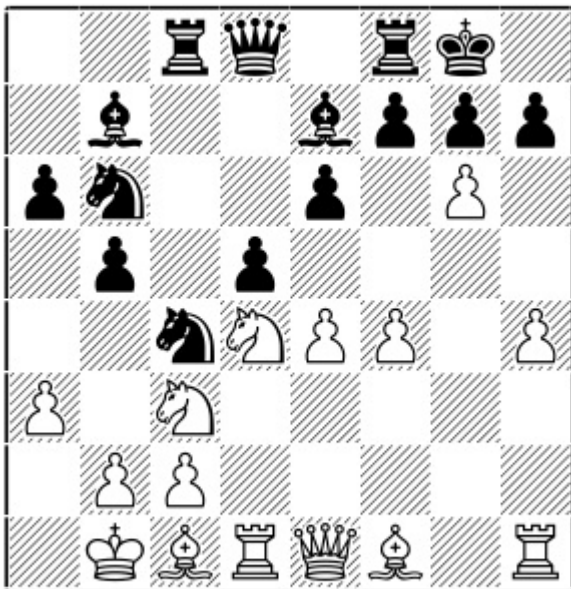
A3.1) 15...Nc4 16.Bc1 Re8 [16...Qc7 17.Rh3 Ndb6 18.b3±] 17.Rh3 d5 18.exd5 exd5 19.Bxc4 bxc4 20.Re3±

A3.2) 15...Nb6 16.f4 Nec4 17.Bc1



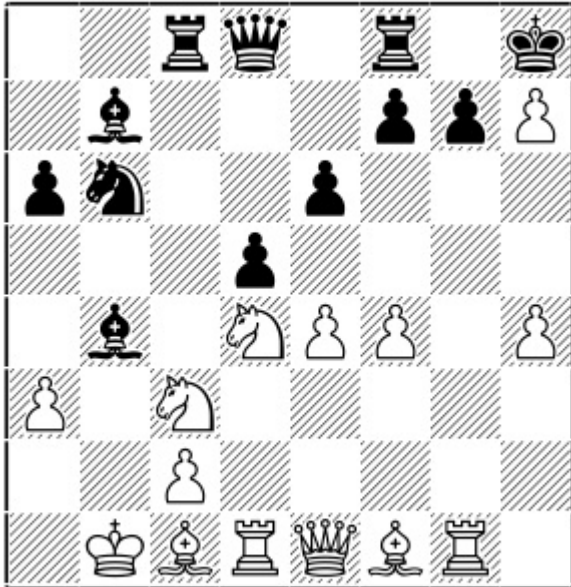
Position after: 17.Bc1

17...d5 [17...Qc7 18.Rh3 d5 19.Bxc4! Nxc4 20.exd5 b4 21.axb4 Bxb4 22.dxe6 Rfe8 23.b3 Nd6 24.Bd2±] 18.g6! Black is already geared up for a strong attack on the queenside, and ...b4 is about to come as the move which opens the floodgates for that attack. So it is necessary for White to act quickly to get an initiative before Black proceeds with his attack. [18.h5?! b4!,,]



Position after: 18.g6!

18...b4 [18...hxg6 19.h5 g5 20.Bxc4 Nxc4 21.Qg3 b4 22.axb4 Qb6 23.e5±] 19.axb4 Bxb4 20.gxh7+ Kh8 21.Rg1 Na3+ 22.bxa3



Position after: 22.bxa3

22...Na4 [22...Bxc3 23.Qg3 g6 24.h5+–] 23.axb4 Nxc3+ 24.Kb2±

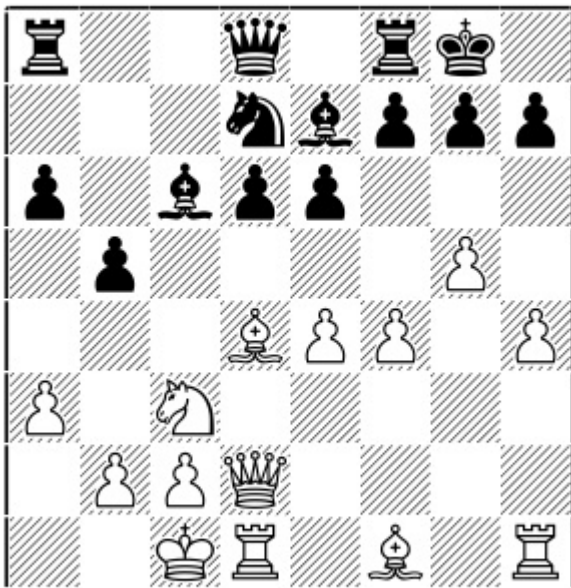
B) 13...Nc5 is the topical line dealt with in the next subchapter.

14.Bxd4 Bc6

Black prepares ...Rb8/...Qb8 with ...a5 but this turns out to be too slow.

14...Rc8 15.Rg1! Ne5 16.Qe3 Nc4 17.Bxc4 Rxc4 18.f4± White was significantly better in Vallejo Pons, F (2697) – Topalov, V (2752) Leon 2012.

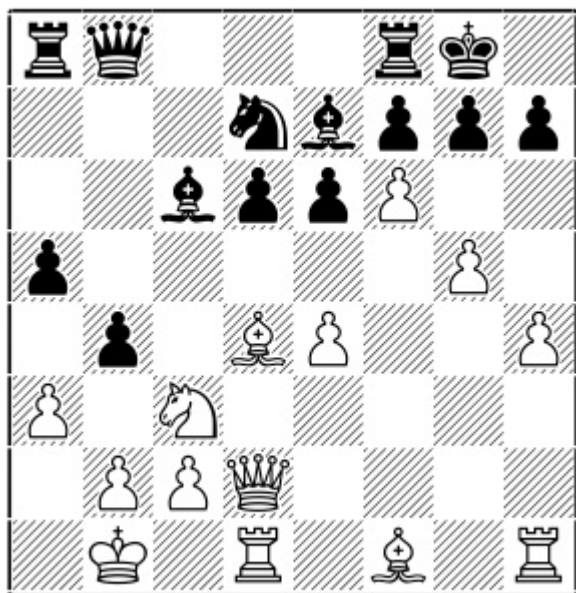
15.f4



Position after: 15.f4

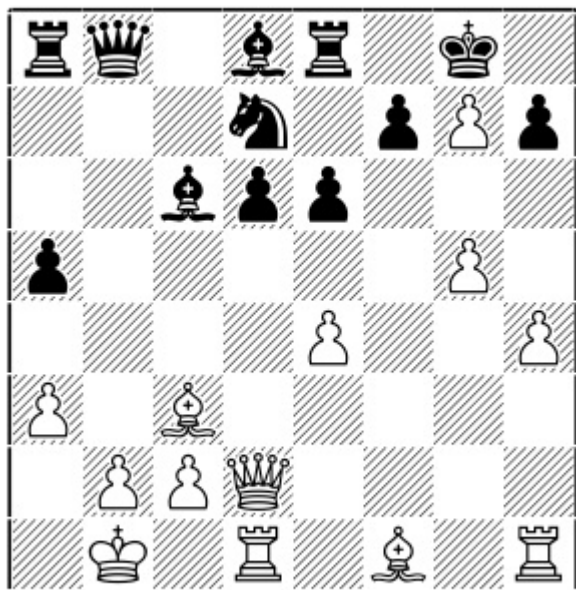
15...Rb8

15...Qb8 16.Kb1 a5 17.f5! b4 [17...exf5 18.Nd5 Bxd5 19.exd5 Ne5 20.Qf4 g6 21.h5 b4 22.a4±] 18.f6!



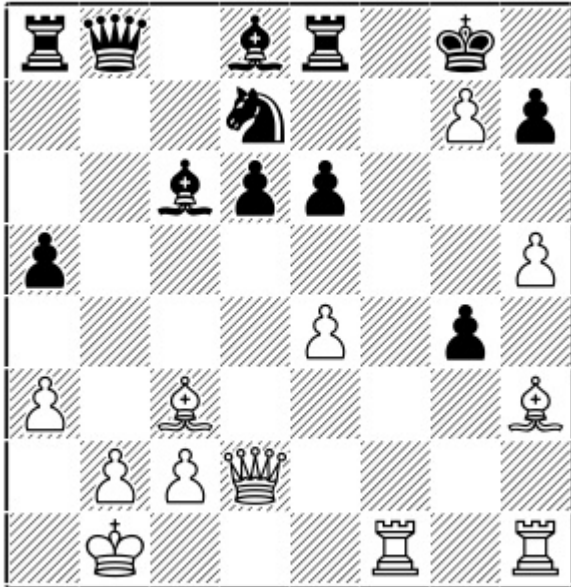
Position after: 18.f6!

This whole idea with f5-f6 has already been played in correspondence. 18...bxc3 [18...Bd8 19.fxg7 Re8 20.h5 Bb6 21.Nb5± Oliynyk, V – Bell, I ICCF email 2016] 19.Bxc3 Bd8 [19...gxf6? 20.gxf6 Bxf6 21.Bxf6 Nxf6 22.Qg5+-] 20.fxg7 Re8



Position after: 20...Re8

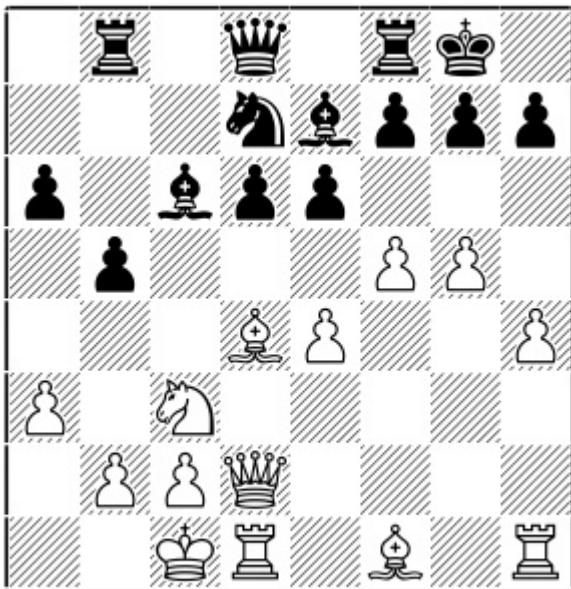
21.g6 [21.h5!? Bxg5 22.Qxg5 Nc5 23.Rh4 Nxe4 24.Qe3±] 21...fxg6 22.h5 g5 23.Bh3 g4 [23...Bxe4 24.Rhf1 d5 25.Rde1+-] 24.Rdf1!! In such positions you can't get too hung up over one or two minor pieces!



Position after: 24.Rdf1!!

- A) 24...gxh3 25.Qf4 Bf6 26.Bxf6 e5 [26...Nxf6 27.Qxf6 Ra7 28.Rhg1+–] 27.Bxe5! Nxe5 28.Rhg1+–
 B) 24...e5 25.Bxg4 Nf6 26.Qh6 Qb7 27.Rxf6 Bxf6 28.Qxf6 Qe7 29.Qh6 Bxe4 30.Re1 d5 31.Qc6± 1-0
 (40) Burg, T (2589) – Finocchiaro, F (2617) ICCF email 2014

16.f5!



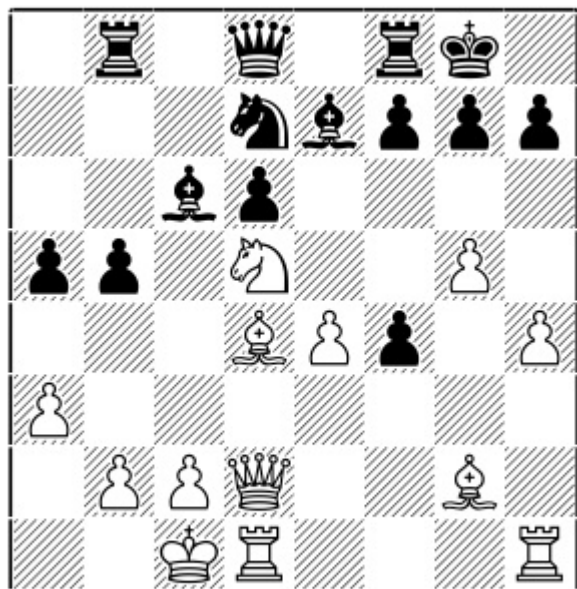
Position after: 16.f5!

Now the extensive correspondence praxis indicates that White has a promising advantage.

16...exf5 17.Bg2 f4 18.Nd5!

18.Qxf4!? b4 19.axb4 Rxb4 20.Qd2 Qb8 21.Nd5 Bxd5 22.exd5 Rc8²

18...a5



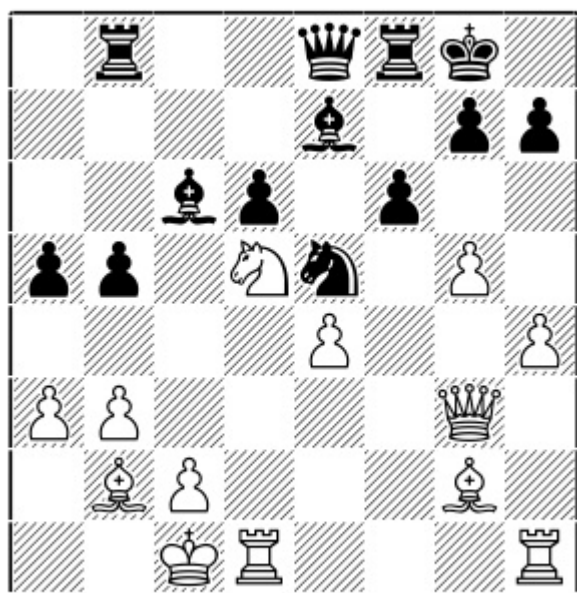
Position after: 18...a5

19.b3!?

A nice way to counter ...b4 with a4.

19.Qxf4 b4 20.axb4 Bxd5 21.exd5 Ne5 [21...Rxb4 22.Qd2 Qb8 23.Bc3 Rb7 24.Rhe1± 1-0 (48) Kubicki, T (2420) – Smythe, A (2316) ICCF email 2013] 22.Be4 g6 23.Qg3 Rxb4 24.c3 Ra4 25.Bb1± [25.b3]

19...Ne5 20.Qxf4 f6 21.Qg3 Qe8 22.Bb2±

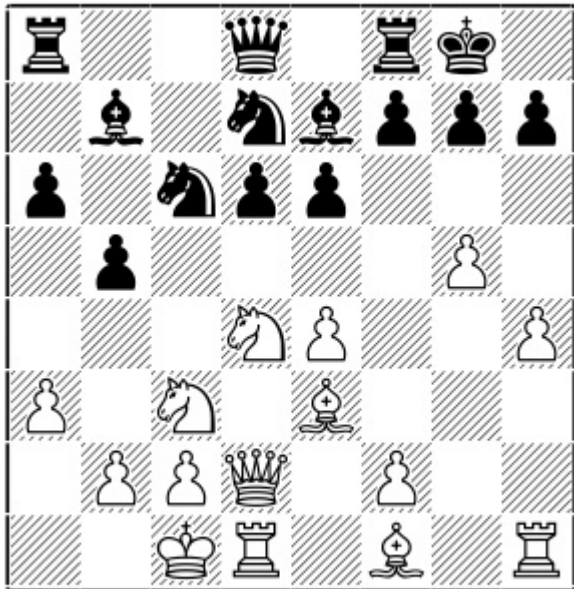


Position after: 22.Bb2±

White went on to win in Yurov, A (2382) – Borisenkov, D (2288) ICCF email 2012.

d) 11...Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0 Rb8, 13...Nc5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Be7 8.g5 Nfd7 9.Be3 b5 10.a3 Bb7 11.h4 Nc6 12.Qd2 0-0 13.0-0-0

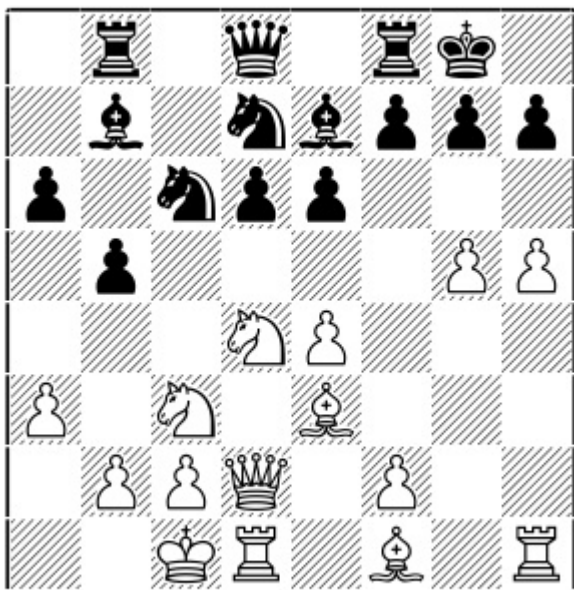


Position after: 13.0-0-0

13...Nc5

This move became very popular after the famous game between Vishy Anand and Anish Giri in the London Classic 2016. Anish introduced this nice idea and later many games followed.

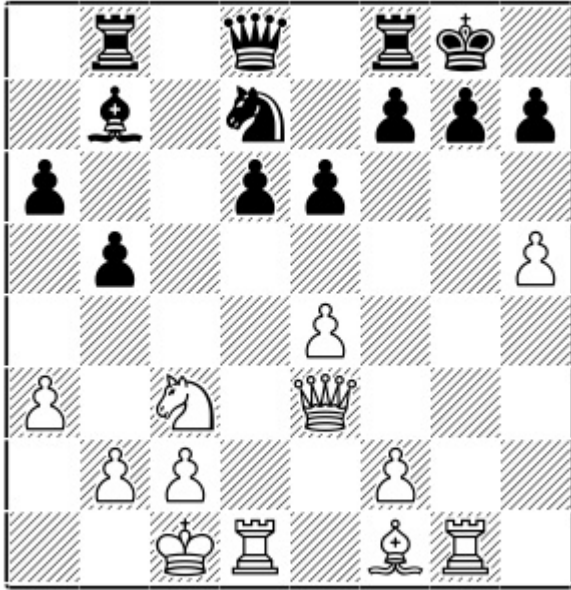
13...Rb8!? 14.h5



Position after: 14.h5

A) 14...Nxd4 15.Qxd4

A1) 15...Bxg5 This turns out to be too greedy; capturing the venomous pawn on g5 just opens up the g-file for the White rook. 16.Rg1! Bxe3+ 17.Qxe3

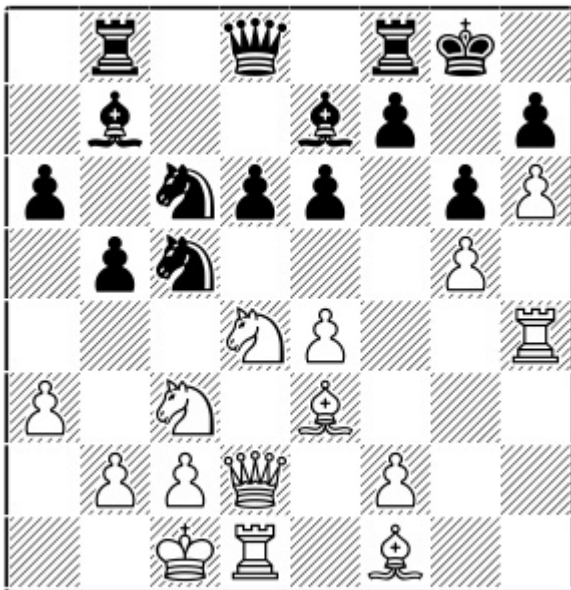


Position after: 17.Qxe3

17...Qh4 [17...Qe7 18.Qg3 g6 19.Rxd6±] 18.h6 g6 19.Rxd6±

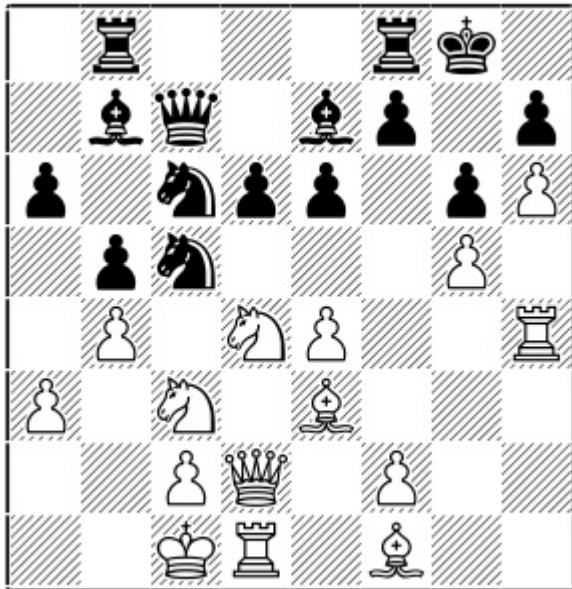
A2) 15...Nc5 16.h6 e5 17.Qd2 g6 18.Rh4²

B) 14...Nc5 15.h6 [15.g6 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 e5,,] 15...g6 16.Rh4!!



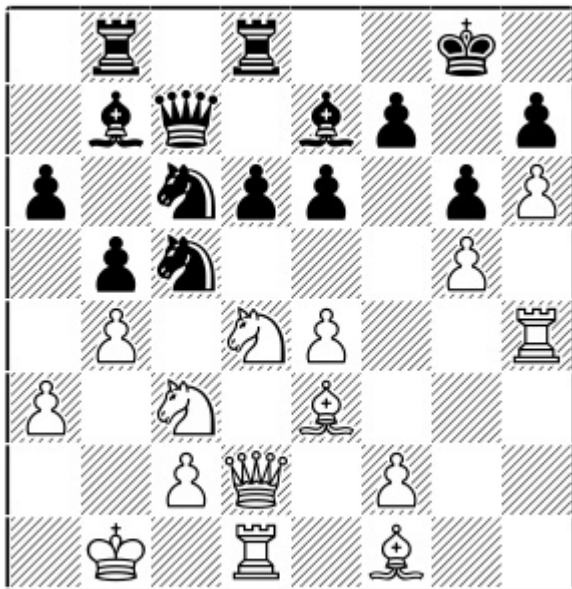
Position after: 16.Rh4!!

A 'mysterious rook move', as Nimzowitsch would call it. White overprotects the e4-pawn and the other advantages of the rook on h4 can be seen in the following lines. [16.b4? Nxd4 17.Bxd4 e5 18.Be3 Nxe4+ 16...Qc7 [16...Nxd4 17.Qxd4 f6 18.Rg4 e5 19.Qd2±] 17.b4!



Position after: 17.b4!

17...Rfd8 [17...Nxd4 18.Qxd4 e5 19.Qd2 Nd7 20.Rh3 Nb6 21.f4 Na4 22.Nxa4 bxa4 23.fxe5 dxe5 24.Qd7 Rfc8 25.Qxc7 Rxc7 26.Kb2 Bxe4 27.c4 Kf8 28.Rh2] 18.Kb1!



Position after: 18.Kb1!

[18.bxc5 dxc5 19.Nxc6 Bxc6 20.Qe1 b4 21.Rxd8+ Rxd8 22.Nb1 Qe5 23.Bxa6 Ba4! 24.Bc4 Bxg5 25.Bxg5 Qxg5+ 26.f4 Qg2 27.Nd2 bxa3,,] 18...Nxd4 [18...Ne5 19.f4 Na4 20.Nxa4 bxa4 21.f5! Bc8 22.fxe6 fxe6 23.Ka1±] 19.Qxd4 e5 20.Qd2 Nd7 21.Nd5 Bxd5 22.exd5 f6 23.gxf6 Bxf6 24.Re4±

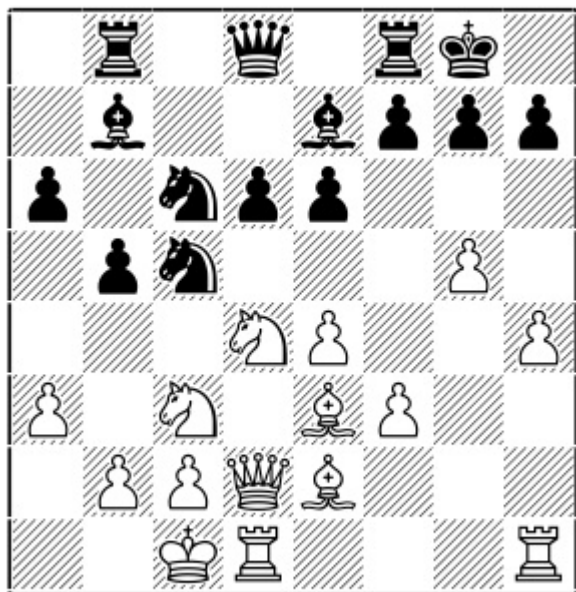
14.f3 Rb8

14...Qc7?! 15.h5 Ne5 16.Rg1± and White's attack is faster.

15.Be2!N

After delving into various possibilities, I found this very nice novelty.

15.Rg1 Qc7 was the continuation of the game that made this line popular for Black. 16.b4 Nd7 17.Ndxb5 axb5 18.Nxb5 Qc8μ Anand, V (2779) – Giri, A (2771) London 2016

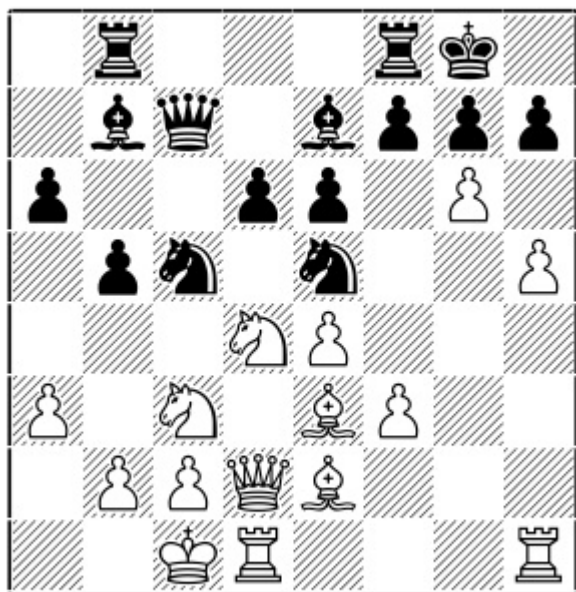


Position after: 15.Be2!N

15...Qc7

A) 15...b4?! 16.Nxc6 Bxc6 17.axb4 Qb6 [17...Rxb4? 18.Nd5 Ra4 19.Nxe7+ Qxe7 20.b3+–] 18.Qd4 Qxb4 [18...e5 19.Qc4+–] 19.Qxb4 Rxb4 20.Rd4² The endgame is slightly better for White because of the lonely pawn on a6 which is weak.

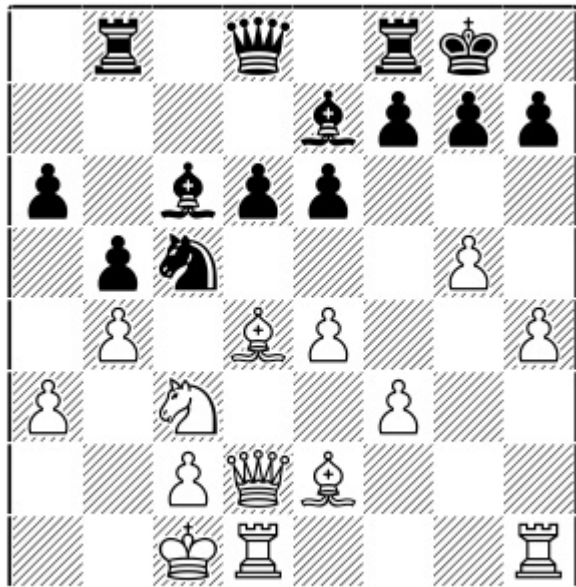
B) 15...Ne5?! 16.h5 Qc7 17.g6!



Position after: 17.g6!

17...fxg6 [17...Bf6 18.gxh7+ Kxh7 19.Bg5! Ned3+ 20.Bxd3 Nxd3+ 21.Kb1! Bxd4 22.Qxd3±; 17...Rfc8 18.gxf7+ Nxf7 19.b4 e5 20.Nf5 Ne6 21.Nxe7+ Qxe7 22.Bf1!² preparing Bh3.] 18.b4 Qc8 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.Rhg1! Na4 [20...Ncd7 21.Nxe6 Rxf3 22.Nf4±] 21.Nxa4 bxa4 22.Bg5±

C) 15...Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Bc6 17.b4!

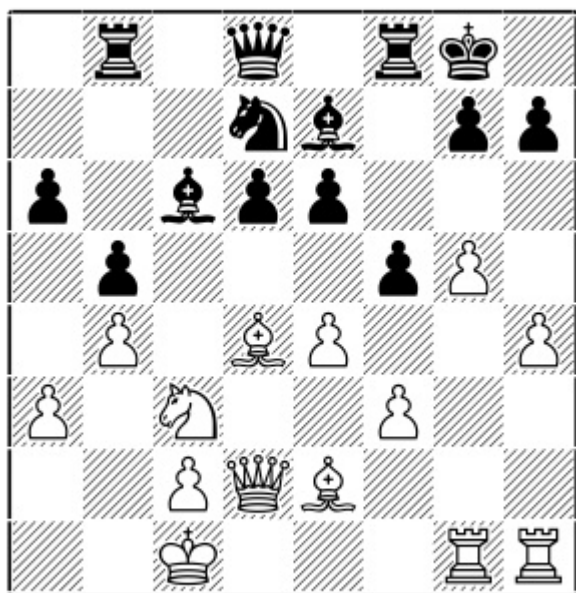


Position after: 17.b4!

Stopping all of Black's counterplay on the queenside.

C1) 17...Qc7 18.h5 e5 [18...a5? 19.h6 g6 20.bxc5 dxc5 21.Bf6+–] 19.Be3 Ne6 20.Rdg1 a5 21.Nd5±

C2) 17...Nd7 18.Rdg1 f5 [18...a5 19.h5 axb4 20.axb4 f5 21.Be3! fxe4 22.g6 exf3 23.h6 with a very strong attack.]

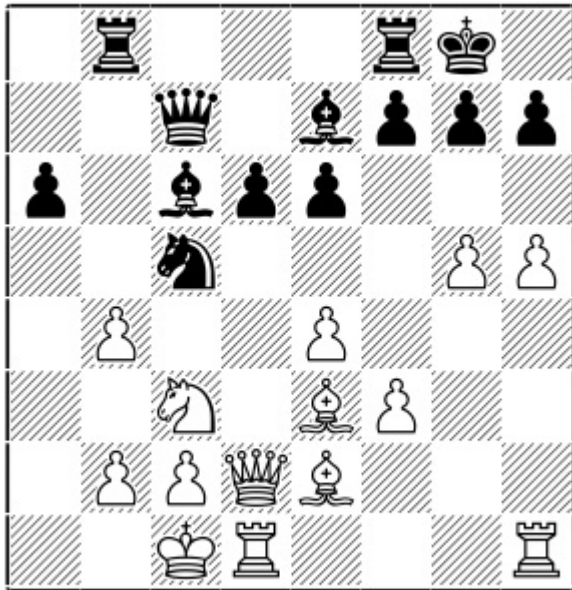


Position after: 18...f5

19.Rd1! Now that the rook on g1 is no longer useful, time to bring it back again. [19.h5 e5 20.Be3 f4

21.Bf2 Kh8 22.h6 g6 23.Nd5 Bxg5 24.Kb2 Bxd5 25.Qxd5 Be7 26.c4 Nf6 27.Qe6 bxc4 28.Rc1 a5
 29.Bxc4 axb4 30.a4∞] 19...a5 20.exf5 Rxf5 21.Rhf1² and Black simply has no attack on the other side.

16.h5 b4 17.Nxc6 Bxc6 18.axb4



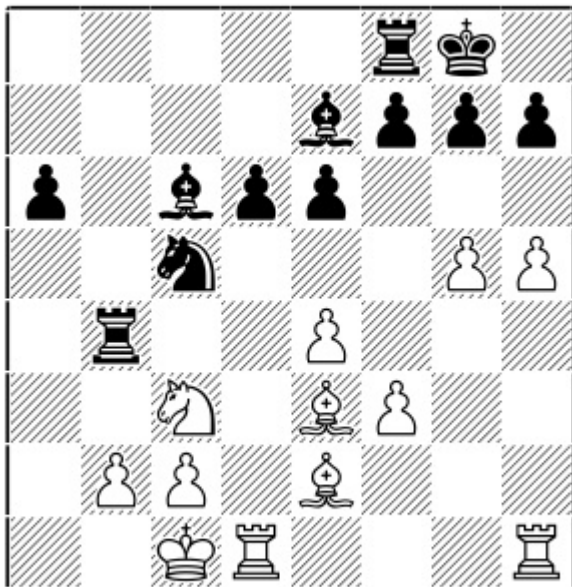
Position after: 18.axb4

18...Qb7!

18...Rxb4?! 19.Nd5 exd5 20.Qxb4 Rb8 21.Qa3 dxe4 22.Rhf1 Na4 23.Bd4 Bxg5+ 24.Kb1±

19.Na2!

19.Qd4 Qxb4 20.Qxb4 Rxb4



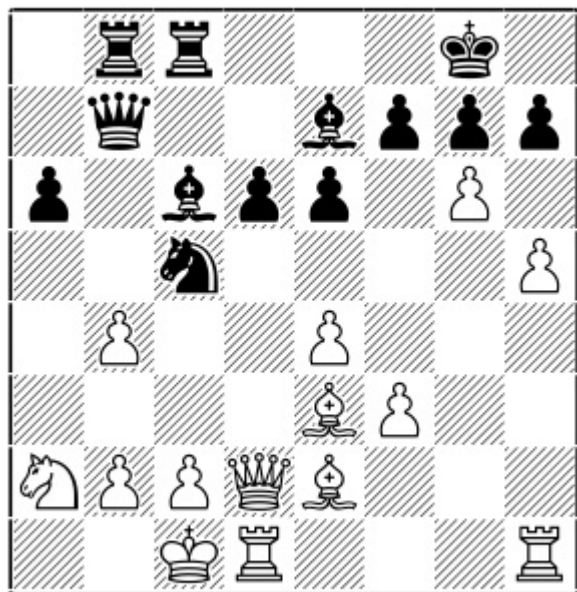
Position after: 20...Rxb4

This endgame (as compared to the other one where the h-pawn was on h4) is an inferior version as the pawn being on h5 makes g5 a potential target, and this detail gives Black good counterplay.

19...Rfc8

19...a5 20.h6 axb4 21.hxg7 Rfc8 22.Bc4 Nxe4 23.Qh2 Nxc5 24.Bd3 f5 25.Bc4!+-

20.g6!



Position after: 20.g6!

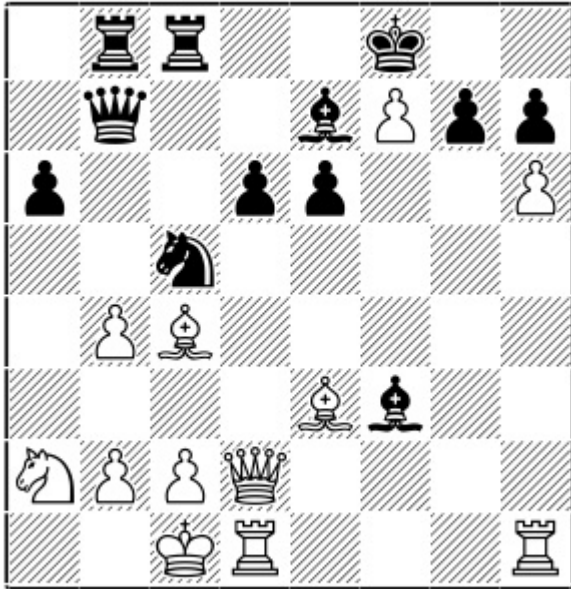
20.Kb1 a5! 21.g6 Nxe4 22.fxe4 Bxe4 23.gxh7+ Kh8 24.h6 Bf8,,

20...Bxe4!

A) 20...Nxe4 21.fxe4 Bxe4 22.gxf7+ Kf8 23.Rhf1! Rxc2+ 24.Qxc2 Bxc2 25.Kxc2 Rc8+ [25...Qe4+ 26.Rd3±] 26.Nc3±

B) 20...Bb5?! 21.Kb1 Bxe2 22.Qxe2 a5 23.c3 axb4 24.Nxb4±

21.gxf7+ Kf8 22.Bc4! Bxf3 23.h6f



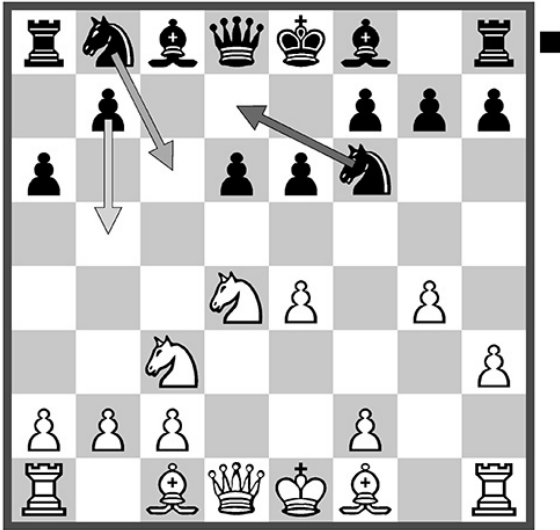
Position after: 23.h6f

Black's position looks really dangerous. I would take White here any day.

Chapter 6

6...e6 7.g4 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 6 – 6...e6 7.g4 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4

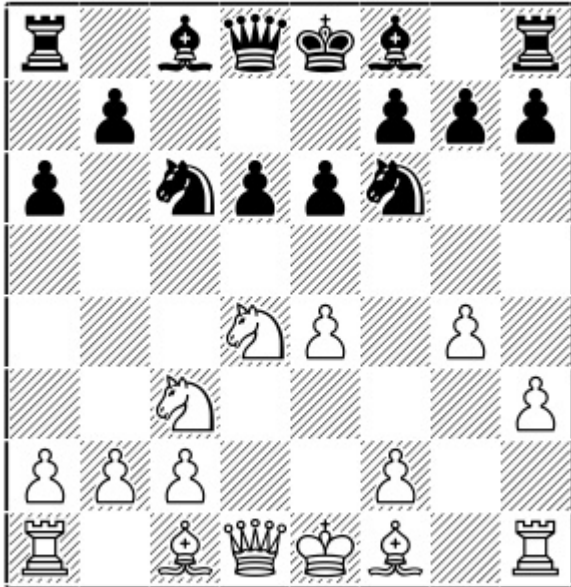
a) 7...Nc6

b) 7...b5

c) 7...Nfd7

a) 7...Nc6

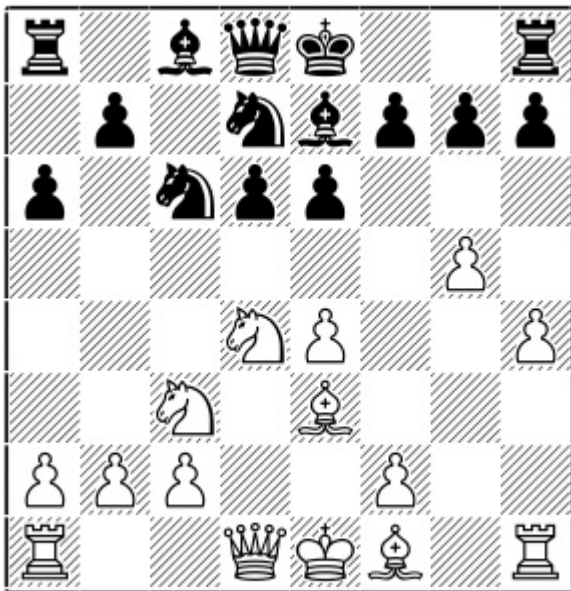
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Nc6?!



Position after: 7...Nc6?!

Generally Black develops his bishop to b7 first and only plays ...Nc6 later. This order is inferior as now it takes time for Black to play ...b5; to arrange ...b5 he will have to support the c6 knight first or exchange it on d4, both of which give White the upper hand.

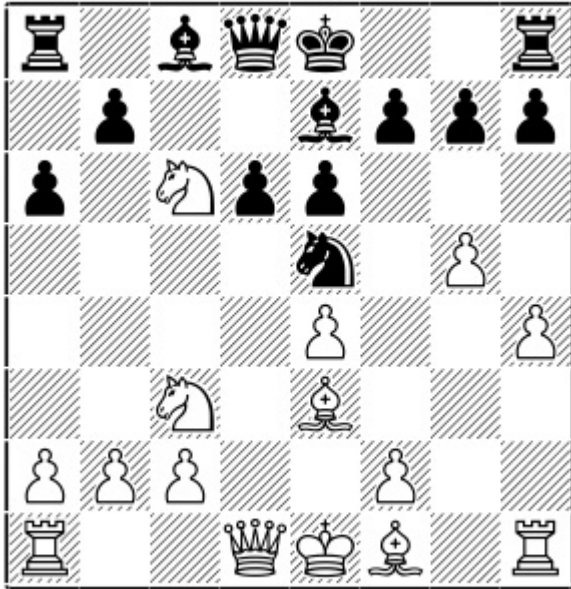
8.g5 Nd7 9.Be3 Be7 10.h4



Position after: 10.h4

10...0-0

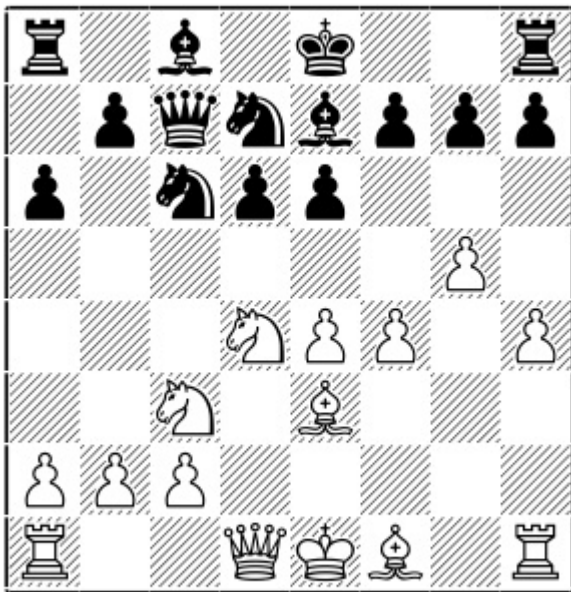
A) 10...Nde5?! 11.Nxc6!



Position after: 11.Nxc6!

11...bxc6 [11...Nxc6 12.Qd2 b5 13.0-0-0 Bb7 14.f4± and White's attack is stronger.] 12.f4 Nd7 13.Qd2 Rb8 14.0-0-0 Qa5 15.Bc4 0-0 16.h5±

B) 10...Qc7 11.f4!



Position after: 11.f4!

B1) 11...b5 12.Nxc6! It is important to make this trade of knights right away (i.e. before Black develops his bishop to b7) so that Black has no choice but to recapture with his queen, leaving it badly placed and facing constant threats after a future Bg2. 12...Qxc6 13.Qd4 Qc5 [13...0-0 14.h5 threatening h6. 14...e5 15.Qd2 exf4 16.Bxf4 Ne5 17.0-0-0±] 14.Qd2 Qc7 15.a3 Bb7 16.0-0-0 0-0 17.Kb1 Bc6 18.f5 Ne5 19.f6 gxf6 20.gxf6 Bxf6 21.Bh6±

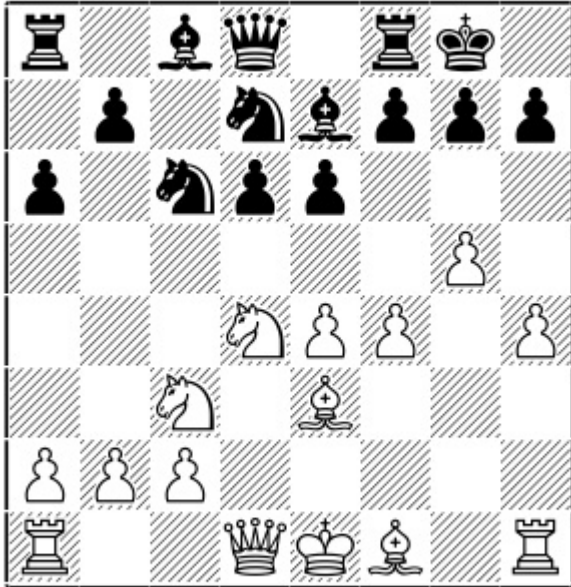
B2) 11...0-0 12.h5! b5 13.h6 g6 14.Nxc6 Qxc6 15.Qd4 e5 16.Nd5! Bd8 [16...exd4 17.Nxe7+-] 17.Qd2

exf4 18.Bxf4 Ne5 19.0-0-0± and White has a huge advantage.

C) 10...Rb8 11.Rg1 Nxd4 12.Qxd4 Ne5 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.f4 Nc6 [14...Nf3 15.Qa7±] 15.Qb6± Anand, V (2803) – Salem, A (2624) Berlin 2015

D) 10...Nxd4 11.Qxd4 0-0 12.0-0-0 b5 13.f4 transposes to the main line.

11.f4!

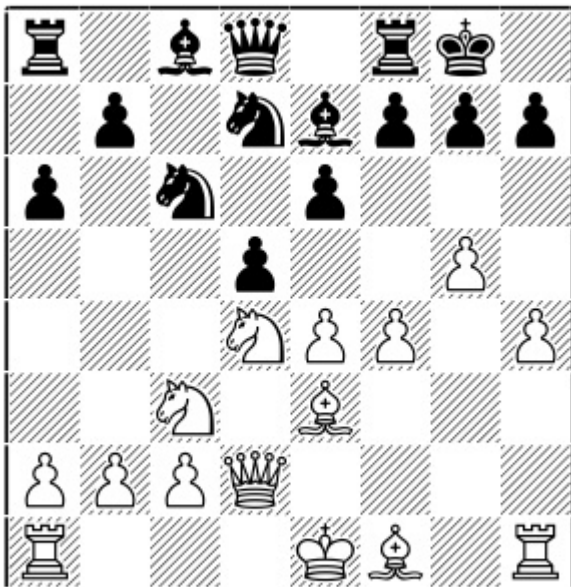


Position after: 11.f4!

11...Nxd4

A) 11...Re8 12.Qf3! Nxd4 13.Bxd4 b5 14.0-0-0 b4 15.e5! Rb8 16.exd6 Bxd6 17.Ne4 Bb7 18.Qe3±

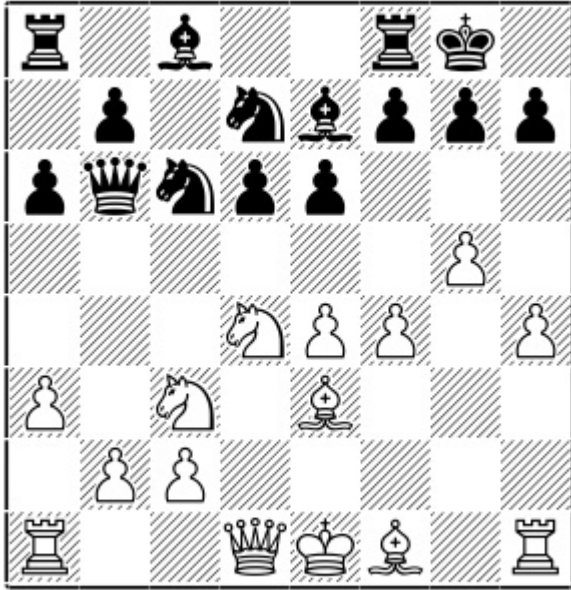
B) 11...d5?! 12.Qd2!



Position after: 12.Qd2!

12...Bb4 [12...dxe4 13.0-0-0 Nc5 14.Nxc6 Qxd2+ 15.Rxd2 bxc6 16.Bg2±] 13.0-0-0 Nc5 14.Nxc6 bxc6 15.Qd4 Rb8 16.a3 e5 17.fxex5 Ne6 18.Qd3±

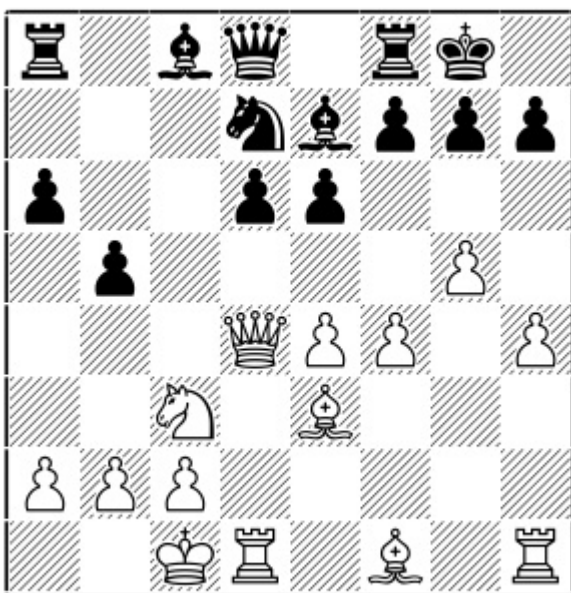
C) 11...Qb6 12.a3! Tactically solving the problem of the b2-pawn.



Position after: 12.a3!

12...d5 [12...Qxb2?? 13.Na4+–; 12...Nxd4 13.Bxd4 Qc6 14.Qd2 b5 15.0-0-0 Bb7 16.h5±] 13.exd5 Nxd4 14.Bxd4 Bc5 15.Bxc5 Nxc5 16.Qd4! Qxb2 17.Qxc5 Qxa1+ 18.Kd2 Qb2 19.Bd3+– and the queen is trapped on b2.

12.Qxd4 b5 13.0-0-0



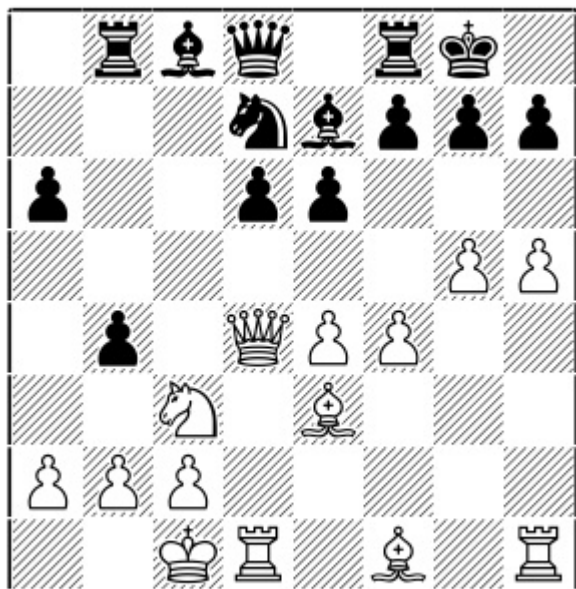
Position after: 13.0-0-0

13...Rb8

13...Bb7 14.h5 e5 15.Qd2 Nc5 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.Qg2 Qa5 18.g6 h6 [18...b4 19.h6!+-] 19.gxf7+ Rxf7 20.Kb1 Kh8 21.Rg1±

14.h5 Qb6

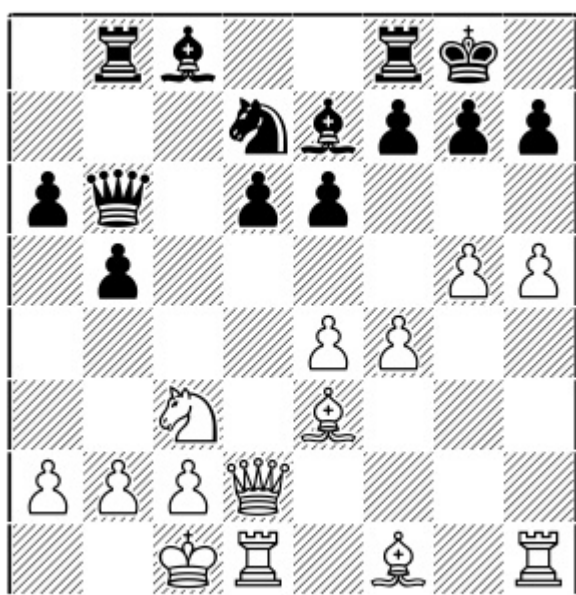
14...b4



Position after: 14...b4

15.Nd5!! exd5 16.h6 and Black is unable to protect the g7-pawn.

15.Qd2

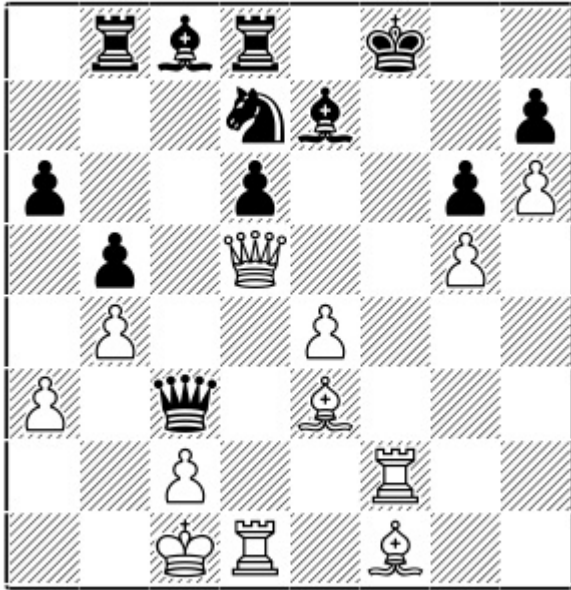


Position after: 15.Qd2

15...Qc7

15...Qa5 16.h6 g6 17.Qd4 e5 18.Qd2± Now the d5-square is available for the knight to occupy.

16.a3 Nc5 17.b4 Nd7 18.f5 Rd8 19.h6 g6 20.fxe6 fxe6 21.Nd5 exd5 22.Qxd5+ Kf8 23.Rh2 Qc3 24.Rf2+

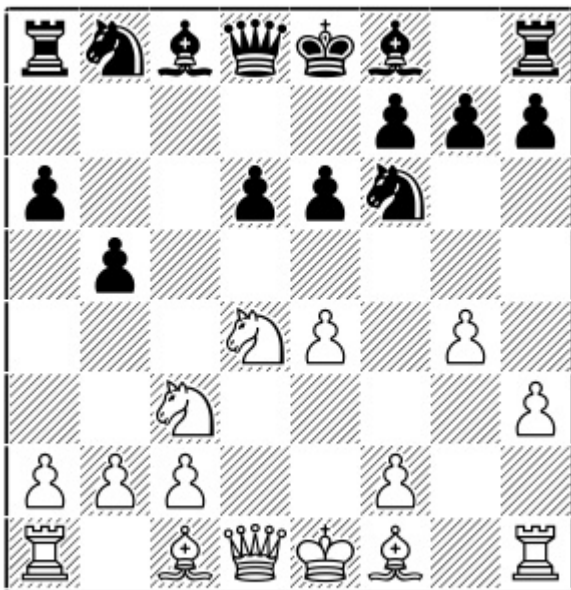


Position after: 24.Rf2+

White just crushed Black in the correspondence game Cornejo, W (2559) – Dieguez Vera, C (2479) ICCF 2012.

b) 7...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 b5



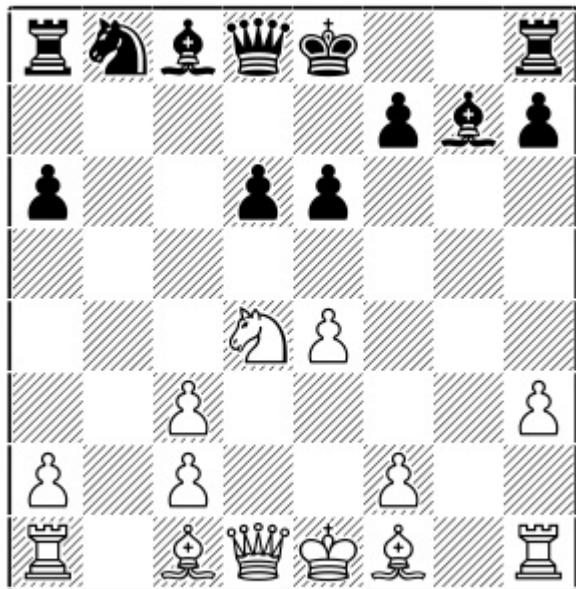
Position after: 7...b5

8.g5 b4?!

Black is trying to seek immediate counterplay, but this premature push will turn out to backfire.

8...Nfd7 9.a3 Be7 transposes to 7...Be7.

9.gxf6 bxc3 10.fxc7 Bxc7 11.bxc3

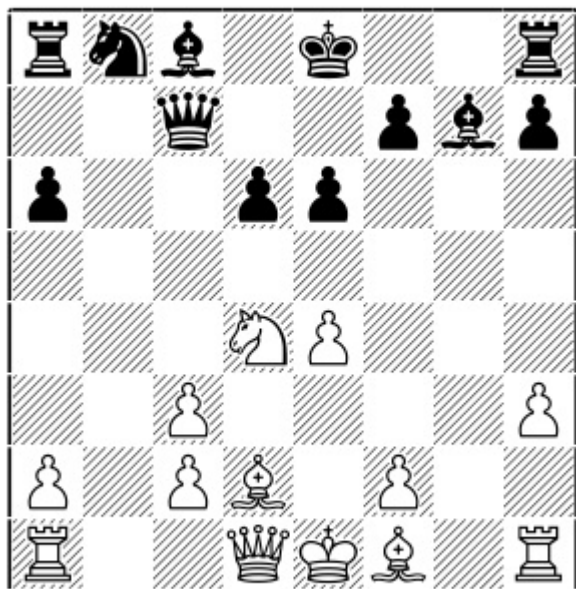


Position after: 11.bxc3

White is a pawn up but in return, his c-pawns are doubled. But the fact is that the doubled pawns act as a good barrier safeguarding the white king.

11...Bb7

11...Qc7 12.Bd2

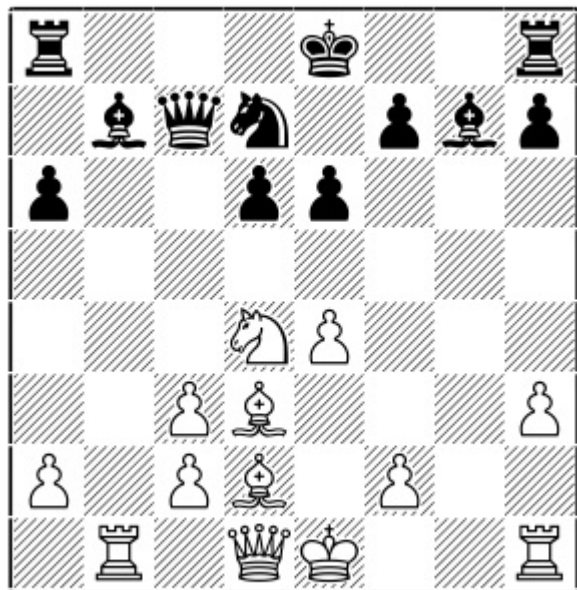


Position after: 12.Bd2

A) 12...Nc6 13.Rg1 Be5 [13...Bf6? 14.Qf3! Be5 15.Nxc6 Qxc6 16.Rb1±] 14.Nf3 Bf6 [14...Bb7 15.Rb1 Bf6 16.Bd3 Ne5 17.Nxe5 Bxe5 18.c4 0-0-0 19.Be3+– with Bb6 coming.] 15.Rb1 Bd7 16.Bd3± with a good advantage.

B) 12...Bb7 13.Bd3 Nd7 transposes to 12...Nd7.

C) 12...Nd7 13.Bd3N [13.Rg1 Bf6 14.Qh5 Ke7 15.Bd3 was played in Shirov, A (2651) – Korobov, A (2664) Karlsruhe 2018 which was also clearly better for White.] 13...Bb7 14.Rb1

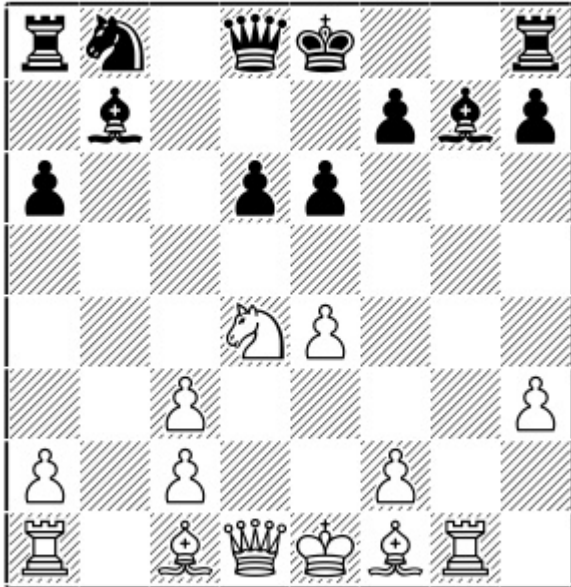


Position after: 14.Rb1

C1) 14...Bf6 15.Qh5 Nc5 16.Rg1 0-0-0 [16...Ke7 17.Bg5+–] 17.Qf3 Be5 18.Qe3 transposes to 14...Nc5 below.

C2) 14...Nc5 15.Rg1 Be5 16.Qf3 0-0-0 17.Qe3 (preparing f4) 17...d5 18.Nf3! Rhg8 19.Rxg8 Rxg8 20.exd5 Bxd5 21.Ke2 Bd6 22.c4 Bb7 23.Bb4!²

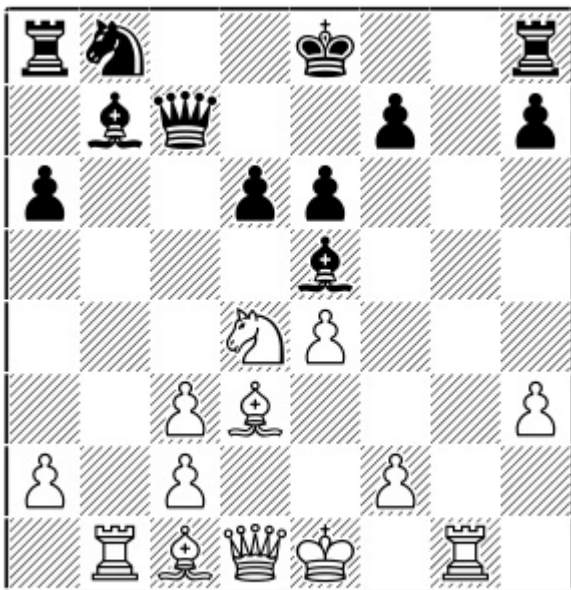
12.Rg1



Position after: 12.Rg1

12...Bf6

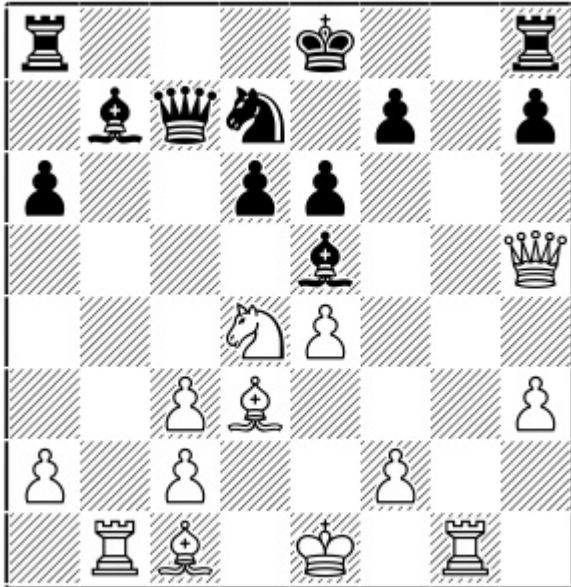
12...Be5 13.Rb1 Qc7 14.Bd3!



Position after: 14.Bd3!

A) 14...Qxc3+ 15.Kf1 Qc7 [15...Qxd4 16.Rxb7 Nd7 17.Be3±] 16.Nf3 Bf6 17.Ba3 Nd7 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.Rxb7± and Black cannot castle on either side.

B) 14...Nd7 15.Qh5



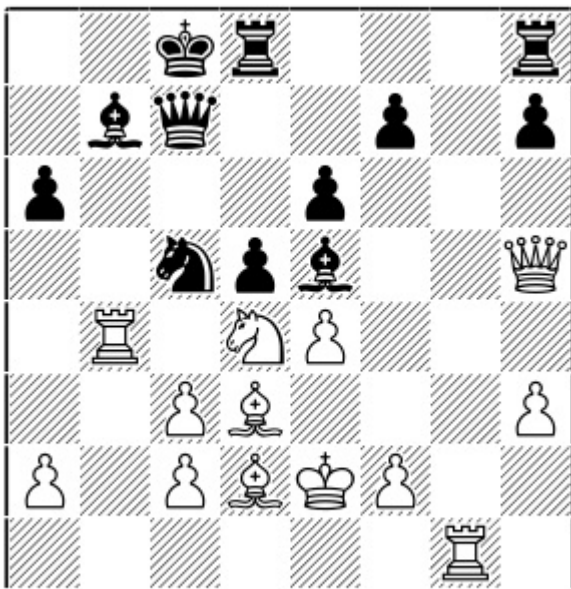
Position after: 15.Qh5

Threatening Nxe6.

B1) 15...Qxc3+?! 16.Ke2 Bxe4 [16...Bxd4 17.Bb2 Qb4 18.Ba1 Qa4 19.Bxd4 Qxd4 20.Rxb7±] 17.Bxe4 Qc4+ 18.Bd3 Qxd4 19.Rb7 Qd5 20.Rc7± and the strong rook on the seventh rank brings White a huge advantage.

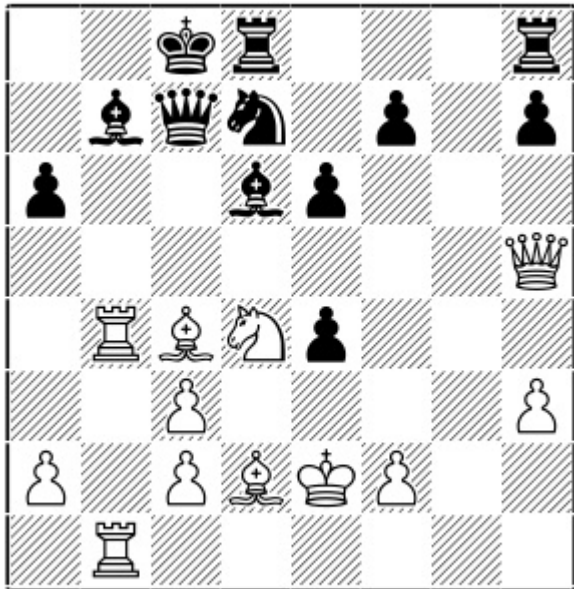
B2) 15...Nc5 16.Qh4 preventing long castling. 16...Rb8 17.Bd2±

B3) 15...0-0-0 16.Bd2 Nc5 17.Ke2 d5 [17...Bxe4 18.Rb4! Bd5 19.Rgb1± with constant threats.] 18.Rb4!



Position after: 18.Rb4!

Doubling rooks on the b-file is more important than the pawn here. 18...dxe4 [18...Nxd3 19.cxd3 dxe4 20.Rgb1 exd3+ 21.Kxd3 Bd5 22.Rb8+ Qxb8 23.Rxb8+ Bxb8 24.c4 Bb7 25.Ke2± and Black cannot take on d4 because of Qc5+.] 19.Bc4 Bd6 20.Rgb1 Nd7



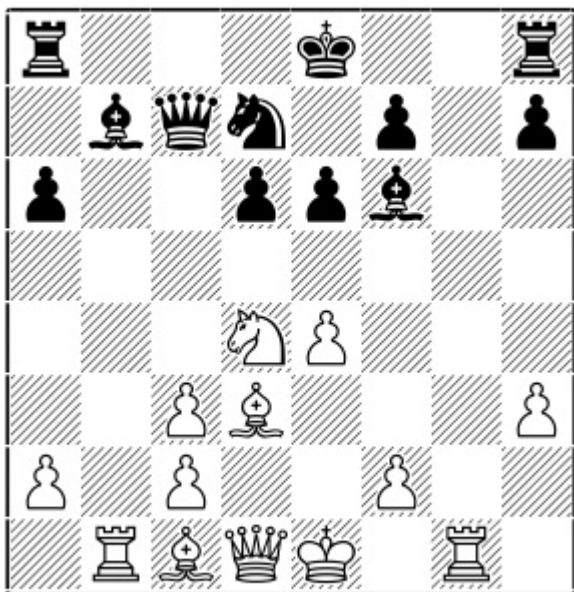
Position after: 20...Nd7

21.Qxf7! Bxb4 22.Rxb4 Rhf8 23.Qxe6 Rde8 24.Qh6± White has more than enough compensation for the exchange because of the black king on c8.

13.Bd3 Nd7 14.Rb1

Also possible is 14.Qh5!? Qc7 15.Bd2 Ke7 16.Rb1 Rag8 17.Ke2 Nc5 18.Rg4² with a slight edge.

14...Qc7



Position after: 14...Qc7

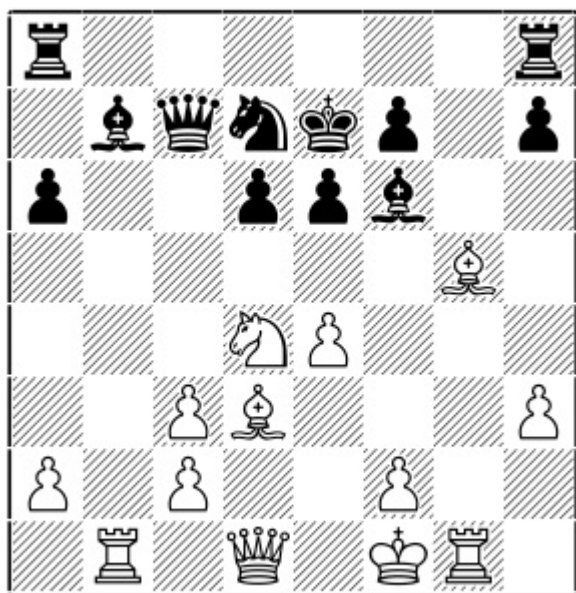
15.Kf1!

Prophylaxis against ...Qxc3+.

15.Qh5 Here this is not so effective as in the variation with 12...Be5, because Black has some important squares available for his queen (thanks to the different bishop placement) which help him to consolidate.
 15...Qxc3+ 16.Ke2 Bxe4! 17.Bxe4 Qc4+ 18.Bd3 Qxd4 19.Rb7 Qc5= [19...Qe5+=]

15...Rb8

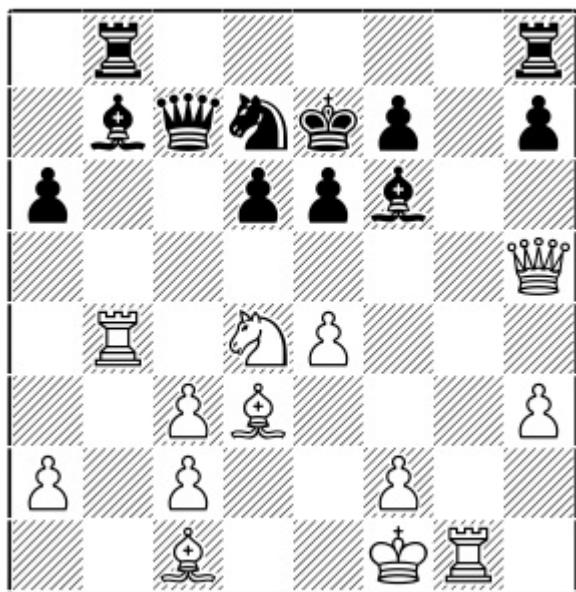
- A) 15...Qxc3? 16.Nxe6 fxe6 17.Rxb7+–
- B) 15...Ke7 16.Bg5



Position after: 16.Bg5

16...Rag8 [16...Rhg8 17.Qd2 Bxg5 18.Rxg5 Nf6 19.Qe3 Rxg5 20.Qxg5 Rg8 21.Qe3±] 17.Qd2 Rg6
 18.Qe3 Bxg5 [18...Rhg8? 19.Nf5+-] 19.Rxg5 Ne5 20.h4±

16.Qh5 Ke7 17.Rb4!



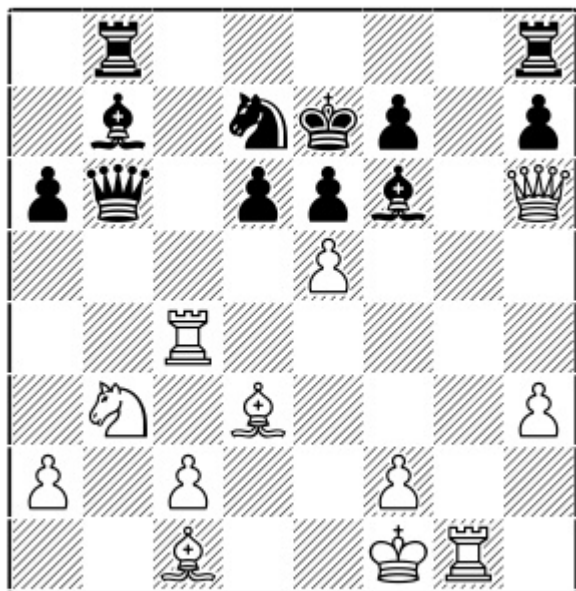
Position after: 17.Rb4!

Again tactically solving the problem of the hanging c3-pawn since if Black takes on c3, then Rc4 pushes the queen to the corner square a1 after which White's attack is huge.

17...Qc5

17...Qxc3 18.Rc4 Qa1 19.Nb3 Qxa2 20.Rc7+–

18.Qh6 Qxc3 19.Rc4 Qa5 20.Nb3 Qb6 21.e5!!

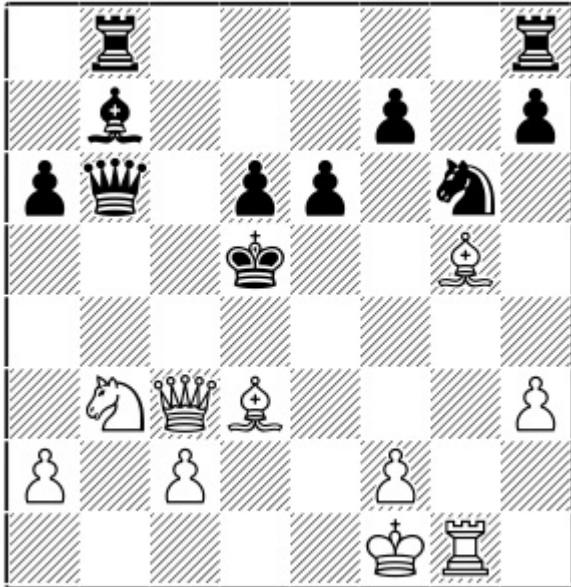


Position after: 21.e5!!

Opening up the position.

21...Bxe5

A) 21...Nxe5 22.Rf4! Ng6 23.Rxf6 Kxf6 24.Bg5+ Ke5 25.Qg7+ Kd5 26.Qc3+–



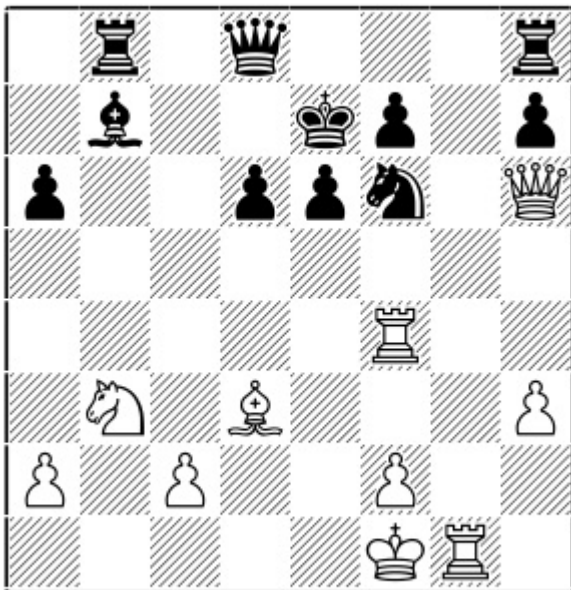
Position after: 26.Qc3+-

B) 21...dxe5 22.Ba3+ Ke8 23.Rcg4+-

22.Be3 Qd8

22...Qb5 23.Rc7 Qd5 24.Qh4+ Ke8 [24...Bf6 25.Bg5+-] 25.Qa4 Bc8 26.Ke2+- And all the black pieces are stuck.

23.Bg5+ Bf6 24.Bxf6+ Nxf6 25.Rf4+-



Position after: 25.Rf4+-

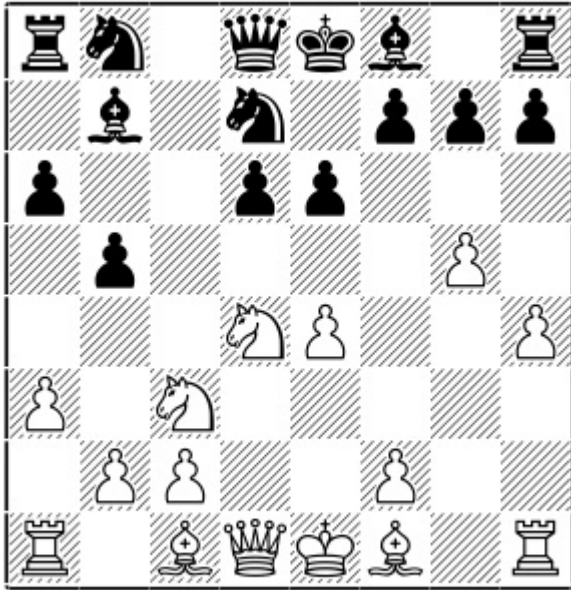
And White is just crushing.

c) 7...Nfd7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 Nfd7

7...b5 8.g5 Nfd7 transposes to the main text.

8.g5 b5 9.a3 Bb7 10.h4

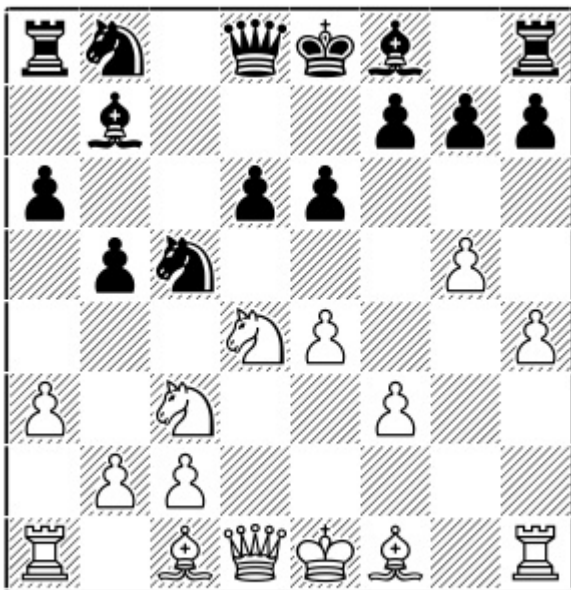


Position after: 10.h4

10...Nb6

A) 10...Be7 11.Be3 transposes to 7...Be7, which will be covered in chapter 8.

B) 10...Nc5 11.f3



Position after: 11.f3

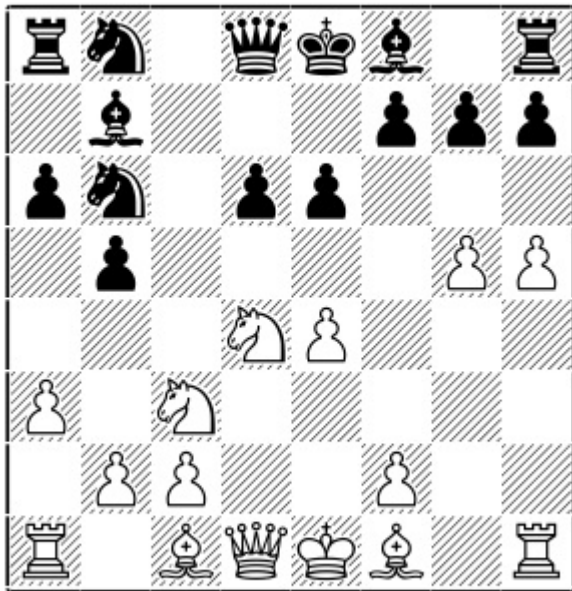
B1) 11...h6 12.gxh6 Be7 13.hxg7 Bxh4+ 14.Ke2 Rg8 15.Bf4 Bf6 16.Qd2 Nbd7 17.Bxd6 Qb6 18.Nb3 Bxg7 19.Rd1 0-0-0 20.Qe3 Bf8 21.Bxf8 Rdxg8 22.Nxc5 Nxc5 23.Rh7± and White is a healthy pawn up.

B2) 11...Nbd7 12.b4! Na4 13.Nxa4 bxa4 14.c4 Be7 15.Be3± and the pawn on a4 will drop.

B3) 11...d5 This central thrust doesn't work either. 12.exd5 Bd6 13.Bg2 0-0 [13...Bg3+ 14.Kf1±] 14.0-0 exd5 15.Nf5 Qd7 16.Nxd6 Qxd6 17.b4 Nbd7 18.f4 Nb6 19.Ne2 Ncd7 20.Bb2 Nc4 21.Bd4 a5 22.c3±

B4) 11...Be7 12.Be3 h6 13.Rg1 hxg5 14.hxg5 g6 15.Qd2 Nbd7 16.0-0-0± Black's king is still not secure.

11.h5



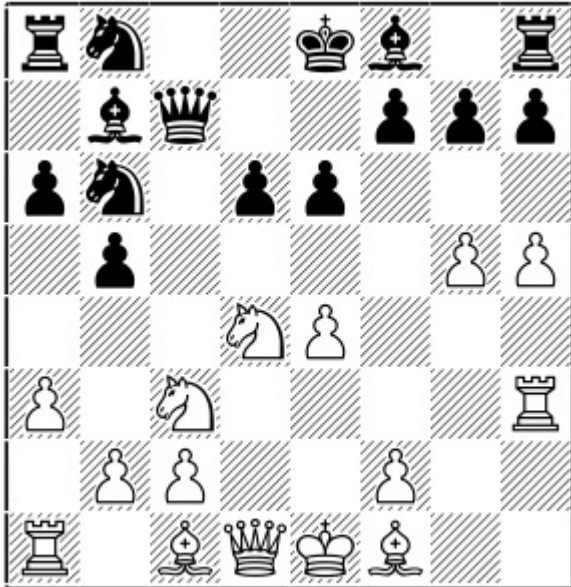
Position after: 11.h5

11...N8d7

A) 11...d5?! Trying to break in the centre is not so effective here. 12.Bg2 dxe4 13.Nxe4 e5 14.Nf5 Qxd1+ 15.Kxd1±

B) 11...Nc6 12.Nxc6! [12.Be3 Ne5,,] 12...Bxc6 13.Be3 Be7 14.Qd4±

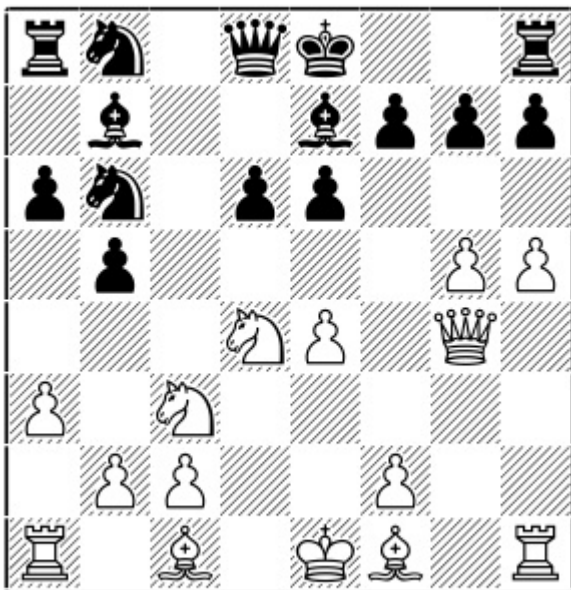
C) 11...Qc7 12.Rh3!



Position after: 12.Rh3!

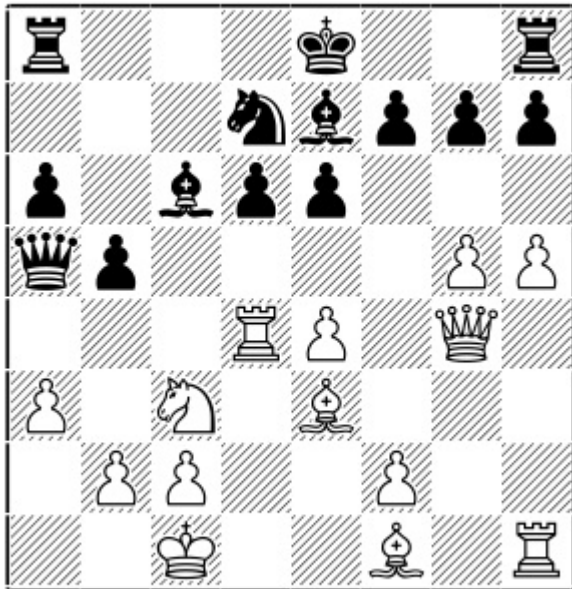
This important rook manoeuvre is quite typical and helps White to prepare the g6 break as now this rook is protected. 12...Nc6 [12...Be7? 13.g6 Bf6 allows 14.Nxb5!+-] 13.Nxc6 Bxc6 14.Be3 Rb8 15.Bd4± and Black is simply worse.

D) 11...Be7 12.Qg4! [12.Rg1 N8d7 13.g6 hxg6 14.hxg6 Bf6 15.gxf7+ Kxf7 16.Qf3 Ne5! 17.Rxg7+! Kxg7 18.Nxe6+ Kf7 19.Nxd8+ Raxd8,, and Black has good compensation for the queen.]



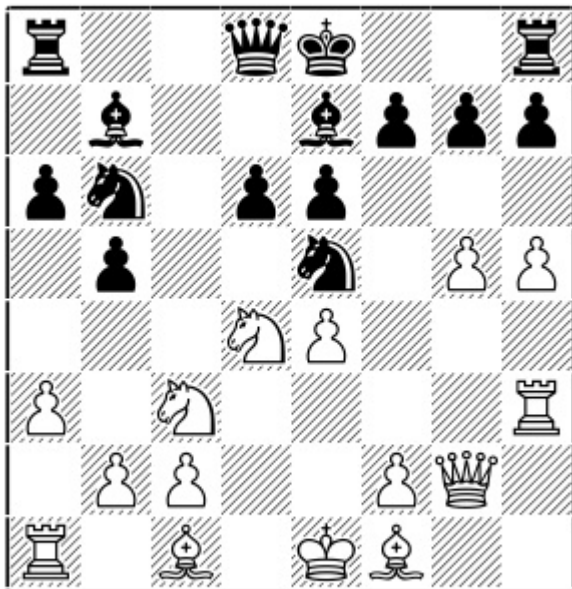
Position after: 12.Qg4!

12...N8d7 [12...Nc6 13.Nxc6! Bxc6 14.Be3 Nd7 15.0-0-0 Qa5 16.Rd4!



Position after: 16.Rd4!

A very important rook manoeuvre to stop all sorts of ...b4 ideas from Black. 16...Rb8 17.Rb4!² A very nice move stopping Black's ...b4.] 13.Rh3! Ne5 14.Qg2



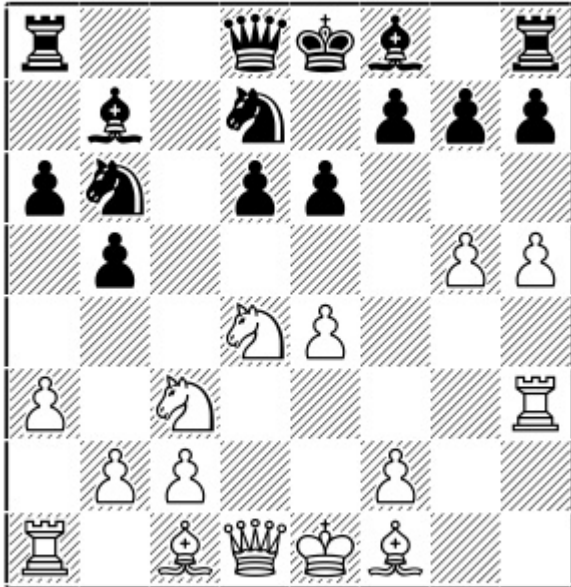
Position after: 14.Qg2

D1) 14...d5 15.Qg3! Ned7 [15...Nec4 16.e5 Nd7 17.Bxc4 bxc4 18.g6± and Black's position is falling apart.] 16.e5±

D2) 14...Rc8 15.f4 Nc6 [15...Nec4 16.b3 Na5 17.Bb2±] 16.Be3± White's attack is just rolling.

12.Rh3!

Threatening g6.



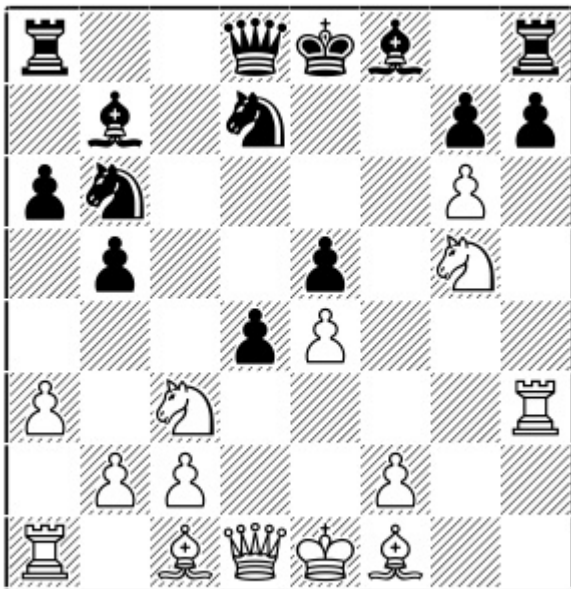
Position after: 12.Rh3!

It might be counterproductive to develop the c1-bishop right now as Black is well equipped to kick the bishop back immediately with ...Ne5 and ...Nc4.

12.Be3 d5 allows unnecessary counterplay although White is equipped better for the complications.

12...Nc5

A) 12...d5 13.g6! The point of Rh3 as now the rook is protected. 13...e5 14.Nf3 d4 15.Ng5! fxg6 16.hxg6

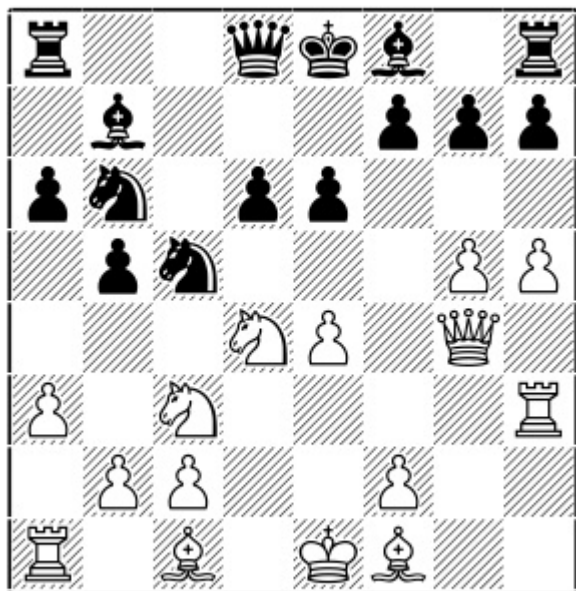


Position after: 16.hxg6

16...Qf6 [16...dxc3 17.Nf7 Qf6 18.Nxh8±] 17.Nf7 dxc3 18.Nxh8 Bc5 19.Qe2 Ke7 20.Rf3 Qc6 21.b4+–

B) 12...Be7 13.Qg4 with g6 to follow. 13...Ne5 14.Qg2 0-0 15.f4 Nc6 [15...Nec4 16.b3+–] 16.Nxc6 Bxc6 17.Be3 Rb8 18.0-0-0 Qc7 19.Bd4±

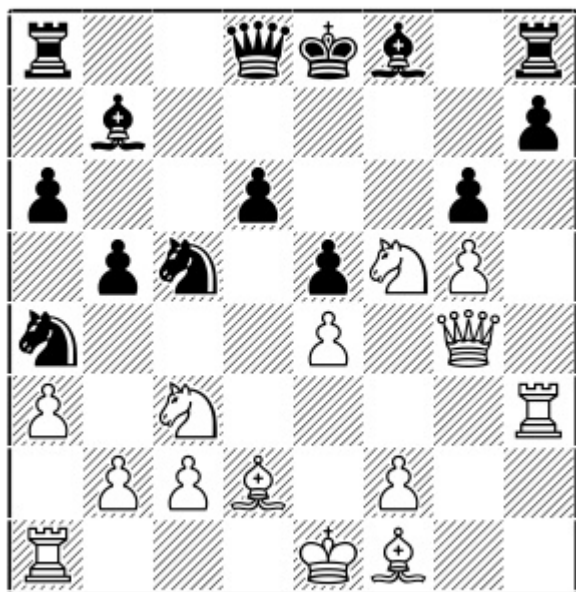
13.Qg4!



Position after: 13.Qg4!

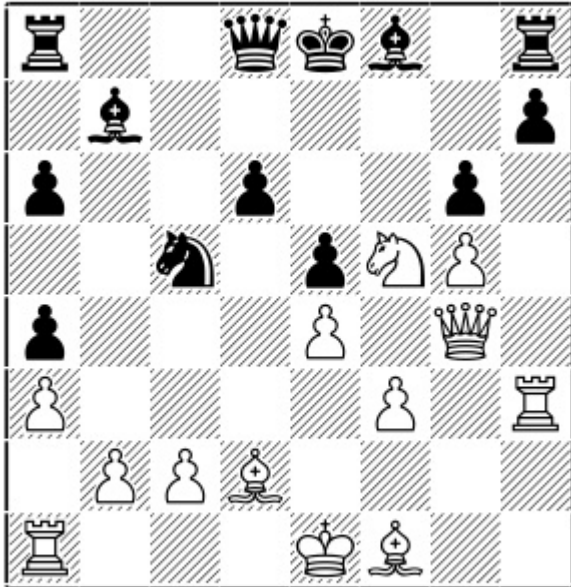
13...e5

13...Nba4 14.Bd2! e5 [14...Nxb2 15.Rb1 Nba4 16.Nxa4 Nxa4 17.g6+-] 15.Nf5 g6 16.hxg6 fxg6



Position after: 16...fxg6

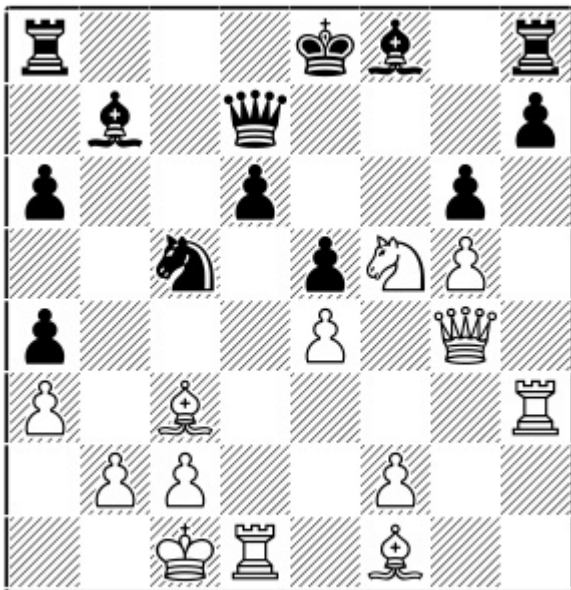
A) 17.Nxa4!? bxa4 [17...Nxa4 18.0-0-0! gxf5 19.exf5+-] 18.f3!



Position after: 18.f3!

18...h5 [18...gxf5 19.exf5 Qd7 20.Qh5+ Kd8 21.f6± Black's king is extremely vulnerable.] 19.gxh6 gxf5 20.Qg6+ Kd7 21.exf5 White is better but it is not so convincing, so I like 17.0-0-0 more.

B) 17.0-0-0! Qd7 [17...gxf5 18.exf5 Nxc3 19.Bxc3+–] 18.Nxa4 bxa4 [18...Nxa4 19.Nxd6+! Qxd6 20.Rd3 Qc6 21.Qg3+– and the whole position collapses.] 19.Bc3!



Position after: 19.Bc3!

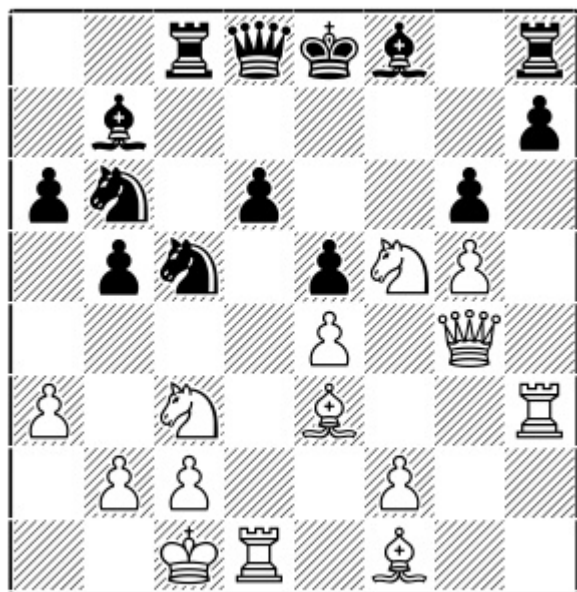
19...Bxe4 [19...gxf5 20.exf5 h5 21.Rxh5 Rxh5 22.Qxh5+ Qf7 23.g6 Qg7 24.f4±; 19...h5 20.Nxd6+! Bxd6 21.Qxd7+ Kxd7 22.Bxe5+–] 20.Nxd6+ Bxd6 21.Qxd7+ Kxd7 22.Bxe5 Nb7 23.Re3 Bf5 24.Bg2 Rhc8 25.Rd2±

14.Nf5 g6 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.Be3! Rc8

16...gxf5 17.Qh5+ Kd7 [17...Ke7 18.g6+-] 18.Bxc5+-

17.0-0-0±

And White was clearly better in Gopal, G (2580) – Areshchenko, A (2666) Al Ain 2014.

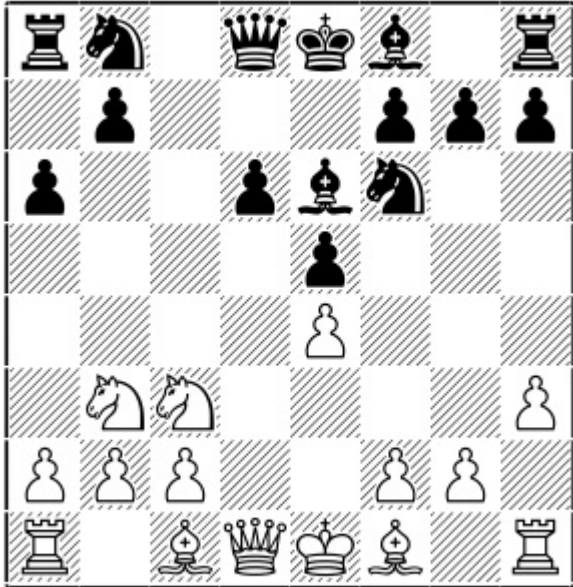


Position after: 17.0-0-0±

Chapter 7

6...e5 7.Nb3 Be6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6



Chapter Guide

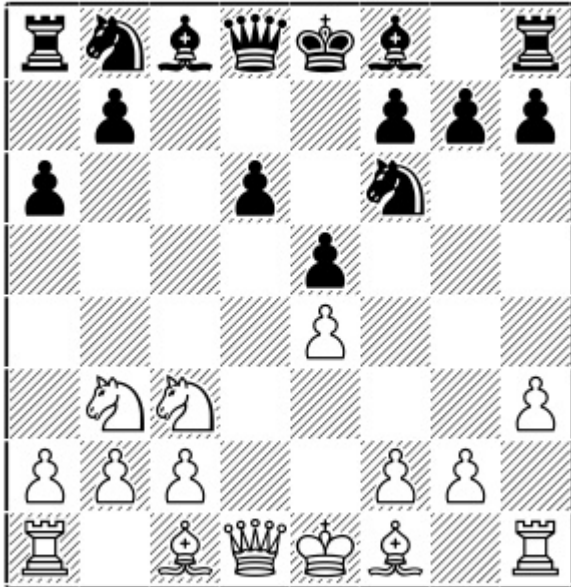
Chapter 7 – 6...e5 7.Nb3 Be6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.Be3

- a) 8...h5
- b) 8...Nc6
- c) 8...Nbd7

a) 8...h5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3!?

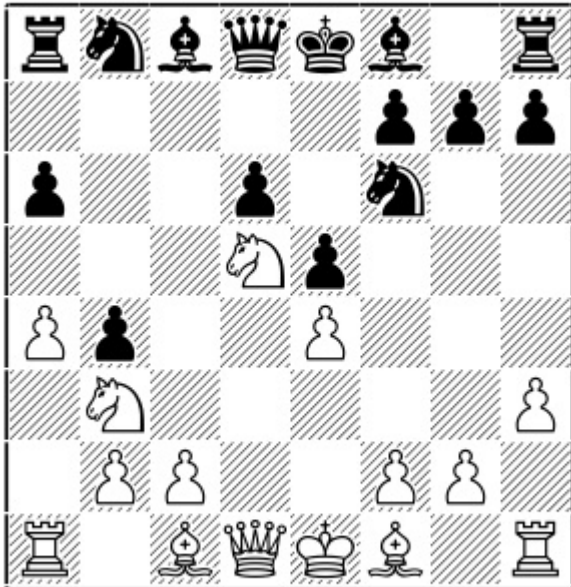


Position after: 7.Nb3!?

This direction is quite new. After playing it a few times myself I thought this might be where the future discussion might take place. I was proven right as even while writing this book, quite a few elite games took place with big names like Carlsen and Caruana employing the present move.

7...Be6

7...b5?! is premature. 8.a4 b4 9.Nd5



Position after: 9.Nd5

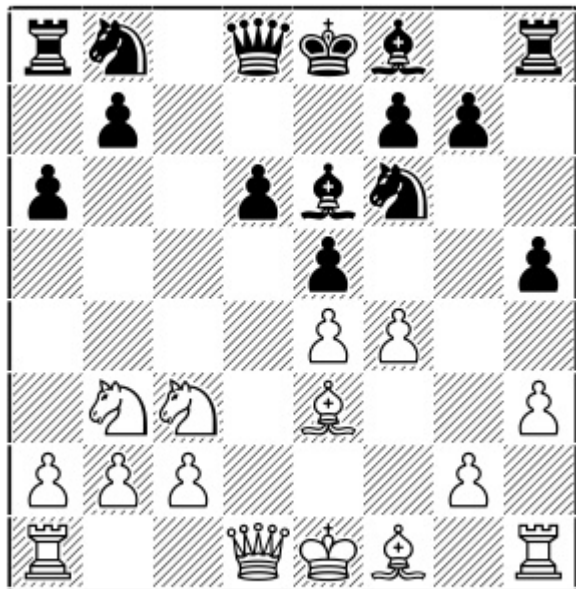
9...Nbd7 [9...Bb7 10.Nxf6+ Qxf6 11.Bd3±] 10.a5 Bb7 11.Ra4! Bxd5 12.exd5 Nc5 13.Rxb4 Nxb3 14.Rxb3 Qxa5+ 15.c3 Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Nxd5 17.Rb7±

8.Be3 h5

This was played in the mini-match between Anand and Kovalyov at the 2017 World Cup.

9.f4!

9.Be2 Nbd7 10.0-0 Rc8 11.Qd2 b5 12.Rfd1 Nb6 Anand, V (2794) – Kovalyov, A (2649) Tbilisi 2017

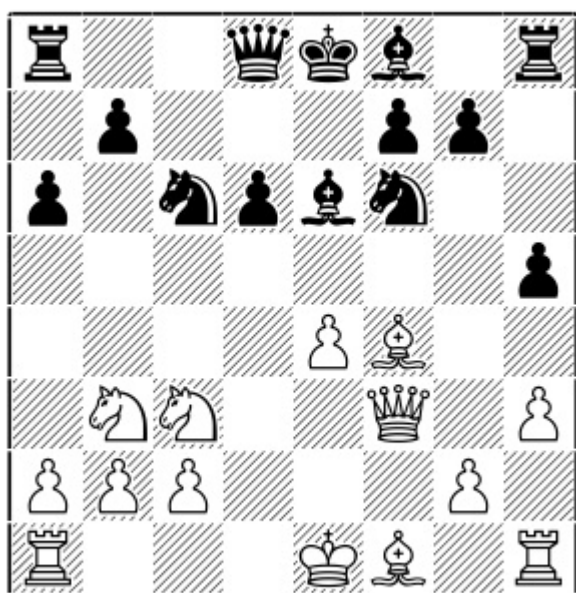


Position after: 9.f4!

9...Be7

A) 9...Qc7?! 10.f5 Bc4 11.Bxc4 Qxc4 12.Nd2 Qc6 13.Qf3±

B) 9...exf4 10.Bxf4 Nc6 11.Qf3!



Position after: 11.Qf3!

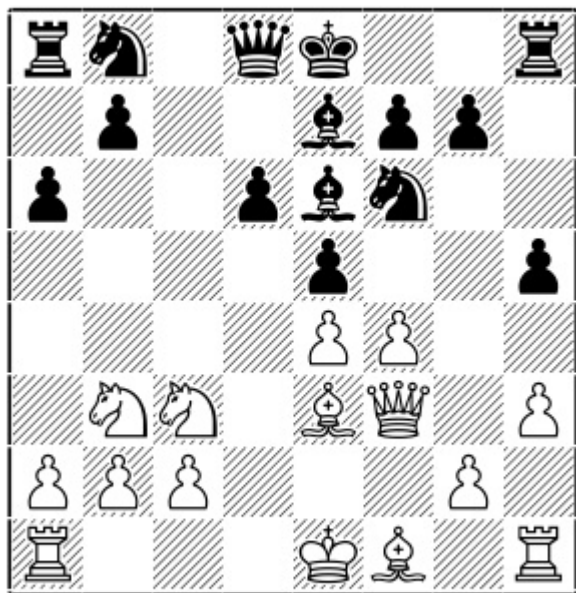
B1) 11...Be7 12.0-0-0 Qc7 13.Nd4 Nxd4 14.Rxd4 Rc8 15.a3 0-0 16.Be2 Nd7 17.Rhd1 Ne5 18.Qxh5± 1-

0 (48) Ros Padilla, J (2253) – Serradimigni, R (2564) ICCF 2013

B2) 11...Ne5 12.Qe3 Ng6 13.g3 Be7 14.0-0-0 Qc7 15.Kb1 0-0 16.Nd4 Rac8 17.Bd3± White was much better in the correspondence game Daubenfeld, N (2536) – Avotins, M (2458) ICCF 2015.

B3) 11...h4 12.0-0-0 Nh5 13.Bh2 Qg5+ 14.Kb1 Ng3 15.Bxg3 Qxg3 16.Qxg3 hxg3 17.Rd3² and the g3-pawn will drop.

10.Qf3!



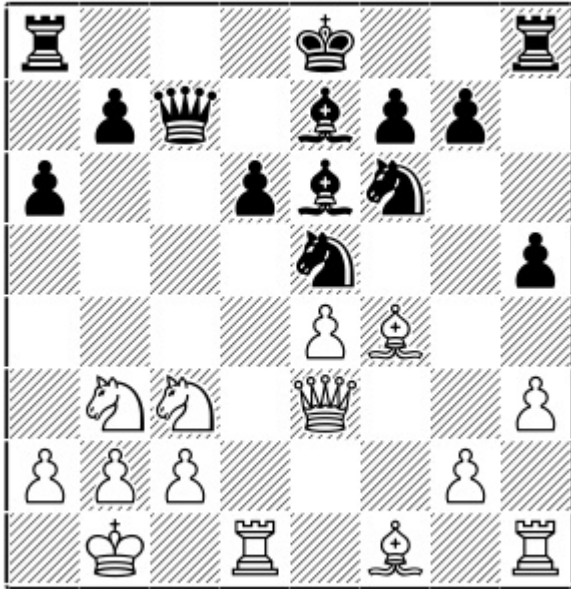
Position after: 10.Qf3!

Given the choice White would rather place the queen on f3 than d2, to make building an attack easier and smoother.

10...exf4

10...h4 11.f5 Bxb3 12.axb3±

11.Bxf4 Nbd7 12.0-0-0 Qc7 13.Kb1 Ne5 14.Qe3



Position after: 14.Qe3

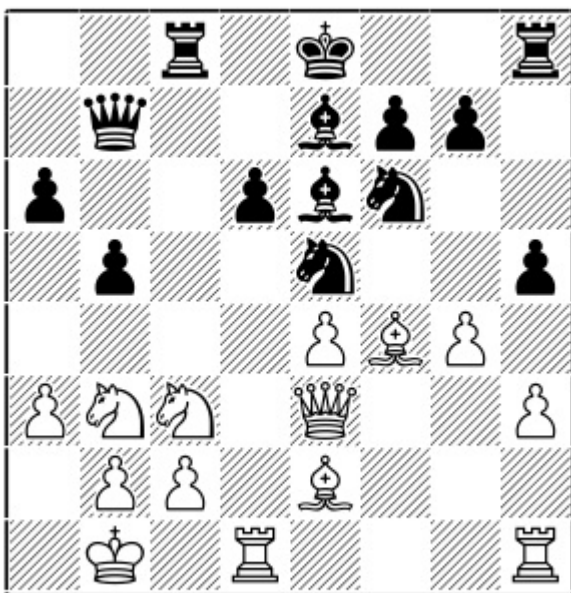
14...b5

14...h4 15.Nd4 b5 16.Nf5 Bxf5 17.exf5 b4 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.Rxd5 Rc8 20.Bxa6 Qxc2+ 21.Ka1 Qxg2 22.Rhd1±

15.Be2 Rc8

15...0-0 16.g4!±

16.a3 Qb7 17.g4



Position after: 17.g4

17.Nd4 0-0 18.g4 b4! 19.axb4 Qxb4,,

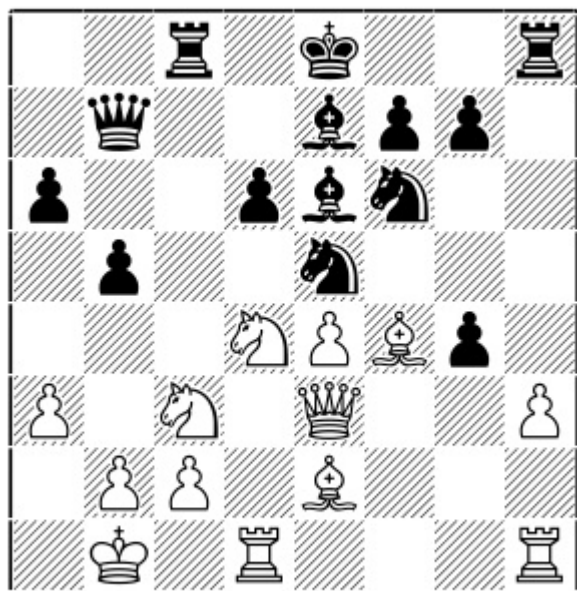
17...hxg4

A) 17...b4 18.axb4 Qxb4 19.g5 Nfd7 20.Nd5 Bxd5 21.exd5±

B) 17...g5 18.Bxe5 dxe5 19.Nd5 Qc6 20.Qd3 Qc4 21.Nxf6+ Bxf6 22.gxh5± And White was winning in the correspondence game Liedl, W (2400) – Pinho, M (2250) ICCF 2015.

18.Nd4!

18.hxg4 Rxh1 19.Rxh1 Ng6 20.g5 Rxc3 21.bxc3 Qxe4 22.Bf3 Qxe3 23.Bxe3 Nd5 24.Bd4 Bxg5 25.Bxg7 f6 and the position is not so clear.

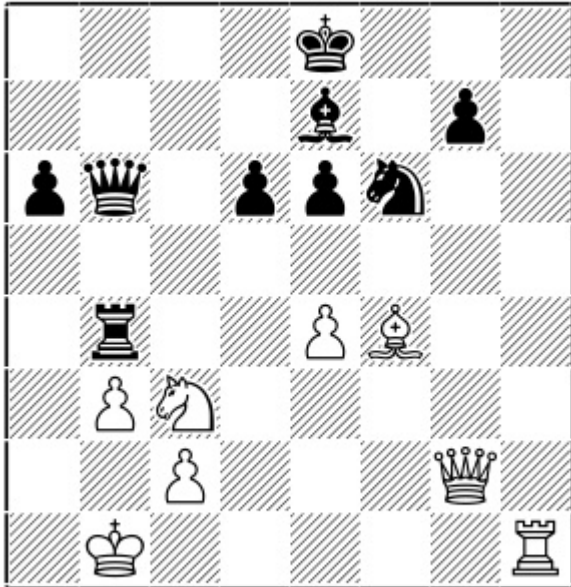


Position after: 18.Nd4!

18...b4

A) 18...Rxc3 19.Qxc3 Nxe4 20.Qe1 gxh3 21.Nxe6 fxe6 22.Bxe5 dxe5 23.Bf3+–

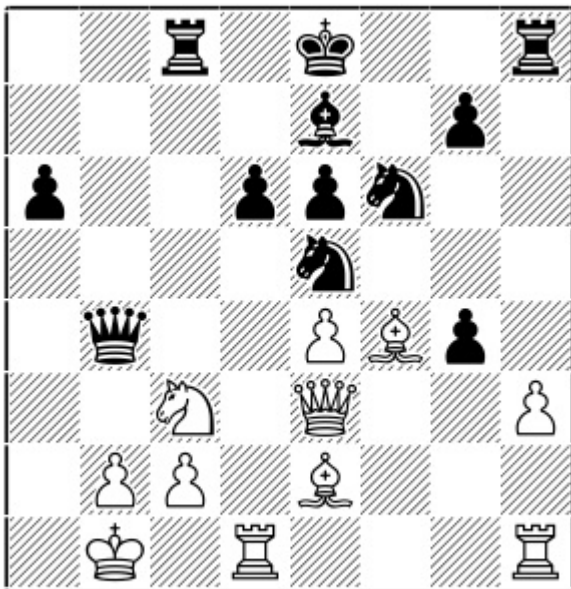
B) 18...Nc4 19.Bxc4 Rxc4 20.hxg4 Rxh1 21.Rxh1 b4 [21...Bxg4 22.Qd3 Rxc3 23.Qxc3 Nxe4 24.Rh8+ Kd7 25.Qb3 Be6 26.Nxe6 fxe6 27.Qh3±] 22.axb4 Rxb4 23.b3 Nxg4 24.Qd2 Qb6 25.Nxe6 fxe6 26.Qg2 Nf6



Position after: 26...Nf6

27.Bc1!± White has to prevent ...Rxb3+. [27.Qxg7? Rxb3+ 28.cxb3 Qxb3+]

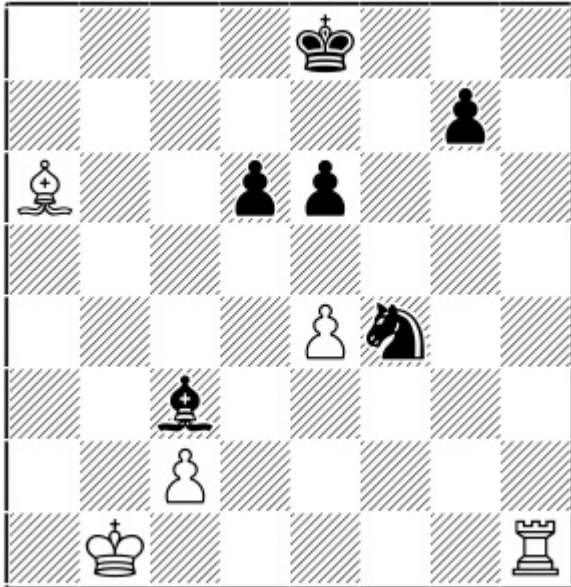
19.axb4 Qxb4 20.Nxe6 fxe6



Position after: 20...fxe6

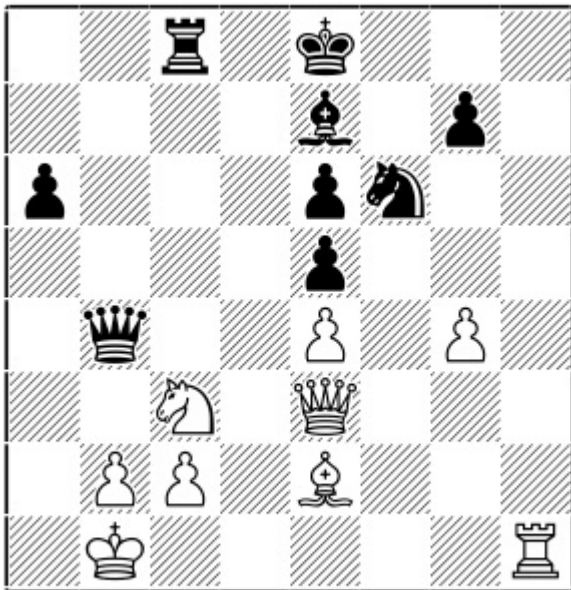
21.Bxe5!

21.hxg4 Rxh1 22.Rxh1 Ng6 23.g5 Rxc3 24.Qxc3 Qxc3 25.bxc3 Nxf4 26.gxf6 Bxf6 27.Bxa6 Bxc3 and Black is close to establishing a fortress, with good to chances to make a draw.



Position after: 27...Bxc3

21...dxe5 22.hxg4 Rxh1 23.Rxh1²



Position after: 23.Rxh1²

Black's pawns are vulnerable now. White has a decent edge with his well-placed pieces and safe king.

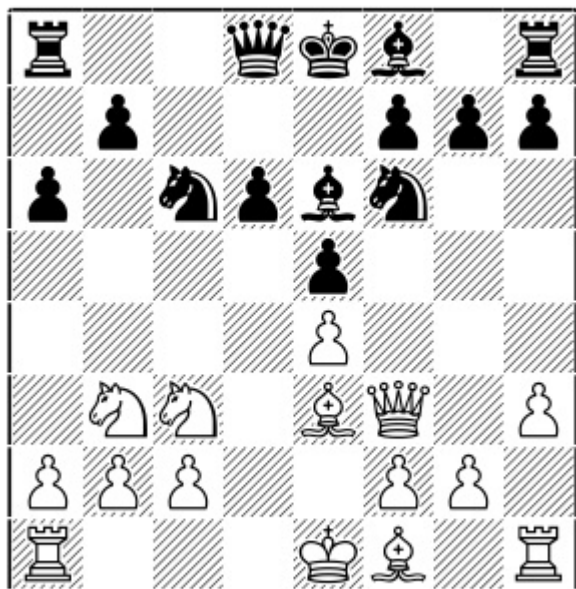
b) 8...Nc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3!? Be6 8.Be3 Nc6

With the knight on c6 rather than on d7 Black is threatening ...d5 now.

9.Qf3

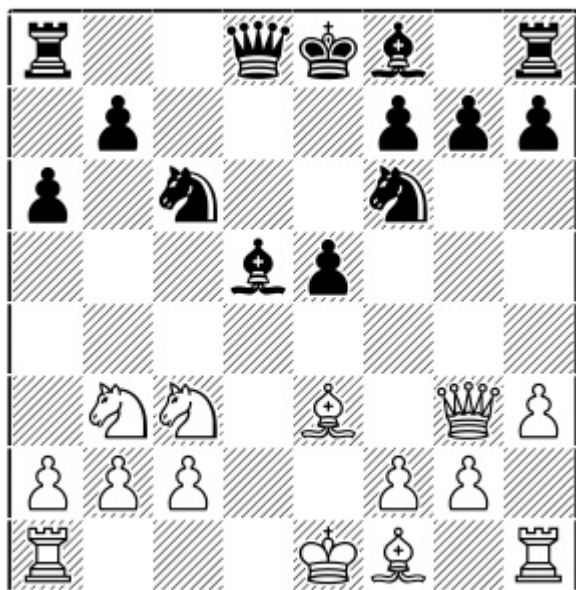
9.Qd2 d5!



Position after: 9.Qf3

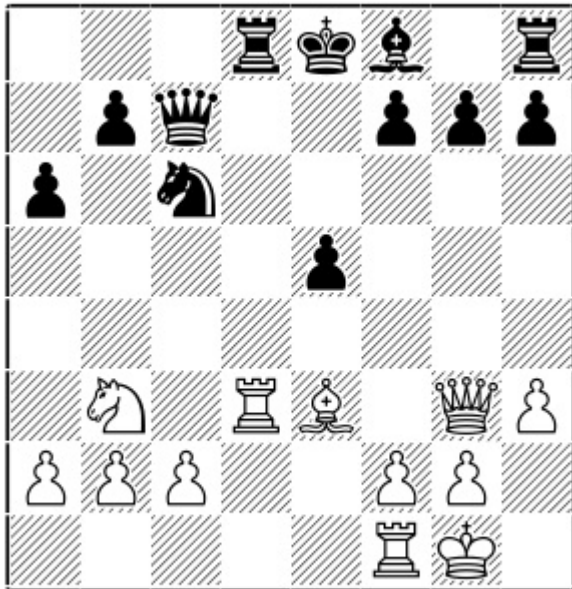
9...Rc8

A) 9...d5?! is not effective here. 10.exd5 Bxd5 11.Qg3 [11.Nxd5 Qxd5 This endgame is fine for Black.]



Position after: 11.Qg3

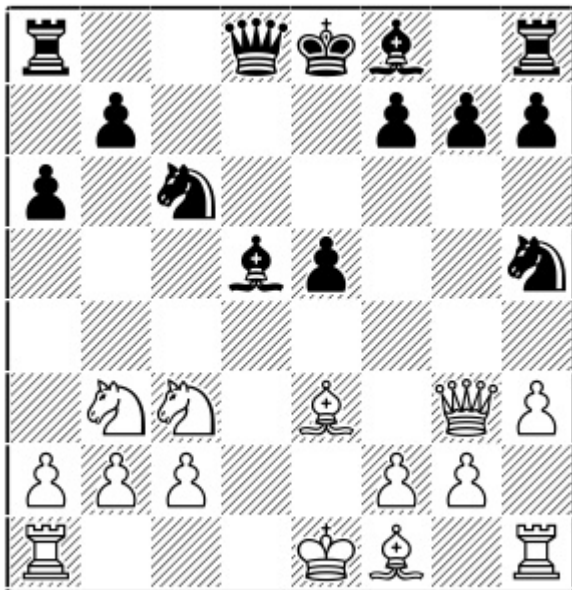
A1) 11...Ne4 12.Nxe4 Bxe4 13.Rd1 Qc7 14.Bd3 Bxd3 15.Rxd3 Rd8 16.0-0!



Position after: 16.0-0!

16...g6 [16...Rxd3 17.cxd3 f5 18.f4² White is ahead in development and can count on a good edge.]
 17.Rxd8+ Qxd8 18.Qf3² The idea is to play 19.Rd1 next.

A2) 11...Nh5

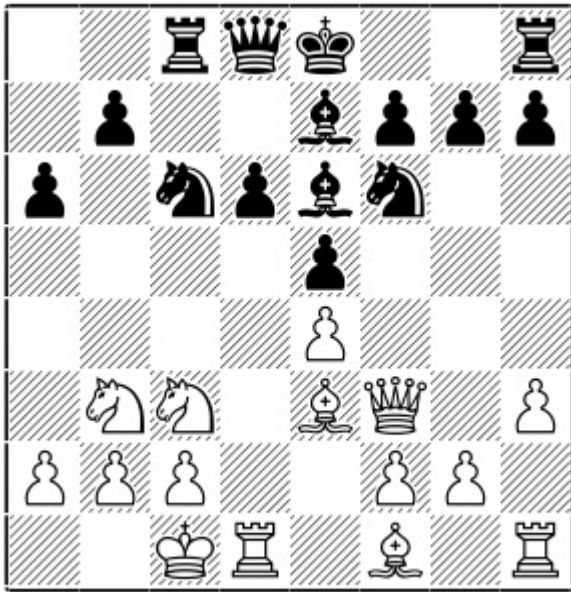


Position after: 11...Nh5

A2.1) 12.Qh2 Be6 [12...Bxb3 13.axb3 Bb4 14.Be2 Nf6 15.Qg3²] 13.Be2 Nd4! 14.Bd1 Bd6 15.Ne4 Bb8! 16.c3 Nf6,,

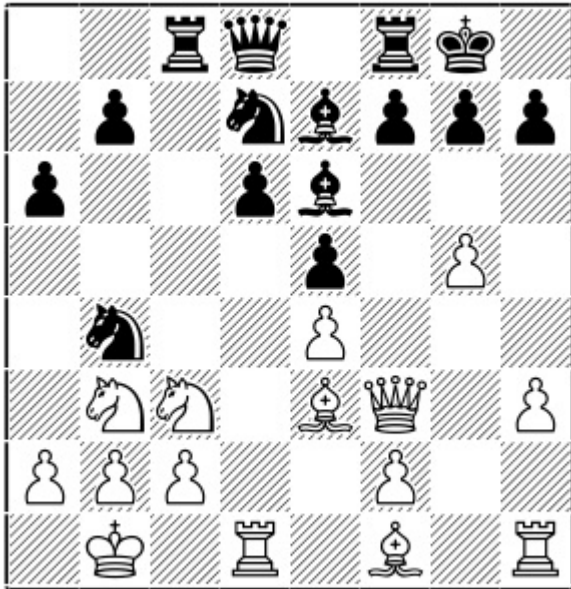
A2.2) 12.Qg5! Bxb3 [12...Qxg5 13.Bxg5 Be6 14.0-0-0 Nf6 15.Be2² and the endgame is pleasant for White.] 13.axb3 Qxg5 14.Bxg5 h6 15.Be3 0-0-0 16.Bc4 Nb4 17.Rc1 Rd7 18.0-0 Nf6 19.Rfe1 Kc7 20.g3 Bd6 21.Bf1 Rdd8 22.Bg2² White enjoyed the bishop-pair advantage and was pressing in the correspondence game Ibragimov, V (2416) – Siigur, J (2411) ICCF email 2014.

B) 9...Be7 10.0-0 Rc8



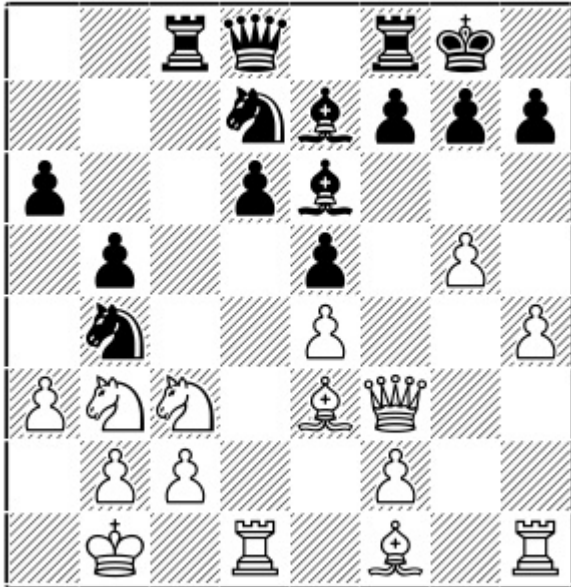
Position after: 10...Rc8

11.g4 [11.Kb1 0-0 12.g4 Na5 13.g5 Nd7 14.h4²] 11...Nb4 12.Kb1 0-0 [12...h6 13.Rg1 Qc7 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5 d5 16.Bxf6 dx4 17.Qxe4 gxf6 18.a3 f5 19.Qe2 Nc6 20.Bg2²] 13.g5 Nd7



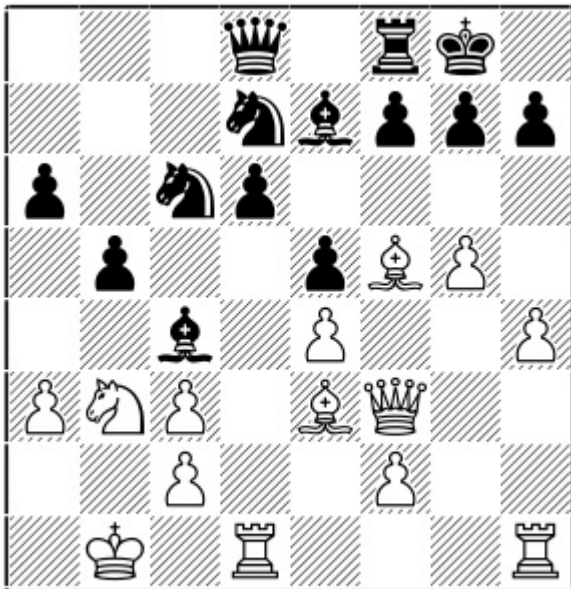
Position after: 13...Nd7

14.h4! The point is that the sacrifice on c3 now for Black is not so effective as I have not weakened my king's position. Also White is threatening Bh3, and maybe later a3 will follow at the right moment. [Playing on autopilot against a compatriot of mine in 2019, I blundered with: 14.a3? Rxc3 15.bxc3 Nc6 16.c4 Na5 17.Bd2 Nxc4 ½-½ (53) Sethuraman, S (2638) – Raja, H (2447) Sitges 2019] 14...b5 [14...a5 15.a3 a4 16.Nc1 Rxc3 17.bxc3 Na6 18.Na2±] 15.a3 This is the right moment.



Position after: 15.a3

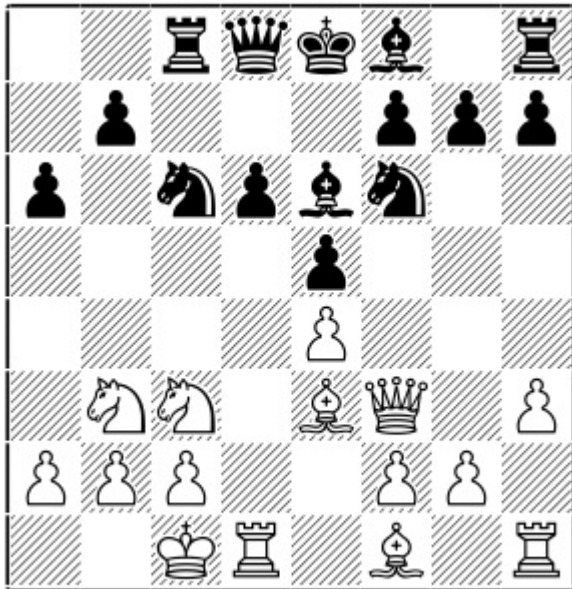
Black was threatening ...Nxc2 followed by ...b4. The difference caused by inclusion of White's h4 and Black's ...b5 is that White has an important option of Bh3 now. 15...Rxc3 16.bxc3 Nc6 17.Bh3 Bc4 [17...Na5 18.Bxe6 fxe6 19.Qg4+-] 18.Bf5!



Position after: 18.Bf5!

18...Nb6 [18...g6 19.Bg4 Qc7 20.h5±] 19.Bxb6 Qxb6 20.Qe3 Qc7 [20...Qxe3 21.fxe3 Rd8 22.Kb2±] 21.h5±

10.0-0-0

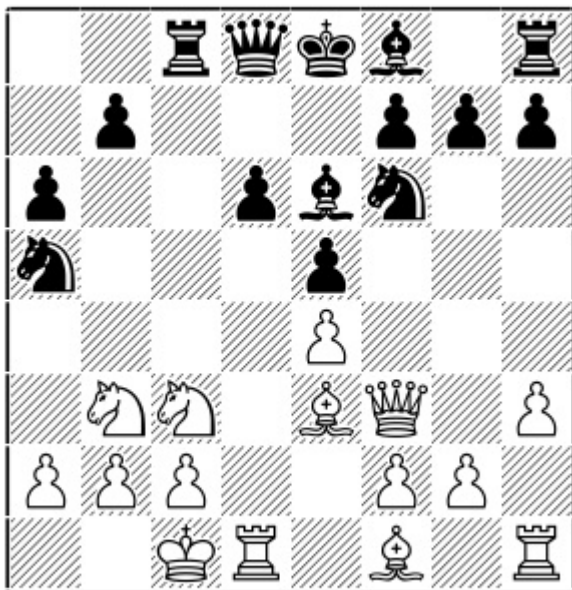


Position after: 10.0-0-0

10...Nb4

Seeking immediate counterplay.

10...Na5 Played in quite a few correspondence games.



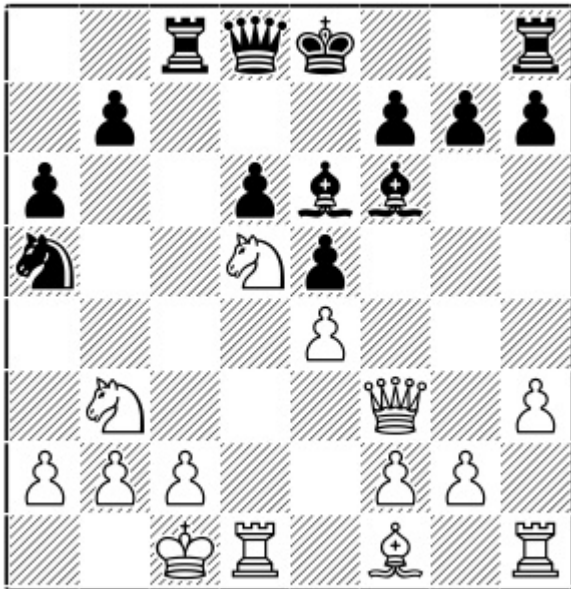
Position after: 10...Na5

A) 11.g4?! Rxc3!,,

B) 11.Nc5 Bc4 12.Nd3 [12.Kb1 Bxf1 13.Rhxf1 Nc4 14.Nb3 Na3+ 15.Kc1 Rxc3 16.bxc3 Qc7,,] 12...Be6!
13.Nb4 Rxc3 14.bxc3 Be7 15.Bg5 0-0 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Nd5 Bg5+ 18.Kb1 Bxd5 19.Rxd5 Qb6+ 20.Ka1
Bc1 21.Bb5 axb5 22.Rxc1 Nc4,,

C) 11.Bg5! Keeping control over the key central d5-square by exchanging the f6 knight. 11...Be7

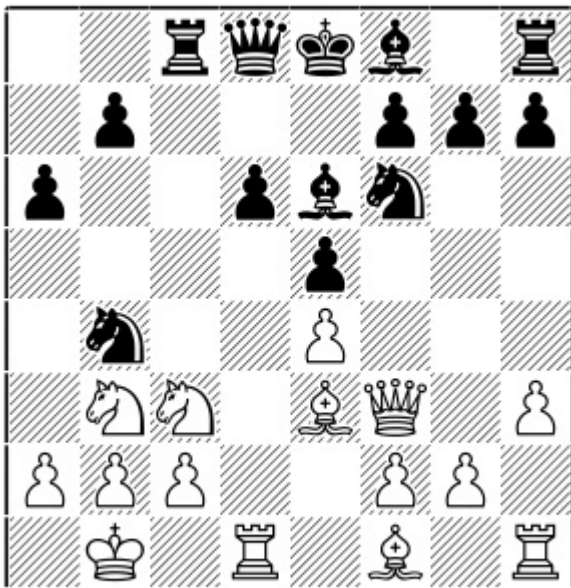
[11...Nxb3+ 12.axb3 Be7 13.Kb1 0-0 14.Bxf6 Bxf6 15.Nd5 Be7 16.Be2] 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.Nd5



Position after: 13.Nd5

13...Bxd5 [13...Bg5+ 14.Kb1 Nc4 15.Bxc4 Rxc4 16.g3 0-0 17.h4?] 14.Rxd5 Nc6 15.c3 Nd4 16.Qd1 Nxb3+ 17.axb3² Having opposite-coloured bishops here favors White as his bishop is better. Also, he has control over the d5-square, while Black has zero counterplay.

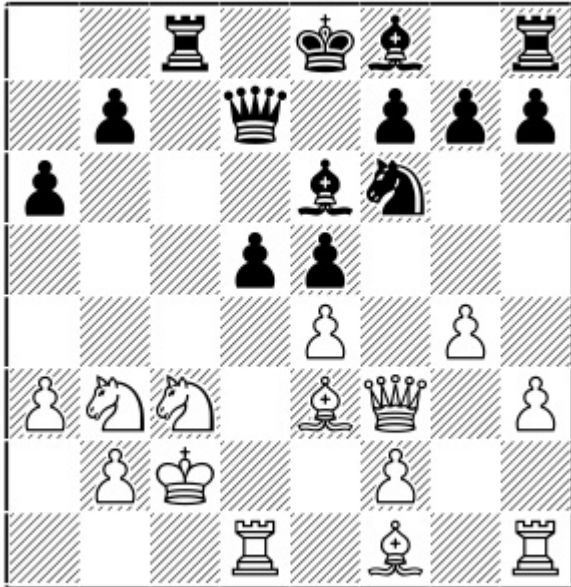
11.Kb1



Position after: 11.Kb1

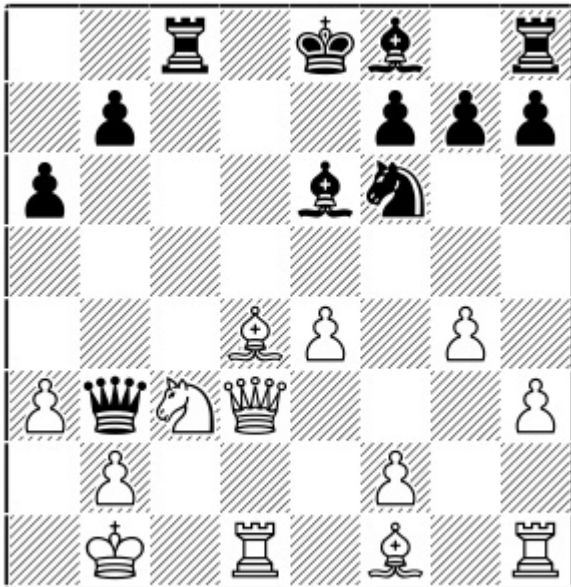
11...Qc7

A) 11...d5?! 12.a3 Nxc2 doesn't work here. [12...Rxc3 13.bxc3 Nc6 14.Bg5±] 13.Kxc2 Qd7 [13...Nxe4 14.Qxe4 dxe4 15.Rxd8+ Kxd8 16.Bb6+ Kd7 17.Na5±] 14.g4!



Position after: 14.g4!

14...d4 [14...Nxe4 15.Qxe4 dxe4 16.Rxd7 Bxd7 17.Bg2±] 15.Nxd4 exd4 16.Bxd4 Qa4+ 17.Kb1 Qb3 18.Qd3!!

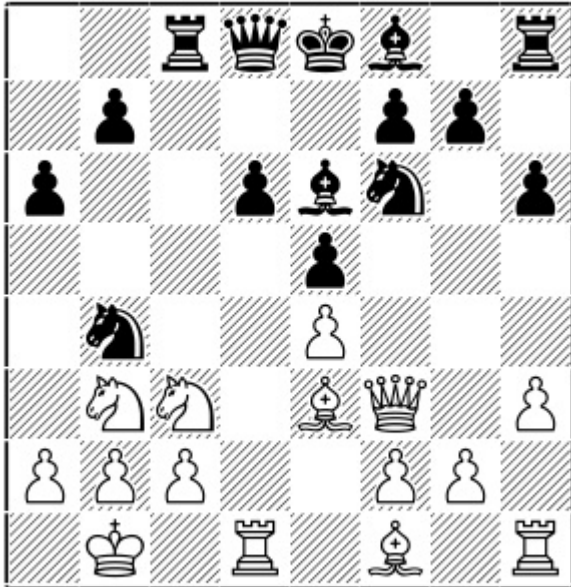


Position after: 18.Qd3!!

An important move, moving the queen to a protected square in order to threaten Nd5. 18...Bxa3 19.Nd5 Qxd3+ 20.Bxd3 Be7 21.Rhe1±

B) 11...Rxc3? 12.bxc3 Nc6 13.g4 h6 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5±

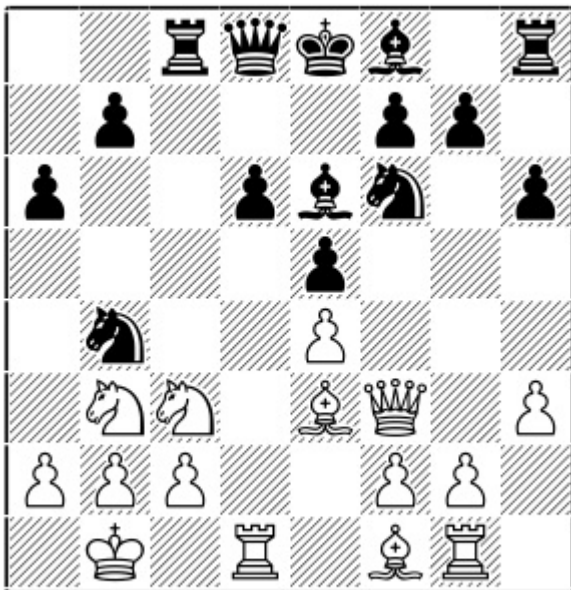
C) 11...h6 Iranian GM Idani played this against me in the Asian Teams 2018.



Position after: 11...h6

C1) 12.Be2 Be7 leads to complex play. [12...d5?! happened in my game. 13.exd5 Nfxd5 14.Bd2 Qb6+–
Sethuraman, S (2657) – Idani, P (2583) Hamedan 2018]

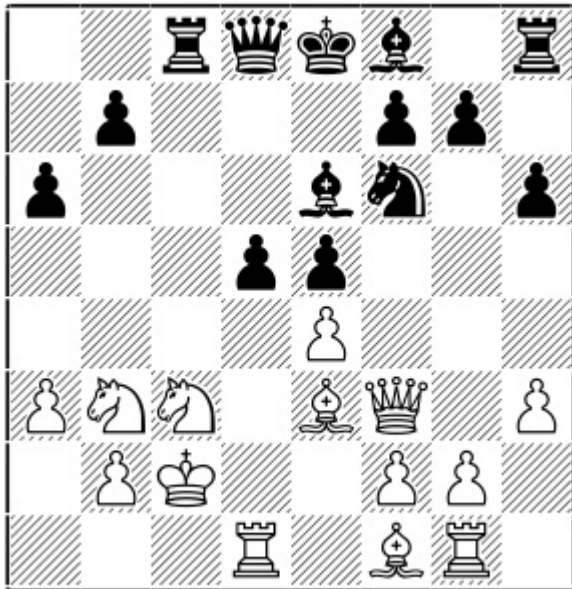
C2) 12.Rg1!



Position after: 12.Rg1!

C2.1) 12...Rxc3 13.bxc3 Nc6 14.g4 Nd7 15.Bc1±

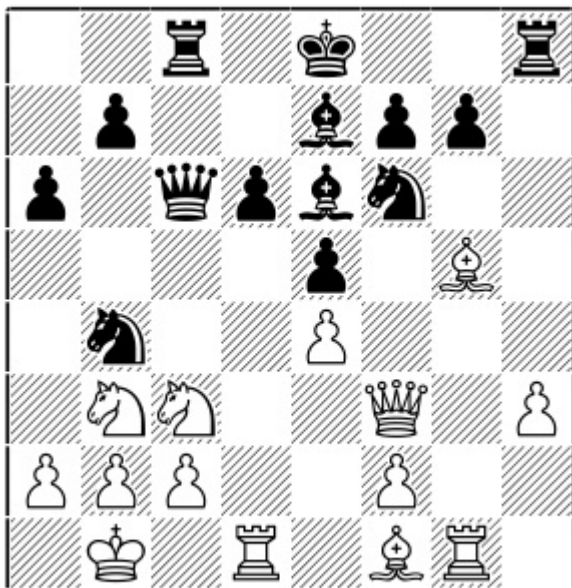
C2.2) 12...d5 13.a3 Nxc2 [13...Rxc3 14.bxc3 Nc6 15.exd5 Bxd5 16.Qe2 Qc7 17.Bc1±] 14.Kxc2



Position after: 14.Kxc2

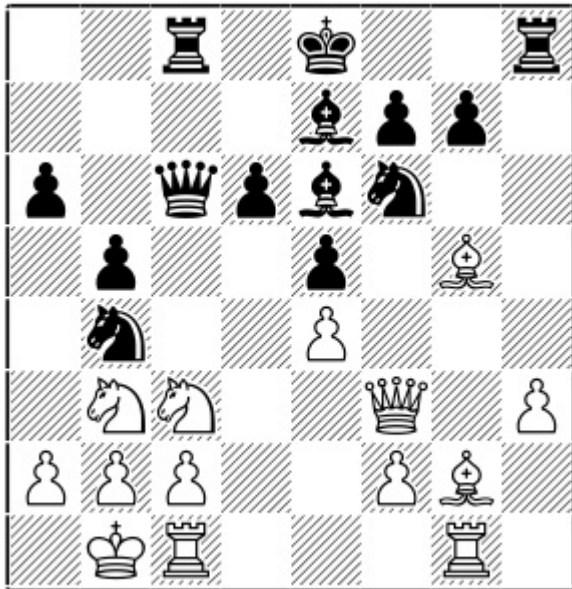
14...Bxa3 [14...Nxe4 15.Qxe4 dxe4 16.Rxd8+ Rxd8 17.g4± and the two pieces are worth more than the rook here; 14...Qd7 15.exd5 Nxd5 16.g4! Rxc3+ 17.bxc3 Qc6 18.Rxd5!+-] 15.bxa3 Nxe4 16.Qxe4! Rxc3+ 17.Kxc3 Qc7+ 18.Kb2 dxe4 19.Rc1 Qe7 20.Nc5± And White has two pieces and rook for the queen.

C2.3) 12...Be7 13.g4 Qc7 [13...Rxc3?! 14.bxc3 Nc6 15.h4±; 13...d5 14.a3 Nxc2 15.Kxc2 0-0 16.g5 Nxe4 17.gxh6 g6 18.Qxe4±] 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5 Qc6



Position after: 15...Qc6

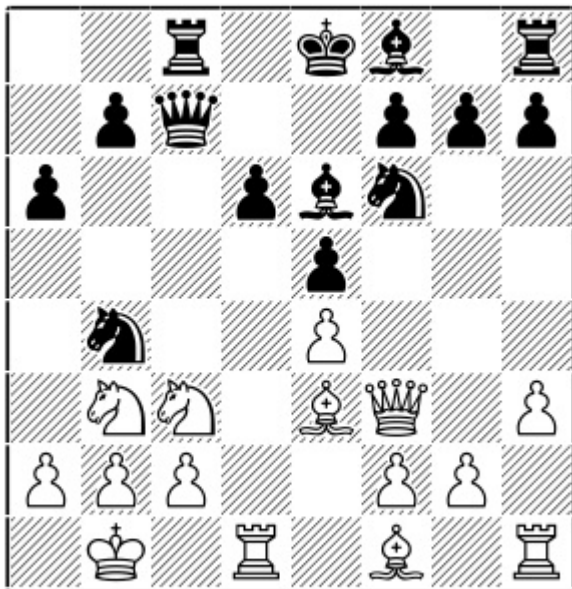
16.Bg2!N [16.Rd2 was played in a correspondence game: 16...d5 17.Bxf6 dxe4 18.Bxe7 exf3∞ 1/2-1/2 (40) Robson, N (2609) – Jonsson, D (2531) ICCF email 2014] 16...b5 [16...a5!? 17.Bf1! Kf8 18.Bb5²] 17.Rc1! [17.Rd2 Nxc2 18.Rxc2 b4 19.Rgc1 bxc3 20.Rxc3 Qa8 21.Rxc8+ Bxc8 22.Na5²]



Position after: 17.Rc1!

17...Qd7 [17...Nxc2? 18.Nd5+–; 17...Qb6 18.h4²] 18.Qe3² With f4 coming, White stands better.

D) 11...Be7 12.g4 transposes to 9...Be7 10.0-0-0 Rc8 11.g4 Nb4 12.Kb1.



Position after: 11...Qc7

12.Bg5!

12.a3 initiates the long-forced line played in many previous games, at the end of which Black is fine.
 12...Nxc2! 13.Kxc2 Qc6 14.Nd2 d5 15.exd5 Nxd5 16.Nc4 Nxc3 17.Qxc6+ Rxc6 18.bxc3 Bxc4 19.Bxc4
 Rxc4 20.Rd5 Be7 ½-½ (69) Karjakin, S (2770) – Khismatullin, D (2679) Kazan 2014

12...Be7 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.a3 Nc6 15.Nd5 Bxd5 16.exd5 Na5

16...Nb8 17.Bd3²

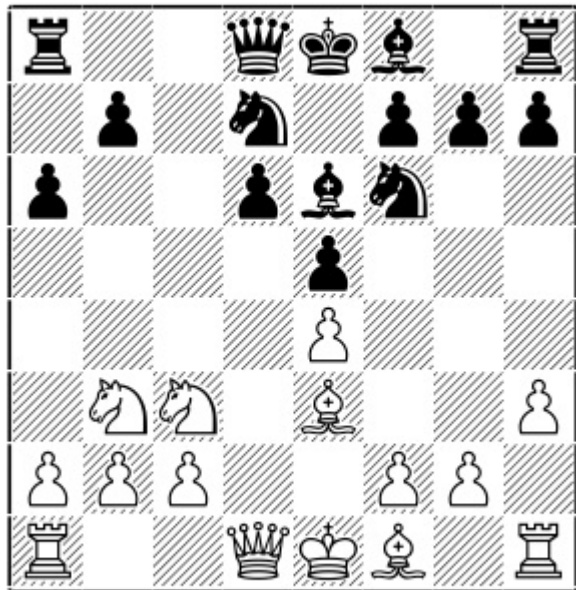
17.Nxa5 Qxa5 18.Bd3²

This duel between opposite-coloured bishops clearly favours White as his king is more secure than Black's.

c) 8...Nbd7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3!?! Be6 8.Be3 Nbd7

8...Be7 transposes to chapter 8.



Position after: 8...Nbd7

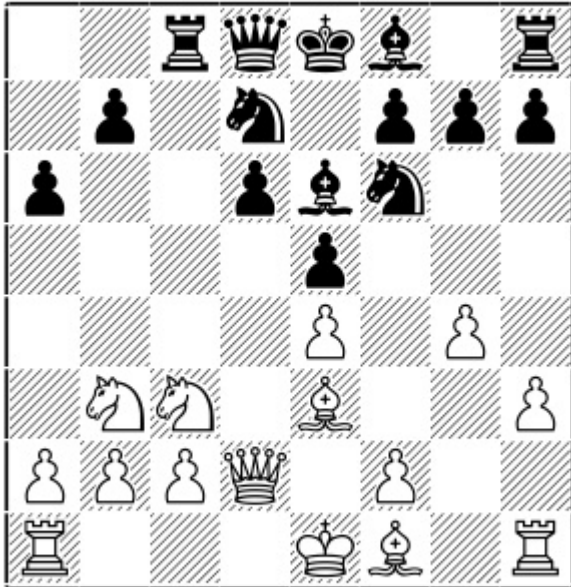
9.g4!

After 9.Qf3 Rc8! Black threatens ...Rxc3 immediately and stands well since White is not in time to push g4-g5.

So in this one case the queen is not ideally placed on f3 (unlike the preceding variations) as Black plans to sacrifice the exchange with ...Rc8 and ...Rxc3 at the first opportunity. Another factor supporting the same conclusion is that ...d5 is no longer on the cards for Black.

9...h6

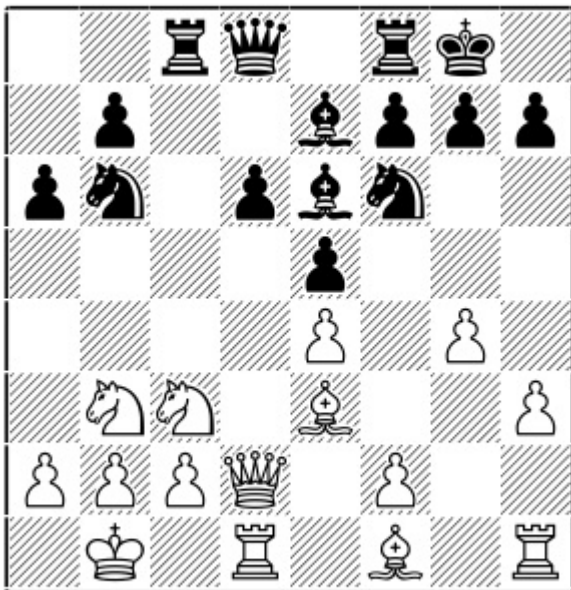
9...Rc8 10.Qd2!



Position after: 10.Qd2!

As hinted in the above comment, White has to place his queen on d2 now, since Black was already threatening to take on c3 with the rook and shatter the pawn structure.

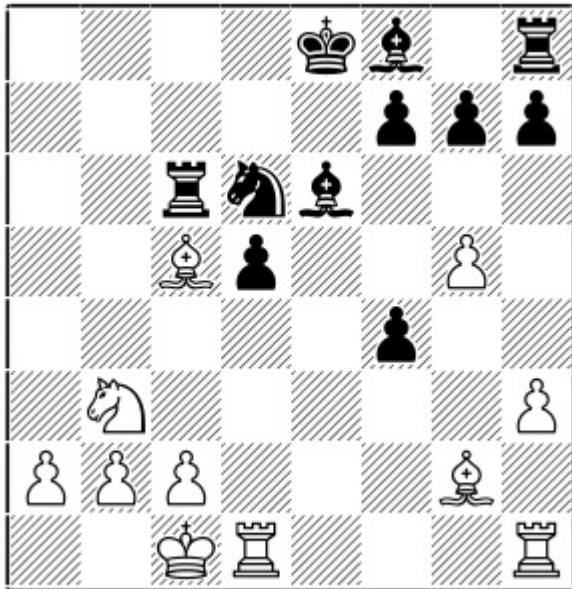
A) 10...Be7 11.0-0-0 [11.g5?! Rxc3! 12.gxf6 Rxe3+,,] 11...0-0 [11...b5 transposes to 10...b5] 12.Kb1 Nb6 [12...b5?! 13.g5±]



Position after: 12...Nb6

13.f4 [13.g5!? Nh5 14.h4 Qc7 15.Be2 Nc4 16.Bxc4 Qxc4 17.a3 g6 18.Rhe1?] 13...exf4 14.Bd4! f3 15.Qe3 Nfd7 16.Qxf3 Qc7 17.Qf2 Nc5 18.h4² Schramm, A (2527) – Siefring, C (2500) ICCF email 2014

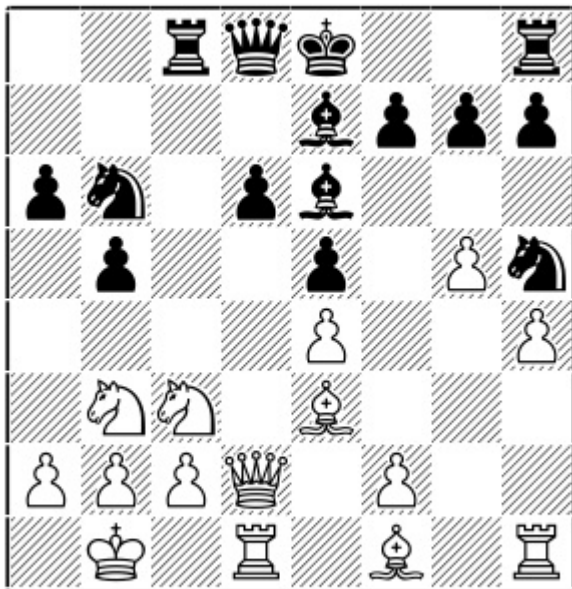
B) 10...h6 11.0-0-0 b5 12.f4! Qc7 13.Kb1



Position after: 22.Bg2±

1-0 (41) Bachmann, W (2360) – Salzmann, S (2271) ICCF 2017

C2) 11...Be7 12.Kb1 Nb6 [12...h6 13.f4 exf4 14.Bxf4 Ne5 15.Nd5²] 13.g5 Nh5 14.h4



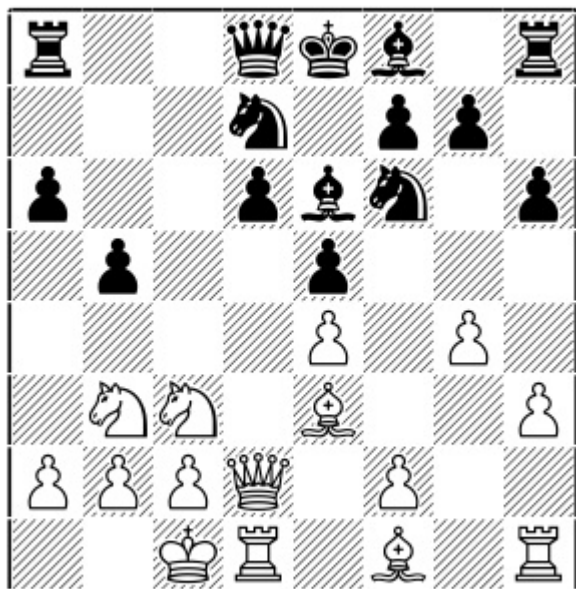
Position after: 14.h4

14...0-0 [14...Nc4 15.Bxc4 bxc4 16.Nc1 0-0 17.Nd5± With total control over the important d5-square.]
 15.Na5! Compared to the ‘standard’ English attack against the Najdorf (with f3 on move 6 or 8), here
 White’s pawn is on f2, which is a major advantage as Be2 is a threat now. 15...Qc7 16.a3²

10.Qd2

10.Qf3?! allows 10...Rc8! again.

10...b5 11.0-0-0

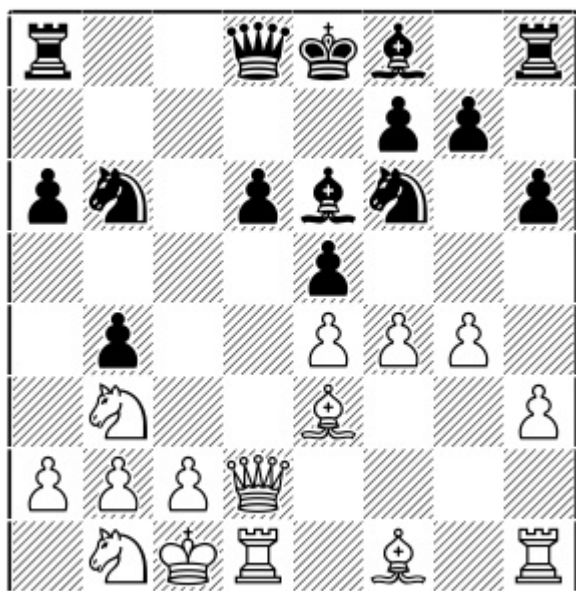


Position after: 11.0-0-0

11...Nb6

11...Be7 12.f4 b4 13.Nd5 Nxe4 14.Qxb4 Bxd5 15.Rxd5 Ng3 16.Rg1 Nxf1 17.Rxf1² White has free play here and his pieces are ideally placed.

12.f4 b4 13.Nb1!



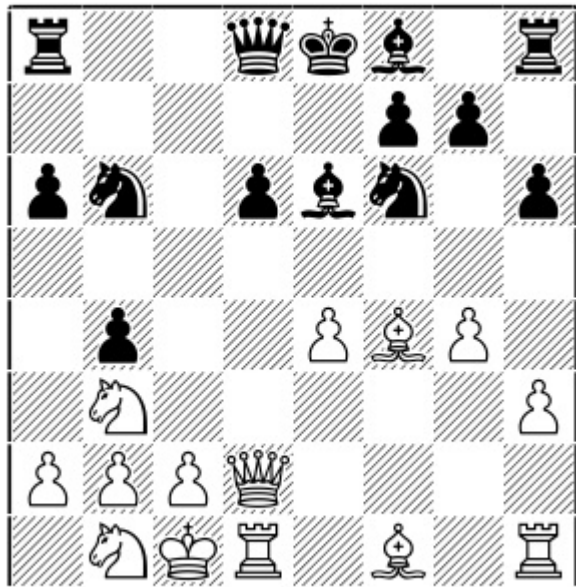
Position after: 13.Nb1!

13.Nd5 Nbx²d5 14.exd5 Nxd5 15.Bg2 Nxe3 16.Qxe3 Rc8 17.fxe5 Be7[∞] Black gets good counterplay here with ...Bg5 next.

13...exf4

13...Rb8 14.fxe5 Nxe4 15.Qxb4 d5 16.Qa5 Be7 17.Bxa6± 1-0 (42) Baiocchi, G (2450) – Rezzuti, V (2393)
ICCF email 2014

14.Bxf4



Position after: 14.Bxf4

14...Nxe4

14...d5 15.Qh2! Threatening Bc7. 15...Nxe4 16.Bc7 Qg5+ 17.N1d2± White has a huge lead in development as Black is yet to castle and consolidate his position.

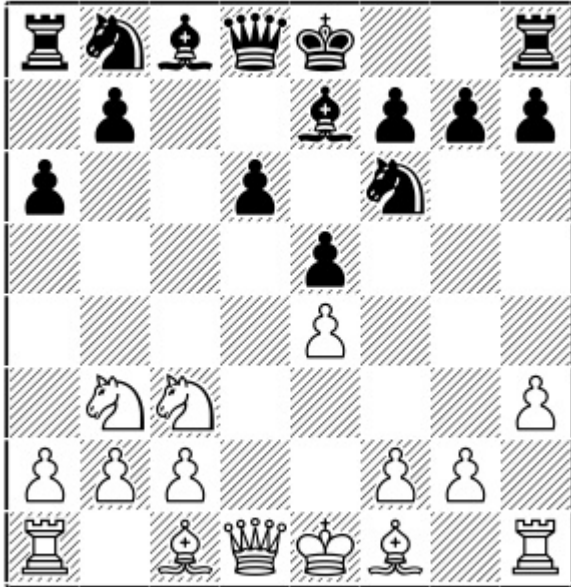
15.Qxb4 d5 16.Qd4 Be7 17.N1d2²

White was slightly better in the correspondence game Faridani, A (2290) – Polyakov, D (2291) ICCF email 2016.

Chapter 8

6...e5 7.Nb3 Be7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3 Be7



Chapter Guide

Chapter 8 – 6...e5 7.Nb3 Be7

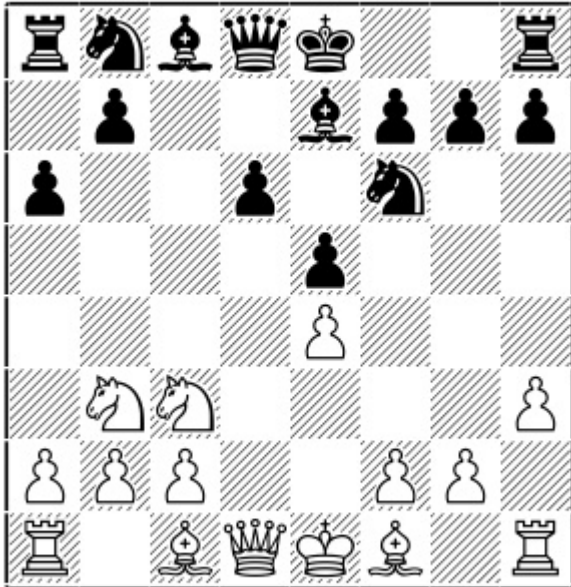
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.Be3 Be6 9.Qf3 0-0 10.0-0 b5 11.g4 b4 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.exd5 Bc8 14.Bd3 a5 15.Nd2 Ba6 16.Bf5 a4 17.h4

a) 17...Nd7

b) 17...Qc7

a) 17...Nd7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3!? Be7



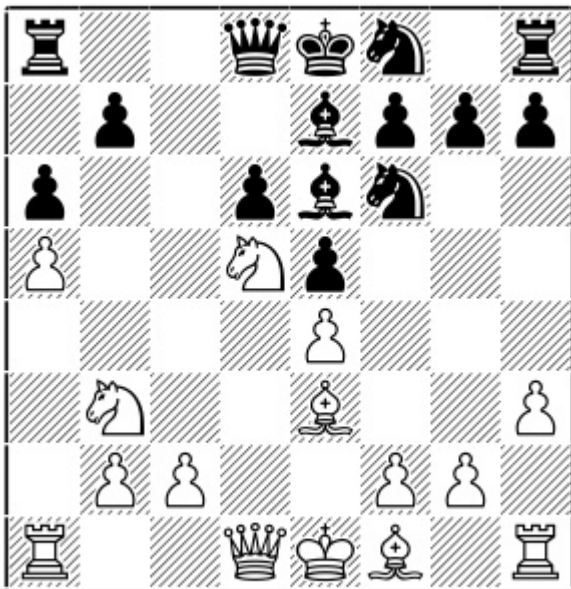
Position after: 7...Be7

The main line.

8.Be3 Be6

A) 8...b5?! is once again premature because of 9.a4 b4 10.Nd5 Nbd7 11.Nxe7 Qxe7 12.f3±.

B) 8...Nbd7?! 9.a4! Nf8 10.a5!N [10.Bc4 Be6 11.Qd3 Rc8 and Black was fine in Anand, V (2785) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2730) Dubai 2014.] 10...Be6 11.Nd5



Position after: 11.Nd5

B1) 11...Nxd5 12.exd5 Bf5 13.Ra4! A nice rook-lift; White intends Rb4. 13...Rc8 [13...Nd7 14.Rb4 Qc7 15.Bd3²] 14.c3 Nd7 15.Rb4 Rc7 16.Be2 0-0 17.0-0² and the bishop on f5 hinders Black's immediate counterplay with ...f5.

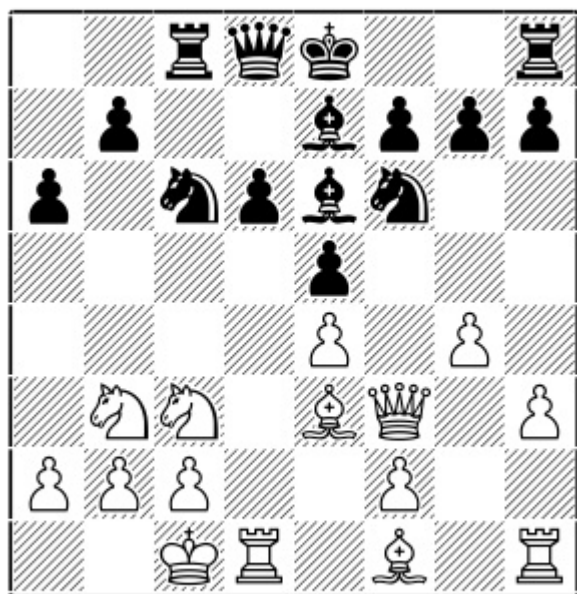
Like in the Taimanov, White again puts his queen on f3 to get an immediate initiative. One advantage of placing the queen on f3 is that after White's pawn march with g4-g5, Black has no h5-square available for the knight.

Another advantage of the queen on f3 is that when Black places his b8-knight on d7 (the normal square) and White replies with Nd5, Black must either leave the knight there or capture it with his bishop (since otherwise exd5 would trap his e6-bishop).

9...0-0

Delaying the development of the b8-knight seems the best approach.

A) 9...Nc6?! 10.0-0-0 Rc8 11.g4

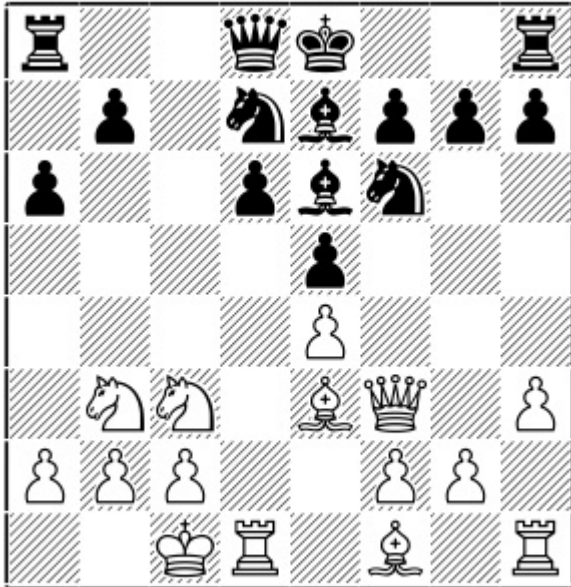


Position after: 11.g4

A1) 11...h6 12.Kb1 Na5 13.Nc5! 0-0 [13...Bc4 14.h4+–] 14.g5! hxg5 15.Rg1±

A2) 11...b5 12.g5 Nd7 13.h4 Na5 14.Nd5 Nc4 15.Kb1 0-0 16.Bxc4 Rxc4 17.Qg2 f5 18.f3 Bxd5 19.Rxd5 fxe4 20.fxe4 Nb6 21.Rd3 Na4 22.h5 Qc8 23.Na5 Rc7 24.Rdd1± 1-0 (35) Morrow, W (2296) – Siefring, C (2476) ICCF email 2012

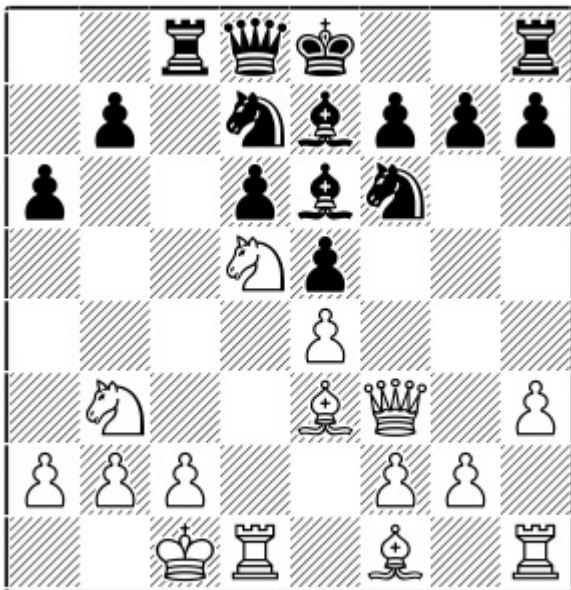
B) 9...Nbd7 10.0-0-0



Position after: 10.0-0-0

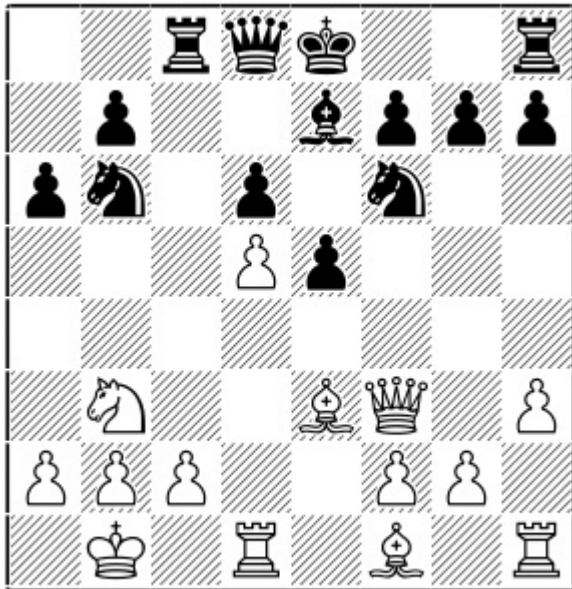
B1) 10...b5?! 11.Nd5 [11.g4 may be even stronger: 11...h6 12.Nd5 Nh7 13.Kb1±] 11...Bxd5 12.exd5 Nb6 13.Kb1 [13.g4 e4 14.Qe2 0-0 15.Bxb6 Qxb6 16.g5 Nd7 17.f4±] 13...0-0 14.g4± Sethuraman, S (2613) – Tran, T (2526) Xingtai 2019.

B2) 10...Rc8 11.Nd5



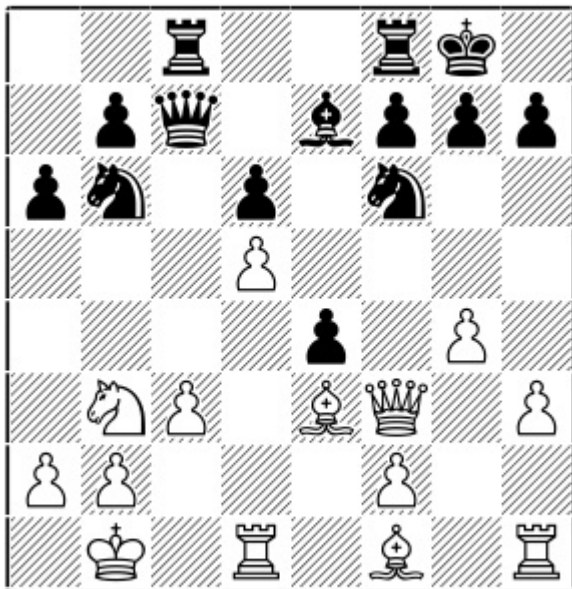
Position after: 11.Nd5

As mentioned just a bit earlier, Black no longer has the option of taking on d5 with his knight on f6 followed by ...Bf5, because of the placement of White's queen on f3. This is one of the important drawbacks of Black's position. 11...Bxd5 [11...Nf8 12.Kb1 Ng6 13.Nxf6+ Bxf6 14.Nc5 Bxa2+ 15.Kxa2 Qa5+ 16.Kb1 dxc5 17.h4! Nxh4 18.Qh5 Ng6 19.Bc4± With the king in the centre Black's position looks very dangerous.] 12.exd5 Nb6 13.Kb1 [13.g4?! Qc7 14.c3 Nbx5! 15.Rxd5 Qc6 16.Bg2 e4 17.Qf5 g6,,]



Position after: 13.Kb1

13...0-0 [13...Nc4 14.Bc1 b5 15.Bd3 0-0 16.g4 a5 17.Bf5±; 13...e4 14.Qe2 0-0 15.g4 Nfxd5 16.Bd2 e3 17.Ba5!±] 14.g4 Qc7 15.c3 e4

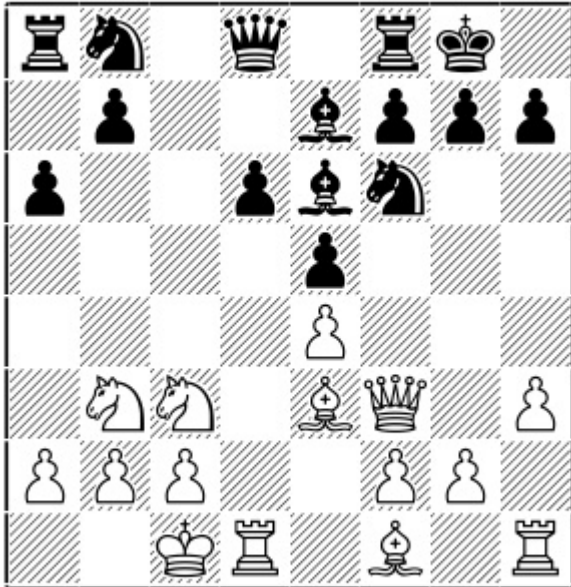


Position after: 15...e4

16.Qe2 [16.Bxb6!? exf3 17.Bxc7 Rxc7 18.Bd3 g6 19.Bc2²] 16...Nfxd5 17.Bd4 e3 18.h4 Bf6 19.Bxb6 Nxb6 20.Qxe3 Na4 21.Rc1² White has clear plans of pushing his pawns whereas Black has no real attack on the other side.

10.0-0-0

10.g4 a5!., Black has been doing fine here because of the fact that White can never play Nc5 without the inclusion of long castling, so I prefer 10.0-0-0 at once as prophylaxis against ...a5.



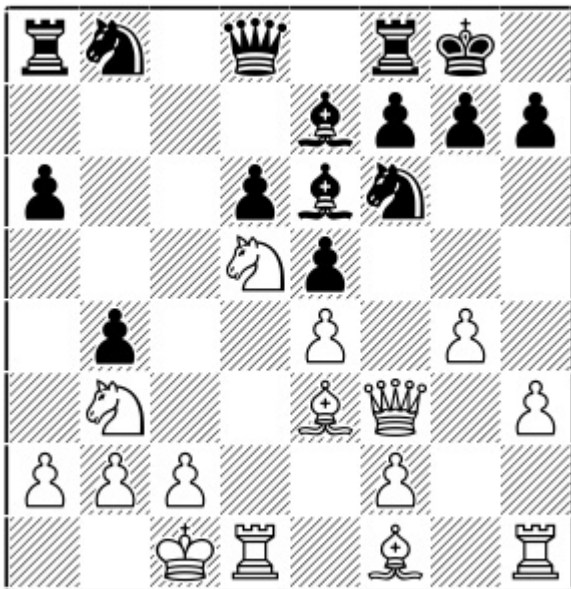
Position after: 10.0-0-0

10...b5

A) 10...a5? 11.Nc5± The difference between 10.g4 and 10.0-0-0.

B) 10...Qc7 11.g4 a5 12.g5 Nfd7 13.a3! a4 14.Nd2 Rc8 15.h4 b5 16.Bxb5 Qb7 17.Ndb1!± Overprotecting the knight on c3 against ...Rxc3 tricks.

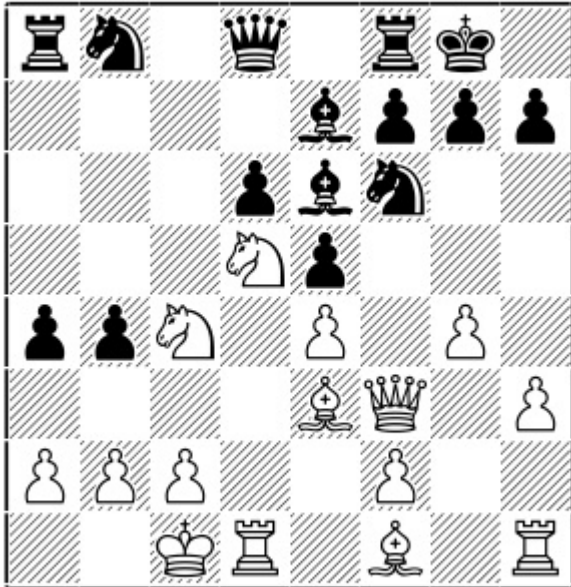
11.g4 b4 12.Nd5



Position after: 12.Nd5

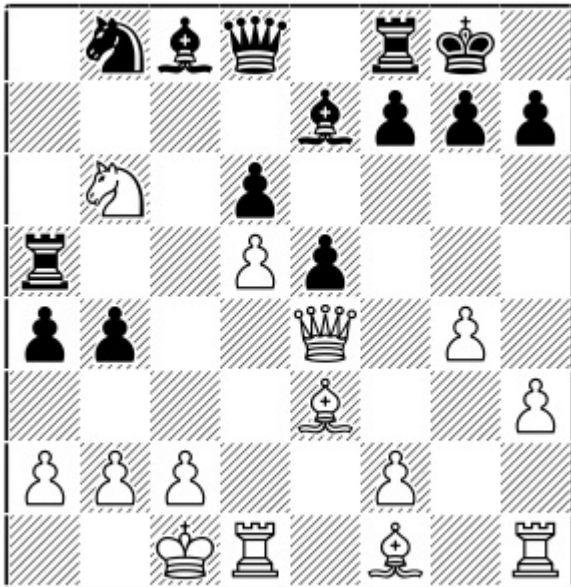
12...Nxd5

12...a5 13.Nd2! a4 [13...Nxd5 14.exd5 Bc8 15.Kb1 transposes to the main line.] 14.Nc4



Position after: 14.Nc4

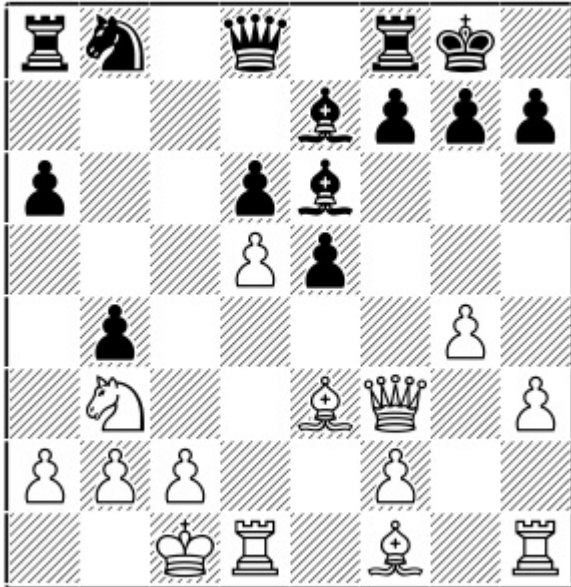
14...Nxd5 [14...b3 15.cxb3 axb3 16.a3 Na6 17.Kb1±; 14...Nc6 15.g5 Nd7 16.h4±] 15.exd5 Bc8 16.Nb6 [16.Nxe5!? b3 17.a3 dxe5 18.d6 bxc2 19.Rd2 Ra5 20.dxe7 Qxe7 21.Bd3²] 16...Ra5 17.Qe4!



Position after: 17.Qe4!

The b4-pawn is quite vulnerable now. 17...b3 [17...Na6 18.Nxc8 Qxc8 19.Bb6 Nc5 20.Qxb4±] 18.Kb1! f5 [18...Bg5 19.cxb3 axb3 20.a3 Bxe3 21.Qxe3 Nd7 22.Nc4²] 19.Qb4 bxc2+ 20.Kxc2 Ra7 21.Nxc8 Qxc8+ 22.Kb1 Rb7 23.Qxa4 f4 24.Bc1²

13.exd5

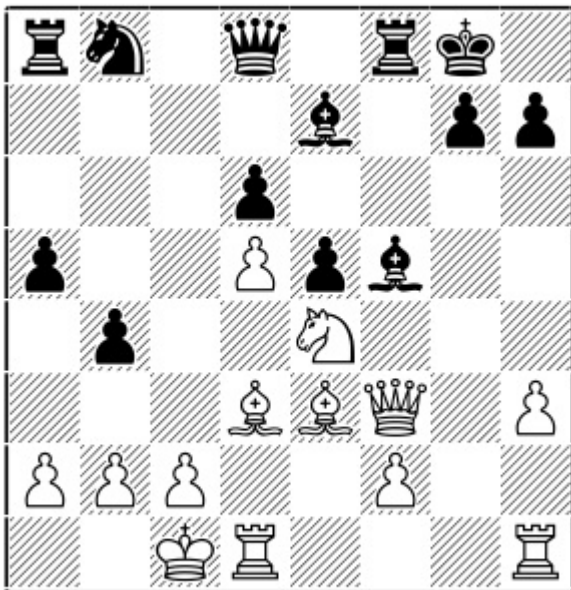


Position after: 13.exd5

13...Bc8

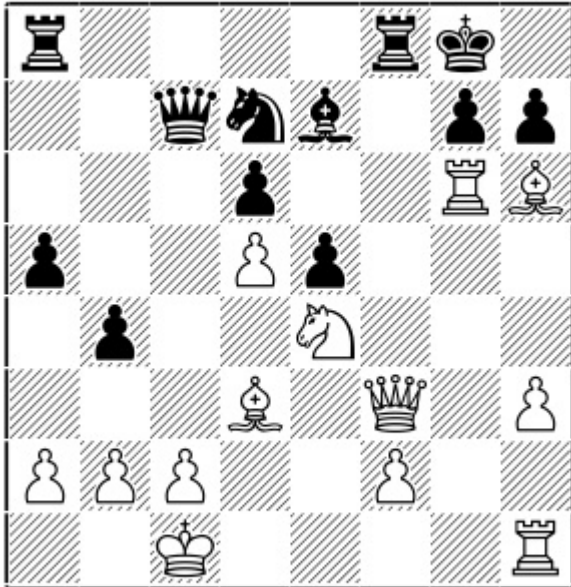
Leaving d7 available for the b8-knight.

13...Bd7 14.Nd2 f5 15.gxf5 Bxf5 16.Ne4! a5 [16...Bg6 17.Qg4 Qd7 18.Bd3 Qxg4 19.hxg4 Nd7 20.g5²] 17.Bd3



Position after: 17.Bd3

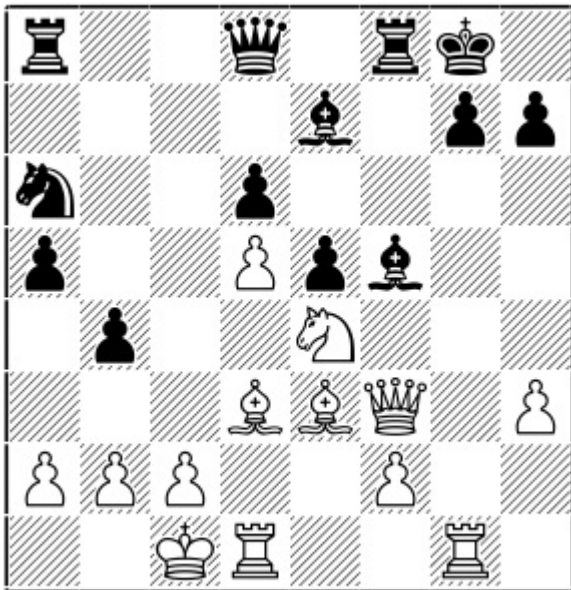
A) 17...Nd7 18.Rdg1 Qc7 19.Bh6 Bg6 20.Rxg6! This nice tactical resource helps White to achieve a winning position as Black cannot take the queen.



Position after: 20.Rxg6!

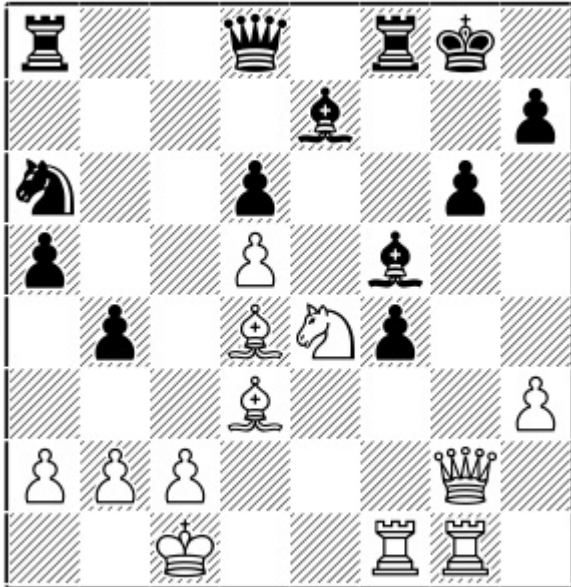
20...Rxf3 [20...hxg6 21.Qg4 gxh6 22.Qxg6+ Kh8 23.Qxh6+ Kg8 24.Rg1+-] 21.Rxg7+ Kh8 22.Rxe7 Qd8 [22...Rg8 23.Nf6+-; 22...Rxd3 23.Ng5+- with mate to follow.] 23.Rg7 Rxd3 24.cxd3 Qh4 25.Bg5 Qxe4 26.dxe4 Kxg7 27.Be3+- White is a pawn up.

B) 17...Na6 18.Rhg1 [18.Rdg1 Qd7 19.Bh6 Bg6 20.Rxg6 is ineffective now due to the queen on d7: 20...hxg6 21.Qg2 Qf5 22.Nd2 e4! 23.Bxe4 Qf6,,]



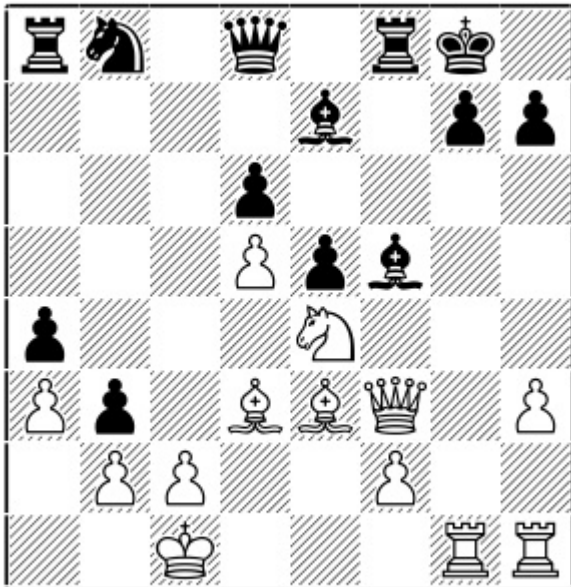
Position after: 18.Rhg1

18...Kh8 [18...Qc8 19.Bh6 Bg6 20.Rxg6! hxg6 21.Qg2 Qf5 22.Be3±; 18...a4 19.h4 b3 20.a3 bxc2 21.Kxc2 Rb8 22.Kb1² With 23.Ka1 to follow, and White's king is pretty safe in the hideout.] 19.Qg2 g6 20.f4 [20.Kb1 b3 21.cxb3 Nb4,,] 20...exf4 21.Bd4+ Kg8 22.Rdf1²



Position after: 22.Rdf1²

C) 17...a4 18.Rdg1 Setting up the key idea of Qg2. 18...b3 [18...Nd7 19.Qg2 g6 20.h4±] 19.a3 Black's attack has stalled and White now has many threats against the black king.



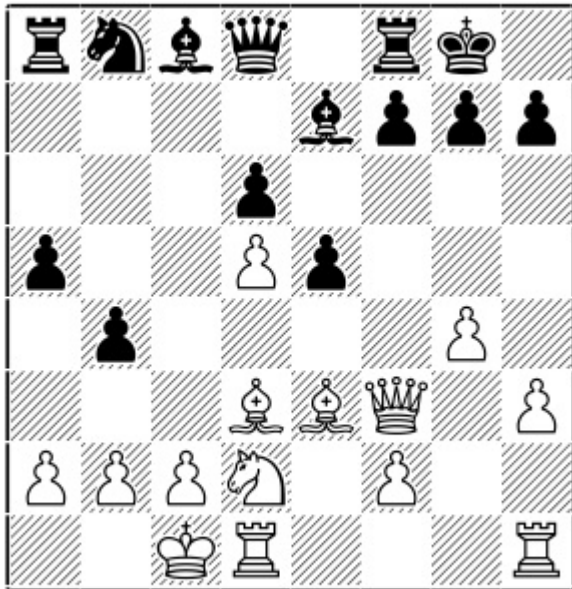
Position after: 19.a3

19...bxc2 [19...Nd7 20.Qg2±] 20.Qg2! g6 [20...Rf7 21.Nxd6 Bxd6 22.Bxf5+–] 21.h4+–

14.Bd3 a5

14...Nd7 15.Nd2 transposes to the main line after 15...a5.

15.Nd2

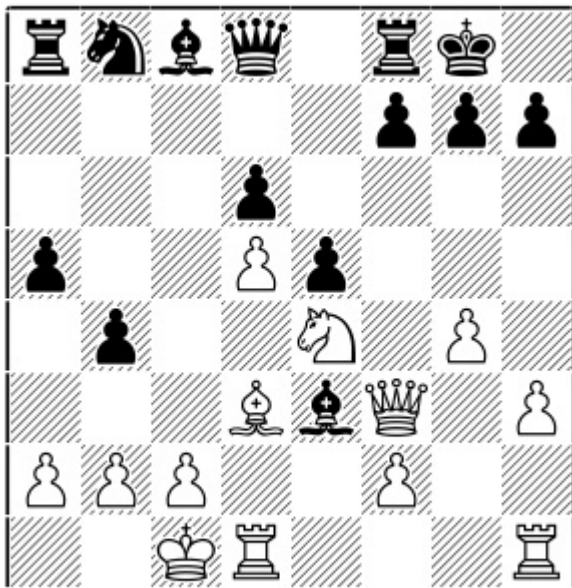


Position after: 15.Nd2

This position is already almost completely new, but I consider it quite critical. I've explored the key possibilities in some depth below; while one can never refute the Najdorf outright, I've found many fresh ideas for White that pose new (severe!) practical problems.

15...Ba6

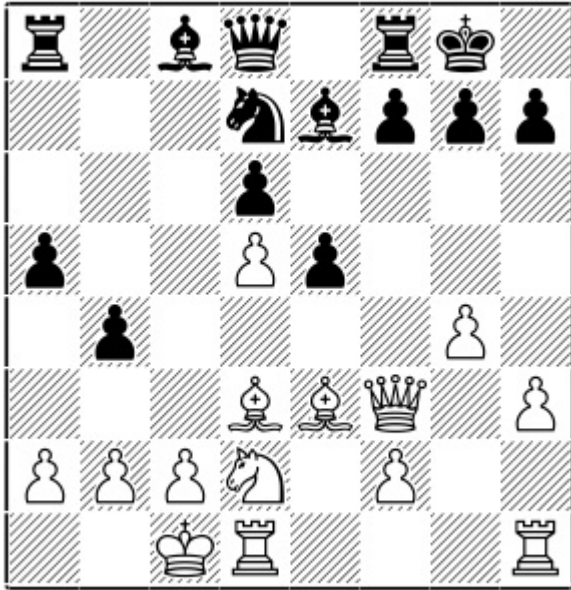
A) 15...Bg5 16.Ne4 Bxe3+



Position after: 16...Bxe3+

17.fxe3! [17.Qxe3 f5 18.gxf5 Bxf5 19.Rhg1 Qe7 20.Rg5 Nd7 21.Rdg1 g6 22.Nxd6 Bxd3 23.Qxd3 Rxf2 24.Ne4 Rf4 25.d6 Qf7 26.Kb1 Rf3 27.Qe2= Siefring, D (2500) – O'Hare, C (2437) ICCF 2014] 17...f6 18.h4 a4 19.h5 Na6 20.Rhf1 b3 [20...Kh8 21.Rf2±] 21.a3 bxc2 22.Bxc2 Rb8 23.h6± Guevara Pijoan, J–Salzmann, S ICCF email 2015

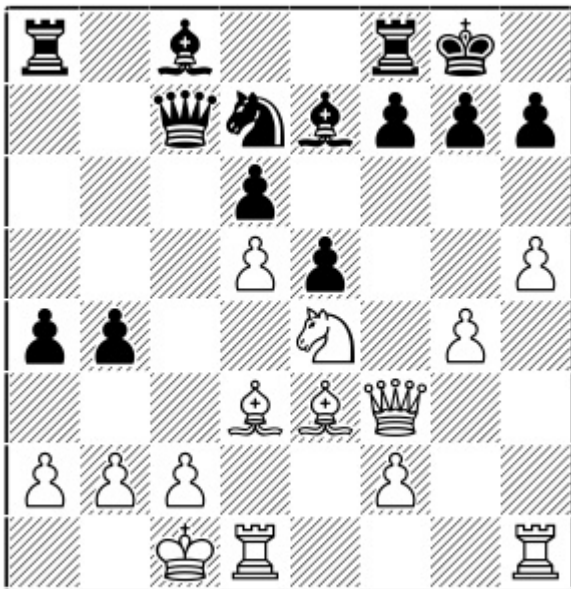
B) 15...Nd7



Position after: 15...Nd7

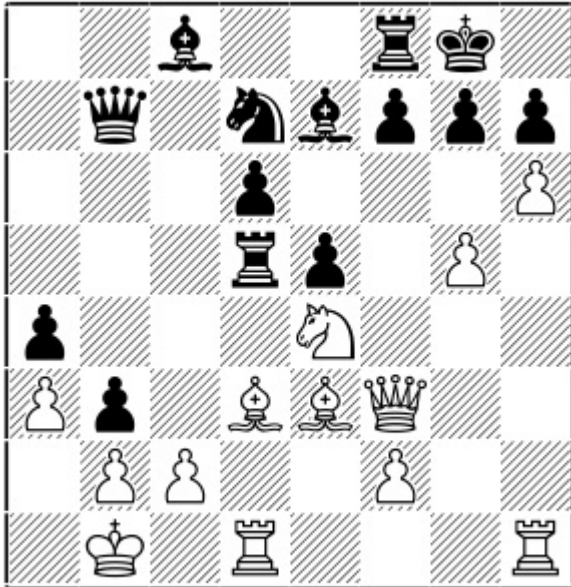
16.h4 White should try to create an initiative as fast as possible. [16.Kb1 Qc7 17.h4 a4 18.Ne4 Bb7 19.Bg5 f6 20.Bd2 Bxd5 21.Bxb4 a3!,,] 16...a4 17.h5 Qc7 transposes to 15...Qc7.

C) 15...Qc7 If Black knows what he is doing, he can eliminate some options by playing this move, which has been tried only once in correspondence chess, and never over-the-board. The game continued 16.Kb1 but I suggest 16.h4 which is more precise. 16.h4!N 16...a4 17.h5 Nd7 [17...Ba6 18.Bf5! transposes to 18.h5 in the next subchapter.] 18.Ne4! [18.Kb1?! a3! 19.b3 Nc5 20.Bxc5 Qxc5,,]



Position after: 18.Ne4!

C1) 18...Ra5 19.g5 b3 20.a3 Rxd5 21.Kb1 Qb7 [21...Rxd3 22.cxd3 Qc2+ 23.Ka1 d5 24.Nf6+! gxf6 25.gxf6 Nxf6 – or 25...Bxf6 26.Rdg1+ Kh8 27.Bh6+– – 26.Bh6 Bg4 27.Qe3+–] 22.h6

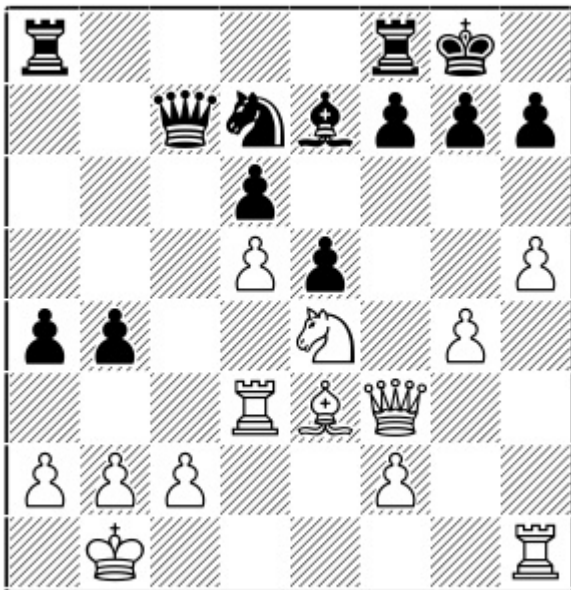


Position after: 22.h6

22...g6 [22...bxc2+ 23.Bxc2 Rb5 24.Bc1 g6 25.Bxa4²] 23.cxb3 axb3 24.Bc4 Ra5 25.Bd2 Ra7 26.Bb4, Black has to remain very cautious as his position is extremely dangerous.

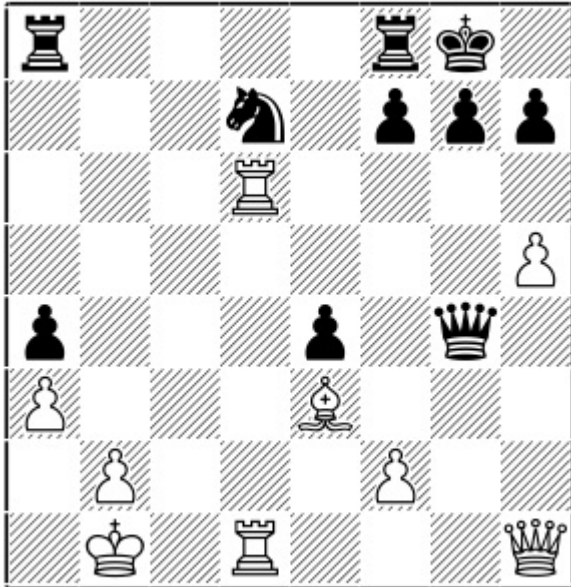
C2) 18...b3 19.a3 bxc2 20.Rd2!±

C3) 18...Ba6 19.Kb1 [19.Bxa6 Rxa6 20.Rd2 Ra5 21.Kb1 a3 22.h6] 19...Bxd3 20.Rxd3



Position after: 20.Rxd3

20...Qc4 [20...Rfb8 21.g5 b3 22.axb3 axb3 23.cxb3 Qb7 24.Rhd1±] 21.Rd2 b3 [21...Ra5 22.Qf5! Rxd5 23.Rxd5 Qxd5 24.h6 g6 25.Qxd7 Qxe4 26.Rc1±] 22.a3 bxc2+ 23.Rxc2 Qxd5 24.Rd1 Qe6 25.Nxd6 Bxd6 26.Rc6 e4 27.Qh1 Qxg4 28.Rcxd6²

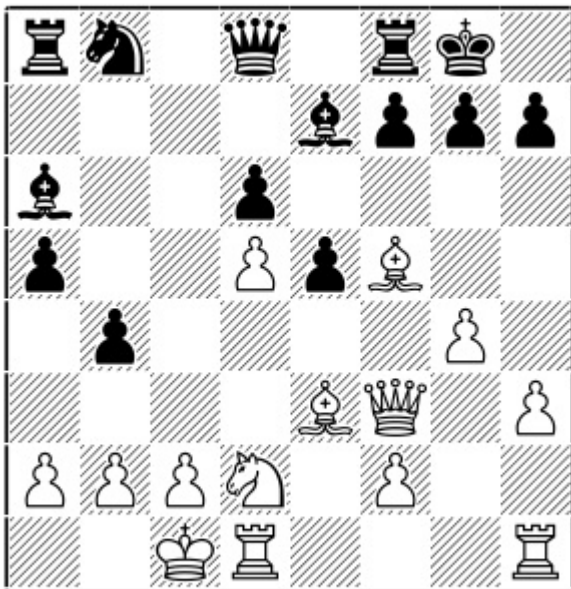


Position after: 28.Rcxd6²

The dominant bishop on e3 is much better than the knight here.

D) 15...a4 16.h4 After some moves Black must basically transpose to other lines anyway. [16.Qe4?! f5 17.Qxb4 Na6 18.Qxa4 f4 19.Bc5 Bd7-+]

16.Bf5!?N

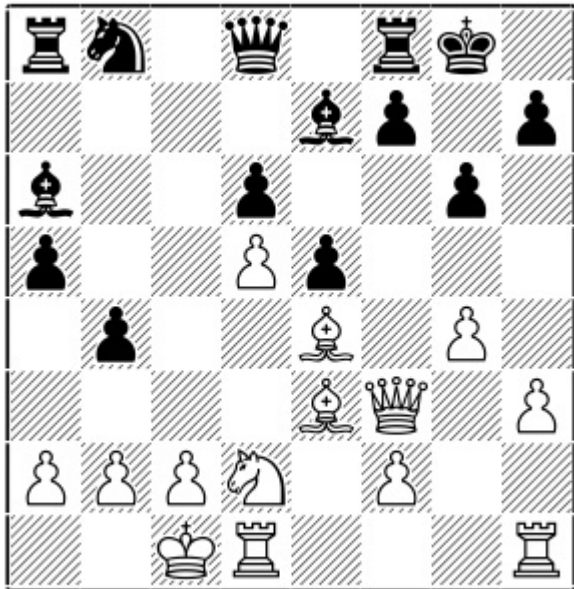


Position after: 16.Bf5!?N

Preserving the bishop for an attack. This novelty was suggested by my good friend and teammate Adhiban during the Asian Team Championship 2018.

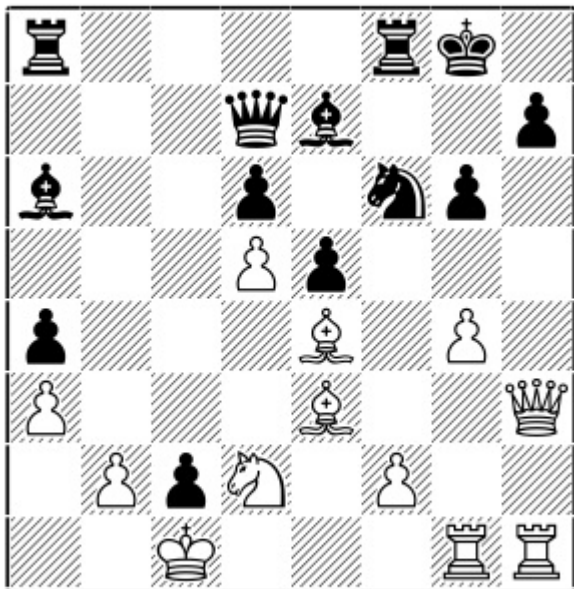
16...a4

A) 16...g6?! 17.Be4! Now the weakness on g6 gives White a huge attack.



Position after: 17.Be4!

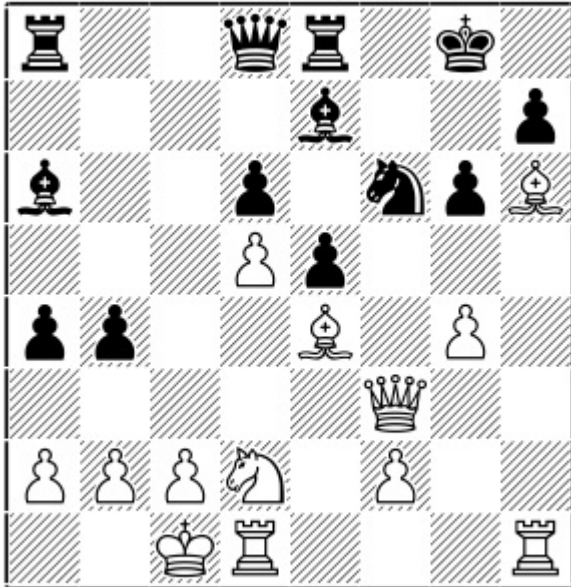
A1) 17...a4 18.h4 b3 19.a3 bxc2 [19...Nd7 20.c3±] 20.Rdg1! Nd7 21.h5 Nf6 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.Qh3 Qd7



Position after: 23...Qd7

24.Bf5!+-

A2) 17...Nd7 18.h4 [18.Kb1 Bh4!,,] 18...Nf6 [18...Rc8 19.h5 Nf6 20.Bh6 Re8 21.Kb1±] 19.Bh6 Re8 20.h5 a4 21.hxg6 fxg6



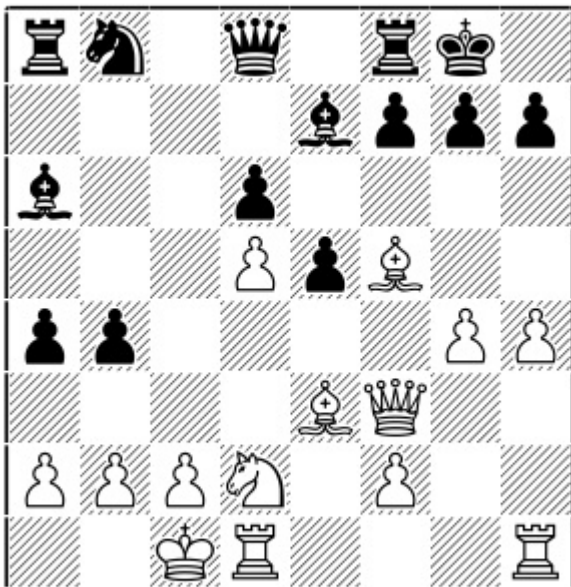
Position after: 21...fxg6

22.Bf5! Bc8 23.Rdg1 Qc7 24.Kb1 b3 25.a3 bxc2+ 26.Bxc2 Qb7 27.Ne4 Rb8 28.Bc1 Rf8 29.Qh3 Rf7 30.Ng5 Rg7 31.Ne6²

B) 16...Qc7 17.h4 a4 is seen in the next subchapter.

C) 16...Nd7 17.h4 a4 transposes.

17.h4

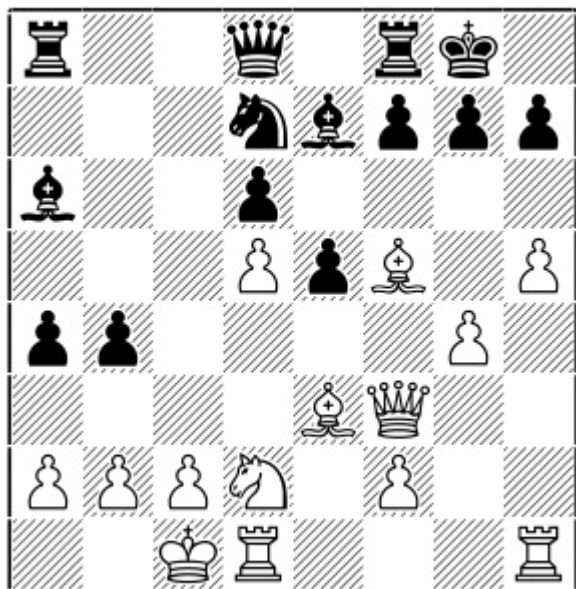


Position after: 17.h4

17...Nd7

17...b3 18.cxb3 axb3 19.a3 Nd7 20.Kb1 g6 21.Be4 Nf6 22.Bh6 Re8 23.Bg5! Nd7 24.Bxe7 Qxe7 25.h5²

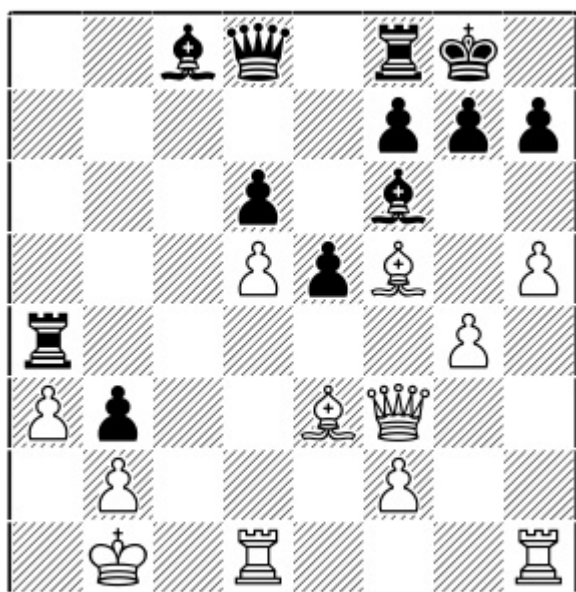
18.h5!



Position after: 18.h5!

18...Qc7

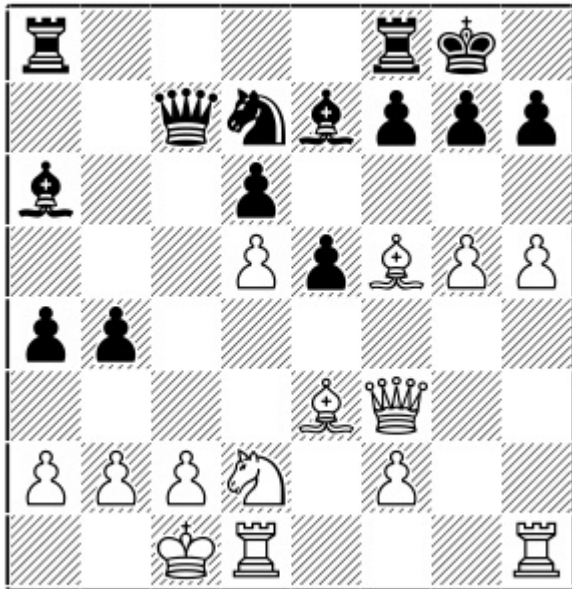
18...b3 19.cxb3 [19.Kb1 bxa2+ 20.Ka1 Qc7 21.Ne4 a3 22.b3 Qxc2 23.Nf6+ Bxf6 24.Bxc2 e4+,,] 19...axb3 20.a3 Nf6 21.Kb1 Bc8 22.Ne4 Ra4 23.Nxf6+ Bxf6



Position after: 23...Bxf6

24.Be4!² Stopping all sorts of counterplay [24.Rd3 e4 25.Bxe4 Qe7 26.Bf5 Qe5 27.Rxb3 Rxa3!,,]

19.g5

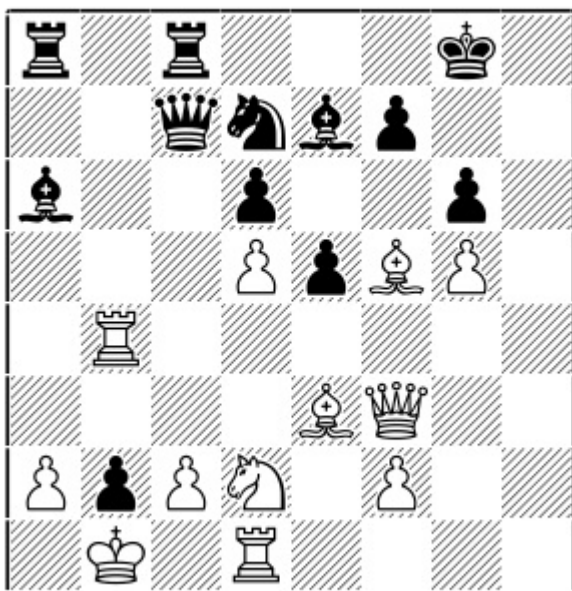


Position after: 19.g5

19...b3

A) 19...a3?! 20.b3 Qc3 21.Ne4 Qb2+ 22.Kd2 Rac8 23.Rc1 Rc5 24.Ke1 Rxd5 25.h6 g6 26.Bxd7 Kh8 27.Rh4 Rd4 28.Rd1 Rxd1+ 29.Qxd1 Qxa2 30.Bd4± 1-0 (42) Franzen, T (2209) – Ovcharenko, L (2272) ICCF email 2016

B) 19...Rfc8 20.Kb1 a3 21.Rh4! axb2 [21...Rab8? 22.Rg4 axb2 23.g6+–] 22.Rxb4 g6 [22...Rab8? 23.Rxb8 Rxb8 24.g6+–] 23.hxg6 hxg6

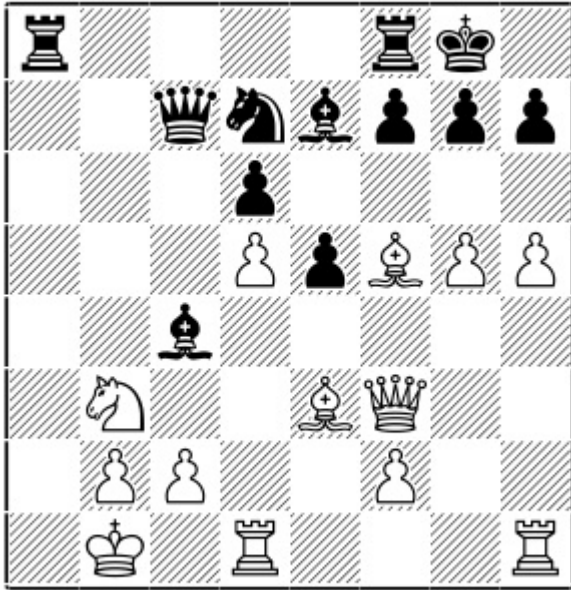


Position after: 23...hxg6

24.Rh1!! [24.Rh4 Bf8 25.Qh3 Bg7 26.Bxg6 fxg6 27.Qe6+ Kf8 28.Qxg6 Qxc2+ 29.Qxc2 Rxc2 30.Kxc2 Rc8+ 31.Kxb2 e4+ 32.Ka3 Be2 33.Rdh1 Ra8+ Klapp, H (2260) – Fischer, W (2445) ICCF 2016] 24...Bf8 [24...gxf5 25.Qxf5 Nf8 26.Rbh4 Qxc2+ 27.Qxc2 Rxc2 28.Kxc2²] 25.Qh3 Bg7 26.Bxg6 fxg6 27.Qe6+!

Kf8 28.c4±

20.axb3 axb3 21.Nxb3 Bc4 22.Kb1



Position after: 22.Kb1

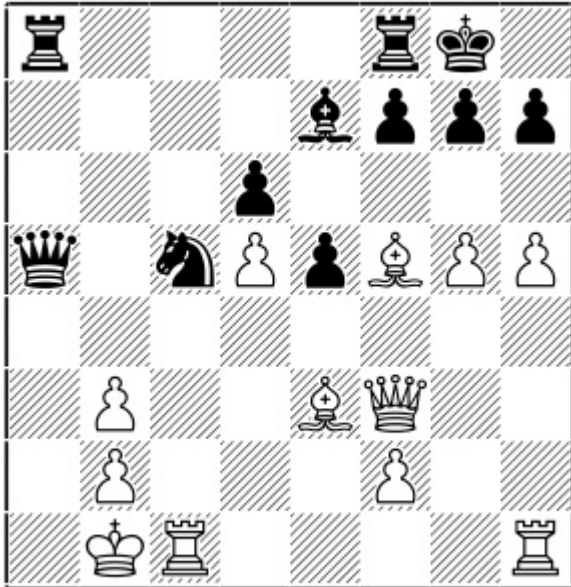
22...Bxb3

- A) 22...Qb7? fails to a tactical trick after 23.Bxh7+ Kxh7 24.Qe4++-
- B) 22...Rfb8? 23.Bxh7+!+-
- C) 22...Nc5 23.Bxc5 Bxb3 24.Ba3 Rxa3 25.bxa3 Bc4 26.Qe3²

23.cxb3 Nc5 24.Rc1

24.Bxc5 Qxc5 25.g6∞ A complicated position, where both kings are under attack but chances are balanced.

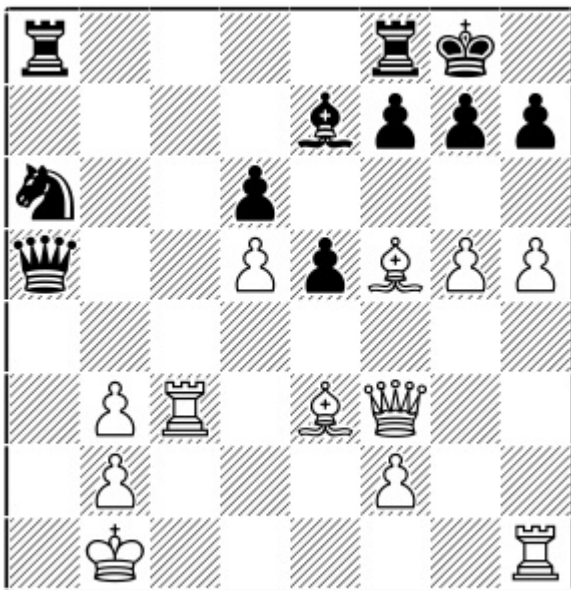
24...Qa5



Position after: 24...Qa5

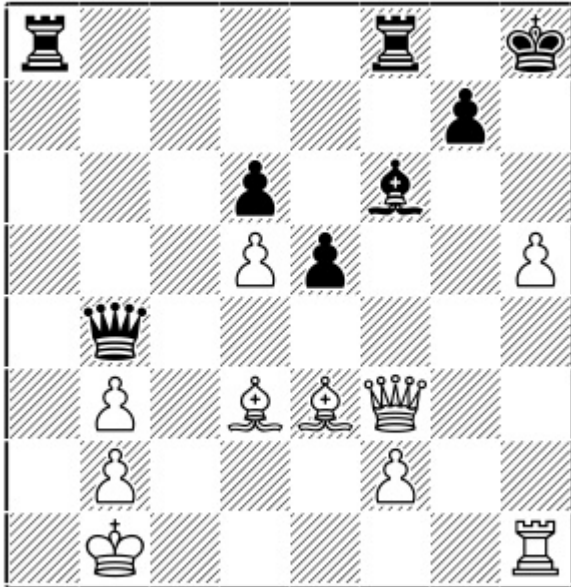
25.Bxc5!

25.Rc3 Na6!



Position after: 25...Na6!

Rerouting the knight: a key principle in attack is to use all the pieces. 26.Rc4 I think White has to block on a4 in order to safeguard his weak king. [26.Rh4? Nb4 27.Bxh7+ Kxh7 28.Qe4+ Kg8 29.Qxb4 Qa1+ 30.Kc2 Ra2; 26.Bxh7+ Kxh7 27.g6+ Kg8+] 26...Nb4 27.Bxh7+ Kh8 28.Rxb4 Qxb4 29.Bd3 f5 30.gxf6 Bxf6

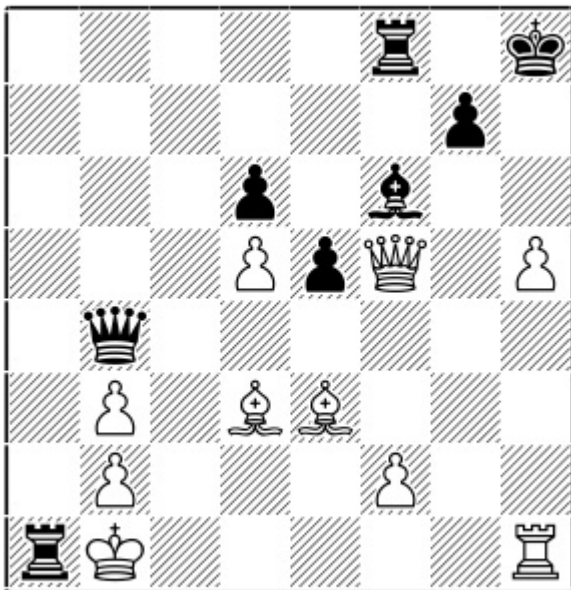


Position after: 30...Bxf6

A) 31.Bc4? Bg5μ

B) 31.h6!? g6 32.Bc4 Bg5!= To exchange one of the key bishops and Black is fine here. [32...Kh7?! 33.Qe4 Qa5 34.Kc2² And White has good stability and more than enough compensation.]

C) 31.Qf5 Ra1+!!

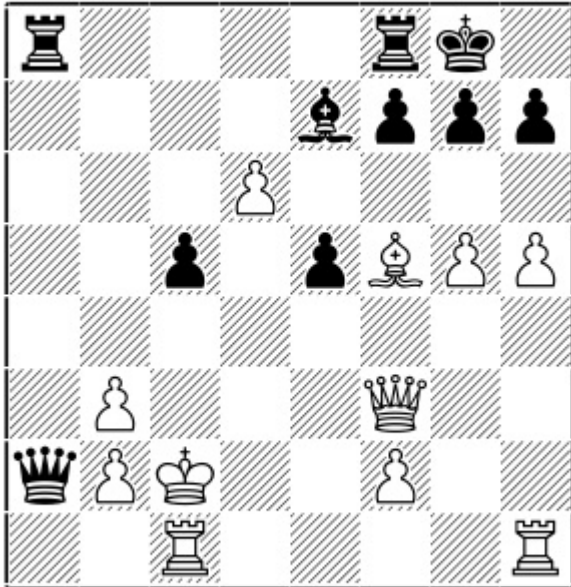


Position after: 31...Ra1+!!

This is the key resource. 32.Kc2 [32.Kxa1 e4μ] 32...g6 33.Qh3 Rxh1 34.Qxh1 Qh4 35.Qxh4 Bxh4 36.Bxg6 Kg7! 37.Be4 Bxf2 38.h6+ Kg8=

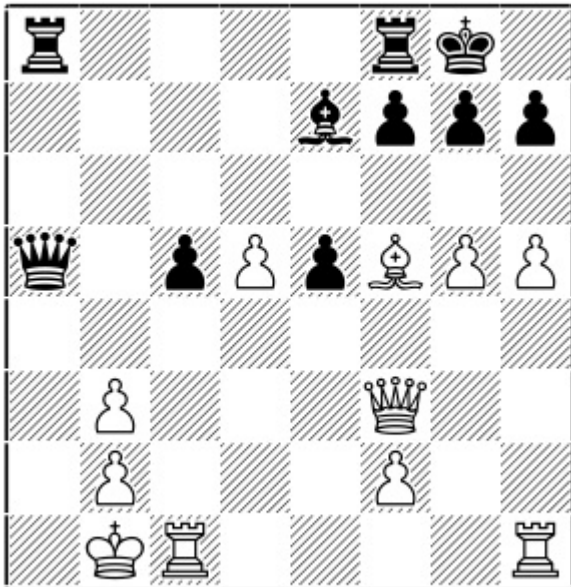
25...dxc5

25...Qa2+ 26.Kc2 dxc5 27.d6!



Position after: 27.d6!

27...Bxg5 [27...Bxd6 28.Bxh7+! Kxh7 29.h6 g6 30.Ra1 Qxa1 31.Rxa1 Rxa1 32.Qf6 Rg8 33.Qxd6+–]
 28.Bxh7+! Kxh7 29.Qf5++–



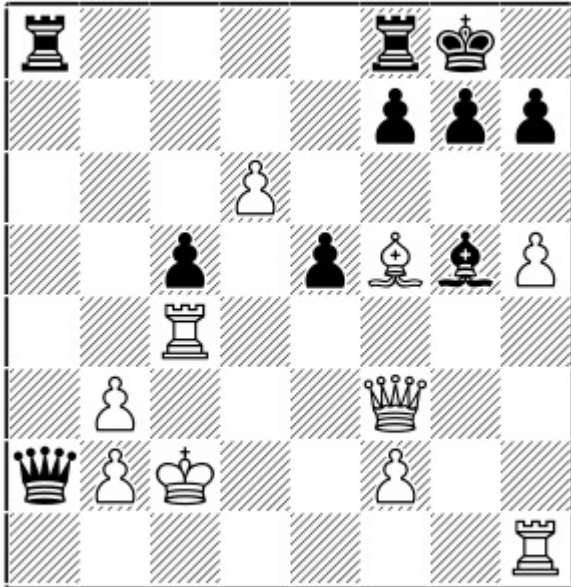
Position after: 25...dxc5

26.Rc4!

26.g6?! Qa2+ 27.Kc2 c4 28.gxf7+ Kxf7 29.d6 [29.bxc4 Kg8=] 29...Qxb3+ 30.Qxb3 cxb3+ 31.Kxb3 Bxd6
 32.Bxh7 Rfb8+=

26...Bxg5 27.d6 Qa2+ 28.Kc2+–

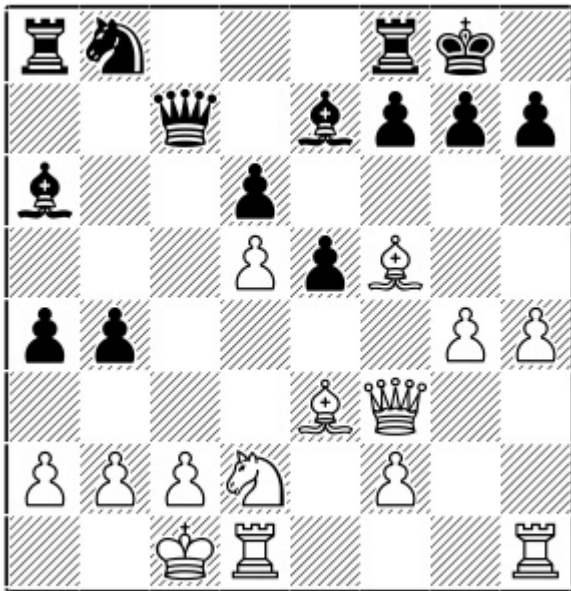
White's king is safe where it is, while the same cannot be said for Black's. White has an overwhelming advantage.



Position after: 28.Kc2+-

b) 17...Qc7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nb3!? Be7 8.Be3 Be6 9.Qf3 0-0 10.0-0-0 b5 11.g4 b4 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.exd5 Bc8 14.Bd3 a5 15.Nd2 Ba6 16.Bf5!?N 16...a4 17.h4 Qc7



Position after: 17...Qc7

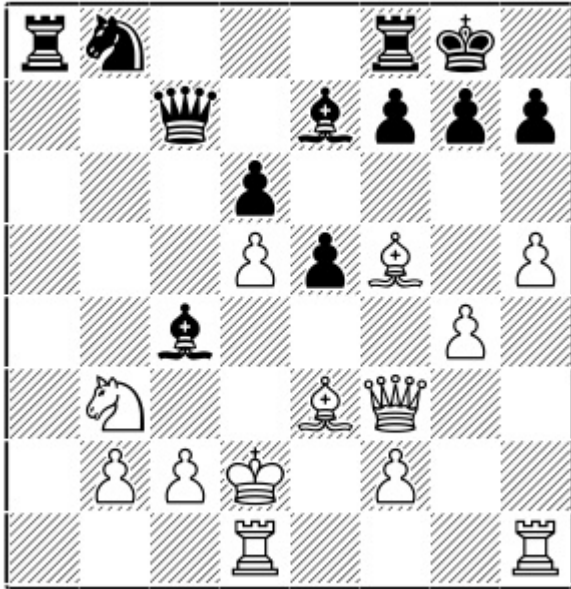
Here I have suggested two interesting options, which provide double-edged positions with plenty of resources. Note that the move 17...Nd7 was covered in the previous subchapter.

18.Bg5!?

Trying to provoke some weaknesses in Black's camp.

A) 18.Kb1? a3,

B) 18.h5!? A direct approach. Now both sides have to walk a thin line: 18...b3! [18...a3? 19.b3 Qc3 20.Ne4+-; 18...Nd7 transposes to the previous subchapter.] 19.axb3 [19.a3 bxc2 20.Rdg1 Nd7 21.g5 Rab8 22.Rh4 Rxb2! 23.Kxb2 Rb8+ 24.Rb4 Rxb4+ 25.axb4 a3+ 26.Kxa3 c1=Q+ 27.Rxc1 Qxc1+ 28.Kb3 Bb5³] 19...axb3 20.Nxb3 Bc4 21.Kd2! Escaping with the king to a safer place.

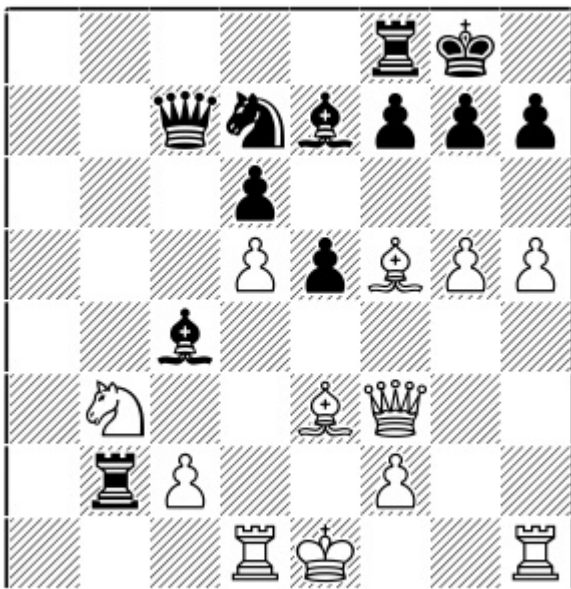


Position after: 21.Kd2!

B1) 21...Qb7?! 22.Ke1!±

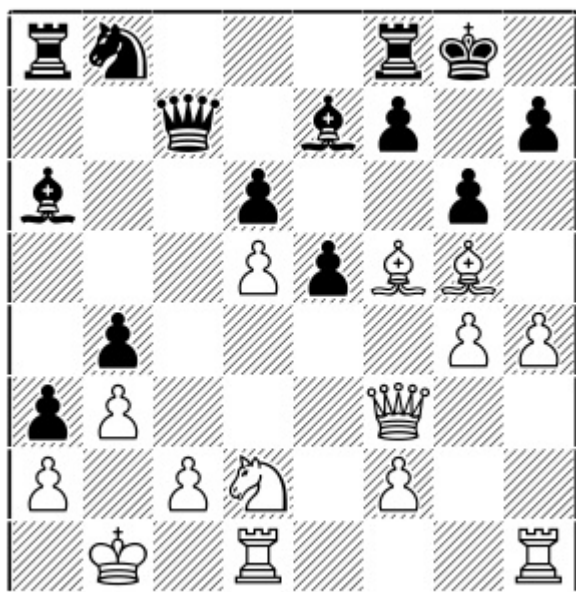
B2) 21...Ra2 22.Ke1 [22.g5 Rxb2 23.Rb1 Bxb3 24.Rxb2 Qa5+ 25.Ke2 Bxd5 26.Qh3 Bxh1 27.Qxh1 d5=] 22...Rxb2 23.Qe4 Nd7 24.g5 Bxb3 25.cxb3 Nc5 26.Qc4∞

B3) 21...Nd7 22.g5 Ra2 23.Ke1 Rxb2



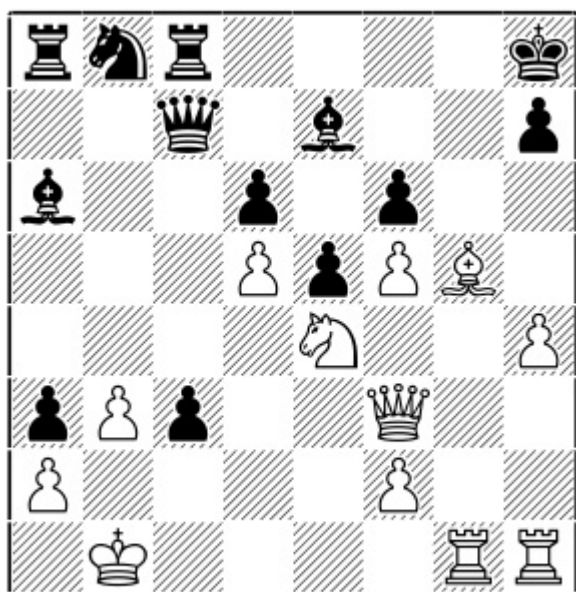
Position after: 23...Rxb2

24.Ne4 Rc8 25.Bg5 Qc7 26.c3 Bc4 27.Bxe7 Qxe7 28.h5 Qb7 29.hxg6 Ra1+ 30.Kd2 Qxb2+,,] 19...a3
 [19...gxf5?? 20.gxf5 f6 21.Bh6+-; 19...b3 20.c4± This important nuance stops all the ideas of counterplay.]
 20.b3



Position after: 20.b3

- A) 20...gxf5 21.gxf5 Rc8 22.Rc1 f6 23.Ne4! Kh8 [23...fxg5 24.hxg5+-] 24.Qh5, and the attack would be very tricky to face in practice.
- B) 20...Kh8 21.Rdg1 gxf5 [21...f6 22.Bh6 Qc3 23.Qxc3 bxc3 24.Bxf8 Bxf8 25.Ne4²] 22.gxf5 Rc8 23.c4! bxc3 24.Ne4 f6

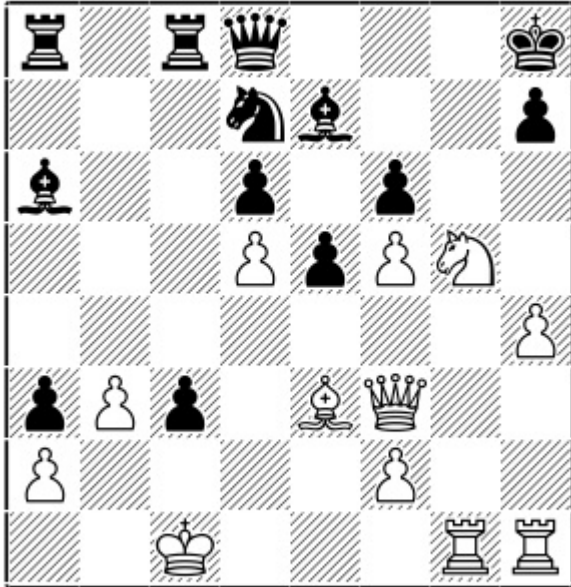


Position after: 24...f6

25.Kc1! [25.Qg4 Bd3+ 26.Kc1 fxg5 27.hxg5 Bxe4 28.Rxh7+ Kxh7 29.Qh5+ Kg8=]

B1) 25...Qd8 At first the engine claims this is winning for Black and underestimates White's attack. Later

the evaluation begins to change, ultimately showing that White's attack is stronger here. [26.Be3!](#) [Nd7](#) [27.Ng5!](#)

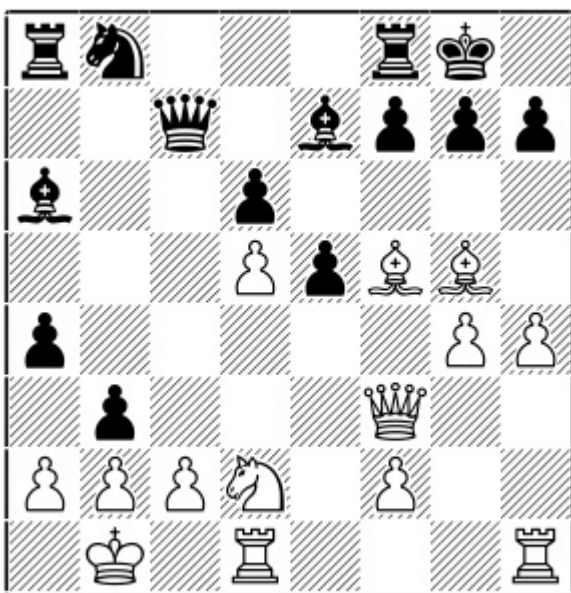


Position after: 27.Ng5!

Double piece sacrifice!! White is trying desperately to break open the position. [27...fxg5](#) [28.hxg5](#) [Qg8](#) [29.g6](#) [Nf6](#) [30.Bh6±](#)

B2) [25...Nd7](#) [26.Qh5](#) [Nc5](#) [27.Nxf6](#) [Nd3+](#) [28.Kc2](#) [Nb4+=](#) Another variation leading to a draw, but there are many pitfalls for the opponent along the route here, making it a good practical pick.

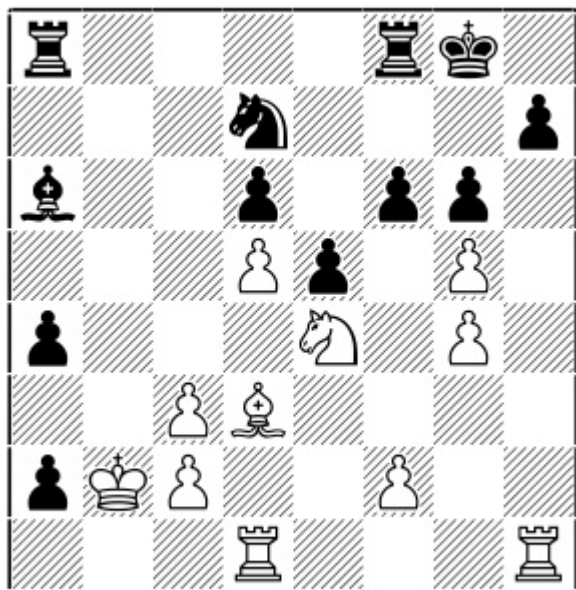
19.Kb1!



Position after: 19.Kb1!

A) [19.axb3](#) [axb3](#) [20.Nxb3](#) [g6](#) [21.c3](#) [Re8!](#), Black brings the knight to d7.

B) 19.Qc3 Qxc3 20.bxc3 bxa2 21.Kb2 Bxg5 22.hxg5 g6 23.Bd3 [23.Ne4 gxf5 24.Nf6+ Kg7 25.gxf5 Rh8 26.Rh6 Bc8=] 23...Nd7 24.Ne4 f6!

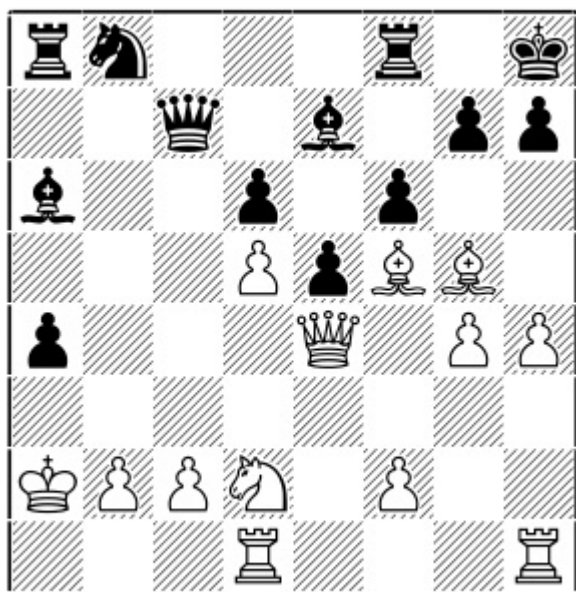


Position after: 24...f6!

Black is holding here thanks to his activity. 25.Nxd6 Nc5 26.f3 fxg5 27.Bxa6 Rxa6 28.Ne4 Nxe4 29.fxe4 Rc8 30.Rd3 Rc4 31.d6 Ra8 32.Rdh3 h5 33.gxh5 Rd8=

19...f6!

19...bxa2+ 20.Kxa2 f6 [20...Bb7 21.Bxe7 Qxe7 22.Ne4 and Black's position looks perilous] 21.Qe4! Kh8



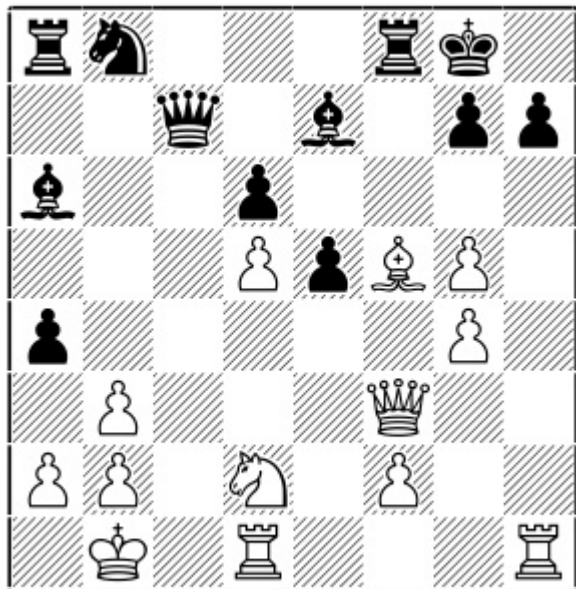
Position after: 21...Kh8

22.c4! [22.Bxh7 a3! 23.b4 Qc3 24.Rb1 fxg5 25.hxg5 Bxg5 26.Bg6+ Bh6 27.g5 Qxd2 28.gxh6 Rf4∞] 22...Nd7 23.Bxh7 [23.Be3 Nc5 24.Bxc5 Qxc5 25.Bxh7 Qb4 26.Qc2 Rfc8,,] 23...Rfb8 24.Be3 Nc5 25.Bxc5

Qxc5 26.Bg6 Qb6 27.Qc2 Ra7 28.g5, This is a double-edged position but it looks more scary for Black.

20.Be3

20.cxb3 fxg5 [20...axb3 21.Be3 bxa2+ 22.Ka1+- Black simply has no attack.] 21.hxg5

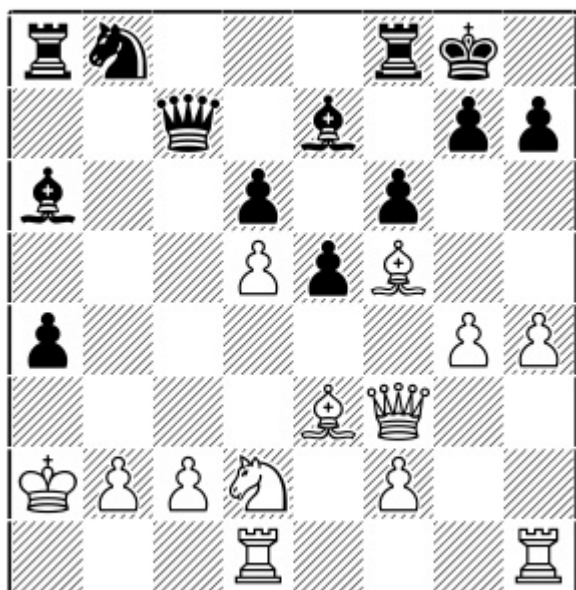


Position after: 21.hxg5

White has sacrificed a piece to weaken Black's king (and he has decent compensation here) but Black is in time to cope with the attack thanks to the strong resource of 21...h6!,, [21...g6?? 22.Be6+ Kg7 23.Rxh7+ Kxh7 24.Qh3+ Kg7 25.Qh6#]

20...bxa2+ 21.Kxa2

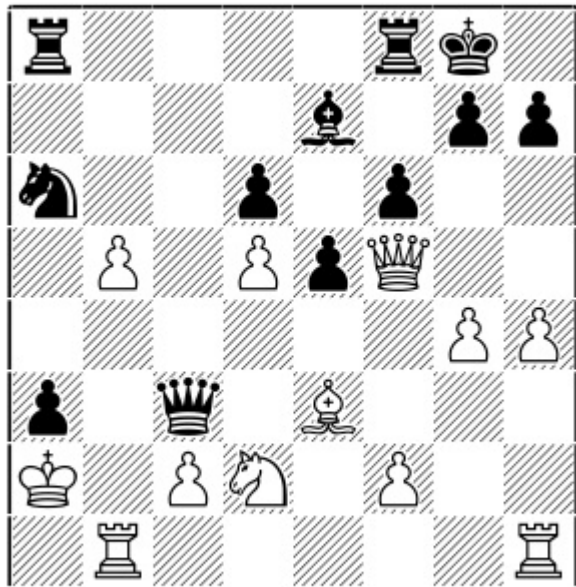
21.Ka1? a3µ



Position after: 21.Kxa2

21...Nd7

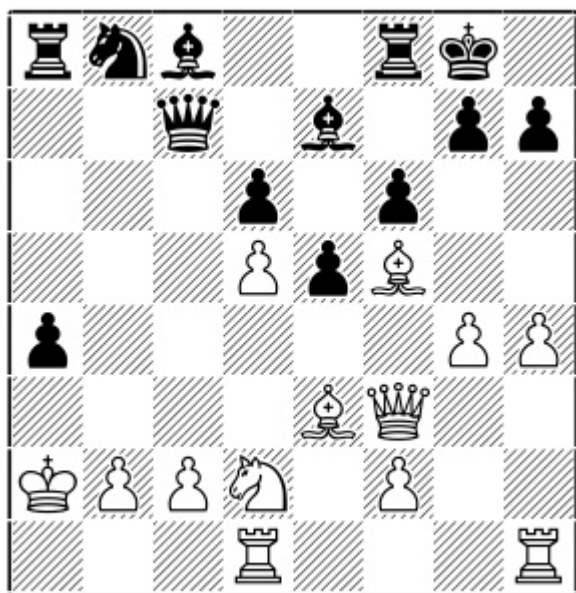
A) 21...a3 22.b3 Qc3 23.Rb1 Bc8 24.b4! Na6 25.b5 Bxf5 [25...Nb4+ 26.Rxb4! Qxb4 27.Rb1 Qa4 28.h5 Rb8 29.c4² White has more than full compensation for the exchange now, as all the avenues of counterplay Black had are now blocked.] 26.Qxf5



Position after: 26.Qxf5

26...Rab8 [26...Nb4+ 27.Rxb4! Qxb4 28.Rb1 Qc3 29.Rb3²] 27.Qe4 Nc5 28.Qc4 Qxc4+ 29.Nxc4 Ne4 30.Kxa3 Nc3 31.Rb3 Nxb5+ 32.Kb2² The knight on b5 is misplaced.

B) 21...Bc8



Position after: 21...Bc8

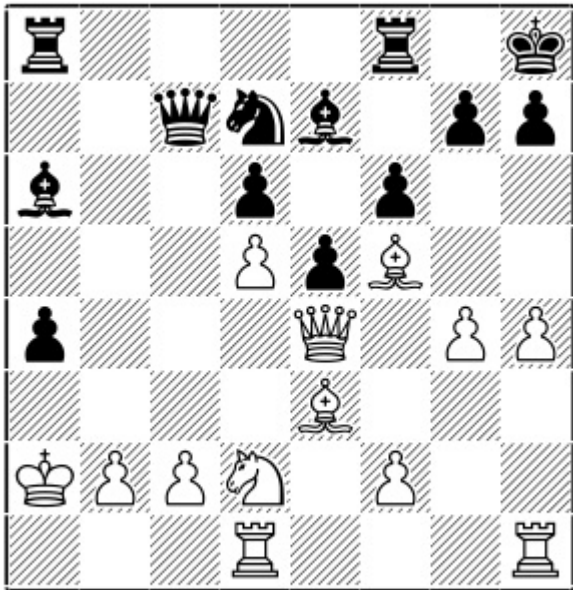
22.Bxh7+! Kxh7 23.g5 Kg6 24.h5+ Kf7 25.g6+ Ke8 26.h6 a3! In this line Black can make a forced draw but it's far from simple even if he gets this far.

22.Qe4

Black's position looks extremely dangerous, but he still has some resources.

Inferior is 22.Rc1? Bc4+ 23.Ka1 a3 24.b3 Be2-+.

22...Kh8!?



Position after: 22...Kh8!?

An interesting prophylactic move to prevent a future Bxh7 or Be6 from coming with check.

23.g5

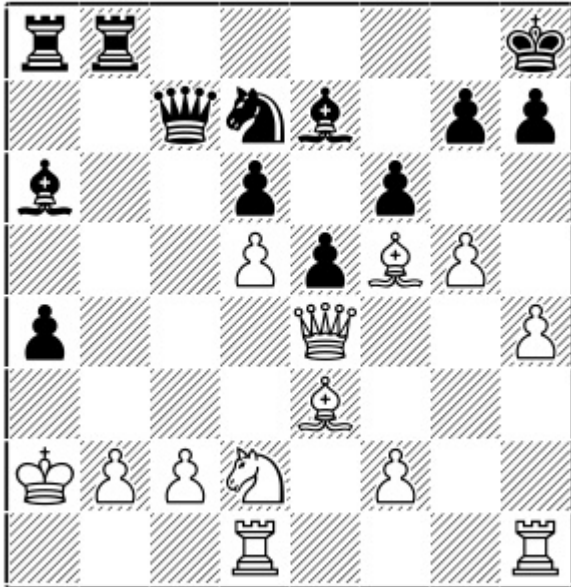
A) 23.Bxh7?? a3 24.b3 f5-+

B) 23.h5 h6 This looks like a brick wall.

C) 23.c4 g6 24.Bxg6 hxg6 25.Qxg6 Bxc4+ 26.Nxc4 Qxc4+ 27.Kb1 a3 28.Qh6+ Kg8 29.Qg6+ leads to a draw.

23...Rfb8

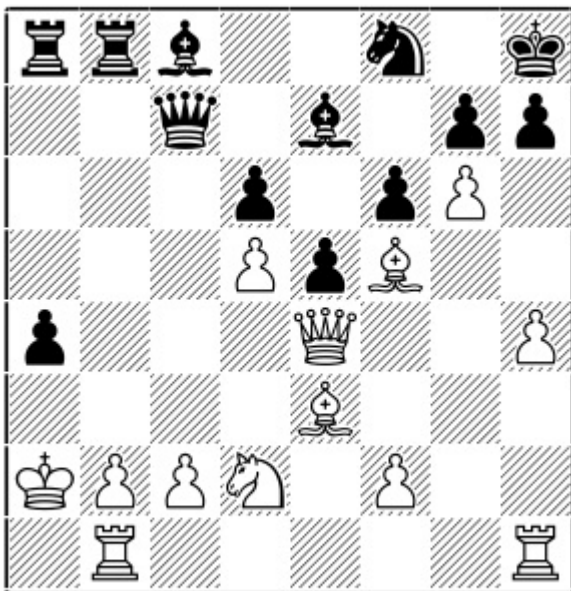
23...Nc5 24.Qf3f With a strong attack, as the move 23...Nc5 only drove White's queen to a better location.



Position after: 23...Rfb8

24.Bxh7

A) White may also choose to play a prophylactic move before he attacks. 24.Rb1 Nf8! I cannot see how Black's defense with the knight on f8 can be broken, e.g. 25.g6 [25.gxf6 Bxf6 26.Bg5 Qf7³] 25...Bc8



Position after: 25...Bc8

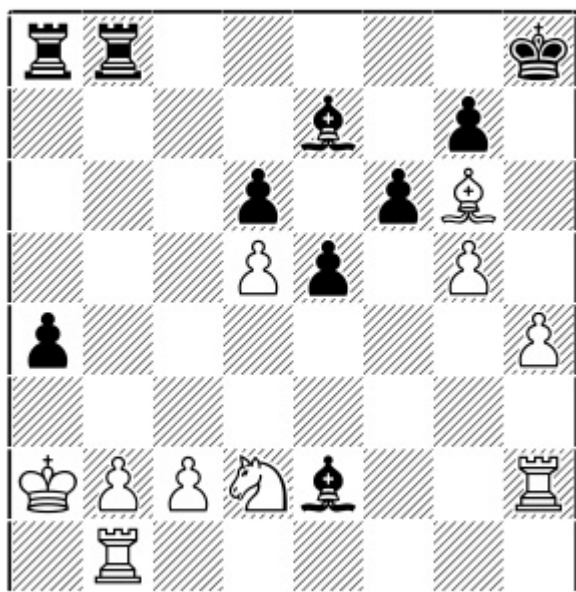
26.gxh7 [26.h5 Bxf5 27.Qxf5 Qc8,, Freeing the f-pawn.] 26...Bxf5 27.Qxf5 Qb7 28.Qe4 Qd7³

B) 24.Rhg1 Nc5 25.Bxc5 Qxc5³

C) 24.c4 Nc5 25.Bxc5 Qxc5 26.Bxh7 Rb4,,

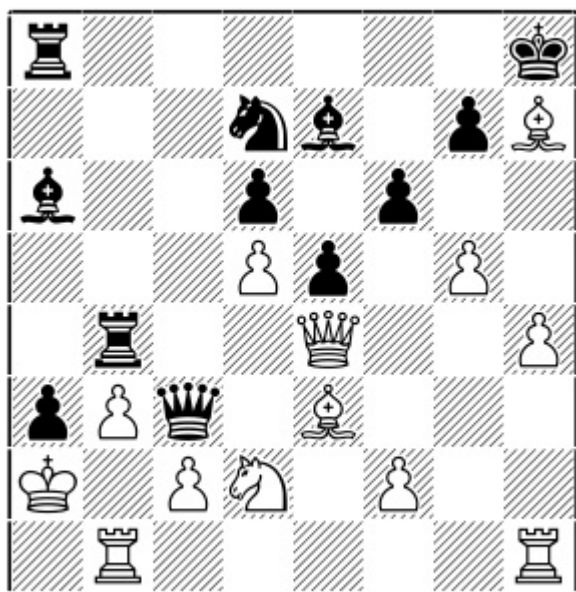
24...a3!

After 24...Nc5 25.Bxc5 Qxc5 26.Bg6 [26.c4 Rb4,, is the same position as after 24.c4] 26...Qb6 [26...Qxf2?! 27.c4!±] 27.Rb1 Qxf2 28.Qg4 Qe2™ 29.Qxe2 Bxe2 I think White does have good chances in the endgame with 30.Rh2².



Position after: 30.Rh2²

25.b3 Qc3 26.Rb1 Rb4



Position after: 26...Rb4

Black has to force a draw, and White has to accept.

27.Qg6

27.Qf5? Nf8µ

27...Nf8 28.Qh5 Nxe7 29.g6 Qxc2+ 30.Ka1 Qc3+=

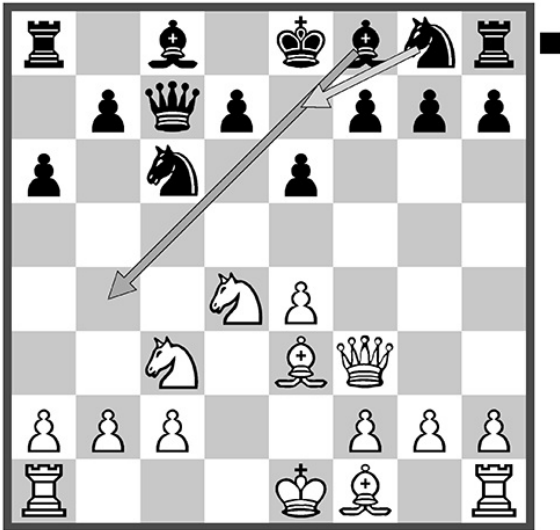
Part II

7.Qf3 Against the Taimanov

Chapter 9

7...Bb4 & 7...Nge7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 9 – 7...Bb4 & 7...Nge7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3

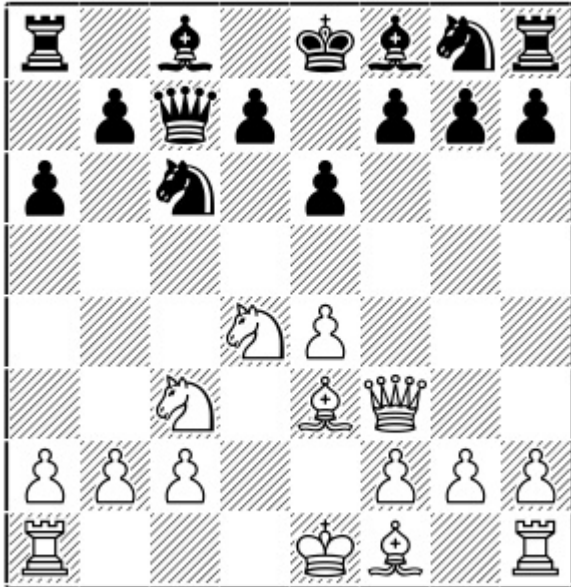
a) 7...Bb4 8.0-0-0 Nf6

b) 7...Bb4 8.0-0-0 Bxc3

c) 7...Nge7

a) 7...Bb4 8.0-0-0 Nf6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3



Position after: 7.Qf3

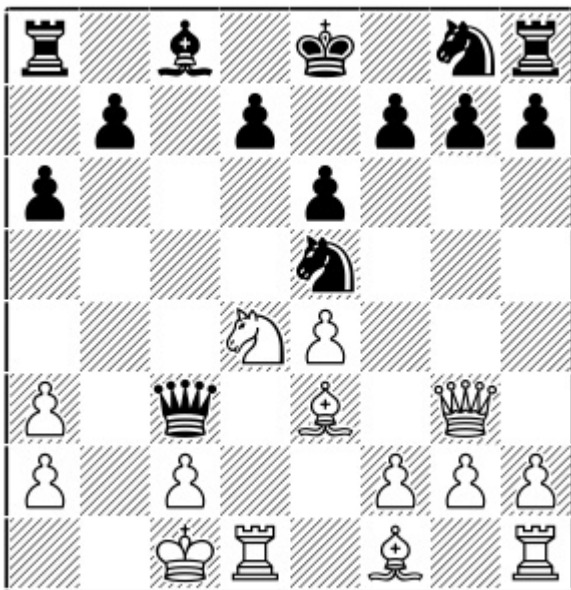
The new way of placing the queen, aiming to create a quick initiative starting with long castling and g4. White also has another plan of Qg3 to exchange the queens and maintain a pleasant edge in the endgame thanks to his well developed pieces and space advantage.

This option became extremely popular after the game Karjakin – Giri, Tashkent FIDE GP 2014.

7...Bb4?!

Generally this is quite normal when White places his queen on d2. But now as the queen is on f3 this does not make much sense.

7...Ba3?! This trick fails to: 8.0-0-0 Ne5 9.Qg3 Qxc3 10.bxa3



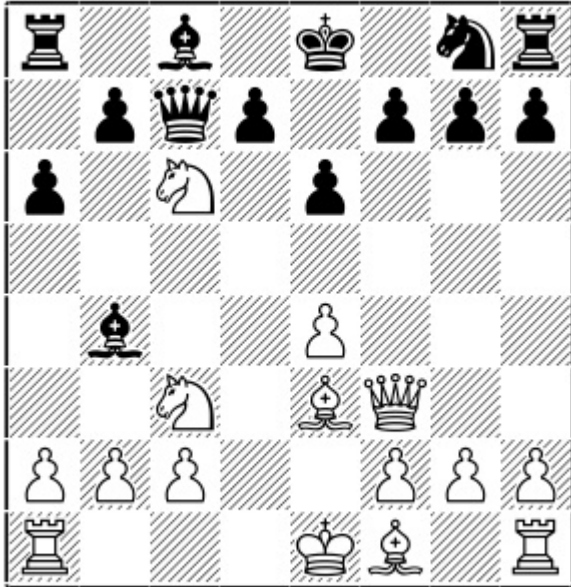
Position after: 10.bxa3

A) 10...Qxa3+ 11.Kb1 Qb4+ [11...Ng6 12.Nb3±] 12.Nb3 Ng6 13.h4 h5 14.f3+–

B) 10...Ng6 11.Qd6 Nf6 12.Bd3± The absence of the dark squared bishop makes Black's cause hopeless.

8.0-0-0

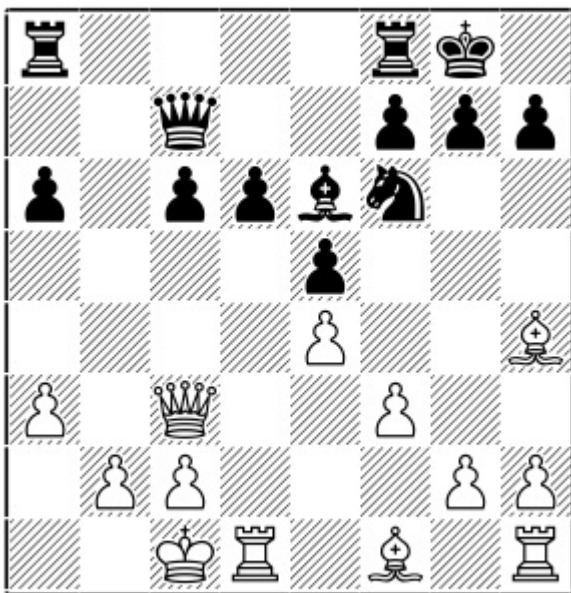
8.Nxc6!? also gives White an advantage, but the main option with 8.0-0-0 is much stronger.



Position after: 8.Nxc6!?

A) 8...bxc6 9.Bf4 d6 [9...Bd6 10.Bxd6 Qxd6 11.Qe3 Ne7 12.Bd3 Qb4 13.0-0 0-0 14.a3 Qxb2 15.e5!

Protecting c3 by means of Bxh7+. 15...Ng6 16.Qc5± As the black bishop on c8 is dead, White has a clear advantage here.] 10.a3 Bxc3+ [10...Bc5 11.Qg3±] 11.Qxc3 e5 12.Bg3 Nf6 13.f3 Be6 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.Bh4!

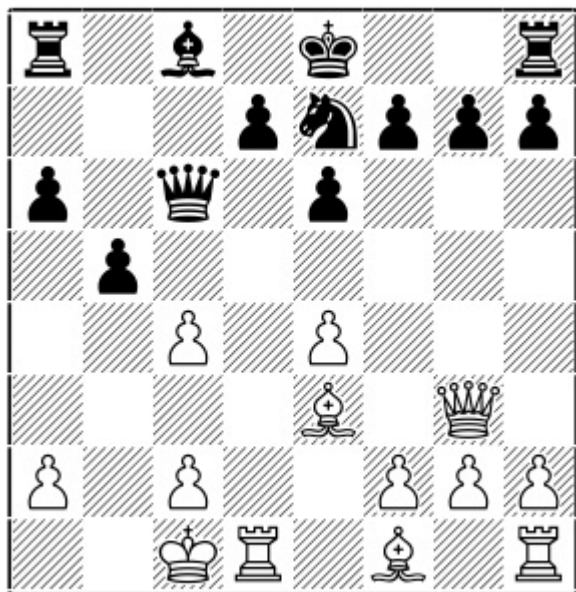


Position after: 15.Bh4!

Targeting the knight on f6 to weaken Black's king position. 15...Rfb8 [15...Ne8 Black's position lacks

coordination because of the placement of the knight on e8 and White has a clear advantage here. 16.Bc4±]
16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.f4 exf4 18.Qxf6±

B) 8...Bxc3+ 9.bxc3 Qxc6 10.c4 Ne7 11.0-0-0! b5 Trying to create some counterplay. 12.Qg3!



Position after: 12.Qg3!

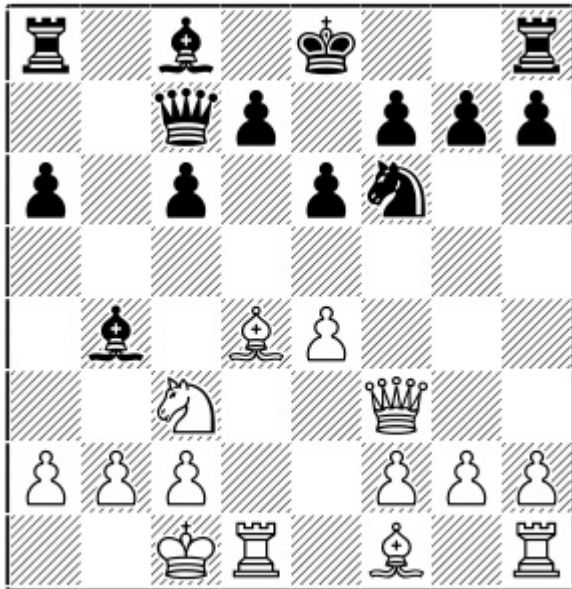
12...bxc4 [12...0-0 13.Rd6 Qc7 14.Bb6 Qb7 15.f3±; 12...Ng6 13.h4 h5 14.Be2 bxc4 15.Rd6 Qa4 16.Rb6! Qxa2 17.Bd4± and White dominates.] 13.Qxg7 Rg8 14.Qd4 d5 15.Be2 Qa4 16.exd5 exd5 17.Qb2 Be6 18.Bf3 0-0-0 19.Kd2!²

The king move is necessary to prepare Rb1, giving White an edge.

8...Nf6

8...Bxc3 – see the next subchapter.

9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.Bd4

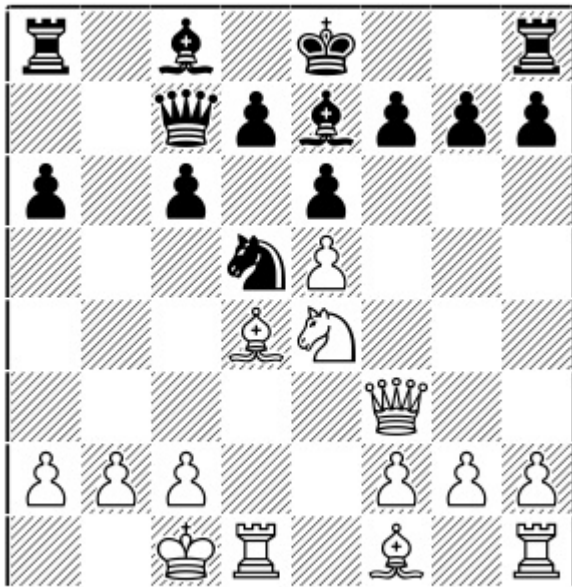


Position after: 10.Bd4

10...d5

A) 10...Bd6 11.Na4 Bb7 [11...Rb8?? 12.Bb6 Rxb6 13.Nxb6+–] 12.Nb6 Rb8 13.Nc4 Bf4+ 14.Be3 Bxe3+ 15.Qxe3 d5 16.e5 Ne4 17.Bd3 c5 18.Bxe4 dxc4 19.c3± and Black's doubled pawns on the c-file give White a good advantage.

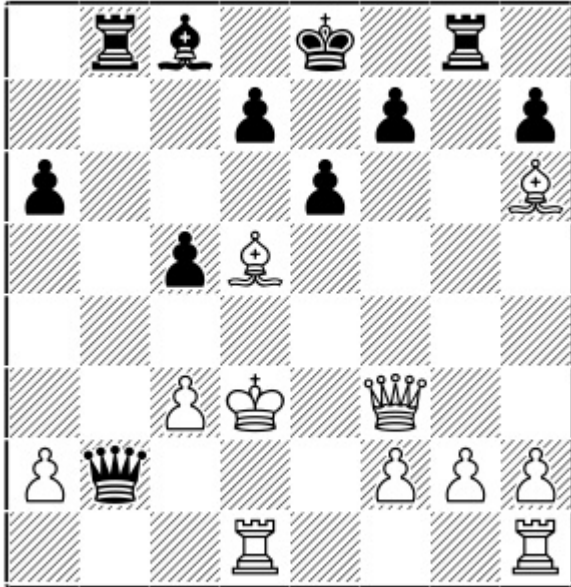
B) 10...Be7 11.e5 Nd5 12.Ne4



Position after: 12.Ne4

B1) 12...0-0 13.Nf6+! Bxf6 [13...gxf6 loses to 14.Qg3+ Kh8 15.exf6 Qxg3 16.fxe7++–; 13...Nxf6 14.exf6 Bxf6 15.Bxf6 gxf6 16.Qxf6 Qd8 17.Qc3± Black's king is without any cover.] 14.exf6 c5 15.fxg7 Re8 16.Bf6 c4 17.h4 Bb7 18.h5 c3 19.Bxc3 Nb4 20.Qf6 Nxa2+ 21.Kb1 Nxc3+ 22.Qxc3 Qxc3 23.bxc3 Kxg7 24.Rxd7±

B2) 12...c5 13.Nd6+ Bxd6 14.exd6 Qxd6 15.Bxg7 Rg8 16.Bh6 Rb8 17.Bc4 Qe5 18.Bxd5 Qxb2+ 19.Kd2 Qb4+ 20.c3 Qb2+ Here White calmly plays 21.Kd3:

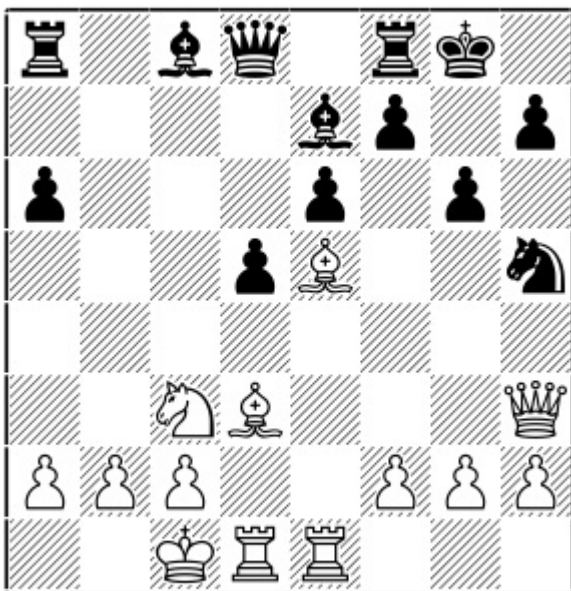


Position after: 21.Kd3

21...a5 [21...c4+ 22.Bxc4 d5 23.Bb3 Bd7 24.Bc1+-] 22.Bc4+- with an extra piece.

11.Bxf6

11.exd5!? An interesting option to continue attacking, but I consider the text a simpler and more convincing way to get a reliable plus. 11...cxd5 12.Bd3 Be7 13.Rhe1 0-0 14.Be5 Qd8 15.Qg3 Nh5 [15...Bb7 16.f4 Bd6 17.Ne2± and White is in total control.] 16.Qh3 g6

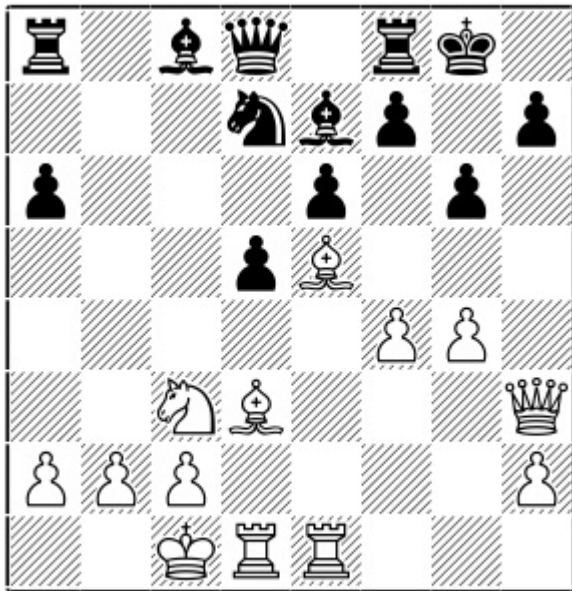


Position after: 16...g6

A) 17.f4 f6! 18.g4 fxe5 19.gxh5 Rxf4 20.hxg6 h6! 21.Rxe5 [21.Qxh6?? Rh4+-] 21...Bg5 22.Kb1 Qf6

23.Rde1 Rb8,,

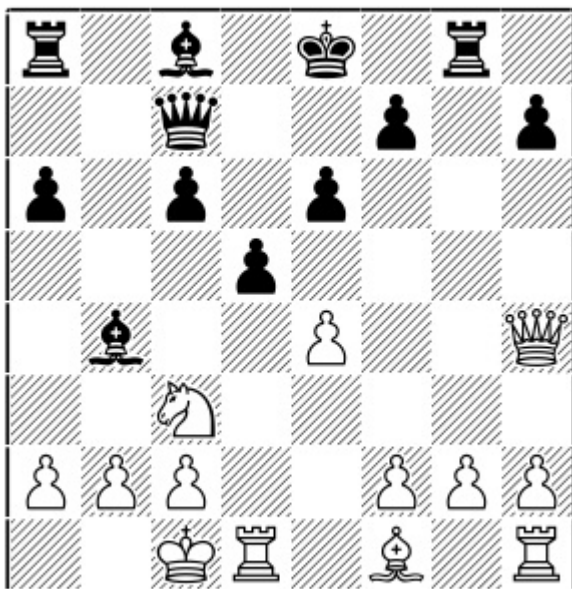
B) 17.g4 Nf6 18.f4 Nd7



Position after: 18...Nd7

19.Bd4 [19.Qh6 Nxe5 20.Rxe5 Bf6 21.Rh5 Re8 22.Qxh7+ Kf8 23.Bxg6 fxg6 24.Qxg6 Qe7 25.Rh7 Bg7 26.f5 Qf6 27.Rf1 exf5,,] 19...Bc5 20.Qe3² White is slightly better here but it is not so convincing.

11...gxf6 12.Qxf6 Rg8 13.Qh4!



Position after: 13.Qh4!

13...Rb8

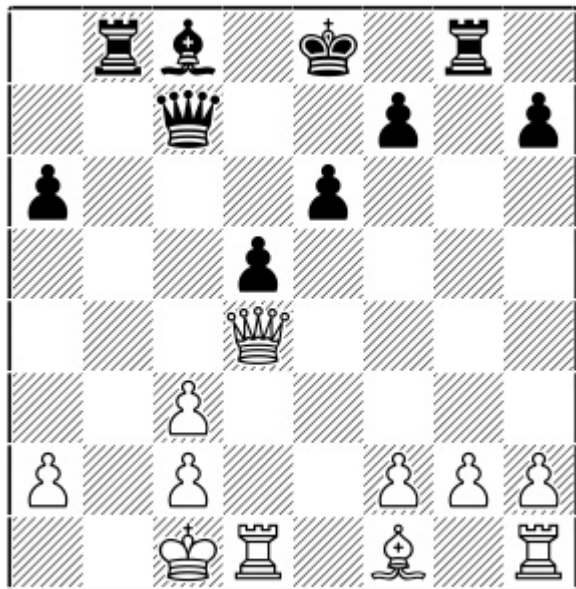
13...Bxc3 14.bxc3 Rb8 15.Bd3 Qe5 16.Kd2 Rxc2 17.Rdg1± and White's king is safe on d2.

14.exd5 Bxc3

A) 14...cxd5? 15.Bb5++-

B) 14...exd5 15.g3!± with the idea of developing the bishop to h3 and Rhe1 to follow.

15.bxc3 cxd5 16.Qd4



Position after: 16.Qd4

16...e5

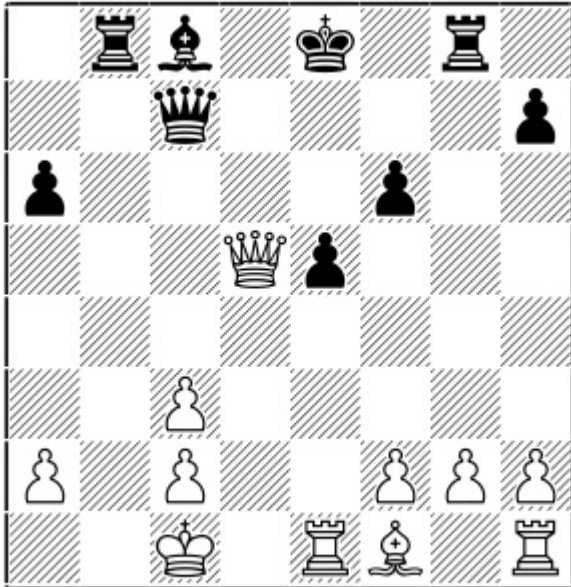
16...Bd7 17.g3± White, one pawn up, has an overwhelming advantage.

17.Re1

An important intermediate move, provoking ...f6 before taking the pawn on d5 and also preventing the rook lift from g8 to b6 via g6.

17.Qxd5 allows 17...Rg6.

17...f6 18.Qxd5±



Position after: 18.Qxd5±

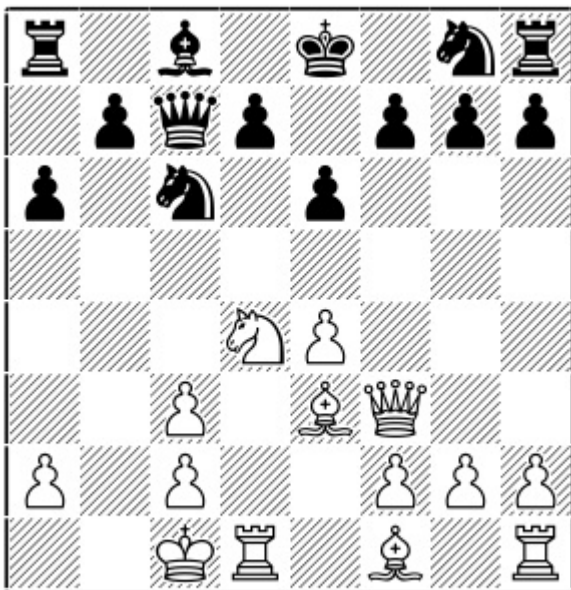
White is clearly better.

b) 7...Bb4 8.0-0-0 Bxc3

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bb4?! 8.0-0-0 Bxc3

Black's other options were dealt with in the previous subchapter. Let us now examine the main idea behind 7...Bb4.

9.bxc3



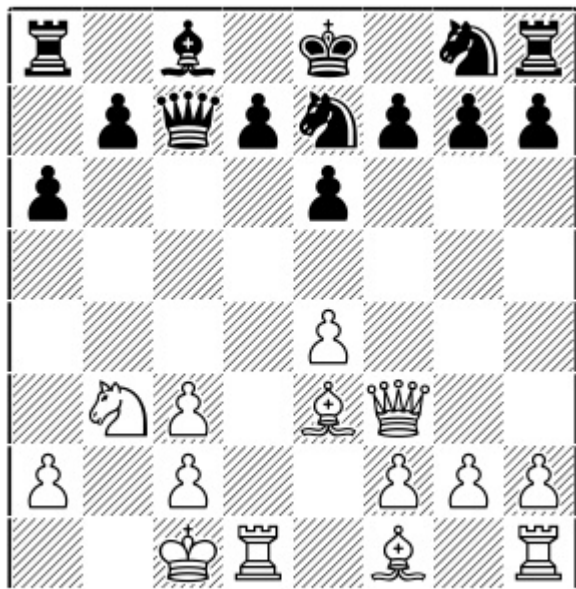
Position after: 9.bxc3

Black has given away his dark squared bishop to shatter White's pawn structure and weaken White's king, but he will end up missing the bishop and paying the price.

9...Nf6

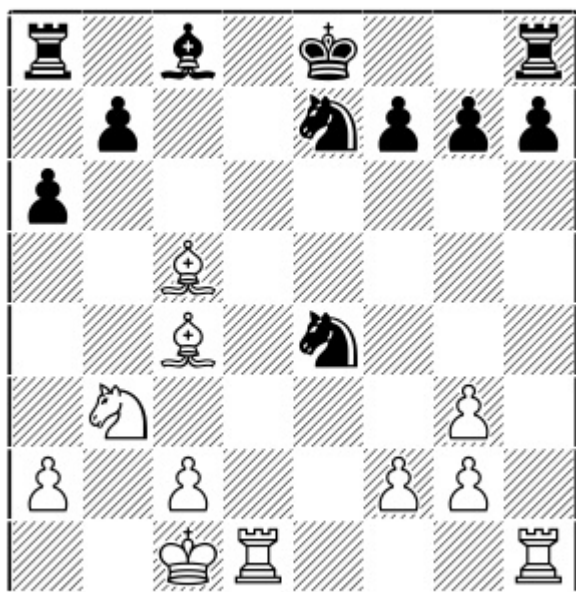
A) 9...Nge7 10.Qg3 Qxg3 11.hxg3 b5 12.c4± White has the bishop pair.

B) 9...Nce7 10.Nb3



Position after: 10.Nb3

B1) 10...Nf6 11.Bc5 d5 [11...b5 12.Bd6 Qc6 13.Rd4 Bb7 14.Na5±] 12.exd5 exd5 13.Qg3! Qxg3 14.hxg3 Ne4 15.c4! dxc4 16.Bxc4



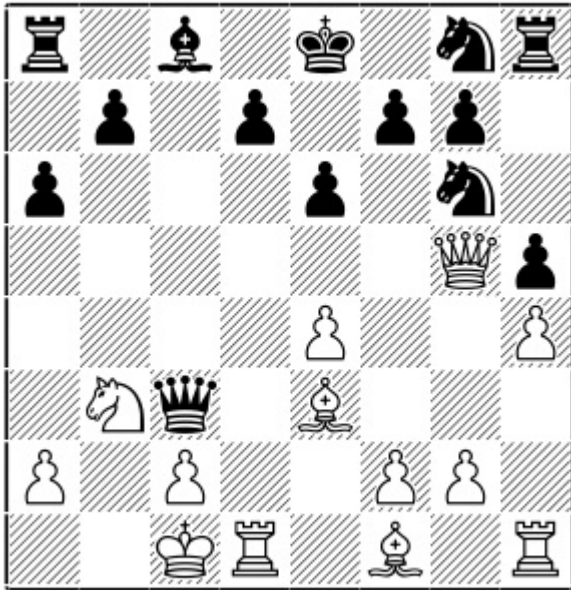
Position after: 16.Bxc4

16...Nxc5 [16...b5 17.Bb6! White threatens mate on d8, and stands better after 17...0-0 18.Bd3±.]

17.Nxc5 b5 18.Bb3 Ra7 [18...0-0 19.Nd7 Bxd7 20.Rxd7± and the rook on the seventh rank is quite devastating.] 19.Rd6 0-0 20.Rhd1± Now White threatens once more to occupy the seventh rank with 21.Nd7.

B2) 10...Qxc3 11.Qg3

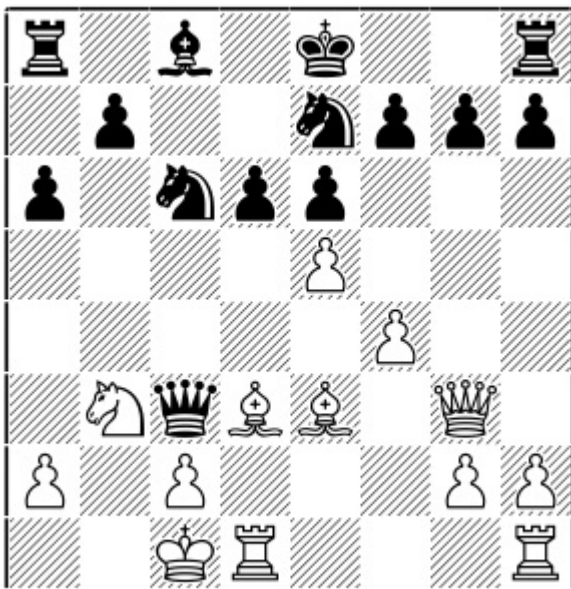
B2.1) 11...Ng6 12.h4 h5 13.Qg5



Position after: 13.Qg5

13...Qe5 [13...Nf6 14.Bd4 Qc7 15.e5 Nd5 16.Bd3±] 14.Bd4 Qxg5+ 15.hxg5 f6 16.Be2 h4 17.g3±

B2.2) 11...Nc6 12.Bd3 Nge7 13.f4 d6 14.e5! Deflecting the queen on c3.



Position after: 14.e5!

14...dxe5 15.Qxg7 Rg8 16.Qxg8+! Nxc8 17.Bd2 Qxd3 18.cxd3± White is simply an exchange up and is clearly better.

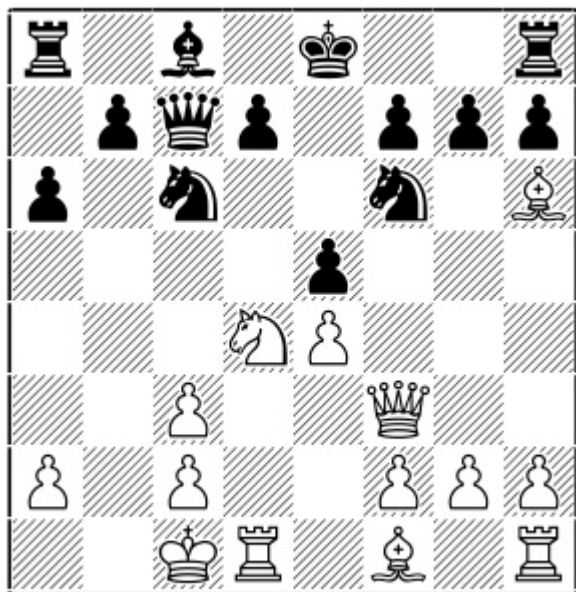
10.Bf4

Exploiting the weakness of Black's dark squares.

10...e5

10...Nxd4 11.Bxc7 Nxf3 12.gxf3 b5 13.c4± Getting rid of the doubled pawns and opening up the position gives White a good advantage.

11.Bh6!



Position after: 11.Bh6!

A picturesque and important resource which gives White the upper hand in the resulting complications.

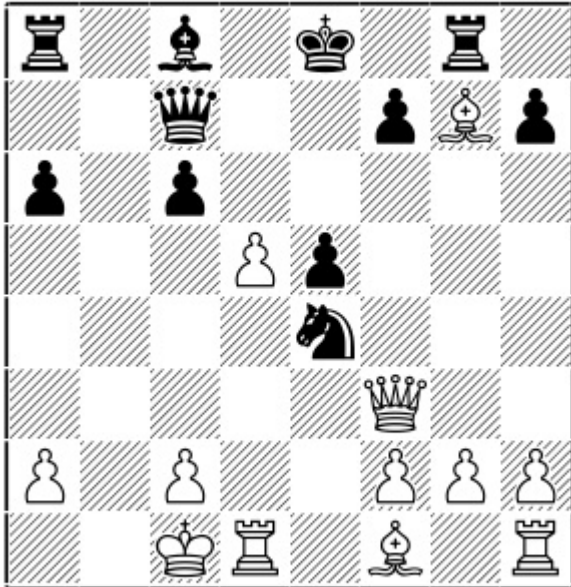
11...d5

11...Nxe4 12.Qxe4 gxh6 13.Nf5 d5 14.Rxd5 Bxf5 15.Qxf5±

12.Bxg7 Nxe4 13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.c4!

14.Bxh8? Qa5! Thanks to this amazing resource Black survives. 15.Bc4 Qa3+ 16.Kb1 Nxc3+ 17.Ka1 Rb8 18.Rb1 dxc4 19.Qxc6+ Kf8 20.Qh6+=

14...Rg8 15.cxd5



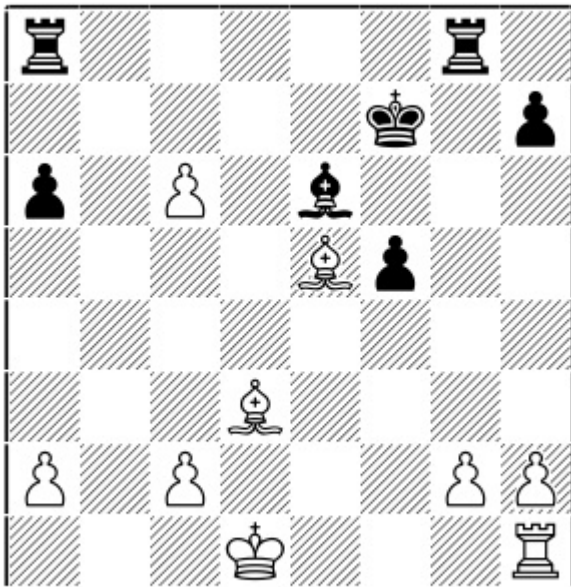
Position after: 15.cxd5

15...f5

A) 15...Ng5 16.d6 Qd8 17.Qf6 Qxf6 18.Bxf6 Ne4 19.Bh4 Rg4 20.Bg3± and White has a strong passed pawn on d6.

B) 15...cxd5 16.Rxd5 Rxc7 17.Qxe4 f6 18.Be2 Bb7 19.Qa4+ Kf8 20.Qb4+ Kg8 21.Rc5± with an extra pawn.

16.Qh5+ Qf7 17.Qxf7+ Kxf7 18.Bxe5 Nxf2 19.dxc6 Nxd1 20.Kxd1 Be6 21.Bd3±

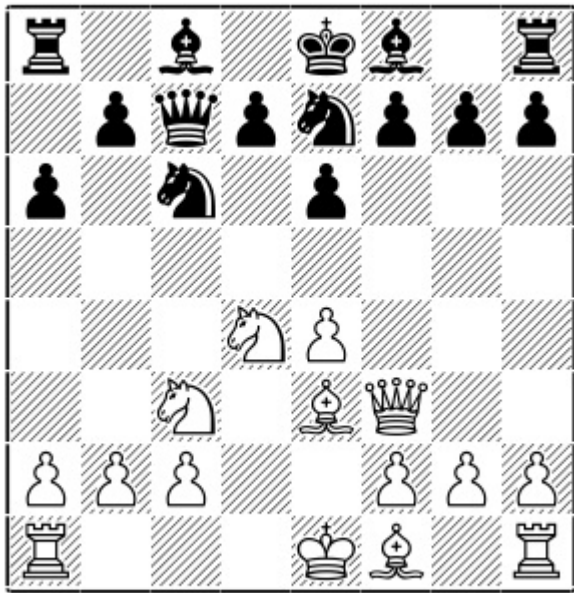


Position after: 21.Bd3±

Here White's strong passed pawn on c6 gives him a good advantage.

c) 7...Nge7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nge7



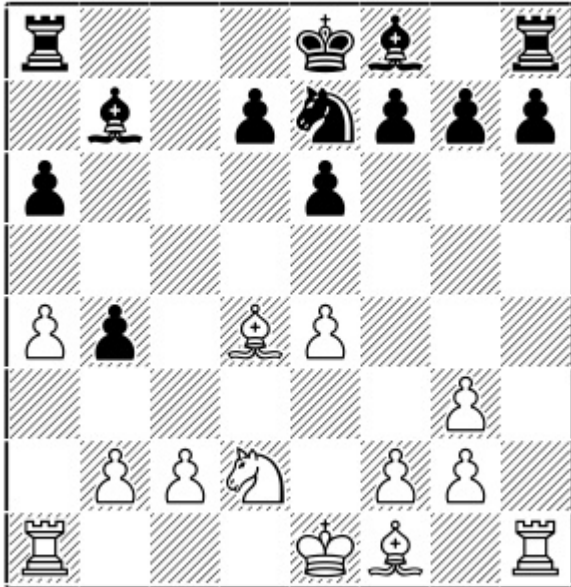
Position after: 7...Nge7

The idea of this move is to take on d4 and bring the other knight to c6. Here White has numerous options to get good play but I prefer the new and powerful idea 8.Nb3.

8.Nb3!N

Simply preventing the exchange of knights on d4 which would lead to Black's e7-knight coming to c6. Now the e7 knight is clearly misplaced.

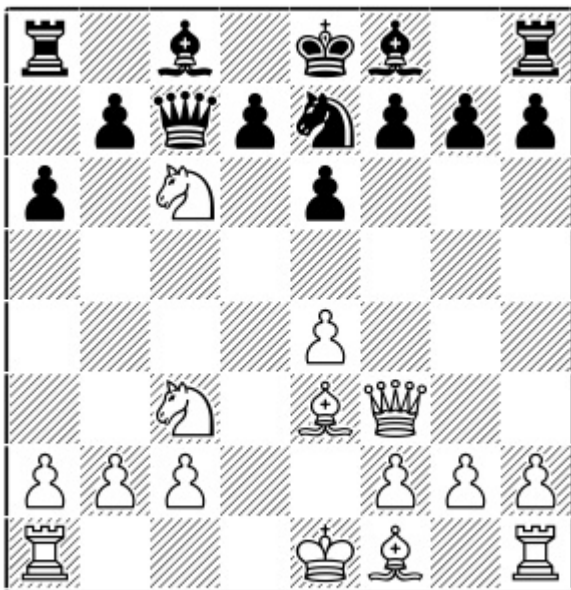
A) 8.Qg3 Qxg3 9.hxg3 Nxd4 [9...b5? 10.Ndxb5! axb5 11.Nxb5+–] 10.Bxd4 b5 [10...Nc6?! 11.Bb6±] 11.a4 b4 12.Nb1 Bb7 [12...d5 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Nd2 f6 15.f4± preventing e5 and White has a large space advantage.] 13.Nd2



Position after: 13.Nd2

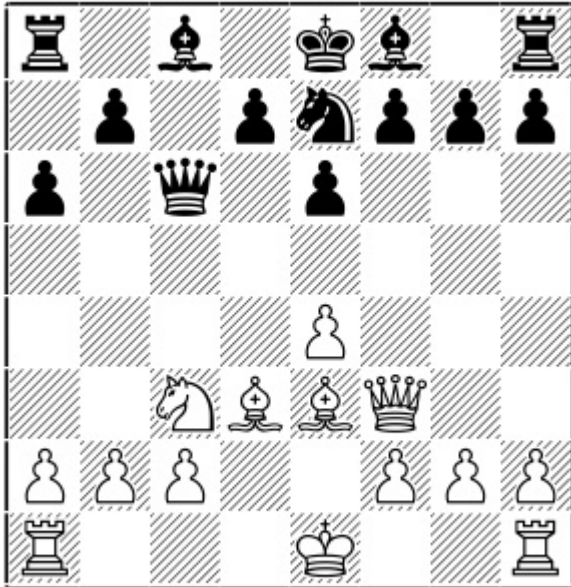
13...d5 [Following 13...f5 14.exf5 Nxf5 15.Bb6 Rc8 16.0-0-0 Bc5 17.Bxc5 Rxc5 18.g4 Ne7 19.Nc4² White has a promising endgame and may continue with Nd6.] 14.Bc5 dxe4 15.Bxb4 Nd5 16.Bxf8 Kxf8 17.Nc4 Ke7 18.0-0-0 a5 19.g4! h6 20.Rd4² White is slightly better here although it is not totally clear as Black has some counterplay thanks to his active pieces.

B) 8.Nxc6



Position after: 8.Nxc6

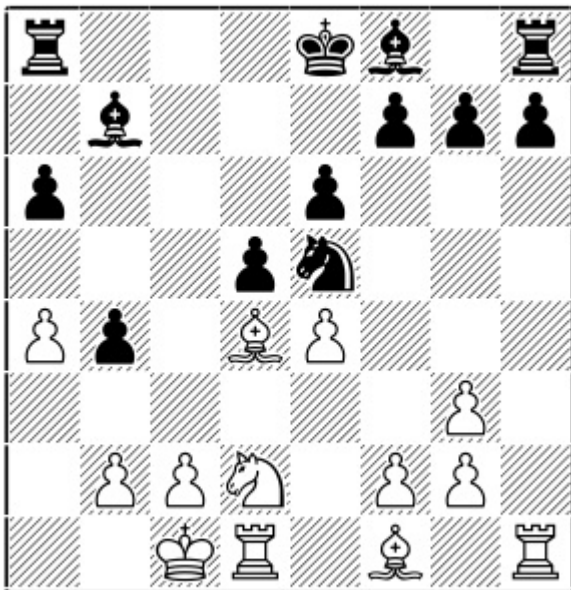
B1) 8...Qxc6?! The normal recapture is with the knight on e7, as that's the whole point of 7...Nge7. So this capture with the queen on c6 is pointless and the following variations prove that Black lands up in trouble. 9.Bd3



Position after: 9.Bd3

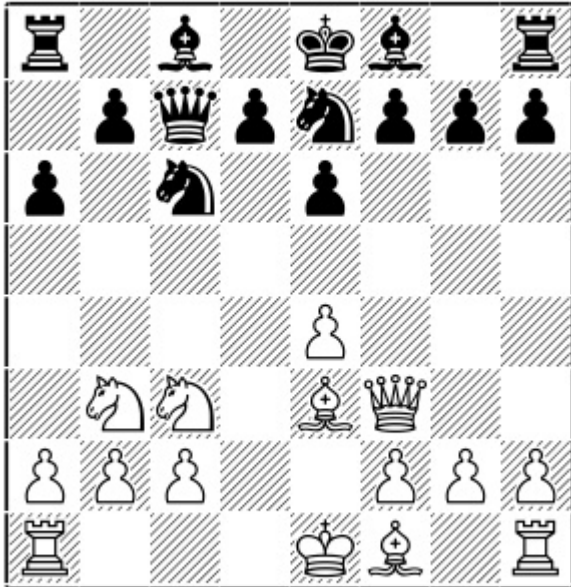
9...Ng6 [9...b5 10.Qg3 Bb7 11.0-0-0 Rc8 12.Kb1 Qc7 13.f4 Nc6 14.Rhe1 Nb4 15.Bd4 Nxd3 16.Qxd3 f6 17.Bb6! Qc6 18.Ba5 Bc5 19.a3±] 10.0-0-0 [10.Qg3 Ba3 11.Nd1 Bd6 12.f4 0-0 13.h4²] 10...Qc7 11.Kb1 b5 12.h4 Ne5 13.Qg3±

B2) 8...Nxc6 9.Qg3 Qxg3 10.hxg3 b5 11.a4! b4 12.Nb1 Ne5 13.Nd2 Bb7 14.0-0-0 d5 15.Bd4



Position after: 15.Bd4

15...Nc6 [15...f6 16.exd5 Bxd5 17.f4 Nc6 18.Bb6±] 16.Bb6 Ne5 17.exd5 Bxd5 18.Bd4 Nc6 19.Be3 Ne5 [19...Be7 20.Nc4±] 20.Rh5 Ng4 [20...f5 21.Bd4 Nc6 22.Bb6± and this endgame is clearly better for White.] 21.Bd4² White has an enduring development advantage that gives him good chances.



Position after: 8.Nb3!N

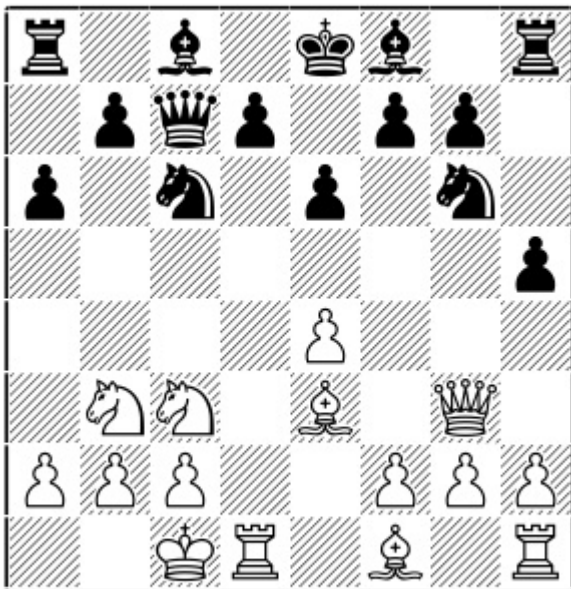
8...h5

8...Ng6 9.0-0-0

A) 9...h5

A1) 10.g3 Nge5 11.Qe2 [11.Qg2 Ng4 12.Bf4 Nge5,,] 11...b5 12.f4 Nc4 13.e5 Bb7 14.Bg2 Rc8 15.Bf2²

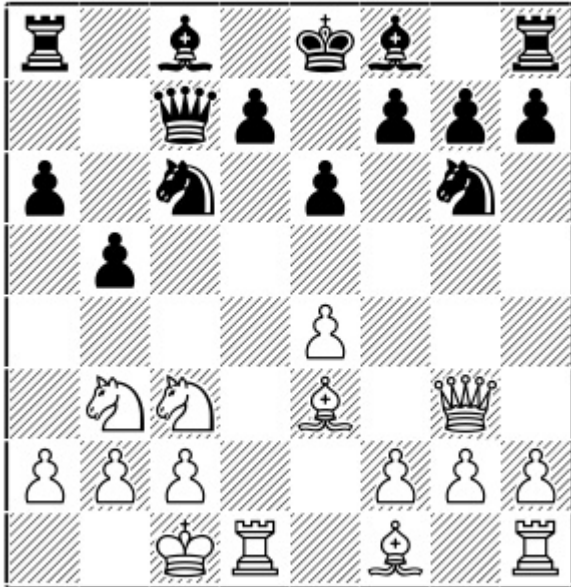
A2) 10.Qg3!



Position after: 10.Qg3!

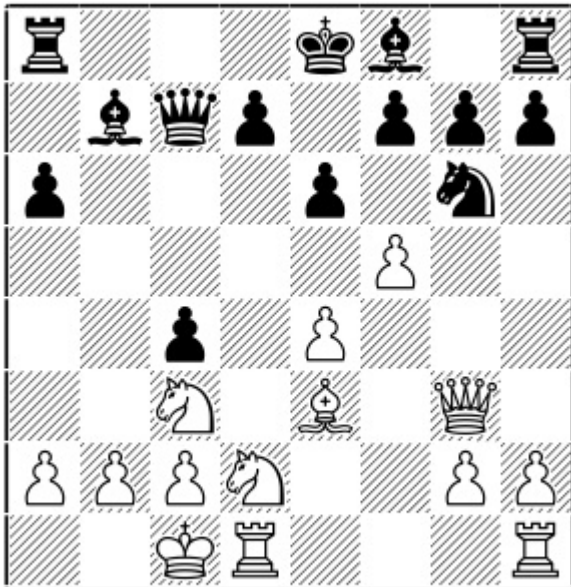
10...Nce5 [After 10...Nge5 11.f4 Ng4 12.Bd2 d6 13.Kb1 b5 14.Bd3 b4 15.Na4 White gets a good attack as Black is underdeveloped.] 11.f4 Ng4 12.e5±

B) 9...b5 10.Qg3!



Position after: 10.Qg3!

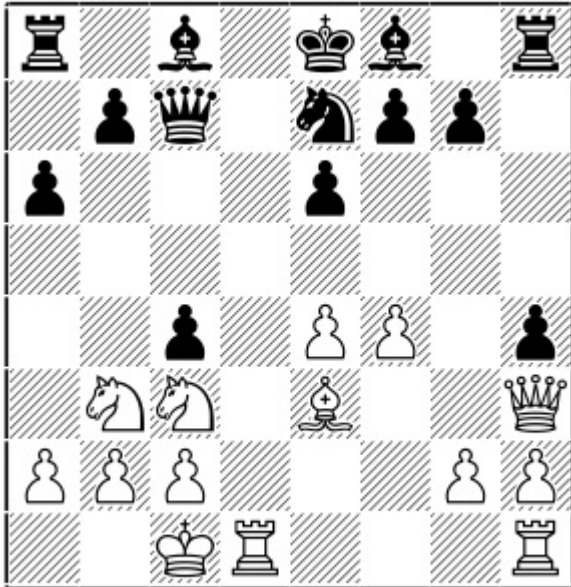
10...Nce5 [10...d6 11.f4 Be7 12.h4 Harassing the g6-knight. 12...h5 13.Kb1 Bf6 14.Bd3±] 11.f4 Nc4
12.Bxc4 bxc4 13.Nd2 Bb7 14.f5



Position after: 14.f5

14...Bd6 [14...Qxg3 15.hxg3 Ne5 16.Bd4 Bd6 17.Nf3 Nxf3 18.gxf3 Bxg3 19.Bxg7 Rg8 20.Rxh7 exf5
21.Bf6±] 15.Qh3 Ne5 16.Rhf1 0-0-0 [16...0-0 17.f6+–] 17.Kb1 Kb8 18.Bf4 f6 19.Nf3 Bb4 20.Nxe5 fxe5
21.Bg5 Rde8 22.fxe6 dxe6 23.a3± Black's pawn structure is completely destroyed.

9.0-0-0 Ne5 10.Qg3 h4 11.Qh3 d5 12.f4 Nc4 13.Bxc4 dxc4

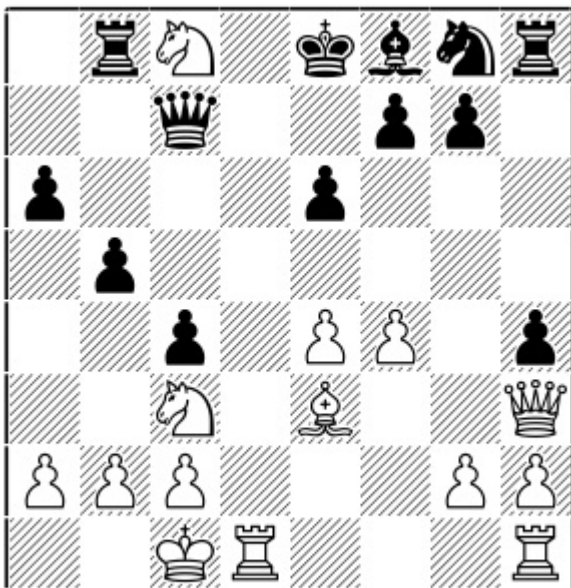


Position after: 13...dxc4

14.Nd2!

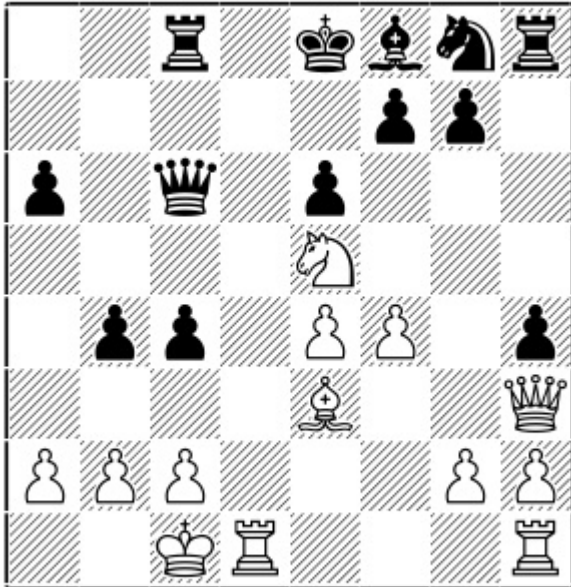
14.Nc5!?

A) 14...Ng8 15.N5a4 b5 16.Nb6 Rb8 17.Nxc8



Position after: 17.Nxc8

17...b4 [17...Rxc8 18.f5! b4 19.fxex6 bxc3 20.Rd7+-; 17...Qxc8 18.e5 b4 19.Ne4 b3 20.axb3 cxb3 21.c3±]
 18.Na4 Rxc8 [18...Qxc8 19.Nb6 Qc6 20.Nd7 Rc8 21.Ne5

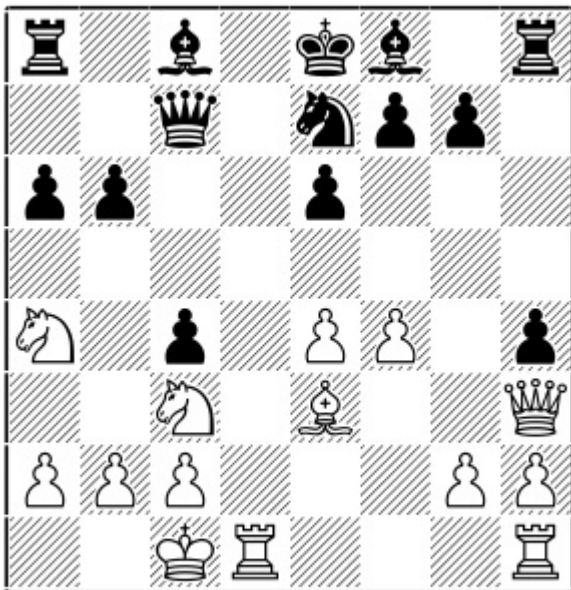


Position after: 21.Ne5

Finally after a long journey the knight lands upon another central square with devastating effect. 21...Qb5 22.Bd4±] 19.f5±

B) 14...b5 15.f5 Qe5 16.fxex6 Bxe6 17.Nxe6 Qxe6 18.Qxe6 fxe6 19.Rd6+-

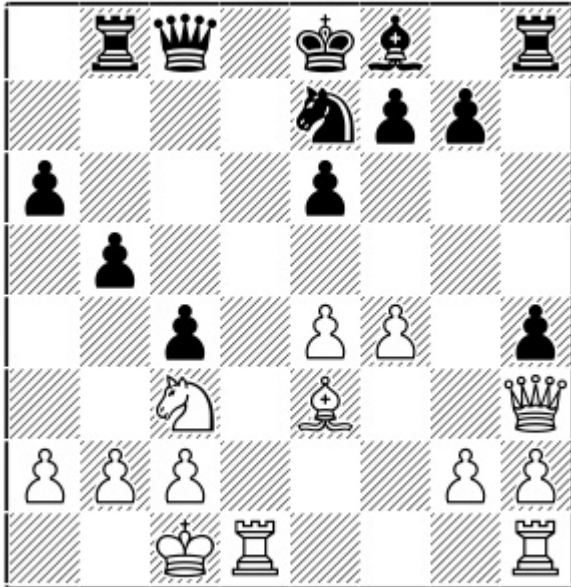
C) 14...b6! 15.N5a4



Position after: 15.N5a4

C1) 15...Rb8 16.f5 b5 17.Nc5 b4 18.N3a4 b3 [18...e5 19.b3±] 19.axb3 cxb3 20.c3± The black pieces are underdeveloped and White's attack is stronger here.

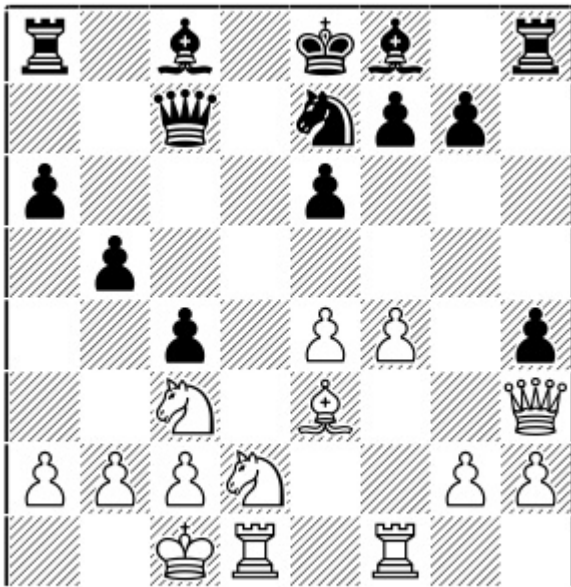
C2) 15...b5 16.Nb6 Rb8 17.Nxc8 Qxc8 [17...Rxc8? 18.f5±]



Position after: 17...Qxc8

18.f5 Making use of Black's vulnerable king on e8. I worked on this line first and assumed White would have a strong attack, but concretely in this position Black gets good counterplay thanks to his ...b4-b3 break. [18.Kb1 b4 19.Na4 Qc6 20.Nc5 Rb5!,,] 18...b4 19.Na4 b3 20.Kb1 bxc2+ 21.Kxc2 exf5 22.Bf4 Rb4 23.Nc3 Ng6 24.Bc1 Be7,,

14...b5 15.Rhf1!



Position after: 15.Rhf1!

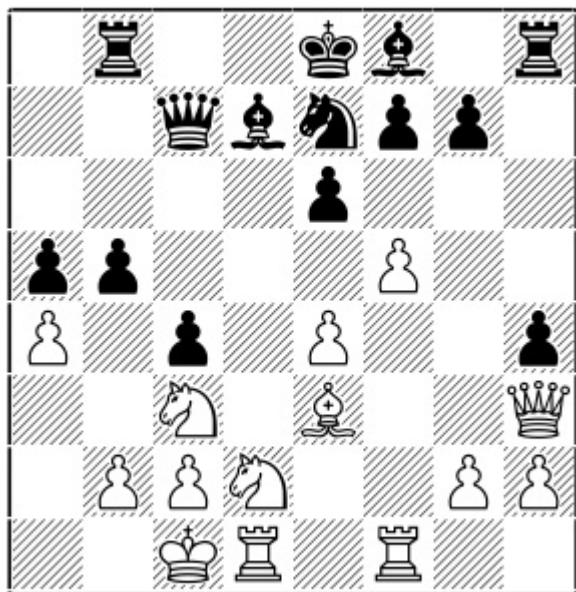
Preparing f5 to open up the position.

15...Bd7

A) 15...b4? 16.Bb6! Qxb6 17.Nxc4+–

B) 15...f6 16.f5 [16.a3 Rb8 17.f5 e5 18.Qg4 a5 19.a4 bxa4 20.Nxa4 Qc6 21.Nc3 g5,,] 16...e5 17.Kb1 Bb7 18.Qg4 0-0-0 19.Nf3± and the h4-pawn falls.

C) 15...Rb8 16.f5 Bd7 17.a3 a5 18.a4!



Position after: 18.a4!

18...b4 [18...bxa4 19.Bf4 e5 20.Bxe5 Qxe5 21.Nxc4+–] 19.Nb5 exchanging the main defender of Black's king, the bishop on d7. 19...Bxb5 20.fxe6+–

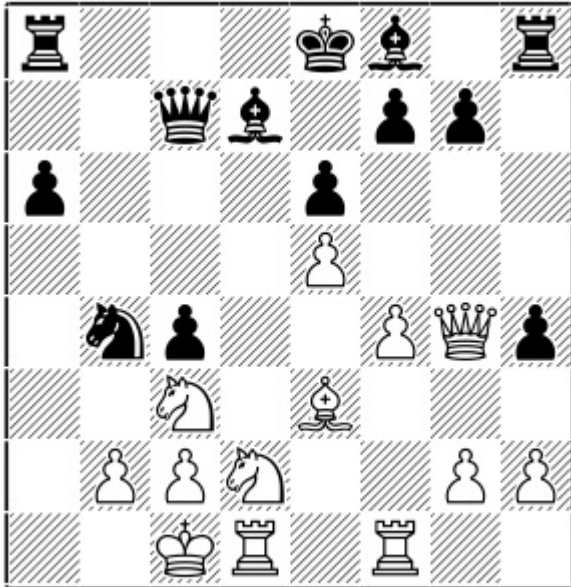
16.a3!

16.Nf3 e5 17.f5 b4 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.Rxd5 f6 20.Rfd1 Bc6 21.Rxe5+ fxe5 22.Qg4 Qf7 23.Nxe5 Qh5 and Black continues the tightrope act.

16...Nc6 17.e5 b4 18.axb4 Nxb4

18...Rb8 19.f5+–

19.Qg4



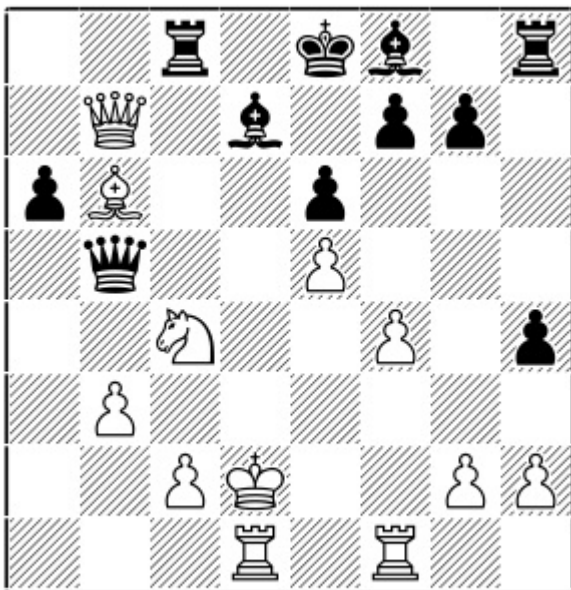
Position after: 19.Qg4

Bringing the queen back into play.

19...Qa5

19...Rb8 20.Nde4 Qa5 21.Ba7 Rb7 22.Bd4± White is well stabilized and has a great advantage.

20.Nxc4 Na2+ 21.Nxa2 Qxa2 22.Qf3! Rc8 23.Qb7 Qa1+ 24.Kd2 Qa4 25.b3 Qb5 26.Bb6±



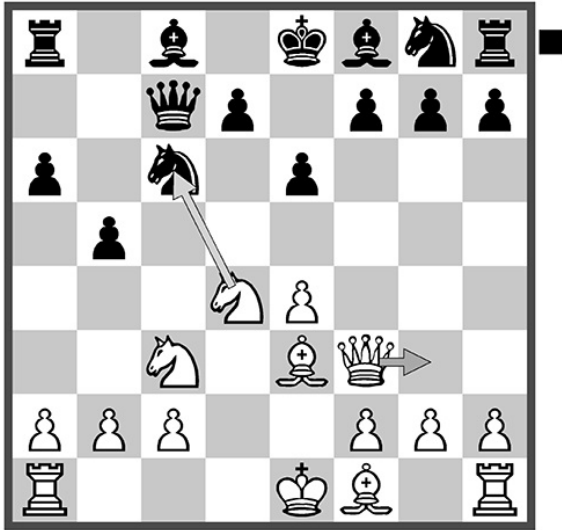
Position after: 26.Bb6±

White has stopped all possible counterplay and he is a healthy pawn up.

Chapter 10

7...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 b5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 10 – 7...b5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 b5

a) 8.Qg3

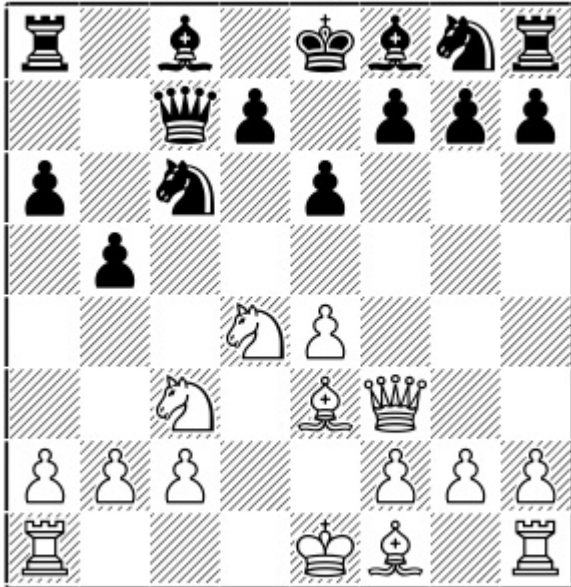
b) 8.Nxc6 Qxc6 9.Bd3 --

c) 8.Nxc6 Qxc6 9.Bd3 b4

a) 8.Qg3

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 b5

7...Nxd4 8.Bxd4 b5 [For 8...Ne7 9.Qg3 Qxg3 10.hxg3 see 7...Nge7] 9.Qg3 Qxg3 10.hxg3 Bb7 11.f3 Ne7 would transpose to an inferior version of the line with 7...b5 8.Qg3.



Position after: 7...b5

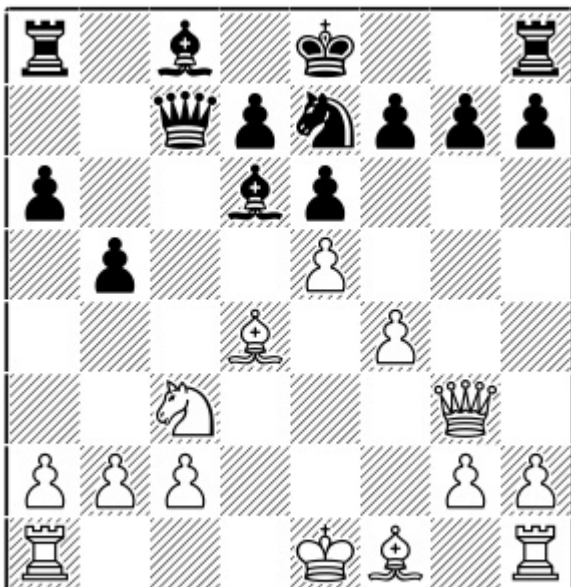
One of the most natural replies against 7.Qf3. Here I suggest two options for White. The main one is 8.Nxc6 (next subchapter) which fights for the initiative and gains an advantage after complex play. The second is 8.Qg3, which is quite simple and gives White a pleasant advantage in an endgame.

8.Qg3!?

A simple option, shifting the play into an endgame where White is simply doing well thanks to his space advantage.

8...Qxg3

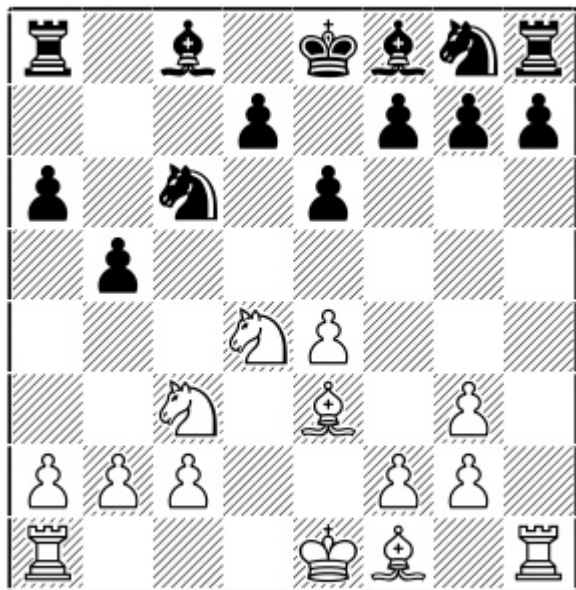
8...Bd6 9.f4 Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Ne7 11.e5



Position after: 11.e5

11...Bc5 [11...Nf5 12.exd6 Qxd6 13.Be5 Nxc3 14.Bxd6 Nxc1 15.Bd3 Bb7 16.Kf1± and the knight is trapped on h1.] 12.Bxc5 Qxc5 13.Bd3 Bb7 14.0-0-0 0-0 [14...f5 15.exf6 gxf6 16.Rhe1 Rg8 17.Qh4 Bxc2 18.Bxc7 Rh8 19.Qg3 Bc6 20.Bg6±] 15.Ne4 Bxe4 16.Bxe4 Ra7 17.Qd3² Black is rather tangled up and White has great control over the d6-square.

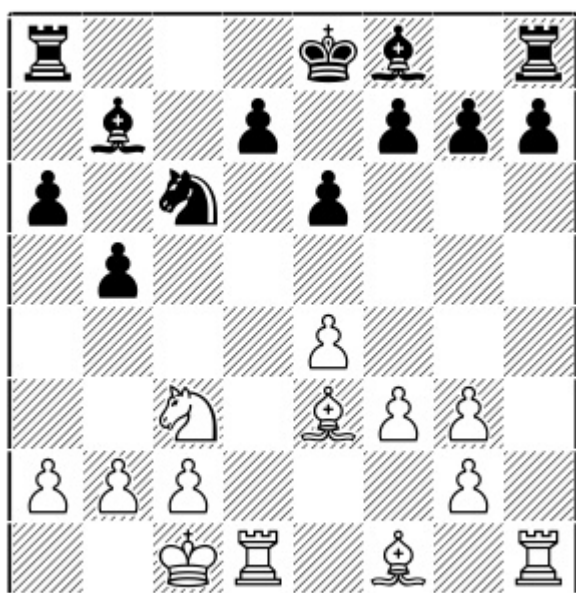
9.hxg3



Position after: 9.hxg3

9...Bb7

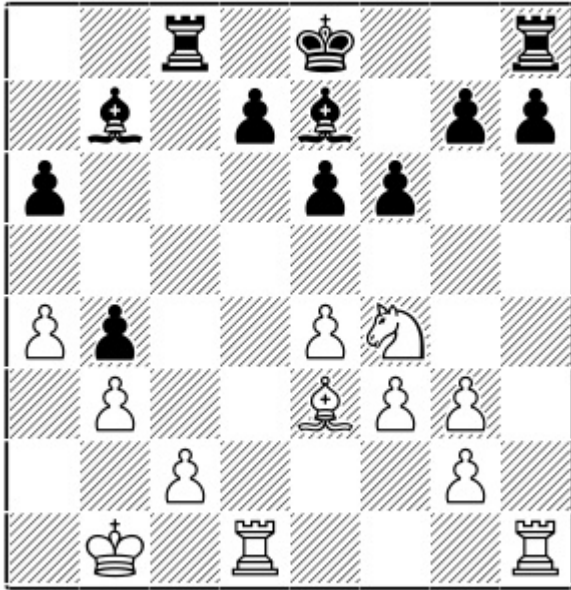
9...Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Bb7 11.f3 Ne7 [11...Nf6?! 12.g4 d6 13.a4 b4 14.Nd1 Nd7 15.a5±] 12.0-0-0 Nc6 13.Be3



Position after: 13.Be3

A) 13...Rc8 14.a4 b4 15.Na2

A1) 15...Ne5 16.Kb1 f6 17.Nc1 Nc4 18.Bxc4 Rxc4 19.Nd3 Be7 20.b3 Rc8 21.Nf4!+-

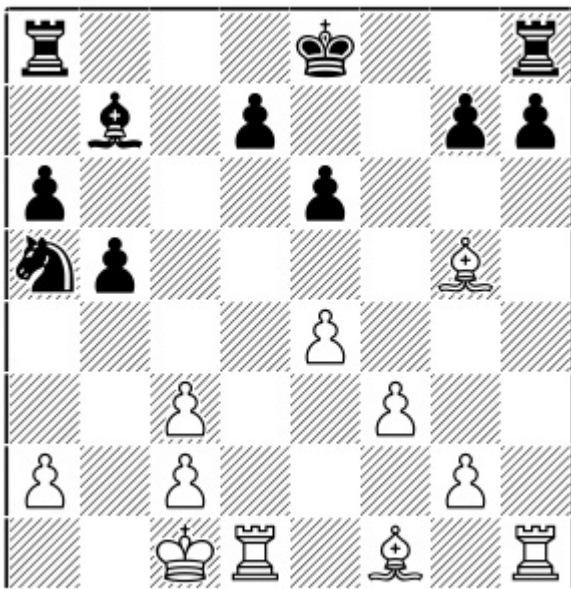


Position after: 21.Nf4!+-

Making use of the drawback of the black pawn on f6. White is threatening 22.Ng6 and Black simply cannot prevent it as his king is tied down to the d7-pawn and the rook on h8 is tied to the h7-pawn.

A2) 15...b3 16.cxb3 Na5+ 17.Kb1 Nxb3 18.Rd3 Na5 19.Be2± Followed by 20.Rc1, exchanging Black's good rook and penetrating into the enemy camp.

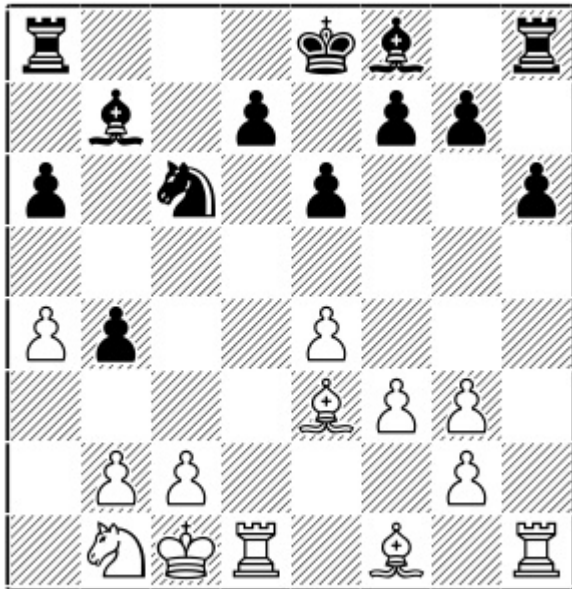
B) 13...Bb4 14.g4 f6 15.g5 Bxc3 16.bxc3 fxg5 17.Bxg5 Na5



Position after: 17...Na5

18.Be3! Rerouting the bishop to d4. [18.Bd3 Rc8 19.Be3 0-0 20.Rh4?] 18...Bc6 [18...Rc8? 19.Bd4 0-0 20.Bb6 Nc4 21.Bxc4 Rxc4 22.Rxd7+-] 19.Bc5± White slowly takes over.

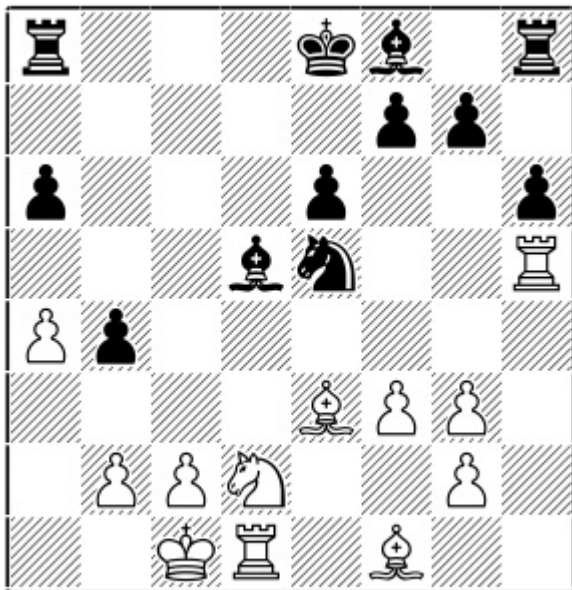
C) 13...h6 14.a4! b4 15.Nb1



Position after: 15.Nb1

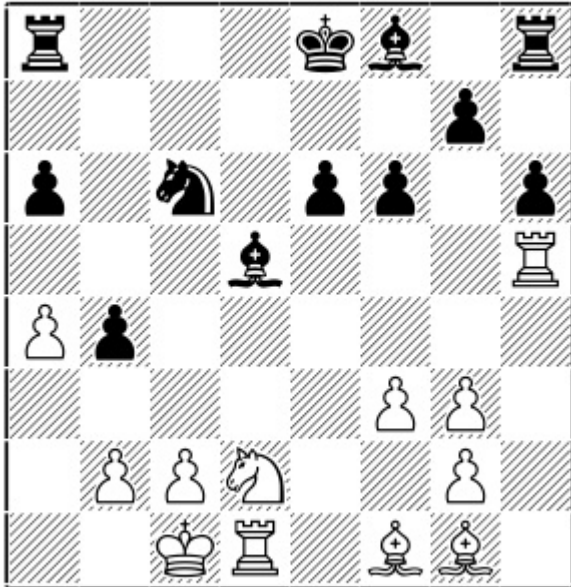
C1) 15...Be7 16.Nd2 Ne5 17.Be2 d5 18.Bd4 Bf6 19.exd5 Bxd5 20.Ne4 Bxe4 21.fxe4 Nd7 22.Bxf6 gxf6 [22...Nxf6 23.e5 Nd5 24.Bf3 Ke7 25.Bxd5 exd5 26.Rxd5±] 23.Rd6± The a6-pawn is being targeted.

C2) 15...Ne5 16.Nd2 d5 17.exd5 Bxd5 18.Rh5



Position after: 18.Rh5

18...f6 [18...Nd7 19.Nc4 Rc8 20.Rhxd5! exd5 21.Rxd5 Rc6 22.Kb1! Be7 23.Ka2± White is positionally dominating: Kb3 can follow and Black's queenside pawns are likely to drop eventually.] 19.Bd4 Nc6 20.Bg1!

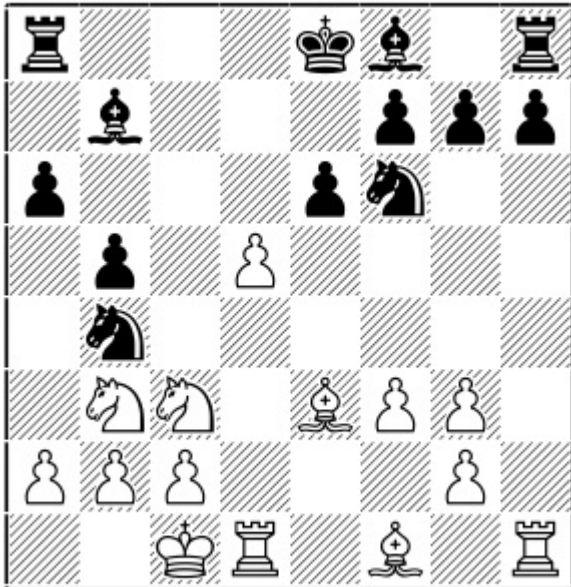


Position after: 20.Bg1!

The bishop is nicely placed on g1, and should Black's knight come to e5 it can be immediately dislodged with f4 (a less favorable move if White's bishop were still on e3.) 20...Ne5 21.f4 g6 22.Rh1 Ng4 [22...Nd7 23.Bc4±] 23.Nc4±

10.Nxc6

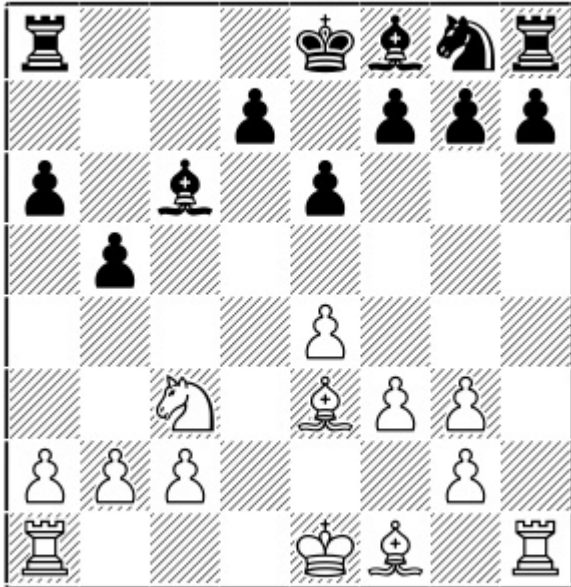
10.Nb3!? Nf6 11.f3 d5 12.exd5 Nb4 13.0-0-0



Position after: 13.0-0-0

13...Nbx d5 [13...Nfx d5 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.Kb1² Bok (2554) – Spoelman (2583) Amsterdam 2015] 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.Kb1 Be7 16.g4² White has a slight edge here due to the extra space.

10...Bxc6 11.f3



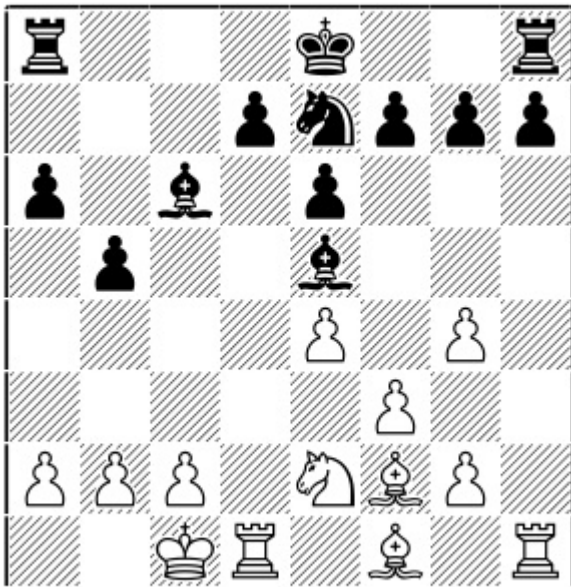
Position after: 11.f3

11...Bd6

11...Bb4 12.0-0-0 Ne7 [12...Bxc3 13.bxc3 f6 14.g4² and the two bishops give White a very comfy endgame.] 13.g4 f6 14.g5 fxg5 15.Bxg5 h6 16.Ne2 Bc5 17.Nd4 Bb7 18.Kb1²

12.g4 Bg3+ 13.Bf2 Be5 14.0-0-0 Ne7 15.Ne2!²

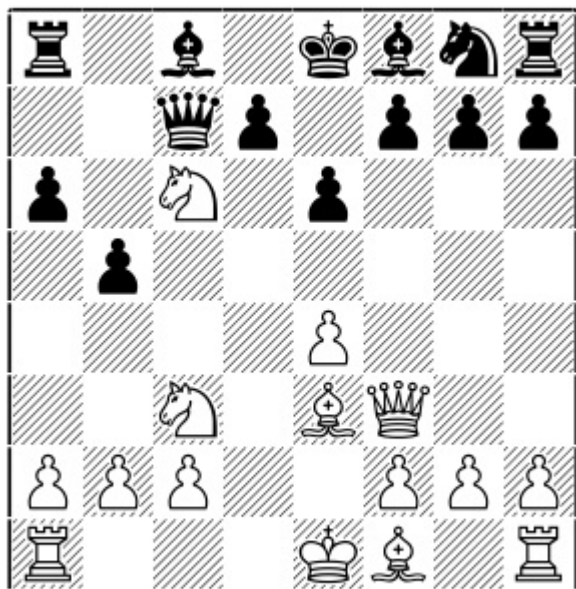
White had obtained a pleasant endgame in the game Motylev, A (2675) – Aravindh, C (2586) Sitges 2017. Although White later lost the game, this was not due to the opening.



Position after: 15.Ne2!²

b) 8.Nxc6 Qxc6 9.Bd3 --

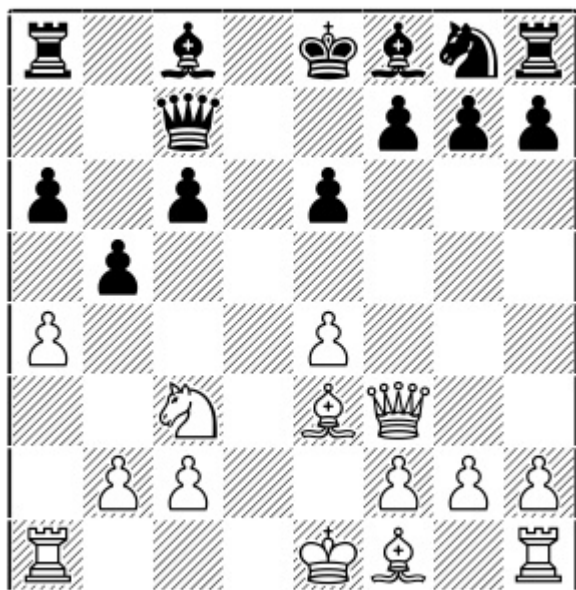
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 b5 8.Nxc6!



Position after: 8.Nxc6!

8...Qxc6

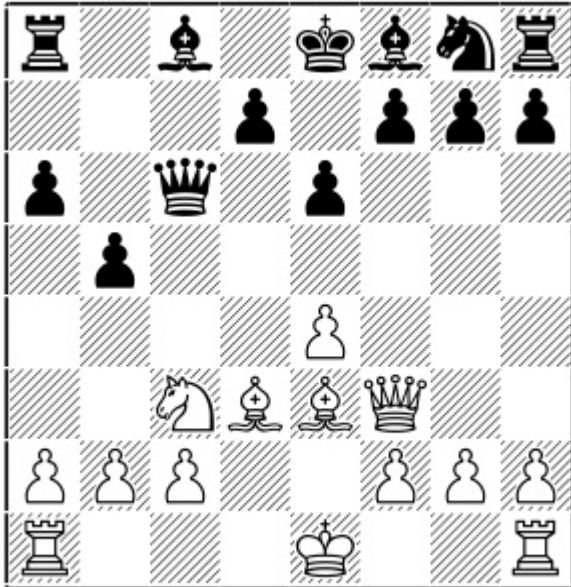
8...dxc6? Here White can immediately punish Black with 9.a4!N [9.e5!? Ne7 10.a4²]



Position after: 9.a4!N

9...Bb7 10.Qg3 Qxg3 11.hxg3 Nf6 12.e5 Nd7 13.f4 b4 [13...Bb4 14.Be2 0-0-0 15.Kf2±] 14.Nb1 c5 15.Nd2 Be7 16.0-0-0± With Nc4-d6 to follow.

9.Bd3

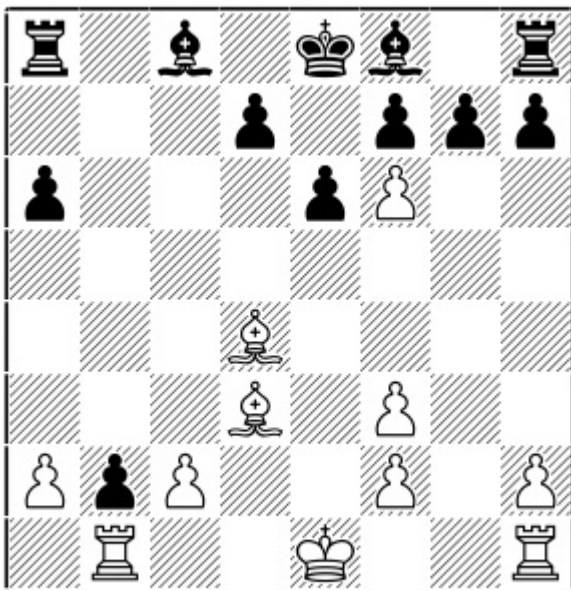


Position after: 9.Bd3

9...Bb7

A) 9...Ba3? 10.Nd1±

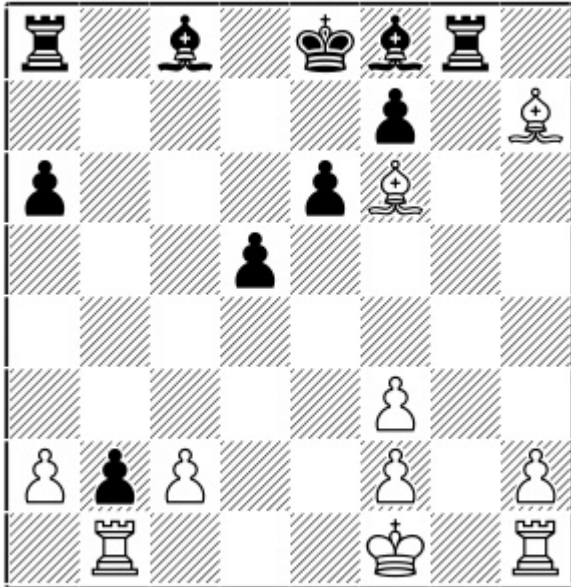
B) 9...Nf6?! 10.e5! Qxf3 11.gxf3 b4 [11...Ng8 12.a4 bxa4 13.Nxa4±] 12.exf6 bxc3 13.Bd4 cxb2 14.Rb1



Position after: 14.Rb1

B1) 14...gxf6 15.Bxf6 Rg8 16.Bxh7 Rg2

B1.1) 17.Be4 It's quite tempting to try and trap the rook after 17...d5 18.Kf1 Rg8 19.Bh7.

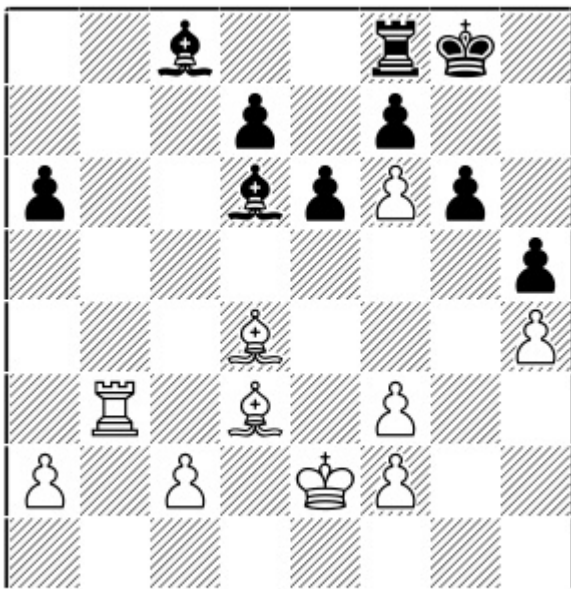


Position after: 19.Bh7

However after 19...Bg7! 20.Bxb2 Rh8 21.Bxg7 Rxb7 22.Bf6 Rh6 23.Bg5 Rg6 24.h4 e5 25.f4², while White does have some chances of pressing due to the outside passed h4-pawn, it is clear that 17.Rxb2 would have been much stronger, maintaining like-colored bishops and an extra pawn.

B1.2) 17.Rxb2! Bg7 18.Bxg7 Rxb7 19.Bd3±

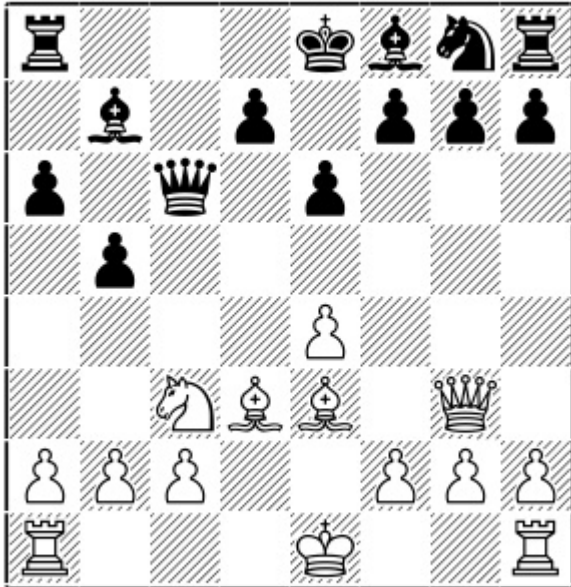
B2) 14...g6 15.Rxb2 Bd6 [15...d5 16.Be5 Bc5 17.h4±] 16.h4 Rb8 17.Rb3 h5 18.Ke2 0-0 19.Rhb1 Rxb3 20.Rxb3± Black's pieces are in disarray.



Position after: 20.Rxb3±

C) 9...b4 is the main option, with which I deal in the next subchapter.

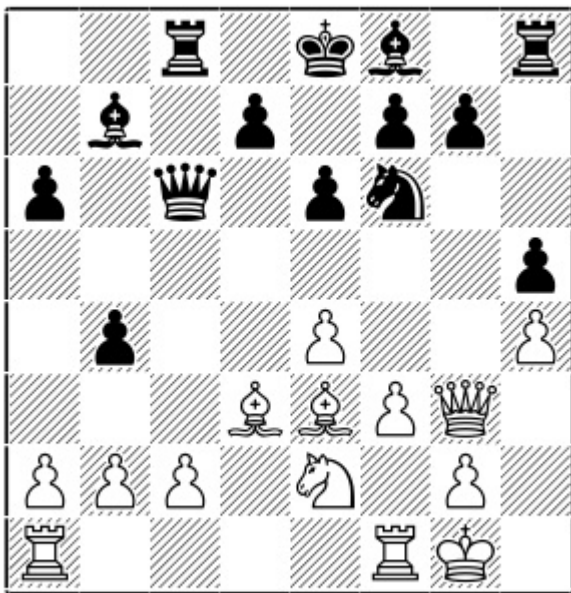
10.Qg3



Position after: 10.Qg3

10...Rc8

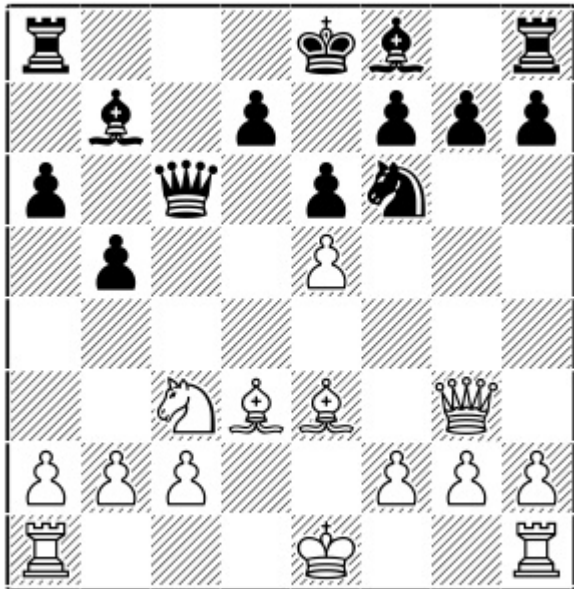
A) 10...h5?! 11.h4 Nf6 12.f3 b4 13.Ne2 Rc8 14.0-0! [14.0-0-0 Qc7 15.Bf4 Qb6 16.Kb1± also gives White a good advantage.]



Position after: 14.0-0!

14...Bc5 [14...Qc7 15.Bf4 Qb6+ 16.Kh1 d6 17.a3±] 15.Bxc5 Qxc5+ 16.Kh2 0-0 17.a3 d6 18.axb4 Qxb4 19.Ra3!± The weakness on a6 begins to make itself felt.

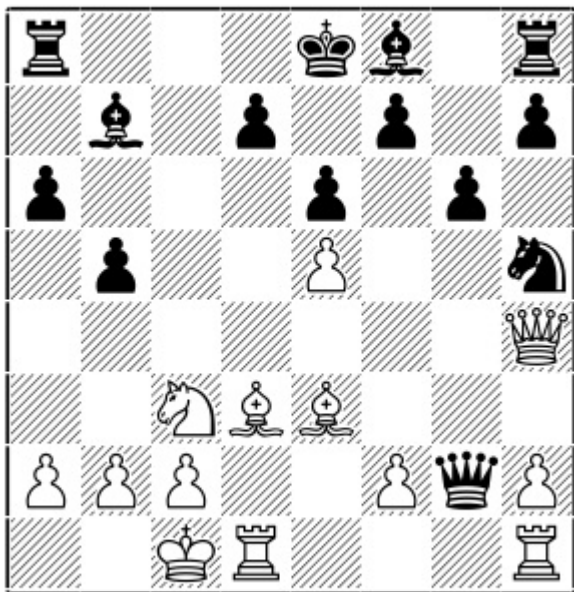
B) 10...Nf6 11.e5! is quite direct and promising.



Position after: 11.e5!

B1) 11...Nd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.0-0 h5 14.h4 Be7 [14...d6 15.a4 b4 16.Rad1 Qxe5 17.Bf4 Qc5 18.Rfe1±] 15.Be2! b4 16.Rfd1 Qa5 17.Qxg7+– and White was winning in Karjakin, S (2766) – Ezat, M (2490) Doha 2015.

B2) 11...Nh5 12.Qh4 Qxg2 [12...g6 13.Qd4 Bg7 14.Be4 d5 15.exd6 Qxc3+ 16.bxc3 Bxd4 17.Bxb7 Bxc3+ 18.Ke2 Kd7 19.Rab1± and Black cannot move his a8-rook as the a6-pawn falls.] 13.0-0-0 g6



Position after: 13...g6

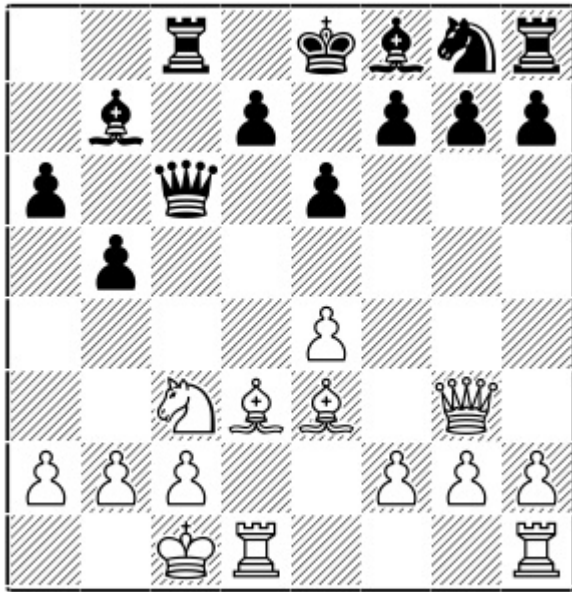
B2.1) 14.Rhg1 Be7! [14...Qc6 15.Ne4±] 15.Qd4 Qc6 16.Be4 Qc7 17.Bg5 Bc5,,

B2.2) 14.Ne4 Be7 15.Nd6+ Bxd6 16.exd6 0-0 17.Rhg1 Qf3 While White is still for choice in this line, it is not as strong as 14.Qd4 given below.

B2.3) 14.Qd4! Threatening Ne4. After 14...Qc6 15.Be4 Qc7 16.Bxb7 Qxb7 17.Ne4 Be7 18.Bh6±

Black's king is under attack and stuck in the centre.

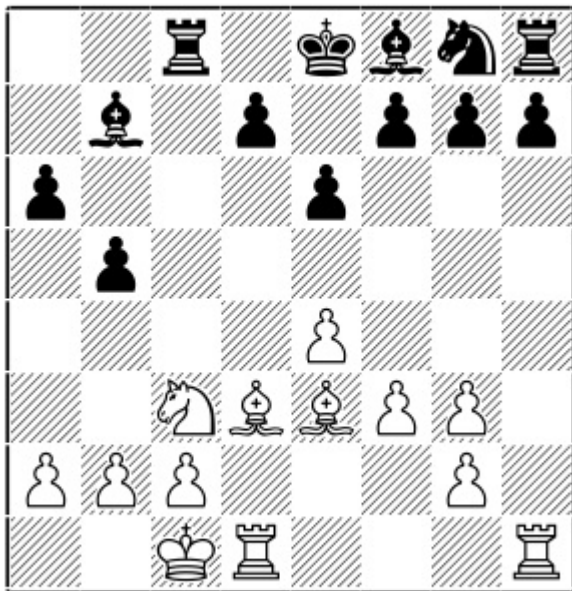
11.0-0-0



Position after: 11.0-0-0

11...b4

- A) 11...h5 12.h4 Nf6 13.f3 Qc7 14.Bf4 d6 15.e5 dxe5 16.Bxe5 Qa5 17.Kb1± White is dominating here.
- B) 11...Qc7 12.f3 Qxg3 13.hxg3

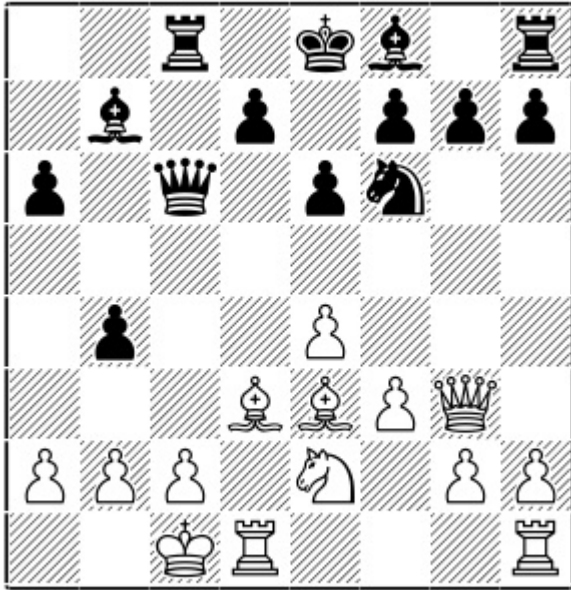


Position after: 13.hxg3

- B1)** 13...Nf6 14.g4 d5 15.exd5 b4 [15...Nxd5 16.Nxd5 Bxd5 17.a4 Bc4 18.axb5 axb5 19.Bxh7±] 16.g5 bxc3 17.gxf6 cxb2+ 18.Kxb2 Bxd5 19.Bxa6 Rb8+ 20.Ka1±

B2) 13...Bc5 14.Bxc5 Rxc5 15.Kd2!² White's idea is b4 followed by a4.

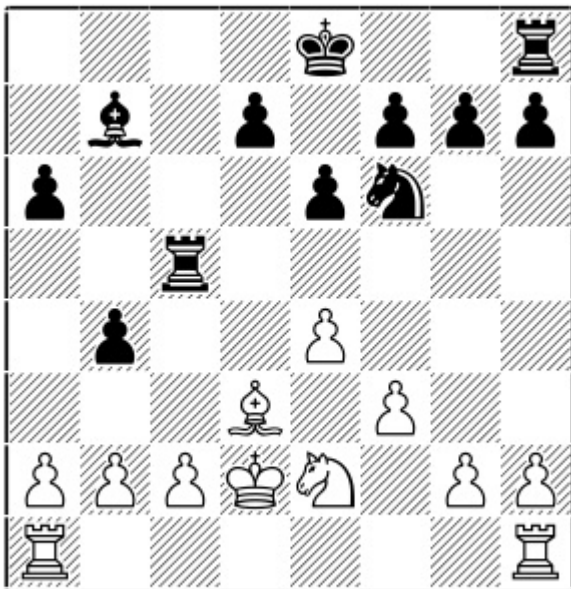
12.Ne2 Nf6 13.f3



Position after: 13.f3

13...Qc7

13...Bc5 14.Bxc5 [14.Bd4?! Bxd4 15.Nxd4 Qb6] 14...Nh5 15.Qg5 Qxc5 16.Qxc5 Rxc5 17.Kd2 Nf6 18.Ra1²
With a3 next White will be able to target Black's weakness on a6.



Position after: 18.Ra1²

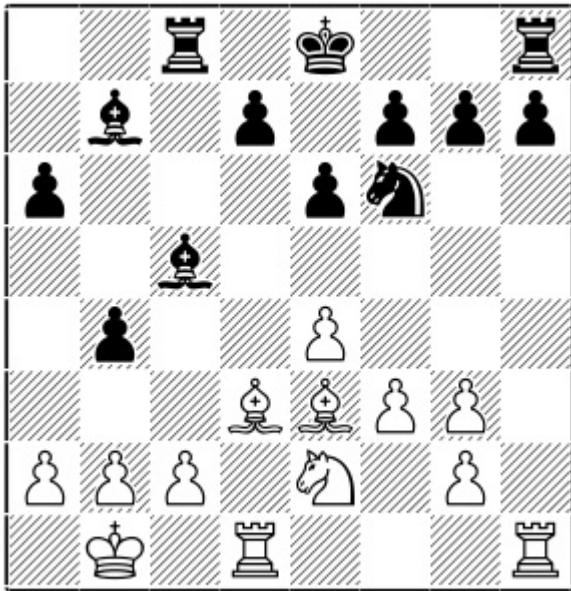
14.Kb1

A) 14.Nd4 Bd6! 15.Qxg7 Bf4 16.Rhe1 Qe5 17.Qxh8+ Ke7 18.Qg7 Rg8 19.Qxg8 Bxe3+ 20.Rxe3 Nxe8

21.Nb3 a5,

B) 14.Qf2 d5

14...Qxg3 15.hxg3 Bc5

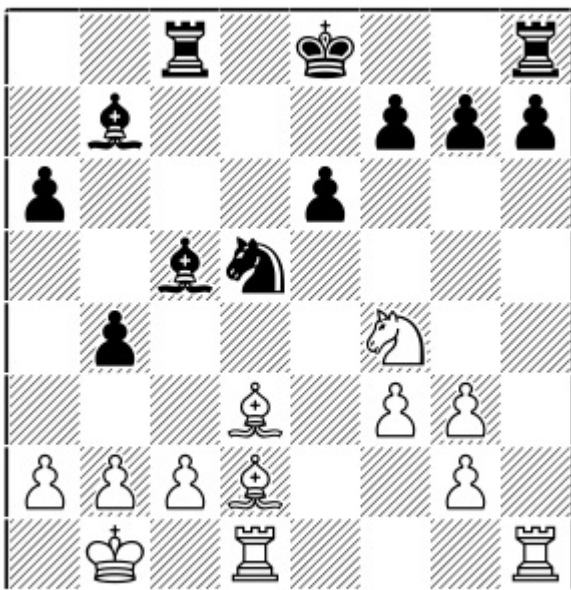


Position after: 15...Bc5

16.Bd2

16.Nd4 h6 17.Rhe1 Ke7 18.Nb3 Bxe3 19.Rxe3 Rc7 20.Be2 [20.Na5 Bc6] 20...Rb8 [20...Rhc8 21.Na5!±
With the rook on c8 this is possible and if Black moves his b7-bishop then White can take on a6 with tempo,
attacking the rook on c8.] 21.Rd4 Bc8 22.g4²

16...d5 17.exd5 Nxd5 18.Nf4!



Position after: 18.Nf4!

18...a5

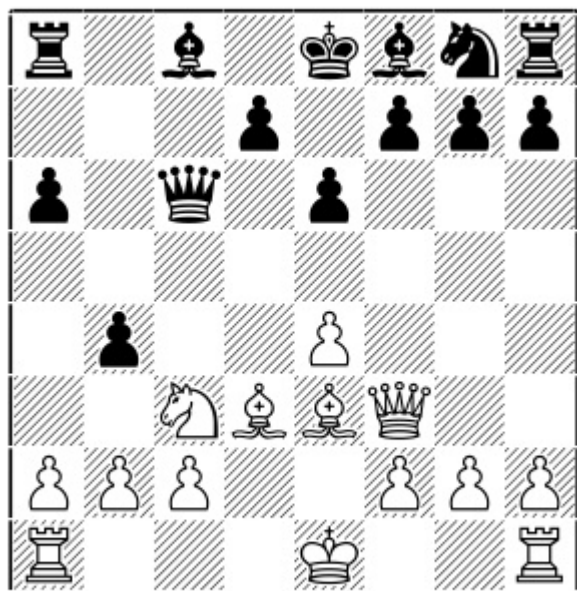
18...Nxf4 19.gxf4 Ke7 20.f5 e5 21.c3±

19.g4 Bd6 20.Nxd5 Bxd5 21.g5²

Black's weakness on h7 is quite serious.

c) 8.Nxc6 Qxc6 9.Bd3 b4

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 b5 8.Nxc6 Qxc6 9.Bd3 b4N

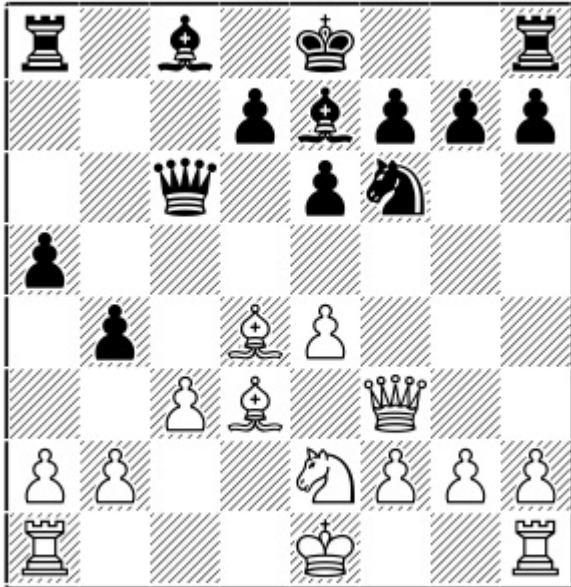


Position after: 9...b4N

Surprisingly there are no games here, but this is the clear remaining option for Black. Other moves, as we just saw, work out badly for him.

10.Nb1!

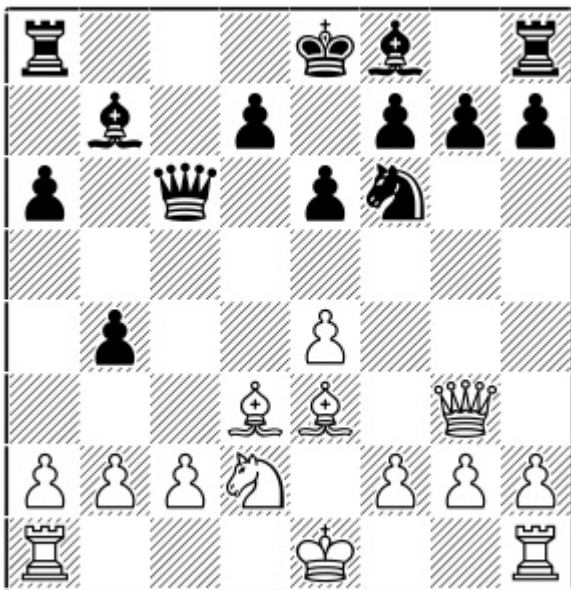
10.Ne2?! loses control over the e4-pawn. 10...Nf6 11.Bd4 Be7 12.c3 a5= Black is doing fine here.



Position after: 12...a5=

10...a5

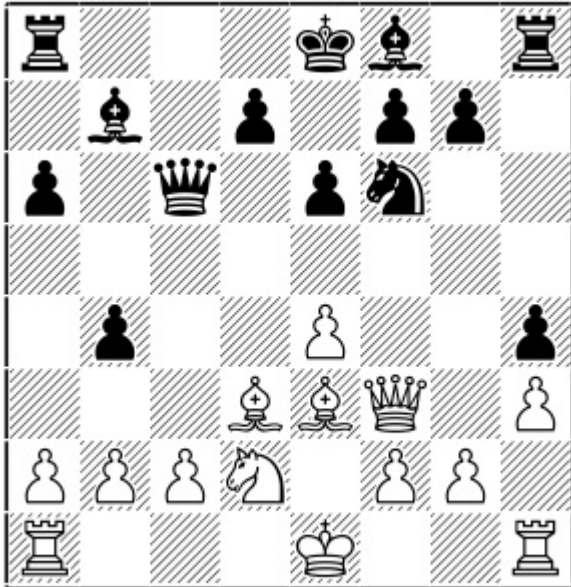
10...Nf6 11.Nd2 Bb7 12.Qg3



Position after: 12.Qg3

A) 12...Be7 13.Qxg7 Rg8 14.Qh6 Rxc2 15.Qh3 Rg6 16.0-0-0±

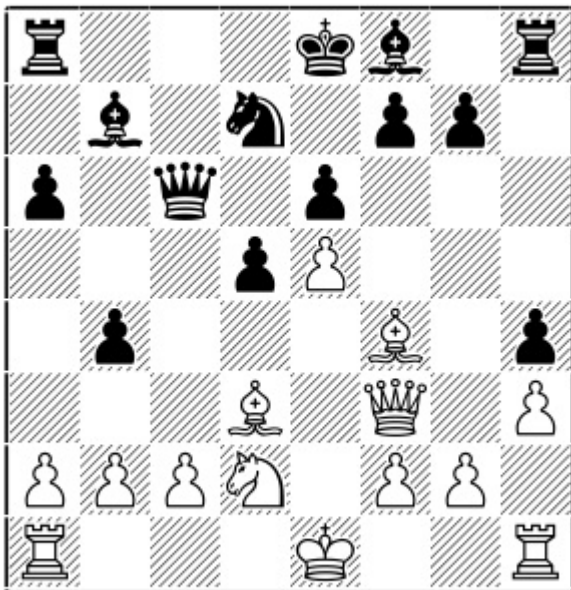
B) 12...h5 Black needs to push the queen on g3 away in order to develop his f8-bishop. 13.h3 [13.h4 Ng4 14.Bf4 Bc5 15.0-0 a5 16.e5 0-0,,] 13...h4 14.Qf3



Position after: 14.Qf3

B1) 14...Be7 15.0-0 Black cannot easily castle kingside, because the h4-pawn would certainly fall and his queenside pawns are also over-extended. So the question of Black's king position remains unresolved.
 15...Qc7 16.Bf4²

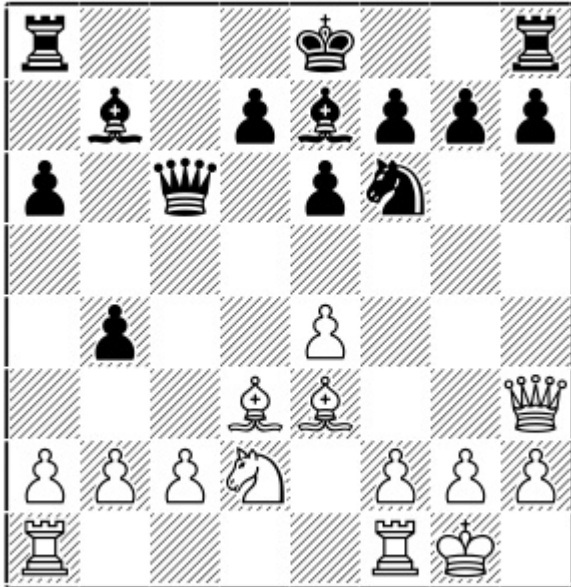
B2) 14...d5 15.e5 Nd7 16.Bf4 [16.Qf4 d4! 17.Bxd4 Qxg2 18.0-0-0 g6]



Position after: 16.Bf4

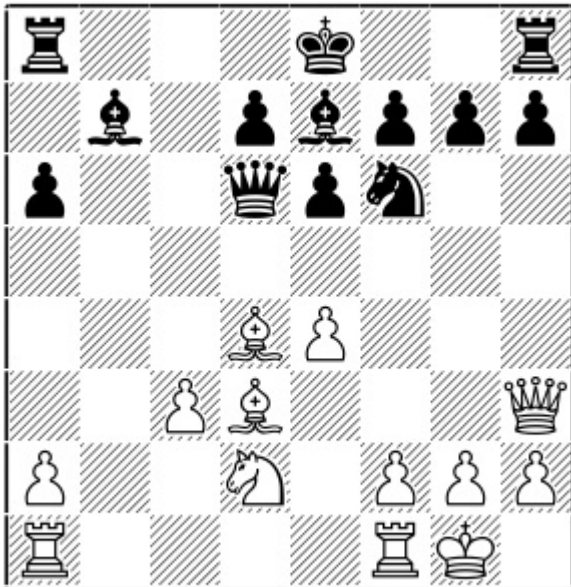
16...g5! [16...Be7 17.0-0 g5 18.Bh2 a5 19.Rac1! Preparing 20.c3. 19...Nc5 20.Nb3 Ne4 21.Nd4 Qb6 22.Rfd1²] 17.Bh2 [17.Bxg5 Qc7!,,] 17...a5 18.0-0² and I prefer White here as it is not easy for Black to castle.

C) 12...Nh5 13.Qh3 Nf6 14.0-0 Be7 [14...h5 15.Bf4! Prophylaxis against Black's ...Ng4. There could follow 15...Be7 16.Rac1² intending c3.]



Position after: 14...Be7

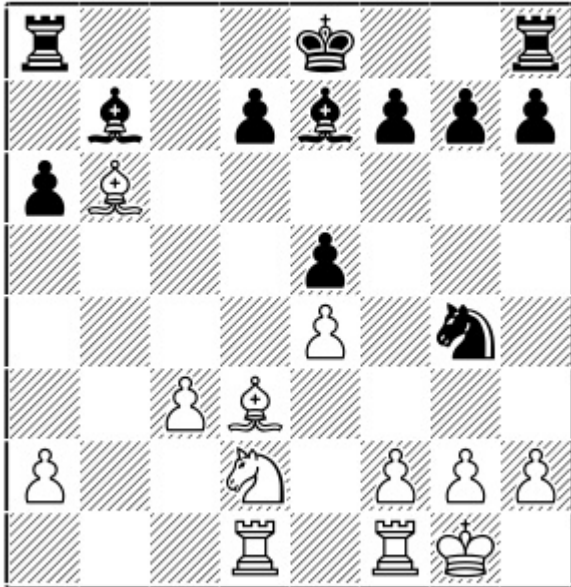
C1) 15.c3!? White's trying to open up the position, but Black has an unusual resource here to complicate matters. 15...Qd6! [15...bxc3 16.Rac1±] 16.Bd4 bxc3 17.bxc3



Position after: 17.bxc3

C1.1) 17...e5 18.Nc4 Qe6 19.Nxe5 Qxh3 [19...Bxe4 20.Rfe1 Qxh3 21.gxh3 Bxd3 22.Nxd3 Kf8 23.Rab1±] 20.gxh3 Nxe4 21.Rab1 Nd6 22.Nc4 Nxc4 23.Bxc4 Be4 24.Rb6²

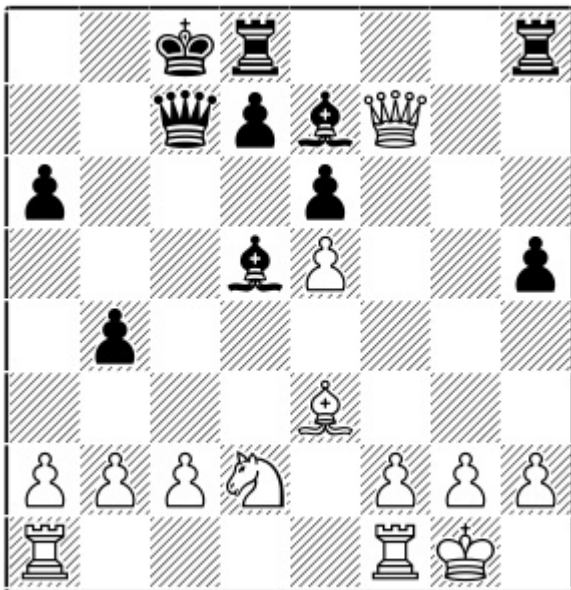
C1.2) 17...Qf4 18.Rad1 e5 [18...h5 19.e5 Ne4 20.Nc4²] 19.Be3 Qg4 20.Qxg4 Nxg4 21.Bb6



Position after: 21.Bb6

21...Rc8 [21...0-0 22.Nc4²] 22.c4 0-0 23.Rb1 d6 24.Ba5 Bc6 25.Rb6² This isn't a convincing edge for White.

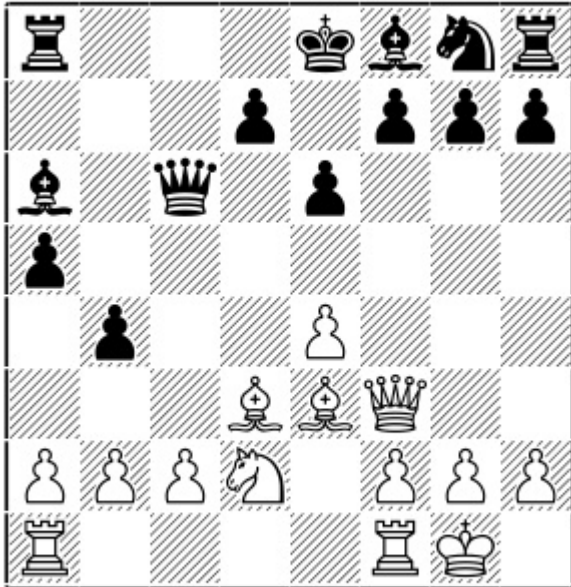
C2) 15.e5! Nd5 16.Be4 Qc7 17.Qg3 h5 [17...g5 18.Bd4± Ignoring Black's empty threats and consolidating White's setup.] 18.Qxg7 0-0-0 19.Bxd5 Bxd5 20.Qxf7



Position after: 20.Qxf7

20...Rhg8 [20...Rde8 21.Qf4 Rhg8 22.f3± Black's attack has completely stalled.] 21.f3 Qxe5 22.Qxe7 Qxe3+ 23.Rf2±

11.0-0 Ba6 12.Nd2

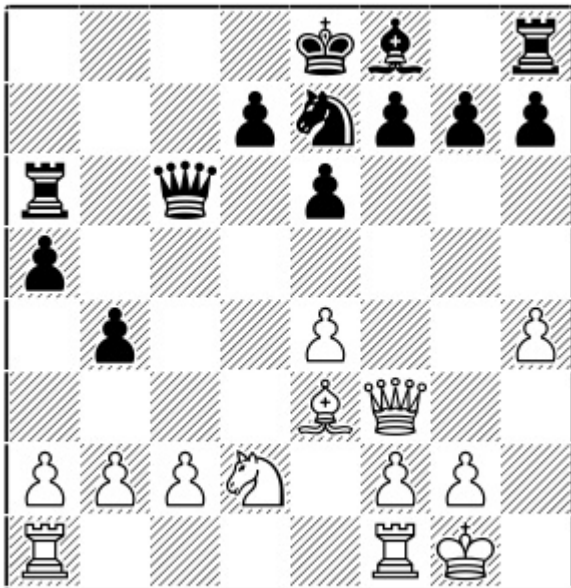


Position after: 12.Nd2

12...Nf6

12...Ne7 13.Bxa6

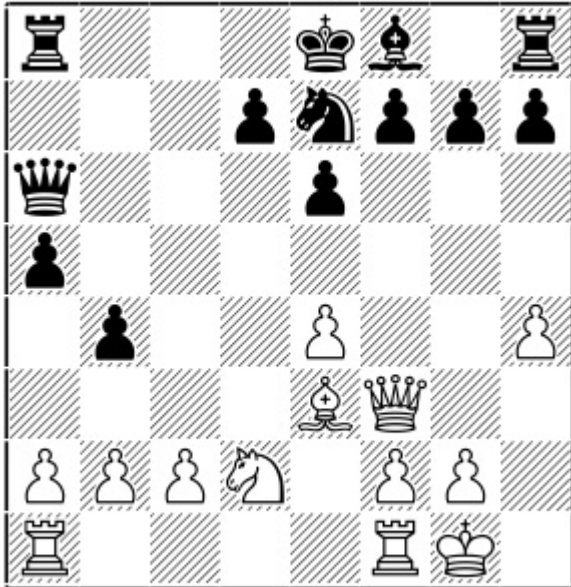
A) 13...Rxa6 14.h4! Preparing to push h5 in case of 14...Ng6.



Position after: 14.h4!

14...h5 15.g3! [15.Rac1 Ng6 16.g3 Bc5 17.c3 Ne5 18.Qe2 Bxe3 19.Qxe3 0-0 20.cxb4 Qb7,,] 15...Ng6 16.Qe2 Ne5 17.Bd4²

B) 13...Qxa6 14.h4 [14.b3!? Ng6 15.Nc4 Be7 16.Rad1 Qc6 17.Rd3 0-0 18.e5²]

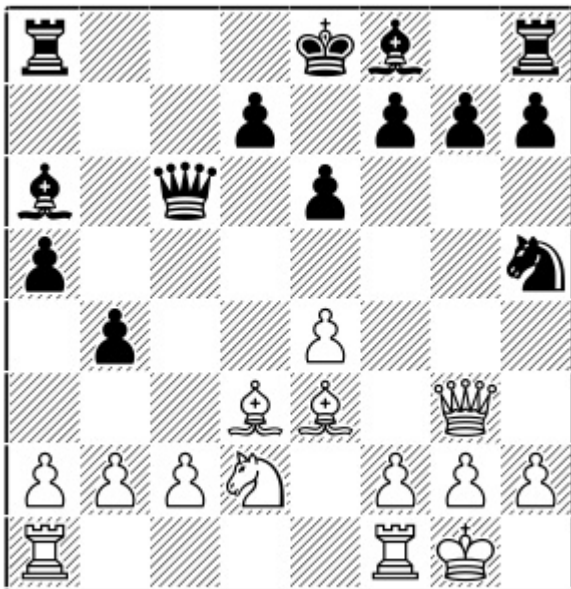


Position after: 14.h4

14...Ng6 [14...h5 15.a3 Ng6 16.axb4 Bxb4 17.c3 Be7 18.b4 a4 19.Rfb1! Nxh4 20.Qd1±] 15.h5 Ne5 16.Qg3 f6 17.Rfd1² With easy play for White.

13.Qg3 Nh5

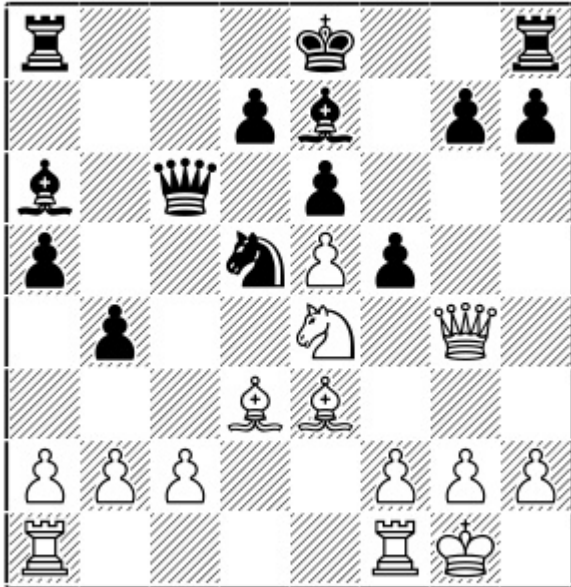
13...h5 14.h3 h4 15.Qf3 Be7 16.Rac1² White will soon expand on the queenside with c4.



Position after: 13...Nh5

14.Qh4!

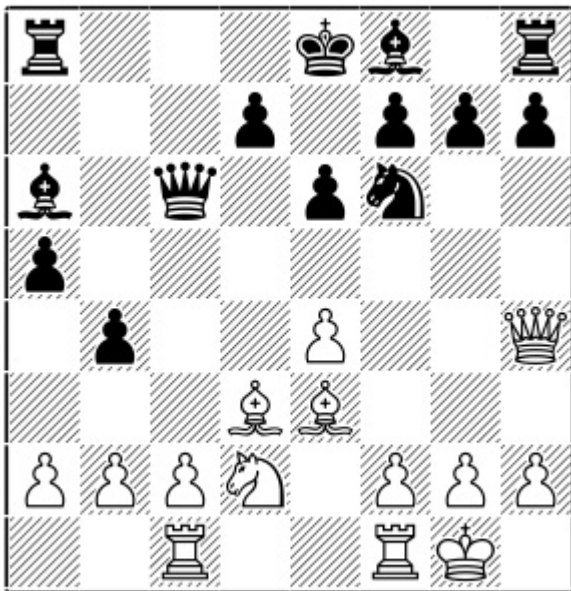
14.Qh3 gives unnecessary counterplay to Black. 14...Nf6 15.e5 [15.Rac1 Bd6 16.c4 h5 17.Be2 Qc7,,] 15...Nd5 16.Ne4 Be7 17.Qg4 f5!



Position after: 17...f5!

[17...Kf8 18.Rac1²] 18.Qxg7 [18.exf6 gxf6 19.Bxa6 Rxa6 20.Qh5+ Kd8,,] 18...0-0-0 19.Bxa6+ Qxa6 20.Nf6 Bxf6 21.exf6 Rdg8 22.Qh6 Qc6 23.Qh3 Nxf6 24.a3 Nd5 25.Bd2 h5 26.axb4 axb4 27.Qf3 h4,, Black is in time to create counterplay.

14...Nf6 15.Rac1

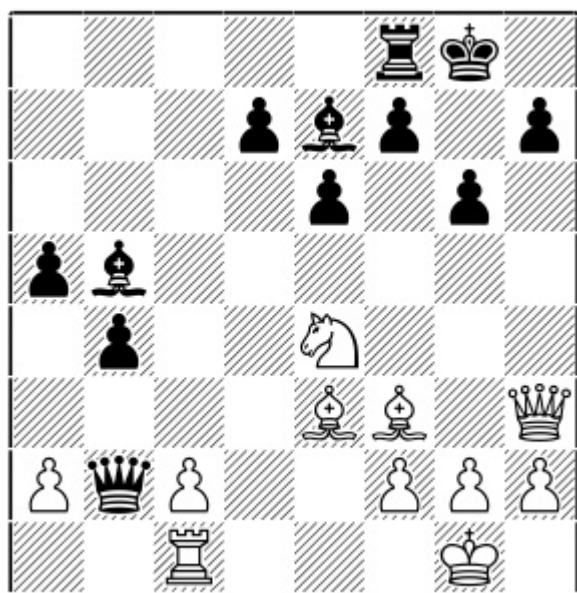


Position after: 15.Rac1

15...Be7

- A) 15...Bd6 16.Bh6! The point of placing the white queen on h4.
- B) 15...Qc7 16.c4²

16.Qg3 0-0 17.e5 Nh5 18.Qh3 g6 19.Be4 Qc7 20.Bxa8 Bxf1 21.Bf3 Bb5 22.Bxh5 Qxe5 23.Bf3 Qxb2 24.Ne4±



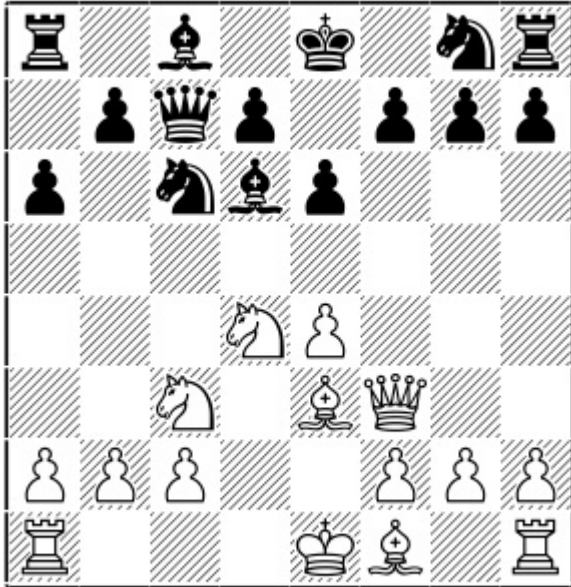
Position after: 24.Ne4±

Black does not have enough compensation for the piece.

Chapter 11

7...Bd6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bd6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 11 – 7...Bd6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bd6 8.0-0-0 Be5 9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.Bxd4

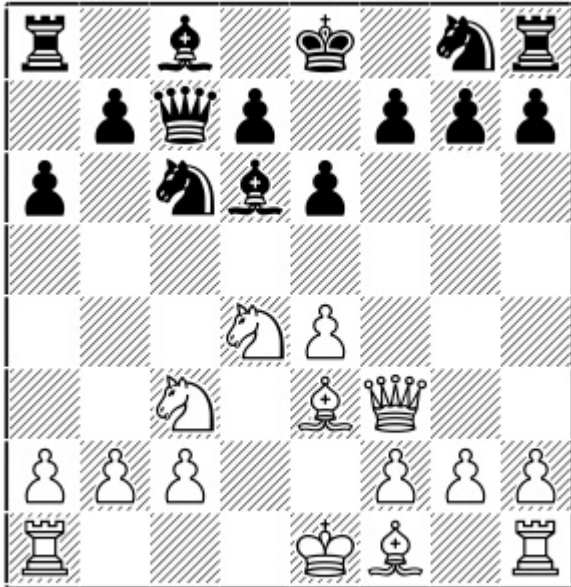
a) 10...Bxd4

b) 10...Nf6 11.Bxe5 Qxe5 12.Qe3 --

c) 10...Nf6 11.Bxe5 Qxe5 12.Qe3 Ng4

a) 10...Bxd4

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bd6



Position after: 7...Bd6

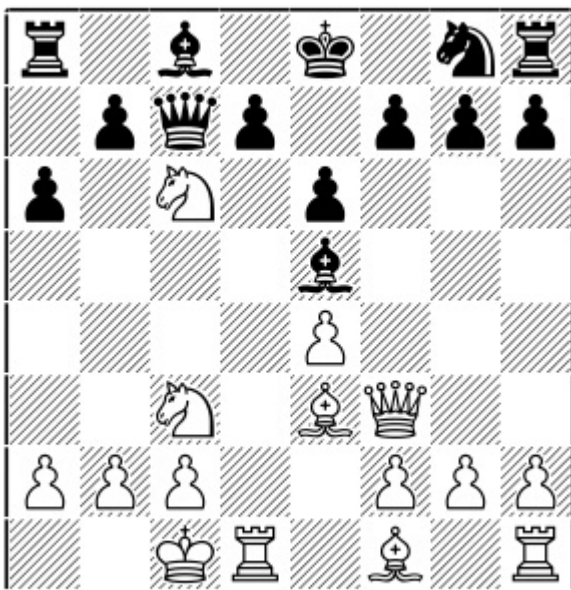
Apart from several natural options, Black has also tried unorthodox replies to this dangerous line with 7.Qf3.

This is one such: Black wants to get the bishop to e5 and play ...Nge7.

8.0-0-0 Be5

Here 9.Qe2 and 9.g3 are often played in top-level games, but I recommend 9.Nxc6, which is quite a strong and typical idea White can use to gain the initiative immediately.

9.Nxc6!

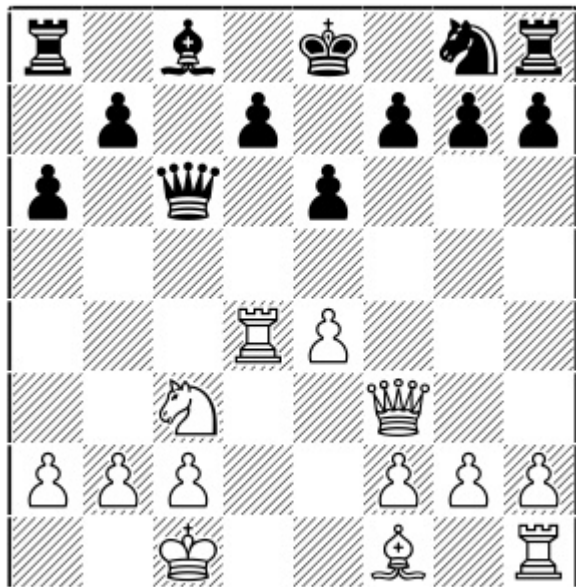


Position after: 9.Nxc6!

9...bxc6

A) 9...dxc6? 10.Na4±

B) 9...Qxc6?! 10.Bd4 Bxd4 11.Rxd4



Position after: 11.Rxd4

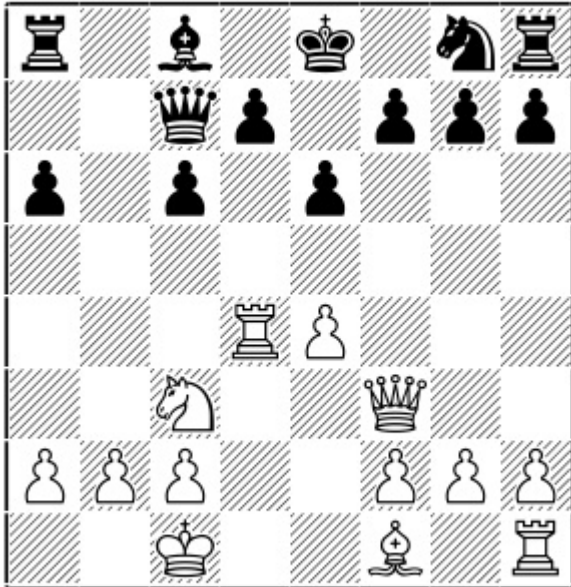
B1) 11...Qc5 12.Rd1 Nf6 13.Qg3 [13.Be2 0-0 14.Qg3 d5] 13...Nh5 14.Qh4 Nf6 15.Be2 b5 [15...0-0 16.g4±] 16.Qg3± Threatening e5 and thanks to the bishop on e2, Black's ...Nh5 idea is prevented.

B2) 11...Ne7 12.Qg3 0-0 13.Qd6 Qxd6 14.Rxd6 b5 15.Bd3 f5 16.f3± The strong rook on d6 totally controls the whole position.

10.Bd4 Bxd4

10...Nf6 – see the next subchapter.

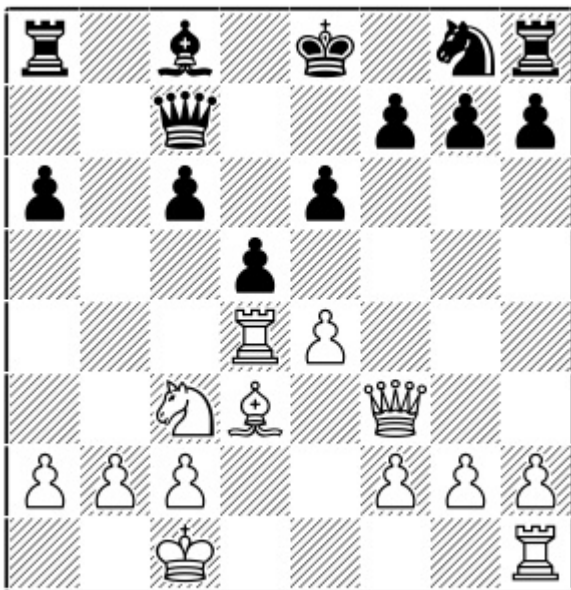
11.Rxd4



Position after: 11.Rxd4

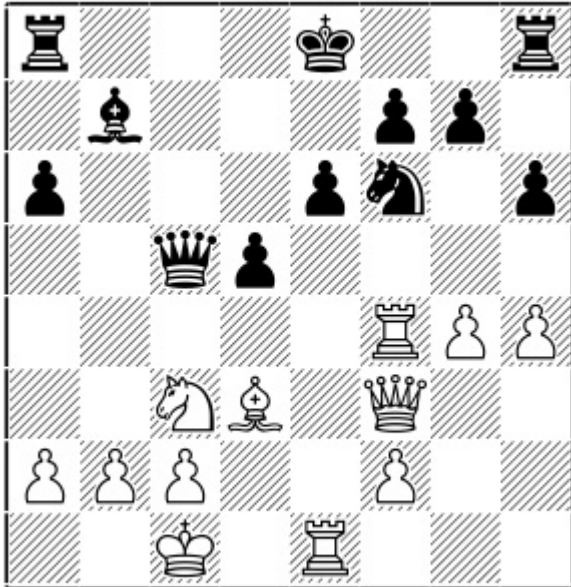
11...Nf6

A) 11...d5 12.Bd3



Position after: 12.Bd3

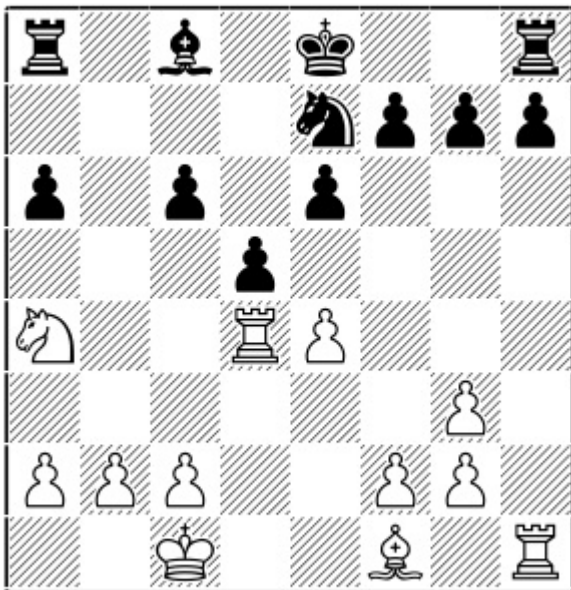
12...Nf6 [12...c5? 13.Ra4 c4 14.Be2 Bd7 15.exd5 Bxa4 16.dxe6+-; 12...Qe5 13.Ra4 Nf6 14.Qe3 0-0 15.Qg3 Qxg3 16.hxg3± White has a good advantage with the active rook on a4.; 12...Qb6 13.Ra4 Ne7 14.Qe3! Qxe3+ 15.fxe3± White is dominating here thanks to his active pieces.] 13.exd5 cxd5 14.Re1 Bb7 15.g4 h6 16.h4 Qc5 17.Rf4



Position after: 17.Rf4

17...Qe7 [17...Rc8 18.Rxf6! gxf6 19.Qxf6±] 18.g5 hxg5 19.hxg5 Nd7 20.Qg4 Nc5 21.g6 Nxd3+ 22.cxd3± and Black's position is collapsing.

B) 11...Ne7 12.Qg3 Qxg3 [12...e5 13.Rd2 0-0 14.Bc4 Bb7 15.Rhd1± and Black cannot carry out the freeing ...d5 break.] 13.hxg3 d5 14.Na4!



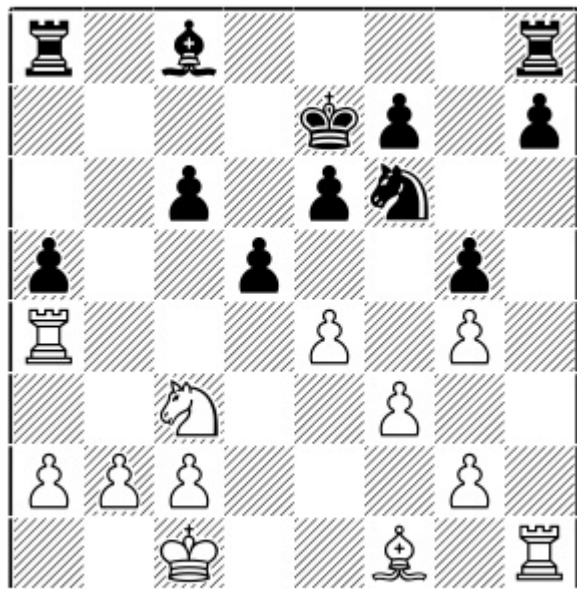
Position after: 14.Na4!

Preventing Black's ...c5 and planning to jump to a nice outpost for the knight, as well as preparing c4 in some cases. 14...e5 15.Rd1 Rb8 16.Nc5 a5 17.Bd3 f5 18.f3 0-0 19.Rhe1 fxe4 20.fxe4 Bg4 21.Rd2 Kh8 22.exd5 Nxd5 23.Rxe5± This is just a pawn.

12.Qe3!

12.Qg3!? On first inspection the endgame looks more than pleasant but after analysing it quite deeply, I came to the conclusion that Black gets counterplay. Here are some variations illustrating how. 12...Qxg3 13.hxg3 d5

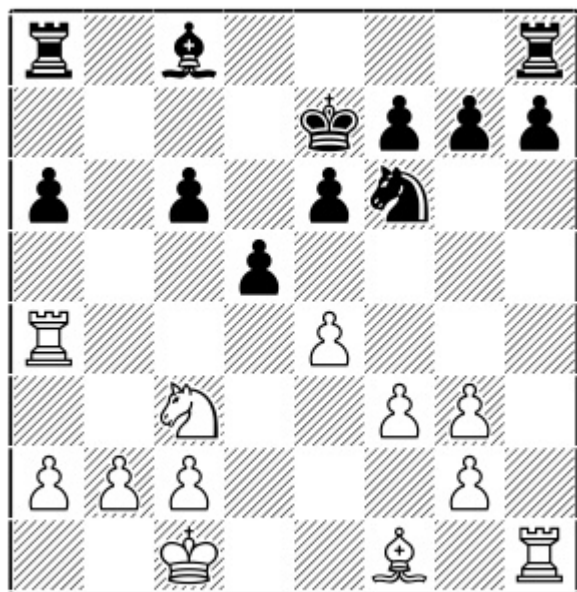
A) 14.f3 Ke7 15.g4 g5 16.Ra4 a5



Position after: 16...a5

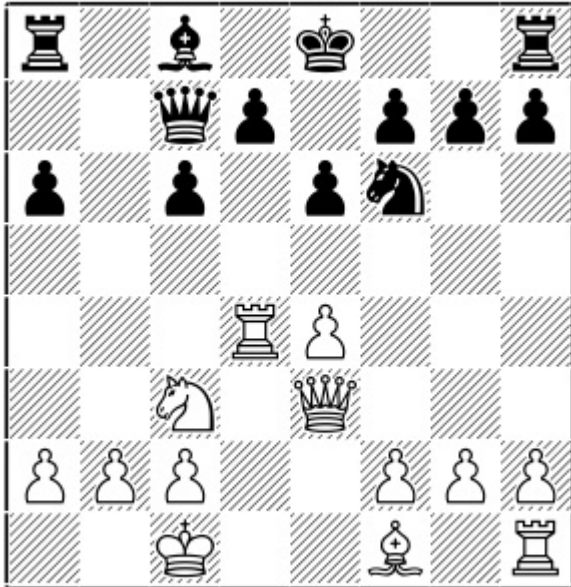
17.Ra3 [17.b4 Ba6 18.Bxa6 Rxa6 19.exd5 cxd5,,; 17.Rh6 Ng8!] 17...h6! 18.Bd3 Nd7! [18...Bb7 allows 19.Rb3!²] 19.exd5 cxd5 20.b4 Bb7 21.bxa5 Ba6! Black gets counterplay as White is not well coordinated.

B) 14.Ra4 Ke7 15.f3 [15.Bd3?! a5! 16.b4 Ba6 17.bxa5 Rhb8,,]



Position after: 15.f3

15...a5! [15...Bb7?! 16.exd5 cxd5 17.Rhh4! Bringing all the pieces into action. 17...Nd7 18.Ra5 Kd6 19.Rb4 Kc7 20.Na4 h6 21.c4²] 16.g4 Nd7 and Black again gets counterplay.

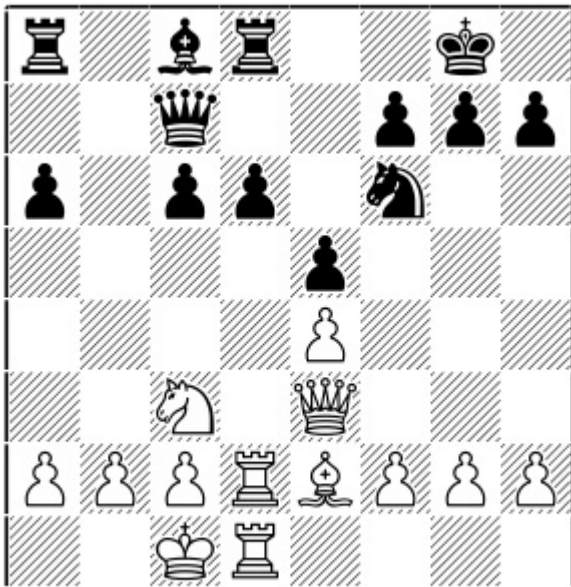


Position after: 12.Qe3!

12...Ng4

A) After 12...0-0?! 13.e5 Nd5 14.Nxd5 cxd5 15.Bd3 f5 16.g4 d6 17.f4 fxg4 18.h3 g3 19.Qxg3± White has a strong attack.

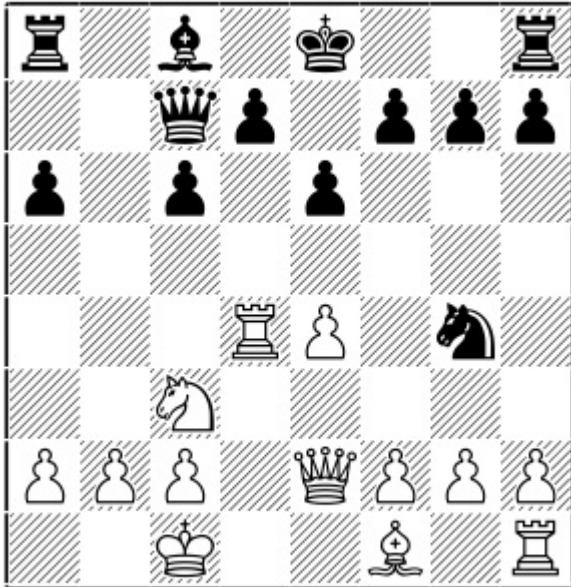
B) 12...e5 13.Rd2 d6 14.Be2! [14.f4 was played in Bok, B (2620) – Spoelman, W (2586) Netherlands 2017 but the text 14.Be2 is even stronger.] 14...0-0 15.Rhd1 Rd8



Position after: 15...Rd8

Now after 16.f4 exf4 17.Qxf4 Be6 18.g4 Black is not in time to reinforce his weak d6-pawn by playing the manoeuvre ...Nd7-e5, as the d6-pawn will hang when he moves his knight to d7. 18...Ne8 19.g5 a5 20.b3±

13.Qe2

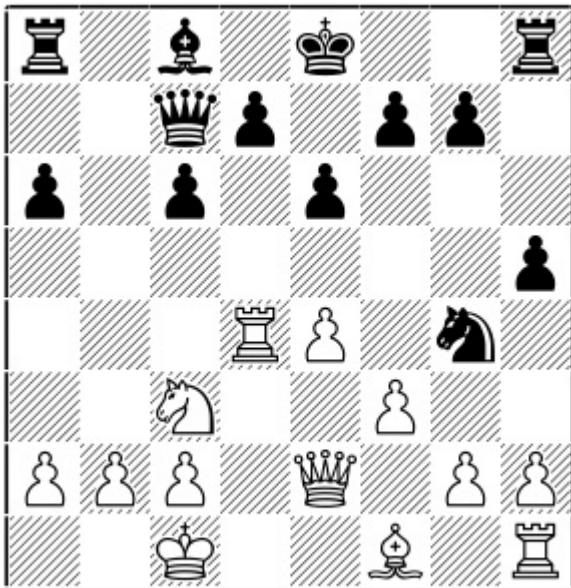


Position after: 13.Qe2

13...Ne5

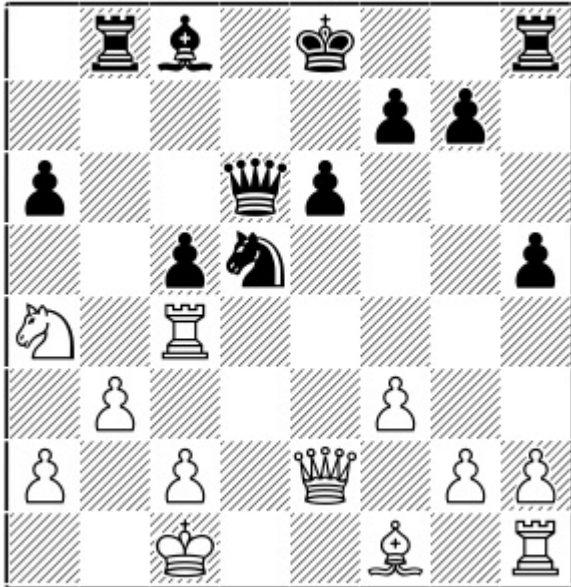
A) 13...Nxh2? fails to 14.e5 Nxf1 15.Ne4!+-.

B) 13...h5 14.f3 [14.h3 Qf4+ 15.Rd2 Ne5 16.h4 a5 17.g3 Qf3 18.Qxf3 Nxf3 19.Rd1²]



Position after: 14.f3

14...Nf6 [14...Qf4+ 15.Qd2 Qxd2+ 16.Rxd2 Ne5 17.f4 Ng6 18.g3 h4 19.Rg1 hxg3 20.hxg3± The black bishop on c8 and the knight on g6 are just rather passive.] 15.e5 Nd5 16.Na4 Rb8 [16...c5? 17.Rc4±] 17.b3 c5 18.Rc4 d6 19.exd6 Qxd6

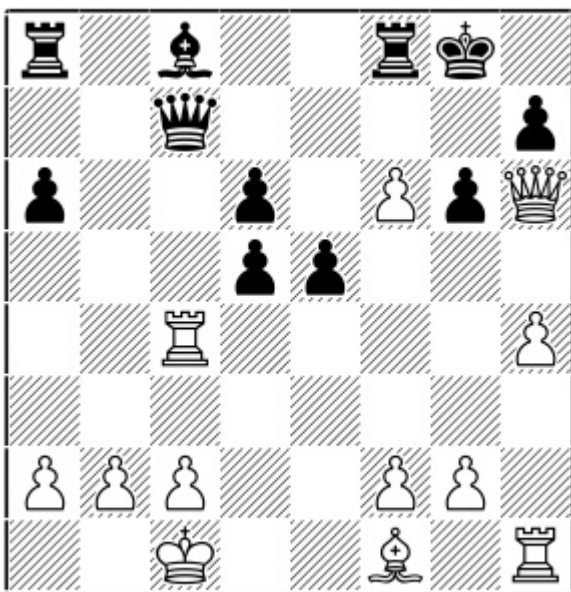


Position after: 19...Qxd6

20.Qf2! [20.Rxc5? Bd7 μ ; 20.Nxc5? Nb6 21.Rc3 Nd5=] 20...0-0 21.Bd3 \pm White can capture the c5-pawn anytime. Before doing so he may as well consolidate his position.

C) 13...Nh6 14.f3! [14.Qc4 f6 15.g3 Nf7 16.Be2 0-0 17.Rhd1 d6] 14...0-0 15.Qe3 f6 16.Rd2 a5 17.Bc4 a4 18.a3 d5 19.Ba2 \pm Now White will attack with g4 and h4.

D) 13...Nf6 14.e5 Nd5 15.Nxd5 cxd5 16.Qe3 Making way for the f1-bishop. 16...0-0 17.Rg4 d6 [17...f5 18.exf6 Rxf6 19.Qg5 Rf7 20.Bd3 \pm] 18.Qh6 g6 19.h4! f5 [19...dxe5 20.h5+–] 20.exf6 e5 21.Rc4!! This key tactic helps White to get an overwhelming advantage.



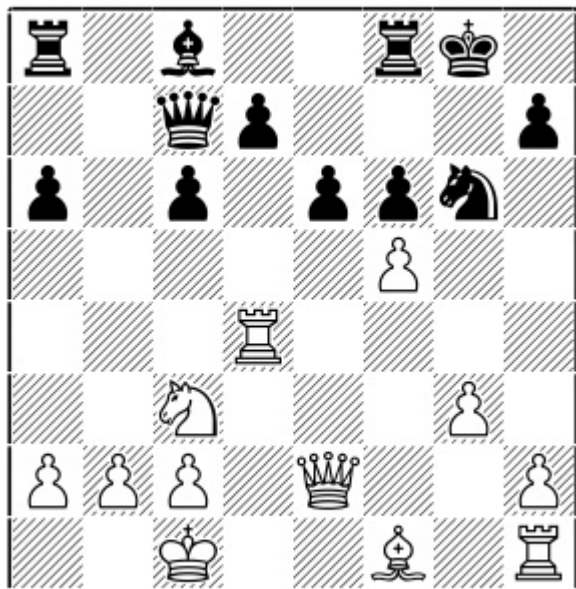
Position after: 21.Rc4!!

21...Qa7 [21...dxc4?? 22.Bxc4+ Qxc4 23.Qg7#] 22.Rc6 \pm

14.Rd2!

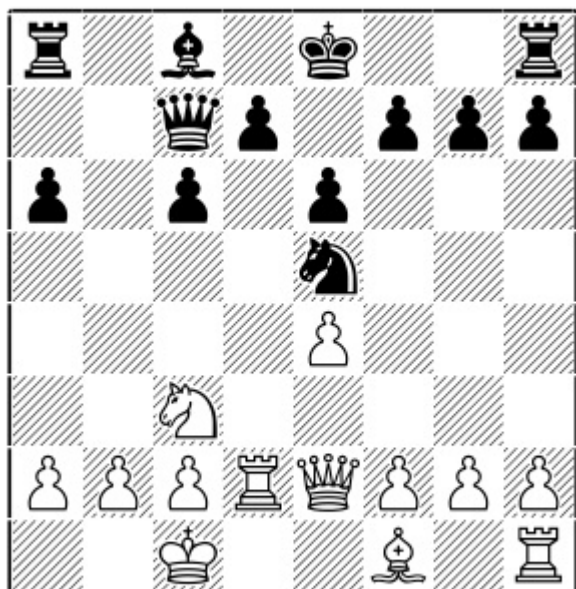
The idea is to play f4 and g3. The rook should avoid going to d4, as Black would then have possibilities of ...e5.

14.f4 also gives White a good edge. 14...Ng6 15.e5 [15.g3 allows 15...e5] 15...0-0 16.g3 f6!? 17.exf6 gxf6 18.f5!



Position after: 18.f5!

18...exf5 [18...Qe5 19.Qf2 Qxf5 20.Qxf5 exf5 21.Rd6 Ne5 22.Bd3 Nxd3+ 23.cxd3 Kf7 24.Rf1?] 19.Bh3 d5 20.Rf1² White is slightly better due to Black's shattered pawn structure.



Position after: 14.Rd2!

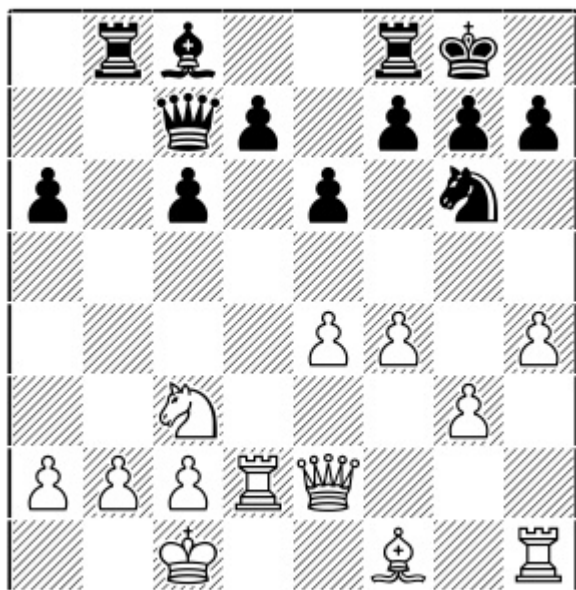
14...0-0

14...f6 15.f4 Nf7 16.g3 0-0 17.Qe3 a5 18.b3 Ba6 19.Bxa6 Rxa6 20.Na4 d6 21.c4 c5 22.g4±

15.f4 Ng6 16.g3 Rb8

16...d5 17.Qe3 a5 18.Qc5² White is in total control and his queen holds the dark squares in a vice-like grip.

17.h4±

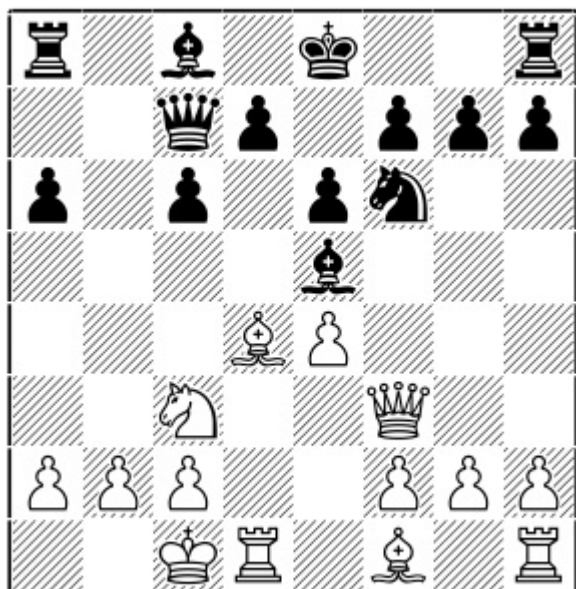


Position after: 17.h4±

White has a strong attack coming.

b) 10...Nf6 11.Bxe5 Qxe5 12.Qe3 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bd6 8.0-0-0 Be5 9.Nxc6! bxc6 10.Bd4 Nf6



Position after: 10...Nf6

11.Bxe5!

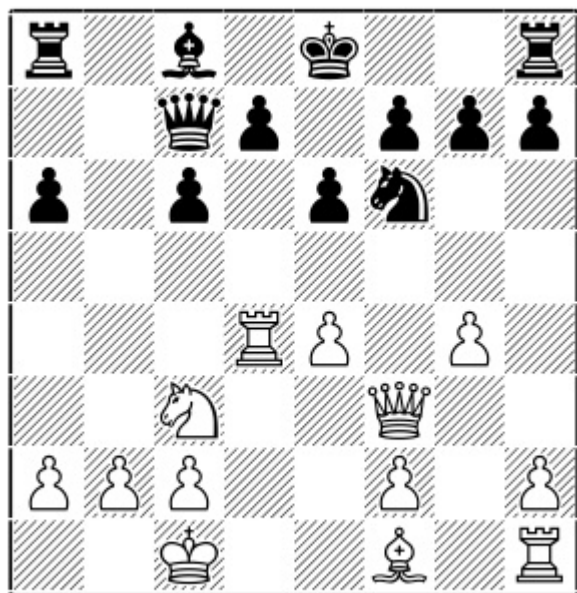
11.g4 I was the first one to play this against Grandmaster Irina Krush in Gibraltar 2015, but later found out that the main option is much stronger.

A) 11...c5?! was the game: 12.Bxe5 Qxe5 13.Qe3! Threatening f4. [13.h4 Bb7 14.Bg2 h6 The game was by now quite complicated and it ended in a draw. Sethuraman, S (2624) – Krush, I (2467) Caleta 2015.]

13...Nxg4 14.Qd2 Nf6 15.f4±

B) 11...d5 12.g5 [12.Bxe5 Qxe5 13.Rg1 0-0 14.Qg3 Qxg3 15.Rxg3 a5 and Black is fine here] 12...Bxd4 13.Rxd4 Qe5! 14.Qe3 c5 15.Ra4 d4 16.Qg3 Nd7,,

C) 11...Bxd4! 12.Rxd4

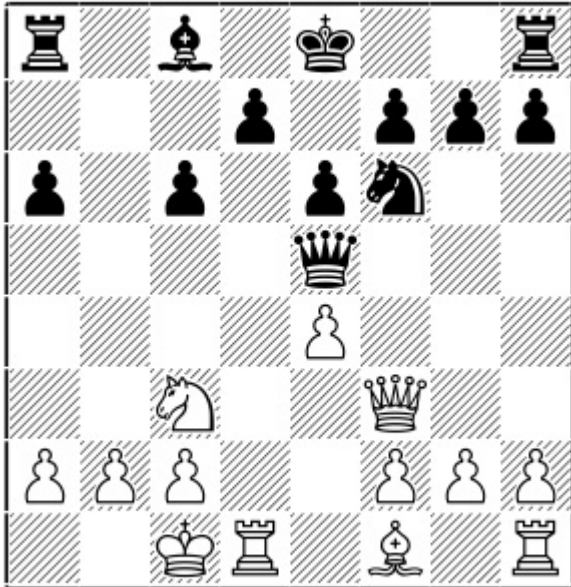


Position after: 12.Rxd4

C1) 12...d5 13.exd5 cxd5 14.g5 Nd7 15.Qg3 Qc5! [15...Qb6 16.Rh4 Rb8 17.b3 Ke7 18.Bh3 Bb7 19.Ne2±] 16.Rh4 g6 17.Bd3 Bb7 18.Rd1 Bc6,, I would still prefer White here but Black has no weaknesses either.

C2) 12...Qe5 13.Qe3 d5 14.exd5 Qxe3+ 15.fxe3 cxd5 Here it's not clear whether White is better at all.

11...Qxe5



Position after: 11...Qxe5

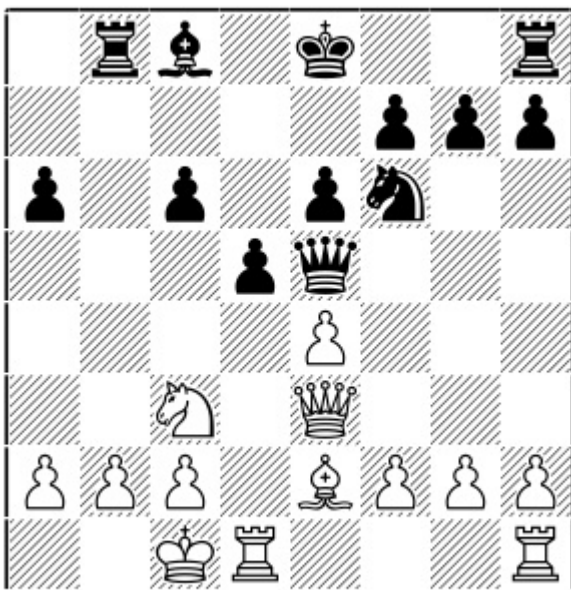
12.Qe3!

Preparing f4.

12.Qg3 was played before, but Black equalises after 12...Qxg3 13.hxg3 d5, e.g. 14.f3 [Or 14.Bd3 Ke7 15.f3 h6 16.Na4 Rd8= Sarana, A (2655) – Nihal, S (2610) Cap d'Agde 2019.] 14...dxe4 15.Nxe4 Nxe4 16.fxe4 e5 17.Rd6 Bd7 18.c4 a5 19.c5 Ke7=

12...0-0

A) 12...Rb8 13.Be2 d5 [13...0-0 14.g4 d5 15.f4 Qc7 16.g5 Nd7 17.h4±]



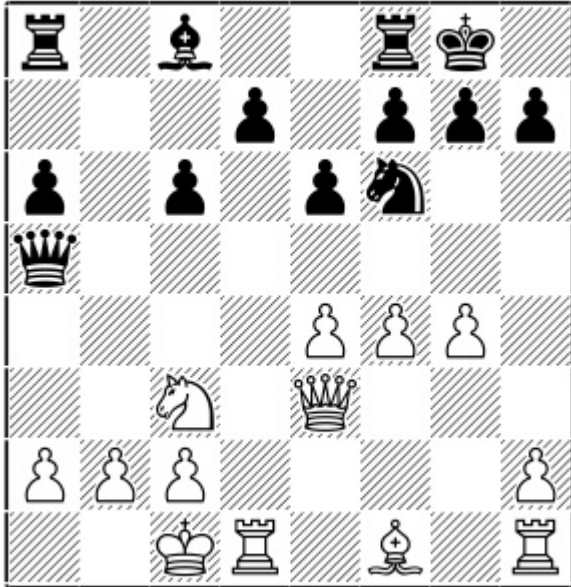
Position after: 13...d5

14.g4 [14.f4!? Qc7 15.exd5 cxd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Rxd5 Qb7 18.Qe5 Qxd5 19.Qxb8 0-0 20.Qb3 Qxg2 21.Qf3?] 14...dxe4 15.Qg3! Qxg3 16.hxg3 e3 17.f4± White takes the pawn on e3 with his rook.

B) 12...Ng4 – see next subchapter.

13.f4 Qa5 14.g4!

White offers a pawn for a quick initiative, but Black cannot very well accept.

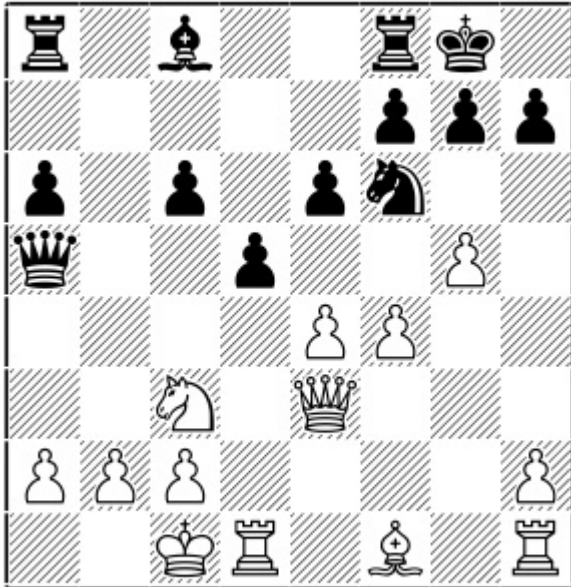


Position after: 14.g4!

14...d5

14...Nxg4? 15.Qg3 Nf6 [15...f5 16.e5 Qb6 17.Rg1±] 16.e5 Nd5 [16...Ne8 17.Rg1±] 17.Ne4 Qxa2 18.Rxd5! cxd5 19.Nf6+ Kh8 20.Rg1+–

15.g5



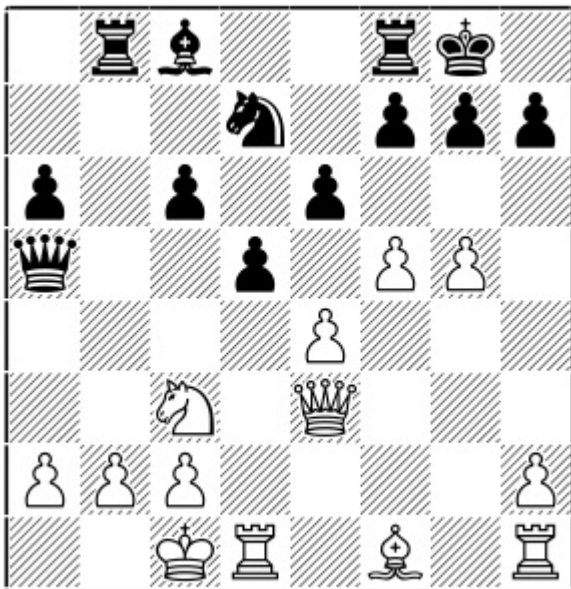
Position after: 15.g5

15...Nd7

15...Nxe4 16.Nxe4 dxe4 17.a3! e5 [17...c5 18.Qxe4 Rb8 19.Bd3±] 18.Qxe4 Bg4 19.Rd2 exf4 20.Qxf4 Be6 21.h4 Bd5 22.Rh3± Thanks to the split black pawns on a6 and c6, White's position is much more fluent.

16.f5 Rb8

16...Qb6 17.Qg3±



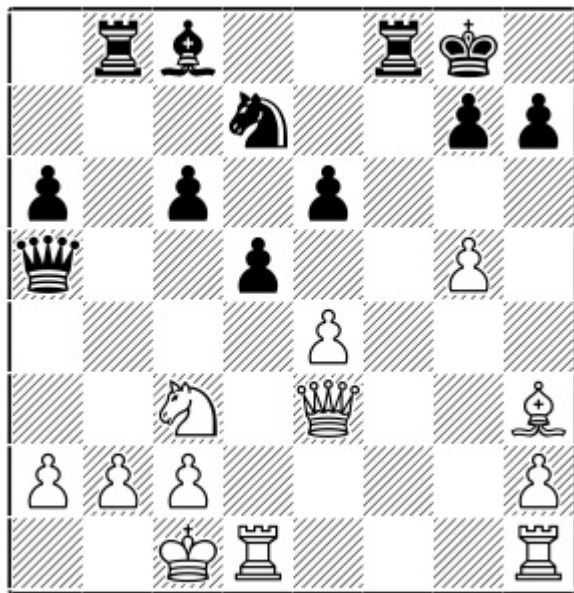
Position after: 16...Rb8

17.fxe6

17.f6?! Nc5! 18.b3 Qa3+ 19.Kb1 e5!,

17...fxe6 18.Bh3!

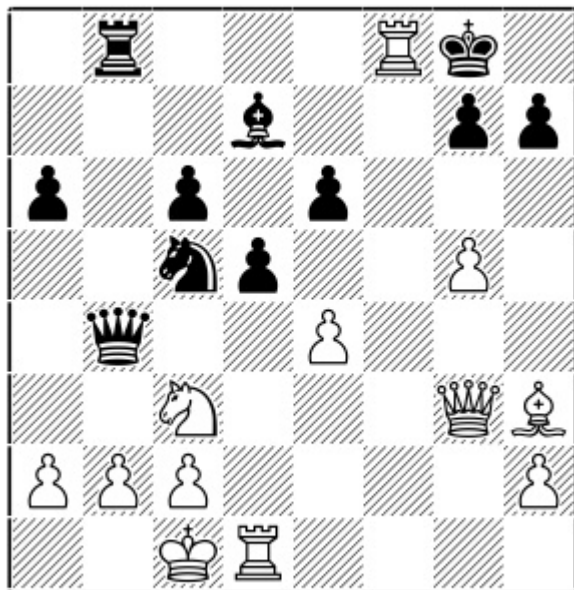
18.Be2!? Qb6 19.Qxb6 Nxb6 20.h4 a5 21.b3 Bd7 22.h5 Rf2 23.h6 g6 24.Bg4²



Position after: 18.Bh3!

18...Ne5

18...Nc5 19.Rhf1 Bd7 20.Qg3 Qb4 21.Rxf8+



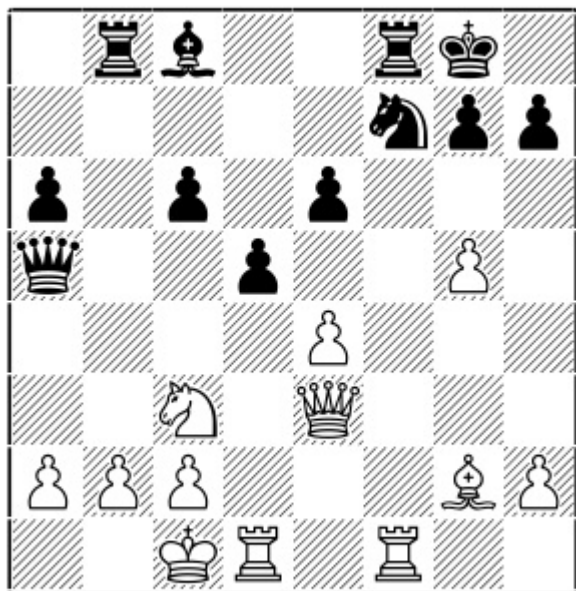
Position after: 21.Rxf8+

21...Kxf8 [21...Rxf8 22.a3 Qc4 23.Qe3±] 22.Rf1+ Ke7 23.b3 d4 24.Nb1 d3 25.cxd3±

19.Rhf1 Nf7

19...Re8 20.Qg3 Qc7 21.Rfe1±

20.Bg2



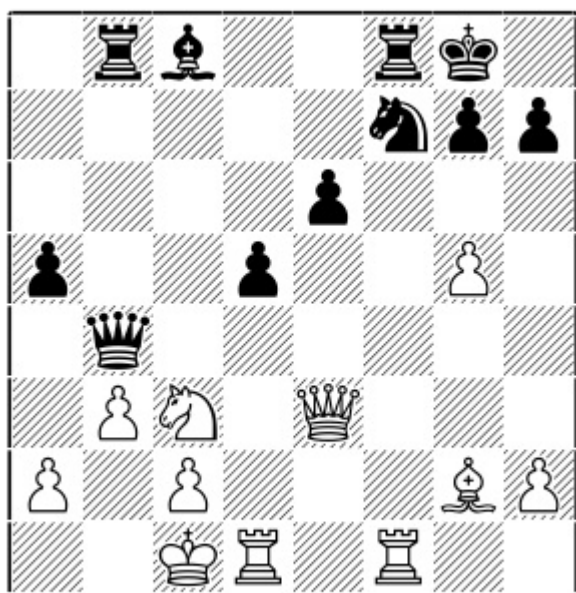
Position after: 20.Bg2

20...Qb4

20...Qb4 21.Qxb6 Rxb6 22.h4 Ne5 23.b3 Ng6 24.Rxf8+ Kxf8 25.h5 Nh8 26.Rf1+ Ke8 27.Re1 Kd8 28.Bf1!
White reroutes his bishop to d3 to target the h7-pawn, while Black is unable to free his own bishop on c8.

21.b3 Bd7

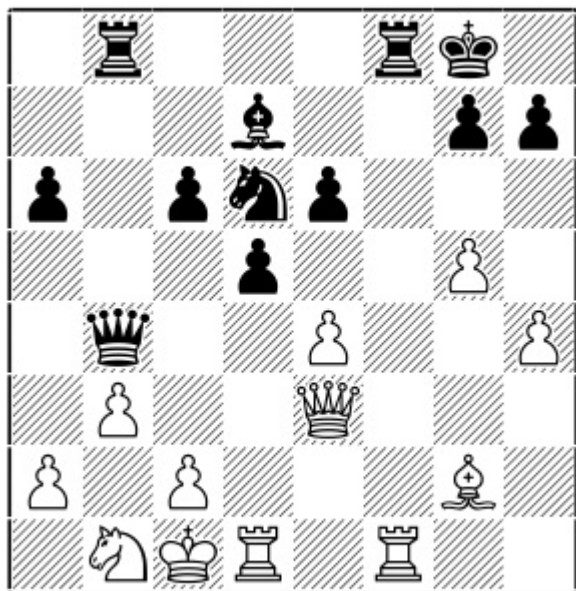
21...a5 22.exd5 cxd5 and White has a strong tactic here with



Position after: 22...cxd5

23.Nxd5! exd5 24.Bxd5 Bb7 25.Bxf7+ Rxf7 26.Rxf7 Kxf7 27.Rd7+ Kg6 28.Qe5+–.

22.h4 Nd6 23.Nb1!!



Position after: 23.Nb1!!

Preventing ...Qa3+.

23...Qa5

23...a5 24.Rxf8+ Rxf8 25.Qa7 Be8 26.a3±

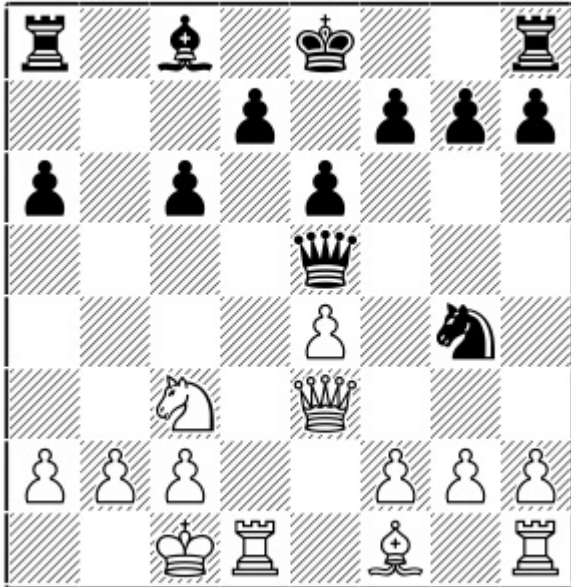
24.a3±

White has consolidated his position, while Black has a whole bunch of weaknesses.

c) 10...Nf6 11.Bxe5 Qxe5 12.Qe3 Ng4

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Bd6 8.0-0-0 Be5 9.Nxc6! bxc6 10.Bd4 Nf6 11.Bxe5! Qxe5 12.Qe3! Ng4

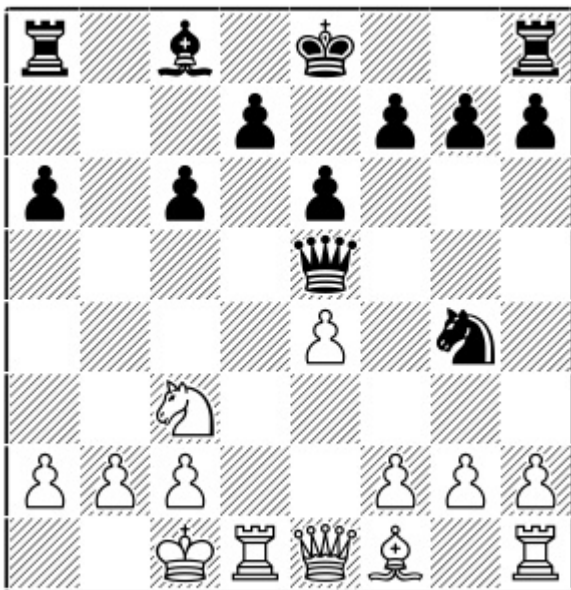
Here White can go back with his queen to e1 or e2 and both these options look like they give him a slight plus.



Position after: 12...Ng4

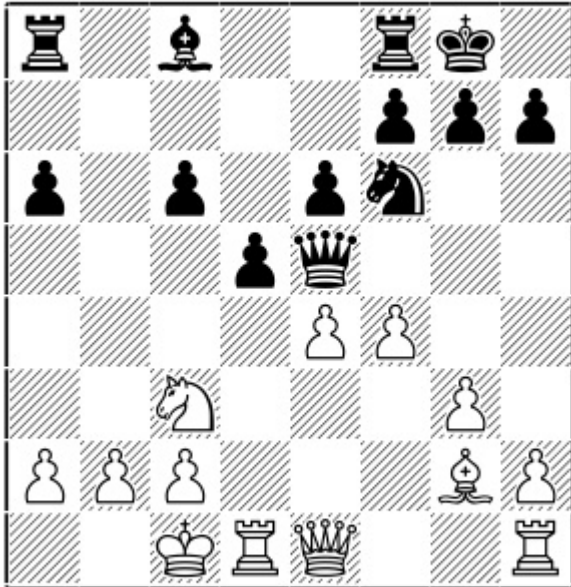
13.Qe2

13.Qe1!?



Position after: 13.Qe1!?

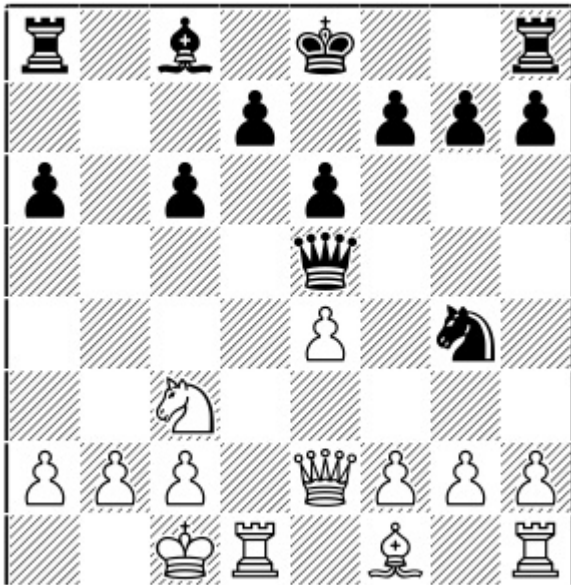
- A) 13...Nxh2? 14.Be2+- traps the knight.
- B) 13...0-0 14.f3 Nf6 15.Bd3 d5 16.Qh4 Qc7 17.g4 Qf4+ 18.Kb1 h6 19.Rhg1 c5 20.exd5 exd5 21.Ne2±
- C) 13...Qc5 14.Rd2 Rb8 [14...0-0 15.f3 Ne5 16.f4 Ng6 17.Qf2 Qxf2 18.Rxf2±] 15.f3 Ne5 16.Qg3±
- D) 13...Nf6 14.g3 d5 15.Bg2 0-0 16.f4



Position after: 16.f4

D1) 16...Qc7 17.Na4! Planning to create a strong bind with Qc3 and Nc5, with the former move also threatening the pawn on d5 due to the pin along the c-file. 17...a5 18.Qc3 Qb8 19.Rhe1 Ba6 20.f5 exf5 [20...Qb4 21.Qxb4 axb4 22.fxe6 fxe6 23.Nc5±] 21.exd5 cxd5 22.Bxd5²

D2) 16...Qb8 17.Qe3 [17.Na4 a5 18.Qc3 Ba6 White is not in time to play f5 and create a weakness on e6: 19.Rhe1 Rd8 20.f5 exf5 21.exd5 cxd5,] 17...a5 18.Rhe1² White gets a similar kind of position to those from the 13.Qe2 line.



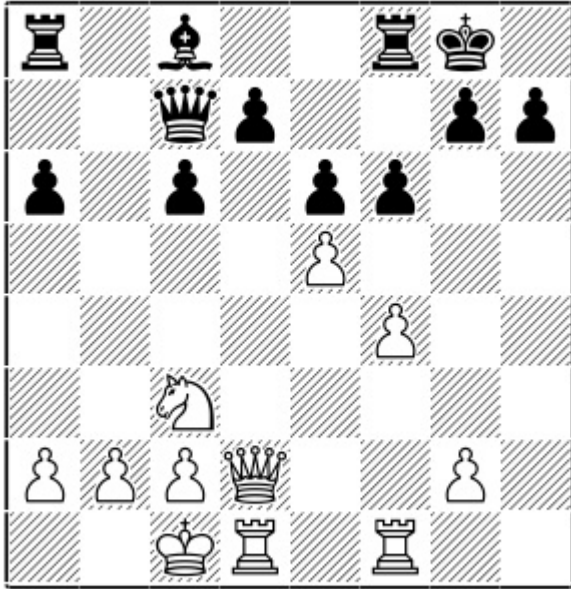
Position after: 13.Qe2

13...Nf6

A) 13...Qf4+? 14.Rd2±

B) 13...Nxh2

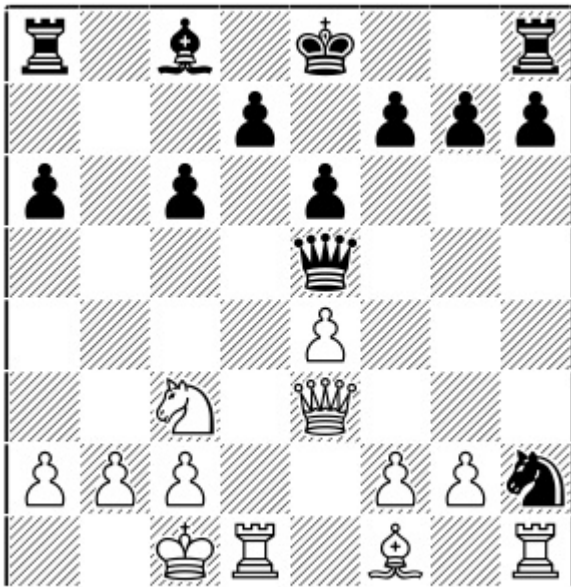
B1) 14.Qd2!? gives White an advantage. 14...Nxf1 [14...Ng4 15.Rh4! Next is f4. 15...Nf6 16.f4 Qa5 17.g4 d5 18.g5 Nd7 19.f5+–] 15.Rhxf1 Qc7 16.f4 0-0 [16...e5 17.Rf3±] 17.e5 f6



Position after: 17...f6

18.Ne4 [18.exf6 Rxf6 19.Ne4 Rf5 20.Qd6 Qxd6 21.Nxd6 Rd5 22.c4²] 18...fxe5 19.Nd6! exf4 20.Rxf4 Qd8 21.Rdf1 Rxf4 22.Qxf4 Qf6 23.Qxf6 gxf6 24.Rxf6±

B2) 14.Qe3! The difference between 14.Qd2 and 14.Qe3 is that in some cases White has the option of Qc5 now, let's say after 14...Nxf1 15.Rxf1 followed by f2-f4.

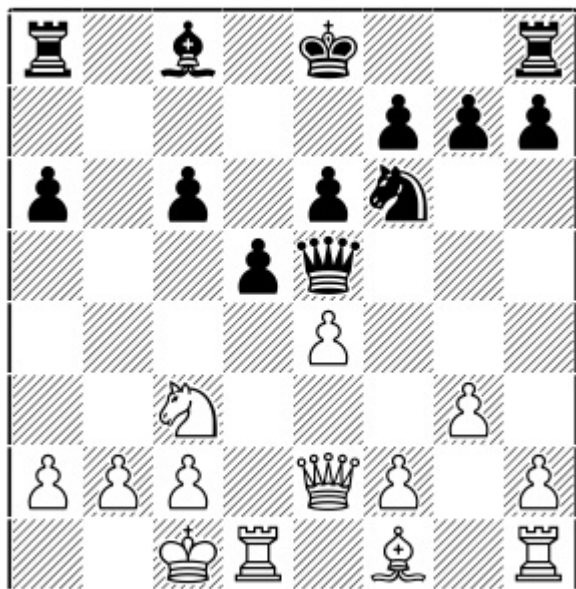


Position after: 14.Qe3!

14...Ng4 [14...Nxf1 15.Rhxf1 Bb7 16.f4 Qc7 17.Qc5±] 15.Qd2 Rb8 16.f3 Nf6 17.b3 d5 18.g4 g5 19.Re1 d4 20.Na4 h6 21.Nb2 c5 22.Bd3± White is dominating and Black's extra pawn is of no use.

14.g3 d5

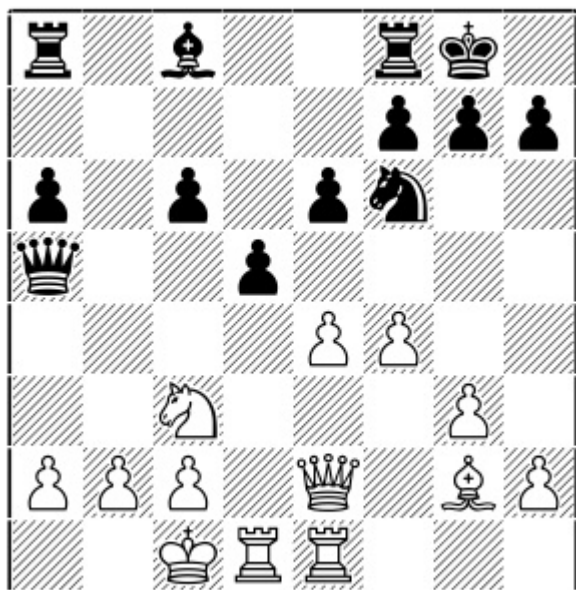
14...0-0 15.f4 Qa5 16.Qe1! Making way for the Bf1. 16...e5 17.Bc4 Rb8 18.Rf1 Qc5 19.Bb3 Re8 20.Qd2±



Position after: 14...d5

15.Bg2

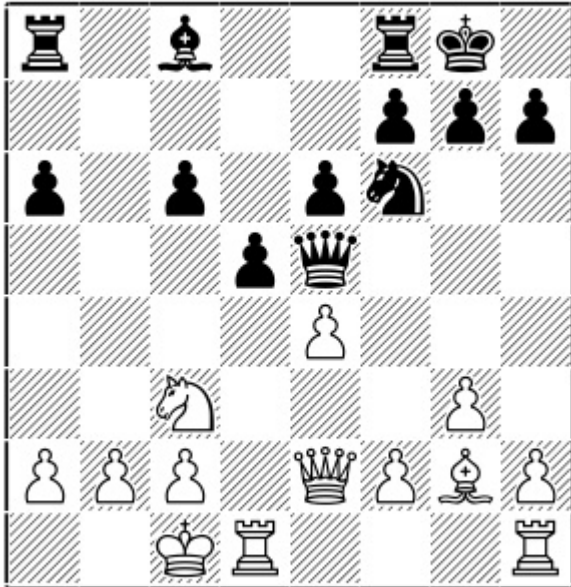
15.f4!? Qc7 16.Bg2 0-0 17.Rhe1 [17.Qe3 Qa5 18.Rhe1 Bb7 19.b3 c5] 17...Qa5 [17...Rb8 18.b3²]



Position after: 17...Qa5

18.Qe3 [18.g4?! e5! 19.exd5 Bxg4 20.Bf3 Bxf3 21.Qxf3 e4!,,] 18...Rb8 19.b3 Ng4 20.Qd2 Qa3+ 21.Kb1 a5 22.Ka1² The black bishop on c8 lacks any real scope, meaning that White has free play.

15...0-0



Position after: 15...0-0

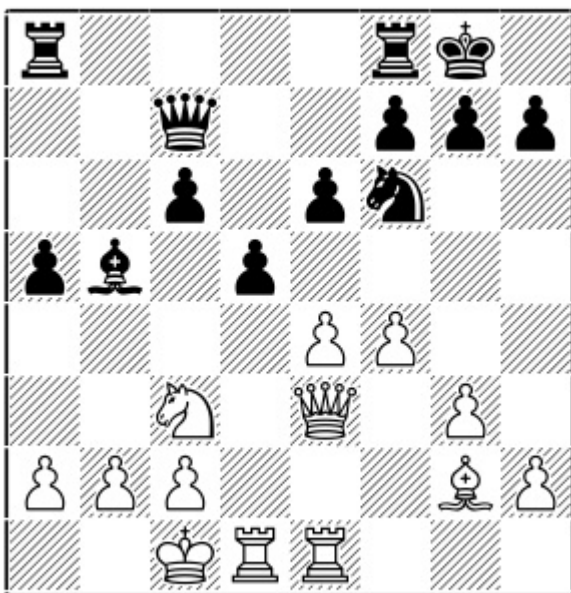
16.Qe3

16.exd5 Qxe2 17.Nxe2 cxd5 18.f4² Although the engines do not show a big advantage for White, practically I consider this position to be much better for him due to his total central control.

16...Qc7 17.Na4 a5

17...Rb8 18.b3 Rb4 19.a3 Rxa4 20.bxa4 a5 21.Rd3±

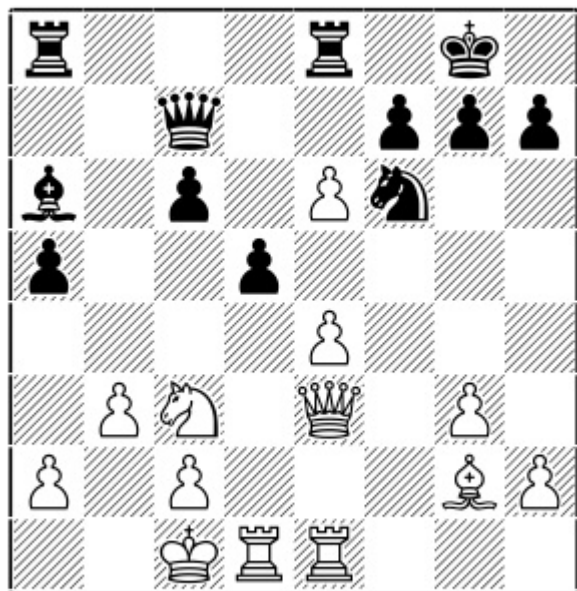
18.Rhe1 Ba6 19.f4 Bb5 20.Nc3



Position after: 20.Nc3

20...Rab8

20...Bc4 21.b3 Ba6 22.f5 Rfe8 23.fxe6



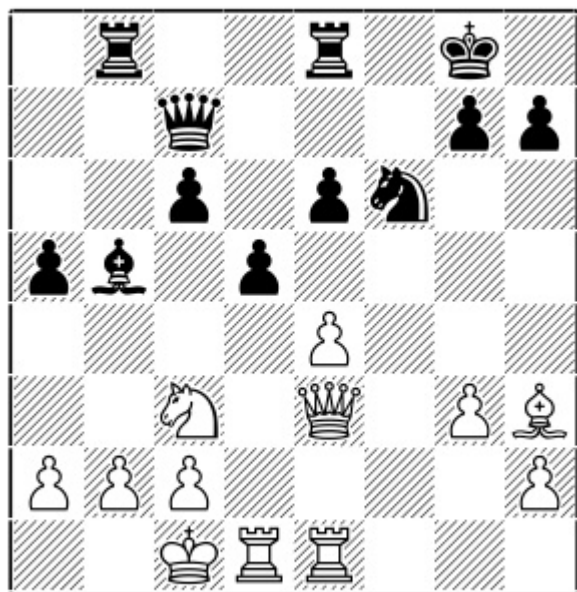
Position after: 23.fxe6

23...fxe6 [23...Rxe6? 24.Qc5 Nd7 25.Qf2±] 24.Kb2²

21.f5 Rfe8 22.fxe6 fxe6

22...Rxe6? 23.Qc5±

23.Bh3²



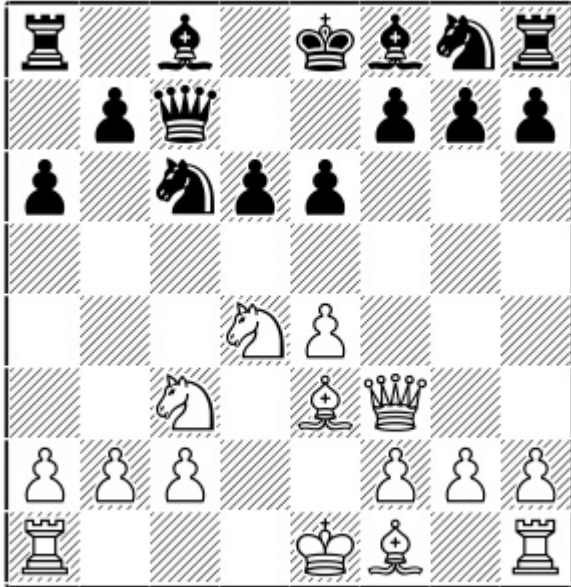
Position after: 23.Bh3²

Black's pawn structure is really all over the place, meaning White has an edge.

Chapter 12

7...d6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 d6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 12 – 7...d6

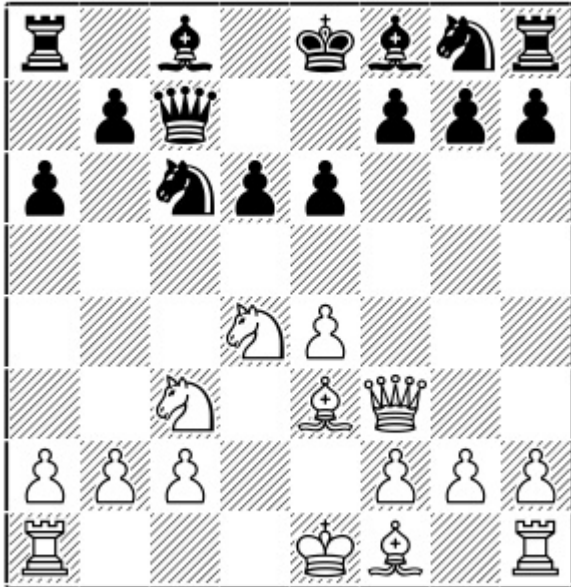
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 d6 8.Nxc6

a) 8...bxc6

b) 8...Qxc6

a) 8...bxc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 d6



Position after: 7...d6

8.Nxc6!

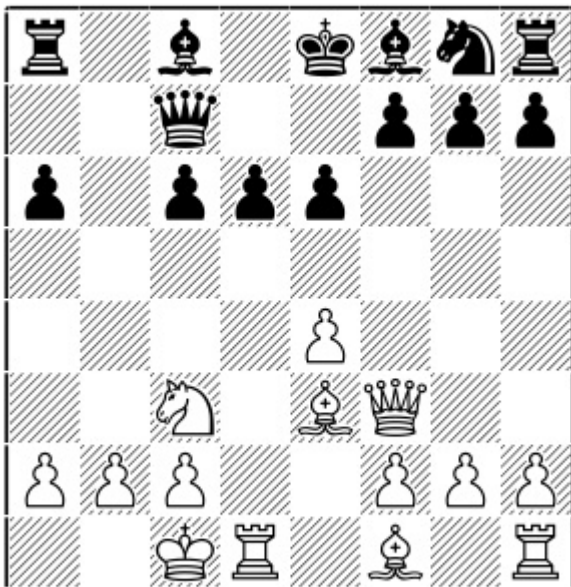
White has several options against this ...d6 system, of which I found the text most powerful and threatening. White makes use of his activity and acts before Black gets to consolidate his position.

Now Black must either take with the queen on c6 (which looks awkward) or change the pawn structure:

8...bxc6

8...Qxc6 – see the next subchapter.

9.0-0-0

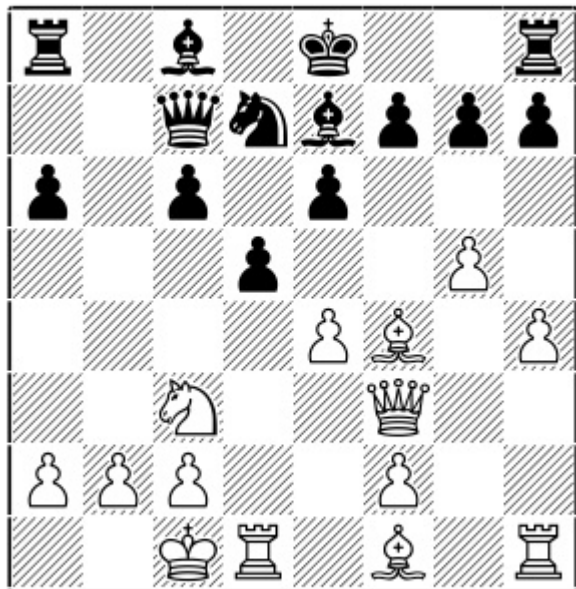


Position after: 9.0-0-0

9...Nf6

A) 9...Be7 10.g4 d5 11.h4

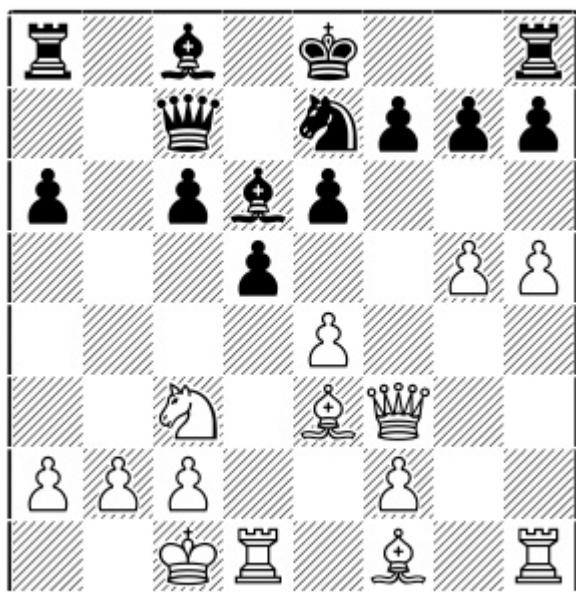
A1) 11...Nf6 12.g5 Nd7 13.Bf4



Position after: 13.Bf4

13...Ne5 [13...Bd6 14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.Qe3 0-0 16.h5 Rb8 17.f4±] 14.Qg3 Bd6 15.Kb1 0-0 16.Bg2 Nc4 [16...Bb7 17.Rhe1 Nc4 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.Qxd6 Nxd6 20.Na4±] 17.Bxd6 Qxd6 18.Qxd6 Nxd6 19.f4±

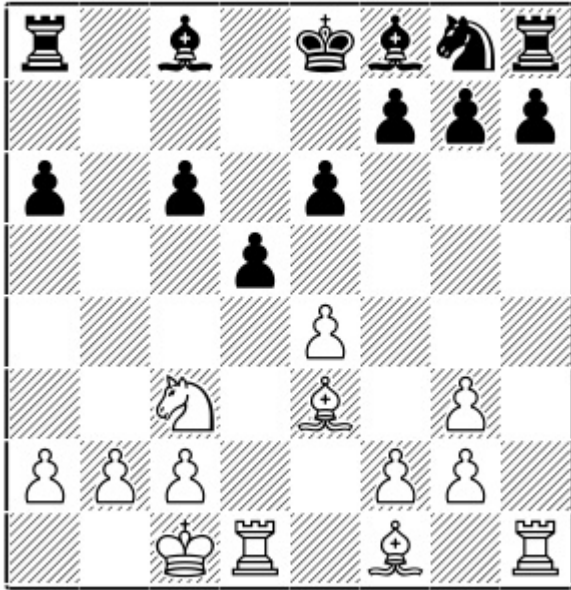
A2) 11...Bd6 12.g5 Ne7 13.h5 White is coasting here as his pawns are already far advanced.



Position after: 13.h5

13...0-0 [13...Rb8 14.h6 g6 15.b3 0-0 16.Kb1 Be5 17.Bc5 f6 18.gxf6 Rxf6 19.Qe3 Bf4 20.Qe1±] 14.h6 g6 15.Bb6! Qb8 [15...Qxb6? 16.Qf6+–] 16.Na4± with constant threats.

B) 9...d5 10.Qg3! Qxg3 11.hxg3

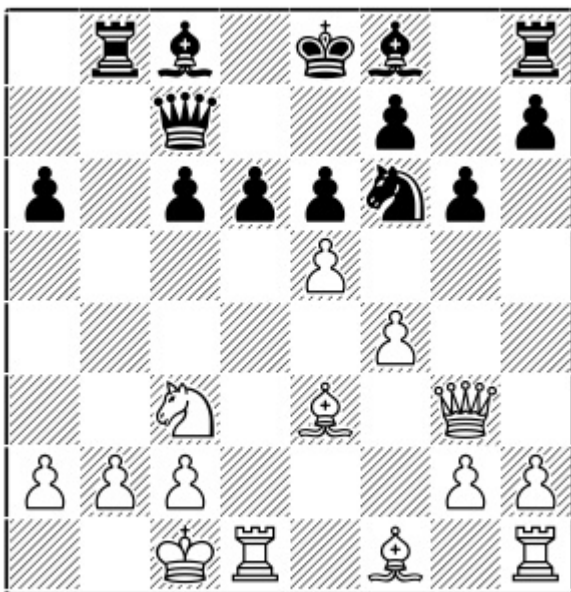


Position after: 11.hxg3

B1) 11...Bb7 12.g4 Nf6 13.Be2! Nxe4 [After 13...dxe4 14.Na4± the bishop on b7 is badly placed.] 14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Rd4 Be7 16.Ra4 [16.Rxe4 c5 17.Re5 Bxg2 18.Rd1²] 16...0-0 17.Rd1± All the black pawns are scattered and Rd7 is coming now.

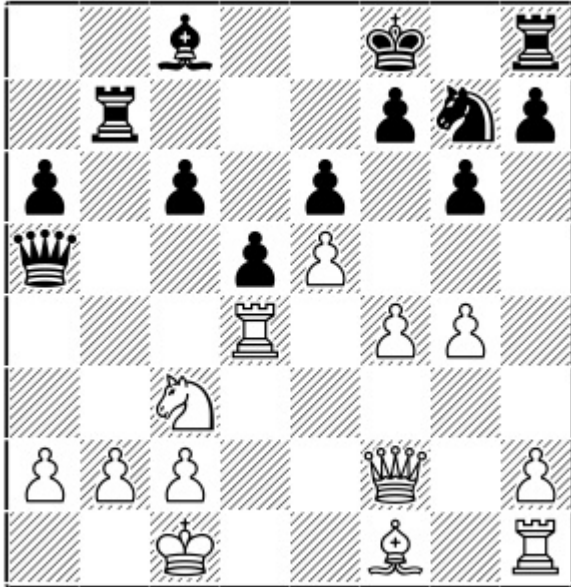
B2) 11...Nf6 12.Be2 Bb4 13.Bd4 [13.f3!? Bxc3 14.bxc3 dxe4 15.c4 e5 16.Rd6 exf3 17.gxf3 Bd7 18.Bd2! The power of two bishops. 18...Ke7 19.Bb4 a5 20.Ba3 Kd8 21.g4±] 13...Bb7 14.g4 0-0 15.exd5 cxd5 16.Bd3± White is in total control of the centre.

C) 9...Rb8 10.Qg3! [10.g4?! allows 10...d5 11.Qg3 Bd6] 10...Nf6 [10...h5 11.Bc4 h4 12.Qf3 Nf6 13.g4±] 11.f4 g6 [11...h5 12.Be2 h4 13.Qf3 d5 14.Bd4 Qa5 15.exd5 cxd5 16.g4±] 12.e5



Position after: 12.e5

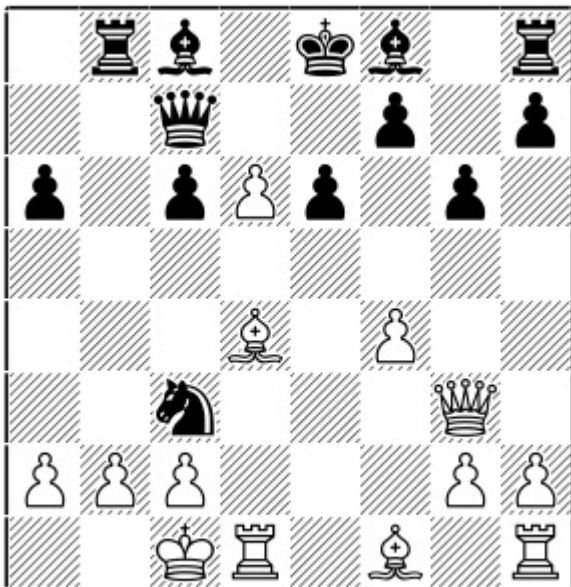
C1) 12...Nh5 13.Qf2 d5 [13...dxe5 14.fxe5 Qxe5 15.Bd4 Qg5+ 16.Kb1+-] 14.g4 Ng7 15.Ba7 Rb7 16.Bc5 Qa5 17.Bxf8 Kxf8 18.Rd4! An important rook-lift.



Position after: 18.Rd4!

White wants to play Ra4, which is both tactically and positionally annoying for Black. 18...c5 19.Ra4 Qb6 20.b3 Ra7 21.b4!±

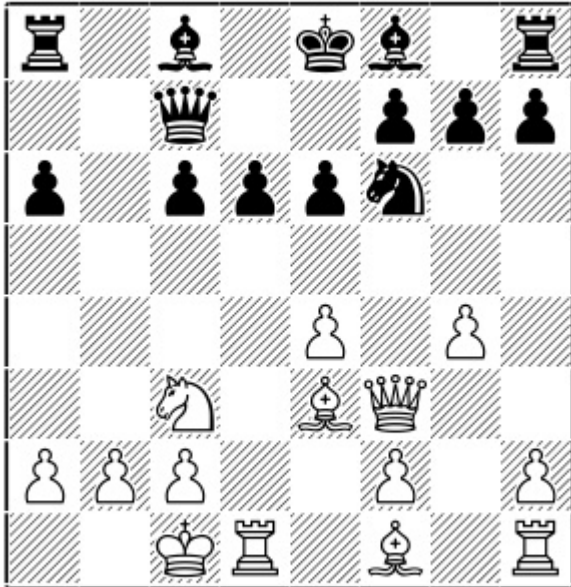
C2) 12...Nd5 13.Bd4 Nxc3 [13...c5? 14.exd6 Bxd6 15.Nxd5 exd5 16.Qe1+-] 14.exd6!



Position after: 14.exd6!

14...Bxd6 [14...Nxa2+ 15.Kb1 Bxd6 16.Bxh8 Bxf4 17.Qa3±] 15.Qxc3 Bxf4+ 16.Kb1 0-0 17.Bf6 c5 18.g3 Bb7 19.Rg1 Bh6 20.Bc4± With h4 to follow, after which Black is completely doomed.

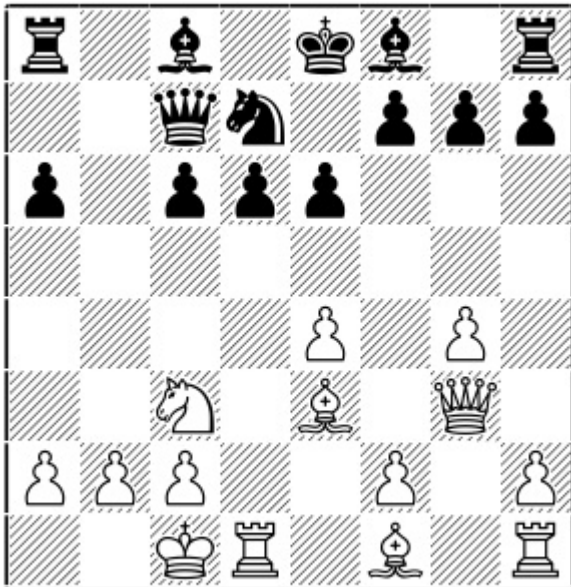
10.g4!



Position after: 10.g4!

10...h5

A) 10...Nd7 11.Qg3



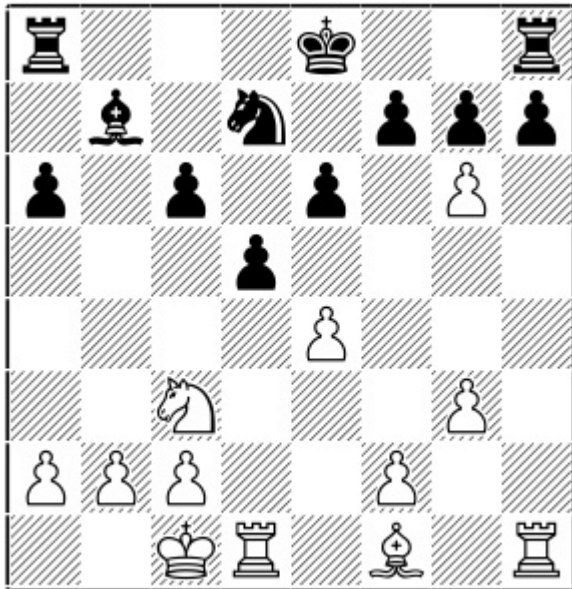
Position after: 11.Qg3

A1) 11...Bb7 12.Bf4 Ne5 [12...e5 13.Be3 Be7 14.g5± Black cannot execute ...d5.] 13.g5 Be7 14.h4 0-0 15.Kb1 c5 16.h5 f6 17.Bh3+–

A2) 11...Qb8 Preparing the ...d5 break. **12.Bf4!** An important provocation. **12...e5 [12...Ne5 13.h4 Be7 14.g5±] 13.Be3±**

B) 10...d5 11.g5 Nd7 12.Bf4 Bd6 [12...Qb6? 13.exd5 cxd5 14.Nxd5! exd5 15.Bc4+–] 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Qg3

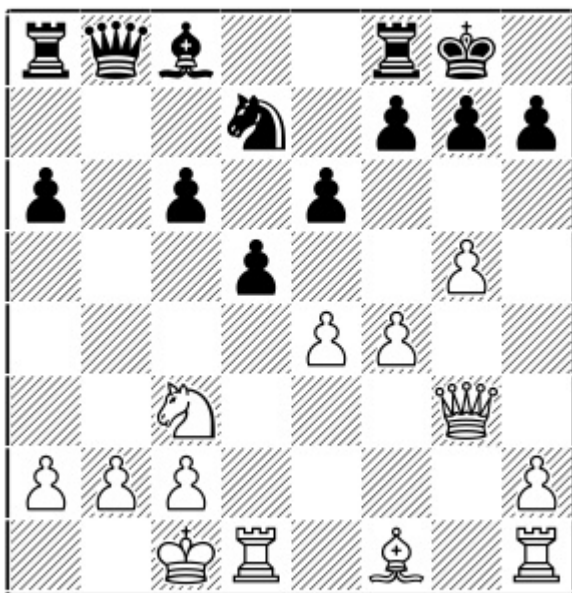
B1) 14...Qxg3 15.hxg3 Bb7 16.g6! The key idea: White breaks up Black's pawn structure.



Position after: 16.g6!

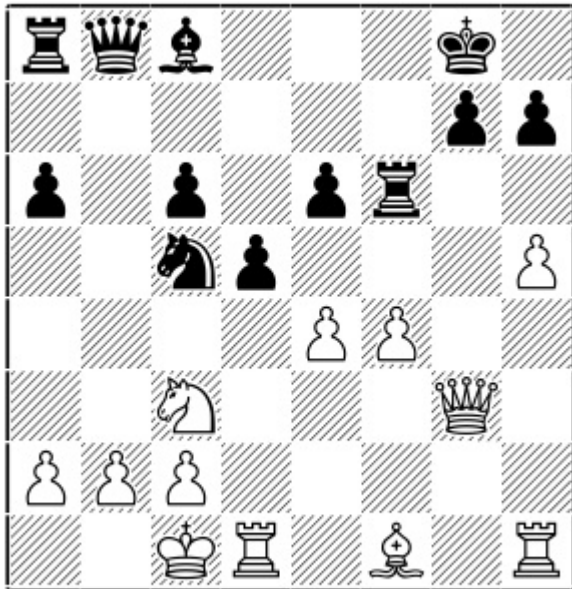
16...fxg6 17.Bh3 Nf8 [17...Kf7 18.exd5 cxd5 19.Ne4!±; 17...Nc5 18.exd5 cxd5 19.b4 d4 20.Rhe1±] 18.Na4± and White is totally dominating.

B2) 14...Qb8 15.f4 0-0



Position after: 15...0-0

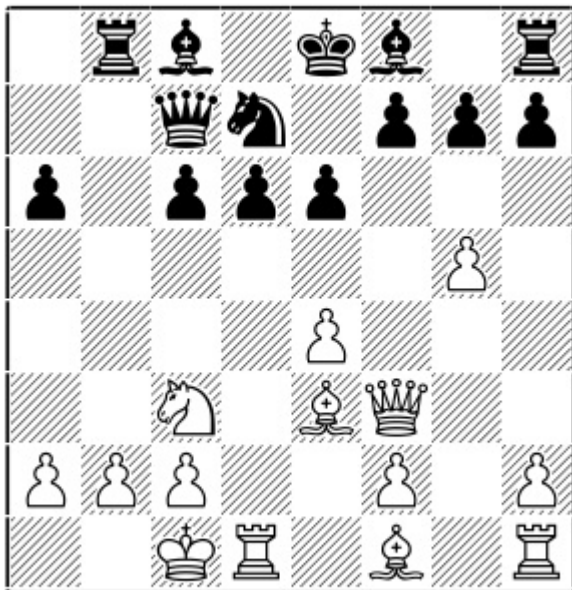
16.h4 [Or 16.Qh4!? Intending the rook-lift Rd3-Rh3. After 16...Nc5 17.Bd3 Qb6 18.e5, White has an attack.] 16...Nc5 17.h5 f6 18.gxf6 [18.h6 fxg5 19.Rh4 gxh6 20.exd5 exd5 21.Rxh6 Ne6,,] 18...Rxf6



Position after: 18...Rxf6

19.Rh4! Threatening h6. [It is too early for White to commit with 19.e5 as now Black can consolidate immediately: 19...Rf7 20.Rh4 a5 21.Rg4 Kh8,..] 19...h6 [19...a5 20.h6 g6 21.Qg5±] 20.e5 Rf7 21.Qg6±

C) 10...Rb8 11.g5 Nd7



Position after: 11...Nd7

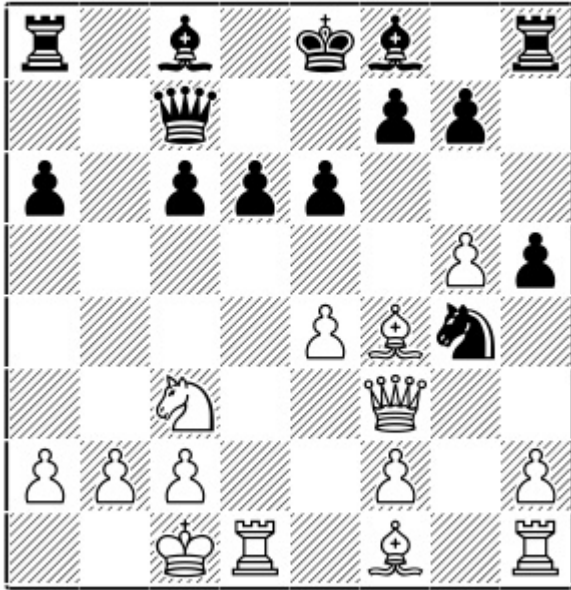
C1) 12.h4 Qa5 13.Bd2 Qb6 [13...d5!.,] 14.b3 d5 15.h5± Baron, T (2541) – Potkin, V (2583) Moscow 2019.

C2) 12.Qg3!N 12...Qb7 13.b3 Qb4 14.Bd2 Nc5 15.h4±

11.g5 Ng4

11...Nd7? 12.g6 Ne5 13.gxf7+ Qxf7 14.Qg2 Qf3 15.Qg1±

12.Bf4

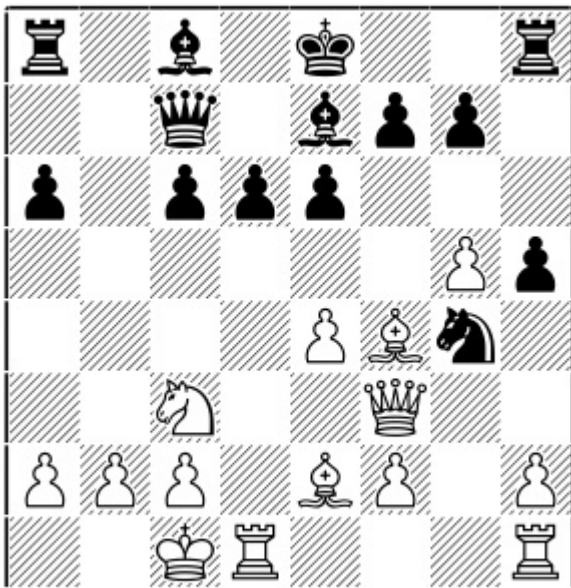


Position after: 12.Bf4

12...Be7

- A) 12...Qb6 13.e5! Nxe5 [13...dxe5 14.Bg3 and the knight on g4 is trapped.] 14.Bxe5 dxe5 15.Ne4 Rb8 16.Qc3 Qc7 17.Bc4 Bb4 18.Qe3±
- B) 12...g6 13.e5! Nxe5 [13...dxe5 14.Bd2+–] 14.Bxe5 dxe5 15.Bg2 Bb7 16.Ne4±
- C) 12...Rb8 13.h3 Ne5 14.Bxe5 dxe5 15.g6 fxg6 16.Rg1 Rh6 17.Kb1± The rook is stuck on h6.

13.Be2



Position after: 13.Be2

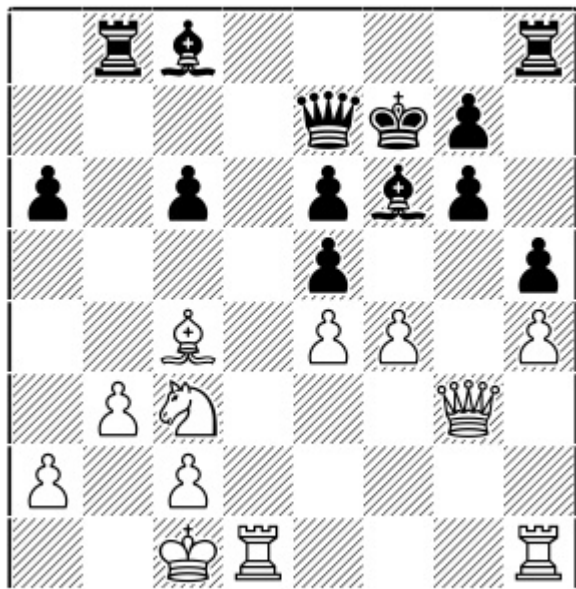
13...Rb8

13...Ne5 was played in a correspondence game: 14.Bxe5 dxe5 15.g6 fxg6 16.Qg3 g5 17.h4 g6 18.hxg5 Kf7 19.Na4 c5 20.Bc4 Rf8 21.b3± and White was clearly better in Gomez Galan Arense, J (2282) – Roy Laguens, A (2326) ICCF email 2014.

14.b3 Ne5 15.Bxe5 dxe5 16.g6! fxg6 17.Qg3 Kf7

17...g5 18.h4± and Black's king is vulnerable.

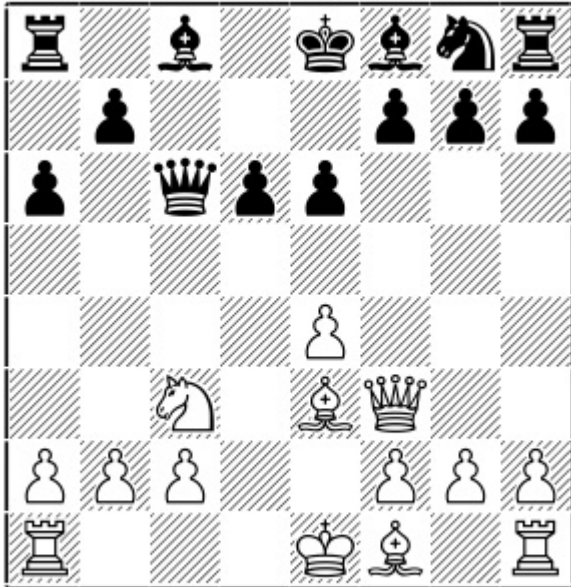
18.h4 Bf6 19.Bc4 Qe7 20.f4±



Position after: 20.f4±

b) 8...Qxc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 d6 8.Nxc6! Qxc6



Position after: 8...Qxc6

Here I suggest a strong early novelty.

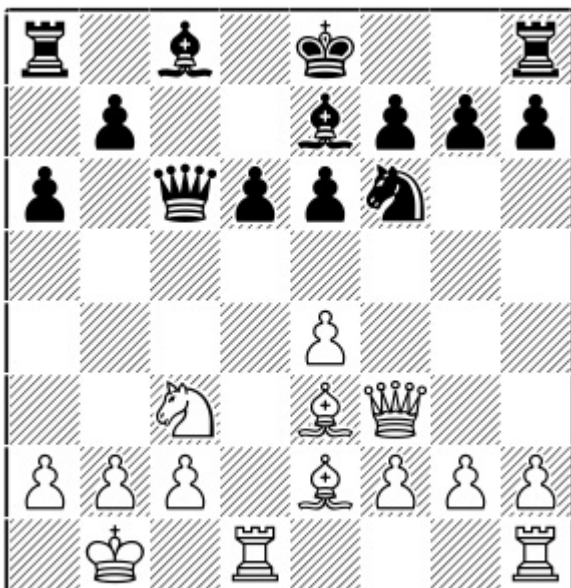
9.Be2!N

I like to place the bishop on e2, which is a more flexible square than d3 for two reasons. Firstly it keeps the d-file open, and secondly Black often has to be careful about White's e5-breaks if he now plays both ...b5 and ...Nf6.

9.Bd3 Nf6 10.0-0-0 b5 11.a3 Rb8! and Black gets good counterplay.

9...b5

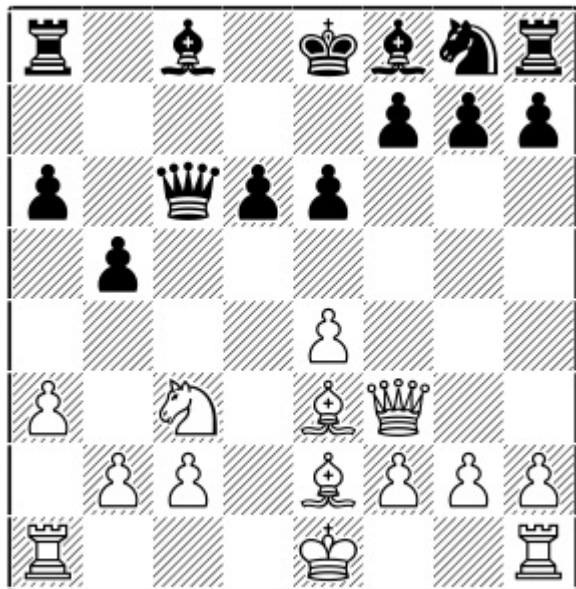
9...Nf6 10.0-0-0 Be7 11.Kb1 Waiting for Black to castle as he does not have 11...b5 because of 12.e5.



Position after: 11.Kb1

11...0-0 [11...Nd7 12.Qg3+-; 11...Qc7 12.Qg3±; 11...e5 12.Bg5 Be6 13.Qd3±] 12.h4! e5 [12...b5? allows 13.e5+- again.] 13.Bg5 b5 14.Qg3 Kh8 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nd5±

10.a3

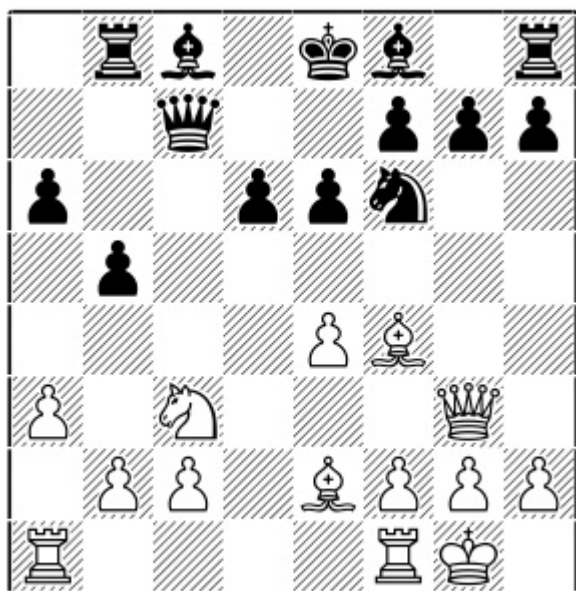


Position after: 10.a3

10...Bb7

A) 10...Nf6?? 11.e5+-

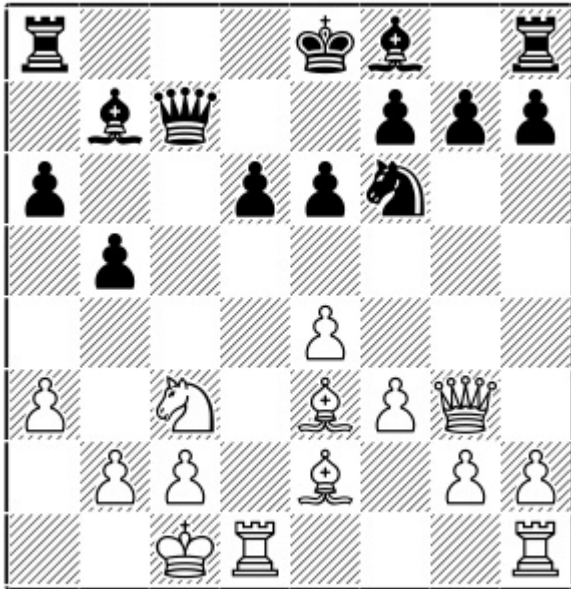
B) 10...Rb8 11.0-0 Qc7 [11...Bb7 12.a4±; 11...Nf6? 12.e5! Qxf3 13.Bxf3 dxe5 14.Ba7±] 12.Qg3 Nf6 13.Bf4



Position after: 13.Bf4

Provoking Black to play ...e5 in order to occupy the d5-square after Bg5. 13...e5 [13...Nd7 14.Rfd1 Ne5 15.a4 b4 16.Na2±] 14.Bg5 Be7 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Nd5±

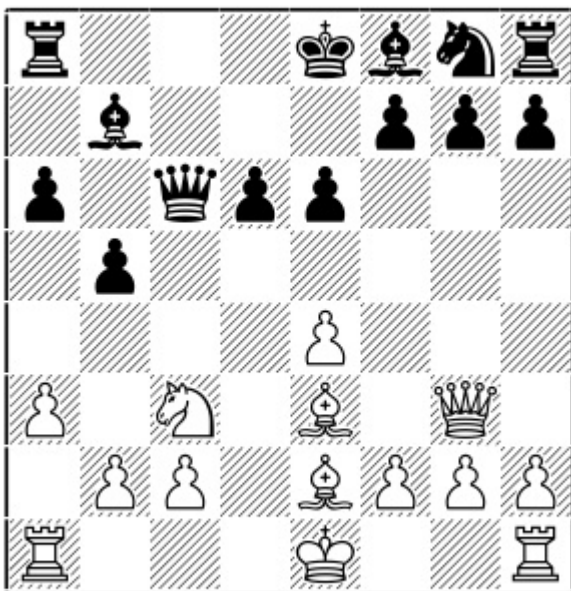
C) 10...Qc7 11.0-0-0 Bb7 12.Qg3 Nf6 13.f3 It is not easy for Black to find any counterplay as all his pieces are tied down.



Position after: 13.f3

13...Bc6 [13...Rc8 transposes to 10.a3 Bb7; 13...Be7? 14.Qxg7 Rg8 15.Qh6 Rxd2 16.Qh3 Rg8 17.Kb1 0-0 18.a4! b4 19.Nd5±] 14.Rd2 Rb8 15.Rhd1 Be7 16.Bc5± and the d6-pawn will drop.

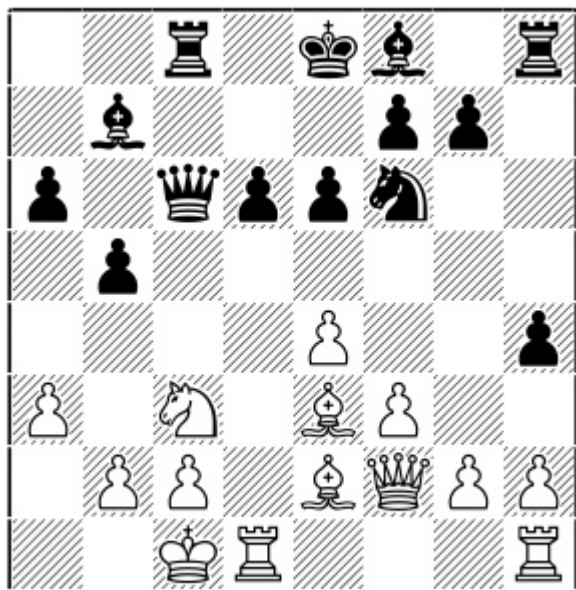
11.Qg3



Position after: 11.Qg3

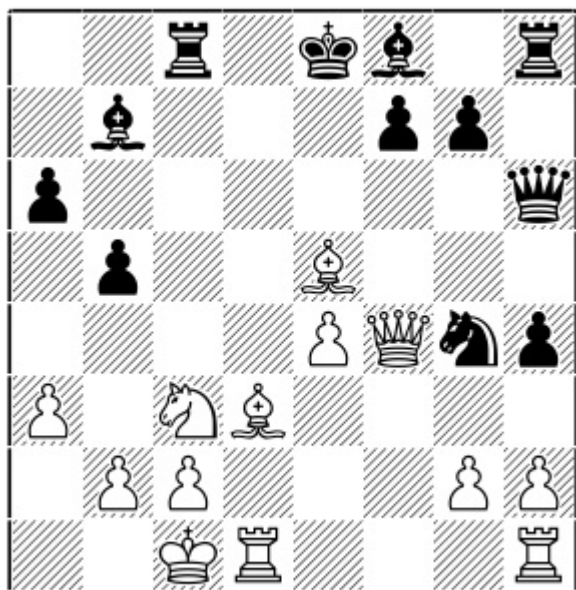
11...Nf6

11...h5 12.f3 h4 13.Qf2 Nf6 14.0-0 Rc8 Here White once more has numerous options to get a comfortable advantage.



Position after: 14...Rc8

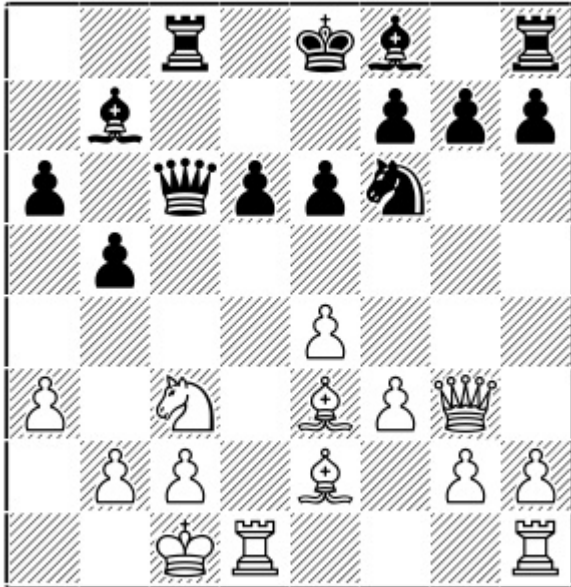
15.Bd4 [15.g4!? hxg3 16.hxg3 Rxh1 17.Rxh1 d5 18.e5 Nd7 19.Bd4 Bc5 20.f4 Bxd4 21.Qxd4 Qc5 22.Qd2² White has a very good French position.] 15...d5 [15...Be7 16.Kb1 0-0 17.g4± and White gets a strong attack.] 16.Bd3 dxe4 17.fx4! [17.Nxe4 Nd5 18.Kb1 b4 19.axb4 Nxb4 20.Rhe1 a5,,] 17...e5 [17...Ng4 18.Qf4 e5 transposes to 17...e5; 17...Be7? 18.Rhf1+–] 18.Bxe5 Ng4 19.Qf4 Qh6



Position after: 19...Qh6

20.Rd2 [After 20.Qxh6 Rxh6 21.Bd4² White has an extra pawn.] 20...Nxe5 21.Qxe5+ Qe6 22.Qxe6+ fxe6 23.e5 Bc5 24.Re1²

12.f3 Rc8 13.0-0-0

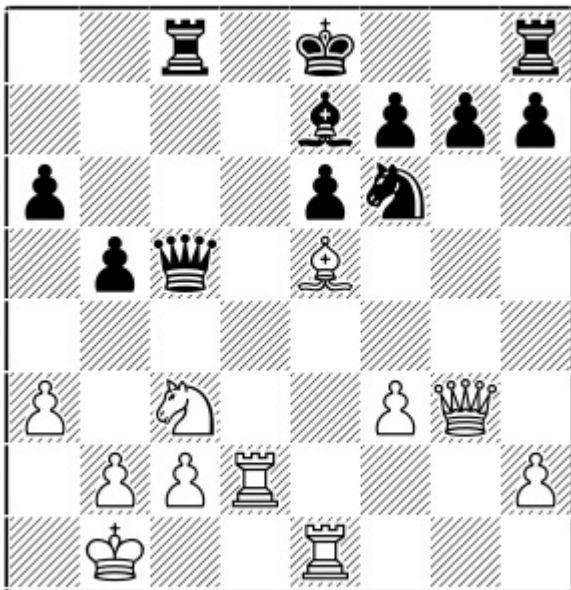


Position after: 13.0-0-0

13...d5

A) 13...Be7?! 14.Qxg7 Rg8 15.Qh6 Rxc2 16.Bd3±

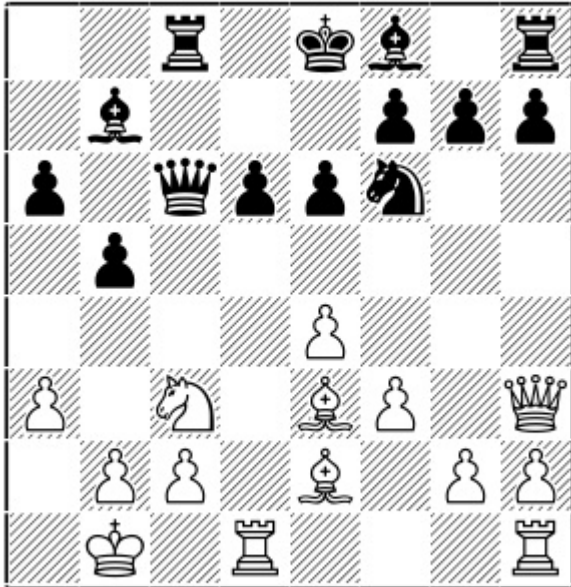
B) 13...Qc7 14.Kb1 d5 15.Bf4 Qc5 [15...Qb6 16.Be5 dxe4 17.fxe4 Nxe4 18.Qf4±] 16.Be5 dxe4 17.Rhe1! exf3 18.Bxf3 Bxf3 19.gxf3 Be7 20.Rd2! Protecting the c2 pawn. [20.Qxg7 Rg8 21.Qh6 Rg6 22.Qh3²]



Position after: 20.Rd2!

20...Qc6 [20...0-0? 21.Ne4 Nh5 22.Nxc5 Nxc3 23.Nd7±] 21.Ne4 Nxe4 22.fxe4 Rg8 23.Qf3±

C) 13...Nh5 14.Qh3 Nf6 15.Kb1 [15.g4?! d5! 16.g5 Bxa3]

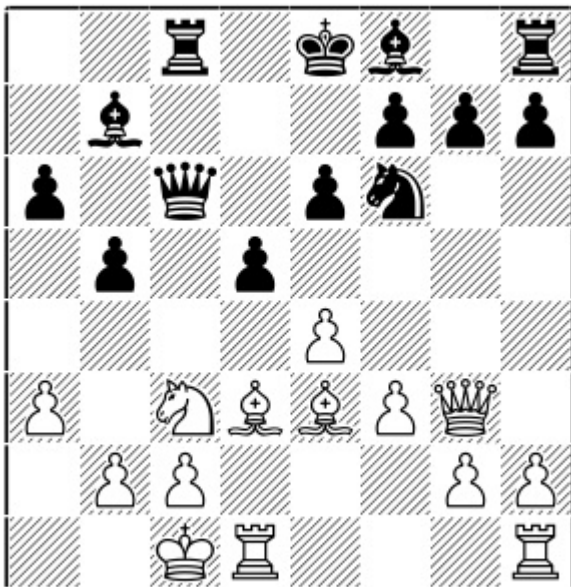


Position after: 15.Kb1

C1) 15...d5 16.Bd3 dxe4 [16...Bxa3? 17.exd5 exd5 18.Bd4+-] 17.Nxe4 Nd5 [17...Be7 18.Bd4±] 18.Bd2!
 [Instead 18.Bd4 would allow 18...Nf4.] 18...b4 [Or 18...Be7 19.Rhe1± and it is not at all easy for Black to castle.] 19.axb4 Nxb4 [19...Bxb4? 20.c4+] 20.Bxb4 Bxb4 21.Qg4 Kf8 22.Ng5±

C2) 15...Be7 16.g4 Nd7 [16...d5? 17.g5+- and there is no possibility of ...Bxa3 as the white king is on b1.] 17.g5 0-0 18.Rhg1 Qc7 The idea is to meet 19.f4 with ...Be4. [18...Nb6 19.Bd3 g6 20.f4+-] 19.Rd4!?, with the idea of f4. [19.Bd3 Ne5 20.f4 Nxd3 21.cxd3 is also better for White.]

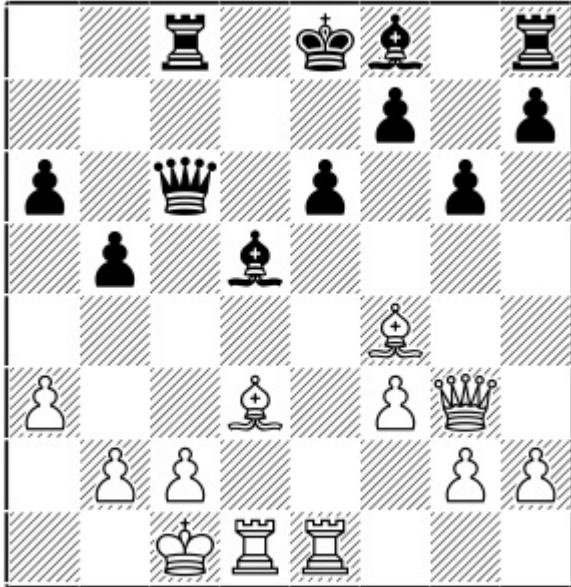
14.Bd3



Position after: 14.Bd3

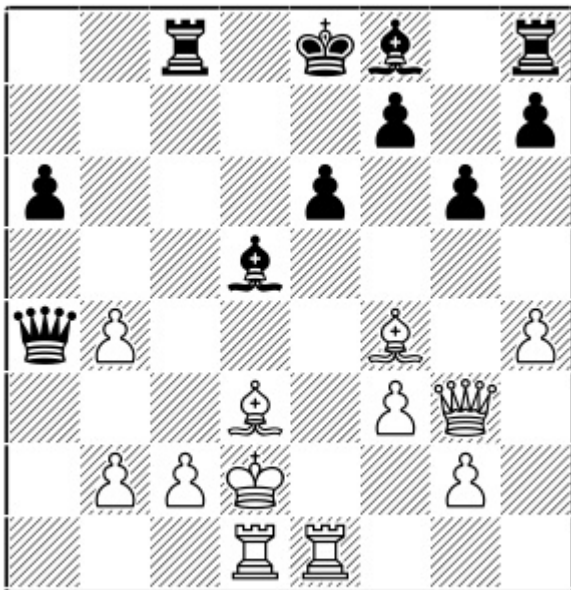
14...dxe4

14...Qc7 15.exd5 Nxd5 [15...Qxg3? 16.hxg3 Nxd5 17.Nxd5 Bxd5 18.Bxh7±] 16.Nxd5 Bxd5 17.Bf4 Qc6
 18.Rhe1 g6



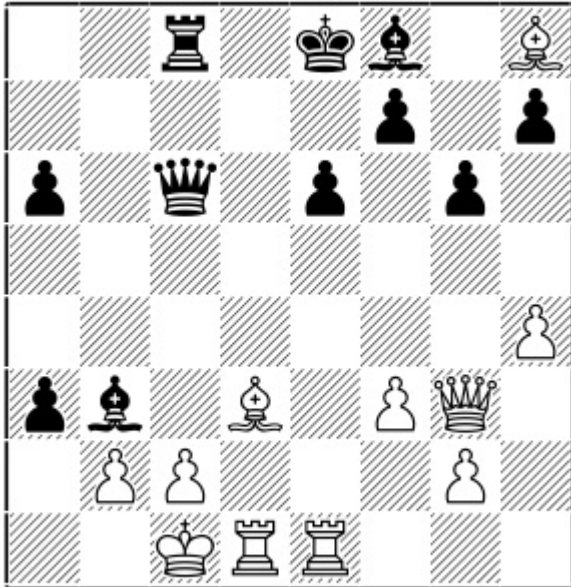
Position after: 18...g6

A) 19.h4 looks logical but here Black has amazing computer resources that force a draw. 19...b4! 20.Be5
 [20.axb4 Qa4 21.Kd2



Position after: 21.Kd2

21...Rxc2+! 22.Bxc2 Bxb4+ 23.Kd3 Bc4+ 24.Kxc4 Qb5+ 25.Kd4 Bc5+ 26.Kc3 Bb4+=] 20...bxa3
 21.Bxh8 Bb3!



Position after: 21...Bb3!

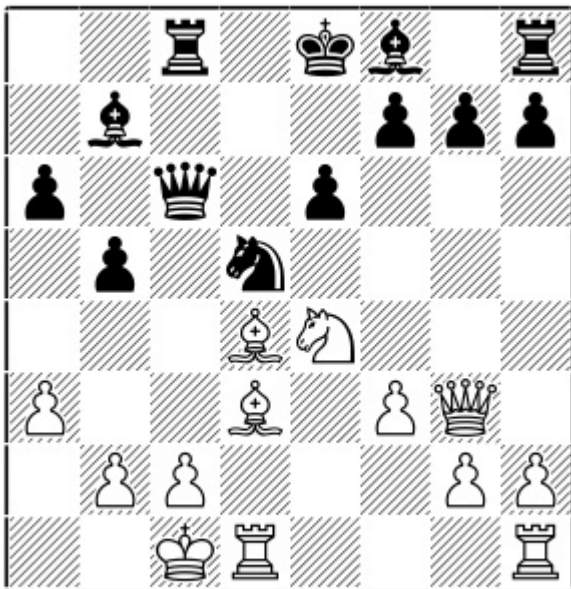
22.Kb1 [22.Kd2 Bxc2] 22...Bxc2+ 23.Bxc2 Qxc2+ 24.Ka1 axb2+ 25.Bxb2 Qa4+=

B) 19.Be5! Bh6+ 20.Kb1 0-0 21.h4± Black cannot carry out his ...b4 idea as the bishop is on h6.

15.Nxe4 Nd5

15...Nxe4 16.Bxe4 Qc4 17.Bd3 Qa2 18.Bd4±

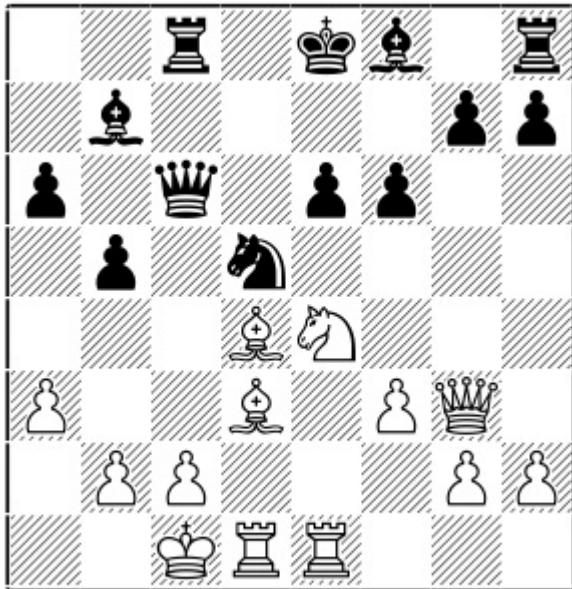
16.Bd4



Position after: 16.Bd4

16...b4

16...f6 17.Rhe1



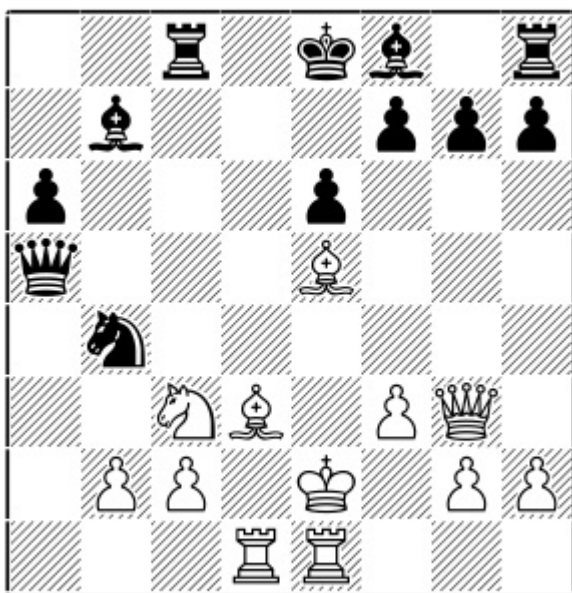
Position after: 17.Rhe1

A) 17...Qc7 18.Qg4 Qf4+ [18...f5? 19.Nf6+!+-] 19.Qxf4 Nxf4 20.Bf1 Kf7 21.g3 Nd5 22.b4± White gets a good grip on the c5-square.

B) 17...Kf7 18.Kb1 b4 19.axb4 Nxb4 20.Bc3 Qa4 [20...Nxd3 21.Rxd3 Qb5 22.Qh3±] 21.Bxb4 Qxb4 [21...Bxb4 22.b3 Qa5 23.Nd6++-] 22.Qf4!±

17.axb4 Nxb4 18.Nc3! Qc7 19.Qxc7

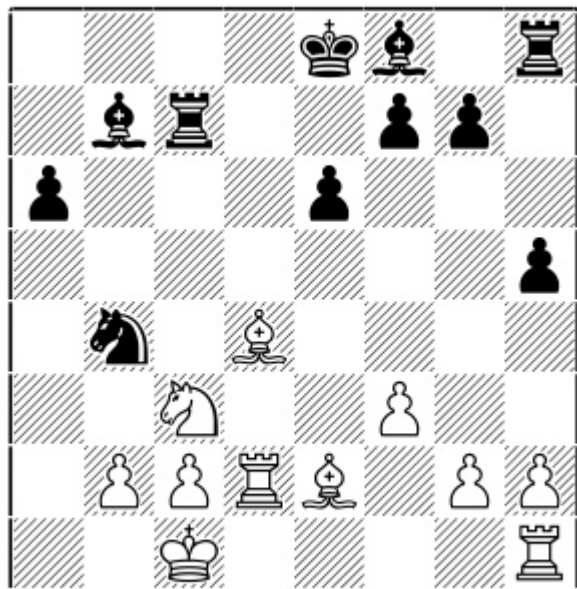
19.Be5!?! Qa5 20.Rhe1 Qa1+ [20...Bd5 21.f4 Qa1+ 22.Kd2 Qa5 23.Ra1 Qc5 24.Nxd5 Qxd5 25.c3±] 21.Kd2 Qa5 22.Ke2!



Position after: 22.Ke2!

A funny king march from b1 to f1. After it arrives on f1 White will have a strong attack. [22...Qb6](#) Although White is better here, practically speaking I would prefer the endgame advantage with [19.Qxc7](#) rather than going all the way into these complications. [[22...Nxd3](#) [23.Rxd3](#) [Qb6](#) [24.Kd2!±](#)]

[19...Rxc7](#) [20.Be2](#) [h5](#) [21.Rd2](#)



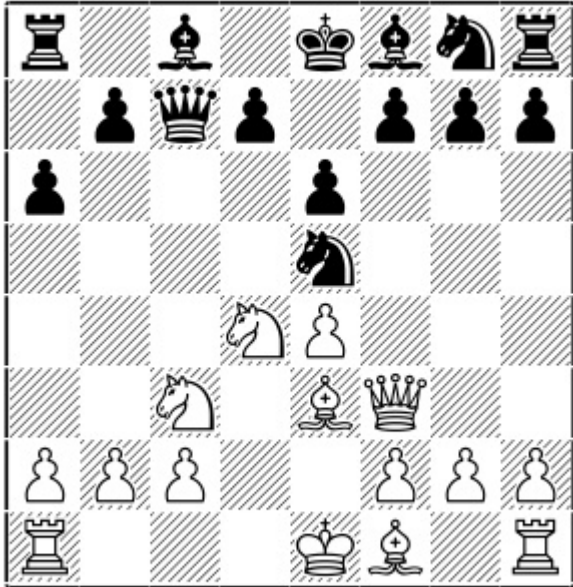
Position after: 21.Rd2

It is still not easy for Black to develop his f8-bishop, and White has a clear plan to bring the other rook to d1 creating some threats on the black king.

Chapter 13

7...Ne5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Ne5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 13 – 7...Ne5

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Ne5 8.Qg3

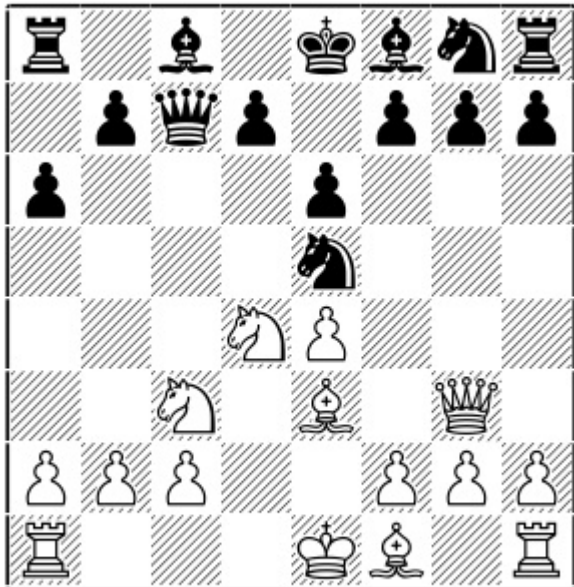
a) 8...--

b) 8...b5 9.Be2 --

c) 8...b5 9.Be2 Bb7

a) 8...--

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Ne5 8.Qg3

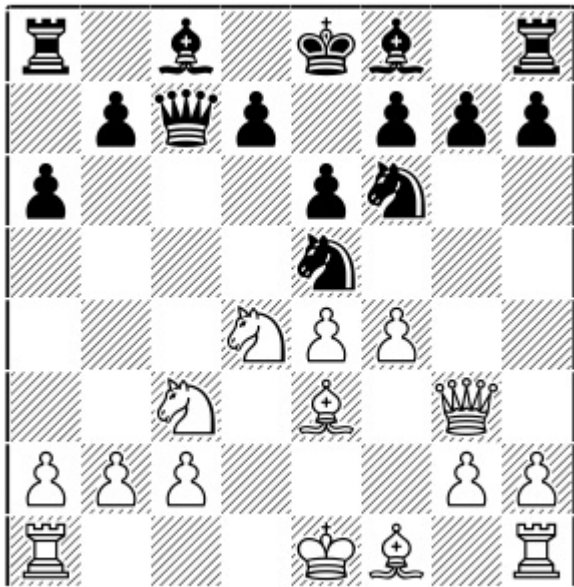


Position after: 8.Qg3

8...Bd6

Around the time I completed the work on this unusual line with 8...Bd6 (which I had intended as a novelty) a game was surprisingly played using it. This was Alinasab – Tsolakidou, New Delhi 2019 in the World Junior (Girls). White has to know a few precise lines in order to punish this weird choice.

A) 8...Nf6? 9.f4



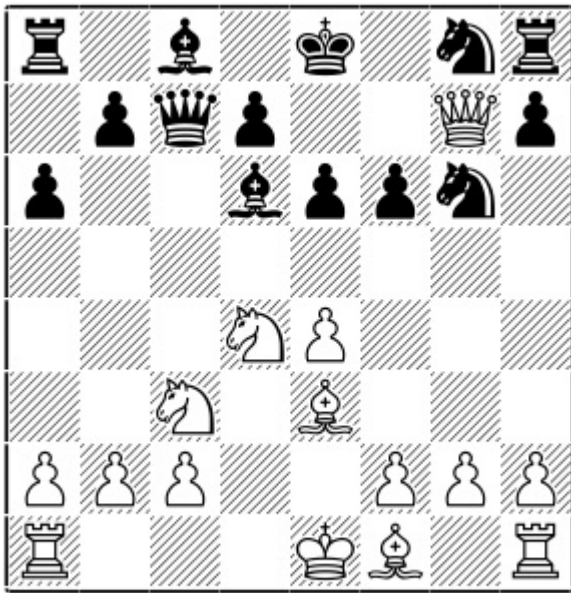
Position after: 9.f4

9...Nc4 [9...Neg4 10.e5 Nxe3 11.Qxe3 Ng4 12.Qg3 h5 13.h3 Nh6 14.0-0-0 b5 15.Ne4 Bb7 16.Nd6±]
 10.Bxc4 Qxc4 11.e5 Nd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.0-0 b5 14.f5± with a large development advantage.

B) 8...b5 is the main line – see the next subchapters.

9.f4

9.Qxg7?! is bit greedy and Black gets huge counterplay here. 9...Ng6 10.Nf3 f6! 11.Nd4

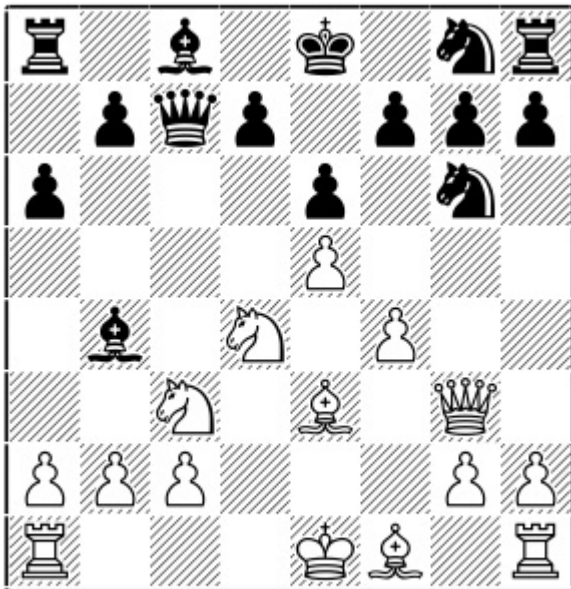


Position after: 11.Nd4

11...Qb8! [11...Bf8 12.Nxe6 Qb6 13.Nxf8 Qxb2 14.Kd2+-] 12.e5 Bf8 13.exf6 Bxg7 14.fxg7 Nf6 15.gxh8=Q+ Nxh8,, and Black is fine.

9...Ng6 10.e5 Bb4

10...Ba3? 11.Ne4 Bxb2 12.Rd1 Ba3 13.h4+- and Black is way behind in development.

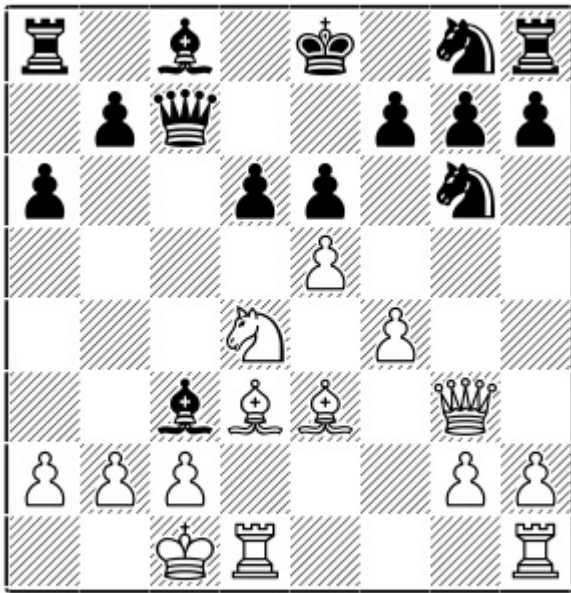


Position after: 10...Bb4

11.0-0-0!

11.Bd3!?

A) 11...d6 12.0-0-0 Bxc3 [12...dxe5 13.f5! exf5 14.Nd5+–]

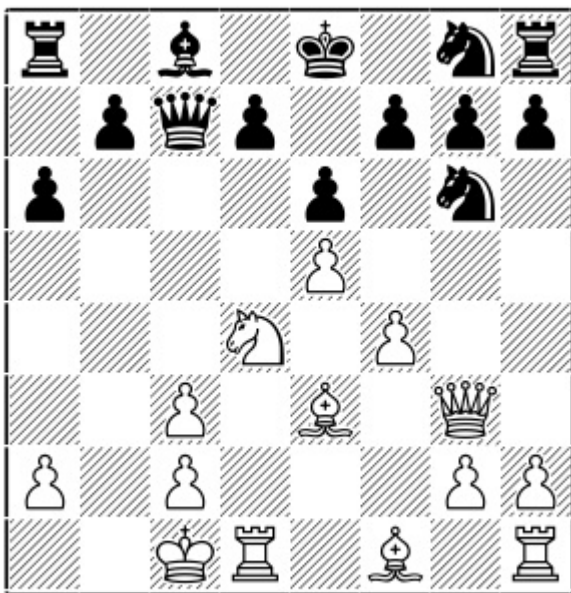


Position after: 12...Bxc3

13.f5!! This nice tactical shot just destroys Black's position. [13.exd6 Qxd6 14.Ne2 Bxb2+ 15.Kxb2 Qb4+ 16.Ka1±] 13...exf5 14.exd6 Qa5 15.bxc3±

B) 11...Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Qxc3+ 13.Kf2 Nh6 14.Ne2 Qc6 15.Qf3! Qxf3+ 16.gxf3 f6 17.exf6 gxf6 18.a4? White's better in this endgame too, but 11.0-0-0 is more ambitious.

11...Bxc3 12.bxc3



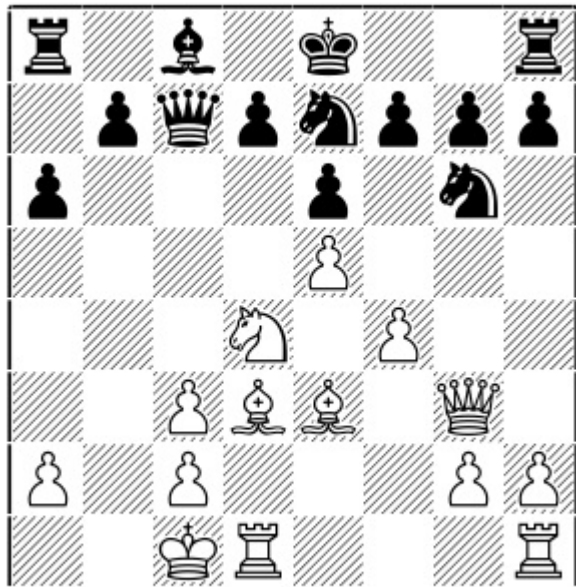
Position after: 12.bxc3

12...N8e7

12...Qxc3? 13.f5 Qa3+ 14.Kd2 exf5 15.Nxf5 Qb4+ 16.c3 Qb2+ 17.Kd3+- The king is safe on d3 and Black cannot prevent White playing Nd6.

13.Bd3

13.c4?! 0-0 [13...b5! 14.cxb5 0-0 15.h4 h5 gives immediate counterplay for Black.] 14.h4 h5 15.Qf3±
Alinasab, M (2239) – Tsolakidou, S (2431) New Delhi 2019.



Position after: 13.Bd3

13...b5

A) 13...Qxc3 14.Nb3 b6 15.Bxb6 Qb4 16.Bc5 Qxf4+ 17.Qxf4 Nxf4 18.Be4 Rb8 19.Bd6 Rb6 20.Rhe1±
The two bishops just dominate the whole position.

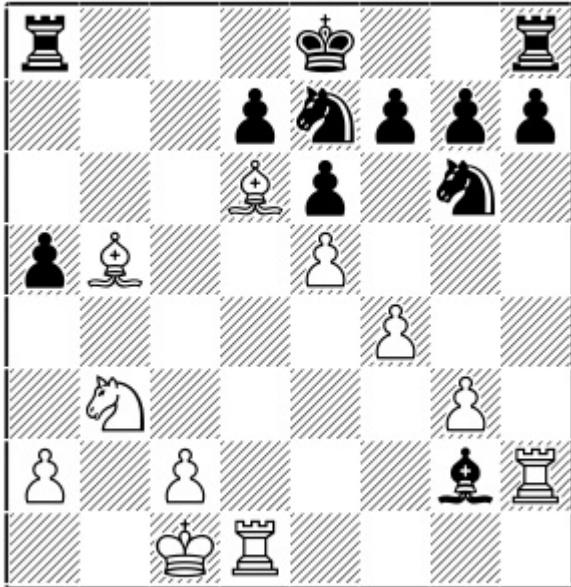
B) 13...d6 14.Bxg6 Nxc6 15.exd6 Qxc3 16.Nb3±

14.Nb3!

Preparing 15.Bc5.

14.h4 Nd5 15.Bd2 Bb7 16.h5 Nge7 17.f5 0-0-0,,

14...Bb7 15.Bc5 Bd5 16.Bb4 a5 17.Bd6 Qxc3 18.Bxb5 Qxg3 19.hxg3 Bxg2 20.Rh2



Position after: 20.Rh2

20...Bd5

20...Bc6 21.Bd3 h5 [21...Nc8 22.Ba3²] 22.Nd4² White is a pawn down, but his active piece play gives him more than enough compensation.

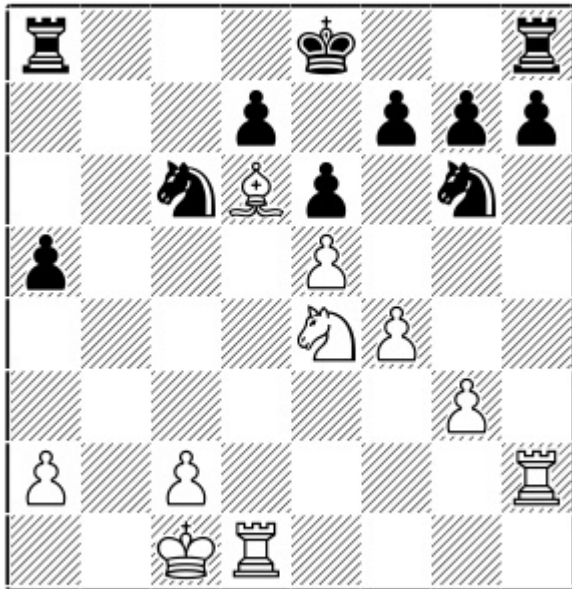
21.Nc5 Bc6 22.Bxc6

22.Bd3 h5= Here Black is fine since the white knight is already on c5 and so he cannot carry out his idea of Nd4.

22...Nxc6

22...dxc6 23.Ne4 0-0 24.c4²

23.Ne4±

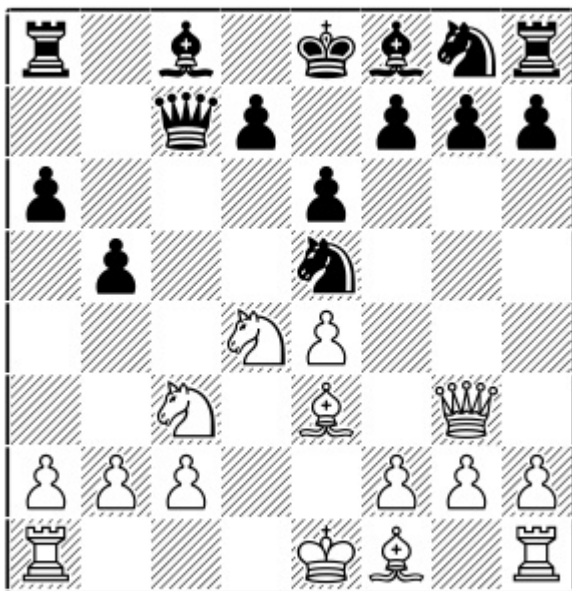


Position after: 23.Ne4±

The strong bishop on d6 gives White a fairly large advantage.

b) 8...b5 9.Be2 --

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Ne5 8.Qg3 b5

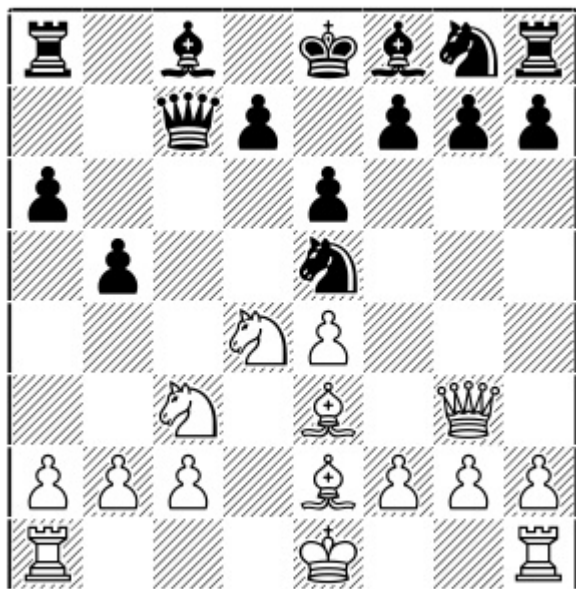


Position after: 8...b5

Black hopes for 9.0-0-0 Nf6, transposing to another line (one which usually occurs from 7...Nf6.) Basically, I believe that line, arising from long castling, is completely fine for Black based on my analysis of recent top-level games. With that in mind, against 7...Nf6 I have recommended the immediate capture on c6, and here too we should avoid being 'move-ordered' and find a new way.

Luckily, I found a nice independent idea for White, which has only been played once before.

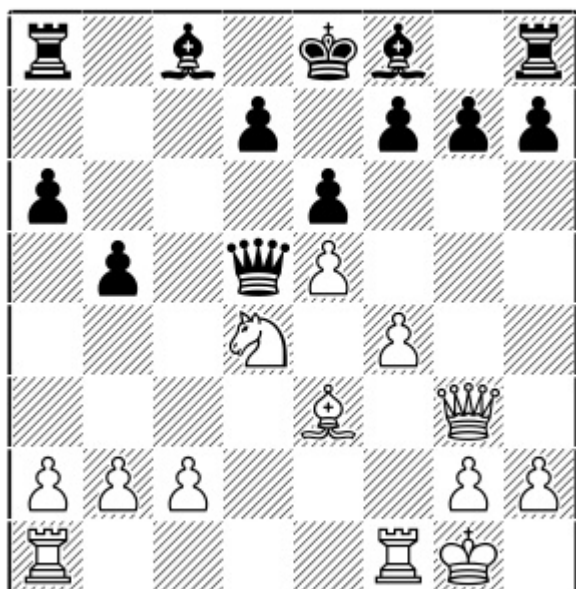
9.Be2!



Position after: 9.Be2!

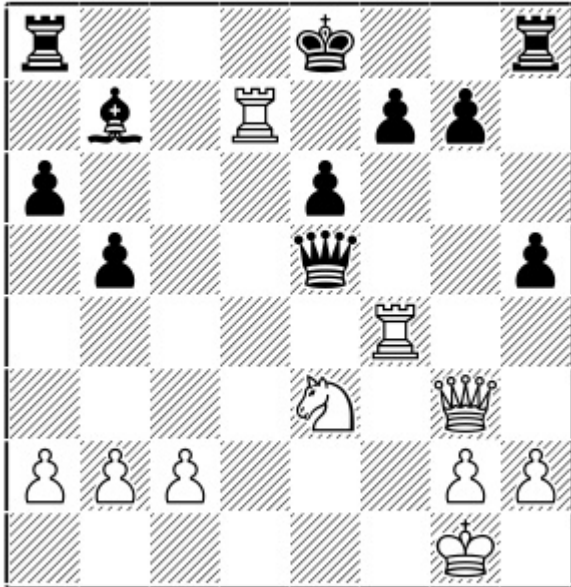
9...h5

A) 9...Nf6?! 10.f4 Nc4 [10...Ng6 11.e5 b4 12.Ncb5 axb5 13.exf6 gxf6 14.Nxb5 Qc6 15.f5±] 11.Bxc4 Qxc4 12.e5 Nd5 13.Nxd5 Qxd5 14.0-0 [14.f5?! Qc4 prevents short castling, and White cannot castle long either because of the a2-pawn.]



Position after: 14.0-0

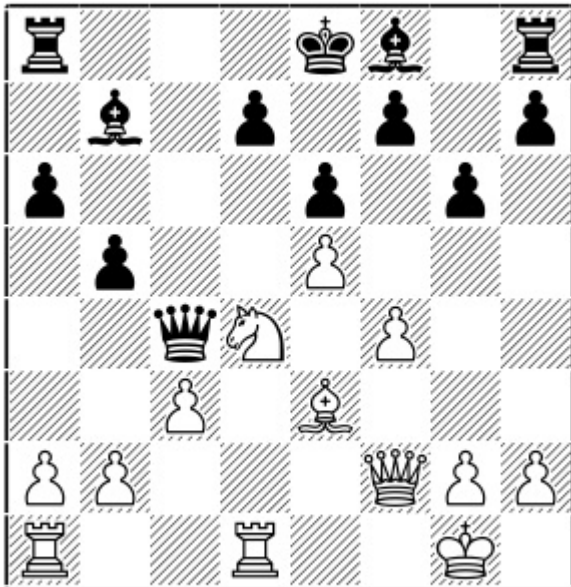
A1) 14...Bb7 15.f5 h5 [15...Be7 16.Rad1 Qe4 17.fxe6! dxe6 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.Qxg7±] 16.Rad1 Bc5 [16...h4 17.Qf2 h3 18.fxe6±] 17.fxe6 dxe6 18.Nf5 Bxe3+ 19.Nxe3 Qe4 20.Rf4! Qxe5 21.Rd7!±



Position after: 21.Rd7!±

This amazing tactical resource gives White a huge advantage.

A2) 14...g6 Stopping White's f5-based ideas. 15.c3 Bb7 16.Rfd1 Qc4 17.Qf2



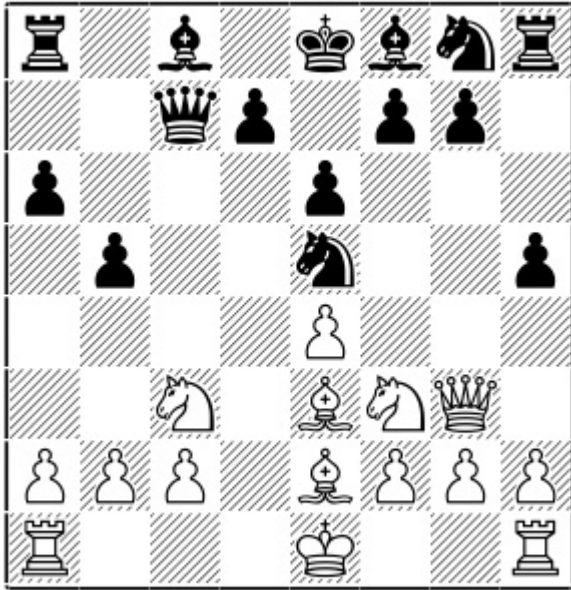
Position after: 17.Qf2

A2.1) 17...Be7 18.Nb3! With the idea of Na5 or Bc5, depending on Black's move. 18...Bd5 19.Nc5± Here Black's queen is more or less trapped and he must give away the dark squared bishop, which leaves his position very damaged.

A2.2) 17...Rc8 18.Nc2! [18.Nb3 Bd5] 18...Be7 [18...Bd5 19.a3² preparing Nb4.] 19.Rd2² and Black cannot easily castle with the d7-pawn hanging.

B) For 9...Bb7 see the next subchapter.

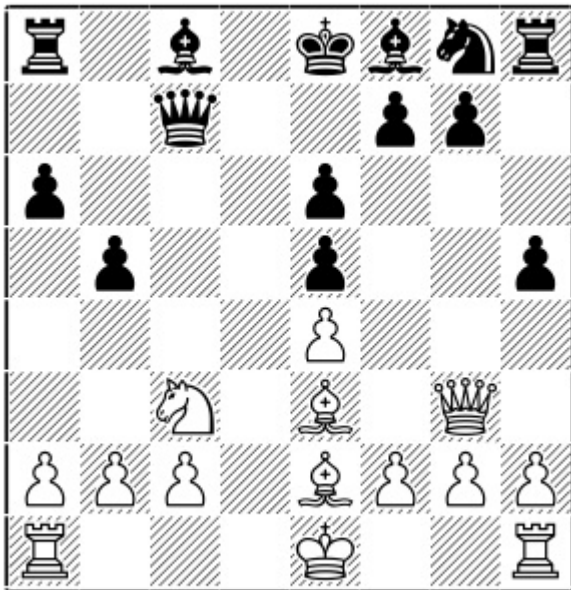
10.Nf3!



Position after: 10.Nf3!

10...Nxf3+

10...d6 11.Nxe5 dxe5 [11...h4? 12.Nxb5+]



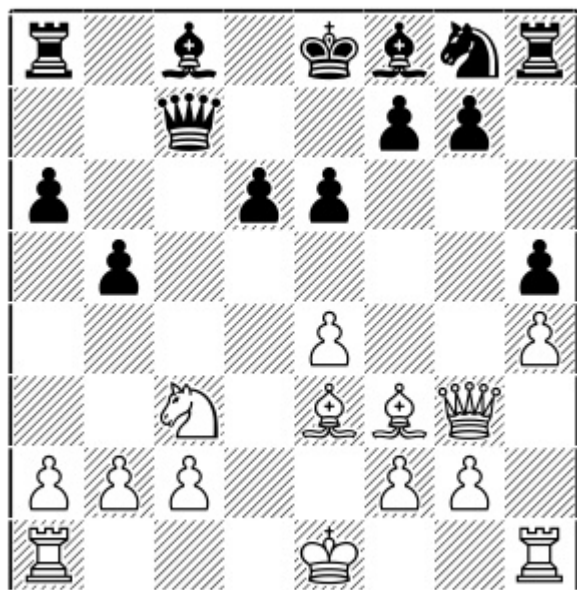
Position after: 11...dxe5

12.Bd4! [12.h4!? Bb7 13.a3 Nf6 14.0-0 Be7 15.Rfd1 (Note 15.f3?! blocks the e2-h5 diagonal. White need only support the e4-pawn after Black plays ...g6, whereas now after 15...0-0 16.Bh6 Ne8 Black is fine.) 15...g6 16.f3 0-0 17.Rac1?] 12...f6 13.Qg6+ Qf7 14.Qxf7+ Kxf7 15.Be3 Bb7 16.f3 Bb4 17.a4 bxa4 18.Rxa4 a5 19.Kf2! The a5-pawn is quite lonely and (after exchanging off Black's b4-bishop) White stands better.

11.gxf3!

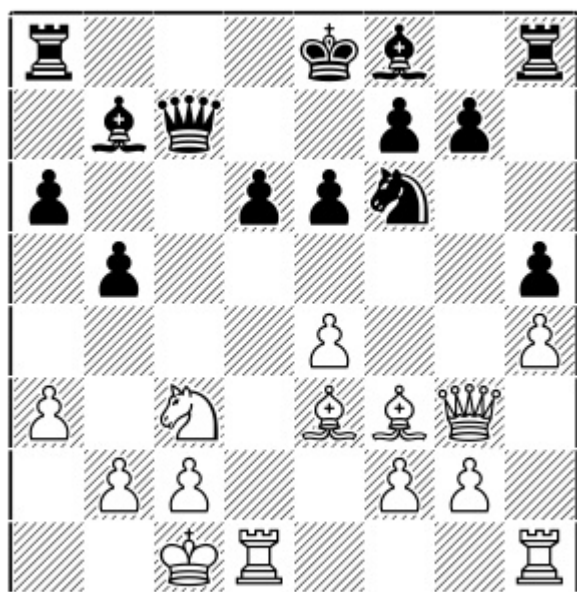
An unusual capture, but one which creates chances of a g-file attack and strengthens the central pawn on e4.

11.Bxf3 looks the natural way to capture but Black consolidates after some precise moves: 11...d6 12.h4



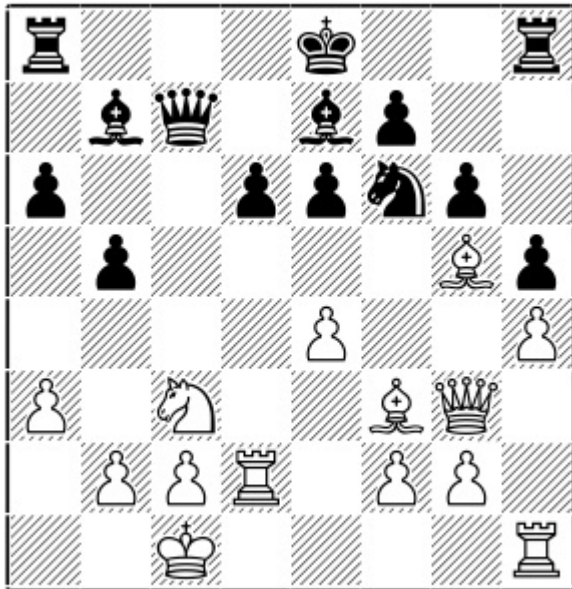
Position after: 12.h4

- A) 12...b4? 13.Na4±
- B) 12...Bb7 13.a3 Nf6 14.0-0-0



Position after: 14.0-0-0

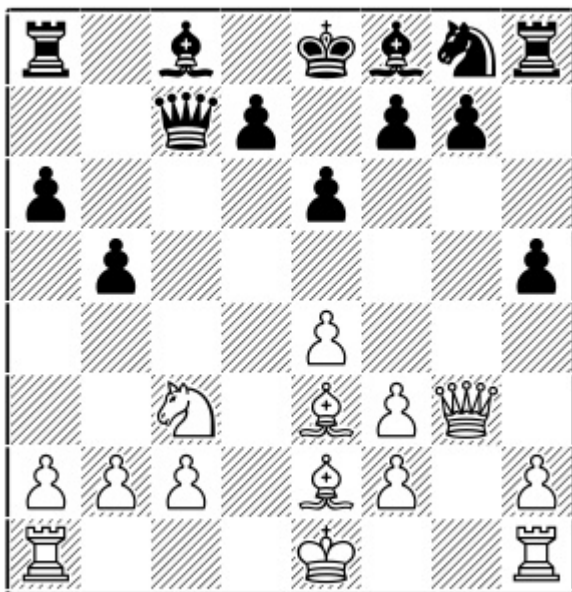
- B1)** 14...Rc8 15.Rd2! Be7 [15...g6 16.Kb1 Be7 17.Rhd1 e5 18.Bg5²] 16.Rhd1 [16.Qxg7?! Rg8 17.Qh6 Bc6,,] 16...0-0 17.Bh6 Ne8 18.e5! d5 19.Bxh5 Bxa3 20.Ne2± White's attack is much stronger than Black's.
- B2)** 14...Be7 15.Rd2 [15.Qxg7?! Rg8 16.Qh6 Rg6 17.Qf4 Rc8 18.Kb1 Bc6 19.Be2 e5 20.Qf3 b4! 21.axb4 Bxe4,,] 15...g6 16.Bg5



Position after: 16.Bg5

16...e5 [16...0-0 17.Qf4 e5 18.Qe3 Rab8 19.Rg1!, with g4 to follow.] 17.Re1 0-0 18.Kb1² With total control over the d5-square.

C) 12...Rb8! This key flexible option, preventing White from long castling right now, helps Black to consolidate his position. The c8-bishop can go either to b7 or to e6 (after ...e5) based on the circumstances. 13.0-0 [13.0-0-0? b4! 14.Nb1 e5µ This is the point of ...Rb8. Now the c8-bishop comes to e6.; 13.a3 Nf6 14.0-0-0 b4 15.axb4 Rxb4 16.Rd4 Rxd4 17.Bxd4 e5 18.Be3 Be6,,] 13...Nf6 14.a3 [14.Bg5 Bb7 15.a3 Be7] 14...Bb7 15.Rad1 e5 16.Bg5 Be7 17.Rd3 g6 18.Rfd1 Rd8 and Black is fine.

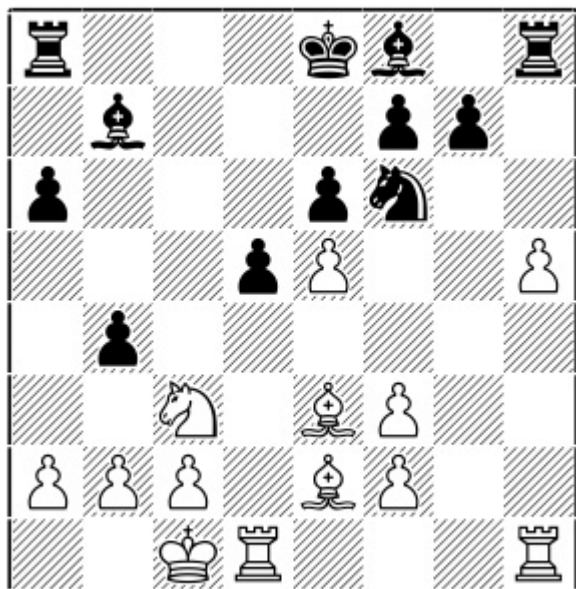


Position after: 11.gxf3!

11...Qa5

A) 11...Qxg3 12.hxg3 Bb7 13.0-0-0 Nf6 [13...Be7 Trying to counter g4 with ...h4. 14.a4 b4 15.Nb1 d5

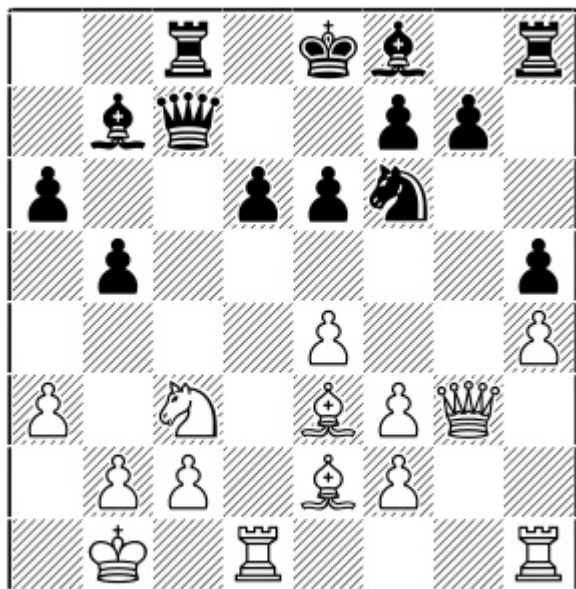
16.Nd2 Nf6 17.exd5 Nxd5 18.Bd4²] 14.g4 d5 15.gxh5 b4 16.e5



Position after: 16.e5

16...Nd7 [16...bxc3 17.exf6 cxb2+ 18.Kxb2 gxf6 19.Rd3! Bd6 20.Rb3 Bc6 21.Rb6 Rb8 22.Rxb8+ Bxb8 23.Bc5² The outside passed h-pawn and dominating c5-bishop give White a pleasant edge.] 17.Na4 Nxe5 18.Nc5 Bc8 19.h6! and White is on top.

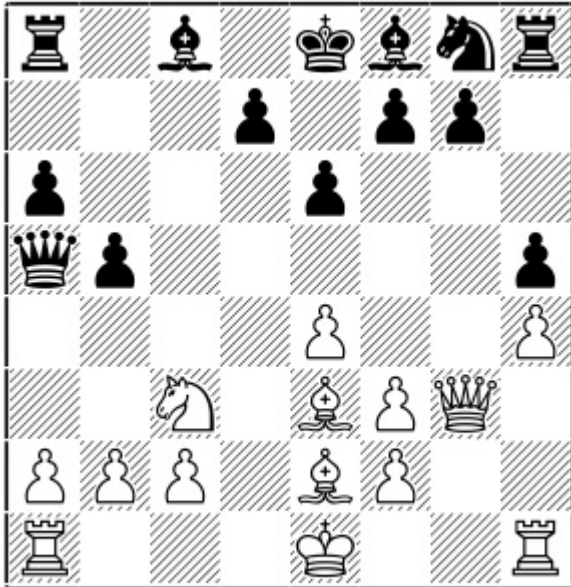
B) 11...d6 12.h4 Bb7 13.0-0-0 Nf6 [13...b4? 14.Na4±] 14.a3 Rc8 15.Kb1



Position after: 15.Kb1

15...g6 [15...d5 16.Bf4 Qc5 17.exd5 Nxd5 18.Be5 b4 19.axb4 Nxb4 20.Rhe1±] 16.Rhe1 Be7 17.Bf1! Rerouting the bishop to h3. After 17...0-0 18.Bh3± White has a strong attack.

12.h4



Position after: 12.h4

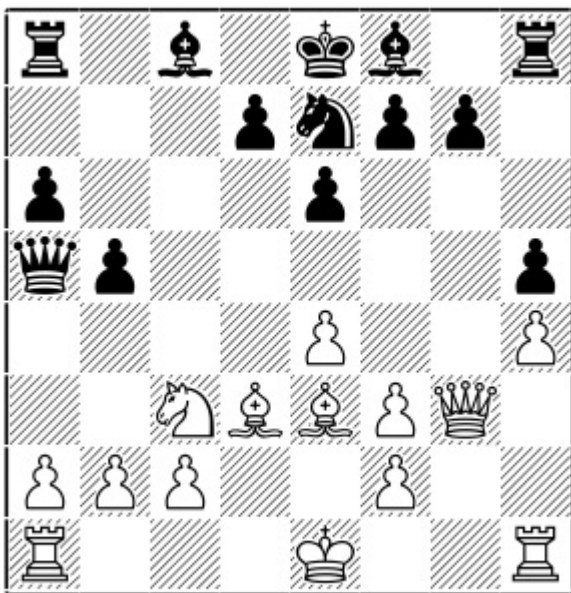
12...Ne7

12...Bb7 13.a3 Rc8 [13...b4 14.Nb1 bxa3+ 15.Bd2 Qb6 16.Rxa3!±] 14.Bd2 Qb6 15.0-0-0²

13.Bd3!

White is planning long castling, and so makes the e2-square available for the knight should it be attacked by ...b4.

13.a3 is not so effective here because of 13...b4 14.Nb1 Ng6 preparing ...Qe5, the key point of developing the knight to e7 immediately.



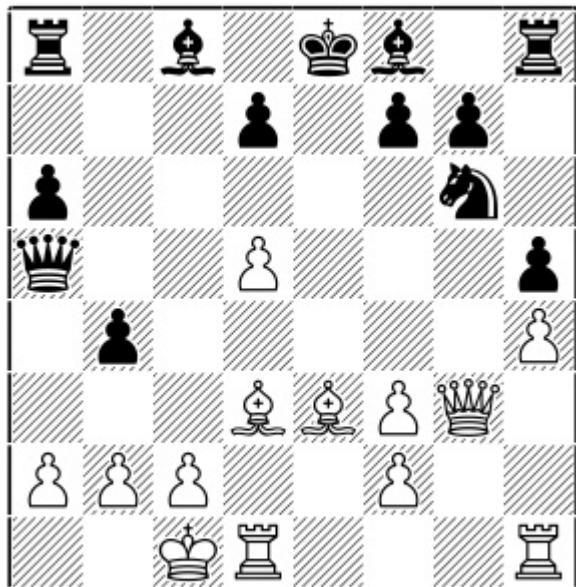
Position after: 13.Bd3!

13...Ng6

A) After 13...Bb7 14.0-0-0 b4 15.Ne2 Qxa2 16.Qc7 Bc6 17.Kd2!+- the black queen is trapped.

B) 13...Nc6 14.Bf4!± Making use of the placement of Black's queen on a5.

14.0-0-0 b4 15.Nd5! exd5 16.exd5±



Position after: 16.exd5±

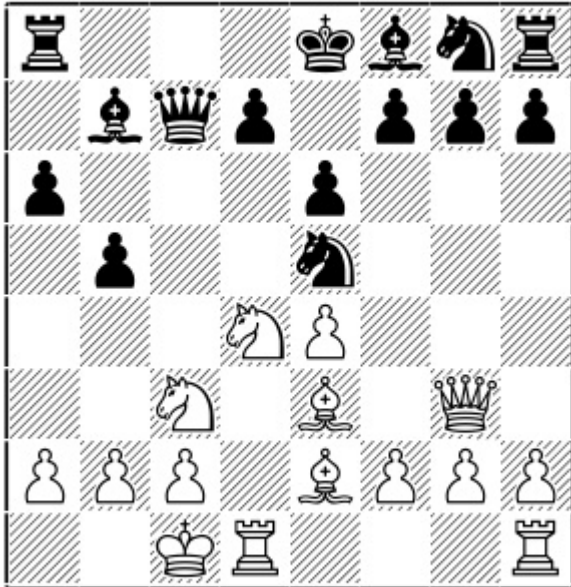
The black king is vulnerable.

c) 8...b5 9.Be2 Bb7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Ne5 8.Qg3 b5 9.Be2! Bb7

Now let us examine the natural development of the bishop to b7. The other options on move 9 have already been discussed.

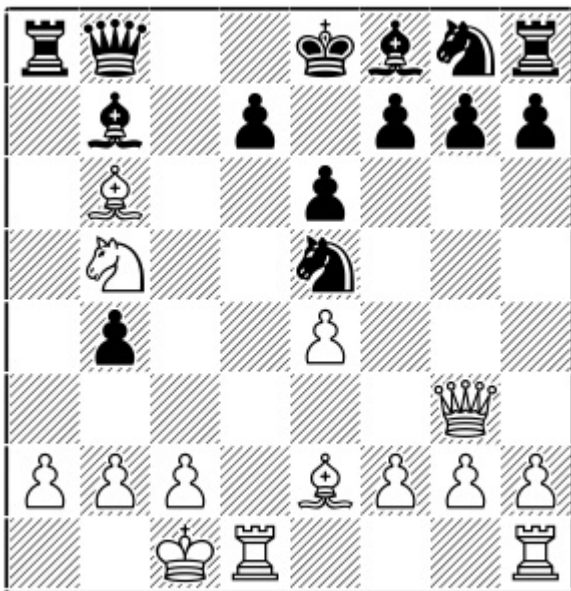
10.0-0-0



Position after: 10.0-0-0

10...Nf6

A) 10...b4? 11.Ncb5! A nice powerful shot that devastates Black's position. 11...axb5 12.Nxb5 Qb8 13.Bb6

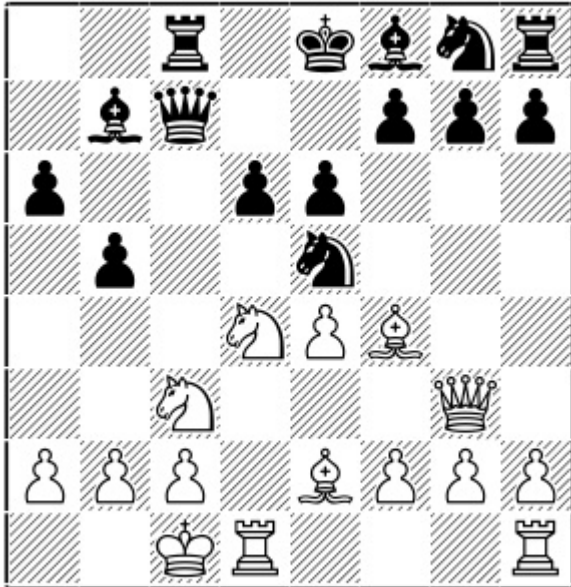


Position after: 13.Bb6

13...f6 [13...Bxe4 14.Nc7+ Ke7 15.Qe3! f5 16.f3+-] 14.f4 Rxa2 [14...Bxe4 15.Nc7+ Kf7 16.Qe3+-] 15.Kb1 Bxe4 16.Nc7+ Kf7 17.fxe5 Qxb6 18.Rxd7+-

B) 10...d6?! 11.f4 Nc4 12.Bxc4 Qxc4 13.Nb3! a5 14.Rd4 Qc6 15.a4 b4 16.Nb5±

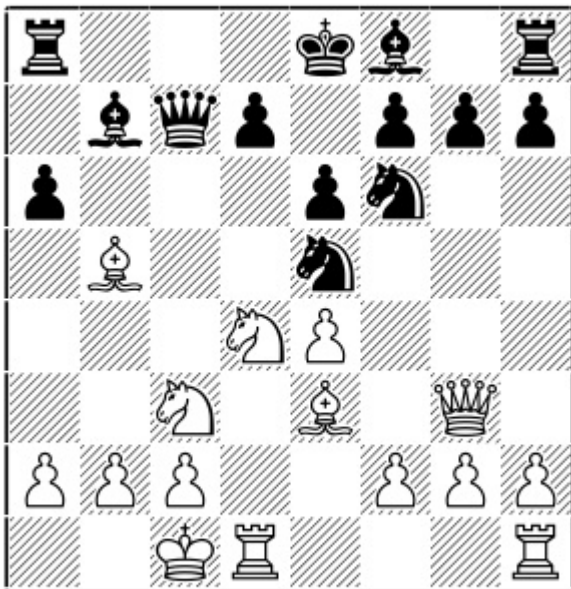
C) 10...Rc8 11.Bf4! d6



Position after: 11...d6

12.Bxb5+ axb5 13.Ndxb5 Qc5 14.Be3 Qb4 15.a3 Qa5 16.Rxd6! Nc4 17.b4 Qa8 18.Rd4+–

11.Bxb5!

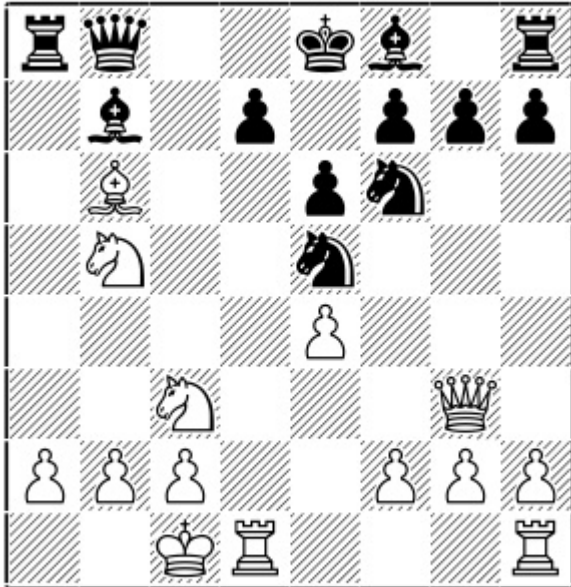


Position after: 11.Bxb5!

Black must be alert to this typical Sicilian bishop sacrifice on the b5-square, especially when his queen is on c7 and his pieces are underdeveloped. This version turns out to be very effective.

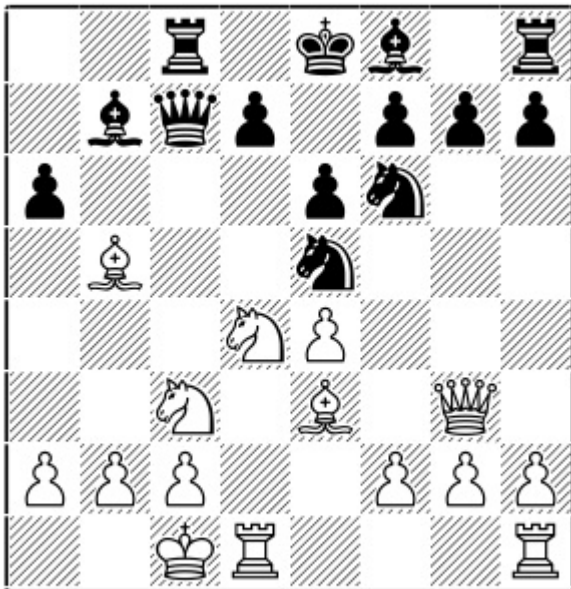
11...Rc8

11...axb5 12.Ndxb5 Qb8 13.Bb6



Position after: 13.Bb6

13...Bc6 [13...Nc4 14.Bc7 Qc8 15.Rd4 d5 16.Re1!+-] 14.Nc7+ Ke7 15.Nxa8 Bxa8 16.Bd4 d6 17.f4 Nc6 18.e5 dxe5 19.Bxe5 Nxe5 20.fxe5 Nd7 21.Rhe1± and White has a clear advantage as the black king is without any cover.

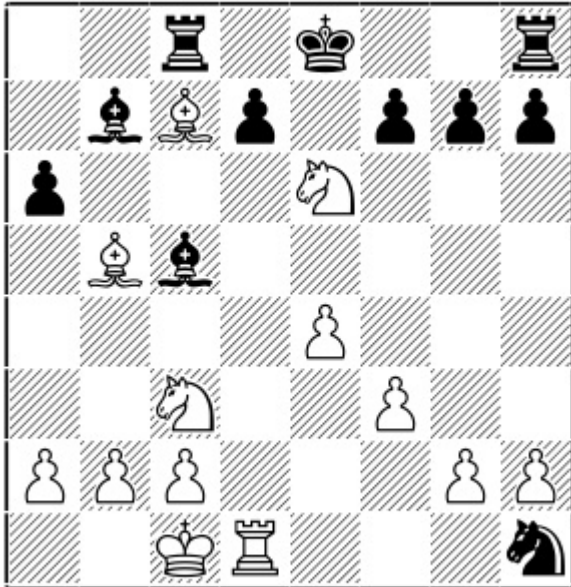


Position after: 11...Rc8

Here there are two interesting options for White.

12.Ba4!

12.f3!? Ba3 [12...h5? 13.Be2±; 12...axb5? 13.Ndxb5 Qb8 14.Ba7+-] 13.Bd2! Supporting the c3 knight. 13...Bc5™ 14.Bf4! Nh5 15.Bxe5 Nxg3 16.Bxc7 Nxh1 17.Nxe6!

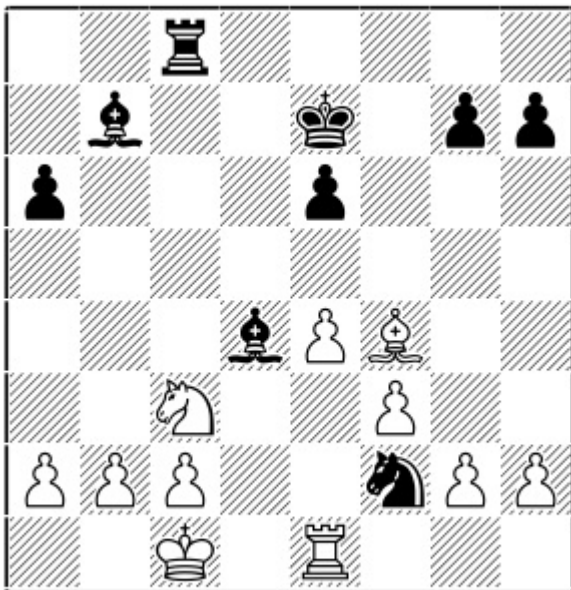


Position after: 17.Nxe6!

A) 17...axb5? 18.Nxc5 Rxc7 19.Nd3±

B) 17...Be3+ 18.Kb1 axb5 [18...fxe6 19.Bxd7+ Kf7 20.Bxc8 Rxc8 21.Be5 Rc5 22.Bb8!+- with the double threat of Rxh1 and Rd7+] 19.Nxg7+ Kf8 20.Nf5 Rxc7 21.Nxe3 Nf2 22.Rd2 b4 23.Ncd5 Bxd5 24.Nxd5 Nxe4 25.fxe4 Rc4 26.c3²

C) 17...fxe6 18.Bxd7+ Ke7 19.Bxc8 Rxc8 20.Bf4 Nf2 21.Re1 Bd4

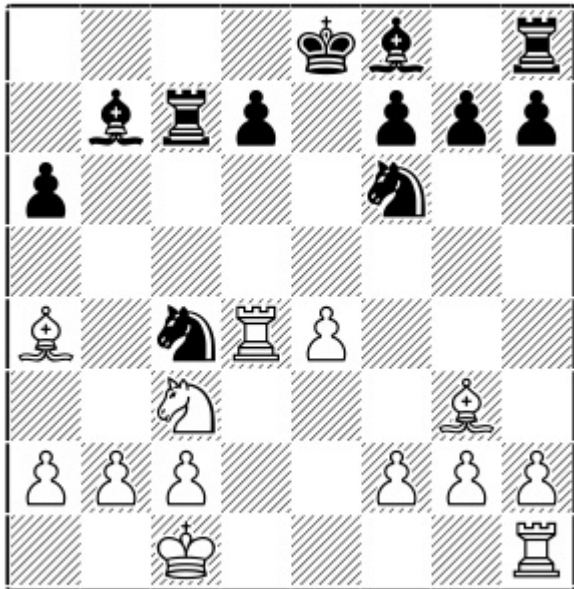


Position after: 21...Bd4

22.Be3 [22.Kd2 Rd8 23.Ke2 Rc8 24.Bg5+ Kd7 25.Kd2 Bxc3+ 26.bxc3 Rc4!]=] 22...Bxc3 23.bxc3 Nxe4 24.fxe4 Rxc3² Not easy for Black but objectively it should be holdable.

12...Nxe4

12...Nc4 13.Qxc7 Rxc7 14.Bf4! e5 15.Bg3 exd4 16.Rxd4

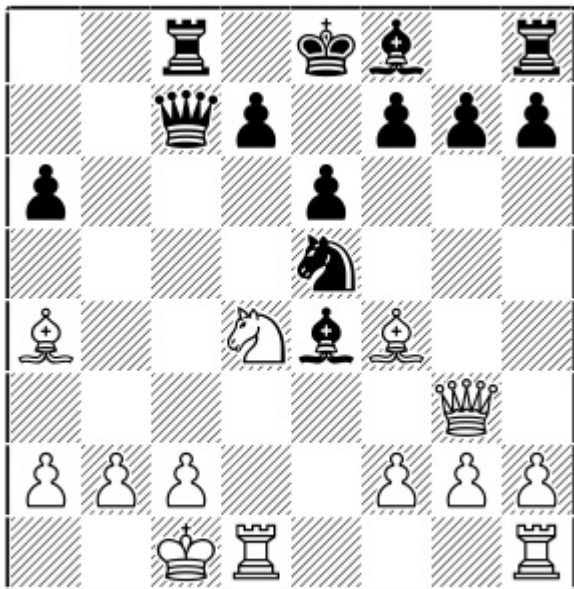


Position after: 16.Rxd4

16...Bc5 [16...Rc5 17.e5±] 17.Rxc4 Be3+ 18.fxe3 Rxc4 19.Rd1 Bxe4 20.Bb3 Rc8 21.Nxe4 Nxe4 22.Bf4²

With his bishop-pair White has more than enough compensation.

13.Nxe4 Bxe4 14.Bf4

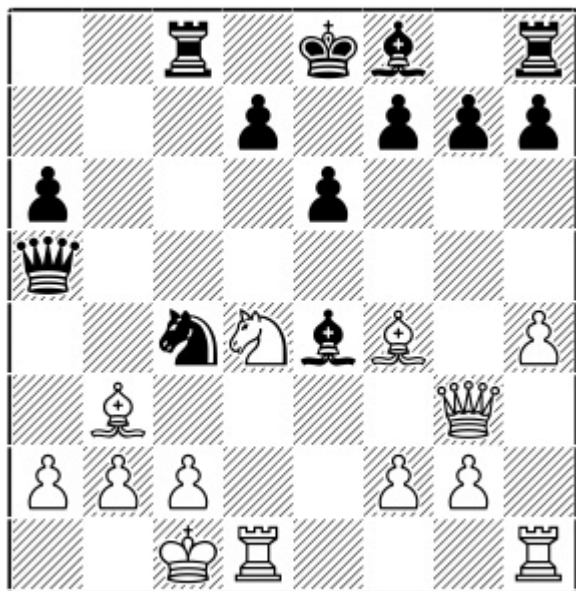


Position after: 14.Bf4

14...Qa5

14...Qc4 15.Bb3 Nd3+ 16.Kb1 Qxd4 17.cxd3 Bf5 18.Be5 Qb6 [18...Qg4 19.Qxg4 Bxg4 20.Rc1²] 19.Rc1 Rxc1+ 20.Rxc1 f6 21.Rc8+ Kf7 22.Qf3! Bg6 23.Rb8 Qc5 24.Bf4² Black's pieces are quite stuck and White has easy play.

15.Bb3 Nc4 16.h4!!



Position after: 16.h4!!

An amazing move preventing Black from sorting out his kingside with ...Bg6, ...Be7, ...0-0.

After 16.Rhe1 Bg6 Black is in time.

16...g6

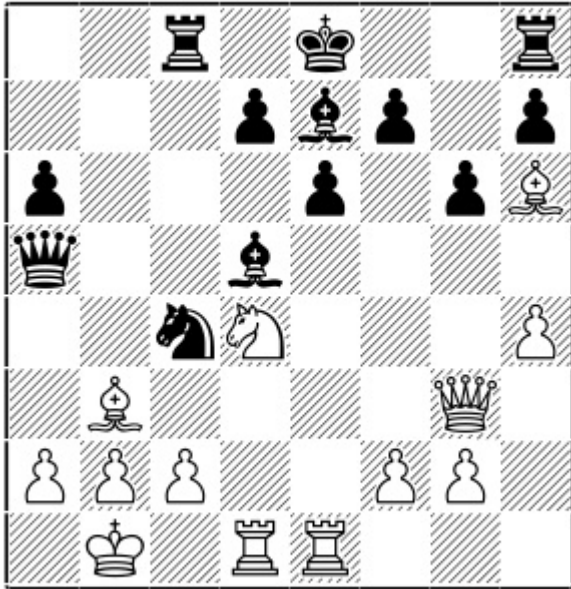
A) 16...Bg6 17.Qf3!+-

B) 16...h5 17.Rhe1 Bh7 18.Kb1 Qb4 19.Re2± and Black simply cannot develop.

17.Rhe1 Bd5

17...Bb7 18.Qd3 Nb6 19.Bg5±

18.Kb1 Be7 19.Bh6±



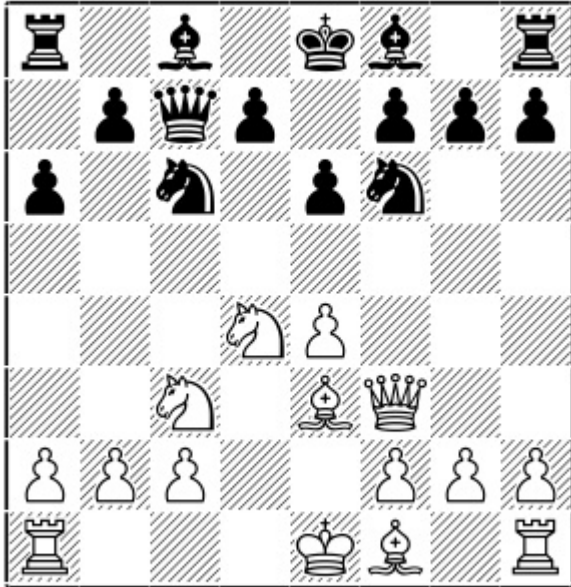
Position after: 19.Bh6±

Preventing castling; White's position is overwhelming.

Chapter 14

7...Nf6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nf6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 14 – 7...Nf6

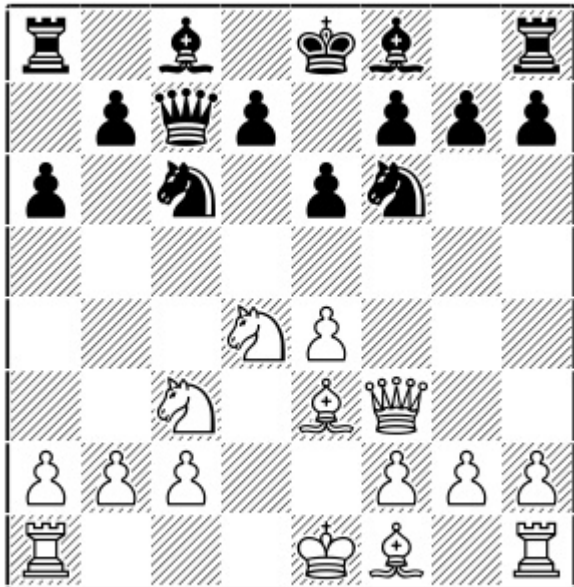
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nf6 8.Nxc6

a) 8...dxc6

b) 8...bxc6

a) 8...dxc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nf6



Position after: 7...Nf6

So now we come to the topical main line. It became fashionable thanks to Vishy Anand, who revived it in his game against Vachier-Lagrave in Grenke 2018 (which continued 8.0-0-0). Although Anand lost the game when his opponent played a strong novelty, improvements were later found enabling Black to equalise, and after 8.0-0-0 there are many other complicated lines in which Black achieves complicated play.

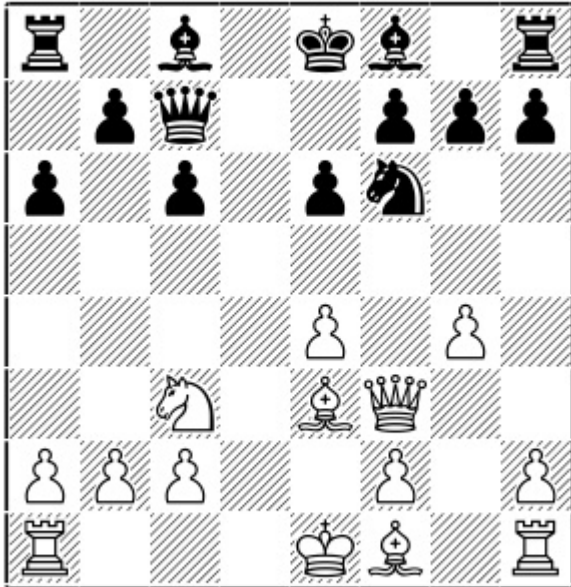
Instead I'm going to explore a very fresh and rarely played direction: 8.Nxc6!? killing Black's attacking chances and leading to pleasant positions for White.

8.Nxc6! dxc6?!

A) 8...Qxc6? 9.e5 Qxf3 10.gxf3±

B) 8...bxc6 – see the next subchapter.

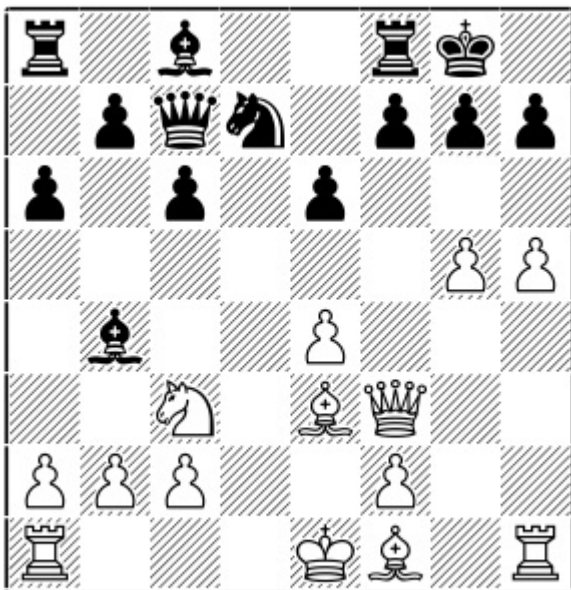
9.g4!N



Position after: 9.g4!N

9...h5

A) 9...Bb4 10.g5 Nd7 11.h4 0-0 [11...Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Qa5 13.Bd2±] 12.h5 White has a strong attack here.

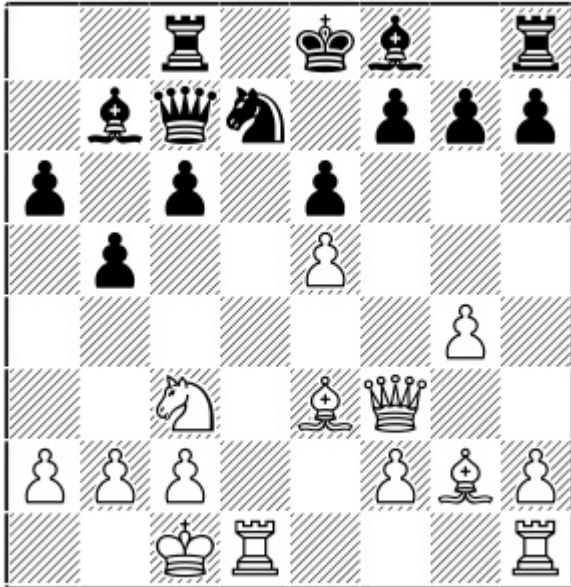


Position after: 12.h5

12...f6 13.Qg2 fxg5 14.Qxg5 Qe5 15.Qxe5 Nxe5 16.Be2 Nf3+ 17.Bxf3 Rxf3 18.Ke2 Rf7 19.Na4±

B) 9...h6 10.Rg1 b5 11.h4 Bb7 12.0-0-0 Nd7 [12...b4 13.Nb1! c5 14.Nd2±] 13.Bf4! e5 14.Be3± and Black cannot castle on either side.

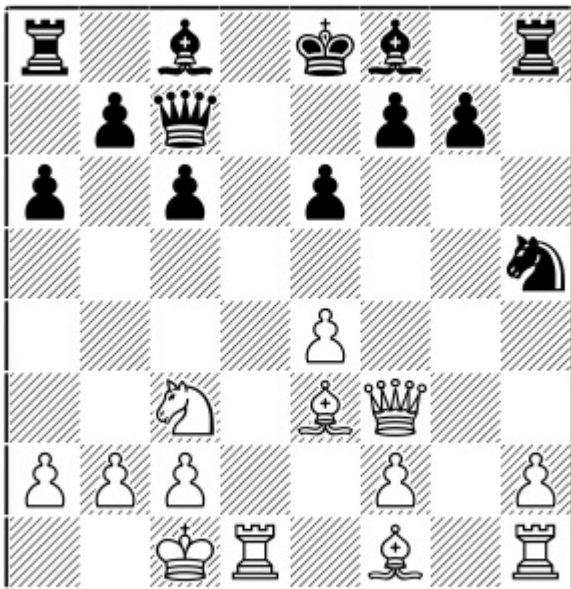
C) 9...Nd7 10.0-0-0 b5 [10...Bb4 11.Ne2 b5 12.Bg2 Bb7 13.Qg3 0-0-0 14.g5²] 11.e5! Bb7 12.Bg2 Rc8 [12...Nxe5 13.Qg3+-]



Position after: 12...Rc8

13.Rxd7!! A positional massacre. 13...Qxd7 14.Bb6±

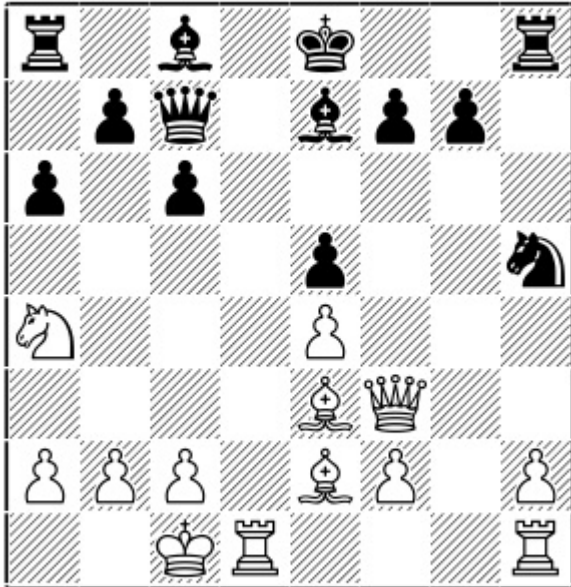
10.gxh5 Nxh5 11.0-0-0



Position after: 11.0-0-0

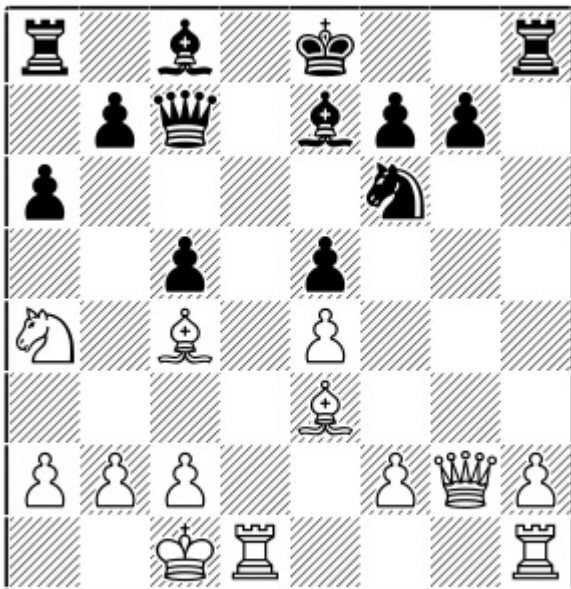
11...b5

11...Be7 12.Be2 e5 [12...g6 13.Na4 c5 14.Bxc5 Bxc5 15.Qc3±] 13.Na4!



Position after: 13.Na4!

13...c5 [13...Be6 14.Bb6 Qc8 15.Nc5 Bxc5 16.Bxc5 Nf4 17.h4 Black's king is stuck in the centre, and after 17...Qc7 18.Be3± (getting rid of the strong knight on f4) White is better.] 14.Bc4! [14.Nc3 allows 14...Be6 15.Qg2 Kf8 16.Rhg1 g6 17.Bg4 Bxg4 18.Qxg4 Nf6 19.Qf3 Rd8 20.h4 b5 21.Bg5 Rxd1+ 22.Rxd1 Qc6,..] 14...Nf6 Black threatens ...Bg4. 15.Qg2



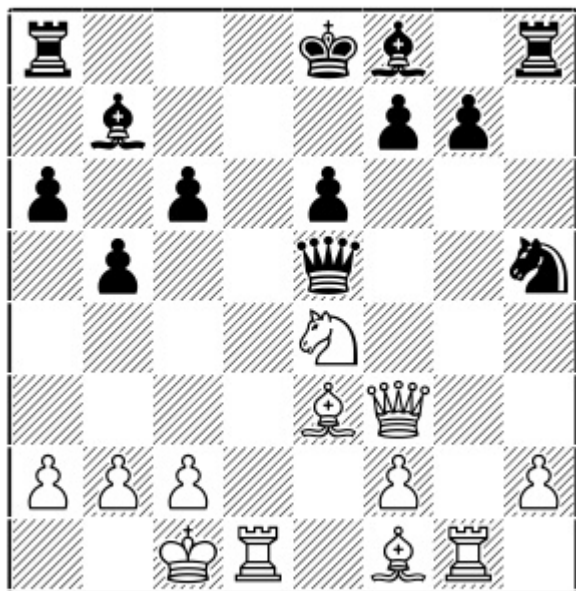
Position after: 15.Qg2

Finally White will bring his a4-knight back to c3 and his bishop on c4 prevents Black from developing his c8-bishop to the most natural square e6.

12.e5! Bb7 13.Ne4 Qxe5

13...c5? 14.Bg2 Rc8 15.Nf6+-

14.Rg1



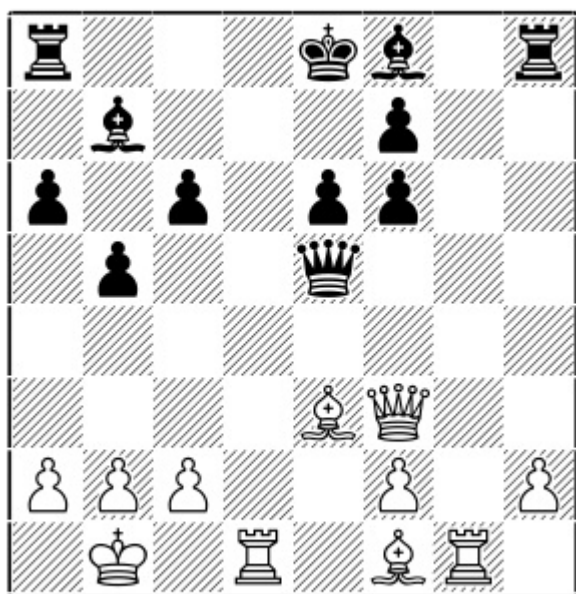
Position after: 14.Rg1

14...Qf5

14...Nf6 15.Nxf6+

A) 15...Qxf6 16.Qg3 g6 [16...Qh4 17.Qc7 Qe7 18.Qb6±] 17.Bg2 e5 18.Rge1±

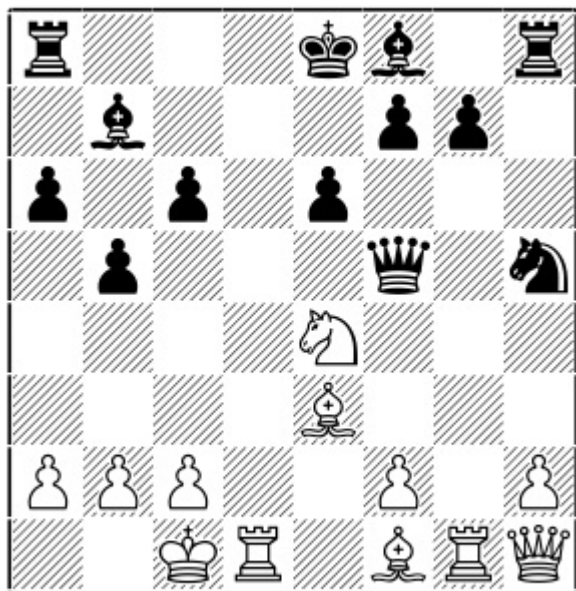
B) 15...gxf6 16.Kb1!



Position after: 16.Kb1!

16...Rd8 [16...Qh5 17.Qxh5 Rxh5 18.Rg8 c5 19.Be2 Re5 20.Rh8 Ke7 21.Rg1± With the outside passed h-pawn, and R1g8 coming, White is clearly better.] 17.Bd3 Be7 [17...Rd5 18.Be4±] 18.Be4 Qc7 19.Rxd8+ Bxd8 20.Bf4±

15.Qh1!!



Position after: 15.Qh1!!

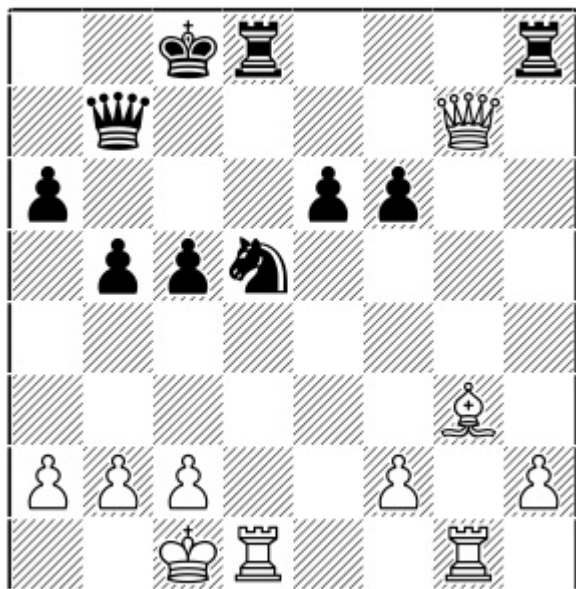
Preventing the exchange of queens.

15...Qe5

15...Nf6 16.Bd3±

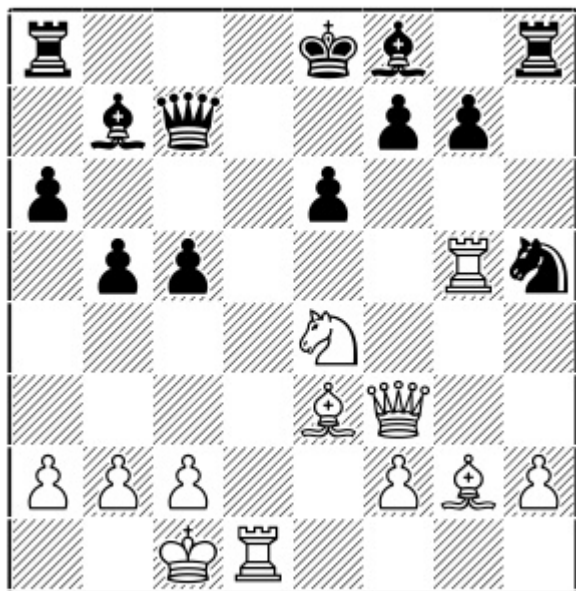
16.Rg5

16.Bg2 Qc7 17.Bc5 Nf6 18.Nd6+ Bxd6 19.Bxd6 Qb6 20.Bf3 0-0-0 21.Qg2 c5 22.Bxb7+ Qxb7 23.Qxg7 Nd5 24.Bg3 f6=



Position after: 24...f6=

16...Qc7 17.Qf3 c5 18.Bg2

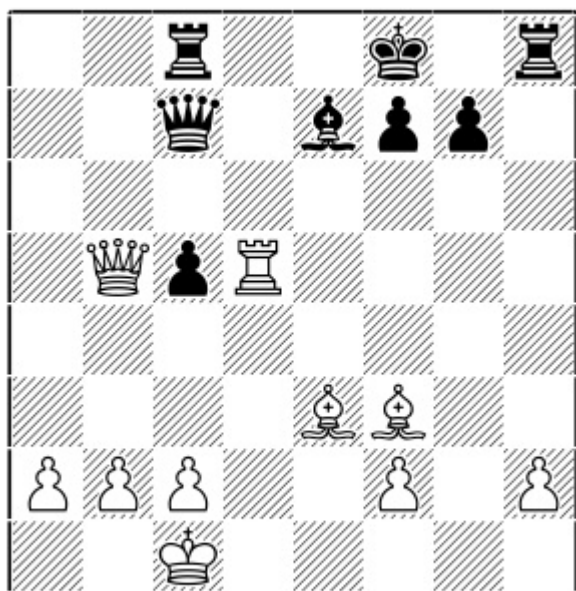


Position after: 18.Bg2

18...Bxe4

18...Rd8 19.Rxd8+ Qxd8 20.Nf6+! Nxf6 21.Qxb7 Be7 22.Rxc5! 0-0 23.Rc3² With two bishops and pressure on Black's weak queenside pawns (a6 and b5) White has a comfortable edge.

19.Qxe4 Rc8 20.Bf3 Nf6 21.Qb7 Be7 22.Qxa6 Nd5 23.Rgx5! exd5 24.Qxb5+ Kf8 25.Rxd5²

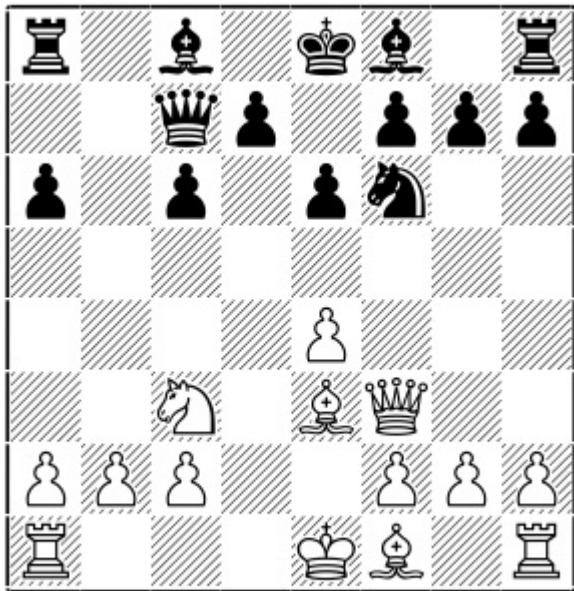


Position after: 25.Rxd5²

White has more than enough compensation based on his bishop-pair and active pieces.

b) 8...bxc6

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nf6 8.Nxc6! bxc6

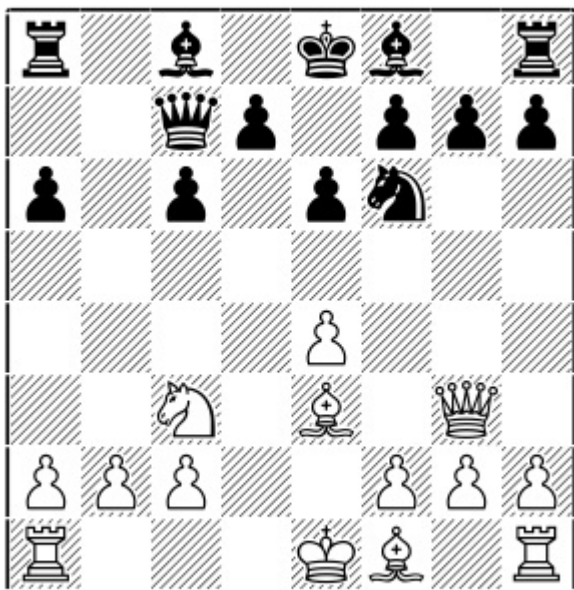


Position after: 8...bxc6

The main line: Black changes his pawn structure and sets up concrete ideas based on ...d5. We already checked the other capture in the previous subchapter.

9.Qg3!

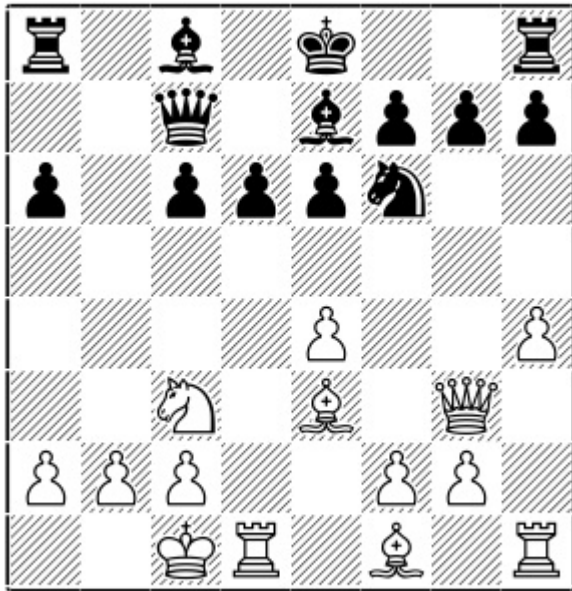
9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 [10.g4 Bb4,,] 10...cxd5 11.Qg3 Qxg3 12.hxg3 Bb7 13.Be2 [13.f3 h5 14.g4 Bd6,,] 13...h6,, Although White is still slightly for choice, Black retains good chances of counterplay.



Position after: 9.Qg3!

9...Qxg3

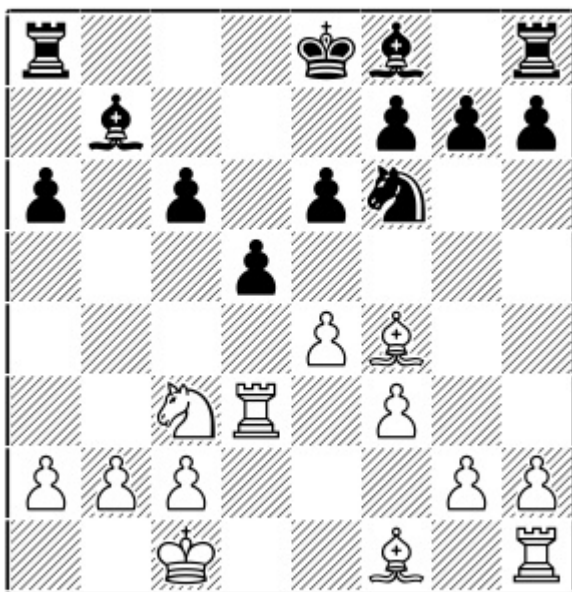
A) 9...d6 10.0-0-0 Be7 [10...Rb8 transposes to 7...d6 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.0-0-0 Rb8 10.Qg3 Nf6 as discussed in the previous chapter.] 11.h4! This march of the h-pawn creates havoc in Black's kingside.



Position after: 11.h4!

11...Rb8 [11...e5 12.Bc4 Be6 13.Bb3 Bxb3 14.axb3 0-0 15.h5± with a strong attack.] 12.h5 Qa5 [12...e5 13.Bc4 Be6 14.Bb3 0-0 15.h6 g6 16.Bg5±] 13.e5! dxe5 14.Rh4!!± With the idea of Ra4 and White is just crushing.

B) 9...Qb8 10.Qxb8 Rxb8 11.0-0-0 d5 12.Bf4 Ra8 13.f3 Bb7 [13...Be7 14.Na4! Nd7 15.Rd3 e5 16.Bg3²] 14.Rd3!

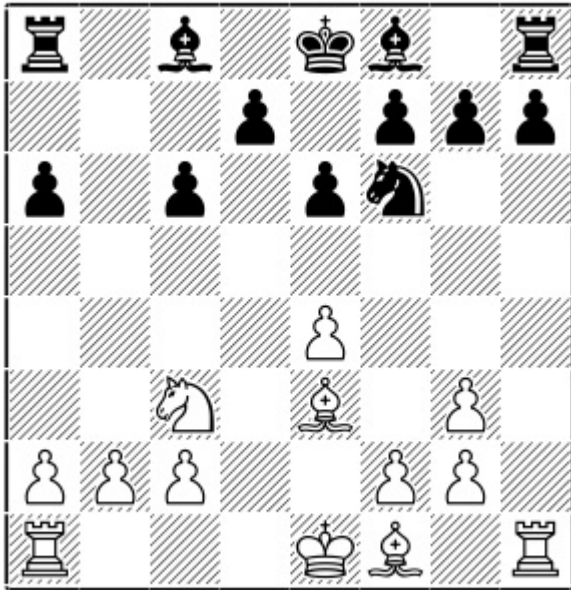


Position after: 14.Rd3!

14...Nd7 [14...dxe4 15.fxe4 c5 16.Be2 Rd8 17.Rxd8+ Kxd8 18.Rd1+ Nd7 19.Nb1!!± White's idea here is

Nd2-c4-d6 and he is clearly much better here; 14...c5 15.exd5 c4 16.Rd4 exd5 17.Be5± is also very good for him.] 15.Na4 e5 16.Rb3 Rb8 17.Be3 d4 18.Bd2 Bd6 19.Nb6 Nc5 20.Ra3 Nd7 21.Nxd7 Kxd7 22.Rb3²
 Black's pieces are stuck.

10.hxg3

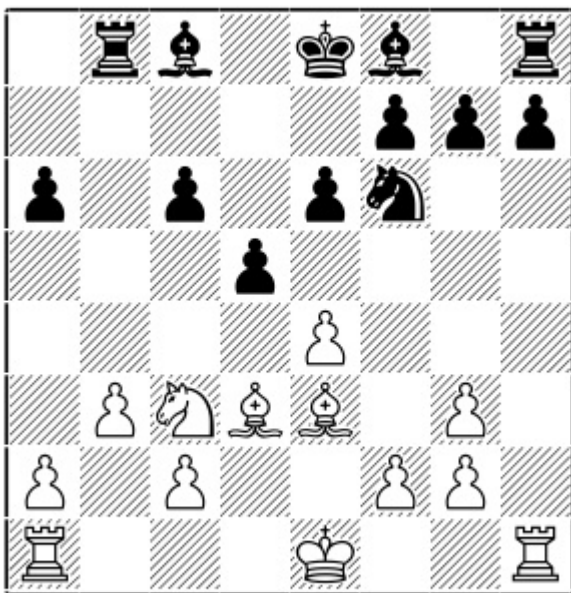


Position after: 10.hxg3

10...d5

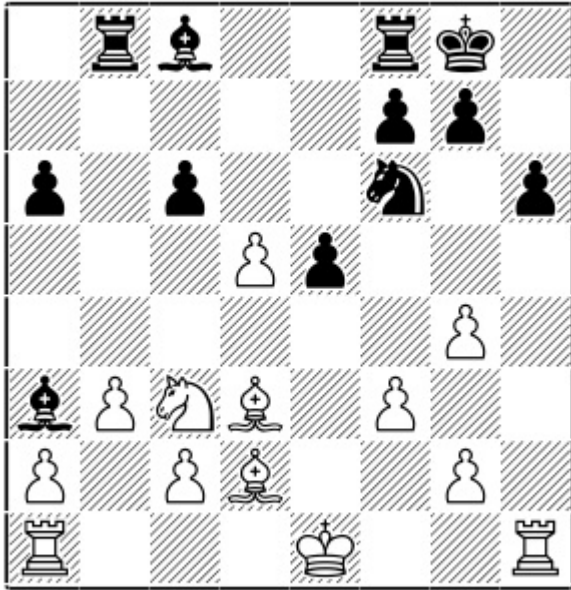
10...Rb8 11.b3

A) 11...d5 12.Bd3



Position after: 12.Bd3

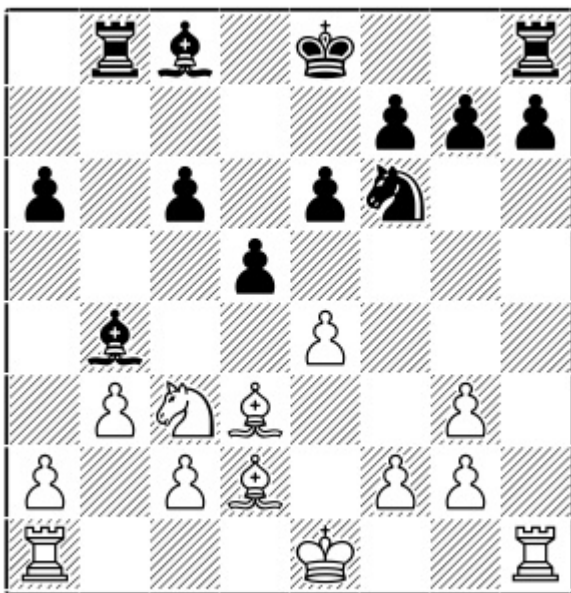
12...e5 [12...Bd6 13.Bf4! If Black exchanges on f4, White will follow up with gxf4, f3, and Na4, with a pleasant advantage. 13...e5 14.Bd2 Ke7 15.f3 h5 16.0-0-0 Be6 17.exd5 cxd5 18.Bg5 Ba3+ 19.Kb1 Rbc8 20.Na4²] 13.Bd2 Ba3 14.f3 White is threatening g4. 14...h6 [14...0-0? 15.exd5! cxd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Bxh7+ Kh8 18.Be4+-] 15.g4 0-0 [15...Rg8 may be the lesser evil: 16.Kf2 Bc5+ 17.Kg3 Ke7 18.Rhe1².] 16.exd5!



Position after: 16.exd5!

16...Bb2 [16...cxd5 17.g5 hxg5 18.Nxd5 Nxd5 19.Bh7+ Kh8 20.Be4+ Kg8 21.Bxd5±] 17.Rb1 Bxc3 18.Bxc3 cxd5 19.Kf2±

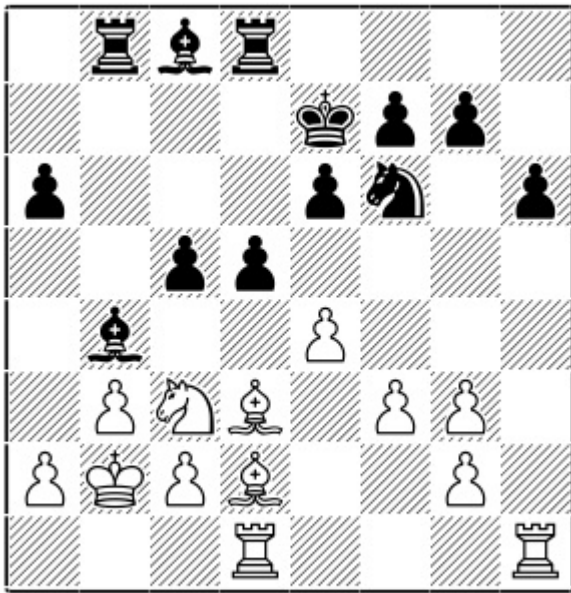
B) 11...Bb4 12.Bd2 d5 [12...e5 13.f3 gives white a decent edge, e.g. 13...d6 14.a3 Ba5 15.g4 Nd7 16.g5 Nf8 17.0-0-0± as in Warmerdam (2475) – Serrano Salvador (2334) Teplice 2019.] 13.Bd3



Position after: 13.Bd3

B1) 13...Bb7 14.f3 h5 15.g4² White has a comfortable edge here.

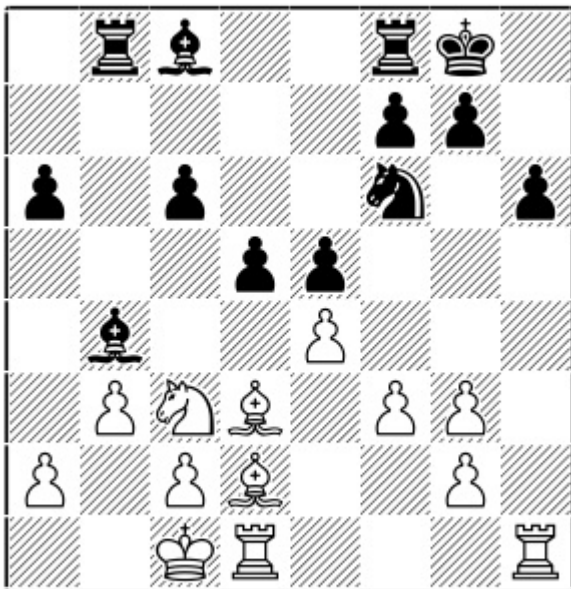
B2) 13...Ke7 14.f3 h6 15.0-0-0 Rd8 [15...Nd7 16.g4²] 16.Kb2 c5



Position after: 16...c5

17.exd5! [17.a3?! Warmerdam, M (2501) – Grutter, T (2203) Amstelveen 2019] 17...Nxd5 18.Nxd5+
exd5 19.c3 Ba5 20.Bf4±

B3) 13...e5 14.f3 h6 15.0-0-0 0-0

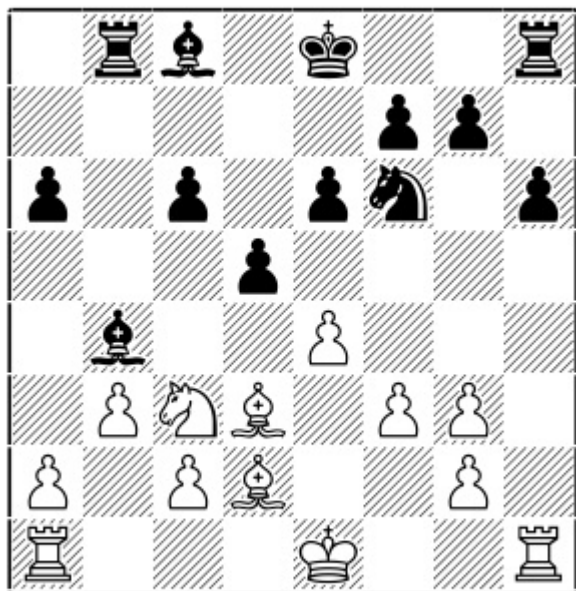


Position after: 15...0-0

16.Kb2 [16.g4 is more precise: 16...Re8 17.Rhe1 d4 18.Na4 Ba3+ 19.Kb1 Be6 20.Bc1 Bb4 21.c3! dxc3
22.Kc2²] 16...Re8 White is still slightly better but compared with 16.g4 it is not that clear. [16...d4?!
17.Na4 Nd7 18.Bxb4 Rxb4 19.c3± Van Forest, J (2622) – Lenderman, A (2645) Saint Louis 2019]

B4) 13...h6 Several other moves have been tried, but none of them equalizes. 14.f3 [14.0-0-0?! Ng4

15.Rhf1 Bc5 16.Be1 Nh2!,,]

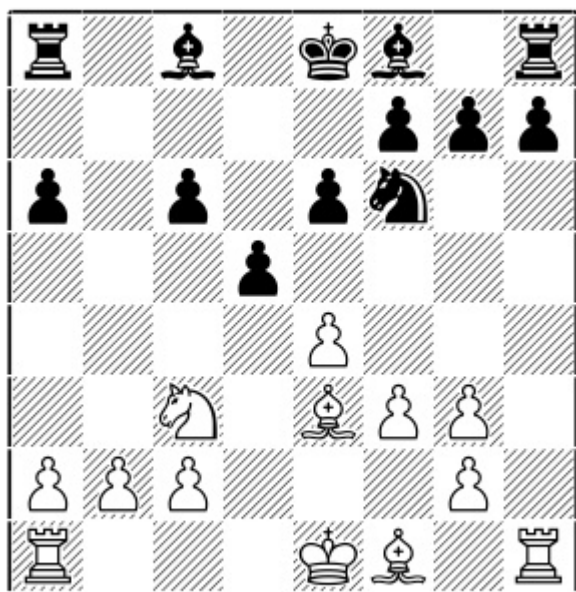


Position after: 14.f3

14...Nd7 [14...0-0 15.g4 Rd8 16.0-0-0 Bb7 17.Rhe1 c5 18.exd5 exd5 19.Nb1! Bxd2+ 20.Nxd2²; 14...Ke7 transposes] 15.0-0-0 Nc5 16.Be2 f6 [16...Ba3+ 17.Kb1 Ke7 18.Bf4 Ra8 19.Be3²] 17.Kb2 d4 18.Nb1²
White is more than fine here thanks to his better pawn structure.

11.exd5!

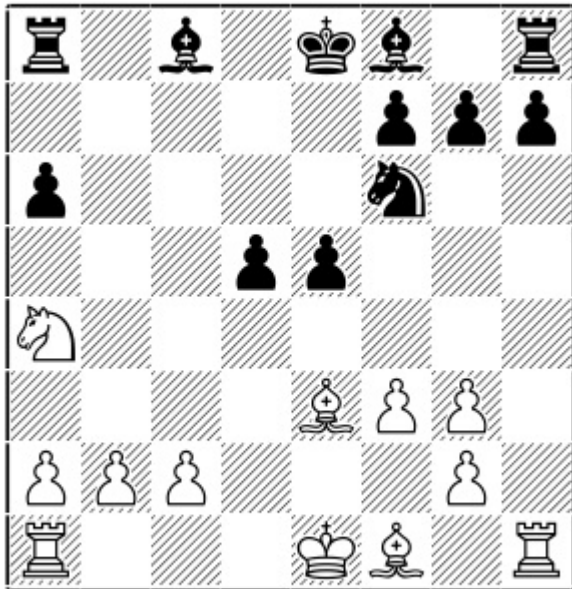
11.f3!?N One of the interesting tries for White, after which Black has to play precisely to equalize.



Position after: 11.f3!?N

A) 11...Bb4 12.exd5 exd5 [12...Nxd5 13.Bd4 f6 14.a3 Bxc3+ 15.bxc3 e5 16.c4! exd4 17.cxd5 exd5 18.Rh4²] 13.g4! Nd7 14.g5 Bb7 15.0-0-0² and the h7-pawn remains a weakness for the whole game.

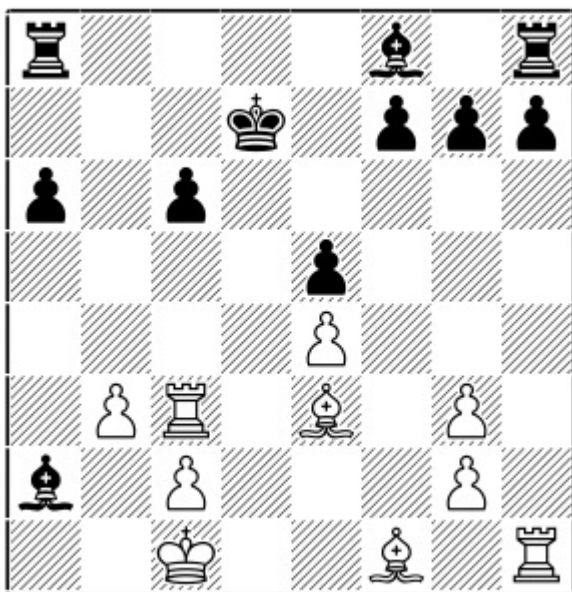
B) 11...e5 12.exd5! [12.Na4 dxe4 13.0-0-0 Nd5 14.Bf2 exf3 15.gxf3] 12...cxd5 13.Na4



Position after: 13.Na4

13...d4 [13...Bb7 14.Nc5²; 13...Rb8 14.Ba7! Rb7 15.Bf2²] 14.Bd2 Rb8 15.b3 Ba3 [15...Bd7? 16.Bxa6±] 16.c3 and White is slightly better.

C) 11...dxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.fxe4 e5 14.0-0-0 Be6 [14...a5 15.Rd3! Be6 16.Rc3 Kd7 17.Bc4 Bxc4 18.Rxc4 Be7 19.Rd1+ Kc7 20.Rd5 f6 21.a3²] 15.Rd3! [15.Be2 Be7 16.Bb6 a5 17.a4 Bd8] 15...Bxa2 16.Rc3 Kd7 17.b3 At first glance it looks like Black's bishop is trapped but Black is in time to rescue the situation:



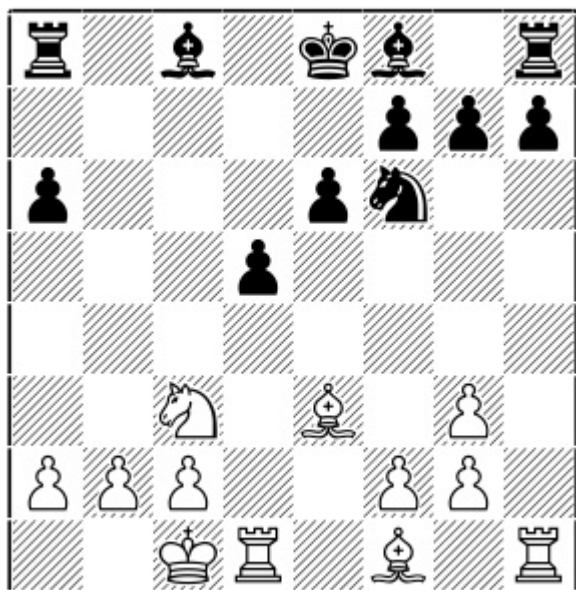
Position after: 17.b3

17...Ba3+ 18.Kd1 a5 19.Bc4 a4 20.Ke2 Bb2 21.Rd3+ Kc7 22.Bxf7 Rad8 23.Bc5 Rxd3 24.Kxd3 a3 25.Ke2 Rd8= and Black is fine here.

11...cxd5

11...Nxd5? 12.Bd2 Be7 13.0-0-0 Bb7 14.g4±

12.0-0-0



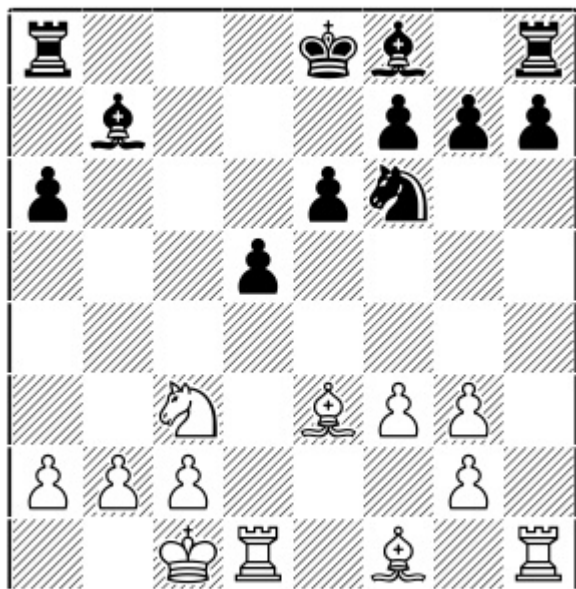
Position after: 12.0-0-0

12...Bb7

A) 12...Bd6 13.Be2 Ke7 14.g4 Bb7 15.g5 Nd7 16.Rh4² Again this nice rook manoeuvre leaves Black's position worse.

B) 12...Bb4?! 13.Na4²

13.f3

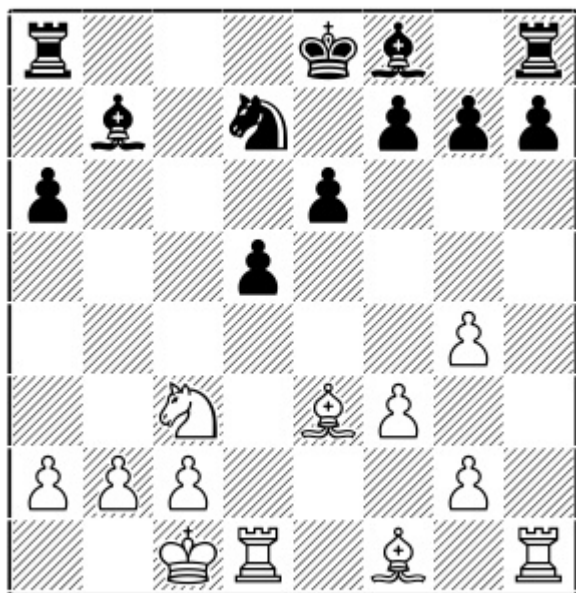


Position after: 13.f3

13...Nd7

13...h5 14.g4 Bd6 15.Na4 Bc6 [15...Ke7 16.gxh5 Rxh5 17.Rxh5 Nxh5 18.Nc5²] 16.Nc5 a5 17.g5 Nd7
18.Nb3 Ke7 19.Nd4 Bb7 20.a4² and White is in total control.

14.g4



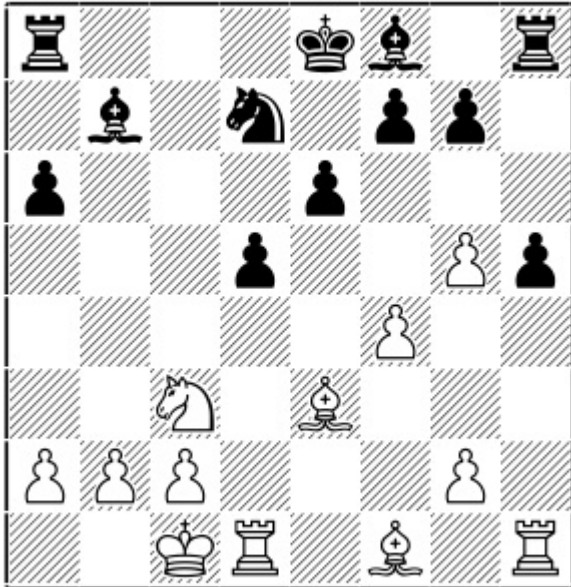
Position after: 14.g4

14...h6!

A) 14...Bc5 15.Bd4 Bxd4 16.Rxd4 f6 17.Be2²

B) 14...Bd6 15.g5 Ke7 16.Ne2! f6 17.Nd4²

15.g5 h5 16.f4



Position after: 16.f4

White is slowly outplaying Black in this pleasant endgame.

16...Bd6

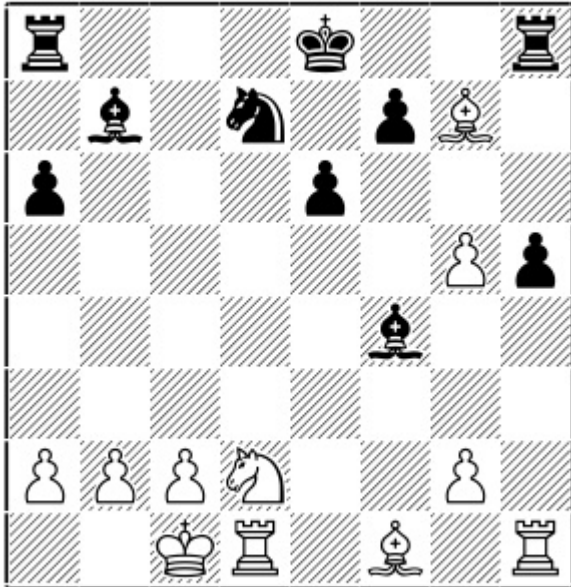
A) 16...Bc5 17.Rh3 Ke7 18.Bxc5+ Nxc5 19.Re3² with Ne2-d4.

B) 16...g6 17.Bd4 [17.g4?! d4 18.Bxd4 e5! 19.fxe5 Bxh1 20.e6 fxe6 21.Bxh8 Bf3,,] 17...Rg8 18.Be2 Bd6 [18...Bc5 19.Bf3²] 19.g3 Bc5 20.Bf3 Bxd4 21.Rxd4 0-0-0 22.b3 Kc7 23.Na4! Bc6 [23...e5?! 24.fxe5 Nxe5 25.Bg2±] 24.Nb2²

17.Ne4! Bc7 18.Nd2 d4

18...f6 19.Nf3 e5 20.fxe5 fxe5 21.Nh4!² Threatening Ng6 or Nf5.

19.Bxd4 Bxf4 20.Bxg7

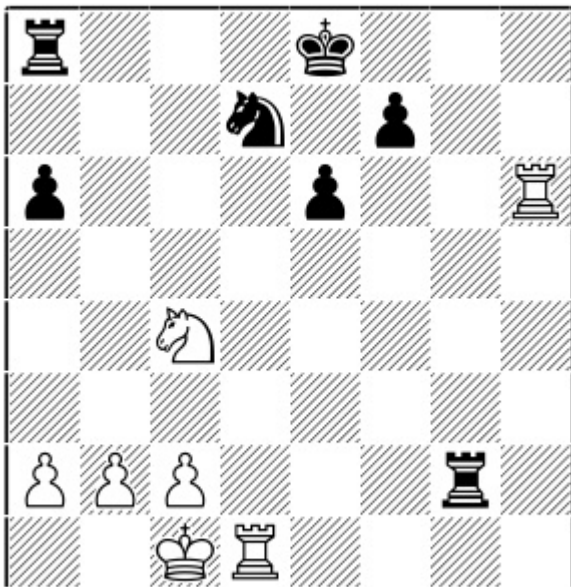


Position after: 20.Bxg7

20...Rg8

20...Rh7 21.Bh6 Ne5 22.Rxh5 f6 23.Rh4 Be3 24.Rh3 Bf4 25.Rb3 Bd5 26.Rb4 fxg5 27.Rxf4! gxf4 28.Bxf4²
 White is doing well with two pawns in return for the sacrificed exchange.

21.Bh6 Bxg5 22.Rxh5 Bxh6 23.Rxh6 Bxg2 24.Bxg2 Rxc2 25.Nc4²



Position after: 25.Nc4²

Objectively this is close to equality but it does look really unpleasant for Black to handle in a practical game as there is still a lot of play left.

Obsah

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