

opening repertoire

# the Queen's Gambit

Damian Lemos



EVERYMAN CHESS

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opening repertoire

# the Queen's Gambit

Damian Lemos

**EVERYMAN CHESS**

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**Damian Lemos** is a grandmaster from Argentina. He is a former Pan-American junior champion and was only 15 years old when he qualified for the international master title. He went on to become a grandmaster at 18. An active tournament player, he also trains students at [ichess.net](http://ichess.net).

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# Preface

Creating a repertoire for the white pieces is no easy task. Nowadays the large amount of theory out there makes it even harder. After finishing my first work, *Opening Repertoire: The Fianchetto System*, John Emms at Everyman Chess suggested the Queen's Gambit as a subject for another book. I decided to take on the challenge and the result is in your hands now.

Why the Queen's Gambit? It is definitely the most aggressive approach for White after 1 d4 d5 and 2 c4 is also the best move if we want to fight for an advantage. My goal was to create a repertoire that allows us to reach the middlegame with a solid foundation while not depending too much on 'exact theory'. Instead, the focus is on strategic plans and positional understanding.

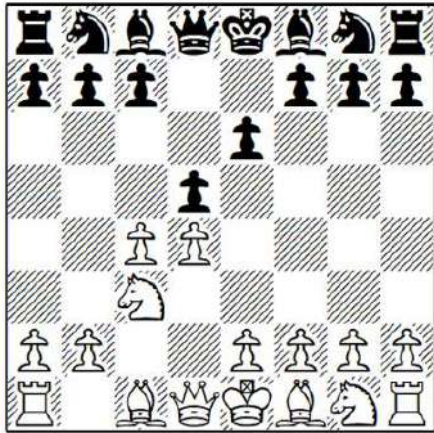
Throughout this project good use was made of *Mega Database 2018* (ChessBase), *Stockfish 10* and the ChessBase Online Database. I must also acknowledge and thank John Emms and Byron Jacobs for giving me the chance to write my first two books, as well as my family and all my chess friends for their endless support.

Damian Lemos,  
Santa Cruz de la Palma,  
July 2019

# Chapter One

## Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3



This chapter principally deals with those positions arising after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6. Also known as the 'Orthodox Defence', the Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD) is one of the most solid defences available to Black. After 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 White often delays the development of g1-knight in order to build up a strong centre by means of e3, Bd3, and Nge2 and eventually f3 and e3-e4. We look at these lines in Game 2-8. Black can prevent this set-up by means of 4 ... Nxd5, which is covered in Game 1.

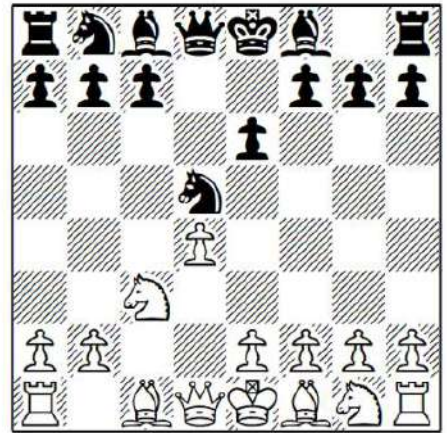
Black can also play 3 ... Be7!? to prevent White's favourite set-up. Since White cannot now play Bg5, he has to either take on d5 or play 4 Nf3. Our repertoire avoids an early Ng1-f3, so in Games 9-13 we will examine 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4.

The Ragozin Variation usually arises after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 Bb4. However, we are not playing an early Nf3 in our repertoire, so we reach the Ragozin via 1

d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4. This will be covered in Games 14 and 15, two encounters where the world number one shows that White has a solid foundation with which fight for the advantage in the middlegame.

*Game 1 P.Svidler-E.Bacrot Thessaloniki 2013*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 Nxd5



This recapture is not as common as 4 ... exd5. Despite a passive appearance, it is pretty solid and White must play accurately in order to fight for an advantage.

**5 e4**

This is the logical approach. The resulting pawn structure has similarities with the Grünfeld Defence line 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3.

**5 ... Nxc3**

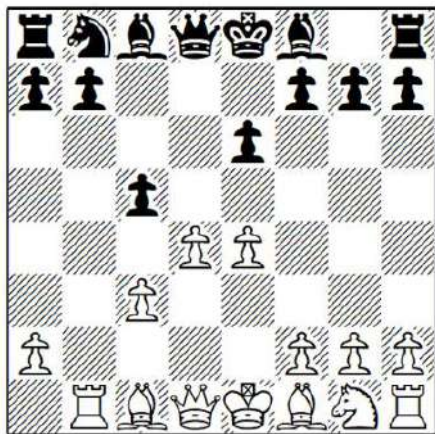
Worse is the passive 5 ... Nf6 6 Nf3 Bb4 7 Bb5+!? c6 8 Bd3 with a slight edge for White.

**6 bxc3 c5**

Instead, 6 ... Be7 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 Bd3 c5 9 0-0 Qc7 was played in M.Drasko-S.Stantic, Arco 2001. Now I like 10 g3!? 0-0 11 Bf4 Qa5 12 Qb3 when Black has some trouble completing his development.

## 7 Rb1!?

This is not the most popular choice, but in the main line after 7 Nf3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Bb4+ 9 Bd2 Bxd2+ 10 Qxd2 0-0 Black is trading pieces and thereby increasing his chances for equality.



## 7 ... cxd4

After 7 ... Be7 8 Nf3 0-0 I like 9 Bc4!?, an active square for the bishop. Following 9 ... Nd7 (9 ... Qc7 10 Qe2 keeps a slight advantage for White) 10 0-0 Qc7 11 Qe2 b6 12 d5! (White grabs more space) 12 ... exd5 (or 12 ... Ne5 13 Nxe5 Qxe5 14 f4! with a strong initiative for White) 13 Bxd5 (13 exd5 is also worth considering) 13 ... Bb7 and now 14 Re1!? (14 Bf4 Qxf4 15 Bxb7 was played in N.Vitiugov-K.Miton, Czech League 2013, when White has a small plus as the presence of opposite-coloured bishops usually favours the attacking side) 14 ... Nf6 15 Bxb7 Qxb7 16 c4! with the idea of e4-e5. White's extra space plus his stronger bishop gives him the edge.

## 8 cxd4 Nc6

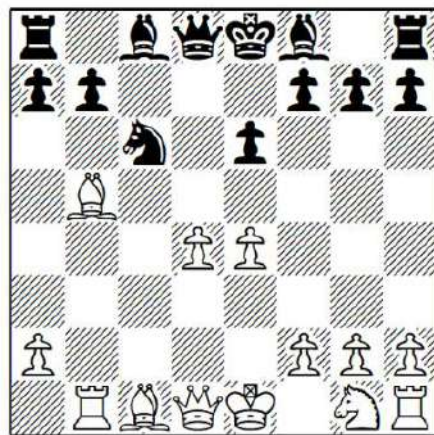
Taking into account White's next move, Black could consider the flexible move 8 ... Be7!? when White has:

a) 9 Bb5+ is met by 9 ... Bd7 10 Nf3 Bxb5 11 Rxb5. At first sight it seems that White should avoid trading pieces.

However, White does have a strong centre and a lead in development.

b) 9 Nf3 0-0 10 Bc4 (from here the bishop supports a future d4-d5 advance) 10 ... b6 11 0-0 Bb7 12 Qe2 Nd7 13 Rd1 (13 Bf4 Nf6 14 Bd3 is also worth considering, as it will not be easy for Black to develop his queen) 13 ... Rc8 14 Bd3 Qc7 with chances for both sides, I.Lysyj-M.Panarin, Yekaterinburg 2013.

## 9 Bb5!



This is the best way of defending the d4-pawn. Instead, 9 Nf3 allows 9 ... Bb4+ 10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Qxd2 0-0 when Black is pretty close to equality.

## 9 ... a6

This move is rather slow. Although Black will obtain the pair of bishops, he will not have enough time to activate them.

The solid 9 ... Bd7 10 Nf3 Bb4+ looks more sensible. 11 Bd2 Bxd2+ 12 Qxd2 0-0 (instead, 12 ... Qa5 13 d5 exd5 14 exd5 Qxd2+ 15 Kxd2 0-0-0 16 dxc6 Bf5+ 17 Kc3 saw White win easily in N.Vitiugov-H.Simonian, St. Petersburg (rapid) 2014) 13 Bd3!? Rb8 14 0-0 Ne7 (after 14 ... Qa5 15 Qb2 Black has a solid position, but White has the centre plus some initiative) 15 Rfe1 was played in D.Kuljasevic-F.Berkes, Legnica 2013. I would prefer 15 Rfc1 Bc6

16 Qe3 Ng6 (to stop Ne5) 17 Rc5!? with a comfortable advantage for White.

**10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 Nf3 c5**

Clearly Black wants to get rid of his weakness as soon as possible. Alternatives are:

- a) 11 ... Be7 12 0-0 0-0 when 13 Qc2 keeps up the pressure.
- b) 11 ... Bd6 12 Qc2 Bd7 13 0-0 0-0 14 Bg5 f6 15 e5! leaves Black's position full of weaknesses.

c) 11 ... Qa5+ 12 Bd2 Qxa2 13 Qc1 Bd7 (13 ... Qa4 14 0-0 Be7 15 Ra1 Qb5 16 Ne5 looks dubious for Black) 14 0-0 and Black is a long way from castling.

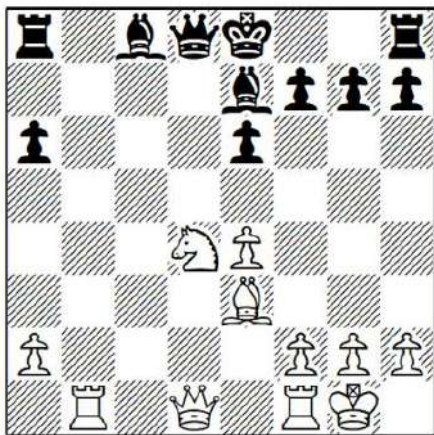
**12 0-0 Be7**

After 12 ... cxd4 White does not need to recapture and can instead play 13 Ne5! when Black is going to have a lot of trouble completing his development.

**13 Be3**

White can also try the calm 13 Ba3 cxd4 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 15 Qxd4 with a risk-free advantage. Svidler prefers to keep pieces on, which makes lot of sense when you have the initiative.

**13 ... cxd4 14 Nxd4**



**14 ... Bd7**

14 ... 0-0 looks risky after 15 Nc6. It is playable, but following 15 ... Qc7 (not 15 ... Qxd1? 16 Nxe7+) 16 Qc1!? looks more

promising than taking on e7. After 16 ... Bd6 17 Bb6 Bxh2+ 18 Kh1 Qf4 (18 ... Qd6? 19 e5 loses on the spot) 19 g3 Bxg3 20 fxg3 Qxe4+ 21 Kh2 I would take White with his extra piece.

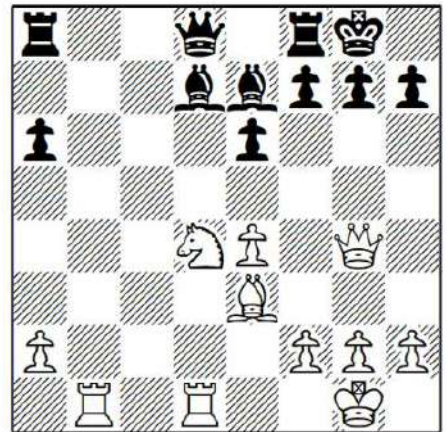
**15 Qg4**

White could also consider 15 Qc2 0-0 (15 ... Rc8 16 Qe2 hits the a6-pawn) 16 Rfd1 (16 Nc6 Rc8! equalizes on the spot) 16 ... Qa5 (if 16 ... Bf6 17 Nb3 followed by Nc5) 17 Nf5 when I prefer his chances.

**15 ... 0-0**

Black should avoid 15 ... e5 16 Nf5 g6 17 Rfd1! gxf5 18 Qg7 Bf6 (or 18 ... Rf8 19 Rb7 and Black cannot move at all) 19 Qh6 and White has lot of ideas in the air, including Rxd7.

**16 Rfd1 Qe8?!**



Black has to play the fearless 16 ... Qa5 17 Bh6 Bf6 18 f4 Ba4 19 e5 Bxd1 20 Rxd1 Bxe5 21 fxe5 Qxe5 22 Nc6 when White has only a small advantage with the two minor pieces being better than the rook.

**17 e5!**

A fine move. White has the initiative and it is going to be tough for Black to activate his bishop-pair.

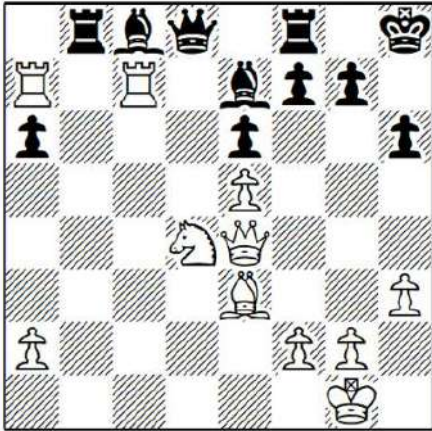
**17 ... Kh8 18 h3 Rb8 19 Qe4 h6 20 Rdc1 Qd8 21 Rb7!**

By playing accurately, White increases his initiative.

## 21 ... Ba3?

It was better to try 21 ... Rxb7 22 Qxb7 Bg5, although White keeps a clear advantage after 23 f4.

22 Rc3 Be7 23 Rcc7 Bc8 24 Ra7



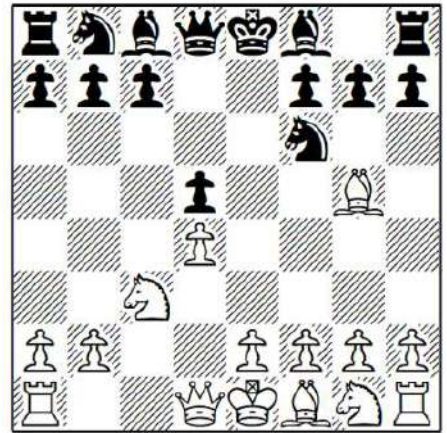
There is nothing Black can do to stop all the threats on the seventh rank as well as Nc6.

24 ... Ba3 25 Rxf7 Rxf7 26 Rxf7 Qg8 27 Qf3 1-0

28 Bxh6 is coming next, so Black resigned.

Game 2 G.Kasparov-D.Barua Internet (rapid) 2000

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5

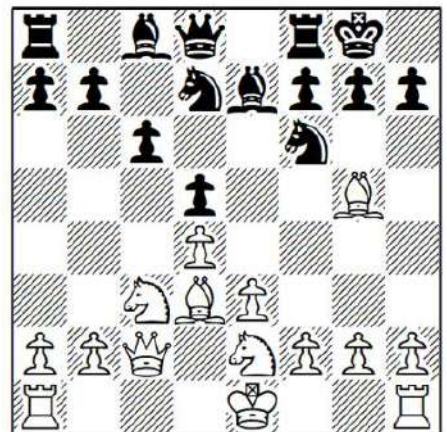


Here we have the main line of the Orthodox Defence, and there is no better way to start than analysing a Kasparov game. The 13th World Champion was always a great connoisseur of the Exchange QGD.

5 ... c6 6 Qc2

I like this move order, which prevents ... Bf5. More common is 6 e3 Bf5 (Black more often plays 6 ... Be7 when we are likely to transpose into the main line) 7 Qf3 Bg6 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Qxf6 gxf6 when White has the better pawn structure in an ending, but Black is very solid.

6 ... Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 Nge2



White develops the knight here to have the chance of building up a strong centre with f3 and e3-e4.

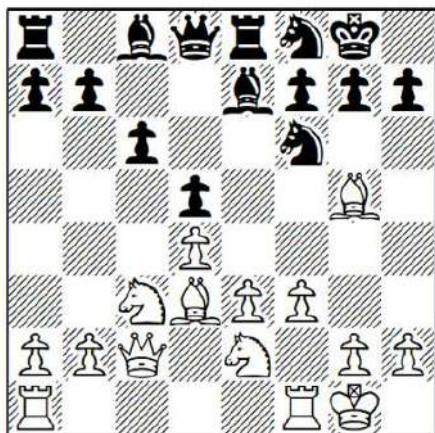
### 9 ... Re8

A move like 9 ... h6 cannot be recommended because it weakens the b1-h7 diagonal. What is more, Black usually tries a ... g6, ... Nf8-e6-g7 and ... Bf5 manoeuvre to exchange off his light-squared bishop. After ... h6 this is no longer possible because Bxg6 sacrifices will be in the air. One game went 10 Bh4 Re8 11 0-0 Ne4 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 Bxe4 dxe4 14 d5 Nf6 (14 ... c5 15 Nb5 followed by d5-d6 looks great for White) 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 Rfd1 when White had obtained a positional advantage in A.Aleksandrov-A.Pendase, Mumbai 2012.

### 10 0-0 Nf8

10 ... Ne4 is premature when h7 is not protected: for example, 11 Bf4! Nxc3 (11 ... f5 12 Nxd5! is a nice trap) 12 bxc3 (12 Bxh7+!? Kh8 13 Nxc3 g6 14 Bxg6 fxg6 15 Nxd5 is good for White, as he has too many pawns in return for the piece, not to mention Black's weak king) 12 ... g6 13 f3 c5 14 Ng3 g5? 15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Be5+ f6 17 Bc7 Qxc7 18 Qg6 Qd8 19 Nf5 led to a quick win for White in A.Aleksandrov-R.Kazmierczak, Warsaw 2007.

### 11 f3



This is White's sharpest set-up against the Orthodox Defence. Black has a several possibilities and we will examine them throughout this chapter.

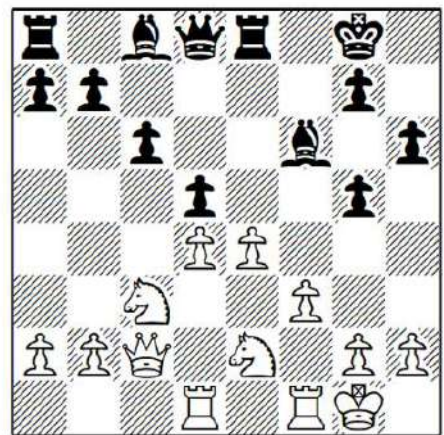
### 11 ... Ng6 12 Rad1 h6

As mentioned before, ... h6 is usually not such a good move for Black. Instead, 12 ... Nh5 is a typical try when White usually plays for a quick e3-e4. One example is 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 e4 dxe4 15 fxe4 Be6 16 e5 c5 17 d5 Bg4 18 e6! and White had a powerful attack, Y.Yakovich-B.Ahlander, Stockholm 1999.

### 13 Bxf6

The sharp 13 Bxh6!? gxh6 14 Bxg6 fxg6 15 Qxg6+ Kh8 16 Nf4 is also worth considering. White has three pawns and attacking chances for the piece.

### 13 ... Bxf6 14 Bxg6 fxg6 15 e4 g5



### 16 e5!

This not only gains space, it gives White the initiative. Instead, 16 a4 Be6 17 a5 Be7 18 f4 gxf4 led to equality in O.Touzane-J.Plachetka, Portoroz 1998.

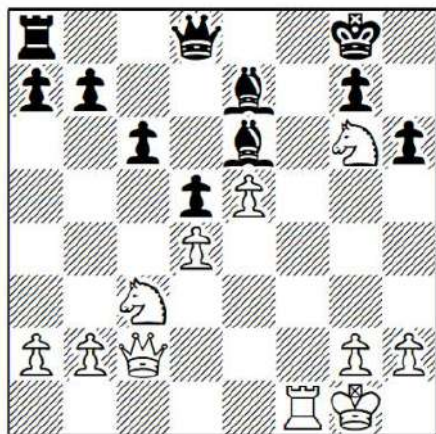
### 16 ... Be7 17 f4 gxf4 18 Nxf4

The opening has turned out quite favourably for White, who has more space and good attacking chances on the kingside. Meanwhile, Black's bishop-pair is not very active.

### 18 ... Rf8?!

Black needs to develop. 18 ... Bg4 is a clear mistake in view of 19 Qg6! Bxd1 (or 19 ... Bg5 20 Nfxd5 cxd5 21 Rf7) 20 Ne6. A better try was 18 ... Bg5 19 Qg6 Re7 followed by ... Qe8, although White still has an annoying initiative.

**19 Ng6 Rxf1+ 20 Rxf1 Be6**



**21 Ne2**

White's knight-pair is much better than Black's bishop-pair. White can also consider taking immediately on e7, leaving Black with his worse bishop.

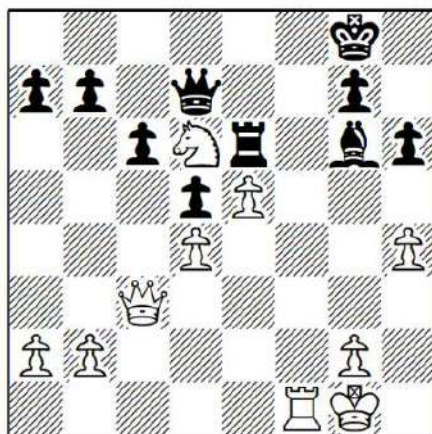
**21 ... Qd7 22 h4 Re8 23 Ng3 Bf7?!**

This is just too passive. Black was better off staying in waiting mode with 23 ... Bd8!? 24 Nf5 Bxf5 25 Rxf5.

**24 Nxe7+ Rxe7 25 Nf5**

Heading for the d6-square.

**25 ... Re6 26 Nd6 Bg6 27 Qc3**



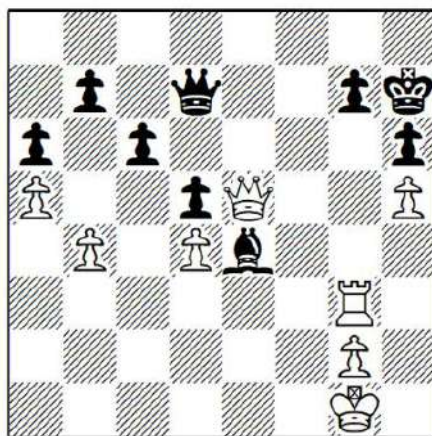
**27 ... Rxd6**

Black tires of trying to manoeuvre around the powerful knight on d6.

**28 exd6 Qxd6 29 Qa3 Qb8 30 Qe7 Qg3 31 Rf3?**

White misses a clear win here, probably because it was a fast time control. After 31 Rf8+ Kh7 32 Qd8 Be4 33 Rh8+ Kg6 34 Qe8+ Kf5 35 Qf7+ mate is coming.

**31 ... Qg4 32 Qf8+ Kh7 33 Qf4 Qd7 34 Rg3 Be4 35 Qe5 Qf7 36 h5 Qd7 37 b4 a6 38 a4 Kg8 39 a5 Kh7**



There is still a long way to go before White can win this endgame as Black has a solid position. Kasparov gets there in the end. The remaining moves were:

40 Kf2 Kg8 41 Qb8+ Kh7 42 Qf8 Bc2  
 43 Qf4 Be4 44 Qe5 Kg8 45 Ke3 Kh7 46  
 Ke2 Kg8 47 Qb8+ Kh7 48 Qf8 Bc2 49  
 Kd2 Be4 50 Kc1 Qc7 51 Rg4 Qd7 52 Rf4  
 Bxg2 53 Qf5+ Qxf5 54 Rxf5 Kg8 55 Kd2  
 Bh3 56 Rf4 Be6 57 Ke3 Bf7 58 Rf5 Kf8 59  
 Re5 Be8 60 Kf4 Bf7 61 Kg4 Be8 62 Kg3  
 Bf7 63 Kf4 Be8 64 Kf5 Bxh5 65 Ke6 Bg6  
 66 Re3 Bc2 67 Rf3+ Kg8 68 b5 cxb5 69  
 Kxd5 b4 70 Kc4 b3 71 Kc3 g5 72 d5 g4 73  
 Rf4 h5 74 d6 1-0

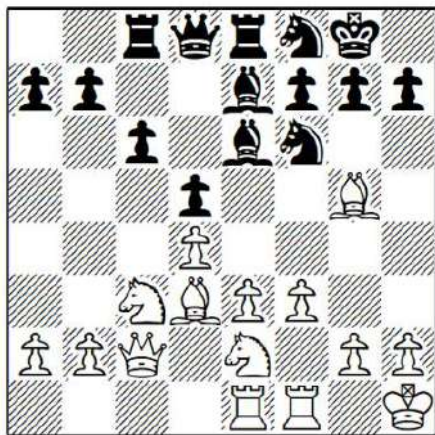
Game 3 V.Ivanchuk-A.Yusupov 3rd  
 matchgame, Brussels 1991

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5  
 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 0-0 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nge2 Re8  
 9 0-0 Nf8 10 Qc2 c6 11 f3

The main position of the QGD Exchange  
 with Nge2.

11 ... Nh5

This move is part of a typical strategy to  
 trade pieces off. I do not like the move so  
 much because it allows White to play a  
 quick e3-e4. Another common try is 11 ...  
 Be6 when I suggest 12 Rae1! (placing this  
 rook on d1 is also possible) 12 ... Rc8 13  
 Kh1!.



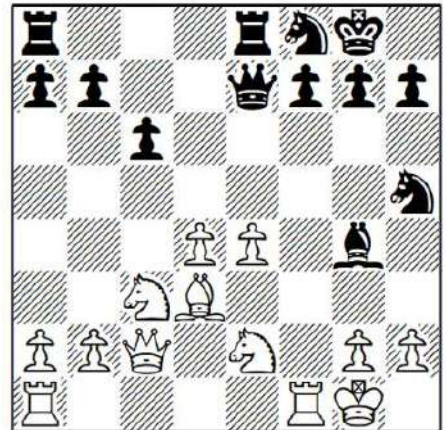
This is another key idea worth  
 remembering. The manoeuvre Bh4-Bf2 may  
 be useful for White, as avoiding trades can  
 make the space-gaining advance e3-e4 even

stronger. In G.Kasparov-U.Andersson,  
 Belfort 1988, Black prevented this idea with  
 13 ... N6d7, but after 14 Bxe7 Rxe7 15 Nf4  
 Rc7 16 Qf2 Nf6 17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 White  
 obtained a comfortable advantage.

12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 e4 dxe4

Black has to take, otherwise White plays  
 e4-e5 followed by f3-f4.

14 fxe4 Bg4



Likewise, after 14 ... Be6 15 e5! there is  
 no good way to stop Ne4 and Black has  
 serious weaknesses.

15 e5

At the time this game was played, this  
 natural move was a novelty. Also good is 15  
 Rf2 Qg5 16 Raf1 Re7 17 Bc4 Ne6 18 d5  
 with a clear initiative for White, A.Vaisser-  
 M.Mozny, Clichy 1991.

15 ... Rad8

Black is not yet ready to free his position  
 with a move like 15 ... c5?, as after 16 Nd5  
 White wins at least a pawn.

16 Ne4 Ng6

After 16 ... Ne6 17 Nd6 Rxd6 (17 ... Rf8  
 18 Bxh7+ Kh8 19 Bf5 is even worse for  
 Black) 18 exd6 Qxd6 19 Bxh7+ Kh8 20 Bf5  
 White's extra material should prove  
 decisive.

17 Rad1!

White maintains the tension and brings  
 some protection to the d4-pawn. There is

nothing really wrong with the natural 17 Nd6 Rxd6 18 exd6 Qxd6 when Black has some compensation, but White's extra material should count for more.

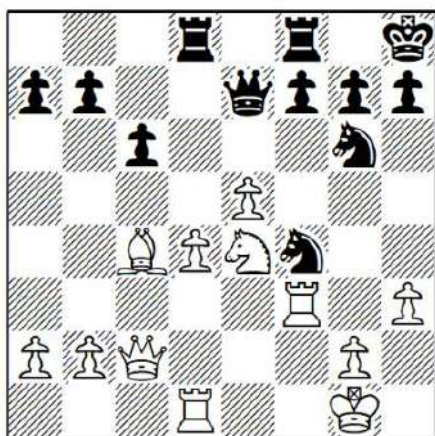
**17 ... Rf8**

This move demonstrates that the pressure on the f-file is too powerful. If, instead, 17 ... Bxe2 18 Bxe2 Nhf4 then 19 Bc4 when White's strong bishop gives him a clear edge.

**18 h3 Bxe2 19 Bxe2 Nhf4 20 Bc4 Kh8**

Yusupov suggests 20 ... Nd5 21 Rf3 Ngf4, but White still has a clear advantage after 22 Nd6 Rxd6 23 exd6 Qxd6 24 Qe4.

**21 Rf3**



**21 ... f6**

Black wants to do something active, but this creates weaknesses and gives White's bishop even greater scope. Instead, 21 ... Nd5 22 Nd6 Rxd6 23 exd6 Qxd6 was possible, although, as pointed out before, White's extra material should eventually count.

**22 exf6 gxf6 23 Ng3 b5?!**

23 ... f5 trying to play ... Qg5 was a better try.

**24 Bf1 c5 25 Qf2! Qc7?**

Losing, but 25 ... Ne6 26 Nf5 Qb7 27 d5 Rxd5 28 Nd6 looks clearly better for White.

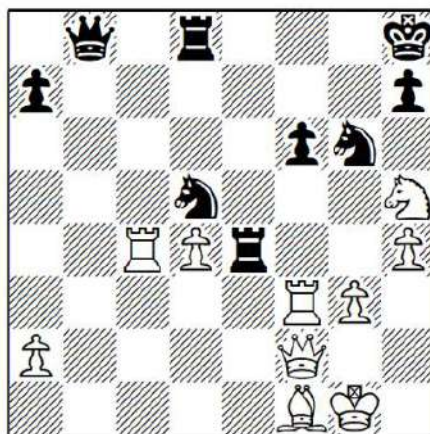
**26 Rc1**

After this Black loses a pawn.

**26 ... c4 27 b3 Rfe8 28 bxc4 bxc4 29 Rxc4 Qb8 30 h4**

30 Rb3 Qd6 31 Nf5 Qe6 32 Rc5 followed by Re3 was even quicker.

**30 ... Nd5 31 Nh5 Re4 32 g3**



**32 ... Nxf4**

Even if this is losing, it looks like Black's best practical chance.

**33 gxh4 Rg8+ 34 Kh1 Rgg4**

After 34 ... Qb1 35 Kh2 Qb8+ 36 Kh3 White is winning, although care is still needed. Similar is 34 ... Qb7 35 Bg2 Qb1+ 36 Kh2 Qb8+ 37 Kh3 when Black is still fighting, but he should lose in the long run.

**35 Rc5 Rxh4+ 36 Rh3 Rxh3+ 37 Bxh3 Qb1+ 38 Qg1 Qxg1+**

Pinning with 38 ... Re1 gets mated by 39 Rc8+.

**39 Kxg1**

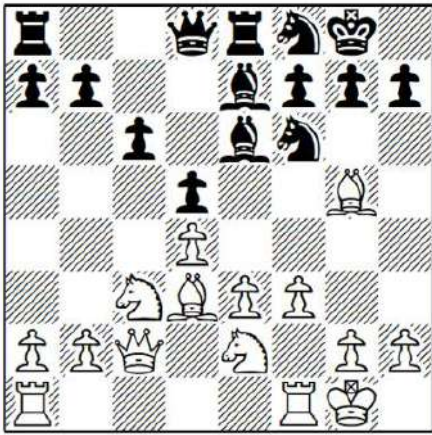
With queens off, the rest is quite simple.

**39 ... Nb6 40 d5 Rh4 41 d6 1-0**

41 ... Rxh3 42 d7 followed by Rc8+ wins.

*Game 4 V.Ivanchuk-L.Bruzon Batista*  
Merida 2006

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 e3 Be7 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nge2 0-0 9 Qc2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 11 f3 Be6**



This is Black's main move in the position. If Black wants to create some counterplay, he has to play ... Rc8 and ... c5 at some point. However, this plan has some drawbacks, as it creates an isolated pawn on d5.

### 12 Rad1!

Played to counter Black's ideas. The rook is going to be useful on the d-file if Black plays ... c5.

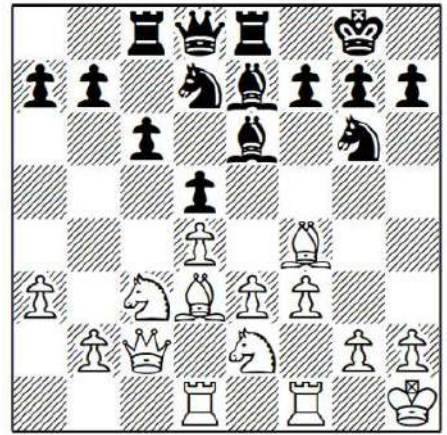
### 12 ... Rc8 13 Kh1

This is a good prophylactic move as it safeguards the king and even prepares a possible Bh4-Bf2-Bg1.

### 13 ... Ng6 14 a3!?

This is always a useful move, and it keeps open the possibility of a 'minority attack' on the queenside where White plays b2-b4 and eventually b4-b5.

### 14 ... Nd7 15 Bf4!



This is a typical idea. The principle is that if you have more space, you do not want trade pieces. Instead, 15 Bxe7 Qxe7 16 e4 dxe4 17 fxe4 c5 18 d5 Bg4 is not that clear as Black can successfully blockade on dark squares.

### 15 ... a6

This prepares ... c5 by avoiding any Nc3-b5 ideas. Black could also play 15 ... c5 16 Bg3 c4 17 Bf5, which is similar to the game. White is going to play e4 sooner or later. Note that Black must avoid 15 ... Nxf4 16 Bxh7+ Kh8 17 Nxf4 which just loses a pawn.

### 16 Bg3 c5

Here is probably Black's last chance to trade the bishops with 16 ... Bh4, although after 17 b4 White can go for the e3-e4 break or the queenside minority attack. 17 Be1!? is also worth consideration.

### 17 e4!?

Initiating complications. Instead, 17 dxc5 is thematic as it creates an isolated pawn on d5. Then 17 ... Bxc5 18 Nxd5! (or 18 Nd4 when White has a positional advantage) 18 ... Bxd5 19 Bxg6 hxg6 20 Rxd5 Rxe3 21 Rc1 looks uncomfortable for Black.

### 17 ... Nf6

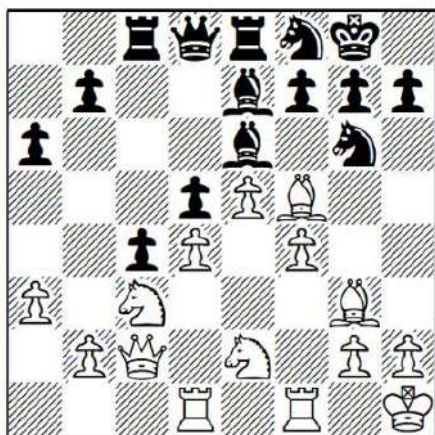
Another possibility was 17 ... c4 18 exd5 cxd3 19 Qxd3 Bh3!?, trying to ruin White's

pawn structure. However, after 20 d6 Bxg2+ 21 Kxg2 Bf8 22 Ne4 White's initiative and space advantage are more relevant.

**18 e5 Nd7 19 f4 c4 20 Bf5**

Now that the centre is closed, the position is easier for White as Black will not have much counterplay.

**20 ... Ndf8**



**21 Bh3!**

An amazing move from Ivanchuk. The pawn structure does not matter much as White can attack with f4-f5 and along the half-open g-file. 21 Bxe6 fxe6 22 f5 is also a good option for White, but in that case f4-f5 is not as powerful as in the game.

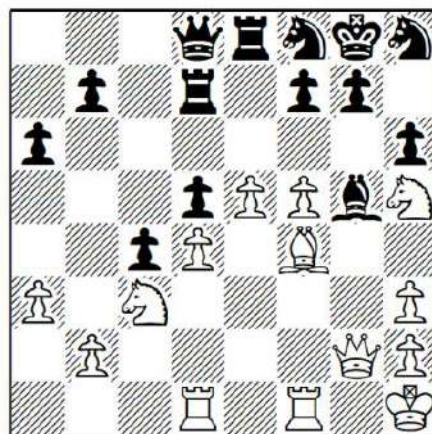
**21 ... Bxh3 22 gxh3 Nh8**

It is really hard to tell where Black makes a serious mistake in this game. White has more space and Black is slowly running out of chances. Perhaps the improvement is 17 ... c4.

**23 f5 Bg5 24 Bf4**

Also good was 24 h4 Bxh4 25 Bxh4 Qxh4 26 Nxd5 with the better centre, while Black is playing as if down a piece, as the h8-knight is not contributing at all.

**24 ... h6 25 Ng3 Rc7 26 Qg2 Rd7 27 Nh5**



After suitable preparation, White is ready to play h3-h4.

**27 ... f6 28 e6 Nxe6 29 fxe6 Rxe6 30 h4 Qe8 31 Nxg7 Kxg7 32 hxg5 hxg5 33 Nxd5 Rxd5 34 Qxd5 gxf4 35 Rg1+ Ng6 36 Qf5 1-0**

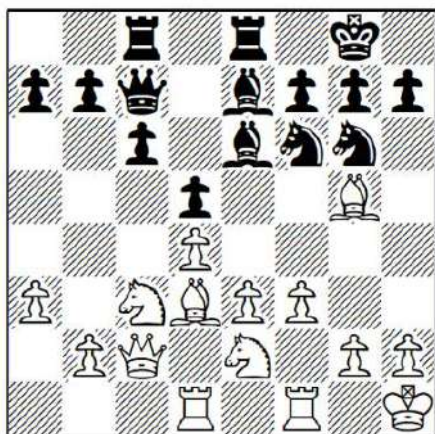
White plans Rxg6+ followed by Rg1. A great game to improve one's understanding of White's ideas in the Exchange QGD.

*Game 5 O.Cvitan-C.Lamoureux Swiss League 2006*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Be7 7 e3 0-0 8 Bd3 Nbd7 9 Nge2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 11 f3 Ng6**

This is another move order for Black, but the good news is that White's plan is clear no matter what Black plays.

**12 Rad1 Be6 13 Kh1 Rc8 14 a3 Qc7**



If Black plays 14 ... Nd7 then we transpose back into Game 4.

**15 Ng3!?**

Note that Black's last discourages 15 e4? for a couple of reasons. After 15 ... Ng4 (15 ... Nxe4 possibly looks even better after 16 Bxe7 Nxc3) 16 fxe4 Bxg5 Black has the bishop-pair. However, 15 Nf4! is a good try. After 15 ... Nxf4 16 Bxf4 Bd6 (or 16 ... Qd8 17 b4 when White is slightly better) 17 Bg5! (trading more pieces with 17 Bxd6 Qxd6 is fine for Black) 17 ... Be7 (Black can keep his pawn with 17 ... h6, but 18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 f4 gives White a clear positional advantage) 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Bxh7+ Kh8 (after 19 ... Kf8 20 Bd3 c5 21 Bf5 White has an extra pawn) 20 Bf5 Bxf5 21 Qxf5 Rxe3 22 Rc1 there is no clear way to stop the upcoming Nxd5!.

**15 ... Rcd8**

A waiting move. Instead, Black could play 15 ... Nh5 16 Nxh5 (16 Bxe7 Nxc3+ 17 hxg3 Rxe7 18 g4 is worth considering) 16 ... Bxg5 17 f4 when it looks as if he will lose a piece. However, after 17 ... Bg4! 18 fxe4 (or 18 Be2 Bxh5 19 Bxh5 Bf6 20 Rf3 when Black has a solid position) 18 ... Bxh5 19 Rde1 Nf8 Black is at least equal because he has a healthy pawn structure and no weaknesses.

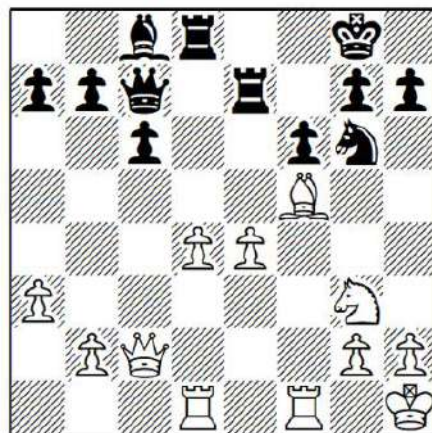
**16 Nce2**

Again White has to delay advancing in the centre because if 16 e4?! dxe4 17 fxe4 (or 17 Nxe4 Nd5 and White has an isolated pawn on d4), then 17 ... Ng4! 18 Bc1 Bh4! gives Black good counterplay.

**16 ... Bc8 17 Bf5**

What I like about this game is how White gradually improves his position. Note that 17 e4? Nxe4 loses material.

**17 ... Nh5 18 Bxe7 Nxc3+ 19 Nxc3 Rxe7 20 e4 dxe4 21 fxe4 f6**



If 21 ... Be6 then 22 Bxe6 Rxe6 23 e5 and I still prefer White's chances.

The text is a solid looking move, although White may exploit this slight kingside weakening in the future.

**22 Bxc8 Rxc8 23 Rf3 Rd7**

23 ... Nh4 is better, stopping Nf5 when it will take a couple of moves before White can push back the knight on h4.

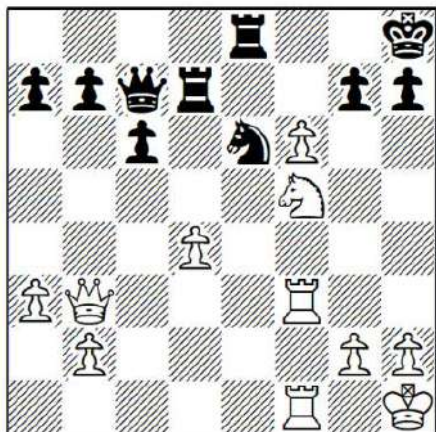
**24 Nf5 Re8 25 Rdf1 Nf8**

Black has not made any serious mistakes, but with all of White's pieces on their best posts it is now time to open the position.

**26 Qb3+**

Stronger was 26 e5! fxe5 27 Qb3+ Rd5 (the only move, as Black gets mated after both 27 ... Ne6 28 Qxe6+ Rxe6 29 Ne7+ Rdx7 30 Rf8 and 27 ... Kh8 28 Ne7) 28 Ne3, winning the exchange and the game.

26 ... Kh8 27 e5! Ne6  
 27 ... fxe5 runs into 28 Ne7.  
 28 exf6



28 ... g6?

Black did not want to defend the position after 28 ... gxf6 29 Re3, but this would have been a better try. White is then clearly better, but Black can fight on.

29 Re3 Rd5

Instead, 29 ... gxf5 30 Rxe6 Rf8 31 Qe3 wins.

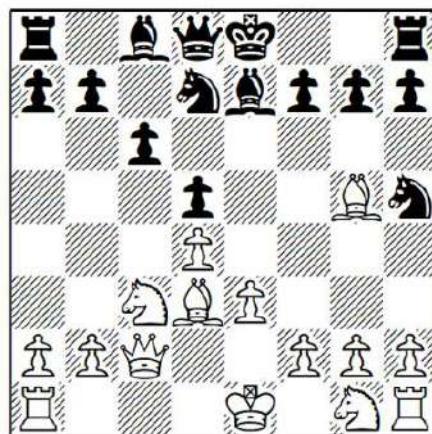
30 Ne7 Rh5 31 h3 Nxd4 32 Nxc6+ 1-0

This game demonstrates that even if Black reaches 'equality', White's position is full of potential and he can always strive to maintain some kind of initiative.

Game 6 G.Kasparov-U.Andersson  
 Reykjavik 1988

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 Nh5

I have to admit that I used to find this variation quite annoying. Black trades pieces off and obtains a solid position. Let's see how Kasparov handles it.



9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Nge2

Definitely the best square for the knight as White will continue with Ng3 in order to open the h-file.

Instead, 10 g4?! creates numerous weaknesses on the kingside and after 10 ... Nf4! 11 Bf1 Nb6 12 0-0-0 Ng6 13 h3 Bd7 14 Kb1 0-0-0 15 Ka1 Kb8 16 Nge2 h5 Black had obtained a clear positional advantage in W.Walkusz-M.Perdek, Wisla 1992.

10 ... g6

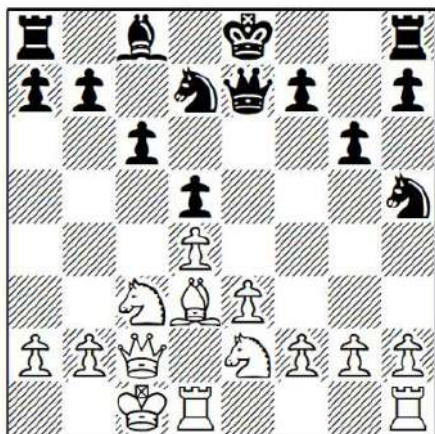
The main drawback to Black's play is the fact that his bishop is on the same colour as most of his pawns. In this game Kasparov castles queenside and attacks on the same wing. However, White can also consider castling kingside.

Black has a couple of alternatives:

a) 10 ... Nb6 11 0-0 (11 0-0-0 g6 transposes to our main game) 11 ... g6 12 Rae1 0-0 13 Nc1!? is an interesting mix of ideas, as in R.Wojtaszek-L.Cyborowski, Turnov 2014. White can try playing with f3 and e3-e4, possibly including queenside manoeuvres such as a3 and b4 or Nb3. After 13 ... Ng7 14 f3 Ne6 15 Qf2 c5 16 dxc5 Nxc5 17 Bb1 White has a solid position and a clear target in the shape of the isolated d5-pawn.

b) 10 ... Nf8 looks a bit slow. 11 h3!? is a flexible reply that already hints at a kingside attack, possible because White can castle queenside. In D.Zagorskis-C.Perdomo, Cappelle-la-Grande 1996, play continued 11 ... Ng6 12 0-0-0 0-0 13 g4 Nf6 14 Ng3 (Black is already in trouble because there is no clear way to stop g4-g5 and h3-h4) 14 ... Re8 (or 14 ... Be6 15 g5 Nd7 16 h4 with a clear advantage for White) 15 g5 Ne4 16 Bxe4 dxe4 17 Ngxe4 (17 d5 is also worth analyzing) 17 ... Bf5 18 Nf6+ Qxf6 19 gxf6 Bxc2 20 Kxc2 with the much better endgame for White.

**11 0-0-0**



**11 ... Nb6**

The main alternative is 11 ... Ndf6, but I do not like this move much as Black needs a knight on the queenside. After 12 h3 Ng7 13 g4 h5 14 g5 Nh7 15 h4 Bf5 we have:

a) 16 Bxf5!? is the move suggested by the engines. After 16 ... Nxf5 17 Nf4 0-0 (17 ... 0-0-0? loses to 18 Ncxd5) 18 Nxh5 Nxe3 19 fxe3 Qxe3+ 20 Kb1 gxf5 21 Rhg1 I prefer White's attacking chances.

b) 16 Kb1 Bxd3 17 Qxd3 0-0 18 f3 Rfd8 19 e4 dxe4 20 fxe4 led to a clear advantage for White in H.Stefansson-P.Egeli, Chalkidiki 2002.

**12 Ng3 Ng7**

If 12 ... Nf6 then I like a plan suggested by GM Mihail Marin: 13 Rhe1 Be6 14 f3 0-0-0 15 Kb1 Kb8 16 Qf2 and e3-e4 is coming soon. The alternative 12 ... Nxe3 13 hxe3 is the subject of the next game.

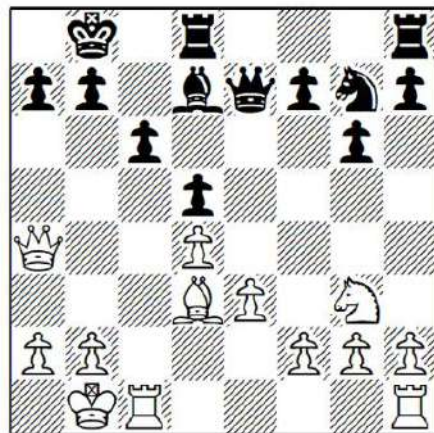
**13 Kb1 Bd7 14 Rc1**

White can also consider opening the centre by means of f3 and e3-e4, although I prefer the useful 14 Rc1 first. White waits until Black castles. If he castles kingside then White can play for an attack (maybe with h4-h5), and if he castles queenside then the rook is definitely well placed on the c-file.

**14 ... 0-0-0 15 Na4**

Trading off Black most important defender.

**15 ... Nxa4 16 Qxa4 Kb8**



**17 Rc3!**

Despite the fact that Black has a solid position, White can still create weaknesses on the queenside.

**17 ... b6**

It is not easy for Black to defend. 17 ... c5?! 18 Qa3 loses a pawn, while after 17 ... Ne6?! White already has a deadly attack after 18 Ra3 a6 19 Bxa6 bxa6 20 Qxa6.

**18 Ba6 Ne6 19 Rhc1 Rhe8 20 Qb3 Qd6 21 Nf1 Ka8 22 Nd2!?**

A risky move by the former world champion. In my opinion it is a good try

since playing something like 22 Qa3 is not sufficiently challenging to fight for the advantage.

**22 ... Nc7**

The engines like 22 ... Qxh2, but it is not that easy when you have to play it in a real game. White has:

a) 23 Rxc6 Bxc6 24 Rxc6 Qxg2 when Black has a clear advantage.

b) 23 Bb5 cxb5 24 Qxd5+ Kb8 and I do not see any good continuation for White.

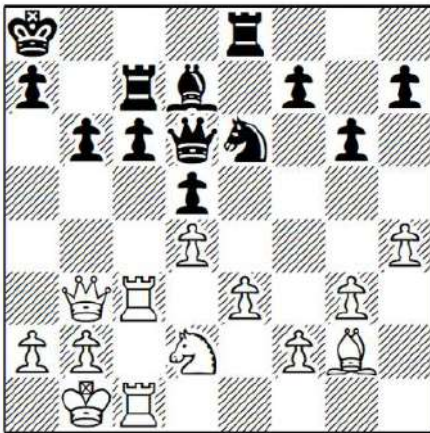
c) 23 Bf1 Qd6 and Black simply has an extra pawn.

d) 23 Nf3!, sacrificing a second pawn. After 23 ... Qxg2 White continues 24 Ne5 with an unclear position.

**23 Bf1 Ne6**

Black should again consider 23 ... Qxh2 24 Nf3 Qd6 25 Ne5 Rxe5! 26 dxe5 Qxe5. Black stands well in the centre and has a solid position, but White's extra exchange should not be underestimated.

**24 g3 Rc8 25 Bg2 Rc7 26 h4**



White gradually improves his position, placing every single pawn on a dark square.

**26 ... Rd8 27 Nf3 Bc8 28 Qa4 c5**

Black is tired of waiting and plays actively. After 28 ... Bd7 29 Ne5 the pressure continues.

**29 Ng5!**

A simple and powerful reply. White opens up the h1-a8 diagonal and the h-file, which could prove useful.

**29 ... Nxg5 30 hxg5 Bb7 31 dxc5 bxc5 32 Qf4**

Suddenly Black's position is full of weaknesses and he is going to have problems defending his hanging pawns.

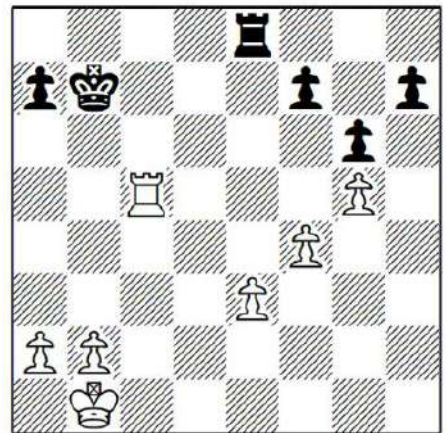
**32 ... Qxf4?**

Although 32 ... c4 is not a great looking move, it does at least protect everything, even though 33 Qd4 in reply gives White a clear positional advantage.

**33 gxf4 d4**

After 33 ... c4 34 Rd3 Kb8 35 Rd4 and White has a winning endgame, as both the d5- and h7-pawns are weak.

**34 Rxc5 Rxc5 35 Bxb7+ Kxb7 36 Rxc5 dxe3 37 fxe3 Re8**



**38 Re5**

At first sight this looks incorrect, but as we will see, Kasparov has worked it all out and the resulting pawn endgame is winning for White.

**38 ... Rxe5 39 fxe5 Kc6 40 Kc2 Kd5 41 b4**

Creating a pass pawn on the queenside as soon as possible.

**41 ... Kxe5 42 a4 f6 43 gxf6 Kxf6 44 b5 1-0**

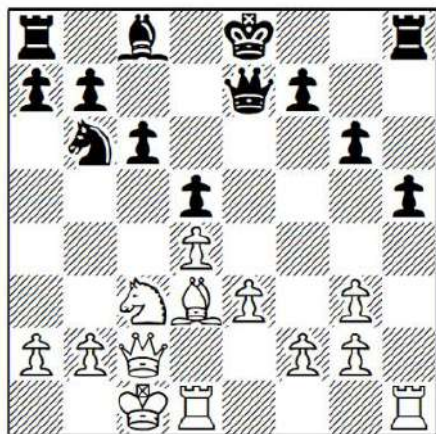
The endgame is lost after 44 ... Ke6 45 a5 Kd7 46 e4 h5 47 b6 axb6 48 a6 Kc7 49 a7 Kb7 50 e5 h4 51 e6 h3 52 e7 h2 53 a8Q+ Kxa8 54 e8Q+.

*Game 7 G.Fish-G.Kern* German League 2005

1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 cxd5 exd5 6 e3 c6 7 Bd3 Be7 8 Qc2 Nh5 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Nge2 g6 11 0-0-0 Nb6 12 Ng3 Nxe3

Black exchanges another set of minor pieces, but in doing so opens the h-file for White.

13 hxg3 h5



Probably the only move for Black, otherwise White plays Rh6 followed by Rdh1.

14 e4!?

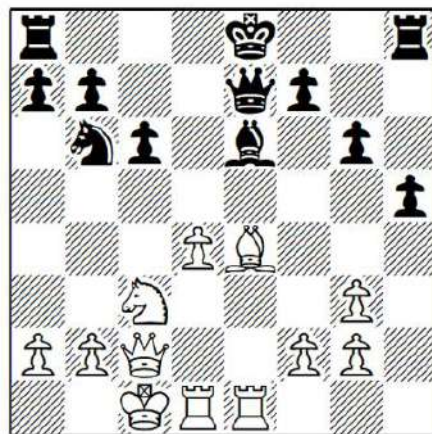
White grabs the opportunity to open the position while Black's king is still in the centre. Instead, 14 Kb1 Bd7 15 Rc1 0-0-0 16 Na4 Nxa4 17 Qxa4 Kb8 18 Rc3 is similar to White's play in the previous game, but with the additional exchange of knights it is harder for him to create pressure.

14 ... dxe4 15 Bxe4 Be6

Playing 15 ... 0-0 is not a good idea because Black's kingside would be too weak.

## 16 Rhe1

White can likely improve his play by means of 16 f4! 0-0-0 17 d5 Bg4 18 Rde1 Qc5 19 dxc6 bxc6 when he has a slight advantage. All of the endgames are clearly better for him because of Black's weak pawn structure on the queenside.



## 16 ... Qf6?

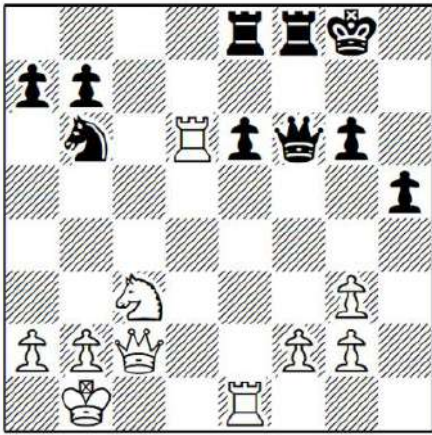
Black has no time for this. Alternatives are:

a) 16 ... 0-0-0? is also clearly wrong in view of 17 d5! Qg5+ 18 f4.

b) 16 ... 0-0 is the only way of getting the king out of the centre. After 17 Bxg6 Qg5+ 18 Kb1 Qxg6 19 Qxg6+ fxg6 20 Rxe6 White has a slight edge.

c) However, 16 ... Qg5+ looks like the best try: 17 Qd2 (after 17 Kb1 0-0-0 18 Bxg6 Qxg6 19 Qxg6 Bxa2+ Black equalizes according to Marin) 17 ... Qxd2+ 18 Rxd2 Kd7 19 d5 Nxd5 20 Nxd5 cxd5 21 Bxd5 Rac8+ 22 Kb1 Bxd5 23 Rxd5+ Kc6 and Black is close to equality.

17 d5! cxd5 18 Bxd5 0-0 19 Bxe6 fxe6 20 Rd6 Rae8 21 Kb1



The opening has resulted in a much better position for White. Black has numerous weaknesses on the kingside and suffers from a weak and isolated e6-pawn.

**21 ... Rf7 22 f4 Qf5**

After 22 ... Rc7 23 Re5 Black is left with no space at all.

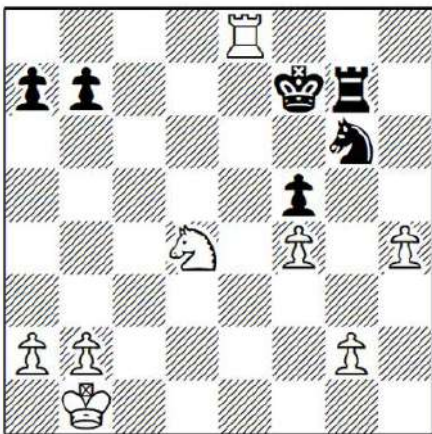
**23 Qxf5 gxf5 24 Rdx6**

With an extra pawn, the rest should be simple.

**24 ... Rxe6 25 Rxe6 Rg7 26 Ne2**

26 Re3 Nc4 27 Rd3 followed by b3 is also enough to win.

**26 ... Nd5 27 Re5 Ne7 28 Nd4 h4 29 gxh4 Ng6 30 Re8+ Kf7**

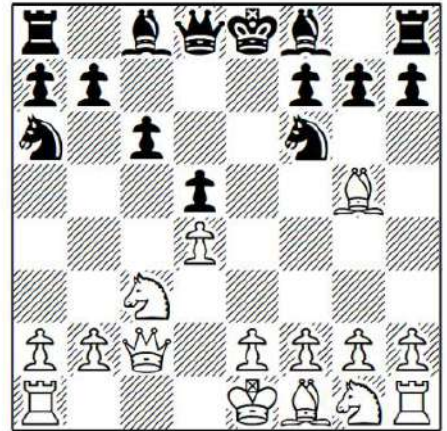


**31 Nxf5! Kxe8 32 Nxc7+ Kf7 33 Nf5 Nxf4 34 g3 1-0**

Although White won quickly, I think White's play on the 16th move can be improved with 16 f4!?

*Game 8 P.Svidler-P.Harikrishna German League 2013*

**1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Na6!?**

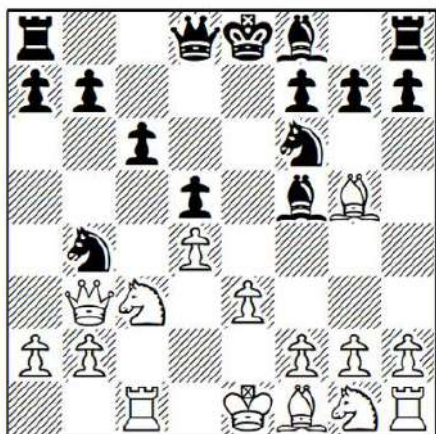


This a logical move, trying to exploit White's move order. As we are going to see, the ... Nb4 idea is not dangerous and that is why I am not recommending wasting time with 7 a3.

**7 e3 Nb4**

This is the most consistent. Black's main alternative is 7 ... Nc7 when after 8 Bd3 Ne6 9 Bh4 Be7 White can still play the Nge2, f3 and e3-e4 set-up. This is why I love White's move order with 6 Qc2. J.Kociscak-V.Priehoda, Prague 2014, continued 10 Nge2 g6 11 f3 Ng7 12 0-0-0 Nf5 13 Bf2 Nd6. Here White should continue 14 g4! 0-0 (14 ... Bd7 15 h4 Qa5 16 Nf4 followed by g4-g5 is uncomfortable for Black) 15 h4 with a powerful kingside attack.

**8 Qb3 Bf5 9 Rc1**



Now White threatens a3.

### 9 ... Qb6

The other way to defend b7 is 9 ... Rb8, as played in M.Ulibin-V.Petkov, Zagreb 2011. Now instead of 10 Bf4 as played in the game, I think White can try 10 Bxf6!? and then:

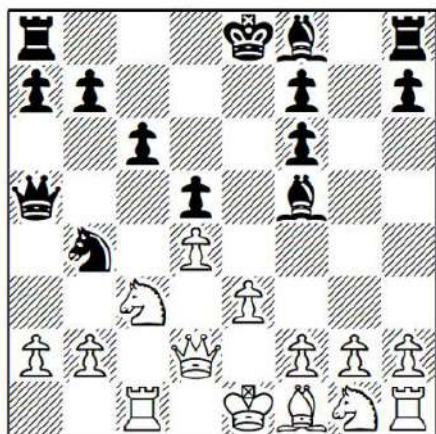
a) 10 ... Qxf6?! 11 a3 Nd3+ 12 Bxd3 Bxd3 13 Nxd5! Qg5 14 Nf3 Qxg2 15 Nc7+ Kd8 (or 15 ... Ke7 16 Ne5!) 16 Qxf7 and White is winning.

b) 10 ... gxf6 11 Qd1! Qa5 12 Qd2 Nxa2 13 Ra1 with similar play to the main game after 13 ... Nxc3 14 Rxa5 Ne4 15 Qc2 Bb4+ 16 Kd1 Bxa5 17 Bd3.

### 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Qd1 Qa5

This leads to a forced line where I think White has an edge. Black has also tried 11 ... Rg8, although this is rather passive and Black's pawn structure remains weak. Play can continue 12 a3 Na6 13 Qd2 (13 b4!? is a possible improvement) 13 ... Nc7 14 Nf3 Be7 15 g3 Be4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Nh4 Rg5 18 Bh3 when White had obtained a slight advantage in M.Mchedlishvili-S.Narayanan, Mumbai 2014.

### 12 Qd2



### 12 ... Nxa2

This walks into a pin and leads to some sharp tactics, but if Black does not take on a2 then his whole plan makes no sense: 12 ... 0-0-0 13 a3 Na6 14 Bd3 Bg6 15 Nge2 with a clear positional advantage for White.

### 13 Ra1 Nxc3 14 Rxa5 Ne4

This is the point of Black's play.

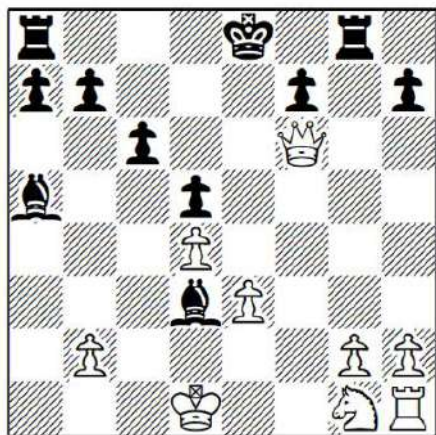
### 15 Qc2

Instead, 15 Qd1 Bb4+ 16 Ke2 Bxa5 17 f3 Nd6 18 Qa4 Bb6 19 Kf2 0-0-0 20 Ne2 also comes into consideration.

### 15 ... Bb4+ 16 Kd1

And not 16 Ke2? which runs into 16 ... Ng3+ 17 hxg3 Bxc2.

### 16 ... Bxa5 17 Bd3 Nxf2+ 18 Qxf2 Bxd3 19 Qxf6 Rg8



### 20 Nh3

White also obtains an advantage after 20 Ne2 Bd8 21 Qe5+ Kd7 22 Ng3. In general, if White can trade off one of Black's bishops he will improve his prospects.

**20 ... Bd8 21 Qe5+ Kd7 22 Nf4 Be4 23 Qh5 Rg7 24 Qh6 Rg8 25 Qh3+ Ke8 26 Rf1**

After some manoeuvring, White completes development and Black has still not been able to find a safe place for his king.

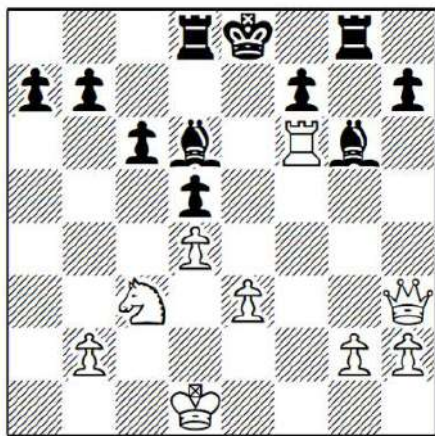
### 26 ... Be7 27 Ne2

Another plan is 27 g3 Rd8 28 Kd2 Rd7 29 Nd3, which gives White a clear advantage.

### 27 ... Bd6

The active 27 ... Bxg2 28 Qxh7 Rf8 was a better way to defend, but White is still calling the shots after 29 Rf2 Be4 30 Qh3.

### 28 Rf6 Rd8 29 Nc3 Bg6



### 30 Rxd6!

As mentioned previously, White needs to get rid of one of Black's bishops since they are key for the defence.

**30 ... Rxd6 31 Qc8+ Rd8 32 Qxb7 Bh5+ 33 Ke1 Rg6 34 h3**

The straightforward 34 b4 Re6 35 b5 cxb5 36 Nxd5 is even more promising for White.

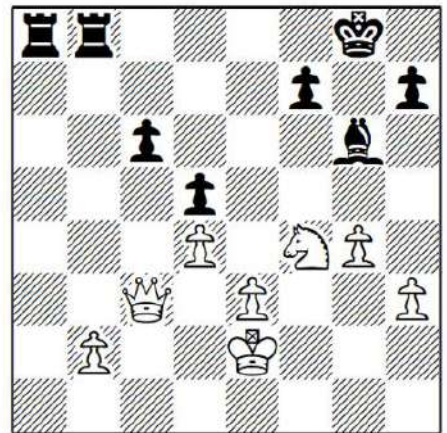
**34 ... Re6 35 g4 Bg6 36 Kd2 Kf8 37 Qxa7 Rde8**

Black has somehow managed to create a fortress and every single piece is protected. White has some initiative, but there is still a long way to go to break Black down.

**38 Qa3+ Kg8 39 Ne2 R6e7**

Black has a passive bishop in the endgame that results after 39 ... Rxe3 40 Qxe3 Rxe3 41 Kxe3.

**40 Qb3 Ra7 41 Nf4 Raa8 42 Ke2 Reb8 43 Qc3**



### 43 ... Ra2?!

43 ... Rb6 was essential, since after the text White gains a clear edge.

**44 Qxc6 Raxb2+ 45 Kf3 Be4+ 46 Kg3 R2b3 47 Kh4 Rxe3 48 Qf6! Rf3**

48 ... Bg6 runs into 49 Nxd5.

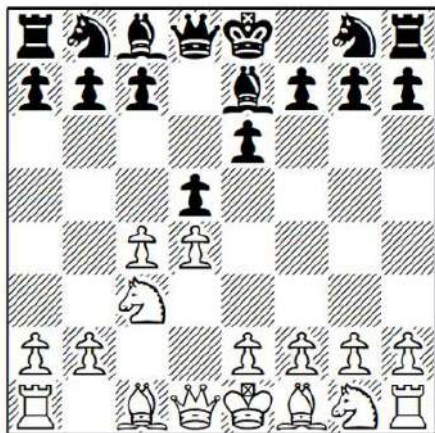
**49 Qe5 Rf8 50 Qg5+ Bg6 51 Nxd5 Kg7 52 Qe7 h6 53 Nc7 Rc8 54 d5 Bd3 55 Qe5+ Kg8 56 Ne6!**

White wins the exchange and the rest is a matter of technique. The remaining moves were:

**56 ... fxe6 57 Qxe6+ Kg7 58 Qd7+ Rf7 59 Qxc8 Bb5 60 Qc3+ Kh7 61 Qc2+ Kg8 62 Kh5 Be8 63 Kxh6 Rd7 64 Qc8 Rd6+ 65 Kg5 Rxd5+ 66 Kf6 Kf8 67 h4 Rd6+ 68 Ke5 Rc6 69 Qf5+ Bf7 70 Qd7 Be8 71 Qd4 Rh6 72 Kf5 Rh7 73 h5 Kg8 74 Qd8 Kf8 75 Kg5 Rd7 76 Qf6+ Rf7 77 Qh8+ 1-0**

*Game 9 M.Carlsen-DJakovenko*  
Nanjing 2009

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7!?**



This is a good try for Black which is often seen in high-level games. The idea is to wait for White to play Nf3 and so avoid the Nge2 and f3 set-up.

**4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4**

As usual in the QGD, Black obtains a solid position, but White still has the chance of opening the centre by means of e4, either quickly or after due preparation.

**5 ... c6 6 Qc2**

I like this move, preventing ... Bf5. The alternative is 6 e3 Bf5 when White has to play the sharp 7 g4 to fight for the initiative, but this weakens the kingside. Instead, 7 Bd3 Bxd3 8 Qxd3 Nf6 trades off some pieces when Black has good chances to equalize.

**6 ... Bd6**

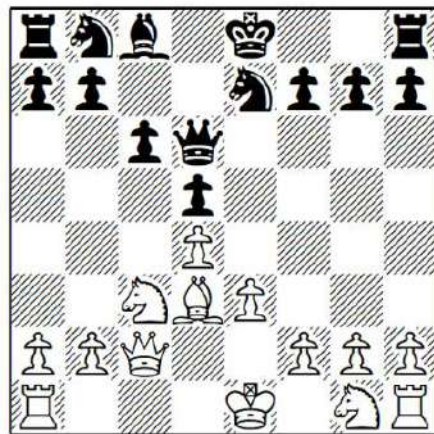
We will study the main alternatives to this move later in this chapter. A less popular idea is 6 ... Na6 7 e3 Nb4 8 Qd2 Bf5 9 Rc1 a5 10 a3 Na6 when Black has not achieved much on the queenside. After 11 Bd3 (11 Nge2!? Nf6 12 Ng3 Bg6 13 Bd3 Nc7 14 Be5 Ne6 15 Nf5 worked well for White in E.Tomashevsky-A.Franco Alonso, Eilat 2012) 11 ... Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nf6 13

Nge2 White had a slight advantage in M.Mozharov-A.Potapov, Pardubice 2012, since he can play with f3 and e3-e4 and can also try Ng3-f5.

**7 Bxd6 Qxd6 8 e3 Ne7**

Black usually develops the knight via the flexible e7-square in this line. Instead, after 8 ... Nf6 9 Bd3 0-0 10 Nge2 b6 11 0-0 Ba6 12 Ng3 (12 f3!? is good enough for an advantage as well) 12 ... c5 13 dxc5 Qxc5 14 Rfd1 White had obtained a clear advantage in A.Aleksandrov-T.Sanikidze, Budva 2009.

**9 Bd3**



**9 ... b6**

After 9 ... g6 10 e4!? (both 10 Nge2 and 10 Nf3 also come into consideration) 10 ... dxe4 11 Nxe4 Qxd4 (or 11 ... Qb4+ 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Kxd2 and the endgame looks much better for White) 12 0-0-0 White has good play for the pawn.

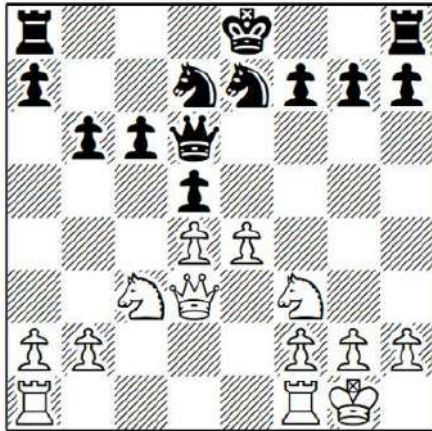
**10 Nf3**

Also possible is 10 Nge2 Ba6 11 0-0 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 0-0 13 f3 when White has a slight advantage.

**10 ... Ba6 11 0-0 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nd7**

Black could also play the natural 12 ... 0-0 13 e4 (or 13 Rac1 Nd7 14 e4 dxe4 15 Nxe4 Qd5 16 Rfe1 when White has some initiative) 13 ... dxe4 14 Nxe4 Qd5 15 Nc3 Qd6 16 Rfe1 Nd7 17 Rac1 when Black is solid, but White has the better development.

13 e4!



Now this advance is well timed because the black king is still in the centre.

**13 ... 0-0**

The main point is that after 13 ... dxe4 14 Nxe4 Qd5 (if 14 ... Qe6 15 Qa3 and Black is likely to lose a piece since Nfg5 or Re1 are coming) 15 Qa3! Black will not be able to castle.

**14 e5**

White's advantage is obvious as he has more space and chances of a kingside attack with a pawn storm.

**14 ... Qe6 15 Rae1 Rfe8**

Black should consider active defence with 15 ... f6!?

**16 Nh4**

White is preparing f4-f5.

**16 ... Ng6**

Grandmaster Krasenkow suggests 16 ... f5!? as it would take White a lot of time to prepare the g2-g4 advance.

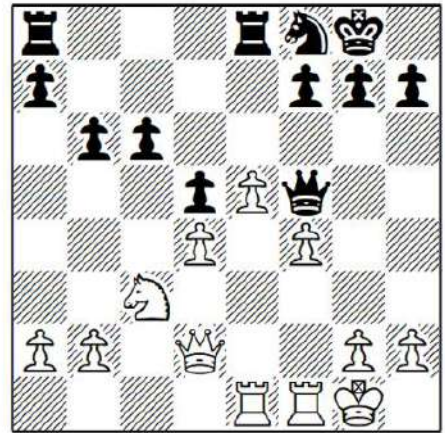
**17 Nxc6 Qxc6 18 Qd2**

White is planning a kingside attack, so he does not want to trade queens.

**18 ... Nf8**

Again, blocking the position with 18 ... f5 makes lot of sense for Black who can follow up with ... Nf8-e6.

**19 f4 Qf5?**



The queen is not as good as a knight or a pawn for blocking purposes. 19 ... f5 was still preferable.

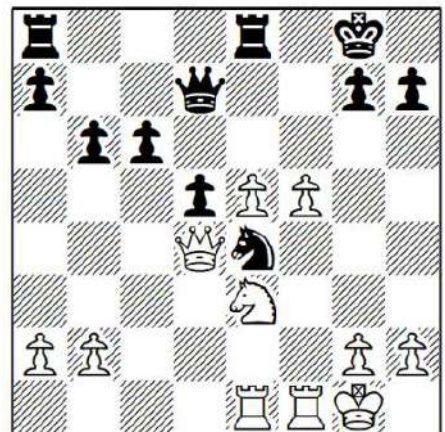
**20 Nd1!**

This natural move pushes the queen back from f5 and also helps White's attack on the kingside.

**20 ... f6 21 Ne3 Qd7 22 Qd3 fxe5 23 dxe5!**

White's extra pawns on the kingside are making the difference.

**23 ... Ne6 24 f5 Nc5 25 Qd4 Ne4**



This loses a pawn, but it is not easy to suggest another move for Black.

**26 Nxd5! Qxd5**

26 ... cxd5 27 Rxe4 is even worse.

**27 Qxe4 Rad8 28 e6 Qxe4 29 Rxe4 Rd6**

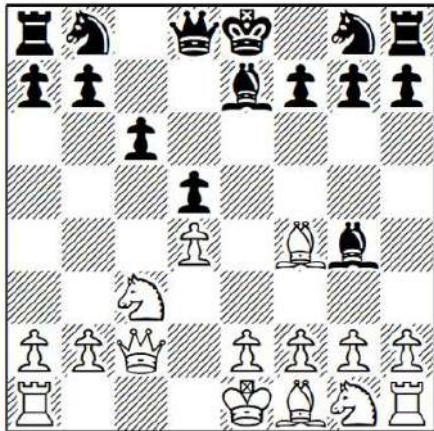
White is also winning after 29 ... Rd2 30 b4 Rxa2 31 Rc1 Rc8 32 Rec4.

**30 g4 Kf8 31 g5 Ke7 32 Kg2 Rd5 33 Kg3 Kd6 34 h4 c5 35 f6 gxf6 36 gxf6 Rd3+ 37 Kh2 Rd2+ 38 Kh1 1-0**

There is nothing Black can do to halt the pawns. A most impressive game by the world champion.

*Game 10 M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura Medias 2011*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4 c6 6 Qc2 Bg4**



As GM Rogozenco points out: “A rare move. Black insists on transferring the bishop to the diagonal b1-h7. Magnus Carlsen admitted after the game that the move was new to him”.

I also like the way Nakamura played this position as White in the following game: 6 ... Bd6 7 Bxd6 Qxd6 8 e3 Qg6 9 Qxg6 hxg6 10 b4 a6 11 f3 Nd7 12 Bd3 Ne7 13 Nge2 g5 14 Kf2 Nf6 15 g4 Kd8 16 Kg3 Bd7 17 a4, H.Nakamura-R.Ponomarev, Saint Louis 2011.

**7 e3 Bh5 8 Bd3 Bg6 9 Bxg6**

Now the pawn structure reminds me of the Nakamura-Ponomarev game. White can consider opening the h-file in the future.

**9 ... hxg6 10 0-0-0 Nf6 11 f3**

This is the usual plan here, but White can also try advancing on the kingside by means of g4 and h4.

**11 ... Nbd7 12 Nge2!**

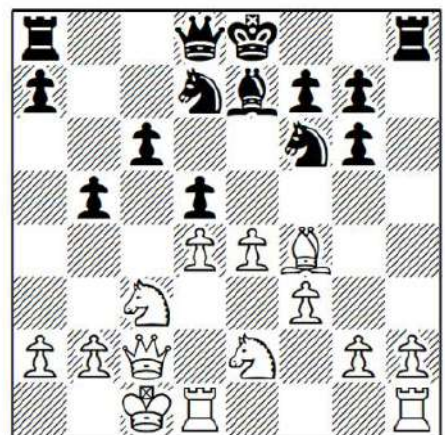
White ensures all his forces are in play before advancing with e3-e4. If 12 e4 Nh5 and White’s bishop will be exchanged since 13 Be3 is not possible, in view of 13 ... Ng3 winning material.

**12 ... b5**

I would once more like to share GM Rogozenco’s words: “Nakamura’s desire to postpone short castling is understandable, since then at some moment White will start advancing the h-pawn. However, Black’s problem is that sooner or later he will have to hide the king anyway, since White’s play in the centre is simple and clear.”

After 12 ... 0-0 13 g4 b5 14 h4 b4 15 Na4 Rc8 White stands well since if Black plays ... c5 at some point, he is going to have an isolated pawn on d5.

**13 e4!**



This move is much stronger if Black’s king is still in the centre.

**13 ... b4 14 Na4 dxe4 15 fxe4 Qa5**

If 15 ... 0-0 then 16 Kb1 White's centre gives him the advantage.

### 16 Kb1

I like this move from a practical point of view. The alternative is 16 e5 Nd5 17 e6 fxe6 18 Qxc6 (if 18 Qxg6+ Kd8 19 Qxg7 Bf6) 18 ... Kf7 19 Qxd7 Rhd8 20 Rhf1 Rac8+ (and not 20 ... Rxd7? 21 Bc7+ Kg8 22 Bxa5) 21 Kb1 Nf6 22 Qb7 Qxa4 23 Rd2 with unclear play.

### 16 ... 0-0

Black finally commits the king which, sooner or later, he would be obliged to do.

### 17 h4 Rfe8 18 e5 Nd5 19 h5 g5

The position is complicated, but the most important factor is that White has the initiative and his kingside attack looks faster than Black's counterplay on the queenside.

### 20 h6! g6

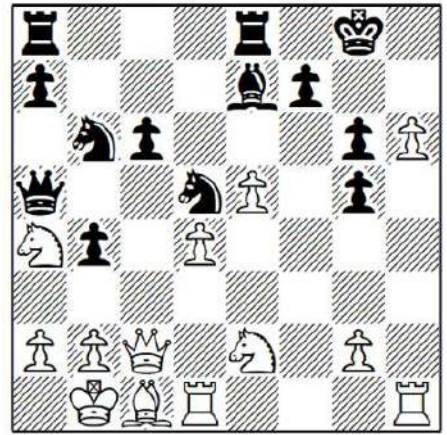
Black cannot afford to take on f4. After 20 ... gxf4 21 hxg7 N7f6 22 Qf5! Qxa4 23 b3! (stopping ... Qxd1+) 23 ... Qa3 24 exf6 Nxf6 25 Qh3 there is no way to prevent mate.

### 21 Bc1

White chooses the solid option. 21 e6 is the preferred move of the engines, although it is not easy to play in practice, for example, 21 ... gxf4 22 exd7 Red8 23 Qxc6 Ne3 24 Nc5 Nxd1 25 Rxd1.

### 21 ... N7b6

This leaves the c5-square unprotected, so it was better to move the other knight. After 21 ... N5b6 Black can still fight on, although his position remains worse. Play might continue 22 Nxb6 axb6 23 b3 when Black has better chances than in the game, although White, who has more space and real chances on the kingside, still stands well.



### 22 Nc5 Bxc5 23 dxc5 b3

If 23 ... Nd7 then 24 e6! Rxe6 25 Nd4 (planning Nxc6 if the rook retreats) 25 ... Ree8 26 Nxc6 Qxc5 27 Qxc5 and White wins a piece.

### 24 Qxb3 Qxc5 25 Nd4 Rxe5 26 Nf3 Re2?

Another mistake, probably due to time trouble. 26 ... Rf5 was the last chance to offer resistance, when White plays 27 Nxc5 Qc4 28 Qa3 and the pressure continues.

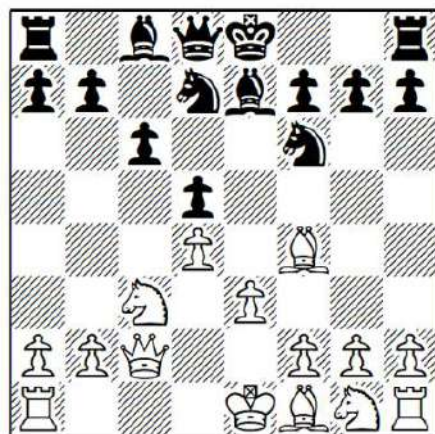
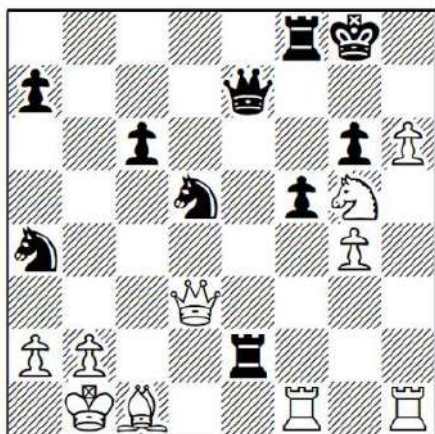
### 27 Nxc5 Qe7 28 Qd3

After 28 Qf3 f5 29 h7+ Kg7 30 g4 Black's position collapses.

### 28 ... Rf8 29 Rdf1 f5

If 29 ... f6 30 Re1! Rxe1 31 Rxe1 Qxe1 32 Qxg6+ and mate follows.

### 30 g4 Na4



### 31 Qd4?!

31 gx f5 is much more accurate: for example, 31 ... Rxf5 (or 31 ... gx f5 32 Rxf5 Rxf5 33 Qxf5) 32 h7+ Kh8 33 Rxf5.

### 31 ... Qe5! 32 Qxe5

The ambitious 32 Qxa4 suddenly runs into 32 ... Nc3+ 33 bxc3 Rb8+ and White give up his queen. After 34 Qb4 Rxb4+ 35 cxb4 Qd5 Black is not worse.

### 32 ... Rxe5 33 gxf5

Rybka suggests 33 h7+ Kh8 34 Rh6 f4 35 Rxc6 Ne7 36 Re6 when White has a clear advantage.

### 33 ... gxf5 34 Nf3 Re7

34 ... Re6 35 h7+ Kh8 36 Bh6 Rb8 37 Rfg1 Nac3+ 38 Ka1 wins for White.

### 35 Rfg1+ Kh7 36 Rg7+!

Despite the fact the queens are off, White's attack remains decisive.

### 36 ... Kh8

36 ... Rxc7 37 hxc7+ Kxc7 38 Bh6+ wins.

### 37 Rhg1 Rfe8 38 Nh4 Rxc7 1-0

White wins after both 39 hxc7+ or 39 Rxc7 followed by Ng6+.

*Game 11 V.Anand-A.Karpov 1st matchgame, Corsica (rapid) 2009*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4 c6 6 Qc2 Nf6 7 e3 Nbd7

This move reminds me of the main line of the Exchange QGD where White plays for a minority attack on the queenside.

We should study too the main alternative as played by Aronian against Grischuk: 7 ... Nh5 8 Be5 Nd7 9 Be2 Nxe5 (if 9 ... Nh6 10 Bg3 and White keeps the bishop-pair) 10 dxe5 g6 11 Bxh5 gxh5 (Black's position looks pretty weak due to his pawn structure, but we should not underestimate his bishop-pair) 12 0-0-0 f6!? (12 ... Be6 13 Nge2 Qa5 14 f4 looks better for White) 13 Nf3 was A.Grischuk-L.Aronian, Kazan (rapid) 2011. Here I believe White can improve his play by means of 13 e4 d4 14 exf6 Bxf6 15 Nf3 Bg4 16 Ne2 with a double-edged position.

### 8 h3!

This natural move explains itself. Black's plan of ... Nh5 becomes useless.

8 ... 0-0 9 Bd3 Re8 10 Nf3 Nf8 11 0-0 Bd6

If 11 ... Ng6 12 Bh2 (or 12 Be5 Bd6 13 Bxd6 Qxd6) 12 ... Bd6 13 Bxd6 Qxd6 and Black gets an extra tempo compared to the game.

### 12 Bxd6 Qxd6 13 Rab1!

White plans a minority attack on the queenside.

### 13 ... a5 14 a3 Be6 15 Na4!?

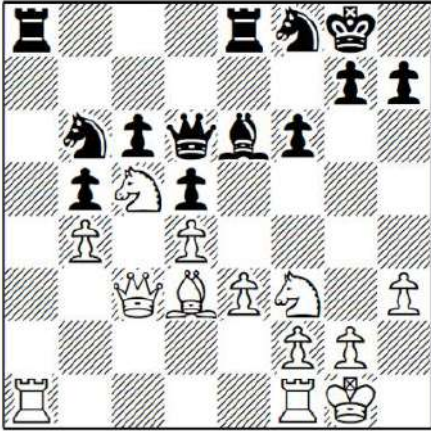
Another line is 15 b4 axb4 16 axb4 b5. When Black plays like this on the queenside,

we have to strongly consider breaking in the centre with e3-e4. There are also holes to exploit on a5, c5 and e5.

**15 ... N6d7 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 b5 18 Nc5 Nb6**

18 ... Nxc5 is positionally suspect after 19 dxc5 followed by Nd4 when White has a pleasant advantage.

**19 Ra1 f6 20 Qc3**



There is no need to capture Black's passive bishop on e6. The way Anand improves White's position without taking risks is very instructive.

**20 ... Bf7 21 Rxa8 Rxa8 22 Ra1**

It would appear that Black has an easy time in the endgame, but White has great potential due to his active pieces and the weakness on c6.

**22 ... Qb8 23 Nd2 Nc4 24 Ndb3 Ra7 25 e4!?**

As pointed out before, White has to consider this when Black has played the advance ... b5.

**25 ... dxe4**

25 ... Rxa1+ 26 Qxa1 Qe8 27 f3 is a better try for Black.

**26 Bxe4 Bd5 27 Bxd5+**

White removes the light-squared bishop which is a key defensive piece.

**27 ... cxd5 28 Re1**

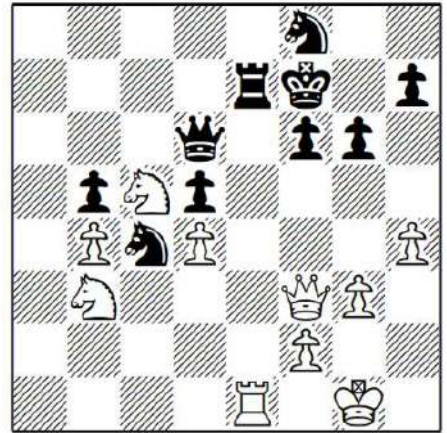
Of course, when you play a rapid game you cannot think too deeply. The engines suggest

28 Rxa7 Qxa7 29 Qf3 Qf7 30 Na5 Nd7 31 Nc6 when White maintains strong pressure.

**28 ... Qd6 29 Qf3 Kf7**

29 ... Ra2 30 Qg4 followed by h4-h5 is very good for White.

**30 g3 g6 31 h4 Re7?!**



31 ... Kg7 was better, although White keeps up the pressure with 32 h5.

**32 Ra1!**

Anand doesn't want to trade pieces as he still has an attack in mind. White takes control of the a-file and increases his initiative.

**32 ... Rc7 33 Ra6 Qd8**

33 ... Rc6? loses to 34 Nb7 Qc7 35 Rxc6 Qxc6 36 Nd8+.

**34 Qf4**

Suddenly Black cannot move at all.

**34 ... Kg7**

34 ... f5 35 h5 does not solve Black's problems.

**35 Rxf6!**

An extra pawn is more than enough to win.

**35 ... Qxf6 36 Qxc7+ Kg8 37 Kg2 Qf5 38 Qe7 h6 39 Nc1 g5 40 hxg5 hxg5 41 N1d3**

This is a very attractive feature of this variation. White is always solid and can manoeuvre slowly, constantly setting Black awkward problems with very little risk.

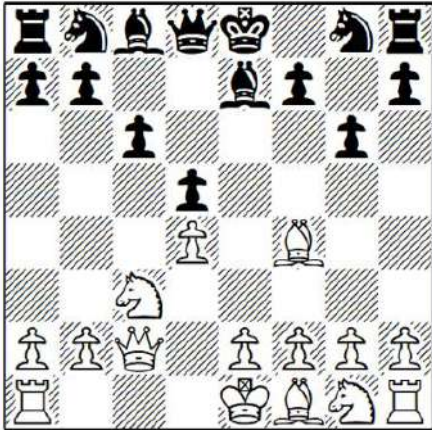
**41 ... Nd2 42 Qe2 Nc4 43 Ne5 Kg7 44 Ng4 Ng6 45 Qe6!**

Black is forced to trade queens, in the process losing another pawn and the game.

**45 ... Qxe6 46 Nxe6+ 1-0**

*Game 12 G.Kasparov-N.Short*  
Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988

**1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4 c6 6 Qc2 g6**



This looks like a natural reaction to 6 Qc2. However, placing the bishop on f5 does rather encourage White to proceed with our favourite f3 and e3-e4 plan.

**7 e3**

There are some recent games where White plays the immediate 7 f3!?, although I prefer the approach we see in this game, as used by Garry Kasparov and other strong grandmasters.

**7 ... Bf5 8 Qd2**

Not 8 Qb3?! Qb6 9 Qxb6 axb6 10 Nf3 b5 when Black is already better.

**8 ... Nf6 9 f3 c5**

White cannot play Nf3, so it makes lot of sense for Black to open the centre. We

will examine Black's other options in the next game.

**10 Bh6!**

Now that Black has opened the position, Kasparov immediately seeks to target his weaknesses.

**10 ... cxd4 11 exd4 a6**

11 ... Nc6 12 g4 Be6 13 Bb5 Nd7 14 0-0 Rc8 15 Nge2 a6 was B.Gulko-A.Beliavsky, Linares 1989. Now 16 Bxc6 was played in the game, but White can improve by means of 16 Bd3 Nb4 17 Kb1 Nxd3 18 Qxd3 when Black's king is stuck in the centre.

**12 g4!**

The former world champion plays aggressively, which is the correct approach since Black is behind in development.

**12 ... Be6 13 Nge2**

There is no need to take the risky route of castling queenside because the white king will be safe on the kingside and will not impede his attacking efforts there.

**13 ... Nbd7**

When lacking space it is a good idea to trade pieces. If instead 13 ... Bf8 then 14 Bxf8 Kxf8 15 h4 and White is clearly better. Black's main problem is his bad bishop on e6 and weak dark squares.

**14 Bg2**

Also possible is 14 Nf4 Rc8 15 0-0-0 followed by Kb1, when White has a serious positional advantage.

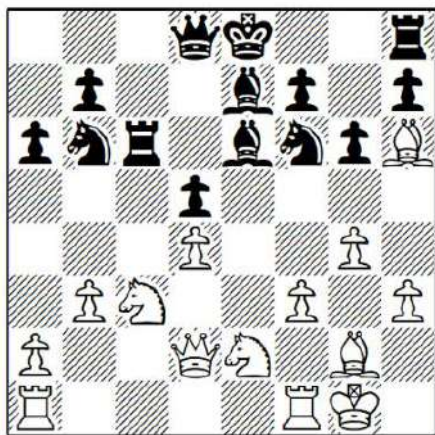
**14 ... Nb6 15 b3**

A good prophylactic move, not allowing any counterplay.

**15 ... Rc8 16 0-0 Rc6**

If 16 ... Bf8 17 Rac1 Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Ng8 19 Qe3 and the pressure continues (but not 19 Qg7? Qf6 when Black trades queens and survives).

**17 h3**



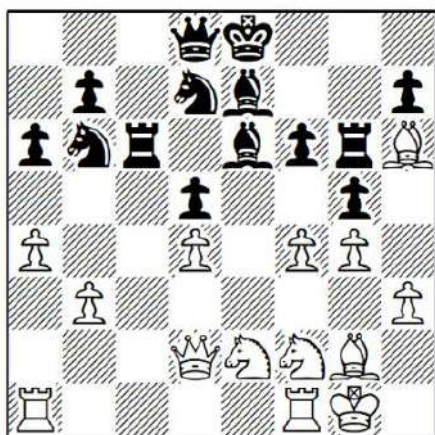
White has a dream position: more space and a clear initiative.

**17 ... Nfd7 18 Nd1!?**

White plans Nf2-Nd3 to further increase his space advantage.

**18 ... Rg8 19 Nf2 f5**

I understand Black wants to create some activity on the kingside. Unfortunately for him this move greatly exposes his king. However, the alternative 19 ... g5 20 f4 f6 21 a4! Rg6



22 Bxg5 fxg5 23 f5 should be winning for White.

**20 Rae1**

Now that the bishop on e6 is no longer protected this move is much stronger.

**20 ... g5 21 gxf5 Bf7**

After 21 ... Bxf5 22 Ng3 Bg6 (or 22 ... Be6 23 Nh5 with the same result) 23 Ng4 Black is defenceless.

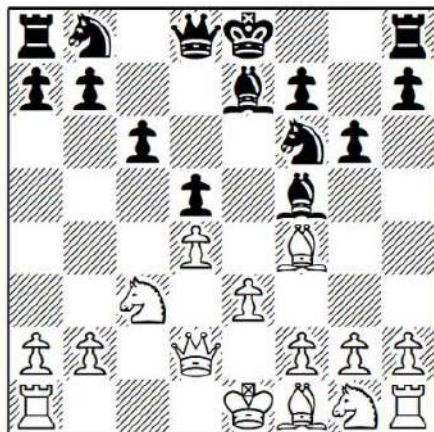
**22 Ng4 Bh5 23 Ng3 1-0**

Powerful play by Kasparov, which shows White's potential in this line.

*Game 13 V.Topalov-A.Karpov Wijk aan Zee 1998*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4 c6 6 Qc2 g6 7 e3 Bf5 8 Qd2 Nf6**

Instead, 8 ... Nd7 9 f3 g5 (9 ... Nb6 10 e4 Be6 11 e5 led to a clear advantage for White in A.Karpov-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 7), London 1986) 10 Bg3 was seen in Y.Yakovich-E.Geller, Elista 199,5 where Black tried 10 ... h5. I do not like this kingside weakening by Black and after 11 e4 dxe4 12 fxe4 Bg6 13 Bd3 h4 14 Bf2 Nf8 15 0-0-0 Qa5 16 Nf3 Bh5 17 d5 White managed to break into Black's position.



**9 f3**

I like to stick with the approach used by Kasparov against Short. However, White can also consider 9 Nge2 Nbd7 10 Ng3 Be6 11 Bd3 0-0 12 0-0 (or 12 Bh6 Re8 13 f3 c5 14 0-0 a6 15 Rad1 Qb6 16 Bb1 and Black is cramped, P.Yanin-A.Donchenko, Smolensk

1997) 12 ... Ne8 13 Bh6 Ng7 14 Nce2 (14 f3 is good enough for a slight advantage) 14 ... f5 15 b4 a6 16 a4 and White had the advantage on both sides of the board in Z.Azmaiparashvili-J.Diaz, Havana 1988.

### 9 ... h5

Black maintains the bishop on f5, but the drawback is that his kingside is now very weak. Others:

a) 9 ... 0-0 10 Nge2 Nbd7 (if 10 ... c5?! 11 dxc5 Bxc5 12 Rc1 then White has the advantage as Black is left with an isolated pawn, while after 10 ... Re8, 11 g4 Be6 12 0-0-0 Nbd7 13 Bg3 followed by Nf4 is worth considering) 11 Ng3 Be6 12 Bd3 c5 13 0-0 cxd4 14 exd4 Qb6 15 Be3 and sooner or later White will advance with f4-f5, when he stands very well.

b) 9 ... Nbd7 10 Nge2 Nb6 11 Ng3 Be6 12 Bd3 h5 13 Nge2 h4 14 e4 Nh5 15 Be3 Qd7 16 e5 Bf5 17 b3 Rd8 18 g4 hxg3 19 hxg3 Bxd3 20 Qxd3 gives White a clear edge due to his h-file control, S.Anapolsky-I.Saric, St. Petersburg 1991.

c) 9 ... Bd6 10 g4 Be6 (or 10 ... Bxf4 11 exf4 Be6 12 Bd3 and White has pleasant prospects on the kingside) 11 Bd3 h5 12 Bxd6 Qxd6 13 g5 Nfd7 14 Nge2 Nb6 was B.Finegold-Y.Norowitz, Saint Louis 2013. Now 15 Nf4 N8d7 16 0-0-0 0-0-0 17 b3 Kb8 18 Kb2 gives White a slight advantage.

### 10 Bd3

Trading off Black's most active bishop is the correct strategy.

### 10 ... Bxd3 11 Qxd3 Na6

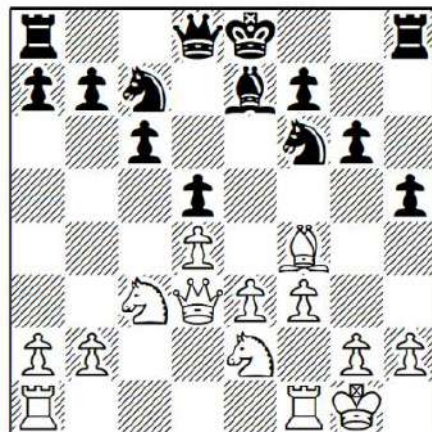
Black plans ... Nc7-Ne6. After 11 ... Nbd7 12 Nge2 0-0 13 e4 dxe4 14 fxe4 Nc5 15 Qf3 Ne6 16 0-0-0 White obtained the advantage in M.Gurevich-E.Geller, Moscow 1987.

### 12 Nge2 Nc7

If 12 ... h4 13 h3 0-0 14 0-0 and then, despite the fact that the position looks equal

at the moment, Black's kingside can be exploited in the long run.

### 13 0-0



This is much better than castling queenside. The key point is that White can still attack after placing the king on g1. Also possible are:

a) 13 e4 Ne6 (or 13 ... dxe4 14 fxe4 Ne6 15 0-0 Nxf4 16 Nxf4 and White has a strong attack as well as the better centre) 14 e5 Nd7 15 Be3 and White lines up f4-f5.

b) 13 0-0-0 does not have any clear drawbacks, but there is no need to place the king on the queenside, where Black might try a future pawn storm.

### 13 ... Ne6 14 Be5

It is also possible to offer the bishop since Black suffers from poor development after 14 e4 Nxf4 15 Nxf4 dxe4 16 fxe4.

### 14 ... h4

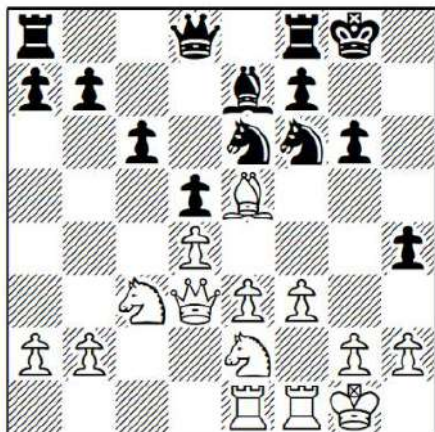
After the natural 14 ... 0-0 White has the powerful reply 15 f4! Ng7 16 f5! Nxf5 (or 16 ... g5 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 e4 and Black's position is very difficult) 17 Rxf5 gxf5 18 Rf1 with a clear positional advantage.

### 15 Rae1

White ensures that all his pieces are in the game before opening the position with e3-e4. If 15 e4 at once then 15 ... 0-0 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 e5 Bg7 18 f4 f5 and Black

manages to close the position while maintaining a powerful knight on e6.

**15 ... 0-0**



Having played ... h4 it is not easy for Black to commit his king to the kingside. However, he cannot castle queenside and his king cannot stay safe in the centre indefinitely.

**16 g4!?**

As discussed previously, White can still advance on the king's wing after castling kingside. Other options are:

a) 16 e4 dxe4 (or 16 ... Qb6 17 exd5 Nxd5 18 Nxd5 cxd5 19 Nc3) 17 Nxe4 Nd5 18 f4 which is unclear after 18 ... f5.

b) 16 h3!/? was suggested by Tsesarsky. After 16 ... Nd7 17 Bh2 Re8 White has a good game since he can choose when to advance with e3-e4.

c) 16 Nf4 Nxf4 17 exf4 (if 17 Bxf4 Nh5 18 Bh6 Re8 19 e4 Bg5!) 17 ... Qd7 18 g4 Ne8! and now it is not so easy to continue with our attack.

d) 16 f4!/? plans to sacrifice the exchange with 16 ... Ng7 17 f5 Nxf5 18 Rxf5 gxf5 19 Qxf5. Chances are balanced here as White does have compensation, but at the same time Black's resources should be sufficient.

**16 ... hxg3**

It's too risky to open up the h-file. The immediate 16 ... Nd7 would have been more prudent.

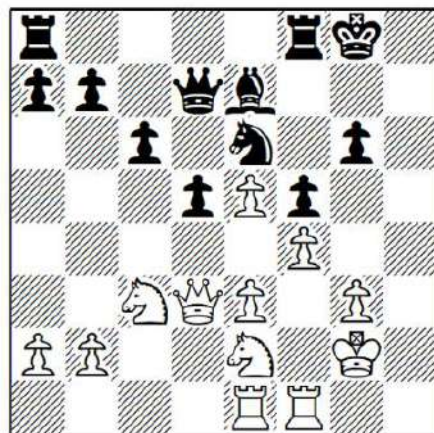
**17 hxg3 Nd7 18 Kg2**

18 f4 at once is premature in view of 18 ... f6! 19 Qxg6+ Ng7.

**18 ... Nxe5 19 dxe5 Qd7**

19 ... Qb6 looks like an active move for Black, although after 20 Rh1 Qxb2 21 Rb1 Qa3 22 Nd4 he runs out of defenders on the kingside.

**20 f4 f5**



20 ... Nc5 21 Qc2 Qg4 22 Nd4 is also better for White, while 20 ... Kg7 runs into 21 f5 gxf5 22 Qxf5 when Black is close to being lost.

**21 g4! Rf7?!**

A better try is 21 ... Ng7 22 Rh1 Kf7, as if 21 ... Nc5 22 Qc2 Ne4 23 gxf5 gxf5 24 Nd4 when White's advantage is clear.

**22 Rh1 Bf8 23 gxf5 Nc5**

After 23 ... gxf5 White keeps up the pressure with 24 Ng3.

**24 Qd1 Qxf5 25 Nd4 Qd7 26 Reg1**

White has the much more solid pawn structure and clear prospects of attack on the kingside.

**26 ... Re8 27 Rh3**

White must be careful here since Black can play ... Rxe5 in some lines: for example,

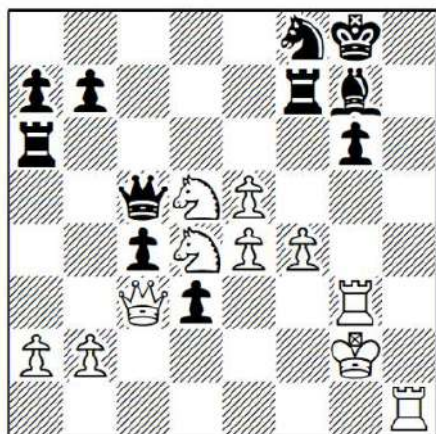
27 Qc2? Rxe5! 28 fxe5 Qg4+ 29 Kh2 Rh7 mate.

Instead, 27 Kf2! leads to a long line analyzed by Topalov: 27 ... Rxe5 28 Rxc6+ Bg7 29 Rxc7+! Kxc7 30 Qg1+ Kf8 31 Rh8+ Ke7 32 Qg8 Nd3+ 33 Kg1 Rxe3 34 Nf5+! Rxf5 (or 34 ... Qxf5 35 Qd8+ Ke6 36 Re8+) 35 Rh7+ Kd6 36 Rxd7+ Kxd7 37 Qh7+! Ke6 38 Qg6+ Rf6 39 Qe8+ and White ends up taking the rook.

27 ... Ne6 28 Rgh1 Bg7 29 Qc2 Nf8 30 Nce2 Qe7 31 Nf3 Qb4 32 Rg3 c5 33 Nh4 Re6 34 Nc3 d4 35 Nd5 Qb5

35 ... d3 36 Nxb4 dxc2 37 Nxc2 leaves Black with no counterplay at all.

36 e4 c4 37 Nf3 d3 38 Qc3 Ra6 39 Nd4 Qc5



39 ... Qa4 seems to be a better try, although after 40 Nb4 Rb6 41 a3 Black is going to lose all his pawns in the long run.

**40 Rxd3!**

White gets rid of the passed pawn.

**40 ... Rxa2 41 Rdh3 b5 42 Nf3**

42 e6? Bxd4 43 Rh8+ fails to 43 ... Kg7, but 42 f5 gxf5 43 Rg3 f4 44 Rg4 is the line suggested by the engines, when White's attack is unstoppable.

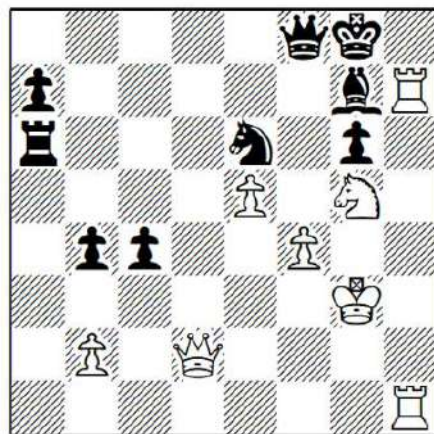
**42 ... Ne6 43 Kg3 b4 44 Qd2 Rf8 45 Nf6+ Rxf6 46 exf6 Bxf6 47 e5 Bg7 48 Rh7 Qf8**

48 ... Nf8 49 Rxc7+ Kxc7 50 Ng5 does not help.

**49 Ng5**

49 Rxc7+! exploits Black's lack of defenders and the misplaced rook on a2 e.g., 49 ... Qxc7 50 Ng5! Nxc5 51 Qd8+ Kf7 (or 51 ... Qf8 52 Rh8+) 52 Qc7+ Kg8 53 Qb8+ Kf7 54 fxg5.

**49 ... Ra6**



If 49 ... Nxc5 50 Qd5+ and Black loses after both 50 ... Nf7 51 e6 and 50 ... Qf7 51 Rh8+!

**50 Rh8+! 1-0**

After 50 ... Bxh8 51 Rxc7+ Kxh8 52 Qh2+ White mates next move. This is a key game for the analysis of this variation.

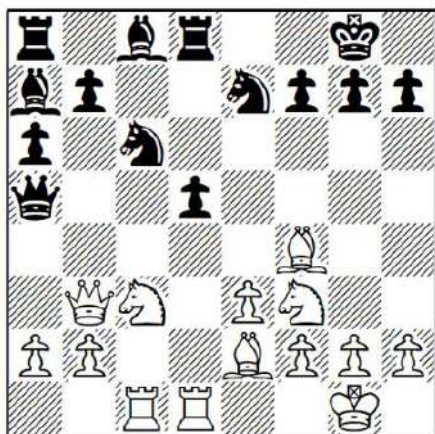
*Game 14 M.Carlsen-L.Aronian Wijk aan Zee 2015*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3**

Accepting a transposition to the main lines of the Ragozin.

**5 ... Nf6**

Black's move order gives him the option to develop the knight via e7, i.e. 5 ... Ne7 6 Bf4!? 0-0 7 e3 c5 8 Be2 Nbc6 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 0-0 a6 11 Rc1 Ba7 12 Qb3 (White is putting a lot of pressure on the isolated d5-pawn) 12 ... Qa5 13 Rfd1 Rd8.



However, after 14 Ne5, as in M.Cebalo-J.Nogueiras, Taxco 1985, White is better and 14 Qa4!? trading queens also makes lot of sense since all endgames are better for White.

Another try is 5 ... Bf5 6 Qb3 (6 Ne5 is simply met by 6 ... Ne7 7 Qa4+ Nbc6 when I do not see a good continuation for White) 6 ... Nc6 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Qxc3 Nf6 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bxf6 Qxf6 11 e3 0-0 12 Be2, which is similar to our main game. White completes his development and plans to advance on the queenside. After 12 ... Qd6 13 0-0 Bg4 14 Rac1 Rfe8 15 Qc5 White enjoys a risk-free advantage, D.Blagojevic-R.Bakic, Novi Sad 2000.

### 6 Bg5 h6

We will consider Black's alternatives in the next game.

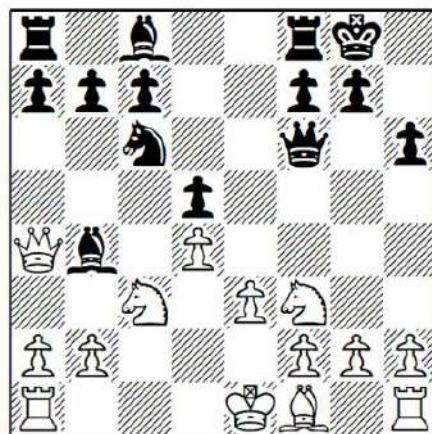
### 7 Bxf6

I like this positional line rather than 7 Bh4. That popular choice leads to sharp play, which is what Black is looking for when he plays the Ragozin.

### 7 ... Qxf6 8 Qa4+

By playing this, White prevents Black from playing the ... c7-c5 break.

### 8 ... Nc6 9 e3 0-0



### 10 Be2

10 Rc1!? is even more flexible than 10 Be2 as we can see in the following game: 10 ... Qg6 11 Qd1 Ne7 12 Ne5 Qf6 13 Nd3 Ba5 14 b4 Bb6 15 Be2 (15 g3!? followed by Bg2 and a future minority attack on the queenside looks for White) 15 ..c6 16 0-0 a6 17 a4 Bc7 18 g3 Bd6 19 b5 axb5 20 axb5 Ra3 21 Nb1 Ra2 22 Nc3 Ra3 23 Nb1 Ra2 24 Nc3 Ra3 and a draw was agreed in J.Duda-R.Wojtaszek, Prague 2019.

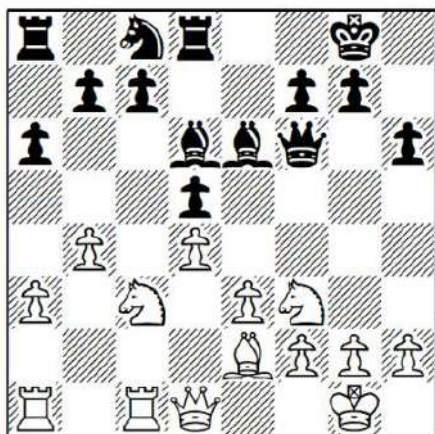
### 10 ... Be6

10 ... Bxc3+ cannot be a good idea in the long run, since White recaptures towards the centre and stands well after 11 bxc3 Qg6 12 0-0 Bh3 13 Ne1.

### 11 0-0 a6 12 Rfc1 Bd6

Despite the fact Black has the bishop-pair, he cannot make good use of it since White has a very solid position. What is more, White has promising plans to improve his position on the queenside, with strategies familiar from the QGD.

### 13 Qd1 Ne7 14 a3 Rfd8 15 b4 Nc8



15 ... b5 would definitely stop White's Na4-c5 plan. However, White still has his pawn pushes, such as a3-a4 or even e3-e4, not to mention manoeuvres like Ne1-d3.

**16 Na4 b6 17 Nb2 Ne7 18 Nd3 Ng6 19 a4 a5**

Otherwise White plays a4-a5 himself.

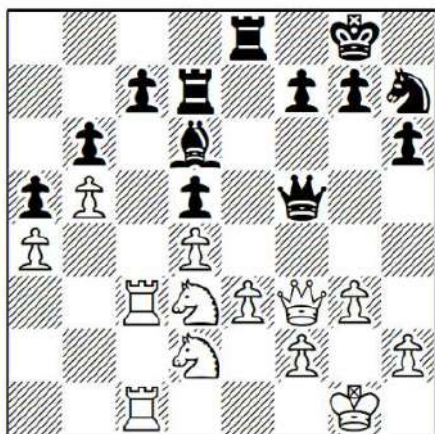
**20 b5 Re8 21 Rc3!**

It is instructive to see how Carlsen gradually improves his position.

**21 ... Bf5 22 Rac1 Rad8 23 Nd2**

The closed nature of the position allows White to manoeuvre as much as he wants.

**23 ... Rd7 24 g3 Nf8 25 Bg4 Nh7 26 Bxf5 Qxf5 27 Qf3!**



White aims to exchange as many pieces as possible. Black has nothing going on the

kingside, whereas White has full queenside domination.

**27 ... Qg5 28 h4 Qe7 29 Rc6 Nf6 30 Nf4 g6**

This move looks like a mistake, creating further weaknesses on the kingside.

However, it is hard to suggest another plan for Black.

**31 h5 Kg7**

After 31 ... Bxf4 32 Qxf4 Nxh5 33 Qxh6 followed by Nf3 Black is in serious trouble.

**32 hxg6 fxg6 33 Nxd5 Nxd5 34 Qxd5 Bxg3 35 Qg2 Bd6 36 Nc4**

The problem for Black is that his pieces are just too passive.

**36 ... Rf8?!**

36 ... Qd8 offered better chances to resist since 37 Ne5 Bxe5 38 Qxg6+? fails to 38 ... Kh8 followed by ... Rg7.

**37 Ne5! Bxe5 38 Qxg6+ Kh8 39 Qxh6+ Kg8 40 dxe5 Qxe5 41 Rg6+ Kf7 42 Rc4!**

Now Black is defenceless against White's threats.

**42 ... Qa1+ 43 Kg2 Rh8 44 Rf4+ Ke8 45 Re6+ Re7 46 Rxe7+ Kxe7 47 Re4+ 1-0**

*Game 15 M.Carlsen-S.Mamedyarov  
Dubai (blitz) 2014*

**1 d4 Nf6**

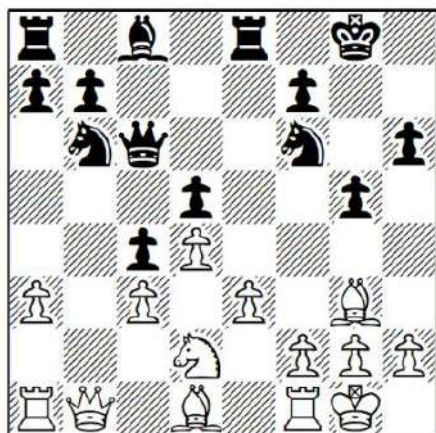
Our move order would be 1 ... d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nf6.

**2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5 Nbd7**

6 ... 0-0 is also possible, but the problem of castling early is that a future ... h6 and ... g5 is going to be much riskier. After 7 e3 there are two main moves for Black:

a) 7 ... c5 8 Be2 Nbd7 9 0-0 Qa5 10 Qc2 Re8 and now White has the unexpected resource 11 Nxd5! Nxd5 12 a3 cxd4 13 axb4 Qb6 14 Nxd4 h6 15 Bh4, which leaves him with a powerful initiative, P.Eljanov-Y.Kryvoruchko, Rogaska Slatina 2011. Also instructive is 9 ... h6 10 Bh4 Qa5 11 Qc2 c4 12 Nd2 Re8 13 Bf3 g5 14 Bg3 Nb6 15 Be5

Nbd7 16 Bg3 Nb6 17 a3! Bxc3 18 bxc3 Qa4  
19 Qb1 Qc6 20 Bd1.

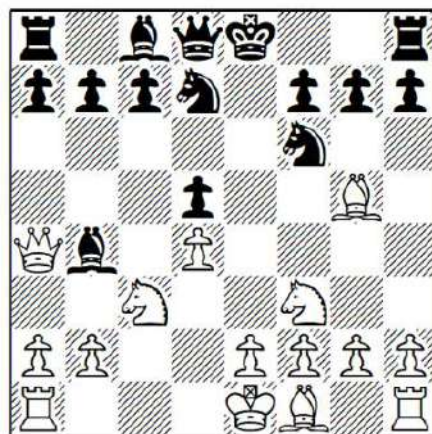


Here the bishop-pair gives White the advantage, M.Kazhgaleyev-B.Jobava, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

b) 7 ... h6 8 Bh4 c5 9 Be2. This move is much more flexible than 9 Bd3 for an obvious reason: it does not lose a tempo if Black advances with ... c4. Furthermore, the bishop might one day be useful on f3. After 9 ... g5 10 Bg3 Ne4 11 Rc1 c4 (or 11 ... Qa5 12 dxc5 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bxc3+ 14 Kf1 Nc6 15 Bd6 Re8 16 h4 g4 17 Ng5 hxg5 18 Qd3 and White developed a powerful attack in Ding Liren-Zhihang Xu, Jiangmen 2014) 12 Nd2 Bxc3 13 bxc3 Nxc3 14 hxg3 Kg7 15 e4 I prefer White's chances, T.Sanikidze-R.Laxman, Kolkata 2013.

Returning to 6 ... Nbd7:

**7 Qa4**



I like this move played by the world number one. I also like the fact he deviates from the very sharp main lines. After all, sharp play is what Black is looking for when he plays the Ragozin variation.

**7 ... a5**

Black can also try:

a) 7 ... Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 0-0 9 e3 Qe8 10 Bf4 Qe7 11 Bd3 c5 12 Nd2 Qe6 13 0-0 b6 14 Rae1 Bb7 15 f3 15 h3!?, as in E.Tomashevsky-Bu Xiangzhi, Sochi 2009. As usual White's bishop-pair offers him an edge.

b) 7 ... Qe7 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 0-0 10 e3 h6 11 Bh4 c5 12 Bd3 g5 13 Bg3 Ne4 was played in A.Lauber-V.Popov, Stockholm 2010. White can now continue effectively with 14 0-0 Nb6 (14 ... Nxc3 15 Qb3 Ne4 16 Qxd5 is better for White) 15 Qc2.

c) 7 ... c5!? is Black's most active choice. After 8 dxc5 Bxc3+ (8 ... Bxc5 just loses a pawn after 9 Nxd5) 9 bxc3 0-0 10 Qb4 h6 11 Bh4 Re8 12 e3 Re4 13 Qa3 Qe7 14 Bb5 (best, as after 14 Be2 Nxc5 15 0-0 b6 Black had equalized in S.Agdestein-A.Giri, Stavanger 2014, while after 14 Bxf6 Nxf6 15 Be2 Bg4 16 Rb1 a6 17 0-0 Rc8 18 Qb3 Rc7 19 h3 Bh5 20 c6 b5 Black is fine, S.Feller-M.Palac, Le Port Marly 2009) 14 ... Nxc5 15 0-0 g5 16 Bg3 Bd7 17 Bxd7 Nfxd7 18 Nd4 White had obtained a slight

advantage in V.Akopian-E.Alekseev, Nalchik 2009. Black has a solid position, although his kingside can be targeted in the long run.

**8 e3 0-0 9 Be2 h6 10 Bh4!? g5**

10 ... c6 11 0-0 Re8 looks like a safe option for Black. However, White can try playing Rfc1 and Rab1 followed by a3 and b4 with a standard minority attack.

**11 Bg3 Ne4 12 Qc2 c6 13 0-0 Ndf6 14 Ne5 Kg7**



14 ... Bf5 is not dangerous, since White can reply 15 Bd3.

**15 a3 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Nxc3**

Black has to take on g3 sooner or later. If 16 ... Bf5 then 17 Bd3! when f3 and c3-c4 are good possibilities.

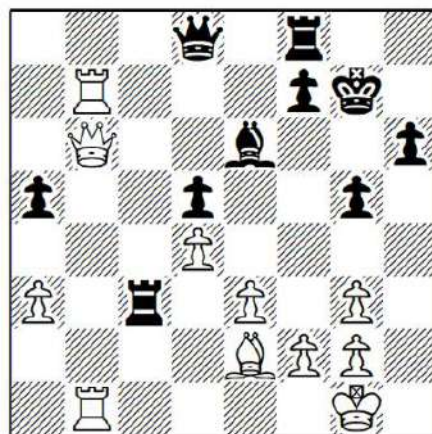
**17 hxg3 Be6 18 Rab1 Qc8 19 c4**

The opening has resulted in a fine position for White, who has the advantage on both sides of the board.

**19 ... Nd7?!**

Black fails to find a good plan. The position requires something like 19 ... Bf5 20 Bd3 Bxd3 21 Qxd3, although White still keeps a clear advantage.

**20 cxd5 cxd5 21 Qb2 Rb8 22 Rfc1 Qd8 23 Nxd7 Qxd7 24 Qb6 Qd8 25 Rc7 Rc8 26 Rxb7 Rc3?**



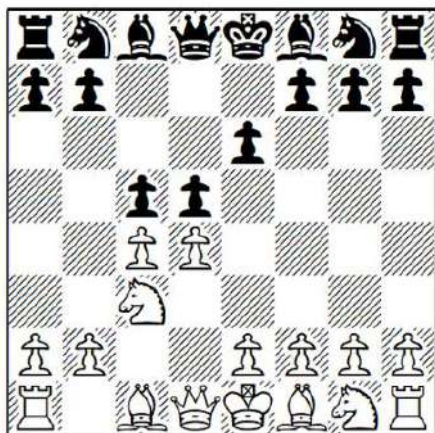
Better is 26 ... Qxb6 27 R1xb6 Rc1+ 28 Kh2 Kg8, although White can still expect to win.

**27 Qxe6 1-0**

# Chapter Two

## The Tarrasch Defence 1

d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5

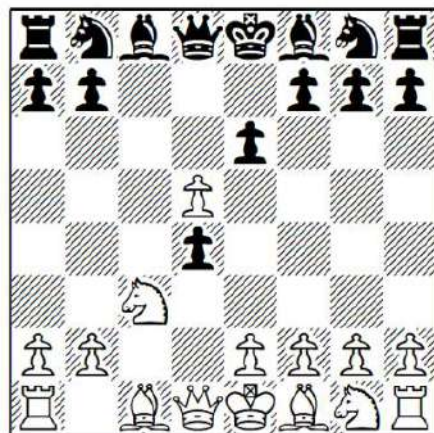


The Tarrasch Defence is an active choice for Black who intends to obtain from the outset quick development and central activity. As you'll no doubt be aware, the drawback is that after 4 cxd5 exd5 Black is going to be saddled with a central isolated pawn and this is a key factor with which White can fight for an advantage. To counter the Tarrasch, I recommend the main line which involves a kingside fianchetto. This makes lot of sense since we want to put pressure on Black's weak centre.

One of Black's most dangerous tries is the Von Hennig-Schara Gambit which arises after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 exd5 exd4!? and is pretty dangerous for the unprepared player. Analysing the position carefully, we can see that White gets an advantage with the in-between move 5 Qa4+!. We'll cover it in Games 16 and 17 before moving on to the main lines of the Tarrasch.

*Game 16 E. Bareev-L. Ljubojevic Linares 1993*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd4!?



This is not the main line, but we should be aware of the theory here because Black has lot of tricks and White will be behind in development.

### 5 Qa4+!

A key zwischenzug. Taking on d4 at once is not that good. After 5 Qxd4 Nc6 Black speeds up his development: for example, 6 Qd1 (or 6 Qa4 exd5 7 e3 Nf6 8 Nf3 Be6 – Black can also try 8 ... Bd6 when he is at least equal – 9 Bb5 Bd7 10 b3 Bb4 11 Bd2 0-0 12 Bxc6 Bxc3 13 Bxc3 Bxc6 14 Qh4 Ne4, which leads to equality, E. Gerloff-V. Drüke, correspondence 1987) 6 ... exd5 7 Qxd5 Be6! (even without queens Black is going to have a powerful attack) 8 Qxd8+ Rxd8 9 e3 (not 9 a3? Nd4 and White can already resign) 9 ... Nb4 10 Bb5+ Ke7 when the resulting position is far from clear. All I can say is that, given the chance, I would take Black, who has the initiative and better development.

### 5 ... b5!?

Black continues in a gambit mode. 5 ... Bd7 6 Qxd4 exd5 7 Qxd5 is the subject of the next game.

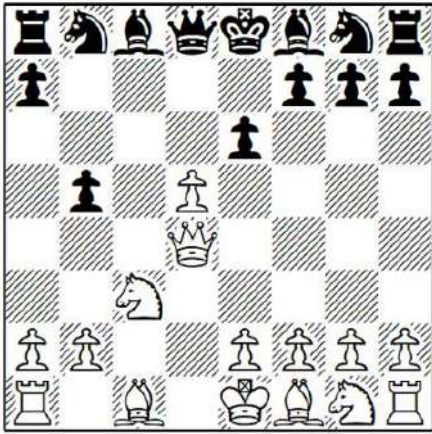
### 6 Qxd4

It is not difficult to realize that taking the b5-pawn is too risky. Some variations:

a) 6 Qxb5+? Bd7 7 Qb7 dxc3 8 Qxa8 cxb2 9 Bxb2 (9 Rb1 bxc1 Q+ 10 Rxc1 Bb4+

11 Kd1 Ba4+ 12 Rc2 Qc7 is also lost for White) 9 ... Qa5+ 10 Kd1 Ba4+ 11 Kc1 Qe1 mate.

b) 6 Nxb5 Bd7 7 d6 Bxb5 8 Qxb5+ Qd7 9 e3 dxe3 (9 ... Nc6!? is probably a better try; Black has the better development therefore he does best to keep queens on board) 10 Bxe3 Bxd6 11 0-0-0 Qxb5 12 Bxb5+ Ke7 13 Ne2 and White has a slight advantage due to his bishop-pair and queenside majority.



### 6 ... Nc6

6 ... b4? is too optimistic and White can punish this move with powerful play. After 7 Nb5 a6 (7 ... exd5 8 Qxd5! is even worse for Black) 8 dxe6! we have:

a) 8 ... axb5 9 exf7+ Ke7 10 fxg8N+ Ke8 (10 ... Rxg8 11 Bg5+) 11 Qe4+ and Black loses everything.

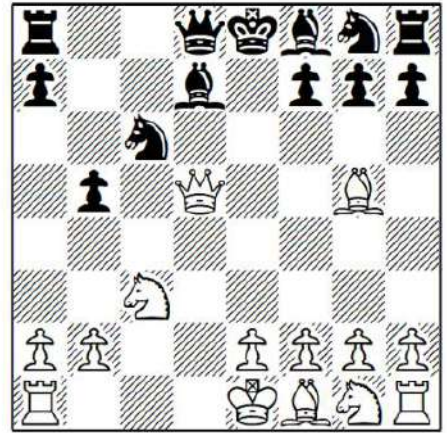
b) 8 ... Bxe6 9 Qe4 Nd7 10 Qxa8! is winning for White.

### 7 Qd2

7 Qd1 will probably lead to the same position, unless White deviates with 7 ... exd5 8 e3 when 8 ... a6 9 Qxd5 Bb7 (9 ... Bd7 followed by ... Nf6 looks interesting for Black) 10 Nf3 Nf6 gives Black reasonable compensation, especially after trading queens. Therefore White should play 7 Qd2(d1) followed by 8 Qxd5 to fight for the advantage.

### 7 ... exd5 8 Qxd5 Bd7 9 Qe4+

When you have more material, you have to trade pieces off. That is why I like doing so by means of 9 Bg5!



After 9 ... Nf6 10 Bxf6! (if 10 Qd2 Qa5 followed by ... 0-0-0 and the position is far from clear) 10 ... Qxf6 11 e3 a6 (or 11 ... Bb4 12 Rc1 a6 13 Nf3 Rd8 14 Qe4+ when White will soon finish his development and also keep his extra pawn) 12 0-0-0!? 0-0-0 (after 12 ... Rd8 13 Qe4+ Black is forced to trade queens, so his attack is not that dangerous, as shown by 13 ... Qe5 14 Nf3 Qxe4 15 Nxe4) 13 Qf3! equality is all that Black can ask for.

### 9 ... Be7

This is the best try, as the alternatives are dubious:

a) 9 ... Nge7 seriously slows down Black's development and after 10 Nf3 a6 11 Be3 Bf5 12 Qf4 White has a clear advantage.

b) 9 ... Qe7 10 Nf3 and White is more than happy to trade the queens at this point.

### 10 Bg5

As pointed out previously, taking on b5 is too risky as White has his king stuck in the centre and poor development. A typical line is 10 Nxb5? Qa5+ 11 Nc3 Nf6 12 Qf3 Rd8 and suddenly all of Black's pieces are very much in the game.

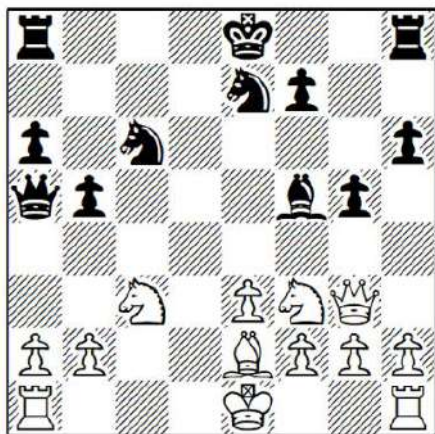
**10 ... h6 11 Bxe7 Ngxe7 12 e3 Bf5**

Despite being down a pawn, I think Black has enough counterplay here to achieve equality. Therefore I recommend analyzing the 9 Bg5 variation.

**13 Qf4 a6 14 Nf3 g5**

This is not the only way to equalize. 14 ... Qa5 looks safe and here I would like to share some variations suggested by Konikowski: 15 Nd4 Nxd4 16 exd4 (or 16 Qxd4 0-0 17 Be2 Rad8 18 Qf4 Nd5 19 Qxf5 Nxc3 20 a3 Nxe2+ and White will have to play with his king in the centre for the rest of the game – not a good idea) 16 ... Rd8 17 Be2 Qb4 18 Qc1 Rxd4 with equality.

**15 Qg3 Qa5 16 Be2**



16 Nd2 seems to be an improvement according to the engines, but I do not think White was in any mood to keep wasting tempi.

**16 ... b4 17 Nd1 Be6! 18 Nd4**

After 18 e4 g4 19 Nh4 Nd4 Black obtains a strong initiative.

**18 ... Nxd4 19 exd4 Nf5 20 Qe5 Qxe5 21 dxe5 Ke7 22 Bd3 Rhd8**

22 ... Nd4 also looks good for equality. White's extra pawn is not relevant: for example, 23 Ne3 Nc6 24 Be4 Rac8 25 Bxc6 Rxc6 when the e5-pawn should fall sooner or later.

**23 Bxf5 Bxf5 24 Ne3 Ke6 25 0-0 Kxe5?**

As mentioned earlier, this pawn was falling sooner or later, so there was no need to take it right now since Black's king will now become exposed. 25 ... Bd3 26 Rfe1 Rac8 is good enough for equality.

**26 f4+!**

Now Black's kingside is very vulnerable.

**26 ... gxf4 27 Nc4+ Kf6**

27 ... Kd4 28 Rxf4+ Be4 29 Re1 doesn't help Black.

**28 Rxf4 Kg5 29 Raf1 Bd3**

After 29 ... Be6 30 Ne5 f5 White has 31 Nf7+! Bxf7 32 Rxf5+, winning a clear pawn.

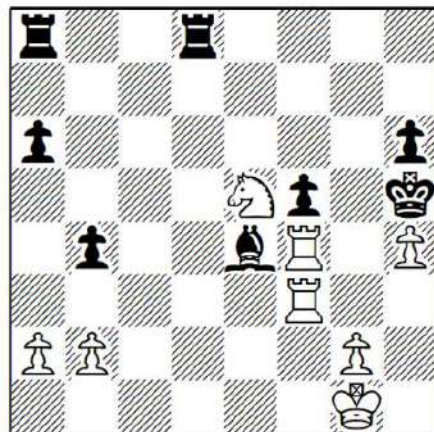
**30 h4+ Kh5**

Not a comfortable square for the king, but 30 ... Kg6 loses on the spot to 31 Ne5+.

**31 R1f3 f5?!**

This is the final mistake after which White is able to create a mating net. 31 ... Bxc4 32 Rxc4 is preferable, but obviously White has a clear advantage.

**32 Ne5 Be4**



**33 Kh2!**

A brilliant move from White – the rook is taboo.

**33 ... Rg8**

33 ... Bxf3 34 Rxf5+ Kxh4 35 g3# is a pretty mate.

**34 Kh3!**

Now Rxf5+ is a threat.

**34 ... Bxf3**

34 ... Raf8 loses to 35 Rxe4 fxe4 36 Rxf8 Rxf8 37 g4# with another beautiful mate.

**35 Rxf5+ Rg5 36 hxg5 1-0**

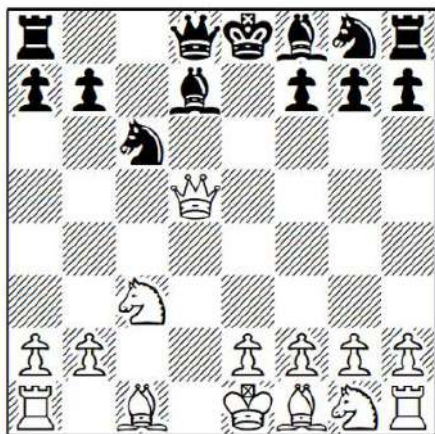
Black resigns as g6# is coming next or 36 ... Be4 37 g4#.

*Game 17 A.Dreev-S.Grishchenko Russian League 2011*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4 5 Qa4+ Bd7**

The main line of this gambit.

**6 Qxd4 exd5 7 Qxd5 Nc6**



7 ... Nf6 is also possible when 8 Qb3! is a good reply. I am surprised this move hasn't been played too often, as Black doesn't have anything better than 8 ... Nc6 (if 8 ... Na6 9 Be3!? Nc5 10 Bxc5 Bxc5 11 e3 0-0 12 Nf3 and White's extra pawn counts) 9 Nf3 when we transpose into our main game.

**8 Nf3 Nf6 9 Qb3!?**

I think this move is stronger than the popular 9 Qd1.

**9 ... Bb4**

Other moves worth of attention are:

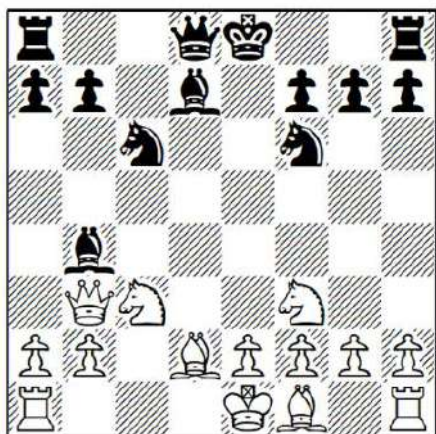
a) 9 ... Bc5 looks like the most active choice for Black. However, I think White can neutralize Black's initiative:

a1) 10 Bg5 0-0 11 e3 (11 0-0-0 Bxf2 12 e4, as suggested by *Rybka*, is also worth considering) 11 ... h6 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 Ne4 worked out well for White in B.Stam-G.Welling, Utrecht 1985.

a2) 10 e3 0-0 11 Be2 Be6 12 Qa4 Qc7 13 0-0 Rad8 14 Bd2 (all White needs is a couple of development moves and he will just be up a pawn) 14 ... Ng4 15 Rfd1! (not 15 h3 Rxd2! and Black seizes the initiative) 15 ... Bd6 16 g3 and Black's attack is over. Furthermore, White has a super-solid position on the kingside and thus has a clear advantage. A.Karpov-J.Hector, Haninge 1990, concluded 16 ... Qe7 17 Be1 f5 18 Nd5 Qf7 19 Ng5 Qh5 20 h4 Bc8 21 Nf4 Bxf4 22 Rxd8 Nxd8 23 Qxf4 Nc6 24 Qc7 1-0.

b) After 9 ... Be6 the reply 10 Qa4 is strong (not 10 Qxb7?! Nb4! and Black gets a dangerous counterplay): for example, 10 ... Bc5 11 e3 (it is tough to play with the bishop on c1 inside the pawn chain, but White can complete development quickly and is a pawn up) 11 ... 0-0 12 Be2 a6 13 0-0 b5 14 Qc2 Rc8 (perhaps 14 ... Nb4 is a better try, but after 15 Qb1 g6 White has the advantage, as shown by 16 a3 Nbd5 17 Nxd5 Bxd5 18 b4) 15 Ng5 Nb4 16 Qb1 Qe7 17 a3 Nc6 18 b4 Bd6 19 Bb2 Ne5 (19 ... Bd7 loses to 20 Nd5!) 20 Rd1 Bb8 21 h3 h6 22 Nxe6 Qxe6 (White is a pawn up and soon eliminates Black's bishop-pair) 23 Ne4 Nfd7 24 Bd4 f5 25 Nc5 Nxc5 26 Bxc5 Rfd8 27 Qa2 Rxd1+ 28 Bxd1 Nc4 29 Be2 f4 30 Bg4 Qg6 31 Bxc8 f3 32 Bg4 fxg2 33 Rd1 with an easy win for White, V.Hort-C.Cuartas, Dortmund 1982.

**10 Bd2**



### 10 ... Qe7

Castling short is also possible for Black. After 10 ... 0-0 11 e3 Be6 12 Qa4 (12 Bc4!?) Bxc3 13 Qxc3 Ne4 14 Qd3 Bxc4 15 Qxc4 Nxd2 16 Nxd2 Ne5 is not that clear) 12 ... Bd7 13 Bb5 Qe7 14 a3 Bd6 15 0-0 a6 16 Be2 I do not see any useful discovered move by the knight on c6. Black has some compensation, but it should not be good enough in the long run and White's extra pawn should have the final say.

### 11 e3 0-0-0 12 Be2 g5

A standard idea in this line; Black starts advancing on the kingside.

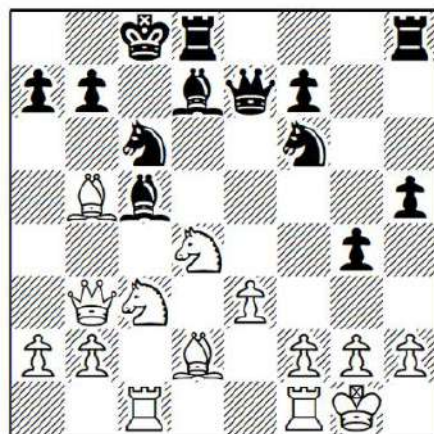
### 13 0-0 g4 14 Nd4 h5 15 Bb5!

White counters by opening lines on the queenside.

### 15 ... Bc5

Black has no time to develop a kingside attack with 15 ... h4 16 Rac1 Rh5 (or 16 ... h3 17 Bxc6 Bxc6 18 Ncb5! and Black has to resign after 18 ... Bxd2 19 Nxa7+ Kc7 20 Naxc6) 17 Bxc6 Bxc6 (17 ... bxc6 runs into 18 Ne4!) 18 Nxc6 bxc6 19 Qc4 with a clear advantage for White, and if 19 ... Rxd2 20 Qxc6+ Kb8 21 Ne4.

### 16 Rac1



### 16 ... Qe5?!

16 ... Be8 17 Na4 Bxd4 18 exd4 h4 19 Rfe1 also loses for Black.

### 17 Nxc6 Bxc6 18 Bxc6 bxc6 19 Na4

White's solid play in the opening is now bearing fruit.

### 19 ... Rxd2 20 Nxc5 Rxb2 21 Qxf7 Rd8

21 ... Qd6 22 Qxa7 doesn't change anything.

### 22 Na4 Rd6 23 Nxb2 Qxb2 24 Qxa7 1-0

0

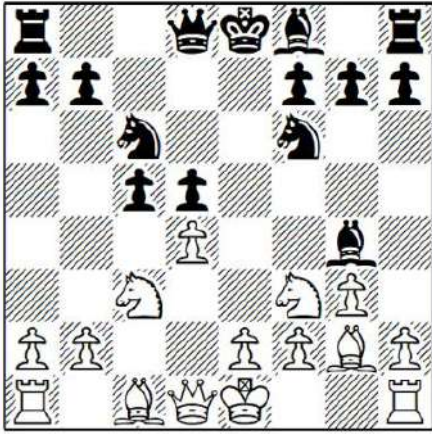
### Game 18 A.Aleksandrov-S.Begun

Belorussian Championship, Minsk 1996

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5

Here we have the main line of the Tarrasch. Black accepts an isolated pawn on d5 which represents a positional advantage for White, but in return he gets active play. We have to point out that trading pieces, especially in the main line, will favour White because the isolated pawn on d5 becomes weaker the more pieces that are exchanged.

### 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 g3 Nc6 7 Bg2 Bg4?!



Not the best move for Black. As we will see later in this chapter, 7 ... Be7 7 ... cxd4 or 7 ... c4 are all better tries.

### 8 Bg5!

White grabs the initiative with this move. Note that Black's centre is now not well protected.

### 8 ... cxd4

8 ... Bxf3 9 Bxf3 Nxd4 10 Bxd5 gives White a clear advantage; Black is too weak on light squares.

### 9 Nxd4 h6?

A mistake is often followed by another one. It wasn't too late to play something like 9 ... Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Qa4 Qd7 (or 11 ... Bd7 12 Rfd1 and Black doesn't have any useful discovered move) 12 Rfd1 with a solid positional advantage for White.

### 10 Bxf6!

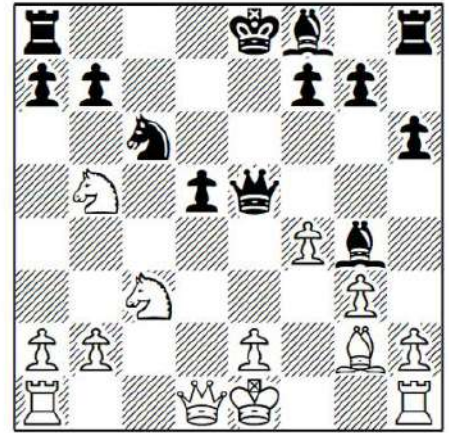
As Black is behind in development and his king stuck in the centre, it is hardly surprising that White can whip up a quick attack.

### 10 ... Qxf6 11 Ndb5

This looks like the simplest route to the advantage. 11 Nxd5!? Qxd4 12 Nc7+ Kd8 13 Nxa8 Bb4+ is far less clear, as White's knight is trapped in the corner.

### 11 ... Qe5

If 11 ... 0-0-0 12 Qa4 and Black is defenceless against White's threats.



As usual, the initiative is more relevant than material. 12 Nxd5 is weaker in view of 12 ... 0-0-0 and suddenly the position is far from clear.

### 12 ... Qb8 13 Nxd5 Bb4+

13 ... Bd6 14 Nf6+ gxf6 15 Qxd6! trades queens and reaches a winning endgame.

### 14 Nxb4 Nxb4 15 a3

White opts for solid play, but there was a quick win available after 15 Qa4! Nc6 (or 15 ... a5 16 Nc7+) 16 Qa3 and there is no way to prevent Nd6+.

### 15 ... Nc6 16 h3 a6

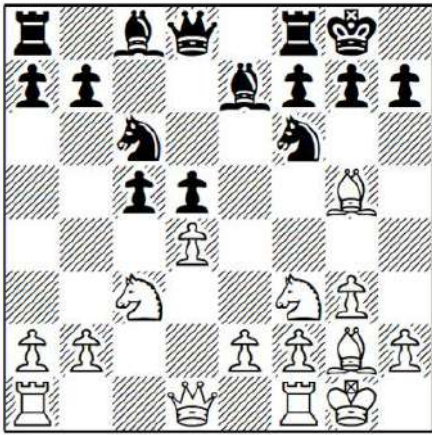
Likewise, 16 ... Bd7 17 Qd6! Qxd6 18 Nxd6+ Ke7 19 Nxb7 wins.

### 17 Nd6+ Ke7 18 Nxf7 Bxe2 19 Qd5 1-0

After 19 ... Rf8 20 Nxh6 gxh6 21 Kxe2 White wins easily. Aleksandrov's play in this game constitutes a clear refutation of the 7 ... Bg4?! variation.

*Game 19 Y. Shulman-M. Cornejo Fremont 2012*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g3 Nf6 6 Bg2 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Nc3 Nc6 9 Bg5**



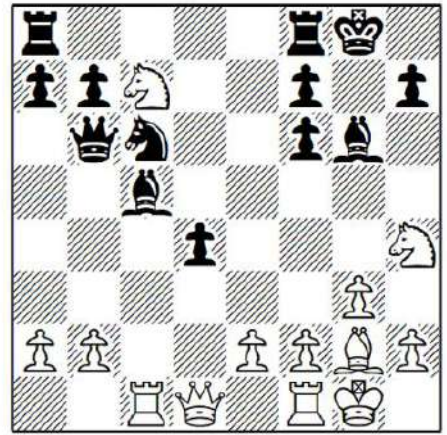
I like this approach and it is by far the most frequently seen try in this position. Unless Black plays ... c5-c4, he ends up with an isolated pawn on d5.

#### 9 ... cxd4

Let us take a look at Black's other options:

a) 9 ... Be6 seems too passive. After 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 Rc1 Bb6 (11 ... Be7 12 Nd4 is comfortable for White) 12 b3 d4?! 13 Ne4 Qe7 14 Nh4! White obtained a clear advantage in V.Korchnoi-J.Piket, Nijmegen 1993.

b) 9 ... Bf5 is similarly sub-optimal for Black, in view of 10 dxc5 d4 (or 10 ... Bxc5 11 Rc1 Be7 12 Nd4 when White has the edge) 11 Nb5 (11 Na4 Qd7 looks promising for White, although he must be wary of the misplaced knight on a4) 11 ... Bxc5 12 Rc1 Qb6 (if 12 ... Bb6 13 Bf4!) 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Nh4 Bg6 15 Nc7!.



White has the better chances as Black's pawn structure is a disaster.

c) 9 ... c4 is the main alternative to 9 ... cxd4 and is the subject of next game.

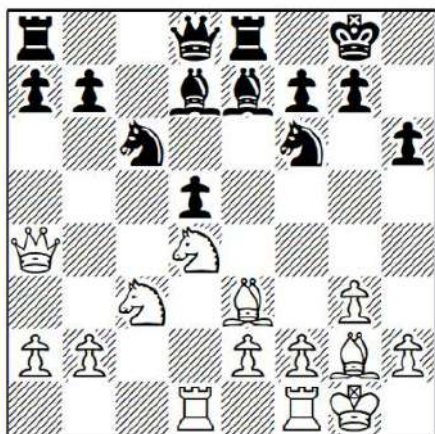
#### 10 Nxd4 h6

After 10 ... Re8 White obtains good chances with 11 Qa4 (11 e3!? was played in B.Gelfand-V.Ivanchuk, Monaco (blindfold) 2011) 11 ... Bd7 (11 ... Qb6 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Nxd5! wins for White) 12 Rad1! (12 Rfd1 Rc8 13 Nb3 Nb4 14 Qxa7 Ra8 15 Qe3 Nc2 loses the exchange and demonstrates why 12 Rad1 is preferable) 12 ... Rc8 13 Nb3 and Black is going to have a hard time defending his isolated pawn.

#### 11 Be3 Re8

Following 11 ... Bg4 12 Qa4 Qd7 13 Bxd5 Nxd4 (13 ... Nxd5 14 Nxd5 Qxd5 15 Nxc6 just wins a pawn) 14 Qxd4 Rad8 15 Rfd1 Qf5 (or 15 ... Bxe2 16 Bxf7+ Kxf7 17 Qxd7 Rxd7 18 Rxd7 Nxd7 19 Nxe2 and White is clearly better) 16 f3 Bh3 17 g4 Qc8 18 Rac1 White already had a winning position in I.Khenkin-F.Manca, Lido Estensi 2003.

#### 12 Qa4 Bd7 13 Rad1



13 Rfd1 is also worth considering. The position is double-edged after 13 ... Na5 14 Qc2 Nc4 15 Nxd5 (15 Bf4 Rc8 16 Nxd5 Ne3 isn't so clear) 15 ... Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Nxe3 17 fxe3. Given the choice I would take White, but one should not underestimate Black's bishop-pair.

**13 ... Bc5**

Others:

a) 13 ... Nb4 14 Qb3 and, as usual, Black has problems defending his isolated pawn.

b) 13 ... Na5 14 Qc2 Nc4 15 Nxd5 Nxe3 16 fxe3 looks better for White, since he has a rook on f1 not d1, which is an important difference.

**14 Qc2**

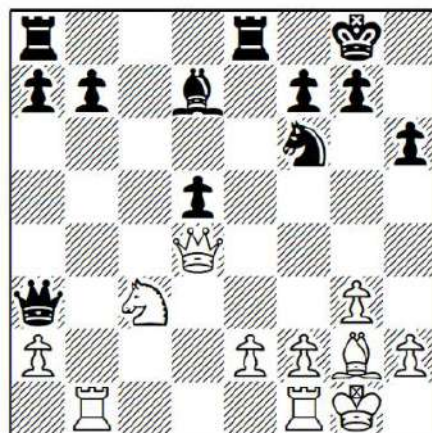
I like this solid plan for White (Qc2-Qd2), because everything is now under control. Also worth consideration is 14 Ne6!? fxe6 (if 14 ... Bxe6 then 15 Bxc5 followed by e2-e4 and White has a clear advantage) 15 Bxc5 b6 16 Ba3 (now White can consider b3 and Bb2, bringing the bishop back home) 16 ... Na5 (after 16 ... Rc8 17 Qa6 the queen is safe on a6 and the e2-e4 advance is imminent) 17 Qb4 Nc4 18 e4 and Black is not well prepared for the impending tactics.

**14 ... Qb6 15 Qd2 Nxd4**

As we already know, exchanges will favour White. Maybe Black has to try 15 ...

Ne5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Bh3 with some chances to equalize.

**16 Bxd4 Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Qxb2 18 Rb1 Qa3**



18 ... Qc2 19 Rxb7 Bc6 20 Rc7 Rec8 21 Rxc6!? Rxc6 22 Nxd5 is better for White.

**19 Rxb7**

Not 19 Nxd5 Nxd5 20 Bxd5 Bc6 when, despite having the inferior pawn structure, I believe Black equalizes.

**19 ... Bc6 20 Rb3 Qa5 21 Rfb1 Rac8 22 e3 Ne4**

Black is attempting to edge his way towards equality. If he can restrict his weaknesses to only the d5-pawn he can achieve this.

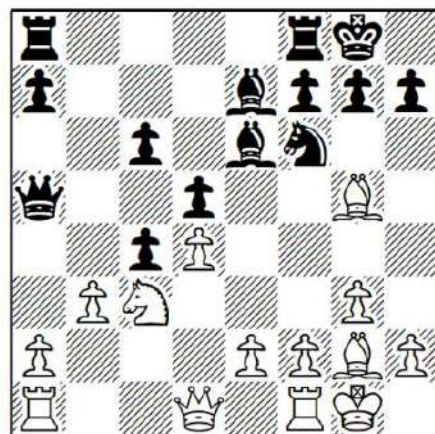
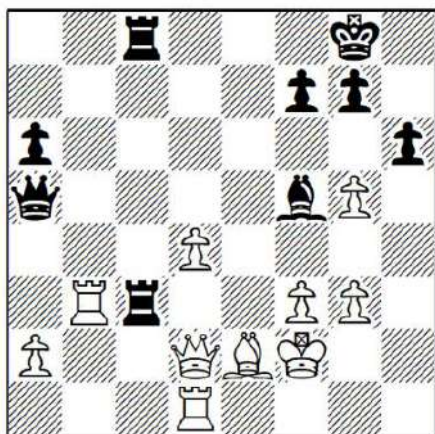
**23 Bh3 Ng5 24 Bg4 Bd7 25 Be2 Bf5 26 Rc1 Re6 27 f3 Rec6 28 Kf2 Qc5 29 Qd2 a6 30 Rd1 d4!?**

Black finds a good way of getting rid of the isolated pawn.

**31 exd4 Qa5 32 h4**

32 Nb1 Qd8 is too passive for White.

**32 ... Rxc3 33 hxg5**



### 33 ... Qc7?

A bad mistake. After 33 ... hxc5 34 Rxc3 Rxc3 35 Qxc5 Rc2 Black has enough compensation.

**34 Rxc3 Qxc3 35 gxh6 Qxd2 36 Rxd2 a5**

If 36 ... gxh6 then 37 Bxa6.

**37 hxg7**

The rest is a matter of technique.

**37 ... Kxg7 38 g4 Bg6 39 Bb5 f5 40 Bd7 Rc7 41 gxf5 Rxd7 42 fxg6 Kxg6 43 Ke3 Kf5 44 d5 Ke5 45 d6 1-0**

An important game for the assessment of this line. I also strongly recommend studying 14 Ne6! when I like White's chances with the bishop-pair.

*Game 20 S.Mamedyarov-V.Akopian*  
Caleta 2012

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bg5 c4**

Another important option for Black.

**10 Ne5! Be6 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 b3!**

The isolated pawn is gone, but now we have new targets on the queenside in the shape of c6 and a7.

**12 ... Qa5**

### 13 Qd2

This is not the main line (13 Na4 and 13 Qc2 are more often seen), but I started analyzing this move after seeing this game.

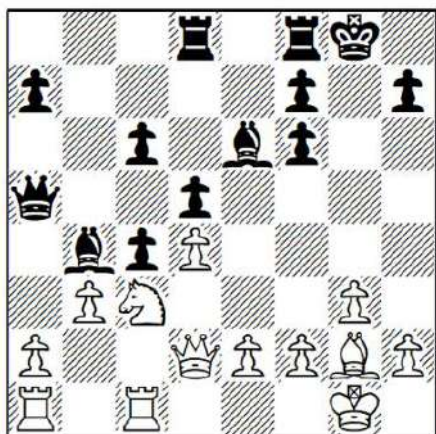
### 13 ... Bb4

As Grandmaster Krasenkov comments, "Obvious, but premature". The alternative is 13 ... Rad8 and, indeed, it makes lot of sense to place the rook on the same file as White's queen, because the position is likely to open soon. Now:

a) 14 Na4 Qxd2 15 Bxd2 cxb3 16 axb3 Ne4 17 Ba5 Rb8 18 Rfb1 Bf5 lead to equality in M.Brodsky-V.Ikonnikov, Le Touquet 2007.

b) 14 bxc4?! dxc4 15 Bxc6 Bb4! 16 Bxf6 (or 16 Rac1 Qb6 17 d5 Rxd5! 18 Bxd5 Nxd5 19 Be3 Qb7 20 Bd4 Nxc3 21 Bxc3 Bxc3 22 Rxc3 Bh3 23 f3 Bxf1 24 Kxf1 Qc7 with equality, according to Yevseev) 16 ... gxf6 17 Rfc1 Qb6 18 Be4 Qxd4 and Black is already better T.Heuer-M.Bach, German League 1998

c) 14 Rfd1! is the best move and after 14 ... Bb4 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 Rdc1! we have two moves by Black to consider:



c1) 16 ... c5 17 bxc4 dxc4 (17 ... cxd4 18 Qxd4 Bxc3 19 Rxc3 is clearly better for White) 18 d5 Bxd5 19 Bxd5 Bxc3 was Zhu Chen-E.Kovalevskaya, Nalchik 2011. After 20 Qxc3! Qxc3 21 Bxf7+ Kxf7 22 Rxc3 White has a clear advantage according to Yevseev.

c2) 16 ... Ba3 17 Rc2 Bf5 (after 17 ... Bb4 18 bxc4 dxc4 19 Rac1 Bf5 20 e4 Be6 21 e5! White obtains a powerful attack) 18 e4 Bg6 19 bxc4 dxc4 20 Qe3 Rfe8 was played in V.Loginov-D.Yevseev, St Petersburg 2002. Here I believe White should try 21 Rd1!? f5 (or 21 ... Bb4 22 Nb1 f5 23 Rxc4 fxe4 24 Nc3 and once again I prefer White, as his position is easier to play and Black has a misplaced bishop on g6) 22 Nb1 Bf8 23 Rxc4 fxe4 24 Nc3 and White has the edge.

**14 Bxf6 gxf6 15 Rfc1 Rad8?!**

Once again I would like to share Krasenkow's assessment: "This move leads to the above variation with a loss of a tempo for Black. Not surprisingly, he gets a poor position". Others:

a) If 15 ... Ba3 16 Rc2 Bf5 17 e4 and White has a clear positional advantage.

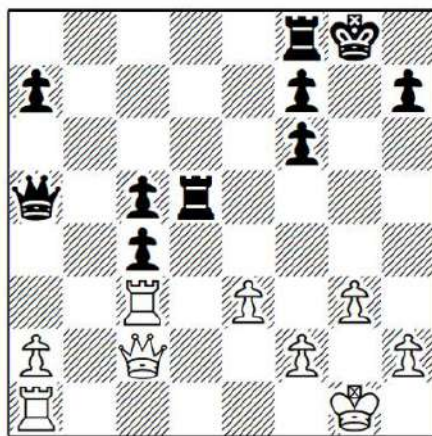
b) 15 ... Rac8 16 bxc4 dxc4 17 a3 (17 e4 Rfd8 18 Qe3 Rc7 19 e5 Be7 20 Qf4 Kg7 led to an unclear position in A.Lugovoi-M.Blubshtein, Gausdal 2003) 17 ... Bxc3 18

Qxc3 18 Rxc3 is also possible, but I do not see anything wrong with the 'risk-free' option for White, as the resulting endgame is quite unpleasant for Black: 18 ... Qxc3 19 Rxc3 Rfd8 20 e3 c5 21 d5 Bxd5 22 Bxd5 Rxd5 23 Rxc4, Zhou Jianchao-V.Akopian, Beijing 2008.

**16 bxc4 dxc4 17 e3 c5**

Black has to create some action as soon as possible in order to compensate for his bad structure.

**18 d5 Bxc3 19 Rxc3 Bxd5 20 Bxd5 Rxd5 21 Qc2**



The opening has worked out very well for White. Black's structure is a disaster and his only hope is the passed pawn on c5.

**21 ... Rb8 22 Rxc4 Rb4 23 Rb1 Rxb1+ 24 Qxb1 Qb6 25 Qc2 f5 26 Rf4 Qc6 27 h3**

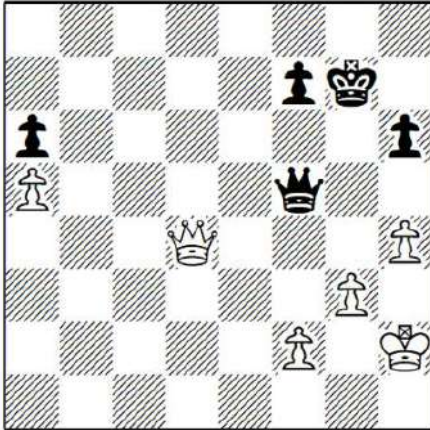
Instead, 27 Rxf5 Rxf5 28 Qxf5 c4 gives Black counterplay due to his passed pawn. Therefore White continues to manoeuvre, and it is very difficult for Black to hold together his numerous weaknesses.

**27 ... h6 28 Kh2 a6 29 a4 Kg7 30 a5 Qe6 31 Qc3+ Qe5 32 Qc4 Qe6 33 h4 Kg8 34 Qc2 Kg7 35 e4 fxe4 36 Rxe4 Qf5 37 Qb2+ Rd4**

Black sacrifices a pawn. The chances of drawing the queen endgame are remote, but if 37 ... Kh7 then 38 Rf4 and Black has to deal with a strong attack, while weakening

the position with 37 ... f6 is not a good idea either.

**38 Rxd4 cxd4 39 Qxd4+**

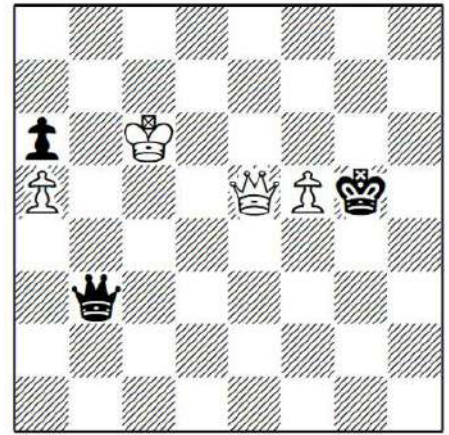


Winning requires a good technique but, Mamedyarov was equal to the challenge,

**39 ... f6**

Perhaps it was better to keep pawns on f7 and h6. The remaining moves were:

**40 Qb6 h5 41 Kg1 Qd3 42 Qb7+ Kg6 43 Kg2 Qc4 44 Qb1+ Kg7 45 Qf5 Qc6+ 46 Kh2 Kh6 47 Kg1 Qc1+ 48 Kg2 Qc6+ 49 Qf3 Qd6 50 Kf1 Kg6 51 Qe4+ Kg7 52 Qf5 Qc6 53 Kg1 Kh6 54 Kh2 Qd6 55 Kh3 Qc6 56 f3 Qc3 57 g4 hxg4+ 58 Kxg4 Qb2 59 Qf4+ Kg7 60 Qc7+ Kg6 61 h5+! Kh6 62 Kf5 Qb5+ 63 Kxf6 Qg5+ 64 Ke6 Qe3+ 65 Kd7 Kxh5 66 f4 Kg4 67 Kc8 Qb3 68 Qe5 Qb4 69 Kc7 Qb3 70 Kc6 Qb4 71 Qg5+ Kf3 72 Qh5+ Kg3 73 Qg5+ Kf3 74 Kc7 Qb3 75 Qf6 Qb4 76 Qe5 Kg4 77 f5 Kg5 78 Kc6 Qb3**



**79 Qc5?**

79 f6+! Kg6 80 Kc7 Qb4 81 Kc8 Qb3 82 Qe7 Qc3+ 83 Kb8 was more accurate.

**79 ... Qb8 80 Kd7 Qb7+ 81 Ke6 Qb3+ 82 Kd7 Qb7+ 83 Kd6 Qb3?**

A mistake. After 83 ... Qb8+ 84 Kc6 Kf6 White may not be able to win.

**84 Kc7 Qf7+ 85 Kb6 Qe8 86 Kxa6 Qa8+ 87 Kb6 Qb8+ 88 Kc6 Qc8+ 89 Kd5 Qd7+ 90 Kc4 Qa4+ 91 Kc3 Qa1+ 92 Kb4 Qb2+ 93 Ka4 Qa2+ 94 Kb5 Qb3+ 95 Kc6 Qa4+ 96 Kc7 Qf4+ 97 Kb7 Qe4+ 98 Ka7 Qe8 99 Qd5 Qe7+ 100 Kb8 Qe8+ 101 Kc7 Qe7+ 102 Kc8 Qa7 103 f6+ Kxf6?**

Black's final error. After this the trade of queens is unstoppable and, as such, 103 ... Kg6 offered more resistance.

**104 Qd8+ 1-0**

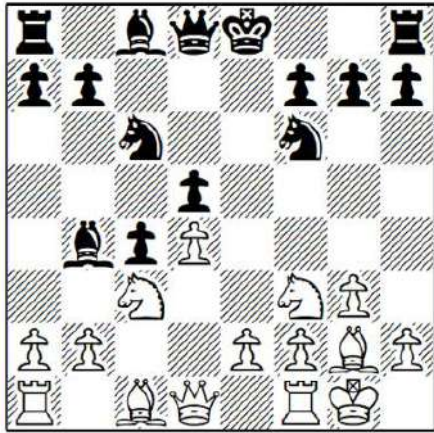
Black loses after both 104 ... Kf7 105 Qc7+ and 104 ... Ke6 105 Qb6+.

*Game 21 A.Bofillmas-L.Rojas Keim Smolensk 2013*

**1 Nf3 c5 2 g3 Nc6 3 c4 Nf6 4 Nc3 d5 5 d4 e6 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Bg2 c4**

As mentioned previously, it is better to play with 7 ... Be7 and ... cxd4 following the spirit of the Tarrasch variation. The text move is rather passive because the central tension is dissipated.

## 8 0-0 Bb4



Black does not want to stay too passive and prefers an active continuation. Instead, 8 ... Be7 9 Ne5 0-0 10 Bf4 Be6 11 Nxc4! dxc4 12 d5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bf6 (or 13 ... Bc5 14 Nc7 and White wins the bishop-pair and, with it, the advantage) 14 Bc7 Qd7 (if 14 ... Qc8 then 15 Nxf6+ gxf6 16 Qd6 when Black cannot free his position) 15 Nxf6+ gxf6 16 Qxd7 Bxd7 17 Rad1 Be6 18 Rd2 when the endgame is clearly better for White, as in S.Stojanov-G.Vallin, Mureck 1998.

### 9 Bg5

Also possible is 9 Ne5!? Bxc3 (if 9 ... 0-0 10 Bg5 and the pin is annoying for Black) 10 bxc3 0-0 11 Bg5 (or 11 Rb1 Re8 12 Bf4 and White's bishop-pair is useful) 11 ... h6 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 f4 when White has more space and it's also clear that the bishop on g2 is much better than the one on c8.

### 9 ... Be6 10 e4!?

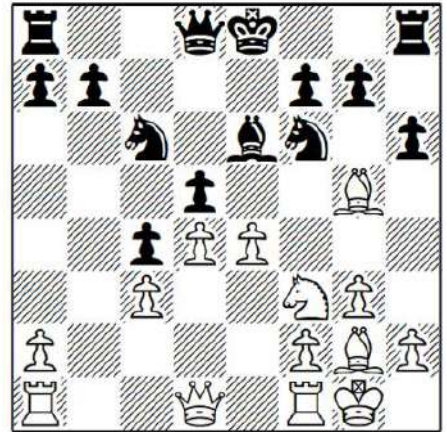
Opening lines when Black's king is stuck on e8 is very logical. If 10 Ne5 then 10 ... 0-0 11 e4 dxe4 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Nxe4 Be7 14 Re1 Rb8 15 Rb1 Nxe4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Bxe4 Qd6 with a level position, as in V.Popov-I.Ibragimov, Smolensk 1997.

### 10 ... Bxc3?!

10 ... dxe4 was much better, although after 11 Nxe4 Be7 12 Nc5 Bxc5 13 dxc5

White, as usual, obtains the advantage thanks to the bishop-pair.

### 11 bxc3 h6



After 11 ... dxe4 12 Nd2 Black badly misses his dark-squared bishop: for instance, 12 ... h6 13 Bxf6 Qxf6 14 Nxe4 Qd8 15 Nc5 and Black cannot finish his development properly.

### 12 exd5! Bxd5

If 12 ... Qxd5 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Rb1 and there is no safe place for Black's king.

### 13 Re1+ Kf8

13 ... Be6 doesn't improve Black's prospects after 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Nd2! (not 15 d5 0-0-0 and Black survives) 15 ... 0-0-0 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 Qa4 and Black is defenceless.

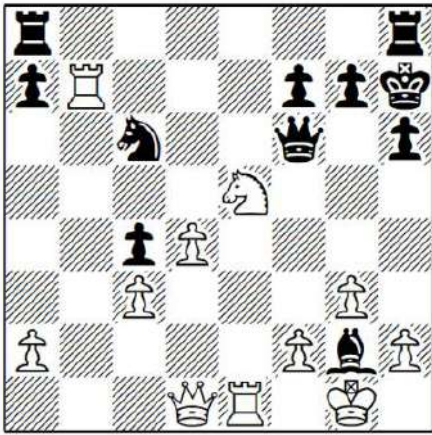
### 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Rb1

Black does not have many weaknesses, but his main problem is a lack of development and this is easy for White to exploit.

### 15 ... Kg8

15 ... b6 offers stronger resistance, although after 16 Ne5 Qd6 17 Bxd5 Qxd5 18 Qa4 Nxe5 19 Rxe5 White still stands very well.

### 16 Rxb7 Kh7 17 Ne5 Bxg2



**18 Qb1+!**

An excellent, accurate conclusion from White.

**18 ... Kg8 19 Kxg2 Rf8 20 Nd7 1-0**

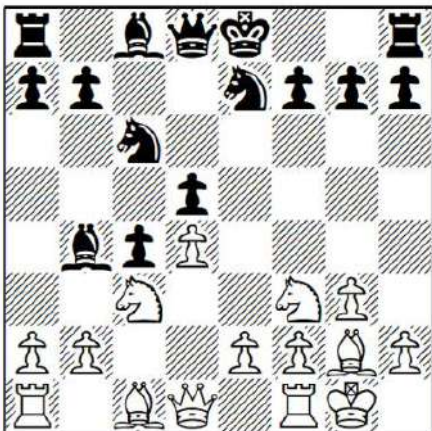
A game well worth studying to understand how to counter a quick ... c5-c4 by Black in the Tarrasch.

*Game 22 H.Keller-V.Mikenas*  
correspondence 1988

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 c4**

By delaying ... Nf6 Black contemplates playing with ... Bb4 followed by ... Nge7.

**7 Bg2 Bb4 8 0-0 Nge7**



This is the most direct way to counter Black's opening set-up.

**9 ... 0-0**

Black's main option is 9 ... dxe4 10 Nxe4 and now:

a) 10 ... Bg4 11 a3 Ba5 12 Nc5 is better for White.

b) 10 ... Bf5 is strongly met by 11 Ne5! Qxd4 (if 11 ... Nxe5 12 dxe5 and Nd6 is coming soon) 12 Qxd4 Nxd4 13 a3 Nb3 14 Ra2 with a clear edge for White.

c) 10 ... 0-0 11 Qc2 and now White gains the advantage in every variation:

c1) 11 ... Nxd4 12 Nxd4 Qxd4 13 Rd1 Qe5 14 Bf4 with a big lead in development.

c2) 11 ... Qd5 12 Be3 Bf5 (or 12 ... Nf5 13 Nfg5) 13 Nh4! is very strong.

c3) 11 ... Bg4 12 Qxc4 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Qxd4 14 Qb3 Nf5 15 a3 Be7 16 Rd1 and, again, White's bishop-pair offers him a healthy plus.

c4) 11 ... Bf5 12 Nh4! Rc8 (White obtains a comfortable edge after both 12 ... Bxe4 13 Bxe4 Qxd4 14 Rd1 and 12 ... Qxd4 13 Nxf5 Nxf5 14 Rd1 Qe5 15 Qxc4) 13 Nf6+! when White's advantage is certainly not in doubt, J.Lautier-O.Rodriguez, Barcelona 1992.

**10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Bg5 Qa5**

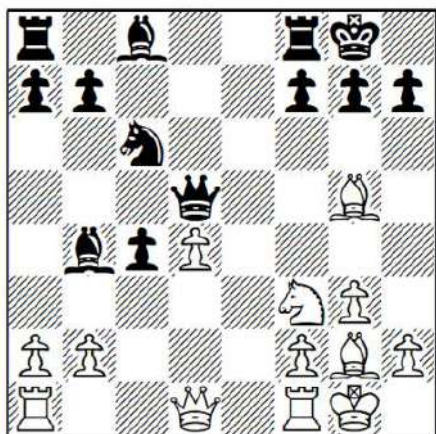
White is likewise better after:

a) 11 ... Be7 12 Nxd5 Bxg5 13 Nxg5 Qxg5 14 f4!.

b) 11 ... Nce7 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 13 Ne5 Qb5 14 a4 Qa6 15 Rc1.

c) And, finally, 11 ... f6 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 13 Ne5 Qb5 14 a4.

**12 Nxd5 Qxd5**



### 13 Ne5

White obtains a comfortable endgame after this move. Also possible is 13 Rc1 Be6 (13 ... Bg4 runs into 14 Ne5! Bxd1 15 Bxd5 Be2 16 Nxc6 bxc6 17 Bxc4 Bxf1 18 Bxf1 and White has two powerful bishops, which are much better than Black's rooks) 14 Be3 when Black's centre is not stable at all, and White is planning both Ne5 and Ng5.

### 13 ... Qxd4?!

13 ... Qb5 is a better try from a practical point of view, since keeping queens on offers Black better chances than playing an endgame.

### 14 Nxc6 Qxd1 15 Rfxd1 bxc6 16 Bxc6 Rb8 17 Rac1

White can also increase the pressure by means of 17 Bf4 Rb6 18 Bd5 Be7 19 Be5.

### 17 ... Bg4 18 Rd4 Be6 19 Bd5

Black's main weakness is the c4-pawn, so White plays to trade the e6-bishop.

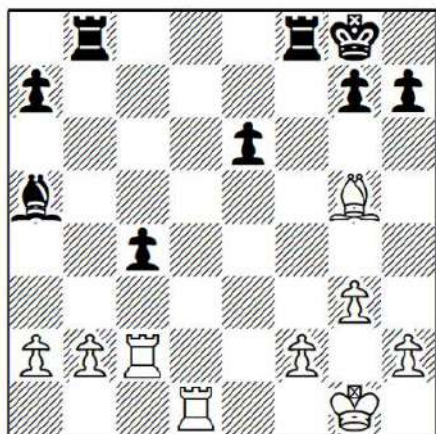
### 19 ... Bc5

If 19 ... Bxd5 then 20 Rxd5 Rfc8 21 Rd7 Bc5 22 Rc2 when Black has not fully equalized.

### 20 Rd2 Bb4 21 Rdd1 Ba5

21 ... Bxd5 22 Rxd5 Rfc8 23 Be3 a6 24 Ba7!? Ra8 25 Bd4 is possible too, but does not seriously change the character of the position.

### 22 Bxe6 fxe6 23 Rc2



Now White has a new weakness to exploit on e6. Black is going to have a tough time defending the endgame with three isolated pawns.

### 23 ... Rb5 24 Be3 Rfb8

If I were Black I would try trading as many pieces as possible with 24 ... Bb6 25 Bxb6 axb6 (25 ... Rxb6 26 Rd7! is too passive), even though after 26 Rd6 White is well on top.

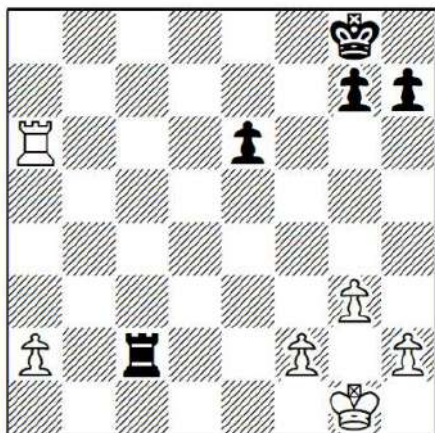
### 25 Rxc4 Rxb2 26 Rd7 R2b7

Black cannot afford to capture on a2: 26 ... Rxa2 27 Bd4 and White's attack is unstoppable (27 Rxa7 followed by Bd4 also looks powerful).

### 27 Rc8+!? Rxc8 28 Rxb7 Bb6

This is a better try than continuing with a passive play. 28 ... Rc2 29 Rxa7 Rxa2 30 Bd4 simply loses for Black and 28 ... a6 29 Re7! Rc6 30 Bd4 is not promising either.

### 29 Bxb6 axb6 30 Rxb6 Rc2 31 Ra6!



Despite having an extra pawn, White has to be extremely careful as many rook endgames are drawn even with extra material.

**31 ... e5 32 Kf1 e4 33 h3 Kf7 34 a4 Ra2**

**35 a5 h5 36 Ra7+ Kf6 37 a6 g6**

37 ... h4!? is probably a better try, although White should still win.

**38 Ra8 Kf7 39 a7 Kg7**

39 ... Ke7 loses to the well-known tactic 40 Rh8! Rxa7 41 Rh7+.

**40 Ke1 Kh7 41 Kd1 Kg7 42 Kc1 Kh7**

**43 Kb1 Ra6 44 g4 hxg4 45 hxg4 Kg7 46 g5**

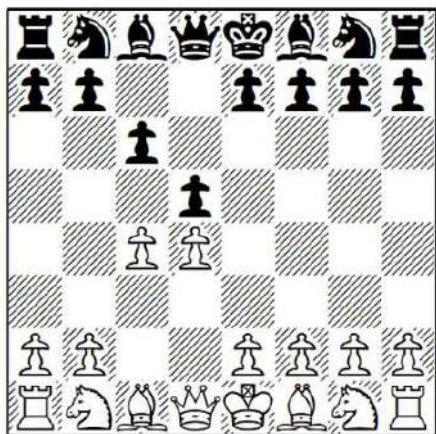
White has shown excellent technique and Black is going to run out of useful moves sooner or later.

**46 ... Kh7 47 Kb2 Kg7 48 Kb3 Kh7 49**

**Kb4 Kg7 50 Kb5 Ra2 51 Kb6 1-0**

# Chapter Three

## Slav Defence 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6



The Slav Defence is one of the most popular defences nowadays. Its big amount of theory and sharp lines sometimes even remind me of the Sicilian Defence. Despite its drawish appearance, I am recommending the Exchange variation, 3 cxd5 cxd5, for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it has been played a lot recently, even by top grandmasters and, secondly, we will not depend on exact theoretical lines, but on good understanding of the position.

Moreover, it is pretty hard to get an advantage against the Slav no matter what line you pick and, as you'll see in this chapter, sometimes even a small advantage is good enough to win. If this happens at elite games, imagine how useful these small advantages can be in normal games.

Our analysis starts after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4!? which stops some tricky lines by Black, and delaying the g1-knight's development (this is not a must though) can also have its benefits. I started to pay attention to this move order after analyzing some of Aronian's games and we begin this chapter with a nice battle between Aronian and Nakamura.

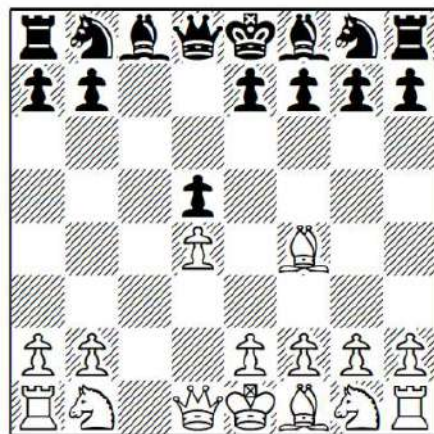
A possible antidote to our line for Semi-Slav players is the move order 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6, which can also lead to the so-called Triangle system. This is the subject of the final game of this chapter, Carlsen-Anand

*Game 23 L.Aronian-H.Nakamura  
Stavanger 2013*

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5

Despite its drawish nature, I think White has lot of potential in the Exchange and, as a Slav player myself, I must admit that this variation can be annoying.

### 3 ... cxd5 4 Bf4!?



This is a great move order to adopt because it avoids some of the secondary lines that Black can produce and usually the game simply transposes to the main line. Aronian has played it, which suggests it is a decent line for White. It avoids the tricky variation 4 Nc3 Nc6 5 Bf4 e5!?, as well as here both 4 ... Nf6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bf4 Nh5!? and 4 ... e5 5 dxe5 d4 6 Ne4 Qa5+.

### 4 ... Nc6

Black's alternatives will be considered later in this chapter.

### 5 e3 Nf6 6 Nc3 Bg4

Black usually prefers to develop his bishop before it gets locked in behind the

pawn chain when he plays ... e6. 6 ... a6 is another very popular choice for Black, but after 7 Bd3 Bg4 we actually transpose to the position reached in our main game after 11(!) moves.

### 7 Qb3

This is the best way to exploit 6 ... Bg4. Also possible are 7 f3 and 7 Be2.

### 7 ... Na5

Best, as shown by:

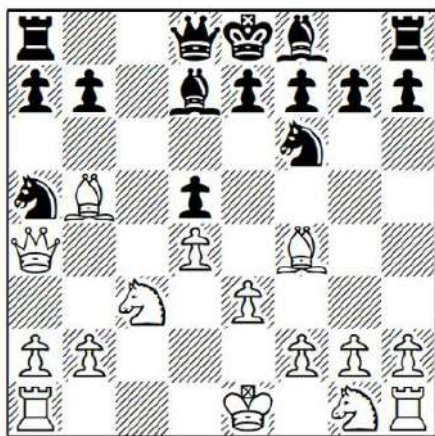
a) 7 ... Qb6?! 8 Qxb6 axb6 9 Bb5 leads to a positional advantage for White. I recommend studying Vachier-Lagrave versus Batchuluun later in this chapter in order to understand how to handle this structure.

b) 7 ... Qd7 is also dubious since White can play with Bb5, Nf3 and Ne5: for example 8 h3 Bh5 (or 8 ... Bf5 9 Nf3 e6 10 Ne5 and Black is in serious trouble) 9 g4 Bg6 10 Nf3.

### 8 Qa4+

8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Qa4 transposes to the main line.

### 8 ... Bd7 9 Bb5



9 Qc2 is the main move for White, but I prefer Aronian's choice. After 9 Qc2:

a) 9 ... Rc8 10 Nf3 g6 11 Bd3 Bg7 12 h3 b5 13 a3 Nc4 14 0-0 0-0 15 Rfc1 a6 16 Qe2 Bf5 17 Ne5 Nd7?! (17 ... Be6) 18 Bxf5 gxf5 19 Nd3 e6 20 a4 and White obtained a clear

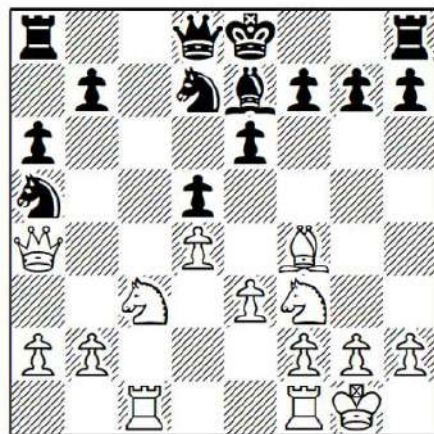
advantage in Zhou Weiqi-Ma Qun, Xinghua 2013

b) 9 ... e6 10 Bd3 Rc8 (10 ... Nh5!? is possible) 11 Nf3 Bb4 12 0-0 Nc4 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 14 Ne5 Rc8 15 Qb3 Qa5 (15 ... Bxc3!? 16 bxc3 Ne4 17 Qxb7 f6 18 Nxd7 Qxd7 is also worth considering; Black probably equalizes in the long run) 16 Nxd7 Nxd7 17 a3 Bxc3 18 Qxb7 0-0 19 bxc3 Nb6 20 Bc7 and White had the advantage in V.Kramnik-L.Aronian, Shanghai (rapid) 2010.

### 9 ... Nc6

Others:

a) The solid 9 ... e6 seems to be the best try here. After 10 Nf3 a6 11 Bxd7+ Nxd7 12 0-0 Be7 13 Rac1 we have:



a1) 13 ... 0-0?! is bad in view of 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 Bc7 and White wins a pawn.

a2) 13 ... b5 14 Qd1 Rc8 (if 14 ... 0-0 15 Nxd5!) 15 a4 b4 16 Ne2 with a solid edge.

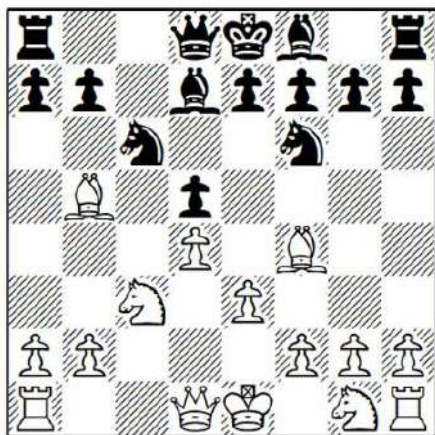
a3) 13 ... Nc4 14 e4 creates some action in the centre before Black completes development. Play can continue 14 ... 0-0 (14 ... dxe4 15 Nxe4 b5 16 Qc2 0-0 17 b3 Ncb6 18 Bc7 Qc8 19 Neg5 g6 20 Qe4 was suggested by Eljanov) 15 exd5 Ndb6 16 Qc2 Nxd5 17 Nxd5 exd5 18 Rfe1 Rc8 19 Qf5 was also suggested by Eljanov and White has some kingside pressure.

b) 9 ... Nc4 10 Nf3 a6 11 Bxd7+ Qxd7 12 Qxd7+ Kxd7 13 Ne5+ (13 Na4 looks

powerful too) 13 ... Ke8 (after 13 ... Ke6 14 Nd3 Kf5 Black avoids material loss, but his king is in terrible trouble) 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Nxc4 Nxf4 16 exf4 Rd8 17 Rd1 and White had a clear advantage with his extra pawn, I.Cosma-A.Abreu, Pedrido 2003.

White can also counter 9 ... e6 with 10 Bg5!?, which was played twice by GM Ju Wenjun. White is trying to disrupt Black's development: 10 ... Nc6 11 Nf3 Be7 (or 11 ... a6 12 Bxc6 Bxc6 13 Qb3 h6 14 Bh4 Bd6, as in Ju Wenjun-Ma Qun, Chinese League 2017, and here I like 15 0-0 0-0 16 Rfc1!?, keeping the other rook on a1 which is going to be useful for future queenside operations) 12 Ne5 Qc7 13 Rc1 0-0 14 Bxc6 Bxc6 15 Nxc6 bxc6 16 0-0 Rfc8 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 was Ju Wenjun-L.Fressinet, Gibraltar 2017, and here White has the upper hand after 18 Rc2.

### 10 Qd1!?



I would like to quote Grandmaster Sumets here: "I believe this is White's best chance to get an edge. Mainly, Black has a better version of the line 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 Bf4 e6 because he has already developed his light-squared bishop. Sooner or later White should play Bd3 so Black will get an extra tempo compared with the above-mentioned line."

Instead, 10 Nf3 is not dangerous at all: for example, 10 ... e6 (10 ... a6 11 Be2 e6 12

0-0 Be7 13 h3 0-0 14 Qd1 Rc8 15 Rc1 Na5 16 Ne5 Nc4 also gave Black a good position in D.Fridman-S.Ter Sahakyan, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 11 Ne5 Nxe5 12 Bxe5 a6 13 Bxd7+ Nxd7 14 Bg3 Be7 15 0-0 b5 16 Qc2 0-0 and Black had equalized in M.Ivanov-A.Sumets, Guben 2012.

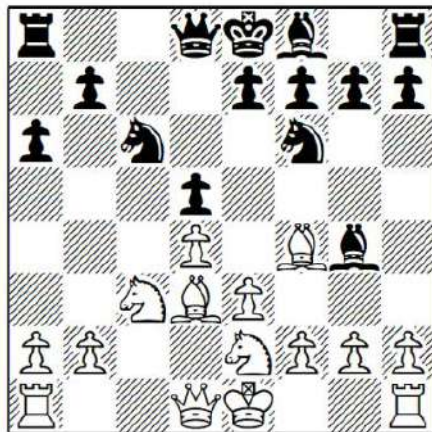
### 10 ... a6

10 ... e6 is the best try for Black despite the fact that his bishop remains inside the pawn chain. After 11 Nf3 Be7 White does best with 12 h3!?, before Black plays ... Nh5, and now:

a) 12 ... 0-0 13 0-0 Qb6 14 Qe2 Rac8 15 Bd3 Rfd8 16 Rac1 Be8 17 Rfd1 was played in A.Stefanova-G.Sargissian, Antwerp 2009, when 17 Na4 Nxd4 18 Nxb6 Nxe2+ 19 Bxe2 Rxc1 20 Rxc1 axb6 21 Rc7 Rd7 was equal. 17 Ne5!?. looks like an improvement if White wants to fight for an advantage.

b) 12 ... Ne4 (there is no need to weaken Black's pawn structure like this) 13 Nxe4 dxe4 14 Nd2 Bb4 15 a3 Bxd2+ 16 Qxd2 Ne7 17 Be2 Qb6 18 0-0 0-0 19 Rfc1 Nd5 20 Bg3 and White has a slight advantage due to his bishop-pair, V.Potkin-B.Esen, Legnica 2013.

### 11 Bd3 Bg4 12 Nge2



Here we see another benefit of our early move order: e2 is often a better square than

f3 for the knight, and now the f3 advance is available for White.

### 12 ... e6 13 0-0 Be7

13 ... Bxe2 is not terrible, but I would not recommend it as White's bishop-pair gives him a permanent advantage. After 14 Qxe2 Bd6 15 Bxd6 (15 Bg5!?) 15 ... Qxd6 16 Rac1 0-0 17 Na4 Nd7 18 Nc5 (18 a3!? Rfc8 19 Rc3 Ne7 20 Rfc1 h6 21 Nc5 Nxc5 22 dxc5 Qc7 23 b4 is possible) 18 ... Nxc5 19 Rxc5 Rfc8 20 Rfc1 g6 21 b4 White had a comfortable position in S.Brunello-P.Michalik, Meissen 2013.

### 14 Rc1 0-0 15 Na4

15 a3 is less incisive. After 15 ... Bh5 16 Na4 Nd7 17 Qb3 Ra7 18 Bg3 Bg6 19 Nf4 Na5 20 Qa2 Bxd3 21 Nxd3 Nc4 22 Nac5 b6 23 Nxd7 Qxd7 24 a4 Rc8 25 b3 Nd6 Black eventually reached full equality in H.Nakamura-F.Caruana, Zug 2013.

### 15 ... Rc8

After this natural move White captures one of Black's bishops, gaining a positional advantage.

A decent alternative is 15 ... Nd7 when we have:

a) 16 Qb3 e5!? 17 dxe5 Ndx5 18 Bxe5 (not 18 Rfd1? Nxd3 19 Qxd3 Nb4 20 Qd2 Nxa2 21 Rc7 Bd6 and Black is fine) 18 ... Nxe5 19 Rfd1 Nxd3 20 Qxd3 Qa5 21 Nac3 Rfd8 22 h3 Be6 23 Nd4 Rac8 is a variation is proposed by Sumets. The position is not easy to assess: White is better from the strategic point of view, but on the other hand, Black's bishops cannot be underestimated.

b) 16 f3 is a good try in order to fight for the advantage. After 16 ... Bh5 17 Qb3 Ra7 18 e4!? (not an easy move to find unless you are using an engine) 18 ... dxe4 (if 18 ... Bg6 19 Be3!?) 19 Bxe4 suddenly Black has a passive position: for example, 19 ... Na5 20 Qe3 and the isolated pawn is not a problem; what really matters here is White's active pieces.

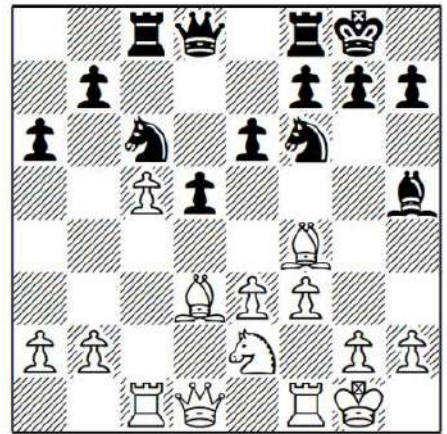
### 16 f3 Bh5 17 Nc5 Bxc5

Others:

a) 17 ... e5!? was probably a better try, since at least Black then has active play compared to in the game. After 18 dxe5 Nxe5 19 Bxe5 Bxc5 20 Qd2 White has a slight advantage.

b) 17 ... Qb6 18 g4 Bg6 19 g5 Nh5 20 Nd7 is not lost for Black, but his compensation is insufficient.

### 18 dxc5!



Recapturing with the rook is also possible, but the text is better. 18 Rxc5 Bg6 19 Bxg6 hxg6 20 h3 leaves White with just a small advantage.

### 18 ... e5 19 Bg5 h6 20 Bxf6

Or 20 Bh4 e4 (if 20 ... g5 21 Bg3 and White can open the kingside by means of h2-h4) 21 Ng3 Bxf3 22 Be2! (22 gxf3 exd3 is also playable, but then the f-file remains closed) 22 ... Bxe2 23 Nxe2 g5 24 Bg3 and White's initiative is much more important than Black's extra pawn.

### 20 ... Qxf6 21 Ng3 Qg5 22 Qd2!?

22 Nxh5 Qxh5 23 Qb3 Qg5 is unclear.

### 22 ... d4

This is the only move, otherwise White plays f3-f4 advantageously:

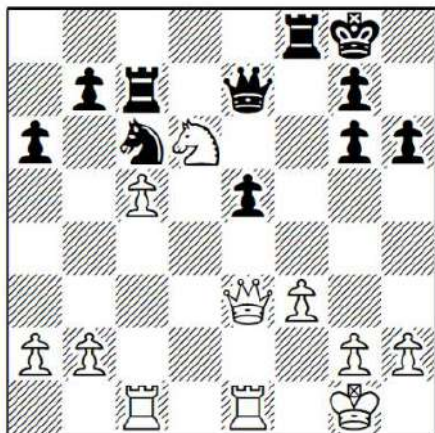
a) 22 ... Rfd8 23 f4 exf4 24 exf4 and Black is going to have a hard time defending on the kingside.

b) 22 ... Bg6 23 Bxg6 Qxg6 24 Qxd5  
wins a pawn for White.

**23 Qe1 dxe3?**

Probably the fatal mistake. There would have been plenty of fight left in the position after 23 ... Rcd8 24 f4 Qh4.

**24 Ne4 Qe7 25 Nd6 Rc7 26 Qxe3 Bg6  
27 Bxg6 fxc6 28 Rfe1**



White has an obvious advantage. He has more space and Black suffers from weaknesses on the kingside.

**28 ... Qe6 29 a3 g5 30 Rc4 Qd5 31 Qe4**

It is fine to trade pieces when you have a superior pawn structure.

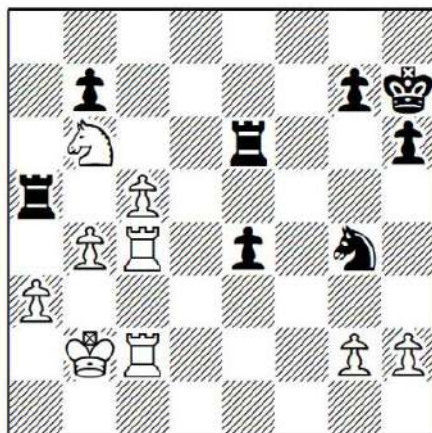
**31 ... Qxe4 32 Rcx4 Rd8 33 R1e3 Kh7  
34 Kf2 a5 35 Rc3 Ra8 36 Ke3 Ra6 37 Nc4  
Ne7 38 Nb6 a4 39 Kd2 Ra5 40 Nxa4 Nd5  
41 Rc2 Nf4 42 Kc1**

White is up a pawn and keeps a solid position.

**42 ... Rc6 43 Kb1 g4**

Black loses another pawn, but, sensibly, he is trying to create some counterplay, whereas if he plays quietly, he will lose without a fight.

**44 fxg4 Nd3 45 Re3 Nf4 46 b3 Re6 47  
Kb2 Nd5 48 Re4 Nf6 49 Rec4 e4 50 Nb6  
Nxc4 51 b4**

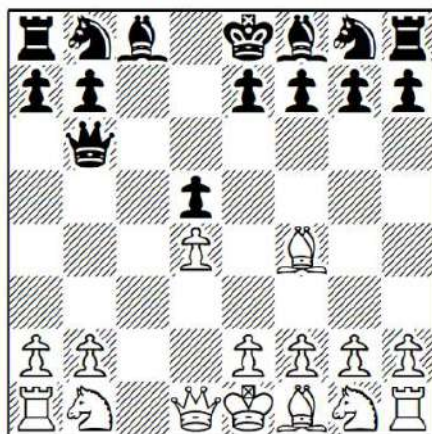


Aronian's technique is worthy of close examination. Nakamura is trying his best to obtain some counterplay, but White's play is just too powerful.

**51 ... Ra6 52 Re2 Nxe2 53 Rxe4 Rg6  
54 Re7 Ra7 55 a4 Nf1 56 b5 Ng3 57 Rf2  
Rg5 58 c6 Rxa4 59 Nxa4 Rxb5+ 60 Kc2  
bxc6 61 Nc3 Ra5 62 Rff7 Nf5 63 Ra7 Re5  
64 g4 Nd4+ 65 Kd2 Ne6 66 Rf5 Nd4 67  
Rxe5 Nf3+ 68 Ke3 Nxe5 69 Kf4 Ng6+ 70  
Ke4 1-0**

*Game 24 B.Gulko-R.Sherbakov Helsinki  
1992*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4 Qb6**



The most natural response to 4 Bf4. If we think about it, we realize that we do the

same thing when Black plays with ... Bf5 or ... Bg4. Before continuing with the 4 ... Qb6 line I would like to discuss an alternative which needs consideration: 4 ... e6. We have already seen positions with Black's light-squared trapped inside the pawn chain and we are going to see more of this structure throughout this chapter.

After 4 ... e6 play continues 5 Nc3 Bd6 6 Bxd6 Qxd6 7 e3 (trading pieces is supposed to help Black, although we have to point out that the dark-squared piece was Black's better bishop) 7 ... Nc6 (considering what happens in this game, 7 ... Nf6 may be an improvement, when White can try playing with f2-f4, Nf3 and Bd3, as will be seen in Li Chao-Yu Lie later in this chapter) 8 Qg4! Kf8 (8 ... g6 is good for White as he has created fresh weaknesses in Black's camp) 9 Bb5 Nf6 10 Qh4 Ne7 11 Bd3 Bd7 12 Rc1 b5 13 Nf3 b4 14 Ne2 Nc6 15 0-0 h6 16 Ne5!? Nxe5 17 dxe5 Qxe5 18 Qxb4+ Kg8 19 Nd4 and White had obtained a clear advantage in E.Romanov-M.Tscharotschkin, Skopje 2014.

### 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 Rc1!

This natural move is likely best, although we will consider two alternatives in Game 28.

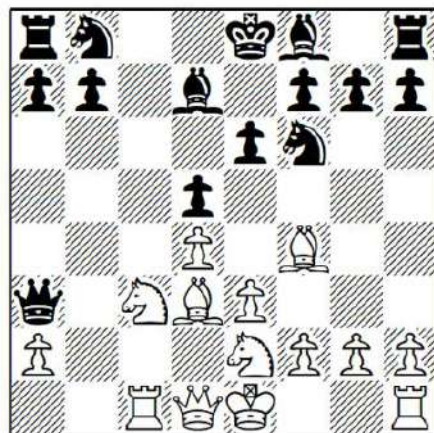
### 6 ... Bd7

Instead, if 6 ... Nc6 (and not 6 ... Qxb2?? 7 Na4 Qb4+ 8 Bd2, winning material) 7 e3 Qxb2 (otherwise there is no point in playing 4 ... Qb6) 8 Bd3 Bg4 9 Nge2 Bxe2 (not 9 ... Nb4?! 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Bxd7+ Nxd7 12 Rb1 Qa3 13 Nb5, but 9 ... Qa3 is a better try even if White keeps the initiative) 10 Bxe2 e5 11 dxe5 Bb4 12 0-0 Bxc3 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Rc2 Qb6 15 Qxd5 and White has a substantial advantage.

### 7 e3 Qxb2 8 Bd3 e6 9 Nge2

This is much stronger than 9 Nf3, as it is necessary to bolster the knight on c3 before Black plays ... Bb4.

### 9 ... Qa3



Others:

a) 9 ... Nc6 runs into 10 Rb1.

b) 9 ... Bb4 10 0-0 0-0 and now:

b1) 11 Rb1 Qa3 12 Rb3 Qa5 13 Qb1!

when White's compensation is more than enough as a3 is coming next.

b2) 11 a3!?, as suggested by *Rybka*, looks even better: for example, 11 ... Be7 (if 11 ... Qxa3 12 Ra1 Qb2 13 Ra2) 12 Rb1 Qxa3 13 Rxb7 and Black is under pressure.

### 10 0-0 a6

If 10 ... Bb4 then 11 Rb1 (or 11 Nb5 Bxb5 12 Bxb5+ Nc6 13 Rxc6 bxc6 14 Bxc6+ Ke7 15 Bxa8 Rxa8 16 Qc2 and Black has not yet fully equalized) 11 ... 0-0 12 Rb3 Qa5 13 a3!? with good play.

### 11 Be5!?

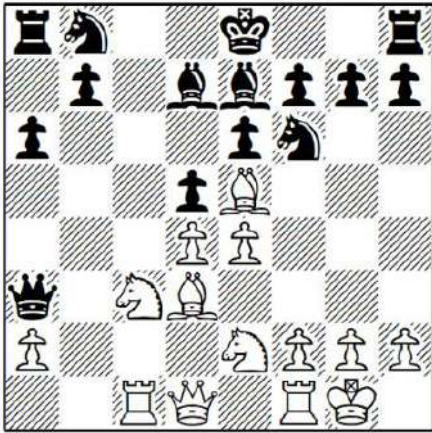
White tries opening the position before Black can complete development. If 11 Nb1 Qb4! 12 a3 Qb6 13 Bc7 Qa7 and Black manages to survive with a solid position.

However, 11 e4!? is worth a try: for example, 11 ... dxe4 12 Bxe4 (not 12 Nxe4 Nd5) 12 ... Nxe4 13 Nxe4 Nc6 (after 13 ... Be7 White has a lot of ideas with d5-d6, Rc7 and maybe even Rc3-g3, while 13 ... Bc6 14 N2c3 Nd7 15 d5 exd5 16 Nxd5 just looks to be winning for White) 14 N2c3 followed by d4-d5 with good play.

### 11 ... Be7

If 11 ... Nc6 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 e4 and White opens the position with the usual e3-e4 break.

**12 e4**



12 Rb1 b5 13 Bc7 forces Black to play 13 ... Bd8 14 Bxd8 (after 14 Rb3 Qe7 15 Be5 Nc6 Black has enough resources and a solid position) 14 ... Kxd8 15 e4 when White has the advantage.

**12 ... Bc6?!**

This is too slow. Black has to play 12 ... dxe4 (12 ... Nc6 is strongly met by 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 exd5 Nxd4 15 Ne4!) 13 Nxe4 Nc6 14 Rc3 (I would also consider 14 Nxf6+ gxf6 15 Bf4 followed by d4-d5, destroying Black's defences) 14 ... Qa5 15 Nd6+ with unclear play.

**13 exd5**

White can improve here with 13 Bxf6! Bxf6 14 exd5 exd5 15 Nxd5! Bxd5 16 Rc8+ Bd8 17 Nf4 Be6 (not 17 ... Kd7 18 Qc2 Bc6 19 Bf5+ Kd6 20 Qc4 and Black is defenceless) 18 Nxe6 fxe6 19 Qf3! when he has a clear advantage.

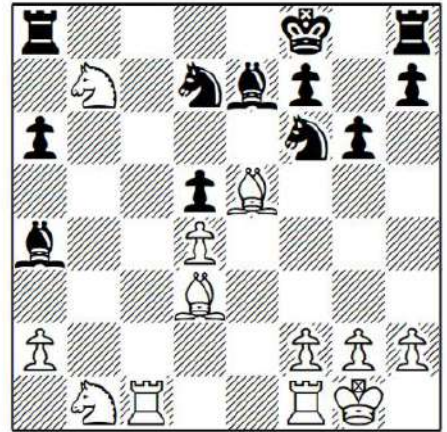
**13 ... exd5 14 Ng3**

White can also consider 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nf4 0-0 16 Ncxd5 Qd6 (not 16 ... Nd7? 17 Rc3 Qd6 18 Bxh7+ Kxh7 19 Qh5+ Kg8 20 Rh3 when Black is defenceless on the h-file) 17 Nxf6+ Qxf6 18 g3 and White has the more active pieces.

**14 ... Nbd7**

14 ... 0-0 15 Nf5 is just too passive for Black.

**15 Nf5 g6 16 Nb1 Qa4 17 Nd6+ Kf8 18 Qxa4 Bxa4 19 Nxb7**

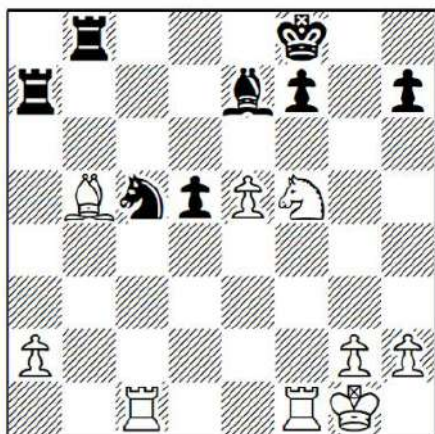


Black managed to trade queens off, which is very useful for him as he was facing a powerful attack. However, the resulting endgame is not that easy to defend as Black's coordination is far from ideal.

**19 ... Nxe5 20 dxe5 Nd7 21 f4 Ra7 22 Nd6 Kg7 23 Nc3 Bc6 24 Ne2 Bb5 25 Nxb5 axb5 26 Bxb5 Nc5**

26 ... Rxa2 is not good enough either for equality after 27 Nc3 Ra7 28 Nxd5. Apart from the extra pawn, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops favours the attacking side.

**27 f5! gxf5 28 Ng3 Rb8 29 Nxf5+ Kf8**



### 30 Nxe7

All of a sudden what started out as a solid position ends up being broken.

### 30 ... Rxb5 31 Nxd5 Kg7 32 Rc4

32 Nf6! Ne6 33 Rc8 was even faster, as shown by 33 ... Rxa2 34 Rg8+ Kh6 35 Ng4+ Kh5 36 Rf5+ Kh4 37 g3+ Kh3 38 Rh5 mate.

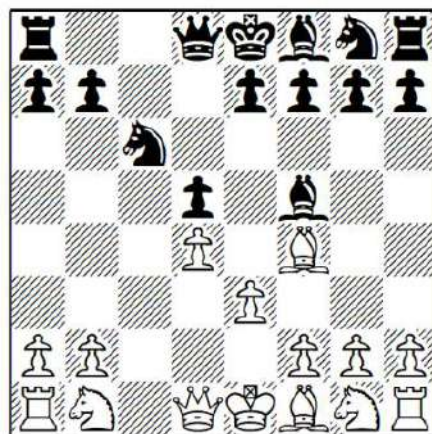
### 32 ... Ra4 33 Ne3 Rxa2 34 Nf5+ Kg6 1-0

A final mistake probably due to time pressure. After 35 Rg4+ Kh5 36 Rg7 Black is getting mated, but 34 ... Kf8 35 Nd6 was also hopeless.

The early queen development with 4 ... Qb6 and ... Qxb2 is a key try for Black against our set-up, but White seems to have good methods to counter it.

*Game 25 M.Vachier-Lagrave-T.Batchuluun* Tromsø Olympiad 2014

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4 Nc6 5 e3 Bf5



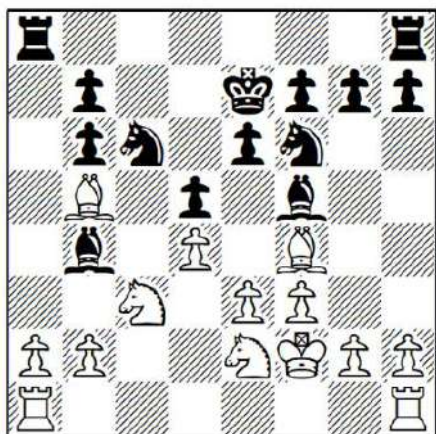
5 ... Nf6 6 Nc3 Bf5 7 Rc1 leads to the main line of our repertoire, and we can also reach this position via a 5 ... Bf5 move order. I included this game for two reasons, though: 6 Qb3!? is a good line to have as an alternative and we will see some ideas to counter the doubled b-pawn structure Black can adopt.

### 6 Qb3!? Qb6

6 ... Qd7 is not good and we already know that d7 is not a good square for Black's queen. It can be exploited with the plan of Bb5 and Nf3-e5. Play can continue 7 Nc3 e6 8 Nf3 Nf6 9 Ne5! and Black is already facing a strong pressure after 9 ... Qc8 (9 ... Nxe5? 10 dxe5 followed by Bb5 is crushing) 10 Rc1.

### 7 Qxb6 axb6 8 Nc3 Nf6 9 Nf3

Let us consider too the Bb5 and Nge2 manoeuvre. After 9 Bb5 e6 10 Nge2 Bb4 11 f3 Ke7 12 Kf2 White's position is risk-free.



He stands better on the queenside and can also try advancing on the kingside. Ni Hua-Yu Ruiyuan, Qingdao 2013, continued 12 ... Rhc8 13 a3 Bxc3?! (after this, as well as the better pawn structure, White has the bishop-pair too, but 13 ... Bd6 14 Bxd6+ Kxd6 15 g4 Bg6 16 h4 is also very good for White) 14 Nxc3 and, as usual, White has a solid advantage.

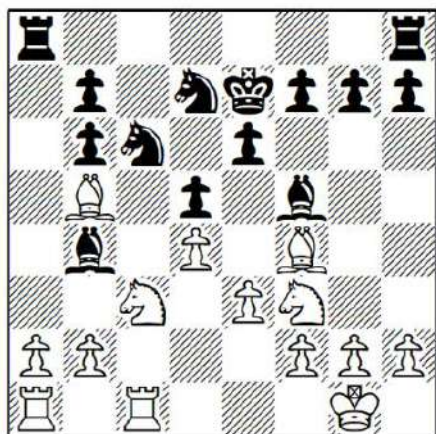
### 9 ... e6 10 Bb5 Bb4

Alternatively, if 10 ... Nd7 11 Nh4 Bg6 (11 ... Bg4 also leaves White better after 12 h3 Bh5 13 g4 Bg6 14 Nxg6 hxg6 15 Rc1) 12 Nxg6 hxg6 13 Rc1 with a dream endgame for White.

### 11 0-0

White does not get much after 11 Ne5 Ne4 12 Nxc6 Nxc3 13 Nxb4+ Nxb5 14 f3 Kd7.

### 11 ... Ke7 12 Rfc1 Nd7



If Black tries 12 ... h6, creating an escape square for the bishop on f5, then White increase the pressure with 13 Ne5, and if 13 ... Rhc8 14 Na4.

### 13 Na4

Here White would do better to insist on obtaining the bishop-pair with 13 Nh4:

a) After 13 ... Bg4 we see the point of White's idea as play continues 14 h3 Bh5 15 Nf5+! exf5 (or 15 ... Kf8 16 Nd6) 16 Nxd5+ Ke6 17 Bxc6, winning material.

b) 13 ... Bg6 14 Nxg6+ hxg6 15 Bd3 and White has a slight advantage.

### 13 ... Ra5!?

Now we enter a complicated variation where White has to sacrifice two minor pieces for a rook.

### 14 Bxc6 bxc6 15 Nxb6!

The only move from a practical point of view since 15 b3 Rc8 just gives Black the initiative with the bishop-pair and better pawn structure.

### 15 ... Nxb6 16 Ne5 Rc8 17 Nxc6+ Rxc6 18 Rxc6

This position is not easy to play. White has good practical chances, though, because the queenside pawns are hard to counter.

### 18 ... Nc4 19 b3

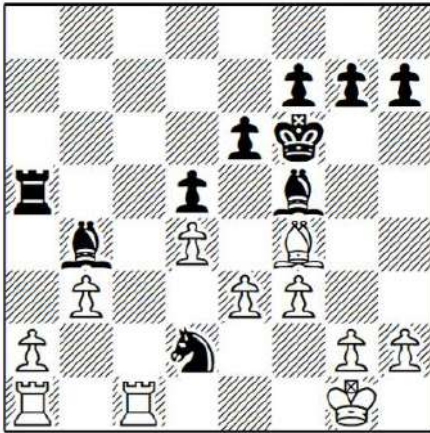
19 Rc7+ Kf6 20 Rb7 is also worth considering. As we will see later in the

game, the black king is vulnerable on f6 and White can often create a mating net.

**19 ... Nd2 20 Rcc1**

Protecting against ... Nxb3. 20 Rb6 Bc3 21 Bd6+ Kf6 22 Bb4 was a good way to trade pieces, but the position remains unclear after 22 ... Bxb4 23 Rxb4 Bc2.

**20 ... Kf6 21 f3**



**21 ... Ba3?**

This is probably Black's first real mistake of the game. After 21 ... Ra7 22 Kf2 Bd3 the position is still unclear.

**22 Rc7 Bb4 23 Rb7!**

Black has carelessly allowed the Rc7-Rb7 manoeuvre and has just lost a tempo with his bishop.

**23 ... Nxb3**

After 23 ... Bc3 24 Rc1 Nb1 Black is in trouble and will soon lose one of his minor pieces, as shown by 25 Be5+ Kg6 26 e4 dxe4 27 g4.

**24 Rf1 Nd2 25 Rc1!**

White plays to win. After 25 Rxb4 Nxf1 26 Kxf1 Rxa2 Black equalizes fully.

**25 ... Ra4**

25 ... g5 26 Be5+ Kg6 27 Rxb4 Rxa2 was Black's last chance, but with his being down the exchange and having no real targets to attack, the win is simply a matter of technique for White.

**26 Rcc7**

Entering the seventh rank and preparing a mating net.

**26 ... Bg6 27 h4**

White plans Bg5+ followed by g2-g4.

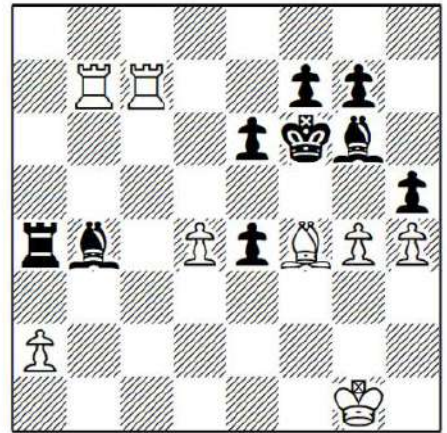
**27 ... h5**

27 ... Bh5 runs into the simple 28 Be5+ Kg6 29 Rxf7.

**28 e4! Nxe4 29 fxe4 dxe4**

29 ... Bxe4 30 Rxf7+ Kg6 31 Rxg7+ Kf5 32 Rbf7 is a pretty mate, but in any case Black can no longer escape.

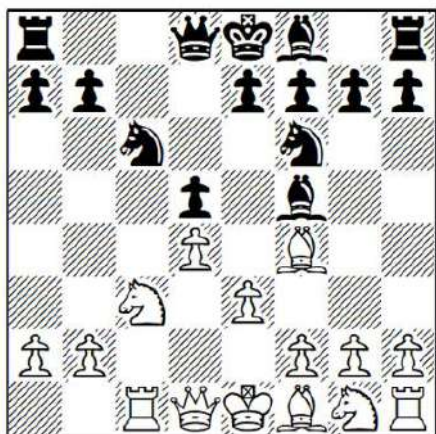
**30 g4! 1-0**



After 30 ... hxg4 31 Bg5+ Kf5 32 Rb5+ mate will soon occur.

*Game 26 P.Eljanov-R.Mamedov Tromsø Olympiad 2014*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4 Nc6 5 e3 Nf6 6 Nc3 Bf5 7 Rc1!?**



This is the starting position of our analysis. White has better chances after playing the flexible 7 Rc1 rather than the main line 7 Nf3, although 7 Qb3 is also worth considering.

### 7 ... Qb6

Eljanov explains this position as follows: “The main idea of the subtle move 7 Rc1 is revealed after 7 ... e6 8 Qb3. Now after Black has closed the h3-c8 diagonal the main defensive resource ... Na5 is simply impossible. So Black should stick to 8 ... Qb6 (8 ... Na5? 9 Qb5+ Nd7 10 Nxd5, planning Bc7, or 8 ... Bb4 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 Rxc3 when the two bishops give White an easy game) 9 Qxb6 axb6 10 Bb5. This endgame is very pleasant for White, but Kramnik did not manage to convert it.”

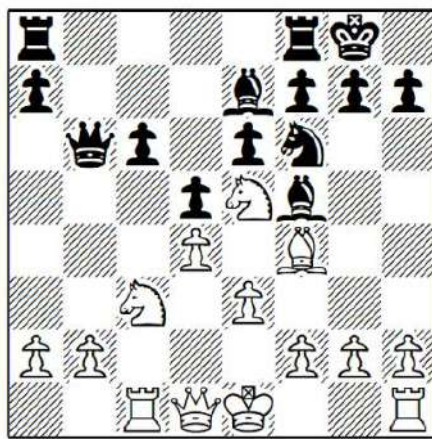
Eljanov is referring to the game V.Kramnik-L.Aronian, Wijk aan Zee 2011, which continued 10 ... Be7 11 f3 (11 Nf3!?) 11 ... 0-0 12 a3 Rfc8 13 Nge2 Na5 14 Na4 Rxc1+ 15 Nxc1 Nc4 16 Bxc4 dxc4 17 Nxb6 Ra6 18 Nxc4 Nd5 19 Ne5 Rb6 20 Ned3 Bxd3 21 Nxd3 Bxa3 22 Bg3 Bxb2 23 Ke2 Rc6 24 Bf2 Rc2+ 25 Kd1 Rxf2 26 Nxf2 ½-½.

Instead, the main line nowadays is 7 ... a6 8 Nf3 e6 9 Qb3 Ra7 10 Be2 (10 Ne5 Nxe5 11 Bxe5 Nd7 12 Bg3 Be7 13 Qd1 0-0 14 Bd3 only led to a draw in V.Ivanchuk-Le

Quang Liem, Gibraltar 2013) 10 ... Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Na4 Nd7 13 a3, as in A.Dreev-P.Harikrishna, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005, when White has some pressure.

### 8 Bb5 e6 9 Nf3 Bb4?!

At first sight this looks like a good move. However, Black will need this bishop later in the game, so it is much better to play the solid 9 ... Be7 10 Ne5 0-0 11 Bxc6 bxc6, after which we have:



a) 12 g4 Bg6 13 Qe2 c5 is doubled-edged, but I would think twice before advancing my kingside pawns so as White.

b) 12 0-0 Qxb2 13 g4 Bg6 14 Na4 (14 h4!?) 14 ... Qb5 15 Qb3 (after 15 Nxc6 Ba3 16 Rc3 Rfe8 17 f3 Bf8 18 Rf2 we reach an unusual position where White has more space, although I do not see clear targets to attack so the chances are about level) 15 ... Qxb3 16 axb3 Rfc8 17 f3 Ne8?! (17 ... h5!?) 18 Rxc6 Bf8 19 Rfc1 Rxc6 20 Rxc6 Bb1 21 Nc5 Bxc5 22 Rxc5 f6 23 Nc6 a6 and Black managed to draw in I.Ivanisevic-Wang Yue, Al Ain 2012. Chinese Grandmaster Wang is a great defender, although I think White's position is by far the easier to play here.

### 10 0-0 Bxc3

If 10 ... 0-0 then 11 Bxc6 Qxc6 (or 11 ... bxc6 12 Nh4 Bg4 13 f3 Bh5 14 Na4 Qb5 15 g4 Bg6 16 Nxc6 hxc6 17 Rf2! and White has a positional advantage) 12 Ne5 Qa6 13

g4 Bg6 14 h4 h6 15 Qa4 (White has a slight advantage too after 15 Nxg6 fxg6 16 f3, as suggested by Eljanov) 15 ... Qxa4 16 Nxa4 and White has the better chances in this endgame.

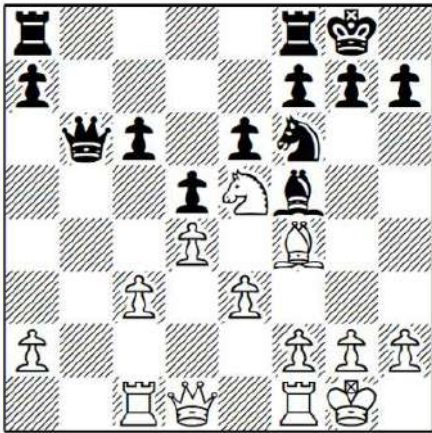
**11 Bxc6+ bxc6 12 bxc3!**

Best, as 12 Rxc3 Qxb2 13 Rxc6 0-0 (and not 13 ... Qxa2?! 14 Bd6!) 14 Qb3 Qxb3 15 axb3 Rfc8 is too drawish.

**12 ... 0-0**

12 ... Qa6! is a better try since then Nh4 is no longer possible in view of the reply ... Bd3. After 13 Ne5 (if 13 Bd6 Bd3 14 Re1 Ne4 15 Bb4 f6 and Black castles by hand) 13 ... h6 14 c4 White can consider a pawn storm on the kingside with h4 and g4, while the presence of opposite-coloured bishops should favour the attacking side.

**13 Ne5**



White can also try to exploit the fact Black has not yet played ... Qa6 with 13 Nh4! and after 13 ... c5 14 Nxf5 exf5 15 Rb1 Qc6 16 Qd3 g6 17 dxc5 Ne4 (if 17 ... Qxc5 18 Be5 when White has a powerful bishop) 18 Rfd1 White has a slight advantage.

**13 ... Qa6?**

Now it is too late to play this. Black does better to pay attention to the position of the bishop on f5, so 13 ... h6 is better, although after 14 g4 Bh7 15 h4 the kingside pressure

continues and White still has c3-c4 in reserve.

**14 g4 Bg6 15 h4 h6**

Likewise, after 15 ... h5 16 g5 Ng4 17 Nd7 Black is lacking counterplay.

**16 Nxg6 fxg6 17 f3**

White has a clear advantage due to his superior minor piece and pawn structure.

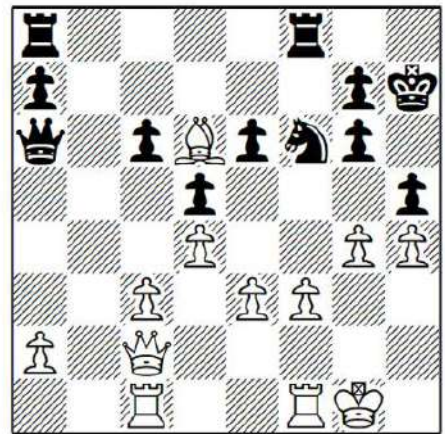
**17 ... h5**

Black can also try activating his position by means of 17 ... Nh7 18 Qc2 g5 19 hxg5 Nxg5 20 Kg2, although White still keeps the advantage.

**18 Qc2 Kh7**

Opening the position with 18 ... hxg4 19 Qxg6 can only help White: for example, 19 ... Rf7 (or 19 ... gxf3 20 Rxf3 Ne4 21 Be5 Qb7 22 Qxe6+) 20 Rc2 gxf3 21 Rxf3 Raf8 22 Rg2 and White's kingside attack will be very strong.

**19 Bd6!**



One of the advantages of this natural move is the fact that Black cannot now double rooks on the f-file, whereas after the weaker 19 gxh5 Nxh5 20 Be5 Rf5 Black would have good control of the light squares.

**19 ... Rf7**

If 19 ... Rfe8?! then 20 gxh5 Nxh5 21 Kh2 which prepares Rg1 with a clear advantage.

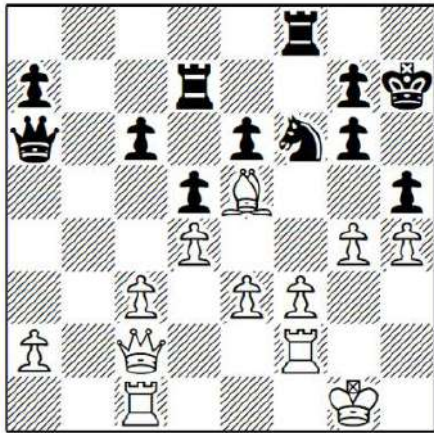
## 20 Rf2!

An useful waiting move. Now whenever Black captures on g4, White is going to have the possibility of h4-h5, opening the kingside.

## 20 ... Rd7

If, instead, 20 ... Qa5 21 Rg2 hxg4 22 h5! and 20 ... Qc8 21 Rg2 hxg4 22 h5 also leaves Black with a defenceless position. Finally, 20 ... hxg4 allows 21 h5! Nxh5 22 Rh2 when there is no way to stop Rxh5+.

## 21 Be5 Rf8



Black has managed to hold White up on the kingside, but after a simple move White now picks up a pawn which proves more than enough to win.

## 22 Bxf6 Rxf6 23 gxh5 Kh6

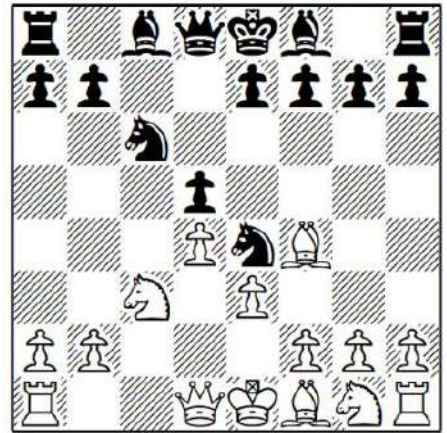
If 23 ... Rf5 24 hxg6+ Kxg6 25 Rg2+ Kf7 26 Kf2 followed by Rcg1.

## 24 hxg6 Rxg6+ 25 Rg2 Rxg2+ 26 Kxg2 Rf7 27 Rg1 g6 28 Kh1 Rf6 29 h5! 1-0

Black cannot stop all of White threats. 29 ... gxh5 runs into 30 Qg2, while 29 ... Kg7 30 Rxg6+ does not help.

*Game 27 A.Graf-S.Atalik* European Individual Championship, Istanbul 2003

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Bf4 Nc6 6 e3 Ne4?!**



We will see this idea from time to time in different variations, but White should get the advantage with simple play. After all, Black is wasting a tempo and this leap works only if White co-operatively captures on e4.

## 7 Nge2!

7 Nxe4 dxe4 is weaker as here Black has extra space and also controls the f3-square: for example, 8 Ne2 e5 9 dxe5 Qa5+ 10 Nc3 Bb4 11 Qc2 0-0 and Black has good chances to equalize, as pointed out by Grandmaster Atalik.

## 7 ... Nxc3

Others:

a) After 7 ... Bf5 a line analysed by Atalik goes 8 Qb3 e5 9 Bxe5 Nxe5 10 Nxe4 dxe4 11 dxe5 Qa5+ 12 Nc3 Bb4 13 Bc4 0-0 14 e6! and White has much the better position.

b) 7 ... g5 rather rolls the dice. There is no need to create such weaknesses on the kingside and after 8 Bg3 Nxc3 9 Nxc3 (9 hxg3!?) 9 ... e6 10 Bd3 White can try Rc1 and Bb1 with a comfortable strategic plus.

## 8 Nxc3 e6

Black cannot even consider developing the bishop on c8 actively as 8 ... Bf5 9 Qb3! wins material for White.

## 9 Bd3 Bd6

Alternatively, 9 ... Bd7 10 0-0 Be7 11 Rc1 when White will soon play Qg4 or Qh5, creating weaknesses on the kingside.

**10 Qg4!**

Capturing on d6 is also possible, as White has the much better bishop on d3, but Black's main problem here is his lack of development and that is the reason why White prefers not to trade pieces yet.

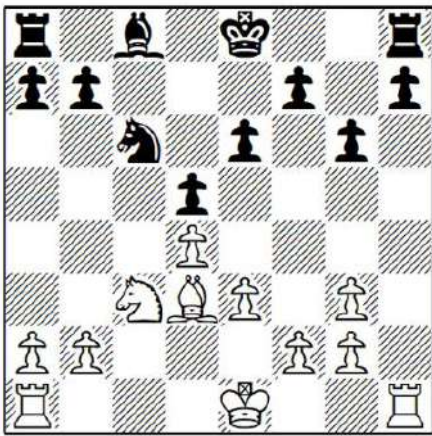
**10 ... g6**

If 10 ... 0-0? then 11 Bh6 and Black cannot play 11 ... Qf6 in view of 12 Bg5!, winning the queen.

**11 Bxd6**

White goes for a risk-free endgame plus, but keeping the queens on board is even stronger. After 11 Qg3 Bxf4 12 Qxf4 White's advantage is clear, as Black will struggle to trade queens and there is no safe place for his king.

**11 ... Qxd6 12 Qg3 Qxg3 13 hxg3**



White enjoys the much better bishop and can also play for pressure down the h-file. This game proves that such small advantages are often enough to win, even in games between strong grandmasters.

**13 ... Bd7**

13 ... h5 looks like a good way to stop White from playing Rh6, but the problem is that White then breaks with g3-g4: for

example, 14 Rh4 Ke7 15 g4 and White has fresh targets to attack on the kingside.

**14 Kd2 Ne7 15 Rac1 Rc8 16 e4**

16 g4 0-0 17 g5! f6 18 gxf6 Rxf6 19 f4 also looks very promising for White.

**16 ... f6**

16 ... dxe4 looks risky, but may be playable for Black. After 17 Nxe4 Rxc1 18 Nd6+ Kf8 19 Rxc1 Bc6 he might manage to survive the storm.

**17 exd5 exd5 18 Bb5**

This move is not as innocent as it looks. The alternative is 18 Nb5 Bxb5 (or 18 ... Rxc1 19 Nd6+ Kf8 20 Rxc1) 19 Rxc8+ Nxc8 20 Bxb5+ when White's bishop gives him a slight edge.

**18 ... Kd8**

After 18 ... a6 White replies 19 Bd3 when both c5 and b6 are ugly holes in Black's position.

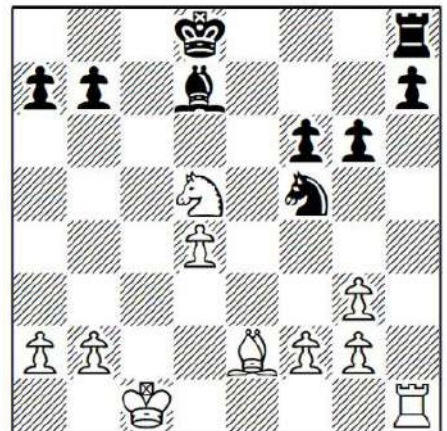
**19 Be2 Nf5?**

There was no need to play this aggressive move, since 19 ... Be6 restricts White's advantage to a minimum. Black should then hold the game if he plays accurately.

**20 Nxd5 Rxc1**

Or if 20 ... Nxd4 21 Rxc8+ Bxc8 22 Nxf6 and White is a pawn up.

**21 Kxc1!**



Possibly Black missed this move when he played 19 ... Nf5. However, even after 21 Rxc1 White keeps his extra pawn: 21 ... Nxd4 22 Nxf6 Bc6 (or 22 ... Rf8 23 Ne4) 23 f3 Ke7 24 Ng4 Nxe2 25 Kxe2 and White's extra pawn is going to have the final word.

### 21 ... Nxd4 22 Bc4 Rf8?

Not best, but even 22 ... Bc6 23 Nxf6 Ke7 24 Rxh7+ Rxh7 25 Nxh7 Bxg2 doesn't help Black much.

### 23 Rxh7 Bc6 24 Kd2 a5 25 Kc3 Nf5 26 Nf4 Bd7 27 Be6 1-0

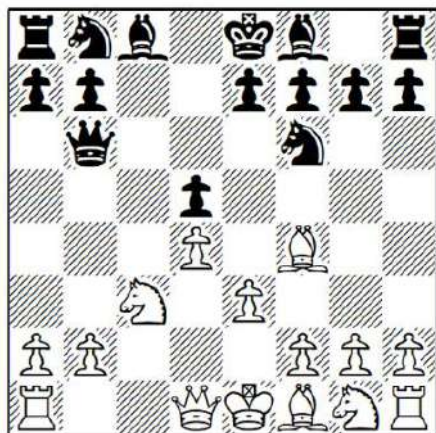
White showed excellent technique in this game, although keeping queens on in this specific line is also very promising.

*Game 28 A.Grischuk-G.Kamsky* Moscow (rapid) 2013

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Bf4 Qb6

Despite this being a rapid game, I decided to include it because it is another excellent demonstration of how to exploit an early ... Qb6 by Black. As usual, we are not wasting time defending the b2-pawn, but will develop instead. Note too that our move order would be 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Qb6.

### 6 e3!?



Possible too are 6 Rc1, as we saw in Game 24, and 6 Qd2 Nc6 7 e3 Bf5 when 8 f3!? is White's only try if he wants to fight for the advantage. The game A.Morozevich-B.Predojevic, Sarajevo 2008, continued 8 ... e6 9 Rc1 Bb4 10 h4 (hyper-aggressive play from Morozevich) 10 ... h5 11 a3 Bxc3 12 Rxc3 0-0 13 Be2 (maybe White can improve his play by means of 13 Ne2 Rfe8 14 Ng3 Bg6 15 Be2) 13 ... Rfe8 (13 ... Rfc8! 14 Nh3 Ne7 is pleasant for Black) 14 Bd1 e5 15 Bxe5 Nxe5 16 dxe5 Rxe5 17 Ne2 Rae8 18 Nd4 and White had a slight advantage.

### 6 ... Nc6

6 ... Bf5 7 Rc1 Nc6 is another move order, as was seen in K.Dragun-V.Artemiev, Moscow 2014. Here instead of 8 Bd3, I like 8 Bb5 a6 (or 8 ... e6 9 Nf3 Bb4 10 0-0 0-0 11 Bxc6 bxc6 12 Nh4) 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10 Nf3 e6 (again, if 10 ... Qxb2 11 0-0 e6 12 Na4 Qb5 13 Nh4 and White has a strong initiative) 11 0-0 and White has a positional advantage. All these variations are similar to the Eljanov-Mamedov game previously analyzed in this chapter.

Possibly Black can though achieve equality, as pointed out by Ftacnik, with the brave 6 ... Qxb2 7 Bb5+ Bd7! (not 7 ... Nc6?! 8 Nge2 Qa3 9 Ba4! when White has some threats), and if 8 Bxd7+ Nbx7 9 Nge2 Qa3 10 0-0 a6 11 Rb1 b6.

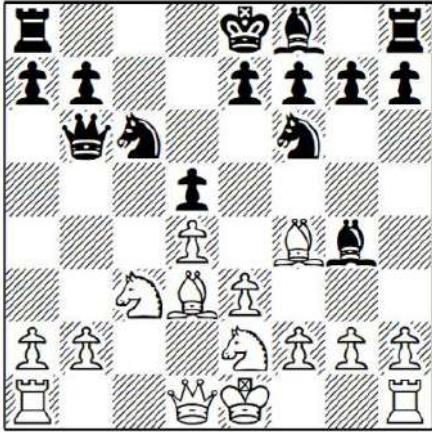
### 7 Bd3 Bg4

7 ... e6 allows 8 Nb5! Bb4+ 9 Kf1 and Black is in trouble as there is no obvious way to stop Bc7.

### 8 Nge2

This move is much more flexible than 8 f3 Bh5 9 Nge2 Bg6 10 0-0 e6 11 Nb5 (11 Na4 Qd8 12 Rc1 Be7 13 Bxg6 hxg6 14 Qb3 is slightly better for White) 11 ... Rc8 12 Rc1 Qd8! (otherwise White plays Nd6+) 13 a3 a6 14 Nbc3 Nh5 15 b4 Nxf4 16 Nxf4 Bd6 and Black ended up equalizing in Zhou Weiqi-Yu Yangyi, Guangzhou 2010. I like the move used by Grischuk because it offers

Black the chance to play 8 ... Bxe2 and we can still play f3 in the future.



### 8 ... e6

Taking the b2-pawn is bad, which is why playing 5 ... Qb6 is not a good idea. After 8 ... Qxb2 9 f3! (if 9 Rb1 Qxc3+! 10 Nxc3 Bxd1 11 Kxd1 and Black manages to trade the queens) 9 ... Bd7 10 Rb1 Qa3 11 Rxb7 White has a clear advantage.

### 9 0-0 a6

Black has to play this sooner or later. The alternatives are:

a) 9 ... Qxb2?! 10 f3 Bh5 11 Rb1 Qa3 12 Nb5 wins immediately for White.

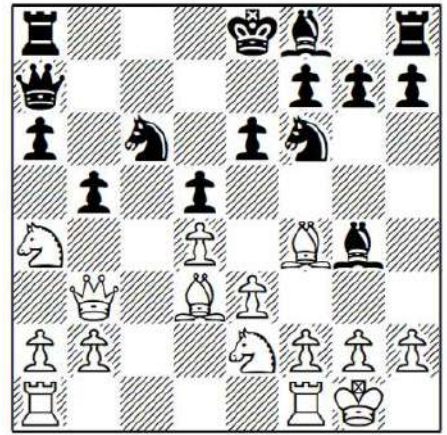
b) 9 ... Be7 10 f3 Bh5 11 Na4 Qa5 12 a3! and White has a commanding position on the queenside as well as good central control thanks to the f3-pawn.

c) 9 ... Bxe2 10 Qxe2 Be7 11 a3 is very comfortable for White.

### 10 Na4 Qa7 11 Qb3

11 f3!? Bh5 12 Rc1 also comes into consideration. White plans Qb3 and can also consider Nc5, since if Black plays ... Bxc5 the resulting position will favour White who has full control over the dark squares and the bishop-pair.

### 11 ... b5



This is risky considering Black's king is still in the centre. Others:

a) 11 ... Bxe2!? 12 Bxe2 Ne4 13 Rfc1 Bd6 and White has an edge but Black remains pretty solid, for example 14 Nb6 Rd8.

b) 11 ... Be7 12 f3 Bh5 13 Nb6 Rd8 14 Bc7 wins material for White.

### 12 Rfc1!

After 12 Nc5 Bxc5 13 dxc5 e5 (or 13 ... Qxc5 14 Rac1 Qb6 15 f3 Bh5 16 Qa3 and Black will have a hard time castling) 14 Bg5 Qxc5 15 Rac1 Qd6 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Ng3 White has more than enough compensation for the pawn, but the text move is stronger.

### 12 ... Rc8 13 Rc2!?

Not an easy move to play, especially in a rapid game. White can also consider the simple 13 Nc5 Bxc5 14 Rxc5 Bxe2 (both 14 ... e5?! 15 Bxe5 Nxe5 16 Rxc8+ Bxc8 17 dxe5 and 14 ... 0-0 15 f3 Bh5 16 Rac1 are good for White) 15 Bxe2 Ne4 16 Rcc1 and White's bishops are much better than Black's knights.

### 13 ... Be7

13 ... bxa4 14 Qxa4 Qd7 15 Rac1 wins for White.

### 14 Rac1

White has a clear advantage as Black is about to lose one of his bishops.

### 14 ... Qb7

14 ... Bxe2 15 Bxe2 Qb7 16 Nc5 Bxc5  
17 Rxc5 Ne4 18 R5c2 is also very pleasant  
for White.

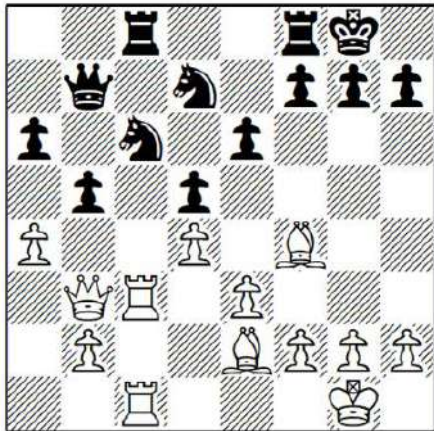
**15 Nc5**

I also like *Rybka's* suggestion of 15 f3  
Bh5 16 Nc5 Bxc5 17 Rxc5 Bg6 18 Bxg6  
hxg6 19 Qc3 Kd7 20 h3 when Black is  
completely paralyzed.

**15 ... Bxc5 16 Rxc5 Nd7 17 R5c3 Bxe2**

Black lacks space and therefore logically  
attempts to trade pieces. After 17 ... 0-0 18  
f3 Bh5 19 Bd6 Rfe8 20 Qc2! White controls  
the b4-square and wins so material.

**18 Bxe2 0-0 19 a4!**



White correctly opens the position,  
favouring his bishop-pair.

**19 ... b4 20 Bd6 Qb6 21 Bxb4**

21 a5! is even stronger, as 21 ... Qb7 (21  
... Nxa5 22 Qxb4 Qxb4 23 Bxb4 loses a  
piece, or if 21 ... Qxa5 22 Rxc6) 22 Bxf8  
wins for White.

**21 ... Rfe8 22 Bc5**

With an extra pawn and two powerful  
bishops, the rest should be a matter of  
technique.

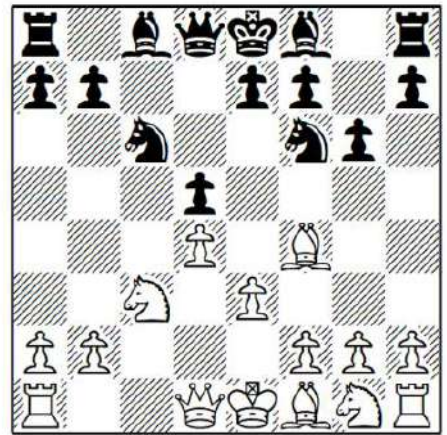
**22 ... Qxb3 23 Rxb3 Na5 24 Rbc3 Rb8  
25 Bxa6 Nb3 26 R1c2 Ndx5 27 dxc5 d4  
28 exd4 Nxd4 29 Rd2 Red8 30 Kf1 Kf8 31  
Rc4 Nb3 32 Rxd8+ Rxd8 33 Ke1 Rd5 34  
c6 Re5+ 35 Kd1 Rd5+ 36 Kc2 1-0**

*Game 29 Y.Seirawan-L.Christiansen*

U.S. Championship, Estes Park 1987

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5  
Bf4 Nc6 6 e3 g6**

The Schlechter variation is more  
attractive for Black when White has the  
bishop inside the pawn chain, i.e. after 4 e3.  
Here White has played Bf4 and e3 and  
doesn't have this problem.



**7 Nf3**

White can also play 7 h3, but since 7 ...  
Nh5 and 7 ... Bg4 are harmless it is not yet  
necessary.

**7 ... Bg7**

After 7 ... Nh5 8 Bg5 h6 (this just  
weakens Black's kingside) 9 Bh4 Bg7 (not 9  
... g5?! 10 Ne5!) 10 Nd2!? 0-0 11 Be2 Nf6  
12 Rc1 as usual White has a clear plan on  
the queenside. F.Vallejo Pons-E.Fernandez  
Romero, Gibraltar 2011, continued 12 ... a6  
13 0-0 Re8 14 Nb3 g5 15 Bg3 Bf5 16 Nc5  
and White had the better chances.

**8 Bb5! 0-0 9 0-0 Bg4**

Others:

a) 9 ... Na5 10 Rc1 Bf5 11 Be2 Rc8 12  
Ne5 a6 was played in A.Khalifman-  
Z.Mammadov, Nakhchivan 2012. Here  
White can continue strongly with 13 Qa4!?  
Nd7 (13 ... b5 14 Qa3 is unpleasant for

Black) 14 b4 Nc4 15 Nxc4 dxc4 16 Rfd1 with a clear advantage.

b) 9 ... Bd7 looks like a solid alternative compared to 9 ... Bg4. After 10 h3 we have:

b1) 10 ... Rc8 11 Ne5! a6 (or 11 ... Be8!? 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Qb3 and White is slightly better) 12 Nxd7 Qxd7 13 Be2 and White has the advantage of the bishop-pair.

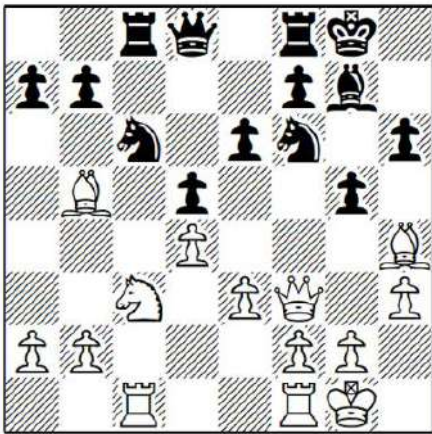
b2) 10 ... Na5 11 Bd3 Bf5 12 Ne5 (12 Bxf5 gxf5 13 Rc1 Rc8 14 Ne5 is also better for White) 12 ... Bxd3 13 Qxd3 Rc8 14 Rac1 Nc4 15 b3 Nd6 was D.Paunovic-D.Cruz Alvarez de Ron, Pontevedra 2014, when 16 Rc2!? is promising.

**10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 Rc8 12 Bg5 e6**

Black has to defend the d5-pawn, and White has the best of it with the bishop-pair and more active pieces.

**13 Rac1 h6 14 Bh4 g5?!**

Black wants to be rid of the pin, but now his kingside is seriously damaged. 14 ... Qe7 is a much better try when Black can always try the manoeuvre ... Nb8-d7 to counter the pin.



**15 Bg3 a6 16 Bd3 Ne8**

On the one hand, opening the position is not a good idea for Black, since White has two powerful bishops, but on the other hand, Black has to try something active otherwise he will not have any counterplay.

**17 Bh2 f5 18 Na4 Nf6 19 Qd1!**

White protects himself before Black advances with ... g4.

**19 ... g4**

19 ... Nb4? loses material after 20 Rxc8 Qxc8 21 Bd6.

**20 Nc5 Qe7 21 Qb3**

21 hxg4 Nxg4 22 Bf4 is also a safe advantage. White is anticipating ... gxh3 and plans gxh3, Kh1 and Rg1.

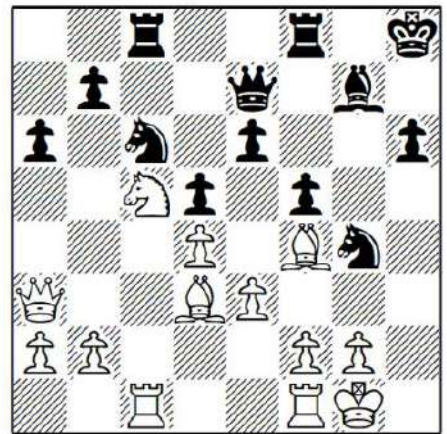
**21 ... Nd8**

If 21 ... gxh3 22 Qxb7! (22 gxh3 Ne4 is not so clear) 22 ... Qxb7 23 Nxb7 and, after trading queens, Black is left no counterplay, so White's queenside domination will decide the outcome of the game.

**22 hxg4 Nxg4 23 Bf4 Kh8 24 Qa3**

After 24 f3 Ne5 25 Rfe1 Rg8 26 Kf2 Qh4+ 27 Bg3 Qg5 28 Rh1 Black cannot create any counterplay.

**24 ... Nc6?**



Bringing the knight back into play, but now White has a simple line to trade queens and kill Black's kingside counterplay.

However, even after 24 ... e5 25 dxe5 Nxe5 26 Bxe5 Bxe5 27 Nd7! (a nice defensive resource) 27 ... Qxa3 (27 ... Bd6? 28 Nxf8! Bxa3 29 Ng6+ wins) 28 bxa3 the resulting endgame is very difficult for Black due to the numerous weaknesses.

**25 Nxb7! Qxb7 26 Qxa6 Qxb2**

Black's only chance is to keep queens on. After 26 ... Qxa6 27 Bxa6 Ne7 28 Bxc8 Nxc8 29 b4 he will not be able to stop White's passed pawns on the queenside.

**27 Rxc6 Ra8 28 Qb5 Qxa2 29 Rxe6 Qd2 30 Be2 Nf6 31 Bf3 Rac8 32 Rc6 Rce8 32 ... Rcd8 runs into 33 Bd6.**

**33 Bxd5 Rd8 34 Bf3 Rxd4 35 Qxf5!**  
35 exd4 Qxf4 is also winning, but there is no need to relinquish dark-square control.

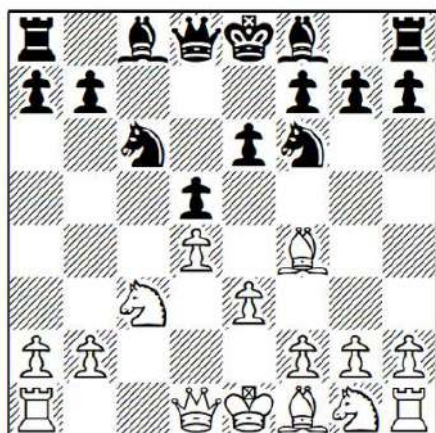
**35 ... Rdd8 36 Qg6 Ng8 37 Be4**  
White has turned the tables. Having defended solidly he now launches a deadly attack.

**37 ... Nf6 38 Rxf6 1-0**

There is no way to prevent mate. The 6 ... g6 variation is playable for Black, although White obtains an advantage with accurate play. After all, Black has problems finding a useful post for his c8-bishop. If he plays ... Bg4 and ... Bxf3 he simply gives up the bishop-pair, while if he plays ... Bf5 then White usually has the opportunity to play Bxf5 when the pawn structure favours him.

*Game 30 Li Chao-Yu Lie Chinese League 2013*

**1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 c6 3 d4 d5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Bf4 Nc6 6 e3 e6**



As you will have gathered by now, playing with the bishop inside the pawn chain is not as bad as it looks for Black. He can still play ... b5 and ... Bb7 or ... Bd7 and ... Bc6. Unless White plays accurately in the opening, Black will not have many problems obtaining equality.

**7 Bd3**

Once more, one of the advantages of our opening move order 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 Bf4 is the fact the king's knight is not committed, so both Nf3 and Nge2 remain possible. Also White avoids some awkward lines based on a quick ... Nh5 by Black.

**7 ... Bd6**

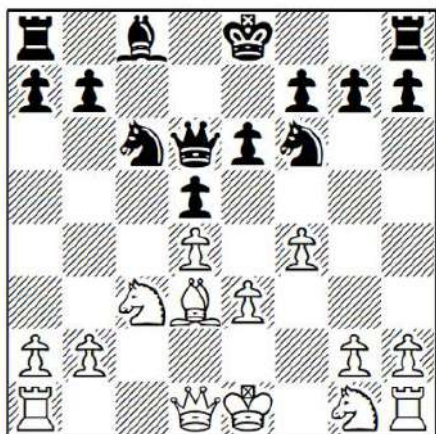
Black can also develop his bishop via e7 and we will consider that in the next game, Portisch-Petrosian.

7 ... Qb6 is possible too and 8 Qd2 Bd7 9 Nf3 Be7 10 h3 0-0 11 0-0 Rfc8 12 Rfc1 Be8 13 Ne5 (maybe 13 Qd1!? preparing 14 Na4 when ... Qb4 is no longer a problem and 13 ... Qxb2 is met by 14 Nb5!) 13 ... Nxe5 14 Bxe5 a6 was seen in V.Moskalenko-A.Dreev, Benidorm (rapid) 2007, when Black's position is fairly solid and White should continue with the natural 15 Rc2.

**8 Bxd6**

It makes sense to remove Black's better bishop. Also possible is 8 Bg5 Qa5 (instead, 8 ... 0-0 9 Nf3 Bd7 10 0-0 Rc8 11 Rc1 Be7 12 h3 is similar to the 7 ... Qb6 line analyzed above) 9 Nge2 Ne4 10 Bxe4 dxe4 11 Bf4 Bxf4 (or 11 ... e5 12 dxe5 Bxe5 13 Bxe5 Qxe5 14 Qa4! f5 15 Nf4 and White's position looks the better) 12 Nxf4 0-0 13 0-0 f5 (if 13 ... e5 14 dxe5 Qxe5 15 Qb3 or 15 Qd5!? with a risk-free advantage for White) 14 Qb3 and White has a slight plus.

**8 ... Qxd6 9 f4!**



Correctly placing the pawns on dark squares and also increasing White's control over e5. This is the only way for White to fight for the advantage, as 9 Nf3 is too passive and Black soon equalizes: 9 ... 0-0 10 0-0 Bd7 11 Rc1 Rfc8 12 h3 a6 13 Qe2 Rc7 14 a3 Rac8 15 Na2 Ne7 16 Rxc7 Rxc7 17 Rc1 Rxc1+ 18 Nxc1 Qc7 1/2-1/2, U.Andersson-R.Hernandez, Biel 1977.

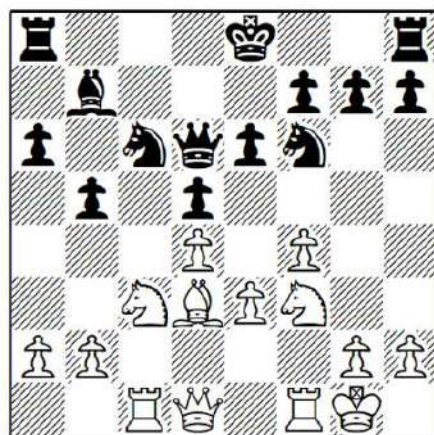
### 9 ... a6

Black chooses a plan based on quick queenside development before castling. Alternatives are:

a) 9 ... 0-0 10 Nf3 g6 (it looks strange to keep placing pawns on light squares, although playing something like 10 ... h6 is worse as eventually White is will play g4-g5, opening the kingside, while after 10 ... Bd7 11 Ne5 Rfc8 12 0-0 Be8, as seen in L.Aronian-G.Kamsky, Beijing (blitz) 2012, White can play 13 Rc1 with a slight advantage and Rf3-h3 can be considered) 11 Qd2 Bd7 12 0-0 Qe7 13 Rac1 Ne8 14 g4!? f5 15 g5 Nd6 16 h4 Ne4 17 Qh2 Be8 18 a3 Bf7?! (with 18 ... a6 Black prevents Bb5 and Bxc6, but understandably he did not want to weaken the dark squares further) 19 Bb5 Rfc8 20 Bxc6 Rxc6 21 Nxe4 dxe4 22 Rxc6 bxc6 23 Ne5 was A.Pashikian-J.Sosovicka, Al-Ain 2013, when White's positional advantage is not in doubt.

b) After 9 ... Bd7 10 Nf3 Ng4!? 11 Qe2 f5 (Black gains some space on the kingside before castling) 12 h3 Nf6 13 Ne5 0-0 14 g4 Ne4 15 Bxe4 (since the position is closed I like the idea of retaining the knight-pair as White) 15 ... fxe4 16 0-0 Nxe5 17 dxe5 Qb6 18 Rad1 Rac8 19 Rf2 a6 20 Qd2 the position looks equal, although I prefer White's chances because the threat to advance with f4-f5 is always an issue for Black. After 20 ... Bb5 21 Nxb5 axb5 22 f5 White went on to win in A.Vaisser-A.Kakageldyev, Kamena Vourla 2012.

### 10 Nf3 b5 11 0-0 Bb7 12 Rc1



### 12 ... Ne7

12 ... 0-0 is more flexible, although after 13 Ne5 Rac8 14 a3 Rfd8 (Black has to be careful as 14 ... Rc7 runs into 15 Bxb5! axb5 16 Nxb5 Qe7 17 Nxc7 Qxc7 18 Rxc6! Bxc6 19 Qc2 Rc8 20 Rc1 and White has a clear advantage) 15 Qe1!? White has good chances.

### 13 a4!?

White is attempting to play on both sides of the board. However, a suggestion by *Rybka* is also very promising: 13 Bxb5+! axb5 14 Nxb5 Qd8 15 Nc7+ Kf8 16 Nxa8 Bxa8 17 Qc2 g6 18 Qc7 when White has a clear advantage due to the queenside passed pawns.

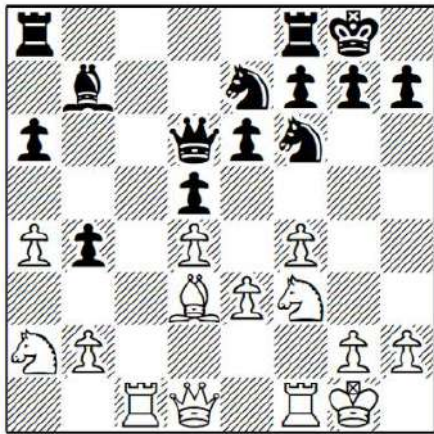
### 13 ... b4

13 ... bxa4 is weak in view of 14 Nxa4  
0-0 15 Nc5.

**14 Na2**

White keeps an eye on b4 and also keeps  
the option of Nc1-b3 in the future.

**14 ... 0-0**



Noting what happens in this game, Black  
should consider 14 ... a5, as after 15 Bb5+  
Kf8 16 Ne5 g6 it is not clear how to improve  
the position of the knight on a2 and 17 Rc5  
runs into 17 ... Ne4. Maybe White can try 15  
Ne5.

**15 a5!**

Now b4 is a clear target.

**15 ... Rfc8**

If 15 ... Ne4 16 Qa4 Nc6 17 Bxe4 dxe4  
18 Ne5 and there is no way to protect the  
b4-pawn.

**16 Qa4 Ng4**

After 16 ... Nc6 17 Ne5 b3 18 Nc3  
Rab8!? Black somehow avoids losing a  
pawn immediately, although White should  
be able to capture it in the long run after 19  
Ra1.

**17 Rce1 Nc6 18 h3 Nf6 19 Ne5 Rab8**

Black is trying hard to hold on to the b4-  
pawn, although White's pressure continues.

**20 Rc1 b3!**

The best move for practical reasons.

Note that 20 ... h6 is strongly met by 21 Rc5.

**21 Nc3**

Not 21 Qxb3 Nxa5 22 Rxc8+ Rxc8 23  
Qa4 Qb6 and White's advantage is gone.

**21 ... Qc7 22 Ra1**

Also possible is 22 Qxb3 Qxa5 (22 ...  
Nxa5 23 Qa3 Nc6 24 Na4 is clearly better  
for White) 23 Na4! Qb4 24 Qxb4 Nxb4 25  
Nc5 with a slight advantage for White.

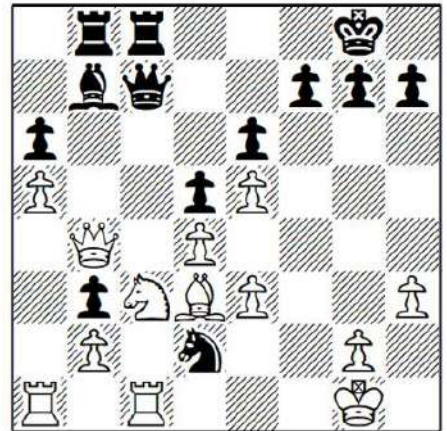
**22 ... Ne4 23 Rfc1!**

Stronger than:

a) 23 Nxe4 dxe4 24 Bxe4 Nxe5 25 Bxb7  
Qxb7 26 fxe5 Rc2 and Black obtains  
dangerous counterplay.

b) 23 Bxe4 dxe4 24 Rfc1 Nxe5 25 fxe5  
Bc6 26 Qa3 Qb7 and I do not see a clear  
way to obtain the advantage as White.

**23 ... Nxe5 24 fxe5 Nd2 25 Qb4!**



It is not easy to place the queen on the  
same file as Black's rook. However, White  
understands that he has to trade queens in  
order to achieve a favourable endgame.  
After all the queen on c7 is Black's most  
active piece.

**25 ... Ba8?!**

Black should have tried the active 25 ...  
Nc4 26 Na4 (if 26 Bxc4 dxc4 27 Qd6  
Bc6!?) 26 ... Qd8 when White is slightly  
better, but the position requires accurate  
play. Even if White manages to win a pawn  
after taking on c4, it will be a risky venture  
because the b7-bishop will have been  
opened up.

### 26 Qd6 Qxd6 27 exd6 Rc6

After 27 ... Nc4 28 Na4 Rd8 29 Bxc4 dxc4 30 Rxc4 Rxd6 31 Nb6 White follows up with Ra3-b3.

### 28 d7

Black is in trouble due to his back rank.

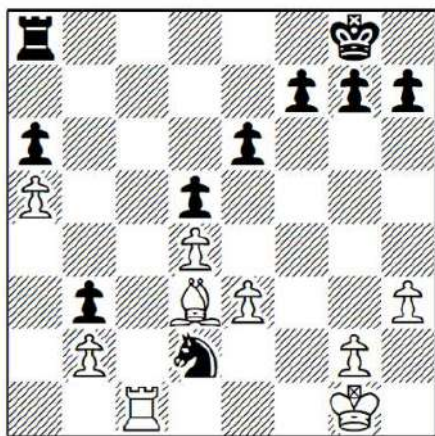
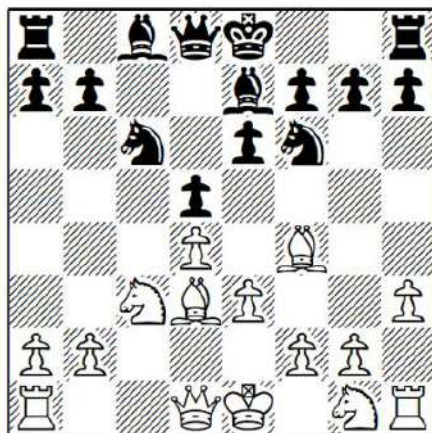
### 28 ... Rd8 29 Na4 Rxd7 30 Nb6

The a6-pawn falls and with it Black's resistance.

### 30 ... Ra7

30 ... Rd8 31 Nxa8 Rxc1+ 32 Rxc1 Rxa8 33 Bxa6! transposes to the game.

### 31 Nxa8 Rxc1+ 32 Rxc1 Rxa8



Now a pawn will finally fall and so the game is up for Black.

### 33 Bxa6! Nc4 34 Bxc4 dxc4 35 Rxc4 Kf8 36 Rc5 Ke7 37 Kf2 Kd6 38 Ke2 f6 39 Kd3 e5 40 Kc4 exd4 41 exd4 1-0

*Game 31 L.Portisch-T.Petrosian 12th matchgame, Palma de Mallorca 1974*

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bf4 e6 6 e3 Be7 7 Bd3 Nc6

This position can also be reached via the following move order: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 exd5 4 Bf4 Nc6 5 e3 Nf6 6 Nc3 e6 7 Bd3 Be7, as we would do.

### 8 h3!

White takes time to create a retreat square for the bishop, rendering ... Nh5 ideas useless.

8 Nf3 usually transposes to the main line, although Black has the extra option 8 ... Nh5 when after 9 Be5 (after 9 Bg3 Bd7 10 Rc1 Rc8 11 Qe2 g6 Black obtained a comfortable position in J.Banas-N.Sedlak, Decs 2010) 9 ... 0-0 10 Rc1 Bd7 11 0-0 Rc8 12 a3 a6 13 b4 a5 14 b5 Nxe5 15 Nxe5 Nf6 16 Qb3 Bd6 Black had easily equalized in B.Schneider-A.Dreev, Solingen 1991.

### 8 ... 0-0 9 Nf3 Bd7

Fianchettoing the bishop is also possible, although Black generally aims for this with an ... a6 and ... b5 structure. If Black plays 9 ... b6, White can try exploiting both the b5- and a6-squares: 9 ... b6 10 0-0 Bb7 11 a3 Rc8 12 Qe2 Na5 13 Nd2 Bd6 14 Bxd6 Qxd6 15 Rac1 Qe7 16 Rc2 Ne8 17 b4 Nc6 18 Rfc1 and White eventually won the endgame in U.Andersson-S.Ansell, British League 2006. With the help of *Rybka*, I found the following alternative for White at move 12: 12 Rc1 Bd6 13 Re1. If Black now takes on f4, then the resulting position looks excellent for White, whereas if Black plays something like 13 ... Re8 then comes 14 Ne5! when White gains useful space and can also consider the manoeuvre Re1-e2-c2.

### 10 0-0 Qb6

Others:

a) After 10 ... a6 11 Rc1 Rc8 12 Ne5 Qa5 13 Qe2 Rfd8 14 Bg5!? h6 15 Bh4 Be8 16 f4 Rc7 17 f5 White obtained a powerful kingside attack in Y.Drozдовskij-Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son, Beijing 2008.

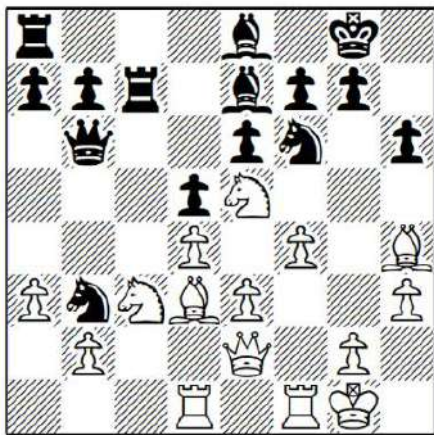
b) 10 ... Rc8 11 Rc1 a6 12 Ne5 Be8 13 a3 Kh8 (13 ... Nxe5 14 dxe5 Nd7 15 Qg4 also looks better for White) 14 Bb1 Ng8 was played in B.Macieja-C.Sandipan, Gausdal 2008. Here White can gain a useful advantage with 15 Nd3 planning to play on the queenside.

### 11 a3 Na5

Of course, Black cannot take on b2: 11 ... Qxb2? 12 Na4 and the queen is trapped.

### 12 b4

The natural 12 Ne5!? also comes into consideration. White will continue with Bg5-f4 which is often a good idea in order to develop a kingside attack: 12 ... Rfc8 13 Qe2 Nb3 14 Rad1 Be8 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bh4 Rc7 17 f4.



An ideal set-up and one which gives White good prospects on the kingside.

12 ... Nc4 13 Ne5 Rac8 14 Bxc4 dxc4 15 Bg5

15 Ne4 is tricky, but well enough met by 15 ... Bb5! 16 Bg5 c3 17 Nxf6+ Bxf6 18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 Qg4+ Kh8 and there is nothing better than 20 Qf4 fxe5 (20 ...

Qd8!?) 21 Qf6+ Kg8 22 Qg5+ Kh8 23 Qf6+ with a draw.

### 15 ... Qd8 16 Qf3

Although Black does not have any weaknesses, White is fully blockading the c4-pawn and can still advance with e3-e4 and d4-d5 in the future. The position is not entirely open either, so Black's bishop-pair is not currently a concern.

### 16 ... Bc6

16 ... Nd5!? is possible too and after 17 Nxd5 (not 17 Bxe7 Qxe7 18 Nxd5 exd5 19 Qxd5 Be6 20 Qe4 f6 21 Nf3 Qf7 when Black has more than enough compensation) 17 ... Bxg5 18 Nc3 b6 19 Rad1 the knight-pair is better than Black's bishops.

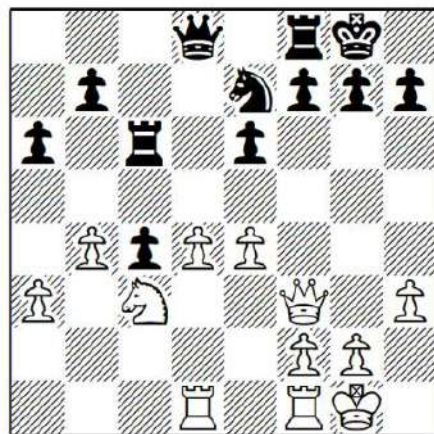
### 17 Nxc6

17 Qg3?! runs into 17 ... Nh5 18 Qh4 Bxg5 19 Qxh5 f5 with a comfortable position for Black.

17 ... Rxc6 18 Rad1 Nd5 19 Bxe7 Nxe7?

This is just too passive. Sacrificing a pawn was a much better idea: 19 ... Qxe7! 20 Nxd5 exd5 21 Qxd5 c3 when Black's passed pawn is dangerous. After 22 Rd3 Rfc8 23 Rc1 Rc4 the situation is unclear.

### 20 e4 a6



Others:

a) The position after 20 ... f5 21 b5 Rd6 22 exf5 Nxf5 23 Qxb7 Nxd4 24 Qe4 (24

Kh1?! runs into the powerful 24 ... Ne2!) may look equal, but in the long run White can exploit Black's weaknesses.

b) 20 ... Ra6 21 a4 Rd6 22 d5 a5!? leads to a complex position after either 23 Nb5 axb4! 24 Nxd6 Qxd6 25 e5! Qxe5 26 dxe6 fxe6 or 23 e5 Rxd5 24 Nxd5 Nxd5.

**21 d5 exd5 22 exd5 Rd6 23 Rd2**

After 23 Rfe1 b5 24 a4! Black has problems freeing his position.

**23 ... Qc7 24 Qg3 Qd7!**

Black has to unpin as soon as possible. This is the only way to do it as 24 ... Nc8? 25 Ne4 Rd7 26 Nf6+ loses material and after 24 ... Qd8 25 Ne4! Black cannot take on d5 in view of 25 ... Rxd5? 26 Nf6+.

**25 Kh1 Nc8 26 Ne4 Rg6 27 Qf4 Nd6 28 Nxd6**

After trading knights it feels like Black is near to equality. However, the resulting endgame is difficult for him as he is going to have a hard time developing the rook on f8.

**28 ... c3!**

Necessary, as otherwise Black loses a pawn.

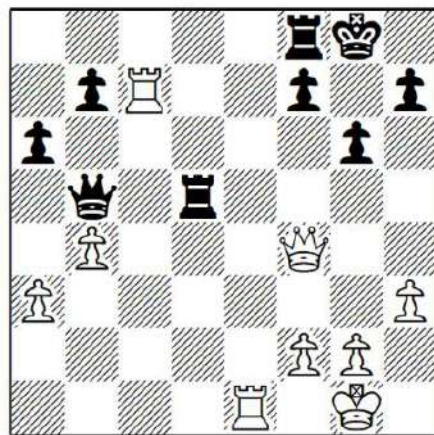
**29 Rd3 Rxd6**

After 29 ... Qxd6 White replies 30 Qc1! and no matter what Black does he ends up a pawn down, as after 30 ... Rc8 31 Rxc3 Rxc3 32 Qxc3 h6 33 Qc8+ when White has a clear plus.

**30 Rxc3 Rxd5 31 Rc7 Qb5 32 Re1 g6**

This is probably Black's first real mistake. He had to trade rooks as soon as possible with 32 ... Rd7 33 Re7 Rxe7 34 Rxe7 Qd5, although White still has some initiative.

**33 Kg1**



**33 ... a5?!**

33 ... Rd7 34 Re7 Rxe7 35 Rxe7 Qd5 is similar to the previous line. However, White increases the pressure with 36 Qf6!, thereby obtaining a slight advantage.

**34 Ree7**

Suddenly White enters the seventh rank. When it comes to endgames, piece activity is even more important than material as this position demonstrates.

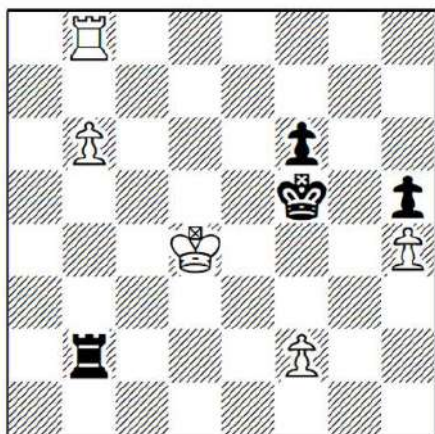
**34 ... Rf5 35 Qd4 b6 36 Rb7 axb4?**

This is a mistake. Black can hold more easily after the simple 36 ... Qa4 37 Rxb6 (or 37 Qc3 axb4 38 axb4 Qd1+ 39 Re1 Qd6) 37 ... Qxa3 and White cannot play 38 b5, in view of 38 ... Qxe7 38 Rc7 axb4 39 Qxb4 Qxb4 40 Rxb4 with a drawish position.

**37 Rxb6 Qd5 38 Qxd5 Rxd5 39 axb4 h5 40 h4 Kg7 41 g3 Ra8 42 Rbb7 Rf5 43 Re2 Ra1+ 44 Kg2 Rb1 45 Re3 Rb2 46 Rf3 Rxf3 47 Kxf3 Kh6 48 Ke3**

Instead, 48 Rxf7 Rxb4 leads to a drawish endgame where White's extra pawn is not likely to decide the game, but White might consider 48 b5!?.

**48 ... f6 49 Rb6 Kg7 50 Rb7+ Kh6 51 Rb8 g5 52 b5 gxh4 53 gxh4 Kg6 54 b6 Kf5 55 Kd4**



### 55 ... Rxf2?

Black can still hold after the long variation 55 ... Kg4! 56 Rg8+ Kxh4 57 Kc5 Rc2+ 58 Kd6 Rd2+ 59 Kc7 Rc2+ 60 Kb8 Rxf2 61 b7 Rb2 62 Kc7 f5 63 b8Q Rxb8 64 Rxb8 f4. Unfortunately for White his king is far away from the action and after 65 Kd6 f3 66 Ke5 f2 67 Rf8 Kg3 68 Ke4 Kg2 69 Rg8+ Kh3 Black draws.

### 56 Ra8 Rb2 57 Kc5

Now the Ra4-b4 manoeuvre appears, making ... Kg4 a useless move for Black.

### 57 ... Rc2+ 58 Kd4 Rb2 59 Ra5+ Ke6?

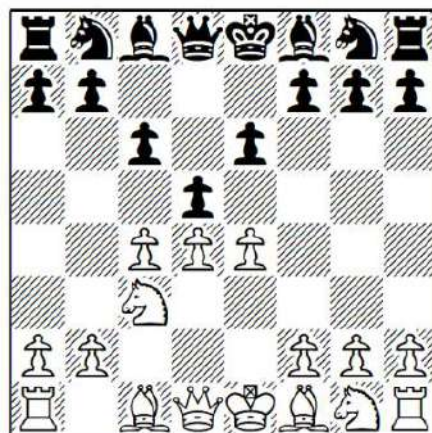
The final mistake. Black can still save himself by a miracle after 59 ... Kg4 60 Ra4 Kh3! (not 60 ... Kg3? 61 Kc5 f5 62 Rb4 Rxb4 63 Kxb4 f4 64 b7 f3 65 b8Q+ when White promotes with check, winning) 61 Kc5 f5 62 Rb4 Rxb4 63 Kxb4 f4 64 b7 f3 65 b8Q f2 and, amazingly, Black survives.

### 60 Kc5 Rc2+ 61 Kb5 Kd6 62 Ka6 Kc6 63 Ra1 Rc4 64 b7 Rb4 65 Rc1+ Kd7 66 Rc8 1-0

This game is worthy of close study because of how Portisch applied pressure during both the middlegame and the endgame.

*Game 32 M.Carlsen-V.Anand* World Championship (Game 5), Chennai 2013

1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 c6 4 e4

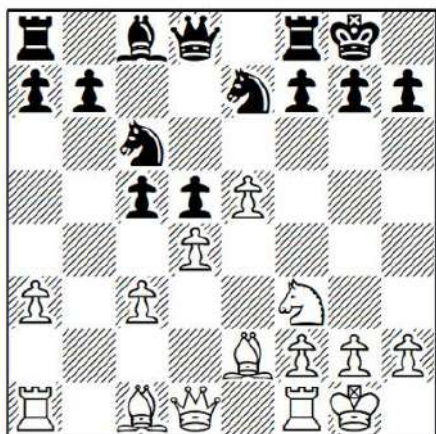


As 4 cxd5 exd5 leads to a toothless version of the Exchange QGD, White takes up the challenge in the centre.

### 4 ... dxe4

After 4 ... Bb4 5 e5 the position resembles a French Winawer. Play can continue 5 ... c5 6 cxd5 (6 a3 has to be considered too) 6 ... exd5 7 a3 and here we have to analyze all of Black's possibilities:

a) 7 ... Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Nc6 (8 ... Ne7 9 Nf3 Nbc6 transposes) 9 Nf3 Nge7 10 Be2 (10 Bb5 was seen in N.Marusic-T.Stepovaia, Bled 2004, but it is not a good idea for White to trade off his best bishop) 10 ... 0-0 11 0-0. White has some edge here because of his extra space and bishop-pair.



Practice has seen:

a1) 11 ... cxd4 12 cxd4 h6 was seen in W.So-H.Nakamura, Wijk aan Zee 2014. Once again, I would like to share GM Krasenkow's words: "A new idea. Black prevents Bc1-g5 and prepares ... Bc8-f5: now in the case of Nf3-h4 the bishop will be able to retreat to h7". Personally I think White has an obvious advantage because of his bishops and maybe he can try improving on the game with 13 Bb2!? Bf5 (instead, 13 ... Qb6 14 Bc3 Bf5 15 Nh4 transposes below, while after 13 ... Be6 14 Bc3 followed by Qd2 and Rfc1 White gradually improves his position) 14 Nh4 Be4 (or 14 ... Qb6 15 Bc3 Be4 16 Bg4 and once more White's bishop-pair is a powerful asset) 15 Bc3!?.

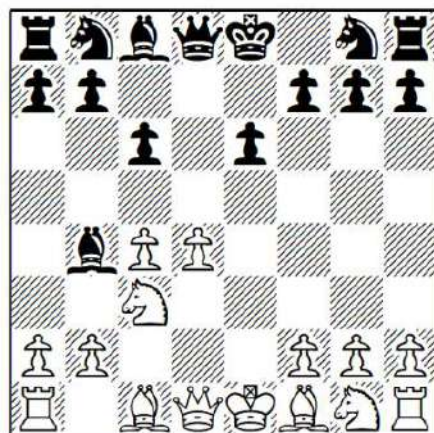
a2) 11 ... Bf5 12 Nh4! cxd4 13 cxd4 and White eventually advances on the kingside with f4-f5, A.Onischuk-Y.Shulman, San Diego (rapid) 2006.

a3) 11 ... Bg4 12 h3 Bh5 13 g4 Bg6 14 Nh4 cxd4 15 Nxc6 Nxc6 16 cxd4 and again White's bishop-pair gives him the advantage.

b) 7 ... Ba5 8 Bd2! Nc6 9 dxc5 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 d4 11 Bd2 Qe7 12 f4 f6 13 Nf3 Bg4 14 Bb5 fxe5 15 fxe5 Nf6 16 0-0 and White had obtained a clear advantage in A.Hauchard-D.Pavasovic, Cannes 1996.

c) 7 ... cxd4 8 axb4 dxc3 9 bxc3 Nc6 10 f4 Nh6 11 Nf3 and White was slightly better in J.Lautier-V.Zvjaginsev, Poikovsky 2003.

**5 Nxe4 Bb4+ 6 Nc3**



This is not so frequently seen in this position and the main line is the Marshall Gambit, 6 Bd2 Qxd4 7 Bxb4 Qxe4+. However, I started to analyze the safer text move closely after this game by the world champion.

**6 ... c5**

The alternatives are:

a) 6 ... e5 7 a3 Bxc3+ (if 7 ... Ba5 8 dxe5 and Black does not have enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 8 bxc3 with good play.

b) 6 ... Ne7 7 Nf3 c5 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Nbc6 10 Ra2!? 0-0 11 Rd2 Re8 12 Bd3 Ng6 13 0-0 Qf6 14 Be4 Nf8 15 Re1 with a nice position for White, as in L.D.Nisipeanu-G.Strutinskaya, Wunsiedel 2014.

**7 a3 Ba5 8 Nf3 Nf6**

Others:

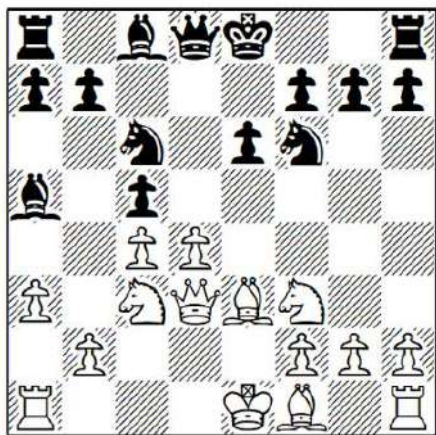
a) 8 ... cxd4 9 Qxd4 Qxd4 10 Nxd4 and unless Black takes on c3, giving up the bishop-pair, White can consider playing b4 with a good game.

b) After 8 ... Ne7 9 Be2 cxd4 10 Qxd4!? Qxd4 11 Nxd4 Nbc6 12 Ndb5 Black has a solid position, but White can still apply some pressure.

## 9 Be3 Nc6

9 ... Ne4 looks like an easier way to equalize and it's interesting to contemplate what Carlsen had in mind here. After 10 Qc2 Nxc3 11 bxc3 cxd4 12 Bxd4 0-0 13 Bd3 h6 (13 ... g6!?) 14 0-0 Nc6 15 Rab1 Bc7 White has some initiative, but Black is pretty close to equalizing. A variation proposed by *Rybka* is 16 Bh7+ Kh8 17 Be4 Nxd4 (if 17 ... Qe7 18 Bxc6 bxc6 19 Qe4) 18 cxd4 and White has a tiny edge.

## 10 Qd3



Not 10 dxc5 Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 Qa5 when White's pawn structure looks terrible as in Su.Polgar-L.Portisch, Budapest 1993.

## 10 ... cxd4 11 Nxd4 Ng4

The critical line is probably 11 ... Ne5 12 Qc2 0-0 13 0-0-0 with unclear play.

## 12 0-0-0 Nxe3 13 fxe3 Bc7

This move is a little passive. Black should consider 13 ... Qe7 or 13 ... 0-0.

## 14 Nxc6

After 14 Ndb5 0-0 15 Qc2 Qe7 16 Nxc7 Qxc7 17 Nb5 Qe5 18 Qf2 Black has some problems finishing his queenside development.

## 14 ... bxc6

Not 14 ... Qxd3?! 15 Bxd3 bxc6 16 Be4! followed by Nb5 with a plus for White.

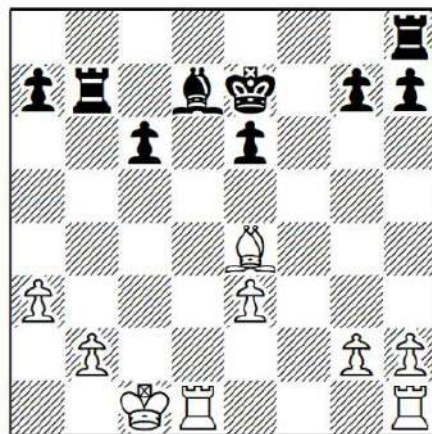
## 15 Qxd8+

White now gains a pleasant endgame where he can probe without risk.

## 15 ... Bxd8 16 Be2 Ke7 17 Bf3 Bd7 18 Ne4 Bb6

18 ... Bc7 is more accurate.

## 19 c5 f5 20 cxb6 fxe4 21 b7! Rab8 22 Bxe4 Rxb7



After some minor inaccuracies from Black, White has managed to achieve a slightly better endgame. The remainder of the game is an excellent demonstration of how important the initiative is, as well as of how a small advantage is sometimes enough to win.

## 23 Rhf1 Rb5 24 Rf4 g5 25 Rf3 h5 26 Rdf1 Be8 27 Bc2 Rc5 28 Rf6 h4 29 e4 a5 30 Kd2 Rb5 31 b3 Bh5 32 Kc3 Rc5+ 33 Kb2 Rd8

33 ... g4 is better when, after trading some pawns or opening lines for that matter, Black should find enough counterplay to equalize: for instance, 34 g3 hxg3 35 hxg3 Be8 and Black has sufficient resources.

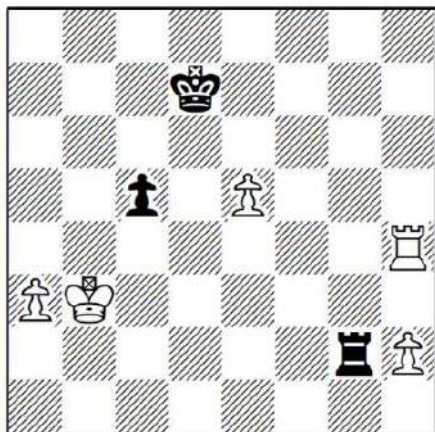
## 34 R1f2 Rd4 35 Rh6 Bd1 36 Bb1 Rb5 37 Kc3 c5 38 Rb2 e5 39 Rg6 a4?!

Now White obtains a real advantage. 39 ... g4 was necessary.

## 40 Rxg5 Rxb3+ 41 Rxb3 Bxb3 42 Rxe5+ Kd6 43 Rh5 Rd1 44 e5+ Kd5 45 Bh7 Rc1+?!

Once again, a mistake is followed by another. Black can still survive by means of 45 ... Ra1! 46 Bg8+ Kc6 47 Bxb3 Rxa3! when the endgame should be a draw.

**46 Kb2 Rg1 47 Bg8+ Kc6 48 Rh6+ Kd7 49 Bxb3 axb3 50 Kxb3 Rxb3 51 Rxh4**



**51 ... Ke6?**

The black rook belongs behind the passed pawn and after the immediate 51 ... Re2! White cannot win as has been demonstrated by an in-depth analysis from g Krasenkow. The key variation is 52 a4 Rxe5 53 Kc4 Kc6 54 Rh6+ Kb7 55 a5 Re4+ 56 Kxc5 Re2 when Black has reached a version of the defence known as Vancura's draw.

**52 a4 Kxe5 53 a5 Kd6 54 Rh7!**

Cutting off the black king is the key.

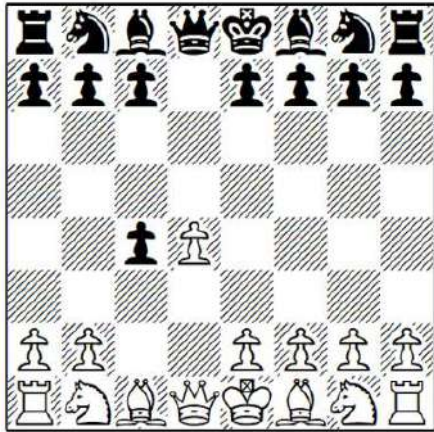
**54 ... Kd5 55 a6 c4+ 56 Kc3 Ra2 57 a7 Kc5 58 h4 1-0**

Black cannot stop both pawns.

# Chapter Four

## The Queen's Gambit

### Accepted 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

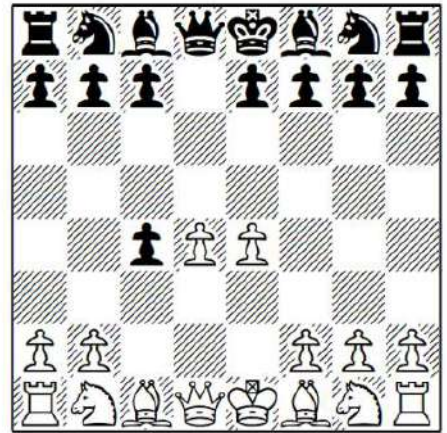


Against the Queen's Gambit Accepted (QGA) we are going to take an aggressive approach with 3 e4!. Personally, I think 3 e4 is more challenging than the main line 3 Nf3 followed by e3 and Bxc4, when Black usually plays a quick ... c5 and ... cxd4, giving White an isolated queen's pawn. By contrast, after 3 e4 we have already built up a pawn centre and we usually emerge with more space, especially in the case of 3 ... Nc6 and 3 ... Nf6 4 e5.

Our centre and extra space is also of paramount importance in the following endgame: 3 ... c5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Qxd4!?, as covered in Game 35, while our development advantage is quickly felt after 3 ... e5 4 Nf3 exd4 5 Bxc4, which we'll explore in some detail towards the end of this chapter.

*Game 33 R.Ponomariov-I.Sokolov* Zafra 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4



I think this is the most aggressive approach against the QGA. As we will see in this chapter, it is often employed by strong grandmasters.

**3 ... b5!?**

The text move is unsurprisingly risky for Black, since he does not develop and White can open the queenside by simple means.

**4 a4 c6 5 axb5**

White can also consider 5 b3, although Black then frees his position with 5 ... e5 6 axb5 Bb4+!? 7 Bd2 Qxd4 8 Bxb4 Qxa1 9 Bxc4 Qd4, reaching a murky position.

**5 ... cxb5 6 Nc3!**

White has to aim for rapid development. It is not necessary to focus on regaining the pawn immediately. Besides, after 6 b3 e5 Black manages to trade pieces off, with good chances to equalize.

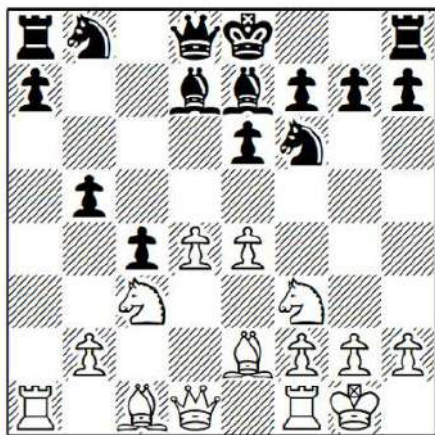
**6 ... Bd7**

The ultra-aggressive 6..a6 is the main line and the subject of our next game, Wagner-Smeets. The text is probably the only other playable move, since 6 ... b4 just loses a pawn after 7 Qa4+ Bd7 8 Qxb4 when c4 is falling next, while 6 ... Qb6?! cannot be recommended either, since Black has violated too many opening rules and after 7 b3 White has a clear advantage.

**7 Nf3 e6 8 Be2**

8 Ne5 is also very promising. After 8 ... Nf6 9 Be2 Nc6 10 0-0 b4 (or 10 ... Nxe5 11 dxe5 Ng8 12 Be3 and all Black's pieces are still on the back rank) 11 Nxd7 Qxd7 12 Nb5 (12 e5!?) 12 ... Nxe4 13 Bxc4 Nd6 (otherwise White advances with d4-d5, while 13 ... Nf6 runs into 14 Bf4!) 14 Nxd6+ Bxd6 15 d5 White opens up the position as his bishop-pair becomes powerful.

**8 ... Nf6 9 0-0 Be7**



Black has to castle as soon as possible, otherwise his king is going to be trapped in the centre.

9 ... b4 can be met in two promising ways:

a) 10 Na4 Nxe4 11 Bxc4 Nd6 (or 11 ... Bd6 12 d5 0-0 13 Qe2 Nf6 14 dxe6 Bxe6 15 Bxe6 fxe6 16 Qxe6+ Kh8 17 Be3 when White has a clear advantage) 12 Bd3 followed by Nc5 with a great initiative for White.

b) 10 e5 Nd5 (after 10 ... bxc3 11 exf6 cxb2 12 Bxb2 gxf6 13 d5 White's advantage is clear) 11 Ne4 with strong play for White.

**10 d5 exd5**

After 10 ... b4 White has the zwischenzug 11 d6. Then after 11 ... Bf8 (or 11 ... bxc3 12 dxe7 Qxe7 13 bxc3 Nxe4 14 Qd4 and Ba3 is coming next) 12 e5! bxc3 13 exf6 Nc6 14 bxc3 Qxf6 15 Ra4 Ne5 16 Ba3!

White's development causes Black serious headaches.

**11 exd5**

Unfortunately for White the natural 11 e5 is not effective after 11 ... Ne4. White only obtains a tiny plus after 12 Qxd5 (or 12 Nxd5 Bc6 13 Nxe7 Qxe7 14 Nd4) 12 ... Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bc6.

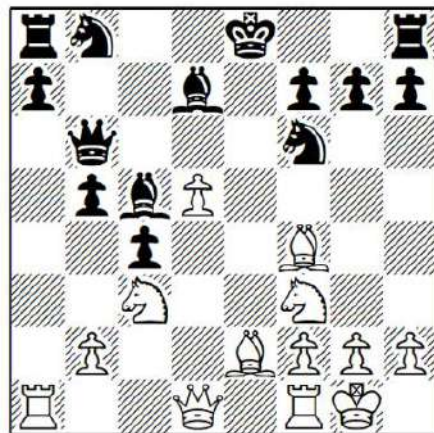
**11 ... Qb6**

Others:

a) If 11 ... Bc5 12 Bg5 0-0 13 Ne4 Qe7 14 Nxc5 Qxc5 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 Qd2 and White can consider playing the manoeuvre Ra3-g3 at some point.

b) 11 ... Bd6 looks like a better try, but after 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 0-0 14 Ne4 White will weaken Black's kingside.

**12 Bf4 Bc5**



Black is about to castle and it appears that his position is safe. However ...

**13 Bxc4!**

... is an imaginative try which sets Black great defensive problems. White develops a strong attack and traps Black's king in the centre. Another approach is 13 b3 b4 14 Na4 Bxa4 15 bxa4 when 15 ... c3 is met by 16 Bb5+.

**13 ... bxc4**

After 13 ... 0-0 14 Bd3 White's passed pawn on d5 allied to the fact that Black

cannot develop his queenside gives the first player a clear advantage.

**14 Qe2+ Kf8 15 Ne5 Bf5**

This is a mistake (15 ... h6 is better), but it is not easy to deal with White's attack over the board.

**16 Na4 Qb5 17 Nxc5**

Even after trading queens White maintains the initiative, as shown by 17 Qxc4 Qxc4 18 Nxc4 Bd3 19 Rfc1.

**17 ... Qxc5 18 Nxc4 Qd4**

Not 18 ... Qxd5? 19 Rfd1 Qe6 20 Rd8+ Ne8 21 Bd6+ and mate is coming soon.

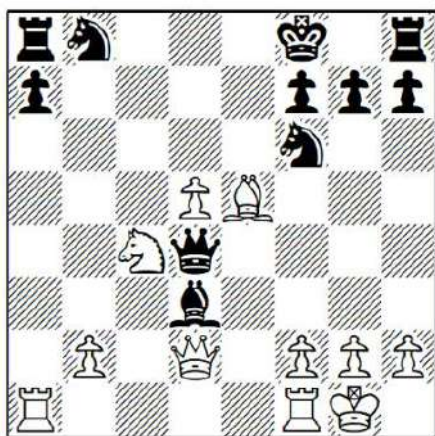
**19 Be5**

Even stronger is 19 Bd6+ Kg8 20 Rfd1 Qe4 21 Qxe4 Nxe4 22 Nb6 when White has a clear advantage.

**19 ... Bd3**

Or if 19 ... Qd3 20 Bd6+ Kg8 21 Qxd3 Bxd3 22 Nb6 Bxf1 23 Kxf1.

**20 Qd2**



**20 ... Qxd5**

If 20 ... Qxc4 then 21 Rfc1 Qg4 22 h3! Qd7 23 Qxd3, and if 23 ... Nxd5 24 Bd6+! winning.

**21 Rfd1?**

White spoils his fine effort with a blunder. 21 Bxf6! was winning, as shown by 21 ... gxf6 (21 ... Bxc4 22 Qb4+ Kg8 23 Rfd1 is crushing) 22 Ne3 Qe4 23 Rfd1 Bb5

24 Qd6+ Qe7 25 Qd8+ Qxd8 26 Rxd8+ Kg7 27 Nf5+ Kg6 28 Rxh8 Kxf5 29 Rd1.

**21 ... Qxc4**

Not 21 ... Bxc4? 22 Qb4+.

**22 Rac1 Qa6?**

It is never easy to find the best defence when you are facing a relentless attack. Black could have exploited White's lapse on move 21 with 22 ... Qe6! 23 Bxf6 (or 23 Qb4+ Kg8 24 Qb7 h5 25 Bxf6 Be4 and Black wins) 23 ... Nc6 and Black survives with an extra piece.

**23 Bxf6**

23 Bd6+!? Qxd6 24 Rc8+ Ke7 25 Rxh8 looks better for White.

**23 ... Nd7**

Side-stepping 23 ... gxf6 24 Qh6+ Ke7 25 Qe3+ Qe6 26 Qxd3 with a raging attack.

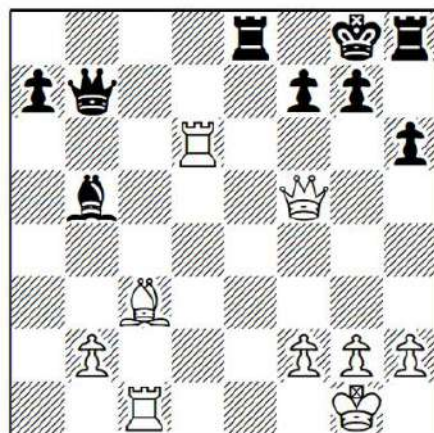
**24 Bc3 Bb5 25 Qg5 Nf6**

Black cannot play 25 ... f6 in view of 26 Qd5 followed by Bb4+.

**26 Qc5+ Kg8 27 Bxf6 h6 28 Bc3**

Now material is equal, but the game will be decided by White's superior development and activity.

**28 ... Re8 29 Rd6 Qb7 30 Qf5**



White plans Qg4.

**30 ... Qe7?**

This makes things easier for White. 30 ... a6 31 Qg4 Rh7 offered better resistance.

**31 Qxb5! 1-0**

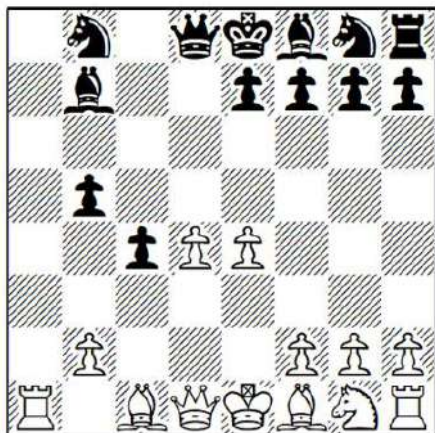
Black's rook is hanging.

*Game 34 D.Wagner-J.Smeets* German League 2018

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5 4 a4 c6 5 axb5 cxb5 6 Nc3 a6**

A critical and fairly topical choice.

**7 Nxb5 axb5 8 Rxa8 Bb7 9 Ra1**



9 Ra2 is another key move to consider. I prefer the text because it keeps things simple for White.

**9 ... e6!**

Development is much more relevant than material.

After 9 ... Bxe4 10 b3 (10 Nf3 followed by Be2 looks extremely safe for White) 10 ... Nc6 11 f3 White's position is clearly better according to the engines, although accuracy is required. After all, having the king in the centre is always a risky enterprise: 11 ... e5 12 fxe4 (12 bxc4! is the right way to go for White, but I suggest playing out all the possibilities with the help of an engine in order to fully understand these sharp lines) 12 ... Qh4+ (Black misses a great opportunity to mix things up with 12 ... Bb4+ 13 Bd2 c3 14 Bxb5 cxd2+ 15 Ke2 Qb6, with an unclear position) 13 g3 Qxe4+ 14 Kf2 Nxd4 15 Bg2 Qf5+ 16 Nf3 Bc5 17 b4 (Black's attack is over and so is the game) 17 ... Nf6 18 bxc5 Ne4+ 19 Kg1 0-0

20 Be3 Nc3 21 Nxd4 exd4 22 Qd2 dxe3 23 Qxe3 h5 24 h3 1-0, R.Leitao-E.Matsuura, Tres Barras 2015.

**10 Ne2**

As pointed out before, development is much more important than material. As such, 10 f3 is very risky because Black has lots of possibilities involving moves like ... f5, ... Nc6 and ... Bb4+, and even 10 ... f5 11 exf5 Nc6!/? seems extremely difficult for White to face in practice.

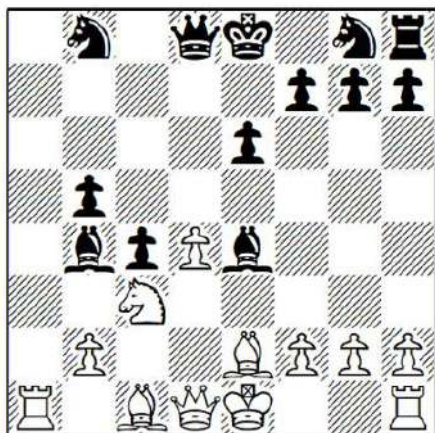
**10 ... Bxe4**

Now after 10 ... Nf6 11 f3 Black no longer has the possibility of playing ... f5.

**11 Nc3 Bb4**

With 11 ... Bc6 12 Be2! b4 13 Nb1 Bxg2 14 Rg1 Bd5 15 Nd2 I don't mind losing pawns so long as White maintains the initiative. The following game is a model example of that strategy: 15 ... c3 16 bxc3 bxc3 17 Nb1 (White obtains a winning advantage after 17 Bb5+! Bc6 18 Bxc6+ Nxc6 19 Ne4 Nge7 20 Ra6 with Nc5 and Qa4 to follow) 17 ... Bb4 18 Qa4+ Nc6 19 Bb5 Qd6 20 Qa8+ Ke7 21 Bg5+ Nf6 22 Qxh8 Ba2 23 Qxg7 c2+ 24 Nd2 Bxd2+ 25 Bxd2 Nxd4 26 Qg3 Qc5 27 Bd3 Nb3 28 Rc1 Nxc1 29 Bxc1 Qc3+ 30 Ke2 Nd5 31 Qh4+ f6 32 Rg7+ Kd6 33 Qa4 Qe5+ 34 Kf1 1-0, M.Rodshtein-K.Alekseenko, Russian Team Championship 2017.

**12 Be2!**



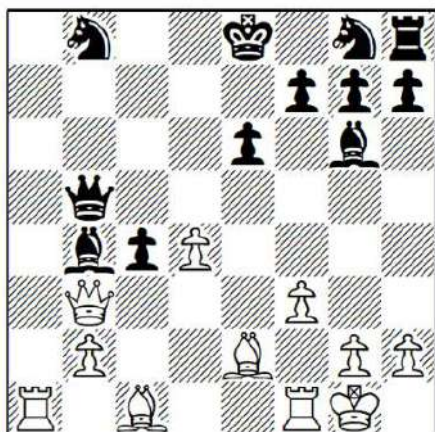
Several games have been lost by White defending his pawns and not developing his minor pieces here.

### 12 ... Qd5

Alternatively, 12 ... Bxg2 13 Rg1 Be4 14 Bd2 with a clear edge for White (after 14 Rxc7 Bg6 White's rook is trapped, but even in this variation White has much the better chances following 15 d5 Kf8 16 Rxc6 hxc6 17 dxe6).

### 13 f3 Bg6 14 0-0 Qb7 15 Ne4

Very logical from a human point of view. However White had an amazing option available in 15 Nxb5 Qxb5 16 Qb3!!.



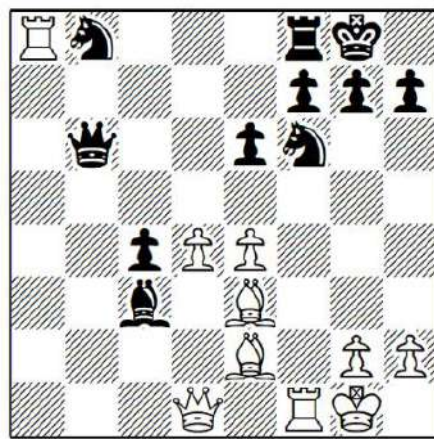
White is going to play Bxc4, Ra4 and Bd2. He is doing extremely well, as shown by the lines 16 ... Ne7 17 Bxc4 Qb6 18 Bd2

Qxd4+ 19 Be3 Qe5 20 Qxb4 Qxe3+ 21 Kh1 Nbc6 22 Ra8+, 16 ... cxb3 17 Bxb5+ Ke7 18 Ra7+ Kf6 19 Bf4 and 16 ... Qb6 17 Bxc4 Ne7 18 Bd2 Nbc6 19 Ra8+.

### 15 ... Qb6

After 15 ... Nf6!? White is probably still better, although the position is far from clear.

16 b3 Bxe4 17 fxe4 Bc3 18 Ra8 Nf6 19 Be3 0-0 20 bxc4 bxc4



### 21 Qb1

21 Ra4 would have been even faster, but White got there in the end.

21 ... Bb2 22 Kh1 Qb7 23 Ra2 c3 24 Bd3 e5 25 dxe5 Nfd7 26 e6 fxe6 27 Rxf8+ Nxf8 28 Ra7 Qc6 29 Qf1 Nbd7 30 Bb5 Qd6 31 Bxd7 Nxd7 32 Ra8+ Nf8 33 e5 Qe7 34 Ra7 Qe8 35 Bd4 h6 36 h3 Ng6 37 Qf3 Kh7 38 Qf6 Qg8 39 h4 Bc1 40 Bxc3 Be3 41 Rd7 Nf4 42 Ba5 Bc1 43 Qe7 Kg6 44 Qc5 Qa8 45 Qc2+ Kh5 46 Qd1+ Kxh4 47 Rxc7 1-0

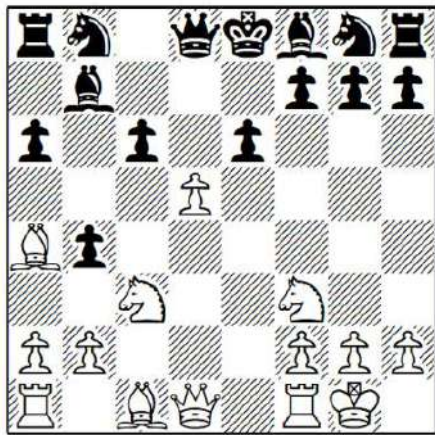
Game 35 Y.Vovk-N.Nikcevic Cappelle-la-Grande 2013

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 a6

This is a fairly solid try for Black, who hopes to hit back against White's centre just as he does in the 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 a6 variation.

### 4 Bxc4 c5

Playing a quick ... b5 is premature, as the following spectacular variations demonstrate: 4 ... b5 5 Bb3 Bb7 6 Nf3 e6 (6 ... Bxe4 7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 Ng5+ leaves Black's position full of weaknesses) 7 0-0! (when you have a huge advantage in development, material is not that relevant) 7 ... Bxe4 8 Nc3 (speeding up White's development and now d4-d5 is imminent) 8 ... Bb7 9 d5 b4 (after 9 ... exd5 10 Nxd5 White already has a winning advantage) 10 Ba4+ c6.



Here White can crash through with 11 Ne5! Qc7 12 Nxf7 Kxf7 (or 12 ... Qxf7 13 dxe6 Qf5 14 Nd5 when White has a clear advantage) 13 dxe6+ Ke7 14 Qh5 g6 15 Bg5+ Ke8 16 Nd5 giving him a decisive attack.

### 5 Nf3 cxd4 6 Nxd4

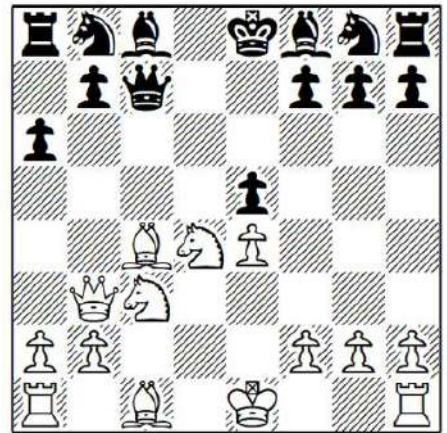
An ambitious move from White, but trading queens should also offer a small advantage. We will look at such an approach in our next game.

### 6 ... e6?!

As pointed out by Grandmaster Sumets, this natural move (blocking the diagonal of the c4-bishop) is dubious.

Black should play 6 ... e5 7 Qb3 (White doesn't get much after 7 Qa4+ Qd7) 7 ... Qc7 8 Nc3! (as usual, development is what really matters; Black gets a good position

after both 8 Nf3 b5 or 8 Ne2 Nc6). Let us take a look at Black's possibilities here:



a) After 8 ... b5 the long variation 9 Ndx b5 axb5 10 Nxb5 Qb7 11 Bd5 Nc6 12 Qc4 Ra6 13 0-0 Nf6 14 Be3 Nxd5 15 exd5 Nb4 16 a3 Nxd5 17 Qxd5 Qxd5 18 Nc7+ Kd8 19 Nxd5 is good for White.

b) 8 ... Nf6 is the most solid try for Black, but after 9 Nf3 Bd6 10 Bg5! (there is no rush to castle) 10 ... b5 (Black cannot connect his knights by means of 10 ... Nbd7 because f7 is hanging) 11 Bd5 Nxd5 12 Nxd5 Qb7 13 Qd3 I prefer White's chances.

### 7 0-0 Qc7

Black has to control the e5-square. If 7 ... Nf6 then 8 e5 Nd5 (or 8 ... Nfd7 9 Bf4 when White has much more space, as well as a good plan with the Nc3-e4-d6 manoeuvre) 9 Qg4 with a clear advantage for White.

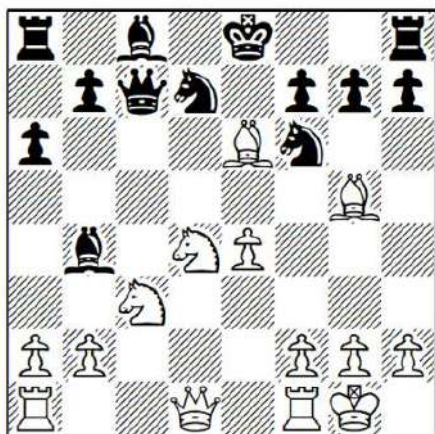
### 8 Bb3 Nf6 9 Nc3 Bb4

Black cannot afford to be playing this when he is so far behind in development. 9 ... Be7 is better, although after 10 Be3 0-0 11 Rc1 the positional pressure continues.

### 10 Bg5 Nbd7

10 ... Bxc3 11 Bxf6 Bxd4 (or 11 ... gxf6 12 Rc1) 12 Bxd4 gives White the bishop-pair and Black a vulnerable kingside.

### 11 Bxe6!



White acts quickly before Black can complete development.

**11 ... fxe6**

11 ... Bxc3 12 Bxd7+ Bxd7 13 Bxf6 does not help Black.

**12 Bxf6?**

White errs. He can obtain a winning position by means of 12 Nxe6 Qb6 13 Nxg7+ (13 Nd5 Nxd5 14 exd5 is also very good) 13 ... Kf7 14 Nf5 when the position resembles a Sicilian Defence gone horribly wrong for Black.

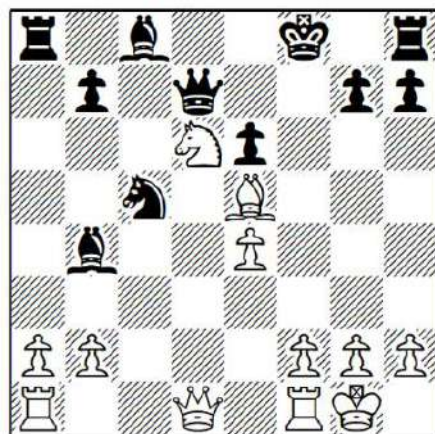
**12 ... Nc5?**

Black had to play the cold-blooded 12 ... gxf6! 13 Qh5+ Ke7 14 Qh6 (if 14 Nxe6? Kxe6 15 Nd5 Qe5 when Black survives and keeps the extra material, while both 14 Nf5+ Kd8 and 14 Qg4 Ne5 15 Qg7+ Nf7 lead nowhere for White) 14 ... Kf7 15 Qh5+ Ke7 and there is nothing better than repeating moves with 16 Qh6 (not 16 Rad1 Bxc3 17 bxc3 Nc5 18 Qh6 Kf7 19 Qh5+ Kf8 when Black has a clear advantage) 16 ... Kf7 17 Qh5+, etc.

**13 Ndb5!?**

13 Nc2 is good enough to keep the advantage for White after 13 ... Bxc3 14 Bxc3 Nxe4 15 Bb4.

**13 ... axb5 14 Nxb5 Qd7 15 Nd6+ Kf8 16 Be5**



White's forces create a pleasing effect. There is not much Black can do to get his pieces out.

**16 ... Na4?**

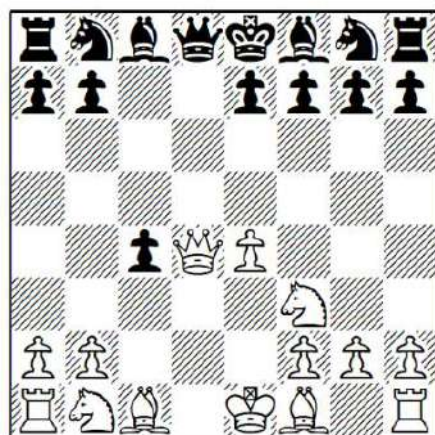
The last try was 16 ... Na6 17 Qf3+ Kg8 18 Rfd1 Qe7 19 Rac1 Bxd6 20 Bxd6 Qf7 21 Qb3 and Black is fighting on.

**17 Rc1 Bxd6 18 Bxd6+ Kg8 19 Rc7 Qb5 20 Be5! 1-0**

Black has no defence against both Rxg7+ and Qd8+.

*Game 36 F.Berkes-M.Perez Candelario*  
Spanish Team Championship 2014

**1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 dxc4 4 e4 cxd4 5 Qxd4**



The idea here is to play a ‘pre-endgame’ with the better development and greater space for White.

### 5 ... Qxd4

5 ... Bd7 is the subject of our next game, Vallejo-Aronian.

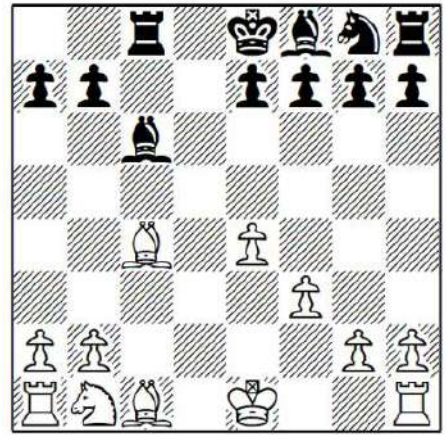
### 6 Nxd4 Bd7

The most solid move by Black. After 6 ... Nf6 White can seriously damage Black’s pawn structure: 7 e5 Nfd7 8 e6 Ne5 9 Na3! Nd3+ 10 Ke2 Bxe6 11 Nxe6 Nxc1+ 12 Rxc1 fxe6 13 Nb5! Na6 14 g3 (White has a clear advantage; aside from his superior pawn structure, we also have to point out that opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side) 14 ... g6 15 Bg2 0-0-0 16 Rxc4+ Kb8 17 Rhc1 and White went on to win in J.Speelman-Y.Seirawan, Roquebrune (rapid) 1992.

### 7 Bxc4 Nc6 8 Nxc6

Another way to play is 8 Be3 Rc8 9 Nd2. The advantage of this development compared to playing Nc3, is that White can try Nb3-a5, as we are going to see. Note too that the bishop-pair can be a powerful force in the resulting endgame: 9 ... Nf6 (if 9 ... Ne5 then 10 Be2 Nf6 11 f3 followed by Kf1 and Rc1) 10 Nxc6 Bxc6 11 f3 a6 12 Rc1 e6 13 Kf2 Nd7 (if 13 ... b5 14 Be2 Be7 15 Nb3 0-0 16 Nc5 and White gradually increases the advantage, while after 13 ... Bd6 14 Be2!, apart from the Nb3-a5 manoeuvre, White can also consider Nc4-b6) 14 Nb3 Bd6 15 Na5 Bb4? (better is 15 ... Nb8, but after 16 Be2 Bb4 17 Nxc6 Nxc6 18 f4 White is soon going to exploit the vulnerable light squares) 16 Nxc6 Rxc6 17 Bxa6! saw White take advantage of Black’s weak back rank to win material in I.Lysyj-T.Nabaty, Rijeka 2010.

### 8 ... Bxc6 9 f3 Rc8



### 10 Na3

Also possible is 10 Nc3!? e6 (if 10 ... Bxe4 11 Bxf7+ Kxf7 12 Nxe4 when White has some advantage) 11 Be3 Bxe4 (or 11 ... Nf6 12 Rc1 a6 13 Ne2) 12 Bxe6, which looks better for White.

### 10 ... e6 11 Bd3

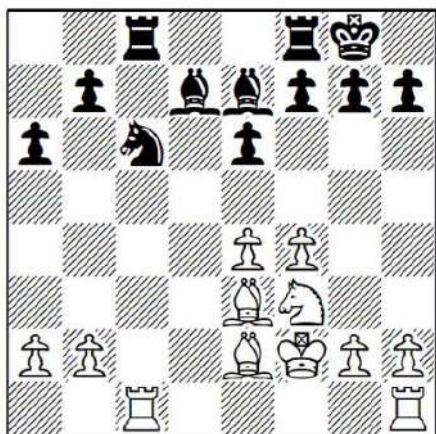
11 Be3 Bxa3 12 bxa3 Bxe4 13 Rc1 Bc6 14 Bxa7 Nf6 followed by ... Nd5 looks solid enough for Black.

### 11 ... Nf6

After 11 ... Bxa3 12 bxa3 Nf6 13 Be3 a6 14 Rb1 White retains an edge.

### 12 Be3 Nd7 13 Rc1 Ne5 14 Be2 a6 15 Kf2 Be7 16 Nc4

After this White’s advantage is minimal. A stronger plan is 16 Nc2 0-0 17 Nd4 Bd7 18 f4 Nc6 19 Nf3.



Here White a useful space advantage, whereas the further exchange that White initiates in the game only helps Black to edge towards equality.

**16 ... Nxc4 17 Rxc4 Bd6 18 Rhc1 Ke7 19 f4 f6**

After 19 ... e5 20 f5 Bd7 21 Rxc8 Rxc8 22 Rxc8 Bxc8 23 Bc4 White continues to apply pressure.

**20 Bc5 e5?!**

It is hard to believe that this move is a mistake, but, as we will soon see, the e5-pawn is going to become a target. 20 ... Rhd8 21 Ke3 Bxc5+ 22 Rxc5 is better when White can try advancing on the kingside by means of g4-g5 or maybe e4-e5.

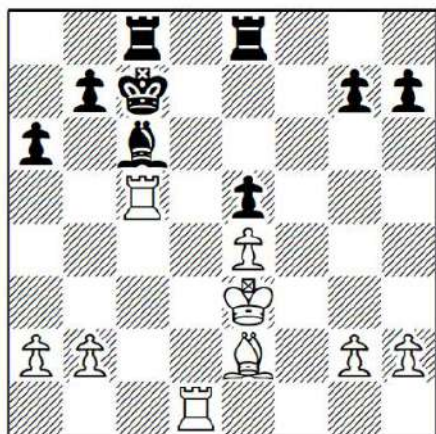
**21 fxe5 fxe5 22 Ke3 Rhf8**

After 22 ... Rhd8 23 Bxd6+ Rxd6 24 Rc5 Black still has problems defending the e5-pawn.

**23 Bxd6+ Kxd6 24 Rd1+ Kc7**

24 ... Ke6?! 25 Bg4+ wins material for White.

**25 Rc5 Rfe8**



25 ... Rce8 was the only move, but one not easy to find over the board. After 26 Rdd5 b6 27 Rc2 a5 28 Bb5 Rf6 Black manages to survive.

**26 Rdd5!**

Now White wins the e5-pawn.

**26 ... h6 27 Rxe5 Kd6 28 Rxe8 Rxe8 29 Rc4 b5 30 Rd4+ Ke5 31 Bf3 Rc8 32 a3 Rc7**

White demonstrates excellent technique in this game. The winning plan is not obvious as Black has a decent blockade over the e4-pawn.

**33 Rd8 Bd7 34 h4 g5 35 h5!**

This is stronger than capturing on g5. The h5-pawn is a potential passed unit and h6 a new weakness for White to target.

**35 ... Be6**

If 35 ... g4 36 Be2 g3 37 Rh8 Rc6 38 Bf3 and all White's pieces are protected.

**36 Re8 Rc4?!**

36 ... Kf6 was the last chance.

**37 b3 Rc3+ 38 Kd2 Rxb3 39 Bg4 Kxe4 40 Rxe6+ Kf4 41 Bf3 Rxa3 42 Rf6+ Ke5 43 Rxh6**

Now we see the point of 35 h5.

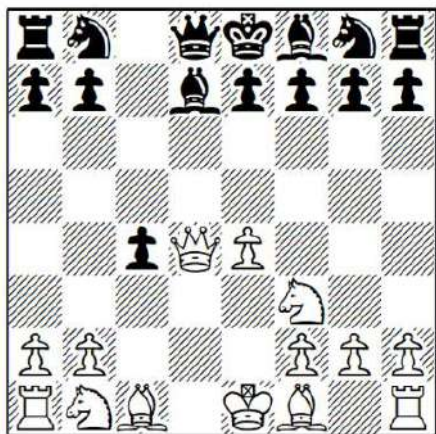
**43 ... b4 44 Rb6 a5 45 h6 Ra1 46 Bd1 1-0**

Black cannot prevent promotion. This game is typical for this variation. White's advantage is minimal, but at the same time

the ‘risk of ruin’ is zero. Note that the Nd2-b3 followed by Na5 or Nd4 manoeuvre is quite annoying for Black.

*Game 37 F.Vallejo Pons-L.Aronian Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011*

**1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 c5 3 c4 dxc4 4 e4 cxd4 5 Qxd4 Bd7**



Black does not want to play an unpleasant endgame after trading queens. 5 ... Qxd4 6 Nxd4 Bd7 is the most common variation though. I cannot find better words than French Grandmaster Edouard’s:

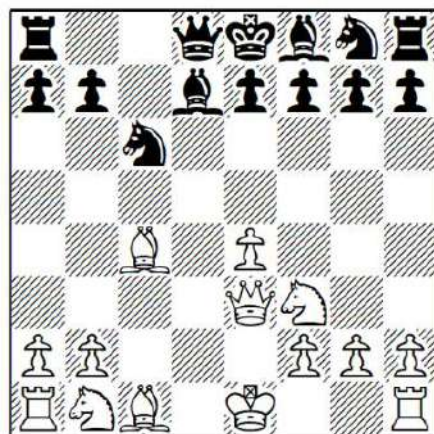
“A strange opening choice by Aronian in my opinion. When several people asked me to explain it, I thought it could be a cool idea to try! Indeed, somehow White should be always slightly better everywhere, while Black hopes to make a draw if White makes one or several inaccurate moves. For me, it is very hard to know at what moment in a game top players like Aronian go for a draw, or decide to go for a win. If I were playing this opening with Black, it would mean I was planning for both a draw, and for some sideline just to change a bit from the usual stuff. But Aronian played 5 ... Bd7, declining a drawish queen exchange, though White should be very slightly better after that. As a result, I would say Aronian did

not want to go desperately for a win, but also wanted to be creative, feeling that it should be possible to hold even a slightly worse position due to the (almost) hundred points difference. However, Vallejo is an extremely strong player, and I think Aronian was not far from getting punished right after the opening”.

**6 Bxc4 Nc6**

Instead, 6 ... e6 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Qe3 transposes to the game, while 6 ... Nf6 is premature in view of 7 e5 Nc6 8 Qf4. Black is under a lot of pressure and has to play something like 8 ... g5 9 Bxf7+! (or 9 Nxc5 Qa5+ 10 Nc3 Qxe5+ 11 Be3 and White has an edge) 9 ... Kxf7 10 Nxc5+ Kg6 11 Nf3 when Black is in really bad shape with his king on g6.

**7 Qe3!**



Just in case leaving d3 and e2 free for our bishop. After 7 Qd3 Na5 8 Bb5 Nf6 Black manages to trade some pieces.

**7 ... e6**

Another favourable line for White is 7 ... Nf6 8 0-0! (8 e5?! runs into 8 ... Ng4 9 Qf4 Ngxe5 10 Nxe5 Qa5+) 8 ... e6 9 e5 Nd5 10 Qe4.

**8 0-0 Qb8**

Not a rare move in the QGA, but a novelty when played. Others:

a) 8 ... Nge7 9 b3 was preferred in P.Tregubov-H.Jonkman, Wijk aan Zee 2002: 9 ... Ng6 10 Bb2 Qc7 11 Nc3 Qa5 12 Rfd1 and here I think White can improve his play by means of 12 Nb5! a6 13 a4 when I was not able to find a good continuation for Black.

b) 8 ... Nf6 9 e5 Nd5 10 Qe4 and White has much more space (10 Bxd5 exd5 11 Rd1 Be6 12 Nc3 is also worth considering).

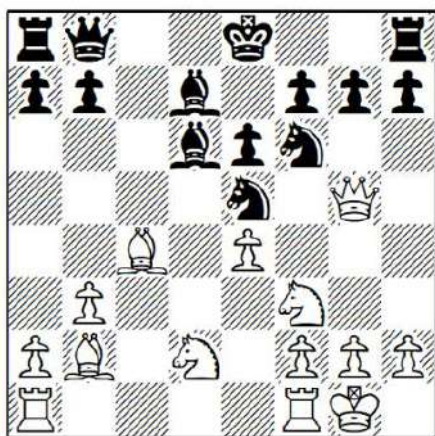
### 9 b3 Ne5

After 9 ... Nf6 10 Bb2 Be7 11 e5 Nd5 12 Bxd5 exd5 13 Nc3 Be6 14 Rfd1 Black is forced to play the ugly 14 ... Qd8, placing the queen on the same file as the white rook.

### 10 Bb2

White speeds up his development and now if 10 ... Nxc4 11 bxc4 when Black is going to have a hard time developing his kingside.

### 10 ... Bd6 11 Nbd2 Nf6 12 Qg5



A great looking move by White. Although constructing a battery with 12 Qc3! is even stronger, as there is not much Black can do to defend the a1-h8 diagonal: 12 ... Nxf3+ (or 12 ... Nxc4 13 bxc4 Be7 14 e5 Ng4 15 h3 Nh6 16 Ba3 and Black is in danger since his dark squares are unprotected) 13 Nxf3 b5 14 Bd3 (here I'd like to share a variation analyzed by Edouard: 14 Be2 0-0 15 Rfd1 e5 16 Nxe5

Nxe4 17 Qd4 Bxe5 18 Qxe5 Qxe5 19 Bxe5 Rfe8 20 f4 Re7 21 Rac1 f6 22 Bb2 Rae8 23 Bf3 f5 and I prefer White's chances) 14 ... Qb7 (14 ... 0-0 15 e5 Nd5 runs into 16 Bxh7+!) 15 Qd4 Be7 16 Ne5 and White has the initiative.

### 12 ... Ng6

Not 12 ... Nxf3+ 13 Nxf3 when I feel Black can already resign, in view of 13 ... Bf8 14 Bxf6 gxf6 15 Qxf6 Rg8 16 Ne5.

### 13 Bxf6 h6 14 Qa5

14 Qh5!? gxf6 (if 14 ... Nf4 15 Qg4 and here White can also try the amazing 15 Qe5!?, and if 15 ... gxf6 16 g3 Ng6 17 Qh5) 15 Bb5 Bxb5 16 Qxb5+ Ke7 17 g3 looks easy to play for White.

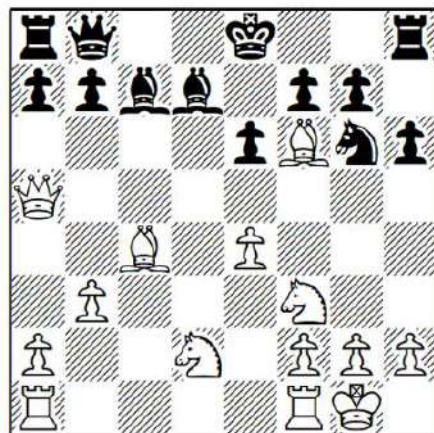
### 14 ... Bc7

14 ... gxf6 15 Bb5 Bxb5 16 Qxb5+ Ke7 17 g3 transposes to our previous variation.

### 15 Qc5

Once more moving the queen to c3 was easier: 15 Qc3! gxf6 16 Rac1 (of course, we can also consider taking on f6, but taking into consideration that Black has the bishop-pair, I think it is not worth it; instead, White should try to exploit Black's weaknesses) 16 ... Be5 17 Nxe5 Qxe5 18 Qe3 Qf4 19 Qe2 and White has a clear advantage in my opinion.

### 15 ... Bd6 16 Qa5 Bc7



### 17 Qh5?!

Even strong grandmasters make mistakes. I am not saying the move is completely wrong, but there is a big difference compared to if White had played 17 Qc3. For some reason White did not play 17 Qc3 and it is clear that he did not want to draw with 17 Qc5.

**17 ... gxf6 18 Bb5**

The engines suggest 18 g3 when at some point White can fianchetto his bishop. As long as Black's king is in the centre (I do not see any safe area for it), he's going to have the worse position.

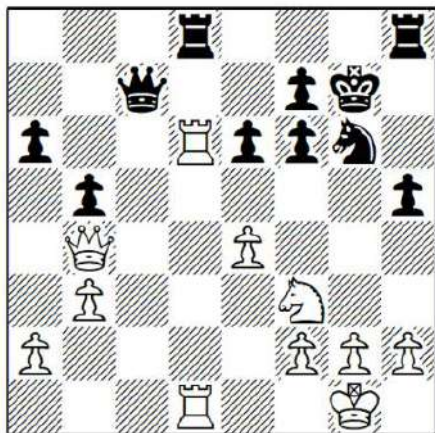
**18 ... Bxb5 19 Qxb5+ Kf8 20 Rad1 Kg7 21 Nc4**

Probably a slight mistake by White, as Black is going to win some tempi with ... a6 and ... b5, although even after 21 g3 h5! (otherwise White plays Qh5) Black seems to be equalizing.

**21 ... h5**

Missing 21 ... a6! 22 Qh5 b5 23 Nb2 Qb7 24 Rfe1 Ba5 and suddenly Black appears to be a bit better.

**22 Rd7 a6 23 Qb4 b5 24 Nd6 Bxd6 25 Rxd6 Qc7 26 Rfd1 Rad8**



Now Black fully equalizes. His 'weak' kingside is not a big deal.

**27 g3 h4 28 Rxd8 Rxd8 29 Rxd8 Qxd8 30 Qd4 Qc8 31 Nxb4 Nxb4 32 gxh4 Qc2 33 e5 fxe5 34 Qxe5+ Kh7 35 Qh5+ Kg7 36**

**Qg5+ Kh7 37 Qh5+ Kg7 38 Qg5+ Kh7 39 Qh5+ ½-½**

A key game for the study of 5 ... Bd7 line. Overall I think White gets an advantage out of the opening.

*Game 38 V.Anand-F.Vallejo Pons Bilbao 2014*

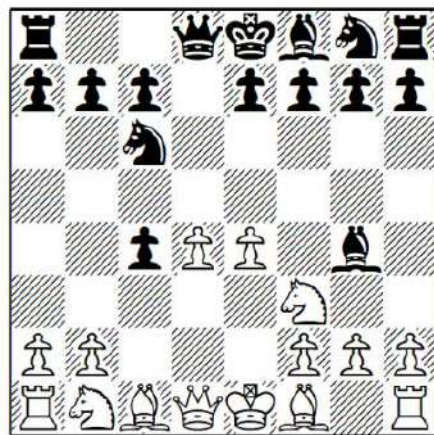
**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Nc6**

This variation reminds me of the Chigorin Defence, which we'll come to in our next chapter. Black does not have a strong centre and we have to use that in our favour as White.

**4 Nf3**

Another line is 4 d5 Ne5 5 Bf4 Ng6 6 Bg3 e5.

**4 ... Bg4**



I believe this is by far Black's best try in the position. Let us take a look at the alternatives:

a) 4 ... b5?! is easily punished by 5 a4 Bg4 (if 5 ... b4 6 Bxc4) 6 axb5 Bxf3 7 gxf3 Nxd4 8 Be3! e5 9 Bxc4 when White has a pleasant advantage thanks to his bishop-pair.

b) 4 ... e5?! is dubious as well 5 d5 Nb4 6 Bxc4.

c) 4 ... Nf6 5 Nc3 Bg4 6 d5 Ne5 7 Bf4 Ng6 8 Be3 e5 leads to the main line of this game.

## 5 d5 Ne5 6 Bf4 Ng6

Again, logical and best:

a) 6 ... Nxf3+ 7 gxf3 Bd7 8 Bxc4 Nf6 9

Qb3 leaves Black in serious trouble.

b) 6 ... Bxf3 7 gxf3 Ng6 8 Be3 e5 9

Qa4+ Qd7 10 Qxc4 Bd6 11 Qb3 Qc8 12

Nd2 and White obtained a clear advantage in C.Scholz-E.N'Guyen, Saint Affrique 2013.

c) 6 ... Nd3+ 7 Bxd3 cxd3 8 Qxd3 does not make any sense for Black who is lacking space.

### 7 Be3

7 Bg3 is possible as well, but I prefer moving the bishop to e3 controlling both sides of the board.

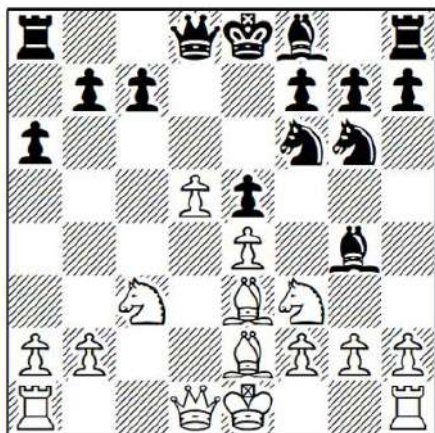
### 7 ... e5

As usual, defending the c4-pawn is not recommended for Black: 7 ... b5 8 a4 a6 9 axb5 axb5 10 Nc3 Rb8 (10 ... b4?! 11 Nb5) 11 Be2 and Black has problems with his development.

### 8 Bxc4 Nf6 9 Nc3 a6

9 ... Nh4 10 Rg1!? is a move suggested by *Rybka*. I do not see much for Black here because even taking on f3 favours White who wins lot of tempi: 10 ... Nxf3+ (or 10 ... Bd6 11 Be2) 11 gxf3 Bd7 12 Qb3 with a powerful initiative.

### 10 Be2



I am a big fan of this move followed by Nd2. It makes lot of sense to trade off Black's best bishop.

I also like the approach used by White in the following game: 10 h3 Bd7 11 a4 Bd6 12 0-0 0-0 13 Re1 h6 14 Bf1 Re8 15 Nd2 Qe7 16 Qb3 Rab8 17 Nc4 Bc5 18 a5 Bxe3 19 Rxe3 Qc5 20 Qa3 Qxa3 21 Rxa3 Red8 22 g3 and White had obtained a very pleasant endgame in J.Lopez Martinez-J.Vazquez Moreno, Badalona 2014.

### 10 ... Bd6 11 Nd2 Bxe2 12 Qxe2 0-0 13 0-0

The opening result is quite favourable for White. I believe he has the much better future due to his queenside prospects, whereas Black does not have much on the kingside, where his counterplay is supposed to lie.

### 13 ... Qe7

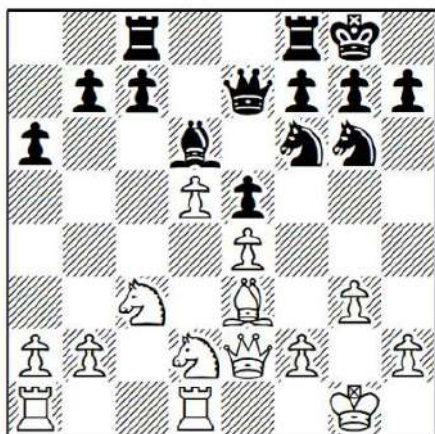
Black has to be extremely careful with moving the b7-pawn because of creating a hole on c6.

### 14 Rfd1 Rac8

If Black plays 14 ... Nf4 I think White should react with 15 Qf3 and not 15 Bxf4?! exf4 16 Nb3 Rfe8, since Black can now easily activate his bishop.

### 15 g3!

This useful move does not weaken our kingside at all and after undertaking this precaution we can continue playing on the queenside.



### 15 ... h6

15 ... b5 16 a3 c6 seems to be a good way of freeing Black's position, although after 17 dxc6 Rxc6 18 Bg5 (or 18 a4 b4 19 Nd5 Qe6 20 Nxf6+ Qxf6 21 Nc4 with the better chances for White too) 18 ... Qe6 19 Bxf6 Qxf6 20 a4 b4 21 Nd5 White has full control of the light squares.

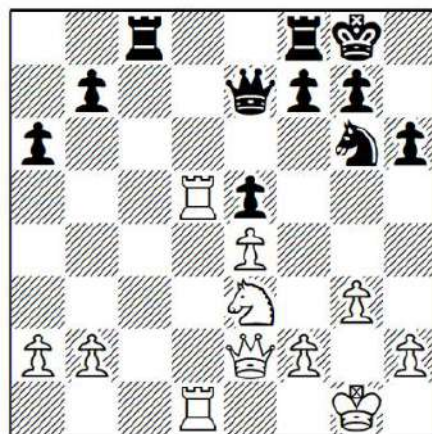
### 16 Ra1 c6

Black has to play this move sooner or later. He is also worse after 16 ... Rfd8 17 a3!? c6 18 dxc6 Rxc6 19 Nc4.

### 17 Nc4 cxd5 18 Nxd5

18 Nb6!? looks tempting too: 18 ... Rcd8 (18 ... Rxc3 19 bxc3 dxe4 20 Qc4 is clearly better for White) 19 Nbx d5 Nxd5 20 Nxd5 Qe6 21 Qd3 when White has the more active and stronger pieces than Black.

18 ... Nxd5 19 Rxd5 Bc5 20 Rcd1 Bxe3 21 Nxe3



Black has managed to get rid of his bad bishop, although White is still better with his stronger knight.

### 21 ... Qb4

After 21 ... Rfd8 22 Nf5 Qf8 23 h4! White keeps on winning space and limiting the g6-knight's possibilities, or if 21 ... Rc7 22 Nf5 Qe6 23 Qg4 followed by h4-h5 and the pressure continues.

### 22 Nf5 Rc4

After 22 ... Qc4 23 Qf3 Qxa2 24 h4 White's attack is unstoppable: 24 ... Qxb2 25 h5 Kh8 (or 25 ... Nh8 26 Qg4) 26 Rd6 and Black cannot avoid losing a piece.

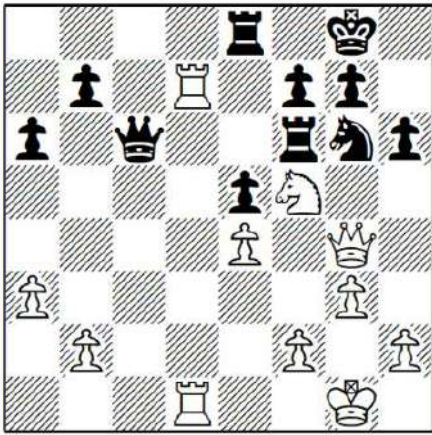
### 23 Nd6 Rc6 24 a3 Qb3 25 R5d3

It is hard to tell where Black made a major mistake. Most likely White always had the initiative and Black was not able to create much counterplay, his main problem being the passive knight on g6.

### 25 ... Qb6 26 Nf5 Re8 27 Rd7 Rf6

After 27 ... Rc7 28 R1d6 Rc6 29 Qf3 White keeps a clear advantage.

### 28 Qg4 Qc6



Black cannot afford to take on b2: 28 ... Qxb2 29 h4 and there is no defence.

**29 h4 h5 30 Qxh5 Qxe4 31 Rd8 Qc6 32 Qg5 Qe6**

32 ... e4 also loses to 33 h5 Rxf5 34 Qxf5 Nf8 35 Rxe8 Qxe8 36 Re1.

**33 R1d6 1-0**

*Game 39 D.Khismatullin-A.Kharlov*  
Moscow 2011

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Nf6**

One of the most popular tries. Black establishes a strong knight on d5 at the cost of granting White much more space.

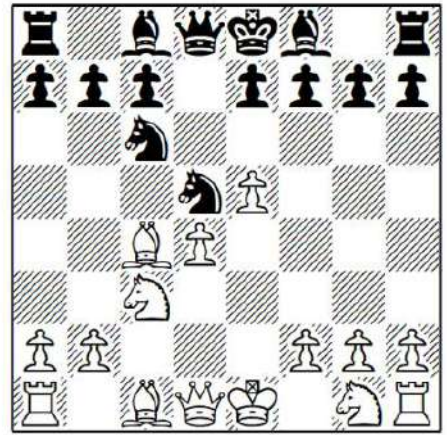
**4 e5**

The key response, as 4 Nc3 runs into 4 ... e5! when Black suddenly frees his position: 5 dxe5 Qxd1+ 6 Nxd1 (or 6 Kxd1 Ng4) 6 ... Nxe4.

**4 ... Nd5 5 Bxc4 Nc6**

We will study 5 ... Nb6 and Black's other alternatives in the next few games.

**6 Nc3!?**



I like this move because it limits Black's options. The main move is 6 Ne2.

**6 ... Nb6**

6 ... Be6 is the subject of our next game, Goganov-Alekseenko.

**7 Bb5 e6 8 Nf3**

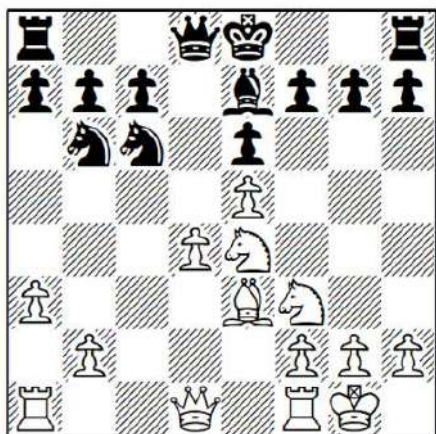
8 Qg4!/? puts some pressure on Black's kingside and in the worst scenario we place the queen on e4. I believe White has the advantage after 8 ... Bd7 9 Nf3 a6 10 Bd3.

**8 ... Bd7 9 Bd3**

Probably White did not want to allow the following variation: 9 0-0 Nb4 10 Be2 (trading bishops can only help Black) 10 ... Bc6.

**9 ... Nb4 10 Bb1**

I would also consider 10 Be4, since even if Black trades bishops, we win a tempo in bringing our knight via e4 to c5: 10 ... Bc6 11 0-0 Bxe4 12 Nxe4 Be7 13 a3 Nc6 14 Be3.



Here White has a solid advantage. The piece on e3 looks like a bad bishop, but it is pretty useful for supporting our centre, and if Black takes it by means of ... Nd5 and ... Nxe3, then we can exploit the half-open f-file.

**10 ... Bc6 11 0-0 Be7**

11 ... Bxf3, getting rid of the bishop-pair, is not part of Black's strategy. White obtains enough compensation after 12 Qxf3 Qxd4 13 Qxb7 Qxe5 14 g3 thanks to the open position and his powerful bishops.

**12 a3 N4d5 13 Ne4 Qd7 14 Bd2 Nc4 15 Bc1 Ncb6 16 Re1**

Of course, it is too soon to make a draw by repetition. What is more, White has a space advantage so plays on.

**16 ... 0-0-0**

Castling short looks dangerous since Black is lacking a defender on f6: 16 ... 0-0 17 Nc5 Bxc5 18 dxc5 Na4 19 Qc2 with a clear advantage for White.

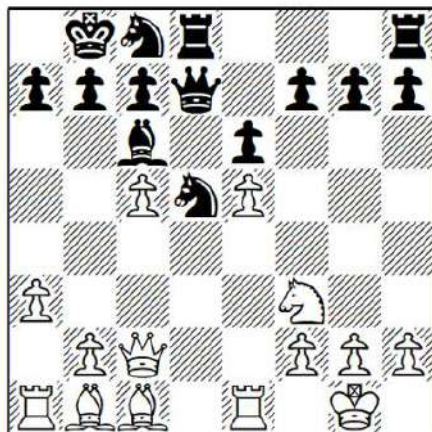
**17 Qc2 Kb8 18 Nc5 Bxc5**

18 ... Qe8 is possible, but passive. Then White continues the queenside pressure with 19 Bd2 h6 20 a4 and Black cannot take on a4: 20 ... Bxc5 21 dxc5 Nxa4 22 b3.

**19 dxc5 Nc8**

The engines suggest 19 ... Na4, but it is not easy to play a move like this in a real game. The knight looks misplaced on the

rim and after 20 Ba2 White has the better chances.



**20 Nd4**

20 Qc4 is probably more accurate. White is ready to finish his development and sooner or later he is going to advance his queenside pawns.

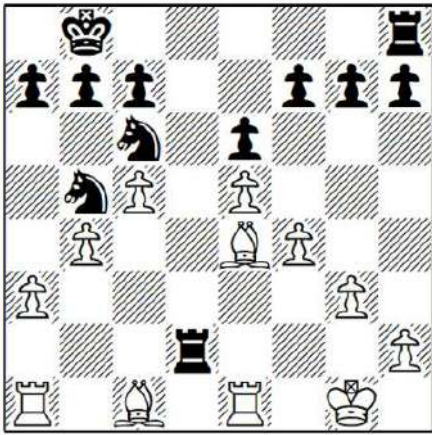
**20 ... Nde7**

20 ... Nb4 21 Nxc6+ Nxc6 22 b4 doesn't really alleviate the pressure.

**21 Nxc6+ Nxc6 22 b4 N8e7 23 Bb2 Qd2 24 Qxd2 Rxd2 25 Bc3 Rd7 26 Be4 Nd4**

I have to admit that Black's position is extremely solid, although he cannot ask for more than a draw.

**27 g3 Nec6 28 f4 Nb5 29 Bb2 Rd2 30 Bc1**



The entire position is controlled by bishops.

**30 ... Rd4?**

A clear mistake which leads to a disaster. After 30 ... Rd7 there is still a long way to go.

**31 Bxc6 bxc6 32 a4**

Apart from destroying Black's pawn structure, White also wins material.

**32 ... Rhd8**

32 ... Nc3 33 Bb2 Rc4 runs into 34 Ra1.

**33 axb5 cxb5 34 Be3 Rxb4 35 c6 1-0**

An instructive game, while in the opening I think that both 8 Qg4 and 10 Be4 deserve further attention.

*Game 40 A.Goganov-K.Alekseenko St. Petersburg 2014*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Nf6 4 e5 Nd5 5 Bxc4 Nc6**

Let us take a look at Black's options in this position, aside from 5 ... Nb6, the subject of our next two games:

a) 5 ... e6 is not that good because Black keeps his light-squared bishop inside the pawn chain. With 6 Nf3 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Nc3 Nxc3 9 bxc3 b6 10 Qe2 a5 somehow Black manages to finish development, although White has the better chances after

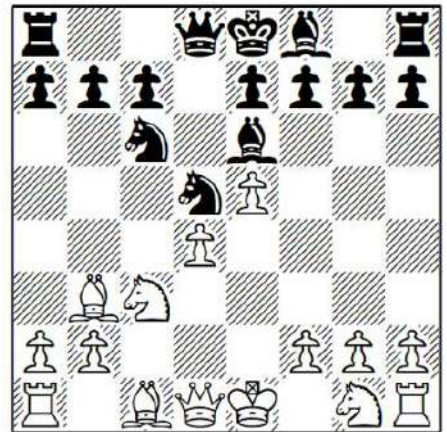
11 Qe4 Ba6. This was played in A.Fier-A.Gholami, Izmir 2013, and here I believe White can improve his play by means of 12 Bxe6! (12 Bb3 Bxf1 13 Bc2 g6 14 Qxa8 Bc4 15 Qe4 was played in the game when I still prefer White) 12 ... Bxf1 (or 12 ... fxe6 13 Qxa8 Bxf1 14 Kxf1) 13 Kxf1 fxe6 14 Qxa8 Qd7 15 Qe4 and Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

b) 5 ... c6 is just too passive for Black. After 6 Nc3 Nxc3 7 bxc3 e6 8 Nf3 Be7 9 Be3 Nd7 10 Bb3 b5 11 Nd2 White obtained a slight edge in A.Sorin-J.Fuentes, Buenos Aires 2005.

**6 Nc3 Be6**

6 ... Nb6 was previously analysed in Khismatullin-Kharlov.

**7 Bb3**



**7 ... Na5**

At first sight 7 ... Nxc3 8 bxc3 Bd5 followed by ... e6 looks like the easiest way to equalize. However, 9 e6! fxe6 (9 ... Bxg2 10 exf7+ Kd7 11 Qg4+ Kd6 12 Qe6# is a quick win for White and 9 ... Bxe6 10 d5 loses a piece) 10 Nf3 sees White create a lot of weaknesses. Therefore he has more than enough compensation. J.Stocek-I.Starostits, Porto Carras 2011, continued 10 ... g6 11 0-0 Bg7 12 Ng5 Qd7 13 Re1 and here 13 Qg4!? is probably even stronger: 13 ... h5 14

Qh3 Bxb3 15 axb3 e5 16 Ne6 and White is doing well.

### 8 Ba4+

The engines suggest the unnatural 8 Nf3 Nxb3 9 axb3. However, it makes some sense if you realize Black is down in development. Then 9 ... Qd7 (if 9 ... h6 10 0-0 Qd7 11 Ne4) 10 0-0 h6 11 Ne4 b6 12 h3 is far from clear.

### 8 ... c6 9 Nge2 Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bc4

Black needs to play with ... e6 in order to finish his development, as even if he plays ... g6 and ... Bg7 he will not find a good diagonal for his bishop.

### 11 0-0 e6 12 Re1!

Simple and effective. After this move we are able to move our knight followed by something like Qg4 and we will have a strong kingside initiative.

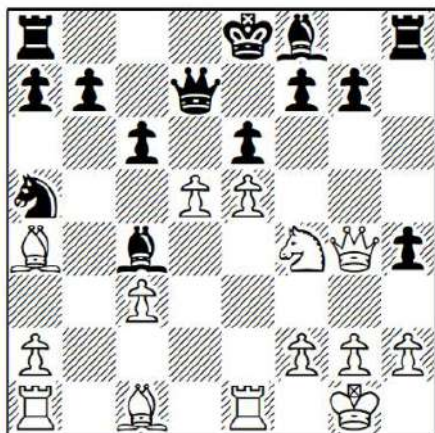
### 12 ... h5

It feels like Black knew White's plan beforehand (12 ... Be7 13 Ng3 0-0 14 Qg4 and here 14 Ne4 followed by Qg4 is also possible), but this move weakens the kingside a lot.

### 13 Nf4

13 Ng3 g6 14 Ne4 is a good way to exploit Black's weaknesses, especially those on d6 and f6.

### 13 ... h4 14 Qg4 Qd7 15 d5!?



The move itself is quite interesting. The only issue is that I do not think White needs to sacrifice a pawn in order to gain the advantage. After 15 h3 0-0-0 16 Bc2 White has a pleasant positional advantage, while after the sacrifice Black suffers from poor development and his king being stuck in the centre.

### 15 ... Bxd5

15 ... exd5 runs into 16 e6.

### 16 Nxd5 Qxd5 17 Bg5

Not a bad investment. Black's king remains in the centre and the d-file is open.

### 17 ... h3 18 Re4

White was probably worried about 18 gxh3 Qc4, but he can play 19 Bb3! Qxg4+ 20 hxg4 and the resulting endgame is a bit better for White.

### 18 ... Bc5 19 Rd1

It makes lot of sense to keep on developing pieces. However, White had a better move, as found by *Rybka*: 19 Bd1! hxg2 20 Be2 (White prepares c3-c4 and Rd1) 20 ... b5 21 a4 and it is pretty hard for Black to handle this open position, being up against the bishop-pair and with his king still in the centre.

### 19 ... Qxa2 20 Bh4 b5

Likewise, after 20 ... g6 21 Qf3 Kf8 22 Qf6 I think Black's position is hard to defend unless you have the help of an engine, while 20 ... Kf8 21 Rf4 Kg8 looks safe for Black, but it runs into 22 Rxf7! Kxf7 23 Rd7+ Ke8 24 Qxg7 Qb1+ 25 Bd1 when White covers the check and wins.

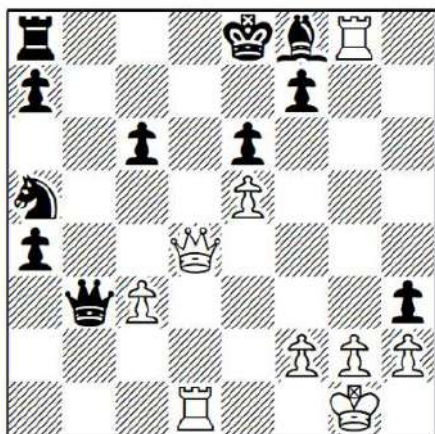
### 21 Qxg7 Rxh4

21 ... Rf8 loses to 22 Qf6 followed by Rd8+.

### 22 Qg8+ Ke7 23 Qg5+ Ke8 24 Qg8+

White can also go for the drawish variation 24 Qxh4 bxa4 25 Rg4 Qb3 26 Rg8+ Bf8 27 Rxf8+ Kxf8 28 Qh8+ Ke7 29 Qf6+ Ke8 30 Qh8+, with equality.

24 ... Ke7 25 Qg5+ Ke8 26 Qxh4 bxa4 27 Rg4 Qb3 28 Rg8+ Bf8 29 Qd4!?



Going for the win, rejecting 29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 Qh8+ Ke7 31 Qf6+ Ke8 32 Qh8+, etc.

**29 ... Qd5**

This is the only move by Black. 29 ... Qb7 30 Qc5 loses immediately.

**30 Qxa4 Qc5 31 Qh4 hxg2?!**

Believe it or not, this move helps White a lot because the h2-pawn is now free to advance. After 31 ... Rb8!?! the position is far from clear.

**32 Qh8**

32 Rd6!?! Qc4 33 Rxf8+ Kxf8 34 Qh8+ Ke7 35 Qf6+ secures a draw for White, but Goganov was out for blood as we know by now.

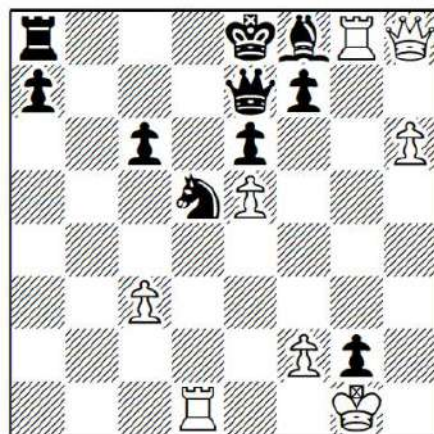
**32 ... Qe7 33 h4!**

Now there is no way to stop this guy.

**33 ... Nc4 34 h5 Nb6**

34 ... Nb2 35 h6 Nxd1 36 h7 is an easy win for White.

**35 h6 Nd5**



**36 h7?!**

Missing 36 Rxd5! (getting rid of Black's only active piece) 36 ... exd5 37 h7 when Black cannot create any counterplay, White winning after 37 ... Qh4 38 Rxf8+ Ke7 39 Qf6+!.

**36 ... Qh4 37 Rxd5**

Not 37 Rxf8+? Ke7 and White suddenly loses.

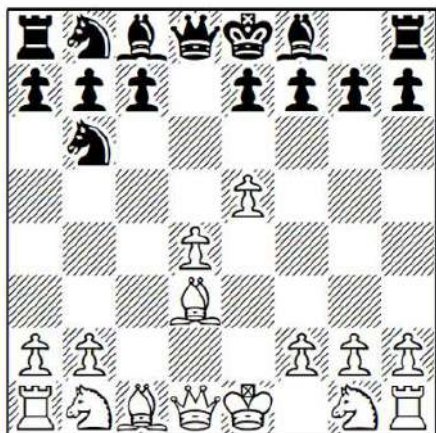
**37 ... Nf4 38 Qg8?!**

38 Rg8 Nh3+ 39 Kg2 Nf4+ 40 Kg1 Nh3+ was the other possibility and it also ends in a draw by repetition.

**38 ... Nh3+ 39 Kf1 Qc4+ 40 Ke1 Qe4+ 41 Kf1 Qc4+ 1/2-1/2**

*Game 41 V.Kramnik-S.Karjakin Khanty-Mansiysk Candidates 2014*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Nf6 4 e5 Nd5 5 Bxc4 Nb6 6 Bd3!?**



Moving the bishop to b3 is also a popular option for White who controls the centre, especially the d5-square. I prefer the text move, as played by the former world champion and in this game he had a certain novelty in mind.

6 Bb3 Nc6 7 Ne2 (7 Be3 Bf5 8 Ne2 e6 9 Nbc3 usually transposes to the main line after 9 ... Qd7) 7 ... Bf5 8 Nbc3 e6 9 0-0 Qd7 is a key line and, of course, there is lot of material to study here.

### 6 ... Nc6

As we already know, there is no point in playing 6 ... e6 for Black, as having his queen's bishop inside the pawn chain is not a good idea.

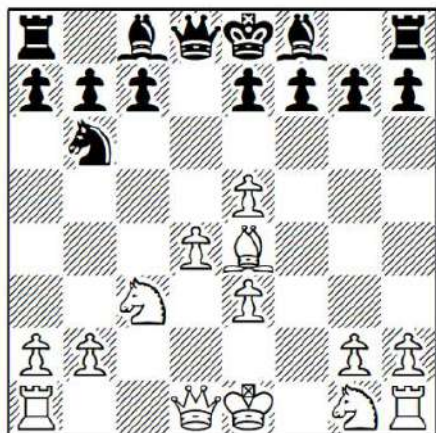
### 7 Be3 Nb4

We will study 7 ... Be6 and Black's alternatives in the next game, Sargissian-Granda Zuniga.

### 8 Be4 f5

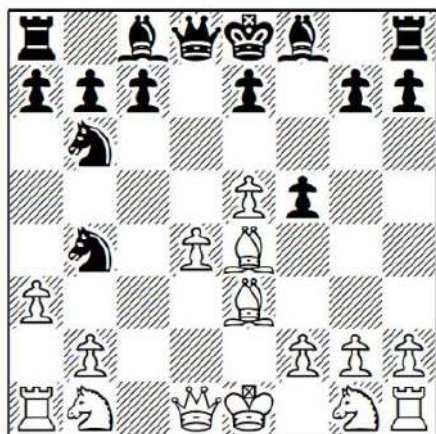
Black chooses the main line.

Let us take a look too at the natural 8 ... N4d5. After 9 Nc3 Nxe3 (or 9 ... c6 10 Nf3 h6 11 0-0 Be6 12 Nd2 Qd7 13 a4 a5 14 Nb3 Bg4 15 Bf3 Bxf3 16 Qxf3 e6 17 Ne4 and White obtained a clear advantage in V.Potkin-K.Bischoff, German League 2011) 10 fxe3 I think that the resulting pawn structure favours White.



White's centre is the stronger and the f-file is now open. Moreover, the dark-squared bishop wasn't a great piece, so we should not mind trading it off. With 10 ... g6 11 Qf3 (after 11 Nge2 Bh6 12 Nf4 Bxf4 13 exf4 c6 14 d5 cxd5 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Qxd5 Qb6 Black was able to free his position in K.Sasikiran-A.Volokitin, Wijk aan Zee 2009) 11 ... Bh6 (11 ... c6 12 Nh3 Bh6 13 0-0 0-0 14 Nf4 is also worth considering) 12 Nge2 0-0 13 Nf4 (13 0-0-0 Nc4 14 Nf4 c5 15 Qe2 Nxe3 16 Qxe3 cxd4 17 Qf2 Qc7 is not that clear since Black's bishop-pair is quite powerful) 13 ... c5 14 Rd1 Nc4? (Stohl suggests 14 ... cxd4 15 exd4 f6!?) 15 Qe2 Bg4 16 Bf3 Bxf3 17 gxf3 b5 18 dxc5 White had obtained a clear advantage in R.Wojtaszek-M.Bartel, Lublin 2009.

### 9 a3!?



This move is a secondary choice compared to 9 exf6. In fact you'll find only about 30 games on the database with 9 a3, but I think we are going to see much more of it in the future.

### 9 ... fxe4

The critical response. Black can also try the quiet 9 ... N4d5 10 Bd3 (I would also consider 10 Bf3!? Nxe3 11 fxe3 g6 12 Ne2 c6 13 Qb3 Nd5 14 h4 Bh6 15 Bxd5 Qxd5 16 Qxd5 cxd5 17 Nbc3 Be6 18 Kf2, which is a line suggested by GM Landa; personally, I think White is better because the knight-pair works better than Black's bishops in this fairly closed position) 10 ... Nxe3 11 fxe3 e6 12 Nf3 g5 13 Nc3 g4 14 Nd2 c5, as played in M.Janczarski-M.Bartel, Warsaw 2013. Here I believe White can improve his play with 15 Qe2 cxd4 16 exd4 Qxd4 17 Nb5 when he has a dangerous initiative.

### 10 axb4 e6

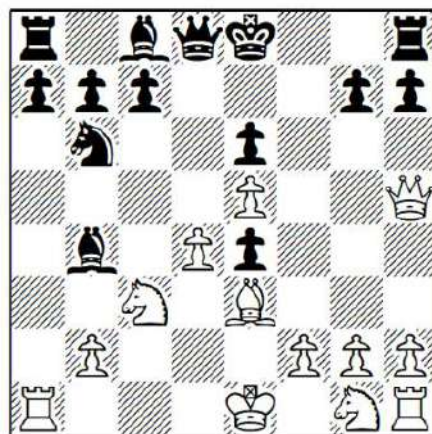
10 ... Bf5 not look great when Black has a pawn on e4: 11 Nc3 (11 Ne2 e6 12 b5 Be7 13 Nbc3 looks better for White too) 11 ... e6 12 b5 Nc4 13 Qe2 Nxe3 14 Qxe3 and I think the position is easier to play as White.

### 11 Nc3 Bxb4

I wonder what Kramnik had in mind against 11 ... Nd5, when White has lot of possibilities: 12 b5 Nxe3 13 fxe3 Qh4+ 14 g3 Qh6 15 Kd2; 12 Nge2 Bxb4 13 Bd2 0-0

14 0-0! (but not 14 Nxe4 Bxd2+ 15 Qxd2 Qh4 16 N2g3 b6 followed by ... a5 and ... Ba6 when Black has a good position); and 12 Qg4 Nxb4 13 0-0-0.

### 12 Qh5+



A key move in order to weaken Black's position. Always look out for in-between moves!

### 12 ... g6 13 Qg4

Let me share a variation analysed by Stohl: 13 Qh6!? Bf8 (or 13 ... Nd5 14 Nge2) 14 Qf4 Nd5 15 Qxe4 Nxc3 16 bxc3 Qd5 17 Qg4. Once White finishes his development with Ne2(f3) and 0-0, he should be somewhat better in this complex position. Black's king will be exposed no matter where it hides and also the e6-pawn is vulnerable.

### 13 ... Bxc3+?!

After this move Black is going to have serious trouble defending his dark squares. Let us consider Black's other options:

a) 13 ... Nc4 14 Nge2 Nxe3 15 fxe3 0-0 16 Nf4 Qe7 17 0-0 and I think that the knight-pair works much better than Black's bishops.

b) 13 ... Nd5 14 Nge2 0-0 15 0-0 Rf5 16 Nxe4 and White has a slight advantage.

c) 13 ... 0-0 14 Nge2 Be7 15 Nxe4 Nd5 16 0-0 reminds me of the previous lines.

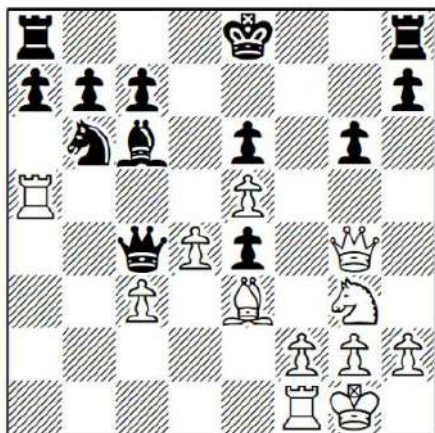
### 14 bxc3 Qd5 15 Ne2 Bd7 16 0-0

Black keeps his extra pawn. On the other hand, White has more than enough compensation and we also know that opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side.

### 16 ... Qc4

16 ... 0-0?! is too risky in view of 17 Bh6 Rf5 (17 ... Bb5 18 Bxf8 Rxf8 offers Black some compensation, but I think White's extra material is more relevant) 18 Nf4 Rxf4 19 Qxf4 followed by Qf6. Likewise, after 16 ... a6 17 Ng3 0-0-0 18 Nxe4 Bc6 19 f3 I prefer White's chances.

### 17 Ng3 Bc6 18 Ra5!



A nice positional manoeuvre. White is going to sacrifice on c6 and suddenly there is no safe place for Black's king. However, the engines remain unimpressed, recommending 18 Qh4 instead. This prevents queenside castling and White holds the initiative after 18 ... Kd7 19 Qh6 Raf8 20 Rxa7 Rf7 21 Qh4.

### 18 ... 0-0-0!

Black has to castle queenside, as otherwise White has a powerful kingside attack with h4-h5.

### 19 Rc5

Taking on a7 was also possible: 19 Rxa7 Kb8 20 Ra3 Qd3 21 Rfa1 Bd5 and White gradually improves his position with 22 Nf1!.

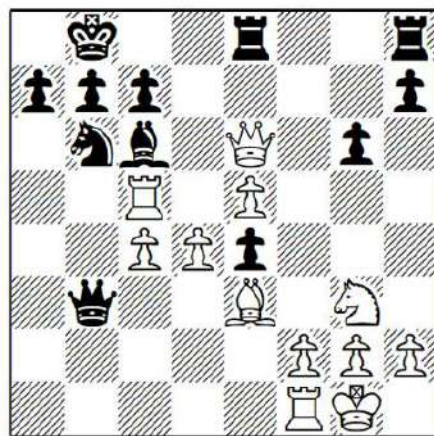
### 19 ... Qb3 20 c4

White can also sacrifice the exchange with 20 Rxc6 bxc6 21 Nxe4 Rde8 22 Qe2 Qb5 23 Qc2 when his compensation is more than sufficient.

### 20 ... Kb8

If 20 ... Nxc4 21 Qxe6+ Kb8 22 Qxc4 Qxc4 23 Rxc4 Bb5 24 Rb4 Bxf1 25 Kxf1 with a clear advantage for White, while 20 ... Rhe8 21 d5 Nxc4 22 Rxc4 Bb5 23 Rcc1 Bxf1 24 Nxe4 (24 Kxf1!?) leads to a complex position.

### 21 Qxe6 Rde8



After 21 ... Rhe8 22 Qf7 Rf8 23 Qg7!? Nxc4 24 Bg5 Rde8 25 Nxe4 Bxe4 26 Qxc7+ Ka8 27 Rxc4 Bxg2 28 Ra1 (White plans Rca4) 28 ... a6 29 Be3 White's initiative is just too powerful.

### 22 Qh3

I'm not sure whether this move is a mistake or not, but I do prefer *Rybka's* suggestion: 22 Qf7 Ref8 23 Qe7 Re8 (not 23 ... Nxc4? 24 Qe6 and Black loses material) 24 Qg7 Reg8 25 Qh6 Na4 (25 ... Nxc4 26 Rxc6 bxc6 27 Nxe4 also offers White a clear advantage) 26 Rxc6 bxc6 27 Nxe4 Qxc4 28 h3 and there is no doubt that White has the advantage.

### 22 ... Nxc4 23 Rxc6 bxc6?!

Black accepts the challenge, although he was already short of time. After 23 ... Nxe3

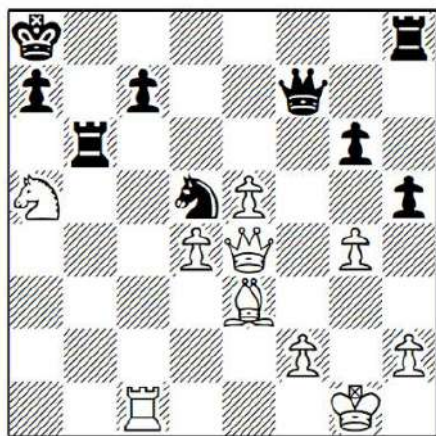
24 Nxe4 Qb5 (or 24 ... bxc6 25 Nc5 Qb5 26 Qxe3) 25 Rfc1 bxc6 26 Qxe3, given the chance, I would take White who was a strong attack and the much better structure.

24 Nxe4 Nb6 25 Nc5 Qd5 26 Rc1 Ka8  
26 ... a5 runs into 27 Qg4! when White plans Qe2-Qa6.

27 Na6 Kb7 28 Nb4 Qf7 29 Qg4 Nd5  
30 Nxc6 Re6 31 Na5+ Ka8 32 Qe4 Rb6 33 g4

After 33 Rc5 Rd8 34 Nc6 Rc8 35 h3  
Black's position collapses.

33 ... h5?!



This mistake was probably due to time trouble, but it is already hard to suggest a good defence for Black.

34 Rc5 Rd8 35 Nc6 Rxc6 36 Rxc6  
hxg4 37 Rf6 Qh7 38 Bg5 Qg8

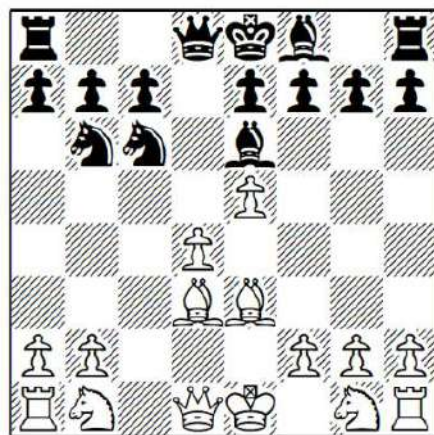
38 ... Qd7 39 e6 Qd6 40 Rf7 Re8 41 Rd7  
Rxe6 42 Qxd5+ wins a piece and the game.

39 Rxg6 1-0

An awesome performance by Kramnik. I hope we will see much more of this line in the future and I believe there is still a lot of room for improvement especially after 11 ... Nd5.

Game 42 G.Sargissian-J.Granda Zuniga  
Zafra 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Nf6 4 e5 Nd5 5  
Bxc4 Nb6 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 Be3 Be6



Black deviates from the main line 7 ... Nb4. As we can see, one of his main problems is finding a good square for his light-squared before playing ... e6.

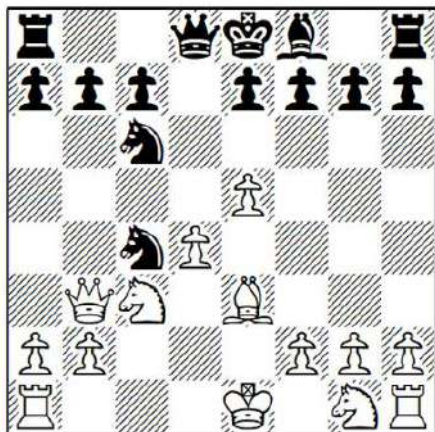
8 Nc3 Bc4

Granda is such a talented player that he always has original ideas in the opening. Here he tries trading bishops off in order to play ... e6 afterwards. Let us analyze too the alternatives:

a) 8 ... Qd7 9 Nge2 Bc4 (or 9 ... Nb4 10 Be4 N4d5 11 0-0 0-0-0 12 a4 and White has good prospects on the queenside and in the centre) 10 Be4!? (White can also go for the simple 10 Bxc4 Nxc4 11 Qb3 Nb6 12 e6!? fxe6 13 0-0 0-0-0 14 Rac1 g6 15 Nf4) 10 ... e6 (maybe 10 ... f5!? 11 Bf3 0-0-0) 11 0-0 0-0-0 12 b3 Bd5 (12 ... Bxe2 13 Qxe2!? Nxd4 14 Bxd4 Qxd4 15 Nb5 is another interesting idea) 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 a3!? f6 15 exf6 gxf6 16 b4 Nce7 17 Qb3 h5 18 Rac1 and White had obtained a promising position in M.Gurevich-H.Olafsson, Stockholm 1997.

b) 8 ... Nb4 9 Be4 c6 10 Nge2 N4d5 11 0-0 g6 12 a4 Nxe3 13 fxe3 and White has the better development, which he can begin to put to good use with 13 ... Nc4 14 Qd3! Bh6 (or 14 ... Nxb2 15 Qb1 with a clear advantage for White) 15 Nf4.

## 9 Bxc4 Nxc4 10 Qb3



10 Nf3 e6 11 0-0 Be7 12 Qb3 N6a5 13 Qc2 0-0 14 Rad1 is also worth considering.

### 10 ... N6a5

After 10 ... Nxe3 11 fxe3 Qd7 12 0-0-0 g6 (or 12 ... e6 13 Qxb7 Rb8 14 Qa6 when Black's counterplay is not enough in my opinion) 13 Nf3 Bh6 14 Rhe1 White has a clear advantage.

### 11 Qc2 e6 12 Nf3 Nc6 13 a3

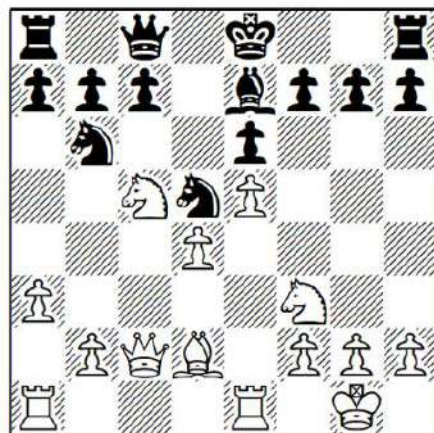
I like the approach used by White in this game because it is simple and positional. Let me share too an idea found with the computer: 13 0-0-0!? (it is not that easy to castle queenside if we haven't studied the move beforehand) 13 ... Bb4 (or 13 ... Nb4 14 Qe2 Nb6 15 Kb1 c6 16 Nd2!?) 14 d5! Bxc3 15 dxc6 Bxb2+ 16 Kb1 Na3+ 17 Kxb2 Nxc2 18 Rxd8+ Rxd8 19 Kxc2 and White has a clear advantage.

### 13 ... Nb6 14 0-0 Ne7

This looks a bit slow, but Black wanted to place a knight on d5 before playing ... Be7. After the immediate 14 ... Be7 Black will have a hard time finding a better square for the knight on c6 and 15 Qe4 0-0 16 b4 gives White the initiative on both sides of the board.

### 15 Ne4 Ned5 16 Bd2 Be7 17 Rfe1

17 Nc5!? Qc8 18 Rfe1 is also worth considering.



I can imagine a manoeuvre like Re4-Rg4 occurring quite quickly.

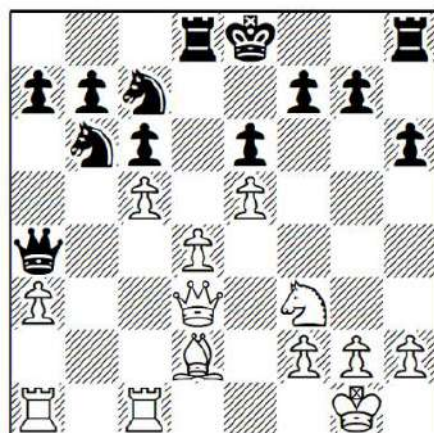
### 17 ... Qd7 18 b4 h6 19 Ng3 Qa4 20 Qd3 c6 21 Rec1 Nc7

One of the main problems I see for Black in this line is the fact that he does not get much apart from a strong knight on d5. The e5-pawn gives White lot of space and usually Black finds himself lacking pieces on the kingside.

### 22 Ne4

I like 22 Nh5 as well, because whatever Black plays, he is going to create extra weaknesses on the kingside. That is unless he plays 22 ... Bf8, but that is a bit passive.

### 22 ... Rd8 23 Nc5 Bxc5 24 bxc5!



It may look like the bishop on d2 is a bad piece, but we have to point out that it is actually quite a nice one because it defends every single pawn we have, while the position may open anytime soon.

**24 ... Nbd5 25 Rc4 Qa6 26 Qc2!**

White makes sure c6 is hanging in case Black plays ... b6 or ... b5. We also have the threat of Ra4 and Rb1, trapping Black's queen.

**26 ... b5**

Otherwise Black loses his queen.

**27 cxb6 Nxb6 28 Rxc6**

Aside from his extra space, White has increased his advantage to an extra pawn. Black can keep on fighting, but he should lose in the long run.

**28 ... Ncd5 29 a4 0-0 30 Qb3**

With 30 a5 White is not winning a piece and a possible variation is 30 ... Rc8!? 31 h3 Ne7 32 Rc5 Nbd5.

**30 ... Rc8 31 Rac1 Rxc6 32 Rxc6 Rc8**

Or if 32 ... Qxa4 33 Qxa4 Nxa4 34 Ra6 Nac3 35 Rxa7.

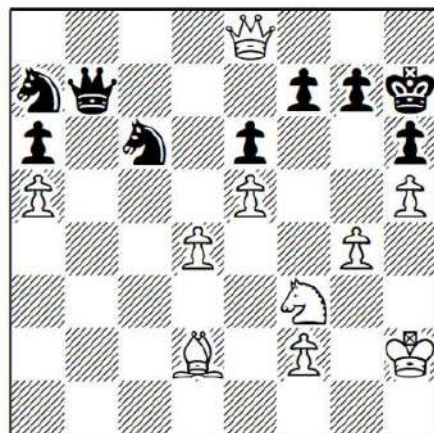
**33 Rxc8+ Qxc8 34 a5 Qc4 35 Qb1**

All Black can do here is try to blockade on light squares. In the meantime the bishop on d2 continues to do a great job and it may be useful to protect d4 and a5. Let us learn from White's technique.

**35 ... Nc8 36 h4 Nde7 37 Qb7 a6 38 Qd7 Qb5 39 Qd8+ Kh7 40 Kh2**

There is no rush as there is nothing Black can do in order to free his position.

**40 ... Qb7 41 Qe8 Nc6 42 h5 N8a7 43 g4!**



**43 ... Qe7**

Black is forced to trade queens, otherwise White continues the kingside pawn-storm.

**44 Qxe7 Nxe7 45 Kg3 g5 46 hxg6+ fxg6 47 Kf4 Nac6 48 Ke4 Nd8 49 Nh4 Ndc6 50 Kd3 Kg7 51 Kc4 h5 52 gxh5 gxh5 53 Kc5 Kf7 54 Nf3 Kg6 55 Kd6 Kf5 56 Bg5 1-0**

Finally breaking Black's resistance. This is a fine game worth studying in order to appreciate White's main ideas in this line.

*Game 43 I.Cheparinov-T.Nabaty Skopje 2013*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 e5**

Nowadays this is the most popular reaction against 3 e4.

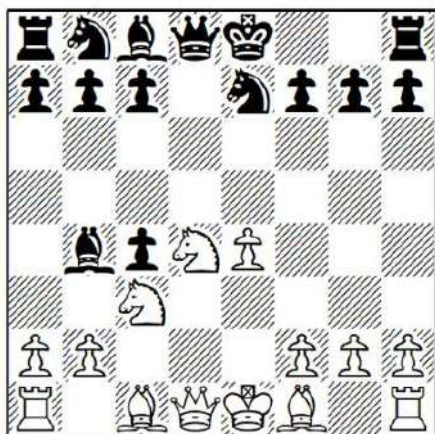
**4 Nf3**

4 d5 is not recommended in view of 4 ... Nf6 5 Nc3 b5 and here 5 ... Bc5 or 5 ... c6 are also possible – Black has a good position.

**4 ... Bb4+**

We are going to study 4 ... exd4 later in this chapter.

**5 Nc3 exd4 6 Nxd4 Ne7**



This is by far the most solid move by Black:

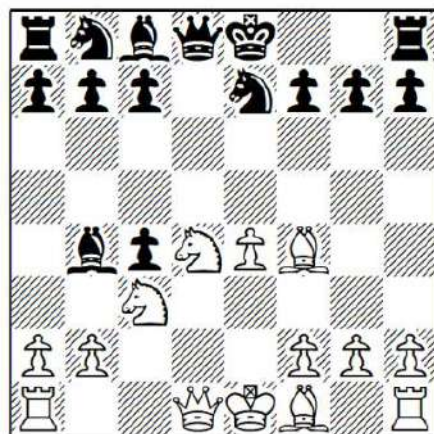
a) 6 ... Qh4 7 Bxc4 Qxe4+ 8 Kf1 Bxc3 9 bxc3 (we also reach this position after 6 ... Qe7) 9 ... Nf6 10 Ba3 and Black faces serious development problems.

b) 6 ... Qe7 7 Bxc4 Qxe4+ 8 Kf1 Bxc3 9 bxc3 transposes to line 'a'.

c) 6 ... Nf6?! 7 Qa4+ Qd7 8 Qxb4 Qxd4 9 Be3 Nc6 10 Qxc4 when White has the bishop-pair and a kingside majority.

d) 6 ... Nd7 7 Bxc4 Ngf6 8 Bf4!? (we also develop the bishop to f4 in the main line) gives White a good position: for instance, 8 ... Nb6 (Black is also worse after 8 ... Nxe4 9 0-0 Bxc3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 Re1 and 8 ... 0-0 9 0-0 Nb6 10 Bb3 Bxc3 11 bxc3 Nxe4 12 Qf3) 9 Bb3 0-0 10 0-0 Bxc3 11 bxc3 Nxe4 12 Qf3 and despite the fact that White a pawn down, he has the upper hand with the bishop-pair and much better development.

**7 Bf4!?**



I started to pay attention to this move after the present game. It makes lot of sense to me since Nb5 will now be a stronger move. 7 Bxc4 Nbc6 8 Be3 is White's main option, although I have the feeling Black can equalize sooner or later.

**7 ... Ng6**

Alternatively:

a) 7 ... 0-0 8 Bxc4 Ng6 9 Bg3 (9 Be3 is possible too, but I prefer keeping the bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal) 9 ... c5 10 Nf3 and I prefer White's chances.

b) 7 ... Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Ng6 9 Bg3 Qe7 and now I know defending the pawn looks a bit passive, but I think it is worth considering, i.e. 10 f3!? Ne5 11 Bxc4 0-0 (or 11 ... Nxc4 12 Qa4+ Nd7 13 Qxc4 and White has the initiative) 12 Qe2. Black has a solid position, but I trust White's kingside possibilities in the future. The alternative is 10 Bxc4 Qxe4+ 11 Qe2 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Na6 13 Rb1 when the resulting endgame is easier to play as White, F.Caruana-M.Godena, Siena 2010.

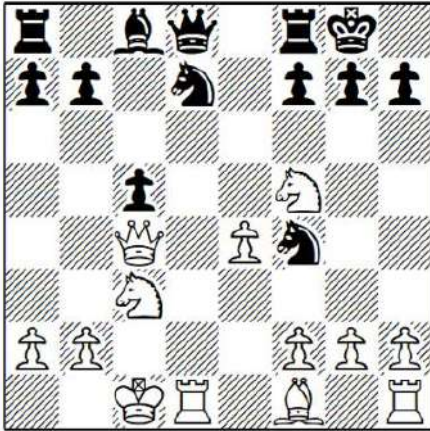
**8 Bg3**

Apart from this natural retreat, I would consider playing 8 Qa4+!?:

a) 8 ... Nc6 9 Nxc6 bxc6 (9 ... Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Qf6 is a computer variation, of course; after 11 Rd1 bxc6 12 Bxc7 Qxc3+ 13 Rd2 Qc1+ 14 Qd1 the resulting endgame is better

for White) 10 Be3 and Black's camp is full of weaknesses.

b) 8 ... Nd7 9 Qxb4 c5 (9 ... Nxf4 runs into 10 Nf5) 10 Qxc4 Nxf4 (if 10 ... cxd4 11 Bc7) 11 Nf5 0-0 12 0-0-0.



White's position looks preferable.

**8 ... Qe7 9 Be2 0-0**

9 ... Qxe4 is risky and after 10 0-0 (10 Qa4+ Nc6 11 0-0-0 Bxc3 12 Bf3 looks like a better way of punishing Black's lack of development) 10 ... Bxc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 Bf3 White has a lead in development.

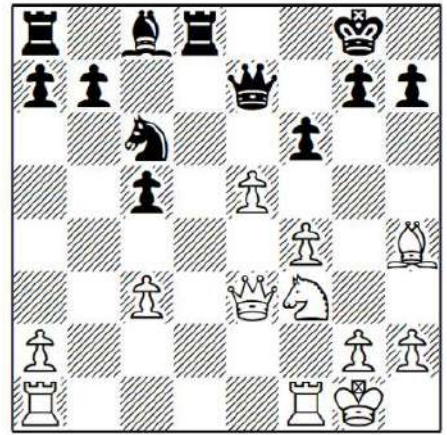
**10 0-0 Bxc3 11 bxc3 Ne5**

After 11 ... Rd8 12 Qc2 c5 13 Nb5 Ne5 14 Bxe5 Qxe5 15 f4 Qe7 16 e5 White just increases his advantage.

**12 f4 Nd3 13 Bxd3 cxd3 14 Qxd3**

The position looks equal, although Black cannot underestimate White's powerful centre. That is the reason why I think White's chances are better.

**14 ... c5 15 Nf3 Rd8 16 Qe3 Nc6 17 Bh4 f6 18 e5!**



When we have opposite-coloured bishops, we have the right to attack.

**18 ... Bf5 19 Qf2 Qf8 20 exf6 gxf6 21 Rfe1**

If you analyze the position with an engine, you'll find the assessment is close to '0.00', but it is quite a different matter in practice: Black's kingside is weak and White is going to exploit this fact shortly.

**21 ... Rd3 22 Rad1 c4**

Not 22 ... Rxc3?! 23 Qb2! and all of a sudden Black's position is falling.

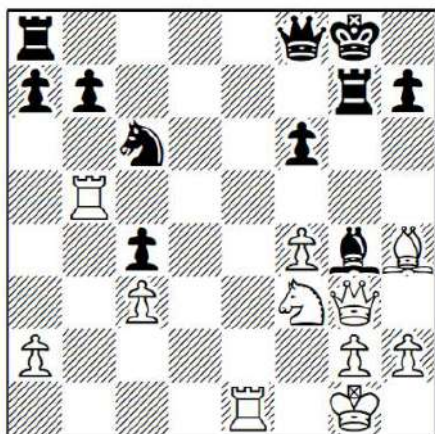
**23 Rb1 Rd7**

Black has to play something like 23 ... b6 24 Rb5 Bd7 25 Nd2, but I still think White has the best of it.

**24 Rb5 Bg4**

24 ... Bg6 was a better try. Here I see lot of good ideas for White like 25 Nd2, maybe Re6 at some point and why not Qg3 too?

**25 Qg3 Rg7**



### 26 Rxb7!

Probably the move missed by Black when he played 24 ... Bg4.

### 26 ... Bd7

Black loses material after 26 ... Rxb7 27 Qxg4+ Rg7 (27 ... Kh8 28 Qe6 is also hopeless) 28 Qe6+.

### 27 Qf2 Qd6 28 Nd2 1-0

I think the 7 Bf4!/? line is quite interesting and there is still room for improvement, so hopefully we will see much more of it in the future.

*Game 44 L.Aronian-H.Stevic* European Club Cup, Plovdiv 2010

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 e5 4 Nf3 exd4 5 Bxc4

We will play in gambit mode for a while. Don't worry, though: White usually gets his pawn back and in the worst scenario the compensation is more than enough. What really matters here is White's development, whereas I do not think White gets an advantage with 5 Qxd4 Qxd4 6 Nxd4 Nf6 7 Nc3 Bc5.

### 5 ... Bb4+

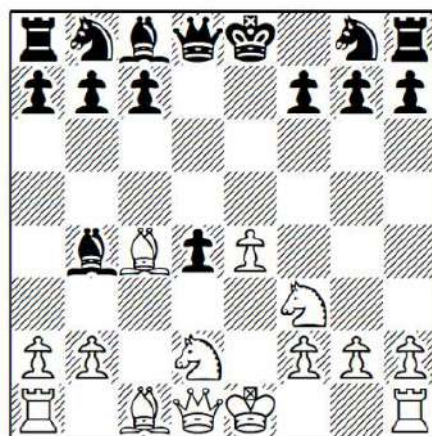
Alternatively:

a) 5 ... Nc6 is the subject of our next game Radjabov-Westerberg.

b) 5 ... Bc5? 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Bxe6 fxe6 8 Qh5+ and Black is in trouble.

c) 5 ... c5 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Bxe6 fxe6 8 Qh5+ g6 9 Nxc6 Nf6 10 Qh3 hxg6 11 Qxh8 and after these forced moves White is up on material. We can argue about Black having any compensation, but I think White's advantage is clear and his extra material is more relevant in the long run: for example, 11 ... Nxe4 12 Nd2 Qf6 13 Qxf6 Nxf6 14 a4! Bh6 15 Nc4 Bxc1 16 Rxc1 Kd7 17 f4 Nc6 18 Ke2 Rh8 19 g3 and White had obtained a clear advantage in G.Sargissian-S.Ganguly, Wijk aan Zee 2011.

### 6 Nbd2



6 Bd2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbx2 is also possible, but I think the text move maintains more of a fighting spirit, as well as more pieces on the board.

### 6 ... Nc6

Black's alternatives are not good enough:

a) 6 ... Nf6 7 e5 Ne4 8 0-0 (8 Bxf7+!? Kxf7 9 Qb3+ Be6 10 Qxb4 is also worth considering) 8 ... Bxd2 9 Bxd2 Nxd2 10 Qxd2 0-0 11 Qxd4 Qxd4 12 Nxd4 and the resulting position is much better for White.

b) 6 ... Ne7?! 7 Ng5 0-0 8 Qh5 wins for White.

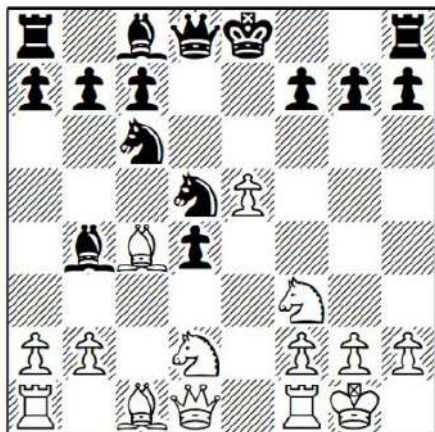
### 7 0-0 Nf6

Again, Black has also tried some other things here:

a) 7 ... Be6 8 Bxe6 fxe6 9 Qb3 Qd7 10 Nc4 0-0-0 was played in E.Postny-M.Kozakov, Le Port Marly 2009. Here I believe White can improve his play by means of 11 Bg5 Nf6 (after 11 ... Nge7 12 Nce5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Qd6 14 Nf7 White wins material, just as he does after 11 ... Be7 12 Nce5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Qe8 14 Qxe6+ Kb8 15 Bxe7 Nxe7 16 Nf7) 12 Nce5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Qe7 14 Nd3 followed by e4-e5.

b) 7 ... Qf6 8 a3 Bxd2 (if 8 ... Bd6 9 e5! Bxe5 10 Re1 and Black is trailing in development, while after 8 ... Be7 9 Bd5 Bd7 10 Qb3 there can be no doubt about White's advantage) 9 Qxd2 Be6 10 Bb5 Nge7 11 Qxd4 Qxd4 12 Nxd4 Bd7 13 Nxc6 (13 Nf3!?) 13 ... Bxc6 14 Bc4 Ng6 15 Rd1 Ne5 16 Bf1 Rd8 17 Bf4 f6 18 f3 was P.Lizak-I.Almasi, Zalaegerszeg 2014. The endgame with the bishop-pair and kingside majority offers White a risk-free advantage.

**8 e5 Nd5**



Normal. 8 ... Ng4 9 h3 h5 looks too fishy to be good (10 Bb5 Bd7 11 Nc4 and White has a clear advantage in my opinion), while 8 ... Nd7 runs into 9 a3 Be7 10 e6.

**9 Nb3 Nb6**

After 9 ... Be7 10 Nbx d4 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Be6 12 Qe4 White plans both Nd4 and Rd1,

while if 9 ... 0-0 10 Nbx d4 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Black has:

a) 11 ... Be6 12 Bg5! (not 12 Bxd5 c5 and Black equalizes) 12 ... Qd7 13 Bxd5 c5 14 Bxe6 wins a piece for White.

b) 11 ... Nb6 12 Bxf7+! wins a pawn for White.

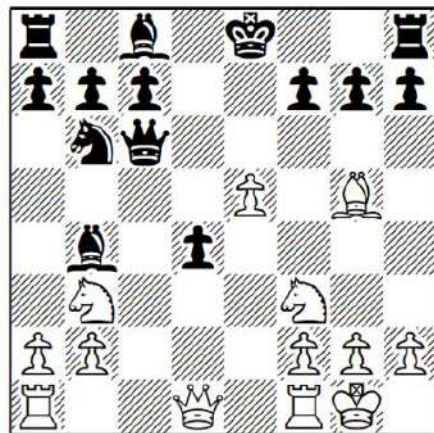
**10 Bb5 Qd5**

If 10 ... 0-0 11 Bxc6 bxc6 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Qxd4 when Black's queenside is pretty weak.

**11 Bxc6+ Qxc6**

11 ... bxc6 is possible, but Black hates creating weaknesses on the queenside in this line. After 12 Qxd4 Be7 13 Bg5 we will keep on trading pieces because all endgames will favour White.

**12 Bg5!**



At first glance the move looks useless, but if you take a deeper look you'll realize it stops Black from castling, as 12 ... 0-0 13 a3! f6 14 exf6 gxf6 15 Nbx d4 Qd7 16 Bh6 wins.

**12 ... Bg4 13 Qxd4 Bxf3?!**

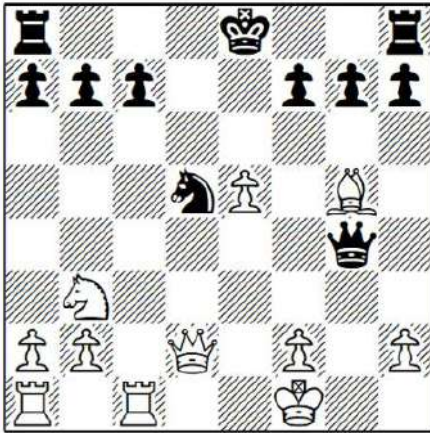
This natural moves happens to be a mistake. Black should have played 13 ... Qc4 14 Rfd1 (planning Qd8+ and mate next) 14 ... Qxd4 (not 14 ... 0-0 15 Rac1! Qxd4 16 Rxd4 Bxf3 17 gxf3 and Black loses material) 15 Rxd4 Bxf3 16 Rxb4 Bc6 17

Rc1 and Black will have to work hard in order to equalize.

**14 Qxb4**

With Black's king still in the middle of the board, White has a very pleasant position.

**14 ... Nd5 15 Qd2 Bxg2 16 Rfc1! Qe6 17 Kxg2 Qg4+ 18 Kf1**



So far this was more or less forced. White keeps the extra piece and I do not see much counterplay for Black.

**18 ... Qh3+ 19 Ke1 c6 20 Qd4**

Preparing to 'castle queenside'.

**20 ... Qxh2**

20 ... 0-0 21 Na5 Qxh2 22 Kd2 looks like a better try for Black, although the assessment does not change.

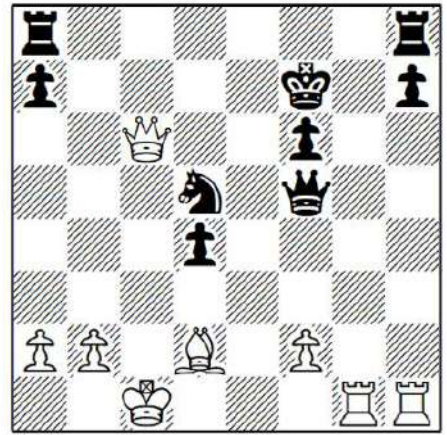
**21 Kd2 Qh3 22 Rh1 Qf5 23 Rag1**

Now we are just one move away from safety. Apart from the extra piece, White has active pieces and a kingside attack. The rest is a matter of technique.

**23 ... f6 24 exf6 gxf6 25 Kc1 c5 26 Qa4+ Kf7 27 Bd2 Nb4 28 Nd4!? cxd4**

Likewise, if 28 ... Nd3+ 29 Kb1 cxd4 30 Qb3+ with similar play to the game.

**29 Qb3+! Nd5 30 Qxb7+ Ke6 31 Qc6+ Kf7**



**32 Rg7+!**

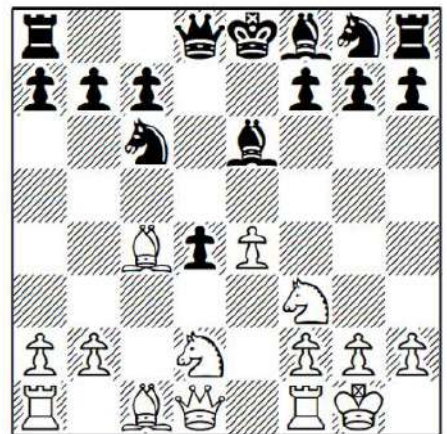
A neat finish to a nice game.

**32 ... Kxg7 33 Qb7+ 1-0**

Black cannot avoid losing more material after 33 ... Kg8 (if 33 ... Kg6 34 Rh6#) 34 Qxa8+ Kg7 35 Rg1+ followed by Qxh8.

*Game 45 T.Radjabov-J.Westerberg*  
European Club Cup, Bilbao 2014

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 e5 4 Nf3 exd4 5 Bxc4 Nc6 6 0-0 Be6 7 Nbd2!?**



Defending c4 and winning some tempi for development.

Instead, 7 Bb5 Bc5 is the main line and here you'll find lot of games with 8 b4, 8 Nbd2 and 8 Qc2, while 7 Bxe6 fxe6 8 Qb3

Qd7 9 Qxb7 Rb8 is another well-known line which you can study. In my opinion Black has enough resources here based on his initiative.

**7 ... Bxc4**

Alternatively:

a) 7 ... Nf6 8 e5 Nd7 (if 8 ... Nd5 9 Bb5 Nde7 10 Re1 and it is going to take a while before Black finishes his development) 9 Bb5 a6 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 Nxd4 Nc5 12 Nxe6 Nxe6 13 Qa4 gave White a clear edge in R.Wojtaszek-I.Nyzhnyk, Warsaw 2010.

b) 7 ... Bb4 8 Bxe6 fxe6 9 Qb3 Qd7 and we saw this position before – see note ‘a’ to Black’s 7th move in Aronian-Stevic.

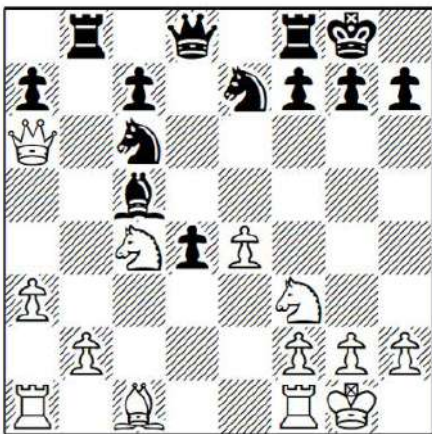
c) 7 ... Bd6 8 Qb3 Qd7 9 e5 and, as usual, Black faces some problems developing.

**8 Nxc4 Bc5 9 Qb3 Nge7**

Otherwise, 9 ... Rb8?! 10 Nce5 Nxe5 11 Nxe5 Qe7 12 Qb5+ Kd8 13 Nc6+ loses for Black, while after 9 ... Bb6 10 a4 White has a dangerous initiative.

**10 Qxb7 Rb8 11 Qa6 0-0 12 a3**

In my opinion, this position is better for White, who has a solid structure, no weaknesses and the better bishop. By contrast, Black has some weaknesses and I believe the d4-pawn is more likely to be a target than an advantage.



**12 ... Qd7 13 Bf4**

13 b4!? Bb6 14 Rd1 Qg4 15 Qa4 is suggested by the engines, Black cannot take on e4 in view of 15 ... Qxe4 16 b5 Nd8 17 Re1.

**13 ... Bb6**

Or 13 ... Ng6 14 Bg3 Rfe8 15 b4 Bb6 16 Rfe1 and again I have to say that White has the best of it: a solid position and no weaknesses.

**14 Rfe1 Ng6 15 Bg3 Rfe8 16 Rad1 Rbd8 17 b4**

One of the advantages of playing like this is as White is that you will not make many mistakes, because of the solid position. On the other hand, it is easier for Black to err.

**17 ... Qe6 18 Qb5 f6 19 h3**

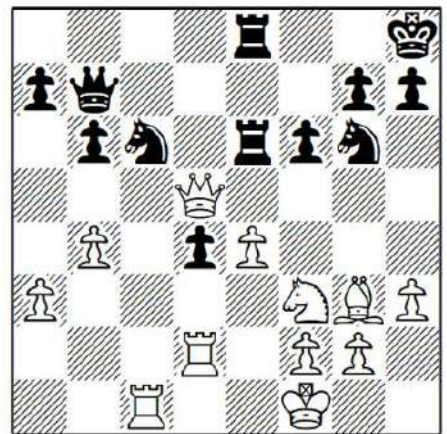
There is no rush to take on b6 and Black will have to adopt a waiting strategy.

**19 ... Kh8 20 Nxb6 cxb6 21 Rd2 Qd7 22 Kf1 Re6 23 Rc1 Qb7 24 Qc4 Rde8?!**

As predicted, Black makes a mistake (24 ... Nf8 was better), and I do not blame him because his position required a lot of accurate play to maintain equality.

**25 Qd5!**

White establishes the queen on d5, from where Black cannot push it back and now the d4-pawn is about to fall.



## 25 ... Qa8

25 ... Nd8 26 Rxd4 Rxe4 is not good in view of 27 Rxe4.

## 26 Rdc2 Nce5 27 Nxd4

White upgrades his advantage from positional to a material one. The endgame supported by the superior minor is quite easy.

**27 ... Qxd5 28 exd5 Rd6 29 Rc8 Rg8  
30 Rxc8+ Kxf7 32 Rc7+ Rd7  
33 d6**

It is always useful to learn from strong players' technique. Here White does not allow any counterplay for Black. The remaining moves were:

**33 ... Ke8 34 Nf5 Rxc7 35 dxc7 Kd7 36  
Nxc7 Kxc7 37 f4 Nc4 38 f5+ Nge5 39 Ne8+  
Kc6 40 Nxf6 Nf7 41 Nxh7 Nxa3 42 Be1  
Kd5 43 g4 Ke4 44 Ke2 Nc4 45 Nf6+ Kf4  
46 Nh5+ Kg5 47 Kf3 a5 48 h4+ Kh6 49  
Nf6 a4 50 g5+ Kg7 51 Bc3 a3 52 Ng4+  
Kg8 53 g6 a2 54 Nf6+ Kf8 55 Nd7+ Ke7  
56 gxf7 1-0**

*Game 46 A.Dreev-C.Bauer Swiss League 2011*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 e5 4 Nf3 exd4 5  
Bxc4 Nc6 6 0-0 Nf6**

Apart from 6 ... Be6, which we studied in Radjabov-Westerberg, Black has two major alternatives in this position:

a) 6 ... Bc5 7 Qb3! (I find this move stronger than 7 Ng5 Nh6 8 Nxf7 Nxf7 9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qxc5 Qe7 when I believe Black can equalize) 7 ... Qe7 8 Bg5 Qf8 (8 ... f6 9 Bf4 Kf8 is a bit uncomfortable for Black) 9 Na3.



Black's strategy does not have a solid foundation. His queen is out of place and White is about to finish his development soon, not to mention the fact that Black's king remains in the centre. After 9 ... Bb6 10 Rac1 White had a clear edge in A.Greenfeld-W.Spoelman, Groningen 2013.

b) 6 ... Bg4 is also well met by 7 Qb3 Na5 (7 ... Qd7 runs into 8 Bxf7+! Qxf7 9 Qxb7 and Black keeps on losing material) 8 Bxf7+ Ke7 9 Qb5 Nf6 (if 9 ... Bxf3 10 Bxg8 Rxc8 11 Bg5+ or 9 ... c6 10 Qg5+ Kxf7 11 Qxc7 and Black's position is a real disaster; the knight on a5 is misplaced and his kingside is full of weaknesses) 10 Qxa5 Bxf3 11 Bb3 Bg4 12 Qe5+ (White has a decisive advantage already) 12 ... Kd7 13 f3 Bd6 14 Qb5+ Kc8 15 fxg4 was an easy win for White in V.Korchnoi-I.Nikolopoulos, Greek Team Championship 2002.

c) Finally, if 6 ... Qf6 7 e5 Qg6 8 Qb3 and White has a powerful initiative, while I'm left wondering how Black plans to finish his development.

## 7 Qb3!

It is nice to see that we react with Qb3 against every single line. Of course, we have to remember the ideas instead of the exact moves.

## 7 ... Qd7

Otherwise, 7 ... Qe7 has the drawback of blocking the f8-bishop's development and with 8 Na3 White speeds up his development, while 7 ... Na5 8 Bxf7+ (I also like 8 Qa4+ Nc6 9 Ne5! 8 ... c6 9 Bd3 b5 10 Qc2 when I think White's lead in development is going to pay off) 8 ... Ke7 9 Qa3+ Kxf7 10 Qxa5 Nxe4 was played in P.Ollier-P.Velten, Nimes 2012. Here I believe White can improve his play by means of 11 Re1 Nf6 (or 11 ... Nc5 12 Bg5 Qd6 13 Na3) 12 Bg5 when Black's position is not that easy to handle.

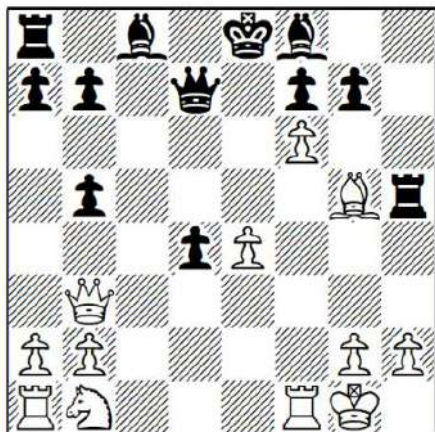
### 8 Ng5

8 Bd2 is the main move, stopping 8 ... Na5, but I prefer Dreev's approach because it is forcing and also opens the position.

### 8 ... Ne5 9 Bb5 c6 10 f4 cxb5

After 10 ... Ng6 11 Bc4 Black loses the f7-pawn, while 10 ... h6 11 fxe5 hxg5 12 exf6 transposes to the game.

### 11 fxe5 h6 12 exf6 hxg5 13 Bxg5 Rh5!?



A creative resource by Black. Let me share some of the other variations I have analyzed:

a) 13 ... gxf6 14 Bxf6 Rh5 15 Na3 d3 16 Rad1 and Black is defenceless.

b) 13 ... d3!? 14 Nc3 Qd4+ 15 Kh1 Bd6 16 Bf4 Bxf4 17 Rxf4 gxf6 18 Qxb5+ Kf8 19 Raf1 when White's advantage is out of question.

c) 13 ... Qc7 14 Bf4 (14 h4 a6 15 Nd2 is also worth considering) 14 ... Qb6 15 Na3 looks promising too.

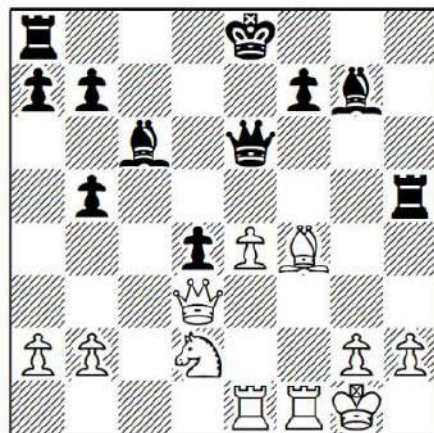
### 14 fxg7

Dreev probably did not want to weaken the kingside, but even after doing so with 14 h4! White has a big advantage: for instance, 14 ... gxf6 15 Rxf6 Bg7 16 Rf5 Qe6 17 Qf3! (White's initiative speaks for itself) 17 ... Qg6 18 Nd2 Bxf5?! 19 exf5 Qh7 20 Qxb7 is winning for White.

### 14 ... Bxg7 15 Bf4 Qe6 16 Qd3 Bd7 17 Nd2

Maybe this position is not as powerful as the one arising after 14 h4 (of course it is easier to find that move with the help of an engine), but still Black cannot activate his bishop-pair and is yet to fully equalize.

### 17 ... Bc6 18 Rae1



18 Rac1 looks like an improvement: 18 ... Rd8 (after 18 ... 0-0-0?! 19 Nb3 Black has to face some threats on the queenside) 19 b3 and position remains unclear, but at least we know Black cannot castle queenside.

### 18 ... 0-0-0 19 Nb3 Be5

Missing 19 ... b6! followed by ... Kb7 when Black has no problems.

### 20 Na5 Bxf4 21 Rxf4 Qh6?!

The move 21 ... Qxa2 was Black's best try: 22 Nxc6 bxc6 23 Qf3 Rg5 24 Rf6 d3 and the position is quite complex.

## 22 Qg3

22 Qf3?! runs into 22 ... Rxh2! 23 Qg4+ Rd7 24 Rxf7 when Black wins with 24 ... Rh1+ 25 Kf2 Qh4+ 26 Qxh4 Rxf7+ 27 Kg3 Rg7+! and White cannot avoid losing material.

## 22 ... Rg5 23 Qf2 Rdg8?!

Black has to stay with the rook on the d-file. After 23 ... Rd7! 24 g3 (24 Rxf7 runs into 24 ... Rxg2+! 25 Kxg2 Qg6+) 24 ... Qg7 the chances are still level.

## 24 g3 Rh5 25 Rf6 Rg6 26 Rxg6 fxg6 27 Nxc6 bxc6 28 e5 Qh8 29 Qf6

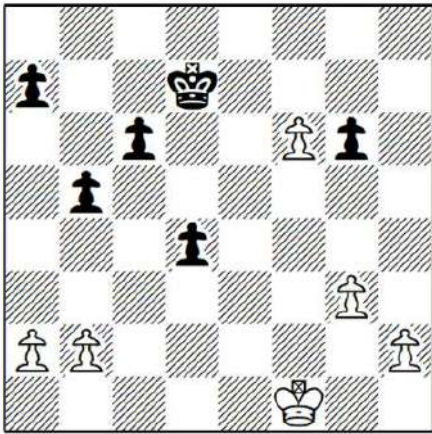
At first glance this variation makes no sense, but we will soon realize that Dreev has already spotted a winning pawn endgame for White.

## 29 ... Qxf6

29 ... Kb7 30 h4 does not solve Black's problems either.

## 30 exf6 Rf5 31 Rf1 Rxf1+ 32 Kxf1 Kd7

## 34 h4 Kxf6 35 g4 Ke5 36 Ke2 Kf4 37 h5 gxh5 38 gxh5 Kg5 39 Kd3 Kxh5 40 Kxd4 Kg5 41 Kc5 1-0



## 33 b4!

The power of endgames knowledge. White knows this b-pawn is more than enough to stop Black's queenside pawns, after which White decisively creates a passed pawn on the kingside.

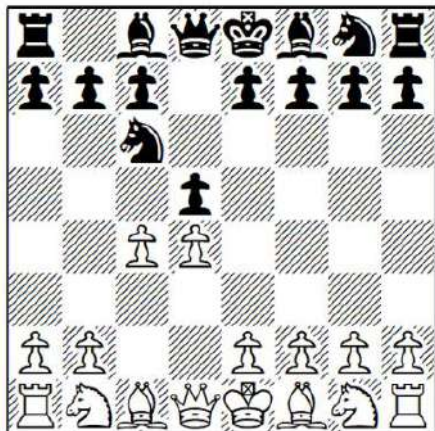
## 33 ... Ke6

33 ... d3 34 Ke1 Ke6 35 Kd2 Kxf6 36 Kxd3 Kf5 also loses after 37 Kd4 Kg4 38 Ke5 Kh3 39 Kf6 Kxh2 40 g4! Kg3 41 g5.

# Chapter Five

## The Chigorin Defence 1

d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6



This is not a common guest at the top level, despite Alexander Morozevich's efforts. As we can notice Black does not really protect his centre and this is what we have to exploit in order to obtain the upper hand.

After the more or less forced line 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 (7 Bxc3 is also possible), we reach a position where we have the advantage of the bishop-pair, not to mention our powerful centre. Moreover, the fact the knight is still on g1 once again offers us the chance to develop with Ne2 and f3.

*Game 47 I.Smirin-F.Vallejo Pons Leon 2001*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3**

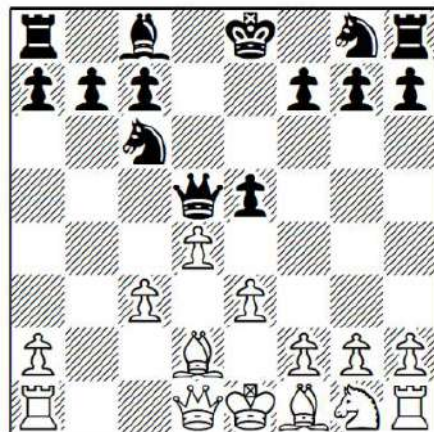
There is no need to allow a future pin after 4 Nf3 when Black can deploy his light-squared bishop to g4.

**4 ... e5**

Definitely the best try for Black, as a natural move like 4 ... Nf6 loses lot of tempi

and White enjoys a plus after the simple 5 Nc3 Qd8 6 Nf3.

**5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3**



I like this solid, positional approach by White, bringing a side pawn towards the centre. We will have a long-term advantage because of our bishop-pair and stronger centre. Keep in mind too that we will probably play f3 and Ne2 as White, rather than develop the knight via f3.

Instead, 7 Bxc3 exd4 8 Ne2 (after 8 exd4 White cannot claim the advantage with an isolated pawn) 8 ... Bg4 is the modern main line. There are some sharp lines after 9 f3 Bxf3 (9 ... 0-0-0!? is also possible) 10 gxf3 Qxf3 11 Nxd4 Qxh1 12 Nxc6 and if you want to study this line I recommend analyzing the game San Segundo-Gallego, Linares 1997.

**7 ... Nf6**

I'm not a big fan of this move since White is able to play c3-c4 and d4-d5, winning plenty of space in a lot of variations. We will analyse the alternatives 7 ... Nge7, 7 ... Qd6 and 7 ... exd4 later in this chapter.

**8 f3!**

Building up a centre. We also now have the Bd2-e1-f2(g3) manoeuvre to improve our 'bad bishop'.

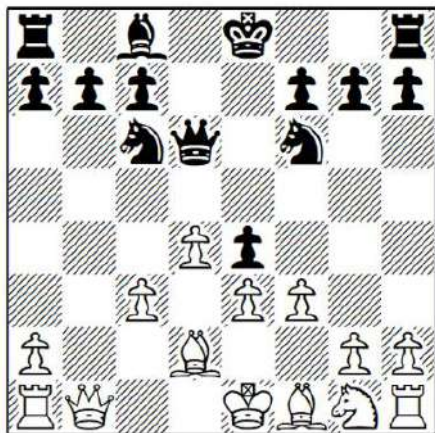
**8 ... e4**

Preventing e3-e4 and d4-d5. The alternative is 8 ... Qd6, although White keeps a slight edge by means of the simple 9 Bd3 0-0 10 Ne2 Re8 11 0-0.

### 9 Qb3

Trading queens is a good idea for us since the bishop-pair represents a clear advantage in the endgame. White can also try 9 c4 Qd6 10 Qb1!? (a nice way to control the centre and the b4-square) 10 ... Bf5 (opening the position is not part of Black's plans: 10 ... exf3 11 Nxf3 followed by Bd3 with a powerful attack) 11 f4 0-0 12 Ne2 when, in my opinion, the position is easier to play as White: his centre looks like a fortress and he will not have any trouble finishing development.

### 9 ... Qd6 10 Qb1!



As mentioned before, this is a key move in order to control the centre as well as the b4-square.

Instead, 10 c4 0-0 11 f4 looks a bit slow and Black can develop strong queenside counterplay starting with 11 ... a5!

### 10 ... Bf5

The alternative is 10 ... Qe7!? when White has to increase the pressure on e4 with 11 Ne2 0-0 12 Ng3 exf3 13 gxf3 Re8 14 Bd3.

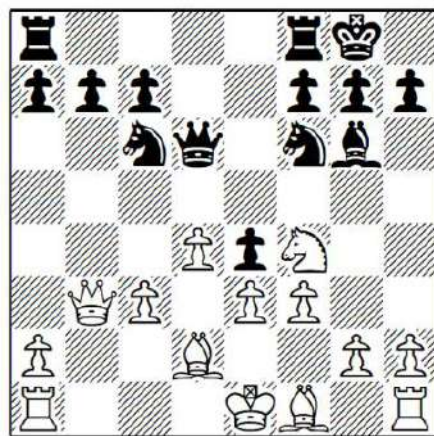
### 11 Ne2 Bg6

After 11 ... 0-0-0 12 Ng3 Qe6 (12 ... Bg6 does not solve Black's problems: 13 fxe4 Rhe8 14 Bd3 h5 15 0-0 h4 16 Nf5 with a clear advantage for White) 13 Nxf5 Qxf5 14 Bc4 followed by 0-0 White's bishops are just too powerful.

### 12 Qb3

Likely wise. The greedy 12 Qxb7 Rb8 13 Qa6 0-0 14 Nf4 Rb6 15 Qa4 exf3 16 gxf3 Nd5 is not that clear, while after 12 Nf4?! exf3 13 Nxc6 hxc6 14 gxf3 0-0-0 Black has the better development.

### 12 ... 0-0 13 Nf4



This is why I like this line. Both sides have played natural moves, but there is nothing Black can do to avoid losing his second bishop.

### 13 ... Na5

After 13 ... Bf5?! 14 g4 Be6 15 Nxe6 fxe6 16 g5 Black's position collapses, but 13 ... b6 is probably better. Here White should go 14 Nxc6 hxc6 15 f4, whereas I believe Black can create some counterplay after 15 Be2 Na5 16 Qa4 c5.

### 14 Qb4

Moving the queen so much can pay off! We will trade queens and play an endgame with a strategic advantage.

### 14 ... Nc6

After 14 ... b6 15 Qxd6 cxd6 16 c4 Rfc8 17 Rc1 Rc7 18 Bb4! Rd8 19 Be2 White has

a clear advantage, while Black is lacking counterplay.

**15 Qxd6 cxd6 16 h4**

Despite the fact the queens are off, we still have the right to attack. 16 Rb1 b6 17 Nxc6 hxc6 18 c4 looks good enough too for an advantage.

**16 ... exf3 17 gxf3 Nh5 18 Nxc6**

I would also consider taking the knight: 18 Nxc6 Bxc6 19 Kf2 Rac8 (after 19 ... Bg6 20 h5 Bc2 21 Rc1 Ba4 22 Rg1 Black has wasted too many tempi) 20 Rb1 Rc7 21 Rb5 and the endgame is quite unpleasant for Black.

**18 ... hxc6**

Black can also try the less common recapture 18 ... fxc6, although the position's assessment does not change after 19 Bc4+ Kh8 20 Kf2 Na5 21 Bd3 d5 (or 21 ... Rac8 22 Rab1 b6 23 Rb4 when White will end up playing c3-c4 or e3-e4 in the long run) 22 Rab1.

**19 Rg1 Rac8 20 c4 Ne7 21 Rb1 Nf5?**

Naturally, Black does not want to sit and wait with 21 ... b6 22 Bd3 when White gradually improves his position (22 e4 Nc6 23 Bc3 is better for White too).

**22 Rxb7 Nxc6 23 Kf2 Rb8 24 Rb3!**

Not allowing any counter-chances for Black. 24 Rb5!?! a6 25 Rb3 also looks good.

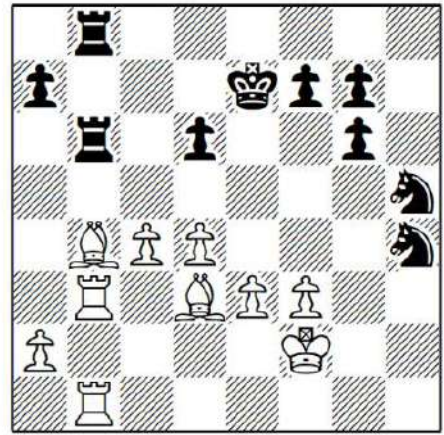
**24 ... Rb6 25 Bd3 Rfb8 26 Rgb1**

Black cannot survive with his knights on the kingside.

**26 ... Kf8?**

The last mistake by Black, as we will have a neat trick on the a3-f8 diagonal, although after 26 ... Nf5 27 Ba5! Rxb3 28 axb3 Rb7 (28 ... Nf6 loses to the simple 29 Bxf5 gxf5 30 Bc7) 29 c5 White's pawns are unstoppable.

**27 Bb4 Ke7**

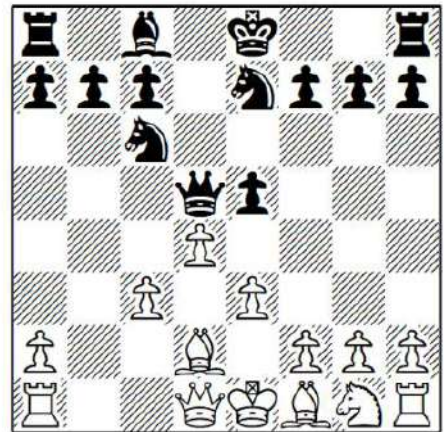


27 ... Rd8 28 c5 is also lost.

**28 Bxd6+! 1-0**

*Game 48 J.Ehlvest-A.Stripunsky USA  
Championship, Stillwater 2007*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5  
Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Nge7**



To me, this move is much more flexible than 7 ... Nf6 and along with 7 ... Qd6 is the best try for Black.

**8 f3**

As mentioned in our last game, this move is key to building up a powerful centre.

I would also like to share my analysis on 8 c4 Qd6 9 d5. This looks very active for White, but I think Black can successfully

close the position after some careful moves:  
 9 ... Nb8 (9 ... Nb4? loses a piece after 10 Qa4+) 10 Bc3 Nd7 11 Nf3 f6! followed by ... Nc5 with equality.

### 8 ... Qd6

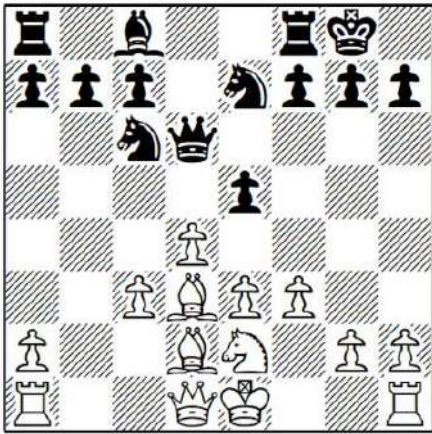
Black has to play this move sooner or later, otherwise he is exposed to e3-e4 and d4-d5 or even c3-c4 and d4-d5.

Instead, after 8 ... 0-0 9 Bd3! (not 9 c4 Qd6 10 d5 Nb4 when Black continues with ... Na6-c5; likewise, with 9 e4 Qd6 10 d5 Na5 11 c4 b6 Black manages to close the position, favouring his knight-pair) 9 ... Qd6 10 Ne2 we are likely to transpose into the main line.

### 9 Bd3 0-0

Black can also try 9 ... exd4 10 cxd4 Bf5, but 11 Bc4!? (11 Bxf5 Nxf5 12 Ne2 looks pretty solid for White too) 11 ... Be6 12 Rc1 supplies a slight edge for White.

### 10 Ne2



### 10 ... b6

Alternatives are:

a) 10 ... f5 looks natural, but I still think that this move can only help White and especially his bishop-pair. After 11 0-0 Be6 12 Be1!? Nd5 13 Bf2 the position reminds me of the Nimzo-Indian Defence. Despite its closed character, White will eventually play e3-e4 or c3-c4 and both bishops are of great value.

b) 10 ... Bf5 11 e4 Bg6 12 Be3! and White keeps a strong centre, but not 12 d5 Na5 13 c4 b6 followed by ... Nb7-c5.

### 11 0-0 Bb7 12 Qc2 f5 13 Rad1

This looks like the most reasonable square for the rook. 13 Rab1 is also possible when our plans remain the same: 13 ... Rad8 14 Be1 Nd5 15 Bf2 Qh6 16 Qc1!. After this precise move everything is under control and White will soon be ready to play e3-e4.

### 13 ... Rad8 14 Be1 Kh8

Likewise, if 14 ... Nd5 15 Bf2 exd4 16 Nxd4! (the best move in order to open lines; 16 exd4 g6 17 Rfe1 is only slightly better for White) 16 ... g6 17 e4! with a clear advantage for White.

### 15 Bf2 Qf6

Black cannot do much to stop White's improving his position, as occurs too after 15 ... exd4 16 exd4 Bc8 (Black has to control f5) 17 Rfe1 Nd5 18 Qd2! when White will push back Black's pieces with c3-c4.

### 16 a3!?

White controls the b4-square in order to play c3-c4. I think 16 e4 is even better: 16 ... fxe4 17 fxe4 Qg5 (or 17 ... Qd6 18 Qd2) 18 Qc1! (we know Black faces a tough endgame without queens and up against the bishop-pair) 18 ... Qg4 19 d5 with a clear edge, as c4-c5 is coming.

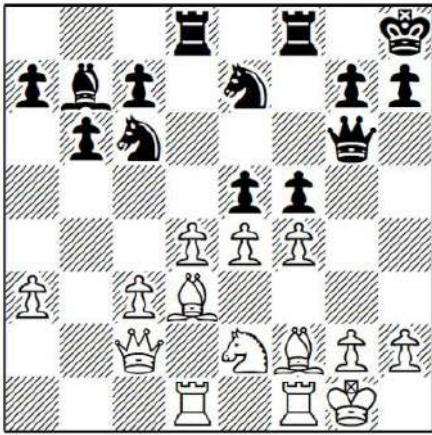
### 16 ... Qg5 17 f4?!

Probably the first mistake by White in this game. Instead, 17 c4 f4 18 exf4 exf4 19 Qc1! prevents ... Nf5 and prepares Be4, while once again 17 e4 fxe4 18 fxe4 Na5 19 Qc1 is a key idea and works very well for White.

### 17 ... Qg6!

17 ... exf4 leads to an inferior position for Black after 18 Nxf4 Rd6 19 Bg3.

### 18 e4?



This time e3-e4 is not working because Black has a strong attack down the h1-a8 diagonal. It was not too late, though, to play something like 18 Ng3 e4 19 Be2 when the chances remain balanced.

**18 ... Nxd4! 19 cxd4 fxe4 20 Bb5**

After 20 Bc4?! e3 21 Qxg6 exf2+ 22 Rxf2 Nxg6 23 fxe5 Rxf2 24 Kxf2 Nxe5 the resulting endgame is lost for White who is down a pawn and with many weaknesses.

**20 ... e3 21 Qxg6 exf2+ 22 Kxf2**

It is not easy to play when you have just lost the advantage. Instead, recapturing with the rook leads to equality after 22 Rxf2!

Nxg6 23 fxe5 Rxf2 24 Kxf2 Nxe5 25 Rc1.

**22 ... Nxg6 23 dxe5 Rxd1 24 Rxd1 Nxe5**

According to *Rybka*, the in-between move 24 ... a6 is more accurate.

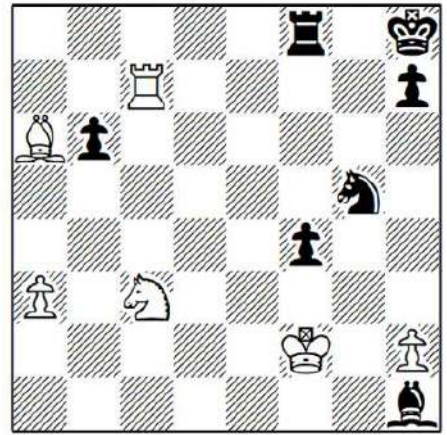
**25 Kg3 Nf7 26 Rd7 Nd6 27 Rxc7 Bxg2 28 Ba6 Bd5 29 Nc3**

The resulting position after 29 Rxa7 Ne4+ 30 Kh3 h6 is quite unpleasant for White, although he should be able to draw with careful play.

**29 ... Bh1 30 Rxa7 g5! 31 Rd7**

31 fxg5 loses a piece to 31 ... Rf3+.

**31 ... gxf4+ 32 Kf2 Nf7 33 Rc7 Ng5**



**34 Kg1?**

The final mistake. 34 Bc8 was White's last chance, stopping ... Nh3 and after 34 ... Rd8 35 Bd7 White survives.

**34 ... Nh3+!**

A neat tactic (if 35 Kxh1 Rg8), as Black creates a mating net.

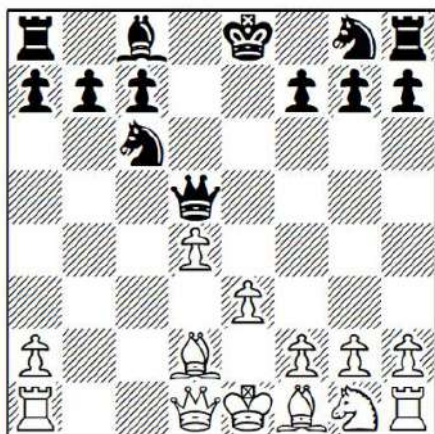
**35 Kf1 f3 36 Ne4 Bg2+ 37 Ke1 Re8 0-1**

*Game 49 V.Malaniuk-Z.Petronijevic Nis 1996*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 exd4**

If we compare this position with the main lines (7 ... Qd6 or 7 ... Nge7), we can clearly see that 7 ... exd4 just limits Black's options. In my opinion, it is much better to keep the tension in the centre.

**8 cxd4**



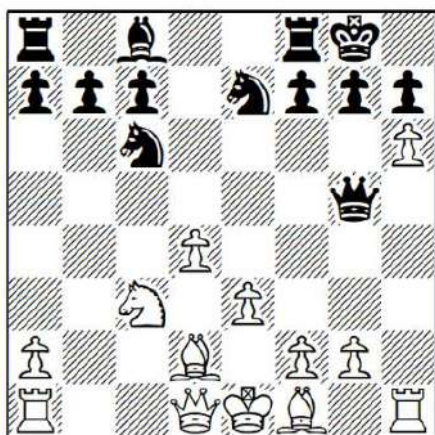
### 8 ... Nf6

8 ... Nge7 is the main alternative, and here I think White should develop the knight through e2 as usual:

a) 9 Nf3 was played in C.Gomez Garrido-I.Starostits, Collado Villalba 2010, where 9 ... 0-0 10 Be2 (or 10 Qb3!?) and after trading queens White has a risk-free advantage) 10 ... Bf5 11 0-0 Qd6 12 Qb3 b6 13 Rfc1 Be4 14 Ng5 Bd5 15 Bc4 h6 16 Bxd5 Nxd5 17 Nf3 f5 18 Rc2 Kh7 19 Rac1 gave White a clear initiative on the queenside.

b) 9 Ne2! 0-0 10 Nc3 is even stronger:

b1) 10 ... Qg5 is punished by 11 h4 Qg6 12 h5 Qg5 (or 12 ... Qf6 13 Ne4 and the attack goes on) 13 h6!.



Already Black's position is unattractive and full of weaknesses.

b2) 10 ... Qd6 11 Be2 Bf5 12 0-0 Rfd8 13 Qb3 followed by Bf3 when White enjoys the advantage of the bishop-pair plus a queenside attack.

### 9 Ne2 0-0 10 Nf4

This is probably a matter of taste or at least I do not see anything wrong with the standard 10 Nc3 Qg5 (if 10 ... Qd6 11 Be2 Bf5 12 0-0 Rfe8 13 Qb3 followed by Bf3 when White is clearly better due to his strong centre and queenside pressure) 11 h4! (this kingside advance again) 11 ... Qf5 12 Be2 Re8 13 Rb1, trying to play Rb5. Note too that despite the pawn being on h4, I think 13 0-0 is also quite playable for White.

### 10 ... Qd6 11 Be2 Ne4 12 0-0 Bf5

As Black I would strongly consider taking White's bishop before he plays Be1. However, the resulting position after 12 ... Nxd2 13 Qxd2 Bf5 14 Rac1 a6 15 Rc5 Ne7 16 Rfc1 c6 17 Qb2 is very passive for him.

### 13 Be1!

Simple and strong. Now Black is defenceless against the plan of f3, e3-e4, d4-d5 and Bg3.

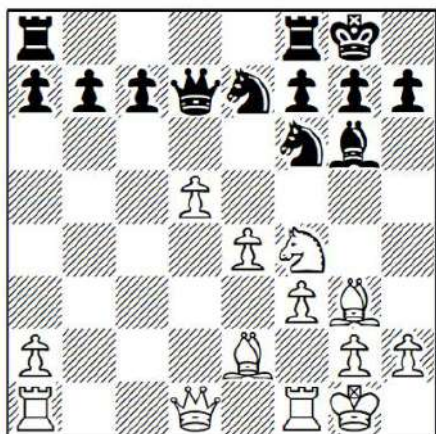
### 13 ... Ne7

Likewise, after 13 ... Rfe8 14 f3 (or 14 Rb1 Rab8 15 Rb5 g6 16 Qc1!; it is amazing to see how useful this Qc1 move is in so many lines) 14 ... Nf6 15 Bf2 sooner or later White will play e3-e4.

### 14 f3 Nf6 15 Bg3 Qd7 16 e4 Bg6

Sacrificing on e4 does not solve Black's problems: 16 ... Bxe4? 17 fxe4 Nxe4 18 Bg4 f5 19 Bf3 is completely winning for White.

### 17 d5



A dream position for White against the Chigorin. Black's lack of space is obvious.

**17 ... Rad8**

Black cannot try freeing his position with 17 ... c6, because White increases his space advantage with 18 d6 Nc8 19 e5.

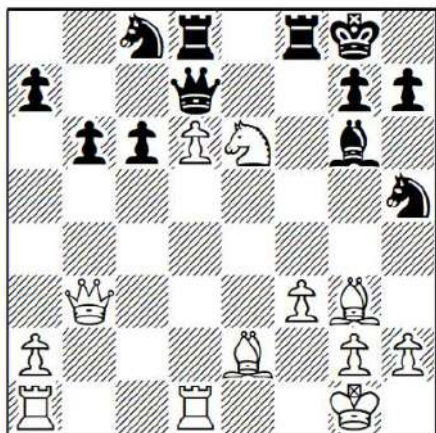
**18 Qb3 b6 19 Rfd1 c6?!**

19 ... c5 was Black best chance, although he is lost from a strategic point of view after 20 Bb5 Qb7 21 Qa4 when he can scarcely move.

**20 d6 Nc8 21 e5 Nh5 22 e6**

Possible too was 22 Nxh5 Bxh5 23 Qc3 c5 24 a4, opening the queenside with a decisive advantage.

**22 ... fxe6 23 Nxe6**



**23 ... Bf7**

There is also the amusing variation 23 ... Nxf3 24 Bc4! Ne2+ 25 Bxe2 Bf7 26 Bc4 when Black cannot avoid losing material.

**24 Nxf3 Bxb3**

After 24 ... Kxf8 25 Qc2 Nxf3 26 hxf3 Nxd6 27 Qxh7 Qe7 Black has some counterplay, but, of course, he should lose in the long run.

**25 Nxd7 Nxf3 26 hxf3 Bxd1 27 Bc4+ Kh8 28 Ne5 1-0**

If 28 ... Nxd6 29 Rxd1 when Black cannot avoid losing more material. A fine positional performance by White.

*Game 50 A. Beliavsky-I. Miladinovic  
Belgrade 1995*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Qd6 8 Bd3**

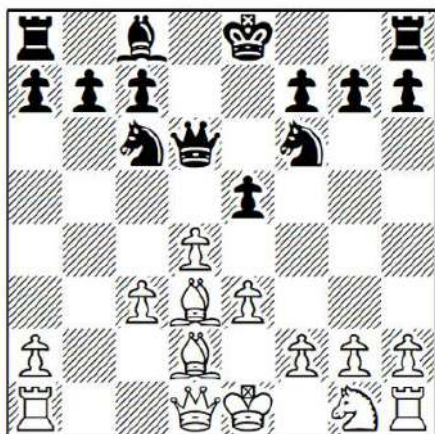
It is a sensible idea to continue with the same set-up used in the previous games (Bd3, Ne2 and f3).

8 Nf3 is also possible:

a) White gains the advantage after 8 ... Bg4 9 h3 Bh5 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Qa4+ c6 (or 11 ... Qd7 12 Qxd7+ Nxd7 13 Nd4 Ngf6 14 f3! and the endgame is not easy for Black, as we already know: White has the superior centre plus the bishop-pair) 12 Nxe5 Qxe5 13 Qd4 Qf6 14 e4.

b) 8 ... e4! is the correct reaction by Black: 9 Ng5 Qe7 10 d5 (after 10 h4 Nf6 I do not see enough coordination in White's position) 10 ... Qxg5 11 dxc6 b6!. Given the chance I would take Black here, as he has a solid position and much the better pawn structure.

**8 ... Nf6**



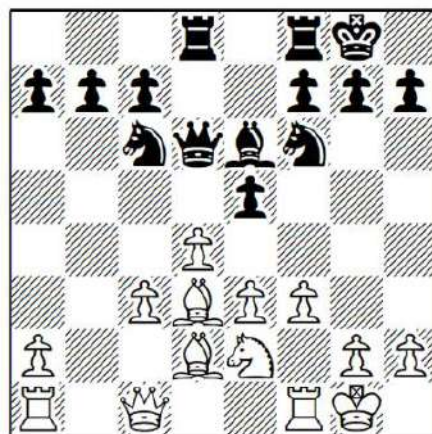
### 9 f3

Against this move order used we can also play without f3. 9 Ne2 was seen in V.Tukmakov-B.Kovacevic, Pula 1999, where 9 ... 0-0 10 Ng3 Ne7 11 0-0 b6 12 Qc2 Bb7 13 dxe5! (it is true that after this exchange our queenside pawns are going to be weak, but opening the a1-h8 diagonal is more relevant) 13 ... Qxe5 14 c4 Kh8 15 Bc3 Qe6 16 Qb2 gave White a clear advantage. Moreover, he can still play f3 if needed.

### 9 ... 0-0 10 Ne2 Re8

Black finishes his development and will have the chance of playing ... e4. However, we are not afraid of this possibility.

Ivanchuk once tried 10 ... Be6 11 0-0 Rad8, but again there is 12 Qc1!.



This is one of the key moves of the entire Chigorin variation. White defends e3, thereby preparing the way for Be1-f2-g3. After 12 ... Nd7 13 Be1! (13 Qb1 is tempting too, but after 13 ... f5 14 Qxb7 Nc5 15 dxc5 Qxd3 16 Qxc6 Bc4 Black obtains powerful counterplay) 13 ... Qe7?! 14 Qb1 Nb6 15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Bd3 Na5 17 e4 Nac4 18 f4, with an extra pawn and Black's kingside so open, the rest was a matter of technique in G.Kasparov-V.Ivanchuk, New York (rapid) 1995.

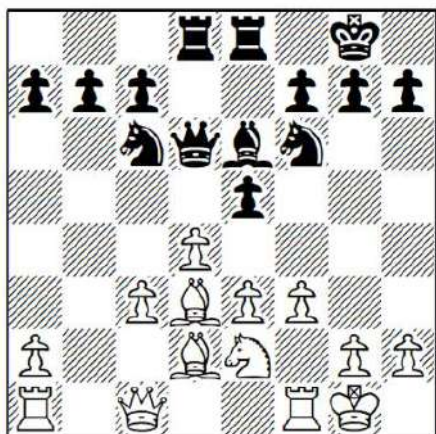
### 11 0-0 Be6

After 11 ... Bd7 we should play our key move 12 Qc1 followed by Be1.

### 12 Qc1

Here 12 Qb1!? is also worth considering.

### 12 ... Rad8



Now that Black has developed every piece, he should be able to create some counterplay in the centre. On the other hand, White has such a solid position that I do not see anything bad happening to him.

**13 Be1 Bc8 14 Bf2**

I think that the aggressive 14 Bg3 is even better, and if 14 ... Qe7 (or 14 ... Nh5 15 Bh4 Nf6 16 Ng3, gaining time) 15 Re1 when White has the better chances.

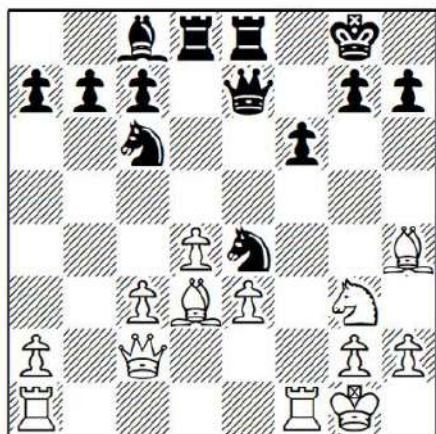
**14 ... e4**

Black has to play this at some point, otherwise White plays e3-e4 and after 14 ... Qe7 15 e4 next up will be d4-d5 followed by c4-c5.

**15 fxe4 Nxe4 16 Bh4!**

16 Bxe4 is tempting, but there is no need to give away a strong bishop: 16 ... Rxe4 17 Ng3 Rg4 and I do not see any special advantage for White.

**16 ... f6 17 Qc2 Qe7 18 Ng3**



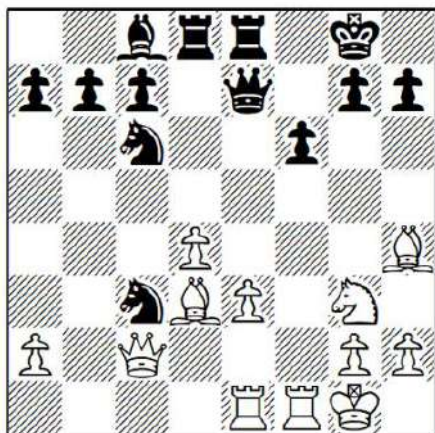
After all these moves we realize that pushing the knight back from e4 was actually quite an easy task.

**18 ... Nxc3**

A tough call for Black, but 18 ... Nxg3 19 Bxh7+ Kh8 20 Bxg3 Qxe3+ 21 Kh1 is not at all comfortable. 18 ... Nxc3 is better from a practical point of view because White has the chance of making some mistakes.

**19 Rae1!?**

White finishes his development, which is not a bad idea when the position is full of tactics. However, after 19 Bc4+! (avoiding 19 Qxc3? Qxe3+ 20 Kh1 Qxd4 and while 19 Bxh7+?! Kh8 is possible, I think this variation offers Black some counter-chances) 19 ... Nd5 (if 19 ... Kh8 20 Qxc3 g5 21 Bxg5 fxg5 22 Rae1 when White's advantage is out of the question; Black's position is too weak due to his open kingside) 20 e4 Nxd4 (or 20 ... Be6 21 exd5 Bxd5 22 Nf5) 21 Qf2! Black's position collapses.



**19 ... g5**

Black has no choice but to open the kingside, as 19 ... Nd5 20 Bxh7+ Kh8 21 Bg6 Nxe3 22 Qc1 is just lost for him.

**20 Nh5?!**

White obtains a clear advantage after the simple 20 Bxg5 fxg5 21 Qxc3 when Black should move his pawn back to g7.

**20 ... Rf8**

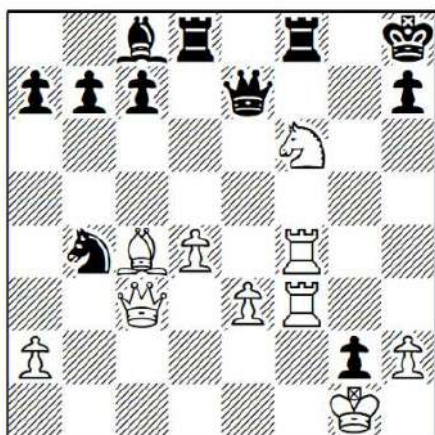
Black misses a nice resource in 20 ... Nd5! 21 Bc4 (or 21 Nxf6+ Nxf6 22 Bxg5 Rd6 and Black defends successfully) 21 ... Kh8 22 Bxd5 Nb4! with an unclear position.

**21 Qxc3 gxh4 22 Rf4 Nb4?!**

22 ... f5 was a better try.

**23 Bc4+ Kh8 24 Ref1 h3 25 Nxf6 hxg2**

**26 R1f3!**



There is no need to take g2, as that pawn works as an effective shield for our king.

**26 ... Nc6**

26 ... b5 loses to 27 d5 bxc4 28 Ne8+.

**27 Qc2 Rd6 28 Qxg2 Rfd8**

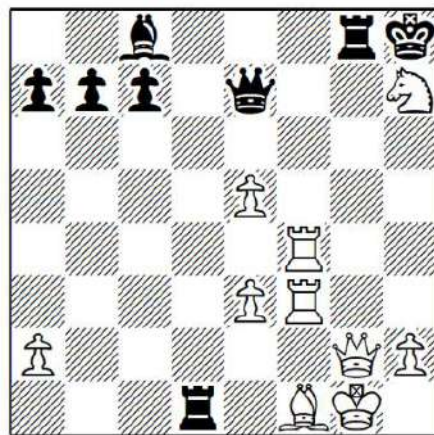
White should also win after 28 ... Rdd8

29 Nd5 Qd6 30 Rxf8+ Rxf8 31 Rxf8+ Qxf8 32 Nxc7.

**29 Nxh7! Ne5**

Of course, 29 ... Qxh7 fails to 30 Rf8+.

**30 dxe5 Rd1+ 31 Bf1 Rg8**



**32 Qxg8+!**

A nice way to finish off the game by Beliavsky.

**32 ... Kxg8 33 Nf6+**

Black is defenceless against all of White's threats, in view of 33 ... Kg7 34 Rg3+ Kf7 35 Nd5+.

# Chapter Six

## The Albin

### Counter gambit 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5

This is a serious gambit as Black obtains some space as well as piece activity in return for the pawn, although after 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3! White can get the advantage in the long run. Remembering the concepts and some specific lines is valuable since some positions we reach from the Albin are far from standard and finding the correct moves can be a tough task.

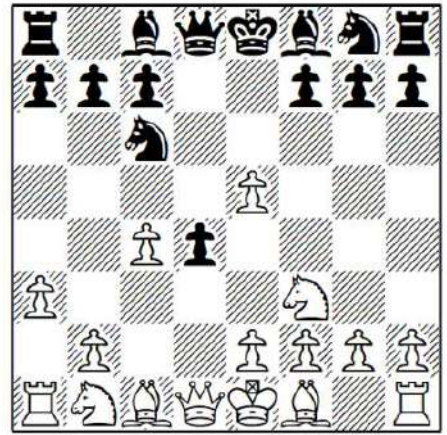
#### 3 dxe5 d4

The key to Black's play, whereas taking on c4 leads to an inferior position: 3 ... dxc4?! 4 Qxd8+ Kxd8 5 Nc3. Despite the fact the queens are off, White has good attacking chances and a dangerous kingside majority. Here 5 ... c6?! (this is just too passive; maybe Black wanted to guard his king on c7, but 5 ... Be6 is a better option even though White still has the advantage after 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Bf4 when 0-0-0 is imminent, not to mention Ng5, looking to seize the bishop-pair) 6 Bg5+ was played in D.Komarov-A.Afifi, Cairo 2001, but I think White can improve his play by means of 6 e4 Nd7 7 Nf3 b5 8 a4 b4 9 Na2! and Black's position collapses: for instance, 9 ... Ba6 10 e6 fxe6 11 Ng5 with a clear advantage for White.

#### 4 Nf3 Nc6

The best way to defend d4, although 4 ... c5 is the subject of our next game.

#### 5 a3!



This move and 5 g3 are White's main weapons against the Albin. I like 5 a3 which not only rules out ... Bb4+ ideas, but also prepares b4 with a powerful queenside attack.

*Game 51 S.Tarrasch-S.Tartakower Berlin 1920*

#### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 c5

Of course, we will see 4 ... Nc6 much more often, but we have to be prepared for this too just in case.

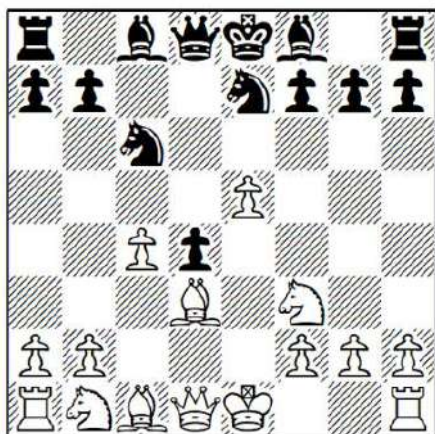
#### 5 e3

I think this move is stronger than 5 g3, as we want to create a weakness on d4 and, as we are up on material, trading pieces should be a good idea.

#### 5 ... Nc6

Not 5 ... dxe3?! 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 7 Bxe3 when Black does not have any counterplay.

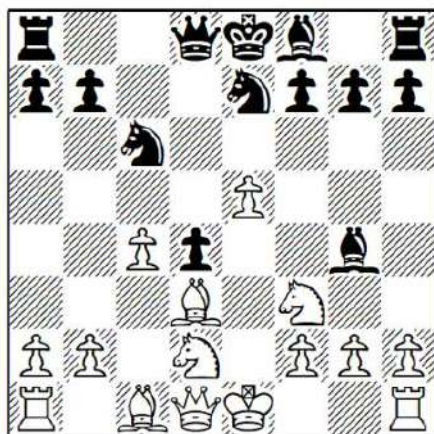
#### 6 exd4 cxd4 7 Bd3 Nge7



Black can also try getting his pawn back with 7 ... Nxe5, but after 8 Qe2! (best, although even after 8 Nxe5 Qa5+ 9 Nd2 Qxe5+ 10 Qe2 I prefer White, as d4 will be pretty weak in the upcoming endgame) 8 ... f6 (8 ... Bd6 loses to 9 Nxe5 Qa5+ 10 Kd1 Qxe5 11 Qxe5+ Bxe5 12 Re1 followed by f4) 9 Nxe5 Qa5+ 10 Nd2 Qxe5 11 Be4! followed by Nf3 Black is in serious trouble in terms of development.

Likewise, the pin is not annoying at all: 7 ... Bg4 8 0-0 Nge7 (Black is not ready to take on e5 as 8 ... Nxe5 9 Qe1! wins material for White) 9 Nbd2 Nxe5 (or 9 ... Ng6?! 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Nxf3 and Black is still down a pawn) 10 Be4 followed by Re1 when White has a clear advantage.

### 8 Nbd2 Bg4



As pointed out before, the pin does not bother us, but even after 8 ... Ng6 9 0-0 Be7 10 Re1 0-0 11 h3!?, which usefully prevents ... Bg4, Black is unable to regain his pawn so White's advantage is clear.

### 9 Qb3

Since Black has development problems, I wouldn't defend the e5-pawn. After 9 0-0! Nxe5 10 Be4 N5c6 11 h3 White has lot of ideas such as Nb3-c5, Nb3xd4 and Re1, and Black is going to have a hard time finishing his development.

### 9 ... Qc7 10 0-0 0-0-0

It seems reasonable for Black to castle queenside, otherwise his king has to stay in the centre for a long time and meanwhile just where is Black's compensation?

### 11 Re1 Ng6 12 h3

12 Be4!? was also worth considering.

### 12 ... Be6

Also after 12 ... Bxf3 13 Bxg6 (this in-between move, trading pieces off, leaves Black without counterplay) 13 ... hxg6 14 Nxf3 Rh5 15 Re4! followed by Bf4 White is in front.

### 13 Be4 Ngxe5

Black finally gets his pawn back, but the problem is he is having to invest plenty of tempi.

### 14 Nxe5 Qxe5

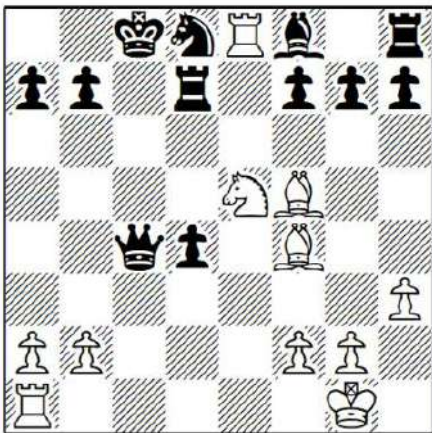
Taking with the knight is just too risky:  
 14 ... Nxe5 15 Bxb7+ Qxb7 16 Rxe5 and I  
 do not see much compensation for Black.

**15 Nf3 Qc5 16 Bf4!**

This game shows us the importance of  
 development and the initiative over material.  
 Both White's bishops have effectively  
 trapped Black's king on c8.

**16 ... Bd6**

16 ... Bxc4 runs into 17 Qxc4! (17 Qa4  
 is probably good too) 17 ... Qxc4 18 Bf5+  
 Qe6 19 Rxe6 fxe6 20 Bxe6+ Rd7 21 Ne5  
 Nxe5 22 Bxe5 Kd8 23 Bxd7 Kxd7 24 Bxd4  
 and after this forced variation we reach a  
 won endgame for White. Note too that here  
 18 ... Rd7 would be even worse, in view of  
 19 Re8+ Nd8 20 Ne5.



Black is temporarily a queen up, but has  
 absolutely no defence.

**17 Bxc6 bxc6**

17 ... Qxc6?! 18 Nxd4 is even worse.

**18 Bxd6 Rxd6 19 Ne5**

This move looks natural, but I think  
 White can better exploit Black's weaknesses  
 with 19 Re5 Qxc4 20 Qa3 when everything  
 is hanging.

**19 ... Rhd8**

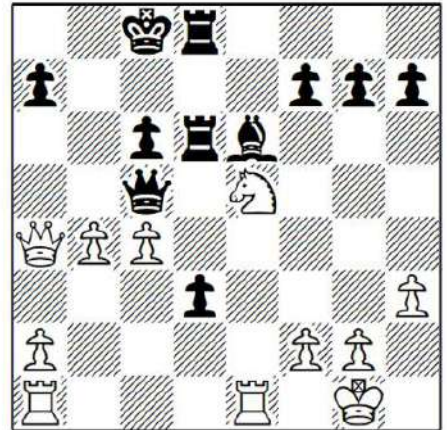
As Black I would have tried 19 ... d3 20  
 Qa4! (not 20 Nxd3? Qxc4 when we are  
 forced to trade queens, after which our  
 attack evaporates) 20 ... d2 21 Re3 when

White is still better, but Black's d2-pawn is  
 a bit annoying.

**20 Qa4 d3**

Now this is too late.

**21 b4!**



Simple and powerful, as Black cannot  
 avoid losing material.

**21 ... Qd4 22 Nxc6 Rxc6**

22 ... Bd7 offered stronger resistance,  
 although after 23 Qa6+! (23 Nxa7+ Kb8 is  
 far from clear) 23 ... Kc7 24 Qa5+ Kxc6 25  
 Qxd8 Black is fast running out of chances.

**23 Qxc6+ Kb8 24 c5 d2 25 Red1**

The rest should be a matter of technique  
 and the remaining moves were:

**25 ... Bf5 26 Qb5+ Kc7 27 Qa5+ Kb8  
 28 b5 Bc2 29 b6 Rd7 30 bxa7+ Ka8 31 c6  
 Rd5 32 c7! Bf5 33 c8Q+**

It is nice to see how White's c-pawn was  
 used to deflect Black's forces.

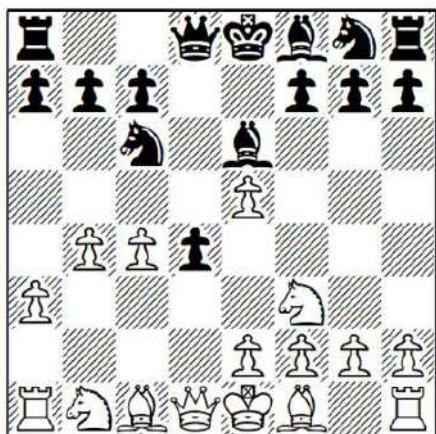
**33 ... Bxc8 34 Qc7 Rb5 35 Qxc8+ Kxa7  
 36 a4 Rc5 37 Qg4 Qxa1 38 Rxa1 Rc1+ 39  
 Qd1 1-0**

*Game 52 F.Schunck-J.Zimmermann  
 correspondence 2010*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3  
 Be6**

We will also study 5 ... a5, 5 ... Bg4 and  
 5 ... Nge7 later in this chapter.

**6 b4!**



6 e3 is the main alternative, but after 6 ... dxe3 7 Qxd8+ Rxd8 8 Bxe3 Nge7 Black has decent compensation based on the idea of ... Nf5-d4. However, the natural move 6 Nbd2 should also be good for an advantage: 6 ... Qd7 (6 ... Nge7!?) 7 b4 Nge7 8 Nb3!? Ng6 9 Nbx4 Bxc4 10 Nxc6 Qxc6 11 Bb2!? was pretty good for White in A.Volzhin-P.Rewitz, Aarhus 1997.

### 6 ... Bxc4?!

Now White speeds up his development, so Black should keep playing in gambit mode:

a) 6 ... Nge7 7 Bb2 Ng6 (if 7 ... Bxc4 8 Nbd2 Be6 9 b5 and White has a clear advantage or here 8 ... Ba6 9 Nb3 when the pressure continues) 8 Nxd4 Ngxe5 9 Nxe6 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 fxe6 11 e3 and White's advantage is almost decisive.

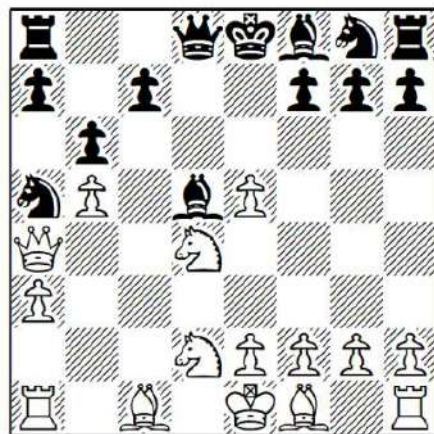
b) 6 ... Qd7 7 e3 dxe3 8 Qxd7+ Bxd7 9 Bxe3 and Black is down a pawn for nothing.

c) 6 ... f6 is probably Black's best try, although after 7 Bb2! (preferable to 7 exf6 Nxf6 when Black improves his development) 7 ... fxe5 (7 ... Nxe5 8 Nxd4 Bxc4 9 Nd2 Bf7 10 f4 Ng4 11 e4 wins a lot of tempi for White) 8 b5 Na5 9 Nxe5 Nxc4 10 Nxc4 Bxc4 11 Bxd4 Bxb5 12 Nc3 I prefer White who has the better development and more active pieces.

### 7 Nbd2 Bd5

Alternatively, 7 ... Ba6 is met by 8 Rb1 Qd5 9 b5! Bxb5 10 e4 dxe3 11 Rxb5 exd2+ 12 Bxd2 with a clear edge for White, while after 7 ... Be6 8 b5 Na5 9 Qa4 c5 10 bxc6 Nxc6 11 Nb3 White exerts strong pressure on the queenside.

### 8 b5 Na5 9 Qa4 b6 10 Nxd4



While the position's assessment has not changed much, I do not see any initiative for Black nor compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

### 10 ... Nb7 11 Bb2 Nc5 12 Qc2

Preparing e4. The opening has clearly turned out disastrously for Black.

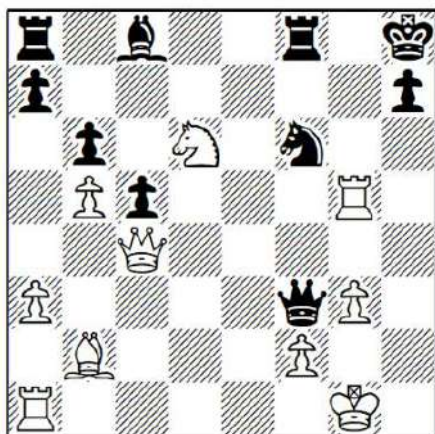
### 12 ... Ne7 13 e4 Bb7 14 Be2 Ng6 15 0-0 Qg5

Black cannot take on e5: 15 ... Nxe5 16 f4 Ng6 17 Rad1 Be7 18 Nf5 and Black already has a lost position.

### 16 N4f3 Qd8 17 Rfd1

Already the rest is just a matter of technique.

### 17 ... Be7 18 g3 0-0 19 h4 Nd7 20 h5 Nh8 21 Bc4 c5 22 e6 fxe6 23 Bxe6+ Nf7 24 Nc4 Bc8 25 h6 Bf6 26 e5 Qe7 27 Bxf7+ Qxf7 28 exf6 Nxf6 29 Nd6 Qh5 30 Qc4+ Kh8 31 hxg7+ Kxg7 32 Rd5 Qxf3 33 Rg5+ Kh8



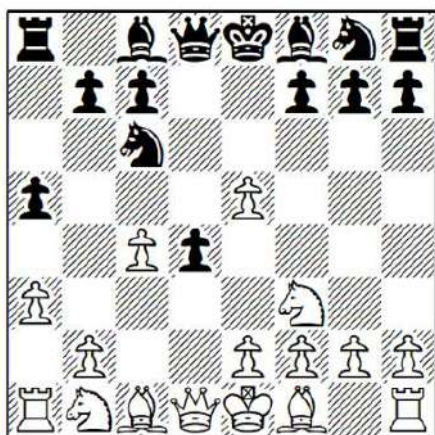
**34 Qg8+!**

A great way of finishing the game by White, as mate is unstoppable.

**34 ... Rxf3 35 Nf7# 1-0**

*Game 53 I.Farago-T.Ellenbroek*  
Leeuwarden 1992

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3 a5**



Stopping b4 looks like a good idea for Black, but I find this move to be too slow and now White will just trade pieces in the centre. Let us take a look too at the 'blitz' move 5 ... f6. After 6 exf6 Black can try:

a) 6 ... Nxf6 7 e3 Bg4 (7 ... dxe3 8 Qxd8+ Nxd8 9 Bxe3 leaves Black with no play) 8 Be2 and White defends successfully.

b) 6 ... Qxf6 7 g3 Be7 8 Bg2 Be6 9 Nbd2 Nh6 10 0-0 Nf7 11 b4 d3 12 Rb1 and White obtained a clear advantage in I.Khenkin-H.Schwarz, Dresden 2010.

**6 e3! Bc5**

I am under the impression Black cannot obtain full equality, no matter what he tries, partly as White always has a solid position. Instead, after 6 ... Bg4 7 exd4 Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Qxd4 (8 ... Nxd4 9 Qd1! keeps the extra pawn) 9 Nc3 Qxe5+ 10 Be2 White's bishop-pair plus Black's weaknesses on the queenside favour the first player.

**7 exd4 Bxd4**

Following 7 ... Nxd4 the engines like 8 Nc3, but I think 8 Be3 is easier to play:

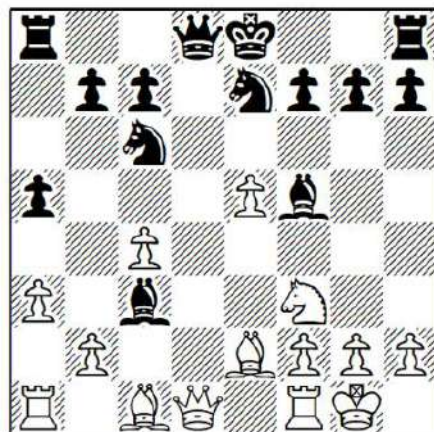
a) 8 ... Bg4 9 Nc3 Nxf3+ 10 gxf3 Qxd1+ 11 Rxd1 Bxe3 (after 11 ... Bxf3 12 Bxc5 Bxh1 13 Nb5 Rc8 14 Bh3 Black runs out of moves) 12 fxg4 and Black is defenceless.

b) 8 ... Nxf3+ 9 Qxf3 Bd4 10 Qe4 and Black is unable to get his pawn back.

**8 Be2 Bf5**

Probably best as after 8 ... Bxe5 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Bf4 the resulting position is very open and Black's king is not at all safe in the centre.

**9 0-0 Nge7 10 Nc3 Bxc3**



Destroying White's pawn structure is Black only chance (if 10 ... 0-0 11 Bg5 and the pin is annoying for Black). On the other

hand, White still has the extra pawn plus two strong bishops to help neutralize Black's counterplay.

**11 bxc3 Qxd1 12 Rxd1 Bc2 13 Rd2**

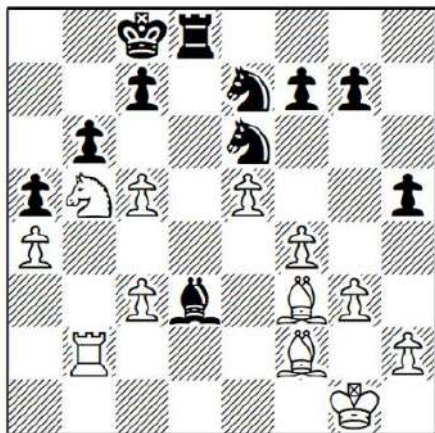
**Bg6**

Likewise, after 13 ... Be4 14 e6! fxe6 15 Ng5 Bf5 16 g4 White's advantage is a decisive one in my opinion.

**14 a4 Rd8 15 Rxd8+ Kxd8 16 Bf4**

The result of the opening is more than satisfactory for White. All Black can hope for is a draw and there is no chance he will get the pawn back. The remaining moves were:

**16 ... Kc8 17 Nd4 Kb8 18 Nb5 Nd8 19 Be3 Nf5 20 Ba7+ Kc8 21 f4 h5 22 Bf2 Ne6 23 g3 Rd8 24 Ra2 Ne7 25 Rb2 Bd3 26 Bf3 b6 27 c5!**



Despite the fact the queens are off, White manages to create an attack.

**27 ... bxc5 28 Bxh5 Be4 29 Na7+ Kd7 30 Bxf7 Nd5 31 Rd2 Ra8 32 c4 Rxa7 33 cxd5 Nd4 34 Bxd4 cxd4 35 Rxd4 Bc2 36 Bh5 Rb7 37 Bg4+ Ke8 38 d6 cxd6 39 exd6 Rb4 40 Rd5 Rxa4 41 d7+ Kd8 42 Rc5 1-0**

*Game 54 A.Graf-D.Barua FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3 Bg4**

One of the most aggressive choices by Black, preparing a quick queenside 0-0-0.

**6 Nbd2**

This natural move makes lot of sense to me. 6 b4 also deserves attention, when 6 ... Qe7 7 Nbd2 0-0-0 8 Bb2 Nxe5 9 Nxe5 Qxe5 10 h3 Bh5 11 g4 Bg6 12 Bg2 Nf6 13 Nf3 Qe8 14 Nxd4 h5 was seen in B.Gelfand-T.Radjabov, Almaty (blitz) 2008 (14 ... c5!? 15 bxc5 Bxc5 is also a doubled-edged position).

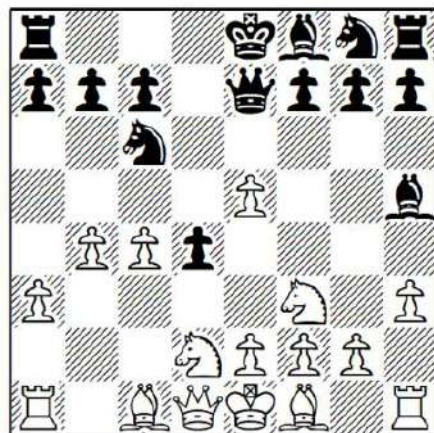
**6 ... Qe7**

Alternatively, if 6 ... Nge7 7 Qb3 Rb8 8 g3 with a clear advantage for White, according to Dautov, who also points out that 6 ... Qd7 7 b4 0-0-0 8 b5 Na5 9 Qa4 b6 10 Bb2 Bc5 11 Ne4 Qe7 12 Rd1! Bxf3 13 gxf3 Qxe5 14 e3 Ne7 15 Nxc5 Qxc5 16 Bxd4 offers White a clear plus too.

**7 h3 Bh5**

Taking on f3 does not make any sense for Black, since his bishop is one of his most active pieces: 7 ... Bxf3?! 8 Nxf3 0-0-0 9 Qd3 h6 (9 ... Nxe5 10 Qf5+ Nd7 11 Bf4 looks better for White) 10 g3 and even if Black manages to get his pawn back, White has the much better position due to his bishop-pair and queenside attacking chances.

**8 b4**



I do not think advancing on the kingside with 8 g4 is a good idea because Black can punish this by means of 8 ... Bg6 followed by ... h5 with counterplay.

Instead, 8 Qa4 is the main alternative which is worth studying for White. After 8 ... 0-0-0 9 b4 there are two options for Black:

a) 9 ... Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Qxe5 11 Bb2 Kb8 12 g4 Bg6 and now:

a1) 13 Nf3 Qe6 (or 13 ... Qe4 14 Bxd4 c5 15 Be5+ Ka8 16 Bg2 Nf6 17 0-0 Qxc4 18 Rfc1 Qe6 19 bxc5 Nd7 20 Bd4 Qe4 21 Ne5 Nxc5 22 Rxc5 Bxc5 23 Bxe4 Rxd4 24 Bxb7+ Kxb7 25 Qc6+ Kb8 26 Qxc5 1-0, A.Goldin-A.Mengarini, New York 1991) 14 Nxd4 Qe4 15 Rd1 Be7 16 Rg1 Qf4 17 e3 Qh6 18 Bg2 left White doing pretty well in M.Thomas-J.Kish, correspondence 1998.

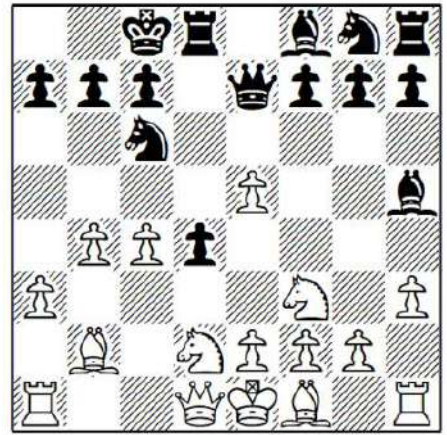
a2) 13 Bg2 Nf6 14 Nf3 Qf4 (after 14 ... Qe4 15 0-0 Qxe2 16 Nxd4 Qxb2 17 Qb5 Black is defenceless against all of White's threats) 15 0-0 followed by Bxd4 and e3! was also quite effective in P.H.Nielsen-K.Rasmussen, Silkeborg 2008.

b) 9 ... Kb8 10 Bb2 Nxe5! (likely better than 10 ... f6 11 0-0-0 Bg6 12 e6 a6 13 b5 axb5 14 cxb5 Qc5+ 15 Nc4 Ne5 16 e3 Nxf3 17 gxf3 d3 18 Qb3 Ne7 19 Bd4 Rxd4 20 exd4 Qxd4 21 Bxd3 Qf4+ 22 Kb2 Qd4+ 23 Kb1 Qxf2 24 Bxg6 hxg6 25 Rd8+ Nc8 26 Qa4 1-0, V.Shtyrenkov-M.Chetverik, Karvina 1998) 11 0-0-0 and the position is unclear.

### 8 ... 0-0-0

The initiative is much more relevant than material. Unsurprisingly taking on e5 leads to trouble for Black: 8 ... Nxe5 9 Qa4+ c6 (or 9 ... Nc6 10 g4 Bg6 11 Nxd4 and Black runs out of counterplay) 10 Nxe5 Qxe5 11 Bb2 when g4 and Nf3 is a serious threat.

### 9 Bb2



### 9 ... Nxe5

When this game was played, this move was a novelty. If I were Black I would keep playing in gambit-style with 9 ... f6!? 10 Qa4! (10 exf6 Nxf6 11 b5 Ne5 12 Qb3 was played in R.Molina-K.Ferreira, Vitoria 2008, when Black has a dangerous attack after 12 ... Nxf3+ 13 Nxf3 Ne4) 10 ... Kb8 (prudent, unlike 10 ... fxe5 11 b5 or 10 ... Nxe5 11 Nxe5 fxe5 12 Qxa7) 11 0-0-0, although here White is better. Black cannot take on e5 because he loses material: 11 ... Nxe5 (not 11 ... fxe5? 12 b5 and Black loses a piece) 12 Nxd4 and apart from the extra pawn, White has a solid position and active pieces.

### 10 Qb3!

Believe it or not, White has the better development. All we have to do is get our king out of the centre (to the queenside, of course), and Black's d-pawn is going to be weak.

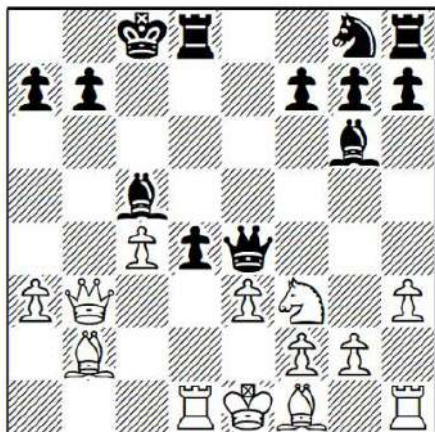
### 10 ... Bg6

10 ... Nxf3+ 11 Nxf3 d3 is met by the strong 12 0-0-0 dxe2 13 Rxd8+ Qxd8 (if 13 ... Kxd8 14 Qd3+) 14 Bxe2 Qe8 15 Re1 when White's advantage is clear.

### 11 Nxe5 Qxe5 12 g3

It is not yet a good time to castle: 12 0-0-0 runs into 12 ... Qf5, but I suggest the following improvement: 12 Nf3 Qe4 (12 ...

Qf4 13 Qa4 Kb8 14 Bxd4 Rxd4 15 Qe8+ looks like a quick mate for White) 13 Rd1 c5 14 bxc5 Bxc5 15 e3.



White wins back his pawn: 15 ... dxe3 16 Rxd8+ Kxd8 17 Bxg7 and I do not see any attacking ideas for Black.

### 12 ... Qe6

The alternatives offer White a slight advantage: 12 ... Be4 13 Nxe4 Qxe4 14 Rg1, 12 ... Nf6 13 Bg2 and 12 ... Ne7 13 Bg2 Nf5 14 Qf3 c6 15 b5 Rd6 16 0-0.

### 13 Qf3!

Bringing the queen over to the kingside before Black plays ... d3 and also preparing to set up a battery with Bg2.

### 13 ... d3 14 e3

14 0-0-0 is suggested by the engines, but I prefer the text move because endgames are better for White – Black's d3-pawn is going to be a soft target.

### 14 ... Qf5 15 Bg2 Qxf3 16 Nxf3

White's advantage is clear. After trading some pieces off he will round up the d3-pawn.

### 16 ... f6 17 0-0 Ne7 18 Rfd1 Nc6 19 Rac1 Be7 20 Nh4 d2

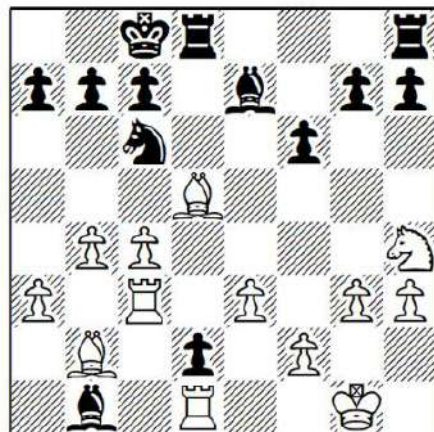
Black's only try as after 20 ... Bf7 21 Be4 he will lose another pawn soon.

### 21 Rc3 Bb1?!

A better try was 21 ... a5 22 Nxc6 hxc6 23 b5 Ne5 24 Rc2 when, despite the fact that

Black has some counterplay, he should lose in the long run.

### 22 Bd5!



### 22 ... Nxb4

22 ... Bg6 23 Nxc6 hxc6 24 Rd3 would be the equivalent of resignation, whereas the text at least tries to create some action.

### 23 Rxb1 Nxd5 24 cxd5 Rxd5 25 Rd1

Once more, the rest is a matter of technique.

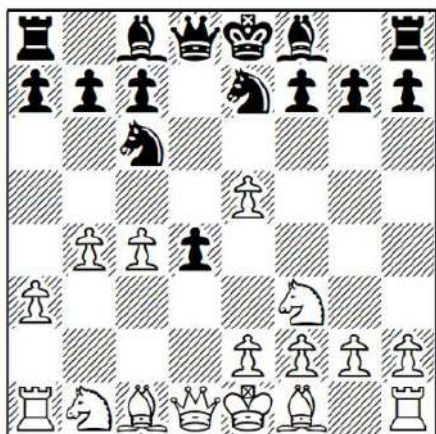
### 25 ... Rhd8 26 Nf3 Rb5 27 Rc2 Ra5 28 Nd4 Rd7 29 Nb3 Rb5 30 Nxd2 a5 31 Kf1 Rbd5 32 Ke2 Rd3 33 Rdc1 Bxa3 34 Nc4 Bxb2 35 Rxb2 Kb8 36 Nxa5 b6 37 Nc6+ Kb7 38 Ra2 R3d6 39 Ra7+ Kc8 40 Rc2 1-0

Game 55 F.Peralta-C.Amura San Luis, 2006

### 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3 Nge7

The critical move in this line, with Alexander Morozevich being its top guardian.

### 6 b4



Best, since after 6 Nbd2 a5 7 g3 a4 8 Bg2 Ng6 9 0-0 Ngxe5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Nf3 Nxf3+ 12 Bxf3 Bc5 Black had solved his opening problems in Le Quang Liem-A.Morozevich, Astana (blitz) 2012.

### 6 ... Ng6

Black has to put pressure on e5 as soon as possible and this way is better than 6 ... Bg4 7 Bb2:

a) 7 ... Bxf3 8 exf3 Ng6 9 g3! Ngxe5 10 f4 and White's bishop-pair is too powerful.

b) 7 ... Ng6 8 Nxd4 Ngxe5 9 Nxc6 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Nxc6 (not 10 ... Nxc4? 11 Ne5!) 11 Nd2 and White should easily win with his extra pawn.

c) 7 ... Nf5 8 Nbd2 Qe7 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Nxf3 0-0-0 11 Qd3 g6 12 g4 Ng7 13 Bg2 Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Qxe5 15 Qf3 left White with a clear advantage in T.Nyback-A.Vihmand, Harjumaa 2010.

### 7 Bb2 a5

Definitely the best try for Black, weakening our queenside a bit before taking on e5 and c4.

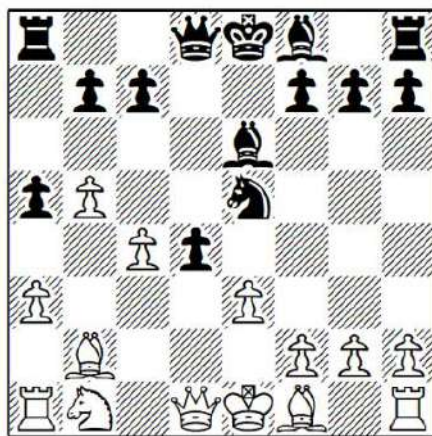
After the immediate 7 ... Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 e3 Be6 10 Bxd4 Nxc4 11 Qc2! Nd6 12 Bd3 Black has some problems finishing his kingside development: 12 ... Qd7 13 0-0 Nf5 (13 ... 0-0-0 does not look like a safe move for Black; White can even consider taking the a7-pawn or playing 14 Rd1, with

a solid advantage) 14 Bb2 (14 Nc3 is also worth considering) 14 ... Be7 15 Rd1 Qc8 16 Nc3 White had obtained a clear advantage in J.Gonzalez Garcia-S.Palit, Barbera del Valles 2012 (16 e4!? Nh4 17 g3 Nf3+ 18 Kg2 Ng5 19 f4 could even be lost for Black).

### 8 b5 Nxe5 9 Nxe5

I have also studied 9 Bxd4 Nxf3+ 10 gxf3 Be6 11 e3 Nh4, but I couldn't find any advantage for White. Despite having the extra pawn, White has a passive position.

### 9 ... Nxe5 10 e3 Be6



I like the fact that this variation is pretty much forced, as well as easy to understand: White is going to have two powerful bishops controlling both sides of the board. On the other hand, Black has some problems finishing his kingside development.

### 11 Bxd4 Nxc4 12 Qc2 Nd6

This looks like a good square for the knight, controlling both sides of the board. Still, Black has some problems defending both g7 and h7 and I cannot see a safe area for his king. However, Black cannot gamble with his development: 12 ... Qd5 13 Nc3 Qg5 14 Bxc4 Qxg2 (14 ... Bxc4 15 Qe4+ loses a pawn) 15 Bxe6! Qxh1+ 16 Ke2 Qxa1 17 Nd5 Qxa3 18 Bf5 and Black is defenceless.

### 13 Bd3 Qg5

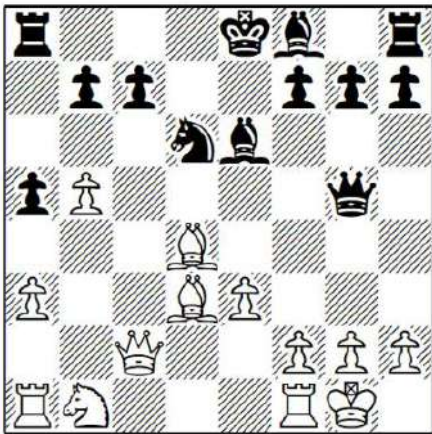
Definitely the main try for Black, but let us take a look too at the alternatives:)

a) 13 ... Be7 14 0-0! (there is no need to take on g7, which would activate Black's pieces) 14 ... Bf6 15 Bxf6 Qxf6 16 Nd2 when Black cannot castle yet, as h7 is hanging and the queenside would not be at all safe either.

b) 13 ... Qh4 14 0-0 Be7 15 Nd2 0-0 16 f4 Rad8 17 a4 Ne8 was played in G.Sargissian-R.Slobodjan, Dresden 2007, and after 18 Nf3 Qh6 19 Rad1 White's advantage is out of the question.

c) 13 ... Qd7 14 Nc3 Nf5 was seen in D.Pustovoitova-A.Eryshkanova, Loo 2014. Here White can improve by means of 15 Ne2! (15 Be4 was played in the game) 15 ... Nxd4 (or 15 ... Bd6 16 0-0 0-0 17 Bb2 and Black is going to have a hard time defending his kingside) 16 Nxd4 when White dominates both sides of the board.

**14 0-0!?**



We do not mind losing a pawn as long as we keep the initiative. Topalov once preferred 14 f4 against Morozevich: 14 ... Qh4+ 15 g3 Qh5 (15 ... Qh3 might be an improvement for Black) 16 Nc3 Nf5 17 0-0 0-0-0 18 Ba7!? Qg4 was V.Topalov-A.Morozevich, Monaco (rapid) 2005, when I think White can improve his play by means of 19 Na4! and there is no clear way to stop

Nb6+, while 19 ... Kd7 20 Be4 is simply lost for Black.

**14 ... Nxb5 15 Bb2**

Black easily equalizes after 15 Bxb5+ Qxb5 16 Qxc7 Qc6. In fact, Black's bishop-pair might favour him in the long run.

**15 ... Bd6**

Leaving the knight on b5 unprotected looks risky for Black, but if 15 ... c6 16 Nd2!? 0-0-0 17 Nc4 with a strong queenside attack. Likewise, after 15 ... 0-0-0 16 Rc1!? (White's compensation is more than enough) 16 ... c6 17 Nc3 Nd6 18 Na4, despite having an extra pawn, this is not an easy position for Black to handle over the board.

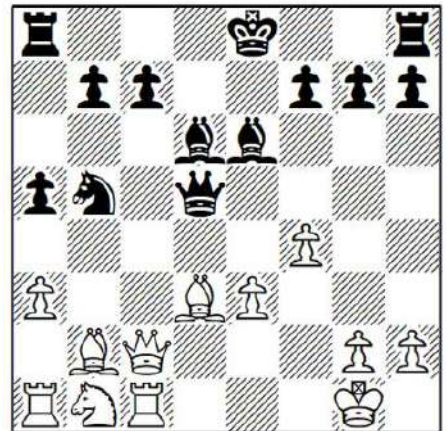
**16 f4!**

16 Nd2 followed by Ne4 also looks great for White, although I do not see anything wrong with starting aggressive actions immediately.

**16 ... Qd5**

After 16 ... Qh5 17 Bxg7 Rg8 18 Bf6 White's advantage is almost decisive because there is no way to stop Bh7.

**17 Rc1**



I really like how Peralta played this game, although, of course, with the help of the engines it is easier to find 'faster' ways for White, not least 17 a4! Na7 18 Bxg7 (we have to be fearless since Black's counterplay

down the g-file is not strong enough) 18 ... Rg8 19 Nc3 Qh5 20 Ne4 Be7 21 Nf6+ Bxf6 22 Bxf6. With the power of the two bishops and with Black's king trapped in the centre, it is easy to tell that White is already winning.

**17 ... c6**

17 ... 0-0-0 was a better resource for Black. After 18 f5 Qxd3 19 Qxd3 Bxh2+ 20 Kxh2 Rxd3 21 fxe6 f6!? the game is not that clear, although White's extra piece should have the final word.

**18 f5**

Amazingly, Black's queen is about to be trapped.

**18 ... 0-0-0**

18 ... Bd7 19 Be4 is simply losing for Black and 18 ... Rd8 19 fxe6 Qxd3 20 Qxd3 Bxh2+ 21 Kxh2 Rxd3 22 a4 is also hopeless for him.

**19 fxe6**

With the extra piece, all we have to do is finish our development and the rest should be a matter of technique.

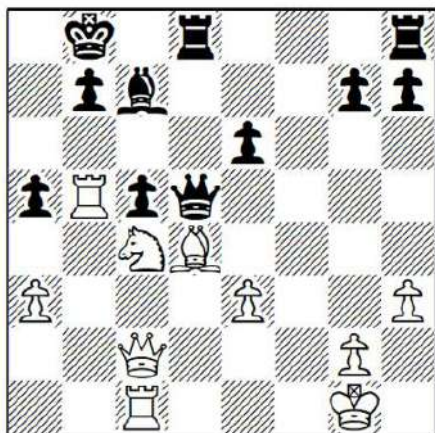
**19 ... Qh5 20 h3 fxe6 21 Nd2 Bc7 22 Bxb5**

As usual, trading pieces is a good idea when you have a material advantage.

**22 ... Qxb5 23 Bd4 Qd5 24 Nc4 Kb8 25 Rab1 c5 26 Rb5!**

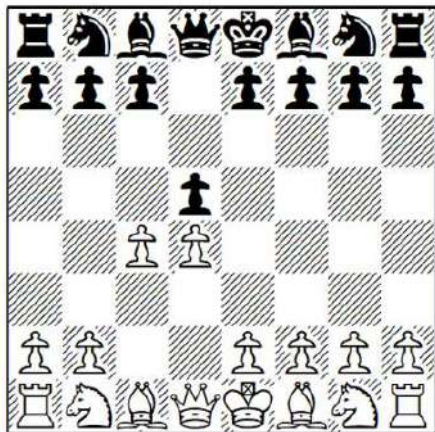
And the rest is quite easy. The remaining moves were:

**26 ... cxd4 27 Rxd5 exd5 28 Nd2 Rc8 29 exd4 Bb6 30 Qd1 Bxd4+ 31 Kh2 Rxc1 32 Qxc1 Be5+ 33 g3 Rc8 34 Qd1 Rc3 35 Nf3 Bc7 36 Qxd5 Rxa3 37 Qg8+ Ka7 38 Qxg7 Bb6 39 Ne5 Rc3 40 Nd7 Rc2+ 41 Kh1 Bf2 42 Qe5 1-0**



# Chapter Seven

## Other Defences 1 d4 d5 2 c4



This chapter contains mainly inferior lines for Black: 2 ... Nf6, 2 ... c5 and 2 ... Bf5. However, we also have to study the rock-solid Stonewall variation which arises after 2 ... e6 3 Nc3 f5. Usually White employs a kingside fianchetto against the Dutch, but here we will take advantage of knowing that Black has already played the Stonewall structure (... d5, ... e6, ... f5 and probably ... c6) to go for an aggressive set-up with Bf4, e3 and Nf3 followed eventually by h3 and g4 with a powerful kingside attack

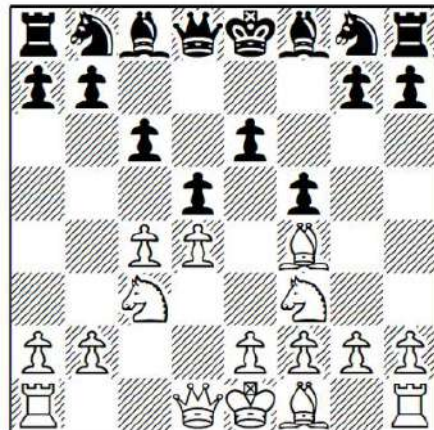
*Game 56 A.Korobov-A.Pridorozhni*  
Pardubice (rapid) 2010

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 f5 4 Nf3 c6**

The Stonewall variation is well known for being a solid defence for Black. On the other hand, White has a positional advantage for a couple of reasons: the e5-square is exploitable, and while it is also true that Black can try a ... Nf6-Ne4 manoeuvre, the difference is that White is able to play f3 at some point. Finally, Black's light-squared

bishop is stymied by his central pawns, which makes it a bad bishop.

**5 Bf4!**



Usually White meets the Stonewall with the fianchetto system. However, Black's move order allows us to play 5 Bf4 and I like this move because we develop the bishop outside the pawn chain before playing e3. Afterwards, we are going to play with h3 and g4 in order to develop a kingside attack. Obviously, we do not have to castle yet.

**5 ... Nf6 6 e3 Be7**

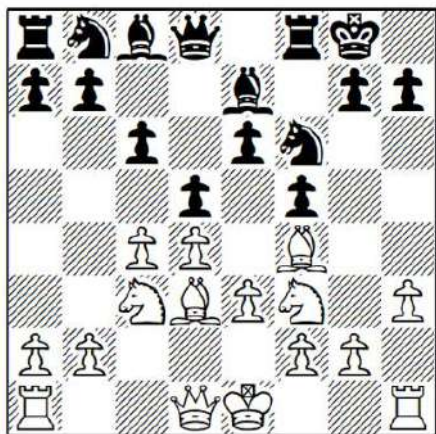
Developing the bishop to d6 is also possible, although Black does lose his most powerful bishop: 6 ... Bd6 7 Bxd6 Qxd6 8 Bd3 0-0 9 0-0 and White has a positional advantage. We are no longer trying to play h3 and g4, but rather we can develop a queenside attack or plan a future f3 and e4:

a) 9 ... Nbd7 10 cxd5! cxd5 (10 ... exd5 11 Bxf5 just loses a pawn for Black) 11 Nb5 Qe7 12 Rc1 Ne8 13 Qb3 a6 14 Nc7 and White has a clear advantage, I.Lutsko-V.Dambrauskas, Feugen 2006.

b) It feels like Black wins space with 9 ... Ne4, but this is not dangerous, as we can finish our development and exploit Black's weakened dark squares: 10 Qc2 Nd7 11 a3 a5 12 Rac1 Qe7 13 Nd2 Kh8 14 f3 Nxd2 15 Qxd2 dxc4 16 Bxc4 Nb6 17 Ba2 e5 (it

seems that Black is freeing his position, but even after this he does not equalize) 18 dxe5 Qxe5 19 Qd4! Qxd4 20 exd4 Bd7 21 Rfe1 Rae8 22 Re5 and even after trading lot of pieces off, the endgame is unpleasant for Black. White converted his advantage into a full point in V.Zvjaginsev-K.Mesropov, Sochi 2012.

**7 Bd3 0-0 8 h3!**



As pointed out before, it is useful to delay castling.

**8 ... Ne4 9 Qb3**

Personally, I think this move is at least as good as the main move 9 Qc2. I like the text, applying some pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal.

**9 ... Kh8**

I think Black has to play this natural move:

a) 9 ... Na6 10 cxd5 exd5 (or 10 ... cxd5 11 a3) 11 Bxa6 bxa6 12 Ne5 and White has a clear advantage.

b) 9 ... Qb6 10 Qc2!? Na6 11 a3 with a comfortable edge for White, whose pieces are well-coordinated.

**10 g4**

The logical follow-up.

**10 ... Qa5**

Black can also try 10 ... Na6, but after 11 Ne5 Nb4 12 Bxe4 fxe4 13 0-0!? followed by f3 I prefer White's chances.

**11 Rg1**

I would also consider 11 gxf5 exf5 12 cxd5 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Qxd5 (or 13 ... cxd5 14 h4) 14 Ke2!. White has the better prospects on each side of the board and, of course, we do not mind playing an endgame with more space and the better pieces.

**11 ... Nd7 12 cxd5 exd5?!**

Black simply loses a pawn after this. After 12 ... cxd5 (12 ... Nxc3 13 bxc3 cxd5 14 gxf5 leads to the same thing) 13 gxf5 Nxc3 14 bxc3 exf5 15 Rb1 White has only a slight advantage.

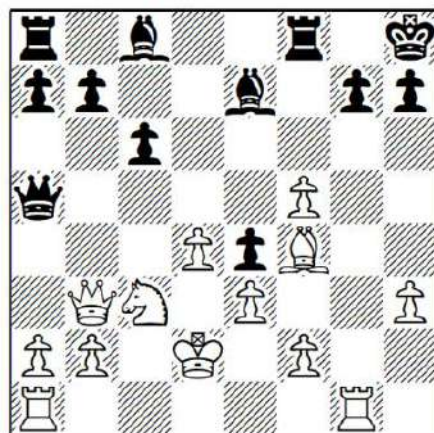
**13 gxf5 Ndf6**

If 13 ... Rxf5 14 Bxe4 dxe4 15 Nd2 (15 Ne5!?) and Black cannot avoid losing a pawn, since 15 ... Nf6 runs into 16 Qf7.

**14 Nd2**

14 Be5 is even stronger according to *Rybka*: 14 ... Bxf5 15 Qxb7 Qb4 16 Qxb4 Bxb4 17 Nd2 and White has a clear advantage.

**14 ... Nxd2 15 Kxd2 Ne4+ 16 Bxe4 dxe4**



**17 Be5**

The position looks like a puzzle, and it is one! Black is defenceless after the sacrifice 17 Rxg7! Kxg7 18 Rg1+ Kh8 (or 18 ... Kf6 19 Bg5+ Kxf5 20 Bxe7) 19 Bh6, which wins on the spot.

**17 ... Bf6 18 Bxf6 Rxf6**

18 ... gxf6 was a better try, although White has a clear initiative after the simple plan of 19 Rg3 Qxf5 20 Rag1 Bd7 21 Kc1.

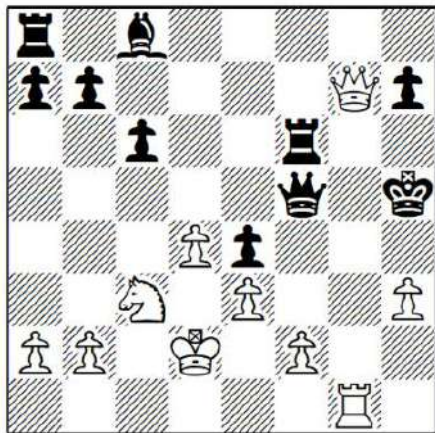
**19 Rxc7!**

Once more Black's lack of development allows this powerful move.

**19 ... Kxc7 20 Rg1+ Kh6**

Or 20 ... Kf8 21 Qg8+ Ke7 22 Rg7+ Kd6 23 Qe8! and there is no way to stop the mate.

**21 Qg8 Qxf5 22 Qg7+ Kh5**



**23 Nxe4**

This move does everything.

**23 ... Kh4 24 Rg4+ Kxh3 25 Rg1 1-0**

Black cannot stop all of White threats. I think that developing the bishop via d6 is probably a better try, although White's positional advantage after trading the bishops is without question.

### Game 57 G.Kasparov-R.Scamps

Besancon (simul) 1999

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d5**

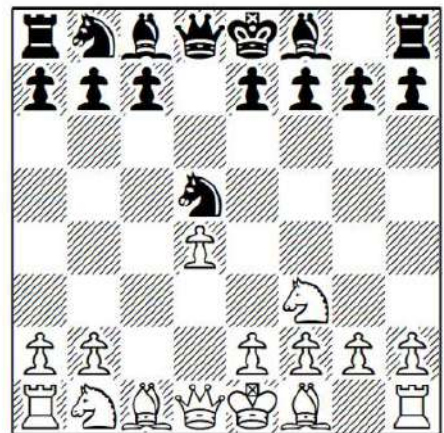
We can also reach this position by the following move order: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nf6. This variation is marginal because White obtains the much stronger centre.

**3 cxd5 Nxd5**

If 3 ... Qxd5 4 Nc3 Qa5 5 Nf3 c6 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nc4 Qf5 8 f3 followed by e4 and

White obtained a clear advantage in C.Horvath-F.Palasti, Hungarian League 1995.

**4 Nf3!**



The key move, as the immediate 4 e4 cannot be recommended, in view of 4 ... Nf6 5 Nc3 e5! and Black suddenly equalizes:

a) 6 dxe5 Qxd1+ 7 Nxd1 (or 7 Kxd1 Ng4 when it is hard to get an advantage) 7 ... Nxe4 and Black has a good position.

b) If 6 d5 Nbd7 and Black can also consider 6 ... Bb4 and 6 ... Bc5.

**4 ... Nf6**

Let us take a look at Black's alternatives:

a) 4 ... g6 5 e4 Nf6 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 h3 (I love this move; now Black does not have a good square for his light-squared bishop) 7 ... 0-0 8 Be3 c6 9 Qd2 Re8 10 Bd3, E.Bogoljubow-P.Romanovsky, Leningrad 1924.

b) 4 ... c6 5 e4 Nc7 6 h3!? and White's centre is a commanding one.

c) 4 ... Bf5 5 Nbd2 Nf6 6 Qb3 Qc8 7 e3 e6 8 Bc4 Be7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Re1 Nbd7 11 e4 Bg6 12 e5 Ne8 13 Bd3 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 Nb6 15 Ne4 and White enjoys a nice space advantage, L.Portisch-M.Kaderi, Siegen Olympiad 1970.

d) 4 ... Bg4 5 e4 Nf6 6 Nc3 e6 7 Be2 Nbd7 8 Be3 Be7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Rc1 c6 11

Nd2 Bxe2 12 Qxe2 Re8 13 Rfd1 with a slight advantage, A.Alekhine-Arancegui, Mexico City 1929.

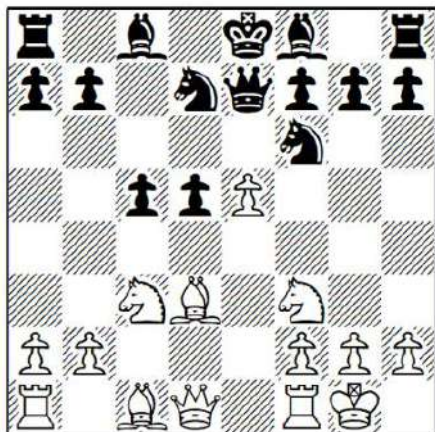
e) 4 ... Nc6 5 e4 Nb6 6 d5 Nb8 7 Nc3 Bg4 8 a4 e6 9 a5 N6d7 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 led to a quick win for White in G.Kasparov-B.Scherrer, Zurich (simul) 1988.

**5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 e4 e6 7 Bd3**

White's strategy is really simple: he finishes his development and will then launch a kingside attack with e4-e5.

**7 ... Be7**

If Black tries to free his position with 7 ... c5 White punishes him with 8 d5 exd5 (or 8 ... Be7 9 dxe6 fxe6 10 e5 and Black's camp is full of weaknesses) 9 e5 Qe7 10 0-0!.



Already Black is lost.

**8 0-0 a6**

It was better to castle as soon as possible: 8 ... 0-0 9 e5 Nd5 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Qc2 h6 12 Bf4, although White's advantage is out of question.

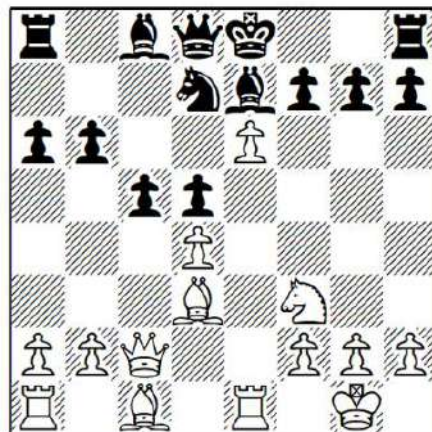
**9 Re1**

White can easily open up the position with 9 e5 Nd5 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Qc2 h6 12 e6! fxe6 13 Bg6+ Kf8 14 Re1 and Black is lost from a strategic point of view.

**9 ... b6 10 e5 Nd5 11 Nxd5 exd5 12 Qc2 c5**

Black cannot castle because White threatens Qc6.

**13 e6!**



**13 ... Nf6**

Likewise, if 13 ... fxe6 14 Bxh7 Nf8 15 Bg6+ Nxg6 16 Qxg6+ Kf8 17 Ne5 Qe8 18 Re3 followed by Rf3 and Black loses.

**14 exf7+ Kf8**

14 ... Kxf7 15 Ne5+ Kf8 16 Nc6 wins a piece and the game.

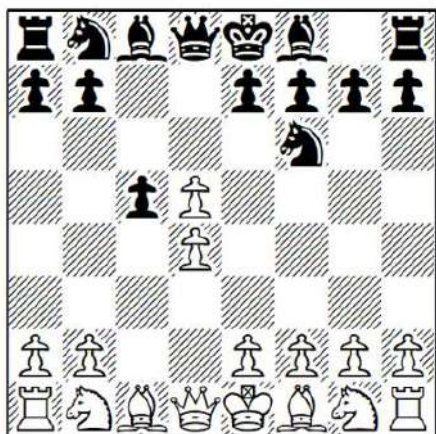
**15 Ne5 Qc7 16 Bf4 Bd6 17 Qe2**

and White won a couple of moves later.

*Game 58 G.Kasparov-F.Casares Galicia (simul) 1991*

We continue to analyze some marginal lines by Black and once more we have a former world champion's game to enjoy.

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c5 3 cxd5 Nf6**



Instead, 3 ... Qxd5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nc3 is the subject of our next game, Akopian-Ulibin, while after 3 ... cxd4 4 Qa4+ Black comes up short after 4 ... Bd7 5 Qxd4 or 4 ... b5 5 Qxd4. As such, 4 ... Qd7 5 Qxd4 e6 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 e4 exd5 8 exd5 a6 9 Nf3 Bd6 10 Bd3 0-0 11 0-0 Qg4 was played in V.Mikhalevski-K.Landa, Ajaccio 2007, and here I believe White can obtain a clear advantage after the simple 12 Be3.

#### 4 Nf3

I like this natural move because White gains a risk-free endgame.

4 e4 is White's main option. He also has the advantage after 4 ... Nxe4 5 dxc5 Nxc5 6 Nc3 e5 7 Nf3, G.Timoshenko-G.Schroeter, Berlin 1997, and here 7 b4 Nca6 8 a3 is also worth considering.

#### 4 ... cxd4

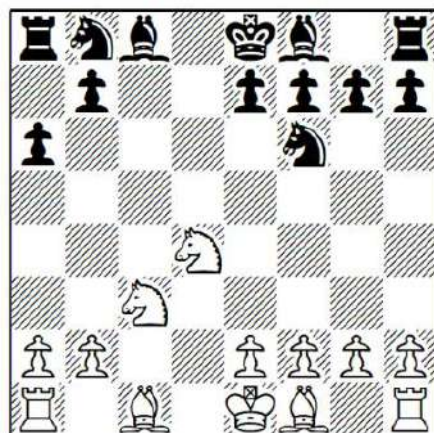
If 4 ... Nxd5 5 e4 Nf6 6 d5 and White is left with a little space more space, in view of 6 ... Nxe4? 7 Qa4+. Likewise, after 4 ... Qxd5 5 Nc3 Qd8 6 d5 Black finds himself a little cramped.

#### 5 Qxd4 Qxd5

The endgame arising after 5 ... Nxd5 is quite unpleasant for Black because he loses the right to castle: 6 e4 Nb6 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Nc3 Nc6 9 Be3 Bd7 10 Bb5 f6 11 0-0 e5 12 Rfd1 and White had obtained a clear

advantage in J.Sunye Neto-L.Vidigal, Brasilia 1975.

#### 6 Nc3 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 a6



It is fundamental to prevent Nb5:  
a) 7 ... Bd7 8 Ndb5 Na6 9 Bf4 is unpleasant for Black, and if 9 ... Nd5!? 10 Nd6+! exd6 11 Nxd5 when he has a weak pawn on d6.

b) 7 ... e5 8 Ndb5 Na6 9 e4 Bb4 10 f3 0-0 11 a3 Bxc3+ 12 Nxc3 and the bishop-pair gives White the better endgame, A.Wojtkiewicz-R.Toledo, Manila 1997.

#### 8 g3

Targeting the long diagonal, while Black is going to have some trouble finishing his queenside development.

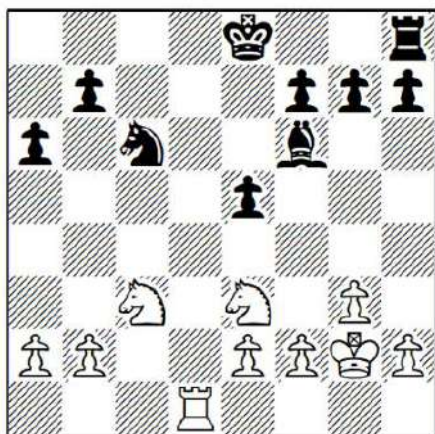
#### 8 ... e5 9 Nc2 Bd7 10 Bg2 Bc6

After 10 ... Nc6 11 Be3!? Black has a weakness on b6 and the d5-square can be exploited at some point, just as we are going to see in our main game.

#### 11 0-0 Bxg2 12 Kxg2 Nc6 13 Bg5 Be7 14 Rfd1 Rd8 15 Bxf6 Rxd1

15 ... Bxf6 16 Ne3 Nd4 17 Ned5 does not fix Black's problems either.

#### 16 Rxd1 Bxf6 17 Ne3



17 Nd5 Bd8 is also possible, but I think the manoeuvre in the game is better, since Nc2-e3-d5 followed by e3 g3 gives us full control over the centre and we can continue with Ne4-c5.

**17 ... 0-0?**

After this the endgame is hopeless for Black; he cannot leave the seventh rank unprotected.

Instead, 17 ... Bd8?! 18 Nf5 g6 (or 18 ... 0-0 19 Rd7) 19 Nd6+ loses a pawn, while after 17 ... g6 18 Ned5 Bd8 19 Na4 followed by Nc5 White's knights cause nightmares for Black.

**18 Rd7 b5 19 Ne4 Rc8 20 Nxf6+**

Or just 20 Nd5 Bd8 21 Nd6 Rb8 22 Nxf7 with a winning advantage.

**20 ... gxf6 21 Nf5 Kf8 22 e3 Rd8 23 Rc7 Nb8 24 Kf3**

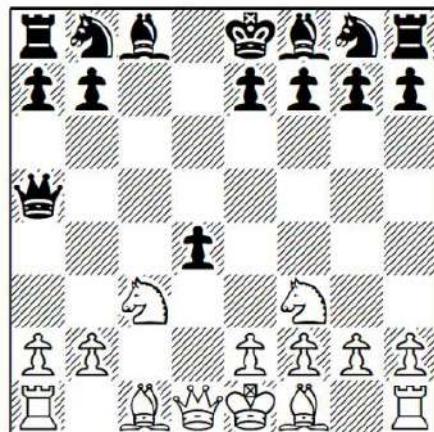
The rest is a matter of technique, as Black can scarcely move:

**24 ... Ke8 25 Ke4 Rd7 26 Rc8+ Rd8 27 Nd6+ Kd7 28 Rxd8+ Kxd8 29 Kd5 Ke7 30 b4 Kd7 31 Ne4 f5 32 Nc5+ Ke7 33 a3 f6 34 f4 e4 35 Nb3 Nd7 36 Kc6 1-0**

White is going to remove all Black's pawns while Black is still trying to activate his knight.

*Game 59 V.Akopian-M.Ulibin Moscow 2012*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c5 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nc3 Qa5**



If, instead, 5 ... Qd8 6 Qxd4! We do not mind playing an endgame because we have a development advantage: 6 ... Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Nf6 and White is up a tempo compared to the previously analyzed Kasparov-Casares. As such, after 8 Ndb5 Na6 9 g3 I believe White has a clear advantage.

**6 Nxd4 Nf6 7 Bd2**

It makes lot of sense to place the bishop on the same diagonal as the queen. I would also consider the simple 7 g3 Ne4 (or 7 ... e5 8 Nb3 Qc7 9 Bg5 when Black has serious development problems, and if 9 ... Qc6 10 Bxf6 Qxf6 11 Bg2 Bb4 12 0-0 Bxc3 13 Rc1! with a clear advantage for White) 8 Bd2 Nxd2 9 Qxd2 e5 10 Ndb5 Nc6 11 Bg2 Bb4 12 Nd6+ Bxd6 (or 12 ... Ke7 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Nc4) 13 Qxd6 and Black is in serious trouble.

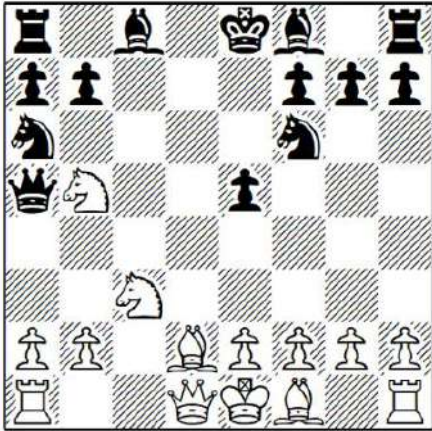
**7 ... e5**

Others:

a) 7 ... Qb6 8 Rc1 Bd7 (8 ... Qxd4? 9 Nb5) 9 Nb3 Nc6 10 Be3 (moving the queen too much was not for free) 10 ... Qd8 11 Nc5 and we are likely to win Black's bishop-pair when the resulting position is much better for White.

b) 7 ... Nc6 does help Black finish his development, but the resulting position after 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 g3 Bf5 10 Bg2 Qa6 11 Rc1 is risk-free for White.

**8 Ndb5 Na6**



Black needs to overprotect c7 and 8 ... Bb4 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Nd6+! Ke7 11 Bxc3 is already lost for him.

**9 e4 Bc5**

After 9 ... Be7 10 Bc4 0-0 11 0-0 Bd7 12 Nd5 Qd8 13 Nxf6+ Bxf6 14 Be3 Black must probably give up his light-squared bishop and we know our bishop-pair makes a big difference afterwards.

**10 Be2**

10 Bc4 0-0 11 0-0 Qd8 12 Rc1 is also possible, but believe White wanted to overprotect the g4-square just in case.

**10 ... 0-0 11 0-0 h6**

White has the initiative after both 11 ... Bd7 12 Nd5 Qd8 13 Bg5 and 11 ... Be6 12 Rc1 Qd8 13 Bg5.

**12 a3 Qd8 13 b4 Bb6 14 Na4! Nxe4 15 Nxb6 axb6**

Likewise, if 15 ... Qxb6 16 Be3 when White has more than enough compensation.

**16 Be3**

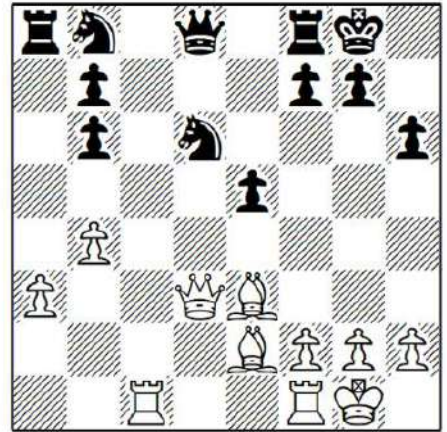
White is likely to get his pawn back and the bishop-pair is already a commanding asset.

**16 ... Bd7 17 Rc1 Bxb5 18 Bxb5 Nd6 19 Be2 Nb8**

If 19 ... Re8 20 Qd3 (20 Qd5 runs into 20 ... Nc7).

**20 b5**

20 Qd3 is probably better.



White maintains the pressure after 20 ... Nc6 21 Rfd1 Nc8 22 b5 Qxd3 23 Rxd3 Nd4 24 Bxd4 exd4 25 Rxd4 Rxa3 26 Rd7 when the endgame is painful for Black.

**20 ... Qe7?!**

Black misses a great chance to trade pieces: 20 ... Rxa3 21 Qd5 Nf5 22 Qxd8 Rxd8 23 Bxb6 Nd4 and White is still better, but I believe Black can equalize with careful play.

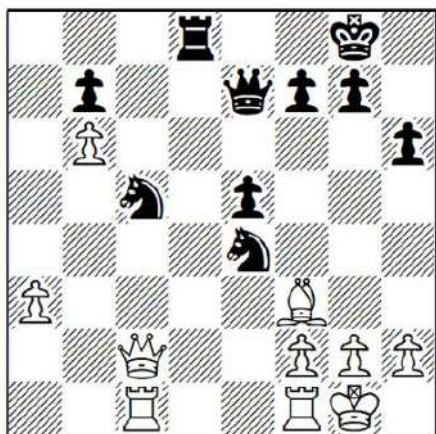
**21 Bxb6 Nd7 22 Bc7 Ne4 23 Bf3 Ndc5 24 b6!**

This passed pawn is going to pay off sooner or later.

**24 ... Rfd8?**

Desperation, but Black's knights are not well protected and they are no competition for White's bishops. Black had to try 24 ... Rxa3 25 Rxc5 Nxc5 26 Bd6 Qf6 27 Bxc5 Rd8 when he keeps on fighting, although he should lose in the long run.

**25 Bxd8 Rxd8 26 Qc2**

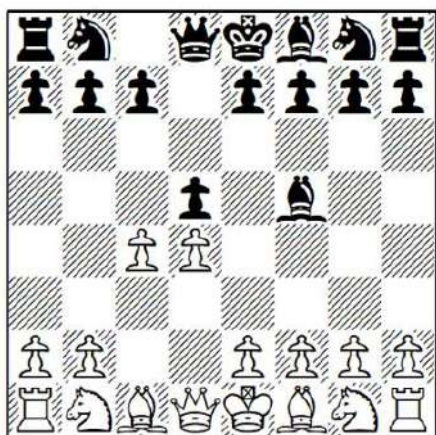


With the extra material, the rest is quite easy for White. The remaining moves were:

**26 ... Rd2 27 Qc4 Rd4 28 Qb5 Kh7 29 Rfd1 Rxd1+ 30 Bxd1 Qd6 31 Bc2 Qd2 32 Bxe4+ Nxe4 33 Rf1 Qd4 34 Qb4 Nc3 35 Qxd4 exd4 36 f3 d3 37 Rf2 Nb1 38 a4 d2 39 Rf1 Na3 40 a5 Nc4 41 a6 1-0**

*Game 60 R.Dautov-J.Peicheva Dortmund 1992*

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 Bf5**



A tricky move by Black, but if we study this carefully we are guaranteed an advantage.

**3 cxd5**

We are not interested in playing risky lines like 3 Nc3 e6 4 Qb3 Nc6, which is the

kind of line Black is looking for when he plays 2 ... Bf5.

**3 ... Bxb1**

3 ... Qxd5 4 Nc3 does not make any sense for Black.

**4 Qa4+!**

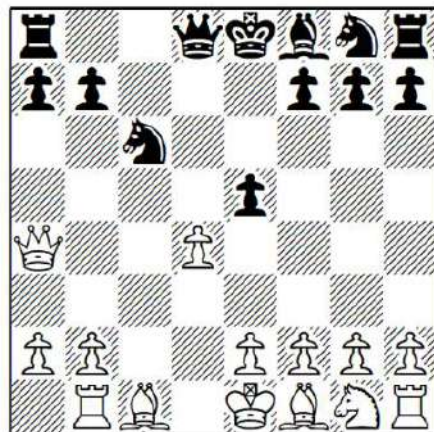
A key in-between move. Instead, 4 Rxb1 Qxd5 5 a3 Nc6 (Black speeds up his development) 6 Nf3 0-0-0 is not that clear.

**4 ... c6**

I would like to also share the variation analysed by Grandmaster Dautov: 4 ... Qd7 5 Qxd7+ Nxd7 6 Rxb1 Ngf6 (Black gets his pawn back, but there is no doubt that the resulting position favours White) 7 Nf3 Nb6 8 e3 Nbx d5 9 Be2 e6 10 0-0. Here I think White can try the minority attack which is a common plan in QGD positions (Bd2, b4, a4 and Rfc1)

**5 dxc6 Nxc6 6 Rxb1 Qxd4**

If I were Black I would play his main alternative because it is sharp, whereas the text move just leaves White with a risk-free advantage. Indeed, 6 ... e5 is critical.



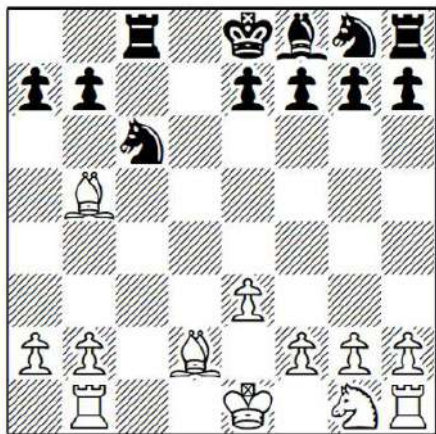
Opening the position when you do not have the bishop-pair looks risky, but does supply some counterplay: 7 Bd2! (stopping ... Bb4+) 7 ... exd4 (or 7 ... Qxd4 8 Qxd4 Nxd4 9 e3 Nc6 10 Nf3 Bd6 11 Bb5 when White can even consider playing Ke2) 8 Nf3! (8 g3 Qd5 9 Nf3 Nf6 10 Bg2 is also

possible, but I do not see anything wrong with the natural text) 8 ... Bc5 9 g3 Nge7 10 Bg2 0-0 11 b4 Bb6 12 b5 Nb8 13 0-0. The result of the opening is quite favourable for White, since Black's d4-pawn is a target, not to mention the open h1-a8 diagonal and Black's lack of development. After 13 ... Nf5 14 Qc2 Nd6 15 Ng5 g6 16 Bf4 Black couldn't avoid losing material in K.Georgiev-C.Abella Vazquez, Bergamo 2012.

**7 Qxd4 Nxd4 8 e3 Nc6 9 Bb5**

I like playing the bishop to b5 first, to prevent an ... e6 and ... Nge7 manoeuvre. Damaging Black's pawn structure is key in order to gain the advantage.

**9 ... Rc8 10 Bd2!**



Once again we have to delay the g1-knight's development, as we prepare Rc1 followed by Bxc6+.

**10 ... e6**

10 ... a6 11 Ba4 b5 is possible, although Black weakens his queenside a lot, so White can try 12 Bd1 e6 13 Rc1 Bd6 14 a4.

**11 Rc1 Bd6**

Alternatively:

a) 11 ... Nge7 12 Nf3 a6 13 Ba4 b5 14 Bc2 Nd5 15 Ke2 is probably Black's best try, although we know the position's assessment has not changed.

b) 11 ... a6 12 Bxc6+ Rxc6 13 Rxc6 bxc6 14 Nf3 Bd6 15 Ke2 Nf6 16 Rc1 Kd7 17 Bc3 and White's position has lot of potential.

**12 Bxc6+ Rxc6 13 Rxc6 bxc6 14 Nf3 Ne7 15 Ke2**

From now on all we have to learn from is White's technique. Black has only two weaknesses (c6 and a7), but sometimes little weaknesses like this are more than enough.

I also like 15 e4!?, as suggested by Dautov, limiting the e7-knight's options.

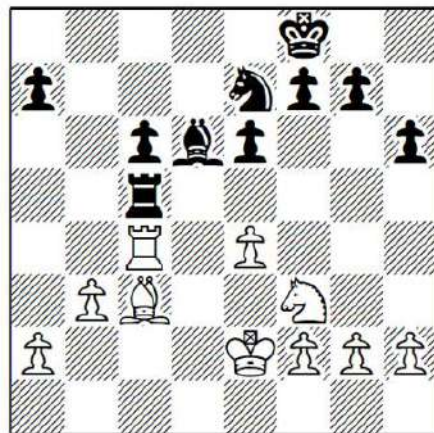
**15 ... 0-0?!**

It was better to stay with the king in the centre, i.e. 15 ... Kd7 16 Rd1. Instead, after 15 ... Nd5 16 Rc1 Kd7 17 b3 White may continue with Rc4 and Ng5-e4.

**16 Rc1 Rb8 17 b3 Kf8 18 Rc4 h6**

If Black continues with 18 ... Ke8 19 Rg4 we can try creating extra weaknesses on the kingside, since each pawn that Black advances creates new holes for us to exploit: for example, 19 ... g6 20 Ng5 h5 21 Rc4 when Black's position is becoming worse and worse.

**19 Bc3 Rb5 20 e4 Rc5?**



Trading pieces off is a good idea when you have a worse position. The problem is that White has a tactic.

Instead, if 20 ... g5 21 h3 h5 22 Bf6, while 20 ... f6 runs into 21 Nd4 and White

wins a pawn. So maybe 20 ... Rb6, but all Black can do here is sit and wait to see how White will improve his position.

**21 e5! Rxc4**

After 21 ... Nd5 22 exd6 Nxc3+ 23 Kd3 Rxc4 24 bxc4 Nxa2 25 Kd4 the endgame looks defenceless for Black.

**22 exd6!**

Probably Black missed the fact White can play d6-d7 next.

**22 ... Rc5**

22 ... Rxc3 23 d7 Rc2+ 24 Kd1 wins for White, or if 22 ... Nd5 23 Bxg7+ Kxg7 24 bxc4.

**23 Bxg7+**

That d6-pawn happens to be a nightmare for Black, since after 23 ... Kxg7 24 dxe7 he cannot prevent the promotion.

**23 ... Ke8 24 dxe7 Kxe7 25 Bxh6**

The rook is no challenge for the two minor pieces and the rest is a matter of technique.

**25 ... Rc2+ 26 Bd2 Rxa2 27 h4 Rb2 28 b4 c5!? 29 bxc5 a5 30 Ne5 a4 31 Nc4 Rb3 32 c6 e5 33 Ba5 Rb5 34 c7 Kd7 35 c8Q+ 1-0**

An awesome performance by GM Dautov.

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