

opening repertoire

# the Sicilian Taimanov

Nigel Davies

EVERYMAN CHESS

opening repertoire

# the Sicilian

# Taimanov

Nigel Davies

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# About the Author

Nigel Davies is an International Grandmaster and FIDE Senior Trainer. He is the author of numerous books and DVDs on the game and is known for the clarity of his explanations.

## **Also by the Author**

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# Bibliography

## **Books**

Winning with the Sicilian by Mark Taimanov (Batsford, 1991)

## **Databases**

Chess Informant Quality Base  
Chess Tempo Online Database  
Megabase 2014

## **Engines**

Stockfish 14  
Deep Fritz 13

# Introduction

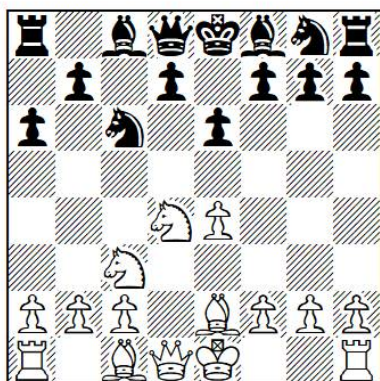
I first met Mark Taimanov at the Paz E Amizade tournament in Lisbon in 1985, a small round robin event in which he was the invited star. Knowing we would be playing I watched his games quite closely and then noticed something strange in his game against Jorge Guimaraes. Hoping for a repeat of this line I opened with 1 e4 in my game against him instead of my habitual 1 d4 followed by 2 g3. This is how the game went.

## Game 1

**N.Davies-M.Taimanov**

Lisbon 1985

1 e4 c5 2 d3 c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 e6 5 d3 a6 6 e2



6 ... Qc7

Taimanov thought for a few minutes before varying from the 6 ... dge7 he played in the Guimaraes game.

**Question:** Had he rightly suspected some preparation?

**Answer:** This is very possible, not least because I varied from my usual 1 d3.

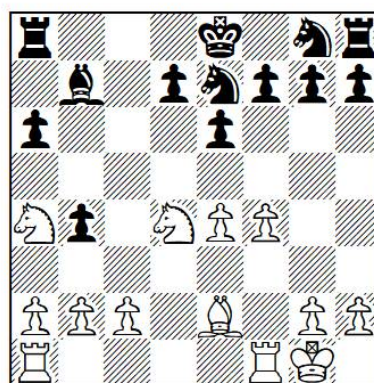
7 f4

After 6 ... Qc7 I had nothing special in mind and was making it up as I went along. This becomes evident over the coming moves, with Black achieving a very comfortable position.

7 ... b5 8 e3 b7 9 0-0 e5 10 d5

This was starting to feel uncomfortable, so I decided to exchange the dark square bishops. White could also play just 10 d2 and then further defend the knight with ead1.

10 ... dce7 11 e5 xc5 xc5+ 12 d4 xd4+ 13 dxd4 b4 14 a4 1/2-1/2



**Question:** Why did Black agree to a draw?

**Answer:** The position is actually quite balanced here, for example after 14 a4 xe4 15 d5 d6 16 xa6 ed5 17 g3 e7 18 a3. It also seems possible that my opponent was okay with a rest day in which to do some sight-seeing. After his loss to Bobby Fischer in 1971 his opportunity for travel had been severely limited.

Afterwards I showed him what I had found, after 6 ... dge7 7 0-0 dxd4 8 dxd4 c6 9 d3 db4 White can play 10 dg3 instead of Guimaraes's move 10 d2. Taimanov was astonished as Anatoly Karpov had also played 10 d2 against him. He was also quite appreciative that I had shown him this line rather than wander into 10 dg3 in a subsequent game. He found a few resources for Black before concluding that White had a very powerful initiative, also pointing out that 9 ... db4 was not Black's only move, and he could also play 9 ... Qc7.

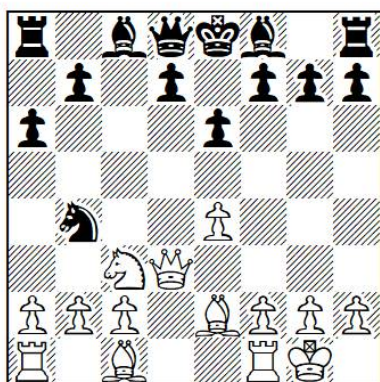
Interestingly James Plaskett made this same 10 ♖g3 discovery over the board, when he played against William Hartston a few years later:

*Game 2*

**J.Plaskett-W.Hartston**

England 1986

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙e2 ♗ge7 7 0-0 ♘xd4 8 ♖xd4  
♘c6 9 ♗d3 ♘b4



I was surprised to see this line come up, but Hartston had been a keen exponent of the Taimanov Variation. At this point Plaskett went into thought and, like I did a year earlier, decided there was no need to defend the c2-pawn.

**10 ♖g3! ♘xc2**

**Question:** Did Black not see what was coming when he took the pawn?

**Answer:** I think that at this stage it is hard to find other reasonable moves. The queen on g3 prevents Black from developing his f8-bishop and unless he takes the pawn moving the knight to b4 will be a waste of time.

**11 ♙g5! f6**

**Question:** With the rook on a1 and bishop attacked, does this not win material?

**Answer:** Unfortunately for Black there is a sting in the tail, as given in the note to Black's next move.

**Question:** So should Black have done something else?

**Answer:** It's not easy to find a good alternative, for example 11 ... ♙e7 12 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 (12 ... ♖xe7 13 ♖xg7) 13 ♖g5+ ♔e8 14 ♖xg7 regains the sacrificed pawn with an overwhelming position, and 11 ... ♖b6 or 11 ... ♖a5 can be met by 12 ♖ad1, when White's lead in development gives him very good compensation for the pawn.

**12 ♙f4! ♔f7**

Ugly but necessary.

**Question:** Why doesn't Black just take the rook with 12 ... ♘xa1 - ?

**Answer:** The problem is that White then has the line 13 ♙h5+ g6 (13 ... ♔e7 14 ♙d6 is mate!) 14 ♙xg6+ hxg6 15 ♖xg6+ ♔e7 16 e5! (threatening mate with 17 exf6!) 16 ... d5 17 ♖xf6+ ♔d7 18 ♖xh8, and when the knight on a1 tries to escape with 18 ... ♘c2, White can just pick it up with 19 ♖h7+, winning back all the sacrificed material with a two pawn surplus.

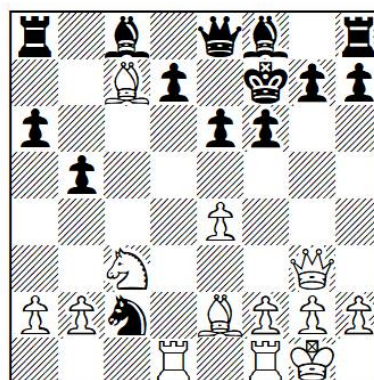
**13 ♙c7 ♖e8**

13 ... ♖e7 14 ♖ad1 would be similarly horrific for Black, due entirely to his lack of development.

**14 ♖ad1**

Threatening ♘a4, amongst other things.

**14 ... b5**



**15 e5!**

Now threatening both ♙f3 and exf6, and there's no good defence to both of

these. Hartston's position rapidly goes down in flames.

### 15 ... ♖b7

After 15 ... f5 there follows 16 ♔f3 ♖a7 17 ♖b6 ♖b7 18 ♔xb7 ♔xb7 19 ♗d3, with a further loss of material being inevitable.

### 16 exf6 ♔g8

This loses by force but there was nothing else, for example 16 ... gxf6 17 ♔h5+ ♔e7 18 ♗d6 mate; 16 ... g6 17 a3 traps the knight on c2, or if 16 ... ♔xf6 there follows 17 ♔e5+ ♔e7 18 ♗g5+ ♔f7 19 ♔h5+ g6 20 ♗f6+ ♔g8 21 ♗xh8+ ♔f7 22 ♗xh7+ followed by mate.

### 17 fxg7 ♔g7 18 ♔e5 1-0

Black will lose a piece after 18 ♔e5 ♗g6 19 ♗xg6 hxg6 20 ♔xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♖xd7+ and taking on b7.

Taimanov would later ascribe the discovery of 10 ♗g3 to 'English chess players', perhaps not sure if it was the result of individual efforts or teamwork. I would meet Taimanov at several events after that, for example Tel Aviv 1990 and Gausdal 1992, subsequently inviting him to the Owens Corning tournament in Wrexham in 1997. Although we could only communicate via my poor German I felt a sense of kinship with him, perhaps partly because Taimanov, like my parents, was also a pianist. My mother had been an aspiring concert pianist before taking lessons with the former Russian star Iso Elinson, who learned at the conservatoire in Taimanov's native St. Petersburg. I was used to being around classical musicians, even if their efforts to involve me fell on stony ground.

Because of this connection, when I became interested in the Sicilian Defence Taimanov was my first source of insight, and I carefully went through his book which was inappropriately titled *Winning with the Sicilian* (Batsford, 1991). I became interested in particular in how he described the evolution of the Taimanov Variation from his earlier studies on 6 ... ♗c7:

"So, in analytical work one day there was born the idea to refrain from the conventional early development of the queen, but instead to develop the king's knight not on the square f6, where it is subject to the threat of attack, but to the more intricate and flexible e7-square. This innovation turned out to be highly significant and enriched the traditional opening scheme with original strategic content.

"In the process of practical tests and theoretical research the new idea found its adherents, gradually gaining in prestige and popularity and finally, having detached itself from the Paulsen system, it became an independent and highly diversified opening scheme known to theory as the 'Taimanov system.'" (Taimanov, 1991),

This makes it abundantly clear that Taimanov himself considered his innovation to be 6 ... ♔ge7 and that it was the development of the knight on e7 that distinguishes it from the Paulsen system with 6 ... ♗c7. Curiously this seems to have been ignored by many authors who simply apply the 'Taimanov' label the position after 1 e4 c5 2 ♔f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♔xd4 ♔c6, regardless of where Black develops his king's knight. I have chosen to go instead with the inventor's definition, that Taimanov's innovation was the development of Black's knight on e7, and the repertoire presented here will reflect this. In a couple of lines, I felt it necessary to give 6 ... ♔xd4 followed by ... ♔e7 rather than 6 ... ♔ge7 because otherwise White can effectively move the knight from d4, but these two are in the Taimanov spirit rather than being Paulsens.

The distinction can be a subtle one, for example the following game starts out with 6 ... ♗c7 but later features the development of Black's king's knight to e7. It was also one of Taimanov's most brilliant games:

### Game 3

**A.Lutikov-M.Taimanov**

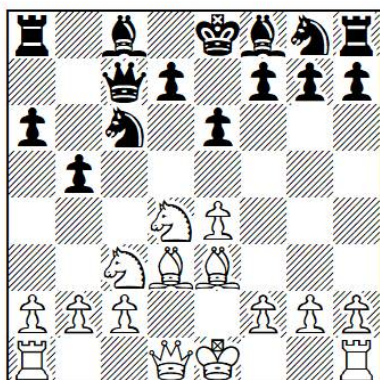
USSR Championship, Moscow 1969

1 e4 c5 2 d3 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 e6  
5 d3 c3 c7

**Question:** Does this not introduce the Paulsen Variation?

**Answer:** Essentially it is a Paulsen, though as Black's king's knight later goes to e7 it has a Taimanov feel. Chess openings are not always easy to define, especially if they involve various transpositions. The formal Taimanov Variation is brought about by 5 ... a6 followed by ... dge7.

6 e3 a6 7 d3 b5



**Question:** Shouldn't Black be developing his pieces instead of this?

**Answer:** In many modern openings, where the position stays relatively closed, you can often afford to develop more slowly. Here it's difficult for White to open files, even though his pieces are currently more active than Black's. 7 ... d6 would stay solidly in Paulsen territory because the knight has gone to f6.

8 dxc6 cxc6 9 d4

**Question:** What's the point of moving the bishop a second time?

**Answer:** He is trying to make it difficult for Black to develop his kingside.

The following year a game D.Minic-M.Taimanov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970 varied with 9 a3 after which 9 ... b7 10 g O-O e7! 11 g4 g6 12 f4 c5 13 xc5 cxc5+ 14 h1 O-O 15 ae1 f6!? 16 e2 ae8 17 g3 d4! 18 h5 f5! 19 exf5 exf5 20 g5 (20 xf5? loses to 20 ... xe1 21 xe1 xf5 22 xf5 xg2+! 23 xg2 h4+ etc.) 20 ... xe1 21 xe1 xb2 22 h3 xa3, with a clear advantage for Black. Another possibility is just 9 O-O.

9 ... b7 10 e2 e7

A Taimanov style move. By bringing the knight to e7 instead of f6, Black makes it harder for White to create a breach in Black's position. After 10 ... d6 11 xf6 gxf6, Black's doubled pawns would make it very difficult for his king to find safety on the kingside.

11 f4

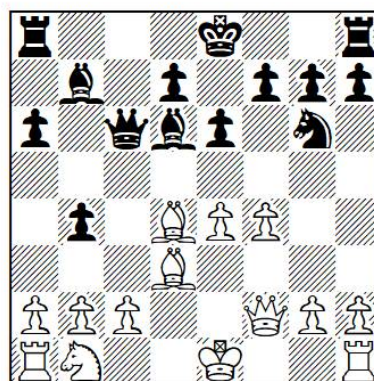
A surprising point of Black's last move is that 11 O-O can be met by 11 ... d5! 12 e5 f6 13 f4 d4, with counterplay.

11 ... b4 12 d1

12 d1 was a better move.

12 ... g6 13 f2 d6!

A provocative move which threatens the f4-pawn.



14 e3

**Question:** Can White not answer this with 14 xg7 - ?

**Answer:** He can, but then 14 ... g8 (14 ... xf4 is also possible) 15 h6 c5 16 e2 d4 will win the b2-pawn and leave Black with tremendous activity.

**Question:** Then can White not win time with 14 e5 - ?

**Answer:** He can, but Black would then play 14 ... ♗e7 threatening the g2-pawn and meeting 15 0-0 with 15 ... ♘xf4. The knight is immune to capture because of 16 ♖xf4 ♗xg2 mate, and meanwhile Black would be threatening 17 ... ♗h3+ 18 gxh3 ♖h1 mate.

**Question:** So that leaves him with 14 g3 then?

**Answer:** It's playable, but Black can then play 14 ... e5 15 fxe5 ♗xe5 with excellent play.

**14 ... 0-0 15 ♗d2 ♖ac8 16 h4!? ♗c7**

Alternatively Black could consider 16 ... e5, for example 17 g3 (17 f5 ♗f4) 17 ... exf4 18 gxf4 ♗c7 19 ♗b6 ♗b8 20 ♗a7 ♗a8 21 ♗e3 ♗xf4!? 22 ♗xf4 f5! threatening 23 ... fxe4.

**17 e5**

17 g3 would be well met by 17 ... f5!

**Question:** What about 17 f5, attacking that g6-knight?

**Answer:** Besides giving the e5-square away, that could be met by 17 ... ♗g3.

**17 ... ♗c5 18 h5 ♗xe3 19 ♗xe3 ♗e7 20 ♗c4**

White could also consider 20 ♗e4, but then Black can gain counterplay with 20 ... ♗f5 21 ♗f2 f6, for example 22 exf6 ♗xe4 23 fxe4 ♗xg7 24 ♗xe4 ♖xf4 etc.

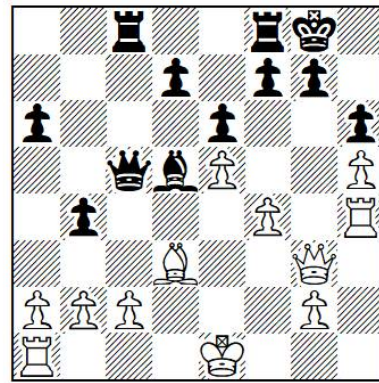
**20 ... ♗f5 21 ♗d2**

21 ♗xf5 is most simply met by 21 ... ♗xc4 (21 ... exf5!? is also possible) 22 ♗d3 ♗d5, when chances remain balanced in this sharp position.

**21 ... ♗d5 22 ♗e3 ♗xe3 23 ♗xe3 ♗c5 24 ♗g3**

After 24 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 Black could then proceed with ... f7-f6! breaking White's centre.

**24 ... h6 25 ♖h4**



**25 ... ♗g1+**

Heading into some mind-boggling complications. There was a solid option in 25 ... f5 after which 26 exf6 ♖xf6 27 ♖g4 ♗f8 defends Black's king and leaves him with options such as an advance of his a-pawn.

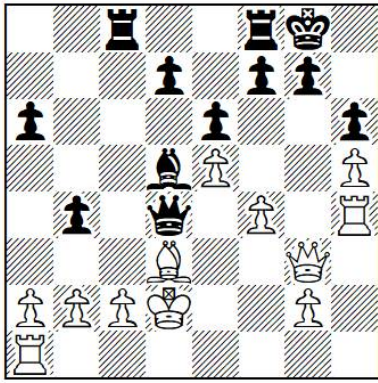
**26 ♗d2**

Analysts have considered this White's best move for decades, but engines consider 26 ♗e2 to have equal value, draws resulting after 26 ... ♗xa1, 26 ... ♖xc2+ or even 26 ... ♗f3+. The easiest to see is after 26 ... ♖xc2+ 27 ♗xc2 ♗c4+ 28 ♗d2 ♗d4+ 29 ♗c1 ♗g1+, when White must allow the draw with 30 ♗d2 because 30 ♗d1 ♖c8 gives Black a winning attack.

**26 ... ♗d4!?**

**Question:** Why did Black not take the rook with 26 ... ♗xa1 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately that would be met by 27 ♖g4!, with a winning attack. At the same time the engines do not favour Taimanov's move, giving instead the line 26 ... ♖xc2+! 27 ♗xc2 ♗d4+ 28 ♗d3 (28 ♗d3 ♗xb2+ 29 ♗e3 ♗xa1 30 ♖g4 ♗c1+ would draw this time) 28 ... ♗f2+ 29 ♗d1 ♗g1+ 30 ♗e2 ♗xg2+ with a draw by repetition.



**27 f5**

Threatening f5-f6.

**Question:** What about 27 ♖g4 threatening the g7-pawn?

**Answer:** Black could then play 27 ... ♗e4! 28 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 when White's attack comes to nought.

**27 ... ♖xc2+! 28 ♔xc2 b3+!**

The best chance. The immediate 28 ... ♖c8+ is met by 29 ♔d1 ♗g1+ 30 ♖e1 ♗xg2 31 ♖e3, when Black's attack is running out of steam and there is the small matter of that sacrificed rook.

**29 ♔d1?**

In this wild position White goes astray. It turns out that he can get away with 29 axb3! ♗xb3+ 30 ♔d2! (30 ♔xb3 ♖b8+ 31 ♔c2 ♗xb2+ 32 ♔d1 ♗xa1+ wins back the rook and leaves Black able to take pot-shots at White's exposed king) 30 ... ♗xb2+ 31 ♔e3 ♗xa1 32 f6! ♖c1+ (Or 32 ... ♗g1+ 33 ♔e2! ♗d1+ 34 ♔f2 ♗d2+ 35 ♗e2 etc.) 33 ♔f2 ♗d2+ 34 ♗e2 ♗g5 35 ♖g4 ♗f5+ 36 ♔g1 ♗b1+ 37 ♔h2, when White's king finally finds safety and leaves him with deadly threats.

**29 ... ♗g1+ 30 ♖e1 ♗xg2! 31 ♗f1**

Black can meet both 31 ♖f4 and 31 ♖e3 with 31 ... bxa2. The engines indicate that he has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed rook.

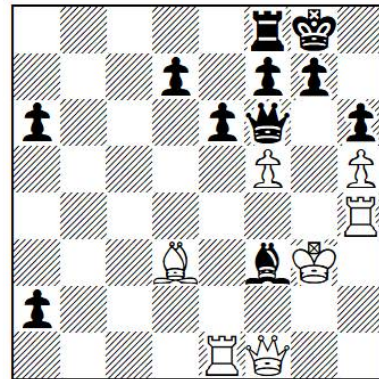
**31 ... ♗f3+ 32 ♔e1**

32 ♔c1 ♗g5+ 33 ♔b1 ♗xh4 34 ♗xf3 ♗e1+ 35 ♗d1 ♗xd1 is mate.

**32 ... ♗xb2 33 ♖b1 ♗xe5+ 34 ♔f2 bxa2 35 ♖e1**

35 ♔xf3 was another possibility, but White still has the problem that his king is totally exposed.

**35 ... ♗f6 36 ♔g3**



**36 ... ♗g2!?**

Unnecessary fireworks from Taimanov. The engines like the mundane 36 ... ♗c6, leaving White to think about his exposed king and that a2-pawn.

**37 ♗g1?**

Black's simple reply is crushing.

**Question:** What happens if White takes the bishop?

**Answer:** He has two ways of doing this, 37 ♔xg2 being simply met by 37 ... ♗xh4. On the other hand, 37 ♗xg2 is considerably less clear as after 37 ... a1♗ 38 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 Black has given up his magnificent, passed a-pawn, and this is the line that Lutikov should have chosen.

**37 ... exf5 38 ♗d4 ♗g5+ 39 ♔h2 ♗e4! 40 ♖hxe4 fxe4 41 ♗xe4 ♗xh5+ 0-1**

With the time control having been passed, White resigned this hopeless position. Black can easily defend against the threat of mate on h7 and then activate his f8-rook.

The type of counter-attacking possibilities seen here are typical of the Sicilian Defence, what is less usual about the Taimanov Variation is that the lines are not well charted by theory. Partially this is because 6 ... ♗ge7 never developed a huge following, but it is also due to the early play developing more slowly and offering scope

for originality. For this reason, you can find Ukrainian Grandmaster Oleg Romanishin on the Black side of the Taimanov.

Besides covering the actual Taimanov Variation with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 followed by 6 ... ♘ge7, I have added other lines to make it a complete repertoire against 1.e4. There are several Open Sicilian lines that preclude Taimanov's 6 ... ♘ge7, such as 6 ♘xc6 and 5 ♘b5. Given the popularity of Anti-Sicilian

lines I have also devoted much of this book to handling them as Black.

It remains for me to wish the reader good luck with your own Sicilian adventures. I recommend going through all the games at least once before playing it in friendly and then competition games.

St. Helens, UK

January 2022

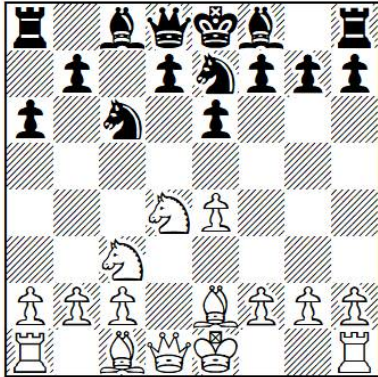
### **Acknowledgements**

My thanks go to Byron Jacobs of Everyman Chess for his support and encouragement throughout this project.

# Chapter One

## Taimanov: 6 ♗e2

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6  
5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗e2 ♗ge7



The move that characterises the Taimanov Variation

**Question:** So what's 6 ... ♖c7 then?

**Answer:** That's actually a Paulsen Variation!

**Question:** How about 6 ... d6 - ?

**Answer:** That would really be more of a Scheveningen System. The Taimanov and Paulsen generally feature a delayed ... d7-d6 and the Taimanov features the development of Black's g8-knight to e7.

**7 0-0**

The simplest and most natural reply, but there are alternatives here:

a) 7 f4 makes room for White's queen to drop back to f2 if Black captures on d4 immediately. It makes more sense for him to wait a few moves before making the trade and 7 ... b5 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♖h1 ♗xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗c6 11 ♗f2 ♗e7 12 ♗e3 0-0 is Balashov-Jansa (Game 4).

b) 7 ♗b3 avoids the exchange on d4 after which Black should then reposition his e7-knight. After 7 ... ♗g6 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 f4 ♗c7 11 ♗d3 b5 12 ♗h5 b4 13

♗e2 f6 there was complex play in prospect in Jansa-Taimanov (Game 5).

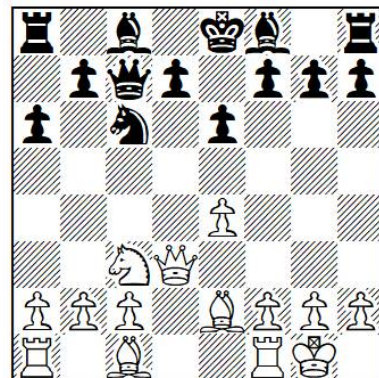
c) 7 ♗f4 posts the bishop where it can apply pressure to the d6-square, but this doesn't amount to much after 7 ... ♗g6 8 ♗g3 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗d2 b5 11 ♗fd1 ♗b6 as in Tal-Romanishin (Game 6).

d) 7 ♗g5 pins the knight on e7 but can be answered by 7 ... ♗a5 as in Yemelin-Taimanov (Game 7).

**7 ... ♗xd4**

Carrying out the key knight exchange. Unlike the position after 7 f4 there is no reason to delay.

**8 ♗xd4 ♗c6 9 ♗d3 ♗c7**



Taimanov experimented with 9 ... ♗b4 before it was put out of business by 10 ♗g3 as in Plaskett-Hartston (Game 2).

**10 ♖h1 ♗e7 11 f4 b5 12 ♗g3 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♗b7**

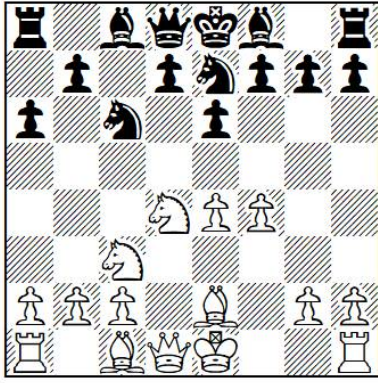
This was all played in Zontakh-Romanishin (Game 8) with a complex middle game in prospect.

*Game 4*

**Y. Balashov-V. Jansa**

Sochi 1980

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 e6  
5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗e2 ♗ge7 7 f4**



An interesting move which vacates the f2-square for White's queen, should Black now capture on d4.

**7 ... b5**

**Question:** Why doesn't Black capture on d4 here?

**Answer:** He decided to delay it because after 7 ...  $\text{dxd4}$  8  $\text{Wxd4}$   $\text{dxc6}$  White can play 9  $\text{Wf2}$  intending  $\text{e3}$ . A possible line might go 9 ...  $\text{b5}$  10  $\text{e3}$   $\text{b7}$  11 0-0-0  $\text{e7}$  12  $\text{e5}$  0-0 13  $\text{e3}$  with serious pressure against Black's queenside and d7.

**8 0-0**

**Question:** Can White avoid the exchange of knights with 8  $\text{d3}$  instead of putting his knight on b3?

**Answer:** Yes, he can. Taimanov gave an antidote to this in 8 ...  $\text{g6}$  9 0-0  $\text{e7}$  10  $\text{e5}$   $\text{b7}$  11  $\text{d3}$   $\text{c8}$  though the engine prefers to break White centre with 11 ...  $\text{d6}$ .

**8 ... e7**

**Question:** Can Black exchange knights now with 8 ...  $\text{dxd4}$  - ?

**Answer:** He still needs to be careful with that, for example after 9  $\text{Wxd4}$  it would be bad to play the natural 9 ...  $\text{b7}$ ? because of 10  $\text{f5}$ !, with a strong attack.

**9 e1**

**Question:** Could White play 9  $\text{b3}$  in this position to avoid the exchange of knights?

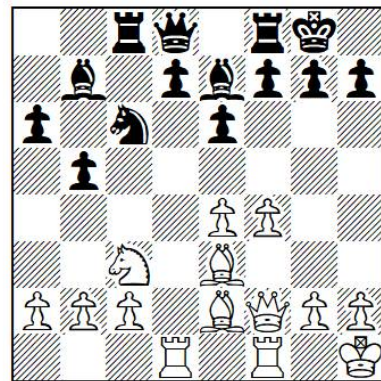
**Answer:** Yes it would be interesting, and in fact S.Mariotti-M.Taimanov, Leningrad 1977 went this way. Taimanov played 9 ...  $\text{g6}$  10  $\text{e3}$   $\text{e7}$  (10 ...  $\text{d6}$  11  $\text{f5}$ !  $\text{ge5}$  12  $\text{fxe6}$   $\text{fxe6}$  13  $\text{g4}$ !) 11  $\text{e1}$  (11  $\text{c5}$ !?  $\text{c7}$  would allow White to gain the two bishops, but Black's position would remain very solid) 11 ... 0-0 12  $\text{d1}$   $\text{d6}$  13  $\text{f2}$  and now Taimanov gave 13 ...  $\text{c7}$  14  $\text{b6}$   $\text{b8}$  as best, rather than the 13 ...  $\text{c8}$  he played in the game.

**9 ... dxd4**

**Question:** As White's queen can still go back to f2, why is this exchange better now?

**Answer:** It's because Black is better developed now, White's 9  $\text{h1}$  giving him some breathing space.

**10 Wxd4 dxc6 11 Wf2 e7 12 e3 0-0 13 ead1 c8**



In his notes to his game against Belyavsky, Taimanov suggested an alternative in 13 ...  $\text{e8}$ .

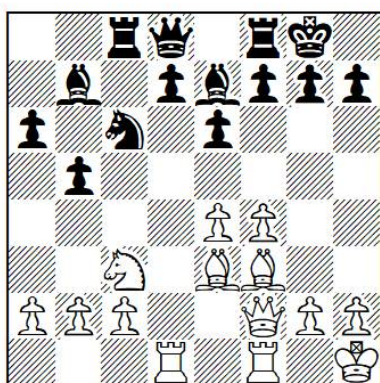
**14 e3**

A major alternative is 14  $\text{a4}$ !?  $\text{b4}$  15  $\text{b1}$   $\text{e8}$  (Stoinev made the interesting suggestion of 15 ...  $\text{b8}$ !?, and the engine agrees with him up to a point; after 16  $\text{d3}$  [16  $\text{b6}$   $\text{e8}$  envisages further play against  $\text{e4}$  with either ...  $\text{f5}$  or ...  $\text{d5}$ ] Black can play 16 ...  $\text{d6}$  [Rather than Stoinev's 16 ...  $\text{a5}$ ] 17  $\text{e5}$   $\text{c7}$  with a comfortable game for Black) 16  $\text{c4}$ !? (White played 16  $\text{d2}$  in M.Stoinev-M.Taimanov, Massy 1991, after which Black could consider both the

immediate 16 ... d5 and 16 ... ♖a5; in the game Taimanov played 16 ... ♗b8!? 17 ♙d3 d5 and equalized after 18 b3 allowed Black to eliminate a potential pawn wedge with 18 ... dxe4 - a more critical line would have been 18 e5) 16 ... bxc3 17 ♗xc3 ♗a5 18 ♙d3 f6 19 ♗e2 ♞c6 20 ♗a2!? ♗c8 21 b4 ♗c4 22 ♙g1 ♞c7 23 ♞c1 d5 was at least equal for Black at this stage in A.Beliavsky-M.Taimanov, USSR 1979.

**Question:** Is this important at club level?

**Answer:** Probably not, though seeing the typical plans and ideas in action may prove useful.



**14 ... ♗e8**

**Question:** That looks like a strange move, what's the idea?

**Answer:** Black wants to play ... ♗a5, which he can't do immediately because of ♙b6. Taimanov also mentioned the possibility of 14 ... ♗b8 when 15 ♙b6 ♗e8 16 e5 is answered by 16 ... ♙xf3 17 ♗xf3 f6!, with fully equal chances.

**15 e5 ♗a5 16 ♙xb7**

Black would meet 16 ♗e4 with 16 ... ♞c4, for example 17 ♙d4 ♙xe4 18 ♙xe4 ♗c6 19 c3 ♗xd4 20 ♞xd4 ♗c8 is fine for Black.

**16 ... ♗xb7 17 f5**

17 ♗e4 looks dangerous at first, but Black gets counterplay via 17 ... f6 (or 17 ... f5) 18 exf6 ♙xf6 19 ♗xf6+ ♞xf6 20 ♙d4 ♞f5 with approximate equality.

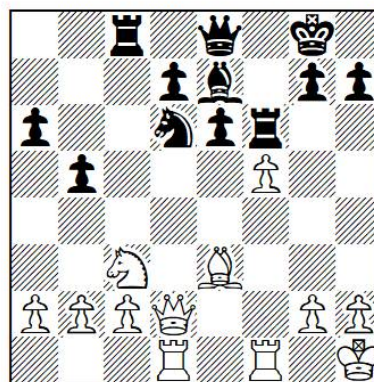
**17 ... f6! 18 exf6**

White had a better try in 18 ♗g3 after which 18 ... ♗h8 19 ♙d4 fxe5 20 ♙xe5 ♙f6 21 fxe6 ♗xe6 22 ♙xf6 ♞xf6 is okay for Black.

**18 ... ♞xf6**

18 ... ♙xf6 is also okay, for example 19 ♙d4 exf5 20 ♗xf5 ♙xd4 21 ♗d5+ ♗e6 22 ♗xd4 ♞xf1+ 23 ♞xf1 ♗d6 is equal.

**19 ♗d2 ♗d6!**



The knight reactivates and Black gets excellent counterplay.

**20 fxe6 ♞xf1+ 21 ♞xf1 dxe6 22 ♙d4 ♗g6 23 ♗d3 ♗xd3**

23 ... b4 might have been even stronger.

**24 cxd3 ♗f5 25 ♙e5 b4 26 ♗d1**

Black is also better after other knight moves, for example 26 ♗e4! ♞d8; or 26 ♗a4 ♞c2.

**26 ... ♞d8?! ½-½**

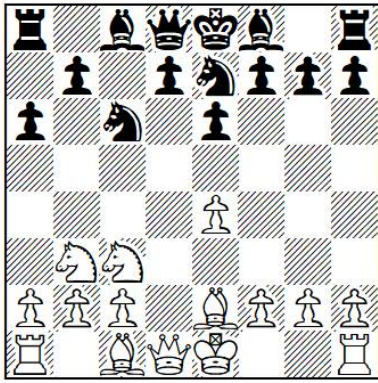
Jansa offered a draw in this promising position, no doubt because of his habitual time trouble. In fact 26 ... ♞c2! would have been even stronger, for example 27 g4 (27 ♞f2 is met by 27 ... ♞c1 28 ♞f1 ♞a1!, winning the a2-pawn) 27 ... ♗h6 28 h3 ♗f7 29 ♙d4 ♙d6 puts White under serious pressure.

*Game 5*

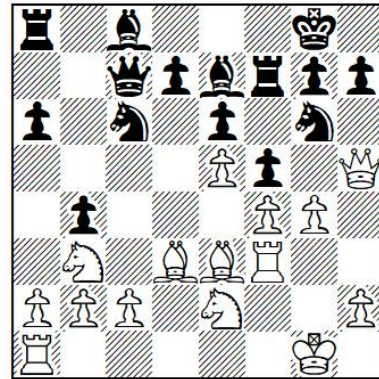
**V.Jansa-M.Taimanov**

Sukhumi 1972

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 e6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♙e2 ♗ge7 7 ♗b3**



15 ... f5 16 g4



By preventing the exchange of knights on d4, White hopes that the knight on e7 will prove to be badly placed. Certainly, Black will need to reposition it somewhere but meanwhile the knight isn't great on b3.

7 ... ♖g6

**Question:** Is that really a reasonable square for the knight?

**Answer:** Actually, it's not bad. If White were to play f2-f4-f5 it would find an excellent outpost on e5. Sometimes Black will play ... f7-f6 and then bring the knight to h8 and f7.

8 0-0 ♕e7 9 ♕e3 0-0 10 f4 ♖c7 11 ♕d3 b5 12 ♗h5 b4 13 ♘e2 f6

**Question:** That move looks strange, what does it do?

**Answer:** It's a very instructive and noteworthy defensive resource for Black in the Taimanov. Black wants to defend his king position with ... ♖f7 and then ... ♘f8, if necessary. Note also that Black could have played 12 ... f6 with the same idea.

14 ♖f3

Another attempt to attack is with 14 f5, but here too Black has an instructive defensive resource. He can play 14 ... ♘ge5 15 ♖f4 ♖f7 16 ♖h4 g5! 17 fxg6 ♘xg6, when the c6-knight will come to e5.

14 ... ♖f7! 15 e5

After 15 ♖h3 Black plays 15 ... ♘f8. An instructive follow-up would be 16 e5 f5 17 g4 g6 18 ♗h6 d6!, when Black has defended his king and now breaks open the centre.

16 ... ♘gxe5!

Just when White's attack is looking dangerous, Black hits back with this brilliant blow.

In his notes Gufeld suggested 16 ... d6 in order to meet 17 gxf5 exf5 18 ♕c4 with 18 ... ♘cxe5. What he missed was that White can then play 19 ♖h3! threatening mate with 20 ♗xh7+ followed by 21 ♗h8+.

17 fxe5 g6!

17 ... ♘xe5 is less good because of 18 ♖g3.

18 ♗h6

18 ♗h3 loses on the spot because of 18 ... fxg4 19 ♗xg4 ♘xe5 etc.

18 ... ♘xe5 19 ♖g3 ♘xg4 20 ♖xg4 fxg4 21 ♖f1

21 ♕xg6 comes to nought after 21 ... hxg6 22 ♗xg6+ ♖g7 23 ♗e8+ ♕f8 24 ♖f1 ♗d6 25 ♕c5 ♕b7! 26 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 27 ♕xd6 ♕xd6, with an easy win in sight.

21 ... ♕f8 22 ♗h4 ♖xf1+ 23 ♘xf1 ♕b7

In this complicated position Black misses the optimal path. 23 ... d5! would have been much stronger, for example 24 ♗xg4 e5 followed by 25 ... e4 traps the bishop on d3.

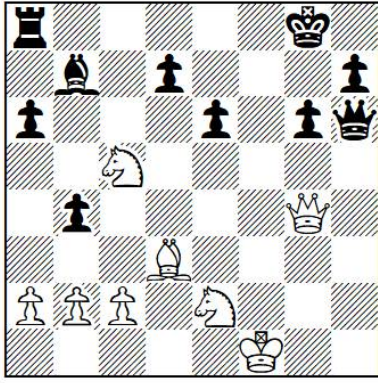
24 ♗xg4 ♗xh2

And here 24 ... a5 was the better move, keeping White's counterplay under wraps.

25 ♘c5 ♕h6

Gufeld suggested 25 ... ♕c6 but White can then play 26 ♘xe6!? to complicate matters.

26 ♕xh6 ♗xh6



**27 ♖xb7?**

It's likely that this was time trouble. 27 ♖xd7 would have kept the position very messy.

**27 ... ♜h1+ 28 ♔f2 ♜xb7**

The smoke has cleared, and Black is winning on material. Jansa's habitual time trouble probably didn't help him.

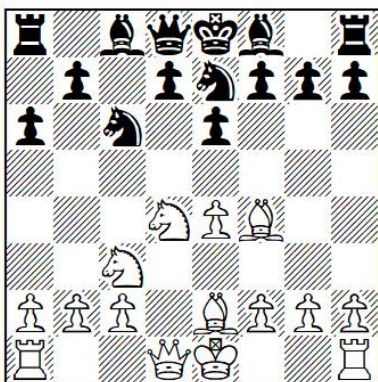
**29 ♕e3 ♜b6+ 30 ♔d2 ♜d6! 31 ♖f4 ♜d4!  
32 ♜g3 ♜xb2 33 ♖e2 ♜g7 34 ♜d6 a5 35  
♕e4 ♜f8 36 ♜c5 ♜h6+ 37 ♔d1 d5 38 ♕g2 0-1**

*Game 6*

**M.Tal-O.Romanishin**

Lvov, 1981

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6  
5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♕e2 ♖ge7 7 ♕f4**



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** White wants to put pressure on the d-file, and especially against d6.

**7 ... ♖g6 8 ♕g3 ♕e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜d2 b5!?N 11 ♜fd1?!**

In his notes to the game Tal gave 11 ♖xc6 dxc6 12 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 13 e5 as slightly better for White, but this seems very optimistic after 13 ... ♕b7 (intending 14 ... c5) 14 ♕f3 ♜d2. Tal also suggested that 11 ♜ad1 would give White an edge, but here too this seems optimistic. After 11 ... ♜b6 12 ♖xc6 dxc6 13 e5 ♕b7 14 ♖e4 ♜ad8, Black seems to be doing fine.

**11 ... ♜b6!**

11 ... ♕b7 would have been well met by 12 ♖f3, but Romanishin's choice is much better. When Tal pursues the same plan he discovers that there's a problem.

**12 ♖f3?**

Tal adorned this move with a question mark, as after Black's reply he ended up retracing his steps. A sacrifice with 12 ♖f5 would be more Tal-like, but the maestro pointed out this wouldn't work after 12 ... exf5 13 ♖d5 ♜d8 14 ♕c7 ♜e8 15 exf5 ♖ge5. White's best was probably 12 ♖xc6 but then Black is fully equal after 12 ... dxc6 13 e5 ♜d8 14 ♜e1 ♕b7 followed by ... c6-c5.

**12 ... d6! 13 ♖d4**

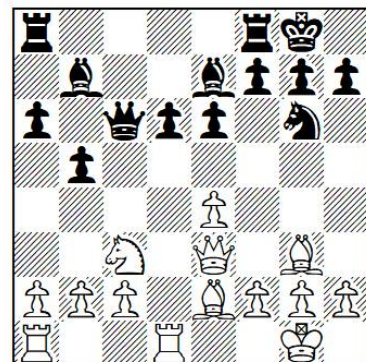
**Question:** Why didn't White play 13 ♕xd6 - ?

**Answer:** It's bad because of the line 13 ... ♜d8 14 e5 ♖cxe5 15 ♖xe5 ♕xd6 16 ♖e4 (16 ♖xg6 ♕xh2+ wins the queen) 16 ... ♕c7 17 ♖d3 ♕b7, with a powerful two bishop game for Black.

**13 ... ♕b7 14 ♜e3 ♜c5! 15 ♖xc6**

15 ♜d2? would have lost instantly to 15 ... ♕g5 and 15 f4 is strongly met by 15 ... e5.

**15 ... ♜xc6**



White's position is suddenly quite difficult as he is threatened with things like ... b5-b4 and ... f7-f5. Tal defends himself quite brilliantly from here.

**16 ♖d4 ♜fd8**

16 ... b4? would be a mistake because of 17 ♖xb4 d5 18 exd5! exd5 19 ♖b3 d4 20 ♙f3 etc.

**17 ♙f1 h5!?**

**Question:** Is Black launching an attack with this move?

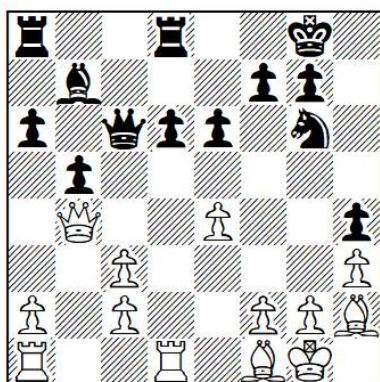
**Answer:** It's more that he's preparing to nudge the bishop to a poor square. White's response is more or less forced because 18 f3 would be answered by 18 ... d5 intending ... ♙c5.

There was another promising line in 17 ... d5 after which 18 exd5 exd5 would threaten both 19 ... ♙f6 and 19 ... ♙c5.

**18 h3 h4 19 ♙h2 ♙f6**

In his notes Tal gave the brilliant 19 ... ♖ac8 20 a4!? b4 21 ♖xb4 d5 22 exd5 ♜xd5 23 ♘d5! (and not 23 ♖b3? because of 23 ... ♜g5) 23 ... ♙xb4 24 ♘xb4 ♖b6 25 c3 a5 26 ♜d6, claiming sufficient compensation for the queen. This may well be so, but the engine prefers 24 ... ♖e4 25 c3 a5.

**20 ♖b4 ♙xc3 21 bxc3**



**21 ... e5**

**Question:** Why didn't Black play 21 ... ♖xe4 - ?

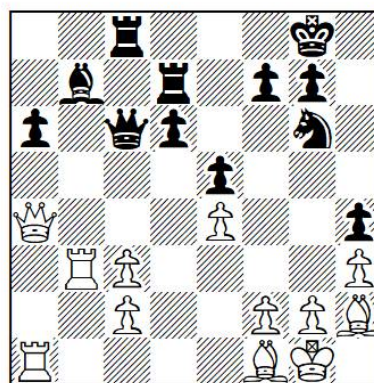
**Answer:** It's certainly not a bad idea, but White can force a drawish endgame via 22 ♜xd6 ♖xc2 23 ♙d3 ♖d2 24 ♙xg6

♜xd6 25 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 26 ♙xf7+ ♔xf7 27 ♙xd6. Romanishin's 21 ... e5 shuts the bishop on h2 out of play, and if anything Black now has the better chances.

**22 a4! bxa4 23 ♜db1**

23 ♜xa4 ♖c7 is very comfortable for Black, for example 24 ♖b1 ♙c6 25 ♜xa6 ♜ab8 26 ♖b6 ♜xb6 27 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 28 ♜xb6 ♙xe4 gives him a slightly better endgame.

**23 ... ♜d7 24 ♖xa4 ♜c8 25 ♖b3**



**25 ... ♘f8**

**Question:** That looks odd, what does it do?

**Answer:** Black is preparing to transfer the knight to c5 via e6.

**26 ♙xa6 ♜a8 27 ♖xc6 ♙xc6 28 ♖b6 ♙xe4**

Black can also play 28 ... ♜c7 29 ♜d1 ♙xe4, but he might want to avoid 29 ... ♘d7 because of 30 ♜xc6!, though there's still not much in it after 30 ... ♜xc6 31 ♙b7 ♜aa6 because of White's crippled pawn structure.

**29 ♜d1 ♜da7 30 ♙f1 ♙xc2 31 ♜c1**

31 ♜dxd6?! would be dangerous for White after 31 ... ♜a1.

**31 ... ♙f5 1/2-1/2**

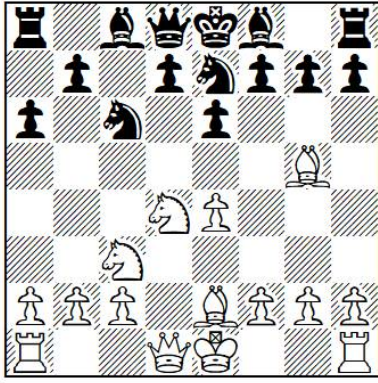
This time 31 ... ♜a1?? just doesn't work after 32 ♜xc2 ♜e1 33 f3! ♜aa1 34 ♜f2, defending the bishop.

*Game 7*

**V.Yemelin-M.Taimanov**

St Petersburg 1996

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙e2 ♘ge7 7 ♙g5**



An interesting but quite rare alternative that has nonetheless attracted the attention of some strong players. The knight on e7 is pinned (at least temporarily) and White gets a step closer to either castling queenside or putting a rook on d1.

#### 7 ... ♖a5

Underlining the negative side of White's last move by attacking the bishop. Velimirovic mentioned 7 ... ♖xd4 8 ♗xd4 ♘c6 9 ♗d2 as being better for White, but this looks okay for Black after 9 ... ♗e7 10 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 11 0-0-0 b5 12 f4 ♗b7. The exchange of minor pieces leaves White with few attacking chances and 13 ♗d6 ♗xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♔e7 (or even 14 ... 0-0-0) leaves White with an apparent space advantage but not much he can attack.

#### 8 ♗f4

**Question:** Can't White just protect the bishop with 8 ♗d2 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately not because of 8 ... ♖xd4 9 ♗xe7 (9 ♗xd4? ♗xg5) 9 ... ♖xc2+! 10 ♗xc2 ♗xe7, going a good pawn up and gaining a useful bishop pair. White has also tried 8 ♗h4, when D.Velimirovic-A.Zapata, Titograd 1984 went 8 ... ♖xd4 9 ♗xd4 ♖c6 10 ♗d2 ♗c5 11 0-0 0-0 with approximate equality. The exchange of a pair of knights does help ease Black's position.

#### 8 ... ♖xd4 9 ♗xd4 ♖c6 10 ♗e3

White has tried two other queen moves here, but neither of them give him anything special:

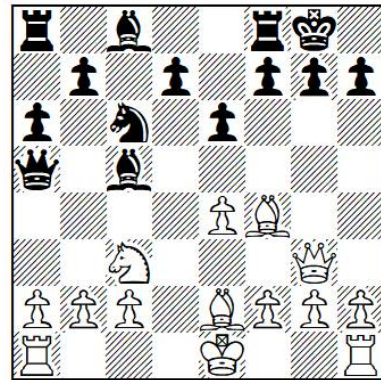
a) 10 ♗d2 ♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗d6 ♗xd6 13 ♗xd6 b5 14 ♖fd1 b4 15 ♖b1 ♗e5 16 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 17 f4 ♖g6 was okay for Black at this stage in O.Korneev-G.Tunik, Panchenko Memorial 2019.

b) 10 ♗d3 can also be met by 10 ... ♗e7, for example 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 ♖b1 b5 13 ♗g3 b4 14 ♗c7 ♗g5 15 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 when Black should be able to neutralize White's temporary activity and space advantage.

#### 10 ... ♗c5

Another good line for Black is 10 ... e5!? 11 ♗g3 ♗c5, for example 12 ♗d2 d6 13 ♖d5 ♗xd2+ 14 ♖xd2 0-0 intending 15 ... f5.

#### 11 ♗g3 0-0



#### 12 0-0

White had an interesting alternative in 12 ♗h6. Black needs to protect g7 with 12 ... ♗d4 and after 13 0-0-0 he can play 13 ... ♗f6 intending 14 ... ♖d4 or just 14 ... ♖h8. Although White's pieces are more active here, it's very difficult for him to find targets in Black's position.

#### 12 ... f6 13 a3 ♗d4 14 ♖fd1

14 b4 ♗d8 is also nothing special, for example 15 ♖ad1 ♗e5 16 ♗xe5 fxe5! is a nice resource that gives Black control over the central dark squares.

#### 14 ... ♗e5 15 ♗c4?!

15 ♗xe5 would be met by 15 ... fxe5, controlling the dark squares in the centre.

#### 15 ... ♗c7 16 ♗xe5 ♖xe5

16 ... fxe5 is another good move, again getting control over the d4- and f4-squares.

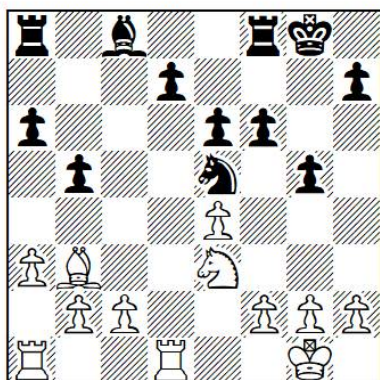
#### 17 ♗b3

17 ♗a2 would similarly be answered with 17 ... b5 and then if 18 f4 Black has 18 ... ♖c4.

**17 ... b5 18 ♖d5 ♜c5 19 ♜e3**

With nothing much happening in the middlegame, Yemelin does for the queen exchange. It's possible that he had already seen the diabolical trap he uses to catch Black.

**19 ... ♜xe3 20 ♖xe3 g5!**



**21 g3**

Yemelin sets an ingenious trap, luring Black's g-pawn to g4. The immediate 21 a4 is simply met by 21 ... ♙b7 22 f3 ♙c6, with full equality.

**21 ... g4 22 a4 ♙b7?!**

Probably missing White's stunning reply. 22 ... ♜b8 would have been fine for Black.

**23 ♖xg4!**

So this is what Yemelin had been playing for. From being about equal, suddenly Black is in a critical position.

**23 ... ♖xg4?!**

A further error, probably in a state of shock after White's previous move. 23 ... bxa4! is still okay for Black, for example 24 ♖xe5 (and not 24 ♜xa4 because of 24 ... ♖xg4 25 ♜xd7 ♙c6! 26 ♙xe6+ ♖h8 etc.) 24 ... axb3 25 ♖xd7 bxc2 26 ♜dc1 ♙xe4 27 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♖f1 ♜b8 29 ♖e2 ♜xb2 with a draw being the most likely result.

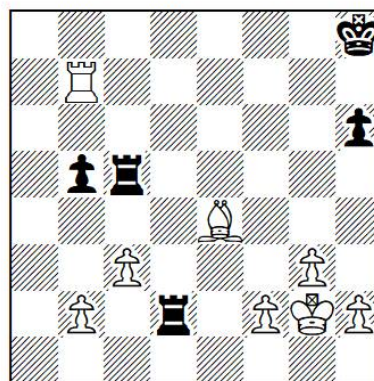
**24 ♜xd7 ♙c8 25 ♙xe6+ ♖h8 26 ♙xg4 ♙xd7 27 ♙xd7**

With three pawns for the exchange this is obviously good for White, but Taimanov hangs on with some fancy endgame skills.

**27 ... ♜fd8 28 ♙e6 ♜d6 29 ♙d5 ♜c8 30 axb5 axb5 31 c3 f5 32 ♜a7?**

The first slip. 32 ♜a5 was better when 32 ... fxe4 33 ♜xb5 gives White two connected passed pawns on the queenside.

**32 ... fxe4 33 ♙xe4 h6 34 ♜b7 ♜c5 35 ♖g2 ♜d2**



**36 b4?**

The win is slipping away. 36 ♜h7+ ♖g8 37 ♜xh6 ♜xb2 38 ♜c6! would have left Black in a very difficult position.

**36 ... ♜c4 37 ♙g6**

On 37 ♙f5 there follows 37 ... ♜xc3 38 ♜xb5 ♜b3 39 h3 ♜bb2, winning the pawn on f2. White would still be better but Black is probably holding.

**37 ... ♜xc3 38 ♜xb5 ♜b3 39 ♜b7 ♜bb2 40 ♜f7 ♜xb4 41 h4**

41 ♜h7+ ♖g8 42 ♜xh6?? ♖g7 wins the bishop!

**41 ... ♖g8 42 h5 ♜b8 43 ♜f3 ♜f8 44 ♙f5 ♖g7 45 g4 ♖f6 46 ♜a3 ♖g5 47 ♜a5 ♜xf5 48 ♜xf5+ ♖xg4 49 ♜a5 ½-½**

### Game 8

**A.Zontakh-O.Romanishin**

Donetsk 1998

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 a6 5 ♖c3 ♖c6 6 ♙e2 ♖ge7 7 0-0**

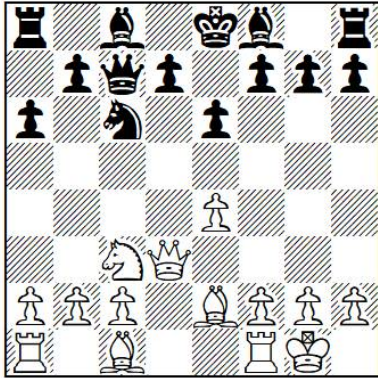
The most natural move, but one which allows Black to carry out the freeing exchange on d4.

**Question:** Is it better for White to avoid this exchange with 7 ♖b3 - ?

**Answer:** It's not clear, as although the e7-knight would need to be repositioned

(on g6 or even c8), White's knight is not that well placed on b3 either.

7 ... ♖xd4 8 ♙xd4 ♜c6 9 ♙d3 ♙c7!



An important move, preventing either 10 ♙g3 or 10 ♙f4. As we saw in Plaskett-Hartston (Game 2), 9 ... ♜b4 is strongly met by 10 ♙g3, the main line of the c2-pawn sacrifice running 10 ... ♜xc2 11 ♙g5 f6 12 ♙f4 ♜xa1 13 ♙h5+ g6 14 ♙xg6+ hxg6 15 ♙xg6+ ♜e7 16 e5 d5 17 ♙xf6+ ♜d7 18 ♙xh8 ♜c2 19 ♙h7+, winning the knight on c2 and emerging two pawns up. Note that the attempt to adopt a Scheveningen structure with 9 ... d6 would also be met by 10 ♙g3, when the pressure against g7 makes it difficult for Black to develop his kingside.

10 ♜h1

Moving his king to a safer square in preparation for f2-f4. In the game F.Hellers-C.Hansen, Aarhus 1997, White chose instead to play 10 ♙g5 after which 10 ... ♙d6 11 ♜h1 b5 12 ♜ad1 ♙f4! was an important defensive resource, exchanging the dark-square bishops. After the further 13 ♙xf4 ♙xf4 14 g3 ♙c7 15 f4 0-0 16 ♙f3 f6 Black had a very comfortable game with the potential for counterplay on the queenside.

10 ... ♙e7 11 f4 b5 12 ♙g3 0-0 13 ♙e3 ♙b7 14 a3

Trying to prevent ... b5-b4 but this move is rather passive.

14 ♙d3 would have been a better move after which 14 ... ♜b4 (14 ... ♜a5 15 ♜ad1 ♜c4 16 ♙c1 would successfully regroup White's pieces) 15 a3 ♜xd3 16 cxd3 would

see Black gain the bishop pair but strengthen White's centre.

14 ... ♜a5 15 ♜ad1 ♜c4 16 ♙c1 ♜ad8  
Playing for ... d7-d5.

17 ♜d3 d5! 18 exd5 exd5

Black has contracted an isolated d-pawn but White's pieces are in no fit state to blockade or attack it. In fact, Black may soon be able to take the initiative with ... d5-d4.

19 ♜fd1 ♙f6 20 ♙f3

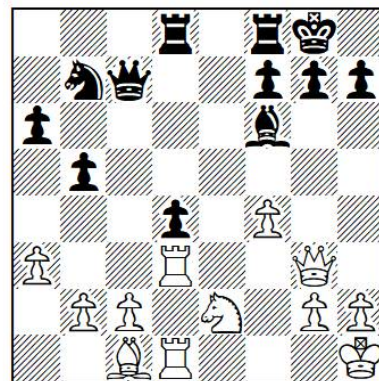
White might have avoided 20 ♜xd5 because 20 ... ♙xd5 21 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 22 ♜xd5 ♜xb2 would leave him with weak pawns on the queenside, but this was probably his best path.

20 ... d4 21 ♜e2

21 ♙xb7 would be strongly met by 21 ... dxc3! 22 b3 ♜xd3 23 ♙xd3 ♜b2 24 ♙xb2 cxb2 when the advanced b2-pawn would prove very unpleasant for White. 21 ♜e4 is also bad because of 21 ... ♙xe4 22 ♙xe4 ♜d6, when the c2-pawn is falling.

21 ... ♜d6 22 ♙xb7 ♜xb7

22 ... ♙xb7 was also quite good, intending to bring the knight to e4.



23 b4

Preventing the knight from coming to c5 because 23 ♜xd4 ♜c5 would cost the exchange. Unfortunately for White he now drops the c2-pawn, and his position begins to look lost.

23 ... ♙xc2 24 ♙f3

**Question:** Why can't White take on d4?

**Answer:** After 24 ♜xd4 ♙xd4 25 ♜xd4 Black can force mate with 25 ... ♙xd1+.

**24 ... ♖fe8 25 ♗g3 ♗d6 26 f5**

26 ♗h5 is answered by 26 ... ♗e4!. After the move played Black might have centralised his bishop with 26 ... ♗e5, but he plays less decisively.

**26 ... ♖c8 27 ♖g4**

27 ♗h5! ♗xf5 28 ♗xf6+ would have given White more chances, though admittedly the position is still bad.

**27 ... ♖c6 28 ♗g5**

It's now too late for 28 ♗h5 because Black has a good reply in 28 ... ♗e4!.

**28 ... ♗e4**

Threatening a family fork on f2, so White's reply is forced.

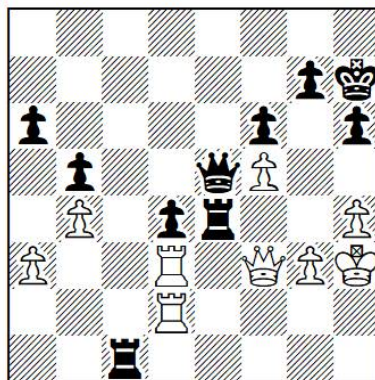
**29 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 30 ♖g3 ♗xg5 31 ♖xg5 f6**

Finally reaching clarity. The next job is to reach the time control without spoiling anything.

**32 ♖g3 ♖d5 33 ♖f3 ♖e5 34 g3 ♖c8 35 ♖1d2 h6 36 ♗g2 ♗h8 37 h4 ♖c1 38 ♗h3 ♖c4 39 ♗g2 ♗h7 40 ♗f2 ♗g8 41 ♗g2 ♗h8**

Black is winning here, and after reaching the time control figures out the best way to convert his advantage.

**42 ♗h3 ♗h7 43 ♗g2 ♖c1 44 ♗h3**



**44 ... ♖ce1! 45 ♖c2 ♖1e3**

Winning immediately.

**46 ♖xe3**

On 46 ♖c5 the simplest route would be 46 ... ♖xf3 47 ♖xe5 ♖xg3+ 48 ♗xg3 fxe5 when the two connected passed pawns win easily in the endgame.

**46 ... ♖xe3 0-1**

After 46 ... ♖xe3 47 ♖f2 Black can win two more pawns with 47 ... ♖xg3+ 48 ♖xg3 ♖xf5+ 49 ♖g4 ♖xc2.

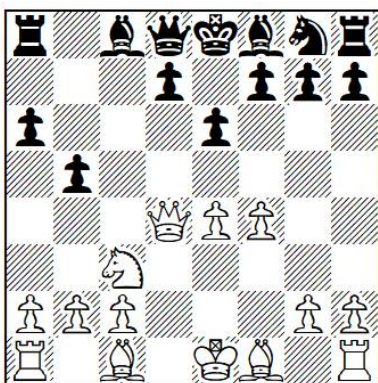
# Chapter Two

## Taimanov: 6 f4

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♖c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 f4 ♗xd4**

This seems to be the best here. The main issue with 6 ... ♗ge7 is that White can answer with 7 ♗f3, which avoids the exchange of knights while putting the knight on a good square. P.Svidler-A.Zapata, New York 1995 continued 7 ... ♗g6 8 ♙e3 ♗c7 9 ♗d2 b5 10 h4 h5 11 0-0-0 ♙e7 12 e5 ♙b7 13 ♗g5 with a quite precarious position for Black.

**7 ♗xd4 b5**



Expanding on the queenside makes sense here as Black might yet put his knight on f6.

**8 ♙e3**

Placing the bishop where it probes the queenside dark squares and makes room for possible queenside castling. White has tried other moves here:

a) 8 ♙d3 is natural as it defends e4 and points the bishop towards the kingside. Black can then play 8 ... ♙b7 9 0-0 ♞c8 10 ♗h1 ♗f6 as in Knezevic-Romanishin (Game 9).

b) After 8 ♙e2 Black can use a similar plan with 8 ... ♙b7 9 0-0 ♞c8, for example 10 ♗h1 ♗f6 11 e5 ♗d5 12 ♙f3 ♞c4 13 ♗f2 ♗a8 14 ♗xd5 ♙xd5 was fine for Black in Conquest-Sokolov (Game 10).

c) 8 a4 tries to get the c4-square, but Black achieves excellent counterplay with

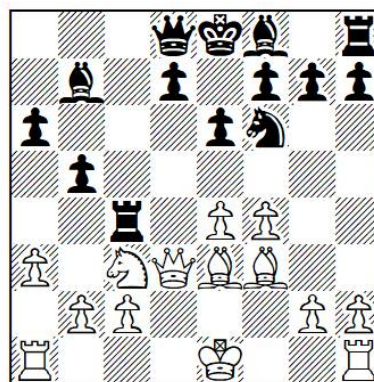
8 ... b4 9 ♗b1 ♙b7 10 ♗d2 d5 as in Dvoiry-Rublevsky (Game 11).

d) 8 e5 is a very ambitious move, trying to stake out the d6-square. Again, the typical Taimanov style plan of 8 ... ♙b7 9 ♙e3 ♗e7 10 0-0-0 ♞c8 is fine, as in the correspondence game Dubois-Brooks (Game 12).

**8 ... ♙b7 9 ♙e2**

Preparing to bring the bishop to f3, where it defends e4 and might potentially be exchanged for Black's bishop on b7 with e4-e5.

**9 ... ♞c8 10 a3 ♗f6 11 ♙f3 ♞c4 12 ♗d3**



**12 ... ♗c7**

This seems like the best option. The provocative 12 ... ♗a8 was played in Renet-Sokolov (Game 13) and seems far more risky.

**13 0-0 ♙c5 14 ♙xc5 ♗xc5+ 15 ♗h1 0-0**

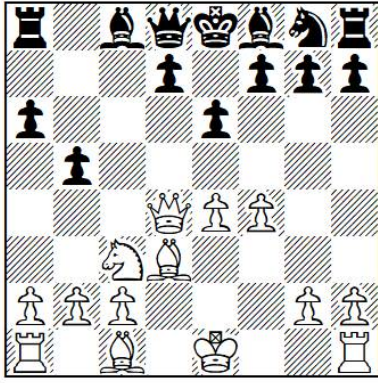
Black was okay in Najer-Rublevsky (Game 14).

### Game 9

#### B.Knezevic-O.Romanishin

Yugoslav Championship, Nis 1996

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 ♗c3 a6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♖c6 6 f4 ♗xd4 7 ♗xd4 b5 8 ♙d3**



### 8 ... ♖b7

**Question:** Does Black have alternatives to this move?

**Answer:** He has also played both 8 ... ♗c7 and 8 ... ♗e7, but putting the bishop on b7 seems to be the most flexible at this stage. The queen may not want to go to c7 and the knight might go to f6 rather than e7, depending on what White does.

### 9 0-0

A natural developing move but not the only option. White's alternatives are as follows:

a) 9 ♗f2 can be answered by 9 ... b4 (9 ... ♖c8 and 9 ... ♗f6 are other reasonable moves that have also been played here) 10 ♗a4 (10 ♗d1 ♗f6 11 ♗e2 ♖c5 12 ♖e3 ♖xe3 13 ♗xe3 d5 1/2-1/2 was T.Tolnai-Z.Ribli, Budapest 1999) 10 ... ♗f6 11 e5 ♗e4 12 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♖e3 1/2-1/2 was W.Watson-O.Romanishin, Frunze 1985. I'm not sure it's possible to read a lot into the short draws, though the engine is quite okay with Black's chances in both games.

b) 9 ♖d2 ♖c8 10 b4 ♗e7 11 a3 ♗c6 12 ♗e3 ♖e7 13 0-0 d6 14 ♖ad1 ♖f6 15 ♗h1 0-0 was played in M.Chandler-U.Andersson, Leningrad 1987 and now Chandler opted for the speculative 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♗e4 ♖e7 18 ♖c3. The engine thinks this is just rubbish and suggests that it's just good for Black after 18 ... exf4 (18 ... ♗c7 was played in the game) 19 ♗h3 h6 20 ♖xf4 f5.

c) 9 a3 is a common move in many Sicilian lines when White wants to discourage ... b5-b4. Here it seems fine for

Black after 9 ... ♖c8 10 ♖d2 (10 ♗f2 can also be met by 10 ... ♗f6 when 11 e5 ♖c5 12 ♗g3 ♗h5 13 ♗g4 g6 leaves Black ready to play 14 ... f5 next, with a good game) 10 ... ♗f6 11 b4!? d5 12 e5 ♗e4 13 ♖xe4 dxe4 14 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 15 0-0-0 ♖c4 was at least equal for Black in M.Chandler-U.Andersson, Naestved 1985.

d) The surprising 9 b4 was played in J.Howell-A.Sokolov, New York 1990 with White finding himself in a horrendous position after 9 ... ♗h4+ 10 ♗f1 (10 g3 must surely be the right move) 10 ... ♗f6 11 ♖d2 ♖e7 12 a4 0-0 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖e1 d5 15 e5 ♗e4. There were other good answers to 9 b4 too, for example just 9 ... ♗e7 or 9 ... d5 10 exd5 ♗f6.

### 9 ... ♖c8

Logical, flexible and it threatens to pin the queen with 10 ... ♖c5.

### 10 ♗h1

Another possibility is 10 ♗f2 but it fails to cause Black any trouble. S.Dvoiryys-A.Sokolov, USSR Championship 1989 continued 10 ... ♗f6 11 ♗e2 d5 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 f5 ♗xc3 14 ♖xc3 ♖c5+ 15 ♗h1 0-0 16 fxe6 (16 f6 can be met by 16 ... g6 as in the worst case Black will be able to defend g7 with ... ♖e8 and ... ♖f8) 16 ... ♗d5 17 exf7+ ♖xf7 18 ♖d2 ♖cf8 19 c4 ♗xg2+ 20 ♗xg2 ♖xg2+ 21 ♗xg2 ♖f2+ 22 ♗h3 ♖xd2 with a drawish endgame coming.

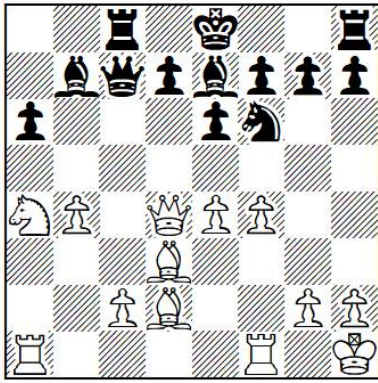
### 10 ... ♗f6 11 b4

11 ♗e3 b4 12 ♗d1 ♖c5 13 ♗e2 0-0 14 e5 ♗d5 was also very comfortable for Black in M.Quast-M.Glienke, Germany 2000.

### 11 ... ♗c7

A calm response to White's last move, though arguably a little too calm. Black can at least equalize with 11 ... d5, for example 12 e5 (12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 is also fine) 12 ... ♗e4 13 ♖b2 ♗d2 14 ♖xb5+ axb5 15 ♗xd2 ♖xb4 when Black has actually rather more than equalized.

### 12 ♖d2 ♖e7 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♗xa4



**14 ... 0-0**

This leads Black into a difficult position, but one in which he was hoping to win. This is a common psychological dynamic where players have a large rating difference, and Romanishin was 2590 at the time of this game as opposed to Knezevic's 2380.

Stockfish mentions the possibility of 14 ... ♖xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♙f6 16 ♚d3 ♙xe4 17 ♚xe4 ♙xa1 18 ♜xa1 ♚xc2, assessing the position as approximately equal. In general, I'd say that humans would shy away from such lines as Black because it can be difficult to prevent White's pieces from coordinating.

**15 ♘c5 ♙xc5 16 ♙xc5 ♚c6 17 ♜fc1**

Had White been looking to win he might have protected his e4-pawn with 17 ♜fe1 because ♙b4 ideas stop Black taking c5.

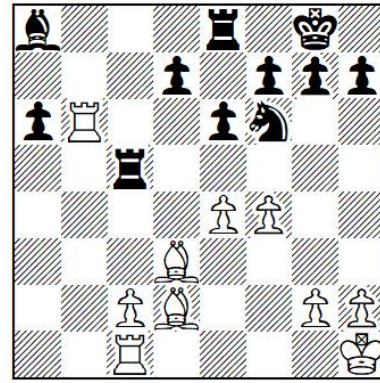
**17 ... ♜fe8?**

Surprisingly Black avoids 17 ... ♘xe4, no doubt wishing to avoid the simplification that would follow 18 ♚xe4 ♚xe4 19 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 20 ♜xa6 ♜a8 21 ♜xa8 ♜xa8. Black is 'better' but it would be very difficult to win.

**18 ♜ab1 ♙a8**

Romanishin probably rejected 18 ... ♘xe4 because of 19 ♜xb7 ♘xd2 20 ♜xd7 ♚xc5 21 ♙xh7+ ♚xh7 22 ♚xd2 when once again the position is drawish.

**19 ♜b6 ♚xc5 20 ♚xc5 ♜xc5**



**21 ♜xa6?**

Handing Black his main chance to win the game. 21 e5 was better when 21 ... ♘e4 22 ♙e3 ♜a5 23 ♚g1 produces an evenly balanced endgame.

**21 ... ♜b8?**

I'm sure that Romanishin would later regret not playing 21 ... ♙xe4 as it gives Black a clear edge without drawish simplification. After 22 ♚g1 ♜d5 23 ♙xe4 ♘xe4 Black should be close to winning. It's possible that the players were already feeling some pressure from the clock, but this was a real chance.

**22 ♙b4**

22 e5 was surely the right move, though White might not have wanted to open the a8-h1 diagonal.

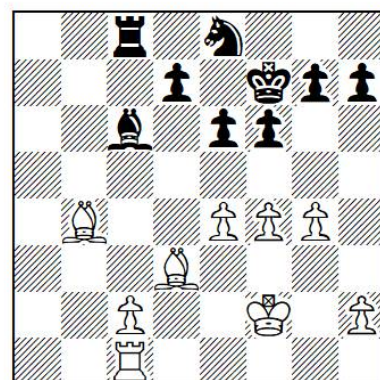
**22 ... ♜c6 23 ♜xc6**

And here 23 ♜aa1 was better.

**23 ... ♙xc6 24 ♙c3**

24 ♙d6 followed by e4-e5 was better. Black should now take the opportunity to play 24 ... ♘xe4.

**24 ... ♘e8? 25 ♚g1 f6 26 ♚f2 ♚f7 27 g4 ♜c8 28 ♙b4**



Preventing Romanishin from putting his knight on d6, which was probably his main hope for making progress.

**28 ... ♖b8**

At first 28 ... ♗xe4 looks like a pawn-winning tactic, but after 29 ♗xe4 ♖c4 White can play 30 ♖d1 d6 31 ♔f3 ♖xb4 32 ♗xh7 g6 33 f5, maintaining equality. Of course one might argue that this was a better way for Black to equalize than the game, but due to the rating difference Romanishin probably wanted to win. This ambition does not last for long.

**29 ♗c5 ♖c8 30 ♗b4 ♖b8**

Rejecting 30 ... ♗xe4, as he did a couple of moves earlier.

**31 ♗c5 ♖c8 ½-½**

A strange game in which both sides made errors, but nonetheless instructive for understanding the Taimanov.

#### Game 10

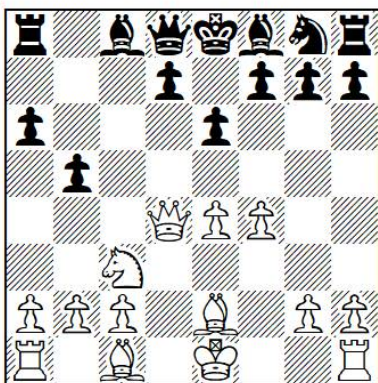
#### S.Conquest-A.Sokolov

Clichy 1991

**1 e4 c5 2 f4**

The relevant move order for our repertoire choices is 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 f4 ♗xd4 7 ♖xd4 b5, reaching the position after Black's 7th move. This line is often reached via a 2 f4 Sicilian.

**2 ... ♗c6 3 ♗f3 e6 4 ♗c3 a6 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 7 ♖xd4 b5 8 ♗e2**



**Question:** Does White have any particular aims with this move?

**Answer:** Essentially it is a simple developing move which will most likely be followed by castling kingside. Often White's bishop will come to f3 in order to support the e4-pawn.

**8 ... ♗b7 9 0-0**

Several alternatives have been tried here, for example:

a) 9 ♗f3 ♖c8 10 ♗e3 ♗f6 11 e5 ♗c5 12 ♖d3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xc5 was R.Nicevski-M.Klarenbeek, San Benedetto 1990, and now 13 ... ♗d5 14 ♖xf3 ♖xc5 was the best with full equality.

b) 9 ♗e3 is well met by 9 ... ♖c8 10 ♖d3 ♗f6 11 ♗f3 b4 12 ♗e2 d5 according to the engine.

c) 9 a3 ♖c8 10 ♗e3 ♗f6 11 ♗f3 ♖c4 12 ♖d3 ♖c7 13 0-0 was E.Hansen-Y.Kambrath, Cappelle la Grande 2013, and now both 13 ... h5 and 13 ... ♗c5 would have been better than the 13 ... d6 of the game.

**9 ... ♖c8 10 ♔h1**

White has also played 10 ♖d3 but Black can handle this with 10 ... b4! 11 ♗d1 ♗f6 as in A.Martin Gonzalez-A.Sokolov, Biel Interzonal 1985. After 12 e5 ♗d5 13 f5 Black's best move was 13 ... ♖c7 (rather than the 13 ... ♖h4?! of the game) when 14 ♖g3 exf5 15 ♗d3 g6 leaves White a pawn down with a shaky-looking position.

**10 ... ♗f6**

Putting pressure on the e4-pawn. Black could also consider 10 ... b4 11 ♗a4 ♖xc2 though he is left trailing in development after 12 ♗d3 followed by 13 ♗d2.

**11 e5 ♗d5 12 ♗f3**

12 ♗e4 ♖xc2 13 ♗d3 runs into the ingenious 13 ... ♗b4! as taking the rook sets up a fork.

**12 ... ♖c4 13 ♖f2**

Another possibility is 13 ♖d3, but then 13 ... ♗b4 14 ♖e2 ♗xf3 15 ♖xf3 ♖c7 seems fine for Black.

**13 ... ♖a8 14 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 15 b3 ♖c7 16 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♗b2**

**Question:** Can White take the initiative with 17 f5 - ?

**Answer:** He can certainly try, but Black seems to be fine after 17 ... exf5 18 ♖xf5 ♕e6.

**17 ... ♕e7 18 ♖ad1**

Here too 18 f5 is possible, but Black then defends himself with 18 ... exf5 19 ♖xf5 g6 20 ♖f2 0-0, with what seems like a shade the better of it.

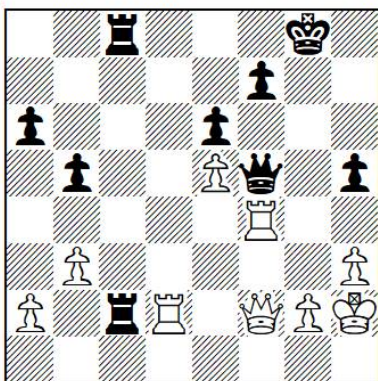
**18 ... ♖e4 19 ♖d2 0-0 20 ♖e1 ♖f5 21 ♖ed1 ♖b4 22 c3 ♖xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 24 ♖xd7 h5 25 h3 ♖c2 26 ♖1d2 ♖fc8 27 ♖h2?**

After Black's powerful reply White is struggling to save himself. He should have played 27 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 28 ♖d8+ ♖h7 29 ♖d2, when Black doesn't have much.

**27 ... g5 28 ♖7d4 gxf4**

Black can also delay this capture with 28 ... ♖g7, which might have posed more problems for White. The engine wants to play 29 a4, but this leads to a very difficult endgame for White after 29 ... gxf4 30 ♖xf4 ♖xd2 31 ♖xf5 ♖xf2 32 ♖xf2 bxa4 33 ♖xa4 ♖c4.

**29 ♖xf4**



**29 ... ♖xe5!**

Keeping his chances alive. 29 ... ♖xd2 30 ♖xf5 ♖xf2 31 ♖xf2 is just a draw.

**30 ♖g3+ ♖g7 31 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 32 ♖d7 ♖f8 33 a4 bxa4 34 ♖xa4**

34 ♖xa4 was better, though of course Black has all the chances. The remainder of the game seems to have been influenced by time trouble because both sides make mistakes.

**34 ... ♖b8?**

34 ... ♖g8! was better after which 35 ♖g3 (35 ♖f4? ♖h8 would win the vital g2-

pawn) 35 ... ♖c3+ 36 ♖f2 ♖xb3 leaves White teetering on the brink of defeat.

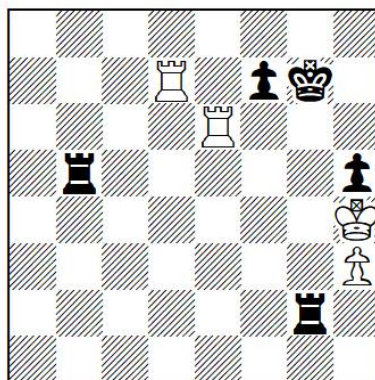
**35 ♖xa6?**

White in turn had a stronger line with 35 ♖f4 after which 35 ... ♖f8 36 ♖a7! ♖a2 37 ♖g3 ♖a3 38 ♖f3 should hold.

**35 ... ♖xb3 36 ♖xe6 ♖bb2 37 ♖g3 ♖xg2+ 38 ♖h4**

38 ♖f3 doesn't help after 38 ... ♖bf2+ 39 ♖e3 ♖e2+ 40 ♖f3 ♖gf2+ 41 ♖g3 h4+ and then 42 ... ♖xe6.

**38 ... ♖b5?**



Missing a stalemate trick. Black should play 38 ... ♖b4+ after which 39 ♖xh5 ♖b8 40 ♖h6 ♖b5+ 41 ♖h4 ♖xh6 42 ♖d6+ ♖g6 forces resignation.

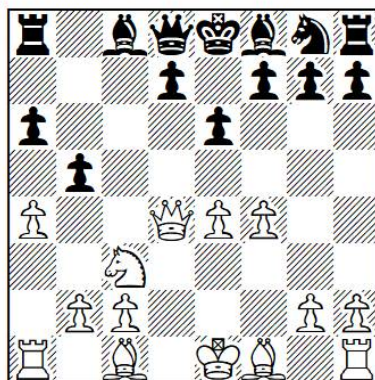
**39 ♖e5 ♖xe5 40 ♖xf7+ ♖g8 41 ♖g7+ ♖xg7 1/2-1/2**

### Game 11

**S.Dvoirys-S.Rublevsky**

Russia 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 f4 ♖xd4 7 ♖xd4 b5 8 a4**



**Question:** That looks strange, why is White forcing Black to play one of his typical ideas with ... b5-b4 - ?

**Answer:** By getting Black to play this immediately White hopes to be able to fight for some queenside squares. The obvious example is the c4-square, but maybe b6 will also fall into White's hands after a later a4-a5.

**8 ... b4 9 ♖b1**

Another possibility is 9 ♖a2 when V.Nevednichy-V.Potkin, Plovdiv 2008 continued 9 ... a5 10 ♕d2 ♕b7 11 ♕d3 ♗e7 (11 ... ♜h4+!? is quite annoying for White) 12 ♗c1 ♗c6 13 ♜f2 ♕e7 14 ♗b3 d6 15 0-0-0 0-0 16 ♕e3 and now 16 ... e5 would make sense as White is in no position to occupy d5.

**9 ... ♕b7 10 ♗d2 d5**

A simple and direct antidote. Black is not behind in development so can afford to allow the position to open up.

**11 ♕d3**

11 e5 might be a better move, a possible sequel being 11 ... ♜c8 12 ♜a7 ♜d7 13 ♕xa6 ♕xa6 14 ♜xa6 ♜xc2 with approximate equality.

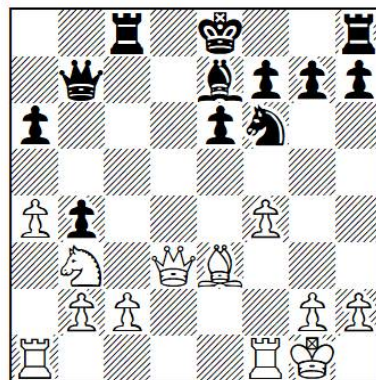
**11 ... ♜c7**

11 ... ♗f6 appears to be even stronger, for example 12 e5 (12 exd5 ♕xd5 is also nice for Black) 12 ... ♗e4 13 ♗xe4 dxe4 14 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 15 ♕c4 ♜c8 16 ♕b3 ♕d5 17 ♗e2 f5 gives him a better endgame.

**12 ♗b3 dxe4 13 ♕xe4 ♗f6**

After the exchange of light-squared bishops Black is simply better. Another good line is 13 ... ♕xe4 14 ♜xe4 ♜c8 threatening c2.

**14 ♕xb7 ♜xb7 15 0-0 ♜c8 16 ♜d3 ♕e7 17 ♕e3**



**17 ... 0-0**

Another possibility was 17 ... ♜e4, though here too White's position should be defensible after 18 ♜ac1 (18 ♜xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♜ac1 ♕f6 20 ♕d4 ♕xd4+ 21 ♗xd4 ♗e7 looks unpleasant for White, not least because Black can support his knight with ... f7-f5) 18 ... 0-0 19 ♜xe4 ♗xe4. Black's position is certainly pleasant, but he may not be able to increase his advantage.

**18 ♕d4 ♜fd8 19 ♜ae1 ♜c6?!**

Allowing White the important f4-f5 break. 19 ... g6 is preferable when Black maintains the better position.

**20 f5!**

**Question:** Why was it important for Black to prevent this move?

**Answer:** The pawn structure is more favourable for Black with four pawns against three on the kingside and the f-pawn fixed on f4. This pawn can become a weakness and protecting it with g2-g3 would further weaken the light squares.

**20 ... ♜xc2 21 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 22 fxe6 ♜c4**

Black's efforts to extract blood from a stone prove unsuccessful. 22 ... fxe6 23 ♜xe6 ♕d6 24 g3 would be equally equal.

**23 ♜f4 ♜e8 24 ♗f1 ♕d6?!**

After this Black needs to defend quite carefully. 24 ... ♜c2 would have been an easier way to draw, for example 25 ♜f2 ♜ec8 26 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 27 ♜e2 ♜c8 maintains material parity.

**25 ♜h4!**

This probably came as a shock to Black as he is suddenly threatened with 26 ♕xf6.

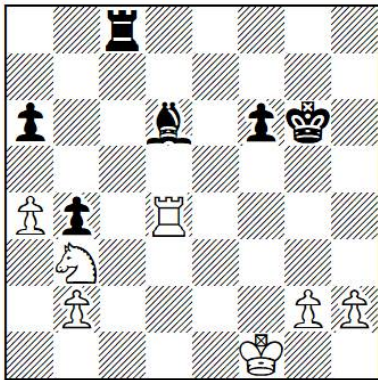
**25 ... ♖cc8**

The only good move. After 25 ... ♖c2 there would follow 26 ♙xf6 gxf6 27 exf7+ ♗xf7 28 ♖xh7+ ♗g6 29 ♖xe8 ♗xh7 30 ♖e2, with a good extra pawn.

**26 ♙xf6 gxf6 27 exf7+ ♗xf7 28 ♖xh7+ ♗g6 29 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 30 ♖h4 ♖c8**

Threatening 31 ... ♖c2.

**31 ♖d4**



White can also try 31 h3 but then 31 ... ♖c2 32 ♖g4+ ♗f7 33 ♖d4 ♖xb2 34 ♖xd6 ♖xb3 35 ♖xa6 ♖a3 will bring about a theoretically drawn rook endgame.

**31 ... ♙xh2 32 ♖xb4 ♙e5 33 ♗d2 a5 34 ♖c4 ♖d8 35 ♖c2 ♖b8 36 ♗c4 ♖b4 37 ♗xa5 ♖xa4 38 ♗c4**

38 ♗c6 ♖a2 39 ♗e2 ♗f5 40 ♗xe5 fxe5 should also be a draw, but Black must be careful in all these lines.

**38 ... ♙d4 39 ♗e2 f5 40 ♗d3 ♙f6 41 ♖e2 ♖b4 42 ♖e6 ♗g5 43 ♖b6**

43 ♖e2 ♗g6 would similarly leave White unable to make progress.

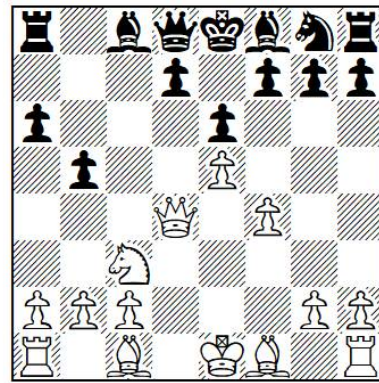
**43 ... ♖xb6 44 ♗xb6 ♙xb2 1/2-1/2**

### Game 12

**L.Dubois-I.Brooks**

Correspondence 1991

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 a6 5 ♗c3 ♗c6 6 f4 ♗xd4 7 ♖xd4 b5 8 e5**



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** White immediately takes space, prevents Black's knight coming to f6 and marks out the e4- and d6-squares as possible targets for occupation. On the downside it opens up the h1-a8 diagonal, invites Black pieces to come to d5 and/or f5 and presents e5 as a target for undermining.

**8 ... ♙b7 9 ♙e3 ♗e7 10 ♑0-0 ♖c8!?**

Another possibility was 10 ... ♗d5 intending ... ♙e7 and ... 0-0.

**11 ♗e4**

Stockfish doesn't like this move, preferring 11 ♖d2 instead. The analysis runs 11 ... b4 12 ♗a4 ♗d5 13 ♙b6 ♗xb6 14 ♗xb6 ♖c7 15 ♗b1 ♙e7 intending ... ♙c6 followed by ... 0-0 with approximate equality.

**11 ... ♗f5 12 ♖d3 ♖c4!?**

Once again, the Stockfish preference. This seems to be an improvement over E.Gufeld-O.Romanishin, USSR 1981 which went 12 ... ♖c7 13 ♙f2 h5 14 ♙e2 ♙d5 (14 ... d5 looks like an improvement, after 15 exd6 ♙xd6 16 ♗xd6+ ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6?? there is 17 ... ♖xc2 mate) and now 15 ♙f3 (15 ♗b1?! as played in the game) 15 ... ♙b4 (15 ... ♙xa2? loses to 16 ♙b6! as the bishop can't be taken because of mate on d7) 16 c3 ♙e7 17 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 18 exd6 ♖xd6 19 ♙xd5 exd5 20 ♖he1 gives White a dangerous initiative.

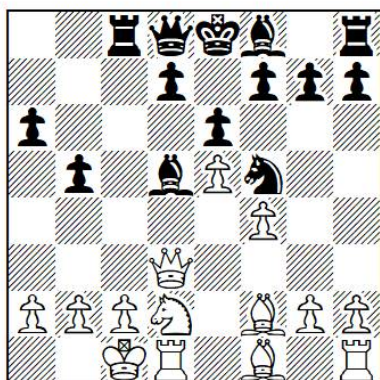
**13 ♗d2 ♖c8**

The engine wants to play 13 ... ♖a4 here, though most humans would balk at

putting their rook on a square with no clear retreat. A possible sequel is 14 ♖b1 ♜c7 15 ♘b3 ♙d5 16 ♚d2 d6 17 ♙f2 dxe5 18 fxe5 ♙e7 19 ♙d3 ♘h4 with the claim that this is clearly better for Black.

**Question:** Given the weight of evidence are you now okay with your rook on a4?

**Answer:** No.  
14 ♙f2 ♙d5



Posting the bishop here shields the d-file and builds enough pressure against White's king position to elicit an astonishing response. There were some good alternatives here in 14 ... h5 and 14 ... ♙c5 both of which are fine for Black according to the engines.

#### 15 a4?

This is not a wise thing to do to your king's defences. 15 ♘e4 is the natural move when 15 ... ♜c4 (15 ... ♙xa2? 16 ♙b6!) 16 ♘c3 ♜xf4 17 ♚d2 (17 ♘d5 ♜xf2) 17 ... g6 18 ♘d5 exd5 19 ♙d3 ♙h6 20 ♙xf5 ♜xf5 21 ♚xh6 ♜xf2 22 ♜xd5 ♚c7 is helpfully assessed as equal according to the engine. Black can also play 15 ... h5, also assessed as equal.

#### 15 ... ♚c7 16 axb5

Unless White does this it's difficult to find the motivation behind 15 a4. Of course, opening the a-file is not a good thing for his king.

#### 16 ... axb5 17 ♘f3 ♙b4 18 c3 ♙b3

Effectively winning the exchange because a rook move would be answered by 19 ... ♚a5. 18 ... 0-0 would also have been very strong.

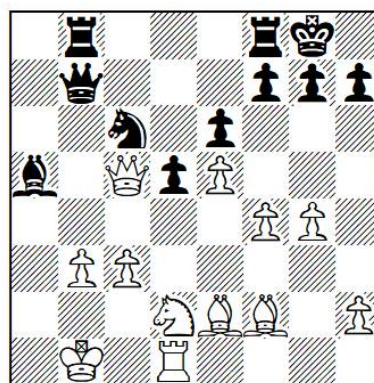
#### 19 ♙e2 0-0

This doesn't spoil anything, but Stockfish points out that 19 ... ♙xc3 20 ♙xc3 (Or 20 ♚xc3 ♚b7 etc.) 20 ... ♙c4 would have been even stronger. For humans this requires some explanation, 21 ♚d2 being answered by 21 ... ♙xe2 22 ♚xe2 ♚xc3+ 23 ♖b1 ♚b4+ 24 ♚b2 ♚e4+ 25 ♖a1 ♜a8+ etc.

#### 20 ♘d2 ♙xd1 21 ♜xd1 ♙a5 22 ♖b1 d5 23 g4 ♘e7 24 ♚xb5

After 24 ♘b3 Black would prise open files with 24 ... b4.

#### 24 ... ♜b8 25 ♚c5 ♚b7 26 b3 ♘c6 0-1



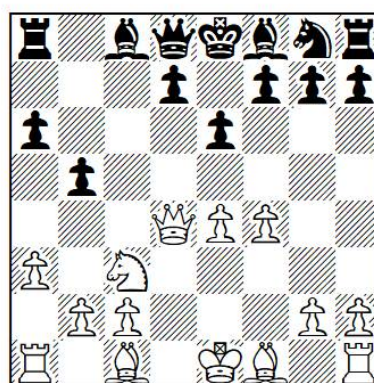
White is the exchange down and faces a withering attack on his king. Despite the extraordinary 15 a4, this game has value in showing how to defuse 8 e5.

#### Game 13

#### O.Renet-A.Sokolov

Mendoza 1985

#### 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 f4 ♘xd4 7 ♚xd4 b5 8 a3



White takes time to prevent ... b4, but it's difficult to believe this is a serious

threat for Black. 8 f5!? ♟b7 9 ♟f4 has been suggested but then 9 ... ♞c8 10 ♞a7 ♟c6 is fine for Black because 11 ♞xa6 ♞a8 traps the queen.

**8 ... ♟b7 9 ♟e2**

**Question:** Has White tried to put the bishop on d3 instead? It looks quite good to defend the e4-pawn.

**Answer:** 9 ♟d3 is a natural move though it does leave White's queen with only one direction of retreat – along the g1-a7 diagonal. The natural reply is surely 9 ... ♞c8 after which 10 ♞f2 (10 ♟d2 ♟f6 11 b4 d5 12 e5 ♟e4 13 ♟xe4 dxe4 14 ♞xd8+ ♟xd8 15 0-0-0 ♞c4 16 ♟e3+ ♟c8 17 ♟b2 ♟e7 was even slightly better for Black in M.Chandler-U.Andersson, Naestved 1985 while 10 b4 is well met by 10 ... ♞f6!) 10 ... ♟f6 11 e5 was V.Kramnik-G.Tunik, Sochi 1989, and now 11 ... ♟c5 12 ♞g3 ♟h5 13 ♞h3 g6 is a typical plan which might be followed by ... f7-f5.

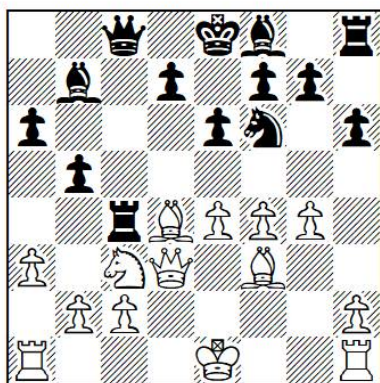
**9 ... ♞c8 10 ♟e3 ♟f6 11 ♟f3 ♞c4!**

Although this was questioned by Renet it's probably the best move, at least if followed up correctly.

**12 ♞d3 ♞a8?!**

This is simply not the best square for the queen. 12 ... ♞c7! is a much better move, as played in the next game, when 13 ♟d4 drops the f4-pawn and 13 0-0-0? is answered by 13 ... ♟xa3.

**13 ♟d4! ♞c8 14 g4! h6**



**15 h4**

Renet would later claim a clear advantage via 15 0-0-0!, and while this is

certainly a better move, the engine does not agree with the size of the advantage. A sample line is 15 ... ♟c5 (once White has castled, 15 ... ♞c7 16 ♟e5 d6 just loses a pawn) 16 ♟e5 0-0 17 h4 ♟e8 18 ♞xd7 ♟e3+ 19 ♟b1 f6 20 ♞xc8 ♞xc8 21 ♟d6 ♟xd6 22 ♞xd6 ♟xf4 23 ♞xe6 ♟g3 24 ♟d5 ♞cd8 which is better for White but not decisively so.

**15 ... ♞c7 16 ♟e5 d6 17 ♟xf6 gxf6 18 0-0 b4**

Opening up White's king position a bit. The structure is more reminiscent of a Richter-Rauzer (1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 d6 6 ♟g5) than a Taimanov, and White's position should be more comfortable at this stage.

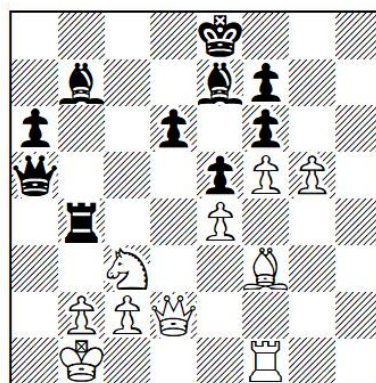
**19 axb4 ♞xb4 20 f5 ♟e7 21 ♞hf1 e5 22 g5?!**

Underestimating the danger to his position. 22 ♞e3 is still very reasonable for White as he can meet 22 ... ♞a5 with 23 ♟b1 and argue that he has a slight plus.

**22 ... ♞a5 23 ♟b1 hxg5 24 hxg5 ♞h2 25 ♞d2?**

Overlooking Black's 26th. 25 ♟e2 is still quite playable for White.

**25 ... ♞xd2 26 ♞xd2**



**26 ... ♞a4!**

This neat trick wins on the spot. Of course the rook can't be taken because White's queen would hang on d2.

**27 ♟c1 ♞a1+ 28 ♟b1 ♞xb1+ 0-1**

*Game 14*

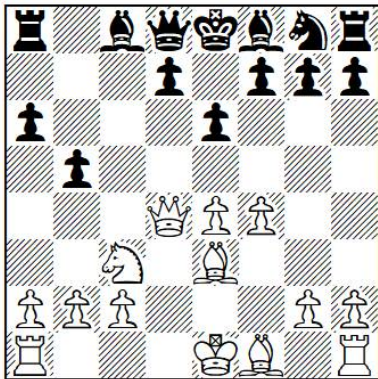
**E.Najer-S.Rublevsky**

Russian Championship 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6  
5 ♗c3 a6 6 f4 ♘xd4

This is probably Black's wisest option as 6 ... ♗ge7 can be answered by 7 ♗f3 leaving Black wondering what to do with his knights.

7 ♖xd4 b5 8 ♙e3



8 ... ♙b7

**Question:** Is the immediate 8 ... ♗e7 also possible?

**Answer:** Yes, though as Black will almost certainly want to put his bishop on b7 he puts it there first. Under certain circumstances the knight may want to go to f6 so, for this reason, Black keeps its options open.

9 ♙e2

**Question:** How should Black play after 9 0-0-0 - ?

**Answer:** This was actually played in a game W.Beckemeier-M.Muse, Berlin 1997, which went 9 ... ♗e7 10 a3 ♗c6 11 ♖b6 ♖xb6 12 ♙xb6 ♗c8 with a typical Sicilian endgame in which White's space and temporary activity is offset by Black's superior pawn structure. Other moves are also possible, for example 9 ... ♗c8.

9 ... ♗c8 10 a3

White has also tried his two castling options here:

a) 10 0-0-0 ♗f6 (10 ... ♙c5 11 ♖d3 ♙xe3+ 12 ♖xe3 ♖c7 13 ♗d2 b4 14 ♗a4 ♗f6 also looks quite thematic and playable) 11 ♙f3 (11 e5 ♗d5 12 ♗xd5 ♙xd5 13 ♙f3 ♙xf3 14

gxf3 ♙c5 15 ♖e4 0-0 is fine for Black) was played in I.Smirin-S.Rublevsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013, which should probably have been answered by 11 ... ♙c5 (11 ... ♙e7 was played in the game and seems less good) 12 ♖d3 ♙xe3+ 13 ♖xe3 b4 14 ♗e2 0-0 with Black having his fair share of the chances.

b) 10 0-0 ♙c5 11 ♖d3 ♖b6 12 ♙xc5 ♖xc5+ 13 ♗f2 ♗e7 14 ♗d1 ♗c7 was fine for Black in J.Plaskett-C.Pritchett, Swansea 1987.

10 ... ♗f6

The most direct move, putting pressure on e4. Black has also tried 10 ... ♖c7 and 10 ... ♗e7, but neither of these moves seems quite as good.

11 ♙f3

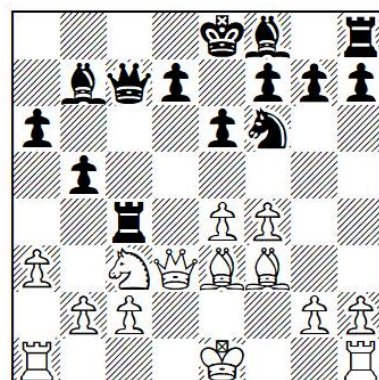
On 11 ♖d3 Black can even try a typical Sicilian exchange sacrifice with 11 ... ♗xc3 12 ♖xc3 ♗xe4 13 ♖e5 ♙e7 intending 14 ... ♙f6. It seems to offer excellent compensation.

11 ... ♗c4

11 ... ♙c5 12 ♖d3 d5 is also quite playable, for example 13 exd5 ♙xd5 14 ♗xd5 (14 ♙xc5 is better and equal) 14 ... ♗xd5 15 ♙xd5 ♙xe3 16 ♖xe3 ♖xd5 is suddenly better for Black as he is hitting c2 and g2.

12 ♖d3 ♖c7

12 ... ♖a8 is less good because of 13 ♙d4! ♖c8 14 g4!, as in Renet-Sokolov (Game 13).



13 0-0

**Question:** Can White play 13 e5 here?

**Answer:** It actually helps Black to find squares for his pieces, for example 13 ... ♗xf3! 14 gxf3 (14 exf6 ♗b7 15 fxg7 ♗xg7 is very good for Black) 14 ... ♖h5 15 ♖e4 ♗xc2 16 0-0 (16 ♖c3 ♗xb2) 16 ... f5 17 exf6 gxf6 threatens 18 ... ♗g8+ and ... ♗gg2.

**13 ... ♗c5 14 ♗xc5**

14 e5 is slightly better than on the previous move as after 14 ... ♗xf3 15 exf6 (15 ♗xf3? is bad because of 15 ... ♖g4 16 ♖d1 g5!, undermining the e5-pawn) 15 ... ♗xe3+ 16 ♗xe3 ♗b7 17 fxg7 ♗g8 18 ♗g3 f5 19 ♗f2 followed by ♗d1, the position is approximately equal.

**14 ... ♗xc5+ 15 ♖h1 0-0**

Black can also consider 15 ... e5!? after which 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 followed by ... 0-0 leaves Black with nicely centralized pieces.

**16 e5 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3**

17 exf6 ♗c6 18 fxg7 ♗c8! is an instructive move, leaving the pawn on g7 as a frontal defence for Black's king.

**Question:** When should the g7-pawn be recaptured?

**Answer:** When it is either helpful or necessary, but not as a reflex!

**17 ... ♖d5 18 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 19 c3 f6**

A typical pawn lever in the Taimanov which activates the rook on f8.

**20 ♗xd5 exd5 21 ♗ad1**

It's not inconceivable that White might drift into a poor position, for example should Black get his rooks to the seventh rank. One line in which this might happen is 21 exf6 ♗xf6 22 g3 d4! 23 cxd4 ♗c2!, when White will need to be careful despite his extra pawn.

**21 ... fxe5 22 ♗xd5 exf4**

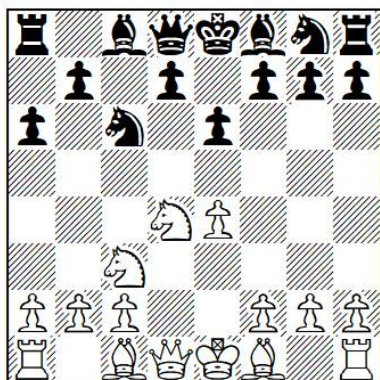
22 ... ♗cxf4 also leads to a draw after 23 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 24 ♖g1 e4 25 ♗xd7 e3 26 ♗e7 ♗f2 27 b4 ♗a2 etc.

**23 ♗xd7 ♗e4 24 ♖g1 ♗e2 25 ♗f2 ♗e1+ 26 ♗f1 ♗e2 27 ♗f2 ½-½**

# Chapter Three

## Taimanov: 6 ♖e3 and 6 f3

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6



### 6 ♖e3

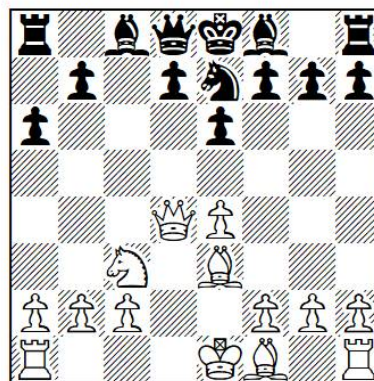
This and 6 f3 can come to the same thing if both moves are played, though ♖e3 can also be played with independent significance. Another difference is that Black can meet 6 f3 with 6 ... ♗ge7, as in Inarkiev-Mchedlishvili (Game 15), though it might be simpler from a repertoire perspective to meet it with 6 ... ♘xd4 7 ♗xd4 ♗e7 8 ♖e3 b5 as in Vallejo Pons-Kobalia (Game 16).

### 6 ... ♘xd4

**Question:** Why does Black make this exchange so early?

**Answer:** There are a couple of lines in which White can effectively move the d4-knight away if Black doesn't exchange immediately, 6 ♖e3 is one of them and 6 f4 is another. In this position 6 ... ♗ge7 would be well met by 7 ♗b3, for example 7 ... d6 (7 ... b5 8 a4! b4? 9 a5! ♗xa5 10 ♗a4 ♗xb3 11 ♖b6 ♗xa1 12 ♗xa1 was winning for White in Y.Zaderman-M.Taimanov, New York 1992) 8 ♗a4!? b5 9 ♗b6 ♗b8 10 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 11 c4 ♖e7 12 ♗c1 ♗d7 13 cxb5 axb5 14 ♖e2 0-0 15 0-0 ♗b7 16 f4 was better for White in A.Sulypa-M.Taimanov, Lvov 2000.

### 7 ♗xd4 ♗e7



### 8 f4

8 ♖c4 is an aggressive move by White common to many Sicilian lines, but here it seems less appropriate. Black played 8 ... b5 9 ♖b3 ♗c6 10 ♗d2 ♖e7 11 0-0 ♖b7 in Kabisch-Moor (Game 17).

8 ... b5 9 0-0-0 ♗c6 10 ♗d2 ♖e7 11 ♗f2 ♖b7

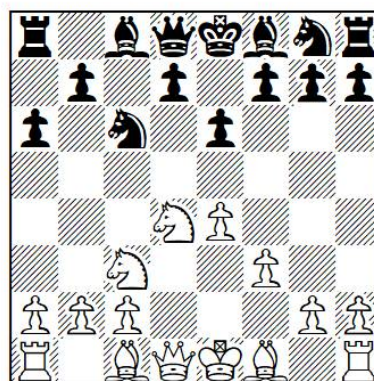
This brought about a typical Sicilian Taimanov middlegame in S.Polgar-M.Taimanov (Game 18) in which experience triumphed over youth.

### Game 15

#### E.Inarkiev-M.Mchedlishvili

European Championship, Jerusalem 2015

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 f3



**Question:** As the e4-pawn is not being attacked, what is White's idea with this move?

**Answer:** He is presumably envisaging a set-up with ♕e3 but keeps some short-term flexibility with his bishop. It could also be to lend the opening a new twist to get his opponent to think for himself.

**6 ... ♖ge7**

6 ... ♖xd4 7 ♗xd4 b5 is arguably more flexible as Black can still bring his knight out to f6. I could not find any games from this position, which is surprising given that we are only up to move seven in a Sicilian.

**7 ♖b3**

After 7 ♕e3 ♖xd4 8 ♗xd4 b5 9 0-0-0 ♖c6 10 ♗d2 Black should probably play 10 ... ♕e7 followed by ... 0-0 so that the bishop on c8 will continue to defend d7 for the time being. As with 6 ... ♖xd4 there is a dearth of experience in this position.

**7 ... b5 8 ♕e3 d6**

Playing ... d7-d6 generally has a low priority in the Sicilian Taimanov. Black does still intend a manoeuvre that is known in the Taimanov; he is planning to bring his e7-knight to c8 and b6. 8 ... ♖g6 would have been a typical alternative, intending 9 ... ♕e7 followed by 10 ... 0-0.

**9 ♗d2 ♕b7 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 g4 ♕e7 12 f4 0-0 13 g5 ♖b6**

The e7-knight completes its voyage to the queenside and may now take part in action against White's king. One of nice things about having a knight on b6 is that White cannot meet ... b4 with ♖a4.

**14 ♖g1 b4 15 ♖b1 ♖e8 16 ♗f2 ♖d7 17 ♖1d2**

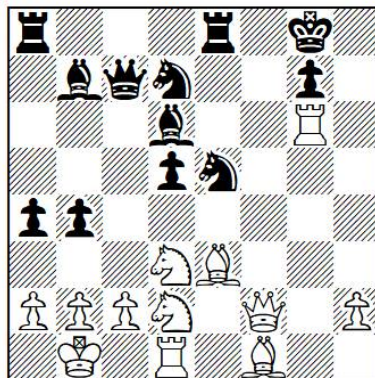
**Question:** Can White launch an attack with 17 f5 - ?

**Answer:** It would be a playable move, but it's not clear that any attack would be served up after 17 ... ♕f8 followed by ... ♖ce5.

**17 ... a5 18 ♖b1 a4 19 ♖c1 ♗c7 20 ♖d3 d5 21 exd5 exd5 22 f5 ♕d6**

22 ... ♖ce5 would also have been a logical move, meeting 23 f6 with 23 ... ♕f8.

**23 g6 hxg6 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 ♖xg6 ♖ce5**



**26 ♖g1?**

From here until the end of the game the advantage seems to change hands every move or two. In such a complicated position inaccuracies can be expected, especially if the players were short of time, though this has little to do with our consideration of the opening moves. Apparently 26 ♖g5 was the right move here.

**26 ... ♖ac8 27 ♖c1 ♖c5 28 ♖f4 ♗f7 29 ♗h4 b3 30 ♕h3 bxa2+ 31 ♖a1 ♕e7 32 ♗f2 a3 33 ♕d4 ♖c6 34 b3 ♕f8?**

Here 34 ... ♕f6 was the right move with Black being well on top. White in turn misses an apparent chance, he should have played 35 ♖cf1.

**35 ♗h4? ♕e7?**

35 ... ♖e4 was the right move, and now White should have played 36 ♗h5.

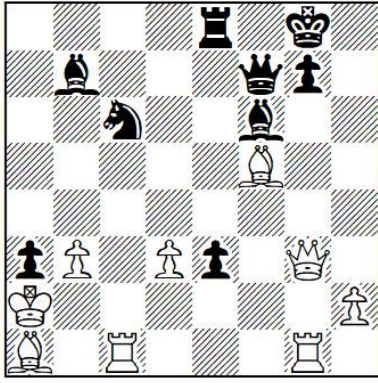
**36 ♗f2? ♕f6 37 ♖xa2 ♖e4 38 ♖xe4 dxe4 39 ♕f5 ♖d6?**

We are approaching the final moments of this dramatic encounter. Stockfish indicates that 39 ... ♖f3 was correct, assessing the position as very good for Black after 40 ♕g6 ♗f8 41 ♕e3 ♕h4.

**40 ♕a1?**

Nimzowitsch wrote that a passed pawn is 'a criminal that must be kept under lock and key', but this unlocks Black's e-pawn. 40 ♕c5 would have kept Black's e-pawn under guard when it's still anybody's game.

**40 ... e3! 41 ♗g3 ♖c6 42 ♖d3 ♖xd3 43 cxd3?**



Losing immediately. After 43 ♖f4 ♕xa1 44 ♕h7+ ♔f8 45 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 46 ♖g6+ ♔e7 47 ♕xe8 White could certainly fight on for a while.

**43 ... ♕xa1 44 ♖xa1 ♗f6 45 ♗xg7+**

45 ♖ab1 is met by 45 ... ♖b4+ 46 ♔xa3 ♖c2+ followed by 47 ... ♖a8 mate.

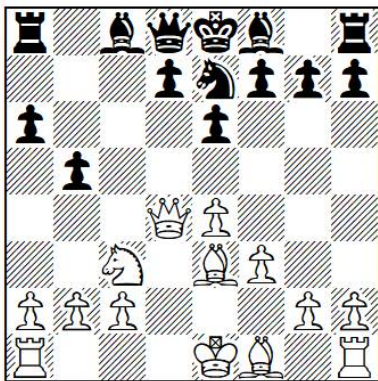
**45 ... ♗xg7 46 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 47 ♖g1+ ♔f6 48 ♕e4 ♖b4+ 49 ♔xa3 ♕xe4 50 dxe4 ♖xe4 0-1**

### Game 16

**F.Vallejo Pons-M.Kobalia**

Germany 2006

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 e6 3 ♖ge2 ♖c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 a6 6 f3 ♖xd4 7 ♗xd4 ♖e7 8 ♕e3 b5!**



**9 ♗e5!?**

Vallejo Pons finds an interesting way to bring the queen to g3. A couple of alternatives are worth considering:

a) 9 ♗d2 ♖c6 10 ♗f2 ♗c7 11 0-0-0 ♕e7 12 ♕c5? 0-0 13 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 14 ♗g3 e5 gave Black a comfortable game in J.Alvarez Nunez-R.Leitao, Santiago Entel Cup, 2006.

b) 9 a4 can be met by 9 ... ♖c6 10 ♗d2 ♗a5 (10 ... b4 allows 11 ♖d5 exd5 12 exd5

♖e5 13 d6, when White will have a dangerous attack for the sacrificed piece) when 11 ♕d3 b4 12 ♖e2 (12 ♖d5? is no longer any good because of 12 ... exd5 13 exd5 ♗xd5) 12 ... ♕c5 is about even.

**9 ... ♖c6**

In his notes to the game, Kobalia also mentioned 9 ... ♖g6 with the variation 10 ♗g3 ♗a5 (10 ... ♕e7 is also playable) 11 ♕d3 b4 12 ♖e2 ♕c5 13 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 14 f4 offering a complex Sicilian middlegame fight.

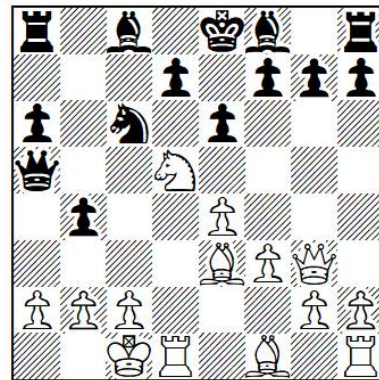
**10 ♗g3 ♗a5 11 0-0-0**

There's a good answer to 11 ♕d3 in 11 ... g6 followed by 12 ... ♕g7.

**11 ... b4!**

Provoking the following sacrifice. Black could also play 11 ... ♕b7 but this gives White time to protect his a-pawn with 12 ♔b1.

**12 ♖d5!**



With the a-pawn dropping this is the only show in town.

**12 ... exd5 13 exd5 ♗xa2**

Counterattack! 13 ... ♖e7 14 ♕c4 would give White excellent compensation.

**14 dxc6 ♗a1+**

**Question:** Can't Black eliminate that dangerous c6-pawn with 14 ... dxc6 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, that would lose on the spot to 15 ♗c7.

**15 ♔d2 ♗xb2 16 ♔e1**

Kobalia thought that 16 ♕d3! was better and he may well be right. My silicon friend then indicates that 16 ... d5 17 c7 ♗f6 is Black's best defence, aiming for ... ♕e7 and ... 0-0. Another possibility is 16 ♖e1

♙e7 17 ♖g5 when Black can force a draw with 17 ... ♜c3+ 18 ♔d1 ♜a1+ etc.

**16 ... ♜c3+! 17 ♜d2!**

The best try. Black defends easily after either 17 ♙d2 ♜xc6 or 17 ♔f2 ♙c5 18 cxd7+ ♙xd7 etc.

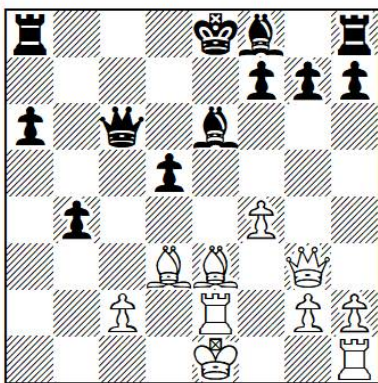
**17 ... ♜xc6 18 ♙d3**

After 18 ♜e2 Black can cold-bloodedly allow the discovered check with 18 ... f6! and then play his king to f7 next.

**18 ... d5 19 ♜e2**

On 19 ♙d4 Black defends with 19 ... ♙e6 20 f4 f6 for example 21 ♙xh7 0-0-0.

**19 ... ♙e6 20 f4**



This time 20 ♙d4 can be answered by the immediate 20 ... 0-0-0, for example 21 ♔f2 a5 setting in motion a passed a-pawn!

**20 ... d4!**

Suddenly taking the initiative.

**21 ♙xd4 0-0-0! 22 ♜f2**

After 22 ♙e3 Black can develop with 22 ... g6 followed by ... ♙g7 when the raking bishops help keep White's pieces passive.

**22 ... ♙c4 23 ♔d2?**

23 ♜e3 was a better chance but still good for Black after 23 ... ♙xd3 24 ♜xd3 ♔b7.

**23 ... ♜d5! 24 ♙b6 ♙xd3 25 ♜e5**

Or 25 cxd3 ♜xd3+ 26 ♔c1 ♜d5 27 ♜c2+ ♔b7 28 ♜c7+ ♔b8 escapes the checks after which it's Black's turn to 'attack'.

**25 ... ♜c4 26 ♜c1 ♜c3+ 0-1**

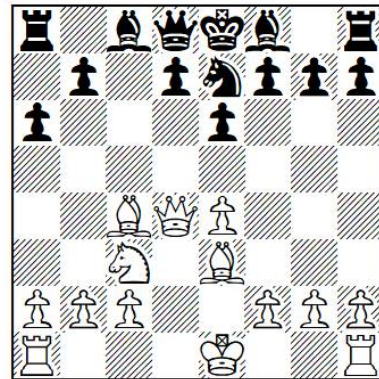
*Game 17*

**T.Kabisch-R.Moor**  
Dresden 2002

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6**

It's probably as well to ignore the early moves of the actual game and instead consider the relevant move order with 4 ... ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙e3 ♘xd4 7 ♜xd4 ♘e7 8 ♙c4.

**5 ♙c4 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 ♘ge7 7 ♙e3 ♘xd4 8 ♜xd4**



The development of White's bishop on c4 is typical of many lines of the Sicilian. Here it seems less well motivated, if only because Black's e6-pawn is so securely defended.

**8 ... b5 9 ♙b3 ♘c6 10 ♜d2 ♙e7**

A year later Moor would choose 10 ... ♙b4, presumably to sidestep any preparation.

A.Sokolov-R.Moor, Switzerland 2003 went 11 0-0 ♙b7 12 ♜fd1 ♜c8 13 f3 ♘a5 14 ♜d4 ♙c5 15 ♜d3 ♙e7 16 e5 ♘c4 17 ♙xc4 bxc4 18 ♜d2 ♙c6 19 ♜d4 0-0 20 ♘e4 ♙d5, ending in a draw after 21 ♘c3 ♙c6 22 ♘e4 ♙d5 23 ♘c3 (1/2-1/2).

**11 0-0**

**Question:** Can White castle long instead?

**Answer:** This might be where Sokolov intended to improve with 11 0-0-0, though the position looks fine for Black after 11 ... ♘a5 12 ♔b1 ♙b7 13 f3 ♙c6, securely defending d7 and keeping the option of exchanging off the bishop on b3.

**11 ... ♙b7 12 ♜ad1**

White can also play 12 f4 ♜c8 13 ♜ad1 ♘a5 14 f5 (14 e5 ♘c4 15 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 was fine for Black in D.Krklec-W.Karrer, Munich 2005) 14 ... ♘xb3 15 axb3 ♜c7 16 ♔h1 was a game L.Ölzem-H.Scepanik, Calella 1994,

and now 16 ... ♖c6 looks like a good move, envisaging ... ♗b7.

**12 ... ♜c8 13 ♘h1**

13 f4 would transpose into the previous note.

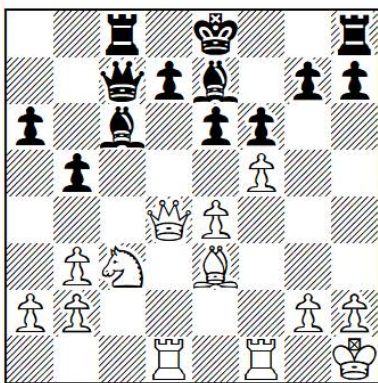
**13 ... ♗a5 14 ♗d4**

Hereabouts it seems that White was running out of ideas; Black can easily handle the temporary activity of White's queen.

**14 ... f6**

14 ... ♙f6 15 ♖a7 ♗c7 is also fine for Black.

**15 f4 ♗c7 16 f5 ♗xb3 17 cxb3 ♙c6**



Defending d7 and creating a rock-solid position. White has some space and activity, but his pawn structure is loose.

**18 a3 0-0 19 b4 ♜fd8 20 ♗d2 d5**

Opting to free his position, though this does allow White to exchange his weak e-pawn. 20 ... ♗b7 would have been a good alternative, intensifying the pressure on e4 and the a8-h1 diagonal.

**21 ♗f2 ♗b7 22 fxe6**

A double-edged decision as the pawn on e6 might prove to be a weakness. 22 exd5 exd5 23 ♗e2 seems sounder, with approximate equality.

**22 ... dxe4 23 ♗g3 ♜d3 24 ♜xd3 exd3 25 ♜d1 ♜d8**

25 ... ♙d5 26 ♜xd3 ♙xe6 was probably stronger, when Black has the two bishops and White would struggle to produce a passed pawn in this position with asymmetric majorities.

**26 ♙f4?!**

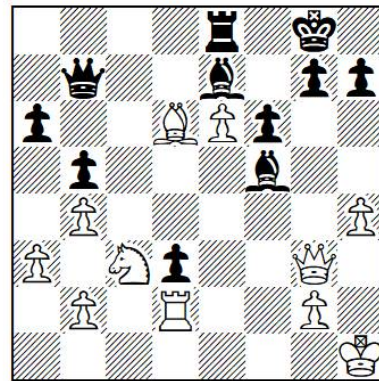
Missing his way. White should challenge the blockader of his passed

pawn with 26 ♙c5 when 26 ... ♙xc5 27 ♙xc5 ♗e7 28 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 29 ♗xd3 ♗xe6 is very slightly better for Black because of the strength of his bishop.

**26 ... ♙e4 27 ♜d2?**

Making matters worse because rooks are notoriously poor blockaders. From d2 the rook cannot go to the open e-file which is his main source of possible counterplay.

**27 ... ♙f5 28 ♙c7 ♜c8 29 ♙d6 ♜e8 30 h4**



30 ♙c7 ♗c8 followed by 31 ... ♗xe6 would be winning for Black, so White's attempts to lash out are understandable. The remainder of the game might have been played with both sides short of time; improvements were certainly possible.

**30 ... ♙xd6 31 ♗xd6 ♜xe6 32 ♗d8+ ♔f7 33 ♗d5 ♜e5 34 ♗c3 ♗a7 35 ♗d5 ♜e8 36 ♗d6 ♜e2 37 ♗f4 ♜e4 38 ♗g3 ♜e2 39 ♗f4 ♜e1+ 40 ♔h2 ♗g1+ 41 ♔g3 ♜e5 42 ♜f2 ♜xd5 43 ♗c7+ ♜d7 44 ♗c5 ♗xf2+ 45 ♗xf2 d2 46 ♗xf5 d1 ♗ 0-1**

### Game 18

**S.Polgar-M.Taimanov**

Women-Veterans, London 1996

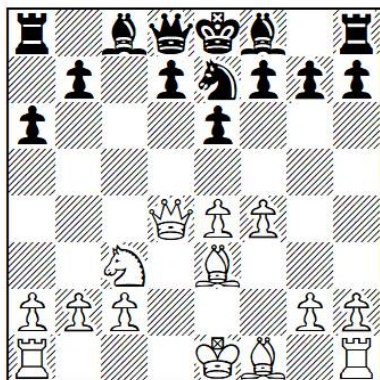
**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♙e3**

The position after White's eighth move can also arise after 6 f4 ♗xd4 7 ♗xd4 ♗e7 8 ♙e3.

**6 ... ♗xd4**

There is a problem with the immediate 6 ... ♗ge7 in that White can then play 7 ♗b3 b5 8 a4! b4? 9 a5! threatening to trap Black's queen with 10 ♙b6. For this reason, it's better to exchange immediately on d4.

7 ♖xd4 ♜e7 8 f4



8 0-0-0 b5 9 ♖d2 ♜c6 10 f4 would transpose into the position after White's 10th move.

8 ... b5 9 0-0-0

9 ♖b6 forces the exchange of queens, but generally speaking this is not a bad thing for Black in the Sicilian. N.Hoiberg-M.Taimanov, Copenhagen 1996 continued 9 ... ♖xb6 10 ♙xb6 ♙b7 11 ♙d3 ♜c8 12 0-0 ♜c6 13 a3 ♙e7 14 ♜ad1 b4 15 ♜b1 g5!? 16 f5 bxa3 17 ♙xa3 ♜e5 when Black already had the more comfortable game.

9 ... ♜c6 10 ♖d2 ♙e7 11 ♖f2

Taimanov has had this position several times, for example:

a) 11 ♙e2 ♖a5 12 e5 (12 ♙b1 b4 13 ♜d5 exd5 14 exd5 b3! forces the queens off) 12 ... b4 13 ♜e4 ♖xa2 14 ♜d6+ ♙xd6 15 ♖xd6 ♖a1+ 16 ♙d2 ♖xb2 17 ♙c5?! (17 ♙e1 f5!? 18 ♙h5+ g6 19 ♙f3 ♙f7 isn't clear, but certainly not worse for Black) 17 ... ♖c3+ 18 ♙c1 b3 19 ♙d3 ♜b8 was winning for Black in A.Martin Gonzalez-M.Taimanov, Montilla 1977.

b) 11 g4 ♙b7 12 ♜g1 ♜c8 13 ♙b1 ♜a5 14 ♖d4 0-0 15 e5 was Xie Jun-M.Taimanov, London Wom-Veterans 1996, and now 15 ... ♙f3 would have been much stronger than the immediate 15 ... ♙c5, with Black taking the initiative.

c) 11 ♙d3 may be White's best when Taimanov would probably play 11 ... ♙b7 12 ♖f2 and now 12 ... 0-0 rather than the 12 ... d6 13 ♙b1 ♖c7 14 h4 ♜c8 15 ♙b6 ♖b8 16 ♜h3 of T.Tolnai-A.Felsberger, Velden 1994.

11 ... ♙b7

Black needs to be aware of the threat of ♙b6, but he could also consider 11 ... 0-0 12 ♙b6 ♖e8

12 g4

This traditional plan of attack seems less effective here, and meanwhile Black's play on the other flank is proceeding apace. 12 ♙b1 might have been a wiser choice.

12 ... 0-0 13 ♙g2 ♖c8

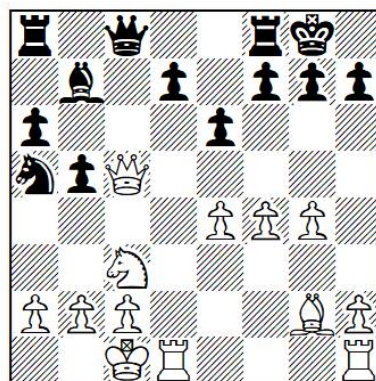
**Question:** That move looks odd, what's Black's idea?

**Answer:** He wants to play ... ♜c6-a5-c4, but the immediate 13 ... ♜a5?? is bad because of 14 ♙b6.

14 ♙c5

The prophylactic 14 ♙b1 might have been a better idea.

14 ... ♙xc5 15 ♖xc5 ♜a5!



Offering White an endgame in which he has some activity and space but Black's pawn structure is more compact. In the current situation White's best option is to accept and 14 ♙c5 was quite committal in this respect.

16 ♖xc8

On 16 ♖d6 Black does not need to defend the d7-pawn but can instead proceed with 16 ... ♜c4! 17 ♖xd7 ♜e3, placing White in deep trouble. The engine wants to give up the exchange immediately with 18 ♙f3, and this is certainly better than 18 ♖xc8 ♜axc8 19 ♜d2 ♜xg2 20 ♜xg2 b4 etc.

16 ... ♙xc8

The engine actually prefers to sacrifice a pawn with 16 ... ♜axc8, for example 17

♖xd7 b4 18 ♗e2 b3 19 axb3 (Or 19 ♗c3  
 bxa2 20 ♗xa2 ♗b3+ 21 ♖b1 ♗c5 22 ♖d4 f5!)  
 19 ... ♗xb3+ 20 ♖b1 ♗c5 21 ♖d4 f5!,  
 regaining the pawn with approximate  
 equality. Personally, I like Taimanov's  
 choice, although his pieces are passively  
 placed his pawn structure is very solid;  
 over time he can improve his position and  
 look to exploit White's pawn weaknesses.

### 17 ♖d3

17 e5 ♖a7 18 ♗e4 might have been  
 better after which Black would start to  
 unravel with 18 ... ♖c7 followed by 19 ... ♗b7.  
 White's position may look nice because of  
 the space advantage, but Black has the  
 more solid pawn structure, can defend his  
 only weakness (d7) and look to gradually  
 improve his position.

### 17 ... ♖a7 18 ♖hd1 ♖c7 19 b3

After 19 e5 Ribli advised 19 ... f6 20 exf6  
 ♖xf6, though it's also worth considering  
 19 ... ♖d8 followed by bringing the king to  
 e7. Black's position is very solid, and he can  
 afford to spend time unravelling.

### 19 ... f6 20 h4 ♗c6 21 a4?

The ongoing series of active moves will  
 be the cause of White's undoing, this move  
 weakens White's king position. 21 ♖b2  
 would have been a good consolidating  
 move, though Black might then consider  
 21 ... g5!? to fight for the e5-square.

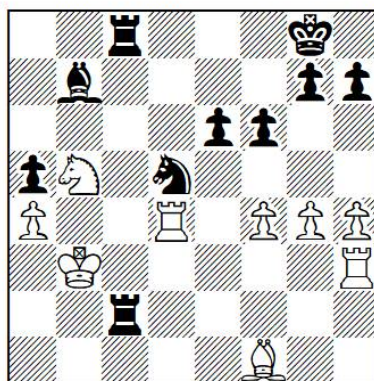
**21 ... ♗b4! 22 ♖h3 bxa4 23 ♗xa4 ♗b7 24  
 ♖d4 a5 25 ♗f1 ♖fc8 26 ♖b2 d5!**

This powerful central blow leads, at the  
 very least, to the gain of material.

### 27 exd5

White's best try was 27 ♗b5 after which  
 27 ... e5 28 fxe5 fxe5 29 ♖xb4 axb4 30 ♗xd5  
 ♖xc2+ 31 ♖b3 ♖f7 leaves Black the  
 exchange but with some play left in the  
 position.

### 27 ... ♗xd5 28 ♗b5 ♖xc2+ 29 ♖b3



### 29 ... ♗xf4!

This neat combination wins a second  
 pawn.

### 30 ♖c3

**Question:** What happens if White plays  
 30 ♖xf4 - ?

**Answer:** There follows 30 ... ♗d5+ 31  
 ♖a3 ♖a2 mate.

**30 ... ♖2xc3+ 31 ♗xc3 ♗d5 32 ♗e4 ♗e3  
 33 ♗d6 ♖d8 34 ♗c4 ♗d5 0-1**

# Chapter Four

## Taimanov: 6 g3

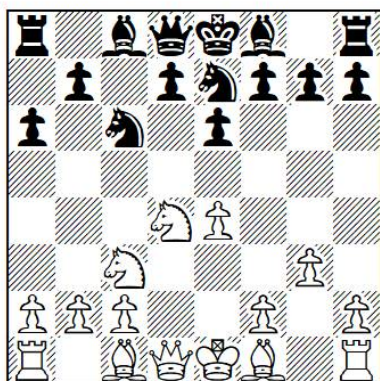
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♖c6  
5 ♗c3 a6 6 g3

The fianchetto of White's king's bishop is a ubiquitous system against the Sicilian which can be used against almost any Black line. It is quite well thought of as an anti-Taimanov weapon, having even been used by Bobby Fischer.

**Question:** What are the ideas behind it?

**Answer:** It helps control the centre, it protects e4 and will shield White's king should he later advance his kingside pawns.

6 ... ♗ge7



This is the best way to get a Taimanov set-up now. The immediate exchange on d4 has the disadvantage that after 6 ... ♗xd4 7 ♖xd4 ♗e7 White can play 8 ♗f4. Gurevich, V - Volokitin, A. Germany 2003 continued 8 ... b5 9 ♗g2 ♗b7 10 0-0 ♗c6 11 ♖d2 d6 12 a4 b4 13 ♗a2 ♖a5 14 c3 bxc3 15 ♗xc3 when White had the better game.

7 ♗b3

White avoids the exchange on d4 in the hope that the knight on b3 will prove to be better than the one on e7. In Kapengut-Taimanov (Game 19) White tried a different knight retreat with 7 ♗de2 but after 7 ... ♗g6 8 ♗g2 ♗c5 9 0-0 b5 10 ♗f4 ♗b7 Black's pieces became very active.

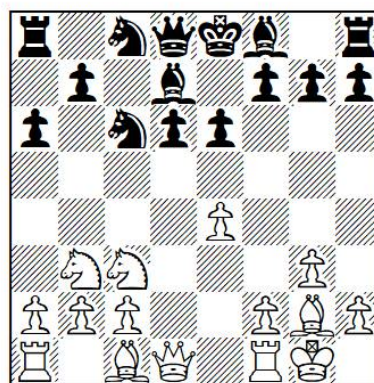
After 7 ♗g2 Black can simply exchange knights with 7 ... ♗xd4 8 ♖xd4 ♗c6 9 ♖d1 ♗e7 as in Mnatsakanian-Taimanov (Game 20) and on 7 ♗e3 Black played 7 ... b5 in Leko-Topalov (Game 21) when 8 ♗b3 d6 9 f4 ♗d7 10 ♗g2 ♗c8 was quite similar to the main line with 7 ♗b3.

7 ... d6

**Question:** Isn't playing ... d7-d6 unusual in a Taimanov?

**Answer:** Yes, though Black has in mind a regrouping of his forces to bring the e7-knight across to b6. It will stand very well there as the c4-square is no longer defended by White's light-squared bishop, which has gone to g2.

8 ♗g2 ♗d7 9 0-0 ♗c8



All part of Black's plan.

10 a4

This should probably be played before Black can safely expand with ... b7-b5, though there have been other choices here:

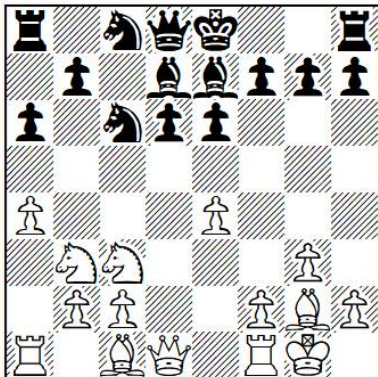
a) 10 f4 ♗e7 11 ♗e3 was Simonian-Kovalev (Game 22) in which Black should have castled because his 11 ... b5 could have been answered with the surprisingly powerful 12 f5!

b) 10 ♗e3 b5 11 ♖e2 ♗e7 12 f4 0-0 13 ♖fd1 ♗b6 was nice for Black at this stage in

Kholmov-Taimanov (Game 23), despite the eventual result.

c) 10 ♖e2 ♙e7 11 ♞d1 ♚c7 12 ♙f4 ♜e5 13 ♞d4 began an optimistic plan that rebounded on White in Gruenfeld-Davies (Game 24).

10 ... ♙e7



11 ♖e2

Here too White has different options and the main line was chosen largely because of the illustrious participants:

a) 11 f4 0-0 12 ♖e2 ♜b4 was Perelshteyn-Milov (Game 25), though Black might well have played 12 ... ♚c7 instead.

b) 11 a5 0-0 12 ♖e2 ♚c7 featured in Romanishin-Taimanov (Game 26) together with the instructive idea of 13 ♞d1 ♙f6 14 ♙e3 ♙xc3, weakening White's queenside pawns.

11 ... 0-0 12 ♙e3 ♜a5

This is a drawback with White's a2-a4, Black can often play ... ♜c6-a5 and threaten to weaken White's pawns with ... ♜a5xb3.

13 ♜xa5 ♚xa5 14 ♚d2 ♚c7

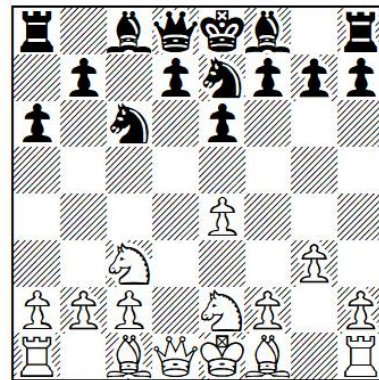
This is Carlsen-Timman (Game 27) in which youth lost out to experience.

### Game 19

#### A.Kapengut-M.Taimanov

Russian Championship 1971

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 g3 ♜ge7 7 ♜de2



**Question:** What is the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** It is another way to avoid the knight exchange, but e2 may be a less relevant square than b3. Usually, a knight on e2 in the Sicilian is associated with a later g3-g4 and ♜e2-g3, building for a kingside attack, but in the Taimanov this will be difficult to realize.

7 ... ♜g6

**Question:** Why does the knight go to g6 rather than c8, which was the repositioning that is advised in the 7 ♜b3 line?

**Answer:** White normally wants to reposition e2-knights to g3 in the Sicilian. The knight on g6 is well placed to counter this plan as after a g3-g4 move it might hop into h4.

8 ♙g2 ♙c5 9 0-0 b5 10 ♜f4

With the knight on g6 White is reluctant to play g3-g4 because of ... ♜g6-h4. So he puts the knight on f4 instead.

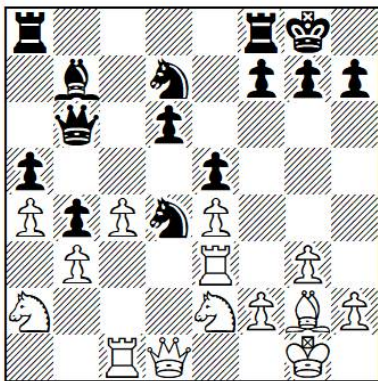
10 ... ♙b7 11 ♜d3 ♙b6 12 a4 b4 13 ♜a2 a5 14 c4?!

14 c3 would have been a better idea. Now Black can simply ignore the advance of White's c-pawn as the knight on a2 is out of play and White has central dark-square weaknesses.

14 ... d6 15 b3 ♙d4 16 ♙b2 ♚b6 17 ♞c1?!

With the rook occupying the c1-square, the knight on a2 will have an even harder time getting back into play. 17 ♜ac1 was a much better idea.

17 ... ♖xb2 18 ♜xb2 ♜d4 19 ♝e1 0-0 20 ♝e3 ♜e5 21 ♜d3 ♜d7 22 ♜f4 e5 23 ♜e2



**23 ... f5!**

Having brought his pieces to excellent squares, Taimanov undermines the e4-pawn so as to exchange light-squared bishops. Once this has been accomplished White's king will prove to be very weak.

24 ♜xd4 exd4 25 ♝d3 fxe4 26 ♝xd4 ♜e5 27 ♝c2

27 ♝xd6 ♝xf2+ 28 ♔h1 ♜d3 29 ♝c2 ♝c5 wins material because of the threats to either capture the rook on d6 or play ... ♜f2+.

27 ... ♜d3 28 ♝xd3

Or 28 ♝xe4 ♝xf2! etc.

28 ... exd3 29 ♝xd3 ♖xg2 30 ♔xg2 ♝c6+ 31 f3 ♝ae8

If White's knight on a2 could reach d5 the position would not be so clear. As it is the knight is still far away.

32 ♜c1 ♝c5 33 ♝d2 ♝e3 34 ♝xd6 ♝xd6 35 ♝xd6 ♝c3! 36 ♜d3

36 ♝d1 ♝xf3 would also be hopeless for White.

36 ... ♝xb3 37 ♜e5 ♝a3 38 c5 ♝xa4 39 ♝b6 ♝a2+ 40 ♔h3 ♝c2 41 c6 ♝c3 42 f4 b3 0-1

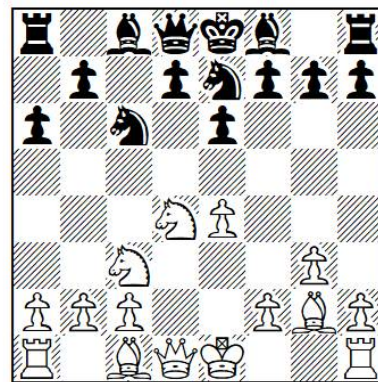
A very smooth and convincing game by Taimanov.

*Game 20*

**E.Mnatsakanian-M.Taimanov**

Yerevan 1986

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 g3 ♜ge7 7 ♖g2



Simply allowing Black to capture on d4. This tends to lead to strategically simpler games as neither side has any issue with repositioning offside knights.

7 ... ♜xd4 8 ♝xd4 ♜c6 9 ♝d1

White has tried moving the queen to other squares:

a) 9 ♝e3 ♝c7 10 ♔0-0 ♜e5 was played in a game S.Djuric-P.Velikov, Toulon 1996, with the interesting sequel of 11 b3 ♖c5 12 ♝d2 h6 (12 ... b5 would have been a simpler and better move) 13 ♜a4 ♖e7 14 ♖b2 b5 15 ♝c3 ♝xc3 16 ♜xc3 f6 17 h3 1/2-1/2.

b) 9 ♝d2 b5 10 ♔0-0 ♖b7 11 b3 ♖c5 featured in S.Hamann-Y.Razuvaev, Amsterdam 1975, with Black obtaining a very comfortable position after 12 ♖b2 0-0 13 ♜e2 e5 14 ♝ad1 d6 15 ♜c1 a5 16 ♜d3 ♖b6. Black could also adopt a set-up based on ... ♖e7 and ... d6, but this is more in the spirit of the Scheveningen than the Taimanov.

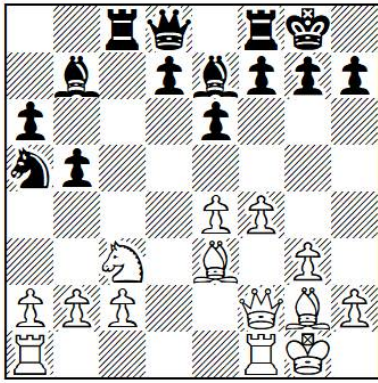
9 ... ♖e7 10 ♔0-0 0-0 11 ♖e3 b5 12 f4

White can play 12 ♜d5 after which 12 ... exd5 13 exd5 ♖b7 14 dxc6 ♖xc6 is probably best. White can claim a small advantage because of Black's isolated d-pawn, but this is offset by the coming weak light-squared weaknesses around his king.

12 ... ♖b7 13 ♝e2 ♝c8 14 ♝f2

Perhaps thinking this would prevent Black's next move, though as it doesn't it deserves a rethink. 14 ♝ad1 would have been better after which 14 ... ♜a5 15 ♔h1 ♜c4 16 ♖c1 regroups White's forces without serious damage. Even so this position is nice for Black.

14 ... ♜a5!?



A typical plan, aiming to bring the knight to c4. Of course, Black must take account of 15 ♖b6 in playing this way.

**15 ♖d1**

Black can meet 15 ♖b6 with 15 ... ♗xb6 (15 ... ♗e8 is actually also possible because of 16 ♕xa5 ♖c5!, winning the queen) 16 ♗xb6 ♖c5+ 17 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 with the better endgame for Black because of his pressure down the c-file.

**15 ... ♖c4 16 ♖d4 f6!?**

**Question:** That move looks strange for a Sicilian, what's the idea?

**Answer:** It's actually quite common in the Taimanov, perhaps because Black's f6-square does not get occupied with a knight early on. The idea is just to play ... e6-e5, driving White's bishop from its strong square and beginning the process of attacking White's centre.

**17 c3 e5 18 ♖a7 ♗c7 19 ♖h1**

In his notes to the game, Taimanov pointed out that 19 b3 can be answered by 19 ... ♖a8! 20 ♖xc4 ♖xa7!, once again exploiting the g1-a7 diagonal.

**19 ... ♖c6**

This is strong, but Black could also consider 19 ... f5!? to attack White's centre and bring the rook on f8 into play opposite White's queen.

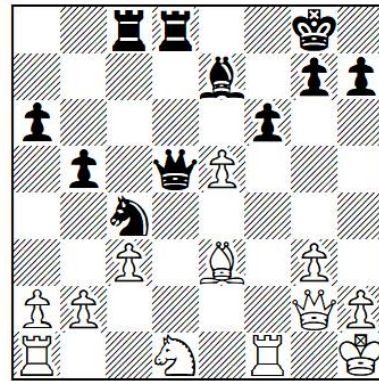
**20 ♖e3**

20 b3 would just send the knight where it would quite like to go; after 20 ... ♖d6 21 ♖e1 ♗b7 the e4-pawn comes under deadly fire.

**20 ... ♗b7!**

Stronger than 20 ... ♖d6 when 21 ♗c2 ♗b7 22 ♖f2 hangs on.

**21 ♗c2 d5 22 exd5 ♖xd5 23 ♖xd5+ ♗xd5+ 24 ♗g2 ♖fd8 25 fxe5?**



Losing immediately. White should have exchanged queens, but his position is unenviable in any case.

**25 ... ♗xg2+ 26 ♖xg2 ♖xd1! 0-1**

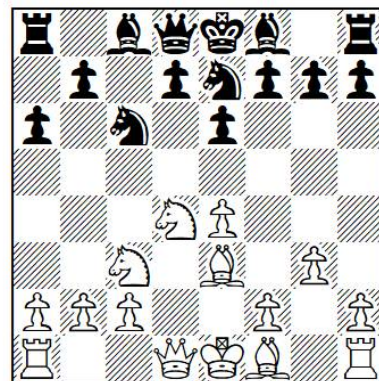
A neat tactic to finish the game. When White recaptures on d1, 27 ... ♖xe3+ forks all his remaining pieces.

*Game 21*

**P.Leko-V.Topalov**

Leon 1996

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 g3 ♖ge7 7 ♖e3**



**Question:** Are there any special features of this move we should know about?

**Answer:** Not particularly, it commits the bishop early on but keeps options open as to whether White should play ♖f1-g2 and which side he should castle.

## 7 ... b5

**Question:** Is 7 ... ♖xd4 a good move here?

**Answer:** Yet it's fine, for example 8 ♗xd4 (8 ♖xd4 b5 9 a3 ♗b7 10 ♗g2 ♖c6 11 ♖d1 ♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 f4 ♗a5 gave Black good counterplay in L.Denis-S.Conquest, France 1990) 8 ... ♖c6 9 ♗e3 b5 10 ♗g2 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♖c7 12 f4 ♗a5 ½-½ was B.Kurajica-M.Taimanov, Wijk aan Zee 1970.

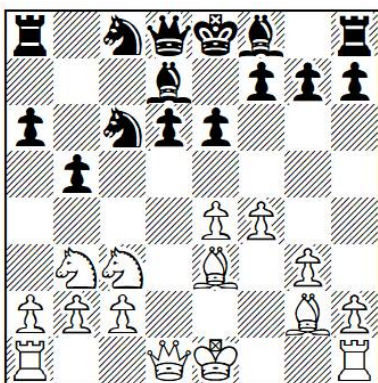
### 8 ♖b3

8 ♗g2 would be met by 8 ... ♖xd4, for example 9 ♖xd4 (9 ♗xd4 ♖c6 10 9 0-0 ♗b7 11 ♗e1 ♖c8 12 a3 ♖xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖c4 14 ♖d3 ♖c7 was very comfortable for Black in H.Van Riemsdijk-G.Milos, Serra Negra 2002) 9 ... ♗b7 10 9 0-0 ♖c6 11 ♖d3 ♗e7 12 ♗ad1 ♖e5 13 ♖e2 f6 14 f4 ♖c4 15 ♗c1 0-0 was at least equal for Black in D.Gormally-K.Bischoff, Hastings 1999.

### 8 ... d6 9 f4

9 ♗g2 ♗b7 10 f4 ♖c8! 11 ♖e2 ♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 ♖c7 led to complex play in N.De Firmian-J.Grefe, USA 1981.

### 9 ... ♗d7 10 ♗g2 ♖c8



### 11 ♖d4

The aggressive 11 e5 should probably be met by 11 ... d5, for example 12 f5 ♖b6 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 0-0 ♖c7.

**11 ... ♖b6 12 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♗d4 b4 14 ♖e2 ♖d7 15 ♖d3 e5 16 ♗f2 ♖b8**

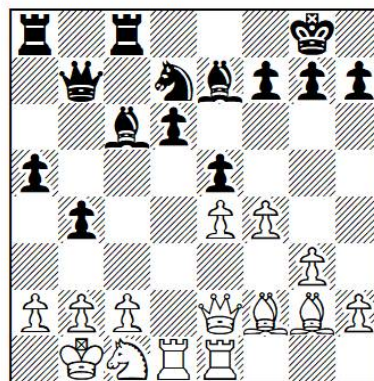
A typical Sicilian move, getting the queen off the d-file and potentially putting it on b7 to attack e4.

### 17 0-0-0

Committing the king to the queenside is a bold decision, possibly too bold. White

could have sent his king the other way with 17 0-0 with approximate equality.

**17 ... ♗e7 18 ♗he1 0-0 19 ♖b1 a5 20 ♖c1 ♖b7 21 ♖e2 ♖fc8**



### 22 ♖d3 ♖c7 23 ♗d2 ♗f6

23 ... a4 is a good move here, getting ready to open a file against White's king with ... b4-b3.

### 24 f5

With his enemy at the gates on the queenside, this looks optimistic. 24 fxe5 dxe5 25 ♗h3 might be objectively better, but it very much leaves White playing for equality.

### 24 ... ♗g5 25 ♗e3 ♗e7 26 ♗f2 ♖b6 27 b3

White understandably wishes to stop the knight coming to c4 but this presents Black with a powerful pawn lever in ... a5-a4. Why Topalov doesn't play this move is something of a mystery, though it's possible that he was short of time. 27 ♗xb6 is a radical method of stopping 27 ... ♖c4 because it seriously weakens White's dark square control. After 27 ... ♖xb6 28 ♖f2 ♖b7 29 h4 a4 30 g4 h6 it's difficult to be optimistic about White's chances.

### 27 ... ♖d7 28 h4 ♗b5

Here, and over the next few moves, 28 ... a4 looks natural and strong.

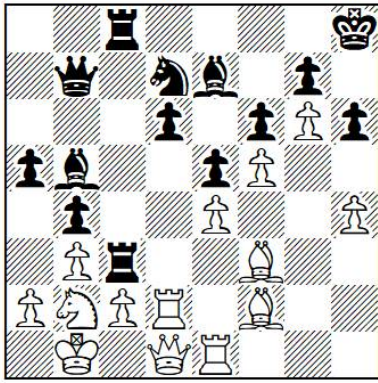
### 29 g4 ♗ac8

29 ... a4 is good here too.

### 30 g5 f6

Once again Black should probably play 30 ... a4, but this concept isn't going away.

**31 g6 h6 32 ♖d1 ♖c3 33 ♖b2 ♖h8 34 ♗f3**



### 34 ... ♖f8

This move, accompanied by a draw offer, makes me think that Topalov was short of time at this stage. Stockfish likes Black after 34 ... a4.

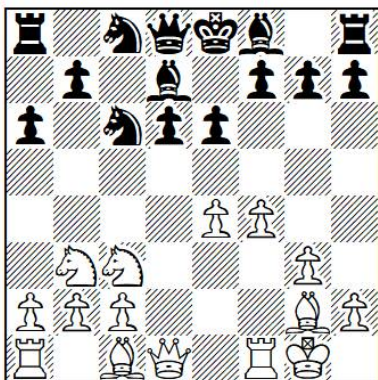
### 35 ♙e2 ½-½

#### Game 22

H.Simonian-A.Kovalev

Alushta 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 a6 4 g3 ♘c6 5 ♙g2 d6 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♙d7 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 ♘b3 ♘c8 10 f4



Dispensing with a2-a4 for the time being, as it's not immediately necessary.

### 10 ... ♙e7

The immediate 10 ... b5 is too risky because of 11 f5! ♘e5 (Or 11 ... ♙e7 12 fxe6 fxe6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♘e4) 12 ♘d4 ♙e7 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 ♙h3 etc.

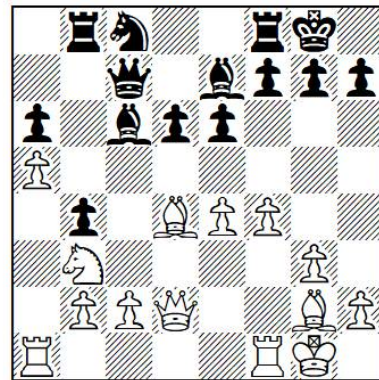
### 11 ♙e3 b5?

This is still too early, but White doesn't exploit it. 11 ... 0-0 was the right move, when Black will play ... b7-b5 on his next move if he is allowed to do so.

### 12 a4?!

A missed opportunity. The anti-positional 12 f5! gives White a powerful initiative, for example 12 ... 0-0 (12 ... ♘e5 is met by 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 ♘c5! dxc5 15 ♙h5+ ♘g6 16 e5 ♖a7 17 ♙e4 etc.) 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 ♖xf8+ ♙xf8 15 e5! ♙c7 (15 ... d5 allows 16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 ♙xd5+ ♘h8 18 ♙xc6) 16 ♙h5 g6 17 ♙f3 d5 (Or 17 ... ♘b6 18 exd6 ♙xd6 19 ♙f2 ♘c4 20 ♘d5 exd5 21 ♙xd5+ ♘g7 22 ♙f7+ ♘h8 23 ♙f6 mate) 18 ♘xd5 exd5 19 ♖f1 ♙g7 20 ♙xd5+ ♘h8 21 e6 ♙e8 22 ♙c5 ♘g8 23 ♘d4 ♘8e7 24 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 25 ♖f7 ♙f8 26 ♙g5. This is a good illustration of the power of engine analysis as the Black position quickly became desperate without him having done much wrong.

12 ... b4 13 ♘e2 0-0 14 a5 ♖b8 15 ♘ed4 ♘xd4 16 ♙xd4 ♙c7 17 ♙d2 ♙c6



### 18 ♖fc1

18 f5 e5 is fine for Black with White's knight so far from the d5-square.

18 ... e5 19 ♙e3 ♙b7 20 fxe5 dxe5 21 ♘c5 ♙a8 22 c4 ♘d6 23 ♙e2 ♖fd8

23 ... ♘xe4 was possible here as after 24 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 25 ♘d7 ♙c6 Black has more than enough compensation for the exchange.

### 24 ♙f2 ♖bc8 25 ♘a4?!

Giving Black a chance to make progress. 25 ♖d1 would have kept the balance.

### 25 ... ♙xa4 26 ♖xa4 ♘b5!

Exploiting the pin on the c4-pawn to get the knight to d4.

### 27 ♖f1?!

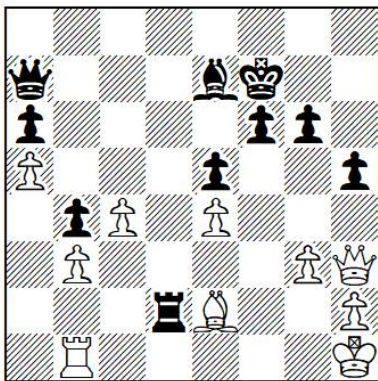
Making matters worse. 27 ♙b6 ♘d4 28 ♙d1 was better, when Black's most

effective line may be to sacrifice the exchange with 28 ... ♖c6!? 29 ♟xd8 ♞xd8. White would have a depressing position in which none of his pieces can do very much.

**27 ... ♞d4 28 ♞h5 f6 29 ♟xd4 ♞xd4**

Black's position is now very easy to play, and in fact White's only real chance is to anchor his bishop on d5. How it should get there is anybody's guess.

**30 b3 ♞cd8 31 ♞aa1 ♞d3 32 ♞ab1 ♞c6 33 ♞fd1 ♞d7 34 ♟f3 ♞a7+ 35 ♟h1 g6 36 ♞g4 ♟f7 37 ♞xd3 ♞xd3 38 ♟e2 h5 39 ♞h3 ♞d2**



**40 ♞f1?!**

This loses in short order. 40 ♟f3 ♞e3 41 g4 was a better chance to stay in the game, though it's still very unpleasant for White.

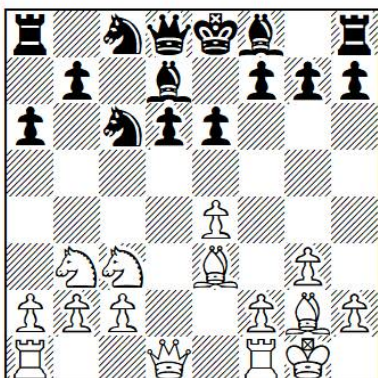
**40 ... ♞e3 41 ♞e1 ♞xe4+ 42 ♟f3 ♞c2 43 ♟d5+ ♟g7 44 ♞h3 f5 0-1**

### Game 23

**R.Kholmov-M.Taimanov**

St Petersburg Seniors 1995

**1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♞xd4 ♞c6 5 ♞c3 a6 6 g3 ♞ge7 7 ♞b3 d6 8 ♟g2 ♟d7 9 0-0 ♞c8 10 ♟e3**



**Question:** What are the pros and cons of this move?

**Answer:** It's a simple developing move, though it does allow Black to expand on the queenside. In the game Taimanov builds a very promising position.

**10 ... b5**

A critical test of White's omission of a2-a4, though Black can also wait with this and play 10 ... ♟e7 11 f4 0-0.

**11 ♞e2 ♟e7 12 f4 0-0 13 ♞fd1 ♞b6 14 a4 b4 15 a5**

On 15 ♞b1 Black would cement his queenside pawns with 15 ... a5 after which 16 c3 e5 would give him a very comfortable game.

**15 ... ♞xa5 16 ♞xa5 bxc3 17 b3 ♞c7 18 ♞f2 ♞ab8 19 ♟d4 ♟b5 20 ♟f1 e5 21 ♟e3?!**

This would have been a good time to bring the knight back into play with 21 ♟xb6 ♞xb6 22 ♞c4 ♞b7 23 ♞e3, planning to come to d5. The engine assesses this as about equal, presumably because 23 ... exf4 24 gxf4 ♟c6 includes White's weakened king position as a factor.

**21 ... ♞fd8 22 ♟xb6**

Deciding this is best, but crucially a move too late.

**22 ... ♞xb6 23 ♞d5**

Unfortunately for White he can no longer play 23 ♞c4 because of 23 ... ♟xc4 24 ♟xc4 d5!, with ... ♟c5 coming. This is why the exchange on b6 should have been performed a move earlier.

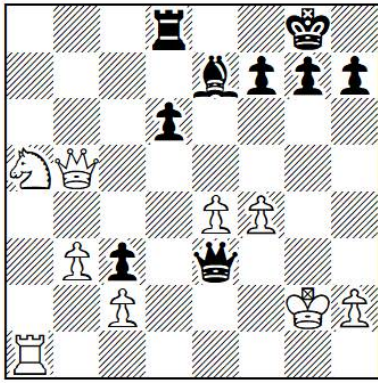
**23 ... exf4 24 gxf4**

Taking the difficult decision to control e5, despite the weakening of his king position. 24 ♞xf4 would also have been unpleasant for White, for example after 24 ... h6 or 24 ... ♞bb8.

**24 ... ♟xf1**

24 ... ♞e8! might be an improvement, immediately taking aim at the e4-pawn.

**25 ♞xf1 ♞b5 26 ♞xb5 axb5 27 ♞xb5 ♞a7+ 28 ♟g2 ♞e3**



**29 ♖d5?**

It's not easy for White to play this position with his king so exposed, but this is a mistake. White can force the exchange of queens with 29 ♖d3, for example 29 ... ♗xf4 (29 ... ♗xd3 30 cxd3 ♖a8 31 b4 is also fine for White) 30 ♘c6 ♗g5+ 31 ♗g3 ♖e8 32 ♗xg5 ♙xg5 33 ♖a5, with approximately equal chances.

**29 ... ♗e2+ 30 ♔h1 ♗f3+ 31 ♔g1 ♗g4+**

31 ... ♙f8 would have been a useful precaution, leaving White's position dangling on the edge of the precipice.

**32 ♔h1 ♗xf4 33 ♘c6 ♗f3+ 34 ♔g1 ♙h4 35 ♖f1 ♗g4+ 36 ♔h1 ♖f8 37 ♘d4 ♙f6 38 ♘f5 ♗h3 39 ♖f2 ♙e5 40 ♘xd6 ♙xh2?**

This tactical blow is a serious mistake because now White forces the exchange of queens. 40 ... ♗h4 leaves White in serious trouble, for example 41 ♔g1 ♙xd6 42 ♗xd6 ♗xe4 43 ♗f4 ♗g6+ 44 ♖g2 ♗e6, and White's exposed king is a long-term issue.

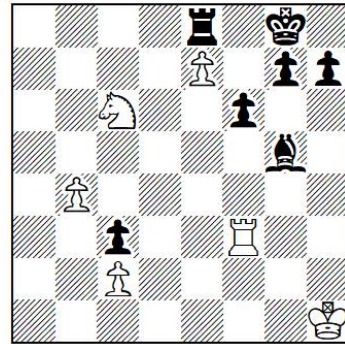
**41 ♗f5 ♗xf5 42 ♘xf5 ♙e5**

For humans this is a very natural move, putting the bishop in front of the isolated e-pawn and protecting the one on c3. Nonetheless it can be questioned because of White's reply, and a case can be made for Stockfish's 42 ... ♙c7 intending 43 ♘e7+ ♔h8 44 ♖f3 ♙d6 45 ♘c6 ♖c8 46 ♖xc3 g5.

**43 ♘e7+ ♔h8 44 ♘c6 ♙f6**

Here too Black should consider 44 ... ♙c7.

**45 e5 ♙g5 46 ♖f3 f6 47 e6 ♖e8 48 e7 ♔g8 49 b4**



**49 ... ♔f7?**

Turning what is still a drawn position into a loss. Only 49 ... f5 would hold the draw, for example 50 b5 (50 ♖xf5 ♙xe7 51 ♖e5 ♔f7 is even better for Black) 50 ... ♙xe7 51 b6 ♙d6 52 ♖d3 ♙f4 53 b7 ♔f7 and Black's king comes over to the queenside.

**50 b5 ♔e6 51 ♖d3 f5 52 b6 ♙xe7 53 ♘xe7 ♖b8**

Recapturing on e7 leads to the rooks being exchanged and a quick coronation for White's b-pawn.

**54 ♖e3+ ♔d7 55 ♘xf5 ♖xb6 56 ♖d3+ ♔e6 57 ♘g7+ ♔e5 58 ♖xc3 ♖g6 59 ♖c7 ♖g4 60 ♔h2 h5 61 ♘xh5 ♔d6 62 ♖c3 ♖h4+ 63 ♖h3 ♖c4 64 c3 ♔c5 65 ♘g3 ♖f4 66 ♔g2 ♔c4 67 ♘e2 ♖f7 68 ♖f3 ♖h7 69 ♔f2 ♖h4 70 ♔e3 1-0**

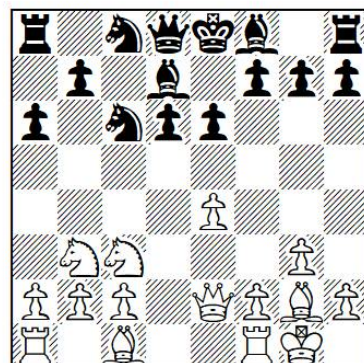
A tragic loss for Taimanov from a winning position.

*Game 24*

**Y.Gruenfeld-N.Davies**

Israel 1991

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 g3 ♘ge7 7 ♘b3 d6 8 ♙g2 ♙d7 9 0-0 ♘c8 10 ♗e2**



**Question:** Are there any special features to this move?

**Answer:** In this game there are because White attempts to build up against the pawn on d6. This was far from mandatory, 10 ♖e2 could also be combined with standard moves such as ♗e3 and f2-f4.

10 ... ♗e7 11 ♖d1

11 ♗e3 would have been very reasonable, both here and on the next move.

11 ... ♖c7 12 ♗f4

Embarking on the wrong plan, an error which continues over the next few moves. The bishop should have gone to e3 instead, and it was not too late for 12 a4.

12 ... ♘e5 13 ♖d4 0-0 14 ♖ad1

Continuing the build-up against d6, but Black can defend easily enough. 14 a4 was probably a better idea, allowing the rook on d4 to retreat more easily.

14 ... ♘b6

14 ... ♖d8 was another good move, which has the advantage that it doesn't block the b-pawn.

15 ♗f1

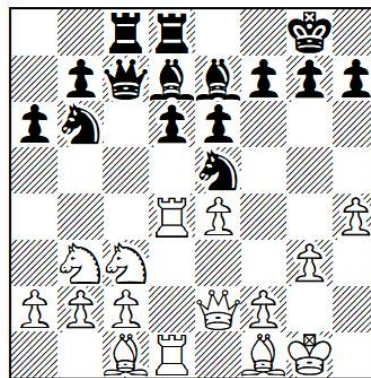
**Question:** That looks strange, what's the idea?

**Answer:** White is getting concerned about queenside action and wants this bishop to face that direction. Of course, it doesn't fit well with 6 g3 and means that he already doesn't like his position.

15 ... ♖ac8 16 ♗c1

This second bishop retreat at least frees the way for the f-pawn to advance.

16 ... ♖fd8 17 h4



**Question:** Why didn't White play 17 f4 - ?

**Answer:** Had he done so Black could consider sacrificing a pawn with 17 ... ♘ec4 18 ♖d3 d5 19 exd5 ♖e8, reaching a position in which White's king looks exposed. This explains the h-pawn move, White wants to roll his kingside pawns without creating too many weaknesses too soon.

17 ... ♗e8 18 h5 h6 19 g4 ♗f6

19 ... ♘ec4 would have been strong, both here or on the next move.

20 f4 ♘c6 21 ♖d3 ♘b4 22 ♖h3 ♘a4 23 e5

23 ♘xa4 ♗xa4 24 g5 hxg5 25 fxg5 ♗e5 is also very good for Black.

23 ... dxe5 24 ♖xd8

24 g5 was the best chance to complicate when I would probably have chosen 24 ... ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 hxg5 26 fxg5 ♗e7 27 h6 g6 keeping lines closed in front of my king.

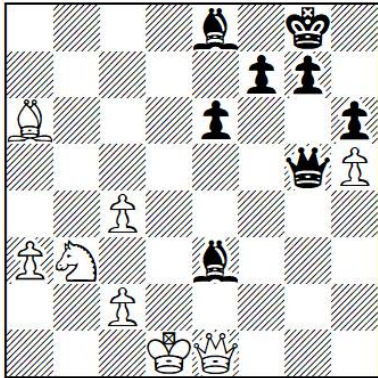
24 ... ♖xd8 25 fxe5 ♗g5

Not the best according to Stockfish, which prefers just 25 ... ♗e7. In either case Black is better so my error was not that great.

26 a3

A further error in a difficult position. My intention was to meet 26 ♗xg5 with 26 ... ♖xg5 when the engine only gives me a slight edge after 27 ♘xa4 ♗xa4 28 ♖e4 ♗xb3 29 ♖xb3 ♘d5 30 ♖xb7 ♘f4. Actually, I think this is a very difficult position for White because of his exposed king and my queen and knight buzzing around it.

26 ... ♖xc3 27 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 28 ♙xc3 ♖c6  
 29 ♙b2 ♙f4 30 c4 ♚g5 31 ♙g2 ♙e3+ 32 ♖f1  
 ♚f4+ 33 ♖e1 ♖xe5 34 ♙xe5 ♚xe5 35 ♙xb7  
 ♚g3+ 36 ♖d1 ♚g1+ 37 ♚e1 ♚xg4+ 38 ♚e2  
 ♚g1+ 39 ♚e1 ♚g5 40 ♙xa6?



40 ♖e2 f5 would be every bit as  
 hopeless for White.

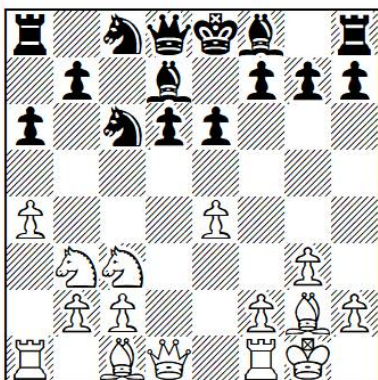
40 ... f5 41 c5 f4 0-1

*Game 25*

**E.Perelshteyn-V.Milov**

Chicago 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 a6 5  
 ♖c3 d6 6 g3 ♙d7 7 ♙g2 ♖c6 8 0-0 ♖ge7 9  
 ♖b3 ♖c8 10 a4



**Question:** White is obviously trying to  
 prevent ... b7-b5. Are there any  
 disadvantages to this move?

**Answer:** It makes 10 ... ♖a5 a more  
 interesting possibility, though Black  
 chooses not to play this way.

10 ... ♙e7 11 f4 0-0 12 ♚e2

12 ♖h1 was played in D.Velimirovic-  
 V.Jansa, Amsterdam 1974 as a precursor to

the advance of White's kingside pawns.  
 The game went 12 ... ♚c7 13 g4 ♜e8 14 g5  
 ♖b6 15 f5 ♙f8 16 ♚h5 ♖e5 17 ♖d4 ♜ac8 18  
 ♜f4 g6 19 ♚h3 ♖bc4 20 ♜h4 h5 21 ♖de2 (21  
 gxh6 ♖h7) 21 ... ♖g4! with double-edged  
 play. The way Jansa constructed his  
 defence is well worth examining as his  
 manoeuvres were very instructive.

12 ... ♖b4

Black can also play 12 ... ♚c7 here.

13 ♙e3 ♚c7 14 ♚f2 ♜b8 15 ♜fc1 b6

15 ... b5?! would be premature, for  
 example 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖d4 targets the  
 b5-pawn and leaves ... ♖b4 out on a limb.

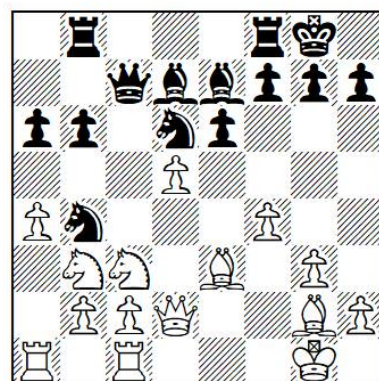
16 ♚d2 d5!?

**Question:** Doesn't that lose a pawn?

**Answer:** Black is sacrificing a pawn in  
 order to highlight the weakness of White's  
 king. The problem with White advancing  
 his kingside pawns is that he can't then  
 move them back.

After the quiet 16 ... ♜d8 Perelshteyn  
 intended 17 ♖d5! after which 17 ... ♖xd5  
 18 exd5 ♙f6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 ♙d4 gives  
 White the better game.

17 exd5 ♖d6



18 ♙d4

18 dxe6 ♙xe6 would give Black  
 excellent compensation, for example 19  
 ♖d5 ♖xd5 20 ♙xd5 ♖c4 21 ♙xc4 ♚xc4 22  
 ♖d4 ♜bd8, when White's extra pawn is  
 counterbalanced by his weak king and  
 light squares.

18 ... ♜fe8

At first sight 18 ... ♖c4 is attractive but  
 after 19 ♚f2 ♖xb2 White has 20 ♙e5! ♙d6

21 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 22 ♘e4 ♗c7 23 d6 ♗c8 24 ♗d4.

**19 ♗f2**

Black also has compensation for the pawn after 19 ♖e5 ♜bc8 just, for the time being, by bringing his pieces to better squares.

**19 ... ♖f8 20 ♜e1 exd5 21 ♜xe8 ♖xe8 22 ♗xd5**

After 22 f5 Black would defend d5 with 22 ... ♖c6.

**22 ... ♗xc2 23 ♗xb4 ♗xb3 24 ♖c3**

Or if 24 ♗xa6 there follows 24 ... ♜c8 25 ♗e3 ♖xa4 26 ♗xb3 ♖xb3 27 ♖xb6 ♜c2 28 ♖d4 ♗b5, when White can no longer defend b2.

**24 ... ♗c4! 25 ♗xa6**

After 25 ♗c2 there follows 25 ... ♗xc2 26 ♗xc2 ♜d8, when 27 b3 is answered by 27 ... ♜d3.

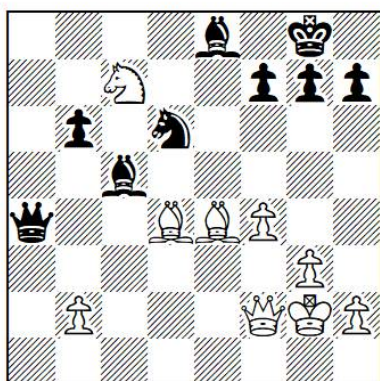
**25 ... ♜d8 26 ♖e4 ♜d1+ 27 ♜xd1 ♗xd1+ 28 ♖g2**

Although Black has recovered his pawn, he still has some of the compensation in the form of White's vulnerable king position. After 28 ♗e1 there follows 28 ... ♗xa4 29 ♖d5 (29 ♗c7 loses to 29 ... ♖c5+ 30 ♖h1 ♗e3! 31 b4 ♖c6! etc.) 29 ... ♖d7 30 ♗b8 ♖e6! 31 ♖f3 ♖c5+ 32 ♖h1 ♗c2, when White must be very careful in the face of Black's active pieces.

**28 ... ♗xa4 29 ♗c7?**

The losing move. 29 ♗e2 would have kept the game going, for example 29 ... ♗xa6 30 b3 b5 31 ♖xc4 bxc4 (31 ... b4! keeps an edge) 32 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 33 ♗xe8 ♗b7+ 34 ♖h3 is equal.

**29 ... ♖c5 30 ♖d4 ♗d6! 0-1**



A neat finish, skewering White's bishops.

*Game 26*

**O.Romanishin-M.Taimanov**

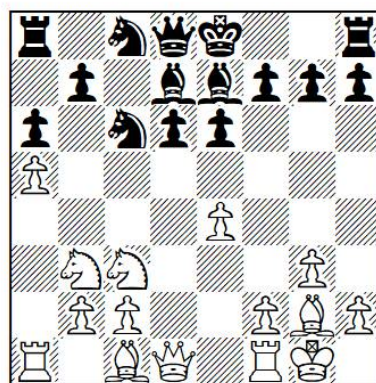
Russian Championship 1974

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 g3 ♗ge7 7 ♗b3 d6 8 ♖g2 ♖d7 9 0-0**

**Question:** Why can't White take the d6-pawn?

**Answer:** After 9 ♗xd6?? ♗d5, White's queen would be trapped.

**9 ... ♗c8 10 a4 ♖e7 11 a5**



**11 ... 0-0 12 ♗e2**

White could also consider 12 ♖e3 ♗c7 13 f4 which Black should probably meet with 13 ... b6 (13 ... ♖f6 would be less good here as after 14 ♗d2 b6 15 ♜fd1 White is threatening e4-e5) 14 axb6 ♗xb6 with ideas of ... ♗b4.

**12 ... ♗c7 13 ♜d1 ♖f6!?**

Getting ready to capture on c3, which White can't comfortably prevent. 13 ... b5 14 axb6 ♗xb6 15 ♖f1 ♜fc8 16 ♜xa6 ♜xa6 17 ♗xa6 ♗b4 18 ♗e2 ♗a4

**14 ♖e3**

Other moves have also been tried:

a) 14 ♗c4 was suggested by Minic, who thought that 14 ... b5 would then be bad for Black because of 15 axb6 ♗xb6 16 ♗d3 threatening a6 and d6. Yet after 16 ... ♖e5 Black wants to get counterplay with ... ♗b4 and this would refute 17 ♜xa6?.

b) 14 f4 ♖b8 15 ♙e3 ♜d8 was V.Liberzon-J.Speelman, Hastings 1979-80, and now 16 ♜a4?! (16 ♜f2) should have been answered by 16 ... ♜xa5 17 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 because 18 ♜b6 can be met by 18 ... ♜b5 19 c4 ♜xb2 20 ♜xb2 ♙xb2 21 ♜ab1 ♜xb6 22 ♙xb6 ♙a4!.

c) 14 ♙d2?! ♜e5 15 ♙f1 b5 16 axb6 ♜xb6 17 ♜a5 was S.Makarichev-O.Romanishin, Sochi 1983 and now 17 ... ♜fb8 would have been more accurate than putting this rook on c8.

**14 ... ♙xc3!**

Giving up the bishop pair in order to weaken White's pawns, a quite common theme in this line.

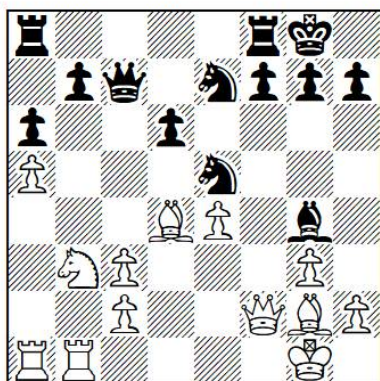
**15 ♙xc3 ♜e5**

Blockading the doubled pawns and putting the knight on a great square.

**16 ♙d4 ♜c4 17 f4 e5!**

Another excellent and instructive move by Taimanov, further weakening White's pawn structure. At the same time White's bishop is well established on the d4-square and for the time being holds White's position together.

**18 fxe5 ♜xe5 19 ♜f2 ♙g4 20 ♜db1 ♜e7**



**21 ♜d2?!**

Not the best. White should route this knight towards d3, f4 (or b4) and d5 starting with 21 ♜c1. In this case Black would have the more comfortable game but with nothing concrete for the time being.

**21 ... ♜7c6 22 h3 ♙e6 23 ♙b6**

23 ♜f1 looks more logical, aiming to come to e3 and then d5. The a5-pawn is immune because of ♙b6.

**23 ... ♜d7 24 ♜h2 f5!**

Taking the initiative on the kingside.

**25 ♜e3 ♜ae8 26 ♜f1 ♜c4 27 ♜xc4 ♙xc4 28 ♜f2?!**

28 ♜fe1 is better as after 28 ... d5 White can play 29 ♜d2 fxe4 30 ♙xe4 because the d5-pawn is pinned.

**28 ... d5 29 ♜d1**

White's last chance to stay on the board was via 29 ♜c5 fxe4 30 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 31 ♙xe4 dxe4 32 ♜xc4+. Now he goes a pawn down with a bad position.

**29 ... ♜f7 30 e5 ♜xe5 31 ♜f4 ♙e6 32 h4 h6 33 ♙h3 ♜e7 34 h5**

34 ♙g2 would have been more tenacious, preventing Black's next.

**34 ... ♜e4! 35 ♜d2 ♜e5 36 ♜g2 ♜g4 37 ♙xg4 fxg4 38 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 39 ♜e1 ♜xh5 40 ♙c7 ♜f5 41 ♜e3 d4! 42 ♜xe4 ♜xe4+ 0-1**

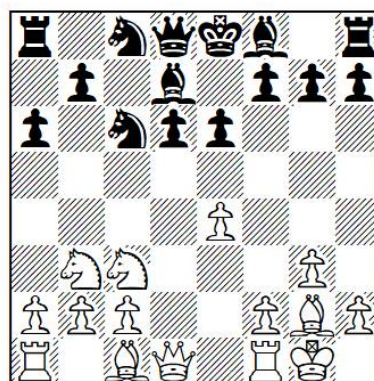
A good win by Taimanov against the young Ukrainian star.

### Game 27

**M.Carlsen-J.Timman**

Reykjavik 2004

**1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 g3 ♜ge7 7 ♜b3 d6 8 ♙g2 ♙d7 9 0-0 ♜c8**



**Question:** Why is the knight brought here rather than g6?

**Answer:** White's kingside fianchetto means that the f4- and h4-squares are covered, making g6 unattractive. On the other hand there is a potential outpost on c4 that beckons Black's knight, and it might get there via b6.

**10 a4 ♙e7 11 ♜e2 0-0**

Black has also tried exchanging a pair of knights with 11 ... ♖a5 when in V.Jansa-J.Ost Hansen, Esbjerg 1982, the sharp 12 e5 led to approximate equality after 12 ... ♖xb3 13 cxb3 d5 14 ♖g4 ♔f8.

### 12 ♗e3

White has tried other moves too, though they all tend to lead to similar complex middlegames. Here are some examples:

a) 12 a5 ♗f6 13 ♗e3 ♗xc3 14 ♗xc3 ♖e5 15 c4 ♖c7 16 ♖d2 ♗c6 17 ♖fb1 ♖d7 18 ♖b3 ♖e7 19 ♖d2 ♖ad8 20 ♖d1 ♖c8 21 ♖b4 h6 22 ♖d2 ♖f6 23 f3 d5 successfully freed Black's position in S.Garcia Martinez-V.Hort, Madrid 1973.

b) 12 ♖d1 ♖c7 13 a5 ♗f6 14 ♗e3 ♗xc3 15 ♗xc3 ♖e5 16 f4 ♖c4 17 ♗d4 e5 18 fxe5 ♖xe5 was already very comfortable for Black in J.Dueball-O.Roese, Germany 1991.

c) 12 ♖d1 ♖e8 13 ♖e3 ♗f8 14 ♖d1 b6 15 ♗d2 ♖c7 16 ♗c3 ♖a7 17 h4 ♖b8 18 h5 h6 19 ♗f1 ♖8e7 20 ♖d2 ♖a8 gave rise to a complex middle game in M.Ashley-J.Ehlvest, New York 1994.

### 12 ... ♖a5

The exchange of a pair of knights will reduce the importance of White's space advantage. Black can also just play 12 ... ♖c7, for example 13 f4 b6 (13 ... ♗f6 is also possible) 14 g4 ♖a5 15 ♖d2 ♖e8 was a game N.Ioseliani-M.Taimanov, London 1996.

### 13 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 14 ♖d2

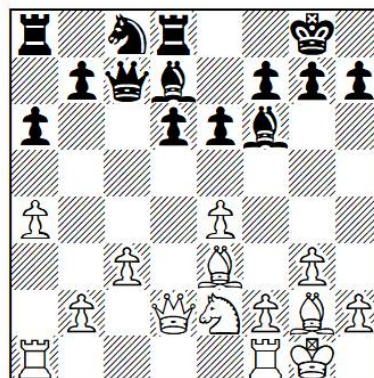
Several other moves have been tried in this position, all of which lead to complex play in which White has a slight space advantage:

a) 14 ♗d4 ♗d8 15 ♖fd1 ♗c6 16 ♖c4 ♖b6 17 ♖b3 ♖d7 18 ♖a3 ♗e7 19 ♖d5!? ♗xd5 (19 ... exd5!? 20 exd5 ♗xa4 21 ♖xa4 gives White a nice two bishop endgame) 20 exd5 e5 produced a complex middle game in N.De Firmian-A.Zapata, Tunis Izt 1985, with Black's kingside majority being balanced by White's bishop pair.

b) 14 ♖fd1 ♗f6 15 ♖d3 ♗c6 16 f4 g6 17 ♖f2 ♗g7 18 g4 f5!? 19 exf5 gxf5 20 g5 ♖c7 21 ♖ad1 ♗xg2 22 ♖xg2 d5 produced a strategically complex position with

chances for both sides in S.Kindermann-A.Pekarek, Prague 1988.

### 14 ... ♖c7 15 ♖e2 ♗f6 16 c3 ♖d8



### 17 f4

A kingside pawn storm seems rather ambitious and optimistic in this position, though it's difficult to find another clear plan for White here.

### 17 ... ♖b8 18 g4 b5 19 g5

In a couple of moves time White may have regretted playing this. The immediate 19 a5 would have been better as after 19 ... d5?! (19 ... ♗e7 is better) White can play 20 e5 without leaving a hole on f5.

### 19 ... ♗e7 20 a5 d5 21 f5

21 exd5 is met by 21 ... ♗c6 followed by ... ♗xd5; while 21 e5 leaves a 'hole' on f5.

### 21 ... dxe4 22 f6 ♗c5 23 ♖h1

Probably just a loss of time as the king stands no better here than on g1. 23 fxe4 was stronger, with only a minimal advantage to Black.

### 23 ... ♗c6 24 ♖c1 ♗xe3 25 ♖xe3 ♖d3 26 ♖g1 ♖d6 27 ♖f4 ♖f3

27 ... ♖d2 was probably even stronger.

### 28 ♖ad1 ♖c4 29 ♖c5 ♖xa5

Another good line would have been 29 ... ♖xf4 30 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 31 ♖xc6 e3! 32 ♖d7 ♖f8, when the passed pawn becomes quite menacing.

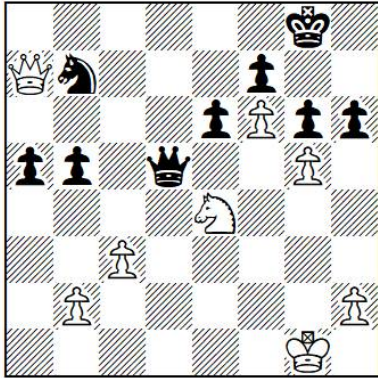
### 30 ♖h5 ♖b7 31 ♖a7 g6 32 ♖g3 ♖xf1+ 33 ♖xf1 a5 34 ♖g3 ♖d8

34 ... ♖f4 would have been objectively stronger, but Timman probably wanted to keep it simple against his talented young opponent.

### 35 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 36 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+

Here too opting for simplification. 36 ... ♗d5 would have been objectively stronger.

**37 ♖xe4 ♗d5 38 ♜g1 h6**



**39 ♗a8+?!**

A mistake, perhaps thinking that the coming knight endgame would be a draw.

39 ♗b8+ was the right move after which 39 ... ♖d8 40 h4 ♜h7 41 ♖d6 would force Black to deliver perpetual check via 41 ... ♗d1+ 42 ♜f2 ♗d2+ 43 ♜f3 ♗d5+ etc.

**39 ... ♖d8 40 ♗xd5 exd5 41 ♖d6 hxc5 42 ♖xb5 ♖c6 43 ♜f2 ♖e5 44 ♜g3?!**

After this Black can just go for the b2-pawn. 44 ♜e2 would have saved the b2-pawn but would still be winning for Black, for example after 44 ... a4 45 ♜d2 ♖g4 46 ♖a7 ♜f8 47 ♖c8 ♖xh2 48 ♖b6 ♖f3+ 49 ♜e3 ♖e5 50 ♜d4 g4! etc.

**44 ... a4 45 ♖c7 ♖c4 46 ♖xd5 ♖xb2 47 ♖b4 ♜h7 48 ♜f3 ♜h6 49 ♜e4**

Or 49 ♖c2 ♜h5 50 ♜e3 g4, which is also winning for Black.

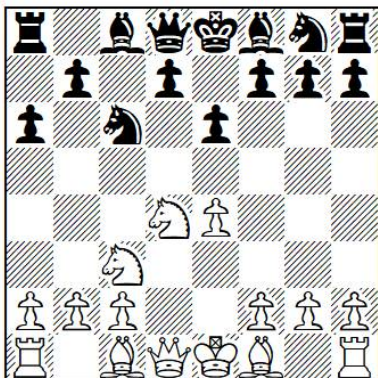
**49 ... g4 50 ♜d5 a3 51 ♜d6 g5 0-1**

51 ... g5 52 ♜e7 ♜g6 leaves White without a good move.

# Chapter Five

## Taimanov: 6 Others

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6



### 6 ♕f4

This chapter looks at several other attempts for White where 6 ♕f4 is probably the best motivated.

**Question:** What is White's idea?

**Answer:** He's looking to exploit a perceived weakness of the d6-square, either via direct occupation or by pressuring Black's d-pawn should it go there.

The other moves are as follows, in approximate order of significance:

a) 6 g4 ♘ge7 7 ♕e3 b5 8 ♘b3 ♘a5 9 g5 ♘ec6 deftly evaded White's pawn storm and got Black's knights to good squares in Hansen-Andersson (Game 28).

b) 6 ♖d3 is quite an interesting move tried in Trjapishko-Grachev (Game 29), considering castling long and perhaps swinging the queen over to the kingside. There's a strong case for 6 ... ♘xd4 instead of Grachev's 6 ... ♘ge7, and in fact he played this in a later game against the same opponent.

c) 6 ♕c4 is a popular choice against many Sicilians but looks a bit strange when e6 is defended by two pawns and ... b7-b5 will soon win some time. Lutikov-Taimanov (Game 30) went 6 ... ♖c7 7 0-0

♘f6 8 h3 ♘xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♕c5 10 ♖d3 b5 with an excellent game for Black.

d) 6 a3, played in Shamkovich-Taimanov (Game 31), is quite a useful waiting move. Black might be able to show up the dark side of this idea with 6 ... ♘ge7 7 ♕e3 b5 8 ♘b3 ♘a5, threatening to double White's b-pawns.

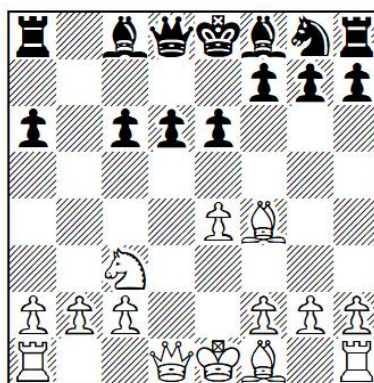
e) 6 a4 was played in Bouvier-Istratescu (Game 32), with Black choosing a Paulsen set-up with 6 ... ♖c7.

f) Finally, the passive 6 ♘b3 was played in Pontes-Leitao (Game 33), with Black taking the opportunity to switch to a Scheveningen set-up with a later ... d7-d6 because ♘d4-b3 is out of place in that line.

### 6 ... d6

Threatening ... ♘xd4 followed by ... e6-e5, which explains why White now trades on c6.

### 7 ♘xc6 bxc6



### 8 ♕c4

An attempted improvement on the 8 ♖d2 of Ganguly-Rublevsky (Game 34) in which 8 ... e5 9 ♕g5 ♘f6 10 ♖0-0-0 h6 11 ♕h4 ♕e6 was played, with a sharp struggle in prospect.

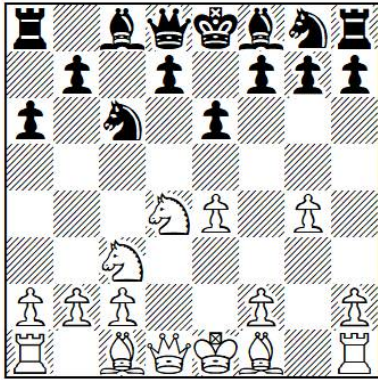
### 8 ... ♘f6 9 ♕b3 d5 10 ♖f3 ♕e7 11 0-0-0 0-0

This brought about a complicated middle game in Ivanisevic-Rublevsky (Game 35) which certainly wasn't worse for Black.

Game 28

S.Hansen-U.Andersson  
Germany 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6 6 g4



**Question:** That looks aggressive, what's White's idea?

**Answer:** It's a move in the spirit of the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 g4!?), but it seems less well motivated here because Black has not moved his knight to f6.

6 ... ♘ge7 7 ♙e3

A game L.Kuznetsov-D.Bocharov, Russia 2000 featured 7 ♙g2 in this position, but after 7 ... ♗c7 8 ♘de2 (and not 8 ♘db5 axb5 9 ♘xb5 because of 9 ... ♗a5+) 8 ... ♘g6 Black began targeting White's kingside dark squares. The game continued 9 h4 ♙d6 10 ♗d2 h5 11 g5 b5, and Black already had an excellent game.

7 ... b5 8 ♘b3 ♘a5 9 g5 ♘ec6 10 ♙g2?

A somewhat baffling decision as Black now puts his knight on the undefended c4-square. 10 h4 makes more sense and does seem consistent with the strategy of hurling the kingside pawns forward with reckless abandon.

10 ... ♘c4 11 ♙c1 ♙e7 12 h4 ♙b7 13 ♗e2 ♗c8 14 0-0 h6 15 gxh6

Opening the g-file is another pleasant surprise for Black.

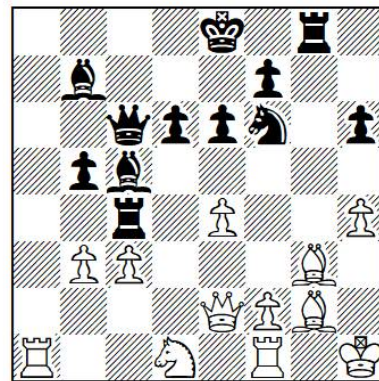
15 ... gxh6 16 a4 ♗b6

Probably not the best. 16 ... b4 is a strong move here as after 17 ♗xc4 bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗g8, Black is threatening 19 ... ♘b4 with a tremendous initiative.

17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘d2

18 ♗h5 would have been a better try, the main idea being to exchange queens with 19 ♗xb5. With this chance gone White's position becomes desperate, largely due to the vulnerability of his king.

18 ... ♘6e5 19 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 20 ♙e3 ♙c5 21 ♙f4 d6 22 ♖h1 ♗g8 23 ♙g3 ♙d4 24 ♘d1 ♘g4 25 ♗a3 ♗c6 26 c3 ♙c5 27 ♗a1 ♘f6 28 b3



White's position has been grisly for quite a few moves, but this forces Black to play a move he'd like to make anyway.

28 ... ♗xe4! 29 ♙xe4

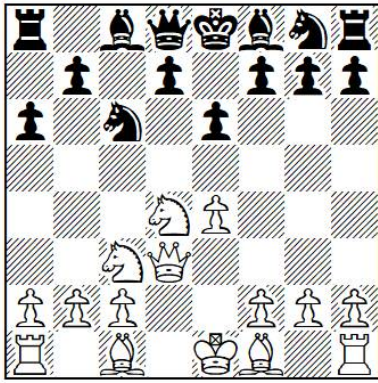
Going down in flames, though White's position is hopeless anyway. 29 ♗f3 is best met by the quiet 29 ... ♖e7 intending 30 ... ♗c7, but the violent 29 ... ♗h4+ would also work.

29 ... ♘xe4 30 ♖h2 ♘xc3 0-1

Game 29

A.Trjapishko-B.Grachev  
Sochi 2018

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗d3



**Question:** What's White's idea with this move?

**Answer:** Besides facilitating possible queenside castling the queen might swing over to the kingside from here.

**6 ... Nge7**

There's a strong case for the immediate 6 ... Nxd4, making the queen move a second time, and this was played in a game between these same two players a year later. A.Trjapishko-B,Grachev, Sochi 2019 continued 7 Bxd4 b5 8 Qe3 Qb7 9 f3 Nf6 10 a4 b4 11 Na2 d5 12 Nxb4 dxe4 13 Bxd8+ Qxd8 14 O-O-O+ Qc8 15 Bd4 exf3 with approximate equality.

**7 Qf4**

Another possibility is 7 Qe3 but then 7 ... Nxd4 8 Bxd4 b5 (8 ... Nc6 9 Bb6 is a bit annoying) 9 Bd2 Nc6 looks fine for Black.

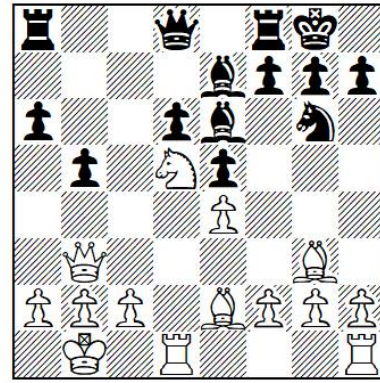
**7 ... Ng6 8 Qg3 d6?!**

This Scheveningen style move leads Grachev into difficulties and explains why he later switched to 6 ... Nxd4. Black would do better to play 8 ... Nge5 9 Bd2 b5, with Taimanov style counterattacking possibilities.

**9 O-O-O Nxd4 10 Bxd4 e5 11 Ba4+**

11 Bb4 is also quite good, for example 11 ... b5 12 h4 h5 13 Nd5 Qe6 14 Ba3 Bb8 15 Bc3 Qxd5 16 Bxd5 with quite serious pressure.

**11 ... Qd7 12 Bb3 b5 13 Nd5 Qe7 14 Qb1 O-O 15 Qe2 Qe6**



**16 Qxe7+**

This eases the pressure on Black's position. 16 Bb4 might have been more difficult to counter.

**16 ... Qxe7 17 Ba3 Qfd8 18 h4 Bxc8 19 Bd2**

Here White should have played 19 h5 Nf4 20 Qxf4 exf4 21 h6, which still seems better for him. After the move played Black fully escapes from his earlier difficulties.

**19 ... Qc7 20 Bhd1 d5 21 exd5 Bxd5 22 c3 Qc5 23 h5 Nf8 24 Qh4 f6 25 f4?**

White was probably becoming increasingly alarmed at how his opponent was improving his position, decided to complicate rather than get tied down. Yet objectively speaking 25 f3 was probably a better move.

**25 ... a5 26 Qf2 b4 27 Ba4 bxc3**

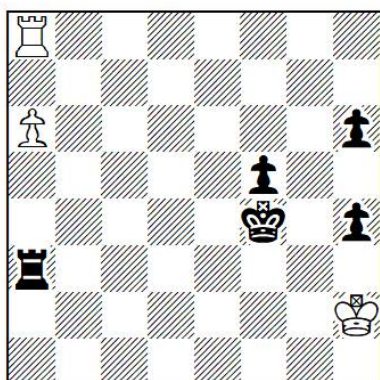
Stockfish much prefers just to safeguard the rook with 27 ... Bc6, leaving all Black's options on the table such as 28 ... Qf5+ next. The move played isn't bad either, it just isn't quite as good.

**28 Bc2 Bc6 29 Qb5 Qf5 30 Qxc6 Bxc6 31 Bxc6 Bxc6 32 b3 exf4 33 Qc1 Qxc2 34 Qxc2 Ne6 35 Bd5 Ng5 36 Bxa5 Qe6 37 Ba8+ Qf7 38 Ba7+ Qe8 39 Qd4 Qe2+ 40 Qxc3 Bxg2 41 h6**

Taking the opportunity to split Black's kingside pawns.

**41 ... gxf6 42 b4 f3 43 b5 Ne6 44 b6 Nxd4 45 Qxd4 Bb2 46 Ba3 Bxb6 47 Qe3 Qf7 48 Qxf3 Qg6 49 Ba8 h5 50 Qg3 Bb4 51 Qh3 Bc4 52 Bg8+ Qf5 53 Ba8 Bc3+ 54 Qh4 Bc1 55 Ba5+ Qg6 56 a4 Bc4+ 57 Qh3 Bc3+ 58 Qh4 h6 59 Ba8 Bc4+ 60 Qh3 Qg5 61 a5**

♖c3+ 62 ♘g2 ♝a3 63 a6 ♗f4 64 ♗h2 f5 65  
 ♗g2 ♝a2+ 66 ♗h3 ♝a3+ 67 ♗g2 h4 68 ♗h2



### 68 ... ♝a1?

Stockfish claims that Black can win if he keeps all his pawns and plays 68 ... ♗f3, for example 69 ♝f8 f4 70 ♝f6 ♝a2+ 71 ♗h3 ♝a1 72 ♗h2 h5. This may well be true, but it's not that relevant to our consideration of this Sicilian line.

### 69 ♗g2 ♝a3 70 ♗h2 h3?

Once again it seems that Black missed his chance with 70 ... ♗f3.

### 71 a7 h5 72 ♝b8 ♝xa7 73 ♗xh3

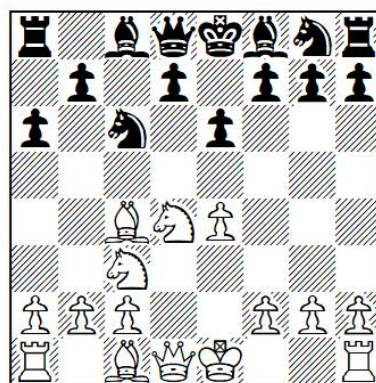
This endgame is a theoretical draw but it needs to be defended with great accuracy. It turns out that Trjapishko knows what he's doing.

73 ... ♝a1 74 ♝b7 ♝h1+ 75 ♗g2 ♝c1 76  
 ♗h3 ♗g5 77 ♝g7+ ♗f6 78 ♝a7 ♗g6 79 ♝a8  
 ♝c3+ 80 ♗h4 ♝c4+ 81 ♗h3 ♝g4 82 ♝g8+ ♗f6  
 83 ♝h8 ♗g5 84 ♝g8+ ♗f4 85 ♝a8 ♝g1 86  
 ♝a4+ ♗g5 87 ♝a8 ♝e1 88 ♝g8+ ♗f4 89 ♝f8  
 ♝e5 90 ♝h8 ♝e3+ 91 ♗h2 ♗g4 92 ♝g8+ ♗f4  
 93 ♝h8 ♗g4 94 ♝g8+ ♗f3 95 ♝g5 ♝e2+ 96  
 ♗g1 ♝e1+ 97 ♗h2 f4 98 ♝xh5 ♗f2 99 ♝a5 f3  
 100 ♝a2+ ♝e2 101 ♝a1 ♝e3 102 ♝b1 ♝e1  
 103 ♝b2+ ♝e2 104 ♝b1 ♝e1 105 ♝b2+ ♗e3  
 106 ♝b3+ ♗f4 107 ♝b4+ ♝e4 108 ♝b8 ♝e1  
 109 ♝b4+ ♝e4 110 ♝b8 ♝e7 111 ♗g1 1/2-1/2

### Game 30

A.Lutikov-M.Taimanov  
 Jurmala 1978

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6  
 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗c4



**Question:** I was wondering when we were going to look at ♗c4 lines, isn't that the Sozin-Velimirovic Attack?

**Answer:** No, not really. The Sozin-Velimirovic Attack is 6 ♗c4 after 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♗c6. Against the Taimanov it will be very different, and not least because the d7-pawn helps protect e6.

6 ... ♗c7 7 0-0 ♗f6 8 h3 ♗xd4 9 ♗xd4  
 ♗c5 10 ♗d3 b5 11 ♗b3 ♗b7 12 ♝e1 0-0 13  
 ♗e3 d6 14 a3 ♝ac8 15 f3 ♝fd8

Stockfish prefers the immediate 15 ... d5 but simplifications would follow 16 exd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♝fd8 18 ♗xc5 ♗xc5+ 19 ♗e3 ♗xe3+ 20 ♝xe3 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♝xd5. Taimanov will have wanted to win so he keeps tension in the position.

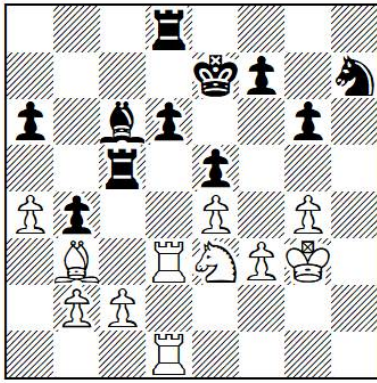
16 ♝ad1 h6 17 ♗e2 ♗b6 18 ♗f2 ♗xe3 19  
 ♝xe3 ♗f8 20 ♝ed3 ♗xf2+ 21 ♗xf2 ♗e7

With the d6-pawn solidly protected and latent pressure along the c-file, Black's chances seem preferable in this endgame, at least to the human eye.

### 22 ♝d4 ♗c6 23 a4 e5 24 ♝4d3

On 24 ♝b4 Black can play 24 ... bxa4 25 ♗xa4 a5 26 ♝c4 ♗xa4 27 ♝xa4 ♝c5 intending 28 ... ♝b8. The engine still says it is equal and I'd still prefer to be Black.

24 ... b4 25 ♗e2 ♗e8 26 ♗g3 g6 27 ♗f1  
 ♝c5 28 ♗e3 ♗c6 29 g4 h5 30 ♗g3 hxg4 31  
 hxg4 ♗h7



### 32 ♖d5+

The exchange of White's knight is helpful to Black in his campaign to control dark squares. 32 ♙c4 would have been better after which the engine comes up with the remarkable 32 ... ♗xa4 33 ♜d5+ ♕f8 34 b3 (34 ♜b6 ♞c6 35 ♜xa4 ♞xc4 36 ♞xd6 ♞xd6 37 ♞xd6 ♞xc2 38 ♞xa6 is a more mundane route to equality) 34 ... ♞xc4! 35 ♞h1!! ♞xc2 36 ♞xh7 ♙b5 37 ♞d1 ♕e8 38 ♞h8+ ♕d7 39 ♜b6+ ♕e7 40 ♜d5+ with a draw by repetition.

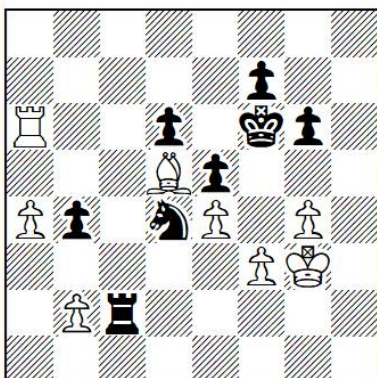
32 ... ♗xd5 33 ♞xd5 ♞c6 34 ♞5d2 ♜g5 35 ♗d5 ♞c5 36 ♞h1 ♞dc8 37 ♞hh2 ♞a5 38 ♗b3 ♜e6 39 ♞h7

39 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 40 b3 d5 would see Black gain a slight edge, though the drawish properties of rook endgames might have made this preferable to the game.

39 ... ♞f8 40 ♞dh2 ♞c5 41 ♞h8 ♞xh8 42 ♞xh8 ♜d4

It is now clear that Black is better. The problem for White in such situations is to choose between lines that are unpleasant and those that are lost.

43 ♗d5 ♞xc2 44 ♞a8 ♕f6 45 ♞xa6



### 45 ... ♜e2+

Forcing a draw. Stockfish wants to try for a mating net with 45 ... ♕g5 46 ♞xd6 ♞d2 47 a5 ♜c2 48 ♞c6 ♜e3 49 ♞c1 (Black was threatening ... ♜f1+ followed by ... ♞h2 mate) 49 ... ♞g2+ 50 ♕h3 ♕f4 51 ♞e1 (again sidestepping a mating net as after 51 a6 there follows 51 ... ♕xf3 52 a7 ♞g3+ 53 ♕h4 ♞xg4+ 54 ♕h3 ♞g3+ 55 ♕h2 ♜g4+ 56 ♕h1 ♜f2+ 57 ♕h2 ♞g2 mate) 51 ... ♞xb2 52 a6 ♜xd5 53 exd5 ♞a2 54 ♞d1 ♞xa6 55 d6 ♞a8 56 d7 ♞d8 57 ♕g2 b3 58 ♞d3 b2 59 ♞b3 ♞xd7 60 ♞xb2 e4 61 fxe4 ♕xg4 and White must still be careful to draw the rook endgame.

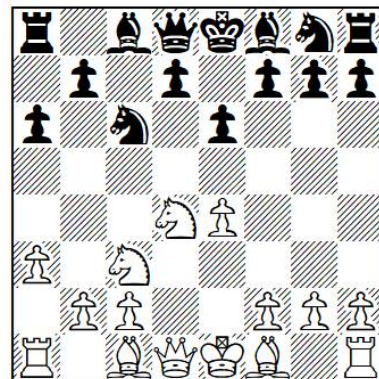
46 ♕f2 ♜f4+ 47 ♕e1 ♜g2+ 48 ♕d1 ♜e3+ 49 ♕e1 ♜g2+ 50 ♕d1 1/2-1/2

### Game 31

L.Shamkovich-M.Taimanov

USSR Championship, Baku 1961

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 a6 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♜xd4 e6 6 a3



**Question:** Isn't that a bit passive?

**Answer:** It does look passive but there is logic there too. White may have reasoned that as this is a useful move he might as well play it immediately and meanwhile see what Black wants to do. It also throws the players on their own resources, though this was less of a factor when the game was played.

6 ... ♜ge7 7 ♗e3

Clearly White has other options but none of them seem particularly threatening, for example 7 ♗e2 ♜xd4 8

♖xd4 ♗c6 9 ♕d1 b5 10 ♗0-0 ♘b7; and 7 ♗b3 b5 8 ♙e2 ♗g6 look very comfortable for Black.

**7 ... b5 8 ♗b3 ♗g6**

Black has an interesting alternative in 8 ... ♗a5, using White's 6 a3 to threaten a doubling of his pawns.

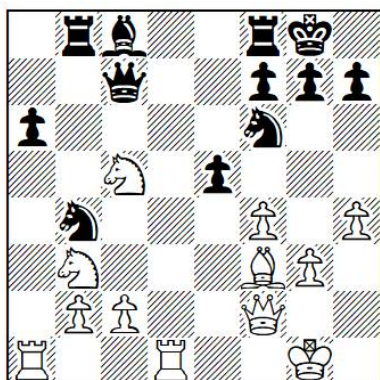
**9 f4 ♖c7 10 ♕d2 ♙e7 11 g3 0-0 12 h4 b4 13 axb4 ♙xb4 14 ♙g2**

14 h5 is more dangerous for Black, a sample line being 14 ... ♗ge7 15 h6 g6 16 ♙c5 ♖b8 17 ♙xb4 ♗xb4 18 0-0-0 f5 19 ♕d4 ♖f7 with murky play. The game continuation is also rather murky.

**14 ... ♗ge7 15 0-0 d5**

Following the classic advice that a flank attack is best met by a counterblow in the centre.

**16 ♖f2 dxe4 17 ♙xe4 ♖b8 18 ♗a4 ♗d5 19 ♙c5 ♙xc5 20 ♗axc5 ♗f6 21 ♙f3 ♗b4 22 ♖fd1 e5**



Continuing the theme of opening up the centre, even at the cost of a pawn. During this process the White king looks increasingly exposed.

**23 c3**

23 fxe5 ♗g4 24 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 leaves White a pawn up, but his king looks quite vulnerable.

**23 ... ♗c6 24 ♗xa6**

The engine says that 24 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 25 ♗a5 ♖c7 26 b4 is better, but I'm still seeing an exposed White king after 26 ... ♗g4.

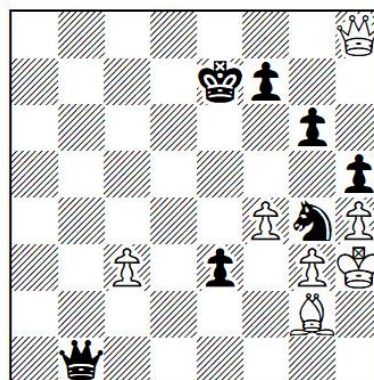
**24 ... ♙xa6 25 ♖xa6 e4 26 ♙g2 ♖xb3 27 ♖c5 ♖xb2 28 ♖xc6**

After 28 ♖xc6 Black would keep the queens on with 28 ... ♖e7.

**28 ... ♖b7 29 ♖cd6 ♖b1 30 ♕d4 h5 31 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 32 ♗h2 ♗g4+ 33 ♗h3 e3 34 ♖d8 g6**

The engine says that 34 ... ♖xd8 is more precise, with Black having an overwhelming position after 35 ♖xd8+ ♗h7 36 ♕d5 ♗f6. This doesn't look straightforward to me, at least not at first sight, so it's understandable that Taimanov made a clearer choice.

**35 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 36 ♖h8+ ♗e7**



**37 ♖c8**

This loses in short order, though the alternative was to go into a horrible and probably lost endgame after 37 ♕d4 ♕d1 38 ♖xd1 ♗f2+ 39 ♗h2 ♗xd1 40 ♙f3 ♗xc3 etc.

**37 ... ♕d3 38 ♖c5+ ♗f6 39 ♙f3 e2 40 ♖c6+ ♗g7 0-1**

### Game 32

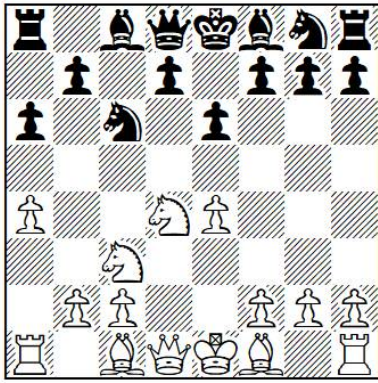
**B.Bouvier-A.Istratescu**

Niort 2004

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 ♗c3**

3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 a4 is the standard move order and would reach the position after White's sixth move.

**3 ... a6 4 a4 ♗c6 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♗xd4**



**Question:** White's a2-a4 looks like a sensible move to prevent ... b7-b5. Why isn't it played more often?

**Answer:** The problem is that it weakens b4, which can prove to be an effective square for Black's f8-bishop. The game provides an illustration of this happening.

6 ... ♖c7 7 ♙e3 ♜f6 8 ♙d3 ♞e5 9 h3 ♙b4 10 ♞de2

White wants to losing a pawn, or having them doubled, but Black has a strong reply. 10 0-0 was a better move after which 10 ... d6 (10 ... ♙xc3 11 ♙xc3 ♖xc3 12 ♞b3 gives White compensation because of his play on the dark squares) 11 f4 ♙c5 12 ♖d2 ♞xd3 13 cxd3 0-0 would be about equal.

10 ... d5! 11 0-0 dxe4 12 ♞xe4 ♞d5 13 ♙d4 0-0 14 ♞g5

**Question:** Did White really expect his opponent to miss the threat to take h7?

**Answer:** Probably not, it's more likely that White did not like his position and was seeking some kind of activity.

14 c4 was a better move, when the game is still more or less balanced.

14 ... h6 15 c4

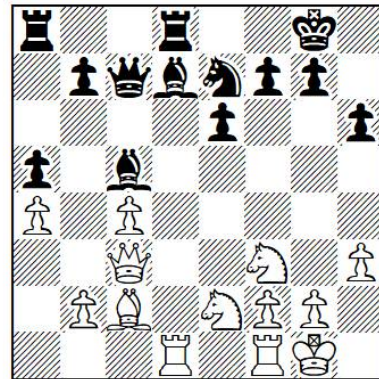
The computer approves of this move but what about the hole on b4? This issue will plague White for the entire game.

15 ... ♞e7 16 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♖b3 ♙c5

The immediate 17 ... a5 was also good, sealing White's queenside pawns. This happens in a few moves anyway and

represents the essence of Black's advantage.

18 ♞f3 ♖c7 19 ♖ad1 ♙d7 20 ♙c2 ♖fd8 21 ♖c3 a5!



Cementing Black's advantage as his two pawns hold White's three on the kingside whereas his kingside majority is still fully mobile. Black also has the two bishops, which helps his cause considerably.

22 ♞ed4 ♙e8 23 ♞b5 ♖b6 24 ♞e5 ♖xd1 25 ♙xd1 ♞c6 26 ♞d3 ♖d8 27 ♞xc5 ♖xc5 28 ♙b3

28 ♙f3 b6 would not change the fundamentals of the position nor White's inferior pawn structure.

28 ... b6 29 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 30 ♙xd1 ♞e5 31 ♞a3 ♜f8 32 ♜f1 g5 33 ♜e2 ♙c6 34 f3 ♞g6 35 ♜f1 ♜e7 36 ♞b1 ♞h4 37 ♙c2 h5

Playing to break open White's king position with the ... g5-g4 lever.

38 ♞d2 g4 39 hxg4 hxg4 40 ♙e4

40 fxg4 would hang on longer but is hopeless for White after 40 ... ♞xg2.

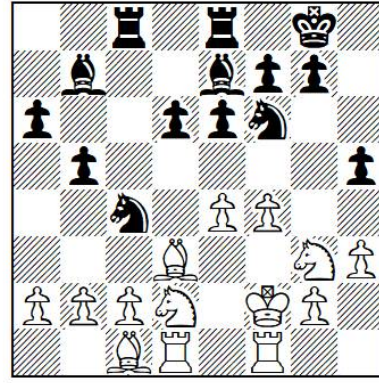
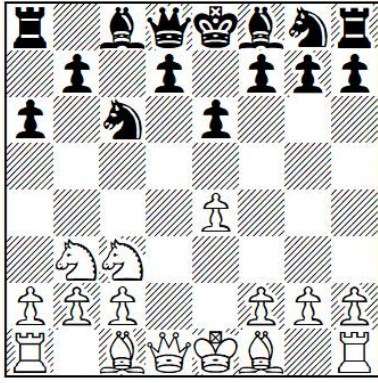
40 ... g3 0-1

Game 33

I.Pontes-R.Leitao

Teresina 2018

1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 e6 3 ♞c3 a6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♞xd4 ♞c6 6 ♞b3



**Question:** Why is White moving his knight away even before Black's 6 ... ♖ge7 - ?

**Answer:** It's difficult to know exactly, but it's not a very good idea. This is one of the few lines in which I wholeheartedly recommend switching to a Scheveningen setup with ... ♗e7 and ... d6, not least because an unprovoked ♖b3 is thought to be an inferior line.

6 ... ♖f6 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 0-0 d6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 h3

A loss of time, perhaps motivated by the fact that he was heavily outrated and wanted to keep Black's pieces out of g4. White should play 10 f4 intending ♗f3 next.

10 ... b5 11 ♖e2

Another inferior move by White. 11 f4 is the right move.

11 ... ♗b7

11 ... d5 was already very nice for Black, but on seeing his opponent play some passive moves it's tempting to maintain the tension.

12 ♖g3 ♖e5 13 ♗e2 ♗c8 14 ♗ad1 ♗c7 15 f4 ♖c4 16 ♗c1 ♗fe8

This is more or less an ideal Sicilian position for Black, his pieces have reached excellent squares and White is in no position to attack. The next issue is in how to improve matters and perhaps create a breakthrough.

17 ♖d2 ♗b6+ 18 ♗f2 ♗xf2+ 19 ♖xf2 h5

20 ♖f3

Possibly the decisive mistake. The best try was 20 ♗fe1 after which 20 ... h4 21 ♖gf1 e5 22 fxe5 dxe5 23 g4 ♗ed8 is clearly very nice for Black, but so far White is hanging on.

20 ... h4! 21 ♖xh4 d5!

Puncturing White's lines of defence because of the awkward position of his pieces.

22 ♗fe1

This loses easily but there was no good line for White, for example:

a) 22 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 23 e5 ♖e4+ 24 ♖xe4 dxe4 25 ♖g3 ♗xc2 gives Black a decisive positional advantage because of the position of his rook on the seventh rank.

b) 22 exd5 ♖xd5 23 ♖f3 ♗c5+ 24 ♖e2 ♖ce3 wins the exchange.

c) 22 e5 ♖e4+ 23 ♖f3 (23 ♖xe4 dxe4 24 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 25 ♖g3 ♗xc2 is the same as line 'a') 23 ... ♗xh4 wins a piece.

22 ... dxe4 23 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 24 ♖e2 ♗xc2 25 g3

White could really have saved himself the rest.

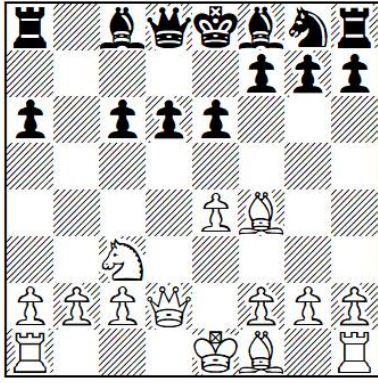
25 ... ♗c5+ 26 ♖f1 ♗b4 27 ♖d4 ♗xe1 28 ♖xc2 ♗xg3 29 ♖g2 ♖d5 30 ♖d4 e3 31 ♖e2 ♗f2 32 a3 ♗c8 33 ♗d3 ♗c2 34 b4 ♖xb4 0-1

### Game 34

S.Ganguly-S.Rublevsky

World Rapid, Berlin 2015

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♗f4 d6 7 ♖xc6 bxc6 8 ♗d2



For 8  $\text{e}5$  see Ivanisevic-Rublevsky.

**8 ... e5**

A simple and logical way to handle the position. Black has also played 8 ...  $\text{f}6$  9 0-0 d5 (9 ... e5? is now bad because of 10  $\text{e}5!$ ), for example 10 g4  $\text{b}4$  11  $\text{g}2$   $\text{a}5$  gave rise to complex play in S.Ganguly-D.Andreikin, World Rapid 2015.

**9  $\text{g}5$**

9  $\text{g}3$   $\text{f}6$  10  $\text{e}2$   $\text{e}7$  is also fine for Black.

**9 ...  $\text{f}6$  10 0-0**

Committing himself to a sharp struggle. 10  $\text{e}2$  is a quieter way to play it, keeping open the option of castling short.

**10 ... h6 11  $\text{h}4$   $\text{e}6$  12  $\text{e}2$   $\text{a}5$  13  $\text{xf}6$**

Creating an imbalance by giving up the bishop pair to weaken Black's pawn structure.

**Question:** Does this favour Black or White?

**Answer:** It's difficult to say at this time, though Black would certainly like to open the position so that his dark square bishop is an effective piece.

**13 ...  $\text{gxf}6$  14 b3  $\text{d}8$  15  $\text{a}4$   $\text{xd}2+$  16  $\text{xd}2$  a5 17  $\text{f}3$  d5 18  $\text{hd}1$   $\text{a}3+$  19  $\text{b}1$  d4 20 c3 c5 21  $\text{e}2$  0-0 22  $\text{b}6$   $\text{b}8$  23  $\text{c}4$   $\text{dxc}3$  24  $\text{c}2$**

White can also keep the c2-square for his king with 24  $\text{d}3$ , the tactical justification being 24 ...  $\text{xc}4?!$  25  $\text{g}3+$ ! followed by 26  $\text{xc}4$ .

**24 ...  $\text{b}4$  25 a3  $\text{xa}3$  26  $\text{xa}3$   $\text{xb}3$  27  $\text{e}1$   $\text{xc}2+$  28  $\text{xc}2$   $\text{b}2+$  29  $\text{xc}3$   $\text{fb}8$  30  $\text{c}4?$**

It's difficult to know what the clock times were but this hangs the f2-pawn. 30  $\text{c}2$  was better, routing the knight towards e3 and later d5 or f5.

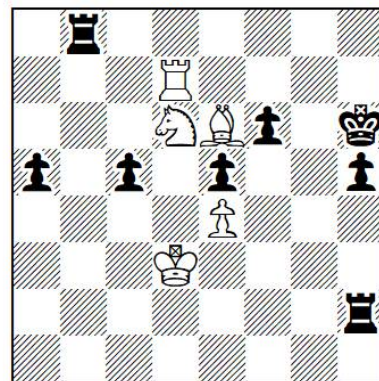
**30 ...  $\text{xf}2$  31  $\text{d}1$**

Here too it should have been all about repositioning the knight. 31  $\text{b}5$  was a much better move, sending it towards d6.

**31 ...  $\text{xg}2$  32  $\text{b}5$**

32  $\text{d}7$  would have been a more consistent follow up to the previous move.

**32 ...  $\text{hx}2$  33  $\text{d}7$   $\text{h}3+$  34  $\text{c}2$   $\text{g}7$  35  $\text{xf}7$   $\text{h}2+$  36  $\text{d}3$  h5 37  $\text{d}6$   $\text{h}6$  38  $\text{e}6$**



**38 ...  $\text{f}2$**

The engines like 38 ... c4+ here, a move which is completely beyond me. The remainder of the game might be described as a 'fluctuating struggle', both players making errors in what was probably serious time trouble. As we are also far from the opening it doesn't seem right to analyze the rest in detail.

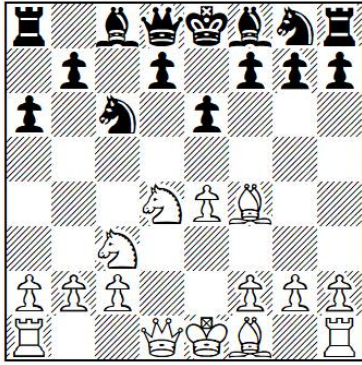
**39  $\text{e}3$   $\text{bb}2$  40  $\text{f}5+$   $\text{xf}5$  41  $\text{exf}5$  a4 42  $\text{a}7$   $\text{b}4$  43  $\text{f}7$   $\text{g}5$  44  $\text{g}7+$   $\text{h}4$  45  $\text{g}6$  a3 46  $\text{d}3$   $\text{a}4$  47  $\text{a}2$   $\text{a}6$  48  $\text{c}4$  e4 49  $\text{b}5$   $\text{a}8$  50  $\text{xc}5$  e3 51  $\text{g}1$   $\text{d}8$  52  $\text{c}4$  e2 53  $\text{e}1$   $\text{d}2$  54  $\text{b}3$  a2 55  $\text{c}3$   $\text{d}1$  0-1**

*Game 35*

**I.Ivanisevic-S.Rublevsky**

Serbian Team Championship 2017

**1 e4 c5 2  $\text{f}3$  e6 3 d4  $\text{cxd}4$  4  $\text{xd}4$   $\text{c}6$  5  $\text{c}3$  a6 6  $\text{f}4$**



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** White simply wants to put pressure on the d-file and against the d6-square.

**6 ... d6**

This makes perfect sense, threatening 7 ... dxd4 followed by 8 ... e5 and making f4 bite on granite pawns on the dark squares.

**Question:** Can you not play 6 ... ge7 here?

**Answer:** Possibly, but it seems less appropriate against 6 f4. There's also a very dangerous line in 7 ddb5!? when J. Van der Wiel-G. Ligterink, Nijmegen 1983 continued 7 ... axb5 8 dxb5 d5? (8 ... Wa5+ 9 d2 Wb6 is better, when White has a draw with 10 dd6+ d8 11 dxf7+ e8 12 dd6+, but possibly nothing better than that) 9 fc7 Wd7 10 dd6+ Wxd6 11 fxd6 and White soon won.

**7 dxc6 bxc6 8 fc4**

Had White tried to build pressure along the d-file, starting with 8 Wd2, Black could play 8 ... e5.

**8 ... f6 9 fb3 d5**

The position of White's bishop on b3 probably encouraged Black to arrange his pawns this way rather than with 9 ... e5. Bishops should be blunted.

**10 Wf3 fe7 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 h4 a5 13 e5**

This was not strictly necessary at this point, and White would have had more options had he delayed it by first playing 13 h5.

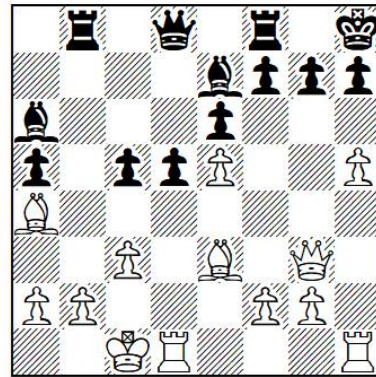
**13 ... d7 14 Wg3 dh8 15 h5 dc5**

Here, and over the coming moves, Black should have prevented White's h5-h6 by playing 15 ... h6 himself.

**16 fe3**

White in turn should play 16 h6 so that after 16 ... g6 Black would have to use some resources to defend his kingside dark squares and could not fully commit his pieces on the other flank. In this case the position would remain balanced.

**16 ... fa6 17 da4 dxa4 18 fxa4 c5 19 c3?! fb8**



**20 fd2**

Missing his last chance to play 20 h6 after which 20 ... g6 21 fd2 still leaves the position balanced.

**20 ... h6 21 db1 Wb6 22 Wg4**

After this White's position goes rapidly downhill. He should have taken account of Black's intention to play ... d5-d4 with 22 fe4 after which 22 ... ffd8 23 fc1 fc4 24 da1 d4 25 b3 would cobble together a defence, at least for the time being.

**22 ... ffd8 23 fb3 d4 24 cxd4 Wb4 25 fh3 c4 26 fg3 fg8 27 fd1**

The engines want to jettison a piece for White with 27 d5, which says a lot about how bad the position is.

**27 ... c3 28 fc2 fd3 29 fc1 ff5 30 Wf4 fg5**

Another way would have been 30 ... cxb2 31 fd2 Wa4, threatening 32 ... Wxa2+ amongst other things. But all roads lead to Rome at this stage.

**31 fxg5**

A last desperate throw.

**31 ... hxg5 32 We3 cxb2 33 fd2 Wc4 0-1**

# Chapter Six

## Paulsen/Taimanov: 6 $\text{Nxc6}$ Lines

1 e4 c5 2  $\text{Nf3}$  e6 3 d4 cxd4 4  $\text{Nxd4}$   $\text{Nc6}$   
5  $\text{Nc3}$

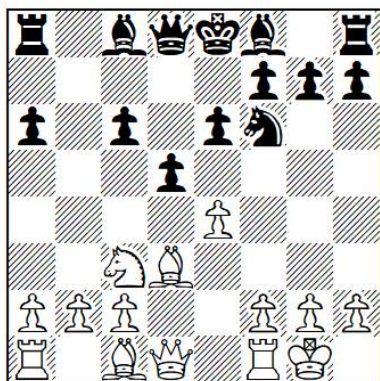
White has also tried 5  $\text{Nxc6}$ . At first sight this looks as if it has to be much worse than waiting for 5 ... a6 and then playing 6  $\text{Nxc6}$ , but White has the idea that 5 ... bxc6 allows him to deploy his queen's knight with 6  $\text{Nd2}$  rather than having it on c3. Even so this is rather innocuous, as shown in Tomic-Predojevic (Game 36).

5 ... a6 6  $\text{Nxc6}$  bxc6

**Question:** Can Black play 6 ... dxc6 here?

**Answer:** He can, but the position after 7  $\text{Qxd8+}$   $\text{Kxd8}$  8  $\text{Qf4}$  would be very unpleasant for Black. His king is stuck in the centre and there are dark-squared weaknesses in Black's queenside, most notably the b6-square.

7  $\text{Qd3}$  d5 8 0-0  $\text{Nf6}$



This seems like Black's simplest and most logical line, using his extra central pawn and developing his knight on the natural f6-square. If White plays e4-e5 at some point the position can resemble a French Defence.

9  $\text{Re1}$

We will take this as the main line but there are several popular ways to play this for White. Many of them involve playing

for c2-c4 later, possibly with  $\text{Nc3-a4}$ , and Black needs to be ready to meet this plan:

a) 9  $\text{Qe2}$   $\text{Qe7}$  10 b3 (10  $\text{Na4}$  0-0 11 c4 tried to do without c2-c4 in Ponomariov-Rublevsky, Game 37) 10 ... 0-0 11  $\text{Qb2}$   $\text{Qb7}$  12  $\text{Na4}$   $\text{Qc7}$  13 e5 (13 c4 dxe4 14  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Nxe4}$  15  $\text{Qxe4}$  c5 was nice for Black because of his bishop pair in Kutuzovic-Romanishin, Game 38) 13 ...  $\text{Nd7}$  14 c4 dxc4 15  $\text{Qxc4}$   $\text{Nb6}$  was a bit better for White in Ashwin-Laznicka (Game 39), which makes a case for delaying 12 ...  $\text{Qc7}$  with 12 ... c5.

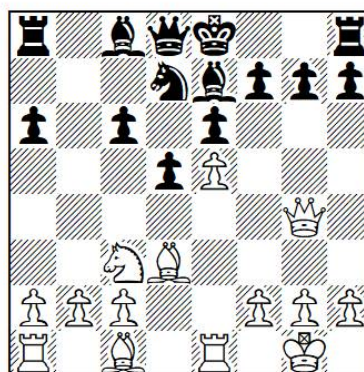
b) 9  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qe7}$  10  $\text{Qg3}$  is a dangerous line, but Black can neutralize it with 10 ...  $\text{Nh5}$  11  $\text{Qg4}$  (11  $\text{Qh3}$  g6 12 e5 f5 was Movsesian-Predojevic, Game 40) 11 ... g6 12  $\text{Qh6}$  d4 13  $\text{Na4}$  e5 was fine for Black in Jones-Korneev, Game 41.

c) 9 e5  $\text{Nd7}$  10  $\text{Re1}$   $\text{Qb7}$  11  $\text{Na4}$   $\text{Qc7}$  12  $\text{Qe2}$  c5 saw Black benefit from being about to delay ...  $\text{Qf8-e7}$  in Sanal-Berkes (Game 42).

d) 9  $\text{Qg5}$   $\text{Qe7}$  10 e5  $\text{Nd7}$  11  $\text{Qxe7}$   $\text{Qxe7}$  exchanged Black's more useful bishop, but it also freed his position with exchanges in Morozevich-Svidler (Game 43).

e) 9  $\text{Qf4}$  is not a silly move, and after 9 ...  $\text{Qe7}$  10  $\text{Re1}$  0-0 11  $\text{Qf3}$  perhaps Black should avail himself of Stockfish's 11 ... a5 rather than play the 11 ...  $\text{Qb7}$  of Timofeev-Grachev (Game 44).

9 ...  $\text{Qe7}$  10 e5  $\text{Nd7}$  11  $\text{Qg4}$



This is the point behind not moving the queen earlier – it goes directly to g4. Black cannot castle because of 12 ♔h6, but he can just defend the g-pawn with the king.

**Question:** Doesn't giving up castling rights have potential consequences?

**Answer:** Perhaps, but with the centre closed Black has time on his side.

**11 ... ♕f8 12 ♖e2**

White considers that the queen's job is done, other games have pursued the c2-c4 lever:

a) 12 ♖a4 h5 13 ♗f4 was Cornette-Laznicka (Game 46), in which Stockfish disagreed with Black's 13 ... c5 and wanted to play 13 ... ♔g8 instead.

b) 12 b3 c5 13 ♖a4 ♕b7 14 c4 d4 kept the centre closed and was about equal in Karjakin-Ivanchuk (Game 47).

c) 12 ♗h5 physically prevented Black's ... h5 in Duda-Grachev (Game 48) before later returning to the ♖a4 and theme. Black eventually won a complicated game, but the game could have easily gone the other way.

**12 ... c5 13 b3 ♕b7**

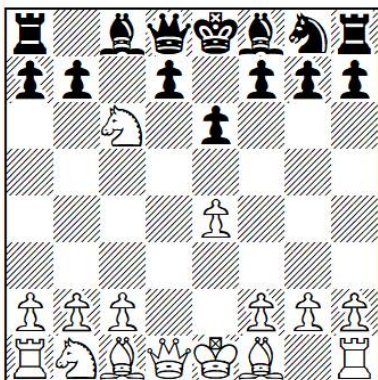
This gave rise to rich and complex play in Solak-Caruana (Game 45).

*Game 36*

**B.Tomic-B.Predojevic**

Bosnia 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗xc6**



A simple line, but one which should not trouble Black as he can immediately strengthen his pawn centre.

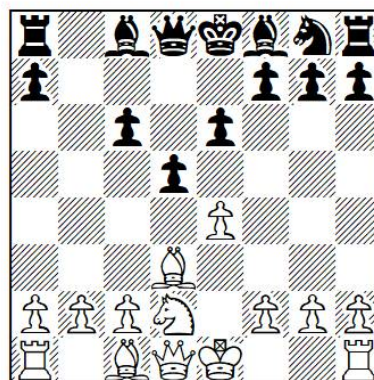
**5 ... bxc6 6 ♗d2**

This looks like the most logical follow-up. A couple of alternatives have been tried here, but they fail to impress:

a) 6 c4 ♗f6 7 ♗c3 (7 e5 loses the e-pawn after 7 ... ♗a5+) 7 ... e5 8 ♕e3 (8 ♕d3 ♕c5 is nice for Black, so White prevents this) 8 ... ♗b8 9 ♗b1 (9 ♗c2 ♗a5 10 ♕e2 d5 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 exd5 ♗xd5 is also very comfortable for Black) 9 ... ♕b4 10 ♕d3 d5 gives Black an excellent game.

b) 6 ♗c3 d5 7 ♕d3 is not good as White is essentially a tempo down compared with the 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♕d3 d5 line.

**6 ... d5 7 ♕d3**



**7 ... ♕d6**

**Question:** Why doesn't Black just play 7 ... ♗f6 - ?

**Answer:** He has played that, but then 8 0-0 ♕e7 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 c4 would make sense of White's set-up as when you compare the line 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♕d3, White does not need to play ♗c3-a4 before being able to play c2-c4. The precise 7 ... ♕d6 prepares to annoy White by attacking his h2-pawn, thus throwing a spanner in the works.

**8 0-0**

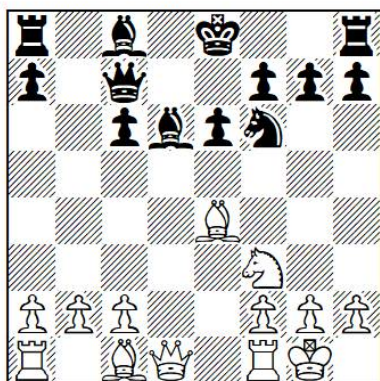
White has also played 8 ♗e2 when R.Ponomarev-S.Krivoshay, Kiev 1997 continued 8 ... ♗c7 9 ♗f3 dxe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗f6 11 ♗h4 ♕a6! 12 c4!? (12 ♕xa6 ♗a5+ 13 ♕d2

♖xa6 is fine for Black; and then adventurous 12 ♗h6!? is strongly met by 12 ... ♗xd3 13 ♗xg7 ♖a5+ 14 c3 ♖f5 15 ♗xf6 ♗f4 16 ♗d4 ♖g8 with a powerful initiative for Black) and now a good line would have been 12 ... 0-0-0?! (Rather than 12 ... ♖d8 13 ♗g5 ♖a5+, as played in the game) 13 0-0! h6! (13 ... ♗xh2+ 14 ♗xh2 ♖xd3 15 ♗f3 would give White a strong initiative for the pawn) 14 ♖h3 g5 uses the position of White's queen to develop a kingside attack.

**8 ... ♖c7 9 ♗f3**

White can try gambiting the h2-pawn with 9 c4 but there's no need for Black to take it immediately. He can instead play 9 ... ♗f6 (9 ... dxe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗xh2+ 11 ♖h1 ♗e5 12 f4 would give White the initiative for the pawn) after which 10 exd5 cxd5 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 gives him full equality.

**9 ... dxe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗f6**



**11 ♗d3**

White does not want to give up the bishop pair, for example 11 ♖e2 ♗xe4 12 ♖xe4 ♗b7 gives Black a good game.

**11 ... ♗b7 12 ♖e1**

In his notes to the game Predojevic indicated that 12 ♖e2 was better 12 ... c5 13 ♗g5 0-0 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♗e4 ♗xe4 16 ♖xe4 f5 17 ♖h4 ♖e7 18 ♖h6 ♖fd8 is fine for Black.

**12 ... c5 13 ♗g5**

Black would meet 13 ♗b5+ with 13 ... ♖e7 intending ... ♖hd8.

**13 ... ♖d8!**

Threatening ... c4 followed by ... ♗xh2+, which wins a pawn for inadequate compensation.

**14 ♗xf6**

14 ♖e2 ♗xf3 15 ♖xf3 ♗xh2+ 16 ♖h1 ♗e5 17 ♗b5+ ♖e7 leaves White undercompensated for his pawn.

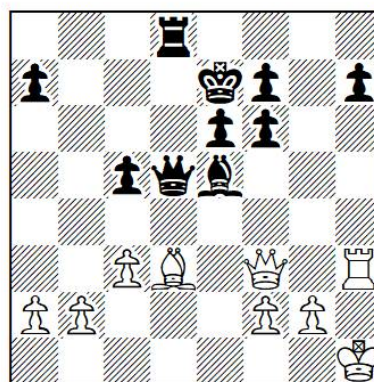
**14 ... gxf6 15 ♖e2 ♗xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♗xh2+ 17 ♖h1 ♗e5 18 ♖e4 ♖e7 19 ♖ae1 ♖d4**

This was a case of greed being good, Black can get away with 19 ... ♗xb2! here.

**20 c3 ♖xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖d8 22 ♖h4! ♖d7 23 ♖h3**

And not 23 ♗xh7?? because of 23 ... ♖d1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♖xd1 mate.

**23 ... ♖d5!**



**Question:** Why is Black exchanging queens when opposite-coloured bishops will make the endgame drawish?

**Answer:** That only applies if there are no rooks on the board. One advantage of having opposite-coloured bishops is that they can attack things your opponent may struggle to defend, in this case the f2-pawn being a clear target for Black.

**24 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 25 ♖g1**

25 g4 would have been a better try, but then 25 ... c4! 26 ♗xc4 ♖d2 is still good for Black.

**25 ... c4!**

Getting his rook through to the important seventh rank.

**26 ♗xc4 ♖d1+ 27 ♗f1 ♖d2 28 ♖h4 ♖xb2 29 ♖a4 ♗xc3**

White has a major issue now defending his f2-pawn.

**30 ♖xa7+ ♖f8**

Threatening ... ♗d4.

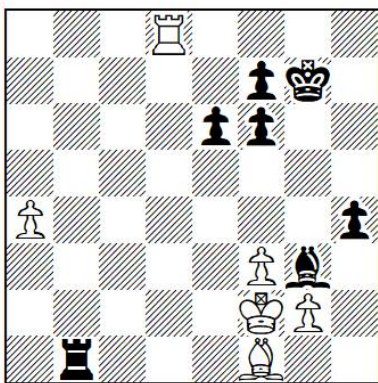
**31 ♖a8+ ♖g7 32 f3 ♗d4+ 33 ♖h2 ♗e5+ 34 ♖g1 h5! 35 a4**

Black has a powerful attack here despite the reduced material, for example 35 ♔d3 ♖d2 36 ♜f1 h4; or 35 g4 ♜h2+ 36 ♖h1 h4 37 a4 ♜f4 38 a5 ♖b1 39 ♖g2 h3+ etc.

**35 ... h4 36 ♖d8**

There are no good moves for White, for example after 36 a5 there is 36 ... ♔d4+ 37 ♖h2 ♖b1 38 ♜c4 ♜e5+ 39 ♖h3 f5 threatening mate with 40 ... ♖h1; and 36 ♖c8 is similarly met by 36 ... ♔d4+ 37 ♖h2 ♖b1 38 ♖c4 ♜f2 39 ♔d3 ♜g3+ 40 ♖h3 ♖h1+ 41 ♖g4 f5+ 42 ♖h5 h3 after which 43 gxh3 ♖xh3+ 44 ♖g5 f6 is mate.

**36 ... ♖b1 37 ♖f2 ♜g3+ 0-1**



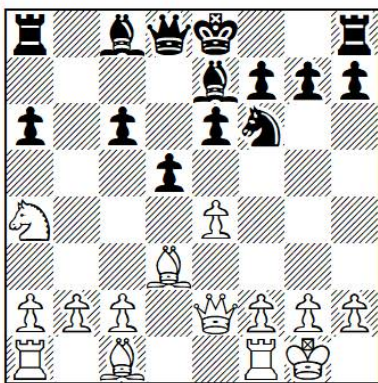
After 37 ... ♜g3+ 38 ♖g1 (Or 38 ♖e2 ♖e1+) 38 ... ♜c7 39 ♖c8 ♜b6+ White loses his bishop.

*Game 37*

**R.Ponomariov-S.Rublevsky**

Elista 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♖xc6 bxc6 7 ♔d3 d5 8 0-0 ♖f6 9 ♗e2 ♜e7 10 ♖a4



**Question:** Isn't that new?

**Answer:** Yes it is. Ponomariov is dispensing with the preliminary 10 b3 that we saw in the previous two games, proceeding directly with the ♖a4 and c2-c4 plan.

**Question:** Are there any advantages to doing so?

**Answer:** It certainly saves a tempo in the short term. In this game Ponomariov uses that time to reach a different pawn structure to the ones we've seen so far.

**10 ... 0-0 11 c4 ♜b7 12 e5**

In an earlier game, H.Stefansson-U.Andersson, Istanbul (ol) 2000, White played 12 ♖d1, a quick draw resulting after 12 ... ♗c7 13 ♜g5 (13 c5 would be met by 13 ... e5, with approximate equality) 13 ... dxe4 14 ♜xe4 ♖ad8 15 ♜c2 c5 16 ♜h4 ♜c6 17 ♜g3 1/2-1/2. The final position is very comfortable for Black, and he could consider playing on with 17 ... ♗b7 18 f3 ♖h5.

**12 ... ♖d7 13 ♜f4 ♖b6**

L.Kritz-M.Kobalia, Biel (open) 2006 had gone 13 ... a5 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 ♖ac1 ♖b8 16 ♖c2 ♜a8 17 ♔d2 ♜b4 18 f4 ♜xd2 19 ♗xd2 ♖b4 20 b3, with White having a shade the better of it. Rublevsky's move is designed as an improvement.

**14 cxd5 cxd5**

**Question:** Can Black not take the knight on a4 here?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, this would be bad for Black after 14 ... ♖xa4? 15 d6 ♜g5 16 ♗e4, recovering the piece because of the threats against a4 and h7. Meanwhile White would have acquired a powerful passed pawn on d6.

**15 ♖c3 ♖d7 16 ♖ad1 ♖c5 17 ♜b1 a5 18 ♖fe1 g6**

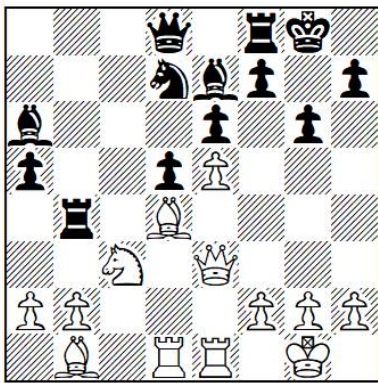
In his notes Rublevsky indicated that 18 ... ♜a6 would be met by 19 ♜xh7+ ♖xh7 20 ♗h5+ ♖g8 21 ♖e3 f5 22 ♖h3, getting what is undoubtedly a strong attack. Just how strong is another question, for

example Black can play 22 ... ♖e4 when White has a draw via 23 ♗h7+ ♕f7 24 ♗h5+ ♕g8, though it's not clear he has more than that.

**19 ♖e3 ♖a6 20 ♗d2 ♖b8 21 ♖d4**

After 21 ♖c1 Rublevsky gave 21 ... ♖b4 when 22 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗xd5 exd5 24 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 25 ♖xc5 ♖xb2 26 ♖xa5 (Or 26 ♖xd5 ♖fb8 27 ♖dd1 a4, when White must be careful because a2 is going to drop off) 26 ... ♖c4 is fine for Black, not least because of the threat of 27 ... ♖fb8.

**21 ... ♖b4 22 ♗e3 ♖d7**



**23 a3**

At first 23 ♖xd5? exd5 24 e6 looks good, but Black can meet this with the calm 24 ... ♖f6!. White might have considered the solid 23 b3, but Black can then regroup his knight with 23 ... ♖b8 24 ♖a4 ♖c6 getting full equality.

**23 ... ♖b7 24 f4**

24 ♖a2 was worth considering, offering the b2-pawn as bait. Black should probably then play 24 ... ♖b8! intending ... ♖c6 (24 ... ♖xb2!? 25 ♖xd5 exd5 26 ♖xd5 looks very risky, with ideas such as e5-e6 in the air) and meet 25 ♖a4 with 25 ... ♖b5 26 ♖c5 ♖c7.

**24 ... ♖c4 25 ♖d2**

White has some promising attacking tries here, but they can be handled with cold-blooded defence. After 25 f5!? Black can play 25 ... ♖g5 26 ♗f2 gxf5! and 25 ♖d3?! is answered by 25 ... ♖xb2 26 ♖xd5 ♖b3!.

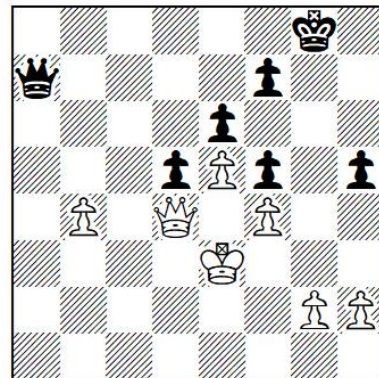
**25 ... ♖b8! 26 ♖d3 ♖xd3 27 ♗xd3 ♖d7 28 ♖a4 ♗b8 29 ♖c1 ♖c8 30 ♖dc2 ♖bc7 31**

**♖xc7 ♖xc7 32 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 33 ♗c3 ♗b7!? 34 ♕f2**

**Question:** Can White not play 34 ♗xa5 here?

**Answer:** Rublevsky would have answered with 34 ... ♖xa3! after which 35 ♗a7 (35 ♖xa3 ♗b1+ 36 ♕f2 ♗c2+ 37 ♕g3 ♗d3+ 38 ♕h4 ♗xd4 is just good for Black) 35 ... ♗xa7 36 ♖xa7 ♖e7 followed by 37 ... g5 would give Black some chances in the endgame.

**34 ... ♗b5 35 ♗c2 ♖b8 36 ♖c3 ♗b7 37 ♖e2 ♖c6 38 ♖c5 ♗b5 39 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 40 ♗c3 h5 41 ♖d4 ♗b6 42 ♕e2 ♖f5 43 ♖xf5 gxf5 44 b4 axb4 45 axb4 ♗a6+ 46 ♕e3 ♗a7+ 47 ♗d4**



After 47 ♕f3 Black gets some chances with 47 ... d4!, for example 48 ♗b3 ♗a8+ 49 ♕f2 ♗e4 50 g3 h4 etc.

**47 ... ♗a3+**

47 ... ♗xd4+ 48 ♕xd4 ♕f8 49 b5 is a draw.

**48 ♕f2 h4!? 49 ♗b6**

49 h3 was worth considering as White's king can escape the checks on h2.

**49 ... ♗b2+ 50 ♕e1 ♗c1+ 51 ♕e2 ♗c4+ 52 ♕d1 ♗f1+ 53 ♕c2 ♗c4+ 54 ♕d1 ♗f1+ 55 ♕c2 ♗xf4 56 ♗d8+ ♕h7 57 ♗e7?**

Thus far White has defended well but allowing Black to capture on e5 turns out to be a mistake. White should have played 57 ♗f6 after which Rublevsky analyzed 57 ... ♗c4+ 58 ♕d1 ♗f1+ 59 ♕c2 ♗xg2+ 60 ♕b3 ♗f3+ 61 ♕a4 ♗h5 62 b5 d4 63 ♕b4! d3 64 ♕c3 with a draw.

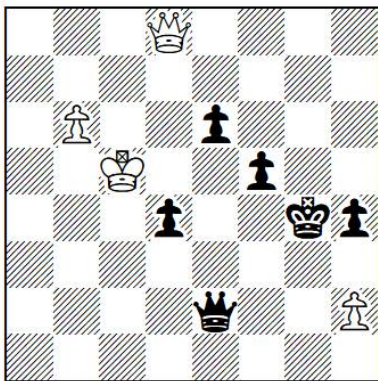
57 ... ♖xe5 58 ♖xf7+ ♔h6 59 b5 ♖e2+ 60 ♔c3 ♖c4+ 61 ♔d2 d4 62 ♖f8+ ♔g6 63 ♖g8+ ♔h5 64 ♖e8+ ♔g5 65 ♖d8+ ♔g4! 66 b6

66 ♖g8+ might have been a better try but Black can then play 66 ... ♔f4 67 ♖b8+ ♔e4! 68 ♖b7+ ♔e5 69 ♖b8+ ♔d5 70 ♖b7+ ♔d6 71 ♖a6+ (Or 71 ♖b8+ ♔c5 72 ♖e5+ ♖d5) 71 ... ♔e5 to escape the checks. On the other hand, 66 h3+ seems to lose fairly trivially after 66 ... ♔g3 67 ♖g5+ ♔f2 68 ♖xh4+ ♔xg2.

66 ... ♖c3+ 67 ♔d1 ♖d3+ 68 ♔c1

After 68 ♔e1 Black is winning with the line 68 ... ♖e3+ 69 ♔f1 d3 70 ♖g8+ ♔f4 71 g3+ ♔f3 72 ♖a8+ ♖e4 73 ♖xe4+ fxe4 74 ♔e1 e3 75 b7 d2+ 76 ♔d1 ♔f2 77 b8 ♖e2+ 78 ♔xd2 e1 ♖+ 79 ♔d3 ♖e3+ 80 ♔c4 ♖e4+ 81 ♔c3 h3! marking out White's h2-pawn for capture.

68 ... ♖f1+ 69 ♔b2 ♖xg2+ 70 ♔b3 ♖f3+ 71 ♔c4 ♖c3+ 72 ♔b5 ♖b3+ 73 ♔a6 ♖a3+ 74 ♔b5 ♖b2+ 75 ♔a6 ♖a2+ 76 ♔b5 ♖e2+ 77 ♔c5



Or if 77 ♔a5 there follows 77 ... d3 78 b7 d2 79 b8 ♖ d1 ♖ 80 ♖g8+ ♔f3 81 ♖b7+ ♖e4 82 ♖xe4+ fxe4 with a technical win in sight.

77 ... ♖c2+ 78 ♔d6 d3 79 b7 d2 80 ♔xe6

After 80 b8 ♖ Black can win with 80 ... d1 ♖+ 81 ♔xe6 ♖c4+ 82 ♔e7 ♖e1+ 83 ♔f8 ♖a1, when White has no useful checks and is faced with the threat of ♖h8+.

80 ... ♖e4+ 81 ♔f6 ♖c6+ 82 ♔e5 ♖xb7 83 h3+

83 ♖xd2 ♖e7+ 84 ♔d4 ♖d8+ gets the queens off with a winning pawn endgame.

83 ... ♔xh3 84 ♖d3+ ♔h2 85 ♖xd2+ ♖g2 86 ♖d1 ♖f2 87 ♔f6 f4 88 ♔f5 f3 89 ♔g4

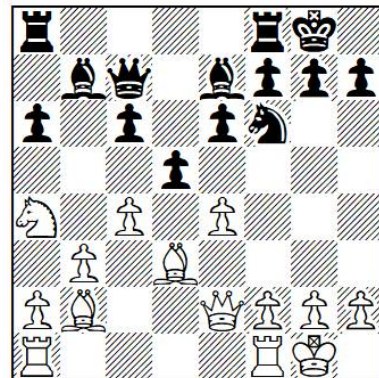
♖g3+ 90 ♔h5 f2 91 ♖f1 ♖f3+ 92 ♔h6 ♖g2 0-1

### Game 38

**B.Kutuzovic-O.Romanishin**

Nova Gorica 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♖e2 ♙e7 10 b3 0-0 11 ♙b2 ♙b7 12 ♘a4 ♖c7 13 c4

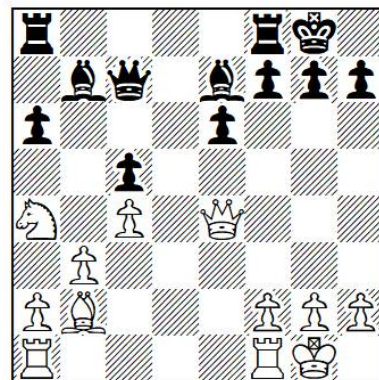


The previous game featured the superior (but equal) 13 e5, this time we see what happens when White omits this move and allows Black to capture on e4

**Question:** Are there any potential advantages to what White is doing here?

**Answer:** One major one is that he is not blocking in the bishop on b2.

13 ... dxe4 14 ♙xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♖xe4 c5!



The right move, unveiling the bishop on b7. White might have hoped to attack the c5-pawn with ♖e3 and ♙a3, but this plan proves to be unachievable.

**16 ♖e3 ♜fd8 17 ♜ad1**

It turns out that Black can meet 17 ♟a3 with 17 ... ♜d4 (Or even 17 ... ♟f6 intending 18 ... ♟d4) 18 ♟b2 ♜e4, when Black takes the initiative. White can also consider 17 ♟e5 but then 17 ... ♞c6 18 f3 ♜d7 19 ♜ad1 ♜ad8 would also see Black starting to improve his position.

**17 ... ♜xd1 18 ♜xd1 ♜d8 19 ♜xd8+ ♞xd8 20 h3?!**

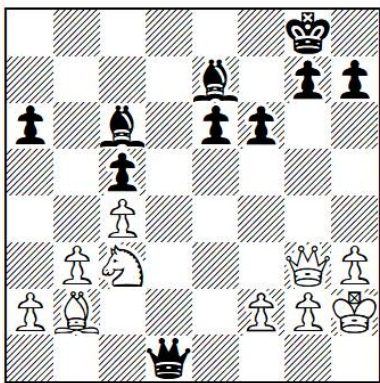
Letting Black's queen in is a clear mistake, but it's not easy for White in any case. The obvious defence is 20 ♞e2 and it does look like the better option. Even so Black is pressing, for example after 20 ... ♟c6 21 ♞c3 ♟f6 22 ♞d1 ♟d4 23 ♟xd4 ♞xd4 (23 ... cxd4!? is also interesting) 24 ♞e3 f5 the advance of Black's kingside pawns is evidently causing some difficulties.

**20 ... ♞d1+ 21 ♟h2 ♟c6 22 ♞g3**

**Question:** Why can't White play 22 ♞xc5 and win a pawn?

**Answer:** This might have been his intention some moves back, but now it's clear that the knight is lost after 22 ... ♞d6+ etc.

**22 ... ♟f6 23 ♞c3**



**23 ... ♞c2?**

Hereabouts both sides slip up, with Romanishin missing some ingenious pathways pointed out by Stockfish. 23 ... ♞f1 is the most testing move as Black has the powerful threat of 24 ... ♟d6. After 24 f3 ♟f7 25 ♟a3 f5 White is tied down whereas Black can gradually improve his position.

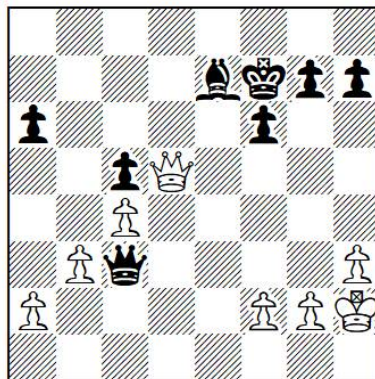
**24 ♞e3?**

White in turn slips up and could have lost on the spot. He should have played 24 ♞c7!, when, for example, 24 ... ♟f7 (24 ... ♞xb2? 25 ♞xe7 ♞xc3 26 ♞xe6+ leads to the win of a pawn for White) 25 ♞xc6 ♞xb2 26 ♞f3 brings about approximate equality.

**24 ... ♞xb2?**

Missing a win, which was admittedly very hard to see. Black could have played 24 ... ♟d6+ 25 g3 ♟e5 which has the amazing point that 26 ♞xc5 ♟b7!! 27 ♞b6 loses to 27 ... ♟xg3+!! 28 ♟g1 (28 ♟xg3 ♞g6+ followed by 29 ... ♞g5 is mate!) 28 ... ♞xb2 29 ♞d1 ♞e2 30 ♞xb7 ♞xd1+ 31 ♟g2 ♟d6 32 ♞d7 h5, winning for Black. Engines make this look easy, but it most definitely is not!

**25 ♞xe6+ ♟f8 26 ♞xc6 ♞xc3 27 ♞a8+ ♟f7 28 ♞d5+**



**28 ... ♟f8**

Surprisingly there is no escape from the checks, for example 28 ... ♟g6 is met by 29 ♞e4+ when Black must defend his bishop with 29 ... ♟f7. Romanishin checks to see if he can tempt White into a mistake, but it just doesn't happen.

**29 ♞a8+ ♟f7 30 ♞d5+ ♟e8 31 ♞c6+ ♟d8 32 ♞a8+ ♟d7 33 ♞b7+ ♟d8 34 ♞a8+ ♟c7 35 ♞a7+ ♟d6 36 ♞xa6+ ♟d7**

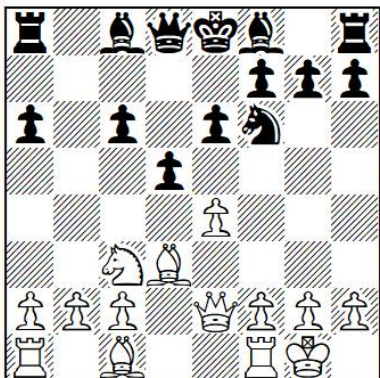
**Or 36 ... ♟e5 37 ♞b7 ♟d6 38 ♞a6+ etc. 37 ♞b7+ 1/2-1/2**

*Game 39*

**J.Ashwin-V.Laznicka**

World Under-20 Championship, Yerevan 2007

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9  
♙e2



**Question:** How is this different to the 9 ♙e1 ♙e7 10 e5 ♘d7 11 ♙g4, that we've seen so far?

**Answer:** White has no intention of troubling Black with any ♙g4 sally, focussing instead on the strategic plan of ♘a4 and c2-c4. It's a quieter and more positional treatment.

9 ... ♙e7 10 b3 0-0 11 ♙b2 ♙b7 12 ♘a4 ♙c7

A case can also be made for 12 ... c5. White cannot then play 13 exd5 exd5 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♘xc5 because of 15 ... ♙xa1 16 ♘xb7 ♙c7, winning the exchange.

13 e5 ♘d7 14 c4 dxc4

Black also contracts some pawn weaknesses after 14 ... ♘b6 15 cxd5. He is unable to capture on a4 because of d5-d6.

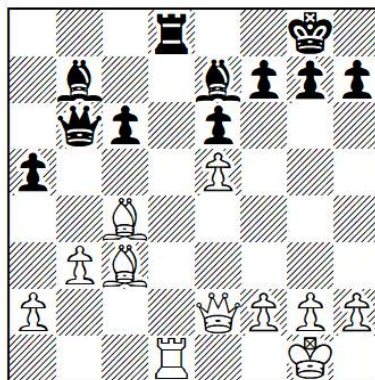
15 ♙xc4 ♘b6 16 ♘xb6 ♙xb6 17 ♙fd1 ♙fd8

Here too Black could well consider 17 ... c5, not least because 18 ♙d7 is met by 18 ... ♙c6, threatening the rook and mate on g2.

18 ♙xd8+

Stockfish points out the exotic 18 ♙d6!?, the point being that after 18 ... ♙xd6? (18 ... a5 might be best, just ignoring the offer) 19 exd6 ♙c5 (19 ... ♙xd6 20 ♙e5 wins on the spot) 20 ♙g4 g6 21 ♙h4, White's queen is coming in on f6 with a powerful attack.

18 ... ♙xd8 19 ♙d1 a5 20 ♙c3



Regardless of whether White exchanges rooks, the position is now rather equal. It also appears to be heading for a draw until White suddenly blunders.

20 ... ♙b4 21 ♙xb4 axb4 22 ♙d6 ♙xd6 23 exd6 ♙d4 24 ♙xe6!

A spectacular way to hold the balance.  
24 ... ♙xd6

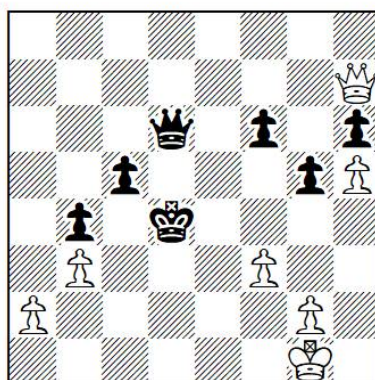
**Question:** What happens after 24 ... fxe6 - ?

**Answer:** Black gets mated via 25 ♙xe6+ ♔f8 26 ♙e7+ ♔g8 27 ♙e8 mate.

25 ♙c4 ♔f8 26 h4 h6 27 ♙h5 ♙e7 28 ♙a5 g6 29 h5 g5

It's not clear who was playing for White at this stage, White is playing aggressively but Black is higher rated.

30 ♙f5 c5 31 f3 ♔g7 32 ♔f2 ♙c6 33 ♙d3 ♙d6 34 ♙h7+ ♔f8 35 ♙c4 ♙e8 36 ♙f5 ♙d4+ 37 ♔e2 ♔e7 38 ♔f1 ♔d8 39 ♙h7 ♙a1+ 40 ♔f2 ♙f6 41 ♙d3+ ♔c7 42 ♙b5 ♙b2+ 43 ♔g3 ♙c3 44 ♙e2 ♙xb5 45 ♙xb5 ♙e1+ 46 ♔h2 ♙e5+ 47 ♔g1 f6 48 ♙a6 ♔d7 49 ♙b7+ ♔e6 50 ♙c8+ ♔d5 51 ♙d7+ ♙d6 52 ♙h7 ♔d4



Setting a trap into which White promptly tumbles.

**53 ♖xh6??**

Turning a drawn position into a lost one. 53 ♖b1 would have been dead equal.

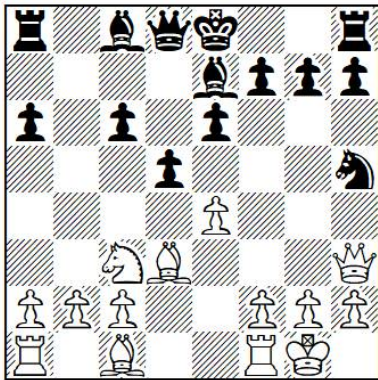
**53 ... ♗e3 54 ♖g6 ♖d1+ 55 ♔h2 ♕f2 56 ♕h3 ♖d7+ 57 g4 ♖d1 0-1**

*Game 40*

**S.Movsesian-B.Predojevic**

Sarajevo 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♖f3 ♙e7 10 ♖g3 ♘h5 11 ♖h3**



11 ♖g4 g6 will be examined in the next game.

**11 ... g6 12 e5**

**Question:** Can White harrass that knight on h5 with 12 ♙e2 ♘g7 13 ♙h6 - ?

**Answer:** He can, but it does not seem to get him very far after 13 ... 0-0 intending 14 ... f5 because White is relying purely on piece play rather than pawn action.

**12 ... f5!?**

**Question:** That looks interesting, what is the idea?

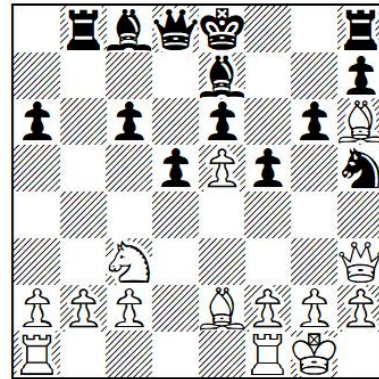
**Answer:** Essentially Black is giving his opponent a chance to open the position immediately with exf6, but if he doesn't take this it will be difficult to open the position later on. Note that Black had some good alternatives here such as 12 ... 0-0 or 12 ... ♖b8.

**13 ♙h6**

**Question:** What would happen after 13 exf6 - ?

**Answer:** It does look quite attractive for Black after 13 ... ♙xf6 (13 ... ♘xf6? 14 ♙xg6+), for example 14 f4 0-0 15 g4 ♙d4+ 16 ♕h1 ♘f6 with ... e5 in the air.

**13 ... ♖b8 14 ♙e2**



Quiet play does not work well, for example 14 b3 ♙g5 (14 ... ♕f7 also looks okay) 15 ♙xg5 ♖xg5 leaves no sign of the attacking chances White often gets in this line.

**14 ... ♖b4! 15 ♙xh5**

One of the points of Black's original and enterprising play is that 15 f4 can be met by 15 ... ♖xb2 16 ♙xh5 gxh5 17 ♖xh5+ ♕d7, when Black's king finds safety on the queenside. This kind of thing is quite common in the French Defence but not seen as often in the Sicilian.

**15 ... ♖h4! 16 ♖g3 ♕f7!?**

**Question:** Why did Black not take the bishop?

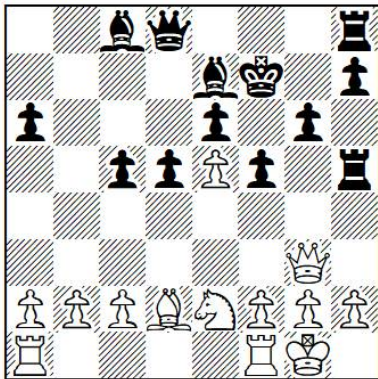
**Answer:** 16 ... ♖xh5 was very reasonable, but Predojevic sees no reason to recapture the piece immediately. He's tempting White into 'winning a pawn' by capturing on g6, but his opponent rightly declines.

**17 ♘e2**

White avoids 17 ♙xg6+? as after 17 ... hxg6 18 ♙d2 there follows 18 ... ♖xh2 19 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 20 ♕xh2 ♖h8+ 21 ♕g1 ♖xe5. Although the material balance would be

maintained, Black's central pawns would soon swamp White's position.

17 ... ♖xh5 18 ♔d2 c5



19 a3

**Question:** What does that move do?

**Answer:** White wants to get the d4-square for his knight, so he's looking to undermine the c5-pawn with b2-b4.

19 ... ♖h4 20 b4 ♖e4 21 ♕f3?!

21 ♖fe1 would have been a better way to defend the knight as it also lends protection to the pawn on e5.

21 ... ♔d7 22 ♘g3 ♖c4 23 c3 h5 24 h3

White probably didn't like the look of Black's h-pawn going to h3. 24 ♔xc5 h4 25 ♘e2 h3 certainly doesn't look pleasant.

24 ... ♕c7 25 ♔xc5 ♖xc5

Given Black's sharp conduct of much of this game, it's almost a surprise to see a recapture.

**Question:** Was there a stronger move?

**Answer:** Probably at least one. Besides capturing the e5-pawn, Black could have considered 25 ... g5!? intending ... g5-g4 and meeting 26 ♘xh5 with 26 ... g4 27 hxg4 ♖xg4 28 ♘g3 ♔xc5. Although nothing is forced it looks very difficult for White to arrange the defence of his king.

26 ♖fe1

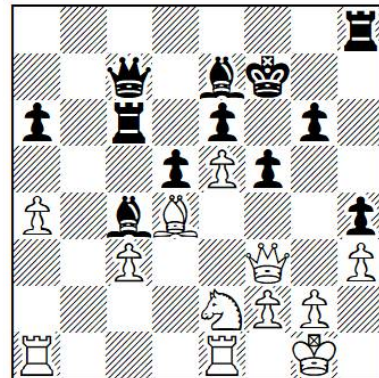
There was a case for the immediate 26 ♘e2 before Black's rook returns to c4.

26 ... ♔b5

Probably the wrong plan, the bishop looks good on c4 but Black later ends up

exchanging it. 26 ... ♖c4! looks more dangerous for White because the regrouping with 27 ♘e2 is answered by 27 ... ♖e4! attacking the e5-pawn.

27 a4 ♔c4 28 ♔e3 ♖c6 29 ♔d4 h4 30 ♘e2



30 ... ♔xe2

**Question:** Why did Black exchange his wonderful bishop for White's poorly placed knight?

**Answer:** The bishop looks nice on c4 but it helps shield the weak pawn on c3. Black probably reasoned that without this exchange it would be impossible to make any progress.

31 ♕xe2 ♖c4 32 ♖eb1 ♖b8 33 ♕d1 ♖xb1

Black is going directly for the a4-pawn, but White has enough counterplay to draw. To access c3 Black would really like to exchange bishops too, but after 33 ... ♔c5 34 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 35 ♖b1 ♕c7 36 ♕d2 Black would need to look after his king.

34 ♖xb1 ♕d7 35 a5 ♖a4 36 ♕d2 ♔g7 37 ♖b6! ♖xa5 38 c4!

Hitting the rook on a5 so as to gain time to set up a passed c-pawn.

38 ... ♖a4 39 c5 ♖c4 40 ♖xa6 g5 41 ♕b2 ♔xc5 42 ♔xc5 ♖xc5 43 ♕b8 ♕c8 44 ♕d6

This is starting to look dangerous for Black, but he can force perpetual check.

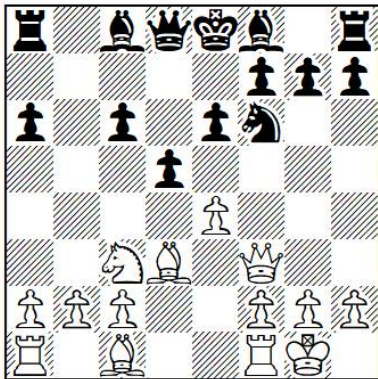
44 ... ♖c1+ 45 ♔h2 ♖h1+! 46 ♔xh1 ♕c1+ 47 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 1/2-1/2

Game 41

G.Jones-O.Korneev

Spanish Team Championship, Linares 2018

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6  
5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♕d3 d5 8 0-0 ♗f6 9  
♙f3



**Question:** What is the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** White wants to bring his queen to g3 and make it difficult for Black to develop his kingside. It is arguably the most critical plan in the 6 ♗xc6 system.

9 ... ♕e7 10 ♙g3 ♗h5!

This looks like Black's best and most direct approach. 10 ... 0-0 11 ♕h6 ♗e8 has been played by some strong players, but it is rather passive for most players' taste.

11 ♙g4

11 ♙h3 g6 was covered in the previous game. Note that White can also play 11 ♙e5 ♗f6 and now 12 ♙g3, repeating the position. Black would not be troubled by 12 ♕f4 because of simply 12 ... 0-0 followed by ... ♕b7 and ... ♗d7.

11 ... g6 12 ♕h6

Preventing Black from castling, at least temporarily. 12 f4? would be a blunder because of 12 ... dxe4 13 ♗xe4 f5. White could consider 12 e5 but then Black can obtain counterplay with the typical 12 ... ♖b8 intending ... ♖b4.

12 ... d4

Immediately closing the centre looks best, and is also very comfortable for Black. 12 ... e5 13 ♙f3 and now 13 ... d4 would be bad because of 14 ♕c4!. When Black tries to support the centre with 13 ... ♕e6 White can play 14 exd5 cxd5 15 ♖ad1 with a dangerous initiative.

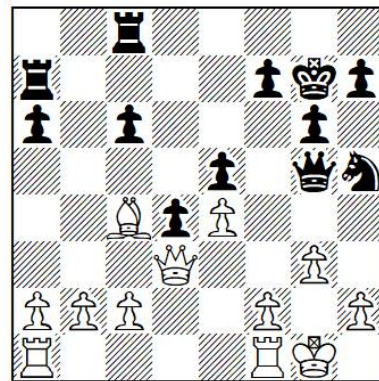
13 ♗a4

After 13 ♗e2 e5 14 ♙f3 Black can play 14 ... ♕e6 preparing ... ♕g5. The immediate 14 ... ♕g5 is also fine because 15 ♕c4 can be comfortably met by 15 ... ♖a7.

13 ... e5 14 ♙f3 ♕g5 15 ♕c4 ♖a7 16 ♕xg5  
♙xg5 17 ♗b6

White could also keep his knight on the board with 17 g3, and here too the position would be about equal.

17 ... 0-0 18 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 19 g3 ♔g7 20  
♙d3



20 ... c5!

Black rightly understands that the priority is to support his centre, for example 20 ... a5 is strongly met by 21 f4!.

21 ♕xa6 c4!?

Korneev embarks upon an interesting but intricate pawn sacrifice which places demands on both players. A simpler approach would have been 21 ... ♖b8 after which 22 b3 ♗f4 23 ♙c4 ♖ba8 24 ♕b5 ♖xa2 25 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 26 ♙xc5 ♗e6 27 ♙c6 ♙g4 gives Black excellent play on the kingside. A possible sequel is 28 f3 ♙g5 29 ♕d3 ♗f4 30 ♙b5 h5 31 ♔h1 ♗xd3 32 ♙xd3 ♙e3 33 ♙xe3 dxe3 34 ♖e1 ♖xc2 35 ♖xe3 ♔f6 with a drawn rook endgame.

22 ♕xc4 ♗f4 23 ♙b3 ♙h5 24 gxf4

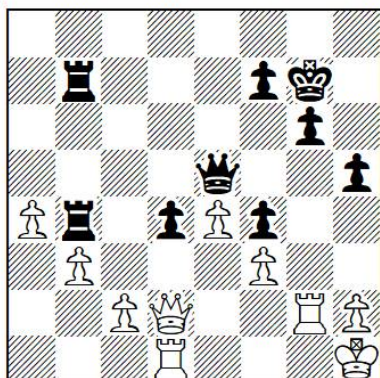
24 f3 ♖ac7 25 gxf4 ♖xc4 26 ♖f2 exf4 is almost the same as the game.

24 ... ♖xc4 25 f3 ♖ac7 26 ♖f2 exf4 27  
♙d3 ♙g5+ 28 ♔h1 ♙c5 29 ♖d1 ♖b4

It seems that the right idea for Black was to play ... f6, which would make it very difficult for White to improve his position in the way he did in the game. There are

various points at which Black could do this, but the immediate 29 ... f6 looks fine.

30 b3 ♖a7 31 a4 ♕e5 32 ♖d2 ♗ab7 33 ♗g2 h6 34 ♗g4 h5 35 ♗f6



35 ... ♗f6

It looks as if White should eventually win this position with the connected passed pawns on the queenside, but to do so he will first need to activate his pieces. Keeping the queen on e5 with 35 ... ♔h7 probably makes things slightly more difficult for White to improve his position, for example 36 ♗dg1 ♗e6 37 ♗g5 (Or 37 ♗xf4?! d3!) 37 ... ♗h3 38 ♗xf4?! d3 breaking up White's queenside pawns with real chances to save the game.

36 ♗dg1 ♗b6 37 ♗g5 ♗e6?! 38 ♗f5 ♗h4 39 ♗xf4

The fall of another pawn is not good news for Black, and when d4 drops as well it is probably time to take the rest of the day off.

39 ... ♗d8 40 ♗f5 ♔h7 41 ♗g2 ♗h4 42 ♗d5 ♗c6 43 ♗xd4

**Question:** Is there a reason Black played on after this move?

**Answer:** Probably the clock was playing a role, that White was short of time. And as Frank Marshall once stated, nobody ever won a game by resigning!

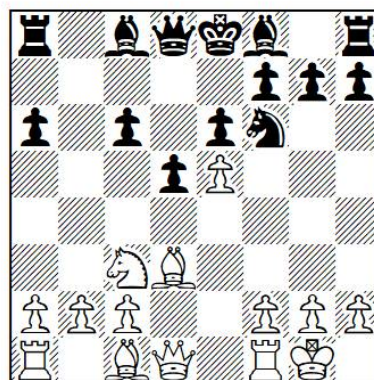
43 ... ♗c3 44 ♗d2 ♗f4 45 ♗f2 ♗e3 46 ♗e2 ♗f4 47 ♗f1 ♗bc7 48 ♗g3 ♗f6 49 ♗f2 ♗a6 50 ♗d1 ♗f6 51 f4 h4 52 e5 ♗c6+ 53 ♔g1 h3 54 ♗h4+ ♔g7 55 ♗d8 ♗c5+ 56 ♗f2 ♗xf2+ 57 ♔xf2 ♗xc2+ 58 ♔e3 1-0

## Game 42

V.Sanal-F.Berkes

European Championship, Minsk 2017

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗c3 ♗c6 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 d5 8 0-0 ♗f6 9 e5



A very early instance of this move.

**Question:** Are there any advantages or disadvantages compared with waiting?

**Answer:** The main advantage is that you don't have to keep wondering when you should play e4-e5. A disadvantage is that unless Black plays and obliging ... ♗e7, there's not much point attacking his g-pawn with ♗g4. This in fact explains why he leaves ... ♗e7 until later and plays other useful moves.

9 ... ♗d7 10 ♗e1 ♗b7 11 ♗a4 ♗c7 12 ♗e2 c5 13 c4 d4

This tends to be the best answer to White's c2-c4.

14 b3 ♗e7 15 ♗f4 0-0 16 ♗g3 a5 17 f4

It always looks tempting to recommend 17 ♗b2 in order to send the knight to the d3-square. The problem is that timing is crucial because Black can answer with 17 ... ♗b6 intending ... a5-a4.

17 ... ♗c6

**Question:** Can Black break the queenside blockade with 17 ... ♗b6 here too?

**Answer:** This will often be a good idea, though Black must be careful about

moving pieces away from the protection of his king. In the current position White could then consider 18 f5! exf5 19 e6 ♔d6 20 ♔xd6 ♚xd6 21 ♖xb6 ♚xb6 22 ♔xf5 fxe6 23 ♚xe6+, when a subsequent ♚e5 will put pressure on the weak c5-pawn.

**18 ♚c2 g6 19 ♖b2 ♔g7 20 ♚f2**

White wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops with ♔g3-h4, but Black's reply looks quite strong. In retrospect it would have been better to play 20 ♔e4 as this would clear the d3-square for White's knight.

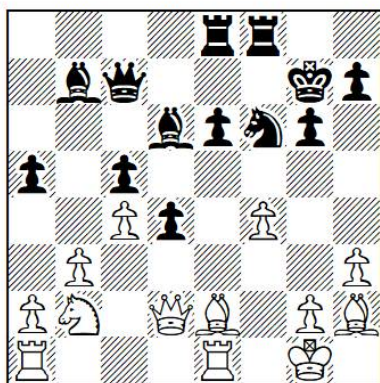
**20 ... f5 21 exf6+ ♖xf6 22 h3?**

White is concerned about ... ♖f6-g4 but the medicine proves worse than the disease. 22 ♚d2 was relatively best, at least getting the queen off the f-file. After 22 ... ♚ae8 (22 ... ♖g4?! is strongly met by 23 ♔e4!) 23 ♚e2 intending ♚ae1, White's position is still okay.

**22 ... ♚ae8 23 ♚d2**

A move too late, but it's already difficult to find moves for White.

**23 ... ♔d6 24 ♔h2 ♚c7 25 ♔e2?**



It seems likely that White was in time trouble here, perhaps brought on by his difficulty in finding a plan. The rest is a massacre.

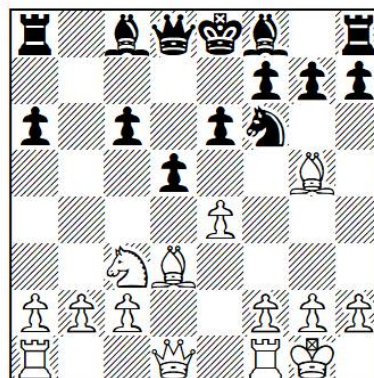
**25 ... ♖e4 26 ♚d3 ♖c3 27 ♔g4 ♔xf4 28 ♔xf4 ♚xf4 29 ♚f1 ♚d6 30 ♚xf8 ♚xf8 31 ♚e1 ♚f4 32 ♚f1 ♚xf1+ 33 ♚xf1 ♚xf1+ 34 ♔xf1 ♔e4 35 ♔xe6 ♔f6 36 ♔g8 g5 37 g3 ♔e5 38 ♔f2 ♖xa2 39 ♖a4 ♔d6 0-1**

Game 43

A.Morozevich-P.Svidler

Moscow 2009

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 a6 6 ♖xc6 bxc6 7 ♔d3 d5 8 0-0 ♖f6 9 ♔g5**



A natural developing move which looks to force the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

**Question:** Is that good for White because Black's light-squared bishop is shut in behind pawns?

**Answer:** It's not quite that simple, not least because Black's pawns are hardly fixed. In fact after a later ... c6-c5 and ... d5-d4, the light square bishop might become very strong.

**9 ... ♔e7 10 e5**

This is certainly the logical follow-up.

**10 ... ♖d7 11 ♔xe7 ♚xe7 12 ♚e1 c5**

This also makes sense but is certainly not mandatory. 12 ... ♚b4 13 ♚b1 a5 is worth considering, activating Black's queen and preparing to exchange the light-squared bishops with 14 ... ♔a6.

**13 b3 ♔b7 14 ♚h5**

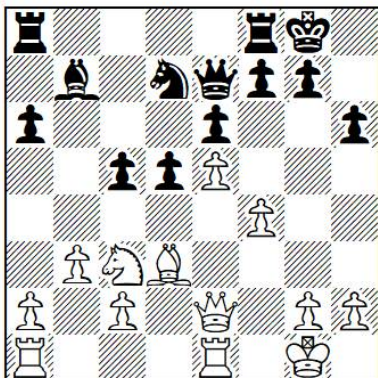
**Question:** Does White really expect Black to castle into mate?

**Answer:** He might have been hoping for such a miracle, but the expectation was probably that Black would now weaken his kingside in preparation for castling. This is, in fact, what now happens.

Another way to play the position is with 14 ♚g4 0-0 15 ♚g3, essentially preparing for Black's ... f7-f6. In fact, he can probably

dispense with this move if there is no particular threat against his king.

14 ... h6 15 f4 0-0 16 ♖e2



16 ... f6

This typical undermining move is not entirely necessary. Black could also play 16 ... ♘b6, looking to play ... c4-c4 at an appropriate moment.

17 exf6 ♜xf6 18 ♜ad1 ♚d6

In view of the following combination the engine prefers the odd-looking 18 ... ♚d8, though White's efforts only manage to eke out a minimal edge.

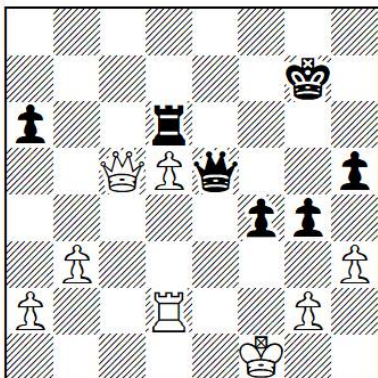
19 f5! exf5 20 ♘xd5 ♙xd5 21 ♙c4 ♘b6 22 ♙xd5+ ♘xd5 23 ♚f3 ♜d8 24 c4

So White recovers the piece with the better pawn structure but the position turns out to be drawish anyway.

24 ... ♜e6! 25 ♜xe6 ♚xe6 26 cxd5 ♚e5 27 ♚d3 ♜d6 28 h3 f4

Svidler plays very well here, taking space on the kingside so as to prevent White from improving his position.

29 ♔f2 ♔h8 30 ♜d2 g5 31 ♔f1 ♔g7 32 ♚c4 h5 33 ♚xc5 g4



34 hxg4

**Question:** Should White not exchange queens with 34 ♚d4 to go a pawn up in the endgame?

**Answer:** That would certainly be playable, but after 34 ... ♔f6 35 ♚d3 ♚f5 36 ♚c3+ ♚e5 the exchange of queens would see the d5-pawn drop off.

34 ... hxg4 35 ♚d4 ♔f6 36 ♚d3 a5 37 ♜d1 ♔g5 38 ♔f2 ♚b2+ 39 ♜d2 ♚e5 40 ♜d1 ♚b2+ 41 ♚d2 ♚xd2+ 42 ♜xd2 ♔f5 43 g3 fxg3+ 44 ♔xg3 ♔e4 45 a3 ♜xd5 46 ♜xd5 ♔xd5 47 b4 axb4 48 axb4 ♔c4 49 ♔xg4 ♔xb4 1/2-1/2

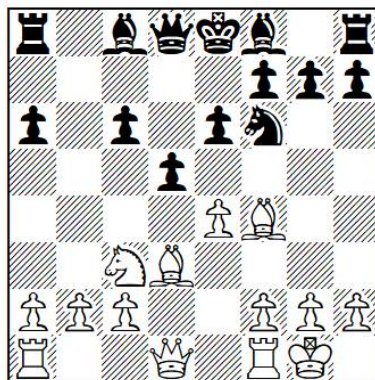
Playing on to king vs. king can be perceived as a display of manhood; neither side backed down and nobody sued for peace.

#### Game 44

**A. Timofeev-B. Grachev**

Vladivostok 2014

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♙f4



A simple developing move which certainly shouldn't be bad.

**Question:** Is there a specific plan associated with this move?

**Answer:** Not really, though one plus point is that it prevents ... ♜a8-b8, which is frequently played in this line.

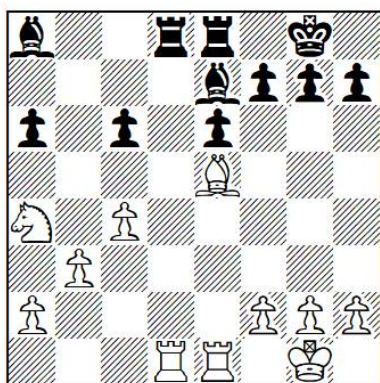
9 ... ♙e7 10 ♜e1 0-0 11 ♚f3 ♙b7

Black habitually places his bishop here but against White's set-up in this game there is another choice. Stockfish makes the eminently sensible suggestion of 11 ... a5 followed by 12 ... ♗a6, and it looks fairly even.

**12 ♖ad1 ♗e8 13 ♘a4**

13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♘e2 is a more direct approach, trying to bring pieces across to the kingside. Black should probably meet this with 14 ... ♘c5 in order to eliminate White's more dangerous bishop.

**13 ... ♗a5 14 b3 dxe4 15 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♖ad8 17 c4 ♗a8 18 ♗e5 ♗xe5 19 ♗xe5**



**19 ... ♗b4**

Probably not best, though it's tempting to want to bring this bishop outside the pawn chain before playing ... c6-c5. The immediate 19 ... c5! was preferable after which 20 ♗c7 ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 ♗c6 22 ♗b6 (Or 22 ♘b6 f6) 22 ... ♗xa4 23 ♗xa4 ♖b8 24 a5 ♖b7 defends d7 with rather more than equality. White can do nothing whereas Black can start nudging his kingside pawns forward.

**20 ♖f1**

Perhaps trusting his opponent's assessment or missing the fact that after 20 ♗c3 c5 21 ♗xb4 cxb4 22 ♖a1! intending 23 a3 looks quite unpleasant for Black.

**20 ... c5 21 ♗d6 ♖c8 22 ♘b6 ♖c6 23 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♗e5 a5!**

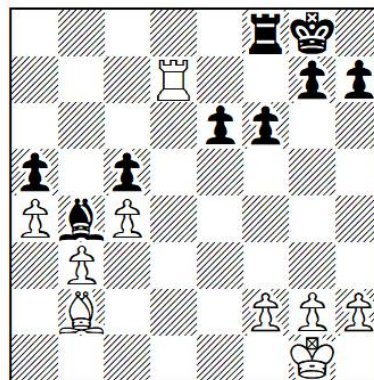
A typical and noteworthy plan in these structures. Black wants to lever open the a-file with ... a5-a4 and if White stops this with a2-a4 the b3-pawn is backward.

**25 a4 f6 26 ♗b2 ♖cc8 27 ♖d7**

**Question:** Can White play 27 ♖d6 and then use the time gained by the attack on e6 to double rooks?

**Answer:** That's a great question. The answer is that Black should let e6 drop and seek active play, the right line being 27 ... ♖d8! 28 ♖xe6 ♖d3 29 ♖e3 ♖xe3 30 fxe3 ♖d8 intending 31 ... ♖d3.

**27 ... ♖d8 28 ♖fd1 ♖xd7 29 ♖xd7 ♖f8**



Aiming to challenge White's rook with ... ♖f8-f7. Although Black's position looks passive there are no targets in his position, the bishop on b4 protects the two isolated pawns on the queenside.

**30 ♖f1 ♖f7 31 ♖d8+ ♖f8 32 ♖d7 ♖f7 33 ♖d6 ♖e7 34 ♖e2 ♖f7 35 ♖d3 e5 36 f3 ♖e6 37 ♖d7+ ♖e8 38 ♖d5 ♖e7 39 ♗c3**

The exchange of bishops is almost equivalent to the offer of a draw.

**39 ... ♗xc3 40 ♖xc3 ♖c6 41 h4 1/2-1/2**

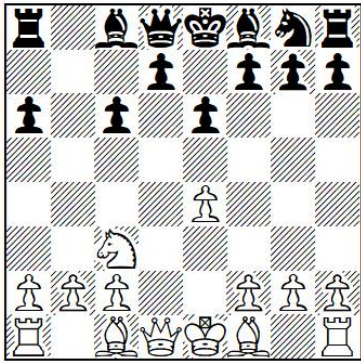
There is no way for either side to make progress.

*Game 45*

**D.Solak-F.Caruana**

Tromsø Olympiad, 2014

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6**



### 7 ♖d3 d5

Although other moves have been tried here, this simple and direct approach seems like the most logical. Black has an extra central pawn and so uses to stake a claim to the centre.

### 8 0-0 ♗f6 9 ♖e1 ♙e7 10 e5

In the game V.Topalov-S.Mamedyarov, Sofia 2007, White varied with 10 ♖f3 after which 10 ... 0-0 11 ♙g5 d4 12 ♗a4 e5 13 b3 ♗d7 14 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 15 c3 c5 16 ♖ac1 ♗d6 17 ♗g3 ♙b7 was certainly no worse for Black.

### 10 ... ♗d7 11 ♗g4 ♙f8

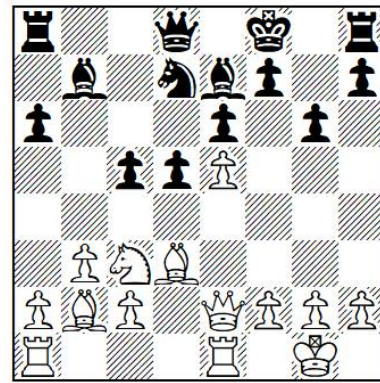
Caruana is probably the World's leading expert in this line, so his patronage of the king move is something we should take note of.

The alternative is 11 ... g6 but this seems less reliable, for example 12 ♙h6 ♖b8 13 ♗d1 (13 ♖h3!? is also critical, for example 13 ... ♖xb2 14 ♙g7 ♖g8 15 ♖xh7 ♖xg7 16 ♖xg7 ♙b4 17 ♖g8+ ♗f8 18 ♖e3 ♙xc3 19 ♙xg6 fxg6 20 ♖xc3 seems okay for Black but would not be everybody's idea of heaven) 13 ... ♖b4 14 c4 dxc4 (14 ... ♖a5!? 15 ♖e2 ♗c5 16 ♗e3 ♗xd3 17 ♖xd3 ♖xb2 18 ♖ac1 was also quite scary-looking in A.Naiditsch-B.Grachev, Croatia 2014) 15 ♙xc4 ♖a5 16 ♗e3 ♗xe5 17 ♖d4 f6 18 ♖c3 ♖c5 19 ♖ac1 gave White a strong initiative for the pawn in F.Caruana-P.Svidler, FIDE World Rapid 2014.

### 12 ♖e2

One move of several. The alternatives will be examined in the next three games.

### 12 ... c5 13 b3 ♙b7 14 ♙b2 g6



This makes sense when White's bishop has been committed to b2 as Black's king can now 'castle by hand'. Playing it any earlier would be met by ♙h6+.

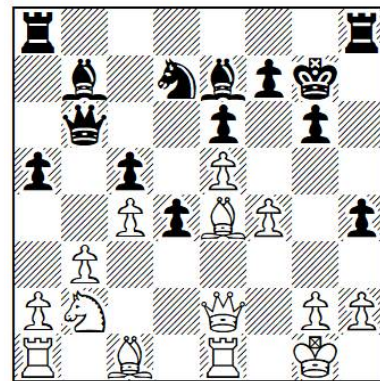
### 15 ♗d1 ♖b6 16 c4 d4

There are pros and cons to this move. The main drawback is that it gives his opponent the e4-square but at the same time it cuts the bishop on b2 out of play. White now repositions this bishop so as to give it more scope.

### 17 ♙c1 h5!

Taking space on the kingside and preventing 18 ♙h6+.

### 18 ♙e4 h4 19 f4 ♙g7 20 ♗b2 a5



Another instructive pawn move. Caruana introduces the possibility of ... a5-a4, which would break open a file on the queenside.

### 21 ♙d2 ♗b8

**Question:** Why is Black undeveloping his knight and interfering with the connection of his rooks?

**Answer:** The knight is being repositioned on c6 where it has more activity.

22 ♖ab1 ♙xe4 23 ♜xe4 ♘c6 24 ♜f1 ♖ab8  
25 ♜f3 ♜c7 26 ♜bf1 ♙d8 27 ♜h3 ♘e7 28 g4?!

White loses patience and allows Black to damage his pawn structure with a neat trick. 28 ♜d3 would have been better when the position is still about equal.

28 ... hxg3 29 ♜xh8 g2!

A neat trick which was probably missed. Black is winning back the rook and now White cannot keep his pawns united with hxg3.

30 ♙xg2 ♘xh8 31 ♙f3 ♘f5 32 ♙e2 ♙g7  
33 ♜f3 ♙e7 34 ♜h3 ♙d8 35 ♙d1 ♙h4 36 ♜f3  
♙e7 37 ♙c1 ♙h4 38 ♜g2 ♜h8 39 ♜f3 ♖b8 40  
♜g2 ♙e7 41 ♜e4 ♙d8 42 ♙c2 a4?!

It's Caruana's turn to lose patience with this misfired attempt at a breakthrough. He would probably explain that it was his best practical chance in what is essentially a drawn position.

43 ♘xa4 ♜c8 44 ♜g2 ♜a7 45 ♙c1 ♙e7 46  
♙d2 ♜a6 47 ♙c1 ♜c7 48 ♙b1 ♖b7 49 ♘b2  
♖b8 50 ♜e2 ♙d8 1/2-1/2

Although White is a pawn up it looks impossible to utilize; an advance of his a- or b-pawns is never going to happen.

#### Game 46

**M.Cornette-V.Laznicka**

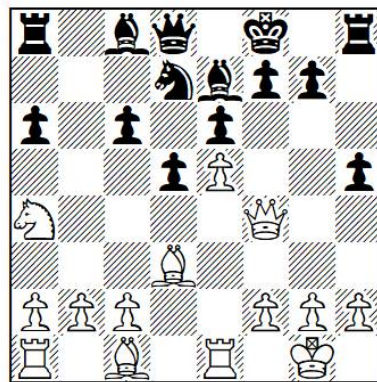
Porticcio Open 2016

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9  
♖e1 ♙e7 10 e5 ♘d7 11 ♜g4 ♙f8 12 ♘a4

**Question:** What is that idea behind that move?

**Answer:** It's a logical move. White makes way for his c-pawn to advance to c4, possibly envisaging a breakthrough on the c-file. Black responds in an equally logical way, ensuring that he is ready to meet c2-c4 with ... d5-d4, though my engine has some tactical issues with this plan that we'll come to later.

12 ... h5 13 ♜f4



13 ... c5

Stockfish doesn't like this move and instead recommends 13 ... ♙g8 in order to sidestep the idea of 14 ♙g6. It then suggests that 14 c4 can be met simply by 14 ... h4 intending to play ... ♜h5 at the next opportunity. Speaking as a human, like Laznicka I want to meet c2-c4 with ... d5-d4, though this does not mean that I am right.

**Question:** Are these disagreements between man and machine common?

**Answer:** They can be. Normally it means that the human has missed some complex tactical sequence, occasionally the human can perceive subtle strategic flows that only become apparent many moves later.

14 c4 d4

The logical follow-up to 13 ... c5, but again Stockfish doesn't like it. Instead it recommends 14 ... dxc4 as being Black's best chance.

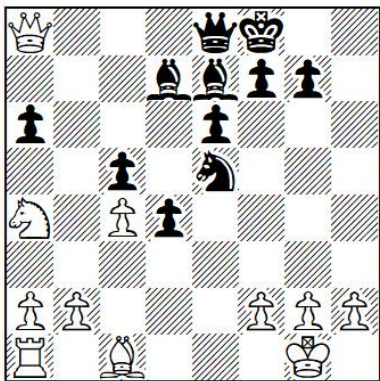
15 ♙g6 ♜e8 16 ♙xh5?!

This wins material but allows Black excellent counterplay. The reason for Stockfish's condemnation of 13 ... c5 and 14 ... d4 is that it claims 16 b4!? is very strong here. Certainly it looks difficult for Black, for example 16 ... cxb4 17 ♙e4 ♖b8 18 ♙b2 g5 19 ♜d2 ♜d8 (19 ... ♘xe5 20 ♙xd4 ♘xc4 21 ♜e2 threatens both the knight on c4 and the win of the exchange with 22 ♙a7/20 ♙xd4 ♙b7 21 c5 ♙xe4 22 ♖xe4 looks very dangerous for Black. I am inclined to defer to its view on this and accordingly prefer its 13 ... ♙g8 idea.

16 ... ♖xh5 17 ♜f3

Forking Black's rooks, but the e5-pawn is dropping.

17 ... ♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♔xa8 ♙d7



20 ♔e4?

White decides to keep the queens on, but he should probably have entered an endgame. Stockfish assesses 20 ♔xe8+ as approximately equal after 20 ... ♙e8 21 b3 ♙xa4 22 bxa4 ♗xc4 23 ♖b1 etc.

20 ... f6 21 b3?

After this White is demonstrably lost, though he subsequently escapes by the skin of his teeth. The energetic 21 f4 appears to have been necessary, for example 21 ... ♗xc4 22 ♔e2 ♙xa4 23 ♔xc4 ♔c6 24 b3 ♙b5 25 ♔c2 seems okay for White despite Black's apparent pressure.

21 ... ♔h5 22 f3 ♙c6 23 ♔e2 d3

Not bad but perhaps not the best. 23 ... ♙d6! is more convincing, for example 24 ♗b2 (24 ♙f4 ♗xf3+ 25 gxf3 ♙xf4 is horrendous for White) 24 ... ♙xf3 25 gxf3 ♗xf3+ 26 ♗f1 ♗xh2+ 27 ♗e1 ♗f3+ 28 ♗d1 ♔h1+ 29 ♗c2 ♗e1+ 30 ♗b1 ♔h7+ etc.

24 ♔f2 ♙d6 25 f4

25 ♙f4 does not help much after 25 ... ♗xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♙xf4, for example 27 ♗xc5 (Or 27 ♔xc5+ ♔xc5+ 28 ♗xc5 ♙e3+ 29 ♗f1 ♙xc5 30 ♖d1 ♙xf3 etc.) 27 ... ♗f7 28 ♗f1 (28 ♗xd3 ♔g6+ wins the knight) 28 ... ♙xf3 29 ♗xd3 ♔h3+ 30 ♗e1 ♙g5 threatens 31 ... ♙h4, with a winning attack.

25 ... ♙xa4 26 fxe5

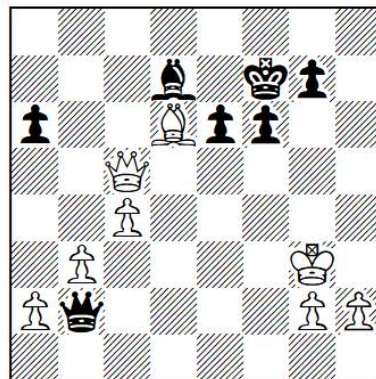
26 ♙xa4 ♗xc4 is also winning because of Black's passed pawn duo.

26 ... ♙xe5?

Here and through to the end of the game the play seems to have been

influenced by time trouble. 26 ... ♔xe5 was just winning for Black because of the threats against a1 and h2.

27 ♔xc5+ ♗f7 28 ♙f4 d2 29 ♙xe5 d1♔+ 30 ♖xd1 ♔xd1+ 31 ♗f2 ♔d2+ 32 ♗f3 ♔d3+ 33 ♗f2 ♔f5+ 34 ♗e3 ♔g5+ 35 ♗f2 ♙d7 36 ♙d6 ♔d2+ 37 ♗f1 ♔c1+ 38 ♗f2 ♔b2+ 39 ♗g3



39 ... ♔xa2?

After this White even has the better of it, but in time trouble everybody plays badly. 39 ... ♔c3+ would be a draw.

40 ♔b6?

Missing his chance. 40 ♙f8 would leave Black struggling to save himself.

40 ... ♔c2 41 h3 e5 42 ♔b8?!

With this the advantage changes hands again! 42 ♗h2 was better to safeguard the king.

42 ... ♔e4 43 ♗f2?

43 ♗h2 was still the right move.

43 ... ♙c6 44 g4 ♔f3+ 45 ♗e1 ♗g6?

Missing a clear win with 45 ... ♔e3+ 46 ♗d1 ♙e4. Now White should play 46 ♔h8 threatening ♔h5 mate.

46 ♗d2? e4?

The final error after which this fluctuating struggle ends peacefully in a draw. 46 ... ♙e4 was still good for Black as his king can escape after 47 ♔e8+ ♗g5 48 ♔h5+ ♗f4 etc.

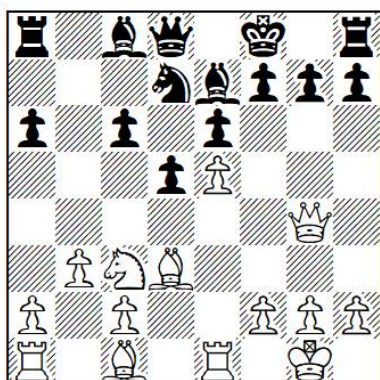
47 ♔h8 ♔d3+ 48 ♗e1 ♔e3+ 49 ♗f1 ♔f3+ 50 ♗e1 ♔e3+ 51 ♗f1 ♔c1+ 52 ♗e2 ♔c2+ 53 ♗e1 ♔c3+ 54 ♗e2 ♔c2+ 1/2-1/2

Game 47

S.Karjakin-V.Ivanchuk

Russian Team Championship, Loo 2013

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6  
 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9  
 ♜e1 ♙e7 10 e5 ♘d7 11 ♚g4 ♙f8 12 b3



Another of White's 12th move alternatives. In the previous two games we looked at 12 ♚e2 and 12 ♘a4.

**Question:** Why is White putting his bishop on the b2-square where it will be locked in by the pawn on e5?

**Answer:** In fact this move is not played with the intention of following up with 13 ♙b2. White is preparing the possibility of ♘a4 and c2-c4 and incidentally constructing a barricade on the half open b-file.

12 ... c5 13 ♘a4 ♙b7 14 c4 d4

**Question:** Does this not give White the e4-square?

**Answer:** It does, though Black is more concerned about allowing an opening of the position with 15 cxd5, especially with his king on f8. With the rook on h8 likely to be out of play for a while, it makes sense to reduce the importance of rapid development.

15 ♙d2 ♚c7

Stockfish prefers 15 ... h5 16 ♚e2 g6, and possibly it is right. Black's king would then be ready to come to g7 and there are no apparent difficulties for Black.

16 ♚f4

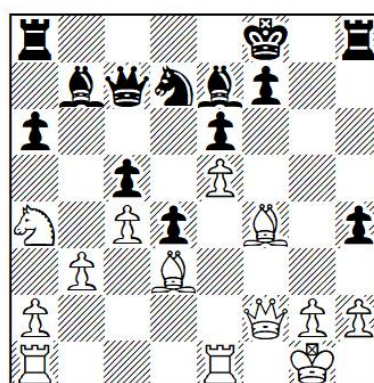
Karjakin plans to meet 16 ... g6 with 17 h4, but his creative opponent comes up

with an altogether more energetic response. The objection Stockfish raises to Black's previous move (15 ... ♚c7 rather than 15 ... h5) is that it now gives 16 ♚h5 as an improvement for White. The idea is to prevent Black putting his king on g7 as 16 ... g6 could now be met by 17 ♙h6+ ♚g8 18 ♚e2. Yet this position does not seem unduly difficult for Black as he can unravel with 18 ... ♙f8 19 ♙xf8 ♚xf8 and 20 ... ♚g7 next.

16 ... g5! 17 ♚g3 h5!

Brilliant play by Ivanchuk, who is using White's queen to accelerate a kingside pawn storm.

18 f4 h4 19 ♚f2 gxf4 20 ♙xf4



20 ... ♚g7

**Question:** Doesn't this march Black's king into danger?

**Answer:** Ivanchuk's intention is to play 21 ... ♜ag8 followed by 22 ... ♙f8, but this plan runs into trouble because of White's play along the f-file. Accordingly, you could argue that it is a risky way to play the position. Stockfish prefers a less ambitious line with 20 ... h3 21 g3 a5 22 ♙e4 ♚e8, with a position in which neither side will find it easy to make progress.

21 ♜e2

The immediate 21 ♙e4 might have been slightly better as sooner or later White will probably have to do this.

21 ... ♜ag8?

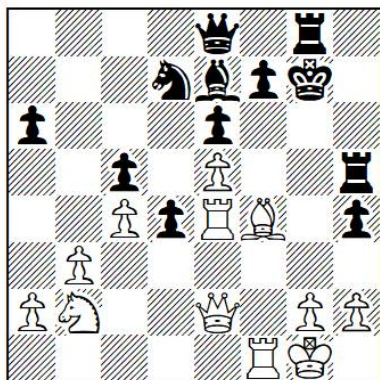
Sinking deeper into the mire, according to the silicon beast. Ivanchuk might have seen that 21 ... ♘f8 22 ♜f1 ♘g6 is answered

by 23 ♔h6+ ♖xh6 24 ♜xf7+ ♔h8 25 ♙xg6, recovering the piece with the win of a pawn and Black's king looking none too safe. Yet Stockfish is quite okay with Black's position after 25 ... ♖g8 26 ♙d3 ♖g7 27 ♜f4 ♖h5, with 28 ♙e4 being calmly met by 28 ... ♜xe5.

**22 ♜f1 ♜d8? 23 ♘b2?**

The reason for doubting the efficacy of Black's previous moves is that 23 ♙g5! seems strong here and appears to refute Ivanchuk's entire plan of putting his rooks on h8 and g8. After 23 ... ♜e8 (23 ... ♙xg5 24 ♜xf7+ ♔h6 25 ♜xe6+ would be crushing) there follows 24 ♙f6+ ♙xf6 25 ♘xc5! ♙xe5 (25 ... ♘xc5 is answered by 26 exf6+ ♔f8 27 ♜xd4 ♖g5 28 ♜f5! etc.) 26 ♘xb7 ♖h5 27 c5, when the advance of White's queenside pawns is the most important feature of the position. It's understandable that both players would miss such a line as the tactical points are very difficult to see. Ivanchuk's next move indicates that he might have perceived the danger rather late in the day.

**23 ... ♜e8 24 ♙e4 ♙xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♖h5 26 ♜e2**



**26 ... ♜f5?**

Presenting White with a new opportunity which also falls by the wayside. 26 ... ♖h7 would have been safer.

**27 ♘d3?!**

Missing the powerful 27 g4!, after which 27 ... hxg3 (27 ... ♔h8 28 ♔h1 traps the rook on f5) 28 ♜g4+ ♔h7 leads to mate after 29 ♜h3+ ♔g7 30 ♜h6 mate.

**27 ... ♘f8 28 ♙c1 ♘g6?**

Presenting White with yet another chance, and this too is missed. 28 ... ♜xf1+ should have been played, but Black's king is still under serious pressure here.

**29 ♜xf5 exf5 30 ♜d2?**

Karjakin's final opportunity was via 30 ♜h5 ♖h8 31 ♜xf5 h3 32 ♖g4, with a winning attack.

**30 ... ♖h8 31 ♜e1 h3 32 g3 ♜c6**

The requirement to watch g2 keeps White tied down and this interesting encounter ends peacefully.

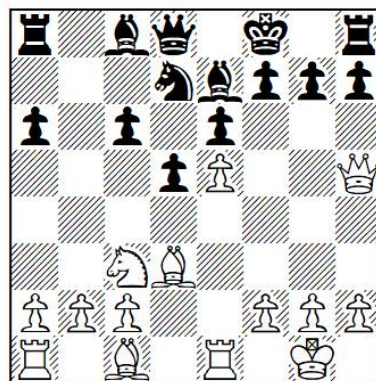
**33 ♜e2 a5 34 ♜f1 ♜e4 35 ♜e1 ♜c6 36 ♜f1 ♜e4 37 ♜e1 1/2-1/2**

### Game 48

**J.Duda-B.Grachev**

European Championship, Jerusalem 2015

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 d5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♜e1 ♙e7 10 e5 ♘d7 11 ♜g4 ♔f8 12 ♜h5**



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** Given the frequency with which Black plays ... h5 followed by ... g6 and then ... ♔g7, this move makes sense in that it tries to prevent it. Here too we see a later return to the ♘a4 and c4 plan, so it is more of a short-term expedient than a change of direction.

**12 ... ♔g8 13 ♙d2 ♙b7 14 ♘a4 c5**

As usual Black wants to meet c2-c4 with ... d5-d4.

**15 b3 ♜c7 16 c4 d4 17 ♙f4 a5 18 ♙c2 ♜c6**

**Question:** Was Black hoping that White would overlook the threat of mate on g2?

**Answer:** Probably not, it's more likely to have been a tacit invitation to repeat the position after 19 ♖e4 ♜c7 20 ♙c2 etc.

**Question:** So would this be a way for White to get a draw?

**Answer:** Not necessarily; Black could also consider 18 ... g6 and after 19 ♜h6 could choose between many different moves including 19 ... ♙c6 and 19 ... ♗b6.

**19 f3 g6 20 ♜h6 ♙f8 21 ♜h4 ♜c7 22 ♗b2 h6 23 ♜g3 ♖g7**

Preventing the sacrifice with 24 ♙xg6, though there was also a case for 23 ... ♙g7.

**24 ♗d3**

**Question:** Shouldn't White be launching an attack with 24 h4 - ?

**Answer:** That's certainly a possibility, but Black could then choose between stopping the h-pawn's advance with 24 ... h5 or allowing it with 24 ... ♙e7!? 25 h5 g5 26 ♙d2 ♜hg8 27 f4 ♖h8 28 f5 f6!. In this second line it's not clear who is doing the attacking. Duda's move doesn't rule out a later h2-h4 and it introduces the idea of ♗d3-f4 followed by a sacrifice on g6.

**24 ... ♙e7 25 ♙d2 ♜ag8 26 ♜e2 ♖f8?!**

Things start to look awkward for Black now after Duda's reply. This was probably the right time for 26 ... h5 as after 27 ♗f4 (27 ♜e1 can still be met by 27 ... ♜a8) 27 ... ♖f8 28 ♜e1, Black can get counterplay with 28 ... g5! 29 ♗d3 g4! 30 ♙xa5 ♜c8 31 f4 h4. In such a position the need for White to protect his vulnerable king would make it very difficult for him to improve his position. This will be seen in the next game, Solak-Caruana.

**27 ♜e1 ♙d8 28 a3 h5 29 ♜b1 h4?!**

29 ... g5!? was probably better in order to keep the option of ... g5-g4. Now White

can close down Black's chances on the kingside and try to engineer a breakthrough on the other flank.

**30 h3! ♖g7 31 ♗f2 ♜h5 32 ♗g4 ♜e8 33 ♖h1 ♙c6?!**

Black should probably try to prevent b3-b4 with 33 ... ♙a6, notwithstanding the fact that the bishop would be in a defensive role here. It was no longer effective on the a8-h1 diagonal after White prevented any kingside pawn levers with his 30 h3.

**34 ♙d3 ♜b7 35 f4 ♜a8 36 b4**

This is starting to look very unpleasant for Black because of his lack of counterplay.

**36 ... axb4 37 axb4 ♜hh8 38 ♖h2?**

38 ♜a1 would have been better in order to prevent 38 ... ♜a3. When Grachev misses this chance, his position becomes desperate.

**38 ... ♙e7? 39 ♜a1! ♜b8 40 b5 ♙b7 41 ♖g1 ♙d8 42 ♜a3 ♙b6 43 ♙a5 ♜c7 44 ♜ea2 ♙xa5 45 ♜xa5 ♜a8**

**46 ♗f6?**

It seems that Duda probably miscalculated here. 46 ♜xa8 ♙xa8 47 ♜a6 is simple and strong. White has a comfortable positional advantage.

**46 ... ♗xf6 47 exf6+ ♖xf6 48 b6 ♜d6 49 ♜e5+?**

This is probably what White had calculated in playing his 46th move, but unfortunately for him it leads to a lost position. White is still okay after 49 ♜xa8 ♙xa8 50 ♜a7, for example 50 ... ♜xf4 51 b7 ♙xb7 52 ♜xb7 ♜a8 53 ♜b2 ♖g7 54 ♜f2. With three pawns for the piece the position is more pleasant for Black to play, but White is still in the game.

**49 ... ♜xe5 50 fxe5+ ♖g5 51 ♜xa8**

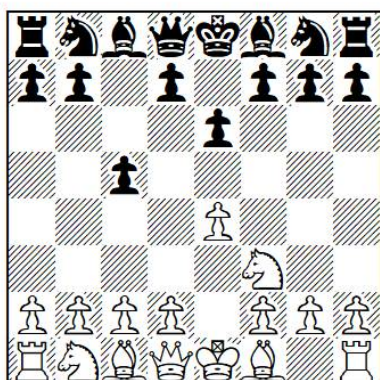
It's not clear what White missed because everything seems very straightforward for Black. 51 ♜a7 is answered by 51 ... ♜xa7 52 ♜xa7 ♜b8 etc.

**51 ... ♜xa8 52 ♜xa8 ♙xa8 53 ♙e2 d3 54 ♙xd3 ♖f4 55 ♖f2 ♖xe5 56 g3 g5 57 ♙h7 ♖d6 58 g4 ♙b7 59 ♖e3 f6 60 ♙g8 ♙c8 0-1**

# Chapter Seven

## Paulsen/Taimanov: Maroczy-type Lines

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6



3 d4

A white c2-c4, creating a Maroczy Bind type structure, lends the game a quite different character to that of standard open Sicilians. Black will find it difficult to play either of his two most typical pawn moves (... b7-b5 or ... d7-d5) and White will normally have a space advantage. On the other hand, the c4-pawn can become weak and the d4-square is a potential outpost for a Black piece, depending on how things develop.

White's earliest attempt at a c2-c4 plan is with 3 c4 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 (4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 transposes into the 5 c4 line) but then 4 ... e5 stopped White's evil intentions in Kinsman-Davies (Game 49).

**Question:** Doesn't this just lose time, a vital commodity in the opening?

**Answer:** It's a simple solution to White's opening line, creating a closed position in which the loss of tempo doesn't matter. In this structure both sides should look to advance their f-pawns, but here the knight on f3 would need to move before White's f2-pawn could go anywhere.

3 ... cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘b5

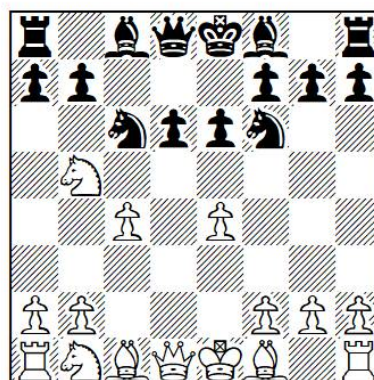
White threatens to infiltrate on d6 (or play ♕f4 next) in order to get Black to play ...

d7-d6 which stops him bringing his f8-bishop out. Playing the immediate 5 c4 is also possible after which 5 ... ♘f6 6 ♘c3 ♕b4 is Nakamura-Gelfand (Game 50) which arose via an English Opening move order.

5 ... d6 6 c4

6 ♕f4 will be examined in the next chapter.

6 ... ♘f6



7 ♘1c3

White has also played 7 ♘5c3 in order to keep more options as to where to place his knights, though this also means that Black can delay or omit ... a7-a6. After 7 ... ♕e7 8 ♕e2 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 ♕f4 ♕b7 11 ♖e1 ♜c8 12 ♕f1 ♘e5 White played 13 ♘d2 in Kavalek-Liberzon (Game 51) and 13 ♘a3 in Aseev-Zvjaginsev (Game 52).

7 ... a6 8 ♘a3 ♕e7 9 ♕e2 b6

Black's queen's bishop is now thought to be best placed on b7, though there is more debate about the knights. Some players like them on e5 and d7, we'll cover the lines where they go to c6 and c5.

10 0-0 ♕b7 11 ♕e3 0-0

11 ... ♘e5 followed by ... ♘ed7 creates the 'other' knight arrangement.

12 ♜b3

Forcing Black's reply, though the queen can become awkwardly placed on b3.

12 ... ♖d7 13 ♜fd1 ♗c5 14 ♚c2 ♙f6 15 ♜ac1 ♜e7

An interesting alternative is 15 ... ♙e5 as in Game 53, Naiditsch-Mamedyarov.

16 ♗ab1 ♗b4 17 ♚d2 ♜fd8

This was getting awkward for White in Van der Vorm-Brodsky (Game 54).

*Game 49*

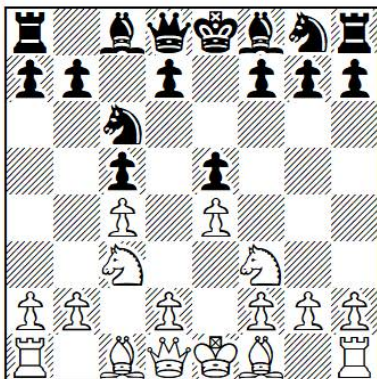
**A.Kinsman-N.Davies**

4NCL 1998

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 c4 ♗c6 4 ♗c3

4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 transposes into the 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 c4 line covered in the next game, Nakamura-Gelfand. 4 ♙e2 e5 5 ♗c3 would transpose back into the game.

4 ... e5



5 ♙e2

If White wants to facilitate a later f2-f4, it would make more sense to fianchetto this bishop. J.Hammer-B.Macieja, Oslo 2009 then featured an interesting treatment for Black with 5 d3 d6 6 g3 g6 7 ♙g2 ♙h6! (7 ... ♙g7 would be normal and quite okay for Black after 8 0-0 ♗ge7 intending a later ... f7-f5) 8 0-0 ♙xc1 9 ♚xc1 ♗f8 10 ♗e1 ♗g7 11 f4 ♗d4 12 ♗c2 ♗e7 13 ♜f2 f6 with a solid position for Black.

5 ... g6 6 0-0 ♙g7 7 a3

As he is not in a position to play f2-f4, White looks to expand on the queenside with b2-b4.

7 ... ♗ge7 8 b4 b6

8 ... d6 9 ♙xc5 dxc5 10 ♗d5 would be less good as if Black takes the knight White gets a passed d-pawn.

9 ♜b1 0-0 10 d3 d6 11 ♗e1

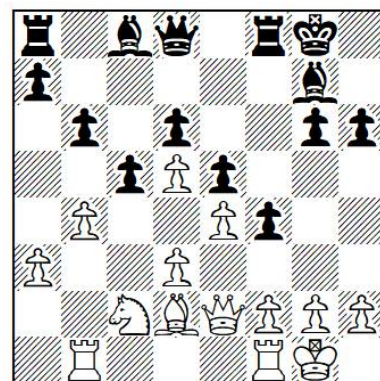
This does free up the f2-pawn and it does send the knight towards the d5-square, but neither of these ideas come to fruition in the game. A more natural continuation would have been 11 ♙xc5 bxc5 12 ♗d5, with approximately equal chances.

11 ... ♗d4 12 ♗c2 ♗xe2+ 13 ♜xe2 h6 14 ♗d5

After this the d5-square is blocked with a White pawn.

14 ♗e3 makes more sense, with complex play in the offing after 14 ... ♗c6 15 ♗ed5 f5.

14 ... ♗xd5 15 cxd5 f5 16 ♙d2 f4!



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** It's a plan that is very common in the King's Indian Defence, a kingside pawn storm in front of Black's own king. White, meanwhile, will struggle to gain any counterplay on the other flank.

17 f3 g5 18 a4 h5 19 ♗a3 g4 20 ♗c4 ♜f6

Both protecting the d6-pawn and preparing to put the rook on g6.

21 ♙xc5 bxc5 22 ♗a5 ♜g6 23 ♗c6 ♜g5 24 ♜b2?

This is a mistake as in many lines White will want to play ♗h1 followed by ♜g1, having this g1-rook protected. White should have evacuated the g-file with 24 ♗h1 after which 24 ... h4 25 ♜g1 defends because 25 ... h3? is met by just 26 gxh3

24 ... ♗h7

24 ... h4! is already very strong as after 25 ♗h1 ♗h7 26 ♜g1 Black can simply play

26 ... gxf3 27 ♖xf3 (27 gxf3?? ♖xg1 mate)  
 27 ... h3, when the attack is breaking through.

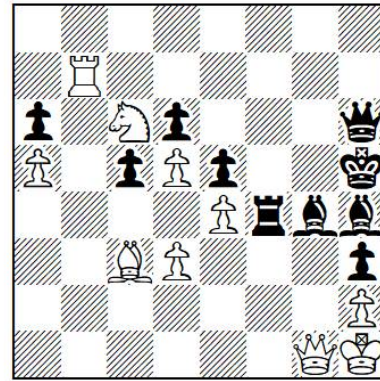
**25 ♖a1**

And here White should play 25 ♖a5 to meet 25 ... h4 with 26 ♖d8 ♖f6 27 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 28 ♖e1. The position is very good for Black, but not necessarily winning.

**25 ... ♖f6**

25 ... h4! is again the right move.

**26 ♖aa2 h4!**



The time control has been reached and there's no good defence to ... ♖f3+.

*Game 50*

**H.Nakamura-B.Gelfand**

Wijk aan Zee 2014

**1 ♖f3**

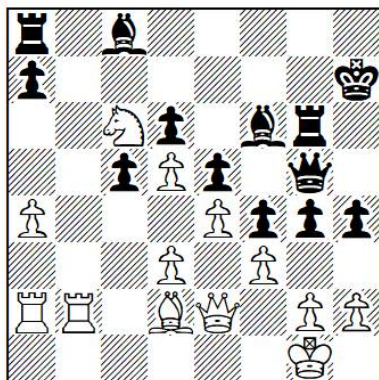
**Question:** I thought this was a book about the Sicilian, so why are we starting with 1 ♖f3 - ?

**Answer:** We will be getting a transposition into the line 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e3 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 c4, after which 5 ... ♖f6 6 ♖c3 ♖b4 reaches the position after Black's sixth move.

**Question:** Is 5 c4 a good move?

**Answer:** It's not bad, and it can be good if Black responds passively.

**1 ... c5 2 c4 ♖c6 3 ♖c3 ♖f6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 e6 6 e4 ♖b4**



Better late than never Black prepares to prise open the kingside. It puts White into a desperate position.

**27 fxg4**

After 27 ♖h1 there follows 27 ... h3 (Or first 27 ... ♖h5) 28 g3 ♖h5 with a winning attack.

**27 ... ♖xg4 28 ♖b7+ ♖g7 29 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 30 ♖f1 ♖g8 31 ♖b2 h3! 32 ♖e1**

32 g3 ♖f8 sets up lethal threats along the f-file, and 33 gxf4 is most simply met by 33 ... ♖e2+, winning the queen.

**32 ... ♖c8**

Had I seen 32 ... hxg2! 33 ♖xg2 ♖h3 I might well have played it. My excuse is that I was running short of time.

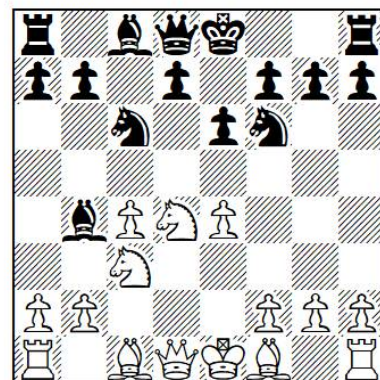
**33 ♖h1 ♖g5**

33 ... hxg2+ 34 ♖xg2 ♖g4 wins for Black because 35 h3 is answered by 35 ... ♖h6.

**34 g3 ♖f8 35 ♖f2 ♖g4 36 a5 a6 37 ♖c3 ♖h6 38 gxf4**

The desperate 38 ♖xe5 was a better try, though Black is winning after 38 ... dxe5 39 ♖xe5 ♖c8 because his attack will have a second wave.

**38 ... ♖h4 39 ♖b2 ♖xf4 40 ♖b7+ ♖g6 41 ♖g1 ♖h5 0-1**



**7 ♖xc6**

The alternatives are not encouraging for White, for example 7 ♖d3 0-0 8 ♙e2 d5 leaves White needing to be careful, for example 9 exd5 exd5 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 12 ♙d2 ♗xc3 13 ♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 14 ♗xc3? (14 ♙xc3 would probably maintain equality) 14 ... ♞e8 prevents White from castling. and 7 ♗db5 ♗xe4 8 ♗g4 ♗f6 9 ♗xg7 ♞g8 10 ♗h6 ♞g6 11 ♗d2 a6 12 ♗d4 ♗e4 also leaves White in trouble.

**7 ... bxc6 8 ♙d3**

**Question:** Can't White attack the knight with 8 e5 - ?

**Answer:** He can but he might regret it after 8 ... ♗e4 9 ♗g4 ♗xc3 10 a3 ♗a5, for example 11 ♗xg7 ♗e4+ 12 axb4 (12 ♗e2 ♞f8 13 axb4 ♗xa1 14 ♙h6 ♗xb2+ 15 ♗e3 ♗xb4 16 ♗xe4 ♙b7 17 ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 18 ♙xf8 c5+ 19 ♗f4 ♗xf8 leaves Black a good pawn up in the endgame) 12 ... ♗xa1 13 ♗xh8+ ♗e7 14 ♗d1 ♗a4+ 15 ♗e2 (15 ♗e1 ♗xb4+ 16 ♗d1 ♙b7 is also good for Black) 15 ... ♗c2+ 16 ♗e3 ♙b7 17 ♗g7 ♗xc1+ 18 ♗xe4 c5+ and Black reaches a pawn up endgame.

**8 ... e5 9 0-0 0-0**

In S.Karjakin-A.Grischuk, Russian Team Championship 2016, Black played 9 ... ♙c5 instead and reached a very decent position after 10 ♗e2 d6 11 ♙e3 ♙g4 12 ♗e1 ♗d7 13 ♗a4 ♙xe3 14 ♗xe3 0-0.

**10 ♙g5**

White has tried other moves here, though without notable success:

a) 10 ♗e2 ♙xc3 (10 ... d6 will also be fine for Black) 11 ♙xc3 d6 12 c5 dxc5 13 f3 ♙e6 14 ♙e3 ♗e7 15 a4 ♞fb8 16 ♞fb1 ♗d7 was about equal in M.Carlsen-V.Anand, World Rapid 2018.

b) 10 ♙e3 ♙xc3 11 ♙xc3 d6 12 c5 ♗g4, or 12 ... d5, is also very comfortable for Black.

c) 10 ♗a4 d5 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 exd5 ♗xd5 is already slightly better for Black.

d) 10 ♗c2 ♙c5 11 ♞b1 ♞b8 12 ♙d2 d6 13 ♗a4 ♙d7 fails to make any impression on Black's solid position.

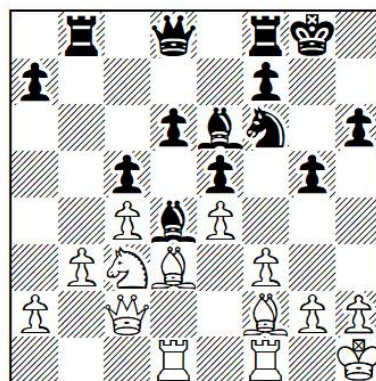
**10 ... h6**

Black can also consider 10 ... ♙xc3 11 ♙xc3 h6, the idea being that after 12 ♙h4 d6 13 ♗e2 g5 14 ♙g3 c5, neither of White's bishops can do much.

**11 ♙h4 ♙c5**

11 ... ♙xc3 12 ♙xc3 d6 is possible here too.

**12 ♗h1 d6 13 f3 ♙e6 14 ♗c2 ♞b8 15 ♞ad1 ♙d4 16 b3 g5 17 ♙f2 c5**



Cementing the position of the bishop on d4, which might be slightly less wonderful than it looks.

**18 ♗b5**

White can try to play for f3-f4 starting with 18 g3 but this plan would prove difficult to implement after 18 ... ♙h3 19 ♞g1 ♙d7.

**18 ... ♗d7 19 g4**

More or less giving up on any hope of a kingside breakthrough and White soon leaves himself with weaknesses on the queenside. It looks like Nakamura didn't know how to proceed.

**19 ... ♗g7 20 ♗d2 ♗g8 21 ♙g3**

21 h4 f6 just seals things up.

**21 ... f6 22 b4 ♗e7 23 ♗xd4 cxd4 24 b5 ♞fc8**

Latching onto the weakness on c4 after which White is fighting for survival. White's 22nd, 23rd and 24th moves can all be held partially responsible.

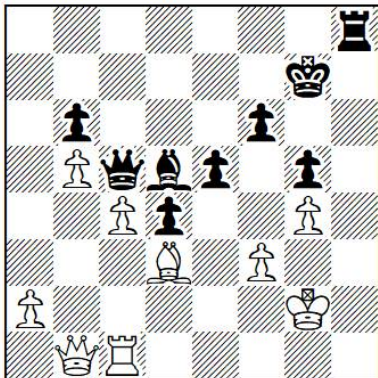
**25 ♞c1 ♞c5 26 ♞c2 ♗c8 27 ♞fc1 ♗b6 28 ♗e2 ♞bc8 29 ♙e1 ♗a4 30 ♙b4 ♞5c7 31 ♗g2 h5 32 h3 ♞h8 33 ♞h1 ♞cc8 34 ♞cc1 ♗c7 35 ♗c2 ♗b6 36 ♙a5 ♗c5 37 ♙xb6**

White would not have wanted to play this way, but by now there is little choice.

37 ... axb6 38 ♖b3 hxg4 39 hxg4 ♜xh1  
40 ♔xh1 d5

Taking the opportunity to exchange  
Black's backward c-pawn for White's  
important e4-pawn.

41 exd5 ♙xd5 42 ♔g2 ♜h8 43 ♖b1



43 ♜f1 ♙b7 is also very good for Black,  
and without the need for particular  
brilliance.

43 ... ♙f7?

Missing a brilliant win via 43 ... ♙f3+  
44 ♔xf3 e4+, for example 45 ♔g2 ♜h4 46  
♙e2 d3 47 ♖b2 ♗e3 48 ♜f1 ♜h6 49 ♙d1  
♗h3+ 50 ♔g1 ♗h1+ 51 ♔f2 ♗h2+ 52 ♔e3  
♗xb2 53 ♔xe4 ♗xa2 54 ♜f3 ♗xc4+ 55 ♔e3  
♗c1+ 56 ♔xd3 ♗xd1+ etc.

44 ♜h1 ♜xh1 45 ♗xh1 ♙g6?!

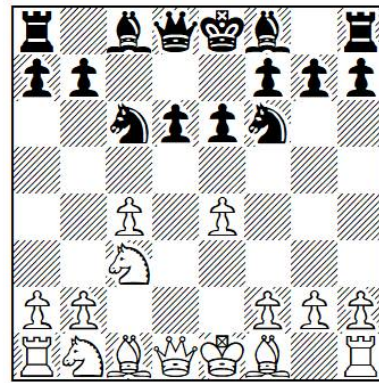
Allowing White to escape. Black still has  
some chances after 45 ... e4, for example 46  
♙xe4 ♗xc4 47 ♗h7+ ♔f8 48 ♗h8+ ♔e7 49  
♖b8 ♗xb5 50 ♗c7+ ♔f8 51 ♗d8+ ♔g7 52  
♗xd4 ♙xa2 leaves Black's king much safer  
than the game because his light square  
bishop will help in the defence.

46 ♙xg6 ♔xg6 47 ♗h5+ ♔g7 48 ♗e8  
♗xc4 49 a4 ♗c2+ 50 ♔g3 ♗c7 51 ♗c6 ♗d8  
52 a5 bxa5 53 b6 d3 54 ♗c7+ ♗xc7 55 ♙xc7  
d2 56 c8 ♗d1 ♗ 57 ♗c7+ ♔h6 58 ♗e7 ♗g1+  
59 ♔h3 1/2-1/2

### Game 51

L.Kavalek-V.Liberzon  
Amsterdam 1977

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘b5 d6 6 c4 ♘f6 7 ♘5c3



**Question:** How is this different from 7  
♘1c3 - ?

**Answer:** By leaving the b8-knight at  
home, White hopes to find a better square  
for it than a3. As things stand that would  
mean the d2-square, and the knight later  
finds itself developed there.

7 ... ♙e7 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 ♙f4 ♙b7  
11 ♜e1 ♜c8 12 ♙f1

The immediate 12 ♘d2 is also possible  
and would lead to similar play.

12 ... ♘e5 13 ♘d2 ♘fd7 14 ♙g3 g5!

An important and instructive move  
from Liberzon, preventing f2-f4 which  
would drive his knight from its nice  
outpost.

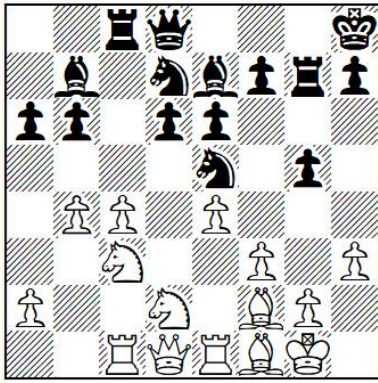
**Question:** Doesn't this weaken Black's  
king position?

**Answer:** It does, but White's pieces are  
not in a position to exploit this. Meanwhile  
Black can safeguard his king with ... ♔g8-  
h8 and ... ♜f8-g6 next.

15 ♜c1 a6 16 f3 ♔h8 17 ♙f2 ♜g8 18 h3

Probably wanting to prevent a  
possible ... g5-g4, not that this was an  
immediate problem.

18 ... ♜g7 19 b4



19 ... h5

**Question:** I know Black got away with 14 ... g5, but this looks really weakening. What is the justification?

**Answer:** This is a natural way for Black to make progress on the kingside, as long as any weakening of his king position is manageable. Black's previous move, 18 ... g7, certainly helped eliminate any attacking tries by White.

20 a3

**Question:** What does that move do? Isn't White wasting time while the storm clouds gather around his king?

**Answer:** It's always useful to safeguard your position, even if there are no immediate threats.

20 ... g8 21 e3 h7 22 e2 c8 23 c3 g6 24 f4 gxf4 25 xf4 h6 26 g3

After 26 d3 Black can try to blast open the a8-h1 diagonal with 26 ... f5.

26 ... xg3 27 xg3 h4 28 f2 xe4  
Winning a key pawn.

29 c5!?

Kavalek doesn't want to go down quietly and plays to complicate at any cost. Yet 29 xe4 xe4 30 d3 would have been a better try, for example after 30 ... f6 31 xe5 xe5 32 f3 f5 White has 33 a4, with counterplay.

29 ... dxc5 30 xc5 xc5 31 xc5 bxc5 32 c4

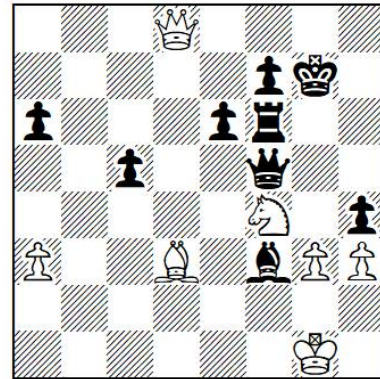
Continuing to play for the initiative to offset his deficit of two pawns, but when

Liberzon finds the right moves the position becomes hopeless for White. 32 e2 was probably a better try

32 ... f5 33 d2 f6 34 xe5 xe5 35 d8+ g7 36 g3

Kavalek is playing for a cunning trap, but when Black spots it he is busted. In any case there's not much to do any more as 36 d2 is answered by 36 ... g6.

36 ... f3+ 37 xf3 xf3 38 d3



38 ... e5 0-1

White had one last trick in 38 ... g5? 39 xe6+ xe6 40 e7+ g8 41 d8+ etc., but when this hope was extinguished it was clearly time to resign.

Game 52

K.Aseev-V.Zvjaginsev

Russian Championship 2000

1 e4 c5 2 f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xd4 c6 5 b5 d6 6 c4 f6 7 d5c3

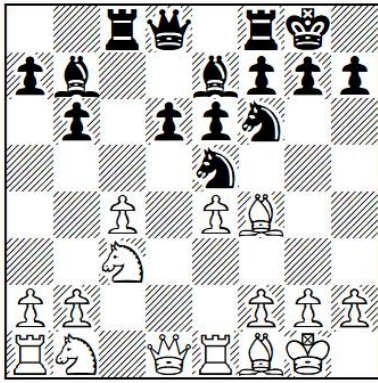
**Question:** How is this different from 7 d1c3 - ?

**Answer:** By leaving the b8-knight at home, White hopes to find a better square for it than a3. As things stand that would mean the d2-square, and the knight later finds itself developed there.

7 ... e7 8 e2 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 f4 b7 11 e1 d5

The knight stands well here.

12 f1 c8



13 ♖a3

**Question:** If the white knight is going to a3 after all, why not go there on move 7?

**Answer:** It can be argued that White has managed to get his opponent to adopt a different set-up, with the queen's knight coming to e5 instead of the king's knight going to c5.

**Question:** So is a3 a better square than d2?

**Answer:** It might well be. 13 ♖d2 does cause something of a traffic jam in White's position, as in Kavalek-Liberzon.

13 ... ♙c7

Black can also try to implement ... g7-g5, in order to maintain the knight on e5. A way to do this might be 13 ... h6 14 ♙e2 g5 for example 15 ♙g3 a6 16 ♖ad1 ♖fd7. Zvjaginsev chooses more of a 'wait and see' approach.

14 ♖c1 ♙b8 15 h3 ♙a8

Richard Réti popularized this positioning of the queen in the 1920s, creating latent pressure on the long diagonal while keeping the queen away from the x-ray stare of the opponent's rooks.

16 ♙e2 ♙a6 17 ♖cb5 ♙b7 18 ♖c3 ♙a6 19 ♖cb5 ½-½

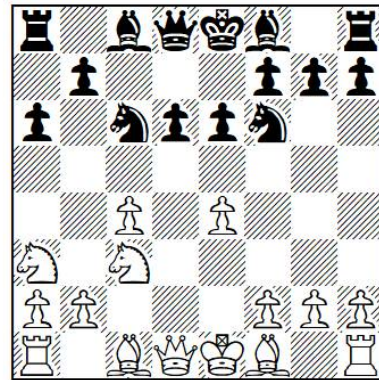
It feels like the players were not averse to a draw and found a convenient way to repeat the position.

### Game 53

A.Naiditsch-S.Mamedyarov

Fuegen 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 5 ♖b5 d6 6 c4 ♖f6 7 ♖1c3 a6 8 ♖a3



**Question:** Why doesn't White put the knight on d4 instead?

**Answer:** It's because he has more space and does not want Black to free his position with exchanges. A good answer for Black would be 8 ♖d4 ♙a5 9 ♖b3 (9 ♖xc6 bxc6 would be fine for Black) 9 ... ♙c7 10 ♙e2 ♖e5, already harassing the c4-pawn.

8 ... ♙e7 9 ♙e2 0-0 10 ♙ 0-0 b6 11 ♙e3 ♙b7 12 ♙b3 ♖d7 13 ♖fd1 ♖c5 14 ♙c2

**Question:** Doesn't White have 14 ♙xc5 bxc5 15 ♙xb7 - ?

**Answer:** That would lose the queen to 15 ... ♖a5.

14 ... ♙f6 15 ♖ac1

15 f3?! ♙e5 16 ♙f1 ♙f6 is very promising for Black, whose active pieces are exerting a great deal of pressure.

15 ... ♙e5

15 ... ♙e7!? is another possibility, covered in Van der Vorm-Brodsky. 15 ... ♙xc3 16 ♙xc3 ♖xe4 is not as good because 17 ♙d3 (17 ♙b3?! ♖b8) 17 ... ♖e5 18 ♙d4 gives White compensation for the pawn.

16 ♖ab1 f5

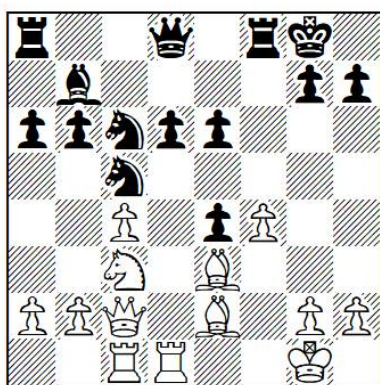
16 ... ♙h4 17 g3 ♙f6 18 f4 (18 ♙d2 ♙g6 19 f4 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 21 ♖f2 ♙f5 22 g4 ♙f6 23 g5 ♙f5 24 ♖e1! ♙e4 25 fxe5 ♙h1+

26 ♖f1 ♜xe5 gave Black adequate compensation for the piece in V.Ivanchuk-Y.Wang, Beijing 2013) 18 ... ♙d4 19 ♚d2 e5 20 ♜d5 was A.Karpov-F.Olafsson, Amsterdam 1976, and now 20 ... ♚g6 would have been better than the retreat to d8 that was played in the game, 21 f5 being answered by 21 ... ♚h6.

#### 17 f4

17 exf5 ♜xf5 18 ♜d2 ♚h4 19 ♜f3 ♜xf3 20 ♙xf3 ♚xh2+ 21 ♚f1 ♜b4 22 ♚b1 ♙xf3 23 gxf3 ♜f8 24 ♚e2 ♚h5 was very good for Black in E.Gajsin -A.Kopylov, Salekhard 2006.

#### 17 ... ♙xc3 18 ♜xc3 fxe4



#### 19 a3

After this game a couple of other moves were tried, but neither with much success:

a) 19 ♚d2 e5 20 fxe5 ♜xe5 21 ♚xd6 ♜cd3 22 ♚xd8 ♜axd8 23 ♙xb6 ♜c8 gave Black more than enough for the sacrificed pawns in A.Naiditsch-D.Navara, Sibenik 2011.

b) 19 ♜xe4 ♜b4 20 ♚d2 ♜xa2 21 ♜xc5 dxc5 22 ♚e1 was B.Lengyel-B.Bea, Budapest 2011, and now 22 ... ♚f6! (Rather than the 22 ... ♚e7 that was played in the game) 23 ♜a1 ♜b4 would have been clearly better for Black.

#### 19 ... e5!

This was a new move at the time of the game, Black having played 19 ... ♚c7 previously.

20 ♜d5 ♜d4 21 ♙xd4 exd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜e6 23 ♜xe4 ♙xd5 24 cxd5 ♜xf4 25 ♙f3

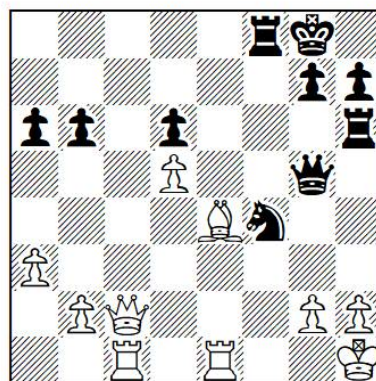
In the game D.Guerra Bastida-L.Filip, Ortigueira 2008, White tried to improve with 25 ♙g4 but after 25 ... ♚g5 26 ♙e6+ (26

h3 ♜f6 27 ♙c8 ♜xc8 28 ♚xc8+ ♜f8 29 ♜xf4 ♚xf4 is also equal) 26 ... ♚h8 27 ♜ce1 the position was still about equal.

#### 25 ... ♚g5 26 ♜e1 ♜f6 27 ♚h1?!

27 ♚b3 ♜af8 28 ♚e3 should be played according to the engine, but this still seems a shade better for Black after 28 ... b5.

#### 27 ... ♜af8 28 ♙e4 ♜h6



#### 29 ♜f1?

Either missing Black's combination entirely or some part of it. After 29 g3 ♚xg3 30 ♙h7+ ♚h8 31 ♙e4 ♜e8 the position is not pleasant but there's no immediate win for Black. White's best chance was probably 29 ♚c3 when 29 ... ♚h5 30 h3 ♜e2 31 ♙f3! ♜xc3 32 ♙h5 ♜a2 33 ♜c6! ♜xh5 34 ♜xd6 leaves the knight on a2 out of play while White is hoovering up pawns, with the odds on him holding a draw.

#### 29 ... ♜xh2+ 0-1

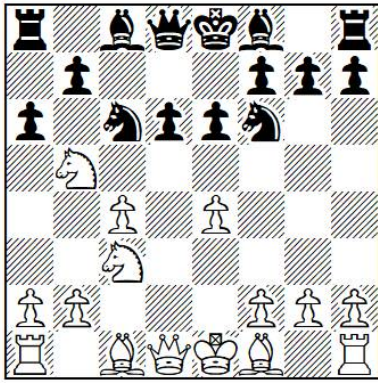
29 ... ♜xh2+ 30 ♚xh2 ♚h5+ 31 ♚g1 ♜e2+ 32 ♚xe2 ♚xe2 appears to allow 33 ♙h7+, but then 33 ... ♚xh7 34 ♜xf8 ♚e3+ is the sting in the tail.

#### Game 54

#### T.Van der Vorm-M.Brodsky

Wijk aan Zee 1998

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e6 5 ♜b5 d6 6 c4 ♜f6 7 ♜1c3 a6



8 ♖a3

**Question:** Why doesn't White put the knight on d4 instead?

**Answer:** It's because he has more space and does not want Black to free his position with exchanges. A good answer for Black would be 8 ♗d4 ♕a5 9 ♗b3 (9 ♗xc6 bxc6 would be fine for Black) 9 ... ♖c7 10 ♕e2 ♗e5, already harassing the c4-pawn.

8 ... ♕e7 9 ♕e2 b6 10 ♗9 0-0 ♕b7 11 ♕e3 0-0

There is a major alternative in 11 ... ♗e5 followed by dropping this knight back on d7 but just castling feels more natural.

12 ♖b3 ♗d7 13 ♖fd1 ♗c5 14 ♖c2 ♕f6 15 ♖ac1 ♖e7!?

Brodsky has also played this position from the White side so we should assume he knows what he's doing. M.Brodsky-M.Sion Castro, Cappelle la Grande 1997 went 15 ... ♖c8 16 ♗ab1 e5 17 ♕g4 ♗e6 18 ♖d3 ♗cd4 19 ♗d2 g6?! 20 ♗f3! ♗c5 21 ♖d2! with the better game for White. Black has another interesting move in 15 ... ♕e5 which was played in the previous game, Naiditsch-Mamedyarov.

16 ♗ab1 ♗b4 17 ♖d2 ♖fd8

Black could also have put the other rook on this square.

18 ♖e1

Another possibility is 18 f4 when P.Acs-Z.Almasi, Hungary 2001 went 18 ... a5! 19 ♕f3 ♗bd3 (19 ... ♗cd3! may be even stronger) 20 ♖c2 e5 21 fxe5 ♗xe5, with

complex play in which Black certainly isn't worse.

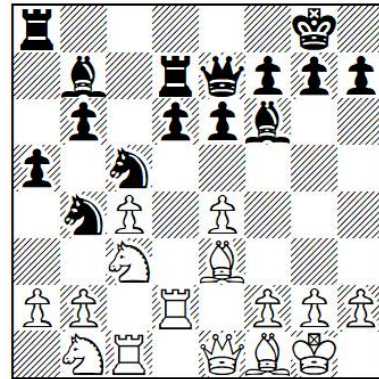
18 ... a5 19 ♕f1

19 f3? would be strongly met by 19 ... d5, blasting open the centre.

19 ... ♖d7

19 ... ♗xe4 would have been met by 20 ♕xb6, but Black could also consider 19 ... d5 20 e5 ♕g5 21 f4 d4!, with excellent play.

20 ♖d2



20 ... ♖b8

Looking to protect the b-pawn before snapping off the one on e4. 20 ... ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 22 ♗c3 is less clear.

21 f3 ♕c6 22 ♖cd1 ♖bd8

With White's pieces grouped quite passively, Black prepares to break out with ... d6-d5.

23 ♗h1!?

White should have played 23 ♖f2 when 23 ... d5 can be adequately met by 24 exd5 exd5 25 a3, for example 25 ... ♗cd3 (25 ... d4 26 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 27 ♖xd4 ♗bd3 28 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♖e2 ♖d8 is also about equal) 26 ♕xd3 ♗xd3 27 ♖xd3 d4 28 ♗d5 ♕xd5 29 cxd5 dxe3 30 ♖xe3 ♖c5 31 ♗c3 ♕xc3 32 ♖xc3 ♖xd5 fizzles out to stone cold equality. Black could also meet 23 ♖f2 with some other move, for example 23 ... g6, when a complex struggle would still be in progress.

23 ... d5! 24 cxd5

24 e5 ♕h4 25 ♖e2 (25 g3? d4 wins for Black) 25 ... dxc4 26 ♖xc4 ♖xd2 27 ♖xd2 ♗d5 would also leave White struggling for equality.

24 ... exd5 25 ♕xc5!?

White should not give his bishop up like this. The right way to play for equality was

via 25 exd5 ♖xd5 26 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 27 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 28 ♗c3 etc.

**25 ... bxc5 26 a3**

After 26 exd5 ♗xd5 27 ♖xe7 ♙xe7 the bishop pair would outweigh White's slightly better pawn structure.

**26 ... d4 27 ♗b5**

On 27 ♗e2 there follows 27 ... d3 (27 ... ♗a6!? is also interesting) after which 28 axb4 (28 ♗f4? is strongly met by 28 ... ♗c2) is strongly met by 28 ... dxe2 29 ♙xe2 cxb4 30 b3 ♜d4, when Black's bishops dominate the position.

**27 ... ♗a6 28 ♗xd4**

In time trouble White sees a combination, but one which leads to the loss of the exchange. 28 ♜c2? would lose immediately because of 28 ... d3, but 28 ♙c4 would have been a better try. The engine is still deeply pessimistic about White's chances, for example 28 ... ♜b8 29 ♖e2 ♗c7 30 ♗xc7 ♜xc7 31 b3 a4 breaks open the b-file.

**28 ... cxd4 29 ♙xa6 ♙a4!**

Winning the exchange.

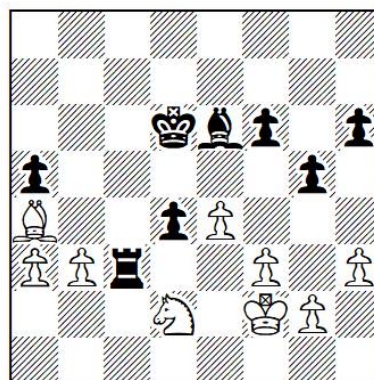
**30 ♜c1 ♙g5 31 ♜c4 ♙b3 32 ♜c6 ♙xd2 33 ♗xd2 ♙e6**

The engine points out that Black could also play 33 ... ♜d6, with 34 ♜xd6 ♖xd6 hitting the bishop on a6.

**34 ♖c1 ♜d6 35 ♖c5**

35 ♜c7 ♖g5, intending ... ♖e3, is also winning for Black.

**35 ... ♖f8! 36 h3 ♜xc6 37 ♖xc6 ♖d6 38 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 39 ♙b5 ♜d8 40 ♗g1 ♜c8 41 ♙a4 ♜b8 42 b3 ♜c8! 43 ♗f2 ♜c3! 44 ♗e2 ♗f8 45 ♗f2 f6 46 ♗e2 ♗e7 47 ♗d1 g5 48 ♗e2 h6 49 ♗f2 ♗d6 0-1**

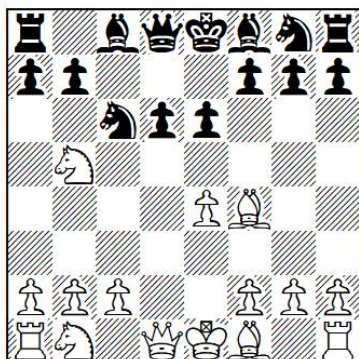


White has no good defence to the threat of Black decisively improving his position with ... h6-h5-h4 and ♗d6-e5-f4.

# Chapter Eight

## Paulsen/Taimanov: 5 ♘b5 d6 6 ♙f4

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6  
5 ♗b5 d6 6 ♙f4



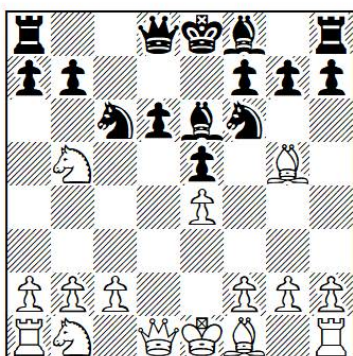
The threat against d6 encourages Black's reply, producing a structure more typical of the Sveshnikov or Boleslavsky Sicilians than the Taimanov.

6 ... e5

**Question:** Can't Black avoid the backward pawn with 6 ... ♗e5 - ?

**Answer:** Very possibly. This move is widely dismissed by theory but it's not easy to find a refutation and, in fact, many strong players have used it. A.Zubov-D.Dubov, Voronezh 2010 continued 7 ♗d4 a6 8 ♘5c3 (8 ♘xd6+ ♙xd6 9 ♙xe5 doesn't work because of 9 ... ♗a5+) 8 ... ♗c7 9 a4 ♗f6 10 ♙e2 ♙e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗a3 b6 and White had only succeeded in misplacing his pieces.

7 ♙e3 ♗f6 8 ♙g5 ♙e6



9 ♗d2

There are several alternatives here:

a) 9 c4 a6 10 ♙xf6 gxf6 11 ♗5a3 ♗a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13 ♘xd2 f5 gave Black excellent counterplay in Frick-Bischoff (Game 55).

b) 9 ♙xf6 gxf6 10 ♗d2 ♗c8 led to a very exciting and double-edged game in Almasi-Ljubojevic (Game 56).

c) 9 ♗1c3 a6 10 ♗a3 b5 gives Black the extra ... ♙c8-e6 compared with the Sveshnikov Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 e5 6 ♗db5 d6 7 ♙g5 a6 8 ♗a3 b5), and therefore a good game.

9 ... ♙e7 10 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 ♗xd6 ♗c8

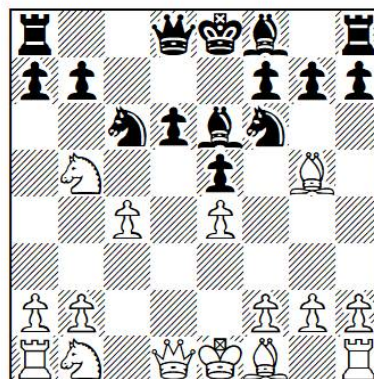
Black had more than enough for the pawn in McDonald-Plaskett (Game 57).

*Game 55*

**R.Frick-K.Bischoff**

Bern Zonal 1990

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c6  
5 ♗b5 d6 6 ♙f4 e5 7 ♙e3 ♗f6 8 ♙g5 ♙e6 9  
c4



Setting up a kind of bind formation, though Black will get active play. 9 ♙xf6 will be covered in Almasi-Ljubojevic and 9 ♗d2 in McDonald-Plaskett.

9 ... a6 10 ♙xf6

Giving up the two bishops allows Black an excellent position. 10 ♖5c3 ♕e7 is not much fun for White either as Black is threatening 11 ... ♗xe4.

**10 ... gxf6 11 ♗5a3**

11 ♗5c3 ♖b6 12 b3 0-0-0 is also very good for Black with ... ♖g8 and ... ♗d4 in the offing.

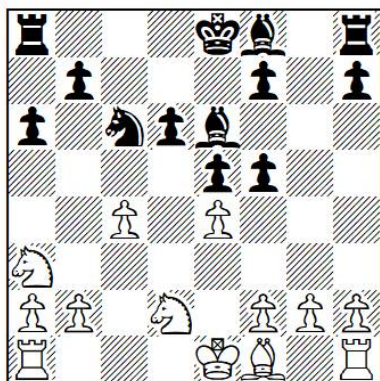
**11 ... ♖a5+**

11 ... ♖b6 would have been even stronger, for example 12 ♖b3 (12 ♗c2 ♖xb2 13 ♕e2 0-0-0 is just a good pawn up for Black) 12 ... ♖xb3 13 axb3 ♗d4 14 ♗d2 ♕h6 15 ♖d1 ♖e7 places White under massive pressure.

**12 ♖d2**

12 ♗d2? is met by 12 ... ♕h6 when it becomes difficult to find moves for White. His best option would have been 12 ♗c3 but this is still nice for Black after 12 ... f5 (12 ... d5 13 cxd5 ♕xa3 14 ♖d2 hangs on for White) 13 ♕d3 f4 14 0-0 ♖g8 intending ... 0-0-0.

**12 ... ♖xd2+ 13 ♗xd2 f5**



Starting to open the position for Black's two bishops and at the same time eliminate his weak pawns.

**14 f3**

14 ♗c2 might have been marginally better, though it's still pleasant for Black after 14 ... fxe4 15 ♗xe4 f5 16 ♗g5 ♕d7 intending 17 ... ♕e7 next.

**14 ... fxe4 15 fxe4 ♗b4 16 ♕e2 ♕h6 17 ♖f1 ♖e7**

**Question:** Why doesn't Black castle instead of leaving his king in the centre?

**Answer:** The king is perfectly safe on e7 and may be better placed there because the queens have been exchanged. The king is a strong piece that should be used actively in the endgame.

**18 ♖d1 ♖hc8**

One of the problems Black has is to choose between the attractive continuations on offer. Here he might also try 18 ... ♖hg8 after which 19 g3 ♕e3 20 ♖f3 ♕c5 leaves White in all sorts of trouble.

**19 b3 b5 20 ♖f3**

After 20 cxb5 axb5 21 ♗xb5 ♗c2+ 22 ♖f2 ♗e3 Black wins the exchange.

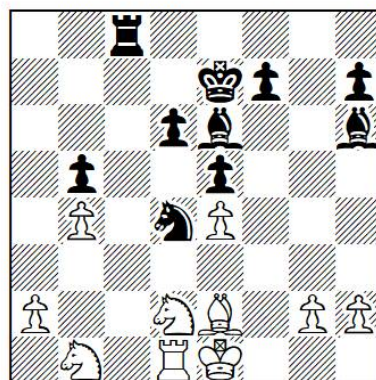
**20 ... ♖c5 21 ♗ab1 ♗c6**

21 ... ♗c2+ 22 ♖f2 b4 intending 23 ... ♗d4 is also horrible for White.

**22 ♖c3 ♗d4 23 b4 ♖cc8 24 cxb5**

24 ♕d3 would have been a better try but 24 ... a5 is still good for Black.

**24 ... axb5 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8**



**26 a4**

White is lost regardless of how he plays. 26 ♗a3 ♕d7 would threaten ... ♖a8 and ... ♖c3.

**26 ... ♗c2+ 0-1**

### Game 56

**Z.Almasi-L.Ljubojevic**

Monaco Rapidplay 2001

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗b5 d6 6 ♕f4 e5 7 ♕e3 ♗f6 8 ♕g5 ♕e6 9 ♕xf6**

9 c4 is covered in Frick -Bischoff; and 9 ♗d2 will be addressed in the next game, McDonald-Plaskett.

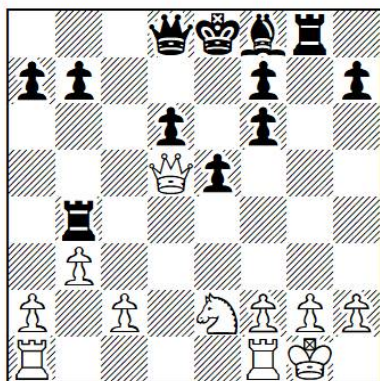
**9 ... gxf6 10 ♗d2 ♖c8 11 ♕c4**

An interesting pawn sacrifice which nonetheless looks equal. In the game A.Delchev-G.Borgo, Bolzano 1999, White played 11 ♖c4 here and in his notes claimed an edge for White after 11 ... d5 (11 ... ♗d4 12 ♗xd4 ♙xc4 13 ♗f5 really does seem slightly better for White), his variation running 12 exd5 ♙xd5 13 c3 ♙xc4 14 ♙xc4 ♖xd1+ 15 ♖xd1 a6 16 ♗d6+ ♙xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♗e7 18 ♖d2 f5 19 f4 ♖hd8 20 ♙d5 (20 fxe5 ♖xd2 21 ♗xd2 ♗xe5 22 ♙e2 ♖d8+ 23 ♗c1 f4 was more or less equal in the game). Yet this looks like a draw after 20 ... ♗b4 21 ♙xb7 ♖c7 22 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 23 0-0 ♖xb7 24 cxb4 ♖xb4 25 b3 e4 intending ... a7-a5-a4.

**11 ... ♙xc4 12 ♗xc4 ♗d4 13 ♗xd4 ♖xc4 14 ♗e2 ♖xe4 15 0-0**

Another possibility is 15 ♖d3 when Black's simplest way to a good position may be 15 ... ♖a5+ 16 c3 f5 17 f3 ♖a4 18 ♖xf5 ♖b6 19 f4 ♙g7.

**15 ... ♖g8 16 ♖d5 ♖b4 17 b3**



**17 ... ♖d7?!**

Letting White off the hook. 17 ... ♖bg4 is a better move when White's position is still uncomfortable. Now he gets a position where there is excellent compensation for the pawn. It has to be remembered that this is a rapid game in which neither side could be expected to play perfectly. In the end it is experience that wins out over youth.

**18 c4 ♖b6 19 f4 ♖c6 20 ♖ad1**

20 ♗g3 would have been even stronger.

**20 ... ♙h6 21 fxe5**

This also helps Black free his position. 21 ♖f3 is better when he is still struggling.

**21 ... fxe5 22 ♗g3 ♖g6 23 ♖d3 ♙f4 24 ♗h5 ♖c5 25 ♖f3 ♙g5 26 ♗g3 ♙f4 27 ♗e4 ♖c6 28 c5 ♗f8?**

With more thinking time Black might have played 28 ... d5 29 ♗d6+ ♖gxd6 30 cxd6 ♖xd6, when the two central pawns offer full compensation for the exchange. With this having been missed Black's position becomes difficult again.

**29 ♗xd6 a5 30 g3 ♖h3 31 ♗e4 f5 32 ♗f2 ♖h6 33 ♖d8+ ♗e7 34 ♖d5 ♗f6 35 ♖d7 ♖f8 36 ♖d1?**

36 ♗h1 is lethal as after 36 ... ♙h6 (Or 36 ... ♖xc5 37 ♖xb7 etc.) White has 37 ♗e4 mate. The final stages bear the hallmark of desperate time trouble.

**36 ... ♙e3 37 ♖xb7?**

And here White should have played 37 ♖d6+ ♖xd6 38 cxd6 ♙d4 39 ♗g2 with a winning position.

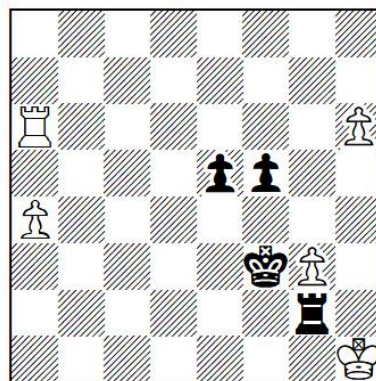
**37 ... ♙xf2+ 38 ♗xf2 ♖xc5+ 39 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 40 ♖xh7 ♖c2+ 41 ♗e3 ♗e6 42 ♖hd7 ♖c6 43 ♖a7 ♖g4 44 ♖d2 ♖e4+ 45 ♗f2 a4 46 bxa4 ♖d4 47 ♖b2 ♖dc4 48 h4 ♖c2+ 49 ♖xc2 ♖xc2+ 50 ♗f1 ♖xa2?**

After 50 ... ♗d5 51 h5 ♖h2 a draw would be a fair result.

**51 ♖a6+?**

Turning a win into a draw. 51 h5 ♗d5 52 h6 ♗e4 53 h7 ♗f3 54 ♗g1 ♖a1+ 55 ♗h2 ♖a2+ 56 ♗h3 ♖a1 57 ♗h4 would see White's king get away.

**51 ... ♗d5 52 h5 ♗e4 53 h6 ♗f3 54 ♗g1 ♖g2+ 55 ♗h1?**



Losing. 55 ♗f1 would have left Black with nothing better than a draw.

**55 ... ♖xg3 56 ♖e6? e4 57 ♗h2 ♖g5 58 ♖b6 e3 59 a5 ♗f2 60 ♖b2+ e2 0-1**

Game 57

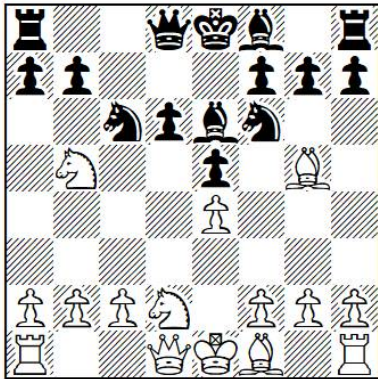
N.McDonald-J.Plaskett

London 1998

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6  
5 ♘b5 d6 6 ♙f4 e5 7 ♙e3 ♙e6

The preferred move order is 7 ... ♘f6 after which 8 ♘d2 ♙e6 9 ♙g5 would lead back into the game.

8 ♘d2 ♘f6 9 ♙g5



**Question:** What's White's goal with this move?

**Answer:** Firstly, it challenges the knight that defends the hole on d5 and with the knight pinned White might play ♘c4 to attack the d6-pawn. In the game Black answers with an interesting pawn sacrifice.

9 ... ♙e7

9 ... a6 can be met by 10 ♙xf6 gxf6 11 ♘c3 with White having the better chances.

10 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 11 ♘c4 0-0

11 ... d5 loses a piece to 12 exd5 ♙xd5 13 ♙xd5 (Or indeed either knight to d6 with check) 13 ... ♙xd5 14 ♘c7+ and 15 ♘xd5.

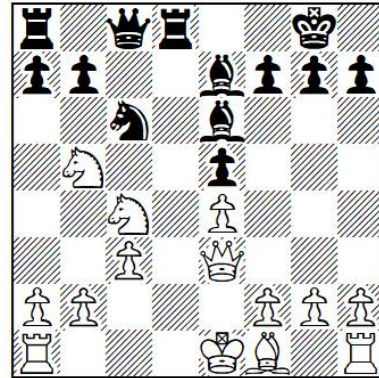
12 ♙xd6 ♙c8 13 c3 ♙e7!?

An excellent novelty from Plaskett which gives Black good play for the pawn. Previous games had featured 13 ... ♙xc4, for example 14 ♙xc4 ♙g4 (14 ... a6 15 ♘a3 ♙g4 16 0-0 was a bit better for White in V.Peresypkin-G.Timoschenko, USSR 1973) 15 0-0 ♙ad8! and now 16 ♙c7 (Rather than the 16 ♙c5 of J.Nunn-M.Tal, Reykjavik 1988) 16 ... ♙xe4 17 ♙b3 is better for White because of his pressure against b7 and f7.

14 ♙d2

After this Black gets a powerful initiative. White should hoover the queens off with 14 ♙c7 after which 14 ... ♙d8 15 a4 ♙xc4 16 ♙xc4 a6 17 ♙xc8 ♙axc8 18 ♘a3 ♙xa3 19 ♙xa3 ♘b4 20 ♙b3 (20 cxb4 ♙xc4 21 0-0 ♙xb4 puts White in desperate trouble) 20 ... ♘d3+ 21 ♘f1 ♘xb2 22 ♙e2 holds White's position together.

14 ... ♙d8 15 ♙e3



15 ... ♘d4

Not the most incisive continuation. The engine is screaming to play 15 ... ♘b4!! after which 16 ♘ba3 (16 cxb4 ♙xb4+ 17 ♘c3 ♙xc4 levels the pawns while leaving Black with massive pressure) 16 ... ♙c5 17 ♙f3 (17 ♙c1 b5 18 ♘xb5 ♙c6 19 cxb4 ♙xb4+ 20 ♘c3 ♙xc4 is also very good for Black) 17 ... b5 18 ♘e3 a6 19 ♙e2 ♘d3+ 20 ♙xd3 ♙xa3 21 ♙e2 ♙xb2 22 ♙xb2 ♙xd3 is close to winning.

16 cxd4 ♙xc4 17 ♙c1

In his notes to the game Plaskett mentioned that 17 d5 was a better move, for example 17 ... ♙b4+ 18 ♘c3 f5 keeps the initiative for a pawn. Another possibility was 17 dxe5 when 17 ... ♙xb5 18 ♙xb5 ♙b4+ 19 ♘f1 ♙c2 20 g3 ♙d2 piles the pressure onto White's undeveloped position.

17 ... ♙b4+ 18 ♘d1 exd4 19 ♘xd4?!

In such a complex tactical position it's almost impossible to calculate the right path. White should have played 19 ♙f4 when 19 ... d3 20 e5 ♙xa2 21 ♙xb4 ♙f5 gives Black more than enough compensation for his sacrificed piece, but nothing decisive at the moment.

19 ... ♙c5

Plaskett noted that 19 ... b5! 20 ♖xc4 bxc4 would have been a better way to keep White's king in trouble. Now White has a brief opportunity to save himself.

**20 ♖xc4?**

Missing it. By playing 20 ♖xc4! b5 21 ♖c2! White could hang on, for example 21 ... ♗xd4 22 ♖xc8 ♗xe3+ 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8+ 24 ♔e2 ♗h6 25 ♔f3 ♖d1 26 g3 will finally get White's pieces developed. Once this opportunity is gone he is busted.

**20 ... ♖xd4+**

Plaskett criticized his play here, but the engine says that his move was the best. After 20 ... ♗xd4 White can try 21 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♖b3+ ♖e6 23 ♖c7+ ♔f6 24 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 25 ♔e2 which is losing for White but certainly no worse than the game.

**21 ♗d3 ♖g4+ 22 ♔d2**

22 f3 ♖xg2 is just as hopeless.

**22 ... ♗b6 23 h3**

**23 ... ♖e6**

Not bad but not the best. Black had a stronger move in 23 ... ♖h4 intending 24 ... ♖ad8.

**24 ♔e2 ♖ad8 25 ♖hd1 ♖xa2 26 ♖c2 h6 27 ♖c1 ♖e6 28 ♖c3 ♖f6 29 ♖f1 ♖g6**

Threatening both e4 and g2.

**30 ♖f4 ♖xg2**

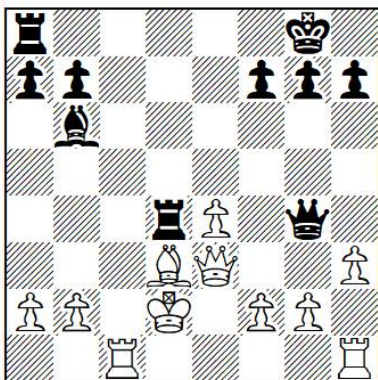
The game was hit by time trouble at this stage. 30 ... ♗a5 would have been much stronger.

**31 ♖g4 ♖h2 32 ♖g3**

Not 32 ♖g1 because of 32 ... ♖xe4+ etc.

**32 ... ♖xg3 33 f3 ♔f8 34 ♖b3 ♔e7 35 ♖f5 ♖d7 36 ♖e5+ ♔d8 37 ♗b5 ♖e7 38 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 39 ♔f3 ♖d2 0-1**

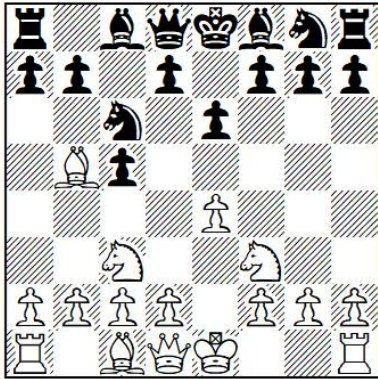
Black won on time, though White's position is unenviable even without this. A spectacular game by Plaskett which also has theoretical importance.



# Chapter Nine

## Anti-Sicilian: 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♘c3

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 ♖b5



Now that Black's knight is on c6 this becomes reasonable, though Black's reply is annoying because White has developed his knight to c3.

4 ... ♘d4 5 0-0

The main line, but not White's only move, 5 ♖d3 being examined in Delgado Ramirez-Laznicka (Game 59). 5 ♘xd4 is not very good because of 5 ... cxd4 6 ♘b1 ♖g5 as in Velikhanli-Tissir (Game 58).

5 ... a6 6 ♖d3 ♘c6

**Question:** Why is Black losing time by moving his well placed knight back?

**Answer:** If White can't play ♘xd4 followed by ♘c3-e2 and c2-c3, his set-up does not make a lot of sense.

7 ♖e1 g5!?

A very interesting move which aims to take control of the central dark squares; Black can post his f8-bishop on g7 and threatens to win the knight on f3 with 8 ... g4. We are following Tseitlin-Avruch (Game 60).

*Game 58*

**F.Velikhanli-M.Tissir**  
Abu Dhabi 2003

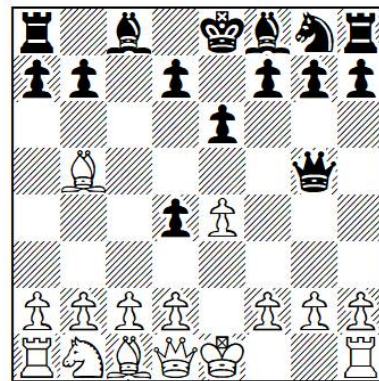
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 ♖b5 ♘d4 5 ♘xd4

White's alternatives here are 5 ♖d3 (Delgado Ramirez-Laznicka) and 5 0-0 (Tseitlin-Avruch).

5 ... cxd4 6 ♘b1

6 ♘e2 is worse as after 6 ... ♖g5 White can't play 7 ♘xd4 because 7 ... ♖c5 8 c3 e5 wins a piece.

6 ... ♖g5



This has been thought to be a reason for White to avoid 5 ♘xd4, but actually 6 ... ♘f6 seems stronger. Obviously White can't play 7 d3 because 7 ... ♖a5+ wins his bishop, so he would have to resort to less natural ways to defend the e4-pawn.

7 ♖f1 ♘f6 8 d3 ♖a5+ 9 ♘d2 d5 10 e5 ♘d7 11 f4 g5 12 fxg5

This is not necessarily bad but it does cooperate with Black's evil intentions. 12 ♖h5 seems more awkward, meeting 12 ... gxf4 with 13 ♖e2 followed by 14 0-0.

12 ... ♘xe5 13 ♖e2 h6 14 gxh6

14 0-0 would have been a much better idea after which 14 ... hxg5 15 ♘b3 ♖d8 16 ♘xd4 ♖c5 17 c3 hangs on.

14 ... ♖xh6 15 0-0 ♖e3+ 16 ♔h1 ♖c7 17 g3 ♖d7 18 ♘b3 0-0-0 19 ♖xe3 dxe3 20 d4 ♘c4 21 ♖e1 ♖dg8

White's position is very unpleasant due to the exposed position of his king.

22 ♖f3 ♖c6 23 ♘c5 e5 24 c3 ♘xb2?!

Allowing himself to be distracted by a pawn with little relevance. 24 ... ♖h6 was better to continue developing the attack.

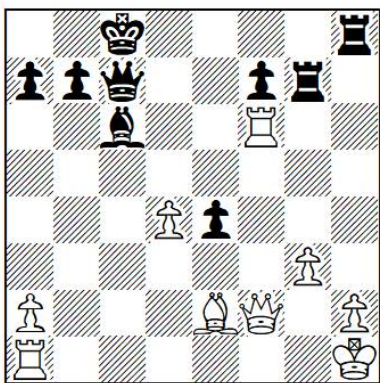
**25 ♖xe3 ♜c4 26 ♜f3 ♜g7 27 ♞f2 ♞d2?!**

And here 27 ... b6 was the right move, taking time to evict White's knight from its good outpost.

**28 ♜f6?!**

White had a chance to get back into the game via 28 ♖e3, after which 28 ... ♞e4 29 ♞xe4 dxe4 can be met by 30 ♞f6 ♜gh7 31 h4!, holding his kingside together.

**28 ... exd4 29 cxd4 ♞e4 30 ♞xe4 dxe4**



**31 ♜c1?**

The losing move. White had to play 31 ♜g1 when it simply isn't clear.

**31 ... e3+ 32 ♜fxc6 bxc6 33 ♙a6+ ♚d7 34 ♞f5+?!**

It would have been better to omit this check and play 34 ♞f3 as it just drives Black's king to a better square.

**34 ... ♚e8 35 ♜c2 ♚f8 36 ♞c5+ ♚g8 37 ♞xc6?!**

Allowing a forced mate, though the position was lost for White in any case.

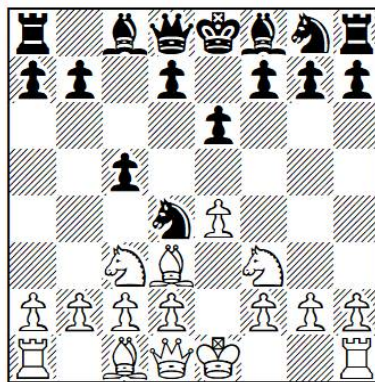
**37 ... ♜xh2+! 0-1**

After 37 ... ♜xh2+ 38 ♜xh2 (38 ♚xh2 ♞xg3+ 39 ♚h1 ♞g1 is mate; or if 38 ♚g1 then 38 ... ♞xg3+ etc.) the fastest mate is via 38 ... ♞xc6+ 39 ♜g2 ♞c1+ 40 ♜g1 ♜h7+ 41 ♚g2 ♞c6+ 42 d5 ♞xd5+ 43 ♚f1 ♞f3+ 44 ♚e1 ♞f2+ 45 ♚d1 ♞d2 mate.

### Game 59

**N.Delgado-V.Laznicka**  
Turin Olympiad 2006

**1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 e6 3 ♞c3 ♞c6 4 ♙b5 ♞d4 5 ♙d3**



**Question:** Doesn't that block White's d-pawn?

**Answer:** Yes it does, but he hopes to later capture on d4, move the knight from c3 and play c2-c3 and ♙d3-c2. Admittedly this takes some time, which is why this line is not a particular problem for Black.

**5 ... ♞e7 6 ♞xd4 cxd4 7 ♞e2**

White can also play 7 ♞b5, for example 7 ... ♞c6 8 c3 dxc3 9 ♞xc3 ♙e7 10 ♞0-0 d5 11 exd5 exd5 12 ♞h5 ♙e6 13 ♜e1 g6 14 ♞h6 ♙g5 15 ♞g7 ♙f6 resulted in a draw by repetition in R.Damaso-M.Pena Gomez, Torres Vedras 2013.

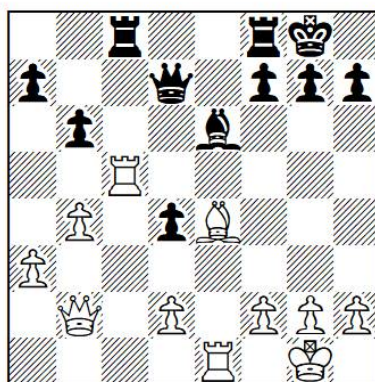
**7 ... ♞c6 8 c3 ♙c5 9 b4 ♙b6 10 ♞b3**

Just 10 ♞0-0 would have been a simpler path, with an equal position after 10 ... ♞0-0 11 b5 ♞e5 12 ♙b1 dxc3 13 d4 ♞g6 intending 14 ... d5.

**10 ... d5 11 ♞0-0 ♞0-0 12 exd5 exd5 13 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 14 cxd4 ♙xd4 15 ♙b2 ♙xb2 16 ♞xb2 d4 17 ♜fe1 ♞d6**

The position is about equal.

**18 ♙e4 ♙e6 19 a3 ♞d7 20 ♜ac1 ♜ac8 21 ♜c5 b6**



**22 ♖e5**

It looks as if White wanted to play for a win but leaving the c-file is risky. For a draw the best way would be to exchange pieces, for example via 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♖c1.

**22 ... d3!?**

A committal and double-edged decision as this pawn might become weak.

**23 ♗b1?**

A poor reaction after which Black takes over. The right move was 23 ♖g5 after which 23 ... g6 24 ♖g3 ♖c2 25 ♗e5 ♖xd2 26 ♗c3 ♖c2 27 ♗xd3 should be okay for White, notwithstanding the arrival of a Black rook on the seventh rank.

**23 ... ♖c2! 24 ♗d1 ♖g4?!**

24 ... ♗d4 would have been much stronger, in fact it's difficult to understand why Black rejected this move. Surprisingly he gets a second chance after the position repeats.

**25 ♗a1**

25 ♖f3 was the right move when 25 ... ♖xf3 26 ♗xf3 ♖xd2 27 ♖d5 ♖e8 28 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 29 g3 g6 30 ♖xd3 would be a draw.

**25 ... ♖e6 26 ♗d1 ♗d4!**

This time he sees it and White is in big trouble. Of course, the rook isn't threatened with 27 ... ♗xe5, at least not immediately, as ♖xh7+ would win the queen. A bigger issue is the awkward position of White's pieces, Black's strong rook on c2 and the weakness of the a3- and d2-pawns.

**27 h3**

27 ♖f5 is met by 27 ... ♗f4, again getting the d2-pawn.

**27 ... g6 28 ♖b7 ♗b2 29 ♗f3 ♖xd2 30 ♗e3 ♖xf2**

A neat tactic. If White takes the rook then 31 ... d2 follows.

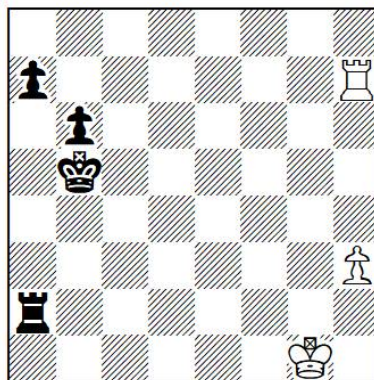
**31 ♗xd3 ♖d2 32 ♗e3 ♖fd8 33 ♖f3 ♖8d3 34 ♗f4 ♗d4+ 35 ♗xd4 ♖xd4**

A pawn up and with the better pieces, Black is now winning. Of course, care and attention is required due during the conversion process.

**36 ♖h2 ♖a2 37 ♖5e3 ♖d5 38 ♖e8+ ♖g7 39 ♖1e3 ♖xf3 40 ♖xf3 ♖dd2 41 ♖e7 ♖xg2+ 42 ♖h1 ♖gd2**

42 ... h5 would have made it easier, making room for the king on h6.

**43 ♖xf7+ ♖h6 44 ♖xh7+ ♖g5 45 ♖e1 ♖xa3 46 ♖g1+ ♖f5 47 ♖f1+ ♖e5 48 ♖e1+ ♖d6 49 ♖g1 ♖c6 50 ♖xg6+ ♖b5 51 ♖h4 ♖a1+ 52 ♖g1 ♖aa2 53 ♖g5+ ♖a4 54 b5+ ♖a5 55 ♖h7 ♖d1+ 56 ♖g1 ♖xg1+ 57 ♖xg1 ♖xb5**



Finally getting a united duo of passed pawns.

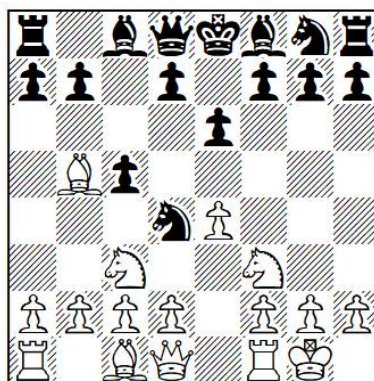
**58 h4 a5 59 h5 ♖c2 60 ♖g7 ♖c5 61 h6 ♖h5 62 h7 ♖a4 63 ♖g4+ ♖b5 64 ♖g7 a4 65 ♖f2 ♖b4 66 ♖e2 a3 67 ♖a7 b5 68 ♖d1 ♖b3 69 ♖c1 a2 70 ♖a5 ♖h1+ 71 ♖d2 b4 0-1**

### Game 60

**M.Tseitlin-B.Avrukh**

Israeli Championship, Tel Aviv 2002

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖c6 4 ♖b5 ♖d4 5 0-0**



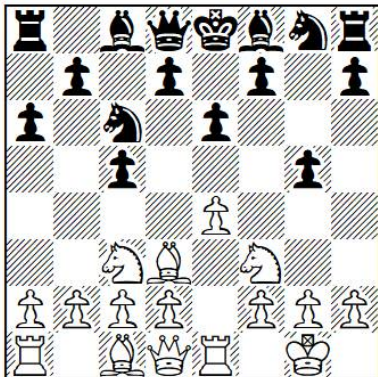
Probably White's best try as White will have useful lead in development if Black takes on b5. But Black has other options which make White's life difficult.

**5 ... a6 6 ♖d3 ♖c6**

**Question:** Why is Black losing time by moving his well-placed knight back?

**Answer:** If White can't play  $\text{dxd4}$  followed by  $\text{c3-e2}$  and  $\text{c2-c3}$ , his set-up does not make a lot of sense.

**7  $\text{Re1 g5!?$**



A very interesting move which aims to take control of the central dark squares. Black can post his f8-bishop on g7 and threatens to win the knight on f3 with  $8 \dots g4$ .  $7 \dots d6$  should also be okay for Black, though White then has a straightforward plan of  $8 \text{ e1f1}$  followed by  $9 d4$ .

**8  $\text{Ch1}$**

In an earlier game (G.Souleidis-H.Bousios, Halkidiki 2002) White played  $8 g3$  after which  $8 \dots d6$   $9 b3 \text{ g7}$   $10 \text{ b2 h6}$   $11 \text{ e1f1 g7e7}$  gave Black full equality. Note that he should be careful to avoid  $8 h3$  because  $8 \dots h5!$  would renew the idea of  $\dots g5-g4$  but this time prising open lines in front of White's king.

**8 ...  $\text{g7}$  9  $\text{e1f1 h6}$  10  $\text{d3 g7e7}$  11  $\text{e2}$**

$11 \text{ e3}$  was worth considering because  $11 \dots d4$  can be answered by  $12 \text{ e5!?$   $\text{dec6}$  ( $12 \dots \text{xf3}$   $13 \text{ Wxf3 e5}$  is met by  $14 \text{ xc5}$ )  $13 \text{ de4}$  and if  $13 \dots 0-0$  there follows  $14 \text{ fxg5!! hxg5}$   $15 \text{ xg5 f6}$   $16 \text{ exf6 xf6}$   $17 \text{ Wg4!}$  with a winning attack. Black might be better off with just  $11 \dots d6$ , when the game would be fairly balanced.

**11 ...  $\text{d5}$  12  $\text{c3}$**

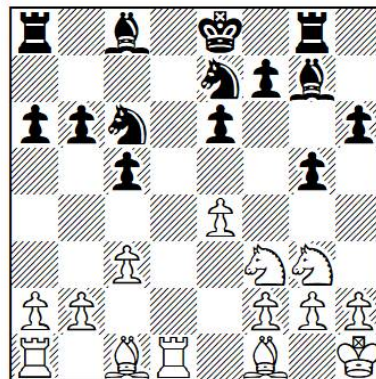
The immediate  $12 g3$  might have been a better idea when Black should play  $12 \dots 0-0$  ( $12 \dots \text{dxe4}$   $13 \text{ dxe4 0-0}$   $14 \text{ c3}$  is better for White as the bishop on g7 bites on the granite pawn on c3)  $13 \text{ dh5 dxe4}$   $14$

$\text{dxe4 Wxd1}$   $15 \text{ Rxd1 f5}$  with complex play in the endgame.

**12 ...  $\text{dxe4}$**

Going for an endgame before White plays  $\text{e2-g3-h5}$ . Chances are about even at this stage, but Tseitlin gets outplayed by his opponent.

**13  $\text{dxe4 Wxd1}$  14  $\text{Rxd1 b6}$  15  $\text{dg3 Rg8}$**



**Question:** What does this move do?

**Answer:** Black is just making room for his bishop on h8 in anticipation of  $\text{e2-g3-h5}$ .

**16  $\text{d2}$**

$16 \text{ dh5 e8}$   $17 h4$  was worth considering.

**16 ...  $\text{e5}$  17  $\text{dc4 dxc4}$  18  $\text{xc4 eb7}$  19  $\text{g1 ee5}$  20  $\text{f3 dc8}$**

Routing the knight towards the d6-square. This position is not easy for White now.

**21  $\text{dh5}$**

The knight seems misplaced here but, as Avrukh pointed out in his notes, it does at least stop Black castling queenside. After  $21 \text{ df1 d6}$   $22 \text{ e2 0-0-0}$  White's position is becoming quite awkward; as it does after  $21 \text{ e3 d6}$   $22 \text{ e2 0-0-0}$  intending  $\dots f7-f5$ .

**21 ...  $\text{e7}$**

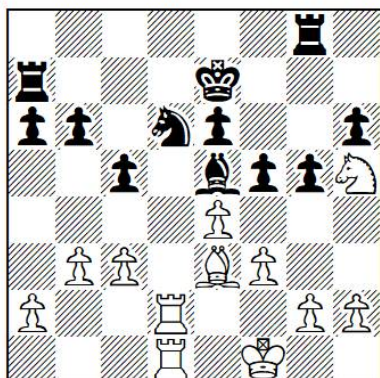
$21 \dots d6$  can now be met by  $22 \text{ Rxd6 exd6}$   $23 \text{ df6+ e7}$   $24 \text{ dxg8+ Rxg8}$   $25 \text{ e3}$  when White pretty much equalizes.

**22  $\text{e3 d6}$  23  $\text{e1 ec6}$  24  $\text{Rd2 eb5}$  25  $\text{Rad1 Ra7}$  26  $\text{b3}$**

Avrukh thought that White had to play  $26 \text{ e3}$  when it's difficult for Black to improve his position. While this is true it's also hard to find much advantage for Black

after 26 g3, for example 26 ... ♙xf1 27 ♔xf1 ♘c4 28 ♖e2 seems okay, and even Tseitlin's 26 b3 seems defensible.

26 ... ♙xf1 27 ♔xf1 f5



Although this wins a pawn the resulting positions are far from clear.

28 exf5 ♘xf5 29 ♖d3 ♙xh2 30 ♙f2 g4 31 f4?

In the hope of trapping the bishop on h2 White makes a serious positional mistake, fixing the kingside pawns on dark squares and making the knight on f5 into a beast. He should have played 31 ♔e2 gxh3+ 32 ♔xf3 when there's no reason White should lose with his pieces so actively placed.

31 ... ♔f7 32 g3

32 ♖d7+ ♖xd7 33 ♖xd7+ ♔g6 actually traps White's knight.

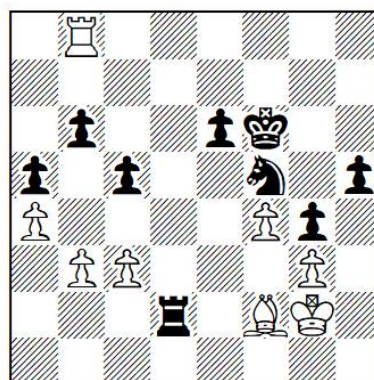
32 ... ♔g6 33 ♔g2 ♔xh5 34 ♔xh2 ♖c7 35 ♖d8 ♖xd8 36 ♖xd8 ♖c6 37 a4 a5 38 ♖b8 ♔g6 39 ♖g8+ ♔f7 40 ♖b8

40 ♖xg4 would leave the rook trapped, and Black wins with just 40 ... ♖d6 to attack White's queenside pawns.

40 ... ♖d6 41 ♖b7+ ♔g6 42 ♔g2 h5 43 ♖b8 ♔f7 44 ♖b7+ ♔f6 45 ♖b8

Or 45 ♔f1 ♖d3 etc.

45 ... ♖d2



46 ♔f1

46 ♖xb6 h4 is winning because 47 gxh4 would be answered by 47 ... g3.

46 ... ♖d3 47 ♖xb6 ♘xg3+ 48 ♔g2 h4 49 ♙xc5 ♖d2+ 50 ♔g1 ♘f5 51 ♖b8 h3 52 ♖h8 ♖d1+ 53 ♔f2 h2 0-1

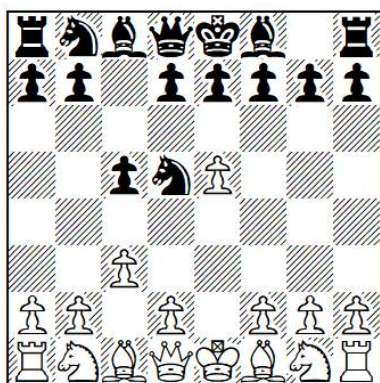
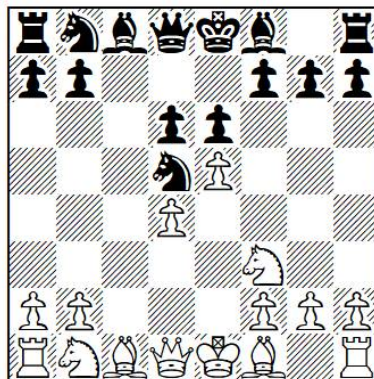
# Chapter Ten

## Anti-Sicilian: Alapin and Morra Gambit

**1 e4 c5 2 c3**

White has another move order to reach the Alapin, which is to play 2  $\text{d}f3$  e6 and then 3 c3. For this reason, Black needs a counter which includes the move ... e7-e6 so he can apply the same lines to both move orders. The lines considered here will also arise after a Morra Gambit with 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3  $\text{d}f6$  or indeed a delayed Morra with 2  $\text{d}f3$  e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 c3  $\text{d}f6$ .

**2 ...  $\text{d}f6$  3 e5  $\text{d}d5$**



**4 d4**

White can also delay playing d2-d4 with 4  $\text{d}f3$ , for example 4 ... e6 5 g3 (5  $\text{c}c4$   $\text{e}e7$  6 d4 cxd4 7 cxd4 d6 transposes into the 7  $\text{c}c4$  line, given below) 5 ...  $\text{d}c6$  6  $\text{g}g2$  d6 7 exd6  $\text{e}e6$  8 d4 cxd4 9  $\text{d}d4$   $\text{d}d4$  10  $\text{w}w4$  0-0 is Ivanov-Bruzon Batista (Game 61).

**4 ... cxd4 5  $\text{d}f3$**

White has also played 5  $\text{w}w4$  which can lead to two very different treatments of the position after 5 ... e6 6  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{d}c6$  7  $\text{w}w4$  f5 8  $\text{w}w2$  (Kristjansson-Kotronias, Game 62) or 8 exf6, which is covered in Vorotnikov-Sveshnikov, Game 63.

**5 ... e6 6 cxd4 d6**

**7 a3**

This prepares to play  $\text{e}f1$ -d3 as the immediate 7  $\text{e}d3$  can be met by 7 ... dxe5 8 dxe5  $\text{d}b4$  as in Stoven-Epishin (Game 64). White's other popular moves are 7  $\text{e}c4$  (Istratescu-Anand, Game 65) and 7  $\text{d}c3$  (Chuprov-Kalegin, Game 66). He has also tried some other seventh moves, and these are summarized as follows:

a) 7 exd6  $\text{e}e6$  8  $\text{d}c3$  0-0 9  $\text{e}d3$   $\text{d}c3$  10  $\text{e}c3$   $\text{w}w7$  11  $\text{w}w2$  (11  $\text{e}xh7+$  doesn't work as after 11 ...  $\text{c}xh7$  12  $\text{d}g5+$   $\text{c}g8$  13  $\text{w}w5$  Black has 13 ...  $\text{w}xc3+$  14  $\text{e}d2$   $\text{w}d3$ , covering the h7-square) 11 ... h6 12 0-0 b6 will give Black a comfortable game, he can further develop with ...  $\text{e}b7$  and ...  $\text{d}d7$  to put his knight on f6 or f8.

b) 7  $\text{e}d2$   $\text{e}d7$  8  $\text{e}d3$  (8  $\text{d}c3$  is also met by 8 ...  $\text{e}c6$ ) 8 ...  $\text{e}c6$  9 0-0  $\text{d}d7$  10  $\text{d}c3$  dxe5 11 dxe5  $\text{d}c5$  12  $\text{e}c2$   $\text{d}c3$  13  $\text{e}c3$   $\text{w}w1$  14  $\text{f}fxd1$   $\text{d}a4$  gives Black fully equal chances in the endgame.

c) 7  $\text{e}b5+$   $\text{e}d7$  8  $\text{e}c4$  dxe5 9  $\text{d}xe5$  (9 dxe5  $\text{e}b4+$  10  $\text{e}d2$   $\text{e}xd2+$  11  $\text{d}bxd2$   $\text{e}c6$  is also very comfortable for Black) 9 ...  $\text{e}b4+$  10  $\text{e}d2$   $\text{e}xd2+$  11  $\text{w}w2$   $\text{d}c6$  will exchange the knight on e5 or force it to retreat.

d) 7  $\text{e}e2$   $\text{e}e7$  8 0-0 0-0 9  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}c3$  10  $\text{e}c3$   $\text{d}d7$  11 exd6  $\text{e}e6$  will be followed by ...  $\text{w}w7$ , ... b6 and ...  $\text{e}b7$ , with very comfortable play.

**7 ...  $\text{e}d7$  8  $\text{e}d3$   $\text{e}c6$**

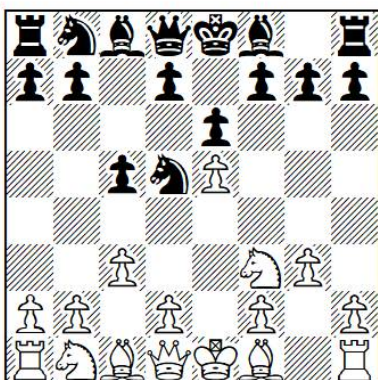
We are following Shaked-Rublevsky (Game 67). Black's last two moves were pioneered by Sicilian guru Lev Polugaevsky and give Black decent fighting chances in the forthcoming middlegame.

*Game 61*

**A.Ivanov-L.Bruzon Batista**

Buenos Aires 2005

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c3 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘d5 5 g3**

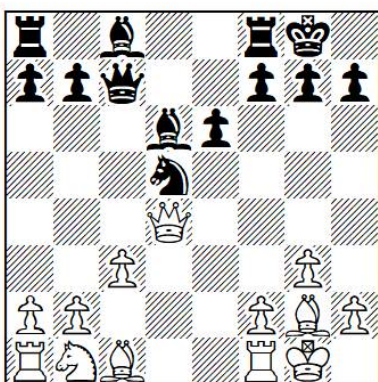


An interesting alternative which hopes that the bishop will be well placed on g2.

**5 ... ♘c6 6 ♗g2 d6**

Sooner or later White's e-pawn should be eliminated due to its cramping effect on Black's position.

**7 exd6 ♗xd6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 0-0 11 0-0 ♗c7**



**12 ♘d2**

12 ♗xd5 exd5 13 ♗xd5 is way too dangerous for White because of the weakened light squares, for example 13 ... b6 14 ♗xa8 ♗b7 15 ♗xf8+ ♔xf8 16 ♗e3 f5 17 ♘d2 f4 gave Black a winning attack in A.Hugaert-J.Veltman, Hengelo 2005. 12 c4

♘f6 13 ♘c3 ♗d7 14 ♗e3 ♗e5 15 ♗d3 ♗fd8 16 ♗ac1 ♗c6 was very comfortable for Black in A.Deviatkin-P.Tregubov, Dagomys 2009.

**12 ... ♗d7**

Although this looks fine for Black, the following year he chose 12 ... ♗d8. P.Harikrishna-L.Bruzon Batista, Spain 2006 continued 13 ♗c4 ♗b8 14 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 15 ♘b3 ♗d7 16 ♗g5 f6 17 ♗xd5! exd5 18 ♗f4 (18 ♗e3 might have been better) 18 ... ♗xf4 19 gxf4 ♔f7 with at least equality for Black.

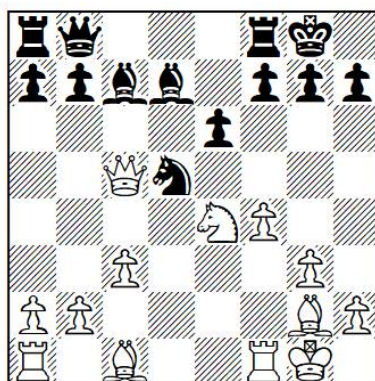
**Question:** Did he vary because White had an improvement on the main game?

**Answer:** Not necessarily, he might have wanted to try a different move or simply forgotten what he played previously. Another possibility is 12 ... ♗c5 after which 13 ♗d3 ♗d8 14 ♗e2 ♗d7 15 ♘e4 ♗e7 16 c4 ♘b4 was fine for Black in S.Tiviakov-S.Karjakin, Turin 2006.

**13 ♘e4 ♗e5 14 ♗c5 ♗b8 15 f4**

Driving the bishop back but weakening White's position. 15 ♗c4 would have been a better idea when the queen can drop back to e2.

**15 ... ♗c7**



**16 ♔h1**

**Question:** Couldn't White undermine the knight on d5 with 16 f5 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, that would lose the queen after 16 ... ♗b6.

**16 ... ♗b6 17 ♗d6 ♗c6**

Posting the bishop on c6 is a way to neutralize White's bishop on g2, though

there was no need to exchange White's errant queen. A preliminary 17 ... ♖c8 would have been stronger, preventing c3-c4 and intending ... ♗d7-c6 next. In this case Black's position would have been slightly preferable.

**18 c4 ♖xd6**

Sacrificing a pawn for the initiative. 18 ... ♗f6 would have left White with the better pawn structure after 19 ♖xb8 ♖axb8 20 ♗xf6+ gxf6 21 ♗xc6 bxc6 though with Black's bishop coming to d4 next, it's not clear this would count for much.

**19 ♗xd6 ♗f6**

Black can also play 19 ... ♗b4 after which 20 ♗xb7 ♗xg2+ 21 ♖xg2 ♖ab8 22 ♗d6 ♖fd8 23 ♗b5 (23 ♗e4 ♗c2 24 ♖b1 ♗d4 wins back the pawn) 23 ... a6 24 ♗a3 ♗c5 when White cannot easily free his position.

**20 ♗xb7 ♗xg2+ 21 ♖xg2 ♖ab8 22 c5**

If 22 ♗d6 there follows 22 ... ♖fd8 23 ♗b5 ♗e4 with the intention of 24 ... ♗d2 and excellent compensation for the pawn.

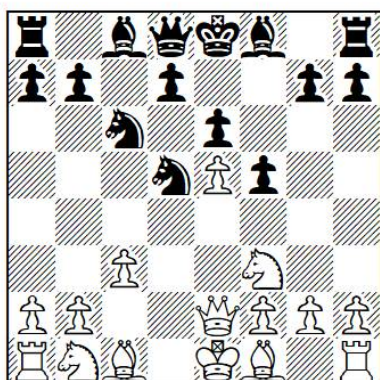
**22 ... ♖xb7 23 cxb6 axb6 24 ♗e3 ♗d5 25 ♖f3 f6 26 ♖fd1 ♖a8 27 a3 ♖f7 28 f5 ♗xe3 1/2-1/2**

*Game 62*

**B.Kristjansson-V.Kotronias**

Gausdal 1994

**1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♗f6 3 e5 ♗d5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 e6 6 ♗f3 ♗c6 7 ♖e4 f5 8 ♖e2**



Keeping the e5-pawn, at least for the time being. White's alternative is 8 exf6, which will be covered in the next game, Vorotnikov-Sveshnikov.

**Question:** Which of these two approaches is better?

**Answer:** Essentially they just lead to different position types, which is true of many choices in the opening.

**8 ... d6 9 g3 ♖c7 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♗g2**

In a later game, I.Buljovcic-V.Kotronias, Yugoslavia 1999, White varied here with 11 ♗bd2 and the game went 11 ... 0-0 (after 11 ... e5 White can play 12 ♗c4 e4 13 ♖d1 ♗ce7 14 ♗xd6+ ♖xd6 15 ♗d4, with what is arguably a slight edge) 12 ♗c4 ♗c5 13 ♗g2 b5!? and now White's best was probably 14 ♗e3 (rather than 14 ♗ce5, as played in the game) when 14 ... ♗f6 15 0-0 ♖b8 intends to play ... e6-e5. This fight over Black's ... e6-e5 can become quite intricate and is the key to assessing the position after 10 ... ♗xd6.

**11 ... 0-0**

Stockfish prefers to delay castling and play 11 ... ♗f6, for example 12 0-0 e5 13 ♗d4 ♗xd4 14 cxd4 e4 15 ♖b5+ ♖f7 is better for Black because of the space. This would explain why Buljovcic subsequently played 11 ♗bd2, even if he didn't fare much better.

**12 0-0 ♗f6 13 ♗bd2**

After this Black just plays ... e6-e5 and can claim to have the better game. 13 ♗d4 is a better move when 13 ... ♗xd4 14 cxd4 ♗d7 15 ♗c3 a6 16 ♗g5 is about equal.

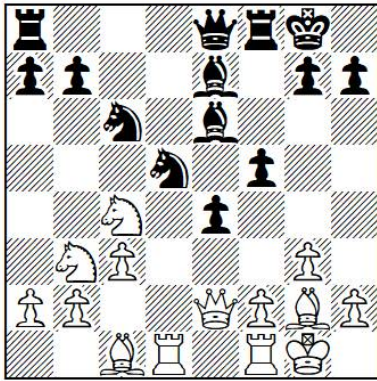
**13 ... e5 14 ♗c4 e4 15 ♗fd2 ♗e7**

Black can also consider letting White have the bishop pair with 15 ... ♗e6, the most important feature of the position being Black's control of space. After 16 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 17 ♗c4 ♖c5 the position is becoming very difficult for White.

**16 ♗b3 ♗e6 17 ♗f4 ♖d7 18 ♖ad1 ♗d5 19 ♗c1?!**

White should try to break up Black's pawns with 19 f3, notwithstanding the disappearance of his dark-squared bishop after 19 ... ♗xf4. White seems to be doing quite well after 20 gxf4 ♖c7 21 fxe4 fxe4 22 ♖xe4, and this in turn indicates that Black should have played 15 ... ♗e6 rather than losing time.

19 ... ♖e8



20 ♘d4

Here too it was vital to challenge Black's pawn mass with some urgency, the means of doing so this time being 20 g4. When White fails to do this he leaves Black on top, and it stays that way until the end of the game.

20 ... ♘xd4 21 cxd4 ♖b5 22 ♜fe1 ♘f4 23 ♜xf4 ♜xc4 24 ♖e3

24 ♖h5 g6 25 ♖h6 ♖xb2 is not an improvement for White.

24 ... ♜b4 25 b3 ♜d3 26 ♜e5?!

26 ♜xd3 was a better try as after 26 ... ♜xe1 27 ♜d1 ♜b4 28 f3! White gets to break up the kingside pawns. Admittedly he is the exchange down, but at least this way he would have some fighting chances.

26 ... ♜ae8

This really isn't necessary. Simply 26 ... ♜xe1 27 ♜xe1 ♜ac8 is winning for Black.

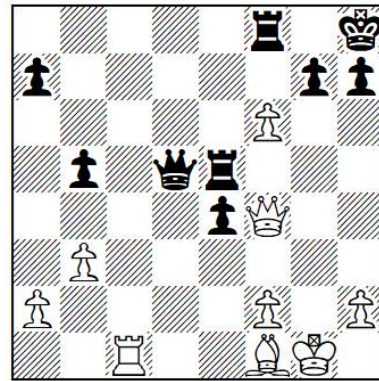
27 ♜f1

There was a case for immediately giving up the exchange with 27 ♜xd3. Black would probably answer with 27 ... ♜xe1 in order to keep his pawn structure intact, but then 28 ♜d1 ♜b4 29 ♜c1 ♜c8 30 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 31 ♜f1 would get the bishop to c4 where it might prove difficult to get rid of.

27 ... ♜xf1 28 ♜xf1 ♖d7 29 ♖f4 ♜d8 30 ♜c4+ ♜h8 31 g4

Understandably trying to break up Black's kingside pawns, but this also hurts White's position. Kotronias rightly takes the opportunity to exchange the dark-squared bishops when any technical difficulties start to dissolve.

31 ... ♜d6 32 ♜e1 ♜xe5 33 dxe5 b5 34 ♜f1 ♜de8 35 ♜c1 ♖d5 36 gxf5 ♜xe5 37 f6



As good or bad as anything else in this lost position. White is hoping for 37 ... ♜xf6 and a back rank trick with ♜c8+.

37 ... gxf6 0-1

Game 63

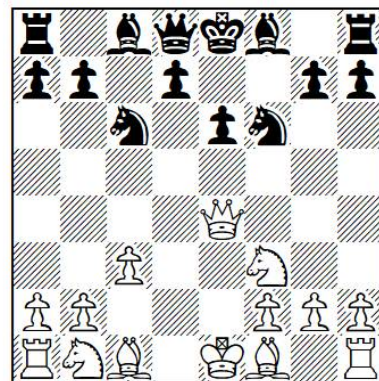
V.Vorotnikov-E.Sveshnikov

Lvov 1983

1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 e6 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♖e4 f5 8 exf6

A move which aims for active piece play, though Black's central pawn duo can become very strong. The alternative is 8 ♖e2.

8 ... ♘xf6



9 ♖h4

This aggressive move has the drawback that it exposes White's queen. There is an alternative in 9 ♖c2 but it also leaves a lot to be desired if Black plays 9 ... e5!. D.Howell-Y.Kryvoruchko, World U-20 Championship, Erevan 2006 continued 10

♙b5 e4 11 ♘d4 ♚b6 12 ♚a4 a6 13 ♙xc6 bxc6 with an excellent game for Black.

**9 ... d5**

Black needs to know what he's doing here because the natural 9 ... ♙e7 is dangerous due to 10 ♙d3 0-0 11 ♙g5 h6 12 ♙xh6 gxh6 13 ♚g3+ ♔h8 14 ♚g6, with at least a draw for White. On the other hand 9 ... e5 is a good move, though more difficult to handle than 9 ... d5.

**10 ♙d3 ♙d6! 11 ♙g5**

It's tempting to play 11 ♙g6+? in order to prevent Black from castling, but after 11 ... ♔e7 12 ♙c2 the time lost is more important. A.Novopashin-E.Sveshnikov, USSR 1981 continued 12 ... h6 13 ♙g6 ♙d7 14 ♙f4 e5 15 ♙g3 ♙e8 16 ♙xe8 ♚xe8 17 ♚a4 ♔f7 and Black was safely castling by hand while having created a powerful centre.

**11 ... ♔f7!**

Here too setting about castling by hand.

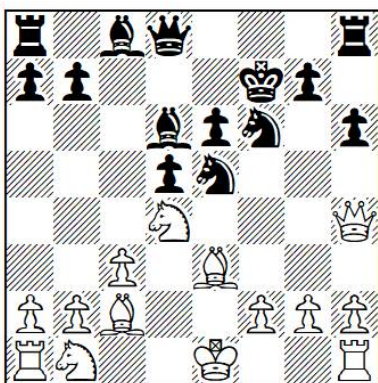
**Question:** Why didn't Black just play 11 ... 0-0 - ?

**Answer:** Because White could then play 12 ♙xh7+ on account of the knight on f6 being pinned.

**12 ♘d4?!**

White should probably just play 12 0-0, but after 12 ... h6 13 ♙xf6 ♚xf6 White should probably stay in a dodgy middle-game rather than exchange queens and reach a bad endgame.

**12 ... h6 13 ♙e3 ♘e5 14 ♙c2**



**14 ... g5**

This is certainly not bad, but 14 ... ♘eg4 is even better.

**15 ♚h3 ♘g6 16 g3 e5 17 ♘f5 ♘e7 18 f3**

It's getting hard to give White good advice, for example 18 ♘xd6+ ♚xd6 19 ♚g2 d4 is also very good for Black.

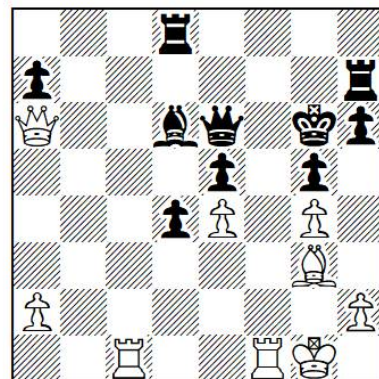
**18 ... d4! 19 ♙f2 ♘xf5 20 ♙xf5 ♚b6! 21 ♘d2 ♚xb2 22 ♚d1! ♚xc3 23 0-0 ♙xf5 24 ♚xf5 ♚c8**

Driving White's queen back from its threatening position. The only problem Black has is that his king might become exploded through a lack of pawn cover. If he manages this issue he should win.

**25 ♚b1 ♚c6 26 ♚c1 ♚d5 27 ♘e4 ♚ad8 28 g4 ♘xe4?!**

Black's desire to simplify is understandable, but this brings the rook on f1 into the game. 28 ... b6 would have been a safer option.

**29 fxe4 ♚e6 30 ♚xb7+ ♔g6 31 ♙g3 ♚h7 32 ♚a6**

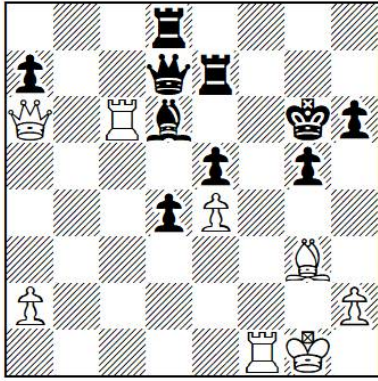


**32 ... ♚xg4?**

A serious error that could have cost Black dearly. Black should push his passed pawn with 32 ... d3, when his position is still clearly better.

**33 ♚c6 ♚hd7 34 ♚c4 ♚e7 35 ♚a6 ♚d7?**

This could have cost Black. 35 ... ♚e6 was the right move even though it leaves the d6-bishop pinned against both king and queen.



### 36 ♖c2?

Missing 36 ♖f8! after which 36 ... ♖xf8 37 ♖xd6+ ♖h7 38 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 is just lost for Black. Had Black played 35 ... ♗e6 instead of 35 ... ♗d7, there would have been a resource in 36 ... ♖d7.

### 36 ... d3

Based on a neat tactic this ties White down. The d3-pawn cannot be taken because of 37 ... ♗c5+.

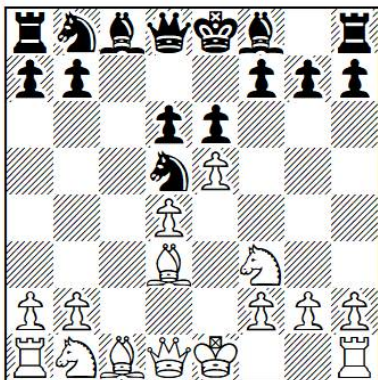
37 ♖d2 ♗e6 38 ♖g2 ♗b4 39 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 40 ♖dd1 d2 41 ♖f5 ♖c8 42 ♖f3 ♖c1 0-1

### Game 64

#### G.Stoven-V.Epishin

Marseille 2003

1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘d5 5 ♘f3 e6 6 cxd4 d6 7 ♗d3



Black can equalize easily after this natural move, but it's also important to see how winning chances might be generated.

### 7 ... dxe5 8 dxe5

Black would meet 8 ♘xe5 with 8 ... ♘d7 after which 9 0-0 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♗d7 followed by 11 ... ♗c6 is fine for Black.

### 8 ... ♘b4 9 ♗b5+

On 9 ♗e4 there would follow 9 ... ♗xd1+ 10 ♖xd1 ♘d7 11 ♗d2 a5 intending 12 ... ♘c5.

### 9 ... ♗d7 10 ♗e2 ♗e7 11 ♘c3 ♗c6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗b3

The queen is slightly exposed on this square. Perhaps White should have played 13 ♘d4 instead, but then 13 ... ♘d7 also gives Black full equality.

### 13 ... ♘d7 14 ♗f4 ♘d5 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗c4 ♘c5

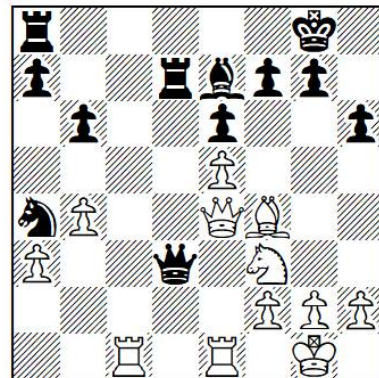
Both hitting the queen and probing some of the weak light squares in White's position. Black is slightly better now but it won't be easy to win.

### 17 ♗c2 ♗e4 18 ♗e2 ♗d3 19 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 20 ♗e3 ♖fd8 21 ♖ac1 b6 22 a3 ♖d7 23 b4 ♘a4

**Question:** Isn't the knight out of play on the edge like this?

**Answer:** Not really because it can easily hop into c3 or b2 later. Meanwhile the a4-square is a nice outpost on which the knight is not going to be harassed.

### 24 ♖fe1 h6 25 ♗e4



### 25 ... ♗xe4

Black hopes to be able to exploit his control of the d-file and the weakness of a3 in the endgame, though there was a case for letting White make the exchange with 25 ... ♖ad8.

### 26 ♖xe4 ♖ad8 27 h3 b5 28 ♗e3 ♖d3 29 ♗xa7?!

29 ♖d4 seems to be okay for White, for example 29 ... ♜8xd4 30 ♗xd4 ♜c3 31 ♜c2 ♗d5 32 ♗xb5 holds the balance.

**29 ... ♜xa3 30 ♖d4 ♗c3 31 ♗b6?**

These final moves bear the hallmark of serious time pressure. White should play 31 ♜xd8+ ♗xd8 32 ♖f1 after which Black can win a pawn in the variation 32 ... ♗a2 33 ♜c8 ♜xa7 34 ♜xd8+ ♖h7 35 ♗d4 ♗xb4 36 ♗xb5 ♜a1+ 37 ♖e2 ♜a5 38 ♗d6 ♜xe5+. Yet with the pawns restricted to one side of the board the chances to win will be problematic.

**31 ... ♜xd4?**

Winning a pawn but there was an even stronger move. 31 ... ♜b8 32 ♗c7 ♜c8 threatens both the bishop and the fork on e2.

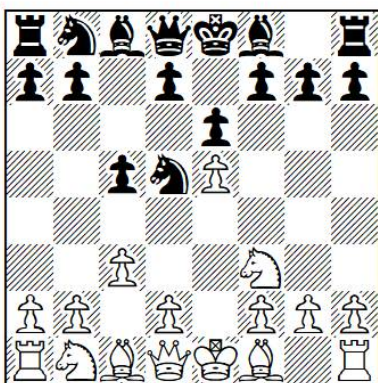
**32 ♗xd4 ♗xb4 33 ♖h2 ♗f8 34 ♗c7 b4 35 ♗d6 ♜a6 36 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 37 ♜c2 ♜a2 0-1**

### Game 65

**A.Istratescu-V.Anand**

London 2013

**1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♗f6 3 e5 ♗d5 4 ♗f3 e6**



**5 d4**

Another move order is 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 d4 cxd4 7 cxd4 d6, reaching the position after Black's 7th move.

**5 ... cxd4 6 cxd4 d6 7 ♗c4 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e2**

By far White's most important move, though not the only one. The alternatives are handled as follows:

a) 9 exd6 is White's main alternative, but Black is fine after 9 ... ♖xd6 10 ♗c3 ♗d7, for example 11 ♗xd5 exd5 12 ♗b3 ♜d8 13

♜e1 ♗f8 14 ♗e5 ♗f6 15 ♖f3 ♗e6 16 ♗d2 1/2-1/2 was B.Kantsler-V.Epishin, Ohrid 2001.

b) A simple way to meet 9 ♗c3 is with 9 ... ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♖xd1 12 ♜xd1 ♗d7 intending 13 ... ♜c8.

c) A good plan after 9 ♗d2 is 9 ... b6 10 ♗c3 ♗xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♗a6, exchanging off White's light-squared bishop which is his main attacking piece. If Black can later bring his knight to d5 he might even take over.

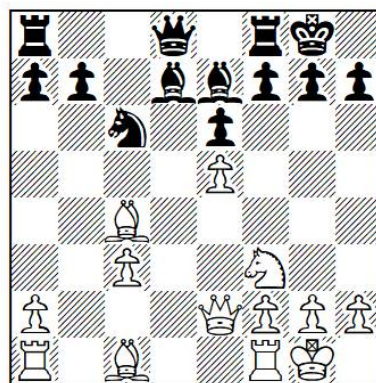
d) 9 a3 ♗c6 10 ♖e2 ♖b6 11 ♖e4 ♗a5 12 ♗d3 f5!? 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♖h4 ♗b3 was fine for Black in K.Grigrorian-E.Sveshnikov, Moscow 1983.

e) 9 ♗xd5 exd5 10 ♗c3 does not offer White anything, for example 10 ... dxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♗c6 12 ♗f4 ♗xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♗e6 14 ♜e1 ♜c8 was fully equal for Black in R.Ekstroem-V.Tukmakov, Zuerich 2001.

**9 ... ♗c6**

Other moves have been tried here but I like what Anand does in this game. It's the start of a simple and logical plan which shows some classy preparation.

**10 ♗c3 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♗xc3 12 ♗xc3 ♗d7!**



Anand has an excellent defensive set-up in mind in which the bishop will go to e8 to defend his kingside. 12 ... b6 has been played more frequently but seems to be far more risky, for example 13 ♖e4 ♗b7 14 ♗d3 g6 15 ♗h6 ♜e8 16 ♜ad1 ♖c7 17 ♖f4 intends some combination of ♜fe1, h4 and ♗g5.

**13 ♜d1**

This does at least prevent 13 ... ♖a5. White has tried several alternatives here but without making much impact on Black's position:

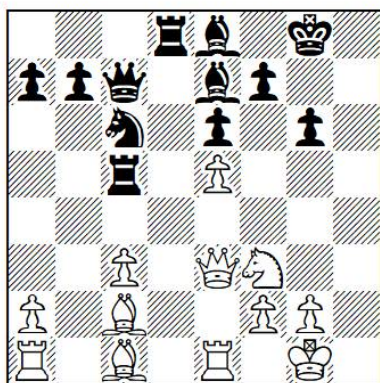
a) 13 ♖d3 ♜c7 (13 ... ♜a5 is also possible as after 14 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15 ♜d3+ ♔g8 16 ♜xd7 Black will get play for his pawn via various different means, for example 16 ... ♜a6 or 16 ... ♞ac8) 14 ♜e4 g6 15 ♗h6 (15 ♞e1 ♞fd8 and ... ♗e8 would be similar) 15 ... ♞fd8 16 ♞fe1 ♗e8 17 ♗f1 ♔a5 would see Black start to develop counterplay on the queenside.

b) 13 ♜e4 can be met by 13 ... ♜a5 for example 14 ♞b1 (14 ♗d3 g6 15 ♗d2 ♞fd8 16 ♞fe1 ♗e8 17 ♗c2 ♞d7 18 h4 ♞ad8 was also comfortable for Black in O.Zimina-O.Vasiliev, Plovdiv 2010) 14 ... ♜a4 15 ♗g5 b6 16 ♞fd1 ♞ad8 17 ♞d2 ♗c8 18 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 19 h3 ♗a6 was starting to look nice for Black in V.Manelis-A.Gabrielian, Voronezh 2006.

13 ... ♜c7 14 ♗d3 ♞fd8 15 h4 ♗e8 16 ♜e4 g6 17 h5 ♞d5

Preparing to double rooks on the d-file. Little by little the weaknesses in White's position start to hurt.

18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♞e1 ♞ad8 20 ♗c2 ♞c5 21 ♜e3



Black's reply is just stunning, but it's hard to see what else White can do.

21 ... ♗xe5!! 22 ♗xe5 ♞xc3 23 ♗d3 ♗f6

Attacking the knight that defends the bishop on d3. White's reply is mandatory.

24 ♗b2 ♗xe5 25 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 26 ♞ac1 ♜a5

With two pawns and a strong dark-squared bishop, Black has more than enough compensation for the exchange. Yet this is still far from winning, at least for the time being.

27 ♞ed1 ♗d4 28 ♜e2 ♗c6 29 ♗e4 ♞d6

**Question:** Why is Anand allowing his queenside pawns to be split?

**Answer:** He doesn't mind because the c-pawn can be used to support the bishop on d4.

30 ♗xc6 bxc6 31 ♞b1 c5 32 g3 ♞d5 33 ♔g2 ♞e5 34 ♜d2 ♜d8 35 ♞b3 ♜d5+ 36 f3 ♜c4 37 ♞d3 ♞h5 38 g4

Black has managed to provoke further weaknesses in White's position, which in turn becomes harder to play. As time trouble approaches his position becomes too difficult.

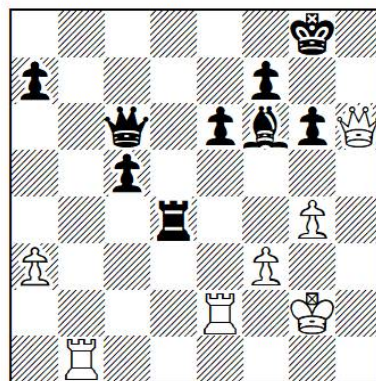
38 ... ♞d5 39 a3 ♜b5 40 ♜c2 ♞d8 41 ♞b3 ♜a6 42 ♞c1 ♔g7 43 ♜c4

With a vulnerable king White would like to exchange some pieces. Anand declines the offer.

43 ... ♜d6 44 ♞h1 ♗f6 45 ♞e3 ♜c7 46 ♞e2

On 46 ♞d3 Black would avoid the exchange of rooks with 46 ... ♗d4.

46 ... ♞d4 47 ♜c1 ♜c6 48 ♜h6+ ♔g8 49 ♞b1?



Blundering in time trouble, but in any case Black has more than enough for the sacrificed exchange.

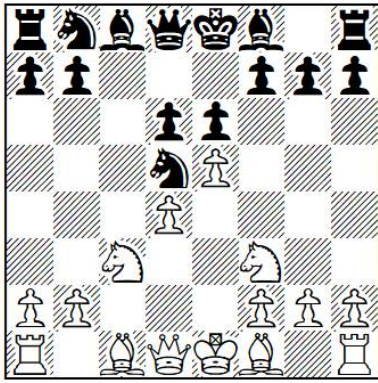
49 ... ♞xg4+ 50 ♔f2 ♗h4+ 0-1

### Game 66

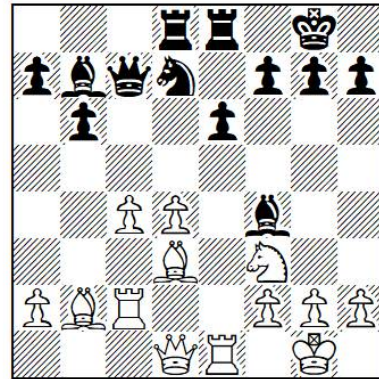
#### A.Chuprov-E.Kalegin

Russian Team Championship, Podolsk 1993

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 c3 ♗f6 4 e5 ♗d5 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 d6 7 ♗c3



16 ♖c2 ♜ad8



This natural-looking move allows Black to get good counterplay, but there's a need for precision on his part.

7 ... ♗xc3 8 ♙xc3 ♖c7 9 ♙b2

Hoping to eventually have 'Horwitz Bishops' pointing at Black's kingside from b2 and d3. White can also keep the bishop on the c1-h8 diagonal with 9 ♙d2, when there too Black should play 9 ... ♗d7!. I.Seitaj-J.Polgar, Kallithea 2002 continued 10 exd6 ♙xd6 11 ♙d3 b6 12 0-0 ♙b7 13 ♖e1 0-0 14 h3 ♖ac8 15 a4 ♙f4 with an excellent game for Black.

9 ... ♗d7 10 exd6 ♙xd6 11 ♙d3 0-0 12 0-0 b6 13 c4 ♙b7 14 ♖e1 ♖fe8

Rightly resisting any temptation to snaffle the h2-pawn as White would get very good compensation. For example, 14 ... ♙xf3 15 ♖xf3 ♙xh2+ 16 ♖h1 ♙d6 17 ♖e4 e5 18 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 19 dxe5 ♗xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 21 ♖e4 g6 22 ♙xe5 was better for White in L.Morelle-O.Simon, Paris 2005. 14 ... g6 would also be risky because of 15 h4, for example 15 ... ♖fe8 16 h5 ♙f8 17 ♗g5 ♗f6 18 d5 e5 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♖f3 gave White a strong attack in D.Campora-P.Cramling, Buenos Aires 1994.

15 ♖c1 ♙f4

Harassing the rook on c1. There were other good moves here, for example putting the queen's rook on c8 or d8. K.Yap-K.Goh Wei Ming, Manila 2008 continued in interesting fashion with 15 ... g6 16 h4 e5, after which 17 d5 ♗c5 18 ♗g5 f5 19 ♙b1 e4 gave him an edge. As usual I'd advise against snatching a pawn with 15 ... ♙xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♙xh2+ 17 ♖h1 ♙f4, but some people might like this.

17 d5

This move is very thematic as it opens up the bishops on b2 and d3, the downside is that the d-pawn may become a weakness without adequate piece play being achieved. It's also not easy to find good alternatives as 17 ♖e2 is strongly met by 17 ... e5! and 17 g3 ♙h6!? prevents any ♗f3-g5 and leaves White vulnerable on the a8-h1 diagonal.

17 ... exd5

Black takes the bait, but he had a good alternative in 17 ... ♗c5. After 18 g3 (18 ♙f1 ♖f8!? would threaten the d5-pawn because White can no longer meet ... exd5 with ♖xe8+) 18 ... ♙h6 19 ♙f1 exd5 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 cxd5 ♖d6 the d5-pawn comes under pressure and the bishop on h6 covers the potential target on g7.

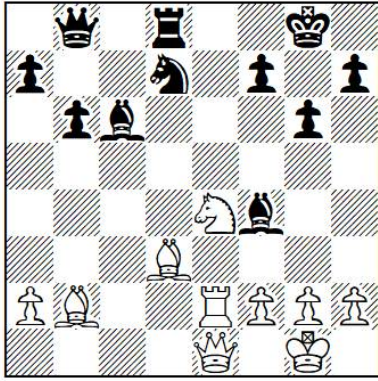
18 cxd5 ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 ♖d6 20 ♖e2

Dropping a pawn for inadequate compensation. 20 ♖c4 would also be good for Black after 20 ... ♗c5 21 ♖c3 ♙h6, but this is better than the game.

20 ... ♙xd5 21 ♗d4 g6

Black decides that one pawn is enough, at least for the time being. Here he cutd out the idea of ♗f5 rather than getting greedy with the pawn on h2.

22 ♗b5 ♖b8 23 ♗c3 ♙c6 24 ♗e4



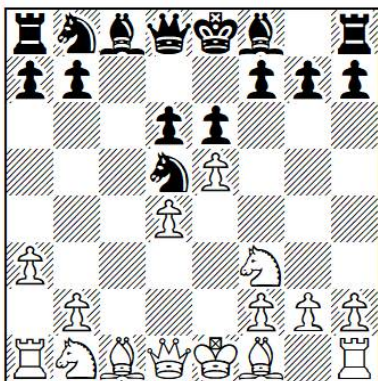
White is trying to get some counterplay but now the h2-pawn is very edible. Of course it's difficult to give White great advice when he's basically just a pawn down.

**24 ... ♗xh2+ 25 ♖h1 ♗e5 26 ♗a3 ♗f6 27 ♗e7 ♜xd3 28 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 29 ♗xf6+ ♖g7 30 ♗g4 ♜d6 31 ♗e3 ♜d4 32 ♖g1 ♜h4 33 ♗f1 ♜f6 34 ♜c1 ♗d5 35 ♜d2 ♜d4 36 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 37 ♗e3 ♗xa2 38 ♜c7 a5 39 ♜g3 ♗e6 40 ♖h2 a4 0-1**

*Game 67*

**T.Shaked-S.Rublevsky**  
Groningen 1997

**1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♗f6 3 e5 ♗d5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗f3 e6 6 cxd4 d6 7 a3**



**Question:** Why is White using a tempo on this move?

**Answer:** It's because he wants to put his bishop on d3 without it being harassed by ... ♗d5-b4.

**7 ... ♗d3**

Starting a neat regrouping of Black's forces that was originated by Lev

Polugaevsky. The bishop will come to c6 and the b8-knight to d7.

**8 ♗d3**

White has also played 8 ♗bd2 in this position, but Black has a good answer in 8 ... ♗c6 9 ♗c4 b5. D.Andreikin-K.Sakaev, St Petersburg 2004 continued 10 ♗xd6+ ♗xd6 11 exd6 ♜xd6 12 ♗e5 0-0 13 ♗d3 ♗e8 14 0-0 f6 with full equality for Black.

**8 ... ♗c6 9 0-0 ♗d7 10 b4**

Threatening b4-b5 and at the same time preparing to develop the dark-squared bishop on b2. Other moves to have been tried here are as follows:

a) 10 ♜e1 ♜c8 11 b4 a6 12 ♗g5 dxe5 13 ♗xe6 (13 dxe5 ♗e7 14 ♜g4 can be met by the sensational 14 ... ♗e3!!, for example 15 ♗xe3 ♗xe5 16 ♗xe6 ♗xg4 17 ♗xd8 ♜xd8 18 ♗c5 ♜xd3 19 ♜xe7+ ♖d8 20 ♜e1 ♜e8 leaves Black slightly better) 13 ... fxe6 14 ♜h5+ ♖e7 15 dxe5 h6 16 ♗c3 (16 ♗g5+ hxg5 17 ♜xh8 ♗f4 sets a winning counterattack in motion) 16 ... ♗xc3 17 ♗g5+ hxg5 18 ♜xg5+ ♗f6 19 exf6+ gxf6 20 ♜xe6+ ♖xe6 21 ♜g4+ ♖e7 22 ♜e1+ ♗e4 23 ♗xe4 ♜d2 and Black won in D.Arenas-V.Topalov, Baku (ol) 2016.

b) 10 ♗d2 dxe5 11 dxe5 g6!? is another plan worth noting as the e5-pawn comes under fire. S.Zilka-P.Cerveny, Litomyšl 2006 continued 12 ♗c3 ♗g7 13 ♜e1 0-0 14 ♜e2 and now 14 ... ♗e7 (intending 15 ... ♗xf3 followed by 16 ... ♗c6) would have been very awkward for White.

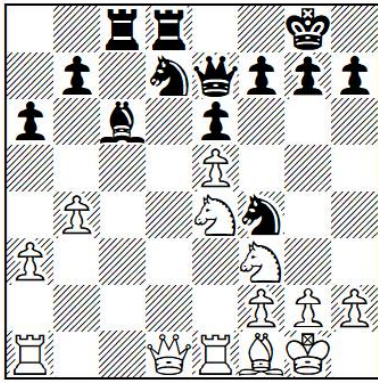
**10 ... a6 11 ♜e1**

After 11 ♗bd2 Black can even play 11 ... ♗c3! 12 ♜b3 (12 ♜e1? dxe5 13 ♗e4 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗b5 was better for Black in A.Berelowitsch-S.Rublevsky, Azov 1996) 12 ... ♜c8! because 13 ♜xc3 (13 ♗b2? ♗a4!) 13 ... ♗xf3 14 ♜b2 ♗c6 is already slightly better for Black.

**11 ... ♜c8 12 ♗g5 ♗e7 13 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 14 ♗bd2 0-0 15 ♗e4 dxe5 16 dxe5 ♗f4**

Depriving White of the time he needs to consolidate. 16 ... ♜fd8 17 ♜d2 would allow White to keep control.

**17 ♗f1 ♜fd8**



**18 ♖d4**

18 ♖d6 would be awkward for White after 18 ... ♗xd6 19 ♘xd6 (19 exd6 ♙xe4 20 ♜xe4 ♘d5 will soon win the d6-pawn) 19 ... ♜b8 because Black is threatening 20 ... ♙xf3 and 20 ♘h4 can be met by 20 ... ♘xe5 21 ♘xb7 ♜xb7 22 ♜xe5 ♙b5 with rather more than equality.

**18 ... ♘g6 19 ♗b2 ♙d5 20 g3 ♘b6 21 ♜ac1 ♘c4 22 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 23 ♜xc4 ♙xc4 24 h4 h6 25 h5 ♘f8 26 ♘fd2 ♙d5 27 ♗c3 ♙c6 28 ♗e3**

28 ♘d6 looks good until you see 28 ... ♗g5, winning the h5-pawn.

**28 ... ♘d7 29 f4 ♘h8**

There was a case for 29 ... f6 undermining the e5-pawn so White's knight can't use the d6-square.

**30 ♘c4 ♙d5 31 ♘cd6 f6 32 ♗d4**

32 ♗c3, avoiding the gaze of Black's rook on d8, was possible.

**32 ... ♙xe5 33 ♙xe5 ♘b8!**

Routing the knight towards the excellent c6-square.

**34 ♘c3 ♘c6 35 ♗f4**

And not 35 ♘xd5? because of 35 ... ♗xd6! 36 exd6 ♘xd4 37 ♜d1 ♜xd6, winning a pawn.

**35 ... ♜f8**

There was a nice trap here in that 35 ... ♘xe5? loses to 36 ♘xd5 ♗xd6 37 ♜xe5 exd5 (37 ... ♜f8 loses to 38 ♜xe6!) 38 ♜e8+ ♘h7 39 ♗f5+ followed by mate.

**36 ♘xd5 exd5 37 ♘f5 ♗e8**

Inaccurate because White could now play 38 e6!. 37 ... ♗e6 38 g4 ♘g8 would

have been better, with full equality for Black.

**38 g4**

38 e6! is quite a testing move but Black can play 38 ... ♘e7 (and not 38 ... ♗xh5? 39 e7!) after which 39 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 40 ♗e5 ♗f6 41 ♗xf6 gxf6 looks drawish.

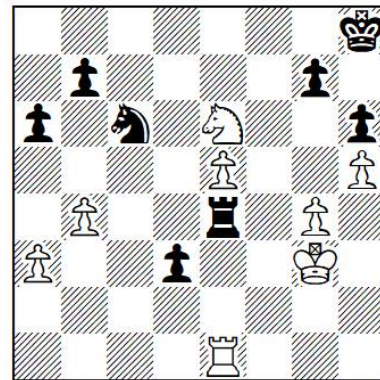
**38 ... ♗e6 39 ♘h2 d4! 40 ♘g3**

The only good move. 40 ♘xd4? would have lost on the spot to 40 ... ♗a2+ and 40 ♗e4?! would also be difficult for White after 40 ... ♜d8!, intending to push the d-pawn.

**40 ... d3 41 ♘d4**

Allowing Black to transition into a favourable endgame. 41 ♗d2 was best, when it's still anybody's game.

**41 ... ♜xf4 42 ♘xe6 ♜e4!**



**43 ♜f1**

After 43 ♘f2 there follows 43 ... d2 44 ♜d1 ♘xe5, for example 45 ♘c5 (45 ♜xd2 ♘xg4+ 46 ♘f3 ♜xe6 47 ♘xg4 ♜e4+ 48 ♘f5 ♜h4 49 ♘g6 ♜g4+ 50 ♘f7 ♜g3 reaches a winning rook endgame) 45 ... ♜d4 46 ♘e3 ♜d6 47 ♘xb7 ♘c4+ 48 ♘e2 ♜e6+ 49 ♘f2 ♜e4 50 ♘c5 ♜f4+ 51 ♘e2 ♜xg4 52 ♘xa6 ♜g2+ 53 ♘d3 (53 ♘f3 ♘b2) 53 ... ♘b2+ 54 ♘c2 ♘xd1 55 ♘xd1 ♜g1+ 56 ♘xd2 ♜a1, finally reaching a winning position. 43 ♜xe4? is obviously bad because of 43 ... d2! followed by queening.

**43 ... ♘xe5 44 g5 ♜g4+ 45 ♘h3 hxg5 46 ♜f5 d2 47 ♜f8+ ♘h7 48 ♜d8 ♜g1! 49 ♘f8+ ♘h6 0-1**

White even gets mated after 50 ♜xd2 g4+ and 51 ... ♘f3 mate.

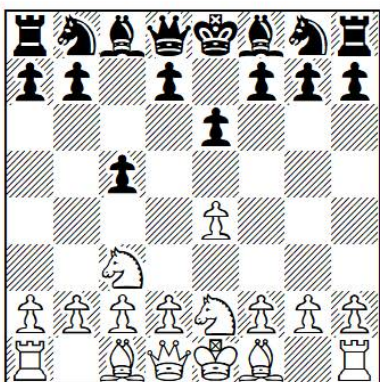
# Chapter Eleven

## Anti-Sicilian: Closed Fianchetto Systems

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3**

This is the traditional way of introducing closed fianchetto systems in which White plays g2-g3 but not d2-d4. The immediate 2 g3 allows Black to counter with 2 ... d5 as in Batsanin-Yakovich (Game 68) and 2 d3 also allows Black to take the centre with 2 ... ♘c6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘d2 ♘f6 5 ♙g2 e5, as in Klenburg-Chernyshov (Game 69). White can also fianchetto after first committing his knight to f3 with 2 ♘f3 e6 and now either 3 g3 immediately (Ponomariov-Caruana, Game 70) or 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3, which is covered in Sebe Vodislav-Iordachescu (Game 71).

**2 ... e6 3 ♘ge2**



This is White's most promising treatment, waiting with his g3 until he can meet ... d7-d5 by capturing and playing d2-d4. The immediate 3 g3 is met by 3 ... d5 after which 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♙g2 ♘f6 6 d3 d4 secures a useful space advantage as in Damians Janes-Delchev (Game 72).

**3 ... ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 exd5 exd5 6 d4**

This is the point behind 3 ♘ge2.

**6 ... ♘f6 7 ♙g2 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♙g4**

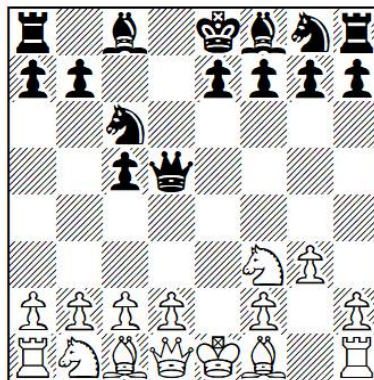
An interesting, isolated d-pawn position has been reached that is covered in Safarli-Tregubov, Game 73.

*Game 68*

**D.Batsanin-Y.Yakovich**

Russia Cup, Omsk 1998

**1 e4 c5 2 g3 d5 3 exd5 ♙xd5 4 ♘f3 ♘c6**



This is probably Black's most reliable move. After 4 ... ♙g4 5 ♙g2 ♙e6+ 6 ♔f1 ♘c6 7 h3 ♙h5, White will often get the bishop pair with a later g3-g4 and ♘f3-h4.

**5 ♘c3**

White's best here might be 5 d3 after which 5 ... ♘d4 6 ♙g2 ♙h3 7 ♙xh3 ♘xf3+ 8 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 9 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 10 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 11 ♔g1 ♘f3+ is a funny draw by perpetual check (1/2-1/2) as occurred in N.Davies-O.Renet, Haifa 1989. After 5 ♙g2 ♙e6+ 6 ♔f1 White loses castling rights as in the 4 ... ♙g4 line, though here he won't be able to exchange Black's light-squared bishop. A.Nadanian-M.Golubev, Kiev 1997 continued 6 ... ♘f6 7 d3 b6 8 b4?! cxb4 9 ♘d4 ♘xd4 10 ♙xa8 and now 10 ... ♙d7! intending 11 ... ♙c6 would have been strong.

**5 ... ♙e6+ 6 ♙e2 ♘d4!**

At the time of the game this was thought to be an important new move from Yakovich, though he also seems okay after the older 6 ... ♙d7, which is well met by 7 ♙b5 ♙e6+ (7 ... f6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 e5 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 was V.Chernov-T.Seeman, Elista (ol) 1998 after which 11 ♙h5+ g6 12

♖f3 ♗b7 13 ♔a4 would have been stronger than the queen exchange White made in the game) 8 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 9 ♜xe2 ♔d7 10 ♞d1 and now 10 ... ♞d4+ 11 ♞xd4 cxd4 12 ♔xd7+ ♜xd7 would have been fine for Black rather than the 10 ... e6 11 d4 of D.Batsanin-E.Bacrot, Cala Galdana 1996.

**7 ♞xd4 cxd4 8 ♞b5 ♖c6 9 f3 ♖d7**

Yakovich was proud of this move, pointing out that 9 ... e5?! is too early because of 10 ♔d3 a6 11 ♖e2!, when White is threatening 12 ♞xd4 and the knight on b5 can't be taken. 9 ... ♖b6 looks like a natural move but White can answer with 10 c3. The point behind 9 ... ♖d7 is to meet 10 c3 with 10 ... d3.

**10 ♔d3 a6 11 ♖e2 ♖d8**

Yet another queen move, in order to threaten 12 ... axb5. Although Black has moved his queen five times White's pieces are not on good squares.

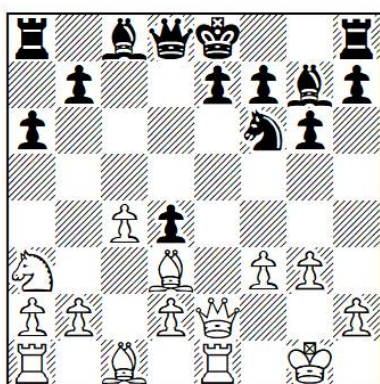
**Question:** Can't Black just play 11 ... ♞f6 - ?

**Answer:** The problem is that White could then play 12 ♖e5, threatening a fork on c7 and the knight still can't be taken.

**12 ♞a3 ♞f6 13 c4**

13 c3 e6 14 ♞c2 ♔c5 is fine for Black.

**13 ... g6 14 0-0 ♔g7 15 ♞e1**



**15 ... e6**

In his notes to the game Yakovich criticized this move because it weakened d6, preferring 15 ... b6! instead. This does make sense but after 16 ♞c2 Black should probably play the simple 16 ... ♗b7 rather

than Yakovich's 16 ... ♞a7 and meet 17 b4 0-0 18 ♖xe7 with 18 ... ♔xf3.

**16 c5 b6**

16 ... ♞d5 looks like a natural move after which 17 ♞c4 0-0 18 b3 ♔d7 followed by 19 ... ♔c6 reaches a good set-up for Black.

**17 cxb6 ♖xb6 18 ♞c4 ♖b8 19 b3 0-0 20 ♔a3 ♞d8 21 ♞ac1 ♔d7!**

Black has to be careful here with White's dark-squared bishop and knight ready to invade.

**22 ♔e7**

Against 22 ♞e5 Black can play 22 ... ♞d5! threatening the knight on e5, and then if 23 ♞c6 he has 23 ... ♔xc6 24 ♞xc6 a5 intending ... ♞d5-b4.

**22 ... ♞c8 23 ♞e5 ♞xc1!**

And not 23 ... ♔b5? because of 24 ♞xf7! ♞xc1 25 ♞h6+! ♔xh6 26 ♖xe6+ followed by ♔xf6+ and ♞xc1.

**24 ♞xc1 ♔b5 25 ♔a3 ♞d5 26 ♞c4 ♖a7 27 ♞d6 ♞d8 28 ♞e4?!**

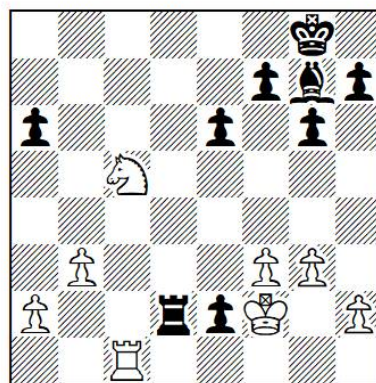
Both sides were running short of time at this stage and it's Yakovich who holds his nerve better. 28 ♔c5 would have been a safer move.

**28 ... ♞c3! 29 ♖f1?**

29 dxc3 was White's only move, but then 29 ... dxc3+ 30 ♔c5 ♔d4+ 31 ♜g2 ♔xc5 32 ♔xb5 axb5 33 ♞xc3 ♔d4 leaves Black with a pleasant advantage.

**29 ... ♔xd3 30 ♖xd3 ♞e2+! 31 ♖xe2 d3+ 32 ♔c5 ♖xc5+ 33 ♞xc5** Or 33 ♞xc5 dxe2 34 ♞c1 f5 etc.

**33 ... dxe2 34 ♜f2 ♞xd2**



**35 ♞e4?**

Losing on the spot. 35 ♞xa6 would have held on for longer, but Black can then play

35 ... ♖xa2 36 ♜b4 e1♙+ 37 ♔xe1 ♖xh2, when the poor position of White's king will cost him the game.

**35 ... ♗d4+ 36 ♜e1 ♖xa2 0-1**

*Game 69*

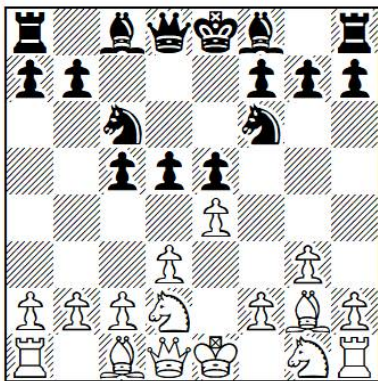
**M.Klenburg-K.Chernyshov**

Pardubice 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 d3 ♘c6 3 g3 d5 4 ♘d2**

4 exd5 ♙xd5 was examined in Batsanin-Yakovich (Game 68).

**4 ... ♘f6 5 ♗g2 e5**



**Question:** Isn't it dangerous for Black to go into a King's Indian Defence a tempo down?

**Answer:** Not really because White's pieces are not very aggressively posted. A lost tempo in some sharp open game would be more serious.

**6 ♘gf3**

There are a couple of alternatives that can be considered here:

a) 6 ♘e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 exd5 (8 f4 dxe4 9 dxe4 exf4 10 gxf4 ♗g4 is already awkward for White; while 8 h3 intends f2-f4, but can be well met by 8 ... dxe4 9 dxe4 b6 intending ... ♗a6) 8 ... ♘xd5 9 ♖e1 (9 ♘c4 was probably a better idea) 9 ... ♗e6 10 ♘c4 ♙c7 11 f4 ♖ad8 threatened ... ♘xf4 followed by ... ♗xc4 in S.Conquest-J.Nunn, London 1993. Black had a nice position.

b) 6 exd5 ♘xd5 7 ♘gf3 allows Black to develop his bishop on g7, where it supports the e5-pawn. 7 ... g6 8 0-0 ♗g7 9 ♘c4 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 c3 h6 13 ♘e4 b6 14

a4 ♗e6 was nice for Black in W.Arencibia Rodriguez-V.Kramnik, Biel 1993.

**6 ... dxe4**

**Question:** Isn't this a bad idea in King's Indian structures because of the weak square on d5?

**Answer:** That's what has been thought in the past, but Black can easily prevent White using d5 if he puts his pieces on the right squares.

The standard 6 ... ♗e7 is also quite playable but if White later captures on d5 Black achieves a less harmonious set-up than in Arcencibia-Kramnik, note to White's sixth move.

**7 dxe4 ♗e6**

In the game B.Abramovic-D.Barlov, Arandjelovac 1990, Black first played 7 ... h6 and then after 8 0-0 went 8 ... ♗e6. This is okay for Black but simply unnecessary.

**8 0-0**

8 ♘g5 ♗g4 9 f3 ♗d7 followed by ... h6 would force White's knight to a poor square.

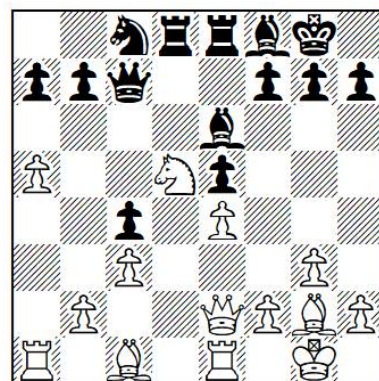
**8 ... ♗e7 9 c3 0-0 10 ♙e2 ♙c7 11 ♘h4 ♖fe8**

Black could also prevent the knight incursion with 11 ... g6.

**12 ♘f5 ♗f8 13 ♘e3 ♖ad8 14 a4**

White is trying to stake out the c4-square but finds himself challenged every step of the way.

**14 ... ♘a5 15 ♘ec4 ♘d7 16 ♖e1 ♘xc4 17 ♘xc4 ♘b6 18 ♘e3 c4! 19 a5 ♘c8 20 ♘d5**



So White achieves his desired  $\text{d5}$ , but the passed pawn gets blockaded, and Black has a kingside pawn majority.

**20 ...  $\text{exd5}$  21  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{xc5}$  22  $\text{g5}$  f6 23  $\text{e3}$   $\text{d6}$**

Black's pieces have floated naturally onto their best squares and he is now ready to start pushing the kingside pawns.

**24  $\text{xc5}$   $\text{xc5}$  25  $\text{e3}$   $\text{xe3}$  26  $\text{xe3}$  f5**

This seems a bit early because White could now find ways to frustrate Black's efforts. An extra preparatory move with 26 ...  $\text{e7!}$  would have been a good idea.

**27  $\text{ae1}$   $\text{f7}$**

After 27 ... e4 White can undermine the e-pawn with 28 f3.

**28 d6**

28 g4! would have shaken Black's grip, for example 28 ... fxg4 29  $\text{e4}$   $\text{xd5}$  30  $\text{xg4}$   $\text{xa5}$  31  $\text{xc4}$  intends 32  $\text{c7}$  with enough play to draw.

**28 ...  $\text{xd6}$  29  $\text{xb7}$   $\text{f8}$  30  $\text{e2}$**

Either missing or underestimating the reply. 30  $\text{f1}$  is better so that 30 ... e4 can be answered by 31 f3.

**30 ... e4 31  $\text{f1}$**

White would like to undermine the e4-pawn with 31 f3, but then 31 ...  $\text{e5}$  is crushing.

**31 ...  $\text{g5}$  32 h4  $\text{f3}$  33  $\text{a1}$  a6 34  $\text{g2}$   $\text{b8}$  35  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{xe4}$  36  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{d2}$  37  $\text{f4+}$   $\text{f6}$  38  $\text{d4?}$**

A blunder in a lost position, losing more material. Presumably time trouble was to blame.

**38 ...  $\text{b3}$  0-1**

### Game 70

**R.Ponomariov-F.Caruana**

Bucharest 2013

**1 e4 c5 2  $\text{f3}$  e6 3 g3**

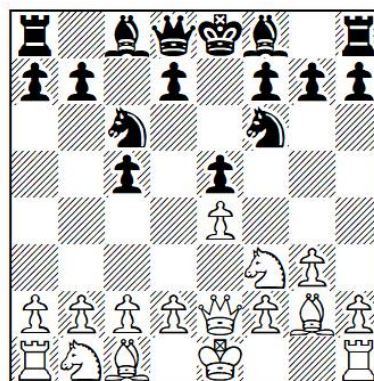
White tries for a King's Indian Attack set-up but without using a tempo on d2-d3. In this game Caruana counters with a novel and very interesting plan.

**3 ...  $\text{c6}$  4  $\text{g2}$   $\text{f6}$  5  $\text{e2}$**

5  $\text{c3}$  keeps the option of switching to open Sicilians with d2-d4, but Black can cut across this plan with 5 ... d5. Play might

continue 6  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{exd5}$  7 0-0 (7 d4 seems to be well met by 7 ...  $\text{g4}$  8  $\text{e2+}$   $\text{e7}$  9  $\text{xe7+}$   $\text{xe7}$  10  $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{xc5}$  11 0-0 0-0-0 when Black's activity fully compensates for the isolated d-pawn) 7 ... d4 8  $\text{e1+}$   $\text{e7}$  9  $\text{e4}$   $\text{xe4}$  10  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{e6}$  11 d3 0-0 when Black can claim to have somewhat the better of it because of his space advantage.

**5 ... e5!?**



**Question:** Doesn't that just lose an important tempo?

**Answer:** Actually, it's an interesting new idea. Black argues that his opponent is in no position to exploit the loss of time, mainly because White has developed so quietly. Meanwhile he will be playing for a later ... d7-d5.

**6 0-0  $\text{e7}$  7 c3**

After 7 d3 0-0, and Black will prepare ... d5 while it's not clear what White is doing.

**7 ... 0-0 8 d4**

The sharpest line. Delaying with 8  $\text{d1}$  can be answered by 8 ... d5! after which 9  $\text{exd5}$  (9 d3 d4 is just a nice space advantage) 9 ...  $\text{xd5}$  10 d4 e4 11  $\text{e5}$   $\text{cxd4}$  12  $\text{dxc6}$   $\text{xc6}$  13  $\text{xd4}$   $\text{c5}$  becomes very awkward for White.

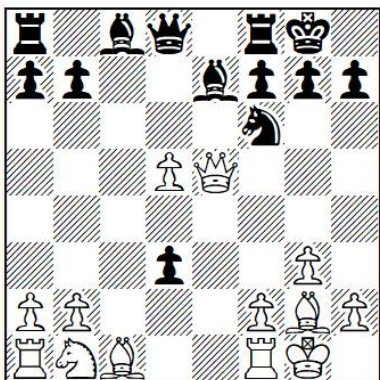
**8 ...  $\text{cxd4}$  9  $\text{cxd4}$  d5!?**

This sharp counter is fine, but not strictly necessary. Black could also play just 9 ...  $\text{exd4}$  10 e5  $\text{e8}$ , for example 11  $\text{d1}$   $\text{b6}$  12  $\text{bd2}$  d5 13  $\text{b3}$   $\text{g4}$  when White still has the problem of recovering the pawn.

**10  $\text{exd5}$**

10  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{dxe4}$  11  $\text{exf6}$   $\text{exf3}$  only achieves mass exchanges.

10 ... ♖xd4 11 ♖xd4 exd4 12 ♖e5 d3



At first it looks as if White should win this pawn while protecting his own d-pawn on d5. Yet Black's active pieces make it far from easy for White.

13 ♖c3

Another possibility was 13 ♖f4, but then 13 ... ♖e8 14 ♖d4 ♖f5 15 d6 ♖f8 can be followed by 16 ... ♖b6 or 16 ... ♖d7.

13 ... ♖e8 14 ♖f4?

Missing Black's surprising reply. White should have played 14 ♖d4 after which 14 ... ♖f5 15 ♖f4 ♖d7 keeps the position in balance.

14 ... ♖a3! 15 ♖d4 ♖xb2 16 ♖xd3

The best chance. After 16 ♖ab1 ♖xc3 17 ♖xc3 ♖xd5 White would be two pawns down and with very little hope of complicating the position.

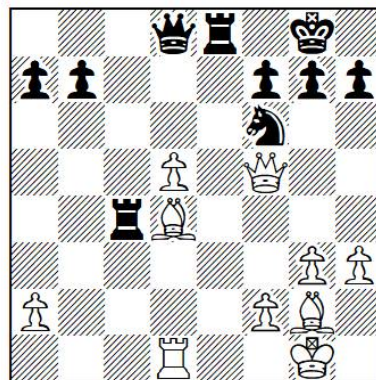
16 ... ♖xa1 17 ♖xa1 ♖d7 18 h3 ♖c8 19 ♖e3 ♖f5

19 ... ♖a5 was also good.

20 ♖xf5 ♖xc3 21 ♖d4 ♖c4?!

Caruana criticized this move in his notes because it gives White a tempo when he plays a later ♖g2-f1. 21 ... ♖c7! would have been much better, with White being unlikely to survive.

22 ♖d1



22 ... ♖d6?!

Again this was heavily criticized by Caruana, who claimed he should have played 22 ... a6! 23 ♖f1 ♖c7 and then meet 24 ♖b6 with 24 ... ♖d7!.

23 ♖f1 ♖b4

23 ... ♖c7 is met by 24 ♖b5!, a move that Caruana missed. Yet Black is still much better here after 24 ... ♖d7.

24 ♖c3

24 ♖c2 comes close to trapping Black's rook, though he does have a resource with 24 ... ♖d7.

24 ... ♖be4!

The result of some deep calculation. 24 ... ♖b6 25 ♖d4 would have either led to a repetition (25 ... ♖b4 26 ♖c3) or stone-cold equality after 25 ... ♖xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 28 ♖g2 followed by 29 ♖xb7. Note that 28 ... ♖b8 29 ♖xb7 is still possible because of Black's back rank issues.

25 ♖b5

And not 25 ♖d3? because of 25 ... ♖xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖xe4 ♖xc3 etc.

25 ... ♖c5! 26 ♖xf6?

Losing. White had to try 26 ♖xe8 ♖xc3 27 ♖b5 after which 27 ... g6 28 ♖g5 ♖e1+ 29 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 30 ♖g2 ♖e4+ followed by 31 ... ♖xd5 wins a pawn, though it would still be a tough position to convert into a win.

26 ... ♖e1+

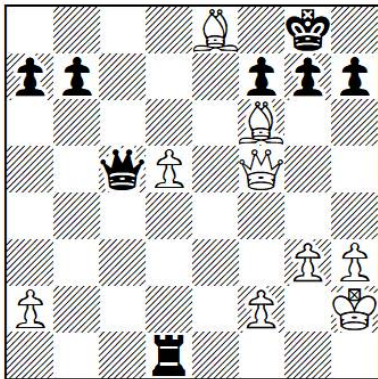
And not 26 ... ♖xb5? because of 27 ♖g5 ♖e1+ 28 ♖h2 g6 29 ♖h6 followed by mate on g7.

27 ♖h2

After 27 ♖g2 ♖xb5 threatens 28 ... ♖f1+, thus depriving White of time for a mating attack with 28 ♖g5. Black is also winning

after 27 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 28 ♔h2 gxf6 29 ♕e2 ♗d4.

27 ... ♖xd1 28 ♕xe8



28 ... ♖xd5!

This might have been what White missed when he captured on f6.

29 ♕e5

If 29 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 30 ♕e5+ Black escapes the checks with 30 ... ♖e7 31 ♗g5+ ♖e6.

29 ... ♖xe5

29 ... f6 was also good.

30 ♗xf7+ ♔h8

The smoke has cleared and White is simply the exchange down. The rest is a matter of technique.

31 ♕d7 ♗e7 32 ♗f4 ♗f6 33 ♗d2 b5 34 ♕g4 h5 35 ♕d1 h4 36 ♕g4 ♖e8 37 gxh4 ♗xh4 38 ♔g2 ♗e7 39 ♕f3 ♖d8 40 ♗f4 ♗f6 41 ♗g4 g6 42 ♗e4 ♗g5+ 43 ♔f1 a5 44 h4 ♗f5 45 ♗c6 ♖f8 46 ♗c3+ ♔h7 0-1

### Game 71

F.Sebe Vodislav-V.Iordachescu

Bucharest 2003

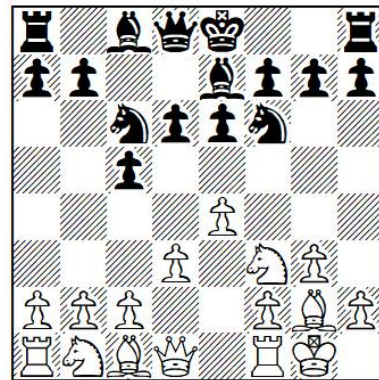
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 ♘c6 4 g3

4 ♕e2 is too quiet to trouble Black in the opening, for example 4 ... ♘f6 5 0-0 d6 6 c3 ♕e7 7 ♘bd2 e5 (Preventing d3-d4) 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 ♕f1 ♖e8 is very comfortable for Black.

4 ... ♘f6 5 ♕g2

5 e5 ♘d5 6 ♕g2 d6 is a safe equalizer for Black.

5 ... d6 6 0-0 ♕e7



A modest but effective set-up for Black which keeps both ... e6-e5 and ... d6-d5 available.

**Question:** Won't moving one of the centre pawns again lose time?

**Answer:** It will, but White is hardly developing at breakneck speed, and will also lose time if he wants to play c2-c3 followed by d3-d4.

7 ♖e1

After 7 c3 0-0 White can try to do without ♖e1 with 8 ♘bd2 but then 8 ... ♕d7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♖c8 gets play along the c-file. Another plan for White would be 7 c4, intending to take space in the centre with d3-d4 later. Yet this may not prove easy to achieve, for example Black can play 7 ... 0-0 8 ♘c3 e5.

7 ... 0-0 8 c3 ♕d7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 exd5

11 e5 ♘e4 12 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 13 ♕xd2 ♖c8 would be nice for Black, who is ready for active play on the queenside.

11 ... ♘xd5 12 ♘c3 ♘xc3

Giving White hanging pawns like this is the most pugnacious approach. After 12 ... ♖c8 White could produce an equal and rather dull position with 13 ♘xd5.

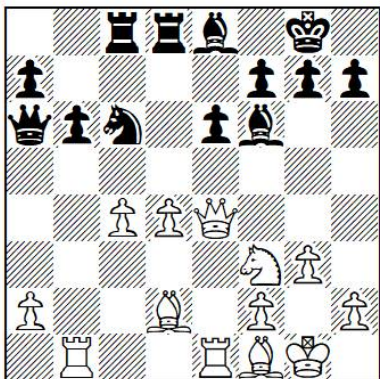
13 ♕xc3 ♖c8 14 ♗d3 ♗a5

I like this more than the 14 ... a6 of G.Jones-H.Nakamura, London Chess Classic 2013. The reason is that a later ... b7-b6 would be the most compact answer to any b-file pressure, but when the pawn is on a6 this will not be possible.

15 ♕d2

In G.Seul-J.Hellsten, Germany 2001, White played 15 a4 after which 15 ... ♖fd8 16 ♙d2 ♙e8 17 ♚e2 b6 was about equal. White has more space and activity but his pawn structure is less compact than Black's.

15 ... ♖fd8 16 ♖ab1 b6 17 c4 ♚a6 18 ♙f1 ♙e8 19 ♚e4 ♙f6



Another possibility is 19 ... ♚a4 but then 20 ♙g5 is possible because 20 ... ♗xd4? hangs the bishop on e7.

20 ♙g5

This seems to be an inaccuracy, but Black only 'proves' it in massive complications. The correct move is 20 d5! when the main line runs 20 ... ♚xa2 21 ♙d3 (21 dxc6 ♙xc6 22 ♚e3 ♙xf3 recovers the piece with two extra pawns but 21 ♙g5 exd5 22 ♚f4! is okay for White, for example 22 ... ♙xg5 23 ♗xg5 h6 24 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 25 ♚xf7+ ♗h8 26 ♙d3 hxg5! 27 ♚h5+ ♗g8 28 ♚h7+ ♗f8 29 ♚f5+ ♗g8 is a draw by perpetual check) 21 ... g6 22 dxe6 ♗d4 23 ♗xd4 ♚xd2 24 ♖bd1 ♚b2 25 exf7+ ♙xf7 26 ♗c6 ♖e8 with approximate equality.

20 ... ♗xd4!

Allowing White to sacrifice his queen, though it seems he doesn't get quite enough. 20 ... ♖xd4 leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the exchange after 21 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 22 ♙d3 g6 23 ♙e3.

21 ♙xf6 ♙c6 22 ♙xd4 ♙xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♚xa2?!

23 ... ♖d7 would have kept an edge. Now White has some tactical resources that could have secured a draw.

24 ♖ee1?!

Missing his chance. White should play 24 ♖a1 ♚c2 25 ♖g4!, for example 25 ... g6 26 ♖xa7 ♖a8 27 ♖e7! ♚d1 28 ♖f4 ♖xd4 29 ♖xf7 will deliver a draw by perpetual check.

24 ... ♚c2 25 ♙e3 ♚e4 26 ♙e2 h6 27 ♗d2 ♚c2 28 ♖ec1 ♚f5 29 ♗b3 e5

Keeping the knight out of d4. If White's pieces ever manage to co-ordinate, he could turn the tables.

30 ♖a1 ♖c7 31 c5 bxc5 32 ♖xc5

32 ♗xc5 would have been better.

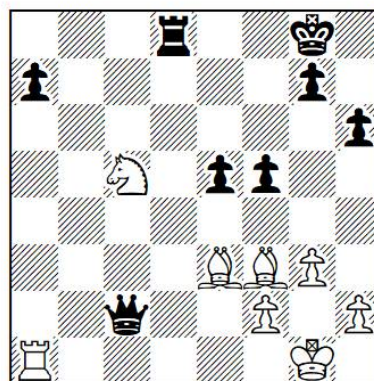
32 ... ♖xc5 33 ♗xc5

And not 33 ♙xc5? because of the fork with 33 ... ♚c2.

33 ... ♚c2! 34 ♙f3

On 34 ♗f1 Black could roll his kingside pawns forward with 34 ... f5! after which 35 ♖c1 (35 ♖xa7? loses to 35 ... f4!) 35 ... ♚b2 36 ♗d3 ♚b7 37 ♗g1 ♚a6 is good for Black.

34 ... f5



35 ♖xa7?

Losing on the spot. 35 ♖c1 ♚a2 is better for Black but the game is not over.

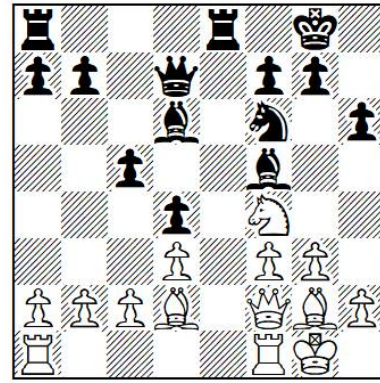
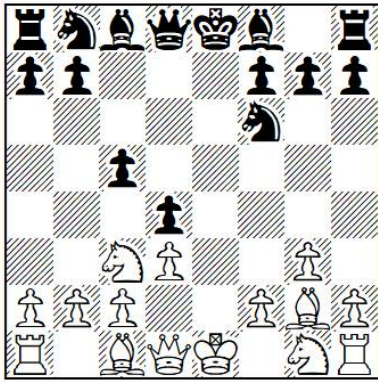
35 ... f4 36 ♗e6 fxe3 0-1

Game 72

J.Damians-A.Delchev

Andorra Open 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♗c3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♙g2 ♗f6 6 d3 d4



**7 dxe4 dxe4**

7 ... e7 8 dxf6+ exf6 9 We2+ e7 10 dh3 d7 11 0-0 0-0 12 e1 gave White an edge in B.Gulko-B.Vladimirov, USSR 1968.

**8 ex4**

Gulko has preferred 8 dxe4 here. After 8 ... e7 9 d2 I played 9 ... g5!? in T.Wold-N.Davies, Trondheim 1997 after which 10 0-0 c6 11 a4 e6 12 f4 h6 13 b3 f6 gave Black a promising position.

**Question:** Do we have to play 9 ... g5 - ?

**Answer:** It's not necessary; 9 ... 0-0 10 0-0 c6 is more solid and equal.

**8 ... e6 9 d2 d7 10 0-0 0-0 11 f4 f6 12 g2 g4 13 d2?!**

This artificial move leaves White's pieces tripping over each other's toes. He should play 13 f3 after which 13 ... exf3 14 Wxf3 Wd7 15 dh5 is only marginally better for Black, the exchanges mitigating White's lack of space.

**13 ... d7 14 f3 ef5 15 Wf2**

If White wants to play g3-g4 this is a better moment than the one in the game. A possible line is 15 g4 e6 (15 ... eg6 16 h3 exf4 17 Wxf4 Wfe8 intending ... d5 is also good) 16 dxe6 fxe6 intending 17 ... d5 followed by an invasion of the f4-square. It's good for Black but not quite as good as the game.

**15 ... Wfe8 16 ed2 h6**

**17 Bae1?!**

Overlooking Black's next move. 17 b3 is also bad because of 17 ... exf4 18 exf4 d5 19 ed2 de3, threatening the rook on f1 and the c2-pawn.

**17 ... Wa4 18 ec1?!**

Banking on a desperate attack. White can prevent the loss of a pawn with 18 b3 as after 18 ... Wxa2 he can perpetually attack Black's queen with 19 Ba1 Wxc2 20 Wfc1 Wxb3 21 Wcb1 etc.

**18 ... Wxa2 19 g4**

Commencing a kingside charge, but one which is doomed to failure.

19 ... ed7 20 Wh4 Wxe1 21 Wxe1 We8 22 Wf1 exf4 23 exf4 We6 24 eg3 We3+ 25 ef2 Wd2 26 h3 d5 27 f4 dxf4 28 exb7 Wxc2 29 ee4 Wxe4 30 dxe4 Wxe4 0-1

*Game 73*

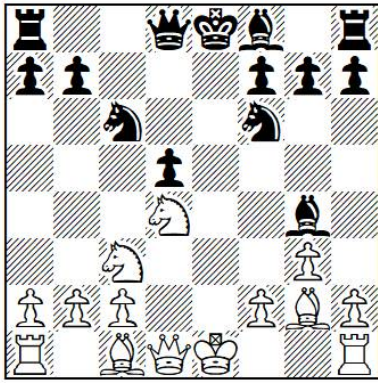
**E.Safarli-P.Tregubov**

Russian Team Championship, Loo 2013

**1 e4 c5 2 d3**

This move order might cause confusion as to the repertoire significance of this game. 2 d3 c5 3 dge2 d6 4 g3 d5 5 exd5 exd5 6 d4 df6 7 eg2 cxd4 8 dxd4 eg4 is the relevant move order, reaching the position after Black's eighth move.

**2 ... e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 dc6 5 d3 df6 6 g3 d5 7 exd5 exd5 8 eg2 eg4**



### 9 f3

This seems to be White's best, though several alternatives have been played:

a) 9 ♖d3 is best met by 9 ... ♗c5, for example 10 ♖e3+ (alternatives seem worse, for example 10 ♗e3 ♗xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♖e7+ 12 ♗e3? ♗b4 was already winning for Black in H.Jurkovic-J.Stoczek, Pardubice 1995 because of an imminent ... d4; 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗a4 ♗d6 13 c4 ♖e8 14 ♗e3 ♖b8 gave Black active piece play in V.Krapivin-J.Stoczek, Pardubice 1996. and 10 ♗ce2 ♖b6 11 c3 0-0 12 0-0 ♖fe8 was already difficult for White in Z.Igrishvili-A.Rychagov, Moscow 2000) 10 ... ♗d7! (10 ... ♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖d3 was slightly better for White in M.Narciso Dublan-H.Ni, Montcada 2014, but this is a way to keep more fight in the position for Black) 11 ♗xc6 ♗xe3 12 ♗xd8 ♗xc1 13 ♖xc1 ♖axd8 14 0-0 d4 15 ♗e4 ♗xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♗c7 is equal but drawish.

b) 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♖d3 ♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗e3 ♖e8 13 ♗a4 ♖a5 14 b3 ♗e4! was nice for Black in L.Espig-E.Vasiukov, Berlin 1968.

### 9 ... ♗d7 10 ♗e3

10 0-0 is better, not least because 10 ... ♗b4 can then be met by 11 ♖e1+, a useful move that sends the bishop back to e7.

### 10 ... ♗e7

10 ... ♗b4 is fine for Black, which is an argument for 10 0-0.

**11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖e1 ♖e8 13 ♗b3 ♗e6 14 ♗f2 ♖d7 15 ♖d2 ♖ad8 16 ♖ad1 ♖c8 17 ♗b5 b6**

An understandable human move, though Stockfish wants to play 17 ... d4!

here. It then gives 18 ♖c1 (White cannot take the d4-pawn, for example 18 ♗5xd4 ♗xb3, 18 ♗3xd4 a6 or 18 ♗xd4 ♗xb3 etc.) 18 ... ♗b4 19 ♖e2 d3 20 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 21 cxd3 a6 22 ♗c3 ♖d8 23 ♖d1 ♗xb3 24 ♖xb3 ♖xd3 with equality. In the game Black nurses a slight disadvantage.

**18 ♗5d4 ♗d7 19 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♗d4 ♖c8 21 c3 h6 22 ♗f1 ♗h7**

The idea of coming to g5 gets White to weaken his kingside pawns.

**23 h4 ♗f8 24 ♗d3 ♗a4 25 ♖c1 ♗f6 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 ♗f5 ♖c7 28 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 29 cxd4**

**Question:** Why didn't White play 29 ♗xd4 to have his knight blockading the isolated d-pawn?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, he would then succumb to 29 ... ♖xg3+, which is one of the benefits of Black having provoked White's h2-h4.

**29 ... ♖b8 30 ♖b4 ♗d7 31 ♖d6 ♖xd6 32 ♗xd6 ♖e3 33 ♖c3 ♖e1+**

And not 33 ... ♖xf3 because of 34 ♗h7+ etc.

**34 ♗f2 ♖a1 35 ♖a3 a5 36 ♖b3**

**Question:** Can White try to cramp Black's kingside with 36 h5 - ?

**Answer:** In general, that would be a useful thing to do, though here Black can answer with 36 ... ♖d1 37 ♗e2 (37 ♖b3 is met by 37 ... ♗a4!) 37 ... ♖g1 38 ♗f2 ♖d1 with a draw by repetition.

**36 ... ♖xa2 37 ♖xb6 a4 38 ♗e3 a3 39 ♗xa3 ♖xa3 40 g4 g5 41 h5 ♗e6 42 ♖b8 ♗g7 43 ♗e8+ ♗g8 44 ♗d6 ♗g7 45 ♖d8**

45 ♗e8+ ♗h8 46 ♗c7 would have made things more difficult for Black, though he should still hold a draw without too much difficulty.

**45 ... ♗d7 46 ♗d2 ♖b3 47 ♗c2 ♖b6 48 ♗f5+ ♗xf5 49 ♗xf5 ♖b5 50 ♖d6 ♗h7 51 ♗xh7 ♗xh7 52 ♖c6 ♖b4 53 ♗d3 ♗g7 54 ♖c5 ♖b3+ 55 ♗e2 ♖b2+ 56 ♗e3 ♖b3+ 57 ♗f2 ♖b2+ 58 ♗g3 ♖d2 59 ♖xd5 ♗f8 60 ♖d8+ ♗g7 61 ♖d6 ♗h7 62 d5 ♗g7 63 ♗h3 ♗h7 64 ♖f6 ♗g7 1/2-1/2**

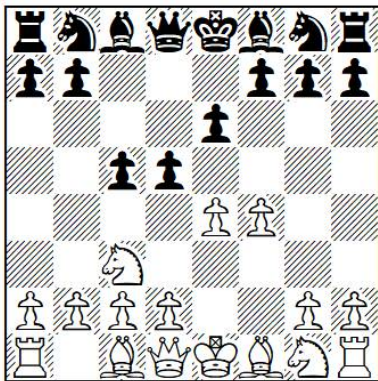
# Chapter Twelve

## Anti-Sicilian: Closed Systems with f2-f4

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3**

As with the closed fianchetto lines, this tends to be played to at least delay Black's ... d7-d5. After 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 the pawn sacrifice with 3 ... ♖f6 has proven to be very promising, as in Poloch-Tischbierek (Game 74). White can also play 2 d3 ♗c6 3 f4 as in Ansell-Shirov, Game 75.

**2 ... e6 3 f4 d5**



**4 ♗f3**

This is given as the main line because it can be reached by other move orders such as 2 f4 d5 3 ♗c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 e6. White can also try to maintain an e4/f4-pawn duo with 4 ♙b5+ ♙d7 5 ♙xd7+ ♚xd7 6 d3 as in Micayabas-Stripunsky (Game 77), which is probably better than doing so with 4 d3 De Sallier-Giffard (Game 76) because the f1-bishop is then blocked in.

**4 ... dxe4 5 ♗xe4 ♗c6 6 ♙b5**

White can also develop the bishop in 'Leningrad Dutch' style with 6 g3 ♙e7 7 ♙g2, but after 7 ... ♗f6 8 ♗f2 0-0 9 0-0 ♚c7 10 b3 b6 11 ♙b2 ♙b7 the position is very comfortable for Black.

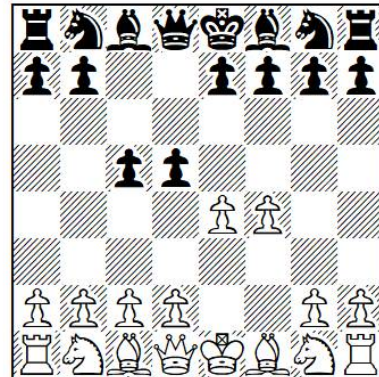
**6 ... ♙d7 7 ♚e2 ♗h6**

Black was doing well in Yudasin-Ulybin (Game 78).

*Game 74*

**P.Poloch-R.Tischbierek**  
Leipzig 1984

**1 e4 c5 2 f4 d5**



This counter essentially put the 2 f4 move order out of business, with many aficionados switching to 2 ♗c3 instead.

**Question:** Is it really that bad for White?

**Answer:** No, but they found the position somewhat devoid of excitement.

**3 exd5**

The supposedly 'critical' line, but one which has brought White nothing but misery. Several alternatives have been tried:

a) 3 ♙b5+ ♙d7 4 ♙xd7+ ♚xd7 5 d3 dxe4 6 dxe4 ♚xd1+ 7 ♔xd1 ♗f6 transposes into line 'd' below.

b) 3 e5 ♗c6 4 ♗f3 ♙g4 gives Black a kind of souped-up French Defence in which his bishop is developed outside the pawn chain.

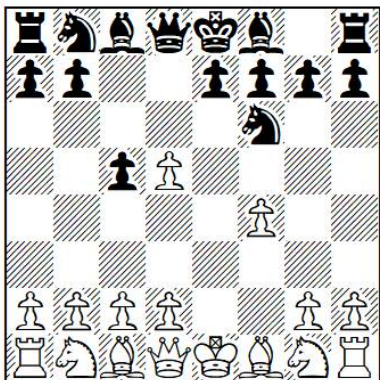
c) 3 ♗c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 e6 5 ♗f3 ♗c6 transposes into Game 78, Yudashin-Ulybin.

d) 3 d3 has been played in a number of games by GM Luke McShane who seemed happy to play the endgame after 3 ... dxe4 4 dxe4 ♚xd1+ 5 ♔xd1. Unfortunately this doesn't look great for White after 5 ... ♗f6 because all the ways of defending e4 seem to have issues. 6 ♗c3 makes it difficult to defend the d4-square, 6 ♗d2 blocks the c1-

bishop in and 6 ♕d3 can be met by 6 ... c4. Maybe White's best is 6 ♖b5+ but the exchange of light-squared bishops, for example after 6 ... ♕d7 7 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7!?, makes any space advantage White might claim rather meaningless.

**3 ... ♖f6!**

This gambit line is what caused the exodus from 2 f4, certainly at higher levels.



**Question:** What does Black get as compensation?

**Answer:** The usual gambit stuff of fast development, plus that White pawn on f4 would much prefer to be back on f2.

**4 ♕b5+**

Black also has excellent compensation after 4 c4 e6 5 dxe6 ♕xe6, for example A.Rosich Valles-G.Kasparov, Barcelona (simul) 1988 went 6 ♖f3 ♖c6 7 ♖c3 ♕d6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♖xd4 0-0 10 ♖xe6 fxe6 11 ♕e3 ♗e7 12 ♗f3 ♖b4 13 ♕e2 e5 with a powerful initiative for Black.

**4 ... ♕d7**

4 ... ♖bd7 is also possible here.

**5 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 6 c4 e6 7 ♗e2**

This used to be the critical line, though alternatives have emerged:

a) 7 ♖f3 exd5 8 ♖e5 should be met by 8 ... ♗f5 according to the engine, and then after 9 0-0 just 9 ... ♕d6 intending 10 ... 0-0.

b) 7 dxe6 ♗xe6+ 8 ♗e2 ♖c6 9 ♖c3 ♗xe2+ 10 ♖gxe2 ♖b4 11 0-0 0-0-0 gives Black full compensation for the pawn according to Evgeny Sveshnikov, a view with which the engine concurs.

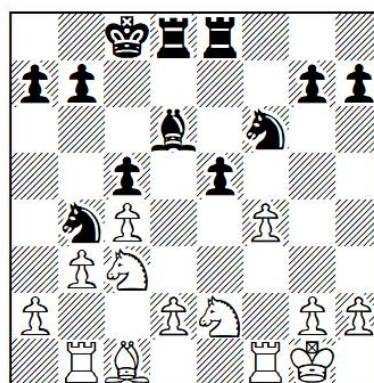
**7 ... ♕d6 8 dxe6**

Another possibility is 8 f5, for example 8 ... 0-0 9 fxe6 fxe6 10 dxe6 (10 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6+ 11 dxe6 ♖e8 gives Black more than enough compensation) 10 ... ♗e7 11 ♖f3 ♖c6 12 ♖c3 ♖ae8 13 d3 ♗xe6 gives Black a powerful initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

**8 ... ♗xe6**

Black can also play 8 ... fxe6, for example Sveshnikov analyzed 9 d3 0-0 10 ♖f3 ♖c6 11 0-0 ♖ae8 12 ♖c3 e5 13 f5 ♖d4 14 ♗d1 ♖xf5 15 ♕g5 was A.Bangiev-R.Lau, Binz 1994 and now the engine points out that 15 ... ♖h5! is possible, for example 16 g4 ♖d4 17 ♖xd4 exd4 18 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8

**9 ♗xe6+ fxe6 10 ♖e2 ♖c6 11 0-0 0-0-0 12 ♖bc3 ♖b4 13 b3 e5 14 ♖b1 ♖he8**



**15 f5**

White wants to keep the position as closed as possible in order to keep Black's pieces out.

**15 ... e4 16 ♕a3 ♖c2 17 ♕b2 ♕e5 18 ♖bd1 ♕d4+**

The engine prefers 18 ... e3 after which 19 dxe3 ♖xe3 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♖e1 ♖d3 is somewhat better for Black.

**19 ♖xd4**

19 ♖h1 is strongly met by 19 ... e3!

**19 ... cxd4 20 ♖e2**

White also seems to be holding after 20 ♖d5 ♖xd5 21 cxd5 ♖d7 22 ♖c1 ♖c8 23 ♖f2.

**20 ... d3 21 ♖f4 e3 22 dxe3 ♖xe3 23 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♖xf1 25 ♖xf1 ♖g4! 26 ♕xg7 ♖e3+ 27 ♖f2 ♖xf5 28 ♕e5 ♖d8 29 ♖e2 ♖h4 30 g4 ♖e8 31 ♖f2 ♖d8 32 ♖e2 ♖g8 33 h3**

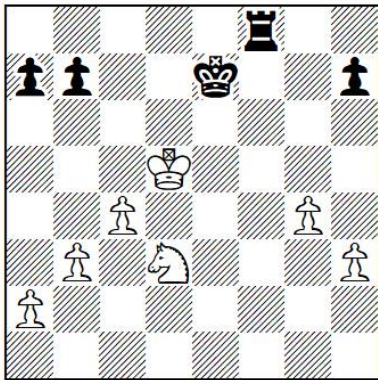
White is okay at this point and should now play 33 ♕f6!. A draw might result after

33 ... ♖xg4 34 ♗f2 ♜f4 35 ♙g5 ♞d4 36 ♙f6 etc.

**33 ... ♞e8 34 ♚e3? ♚d7 35 ♚d4?**

A serious mistake which allows the exchange of his bishop. White should probably play 35 ♗f2 when there's no need for him to lose.

**35 ... ♗f3+ 36 ♚d5 ♗xe5 37 ♗xe5+ ♚e7 38 ♗d3 ♜f8**



**39 ♚e4**

Perhaps 39 ♗c5 was a better try but White is in big trouble in any case. Knights are notoriously bad against rooks in the endgame, and even the two extra pawns doesn't compensate.

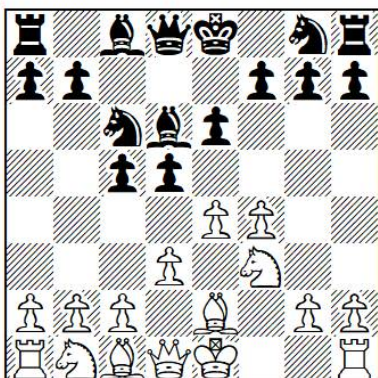
**39 ... ♜f1 40 h4 ♜a1 41 a4 a5 42 ♗f4 ♜b1 43 g5 ♜xb3 44 g6 hxg6 45 ♗xg6+ ♚d6! 46 h5 ♚c5 47 ♚f5 ♚xc4 48 ♚g4 b5 49 axb5 ♜xb5 50 h6 a4 0-1**

### Game 75

**S.Ansell-A.Shirov**

Gibraltar Masters 2012

**1 e4 c5 2 d3 ♗c6 3 f4 d5 4 ♙e2 e6 5 ♗f3 ♙d6**



**Question:** What's the idea behind this move, doesn't it just encourage White to advance with e4-e5 - ?

**Answer:** This mode of development is better known against the King's Indian Attack (for example 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d5 3 ♗d2 c5 4 ♗gf3 ♗c6 5 g3 ♙d6 followed by 6 ... ♗ge7). It also represents a very reasonable way for Black to develop in this position, for example after White's e4-e5 he will have the f5-square for a knight and might undermine White's e5-pawn with a later ... f7-f6.

**6 0-0 ♗ge7 7 ♗a3**

**Question:** Why is the knight going to the edge of the board here?

**Answer:** White is trying to achieve a set-up with c2-c3 and ♗a3-c2, which would potentially support a broad pawn wedge with pawns on c3, d4, e5 and f4. He can try other moves here too, for example:

a) 7 e5 ♙c7 8 ♗a3 0-0 9 c3 ♙d7 10 ♗c2 f6 11 exf6 ♜xf6 creates counterplay for Black.

b) 7 ♙e3 f6 8 c3 0-0 9 a4 b6 10 ♗a3 ♙b7 11 ♜c2 a6 12 ♜ae1 ♜c7 13 g3 ♜ae8 gave Black very comfortable play in U.Krstic-B.Predojevic, Bihac 2010.

**7 ... 0-0**

The immediate 7 ... f6 is also quite playable.

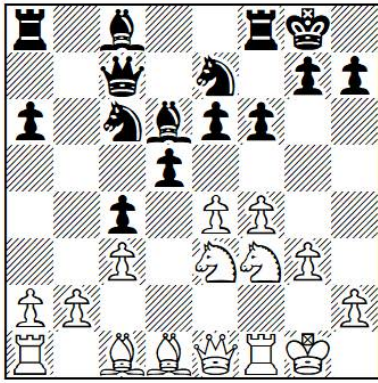
**8 c3 f6 9 ♜e1 a6**

Shirov is preparing to expand on the queenside with ... b7-b5. 9 ... b6 is possible here too, for example 10 ♙d2 ♙a6 11 ♗c2 ♜c7 12 g3 ♜ae8 13 b4 c4 14 dxc4 dxe4 gave Black good play in J.Englert-G.Gajewski, Deizisau 2011.

**10 ♗c2 ♜c7 11 g3 b5 12 ♙d1**

With the knight occupying c2, this makes a strange impression. Where is the bishop heading? 12 ♜f2, intending ♙d2, might have left White's pieces in less of a jumble.

**12 ... c4 13 dxc4 bxc4 14 ♗e3**



It would have been better to play 14 exd5 after which 14 ... ♖xd5 (14 ... exd5 15 ♗fd4 finds a good central outpost) 15 ♔e4 starts to get White's pieces coordinated.

**14 ... ♗c5 15 ♗c2 ♗b7**

This might have been a good moment for 15 ... d4, which is better for Black after 16 cxd4 ♗xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4. Shirov's move gives White another chance to capture on d5 to get the d4-square.

**16 ♗h1?! dxe4 17 ♗xe4 f5 18 ♗c2 e5**

The opening of the centre and the a8-h1 diagonal starts to look ominous for White.

**19 ♗g2?!**

Against Shirov it's tempting to decline pawn sacrifices on principle, though White should have taken this one with 19 ♗xc4. After 19 ... ♗g6 20 ♗e3 ♗xe3 21 ♔xe3 exf4 22 ♔b6 ♔b8 Black regains his pawn with White's king opening up. Shirov could now have played 19 ... ♖ae8 with a strong initiative.

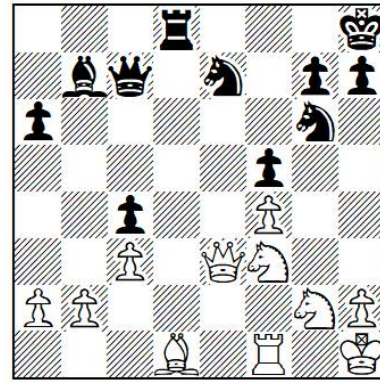
**19 ... ♗g6?! 20 ♗e3**

Here too White should look to go a pawn up for his troubles with 20 ♔e2, after 20 ... ♗h8 he can cause some annoyance with 21 ♗g5 ♖f6 22 ♔h5.

**20 ... ♗xe3 21 ♔xe3 exf4 22 gxf4 ♗ce7 23 ♖ad1 ♗h8 24 ♖d4 ♖ae8**

Shadowing the White queen just as the bishop on b7 shadows White's king.

**25 ♔d2 ♖d8 26 ♗d1 ♗c6 27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♔e3 ♗ce7**



**29 ♗g5**

It's hard to give White good advice. 29 ♗d4 looks more natural but after 29 ... ♗xg2+ 30 ♔xg2 ♗d5 the f4-pawn is dropping.

**29 ... ♗d5 30 ♔h3**

30 ♔g3 ♗dxf4 31 ♗f3 was the last chance to hang on for White, though he is a pawn down with a very shaky kingside.

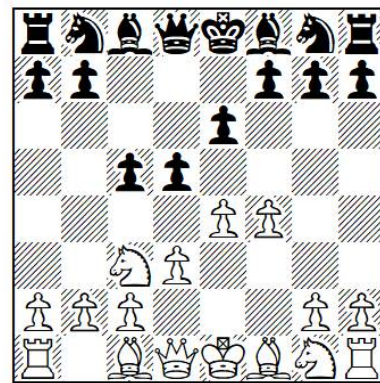
**30 ... h6 31 ♗e6 ♗dxf4 32 ♗xc7 ♗xh3 0-1**

### Game 76

**F.DeSallier-N.Giffard**

Val Thorens 1996

**1 e4 c5 2 ♗c3 e6 3 f4 d5 4 d3**



Not a bad idea, but White might also consider exchanging his light-squared bishop with 4 ♗b5+ first (see Micayabas-Stripunsky, Game 77). The alternatives can be summarized as follows:

a) 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗b5+ ♗c6 6 ♗f3 ♗f6 7 ♗xc6+ bxc6 8 0-0 ♗e7 is very comfortable for Black because of the bishop pair and the fact there is an open e-file. If the e-

pawns were still present it might be harder for Black to generate play.

b) 4 e5 c6 5 f3 h6 would lead to a kind of French Defence in which White's knight on c3 is inappropriately placed (it would be better on c2 after c2-c3).

c) 4 f3 dxe4 breaks up White's pawn duo after which 5 dxe4 c6 transposes into Yudashin-Ulybin (Game 78).

#### 4 ... b5!

An excellent move by Giffard, using a tactical trick to expand on the queenside and potentially dislodge the knight from c3.

**Question:** Can't White just take it with 5 dxb5 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, that would lose a piece after 5 ... a5+ 6 d3 d4.

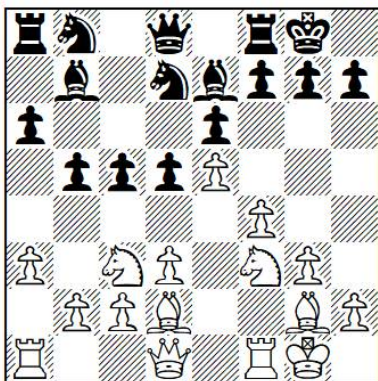
#### 5 a3

Black would meet 5 exd5 with 5 ... b4 after which 6 dxe6 bxc3 7 exf7+ xf7 8 f3 e7 leaves a position in which White's three pawns are probably not as good as Black's piece. 5 f3 is a natural move but after 5 ... b4 6 e2 (6 a4 dxe4 7 dxe4 xd1+ 8 xd1 d7 9 b3 df6 is also nice for Black) 6 ... dxe4 7 dxe4 xd1+ 8 xd1 b7 Black has some initiative in the endgame.

#### 5 ... a6

There was a case for 5 ... b4 here too, but Giffard is content with the space he has gained.

6 f3 d6 7 d2 b7 8 e5 fd7 9 g3 e7 10 g2 0-0 11 0-0



#### 11 ... b4

Personally, I would have avoided splitting Black's pawns into two islands, for example with 11 ... c6.

12 axb4 cxb4 13 a4 b6 14 e3 d7?!

This also seems mistaken. Black should play 14 ... xa4 after which 15 xa4 a5 16 c3 c7 gives Black some c-file pressure to compensate him for the split pawns.

#### 15 e2

15 dxb6 dxb6 16 e2 looks quite nice for White, with Black's knight committed to the b6-square he controls d4.

15 ... xa4 16 xa4 c7 17 aa1 fc8 18 fc1 a5 19 c4 bxc3 20 xc3?!

White finally makes a mistake – he should not leave Black with a passed a-pawn. 20 xc3 was a better move with approximate equality.

20 ... d5 21 ab1 a6 22 c4 dxc4 23 dxc4 b7 24 d2?

24 d4 was a better move, routing the knight towards the b5-square.

24 ... xg2 25 xg2 a4 26 b5 a3 27 b3?

The final error. 27 a1 was a better attempt to control the passed a-pawn.

27 ... xb3 28 xb3 a2 29 a1 xc4 30 xa2?

Presumably down to time-trouble, but White's position is hopeless in any case.

#### 30 ... xb3 0-1

#### Game 77

#### M.Micayabas-A.Stripunsky

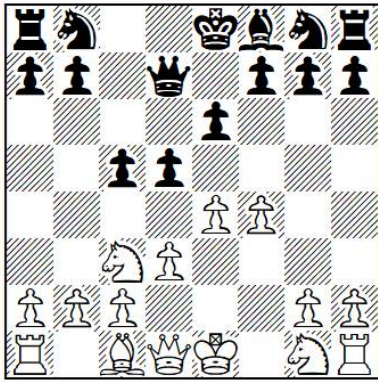
Foxwoods Open, Connecticut 2007

1 e4 c5 2 d3 e6 3 f4 d5 4 b5+

**Question:** What's the idea behind this move?

**Answer:** White wants to support his e4-pawn with d2-d3, but makes more sense to exchange the light square bishops first, rather than play the immediate 4 d3 because the bishop would then be shut inside the pawn chain. Whether it troubles Black is another question.

4 ... d7 5 xd7+ xd7 6 d3



Maintaining the duo of pawns on e4 and f4 is by far the best idea. Black would be very comfortably placed after 6 exd5 exd5 7 d3 dxc6 8 0-0 0-0-0.

**6 ... dxc6 7 d3 dxf6 8 0-0 e7 9 de5**

It's not a bad idea to exchange the knight on c6, after a move such as 9 e5 White would constantly have to watch out for a timely ... d4. Pushing on with 9 e5 seems quite tempting but Black could answer with 9 ... d8 intending ... h7-h5 and ... g8-h6.

**9 ... c7 10 dxc6 cxc6 11 exd5?!**

A positional error. White should keep his e4 and f4-pawn duo intact with 11 f3 or even 11 e2, with a balanced game in either case.

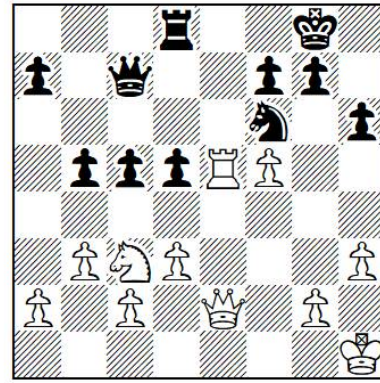
**11 ... exd5 12 e1 d8**

Preparing to play ... d7 so he can then castle.

**13 f5 d7 14 g5 0-0 15 f3 h6 16 h4 d8 17 h1 h7**

Some weaknesses are starting to appear on White's kingside dark squares, though it shouldn't be too serious with careful play. Perhaps White should now avoid the exchange of bishops with 18 f2.

**18 xd8 dxd8 19 e5 f6 20 e1 fe8 21 h3 xe5 22 xe5 b5 23 b3 c7 24 e2?**



Missing Black's lethal reply. White should have played 24 f4 when Black is still better because of his space and some weak dark squares in White's camp, but it's still only marginal.

**24 ... e4! 25 xe4 dxe4 26 xe4 c4 27 xc4 bxc4 28 dxc4 e5 29 f3 d4 30 f2 f4 0-1**

### Game 78

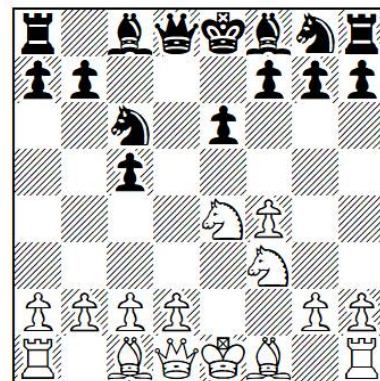
**L.Yudasin-M.Ulybin**

Las Palmas 1993

**1 e4 e6**

1 ... c5 2 c3 e6 3 f4 d5 4 f3 dxe4 (4 ... d6!?) 5 xe4 c6 would be the Sicilian move order, with Black's fourth move performing the important function of breaking up White's e4/f4-pawn duo.

**2 f4 d5 3 c3 dxe4 4 xe4 c5 5 f3 c6**



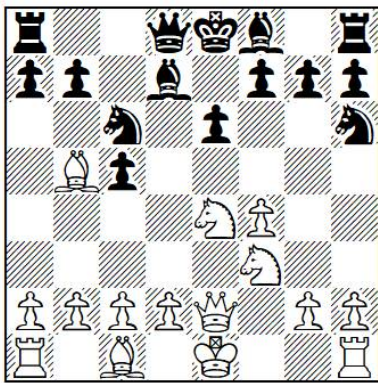
The game has transposed into an f2-f4 Sicilian with a pawn structure that is reminiscent of some lines of the Leningrad Dutch with colours reversed (e.g. 1 d4 f5 2 c4 f6 3 f3 g6 4 g3 g7 5 g2 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 c3 c6 8 d5 e5 9 dxe6 xe6). It's

difficult for either side to carry out a pawn lever in such positions so piece play predominates.

**6 ♖b5 ♗d7 7 ♛e2**

An interesting move from Yudasin, which has ideas of ♗f3-e5 and f4-f5. 7 0-0 was played in J.Pribyl-I.Nej, Tallinn 1973, when the game continued 7 ... ♗h6 8 b3 ♗f5 9 ♖b2 ♗e7 10 g4!? ♗fd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 12 ♗d3 ♗c6 13 f5 ♗d7 14 fxe6 ♗xe6 15 ♗f3 0-0-0 with sharp play, 16 ♗xf7 being met by 16 ... ♜hf8 17 ♗h5 ♗f4.

**7 ... ♗h6!**



An interesting and unsteretyped way to develop the knight.

**Question:** What's so good about it, couldn't Black just get his pieces out with 7 ... ♗f6 - ?

**Answer:** Yes he could and the sequel 8 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 9 ♗e5 (after the immediate 9 0-0 Black would prevent this with 9 ... ♗d6) 9 ... ♗xe5 10 fxe5 ♗h4+ 11 g3 ♗d8 gives Black an excellent game. The e5-pawn is cut off from its compatriots and White's extra space doesn't matter much when so many pieces have been exchanged.

**Question:** So which square is better, f6 or h6?

**Answer:** It's probably a question of taste, some people just don't like putting their knights on the edge of the board.

**8 0-0**

Clearly the idea of 8 f5 no longer works now and 8 ♗e5 can be answered by 8 ...

♗xe5 9 fxe5 ♗f5 10 ♗ 0-0 ♗e7 with full equality.

**8 ... a6 9 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 10 b3**

10 ♗e5 can be simply met by 10 ... ♗xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗d4+ 12 ♗xd4 cxd4 with at least equality for Black in the endgame. A sensible alternative would be 10 d3 after which 10 ... ♗e7 11 ♗e5 ♜c8 is just equal.

**10 ... ♗f5 11 ♖b2 ♗e7 12 ♗e5 ♜c8 13 d3 0-0 14 ♜ae1**

Ambitiously placing for g2-g4 and f4-f5, but Black has more than enough resources to meet this and it will weaken White's position.

**14 ... ♗d4 15 ♗f2 ♗h4**

Provoking a weakening of White's king position. 15 ... b6 wasn't bad either.

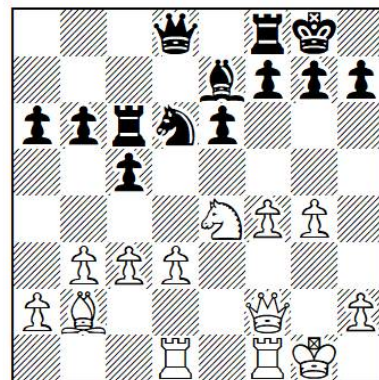
**16 g3 ♗e7 17 c3 ♗f5 18 ♜d1 b6**

Preparing to retain the bishop with 19 ... ♖b7. When White allows this to pursue his own agenda, the game becomes quite sharp.

**19 g4!? ♗d6**

Very much Black's best option. 19 ... ♗h6 would leave the knight out of play and 19 ... ♗h4 is met by 20 ♗xc6 ♜xc6 21 f5!.

**20 ♗xc6 ♜xc6**



**21 ♗d2**

It turns out that 21 f5 can be answered by just 21 ... exf5 22 gxf5 ♗xe4 23 dxe4 ♜d6, when Black even has the better of it. Yudashin's decision to avoid the exchange of knights is actually quite risky as he is moving his pieces to inferior squares.

**21 ... f5**

A radical way to prevent White's f4-f5. In doing this he does weaken e6, but that can be defended easily enough.

**22 ♖g2 ♜c8 23 g5**

White is starting to worry about Black playing ... fxg4, but now Black can play for ... e6-e5.

**23 ... ♗f7 24 c4 e5 25 ♜fe1**

With the game being so intricate and complex, both players were running short of time at this stage. In his notes to the game Yudashin felt that 25 ♜de1 would have been a better move, and it does seem more natural to place this rook on e1.

**25 ... ♜e6 26 ♙xe5**

26 ♖e2 would be met by 26 ... ♗d6! intending 27 ... ♜fe8.

**26 ... ♗xe5**

Time trouble was playing its part at this stage. Both players might have assumed that 26 ... ♙xg5 was met by 27 ♙xg7, but that isn't the end of the story because Black can play 27 ... ♜g6!.

**27 ♜xe5?**

27 fxe5 ♙xg5 28 ♗f3 ♙e7 is just good for Black, who threatens 29 ... ♜g6.

**27 ... ♗d6 28 ♜xe6 ♖xe6 29 ♜f2 ♜e8 30 ♗b1 ♖e2**

Things are looking grim for White, whose seventh rank has just been invaded and he is threatened with the loss of his f-pawn. Yudasin, to his credit, finds a brilliant plan of counterattack that makes it very difficult for his opponent to win.

**31 ♖xe2 ♜xe2 32 ♗c3 ♜c2 33 ♗d5 ♜xa2 34 h4! b5 35 h5 ♗f7 36 ♜e1**

Threatening 37 g6+.

**36 ... g6 37 hxg6+ hxg6 38 ♜e3 ♜b2 39 ♜h3 ♜xb3 40 ♜h7+ ♗e6 41 ♜g7 ♜xd3 42 ♜xg6+ ♗d7 43 ♜f6 b4**

Setting up a powerful passed pawn.

**44 ♗f2 b3 45 ♜f7+ ♗c6 46 ♜a7 ♜d2+?**

Here if anywhere Black misses his chance. 46 ... ♜xd5! would have won him the game, for example 47 cxd5+ ♗b6! 48 ♜h7 ♙xf4 49 ♜h3 c4 50 g6 ♙e5! 51 ♗e2 c3 52 ♗d3 c2 53 ♜h1 ♗c5 leaves White defenceless.

**47 ♗e3! ♜a2 48 ♗d3 b2 49 ♗c2 ♜a4 50 ♗xb2 ♜xc4 51 ♗e3 ♜b4+ 52 ♗c2 ♙xf4 53 ♗xf5**

Black has what chances are going here, for example he could take on g5. But with good play from both sides, it should be drawn.

**53 ... ♗b6 54 ♜g7 ♜c4+ 55 ♗d3 ♜c1 56 ♗e4 ♙d2 57 ♗d3**

57 g6 c4 58 ♜d7 would also be a draw.

**57 ... ♙c3 58 ♜h7 ♙e5 59 ♗e3! ♗b5 60 ♜b7+ ♗c6 61 ♜a7 ♗b6 62 ♜e7 ♙d4 63 g6 ♙xe3 64 g7 ♜g1 65 ♗xe3 ♗b5 66 ♗f4! ♗b4**

Black must avoid 66 ... c4? because of 67 ♜e5+ and ♜g5.

**67 ♗e5 c4 68 ♜b7+ ♗c3 69 ♗f6 a5 70 ♜b8 a4 71 g8 ♖ ♜xg8 72 ♜xg8 a3 73 ♜a8 ♗b2 74 ♜b8+ ♗a2 1/2-1/2**

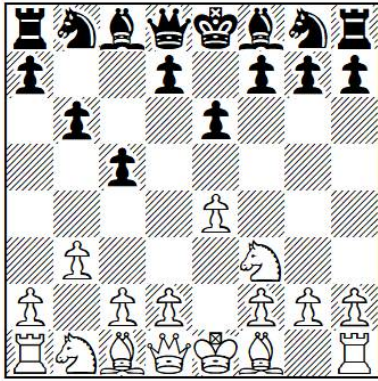
# Chapter Thirteen

## Anti-Sicilian: b2-b3 Lines

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3**

White can also play the immediate 2 b3 when 2 ... b6 3 ♙b2 ♙b7 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 reaches the main line.

**2 ... e6 3 b3 b6**



**4 ♙b2**

This is very much the main line, though White has tried some other moves here:

a) 4 c4 ♙b7 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♙b2 ♘f6 is Ardeleanu-Nisipeanu (Game 79).

b) 4 ♙d3 ♙b7 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 ♖e1 ♙e7 7 ♙b2 ♘f6 is possible, for example 8 c3 (8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♙e4 0-0 is fine for Black) 8 ... 0-0 9 ♙c2 d5 10 e5 ♘e4! 11 ♙xe4?! (11 d3 ♘g5 12 ♘fd2 f5 makes room for the knight on f7) 11 ... dxe4 12 ♖xe4 ♘d4! 13 ♖xd4 (13 ♖e1 ♘xf3+ 14 gxf3 ♗d3 wins for Black) 13 ... cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♗d5 15 ♘f3 ♗d3 puts White in an unpleasant position.

c) 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♙b7 6 ♘b5 (6 ♘d2 ♙c5 7 ♙b2 ♘h6 followed by 8 ... 0-0 is good) 6 ... d5 7 exd5 a6 8 ♘5c3 exd5 9 ♙d3 ♘f6 10 9 0-0 ♙e7 leaves White's poorly placed to combat the strengths of the isolated d-pawn.

**4 ... ♙b7 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 d4**

In Short-Vallejo Pons (Game 80) White played 6 ♗e2 a6 7 0-0-0 and White soon ran into trouble. Opening the position with d2-d4 seems much more natural.

**6 ... cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♙c5 8 ♘db5 ♗b8 9 ♘d5 ♘f8 10 ♘dc7 a6**

This led to a tremendous struggle in Perdomo-Psakhis (Game 81) where Black eventually triumphed.

*Game 79*

**A.Ardeleanu-L.Nisipeanu**

Romania 1999

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 b3 b6 4 c4**

One of several less common alternatives, possibly looking to get a Maroczy Bind type structure with a later d2-d4. 4 ♙b2 is examined in the next two games

**4 ... ♙b7 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♙b2 ♘f6 7 e5**

Trying to disturb the harmony in Black's position. Against other moves one plan for Black is to line his queen and bishop up on the b8-h2 diagonal, for example 7 ♙d3 ♗b8 intending ... ♙d6 or 7 ♙e2 a6 8 0-0 ♗c7 intending ... ♙d6. This is quite a nice plan for Black as it helps control dark squares.

**7 ... ♘g4 8 ♘b5 ♗b8 9 ♗e2 a6 10 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 11 exd6 ♗xd6!**

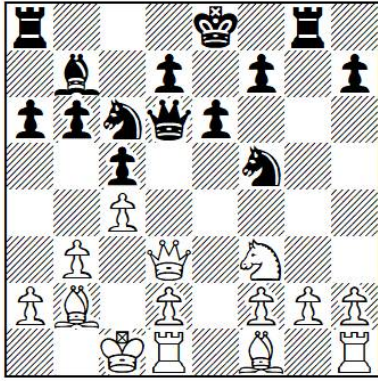
**Question:** Can't Black try to win a pawn with 11 ... ♘f6 - ?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, that would run into trouble after 12 d4 cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗xd6 14 0-0-0, with a lead in development and control of dark squares as compensation.

**12 ♙xg7 ♖g8 13 ♙b2 ♘h6**

The knight is heading for f5 from where it will control d4.

**14 0-0-0 ♘f5 15 ♗d3**



15 ... ♖xd3

This simple move leaves Black with an edge. The engine slightly prefers the exotic 15 ... ♗b4!? after which 16 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 17 a3 ♗e4! 18 axb4 ♗xf2 19 ♖xc5 bxc5 20 ♖e2 ♗xh1 21 ♖xh1 ♖xg2 is good for Black.

16 ♖xd3 ♗cd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♖hg1 ♖xg2 19 ♖xg2 ♖xg2 20 ♖g1 ♖c6 21 ♖xd4 cxd4 22 ♖g4 e5 23 ♖xh7

Getting the pawn back but leaving Black with an edge because of his better pawns and space advantage. White could also exchange rooks with 23 ♖g8+ ♗e7 24 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 25 ♖xh7, but Black is still slightly better after 25 ... ♖f3.

23 ... ♗e7 24 ♖g8 ♖f3! 25 ♖g7 ♖h5

Threatening to trap White's rook with ... ♖h5-g6.

26 ♖h7 ♖h8 27 ♖e4 ♗f6 28 ♖g3 ♖e2! 29 h3 ♖f1 30 ♖f3+ ♗e7 31 ♖f5 ♖g2 32 ♖g3

Thus far White has managed to hang on, but the superiority of Black's pawn structure is a constant factor.

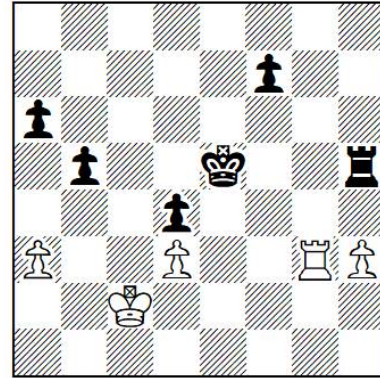
32 ... ♖c6 33 d3 d5 34 ♗d2 dxc4 35 ♖xc4 b5 36 c5

36 cxb5 axb5 turns a2 into a target, but this might have been better than the game. After 37 a3 ♖a8 White has a neat resource in 38 ♖e4! ♖xe4 39 dxe4, and the rook on g3 defends the a-pawn.

36 ... ♖d5 37 a3 ♖e6! 38 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 39 ♗e2 ♖c8 40 f4

After this White is lost. The last chance to stay in the game was with 40 h4 after which 40 ... ♖xc5 41 h5 ♖c2+ 42 ♗f3 leaves White with some counterplay because of the h-pawn.

40 ... ♖xc5 41 fxe5 ♖xe5+ 42 ♗d2 ♖h5 43 ♗c2 ♗e5



44 ♗d2

44 ♗b3 a5 would keep White's king at bay on the queenside.

44 ... ♖h6 45 ♗e2 f5 46 ♗f2 a5 47 ♗g2 ♖c6 48 ♖g8 ♗f4+ 49 h4 ♗e3 50 h5 f4 51 ♖e8+ ♗xd3 52 ♗f3 b4 53 axb4 axb4 54 ♖b8 ♗c3 55 ♗xf4 d3 0-1

Game 80

N.Short-F.Vallejo Pons

Bangkok 2016

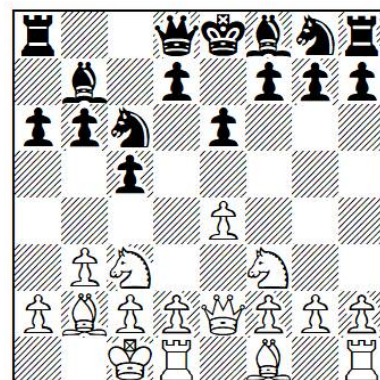
1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 b3 b6 4 ♖b2 ♖b7 5 ♗c3

Black would also meet 5 ♖e2 and 5 ♖d3 with 5 ... ♗c6.

5 ... a6

The recommended move order is 5 ... ♗c6 6 ♖e2 a6, with White's other sixth moves (instead of 6 ♖e2) being covered in Perdomo-Psakhis (Game 81).

6 ♖e2 ♗c6 7 0-0-0



White still had a quiet move in 7 g3, but instead chooses to initiate sharp play.

## 7 ... b5 8 ♖b1

**Question:** Why did White play this move rather than something more aggressive?

**Answer:** One of the major issues with castling queenside is that the king tends to be more vulnerable because the a-pawn is unprotected and it is closer to the centre. It often makes sense to improve its lot with ♖b1, especially against the Sicilian.

## 8 ... ♝c8 9 h4

Choosing not to give Black the half-open c-file, which is what would have happened after 9 d4.

**Question:** Is 9 h4 a pawn storm?

**Answer:** Partially, but there's also the point that White can develop his king's rook via h3

**Question:** Is bringing your rook out via h3 a good idea?

**Answer:** Not usually, but there are moments when it's either expedient or necessary.

## 9 ... h5 10 ♜h3 ♗d4 11 ♕e1 ♗f6 12 d3 d6

Stockfish likes 12 ... ♗g4 here, and it does look quite good.

## 13 ♗e2 e5 14 c3 ♗c6 15 ♗g5

White seems intent on creating the most original position that he can. Most of us would settle for the humdrum 15 d4, where chances seem balanced. Black can't take on e4 because of 16 dxe5.

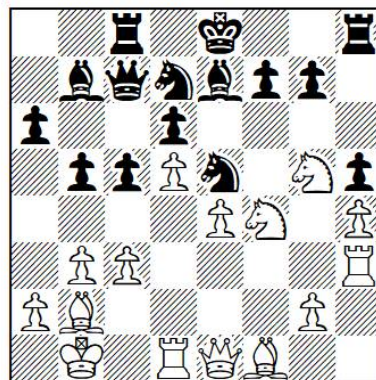
## 15 ... ♗e7

There's a good case for 15 ... b4 in order to undermine the c3-pawn that supports d3-d4. After the move played White's central expansion leaves him better.

## 16 d4 ♕c7 17 f4

17 d5, taking space, is quite good here. Black should now exchange on d4 as a matter of urgency, failing to do so leaves him in a cramped position.

17 ... ♗g4?! 18 d5 ♗b8 19 fxe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗f4 ♗bd7



## 21 ♗e2

21 c4 bxc4 22 ♗xc4 looks very attractive because the bishop on b2 and rook on h3 are both coming into play.

## 21 ... g6 22 ♕g3

22 c4 is still the right move to unleash White's pieces. Omitting this move gradually leads White into difficulties as Black now takes space on the queenside.

22 ... c4! 23 b4 ♝a8 24 ♜hh1 ♗c8 25 ♜hf1 ♗f6 26 ♜f2 ♕d8 27 ♜df1 a5 28 ♗c1 ♝a6?

Presenting White with an opportunity. 28 ... axb4 29 cxb4 ♗g4 is just good for Black.

## 29 ♗d1?

Missing his chance. 29 ♗xf7!! is the move when the engine suddenly favours White. A sample line is 29 ... ♗xe4 30 ♕e3 ♗xf7 31 ♗xg6 ♗xf2 32 ♜xf2 ♜h7 33 ♕e4 when White's attack just keeps coming.

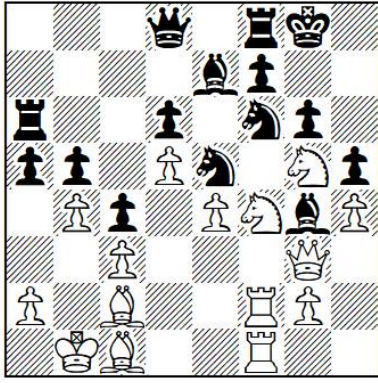
## 29 ... ♗g4

29 ... ♗fg4 would prevent any of this ♗xf7 mayhem, for example after 30 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 31 ♗xf7 there is 31 ... ♗xh4.

## 30 ♗c2

30 ♗xg4 ♗fxg4 31 ♗xf7 is tempting but Black can then play 31 ... ♗xh4! 32 ♕h3 ♗xf7 when White doesn't quite have enough. Of course, this might have been a better practical try than what was played in the game.

## 30 ... 0-0



Ending White's f7 tricks for good after which it's only the White king that is vulnerable. Black's pieces cooperate very nicely here, the lynchpin being the knight on e5.

**31 a3** ♖h7 **32** ♜fh3 ♙xh3 **33** gxh3 ♜xg5  
**34** hxg5 ♖a8 **35** h4 ♜e8 **36** ♙d1 ♙f8 **37** ♙e2  
 ♙g7 **38** ♖c2 ♜e7 **39** ♖h3 axb4 **40** cxb4 ♜ea7  
**41** ♜f3 ♜xf3 **42** ♜xf3 ♖e8 **43** ♜f4 **0-1**

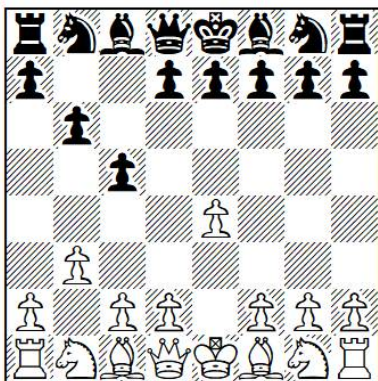
White had evidently decided that enough was enough.

#### Game 81

**C.Perdomo-L.Psakhis**

Groningen Open 1995

**1 e4 c5 2 b3 b6**

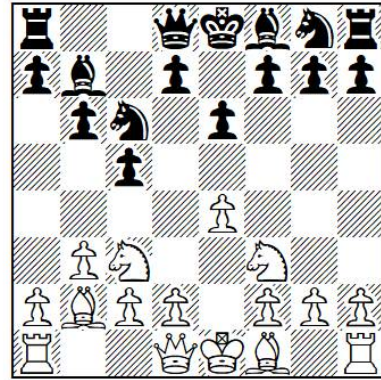


**Question:** Why is this the chosen move for Black, rather than something like 2 ... d6 - ?

**Answer:** It is important for Black to have a defence to 2 b3 that is also compatible with a 2 ♜f3 e6 3 b3 move order. This fits the bill as Black then has 3 ... b6, transposing into the game after 4 ♙b2 ♙b7

5 ♜c3 ♜c6. White has several other moves he can try such as 4 c4, 4 ♙d3 and 4 d4. These are considered at the start of the chapter and in Game 79.

**3 ♙b2 ♙b7 4 ♜c3 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 e6**



**6 d4**

The most 'Sicilian' of White's alternatives, the other moves being as follows:

a) 6 ♖e2 a6 transposes into the previous game, Short-Vallejo Pons.

b) 6 g3 ♜f6 7 ♙g2 ♙e7 8 0-0 (8 e5? ♜xe5 9 ♜xe5 ♙xg2 is good for Black) 8 ... 0-0 9 e5 ♜g4 10 h3 ♜h6 11 g4?! f5! 12 exf6 ♙xf6 is good for Black.

c) 6 ♙e2 ♜f6 7 0-0 ♖c7 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♜xd4 a6 produces a fairly typical Sicilian position, but with White's bishop on the strange b2-square.

**6 ... cxd4 7 ♜xd4 ♙c5**

This move results in some crazy complications which nonetheless turn out okay for Black. 7 ... ♜f6 is a very reasonable move though the position after 8 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 9 e5 ♜d5 10 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 11 ♖g4 may not be to everyone's taste.

**8 ♜db5!**

Black can meet 8 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 9 ♖g4 (9 ♜b5 is met by 9 ... ♜f6) with just 9 ... ♜f6 as 10 ♖xg7? ♜g8 11 ♖h6 ♙xf2+ is a typical trick for Black.

**8 ... ♖b8! 9 ♜d5**

After 9 ♖g4 Psakhis gave 9 ... ♙f8, but the engine prefers the cold-blooded 9 ... ♜f8 10 ♜d5 ♜e5 11 ♖f4 ♜g6, claiming full equality for Black. Another possibility is 9 ♜a4 after which 9 ... ♙b4+ 10 ♙c3 (10 c3

would be answered by 10 ... ♔e7) 10 ... ♕xc3+! 11 ♖axc3 ♕e7 is fine for Black.

**9 ... ♕f8!**

And not 9 ... exd5 because of 10 ♕xg7 ♖f4 and now 11 ♖f3.

**10 ♖dc7**

Psakhis mentioned 10 ♖g4 but Black can meet this with 10 ... ♗e5 (Rather than his 10 ... f6) 11 ♖g3 f6, for example 12 b4 exd5 13 ♕xc5 bxc5 14 ♕xe5 fxe5 15 ♖a3 d6 16 exd5 ♕xd5 17 ♖d1 ♗f6 18 c4 a6 19 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 20 cxd5 ♕f7 followed by ... ♖ab8.

**10 ... a6 11 ♖xd7**

The engine prefers 11 ♖xa8 but still thinks this is better for Black after 11 ... axb5 12 ♖xd7 (Both 12 ♖g4 ♗f6; and 12 ♖xb6 ♕xb6 are worse) 12 ... ♗f6 13 ♖c7 ♕xa8 14 ♖xb8+ ♖xb8 15 e5 ♖g4.

**11 ... ♗f6**

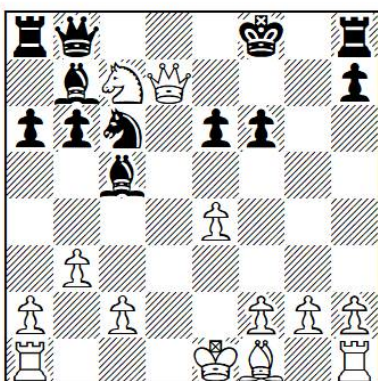
**Question:** Why does Black not play 11 ... axb5 - ?

**Answer:** White would then mate him with 12 ♖xe6+! fxe6 13 ♕xg7 mate.

**12 ♕xf6 gxf6 13 ♖xe6+!?**

Probably the best practical try, even if it is losing for White. 13 ♖d6? is bad because of 13 ... ♗e5! 14 ♖e8+ (Or 14 ♖xe6+ fxe6 15 ♖xe6 ♖xd6 etc.) 14 ... ♖xe8 15 ♖cxe8 ♕c6, winning for Black. From an objective point of view 13 ♖xa8 might be White's best, though after 13 ... axb5 14 ♕xb5 (Or 14 ♖xb6 ♕xb6 15 ♕xb5 ♖d4!) 14 ... ♗e5 15 ♖xb6! ♕xb6 16 ♖d2 ♗g7 Black's king reaches safety, making his position much easier to play.

**13 ... fxe6 14 ♖c7!**



And not 14 ♖xe6? because of 14 ... ♖f4!, and Black wins.

**14 ... ♖d4**

14 ... ♕b4+ 15 ♗d1 would have been less convincing, though it's still good for Black after 15 ... ♗e7 16 ♖xe6 ♖d8+ 17 ♕d3 ♖d4.

**15 0-0-0**

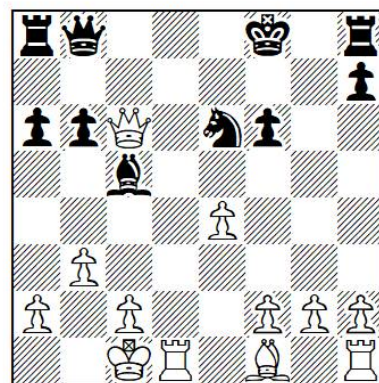
Very much White's best. 15 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 loses to 16 ... ♖f4, and 15 ♖d1 is bad because of 15 ... ♕b4+ 16 ♖d2 ♕xd2+ 17 ♗xd2 ♖d8

**15 ... ♕c6**

This move looks natural but is not the best. Black should have played 15 ... ♕c8! after which 16 ♖d8+ (16 ♖e8+ ♗g7 is even worse for White) 16 ... ♗g7 17 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 18 ♖xe8 ♕a3+! 19 ♗b1 ♖c7 is good for Black because of 20 ♖xd4 ♖c3!. When embroiled in such chaos it's always going to be very tempting to go for a clear edge if one can be found.

**16 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 17 ♖xc6**

Or 17 ♖xe6 ♕a3+ 18 ♗b1 ♖e5! 19 ♖xe5 fxe5 and, with the queens off, it will be Black who has all the chances.



**17 ... ♖f4+**

This time White can meet 17 ... ♕a3+ 18 ♗b1 ♖e5 with 19 c3!, though this still favours Black after 19 ... ♖a7!. The engine also likes 17 ... ♖e8 for Black.

**18 ♗b1 ♖e8 19 ♕c4**

Perhaps 19 ♕xa6 was better, for example 19 ... ♖d4 20 ♖d5 ♖e5 is very messy. Of course, it's going to be next to impossible to chart the right course in such a complicated position.

**19 ... ♖c7! 20 ♖d5?!**

White was already running short of time here, which is understandable given the complex nature of the position. He had a better line in 20 ♖xc7!? ♜xc7 21 ♞d7, but this is nonetheless better for Black after 21 ... ♞e7.

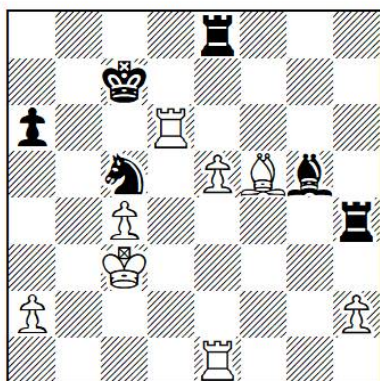
**20 ... b5 21 ♙e2 ♜f4 22 ♖f5 ♗e5 23 ♖xe5 fxe5 24 ♙f3 ♜e7 25 g3 ♜e6 26 ♞d5 ♙d4 27 ♙g4 ♜c5 28 c3**

The best try. 28 f3 is strongly met by 28 ... ♞d8 29 ♞xd8 ♜xd8 30 ♞d1 b4! keeping the position closed.

**28 ... ♙xf2 29 ♞xe5+ ♜d6 30 ♞d5+ ♜c7 31 e5 h5 32 ♙f5 ♞h6!? 33 ♞f1 ♙e3 34 ♞e1 ♜c6! 35 c4 bxc4 36 ♙xc4 ♙g5 37 ♜c2 h4! 38 gxh4?**

White loses his way in time trouble. He had to play 38 g4 when he's still in the game.

**38 ... ♞xh4 39 ♞d6+ ♜c7 40 ♜c3**



**40 ... ♞xe5**

Keeping it simple, 40 ... ♞xh2 is also good but only because of 41 ♜d4 (41 ♜b4 is also met by 41 ... ♙h4) 41 ... ♙h4! 42 ♙g6 (after 42 ♜xc5 there follows 42 ... ♙xe1 43 ♞d7+ ♜b8; and 42 ♞f1 is met by 42 ... ♞d2+ etc.) 42 ... ♞d2+ 43 ♜xc5 ♙f2+! 44 ♜b4 ♙xe1, winning for Black.

**41 ♞xe5 ♜xd6 42 ♞d5+ ♜c6 43 ♙d7+**

After 43 h3 Black has a nice winning line in 43 ... ♙f6+ 44 ♜b4 (44 ♜d2 allows Black to take the c-pawn) 44 ... a5+! as after 45 ♜xa5 there is 45 ... ♙c3 mate.

**43 ... ♜xd7 44 ♞xg5 ♞xh2 45 ♞g6+ ♜b7 46 ♞g7**

Or 46 ♞d6 ♜b6 47 c5 ♞h3+ 48 ♜d4 ♞h4+ 49 ♜d3 ♜a4 etc.

**46 ... ♜c7 47 a4**

47 a3 would have made it harder for Black.

**47 ... ♞h5! 48 ♜d4**

Or 48 ♜b4 a5+ etc.

**48 ... ♞a5 49 ♜c3 ♞xa4**

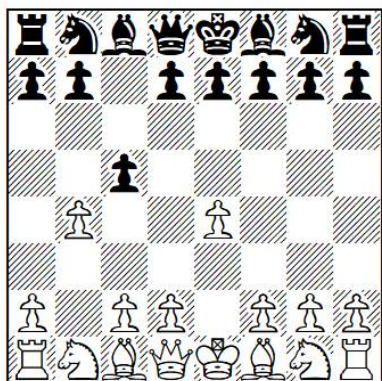
The rest, as the saying goes, is a matter of technique. But it's important not to take your eye off the ball, even when the win is 'easy'.

**50 ♜b3 ♞a5 51 ♜b4 ♞f5 52 ♞h7 ♞g5 53 ♜a4 ♞c5 54 ♜b4 ♜c6 55 ♞h6+ ♜b7 56 ♞h7 ♞c7 57 ♜a5 ♜b8 58 ♞h4 ♜c6+ 59 ♜a4 ♜b6 60 ♞h5 ♞e7 61 c5+ ♜b7 62 ♜b3 a5 63 ♞h4 ♜a6 64 ♜c4 ♞e1 65 ♞h7 ♞c1+ 66 ♜d5 ♜b4+ 67 ♜d4 ♜b5 0-1**

# Chapter Fourteen

## Anti-Sicilian: Miscellaneous Lines

1 e4 c5 2 b4



The Wing Gambit has attracted the attention of attack-minded players from time to time, but it seems well met by taking the pawn and playing 3 ... e5

**Question:** How should we meet a delayed Wing Gambit with 2 ♖f3 e6 and then 3 b4 - ?

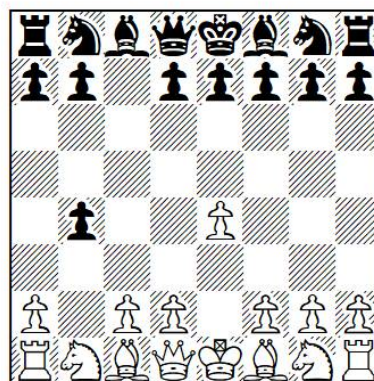
**Answer:** That's a good question because 3 ... cxb4 would take us out of our treatment against 2 b4. I suggest playing 3 ... b6, for example 4 ♙xc5 bxc5 5 ♘a3 ♙b7 6 e5 ♗e7 7 h4 ♖f5 8 ♙d3 ♙d5 9 c4 ♙xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♗c6 11 ♙b2 (11 ♙xf5 ♗d4) 11 ... ♗fd4 was quite good for Black in S.Williams-A.Delchev, London 2013.

White has also tried to prepare b2-b4 with 2 a3 but then 2 ... e6 (2 ... g6 3 h4) 3 b4 b6 4 ♗c3 ♗c6 5 ♙xc5 bxc5 is a good method of play because White's a2-a3 is a wasted move. D.Vocaturo-E.Agrist, Arvier 2007 continued 6 g3 ♖b8 7 ♙g2 ♗ge7 8 f4 d6 9 ♗ge2 g6 10 0-0 ♙g7 11 ♗h1 ♗d4 12 ♗xd4 cxd4 13 ♗e2 f5 with the better game for Black.

White has also played some oddball knight moves, 2 ♗a3 being better motivated but well met by 2 ... g6 as in Zvjaginsev-Bocharov (Game 81). 2 ♗h3 has been played against me a couple of times

by the English player Michael Surtees. On both occasions I got a good game with 2 ... d5 3 ♗g5 e6 4 ♙b5+ ♗c6 5 ♙xc6+ bxc6, reaching a kind of Nimzo-Indian with colours reversed but one in which I had gained some time. There are also a couple of transpositions worth mentioning, 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 ♗f6 4 e5 ♗d5 becoming an Alapin Variation; and 2 ♗e2 ♗c6 3 ♗bc3 e6 transposing into Safarli-Tregubov (Game 72).

2 ... cxb4



**Question:** Can't Black play 2 ... b6 to have a similar treatment to the one we're using against 2 ♗f3 e6 3 b4 - ?

**Answer:** He can, but without having been committed to putting his knight on f3 White has some other dangerous set-ups. For example C.Nanu-Z.Papp, Szeged 1998 continued 3 bxc5 bxc5 4 ♗c3 ♗c6 5 ♖b1 g6 6 g3 ♙g7 7 ♙g2 ♙a6 8 ♗ge2 ♗d4 9 0-0 ♗xe2+ 10 ♗xe2 ♖b8 11 ♖b3 ♙c4 12 ♖a3 ♗c7 13 d3 ♙b5 14 ♗e1 ♙c6 15 ♗a5 with a clear advantage.

3 a3

White has tried several alternatives here, for example:

a) 3 d4 d5 4 exd5 (4 e5 ♗c6) 4 ... ♗f6 5 a3 ♗xd5 6 c4 (Or 6 axb4 e5) 6 ... bxc3 7 ♗xc3 ♗a5 8 ♙d2 e6 leaves White with inadequate compensation.

b) 3  $\text{d}f3$   $d5$  4  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{d}f6$  5  $a3$   $\text{d}xd5$  6  $\text{axb4}$   $\text{d}xb4$  7  $d4$   $\text{e}f5$  8  $\text{e}b5+$   $\text{d}d7$  9  $0-0$   $a6$  10  $\text{e}xd7+$   $\text{w}xd7$  11  $\text{d}e5$   $\text{w}c7$  again leaves White struggling to justify his play.

c) 3  $\text{e}b2$   $\text{d}f6$  4  $e5$   $\text{d}d5$  5  $\text{d}f3$   $e6$  6  $d4$   $d6$  and White has inadequate compensation. In all these lines White has some play for the pawn but the overriding impression is that he is struggling to get enough, at least when Black plays accurately.

### 3 ... e5!

This seems better than the older antidote with 3 ...  $d5$  4  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{w}xd5$ .

4  $\text{d}f3$  After 4  $\text{axb4}$   $\text{e}xb4$  5  $c3$   $\text{e}e7$  there's nothing to stop Black playing ...  $\text{d}f6$  and ...  $0-0$ .

### 4 ... $\text{d}c6$ 5 $\text{axb4}$

Several alternatives need to be considered here, though in every case he is struggling to equalize:

a) 5  $\text{e}b5$   $\text{d}f6$  6  $0-0$   $\text{d}xe4$  7  $d4$   $\text{e}e7$ .

b) 5  $\text{e}c4$   $\text{d}f6$  6  $\text{d}g5$  (after 6  $0-0$  Black can simply play 6 ...  $\text{d}xe4$ ) 6 ...  $d5$  7  $\text{exd5}$   $b5$  8  $\text{e}f1$   $\text{w}xd5$  wins for Black.

c) 5  $\text{e}b2$   $\text{d}f6$  6  $\text{d}xe5$   $\text{w}e7$  7  $d4$   $d6$  8  $\text{d}xc6$   $\text{w}xe4+$  9  $\text{w}e2$  (Or 9  $\text{e}e2$   $\text{w}xc6$  10 9  $0-0$   $d5$ ) 9 ...  $\text{bxa3}$  10  $\text{w}xe4+$   $\text{d}xe4$  11  $\text{d}xa3$   $\text{bxc6}$  12  $d5$   $\text{e}d7$  13  $\text{dxc6}$   $\text{e}xc6$  will again leave White fighting for a draw.

### 5 ... $\text{e}xb4$ 6 $c3$ $\text{e}e7$

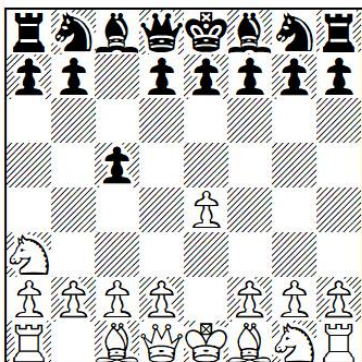
We are following the game Gorovkyh-Yemelin (Game 83) in which White should have played 7  $d4$  here.

## Game 82

### V.Zvjaginsev-D.Bocharov

Russian Championship, Tomsk 2006

### 1 $e4$ $c5$ 2 $\text{d}a3$



**Question:** What's the idea behind that weird-looking move?

**Answer:** There are several. It develops a piece, can prepare to play  $c2-c3$  and  $\text{d}a3-c2$  in some closed positions and stays flexible enough to adapt to Black's next move.

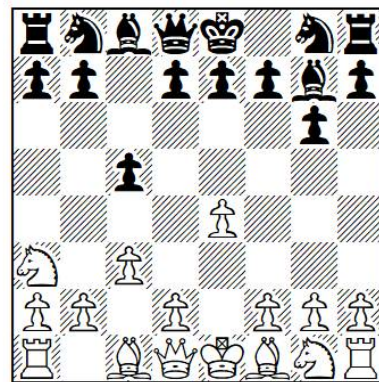
### 2 ... $g6$ 3 $c3$

Black can handle the alternatives as follows:

a) 3  $f4$   $d5$  4  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{w}xd5$  5  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{e}g7$  is fine for Black.

b) 3  $d4$   $\text{cxd4}$  4  $\text{w}xd4$   $\text{d}f6$  5  $\text{e}b5$  (5  $e5$   $\text{d}c6$  6  $\text{w}f4$   $\text{d}h5$  7  $\text{w}e3$   $\text{w}a5+$  safely wins the e-pawn) is simply met by 5 ...  $\text{d}c6$  when 6  $\text{e}xc6$   $\text{dxc6}$  7  $\text{w}xd8+$   $\text{e}xd8$  8  $f3$   $\text{d}d7$  9  $\text{d}e2$   $\text{c}c7$  10  $\text{d}c4$   $e5$  shows how Black can comfortably handle the endgame.

### 3 ... $\text{e}g7$



### 4 $\text{d}f3$

White has alternatives here too:

a) 4  $f4$   $\text{d}f6$  5  $d3$  (5  $e5$   $\text{d}d5$  is already quite awkward for White because of his many pawn moves) 5 ...  $0-0$  6  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{d}c6$  7  $\text{e}e2$   $d6$  8  $0-0$   $\text{e}b8$  9  $\text{w}e1$   $b5$  10  $\text{w}h4$   $b4$  11  $\text{d}c4$   $\text{bxc3}$  12  $\text{e}xc3$   $\text{e}a6$  was already better for Black in E.Dolukhanova-J.Majdan, Paks 2009, because of the well developed counterattack. Having a knight on a3 and pawn on c3 really encourages the ...  $b7-b5-b4$  plan.

b) 4  $d4$   $\text{cxd4}$  5  $\text{cxd4}$   $d5$  6  $\text{exd5}$  (6  $e5$   $\text{d}c6$  7  $\text{e}b5$   $\text{d}h6$  8  $\text{d}f3$   $0-0$  9  $0-0$   $f6$  10  $\text{exf6}$   $\text{exf6}$  is fine for Black) 6 ...  $\text{d}f6$  7  $\text{e}b5+$   $\text{e}d7$  8  $\text{w}b3$   $0-0$  9  $\text{e}c4$   $\text{e}c8$  intends ...  $a7-a6$  and ...  $b7-b5$ , when the knight on a3 stops White responding with  $a2-a4$ .

4 ... ♘c6 5 d4

5 ♙b5 ♘f6 6 d3 0-0 7 0-0 d6 intends ... ♙d7 followed by an orchestration of Black's b-pawn advance.

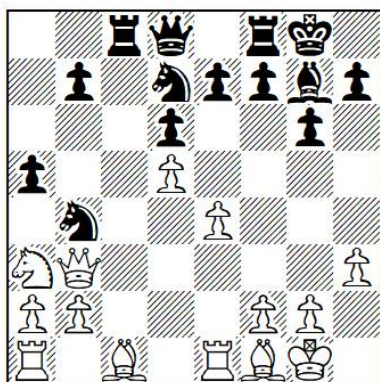
5 ... cxd4 6 cxd4 ♘f6 7 d5

Initiating a theme that will be White's undoing, that of pushing his pawns too far. 7 e5 would have been another way to kick Black's knights around when A.Ivanov-D.Shestakov, Zudov Memorial-B, 2007 continued 7 ... ♘d5 8 ♙c4 0-0 9 h4 d6 10 exd6 ♙g4 11 ♘b5 ♘b6 12 ♙e2 exd6 with an excellent game for Black. Another possibility is 7 ♙d3 after which 7 ... d5 8 e5 ♘e4 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♙f5, intending ... f7-f6, is quite good for Black.

7 ... ♘b4 8 ♙d3 0-0 9 0-0 d6 10 ♙c4 ♙g4 11 h3 ♙xf3 12 ♖xf3 ♖c8 13 ♖b3

13 ♖e2 would have been a better move when the game remains balanced.

13 ... a5 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 15 ♙f1?!



Understandably wanting to tuck the bishop out the way but Black comes up with a powerful replay. 15 ♖e2 is a better move after which 15 ... ♘c5 16 ♖g3 ♙e5 17 ♙f4 ♘d7 is nice for Black but certainly not crushing.

15 ... f5! 16 exf5 ♖xf5 17 g4?

This is not a move we would encourage kids to play because it weakens the kingside. Grandmasters might think they are above such rules, but this does not prove to be the case in this game. White should play just 17 ♙e3 and after 17 ... ♘c5 give up the bishop pair with 18 ♙xc5. This is not pleasant, by any means, but it's better than what happens.

17 ... ♖f7 18 ♘c4?

White's position collapses rapidly after this. 18 f4 was also bad because of 18 ... ♖b6+ 19 ♔g2 ♖d4 but this is marginally better than the game.

18 ... b5 19 ♘e3

19 ♘a3 is strongly met by 19 ... ♙d4 20 ♙e3 ♘c5 etc.

19 ... ♖b6 20 ♙d2 ♘c5 21 ♖d1 ♘e4 22 ♙xb4

White's position is just collapsing here, for example 22 f3 ♘xd2 23 ♖xd2 ♖c2 is crushing.

22 ... axb4 23 ♖c1

Or 23 f3 ♙xb2 24 ♖b1 ♙c3 25 ♖e2 ♖xf3 etc.

23 ... ♖cf8 24 ♖c6

After 24 ♙g2 there follows 24 ... ♘xf2 25 ♖d2 ♙d4.

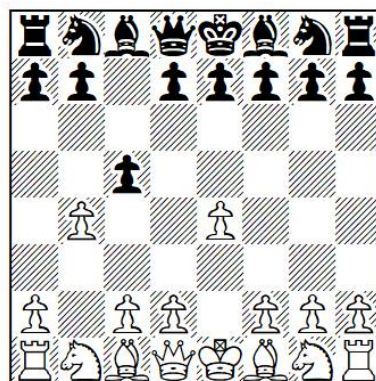
24 ... ♖a7 25 ♖d3 ♘xf2 26 ♖xb5 ♘d1 0-1

### Game 83

E.Gorovkykh-V.Yemelin

Chigorin Memorial, St Petersburg 2010

1 e4 c5 2 b4!?



The so-called Wing Gambit, which Frank Marshall used to like and has been occasionally tried by gambit-loving Grandmasters such as David Bronstein.

**Question:** Is it playable?

**Answer:** At club level certainly, though you probably won't see it in a World Championship match any time soon.

2 ... cxb4 3 a3 e5 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 axb4 ♙xb4 6 c3 ♙e7 7 ♙c4?!

As the pressure against f7 doesn't amount to anything White should play 7 d4 instead. M.Reinke-P.Ostermeyer, Dusseldorf 1995 continued 7 ... d6 (Another good line is 7 ... exd4 8 cxd4 d5 9 e5 ♟b4+ 10 ♟d2 ♞ge7, again with White struggling to find compensation for the pawn) 8 ♟e2 ♞f6 9 ♞bd2 0-0 10 ♟b3 ♟c7 11 0-0 ♟g4 and White's compensation was rather nebulous in nature.

**7 ... ♞f6 8 ♟b3 0-0 9 ♞g5 ♟e8**

With the threats against f7 neutralized it's not clear what White has for the pawn.

**10 0-0 h6 11 ♞f3 ♞xe4 12 d4 d6 13 ♟e1 ♞f6 14 dxe5 ♞xe5 15 ♞xe5 dxe5 16 ♟xe5 ♟d8 17 ♟a3 ♟xa3 18 ♞xa3 a6 19 ♟b4 ♞g4**

19 ... b5 followed by 20 ... ♟d7 would leave White with nothing for his pawn.

**20 ♟e7 ♟d2 21 ♟c5**

It looks like White did not wish to play any retreating moves but 21 ♟e2 would have been better. Black is still a good pawn up after 21 ... ♟f4 22 g3 ♟f6, but this is not as bad for White as the game.

**21 ... ♞f6 22 ♟b3 ♟g4!?**

Returning the pawn to get the initiative, but 22 ... ♟d7 would have been better.

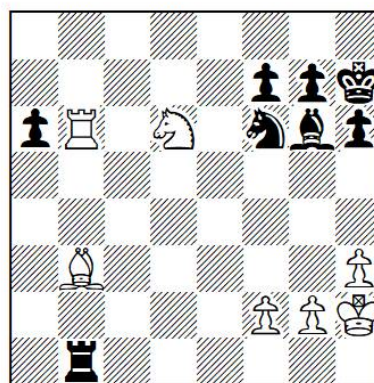
**23 ♟xb7 ♟ac8 24 ♟e7 ♟h5 25 ♟e1 ♟xe1+ 26 ♟xe1 ♟xc3 27 ♞c4 ♟c8 28 ♞d6 ♟8c7 29 ♟b8+ ♞h7 30 h3 ♟g6 31 ♟b6?**

The remaining moves seem to have been affected by time trouble. 31 ♟a2 would have been better here when 31 ... ♟c1 32 ♟xc1 ♟xc1+ 33 ♞h2 ♟c2 34 ♟xf7 ♟xf7 35 ♞xf7 ♟xf2 36 ♟a8 offers excellent drawing chances.

**31 ... ♟c1?**

Returning the favour. 31 ... ♞d7 was much better.

**32 ♟xc1 ♟xc1+ 33 ♞h2 ♟b1**



**34 ♟b8?**

Losing. White could draw with just 34 ♟b7.

**34 ... ♞d7 0-1**

35 ♟d8 (35 ♟b4 ♞c5) 35 ... ♟xb3 36 ♟xd7 ♟d3 sets up a lethal pin on the knight as Black will just push the a-pawn.

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opening repertoire

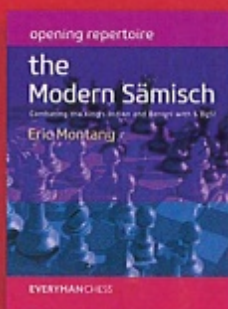
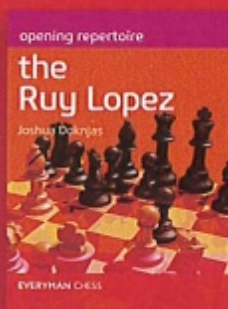
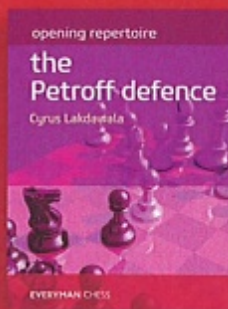
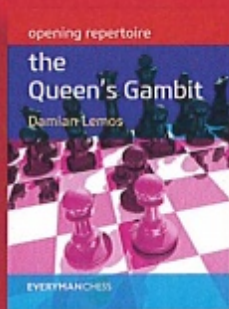
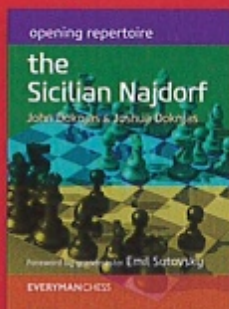
# the Sicilian Taimanov

The Sicilian Taimanov (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6) is a very flexible Black system in the Sicilian Defence developed by Mark Taimanov. It is characterised by the development of the g8-knight on e7, often along with a quick ...b7-b5. The Taimanov often leads to tense, dynamic positions which are ripe in counterattacking possibilities.

In *Opening Repertoire: The Sicilian Taimanov*, highly experienced chess author and coach Nigel Davies guides the reader through the complexities of the Taimanov and carves out a repertoire for Black. He examines all aspects of this highly complex opening and provides the reader with well-researched, fresh, and innovative analysis. Each annotated game has valuable lessons on how to play the opening and contains instructive commentary on typical middlegame plans. There are also suggestions for countering White's "anti-Sicilian" tries thus creating an entire repertoire to meet 1 e4.

- A complete repertoire for Black against 1 e4.
- A question and answer approach provides an excellent study method.
- All key variations analysed in detail.

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