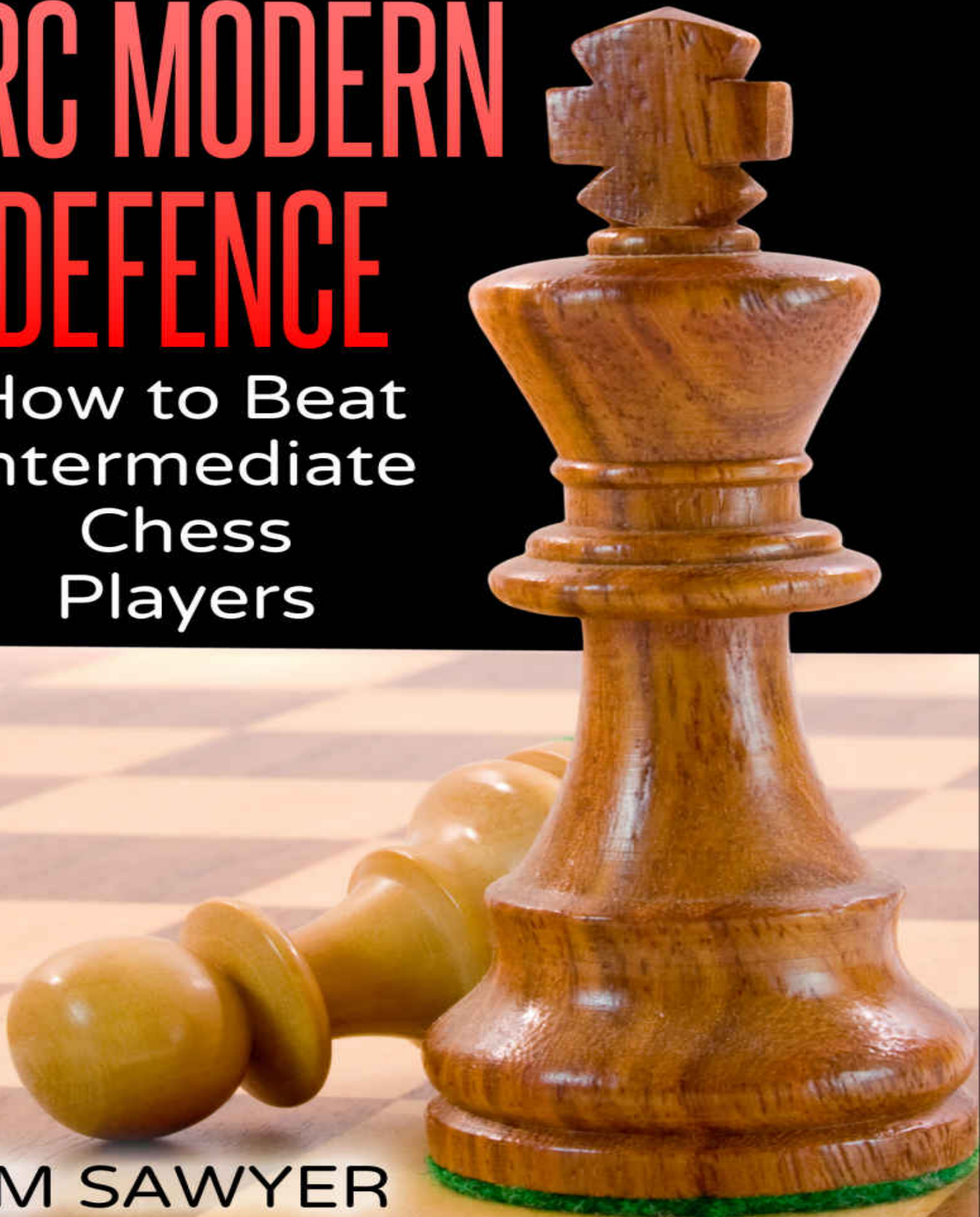


CHESS STRATEGY

PIRC MODERN

DEFENCE

How to Beat
Intermediate
Chess
Players



TIM SAWYER

Chess Strategy
Pirc Modern Defence

**How to Beat Intermediate Chess
Players**

Tim Sawyer

Chess Strategy Pirc Modern Defence: How to Beat Intermediate Chess Players

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Introduction

This Pirc Modern Defence book shows how I win in these chess openings. You need to understand what's going on more than remember exact lines. Strategy and tactics are more important than the memory of concrete analysis.

Pirc Defence 1.e4 d6 and Modern Defence 1.e4 g6 often transpose. I illustrate strategy from games vs intermediate players on chess.com. The book has 33 games with 174 diagrams. White wins 17 and Black wins 16 of these 10-minute games. Opening theory and endgame knowledge help your play, but tactics win most games.

I use strategy for my comments to explain what's going on. I follow any of these steps. 1. Describe the current position. 2. Imagine how to improve it. 3. Plan how to get there.

I pick a key position every few moves to make a comment. My plan is for you to browse through the book, look at the diagrams and read the comments with ease.

For those who prefer to read quickly, you can skim through the book from diagram to diagram. Note the change from the previous diagram and read any notes that interest you.

From time to time, I add a line of analysis. You may wish to work out some of those lines in your head, or just note that there was an alternative way to play and keep reading.

I played chess for 50 years. As a correspondence master and blitz master, my usual opponents were rated 1800 to 2400. My opponents here are often lower to intermediate.

I assume that you can read algebraic chess notation. The diagrams have White at the bottom of the board. Thank you for reading my books. I hope you enjoy this one!

Chapter 1 – Pirc 1.e4 d6

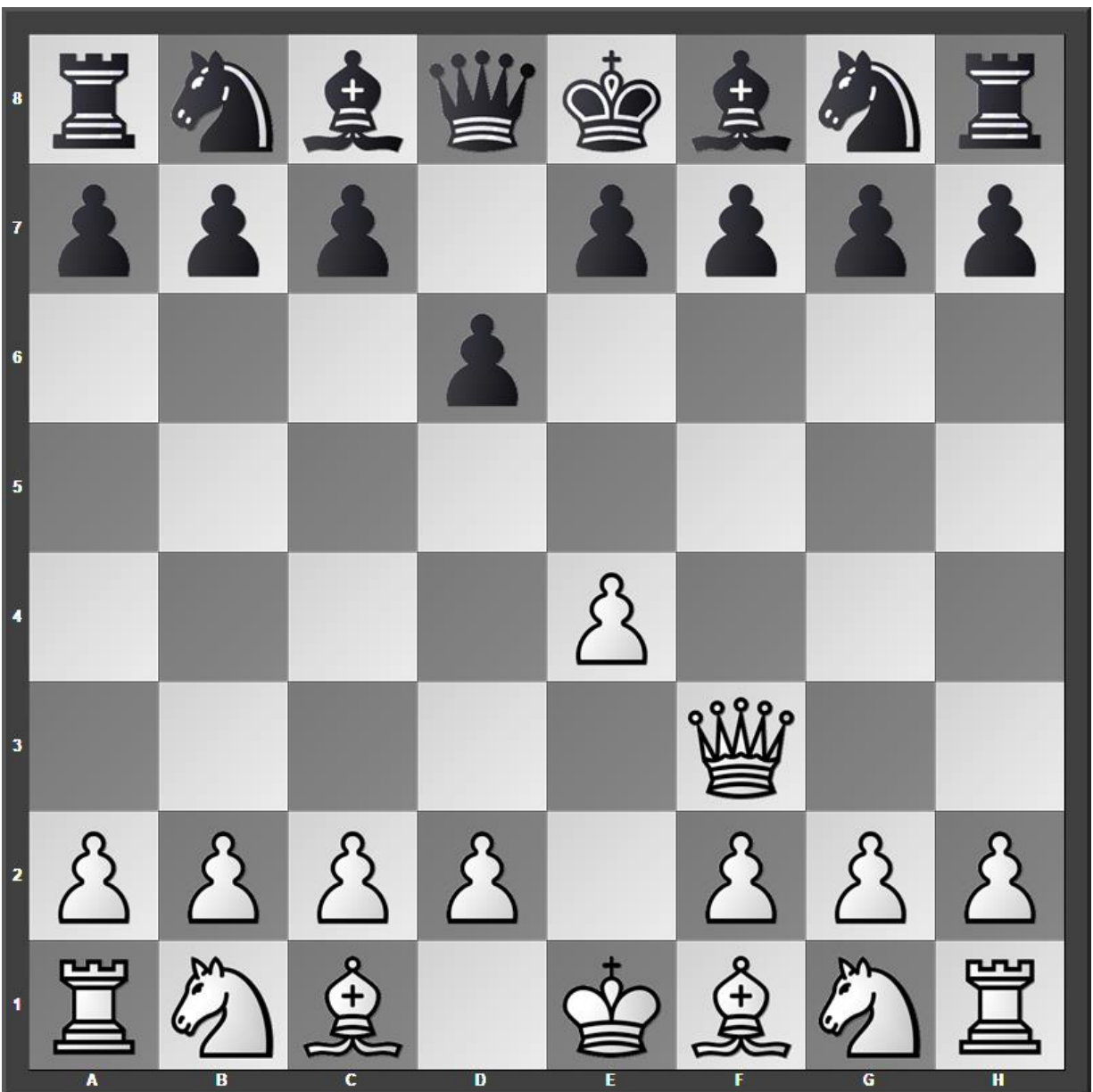
Game 1 – B07 [2.Qf3 Nf6 3.Nh3 g6]

Guest - Sawyer, Chess.com, 25.01.2022

1.e4 d6

Black stops the advance of the e4 pawn. This first chapter demonstrates White choosing various poor strategies.

2.Qf3



My opponent's goal is to attack f7. The queen takes aim.

2...Nf6

3.Nh3 g6

4.Nc3 Bg7

The idea of 4.Ng5 and 5.Qxf7 doesn't work directly. White develops another knight planning to remove the f6 knight.

5.Nd5

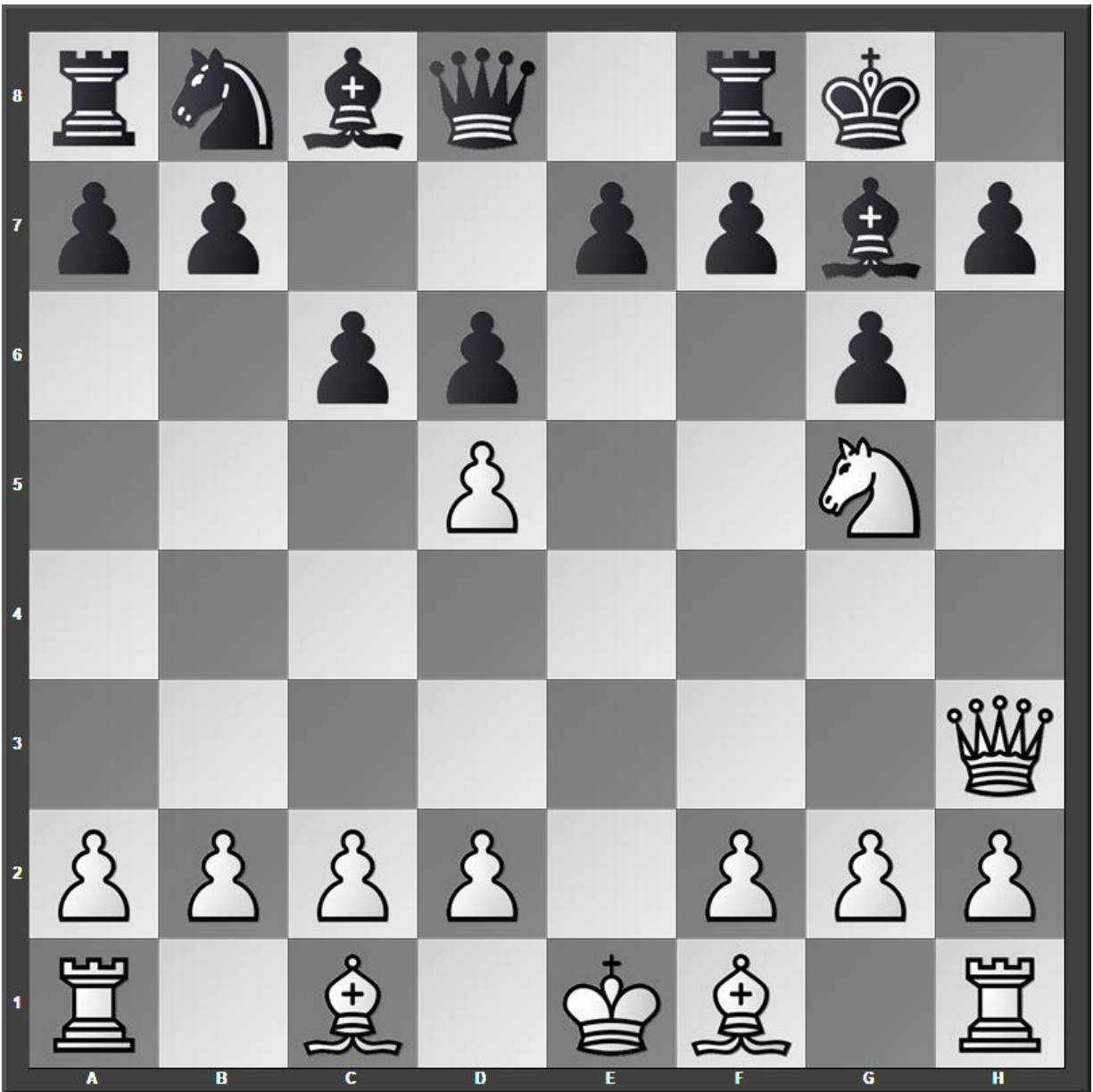


5...Nxd5

6.exd5 0-0

7.Ng5 c6

8.Qh3



It's good to threaten mate on h7. It's bad to lose the queen.

8...Bxh3

9.gxh3 e5

10.h4 cxd5

11.Bh3 e4

White could retreat the knight after 12.Bg2 h6 13.Nh3 Nc6 when Black remains up a queen for a bishop.

12.h5 h6

13.hxg6 Qxg5

14.gxf7+ Kh8

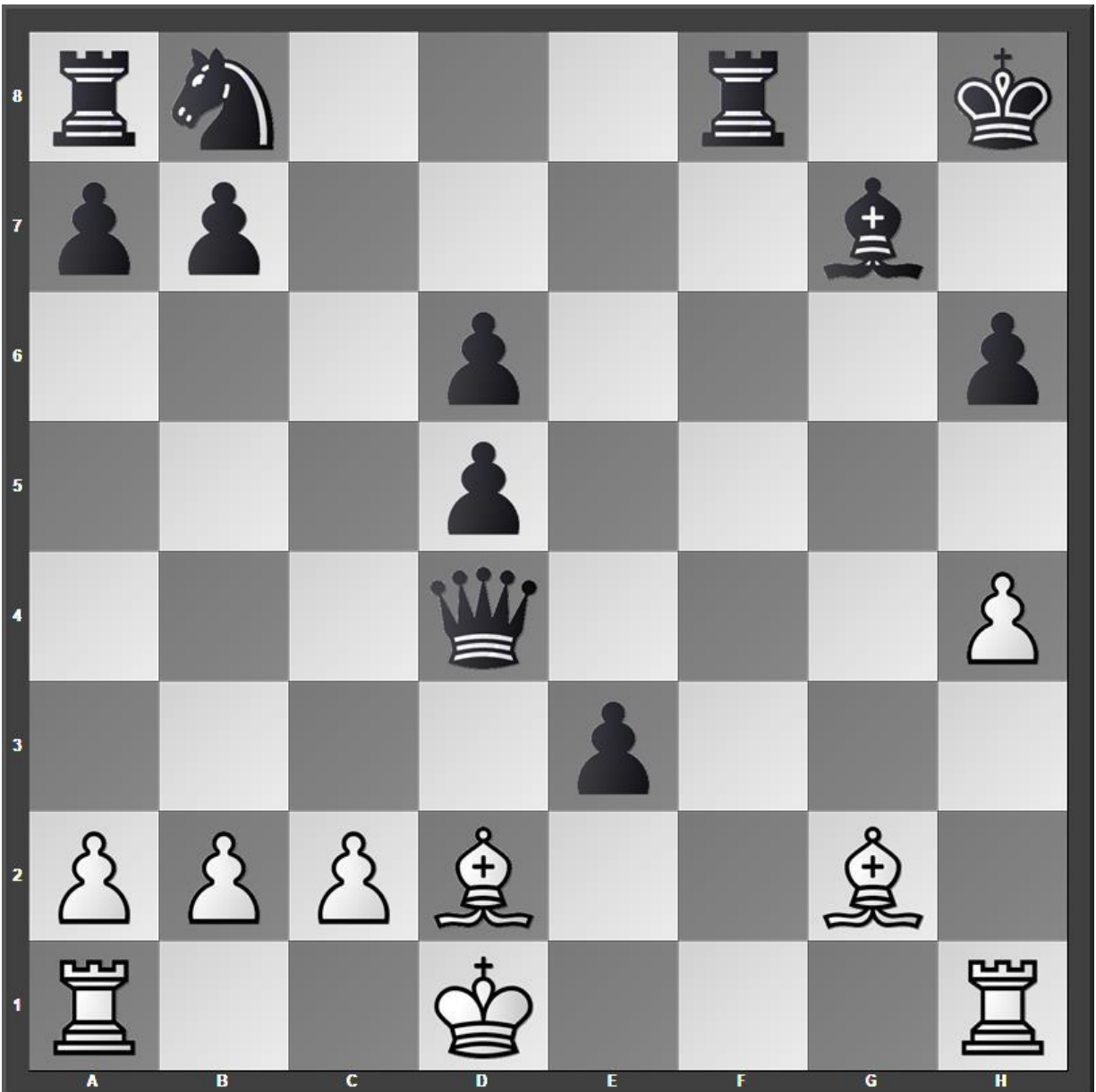
15.d4 Qh5

16.Bg2 Qxf7

17.h4 Qxf2+

18.Kd1 Qxd4+

19.Bd2 e3



20.Re1 Qxd2# 0-1

White is checkmated

Game 2 – B07 [2.d3 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6]

Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 26.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.d3 Nf6



2.d3 meekly defends e4. This passive move usually means White is afraid and has poor tactical skills. I want to attack.

3.Nc3 g6

4.Nh3 Bg7

5.Nd5 Nxd5

6.exd5 0-0

7.Be2 c6

8.Bf3 cxd5



9.Bxd5 Qa5+

If 9.Nf4 d4 10.0-0 Nc6 Black has won a pawn. Instead, White loses a bishop to a check and capture combination.

10.c3 Qxd5

11.0–0 Bxh3

12.gxh3 Nc6

13.d4 Qf5

14.Re1 Qxh3

15.a3 e5

Now d4 is vulnerable. 16.Re3 Qf5 17.d5 Ne7 favors Black.

16.a4 exd4

17.cxd4 Nxd4



18.Qxd4 Bxd4

19.Bh6 Qxh6

20.Re4 Qg5+

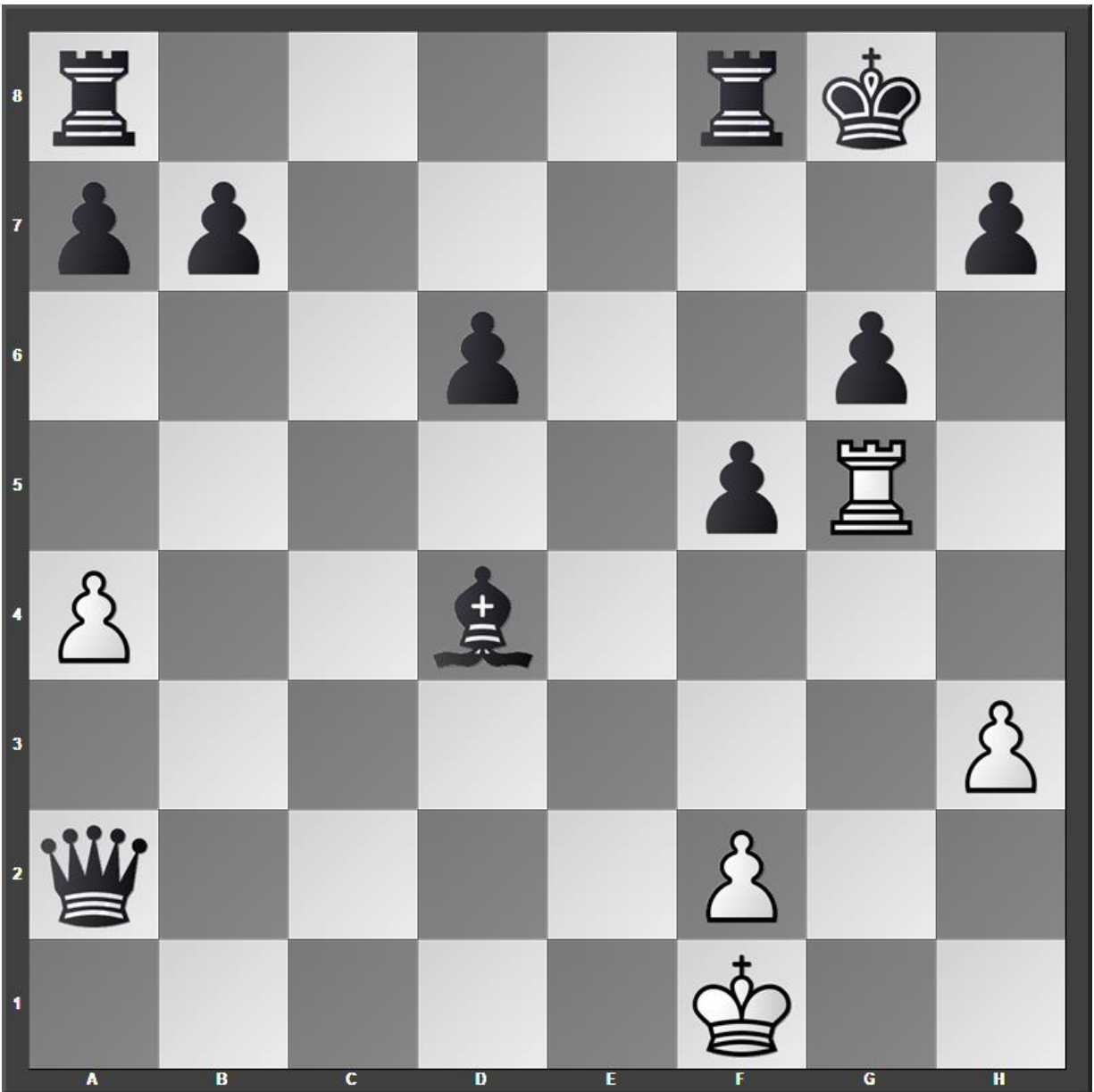
21.Kf1 Bxb2

22.Ra2 Qd5

23.Rg4 Qxa2

24.h3 f5

25.Rg5 Bd4



26.h4 Qxf2# 0-1

White is checkmated

Game 3 – B07 [2.Bc4 Nf6 3.d3 g6]
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 29.01.2022
1.e4 d6
2.Bc4 Nf6
3.d3 g6



Again, White plays d3 but here the bishop goes to c4 first.

4.Bg5

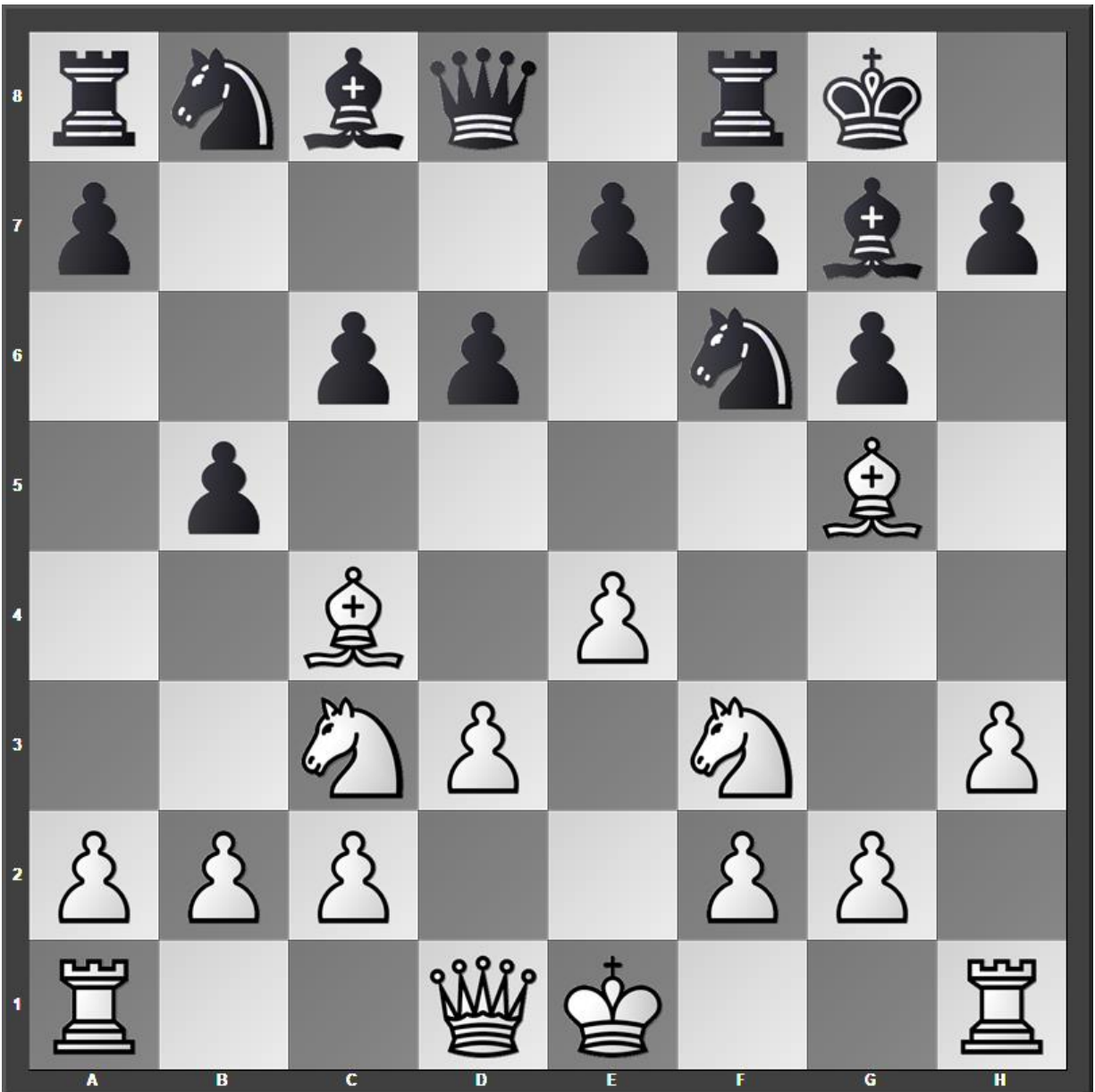
An alternative is 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.f4 0–0 6.Nf3 c5 Grand Prix Sicilian Defence
or here 6...c6 – both with equal chances.

4...Bg7

5.Nc3 0-0

6.Nf3 c6

7.h3 b5



Attacking Bc4 with b5 is a common Pirc Modern strategy.

8.Bb3 a5

9.a4 b4

10.Ne2 Nbd7

11.0-0 Qb6

12.c4 bxc3

13.Nxc3 Ba6

If 14.Rb1 Bxd3 15.Bxf7+ Rxf7 16.Qxd3 Nc5 Black is better.

14.Bxf6 Bxf6



15.d4

This loses the Exchange. If 15.Rb1 Rab8 favors Black.

15..Bxf1

16.Kxf1 c5

Stronger is 16...Rab8 17.Ra3 e6 with advantage to Black.

Here after 16...c5, if 17.Nd5 Qa6+ Black is better.

17.dxc5 Nxc5



18.Nd5

Loses a bishop. If 18.Nb5 Nxe4 Black is up the Exchange.

18...Qxb3

19.Nxf6+ exf6

20.Qxd6 Qd3+



My strategy is to force the exchange of queens by a check.

21.Qxd3 Nxd3

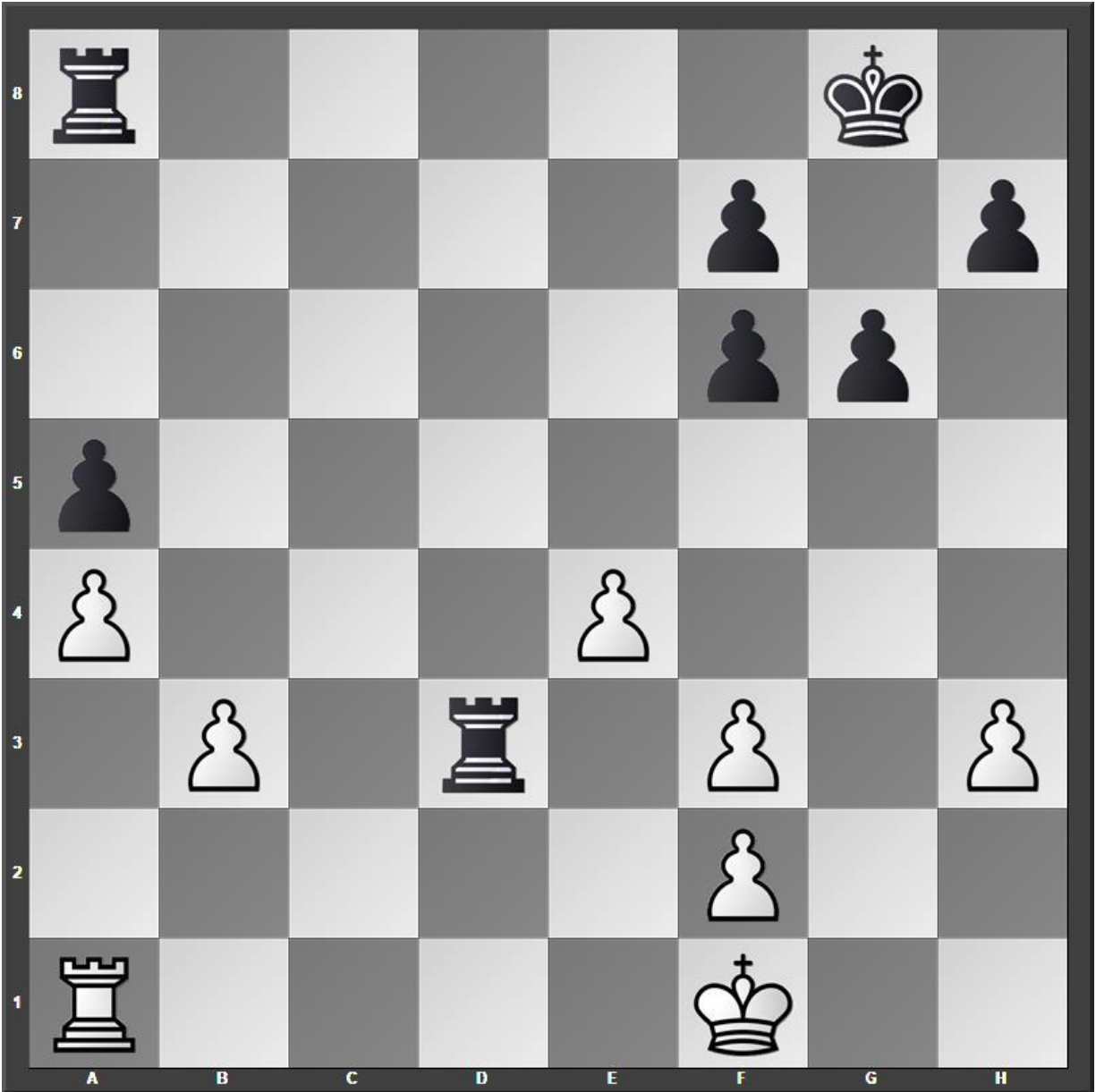
22.b3 Ne5

Next, I offer to exchange knights in a winning endgame.

23.Nd4 Rfd8

24.Nf3 Nxf3

25.gxf3 Rd3



The knights are gone. Next, I attack pawns simultaneously.

26.Kg2 Rxb3

27.h4 Rab8

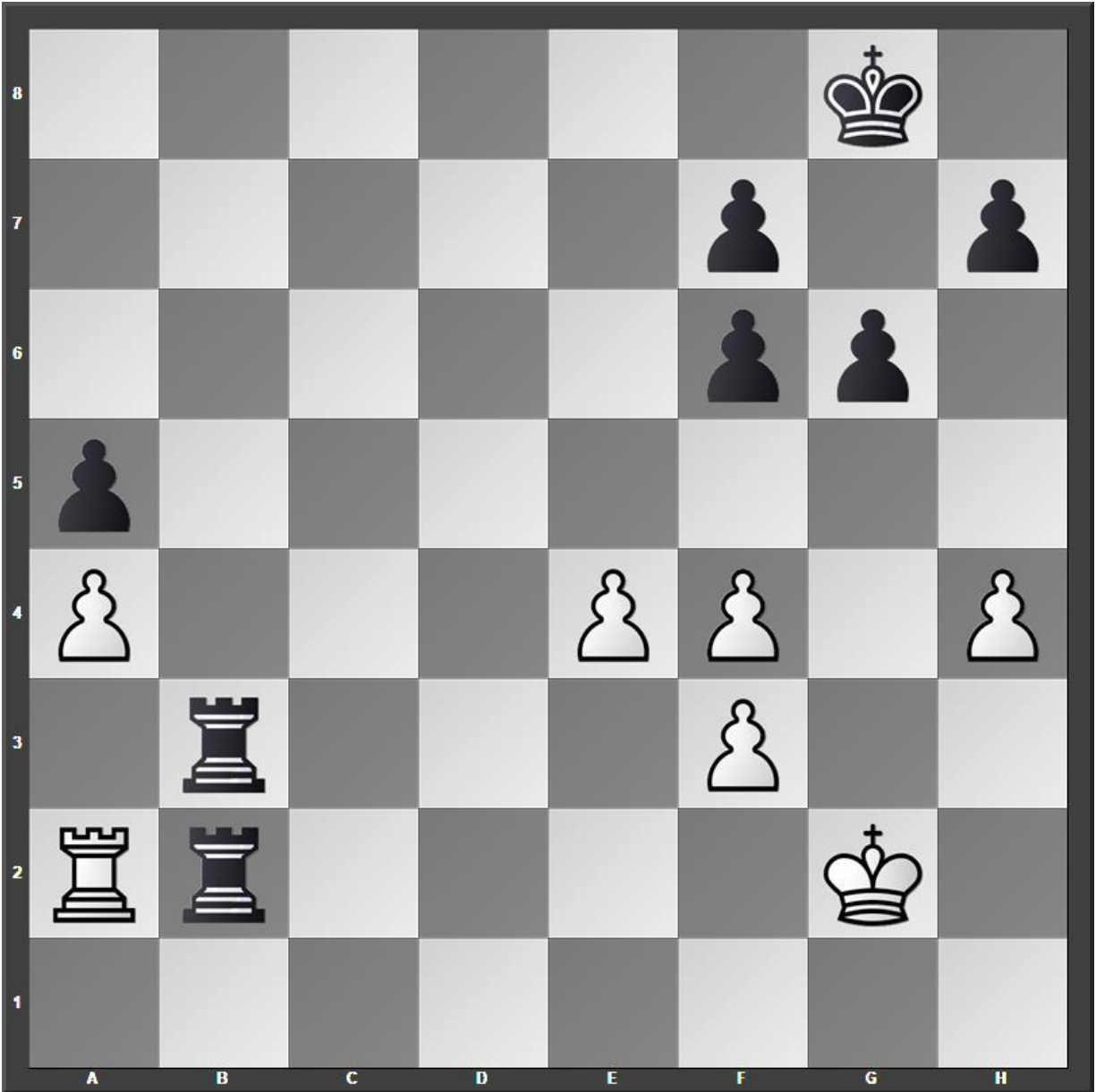
28.f4 R8b4

If 29.h5 Rxe4 30.hxg6 hxg6 31.f5 gxf5 and Black wins.

29.f3 Rb1

30.Ra3 R4b3

31.Ra2 R1b2+



White is forced to swap rooks leaving Black ahead a rook.

32.Rxb2 Rxb2+

33.Kg3 h5

34.e5 fxe5

35.fxe5 Rb4

36.Kg2 Rxh4

37.f4 Rxf4 0-1

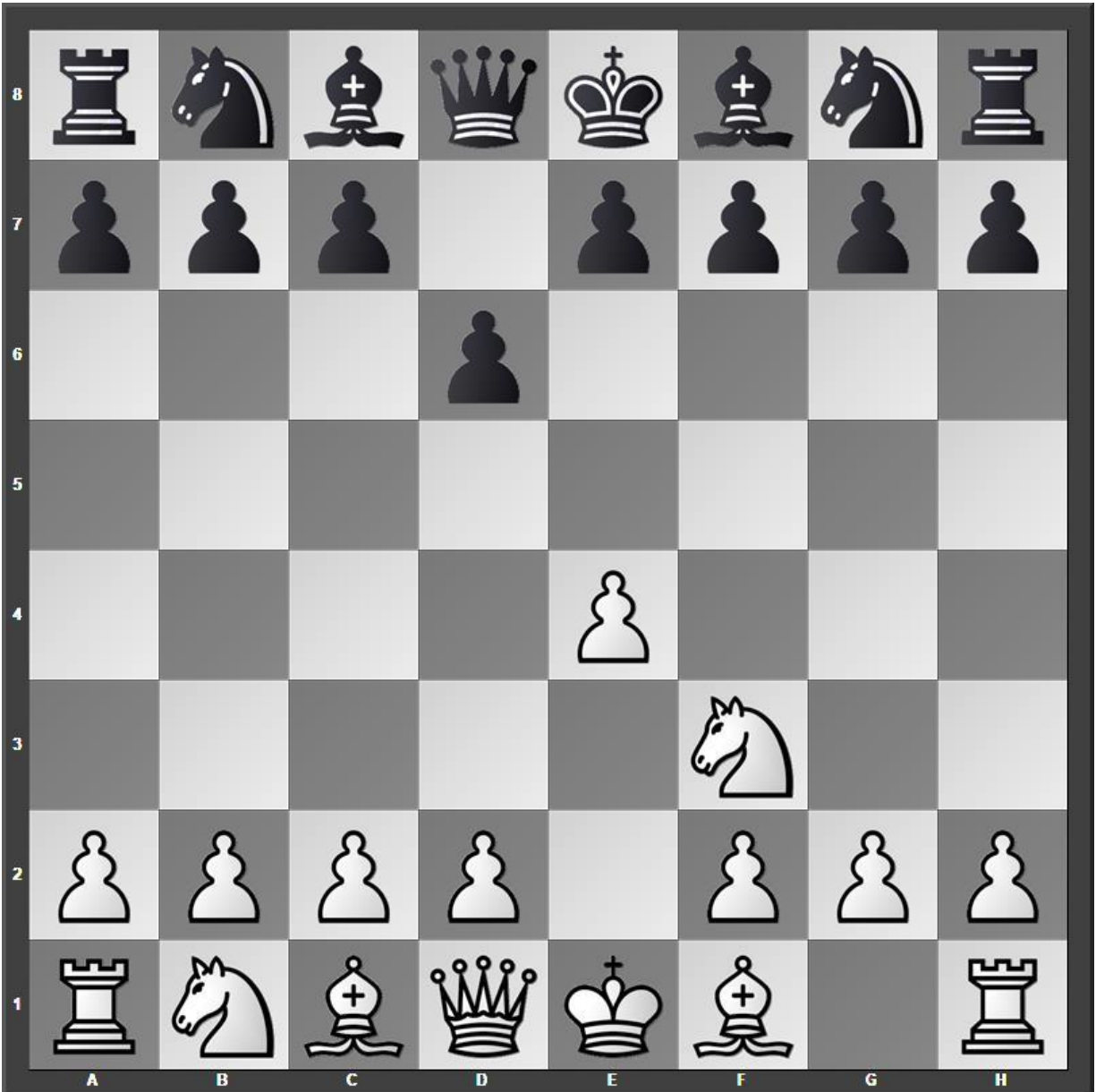
White resigns

Game 4 – B07 [2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Be2 Nxe4]

Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 25.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.Nf3



Yes, 2.Nf3 can be played against anything. And no, it's not always the best.
Here I prefer 2.d4 playing with two hands.

2...Nf6

My f6 knight threatens to take on e4, just as I do after 1.e4 Nf6. White has 10 minutes for the game but plays a quick blitz move without paying attention to what I threatened.

3.Be2 Nxe4



Black captures the undefended e4 pawn. After two hasty moves, White now slows down to play much better chess.

4.0-0 e5

5.d3 Nf6

6.Bg5 Be7

7.Nc3 0-0

8.d4 exd4

9.Nxd4 h6

10.Bxf6 Bxf6

11.Nb3 c6

12.Ne4 Be7

I retreat my bishop to protect d6. Better is 12...Bxb2 13.Rb1 Ba3 and Black is up two pawns.



13.c4 Be6

If 14.Nd4 Bd7 15.Qd2 Na6 16.Rad1 with compensation.

14.c5 dxc5

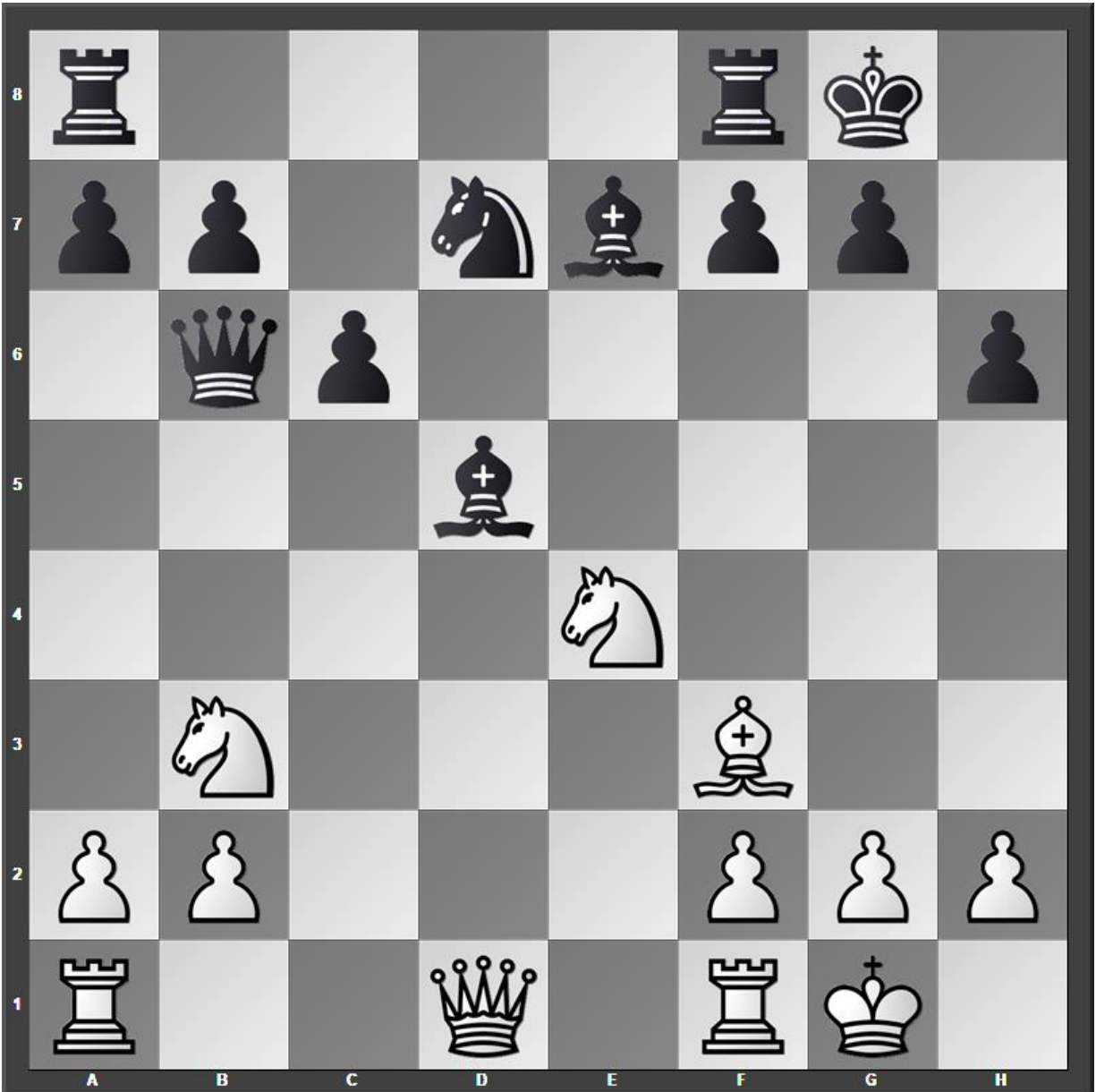
If 15.Nexc5 Bxb3 16.Nxb3 Nd7 when Black is a pawn up.

15.Nbxc5 Bd5

Or 15...Qxd1 16.Bxd1 Bd5 and Black stands better.

16.Bf3 Qb6

17.Nb3 Nd7



If 18.Ng3 Nf6 19.Nf5 Rae8 Black is better. Instead, White aims at the queen but forgets to defend the b3 knight.

18.a4 Qxb3

19.Qxb3 Bxb3

20.Rfe1 Bb4

21.Re3 Be6

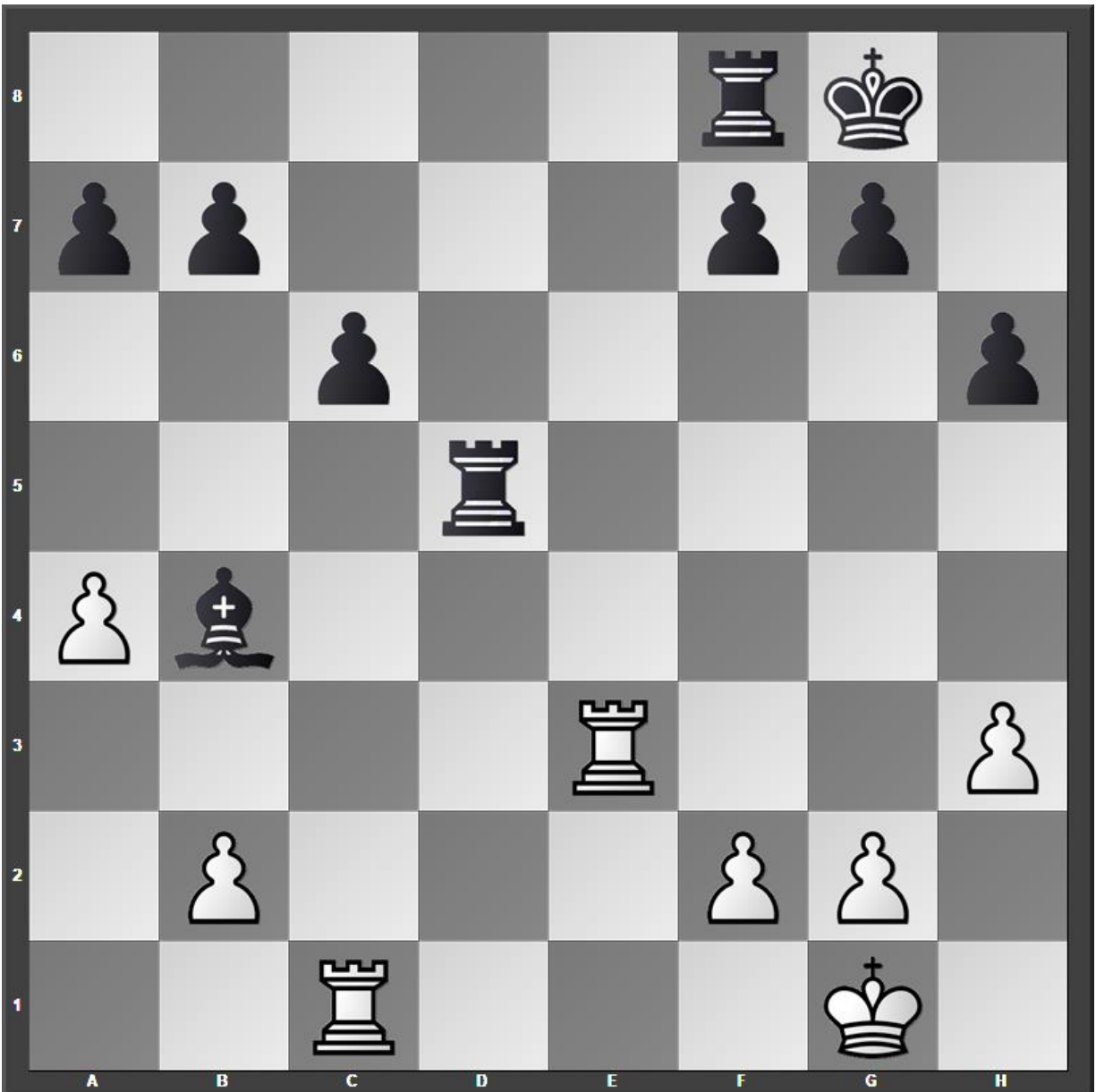
22.Rc1 Rad8

23.Nc3 Nf6

24.h3 Nd5

25.Nxd5 Bxd5

26.Bxd5 Rxd5 0-1



Black has an extra bishop and pawn with no weaknesses.

White resigns

Game 5 – B07 [2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e5 dxe5]

Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 27.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.Nf3 Nf6

3.e5 dxe5

4.Nxe5



4...Bf5

Black can achieve instant equality with 4...Nbd7, but I treat the opening like a Caro-Kann rather than a Pirc Defence.

5.d4 e6

6.Nc3 c6

Too slow. Better is 6...Nbd7 with equal chances.



7.Be3

More dangerous to my bishop is 7.g4 Bg6 8.h4 Bb4 9.a3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Qa5 11.Bd2 when White stands better.

7...Be7

8.Bd3 Bxd3

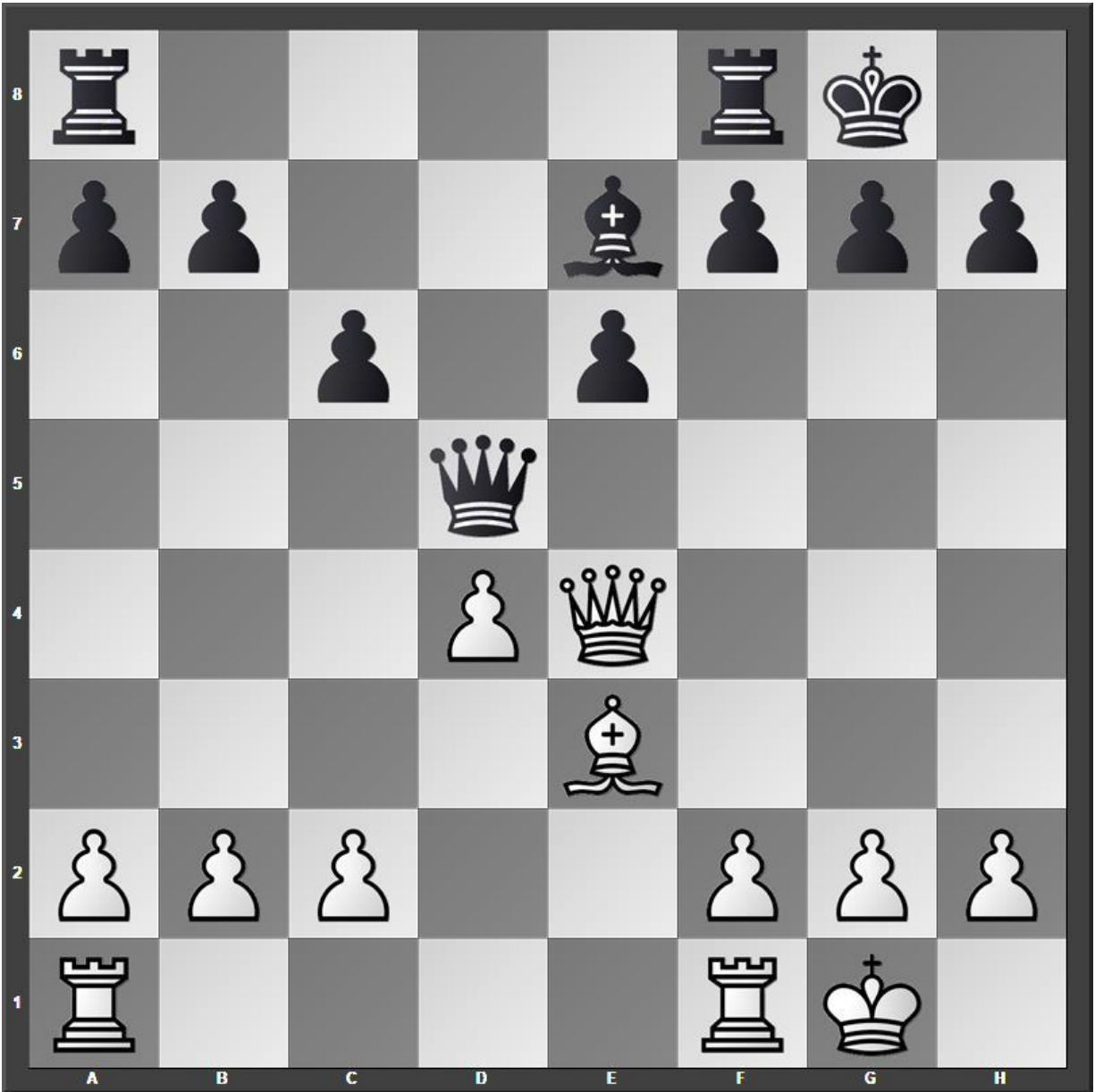
9.Qxd3 0-0

10.0-0 Nbd7

11.Nxd7 Qxd7

12.Ne4 Nxe4

13.Qxe4 Qd5



My plan is to play an endgame where I my bishop has more scope than my opponent's bishop.

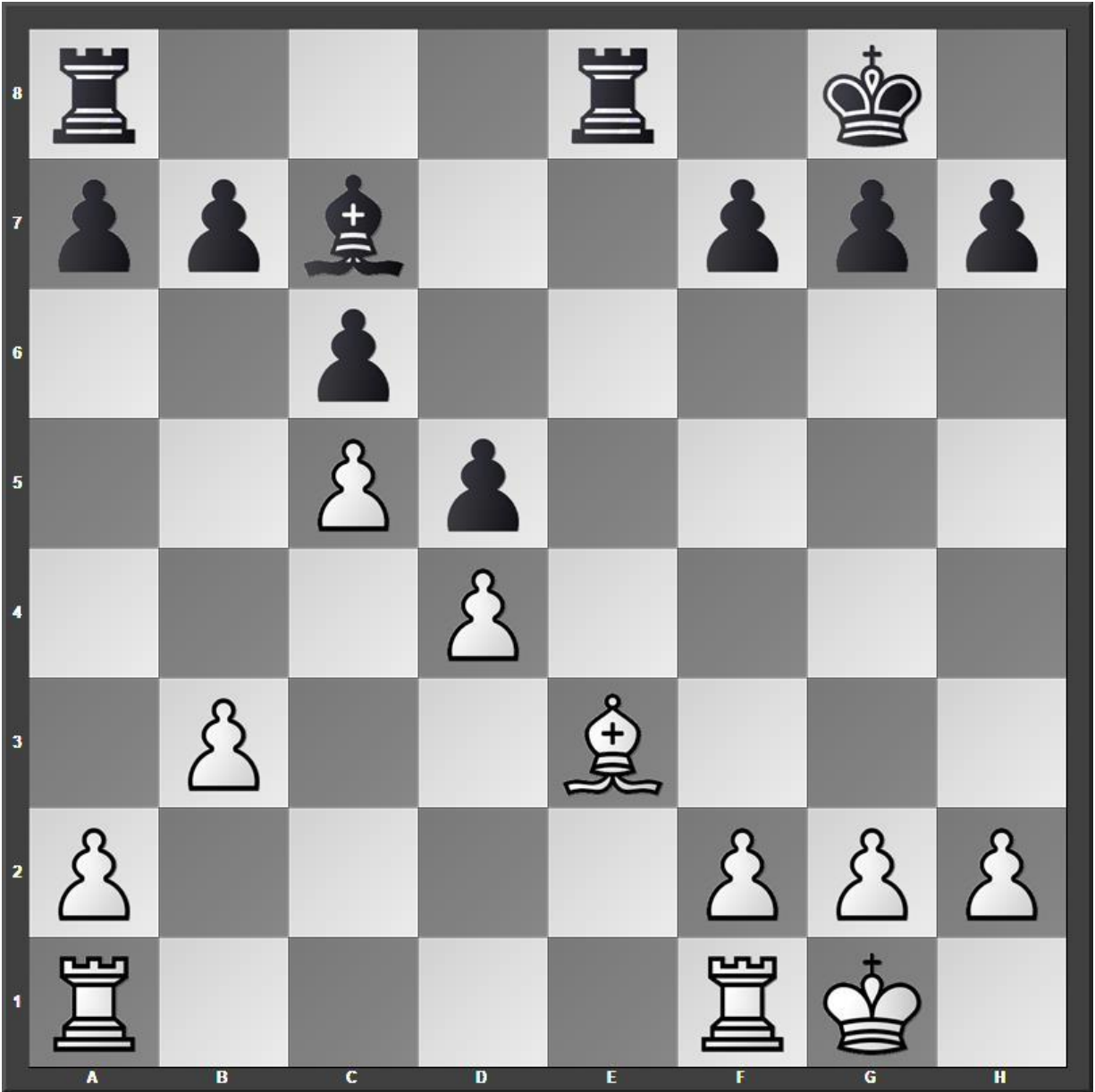
14.Qxd5 exd5

14...cxd5 also works with a queenside minority attack, but I wanted the swap rooks on the open e-file if possible.

15.b3 Bd6

16.c4 Rfe8

17.c5 Bc7



18.a4 Re6

19.b4 f5

20.b5 Re4

21.Rfd1 f4

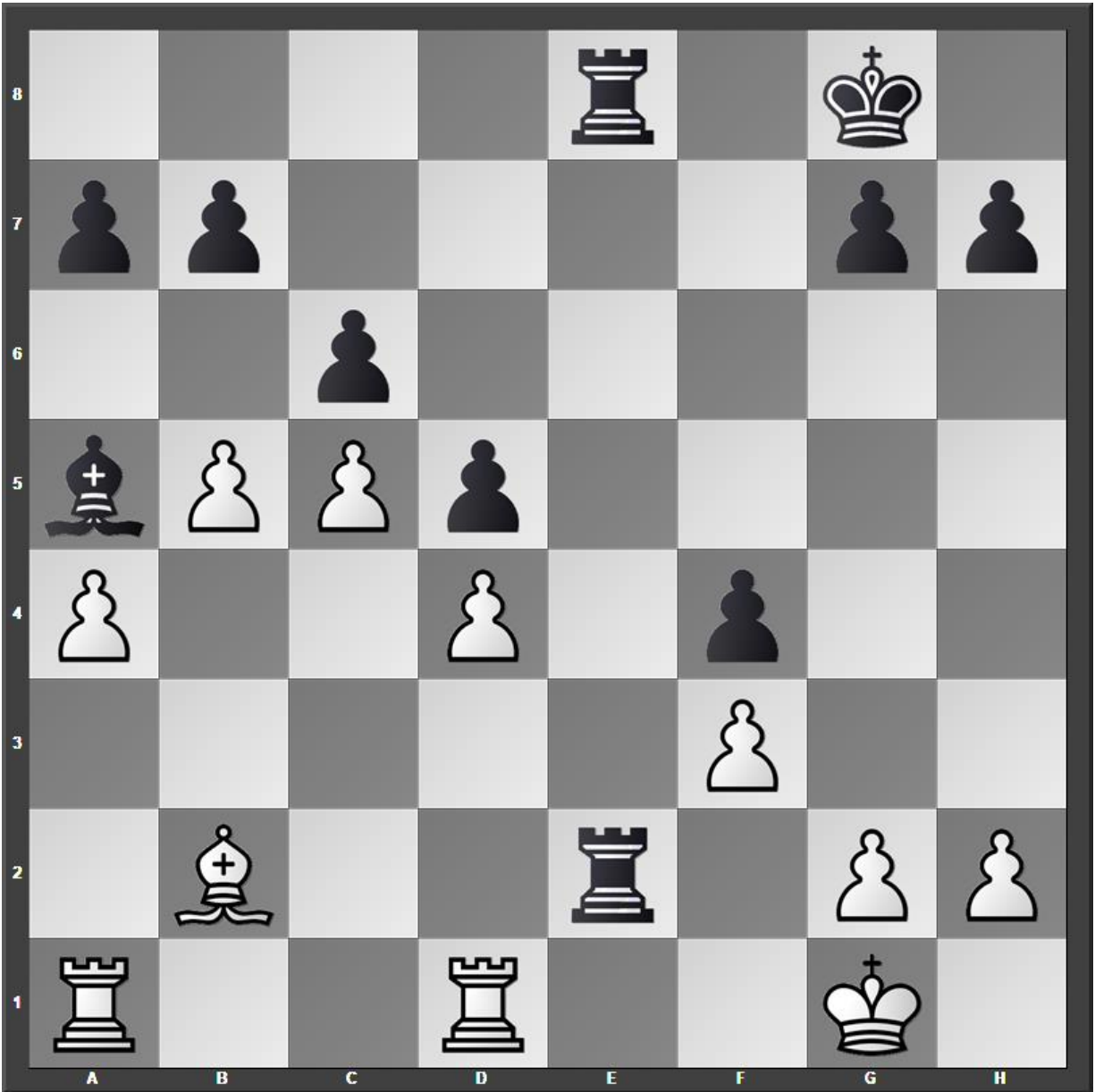
22.Bc1 Rae8

23.Bb2

This allows Black better open lines. 23.Kf1 gives equality.

23...Ba5

24.f3 Re2



25.Rac1

My opponent loses the bishop. If 25.Rab1 Kf7 26.Kf1 Kf6 Black stands better in the endgame.

25...Rxb2 0-1

White resigns

Game 6 – B07 [2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6]

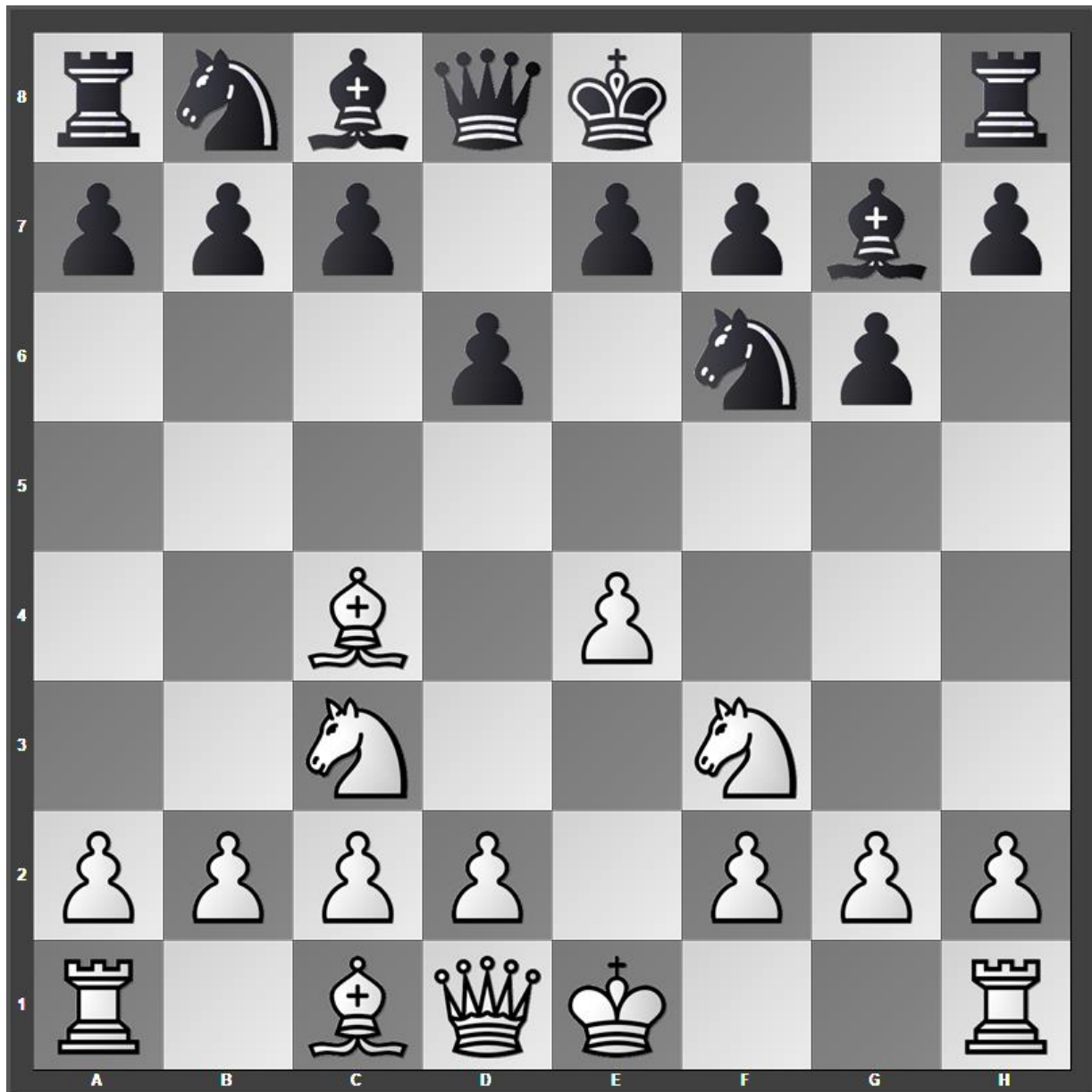
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 25.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.Nf3 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

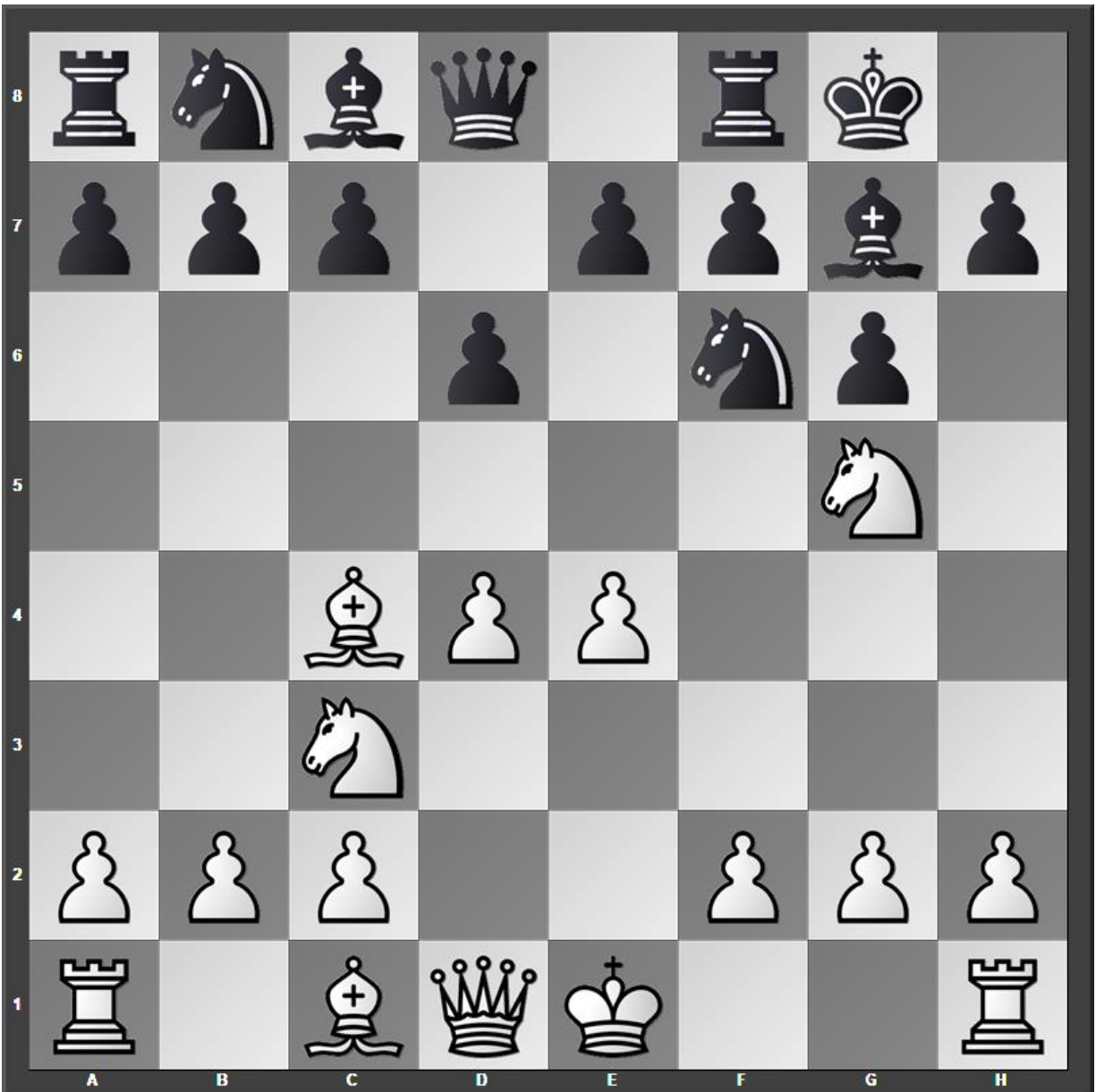
4.Bc4 Bg7



White rapidly develops three pieces and takes aim at f7.

5.Ng5 0-0

6.d4



6...c6

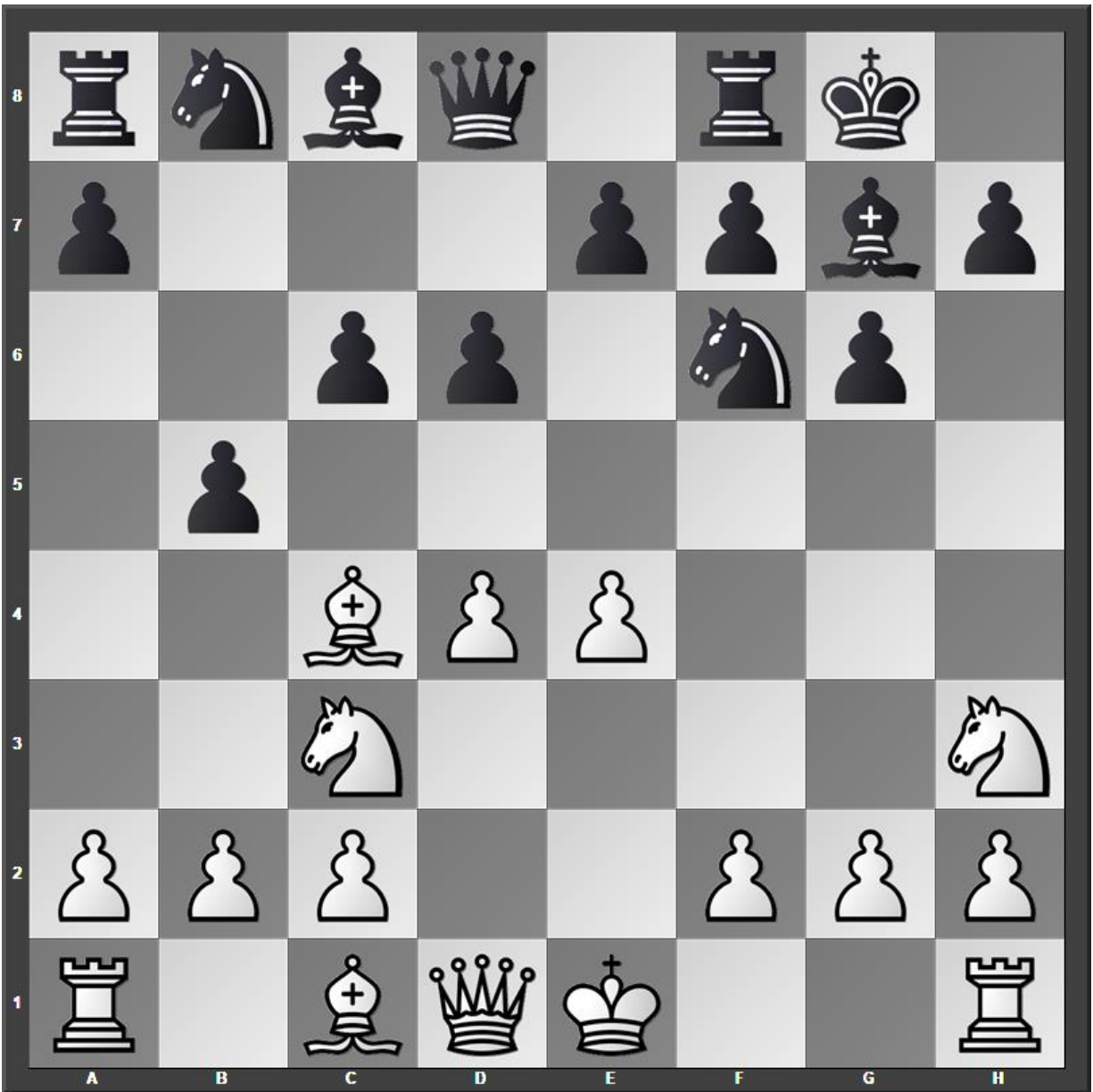
The “knight sac pawn fork trick” can follow 6...h6 7.Nf3 Nxe4 8.Nxe4 d5 9.Bd3 dxe4 10.Bxe4 c5 11.dxc5 Nd7 12.Qd5 Qa5+ 13.Bd2 Qxc5 with chances for both sides.

7.Nh3

Better is 7.Bb3 h6 8.Nf3 d5 with equal chances.

7...b5

Or again 7...Nxe4 (knight sac) 8.Nxe4 d5 (pawn fork trick) 9.Bd3 dxe4
10.Bxe4 Qxd4 and Black wins a pawn.



My opponent will fail to save the c4 bishop. If 8.Bd3 Bxh3 9.gxh3 Nbd7 10.0-0 e5 Black only has a positional edge.

8.Bg5 bxc4

9.Bxf6 Bxf6

10.Qf3 Bxh3

11.Qxh3 Bxd4

12.0-0-0 Bxc3

My strategy is to trade pieces and head for an endgame with an extra knight. Maybe 12...Bg7 is more prudent.

13.Qxc3 d5

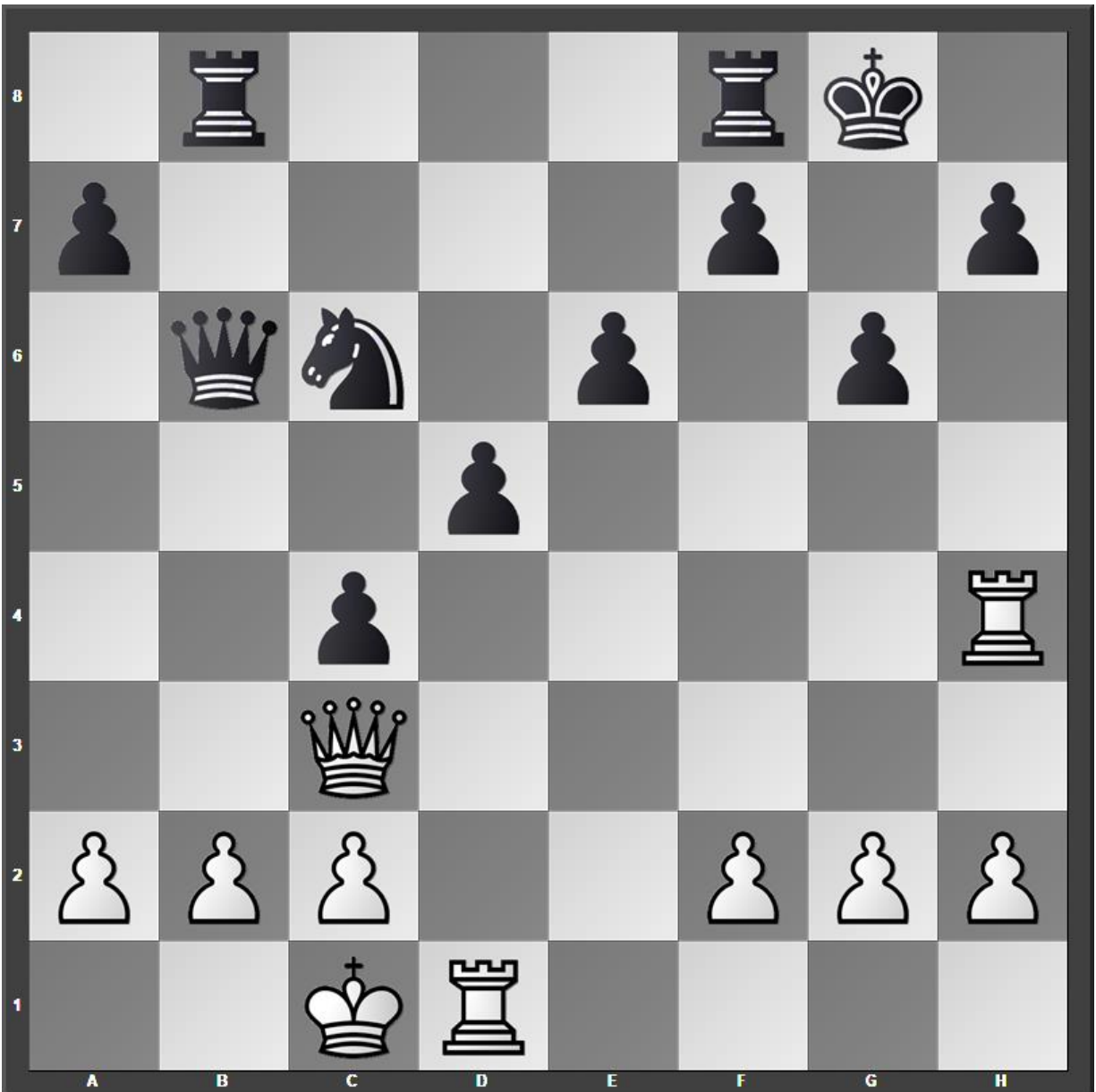
14.exd5 cxd5

15.Rd2 e6

16.Rhd1 Qb6

17.Rd4 Nc6

18.Rh4 Rab8



19.Rh6 Ne7

Black can also attack with 19...d4 20.Qa3 d3 21.Rd2 Nd4.

20.Rd4 Nf5

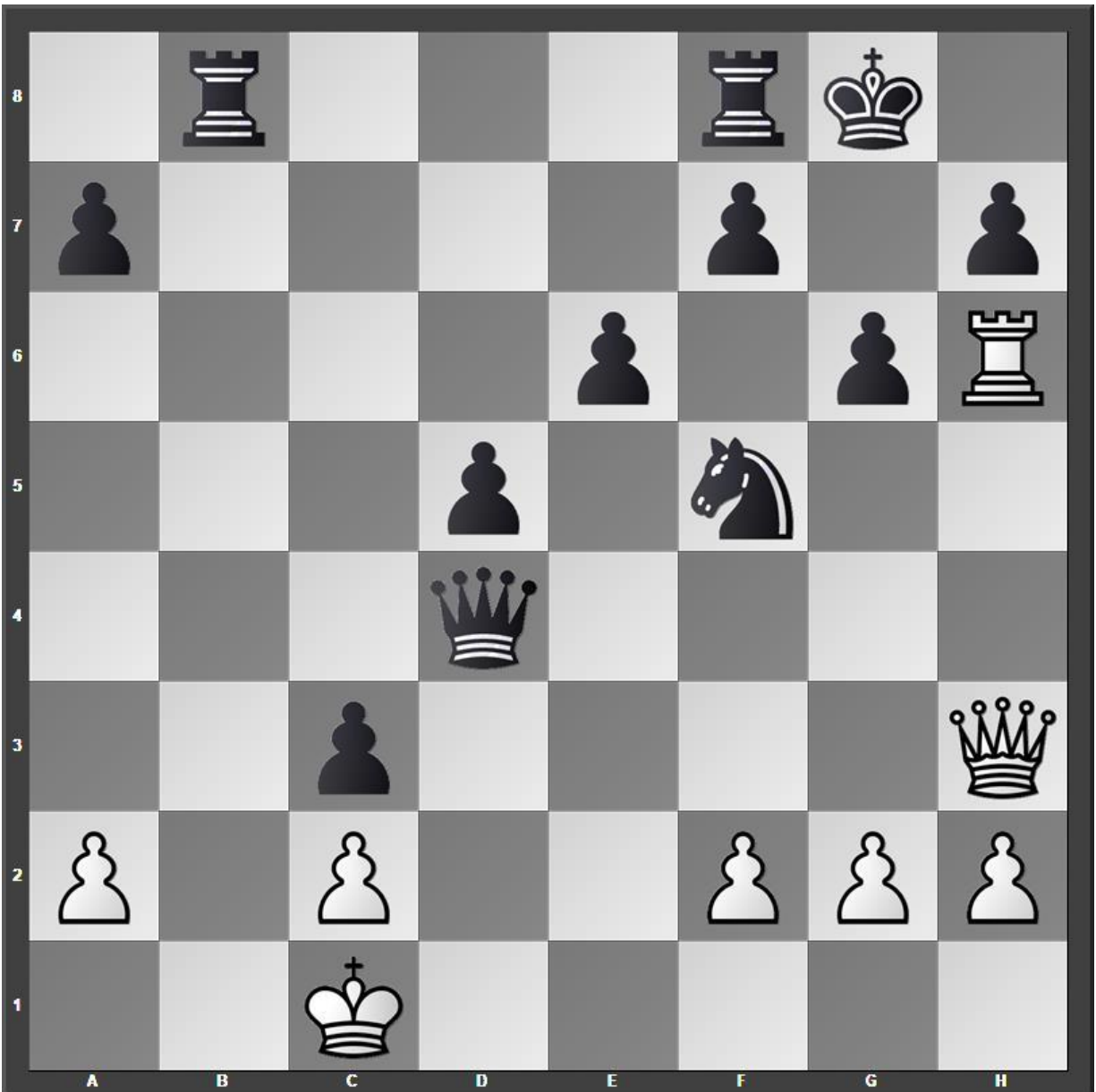
Black's knight forks White's rooks.

21.Qh3 Qxb2+

22.Kd2 Qxd4+

One rook is gone, and the king will follow soon.

23.Kc1 c3



24.Rxh7 Qd2# 0-1

White is checkmated

Chapter 2 – Pirc 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6

Game 7 – B07 [3.Bd3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7]

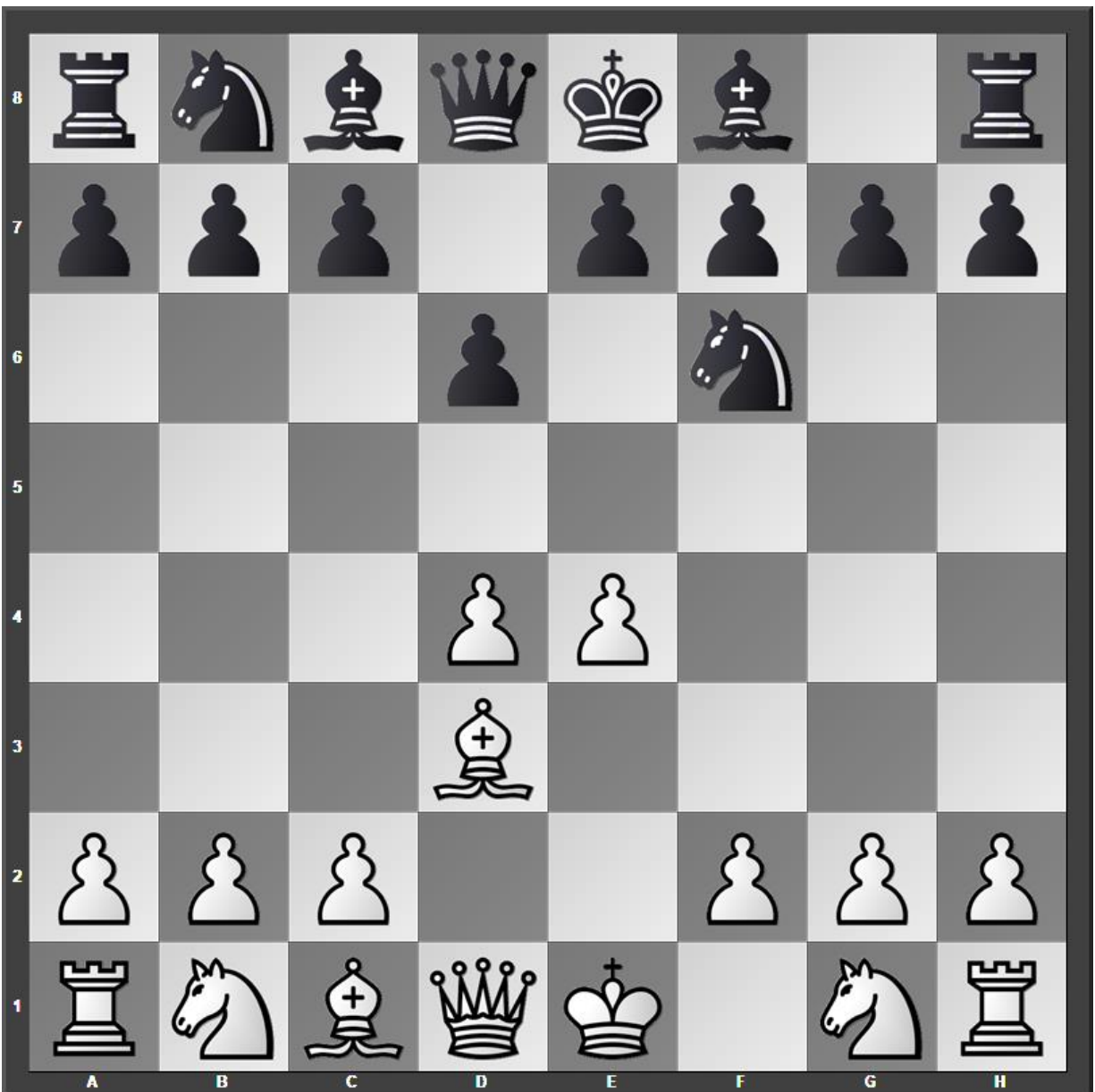
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 25.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

Again, Black covers e5 with d6 and attacks e4 with Nf6.

3.Bd3



White protects e4, but this limits the scope of the bishop.

3...g6

Objectively, 3...e5 leads to equality, but I maintained a Pirc Defence approach to include the game in this book.

4.Nf3 Bg7

5.0-0 0-0



6.Bg5

If 6.Re1 White has a strong flexible center.

6...Nbd7

7.Nbd2 h6

White played Nbd2 instead of Nc3. The position is equal.

8.Bh4 g5
9.Bg3 Nh5
10.Re1 Nxg3
11.hxg3 c5



12.e5

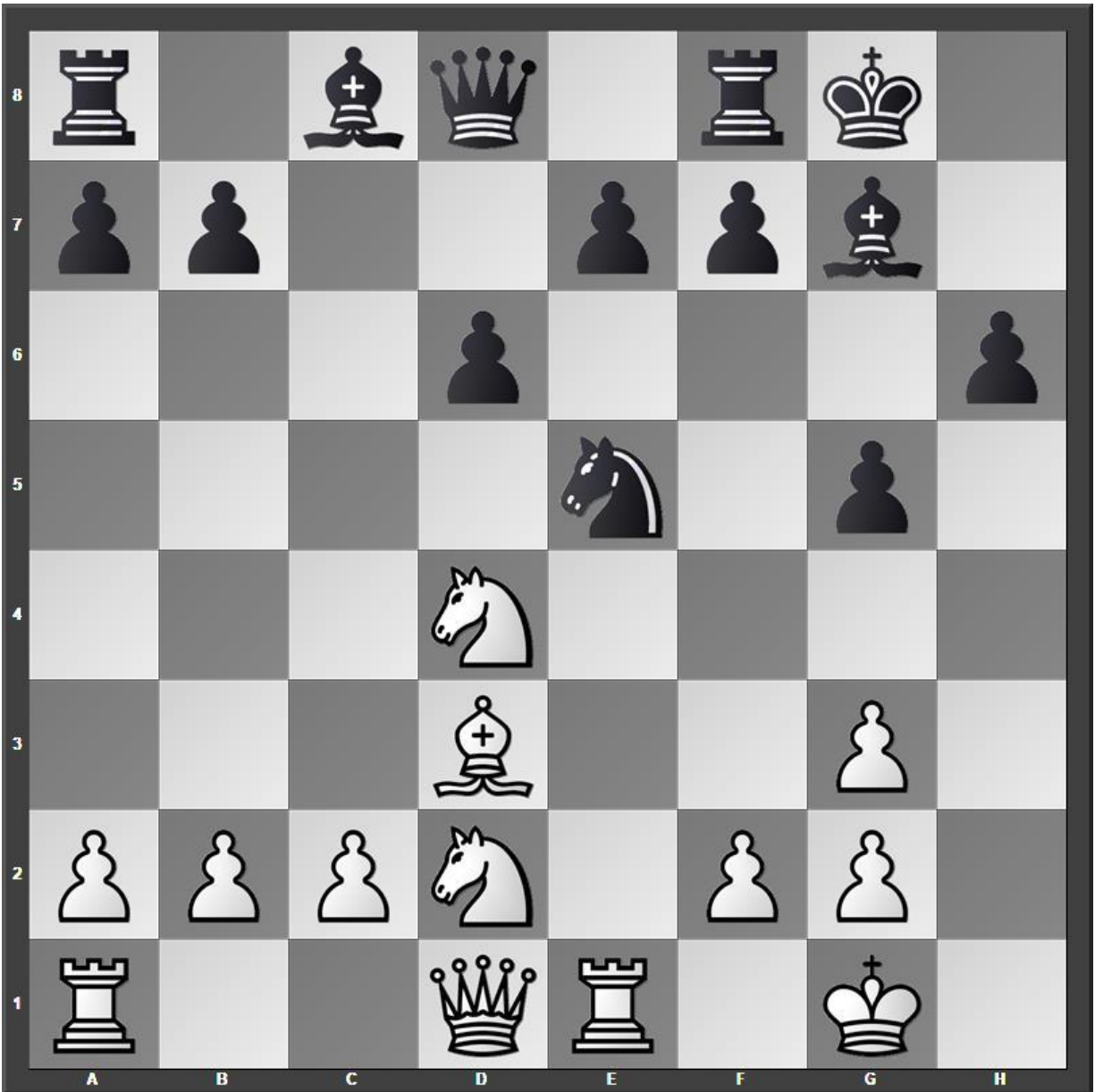
A solid option is 12.c3 e6 with chances for both sides.

12...cxd4

13.Nxd4

Better is 13.exd6 exd6 14.Nb3 Nc5 with equal chances.

13...Nxe5



Black has won a pawn.

14.Nf5 Bxf5

15.Bxf5 e6

16.Bg4 Nxg4

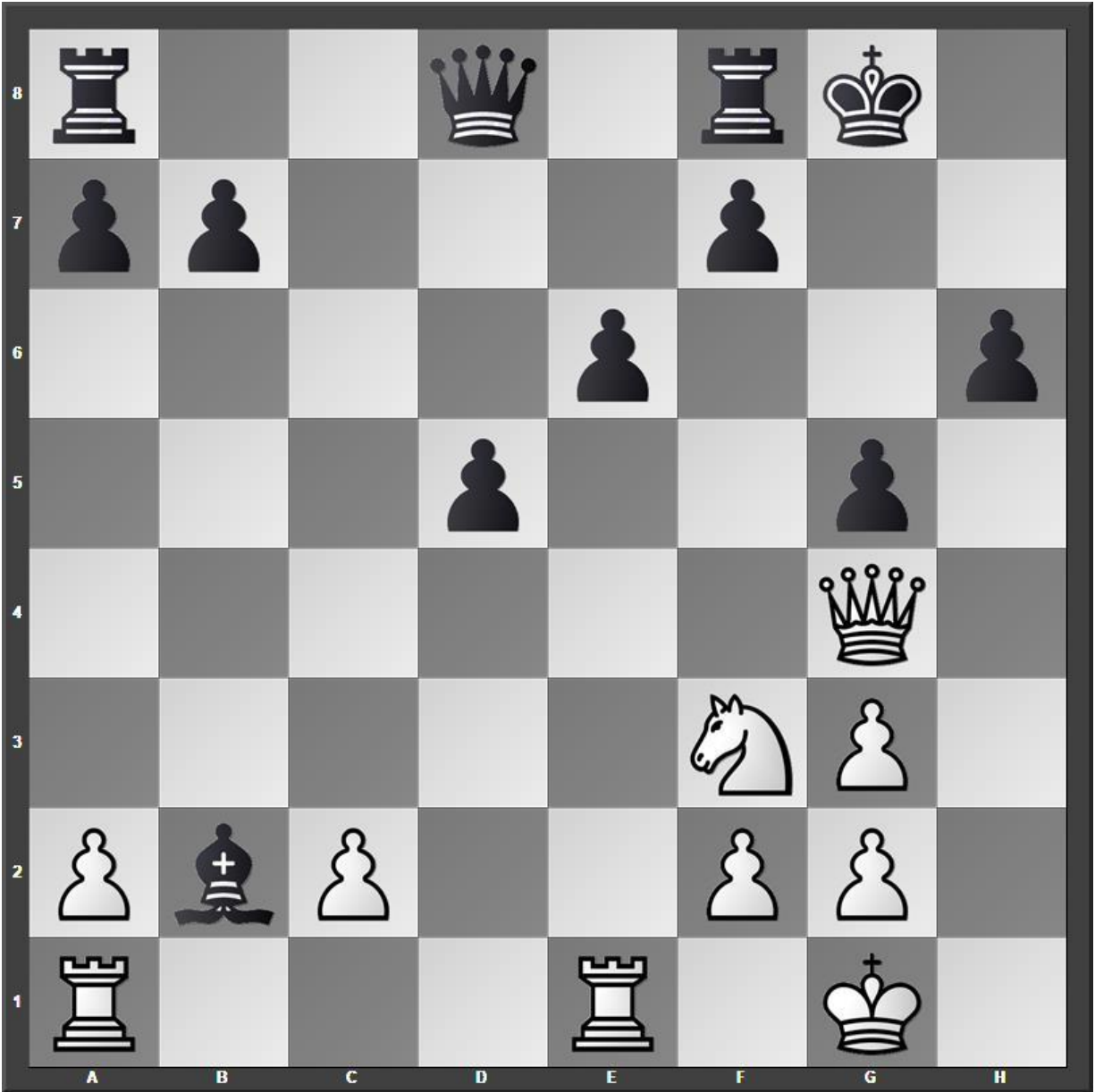
17.Qxg4 d5

Black can grab a pawn with 17...Bxb2 but first I solidify my loose d6 and b6 pawns and keep my bishop for defense.

18.Nf3

If 18.c3 d4 which favors Black.

18...Bxb2



Now that I played 17...d5 and my bishop can gain a tempo to push ...b6, I feel more confident to take the extra pawn.

19.Rab1 Bc3

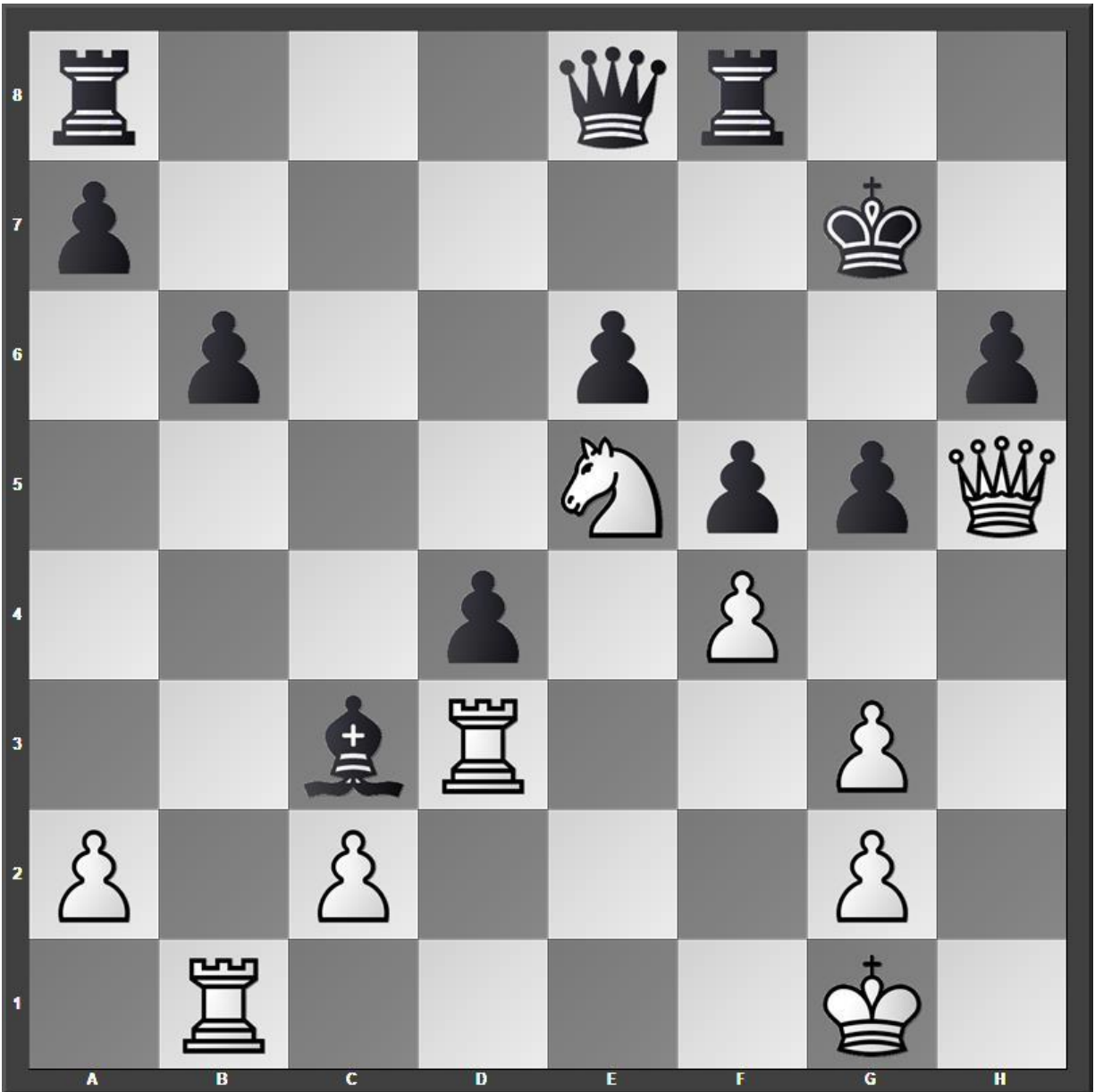
20.Re3 d4

21.Rd3 b6

22.Ne5 Kg7

23.f4 f5

24.Qh5 Qe8



25.fxg5

White becomes so focused on taking my g5 pawn that my opponent did not pay attention to the threat my last move makes. Always look at your opponent's last move. Instead, 25.Qf3 Qe7 Black has the advantage, but White can fight.

25...Qxh5 0-1

Black wins a queen.

White resigns

Game 8 – B07 [3.Nc3 Bg4 4.f3]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 23.08.2021

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 Bg4

Intermediate club players choose this from time to time.

4.f3 Bh5



Black has played this 28 times in games from my database. It doesn't lose by force, but it ain't good!

5.Be3 e6

6.h4 Be7

7.g4 Bg6



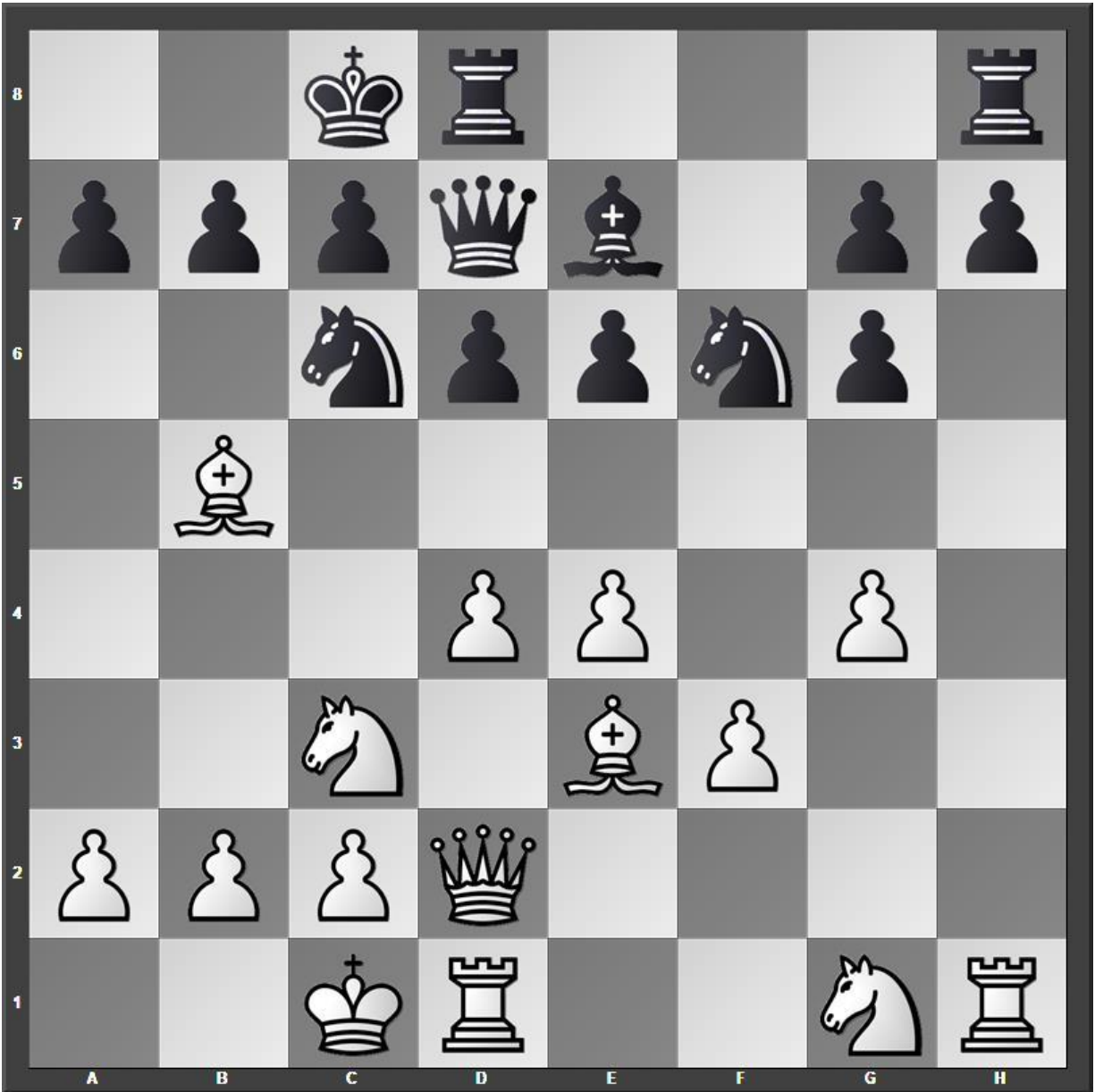
As White vs the Pirc, these are exactly the squares where I place all my pawns in the opening (usually after 6.Qd2 and 7.O-O-O). Black plays right into my strategy and loses.

8.h5

White traps the bishop.

8...Nc6

9.hxg6 fxg6
10.Qd2 Qd7
11.0-0-0 0-0-0
12.Bb5



My Bb5 pin on Nc6 threatens to win a piece with 13.d5. Black must play either 12...d5 or 12...a6 to stop it.

12...h6

13.d5 exd5

14.exd5 Nb4

My opponent saves the knight and loses the queen.

15.Bxd7+ Rxd7

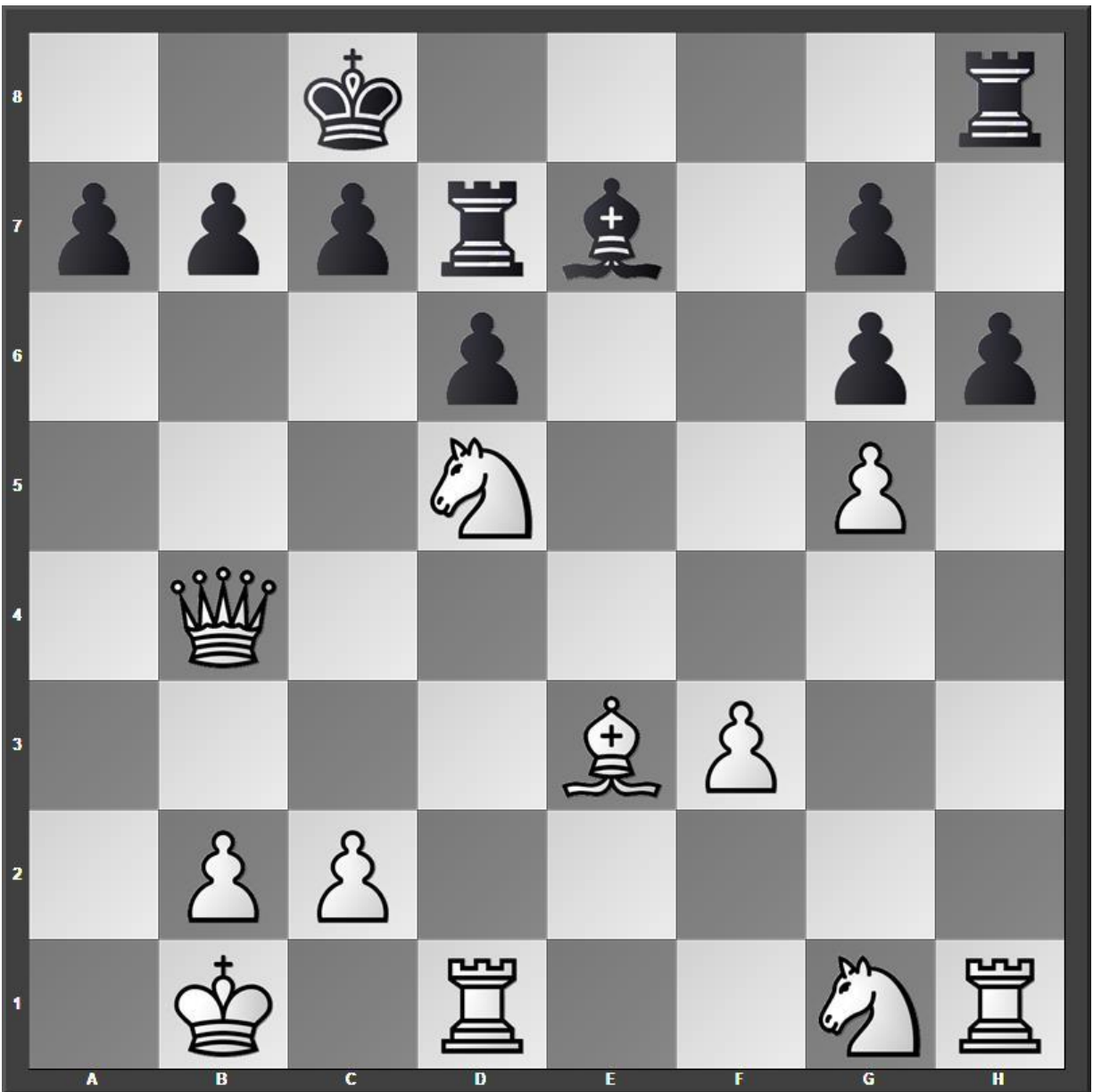
16.g5 Nfxd5

17.Nxd5 Nxa2+

Black's game completely falls apart. There is no hope.

18.Kb1 Nb4

19.Qxb4 1-0



Black resigns

Game 9 – B07 [3.Nc3 Nbd7 4.f4]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 25.01.2022

1.d4 d6

2.e4 Nf6

We transpose to Pirc Defence after 1.d4. Black normally plays 3.Nc3 g6. White can avoid that by 3.e5 dxe5 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 Ng4 6.Ke1 Nxe5 but Black wins a pawn.

3.Nc3 Nbd7



The Lion Defense. It resembles some lines of the Philidor. Black gives me the center, so I play 4.f4 rather than my f3.

4.f4 c6

My opponent plays this defense passively. It works for me! Common is 4...e5 5.Nf3 exd4 6.Qxd4 which favors White.



5.Nf3

One promising approach is 5.e5 Nd5 6.Nxd5 cxd5 7.Nf3.

5...Qc7

6.e5 dxe5

If 6...Ng8 7.Bd3 White stands better.

If 6...Nd5 7.Ne4 White stands better.

7.fxe5 Nd5

8.Nxd5

This is good, but objectively 8.Ne4 might be stronger.

8...cxd5

9.Bd3 e6

The game takes on the character of a French Defence, but Black lacks the pressure against d4 from ...c5 and ...Nc6.

10.0-0 g6



Black's f7 pawn is weak.

11.Ng5 Bg7

12.Nxf7 Rf8

If Black plays 12...0-0 13.Nh6+ Kh8 14.Rxf8+ Nxf8 15.Qf3 White has an extra pawn with a dominating position.

13.Nd6+ Kd8

14.Bg5+ Bf6

15.Nb5 Qb6



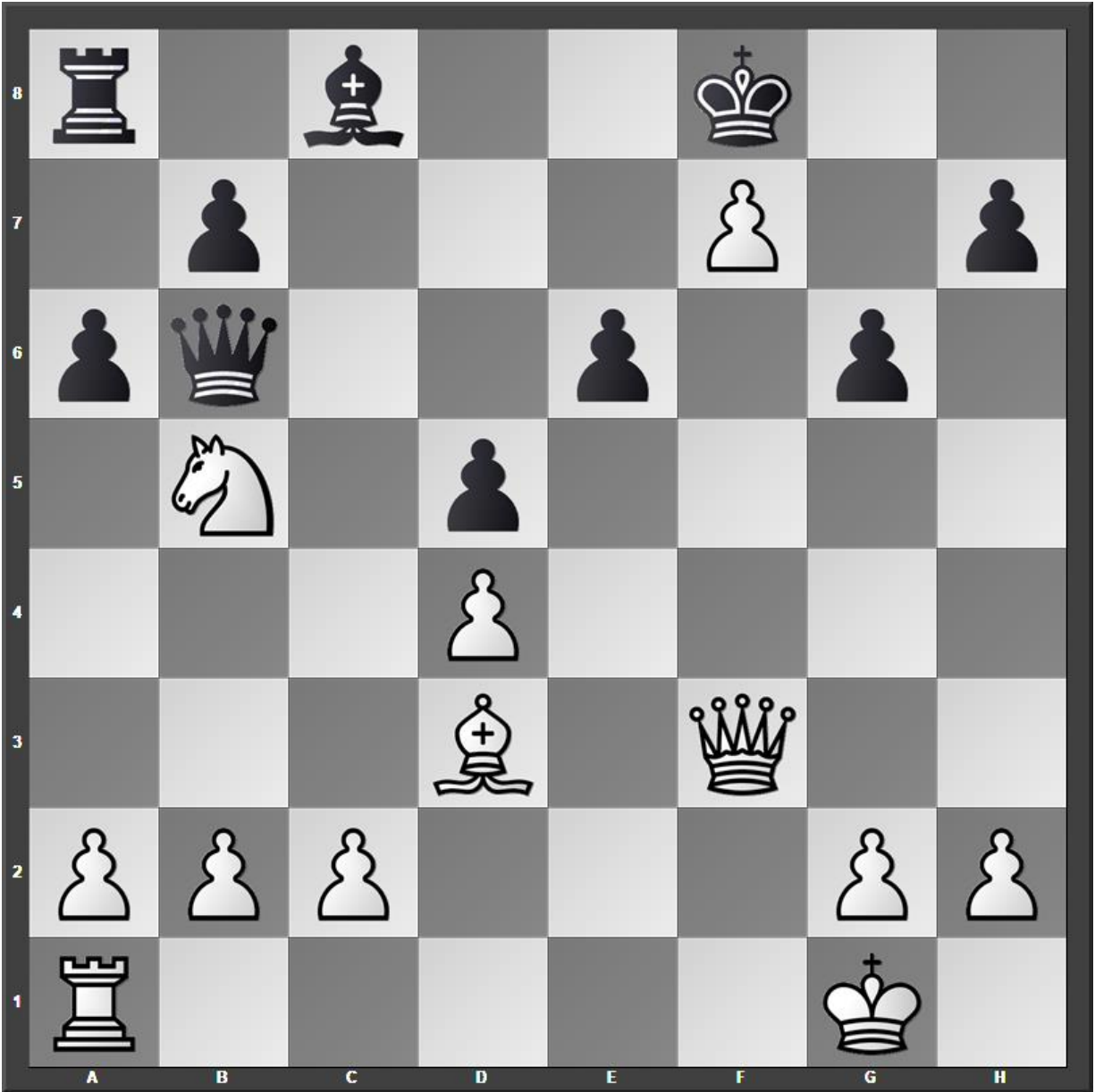
16.Bxf6+ Nxf6

17.Rxf6 Rxf6

18.exf6 a6

19.f7 Ke7

20.Qf3 Kf8



I thought for a second about 21.Qf6 axb5 but I missed 22.Rf1 Bd7 23.Qh8+ Ke7 24.f8Q+ Rxf8 25.Qxf8 mate.

21.Nc3 Qxd4+

22.Kh1 e5

23.Qxd5 Qxd5

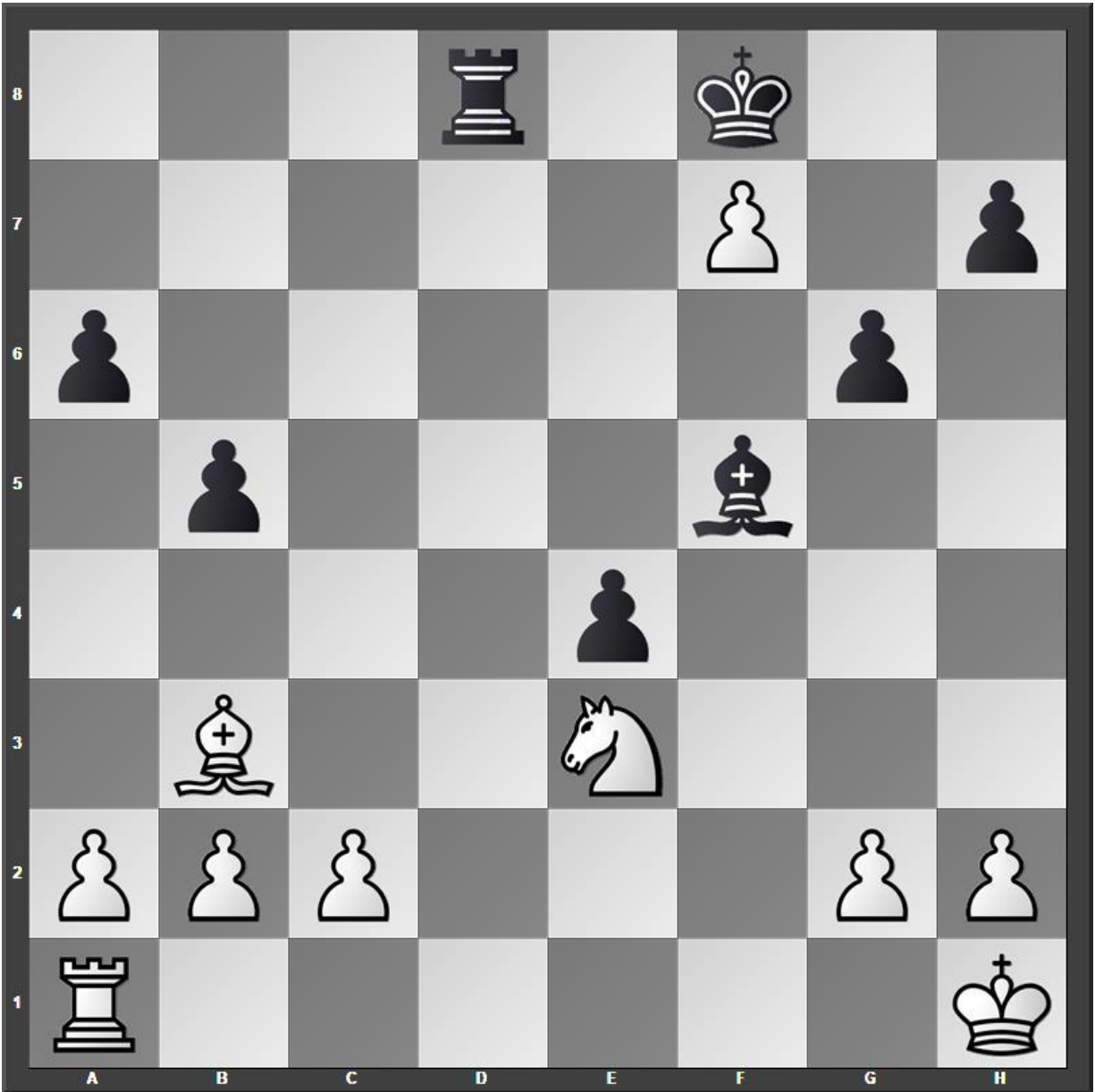
24.Nxd5 Bf5

25.Bc4 e4

Or 25...Rd8 26.Ne3 Rd2 27.Bb3 Re2 28.Rd1 winning.

26.Ne3 b5

27.Bb3 Rd8



28.Rd1 Rxd1+

29.Nxd1 a5

30.Ne3 Bd7

31.Bd5 Ke7

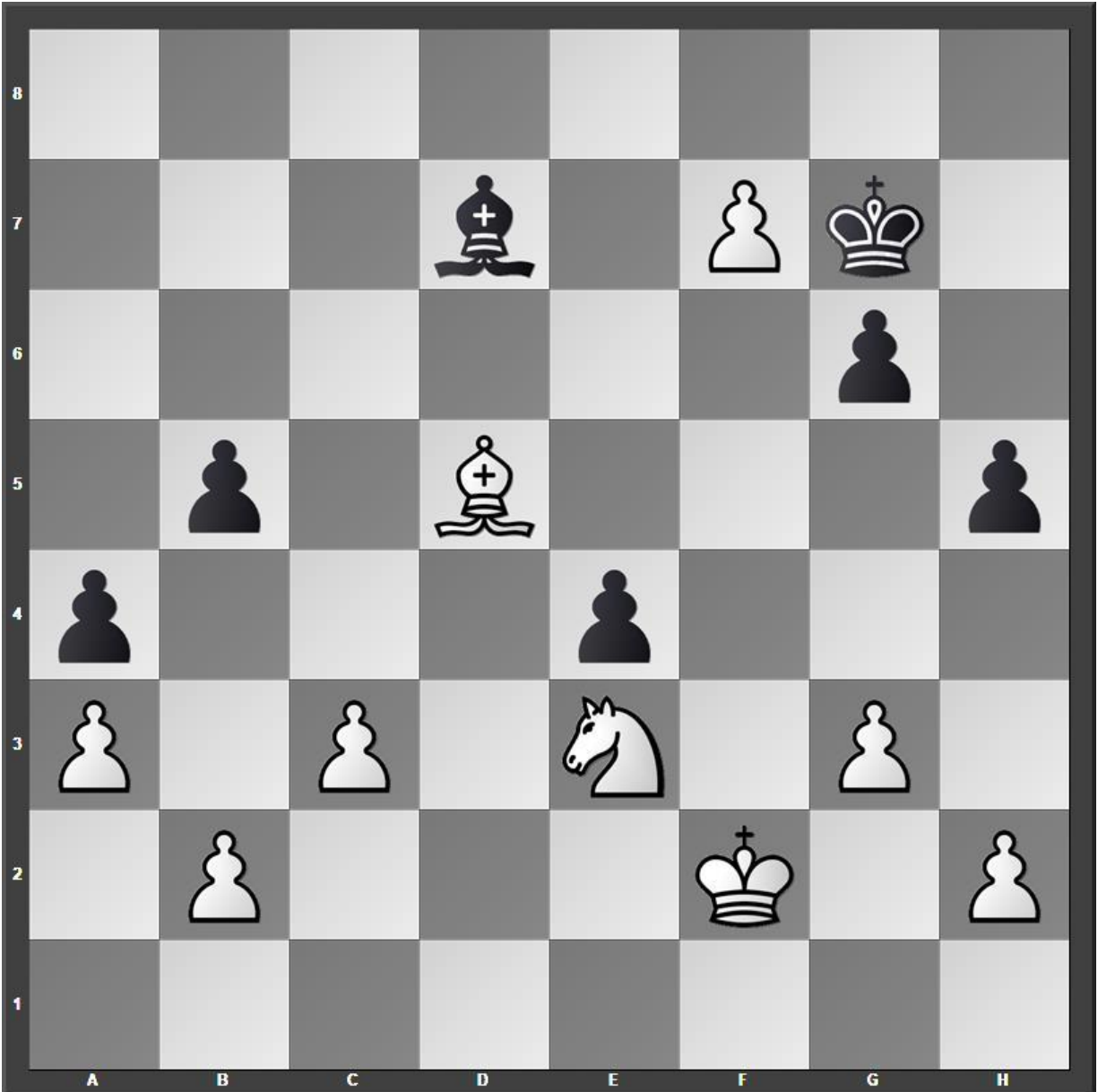
32.Kg1 h6

33.Kf2 a4

34.a3 Kf8

35.c3 h5

36.g3 Kg7



Black is helpless as White invades on the dark squares.

37.Nc2 Kf8

38.Ke3 Bf5

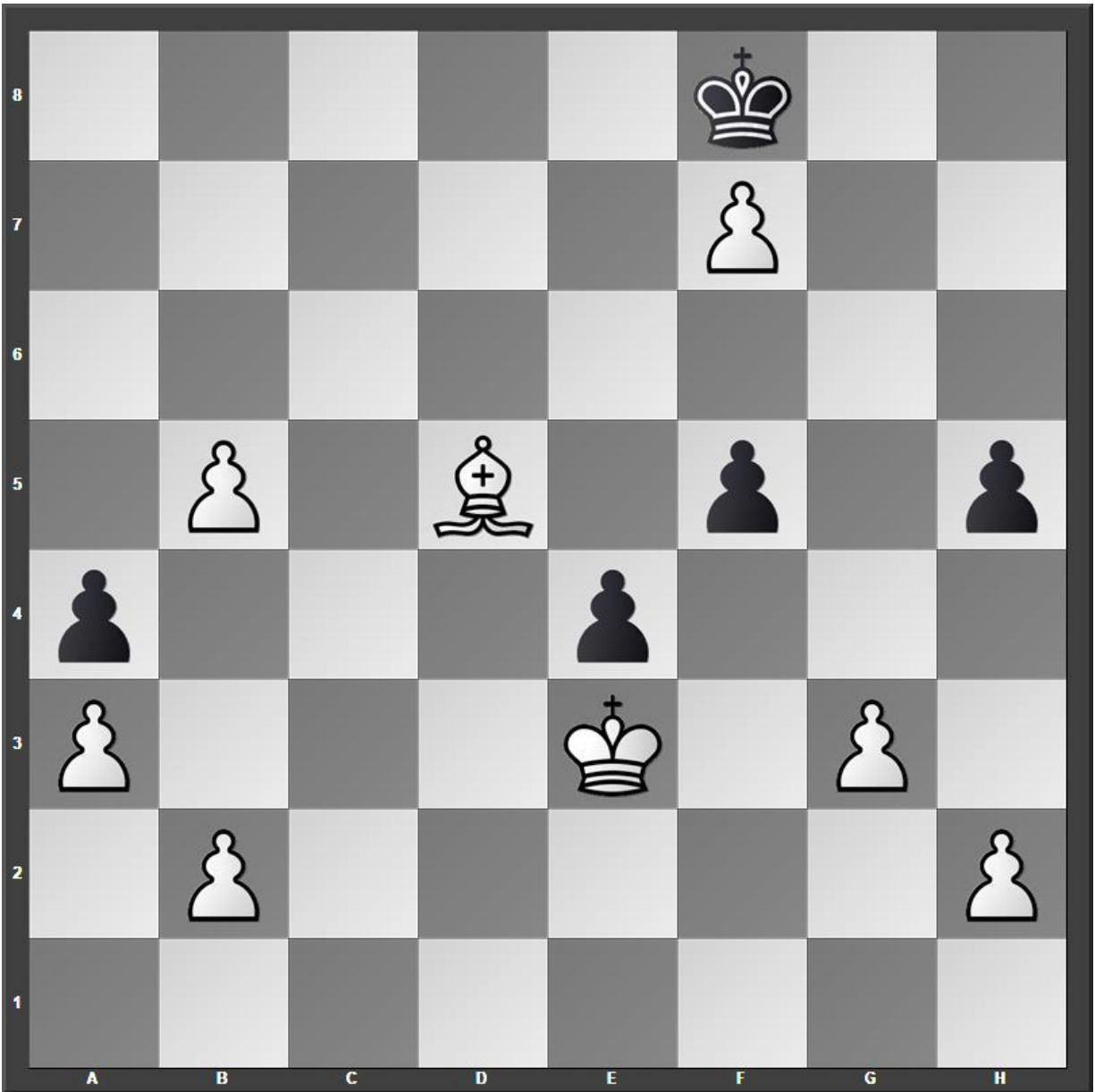
39.Nd4 b4

My opponent sacrifices a pawn out of desperation. This lets me queen faster.

40.cxb4 Kg7

41.Nxf5+ gxf5

42.b5 Kf8



43.b6 1-0

White will mate quickly after getting two queens.

Black resigns

Game 10 – B07 [3.Nc3 c6 4.f3 Na6]
Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 12.08.2021

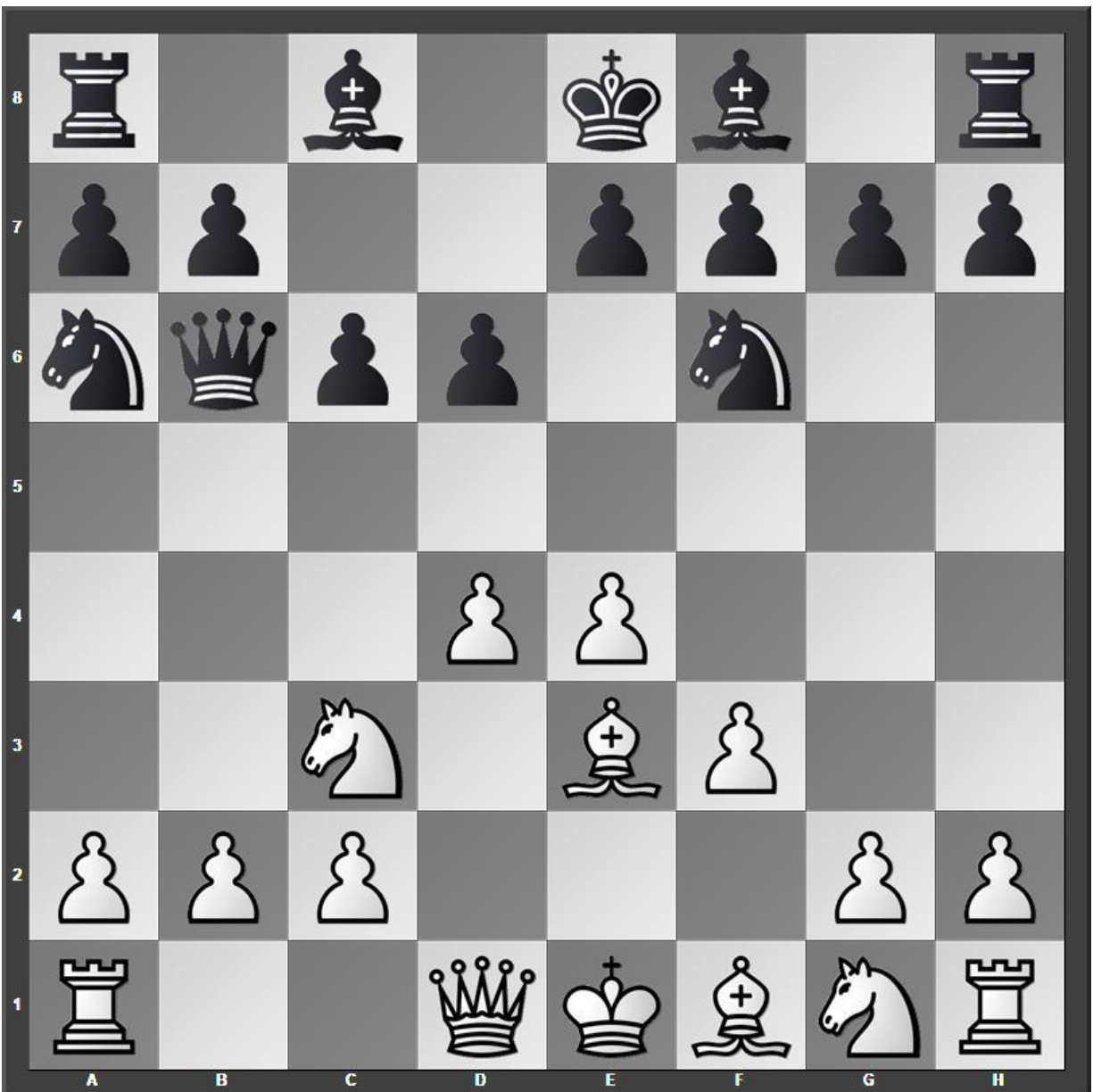
1.d4 c6

2.e4 d6

3.Nc3 Nf6

4.f3 Na6

5.Be3 Qb6



Black threatens to take on b2, so White adds some poison.

6.a3 Qxb2

Black takes the poisoned pawn. Better is 6...g6 7.Bd3 Bg7.

7.Na4



The a4 knight slams the trap shut. Black loses the queen.

7...Qxa1

8.Qxa1 d5

9.e5 Nd7

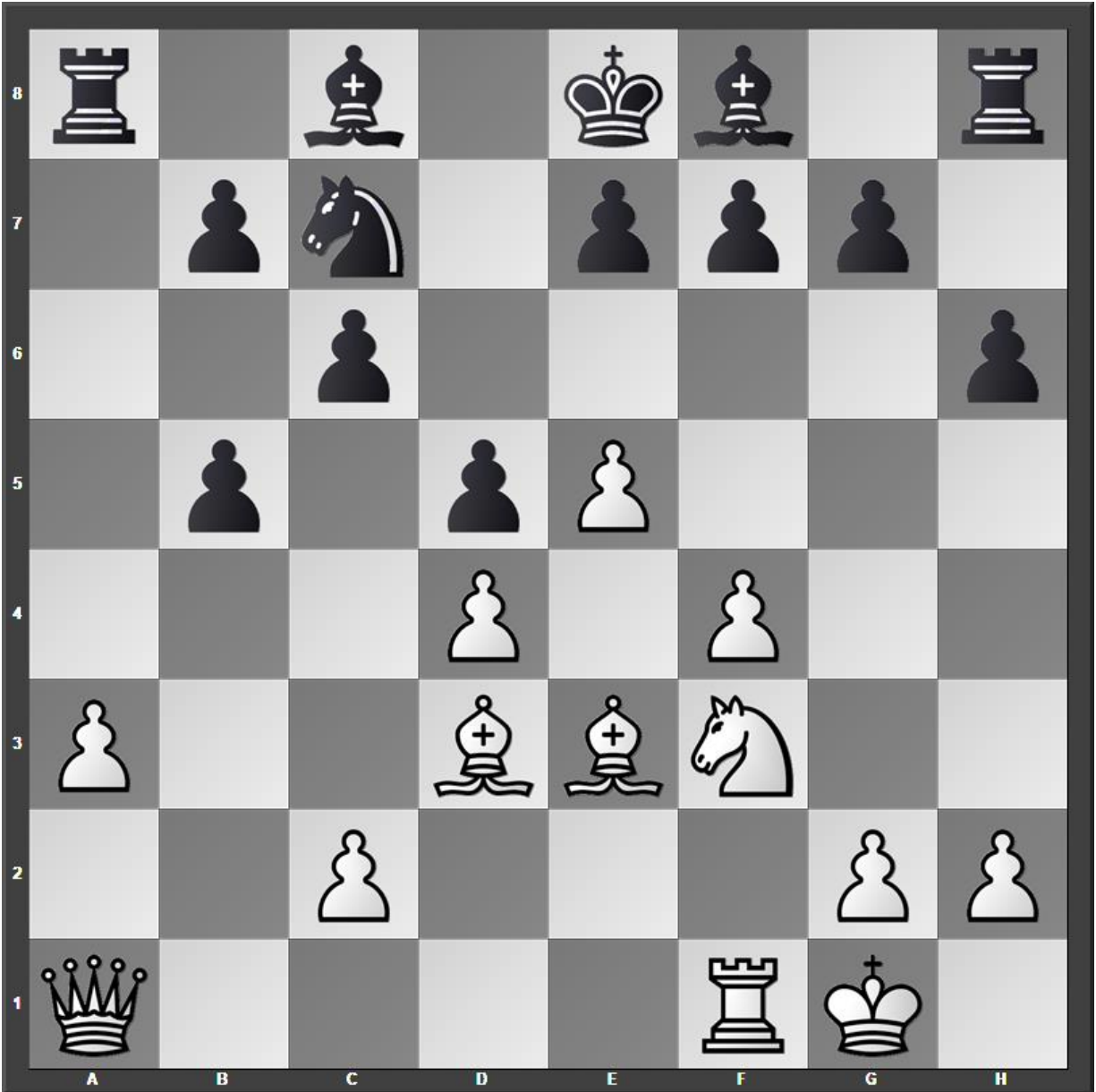
10.f4 Nb6

11.Nxb6 axb6

12.Nf3 h6

13.Bd3 b5

14.0-0 Nc7



15.Bc1 Ne6

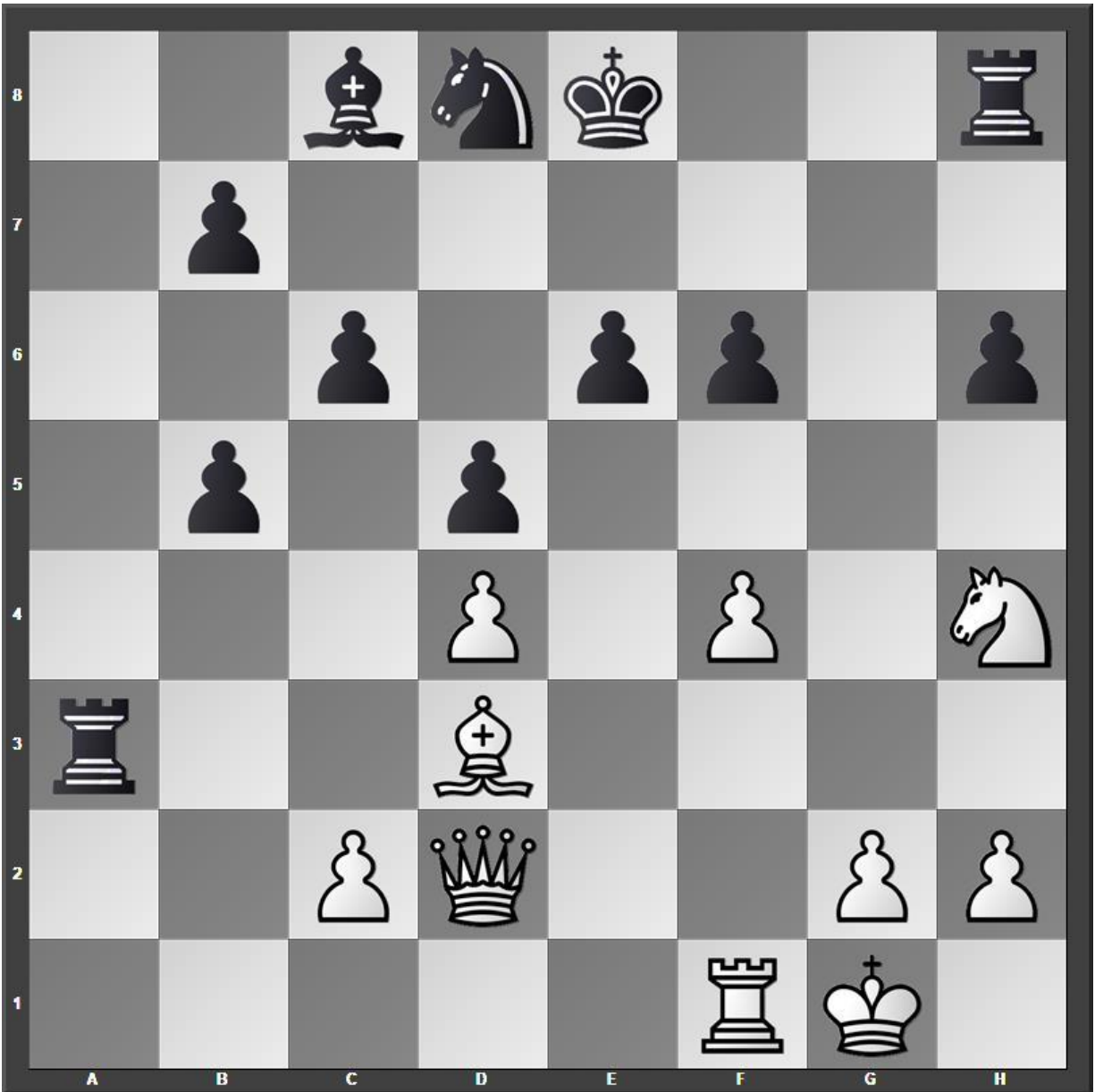
16.Qc3 Nd8

17.Bb2 e6

18.Qd2 Bxa3

19.Bxa3 Rxa3

20.Nh4 f5
21.exf6 gxf6



I slowly angle for mate, but there is no need to wait. If 22.Qb4 Ra8 23.Ng6 Rh7 24.Qf8+ Kd7 25.Qxf6 wins.

22.Bg6+ Nf7

23.Bh5 Rg8

24.Ng6 Kd8

25.Qb4 1-0

Black resigns

Game 11 – B07 [3.Nc3 c6 4.Be3 Nbd7]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 30.01.2022

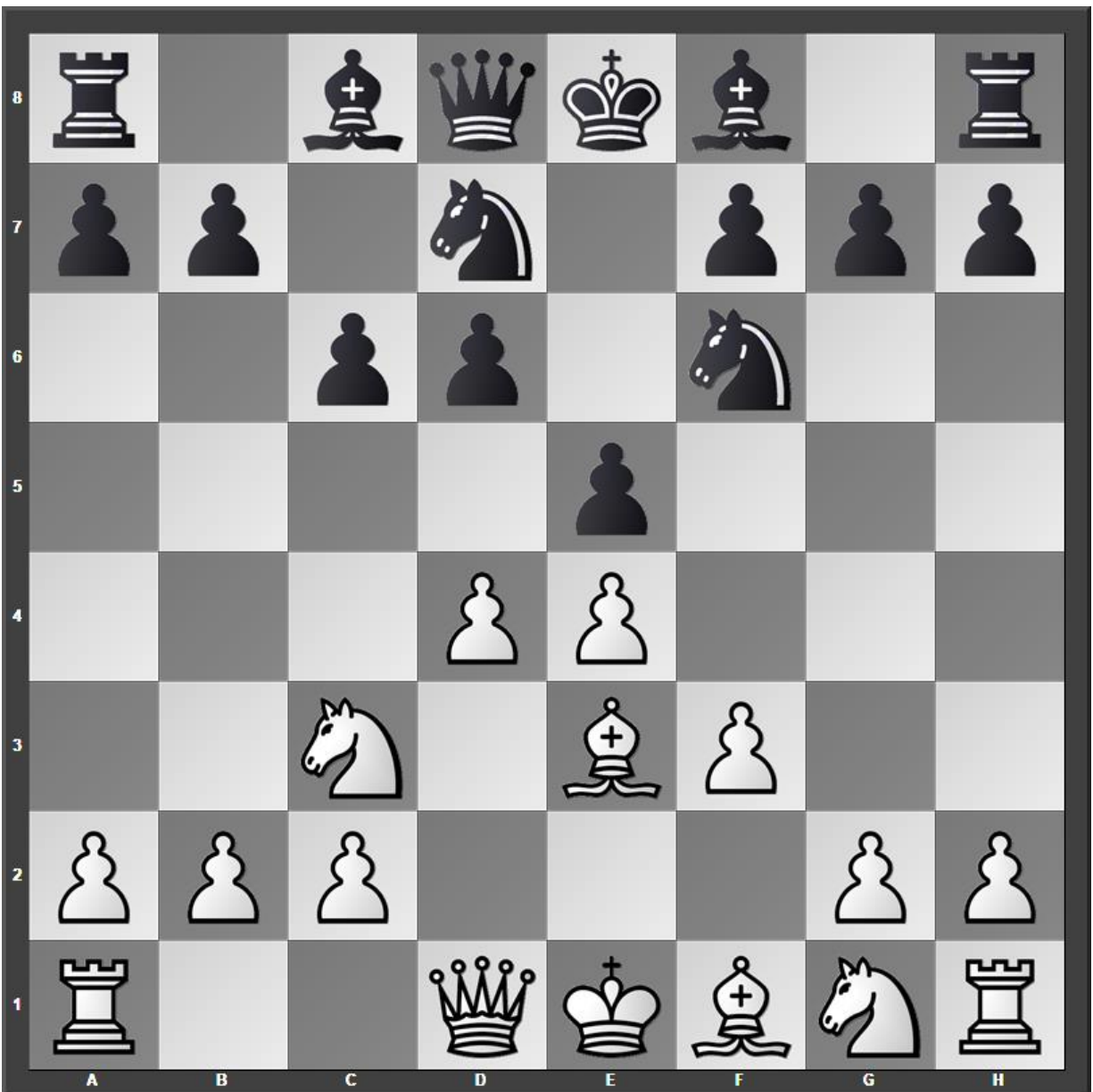
1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 c6

4.Be3 Nbd7

5.f3 e5



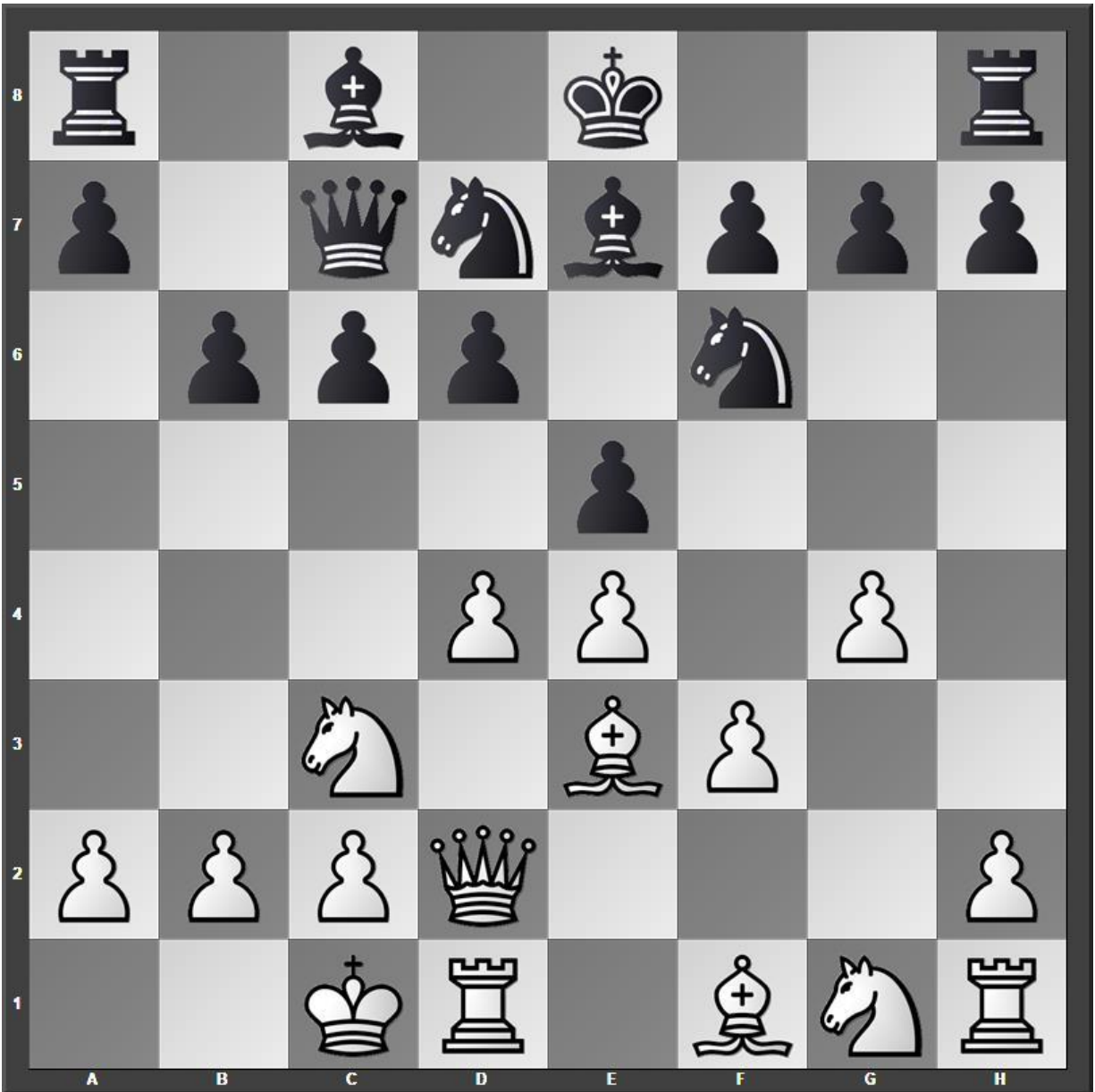
More common is 5...g6 like most games in this book.

6.Qd2 Be7

7.0-0-0 b6

8.g4 Qc7

It might be wise to prevent 9.g5 with 8...h6 however, Black's king safety might become an issue in the future.



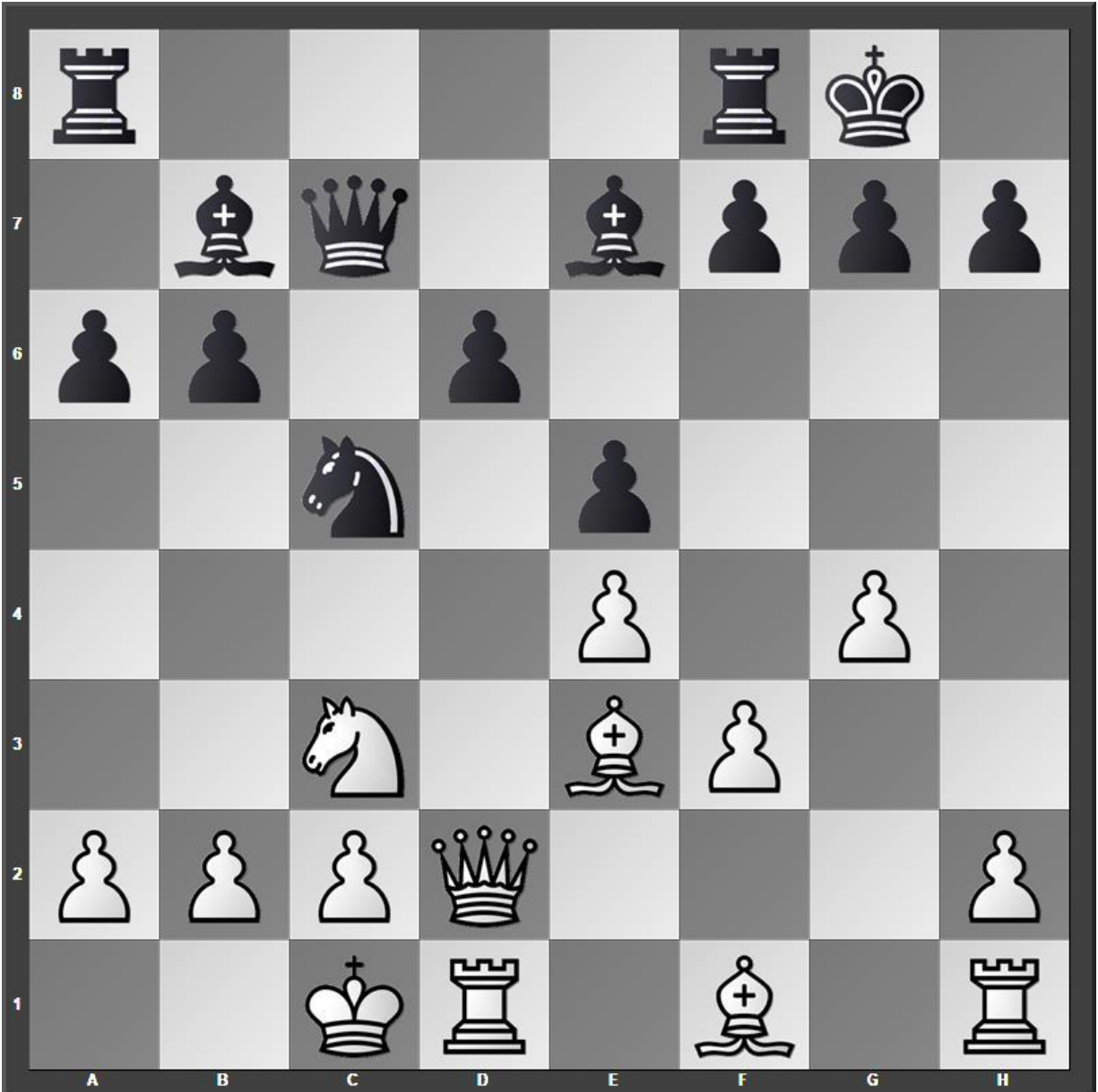
If 9.g5 Nh5 10.d5 White stands better.

9.d5 cxd5

10.Nxd5

10.exd5 is okay, but my strategy is to tie Black down to the defense of d6 and leave my opponent with a bad bishop.

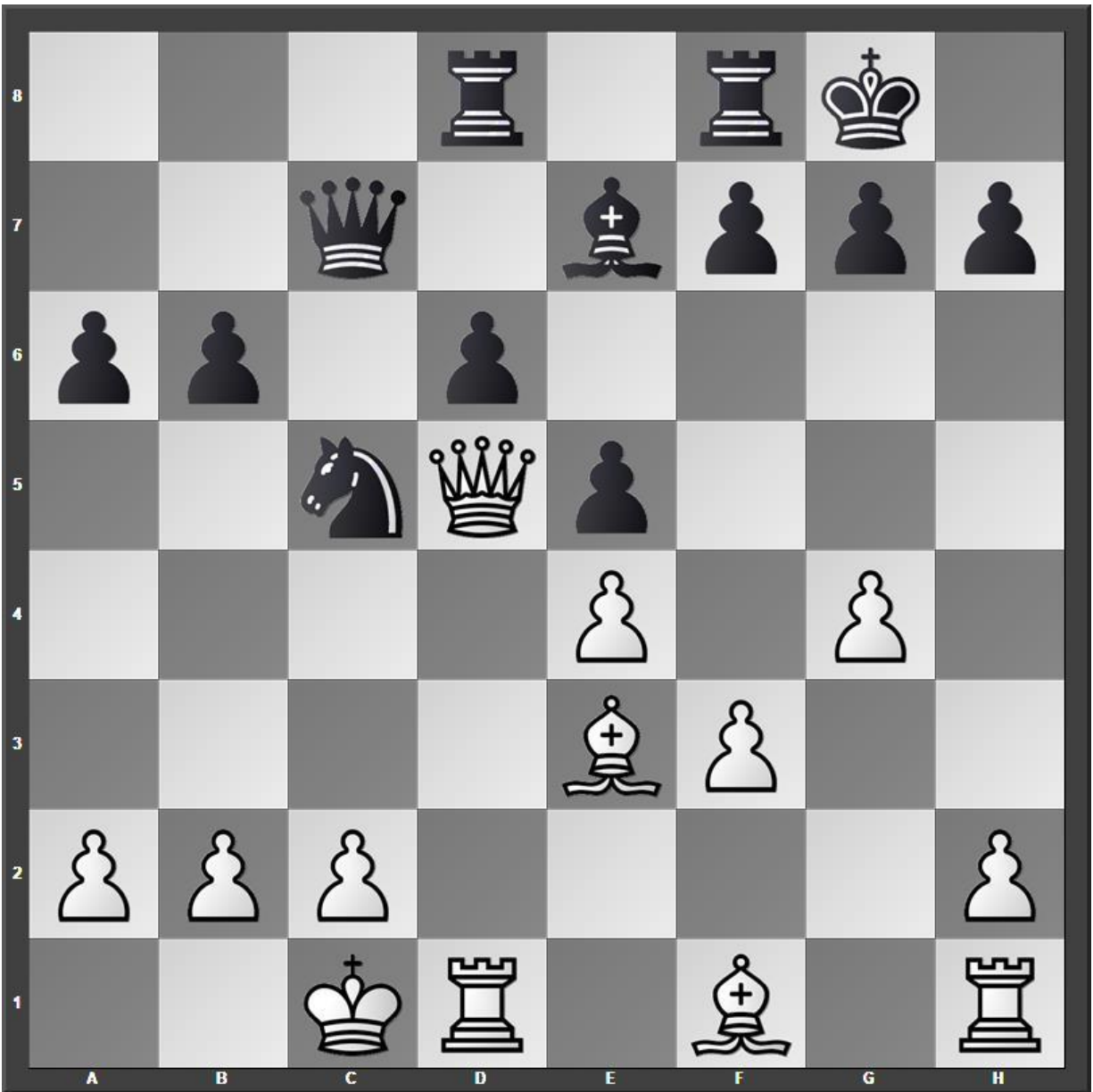
10...Nxd5
11.Qxd5 Bb7
12.Qd2 a6
13.Ne2 0-0
14.Nc3 Nc5



This position resembles the Najdorf Sicilian. My opponent appears to be stronger than an intermediate player.

15.Nd5 Bxd5

16.Qxd5 Rad8



White could attack kingside with 17.h4 b5 18.g5 intending Bh3, but my advanced pawns would likely become targets. Instead, I decided to activate my light-squared bishop.

17.Bc4 b5

18.Bb3 Nxb3+

19.Qxb3 Kh8

20.Kb1 Rc8

21.c3 Rb8

22.Rc1 a5

23.Rhd1 a4

24.Qd5 Rfd8



Not 25.Qxf7 Rf8 26.Qd5 Rxf3 when Black wins a pawn.

25.c4 Qa5

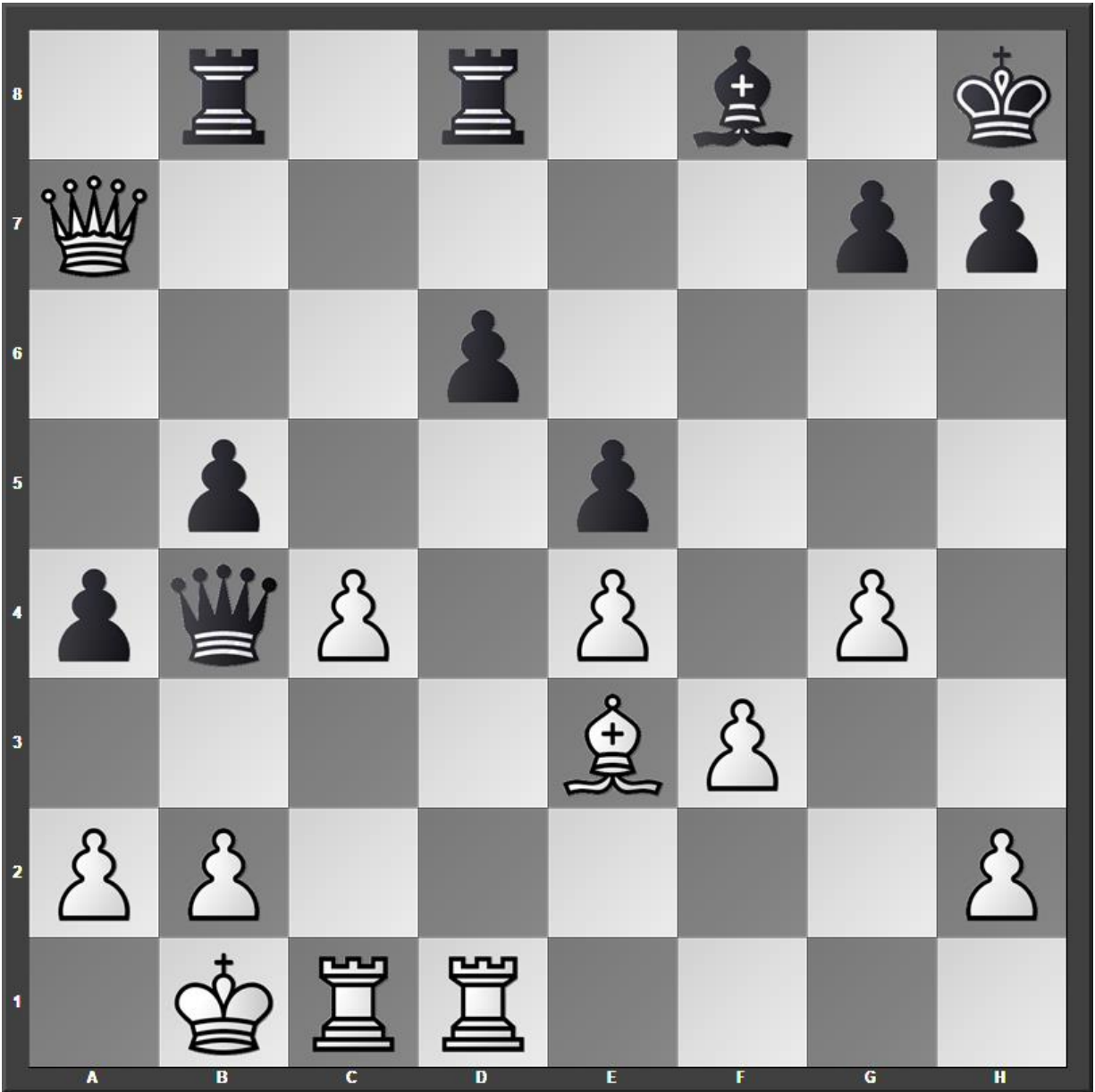
Now I can take on f7. Better is 25...b4 with equal chances.

26.Qxf7 Bf8

27.Qa7

Another good continuation is 27.Rd5 Qa6 28.Bg5 and White stands better.

27...Qb4



Black tries to avoid a queen swap, but to no avail.

28.Bd2 Qc5

29.Qxc5 dxc5

30.cxb5 Rxb5

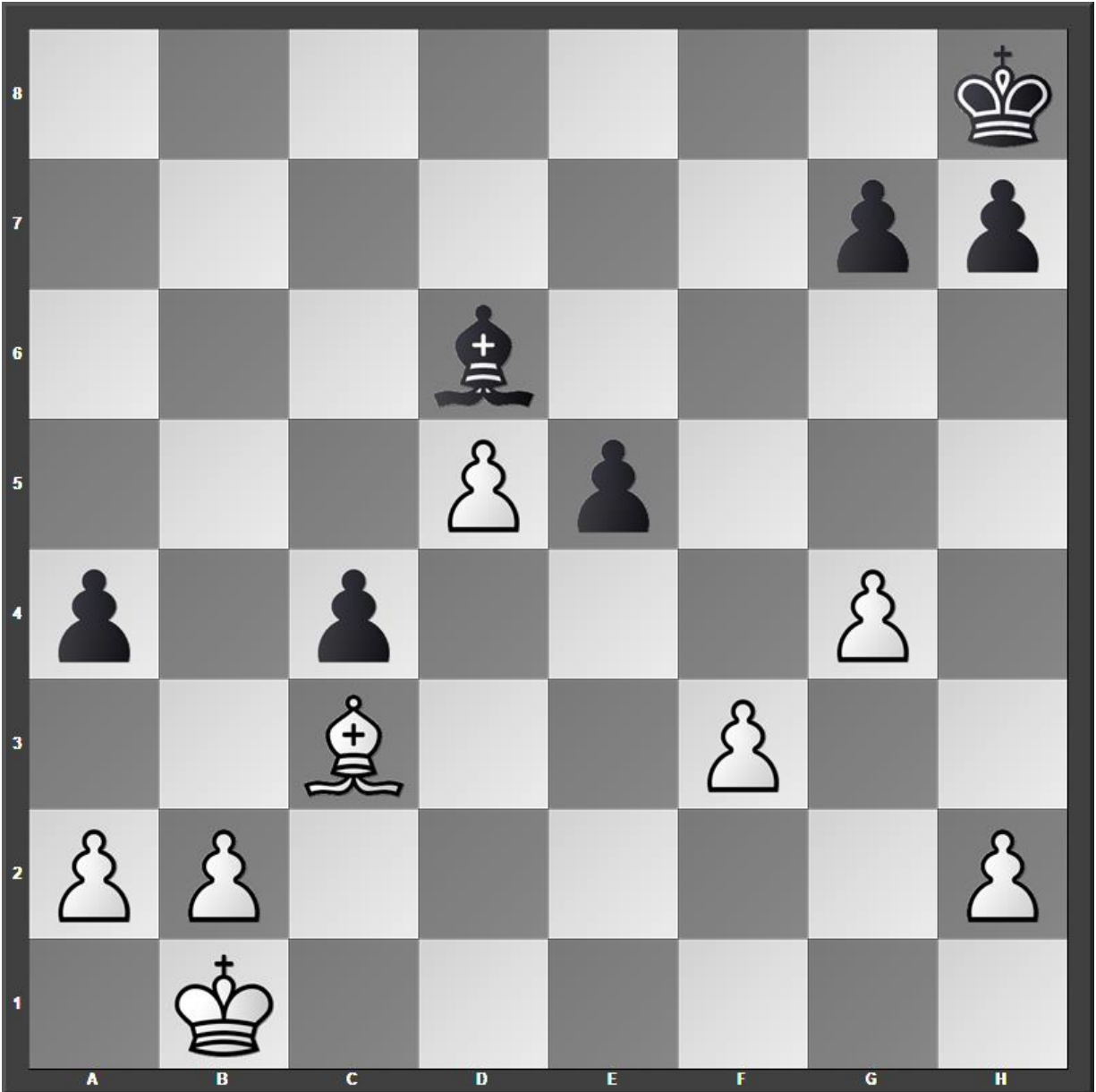
31.Bc3 Rxd1

32.Rxd1 c4

Black must trade off rooks in order to protect the e5 pawn.

33.Rd5 Rxd5

34.exd5 Bd6



We have reached my desired endgame where I have the better bishop, better king position, and an extra pawn.

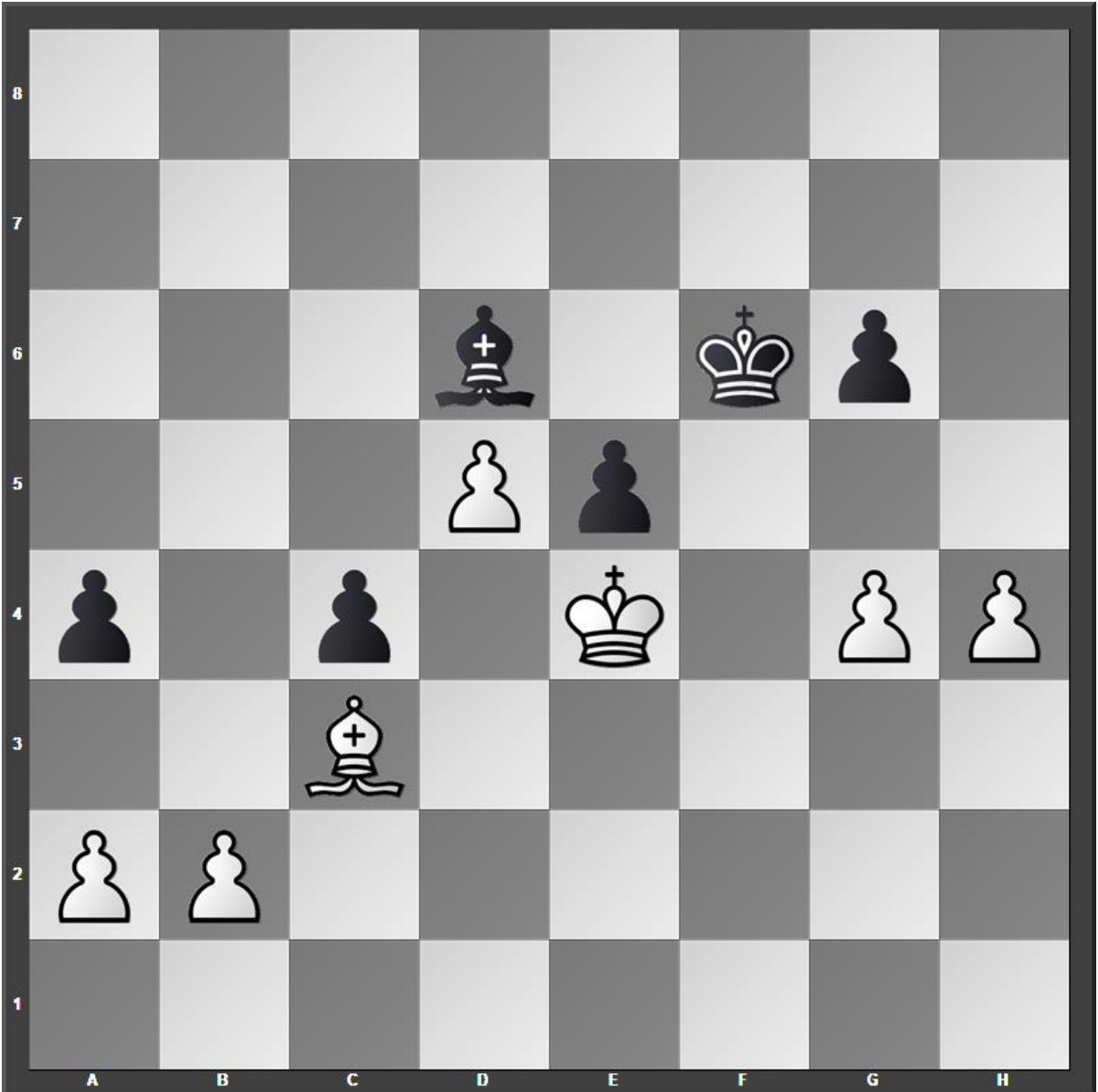
35.h3 Kg8

36.Kc2 Kf7

37.Kd2

I race my king to the center, but another winning strategy is 37.Ba5 Ke7
38.Kc3 Bc5 39.Kxc4 picking up the c-pawn.

37...Kg6
38.h4 h5
39.Ke3 hxg4
40.fxg4 Kf6
41.Ke4 g6



Now I need to prevent Black from pushing a pawn to a3. My strategy is for my b2 pawn to hold the c4 pawn from any advance in case the bishops are

exchanged.

42.a3 g5

The direct approach wins tactically by 43.Bxe5+ Bxe5 44.hxg5+ Kxg5
45.Kxe5 Kxg4 46.d6 and it's over.

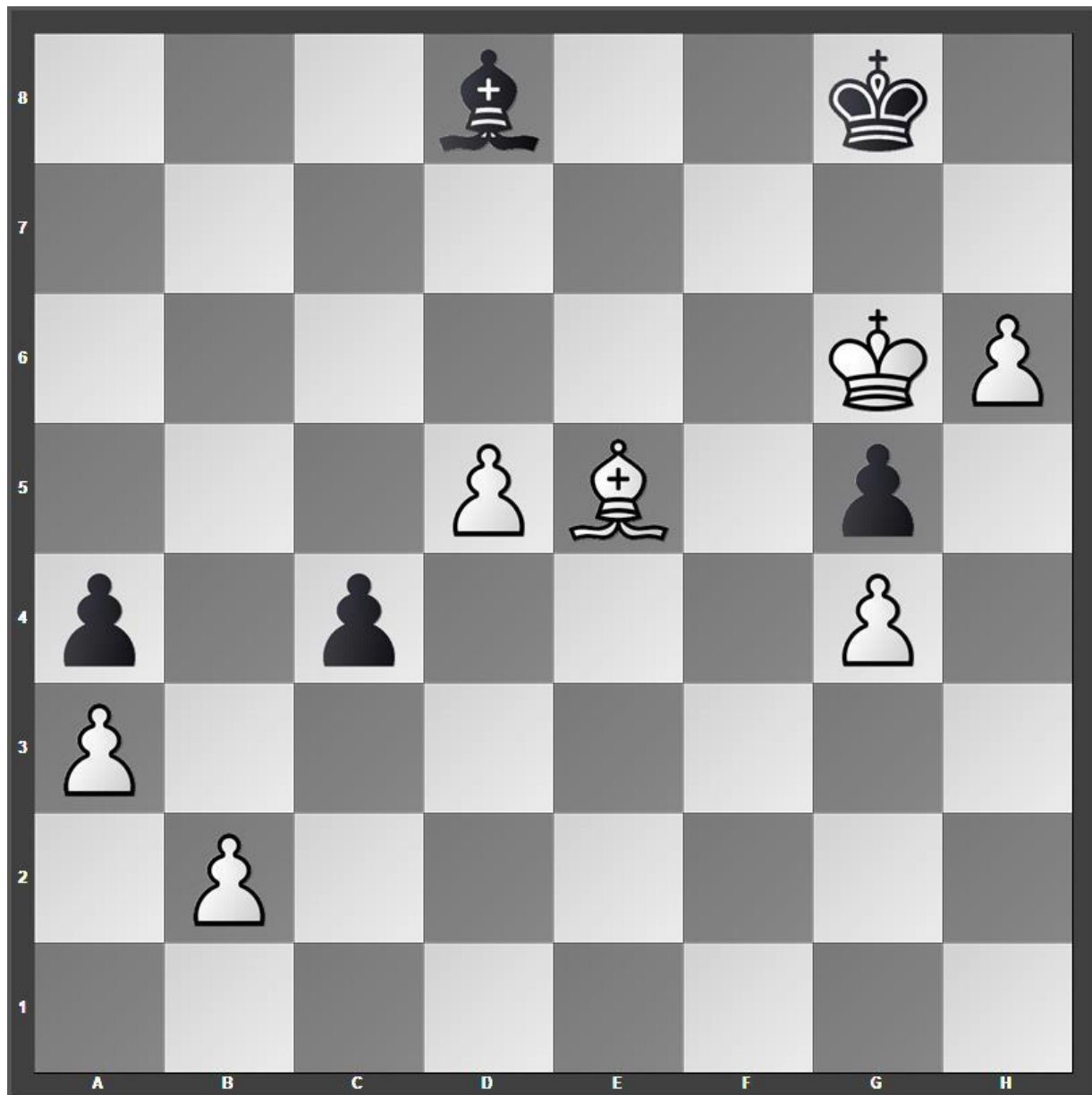
43.h5 Be7

44.Bxe5+ Kf7

45.Kf5 Bd8

46.h6 Kg8

47.Kg6 1-0



White queens or mates in two: 47...c3 48.Bg7 cxb2 49.h7 checkmate!
Instead, my opponent lets the clock expire. Black lost on time

Game 12 – B08 [3.Nc3 g6 4.g4 Bxg4]

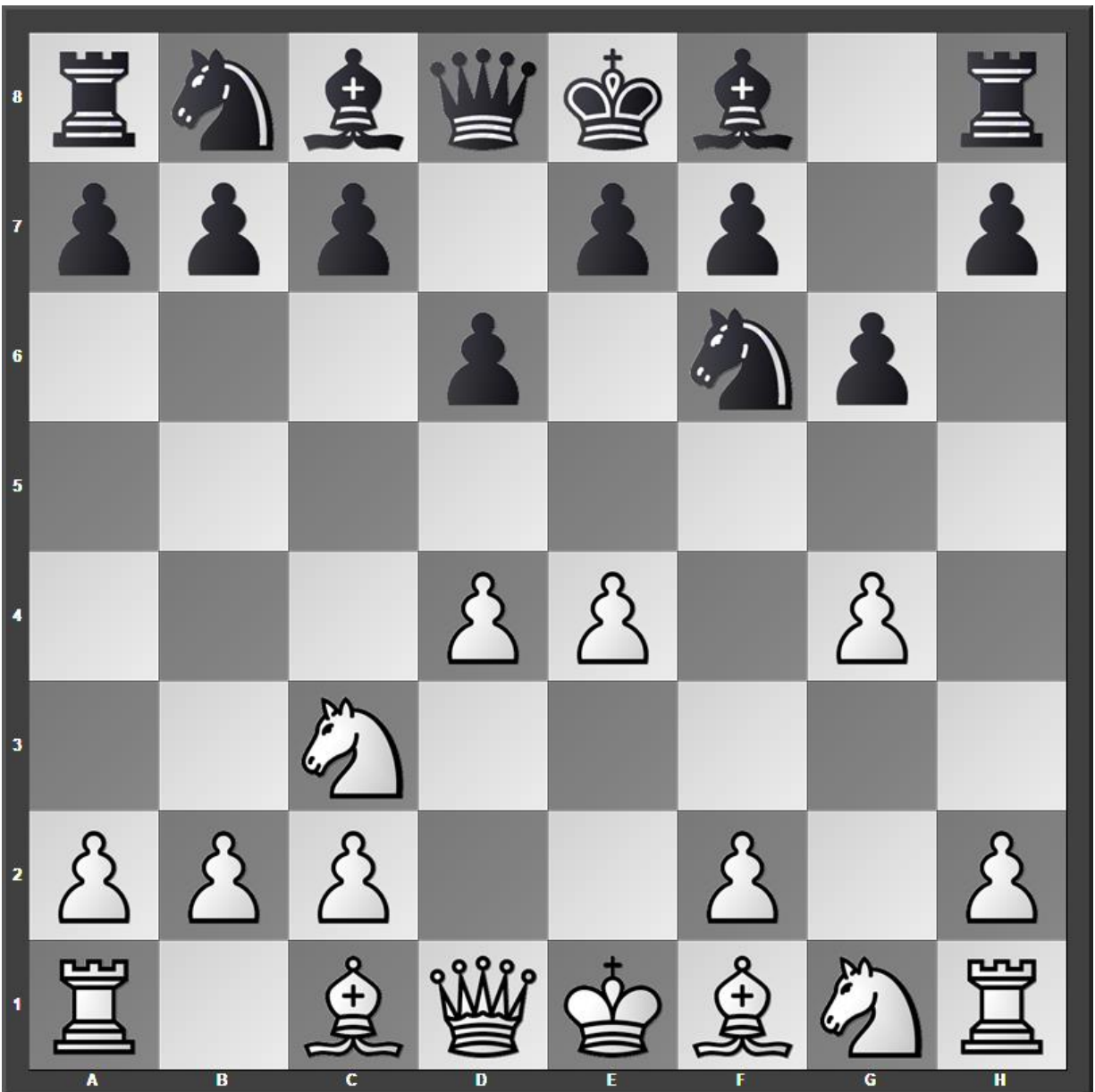
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 27.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.g4



4...Bxg4

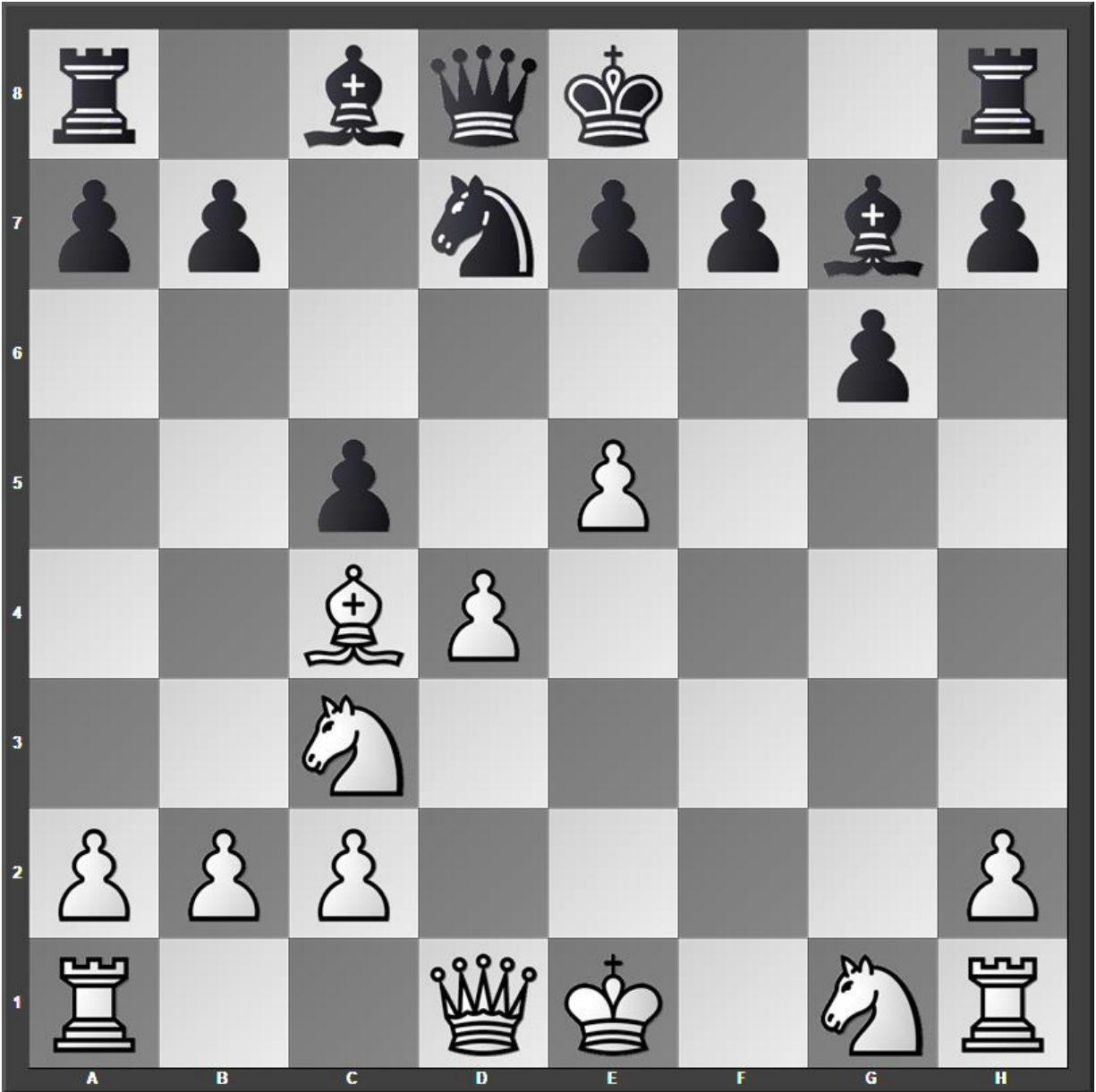
This opponent goes all out for attack, no matter the cost. White throws everything at Black's king until nothing is left.

5.f3 Bc8
6.Bg5 Bg7
7.Bxf6 Bxf6
8.f4 Nd7



9.e5 dxe5
10.fxe5 Bg7
11.Bb5 c6

12.Bc4 c5



I expected 13.e6 fxe6 after which 14.Bxe6 cxd4 15.Qf3 Ne5 and Black is winning.

13.Qf3 0-0

14.Nh3

If 14.0-0-0 cxd4 15.Rxd4 Bxe5 and Black stands better.

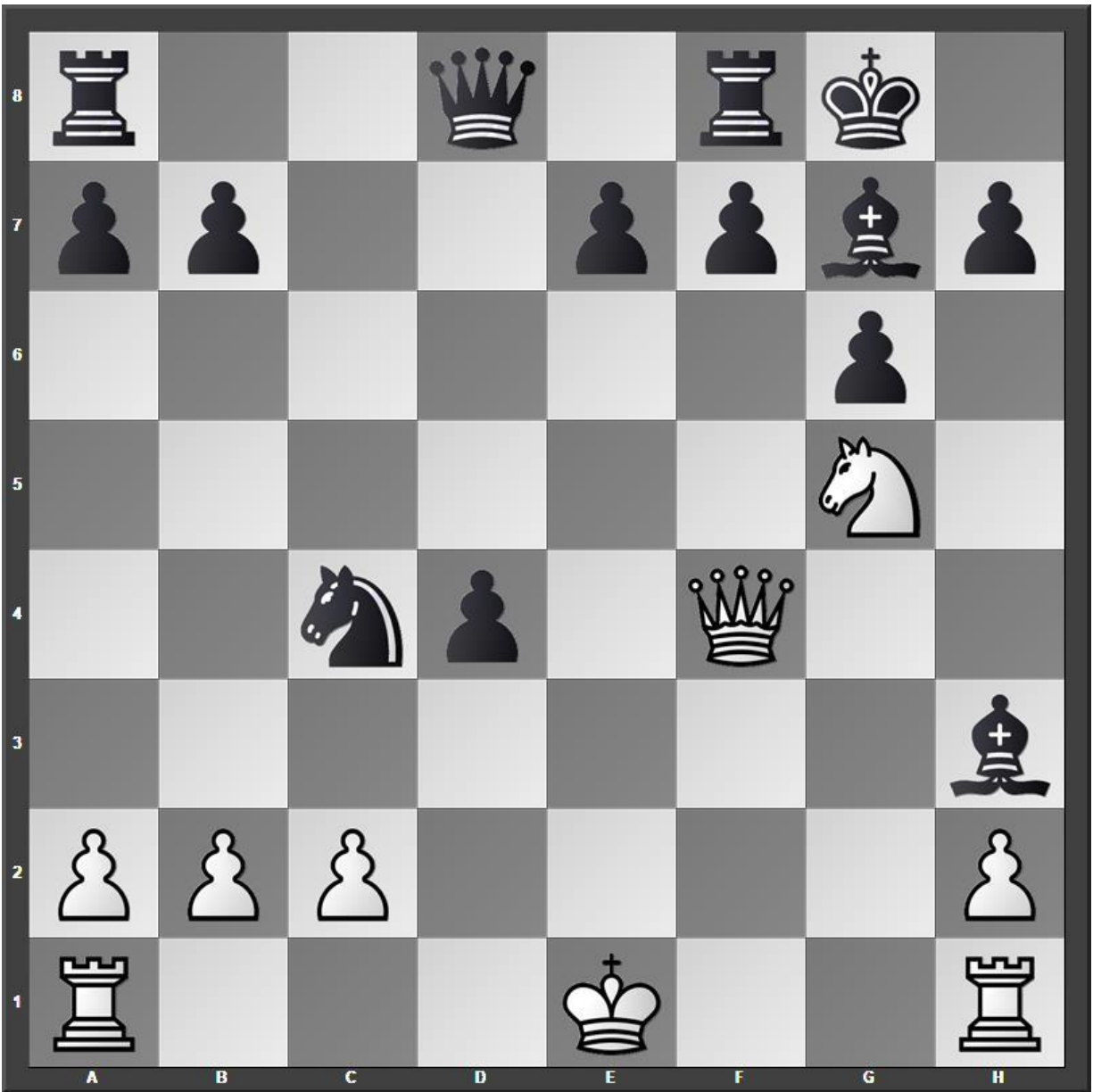
14...cxd4

15.Ne4 Nxe5

16.Qf4 Bxh3

Or 16...Nxc4 and Black is up a piece.

17.Ng5 Nxc4



My opponent could retreat and remain only one piece down with 18.Nxh3 Ne3. Instead, White charges ahead.

18.Nxf7 Rxf7

19.Qh4 Qd7

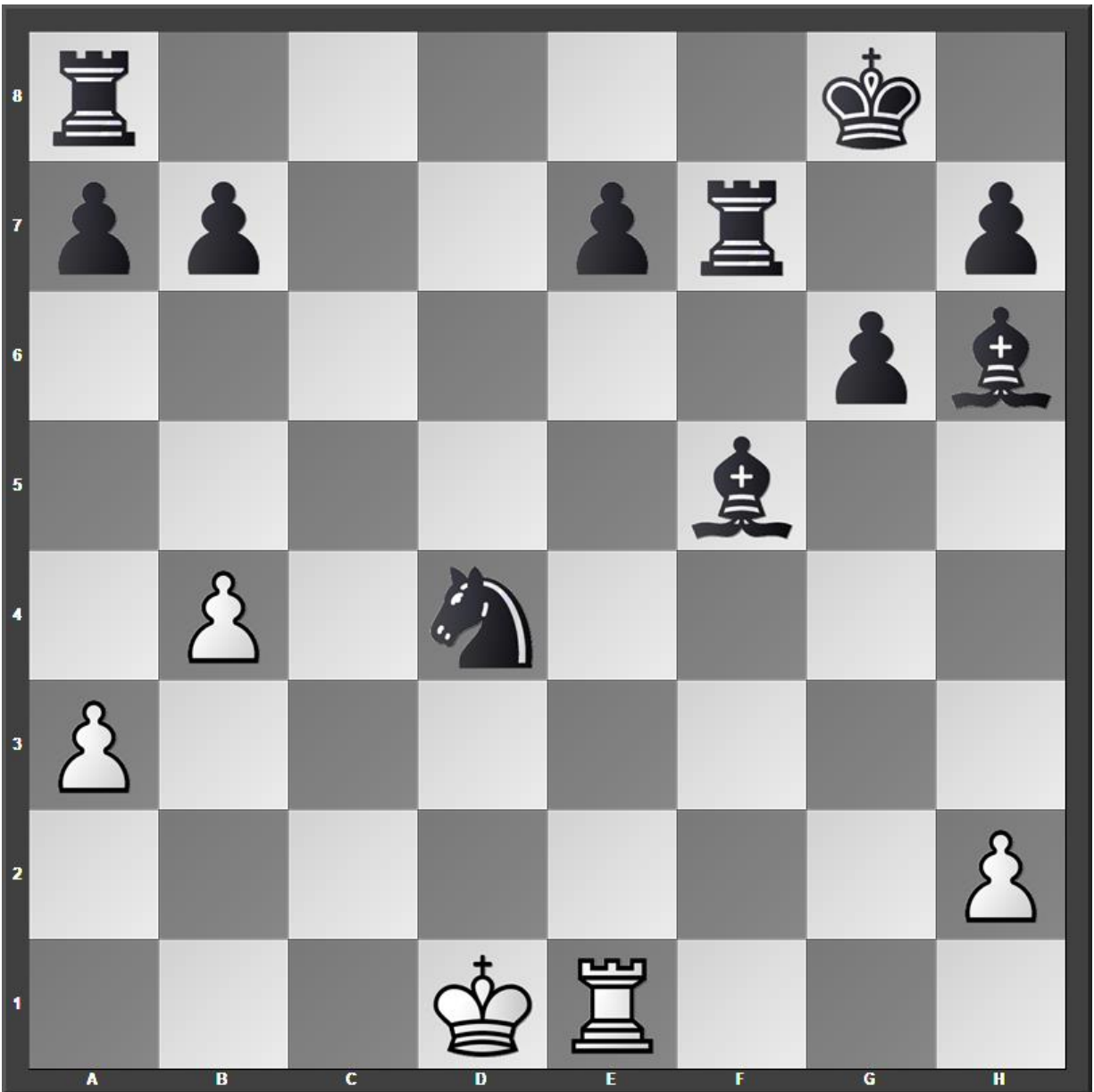
Black has a mate in 7 beginning with 19...Qa5+.

20.0-0-0 Qg4

21.Qe1 Qe6

22.Qxe6 Bxe6

23.Rhe1 Bf5
24.a3 Ne3
25.Rd2 Bh6
26.Rxd4 Nxc2+
27.Kd1 Nxd4
28.b4 0-1



I reached for my bishop to apply mate on c2, but before I could complete the move, my opponent threw in the towel.

White resigns

Game 13 – B09 [3.Nc3 g6 4.f4 Bg7]

Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 28.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.f4



I was glad to see this master level opponent choose 4.f4 since no one else had played it. White is a strong player who often (not always) beats me with sharp blitz tactics.

4...Bg7

If 5.e5 Nfd7 6.Nf3 c5 7.exd6 Nc6 Black has adequate counterplay on the dark squares.

5.Nf3



5...0-0

The sharp alternative is 5...c5 6.dxc5 Qa5 7.Bd3 Qxc5 8.Qe2 tends to favor White.

6.Bd3 Nc6

Sometimes Black prefers 6...Na6 7.0-0 c5 8.d5 Bg4 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Rxf3
with an unbalanced position.

7.0-0 e5

Now if 8.fxe5 dxe5 9.d5 Nd4 10.Nxe5 then Black has 10...Nxe4 or 10...Nxd5 with chances for both sides.

8.dxe5 dxe5



9.Qe1

Stockfish recommends this. The traditional continuation is 9.f5 Nb4 10.fxg6 hxg6 with equal chances.

9...Bg4

I almost played 9...exf4 10.Bxf4 Bg4 which is equal in theory, but it feels like White has a strong tactical attack.

10.fxe5 Nxe5

11.Nxe5 Qd4+



12.Qf2 Qxe5

13.Bf4 Qe7

I walk into a pin. Better is 13...Qa5 with equal chances.

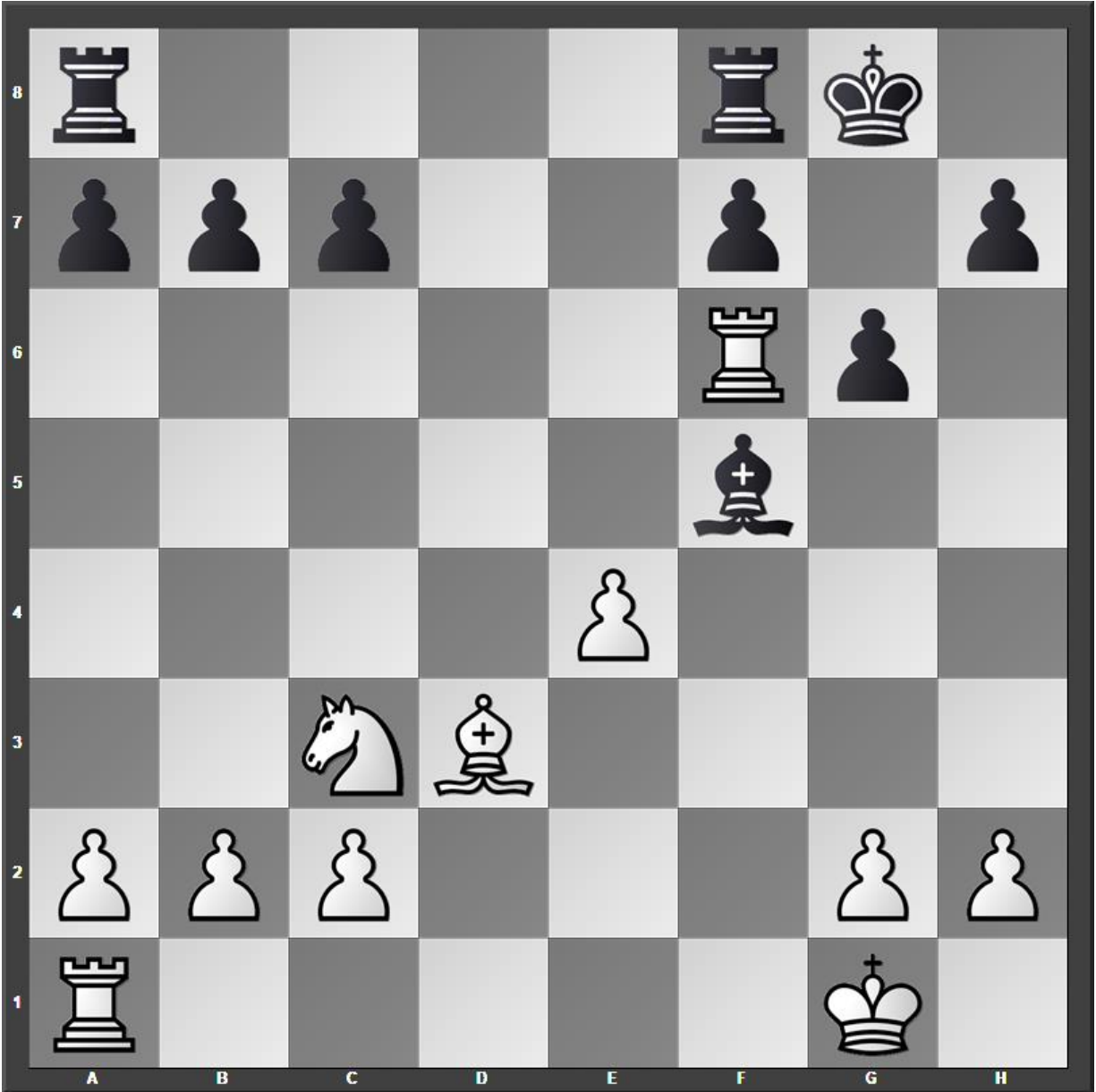
14.Bg5 Qe6

15.Bxf6 Bxf6

16.Qxf6 Qxf6

17.Rxf6 Bf5

I lost a piece to the pin on f6, but I try to trap the White rook. Otherwise 17...Kg7 18.Rf4 and White is winning.



18.exf5 Kg7

19.Ne4 Rae8

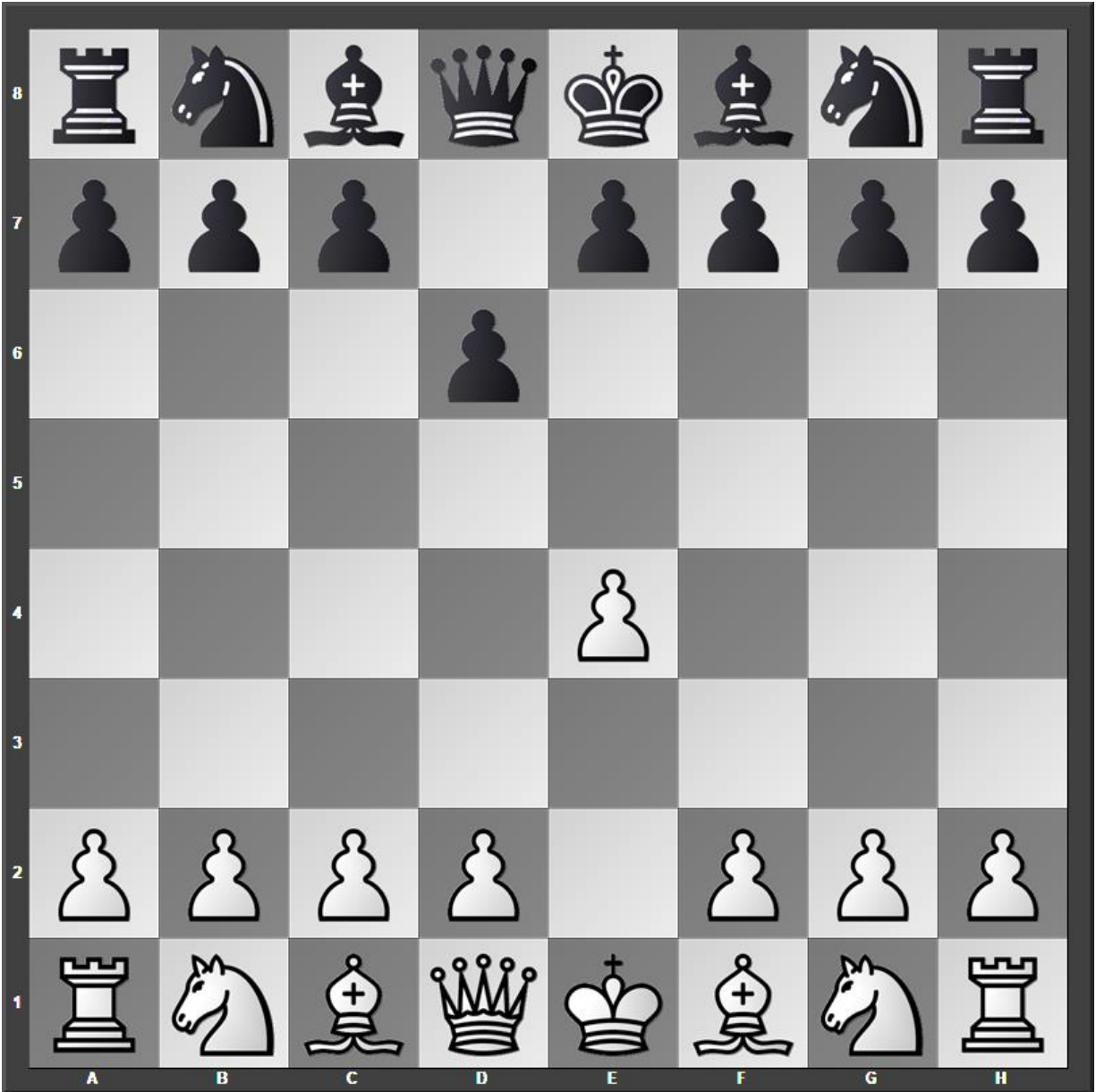
20.fxg6 Rxe4

21.Raf1 Re7

22.gxh7 1-0

Black resigns

Game 14 – B09 [3.Nc3 g6 4.f4 Bg7]
Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 28.01.2022
1.e4 d6



We turned the board around from the previous game. My master level opponent copied my Pirc Defence, so I copied 4.f4. I used to play f4 50 years ago, but not as much since.

2.d4 Nf6
3.Nc3 g6

4.f4 Bg7

5.Nf3 0-0

6.Bd3 Nh5



My opponent probably played this rare move out of the inspiration of the moment to attack. I'm on my own.

7.0-0

Promising alternatives 7.f5 and 7.Be3 tend to favor White.

7...Bg4

8.Be3 c5

9.dxc5 dxc5

10.h3

If 10.e5 White stands better.

10...Bd7

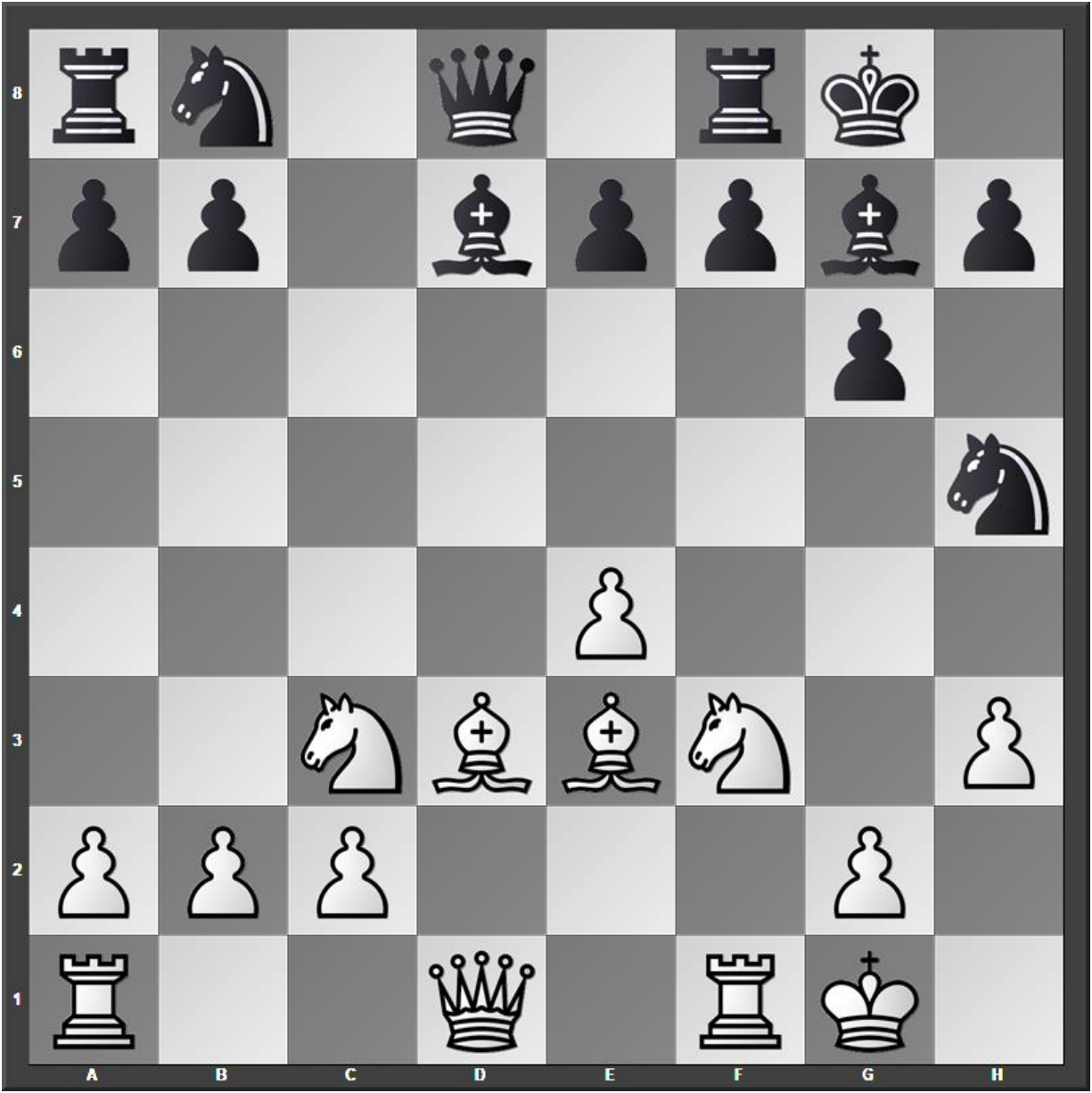
A creative option is 10...Bd4 with equal chances.

11.Bxc5

Better is 11.Qe1 and White has an advantage.

11...Nxf4

12.Be3 Nh5



13.g4 Ng3

A mistake. Instead, 13...Nf6 14.Qe1 Nc6 with equality.

14.Re1 f5

15.exf5 gxf5

16.Kg2 f4



17.Bxf4

I missed 17.Bc4+ Kh8 18.Bd4 with advantage to White.

17...Rxf4

18.Kxg3

Inaccurate. If 18.Nd5 Rf7 19.Ng5 White has a good attack.

18...Rf8

If 18...Qc7 with equal chances.



19.Rf1

If 19.Kg2 White stands better.

19...e6

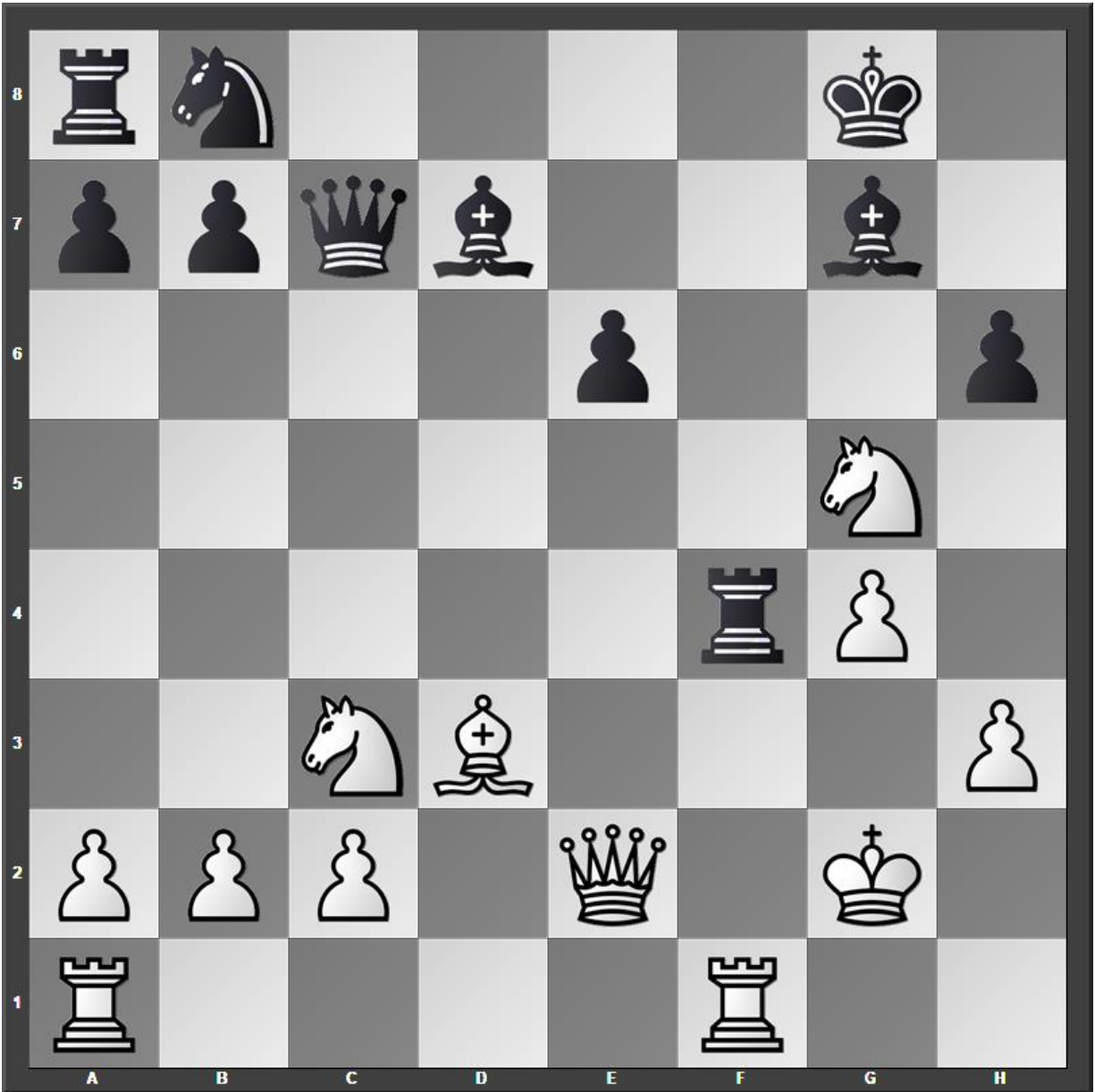
20.Qe2 Qc7+

21.Kg2 Rf4

22.Ng5

Bringing in another rook by 22.Rad1 looks good for White.

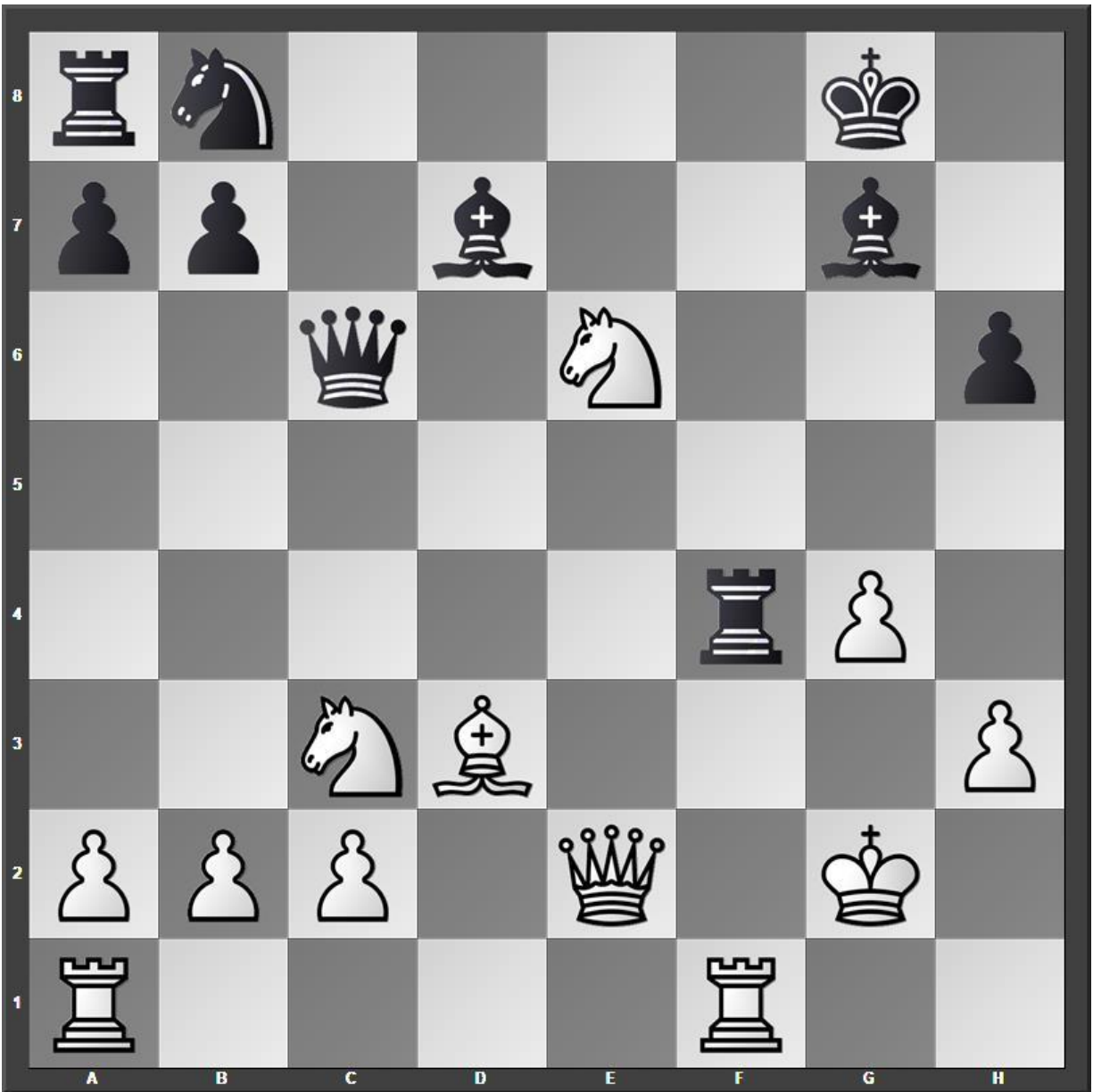
22...h6



I should swap rooks first with 23.Rxf4 Qxf4 24.Nxe6 Qe5 25.Nxg7 and White is up two pawns.

23.Nxe6 Qc6+

I blundered my knight on e6. If 24.Be4 Rxe4 25.Qxe4 Bxe6 26.Rad1 White has a rook and two pawns for two bishops.



24.Kh2 Rxf1

25.Rxf1 Bxe6

26.Qe4 Qxe4

27.Bxe4 Nc6

28.a3 Rd8

29.Rf2 Bd4

30.Re2 Be5+

31.Kg2 Bc4

32.Rf2 Kg7

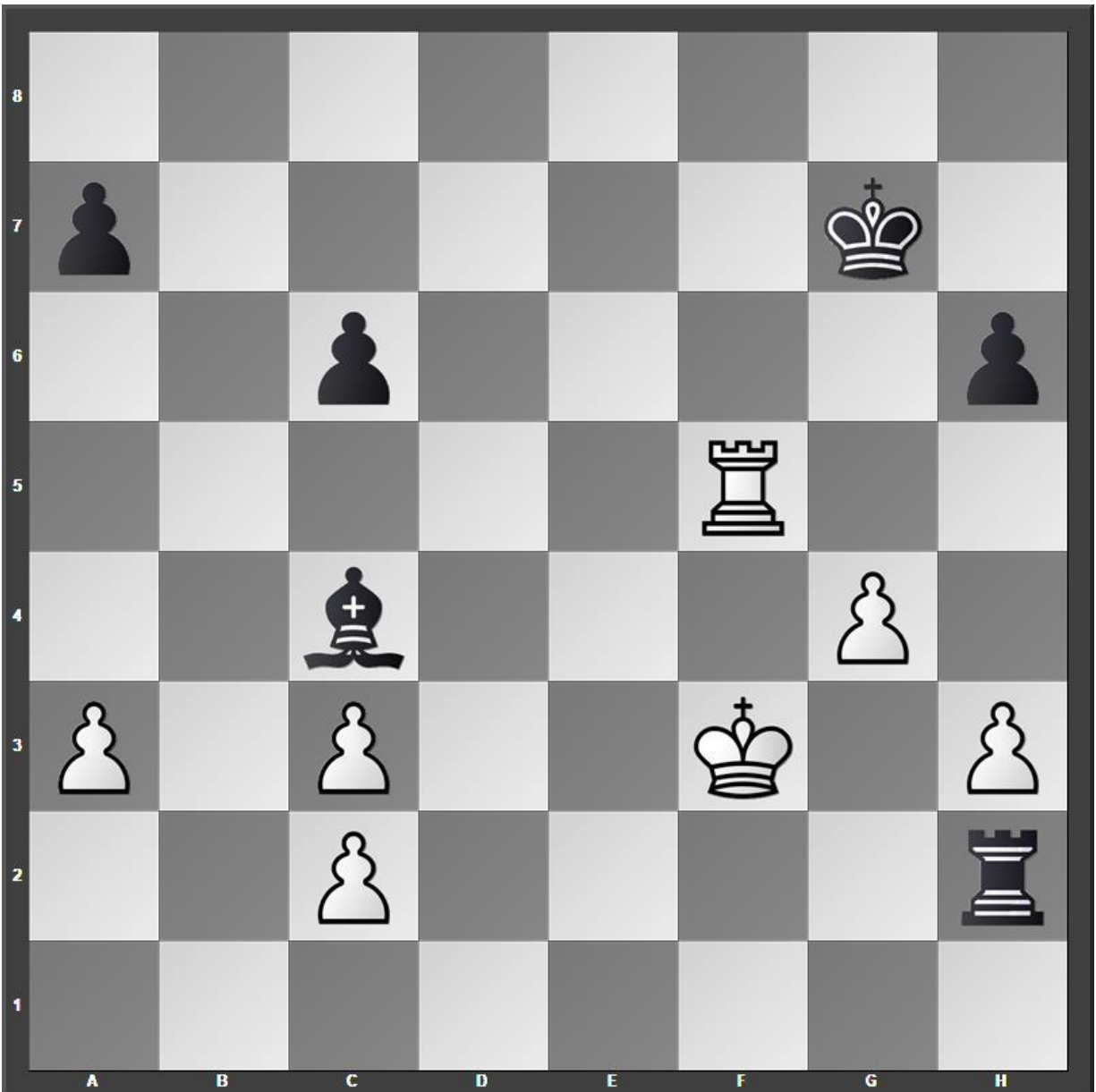
33.Rf5 Rd2+

34.Kf3 Rh2

Black can trap a rook by 34...Be6 35.Rh5 Bf7 36.Rf5 Bg6.

35.Bxc6 Bxc3

36.bxc3 bxc6



Black has a bishop, and my two extra pawns will soon disappear. I note that the bishop does not cover a1. My hope is to swap rooks and draw vs bishop and a-pawn.

37.g5

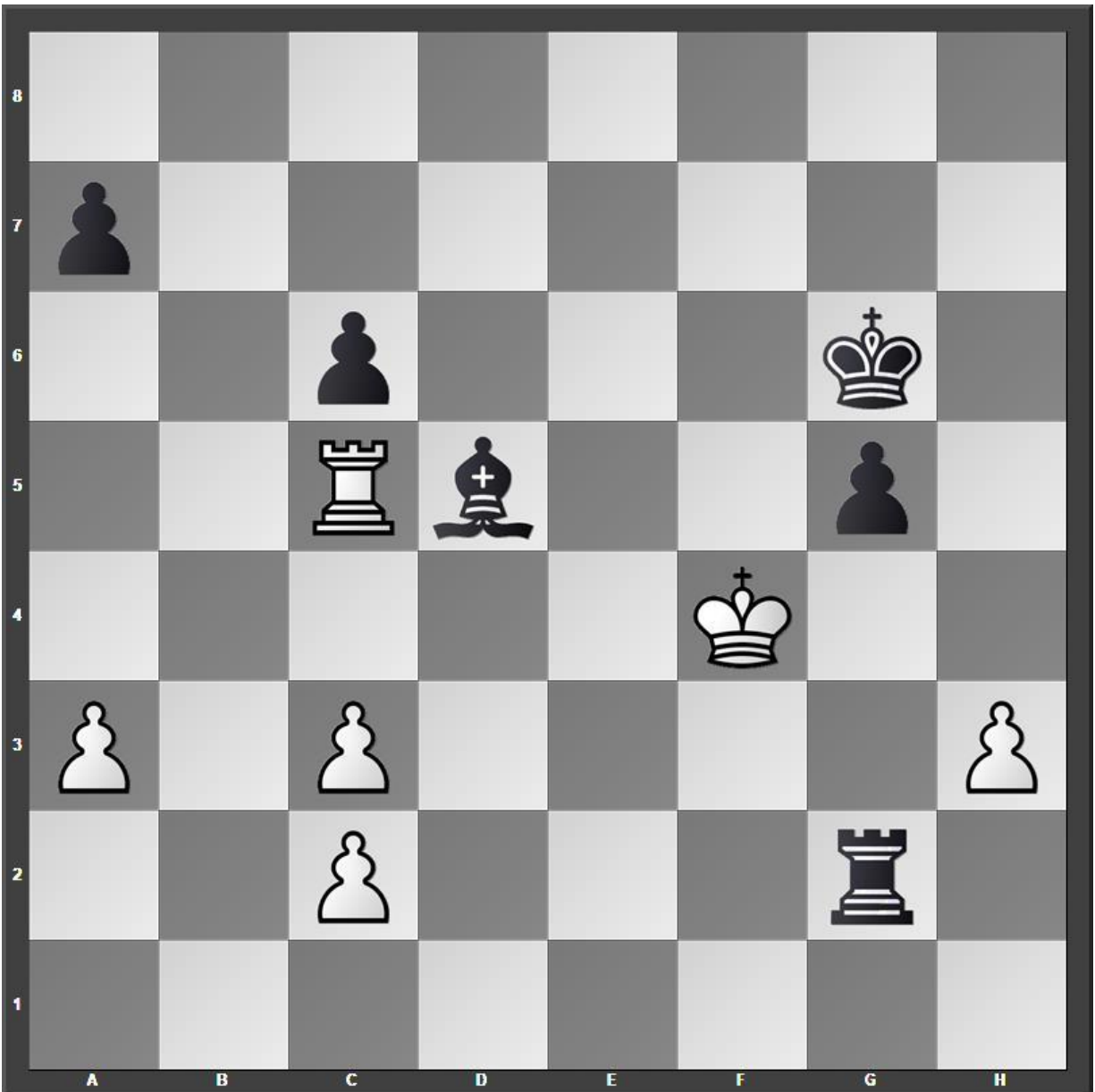
White has drawing chances if the h-pawn is gone, but my move fails. If
37.Rh5 Bd5+ 38.Ke3 Rxc2 Black is winning.

37...Kg6

38.Rc5 Bd5+

39.Kg3 Rg2+

40.Kf4 hxg5+



41.Ke5 Rxc2

42.Ra5 Rxc3

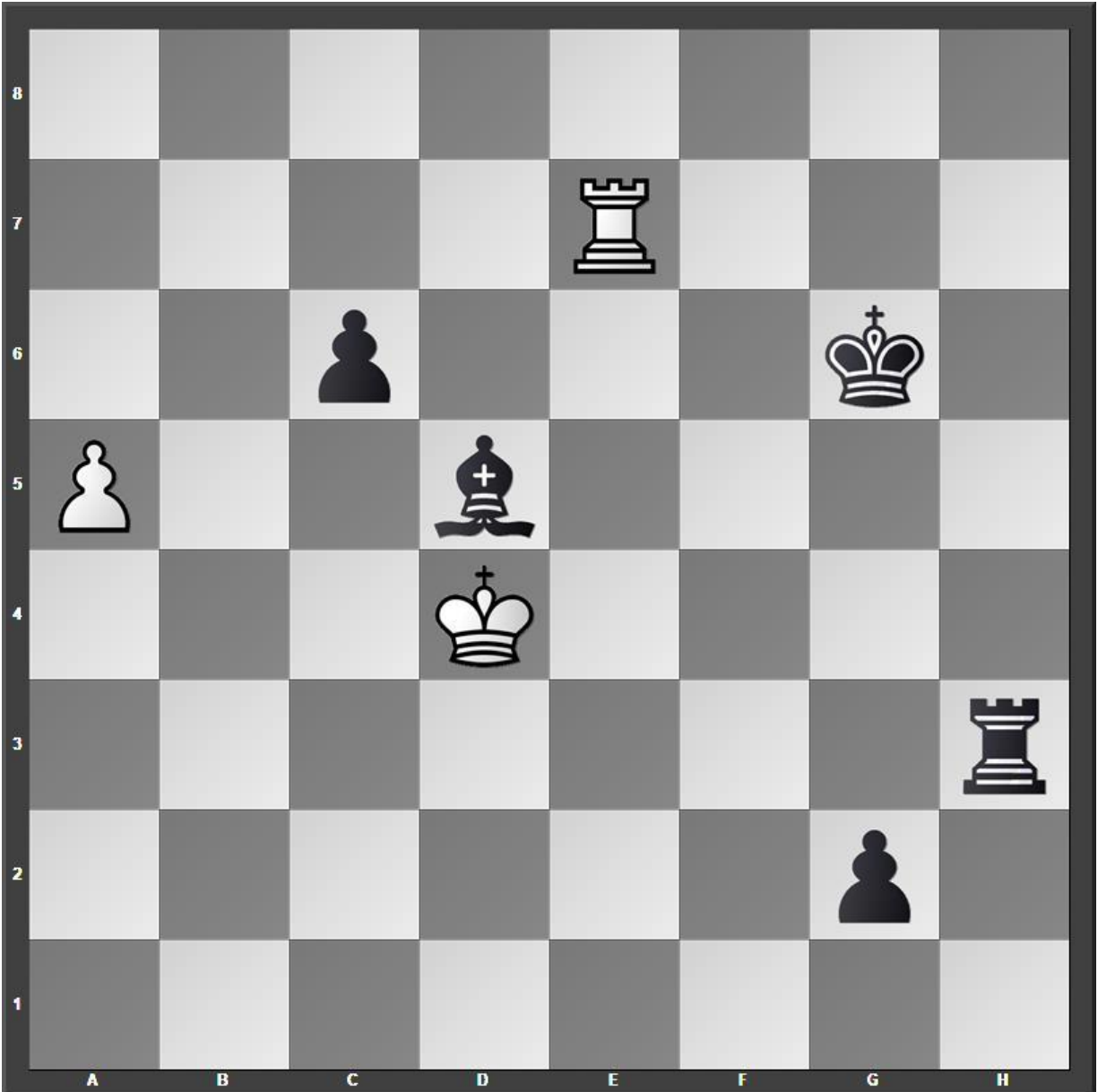
43.Rxa7 Re3+

44.Kd4 Rxh3

45.a4 g4

46.Re7 g3

47.a5 g2



48.Re1 Rh4+

49.Kc5 Rh1 0-1

White resigns

Chapter 3 – Pirc 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7

Game 15 – B08 [5.Be3 a6 6.h3]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 04.06.2021

1.e4 d6

2.d4 g6

3.Nc3 a6



I assume that this opponent is an intermediate player who plays many good moves, but against whom I usually win. However, Black proves much stronger than I anticipated. We transpose to the 3...g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Be3 a6 variation.

4.Nf3

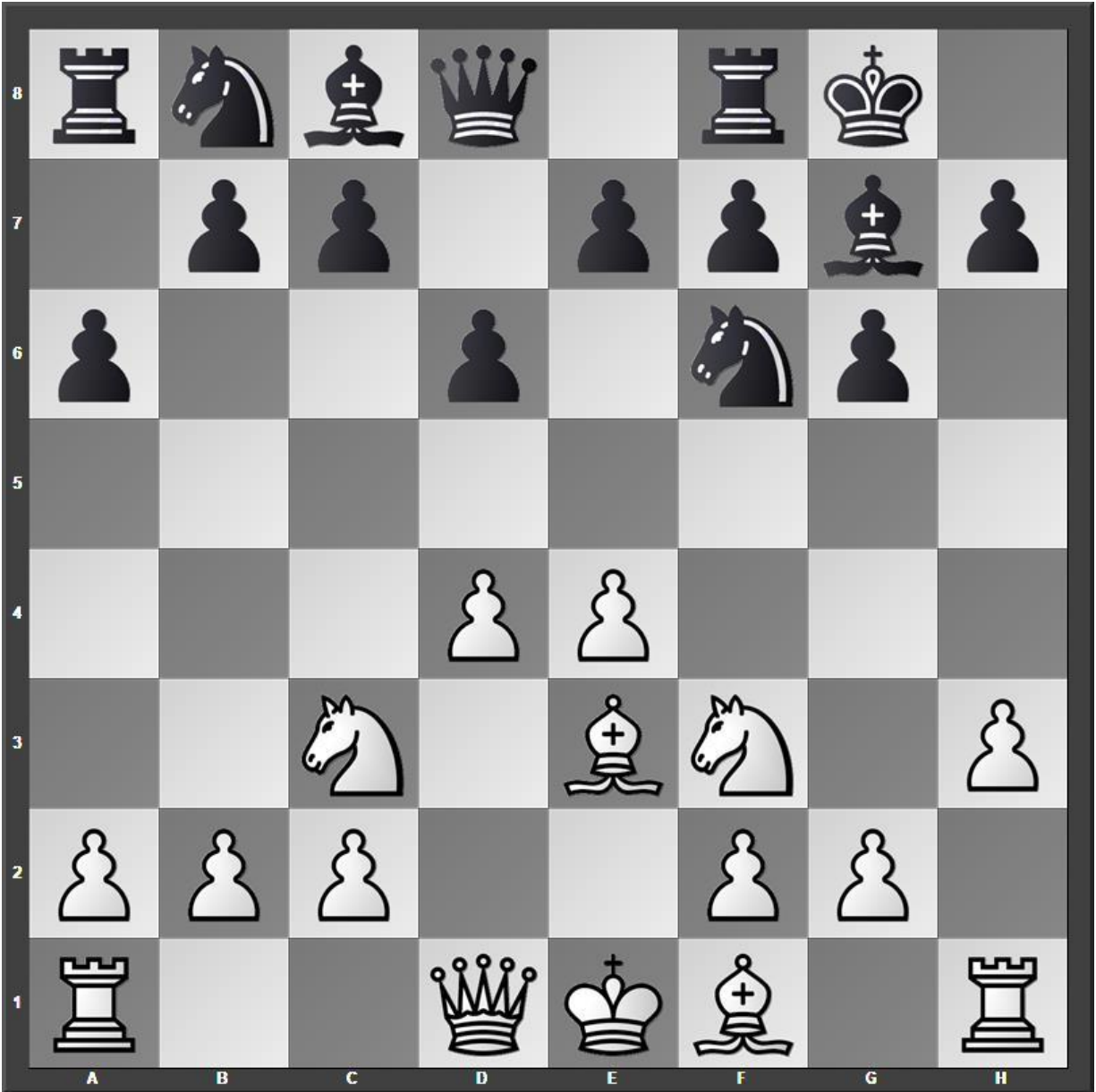
Thinking I had a weaker opponent, I varied from my normal 4.Be3 Bg7 5.Qd2 Nf6 6.f3 to choose 4.Nf3. Risky strategy.

4...Bg7

5.Be3 Nf6

This transposes to the Pirc Defense. White plays h3 to keep a minor piece out of g4.

6.h3 0-0



7.Qd2 Nbd7

8.0-0-0

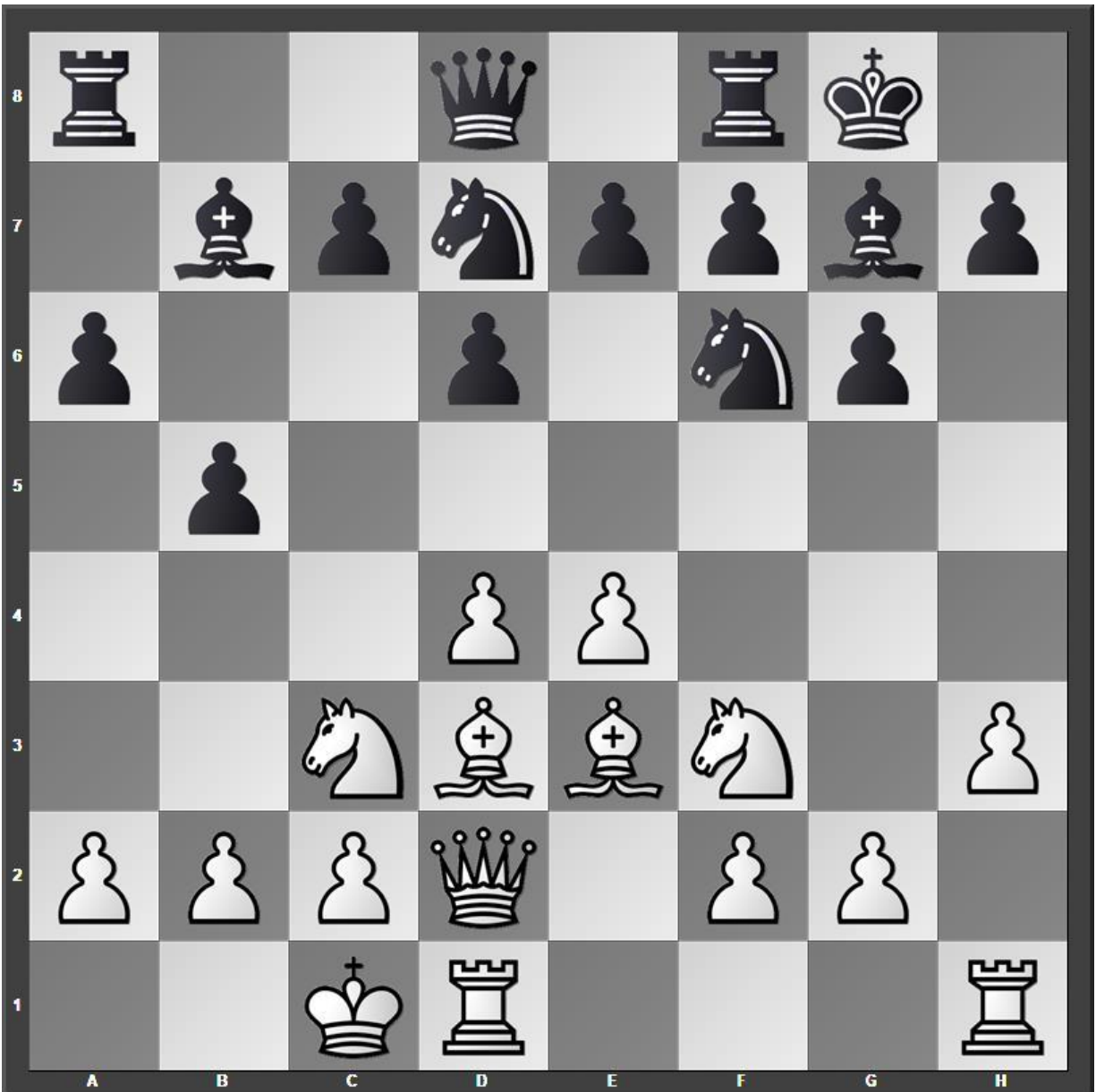
Another option is 8.e5 Ne8 9.0-0-0 White has a slight edge.

8...b5

9.Bd3

Or 9.e5 b4 10.Na4 when White has threats b4 and f6.

9...Bb7



A good continuation for White is 10.e5 Nd5 11.Nxd5 Bxd5 12.Bh6 with chances for both sides.

10.d5 e6

Maybe 10...c6 which seems to favor Black.

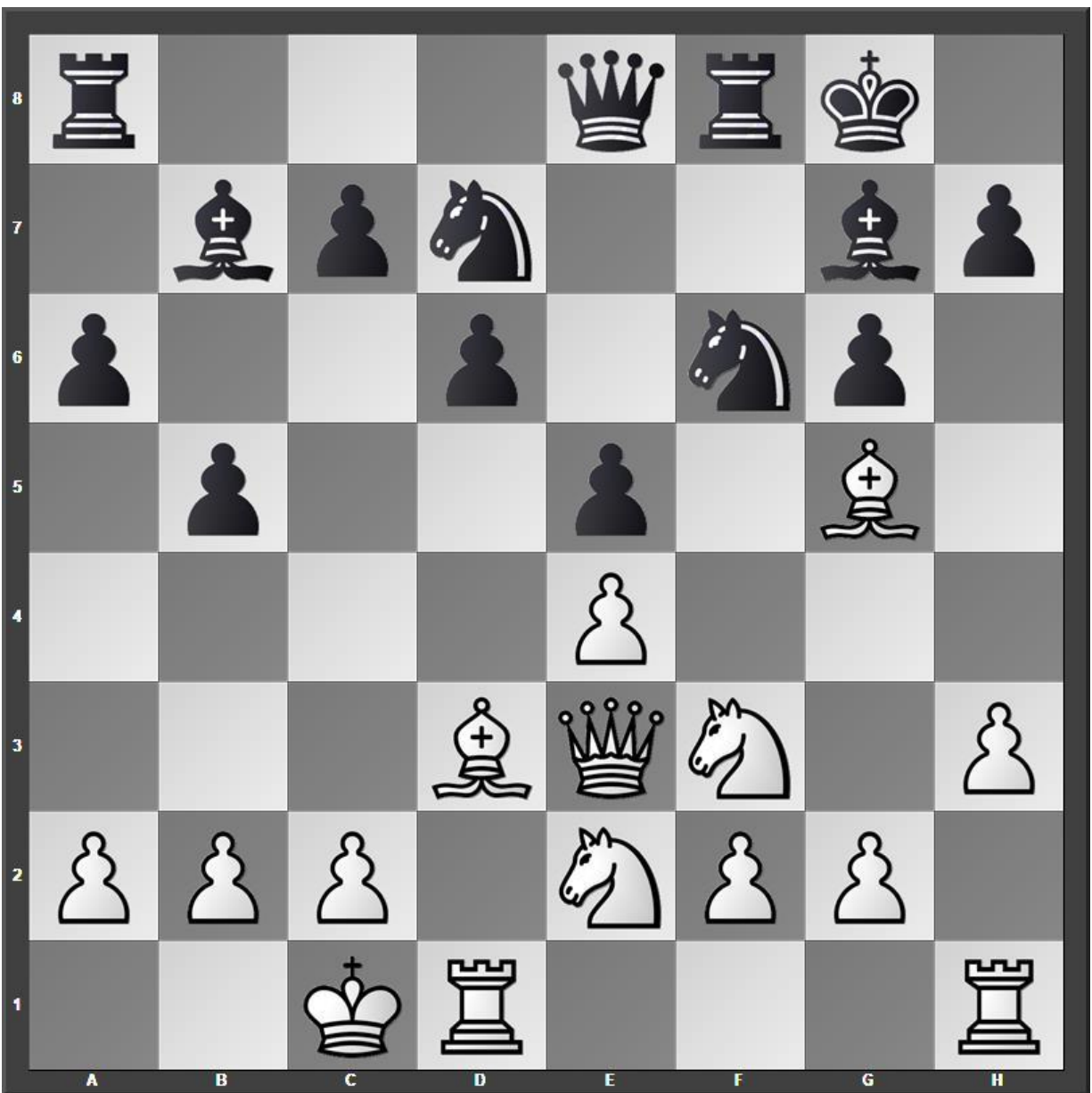
11.dxe6 fxe6

12.Bg5 Qe8

13.Qe2 e5

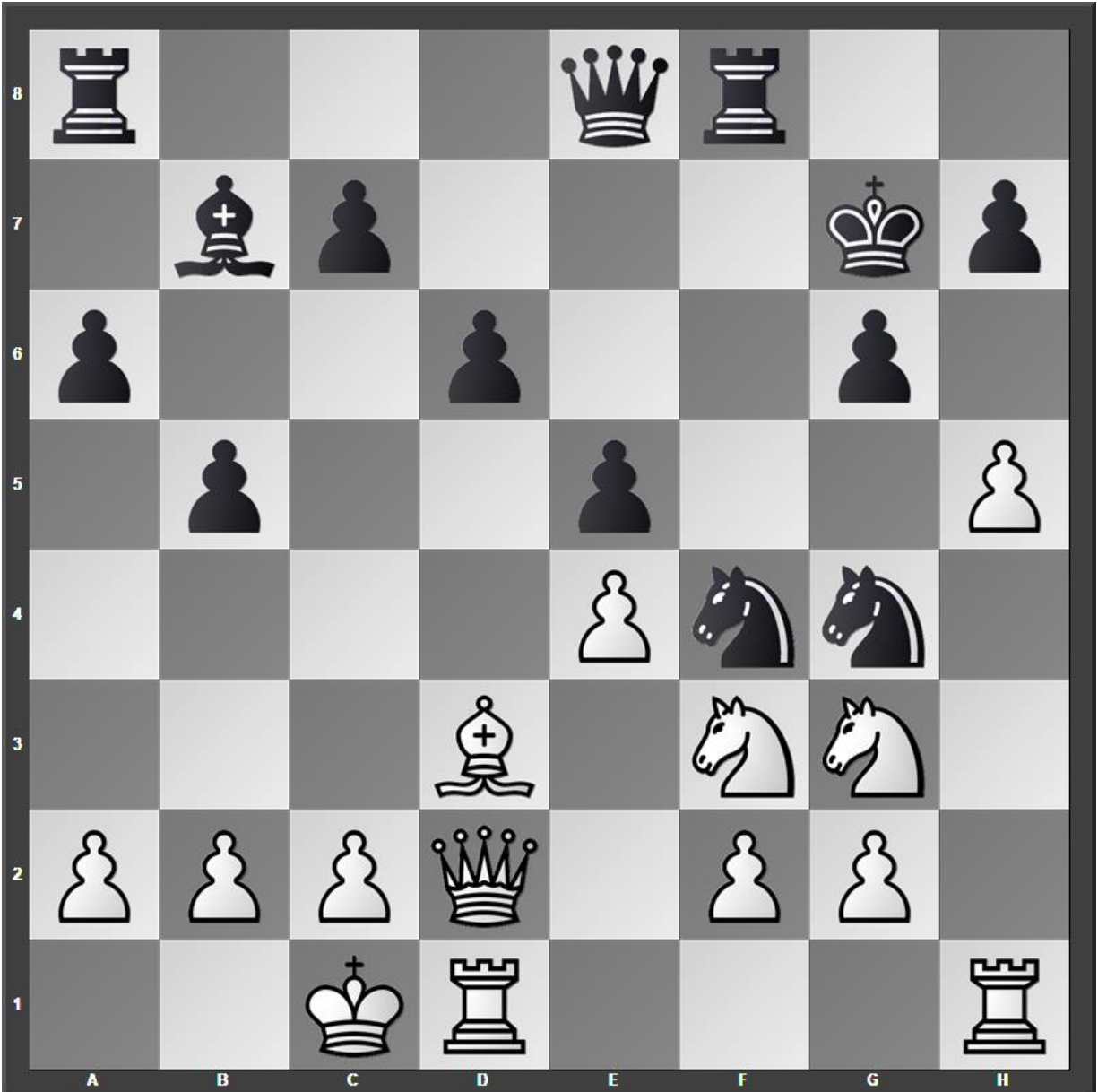
14.Qe3 Nh5

15.Ne2 Nhf6



16.Ng3 Kh8

17.Bh6 Nc5
18.Bxg7+ Kxg7
19.h4 Ne6
20.h5 Ng4
21.Qd2 Nf4



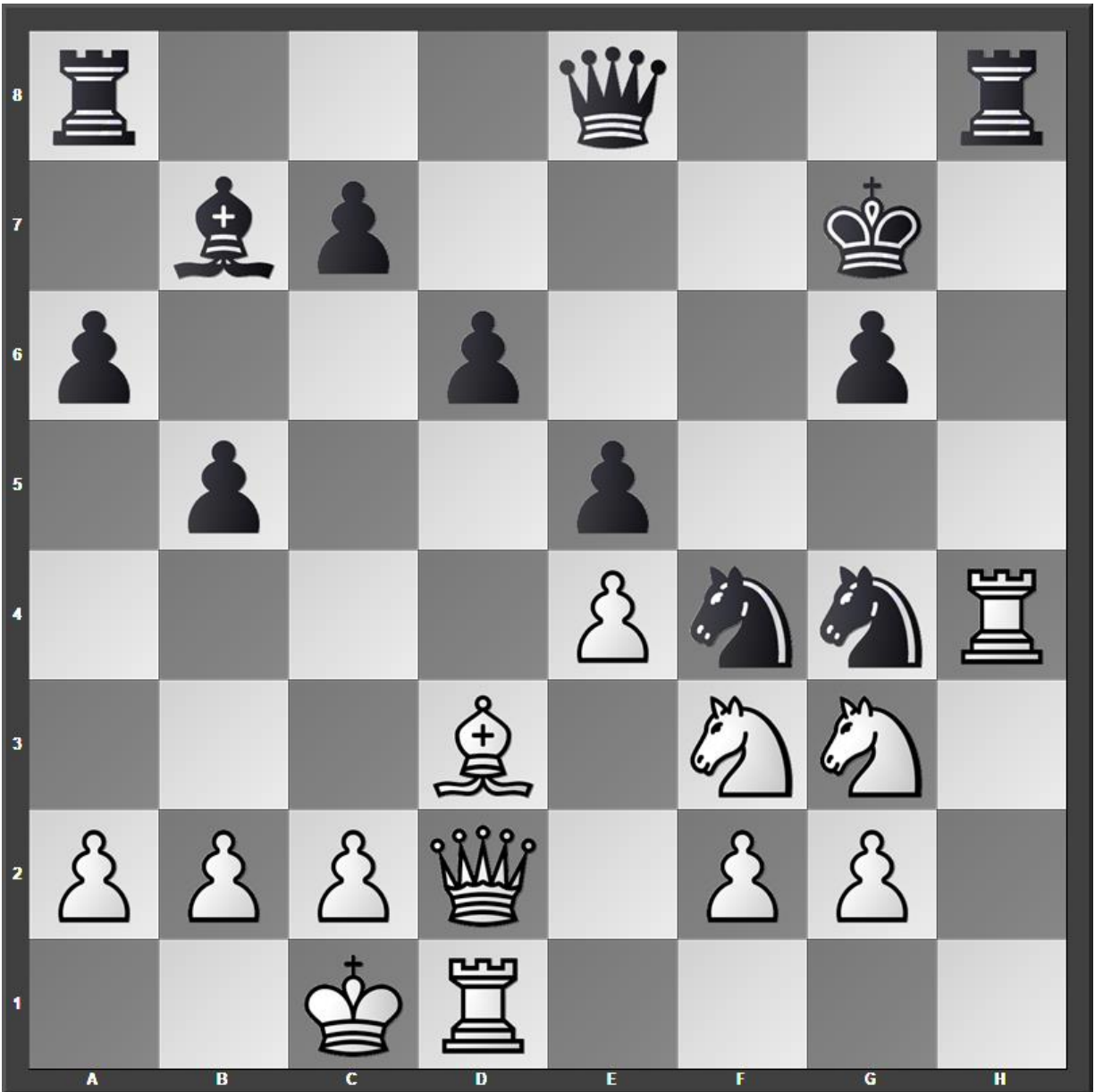
22.hxg6

Interesting is 22.Rh4 and White stands better.

22...hxx6

23.Rh4 Rh8

Better is 23...Qd7 protecting the g4 knight.



24.Rdh1

Playing blitz too fast, I missed 24.Rxg4 winning a knight.

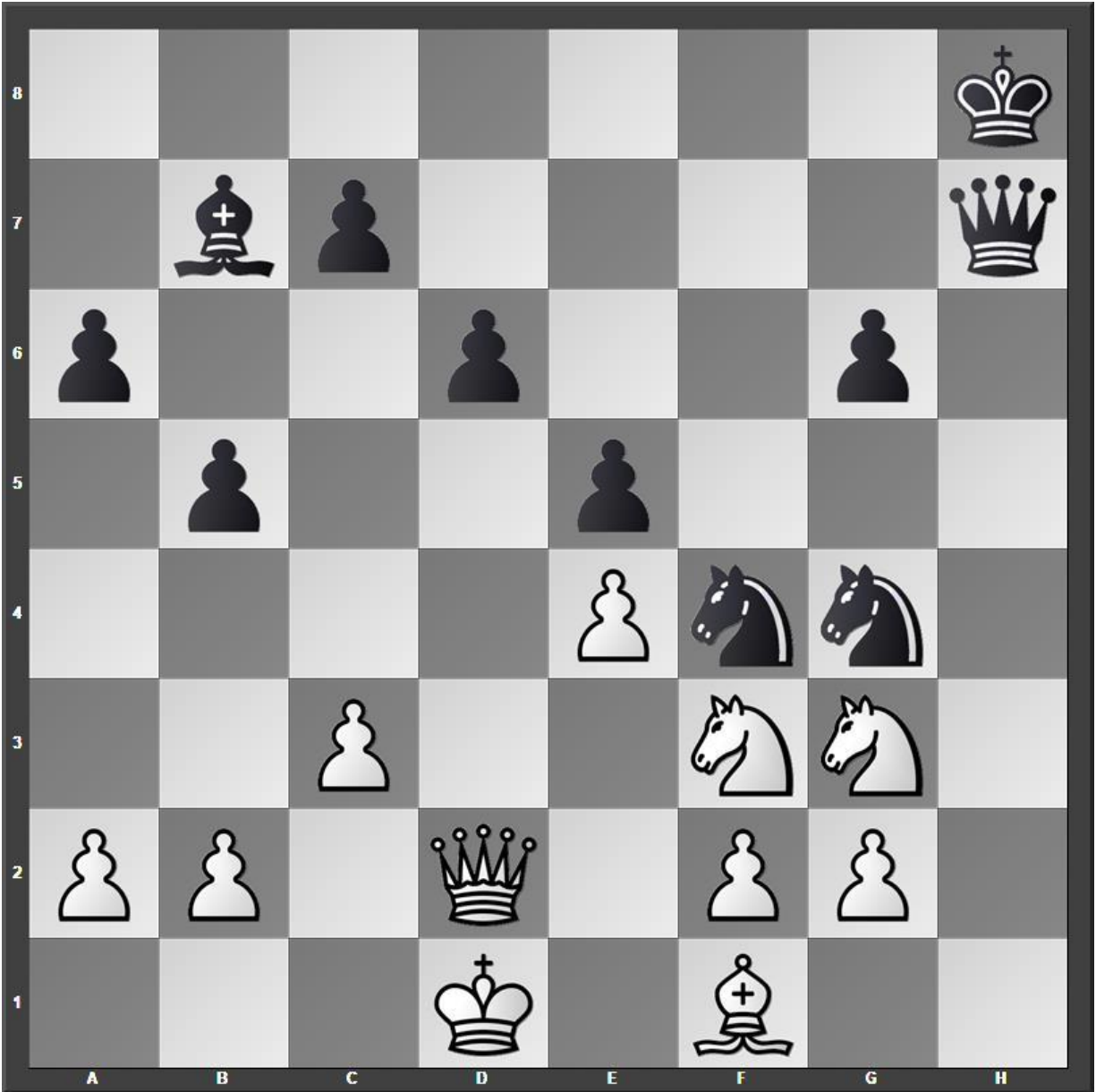
24...Rxh4

25.Rxh4 Nh6

26.Bf1

White can pressure both Black knights with 26.Ne2.

26...Qe7
27.Rh1 Rh8
28.c3 Ng4
29.Rxh8 Kxh8
30.Kd1 Qh7



31.Ne2

This should lose. A wild line is 31.Nxe5 dxe5 32.Qd8+ Qg8 33.Qh4+ Kg7
34.Qxg4 Qxa2 with equal chances.

31...Nxf2+

32.Kc2 Bxe4+

33.Kb3 Qf7+

34.Ka3 Qc4

35.b3 Qc5+

36.Kb2 N2d3+

37.Ka1



37...Nxe2

Black can invade with 37...Qf2 which makes it tough for White to hold all the pieces.

38.Bxe2 Nf4

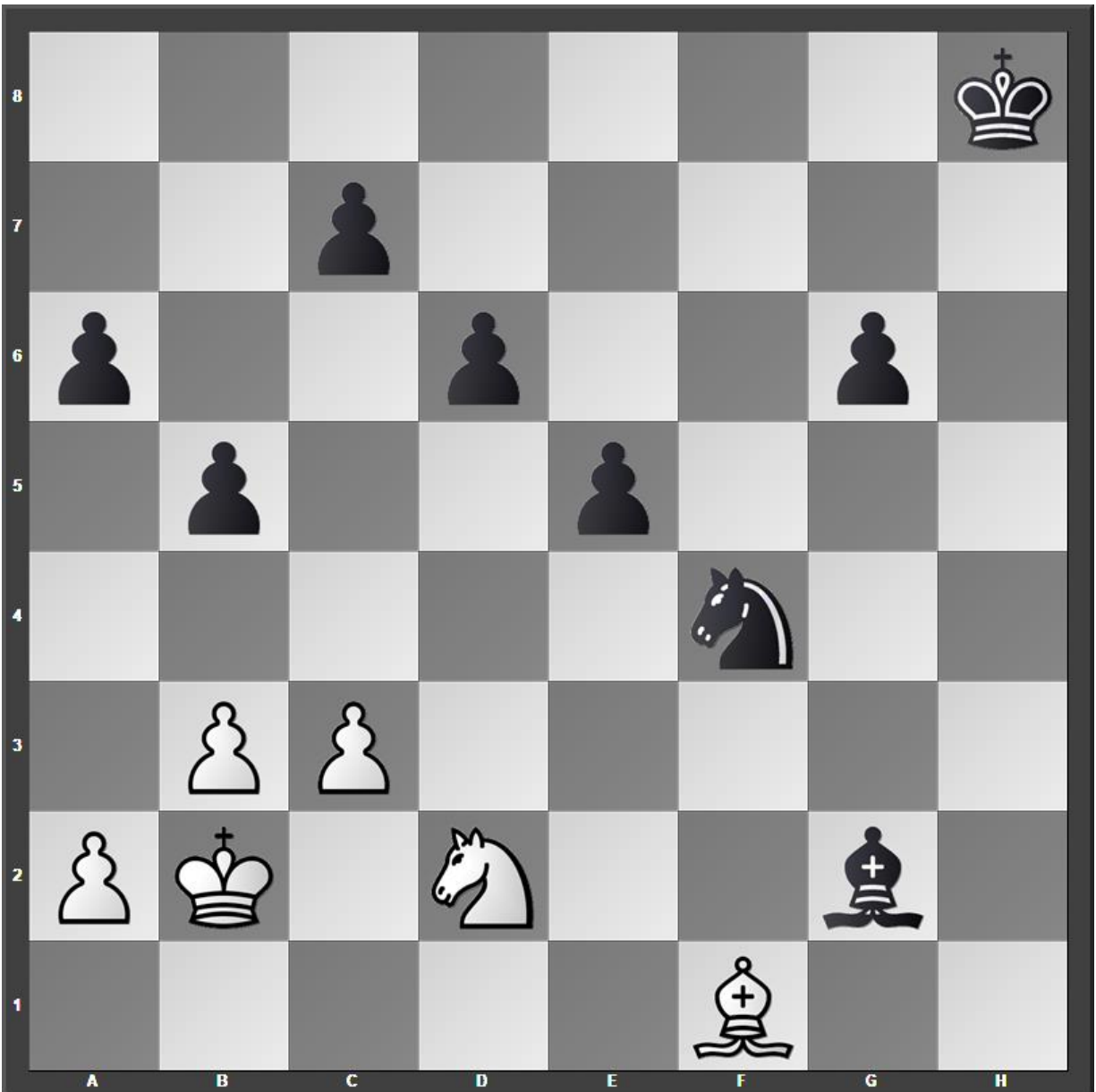
39.Bf1 Qd5

If 40.c4 bxc4 41.Qxd5 Bxd5 42.bxc4 Bb7 and Black is up two pawns.

40.Kb2 Qxd2+

Stronger is 40...Bxf3 41.Qxd5 Bxd5 and Black is winning.

41.Nxd2 Bxg2 0-1



Black has a three-pawn advantage in a knight endgame.

White resigns

Game 16 – B08 [5.e5 dxe5 6.Nxe5]

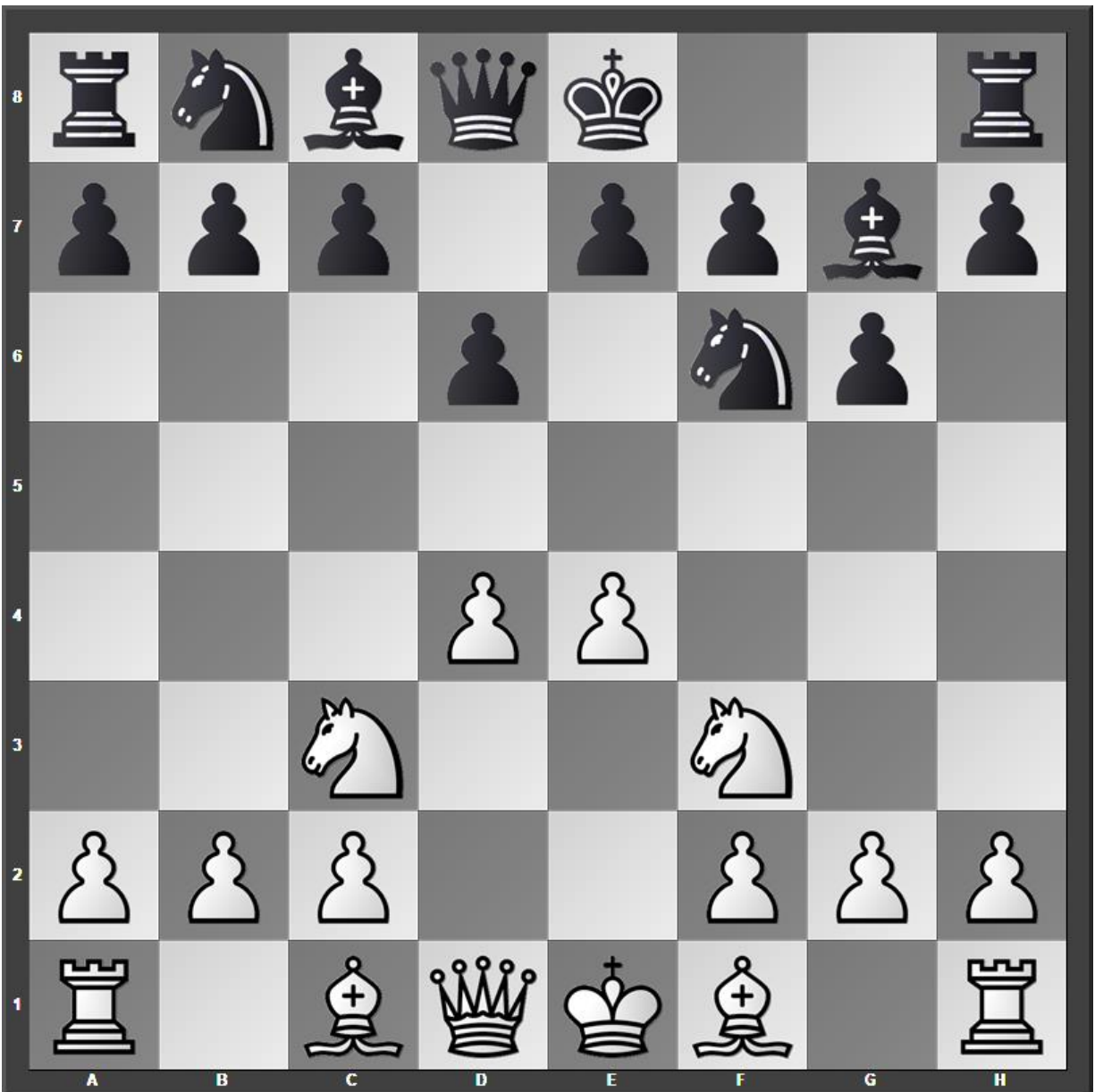
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 28.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.Nf3 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.d4 Bg7



This position may be reached from many move orders.

5.e5 dxe5

6.Nxe5 0-0

Interesting is 7.Bc4 Nfd7 with chances for both sides.

7.Bg5 c6

Sharper is 7...c5 8.dxc5 Qc7 9.Nd3 Na6 with equality.

8.h4 Nd5

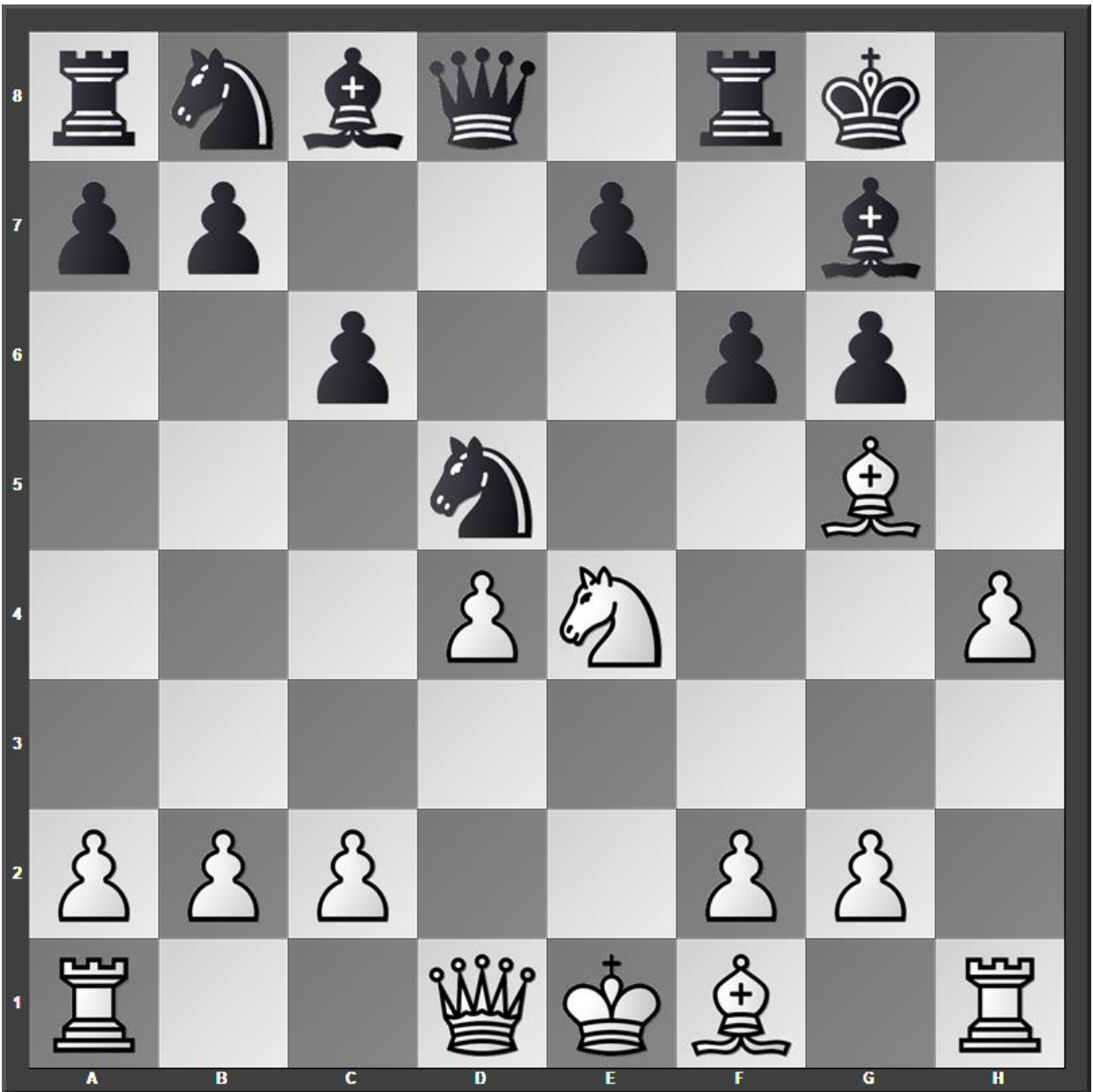


9.Ne4

White loses a piece to a pawn fork. If 9.h5 Qb6 10.Na4 Qb4+ 11.c3 Qd6 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.Nf3 e5 the fight is on.

9...f6

10.Nxg6 hxg6



If 11.Bc1 e5 12.h5 Re8 13.Bd3 f5 and Black is up a knight.

11.c4 Nc7

I save my knight but stronger is 11...fxg5 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.Nc3 gxh4
14.Rxh4 e5 and Black has an extra bishop.

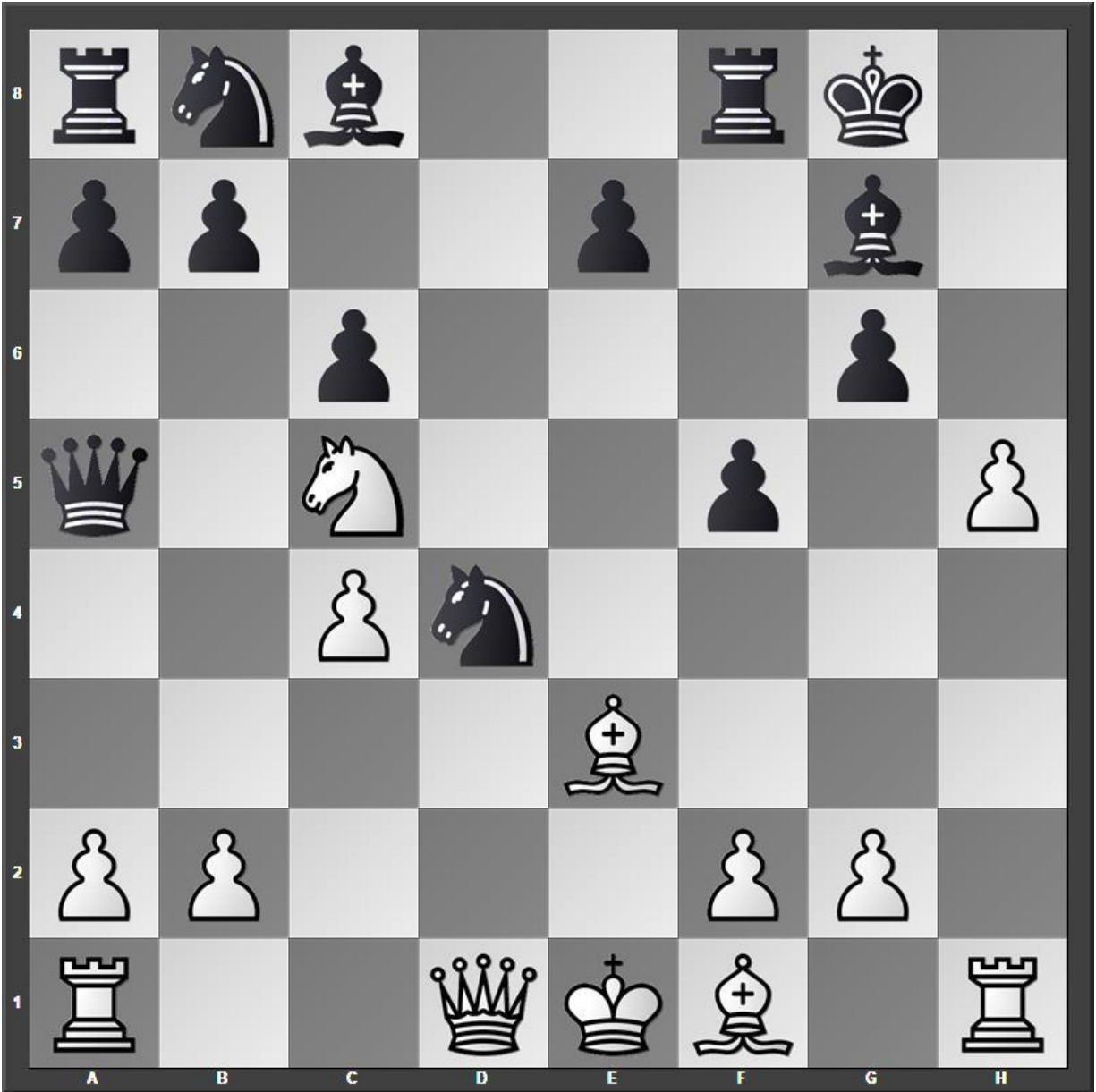
12.Bf4 Ne6

13.Be3 f5

14.Nc5 Nxd4

15.h5 Qa5+

The check and capture on c5 leaves Black up two pieces.



16.Bd2 Qxc5

17.hxg6 Qe5+

18.Be2 Qxe2+

19.Qxe2 Nxe2

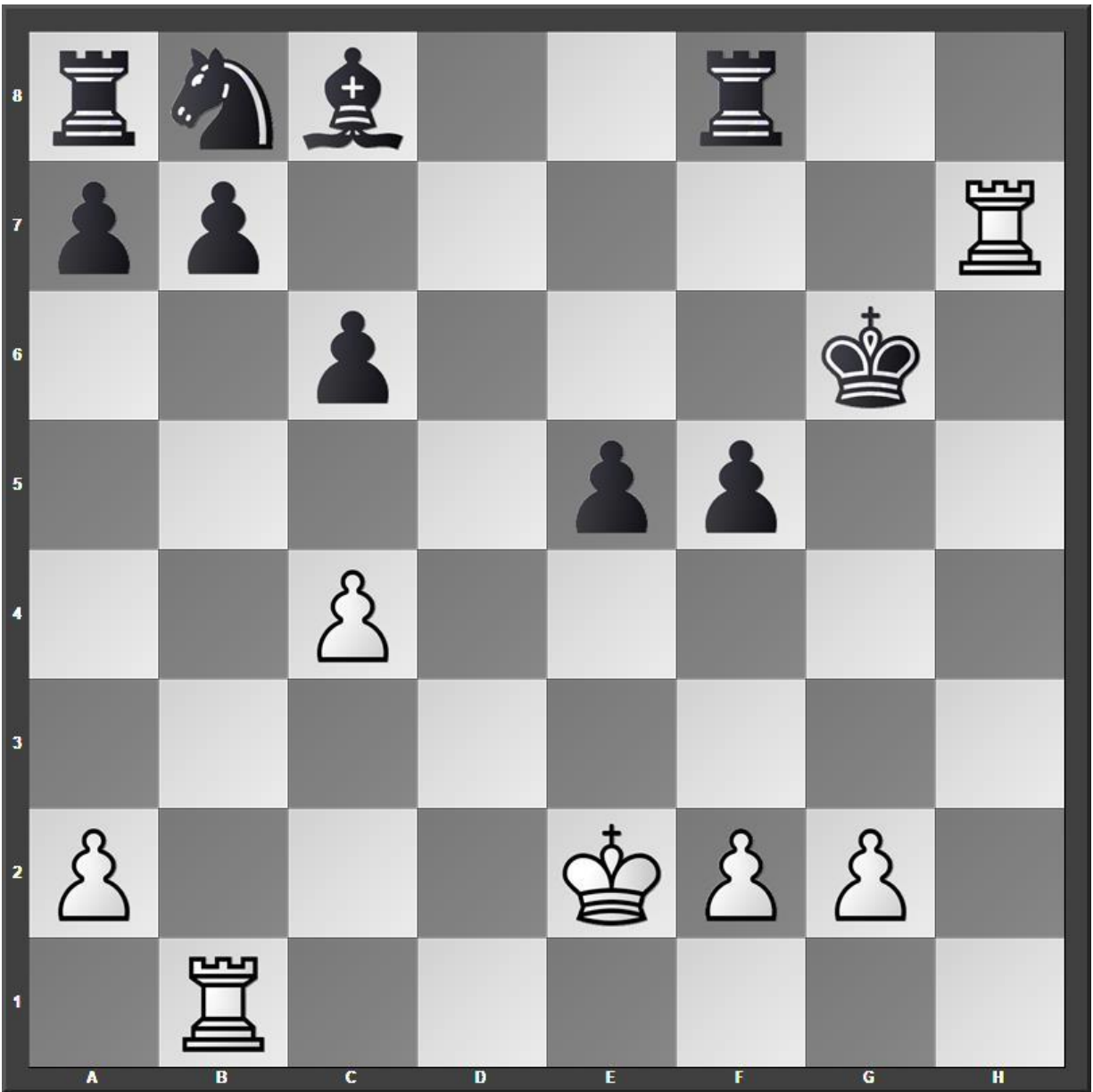
20.Kxe2 Bxb2

21.Rab1 Bg7

22.Bh6 e5

23.Bxg7 Kxg7

24.Rh7+ Kxg6



Black has two extra – but currently undeveloped – pieces.

25.Rbh1 f4

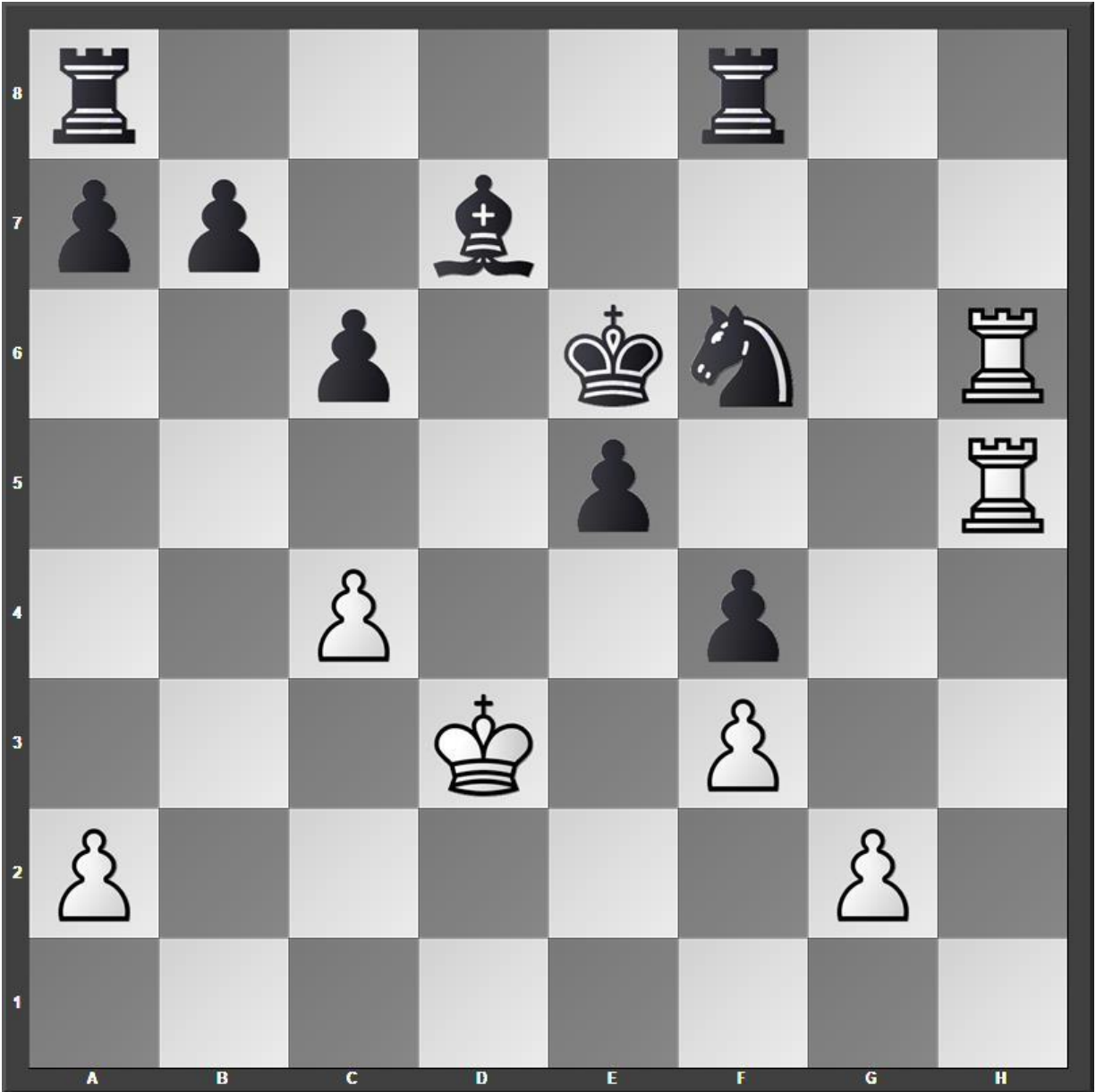
26.R1h6+ Kf5

27.f3 Nd7

28.Rh5+ Ke6

29.R7h6+ Nf6

30.Kd3 Bd7



If 31.Rh1 Rg8 32.R6h2 e4+ Black is winning. Instead, White allows Black to exchange the rooks.

31.Rg5 Rh8

32.Rhg6 Rag8

33.Rxg8 Rxg8

34.Rxg8 Nxg8

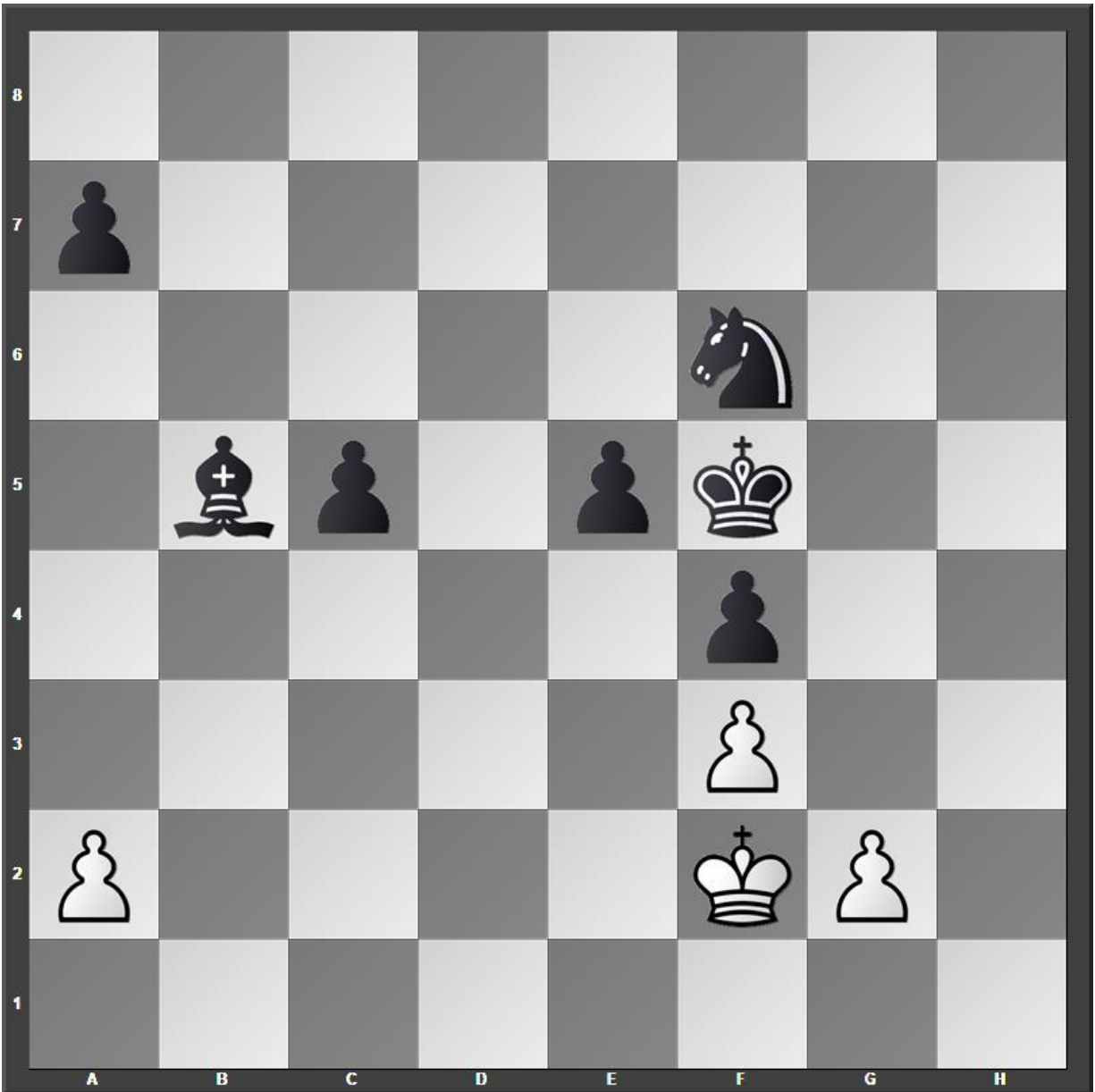
35.Ke4 Nf6+

36.Kd3 c5

37.Ke2 Kf5

38.Kf2 b5

39.cxb5 Bxb5



40.a3 Nd5

41.g3 fxg3+

42.Kxg3 c4

43.Kf2 Kf4

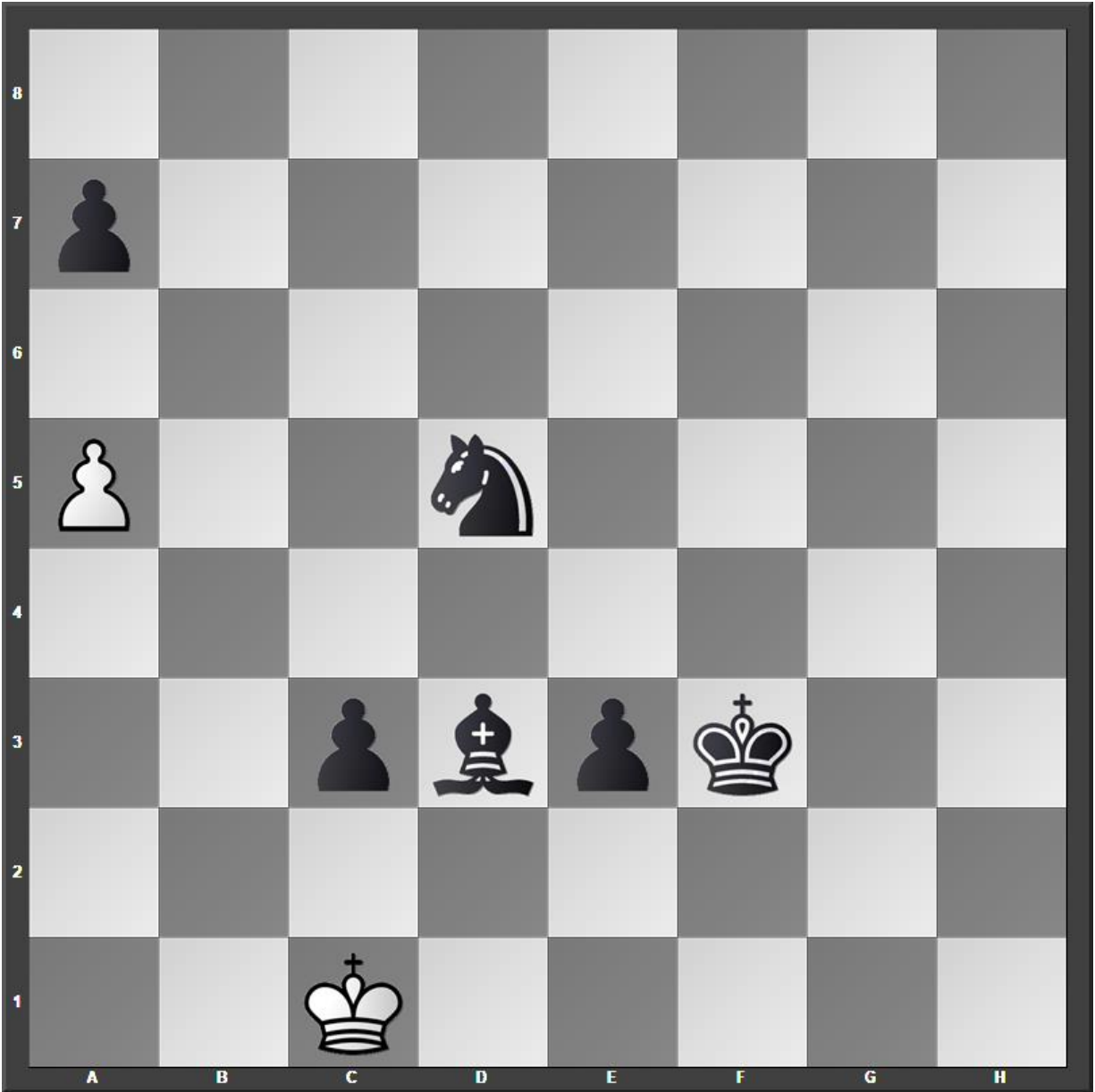
44.Ke1 c3

45.Kd1 Bd3

46.Kc1 Kxf3

47.a4 e4

48.a5 e3



Black has checkmate in 3 or stalemate in 1. I avoid 49...e2.

49.a6 Nb4

50.Kd1 e2+

51.Ke1 Nc2# 0-1

White is checkmated

Game 17 – B08 [5.Bd3 0-0 6.Be3]

Guest - Sawyer, Chess.com, 24.01.2022

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

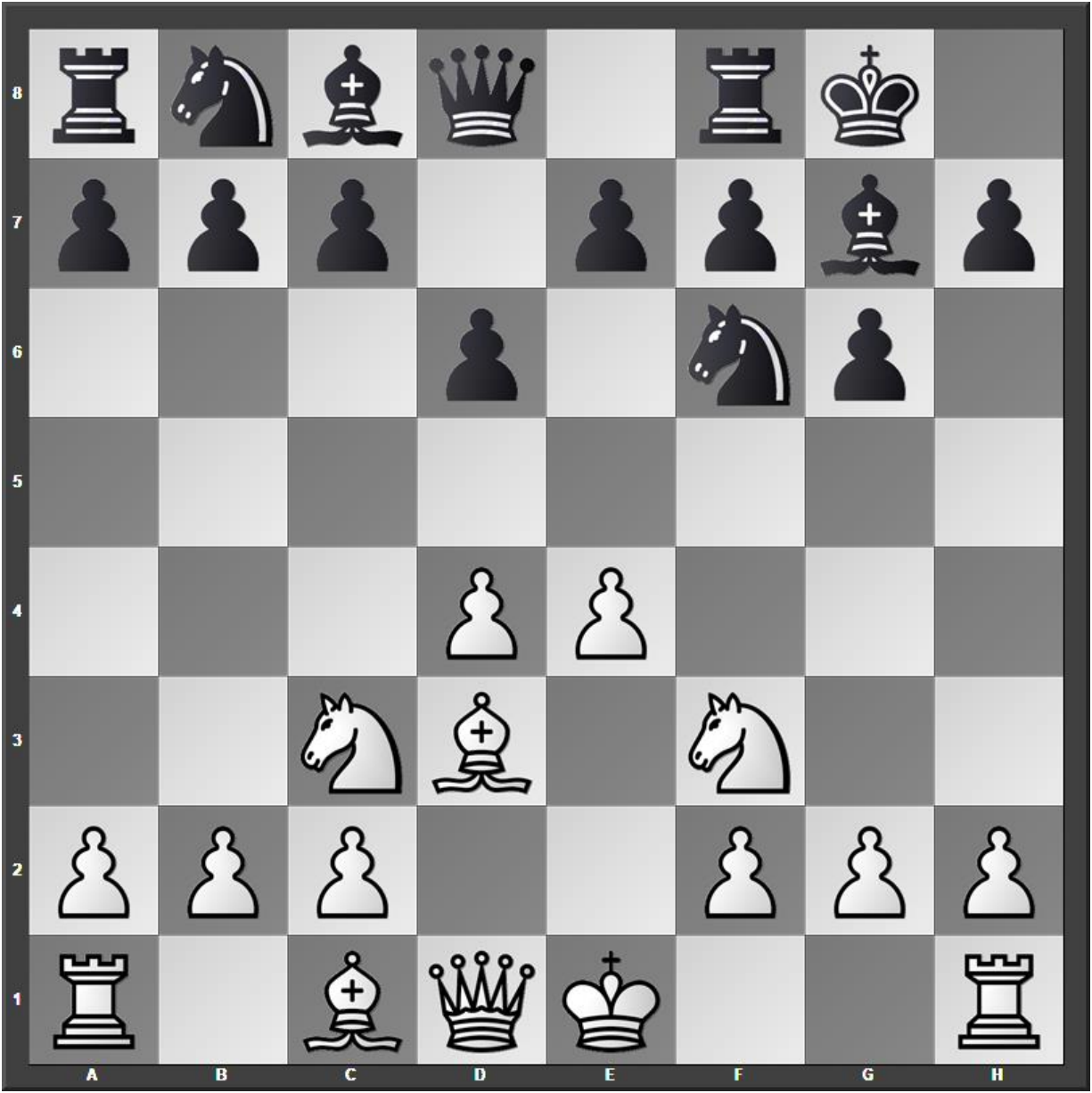
3.Nc3 g6

4.Nf3 Bg7

5.Bd3

The main line is 5.Be2 0-0 6.0-0.

5...0-0

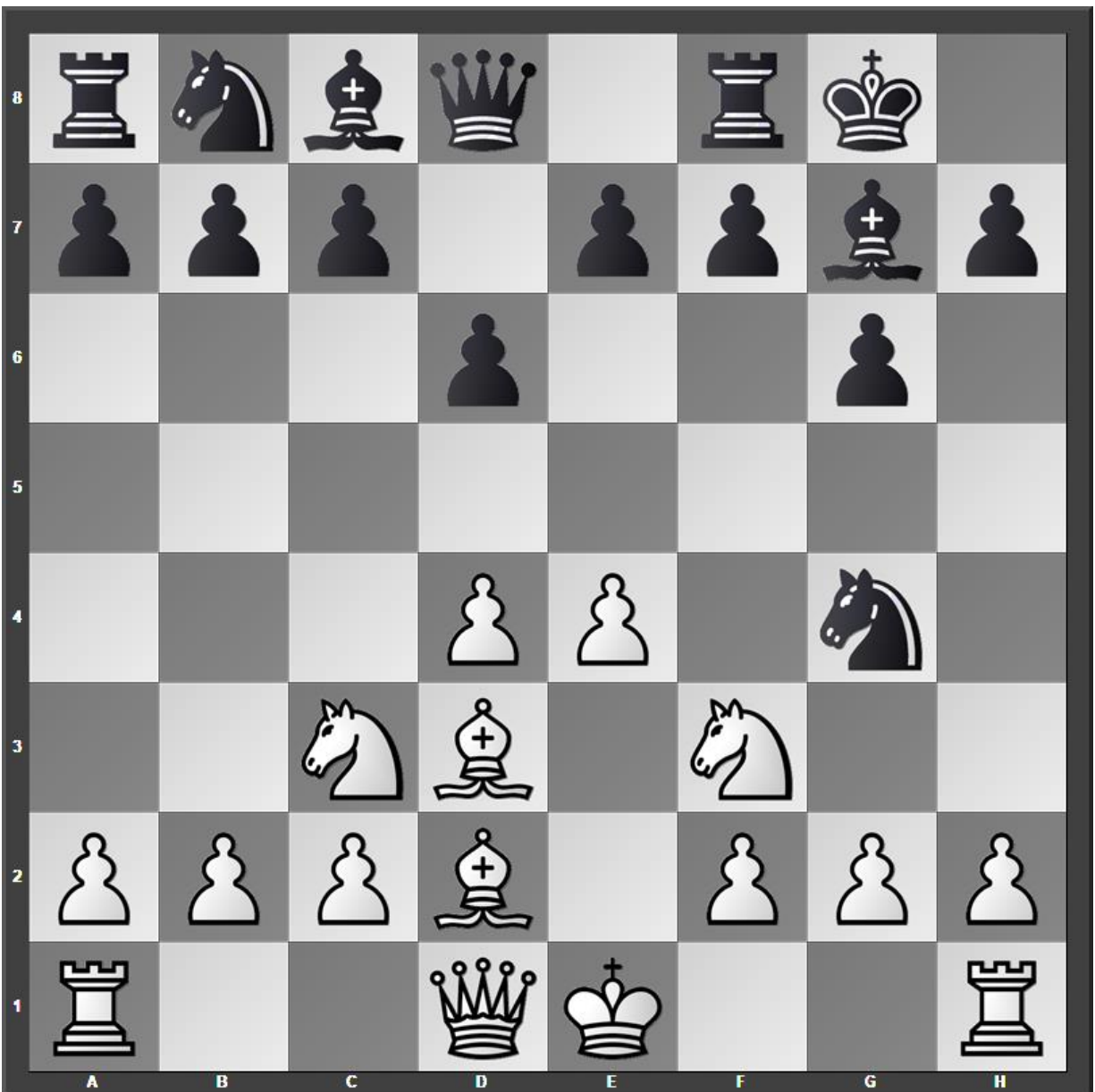


6.Be3 Ng4

A good alternative is 6...Nbd7.

7.Bd2

Or 7.Bg5 c5 8.h3 cxd4 or here 8.dxc5 dxc5 9.h3 Ne5 with chances for both sides.



7...c6

More reliable seems 7...e5 or 7...c5 with equality.

8.h3 Nf6

9.Ng5 e5

10.dxe5 dxe5

11.0-0 Nbd7

12.Qf3 h6



Now it seems logical is to sacrifice the knight by 13.Nxf7 Kxf7 14.Bc4+ Ke8 and White has some compensation.

13.h4 hxg5

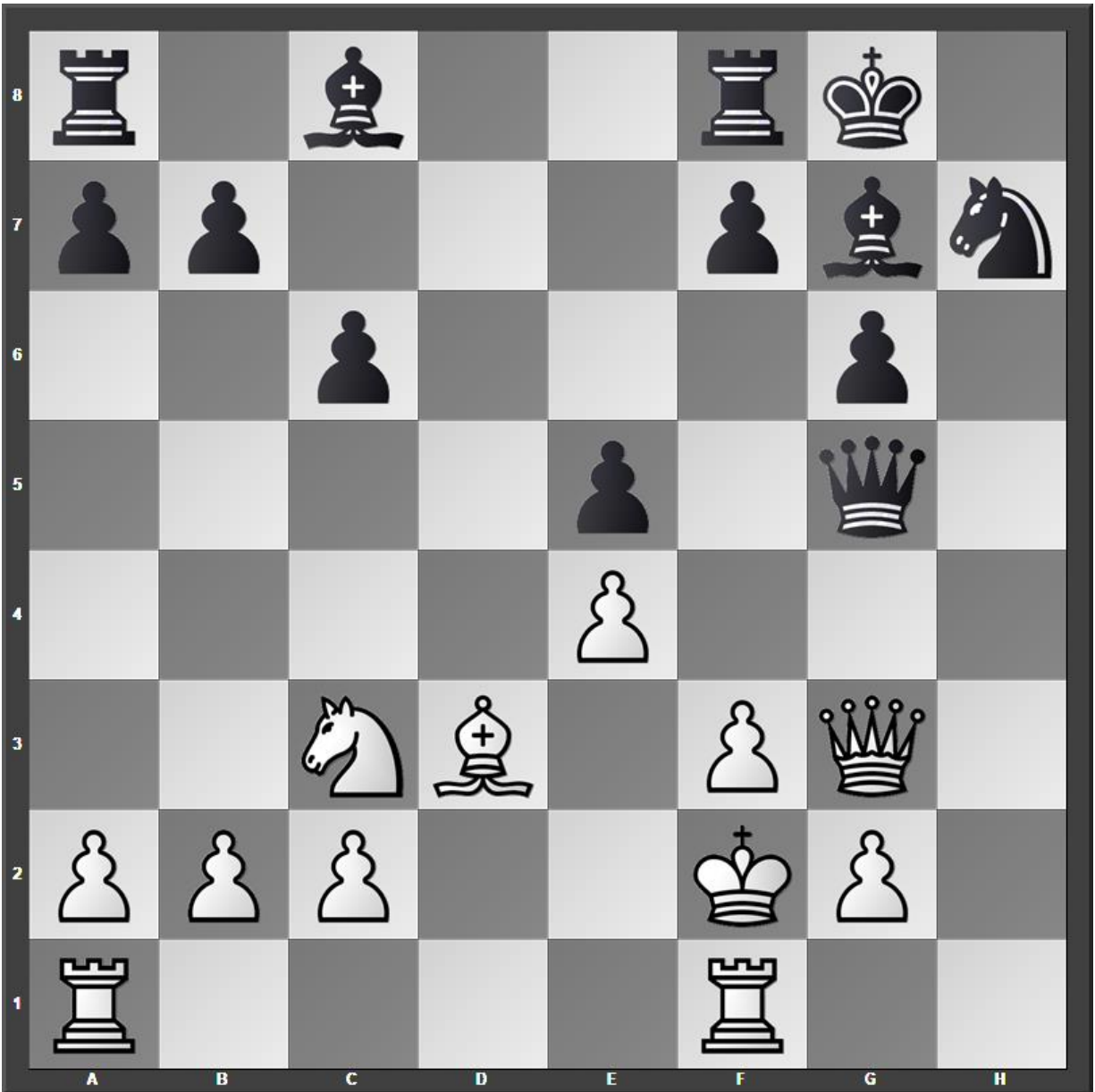
14.hxg5 Nh7

15.Qg3 Nc5

16.f3 Ne6

17.Kf2 Nexg5

18.Bxg5 Qxg5



19.Rh1 Qxg3+

20.Kxg3 Be6

21.Rh2 f5

22.Rah1 Nf6

23.Ne2 f4+

One possibility is 23...fxe4 24.fxe4 Nh5+ 25.Kh4 Bf6 mate.

24.Nxf4 exf4+

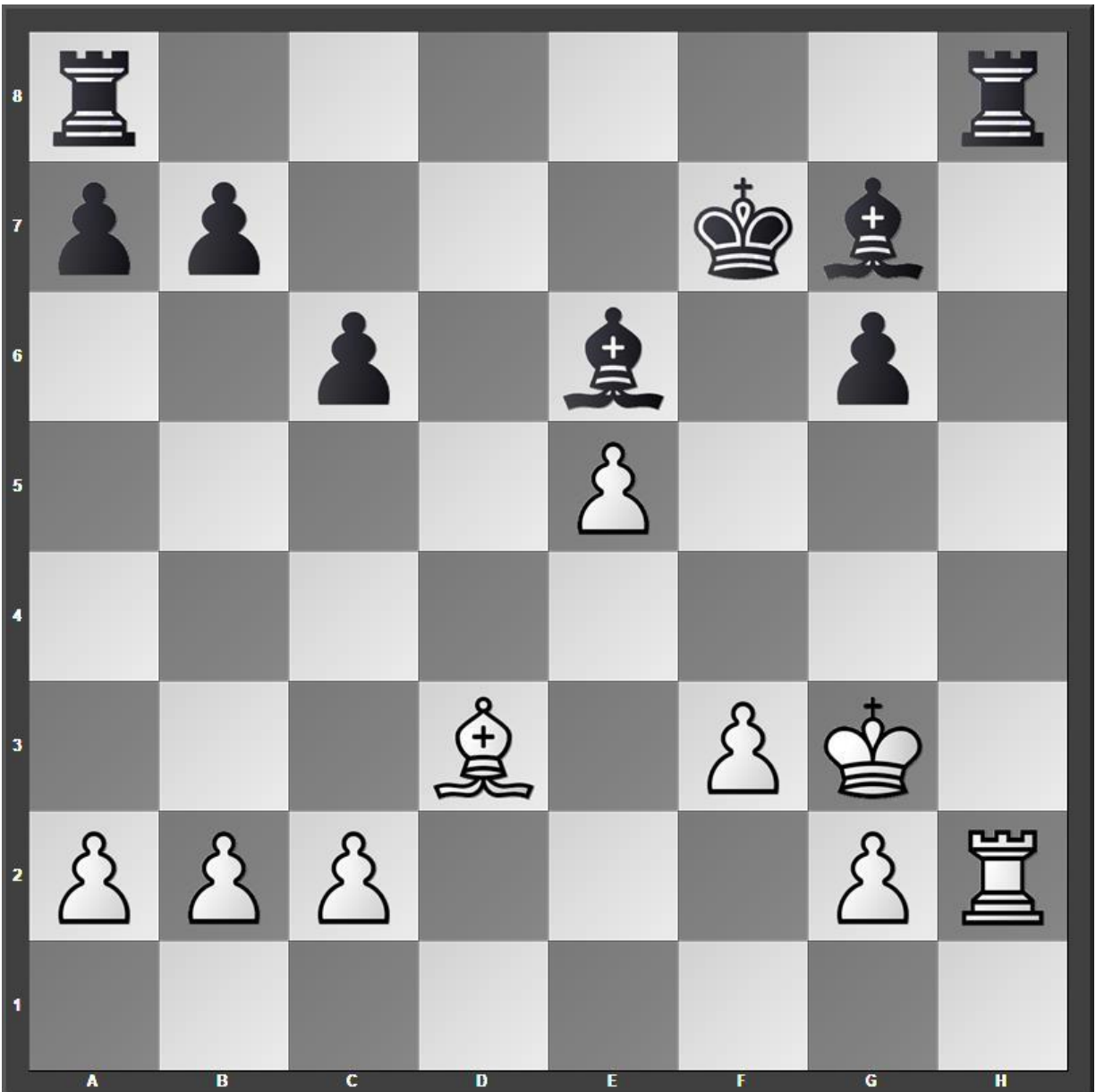
25.Kxf4 Ng4+

26.Kg3 Nxh2

Even stronger is 26...Be5+ 27.f4 Bxf4+ winning.

27.Rxh2 Kf7

28.e5 Rh8



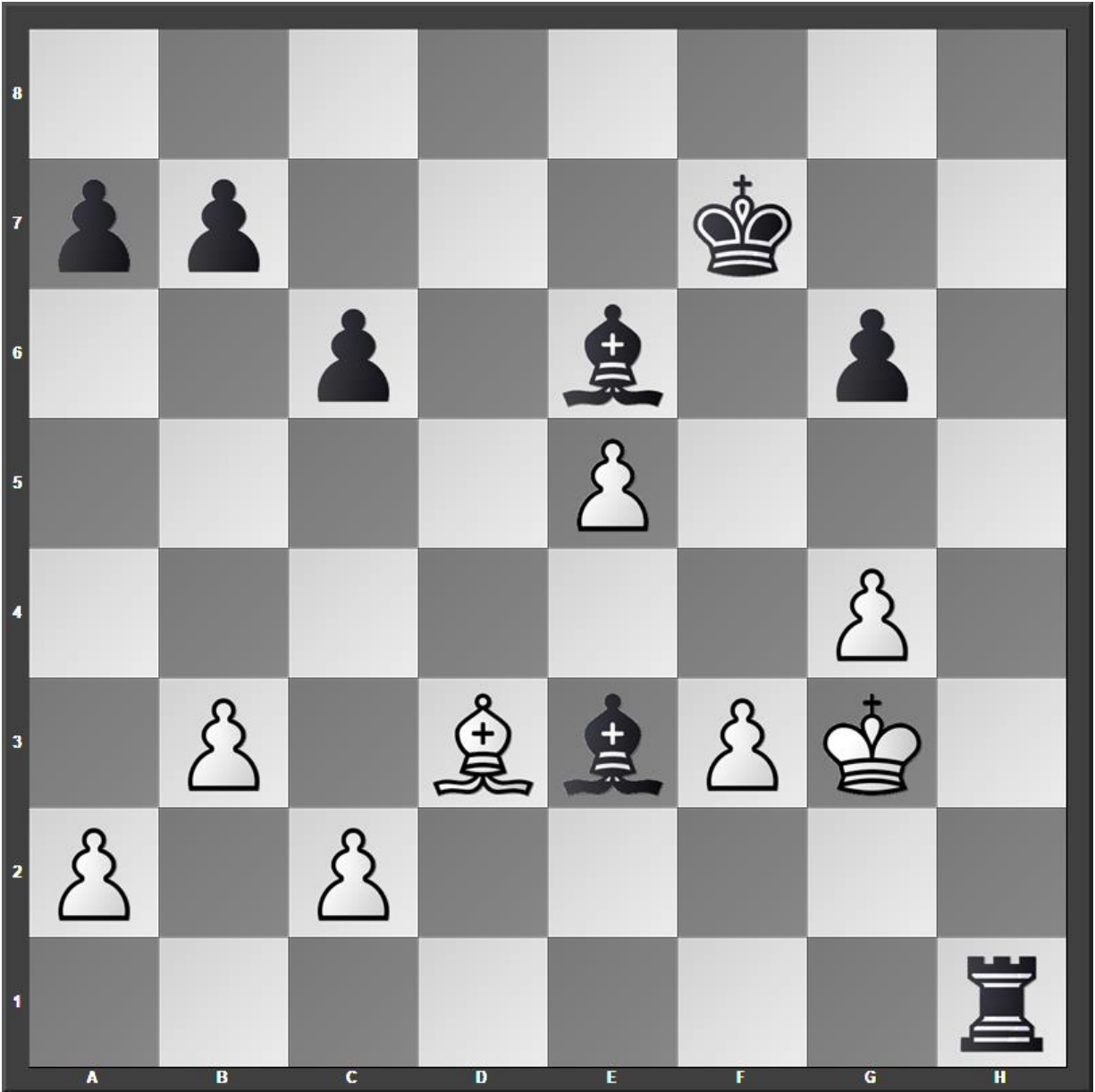
29.Rxh8 Rxh8

30.Kf4 Rh4+

31.g4 Rh1

32.b3 Bh6+

33.Kg3 Be3



34.a4 g5

35.Kg2 Ra1

36.Kg3 Bf4+

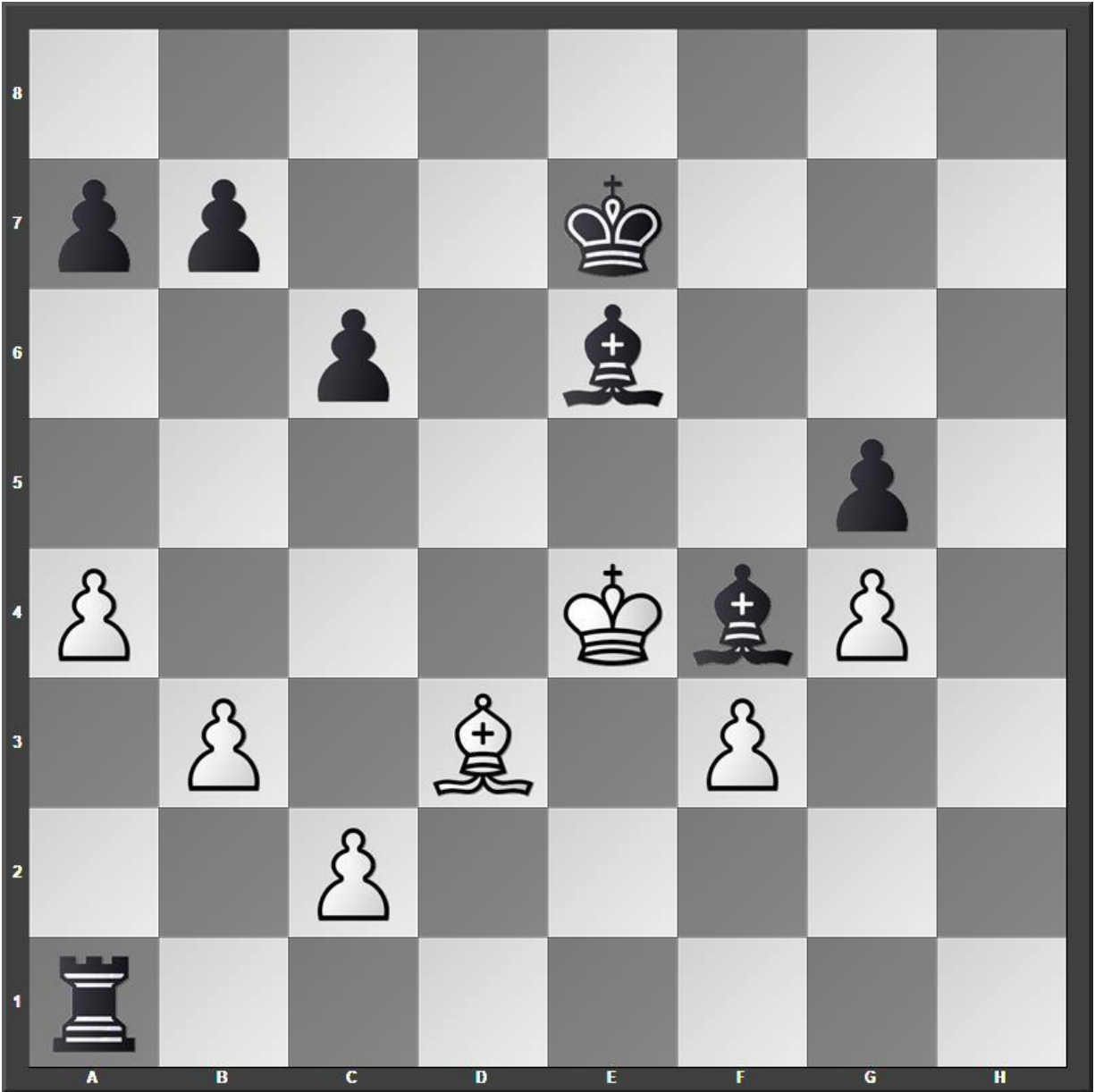
37.Kf2 Bxe5

38.Ke3 Ke7

If 39.Be4 Bf4+ 40.Ke2 Rh1 Black stay up the Exchange.

39.Ke4 Bf4

Or 39...Re1+ 40.Be2 Rxe2+ and Black wins a bishop.



40.Kd4 Kd6

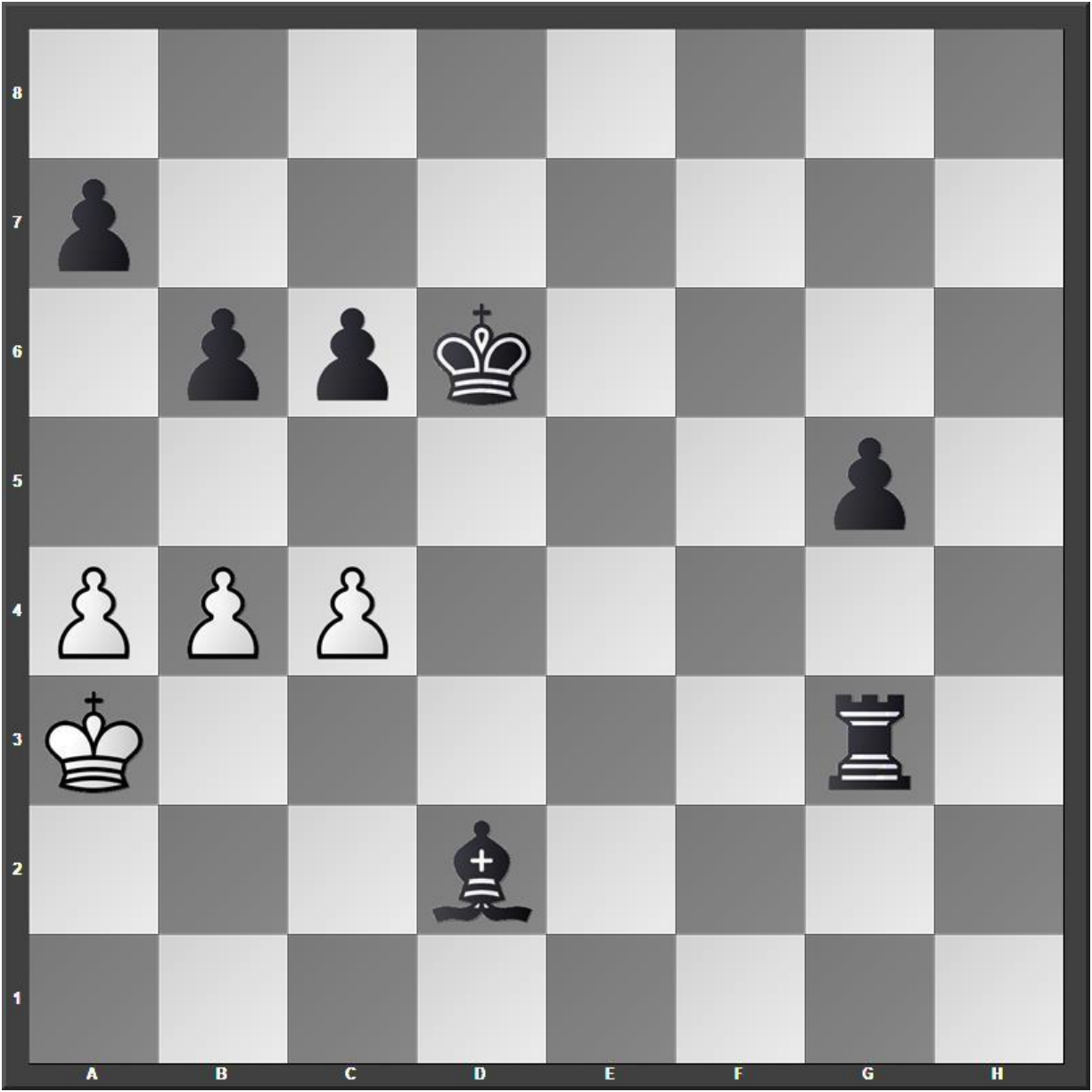
41.Ke4 Re1+

42.Kd4 Bd5

43.Kc3 Bxf3

44.Bf5 Rg1

45.Kb4 b6
46.c4 Bxg4
47.Bxg4 Rxg4
48.Ka3 Bd2
49.b4 Rg3+



50.Kb2 Bxb4
51.a5 Rc3 0-1

White resigns

Chapter 4 – Pirc 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3 Bg7

Game 18 – B07 [4.Be3 Bd7 5.Qd2 Nd7]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 20.09.2021

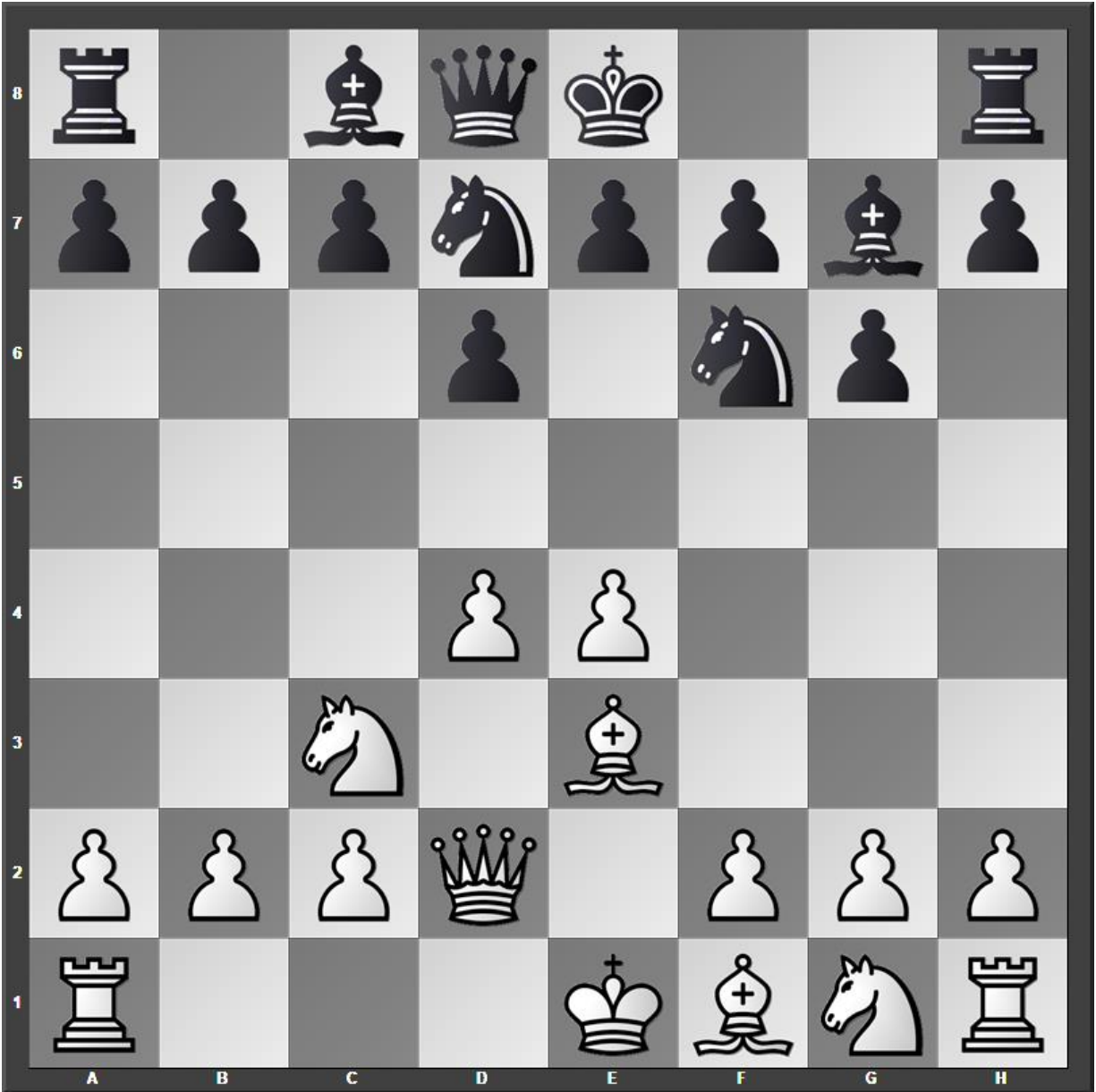
1.e4 g6

2.d4 Bg7

3.Nc3 d6

4.Be3 Nd7

5.Qd2 Ngf6



We transpose to a Pirc Defence. Next, I prevent 6...Ng4.

6.f3 c6

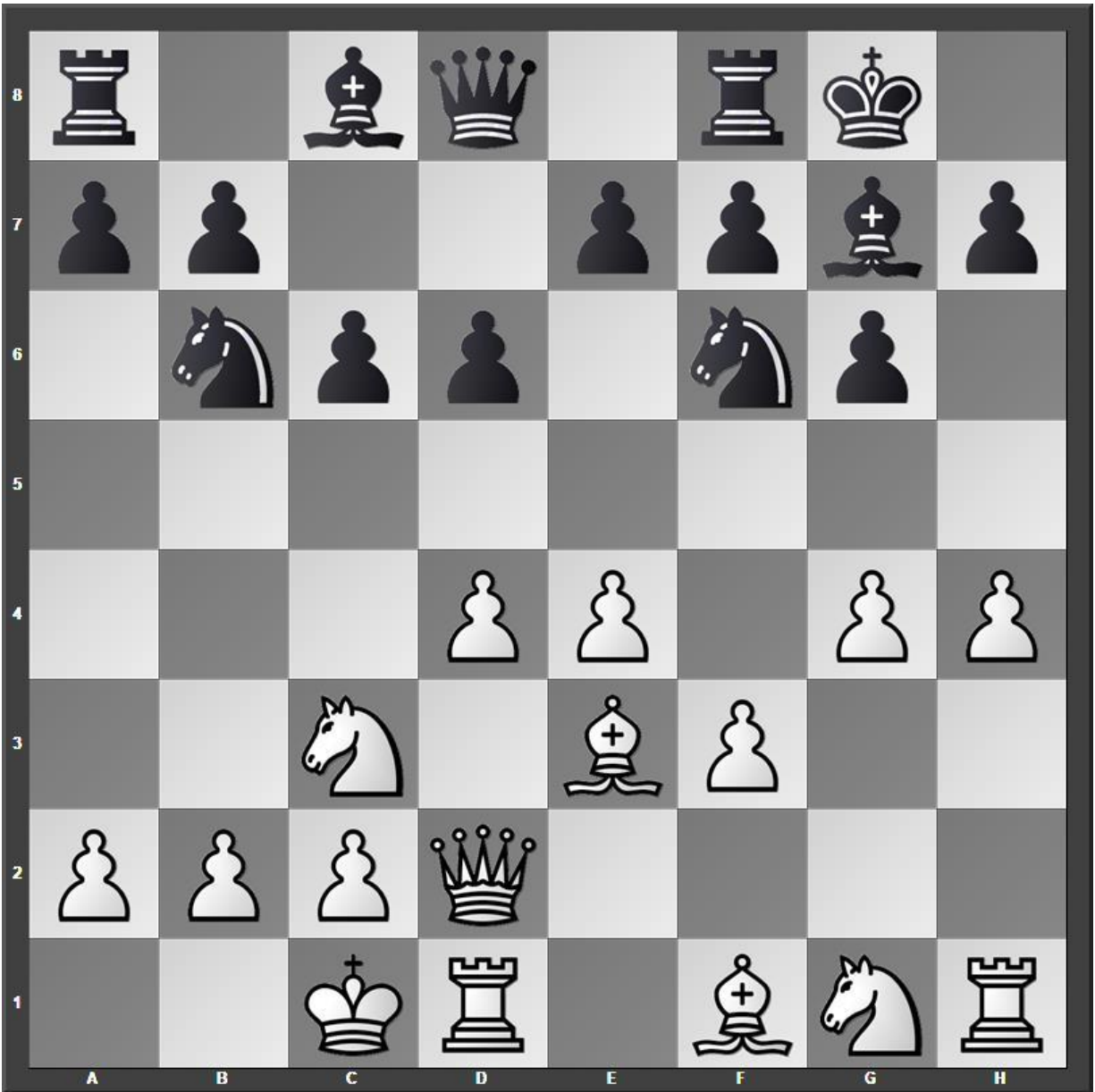
7.0-0-0 0-0

When Black castles kingside early in this line, White has an easy target.

Better is 7...b5.

8.g4 Nb6

9.h4



9...Be6

My opponent plans 10...Nc4 with a fork on my queen and the e3 bishop.
However, my f1 bishop has c4 covered.

10.Bh6 Nc4

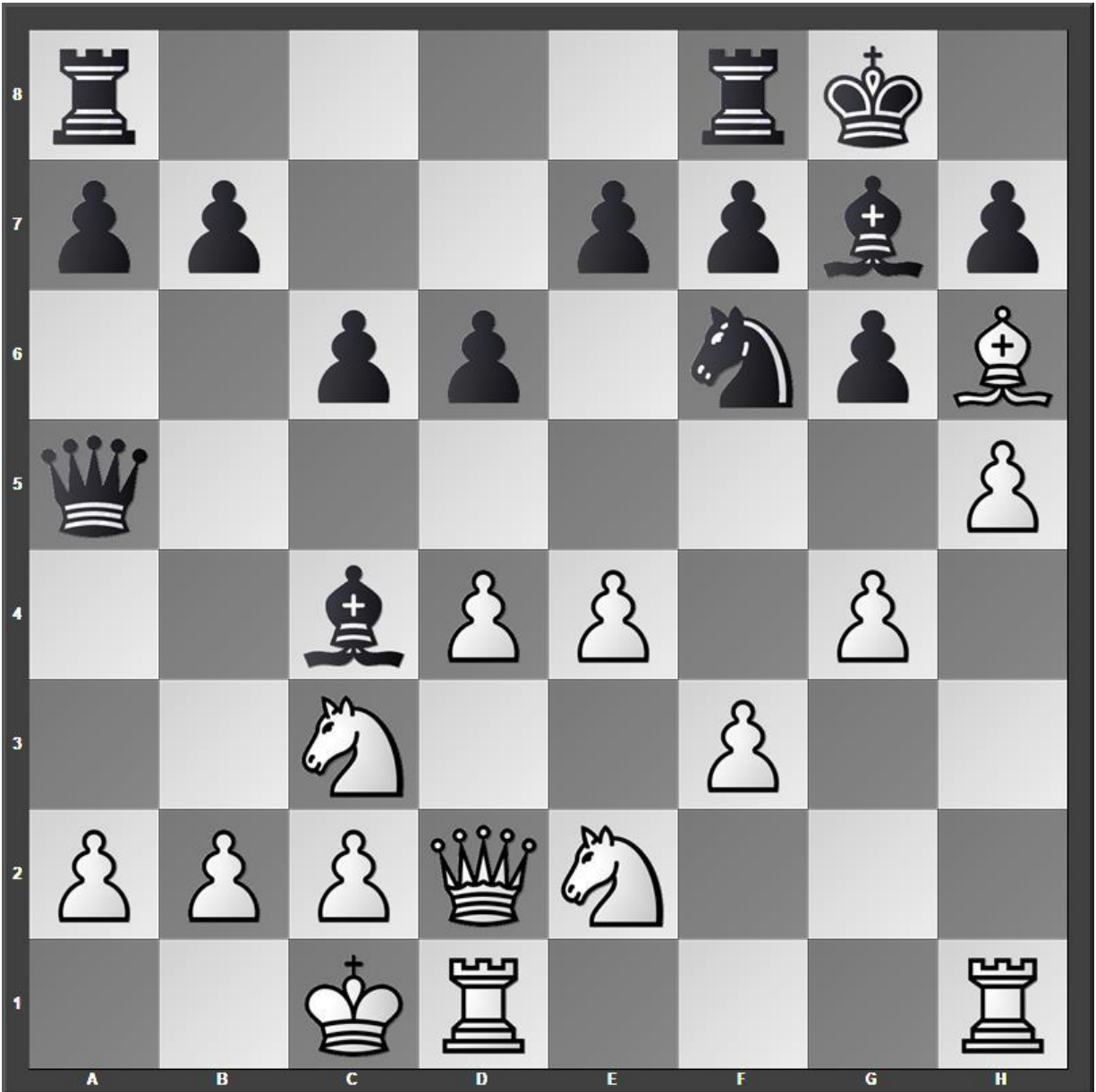
11.Bxc4 Bxc4

12.Nge2

My strategy is too slow. Better is 12.h5 to attack faster.

12...Qa5

13.h5

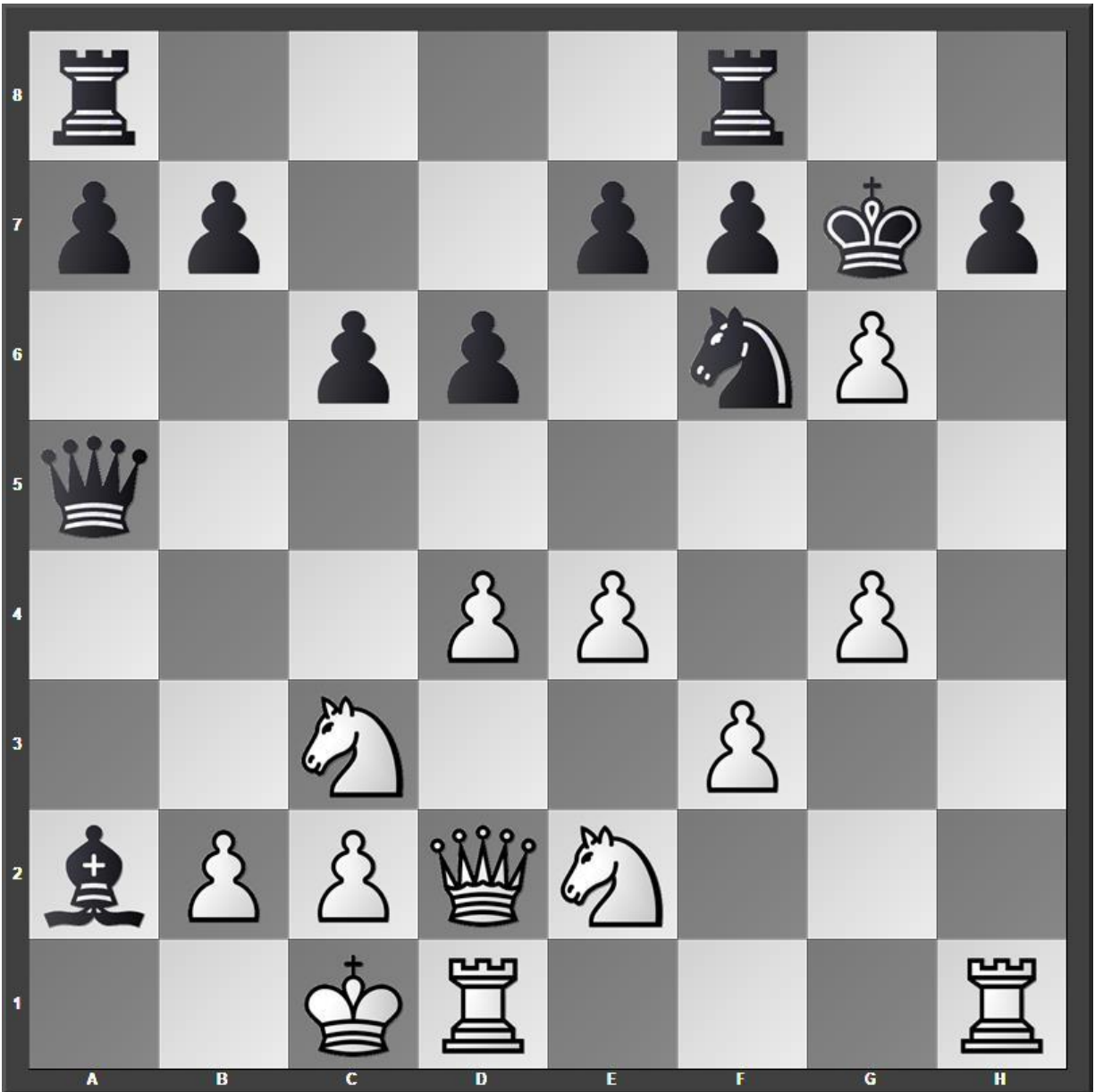


13...Bxa2

This loses. Instead, Black could mess up my plans with 13...Bxe2 14.Nxe2
Qxd2+ 15.Bxd2 to eliminate my attack.

14.Bxg7 Kxg7

15.hxg6



This pawn capture opens the h-file and prepares Qh6+.

15...hxg6

Or 15...fxg6 16.Qh6+ Kf7 17.g5 and White is winning.

16.Qh6+ Kg8

17.Qh8# 1-0

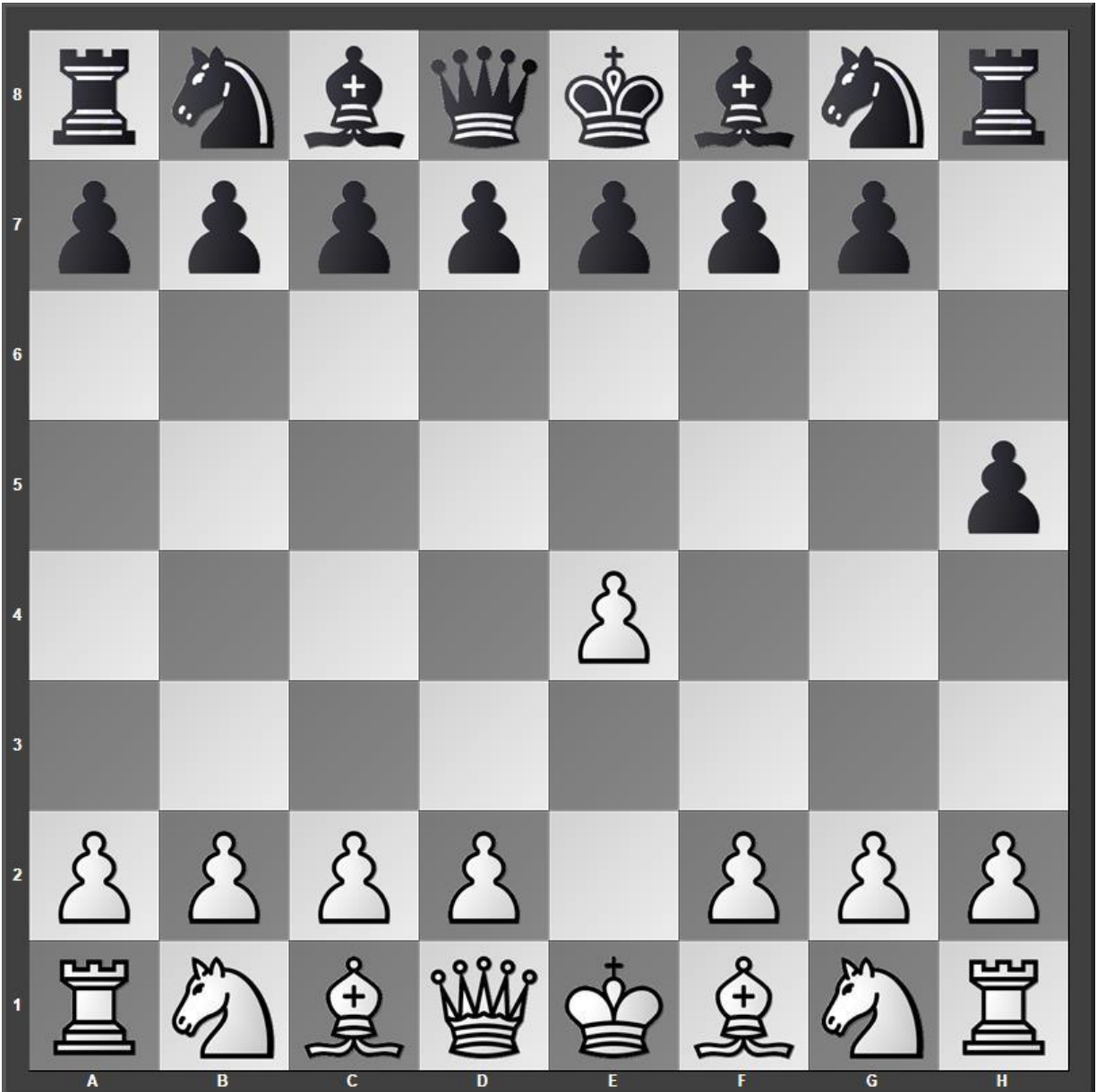
Black is checkmated

Game 19 – B07 [4.Be3 Bg7 5.f3 c6 6.Qd2 h5]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 22.07.2021

1.e4 h5

When I worked in prison about 20 years ago, I used to see inmates play this move against each other. They had time to play but most knew nothing about chess opening theory.



White scores 54% against all openings, but against 1.e4 h5 White scores 79%. Black would lose 100 rating points. I'm thinking Black is weak.

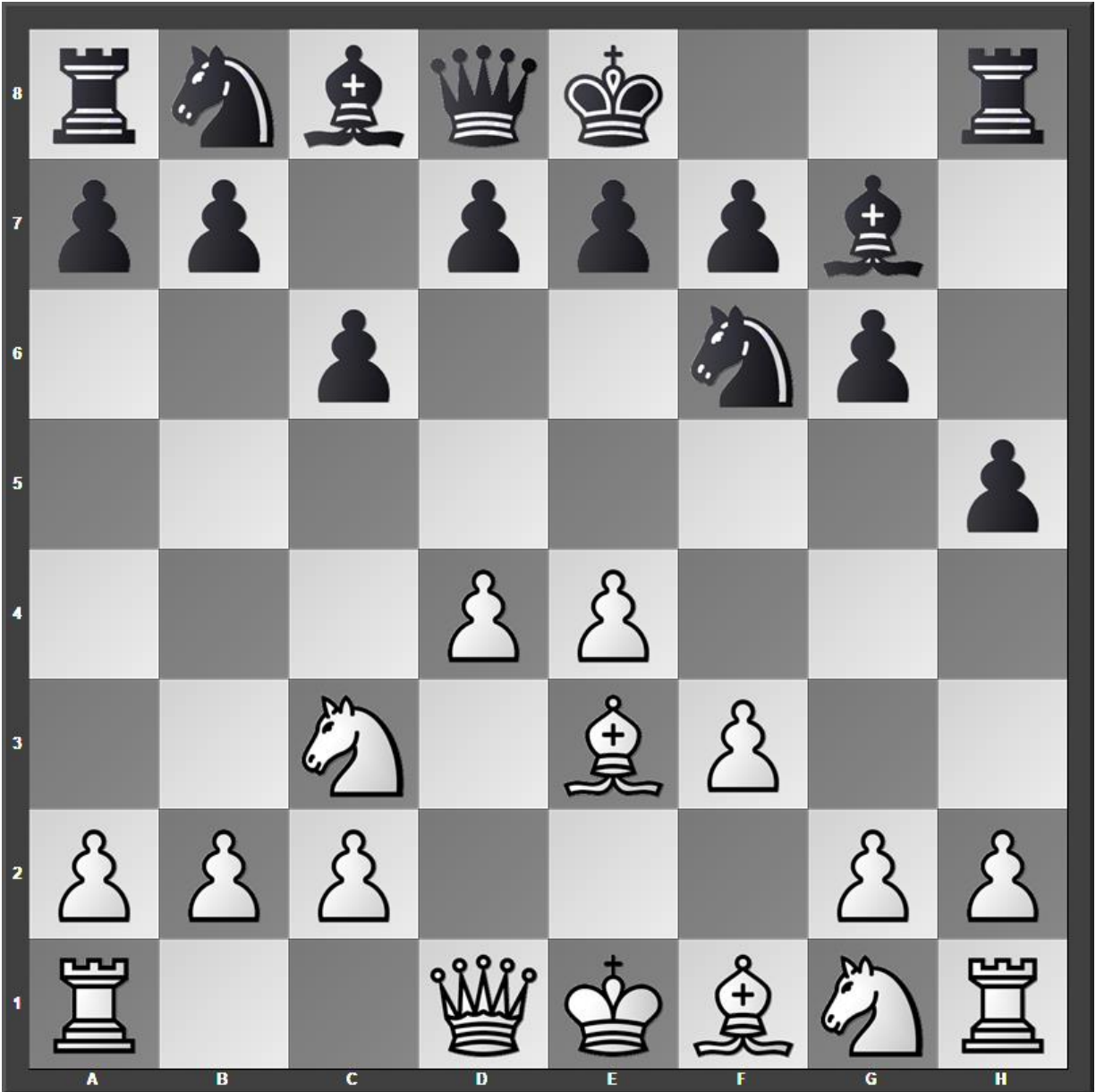
Wrong! This opponent makes impressive fast moves to outplay me on the queenside.

2.d4 g6

3.Nc3 Bg7

4.Be3 Nf6

5.f3 c6



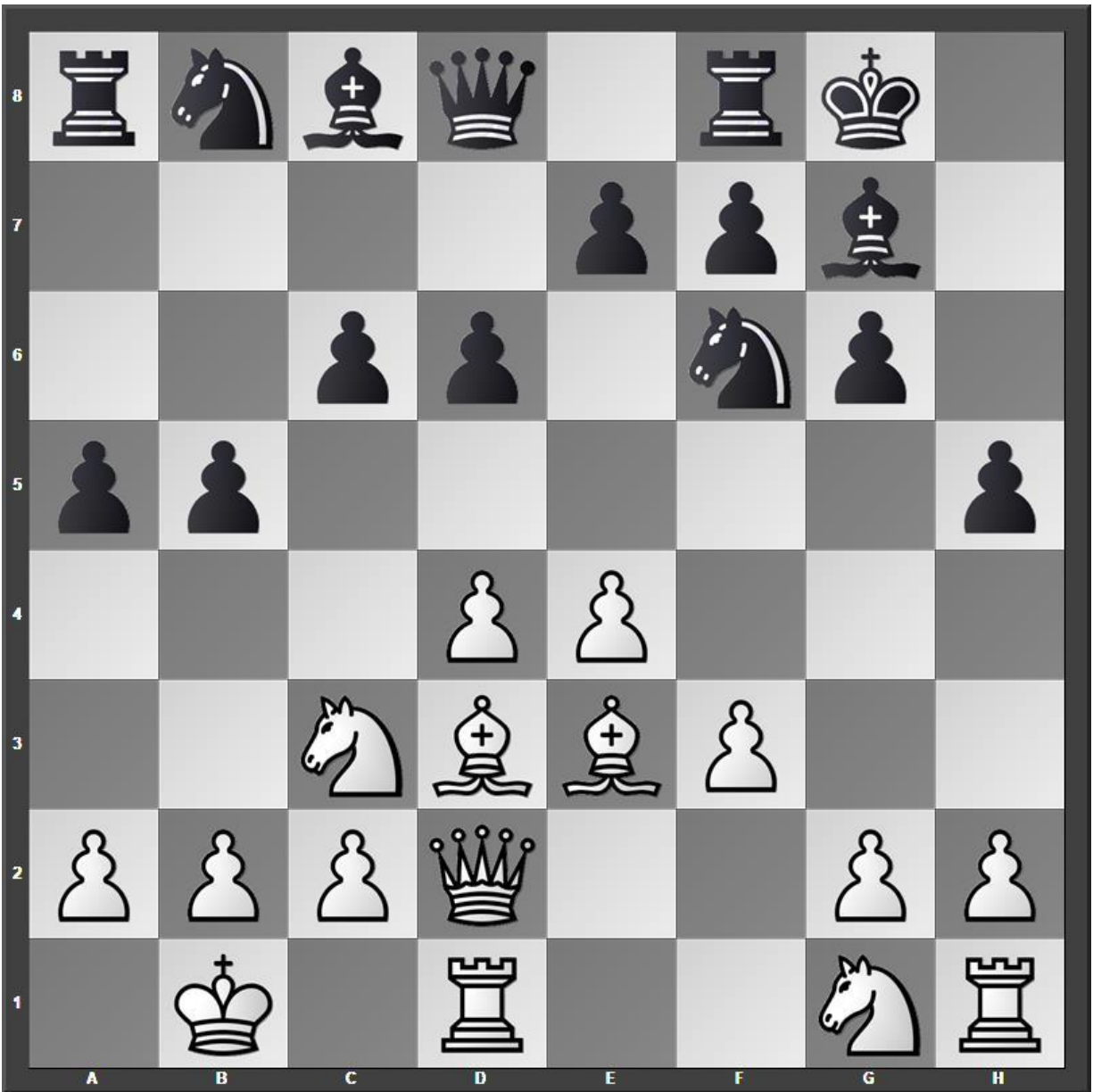
6.Qd2 d6

In the Pirc Modern Defence the move ...h5 might make sense – as does the move h4 in the King’s Indian Attack.

7.0–0–0 b5

8.Kb1 0-0

9.Bd3 a5



A good idea here is 10.Nh3. Instead, I put a pawn there.

10.h3 Nbd7

Since Nh3 is out, White should consider 11.Nge2. It seems like I am waiting for a Black blunder that never comes.

11.g4 Ba6

12.Bh6 b4

13.Nce2 Qb6

14.Bxg7 Kxg7

15.Bxa6 Rxa6

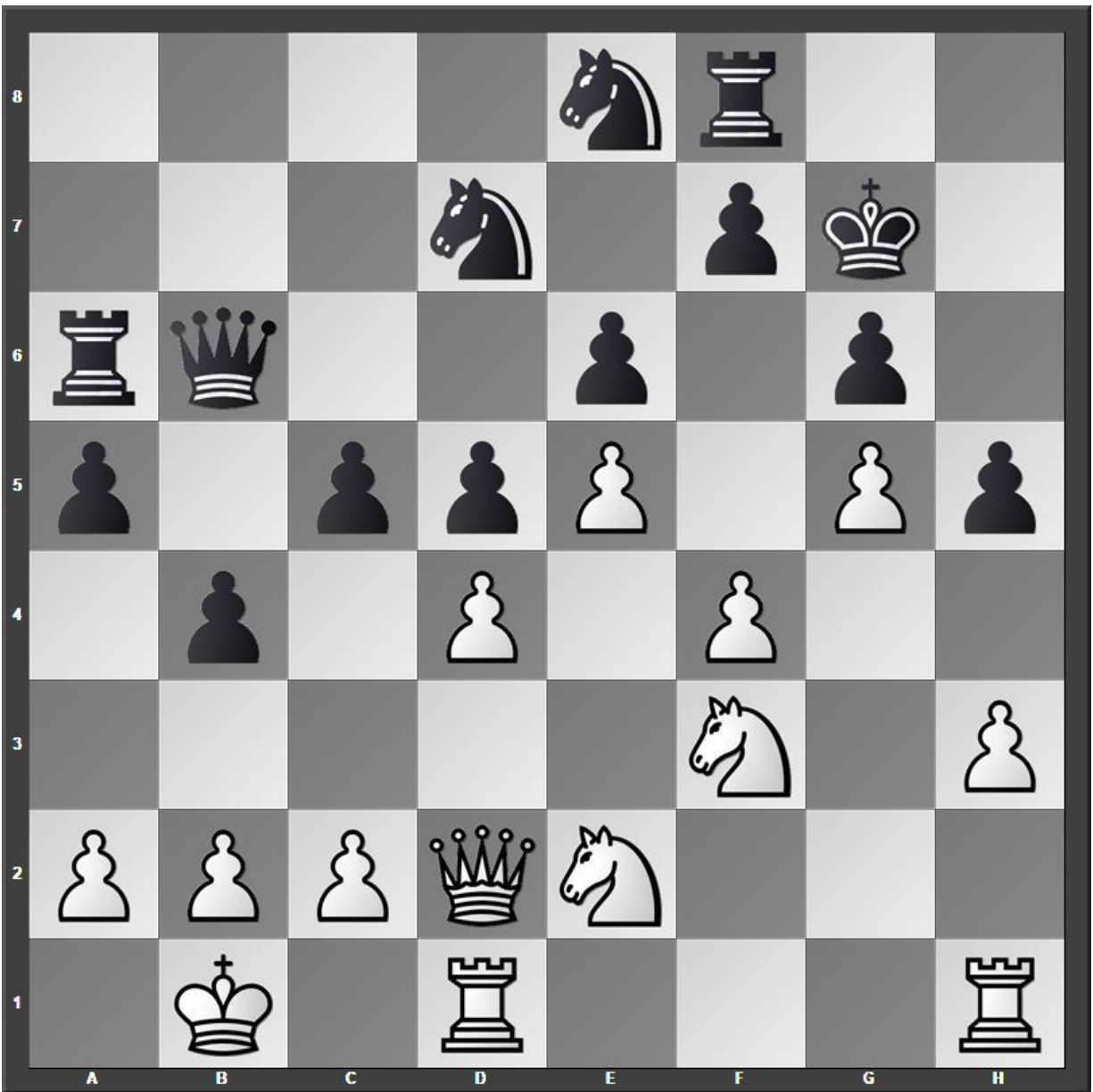
White can activate both knights with 16.Nf4 and 17.Nge2. Instead, I get completely outplayed by a strong opponent.

16.g5 Ne8

17.f4 d5

18.e5 e6

19.Nf3 c5



20.dxc5 Nxc5

21.Qd4 Nc7

22.h4 Nb5

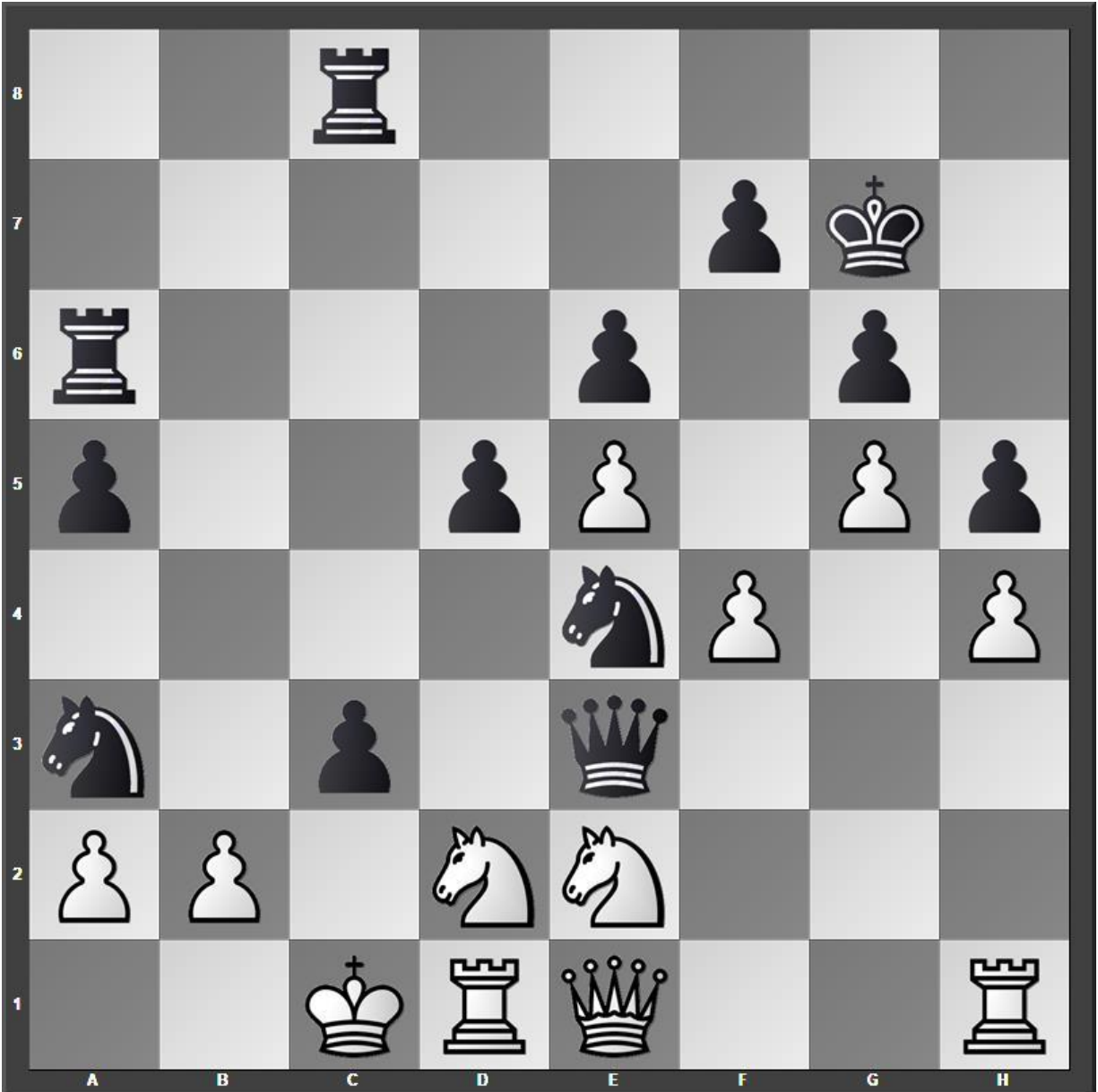
23.Qd2 Ne4

24.Qe1 Na3+

25.Kc1 Qe3+

26.Nd2 Rc8

27.c3 bxc3



28.Nxc3 Rxc3+

29.bxc3 Qxc3# 0-1

White is checkmated

Chapter 5 – Pirc 4.Be3 Bg7 5.f3 0-0

Game 20 – B07 [6.Qd2 Re8]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 25.09.2021

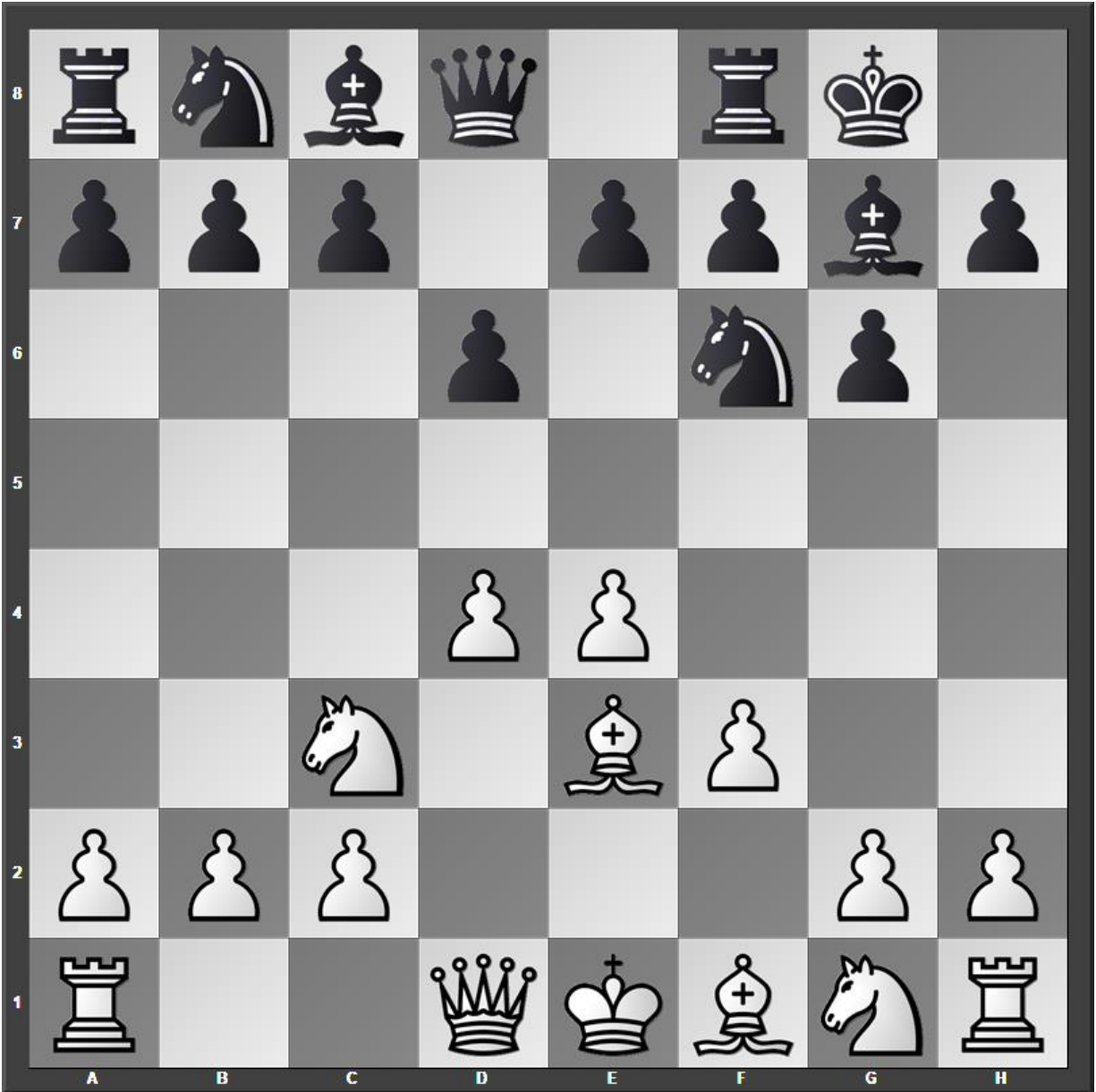
1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.Be3 Bg7

5.f3 0-0



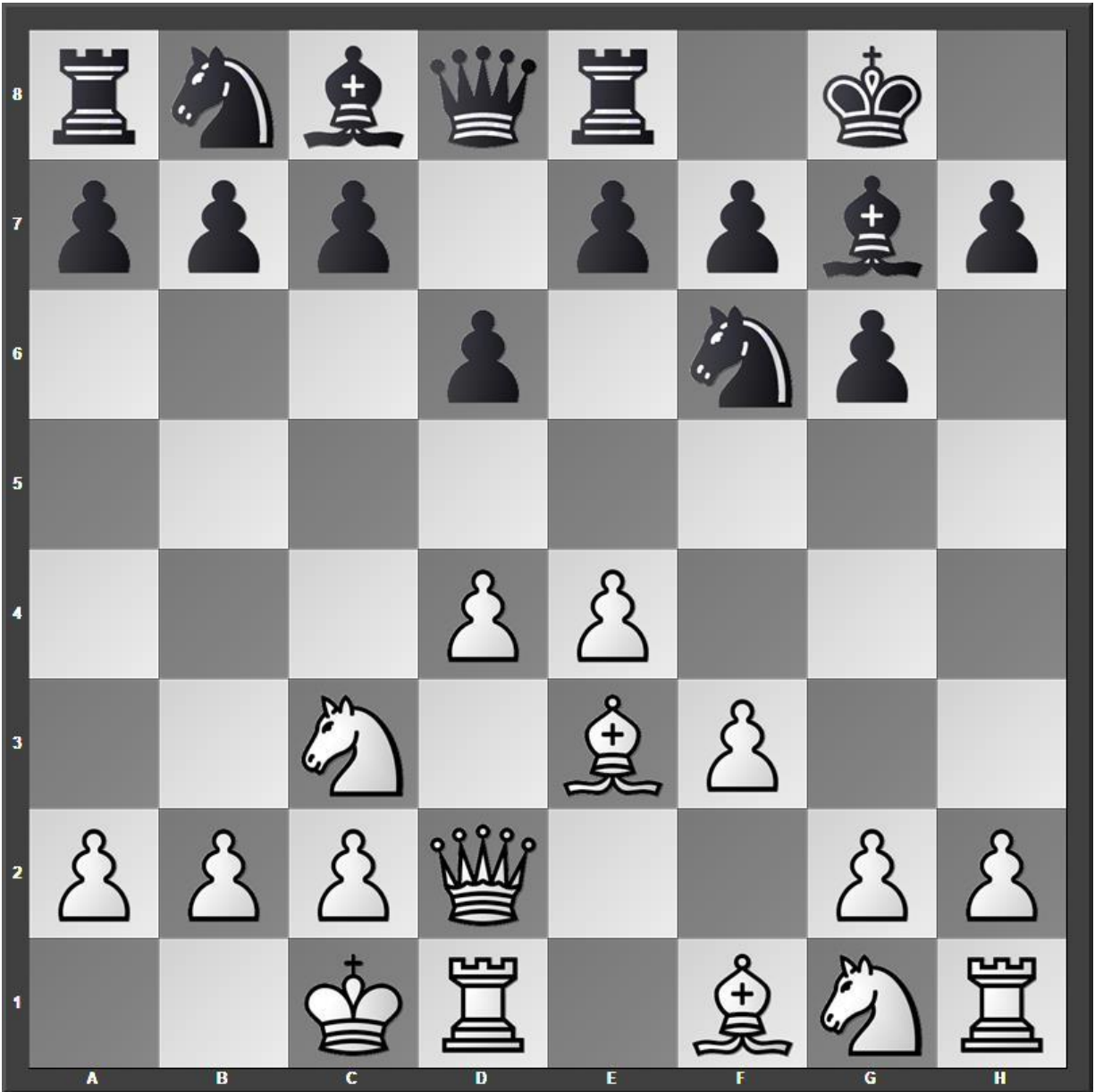
5...0-0 is popular. Masters tend to prefer 5...c6 6.Qd2 b5.

6.Qd2 Re8

Black has a wide variety of choices. One questionable idea is 6...c5 7.dxc5 dxc5 8.Qxd8 Rxd8 9.Bxc5 White is better.

The rook to e8 in this game doesn't help much, but at least this move does not have to lose by force.

7.0-0-0



7...c6

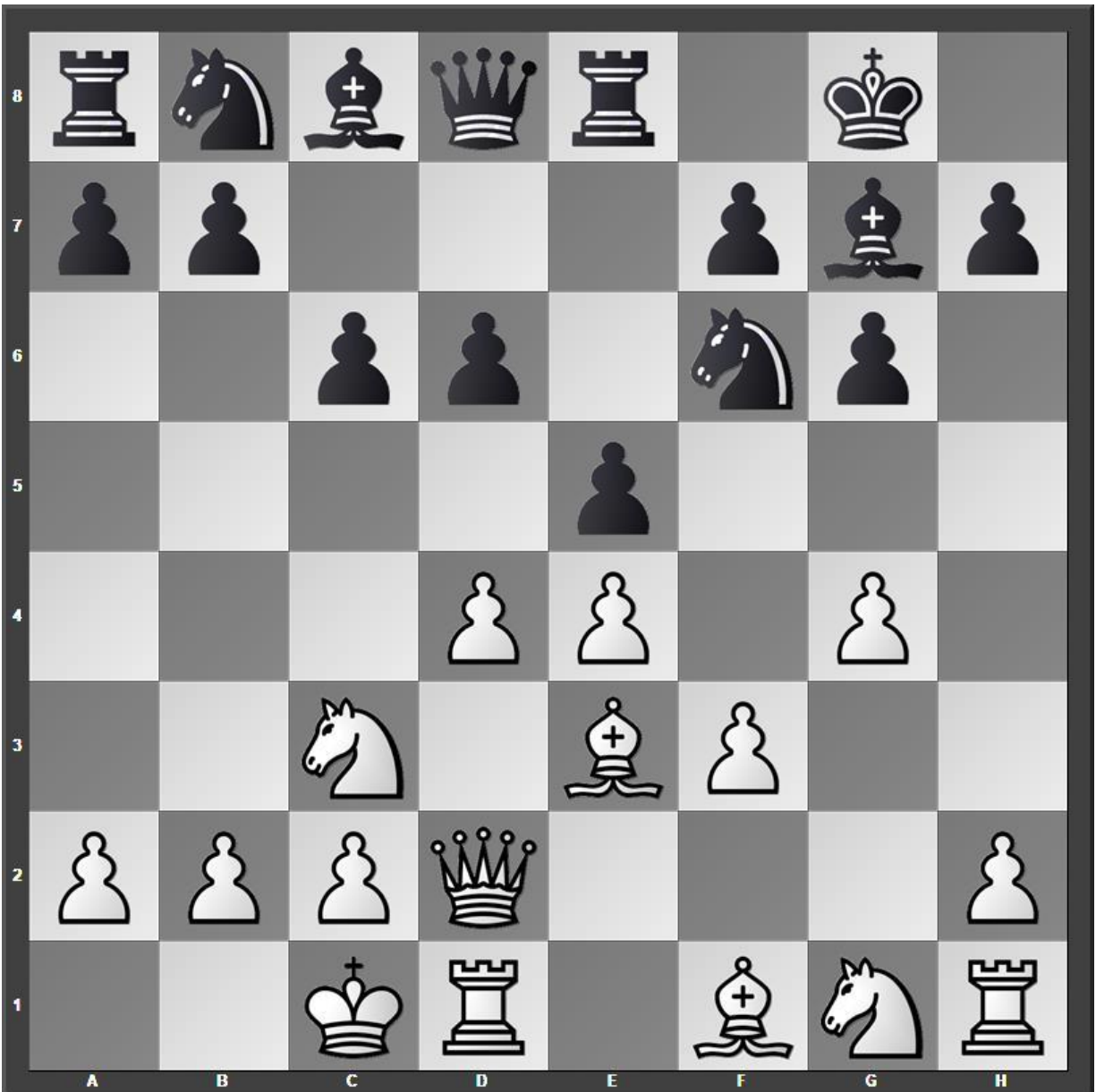
Another possibility is 7...e5 8.dxe5 Rxe5 9.Kb1 Re8 10.g4 Nc6 11.h4 and
White stands better.

8.g4

An alternative is 8.h4 h5 9.Bh6 Bh8 10.g4 when Black might blunder with 10...hxg4 11.h5 Nxh5 12.Rxh5 gxh5 13.Qg5+ Kh7 14.Qxh5 and White has a winning attack.

8...e5

A better strategy is 8...b5 9.Bh6 Bh8 10.h4 Qa5 11.Kb1.



9.dxe5 dxe5

This natural recapture loses. Better is 9...Rxe5 10.Qxd6 Qxd6 11.Rxd6 Re8 12.g5 and White has won a pawn.

10.Qxd8 1-0

Black resigns

Game 21 – B07 [6.Qd2 Qe8]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 14.08.2021

1.d4 d6

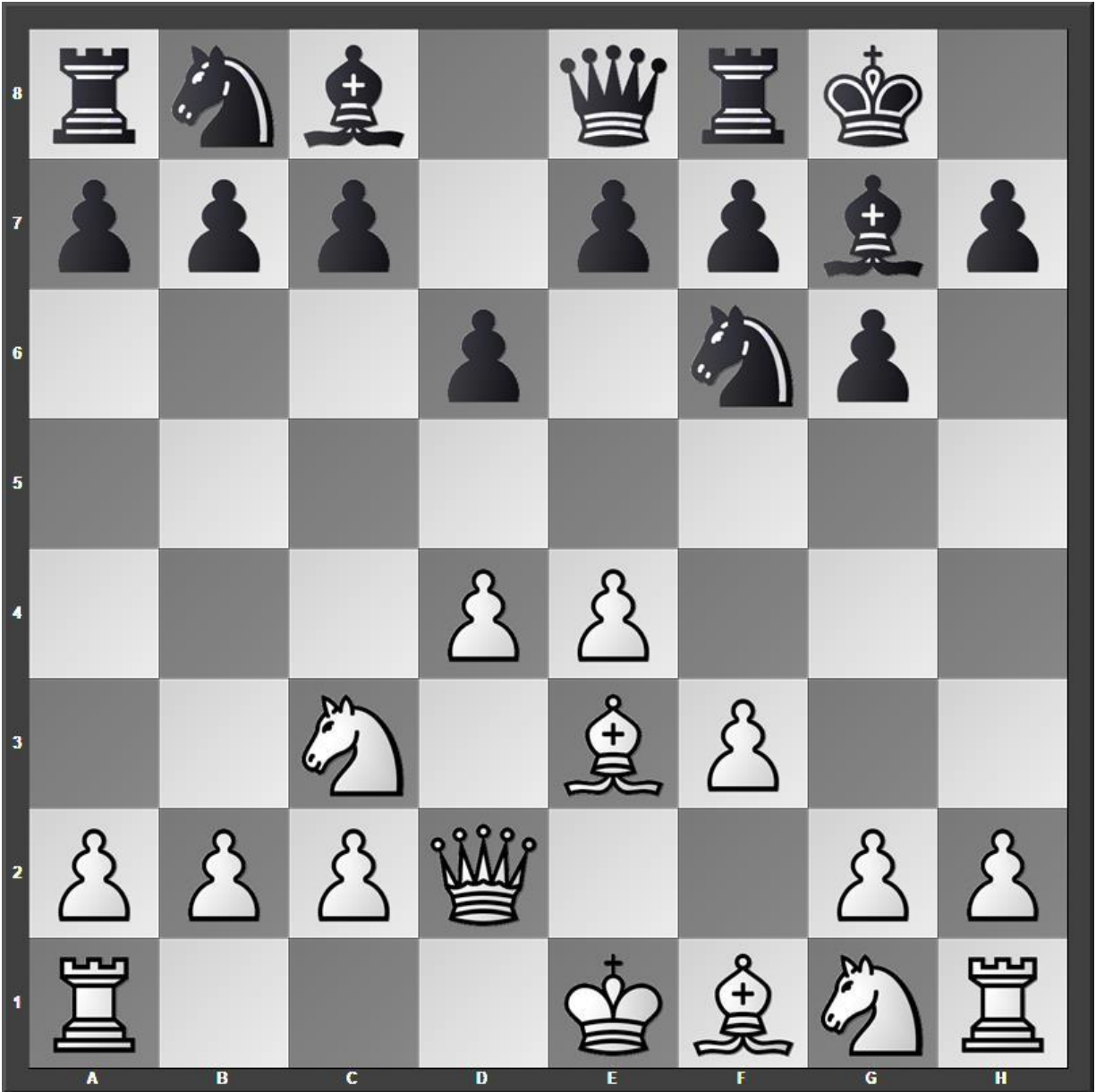
2.e4 g6

3.Nc3 Bg7

4.Be3 Nf6

5.f3 0–0

6.Qd2 Qe8



A rare move that avoids the fate of the previous game.

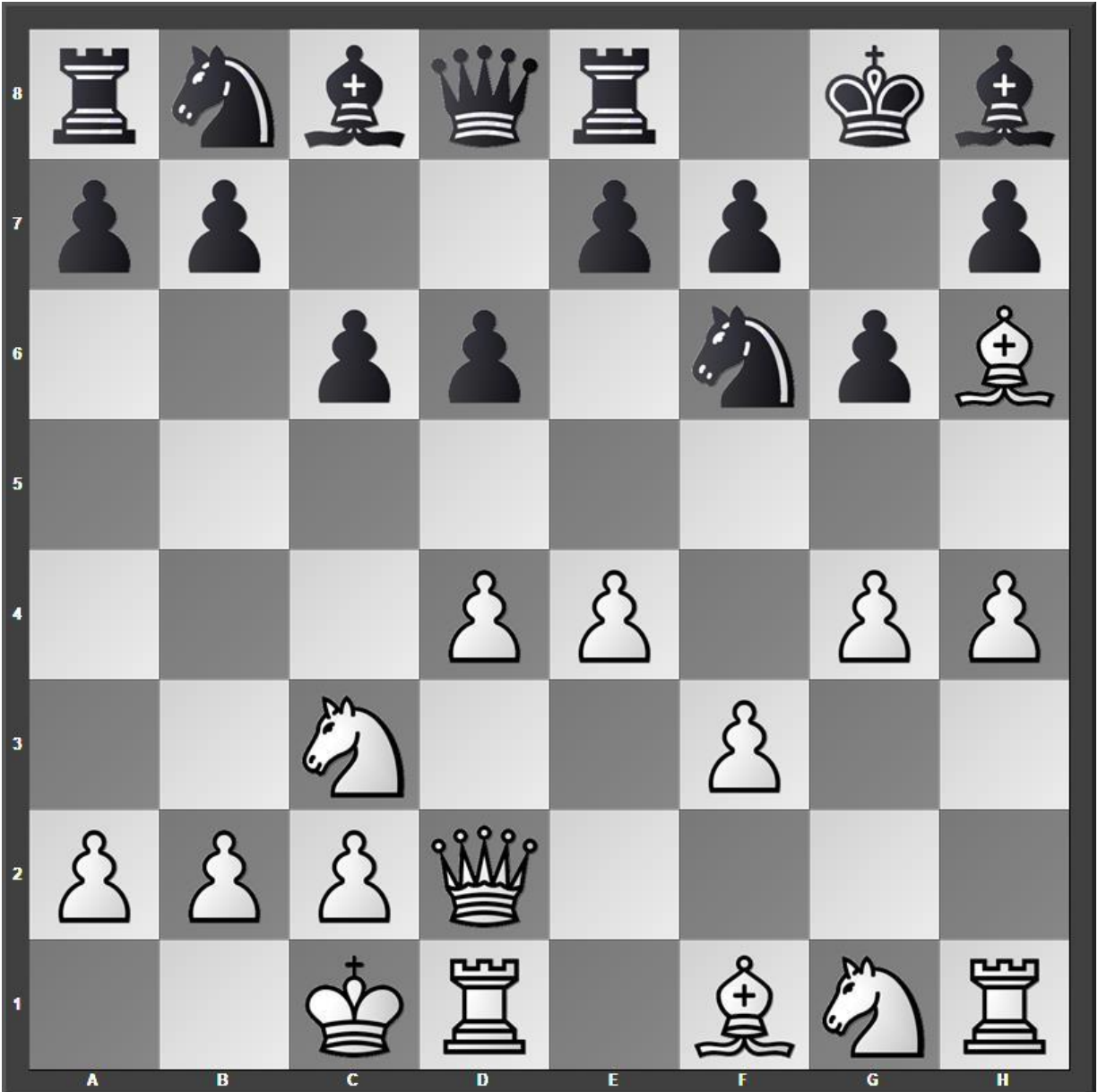
7.0-0-0 c6

8.g4 Qd8

The queen returns to her original square wasting time.

9.h4 Re8

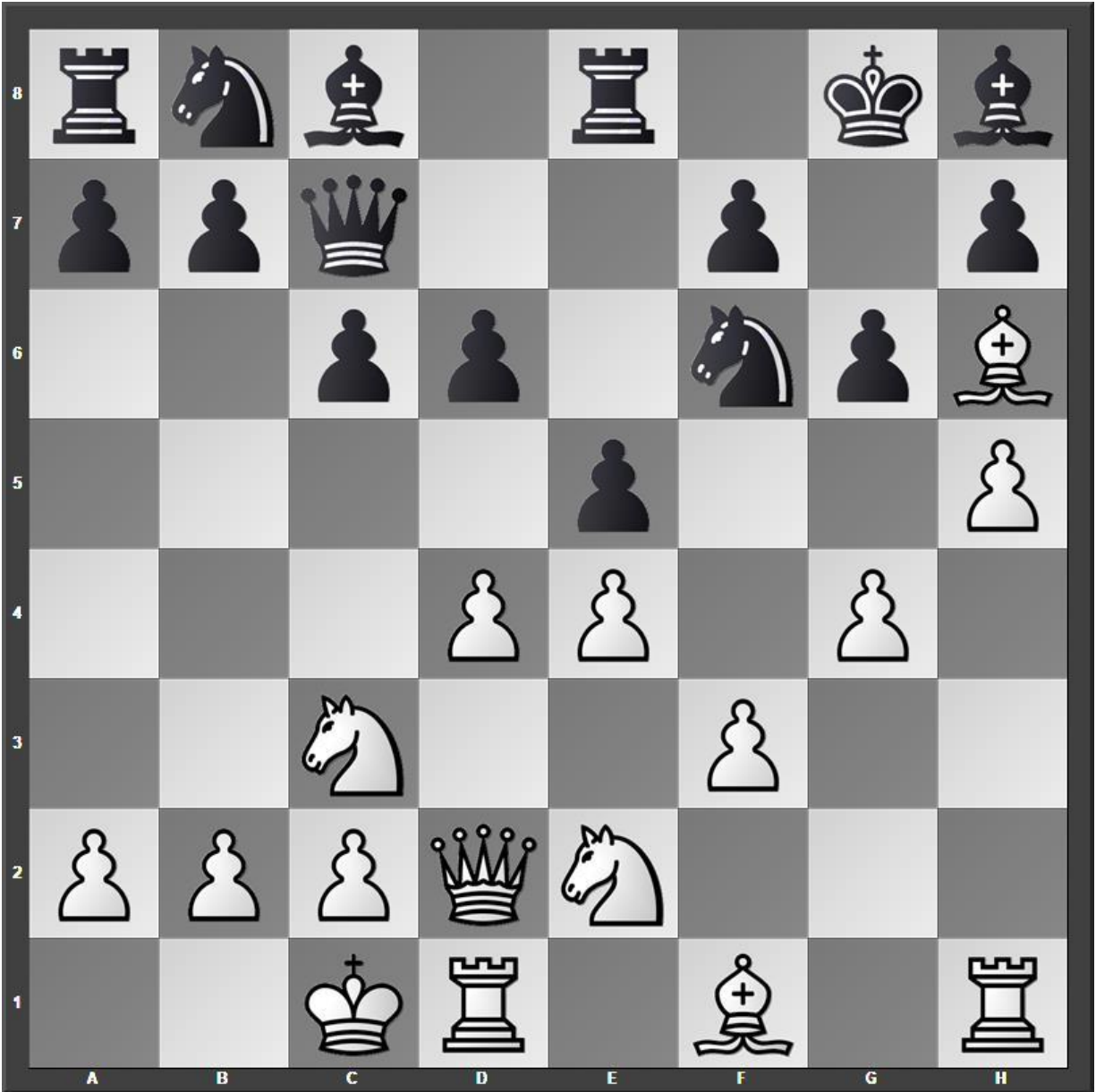
10.Bh6 Bh8



Black keeps the bishop on the long diagonal without allowing my bishop to capture it or the rook formerly on f8.

11.Nge2 Qc7

12.h5 e5



13.d5

Both 13.hxg6 or 13.dxe5 are promising moves for White.

13...c5

14.Ng3 a6

15.Kb1 b5

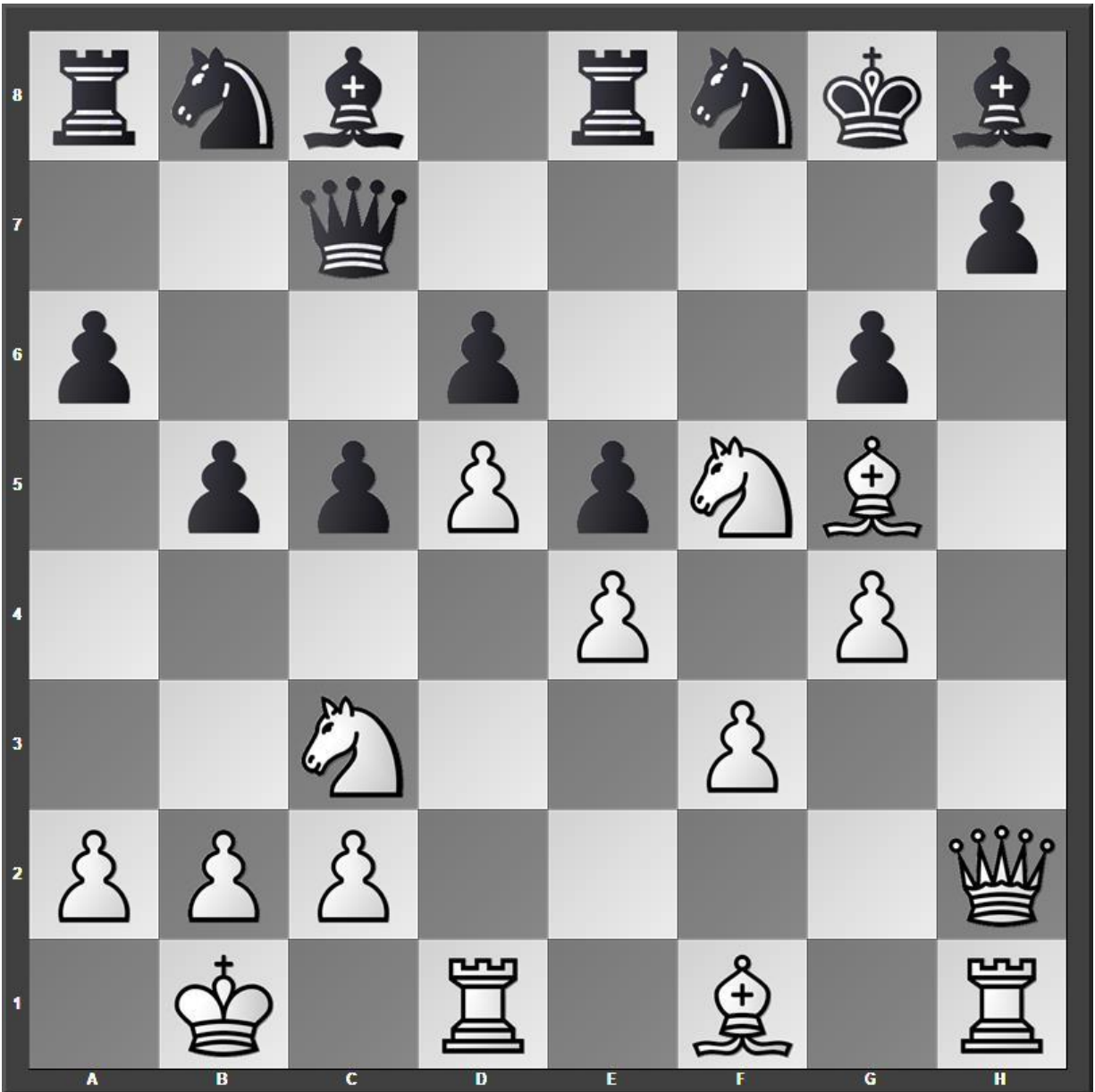
16.Bg5 Nfd7

Better is 16...b4 17.Nce2 a5 18.Nc1 c4 19.Qh2 c3 with chances for both sides.

17.hxg6 fxg6

18.Qh2 Nf8

19.Nf5



19...gxf5

I offer a knight on f5 to open lines toward Black's king. If 19...Bg7 20.Nxg7 Qxg7 21.Be2 White stands better.

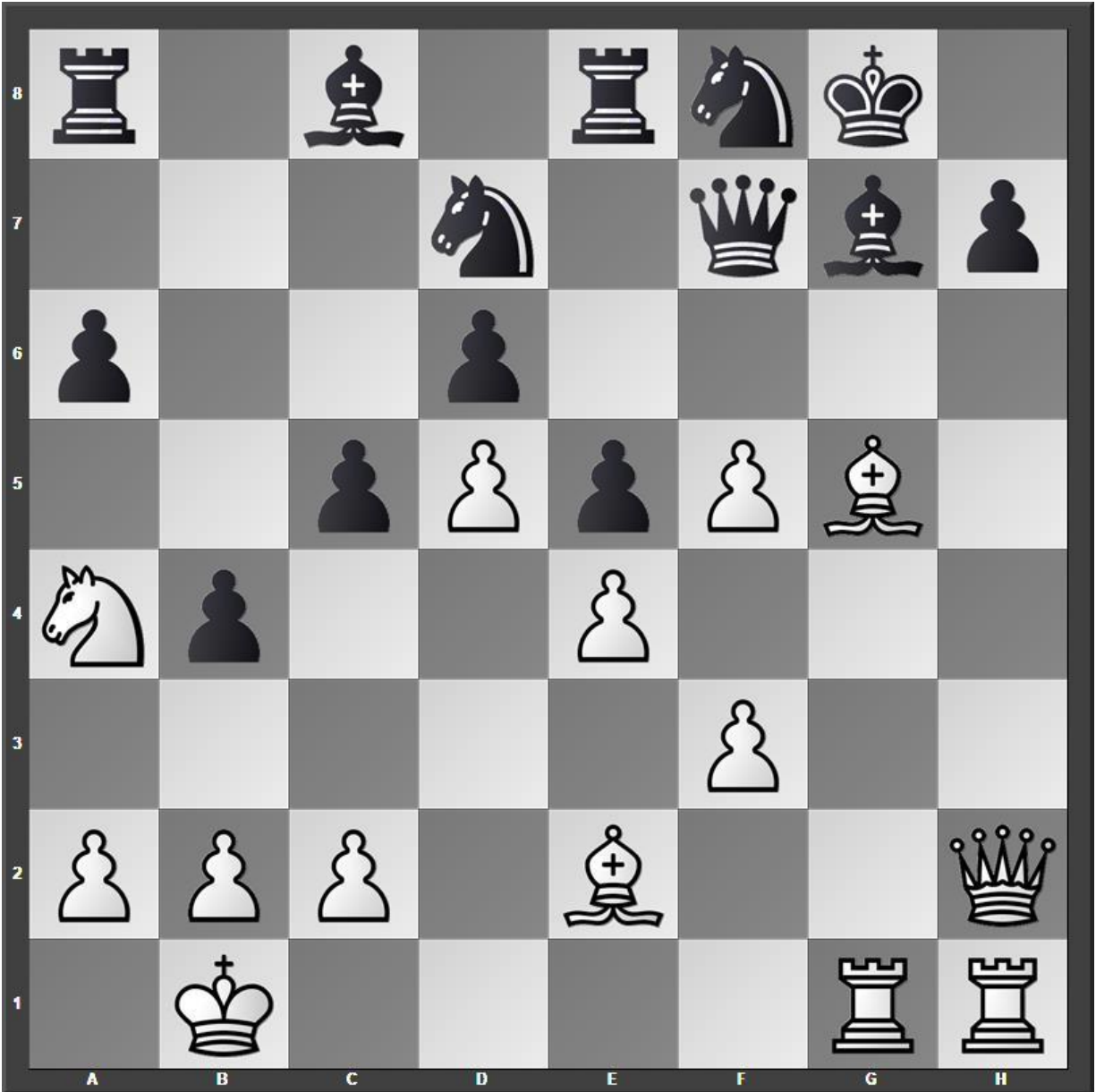
20.gxf5 Qf7

21.Be2 b4

White has a crushing attack with 22.Rdg1. My strategy to open the g-file is good. My execution of the attack is not.

22.Na4 Nbd7

23.Rdg1 Bg7



24.f6

A mistake. White missed the powerful move 24.f4 which both attacks e5 and threatens Bh5.

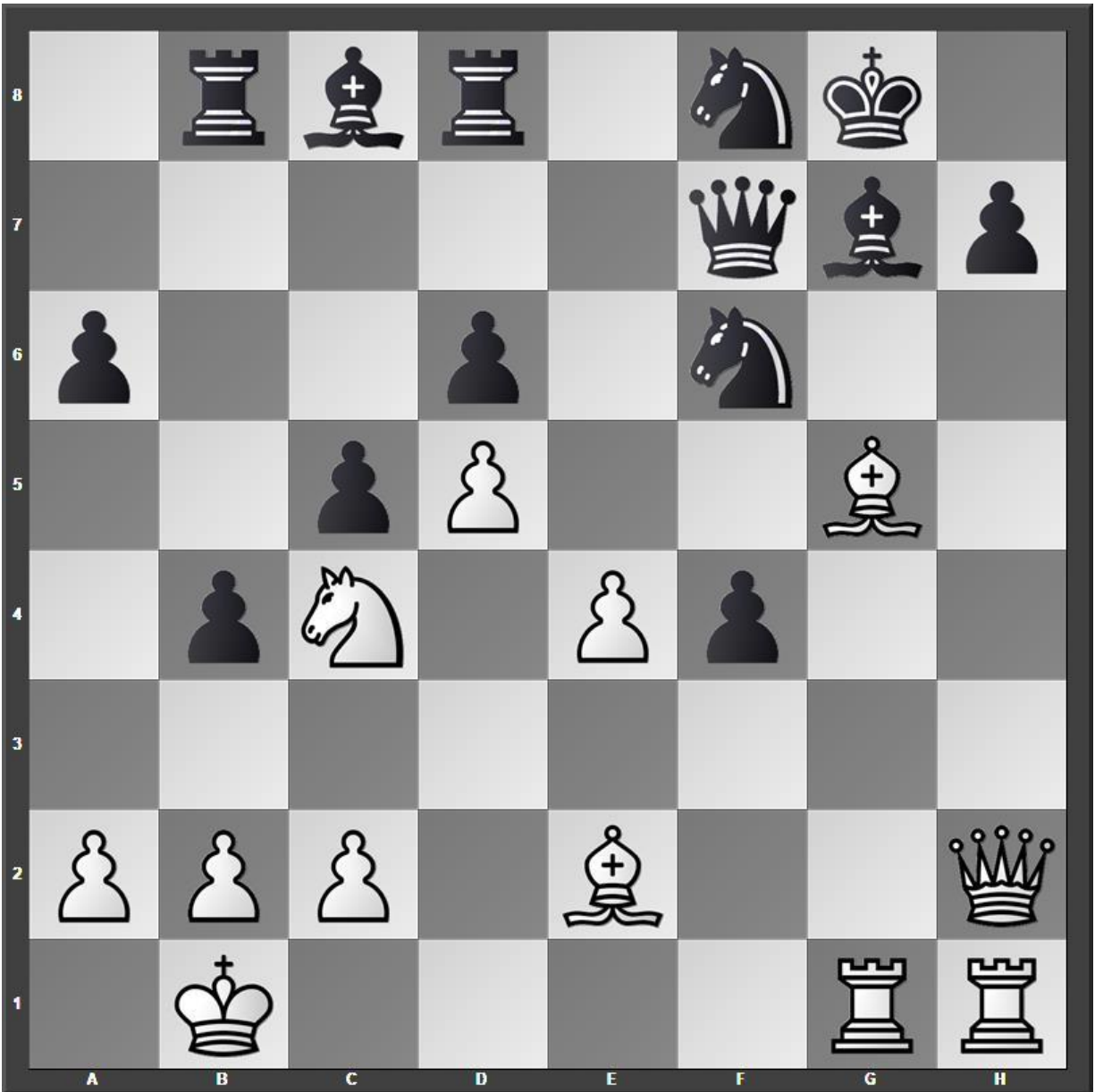
24...Nxf6

25.Nb6 Rb8

Black missed 25...Ra7 with equal chances. I outplayed my opponent early in this game. However, the last part of the game sees White's position fall apart after missing moves.

26.Nc4 Rd8

27.f4 exf4



28.Bxf4

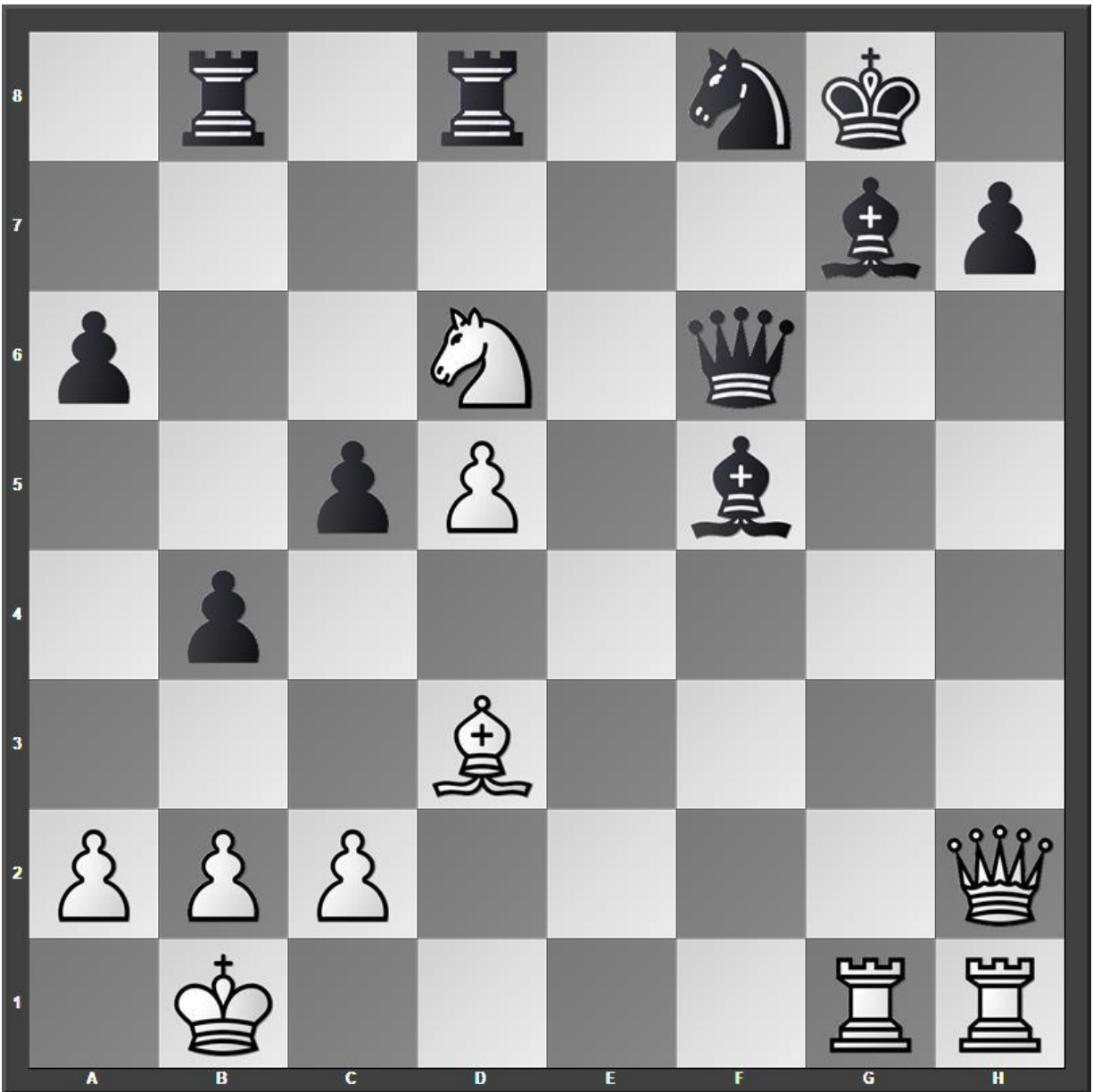
I played a mindless recapture and missed a winning continuation in 28.e5.

28...Nxe4

29.Bd3 Bf5

30.Bxd6 Nxd6

31.Nxd6 Qf6



32.Nc4

A fatal blunder. White still has attacking chances after 32.Rxg7+ Kxg7
33.Nxf5+. I fail to focus on Black's king.

32...Bxd3

33.cxd3 b3

34.a3 Rb7

35.Rf1 Qg6

36.Rhg1

A final blunder. If 36.Ne5 Qd6 Black is only up one piece.

36...Qxd3+

37.Ka1 Qxc4

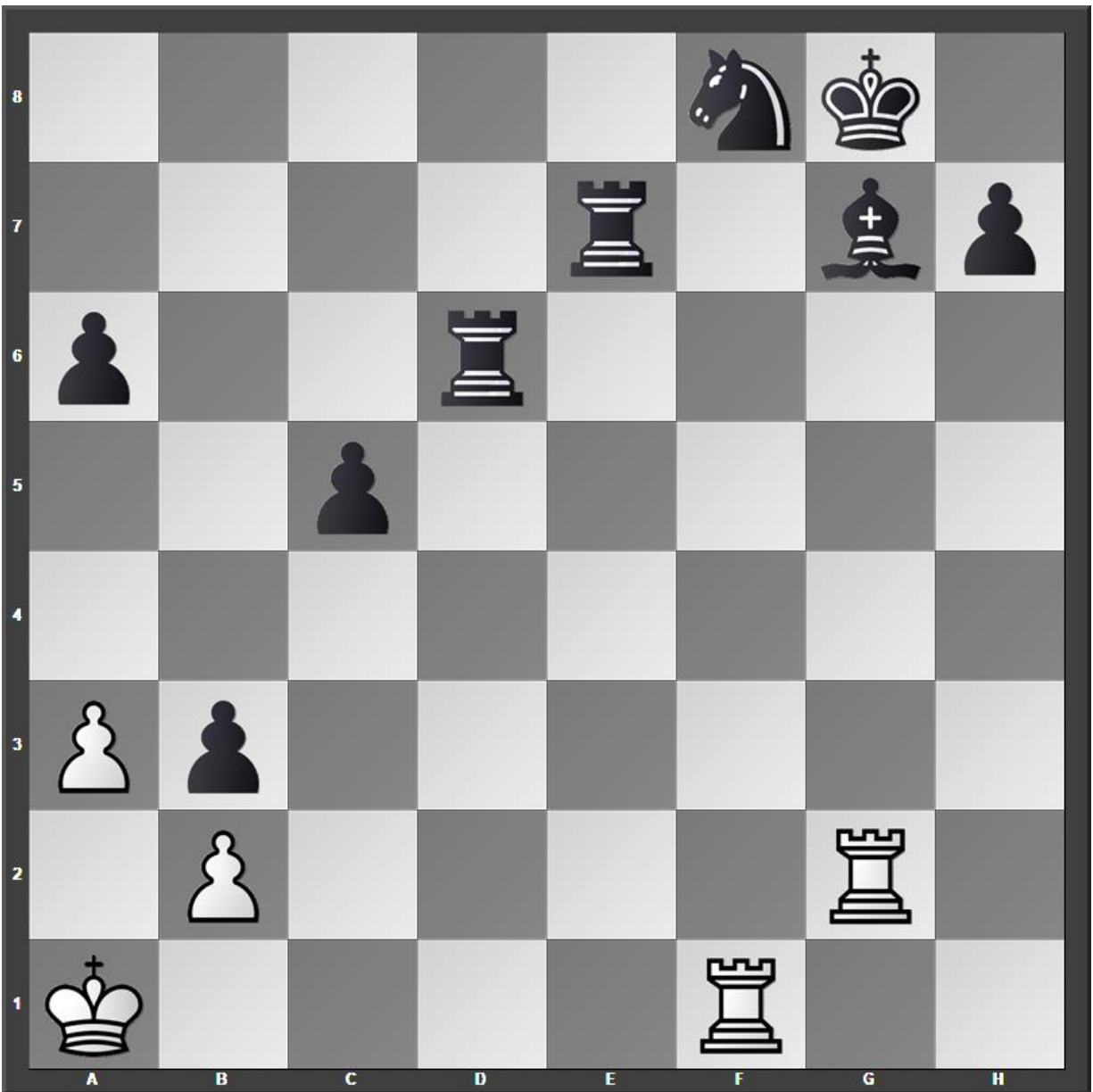
38.Qg2 Qa4

39.Kb1 Re7

40.d6 Qe4+

41.Ka1 Qxg2

42.Rxg2 Rxd6 0-1



White resigns

Game 22 – B07 [6.Qd2 Nc6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 16.10.2021

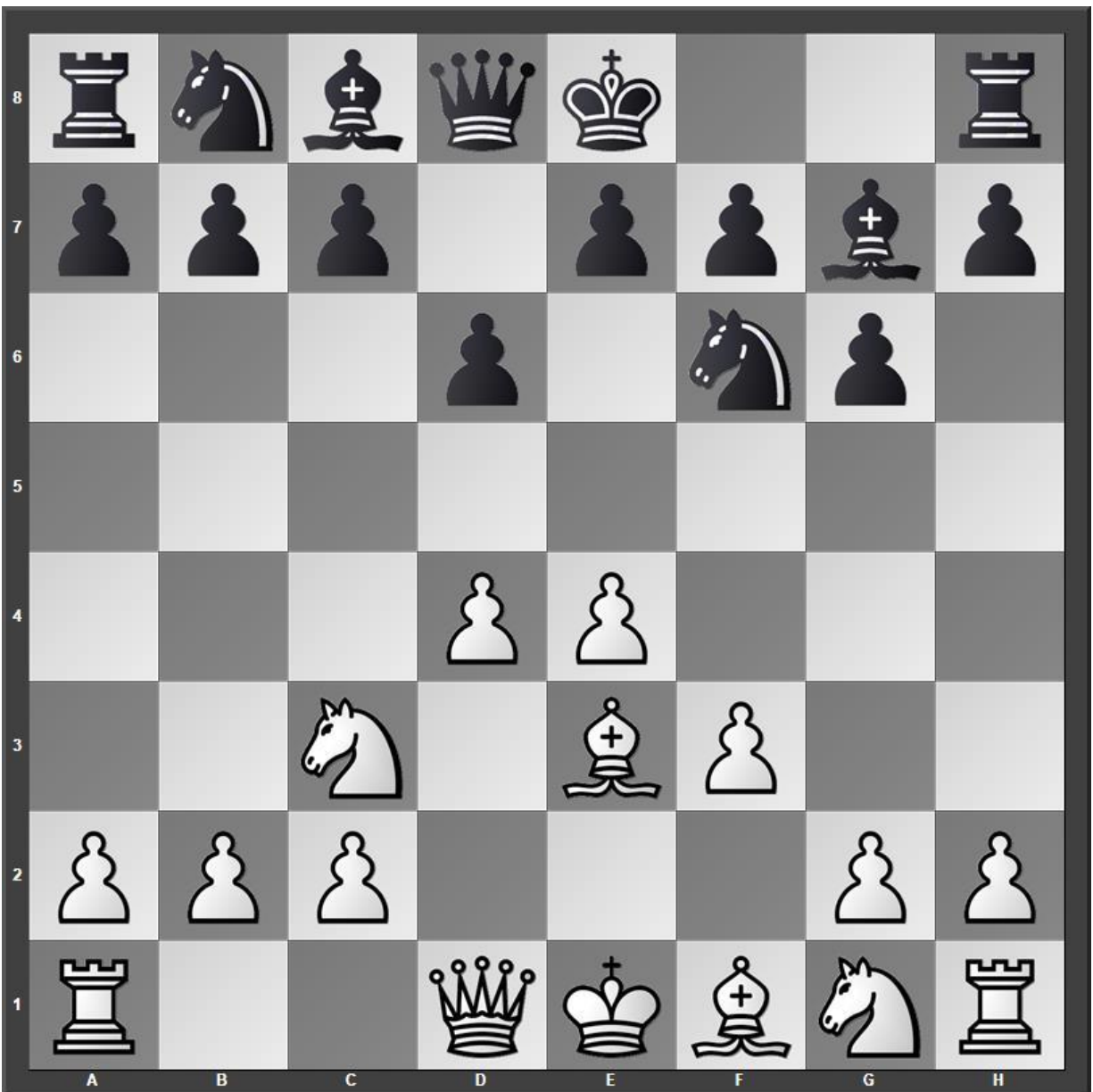
1.d4 g6

2.e4 Bg7

3.Nc3 d6

4.Be3 Nf6

5.f3

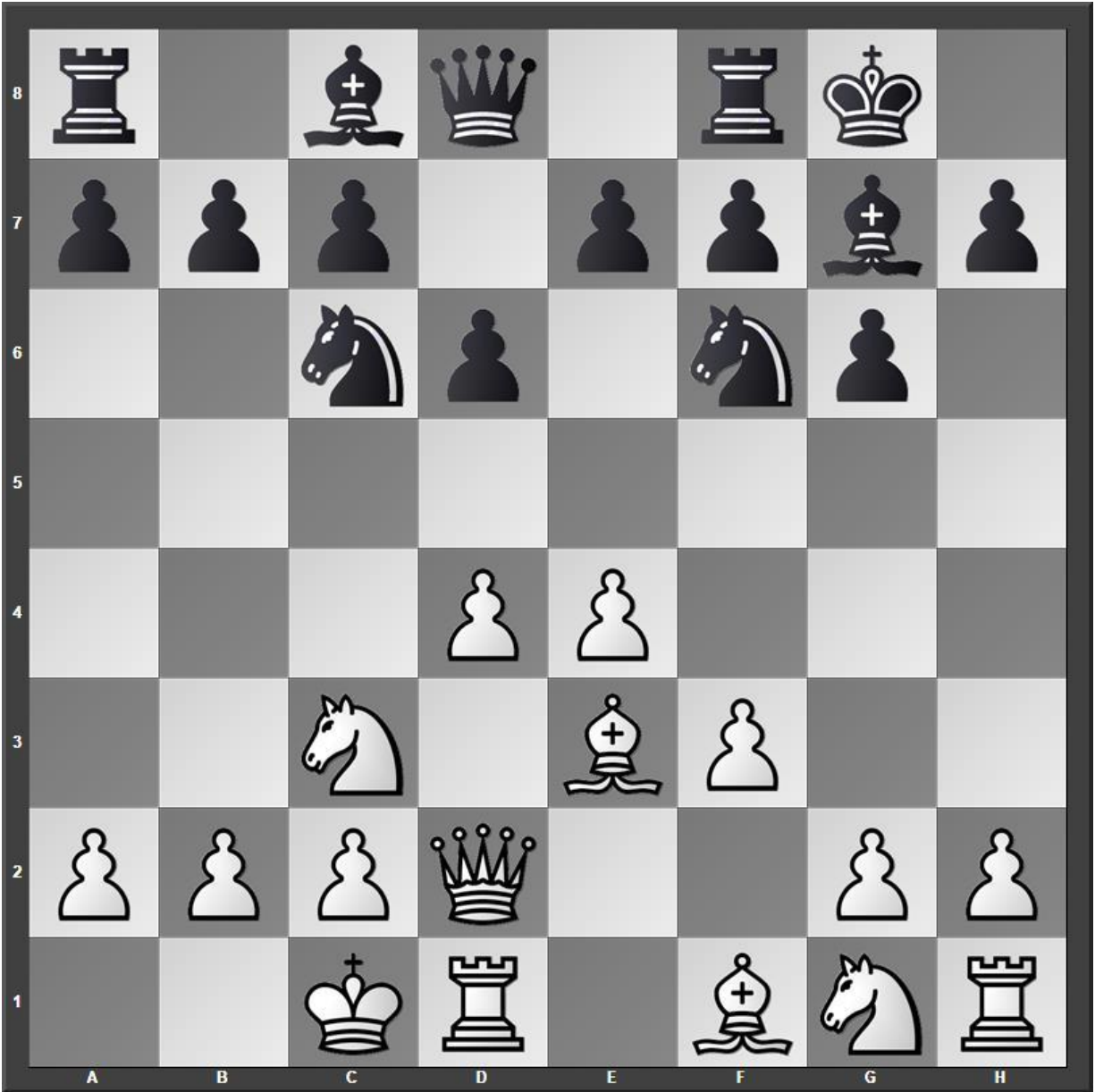


I often reach this position after 1.d4 Nf6 by 2.Nc3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.f3 Bg7
5.Be3 or by 2.f3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.Be3.

5...0-0

6.Qd2 Nc6

7.0-0-0



This is my preferred setup after seven moves vs the Pirc.

7...a6

A critical line is 7...e5 8.d5 Nd4 9.Nge2 which favors White.

8.g4

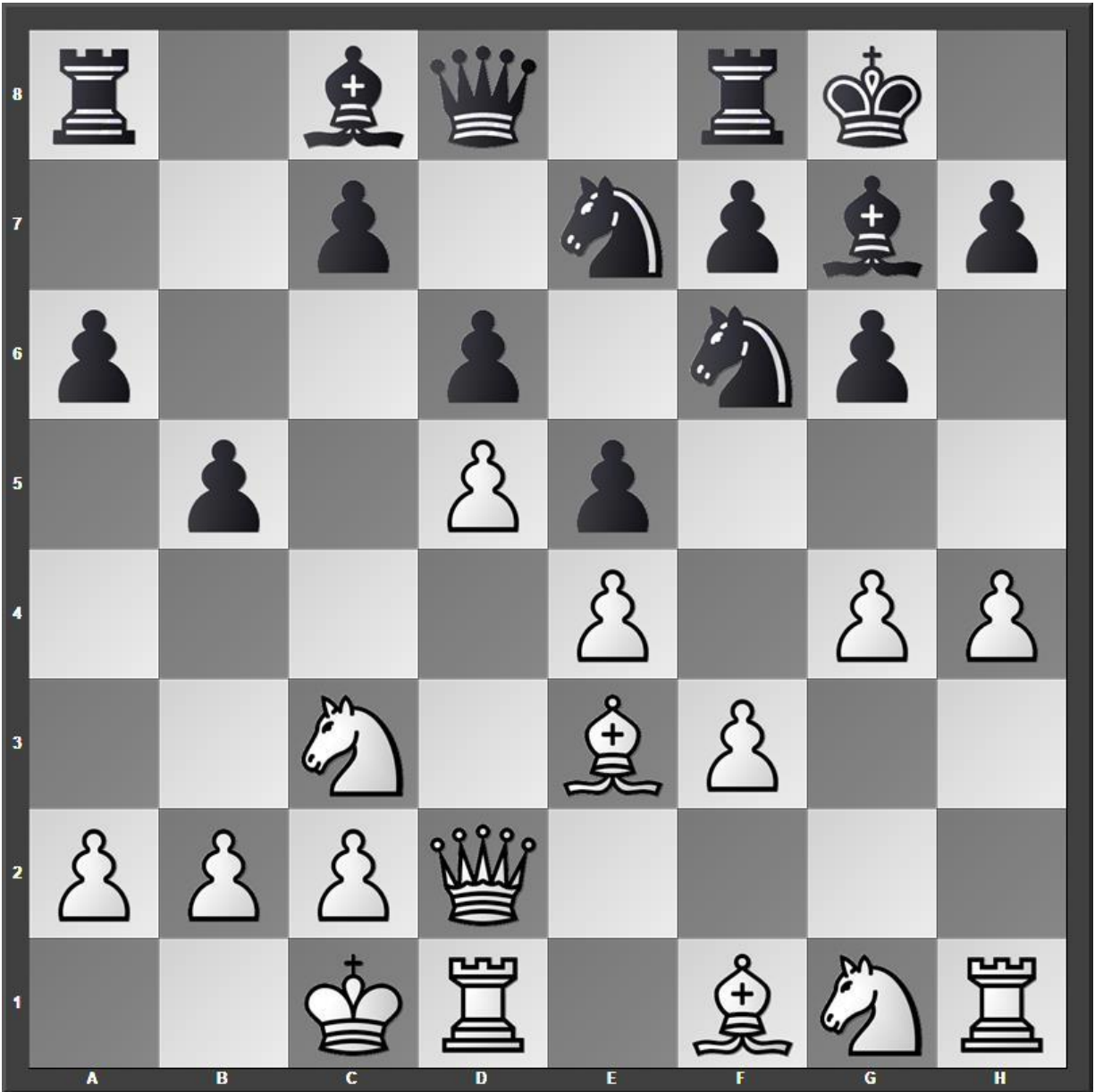
Stockfish likes the unusual 8.Nd5 and White looks strong.

8...b5

9.h4 e5

10.d5 Ne7

Or 10...Nd4 11.h5 and White stands better.



11.Bh6 Bxh6

12.Qxh6 Kh8

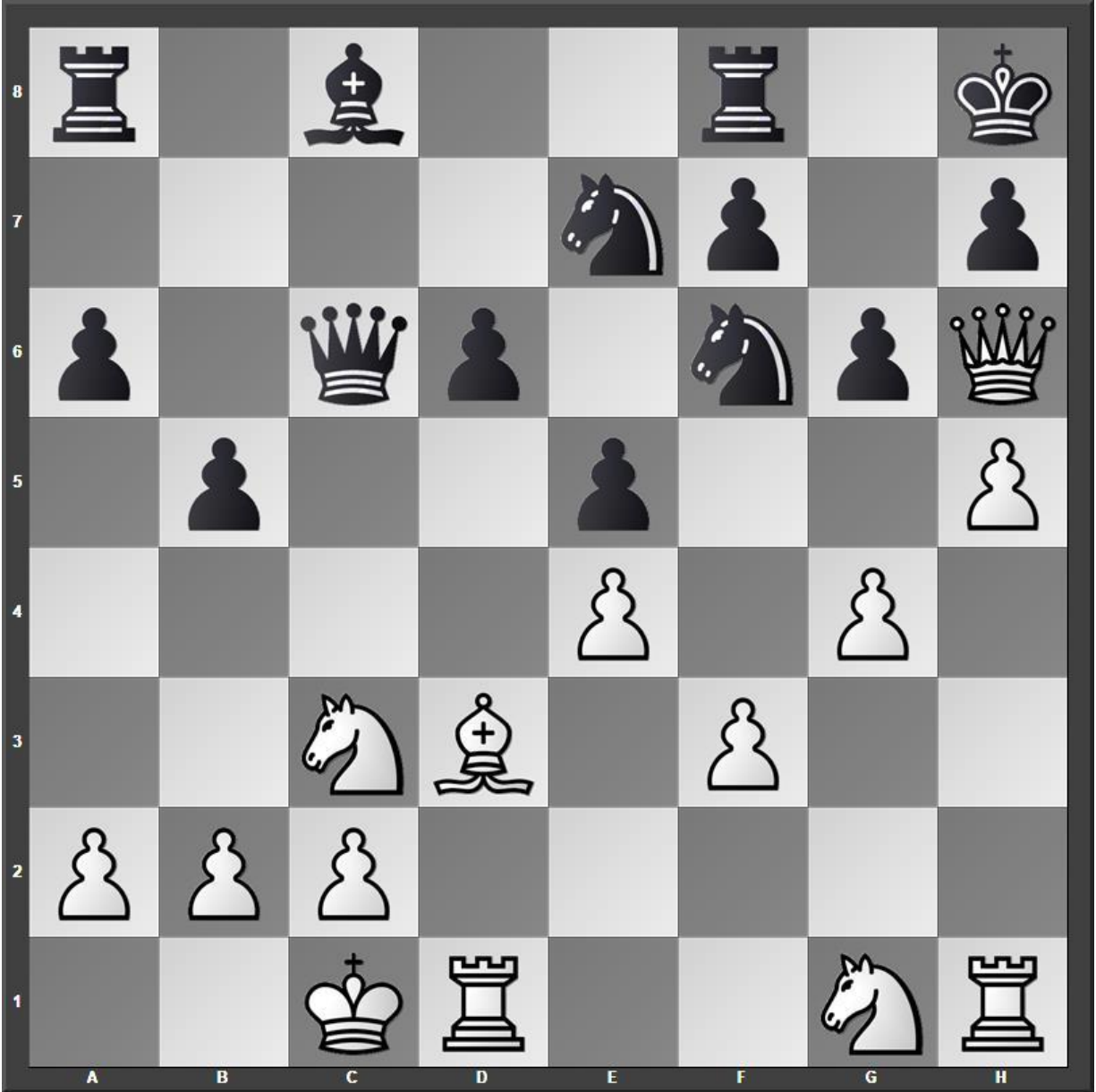
Now if 13.h5 Neg8 and White's queen is driven away.

13.Bd3 c6

14.dxc6 Qc7

I was so focused on Qxh7 mate that I missed 15.Qxf8+.

15.h5 Qxc6



If Qxf8+ Neg8 17.h6 Ne8 18.Nd5 and White wins.

16.hxg6 Nxg6

White attacks the f6 knight that prevents mate on h7.

17.g5 1-0

Black resigns

Game 23 – B07 [6.Qd2 Nbd7]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 15.10.2021

1.d4 d6

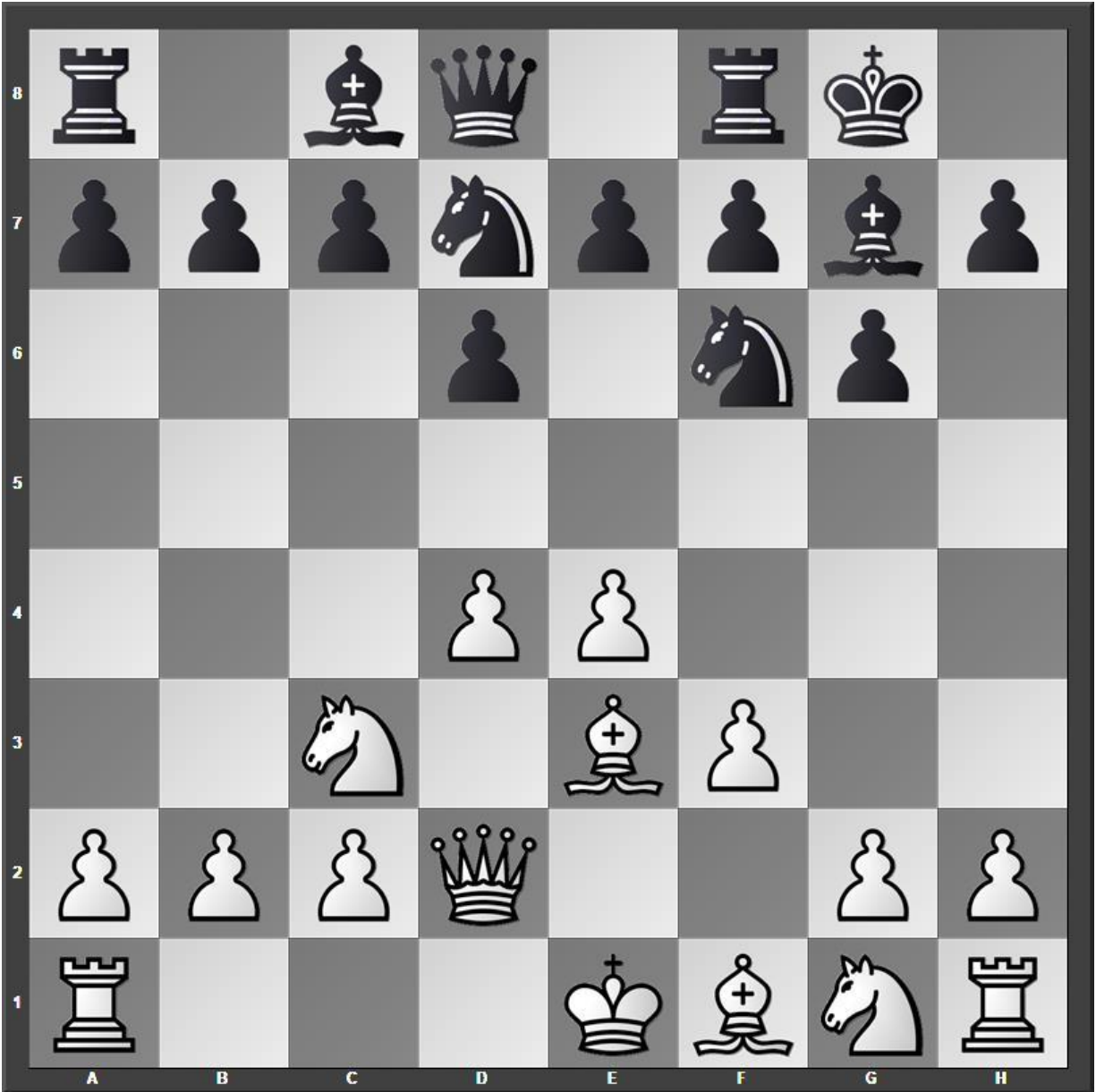
2.e4 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.Be3 Bg7

5.f3 Nbd7

6.Qd2 0–0



7.0-0-0 e5

Unless I can win material, I do not like to open the center in this line. I want to attack Black's king without undo hassle.

8.d5

Or 8.g4 c6 9.d5 c5 10.h4 and White has an attack.

8...c6

Black drops a pawn. If 8...a6 9.g4 b5 10.Nce2 Nb6 11.Ng3 White is slightly better.



9.dxc6 bxc6

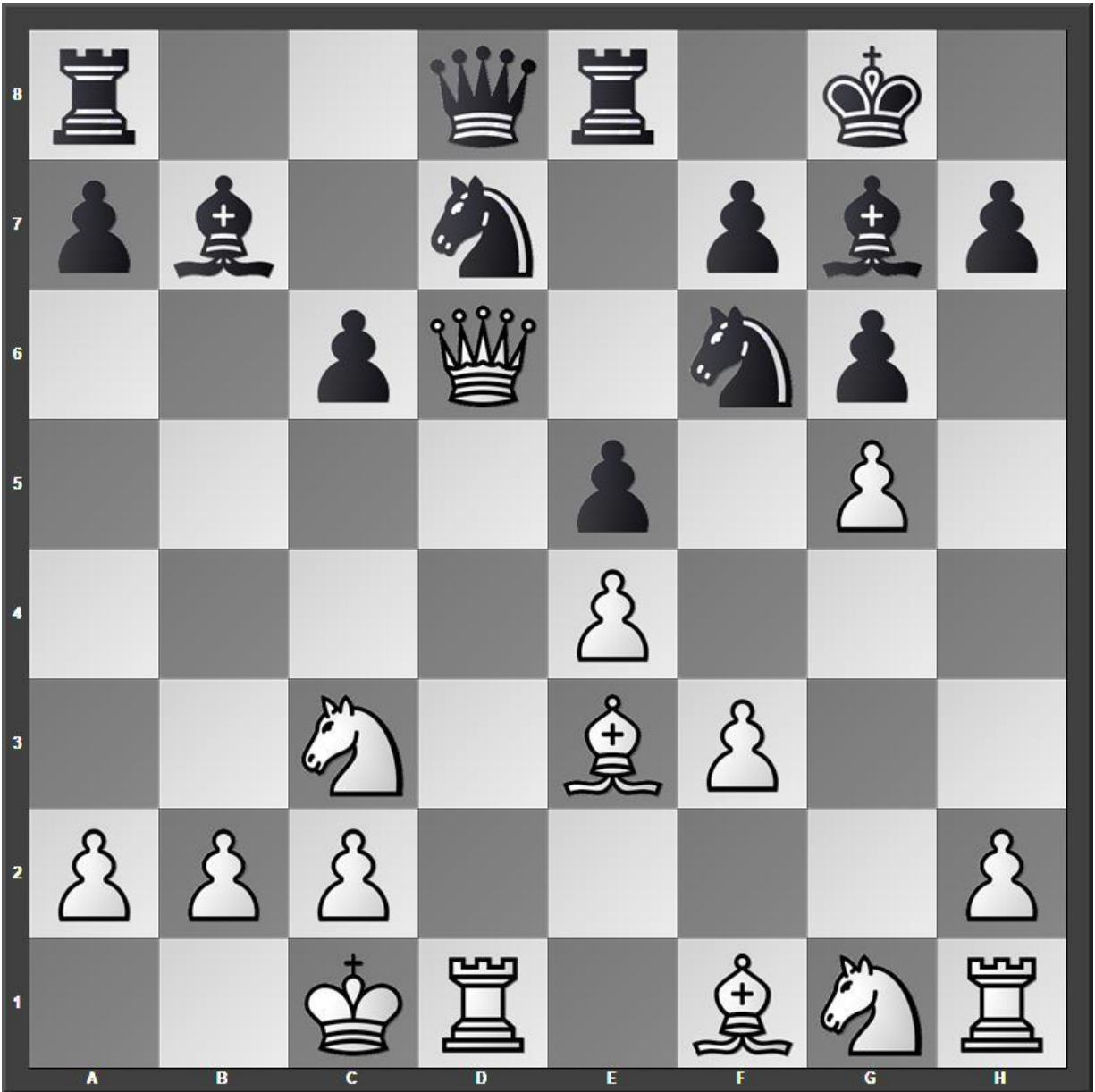
10.Qxd6 Bb7

11.g4

Another interesting idea is 11.Bc4.

11...Re8

12.g5



12...Re6

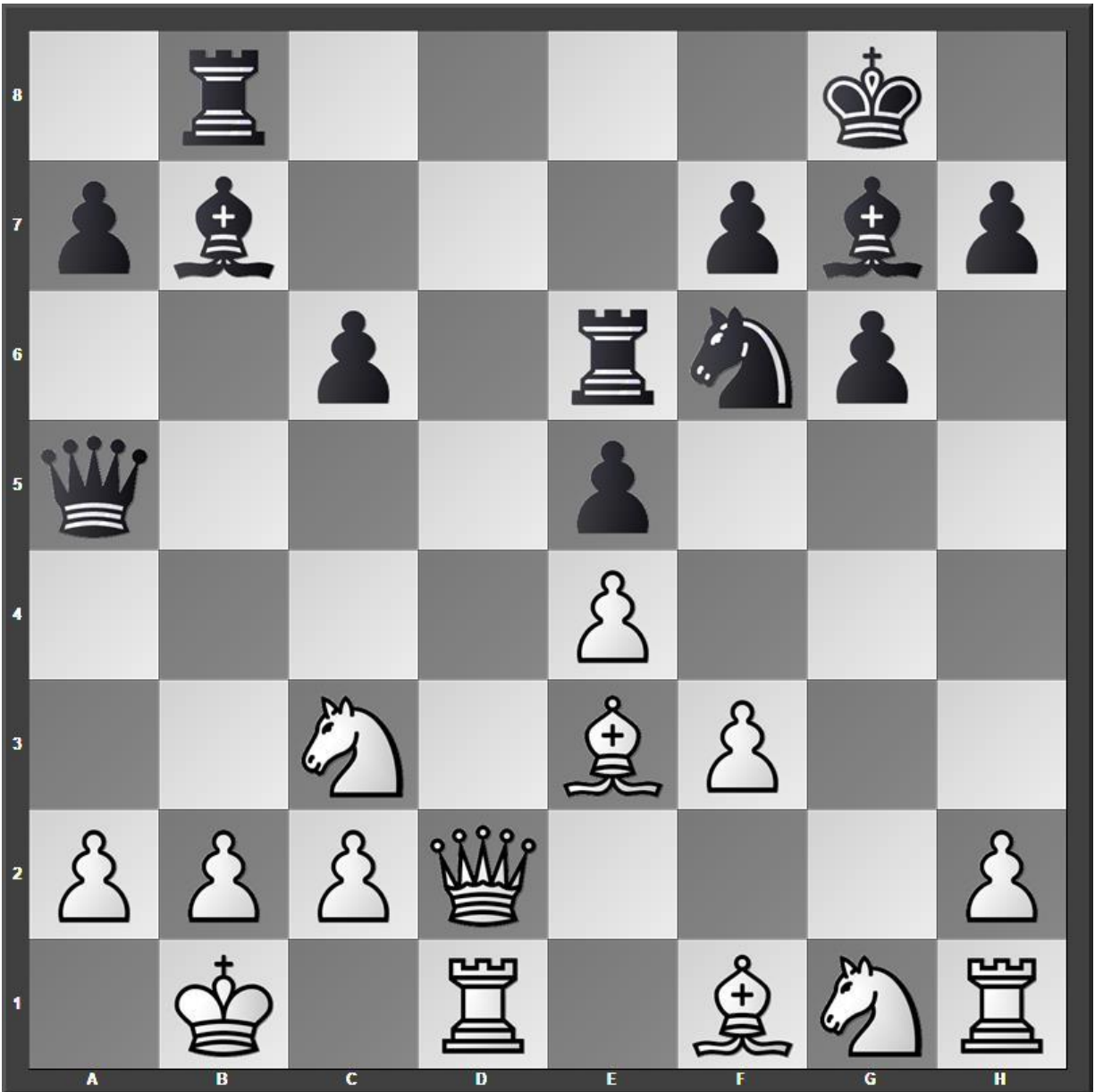
A wild alternative is 12...Nd5 13.exd5 Bf8 14.dxc6 Bxd6 15.cxb7 Bc5 16.Bxc5 Qxg5+ 17.Kb1 Nxc5 18.bxa8Q Rxa8 19.Bc4 and White has two

pieces and a rook for a queen.

13.Qd2 Qa5

14.gxf6 Nxf6

15.Kb1 Rb8



16.Nd5

White launches a thematic tactical sequence that swaps queens while a pawn up. An alternative is 16.Bc4.

16...Qxd2

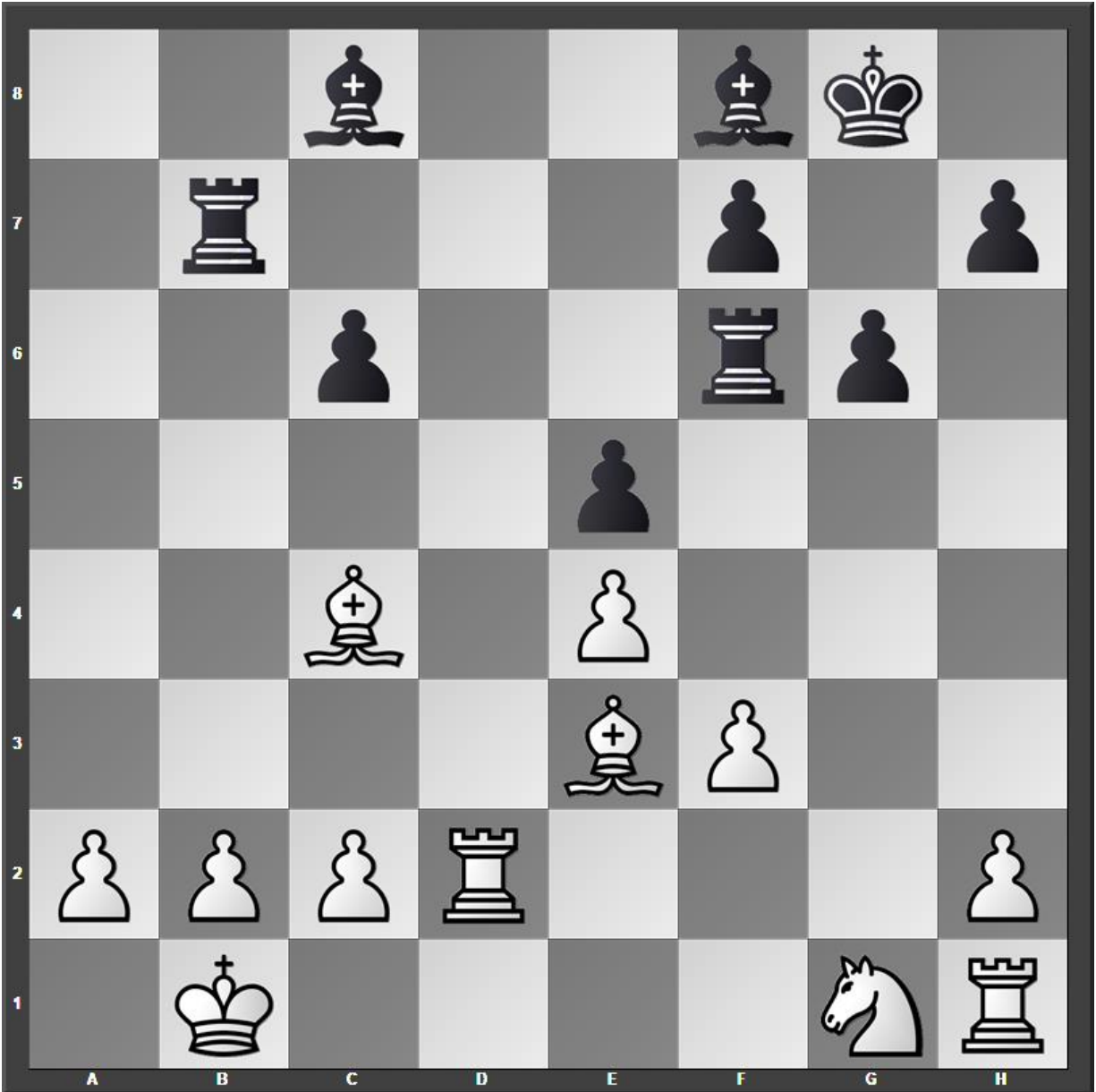
17.Nxf6+ Rxf6

18.Rxd2 Bf8

19.Bc4 Bc8

20.Bxa7 Rb7

21.Be3



21...Rb4

Or 21...Kg7 22.Rd8 and White stands better.

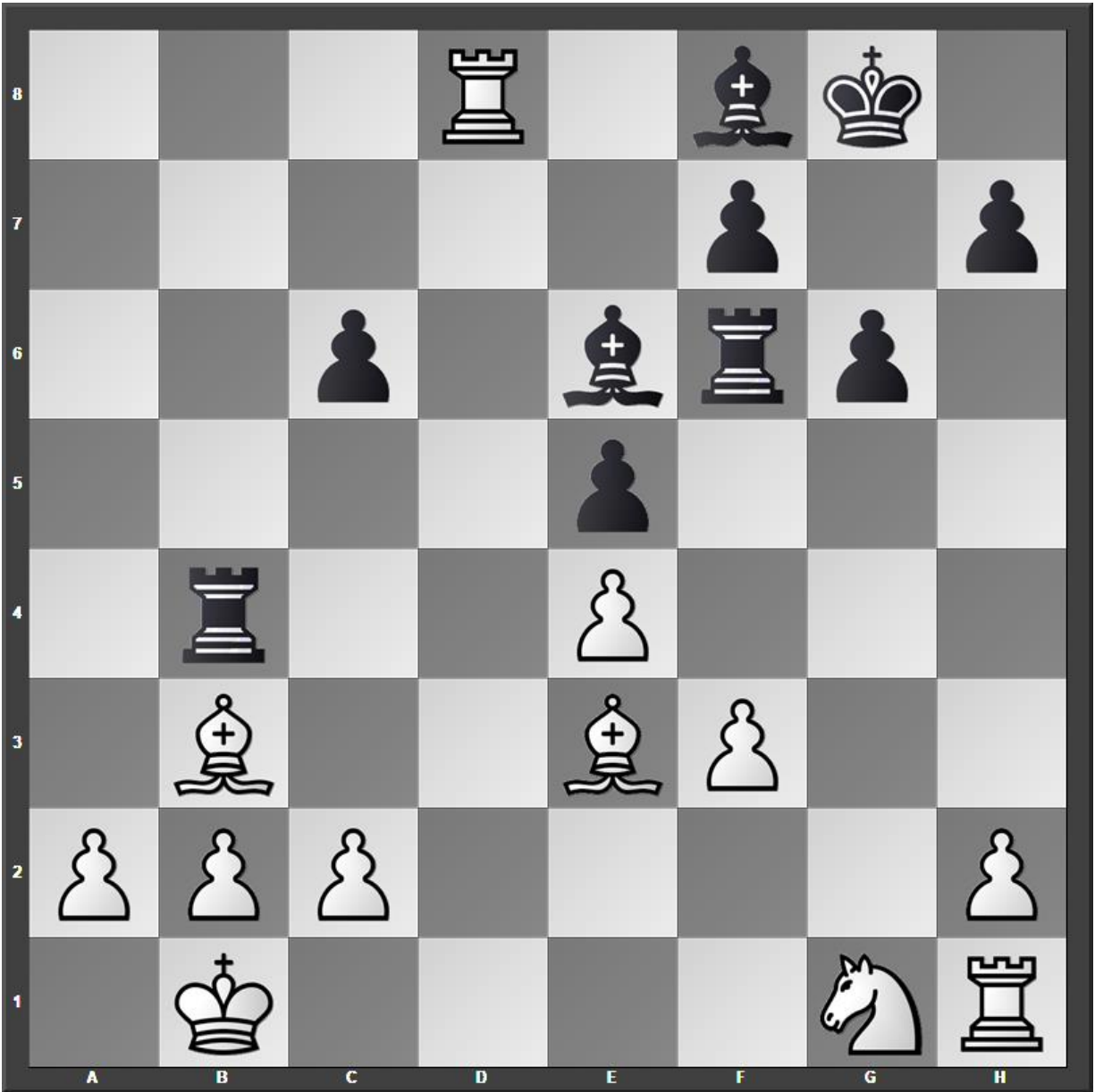
22.Bb3

Better is 22.Rd8 Rd6 23.Rxf8+ Kxf8 24.Bc5 Rxc4 25.Bxd6+ Ke8 26.Ne2 and White is up a knight.

22...Be6

If 22...Rxe4 23.Bf2 Ref4 24.a4 White has an advantage.

23.Rd8



23...Bxb3

Black falls for mate. If 23...Kg7 24.Rxf8 Rxe4 25.fxe4 Rf1+ 26.Bc1 Kxf8
27.Bxe6 fxe6 28.b3 White is up two pieces.

24.Bh6 Bxc2+

The f8 bishop is pinned. Rxf8 mate cannot be prevented.

25.Kc1 Rd6

26.Rxf8# 1-0

Black is checkmated

Game 24 – B07 [6.Qd2 c6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 10.10.2021

1.d4 g6

2.e4 c6

3.Nc3 Bg7

4.Be3 Nf6

5.f3 d6

6.Qd2 0–0



Black uses the c6 pawn to support ...b5 along with ...a5.

7.0-0-0 a5

White wants to push both the g-pawn and h-pawn in any manner that allow the opening of a file on the kingside.

8.g4 b5

9.h4 a4



The players castle on opposite sides and push pawns to open the opponent's king position. A good strategy is to make attacking moves that force your

opponent to defend. My next move is slow. Better here is the aggressive
10.h5.

10.Bh6 b4

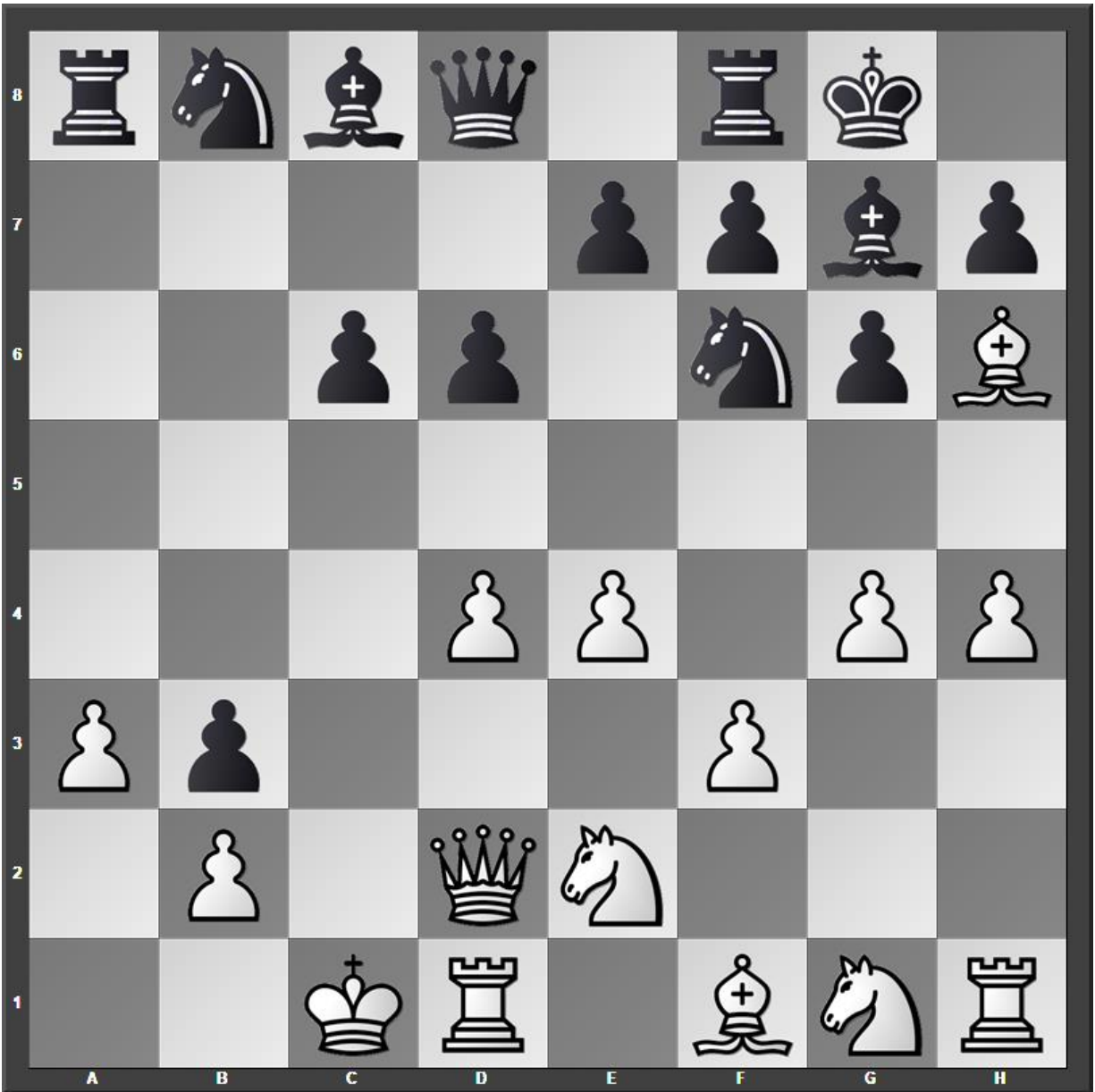
11.Nce2 b3

12.cxb3

White wants to block the pawns on the queenside. A bad strategy is 12.axb3
axb3 when Black is winning.

12...axb3

13.a3



Black now sacrifices a piece for two pawns on the kingside which only helps White.

13...N_xg4

14.fxg4 Bxg4

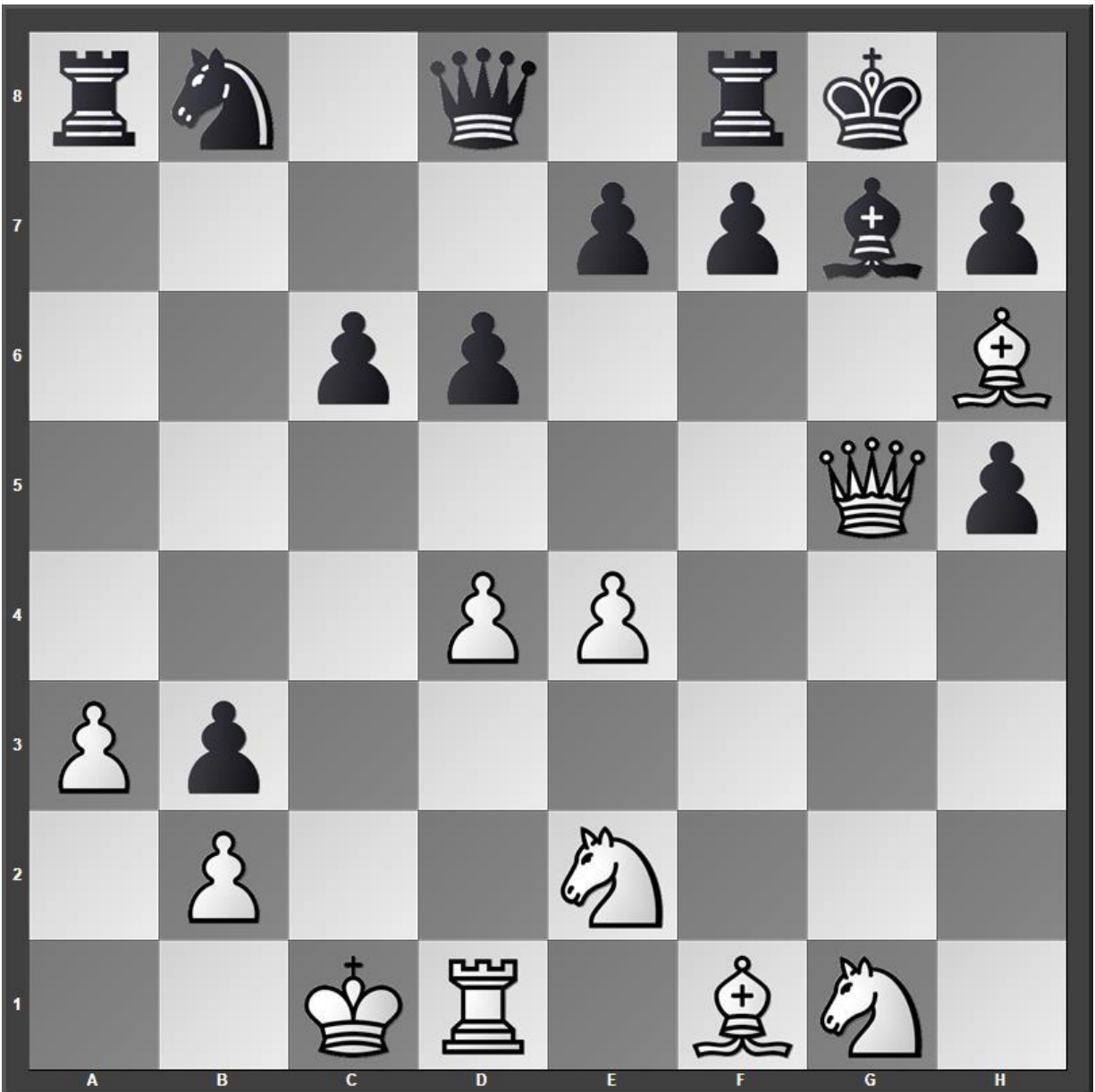
15.h5 Bxh5

Black picks up a third pawn but loses the bishop or worse.

16.Rxh5 gxh5

White executes a thematic sacrifice the Exchange (Rxh5) to remove the knight as a key defender of g7.

17.Qg5 1-0



White pins the bishop to play Qxg7 mate next move.

Black resigns

Game 25 – B07 [6.Qd2 c6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 28.07.2021

1.e4 d6

2.d4 g6

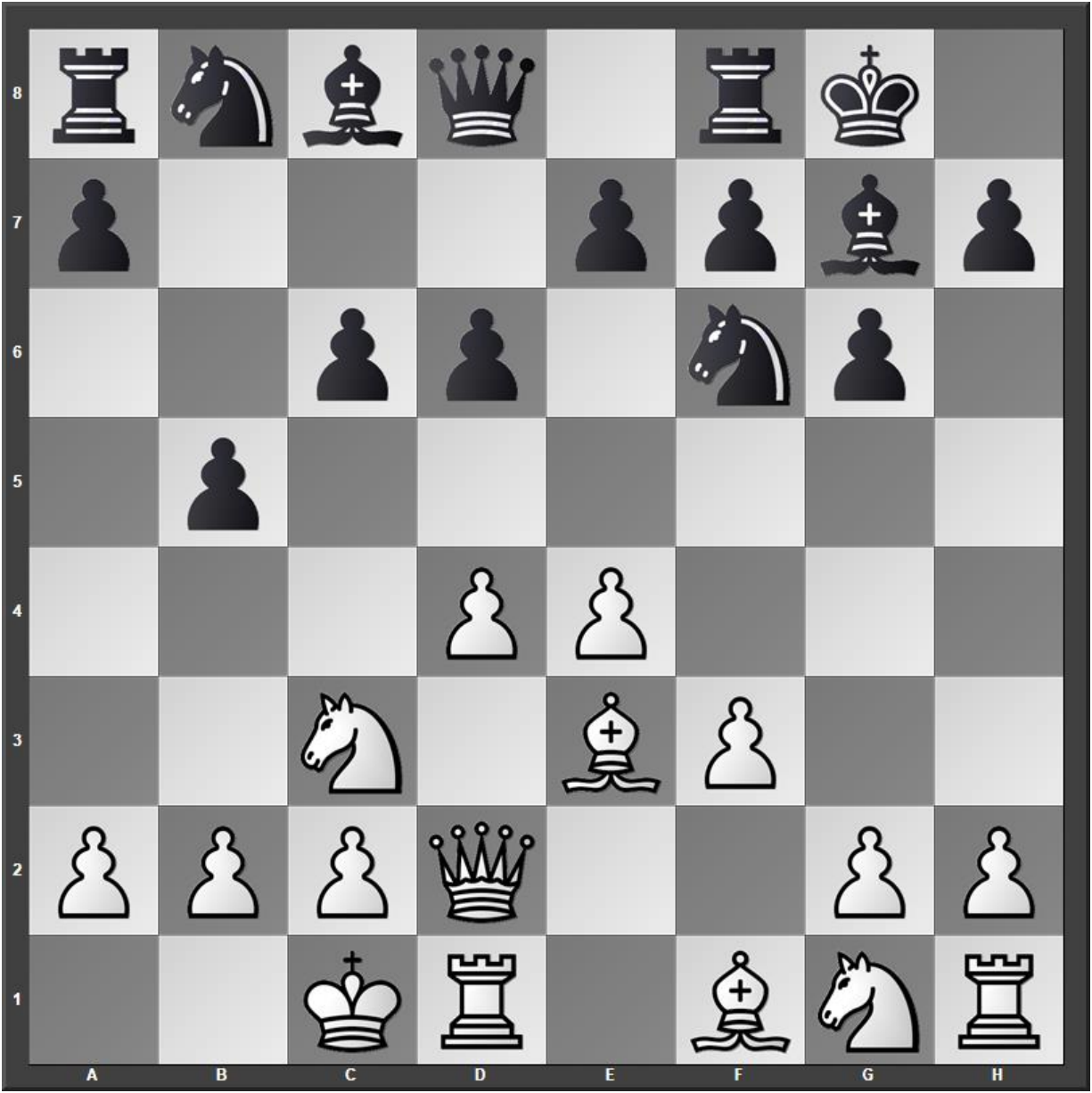
3.Nc3 Bg7

4.Be3 Nf6

5.f3 0–0

6.Qd2 c6

7.0–0–0 b5



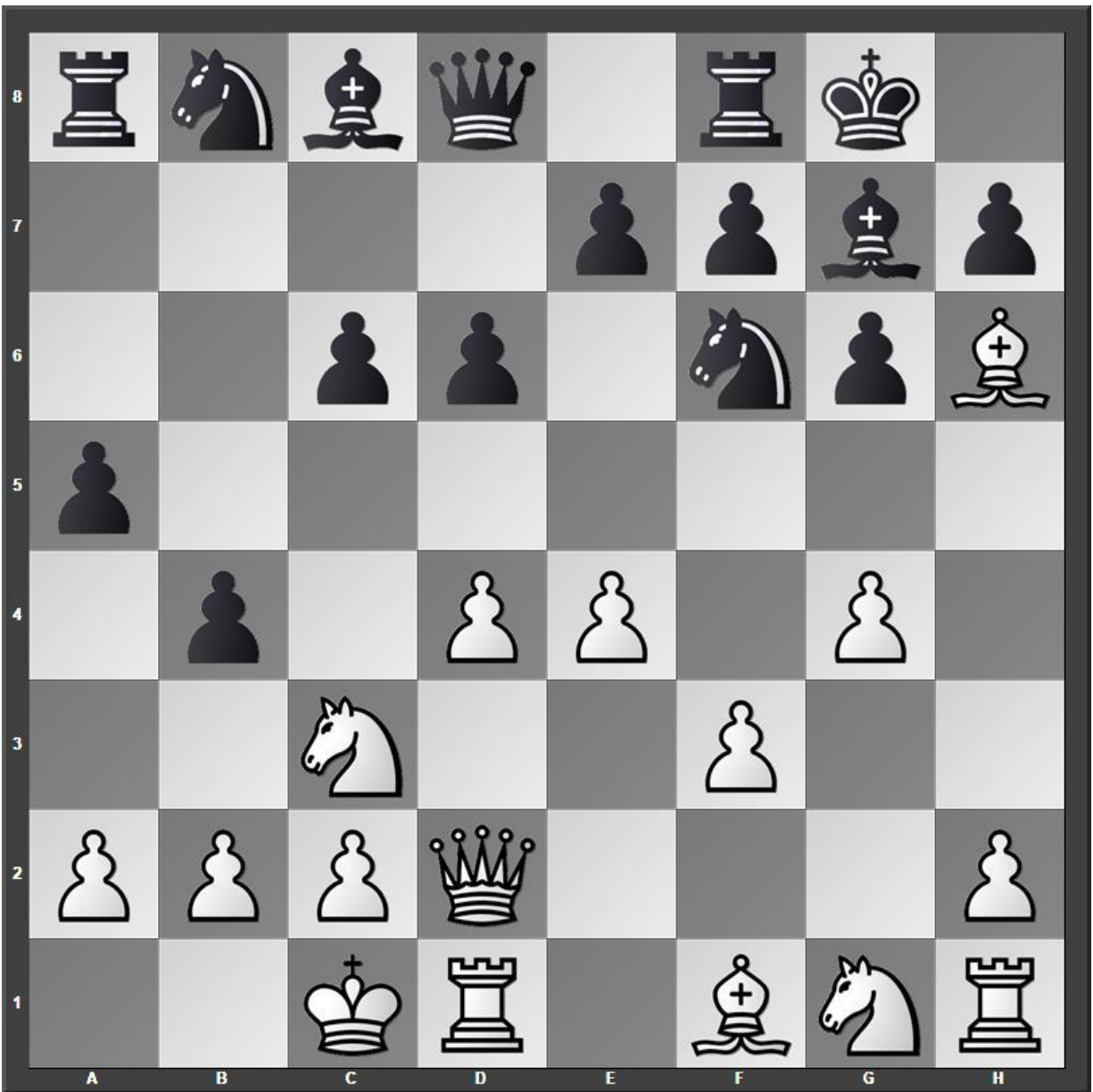
The race is on. Players hope to attack first with the most.

8.g4 a5

8...b4 9.Nce2 Qa5 10.Kb1 with chances for both sides.

My next move keeps the pawn on h7. If 9.h4 h5 when White can choose between 10.e5, 10.Bh6 or 10.Nce2.

9.Bh6 b4



10.Na4 favors White.

10.Nce2 Ba6

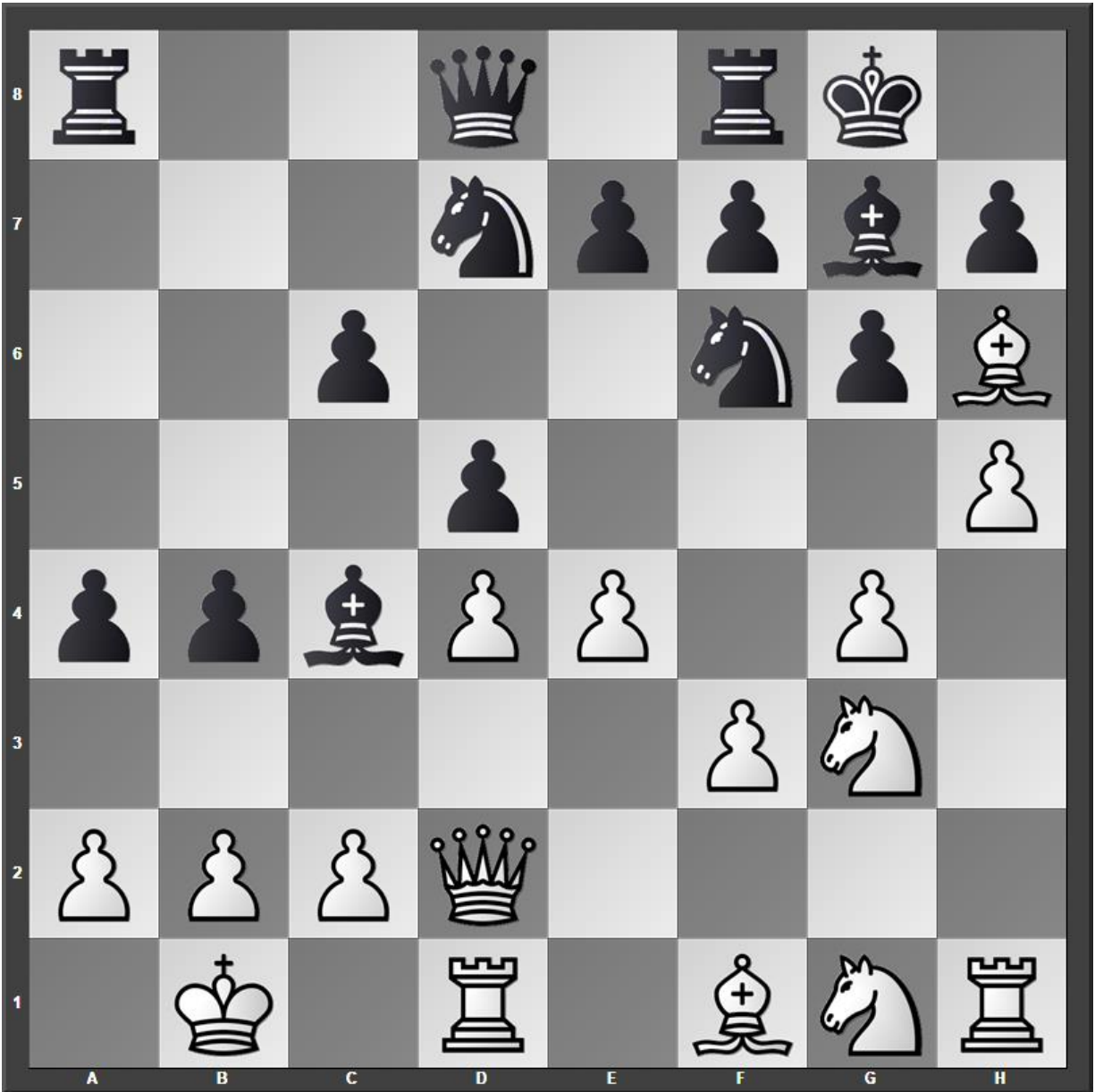
11.h4 Bc4

If 12.h5 White's attack picks up speed.

12.Kb1 Nbd7

13.Ng3 d5

14.h5 a4



15.Bxg7 Kxg7

16.hxg6 fxg6

17.Qh6+ Kf7

18.e5 Ng8

Black saves the knight to the detriment of the king.



19.Qxh7+ Ke8

If 19...Ke6 20.Qxg6+ wins a rook on f6 or 20...Ndf6 21.Qf5+ Kf7 22.e6+ Ke8 23.Qg6+ Rf7 24.Qxf7 mate.

20.Qxg6+ Rf7

21.e6 Nf8

If 21...Qc8 22.exf7+ Kd8 23.fxg8Q+ White adds a queen.

22.Qxf7# 1-0

Black is checkmated

Chapter 6 – Modern 1.e4 g6

Game 26 – B06 [2.f4 d6 3.Nf3 Bg7]

Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 27.01.2022

1.e4 g6

2.f4 d6

3.Nf3 Bg7



The delay of the moves d4 Nf6 allow for a slightly different setup than the standard 2.d4 Nf6 Pirc Defence.

4.d4 Nf6

Now 5.Nc3 0-0 transposes to the Pirc Three Pawns Attack.

5.Bd3 0-0

6.0-0 Nbd7

7.c4



White opts for the Four Pawns Attack like the line against the King's Indian Defence but here it is without Nc3. Black's strategy is to counterattack with ...c5 or ...e5.

7...e5

8.fxe5 dxe5

White unwisely sacrifices the bishop. Better is 13.Bf2 Qe7 14.Nc3 Ng4
with an unbalanced but equal position.

13...hxg5

14.Nxg5 Ng4

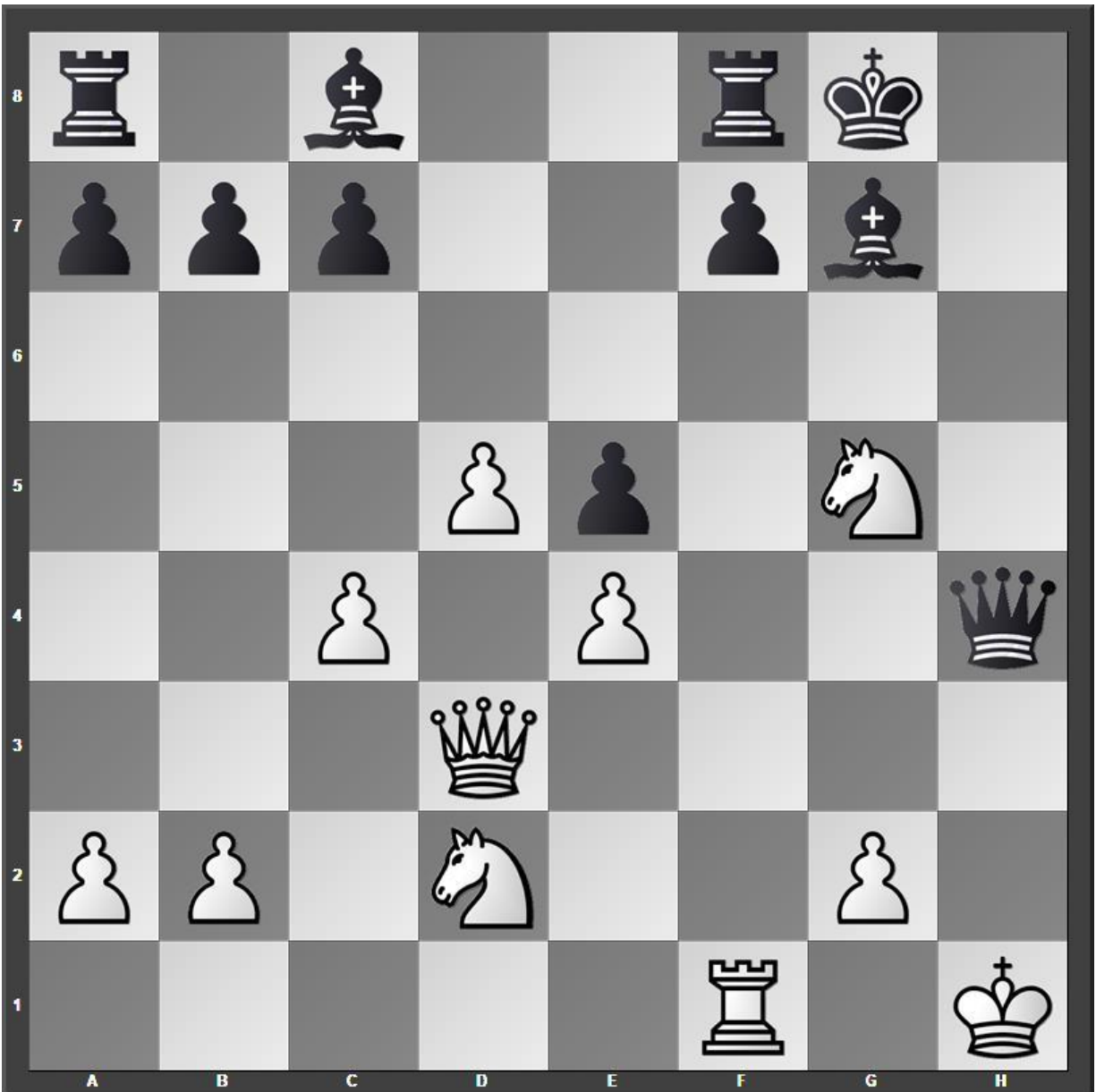
15.h4 Qe7

16.Nd2 Qc5+

17.Kh1 Nf2+

18.Rxf2 Qxf2

19.Rf1 Qxh4+



20.Kg1

White could save the knight with 20.Nh3 f5 although Black still has an extra rook hiding away over on a8.

20...Qxg5

21.Rf3 Bg4

22.Rg3 Qf4

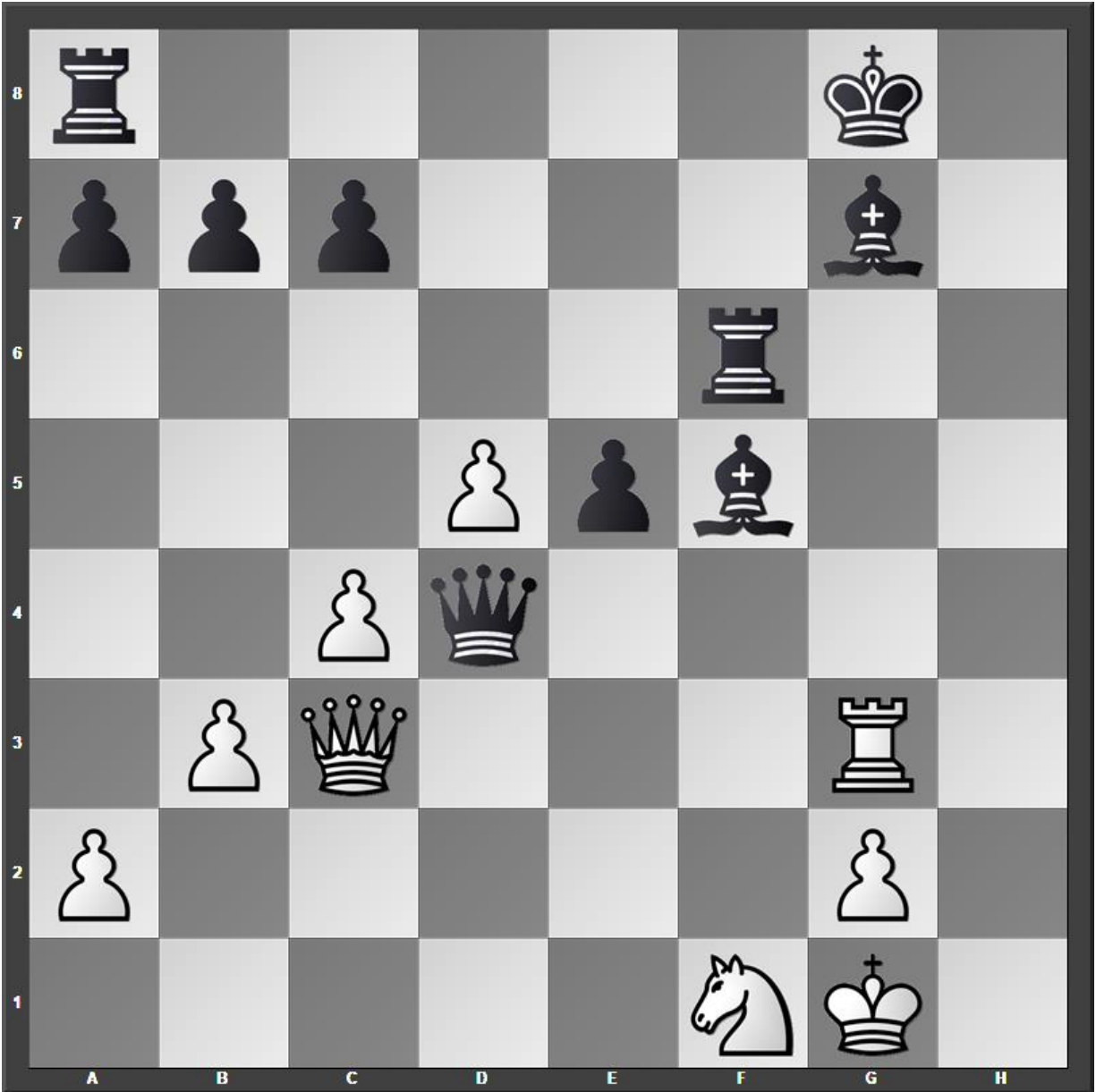
23.b3 f5

24.exf5 Bxf5

Also winning for Black is 24...e4 25.Nxe4 Rae8.

25.Qc3 Rf6

26.Nf1 Qd4+

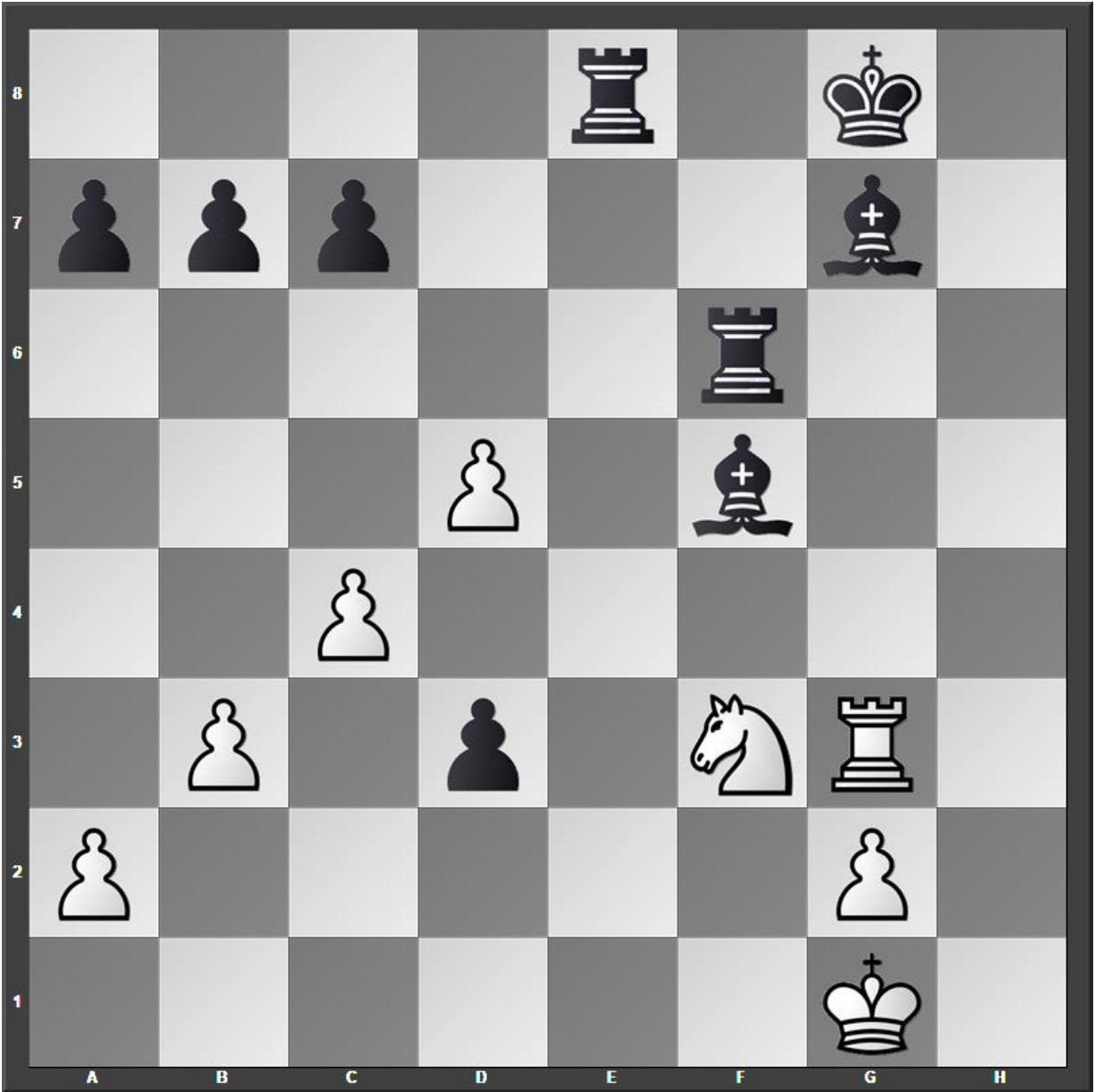


Black's check will swap queens and stop the White attack.

27.Qxd4 exd4

28.Nh2 Re8

29.Nf3 d3



Black's extra rook and minor piece is too much too handle.

30.Ng5 d2

31.Ne6 d1Q+

32.Kf2 Bxe6+ 0-1

White resigns

Game 27 – B06 [2.d4 c6 3.Nc3 Bh6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 08.08.2021 4634

1.d4 c6

2.e4 g6

Sometimes Black combines the Caro-Kann 1...c6 with the Modern 1...g6.

A typical continuation in this game might be 3.Nc3 Bg7 (or 3...d5) 4.Nf3 d5. White has many playable fifth move choices such as 5.h3, 5.e5, 5.exd5, or 5.Be2.

3.Nc3 Bh6



4.f4

I did not feel like swapping bishops. Anyone who plays 3...Bh6 might not have a good strategy for development. So, I blocked the swap with 4.f4. Although, after 4.Bxh6 Nxh6 5.Qd2 White enjoys a nice lead in development.

4...f5

Black loses a pawn. I had expected 4...d5 5.e5.

5.exf5 gxf5

6.Qh5+ Kf8

7.Qxf5+



7...Ke8

A reasonable continuation is 7...Nf6 8.Qh3 Bg7 9.Nf3 d6 10.f5 when White keeps the extra pawn.

8.Nf3 d6

9.Qh5+ Kf8

10.Ng5



10...Nf6

My opponent falls for mate. If 10...Qe8 11.Qh4.

11.Qf7# 1-0

Black is checkmated

Game 28 – B06 [2.d4 Bg7 3.Nf3 c6]
Guest – Sawyer, Chess.com, 30.01.2022
1.e4 g6
2.Nf3 Bg7
3.d4 c6
4.Bc4 d5



This line blends 1...g6 with 1...c6. It works in either order.

5.exd5 cxd5

6.Bb3 Nc6

7.Nc3 Nf6
8.Bg5 e6
9.0-0 0-0
10.Re1 Qb6



White has a solid position despite Black's focus on d4.

11.Ne2 Ne4
12.c3 Nxc3

13.Nxg5 Qd8

14.Nf3 b6

15.Rc1 Ba6

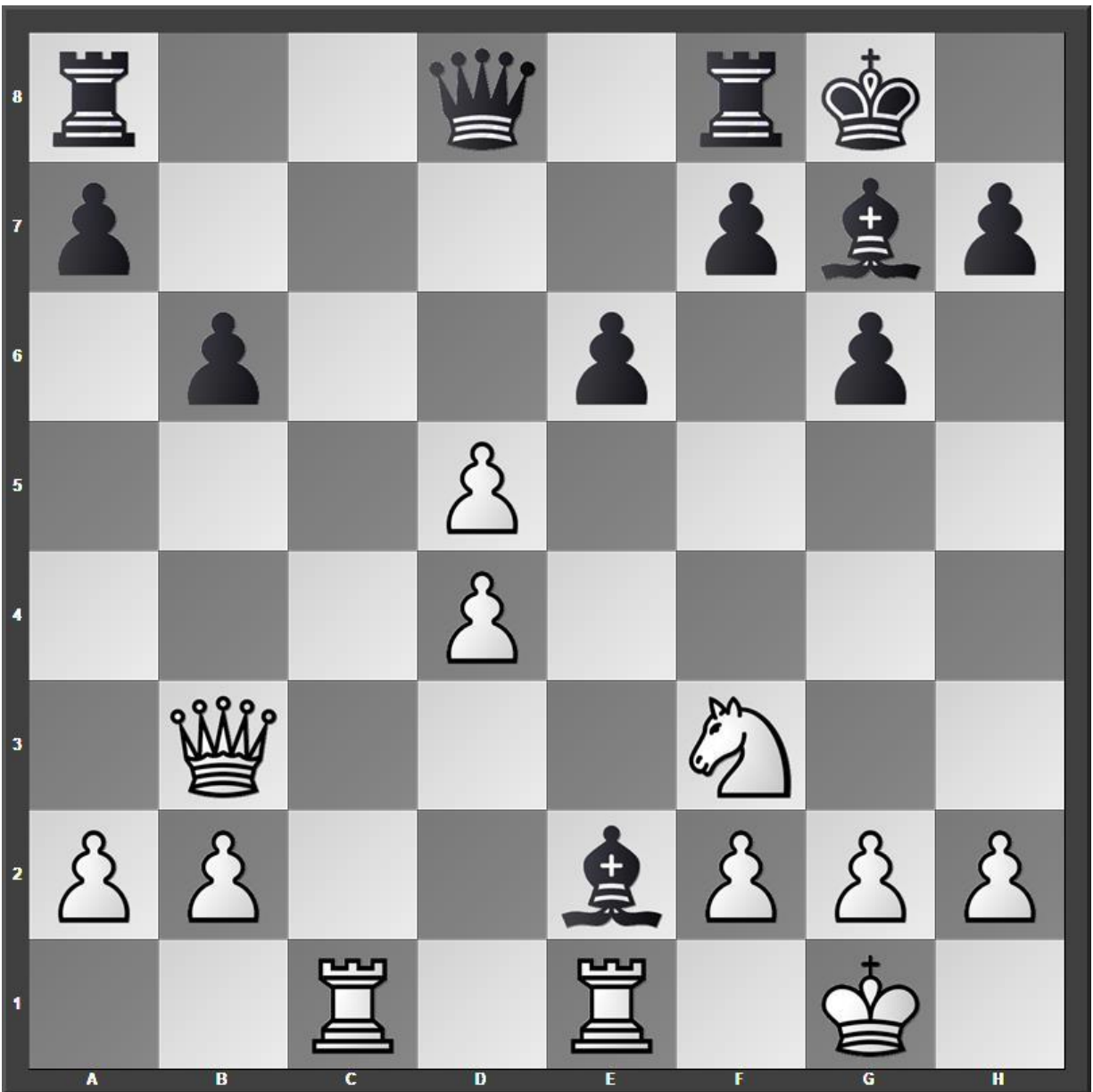
Interesting is 16.h4 Qd6 17.h5 with attacking chances.

16.c4 Na5

17.cxd5 Nxb3

18.Qxb3 Bxe2

A mistake. Better is 18...Qxd5 19.Qxd5 exd5 with equality.



We missed 19.dxe6 Bxf3 20.e7 Qxd4 21.exf8Q+ Rxf8 22.Qxf3 Qxb2 and
White wins the Exchange for a pawn.

19.Rxe2 exd5

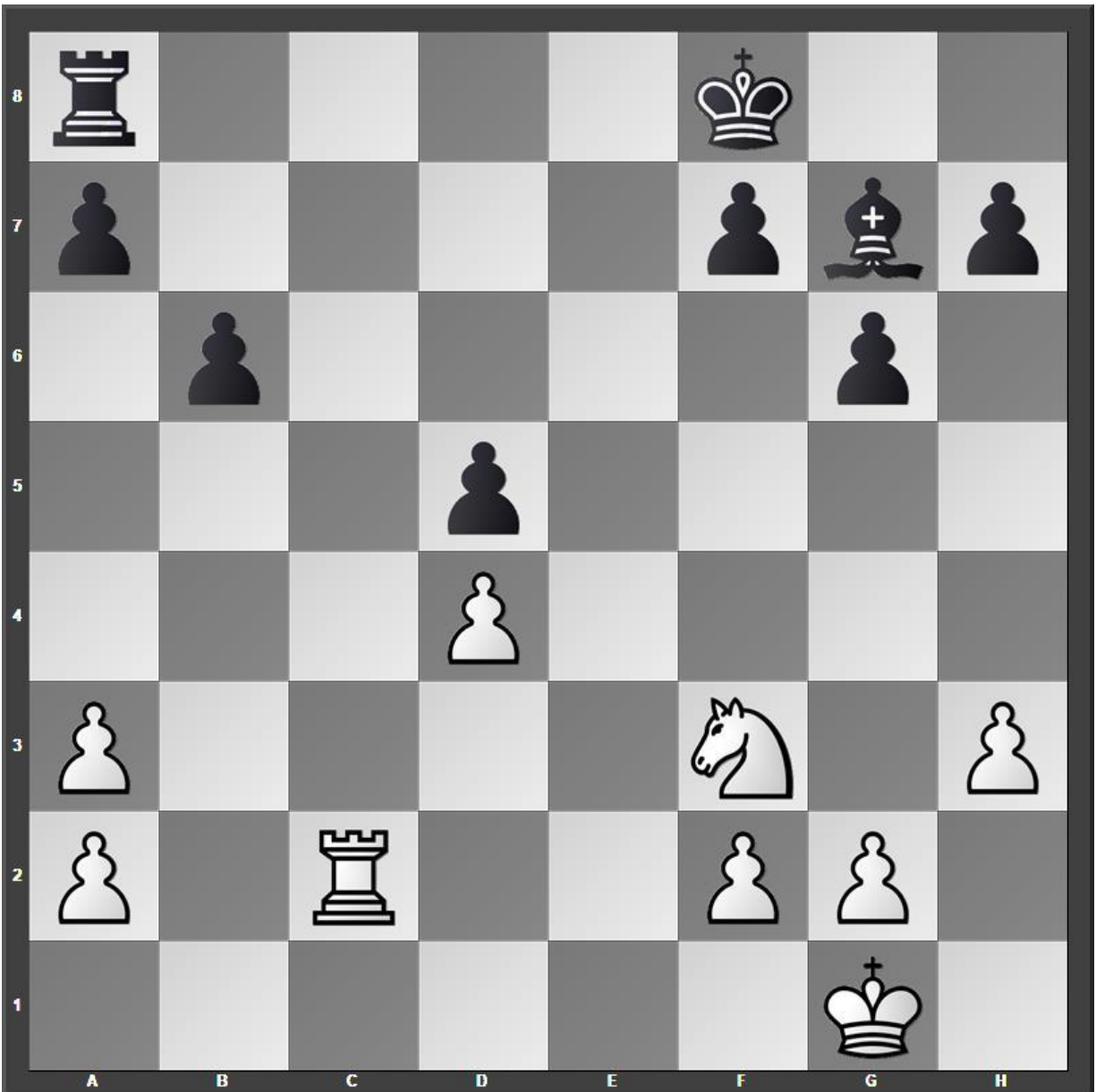
20.h3 Qd6

21.Qa3 Qxa3

22.bxa3 Rfc8

23.Rec2 Rxc2

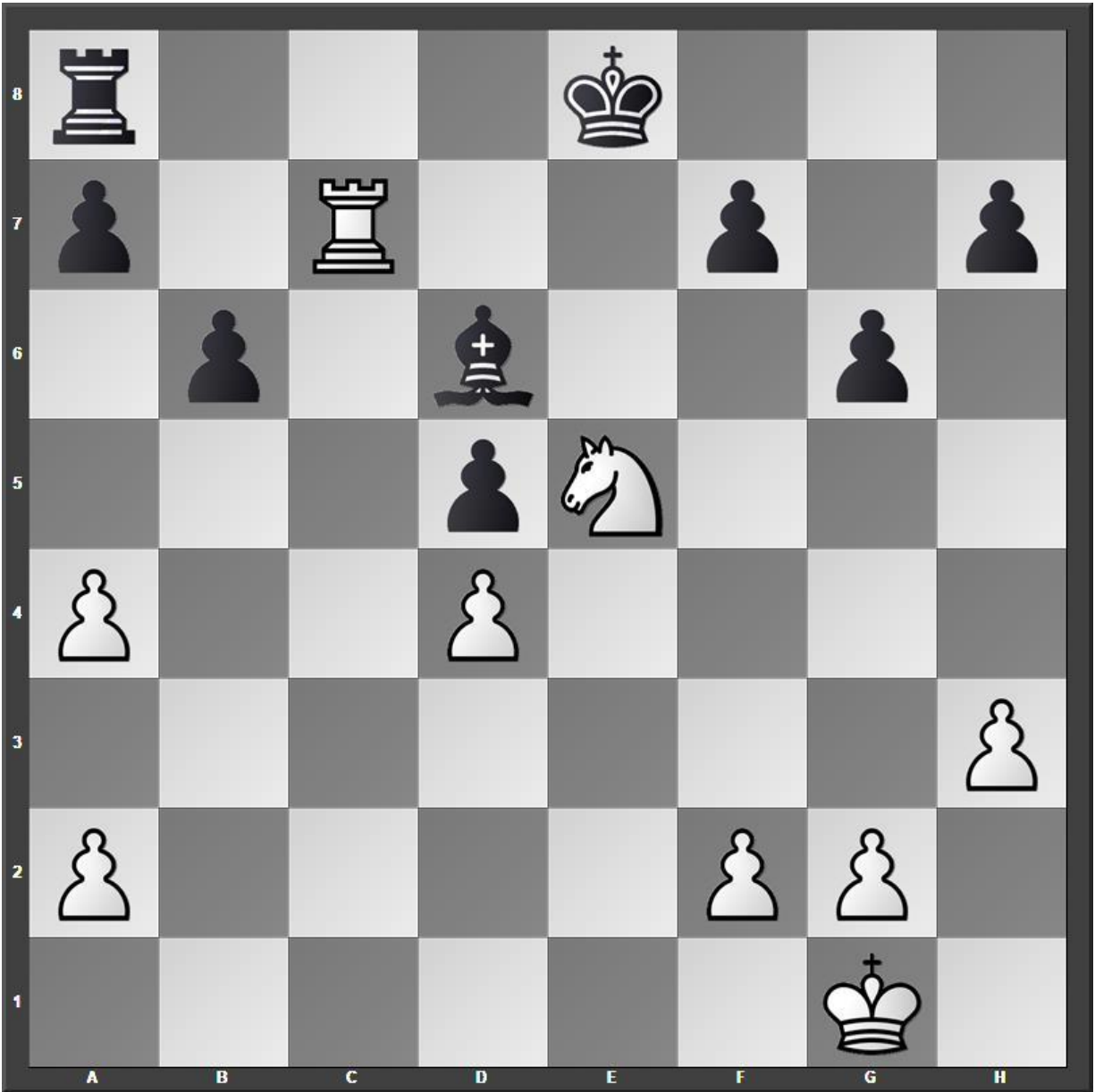
24.Rxc2 Kf8



25.Rc7 Ke8

26.a4 Bf8

27.Ne5 Bd6



Best is 28.Rc1 Ke7 29.Kf1 f6 with equal chances. Instead, White loses a knight by taking the f7 pawn with the rook.

28.Rxf7 Bxe5

29.Rxh7 Bxd4

30.Rh6 Kf7

31.g3 Rh8

32.Rxh8 Bxh8 0-1

White resigns

Chapter 7 – Modern 1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3

Game 29 – B06 [2.d4 c6 3.Nc3 e5]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 17.09.2021

1.e4 g6

2.d4 Bg7

This is the standard starting point for the Modern Defence.

3.Nc3 e5



I choose not to play 4.dxe5 Bxe5 5.Nf3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3.

4.Nf3 exd4

5.Nxd4 Bxd4

If 5...d6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Qd2 Nc6 8.f3 White stands better.

6.Qxd4 f6

If 6...Qf6 7.Qxf6 Nxf6 8.Bg5 Nh5 9.Nd5 threatening Nxc7.



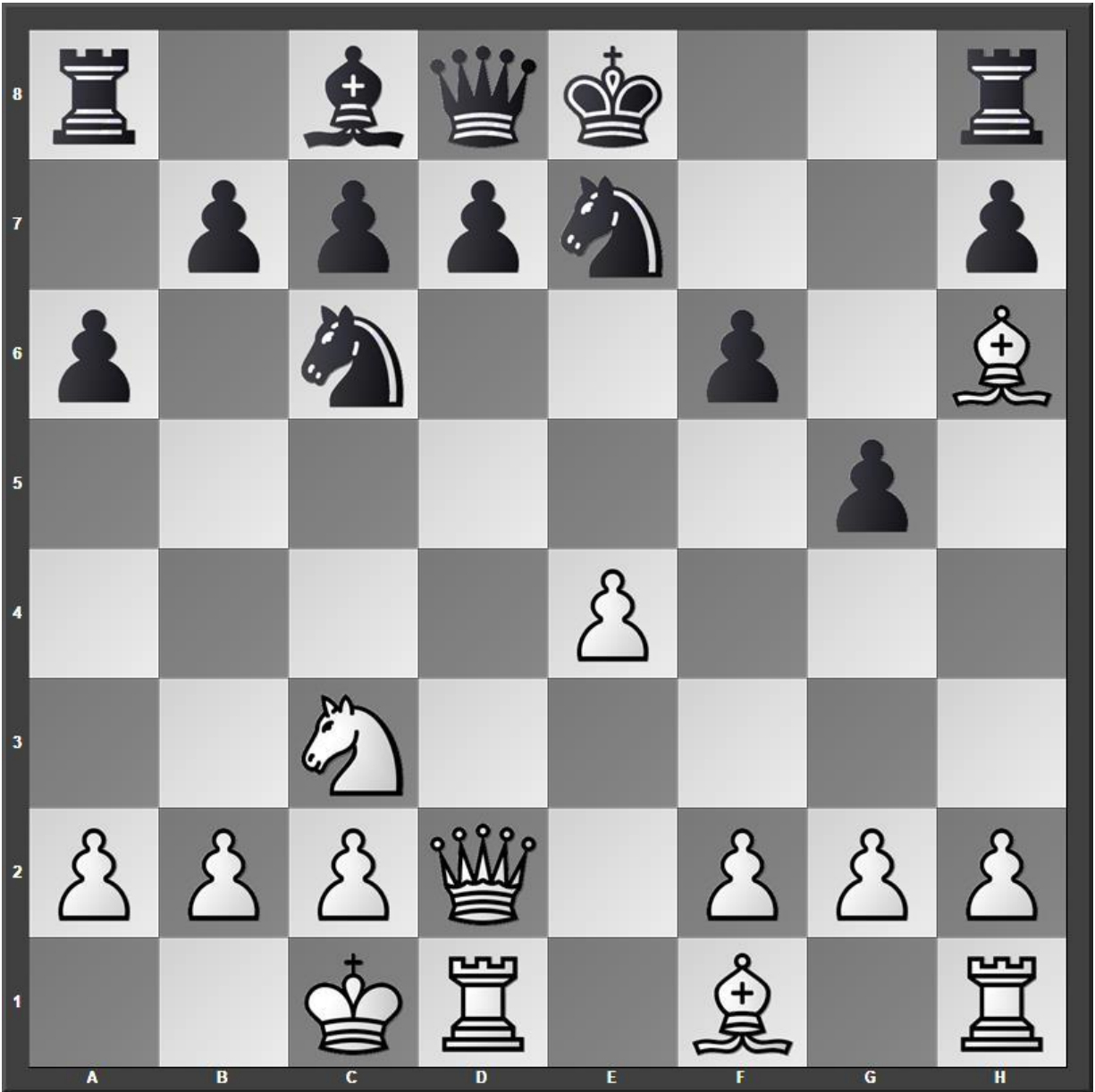
A creative idea is 7.Nd5 d6 8.Bg5.

7.Bf4 Nc6

8.Qd2 a6

9.0-0-0 Nge7

10.Bh6 g5



Now White wins a pawn.

11.Bg7 Rg8

12.Bxf6 h6

13.Bc4 Rg6

14.Nd5 b5

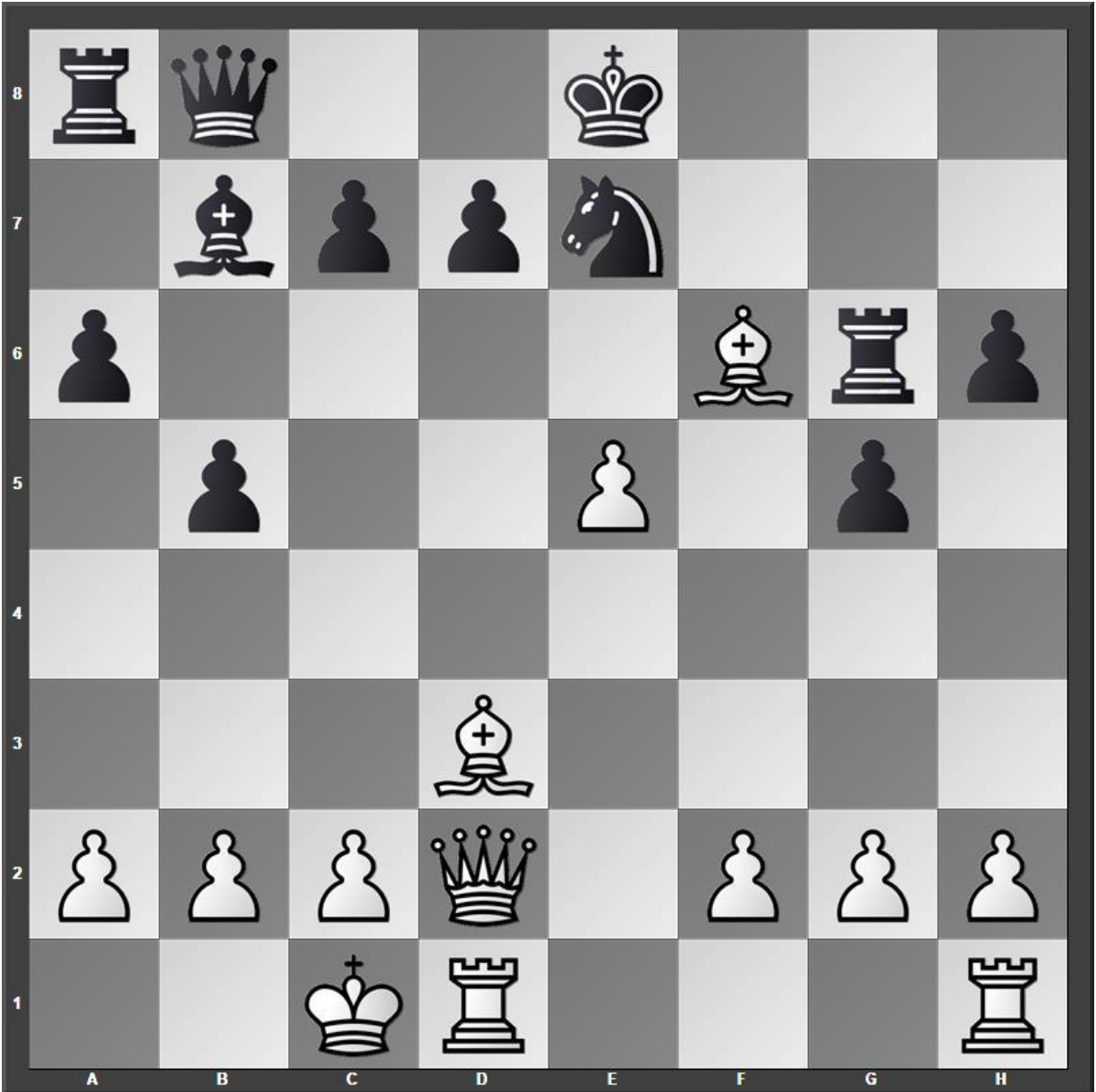
15.Bd3 Bb7

16.e5 Qb8

If 16...Rxf6 17.Nxf6+ Kf8 18.Be4 White stands better.

17.Nxe7 Nxe7

If 17...Rxf6 18.exf6 Ne5 19.Qe3 White is winning.



I missed a mate in 10 moves after 18.Bxg6+ Kf8 19.Bxe7+ Kg7 20.Qxd7 Qc8 21.Bf8+ Kxg6 22.Qg7+ Kh5 23.Qxh6+ Kg4 24.Rd4+ Be4 25.f3+ Kf4 26.Rxe4+ Kf5 27.Qf6 mate.

18.Bxe7 Kxe7

19.Bxg6 1-0

Black resigns

Game 30 – B06 [2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 f5]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 18.11.2021

1.d4 g6

2.e4 Bg7

The Fool's Mate theme is 2...f5 3.exf5 gxf5 4.Qh5 mate.

3.Nc3 f5



4.exf5 gxf5

If 4...d5 5.fxg6 hxg6 6.Bd3 White has a big advantage.

5.Qh5+ Kf8

6.Qxf5+ Ke8

7.Bc4 Nf6

8.Qf3 Rf8

9.Qg3 Ne4



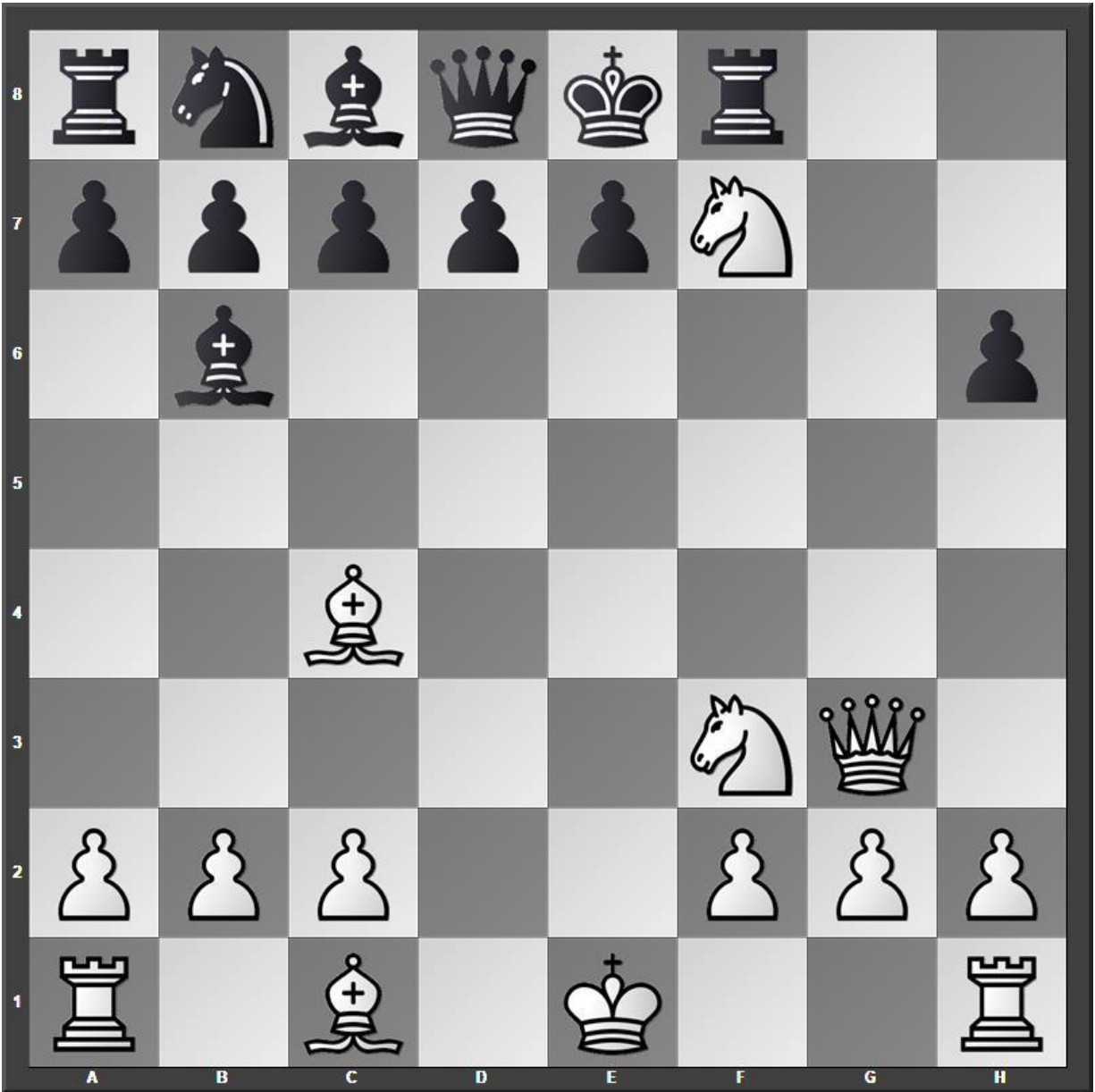
An embarrassment of riches. I take the free knight on e4 but taking the free bishop with 10.Qxg7 wins just as well.

10.Nxe4 Bxd4

11.Nf3 Bb6

12.Neg5 h6

13.Nf7



Smothered mate to the queen.

13...Rxf7

My opponent can avoid immediate mate with 13...d6 14.Qg6 but certain disaster awaits Black.

14.Qg8+ Rf8

15.Qg6+ Rf7

16.Qxf7# 1-0

Black is checkmated

Game 31 – B06 [2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 Nf6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 21.01.2022

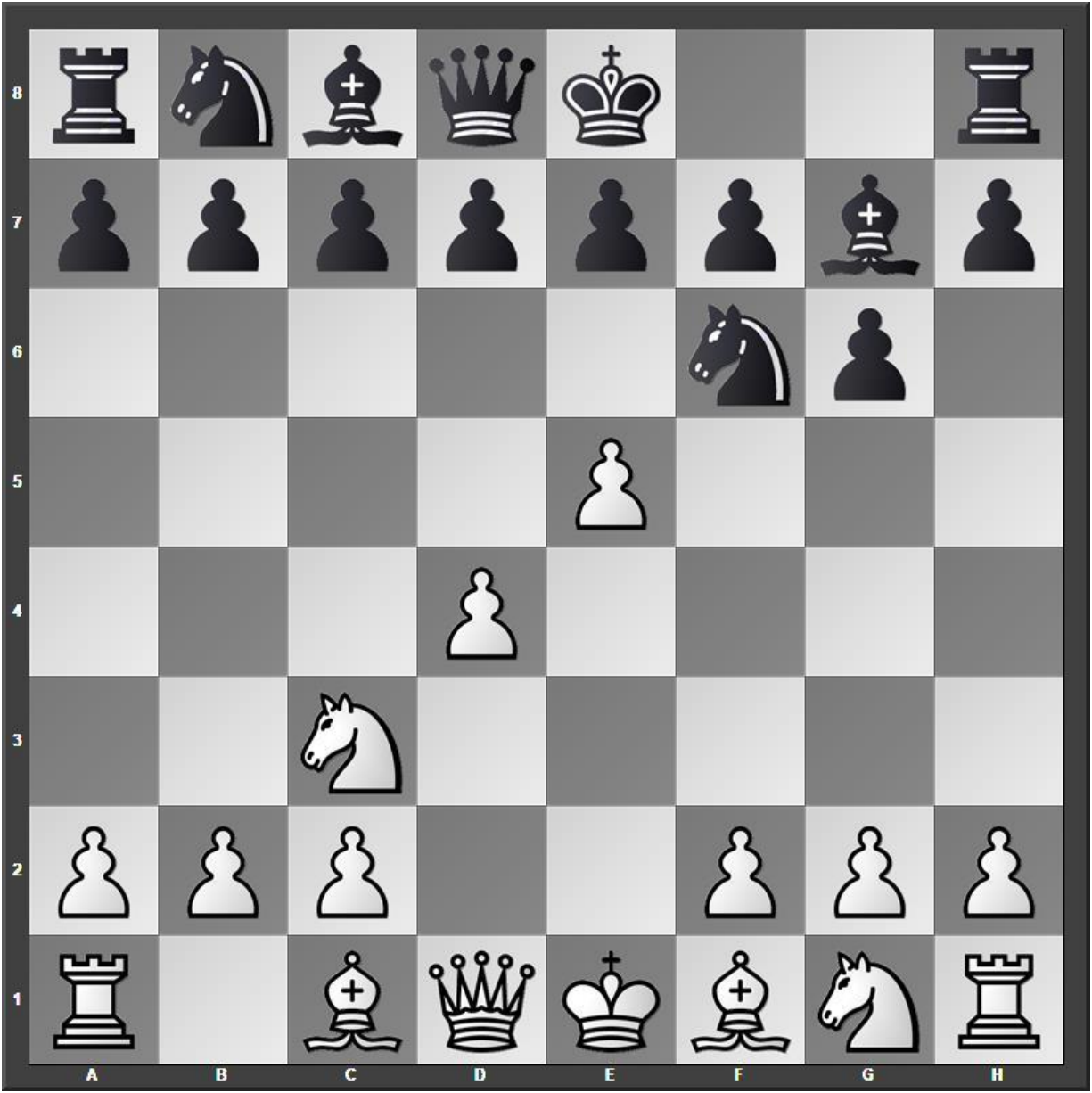
1.e4 g6

2.d4 Bg7

3.Nc3 Nf6

Black plans to quickly develop the kingside, castle, and then deal with White's plans. That is a flawed strategy. If Black wants to play Nf6 then 3...d6 must come first.

4.e5



4...0-0

This loses a piece. The knight must retreat to g8. White covers d5, e4, and g4. If 4...Nh5 5.g4 wins the knight.

5.exf6 Bxf6

6.Nf3 Bxd4

7.Qxd4 b6

8.Bh6 c5



9.Qg7# 1-0

Black is checkmated

Game 32 – B06 [2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 b6]

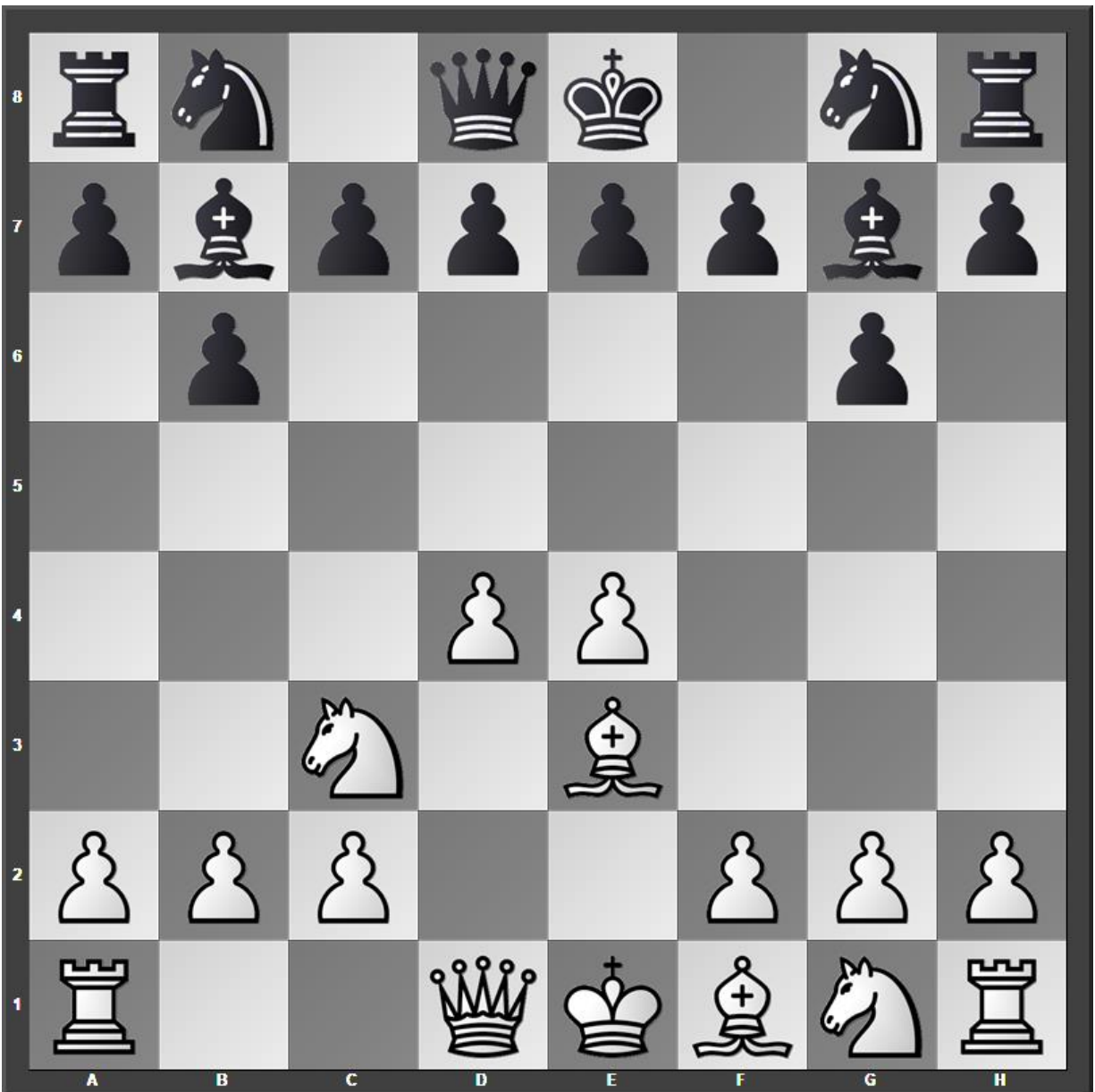
Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 22.01.2022

1.d4 g6

2.e4 Bg7

3.Nc3 b6

4.Be3 Bb7



Black adopts a double fianchetto defense. The danger is that White will completely dominate and control the center.

5.f3 Nc6

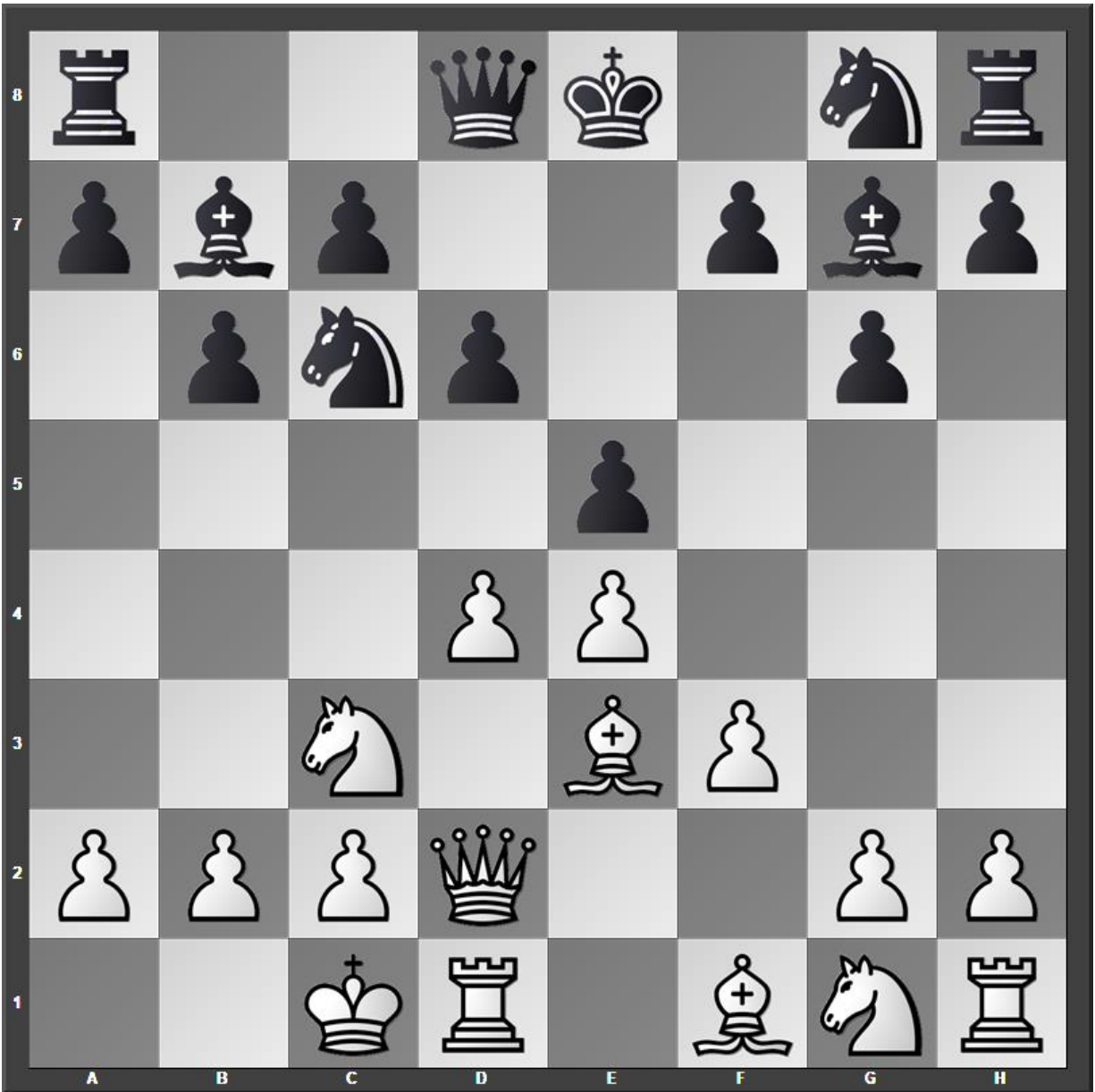
6.Qd2

Or 6.d5 Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 Na5 8.Qd4 when White has doubled pawns but a solid center. I'm not in that much of a hurry.

6...d6

The position resembles a Pirc without the Nf6.

7.0-0-0 e5

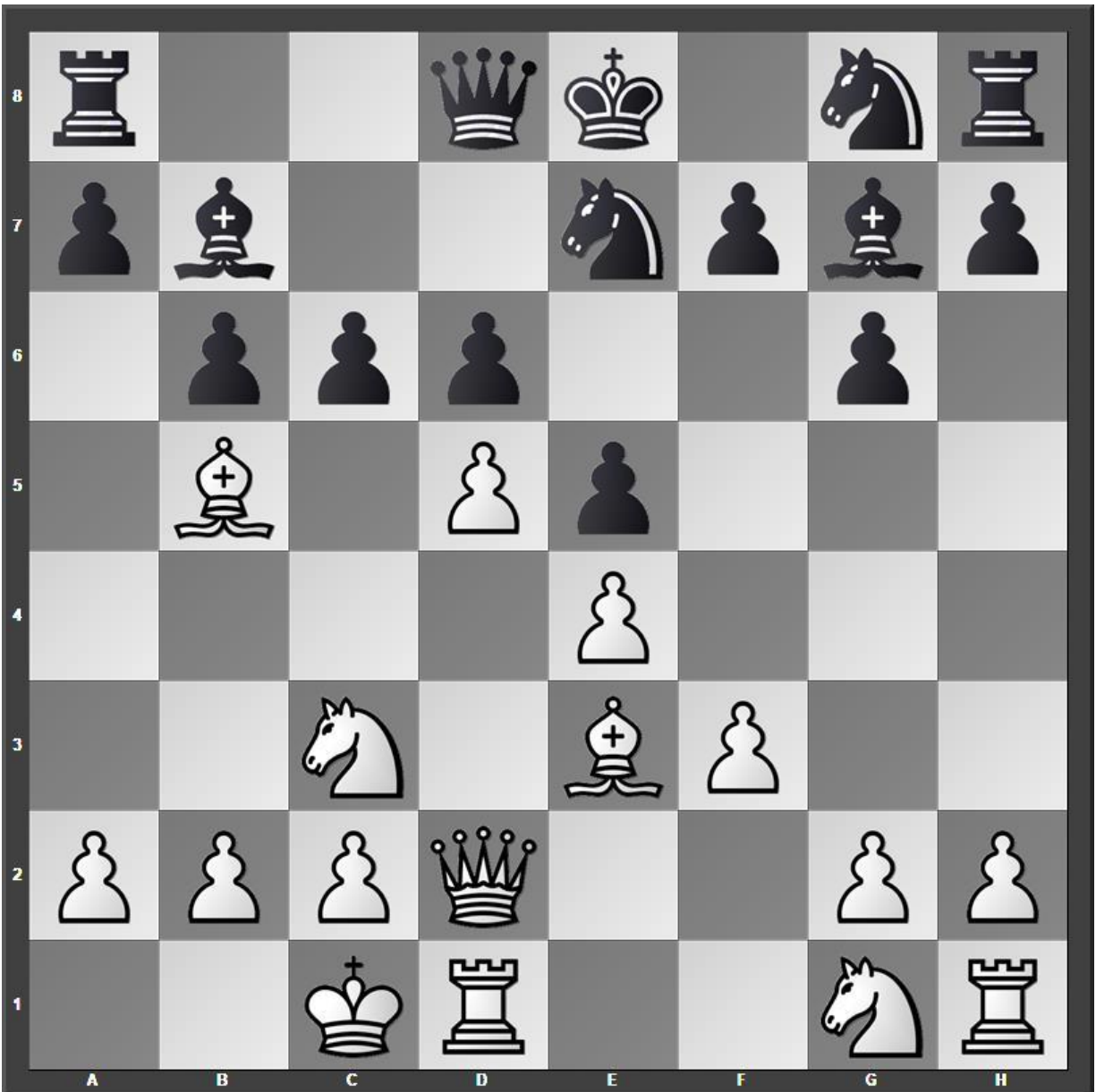


Black's g7 bishop eyes d4. I close that window with 8.d5.

8.d5 Nce7

9.Bb5+ c6

Black will lose the d6 pawn. If 9...Kf8 10.h4 White is better.



10.dxc6 Bxc6

11.Qxd6 Qxd6

12.Rxd6 Bxb5

13.Nxb5 Nf6

This loses the a8 rook. If 13...Nc8 14.Nc7+ Kf8 15.Rd3 Rb8 16.Ne2 White has a pawn and a development lead.

14.Nc7+ 1-0

Black resigns

Game 33 – B06 [2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 b6]

Sawyer – Guest, Chess.com, 03.06.2021 4336

1.e4 g6

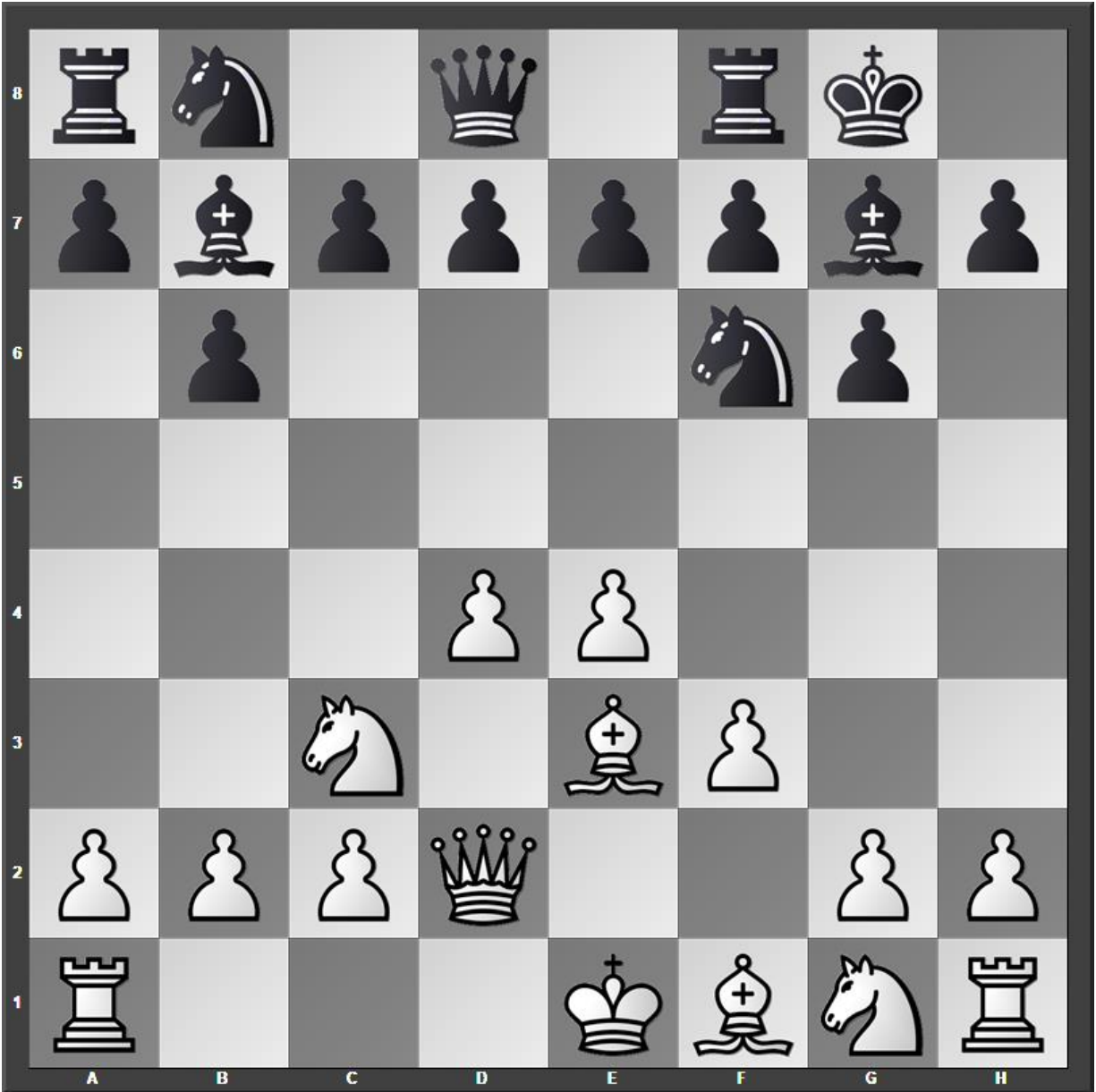
2.d4 Bg7

3.Nc3 b6

4.Be3 Bb7

5.Qd2 Nf6

6.f3 0–0



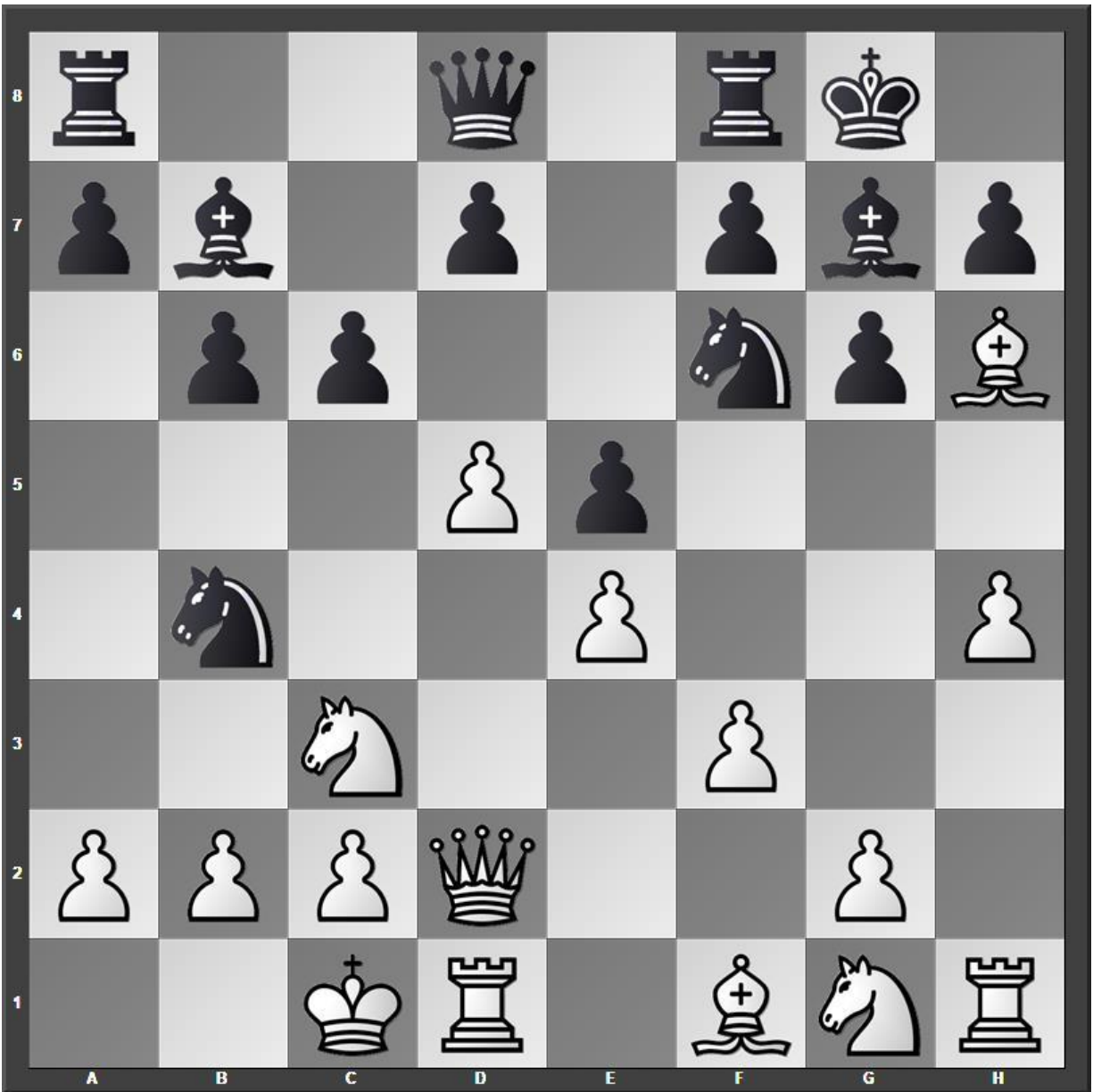
My pawn on f3 keeps a knight out of g4 and protects e4.

7.0-0-0 Nc6

8.h4 e5

9.d5 Nb4

10.Bh6 c6



My strategy is to trade off the bishop that protects the king.

11.Bxg7 Kxg7

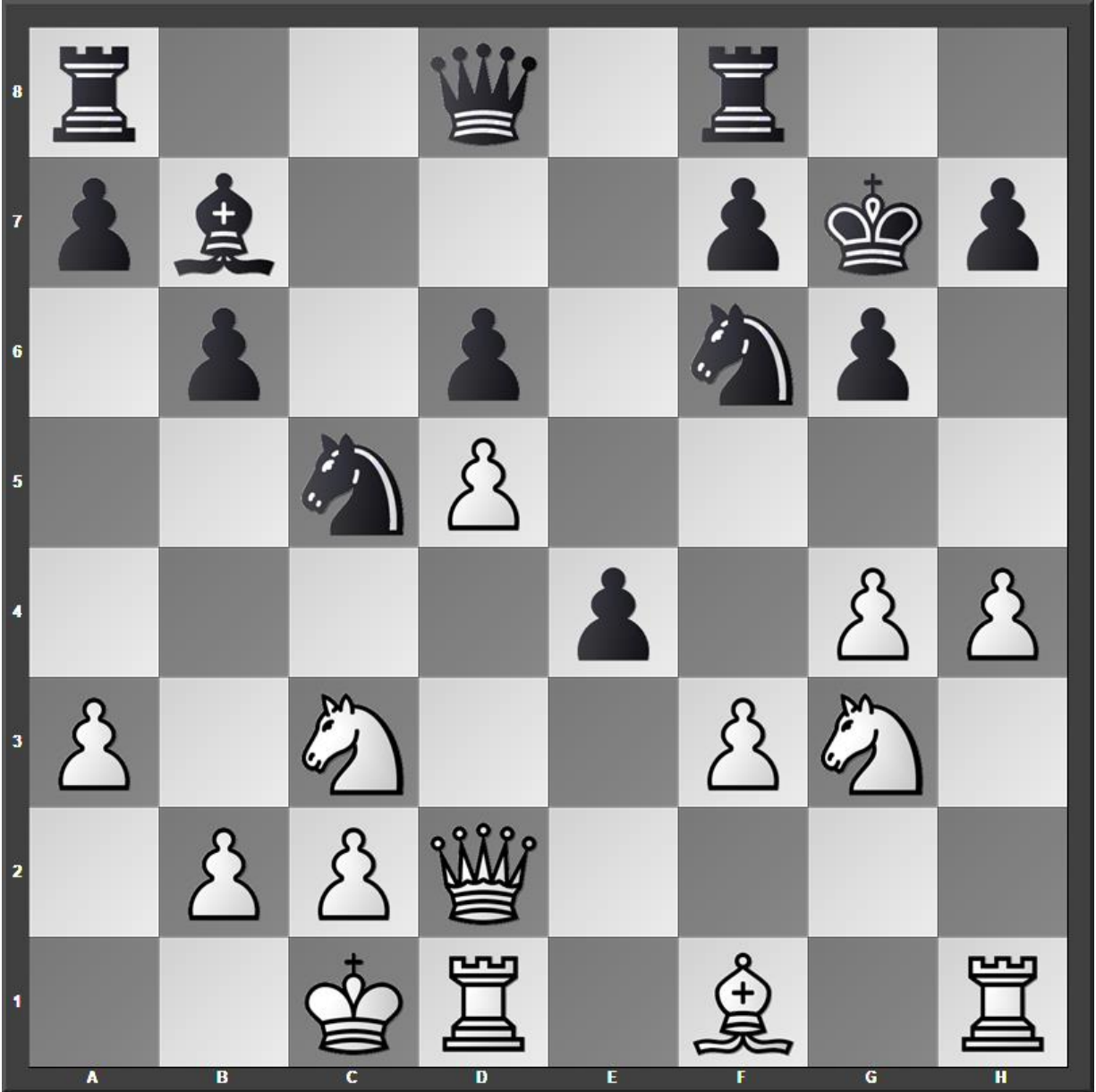
12.a3 Na6

13.g4 cxd5

14.exd5 d6

15.Nge2 Nc5

16.Ng3 e4



17.Ncxe4 Ncxe4

18.Nxe4 Nxe4

19.fxe4 Re8

20.Bd3 Rc8

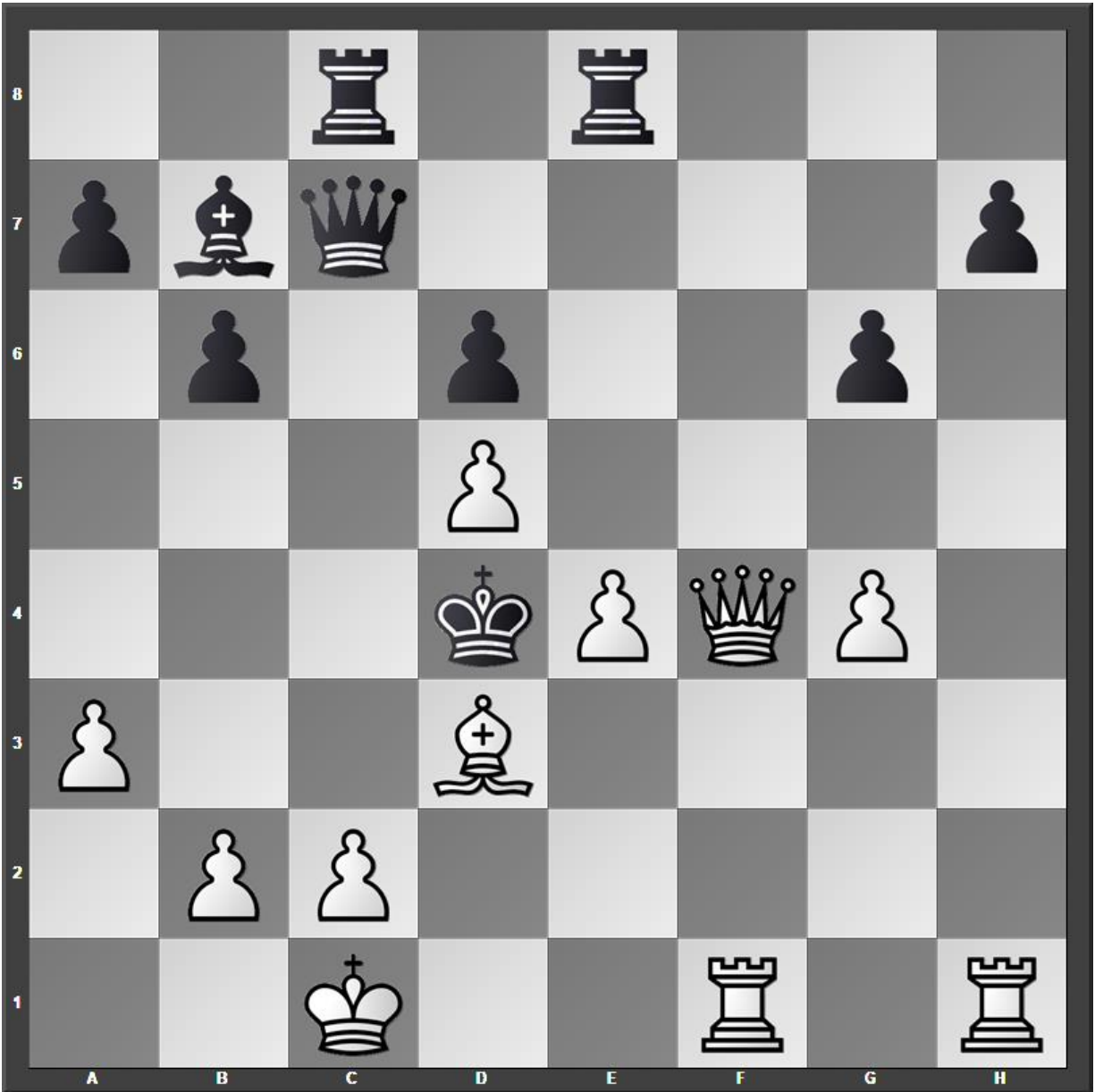
21.h5 Qc7

22.hxg6 fxg6

23.Qh6+ Kf6

24.Rdf1+ Ke5

25.Qf4+ Kd4



Now White has a mate in two.

26.Qf2+ Ke5

27.Qf6# 1-0

Black is checkmated

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[Semi-Open Tactics: Opening Combinations & Mates](#)

This book shows 500 examples of how to checkmate or win material from master play in the Semi-Open games after 1.e4.

[Alekhine & Pirc 1.e4 – Second Edition \(182 Games\)](#)

This is a collection of 173 games (many are mine) that I analyze with some commentary. Most are tournament or postal games.

[Chess Strategy Pirc Modern Defence \(174 diagrams\)](#)

This is a collection of Pirc 1.e4 d6 or Modern Defence 1.e4 g6 in 33 games. It covers how I beat intermediate chess players.

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This is a collection of Alekhine 1.e4 Nf6 or Scandinavian 1.e4 d5 in 34 games. It covers how I beat intermediate chess players.

[Alekhine 1...Nf6 Playbook \(200 Opening Chess Positions\)](#)

This is a collection of 200 opening positions for Black. This book recommends a way to play the Alekhine Defence after 1.e4 Nf6.

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