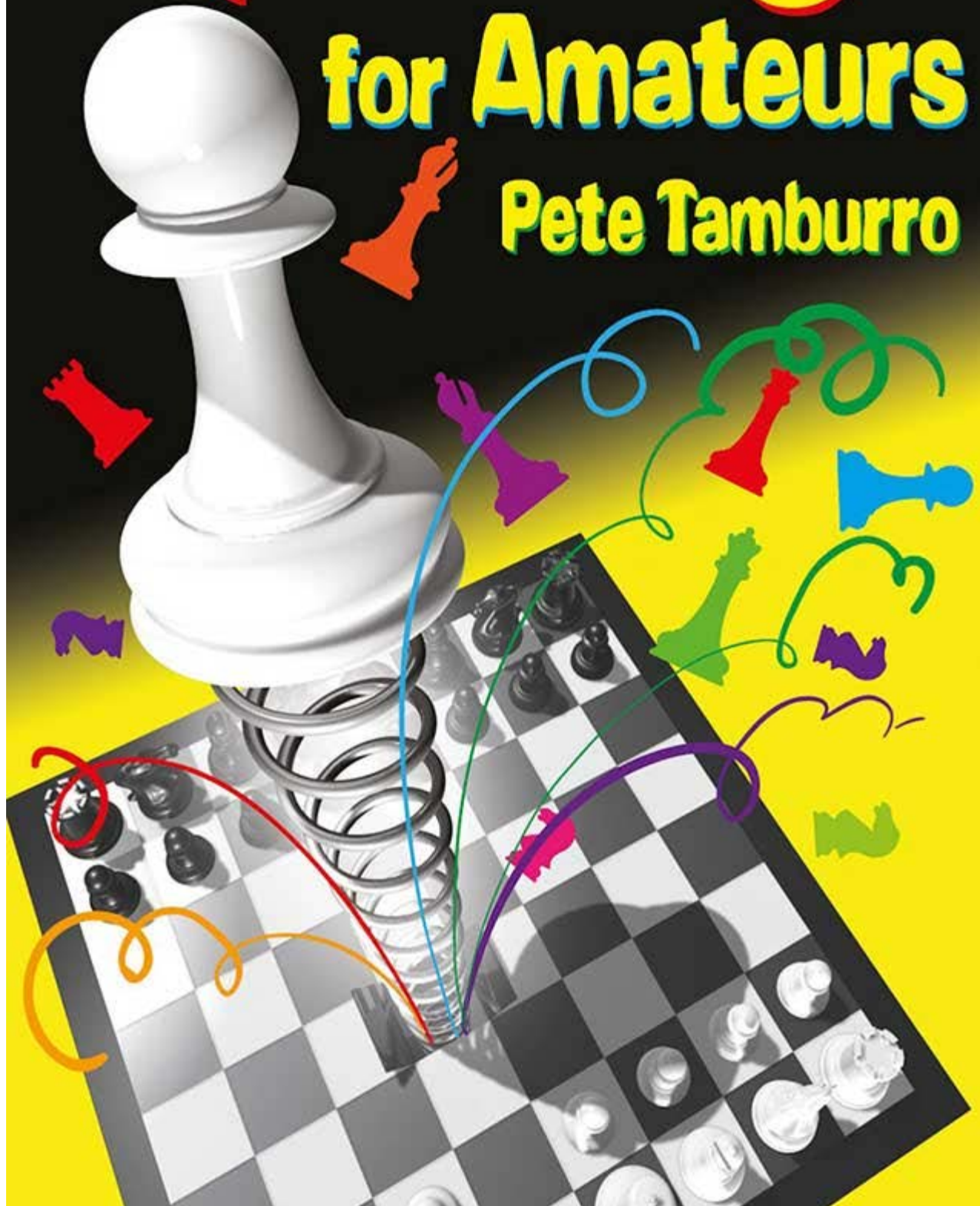


Openings

for Amateurs

Pete Tamburro



Contents

Introduction

PART I: THE PRIMER

1. Allowing the king to give up castling without a good reason.
2. Allowing early simplification.
3. Don't lose time in the opening.
4. Don't be an opening robot!
5. Don't help your opponent to do what he wants to do!
6. Not all aggressive bishop moves are good.
7. Don't panic against unusual moves.
8. Don't create weaknesses that your opponent can exploit.
9. Don't forget that play in the center is the essential point of all openings.
10. Be careful to avoid "plodding" development.
11. Playing an opening (especially a defense) without understanding why certain moves are played and when they are played, is not a good idea.
12. Know when it's good to exchange a bishop for a knight and when it is not good. Oh – and vice versa!
13. Don't turn a won game into a draw – or worse!
14. Always consider counterattacking in the center.
15. If your opponent gives you the center, it's generally a good idea to accept the gift!
16. Solid, passive defenses are the waiting rooms for defeat.
17. Even though you have an opening plan, be alert to good moves in changing circumstances.
18. Don't forget, before every move, to look for all checks and captures.
19. Know when to play g4 or ...g5 against a bishop and know when not to play it.
20. Don't make it easy for your opponent to make a freeing move.
21. Don't incorrectly use computers.
22. Don't be in a hurry to resign.
23. Don't sleep in the streets!
24. Be ever vigilant for ♗f7+.
25. Do not be so eager to play so "solidly" that you block in your bishops.
26. Don't underestimate exchange variations.
27. Beware sudden pawn thrusts!
28. Gambits are best met by countergambits. The best way to meet a gambit is to accept it. Huh?
29. Do not play premature attacks.

30. Tempi! Tempi! Tempi!
31. Don't go crazy against hedgehog or hippo-type openings.
32. If you like attacking chess, don't hesitate to use attacks based on h2-h4-h5 against fianchetto defenses.
33. Don't go crazy when facing an offbeat opening, either.
34. When playing against the Colle System, do not think that simple, planless, developing moves will be sufficient.
35. When facing some of the "pre-planned" openings, don't be afraid to have your own plan ready to go.
36. Speaking of preparation, don't believe everything you read in opening books or articles (especially if you wrote them!).
37. Don't just concentrate on openings!
38. Pete, what should I play in the openings? What do you do?
39. Once I've picked my openings, how should I study them?
40. What if I just want to have fun?

PART II: OPENINGS FOR AMATEURS

1. Sicilian (for White)

Hungarian Variation

Rossolimo Attack

Closed Sicilian

c3 Sicilian

2. French Defense

Tarrasch Variation with ... Δ f6

Tarrasch Variation with ...c7-c5

Guimard Variation

3. Caro-Kann Defense

Horowitz suggestion

Keres suggestion

Fantasy Variation

4. Systems with ...g7-g6

Pirc

Modern

Gurgenidze

5. Alekhine's Defense, Canal Variation

6. Scandinavian/Center Counter

3... W a5 line

3... W d6 line

2...♞f6 line

7. Four Knights' Game

Classical Attack

Rubinstein Variation

8. Vienna Opening with g3

Black plays ...d7-d5

Black plays ...d7-d6

9. Two Knights' Defense

Fritz Variation

Classical Variation

d4 Attack

10. Scotch Opening

11. If You Don't Want to Play 1...e5 to Meet 1.e4: The Sicilian Dragon

12. The English Opening According to Botvinnik

13. Nimzo-Indian and Bogo-Indian

14. Dutch Defense

15. A Plea for the Ruy López

16. Final Thoughts

Swipe left for next chapter

Pete Tamburro

Openings for Amateurs



(c) 2014 Peter J. Tamburro, Jr.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the Publisher.

Publisher: Mongoose Press

1005 Boylston Street, Suite 324

Newton Highlands, MA 02461

info@mongoosepress.com

www.MongoosePress.com

ISBN 978-1-936277-50-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014932109

Distributed to the trade by National Book Network

custserv@nbnbooks.com, 800-462-6420

For all other sales inquiries please contact the publisher.

Editor: Jorge Amador

Layout: Andrey Elkov

Cover Design: Kaloyan Nachev

Printed in the United States of America

First English edition

To Ruth

For your support, understanding, and incredible patience

And my thanks

To my invaluable editor

Jorge Amador

Introduction

Who are you as a chessplayer? Is this book for you? After playing chess for over fifty years and writing about the royal game for about forty of those years, the first question has come to this writer as being the most important question. We'll answer the second question, too.

Your choice of openings and how you play them tell us more than you may want your opponent to know about the rest of your play, and there is a connection. Are you the type to set up a solid formation? Do you like gambits? Do you find it easier to play open positions or are you more comfortable maneuvering in closed positions? Does pawn structure matter to you? Do you always try to get the two bishops? Do you like to play unusual lines that you have studied from some repertoire book? Do you like attack better than defense? Would you rather set up a rock-solid position as Black than counter with a gambit? Do you like to head for endgames? Do you enjoy creating complicated tactical positions? Would you rather be a pawn up and suffer through an attack than be a pawn down and attacking? If you are a gambit player, do you try to get the pawn back or do you ignore the material deficit and develop an attack as quickly as possible? Do you follow a "system" of pre-planned moves?

The answers to these questions tell us who you are in the middlegame. The opening is the introduction to what type of middlegame you feel comfortable in. That will no doubt enter into the mind of your opponent as your foe decides whether to accept your gambit or offer a countergambit. If you play the Colle System or London System or Barry Attack, do you automatically play the same moves if your opponent tries the Dutch Defense?

If any of these questions are important to you, then this book is for you. I was asked to write a book on the openings for "club players." I've always had a problem figuring out what that means, but the outside boundaries for the group will be defined here as between 1100 and 1900, or people who want to be there.

The book is called *Openings for Amateurs* due mostly to the series of Internet Chess Club lectures I gave years ago. People still ask about them. Others come to my message board of the same title where everyone from novices to IMs gives their two cents' worth about thousands of opening topics. I have taken material from those lectures that people continually ask about. My articles in *Chess Life* and *Chess Life for Kids* also will come into play here. The message board is filled [<http://njscf.proboards.com/board/3>] with over 1,600 topics and more than 16,000 posts where players just like you come on and ask questions, share experiences, and give opinions. This is how I've learned to understand what's important to "club players." The important parts of all of this are woven together here and expanded upon.

I did not want to write simply another repertoire book. There are entirely too many of those. Aside from the material on openings I've written in various media that people have valued, I felt there had to be something

else in addition that would help our “club player.” Then, it occurred to me: let’s find out how club players are playing! I had three distinct sources.

The first resource was history. With my chess book collection, there would be no problem digging up material, but I didn’t want to be too derivative. The second source comes from the greatest tournament in the USA: the U.S. Amateur Team East (USATE), held every Presidents’ Day weekend for over forty years. About 1200 people gather for three days to give their all. I have the databases. Can’t beat that for information on what people are playing! The third source was the Internet Chess Club. I played hundreds of unrated 5-minute games with players rated 1200-1900.

Now, the first two make sense. But why would I go do something like 5-minute games? When I started out, it was just a general curiosity about what people played. Then, it got interesting! I started playing provocative moves, purposely dubious stuff. I played flank openings, queen pawn openings, king pawn openings, gambits... you name it!

The thing that fascinated me was what people were choosing in reply. Out of what could have been chaos, came patterns. The players in the rating group were making the same kinds of decisions in the openings that their peers did.

There were characteristics that they all had in common in one way or the other. We’re going to talk about those. The first section of the book is a “Primer” on those common errors. These errors are not just oversights and tactical blunders; what I found was that a certain flawed thinking process and approach to openings was all too evident. These can be fixed if they are recognized and if a suitable discipline can be put in place to make sure these things don’t happen again.

Once we go through that together, it will be easier to focus on the next most important question that is continually asked by our club players on my message board: what openings should I play?

The answer I always give is to play what you feel comfortable with. There are quite a few caveats with this answer, but the fundamental truth is that your opening selection and your personality are intertwined. If people find themselves in a middlegame position they don’t like, all the opening theory in the world won’t help them.

Several openings are going to be presented here, not as the last word on them, but as a way of helping you to understand who you are as a player. There is also another factor. You’re an amateur. I’ve been an amateur for more than a half-century of play. I have a profession and a family. You may very well have that, too. Or you may have tons of school work and a girlfriend or a part-time job. Can you allot time to studying 35 moves into the Marshall Attack to the Ruy López and the deviations before that like the Exchange Variation, various delayed exchanges, the Center Attack Ruy López and all sorts of other stuff? Do you really want to have to learn how to meet the Najdorf, various Dragons, the Scheveningen, Paulsen, Boleslavsky and the other ...e5 systems? If you have the time, bless you – but, since you’re an amateur as well, you might consider getting a life!

Thus, this book is about what you should do and what you should not do in the opening. Years of playing, observing, and coaching at every level make this a very practical book for you. Some thoughts and openings presentations may be radical in terms of what you’ve read elsewhere, but years of thought and writing have gone into this. You might want to keep an open mind.

More than anything, I want you to notice an improvement in your approach to openings and an improvement in results. I enjoy getting such notes on my message board and will look forward to your input in the future. You want to get better. Chess is more fun when you improve. Now is your chance!

Here’s how I hope to help you out. My plan of attack is based on the best piece of chess advice I never listened to! When I was in high school, I asked the TD what openings I should study to get better. “Study the Ruy López, the Sicilian, and the Nimzo-Indian.” I ignored the advice. As I came to learn, these are good choices

because you get to grow with the openings. For example, you don't have to go to the mainline Ruy López right away. You can try the Exchange Variation or maybe the Delayed Exchange Variation or some early d2-d4 moves. GM Andy Soltis confessed in his autobiographical book that he never did quite make it all the way to the main lines.

Many amateurs find out they can be successful with all sorts of offbeat openings designed to trick the unwary opponent. There are a host of gambits to play as well, and I think I played them all. We will address some of those, as well, in this book.

By far the one opening that our message board went crazy over was this line that I discussed in my ICC lectures. I had a fellow write to thank me because he won a game with it in a tournament in the Czech Republic. Another guy beat someone 400 points higher... and on and on. We had one interesting discussion as questions arose and strategies were batted around.

Here's the line: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4. It followed the philosophy you will see in every chapter here: play solid, aggressive chess where little memory is required because general principles can be followed. This is explained in greater detail in Part II, Chapter 1.

Aside from the Sicilian, we'll spend a good deal of time on the Nimzo-Indian. Why? I learned a wonderful lesson from the late Australian writer, C.J.S. Purdy. He wrote a series of articles on the Nimzo in the 1930s that were still valid 50-75 years later! Oh, a good deal of theory has changed the Nimzo since then, and although Purdy's guide was no longer fashionable, it was very playable.

Because of my sin of not following the TD's advice, I include here the article I wrote on the Ruy López for *Chess Life's* Sept. 2010 issue. My radical opinion is that amateurs who need to budget their time should pick an opening that doesn't follow the main lines. Years ago, I loved, worshipped, and played the Marshall at every opportunity. The problem was that a good many Ruy López players deviated before I could get there, and then I had to learn all those lines as well. I fixed them! I learned the Schliemann (3...f5) and drove them all crazy. You need a certain temperament to play it, so you can also decide between 3...♗c5 (solid with a speculative bent if you choose) and 3...g6, which former world champ Smyslov played with success. There is also the main line included so you can see what you can grow into from White's or Black's side. My hope is that by looking at these alternatives, you'll find one that fits "you" and you'll go from there to books specializing in that line.

Those are important sections my old TD would be happy to see me cover. There are some very practical topics in the Primer that deal with very typical problems for amateurs, especially with the black pieces: the Blackmar-Diemers and the Barry Attacks and the Colle System and the Colle-Zukertort approach. You'll be happy to meet those systems after going through these chapters.

The idea of this book is not to keep up with the latest TNs or to swamp you with database analysis. Rather, the idea is to set before you some openings worthy of your consideration and to have you make some decisions about who you want to be as a player.

Following this introduction, there is a whole section of the book before all these openings that I feel is important. Go through the Primer: it's about the mistakes amateurs make time and again concerning the opening. They always seem like a good idea at the time.

The first part of the Primer is devoted to errors that are regularly committed by club players. Then, the Primer starts to deal with some of the more troublesome opening questions that come up over and over on my message board and in my scholastic coaching experience. I thought it would be best to get some of the "scary" stuff out of the way first!

Once the Primer ends, Part II – Openings for Amateurs – comes along with 53 annotated games covering a range of openings that vary from conservative to double-edged. Oftentimes, players pick an opening based on the promises printed on the cover of a book at the bookseller's table outside the tournament room. The

very first opening we examine goes over how you might make a more informed decision as to how to choose your openings. They are not “White to Play and Win” openings or “Black to Play and Win” defenses. No such claims are made here. What *is* promised is that they are solid and aggressive and that they give you as much a chance to win as your opponent. The difference with the “Win” books is that you might actually understand the concepts behind these openings.

Even though the openings have a great effect on the outcome of a game, tactical errors or strategic errors decide a good many contests. That’s why tactics practice is good for you. That’s why I do an Internet column (www.arcamax.com) with three puzzles a week. Keeps you alert!

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention one other thing that doesn’t appear very much at all in the book: endings. Please study your king-and-pawn and rook-and-pawn endings! Many young players can’t play endings because they spend so much time on the opening and on middlegame tactics. However, that is not our task here. Our goal is to find the most efficient way to meet the challenge of the opening in chess. Chess is fun and chess is work. Let’s get started!

PART I

The Primer: Mistakes in the Opening Most Often Made by Amateurs, And Other Worries

The following three dozen examples are culled from actual play among our “Club Player” group. There are some masters in here as well. As I reviewed all these examples, the eternal question kept running around in my head: *Why??*

I have a hypothesis, supported only by feelings and personal experience, but worthy of a beginning of that discussion. As I looked these over, many of them were bits and pieces of the “street smarts” you picked up at the chess club. You would play a lot of offhand games with stronger players, and they would take the time to give you a short lesson in what you did wrong. You filed it away and reduced your errors that way.

We talk about “club players” here. It’s actually a bit of an irony as there aren’t as many clubs anymore. The ICC, for example, can be your club. How many of you have had someone spend some time after your game to talk it over? It’s rare. On to the next game! There is no feedback. This may very well be the reason you don’t pick up tips: chessplayers are too eager to get to the next game. I’m open to suggestions!

Some big things hit me in this series of mini-lessons in the Primer. It would be good to read this before you go on.

Time is a crucial principle in the opening. Club players have a tendency to waste time in not developing with a purpose.

There is another time-related issue: study time. Most amateurs can’t spend the time to really study sophisticated openings. Thus, they limit themselves by choosing a too-highly structured system (Colle System, Barry Attack, Colle-Zukertort, etc.). It often leads to playing inappropriate, pre-programmed moves against alternative counters the opponent uses. It also limits their understanding of the number of concepts available to chessplayers. It leads to a kind of sterility in the thought process. This is not to say you shouldn’t choose a system: you just need to remember that if you want to be a better player, you have to grow with the opening. Avoid the wacky stuff. If you pick really offbeat stuff, you may be comfortable and even successful at first, but if you get better, your opposition will become better as well and know how to deal with those openings. All too often, the average player will memorize a bunch of moves without really understanding the theme of the opening or the tactical elements in the position. Few players take the time to study pawn structures, even such elementary ideas as doubled or isolated pawns.

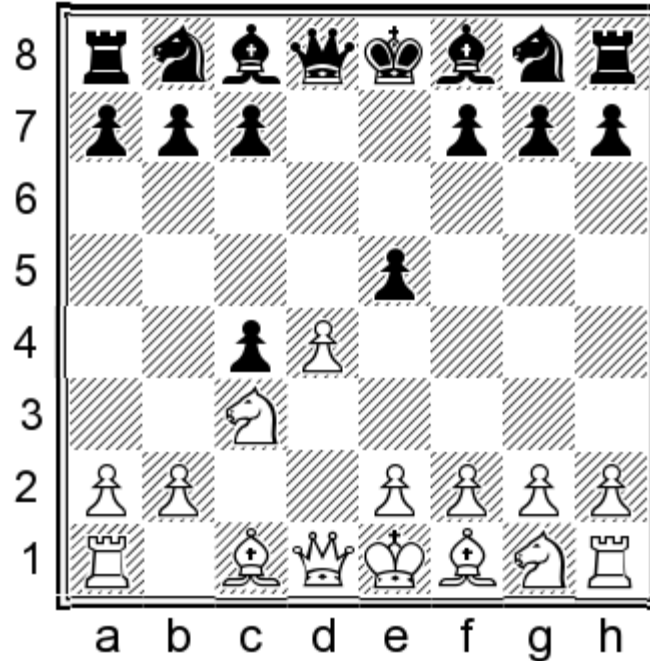
Tactical threats (checks, captures, forced moves, *Zwischenzugs*) are often overlooked because the club player gets too much tunnel vision when looking at a position. You have to look at the whole board, take inventory of possible threats and themes... When tactical errors are made, it is usually because the player does not spend enough time thinking in terms of what the opponent can or will do. Do as Weaver Adams, the creative master of the 1940s and 1950s, suggested: perform a scan of the board, look for checks, captures, forced moves.

There is much discussion in the following pages on the level of preparation you need, even as an amateur, to deal with sharp openings or thematic pawn advances and the like. No matter your strength or your goals in getting better at chess, this Primer will be worth going through.

So, here’s an opportunity to learn some street smarts. Even the high end of our target group can benefit from reviewing these items.

1. Allowing the King to Give Up Castling without a Good Reason.

For example, **1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘c3 e5:**

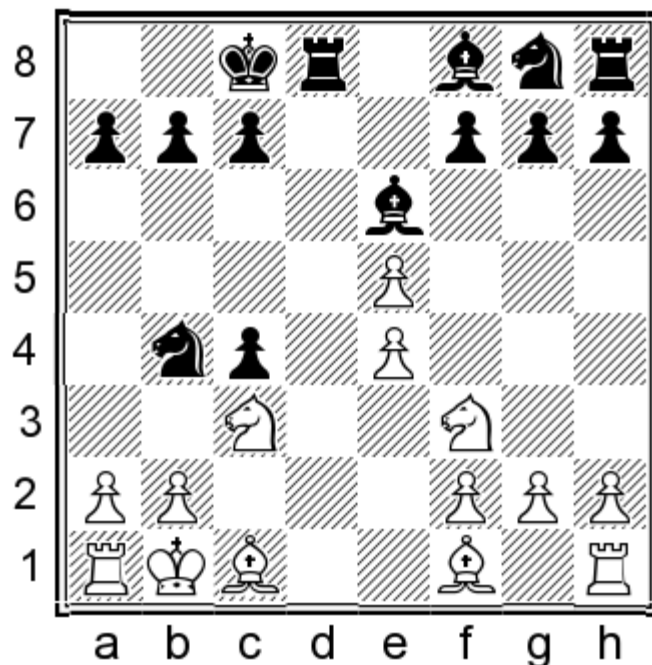


First of all, White allowed this countering move by not playing 4.♘f3 to prevent 3...e5. Even here, though, White can play 4.e3 or 4.♘f3 with no problem.

However, White decides to play **4.dxe5**, which can lead to **4...♙xd1+ 5.♔xd1**

Even taking with the knight loses time: **5.♘xd1 ♖c6 6.♘f3 ♙e6 7.e4 ♙b4+ 8.♘c3 ♗ge7 9.♙f4 ♗g6 10.♙g3 0-0-0 11.♞c1 ♜he8**, and Black's edge in development gives the second player the initiative.

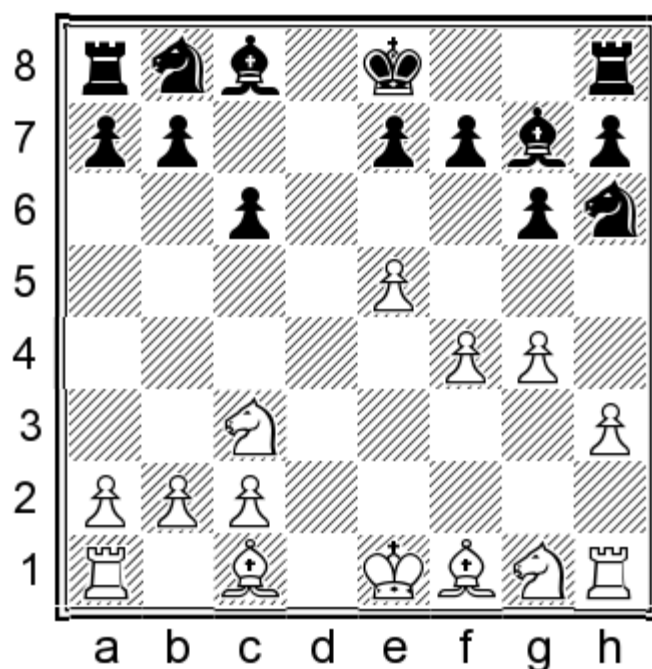
5...♙e6 6.♘f3 ♗c6 7.e4 0-0-0+ 8.♔c2 ♗b4+ 9.♔b1, and now take a look at this position in comparison with the above diagram:



Look at the horrible position of the white king. Black's castling queenside as quickly as possible, because of the king's position on d1, has led to this. Now Black has a delightful choice between 9...♖d3 or 9...♗c5 with the much better game.

A reasonable question is whether it's OK to allow your king to get moved like that. The answer is, Yes! Please notice the "without a good reason" from above. Here's a good reason: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♗g7 5.e5 dxe5 6.dxe5 ♙xd1+ 7.♔xd1 ♘g4 8.♔e1 c6 (worrying about 9.♘d5) 9.h3 ♘h6 10.g4. GM David Bronstein played this line against GM Pal Benko in 1969 and won (see the whole game annotated in Part II, Chapter 4).

Bronstein didn't worry about his king moving twice (!) because there was no queenside castling with check to worry after 7.♔xd1. Another reason is that, although the black knight made the king move a second time, White later chases it with a gain in space. Here we have an endgame with a slight edge to White:



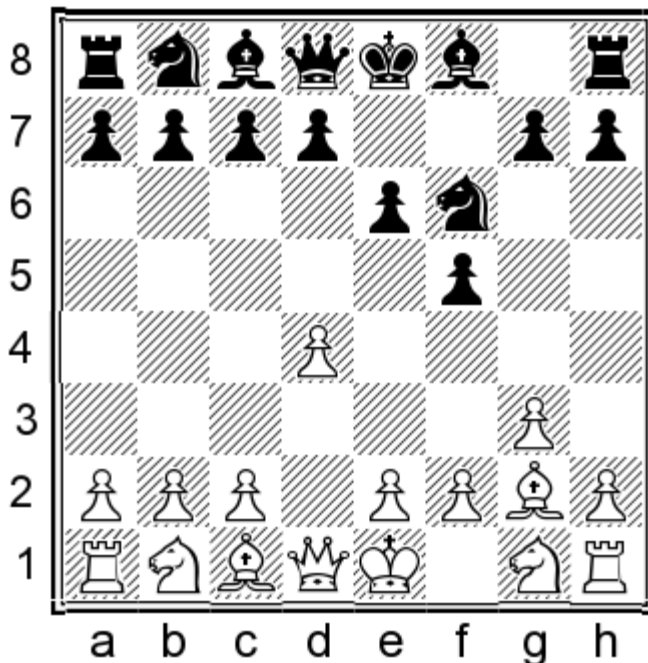
Thus, if you are going to allow your king to be moved before castling, make sure there's a good reason for it.

Don't make it a contributing factor to helping your opponent develop.

2. Allowing Early Simplification.

After **1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6**, we have a Dutch Defense.

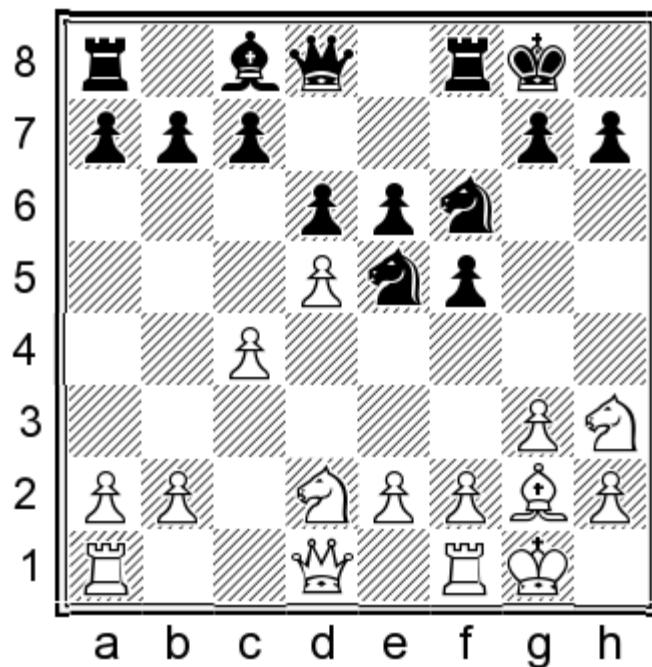
Normally, White plays 4.♘f3 here, followed by castling and only then 6.c4. Why? Black has chosen a cramped, yet double-edged defense. If you play 4.c4, then Black gets to exchange off a bishop that is usually destined for e7, locked in behind a pawn on d6. Also, since Black many times will try a Stonewall formation with ...d7-d5, White likes to reserve his queen bishop for a ♗a3 move (after b2-b3) to contest Black's weak dark-squared diagonal. Once you trade off the bishop, Black's position is a little easier.



Here's a sample game: **1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 ♗b4+ 5.♙d2 ♗xd2+ 6.♘xd2**

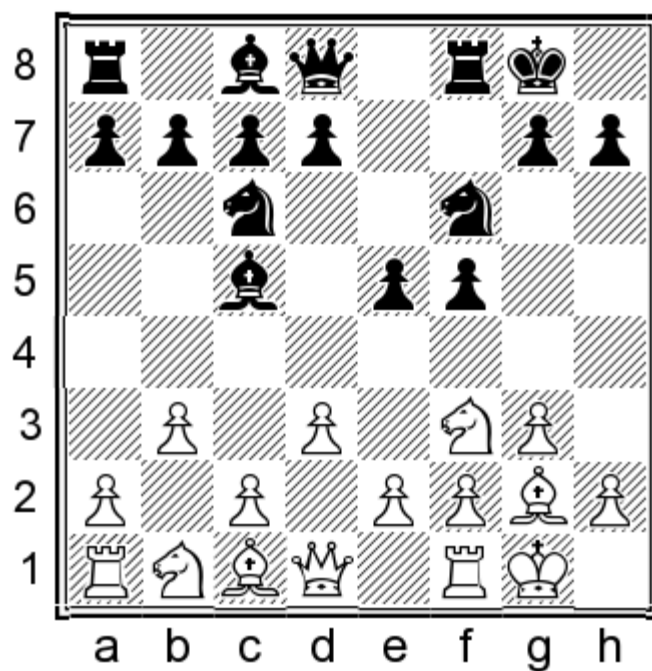
Here's a mini-lesson! Much better is 6.♙xd2 so that the queen knight can go to a better square at c3. White may have been afraid of exchanging his bishop for a knight after 6...♘e4, but there was nothing to worry about: 7.♙xe4 fxe4 8.d5 d6 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♘xe4 ♘d7 11.♘f3.

6...0-0 7.♘h3 d6 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d5 ♘e5:



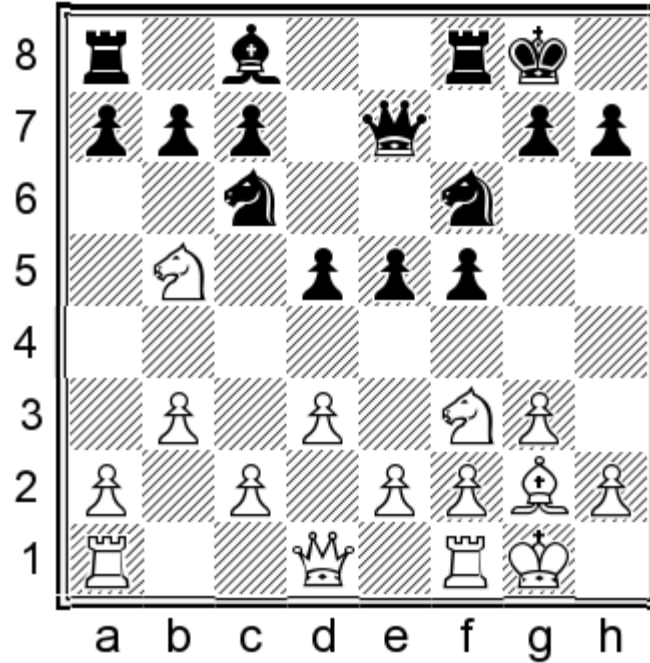
Now you can see why an innocent exchange of bishops helped Black. Put the black bishop back on e7 and put the white bishop on b2 (or even a3) with the pawn on b3. Black is cramped. White has two bishops with great range. It's not a mating attack or even a decisive edge, but Black will have to work a lot harder in that position than in the diagram above.

Just one more example of this: 1.♘f3 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♙g2 e5 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.b3 0-0. At this point, White unintentionally decides to help Black develop by playing to simplify the position, perhaps hoping for a draw against a stronger player:



White could play 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.d4 ♙d6 9.dxe5 ♙xe5, or 7.♙b2. In either case it would be an equal struggle. However, White decides to play 7.♙a3, figuring the less pieces the better chance to draw.

Instead, he gets into more trouble: 7. ♖a3 ♙xa3 8. ♗xa3 ♚e7 9. ♗b5 d5:



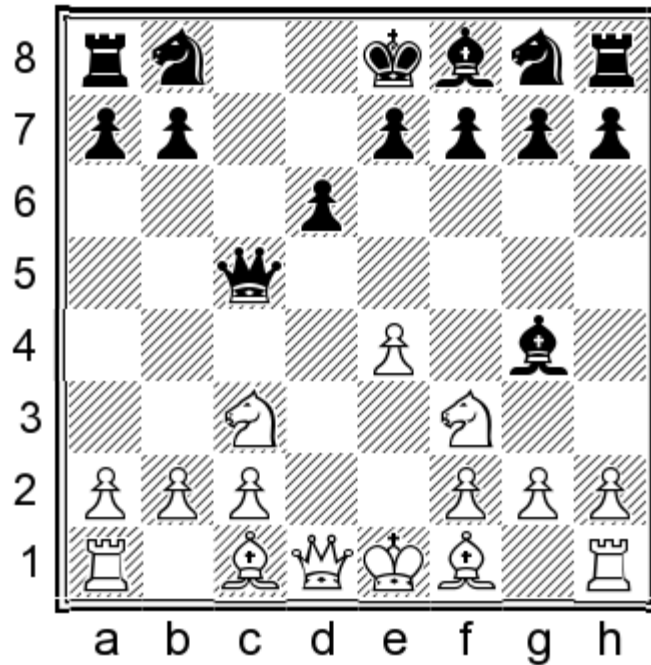
Black now dominates the center, and the knight's eventual retreat to c3 will add to the time lost. Notice how Black exchanged on a3 and then moved the queen to e7 to virtually force the knight to b5 rather than retreat ignominiously to b1. Simplifying can often times make things harder for you. Of course, if you're ahead in material, then by all means trade off pieces rather than pawns to get the win in the endgame.

3. Don't Lose Time in the Opening.

We've already talked about lost time, but the thing that amazed your author in playing and playing over hundreds of games is how many club players still don't appreciate time loss. This is a relatively common example:

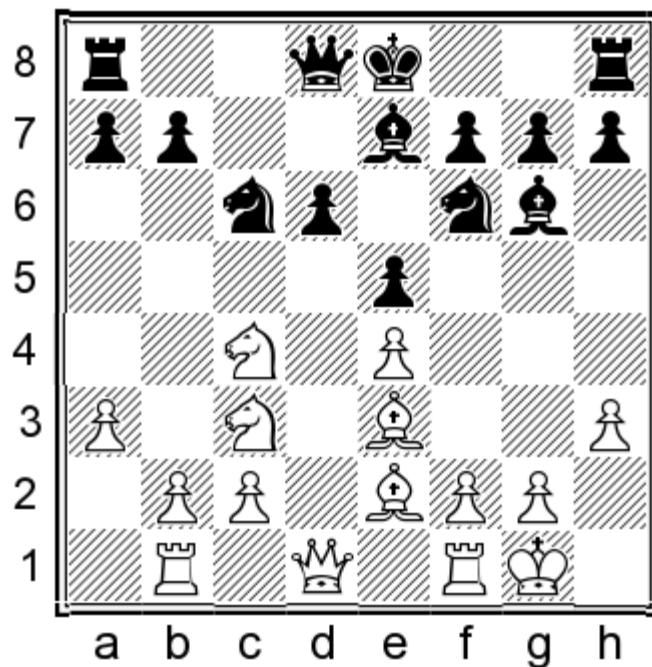
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.dxc5 ♚a5+ 5.♗c3 ♜xc5

Black's third move violates a rule offered by the great Australian writer and world correspondence champion, C.J.S. Purdy, who said that in choosing which pieces to develop, you should first develop those pieces that you know where they should be going. For those pieces whose destination squares you're not sure about, wait a while. See what your opponent plays. Good rule!



By playing 3...♗g4, Black is putting too much value on the pin of the knight. White plays correctly with 4.dxc5 because 4...dxc5 would take us back to the lesson above about moving kings. Black thinks he is clever by checking with the queen, getting the pawn back, and avoiding the queen exchange on d8. However...

6.♗e3 ♜b4 7.♝b1 ♘f6 8.♗d3 e5 9.a3 ♚a5 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♗e2 ♗g6 13.♗d2 ♗e7 14.♗c4 ♜d8



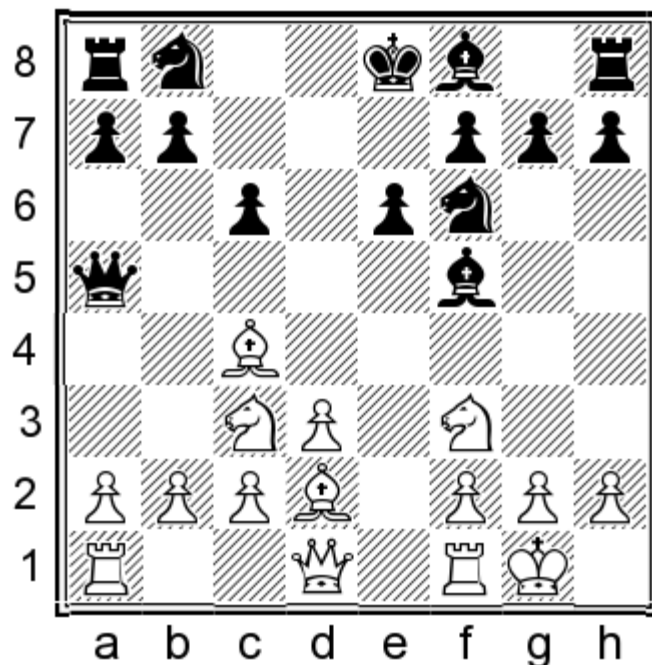
The result of the bishop pin and the queen adventure is that the queen has been chased back home and the bishop has retreated to g6 where it has little scope. The “threat” on e4 is easily handled by 15.f3. White can then plan something like ♕e3-f2, ♖c4-e3, and ♘cd5, taking advantage of the “hole” on d5 with a great game. Early queen sorties are almost always a bad idea.

The reason we say “almost” is that one defense involving early queen moves has become quite popular in recent years. In my lecture series on the Scandinavian Defense for the ICC, the pitfalls and possibilities of this defense were covered and they will be highlighted again in this book. Let’s take a look at how an amateur turned a viable defense into a disaster:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♘c3 ♚a5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♙c4 ♙f5

5...♙g4 6.h3 ♚h5 7.♙e2 ♘c6 (7...♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♚e5+ 9.♘e2) 8.0-0.

6.d3 e6 7.♙d2 c6 8.0-0



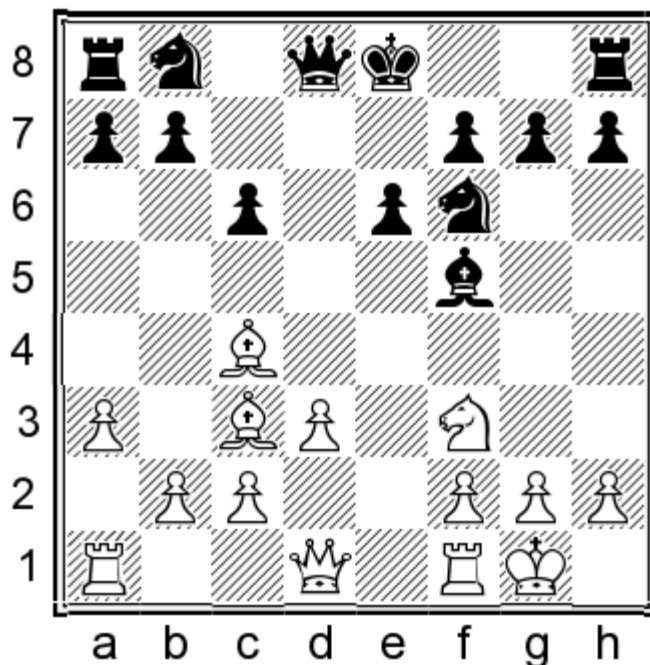
I actually found eight database games with this position and four of them had Black's next move. White only scored 50%, which means that, although this next move is inferior, it doesn't mean it will automatically lose. Please don't get the impression that Black should go with either 8...♔c7 or 8...♖bd7 here, but Black – being rightly worried about the discovered attack on his queen – picks 8...♗b4, which is not so right.

8...♗b4

Black obviously didn't care for the other bishop moves: 8...♗e7 9.♘d5 ♕d8 10.♗xe7 ♖xe7 11.♘d4; 8...♗d6 9.♖b5 ♕d8 10.♗xd6+ ♕xd6 11.♘h4 ♗g6 12.♕e2; although a bit preferable is 8...♖bd7 9.♖b5 ♕d8 10.♖bd4 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 and White is slightly better.

9.a3 ♗xc3 10.♗xc3 ♕d8

Yet another necessary retreat and waste of time:



White's two bishops are quite a tandem force! White is ahead in development and on the move. I've been fond of d2-d3 for White over the years because of this next move. With the support of the bishop, the knight occupies d4, and threatens taking the bishop on f5 plus one other nasty little item.

11. ♖d4 ♗g6 12. ♗xe6!

That's what losing time does to your position. White is castled, Black is not. Because Black had to move both the queen and the bishop again, White gets to make the well-known sacrifice on e6. My opponent castled and lost. He could have tried **12...c5**

I had wished for the following: 12...fxe6 13. ♖xe6 ♔d6 14. ♖e1 ♕f7 15. ♗b4 ♖d7 16. ♖xg7.

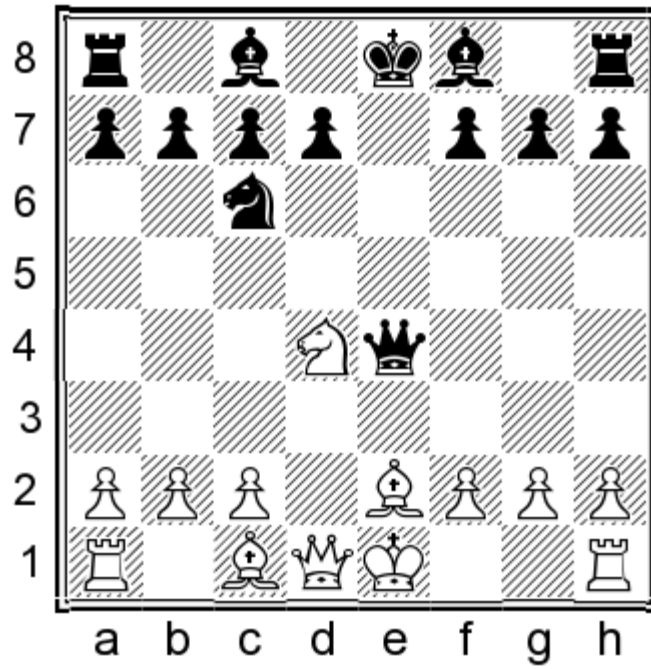
13. ♗h3 cxd4 14. ♗b4 a5 15. ♖e1+ ♖e4 16. ♗d2 0-0 17. dxe4, but White's a pawn up with a winning position. Every time you bring the queen out early, you risk getting taken advantage of. Thus, you have to have a very clear head and stay alert for dangers.

What follows is my own personal tragedy along these lines. Yes, we are all sinners! This is from Round 5 of the 2007 U.S. Open in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. I am paired with Enrico Sevillano, a GM with a real attacking flair. I have Black. I decide to play a double-edged defense to the Scotch called the Schmidt Variation, named after a German GM. The game went:

Sevillano – Tamburro

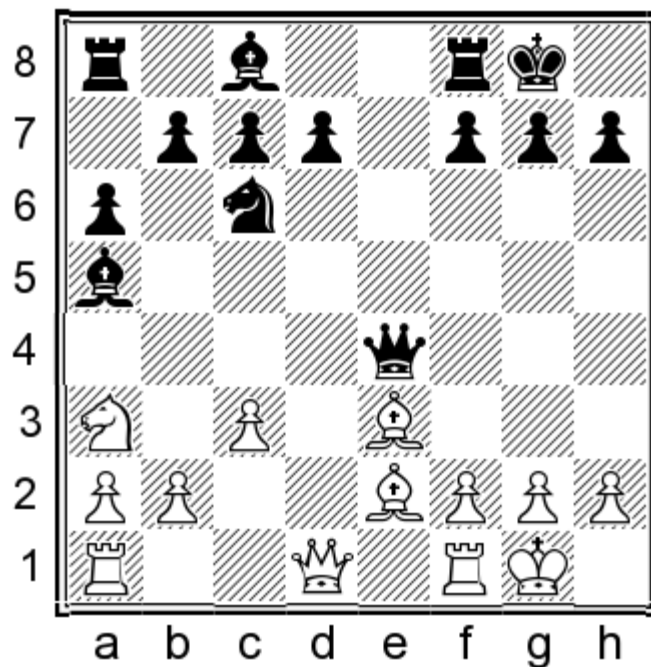
U.S. Open 2007

1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3.d4 exd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖xe4 6. ♖xe4 ♔e7 7. ♗e2 ♖xe4



I'm a pawn up, my queen is in the middle of the board, and White is about to try to make me pay for this. However, I'm ready for him! I'm alert to the possibilities!

8. ♖b5 ♗b4+ 9. c3 ♗a5 10. 0-0 0-0 11. ♗e3 a6 12. ♖a3



So far, so good. I'm a pawn up and castled, and I have lots of places to go with my queen. Black can play either 12...d5 or 12...b5 here and be equal, if not an eyelash better. But I turn off my alert system. I want to show him I'm not afraid, and play the aggressive and stupid 12...f5. It was over in minutes.

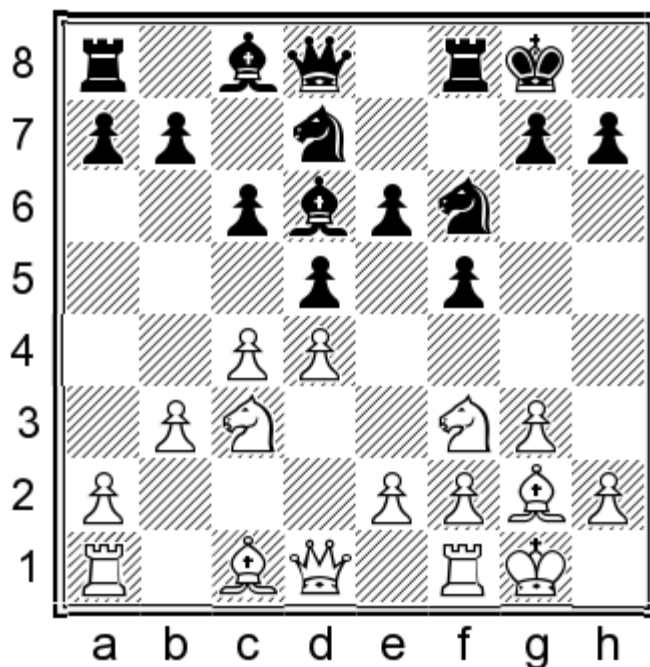
12...f5?? 13. ♗f3 ♖e7 14. ♖e1 d6 15. b4 ♖xb4 16. cxb4 ♗xb4 17. ♗d2 ♖h4 18. ♖b3+ 1-0

I got away with the queen move for a while, but I needed to continue thinking in an objective way. That's what makes early queen moves so tricky. Some people don't even try to preserve tempi. Here's a game that

doesn't even deserve a diagram: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♙xd4 ♘c6 4.♙d1. You should play that last move only if you have a secret desire to have the black pieces.

You can find pieces other than the queen to lose time with. We've seen knights do that above as well. This is a prime bishop example seen more than once:

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 c6 6.c4 ♙d6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.b3 ♘bd7



White decides to pin the knight with 9.♙g5. It is a horrible idea followed by an even more horrible move. If you're going to pin a knight, in general it's good to avoid it if the knight has another knight protecting it, if you can be forced to exchange your bishop for it, or if the opponent is not castled (in which case you can get chased back by the two wing pawns). Based on just one of those general rules, 9.♙g5 is not a good idea. You have to ask yourself, though, what White was thinking by responding to ...h7-h6 with ♙d2? – he could have gone there in the first place! Black promptly punishes White: 9.♙g5 h6 10.♙d2 ♘e4, and now White decides to lose yet even more time with 11.♘xe4 fxe4.

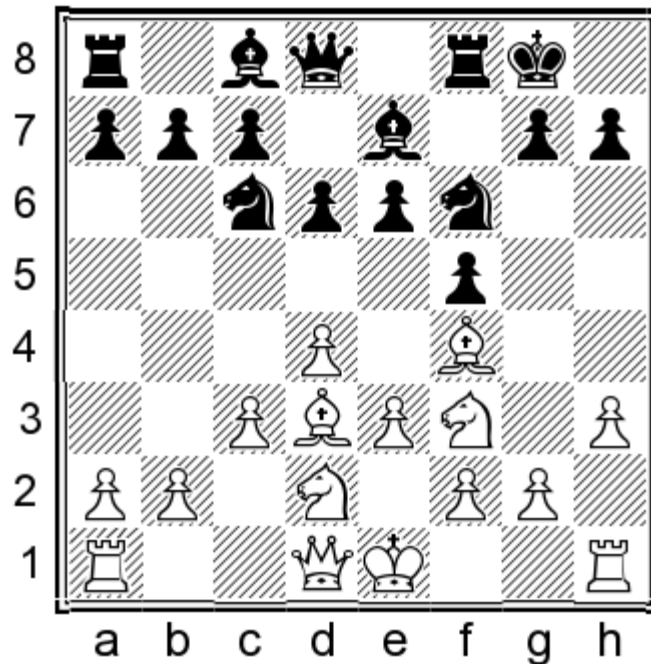
After 12.♘e1 e5! Black has wonderful play.

4. Don't Be an Opening Robot!

This one is a particular bugaboo of mine. We appreciate the desire for young players and other amateurs to want to get out of the opening without getting into trouble. Many chess coaches try to help their students by teaching them the Colle System or the London System or the Barry Attack as White to at least get them out of the opening. Frankly, a good many amateurs don't play well against these openings, so they're a good practical choice. When a weaker player picks one of these, the stronger player has to decide how to avoid a draw. The equalizing lines are relatively easy. It's tough to unbalance the position enough to beat the lesser player.

I started playing the Dutch Defense against these players with absolutely riotous results. They ignored me and continued on playing their automatic moves. They didn't try to understand how the Dutch made the position different. They were just churning out their memorized moves. Although it's good to know a system, it's better when you also understand it.

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♙f4 e6 4.e3 ♙b4+ 5.c3 ♙e7 6.h3 0-0 7.♙d3 d6 8.♘bd2 ♘c6



Both sides have their setup. So far neither side, including your author, had any need to think. Would you believe two masters also reached this position in a tournament? Databases can really surprise you! White is now on his own, although some might know that castling kingside and pushing for e3-e4 is part of the general strategy. Since the opening gears itself toward a kingside attack, ♗b3 is not really part of the plan; it allows Black counterplay with ...a7-a5-a4 and soon the position simplifies and becomes equal, but not necessarily drawn, which is what Black wanted.

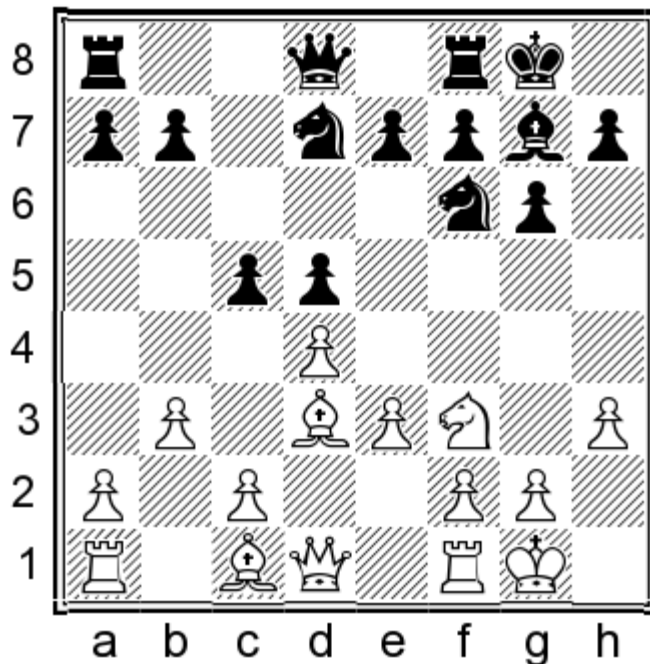
9.♗b3 ♘d5 10.♙h2 ♖e8 11.0-0-0

11.0-0

11...a5 12.e4 a4 13.♖c2 fxe4 14.♙xe4 ♘f6 15.♙d3 a3 16.b3 ♙d7 17.♗he1 ♘h8 18.♘g5 ♘d5 19.♘xe6 ♗xf2 20.♙c4 ♙xe6 21.♗xe6 ♘b6

Another popular continuation is the Colle-Zukertort line. There is a whole section later on these openings, but these ideas are just introductions and warnings.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♗bd2 d5 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♗d3 0-0 6.0-0 ♗g4 7.b3 ♗bd7 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 c5



Again, both sides are getting what they want here. Black plays a Grünfeld setup against the Colle-Zukertort player because it's a dynamic line. If you were paying attention to the opening moves, you would have noticed that Black traded his bishop for a knight, violating one of the general rules listed above. That's why they're *general* rules! Black knows that one C-Z system idea is to play a knight to e5 and even back it up with the queen knight from d2 to f3. So, Black takes one of his opponent's plans away. Let's get him on his own. Sure enough, the robot keeps playing on autopilot. In this position, White should play 10.c4 ♖c7 11.♗b2 and if 11...♗e4, then 12.cxd5 with a nice advantage. However, White just mechanically plays his planned 10.♗b2 without considering the elements of the position. Now when Black plays 10...♗e4, there is no cxd5 to counter it. Big difference in a single move being played one turn later.

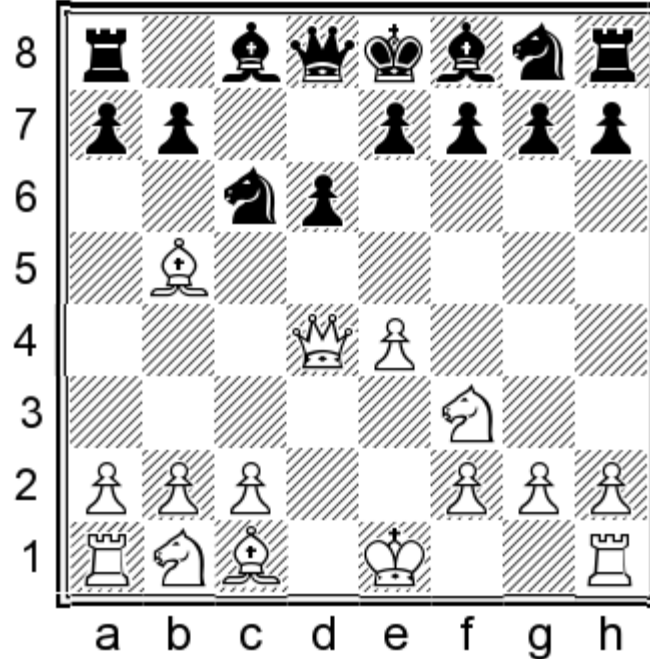
10.♗b2 ♗e4 11.c4 cxd4 12.exd4

12.♗xd4 e5

12...e6 13.♖e2 f5, and Black and White have a rousing fight on their hands.

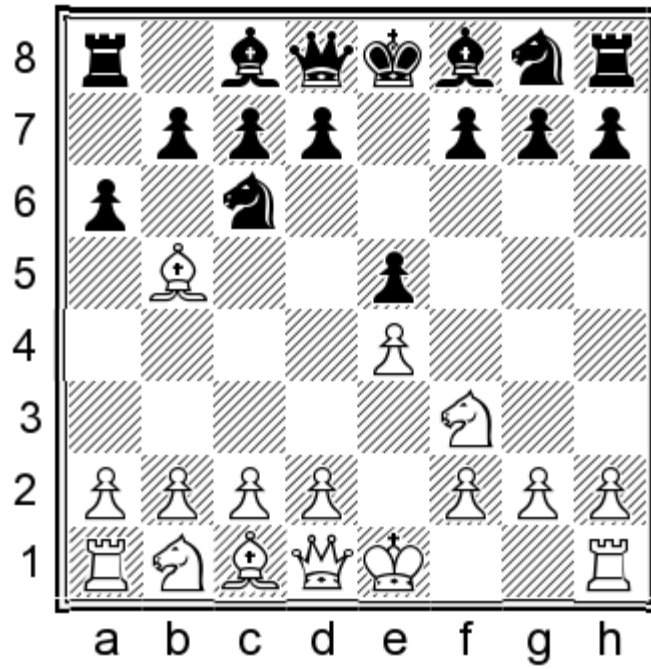
5. Don't Help Your Opponent to Do What He Wants to Do!

That may seem like an obvious truth, not worth mentioning. After all, chess is about competition, not cooperation! Take a look at the following position after **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘c6 5.♗b5:**



Clearly, the best move here is **5...♗d7**, developing a piece and breaking the pin. In fact (as you will learn later in Part II), Black does play **5...♗d7**, and White does, indeed, play **6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.♘c3** and chess is played. You should never, never, never make a move like **5...a6** – you're just forcing White to play what he has every intention of doing anyway and you don't get to develop a piece. Strange, but it happens.

OK, those wheels of yours are spinning in your brain. What about Black's **...a7-a6** move in the Ruy López? Isn't that the same thing? Look at that position and figure out why it's permissible in the Ruy, but not in this Sicilian line:



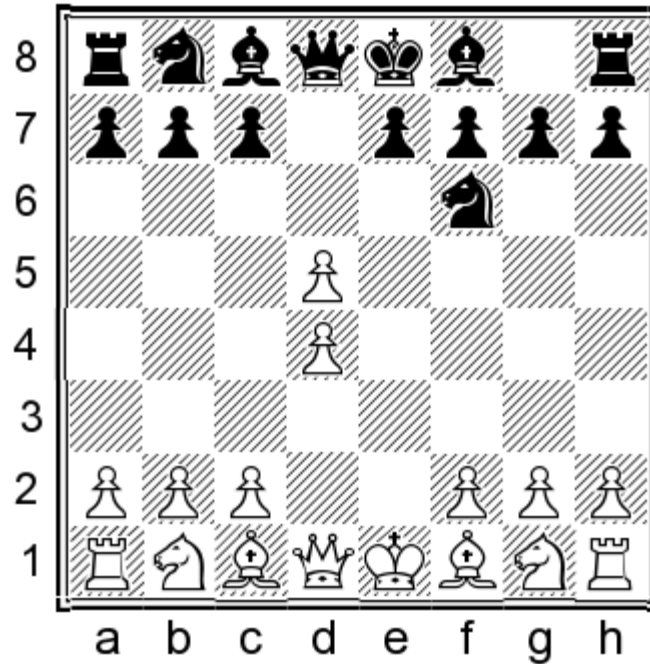
In this diagram you have a different situation. First, White generally does not take the knight. The bishop will head back to a4, and, if chased, then to b3 and c2 where it pairs up with its priestly partner. Secondly, in the Sicilian diagram, Black gets no real benefit from 5...a6 6.♗xc6 as this does not contribute to his development and even creates vulnerable pawns on c6 and a7. In the Ruy line, 4.♗xc6 helps Black to develop after the recapture with 4...dxc6. The bishop and queen both have their range increased. Thus, it's not just memorizing moves that matters.

One other point. In the Sicilian line, there's a good chance that Black will see White play c2-c4 to create a bind on d5. If the b-pawn now resides at c6, the ...b7-b5 counter against c4 will not be available. You need to understand what the characteristics of the specific position are.

6. Not All Aggressive Bishop Moves Are Good.

Consider this sequence from the Scandinavian Defense:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.d4

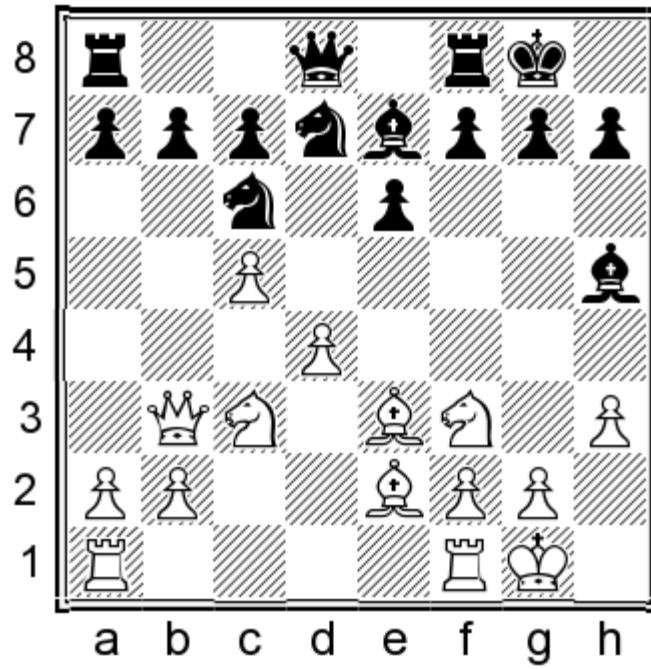


There are many possibilities here, but we're going to concentrate on the move of the queen's bishop in two very different lines.

3...♜xd5 4.c4 ♜b6 5.♜f3 ♔g4 6.c5 ♜6d7 7.♔e2 ♜c6 8.0-0 e6 9.♜c3 ♔e7 10.h3 ♔h5

10...♔f5 11.♔b5, as now there is no threat on f3 and the e2-bishop can find other things to do.

11.♔e3 0-0 12.♚b3, and we end up with this position:



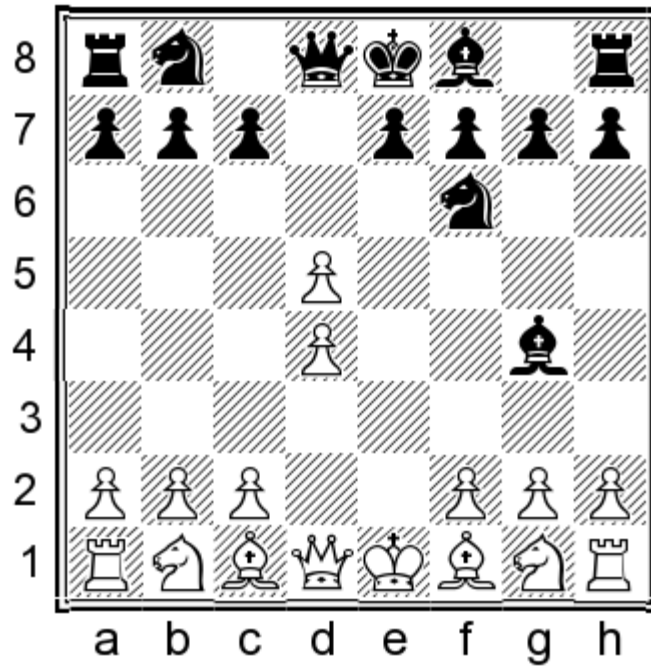
This diagram illustrates one of the considerations you must take into account when you play that bishop out to the kingside. It no longer protects the b7-pawn, so you have to see if ♖b3 is going to give you problems sooner or later, as is evident here.

Some possibilities from this position: **12...♔c8**

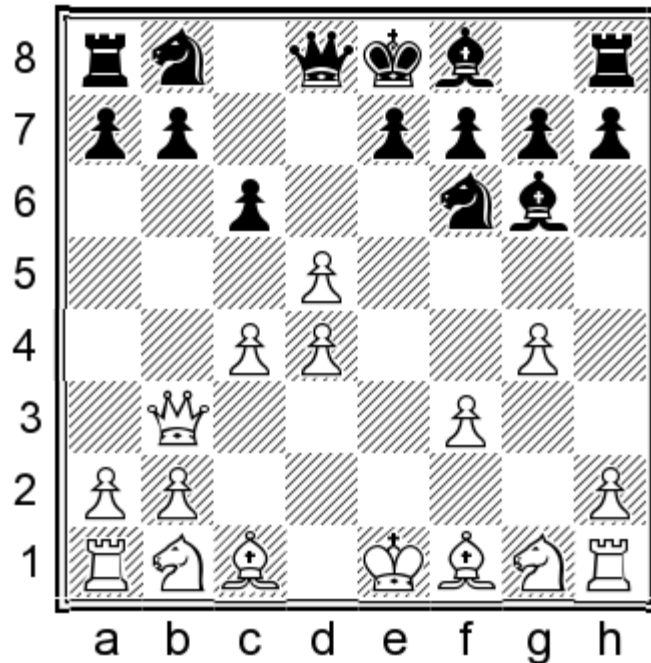
12...♖b8 13.♖ad1 ♖e8 14.d5 exd5 15.♖xd5 ♕xf3 16.♕xf3 ♖ce5 17.♖fd1 ♗xf3+ 18.gxf3 ♗xc5 19.♕xc5.

13.♖ad1 ♕g6 14.d5 exd5 15.♖xd5 ♖f6 16.♖d2 ♗e4 17.♗xe4 ♕xe4 18.♖fd1, and White has ideas such as ♕c4 and ♗g5 to investigate, especially if Black's f8-rook moves. The doubled rooks are difficult to challenge because of the possible threats to f7.

What if Black had not even bothered to wait for the knight to go to f3? Look at this wild possibility:



Again, though, ♜d1-b3 as an idea becomes a real threat: 3...♙g4 4.f3 ♙f5 5.g4 ♙g6 (5...♙c8 6.c4 g6 7.♞c3 ♙g7 8.♜a4+ ♞fd7 [8...♙d7 9.♜b3] 9.♙f4 0-0 [9...♙xd4 10.♞b5] 10.0-0-0) 6.c4 c6 (for 6...e6, see Model Game 22 on pp. 217-19) 7.♜b3:

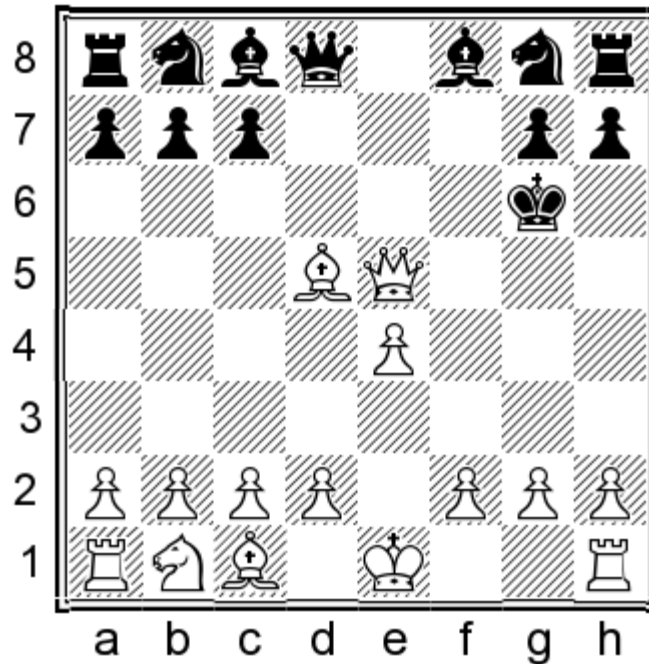


Black is not in good shape here. The threat to b7 must be addressed. It can get really bad really quickly. One example: 7...♜c7 8.♙f4! ♜c8 9.♞c3 ♞bd7 10.h4 h6 11.h5 ♙h7 12.0-0-0. The bishop has been chased and White's position is safe and aggressive. Combine these tips with the ones involving when a bishop should pin a knight and you'll have a nice rule of thumb. You still have to think about each position, but at least you'll know what to look for.

7. Don't Panic Against Unusual Moves.

One of the things that made me curious about club players was an issue that I have spent a lot of time on as a chess teacher: how do you meet unusual moves? It's a concern for club players as well as higher-rated players. Stronger players generally do better because they have a firm grasp of general principles *and* a higher level of tactical alertness.

Here's a simple example: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f6 3.♗xe5 ♖e7 4.♞h5+ ♜e7 5.♞xe5+ ♜f7 6.♙c4+ d5 7.♙xd5+ ♜g6**. Most young players have been taught 3.♗xe5 and 4.♞h5+ and shown all the easy wins, but what if 4...♜e7? The position after move 7 is thus:

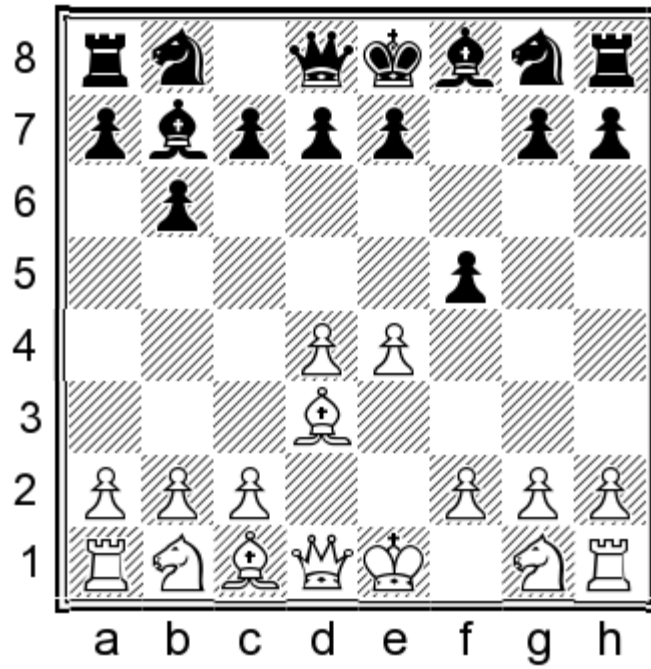


So far, you've done all the right things about 2...f6, but do you know how to finish this? If you play the natural 8.d4, you lose to 8...♙d6!.

You need to find **8.h4!**. Then, after **8...h5**, you need to find the clever **9.♙xb7!!**. Black can't take the bishop because of **9...♙xb7 10.♞f5+ ♜h6 11.d4+ g5 12.♞f7** with mate to follow. You really have to sit there and think about whether you would have found those moves. It's challenging.

In this line, you also have to be aware of **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f6 3.♗xe5 ♖e7 4.♗c4 ♞xe4+ 5.♗e3 ♗e7 6.♗c3 ♞d4 7.♙d3**. Although the first six moves are general principles, 7.♙d3 is a bit counter-intuitive as it blocks the d-pawn, but the strategy is to get the knight to e2 to hit the queen, which the horse could not do if the bishop were on e2.

Another famous example goes this way: **1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♙b7 3.♙d3 f5:**



The “threat” is the indirect attack on g2 by the black bishop. Black wants White to believe he can’t take the f5-pawn, but he can! Do yourself a favor and cover the moves below and see if you can figure it all out, and then look. Search for variations that Black can try. You might know one of the tricks, but see if you know them all!

4.exf5 ♖xg2 5.♚h5+ g6 6.fxg6 ♜g7

This trick is in just about every book of traps: 6...♞f6 7.gxh7+ ♜xh5 8.♜g6#.

7.gxh7+ ♜f8 8.♞f3 ♞f6

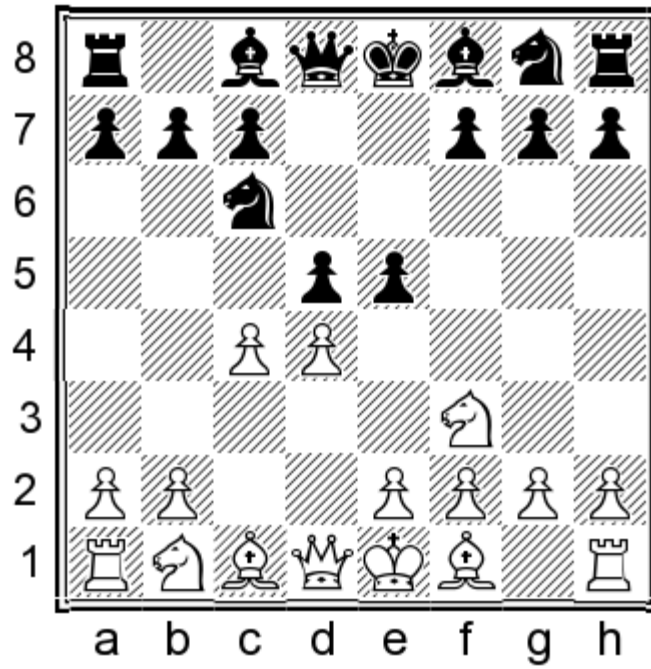
8...♜xh1 9.♞e5 ♜xe5 10.dxe5; or 8...♜xf3 9.♚xf3+ ♞f6 10.♚xa8.

9.♚g6 ♜xh1 10.♜h6 ♞xh7

10...♞e8 11.♚f5+ ♞f6 12.♜xg7+ ♜xg7 13.♚g6+ ♜f8 14.♚h6+ ♜f7 15.♞g5+ ♜e8 16.♜g6#

11.♞g5 ♚e8 12.♞xh7+ ♞xh7 13.♚xg7#. How did you do? There is the principle of the queen check along Black’s weakened light-squared diagonal, but there is also the necessity of finding 8.♞f3 and 9.♚g6. You have to keep a cool head. Bad moves usually violate good principles and can be dealt with by keeping the general principles in mind and heightening your level of tactical alertness.

Out of curiosity, I tried a dubious move against one of my ICC opponents: **1.d4 d5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.c4 e5.** My opponent, whom I had played before, was a decent player. I wanted to see what his choice was here.



His choice was not a good one. He went with **4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.♗c3 ♘b4 6.♙d2 ♙xc3 7.♙xc3 e4**. White didn't look beyond one move. He only looked at 4...♖xd5 5.♗c3, not even noticing the bishop pin that consolidates the queen's dominant position in the middle of the board. **8.♗e5 e3**

Objectively better was 8...♗xe5 9.dxe5 ♗e7 10.e3 0-0 11.♙e2 ♙e6 12.0-0 ♖xd1 13.♖fxd1 ♖fd8, but I couldn't resist seeing his reaction to ...e4-e3.

9.fxe3

Much better is 9.♗xc6 exf2+ 10.♔xf2 bxc6 [10...♖xc6 11.d5] 11.e4 ♖xe4 12.♙d3 ♖f4+ 13.♖f3 ♖xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♗e7 15.♖ae1 ♙e6 16.d5 ♗xd5 17.♙xg7, but White lets his fear of ...exf2+ override what some thoughtful analysis might have dug up.

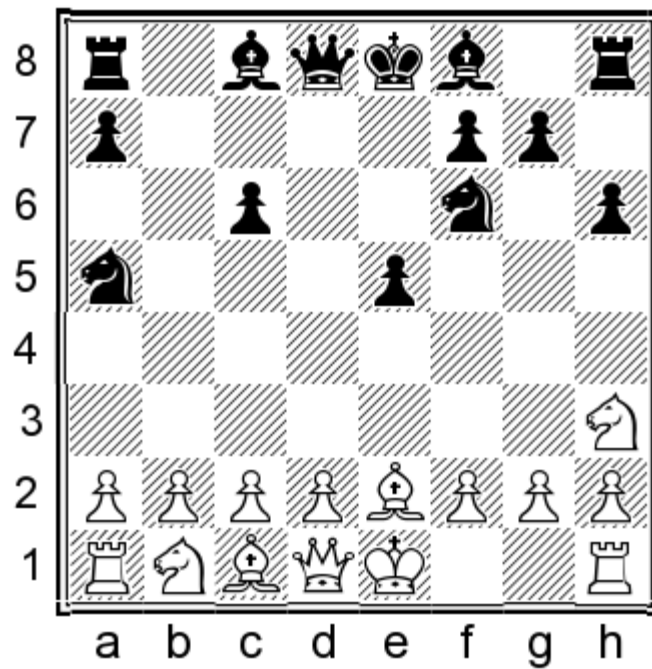
9...♗f6

9...♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♗e7

10.e4 ♗xe4 11.♗xc6 ♖xc6 12.♖c1 ♖h6 13.d5 0-0 14.♖d4 (a desperate bid to make a threat) **14...♖xc1+, White resigned.**

What should have happened? He could have gone with 4.dxe5 d4 and found himself in an Albin Countergambit, which is OK for White, or he could have gone with 4.♗xe5 ♗xe5 5.dxe5 d4 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗f3 ♗c6 8.a3 ♙e7 9.e3, which is similar to the Albin, but the knight trade seems to help White more than Black.

One particular annotation has impressed me more than any other about meeting unusual moves. It was a note by Chigorin in his 1890/91 telegraph game with Steinitz. Steinitz played his now famous 9.♗h3 in the Two Knights' Defense. Years later, Fischer picked it up and that led to a generation of players who mimicked both players as if ♗h3 was simply winning. This cowed a good many players of Black. It didn't scare Chigorin. These are his thoughts about the position after **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♗g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗a5 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗h3**. Remember, this was a big new move in this position back then:



“I did not play 9...♗d6 because of the reply 10.d4; the text move, 9...♗c5, is more aggressive and forces White to later play some moves, e.g. ♖a4, which do nothing to strengthen his position. I no longer wanted to take the knight because my bishop is needed for attack, while the knight will soon be forced to go back to g1. That seemed to be all the more favorable for me as I could, for a long time, prevent the knight coming to f3, and it is only after this move that White can develop properly.”

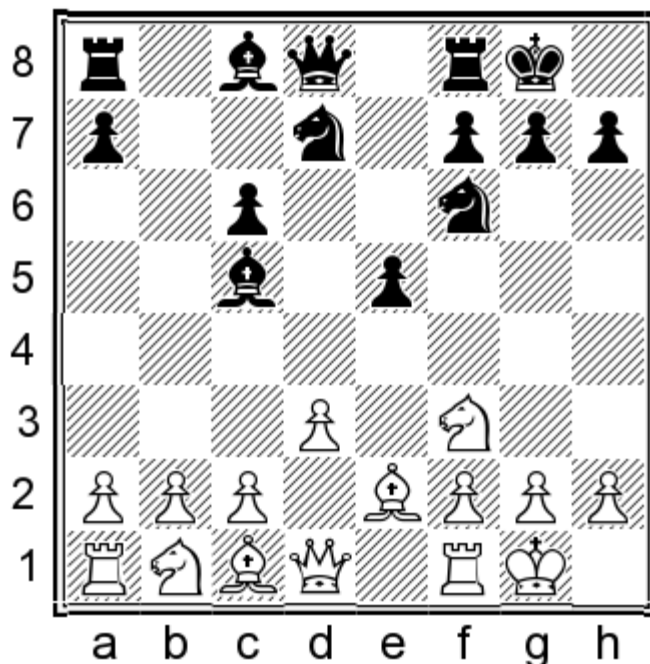
(Quoted from Jimmy Adams’s *Mikhail Chigorin: The Creative Chess Genius*, Caissa Editions, 1987.)

Chigorin creates a plan with *concepts*. No “I go here, he goes there” stuff. I paid more attention to this quote and the rest of his extraordinary notes to this game than I did to the variations given in Bobby Fischer’s *My 60 Memorable Games*.

The point of all this is that when you meet an unusual move in the opening, the choice you make in reply is going to determine the course of the game. Your opponent is counting on your letting your emotions get the best of you. Sit there. Take your time and really get into what the particular position is about. Try to be objective. Look at as many variations as it seems reasonable, and – above all – don’t panic!

8. Don't Create Weaknesses That Your Opponent Can Exploit.

This is one of those “physician, heal thyself” moments. I picked my own personal example because there is a particularly annoying habit I have: I keep forgetting there is someone on the other side of the board and get too wrapped up in what my plan is.



1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.♙b5+ c6 4.dxc6 bxc6

4...♗xc6

5.♙e2 e5 6.d3 ♙c5 7.♗f3 ♗bd7 8.0-0 0-0

I have calmly and correctly met this dubious gambit and am now a pawn up with no weaknesses in the position. How dare he try some sleazy opening?! It's simple enough. I take my extra pawn and inexorably move forward, exchanging off pieces and winning with the pawn plus. That bishop of his is annoying, so let's exchange it off with **9.♙e3** so that the f-file will be open. I can then play e3-e4, maybe Nh4-f5, queen to the kingside, etc... Play proceeded **9...♙xe3 10.fxe3 ♗g4**

More accurate was 10...♗d5 11.♙c1 ♙b6 12.d4 exd4 13.exd4 ♙e8 14.♙e1 c5 15.♗c3 ♙b7.

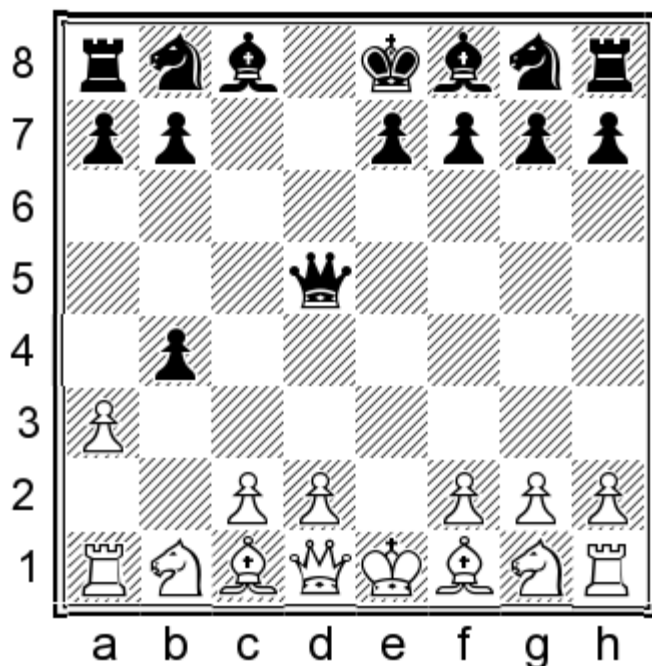
11.♙d2 ♙b6 12.d4 ♙xb2 13.♗c3 exd4 14.exd4 ♙a3, and in both lines here Black has more active play than would come after 9.♗bd2. The resulting pawn on e3 after the bishop trade allowed Black two quick moves to get back in the game. Your opponents will zero in on weaknesses, so before you create one – for the sake of development, say – make sure that it won't come back to haunt you.

9. Don't Forget that Play in the Center is the Essential Point of All Openings.

Hardly anyone plays this opening anymore: 1.e4 c5 2.b4. Yet GM Frank Marshall played it for years. I beat a 2199-rated computer (who beat an IM in that tournament) at the U.S. Open in 1986. Why? The computer didn't understand the position. It just knew it was a pawn up – truly the early days of computer chess! When I play this on the ICC, I get everything but the best move about two-thirds of the time! How do you meet a wing attack? You counter in the center!

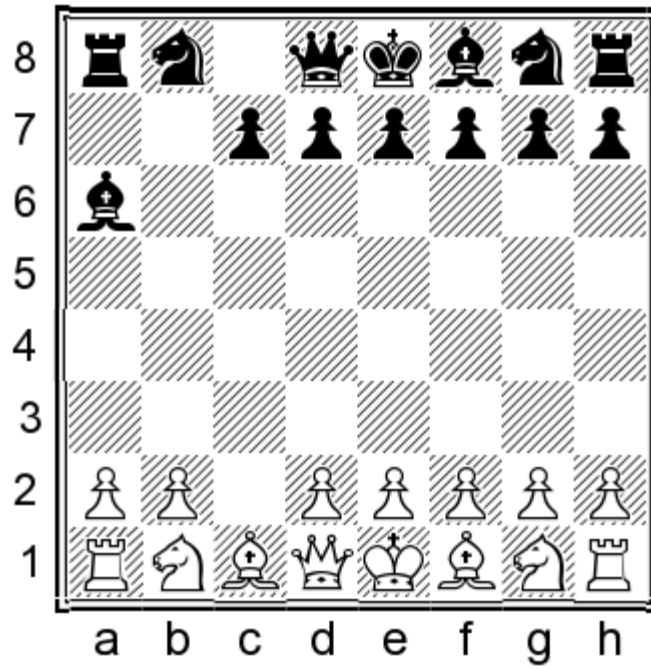
1.e4 c5 2.b4 cxb4 3.a3 d5! 4.exd5 ♔xd5

Because the b-pawn prevents ♞c3, the queen is in a dominating spot and even threatens ...♔e5+ winning the rook, which IM Kamran Shirazi once overlooked in a U.S. Championship!



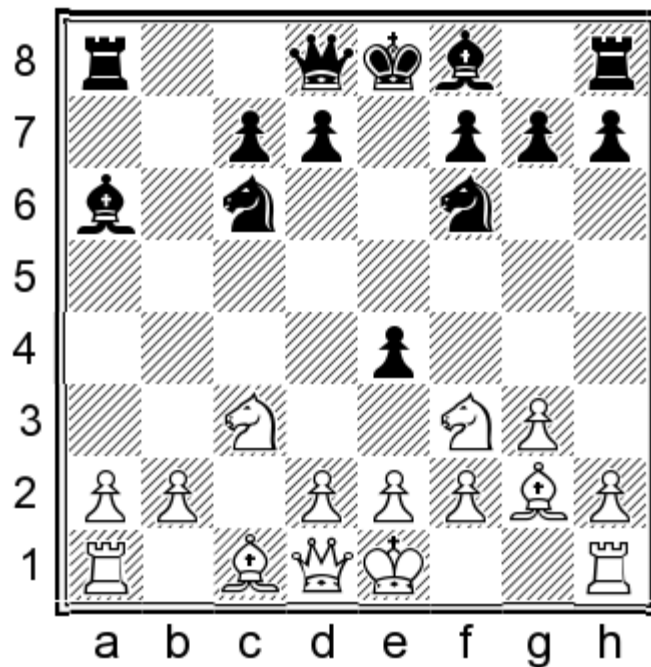
Countering the Wing Gambit

Just for the fun of it, I tried a “wing gambit” as Black against the English to see my opponent’s reaction. I was stunned! Watch: **1.c4 b5 2.cxb5 a6 3.bxa6 ♔xa6**, and now he played a series of strange moves: a2-a3, d2-d3, and e2-e3! This is why there is a Primer in this book. This poor soul has no concept of a center or even a plan. He just pushes plastic pieces around when he plays – or computer images, no matter. What should have happened?



The first consideration is always the center, so you will want to play $\Delta f3$ to prevent ...e7-e5 and figure out how you are to castle kingside without moving the e-pawn, which would lead to a bishop exchange and the loss of castling privileges over there. Ah! You recognize the need to fianchetto! Black will be aggressive so you're going to have to fight for the center since you can't immediately occupy it.

4. $\Delta f3$ $\Delta c6$ 5. $g3$ e5 6. $\Delta c3$ $\Delta f6$ 7. $\text{♙}g2$ e4



Now you have a choice between 8. $\Delta h4$ and 8. $\Delta g5$:

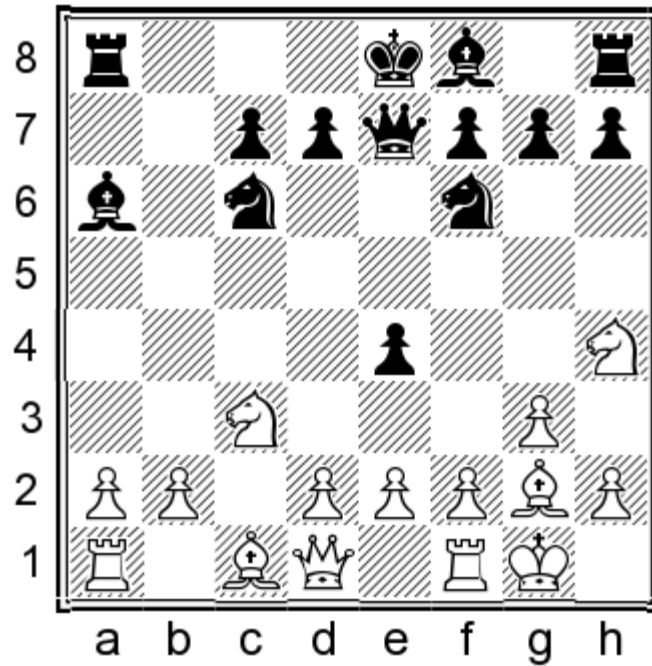
8. $\Delta h4$

Or 8. $\Delta g5$ d5 9. 0-0 h6 10. $\Delta h3$ $\text{♙}c5$ 11. d3 exd3 12. exd3 0-0 13. $\Delta f4$ $\Delta e7$ 14. $\text{♙}e3$ $\text{♙}xe3$ 15. fxe3 c6 16. $\text{♚}d2$.

8...♖e7

8...d5 9.♗a4

9.0-0:



In both lines there is an active fight for the center. 8.♘h4 was a bit better, as it forced Black to block his f8-bishop, and if Black tries the time-consuming ...g7-g6 and ...♗g7, White's all ready to go with d2-d3 and dxe4, dissolving Black's perhaps originally impressive pawn on e4. Even though White's e- and d-pawns didn't budge for the first nine moves, White was ferocious in fighting for the center with the pieces.

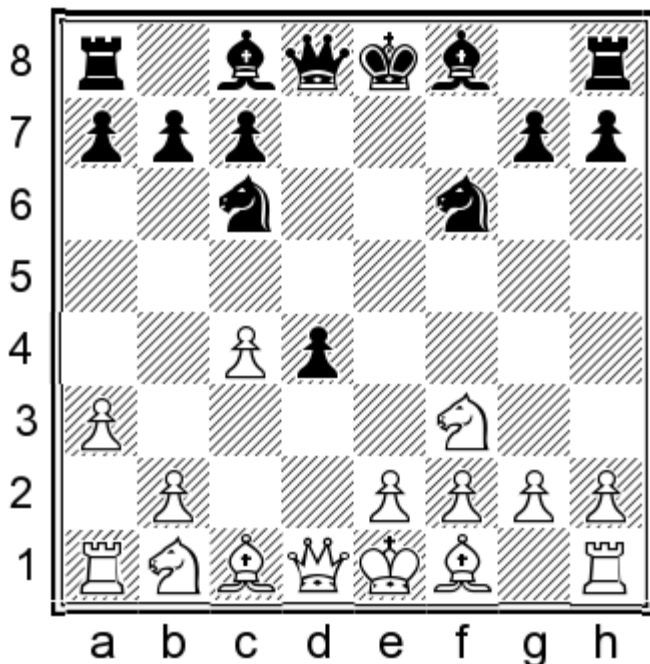
10. Be Careful to Avoid “Plodding” Development.

There is a tendency among club players to think that they have all the time in the world to develop their pieces. This is especially true when they go for a fianchetto. A fianchetto can be quite effective if you have time and quite harmful if you don't. This is from an Albin Countergambit:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.a3 ♘c6 5.♗f3 f6

5...♗ge7 is popular, too.

6.exf6 ♗xf6:



This is a moment of truth, of sorts. The move White chooses here determines the course of the game. White's selection helped lead to defeat. His plan was 7.b4 and 8.♗b2. Granted, it is an attack on the d-pawn, but Black, because of his pawn sacrifice, has very easy development. Any advanced pawn in your position needs to be attacked, but consideration needs to be given to undermining it right away with another pawn. Take, for example, the King's Gambit where Black plays 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 e4. Every KG player knows that you play 4.d3 right away to challenge Black's pawn.

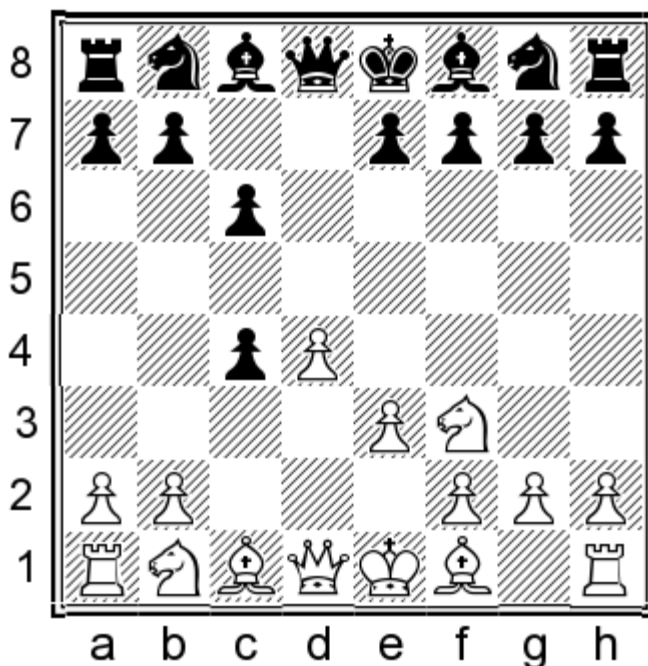
It would have been advisable for White to apply that idea on move 7: 7.e3! dxe3 (7...♗g4 8.♗e2 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♗d7 10.exd4 ♗xd4 11.0-0 0-0-0 12.♗e3 ♗xf3+ 13.♗xf3) 8.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 9.♗xe3. White is a clear pawn up and Black's compensation is nebulous, to be kind. What can happen with the slow 7.b4 and 8.♗b2?

7.b4 ♗e7 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♗xd4 ♗e4 10.♗xc6 ♗xd1+ 11.♗xd1 ♗xf2+ and White is lost. It can happen very quickly. Thus, you should realize that underestimating the sharpness of a position and meeting it with the wrong kind of moves can lead to disaster.

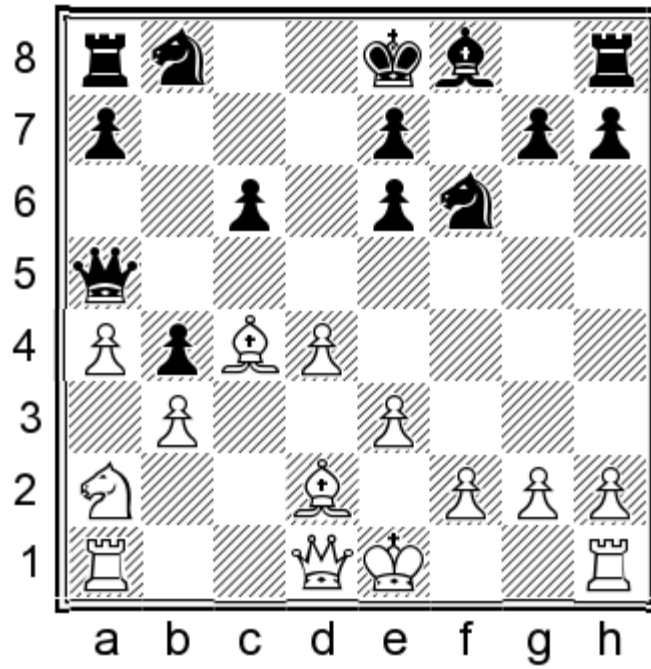
11. Playing an Opening (Especially a Defense) without Understanding Why Certain Moves Are Played and When, is Not a Good Idea.

A novice played the following as Black and clearly had no clue about the opening. He seemed to think he was playing the Slav Defense, but not only did he get the move order messed up, he threw in a rather ill-advised early queen check.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 c6 4.e3



Call it a Queen's Gambit Accepted or a Slav Defense because of the ...c7-c6 move. No matter what you call it, it's playing moves without the right sequence. In the game, Black went with 4...♙a5+ 5.♙d2 ♙a6 6.b3 b5 7.a4 ♙e6 8.♘g5 ♘f6 9.♘xe6 fxe6 10.♘c3 b4 11.♙xc4 ♙a5 12.♘a2:



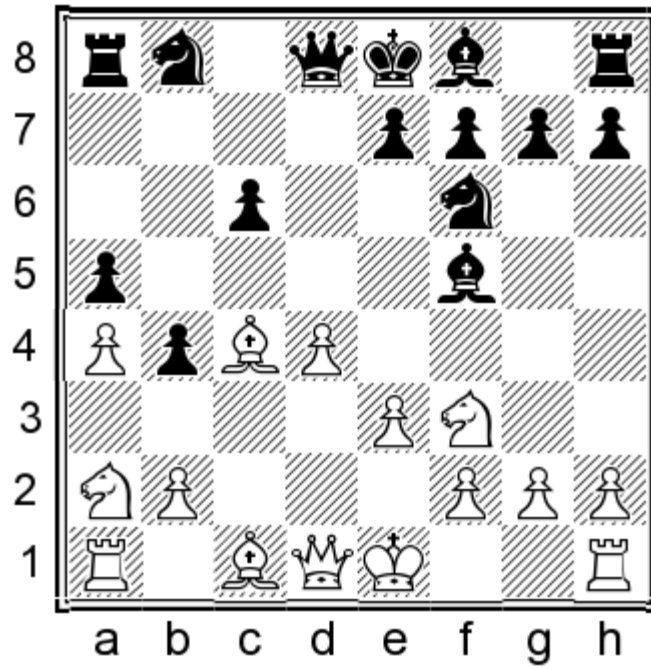
and matters did not end well for Black. The queen was subjected to harassment; holding the pawn was a bad idea; and Black's pawn structure ended up looking messy and weak. The real problem, though, is that Black understood neither *when* to take the c-pawn nor (upon taking the c-pawn) *how* best to follow it up. For example, better would have been 4...♗e6, without worrying about 5.♘g5 because now there's a good early queen check with 5...♙a5+, winning the knight. If you think this is too elementary a point, R.F. Combe, who was to become a British Champion, lost this game to Hasenfuss at the Folkestone Team Tournament in 1933:

1.d4 c5 2.e4 cxd4 3.♘f3 e5 4.♘xe5 ♙a5+ 0-1.

What was it that Black did not understand about the position if he wanted a Slav and a ...b7-b5 move? Let's take a look. First, the "regular" Slav:

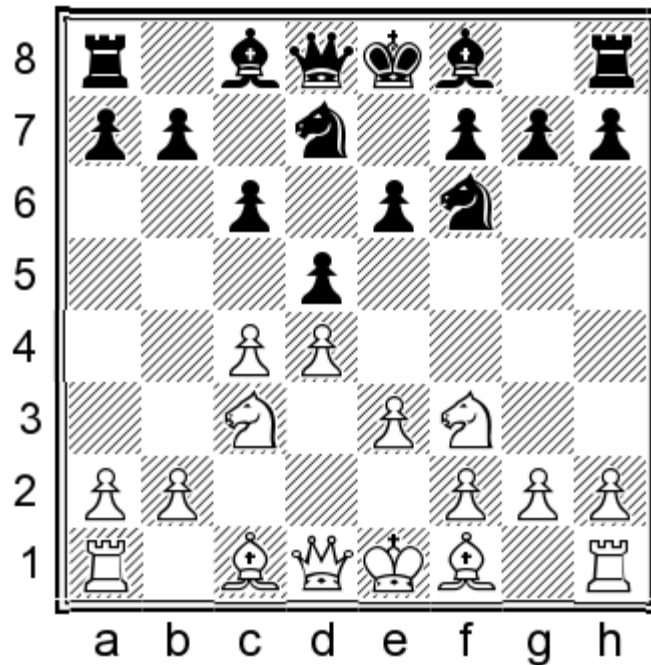
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e3 b5 6.a4 b4 7.♘a2 a5 8.♗xc4 ♗f5

Although the position just below is similar to the one above, it's not the same, and the difference matters! What is different? Black waited until White played 4.♘c3 and *then* took the pawn on c4. Why does that matter? The reason is that when White plays a2-a4 to hit the b-pawn, the b-pawn can advance to b4 and hit the knight. If there is no knight there, you can't do that. As Black, you need to have the white knight there. If you play through the moves above, you'll see the difference. In the current situation, Black's in the game and his queen has stayed out of trouble.



Yet, players of Black wanted more out of the Slav, so the Semi-Slav (see the next diagram) became really popular, especially in recent years. Again, notice the differences. Black has developed his queen knight to d7, where it will serve the useful purpose of aiding counterplay with ...c6-c5. Black has also become a bit more sophisticated with his capture of the c4-pawn. Not only does he wait for the knight to go to c3, he also waits for White to play his bishop to d3, so that when it recaptures on c4, it takes White two moves instead of one.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7



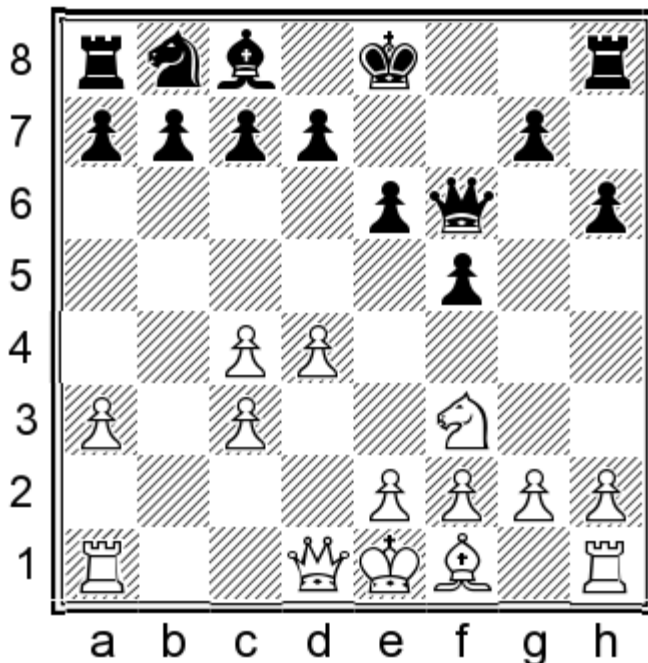
After 6.♙d3 dxc4 7.♙xc4 b5 8.♙d3 a6 9.e4

9.a4 b4 10.♘e4 c5

9...c5, we have ourselves a chess game. It's a far more complicated opening than this, but it's important if you're going to play an opening to know why even the most basic moves are played. You can't just willy-nilly throw moves out there in any old order.

12. Know When It's Good to Exchange a Bishop for a Knight and When It Is Not Good. Oh – and Vice Versa!

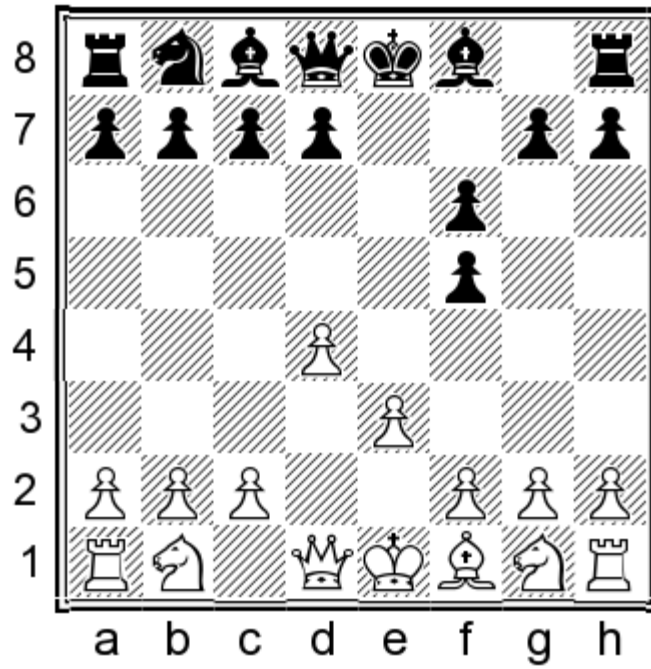
There are chessplayers who chant the mantra, “I’ve got the two bishops,” as though they had just won the lottery. In an open position, that’s great. In a locked position, you might as well have two pawns. The other side of the coin is the group that can’t wait to exchange pieces (see “simplification”). This kind of thinking is all too common. There are some guidelines to follow. From a Dutch Defense, we have **1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♗c3 ♗b4 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♔xf6 7.a3 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3:**



White has given up his king bishop for no particular reason and helped Black to develop his queen to f6. Then, apparently, he figures that if he attacks the black bishop, he will get Black to give it up. The only problem with this thinking is that a structural weakness for White comes along with the time-wasting a2-a3 and subsequent trade. White has made a mess of his queenside pawn structure and Black is ready to castle – two very different situations coming out of two different BxN exchanges.

As with everything in chess, these are general considerations, albeit useful. There is a Dutch line where BxN for White is encouraged and has many supporters. You should be able to see why:

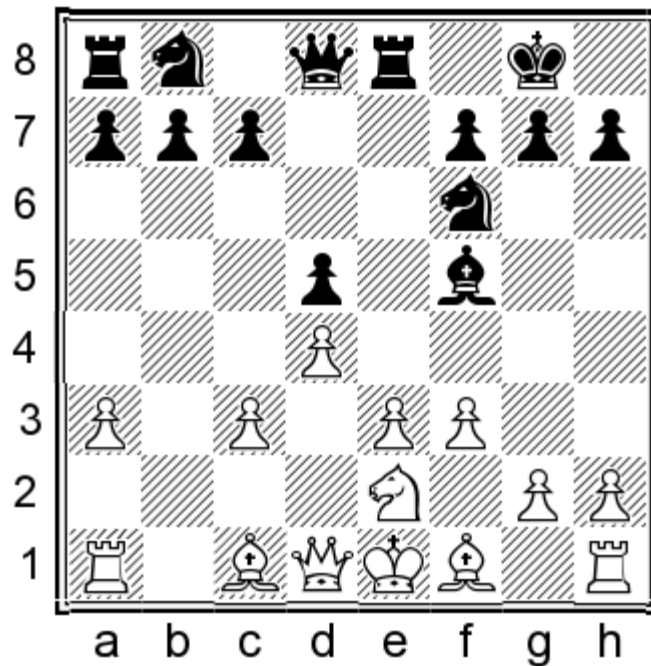
1.d4 f5 2.♙g5 ♘f6 3.♙xf6 exf6 4.e3



White has given Black doubled f-pawns, virtually made the black queen bishop a tall pawn (after ...d7-d5 and ...Bxe6) and created a target on f5 that can be attacked by Nd3 and perhaps even Wf3. It's a tough struggle for both sides, but the rationale for BxN is much better in this line than in the previous one.

The Nimzo-Indian Defense, one of the most solid replies to 1.d4, also has this theme:

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 0-0 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 Bf5 9.Ne2 Re8



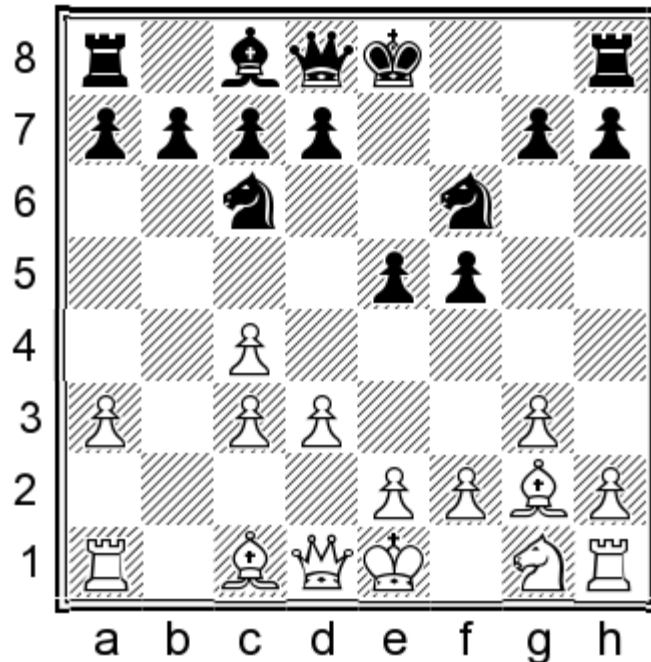
White expended a tempo (a2-a3) to force the exchange, most likely because he's a "two bishops" fanatic of sorts and because he felt he could liquidate the doubled pawns, which he did; however, look at the cost in time! It will take White three more moves to castle, and Black is not only castled, but he has his rook on e8 already and he enjoys a lead in development. Black was correct to exchange the bishop for knight.

You can also get this idea in the English Opening:

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 f5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.d3 ♗b4 6.a3

6.♘f3 e4 7.♘h4

6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3

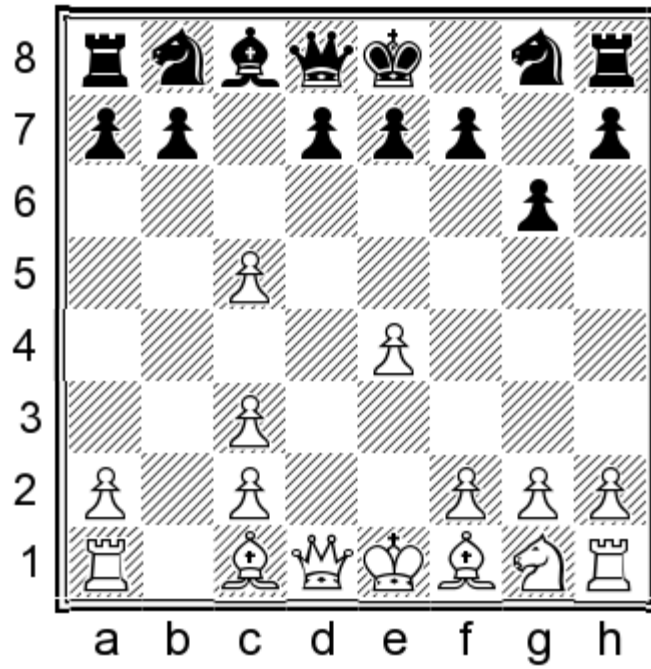


Black will castle, play ...d7-d6, and develop his bishop with an easy equality thanks to his share of the center. White has the bishop pair and an awkward queenside pawn formation. It's worth noting that White seemed to have no idea why he played 5.d3. We can doubt that he did it to create a pin! It seems to be one of those robot moves. They know it's played, but don't know why. We would know that he understood his own opening if he played ♘f3 after d2-d3, as noted above in parentheses. The d2-d3 move is to prepare ♘f3 so that an ...e5-e4 reply by Black turns into an attack on the advanced black pawn. By playing the thoughtless a2-a3 and allowing ...♗xc3, it changed the game. Consequently, you not only have to know when to exchange your bishop for a knight, but you have to know when to allow it!

This discussion would not be complete without one of my favorite "hypermodern" entries that was quite the fashion years ago and still pops up occasionally: 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c5 4.dxc5 ♗xc3+

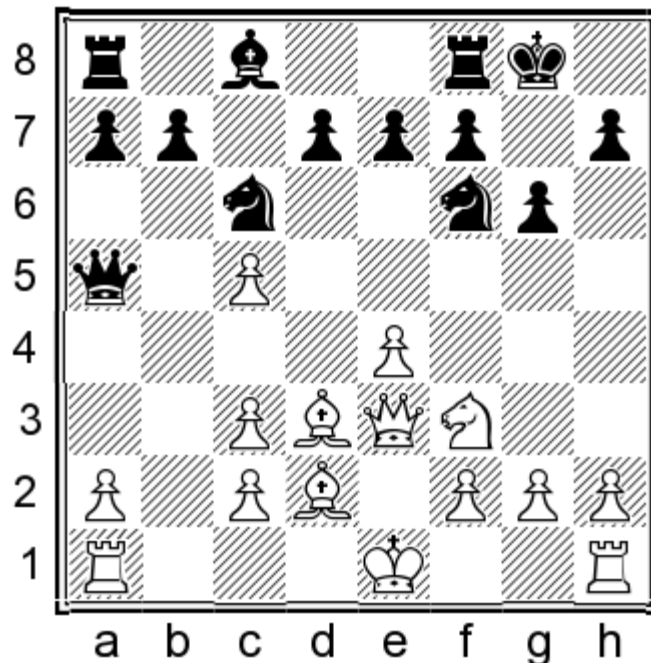
Although a bit better, still unimpressive is 4...♗a5 5.♗d2 ♗xc5 6.♘d5 ♘a6 [6...♗xb2 7.♗b1 ♗e5 8.♗b4] 7.♗e3 [a possible alternative is 7.♗xa6 bxa6 8.♗b4 ♗c4 9.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 10.♘xe2 ♗xb2 11.♗b1 ♗e5 12.f4 ♗b8 13.♗c3 f6 14.0-0 as White does have an edge; giving up the bishop to double the a-pawns is a common theme and a decent one] 7...♗c6 8.♘e2 ♗xb2 9.♗b1 ♗g7 10.♘d4 and White is clearly superior.

5.bxc3:



This position is interesting for our discussion. Black has given up a nicely posted king bishop and left his dark squares a little weaker in exchange for tripling White's pawns and leaving his a2-pawn isolated. White, for his part, has allowed this. Why? He has open lines for his pieces and believes the pawns can either be liquidated or become little thorns in Black's side. Let's see:

5...♖a5 6.♚d4 (a great maneuver, using the attack on the rook to gain a tempo to swing the queen over to b4) **6...♘f6 7.♜b4 ♚c7** (trading queens would help solve White's pawn structure difficulties) **8.♗f3 ♘c6 9.♜a4 ♗e5 10.♚d4 ♘c6 11.♜e3 0-0** (a little dance between queen and knight, but the queen ends up in a secure spot without any real loss of time because the knight also had to expend moves) **12.♙d3 ♜a5 13.♙d2:**



Although tripled, the pawns cannot easily be taken advantage of and the c5-pawn is very restrictive on Black's position. So, Black tries to free his queenside.

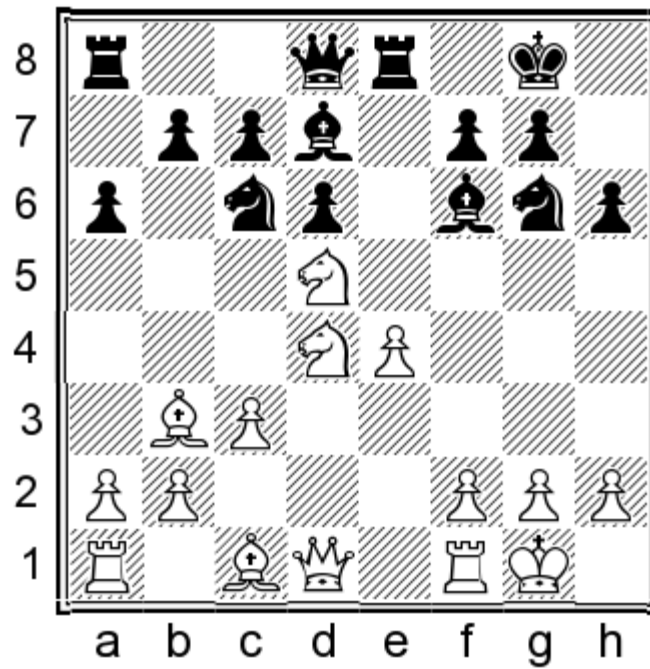
13...b6 14.cxb6 axb6 15.c4 ♔h5

15...♞g4 16.♙xa5 ♞xe3 17.♙d2

16.♚xb6 and White is better: more material, a passed pawn, and a solid central position with nothing much in the way of counterplay for Black.

All these examples will, I hope, make you think twice about bishop/knight exchanges. They're not as simple as they look!

And lest we forget the love affair – nay, obsession – chessplayers have with the two bishops! “Winning” a bishop for a knight is not always a good idea. The best lesson I ever read about this was in *The World Chess Championship 1948* by Harry Golombek. Golombek puts a diagram after Black's move 13 in the game Euwe–Keres:



Euwe – a former world champ who had been playing tournament chess for some 30 years, and was still one of the top grandmasters in the world – here played 14.♞xf6+. Golombek comments:

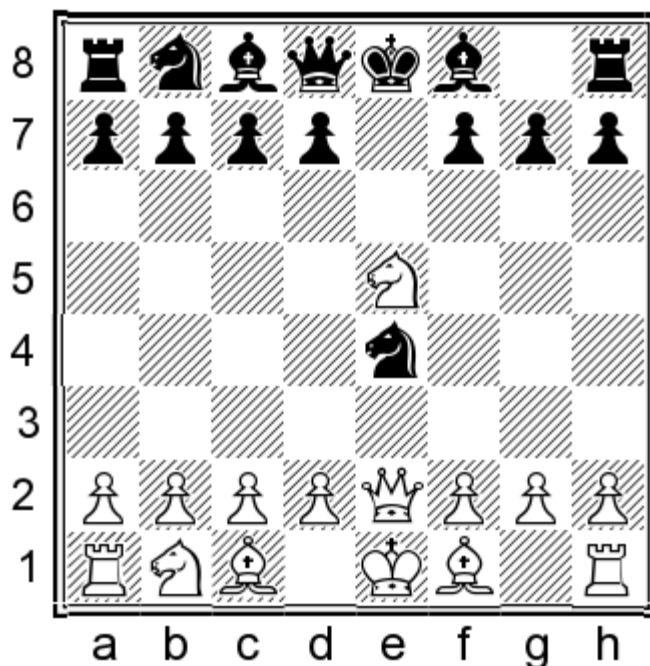
Gaining the technical advantage of two Bishops, but nevertheless dissipating most of his opening advantage. White's superiority has consisted in the beautiful position of his two centralized Knights, and in the fact that his K Bishop is an active attacking piece as opposed to the passive defence of Black's Q Bishop. He must therefore evolve a plan to profit from these advantages.

He goes on to suggest lines, but it just goes to show you that even the world's greatest players can succumb to the two bishops obsession. Sometimes knights are better than bishops.

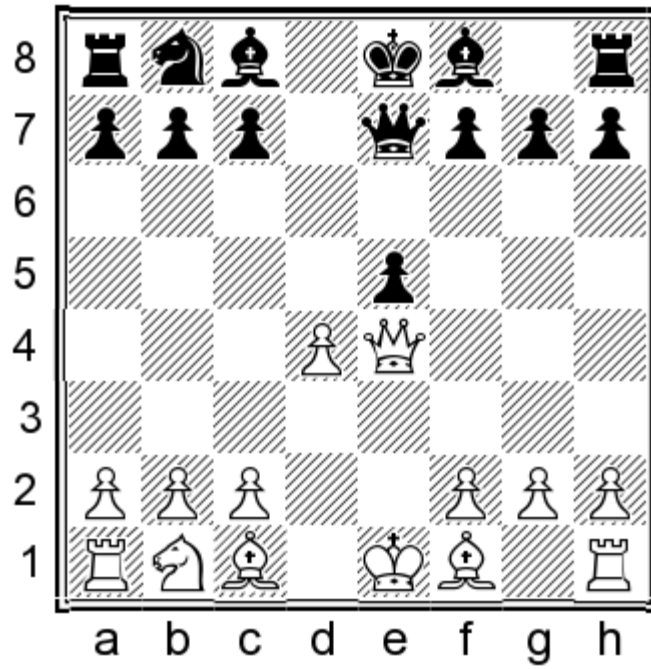
13. Don't Turn a Won Game into a Draw – or Worse!

It is not all that common to get a won game early in the opening, but it happens a fair number of times. Interestingly enough, it is at that point that many players lose their advantage by taking the win for granted. Above, with the 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4 4.♙e2

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4 4.♙e2



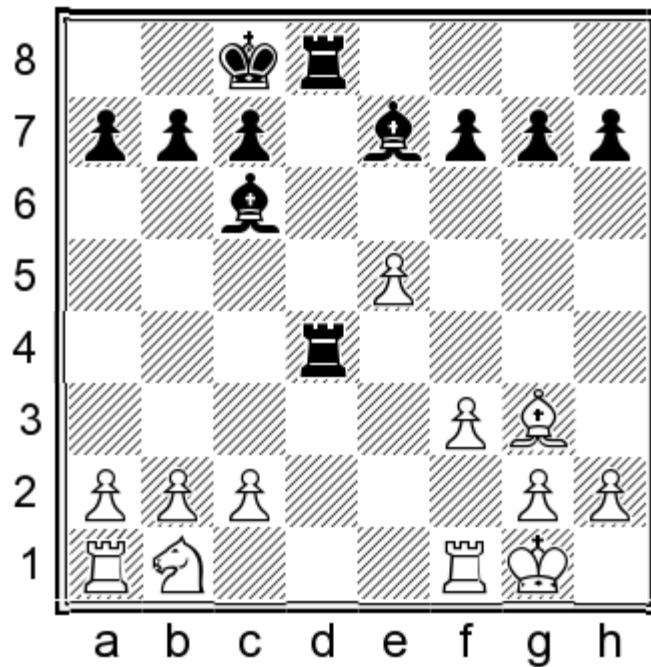
Every opening-trap article loves to point out 4...♘f6 5.♘c6+ winning the black queen. Some imaginative players decided that they would play 4...♙e7 5.♙xe4 d6 6.d4 dxe5 and they've gotten their piece back. The question for you is, would you recapture with the queen or the pawn? "General principles" tell you that taking with the queen would encourage an exchange of queens and you would be a pawn up. That's supposed to be good, right?



Let's see what can go wrong: **7. ♖xe5 ♜xe5+ 8. dxe5 ♞c6 9. ♙b5 ♚d7 10. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 11. f3**

11. 0-0 0-0-0 12. ♙e3 ♙e7 13. ♞d2 ♞d5 14. f4 ♜hd8 15. ♞c4 ♙b5

11... 0-0-0 12. ♙f4 ♞d4 13. ♙g3 ♙e7 14. 0-0 ♜hd8. The activity of Black's pieces is tremendous, with two bishops in an open field, his doubled rooks dominating the d-file, and a real threat to invade via d2. Yes, White's a pawn up, but where's the easy win?



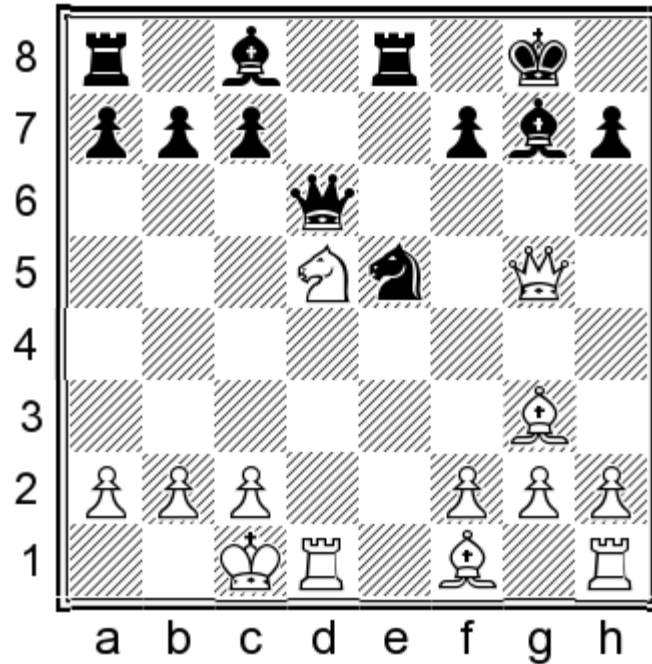
Now let's see what can go right! **7. dxe5 ♞d7 8. ♙f4 g5**

8... f6 9. ♞c3 fxe5 10. ♙g3 ♜b4 11. 0-0-0

9.♙g3 ♗g7 10.♘c3 ♜xe5 11.♞d5 ♚d6 12.0-0-0 0-0 13.♛e3 ♞e8

13...h6 14.h4 g4 15.♙e2 ♙f5 16.♛c3 ♞ac8 17.♞he1 ♞fe8 18.♞e3 ♛e6 19.♞xf5 ♛xf5 20.♛b4

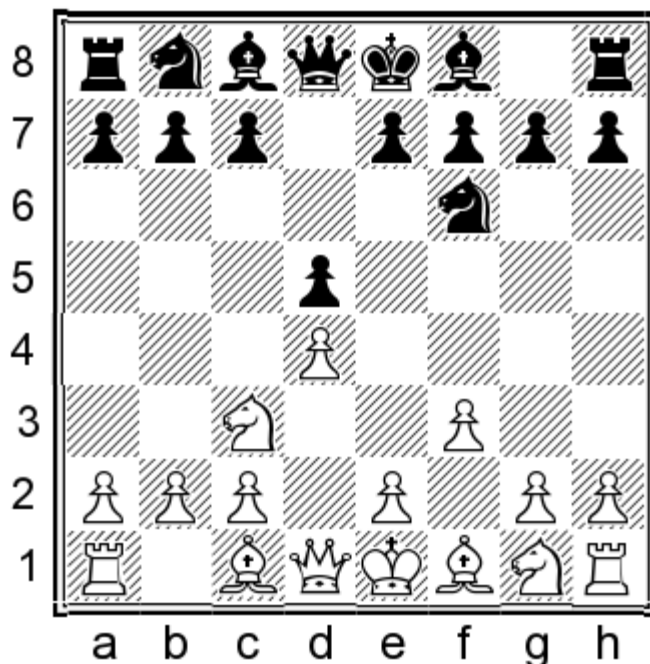
14.♛xg5:



Isn't this a much nicer position for White after 14 moves? Taking with the pawn on move 7 didn't accomplish a queen trade; however, White has very aggressively posted pieces and a weakened king position and a vulnerable black queen to attack.

14. Always Consider Counterattacking in the Center.

Once people who played me a lot realized that I had a particularly effective defense to the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit (see Primer item #30 below), they reacted with the desperate tendencies all attacking players have to one degree or another (me too!). They had to find another way. Sure enough, here it came: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗c3 d5 3.f3:**



Many old opening books always advise players to consider counterattacks, especially against gambits. We don't have a gambit quite yet here; however, it does not take much imagination to see e2-e4 coming with the hope that Black will also grab the f3-pawn. Black is having none of that: *counterattack!!*

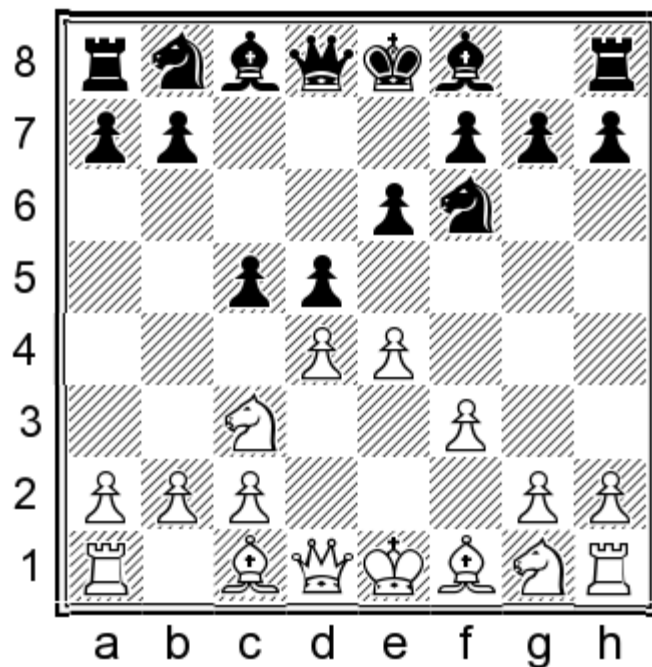
3...c5

3...e6 4.e4 c5

4.e4 e6 5.♗e3 ♘c6 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♗xd5 exd5 8.♕d2

8.dxc5 d4

8...c4 and Black is doing very well. Black is not going to play White's game – White is going to have to play Black's game. For just how ill-advised White's game plan is, take a look at the position after move 4:

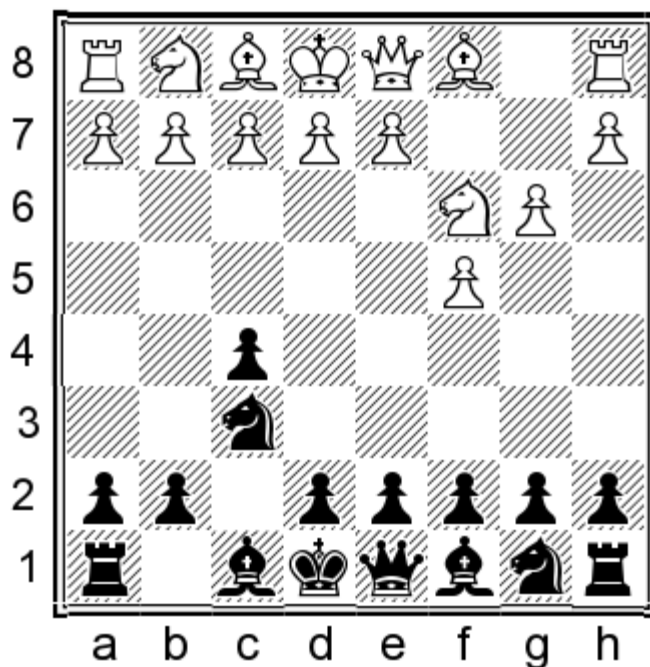


What does it look like? Do you recognize a French Defense pattern here? Then ask yourself, could a French Defense end up like this? Well, yes it could! Here's how it would go: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.f3 c5.**

If you know anything about the French, you would know that here White plays either 4.♗g5 or 4.e5. There was one single GM game (Benjamin – Fedorowicz, U.S. Chp. 1993) featuring 4.f3. It is rejected because it is too easily handled. By the way, The Fed drew the game.

15. If Your Opponent Gives You the Center, It's Generally a Good Idea to Accept the Gift!

I am absolutely amazed at the number of "robot" systems that are played, and many of those are hedgehog-like things: double-fianchetto systems, for example. If you don't want to come out and play, try Candyland! As noted above, I like to play a Dutch formation against these guys because they don't understand how it changes the way they should adapt their system. This one fellow trudged on mechanically: **1.c4 f5 2.♘c3 ♗f6 3.b3**. Only the third move and White has reached a crossroads. Nine out of ten masters would play 3.g3 or 3.d4 or 3.♗f3, most likely heading into main lines of the Dutch. Even 3.g3 would allow what I play next.



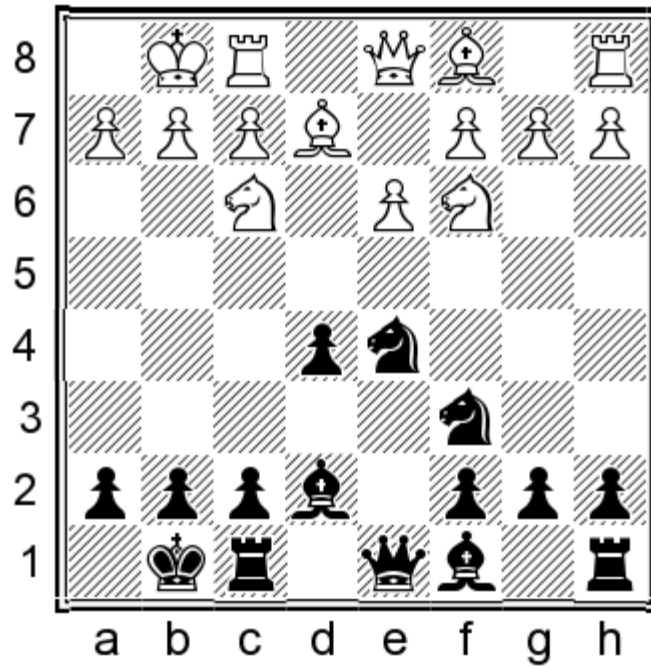
3...e5!

Hey, if you're going to give me the center, I'll take it. A robot on Black's side would continue with 3...e6, 4...♗e7, 5...0-0, etc.

4.♗b2 ♘c6 5.g3 ♗c5 6.♗g2 0-0

And Black has placed himself ideally without much effort. White is supposed to use the advantage of the first move to make Black fight for equality.

I have another frequent opponent who loves playing this line: **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2 ♗f6 4.d3 d5 5.exd5 ♗xd5 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♗c3 0-0**. We've played several slightly different versions of the same idea:

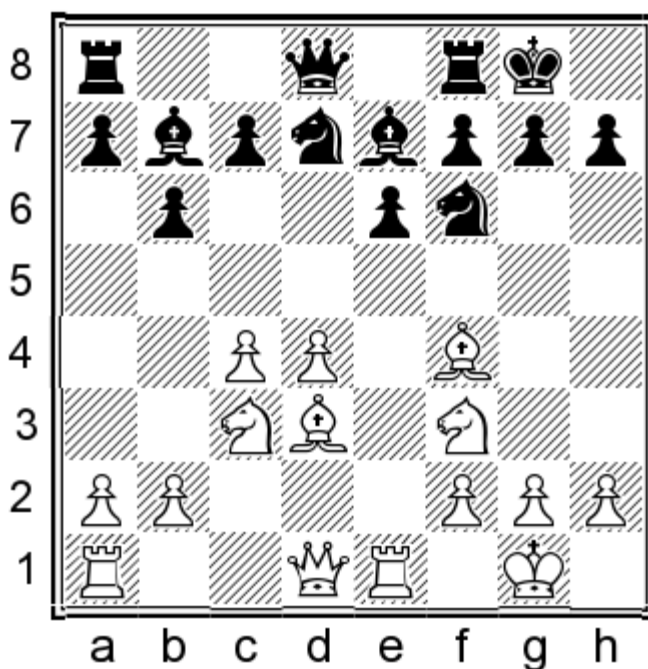


What's the point of White's play? Solidity? Is it the desire to lose slowly in anguish? Yes, it's about equal, but not really because 99% of the winning chances lie with Black. Please don't play like this. You will be condemning yourself to a narrow, dreary line of play and eventually conclude that chess is boring. Actually, *you* are boring! Learn how to play lively openings! Graduate to the Ruy López someday and truly appreciate the rich complexity of that opening. Try all of chess before you go down such dismal paths.

16. Solid, Passive Defenses are the Waiting Rooms for Defeat.

For White to give up the initiative to achieve a kind of equality is bad enough, but setting up all your forces along three ranks won't get you equality. You will just be putting off a loss. Here's a game where Black takes the Scandinavian Marshall Variation (oh, the irony of this!) and turns it into a misleading solidity.

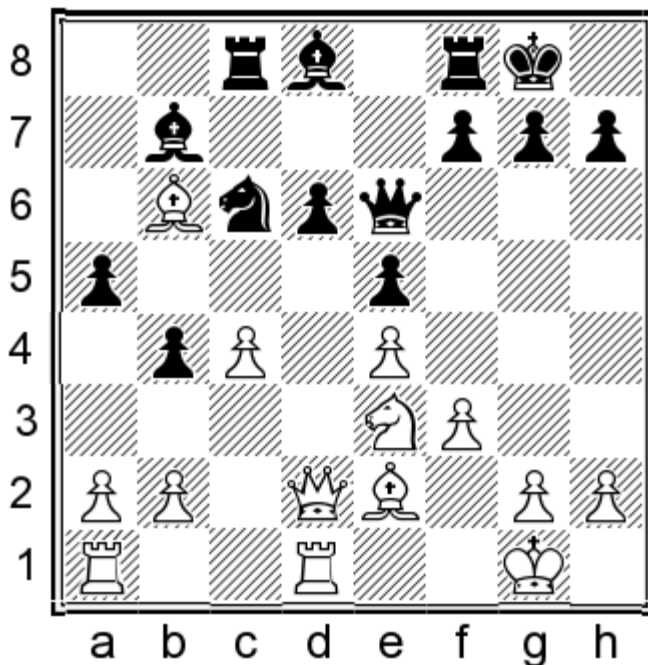
After **1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♘xd5 4.♗f3 e6 5.c4 ♗f6 6.♖c3 ♕e7 7.♙f4 0-0 8.♘d3 b6 9.0-0 ♘b7 10.♙e1 ♗bd7**, we have a typical example of what is wrong with a good many players. Black hides along his first three ranks and challenges nothing. White hasn't done anything spectacular, but look at his piece placement in comparison to Black's! One of the post-WWII chess writers, I.A. Horowitz, used to have you count up the moves your pieces have and weigh that against your foe's. In this position it's about two to one in "mobility" points in White's favor.



11.♗b5 ♗e8 12.♙e2 a6 13.♗c3 h6 14.d5! was how the game continued, and White's initiative is now a clear positional advantage. You do yourself no favors playing like this as White or Black. Even if you have success against lesser players, the likelihood of your getting better against stronger players is not great.

17. Even Though You Have an Opening Plan, Be Alert to Good Moves in Changing Circumstances.

Sometimes people get so wrapped up in their strategic opening plan, they overlook good moves! This position arose in the USATE with a 1700 player as White outplaying a 2100 player in one of those ...e5 Sicilian Defenses. This position, a logical outgrowth of White's plan, is now reached:



White has directed his entire effort toward the control and occupation of d5. He lets a real advantage dissipate because he follows his plan with getting the knight to d5:

20. ♖d5, but after **20...g6 21.c5 ♘d4 22. ♙xd8 ♜fxd8 23.cxd6 ♜xd6 24. ♜ac1 ♜xc1 25. ♜xc1 ♙xd5 26.exd5 ♜xd5 27. ♜e3 ♘xe2+ 28. ♜xe2 ♜d8 29. ♜c4 ♜xc4 30. ♜xc4 ♜d1+ 31. ♔f2 ♜d2+**, **White resigned.**

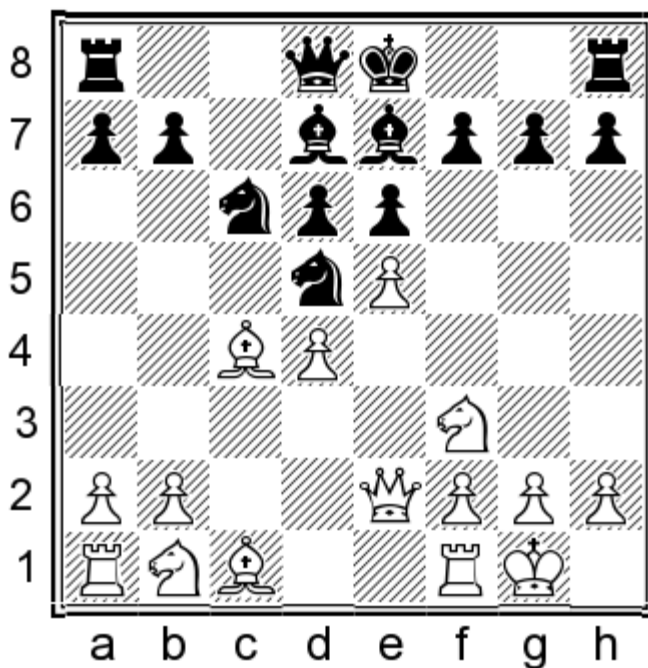
He needed to look at this position with fresh eyes. Then he might have seen that putting the knight on f5 rather than d5 was much better: **20. ♙xd8 ♜fxd8 21. ♖f5 ♜d7 22.c5 ♘d4 23. ♖xd4 exd4 24. ♜xd4 ♜xc5 25. ♜ac1 ♜xc1 26. ♜xc1 d5 27. ♙b5 ♜e7 28. ♜d1 h6 29.exd5**, and the passed pawn in the center will win.

18. Don't Forget, Before Every Move, to Look at All Checks and Captures.

This is a reminder I have given to every chess team I've ever coached; yet, people still forget. You need to have a quick routine that governs your thinking. The legendary Weaver Adams of *White to Play and Win* fame (boy, what he started!) used to advise players to first scan the board. Look at the tactics. How many times have you forgotten that? It doesn't separate amateurs from masters, by the way! GM Alex Baburin's *Chess Today* daily Internet newspaper recently had two perfect examples (from CT-4304):

Collins – Schütze
2nd Riga Tech Open 2012

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♗d5 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 e6 6.♗f3 d6 7.♕c4 ♗c6 8.0-0 ♖e7 9.♞e2 ♗d7



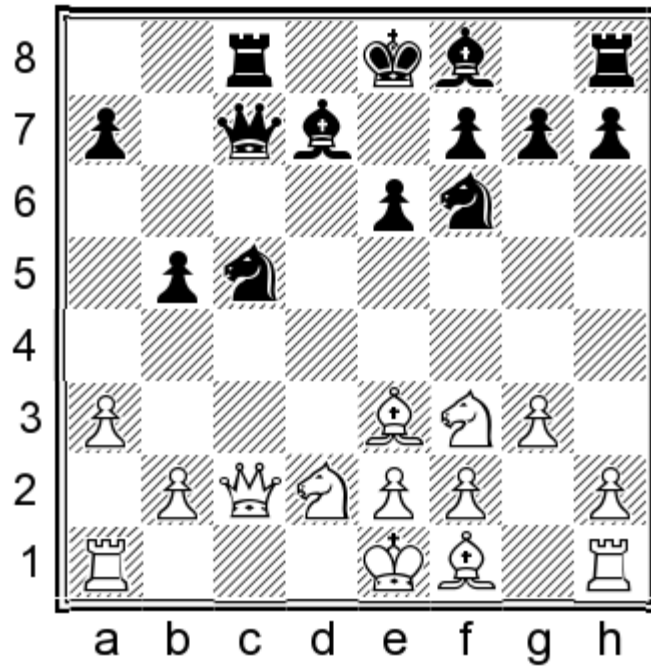
Black, without paying attention, has just played 9...♗d7 instead of 9...0-0 10.♞d1 a6. GM Sam Collins (who, to his credit, actually plays the openings he writes about) gives him an immediate lesson in why you should look at all captures:

10.♕xd5 exd5 11.exd6, and the game is over.

Baburin, in *Chess Today*, also demonstrates why you should look at all checks:

Andonov – Lputian
Chigorin Memorial, Sochi 1987

1.♗f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♞a4+ ♗d7 4.♞xc4 e6 5.d4 b5 6.♞c2 ♗a6 7.a3 c5 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♕e3 ♞c8
10.♗bd2 ♗f6 11.g3 ♞c7



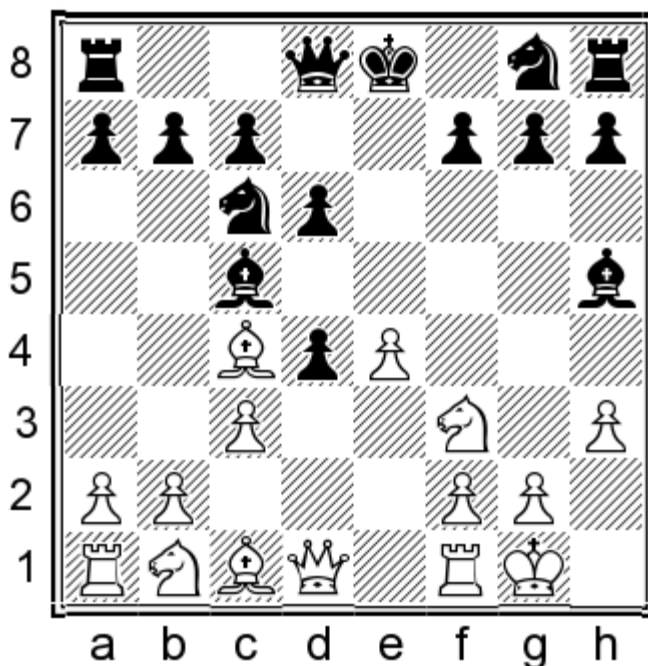
It's a somewhat level position, but one look at it should give you the feeling on either side that there is mischief afoot. White plays **12. ♕d4** and is greeted with the shock of **12... ♖d3+**. Taking the knight with the queen just brings about a back-rank mate, and taking with the pawn loses the queen. Remember, look at *all* checks and captures!

19. Know When to Play g4 or ...g5 Against a Bishop and Know When Not to Play It.

There are some general rules about bishop pins of a king knight and what the side having the knight should do. The rule of thumb is that if the bishop is pinning the knight on f3 (or f6) and the knight's side is not castled, you can usually chase the bishop if you can castle queenside. If you are castled, then you don't want to weaken your castled position. The difficulty lies in the generality of this rule. Most players can think of exceptions already.

This is a really sharp example:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 d6 5.c3 ♙g4 6.h3 ♙h5 7.d4 exd4



Would you play 8.g4 here? It's playable. What you have to decide is whether you want to get involved in this very sharp play. First, you should never have played 7.d4 if you weren't prepared to play 8.g4. Thus, this g2-g4 had better be a prepared line. White has several pluses: good development; his king is castled and his opponent's isn't; g2-g4 will allow cxd4, getting a lovely pair of center pawns. Black, if you play g2-g4, will respond with the thematic ...h7-h5 move, and you had better be cold-blooded to face threats to your kingside. This is one possibility in White's favor, but White had best ask his brain and his heart whether this is the kind of position that is comfortable or to his liking.

8.g4 ♙g6 9.cxd4 ♙b6 10.d5 ♘ce7

10...♘e5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♙b5+ ♔f8

11.e5 h5

11...dxe5 12.♘xe5

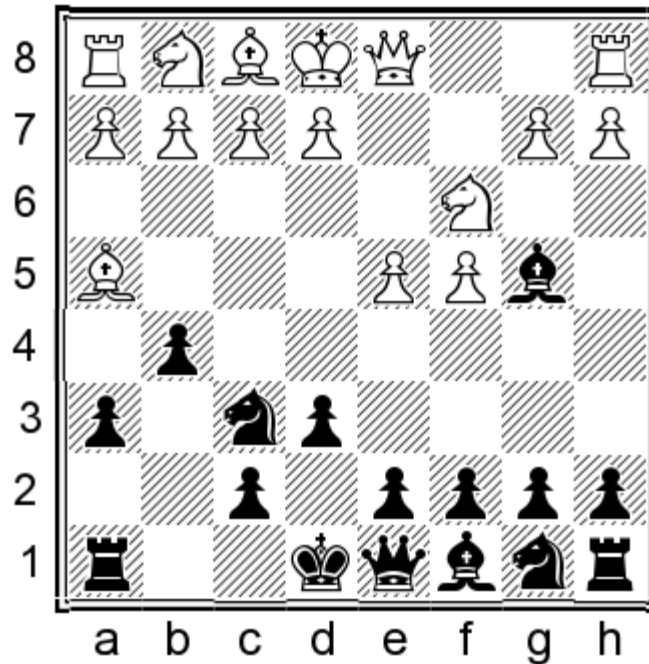
12.♘c3 hxg4 13.hxg4 ♖c8 14.♗a4+ c6 15.♙b3 dxe5 16.♘xe5 f6 17.♘g6 ♘g6 18.♞e1+ ♘e5 19.dxc6 ♗xc6 20.♗xc6+ bxc6 21.♙f4 ♙d4 22.♙xe5 fxe5 23.♘e2 ♙b6 24.♘g3 0-0-0 25.♞xe5.

This doesn't happen in king pawn openings only. In the late 1930s in *The Australasian Chess Review*, Purdy did a magnificent series on the Nimzo-Indian that I used as a basis for my Nimzo lectures on the ICC. In his piece on 4.♘g5, he mentioned that the Soviets had been working on a line for Black that involved playing ...g7-g5. He gave some analysis that is combined here with some *Rybka* "thoughts."

4.♘g5 h6 5.♘h4

5.♘xf6 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♚xf6

5...g5:



6.♘g3 ♘e4

Worth considering is 6...h5 7.h4 ♘e4 8.♚d3 ♘xg3 9.♚xg3 g4 10.e4 d6 11.♘ge2 ♘c6 12.a3 ♘xc3+ 13.♚xc3 ♚f6 14.b4 ♘d7.

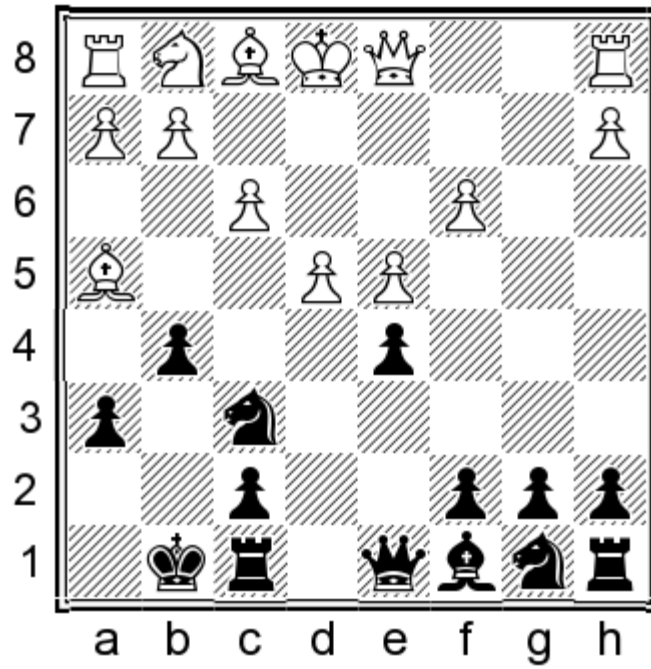
7.♚c2, and now

7...f5 8.f3 ♘xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♘xg3 10.hxg3 ♚f6, where both possibilities create an unbalanced position and put White most likely on his own devices.

It's a drastically different opening, but it's the same story. You have to be prepared tactically, strategically, and emotionally!

Sometimes, it's a bit easier and more thematic. This is a different kind of Nimzo-Indian line, but clearer for Black in terms of playing ...g7-g5:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.f3 ♘xc3+ 5.bxc3 0-0 6.♘g5 h6 7.♘h4 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.e4 g5



Retreating the bishop is not a useful choice as the e-pawn disappears, so White figures that making Black loosen up his castled position would be some compensation, but watch how Black's pieces just flow into the game on the kingside. Because White is so bottled up, Black even has the luxury of taking the time to swing the queen knight to f5 via b8-c6-e7-f5.

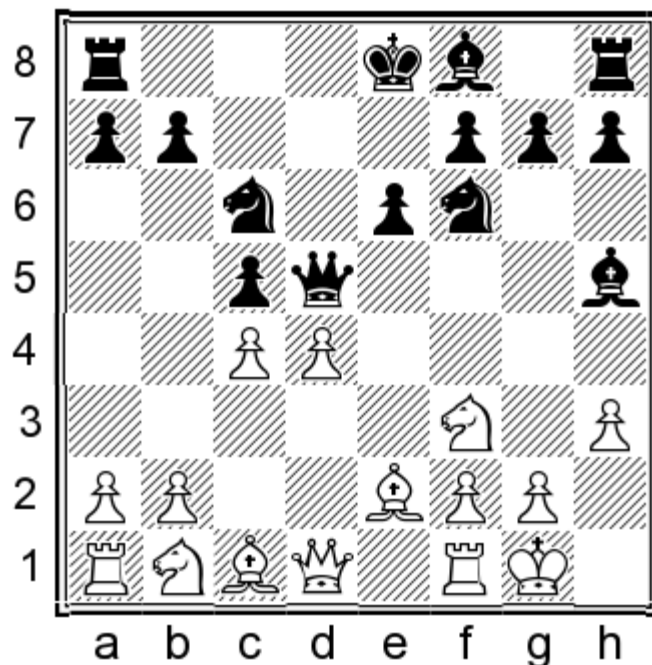
10.e5 gxh4 11.exf6 ♖e8+ 12.♗e2 ♜xf6 13.♕f2 ♘c6 14.g3 ♗e7 15.♗f4 ♗f5

Thus, you must give extra thought to g4 or ...g5 moves when chasing a bishop.

Here's one more example where a position arises that makes one move ripe for g4 and another move a disaster for g4. When I checked the database, I was stunned to see how misplayed this position was:

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♜xd5 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 e6 7.h3 ♗h5 8.0-0 ♗c6 9.c4

Normal and good for White is 9.♗e3, but White sets an interesting problem for Black. It is fascinating that Black shies away from 9...♜f5 and 9...♜d7, both of which are good but look a little risky because of a possible g2-g4, of all things, or just due to general harassment by White's minor pieces of the queen on f5, while in some lines of the c3 Sicilian, the queen on d7 can be discomfited by a timely ♗f3-e5. So, the "safe" 9...♜d8 is played, but it is the worst of the available moves!



9...Qd8

A bad g2-g4 idea comes after 9...Qf5 10.g4 Qxg4 11.hxg4 Qxg4+ 12.Qh1 Qh3+ 13.Qg1 cxd4 14.Qg5 Qf5 15.Qd3 Qg4+ 16.Qxg4 Qxg4; and also after 9...Qd7 10.g4 Qg6 11.d5 exd5 12.g5 Qg8!! (Max Lange fans will grimace at the similar effect that ...Qg8 move has in one of the ...Qxd4 lines).

10.d5 exd5 11.g4 Qg6 12.g5 Qd7 13.cxd5 Qb4 14.a3 Qc2 15.Qd3 Qxa1 16.Qe1+ Qe7 17.d6 Qe5 18.Qb5+ Qc6 19.Qxe7+

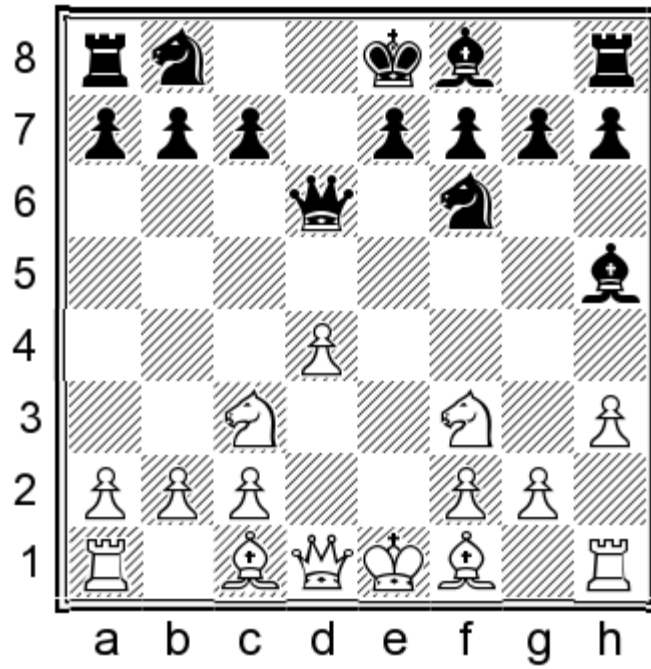
A total disaster!

Another opening rich with possibilities for playing a proper g2-g4 comes in the Scandinavian. In this first of two examples (one later in the Scandinavian chapter in Part II), we have two top-flight internationals coming to the diagram position:

Psakhis – A. Sygulski

Jūrmala (Latvia) 1987

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Qc3 Qd6 4.Qf3 Qf6 5.d4 Qg4 6.h3 Qh5

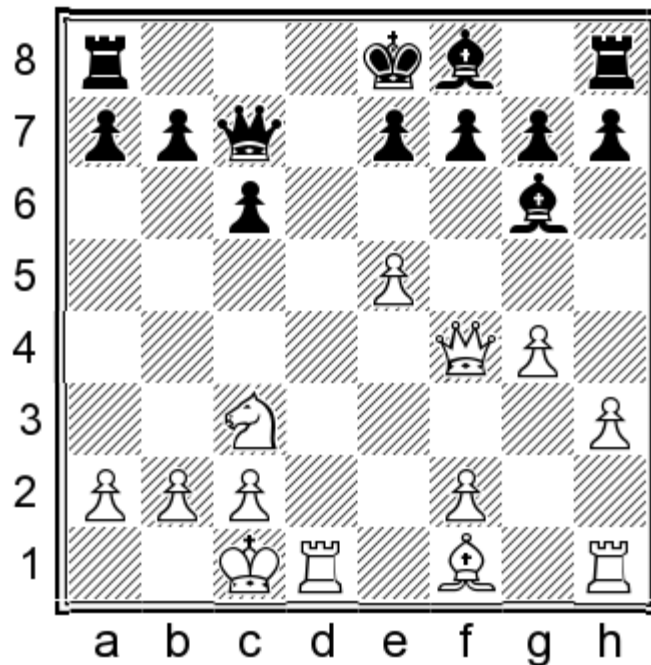


Would you, as Black, be inclined to pin with the bishop when White hasn't castled yet? Would you, as White, be inclined to play 7.g4 here? White did.

7.g4 ♘g6 8.♗e5 c6 9.♘f4 ♗d5

Observe the reasons for playing g2-g4: Psakhis gets a good outpost on e5 for the knight and uses the knight to mask the entrance of the bishop to f4, a very common theme to make threats against the queen at d6.

10.♙d2 ♗xf4 11.♙xf4 ♗d7 12.0-0-0 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♙c7



Now Psakhis makes an unfortunate decision. He plays, shall we say, routinely – and misses a chance for brilliance. He plays 14.♘d3 and does eventually win; however, he misses 14.♗d5!! ♙b8

14...cxd5 15.♔a4+ ♕d8 16.♖xd5+ ♕c8 17.♗e8+ ♖d8 18.♗xd8#

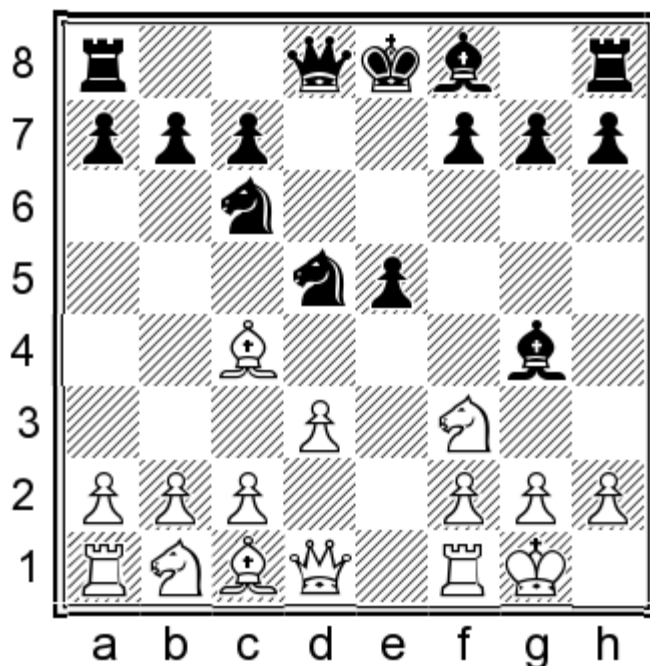
15.♗d2 ♗xe5

15...♗d8 16.♗e3 ♗c8 17.e6 fxe6 18.♘f4 ♙f7 19.♙c4 is overwhelming

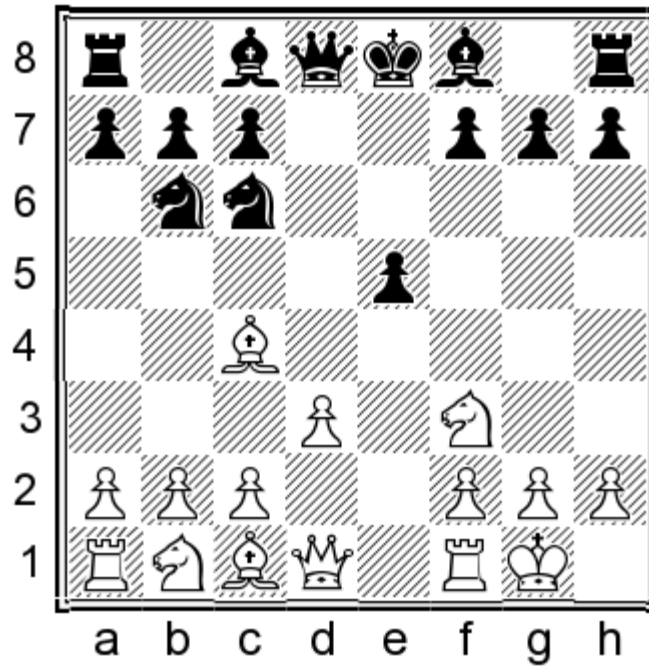
16.♘f6+ ♗xf6 17.♗d7#. Two big guys dealing with issues we're talking about.

The whole g-pawn advance question, along with the bishop pinning, pops up often in the open games (1.e4 e5). It became almost a personal issue with me because I played both sides of the Italian Game (or Giuoco Piano). Although we were taught that rule of thumb mentioned above, it became apparent that a player really needed to see where this concept would show up in their opening selection and then make an in-depth study of the position. All that, to be an amateur!

The Italian Game had two positions that especially intrigued me. One was due to my insistence on playing the Two Knights' Defense. In one line I had adopted Marshall's favorite move, only to find out that Larsen had found an improvement for White a half-century later: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.d3 d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.0-0 ♙g4:**



Copying my chess hero, I would play this line. Marshall liked the open positions and flourished in them. In later years, I would discover a very simple and playable line in this position – 6...♘b6:

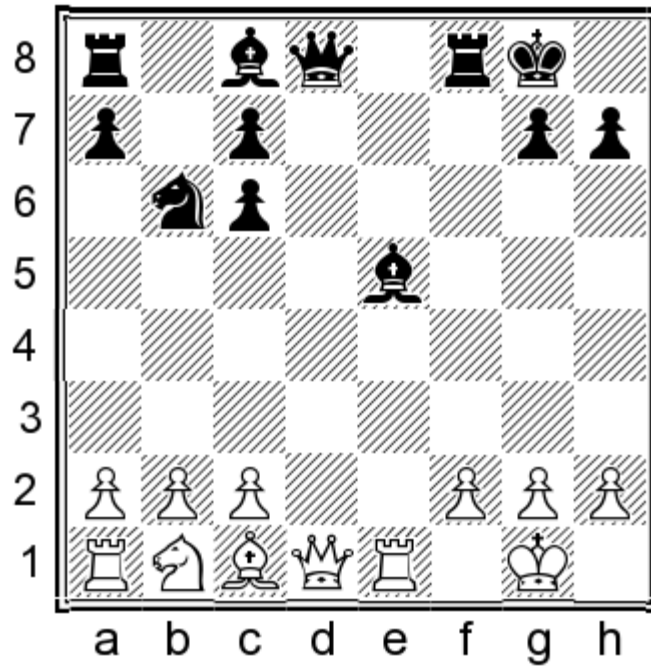


Games normally took this route:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗f6 4.d3 d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.0-0 ♗b6 7.♗b5

More testing is 7.♗b3 ♗f5 [in some positions, in meeting d4 with e4, the bishop is handy at f5] 8.♘xe5 [8.♞e1 ♗d6 9.♗f4 ♘d7 10.d4 0-0 11.♘xe5 ♘dxe5 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♞xd1; 8.♘g5 ♗g6 9.♞f3 ♞d7] 8...♘xe5 9.♞e1 f6 10.f4! [10.d4 ♗e7] 10...♗c5+ [10...♞d4+?!] 11.♔h1 ♗f2! 12.♞e2 ♗g4 13.fxe5 ♞e7 14.♘d2 ♗xe2 15.♞xe2 ♗d4 16.e6 f5! 17.♘f3 ♗f6 18.♘e5 0-0 19.♘d7 ♘xd7 20.exd7+ ♔h8 21.♞xe7 ♗xe7 22.♗d2 ♞ad8 23.♗e6 h6 and, if you can stand a little discomfort, you're OK.

7...♗d6 8.♞e1 f6 9.d4 0-0 10.dxe5 fxe5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 and many players who had not been paying attention suddenly realized that they have just lost a piece! **12.♘xe5 ♗xe5**. They had missed the back-rank mate threat.



One of Fred Wilson's students won this little variation. These are two 1600 players:

Viano – Chachkes

New York 2013

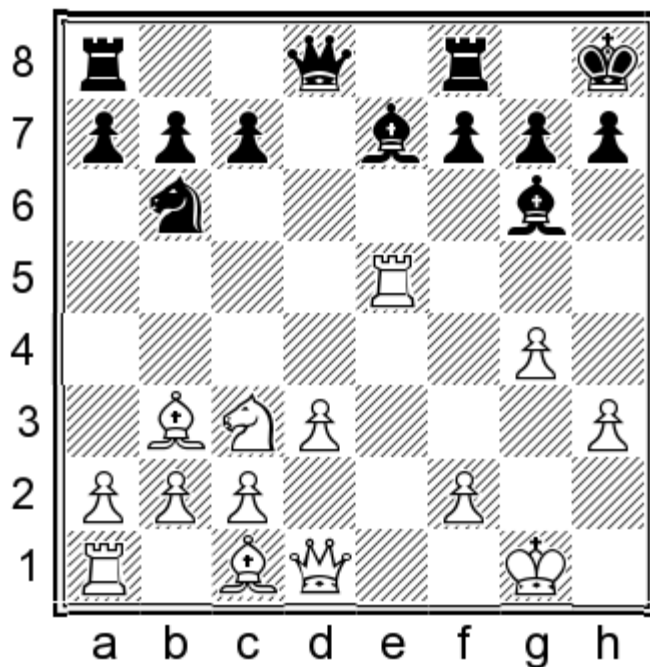
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗f6 4.d3 d5 5.exd5 ♗xd5 6.0-0 ♗b6 7.♗b3 ♗f5 8.♞e1 ♗d6 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗f4 ♖d7 11.d4 0-0-0 12.dxe5 fxe5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♖xd7+ ♞xd7 16.♞xe5 ♞d1+ 0-1. Fred calls this back rank mate idea the Tamburro Trap!

Meanwhile, back at the diagram on the previous page after 6...♗g4: 7.♞e1 ♗e7 8.h3 ♗h5

Decades ago, my friend and FIDE Master Steve Stoyko gave me a lesson in why taking the knight wasn't good: 8...♗xf3 9.♖xf3 ♗d4 10.♖g4 0-0 11.♞xe5 (Larsen – Berger, Amsterdam 1964) 11...♗xc2 12.♞xd5 ♖e8 13.♞e5 ♖d8 (13...♗xa1 14.♗h6) 14.♖e2.

9.g4 ♗g6 10.♗xe5 ♗xe5 11.♞xe5 ♗b6 12.♗b3 0-0 13.♗c3 ♖h8

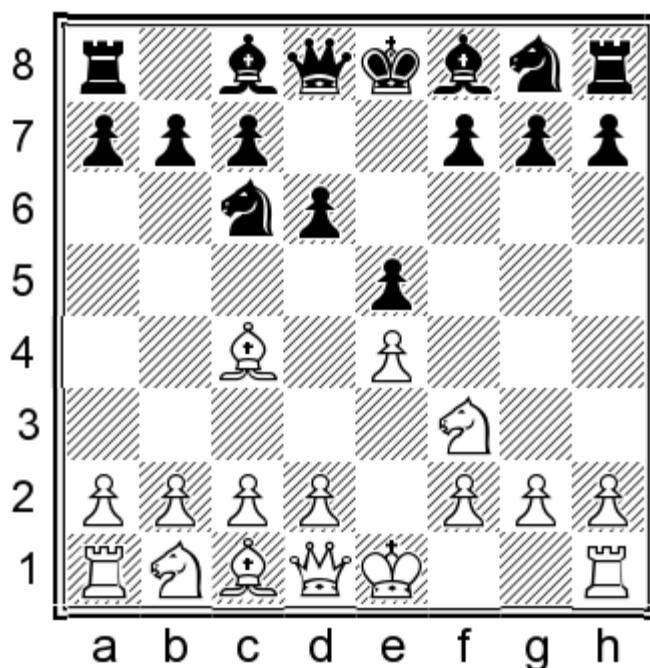
This all was Leonhardt – Marshall, Barmen 1905. Here was the real lesson for me. As I got stronger as a player, this position was not getting the same results because I was facing better opposition.



I had visions of a Marshall-like attack with ...♔d6 and ...♚h4, only to find that 14.♚f3 made that impractical. Marshall obviously played ...♕h8 to play ...f7-f5. So, I combined all these ideas and met this: **14.♚f3 f5 15.♚g2** (even 15.♚xb7 is possible) **15...♔d6 16.♖e2 c6 17.♔d2 fxe4 18.hxe4 ♚h4** and, as enticing as it once seemed, better players of White would seem to always gain the upper hand. Here the g2-g4 idea works well for White, even though the king is castled on that side. I only found that out by really studying the position in an opening where I knew I might reach that situation.

There's another line in the Italian Game that also shows g2-g4 to advantage:

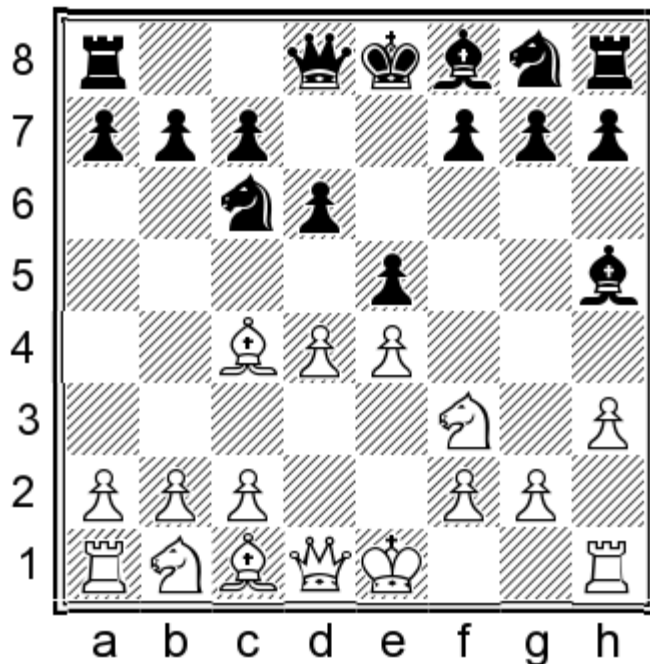
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 d6



Richard Réti, in *Masters of the Chessboard* (a fabulous book!), made the point that when Black plays ...d7-d6 in

the open games, White should generally respond with d2-d4. It works rather nicely here.

4.d4 ♖g4 5.h3 ♗h5

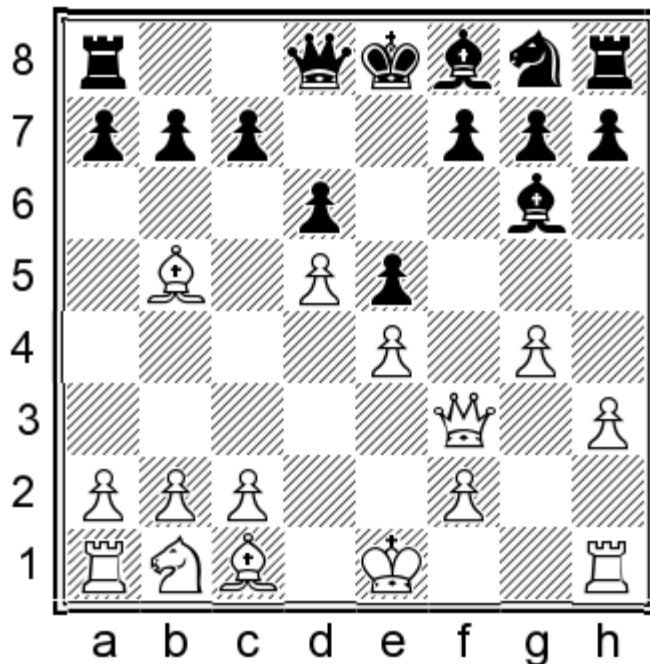


Black could take with 5...♗xf3, but then 6.♖xf3 ♖f6 7.♖b3 gives White the edge, so...

6.d5 ♘d4

More solid is 6...♘b8 7.♘c3 ♘d7 8.♗e3 ♗e7 9.g4 ♖g6 10.♖d3 (Vasiukov – Bakulin, USSR Chp. 1965), but White's still better.

7.g4 ♘xf3+ 8.♖xf3 ♗g6 9.♗b5+



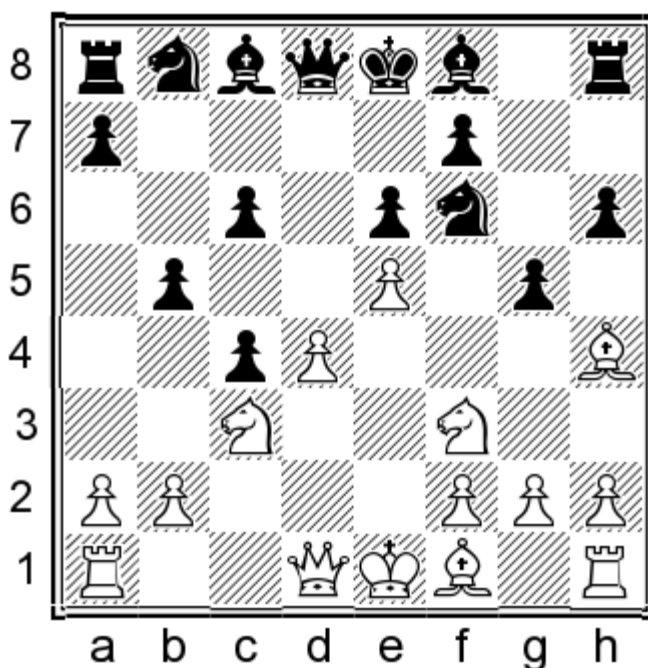
White is clearly better here. The black king has to move as the bishop has left the c8-h3 diagonal. (Incidentally – and this is worth noting in d- and e-pawn openings – once the queen bishop leaves that diagonal, it cannot cover checks or protect the b-pawn on its starting square. That’s always something to consider.) The black bishop has become a “tall pawn” and White will castle queenside. The king’s position on e7 will be a constant source of worry for Black.

What do we learn from all this? General rules of thumb are good, but not perfect. You need to prepare if you know you’re heading in that direction, whether as a ...♗g4 (♗g5) player or as the player who’s getting pinned.

We would be remiss if we didn’t look at one more aspect of the ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 sequence. This also happens in all sorts of openings: ♖xg5!?.

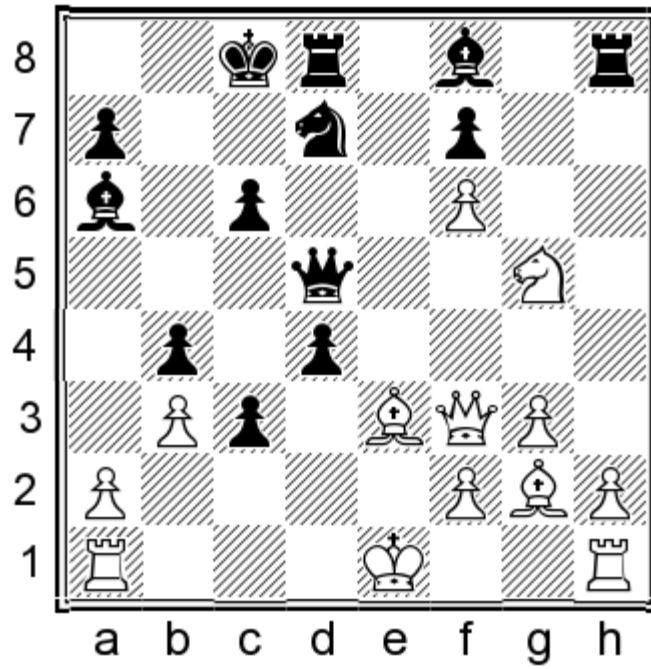
A good many modern players are familiar with this sharp opening first brought to prominence by Mikhail Botvinnik. Here’s the opening of Mikenas – Botvinnik, USSR Chp. 1944:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♗f3 e6 5.♗g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5



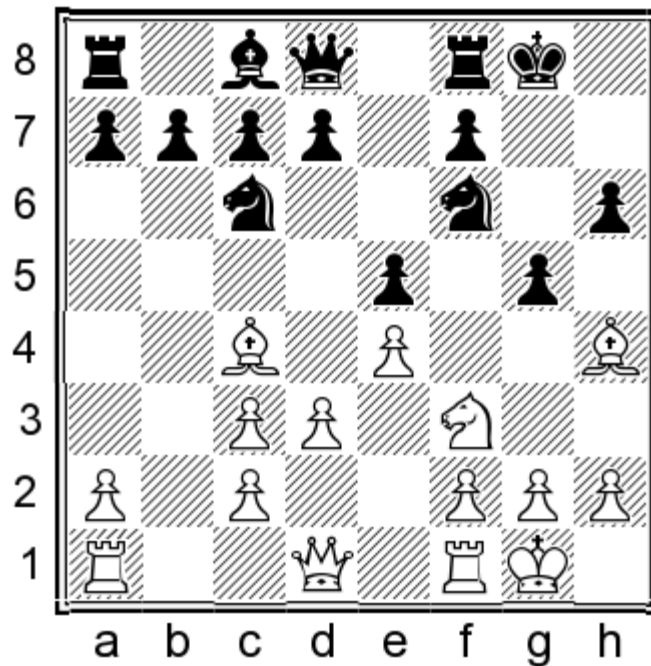
This war then continued:

9.♖xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♗bd7 11.exf6 ♖a5 12.g3 b4 13.♗e4 ♗a6 14.♖f3 0-0-0 15.♗g2 ♖d5 16.♗e3 c3 17.b3 e5 18.♗g5 exd4



Needless to say, this caught the eye of quite a few players on both sides and is fought over to this day. It can happen in the open games as well: Daniels – Walker, London 1841:

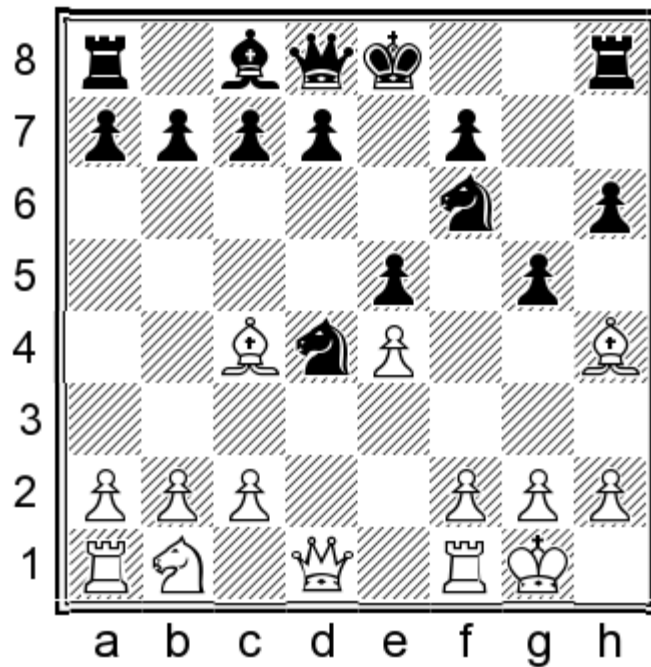
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 0-0 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 ♙b4 (moving the piece twice is not the best idea, but what follows is worse) **8.0-0 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 g5?**



10.♘xg5! hxg5 11.♙xg5 ♗g7 12.f4 and White breaks through with a decisive attack on f6.

A similar and more dramatic example of hitting f6 (without ♘xg5) occurs in the Max Lange Attack:

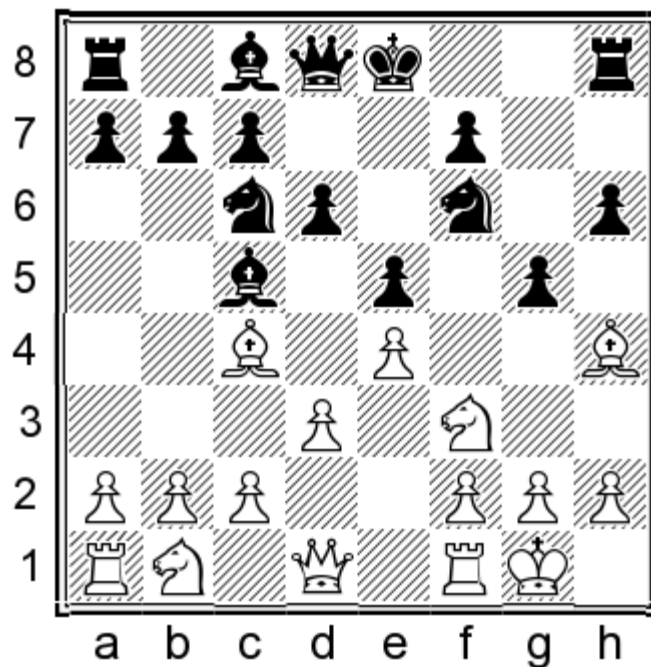
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♖f6 5.d4 ♙xd4 6.♗xd4 ♗xd4 7.♙g5 h6 8.♙h4 g5



9.f4 gxf4 10.♙xf4 exf4 11.♚xd4 0-0 12.♙xf6 ♚e8 13.♙h8 and mate follows.

The ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 idea got a good reputation in 1862 with the game Dubois–Steinitz, and became known as the Steinitz Trap:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♖f6 5.d3 d6 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 g5



8. ♘g3

A prepared player would go with 8. ♖xg5 hxg5 9. ♗xg5 ♖g8 10. h4 ♗g4 11. ♖d2 ♗d4 12. c3 ♗e6, although Black is a wee bit better.

8...h5 (Steinitz's idea) 9. ♖xg5 h4 10. ♖xf7 hxg3 11. ♖xd8 ♗g4 12. ♖d2 ♗d4 13. h3

The aforementioned game went 13. ♗c3 ♗f3+ 14. gxf3 ♗xf3 15. hxg3 ♖h1#; 13. ♗e6 ♗e2+ 14. ♖xe2 ♗xe2 15. ♗xc7+ ♗d7 16. ♗xa8 ♗xf1 17. ♗b5+ ♗e7 18. ♗c3 ♖xh2 19. ♖xf1 ♖h8 20. ♖d1 gxf2+ 21. ♗f1 ♖xa8.

13...♗e2+ 14. ♗h1

Again, a better defense would be 14. ♖xe2 ♗xe2 15. ♗xb7 ♗d4 16. ♗c3 ♗xf1 17. ♗xf1 gxf2 18. ♗e2 ♗b6 with another very slight edge for Black.

14...♖xh3+ 15. gxh3 ♗f3# (Ashley – Tollit, Birmingham 1923).

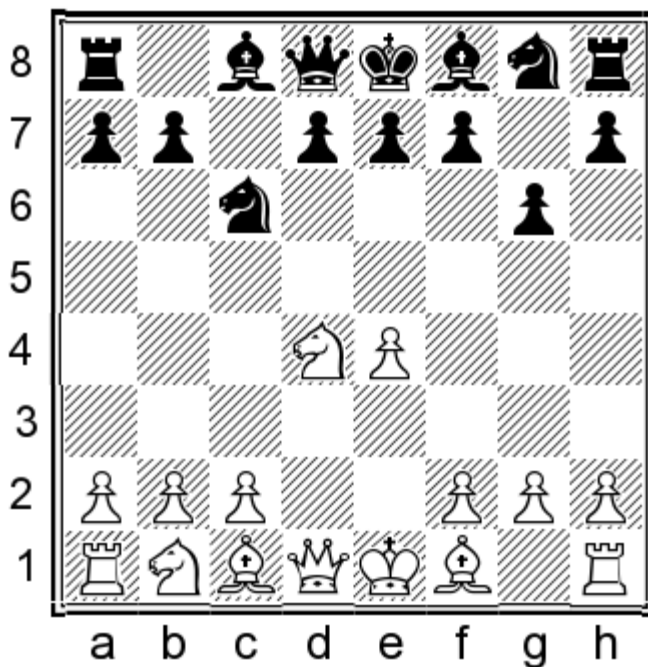
20. Don't Make It Easy for Your Opponent to Make a Freeing Move.

The late world champ, Tigran Petrosian, and the great chessplayer and writer, Aron Nimzowitsch, both gained a certain reputation for preventing their opponents from doing something. Nimzo called it “prophylaxis.” So often at amateur levels (including your author), you see people so wrapped up in their own plans that they forget that their opponent, too, has a strategic plan. A popular opening is one of the accelerated lines of the Sicilian Dragon. It can go like this:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 g6

White now knows he has a very aggressive player on his hands rather than just your run-of-the-mill aggressive Dragon player! If you are playing White, there really is no excuse for not knowing right away what your move is. If you're playing Sicilian lines, you have to have your battle plans ready for all contingencies.

In myriad chess positions, there are good moves, better moves, and best moves...



5.♗c3

This is a good move. It develops a piece. It's not sharp, but it's OK. Then, White decides on following a “normal Dragon” line, but doesn't realize he's not in a normal Dragon. Black is playing an accelerated line and it's different.

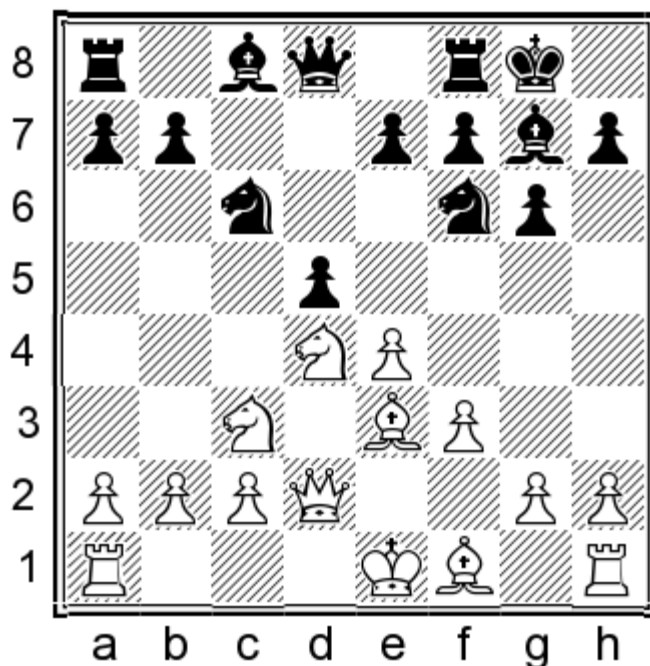
5...♗g7 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.f3

Friskier is 7.♗xc6 bxc6 8.e5 ♗g8 9.♗d4 ♗h6 10.e6 0-0 11.♗xg7 ♖xg7 12.exd7 ♗xd7 13.♗xd7 ♗xd7 14.0-0-0.

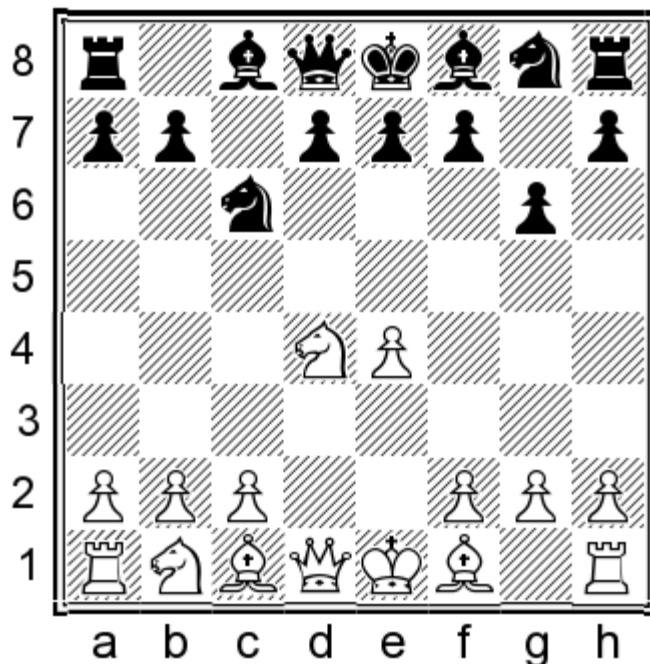
7...0-0 8.♗d2 d5

He has deliberately refrained from ...d7-d6 so he can play ...d7-d5, the freeing move, in one jump. White, by

playing what he considers to be routine moves, is suddenly hit with this position:



That ought to wake him up! A possible continuation is 9.0-0-0 dxe4 10.♖xc6 ♜xd2+ 11.♞xd2 bxc6 12.♗xe4 ♗d5 and Black has loads of play. If White is not careful, things can go downhill very quickly: 13.♙c5 ♞b8 14.c4 ♗b4 15.♙b1 (15.♙xe7 ♗xa2+ 16.♙b1 ♗c3+ 17.♗xc3 ♙xc3) 15...f5 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗h3 f4 18.♙xe7 ♙f5+ 19.♙a1 ♗c2+ 20.♙b1 ♞xb2+.



So, what should White prepare here? If you're the calm type that likes relatively stable positions, here's a possibility that inhibits ...d7-d5: 5.♗xc6 bxc6 6.♙c4 ♙g7 7.0-0

5...dxc6 6.♜xd8+ ♗xd8 7.♙c4

Or you may be a player that yearns for complex positions, in which case this may be for you: 5.c4 ♙g7 6.♙e3

♖b6 7. ♘b3 ♗b4+ 8. ♙d2 ♗b6 9. ♘c3 ♘f6 10. ♙e3

Or even 10. ♙e2 or 10.c5. In both of these cases, especially the latter, White makes it his business to make Black's defense a chore: no easy freeing moves allowed!

21. Don't Incorrectly Use Computers.

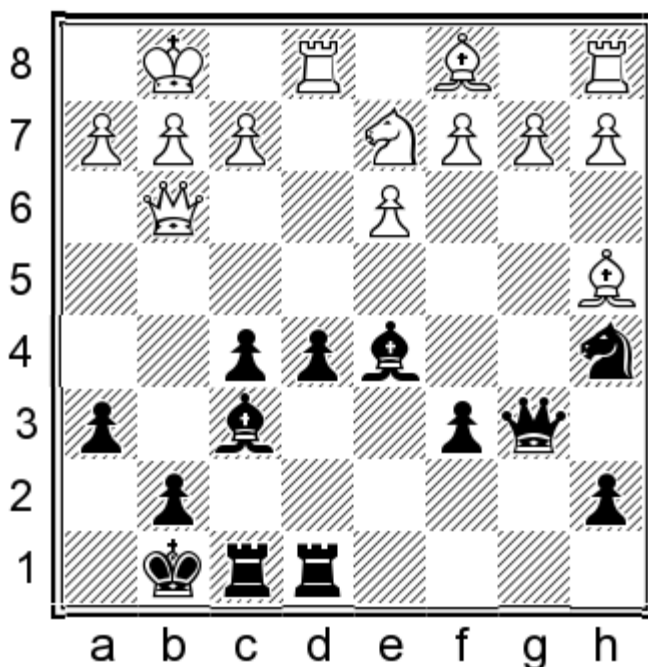
I played in my first international correspondence tournament a few years back. Computers were allowed. I figured that would make it a lot easier. I figured wrong! You don't let the computer do your thinking for you – you use it as a tool to help you to validate or reject what you're thinking. Even then, you need to think for yourself. You have to remember several things: even the strongest engines have horizons (past which they can't see), and evaluations can change more quickly than you realize. Also, computers can't analyze your comfort zone.

Recently, I was sent some analysis to comment on in the Two Knights' Defense. I was told the analyst had used a computer. The main line went thusly: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♗g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗a5 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♚f3 h6**

Somewhat ironic in that, in my ICC lectures on the Two Knights, I recommended 8...♚c7, which was not even mentioned in the analysis! The move chosen is quite good, though.

9.♗e4 ♗d5 10.♙a4 ♙e7 11.♗ec3 0-0 12.0-0 ♙e6 13.d3 f5 14.♞e1 ♙f6 15.♗d2 ♚b6 16.♚g3 ♞ae8 17.♗xd5 ♙xd5.

OK, here we are. We are told by the computer at this point, even mine, that White is better here – a slight advantage, plus-over-equals:



There are two issues with this computer evaluation. The first is the horizon effect. Let's go a few more moves: **18.c3**

18.c4 ♙f7 19.♚e3 e4 20.♚xb6 axb6 21.dxe4 fxe4

18...e4 19.dxe4 fxe4 20.♙c2 ♙h4 21.♚xh4 e3 22.fxe3 ♞xe3. In both cases the evaluation favoring White goes down to favoring Black. It all depends on where you stop.

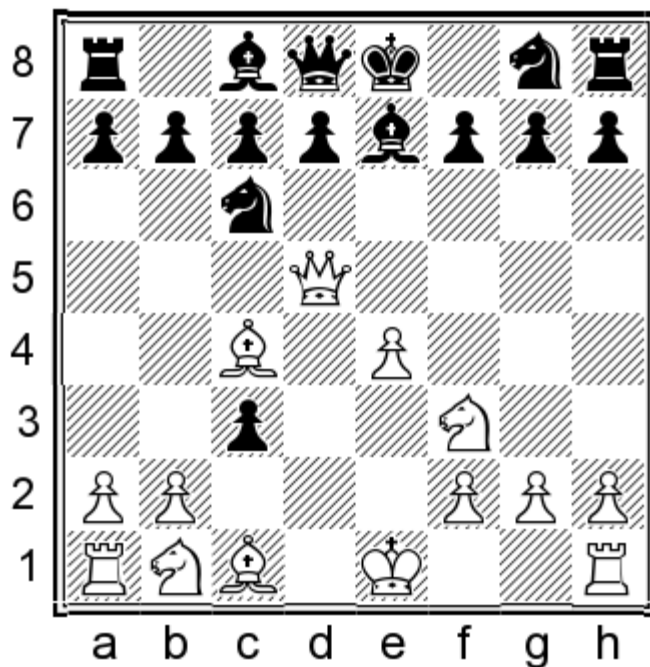
The second issue is the computer's inability to judge your comfort level as a player. With my style preferences, I would be happy as the proverbial clam in high water. All my pieces save one are well placed and well coordinated and that little flaw can be easily remedied. White, on the other hand, has a queen rook and queen bishop that won't be doing much of anything for a while, and the other pieces all seem awkward where they are except for the other rook. The game as depicted in the diagram is a struggle that will be determined by the players. The plus-over-equals means nothing. If you don't mind playing a pawn down in return for active piece play, then you'll be happy as Black. If you are a wizard of defense, you just might like White. People play better in positions they like to play. If you, in any opening, put your opponent on a playing field he doesn't like, it can be worth up to a pawn!

There is a general recognition of this as, time and again at amateur levels, you see all sorts of off-the-beaten path openings for that very reason.

When you're double-checking your specialty opening book's analysis with your chess engine, remember: both of those items are tools. A good craftsman knows how to properly use his tools.

22. Don't Be in a Hurry to Resign.

I have a confession to make. I play a particular line just because I want to see if my opponent will resign in this position (see below). On first glance, it does seem hopeless for Black. If ...♖h6, then ♕xh6 and the mate threat is still on. So it's either heavy material loss or mate. There are 25 tournament games (!) on my database where people resigned in this position. Before you resign, take your time and consider all sorts of moves. What's the worst that can happen – losing on time instead?



The position arises from **1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♗c4 ♗e7 4.d4 exd4**

Quite a few play **4...d6 5.d5 ♖b8 6.♖c3 ♖f6 [6...♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.g4 ♗g6 9.♗e3 ♖f6 10.♗d3 a6 11.a3 {11.0-0-0 b5} 11...b5 12.♗a2 0-0 13.0-0-0] 7.h3 0-0 8.♗e3 c5 9.♗d3 a6 10.a4 ♖bd7 11.a5 h6 12.0-0.**

5.c3 dxc3 6.♗d5.

Rather than resigning, Black can take advantage of the white bishop's coming capture on h6 by threatening a possible ...cxb2. Thus White, after **6...♖h6**, plays **7.♕xh6 0-0!**

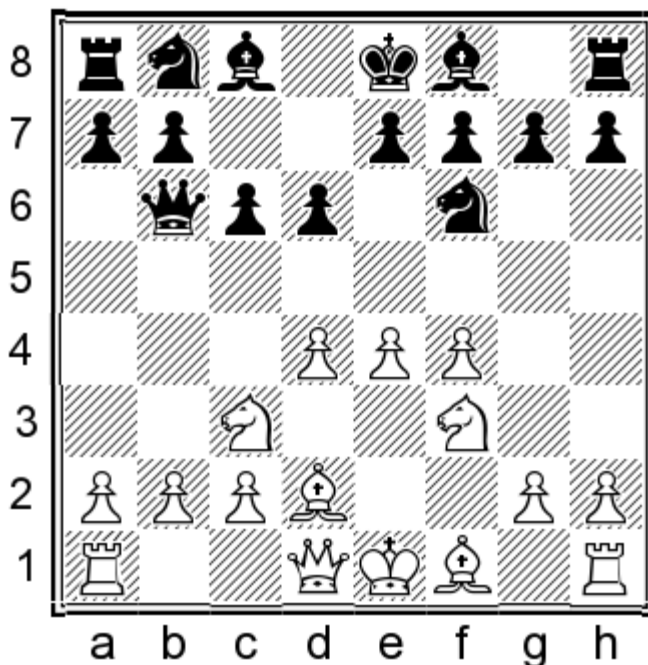
Not **7...gxh6 8.♗xf7#.**

8.♗xg7 ♖xg7 9.♖xc3. Black can now play **9...d6** and follow up with moves like ...♗e6 and ...♗f6. It's a little breezy for Black's king in his castle, but it is far from a resignable position.

23. Don't Sleep in the Streets!

I always love the old saying, “He who takes the queen knight pawn sleeps in the streets.” It doesn't quite have that same romantic flavor when you substitute “b2/b7-pawn.” Old or new, people still take that pawn. In much the same way as we recommend that you be fully prepared before you play that ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 maneuver, we advise that here as well. If you're a Trompowsky (1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗g5) player, you know that very detailed lines come from Black's playing ...c7-c5, ...♜b6, and ...♜xb2.

Many players go with offbeat Pirc or Modern lines that involve ...c7-c6 and ...♜b6. In that case, it's probably best for Black to leave the queen on b6 than take the b2-pawn:



A real “greedy Gus” offhand game example:

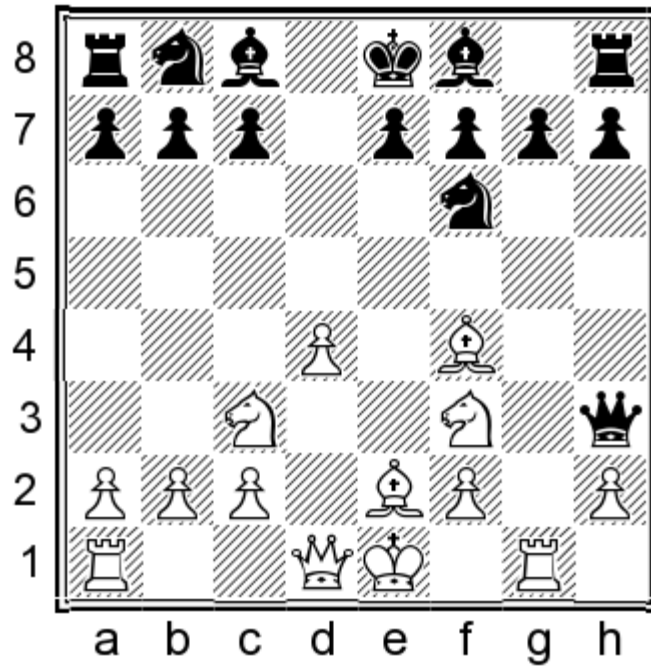
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 c6 4.f4 ♜a5 5.♗d2 ♜b6 6.♗f3 ♜xb2 7.♞b1 ♜a3 8.♗c4

Anticipating 8...♗bd7 9.e5 ♗b6 [preventing ♗d5] 10.♞b3 ♜a5 11.♗b5.

8...♗xe4 9.♗xe4 d5 10.♗e5 dxc4 11.0-0 ♗d7 12.♗xc4 ♜xa2 13.♜e2 e6 14.♞a1 ♜xc2 15.♞fc1 ♜b3 16.♞cb1 ♜c2 17.♗ed6+ ♗xd6 18.♗xd6+ ♗f8 19.♗xc8 ♜f5 20.♞xb7 ♞xc8 21.♞xd7 h5 22.♞axa7 ♗g8 23.♞xf7 ♜xf7 24.♞xf7 ♗xf7 25.♜e5 ♞he8 26.♜xh5+ ♗g8 27.♜g6, and White won.

You can also be greedy with the g2/g7-pawns. This is from a game I played decades ago in a correspondence tournament:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♗c3 ♜e6+ 4.♗e2 ♜g6 5.♗f3 ♜xg2 6.♞g1 ♜h3 7.d4 ♗f6 8.♗f4



Please note that White was in no hurry to play ♖g3. The black queen is out of the game on h3. White is racing ahead in development, will castle queenside, and at the right moment will take action in the center *and* harass the black queen with ♖g3 or ♞g5 and a later ♔g4.

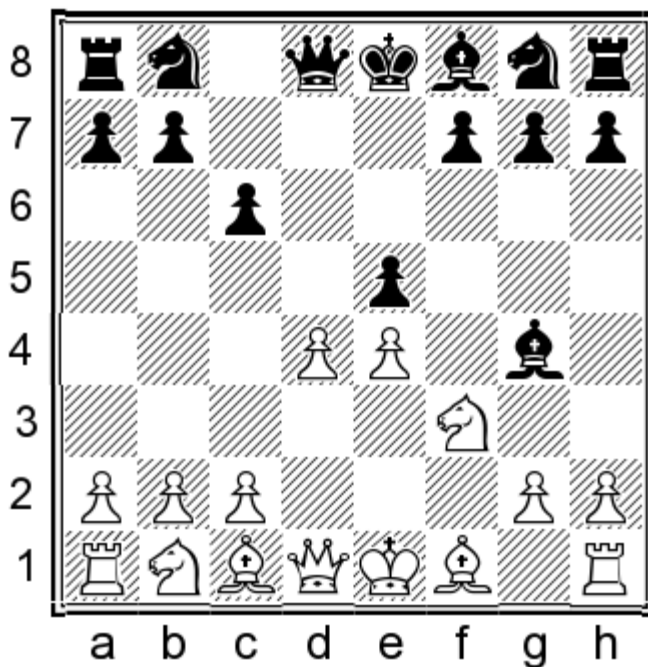
Thus, if you are planning on taking a knight's pawn, please study it carefully!

24. Be Ever Vigilant for ♖xf7+.

The Fantasy Variation of the Caro-Kann has experienced a bit of a renaissance in recent years, and a good many players on Black's side follow this one particular response as a result of several successful defenses. Unfortunately, more than a few overlook the proper sequence or bother even to learn more than a few moves of the line, and then bad things happen. This may be the perfect line to demonstrate our concept, as there are various ways for Black to err.

The line goes like this:

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 dxe4 4.fxex4 e5 5.♗f3 ♖g4



Black can start messing up early with 5...exd4 6.♖c4 ♖g4 7.♖xf7+.

6.♖c4 ♗d7

Another opportunity for negative glory is 6...♗f6 7.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 8.♗xe5+.

7.c3 ♖h5!

And yet a third lack of defense of f7 comes with 7...♗gf6 8.♖b3.

8.♖b3 b5 9.♖e2!

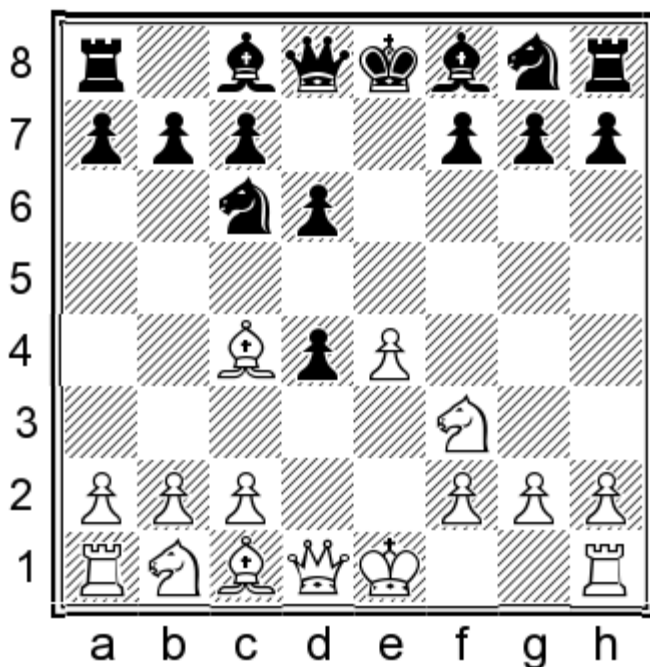
and we now have an interesting theoretical discussion ready to commence.

If Black is careless or plays routinely without regard for the tactical elements of the position, then he's in for a short night. That's why the ...♖h5 move became popular, as it addressed that f7 issue. Also notice that two bishop retreats bolstered each side's play.

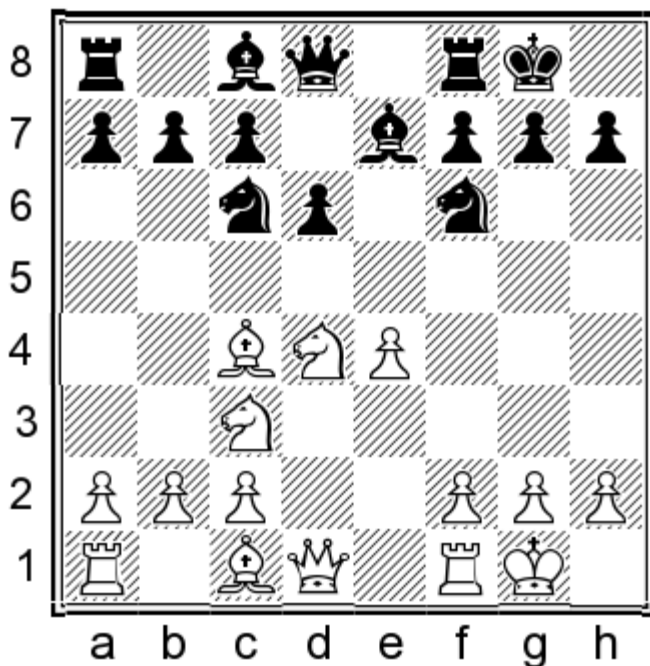
25. Do Not Be so Eager to Play so “Solidly” That You Block in Your Bishops.

You see this happen a lot in the open games: **1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♘f3 ♗c6 4.♙c4 d6.**

I’ve actually asked people why they play ...d7-d6 here. The usual answer is that they are afraid of 4...♗f6 5.e5 and sometimes also figure that they can block the attack on f7 with ...♙e6.



Their overall strategic plan goes **5.♗xd4 ♗f6 6.♗c3 ♙e7 7.0-0 0-0:**



White is not winning here. He is freer, though. Black does have a solid if lifeless position. He might try ...♖c6-♖e5 to hit the bishop, but the clergyman will retreat to a sanctuary at b3 or e2 (especially if ...♖c6-a5) and then play f2-f4, chasing the knight. If Black plays ...♖c6-a5 instead, then from e2 the bishop will find a nice post on f3 after f2-f4. Following an old Nimzowitsch idea against the Philidor, White could even consider b2-b3 and ♗b2, using the long diagonal, or playing ♗e3 prefaced by h2-h3.

Do you really want to play this way as Black? Or would you rather fight for the initiative with 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♖f3 ♖c6 4.♗c4 ♗f6 5.e5 d5 6.♗b5 ♖e4 as your response? Your choice.

26. Don't Underestimate Exchange Variations.

IM John Watson, who has written so many classics on the openings, opined in his book on the French Defense that he had such an incredible score against White playing an Exchange French, that he had every confidence that he could win just about every time. He was utterly contemptuous of this line. As a very fine player with a demonstrated record, he is completely justified. However, you as an amateur can't afford to take White's play as inferior and not worry.

I was curious to see what an 1800+ player would do these days (many years ago I beat two masters with the Winawer exchange line 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙d3, and they both underestimated it).

It was a five-minute game, but it proves the point of the caution: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.♙d3 h6 7.♙h4 ♙d6 8.♘ge2 ♚e7 9.♚d2 ♘bd7**

9...0-0 10.0-0-0 ♘a6 11.♞he1 ♚d8 would have been better.

10.0-0-0 0-0 11.♞de1

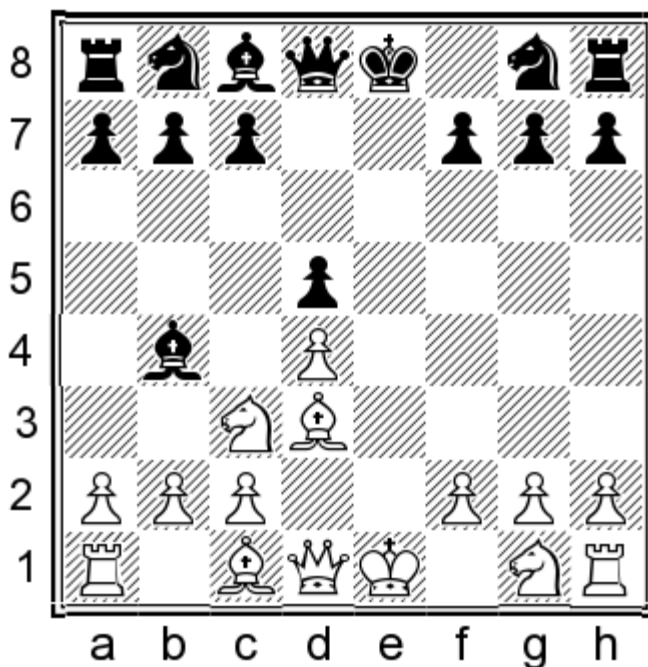
11.♘g3

11...♚d8 12.g4 g5? 13.♙g3?

A typical – for me – 5-minute oversight, especially after harping on ...g7-g5 moves: 13.♙xg5 hxg5 14.♚xg5+ ♔h8 15.♚h6+ ♔g8 16.g5.

13...♚c7 14.f4 ♘xg4 15.fxg5 h5 16.♘f4 h4 17.♘fxd5! (back on track) 17...cxd5 18.♘xd5 ♚c6 19.♘f6+ ♘dxf6 20.gxf6 ♔h8 21.♚g5 1-0.

Speaking of the Winawer exchange line, this brings up knowing your proper sequences. **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙d3:**



Nimzowitsch demonstrated years ago the efficacy of the ...♗e7 with ...♙f5 idea to blunt White's dangerous ♙d3 deployment. Nimzo, though, would preface this sequence with **5...♗c6!**.

This forces White to protect d4, and preference has been given to either 6.♗ge2 or 6.♗f3, both of which block the d1-h5 diagonal for the queen. Those two masters I mentioned both routinely played 5...♗e7 first and were met by a move that goes back to the 1920s: 6.♙h5!. The queen can't be harassed effectively because that would weaken the kingside.

I learned this from an old Tartakower book that had this little gem in it:

Canal – Sacconi

Merano 1926

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙d3 ♗e7 6.♙h5 ♙d7 7.h3 (to stop ♙g4) 7...g6 8.♙f3 ♗f5 9.♗ge2 ♗c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗xd5 ♗cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♙e4 ♙c6 14.♙xd4 ♙c5 15.♗f6+ ♔h8 16.♙h4 h5 17.♙g5 1-0

If you're a French player dreading the exchange lines, then pick up a copy of Watson's latest edition and learn how to win!

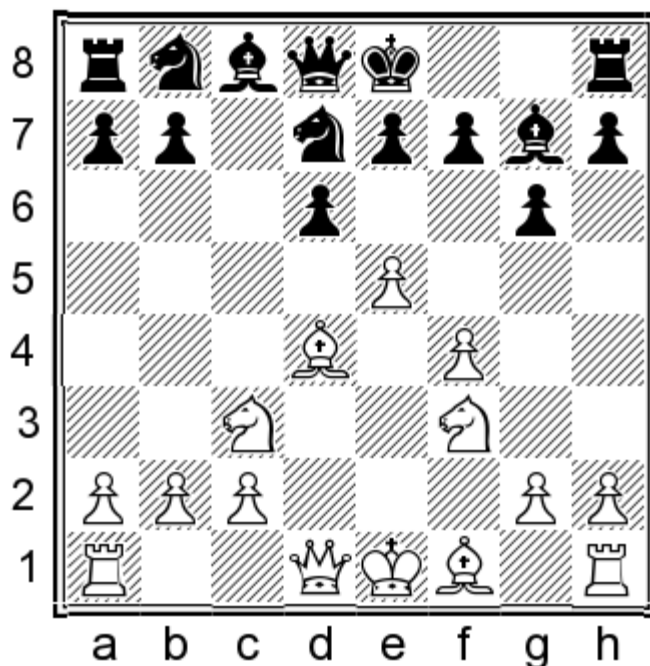
27. Beware Sudden Pawn Thrusts!

If you're a Pirc player, pay attention: **1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.f4 ♕g7 5.e5.**

This early e4-e5 thrust was championed by Chris Baker in a pamphlet decades ago, and I picked it as a topic for several of my ICC lectures on the Pirc.

One of the possible replies that seems to attract quite a few players is this one:

5...♗fd7 6.♗f3 c5 7.♕e3 cxd4 8.♕xd4



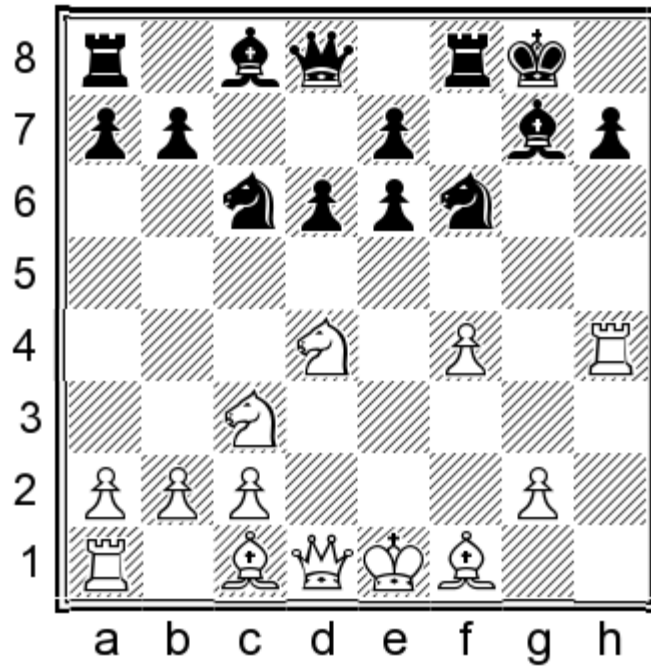
It's easy to see Black's strategy: attack the e-pawn. At this point, Black should keep to his plan with **8...dxe5 9.♕xe5 ♗xe5 10.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 11.fxe5** with an equal game.

However, you would be amazed how many defenders feel compelled as Black to play **8...♗c6**, completely missing the pawn thrust **9.e6 ♗xd4**

9...♗f6 10.exf7+ followed by moves like ♕c4+, ♖e2, ♗g5, etc.

10.exd7+ ♕xd7 11.♗xd4 ♖b6 12.♗b3 ♖e3+ 13.♕e2, and White's in good shape.

This e5-e6 idea arises in the regular Austrian Attack against the Pirc: **1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.f4 ♕g7 5.♗f3 0-0 6.e5 ♗fd7 7.h4 c5 8.e6 fxe6 9.h5 gxh5 10.♖xh5 ♗f6 11.♖h4 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♗c6:**



White has played 13.♙e3 and 13.♞xc6 here. There are many variations even before this. Our point is that both sides must be aware of this possibility and have a plan to implement it or to defend against it.

28. Gambits Are Best Met by Countergambits. The Best Way to Meet a Gambit Is to Accept It. Huh?

This exemplifies the confusion about how to handle gambits. Take the King's Gambit after 1.e4 e5 2.f4. Do you decline it with 2...♗c5? Do you do a countergambit with 2...d5? Do you accept it with 2...exf4? Oddly enough, the answer is yes! You can do all three. A recurring theme in this book is that you should choose whatever makes you feel most comfortable. If you're one of those players who wants to take the pawn and hold it right to the endgame because you feel good about being able to defend, then by all means do that. If you want to turn the tables on the would-be attacker with a countergambit, then go for it! Make sure you don't mind being a pawn down.

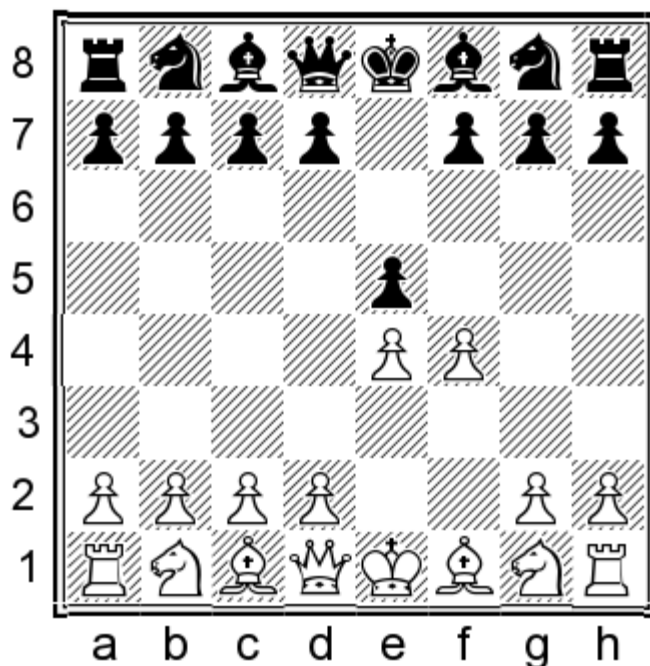
If you play chess, even if you're just starting to play, someone will, at one time or another, play a gambit against you.

In order to figure out what to do against them, you have to understand what they are trying to do. Different gambits have different reasons for being played, but they pretty much fall into these categories:

1. To gain control of the center
2. To speed up development
3. To try and hit an opponent's weakness
4. To be tricky, in an attempt to catch their opponent sleeping
5. To stick an advanced pawn in the other fellow's position
6. To play a positional sacrifice for pressure

Let's take a look at these six different types of gambits using all sorts of openings. We start with one that tries two things at once.

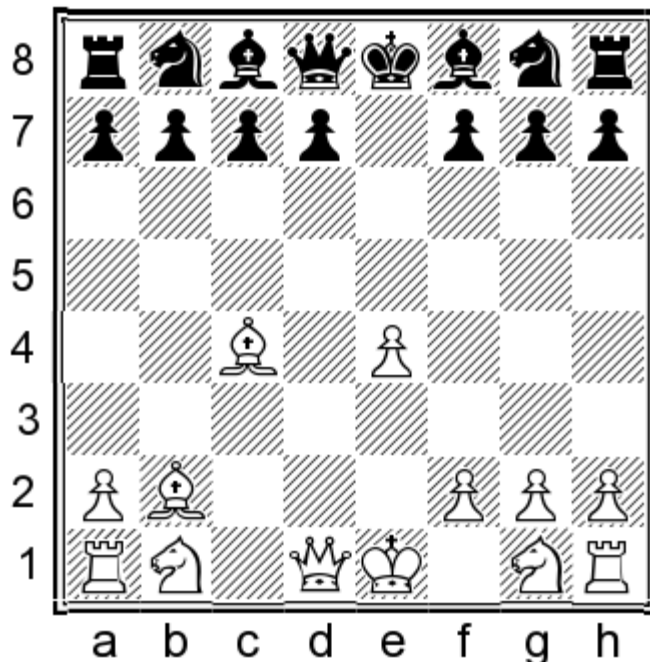
The King's Gambit: 1.e4 e5 2.f4:



Here, White wants Black to take his f-pawn so he can get d2-d4 in later (usually after 2.♗f3 or 2.♗c4) and *then*

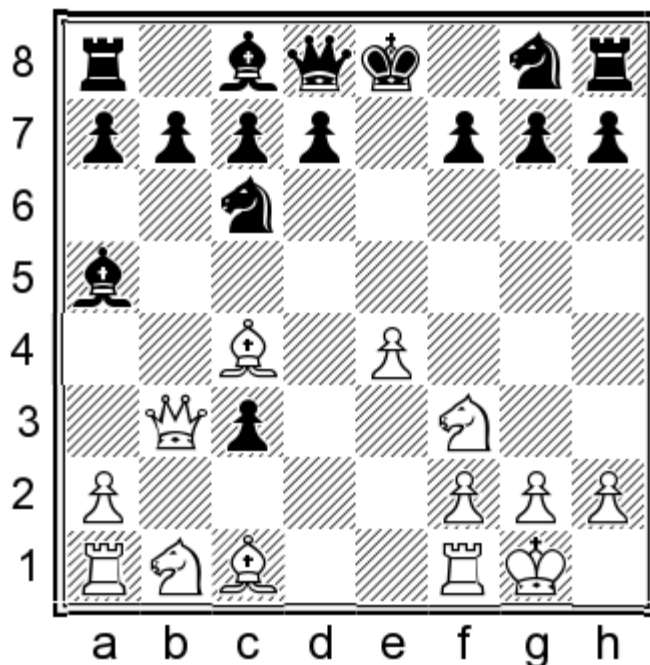
get castled in a hurry and use his rook along the f-file and his bishop on c4 to attack Black's weakest point, f7.

The Danish Gambit: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♗c4 cxb2 5.♗xb2:



You have to admit, those two bishops look pretty cool! White has two very well-developed pieces *and* he is attacking f7 and g7, so Black has to worry about how to develop his kingside.

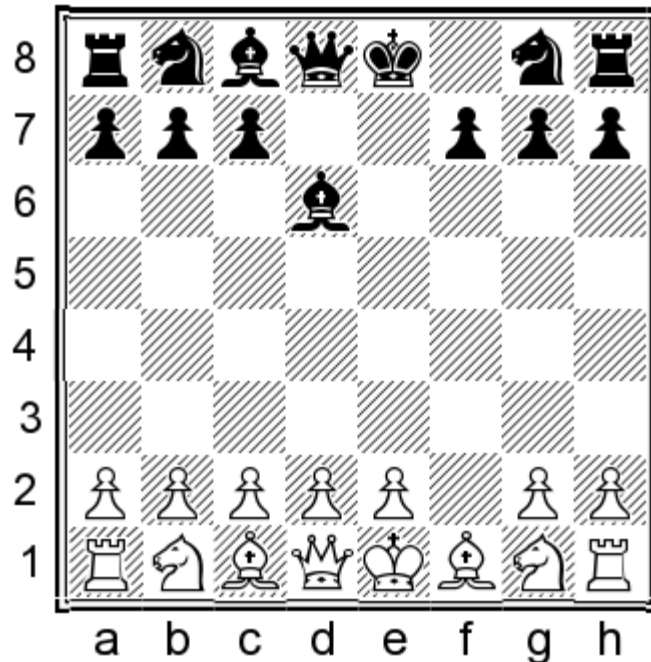
The Evans Gambit: 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4 5.c3 ♗a5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 dxc3 8.♕b3:



This opening was very popular and dangerous in the 19th century, and even Garry Kasparov would pull this rabbit out of his hat every now and then. First, White tempts Black's bishop to take his b-pawn so he can play c2-c3 and d2-d4, getting a nice center. Then, when Black tries to break up that center, White ignores him and quickly castles followed by ♕b3 and the queen-and-bishop battery attacks the weak square f7. It's a very

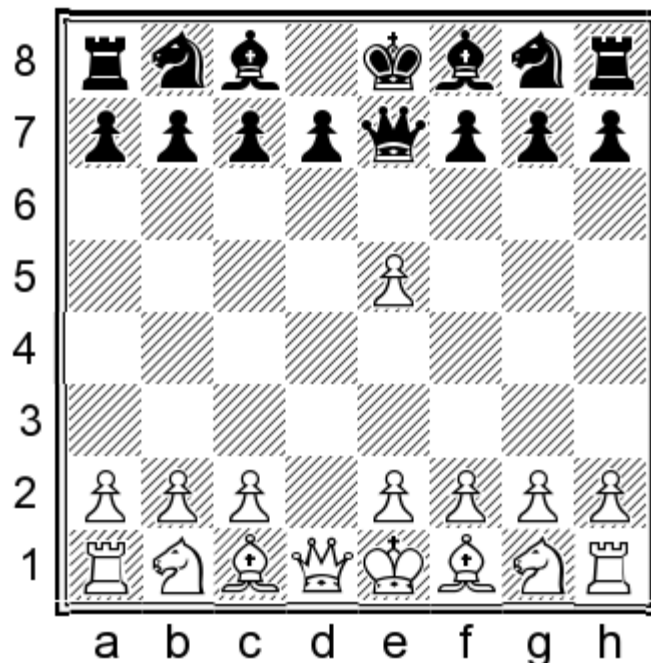
difficult game.

From's Gambit: 1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6:



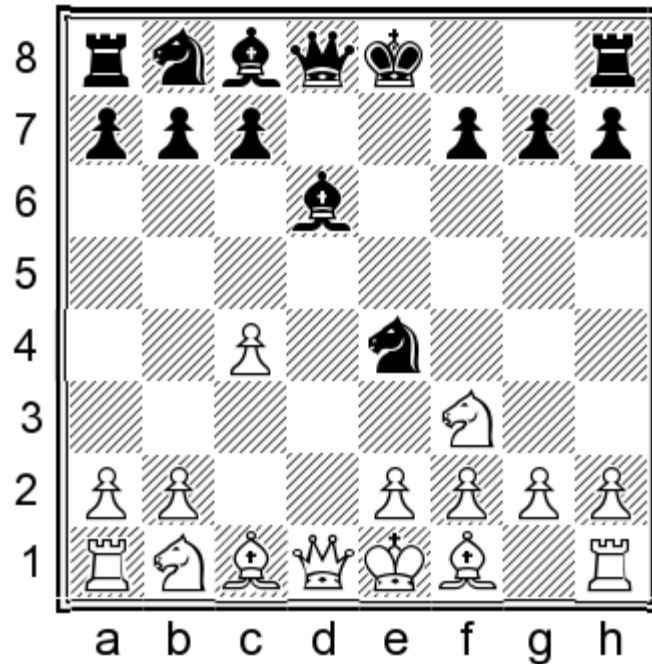
Since White played Bird's Opening (1.f4), Black notices that the f2-h4 diagonal can be taken advantage of, as if it were Black's move here, the game would be over with ...♗h4+ when, after g2-g3, ...♗xg3+ or even ...♗xg3+ would lead to mate. White's best is to play 4.♘f3, then Black looks at ...♗f6 with a possible ...♗g4 attacking h2. It's all about attacking weaknesses.

The Englund Gambit: 1.d4 e5 2.dxe5 ♖e7:



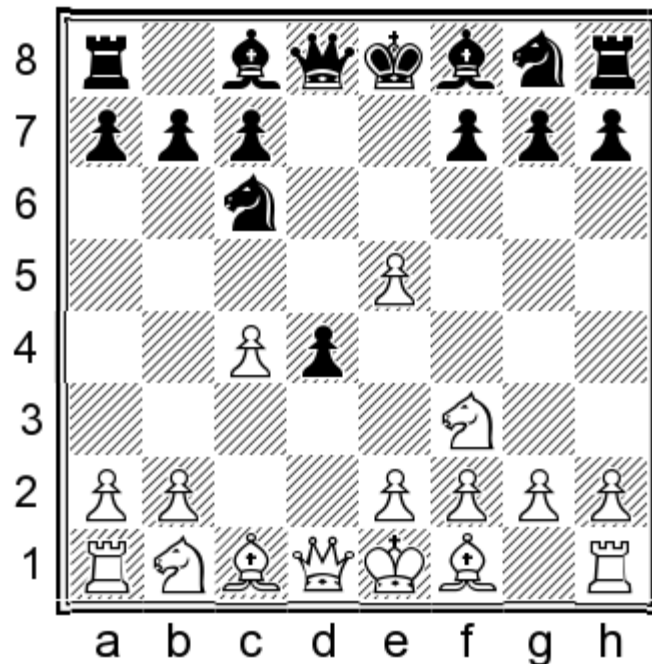
This one is to catch you asleep! 3.♗f4 ♗b4+ 4.♘d2 ♗xf4 and you feel really silly. A more complicated tricky opening is the Budapest Gambit, next.

The Budapest Gambit: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♗e4 4.♗f3 d6 (a second gambit pawn!) 5.exd6 ♙xd6:



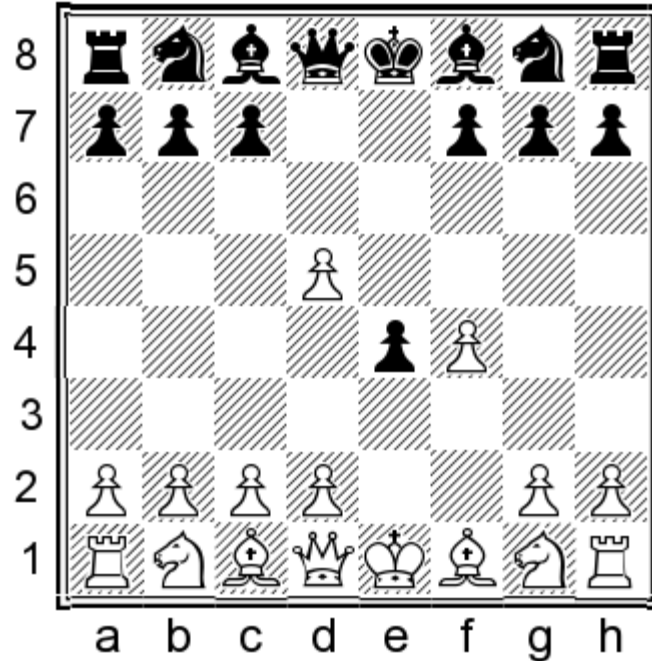
Do you see the trick here? What does Black do if White plays 6.g3? He plays the very surprising 6...♗xf2 7.♗xf2 ♙xg3+ (first two pawns, then two pieces!) 8.hxg3 ♖xd1, winning the queen! White, behind in development, created a weakness and Black pounced on it.

The Albin Countergambit: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.♗f3 ♗c6:



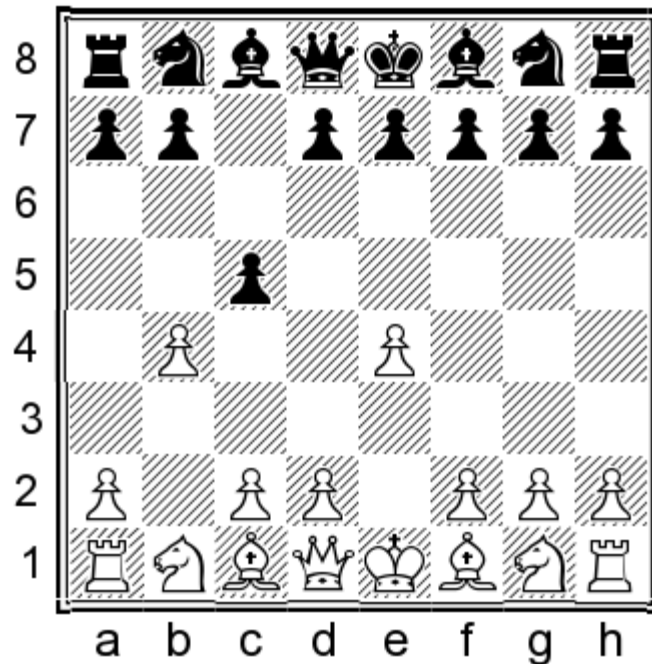
U.S. Champion Hikaru Nakamura has played this as Black. Black gives up a pawn to get an annoying pawn on d4 that he can support. It's a very tricky opening. That's against the Queen's Gambit. If you play a similar idea against the King's Gambit, it's called the Falkbeer Countergambit.

The Falkbeer Countergambit: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 e4:



It's the same idea as the Albin: try to keep either that pawn or a piece at e4 to make it hard for White to get going. Black doesn't worry about the spare d-pawn. He can easily get it back, but will prefer to develop his knights and bishops first.

The Sicilian Wing Gambit: 1.e4 c5 2.b4:



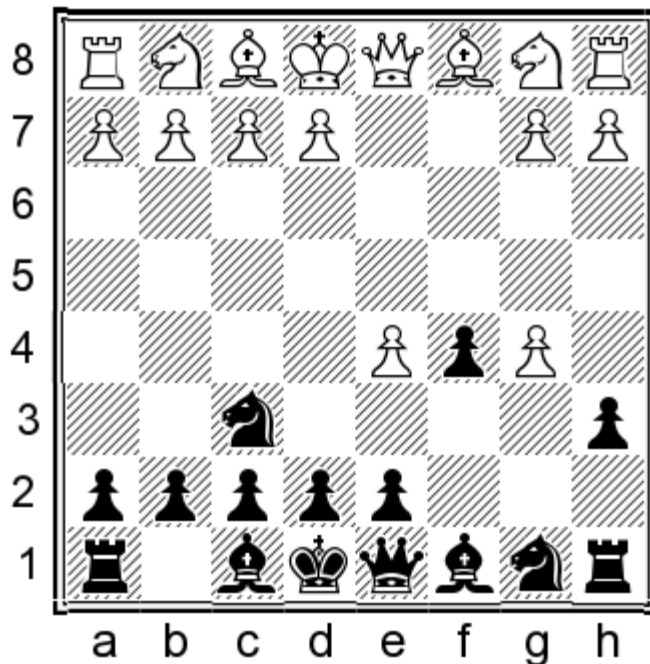
Another gambit to help White get d2-d4 in. Black has to be smart: **1.e4 c5 2.b4 cxb4 3.a3 d5**

3...bxa3 4.♘xa3 helps White develop and get d2-d4 in.

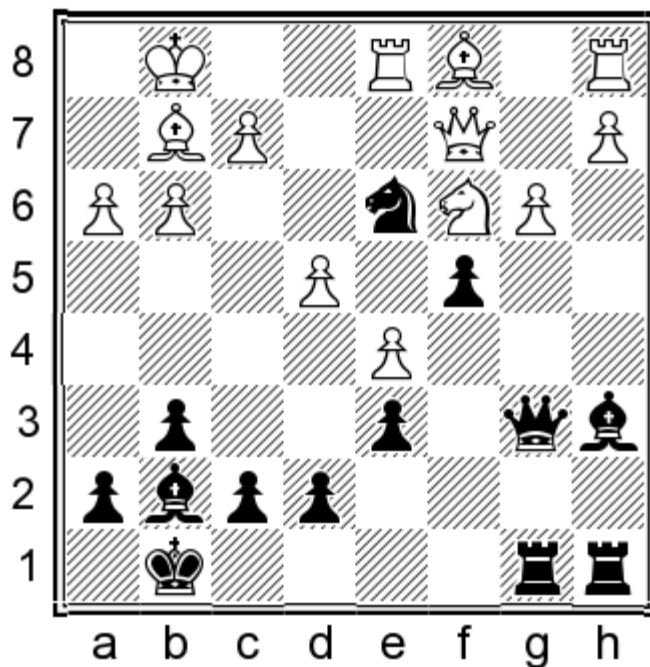
4. **exd5** ♖xd5 (threatening ...♗e5+, winning the rook) 5. **♗f3** e5 and Black's queen is OK on d5 right now because White can't play **♗c3**.

Even Black can do wing attacks. The most famous is the Benko Gambit.

The Benko Gambit: 1. **d4** ♗f6 2. **c4** c5 3. **d5** b5 4. **cxb5** a6:



We're going to give this gambit *two* diagrams. Yes, there is a gambit to help get Black's pieces developed, and here it is. This is a game played by Benko himself in 1971 against Aspler: 5. **bx a6** ♗xa6 6. **♗c3** d6 7. **♗f3** g6 8. **g3** ♗g7 9. **♗g2** 0-0 10. 0-0 ♗bd7 11. **♗e1** ♖b6 12. **e4** ♗g4 13. **♖c2** ♗fb8 14. **h3** ♗ge5 15. **♗xe5** ♗xe5 16. **b3** ♗d3 17. **♗d1** c4:



This diagram speaks volumes about the Benko. Memorize this ideal *position* rather than the moves. Play this game over and think in terms of how Benko puts pressure on and uses the dark squares. It's a lesson all by itself. Not only that, but he trades his powerful king bishop at the right time to win the game:

18.♙e3 ♜b4 19.♙d2 ♛c5 20.♞f1 cxb3 21.axb3 ♘b4 22.♜b2 ♞c8 23.♜a3 ♙xc3 24.♙xc3 ♛xc3 25.♞fc1 ♜d4 26.♙f1 ♞c2 0-1

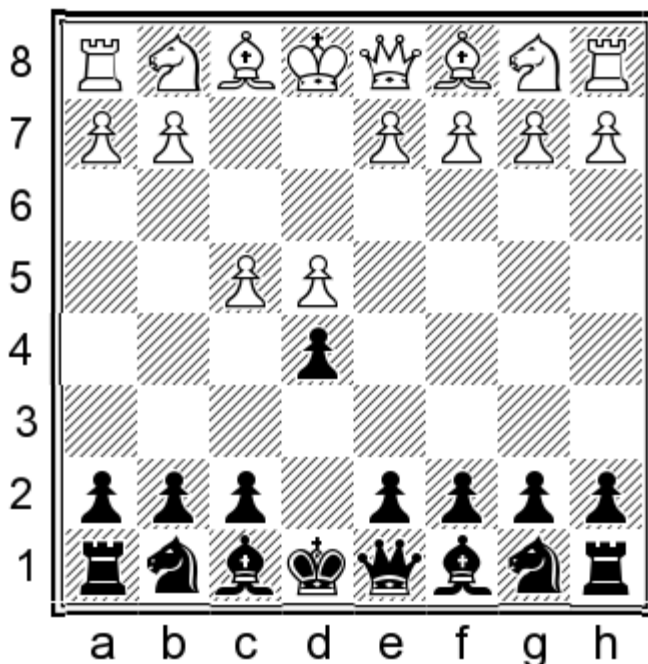
We hope you played all the moves out! Did you see how all of Black's pieces sprang to life? Black even won material. Also (and very important), look at Black's two rooks and queen. Because of the gambit of the b- and a-pawns, Black has what we call "positional pressure" on the white queenside pawns. He can't win them yet, but they have a hard time moving, and White is in a tough spot. That's pressure!

So, how do you meet all these gambits? With one exception, we're going to limit ourselves to gambits commonly arising out of 1.e4 e5, since the recommendation here is that you should play the open games from both sides before moving on to 1.d4 or to flank openings like 1.c4. A good many chess teachers over the years have pointed out that you learn important concepts in the open games about development (time), pawn structure, and gambits (material) within a more limited strategic range. As you develop as a player, you can move on to defend the semi-open games with really complicated Sicilians, French Defenses, Caro-Kanns, or Pircs and Alekhines. There is time for all that. Get the basics in first.

Everybody playing the black pieces runs into a gambit from time to time. At scholastic levels, it happens a lot. Why? Players have learned that, if you study a gambit, a good many scholastic or average players have no idea how to meet it. What happens is that the gambiteer often gets a great position and a win because the game is decided in the first few moves.

In this section we will look at some common gambits (there are so many!) with some quick tips on how to meet them.

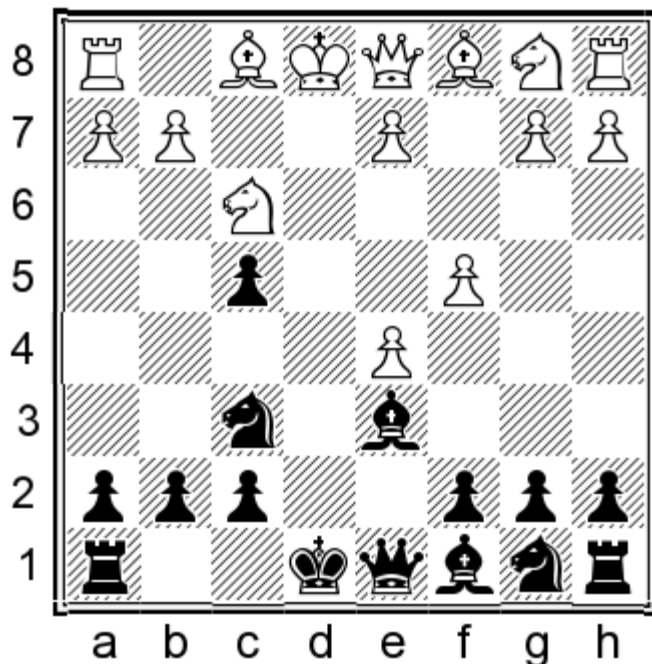
The King's Gambit



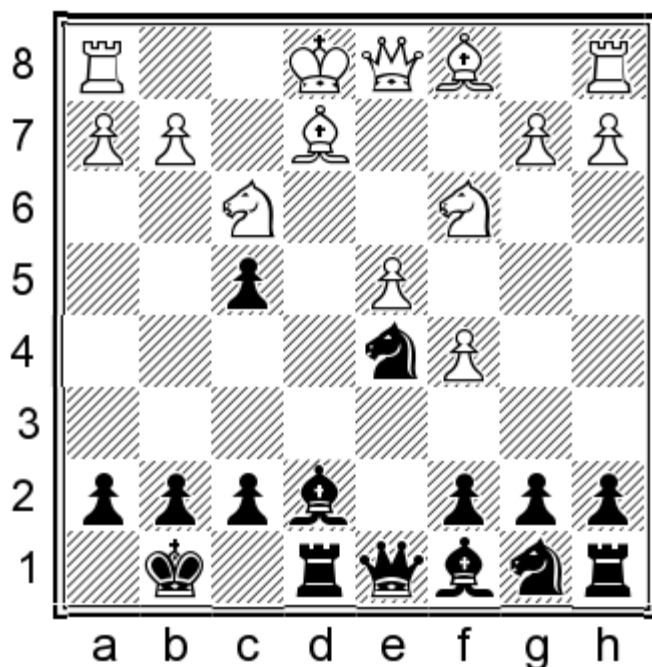
If you play 2...exf4 here, you are playing right into White's hands. Your opponent probably knows all the attacking lines and the defense is difficult. You can decline it with 2...♙c5 as this is a solid move, but books on the opening written from White's side have made this a hard line to defend as well. Other moves like 2...d6 or 2...♘c6 or 2...♘f6 are not that promising either.

We suggest you try 2...d5!. It's good for a number of reasons: You're counterattacking. King's Gambit players don't like defending – they want to attack. Make them uncomfortable! It also gives you a simple, solid way to go, or, if you're an attacking player yourself, it gives you a gambit line to play. Turn the tables on White!

Let's look at the solid approach: **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 exf4 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.c4 ♕d6:**



You're defending the f-pawn and are ready to castle. Suppose White tries to get aggressive with **6.d4 0-0 7.c5 ♖e8+ 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.♘c3 ♘xd5:**

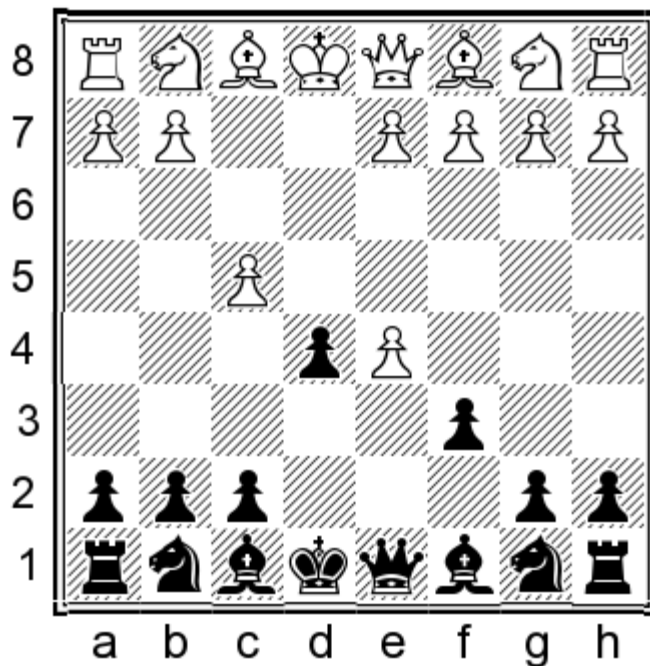


You have a nice game here. Developing with ...♘c6 and ...♗g4 or ...♗f5, and bringing the queen to d7 and the queen rook to d8 to put pressure on the d-pawn, will give Black something to think about aside from getting

his pawn back.

If you like more aggressive play, then you can try another way:

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 c6

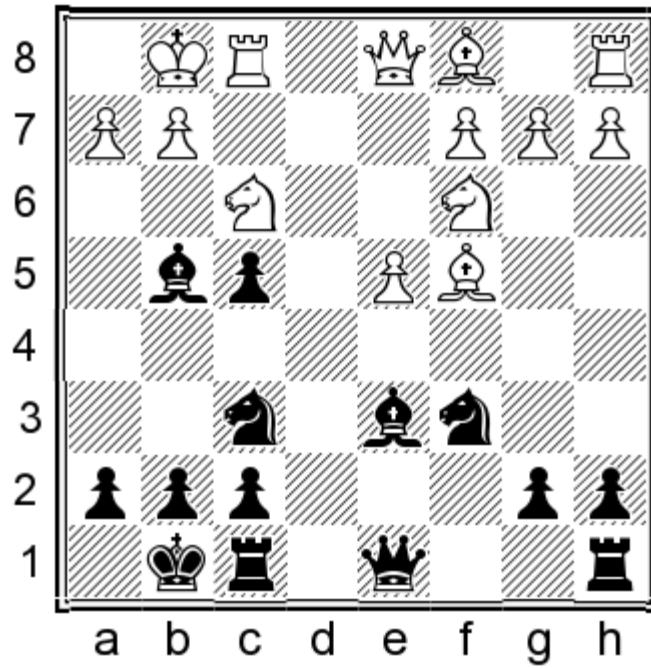


The fun part of this is that you set a trap which more than a few people fall into! 4.fxe5?? ♖h4+ 5.♔e2 (5.g3 ♖e4+ 6.♖e2 ♖xh1 7.♘f3 ♙h3) 5...♗e4+ 6.♔f2 ♙c5+ 7.d4 ♙xd4+ 8.♔g3 ♖g6+ 9.♔h4 ♙f2+ 10.g3 ♖e4+ 11.♔h5 g6+ 12.♔g5 h6#. Wasn't that fun!

The main idea runs like this: **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 c6 4.dxc6 ♗xc6 5.♘c3 exf4 6.♘f3 ♙d6 7.d4 ♘f6**

Even 7...♘ge7 followed by ...♘g6 is good.

8.♙c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♙g4, with this position:



Again, you are well developed. Your queen can go to c7 after a preparatory ...a7-a6 and your rooks can go to e8 and d8. If White tickles your bishop with h2-h3, you just step back to h5. After the ...a7-a6 nudge, you can hit the bishop with ...b7-b5. If you choose the 7...♖ge7 line mentioned above, you would be going to g6 with the knight and then maybe even h4 to pile on the f3-knight. Of course, White would take advantage of ...♖ge7 by playing ♗e4, and you would have to retreat your bishop to c7, but you're also OK there. In this line, too, you would want to hit the white bishop with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5. You're in the game either way!

White might try to avoid all this in a number of ways:

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 c6 4.♖e2 cxd5

4...e4 5.d3 cxd5 6.dxe4 dxe4 7.♗c3 [7.♖xe4+ ♕e7 8.♗f3 ♗f6 9.♖d3 0-0 10.♖xd8 ♖xd8 11.♕c4 ♗c6 12.0-0 ♕f5 13.♗e5 ♗xe5 14.fxe5 ♗g4 15.♗c3 {15.♖xf5 ♖d1+} 15...♖ac8] 7...f5 8.♕e3 ♗f6 9.♖d1 ♕d7 10.♗h3 ♕b4 11.♖c4 ♗a6 12.♕e2 ♖e7 13.0-0 ♖c8

5.fxe5 ♗c6 6.♗f3 ♕g4 7.c3 ♖c7 8.h3

8.d4 ♗xd4 9.cxd4 ♖xc1+

8...♕xf3 9.gxf3 ♖xe5.

White may even try funny ways to avoid the ...c7-c6 variation. The three most popular are 3.d4, 3.♗f3, and 3.♗c3:

a) **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.d4 exd4 4.♖xd4 ♗f6 5.exd5**

Really bad is 5.e5 ♗e4 6.♗f3 ♕c5.

5...♖xd5 and you have not a care in the world.

b) **1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.♗f3 exf4 4.exd5 ♗f6 5.d4**

5.c4 ♕d6 6.d4 0-0 and we're in the solid line above.

5...♞xd5 with an easy game.

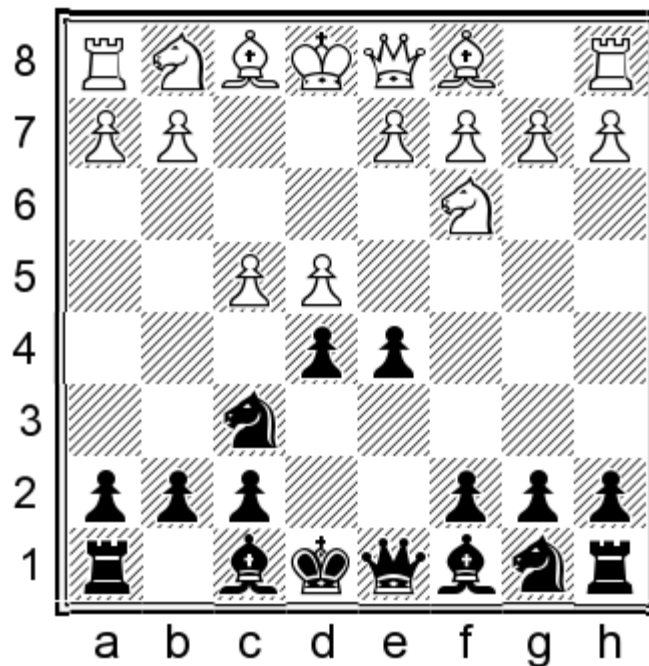
c) 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.♞c3 d4 4.♞ce2 ♞c6 5.♞f3 exf4 6.♞xf4 ♟d6 7.d3 ♞f6 8.♟e2 0-0 and you're good.

Thus, you need never fear the King's Gambit. Just remember the common theme in all these lines: get your pieces out on good central squares, get castled, and centralize your rooks on the e-, d-, and even c-files.

The Vienna Gambit

The last line above has one other alternative that leads to our next gambit – the Vienna Gambit. Instead of playing 3...d4, you have the alternative of playing 3...♞f6 with a position that normally comes about after 1.e4 e5 2.♞c3 ♞f6 3.f4 d5!.

Notice that we didn't take the pawn in this line, either. Here, it's even worse: 1.e4 e5 2.♞c3 ♞f6 3.f4 exf4 4.e5 ♟e7 5.♟e2 ♞g8 6.♞f3 and White's advantage is big.



White has tried a lot of different things here, but if you just go over these few lines, you can see that Black can hold his own:

1.e4 e5 2.♞c3 ♞f6 3.f4 d5 4.fxe5

4.exd5 exf4 5.♟c4 [5.♟b5+ c6 6.dxc6 ♞xc6 7.d4 ♟d6 8.d5 a6 9.♟a4 b5 10.dxc6 bxa4 11.♞ge2 ♟c7] 5...c6 6.dxc6 ♞xc6 7.♞f3 ♟d6 – there is a real similarity with the King's Gambit line here.

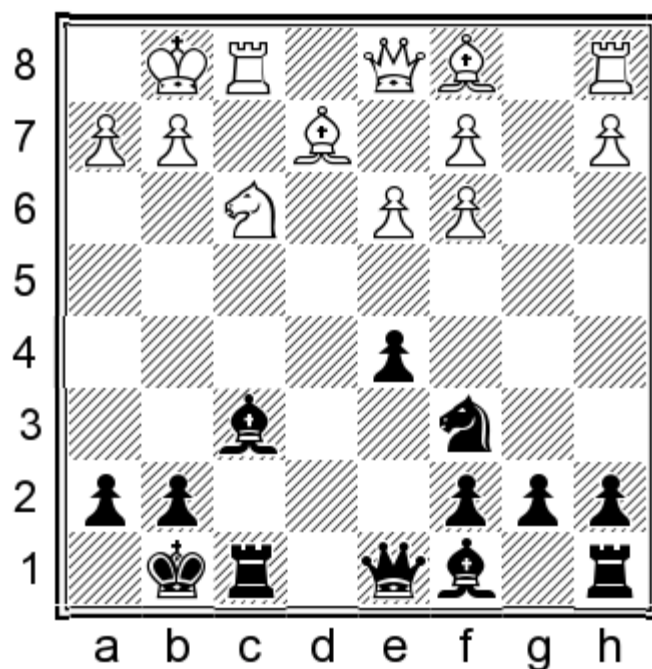
4...♞xe4 5.♞f3

5.d3 ♞xc3! [don't fall for ...♟h4+] 6.bxc3 ♞c6 7.♞f3 f6 8.d4 fxe5 9.♟b5 ♟e7 10.♟xc6+ bxc6 11.0-0 [11.♞xe5 0-0] 11...0-0; 5.♟f3 ♞c6 6.♟b5 [6.♞xe4 ♞d4!] 6...♞xc3 7.bxc3 ♟e7 8.♞e2 0-0

5...♞c6 6.♟e2

6.d4 ♟b4

6...♟e7 7.d3 ♞xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.0-0 f6 10.exf6 ♟xf6:



Black is fine. If White doesn't play a pawn to d4, then you should! Get your queen bishop out to f5 or g4. Centralize the rooks on f8 and e8. Be aware of White's playing a2-a4 and ♖a3 or just ♖a3 right away, but that is pretty easy to handle if you see it coming. Remember that first idea with ...♗e7, castling, and ...f7-f6. It's the great equalizing idea against the Vienna Gambit. In both the King's Gambit and the Vienna Gambit, Black has to remember the importance of good piece placement and castling. That will take the sting out of both of these f2-f4 attacks.

One of the hard parts of meeting 1.e4 with 1...e5 is that there are a lot of gambits to learn to defend against. The good news is that you can defend against them all!

There are certain general principles or hints (or tips, if you will) to guide you when your opponent plays a gambit, especially one you have never seen before.

Here are some pretty good pieces of advice to keep in mind when you're thinking about meeting gambits in the open games (1.e4 e5):

1. You must aggressively develop your pieces.
2. You must always look for a well-timed ...d7(d6)-d5 as a freeing move.
3. You have to try not to abandon the center to your opponent.
4. You should try very hard not to lose tempi. Develop forward! Try not to lose time moving backwards. If you see that he can't get at you, you might be able to move a piece a second time to put it on a better square.
5. You always need to have castling on your mind.
6. You don't have to accept all gambits, but you do have to make a decision about your style as a player. Would you rather accept gambits or decline them? Do you know what the demands are for each of those two paths?

The Center Gambit

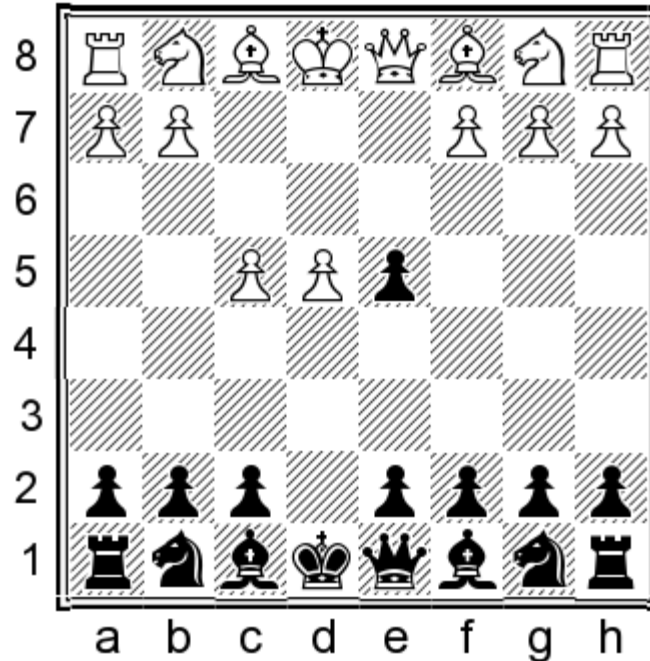
For this reason, we're going to look at a gambit you don't see very much. It was made popular in the early 1900s by U.S. Champion Frank Marshall in his book, *Marshall's Chess Openings*.

Marshall invented quite a few gambits. He would play a pawn down as though he were even in material. He

felt that the advantage in space and/or development put pressure on his opponent to come up with really good defensive moves, often one after the other! That was the risk he took.

He modestly called one of his inventions “The Center Gambit.” It starts out like this:

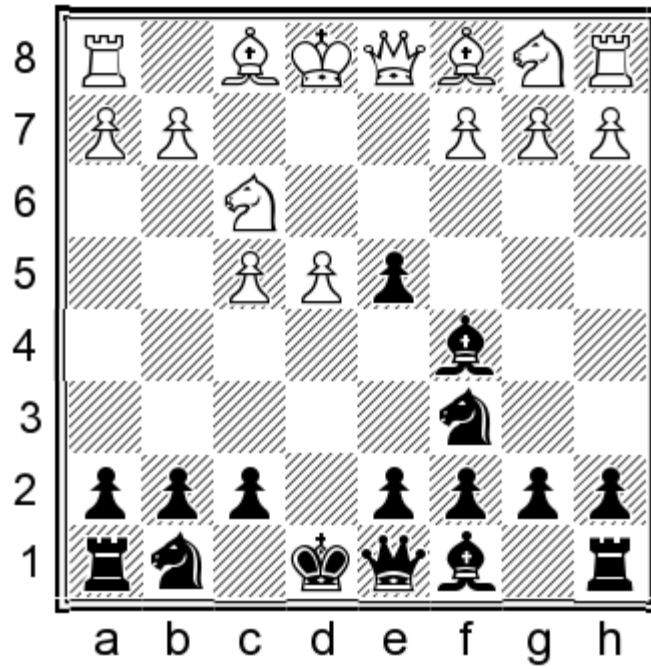
1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.f4



Seeing this for the first time, it can look pretty dangerous! Those two pawns side by side look fearsome, and you can see his knight coming to f3 and his bishop to c4 really quickly. He will castle and generally looks ready to go.

The reason we’re looking at this particular gambit is that in order to meet it, you must use one or more of those six general rules at each move. Let’s see what can happen.

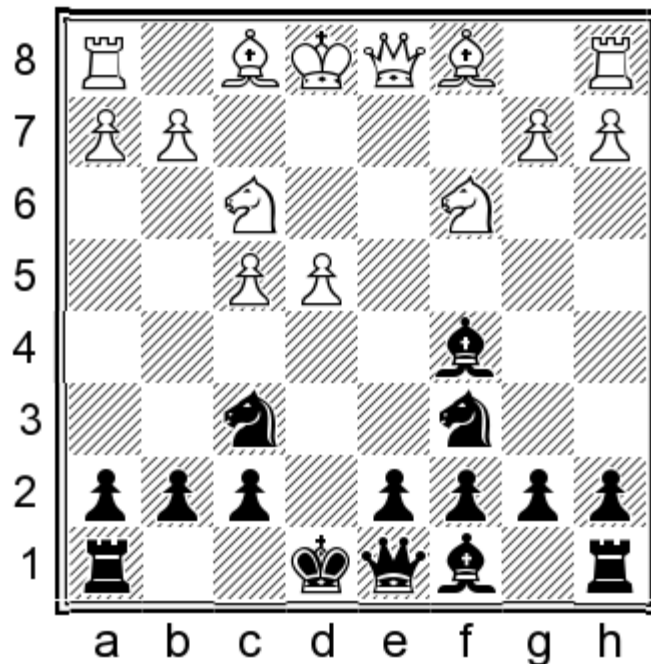
3...♘c6 4.♘f3 ♕c5



As Black, you have made two good developing moves. You know you may want to play ...d7-d6, so you get your bishop out to get it outside the pawn chain. It also allows you to put your knight on e7 if you like.

At this point, White has two ways to go. Marshall favored 5.♘d3, and we will look at that after we see what happens if White is a real gambit player and goes with:

5.c3 dxc3 6.♗xc3 ♖f6



You had no real way to defend the d4-pawn one more time, so you chose to take the c-pawn. You are now up a pawn! You could have played good moves like 6...d6 or 6...♘ge7, but remember the rules above: *develop aggressively*. A lot of players would not play this or even consider it because of the fear of 7.e5. If you get too timid when playing Black, you find yourself playing another timid move after that and so on. That could be a problem. Play good, solid yet aggressive moves!

You can even play another one you might not normally consider: 6...♘h6 7.h3 (7.f5 [to take the knight with ♙xh6] 7...♞g4 and suddenly White is lost!; 7.♞a4 ♚e7 8.♞xc5 ♚xc5 [notice that when you're up in material, you don't mind exchanges]) and now it can get wild: 7...d6 (7...0-0 8.f5 ♚e7 9.♙g5 f6 10.♙xh6 gxh6 11.♚b3+ ♖h8 12.0-0-0 a5 13.g4 ♙b4 14.♞d5 ♚xe4 15.a4 ♙d6) 8.g4 ♞g8 (here's an example of "redeployment" because Black is going backwards to put his knight on a better square and White can't take advantage of it) 9.♙c4 ♞ge7 10.♚e2 0-0 11.♙e3 ♙xe3 12.♚xe3 ♙e6 13.♙xe6 fxe6 14.0-0-0 ♞g6 15.f5 ♞ge5 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5. There are other solid moves, too, for example 6...d6 7.♙c4 ♙g4 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♚xf3 ♞d4 10.♚g3 ♞c2+ 11.♖d1 ♞xa1 12.♚xg7 ♚f6.

You can play over these lines to see if you feel more comfortable – or more adventurous – with them.

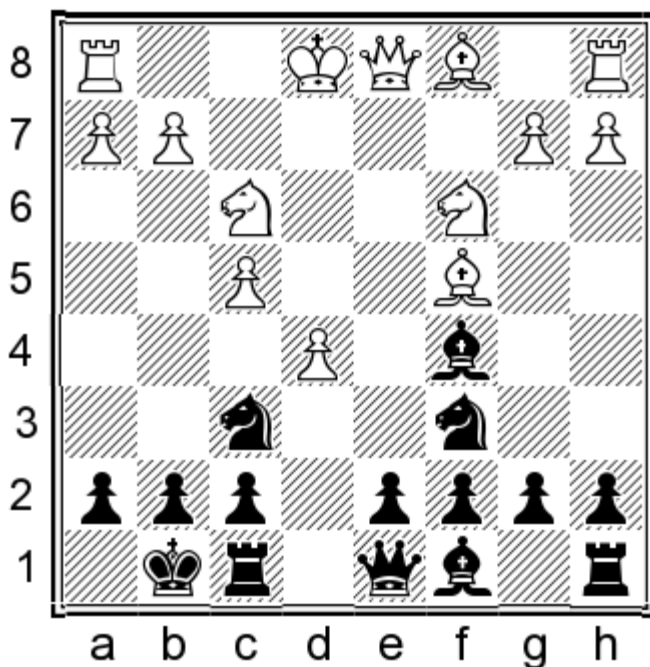
Back to our main line:

7.♙c4

7.e5 ♞g4

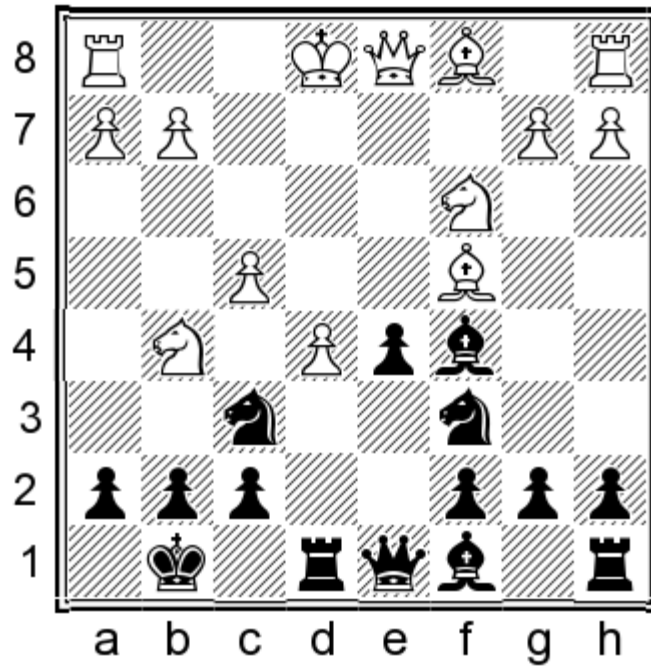
7...0-0 8.e5

OK, we're going to have to deal with e4-e5 after all! Does that ...♞g4 idea work here? Yes and no. You can get into trouble very easily: 8.e5 ♞g4 9.♞g5 ♞f2 10.♚h5 h6 11.♞xf7 ♚xf7 12.♚xf7+ ♖h8 13.♚f1 and White's winning! This is what we talked about above. It's easy to lose your way in very sharp openings. The move ...♞f2 was greedy. Give your other pieces a chance to get out: 9...d6 10.e6 ♞f6 11.exf7+ ♖h8 12.♖f1 and it's a difficult game. The extra pawn is gone, but so is any attack.



So, if 8...♞g4 is a bit tough, are there any better candidate moves? Sure, and a logical one at that: develop some more! Put your rook opposite his king and pin the e-pawn so that it can't capture anything:

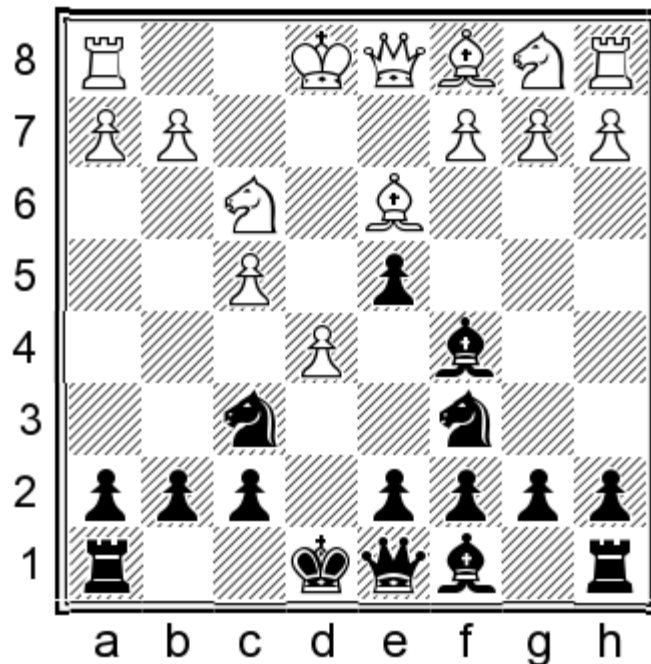
8...♚e8 9.♞g5 d5



And another one of those six hints comes into play! The ...d7-d5 push blocks the white bishop, frees his own, and makes White's ♘g5 move useless. The funny thing about all this is that White, who played c2-c3 to get quick development, is hurt by his king's not being castled. ...♖f8-e8 really brings that point home.

That could explain why Marshall preferred:

5.♙d3 ♘f6 6.e5

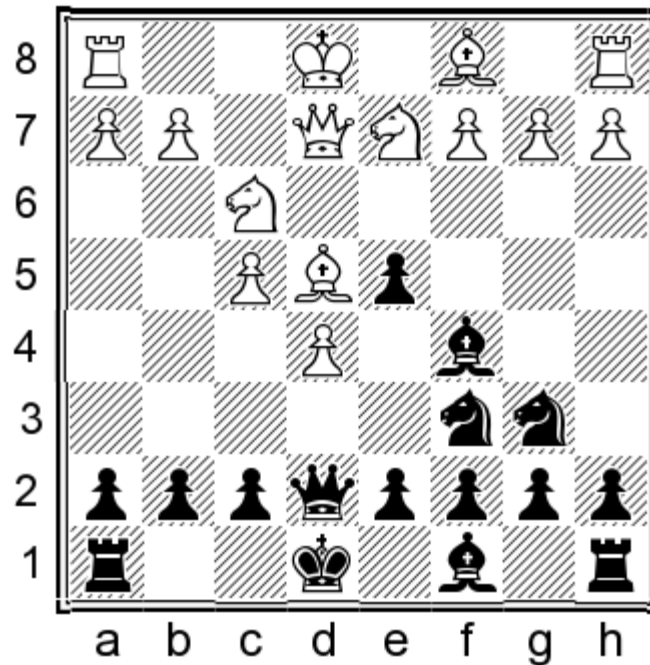


White has to play this, else Black will get ...d7-d6 in. If White tries 6.♘bd2 d6 7.f5 0-0 8.0-0 (8.♘b3 ♙b6 9.♙g5 a5 10.a4 d5) 8...♘g4 9.♘b3 (9.h3 ♘e3) 9...♙b6 10.♙e1 d5 then, again, because White is not castled and Black is, the ...d7-d5 freeing thrust is a hard one to meet.

You, as Black, have two real choices: the knight has to go to d5 or g4.

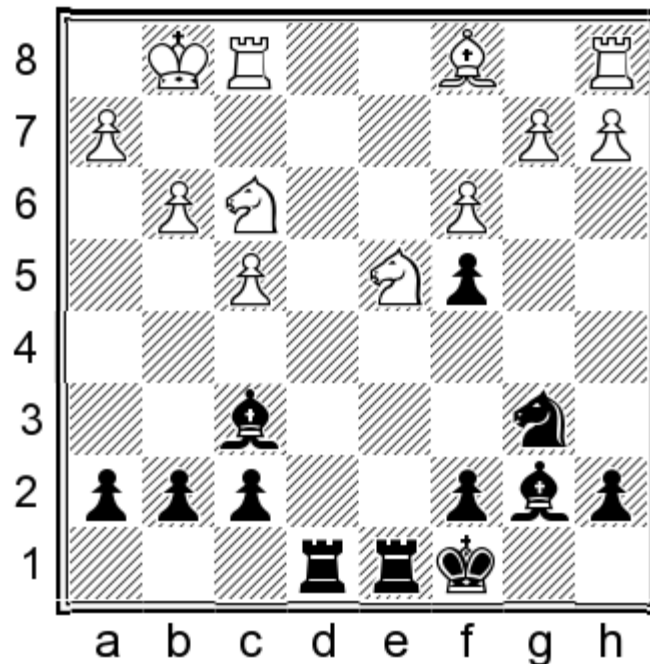
6...♘g4

The alternative is 6...♗d5 7.♚e2 ♚e7 8.♙e4 (8.♚e4 ♗db4) 8...♗b6:



analysis

9.♗bd2 d5 10.exd6 ♙xd6 11.♙xc6+ bxc6 12.♚xe7+ ♙xe7 13.♗xd4 ♙h4+ 14.g3 ♙f6 15.♗2f3 ♙b7 16.0-0 0-0-0 17.c3 c5 18.♗b3 c4 19.♗bd4 ♚he8 and you're OK, though you have some hard work ahead. Your two bishops will be of great help:



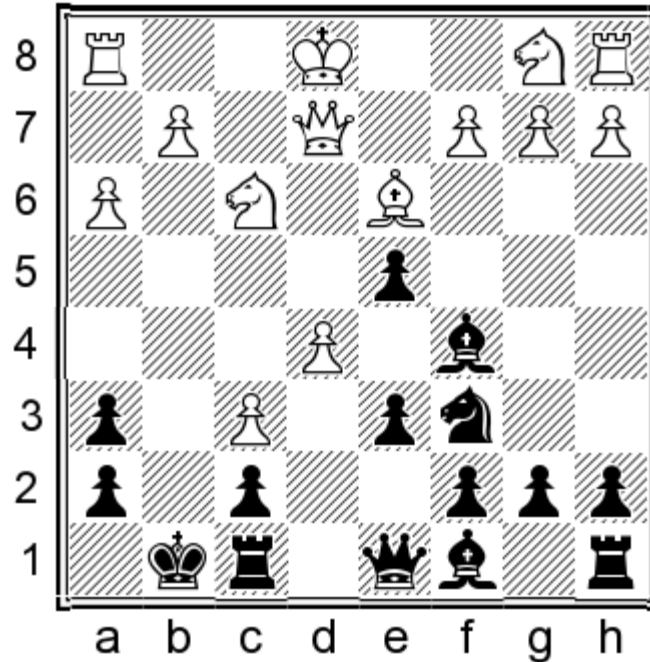
analysis

The long diagonal will be great for the black light-squared bishop, which faces no opposition from an enemy bishop. Your two rooks are already in the game while White's are not. The white knight's position is shaky

because ...c7-c5 can chase it, and the dark-squared white bishop has no real place to go. Why did this come about? It was Black's ...d7-d5 move, concentrating on development, and castling. Following opening principles brought this endgame about. It was no accident.

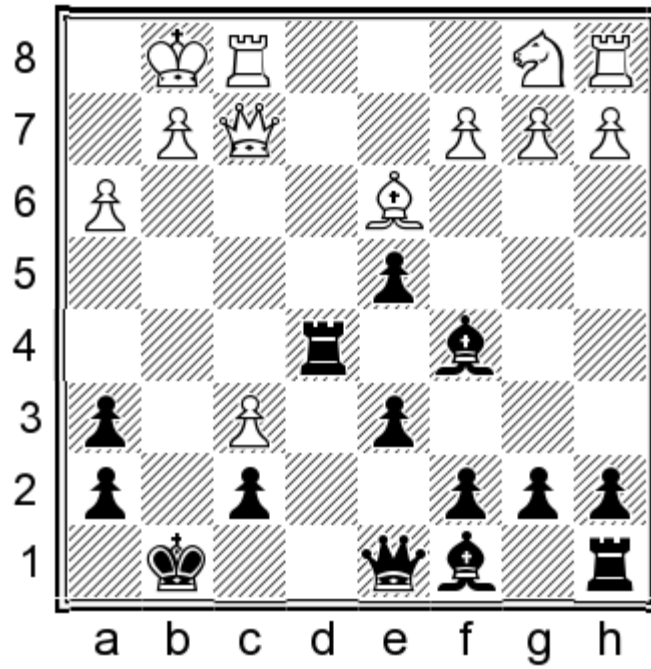
Let's go back to the main line to learn a very important last lesson: *don't be afraid!*

7. ♖e2 0-0 8. h3 ♜h6 9. f5 d6 10. ♙xh6 g×h6 11. f6



Black allowed his pawns to be broken up on the side where he castled, and – to top it off – that pawn on f6 looks very scary. Still, Black hasn't done anything wrong! Black has developed his pieces, is castled, and possesses an extra pawn. And, again, because the opposing king and queen are on the e-file, that f8-rook is looking to go to e8. What happens?

11... ♜xe5 12. ♜xe5 ♜e8 13. 0-0 ♜xe5 14. ♖f2



Here's another thing you need to be alert to: tactics!! You need to come up with a move here. 14...♔h8 would be fine; however, if you are tactically alert, you will notice that your ♕c5 is on the same diagonal as the ♖f2 and ♔g1. Hmm... if that bishop weren't on d3, then you could move the pawn and win. That means the white bishop can't move. Hmm, that means you can challenge the bishop by playing...

14...♕f5 15.♘d2 ♕g6

The black king is now quite protected and Black is a pawn up. Do you see how putting your bishop on c5 is still important ten moves later? Do you see how that c6-knight's going to e5 helped the defense? Do you see how castling before White did protected your king and allowed threats to come along the e-file?

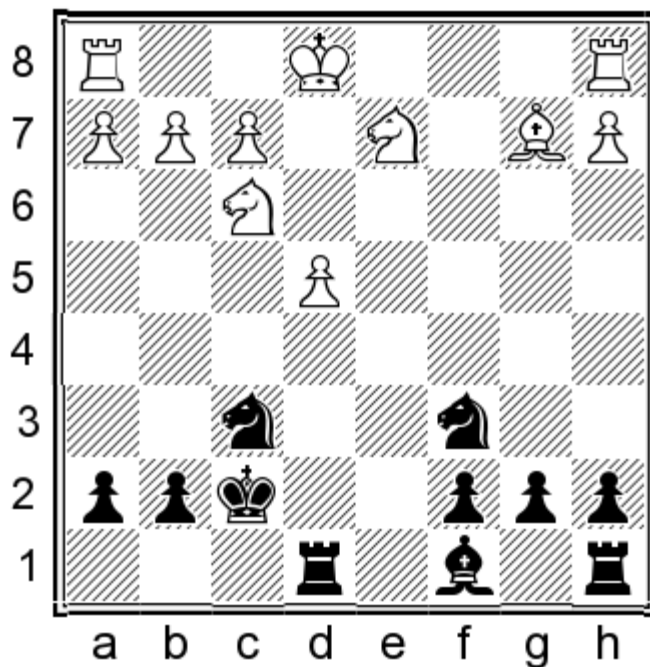
A lot went on in these lines, as you can see. You can also see why Marshall played this variation: Black has to understand how to play chess. He has to know his principles, both the tips listed in the beginning and those last two little warnings. The more knowledge, the less fear... both in life and in chess.

The Danish Gambit

There is one more major gambit worth covering – the Danish. There are several safe ways and one double-edged route. Pick your poison.

The First Safe Way: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♕c4 cxb2 5.♕xb2 d5 6.♕xd5 ♘f6 7.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 8.♖xd8 ♕b4+ 9.♗d2 ♕xd2+ 10.♘xd2 ♖e8 11.♘gf3 ♘c6

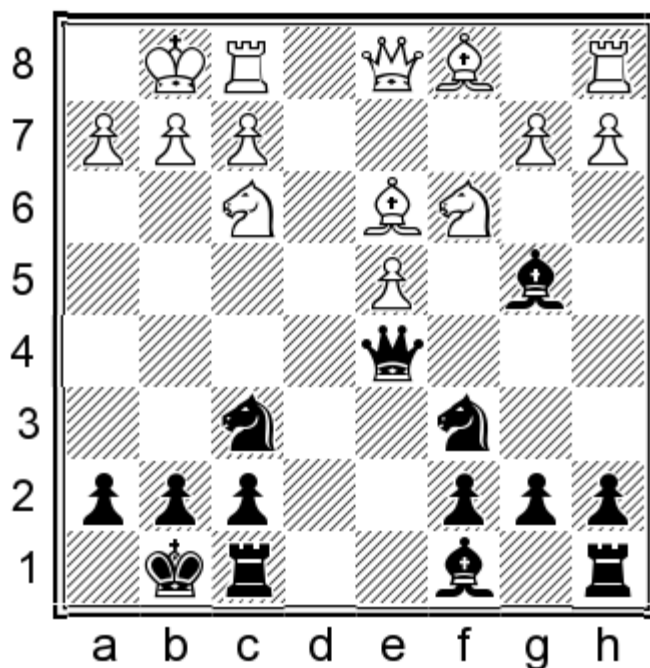
(11...♘xe4?? 12.♘e5+):



The chances are equal here, but it's not necessarily a draw. The queenside pawn majority will be easier to mobilize down the board than the kingside majority, but it will come down to who is the better player.

The Second Safe Way: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 d5 4.exd5 ♖xd5 5.cxd4 ♟f6 6.♘f3 ♟c6 7.♘c3 ♙b4 8.♙d3 0-0 9.0-0

and now either 9...♙a5 or 9...♙h5:



This approach keeps the queens on the board. If you're more of a middlegame player than an endgame player, this might be for you. One tip: after the queen has moved away from d5, don't play ...♙xc3. If the bishop is attacked, put it on d6, especially if the queen is on h5.

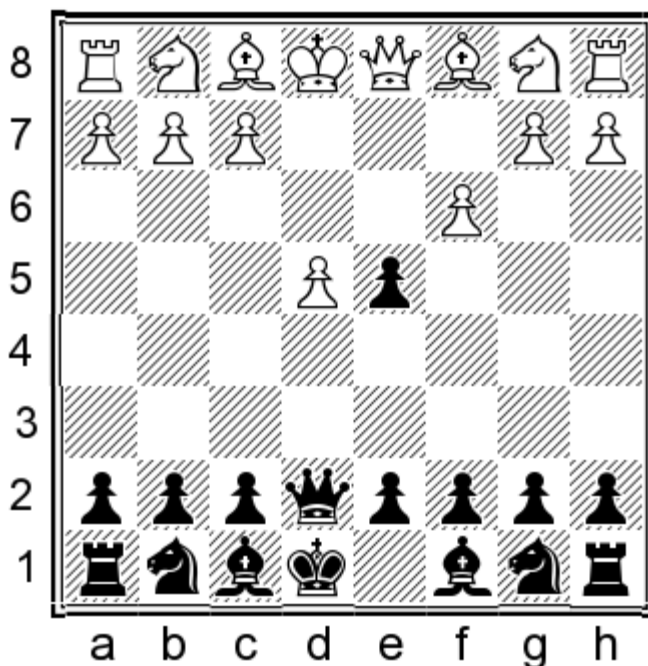
There is a similar line in the Göring Gambit: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♟c6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 d5!. They often transpose. There is a very interesting point that Jude Acers made about these variations in the Lone Pine 1975

tournament book: the famous Marshall–Capablanca “draw game” really isn’t one.

After 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.c3 d5 5.exd5 ♖xd5 6.cxd4 ♙g4 7.♙e2 ♙b4+ 8.♗c3 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♖c4 10.♖b3 ♖xb3 11.axb3 ♗xd4 12.♙xb7 ♗c2+ 13.♔e2 ♗xa1 14.♙c6+, White is better (Ghizdavu – Thornally, circa 1975). As you may have noticed in the above “safe way” line, the “natural” ...♙g4 move is not played, nor is it in this possibility: 6...♙b4 7.♗c3 ♗f6 8.♙e2, and now Acers points out the valuable 8...♗e4!, which, one would think, might go 9.♙d2 ♙xc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.c4 ♖d6 12.d5 ♗e5 13.0-0 ♖e8 (PT). One other thing, a mistake often made is that there is a difference between “drawn” and “equal.” The former means it’s level and there is little or no play left. The latter means that there is an equal chance for both sides to win.

The Double-Edged Route: It’s an old move rarely seen (Acers recommended this, too!), but it’s really annoying to players of the Danish since it becomes unclear who’s attacking whom! I almost feel as though I’m some guy in a dark alley going, “Psst, fella, wanta buy a really cool defense to the Danish?” It offends my basic-principles sensibilities, however, though I still play it!

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♖e7



4.cxd4

Seems logical because we’re taught that early queen moves are bad and pawn grabbing with queens is even worse. Interestingly enough, nobody has refuted it! White could play 4.♗f3 (so that he can play ♙e2, which apparently can’t be played in the main line) 4...♖xe4+ 5.♙e2 d3 6.♖xd3 ♗f6 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.♖e1 ♙e7 9.♙g5 ♖xd3 10.♙xd3 h6 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.♗a3 d5 13.♗b5 ♔d8 14.♖ad1 a6 15.♗bd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 c6 and you have a great illustration of double-edged!

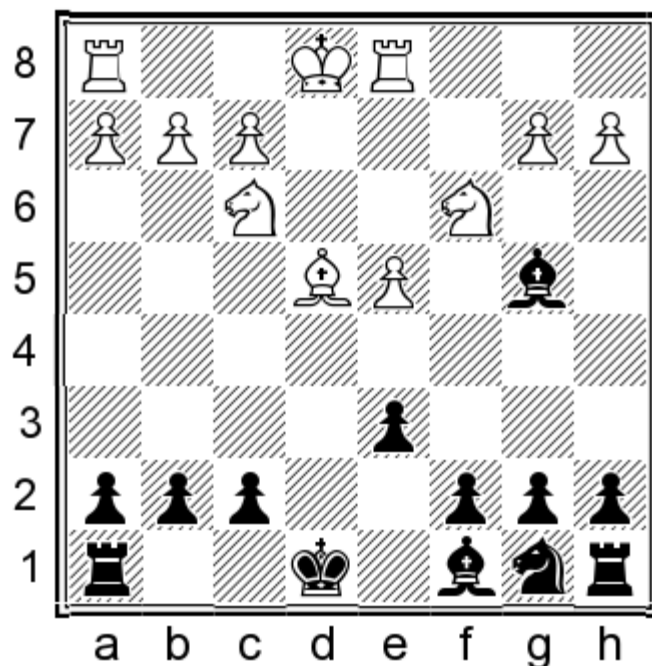
After 4.cxd4, play might continue **4...♖xe4+ 5.♙e3**

5.♙e2 ♖xg2 6.♙f3 ♖g6 7.♗e2 ♙b4+ 8.♗bc3 ♗e7 9.♖g1 ♖f5

5...♙b4+ 6.♗c3 ♗f6 7.♗f3 ♗d5 8.♙d3 ♗xe3 9.♙xe4 ♗xd1 10.♖xd1 d6.

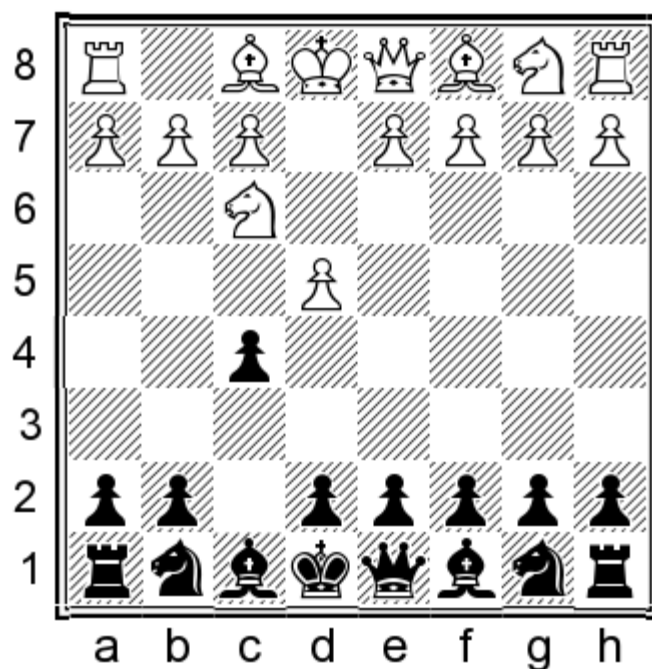
You have another wild position, and you’re a pawn up. White has breathing room. You have to untangle your

queenside, but you're in the game:



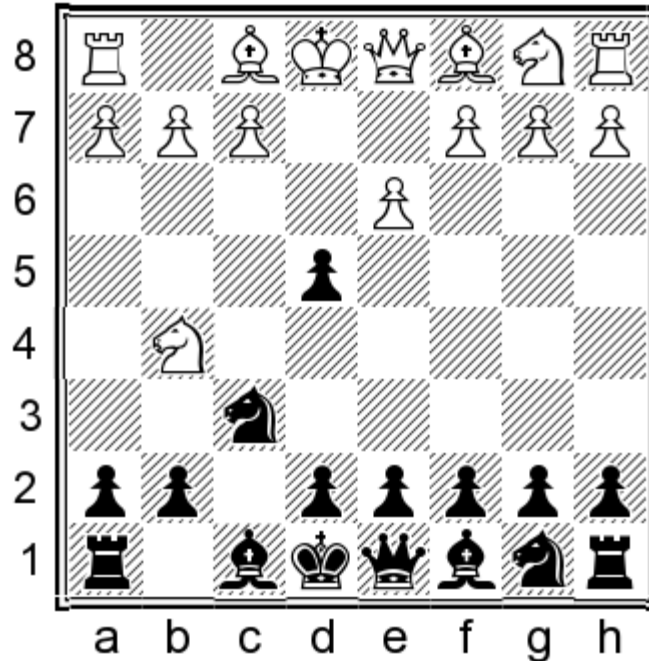
Some final items. How do you defend the Evans Gambit? Play the Two Knights' Defense! (See Part II.) And, since later on we give you the opportunity to play 1...f5 to 1. Nf3, you need to be prepared for the Lisitsin Gambit, 1. Nf3 f5 2. e4.

When confronted with a gambit, you might have to do several different things. Here's an example. White starts out with 1. Nf3 and Black responds with 1...f5, an invitation to the Dutch Defense. More times than I can count, people play the aggressive 2. e4 against me here. Do they think they're going to surprise me?



Declining this gambit is not a good idea for quite concrete reasons: 2...d6 3. exf5 Qxf5 4. Nh4 Qh6 5. Nxf5 Qxf5 and now either 6. d4 or 6. Wxf3, and in both cases White has a nice initiative. So, Black does best to just take the pawn:

1.♖f3 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♗g5 ♗f6 4.d3



Do we take this pawn now? *No!!* If you think for a second and are familiar with From's Gambit (1.f4 e5 2.fxe4 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6), White has a devil of a time with that. Here, with the position essentially reversed, White has a knight on g5 which would greatly help his cause after 4...exd3 in the diagram position. For example, 4...exd3 5.♗xd3 g6 6.♗xh7 ♖xh7 7.♗xg6+ ♖f7 8.g4 e6 9.♗xf7+ ♗xf7 10.♗c3 ♗b4 11.♖f3 and you simply do not want to be Black here.

So what do you do? When in doubt, always look at a developing move. My favorite choice is 4...♗c6. It may not be best, but it drives a lot of opponents crazy. It's a good move. You also have 4...e6, 4...e5, and 4...c6. My personal choice leads to great complications that I am ready for, having played it so much. There is analysis below (by *Rybka 3*), but that is not the point of this whole example. The key thing to take away is that you need to understand that Black has to grasp the nature of the fight along both the a2-g8 and h5-e8 diagonals to determine the best path. You shouldn't play 1...f5 against 1.♖f3 unless you feel ready to jump into all this.

4...♗c6 5.dxe4

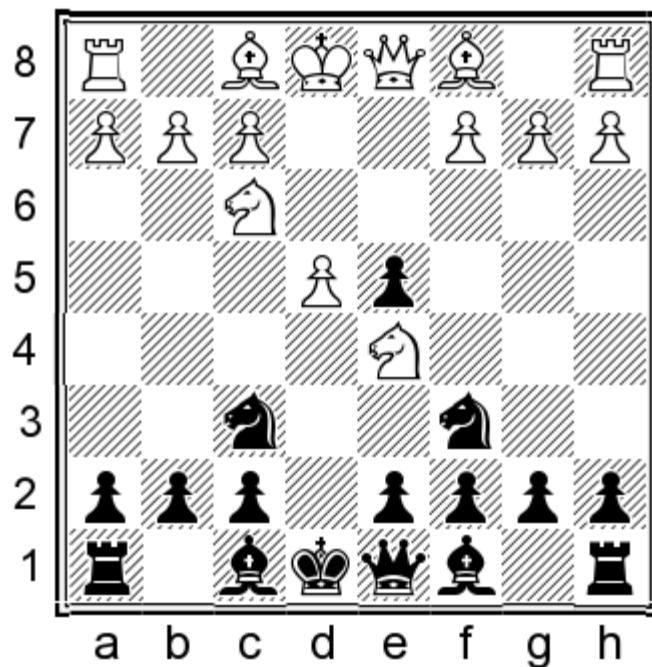
Seen quite often is 5.♗c3 d5 6.dxe4 d4 7.♗c4 ♗e5 8.♗b5+ c6 9.f4 ♗f7 10.♗c4 ♗xg5 11.fxg5 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♖a5+ 13.♗d2 [13.c3 ♖c5 /13...dxc3 14.♗xc3 ♖c5 15.♖e2 a5 (15...♗e5 16.♗b3 ♗g4 17.♖e3 ♖xe3+ 18.♗xe3 ♗d3+ 19.♗d2 0-0-0 20.h3 ♗h5 21.♗e6+ ♗b8) 16.h3 ♗e5 17.♗b3 a4 18.♗xa4 (18.♗xa4 ♖xa4 19.♗xa4 ♖a5+) 18...♗e6 19.♗c2 ♗c4 20.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 21.♗xf2 g6 22.♖f1 ♗g7 23.♗g3 ♖f8 24.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 25.♗b3 ♗g8 26.♗xc4 ♗xc4 27.♗e3 b5] 14.♖xd4 e5 15.♖xc5 ♗xc5 16.h3 ♗f2 17.♖f1 ♗xe4] 13...♖c5.

5...h6 6.♗f3 ♗xe4 7.♗h4 ♗f6 8.♗d3 ♗e5 9.♗g6

9.♗g6+ ♗xg6 10.♗xg6 ♖g8

9...♗xd3+ 10.♖xd3 ♖g8 11.0-0 d6 12.f4 ♖d7 13.f5 b6 14.♗c3 ♗b7, and Black is OK.

The last item here is a gambit I confess that I avoid before it occurs! It's the Belgrade Gambit, and it goes like this: **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.d4 exd4 5.♗d5:**



Various books will tell you that you can defend with either 5...♘b4 or 5...♙e7. This is a reasonable statement, but the defense is difficult and complicated. Tarrasch recommended playing, after 4.d4, 4...♙b4. He believed in development and active play.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 ♙b4 5.d5

Now:

a) 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♗xf6 7.d5 ♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♘a5 or even 8...♘b8;

b) 5.dxe5 ♘xe4 6.♗d3 d5 7.exd6 0-0;

c) 5.♘xe5 ♘xe4 (also playable is 5...♗e7 6.♗d3 ♘xe5 7.dxe5 ♗xe5 8.♙d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 d6 10.f4 ♗e6) 6.♗g4 ♘xc3 7.♗xg7 ♗f8 8.♘xc6 dxc6 9.a3 ♗e7+ 10.♗e5 ♘d5+ 11.axb4 ♗xe5+ 12.dxe5 ♘xb4. It is worth noting that Gary Lane, in the August 2012 *British Chess Magazine* (pp. 433-435), gives a game Oliveira – Santos, Portuguese Team Chp. 2011, where 8.a3 was played. He says Santos “embarks on an entertaining course” with 8...♗e7 and then quotes several games by Glenn Flear with 8...♙a5. There is also this possibility: 8.a3 ♙a5 9.♘xc6 (9.♙d3 ♘xd4) 9...dxc6 10.♗e5+ ♗e7 11.♗xe7+ ♘xe7 12.♙d2 ♙f5 13.bxc3 (13.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♙xc2 15.♙d2 ♙g6 16.h4 ♙f6 [16...♗ae8]) 13...♙xc2 14.c4 ♙xd2+ 15.♙xd2 ♙g6 16.h4 (16.♗e1+ ♙f6) 16...♗ae8 17.g4 h5=.

5...♘e7 6.♘xe5 d6 7.♙b5+ c6

7...♙f8 8.♘f3 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♘xe4 10.♗d4 ♘f6 11.♙c4 h6 12.0-0 ♙f5.

8.dxc6 0-0 9.♘d7

In recent years this has been the “refutation” to Tarrasch’s line, but...

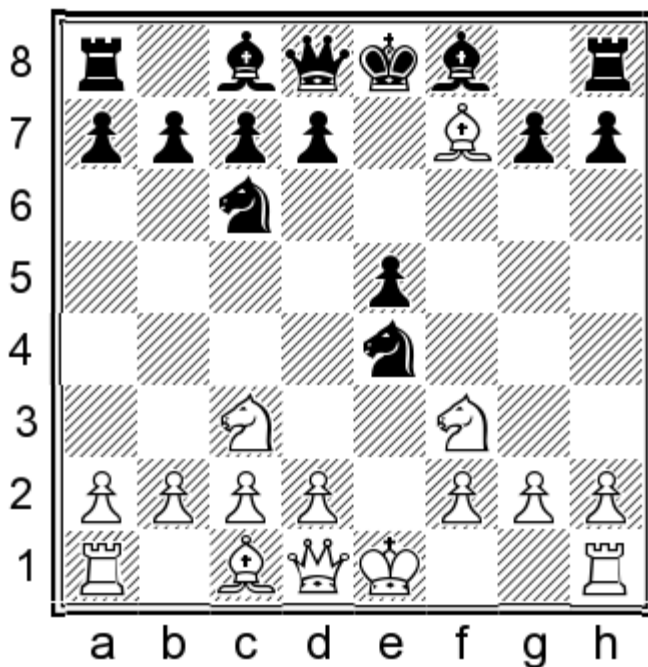
9...♙xd7 10.cxd7 ♗a5! 11.♗d3 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 a6 13.♙c4 ♘xd7 14.♙b2 ♘e5 15.♗d4 ♘7c6

In all the lines above, Black is actively fighting for equality and often the initiative. Yes, there are some lines you had best play over several times – the main line and the 5.♘xe5 line, but the difference is that it will be just as difficult for White to deal with Black’s moves.

The conclusion? When choosing opening systems, make sure you are aware of all the offbeat (not just gambit) lines that people will pull on you, and get clear in your head how you like to meet gambits.

29. Do Not Play Premature Attacks.

It doesn't matter if GM Nakamura played 1.e4 e5 2.♖h5. Don't play it. It's not good. You're not Nakamura. Perhaps the most common one for e-pawn players is this sequence: **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♙c4 ♗xe4 5.♙xf7+**:



Whoopie! You make Black move his king! Then, you lose the center and the game:

5...♙xf7 6.♗xe4 d5 7.♗eg5+

7.♗fg5+ ♔e8 8.♖f3 ♖e7 9.0-0 dxe4 10.♗xe4 ♖f7 11.♖e2 ♙f5 12.d3 ♗d4 13.♖d1 ♞d8; 7.♗g3 e4 8.♗g1 h5 9.h4 ♖f6 10.♗xh5 ♖e5 11.♗g3 ♙c5 12.d3 e3 13.♙xe3 d4

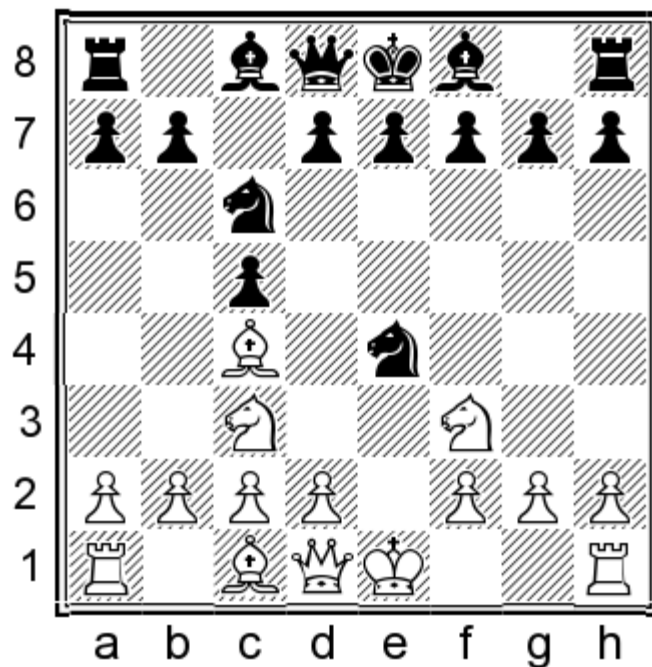
7...♙g8 8.d4 h6 9.♗h3 ♙xh3 10.gxh3 exd4 11.♗xd4 ♖f6 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.c3 ♙c5 14.0-0 ♞e8. None of the lines are good for White.

You can even get more premature with this idea in the Vienna Game: **1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 ♗xe4 4.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 5.♗xe4 d5 6.♖f3+ ♙g8 7.♗e2 ♗c6**

7...dxe4?? 8.♖b3+ – nothing like a cheap trap to encourage people to play this line!

8.0-0 h6 and the *Luft* – escape square, German for “air” – is created. There is no more mate trap. Black controls the center.

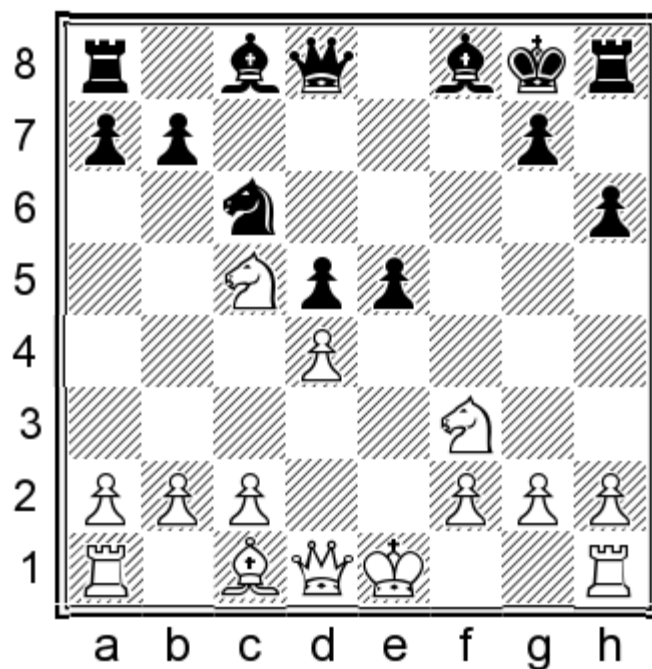
Don't get the idea that this only happens in double king pawn openings: **1.e4 c5 2.♙c4 ♗c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 ♗xe4** and this time we have the old fork trick in the Sicilian. Just as in the Four Knights' Game, you'll get people wanting to play ♙xf7+. Doesn't work any better here!



5. ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 6. ♗xe4 d5 7. ♗fg5+ ♔g8 8. ♗xc5

8. ♕f3 ♕e8 9. ♗xc5 e6 [9...e5 10. ♕xd5+] 10. ♗b3 h6

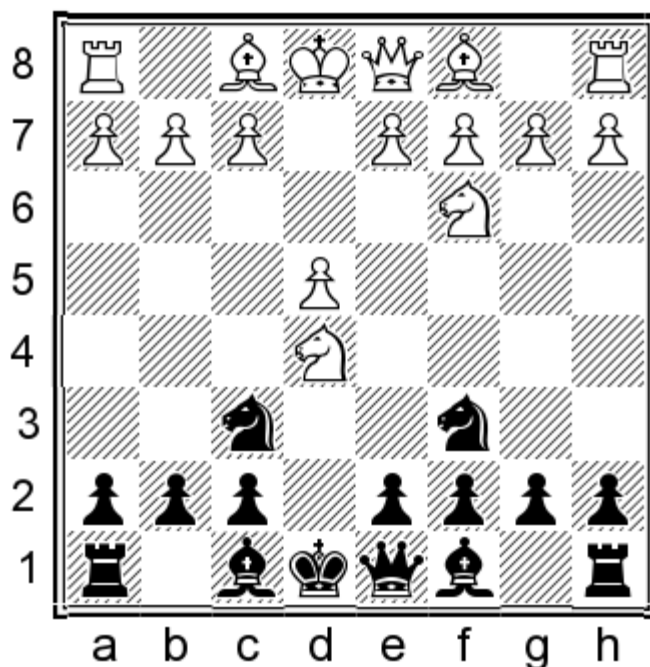
8...e6 9.d4 h6 10. ♗f3 e5:



If you played out the first ♖xf7+ example, you'll see the remarkable similarities: the strong black pawn center, the ...h7-h6 *Luft*, and a free game. Don't do premature attacks, and don't be afraid of them.

Speaking of premature attacks in the Four Knights, one scary one is aptly named the Halloween Gambit: **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♗xe5**. The first time I saw this, my reaction was, "Are you kidding?" A ton of analysis and theory articles came out. Over seventy games with it appear in my database, even by some

master-strength types. No GMs have adopted it for their arsenal, but you can't take it for granted that just because it's premature it isn't dangerous.



What should you do here? Take the knight! It's a piece! One thing that should go through your head in any position in the opening is, "I haven't done anything wrong. I've made good developing moves. This should not work against me, though I still have to think!"

One of my students on our high school chess team was playing in the NJ K-12 Championships in 2008. He found himself, as a then-rated 1100+ player, facing opposition 400-500 points higher than he. He won the individual championship as his team won the team championship. His toughest game was an opponent who played the Halloween Gambit. Josh had never seen it before, but he came up with a common-sense defense that greatly impressed me. No panic. Figured out what threats were in the position and found a plan to thwart White: (Bartling – Block, NJ 2008) 4...♖xe5 5.d4 ♗c6 6.e5 ♗g8 7.♗c4 ♗b4! 8.♕f3 ♕e7 9.0-0 ♗xc3

Also good was 9...♗xd4 10.♕g4 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♗e6, but the way chosen was clearer to him: good decision!

10.bxc3 ♗h6!.

This was his plan: He knew he had to get his pieces out, so he pinned a potentially dangerous knight, defended the attack on f7, and then played ...♗h6 in order to threaten the queen exchange by going to f5. Here is the rest of the game because it is quite instructive, with a wonderful touch of irony at the very end:

11.a4 b6

11...0-0

12.♗a3 ♕g5 13.♟fe1 ♗b7 14.♗d5 ♕g4 (a tad too aggressive, but OK – he really wanted that queen trade! 14...♟f5 was objectively better) **15.♟e3**

15.♗xf7+ ♖d8 is fine for Black.

15...0-0-0 16.c4 ♕xf3 17.♟xf3 ♗xd4 18.♗xb7+ ♖xb7 19.♟d3 ♗xc2 20.♟a2 ♗xa3 21.♟axa3 d6 22.f4

dxe5 23.fxe5 ♖xd3 24.♞xd3 ♞e8 25.♞g3 ♜f5 26.♞h3 ♞xe5 27.♞xh7 ♞e4 28.♞h5 g6 29.♞h7 ♜d6 30.h4 ♞xc4 31.h5 gxh5 32.♞xh5 ♞xa4 33.♜f2 ♞c4 34.♜e3 a5 35.♜d3 a4 36.♞h1 ♞g4 37.♞h2 b5 38.♜c3 b4+ 39.♜b2 ♜c4+ 40.♜c2 ♞xg2+! 41.♞xg2 ♜e3+ 0-1. What's nice about this game is that you can see Black thinking it all out through move 16, at which point the game is won.

Josh's way was Josh's way. It wasn't some memorized line. There are other ways to play this For example, if you are averse to complicated defense, you could try 4...♜xe4 5.♞h5 (5.♜xe4 ♜xe5 6.d4 ♜g6; 5.♜xc6 ♜xc3 6.dxc3 dxc6 7.♞xd8+ ♜xd8) 5...♞f6 6.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 7.♜xf7 ♜xf2 8.♞c4 ♜xh1 9.♜b5 (9.♜xh8 ♞d6 10.g3 ♜d4 11.♜f1 ♜f8 12.♜g2 b5 13.♞d5 c6 14.♞b3 ♜xb3 15.axb3 ♜xg3 16.hxg3 ♜g8) 9...d5 10.♜xh8 (10.♞d5 ♜b4) 10...♞d6 11.♜xd6+ cxd6 12.♞d3 ♞d7 13.♜f1 ♜e7 14.♜g1 ♞f8 15.♜xh1 ♜b4 16.♜g1 ♞xh8. If you like endgames, this is a way to go.

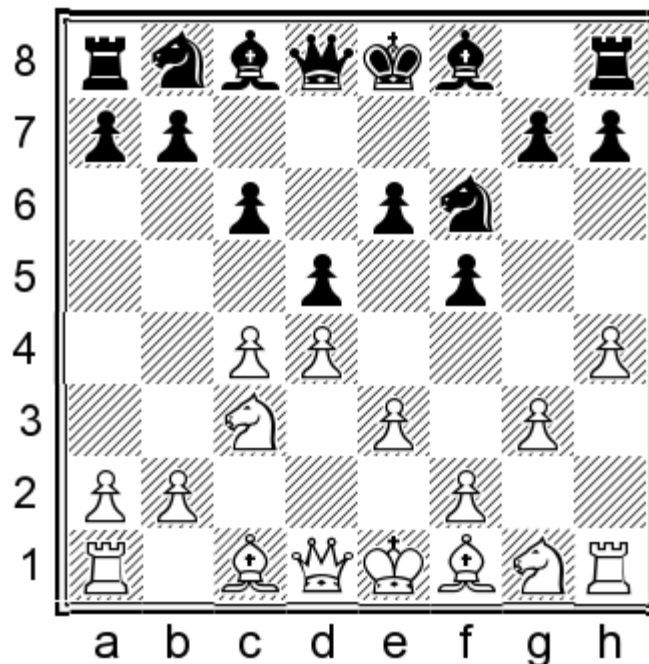
There are even a couple of ways to handle the knight move lines: **1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜c6 3.♜c3 ♜f6 4.♜xe5 ♜xe5 5.d4 ♜c6**

5...♜g6 6.e5 ♜g8 7.♞c4 d6 8.♞f3 ♞d7 9.h4 ♞f5 10.♞e2 dxe5 11.h5 ♜6e7 12.♜b5 ♜d8 13.dxe5 ♜c6 14.♞h4 ♞e6 15.♜d4 ♞xc4 16.♜xc6+ bxc6 17.♞xc4 ♞b8 18.♞f4 ♜c8 19.0-0-0

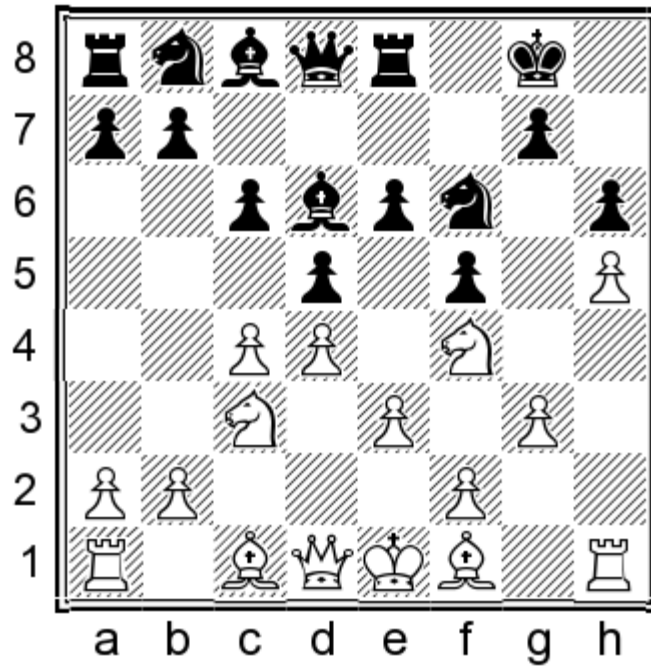
6.e5 ♜g8 7.♞c4 d6 8.♞f3 ♞d7 9.♞e3 dxe5 10.0-0-0 ♞f5.

Notice the similarity to Josh's plan in terms of ideas. Black protects f7 and then uses ...d7-d6 and ...♞d7 to then head to f5 to exchange queens. You're a piece up. It's just the thing to do! No more being scared of Halloween!

It's quite remarkable how many people also seem to think, as White, that h2-h4 is an aggressive attacking move that strikes fear into the hearts of the defense. As we demonstrate elsewhere, it's a good move against fianchettoed positions; however, some people seem to think it's useful any old time. For example, after **1.c4 f5 2.♜c3 ♜f6 3.d4 e6 4.g3 d5 5.e3 c6 6.h4** we see an example of this. Oddly enough, there's a very "logical" idea on White's part. Watch it unfold:



6...♞d6 7.♜h3 0-0 8.h5 h6 9.♜f4 ♞e8



Here is a weak player who was actually happy here: White enjoys total domination of the g6 square, but he has nothing else to do. He has some vague idea of attacking kingside, so he castles queenside. Then, Black shows him what a real attack on a king looks like:

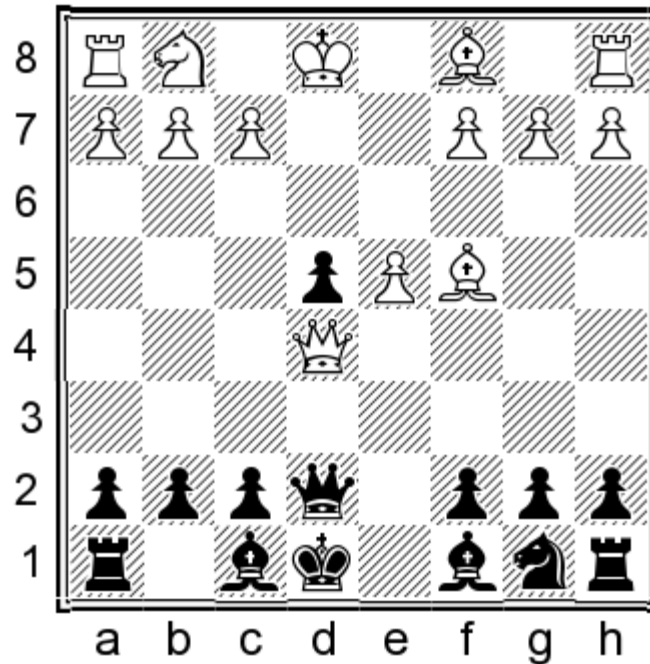
10.♙d2 a5 11.♚f3 b6 12.0-0-0 a4 13.a3 ♖a6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♙xa6 ♜xa6 16.♜xa4 b5 17.♜c5
 17.♜c3 b4

17...♜xc5 18.dxc5 ♙xc5, and White is lost. Notice how Black had a “lever” with ...b7-b5-b4, but White can’t get g3-g4 in. White’s attack is stalled before it gets started.

30. Tempi! Tempi! Tempi!

One recurring theme that has run through several of our examples so far is the idea of time. In the opening, you don't want to lose it. I wrote an article years ago involving the "dreaded" Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. Players of Black quake when White plays it. Since I used to routinely play 1...♘f6 against 1.d4, I would never face 1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.f3 and so forth.

However, some truly committed Blackmar players would try this: **1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.e4** and I would respond with **3...♗xe4 4.♗xe4 dxe4** and they, in turn, would play a series of moves recommended by several specialty opening books: **5.♙c4 e5 6.♖h5 ♖e7 7.♗xe5:**

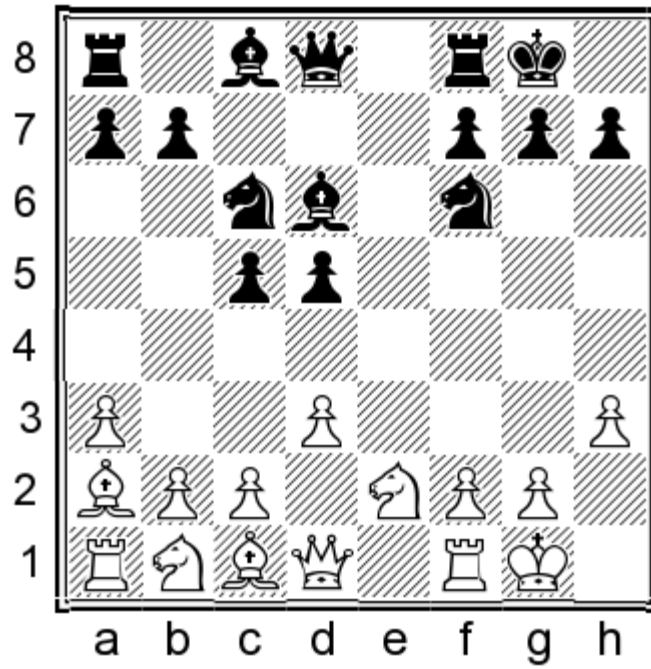


At this point a respected IM and opening theorist concluded in his book that after Black here exchanged queens, White would have the advantage and quoted a database game. It was a game played many years ago in California, so I looked up the players' ratings in the old *Chess Life* magazines I have: under 1500!! And here's an IM quoting them! When I first confronted this line, I was not aware of this "landmark" game. I looked at ...♗xe5, but immediately rejected it. Why? The reason is that it just helps White. I followed my "well, I haven't done anything wrong" theory and looked for a developing move. Easy! 7...♗c6 8.♗xe7+

Moving away loses – 8.♗g3 ♗b4+; while pinning equalizes – 8.♙b5 ♙d7 9.♗xe7+ ♙xe7 10.c3 0-0.

8...♙xe7 9.c3 ♗a5 10..♙e2 0-0 and Black has easy equality. Playing ...♗c6 gained tempi for me, and it was why the move was easily found. It also teaches you that you should check everything you read on your own. Even GMs make mistakes.

This next example is for the beginners out there who are just getting into openings. It could be the best example of how not to play chess although you actually know how to play pretty well. Oh, the tempi lost! **1.e4 c5 2.♙c4 ♗c6 3.a3 ♗f6 4.d3 e6 5.♙a2 d5 6.exd5 exd5 7.h3 ♙d6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0:**



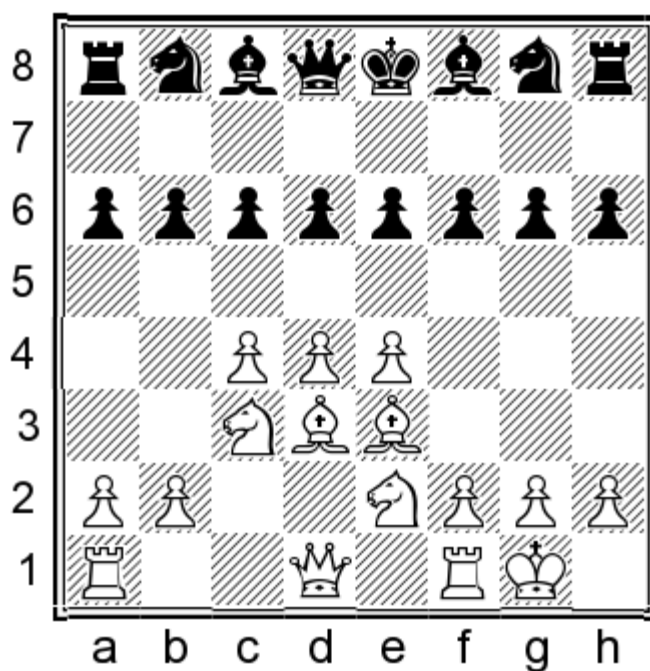
White went to great lengths to preserve his king bishop when it wasn't even attacked and then prevented a pin on the kingside with h2-h3, only to play ♞e2. You don't need to be told who stands better here.

31. Don't Go Crazy Against Hedgehog or Hippo-Type Openings.

Although we have excoriated these hide-behind-the-lines defenses, such “we won't come out and play right away” openings should not be underestimated. When playing against such strategies, it is best to follow the general rules of development and stay alert to a breakthrough move when you are properly prepared.

Let's take a look at the first eight moves of a truly bad opening for Black. My sons and I attended the U.S. Open in Chicago in 1994. At the airport, one of our chess friends, Mike Wojcio, came by and played, just for the fun of it, an opening for Black that mystified my oldest son. He knew it was bad, but didn't know quite how to deal with it.

The first eight moves were actually played by Black, and our recommendation on how White should have reacted is pictured on the bottom half of the board. Here are the moves: 1.d4 h6 2.e4 g6 3.♔d3 f6 4.c4 e6 5.♘e2 d6 6.♞bc3 c6 7.♙e3 b6 8.0-0 a6, leading to the diagram:



There are a couple of things you should notice here. Black hasn't developed even one piece! There is no safe place for Black to castle; however, we've actually seen people play the rooks to h7 and a7 and then slide both over to guard the king.

Other than these problems, what is Black's weakest square? What pawn is not protected? What would be White's best move here? Right! The pawn on g6 is weakest and White could play either 9.e5 or 9.♞f4 to start an attack on Black's tenderest point.

Look at what we have White doing: putting some center pawns on the fourth rank to gain space; placing the minor pieces on good squares in the center (notice how the bishop on d3 is ready to attack g6); castling quickly.

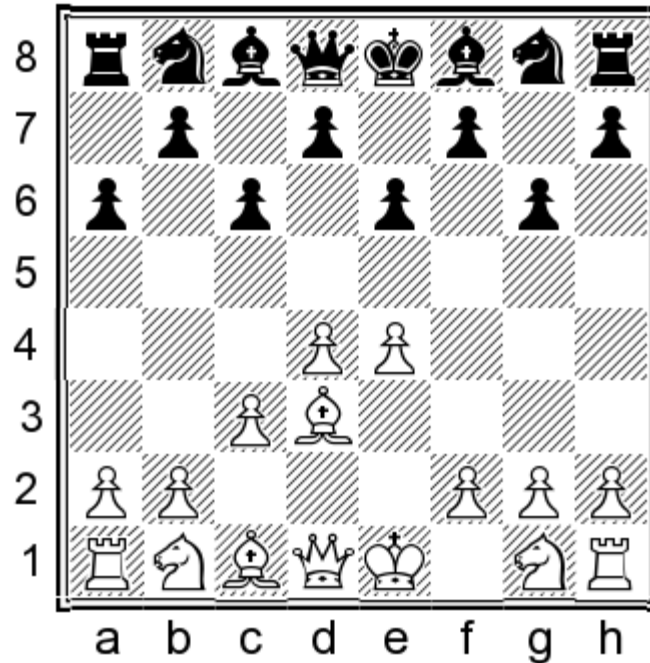
You should have a question or two right now: why do you put the knight on e2 rather than f3? Why did you move the c-pawn rather than the f-pawn?

We put the knight on e2 to prepare both castling and the move f2-f4 with the rook directly behind it. We want the c-pawn out there to help the other pawns attack Black's front line. Players who play these “hedgehog” positions will try to avoid pawn exchanges, so every chance that you get you want to swap pawns to open

lines. The knight on e2 also allows you to play ♖g3 to support f4-f5 and to open a diagonal for your king. This is called strategy. You put pieces on certain squares to cooperate with some later action with your other pawns and pieces. That's planning and teamwork!

There are other funny pawn move defenses that we've seen that are related to this. This could be called the "checkers defense."

This line goes **1.e4 e6 2.d4 g6 3.c3 c6 4.♙d3 a6** and we have the following diagram:



Black looks like his pawns are ready to play checkers. Really strong players avoid this kind of defense because it leaves Black with weak dark squares. In other words, no pawns defend a single dark square, and White can use these squares to travel on without worrying about the black pawns.

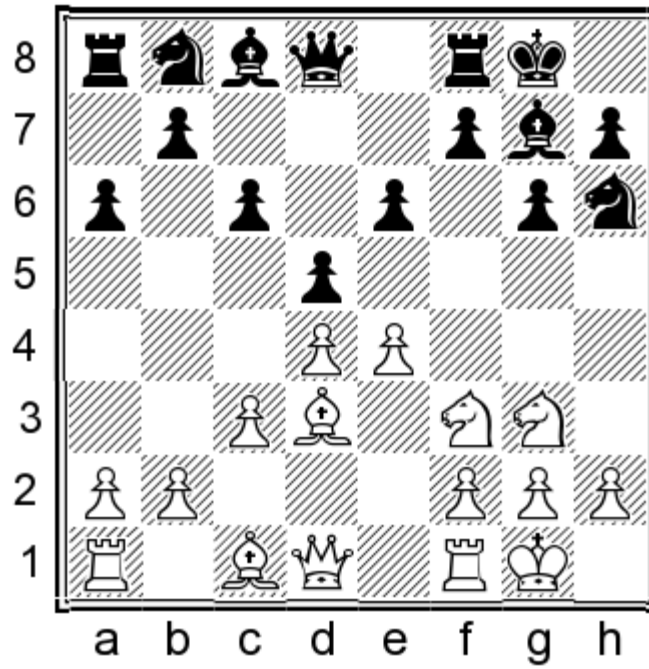
Black will play ...♙g7 and probably... d7-d5 at some point, followed by ...♘h6 and maybe ...♘f5 later if you move your e-pawn.

Although bad, this defense is playable. How should you meet it? There's something different in the second diagram. The pawn is on c3 instead of c4. Why?

The reason is the black bishop going to g7. White can defend with a pawn instead of a piece, which we want to use in the attack. White will play ♖e2 and ♖g3 to support the f4-f5 thrust. The other bishop will head to e3 and the queen to d2. The white queen knight will head to a3 only because d2 and c3 are occupied.

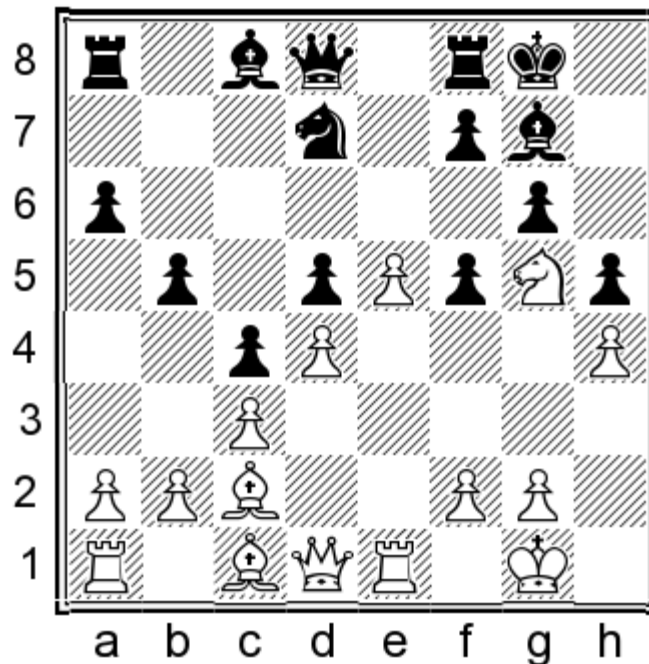
The trick is that ♖a3, normally a bad idea, is good here because you will go to c4 (or c2) and then e3 to aid in the attack in the center or the kingside as Black will probably castle there. Because Black is not challenging you in the center, you have time for this knight maneuver.

If and when Black plays ...d7-d5, should you take the d-pawn, advance your e-pawn, or defend your e-pawn? If Black plays to d5 early, then you can go another way with your knight: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 g6 3.c3 c6 4.♙d3 a6 5.♖e2 d5 6.♖d2 ♙g7 7.♖g3 ♘h6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♖f3**, arriving at this position:



White's position is better than Black's. Except for the queen rook, all of White's pieces are posed to start attacking the king. Let's say the game continued like this:

Black plays **9...♘d7** to support **10...e5**. Now, to prevent that, White has to play **10.e5**, so Black gets his **10...♘f5** but White has someone waiting for him! **11.♘xf5 exf5**. Since his pawns are being doubled, he can't play **...gxf5** which would open up his castled position. Now **12.♖e1** and if Black tries to open up with **...f7-f6**, this rook will be on the right file – an open one! **12...c5 13.h4**. You don't always need a rook to push the h-pawn. Plus, the threat of **h4-h5**, tearing up Black's pawns again, is a real threat to Black. **13...c4 14.♕c2 h5**. White has kept his bishop on the right diagonal and Black tries to prevent **h4-h5**, but an even weaker dark square is created for the knight: **15.♘g5 b5**:

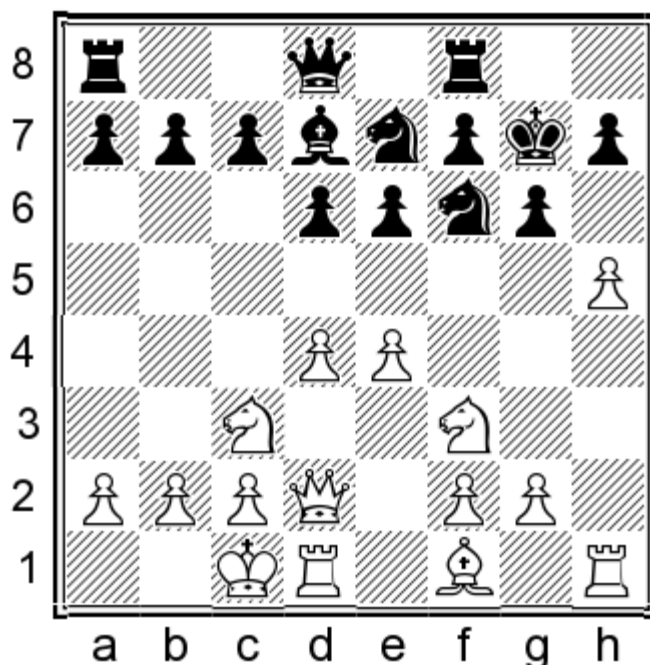


Look at this diagram and compare it to the first diagram for this game. See how much has changed? White is on the offensive and ready for anything. Black is cramped and has weakened his pawns around the king. His pawn storm on the queenside has not bothered White, who now has a winning combination: **16.♙xf5! gxf5** (all because the black knight is blocking the bishop) **17.♚xh5 ♖e8 18.♚xf7+ ♔h8 19.♚xd5**, and White has four pawns for his piece, threatens a knight fork on f7, and can take the a8-rook next move. It happens that quickly!

Remember what White did here. White developed with a plan, was aware of what Black was up to, and gathered his pieces on the kingside for a teamwork attack.

There is a formation you will see a fair number of times on the Internet with 5-minute games. It's called the Hippopotamus. It can go a number of ways. Here's a couple of possibilities: **1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘f3 e6 5.♙f4 ♘e7 6.♚d2 ♘d7 7.0-0-0 0-0 8.♙h6 ♘f6 9.♙xg7 ♔xg7 10.h4 ♙d7 11.h5**

and if 11...♘xh5?? then 12.g4! winning the knight or the h-file for a queen check on h6:



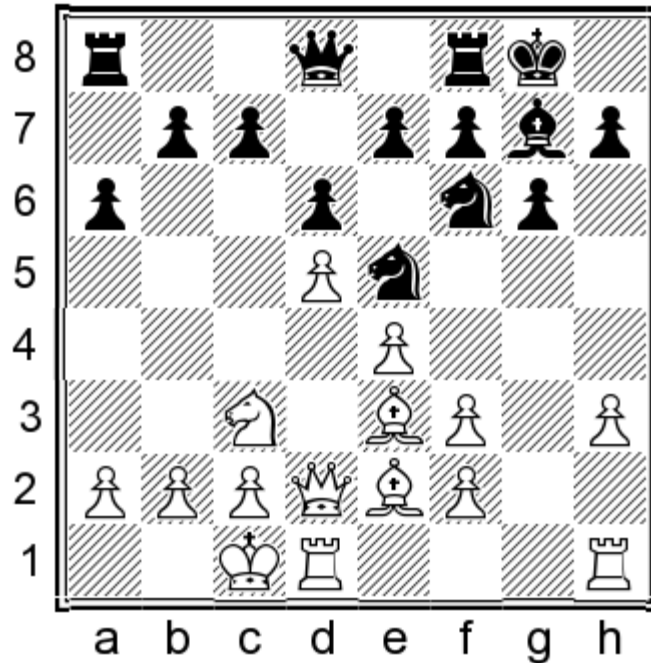
Let's look at this position after White's move 11 and the earlier positions we looked at. You'll notice things that are similar and different.

The center pawns are still there on d4 and e4. White is castled, but on the queenside! The knights are both at their usual posts at f3 and c3. White has swapped dark-squared bishops to weaken the squares around the enemy king. White has played h2-h4-h5 with the rook behind it. White will develop his bishop to d3 after he exchanges on g6: **12.hxg6 fxe6 13.♚h6+ ♔g8 14.♙d3 ♖f7 15.e5 ♘g4 16.♚h4 h5 17.♘e4**, and White's position is overwhelming.

We showed you queenside castling because it is important for you to know that there is more than one way to go against these kinds of openings. Castling queenside and pushing the h-pawn is a time-honored way to attack a fianchetto position.

This last game could have gone many other ways. They are all fine as long as you remember the basic principles. Here's one other possibility for us to look at, where Black plays more actively by trying to get his bishop out:

4...♙g4 5.♙e3 ♘c6 6.h3 ♙xf3 7.gxf3 ♘f6 8.♚d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 a6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♙e2



White has much in common with our last diagram. The big thing to notice is that since White knew he was going to castle queenside, he took with the g-pawn on the bishop-for-knight exchange. He developed a plan: “I’ll open the g-file to put my queen rook on g1 and then I’ll have both rooks and the queen-and-bishop team, along with the pawns to launch a dangerous attack.” White wouldn’t know how it would end or what exact moves would be played, but the setup could be envisioned. He will next play f3-f4 to chase the knight and get his rook over to g1 and push h4-h5, keeping in mind f4-f5 as well. He might try to exchange bishops by keeping the pawn on f3 and just push the h-pawn.

If you take these examples to heart, you’ll be ready for anything because you’ll have enough ideas taken from these setups to create your own plan. The important thing is to stay calm. Have reasons why you make a move. Don’t just develop your pieces without considering how they’re going to be a team to attack your opponent’s king.

32. If You Like Attacking Chess, Don't Hesitate to Use Attacks Based on h2-h4-h5 Against Fianchetto Defenses.

Really good defenders using kingside fianchetto defenses can be tough to beat, but there is no reason to spend all your time worrying about their creative counterattacks in the center or the queenside. Let *them* worry about *you*! If you don't like to attack, then what follows is not for you!

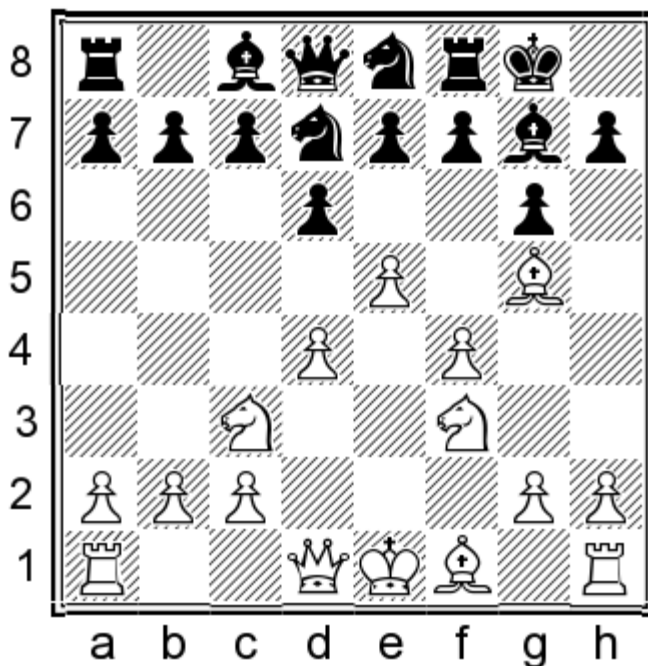
Let's start with some eye-opening attacks against the fianchetto that don't involve the Sicilian. Because the fianchetto formation shows up frequently in chess play, you will learn some very helpful ideas.

Here's a dazzling example from Down Under:

Nettheim – Hamilton

Australia 1958

1.d4 d6 2.e4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♙g5 ♙g7 5.f4 0-0 6.e5 ♘e8 7.♗f3 ♗d7



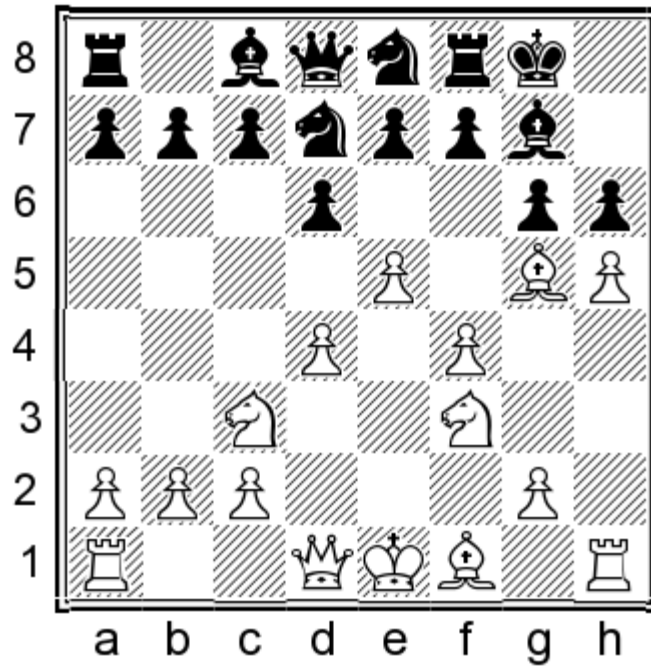
Black has not played very well to this point. He has no piece past the second rank, and has allowed White to gain a lot of space and freedom of movement for his pieces.

White now launches perhaps the key move in all attacks against the fianchetto:

8.h4 h6

Black challenges the bishop, but is a little late in doing so because White can ignore the attack – he has one of his own!

9.h5

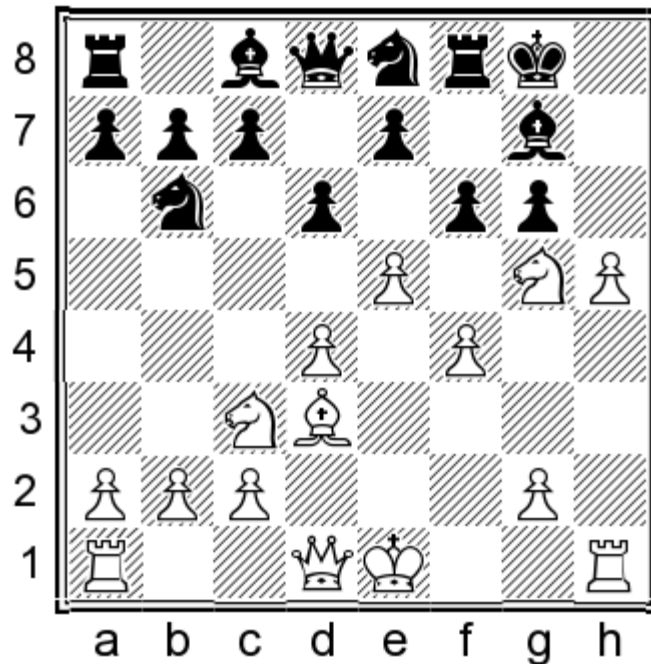


Here we see another important part of the push to h4 – the advance to h5! White wants to open the rook file, make a mess of Black’s pawns, and allow the white knight and queen to participate in the attack. All that is worth giving up the bishop for.

9...hxg5 10.♘xg5

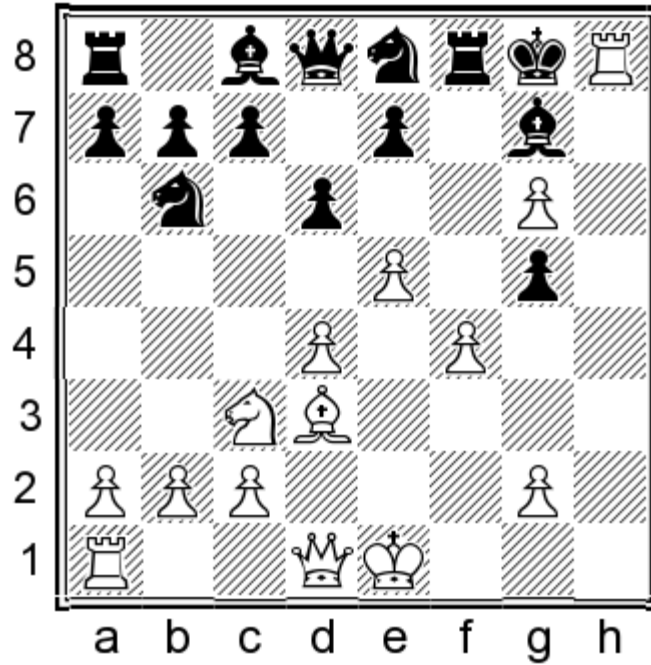
Actually, 10.hxg6 would have been at least as good and more in keeping with the idea of the attack. This works, too!

10...♘b6 11.♙d3 f6



Remember how the g5-bishop wasn’t so important to lose? Now the knight gives itself up. Why? White wants to break through!

12.hxg6 fxg5 13.♖h8+!!

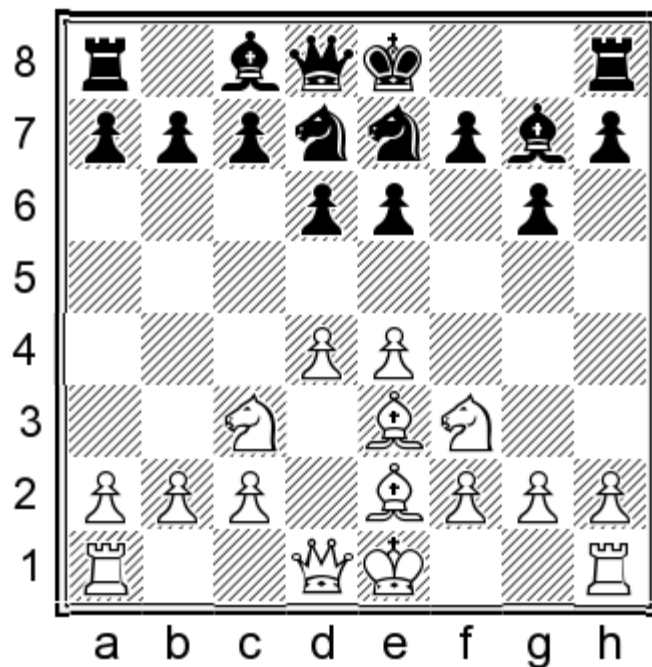


and **Black resigned** because it's mate after 13...♙xh8 14.♚h5 ♜f7 15.gxf7+ ♔f8 16.fxe8=♚+ ♚xe8 17.♚xh8+ ♔f7 18.♚h7+ ♔f8 19.♚h6+ ♔g8 20.♙h7+ ♔h8 21.♙g6+ ♔g8 22.♚h7+ ♔f8 23.♚h8#.

That was quick! There are many such disasters to compare with this game. Here's another one:

Haas – Bungter
Germany 1990

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♙g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♙e2 ♘d7 5.♘f3 e6 6.♙e3 ♘e7

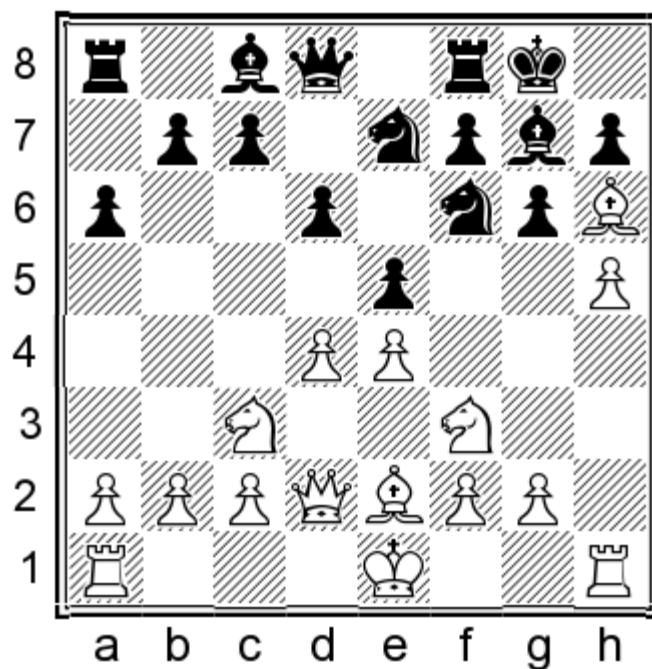


We feel compelled to say something about Black's opening: it's awful! Don't ever do this! It may look like your opponent has set up this great little defense, but watch what White does to it...

7. ♔d2 a6 8. ♘h6 0-0

White has followed a common idea: ♔d2 with ♘h6 to be followed by h2-h4 and h4-h5. The neat thing about the bishop's being on h6 is that it stops Black from playing ...h7-h5 in these kinds of positions.

9. h4 ♘f6 10. h5 e5



And now the white bishop makes way for Her Majesty!

11. ♘xg7 ♔xg7 12. hxg6 hxg6

Longer, but no more successful, is 12...fxg6 13.♖h6+ ♔f7 14.dxe5 ♗fg8 15.♙c4+ ♕e8 16.♖xh7 ♖d7 17.♗g5 ♖g4 18.♙f7+ ♔d8 19.♖g7 ♗xf7 20.♗xf7+ ♔d7 21.♖h8.

13.♖h6+ 1-0

We hope you see the mate!

There are little things about this type of attack that you pick up if you play over different games.

For example, if the plan is to use the h-pawn to head over to h5 and then exchange on g6, wouldn't it be nice to have a bishop pinning the black pawn on f7 so that Black can't take back with that pawn. Then, if he takes with the h-pawn, our goal of opening the h-file will succeed. Take a look at this game:

Polugaevsky – Kudrin

New York 1989

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.♙e3 0-0
10.♗c1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖a5+ 12.♔f1

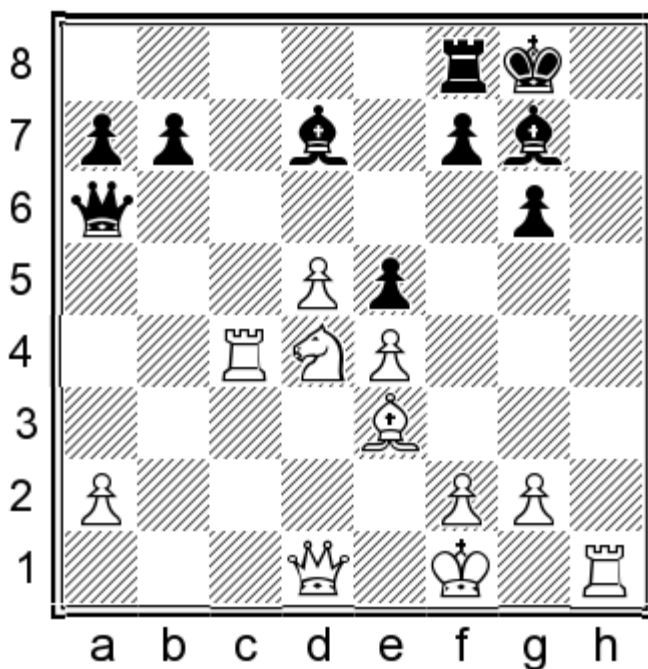
White doesn't mind moving his king because he's pretty safe where he is. He didn't do an early castle because he wanted that rook on the h-file.

12...♙d7 13.h4 ♗ac8?!

As mentioned above, this is where that move to h5 for Black would have come in handy.

14.h5 e5 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.d5 ♗d4 17.♗xd4 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♖a6

Black couldn't afford to play 18...exd4 19.♗xd4! ♙xd4 20.♙xd4 because losing that dark-squared bishop takes away his position's key defender.



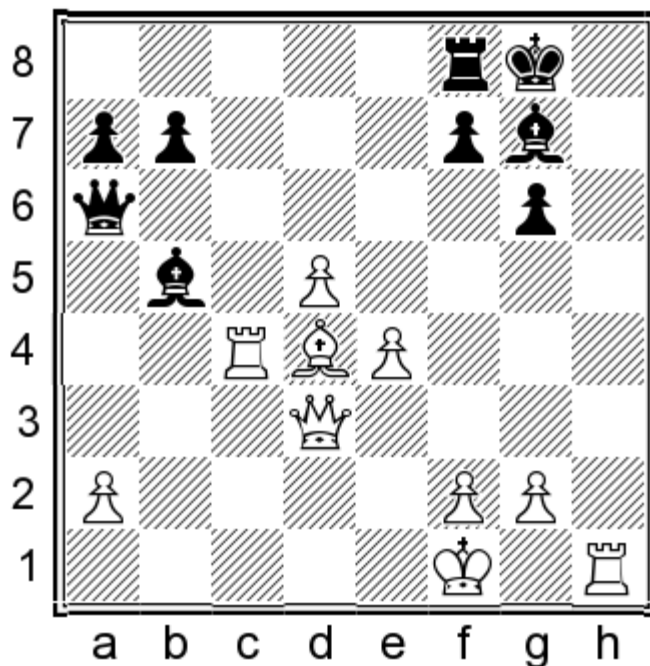
White's rook is attacked and pinned. White also wants to get his queen over to that h-file. How does he get to

do both?

He thinks horizontally as well as diagonally! Chess is not all up and down.

19. ♖d3 exd4 20. ♗xd4 ♘b5

And, again, we now see how getting on the h-file can be more important than some of your other pieces.



21. ♖h3!! ♗xc4+ 22. ♕g1 f6 23. ♖h7+ ♕f7 24. ♖h6

Black resigns as the attacks on g6 and f6 and the pinned bishop are too much for Black to defend.

It almost seems too easy, doesn't it? Let's show you how it can even look scary!!

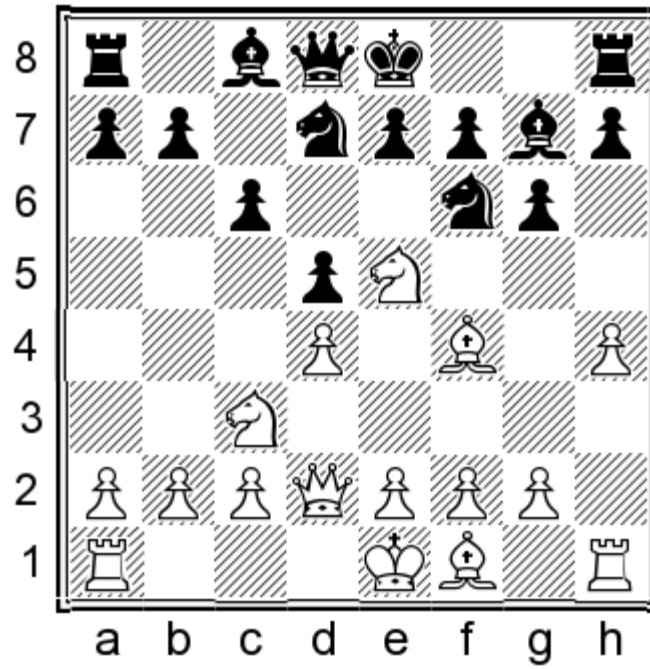
In Volume 6 of the series *Secrets of Opening Surprises*, GM Artur Kogan has a chapter on what he calls the Tarzan Attack!

If you're Black you get the feeling that the big Ape Man is swinging right on top of you. In the following game, Black even gets that ...h7-h5 defensive move in, and we see what White does about that:

Rakić – Cvitan

Yugoslavia 1991

1. d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 g6 3. ♗c3 d5 4. ♗f4 ♗g7 5. ♖d2 c6 6. ♗e5 ♗bd7 7. h4



OK, White is being very open about what he wants to do to Black: queen and bishop lined up, rook behind the h-pawn.

7...♖xe5 8.♗xe5 h5

Black tries a typical way to stop the h-pawn. White, though, has a plan for this defense: f2-f3 and g2-g4.

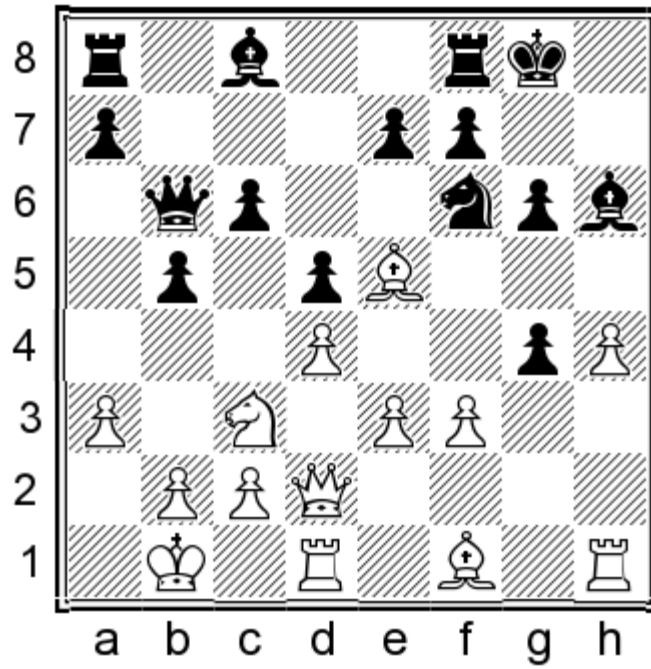
9.0-0-0

This brings another rook into the game as it can later head for h1, too.

9...b5 10.f3 ♔a5 11.a3 ♗h6 12.e3 0-0 13.♖b1

Kings castled queenside often have to make this move for safety reasons. Black is attacking here, too!

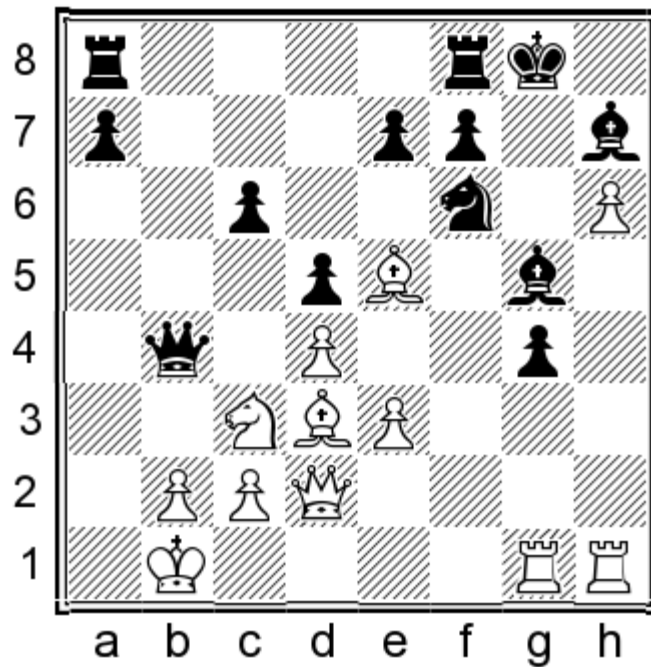
13...♗b6 14.g4 hxg4



15.h5

Another good idea to remember: White is not interested in recapturing – he is interested in opening up Black’s position.

15...g5 16.f4 b4 17.axb4 ♖xb4 18.fxg5 ♕xg5 19.h6 ♕f5 20.♔d3 ♕h7 21.♖dg1



The proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back. The other rook now puts so much pressure on the g-file that Black’s position collapses. You should also notice that because Black doesn’t have that open c-file, his attack went just a bit too slowly.

21...a5 22.♕xh7+ ♖xh7 23.♖d3 ♖c4 24.♖f5

Black resigns because of 24...♖fb8 25.♖xg4 f6 26.♖xg5+ ♜xg5 27.♚g6+ ♔f8 28.h7 ♖xb2+ 29.♔xb2 ♚b4+ 30.♔c1 ♚a3+ 31.♔d1 ♚a1+ 32.♔e2.

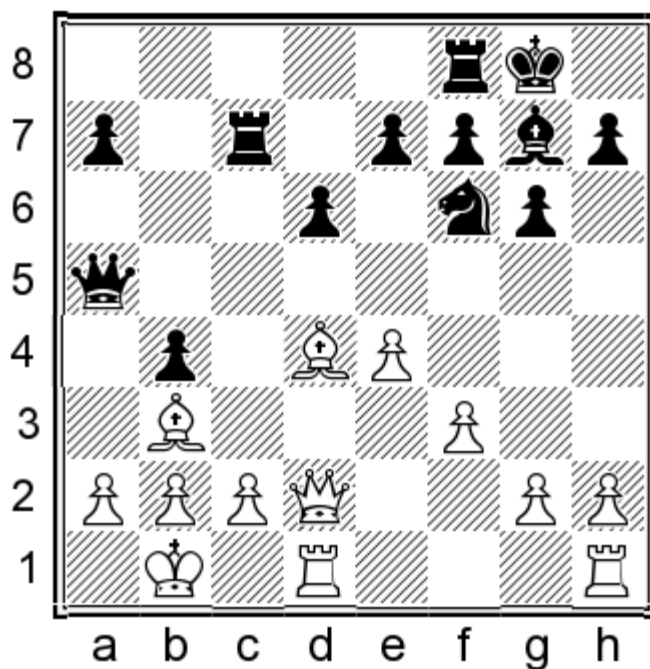
How do you defend all this? Well, that's yet another lesson. Later on we will look at how Black, in the Sicilian Dragon, can take White's queenside castled position apart, so that you get to see how a counterattack can work. But now, we are going to give two games showing you how White attacks the Dragon! The games are 50 years apart!

The first game is from a 15-year-old Bobby Fischer, who defeats one of the greatest players of that era – GM Bent Larsen of Denmark:

Fischer – Larsen

Portorož Interzonal 1958

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2 ♘c6 9.♙c4 ♘xd4 10.♙xd4 ♙e6 11.♙b3 ♚a5 12.0-0-0 b5 13.♔b1 b4 14.♘d5 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 ♖ac8 16.♙b3 ♖c7

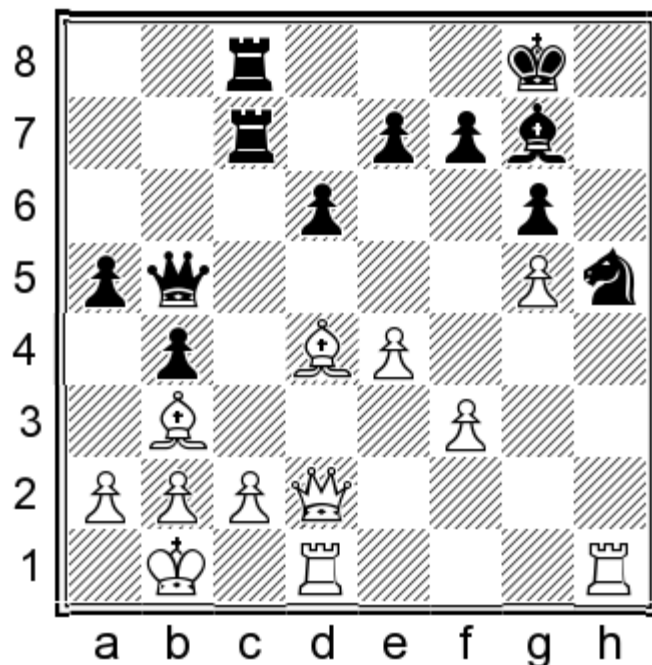


White's ready to attack. By now you should see what's important here: the bishop is pinning the f7-pawn, the rook is behind the h-pawn to support the advance, and the queen is on the important c1-h6 diagonal.

17.h4 ♚b5 18.h5 ♖fc8

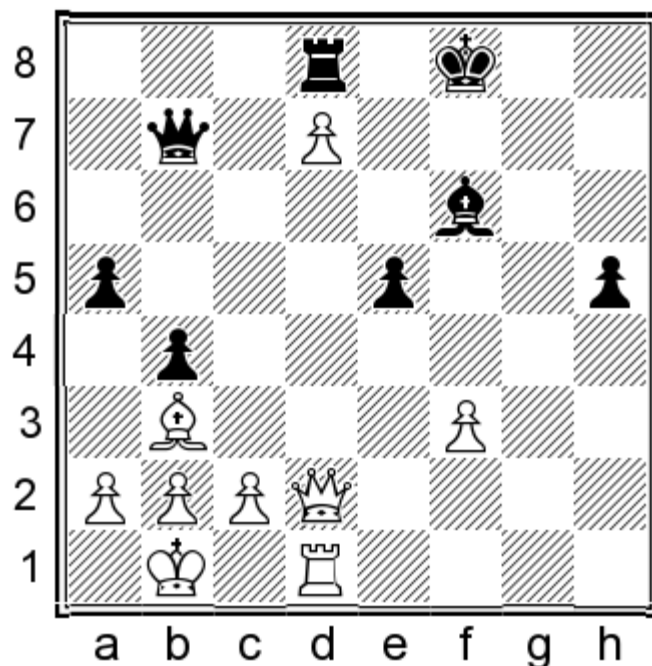
18...♘h5 19.♙xg7 ♔xg7 (19...♘g7 20.♚h6) 20.g4 ♘f6 21.♚h6+ ♔g8 22.g5.

19.hxg6 hxg6 20.g4 a5 21.g5 ♘h5



Here is another key idea you are about to learn. We've seen that sacrificing pieces to break through a castled position can be a good thing to do. Taking the N on h5 is one of those good things.

22. ♖xh5! gxh5 23. g6 e5 24. gxf7+ ♔f8 25. ♕e3 d5 26. exd5 ♖xf7 27. d6 ♖f6 28. ♔g5 ♚b7 29. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 30. d7 ♖d8



Here Fischer points out that while his opponent did resign after what he played, there was a mate in three in the position that he missed! Even Fischer! Can you find it? Answer below.

31. ♚d6+

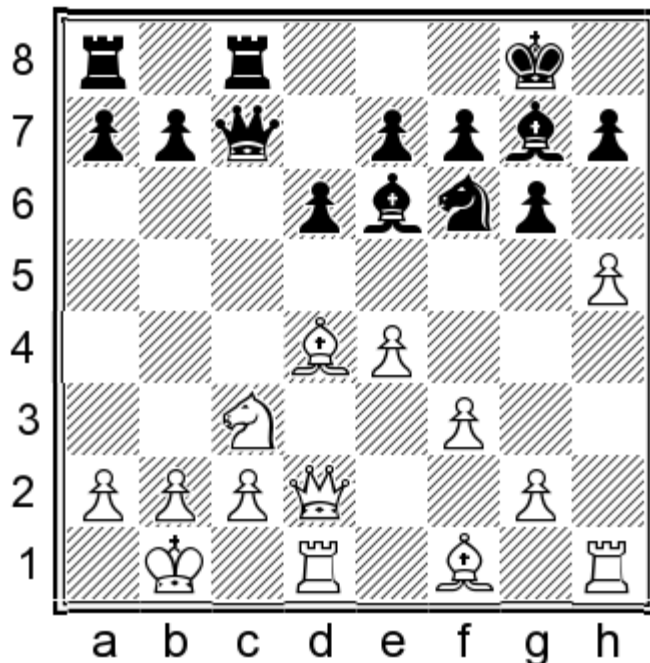
Black resigned because of 31... ♔g7 32. ♖g1+ ♔h7 33. ♚xf6 ♚xd7 34. ♚g6+ ♔h8 35. ♚xh5+ ♚h7 36. ♚xe5+ ♚g7 37. ♚xg7#. The three-move mate was 31. ♚h6+ ♔e7 32. ♚h7+ ♔f8 33. ♚f7#.

Our last game, a half-century removed from Fischer, is really special. You see, years ago, Fischer claimed he could give any woman knight odds (playing without one knight from the outset). Women and young girls have come a long way. Nobody is going to give Alexandra Kosteniuk knight odds!

Kosteniuk – Pogonina

Russian Women's Chp. 2005

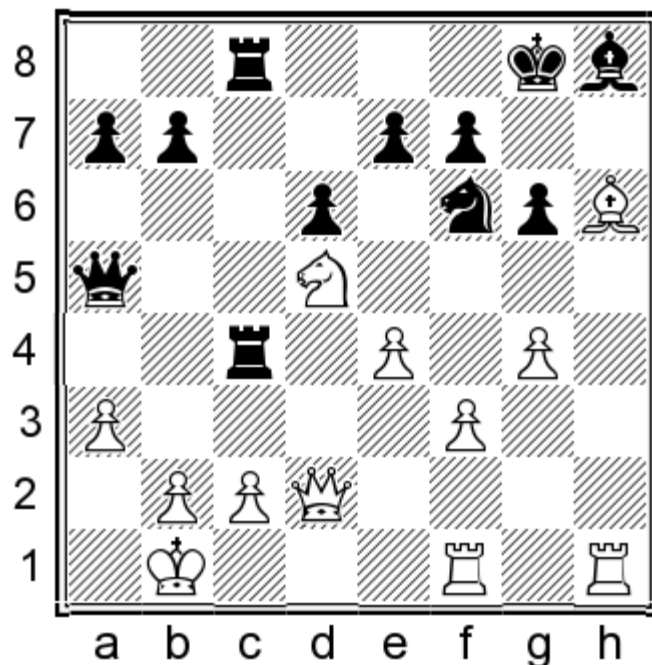
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♕e3 ♖g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♙d2 ♗c6 9.0-0-0 ♗xd4 10.♕xd4 ♕e6 11.♖b1 ♚c7 12.h4 ♜fc8 13.h5



13...♙a5

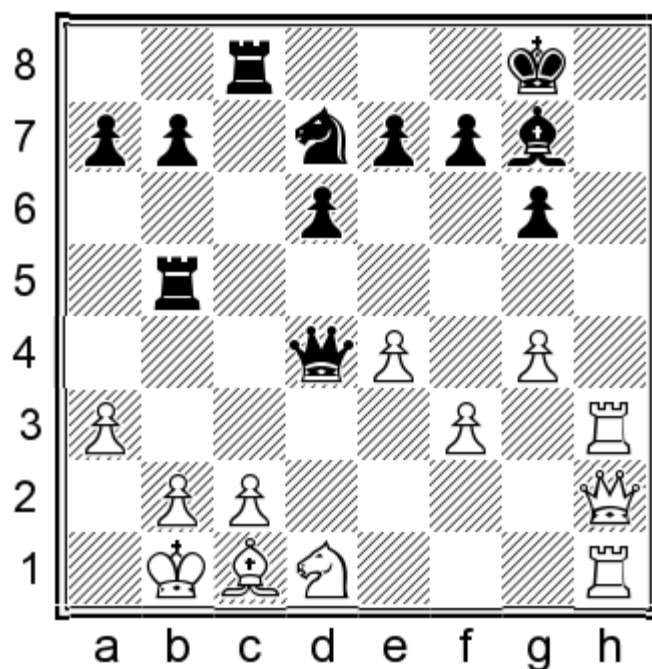
Some years ago, the late GM Larry Evans absolutely demolished an opponent who tried 13...♗xh5. That's why nobody plays that today! It's worth playing over Evans's utterly brilliant game. You'll see many of the ideas we are talking about. We add it at the end.

14.hxg6 hxg6 15.a3 ♕c4 16.g4 ♕xf1 17.♞dx1 ♜c4 18.♕e3 ♞ac8 19.♕h6 ♕h8 20.♗d5!!



What a great move! Instead 20. ♖h2 ♜xc3 21. ♙d2 ♙g7 22. ♙xc3 ♜xc3 23. bxc3 ♜xa3 would have saved Black. Now Black can't even take the white queen: 20... ♜xd2 21. ♘xe7+ ♙h7 22. ♙xd2+. Therefore, Black has to drop back.

20... ♜d8 21. ♘e3! ♜4c5 22. ♜h3 ♜b5 23. ♘d1 ♜a5 24. ♜d3! ♜a6 25. ♜fh1 ♘d7 26. ♙c1 ♙g7 27. ♜d2 ♜a4 28. ♜h2 ♜d4



You probably noticed that Black played a lot tougher than most of the earlier victims. Kosteniuk combined both attack *and* defense to be successful.

You don't just throw your pieces up there willy-nilly and hope for the best. You must remember that your opponent has ideas, too!

In the diagram, she has tripled on the h-file and that is almost always fatal. It certainly is here! There's a neat

trick to remember here, too.

29. ♖h8+ ♙xh8 30. ♚h7+

Black resigned, as after 30... ♗f8 31. ♚xh8+ ♚xh8 32. ♖xh8+ ♗g7 33. ♖xc8 White wins a piece and the game.

Here's that Evans gem:

GM Larry Evans – IM Bernard Zuckerman
New York 1966

1.e4 c5 2. ♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 g6 6. ♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8. ♚d2 ♗c6 9. 0-0-0 ♗xd4 10. ♙xd4 ♙e6 11. ♗b1 ♚c7 12.h4 ♖fc8 13.h5 ♗xh5 14. ♙xg7 ♗xg7 15.g4 ♗f6 16. ♚h6+ ♗g8 17.e5!! dxe5 18.g5 ♗h5 19. ♙d3 e4 20. ♖xh5! gxh5 21. ♗xe4 ♚f4 22. ♗f6+!! exf6 23. ♙xh7+ ♗h8 24. ♙f5+ ♗g8 25. ♚h7+ ♗f8 26. ♚h8+

and **Black resigned** as it's mate after 26... ♗e7 27.gxf6.

You should have a pretty good idea of how to attack a fianchetto castled position.

It's very important to play over these games many times in order to remember the wonderful ideas that are possible in these positions.

Eventually, we'll cover defense, but, for now, we'd like you to understand these attacking principles:

1. Use the h-pawn as a battering ram against the g6-pawn.
2. Your goal is to destroy your opponent's pawn structure around the king.
3. Don't be afraid to sacrifice a piece or a pawn to open things up.
4. Use that queen-and-bishop team to attack along the diagonal.
5. Getting rid of the fianchettoed bishop is often very helpful.
6. The pawn moves f2-f3 and g2-g4 can also help attack the black pieces and pawns.
7. A bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal will pin the black f7-pawn and force Black to open the h-file when recapturing on g6.
8. Don't forget to pay attention to what your opponent is threatening! Timing is everything. Calculate! Calculate!

Do not get the impression that all you need do is to automatically play the h2-h4 idea with the above suggestions and you will win every game. What is emphasized here is that you should study such games, see what the best defenses are, and play over as many games as you can in whatever opening it is where you are dealing with this idea. That goes for the defender as well! As we state many times, you must first determine whether you are comfortable as an aggressive attacking player. That's worth a pawn all by itself.

33. Don't Get Crazy When Facing an Offbeat Opening, Either.

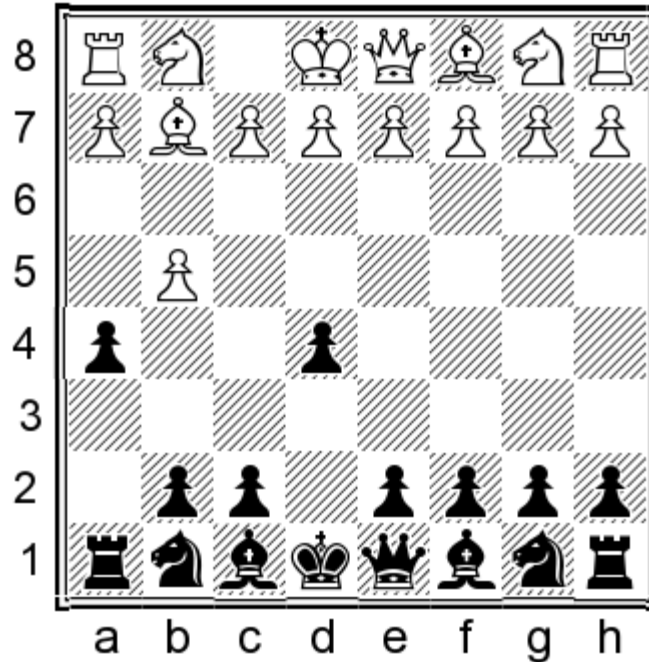
We have looked at how you should meet Black's peek-a-boo defenses. Odd moves can come from White's side as well. As Black, you'll want to know how to meet these attempts to confuse and upset you.

Grob's Attack

Probably the most famous of these is "Grob's Attack" or "The Spike."

The main idea in the Grob is to open this way: 1.g4 d5 2.♙g2 ♟xg4 3.c4 c6 4.♚b3 with pressure against d5 and b7. Black, however, can avoid all this very simply.

1.g4 e5 2.♙g2 h5



Remembering general principles and playing 2...d5 3.c4 d4 4.d3 ♞c6 5.♙xc6+ bxc6 is OK, too. With ...h7-h5, we immediately hit the weak pawn.

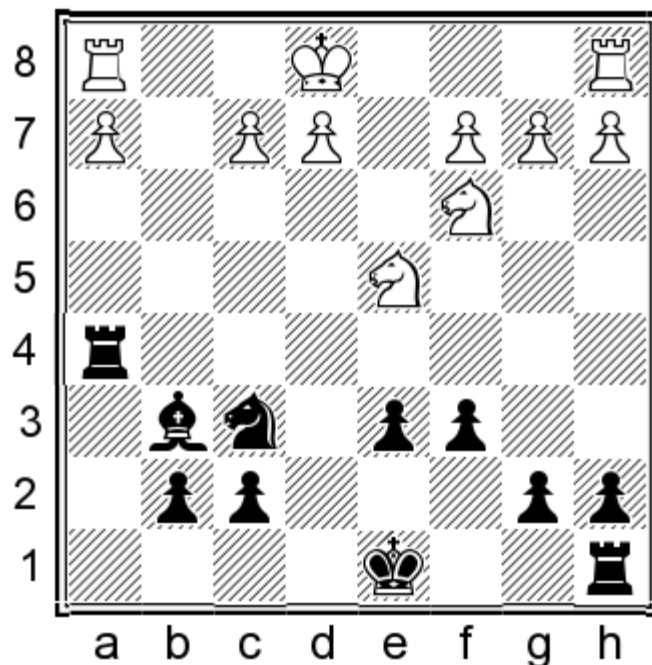
3.gxh5

3.g5 ♚xg5 4.♙f1 ♞c6 5.d4 ♚f5.

3...♞f6

There's no rush to take the pawn – it's not going anywhere.

4.d4 exd4 5.♚xd4 ♞c6 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.♚xd8+ ♙xd8 8.♞f3 ♚xh5 9.♞c3 ♙f5 10.♞d4 ♙g6 11.♙f4 ♙d6 12.♙xd6 cxd6



Black's game is preferable because he's better developed and has the superior pawn structure. The weak white h-pawn can be a target for the black rooks, or the rooks may decide to double on the e-file. All in all, the Grob isn't much to worry about.

Back in 2003, one of my message-board questioners was promoting **1.g4 e5 2.♗g2 h5 3.d4** and made the comment, "I'm definitely not saying that White is better after 3.d4. He's got his chances and some compensation." My reply was not about analysis, but about attitude:

"I think I had better explain some reasons why I think the way I do. Back in the '60s, Weaver Adams used to promote his gambit in the Vienna and Larry Evans would reply showing how Black could defend. Adams used to say things like, 'White threatens various things,' and Evans used to show that because something looks menacing doesn't mean it is. Then, as I grew up in the New York area, I would watch masters get their pawn from some booked-up gambiteer or attacking sacrificial type and just sit there with this contented look and in New York lingo say out loud in a curt foreign accent, 'I have pawn more.' Now some of you say that in amateur chess this doesn't mean much. I won't exactly argue that, as sometimes even a piece doesn't mean much, depending on the level. But when it comes to judging opening systems you have to decide whether to pick an opening like the Grob which gives you 'chances and some compensation' and dismal disappointment as you get better because good players will handle it, or to select a solid opening which keeps White's initiative (like a Ruy López or an English or QGD) and in which you can grow.

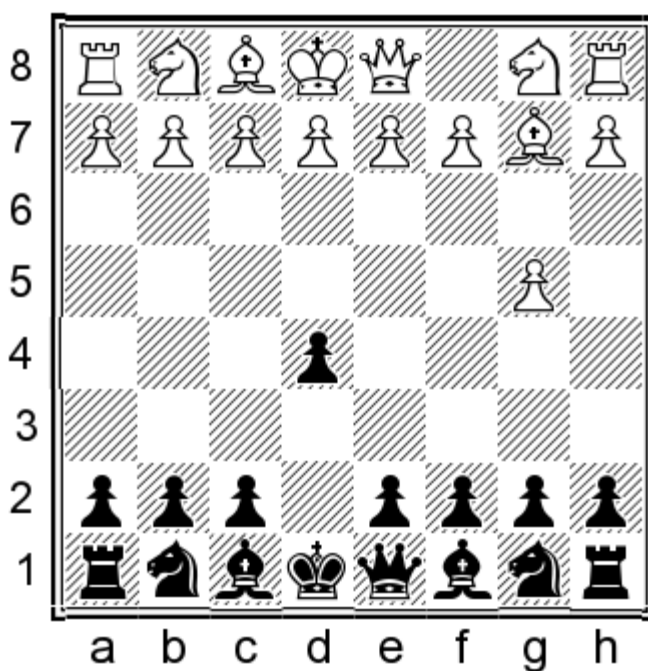
"Now, with the Grob, I just picked one line as a sample of how Black can play. I have no real desire to argue about what move 15 or 20 should be in an opening line. I think that misses the point of my complaint against someone adopting the Grob. I just wanted to show you what I think would have been played by those masters I was talking about. In fact, the one line where White lines all his stuff up on the g-file reminds me of a game long ago, where the master just defended and about 50(!) moves later won because once you stop the attack, you just grind it out. Granted it's not exciting and nobody publishes any book on that style, but I think it's a style you should know about. It's long, it's hard, it requires patience, but it is still chess. So, every time somebody gets all excited about an attack (which frankly includes me!) I like to think back on those guys in Greenwich Village chess houses that would have you for lunch (or your lunch money!)."

The late great GM Savielly Tartakower wrote the following while annotating a game from 1919 in his book of collected games: “Later, at the New York Tournament of 1924, I termed this the ‘Orang-outang’ Opening, not only because I employed it there – against Maróczy – after a previous consultation with a young orang-outang (during a visit by all the masters to the New York Zoo on the eve of the game in question), but also since the climbing movement b4-b5 is reminiscent of that inventive animal.”

You have to admit that he had a sense of humor. In recent years, many have called it Sokolsky’s Opening because of the master who developed it further. While all of this might be quite interesting, how do you meet 1.b4 when you see it over the board?

You meet it by developing your pieces! That’s the way you meet all openings. There are several good ways to meet 1.b4. Here’s one that does not simply develop the pieces, but tries for a win. Let’s look at an ...e7-e5 approach first.

1.b4 e5 2.♖b2

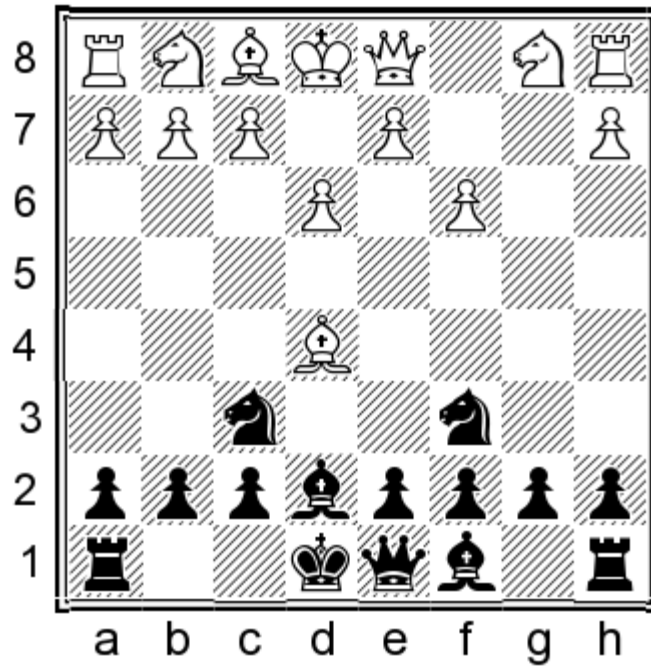


White is daring you to take the b-pawn in exchange for which he will grab your e-pawn. Usually, that’s not a good idea – giving up a central pawn for a wing pawn: however, you’ll be getting something else in return: time!

2...♗xb4 3.♗xe5 ♖f6 4.c3

Nothing else helps, either: 4.e3 (4.♖c3 ♗a5 5.e3 d6 6.♗g3 ♖bd7; 4.a3 ♗e7 5.e3 d5; 4.♖f3 d5 5.e3 0-0; 4.c4 0-0 5.e3 d5 6.cxd5 ♖xd5) 4...d5 5.♖f3 0-0 6.♗b2 c5.

4...♗e7 5.e3 ♖c6



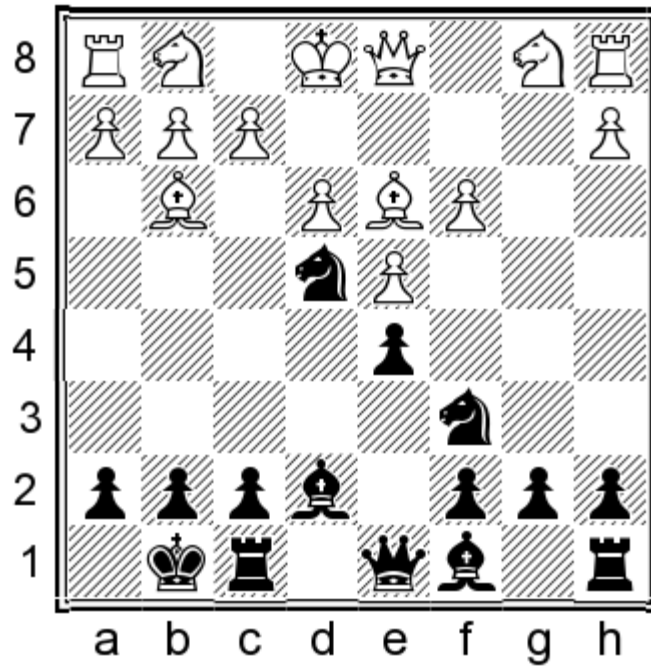
This is what we meant by time. Look at the position. After five moves, Black has three pieces out to White's one and is ready to castle and play ...d7-d5, completely freeing his position.

White, on the other hand, has not developed his kingside pieces, is nowhere near castling, and has his bishop under attack. Not only that, but c2-c3 – attacking your bishop – only served to cut off a line of retreat for his bishop. Sometimes White will play a2-a3 instead of c2-c3 to keep that diagonal open, but you go back with ...♗e7 anyhow and you're fine.

6.♗g3 0-0 7.d4 d5 8.♗d3

Things can go dreadfully wrong for White if he tries to get too active: 8.c4 ♗b4+ 9.♖d2 ♘e4 10.♗gf3 ♗g4 and White can resign as he loses a piece after his queen moves to unpin the knight on f3. Black will capture on f3, then d2.

8...♘e4



We “violated” a general principle earlier with the pawn swap, and here we are going to “violate” one more: don’t move the same piece twice in the opening. General rules are good as general rules. If they were always true, then chess would be a lot easier! Why did we play ...♘e4?

There are several reasons. We are establishing a knight on a very aggressive square in White’s camp. He probably doesn’t want to take it because recapturing on e4 with the pawn puts a serious cramp on White. And there is another really interesting reason: we’re going to violate yet another general rule! We are going to play ...h7-h5-h4, heading for White’s bishop. Moving the knight uncovers the queen on d8 and bishop on e7 who will both support the advance to h4.

Now, why would we want to mess up our castled position? We do it because the pluses outweigh the minuses. Let’s follow this a bit more.

9.♘f3

If White tries to chase you with 9.f3, then 9...♘d6 is very effective as it will help make pawn advances to e4 or c4 difficult for White.

9...h5 10.♘bd2 h4

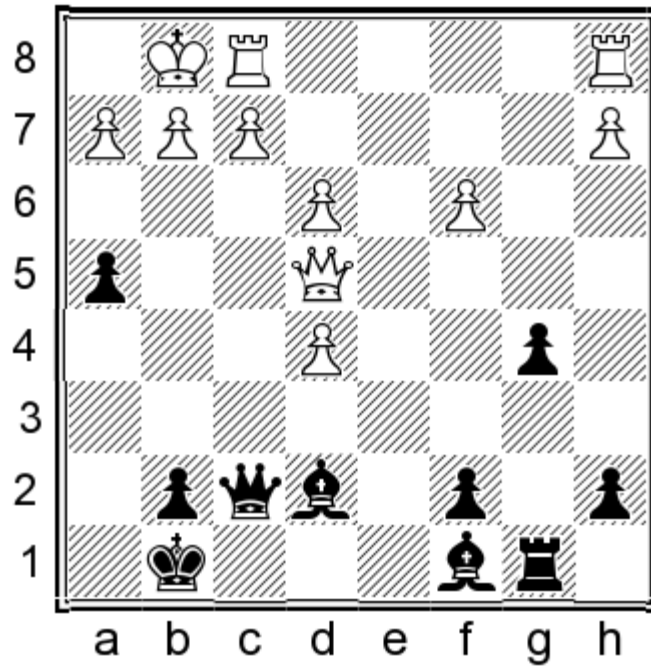
We’re playing for a win here. This is a very sharp position. White and Black both have to be careful, but the better-developed side should come out on top. That’s Black here!

11.♙e5 f6 12.♘xe4 fxe5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5

Here’s what we mean about *both* sides being careful: 13...dxe4 14.♙c4+ ♔h8 15.♚h5 checkmate! Whoa! How did that happen? There are always tactics in chess, and the old rule about looking at *all* checks and captures can keep you out of trouble like this.

14.dxe5 dxe4 15.♙c4+ ♖f7 16.♚b1 ♚f8 17.♚xe4 ♖b8 18.0-0 b5 19.♙xf7+ ♚xf7

And here we have our last diagram for this line:

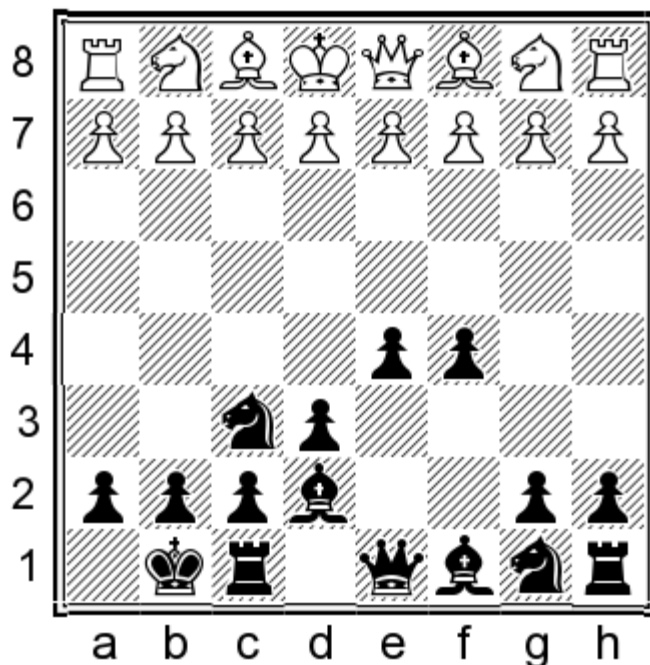


Black is clearly better. His two bishops for a rook are better. In fact, their placement on c5 and c4 may be in the future. The h-pawn can be pushed to h3 where White will have the unhappy choice of taking on h3, creating a weakness with g2-g3, or allowing ...hxg2. In order to defend his e5-pawn, White will have to play f2-f4, which leaves his e3-pawn weak, especially if under attack by a bishop on c5. White's only shot is to get his rooks onto the d-file, but if the bishops position themselves on e6 and e7, there's not much for the rooks to do. You will notice that White has two more pawns and a rook for the two bishops, but the a- and c-pawns are very weak, and Black's bishops will be more than a match for them. Just visualize that lovely c4 square for Black's light-squared bishop!

This was a fighting defense to 1.b4. If you are not comfortable with a sharp game, here's what Purdy called the All-Purpose Defense.

It works against just about everything! It works quite comfortably against not only 1.b4, but also 1.♘f3, 1.♘c3, 1.♘a3, 1.b3, 1.g3, and a bunch of others. Here's the setup:

The All-Purpose Defense



There are no moves for White because we are giving you a general setup for all the unusual openings with g2-g3 and b2-b3 and such, and there are hundreds of possibilities.

The usual order of moves for Black is 1...♘f6, 2...d5, 3...e6, 4...♙e7, 5...0-0, 6...c5. You play this order because ...♘f6 waits to see a little more of what your opponent is up to. Then you play ...d7-d5 to get your share of the center. The next move, ...e7-e6, needs to be played so you can castle after ...♙e7. Sometimes you might find it useful to get the queen bishop out and then play ...e7-e6. A rule of thumb on that decision involves this question: if I move the queen bishop out, will White be able to play ♖b3 to attack my b7-pawn? If the answer is yes, then stick with ...e7-e6. You generally play ...c7-c5 once you have the king bishop ready to support the advance to c5.

Let's see how this works against 1.b4:

1.b4 ♘f6 2.♙b2 d5

You don't have to worry about 3.♙xf6 as after 3...exf6, your whole position is free and you just develop normally.

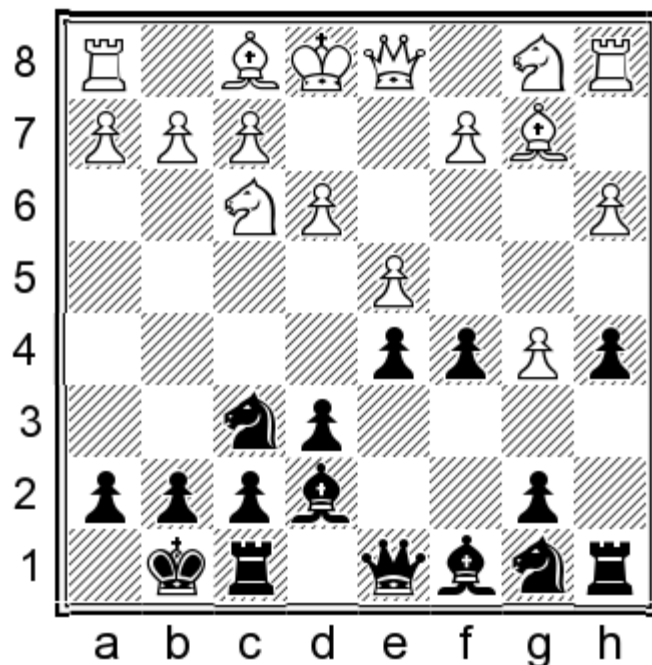
3.♘f3 e6 4.a3

Because the All-Purpose Defense also targets the b-pawn and doesn't offer the e-pawn as a target, White has to waste a move dealing with this threat. Now we interpose one move – just because it's the 1.b4 opening – to become part of the defense we didn't mention above. We are hitting the b-pawn with ...a7-a5 because as White's pawn advances it becomes weaker. Notice how White is already on the defensive! What a waste of the first move.

4...a5 5.b5

White can't afford to ignore it: 5.e3 axb4 6.axb4 ♜xa1 7.♙xa1 ♙xb4. White can't afford to defend it: 5.c3 ♙d6 because since the long diagonal is blocked, Black's bishop is more useful on d6.

5...♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.d4 c5 and we reach this diagram:



White has a number of replies here. The two possible pawn captures favor Black:

8.dxc5

In one sense, this is a logical choice for White, as it opens the long diagonal for the bishop.

8...♚c7

Black can afford this, although we should point out that the direct ...♙xc5 is fine, too. The ...♚c7 move may prompt White to continue:

9.♙e5 ♚xc5 10.♙d3 ♘bd7 11.♙b2 ♙d6 and now Black has his rooks connected and ready to double on the c-file as part of their plan. Another possibility involves putting the rooks on c8 and e8, with the queen on c7, ready to push the e-pawn to e5 and keeping pressure on the c2-pawn.

Other possibilities for White on move 8 are either:

The other pawn capture, which not only helps Black develop, but encourages an attack on b2:

8.bxc6 ♘xc6 9.c4 ♙d7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♙d3 ♚b6

Or just developing, when the queen knight and bishop find really useful squares to settle on and Black is fine:

8.♙e2 ♘bd7 9.0-0 ♚c7 10.c4 b6 11.♘c3 dxc4 12.♙xc4 cxd4 13.♚xd4 ♙b7.

Conclusions: The more you play chess, the more unusual openings you will meet. You should react to them with calm and confidence. As much fun as we've had violating some general principles, we still very much respect them:

1. Develop your pieces on active, central squares.
2. Get your d- and e-pawns out and have a really good reason for moving the others.
3. Get castled.
4. Be aware of the tactical threats in the position: look for *all* checks and captures for both sides.

5. Get your share of the center. Fight for it!

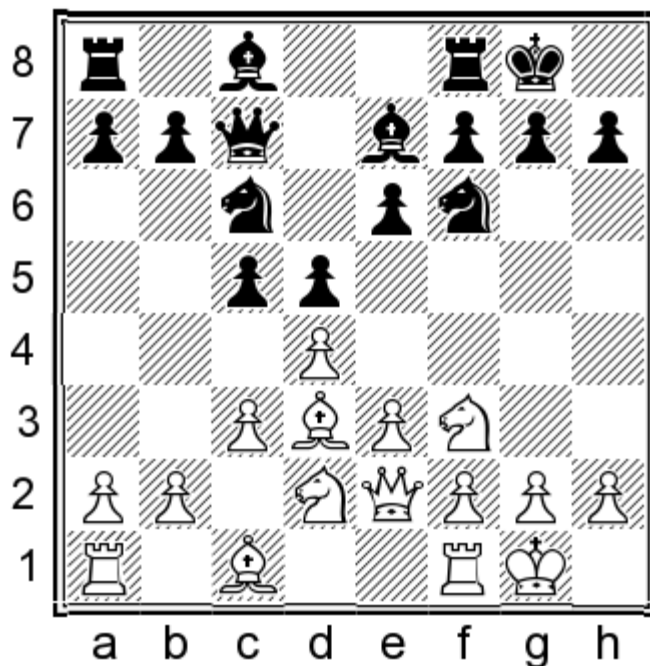
34. When Playing Against the Colle System, Do Not Think That Simple, Planless, Developing Moves Will Be Sufficient.

One of the best opening schemes for scholastic players is the Colle System. Many chess authors, past and present, like it because the first ten moves or so are easy to remember and pretty much keep the player of the white pieces out of trouble for a while.

It also has a fairly straightforward plan: attack the kingside! We've been talking about how to defend as Black against certain "systems." The Colle is one that you can not only meet, but play yourself!

What we are going to do is explain the ideas for both sides so you can play either side!

Here is one of the basic positions of the Colle System:



It looks like White really doesn't want to come out and play, but that is not really the case.

The Idea Behind the Colle System

The idea behind the Colle System is to open the game with 1.d4 and then really build up the push to play e3-e4 at a later time. If you look at the above position, you should notice some key things:

1. White has four pieces ready to protect the pawn when it moves to e4.
2. White's queen rook and queen bishop will have to wait for the e3-e4 push to get free.
3. White's c3-pawn not only protects the d-pawn but allows the king's bishop to drop back if it has to and also prevents ...♘b4 by Black, which would attack the bishop.
4. The white king is safely castled.
5. If Black exchanges his d-pawn and knight on e4, White will recapture with the queen and threaten checkmate on h7 because the king knight is no longer protecting h7.
6. If White pushes to e4 with the pawn and Black doesn't recapture, then White can push the pawn to e5,

chase the king knight, which is defending the h7-pawn, and start to plan an attack on h7 with moves like ♖h5, ♗g5, and even ♙xh7+!

7. As White's pushing his pawn to e4 is a big deal, Black is also thinking of pushing his e6-pawn to e5 to free himself.

8. White's d4-pawn and Black's c5-pawn are going to reach a point where one is going to take the other! We'll see why.

One Move at a Time!

Let's take this opening one move at a time so that, instead of just memorizing moves you don't understand, you'll know why each move is played.

1.d4 ♗f6

White plays one of the two best opening moves. Black prevents 2.e4 while developing a piece at the same time.

2.♗f3 d5

Back in the 1920s, a lot of players played 2.♗f3 because at the time the Budapest Defense (1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e5!?) was causing a lot of headaches. Playing ♗f3 seemed like an easy solution. Hey, it develops a piece! Black, for his part, just wants to get his share of the center.

3.e3 e6

Both sides want to get their king bishops out so that they can castle quickly.

4.♙d3 c5

White gets the bishop out to a square that supports the eventual e3-e4 and the prospective attack on h7. Black counters in the center and threatens ...c5-c4, forcing the bishop back. Notice that this is the All-Purpose Defense from Primer #33, and it comes in handy here as well!

5.c3 ♗c6

White gives his bishop a retreat. If Black doesn't play ...c7-c5, White can consider saving a move by not playing c2-c3. Black puts his knight on a strong square which supports an ...e6-e5 push and attacks d4, which becomes weaker when White plays e3-e4.

6.♗bd2 ♙d6

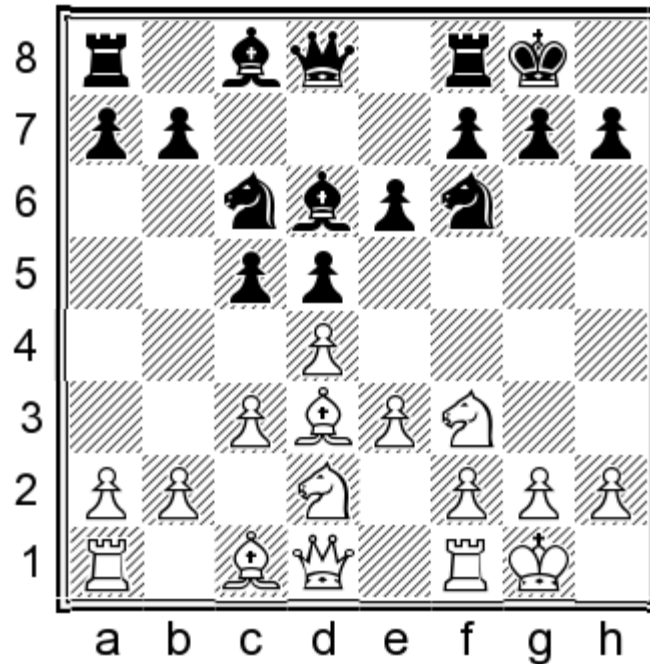
White supports the planned e3-e4. This knight will be the first to recapture on e4 when the moment happens. Black's bishop move is interesting. Usually, in the queen's pawn openings with the All-Purpose Defense, the bishop goes to e7, as in the first diagram. In the regular Queen's Gambit, the bishop goes to e7 because there is a white bishop on g5 pinning the knight and on e7 the bishop becomes a way to cover the pin.

Here, ...♙d6 is adapting to the position. There is no bishop that's going to pin on g5: it's buried on c1! Also, since Black wants to play ...e6-e5 at some point, the bishop is just as well placed as its white counterpart.

7.0-0 0-0

This is a very instructive move for both sides. Why did both players castle here? Why didn't White go for ...e3-e4 and why didn't Black go for ...e6-e5?

Aside from it being good general advice to castle before you get active in the center, it would be good for you to go through the lines given below, because there is an awful lot going on here!



One of the downsides of playing the Colle is that once you get into the center play, you had really better know how to think! The opening moves are easy; the middlegame gets challenging.

Take, for instance, the questions about the e-pawn moves. If White had not castled, and tried instead to play e3-e4 before Black castled, there would be a problem: 7.e4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♖b4 (one reason the knight is better on c6 than d7) 9.♗b1 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♙xe4 0-0, and now if White thinks there's a routine bishop sacrifice here, he's wrong: 12.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♘g5+ ♔g6 14.h4 ♚a5 15.h5+ ♔f6 and the black king escapes to e7, material up. That's a line both White and Black should know!

What about Black's playing 7...e5? That could be embarrassing, too: 8.dxc5 ♙xc5 9.e4 0-0 10.exd5 ♚xd5 11.♚e2 ♙g4 12.♗e4 ♗xe4 13.♙xe4 ♚e6 14.♖e1 f5 15.♙xc6 ♚xc6 16.♚c4+ and White is better.

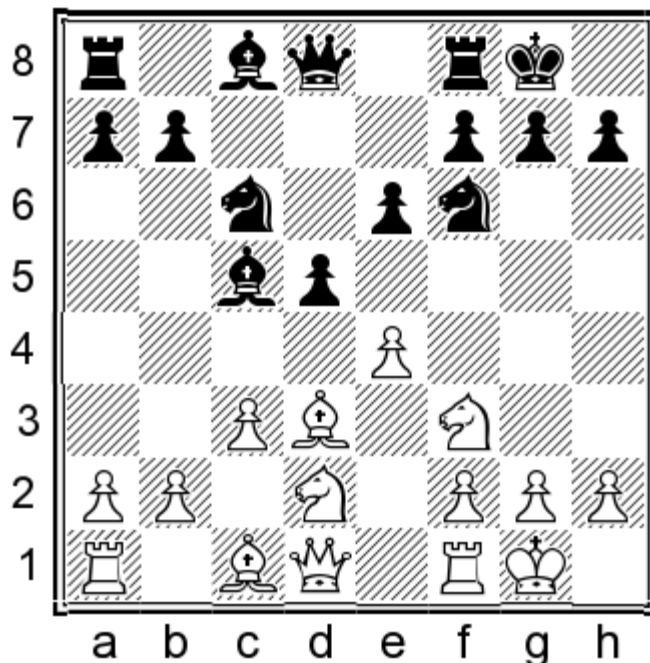
Some Colle books recommend 7...e5 8.dxe5 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5 ♙xe5 10.f4 (10.♗f3 ♙d6), but after 10...♙c7 11.e4 c4 12.♙c2 0-0 13.e5 ♙b6+ 14.♔h1 ♗g4 15.♗f3 ♗f2+ 16.♖xf2 ♙xf2 17.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♗g5+ ♔g6 19.♚c2+ ♙f5 20.♚xf2 f6 21.♗f3 fxe5 22.♗xe5+ ♔h7 23.♙e3, it's an unclear game at best. The first line is easier to handle. However, you can see that in each line both sides get their shots in, and, regardless of your color, you may end up attacking or defending!!

Anyhow, both sides in our main line exercise good judgment and castle. Now you know why.

8.dxc5! ♙xc5

If you play the Colle, you have to know White's eighth move. Remember, the pawn advance to e4 is key, so you have to make sure Black can't capture on d4 more than you want. Worth pointing out is that if Black had played ...♗bd7 earlier, there wouldn't be that pressure on d4. and sometimes White would then prepare even more with ♖e1 or ♚e2. Now White is ready to advance. It's like the old children's cry: "Here I come, ready or not!"

9.e4



This is the big moment in the Colle System. White has made his break. Now, what is Black to do? The first thing you have to look at is exchanging on e4: 9...dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♙xe4 ♚xd1 12.♖xd1 f6 13.b4 ♙b6 14.♙b2 ♙c7 15.a3 a5 16.b5 ♘e7 17.c4 e5 18.c5 and White has a much better endgame with the queenside pawn majority and freer movement for his pieces.

This is one of the lesser-known advantages of the Colle. Many players of Black's side see the queen trade as stopping the dreaded attack, yet ignore the fact that they're going into a poor endgame.

If you shouldn't exchange queens, then what should you do? Should you counter with a pawn advance of your own? No. Here's why:

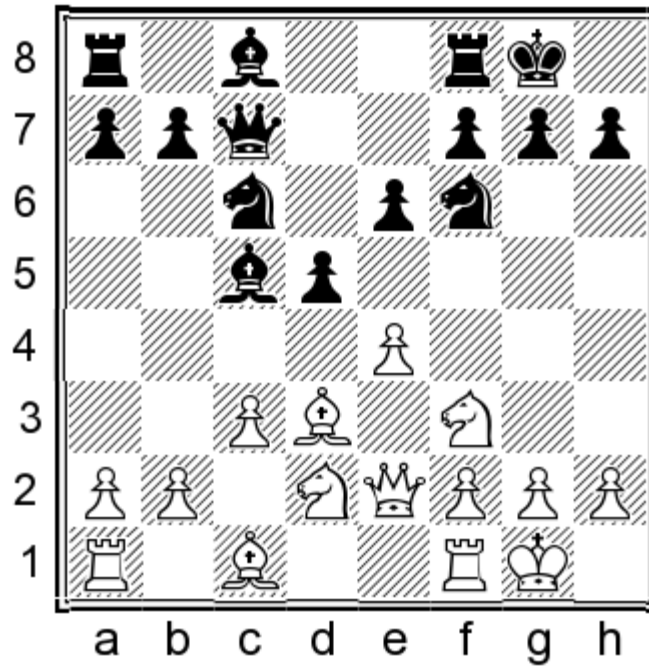
9...d4 10.♘b3 ♙b6 11.e5 ♘d5 12.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♙xd4 14.cxd4 ♚h4 15.f4 ♙d7 16.♖f3; or 9...e5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘c4 ♖e8 12.♙e4 ♘f6 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.♚xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘cxe5 and in both cases White is better. In the first line, White has a kingside attack. In the second line, White has that endgame advantage again.

So what do you play if you're Black?

9...♚c7!

This is not easy to find, but it is easy to understand. Black develops a piece (notice how many times we say that?), prevents e4-e5, and even supports Black doing his own thing by putting a piece or a pawn on e5, or even f4. For example, 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xe4 ♙e7 12.♚e2 b6 (good way to develop the bishop) 13.c4 ♘f4! and the queen proves itself useful. Usually, White responds with:

10.♚e2



10...♙d6

Here's another position where you have to be careful and know what works and what doesn't. If Black tries 10...e5 11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♚e4+, White wins a pawn.

There is an uncharted alternative that might be good for taking your opponent out of his book: 10...b6 11.e5 ♗d7 12.♞e1 ♙e7 13.♗b3 ♙b7 14.♙f4 a6 and you have a kind of French Defense where Black has queenside counterplay.

Wait a second! Some of you attacking types might ask about 12.♙xh7+. Let's look: 12.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♗g5+ ♔g6! (13...♔g8? 14.♚h5; 13...♔h6? 14.♚d3!) 14.♚d3+ f5 15.exf6+ ♔xf6 16.♗h7+ ♔e7 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8 and Black appears to hold, but it's very messy.

Students who really study these lines might just find something they like. It's up to you!

11.♞e1 ♗g4

White wants to enforce e4-e5. Black wants to prevent it. It's that simple.

12.h3 ♗ge5

White chases the defender of the e5 square, but the defender becomes the occupant – one way to prevent e4-e5!

13.♗xe5 ♗xe5

Since 13.exd5 exd5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♙c2 ♞e8 16.♚h5 g6 17.♚h4 ♙e6 doesn't offer White much, he heads for the exchanges and Black is happy to oblige. The more exchanges, the less pressure.

14.exd5 exd5 15.♗f3 ♗xd3 16.♚xd3 ♞c4! 17.♚xc4 dxc4

The flurry of exchanges is over. Where swapping queens didn't work before, it works now because Black rid himself of his isolated d-pawn and created an equal balance of pawns on both sides. Black also has the two

bishops. The position is equal. White has a slightly freer position, an excellent outpost on d4 for his knight, and easy access to the open files for his rooks. Black has to bring his rooks and his king to the center to encourage further exchanges.

It can still get exciting: 18.♖e4 ♘e6 19.♗g5 ♘c5 20.♗xe6 fxe6 21.♙f4 ♖ad8 22.♗xc4 ♘xf2+ 23.♕xf2 e5 24.♕e3 exf4+ 25.♗xf4 ♗xf4 26.♕xf4 ♖d2. Black really has to be on his toes in this line.

This is a pretty solid way to defend the Colle, although you can see how dangerous it can be. It's good to know the ideas for both sides. In referring back to the original statement, you can see that one little misstep on move 9 can make a difference in the game's direction. Developing your pieces is good. Developing them with an overall idea in mind is better.

There is another, more aggressive defense to the Colle, that is also used against the Stonewall Attack, another nasty opening system that you need to know about, which brings us to a further investigation.

35. When Facing Some of the “Pre-Planned” Openings, Don’t Be Afraid to Have Your Own Plan Ready to Go.

Not only is there the Colle System to deal with, there are also such things as the Barry Attack and the Colle-Zukertort Attack (the C-Z). At amateur levels you will meet quite a few proponents of these systems. They roll out the same first ten moves, sometimes no matter what Black replies (see above). They are easy to remember. They are not bad moves, and quite often the attacks initiated seem quite easy to generate.

We’ve talked about using C.J.S. Purdy’s All-Purpose Defense to defend against the Colle. You might remember that normal developing moves were used, but it was a tough game for Black if he made even one mistake!

We’re going to give you a defense to fight with! Not only that, but we’re going to take care of some of Colle’s buddies.

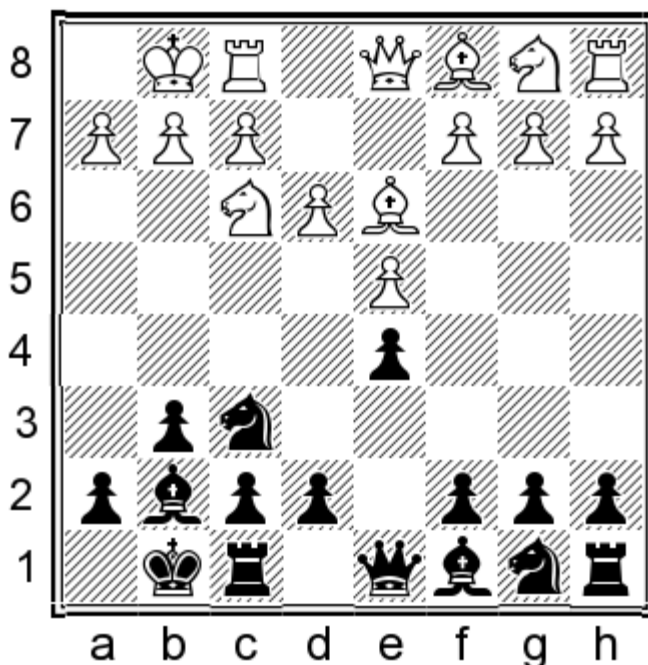
Before we start, we have to say something about specialty books that show you an opening system using one of the lines below. Too many of these books seem to promise White a surefire attack against Black’s defenses with a bunch of moves that seem to work against anything.

There are two things that bother me about this, and it’s been going on for a half-century or so. First, they rarely give the best defense. After all, would you buy the book if it said you were going to draw instead of win? Secondly, it doesn’t teach you how to play chess. Usually, you get a very narrow choice of moves and a very narrow plan. That’s not a lot to grow with.

So why do people play this stuff? Well, it works! And it works especially well in scholastic chess because most players with Black don’t know how to defend against these attacks.

Not to worry, because you are going to learn how to meet these attacks right now!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.e3 g6 4.♗d3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0



As you can see, this is quite different from Black’s e6/d5/c5 pawn formation. Many players prefer this pawn formation because the Colle bishop on d3 isn’t directly attacking h7 – the g6-pawn is in the way. Also, at

some point, the fianchettoed bishop on g7 will help Black to play the counterattack with ...e7-e5.

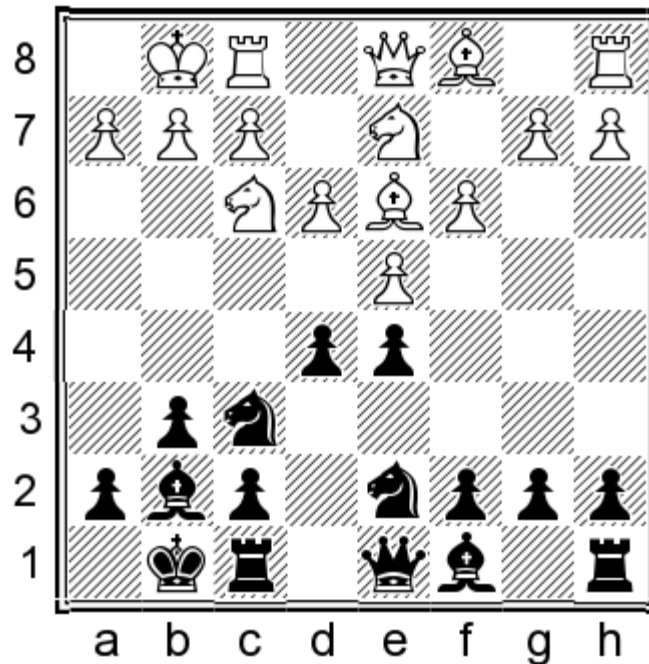
Let's see what Black can do if White continues with the Colle setup.

6.c3 ♖bd7

Here, Black plays the knight to d7 instead of c6 because it gives the defense more choices. With the knight on d7, Black can play either 7...e5 or 7...c5. The ...e7-e5 push is very safe and leads to an equal, worry-free position. The ...c7-c5 move is a try at winning and carries more risk. We'll look at both alternatives.

The Safe Way

7.♖bd2 e5!



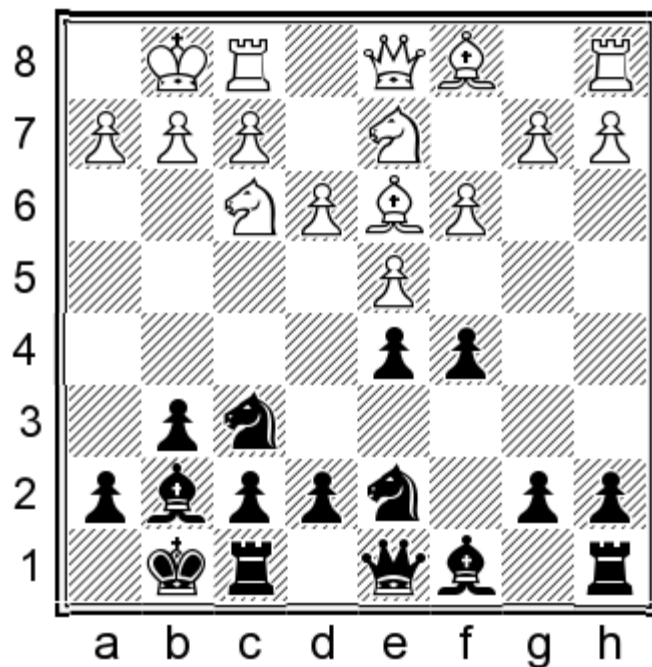
Pretty cool! The Colle is supposed to get the big e-pawn push in, and here it's Black who does it! White can't hold onto the pawn, either: 8.♖xe5 ♖xe5 9.dxe5 ♖g4 10.f4 ♖xe3 and Black has a big edge. So...

8.dxe5 ♖g4 9.e4 ♖dxe5 10.♙c2 dxe4 11.♖xe4

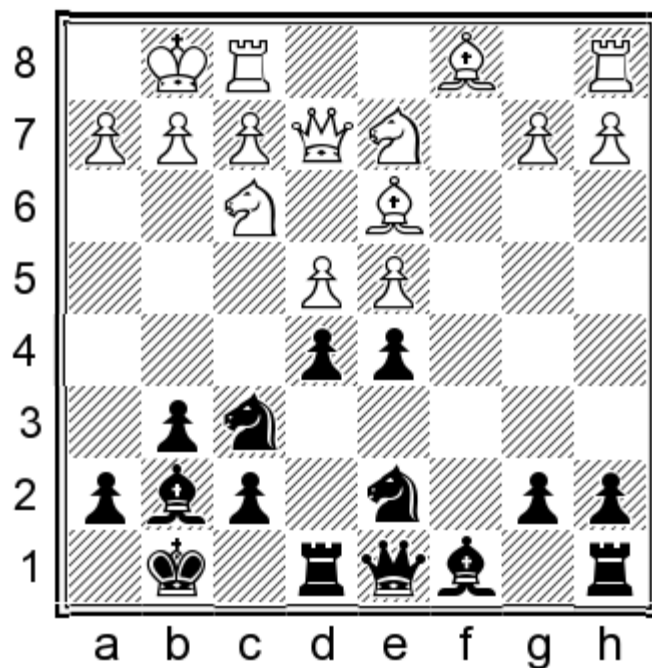
The position is equal and safe for Black. It will be hard for either side to play for a win. However, Black can play for a win with ...c7-c5. Let's look.

Playing for a Win!

7.♖bd2 c5



8. ♔e2 ♖e8 9. e4 cxd4 10. cxd4 e5



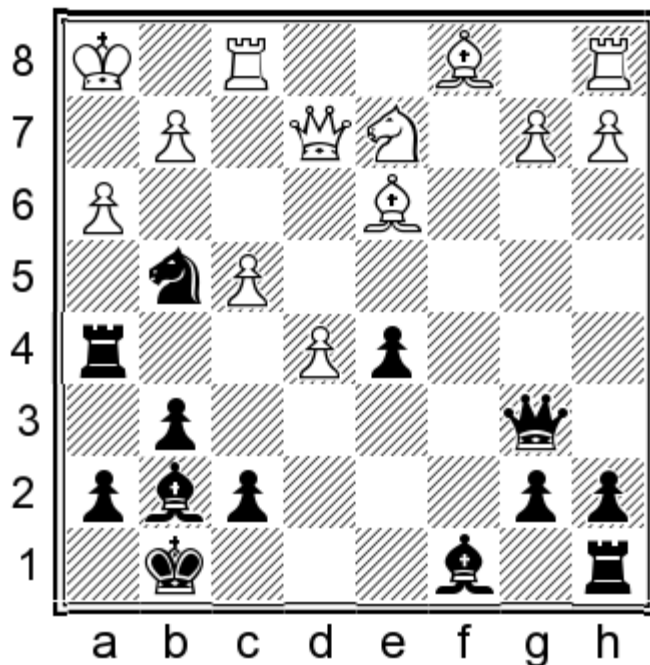
See how much has happened in three moves! White has gone ahead with his plan to push to e4 by putting his queen on e2. Black puts his rook opposite the white queen – a good tip! Then, as soon as White plays e3-e4, Black captures on d4 and counters with ...e7-e5. This is a great position to try for a win!

If White still thinks he has an attack, he is quickly shown that that isn't the case:

11. dxe5 ♜xe5 12. ♞xe5 ♞xe5 13. f4 ♞h5 14. e5

14. f5 dxe4 15. ♞xe4 ♟xf5 16. ♞xf6+ ♔xf6 17. ♟xf5 ♞xf5

14...♖g4 15.h3 ♕b6+ 16.♔h1:

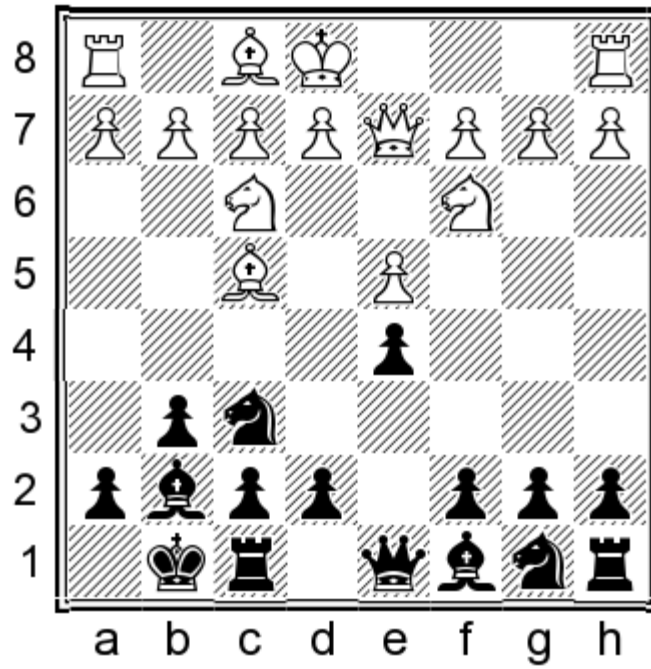


Black to play has about twelve good moves here! His pieces are active and his undeveloped ones will be in the game ahead of White's undeveloped pieces. Black will have a good deal of queenside play with his queen rook moving to the open c-file or to back up the passed d-pawn. The king bishop will get off the blocked diagonal by playing ...♗f8 and the queen bishop has a choice of e6 or even d7, depending on how things develop. If you want safety, go for the first line with ...e7-e5. If you want to go for more, use the ...c7-c5 line.

Colle's Pal, Barry

Something called the Barry Attack has attracted a lot of attention in recent years as a few English players have scored some pretty quick wins with it. There are several books that deal with it. We are not afraid of it because we know how to play good developing moves! We will be active. We will refuse to just sit there and wait for the attack to come. That's a good way to lose.

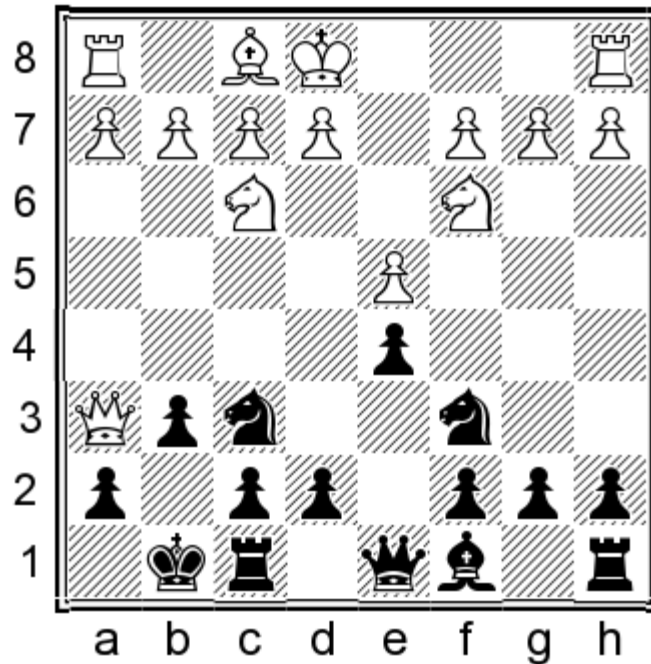
After 1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 d5, White doesn't have to play 3.e3 to go into the Colle System. Instead, he may try the Barry Attack with 3.♗c3 g6 4.♗f4 ♗g7 5.♕d2 0-0:



Well, at least White isn't being sneaky about his plans. He's lined up the queen and bishop to head for h6 to try and trade off the dark-squared bishop and play h2-h4 -h5 to hit g6 (he'll be castling queenside) and even get ♖g5 in for a mating attack.

We've noticed that many players get scared about the bishop trade because the queen recapturing on h6 looks scary. Be careful, yes – but, scared, no! Look what Black can do:

6. ♕h6 ♖xh6 7. ♔xh6 ♜c6



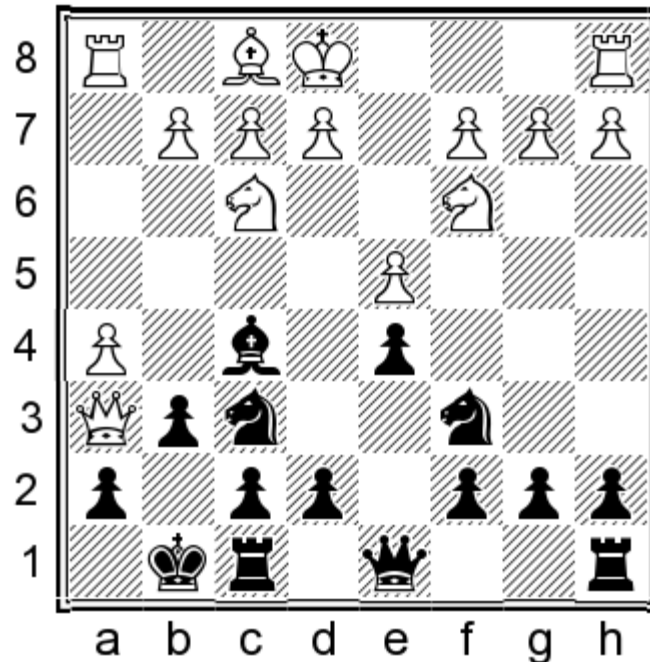
Now White has two paths to try and Black will be ready for both.

Beating the All-Out Attack

Yes, it's dangerous! You have to keep a cool head. Play through the main line here and you'll see it's the same

idea: develop your pieces and be active with them. You also have to know traps you could fall into. Look at the 9...♞xh5 line and see how you can get mated by move 14! Chess isn't easy, but it does reward students who study!

8.h4 ♟f5 9.h5



It would be good to take a little timeout here and really consider this position. You will recall how easy that h-pawn attack seemed above. Well, here is Black playing defense! Another thing to notice (and that we've noticed in playing over many games) is that you see a lot of ...c7-c5 moves, sometimes with ...♞bd7 as support. Too slow!! That queen knight is launching a cavalry raid against White's home base. Another thing to study is why ...♞xh5, indicated in the note ahead, is bad news for Black in this line just as much in a Dragon Sicilian. One chess author, IM John Watson, called this concept "cross-pollination." That's why understanding ideas is more important than just memorizing move sequences.

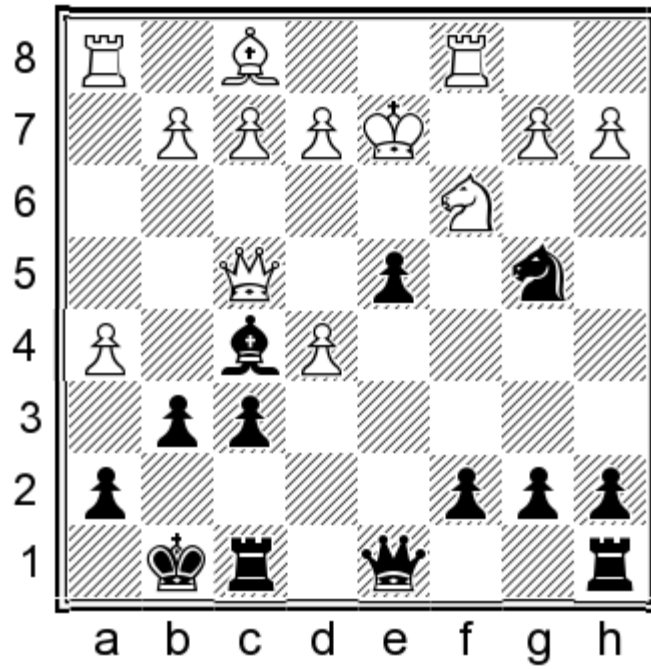
9...♞b4

9...♞xh5 10.♞g5 ♞f6 11.♞xh7 ♞h5 12.♞g5 ♞e8 13.♞h7+ ♞f8 14.♞xf7# Ouch!!

10.♞c1 ♞xc2+ 11.♞d2 ♞g4 12.♞f4 ♞b4 13.♞e5

13.hxg6 fxg6

13...♞xe5 14.♞xe5 f6 15.♞f4 e5 16.dxe5 d4:



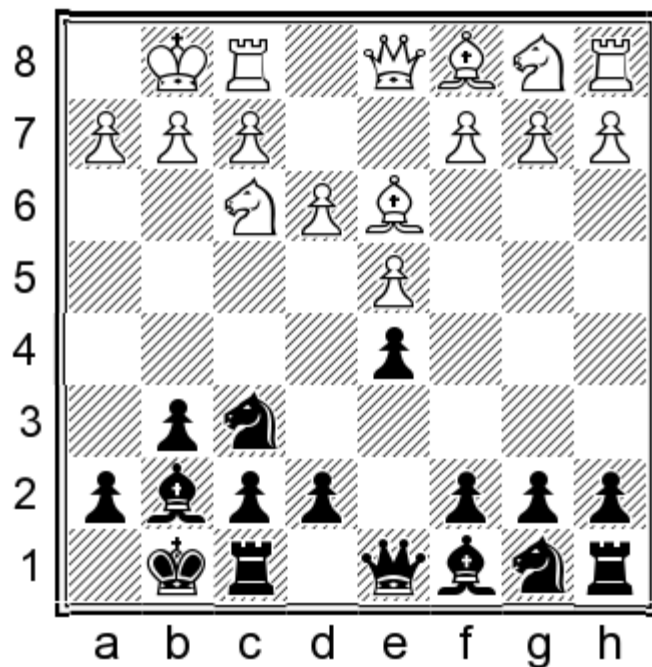
And the hunter becomes the hunted! White can play more solidly with 8.e3 ♖f5 9.0-0-0 ♘g4 10.♗h4 e5 11.♗g3 exd4 12.exd4 ♘f6, but Black is just as developed as Black and has just as much a chance of attacking White's king as White has of attacking Black's monarch.

A Really Wrongheaded Idea!

There is a book (and even a website) on an old line called the Colle-Zukertort System. Some scholastic players may not notice the difference Black's fianchetto makes against the queenside fianchetto by White, which is more effective against the e6/d5/c5 defense setup. You can't just memorize moves, you have to understand *ideas!*

The Colle-Zukertort is the Colle without c2-c3. Instead, White plays b2-b3 and ♖b2 along with ♘f3-e5 and even f2-f4 for a big-time attack on the kingside. However, if we use our fianchetto formation, we have little to worry about.

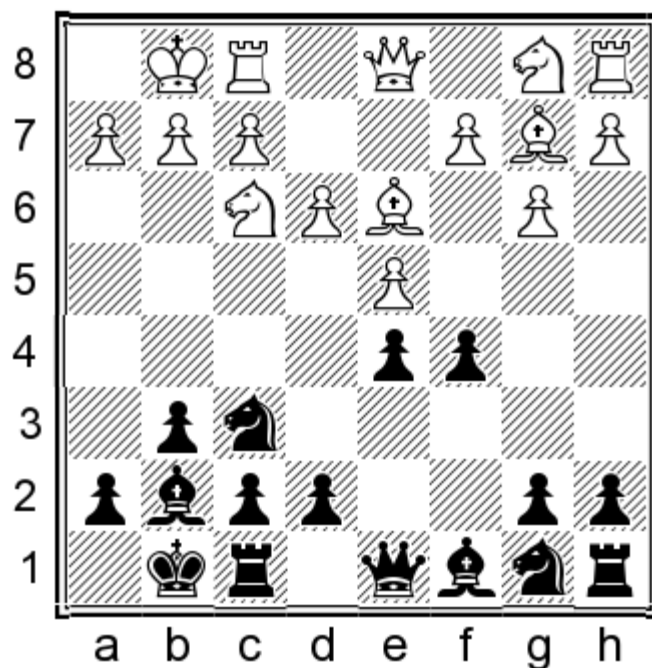
After 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.e3 g6 4.♗d3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0,



White can decide to play a C-Z setup and play 6.b3 instead of 6.c3:

6.b3 c5 7.♙b2

Here is where playing a system against the wrong formation can hurt. If White tries a Colle-like trick with 7.dxc5, then 7...♘fd7! gives Black a great game. If he tries 7.♙a3 (a C-Z type trick), there is 7...cxd4 8.exd4 ♖c6 9.♚e2 ♘e4. After the text move, however, Black has:

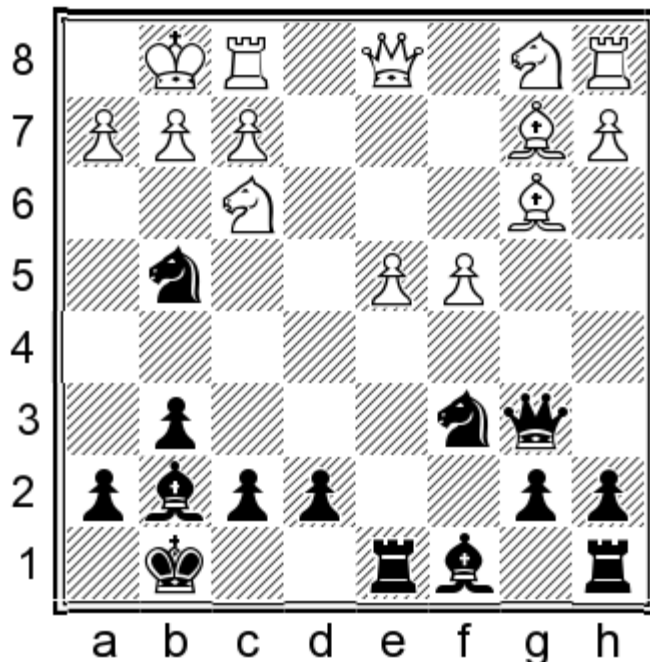


7...cxd4!

The pawn exchange is a great idea! Why? It gives White three choices; two are not good and one is OK. If 8.♙xd4 ♘c6 (hitting the bishop) 9.♙b2 ♚c7 (putting a major piece on the c-file and supporting ...e6-e5)

10. ♖bd2 e5! and Black has a fine center and development. If 8. ♗xd4, Black gets 8...e5 right away. So,

8. exd4 ♘c6 9. c4 dxc4 10. bxc4 ♗g4 11. ♕c2 ♚b6 12. ♘b3 ♜d8



Here we have a perfect position to understand what it means to be active. White's bishops are misplaced and have little scope. The pawns are known as "hanging pawns." They cause problems if one of them moves because then Black can use the square next to the advanced pawn for a piece that can't be attacked by other pawns. Also, in this position, the d-pawn is pinned thanks to Black's fianchettoed bishop, the force of which White didn't consider when mindlessly playing b2-b3 and ♗b2.

And look at that attack on d4! The black queen, rook, queen knight, and king bishop are all hitting it. Even the king knight has a path to join the fun with ...♗h6-f5.

Sooner or later you will no doubt have to meet one of these openings, and probably all of them. It's good to play through all the lines and get a feel for "active" play. You will also notice that key pawn moves like ...c7-c5 and ...e7-e5 come in a lot. The queen ends up on c7 or b6. The knights go to d7 or c6 on the queenside and to f6 and g4 on the kingside. The rooks are really useful on the e- and d-files. The queen bishop usually has to wait to find its best spot, while the king bishop of course goes to g7. As for the pawns, try to keep it to e5, c5, and g6. Your other moves are for the pieces!

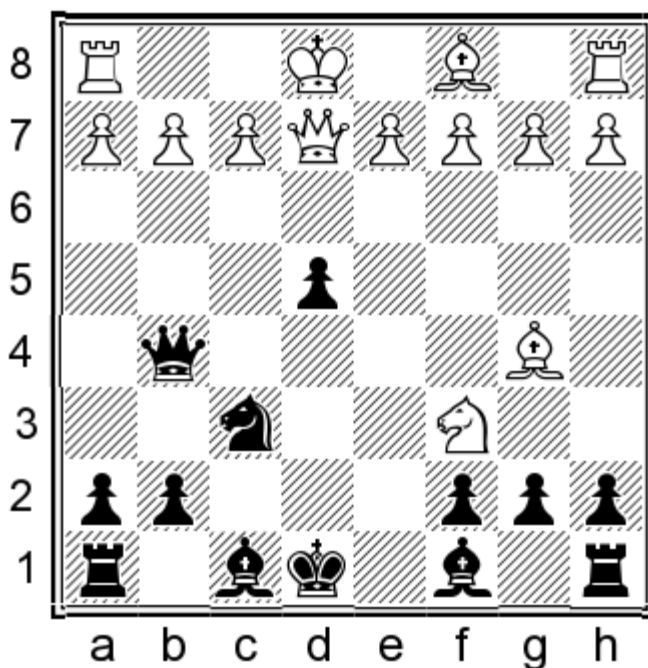
Get developed! Fight it out in the center! As long as you're developing properly, there is no reason any of these attacks should work. GM Walter Browne once said that a strong player was an A-player with no fear. That works at every level! Have no fear!

36. Speaking of Preparation, Don't Believe Everything You Read in Opening Books or Articles (Especially if You Wrote Them!).

Not so long ago, I wrote a long book review which appears later in this work. It compared ways of meeting the Ruy López through the eyes of various authors. I was impressed by Ivan Sokolov and his analysis of the Schliemann Defense.

There is a sub-variation in his book that, he observes, needs more testing. Well, I was tested in that line recently on the ICC and got hammered three times by two different players. I can't find a saving move for Black anywhere – earlier or later. Is this the death knell for the ...♖g5 line? Here's the bust:

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♘b5 f5 4.♗c3 fxe4 5.♗xe4 d5 6.♗xe5 dxe4 7.♗xc6 ♖g5 8.♚e2 ♗f6



and now the variation **9.♗xa7+ ♘d7 10.♘xd7+ ♗xd7 11.f4 ♚a5**

Or 11...♚c5 or 11...♚f5.

12.♗b5 (against all three possibilities) **12...♘c5 13.♚xe4+ ♗d8 14.♚c4**

Sokolov goes with 14.♗d4 and we played with that: 14...♚e8 15.♗e6+ ♗c8 16.f5 g6 17.♗d1 ♚a6 18.♚e1 ♗d6 19.♚h4 [19.g4 ♗f8 20.♚c4 ♘f2 21.♚e2 ♗xe6 22.♚xf2 ♗g5] 19...gxf5 20.♚h5 ♚e7 [20...♚exe6 21.♚e8+] 21.♚xf5 c6 22.♗xc5 ♚xe1+ 23.♗xe1 ♗d5 24.♗xb7 ♗xb7 25.♚g4 ♚c5 26.c3 ♚g1+ 27.♗e2 ♗c5 28.d4 ♗d6 29.♚g7+ ♗d7 30.♚g5 ♚f7 31.dxc5 ♚f1+ with a long, probably flawed draw.

14...c6 15.♗c3 ♚e8+ 16.♗d1 ♘d6 17.g4

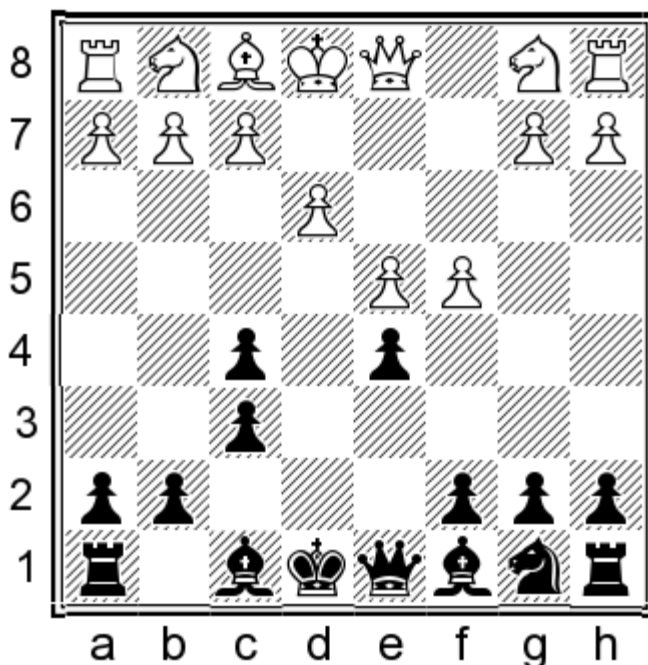
17.g3 ♚h5+

17...♗c7 18.a4 ♗b6 19.♚d4 ♘f8 20.♚e1 ♚ad8 21.♚f2 ♘c5, and I'm not having fun as Black.

Here's what I learned from this experience. I had played other lines of the Schliemann with success, but had noticed that people were catching on, so to speak. The ...♖g5 line seemed to be an alternative and worked quite well until I ran into the ♜xa7 steamroller. I also learned that there was entirely too much analysis involved, too much to remember, and much of that wasn't always "thematic." I had also forgotten to be skeptical of an opening book. Sokolov was at least candid about it needing tests. You have to test everything yourself. Now, even amateurs can use powerful chess engines if they learn how to truly use them, which leads us to another caution.

Ever since GM Larry Kaufman came out with *The Kaufman Repertoire for Black and White*, the Dutch Defense has seen a good deal of this:

1.d4 f5 2.♙g5 ♞f6 3.♙xf6 exf6 4.e3 d5 5.c4



This is GM Kaufman's choice against the Dutch. The alternative, 5.♙d3, is worth a look: 5.♙d3 c5 6.♞f3 (6.c3 ♞b6=; 6.dxc5 ♙xc5 7.♞e2 ♞c6 [7...0-0 8.♞bc3 ♖h8] 8.0-0 0-0 9.♞d2 ♞d6 10.♞b3 ♙b6 11.♞c1 ♞e5 12.♞bd4 g6 13.c4 dxc4 14.♙xc4+ ♞xc4 15.♞xc4 ♞d8=) 6...♞b6! (6...♞c6 7.♞e2 g6 8.dxc5 ♞e5 9.♞g3 ♙xc5 10.♙b5+ ♖f7 11.0-0 a6 12.♙a4 h5∞) 7.♞d2 (7.b3 cxd4 8.♞e2 dxe3 9.♞xe3+ ♞xe3 10.fxe3 ♖f7!) 7...g6 (7...cxd4? 8.exd4 ♞xb2 9.♞b1 ♞xd4 10.♞e2 ♞e5 11.0-0 g6 12.♞f4+-) 8.♞xd5 (8.dxc5 ♞xb2 9.♞d1 [9.♞b1 ♞xa2 10.♞e2 ♞c6 11.♞c3 {11.0-0 ♞e5} 11...♞a5 12.♞xd5 ♞e5 13.♞e2 ♞xc5 14.e4 ♖f7 {14...fxe4? 15.♞xe4} 15.0-0 ♙h6=]) 8...♙e6 9.♞f3 ♞c6 10.♞e2 cxd4 11.exd4 0-0-0 12.♞b3 ♙d5 13.♞h3 ♙xb3 14.axb3 ♞xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞xd4 16.0-0 ♙c5 17.♞a4 ♞d6 18.♞fa1 ♖b8=.

5...♙b4+ 6.♞c3 0-0 7.♞b3 ♙xc3+

At this point Kaufman writes, "If Black has to surrender this bishop for a knight his opening is garbage." No wonder we see amateurs make bad bishop retreats in abject fear of exchanging a knight for a bishop. Sometimes it's good. Sometimes it is garbage; however, we offer this cautionary tale in this line. Let's go a little more with our GM:

8.bxc3 dxc4 9.♙xc4+ ♖h8 10.♞e2

Here he further evaluates, “White has more center pawns, better development and better pawn structure, all for free.” Well! Isn’t that just enough to discourage anyone from playing 2...♘f6 in the Dutch?

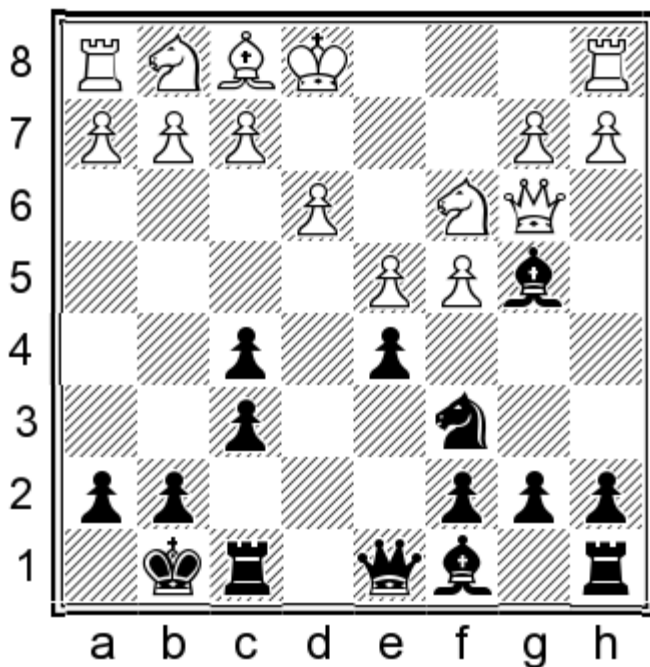
Your author is nowhere near this talented GM in strength, but that is no excuse for not questioning a line of play. What you have to realize, as you get to 1700-1900 strength and above, is that a ton of people will be copying GM Kaufman move for move. That seems odd for an “amateur,” but you really have to get on a chess engine and “play” with it. As we’ve mentioned, that has pitfalls, but ask yourself this question: Which player will have the better chances – the one who simply follows the recommended line, or the one who has done some work? And it *is* work.

Try an experiment with this line. Change *one* move and see what your booked-up opponent does. It will be on move seven.

5...♖b4+ 6.♗c3 0-0 7.♙b3

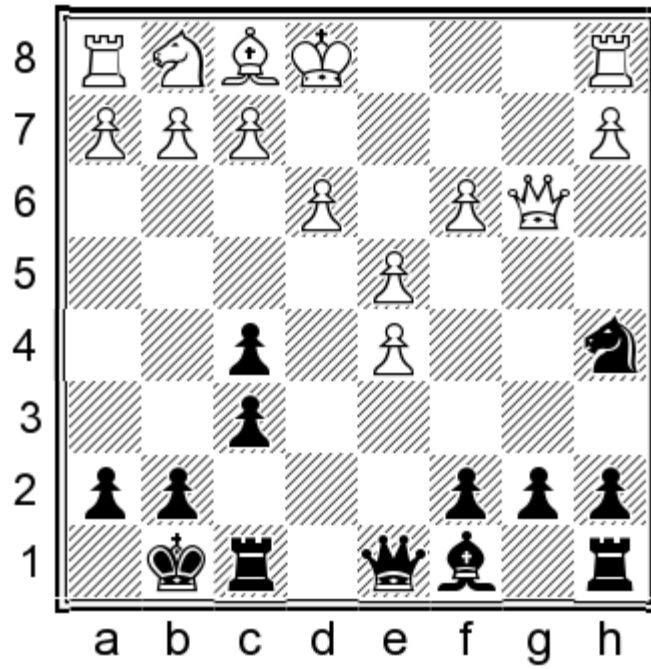
We can head toward the garbage with ...♗xc3+ or we can develop a piece with ...♘c6. Always look at simple things like developing a piece.

7...♘c6



The best move now is 8.cxd5, but you may very well see 8.a3? ♗xc3+, or 8.c5? f4!, or 8.♗ge2 dxc4. Why? It’s because people who blindly follow recommendations don’t think about the position or its other possibilities. They just play moves. That goes for what you read in this book. You have to do your own due diligence at all times. Here’s a line I looked at when reading Kaufman’s book. It’s an excellent book, but you still do your homework and ask questions in “class.”

8.cxd5 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♗a5

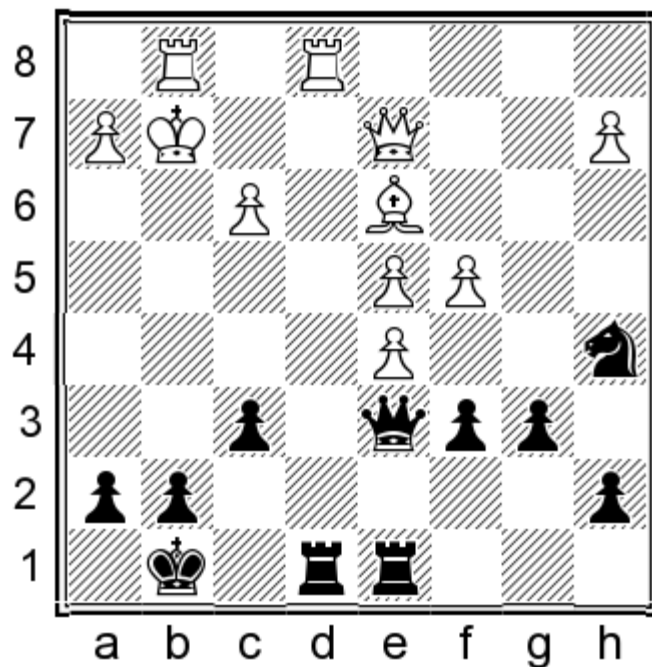


This is rather brazen of me: giving up a pawn – a central one! – and then decentralizing a knight to chase a queen for one move. What am I thinking? Well, I'm castled, I have a possible ...f5-f4, and I have White sitting there with a completely undeveloped kingside. Tarrasch once wrote that you need three tempi to sac a pawn. It will take White three moves to castle kingside. Maybe he will castle queenside, considering my apparent surrender of the center. The way to figure this out is to look at some moves. Having the white queen play backwards is not analysis: You have to look at White's being aggressive. Two key queen moves come into play:

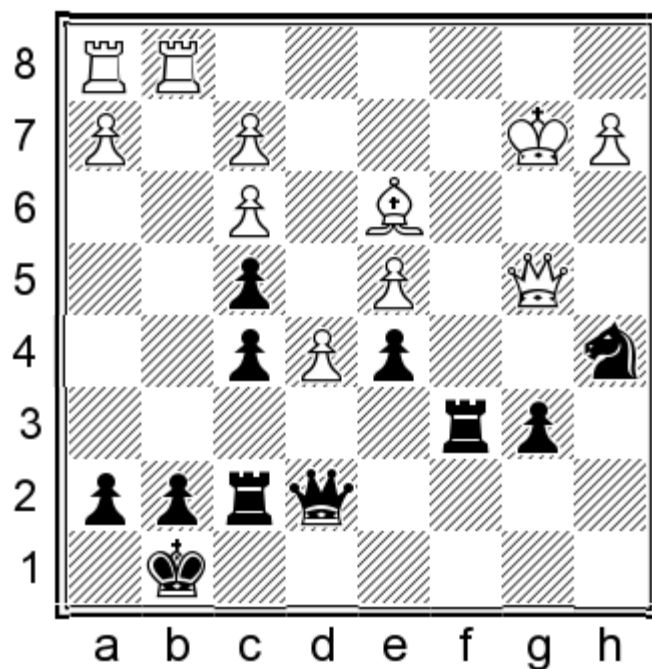
10. ♖b4 b6 11. c4 f4 12. ♕d3

12. e4 ♜e8 13. ♕d3 c5 14. dxc5 f5

12... ♜e8 13. ♘f3 ♙g4 14. 0-0 ♙xf3 15. gxf3 fxe3 16. ♜ae1 exf2+ 17. ♔xf2 ♚d7 18. ♔g2 ♜ad8 19. ♜g1 ♚d6 20. ♚d2 c6:



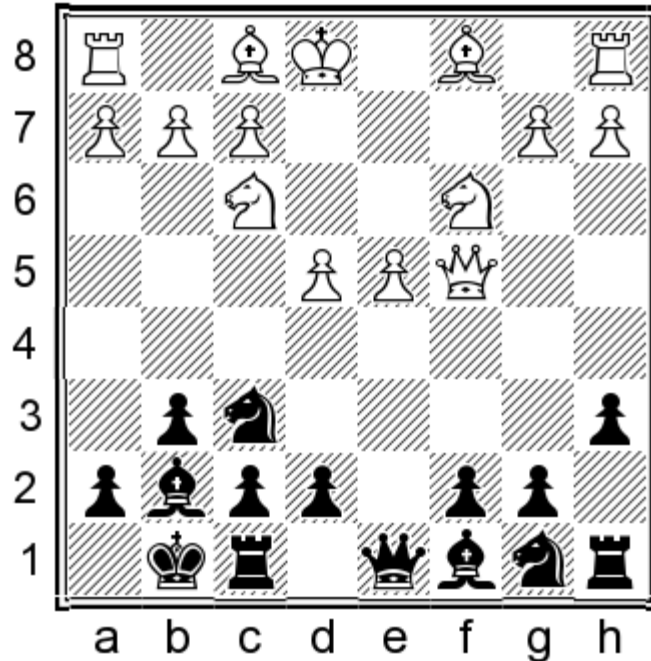
10. ♖a4 b6 11. c4 f4 12. ♙d3 ♚e7 13. ♗f3 ♙g4 14. e4 ♙xf3 15. gxf3 ♜ad8 16. c5 f5 17. 0-0-0 ♜h4
 18. cxb6 axb6 19. ♜c2 ♜f7 20. ♞dg1 ♜e7 21. ♜c3 ♞d6 22. ♔b2 c6 23. ♜b4 cxd5 24. e5 ♞c6:



In both of these diagrams, we have a real chess fight going on. It's not the ho-hum game where White just rolls you up with fine technique. Is this analysis valid? Beats me! I'm still looking at it. In the Dutch Defense chapter in Part II you'll find even other alternatives. The point that I can't emphasize enough is that if you work on this yourself, you will understand the position's little nooks and crannies better than your opponent and I like your chances better than your foe's. Question everything! Use your imagination! Appreciate the rich tapestry that is chess.

Years ago, in the 1930s, Alexander Alekhine played a TN in the Grünfeld Defense against Max Euwe. You may be familiar with the line:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♚b3 dxc4 6.♚xc4 0-0 7.e4 a6



A.A. messed it up badly after 8.♙f4 b5! 9.♚xc7 ♚e8? and the line died in its infancy. Many decades later, a Soviet junior by the name of Lukin revived it with 9...♚xc7! 10.♙xc7 ♙b7. Lukin was a kid who was bold enough to challenge how a world champion played.

One final example shows that even “settled” theory may not always be settled:

I get Brian Wall’s list serve. He is a very creative national master. Brian has posted several emails of considerable interest on meeting the Ponziani Opening with the Fraser Attack, thus overturning a century of theory:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.c3 ♘f6 4.d4 ♘xe4 5.d5 ♙c5 6.dxc6 ♙xf2+ 7.♔e2 ♙b6 8.♚d5 ♘f2 9.♙g1 (9.cxb7 ♙xb7 10.♚xb7 ♘xh1) 9...0-0 10.cxb7 ♙xb7 11.♚xb7 ♚f6 12.♚d5 c6 13.♚d2 e4 14.♘d4 e3 15.♚c2 ♙xd4 16.cxd4 ♘g4.

No doubt people will be looking into this a bit more closely, and the argument is the same: question and investigate.

37. Don't Just Concentrate on Openings!

These three dozen examples from actual amateur (and some master) play are items that go wrong on a fairly regular basis. This is not some theoretical classroom lesson. This is what many of you are doing more frequently than I ever imagined. There are holes in your chess education

Interestingly enough, there are holes elsewhere as well. About eight years ago, one of my Openings for Amateurs message board participants (at www.njscf.org) started a thread that asked, "What percentage of one's study time should be expended on openings?" Even though I had an urge to quote the number of hours that – in order to become a player who wouldn't need to receive odds – one should devote to each aspect of the game according to Lasker in his *Manual of Chess* ("Rules of Play and Exercises, 5 hours; Elementary Endings, 5 hours; Some Openings, 10 hours; Combinations, 20 hours; Position Play, 40 hours; Play and Analysis, 120 hours"), this is what I replied:

Forget percent, guys... Every player has to answer these questions about *endgames*:

1. Do I know the key rook-and-pawn endings and their principles?
2. Do I know the key king-and-pawn endings and their principles?
3. Do I understand how to recognize the moment to make a transition to an endgame most favorable to me?
4. Do I understand what endgame themes go with the openings I select for my repertoire?

For the middlegame:

1. Do I know the key tactical motifs that win material?
2. Do I know the key mating attack plans against:
 - a. an uncastled king?
 - b. a castled king?
3. Do I understand the concept of dynamic strengths and static weaknesses?
4. Do I know the fundamental middlegame plans (e.g., minority attack, attack along the c-file in the Sicilian, etc.)?
5. Do I understand strategic ideas like outposts, weak squares, etc.?

For the *opening*:

1. Am I prepared to meet the possible plans against my opening system?
2. Am I comfortable with my opening systems?
3. Do I know key tactical shots in my opening systems?
4. Have I committed to memory certain key lines?
5. Do I have a clue why I'm making these moves?
6. Have I chosen openings I can grow with, rather than ones that rely on my opponent's ignorance?

For *thinking processes*:

1. Do I have a routine in my move selection process (e.g., looking for all checks, captures and forced moves; analysis tree and such)?
2. Can I explain to my stronger rated friends why I chose a particular move by giving a really good, tangible reason ("it looked good/strong" is not a good reason)?

3. Do I stop myself from moving too quickly and look for Zwischenzugs, cheap shots, hanging pieces, etc.?
4. Do I try to credit my opponent with actually having a brain and maybe even a plan or a threat, and then look for them?

If any amateur can confidently answer these questions, then, forget the percentage of time, he has completed key goals and will be a Class A player in short order.

The thinking process part can only be answered by assessing that process after each game. Some players will find they need to spend more time on one of the three areas above than on the others. You have to think in terms of what you need to accomplish. Some people are more at home in the middlegame than in endgames, so they will probably complete the middlegame portion more quickly. Then, they need to hit the other goals. Think in terms of goals!

Many of you will notice that I left some possible questions out, e.g., queen-and-pawn endings, etc. What I listed above will get you to 1800. You want to go higher? Then you set new, more advanced goals. Ninety percent of your endgames will end up as R+P or K+P endings. Most of the time, your wins will be pawn-up endgames or more-effective pawn-majority endgames, so you should know those. If most of your games are decided by tactical mistakes on your part, then you have to concentrate on the thought-processes part. The most important personal function you can perform is what Karpov told a group of us years ago: go over your own games and study them. You have to objectively assess who you are as a player and what your strengths and weaknesses are as analytically as possible.

38. Pete, What Should I Play in the Openings? What Do You Do?

This was a very legitimate question for an openings message board. “What should I play?” “What do you play?” I very rarely get a “why” question! What follows is an amalgam of various answers I’ve given.

I have always, here and elsewhere, encouraged people to play what they are comfortable with. Simply put, people play better when they’re comfortable with their positions. Move choices come easier and are generally better. Are you happier in e-pawn openings, d-pawn openings, flank openings?

There’s an expert whom I used to play fairly frequently in past years and my record against him was something like 11-2 with only one loss. He’s not that bad! He was just tremendously uncomfortable with my style of play. He was a solid player who likes well-defined themes that he can develop. I’ve gotten away with murder against him with speculative moves because his instincts led him to shy away from unclear, unbalanced positions, when indeed that is the route he has to take. So, making your opponent uncomfortable is thus a legitimate strategy. However, you must first make yourself comfortable in finding your style. If you play some gambit because it’s dangerous and tricky, but you really don’t get the idea of it, then you have a good chance of losing. Once you’ve found your openings “center” inside your chess soul, then you might give some thought to varying and thus expanding your game. This will actually make you a better player. Playing the same thing over and over can make you stale.

After twenty-odd years of coaching basketball in high school and college, I can answer with a basketball analogy as well. We always had to decide on what tempo we should play in a big game. Do we start out with a half-court man-to-man or zone defense and just come down and run our half-court offense, or do we rev it up with a full-court press and our fast break offense? Over the years, sometimes one worked and other times the other worked. You have to know who you are as a team. We would always try both to see how we did, so by the day of the “big game” we knew ourselves pretty well. We knew our opponent, too, because we scouted. We saw what made them uncomfortable. In chess, switching openings against a booked-up opponent is a standard tactic, but you should practice them first! The Internet is good for that.

In general, I recommend that White play 1.e4 and go with the open games. Why? Because you learn the fundamental principles of chess in a clear way. I also recommend you reply to 1.e4 with 1...e5. Later, as White, you should “graduate” to the Ruy López and the Sicilian and the great masters’ favorites where the themes become more sophisticated.

As Black against 1.d4, I recommend 1...f6 and the Nimzo-Indian (and Bogo-Indian) because that opening is probably the best transition to the more sophisticated Grünfelds and King’s Indians – the big-boy defenses! I also recommend, for aggressive players, the Dutch Defense systems.

If you don’t like 1.e4, I recommend the English (1.c4) systems for White. They are very thematic and avoid a lot of gambits by Black.

The greatest mistake you can make in your choice of openings is trying to find the opening that’s going to win the game for you. You need to find the opening that meets your style of play. In the 53 model games given in Part II following this Primer, you’ll find different styles of openings that may suit your needs along those lines. I’ve often said that you are better off playing a position where you are slightly worse but you understand it, than a position where you are slightly better but don’t understand it. Get a playable middlegame where you know what’s going on!

I’ve noticed that people seem to think that teachers advise gambit and open play to teach an attacking style. Not me! I encourage it so as to teach novices the value of *time* (see my complaint above). Every move counts. It forces better analytical thinking because most novices just plow out pieces that look pretty on a particular

square with no regard to its importance in the coming sequence.

No matter your general opening style, you're going to run into the "booked-up" crowd, and then you're playing not them but some master or GM who wrote a book. You may be a better player than your opponent by leaps and bounds, but his GM "alter ego" may beat you before you get a chance to show your stuff. Over the long haul, the player that does something else will beat both you and your GM alter ego.

Everyone, it seems, is trying to get some edge by playing the sharp unusual line rather than just playing good, fundamental chess. I truly believe young people are stunting their chess growth by being consumed by it. Yeah, you'll win some games really quickly because your opponent doesn't know the line, but if you want to get stronger you have to go beyond that.

There is a reason why you see the Ruy López, Sicilian, Nimzo-Indian, King's Indian, and such being used by the best players. If you are young and have years ahead of you and are quite serious about being a master chessplayer, your time would be best spent finding out why.

No opening on this planet wins... You win because you play better than your opponent or because your opponent makes a mistake. As Tartakower said, the winner is the player who makes the next-to-last blunder.

39. Once I Think I've Picked My Openings, How Should I Study Them?

Really good question! Once you've decided on your opening repertoire, here is what I would suggest:

1. Find specialized books that explain the opening really well in terms of strategy (middlegame plans), pawn structure, etc.
2. Find specialized opening books that advocate the defeat of your system.
3. Find really old books (or games) to develop a sense of the history of that system and how it came to its current state.
4. Play tons of 5-minute games with the system, without any aid during the game. Check the game score vs. the theory right away and learn from it. It's a good way to see what your level of understanding is.
5. Pick your lines and backups. My biggest tip is that many times the less-sharp but longer-lasting lines may be better in the long run than keeping up with the latest developments.
6. Keep folders or a database of your games so you can go back to them if you need to.
7. Yes, play over GM games with the line (specific GMs who champion a line are good), and again go back in time and come forward. Find well-annotated collections. They are more valuable than just plain databases. Bound magazines are often a good source.
8. Find a chess friend who will play training games with you. Let him use any book he wants. Clock it.
9. Try to create a TN. Find some position that looks ripe for improvement and really work the position. You will find that really trying to wring every last secret out of a line brings you great understanding of the system.
10. Study the miniatures – a much underrated exercise. You would be amazed how many players who know lines 20 moves deep either get tripped up because someone tries some speculative rarity that is not properly met, or they don't recognize that their opponent's move is a mistake!

40. What if I Just Want to Have Fun?

God forbid, man! This is chess! Fun, you say? Hah! Yeah, I'm kidding, kind of. On my message board I got a question from a reader along these lines and we entered into the following dialogue:

Reader: *I was wondering what you guys think about this: Would it be worthwhile to play "bad" trappy openings? Any suggestions for some of the most difficult and trappy landmine-filled openings to play?*

PT: Gambits are a time honored way to put pressure on your opponent. Generally, you play it more, so you probably know all the ins and outs while they have to know a bunch of different lines that aren't your gambit. I know several strong players that play certain gambits all the time and are successful with them. They're over 2000, too. Heck, I play the Schliemann against the Ruy López! The downside is multi-faceted. If you're a club player, everyone you play will only be unprepared once. If you're a player that wants to start beating stronger players, you're probably best to not use gambits except as a surprise. Stuff like the Diemer, Latvian, Budapest (either line), Danish, etc. have pretty direct counters that don't require much effort on the part of your opponent to be ready for. Something like the Marshall Attack and the Benko Gambit, however, require a good deal of preparation and are positional sacrifices of a higher order with lots of GM vs. GM games to study. They're a different kettle of fish, and you can go into them with confidence. I have to admit that I purposely play unrated ICC games against 1200-1800 players just to see how they reacted. It's dismal. All the traps still work! Good grief! So find some system you like, try it out and see what happens.

Reader: *I placed my post on a couple other places and got the typical answers I expected...*

Stop playing (don't play) this crap

Play real openings

If GMs don't play it then you shouldn't

If you want to improve then make the best move every move

I understand and realize all this. But apparently what some of the well-meaning, well-intentioned chess purists fail to realize is I am never going to be a grandmaster. If I were, then I would play the López, Queen's Gambit, and Najdorf. But I'm not. Heck, I won't even be a master. And beyond this, at my level I never get the Najdorf, nor do I get past 4 or 5 moves of the López or QG. I've tried. I have spent years studying these openings and preparing to no avail. However, if I can win more by playing trappy less well-known openings, then why not? I just need to figure out what to play.

PT: Good for you. You know who you want to be. I made that same decision some years ago and have had a good deal of fun. Here are my suggestions:

As White: Max Lange or Italian Game... lots of possibilities. The Göring Gambit is fun, too.

As Black: the Two Knights, either the Fritz or Ulvestad with ...b5 both covered later in this book. I've had more fun with those than anything. You can even play the classical ...d5 line in the Two Knights.

For the queen's pawn: the Benko Gambit, still kicking after all these years.

Reader: *Thank you Pete. You understand us amateurs better than almost anyone else. Speaking for the rest of us, I appreciate your help, advice and time.*

I replied that perhaps the reason for my understanding was that I'm an amateur as well.

Here's an enthusiastic chessplayer who was trying to study "moves" that everybody recommended in the approved openings. His heart wasn't in it. He would rather have some slashing attacks and some quick defeats than sit at a board playing something he wasn't having any fun with. Earlier in this Primer, I told the story of the TD who recommended the Ruy López, Sicilian, and Nimzo-Indian for me to study if I wanted to be really good. That's a legitimate choice and good advice. My reader's choice is also legitimate. It all

depends on what you want out of chess. And it all gets back to these thoughts: Are you comfortable with the opening system? Do you understand the concepts of the opening you're playing, rather than just regurgitating moves?

Now, we are coming to Part II of this book. There are over 50 games selected to give you possibilities to consider as a player. Treat the "model games" as candidates to help you decide whether the various styles presented are for you. None of these are presented as the last word in these openings. There is no promise that you will win if you just follow some particular sequence of moves. There *is* a promise that all of these openings will give you playable games where you will be able to generate winning chances. Some of the winning chances may require you to attack a castled king. Other winning opportunities may require you to win an endgame. Some opportunities will ask you to get into a brawl. What you like is your personal decision.

There is an encouragement to play 1.e4, and, as an alternative, 1.c4. You will see the reply to 1.e4 to be the great reply of the open games with 1...e5. The Sicilian Dragon is presented as an alternative. You've read the reasons why here in the Primer.

In decades of coaching and teaching chess, I have found that these choices were easier to understand for the audience of this book than learning the systems involving 1.d4.

No matter what you like to play, all these games are entertaining and instructive and will help you develop as a chessplayer. There are myriad ideas for you to "cross-pollinate" into whatever chess position you find yourself in. Learn! Have fun! Be diligent!

In that spirit, let's move on to Openings for Amateurs!

PART II

Openings for Amateurs

“Do not search the books for an irresistible opening. There is none. You will also look in vain for an impregnable defence. None has yet been invented.”

–William Cook

The Chess Player’s Compendium, 1910

1. What to Do About the Sicilian?

Play ♖xd4

A great deal of thought has gone into how to present this material, as the Sicilian is the number one defense for Black. Oddly enough, as I have thought about exactly how to do this, my ruminations kept going back to my basketball coaching days.

For 20 years I coached both high school and college basketball. I kept thinking of my first years as a coach. I would like to tell you a story from one of those early years and make it relate to how you, as an amateur, should approach chess openings.

Early on I bought a book called *Modern Basketball* by John Wooden. He’s a legendary coach at UCLA who won more national championships than any other coach. The first chapter was devoted solely to the philosophy of being a good athlete. All sorts of virtues were discussed. I impatiently skimmed through that, saying to myself, where are the darn plays? Well, I found the plays – enough to last a lifetime. About midway through the season I concluded that winning and losing our games really had less to do with plays and more to do with the character of the players and the philosophy of how to compete.

We’re going to talk about how your character, your makeup if you will, and the philosophy of how you approach the openings affects your success. This first part is not about the “the plays” – the variations – but rather about the philosophy underlying why you should choose what opening you play.

Before I go on to show you not only *how*, but *why* you should choose particular systems against the Sicilian based on concepts, you have to understand some of the general principles of selecting an opening for you.

The approach I’m about to suggest does not apply to masters who have gone beyond that and now often devote an inordinate amount of time to opening theory (many times going to move 30 and beyond), such as the Marshall Attack fans and Ruy López devotees in general.

“Amateur” does not mean you are not master strength, just as “master” doesn’t really mean you are a professional. A lot of masters keep their day jobs. It just means that you’ve probably devoted less time to studying or playing than is required to reach master. Or you may have limited talent and are having a good time playing chess, and that gives even more importance to what I have to say.

Right off the bat, we have to come to the understanding, due to your time or other constraints, that *your opening systems cannot require a lot of memorization*. Some memorization, however, is a necessary evil in all openings.

Second, your system should enable you to *follow general principles so you can get to a playable game*. That’s the

key phrase, “playable game.”

Anyone who tells you that some system wins, is trying to make money from your gullibility and desire to win.

Third, *the playable game that you reach must be one that you are comfortable with.* I have consistently, in Pete’s Forum and in my ICC lectures, said this over and over.

Fourth, as an amateur, *you are probably better off playing solid yet aggressive opening lines that are less familiar to your opponent.* Why play on your opponent’s territory? Why give him the home field advantage, so to speak?

Fifth – and almost the same as the previous one, but not quite – *if you can find a system that is comfortable, and makes your opponent uncomfortable, then definitely play that.*

Sixth, *understand the underlying pawn structures and how to play the endgames resulting from them.* I received more favorable comments on the Timman game in the Nimzo-Indian lecture (see p. 283) because people could see the opening structure playing a decisive role deep into the endgame.

Finally, *pick an opening system that you can grow with.* As you get better, your opponents will get better as well. Those wing gambits and Blackmar-Diemers will have to give way to new names like Ruy López and Nimzo-Indian.

You don’t have to give up your old friends. You can use them as a surprise weapon or against someone you know cannot play defense. Or play them if you want to enjoy yourself. There’s no harm in that.

How can you tell if it is a system that you can grow in? Well, see if grandmasters have it in their repertoire. If they do, then that’s a good sign.

How to Meet the Sicilian

Following these principles, let’s take a look at how an amateur should approach White’s side of the Sicilian Defense.

First, how about not requiring a lot of memory. This means staying away from the Dragons and the Najdorfs and the Pelikans. Let the Sicilian guys memorize all those lines and read every latest issue of whatever. And think about it: if you’re playing Black, you have to remember just one of these aforementioned lines. As White, you have to remember them all. If you think about the implications of this, then 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 is out of the question. But we will come back to that later.

Second, getting a playable game. Well, if you combine this with the first point, we can start to pick some candidate opening systems. Let’s start with these: Closed Sicilian, Alapin (or c3) Sicilian, the Hungarian Variation of the Sicilian, and the Rossolimo Attack. Four choices!

Third, comfort. Only you can decide which of these four candidates fits this requirement.

Fourth, solid and aggressive. All four fit this description. Notice that not one is a gambit (although occasionally a pawn sacrifice does arise).

Fifth, a system that gives you comfort and makes your opponent uncomfortable. Well, comfort is OK but if you can make your opponent uneasy, in a position not to his liking, because maybe he picked his system because he felt at ease in it... Consider this, what do Dragon players like? A fianchettoed bishop, counterattacking down the c-file toward c3 and c2, and that now almost-routine exchange sacrifice: a rook for the c3-knight is what they want. They love repulsing the Saint George or Yugoslav Attack – whatever you want to call it – and playing ...d6-d5 at just the right time.

To one degree or another, each of the candidate openings mentioned above does not let Black have his fun in all these areas. Think of the Pelikan and Najdorf, ...e7-e5 moves and ...a7-a6, ...b7-b5 stuff on the queenside and later ...d6-d5. All of these are not so frequently seen in those type positions with our candidates. However, “uncomfortable” also means something else.

Sicilian players are counterattackers and usually pretty good at it. Defense is not their gig. One thing I learned playing the c3 Sicilian, and what kept it in my arsenal, is that many times the Sicilian types will play 2...♘f6 instead of 2...d5 because ...d7-d5 is a little too equal. I loved playing against 2...♘f6. My comfort, when added to their need to complicate, generally helped me.

Six, underlying pawn structures. One of the first concepts I learned about the Sicilian was that if Black makes it to the endgame, he has very good chances because White has usually weakened himself in some way that has become noticeable when the attack fails to achieve success. In several of our candidate systems, we actually get to create middlegame pawn weaknesses that dictate events in the endgame.

And seven, can you grow within the system? In all these candidates, grandmasters – even world champions and world champion computers – have not infrequently played them.

We will go through all these candidates eventually, but I wanted to start with one in particular because I'm quite intrigued by it. I'm going to go over it in terms of how I personally developed a liking for it and then talk about how it fits the philosophical precepts we have just listed.

When I did play the Sicilian I had run across a game annotated by Harry Golombek in a 1947 issue of *British Chess Magazine*, where Black beat up some upstart player of White who essayed the following moves: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4... Uh-oh – bringing the queen out early! Well, White was properly spanked and the universe was in order.

However, *BCM* emerged again in my life in 1973 with a two-part article by William Hartston on a new approach to attacking the Sicilian that was picking up some very ardent supporters. And here it was with the ♙xd4. He made an interesting comment, and I quote from Hartston:

“This unnatural recapture,” in other words ♙xd4, “has received a great deal of attention recently. Of course, premature queen development is always frowned upon but it might be remembered that in the analogous position, after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 exd4 it is probable that 4.♙xd4 is the more dangerous for Black if the queen recaptures.”

Hartston then goes on to comment on 4...♘c6 as a response to this 4.♙xd4 and I quote, “This natural move attacking the queen usually leads to White conceding the bishop pair and relying on rapid development to preserve his initiative. I remember a few years ago at Hastings when some of the Premier contestants were analyzing this variation, somebody said that 4...♘c6 was a bad move. Grandmaster Unzicker's comment was, ‘If that was a bad move then chess is wrong.’” There's a man who thinks in concepts.

A few years later, I learned that Tal crushed Robert Byrne at the Biel Interzonal in 1976. Not only did I respect Byrne as a great defensive player, but back then he was at or near the top of his powers as a player. Here's how the game went:

Model Game 1

Tal – R. Byrne

Biel Interzonal 1976

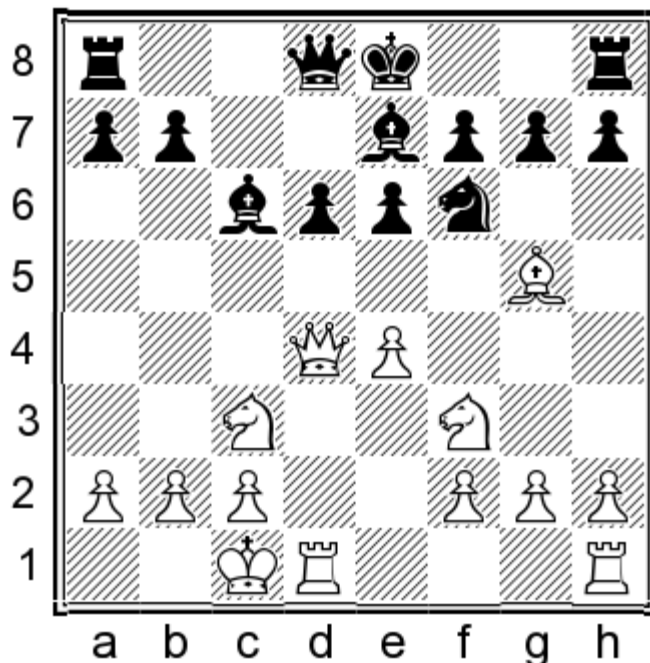
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘c6

A very natural response to the queen's venture out to d4. After some success by White against ...♘c6, Black started getting clever by playing either ...♙d7 or ...a7-a6 first to prevent the upcoming pin.

5.♙b5 ♙d7 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6

Some players go with 6...bxc6 followed by 7...e5. This is not best, as we will learn later.

7.♘c3 ♗f6 8.♙g5 e6 9.0-0-0 ♕e7



Take a look at this position. White has developed as naturally as one could expect. All his minor pieces are placed well. Black has done nothing wrong. It's a chess game that's about to get interesting.

10.♖he1

Popular back then due to some games by Evgeny Vasiukov. The Polgárs later scored with 10.♔d3 (to move along the third rank) and 11.♘d4 with f2-f4-f5 to follow. One of the things you learn quickly in this line is that White can't win a pawn here: 10.♙xf6 ♕xf6 11.♔xd6 ♔xd6 12.♖xd6 ♙xc3 and the doubled pawns on the c-file are perfect targets for Black to hit, starting with ...♖a8-c8.

10...0-0 11.♔d2

To leave room for the knight at d4. You will later see Zsófia (and Judit) Polgár's interpretation through ♔d3, which gives further protection to the e-pawn and allows a nice horizontal swing to the kingside.

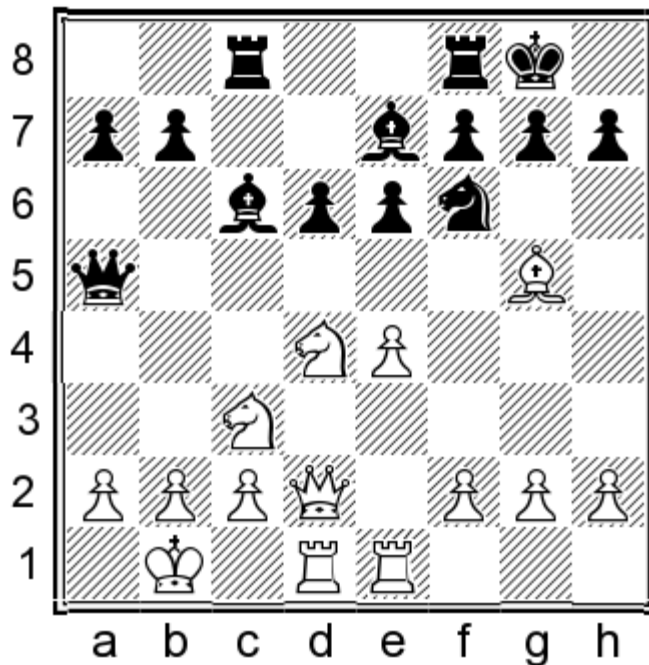
11...♔a5 12.♘d4

12.♔b1 is a nice precaution. The knight can go here not just because the queen has vacated, but because the king bishop is protected by the queen's being at d2.

12...♖ac8

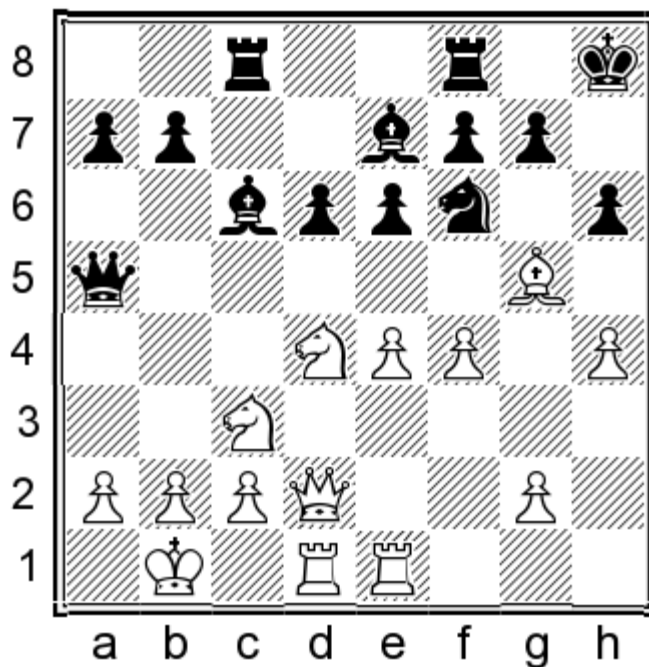
Better was 12...h6 13.♙h4 ♖ad8 (13...♘xe4 14.♘xc6 ♘xd2 15.♘xa5 ♙xh4 16.♔xd2! [watch that bishop check on g5] 16...♙xf2 17.♖e2) 14.♔e2 ♖fe8 15.♔b1 a6 16.♖d3, with a merry brawl in prospect.

13.♔b1



Initiating the ♖c3-d5 trap, because once the K is at b1 there is no check at d2 after 14.♘d5 ♙xd2; thus the e7-bishop goes first with check, followed by the queen recapture. Black therefore removes the check threat.

13...♔h8 14.f4 h6 15.h4!!

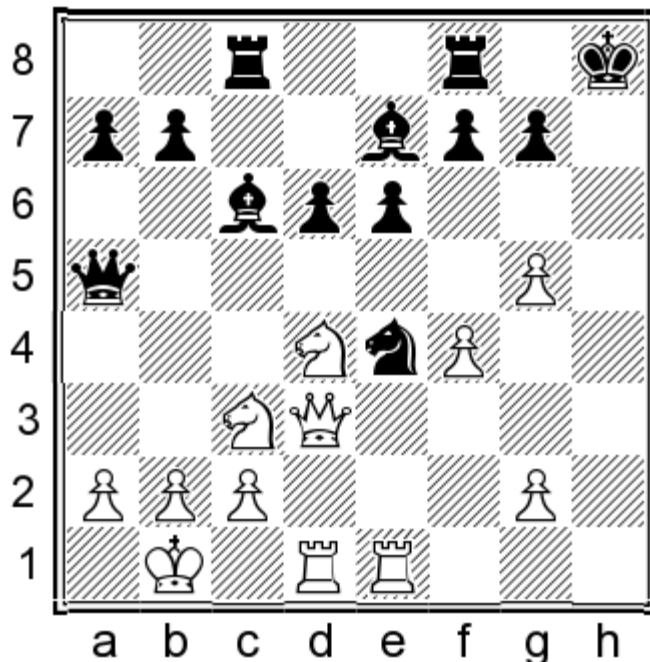


More positionally safe for a slight edge was 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♘cb5 (16.♘db5 ♙xb5 17.♘xb5 ♙xb5) 16...♙xd2 17.♙xd2 ♙xd4 18.♘xd4 ♜fd8 19.c4. But we're dealing with Tal here, so if you know him, you know what he's going to play! By the way, wouldn't it be nice if the queen were on d3? I wonder if that's what the Polgárs noticed. The h-file now becomes the most critical file on the board.

15...hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘xe4 17.♙d3!?

Perhaps Byrne was expecting, not this, but 17.♘xe4 ♙xd2 18.♜h1+ ♔g8 19.♘xd2 ♙d7 (19...♙xg2 20.♜h2 ♙d5

21.c4 ♖xc4 22.♟xc4 ♞xc4 23.♞dh1 f5 24.g6) 20.♞h2 and, although White is somewhat better thanks to the open h-file, Black will seek to counter in the center hoping to open the game for the bishops. Another route would be (17.♟xe4 ♞xd2) 18.♟xd2 ♖d7 (18...♖xg2 19.♞e2) 19.♞h1+ ♔g8 20.♞h2 (reaching the same position as above) 20...f5 21.♟2f3 ♔f7 22.♞hh1 ♞h8 23.♞he1, keeping Black's center at bay. Thus, you don't have to be Tal to play this line – you can go simpler ways. Of course, you had better be OK with having two knights vs. two bishops.



17...♖xg5?

Maybe he only considered 17...♟xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♔g8 19.♞h1 f5 20.g6, but more of a battle comes from 19...f6 20.♞h7+ ♔f7 21.♞h5+ g6 22.♞h7+ ♔e8 23.♞xg6+ ♔d7 24.♞h7 ♖d5 25.gxf6 ♞xa2+ 26.♔c1 ♞a1+ 27.♔d2 ♞xc3+ 28.♔e2 ♞ce8. Another hair-raising variation is 17...♟xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♖xg5 19.fxg5 ♔g8 20.♞h1 ♞fe8 21.♞h3 ♔f8 22.♞de1 ♞xg5 23.♞xe6 f5 24.♞h7 ♞xg2 25.♟xc6 bxc6 26.♞g6. Imagine trying to figure all this out with Tal sitting across the board from you!

18.♟xe4 ♖xe4 19.♞xe4 ♖h6 20.g4 f5 21.♞xe6 ♖xf4 22.♟xf5 1-0. There is no hope after **22...♖h6 23.♟xh6 ♞a6**

23...gxh6 24.♞xh6+ ♔g7 25.♞g6#

24.♞xa6 bxa6 25.♟f5, so Byrne calls it a day.

Now that is a very impressive attacking game, and as you can see it did follow certain themes. That's part of what is attractive about this opening.

Then, after this, I ran into a book by Assiac and O'Connell called *Opening Preparation* that went into some detail on ♞xd4, and I liked that. It highlighted a game where László Szabó used it against Bent Larsen in 1957 and lost, but not because of the opening. So I decided to look into it some more and found some more Tal games – and Karpov played it, so, for heaven's sakes, somebody must know something.

A few years ago I started playing ♞xd4 again as I became less passionate about the c3 Sicilian and noted chess author/teacher Fred Wilson told me he had done an instructional tape on it, calling it the "No-Name

Opening.” I guess that gave it a rather Clint Eastwood aura to it. Apparently some self-appointed neologist decided on Chekhover Attack. “Hungarian Variation” seems to be winning out, so it appears thusly in this book. It’s of little importance.

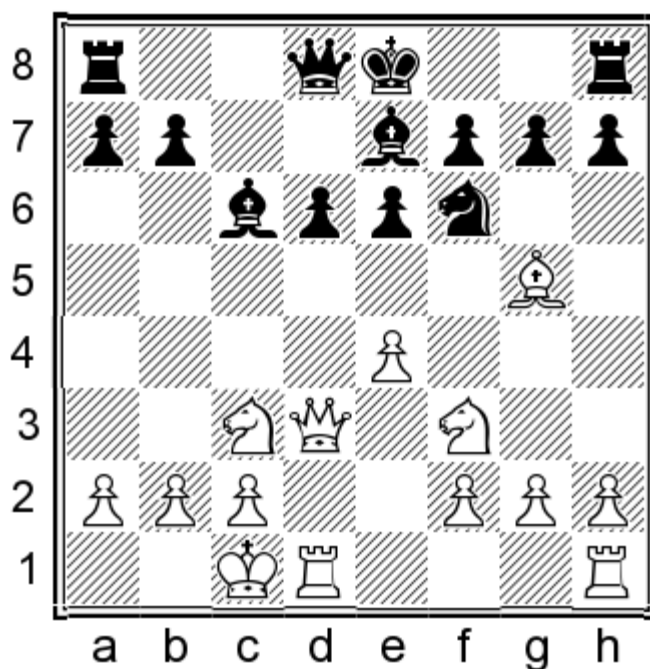
Fred also put me onto games by Judit and Zsófia Polgár with the ♔d3 idea. Now here’s Judit Polgár’s devastating attack against Shirov of all people.

Model Game 2

J. Polgár – Shirov

Las Palmas 1994

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♚xd4 ♘c6 5.♙b5 ♙d7 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♙g5 e6 9.0-0-0 ♙e7
10.♚d3



This is Polgár’s thinking: keep the queen on the third rank to swing over to the kingside and prepare a nice post for the knight at d4. That will aid in the pawn attack with f2-f4-f5. Meanwhile, the king rook stays on the h-file to push the h-pawn.

10...0-0

It is quite possible that 10...♚a5 may be more challenging for White, as it hits the bishop right away. Some GMs have gone with 11.♖b1 0-0 12.h4 h6 13.♙d2 and Black basically has a choice between 13...♚c7 and the odd-looking 13...♚a6, which may actually be better than 13...♚c7, because the latter move gives White time to play 14.♘d4. Since Black played 10...♚a5 to prevent that very move, 13...♚a6 seems consistent with that idea, despite the possible doubled a-pawns. There is much uncharted territory here.

I just finished a correspondence game that will be of some interest:

P. Tamburro – G. Everitt

NAPZ/WS/H/04 ICCF, 05.07.2013

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟c6 5.♞b5 ♟d7 6.♟xc6 ♟xc6 7.♟c3 ♟f6 8.♟g5 e6 9.0-0-0 ♟e7 10.♞d3 ♞a5 11.♟b1 0-0 12.h4 h6 13.♟d2 ♞c7

13...♞a6 14.♟d4 [14.♞xa6 bxa6 15.♞de1 ♞ab8 16.♟d4 ♟a8 17.f3] 14...♞xd3 15.cxd3 ♟g4 16.♟e1 ♟d7 17.f3 ♟e3 18.♞d2 ♟f6 19.♟de2 ♟xg2 20.♟f2 e5 21.♟d5 ♟d8 22.♞h2 ♟f4 23.♟exf4 exf4 24.♟d4 ♟h7 25.♞dg2 g6 26.♟xf4 ♟b5 27.♞g5 ♟e8, and the game is equal, but not necessarily drawn.

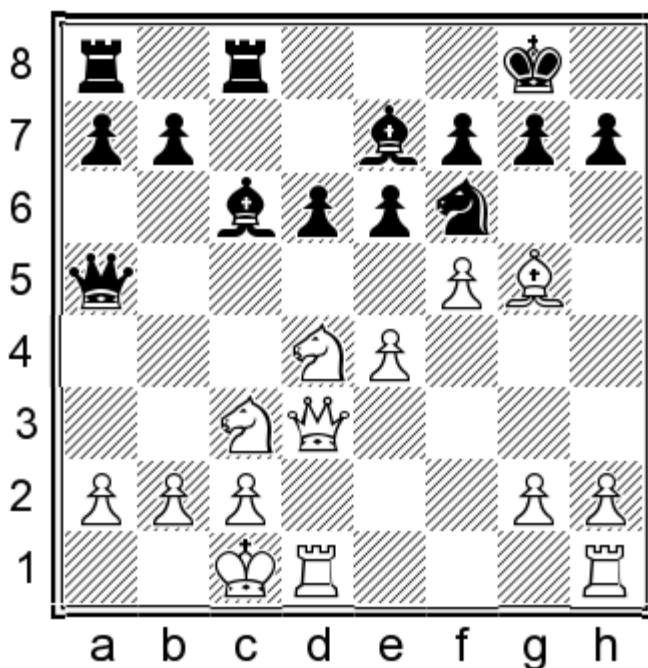
14.♟d4 ♞fd8 15.f4 d5 16.e5 ♟e4 17.♟e3

I spent a good deal of time on 17.g4 ♟f2 18.♞g3 ♟xh1! 19.♞xh1, but 17.♟e3 seemed safer and more sure.

17...♟c5 18.♞e2 ♟e4 19.♟xe4 dxe4 20.g4 ♟d5 21.b3 ♞c3 22.♟b5 ♞a5 23.g5 h5 24.g6 fxg6 25.♞hg1 ♟c6 26.♟d6 ♟xd6 27.exd6 ♞f5 28.♞g5 ♞f7 29.♟c1 a5 30.♞dg1 ♞xd6 31.♞xg6 ♞ad8 32.♞xg7+ ♞xg7 33.♞xg7+ ♟xg7 34.♞xh5 ♞d1 35.♞e5+ ♟f7 36.f5 exf5 37.♞xf5+ ♟g8 38.♞g6+ ♟h8 39.♟b2 ♞8d6 40.♞h5+ ♟g7 41.♟f4 ♞1d5 42.♟e5+ 1-0

Returning now to Polgár-Shirov:

11.♟d4 ♞a5 12.f4 ♞fc8 13.f5

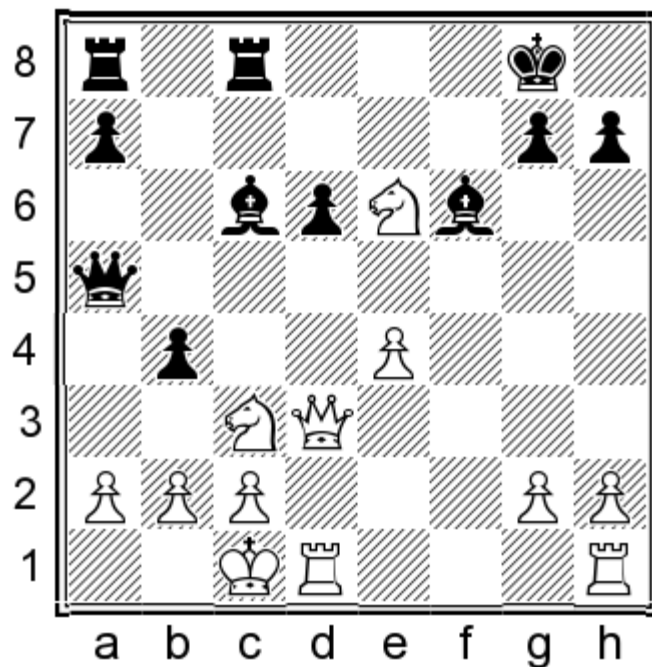


Here's what the plan looks like when carried out. Black now makes typical Sicilian queenside attacking moves.

13...b5 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♟xe6 b4 16.♟xf6

So that she can recapture on c3 if 16...bxc3.

16...♟xf6



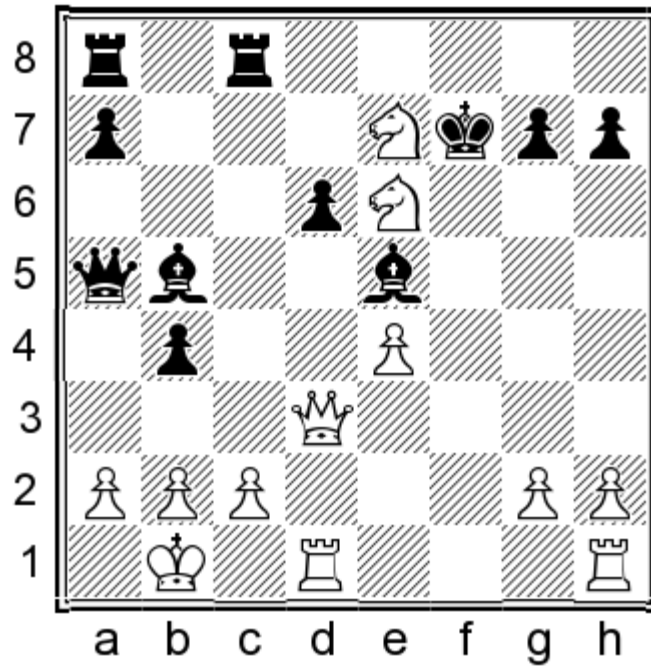
17. ♖d5!

Remember how we've talked about knights vs. bishops? White's last move gets an exclamation point on the idea that knights can be deadlier than bishops. Polgár's knights have taken up dominating central squares as Black's normal ...d6-d5 freeing move in the Sicilian is not here. This comes out of the opening theme with the repositioning of the knight to d4 and the queen being on d3 to swing to g3.

17... ♗e5

17... ♜xa2 18. ♖xf6+ gxf6 19. ♜g3+; or 17... ♗xd5 18. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 19. exd5 with a pawn-up endgame.

18. ♜b1 ♗b5 19. ♖e7+ ♜f7



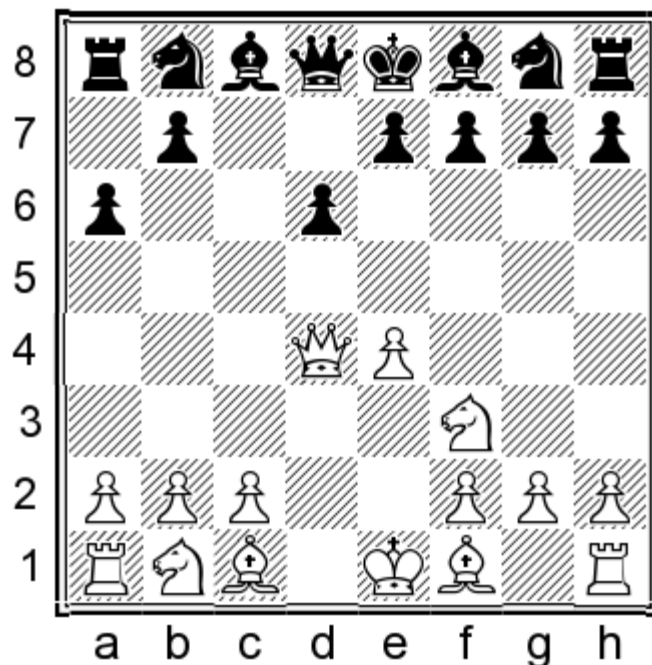
I feel compelled to get back to our principles for choosing an opening. Remember the jibber-jabber about comfort and style of play? If you don't like to attack as Polgár is about to do, if you don't enjoy sacrificing pieces, if you don't like to use knights instead of bishops, then play something else! I can't turn you into Polgár or Tal. I can't even make *me* into one of them. However, ♖d5 and ♘g5+, which is also good, would be one of the first things I would look at here because they involve threatening checks and invading on the weak light squares and the f-file.

One reader to my message board asked about the Latvian Gambit and how to play against it as White. I gave a line that was not only good, but gave White a clear advantage. She didn't like the position and wanted to find something else. That is OK! She may be hard to please, but at least she knows that she's better at some types of positions than others, even with perhaps less of an advantage. Anyhow, obviously Polgár is comfortable here, and Shirov isn't! Matters get wrapped up quickly.

20. ♖d5!! ♔xe7 21. ♘g5 ♞e8 22. ♞hf1 ♜xf1 23. ♚xa5 ♛e2 24. ♞d2 ♜g4 25. h3 ♞f8 26. a4 ♞f1+ 27. ♔a2 ♜d7 28. ♞d5 ♔f6 29. ♘xh7+ ♔g6 30. ♞xe5 dx5 31. ♚a6+ ♔xh7 32. ♚xf1 ♜xa4 33. ♚f5+ ♔h8 34. ♚h5+ ♔g8 35. ♚xe5 1-0

That is a really stunning game and that is, of course, at the highest grandmaster level. You can't do a whole lot better than these two people going at it, especially with Shirov who is an aggressive player himself. He obviously was not comfortable enough in that position even at his level.

Now what did I do with my own experience in learning about this line? I played scores of games on the ICC with astonishing success. I made up my own stuff and only played over about six grandmaster games. The ICC is an excellent place to try out new things. I would go back later and take a look to compare with more GM games. Some of my opponents apparently booked up and returned with an interesting move:



I remember the first time that was played against me and I was upset because I couldn't play the move I wanted with ♕b5. And now here's the guy that plays ...a7-a6 and he's going to hit me with ...♖c6 so I know I'm going to have to bring my queen back. I would like to bring my queen back to d2 since there won't be any ♘d4 in this variation because the black knight is now there to exchange it off.

What's the problem with ♙d2? Well, in this position, because I want to develop my pieces quickly, I don't want to play b2-b3, ♕b2, and c2-c4 quite yet. So I took a look at this and said, Well, where do I want my bishop? I want my bishop on g5. Well, why not put it there? I played 5.♗g5, anticipating ...♖c6 and clearing the way for a ♙d2 that doesn't block my bishop in.

You know, here's not too bad of an idea. What's intriguing about it is that Black shouldn't play ...f7-f6 as the weak light squares with a white bishop on c4 would be annoying. He can play ...h7-h6 but then I can bring the bishop to e3 to later have the queen/bishop battery aiming at h6 in a kingside attack.

So it seemed like a pretty cool idea to me. And frankly I liked it... so I took a look and found that my response, ♗g5, attacking the knight on f6 that isn't there yet, was approved by higher authorities. They also preferred 5.c4, however.

You even learn little things. If you play 6.♗xf6 after Black's possible 5...♖f6, the resultant black pawn structure becomes a very awkward mass to move.

I learned that once my queen gets chased, for example by ...♖c6, I had to be concerned. For example, in this position, if I went back to d2 which seems like a nice square, I had to worry about ...♗h6 after ...h7-h5 if I castled queenside.

So it's little things like that that you have to worry about, but you catch on, and I remember not paying attention in a five-minute game and having that happen and oh boy... I remembered that from then on. So those are things that you just have to be aware of and you get used to them after a while.

There's a bit of a learning curve going back and forth between your experiments, let's say in five-minute land, and going back to the theory book when you're done .

The recommended line against Black's ...a7-a6 is c2-c4. This is pretty logical: Black has "wasted" a move with ...a7-a6, so White can afford to make a pawn move as well. It also puts a nice grip on d5, the freeing square for Black. The first challenge you face will be deciding where to put the queen and how you will develop your

dark-squared bishop.

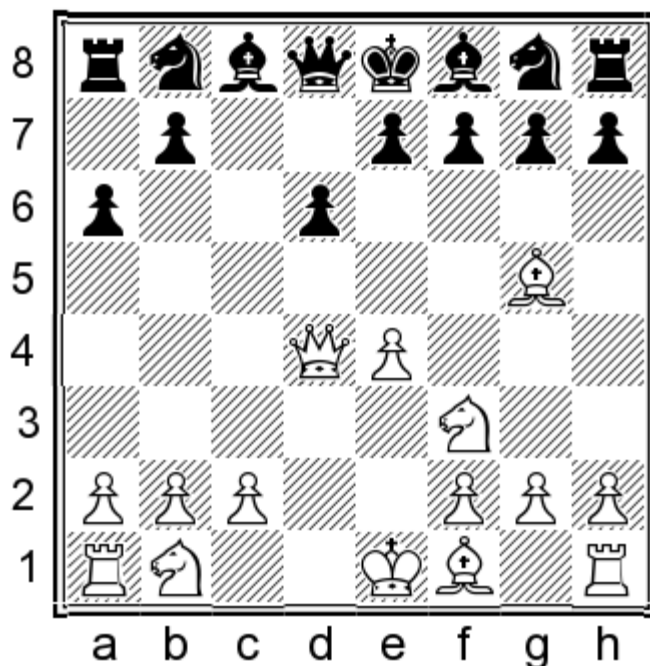
What follows is a game between two masters that deals with these ideas:

Model Game 3

Vojtek – Debnar

Slovak Team Chp. 1997

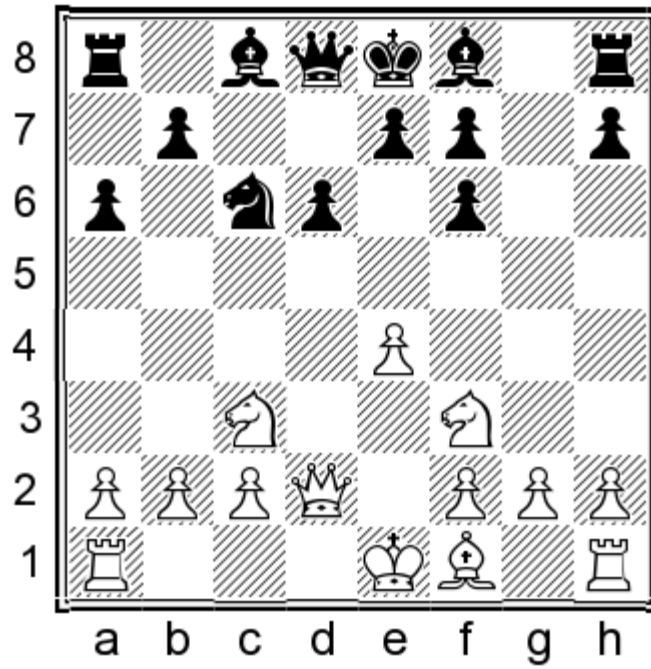
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♚xd4 a6 5.♗g5



As we discussed above, White prepares for the queen's retreat to d2. This spot is useful in two ways. If Black decides to fianchetto, White is all lined up to go to h6. If Black tries an ...h7-h6 move, then the bishop heads back to e3 with possible sacrifices on the kingside castled position. If the bishop never moves from that g5 spot, then it exerts pressure on Black's central squares. Others do prefer 5.c4, but the Maróczy Bind-type positions are not as dangerous as they used to be, and Black is no doubt familiar with them. This ♗g5 move is not only unusual, but good!

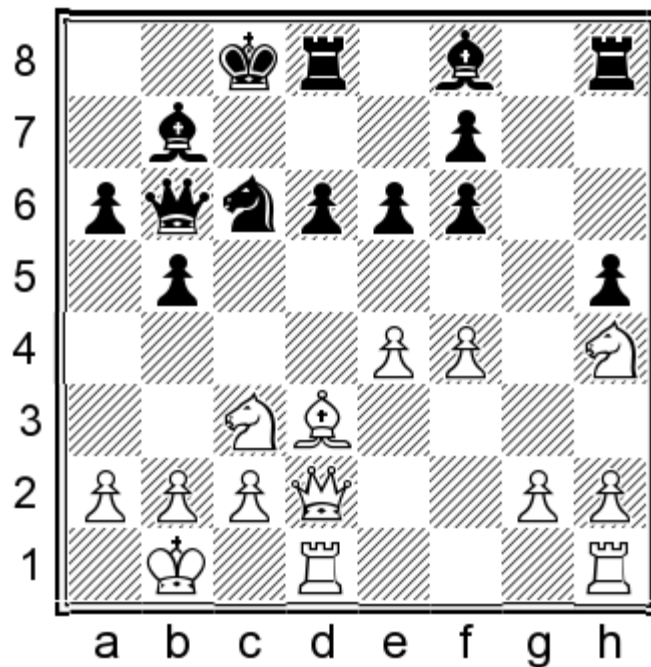
If you would like to play 5.c4, then follow Soltis's advice in *Confessions of a Grandmaster*: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♚xd4 ♗d7 5.c4 ♘c6 6.♚d2 g6 7.b3 (not 7.♘c3? ♗h6 8.♚d1 ♗g7) 7...♗g7 (now the bishop maneuver doesn't work: 7...♗h6 8.♚c3) 8.♗b2 ♘f6 9.♘c3 0-0 10.h3 ♚a5 11.♗d3 a6 12.a3.

5...♘c6 6.♚d2 ♘f6 7.♗xf6 gxf6 8.♘c3



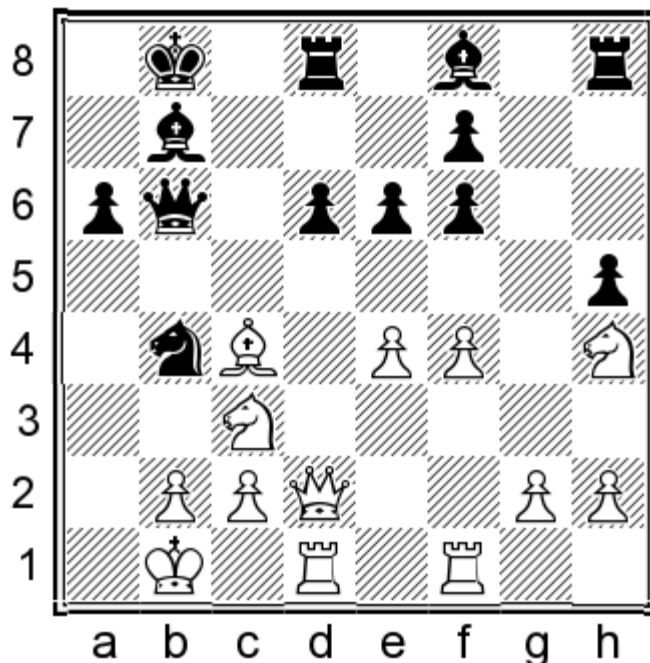
Black's pawn formation is awkward. He can't easily play ...d6-d5. Pushing ...e7-e5 creates weaknesses at f5 and d5. In addition, any place Black castles is going to be breezy. Black now comes up with a reasonable idea: let's discourage castling by giving my king bishop a great diagonal. White wants to castle long, so he prepares the interference to Black's idea.

8...h5 9.♘h4 b5 10.f4 e6 11.♙d3 ♚b6 12.0-0-0 ♘b7 13.♔b1 0-0-0



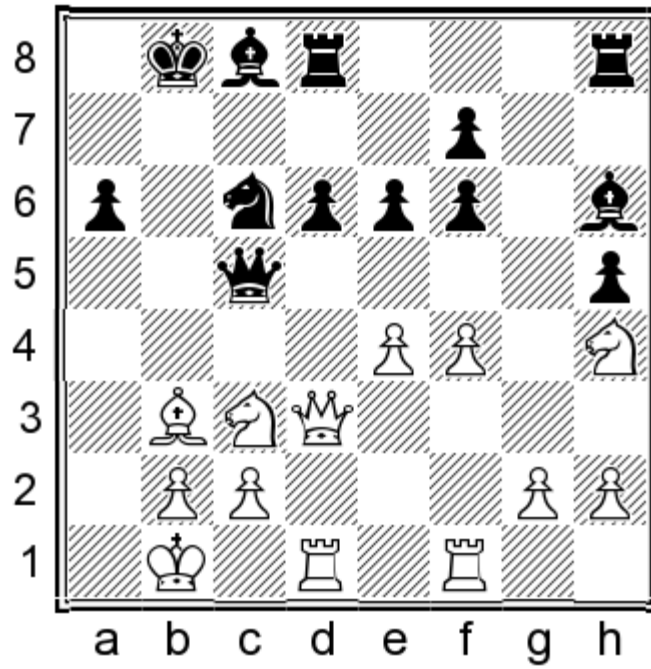
Both sides are now ready to enter the struggle with their kings castled. Notice how Black adapted when White set up f2-f4: he kept the bishop at home, so it could have some say on the queenside if necessary. He went with the moves he knew he had to play and saved his optional moves. It's that old Purdy Rule again about making the moves you know you have to make! Now, White concerns himself with some defensive moves.

14.a3 ♖b8 15.♞hf1 b4 16.axb4 ♜xb4 17.♙c4



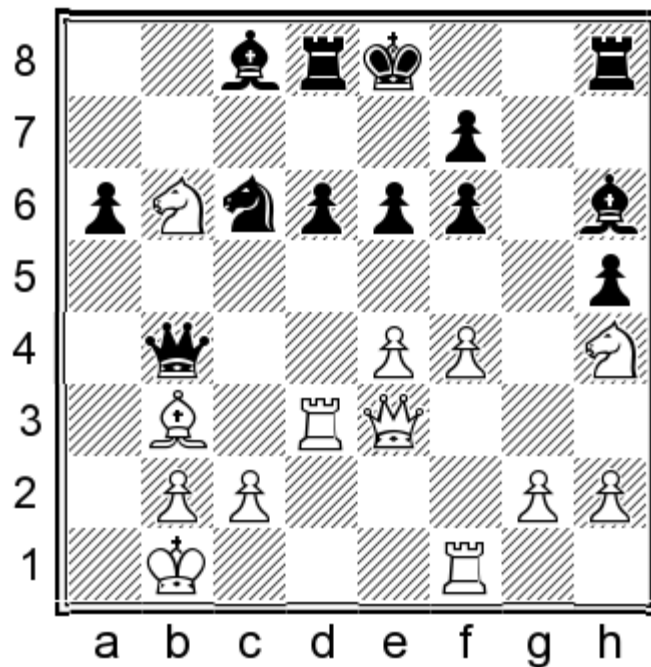
This is one of those equal positions that means equal chances, but you have to be happy with White's position. Think about the nicely placed pieces and the restriction of Black's forces, not to mention that little static mess of pawns. This is not what a person who wished to play the Dragon or Najdorf wanted to have on the board. White continues to concentrate his forces on the d5 square as Black has put knight, bishop, and rook to support that advance. Should he have played it? Both were strong players and must have calculated the ...d6-d5 thrust. In any Sicilian, that is a task on practically every move. It's central to the opening. Some possibilities were: 17...d5 18.exd5 ♜xd5 19.♞xd5 (19.♙xd5 ♙b4 [19...exd5 20.♞f3 d4 21.♞d3] 20.♞f3 exd5 21.♞d3) 19...exd5 20.♙b3, and we have an outcome directly related to the choice of 7.♙xf6. It's why you have to play over master games. Middlegame positions and even endgame positions are the result of different choices in the opening. It's good to have some visions of certain "target positions" to help you make the early decisions in the opening. White's two pawn islands are sound in comparison to Black's three pawn islands. The knights-vs.-bishops theme is somewhat in the horses' favor, but if those two bishops get free, White will have difficulties. That's why ...d6-d5 for Black may have been best.

17...♞c5 18.♙b3 ♙h6 19.♞e2 ♜c6 20.♞d3 ♙c8



The great chess writer, Eugene Znosko-Borovsky, once said that in bad positions there are only bad moves. Black's position isn't *that* bad, but 20...♔c8 is. He should have persisted with 20...♘b4. White, on the other hand, has several good moves here: 21.g3 (so he can reposition the knight at f3) or even 21.f5, giving Black second thoughts about his pawn structure. White chooses a different route.

21. ♖a4 ♜b4 22. ♛e3 ♚c7 23. ♞d3 ♜d7 24. ♘b6+ ♚e8

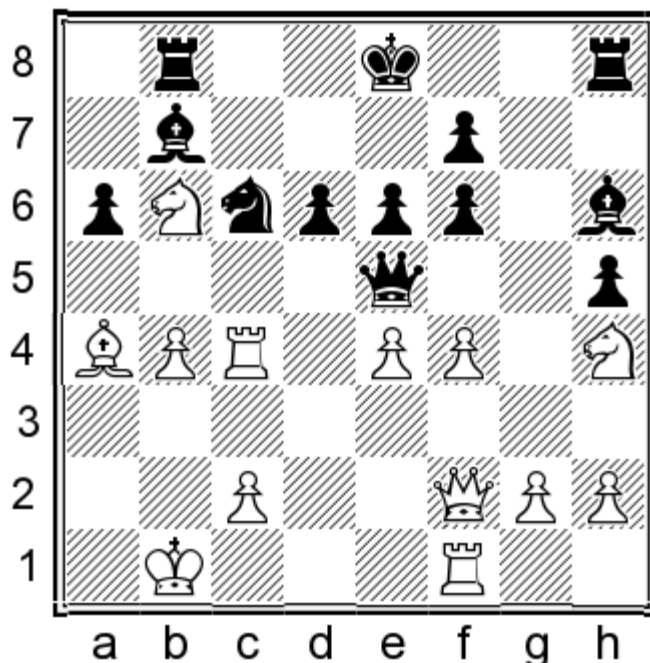


Black's little king odyssey has resulted in a completely lost position. There is one more problem. Do you see it?

25. ♔a4 ♔b7 26. ♞c3 ♞b8 27. ♞c4 ♛a5 28. b4 ♜e5 29. ♛f2 1-0

The final position, a quasi-checkmating of the black queen in the middle of the board, is quite funny in a way.

The black queen “dominates” the center as no white piece occupies any of the central squares. She’s blocked from retreat by that horizontal row of pawns. Talk about being up against a wall!



What can we take away from this game? We know that ...a7-a6 is not to be feared, but dealt with. We pretty much know what Black’s plans are going to be and how to prepare for them. There was no “hey, memorize this line and that sub-variation.” It was just good common sense chess. It’s not White to Play and Win – it’s White to Play and Understand What’s Going On.

There is one more important concept (of many in this opening, but we’re hitting the highlights to see if you might like this sort of play). Many Sicilian players are fond of the ...e7-e5 systems, so you will often see them occur here. Andy Ansel, a real devotee of chess who has one of the finest chess-book collections in the world, sent Fred Wilson a game with an interesting idea. Fred forwarded it to me. I started looking at other games with this idea and just loved it. Here is one of those other games. This one is particularly nice because the theme is clear and the finish has a great knight sacrifice.

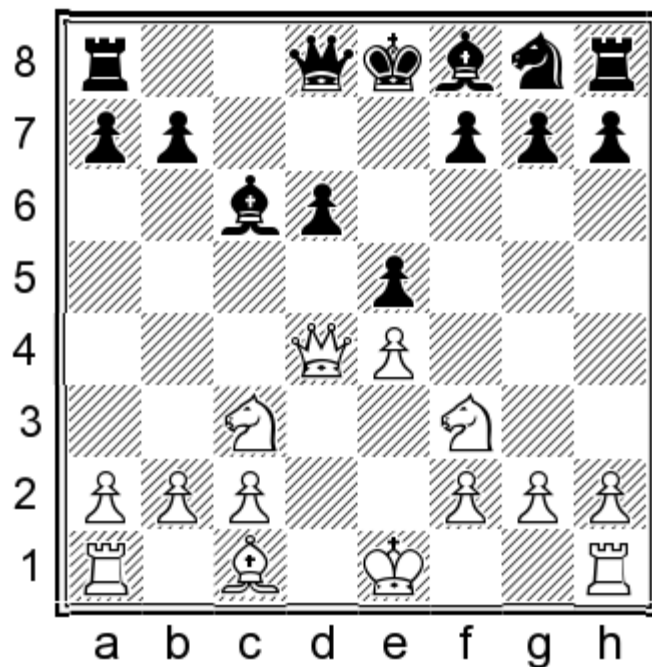
Again, whether one move or another at any given moment would have been better is not the point of showing you this game. Learn the idea!

Model Game 4

Liebert – Weber

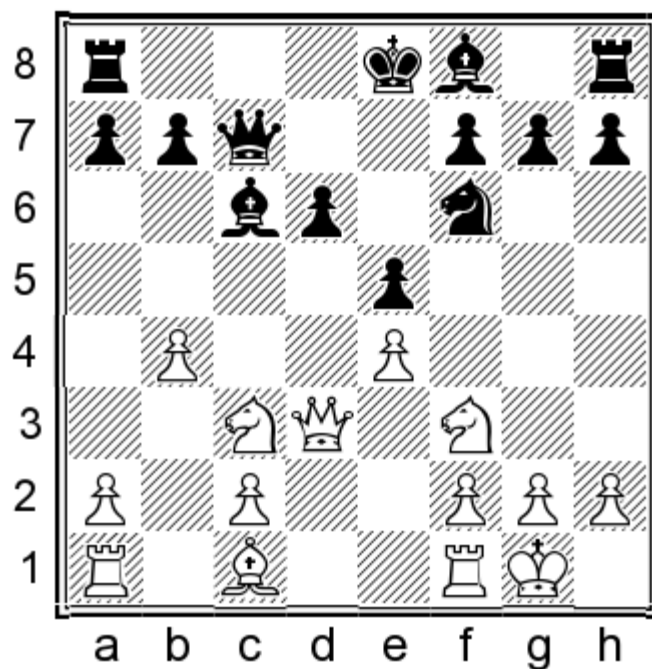
East Germany 1953

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4 ♘c6 5.♙b5 ♙d7 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.♘c3 e5



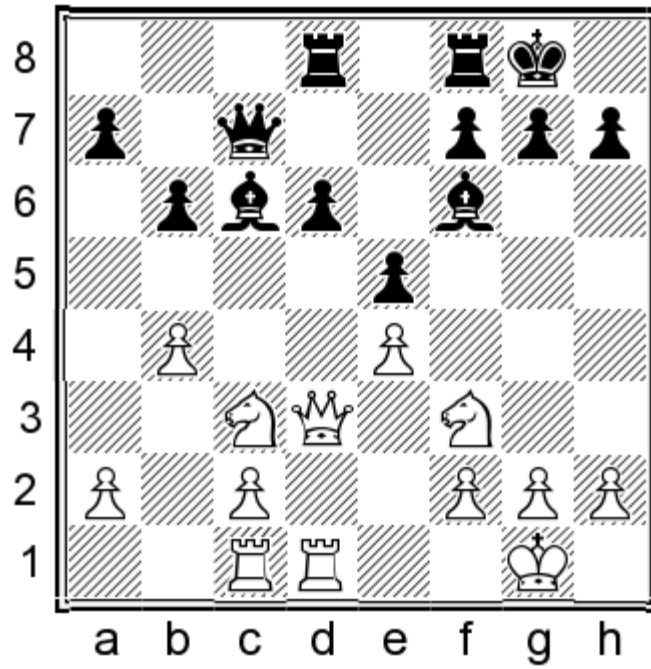
Sometimes, you'll get ...e7-e5 right after ♔xd4. Sicilian players who like the ...e5 systems have no fear of playing that move. You have to give them a reason.

8. ♔d3 ♔c7 9. 0-0 ♘f6 10. b4



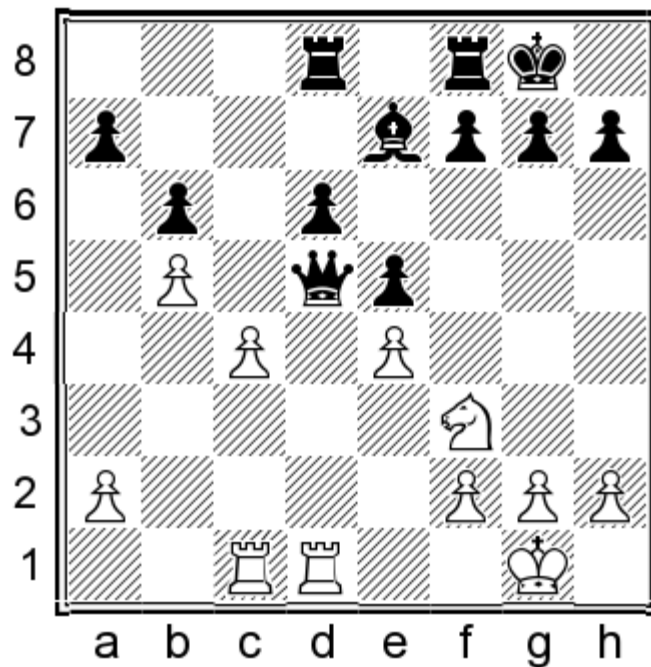
And here it is! White threatens b4-b5, knocking the bishop off the diagonal that would support a ...d6-d5 push. There's more to it, though.

10...b6 11. ♘g5 ♘e7 12. ♖fd1 ♔d8 13. ♖ac1 0-0 14. ♘xf6 ♘xf6



♞xf6 is definitely thematic, no matter what line you pick. The reasoning is simple: the knight fights for d5 – get rid of it! And, yes, you have two knights vs. two bishops. Kind of a theme, huh? If you're obsessive about having the bishop pair, find another line to play! White takes this opportunity to post the horse at d5. Did you wonder about the ♞c1 move? It supports a c2-c4 advance once the knight goes to d5. The other rook is on d1 to exercise influence on the d-file, which also comes in handy later as you will see. Do you remember the point made in the Primer about rook placement? This is an ideal example!

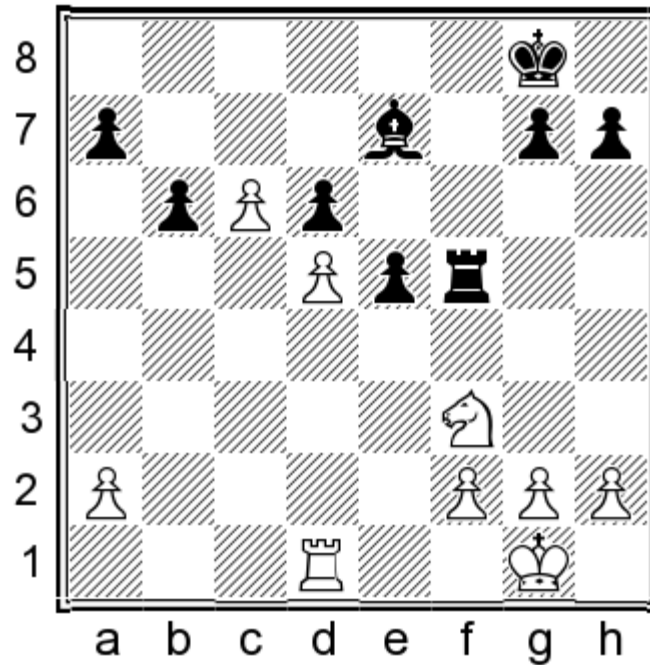
15. ♞d5 ♞b7 16. c4 ♞e7 17. b5 ♞xd5 18. ♞xd5 ♞xd5



Do you take with the rook or with a pawn? The reasoning is clear. If you take with the rook to keep the pressure on d6, you have a backward c-pawn and no hope of winning d6. If you take with the c-pawn, your rook is on the open file. Yes, it can be challenged by Black, but the ace in the hole is 20. ♞c6 , thanks to our

friend who went from b2-b4-b5. Black tries to counter, but an embarrassing moment occurs.

19.cxd5 ♖c8 20.♗c6 f5 21.exf5 ♖xc6 22.bxc6 ♗xf5

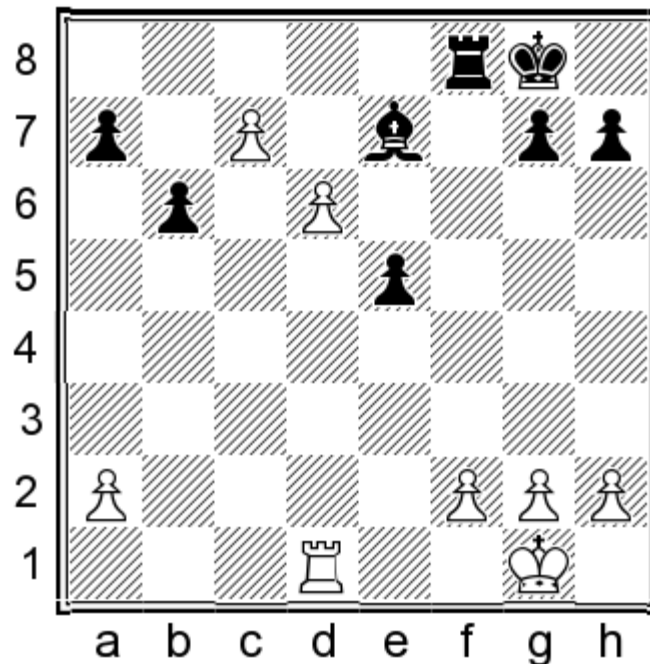


Figuring that he can scamper back if White plays 23.c7, but what if he can't scamper back? White stuns Black with a real zinger.

23.♘xe5! dxe5

Naturally, not 23...♗xe5 24.c7.

24.c7 ♖f8 25.d6



Triumph along the c- and d-files. The irony of this is that those are usually the places where Black finds glory.

25...♞c8 26.dxe7 ♖f7 27.♞d8 1-0

Here are variations on the theme.

Chavin – Derviz

USSR 1954

**1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞b5+ ♗c6 5.♞xd4 ♞d7 6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.c4 e5 8.♞d3 ♞c7 9.♟c3 ♞e6
10.0-0 ♟e7 11.♞d1 ♞d8 12.b4 f6 13.♞e3 g6 14.b5 c5 15.a4 ♞g7 16.a5 0-0 17.♞db1 ♞b8 18.♟d2 h6
19.♟d5 ♞xd5 20.cxd5 f5 21.f3 g5 22.♟c4 ♞d7 23.♞b3 ♖h8 24.b6 a6 25.b7 g4 26.♞a2 gxf3 27.gxf3
♟g6 28.♟xd6 ♞xd6 29.♞xc5 ♞dd8 30.♞xf8 ♞xf8 31.♞c2 fxe4 32.♞b6 ♟f4 33.♞xd8 ♞xd8 34.b8=♞
♞f6 35.fxe4 ♟h3+ 36.♟g2 ♟f4+ 37.♟h1 ♟d3 38.♞g2 ♞f3 39.♞b6 h5 40.♞b3 1-0**

Tringov – Evans

Lugano 1968

**1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♗c6 5.♞b5 ♞d7 6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.c4 e5 8.♞d3 ♞e7 9.0-0 ♞c7
10.♟c3 ♟f6 11.♞g5 ♞d8 12.♞fd1 ♞e6 13.b4 0-0 14.♞ac1 ♞b7 15.♞xf6 ♞xf6 16.b5 cxb5?**

According to Larsen, a positional error; better was 16...♞d7 or 16...♞c8.

**17.cxb5 ♞d7 18.♟d5 ♞d8 19.♞c6 g6 20.a4 ♟g7 21.♟d2 f5 22.♟c4 fxe4 23.♞xe4 ♞xd5 24.♞xd5 ♞b6
25.♞d2! ♞df7 26.♟xb6 axb6 27.♞xd6 ♞e8 28.h3 ♞a7 29.♞b4 ♞a8 30.♞c3 ♞xa4 31.♞xe5+ ♟g8
32.♞d5! ♞e8 33.♞xb6**

33.♞c7?? ♞e1+ 34.♟h2 ♞f4+

33...♟g7 34.g3 ♞e1+ 35.♟g2 ♞f5 36.♞b7+ ♟h6 37.♞xf5 1-0.

If 37...gxf5, then 38.♞d6+ ♟g5 39.f4+.

Stein – Sakharov

USSR 1960

**1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♗c6 5.♞b5 ♞d7 6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.c4 e5 8.♞d3 ♞c7 9.0-0 ♞e7
10.♟c3 ♟f6 11.♞g5 ♞b8 12.♞ab1 h6 13.♞xf6 gxf6 14.b4 0-0 15.b5 ♞fc8 16.♟h4 ♟h7 17.♞f3 ♞e6
18.bxc6 ♞xc6 19.♞xb8 ♞xb8 20.♟d5 ♞d8 21.♟f5 ♞d7 22.♟de3 ♞e7 23.♞h5 ♞xf5 24.♞xf7+ ♟h8
25.♟xf5 1-0**

The Rossolimo Attack (et al.)

You've seen different styles of games within a style, so to speak. Lots of concepts, very little memorization. That's why this is a recommended style against the Sicilian. You might be asking, "What do I do if he plays

2...e6 or 2...♘c6?” If you liked this style of play, you will like to play 3.c3 against 2...e6, heading into the Alapin Sicilian with 3...♘f6 where Black has committed to an early ...e7-e6. That may or may not limit him, depending on whether he’s one who delays ...e7-e6 in the Alapin 2...♘f6 line. Black may also go with 3...d5 and go into 4.exd5 ♖xd5 5.d4, which is also Alapin territory. If he goes with 4...exd5 then 5.d4 is a French Defense of sorts. You generally get this position with the Tarrasch French after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5 exd5, but here the ♘f3 move is more useful than ♘d2.

The move 2...♘c6 is seen quite often, and here you have several options. 3.c3 fits into the general scheme: clear development and not much to memorize, whether Black plays 3...♘f6 or 3...d5 or even 3...e5.

If you like the Nimzo-Indian lines, you can go with 3.♗b5 with the plan of doubling on c6, playing d2-d3, and making it a kind of Nimzo reversed; or you can go for a more open position.

In the 2013 Moscow Open we found an interesting Sicilian Defense where Black just never seemed to be in the game. Burak Firat essayed the Rossolimo idea of 3.♗b5 (which GM Nicolas Rossolimo made famous in the 1940s against both 2...♘c6 and 2...d6) against Alexey Reshetnikov (see below).

In the following game won by Firat, White counts on having a freer position and doesn’t mind conceding the two bishops to do it. Then, he comes up with an ingenious idea which you saw in the Hungarian Variation (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 a6 5.♗g5), which pins the e-pawn and threatens to take the king’s knight when it comes out to f6. What makes this interesting is that in both lines Black’s pawn configuration is so awkward and immobile that the two knights vs. the two bishops becomes an opportunity for rubbing the bishops’ noses in the dirt.

The picture of the two knights at d5 and f5 is delightful, while the clergymen are reduced to irrelevance. Black might have avoided this with 10...h6 11.♗e3 e6 12.f4, but here White has a ready-made kingside attack and a target at h6 if Black is foolish enough to castle there.

Later on, moving the e-pawn wouldn’t help, either: 19...e5 20.♞c1 ♔d7 21.♞e3 ♗e7 22.♖h7 ♖g8 23.♖xg8 ♞xg8 24.♘xe7 ♔xe7 25.♞c7+ ♔d8 26.♞ec3 again is decisive.

White finds the road to victory with ease. Black just never got going. It would have been more picturesque to play 21.♞c1 ♖d8 (21...exf5 22.♞c8+) 22.♞c8 ♖xc8 23.♘xd6+, but you can gather by the short repetition of moves from moves 23-26 that White must have been quite short of time and was using that respite to find the decisive last moves.

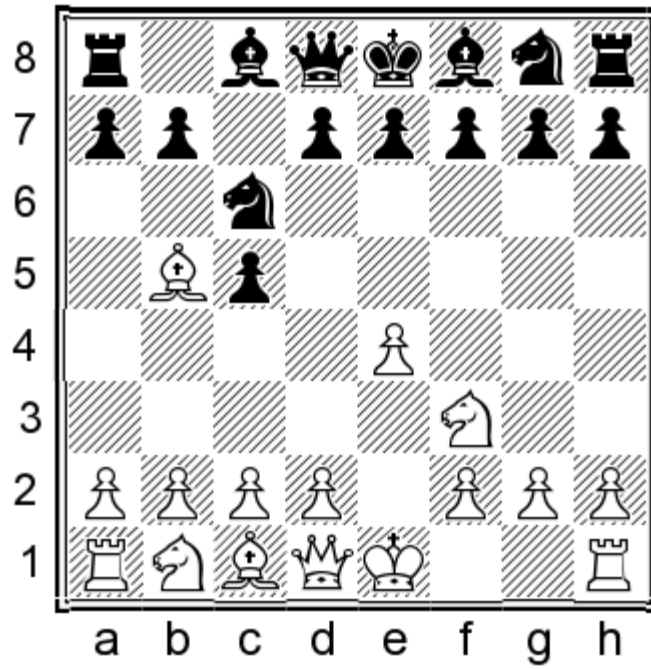
The ♗b5 system is one of the better anti-Sicilian approaches, and they are still dangerous over 60 years past Nick Rossolimo’s great series of victories with it. When working on the book, my editor, Jorge Amador, wrote in the margin, “I remember seeing it described somewhere as a ‘soporific’ approach against the Sicilian, and as a Sicilian player I totally agree.” Well, putting Sicilian players to sleep is a goal of mine!

Model Game 5

Firat – Reshetnikov

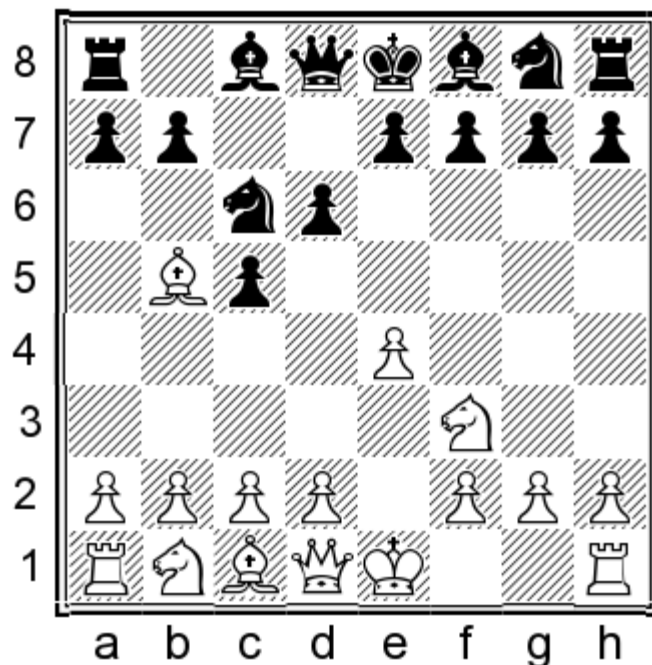
Moscow Open 2013

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5



The Rossolimo Attack. It can come after 3...d6 as well with a check. Various writers have different names for the two lines, but Nick Rossolimo popularized the attack in the late '40s against both 2...♘c6 and 2...d6, so I just call it all the Rossolimo. It's a personal decision, probably also because as a young player I used to go to his chess studio in Greenwich Village where he would play anyone for a small fee, and you would get a little lesson, too. Once, I had photocopied a page out of Purdy's magazine that highlighted three of his miniature wins with these lines and brought it in. He was busy playing, so I showed it to his wife. I meant it as a small gesture of appreciation, but I'll never forget her reply as she looked at it: "What do you want from the grandmaster?" I no doubt looked puzzled. She explained, "It's just that everybody wants something from him." The concept of free was rare even in a small chess studio. I felt bad that this whole scene was the lot of a creative grandmaster.

3...d6

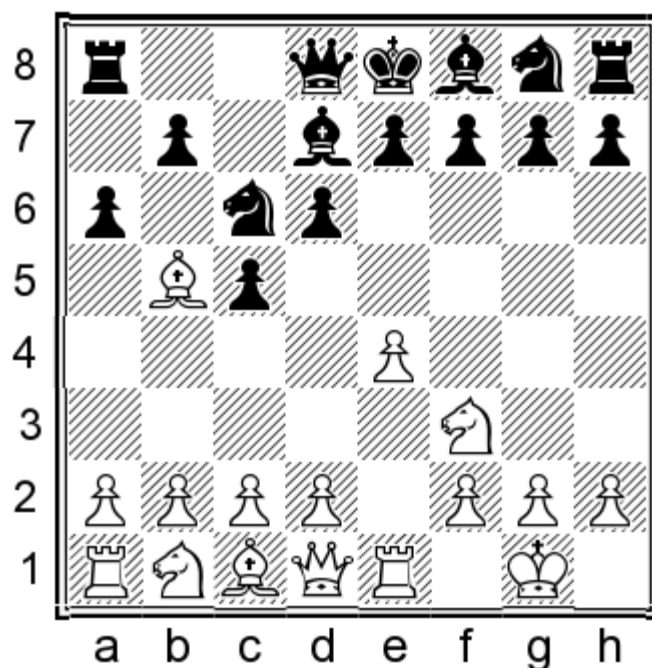


You can smile inside when Black makes this move. Can you see why? As a 2...♘c6 Sicilian player, he may not be familiar with 2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4, which you can now transpose into by 4.d4 cxd4 5.♙xd4. He may even have played 3...d6 with an eye toward an ...e7-e5 move, which you will be ready for using the games here against that idea. It's an option to consider.

4.0-0 ♘d7 5.♙e1

First making the moves that he knows he wants to play. Rossolimo would often go with ♙e2 and ♖d1 to support c2-c3 and d2-d4. There are lots of possible plans here.

5...a6



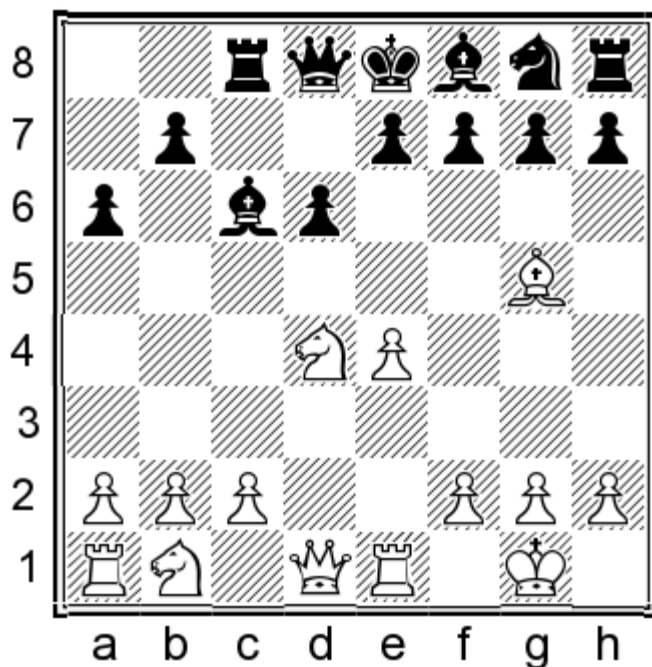
If you thought the Primer was just a bunch of obvious stuff, here's a 2500-level player doing exactly what one

of the lessons said you should not do. He wastes a tempo to have White play ♟xc6 , a move he was going to play anyhow. Perhaps he thought White had played ♞e1 to play ♟b5-f1 , preserving the bishop. Black doesn't understand Rossolimo attackers! Better was developing a piece with $5... \text{♞f6}$.

6. ♟xc6 ♟xc6 7. d4 cxd4 8. ♞xd4

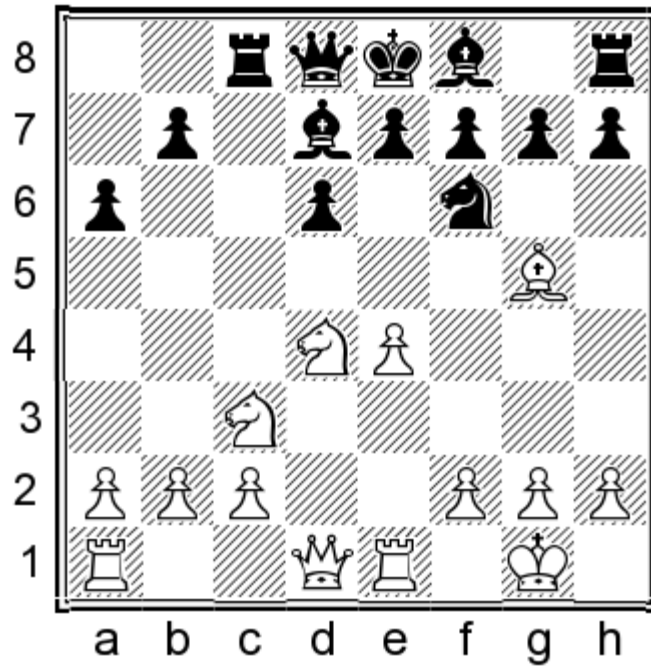
The knight rather than the queen is on d4, but it's a wonderful square. White can play the horse to f5 or capture the bishop.

8... ♞c8 9. ♟g5



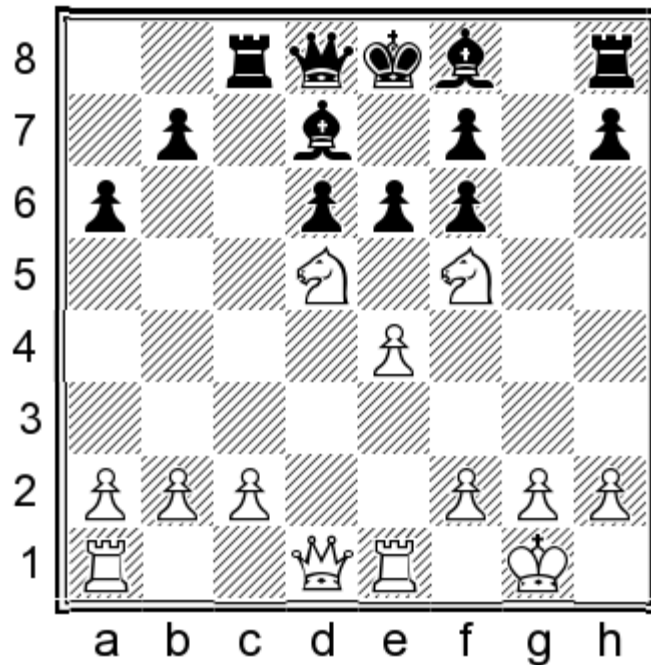
Given the comments on the ♟g5 move in the prior ♞xd4 game when Black had played $... \text{a7-a6}$ to avoid the pin, you gotta love this guy! He is attacking "the ghost of the knight." Consider the price Black has played to keep this bishop in terms of tempi: White is castled and has three pieces actively in play, while Black hasn't moved a thing on the side he is to castle on.

9... ♟d7 10. ♞c3 ♞f6



White's next move is perhaps the most telling move of the game. Chessplayers can become so obsessive about the "two bishops" idea (which, to be fair, has proved its worth) that they are clueless to the possibility of other ideas having value. White is about to give up the bishop pair for the very same reasons given earlier: Black's pawn structure becomes awkward and vulnerable. Knights can dominate bishops depending on the position.

11. ♖xf6 gxf6 12. ♘d5 e6 13. ♘f5



As pretty a picture as you will see involving knights dominating bishops. Black can't take either steed, and castling kingside just became problematic.

13... ♜g8 14. ♚h5

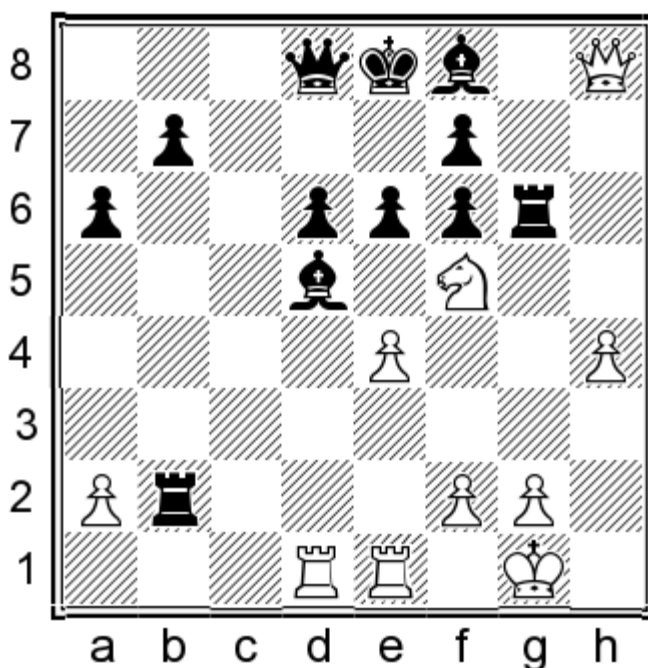
Yes, 14. ♖d4 was good; however, as there are several points along the way here where there are better moves for both sides, it is best to realize that we are looking at the game because of the *ideas*, not because of specific analytical tidbits that will have no meaning for you in later games. The ideas that got you here will stay with you.

14... ♜g6 15. ♗xh7 ♜xc2

White could have rather easily met the threat of ... ♜xc2, but there is an idea worth mentioning about why he didn't. Look at White's concentration on developing his attack: making way for the h-pawn, advancing the pawn, and bringing another rook into the game. You should always consider playing with your whole army!

16. h4 ♙c6 17. ♜ad1 ♜xb2 18. ♗h8 ♙xd5

The most ironic move of the game. He is compelled to give up that precious time-wasting bishop to try and blunt the attack. Too late!



19. exd5 ♗b6 20. ♜f1 ♜e2 21. dxe6 ♜xe6 22. ♜fe1 ♗b4 23. ♗xd6+ ♔e7 24. ♗f5+ ♔e8 25. ♗d6+ ♔e7 26. ♗f5+

Just picking up time on the clock to make sure everything is in order for his final moves.

26... ♔e8 27. ♜xe6+ ♟e6 28. ♗d6+ ♔e7 29. ♗h7+ ♜g7 30. ♗h5 ♗xd6 31. ♜xd6 ♔xd6 32. ♗e8 1-0

After the bishop moves, the queen and h-pawn will be too much for the rook.

With the Rossolimo, you can play an “open” or “closed” style of play. You will see lines with d2-d3 and an eventual f2-f4, lines with Nimzo-Indian qualities with b2-b3 and attacks on the doubled c-pawns, c2-c3 and d2-d4 lines, and c2-c4 with d2-d4 lines. There is not much written on the ♗xd4 lines. That's why more time was given in the previous pages. Several books have been devoted to the Rossolimo, so if you like this idea, go out and get one. *Easy Guide to the ♙b5 Sicilian* by Steffen Pedersen is very enjoyable. If you like DVDs, GM Murray Chandler's *Bashing the Sicilian with ♙b5* is entertaining and instructive.

The variation fits our criteria very well: GMs play it. The moves are very natural. Memorization is not

necessary. It gives you an opening you can grow with. It is solid and aggressive. It creates (should you choose those lines) pawn-structure weaknesses that go well with the Nimzo-Indian or Dutch ideas discussed in this book.

And to honor Nick, here are those three games I was talking about. When I did these as a lecture on the ICC, people loved them! Here's hoping you will, too:

Rossolimo – H. Müller

Bad Gastein (Germany) 1948

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+ ♗d7 4.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 5.0-0 ♘c6 6.♚e2 e6 7.♞d1 d5 8.exd5 ♖xd5 9.♘c3 ♗d7 10.d4 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 cxd4 12.♙e3 ♖c6 13.♞xd4 ♞c8 14.♞ad1 a6 15.♚d2 ♙e7 16.♘e4 ♜f8 17.♚a5 f5 18.♘d6 ♙xd6 19.♞xd6 ♖xc2 20.♚e5 ♞e8 21.♞d7 1-0

Rossolimo – Kottnauer

Bad Gastein 1948

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 e6 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.♞e1 d5 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♘e5 ♖c7 8.♚f3 ♙d6 9.♘xc6 bxc6?? 10.♖xd5 ♙xh2+ 11.♜h1 0-0 12.♚h5 1-0

Rossolimo – Romanenko

Salzburg 1948

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.0-0 ♙g7 5.♞e1 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♘d4 7.e5 ♘g8 8.d3 ♘xb5 9.♘xb5 a6 10.♘d6+ exd6 11.♙g5 ♚a5 12.exd6+ ♜f8 13.♞e8+ ♜xe8 14.♚e2+ ♜f8 15.♙e7+ ♜e8 16.♙d8+ ♜xd8 17.♘g5 1-0

Purdy's comment: "He is mated at f7 or e7. Beautifully played by White – note how four black pieces are still on their original squares." (*Chess World*, December 1948)

The Closed Sicilian

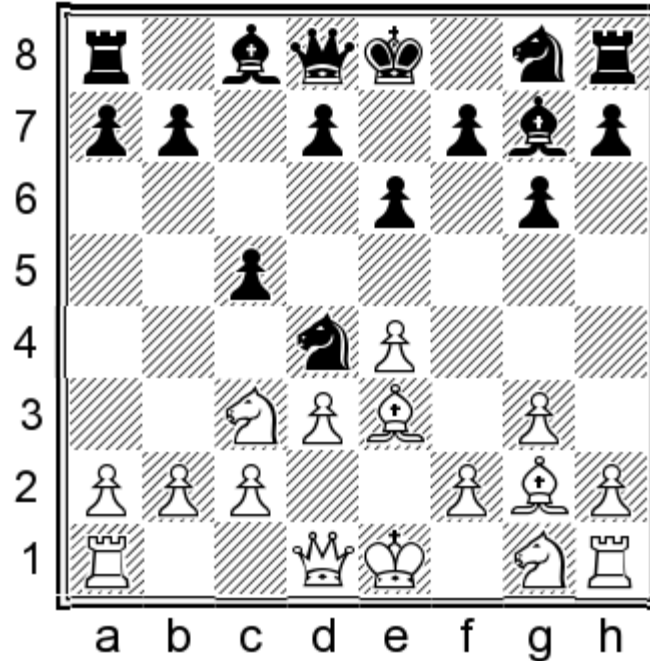
The Closed Sicilian doesn't come out and play right away as 3.d4 does; however, it gets a firm grip on Black's freeing move of ...d7-d5 and it keeps in reserve the idea of launching a kingside attack with f2-f4. Two of its best-known proponents are former world champions Vassily Smyslov and Boris Spassky, both of whom are featured here with their takes on the opening. As you will see, although it seems to follow one particular opening series of moves, just one little change in the starting sequence can change its approach. That will keep players who know what you play off-balance a tiny bit. Our first game is from the 1946 USA-USSR match:

Model Game 6

Smyslov – Denker

USA-USSR Radio Match 1946

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♙g2 ♙g7 5.d3 e6 6.♙e3 ♘d4



This is an important position to study. First of all, Denker is following the conventional wisdom of the day by fostering this defensive setup. The knight, with support of the g7-bishop, will receive further support by ...♘ge7-c6. That's why ...e7-e6 was played. White, on the other hand, follows his idea: a solid center with overprotection of e4 and an attack on Black's eventual freeing plan of ...d7-d5. He is also going to set up the battery of queen on d2 and bishop and e3. One thing I noticed in playing over Closed Sicilian games in various amateur tournaments is that White often goes into robot mode and mindlessly plays an early ♘ge2 to get castled and play f2-f4. Smyslov has a different idea. He keeps the king knight off e2 so he can play ♘ce2 in order to dislodge the nicely posted black knight on d4 with c2-c3.

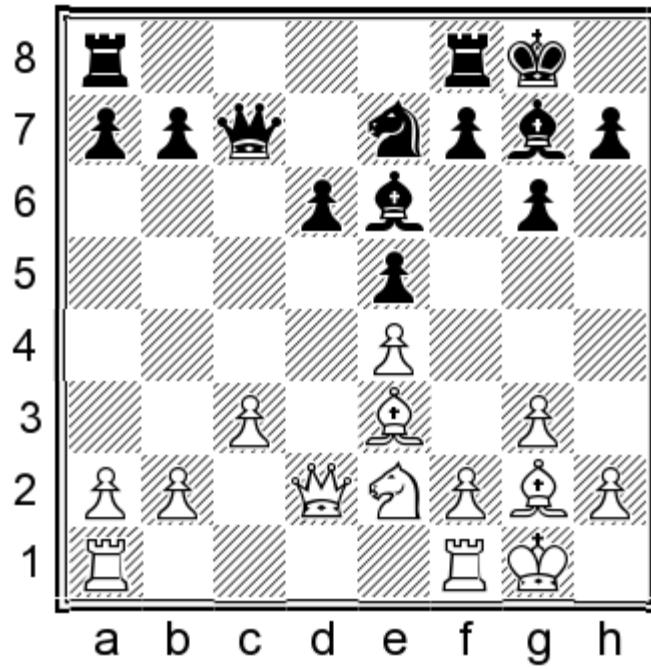
7.♘ce2 d6 8.c3 ♘c6

8...♘xe2 9.♘xe2 ♘e7 (9...♘f6 10.0-0 0-0 11.f4 ♗b6 12.♗b3 ♗c7 [12...♗xb3 13.axb3] 13.c4 ♘g4 14.♙d2) 10.d4.

9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♙xd4 e5 12.♙e3 ♘e7

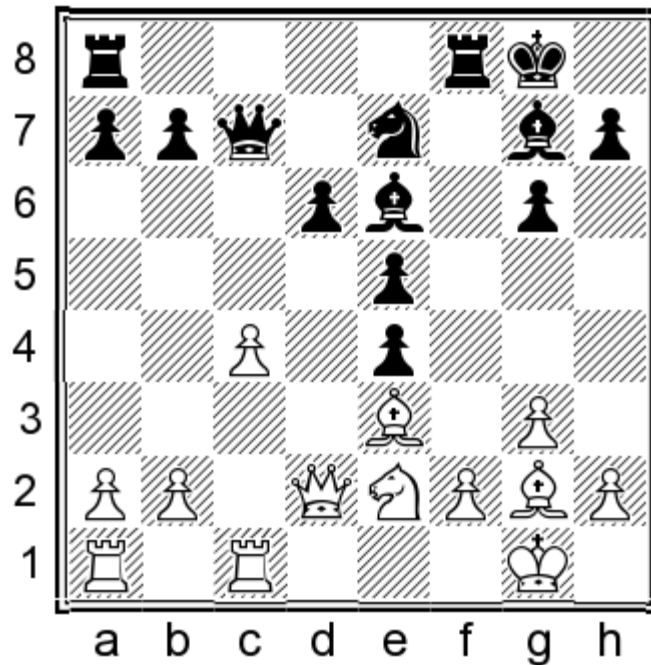
12...♘f6 13.♘e2 ♙e6 14.0-0 d5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♙c5.

13.♘e2 0-0 14.0-0 ♙e6 15.♗d2 ♗c7



Although the Closed Sicilian has as a key theme the push f2-f4, Black's playing to e5 has changed things, and Smyslov adapts. He will concentrate on the weak d5 square. Thus, he takes his king rook over to c1 to support c3-c4 and has his queen rook ready to support an a2-a4 push if Black tries ...b7-b5. You should never set your plans in concrete. In the Primer, we showed White so focused on the opening plan of planting a knight on d5 that he completely overlooked ♖f5.

16. ♖f5 17. c4 fxe4



White has a choice here with ♗xe4, but he shows great judgment with ♖c3. The pawn isn't going anywhere and the knight will be a better recapturing piece because it pressures d6 and even supports a possible eventual c4-c5. Note how well the ♖c1 fits in well with a push to c5 along with the ♗e3. Pieces working cohesively are always a plus. All of this comes out of the opening plan.

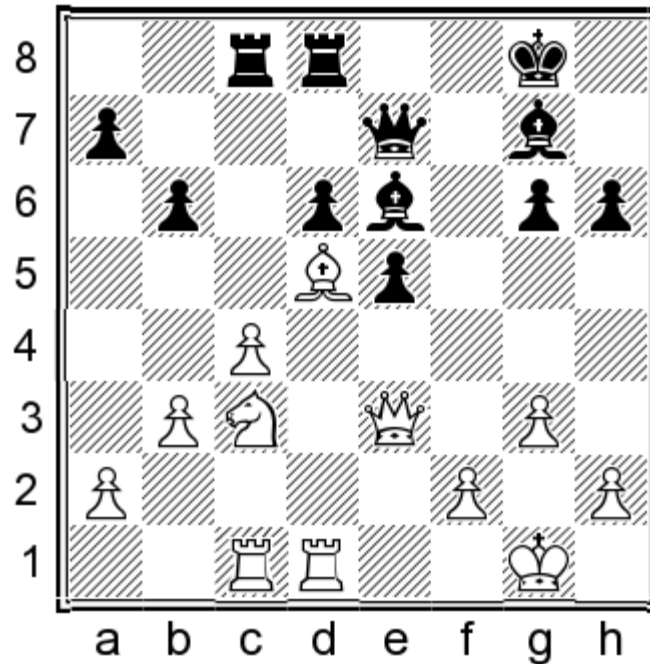
18. ♖c3 ♜f5

18... ♟xc4 19. ♞b5 ♚c6 20. ♞xd6 ♜ad8 21. ♞xc4 ♚xd6 22. ♚xd6 ♜xd6 23. ♟xa7.

19. ♞xe4 ♞xe3 20. ♚xe3 h6

He wants to keep the knight off g5 and later hide his king on h7.

21. ♞d1 ♜fd8 22. ♞ac1 ♜ac8 23. b3 b6 24. ♞c3 ♚e7 25. ♟d5

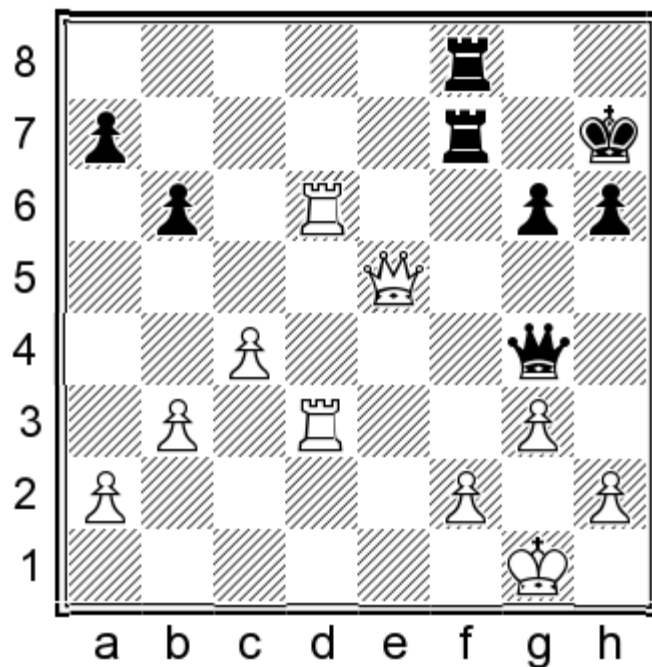


This is a completely successful opening plan. It shows us, on move 25, the fruits of the labors involved: occupation and control of d5. If Black doesn't take the bishop, prompting a recapture with the knight, White will just take the bishop anyhow. Black's light squares then will be weakened and his king bishop restricted by its own pawns. The knight will dominate.

25... ♞h7 26. ♟xe6 ♚xe6 27. ♞d3 ♜c7 28. ♞cd1 ♜f7 29. ♞e4

Again, Smyslov swings away from the idea of occupying d5 which we were looking at and towards attacking d6, which causes Black no end of difficulty.

29... ♟f8 30. ♞d5 ♚g4 31. ♞1d3 ♟e7 32. ♞xd6 ♟xd6 33. ♞xd6 ♜df8 34. ♚xe5



White allows the capture on f2 because he has a plan for this position, too. As a game develops, there is nothing wrong with devising new plans because your opponent will come up with all sorts of unexpected moves. Smyslov sees that the capture on f2 is ferocious-looking but ineffective. White will get to check on d7, exchange a pair of rooks, use his dominant queen and rook to reposition themselves on e4 and e2, and offer trades that lead to an easily won king-and-pawn ending.

34... ♖xf2 35. ♖d7+ ♖2f7 36. ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 37. ♖d8 ♖g7 38. ♕e8 g5 39. ♕h8+ ♔g6 40. ♖d6+ ♔f7 41. ♕xh6 ♕f5 42. ♖d1 ♕c5+ 43. ♔g2 ♕e7 44. ♖f1+ ♔g8 45. ♕f6 ♕e8 46. ♕f5 g4 47. ♖f2 ♕e7 48. ♕d3 ♖g5 49. ♖e2 ♕f8 50. ♕e4 ♖g7 51. ♕e7 ♕f7 52. ♖e6 1-0

There are a variety of different approaches with the Closed Sicilian. That helps fulfill the idea of growing within an opening system. Not only that, but it will keep familiar opponents off-balance if you learn these different variations.

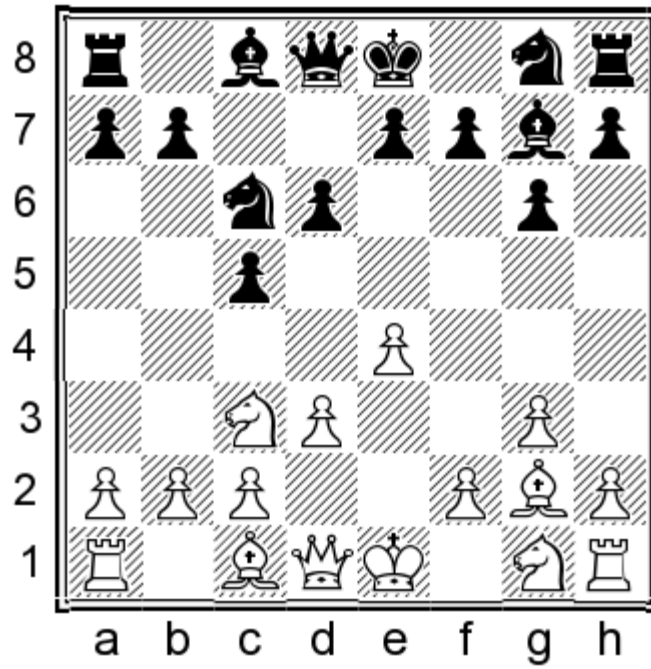
Let's look at one more classic game to give you another approach that is also fundamental to this opening. Spassky used this method to dispatch Efim Geller in their 1968 candidates' match. Spassky would then go on to the world championship to defeat Tigran Petrosian. He was in great form!

Model Game 7

Spassky – Geller

Candidates' Match (6) 1968

1.e4 c5 2. ♖c3 d6 3.g3 ♖c6 4. ♗g2 g6 5.d3 ♗g7

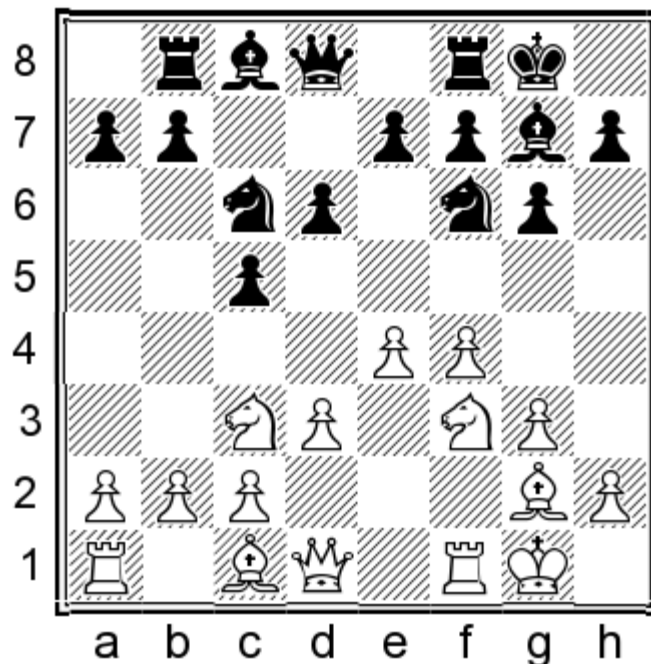


We see a difference from the previous game. Black opts not for ...e7-e6, but for ...d7-d6 to assist him in playing ...♘f6 so it won't be affected by e4-e5 at some point. Spassky adapts by playing f2-f4. Older lines had ♘ge2 followed by f2-f4, but this gets the knight to a more aggressive square. Modern players have been known to go with 6.♙e3 e5 (see the section on the Botvinnik System) 7.♚d2 ♘ge7 8.♙h6 0-0 9.h4!?. Master the classical lines before you "grow" into this highly complex variation.

6.f4 ♘f6

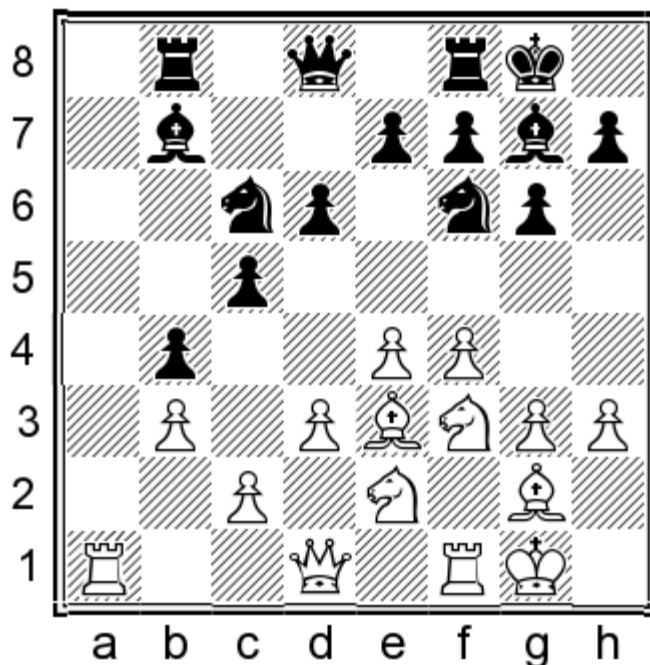
Larsen in 1968 played 6...e5 and Spassky replied 7.♘h3 (yet another idea for the knight!) 7...♘ge7 8.0-0 ♘d4 9.f5 gxf5 10.♚h5.

7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 ♝b8



Both sides have a plan. White will get his bishop to e3, but put his queen to e1 with h4 in mind. He doesn't do the Q+B battery on d2/e3 because the f-pawn is in the way. He knows his c3-knight will be chased, but because the other horse is at f3 he has e2 available, with possibilities of going to g3 or f4 once the pawn storm gets underway. For Black's part, he's trying a queenside advance with ...b7-b5. White will have to stop briefly to deal with it; however, the key difference is that there is no white king on the queenside, but there is a black king where White is moving up the board.

9.h3 b5 10.a3 a5 11.♙e3 b4 12.axb4 axb4 13.♘e2 ♗b7 14.b3



This is a very hard move for chess engines to understand. They value the long diagonal that is open to Black's g7-bishop and assume that White will not concede the a-file. Spassky has his own ideas.

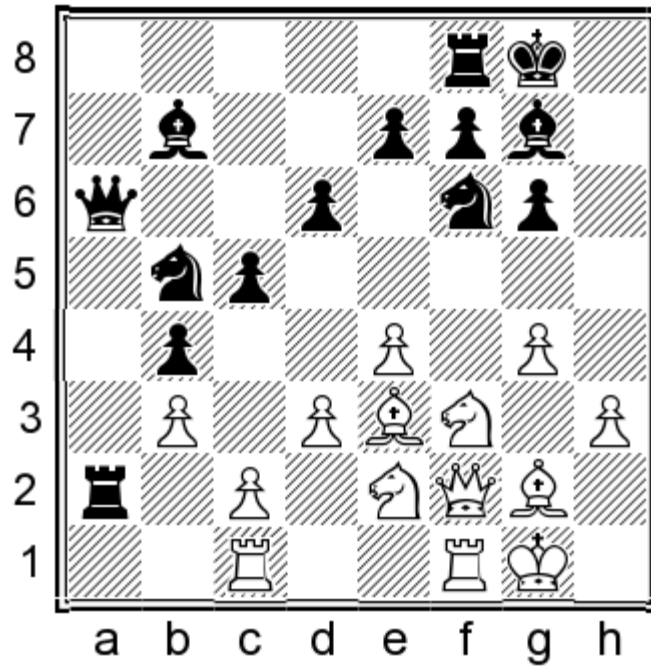
14...♖a8 15.♖c1

And this is it. He protects the c2-pawn and has halted further pawn advances there. Meanwhile, his pieces on the kingside are about to go from potential energy to kinetic energy.

15...♖a2 16.g4 ♕a8 17.♕e1

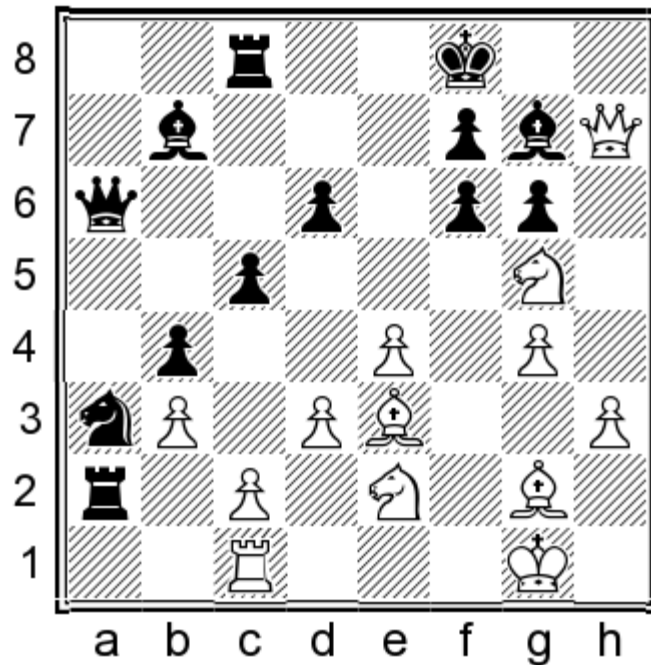
Gligorić points out that White could play f4-f5 right now. Spassky preps a bit.

17...♕a6 18.♕f2 ♘a7 19.f5 ♘b5 20.fxg6 hxg6



Black couldn't take with the f7-pawn because that would leave a hole at e6. Take a look at the diagram above. White's entire opening has been aimed at reaching this position. Can you see the winning plan here? Its first part is pretty clear: ♖g5 and ♕h4 will combine with ♙xf6 to produce a mate on h7. Of course, Black will have something to say about it, but not much. Obviously, the f8-rook will have to give its king an escape square. The question for White is, what is the follow-up to ♕h7+?

21. ♖g5 ♗a3 22. ♕h4 ♙c8 23. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 24. ♕h7+ ♔f8



This game is a real candidate for a second volume of Fred Wilson's book *Simple Attacking Plans*. The first part was simple. Now, before playing all that, you had to see the move that follows. If you didn't, go back to move 21 and try to visualize this whole attack once you have seen it all the way through. That has to be part of your practice in studying this opening or any other. Study the games that have been played, stop at key positions,

and work on them until you can see the chosen plan unfold before your eyes. Pretty soon it will be happening to you on the chessboard!

25. ♖xf7 ♜xc2

It's over. Black can't even take the knight to escape: 25... ♖xf7 26. ♗h6 ♜g8 27. ♗f4. Nice move, that ♗f4. As we mentioned above, that was always a possible path for the knight. Did you think about that in the positions leading up to this move in this variation?

26. ♗h6 ♜xc1+ 27. ♗xc1 ♖xf7 28. ♖xg7+ ♗e8 29. g5 f5 30. ♖xg6+ ♗d7 31. ♖f7+ ♗c6 32. exf5+ 1-0

There are several excellent books on the Closed Sicilian. Two that come to mind may be out of print, but you can probably pick them up cheaply online: *The Closed Sicilian* by Daniel King and *The Ultimate Closed Sicilian* by Gary Lane. Both of them are talented players and authors and they make their topic enjoyable and instructive.

The c3 Sicilian

You now have the ♖xd4 Sicilian, the Rossolimo Attack, and the Closed Sicilian to consider. One further one is the c3 Sicilian. This started becoming popular in the 1970s and then just took off. It's perfect for amateurs who want to avoid those nasty openings we mentioned above. There is so much on it and so many books available, we could hardly do it justice here. We'll mention the books at the end of these two games.

The first game is the one that got me interested in the c3 Sicilian. The second is by the GM who wrote the *magnum opus* on the c3.

Our initial game is an example of Black's logical reply 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5. The white pieces are handled by Alexander Alekhine, which gives it particular interest.

Model Game 8

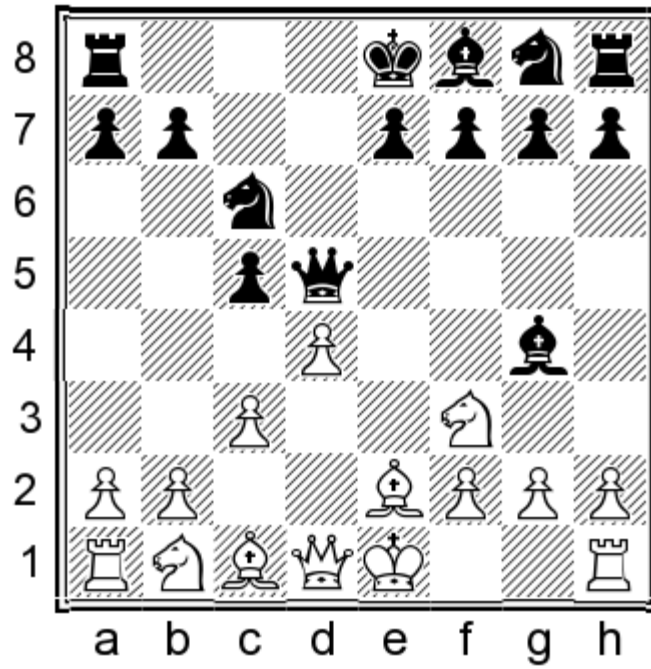
Alekhine – Podgorny

Prague 1943

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5

Quite logical, as the knight can't go to c3. White must play d2-d4 next.

4.d4 ♗c6 5. ♗f3 ♗g4 6. ♗e2

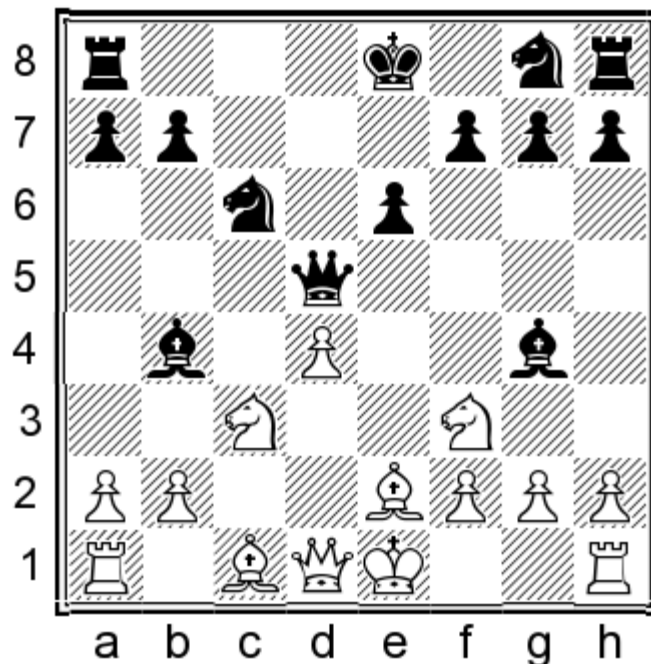


Again, all this is common sense. Black attacks d4, White defends it. Black looks pretty aggressive here, so why would White play into this? There are all sorts of ideas here. Some players of White's side will play dxc5 to get an endgame and a queenside pawn majority. Others would love to play c3-c4 and d4-d5 against the center. There is the possibility of harassing the queen. When you study this opening further, you'll discover what appeals to you the most.

6...cxd4

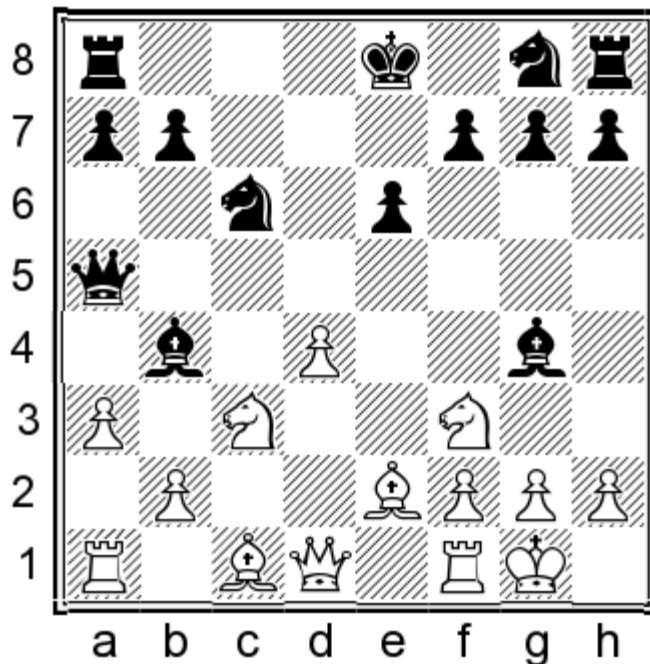
At this point, this is a big mistake, as it allows the knight to come to c3 and hit the queen. Yet it is still played because of 8...♙b4.

7.cxd4 e6 8.♘c3 ♙b4



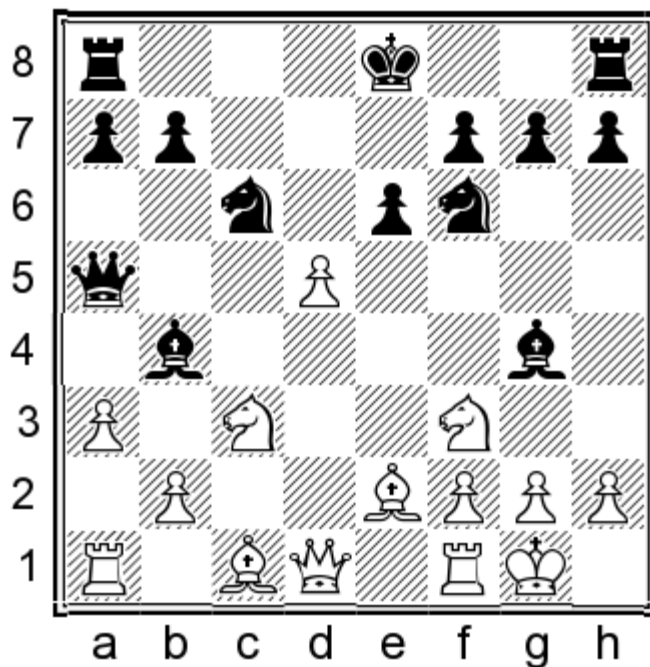
It's only a temporary solution, since after White castles there is no pin. Black can't take the knight because the new c-pawn on c3 will be able to go to c4 and dislodge the queen anyhow.

9.0-0 ♔a5 10.a3



This is where you learn chess from a champion. He offers a pawn and seemingly plays a useless a2-a3 move since capturing the bishop loses a rook. All is not what it seems.

10...♘f6 11.d5



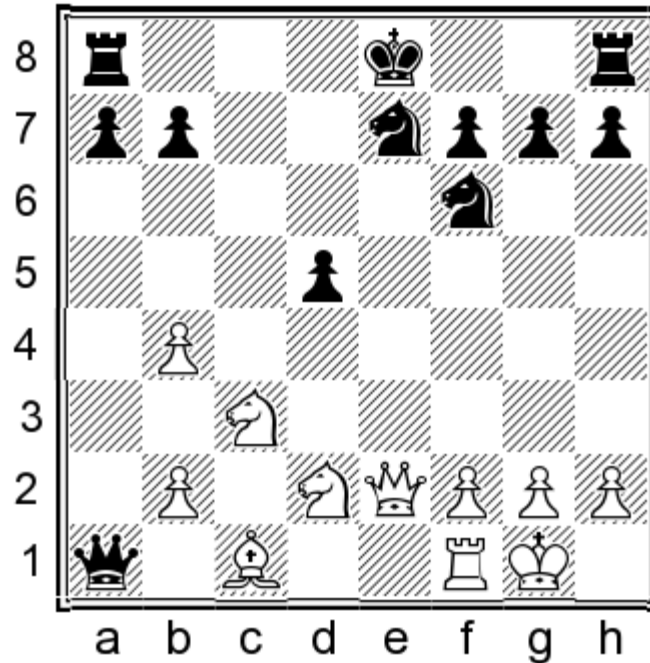
In all systems of opening play, one of the most difficult moves for the average player to get a hold of is the disruptive pawn advance. They're so busy doing the "attacked by three pieces, defended by two pieces" mantra that they don't even consider the pawn move. Other reasons I often run into at scholastic levels

include underestimating the opening of a file and the tendency to sometimes think that the pawn is cemented into place. This has a certain irony to it as one of the oft-seen mistakes is the indiscriminate moving of wing pawns. The chess mind has its mysteries!

11...exd5 12.axb4 ♖xa1 13.♗d2

Although 13.b5 is quite effective as well, Alekhine is the type of player who wants to attack along the open file. That's why he went with d4-d5 to begin with. Black is forced to take the bishop and accept the queen check.

13...♙xe2 14.♖xe2+ ♗e7



The black king is stuck in the center, and the black queen is out of play. Black could not play 14...♔f8 because then 15.♗b3 ♖a6 16.b5 ♖b6 17.♗a4 ♗d4 18.♖d1 ♖xb5 19.♗xd4 is winning. Alekhine does make an uncharacteristic slip here – he gets so wrapped up in his plan that he misses a better move (see the Primer): 15.♖b5+ ♗d7 (15...♔f8 16.♖xb7 ♗d8 17.♗b3) 16.♙e1 0-0-0 17.♗b3 ♖a6 18.♖xa6 bxa6 19.♙xe7. However, the overall lesson is great. Black committed two common errors: getting greedy with the queen, and leaving the king in the center.

15.♙e1 0-0 16.♗b3 ♖a6 17.♖xa6 bxa6 18.♙xe7 ♙ab8

A tougher defense was 18...♙fb8 19.♗c5 d4 20.♗e2 ♙xb4 21.♔f1 ♙c8 22.♙xa7 g6 23.♗d3, where White still maintains a small advantage..

19.b5 axb5 20.♙xa7 b4 21.♗e2 ♙fc8 22.f3 ♙a8 23.♙xa8 ♙xa8 24.♔f2 ♗d7 25.♗f4 ♗b6 26.♔e3 ♙c8 27.♔d3 g5 28.♗h5 1-0

Black surrenders as once the knight completes the ♗h5-g3-f5 tour, White controls the center of the board. However, the resignation is premature. Perhaps the fact that the world champ was handling the white pieces helped Black see the inevitable.

The other main line in the c3 Sicilian is 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♗f6. This is a double-edged game with lots of different variations. The principles are still the same: natural development, control of the center, early castling,

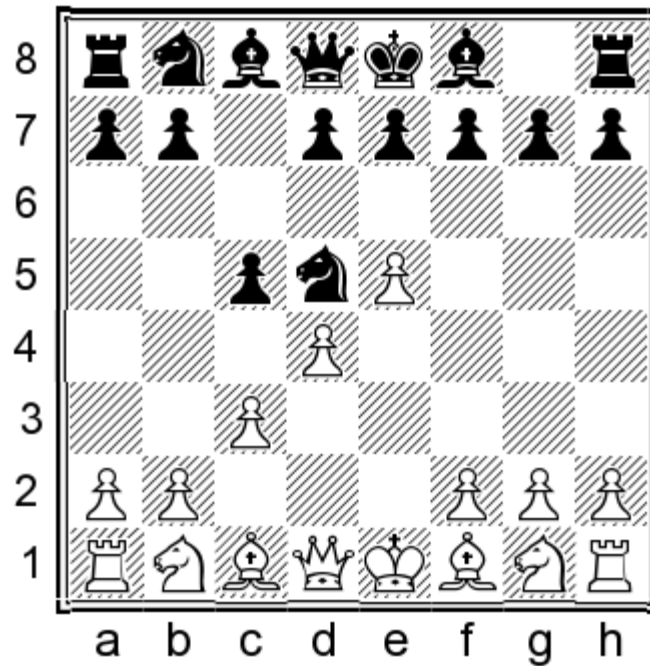
putting your pieces on good squares.

Once you get a specialty book on it, you will find a line you like. The following game highlights a good many of the elements of the 2...♘f6 variation.

The winner as White is Evgeny Sveshnikov over Uwe Bonsch at Cienfuegos 1979. Sveshnikov, along with the Lithuanian GM Eduardas Rozentalis, is one of the gurus of this opening.

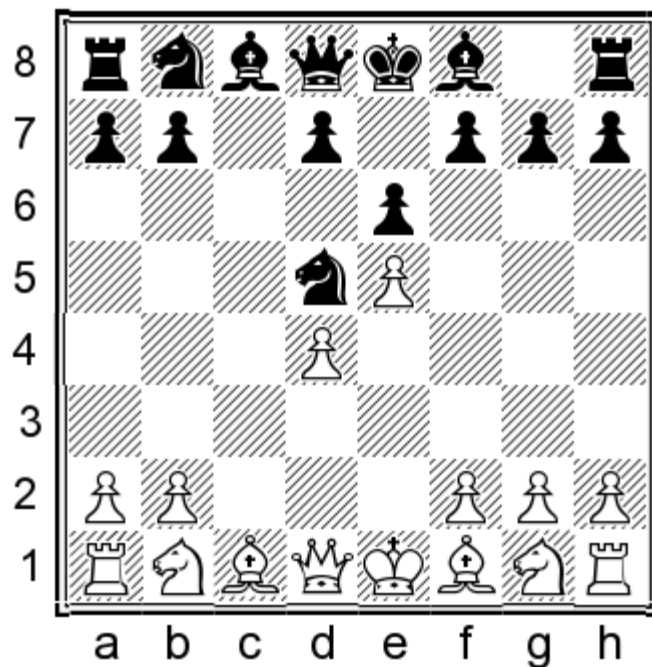
Model Game 9

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4



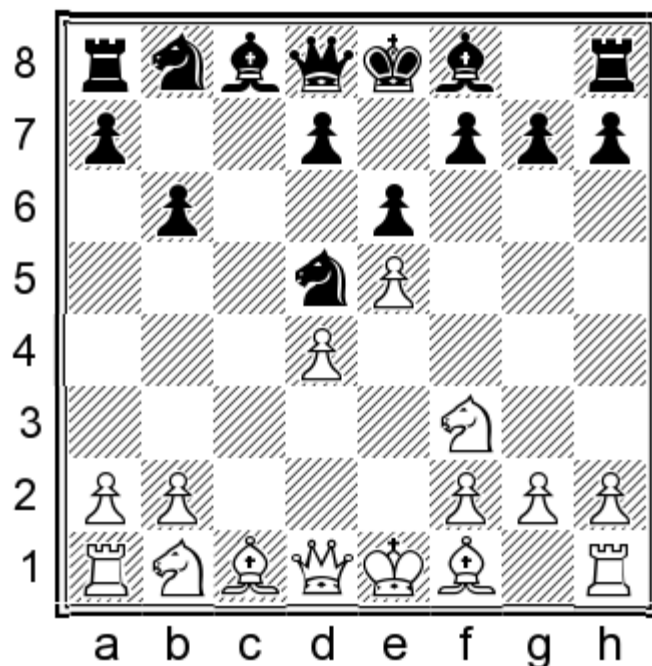
There are alternatives such as 4.♘f3 or 4.♙c4. This d2-d4 is quite natural – lots of open lines to develop your pieces.

4...cxd4 5.cxd4 e6



Black can also play 5...♞c6 6.♟f3 d6, when White goes with 7.♞c4 or even 7.♞c3. One reason I like this line for White is that the black king knight ends up on the queenside and Black's castled position is short of defenders, although not fatally so. It suits my style. Comfort with a chess position is worth half a pawn!

6.♟f3 b6



This position is also worth a look. 6...b6 is very popular because of the clever idea of ...♞a6, attempting to get rid of White's very powerful bishop which can get threatening on d3.

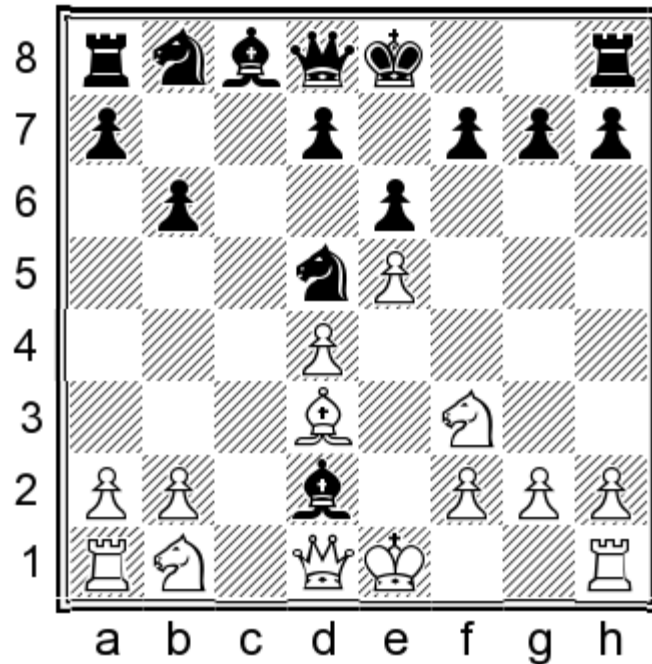
White has several alternatives at this juncture. Some possibilities:

a. 7.♞c3 ♞xc3 8.bxc3 ♖c7 9.♞d2 ♞e7 10.♞d3 ♞a6 11.♞xa6 ♞xa6 12.♞e2 ♞b7 13.0-0.

b. 7.a3 ♞e7 8.♞d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♞a6 10.♞xa6 ♞xa6 11.♞bd2 ♞ac7 12.♞e4 f6 13.exf6 ♞xf6 14.♞d3 ♞cd5 15.♞d2.

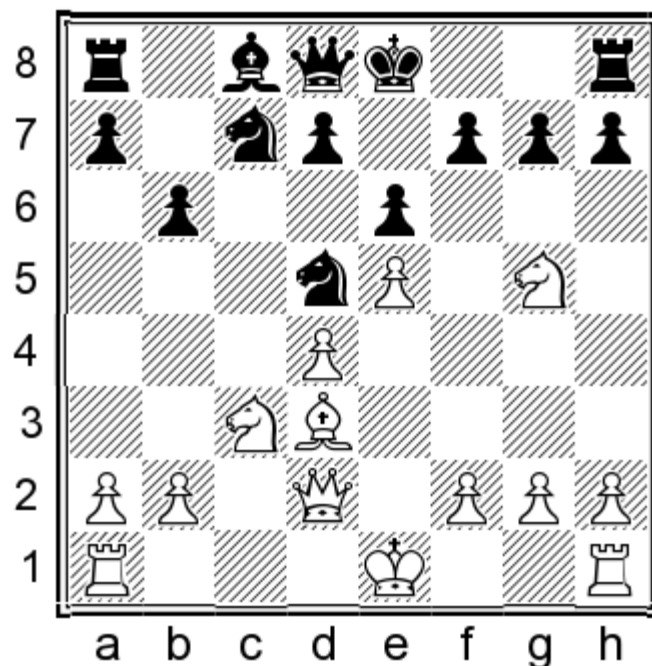
Sveshnikov ignores the bishop check, most likely because getting rid of Black's dark-squared bishop takes away a defender of the kingside.

7.♙d3 ♜b4+ 8.♙d2 ♜xd2+



Do you take with the queen knight or the queen? The GM prefers the queen because he prefers the knight to be able to go to c3. The same idea occurs in the Queen's Indian. It's not that ♜bxd2 is bad, it's just that ♙xd2 is better. 9.♞bxd2 ♙a6 10.♙xa6 ♞xa6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♞e4 f5 13.♞d6 would make many players of White happy.

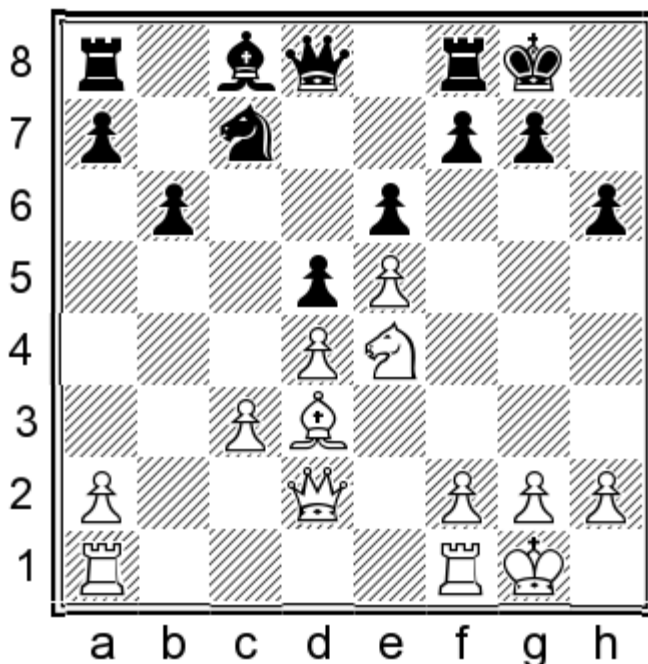
9.♙xd2 ♞a6 10.♞c3 ♞ac7 11.♞g5



Now you can see why our GM took with the queen and didn't mind the bishop check. The dark-squared black

bishop no longer prevents ♖g5 as the queen, now on d2, supports her horse. Granted, the knight will get kicked by ...h7-h6, but the knight outpost at e4, seen so often in this line, will have a dramatic impact on the game.

11...h6 12.♗ge4 0-0 13.0-0 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 d5



Do you see the point I made earlier? No black king bishop or king knight – they all wandered off to the queenside. All that’s left is an undefended king in a weakened castled position, and Black has even encouraged defeat with 14...d5.

15.♗f6+ ♔h8

Of course! Black can’t take the knight: 15...gxf6 16.♖xh6 f5 17.f4 f6 18.♖g6+ ♔h8 19.♖f3 is decisive.

16.♖ae1 ♗e8 17.♗g4

Sveshnikov points out that a bit sharper was 17.♗h7 ♖g8 18.♖e3. For example, 18...f5 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.♗g5 ♖c7 21.♗xe6.

17...♖h4 18.♖d1 h5 19.♗e3 g6 20.f4 ♗g7 21.g3 ♖d8 22.g4 a5

A delightful queen trap arises from 22...♖h4 23.g5 ♗d7 24.♗g2 ♖g4 25.♗e2 ♖f5 26.♗e3 ♖h3 27.♖f3 ♖h4 28.♗g2 ♖g4 29.♖e3 ♖f5 30.♖f1 ♔g8 31.♗h4; and White gets a great position from 22...hxg4 23.♖xg4 ♔g8 24.♖f3 ♗d7 25.♖g3 ♗e8 26.f5 exf5 27.♗xf5 ♗xf5 28.♗xf5 ♔g7 29.h4 ♖h8 30.h5 ♖h6 31.e6 ♖e7 32.♖e2 ♗b5 33.♖e5. In any event, the rook lifts do Black in:

23.♖f3 ♗a6 24.♗b1 f5 25.exf6 ♖xf6 26.gxh5 ♖h4 27.hxg6 ♖xf4 28.♗g2 ♖g4 29.♖ee3 ♔g8 30.♖e1 ♖g5 31.♖f2 ♗f5 32.♗xf5 exf5 33.h3 ♖e4 34.♖xf5 ♖xg6 35.♖g3 1-0

You can see that the 2...d5 line is about sharp play in the center, while the 2...♗f6 line operates mainly on both flanks, although there can be some sharp center play (see the Primer).

It seems everyone has a book out on this opening. Sveshnikov’s book, *The Complete c3 Sicilian*, is over 500

pages! This is a GM who plays the opening he writes about. That's a \$35 investment that might encourage you to just play this line rather than buy other books on the Rossolimo and Closed.

Joe Gallagher and Murray Chandler each have good books on the opening and both have a game of mine in it!

Gary Lane has one with fewer games, but more explanation. Sam Collins's book is filled with original ideas, but you really have to already know the opening pretty well.

Eduardas Rozentalis, a great proponent of White's side, put out a good, practical book co-authored with Andrew Harley.

You can't go wrong with any of these, so it might just depend on your motivation or your wallet.

We have spent a good deal of time discussing four main ways to avoid all the highly detailed lines of the Sicilian. It is the most frequently played response to 1.e4 and there is no refutation. There are more Sicilian specialty books than you can ever hope to buy to keep up with all the latest wrinkles in the Dragon, Najdorf, etc. Again, your choice will mostly be related to your style. These games are starting points and nothing more. There are some great ideas in the above games that will pop up again, regardless of which line you pick.

Go back, read the introduction to this section again, and understand why you are making your decision as to what to play against the Sicilian Defense.

2. What Should I Play Against the French Defense?

Bobby Fischer played 3.♘c3 against 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5. Nimzowitsch played 3.e5. Chigorin played 3.♞e2. All are playable, but we're going with 3.♘d2, Tarrasch's baby. If you play 3.♘c3, you have to really work against defenses such as the Winawer (3...♙b4) and the MacCutcheon (3...♗f6 4.♙g5 ♙b4). They are very hard to crack. The people who play them know them inside out and play them all the time. Meanwhile, you, playing 1.e4, will face mostly Sicilians and Caro-Kanns or the open games among others.

By playing 3.♘d2, you avoid the ...♙b4 idea altogether and allow the possibility of supporting the center that may give you a space advantage with c2-c3. There are three major options for Black: the quirky 3...♘c6, the "I'm satisfied with a draw" move of 3...c5, and the attempt to create winning chances with 3...♗f6.

It is recommended that you study the games of Paul Keres with this line. He made Tarrasch proud. However, we are going to start with Sergei Rublevsky's very instructive win against Sergej Dyachkov in the Russia Club Cup in 1998:

Model Game 10

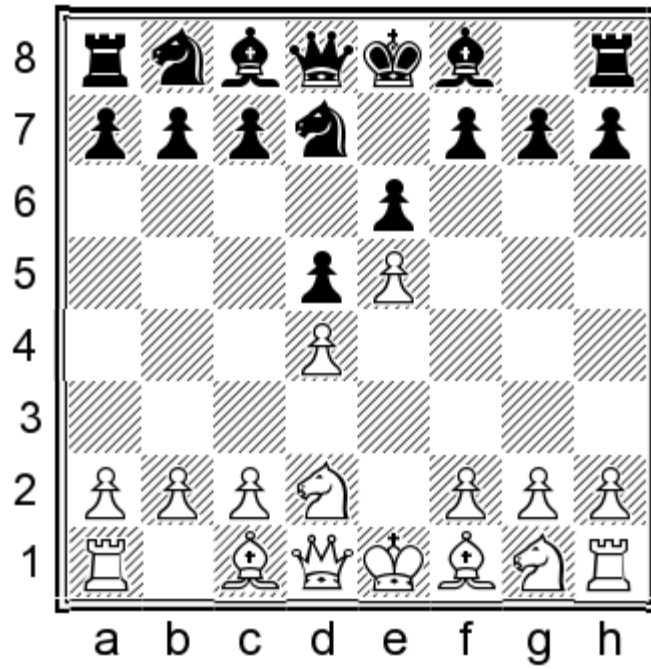
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2

Some French specialists at this point play 3...♙e7, and, after 4.♗g3 ♗f6 5.e5 ♗fd7 6.♙d3 c5 7.c3 ♗c6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 a5 10.b3 ♞b6 11.♙b2, now 11...g5. The idea is that Black has "tricked" White into putting his knight on f3 rather than e2 as you'll see below, and the ...g7-g5 move is justified because it threatens to hit the knight that's defending d4. On the other hand, White can protect d4 and maintain a space advantage.

An exciting correspondence game I played went: Tamburro, Pete – Marconi, Ralph P. (NAPZ/WS/H/04 ICCF, 05.07.2013) 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♙e7 4.♗g3 ♗f6 5.e5 ♗fd7 6.♙d3 c5 7.c3 ♗c6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 a5 10.b3 ♞b6 11.♙b2 g5 12.♞c1 h5 13.♙b1 g4 14.♗e1 ♞g8 15.♗c2 a4 16.♙c3 axb3 17.♗xb3 h4 18.♗h1 f6 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.f4 g3 21.h3 ♗e4 22.♞h5+ ♗d8 23.♗e3 ♗xc3 24.♞xc3 ♞f8 25.f5 ♗xd4 26.♞d1 ♗xb3 27.fxe6 d4 28.axb3 ♙xe6 29.♞e5 ♙f6 30.♞f4 ♞c8 31.♞xc8+ ♗xc8 32.♗f5 ♙xb3 33.♞c1+ ♗d7 34.♙d3 ♞d8 35.♙b5+ ♗e6 36.♞g4 ♗f7 37.♞h5+ ♗f8 38.♞h6+ ♗f7 39.♞h7+ ♗e6 40.♗h6 ♞xb5 41.♞f7+ 1-0.

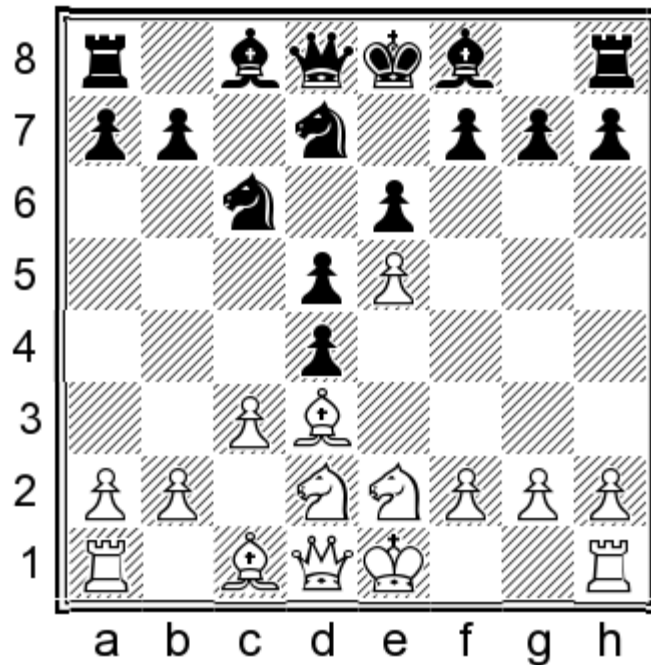
Since this is what Black is looking for, another consideration for White is 4.♙d3 c5 5.dxc5 ♗a6 (5...♗d7, 5...♗f6) as it tends toward a more open game. Pick your preference.

3...♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7



The battle lines are drawn. White has a space advantage because of the d4- and e5-pawns. The pawn chain can be supported by both c2-c3 and f2-f4. Black, for his part, has the ability to attack the pawn chain with ...c7-c5, aided by ...♘c6 and ...♙b6, and/or ...f7-f6 with a variety of ways to recapture if White takes. There's not much to memorize here, as the themes are very clear and straightforward. White continues logically and naturally:

5.♙d3 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♘e2 cxd4



White has played the knight to e2 for several reasons: it supports d4, allows an f2-f4 option at some point where it can perhaps help an f4-f5 advance after ♘g3, and it keeps f4 available as a landing square for the horse. Sometimes, it gives the d2-knight the ability to go to f3. So, it's a very useful move as it develops a piece and leaves options open. Black has captured on d4 because it's one of those moves he knows he will

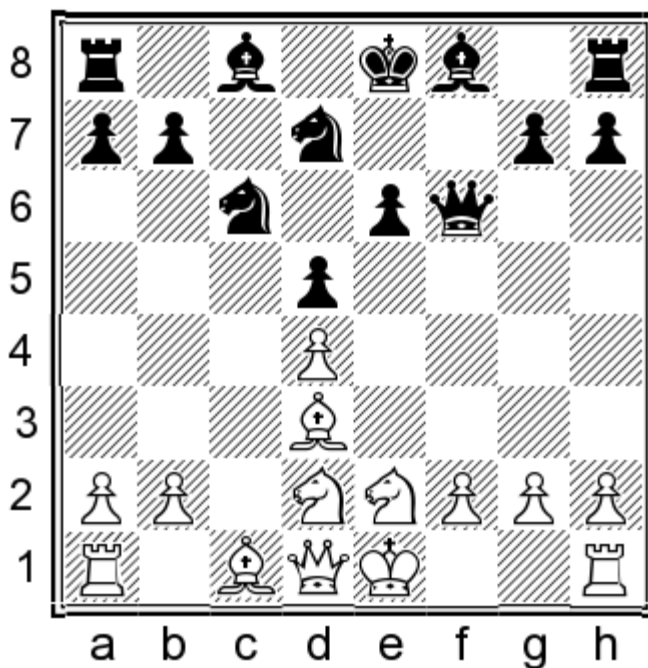
make in the next few moves anyhow, and he plans to be very active in playing the other pawn-chain undermining move of f6.

What if Black continues with pressure on d4? Here's a good example for White's play: Alonso Zapata – Ramón Huerta, Carlos Torre Memorial 2004, began with 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.♘df3 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♙d3 ♚b6 8.♘e2 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♙b4+ 10.♙d2 0-0 11.0-0 f6 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♙f4 ♙e7 (a very typical French position in these types of lines: White controls the e5 square and Black needs to solve the problem of his queen bishop while keeping an eye on protecting or advancing the e6-pawn) 14.♚b1 ♙d7 15.a3 ♘d8 16.♙e5 ♙b5 17.♘g5 h6 18.♙xb5 hxg5 19.♚d3 ♘f7 20.♙g3 ♙d6 21.♘c3 ♙xg3 22.hxg3 ♘d6 23.♞ae1 ♞ac8 24.♞xe6 ♞xc3 25.♞xd6 ♚xd6 26.♚xc3 ♘e4 27.♚e3 ♚b6 28.♙d3 ♞e8 29.♙xe4 ♞xe4 30.♚xg5 ♚xd4 31.♞c1 ♞e8 32.♚g6 ♞f8 33.♚e6+ ♘h8 34.♚e2 a5 35.♞d1 1-0. Of interest also is 10.♘f1 (why not – the center is solid, the rook can help out h4, and the black bishop can be chased with a gain in space and time) 10...♙e7 11.a3 ♘f8 12.b4 ♙d7 13.♙e3 (Alekhine – Capablanca, AVRO 1938).

8.cxd4 f6 9.exf6

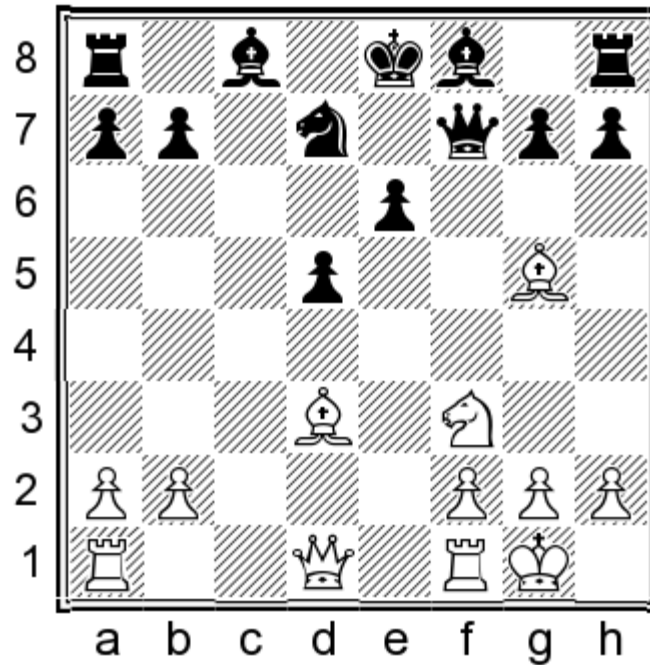
It is sorely tempting to play 9.♘f4 ♘xd4 10.♚h5+, but after 10...♘e7 11.exf6+ ♘xf6 12.♘g6+ hxg6 (12...♘d7 13.♚h4 hxg6 14.♚xh8) 13.♚xh8 ♘f7 14.0-0 e5 15.♘b3 ♘xb3 16.axb3, there's not a lot for White to brag about. White is the exchange up for a pawn, but Black's pawn center needs to be dealt with and White will lose time getting the queen back in the game. Also, Black can vary with 9...♚e7 (9...fxe5 10.♘xe6 ♚b6 11.0-0 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♚xd4 13.♘f3; 9...♘xd4 10.♚h5+ ♘e7 [10...g6 11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.♙xg6+ ♘e7 13.exf6+ ♘xf6 14.♚xh8] 11.exf6! gxg6 [11...♘xf6 12.♘g6+ hxg6 13.♚xh8] 12.♘b3) 10.♘f3 fxe5 11.dxe5 ♘dxe5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♚h5+ ♘f7 14.0-0 g6 15.♚e2 and again White has an edge in a difficult game. It's up to you.

9...♚xf6



An aggressive decision, typical of 3...♘f6 players. After 9...♘xf6 10.0-0 ♙d6 11.♘f3 0-0 12.♙f4 ♙xf4 13.♘xf4 ♘e4 14.g3 ♙d7 15.♙xe4 dxe4 16.♘e5 ♞f5 17.♘xc6 ♙xc6 18.♘xe6 ♚e7 19.♘f4 g5 20.♘g2 White has a fine knight outpost on e3 to support an eventual d4-d5, while Black has freedom of movement for his pieces. With 9...♚xf6, White judges that his lead in development and Black's uncastled king means the first player can offer a pawn for attacking chances. Before you go doing this yourself, you have to realize that White saw something concrete. You will have to think like that, too. See if you can do it here.

10.0-0 ♖xd4 11.♗xd4 ♚xd4 12.♘f3 ♚f6 13.♙g5 ♚f7

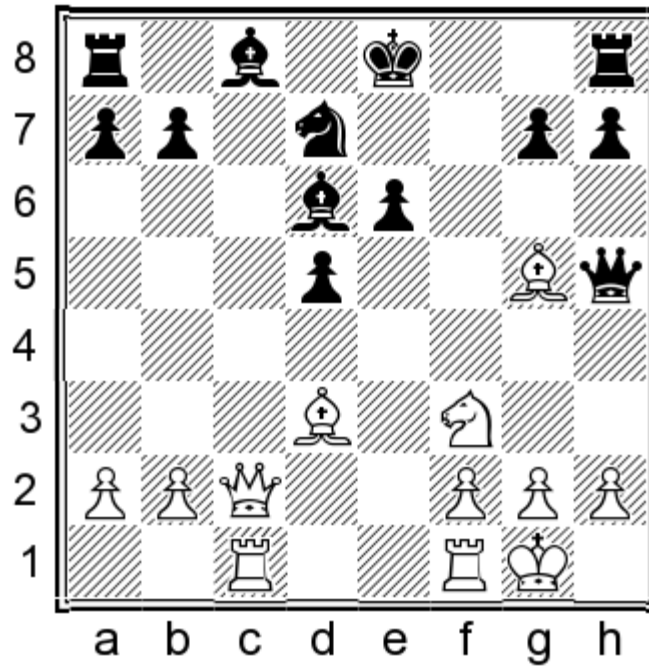


White's opening moves have led to a position like this. What do you see here? It will take Black two moves to castle. Those are the tempi you have won for the pawn; you usually need three to justify a pawn sac.

However, there are some things that add to your compensation for the pawn. Black needs to develop his knight and his queen bishop. More tempi! There's one other little item: the c-file. It's open and unoccupied, and White can control it before Black can get untangled. That's probably what White saw that was concrete, rather than some vague idea of being freer.

Speaking of concrete planning, could Black have taken the notorious (see the Primer) b2-pawn? Watch:
 13...♚xb2 14.♖e1 ♗f6 15.♖e2 ♚b6 16.♖b1 ♚d6 17.♚a4+ ♔f7 18.♚h4 ♙e7 19.♙f4 ♚d8 20.♗g5+ ♔g8 21.♗xe6 ♙xe6 22.♖xe6 is overwhelming.

14.♚c2 ♙d6 15.♖ac1 ♚h5



Black is at a loss for a continuation. It didn't matter what he played. The attack on h7, combined with the occupation of the c-file, sets up a pretty finish.

White wins too much material. It isn't really a queen "sacrifice" if you're getting two rooks and a bishop for the lady.

16. ♖xc8+ ♜xc8 17. ♜xc8+ ♔f7 18. ♜xh8 ♙xh2+ 19. ♗xh2 ♚xg5 20. ♗f3 ♚f6 21. ♜c1 ♚xb2 22. ♜c7 ♔e7 23. ♜b8 ♔d6 24. ♜xb7 ♚a1+ 25. ♙f1 ♗c5 26. ♜xa7 ♔h6 27. ♜xg7 d4 28. ♜g8 1-0

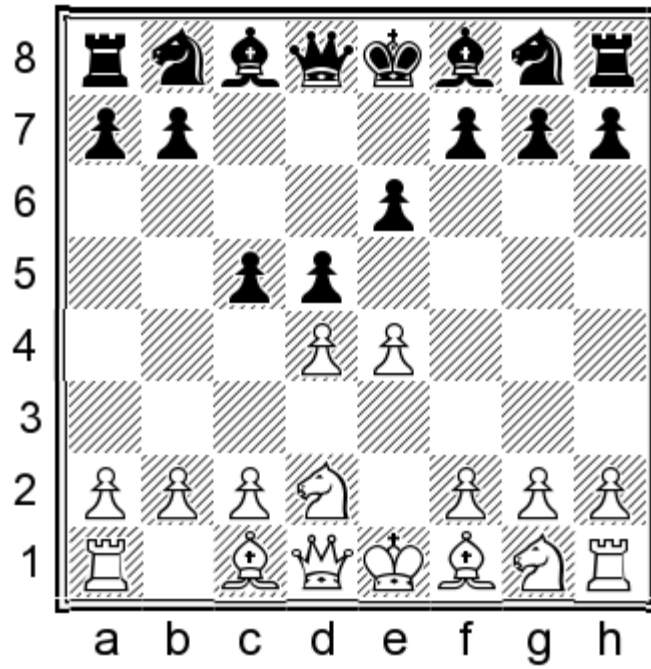
That was a nice, smooth-flowing attack that arose very easily out of the position. You should be able to remember the ideas with little difficulty.

This next game is one that made a huge impression on me forty years ago when it was played. It's a very different type of game than the one we just looked at. It's a positional chess masterpiece. It's different because Black played the other main move of 3...c5 and because it was played by (then) future world champion Anatoly Karpov. It's now time for you to raise your level of thinking and your level of chess play, and especially to learn how to play against 3...c5!

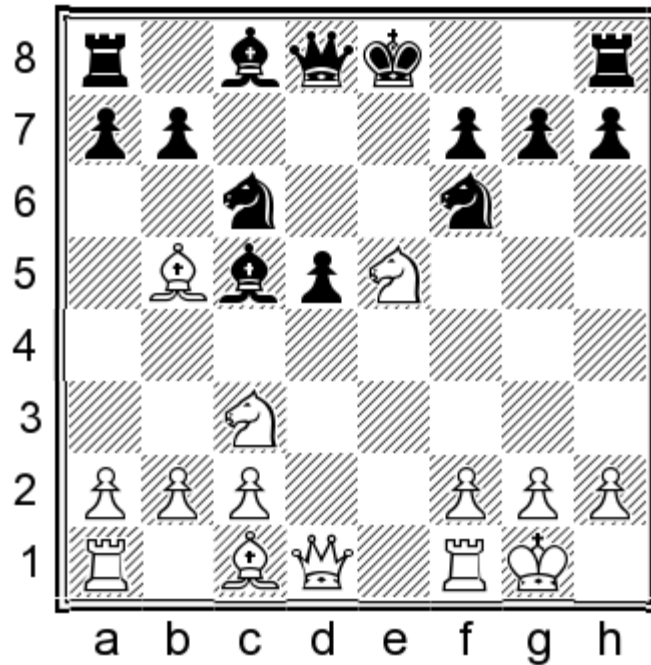
Karpov is playing Gennadi Kuzmin at the Leningrad Interzonal in 1973:

Model Game 11

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗d2 c5

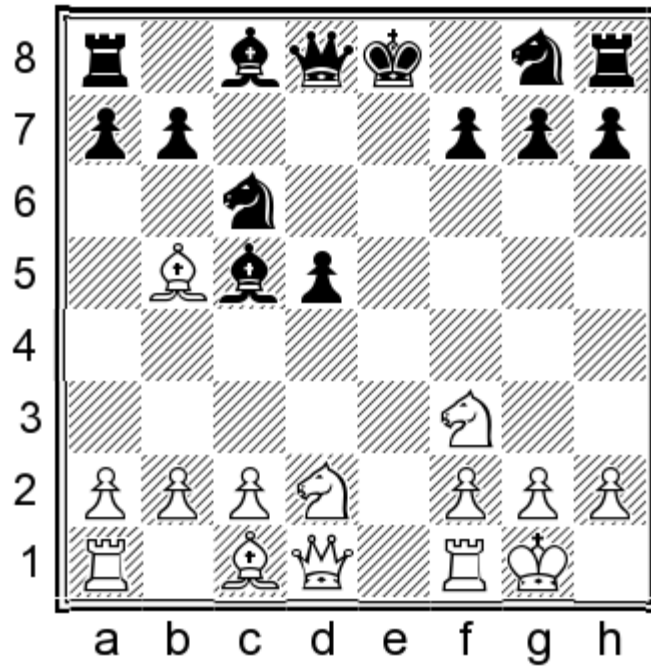


Black uses the fact that White's knight is placed on d2 rather than c3. If Black had played 3...c5 against 3.♘c3, the game would continue 3...c5 4.exd5 exd5 5.♙b5+ ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.0-0 ♙d6 8.dxc5, and now after 8...♙xc5 9.♘e5 White has a much better position than in the diagram following move 8 in our game:



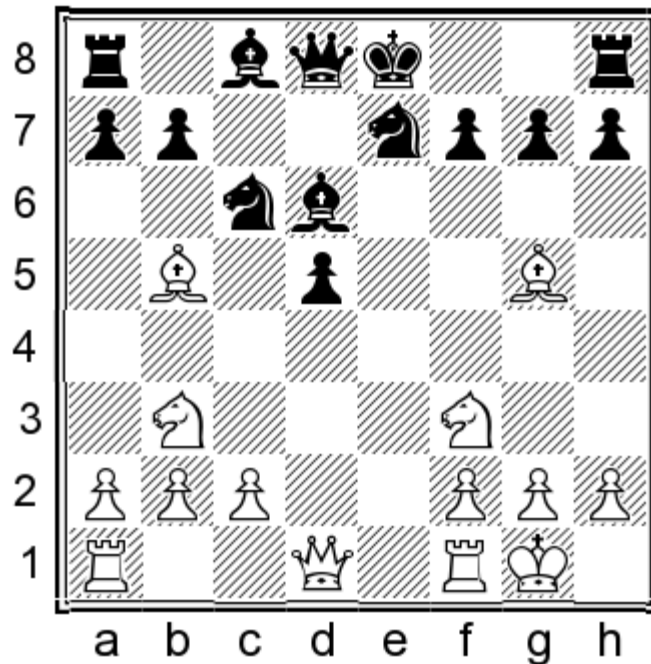
analysis

4.exd5 exd5 5.♘gf3 ♘c6 6.♙b5 ♙d6 7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.0-0



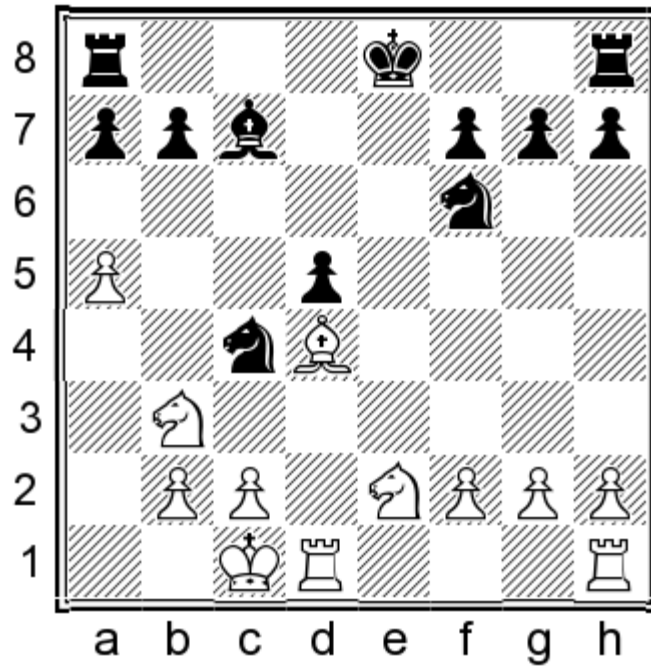
A tiny, but important, item to remember is that White waits until Black moves his king bishop and only then captures on c5. This gains one tempo and then later gains another with Bb3 , which makes up for the initial Bd2 move.

8... Nge7 9. Bb3 Qd6 10. Qg5



When I first came across this move, I didn't get it. It didn't seem like an enduring pin, so why bother? I had been "brought up" on the following line against $3...c5$:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. Bd2 c5 4. exd5 exd5 5. Qb5+ Qd7 6. Wxe2+ Wxe7 (6... Qe7 7. dxc5) 7. Qxd7+ Nxd7 8. dxc5 Wxe2+ 9. Nxe2 Qxc5 10. Bb3 Qb6 11. a4 Ngf6 12. a5 Qc7 13. Qe3 Ne5 14. 0-0-0 Nc4 15. Qd4 , with this resulting position:



analysis

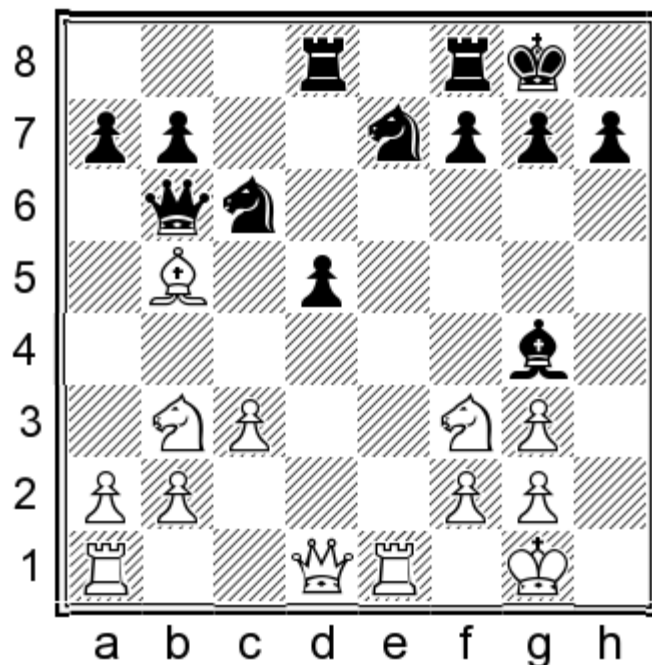
As you can see, White has traded off queens and seized the square in front of the isolated d5-pawn. Knights can go there just as easily. That's the big advantage for the side not having the isolated pawn – a great outpost on the square in front of it. Black should not grab the a-pawn because of 15...♘xa5 16.♗xa5 ♕xa5 17.♕xf6 gxf6 18.♖xd5 and White has translated one set of advantages into another: White's rooks will seize the d-file and Black's kingside pawns are now vulnerable and immobile.

So, Karpov's 10.♕g5 struck me as a bit odd, but it turns out that its idea of attacking the dark squares around the isolated pawn was related.

10...0-0 11.♕h4

Without even being chased, the bishop moves away. Why? He's going to g3 to exchange off the dark-squared black bishop so that it will be harder for Black to contest those squares. In his *Great Predecessors* series, Kasparov points out that Karpov later essayed 11.♖e1 ♗c7 12.c3 ♕g4 13.h3 ♕h5 14.♕e2 (yes, bishops can move backwards!) 14...h6 15.♕xe7 ♗xe7 16.♗fd4 ♕xe2 17.♗xe2 a6 18.♗f3 and notes that Black's defense is possible, but very hard. The point is not which move is best so much as it is that White's position is good enough to have more than one plan.

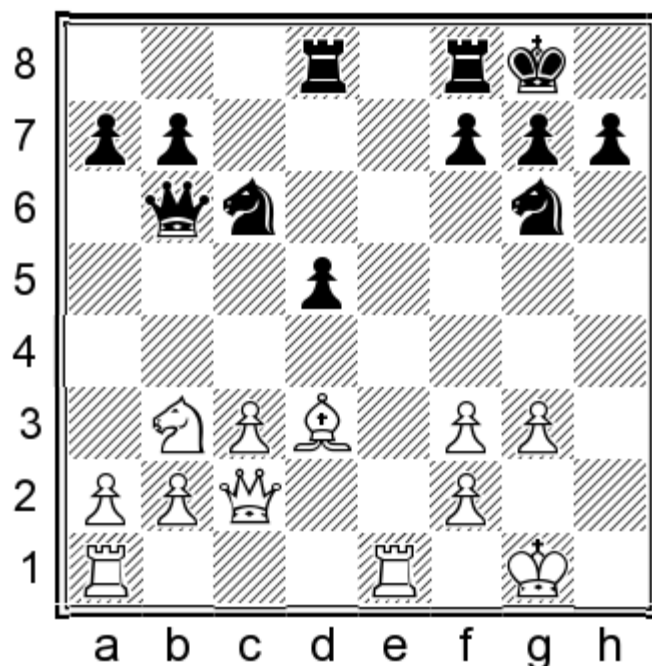
11...♗c7 12.♕g3 ♕xg3 13.hxg3 ♕g4 14.♖e1 ♖ad8 15.c3 ♗b6



Now there starts a struggle that is not played out over the board, but which is key to understanding how to play this line. Black can solve all his problems with a successful ...d5-d4 advance. White needs to be ever mindful of this possibility.

Karpov sets a trap with 16.♙d3. If Black plays 16...d4, Kasparov gives 17.♙xh7+ ♔h8 18.♙d3 dxc3 19.bxc3 and, after 19...f6 20.♖b1 ♘e5 21.♗bd4, White's in great shape. Of course, 17...♔xh7 falls to 18.♗g5+. Also, in our game, 17...d4 won't work either as 17...d4 18.♗bxd4 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 gives White a nice endgame with a queenside pawn majority and a nicely posted knight.

16.♙d3 ♗g6 17.♚c2 ♙xf3 18.gxf3



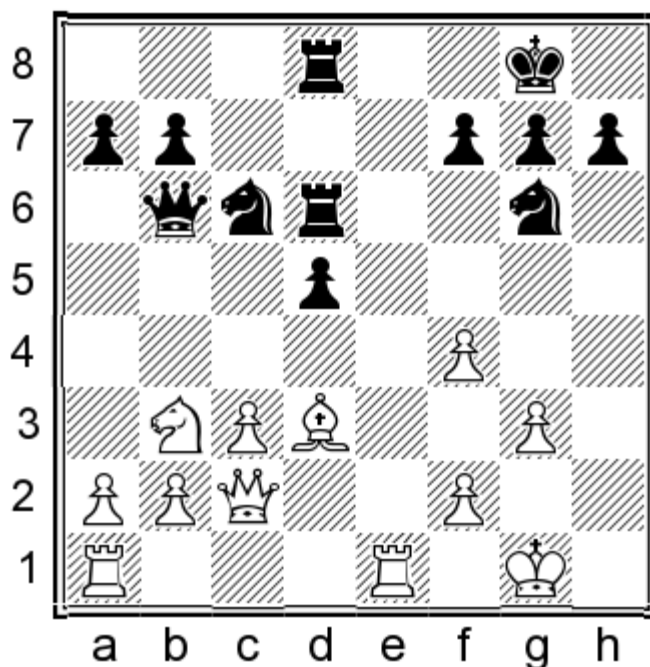
Black has “punished” White for unpinning the queen, but take a close look. The queen and bishop battery puts pressure on Black's kingside and defends b2 so that the knight can move. That earlier c2-c3 move

allowed the queen to occupy its current post and supports d4. There is one other thing: the white king can now go to g2, which, depending on circumstances, gives the rooks access to the h-file.

This game is terrific because there is an opening plan that goes right up to move 20. You don't have to memorize moves, rather you learn concepts and you're much better off.

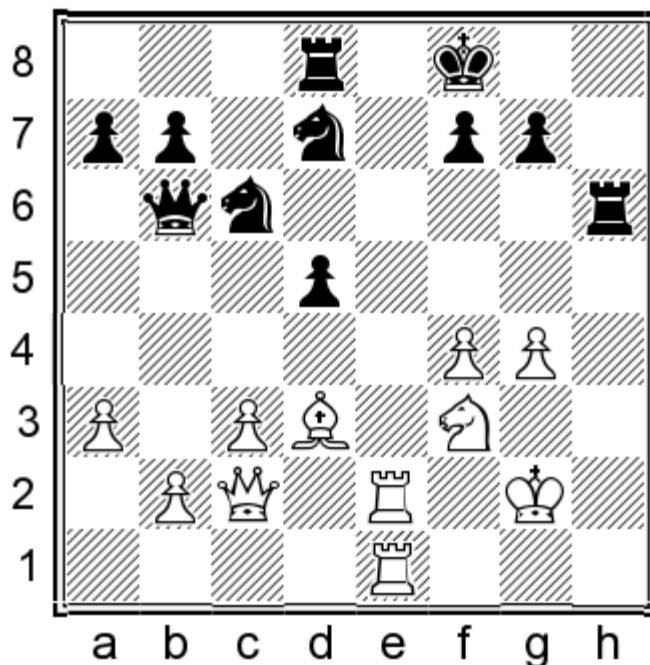
Black has been playing well, too. He's ready for 18...d4, but for some mysterious reason he doesn't play it. That would have pretty much equalized the game. What's the point of showing you this game if Black could have equalized, you ask? First, you learn some really good concepts that help you in all lines of this variation. Secondly, you will see why Karpov went to another line as mentioned above. Since your opponent won't be Kuzmin or anyone else of that caliber, you need to apply the concepts here and prevail! This game still has much to teach us.

18...♖d6? 19.f4 ♜fd8



We can only guess that Black likes to over-prepare his ...d5-d4 thrust as now it becomes too late. Kasparov loves how Karpov does it, and so do I. The harmless looking a2-a3 move prevents ...d5-d4 because there is now no ...♗b4 move after White's cxd4 or c3-c4 in reply to Black's ...d5-d4.

20.a3! h5?! 21.♔g2 h4 22.♞e2 ♜f8 23.♞d2 ♞h6 24.♞f3 hxg3 25.fxg3 ♞d7 26.♞ae1 ♜f8 27.g4!



If you have been brought up in the “don’t move the pawns in front of your castled king” school, this move may scare you. As we discussed in the Primer, you can play a g4 move in front of your castled position if your opponent can’t take advantage of it.

Karpov finishes Kuzmin off by gaining space, exchanging queens, and controlling the e-file. And that d5-pawn never gets to d4!

27...♖c7 28.g5 ♜h8 29.♔g3! ♞c5 30.♙f5 g6 31.b4 ♞e4+

31...♞d7 32.♙xg6 fxg6 33.♚xg6± Kotov.

32.♙xe4 dxe4 33.♚xe4 ♔g7 34.b5 ♞a5 35.♚e7! ♚xe7

35...♚xc3 36.♙e3!

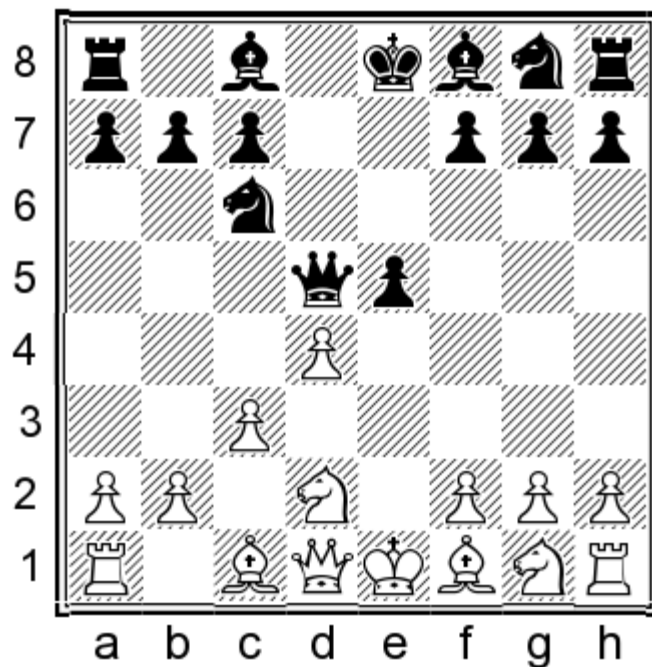
36.♙xe7 ♞d3 37.♙c7 ♞b3 38.♔g4 ♜f8 39.♙ee7 1-0

While both of these games had a certain logic to it on Black’s part, this next version of Black’s meeting 3.♞d2 is the offbeat Guimard Variation, 3...♞c6. The knight looks out of place. Every player of the French in the world wants to play ...c7-c5 at some point early in the opening. The line is, however, not to be underestimated for its trickiness. Even Bobby Fischer fell afoul of this defense. Here’s a very quick look at his disaster, just one year after his spectacular 11-0 victory in the U.S. Championship:

Fischer – R. Byrne

U.S. Chp. 1964-65

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♞d2 ♞c6 4.c3 e5 5.exd5 ♚xd5



You can see the point of the Guimard Variation right now: the c6-knight supports the ...e6-e5 advance and aids in the pressure on d4. That's why it attracts fans!

Fischer apparently now tries to avoid exchanges and equality. That's just the way he was.

6. ♖gf3 exd4 7. ♗c4 ♜h5 8. 0-0

8. ♘xd4 ♜xd1+ 9. ♙xd1 ♘xd4 10. cxd4 ♗f5 11. ♝e1+ ♗e7 12. ♘b3 0-0-0 13. ♗xf7 ♗f6 14. f3 ♘e7 was not to his liking.

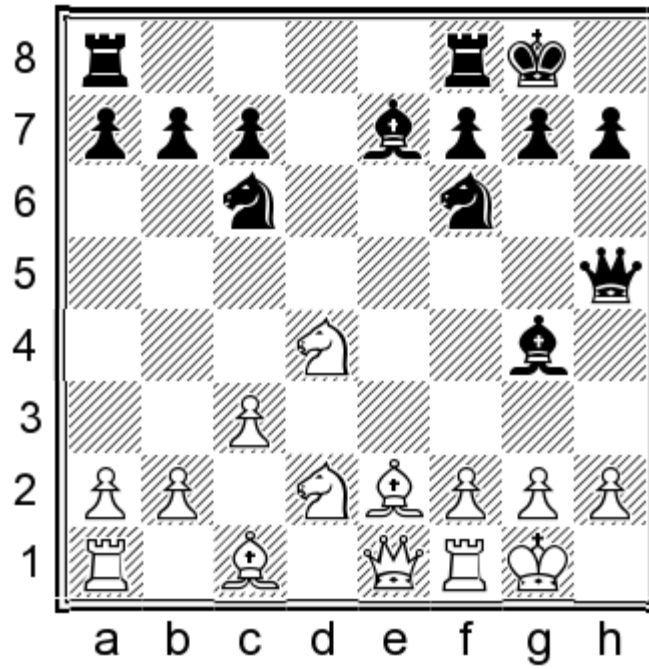
8... ♘f6

8... ♗e6, covering the e-file, might be objectively better.

9. ♜e1+ ♗e7 10. ♘xd4 0-0

Not so good is 10... ♘xd4 11. cxd4 ♜f5 12. ♘f3 ♗e6 13. ♗xe6 fxe6 14. ♘g5 ♘d5 15. ♜xe6 ♜xe6 16. ♘xe6 ♙f7 17. ♘g5+ ♗xg5 18. ♗xg5.

11. ♗e2 ♗g4:



Now Fischer makes a losing blunder! Remember in the Primer we said to look at all checks and captures? “All” means *all!*

12. ♖xc6??

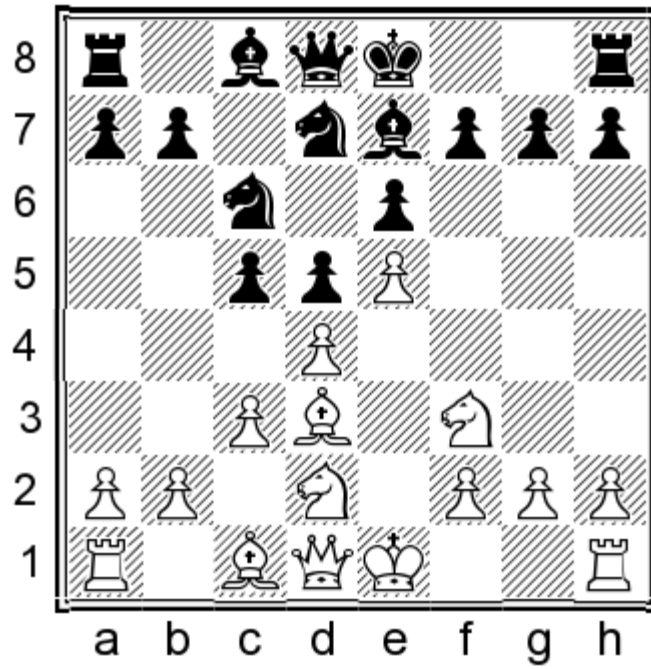
12. ♖2f3 ♖xd4 13. cxd4 ♔d5; 12. ♙xg4 ♖xg4 13. h3 ♖ge5

12... ♙d6!

Fischer had apparently depended on 12... bxc6 13. ♙xg4 ♖xg4 14. h3 ♙d6 15. ♔e2 ♔e5 16. ♔xe5 ♖xe5 17. ♖e4 or 12... ♙xe2 13. ♖xe7+ ♔h8 14. ♖f5 ♙xf1 15. ♖g3 ♔d5 16. ♔xf1, but now, because of the mate threat, there is no bishop on e7! Oops!

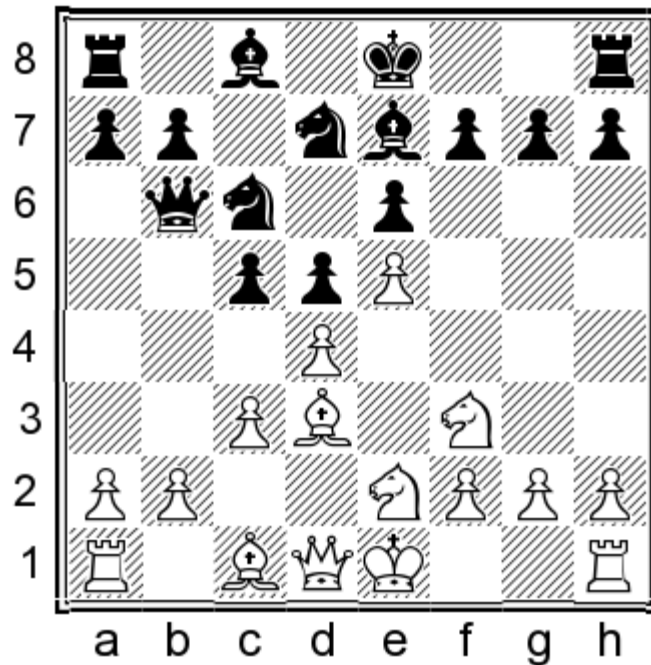
13. h3 ♙xe2 14. ♖d4 ♙xf1 15. ♔xf1 ♔fe8. Fischer stubbornly hung on for a while, but lost just the same. It was probably too much for him to resign on move 14.

So, what do you play against this ambitious line? Think about that early ... ♖c6 move. If it blocks the ... c7-c5 move, shouldn't you be playing something that involves e4-e5 for White and setting up a position similar to the ... ♖f6 line above? Let's take a look at two diagrams. The first one is after 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♖d2 ♖c6 4. ♖gf3 ♖f6 5. e5 ♖d7 6. ♙d3 ♖b4 7. ♙e2 c5 8. c3 ♖c6 9. ♙d3 ♙e7:



analysis

This is after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.Qd3 c5 6.c3 Nc6 7.Nde2 Bb6 8.Nf3 Qe7:

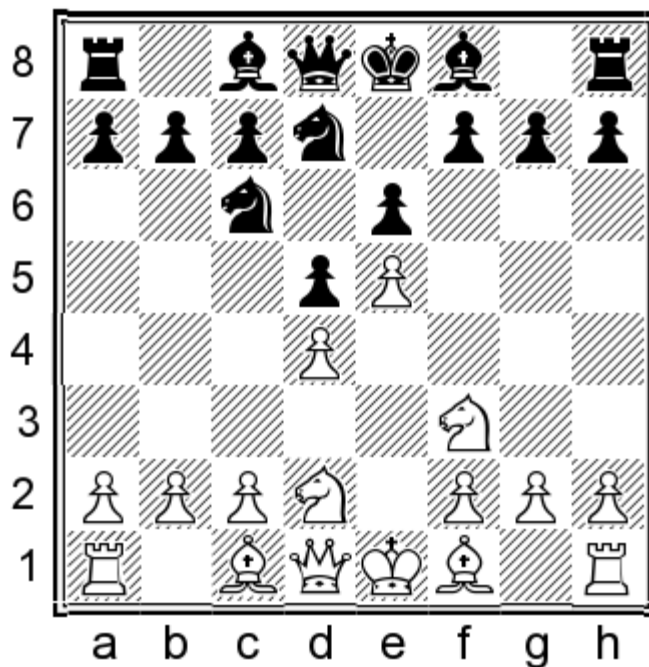


analysis

A quick look gives the impression that it's pretty much the same position; however, look at the knight at d2 in the Guimard line and the knight at e2 in the 3...Nf6 line. The d2-knight is awkwardly placed, while the e2-knight supports the pawn on d4. The Guimard has made things a little tougher.

What to do? You adapt! Obviously you need to rethink the knights' placement. GM Sergei Tiviakov did precisely that against Zhang Pengxiang at the 2006 Olympiad:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘c6 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘d7

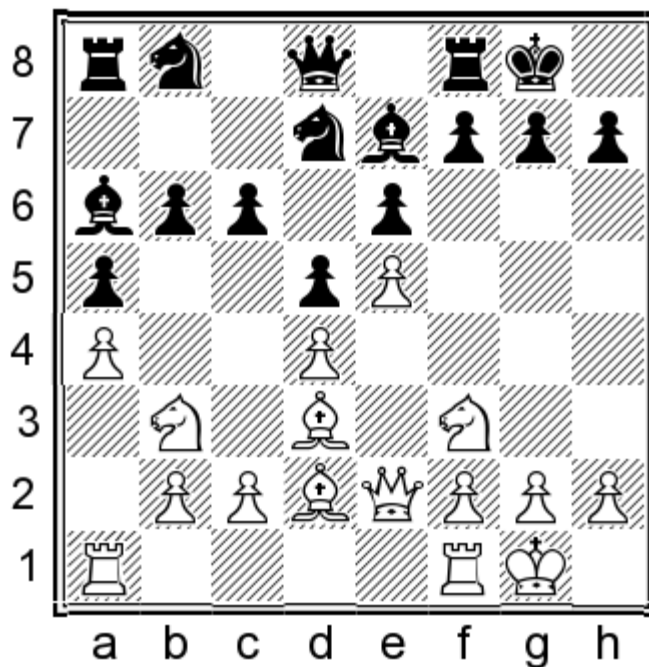


White reasons it out. As the d2-knight is not ideally placed, there has to be a better square. Once you think that way, it doesn't take long to find the next move.

6.♘b3 a5 7.a4 ♗e7 8.♗b5

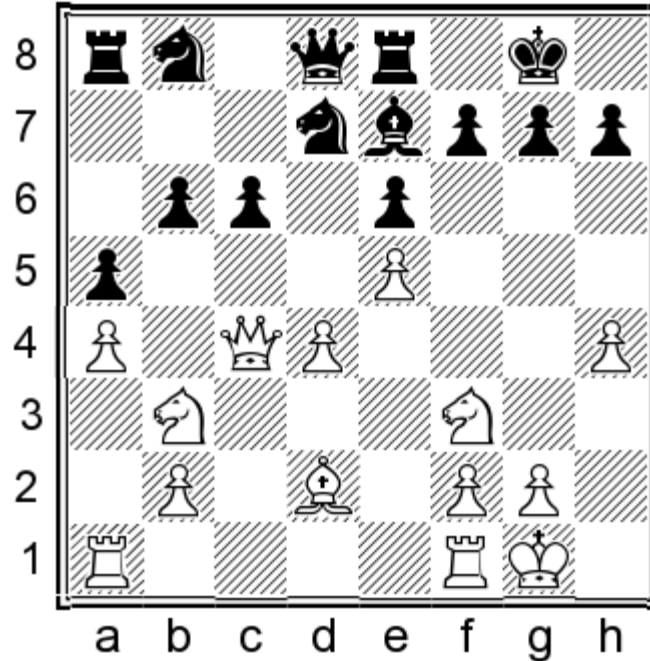
Ah! The Ruy López bishop gets to its square anyhow! Moral victory for White!

8...♘cb8 9.0-0 b6 10.♗d2 0-0 11.♙e2 c6 12.♗d3 ♗a6



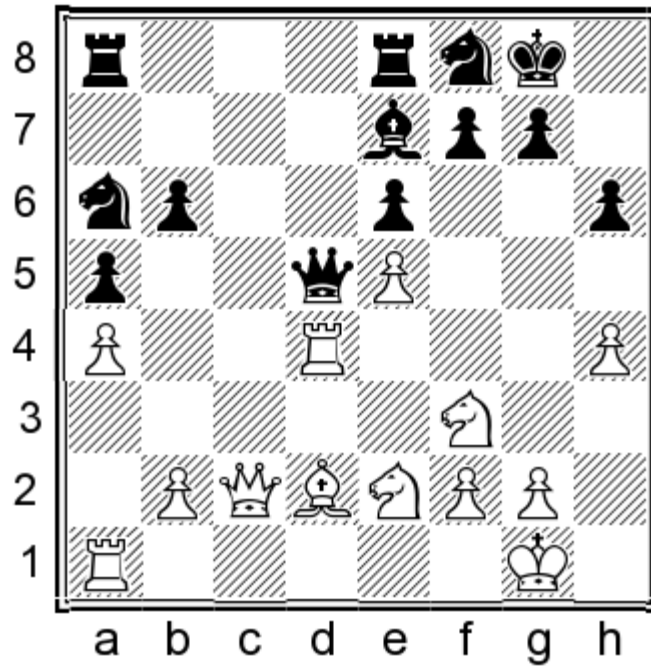
Black has found it awkward to meet White's logical approach. The black knights are not well placed, the c-pawn only got to c6, and White has a secure center. Now comes a move that is great to be able to play against these closed French positions. After 13.c4, the resulting occupation of the c-file by White is a small but key victory on this battlefield.

13.c4 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♖xc4 15.♚xc4 ♜e8 16.h4!



This is a key moment for you to learn something very important: you play using the whole board. We're in the "late opening" because White still needs to put his rooks somewhere, and Black still needs to get untangled. White wants to gain control of more squares and does that on the kingside because of a tactical factor. Why can't Black just play 16...♙xh4? Because White would then break the game open with 16...♙xh4 17.d5! exd5 18.♚xh4 ♚xh4 19.♜xh4 ♜xe5 20.♜d4 c5 21.♜b5, and the pawns can't compensate for the piece.

16...h6 17.♞fe1 ♜f8 18.♞e4 ♚d5 19.♚c2 ♜a6 20.♜c1 c5 21.♜e2 cxd4 22.♞xd4



That one little flaw in the Guimard has come to tell the difference in the game. The delay in getting in the advance to c5 (move 20!) gave White time to activate his pieces on central squares. Lots of squares are available to White. On move 22, Black is limited to three ranks. What's the plan from here? Your opening has been a success. Where do you turn this into a victory? Black is not done fighting.

Here's your plan:

1. Improve further the placement of your pieces. Two logical maneuvers are the knight to g3 and h5 along with the rook to g4.
2. Loosen your opponent's kingside with direct threats. Involve h4-h5 as a possibility.
3. Avoid exchanging queens until absolutely necessary. Piece trades should only be for the purpose of gaining an advantage from them.
4. Create or find weaknesses in Black's camp. The black kingside position has already been mentioned, and there are some possibilities against the black queenside pawns. As you will see, this last item turns into a supported passed a-pawn for White, which is why Tiviakov didn't bring the other rook into the center. Not only that, but if the black bishop absents itself from the a3-f8 diagonal, then ♖a3 is a nice rook lift to get to the kingside.

See how the plan evolves as you play through this game:

22...♖b7 23.♘g3 ♠ac8 24.♗b3 ♘b4 25.♠g4 ♔h8 26.♘h5 ♘g6 27.♘xg7 ♔xg7 28.h5 ♗d5 29.♗e3 ♠h8
 30.♙xb4 axb4 31.hxg6 fxg6 32.♗xb6 ♙c5 33.♗b5 ♠hf8 34.♗e2 ♠fd8 35.♗c2 ♗d3 36.♗xd3 ♠xd3
 37.♠e4 b3 38.a5 g5 39.a6 ♠dd8 40.a7 ♠a8 41.♠c4 ♠d5 42.♠a6 ♔f7 43.♔f1 ♔e7 44.♠a5 ♙b6
 45.♠xd5 exd5 46.♠c6 ♙xa7 47.♠a6 ♔d7 48.♘d2 ♔c7 49.♘xb3 ♔b7 50.♠xh6 ♠e8 51.♘a5+ ♔c8
 52.♠c6+ ♔d7 53.♠d6+ ♔c7 54.♠xd5 ♠f8 55.f3 ♠b8 56.e6 ♔b6 57.♠xg5 ♠e8 58.♠e5 ♔c7 59.b4 ♔d6
 60.♘c4+ ♔e7 61.♠e4 ♠b8 62.♘a5 1-0

There are whole books written on the French Defense (John Watson's are the ones to look for, even the out-of-print ones!), and you can't learn it all here. The aim of this book is not to give you every line, but rather to show you some pathways to start with and some ideas to carry you along. We've seen themes such as space advantage, development with a purpose, how to play against an isolated pawn, how to use the whole board,

how to translate an opening advantage into a victory, the importance of weak squares and weakening squares, how to look out for your opponent's threats, and when loosening your kingside castled position is good and when it is bad. That's a lot for just three games. You will find that these principles will carry over into other openings and middlegames. You will be surprised how much better you're going to get when looking at a chess position.

3. What Do I Play Against the Caro-Kann?

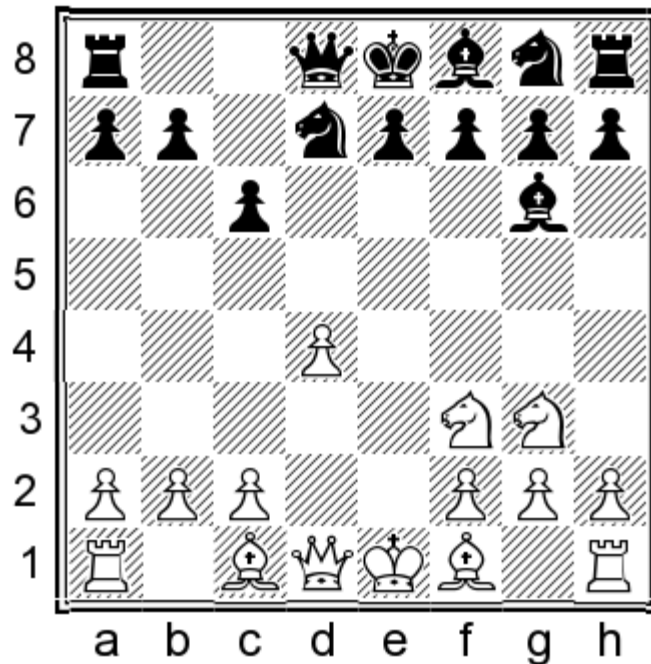
The Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5) is a very solid defense, very thematic, with easy-to-understand ideas for Black to work with. Whereas the French, in general, can generate sharper play and the Caro can be a bit passive, this defense can be feisty too. Names like Capablanca and Botvinnik established this opening in the eyes of chessplayers.

If you're playing for a win as White, its solidity can be downright annoying! When IM Dean Ippolito decided to vary from his trademark Petroff Defense (another equalizing defense), he went over to the Caro-Kann with success.

The first thing you should not do is try to refute it. Recent years have shown a surge in the Advance Variation with 3.e5. This is an extremely sharp line, with both sides getting their shots in. However, you really need to be constantly up on opening theory. Since we're trying to pick openings that have GM approval and good, natural and intuitive moves, we will avoid that. You are welcome to investigate on your own if you're motivated to do the studying.

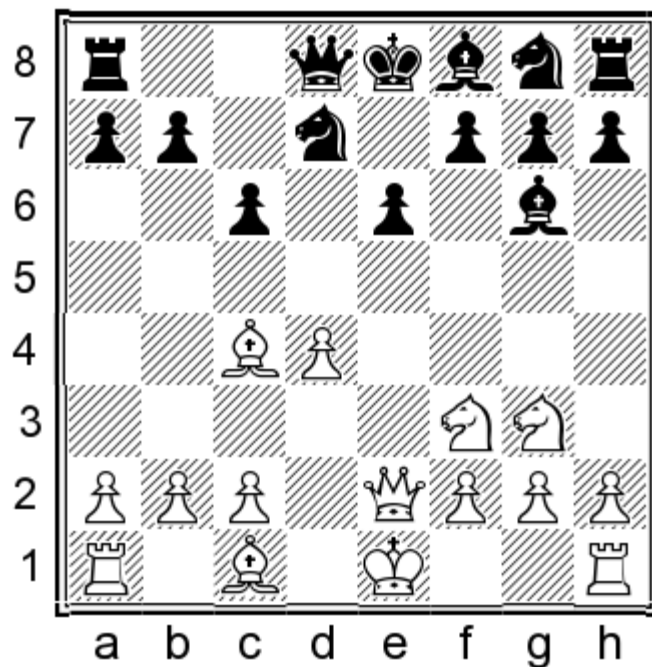
Over the years, several chess writers have gone with a "common-sense" approach rather than hit the 20-move-deep main lines that often involve this defense.

For example, I.A. Horowitz used to recommend this line: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♕f5 (there is a very double-edged line with 4...♗f6 5.♗xf6 gxf6 that many aggressive Caro players like) 5.♗g3 ♖g6 6.♗f3 ♗d7 (to deter ♗e5: 6...♗f6 7.h4 h6 8.♗e5 ♕h7 9.♕c4 e6 10.♔e2 – Horowitz):



The main line now goes 7.h4 h6 8.h5 ♕h7 9.♕d3 ♕xd3 10.♔xd3 e6. Any number of chess engines will tell you White has an edge, but years ago GM Ron Henley (when he was 17!) convinced me that Black's position was solid as a rock. He was right. Horowitz apparently felt the same way and recommended:

7.♕c4 e6 8.♔e2

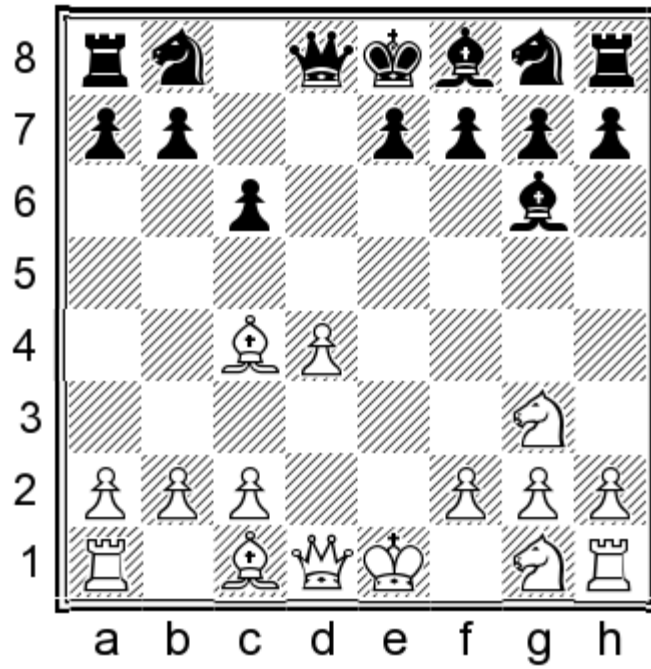


It's still a relatively equal game, with White having that slight advantage (easy development, prevention of ...e6-e5, for example); however, read Horowitz's thoughts here:

"White is for choice. A good plan for future action is 0-0, followed by the development of the queen bishop, posting a rook on the queen file and then the retreat of the king bishop to QN3 [b3], making way for P-QB4 [c2-c4]. It is not easy for Black to meet this proposed action."

It's not the sharper book-version plan with h2-h4. It's something that a good many players could feel comfortable with.

Nor is it just club players who feel more comfortable. Grandmaster legend Paul Keres, in his games collection (which should be in every chessplayer's library), found himself playing former British champion Harry Golombek in Moscow, 1956. Keres very much respected Golombek's knowledge of the opening and relates that he wanted to deprive Golombek "of one of his trump cards." Keres, although far superior as a player, didn't want to enter the British player's "den." Here's how it opened: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♙f5 5.♘g3 ♙g6 6.♙c4:**

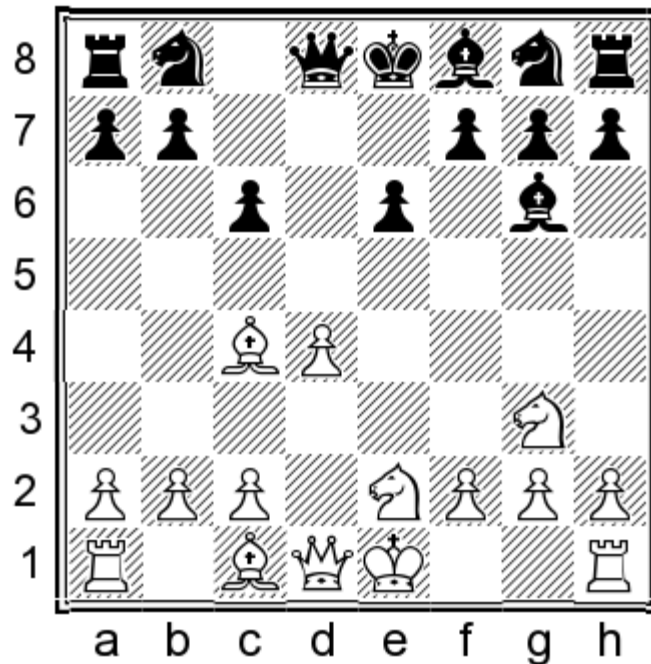


Keres doesn't put the knight on f3. What is he saying by moving the bishop? The answer is logical. He doesn't want to play Bd3 with the subsequent exchange because he feels Golombek knows how to simplify and solidify. He also has another square in mind for the knight: e2. Can you see why?

6...e6

6... Bd7 7. B1e2 e5 8.0-0 – Keres; he notes that opening up the center helps the fellow who is castled as opposed to the one who isn't.

7. B1e2 :



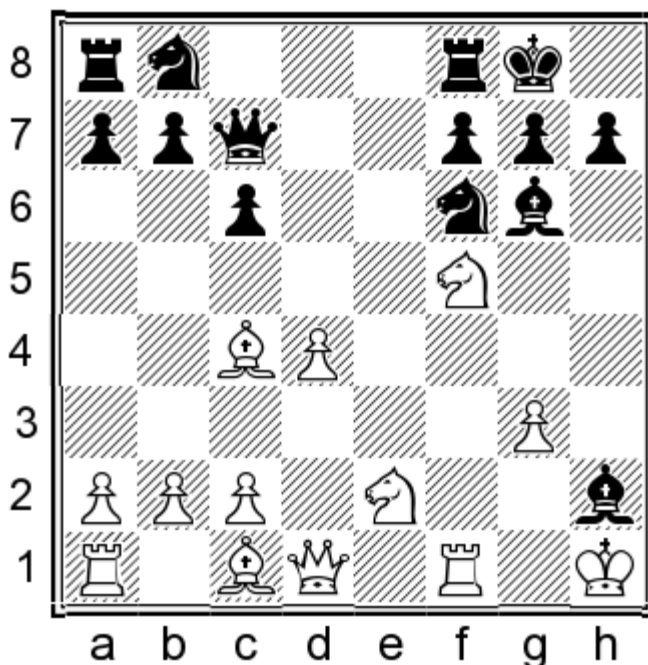
At this point, Keres comments: "The commencement of an interesting idea. In the ensuing phase of the game White wants to set in motion an attack against the enemy king's position by f4-f5, and for this reason avoids

developing his knight on f3, so as not to get in the way of the pawn advance. In addition White threatens when the occasion arises to play his knight to f4 followed by h2-h4, which would leave Black's bishop on g6 in somewhat of a dilemma."

Keres did get his 0-0 and f2-f4-f5 in by sacrificing the f-pawn: 7...♘f6 8.0-0 ♙d6 9.f4 ♚c7 10.f5 exf5 11.♘xf5 ♙xh2+ 12.♖h1 0-0

12...♙xf5 13.♗xf5 ♙d6 14.♙h6!!

13.g3:

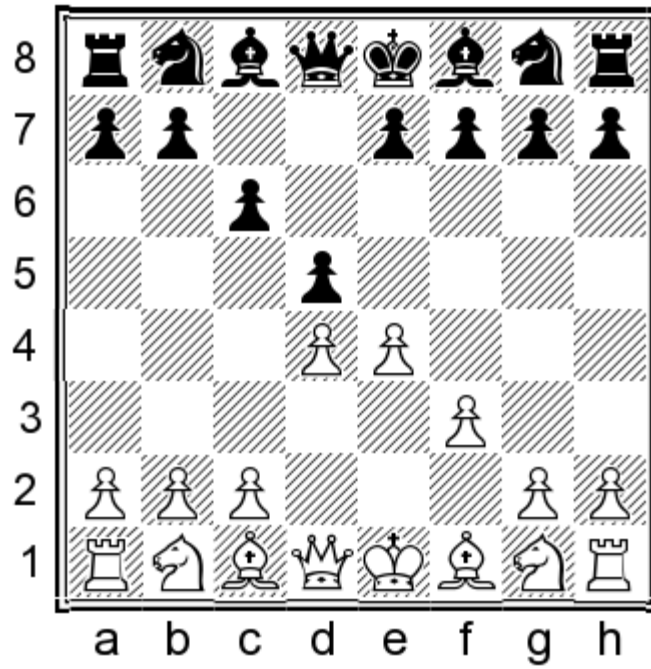


Do you see how Keres carried out his plan? Black is playing a game where an unfamiliar position has arisen. This cost Golombek the game. Keres played naturally and forcefully. If Black tries 13...♚d7, then 14.♙d3 ♘g4 15.♘c3 h5 16.♗f4 looks good. Notice how both Horowitz and Keres went with off the beaten track but sound opening lines with real plans and chances to win.

Now, you're going to be thrown a curveball! There's another opening line which you should consider. Why? Black can play that very difficult 4...♘f6 5.♘xf6 gxf6 we mentioned, or he can play 4...♘d7, which has a very devoted following. In both lines, there is a lot of theory. It can be learned. You should be aware of that commitment.

The approach we are offering looks odd at first sight, but it was played by Smyslov (even in a world championship match against Botvinnik!) and in recent years by GMs Polgár, Hodgson, and Ivanchuk. It takes Black out of all his main line Caro-Kann prep and gives White easy development. It just looks weird at first. Unnatural. Looks can be deceiving, though, about what is natural. Here's how we get there:

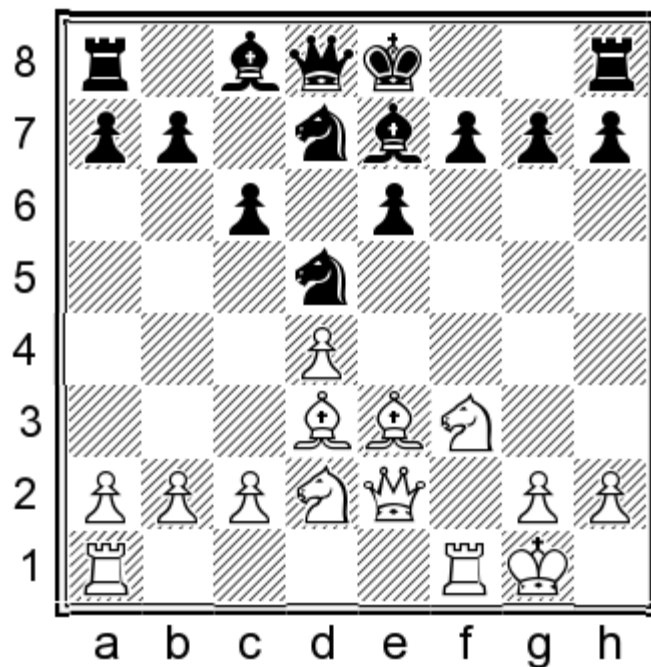
**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 –
The Fantasy Variation!**



That f3-pawn looks awkward and that looming queen check at h4 doesn't look like fun. White hasn't developed a piece. On the other hand, neither has Black. The f3-pawn does support the attacked e4-pawn and it's doubtful Black can take advantage of ...♙h4+ if White is alert.

Smyslov, in his *My Best Games of Chess*, comments on 3.f3 in his game against Makogonov (see below) from the 13th USSR Championship: "This move does not enjoy a wide popularity, although it has its virtues. White strengthens his centre which causes his opponent to be extremely accurate in the choice of replies. As well as this, the system gives to the whole game a sharper and more individual character than in the usual variations of the Caro-Kann, where early on the tension in the centre is removed by pawn exchanges."

The first game I found after Smyslov was the wild encounter Boros – Kóródy, Budapest 1932: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 e6 4.♙e3 dxe4 5.♘d2 exf3 6.♘gxf3 ♘f6 7.♙d3 ♘d5 8.♙e2 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♙e7:**



This position, though presenting equal chances, will warm every Blackmar-Diemer player's heart.

10. ♖e4 0-0 11. ♜ae1 f6

11... ♗xe3

12. ♙c1 (12. ♙d2) 12... ♜e8 13. ♗eg5 ♖f8 14. ♗e5

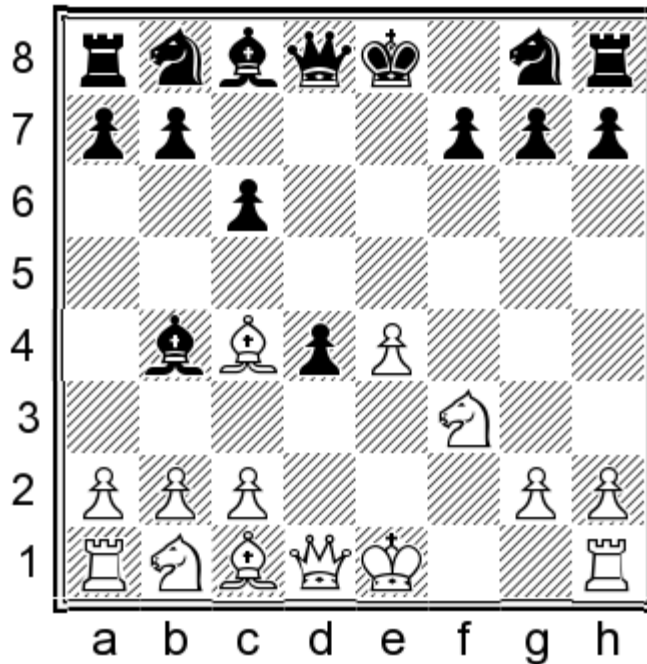
Leading to a draw is 14. ♗xh7 ♗xh7 15. ♙xh7+ ♖xh7 16. ♗g5+ fxg5 17. ♗h5+ ♖g8 18. ♗f7+ ♖h7 19. ♜f3 ♗f4 20. ♙xf4 gxf4 21. ♜e5 [21. ♜h3+ ♙h4 22. ♗xf4 ♖g8 23. ♜xh4 ♜f8].

14... fxg5 15. ♗h5 ♙f6

Black should have taken the draw with 15...g6 16. ♗xg6 hxg6 17. ♜xf8+ [17. ♙xg6 ♗f6 18. ♗xg5 ♗xd4+ 19. ♖h1 /19. ♙e3 ♗d5/ 19... ♜d8 20. ♙d3+ ♖f7 21. ♗h5+ ♖g8] 17... ♙xf8 18. ♗xg6+ ♙g7 19. ♙xg5 ♗f6 20. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 21. ♗xe8+ ♗f8 22. ♗g6 ♗f7 23. ♗g5 ♗f6 24. ♗h5 ♗f7 25. ♗g5 ♗f6.

16. ♙xh7+ 1-0. However, a wild draw was not enough to sway me.

I found another game right after that with a different line in Tatai – Mariotti, Reggio Emilia 1967-68: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 5.♗f3 exd4 6.♙c4 ♙b4+?:**



Even masters make mistakes like this! When you consider the potential threats to f7 other than the bishop (♗g5, 0-0, ♗h5), you would think a red flag would have popped up in Black's mind. That's why you need to review the Primer. These opening mistakes happen over and over again at all levels.

7.c3 dxc3 8. ♙xf7+ ♖xf7 9. ♗xd8 cxb2+ 10. ♖e2 bxa1=♗ 11. ♗g5+ ♖g6 12. ♗e8+ ♖h6 13. ♗f7+ 1-0.

It's either mate after 13... ♖g6 14. ♗xh8+ ♖f6 15. ♜f1+ ♙f5 16. ♜xf5#, or heavy material losses with 13... ♖h5 14. ♗xh8+ g6 15. ♗xc8 ♗xa2+ 16. ♗d2 ♖h6 17. ♜f1 ♖g7 18. ♗xb7+ ♖xh8 19. ♗xb4, when ♙b2+ or ♗c3+ is devastating.

However, there was Smyslov. By following the history of an opening and the players who use it, you get a

pretty good feel for the system. Smyslov is also good for the Closed Sicilian with his very clear plans. This game is Smyslov – Gereben, Moscow vs. Budapest 1949:

Model Game 13

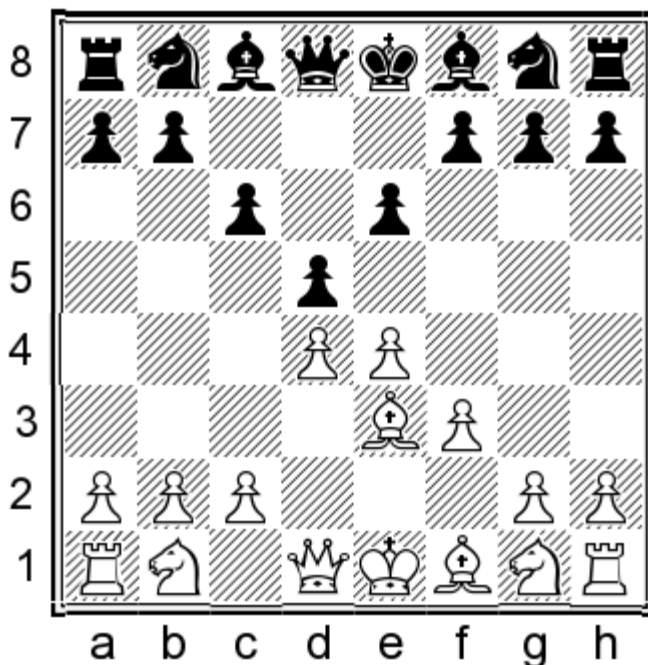
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 e6

3...e5 4.dxe5 ♗c5 5.♘c3 ♖b6 6.♗a4 ♕f2+ 7.♔e2 ♗d4 8.♗xd4 ♗xd4 9.f4 dxe4 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.♔xe3 f5 12.♞d1.

3...♗b6 has interesting possibilities: 4.a4 e6 5.a5 ♗d8 6.♘c3 or 4.c3 e6 5.♗d3 c5 6.exd5 exd5 7.♗e2+ ♗e7 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♗e3 ♗c7 10.♗a3 a6 11.♗d4 ♗f6 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♘c2; or the wild 4.♘c3 dxe4 5.fxe4 e5 6.dxe5 ♗c5 7.♗f3 ♕f2+ 8.♔e2 ♗e6 9.♗d3 a5 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.♗xe3 ♗xb2 12.♞b1 ♗xc2+ 13.♔e1 c5 (13...♗h6 14.♗d4 ♗g4 15.♗g3) 14.♞xb7 ♗e7 15.♗b5+.

3...g6 4.♘c3 (4.c3 ♗g7 5.♗d3 c5 6.♗e2 ♗f6 7.e5 ♗fd7 8.0-0) 4...♗g7 5.♗e3.

4.♗e3



The world champ was fond of this move. It develops a piece and indirectly hits Black's natural freeing move of ...c7-c5. There is an alternative: 4.♘c3 ♗f6 (4...♗b4 5.♗ge2 [Judit Polgár played 5.♗f4, with ♗d3 and ♗ge2 to follow] 5...dxe4 6.a3 ♗a5 [6...exf3 7.axb4 fxe2 8.♗xe2] 7.fxe4 ♗h4+ 8.♗g3 e5 9.dxe5 ♗c7 10.♗d4 ♗e7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.0-0-0) 5.e5 ♗fd7 6.f4 c5 7.♗f3. It is no longer a Caro-Kann in any case.

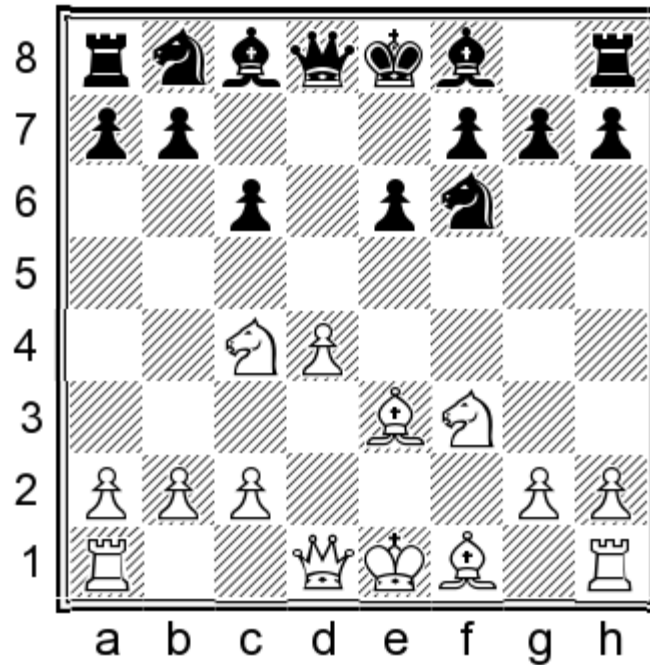
4...dxe4

Makogonov against Smyslov (mentioned above) went 4...♗b6 5.♗d2 ♗d7 6.♗d3 c5 7.c3 c4 8.♗c2 ♗xb2 9.♗e2 ♗a3 10.0-0 ♗b6 11.exd5 exd5 12.♞e1 ♗d7 13.♗f1 (13.♗f4 0-0-0 14.♗b3 cxb3 15.axb3 ♗e7 16.♞xa7) 13...0-0-0 14.♗c1 and, with a backwards bishop move (a little-taught concept), White makes Black regret his grabbing the b2-pawn.

5.♗d2 exf3

5...♖f6 6.fxe4 c5 7.♗gf3 cxd4 8.♗xd4 e5 9.♗4f3.

6.♗gxf3 ♗f6 7.♗c4



You can see Smyslov's idea: he heads for the e5 strongpoint with his knight supported by the other knight. If unchallenged, White may be able to afford ♗g5 with a double attack on f7. We are seven moves into the game, and you can see your middlegame forming: ♗d3, 0-0, ♕e2/e1, ♖d1/e1.

7...♗d5 8.♗d2

White actively preserves the bishop. It also prepares for a possible c2-c4 down the road, hitting the black knight which will find it harder to go to b4 as an option. This is not played in the game, but it's worth knowing about the thought behind this move.

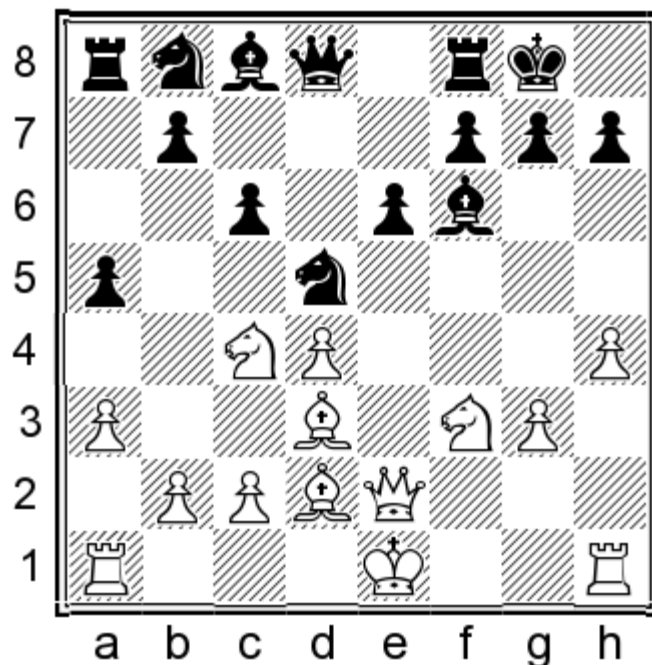
8...♗e7 9.♗d3 ♗h4+

An utter waste of time, perhaps with the vague idea of "loosening up" the white kingside. This underestimates White's initiative.

10.g3 ♗f6 11.♕e2 a5 12.a3

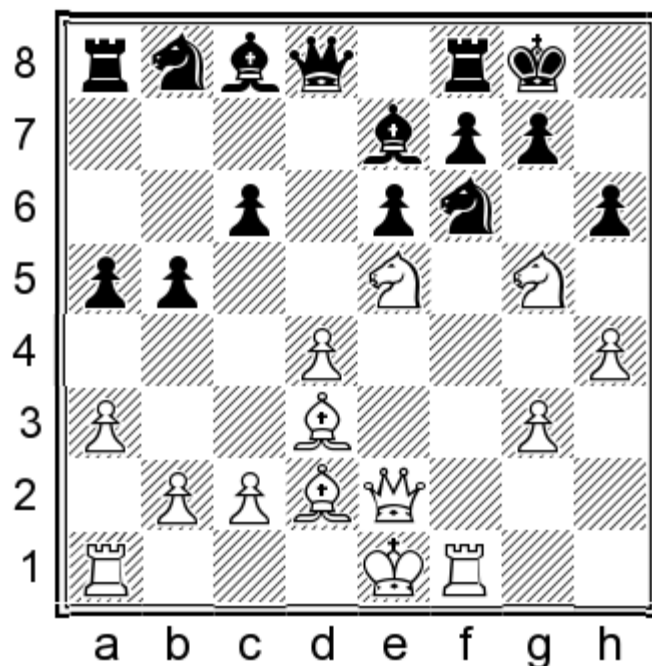
12.0-0-0 was probably more accurate, and would have saved White the need to be clever later.

12...0-0 13.h4



Maybe he has to catch a bus! More prudent is 13. ♖e5 and 14. 0-0-0. He points out that it threatens the famous combination 14. ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15. ♘g5+ ♖g8 16. ♗h5 ♜e8 17. ♗xf7+ ♔h8 18. ♘e5 ♗xe5 19. dxe5 winning (Smyslov). With his next move, Black enables the knight to go to f6 to defend that threat.

13... ♗e7 14. ♘g5 ♖f6 15. ♘e5 b5 16. ♜f1 h6



This is a very important position for understanding whether you should play this opening or not. White has a decisive win here. The opening has been a huge success. However, if you have not studied kingside attacks on castled positions, what's the point of playing this line? If I show this to any number of my attacking-style friends, the *first* move they will look at is 17. ♜xf6!. They understand that Black will have to take with the pawn, 17... gxf6, and the kingside will be torn apart for the final attack. How do they know Black won't play 17... ♗xf6? Because 18. ♗xh7+ ♔h8 19. ♘exf7+ wins the queen. You will not get good at chess just studying the

opening. In the Primer I noted all the other stuff you had best pay attention to. These sacrifices become less genius-like the more you study similar positions. Now Smyslov wraps him up.

17. ♖xf6 gxf6 18. ♕h5 fxg5 19. ♕xh6 f5 20. ♕g6+ ♔h8 21. hxg5 ♕xa3

This looks a little odd, but the idea is to get the bishop off the second rank to allow the a8-rook to play ... ♖a7 for defense. Nice thought, but too late.

22. ♔e2 ♕d5 23. ♗f3 1-0

There is one more line of considerable interest. Because of an annotated game in the October 2010 issue of *Chess Life*, a large number of Caro-Kann players have made this their main line. The game's occasion was the U.S. Junior Championship of that year. The two combatants were two superbly talented players, Ray Robson and Sam Shankland. Shankland's notes as the winner with the black pieces had great influence around the country. After *Chess Life* was published, I noticed it on the ICC as the line started to emerge as the regular weapon of Caro-Kanners.

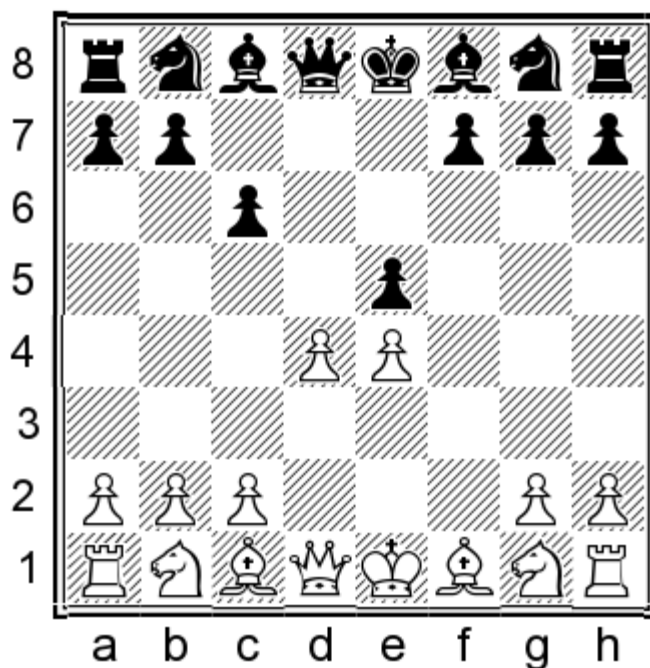
It's a fine game, and, even though the "wrong" side won, it's worth looking at. Oh, by the way, there's an improvement for White in the notes!

Model Game 14

Robson – Shankland

U.S. Junior Chp. 2010

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 dxe4 4.fxe4 e5



The system of choice follows a common-sense chess idea of challenging the center. One way not to challenge the center is by playing 4... ♗f6 5.e5 ♗d5 6.c4. It's not an Alekhine's Defense. Many people might avoid 5.dxe5 in our game because of the queen exchange and losing castling privileges, but White would have a decent chance of holding onto the pawn or making Black lose time to get it back! The problem with 5.dxe5 however, is 5... ♕h4+. Thus, White plays a logical move:

5. ♖f3 ♗g4

Other moves are also seen:

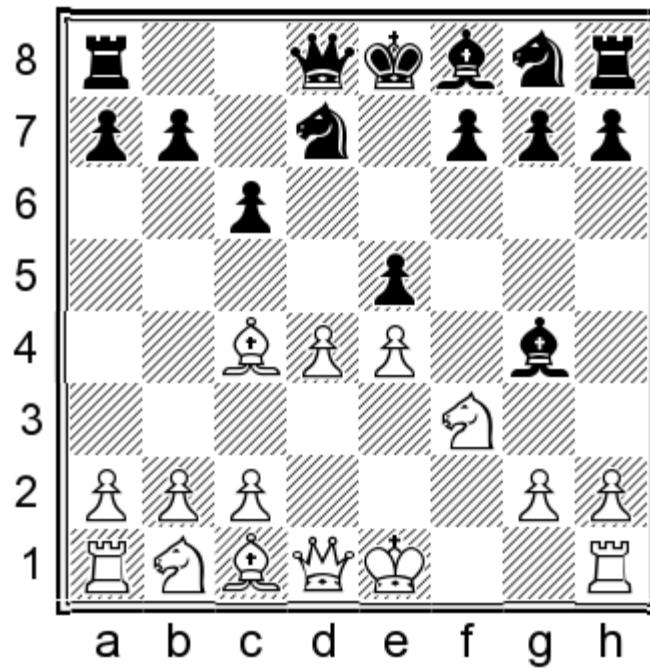
5...exd4? 6. ♗c4 ♗c5 7. 0-0 ♖f6 8. ♗g5 d3+ 9. ♗h1 ♗g4 10. ♗xf7+ ♗e7 11. ♖f3 ♗xf7 12. ♗e5+ ♗e8 13. ♗xg4 ♗xg4 14. ♖xg4;

5...♗e6!? 6. ♖c3 exd4 (6...♗d7 7.d5) 7. ♗xd4 ♗b4 8. ♗e2 ♖f6 9. ♗g5 ♖d6 10. ♖f5 ♖xd1+ 11. ♖xd1 ♗xc3+ 12. bxc3 ♗xf5 13. exf5 ♗bd7 14. 0-0 0-0.

White continues with his f7 theme, a version of which you saw above.

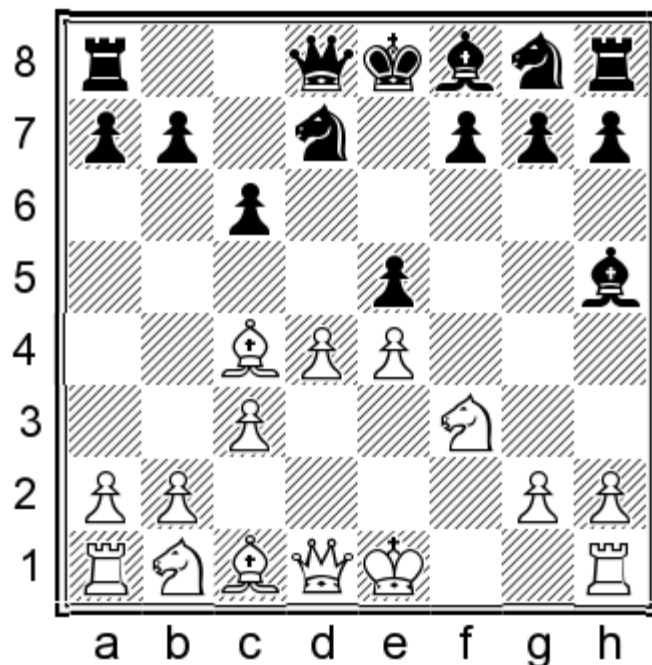
6. ♗c4 ♗d7

One example of a horror show would be 6...♖f6 7. ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 8. ♗xe5+ ♗g8 9. ♗xg4 ♗xe4 10. 0-0.



An early big decision moment for White. He might consider 7.h3 ♗xf3 8. ♖xf3 ♖h4+ 9.g3 ♖f6 10. 0-0 ♖xf3 11. ♖xf3 ♗gf6 12.c3 with very slightly the better of an equal position – nothing to write home about. Robson chooses the critical move.

7.c3 ♗h5



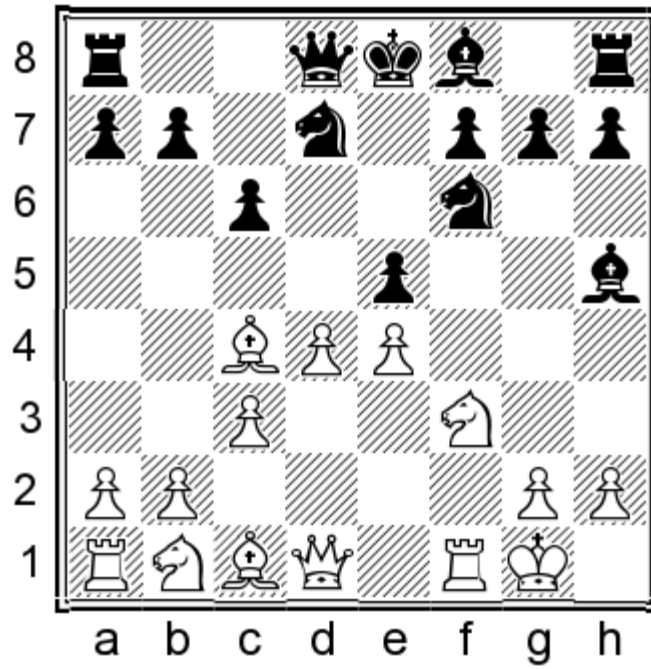
Black had a critical choice to make. Obviously bad is 7...♖g6 8.♔b3.

Much play has been given to 7...b5, but 8.♙e2! ♗gf6 9.a4 (9.0-0 may even be better – remember the Purdy Rule!) 9...a6 (9...♗xe4 10.axb5 cxb5 11.♙xb5) 10.0-0 (10.axb5 cxb5 11.h3 ♙h5 [11...♙xf3 12.♙xf3] 12.♗xe5 ♙xe2 13.♔xe2 ♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♗d7 15.♙f4 [15.e6 ♔h4+] 15...♗c5 16.0-0 ♔d3) 10...♙d6 11.h3 ♙h5 12.axb5 cxb5 13.♗h4. There is still much to be discovered here, but it does follow our rule of being playable with a chance to win.

8.0-0

Another possibility is 8.♔b3 b5 9.♙e2 ♗gf6 10.0-0 ♙d6 11.dxe5 ♙c5+ 12.♔h1 ♗xe4 13.♗fd2 ♗xd2 14.♗xd2 ♔h4 15.♗e4 0-0 16.♙xh5 ♔xh5 17.e6 fxe6 18.♔xe6+ ♔h8 19.♙f4 ♔d5 20.♔xd5 cxd5 21.♗xc5 ♗xc5 22.♙ad1, but there are too many moves here that could go a different way (e.g., 15.♙xh5 and 16.e6), so we'll leave that to your investigation and tastes.

8...♗gf6



At this point, White plays 9.♘bd2, which Shankland properly criticizes as blocking the development of the queenside. He suggests 9.♙g5 ♗d6 10.♘bd2 0-0 “with an interesting and balanced middlegame.” Also, by playing ♘bd2, it causes problems when the c4-bishop retreats to d3, putting him under indirect fire from the black queen and his own queen is blocked from protecting him. As a result, Black can play ...c6-c5 or even ...♘c5 (as Shankland points out) and the white d-pawn can’t capture.

Maybe you can look for something else. Here’s one example to play with, following the “theme” on f7: 9.♗b3 ♗c7 10.♘g5 ♘b6 11.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 12.♘xf7 ♗xf7 13.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 14.dxe5 ♙c5+ 15.♔h1 ♖he8 16.exf6 ♖xe4 17.♘d2 ♖e2 18.♘b3 ♙f2 19.fxg7 ♔xg7 20.♘a5 ♖b8 21.♖b1 ♘a4 22.g3 Have fun! Homework! Also look at 9.♙e2 and 9.♙b3.

The rest of the game demonstrates how Black counters when White falters.

9.♘bd2 ♙d6 10.♙d3 0-0 11.♗e1 ♖e8 12.♔h1 ♙c7 13.♙c2 exd4 14.cxd4 c5 15.dxc5 ♘xc5 16.e5 ♘cd7 17.♗h4 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♙xe5 19.♘c4 ♗d4 20.♗xd4 ♙xd4 21.♘d6 ♖e6 22.♘f5 ♙c5 23.♙b3 ♖e5 24.♙d2 ♘e4 25.♖ae1 ♖ae8 26.♖xe4 ♖xe4 27.♘g3 ♙g6 28.♘xe4 ♖xe4 29.♙c3 h5 30.♙d5 ♖e7 31.b4 ♙b6 32.a4 a6 33.a5 ♙a7 34.♖e1 ♖d7 35.♙f3 ♔h7 36.♖e8 ♖c7 37.♙d2 h4 38.g3 h3 39.♙g4 f5 0-1

You now have three different ways to approach the Caro-Kann. There are others. These were good because most of the moves were natural and the good ones concentrated either on development or on preventing something bad from happening. While this last game will be subject to further theoretical scrutiny, it’s not the hellhole of memorization that so many lines are.

4. What Should I Play Against the Pirc and the Modern?

The best specialized single-volume opening treatment ever written (as opposed to the epic *Wojo's Weapons* multi-volume series by Ippolito and Hilton that has taught a new generation the joys of the Catalan Opening) was by Albur and company with their *Pirc Alert!* Many players took the book to heart and even memorized the key lines. So, if you play an opponent who essays this defense, you're not playing against him – you're playing against Albur, Dzindzi, and Chernin *et al.*

Fortunately for me, I have a philosophy of looking for simpler lines. They obey rules of development, are less familiar to my opponent, and I have some model games to follow. The game that made the most impression upon me was in the great book *The Pirc Defence*, by Botterill and Keene.

The very first illustrative game in their book was played in Monaco in 1969 between Bronstein and Benko. This game was mentioned in the Primer because it's an example of how it's OK to have your king moved. About ten years later, I ran across a small 40-page monograph called *Pirc Defence: A Second Line for White* by Chris Baker. He spent the whole book on 5.e5 as well as early deviations by Black with 4...a6, 4...c5, 4...♘c6, and 4...c6. His later book, *A Startling Chess Opening Repertoire*, was not only quite good, but equally thorough. He did go with 5.♘f3, though, and it leads to hair-raising lines.

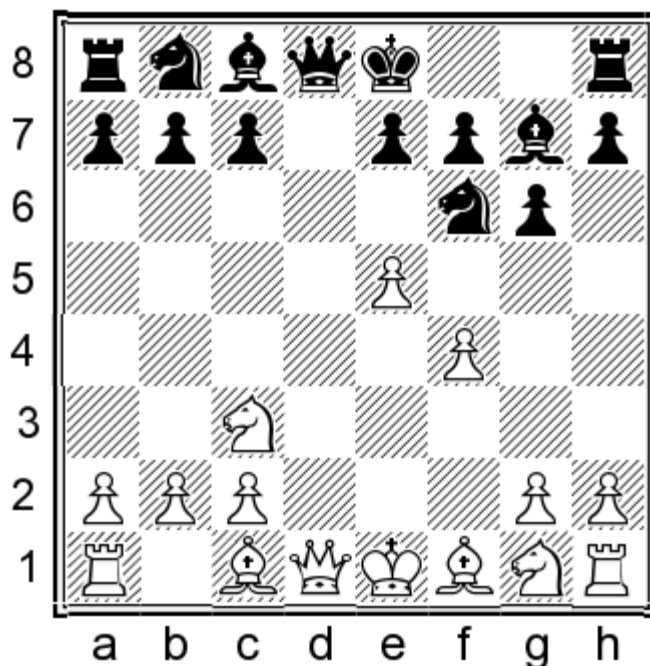
Much more sedate was the line chosen by Bronstein against Benko. Let's look:

Model Game 15

Bronstein – Benko

Monte Carlo 1969

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♙g7 5.e5 dxe5 6.dxe5



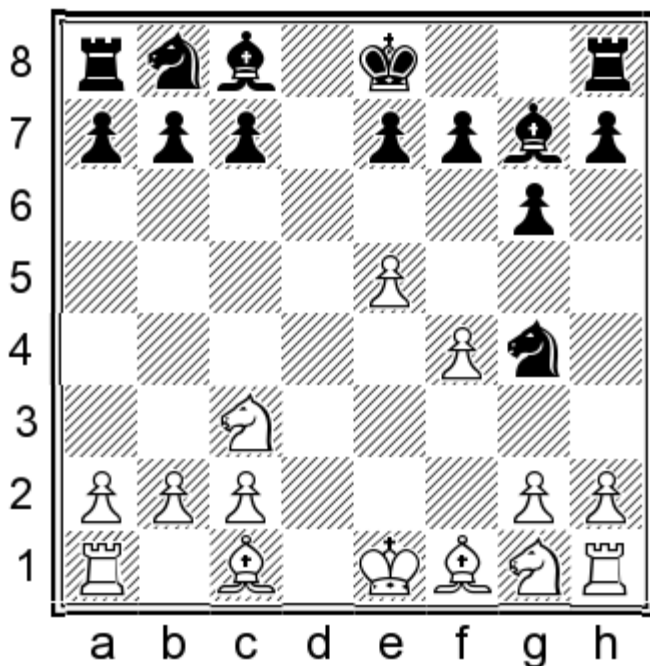
Who can resist taking the queen, forcing the king to move, playing ...♘g4 for the fork on f2, and then having the white king move back? How can this be good for White? (Alternatives for Black don't look inviting: 6...♘fd7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.♞f3 ♘b6 9.♙d3 c6 10.0-0-0; 6...♘g4 7.♞xd8+ ♔xd8 8.h3 ♘h6 9.♙e3 ♘f5 10.0-0-0+ ♙d7

11. ♖f2.)

6... ♖xd1+ 7. ♔xd1 ♗g4

Adorján – Vadasz, Budapest 1970, went 7... ♗fd7 8. ♗d5 ♖d8 9. ♗f3 c6 10. ♗e3 f6 11. exf6 exf6 12. ♗c4 ♗c5 13. ♗d6 ♖e6 14. f5 ♗d5 15. c4 ♖xf3 16. gxf3 ♖e7 17. b4 ♖xd6 18. bxc5+ ♖e7 (18... ♖xc5? 19. ♖b1 b6 20. ♖a3+ ♗d4 21. ♖c2) 19. ♖b1, and White has the advantage.

8. ♔e1



GM Benko is also an endgame composer whose creations have fascinated us for decades in *Chess Life*. This is important to realize because he loses this ending! Despite the position's somewhat quiet appearance, White is now ready to launch his set of moves to make Black lose some time and in the end get a space advantage. The pawns chase the knight with h2-h3 and deny it the f5 square with g2-g4. Then, White's minor pieces jump to natural squares. There is also the threat of ♗d5, and you will be amazed at how many average players miss that. Note, too, that the king is very handy around f2 or even e3 (dare we dream of e4?!) later.

8...c6

Already we have reached a crisis in the game. Natural-looking moves don't seem promising: 8...0-0 or 8... ♗c6 brings 9. ♗d5; 8... ♖e6 9. h3 ♗h6 10. ♗b5 (10. g4 ♗c6 11. ♗f3 0-0-0) 10... ♗a6 11. ♗f3 0-0 (11...0-0-0 12. ♗xa7+) 12. ♖f2 ♖ad8 13. ♖e2 c5 14. c3 and White is doing well. Botterill and Keene suggest that 8...c6 (which, from experience, is most often played) is a mistake and offer either 8...f6 or 8...h5 instead. They have a reasonable complaint; however, White will still maintain a small advantage where Black will be consigned to defense. Some examples: 8...f6 9. h3 ♗h6 10. exf6 (10. ♗d5 ♖d8 11. ♗f3 c6 12. ♗c3 ♖c7 13. ♖f2 fxe5 14. fxe5 ♖e6 15. ♗e2) 10... exf6 11. ♗f3 ♗c6 12. ♗d5 ♖d8 13. ♖f2 ♖e8 14. ♖d2 ♖e6 15. ♗b4 ♗f5 16. ♗xc6+ bxc6 17. ♖d1 ♗d6 18. ♖d3, and White has targets in the weak black queenside pawns; or 8...h5 9. h3 ♗h6 10. ♗d5 ♖d8 11. ♗f3 c6 12. ♗e3 ♖c7 13. b3 f6 14. ♖d3 fxe5 15. fxe5 ♖f5 16. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 17. ♖b2, and White has the two bishops on an open board with black pawns as targets.

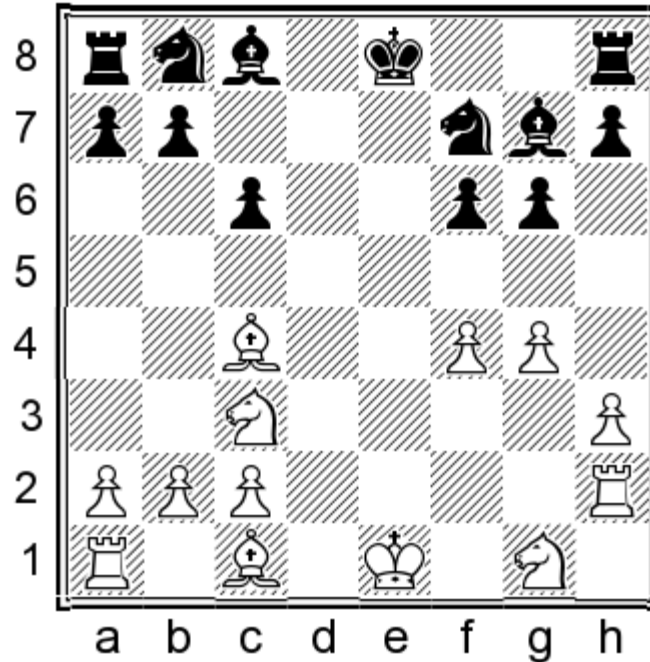
9. h3 ♗h6 10. g4 f6

If 10...0-0 11.♔e3 f6 12.♙c4+ ♘f7 13.♘f3 fxe5 14.♗xe5 ♙xe5 15.fxe5 e6 16.♗e4.

11.exf6 exf6 12.♙c4

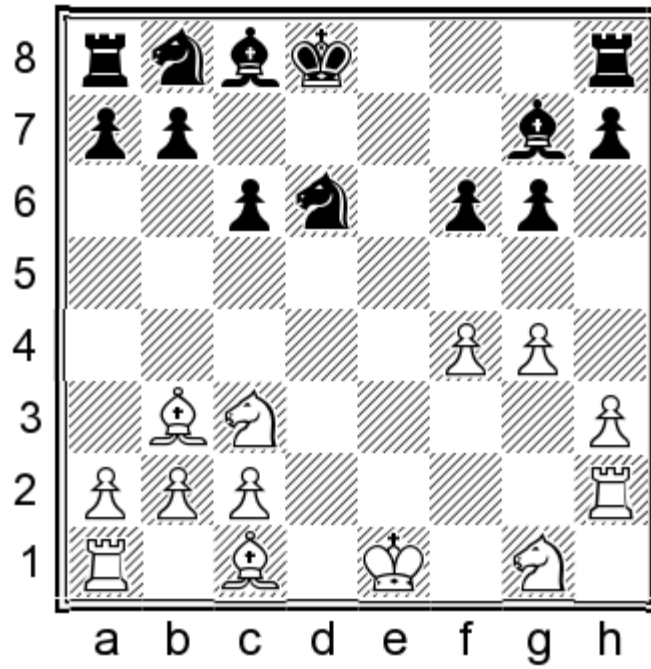
Also possible is 12.♘f3 0-0 13.♙c4+ ♖h8 14.♔f2.

12...♗f7 13.♖h2



This is an instructive position in the opening. Both sides are still developing. Black has found a tortuous route for his knight to go from g8 to f7(!) just so he can castle. He's still looking to get organized. White, on the other hand, has easy moves with 13.♘f3 or 13.♙e3. Natural and good. Of course, when you're dealing with genius the likes of David Bronstein, you get to see some imagination. His 13.♖h2, a rook lift, allows him to slide over to either open central file if necessary in the future. A pretty cool idea to learn when playing over this game, as it translates to other chess positions as well.

13...♗d6 14.♙b3 ♔d8

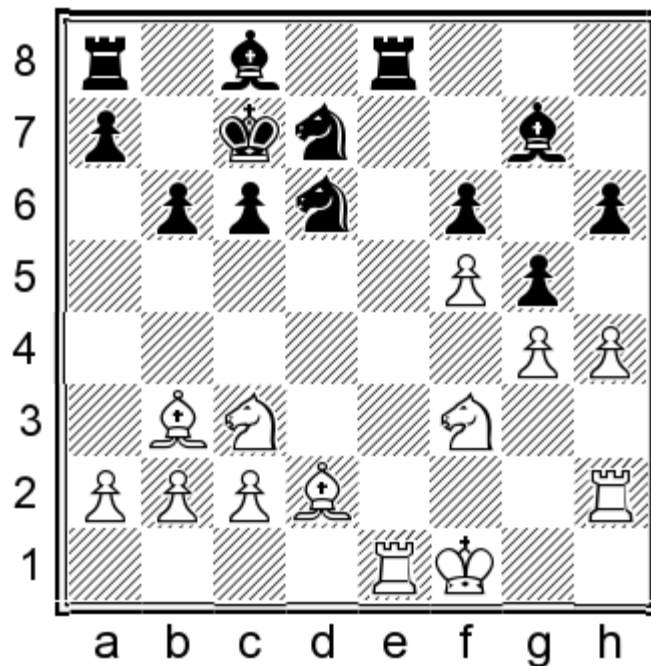


We're still in the opening! Black still hasn't completed his development and neither has White, but White has easier squares to go to. However, Bronstein is not satisfied with the "easy" 15.♙e3 ♜e8 16.♞e2 and 17.♞d1. He wants a better square for his bishop, so he vacates – indeed offers – his f-pawn to get the square f4 for the bishop. Black has to mess up his pawn structure to “win” the pawn. Another great lesson from the GM.

15.f5 ♜e8+

The sac plays out by 15...gxf5 16.♙f4 ♜e8+ 17.♘ge2 ♙f8 18.♞d1 ♖c7 19.♙f1 (19.♙f7 ♜e5 20.♙xe5 fxe5 21.♙b3 ♙e7 may just be defendable for Black).

16.♙f1 g5 17.h4 h6 18.♘f3 ♘d7 19.♙d2 ♖c7 20.♞e1 b6



“Are we out of the opening yet, Daddy?” “We’re almost there, sweetie.” As soon as Black gets his bishop and

rook into play. This is why I love this game and started playing this line. Almost effortlessly, White gets an edge with natural moves and not really much in the way of counterplay. I learned to play this endgame really well, whereas my opponents were not so familiar with it. That was worth a half a pawn!

In this position, White has opportunities to exchange on g5 and get a rook down to h7 (as in the game) or a supported and dangerous passed pawn on f6. Black's g7-bishop has no scope and the coming bishop check on a6 really doesn't attack important squares. White's bishop can dominate e6 and the f3-knight can show up there as well. That's an important square! On move 20, White has a winning advantage and picks one way (there are several) to show us.

By the way, exchanging rooks wouldn't have eased the pressure: 20...♖xe1+ 21.♙xe1 b6 22.hxg5 ♙a6+ 23.♔g1 fxg5 24.♙g3 ♖f6 25.♞d2 as the knight will head to d4 and then you know where.

21.♞xe8 ♖xe8 22.♙e1 ♙a6+ 23.♔g1 ♙f8 24.♙g3+ ♙d6 25.♙xd6+ ♖xd6 26.hxg5 hxg5 27.♞h7 ♞e8 28.♙e6 ♙c8 29.♖d4 a6 30.a4 ♞d8

30...c5 31.♖d5+

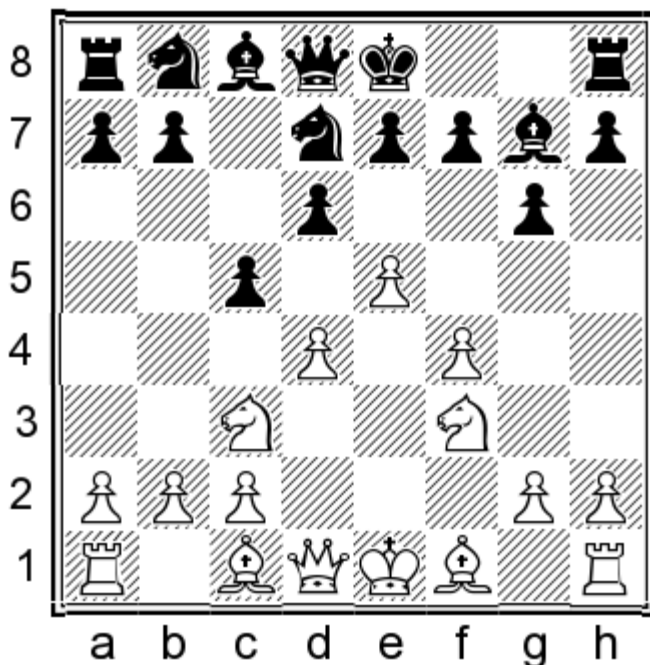
31.♙d5 ♞e8 32.♙xc6 ♖c4 33.♙d5 ♖e3 34.♙e6 ♖xg4 35.♖e4 ♞d8 36.c4 ♖ge5 37.♖xf6 ♔d6 38.♖e4+ ♔c7 39.♙d5 ♞e8 40.♖e6+ ♔b8 41.♖d6 ♞g8 42.b3 ♖f6 43.♞c7 ♖xd5 44.cxd5 (it's hopeless) 44...g4 45.f6 ♖f3+ 46.♔f1 g3 47.♞g7 ♞h8 48.♖xc8 ♞xc8 49.f7 ♞c1+ 50.♔g2 ♖h4+ 51.♔h3 ♞h1+ 52.♔g4 1-0

Black cannot afford to underestimate this opening.

A good many players of Black avoid the endgame, either because they would rather not enter into what looks like a drawish ending or because they just prefer attacking the center as every good Pirc boy and girl should. So, they go with 5...♖fd7. The Polgár game, as we will see, did not start out the way we're looking at here, but arrives at the position by transposition.

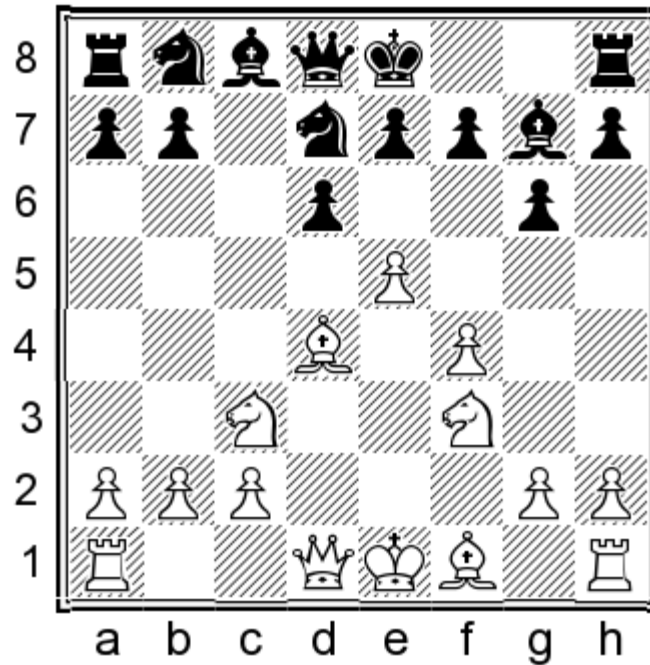
Here's how it usually happens:

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♖f6 3.♖c3 g6 4.f4 ♙g7 5.e5 ♖fd7 6.♖f3 c5



There are a good many playable moves here – 7.dxc5, 7.exd6, 7.e6, 7.♙b5 – but we would like to look at:

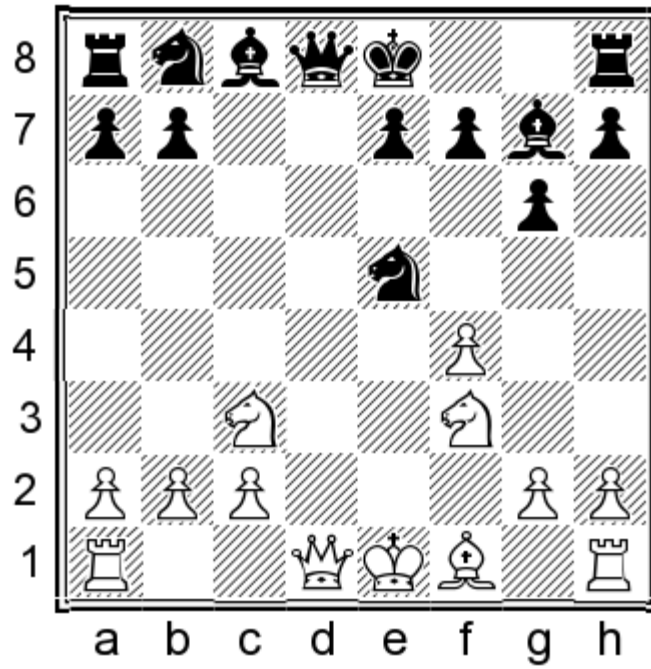
7.♙e3 cxd4 8.♙xd4



♙xd4 is not what you would call a usual move that comes to mind in positions like this as ...♘c6 seems to bother it. But you can't judge by appearances. Let's look at concrete analysis: 8...♘c6 9.e6 (a useful idea in many Pirc lines) 9...♘xd4 10.exd7+ ♙xd7 11.♘xd4 ♚b6 12.♘b3 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♜c8 14.♚d4 ♚xd4 15.cxd4 ♜xc2 16.♙e2 ♙f5 17.♙f3; or Black might play 8...0-0 9.exd6 ♘f6 (9...exd6 10.♙xg7 ♘xg7 11.♚xd6) 10.dxe7 ♚xe7+ 11.♚e2 ♙e6 12.0-0-0. Thus,

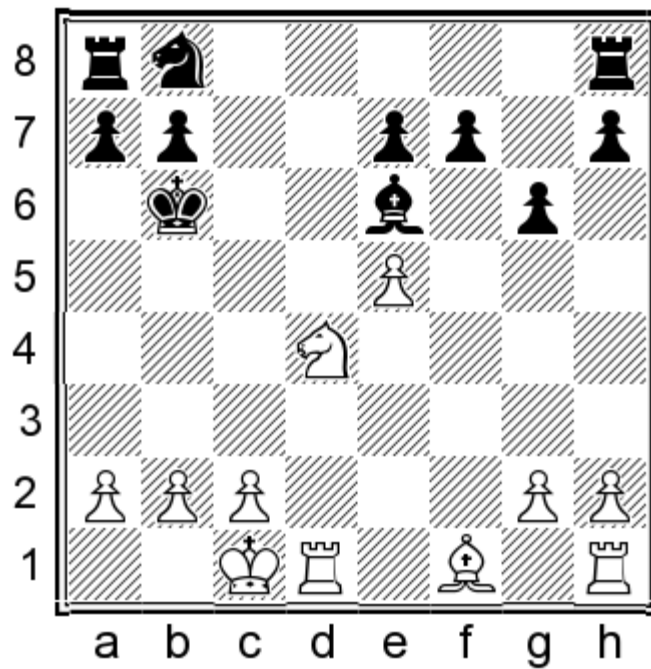
8...dxe5 9.♙xe5 ♘xe5

9...0-0 10.♙xg7 ♘xg7 11.♚d2 ♘f6 12.0-0-0.



If you like to skip complex middlegames with the Pirc, then this is the line for you! You're about to exchange queens, castle queenside with check, and find that your opponent may not be accurate in setting up his endgame. You have winning chances. If Black plays accurately, you will probably draw, but both of you will have to work.

10. ♙xd8+ ♔xd8 11. ♘xe5 ♙xe5 12. fxе5 ♙e6 13. 0-0-0+ ♔c7 14. ♘b5+ ♔b6 15. ♘d4

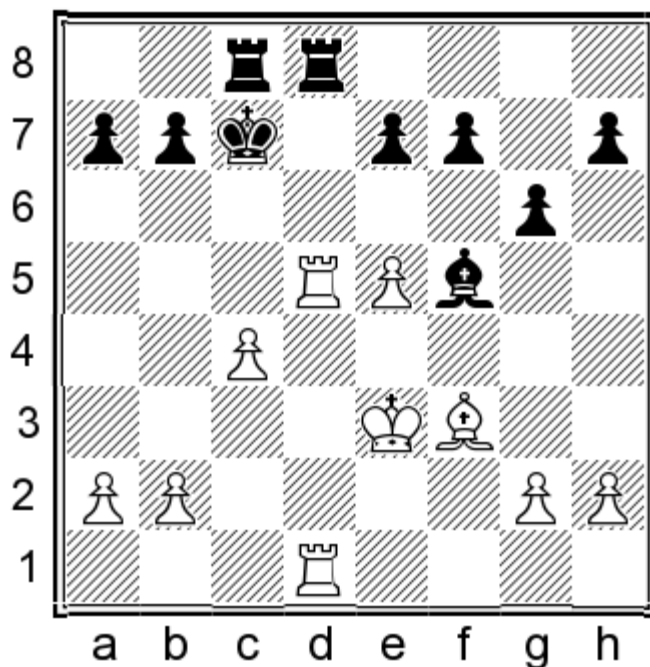


Now Black has to make a decision: either move the bishop, which gets chased around a bit with White getting his king quickly into the action, or accept doubled e-pawns with ...♙d8. Either choice has slight pluses for White and no downside. You have to like to play endgames as White here. You have gone right from the opening to the endgame.

15...♙d5

15...♞d8 16.♜xe6 ♞xd1+ 17.♚xd1 fxe6 18.♙c4 ♜c6 19.♙xe6 ♜xe5 20.♞e1.

16.c4 ♙e4 17.♚d2 ♜c6 18.♚e3 ♙f5 19.♜xc6 ♚xc6 20.♙e2 ♞ac8 21.♞d5 ♞hd8 22.♞hd1 ♚c7 23.♙f3



White is better placed and can chase Black's bishop with g2-g4. Going ...♙e6 would initiate a wholesale rook trade ending with ♙xb7 and ...♙xc4. Grünfeld players will recognize the value of the mobile queenside pawn majority: White can invite a bishop exchange, advance the two pawns, and then – when the black king has to deal with the passed pawn – head for the kingside and gobble up the pawns there. It's not forced, but at least it's a plan, and it comes right out of the opening.

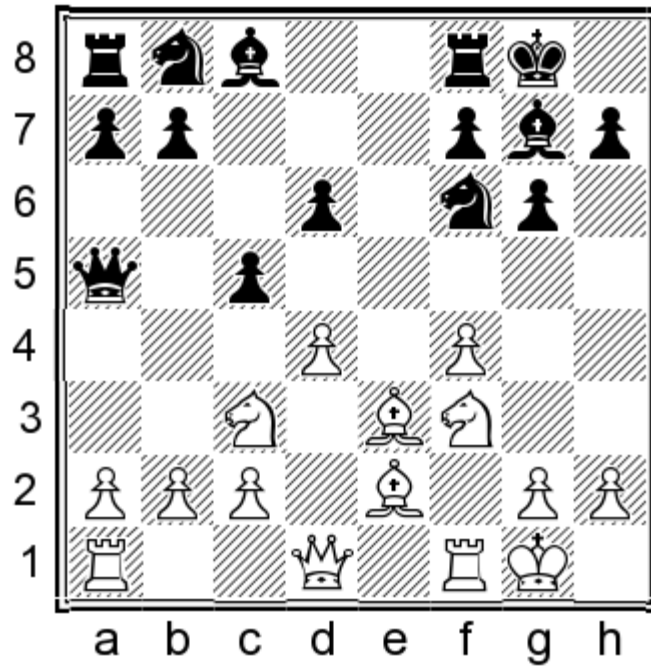
We have a livelier version of this line:

Model Game 16

Zsó. Polgár – Shchekachev

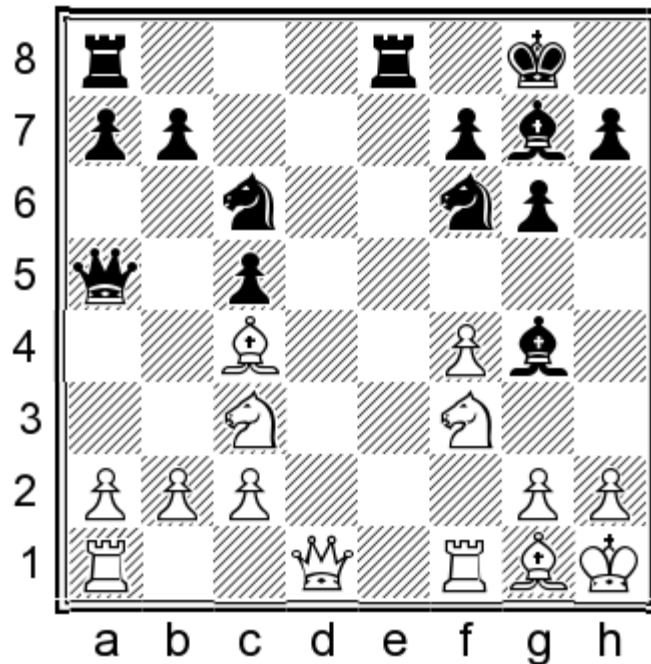
Vienna Open 1991

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.♜c3 ♙g7 4.f4 ♜f6 5.♜f3 c5 6.e5 ♜fd7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.exd6 exd6 9.♙e2 ♞a5 10.0-0 ♜f6



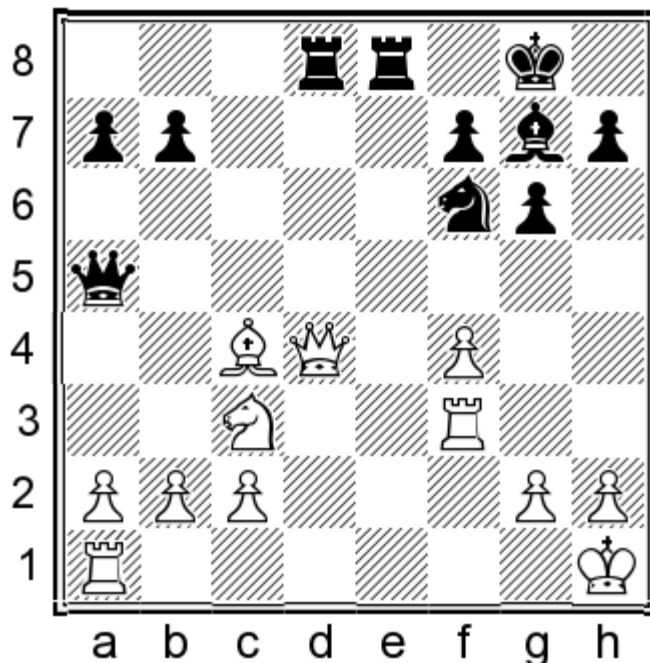
What would you play here? If you pick 11. ♖d2 ♜c7 12. ♗c4 d5 13. ♘e5, you've done well. Polgár has another interesting idea. Zsófia is ahead in development, so moving the king to give the bishop a haven on g1 is reasonable.

11. ♖h1 ♜e8 12. ♗g1 ♞c6 13. ♗c4 ♗g4 14. dxc5 dxc5



Black has played well here and threatens to make the white queen very uncomfortable with ... ♜ad8; however, the ♗g1 move now aids the queen in getting to a better square. With 15. ♛d6 there is a double threat on c5 which snuffs out the ... ♜ad8 threat. We can be sure Polgár had anticipated all this. Let's also notice that White's and Black's pieces are well-placed, natural developing moves. White's advantage of the move played no small part in her ability to use this to her benefit.

15. ♖d6 ♙xf3 16. ♗xf3 ♘d4 17. ♙xd4 cxd4 18. ♖xd4 ♗ad8



Black now has his rook on d8, but White has some choice. There is an important lesson here: you're just out of the opening and have reached a critical position. Where do you put the queen? Should it be f2 or g1? Consider this one line: 19. ♖g1 ♘e4 20. f5 ♙d4 21. ♗f1 ♘d2 22. fxg6 ♘xf1 23. gxf7+ ♔h8 24. fxe8=♖+ ♗xe8 25. ♗axf1 ♙g7 26. ♗f7 with a lot of excitement and advantage to White.

19. ♖f2 b5

Black could have made more of a fight of it with 19... ♘e4 20. ♘xe4 ♗xe4 21. ♙d3 ♙xb2 22. ♗f1 ♗ed4 23. f5 g5 24. ♖e3 (24. f6 h6 25. ♗f5 ♖c7 26. ♗f3 ♔f8 (26... ♗h4 27. g3) 27. ♗b5 ♗f4 28. ♖xb7 ♗xf1+ 29. ♙xf1 ♖xb7 30. ♗xb7 ♙xf6 31. g3 ♗d1 32. ♔g2 ♗d2+ 33. ♔f3 ♗xc2 34. ♗xa7) 24... h6 25. f6 ♙c3 26. ♗f5 ♙d2 27. ♖e2 ♖b4 28. a3 and White wins, but there was lots of room to go wrong.

20. ♙xb5 ♘e4 21. ♖h4 ♙f6 22. ♖h3 ♙xc3 23. ♙xe8 ♙xb2 24. ♙xf7+ ♔xf7 25. ♖xh7+ ♔f6 26. ♗af1 ♖h5 27. ♖b7 1-0

If you have higher aspirations, there can be aggressive and sharp play in our suggested line. For example, 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3. ♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♙g7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6. ♘f3 0-0

6...c5 7.e6 fxe6 8. ♘g5 ♘f6 9.dxc5 ♘c6 10. ♙c4 d5 11. ♙b5 d4 12. ♙xc6+ bxc6 13. ♘e2 ♖a5+ 14. ♖d2 ♖xc5 15. ♘xd4 ♖d5

7. ♙c4

7.h4 c5 8.e6 fxe6 9.h5 gxh5 10. ♘g5

7...c5 8.e6 ♘b6 9.exf7+ ♔h8 10. ♙e2 (10.h4) 10...cxd4 11. ♘xd4 and good luck with all that (GM Seinfeld!).

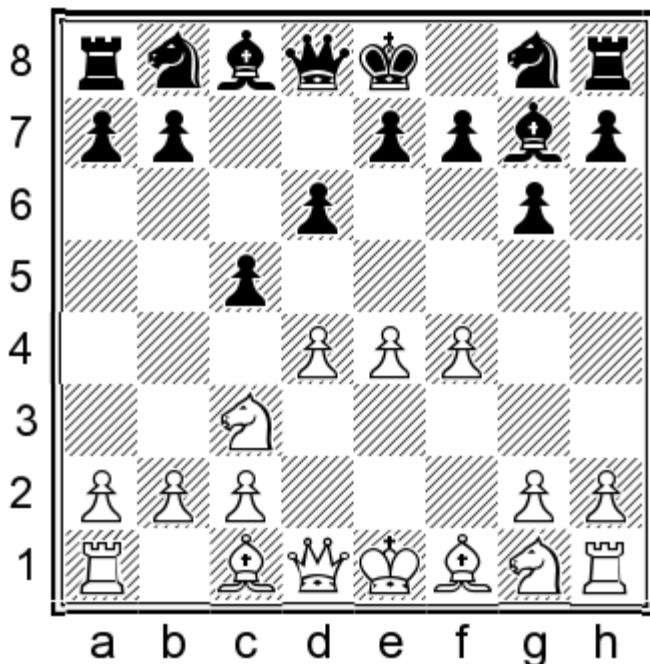
OK, how about the Modern?

An extreme example was covered in the Primer. As for the rest, I like Chris Baker's attitude in *A Startling Chess Opening Repertoire*: play 3.♘c3 anyway. The heck with the bishop on the open diagonal! That's the spirit!

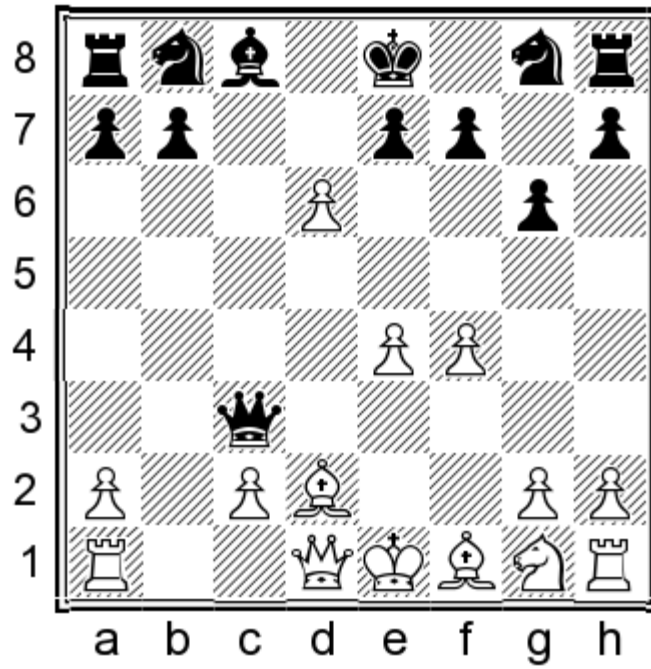
Most people are concerned with the unusual moves by Black like the one in the Primer. Here are some more:

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4 c5

And here we see what gives the appearance of a genuine attack on what now looks like a very static pawn center. Let's see what could happen.



5.dxc5 ♖a5 6.cxd6 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 8.♗d2

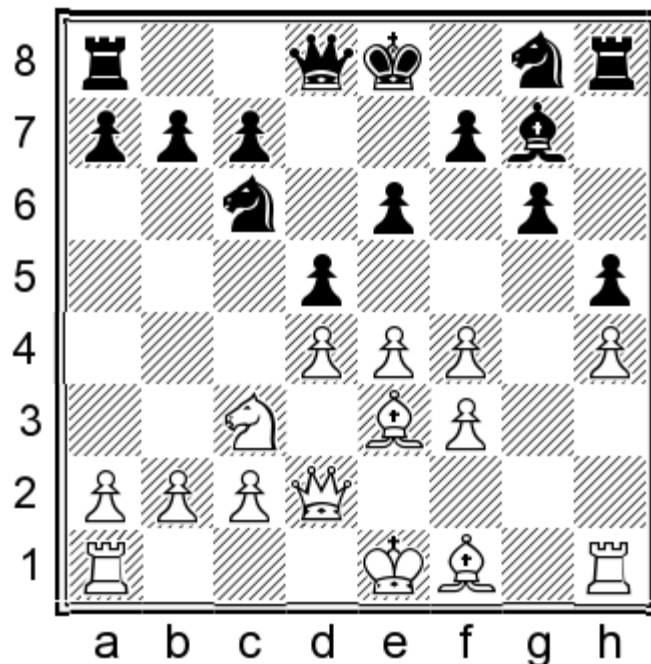


White is clearly winning. He's a pawn up, he's chasing the black queen, and he has natural moves ahead for his development. There are odd little threats here: 8...♖c6 9.e5 exd6 10.♖b1! with ♕b5 in mind. Other lines are not worth too much worry:

a) 4...♗f6 transposes into the Pirc;

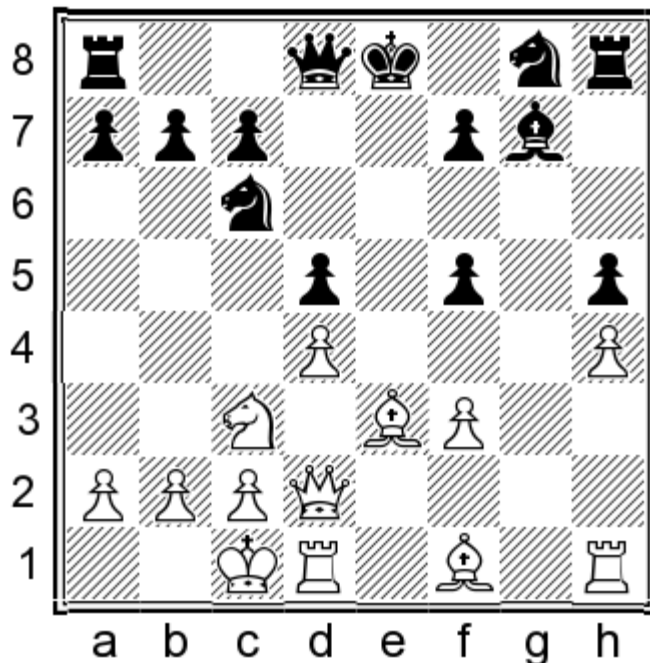
b) 4...c6 5.♗e3 ♖b6 6.♗d2! (6.♗f3 ♖xb2 7.♗d2; too cautious is 6.♖b1 ♗f6 7.♗e2) 6...♗xb2 7.♖b1 ♖a3 8.♗f3 ♗a6 (8...b5 9.♗xb5 cxb5 10.♗xb5 ♖xa2 11.♗c3 ♖xb1+ 12.♗f2 ♖xh1 13.♗xc8# – a fun line to play through) 9.h3 b6 10.♗e2 ♗c7 11.0-0. You have lost the worry of playing a pawn down in a position you dominate.

c) 4...♗c6 5.♗f3 ♗g4 6.♗e3 ♗xf3 7.gxf3 e6 8.h4 h5 9.♗d2 d5:



It is a shame that I have seen so many games like this where Black sees the gxf3 and the ...e7-e6 with ...d7-d5 as positional triumphs. Black doesn't understand that setting up these "blockade" positions can be

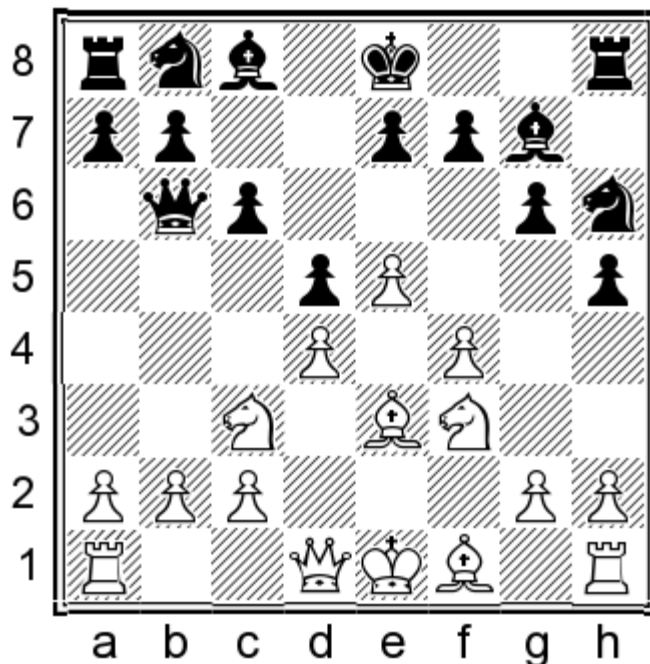
dangerous. Rather than play 10.e5, “gaining space,” and making the game equal, White tears apart Black’s position with 10.f5 gxf5 (10...dxe4 11.fxe6) 11.exd5 exd5 12.0-0-0:



This is an opening nightmare for Black: doubled pawns, loss of control of g5, an open e-file with a rook ready to occupy it, White’s light-squared bishop with squares at h3 and b5 putting great pressure on Black, the coming ♖g1, and perhaps too many threats to deal with that will slow or prevent castling. I used to be so cautious against the Modern with e2-e4, d2-d4, c2-c3, ♕d3, ♜e2, 0-0. Black would play ...e7-e5 at some point and I’d be toast.

There is one more Modern line you should know about – the Gurgenedze System, which was quite the rage many years ago and still has adherents. Its radical idea goes something along these lines:

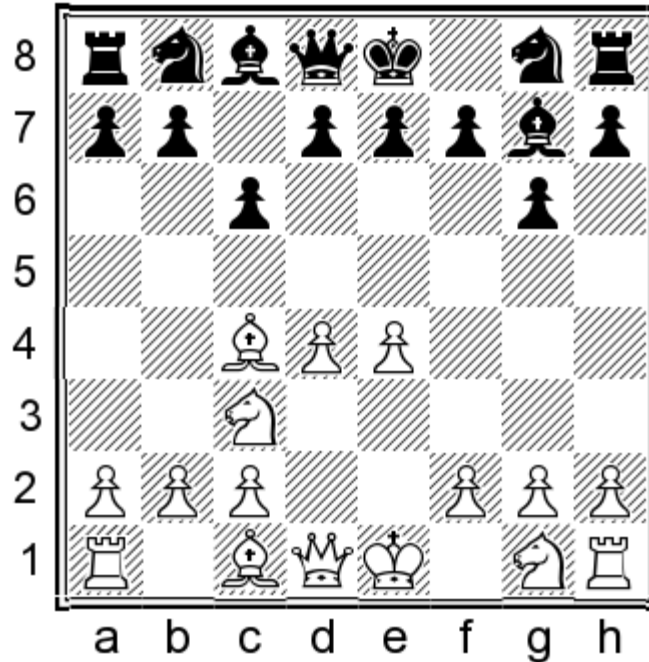
1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♞c3 c6 4.f4 d5 5.e5 h5 6.♞f3 ♞h6 7.♗e3 ♚b6



Black has many ideas here, among them playing ...♗g4, ...♝xf3, and (after gxf3) ...♘f5. Also, if White plays h2-h3, there is ...e7-e6, ...♘f5, and ...h5-h4 to deal with. It greatly depends on the move order. It's a pesky system with players who like blockaded positions. You should be OK, but it is a "comfort quotient" question again.

To veer toward a less-blockaded position, an excellent suggestion is Chris Baker's recommendation (in *A Startling Chess Opening Repertoire*) of

4. ♗c4



White takes advantage of the fact that there is no knight on f6 for a possible ...♘e4 fork trick. It discourages the immediate ...d7-d5: 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♗c4 d5 5.exd5 b5 (5...cxd5 6.♗xd5 ♘f6 7.♗b3) 6.♗d3 b4 7.♘e4 cxd5 8.♘f3 ♜b6 (8...dxe4 9.♗xe4 – it always helps to be alert!) 9.♘c5 ♘d7 10.♘xd7 ♗xd7 11.0-0 ♘h6 12.♝e1, and natural development gives White an easy game (notes based on Baker).

Black has other tries. 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♗c4:

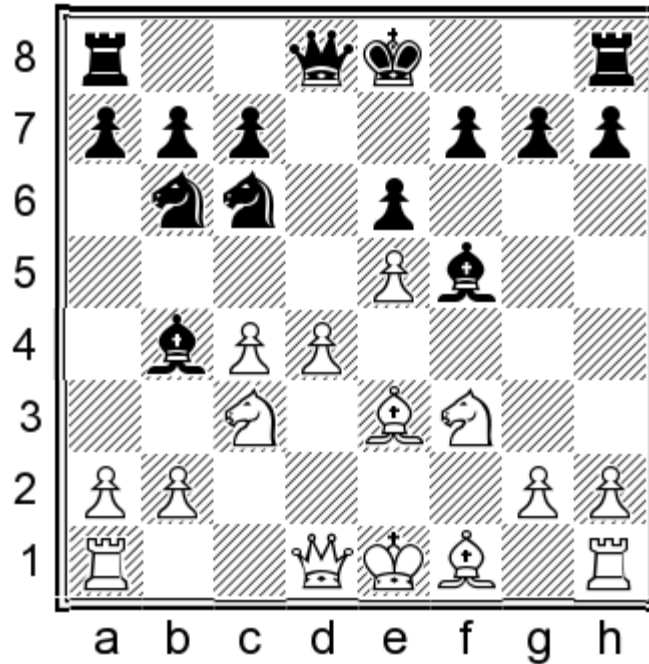
- a) 4...d6 5.♜f3 ♘f6 6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘d5 8.♘xd5 cxd5 9.♗xd5 0-0 10.♗xb7 ♗xb7 11.♜xb7 ♘d7 12.f4;
- b) 4...b5 5.♗b3 a5 6.a3 ♗a6 7.♜f3 e6 8.e5 d6 9.exd6 ♗xd4 10.♘ge2 ♗xc3+? 11.♜xc3 ♘f6 12.♗g5 ♘bd7 13.♘d4;
- c) 4...e6 5.e5 d5 6.exd6 b5 7.♗d3 ♜xd6 8.♘ge2 ♘f6 9.♗f4.

You should get the idea from these lines that you have little to fear in the Pirc or the Modern as long as you remain calm. It is also useful to remember that Black's threats generally fall into these categories: using the king bishop on the long diagonal; attacking advanced white pawns with moves like ...d7-d6 and ...f7-f6; aggressive queen moves; and, especially with the Modern, blocking the position. It's easier to choose your own plan if you can anticipate your opponent's plan.

5. What Do You Play Against Alekhine's Defense?

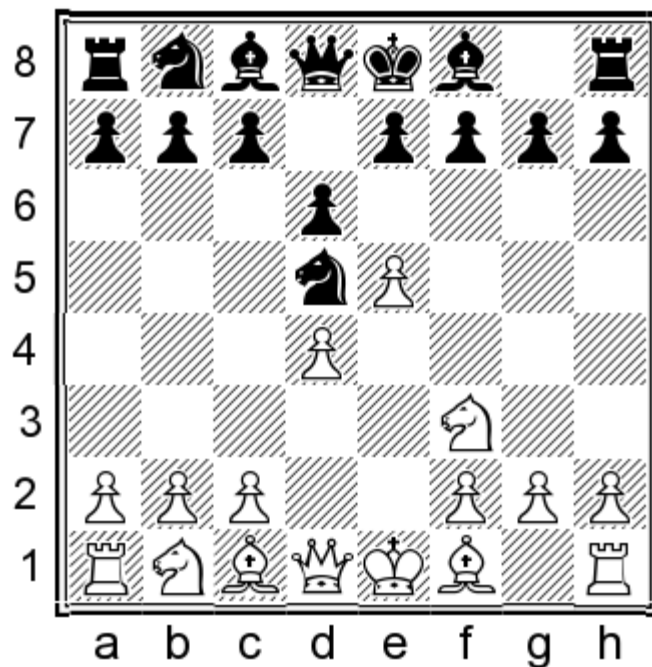
No matter how you spell it (it probably should be Alyokhin, but the chess world hasn't accepted that, many preferring the "Alec-Kine" pronunciation), Alekhine's (or Alekhin's) Defense attracts players who like to get off the beaten paths and just love to do things like counterattacking against a pawn center.

For a century, the main battleground between those who try to hold the center and those who try to undermine it has been the Four Pawns' Attack: 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4 d6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxex5 ♗c6 7.♕e3 ♕f5 8.♗c3 e6 9.♗f3 ♖b4:



And the "discussion" over the issue begins. There are even deviations before this. Wild lines follow. This is not the opening for the casual player on either side. Nobody has refuted it.

Many modern players of the white pieces have taken a more sedate approach with 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3:

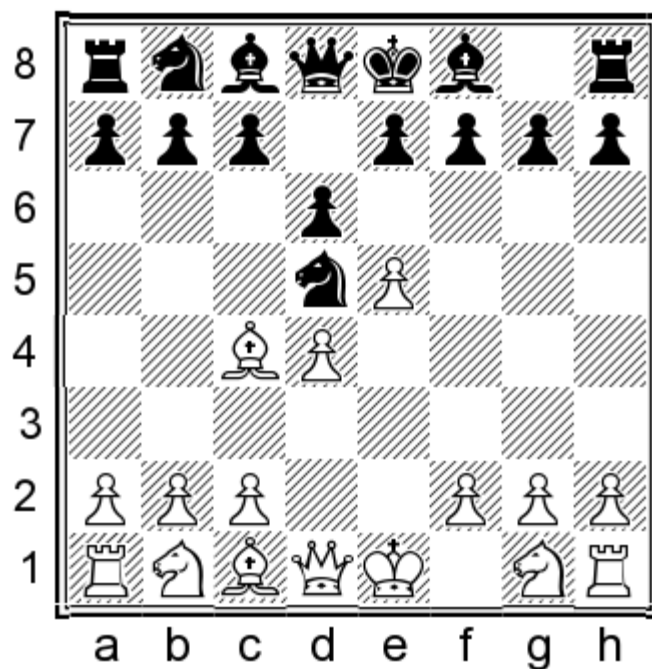


At this point, Black has chosen mostly 4...♗g4, 4...g6, or sometimes 4...dxe5 with a smattering of other choices.

We recommend a system popularized by the Peruvian master Esteban Canal, who was known as an attacking player. Let's take a look at a very typical game he played with this line.

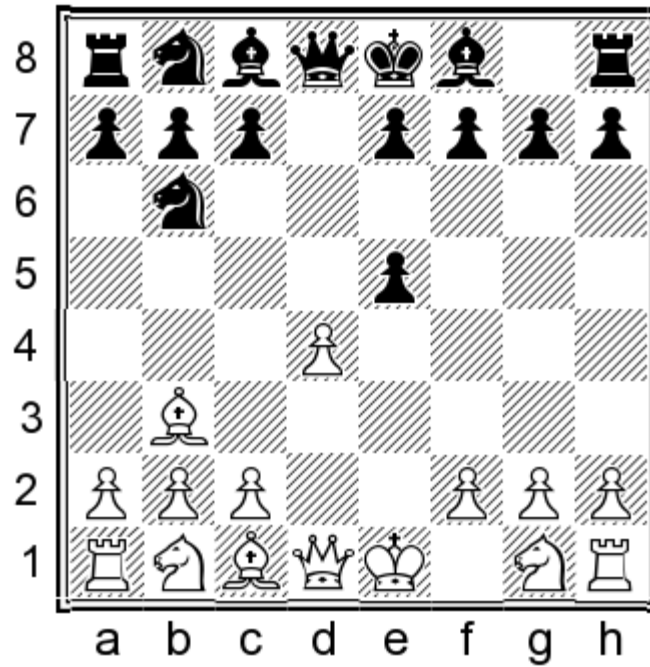
Model Game 17
Canal – Pérez
 Madrid 1951

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗c4



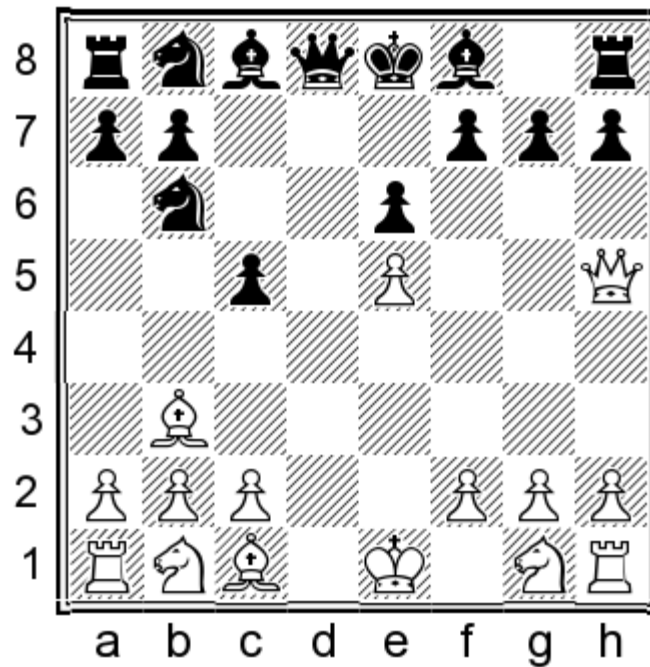
This characterizes the Canal line. Black cannot play 4...dxe5 5.dxe5 ♖b6?? because of 6.♗xf7+ winning the queen (Soltis). Black gets the order right with –

4...♖b6 5.♗b3 dxe5



Now it is White's turn not to be foolish by playing 6.dxe5, because of 6...♙xd1+ 7.♕xd1 ♖c6 followed by 8...a5 and Black has the initiative. So, White has a little *Zwischenzug* – a nasty threat to f7!

6.♙h5 e6 7.dxe5 c5

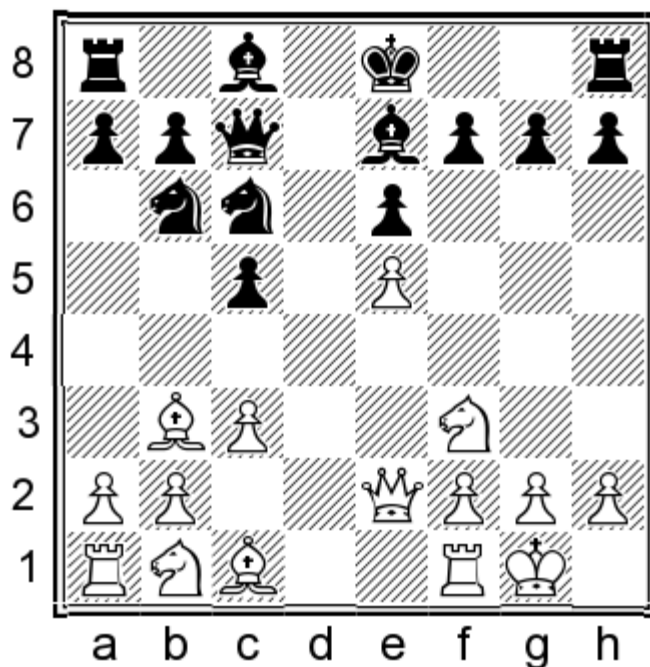


Black also will try to harass the bishop with 7...a5, but White is OK there, too, with 8.a4 ♖c6 9.♗f3 and ideas similar to our game.

8.c3

To provide a nice attacking post for the bishop in case of ...c5-c4.

8...♞c6 9.♚e2 ♜e7 10.♞f3 ♚c7 11.0-0



White's development has been quite easy. He is castled. He has space. If Black castles kingside, the king knight is on the other side of the board. White will be able to deploy his queen to several dark squares and the knight on b1 has a handy knight path with ♞a3 and ♞b5 or ♞c4, as well as ♞bd2, ♞e4, and even ♞eg5 if the occasion requires it. Black can target the pawn on e5 which is cramping his queen bishop, but White can easily defend it. You have to give the edge to White here. It's not a won game, but it's a promising position requiring little effort.

11...♞d7

If 11...♞d7, some ideas we just mentioned pop up: 12.♞a3 a6 13.♞c4 0-0-0 14.♞d6+ ♜xd6 15.exd6 ♚xd6 16.♞d1 ♚c7 17.♞g5 ♜hf8 18.♜e3 ♞a5 19.♞e4 ♜b5 20.♚h5 c4 21.♜c2 ♞d5 22.♜c5 ♜fe8 23.b4 cxb3 24.axb3 g6 25.♚h3 f5 26.♞d6+ ♜xd6 27.♜xd6 ♚xd6 28.c4 ♞xc4 29.bxc4 ♜xc4 30.♚xh7. A bit of a long line, but it highlights key moves with the knight.

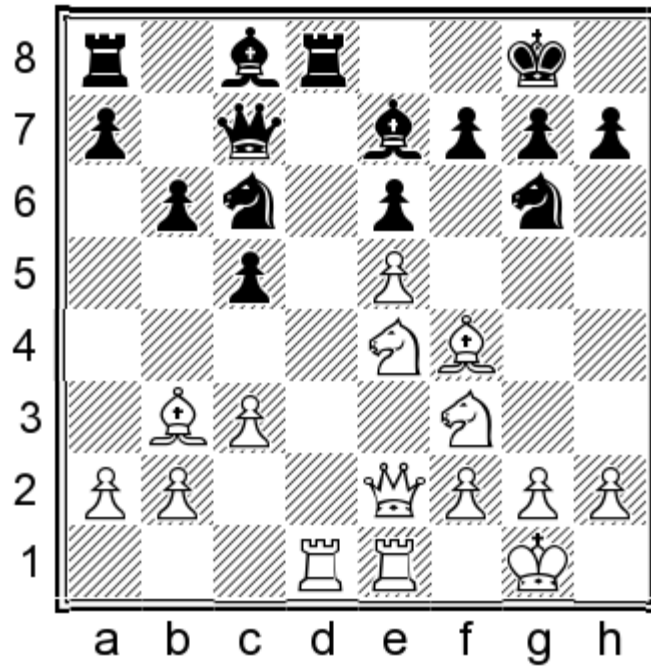
12.♜e1

Also possible is 12.♜f4 0-0 13.♞d1.

12...0-0 13.♜f4 ♞d8 14.♞bd2

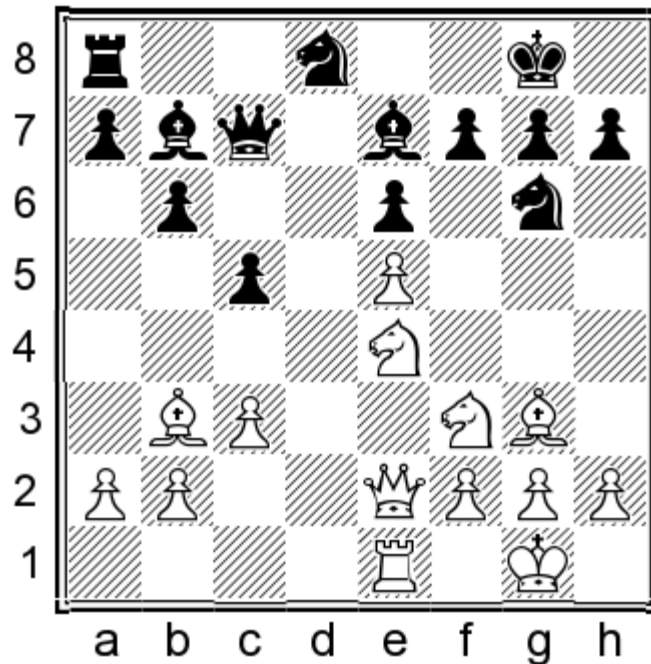
Another route, as mentioned before, is 14.♞a3 a6 15.♞c4.

14...♞f8 15.♞ad1 b6 16.♞e4 ♞g6



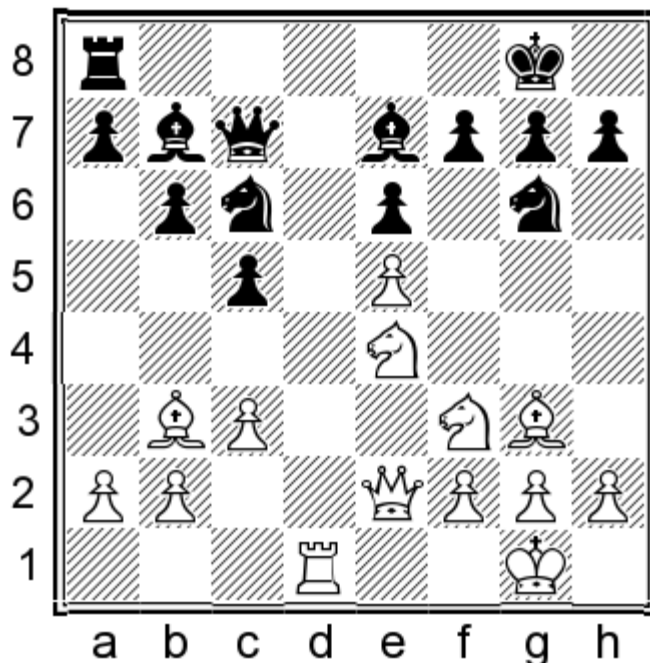
Black is still untangling his queenside, whereas White has all his pieces on good squares and has yet more squares to go to.

17. ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 18. ♗g3 ♖b7



This position and Canal's move choice tells us a bit about him. He seems to revel in piece play. Look at the scope of his pieces! It is quite certain that he saw the line 19.h4 h5 20. ♜fg5 ♗xg5 21. ♜xg5 ♖c6 22.f3 ♜e7 23. ♗c2 ♖c7 24. ♖d2 (24. ♖d3 ♜f5 25. ♗f2) 24... ♗c6 25. ♗h7+ ♜f8 26. ♖d1, but chose a different style of attack. In doing so, he shows us how the opening chosen leads to a piece formation that lends itself rather nicely to a kingside attack. You must always make a point of seeing how the opening plan has a connection to the formation of a middlegame plan.

19. ♖d1 ♗c6



This is one of those moments when all the opening knowledge in the world won't help you if you haven't studied how to assault a kingside castled position. One of the most common sacrifices in this area is ♗f6+. What makes this possibility even more delicious is the indirect attack on the queen by the g3-bishop, which will become a direct threat when the e5-pawn recaptures on f6. Incidentally, that's why pawns on e5 are so important!

Canal ends it with yet another *Zwischenzug* on move 26 and another piece sac on move 29. A very clear game for understanding this line.

20. ♗f6+ gxf6 21. exf6 ♗f4 22. ♖d2 ♗xf6 23. ♗xf4 ♗e5 24. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 25. ♗g3 ♗xg3 26. ♖g5+ ♔h8 27. ♖f6+ ♔g8 28. hxg3 ♗e4 29. ♗xe6 and 1-0 as after

29... fxe6 30. ♖xe6+ ♖f7 31. ♖xe4.

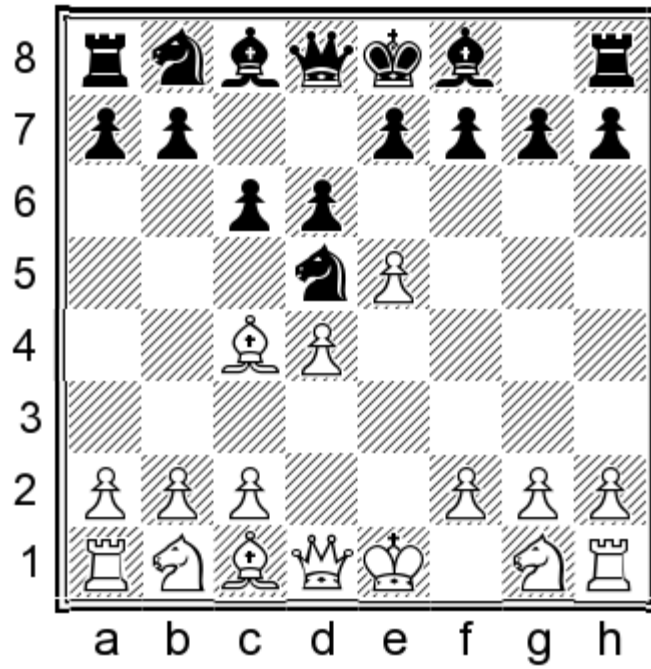
Black has another option that we deal with next. The same principles of development and piece play apply.

Model Game 18

Sax – D. Burić

Bizovac 2002

1. e4 ♗f6 2. e5 ♗d5 3. d4 d6 4. ♗c4 c6

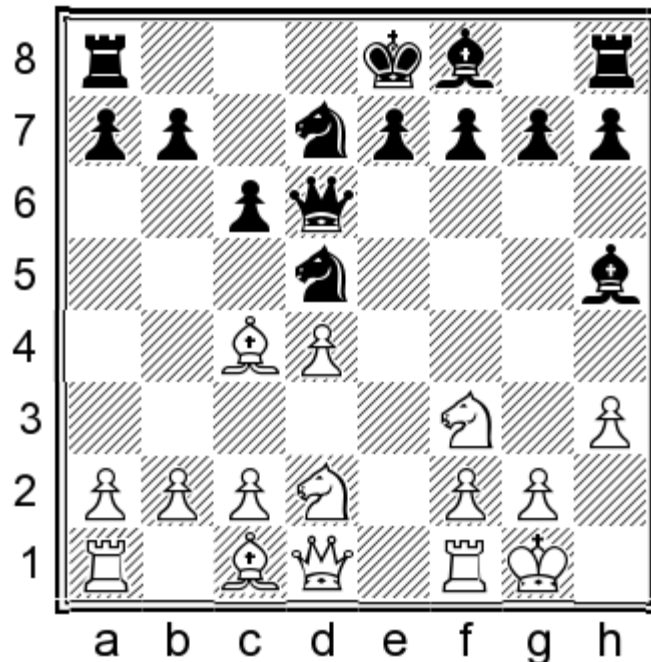


In contrast to the previous game, Black wants to be able to get his queen bishop out and not be in such a hurry to move the knight and expose f7. White does not try to keep the pawn tension by defending e5, but instead relies on getting his pieces out.

5. ♖f3 ♗g4 6. exd6 ♕xd6

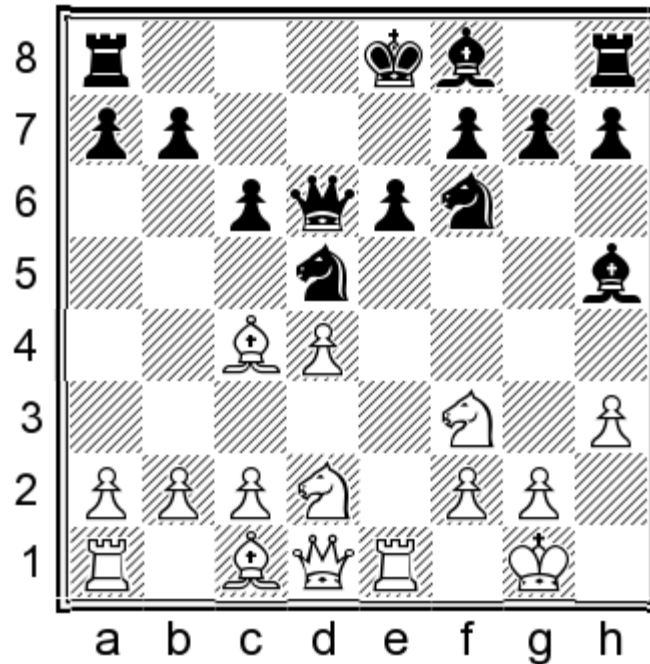
Getting clever as Black is a possibility, but it can get dangerous for the second player: 6...e6 7.h3 ♗f5 8.0-0 ♗xd6 9.♗g5 ♖b6 10.♖h4 ♗e7 11.♖xf5 ♗xg5 12.♖d6+ ♔e7 13.♖e4 ♗f6 (13...♖xb2 14.♖xg5 ♖xa1 15.♖f3 f6 16.♖xe6) 14.♖xf6 ♖xf6 15.♖d3 ♖xb2 16.♖d2 ♖b6 17.♗ab1 ♖c7 18.♖a3+ ♖d6 19.♗xb7+ ♖bd7 20.♖a4, and Black's position is a shambles. White has in mind ♖b3 and ♖a5.

7.0-0 ♖d7 8.h3 ♗h5 9.♖bd2



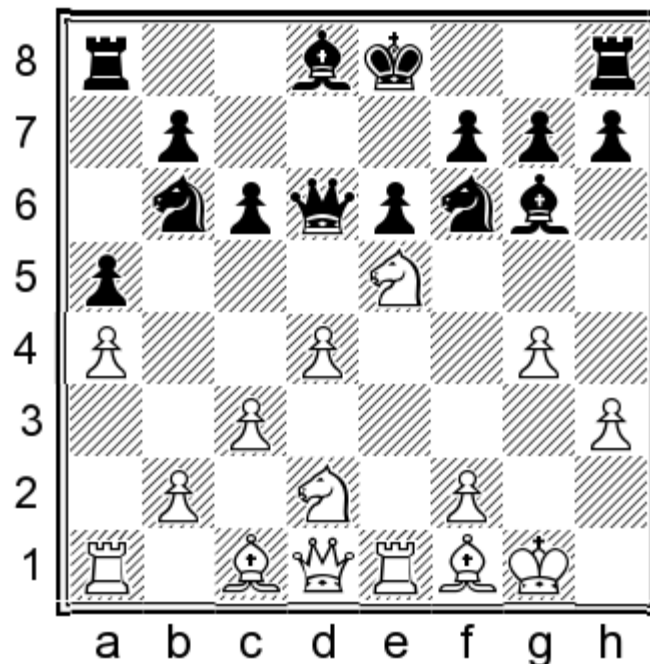
Yes, you could play 9.♘c3 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 e6 11.♙d3 ♚c7 12.a4 ♔d6 13.♞e1 with a minimal edge, but why trade the knights when Black is still cramped? Not only that, but you now retain the possibility of c2-c4, chasing the knight.

9...♘7f6 10.♞e1 e6



You're still in the opening. As we stated in the Primer, the central focus is the struggle in the center. Not only has White castled, but he has played ♞e1 which acts on the center and allows for a big move for White here – ♔f1, which threatens c2-c4 and in turn rules out the black knight's retreat to b6 because of c4-c5. Thus, Black anticipates this thrust.

11.♔f1 ♘b6 12.a4 a5 13.c3 ♔e7 14.g4 ♔g6 15.♘e5 ♔d8



White has picked an opportune moment for the h3/g4 chasing of the bishop we talked about at some length in the Primer. Black can't take advantage of it with 15...h5 because 16.♖xg6 fxg6 17.g5 stops any counter in its tracks. As it is, White's next move encourages Black to accept the same pawn formation, and the win is now certain.

16.h4 h5 17.♖xg6 fxg6 18.♗e4 ♗xe4 19.♝xe4 ♞f8 20.♚e2 ♜d7 21.c4 ♟xh4 22.f4

Also good is 22.♟e3.

22...♗xc4 23.♚xc4 ♟g3 24.♚b3 1-0

Black resigns as both the b7-pawn and the g3-bishop are under attack.

The Canal Variation was characterized by Eales and Williams in their 1973 book on Alekhine's Defense as, "too rustic to cause Black many problems." Nevertheless, it is apparent that it can cause Black some annoying ones!

6. What Do You Play Against the Scandinavian/Center Counter?

It's not only an opening with several names, but an opening with several lives. It has undergone a rebirth in recent years, as attested to by the number of books on it.

People on my message board periodically ask me what I think of the idea of countering 1.e4 with 1...d5. I think it's tricky and trappy and doesn't have to gambit a pawn to be so. Its main strength is that most people are not familiar with its nuances. A well-versed defender can create problems for his opponent.

Having said all that, it is still not an opening I would recommend. It loses time for no positional compensation. It has no way of forcing an unbalanced game to try for a win if White is determined to keep it level. Its rarity at higher levels means that if you want to be a higher-rated player, you had better find a different defense for Black.

Granted, Scandinavian and English internationals have devoted considerable time to it and have used it with some success, but nobody has really picked it up as their favorite defense to 1.e4.

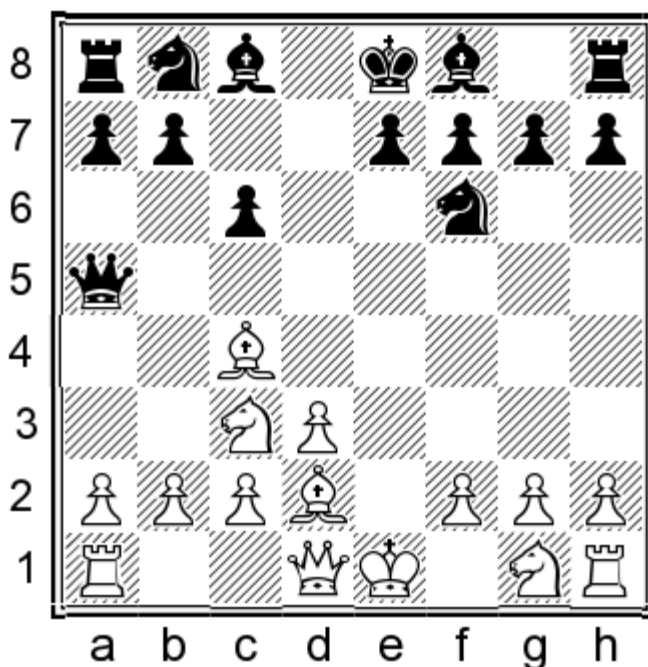
For amateurs playing against this defense, we heartily recommend applying basic principles. This applies both to the normal 3...♖a5 and to the less normal 3...♗e6+ or 3...♗d6+ or 3...♗d8.

In our ICC lectures (the Scandinavian set is still available), we demonstrated how I.A. Horowitz in 1935 dealt brilliantly with 3...♗a5 (see the game score without commentary on p. 215). Fred Wilson asked to use it in his *Simple Attacking Plans*, so a more modern game will be presented here.

Jovanka Houska demolishes GM Ludger Keitlinghaus in the 2003/2004 season of the German Bundesliga. What she does is a textbook lesson from beginning to end.

Model Game 19

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗a5 4.♙c4 ♘f6 5.d3 c6 6.♙d2



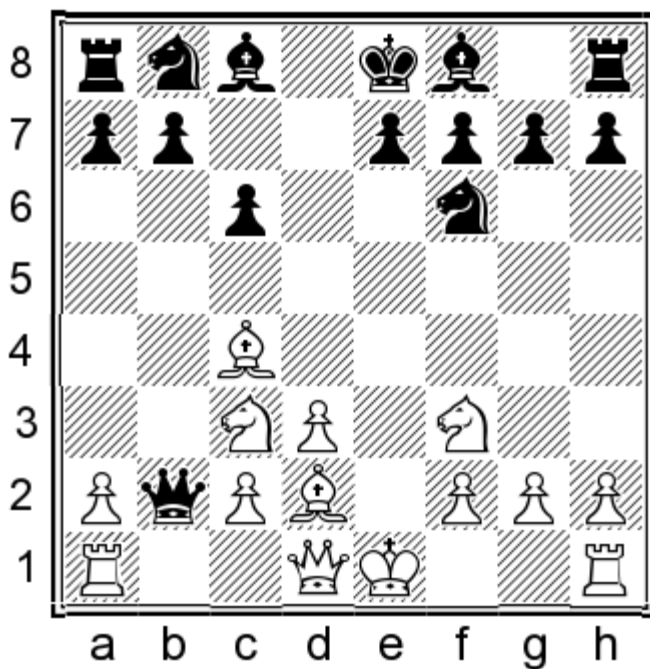
Three cheers for Houska and common sense. Although d2-d4 is normally played against this line, this is a perfectly good variation. Its advantages lie in getting the bishop to continue the queen's harassment and not having the d4-pawn as a target.

6...♝b6

Another lesson for our Primer. What makes GMs think they're invincible? Better was 6...♝c7 7.♘f3 e6 8.0-0 ♗d6 9.♞e2 ♘bd7 10.d4 0-0 11.♞fe1 and White has a much freer game with normal developing moves. A more exciting line would be 6...♝c7 7.♞e2 ♗g4 8.f3 ♗h5 9.g4 ♗g6 10.f4 b5 11.♗b3 a5 12.f5 a4 13.fxg6 axb3 14.gxf7+ ♘xf7 15.cxb3 h6 16.♘f3, and White is clearly winning. It again shows that, sometimes, pawn pushes before castling can work. It all depends... That's what makes chess a challenge.

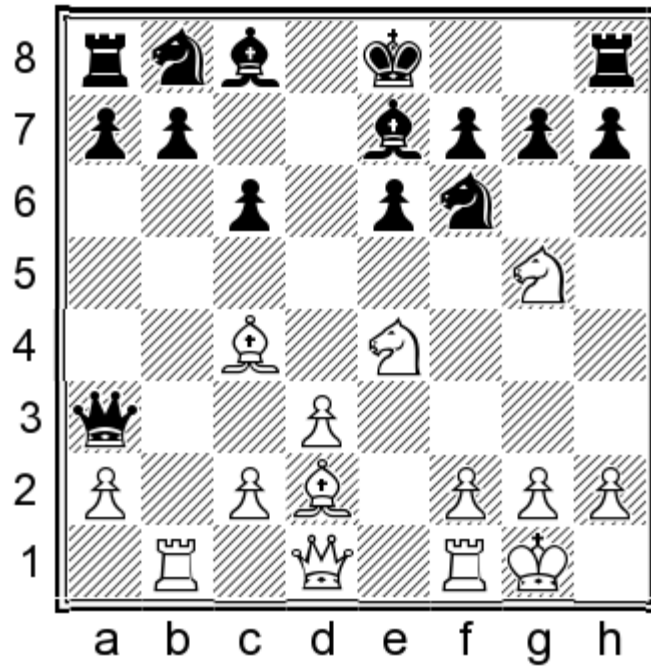
Houska in *New in Chess* gives a game where Black played into this line with 6...♗g4 and White pushed Black off the board by using his kingside pawns. Worth playing over: 6...♗g4 7.f3 ♗f5 8.♞e2 ♝c7 9.g4 ♗g6 10.f4 h5 11.f5 ♗h7 12.g5 ♘g4 13.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 14.g6+ ♚e8 15.gxh7 (V. Moskvitin – Nadezhdin, Novgorod 1997).

7.♘f3 ♝xb2



He's going to sleep in the streets rather early. White picks a sharp way of demonstrating the deficiencies of 7...♝xb2.

8.♘g5 e6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♞b1 ♞a3 11.♘ce4

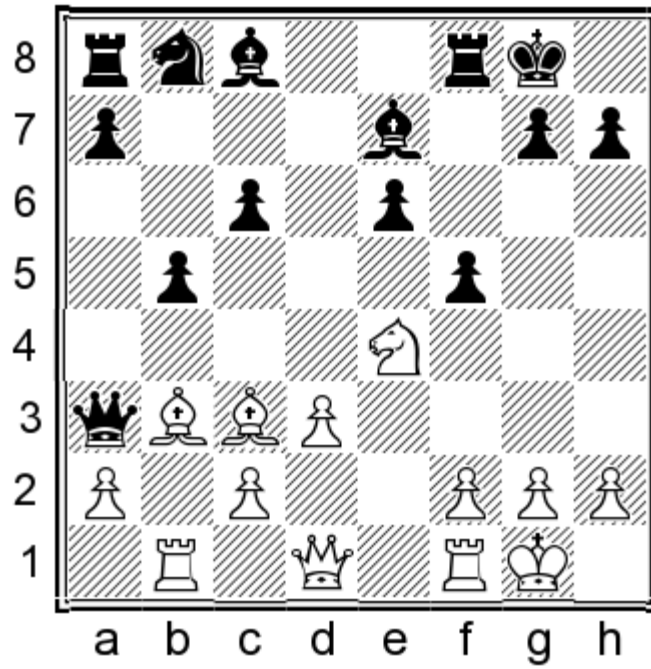


Houska remarks that she went here to take away dark squares from the black queen. The idea of square control, especially preventing your opponent from going to certain ones (prophylaxis), often marks a developmental step up for the average chessplayer. It gets you away from the “where do I go now?” mindset to, “how can I make it harder for my opponent to move?” She also points out that a possible ♕b4 may be in the offing, if, say, Black’s bishop recaptures on f6 on an exchange.

11...♗xe4

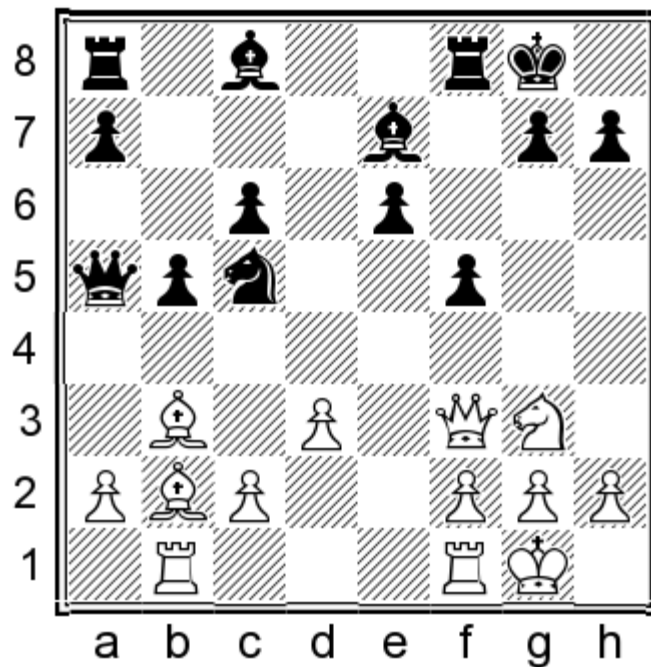
Black had other choices: the reasonable 11...b5 12.♕b3 ♗xe4 13.♗xe4 0-0 14.♖f3 and White maintains the initiative; the disastrous 11...♗bd7 12.♖b3 ♖a4 13.♗c3 ♖a5 14.♗b5 ♖d8 (14...♖b6 15.♗d6+ ♕xd6 16.♖xb6) 15.♕xe6 cxb5 (15...fxe6 16.♗xe6) 16.♕xf7+ ♔f8 17.♗e6+. This last variation is as fine an example as you can find to illustrate the utter humiliation of the queen in the Scandinavian.

12.♗xe4 b5 13.♕b3 0-0 14.♕c3 f5



Black is desperate here as the white queen's easy access to Black's kingside, along with two bishops and a nicely posted knight, are enough to give any GM the jitters. Houska, though, suggests that better was 14...♘d7 15.♙g4 e5 16.♙g3 where "White's position is preferable." White inserts a little "zwischen" before moving the knight:

15.♙b2 ♖a5 16.♘g3 ♘a6 17.♙f3 ♘c5



Before you look at the finish where White starts out with 18.♘xf5!! (the e6-pawn is pinned), ask yourself two questions that you should always ask in positions like this: "How do I intend to make this sacrifice work? What can Black do to not cooperate?" See what you come up with.

18.♘xf5!! ♜xf5 19.♙xf5 ♘xb3 20.♙e5 1-0

20...♔f6 21.♚e4 ♘d7 (21...♞c5 22.♚xc6 ♜b8 23.♚e8#) 22.axb3 ♘xb2 23.♞xb2 and White is the exchange up with an easy win.

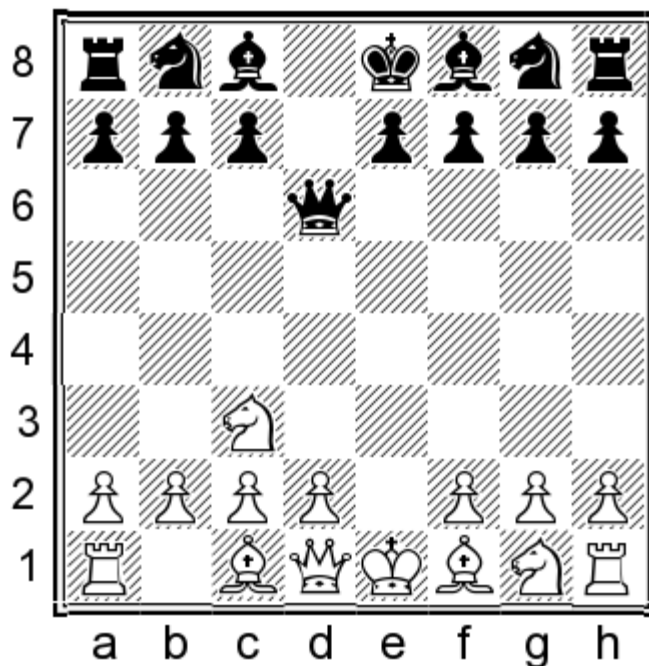
In recent years, an alternative to 3...♚a5 has become popular: 3...♚d6. The following game is another common-sense approach.

Model Game 20

Losev – Orlinkov

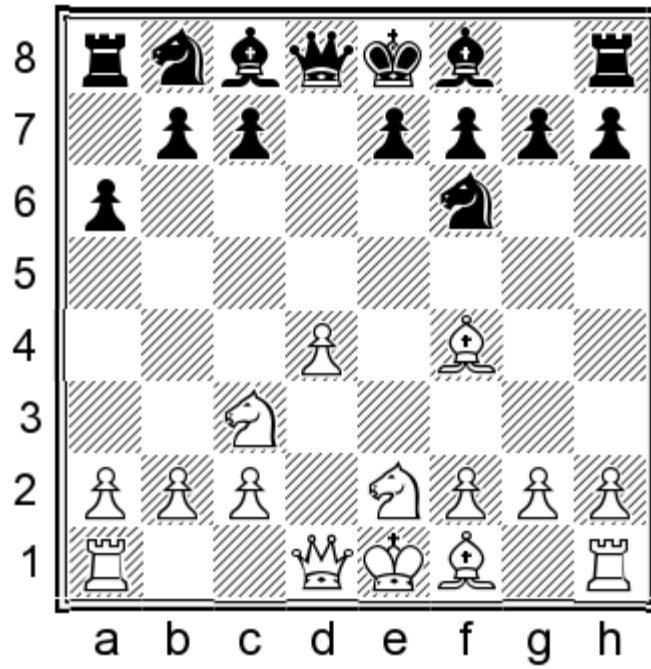
Moscow 2010

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♚xd5 3.♞c3 ♚d6



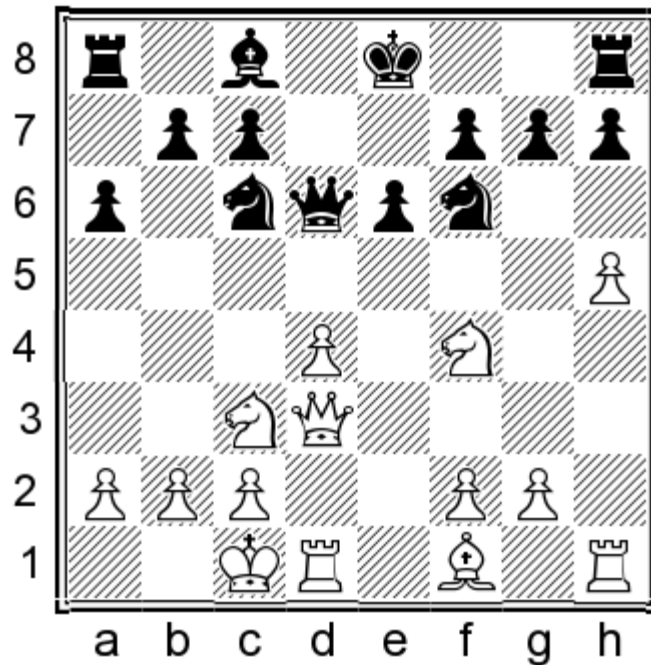
What's the big idea of this? There are several. The black queen puts pressure on d4, which may be followed up by ...♞c6 and queenside castling. Depending on how the game goes, it could also be used to support an ...e7-e5 or ...c7-c5 (hitting d4) thrust. The downside is that the queen is in a very awkward spot and part of the accepted theory is that ...a7-a6 has to be played to prevent ♞b5. Thus, you, as Black, have wasted several tempi. White generally gets into trouble if he overreaches in the attempt to refute this line. You're not going to refute any of the major defenses. What we're trying to do in this book with all these openings is to get you to a playable, solid game with good chances for an aggressive plan to try for a win. Anyone and any book that promises you a win is just promoting sales through hyperbole.

4.d4 ♞f6 5.♞ge2 a6 6.♔f4 ♚d8



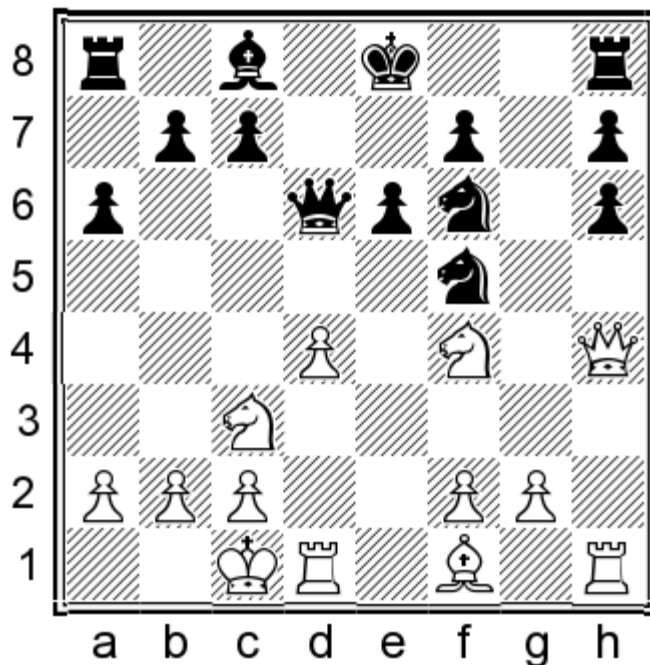
On moves 4-6, a great deal has happened. Black has retreated back to d8 after having played ...a7-a6. After playing ...a7-a6 to prevent ♖b5, he had to deal with White's ♗ge2 and ♘f4. White had to block the development of his king bishop to do it, but he figured it was worth it. Why? His plan is to play a quick ♙d3 and 0-0-0 and then quickly advance his h-pawn to disrupt the black kingside. The bishop's best square will be determined later. First he wants to get done what he is sure about.

7. ♙d3 ♘c6 8. 0-0-0 e6 9. h4 ♗d6 10. h5 ♗xf4+ 11. ♖xf4 ♙d6



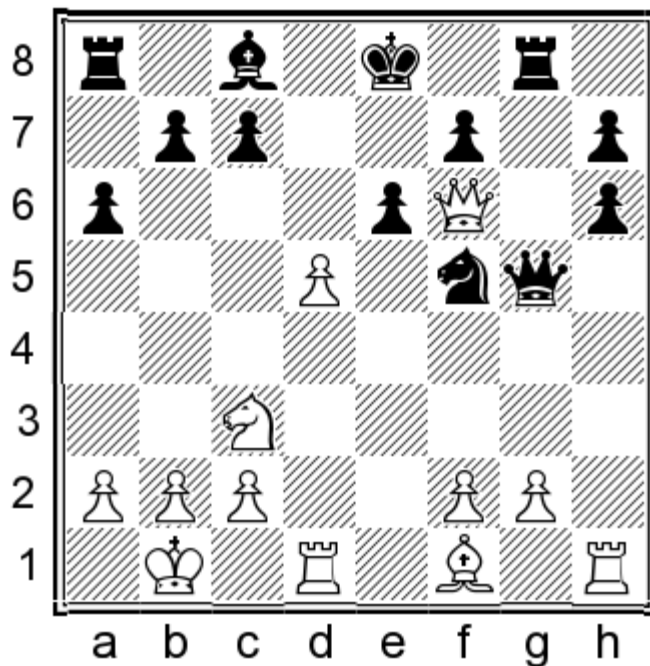
Black has managed to trade off bishops to try and ease the pressure. He also has some notion of castling queenside, so he has to bring the queen out to d6 (again!) and play ...♗d7. Unfortunately for him, he has to deal with White's plan, which is in full swing.

12. ♖g3 ♗e7 13. h6 gxh6 14. ♖h4 ♘f5



Black telegraphed his intentions with ...♗e7 heading for f5, so White made a great decision here. What else could he do, other than defend his f4-knight? He saw the advantage in taking on f6, even allowing a check, because Black would then have to deal with his attacked rook, and the position would be ready for the can opener: d4-d5!

15. ♖xf6 ♖xf4+ 16. ♔b1 ♜g8 17. d5 ♖g5



White could just move ♖e5 here to avoid exchanging and easing Black's game, but instead he enhances his position by bringing another piece into play. Black collapses.

18. ♘e4 ♖g7 19. ♙c4 ♘d6 20. dxe6 ♙xe6 21. ♙xe6 ♘xe4 22. ♙d7+ ♔f8 23. ♖f4 1-0

It's hopeless: 23...♖xg2 (23...♖g6 24.♗f5; 23...♗d6 24.♞xd6 cxd6 25.♖xd6#) 24.♗h3 ♖xf2 (24...♖g6 25.♗f5) 25.♖xe4 ♖b6 26.♞hf1 ♞g7 27.♞d7 ♗g8 28.♞dx7 ♞xf7 29.♗e6.

A little addition for those of you who don't have Wilson's book or access to my ICC lecture – the aforementioned Horowitz–Kibbermann game:

Horowitz – Kibbermann

Warsaw Olympiad 1935

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♖a5 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗h5 7.g4 ♗g6 8.♗e5 c6 9.♗c4 ♖c7 10.♖f3 ♗xc2 11.♗f4 ♖d8 12.♖e2 ♗g6 13.♗d6+ ♗d7 14.♗xb7 ♖b6 15.♗c5+ ♗c8 16.♗g2 e6 17.0-0 ♗d5 18.♗xd5 cxd5 19.♞ac1 ♗d8 20.♗g5+ ♗e7 21.♗xe7+ ♗xe7 22.♗xd5 ♗d7 23.♗xa8 ♞xa8 24.♗xd7 ♗xd7 25.♞fd1 ♖b7 26.d5 exd5 27.♖e5 1-0

If you think about these two 3...♖a5 games and the possible variations, it's still about chess fundamentals: get your pieces out, make threats gaining time, control space, open lines to his king, don't be in a hurry to exchange material as Black is the one with the restricted position.

A good many Center Counter players figure that the suffering under ...♖xd5 is not worth it, so they have delayed the capture on d5 for ...♗f6xd5. We covered this briefly in the Primer. After the game below, we offer two ICCF games where the second player delays the knight recapture, featuring the same player as Black. He's now playing the Sicilian! Only one of that player's (Everitt's) games will be annotated; the other will be in there as a reference.

First, though, we will cover a game from the U.S. Championship that is an important contest for you to understand for opening reasons as well as chess thinking reasons.

Model Game 21

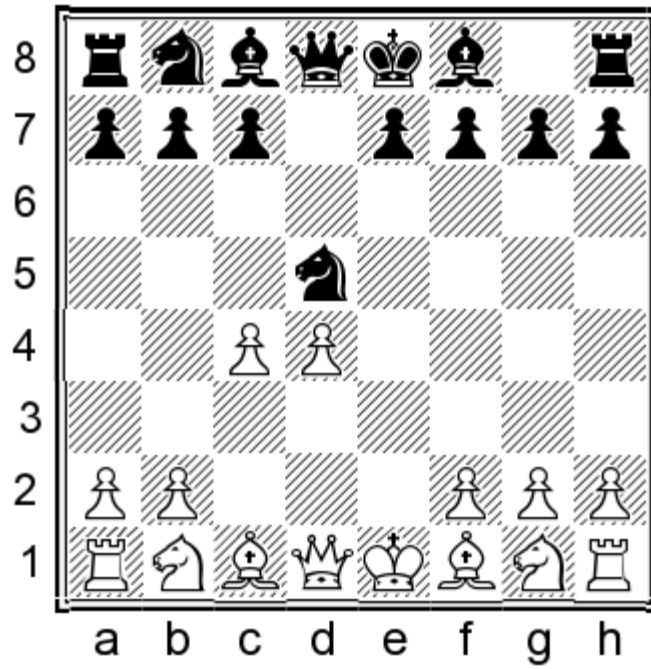
R. Byrne – Rogoff

U.S. Chp., Pasadena 1978

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗f6

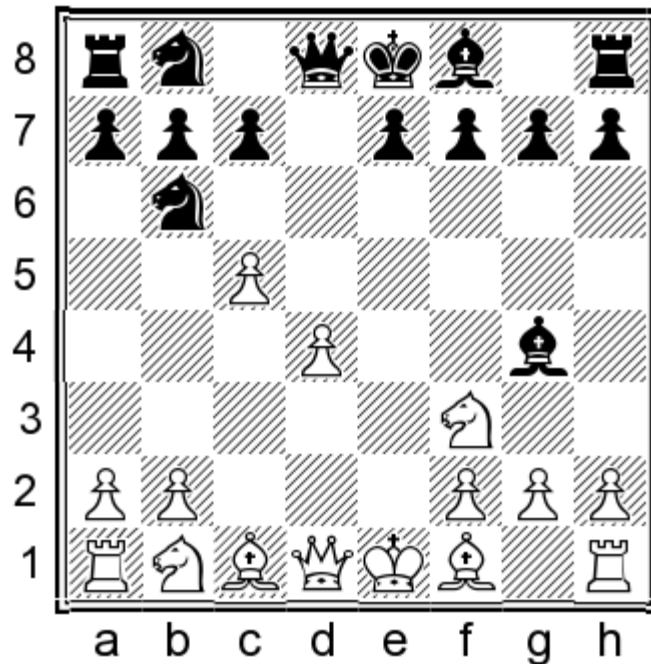
If you're really cautious, you can study the 3.♗b5+ systems, e.g. 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗f6 3.♗b5+ ♗d7 4.♗c4 b5 5.♗e2 ♗xd5 6.♗f3 with d2-d4 and 0-0 to follow.

3.d4 ♗xd5 4.c4



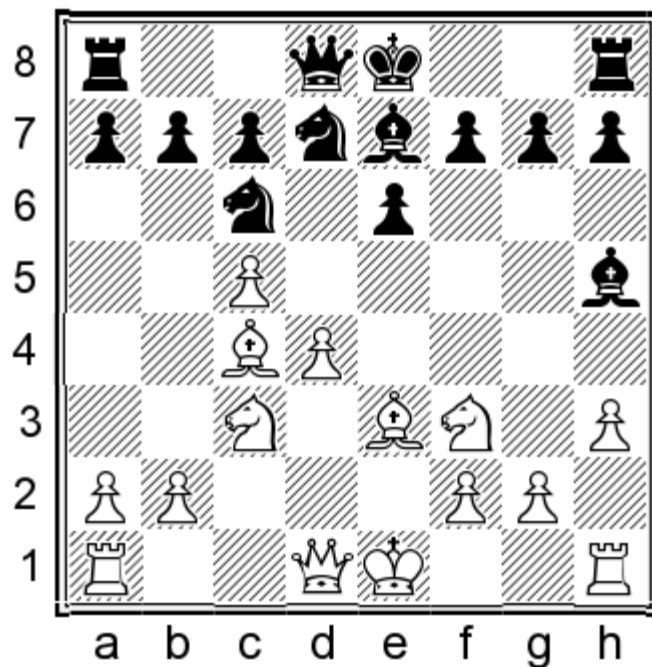
Each side is challenging the other. Black says, “advance your pawns and I’ll end up counterattacking against your center.” White is saying, “I’m going to restrict you so that won’t be successful.” White will play 5. ♖f3 to that end, to avoid 5. ♗c3 e5!.

4... ♗b6 5. ♖f3 ♘g4 6. c5



Not what many average players would consider, since it apparently gives Black the d5 square and renders White’s d4-pawn backward. However, right now, Black can’t play ... ♗d5 since 7. ♕b3 would threaten both b7 and ♗e5.

6... ♗d7 7. ♘c4 e6 8. h3 ♘h5 9. ♘e3 ♗c6 10. ♖c3 ♘e7

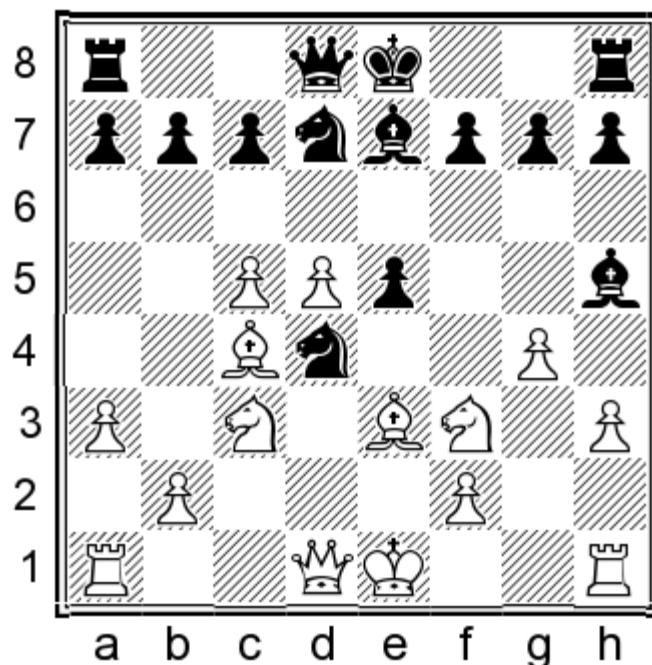


Both sides have concentrated on development. Since White is placed more actively, he decides he has time to threaten an advance on the queenside as well as preventing some future ...♖b4-d5.

11.a3 e5

Black needs to calmly approach his restricted position and play 11...0-0, after which White would have options of advancing to b4 or g4 or both! Black would have to do a goal-line stand. Doable, though. The move he chooses creates turmoil in the center, but he hasn't yet castled. That's not a good, general policy.

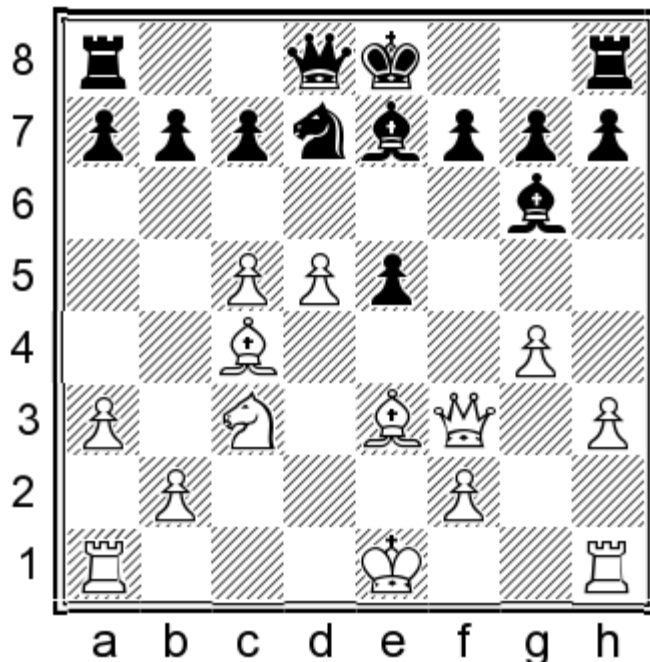
12.d5 ♖d4 13.g4



As I write this book, I've come to realize how many times I've referenced h3/g4-type moves. They show up everywhere. And here we go again! White can play this because Black can't do anything about it. The space

gains with g2-g4 and b2-b4 play a central role in the strategy of this game.

13...♗xf3+ 14.♕xf3 ♖g6



15.b4

Both masters missed White's winning move here: 15.d6 cxd6 16.cxd6 ♕xd6 17.♖d1 ♜c8 (17...♗e7 18.♗b5) 18.♗d5. And now Black misses the pawn move which would vacate the e5 square for the knight.

15...0-0

15...e4 16.♗g3 (16.♗xe4 ♗e5) 16...♗h4 17.♗f4 ♗f6 18.♗d2 ♗e5 19.♗e2 0-0 20.0-0 ♗d3 would have given Black the initiative. This just goes to show (to use a boxing metaphor) that even if you're winning on points, your opponent can still land a staggering punch. Always be alert to what your opponent might have up his sleeve. A good tip I received years ago from a master was to use the time when my opponent was thinking to figure out what my foe was doing. It keeps your sensors up!

16.♖d1 e4 17.♗f4 ♖e8

Black got a second chance and missed it again! He could have tried either 17...♗f6 18.♗d4 (18.♗xe4 ♗e5) 18...♗g5 19.♗g3 ♗h4, or even 17...♗e5 18.♗xe5 ♗f6 19.♗g3 ♗xc3+ 20.♗f1 a5 21.♗g2 axb4 22.axb4 ♖a4. 17...♖e8 is a blunder.

18.♗b5 ♜c8 19.d6

Why chessplayers from GM to duffer see the right move one or two moves late is one of the mysteries of the chess thinking process.

19...cxd6 20.♗xd6 ♕xd6 21.♖xd6 ♗e7 22.♗d4 ♜c6 23.h4 e3 24.fxe3 ♖xd6 25.cxd6 ♗e4 26.0-0 ♗xf4 27.♖xf4 h5 28.gxh5 ♗xh5 29.♖f5 ♗g6 30.♖g5 ♜c8 31.♖xg6 1-0

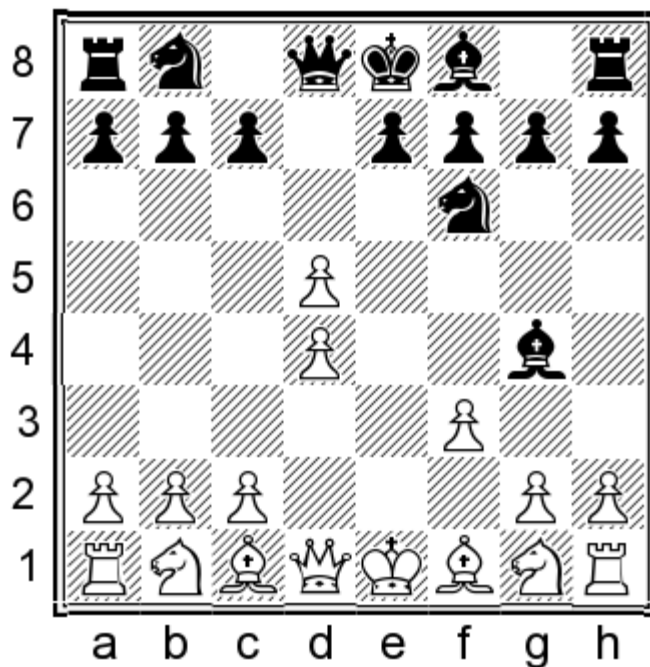
Now we consider the really sharp line:

Model Game 22

Lisetskaya – Everitt

ICCF 2011

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.f3



The idea behind 3...♗g4 is that f2-f3 would be weakening (the e3 square) and interfere with White's natural kingside development.

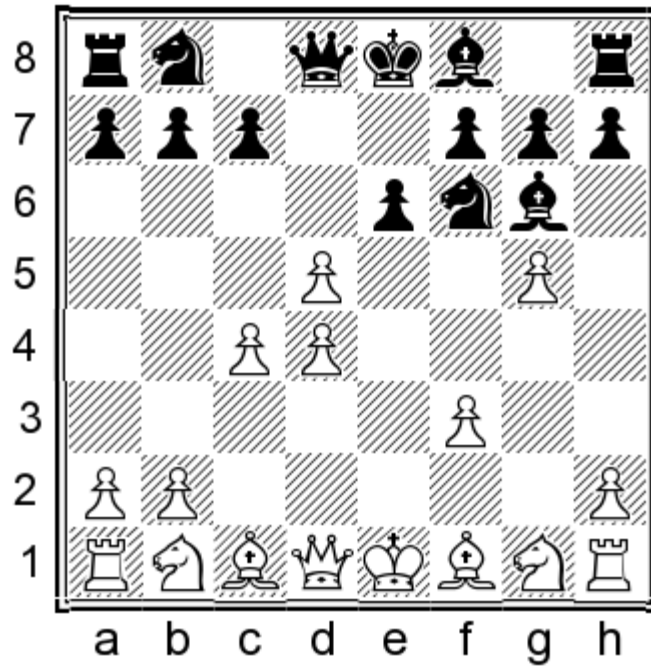
4...♗f5

Neither 4...♗d7 nor 4...♗c8 inspires confidence. It's just lost time.

5.g4

A very sharp move! White can play it because Black, although he has more pieces out, is somewhat cramped.

5...♗g6 6.c4 e6 7.g5

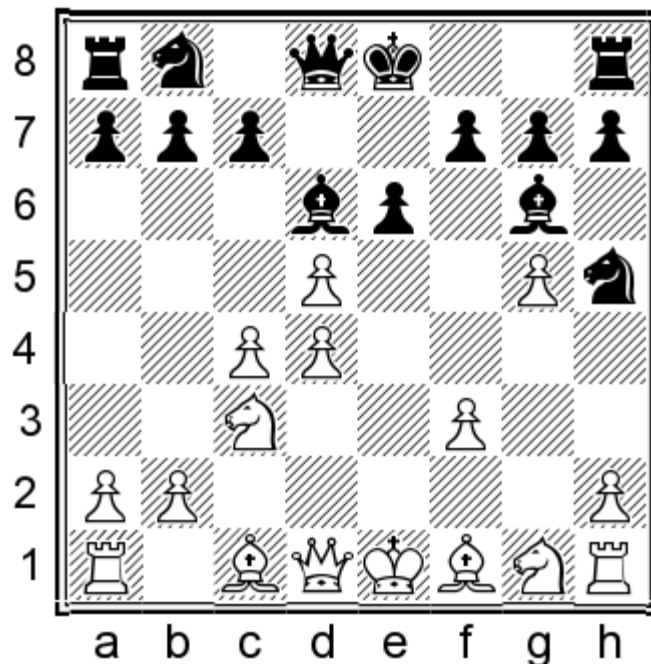


This position reminded me of an old Marshall game against Rogosin in the Wing Gambit (Marshall Chess Club Chp. 1940): 1.e4 c5 2.b4 cxb4 3.a3 ♖c6 4.axb4 ♜f6 5.b5 ♜d4 6.c3 ♜e6 7.e5 ♜d5 8.c4 ♜df4 9.g3 ♜g6 10.f4 ♜gxf4 11.gxf4 ♜xf4 12.d4 ♜g6 13.h4 e6 14.h5 and, after 14 consecutive opening pawn moves, White has a winning game!

7...♞h5

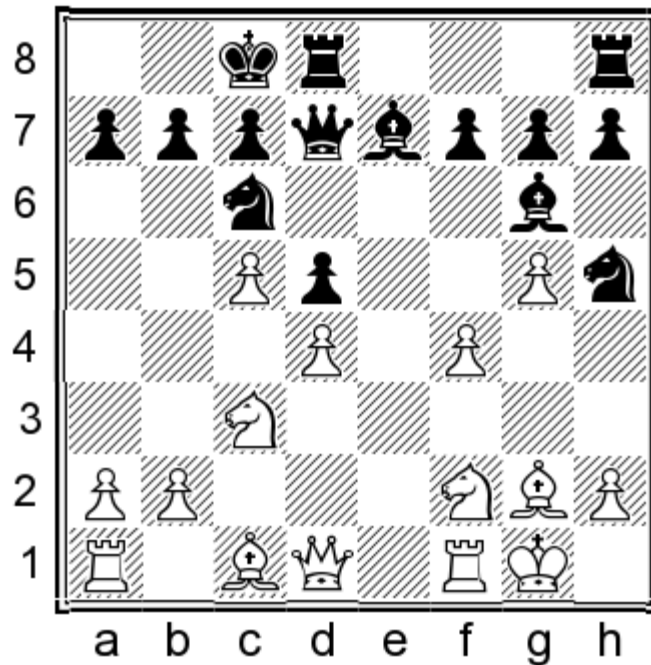
Black, facing Boldysh in a 2005 ICCF event, tried 7...♞fd7 8.♞c3 (8.♞b3) 8...c5 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.d5 exd5 11.cxd5 ♙e7 12.f4 ♞b6 13.a4 a5 14.♞b5 0-0 15.d6 ♙d8 16.♙c4+ ♔h8 17.♞f3 ♞e8+ 18.♙f2 and White has a won game. Undaunted, Black now tries placing the knight on h5 instead.

8.♞c3 ♙d6



This is a good time to talk about your comfort level again. White is still going to be playing pawn moves like c4-c5 and f3-f4 and maneuvering with ♖g1-h3-f2. This seems to go against everything I've been saying – and, to some extent, it does. However, take a closer look. White's pawns are influential in the center and have pushed two of Black's pieces off to the side, and they are about to jostle the d6-bishop. Black isn't castled yet because he has had to react to your direct threats. You had other good reasons to push the pawn to g5: it drove off a defender of d5, and now you control that square in addition to occupying it. I've played this a number of times and have castled kingside, queenside and played ♔f2. All of those choices made me a little nervous because it was so breezy-looking. If you look at it objectively, though, Black can't get at White, so your calculations have to overcome your fear.

9. ♖h3 exd5 10. c5 ♙e7 11. f4 ♘c6 12. ♙g2 ♚d7 13. 0-0 0-0-0 14. ♖f2



White's king is sufficiently protected by pieces as the bishop and knight cooperate well. The pawns on f4 and g5 are still restrictive. That's why White did not opt for the superficially attractive-looking 14. f5 ♙xf5 15. ♚xh5 ♖xd4 16. ♙e3 ♙g6 17. ♚h4, when the advantage has diminished and Black's in the game.

14...h6 15. ♙h3 ♙f5 16. ♙xf5 ♚xf5 17. ♚xh5 ♖xd4 18. ♚g4 ♙xc5 19. ♙e3

Better than 19. ♚xf5+ ♖xf5 20. ♔g2 ♖h4+ 21. ♔g3 hxg5. From now on, White's extra piece for the pawns is the bigger advantage. The rest is technique, although Black fights hard to leave White with just the two knights.

19...♚xg4+ 20. ♖xg4 hxg5 21. fxg5 ♚h4 22. h3 ♚xh3 23. ♔g2 ♚h4 24. ♔g3 ♚h5 25. ♚ad1 ♙d6+ 26. ♔g2 ♖c2 27. ♖xd5 ♖xe3+ 28. ♖dxe3 ♚xg5 29. ♚xf7 ♚d7 30. ♚xd7 ♖xd7 31. ♔f3 ♖e6 32. ♚e1 ♖d7 33. ♔e4 c5 34. ♚f1 ♖e6 35. ♚f5 ♙e7 36. ♚e5+ ♚xe5+ 37. ♖xe5 ♙f6 38. ♖d3 ♖d6 39. ♖f5+ ♖c6 40. ♖e5+ ♖c7 41. ♖d5 b5 42. ♖d6 ♙xe5 43. ♖xe5 ♖c6 44. ♖f7 g6 45. ♖e4 c4 46. ♖d4 ♖b6 47. ♖d5 a6 48. ♖g5 ♖c7 49. ♖c5 ♖b7 50. ♖e6 ♖a7 51. a4 c3 52. bxc3 bxa4 53. ♖b4 ♖b7 54. c4 ♖c6 55. ♖xa4 1-0

You have different ways to meet both ... ♚xd5 and ... ♖xd5. Most are pretty natural and comfortable developing systems. Our last system was introduced because it's very hard for Black to handle and adding a little edginess to your play will give you a greater range of possibilities to think about.

7. What if Black Meets 1.e4 With 1...e5?

If you're playing someone who responds with 1...e5, that tells you this person is not afraid of gambits, may even like to play countergambits, and will not be afraid to slug it out with you. This indicates someone who may not like a game where they find it difficult to do any of the aforementioned things.

Although this book ends with a plea to consider the Ruy López, it is understood that this is quite an undertaking. With that in mind, we will stick with our philosophy of giving you openings that are much easier to study (having a narrower range of strategic ideas to learn) and are solid yet give you a decent opportunity to create winning chances.

Gambits of all sorts are not recommended because every good 1...e5 player you meet will be ready to go with his or her defensive favorite to equalize, while you have to know all of them. It sounds like the same situation that you face against the Sicilian. If you're a scholastic player, you have a good chance of getting away with a King's Gambit, Max Lange Attack, Göring Gambit, Vienna Gambit, Boden-Kieseritsky, or Danish Gambit. I know this because I plead guilty to having taught this to my scholastic team of recent years and they ended up in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan Yeshiva Chess League championships seven years in a row, winning four of those times. Each year, I would change the gambit in case our opponents studied up. I am ashamed to admit that it worked!

However, out-preparing your opponent in some ancient gambit is not what we want to accomplish as a result of this book. Once you start getting better as a player, you'll get better opponents who will be just as booked up as you are. You will find yourself with early draws because they know an equalizing line, or you will become an expert at playing endings a pawn down because you will run into more people who know how to safely hold onto the pawn!

Because of all this, two particular openings are recommended that fit the bill: the Vienna Game with g2-g3 and the Four Knights' Game. The Four Knights was once called by Tarrasch the "milk cow" of the tournament player – a reliable provider of nourishing points in a tournament. Tarrasch was disappointed with the emergence of the Rubinstein line with 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5 ♘d4; there is a suggestion toward the end that will deal with this.

The Four Knights is a good choice because it is not seen too often, there is a game plan that you will see in the games below, and there is little in the way of counterattack and even less so in terms of gambits: a solid opening with chances to win. It's also a stepping stone to the Ruy López as the idea of a strong center and a kingside attack is held in common, but is a good deal less complicated. In fact, the opening four moves of our game right below were known as "The Double Ruy López."

Let's move on to the main line with some of the classic games played with this venerable opening.

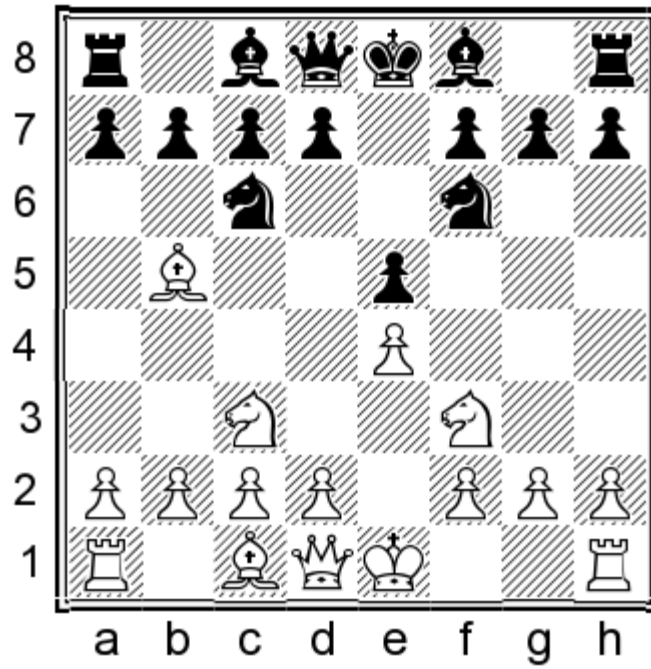
Model Game 23

Capablanca – H. Steiner

Exhibition (Living Chess Game),

Los Angeles 1933

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.♘c3



We need to take a timeout here! A couple of very important points need to be addressed. First of all, it is best if you open with 1.e4 e5 2.♘c3. Why? It leaves the Latvian Gambit crowd wondering why they spent so much time on 2.♗f3 f5. You can't play 2.♗c3 f5 because of 3.exf5 and there is a nasty d1-h5 diagonal open that isn't there after 2.♗f3. There's also the Elephant Gambit group with 2.♗f3 d5. Neither of these lines is all that good, but they are tricky, and it's two less preps to worry about. There's also a not infrequent tendency for Black to play ...♗c5 soon after 2.♗c3; however, after White plays ♗f3, there arises the knight-fork trick with ♗xe5. One last thing: if you decide to play the Ruy López someday, it's handy to know the Four Knights to avoid dealing with the Berlin Wall if you're trying to win, which is basically what Capablanca is doing here. There's a lot going on already!

There are quite a few deviations and transpositions. As much as it would be nice to explain all this, it would be best just to give you some "homework." These are what Horowitz used to call "idea variations" just to get you thinking: **1.e4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗c6**

2...♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 [3...♗b4 – a reversed Ruy López! – the Berlin Defense a move up. 4.♗xe5 {also playable is 4.♗c4 0-0 5.♗xe5 ♖e7 6.♗f3 ♗xc3 7.dxc3 ♗xe4+ 8.♖e2 ♗xe2+ 9.♗xe2 ♖e8 10.♗g5 d6 11.♗xf6 gxf6 12.♗d2; if you like to play endgames, working on the weak kingside pawns is a plan} 4...0-0 5.♗e2 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 d6 7.♗d3 ♗xe4 8.0-0] 4.♗b5 ♗c5 5.♗xe5 ♗xe5 6.d4 ♗d6 7.f4 ♗c6 8.e5 ♗b4 [8...0-0 9.0-0] 9.exf6 ♗xf6 10.a3 ♗a5 11.♗e3 0-0 12.0-0 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 d5 14.♗f3 ♗e7 15.♗d3 ♗f5 16.♖ae1 ♗xd3 17.cxd3 ♗f5 18.♗d2 ♗c6 19.g4, and White has an initiative.

3.♗f3 ♗f6

Early ...d7-d6 moves should be met with d2-d4: 3...d6 4.d4 ♗f6 5.d5 ♗e7 6.♗d3 ♗g6 7.h3 ♗e7 8.♗e3; and Black will often get lazy and play the less precise 3...♗c5 4.♗xe5 ♗xe5 [4...♗xf2+ 5.♗xf2 ♗xe5 6.d4] 5.d4 ♗d6 6.dxe5 ♗xe5 7.f4 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♖e7 9.e5 d6 10.♗a3 ♗h6 11.♗f3 0-0 12.♗d3.

4.♗b5 ♗b4

4...d6 5.d4 exd4 6.♗xd4 ♗d7 7.♗e3; 4...♗c5 5.♗xe5 ♗xe5 6.d4 ♗d6 7.f4 ♗c6 8.e5; 4...a6 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.♗xe5 ♗xe4 7.♗xe4 ♖d4 8.0-0 ♖xe5 9.d4

5.0-0 0-0

5...♙xc3 6.bxc3 ♖xe4 7.♗e2 ♗f6 [7...d5 8.d3 ♗d6 9.♗xe5+] 8.♙xc6 dxc6 9.♗xe5+ ♗e7 10.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 11.♙a3+ ♖d8 12.♖fb1 [12.♖ab1 b6 13.♗g5 /13.♗e5 ♙e6/ 13...♙e6 14.♗xe6+ fxe6 15.♖fe1] 12...b6 13.♗e5 ♙e6 14.♗xc6+; or 5...d6 6.♗d5 ♙a5 7.d4 a6 8.dxe5 ♗xd5 9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.exd5 dxe5 11.♗e2 f6 12.dxc6 ♙b6 13.♖d1with good play.

6.d3 ♙xc3

6...♗d4 7.♗xd4 exd4 8.♗e2 a6 9.♙a4 b5 10.♙b3 ♙c5 11.♗f4 d6 12.h3 ♙d7 13.♗f3 a5 14.a4 bxa4 15.♙xa4 ♙xa4 16.♖xa4, and White can attack the black pawn on d4; 6...d6 7.♙g5 ♙g4 [this move gets mixed reviews in theory; Black can head into the Metger Unpin – see the next game – with 7...♙xc3 8.bxc3 ♗e7 9.♖e1 ♗d8 10.d4 ♗e6 11.♙c1 c6 12.♙f1] 8.♙xf6 gxf6 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.h3 ♙h5 11.g4 ♙g6 12.♗e2.

7.bxc3 d6

Interesting is the Svenonius line: 7...d5 8.♙g5 [the *Lärobok*'s recommendation; if 8.exd5 ♗xd5 9.c4 ♗d6 10.♖e1 ♙g4 11.♙xc6 bxc6 12.h3 ♙h5 13.♖b1 /13.g4 ♗xg4 14.hxg4 ♙xg4 15.♙b2 ♖ae8 16.♖g2 ♗g6=] 13...e4 14.dxe4 ♗xd1 15.♖xd1 ♗xe4 16.g4 ♗c3 17.gxh5 ♗xb1 18.♙b2 ♖ab8 19.♖xb1, and the pawns are so busted up that one wonders whether the price is too high for having two pieces for the rook] 8...dxe4 [8...♗e7 9.♗xe5; 8...♙d7 9.exd5 ♗e7 10.♙xd7 ♗xd7 11.c4; 8...h6 9.exd5 hxg5 10.dxc6 g4 11.♗g5; 8...♙g4 9.h3 dxe4 10.hxg4 exf3 11.♗xf3] 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.♗xe5 ♖e8 11.d4 c5 12.♖e1 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♙f5 14.♗c4 ♖b8 15.♗e3 ♙g6 16.♗d2.

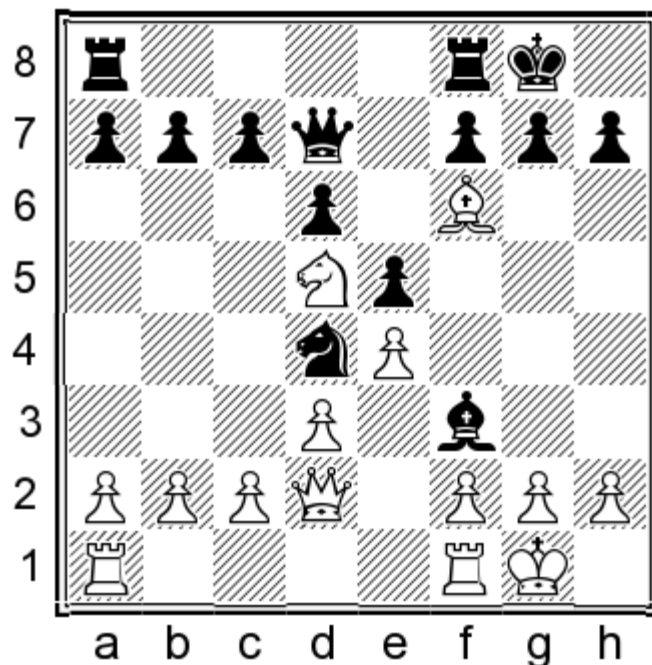
8.♖e1 ♗e7 9.d4 ♗d8 10.h3 ♗e6 11.a4 c6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♙a3 ♗c5 14.♙c4 and White has sidestepped playing ♙g5 and then ♙c1 after that Metger ...♗c6-d8-e6 maneuver. It is a lot to study, but as you play through it the ideas are easy to understand. Let's get back to our model games, so you can see how some important ideas develop.

4...♙b4 5.0-0 0-0

Harmless-looking but not so hot is 5...d6 6.♗d5 ♙a5 7.d4 ♗xe4 8.♗e2 f5 9.dxe5 a6 10.♙xc6+ bxc6 11.♗f4 0-0 12.♗c4+ ♖h8 13.♗xc6 ♖b8 14.exd6 cxd6, and Black's weak d6-pawn is a real liability. Notice how the position just erupted from the seemingly sedate ...d7-d6.

6.d3 d6 7.♙g5 ♙xc3

Maintaining the symmetry has been known to be bad for years: 7...♙g4 8.♗d5 ♗d4 9.♗xb4 ♗xb5 10.♗d5 ♗d4 11.♗d2. The “don't do symmetry” proof gives this continuation: 11...♗d7 (most tenacious is 11...♗xf3+ 12.gxf3 ♙xf3 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♗e3 c6 [14...♙h5 15.♗h6 ♙g6 16.f4] 15.♗xf3 cxd5 16.exd5 ♖h8 17.♖h1 ♖g8 18.♖g1 ♖g6 19.♖g3 ♗b6 20.♖ag1 ♖f8 21.b3 ♗d8 22.c4 b6 23.h4) 12.♙xf6 ♙xf3:



analysis

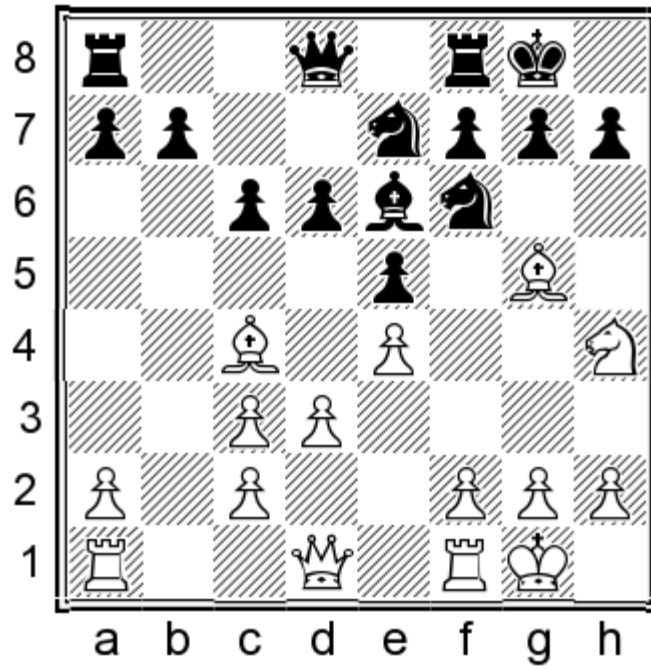
13. ♖e7+ ♔h8 14. ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 15. ♖g5+ ♔h8 16. ♗f6#.

7... ♖e7 is an aggressive, double-edged move that has enjoyed some popularity. Black is willing to endure the doubled f-pawns because he gets an open g-file along which to attack with his rook, and the f-pawn can be advanced to f5. However, after 8. ♖h4 (8. ♕xf6 gxf6) 8...c6 9. ♕c4 ♕e6 10. ♕xf6 gxf6 11. ♕xe6 fxe6 12.f4 (Tarrasch – Janowski, Ostend 1907), regardless of Black's plans, White's first-move advantage means that he gets his attack in first.

8.bxc3 ♖e7 9. ♖h4 c6 10. ♕c4 ♕e6

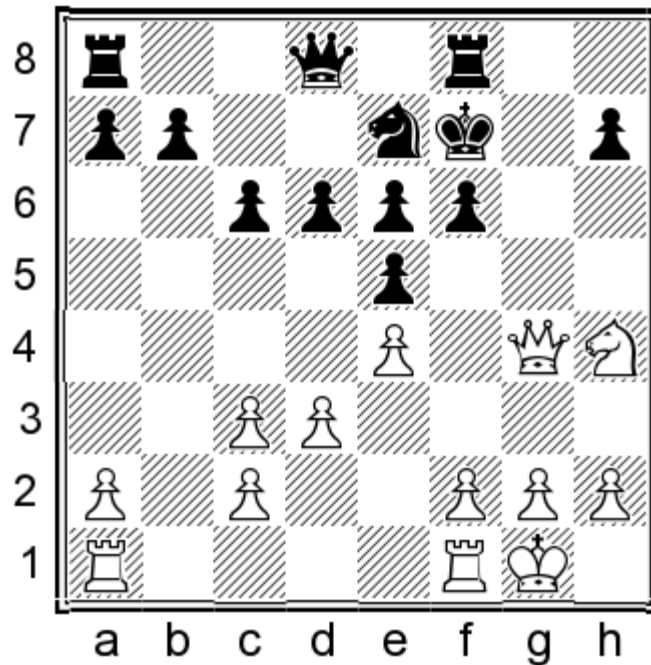
A better defense was 10...d5 11. ♕b3 ♗d6 12.f4 exf4 13. ♗e1 ♖h5 14. ♕xe7 ♗xe7 15.exd5, when White has a slight edge. Black might also have given thought to 9...c5, similar in idea to the same move in the Ruy López.

Unlike in the López, though, White should not be in a hurry to play 10.d5. A move like a2-a4 comes in handy to stifle Black's queenside expansion, and, upon occasion, give rook support to ♕a3. You have to play over a good many Four Knights games to become more familiar with the ideas than your opponent (Botvinnik's suggestion).



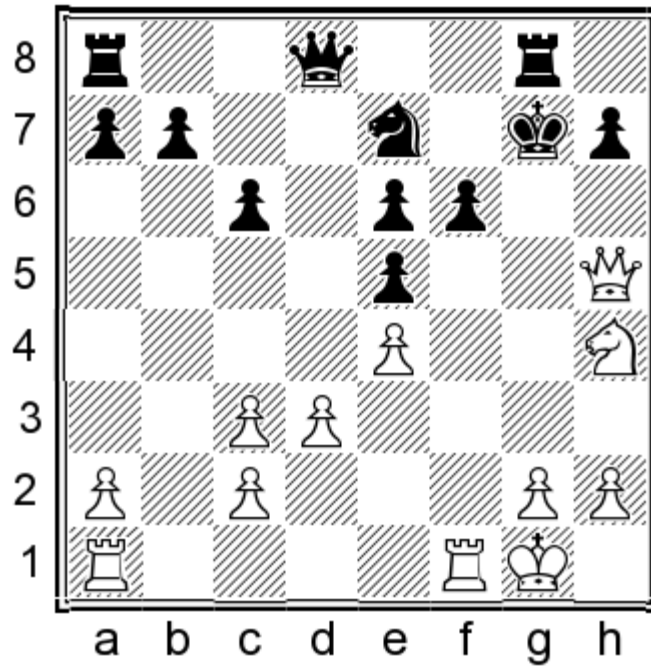
White has a winning attack here after ten moves! The elements are there. Capablanca sees them. What are they? There are the obvious ones: White is about to break up Black's castled pawn position with ♙xf6 and the ♘h4 move allows White to play f2-f4, opening up the f-file for the rook. There is also the queen's ability to go to h5, a very strong square. There is one other finesse. After ♙xf6 , White will further disrupt the black king's position by ♙xe6 .

11. ♙xf6 gxf6 12. ♙xe6 fxe6 13. ♚g4+ ♔f7



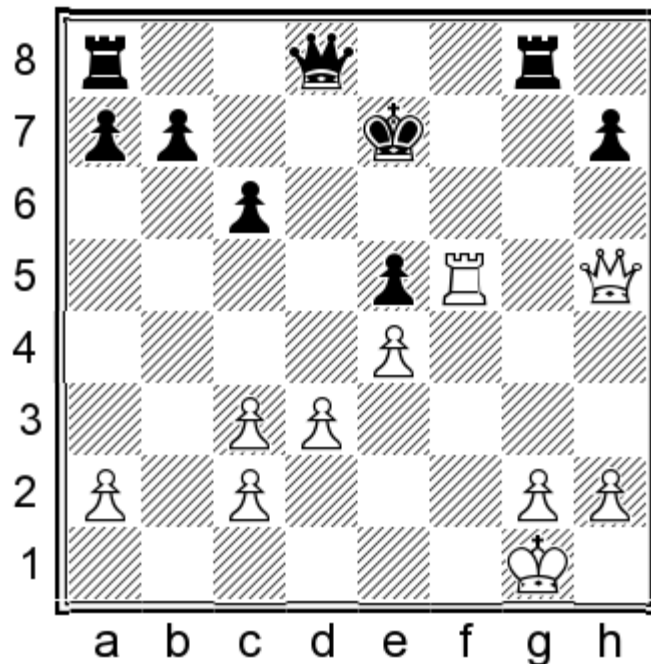
Black hasn't had much choice. White continues with the aforementioned plan.

14. f4 ♖g8 15. ♚h5+ ♔g7 16. fxe5 dxe5



This is another good place to take a breather. You don't need to be a GM to figure out that White has accomplished a great deal. The black king is exposed, White has three pieces in the attack, and ♖f3 with ♖f1 will serve to increase the pressure. If you're an average player, you will win. That's what you need to remember. You don't need to be Capablanca to win this game. The game has developed naturally with common-sense moves, and you should be able to quickly pick these ideas up. Having said that, what happens next in this game is utterly spectacular! Studying this attack will raise your level of chess ability in recognizing the importance of attacking an exposed king. Now, we'll see why Capablanca was Capablanca. He starts by giving up his rook:

17. ♖xf6 ♔xf6 18. ♖f1+ ♔f5 19. ♔xf5 exf5 20. ♖xf5+ ♔e7



Here's a good training exercise: try to find the winning attack here before you look at the rest of the moves.

Also, take a look at the position. The attacking elements of the rook on the f-file and the ♖h5 that were there in the last part of the opening are present in the delivery of the final blows. Games that do this are worth remembering.

21. ♖f7+ ♔d6 22. ♖f6+ ♔c5 23. ♖xb7 ♖b6

23... ♖xf6 24. ♖b4#.

24. ♖xc6+ ♖xc6 25. ♖b4#

Bravo!

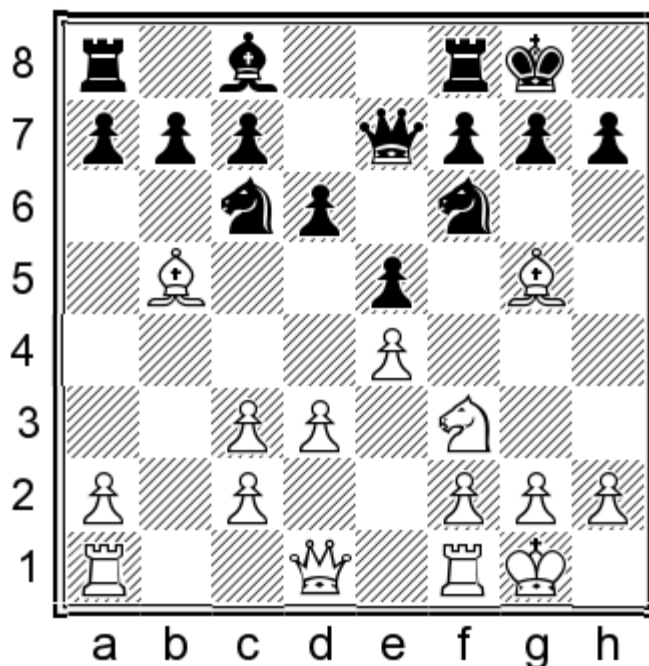
This next game is more of a war – the best player will win. These positions don't lend themselves to easy equality. Thus, your familiarity with the plans available to White are important. This game is annotated with an eye toward concepts and a little analysis. There are entirely too many different ways this game could have gone, but White's space advantage and the mobility of his pieces over Black's crowded position tells in the end.

Model Game 24

Maróczy – F. Treybal

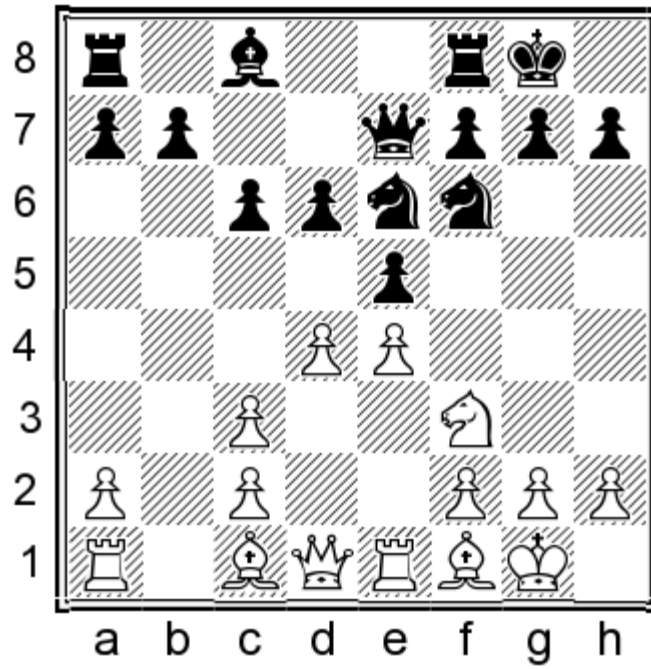
Prague 1908

1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♙b5 ♙b4 5. 0-0 0-0 6. d3 d6 7. ♙g5 ♙xc3 8. bxc3 ♖e7



The start of the unpinning process devised by the 19th-century German master Johannes Metger – a very good way to defend in the Four Knights. Now that the c6-knight is no longer pinned, it can go to d8 (after ... ♖e7) and then e6 to hit the bishop on g5 and later chase the other bishop with ...c7-c6.

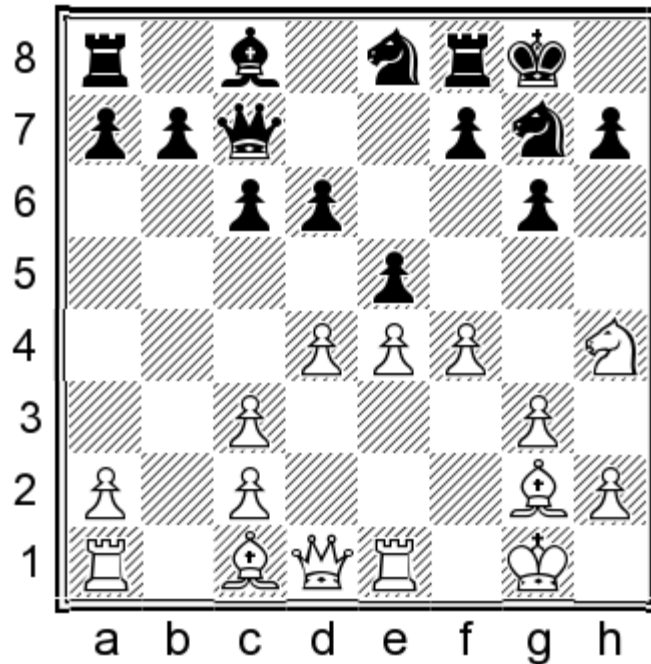
9. ♖e1 ♘d8 10. d4 ♘e6 11. ♙c1 c6 12. ♙f1



Here's another one of those "timeout" positions. Because the center tension will hold as neither side can gain anything from exchanging, White can afford to redeploy the bishops to their original squares. The bishop on f1 will find a home on g2 and influence the center. The bishop on c1 has options to a3 (after a2-a4), b2, d2, and e3.

12...♙c7 13.g3 ♘e8 14.♗g2 g6 15.♘h4 ♘6g7 16.f4

Both sides have redeployed, and, as in the other game, White gets f2-f4 in first.



16...exf4 17.♗xf4

Also possible is 17.gxf4 ♗e6 18.f5 gxf5 19.d5 ♗d7 20.exf5 cxd5 21.♗e3 ♙xc3 22.♗d4 ♙a5 23.♙g4. So often in

the Four Knights, as in the Capa game, there is more than one way for White (and Black!) to proceed. Now Black counters with –

17...f5 18.e5 d5 19.♘f3

Another possibility was 19.♙h6 ♜f7 20.♚d2 ♞e6 21.a4 ♜8g7 22.a5.

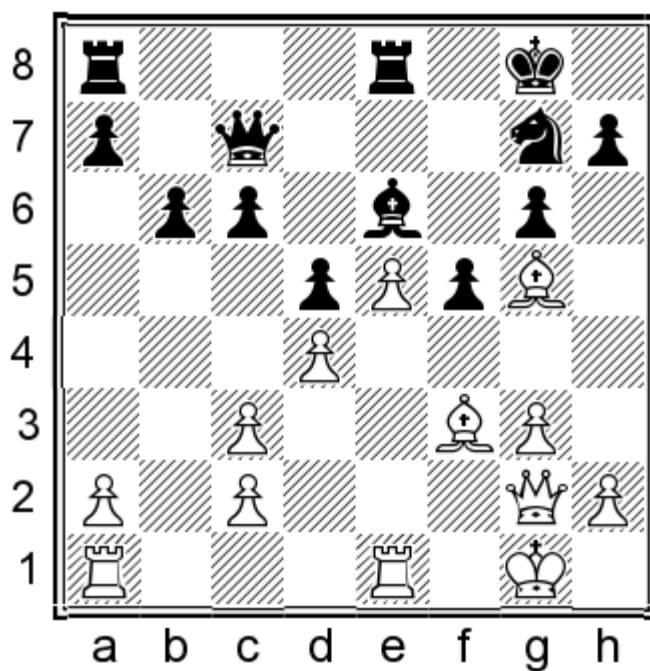
19...♞e6 20.♙h6 ♜8g7 21.♚d2 b6 22.♞g5 ♜e8

Black tries to blockade the passed pawn. He can only play defense because of White's space advantage and greater freedom of movement for his pieces.

23.♙f3

The possibility of h2-h4-h5 now exists. Black tries to ease his position by exchanges.

23...♞xg5 24.♙xg5 ♙e6 25.♚g2

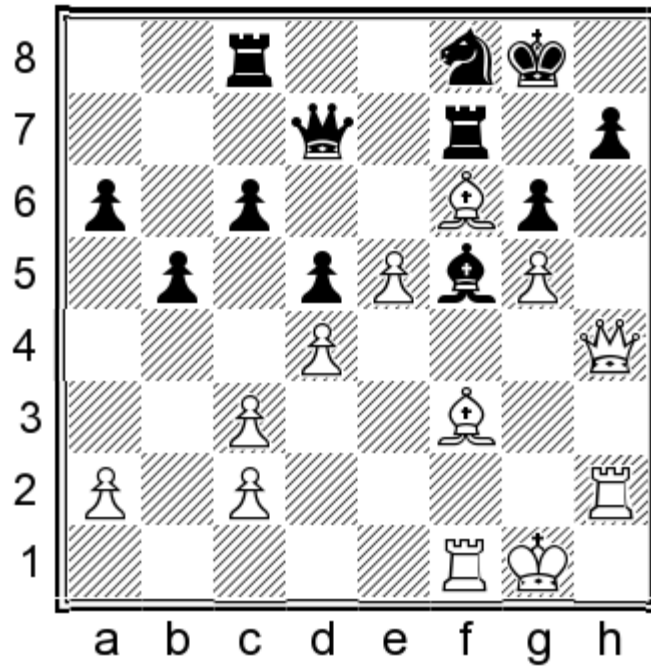


Discourages ...c6-c5. White's mobility allows him to play on both sides of the board.

25...b5 26.h3

26.a4

26...♜f8 27.♜f1 a6 28.g4 ♜f7 29.♙f6 ♚d7 30.♜f2 ♜af8 31.g5 f4 32.♚h2 ♙xh3 33.♚xf4 ♙f5 34.♚h4 ♜c8 35.♜h2 ♞e6 36.♜f1 ♞f8



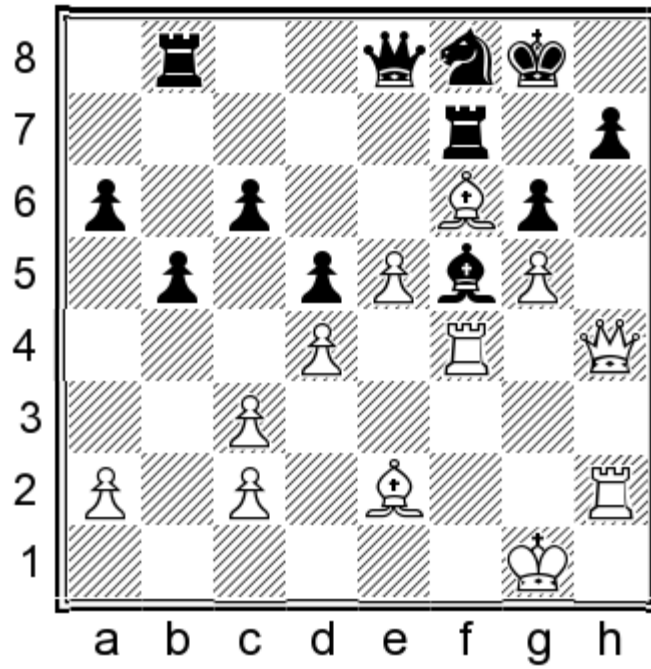
White now has committed all his pieces to the kingside. The bishop on f6 is quite a pain for Black. Black, however, will try to counter along the c-file – a file you must pay attention to as a Four Knights player lest a counterattack cause problems.

37. ♕e2 ♖b8

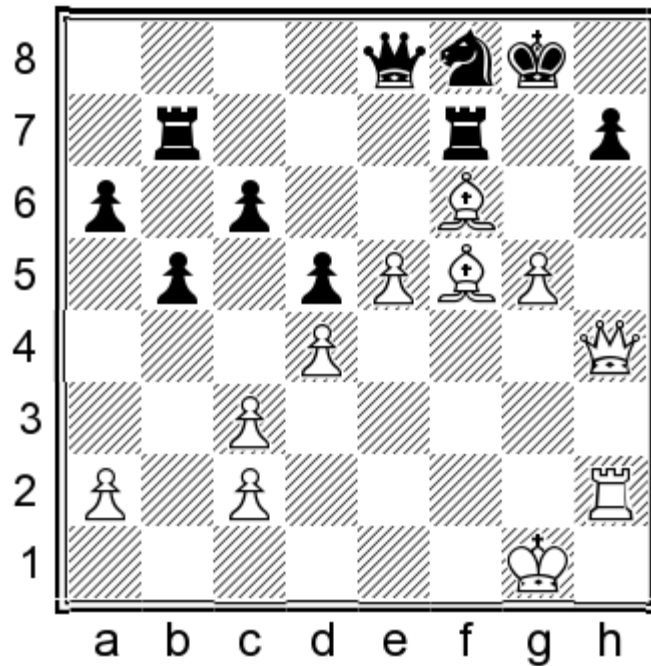
Did you see the purpose of playing ♕e2? If Black plays 37...c5, then 38. ♖xf5!, for example 38...gxf5 39. ♕h5 cxd4 40.cxd4 ♖c6 41. ♗h3 b4 42. ♖g2 (42. ♕xf7+ ♖xf7 [42...♗xf7 43.g6 ♖xg6 44. ♗xf5 ♗e6 45. ♗h5] 43.a3 bxa3 44. ♗xa3) 42...♖g7 43. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 44. ♕f3 a5 45. ♖h2 ♖g6.

38. ♖f4 ♗e8

As we learned in the Capa game, sacrificing a rook on the f-file has always got to be considered.



39. ♖xf5 gxf5 40. ♙d3 ♜bb7 41. ♙xf5



Talk about the advantage of the bishop pair! The rooks look positively helpless, and they are.

41... ♜g7 42. ♚g4 ♜bf7 43. ♜g2 a5

Now is the time for the passed e-pawn to advance.

44. e6 ♜e7 45. ♚h3 ♜b7 46. ♜e2 ♜be7 47. ♚h2 ♚d8 48. ♙f1 ♘g6 49. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 50. ♙xg6 ♜xg6 51. e7 ♚e8 52. ♜e5 1-0

White could have played all sorts of moves to encourage resignation, among them 52. ♚c7, but 52. ♜e5 was

convincing enough.

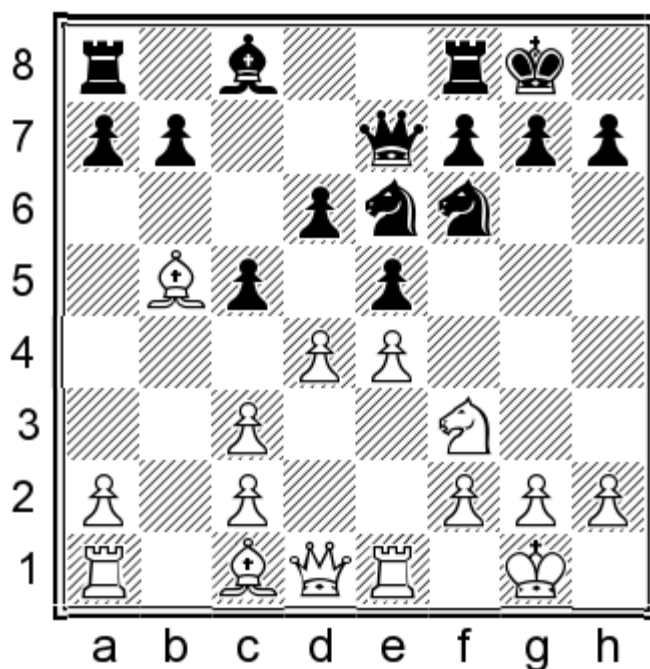
Game 25 is a great model game for the Four Knights as it teaches both sides what they should be doing. If you defend with the open games, the queenside counterplay that Black here chooses and misses is very important to understand. If you wish to play the Four Knights, then you should pay close attention to what White does and doesn't do.

Model Game 25

Perlis – Freyermann

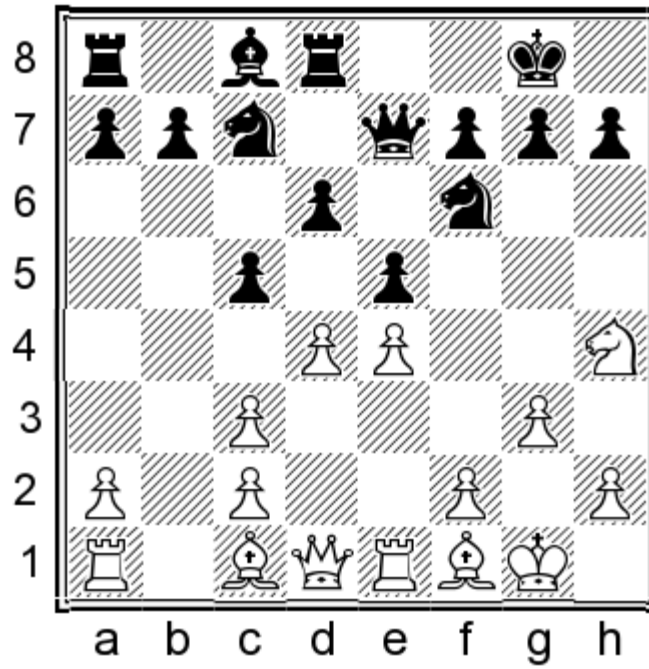
St. Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♙b5 ♙b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 ♟xc3 7.bxc3 d6 8.♟g5 ♚e7 9.♞e1 ♜d8
10.d4 ♞e6 11.♟c1 c5



This is where we depart from the previous games. Black plays ...c7-c5 instead of ...c7-c6 as his defense. Whereas ...c7-c6 has the idea of supporting an future ...d6-d5 break, ...c7-c5 puts pressure on d4.

12.♟f1 ♞d8 13.g3 ♗c7 14.♗h4



What have we just seen? Black, although hitting d4, makes preparations for a ...d6-d5 break. White has redeployed the bishops as we explained previously and has positioned the knight to eye the outpost on f5 and prepare f2-f4 to attack on the kingside. The player who carries out his plan the best will win. The position is equal but not drawn.

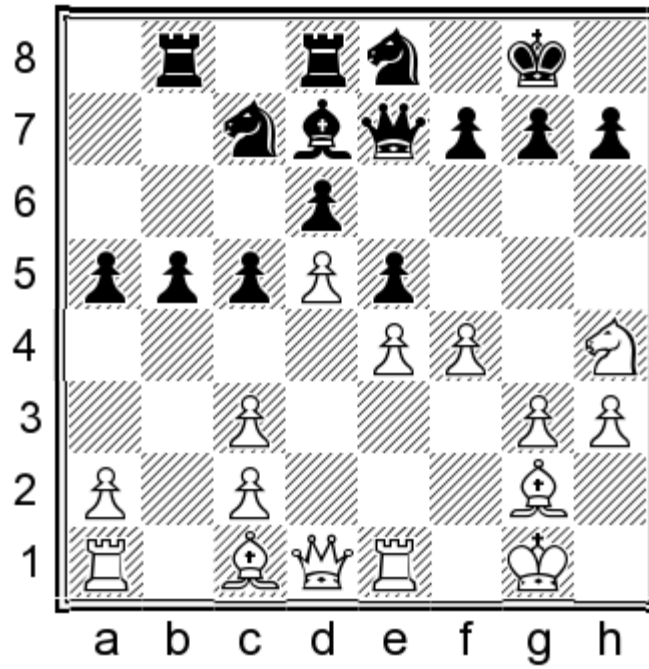
14...b5

Not so hot is the overeager break 14...d5 15.exd5 ♘cxd5 16.dxe5.

15.d5 a5

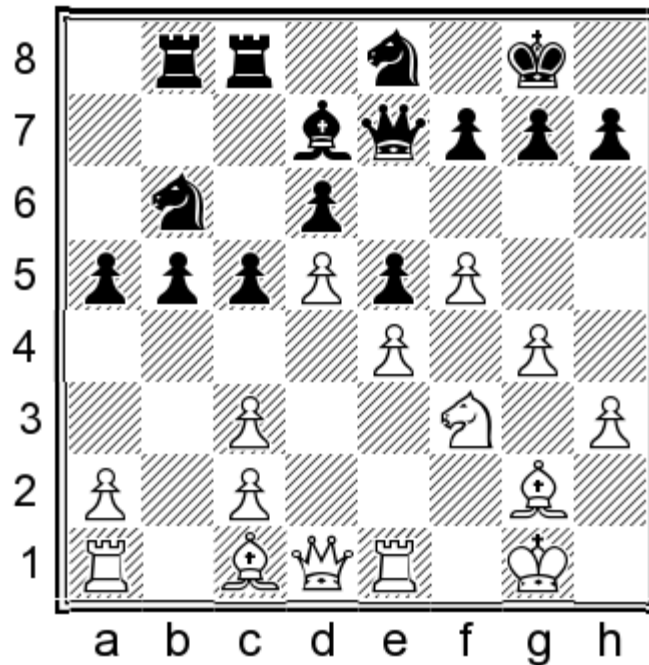
White decides to stop the threat of ...d6-d5. He no doubt noticed the preparations with ...♘c7 and ...♞d8. If you play this opening, that will help you decide as well when to play d4-d5. It's generally a good idea to lock the center when you start a flank attack.

16.h3 ♙d7 17.♙g2 ♞ab8 18.f4 ♞fe8



Each side's opening plan is in full swing. One of the things you learn in bettering your chess is that you can't just proceed with your attack and ignore your opponent's moves. You saw that if you went over Kosteniuk's game against the Sicilian Dragon in Primer #32 (p. 114): right in the middle of her attack, she stopped to cut off some counterplay. Dr. Perlis should have done that here with 19.a4 b4 20.♖f3 ♘a8 21.fxe5 ♗xe5 22.♙f4 ♗xc3 23.♗xc3 bxc3 24.e5 ♖b4 25.e6 ♙xa4 26.♘f5 fxe6 27.dxe6.

19.f5 ♘a8 20.♘f3 ♘b6 21.g4 ♖dc8?!



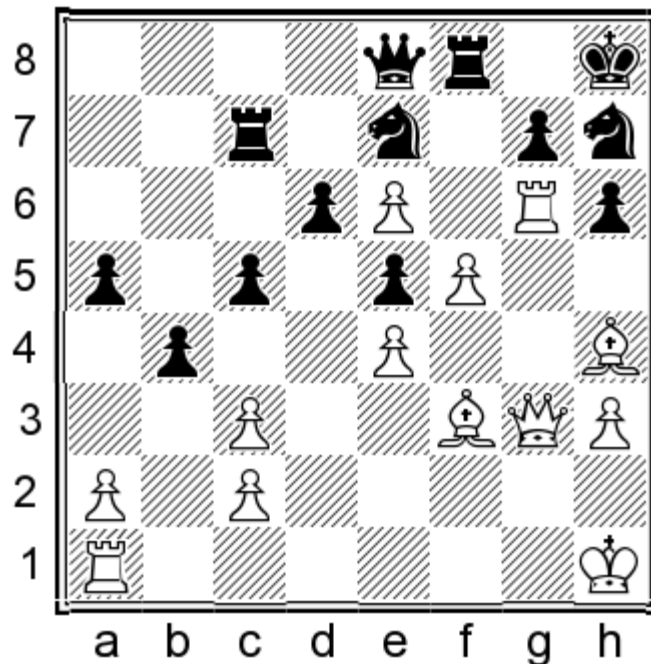
When someone is attacking your king and you have a counterattack on the other side of the board, you have to move very energetically since the bottom line is that attacking a queenside with no king in it is not the same as someone attacking a kingside with a king in it. Kings can get mated. Queensides can't get mated! Better here was 21...♘a4! 22.♙d2 c4 23.♖b1 ♘c7 24.f6 ♗xf6 25.♙g5 ♗g6 26.♙xd8 ♖xd8 27.♗d2 f6=. Both

sides do go at it, though!

22.g5! b4! 23.♖h1 f6?!

Again, Black needed to be more aggressive on the queenside. Best was 23...bxc3! 24.♗h2 ♖a4 25.♗g4 f6, because now White has to keep an eye on Black's invading with the rooks.

24.♞g1 fxg5? 25.♗xg5 ♗f6 26.♞e1 h6 27.♗e6 ♞xe6 28.dxe6 ♖h8 29.♞f3 ♞c7 30.♞g6 ♞f8 31.♞e3 ♗h7 32.♞f2 ♞e8 33.♞h4 ♗c8 34.♞g3 ♗e7



White should now reap the rewards of his playing better than Black. The world champ at the time, Dr. Emanuel Lasker, pointed out that White had a fairly immediate win with 35.♞g7 ♗xf5 36.♞xh7+ ♞xh7 37.exf5 ♞g7 (37...♞xf5 38.♞e4) 38.♞g4 ♞xf5 39.♞d3 ♞f4 40.♞xd6. We have pointed out several times in this book how important it is to learn how to attack castled positions. As it is, White still kept his advantage. There was more than one way to win, but he squandered away the win and then lost the draw. He completely lost the thread of the position. I am almost sure his emotions got hold of him because he knew he had lost the advantage. We used to tell our basketball players that you're always going to make mistakes in a game, but if you keep thinking about the mistake rather than concentrating on what to do next, you will carry that mistake, and the others that follow, up and down the court, and the load will get heavier as you head toward defeat. The same is true in chess. Every position is a new one. Treat it as such. Here's the rest of the game:

35.♞g4!? 35...♗f6 36.♞xf6 ♞xf6 37.♞g1 g6 38.♞e1?

38.♞e2! gxf5 39.exf5 ♞c8 [39...♗xf5 40.♞g8+] 40.♞d3±

38...gxf5 39.♞g7 ♞f8 (39...♞xe6) 40.♞g3?

40.exf5 ♞xg7 41.♞xg7 ♖xg7 42.♞g3+ ♖h8 43.♞e4 c4 [43...d5 44.♞xe5] 44.♞h4±

40...♞xe6 41.exf5 ♞f6 42.♞d5 ♞c8 43.♞e6??

43.♞g2

43...♖xe6! 44.fxe6 ♘f5 45.♗g4 ♘xg7 46.e7 ♗g8 47.♗d7??

47.♗g6!=

47...♖e8 48.♖f1 ♘h7 49.♖f6 ♗d5+ 50.♔g1 ♗d1+ 51.♔g2 ♗xc2+ 52.♔f1 bxc3 53.♖f7 ♗b1+ 54.♔g2 ♗xa2+

54...♗g6+

55.♖f2 ♗xf2+ 56.♔xf2 0-1

There are a good many finely played Four Knights games on databases. It would be worth playing through them to pick up ideas that will remain images in your brain. It's not dull chess!

The Rubinstein Variation did a lot to bring dullness into the Four Knights, though, if White chose to play like this after 4...♘d4: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5 ♘d4 5.♘xd4 exd4 6.e5 dxc3 7.exf6 ♗xf6 (not so good is 7...cxd2+ 8.♙xd2 ♗xf6 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♙c3) 8.dxc3, and this game is depressingly level.

Back when the Rubinstein was still relatively new, two opening theoreticians, Henneberger and Krause, were cited with some of their analysis in an article on the variation in the January 1922 issue of *British Chess Magazine*.

They felt that the proper course for White was neither 5.♙a4 or 5.♘xe5 (both very complex) nor the simplifying 5.♘xd4. Their idea was 5.0-0. The analysis was later backed up by Euwe and others, but the evaluation changed. Even the chess engines are against it. This is how the line begins:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5 ♘d4 5.0-0 ♘xb5

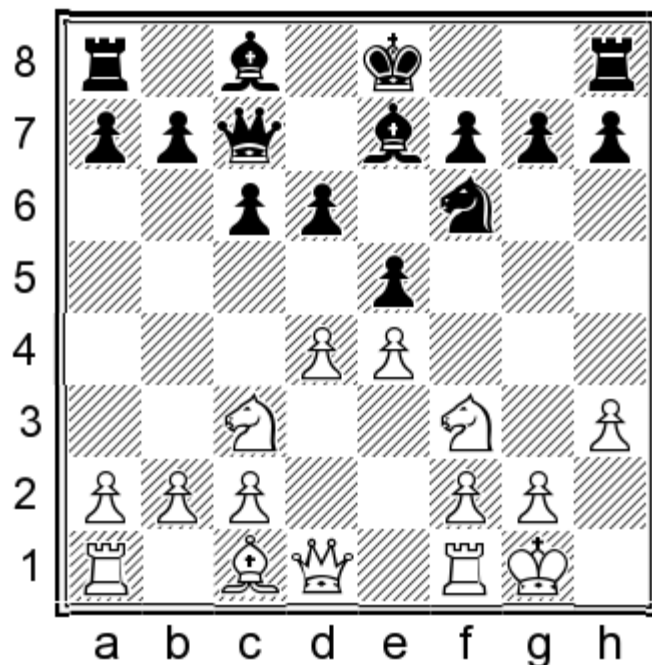
Alternatives are all good for White:

a) 5...♙d6 6.♘xd4 exd4 7.e5 ♙xe5 8.♖e1;

b) 5...c6 6.♙c4 ♙c5 7.♘xe5 0-0 8.♘xf7 ♖xf7 9.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 10.e5;

c) 5...♙c5 6.♘xe5 0-0 7.♘d3 ♙b6 8.e5.

6.♘xb5 c6 7.♘c3 d6 8.h3 ♗c7 9.d4 ♙e7



This position is assessed as equal. There is little argument about that; however, the position is not drawn! Yes, Black has the two bishops in a kind of Philidor setup which gives him a somewhat passive pawn structure. Black's freeing move is (as usual) ...d6-d5.

As for White, he has a fine pawn center and his pieces will come to the central squares with relative ease.

This position lacks both the drawish aspect of 5.♘xd4 and the risk associated with White's other alternatives on move 5. It's a playable game with winning chances. Strong British players like Gallagher and Nunn have played this line and Euwe himself played it back in 1920.

Let's close with a 5-minute game and a correspondence game using this variation: Armed with this "analysis," I decided to play it on the ICC. Here is the resulting effort at 5-minute speed: Tamburro – JackO'Neill, ICC 2013: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 ♘d4 5.0-0 ♘xb5 6.♘xb5 c6 7.♘c3 d6 8.d4 exd4**

8...♗g4 9.dxe5 ♗xf3 10.♖xf3 dxe5 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♖ad1 ♖c7 13.♘e2 0-0 14.♘g3 ♖ad8 15.♘f5 ♖xd1 16.♖xd1 ♖d8 17.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.h3 h6 20.♗xf6 ♖xf6 21.♖xf6 gxf6 22.♔h2 ♔g7 23.♔g3 ♔g6 24.♔g4

9.♘xd4

9.♖xd4

9...♗e7 10.a4 a5 11.h3 0-0 12.♗e3

12.♗f4 d5 13.e5 ♘e4 14.♖d3 ♘c5 15.♖g3 ♗h4

12...♖e8

12...d5 13.e5 ♘d7 14.f4 ♘b6 15.♗f2 [15.f5 ♘c4 16.♗f4 ♘xb2 17.♖g4 ♔h8 18.♖f3 ♘c4] 15...f6 16.e6 c5 17.♘f5 ♗xe6 18.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 19.♖e1 ♖d6 20.♘e4 ♖c6 21.♘xc5

13.f4 ♖c7

13...♗f8

14. ♖f3 ♗f8 15. ♝ae1 ♘d7 16. ♗f5 ♗c5 17. ♗xc5 dxc5 18. ♗g3

18. ♗e3

18...b6 19.e5 ♗a6 20. ♝f2 ♝ad8 21. ♗ce4 ♝d4 22. ♖h5

22. ♗f5

22...♝xa4 23. ♗f5 ♗c8 24. ♗h6+ 1-0.

I didn't play as accurately as I would have liked, as my review of it with my computer demonstrated, but I was happy that I'd remembered a good many opening ideas and a few kingside attacking ideas!

What now follows is a brilliant attack from Hirscheider – Weidemann, corr. 2004 (taken from Andrey Obodchuk's *The Four Knights Game*):

1.e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. ♗c3 ♗f6 4. ♗b5 ♗d4 5. 0-0 ♗xb5 6. ♗xb5 c6 7. ♗c3 d6 8. d4 ♖c7 9. ♗g5 ♗e7 10. ♖d3 0-0 11. h3 h6 12. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13. d5 ♗e7 14. ♝ad1 ♝d8 15. ♗d2 a6 16. a4 c5 17. ♗c4 b6 18. f4 exf4 19. ♝xf4 ♗d7 20. e5! dxe5 21. ♝xf7!! ♗xf7 22. ♖h7 ♗f6 23. ♝f1 ♝h8 24. ♝xf6+ 1-0

I hope this encourages you to look at the Four Knights. If this doesn't tickle your fancy, there's another alternative: The g3 Vienna Game.

8. The Vienna Game With g3

If you like the idea of fianchettoing, which often is just an emotional decision of sorts, you can also do that with 1.e4. The strategy is quite different, as you will see in the games that follow. Its advantage is that the themes are somewhat narrowly defined, although there is room for more than one way to go, and you haven't got to put much to memory. (It's worth mentioning that you also have an excellent fianchetto option in the Catalan when you open with 1.d4. The *Wojo's Weapons* series mentioned before is very useful for that opening.)

There are two main approaches to the Vienna for Black. In our first game, Black actively contests the center with ...d7-d5. In the second game, Black is satisfied with ...d7-d6, supporting his center, and placing his pieces on good squares.

Model Game 26

Motwani – B. Jónsson

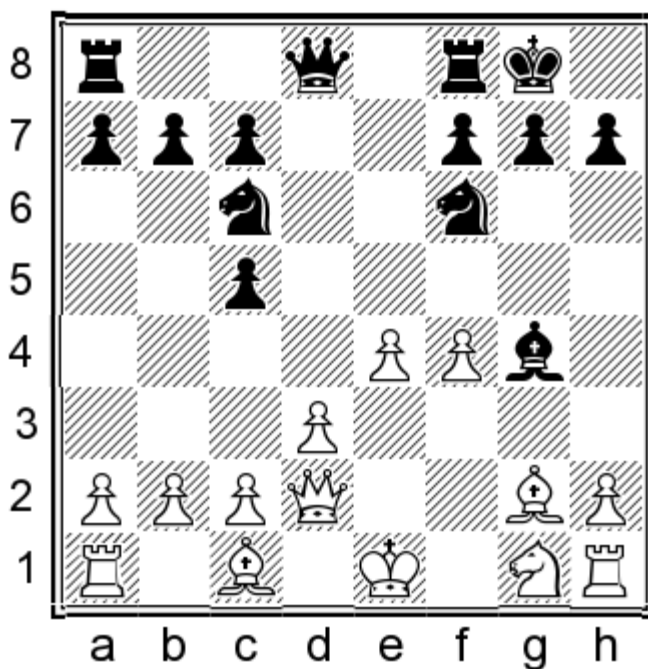
Iceland 1992

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3

This queen knight move is the introduction to the Vienna Game. It may look defensive, but it can get very aggressive very fast!

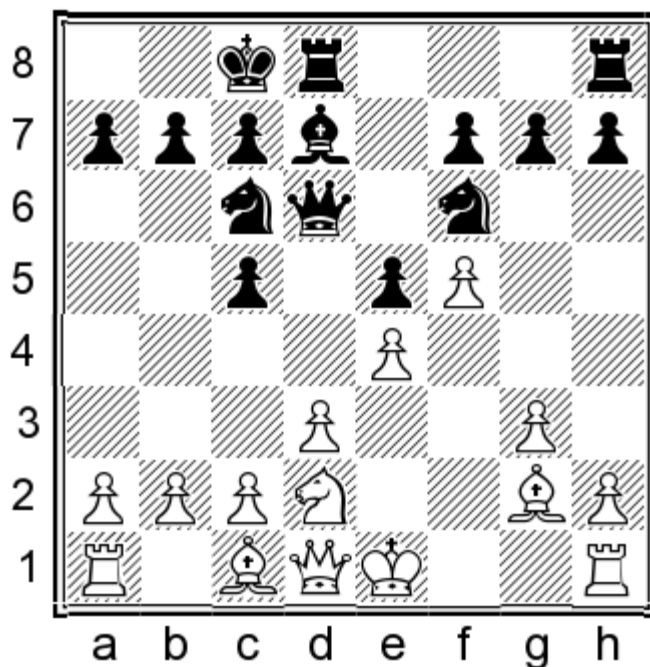
2...♗f6

Black can also play 2...♗c6 3.g3. For the purposes of this lesson, 3.g3 is following our theme. White also has 3.♙c4, which is strong, and 3.f4, which is very double-edged. After 3.g3, there can follow 3...♗f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5 5.d3 d6 6.♗a4!. In modern chess, players try to gain the advantage of the bishop pair. Since the position is fairly closed, White has time for this. 6...♙g4 (6...0-0 7.♗xc5 dxc5 8.f4 ♙g4 9.♚d2! exf4 10.gxf4:



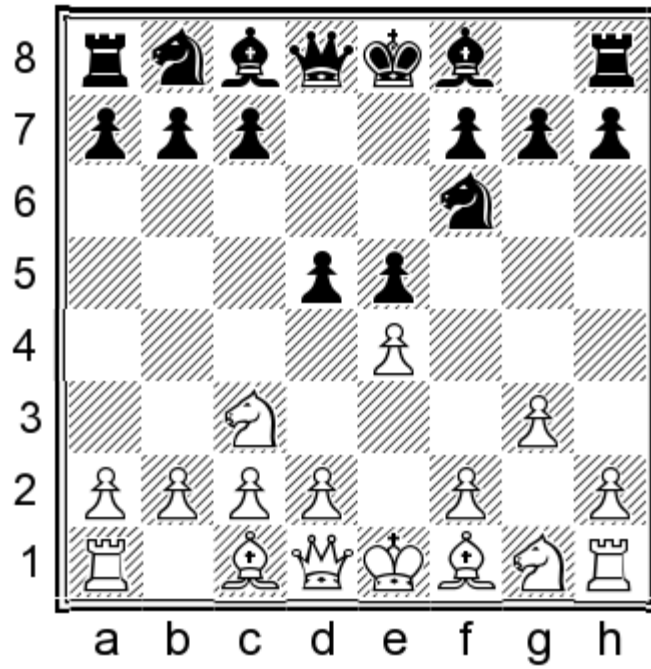
White has a nice pawn front, which can be used as a spearhead against Black's castled position. Also, after

White plays Nf3 and 0-0, the king rook will be able to get into the attack pretty easily. The queen will maneuver from d2 to f2 to h4 and the queen bishop will try to get to g5 or e3.) $7.\text{f3}$ (there is no need to worry about weakening the castled position here, as White will probably castle queenside) $7...\text{Qe6}$ $8.\text{Nxc5}$ dxc5 $9.\text{f4}$ (White can afford this advance, which threatens f4-f5 because Black no longer has a pawn thrust to d5 as a counter-threat, thanks to $8.\text{Nxc5}$) $9...\text{Qd6}$ $10.\text{Nf3}$ 0-0-0 $11.\text{f5}$ Qd7 $12.\text{Nd2}$:



You have to look at “knight paths.” This knight can go to c4 and then maybe even e3 to support g3-g4 as a pawn attack. $12...\text{Qe7}$ $13.\text{Nc4}$ g6 $14.\text{g4}$ h6 $15.\text{h3}$ gxf5 $16.\text{gxf5}$ Rdg8 $17.\text{Qf3}$ Nd4 $18.\text{Qf2}$ Qa4 $19.\text{b3}$ Qb5 $20.\text{c3}$ Qxc4 $21.\text{bxc4}$ Nc6 $22.\text{Qe3}$ Qd6 $23.0-0-0$ (not only protects the threatened d3-pawn, but puts the king on the safe side, away from the black rooks) $23...\text{Rh7}$ $24.\text{Qf3}$ and now, thanks to the long-range bishops, White can operate on both sides of the board and will also be able to use the b-file for the rooks against the black king, whereas Black can’t do the same to his opponent along the g-file!

3.g3 d5



A good and natural reaction by Black. He gets as many open lines as possible.

4.exd5

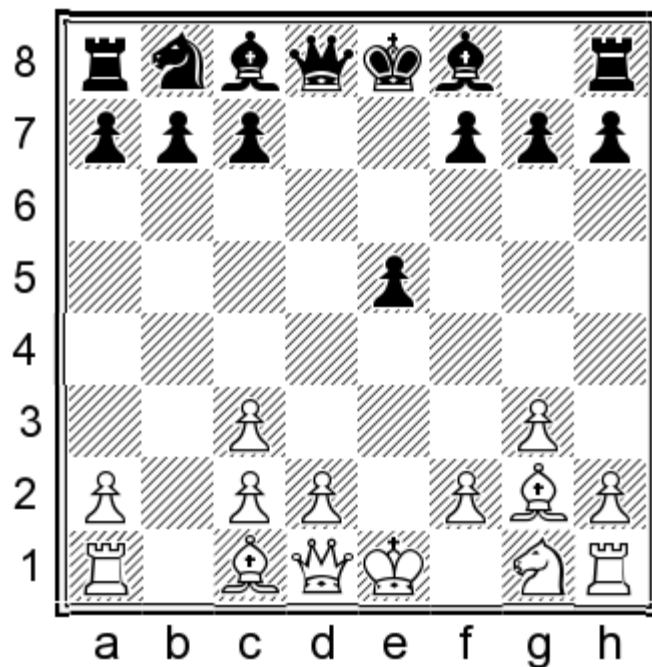
Necessary, else ...d5-d4, chasing a defender of the e-pawn, comes next for Black.

4...♞xd5 5.♙g2 ♞xc3

If Black plays the simple-looking 5...c6, then 6.♚e2 makes it a little embarrassing to defend the e-pawn by ...♙d6 or ...♞d7 as White would then win a pawn by taking twice on d5. The only chance would be to try and punish White for leaving the defense of c2 by playing 6...♞b4; White could then win a pawn for a little discomfort because Black can't really attack too well in this position: 7.♚xe5+ ♙e7 8.♙d1 0-0 9.a3 ♞4a6 10.♞f3 ♞d7 11.♚f4.

5...♙e6 is another good move. After 6.♞f3, the attack on the e-pawn again virtually forces the exchange on c3: 6...♞xc3 7.bxc3 and we reach positions similar to our game.

6.bxc3



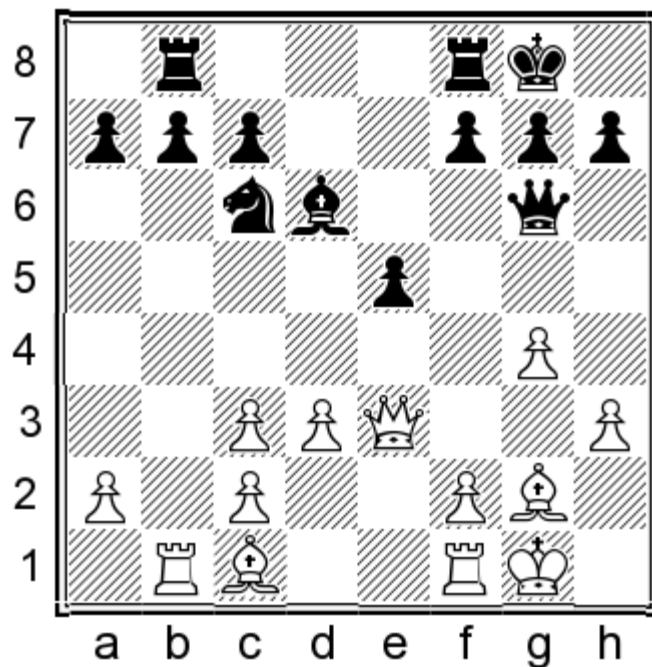
Now we see what White is looking for: the open diagonal for the fianchettoed bishop attacking b7 directly and a8 indirectly. In addition, White will put his rook on b1 to add to the pressure.

6...♗d6

Tseitlin – Bakhmatov, 1978, went 1.e4 e5 2.♖c3 ♗f6 3.g3 d5 4.exd5 ♗xd5 5.♗g2 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♗e7 7.♞b1 c6 8.♗f3 ♗d7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♞e1 ♜a5 11.a3 ♗f6 12.c4 ♞e8 13.d3 ♗f8 14.♗b2 ♗g4 15.♞d2 ♞xd2 16.♗xd2 ♗d7 17.h3 ♗f5 18.a4 a5 19.♗a3 ♞a7 20.g4 ♗g6 21.f4 and White had a clear advantage.

7.♗f3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗d7

White can try to pin the knight with 8...♗g4 but, after 9.h3 ♗h5 10.d3 ♗c6 11.♞b1 ♞b8 12.♞d2 ♞d7 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♗h4 ♞e6 15.♗xg6 ♞xg6 16.♞e3:

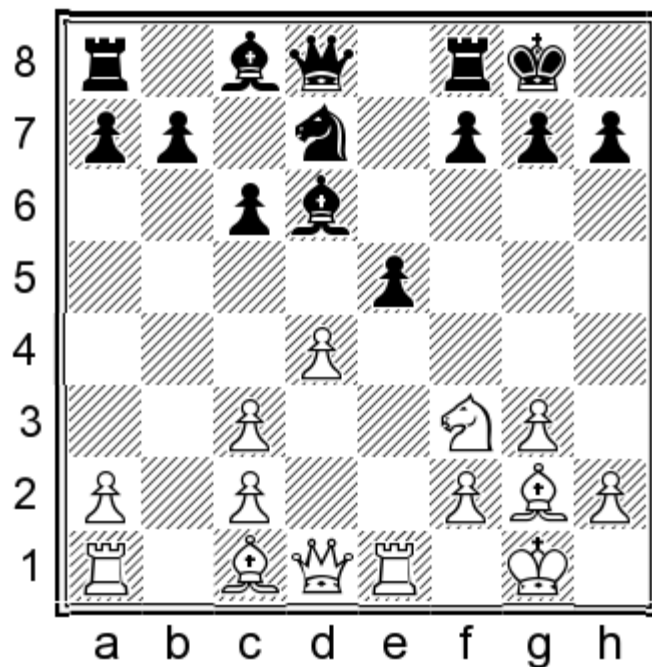


White will have the two bishops. In this position, White is even threatening the capture on c6 followed by the win of a pawn. But, even if Black tries 16...a5, then 17.♖b5 keeps the pressure on.

9.♖e1

More pressure on the e-pawn.

9...c6 10.d4

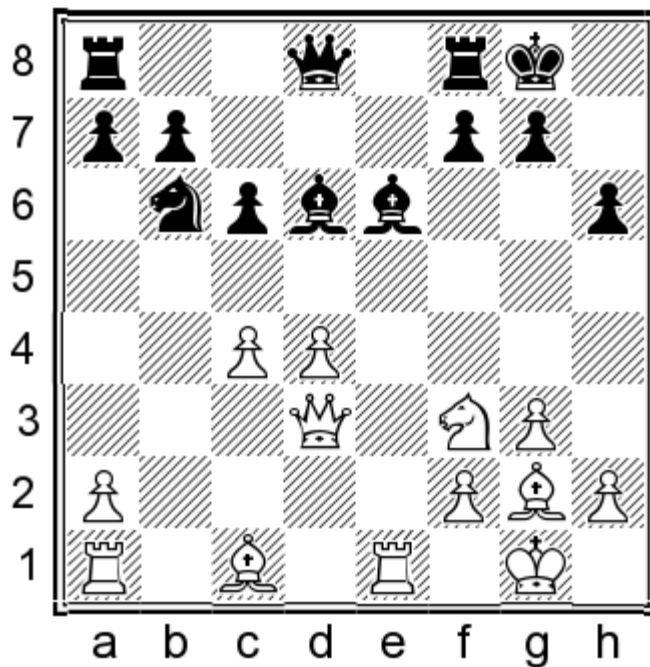


This is White's big pawn move in the center in this form of the Vienna Game. It frees White's position and attacks the e-pawn, while Black can't push the pawn.

10...exd4 11.cxd4 ♖b6 12.♕d3 h6 13.c4

Threatens c4-c5, winning. The queen is nicely posted to defend the c-pawn and even later to prevent ...♙f5.

13...♙e6

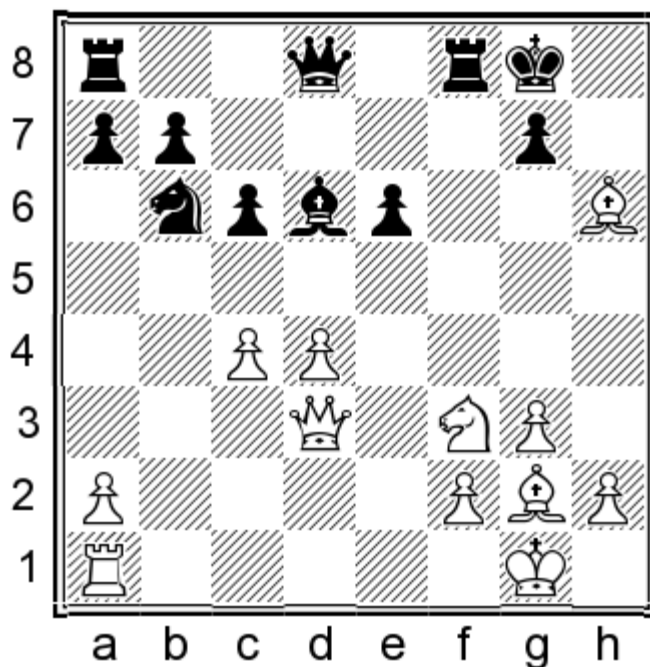


In his book, *H.O.T. Chess*, Motwani points out that White can't play c4-c5 yet as ...♙xc5! would give Black the victory because of White's unprotected queen.

14.♙xe6!!

A beautiful sacrifice by the Scottish grandmaster! And a very logical solution if you think about it...

14...fxe6 15.♙xh6



15...♖xf3

It's very important to see why Black can't take the bishop and expect to survive for long: 15...gxh6 16.♖g6+ ♔h8 17.♖xh6+ ♔g8 18.♗h3!.

16.♗xf3 ♜f6 17.♗d2

The bishop has done its duty and now comes back to redeploy at c3 to bother the black queen.

17...♜f8 18.♗g2 ♜xf2+

Looks impressive, but there is no follow-up available. In fact, White can counter along the f-file with ♖f1!.

19.♔h1 c5 20.♗e3 ♜f6 21.♞e1

White can also put pressure on the weak black e-pawn. Notice how nicely placed White's bishops are.

21...cxd4 22.♗xd4 e5 23.♗e3 ♜e7 24.♖d1 ♗b4 25.c5 ♗xe1 26.cxb6 e4 27.bxa7 ♜b4 28.♖d5+ ♔h8 29.♗xe4 ♜a5 30.♖xa5 and 1-0 because of

30...♗xa5 31.♗xb7.

A very impressive game.

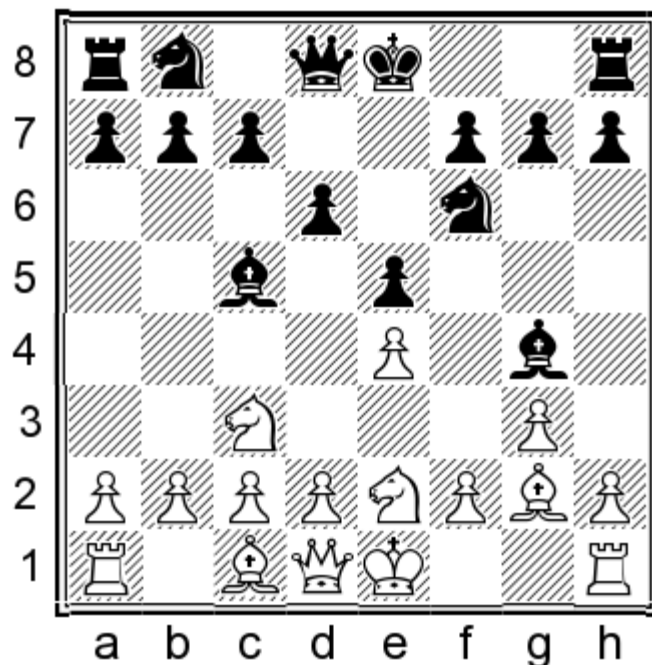
For our final example, we have a game played in 2012 by the grand old man of American chess, GM Arthur Bisguier. His opponent actually played very well for most of the game. Bisguier plays so effortlessly in this opening system that it is a great lesson for young players about development and scope for one's pieces.

Model Game 27

Bisguier – Snow

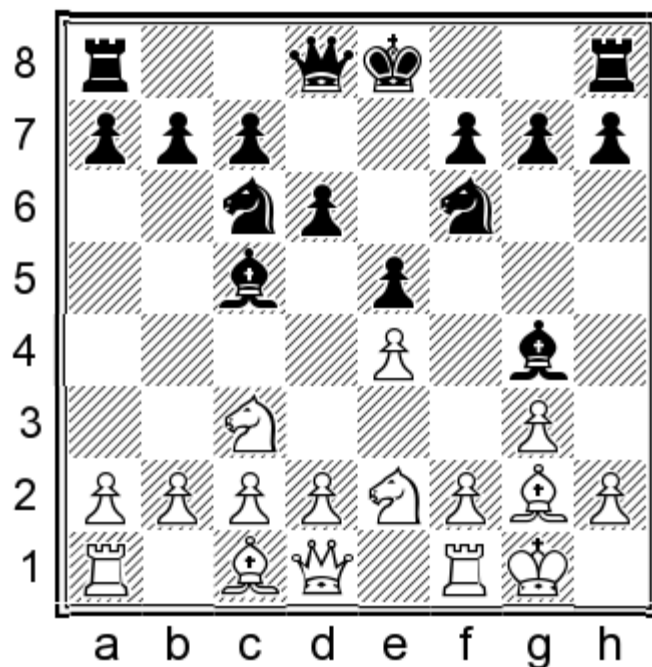
U.S. Amateur Team East,
Parsippany 2013

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 ♗c5 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘ge2 ♗g4



Motwani faced this approach and used h2-h3 and ♖h2 to unpin the f2-pawn so that it could advance: 5...♙d7 6.0-0 0-0 7.h3 ♜e8 8.♗h2 b5 9.a3 a6 10.f4 ♘c6 11.f5 ♘d4 12.g4 h6 13.♘g3 g5 14.♘d5 ♘h7 15.c3 ♘c6 16.f6. Another interesting Motwani exercise went (by transposition): 5...0-0 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.h3 a5 8.♗h2 ♘e8 9.f4 f6 (9...h5 10.f5 h4 11.g4 ♘f6 12.d3 ♙d7 13.♞e1 ♘b4 14.♞xh4 ♘xc2 15.g5 ♘e8 16.f6) 10.♘d5 ♙e6 11.c3 ♙a7 12.d4. There are different ways to play this line, and they are all very fluid and dynamic.

6.0-0 ♘c6



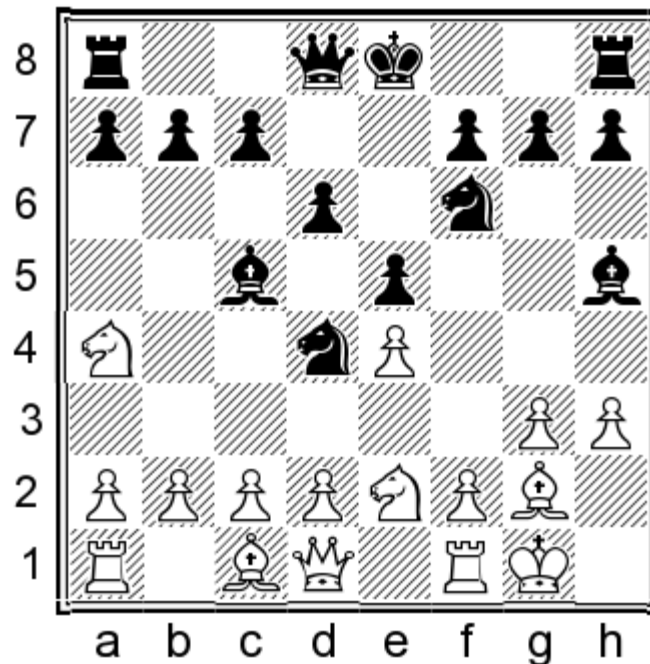
The position is level. Both sides have placed their pieces where they want them. This is not a “White to Play and Win” opening. Unlike the previous game, Black has not responded with an early and challenging ...d7-d5 push. He has put his pieces on good, centrally relevant squares. Bisguier is fine with this as he realizes he doesn’t have to worry about some disruptive counterattack. He has his own plan.

7.h3 ♘h5 8.♗a4

In many Vienna lines, White makes this decentralizing move to gain the two bishops. His h2-h3 nudge is also with purpose, as many times action in the center will be helped if he is able to play g3-g4 to release the pin. Yes, it's that h3/g4 thing again!

8...♗d4

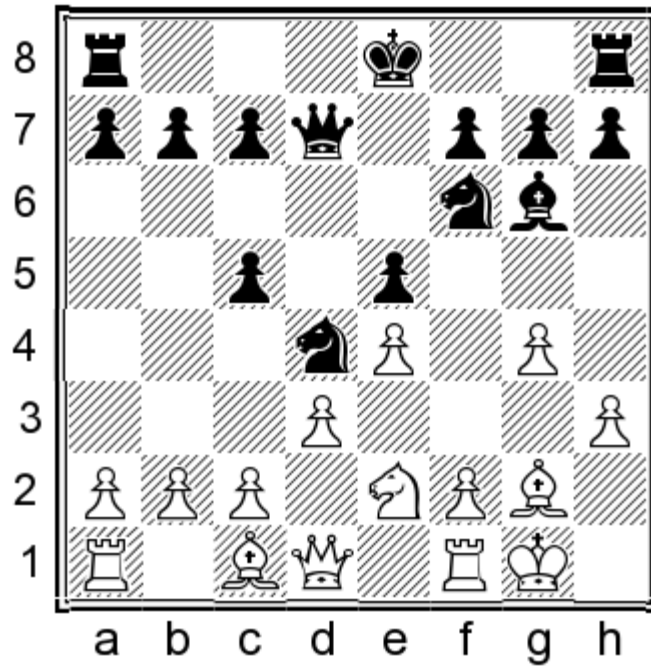
8...♗b6 9.♗xb6 axb6 10.f4 ♗xe2 11.♖xe2 ♖e7 (11...exf4 and now 12.♗xf4 instead of 12.gxf4 because you want the rooks to operate on the semi-open f-file and you may want g3-g4 to help in an eventual advance) 12.d3 h6 13.c3 0-0 14.♗e3, with an equal position where White will benefit if the position opens up because of the two bishops. There will also be pressure on the f-file, although ♖ae1 (after a2-a3) will be an option as well.



9.g4

Having anticipated this ...♗d4 attack on e3, White's h2-h3 can now support the breaking of the pin and the gain of the bishop pair.

9...♗g6 10.♗xc5 dxc5 11.d3 ♖d7

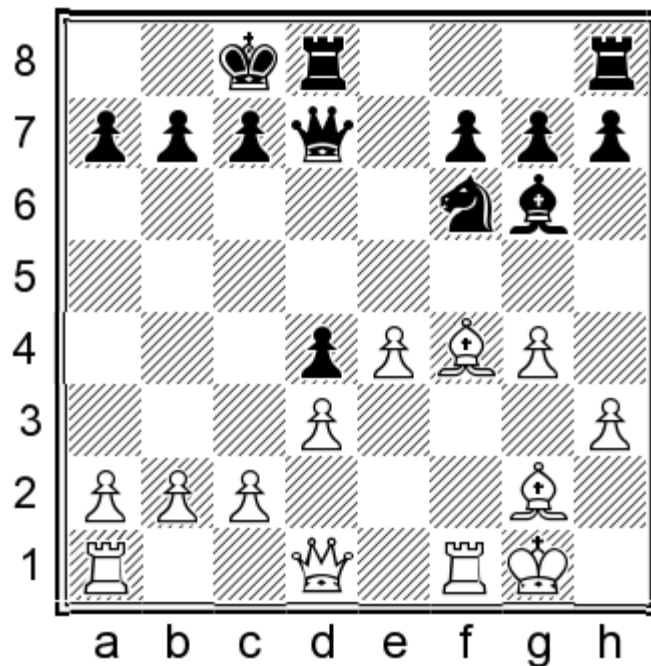


It is such a temptation for Black to play ...h7-h5 here that the idea needs to be addressed. You don't open the file for the opposing rook: 11...h5 12.g5 ♖d7 13.f4 ♜xe2+ 14.♚xe2 h4 15.♚e1 (15.f5 ♗h5) 15...exf4 16.♗xf4.

12. ♜xd4

With the following thrust, White could have taken advantage of Black's delay in castling to get the king out of the center: 12.f4 ♜xe2+ (12...exf4 13.♜xf4) 13.♚xe2 exf4 14.♚f2 ♚e7 15.e5 ♜d7 16.♗xb7. Also effective is 12. ♜xd4.

12...cxd4 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xf4 0-0-0



White has a distinct advantage. He has pressure along the f-file which he can increase. He has a well-timed e4-e5 at some point, opening up his g2-bishop's diagonal, and he can even consider ideas like ♖c1 with c2-c3,

or ♖d2-a5, or a2-a4-a5-a6. This is what makes the Vienna different from those “pre-planned” or “formula” openings that usually have a single strategic idea and thus make an alert defense easier. This position, however, makes it much harder to prepare a defense.

15. ♖f3 ♗e8 16. e5

Nothing like a mate threat to get your opponent’s attention!

16...c6 17. ♕g5

Also possible was 17. h4 h5 18. ♕h3.

17...f6 18. exf6 ♗xf6 19. ♖ae1 ♗df8 20. ♖e2

I was curious why he didn’t play 20. ♖g3.

20...♗d5

Nothing much helps Black here: 20...♖e8 21. ♖d2 ♗d5 22. ♖a5 a6 23. ♖c5 ♗e3 24. ♕xe3 dxe3 25. ♖xe3 with an extra pawn and no problems for White.

21. ♖e5 ♖xf1+ 22. ♖xf1 h6 23. ♕xd5

This is decisive. Knowing Bisguier’s sense of humor, it wouldn’t have surprised me if he had preceded the ♕xd5 idea with 23. ♕xh6 ♖g8 (23...gxh6 24. ♖xh8+; 23...♖xh6 24. ♖f8+) 24. ♕xd5 ♖xd5 25. ♕xg7.

23...cxd5 24. ♕f4 ♗d8 25. ♖b8+ ♖c8 26. ♖d6+ 1-0

Some conclusions:

1. White plays the Paulsen (g3) Variation of the Vienna game to make ...d7-d5 hard for Black with e2-e4, ♗c3, and ♕g2.
2. If Black doesn’t play ...d7-d5 quickly, White gets a fairly free game with the general strategic objective of getting f2-f4 in; however, you must remember the importance of h2-h3 and a possible later g3-g4 as part of the process.
3. If Black exchanges on c3 in the line with an early ...d7-d5, then the queen rook goes to b1 and White will enforce d2(3)-d4 after ♖e1.
4. White shouldn’t be afraid to play ♖d2 to avoid the pin on f3.
5. The white queen bishop can go lots of places: g5 or e3 on the kingside and even b2 or a3 on the queenside.
6. Because Black lacks real counterplay, especially if he castles kingside, then White can feel free to go for f2-f4 or h2-h3 and g3-g4 if Black tries to pin with ...♕g4. The e2-knight can hop to g3 to help the attack, but can go to f3 if Black plays an early ...♕e6 to defend the knight on d5.
7. Don’t castle too quickly! See if Black is going to play ...h7-h5, which means he isn’t castling kingside and is trying to penetrate your castled position if you’re over there. That’s why we mention an early ♗a4 against ...♕c5 (which pins the f-pawn on a possible ...h4xg3 capture, opening the h-file).

9. What Do I Do if I Want to Defend 1.e4 With 1...e5?

You've come to the right place! I've been playing the open games forever. It is reasonable to ask why. As usual, it's a matter of personal style. I feel more comfortable in an open game rather than one that's all bottled up. Some psychologist should someday do research on opening choice and personality, but we may not like the results!

After a lifetime of defending 1.e4 with 1...e5, with some flirtations with the Sicilian along the way, I can safely say not only that it's playable, but also that it offers wide scope for all possible styles. Here in New Jersey we watched Dean Ippolito develop into an IM while playing the Petroff Defense most of the time.

The open games are not better, they are just different. It is my belief that if you are a scholastic player or someone advancing from beginner to a more serious player who wants to improve, the open games are invaluable in terms of teaching you about the importance of time and development, pawn structure issues, and strategic plans that are much easier to understand than 1.d4 plans. Playing over thousands of amateur games in my life has taught me that, in real practice, club players who start out with 1.d4 don't understand what they're doing in the middlegames they get while players of White and Black have a better handle on the open games.

As you get stronger – and yes, older – as a player, you have more patience to play the very deliberate closed games. As a chess coach, I have made exceptions for players on my team that just didn't like 1.e4 e5. OK. I'm not going to force anyone to play something they don't want to. One student liked the French Winawer – no argument there. One loved it when I showed him the Dragon. Both openings are very thematic and very tough. They both had success with them.

The open games for Black also mean that you'll face all sorts of aggressive attacks by people who have read some book showing them how to roll you up. In the Primer, we covered how to defend against the King's Gambit, Vienna Gambit, Danish Gambit, and Göring Gambit. If you simply prepare a little, you'll handle them.

We're going to look at three openings you will have to defend against and that you will see most of the time: a defense to the Italian Game; a defense to the Scotch Game, and a defense to the Ruy López.

The Ruy López is discussed, for both sides, in the very last section of this book, so here we'll concentrate on the Scotch and Italian.

Our first defense to look at is the Two Knights' Defense with 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4, and now 3...♘f6 avoiding the Evans Gambit. I half-jokingly suggested this as the best defense to the Evans. It's one of the oldest openings in chess. It goes through various "refutations," but they eventually turn out to not be as good as initially thought. You got a small intro to the Two Knights in the Primer, but there is much more to it. We'll be looking at three lines, two of which deal with 4.♘g5, which Tarrasch correctly labeled a "duffer's move" and yet which was revived by none other than Bobby Fischer. I have seen scholastic players being encouraged by their coaches to win the pawn because their opponent probably won't know how to respond properly. After all, it does require you to play a pawn down if you're Black.

What else does it require? It requires you to make every move count. The pawn you give up is supposed to give you compensation in time/development. You can't piddle around or your opponent will consolidate his extra pawn and win. It also makes you play without regard for material. This does not mean *complete* disregard – it just means that you should neither feel the need to get your pawn back at once nor shy away from sacrificing more material if necessary. If you are the conservative, plodding sort, go play the French. The Two Knights' Defense forces you to be tactically alert. It raises your chessboard IQ because of the intensity involved in each move's being so critical.

The first line we'll look at is my personal favorite, although I play them all. It's the Fritz Variation, named after a player from about a hundred years ago. It starts out thus: **1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♙c4 ♟f6 4.♟g5? d5! 5.exd5 ♞d4!?**

Perhaps the greatest debate in the open games is whether White's 4th move of ♟g5 in the Two Knights' Defense deserves a ? or ! for an evaluation. My opinion is that it's bad because it gives Black too much play. Playing 4.d4 is much more consequent for White and Black. However, a pawn is a pawn! Fischer played ♟g5, well, because he was Fischer. As an amateur, you're not going to run into GMs every round or any round, so Black's chances with 4...d5 are quite good. The Fritz Variation with 5...♞d4 is chosen here. You can, with equal confidence, play 5...♞a5 (the classical line) or 5...b5 (the Ulvestad). There is no objective reason to prefer one over the other.

I will admit to a sleazy chess-coach reason for teaching it to a 5-year-old lad. In the very first round he played in a real tournament, he faced a much older player. The game lasted about five minutes. I had taught my student a trap, and his opponent quickly fell into it: **1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♙c4 ♟f6 4.♟g5 d5 5.exd5 ♞d4 6.d6 ♜xd6 7.♟xf7 ♜c6 8.♟xh8 ♜xg2 9.♟f1 ♜e4+ 10.♙e2 ♟f3#**. Why did I do such a reprehensible thing? I had noticed several beginners' books touting ♟g5 and noticed a certain slavish devotion by scholastic players to believe everything they read. Taking with ♟xf7 seemed to them to go right along with the theme of what they were taught. Oops!

This counterattack is not for players who like to develop methodically and set up a long-term strategy. It's lively chess, relying very much on development and not so much on material. Although it does not lend itself to positional themes, there are key strategic ideas involving the center, attacking the white king, using rook lifts with ...♞a8-b8-b6, knowing what to do with your king when you have to move it, and playing sharp moves that do provide positional compensation in the endgame when you're a pawn down.

The game presented as an introduction to the possibility of your playing this defense is not in the *Chessbase* database. This doesn't surprise me, as more than a few American games are not. Black was a very talented junior player.

Model Game 28

Sachs – Friedman

Cleveland Junior Chp. 1948

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♙c4 ♟f6 4.♟g5? d5! 5.exd5 ♞d4!?

A short mention of the Ulvestad Variation is in order here: 5...b5 6.♙f1 h6 7.♟xf7 (7.dxc6 hxg5 8.♙xb5 ♜d5 9.♙f1 ♜xc6 10.♞c3 ♙d7 11.♜e2 ♙c5 12.d3 ♟g4 13.♞d1 ♟xh2 14.♜xe5+ ♜e6 15.♜xe6+ ♙xe6 16.♟g1 ♟xf1 17.♟xf1 f6 18.♙e3 ♙d6 19.b3 ♟f7 20.♙d2 ♟h2 21.♞e3 ♟ah8 22.♟e2 ♙d7 23.♞f1 ♟h4 24.♟e1 ♙c6) 7...♟xf7 8.dxc6 ♙c5 (8...♜d5 9.♞c3 ♜xc6 10.♞xb5) 9.♙xb5 ♟g4 (9...♙xf2+ 10.♟xf2 ♜d4+ 11.♟e1) 10.♟f1 ♟f8 11.♜e2 ♟e8 12.f3 ♜h4+ 13.♟d1 ♟f2+ 14.♟xf2 ♜xf2 15.♜xf2 ♙xf2 16.♞c3 ♟b8.

This only scratches the surface. The ideas are very similar: development and open lines are keys to Black's being in the game. It's wild stuff. Black can transpose into the Fritz with 6...♞d4. I've never really come to a personal conclusion about the Ulvestad. The Fritz gives me more confidence. That's why we have this game.

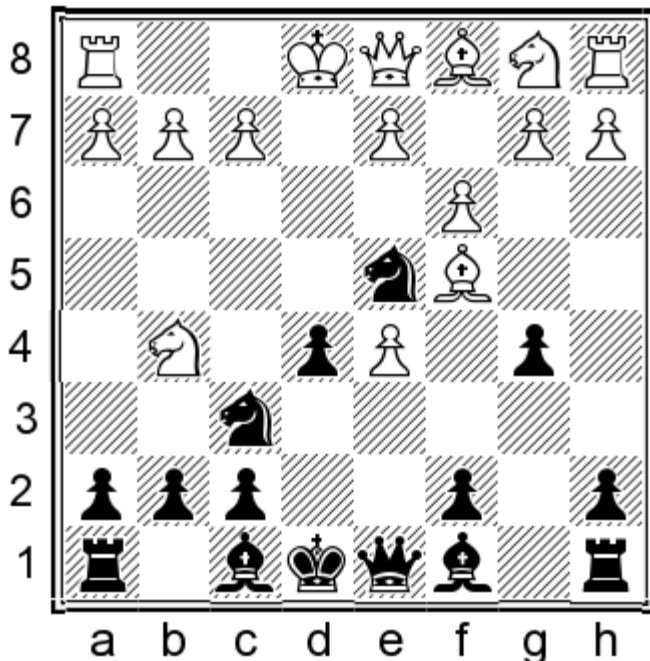
6.c3

Very logical for White. The centralized knight can be a real thorn in White's side.

One route to follow if White avoids the 7.♟xf7 trap goes 6.d6 ♜xd6 7.♙xf7+ ♟e7 8.♙b3 ♞xb3 9.axb3 h6

10. ♖f3 e4 11. ♗g1 ♜f7 12. ♖c3 ♞c6 13. ♗ge2 ♟c5 14. 0-0 b5 15. b4 ♟xb4 16. ♗d4 ♞d7 17. ♗cxb5 a6 18. c3 ♟c5 19. b4 ♟b6 20. ♞b3+ ♜g6 21. ♗a3 ♜h7 22. ♗c4 ♞d5 23. ♞e1 ♞f8 24. ♗xb6 ♞xb3 25. ♗xb3 cxb6 26. b5 a5 27. ♗d4 ♟b7 28. ♟a3 ♞f7 29. ♗f5 ♗e8 30. ♗e3 ♗c7 31. ♞ab1 ♞c8 32. ♟d6 ♗e6 33. ♟g3 g5 34. ♞a1 ♞d7. Neither 6. 0-0 ♗xd5 nor 6. ♗c3 h6 bother Black.

6...b5



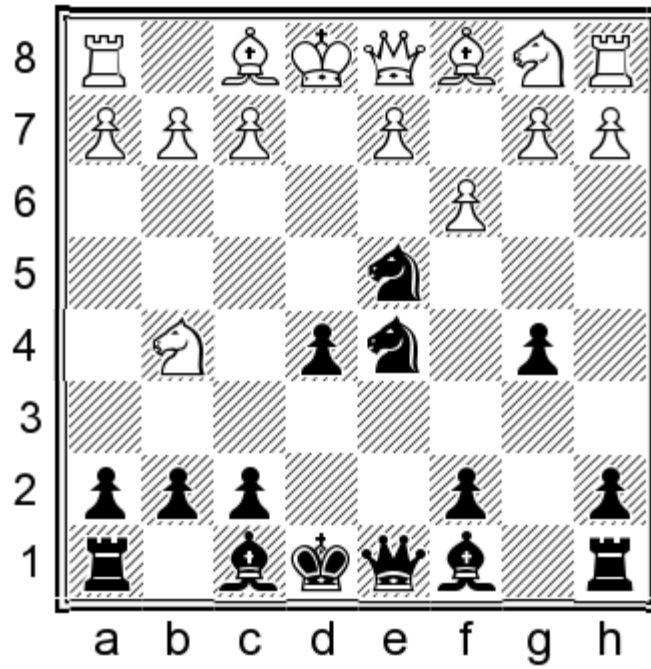
7. ♟f1!

Other moves give Black no problems:

a) 7. ♟d3? ♟f5! 8. ♟xf5 ♗xf5 9. ♞f3 ♗d6 10. d3 h6 11. ♗h3 ♟e7 12. a4 b4 13. cxb4 g5 14. ♞e2 g4 15. ♗g1 ♗f5 16. ♞xe5 ♞xd5 17. ♞xd5 ♗xd5=;

b) 7. cxd4 bxc4 8. dxe5 (8. ♞a4+ ♞d7 9. ♞xc4 [9. ♞xd7+ ♗xd7 10. dxe5 ♗xe5 11. 0-0 ♗d3] 9... ♞xd5 10. ♞xd5 ♗xd5 11. dxe5 ♗b4 12. ♗a3 ♗d3+ 13. ♜f1 ♟a6 14. ♜g1 ♟c5 15. ♗e4 ♟b6 16. ♗c2 ♟b7 17. ♗c3 ♟xf2+) 8... ♞xd5 9. 0-0 ♟b7 10. ♗f3 (10. ♞f3 ♞xf3 11. ♗xf3 ♗d7! 12. ♗c3 [12. e6 fxe6 13. ♞e1 ♟xf3 14. gxf3 ♗c5] 12... 0-0-0 13. e6 fxe6 14. ♗g5 ♞e8 15. b3 h6 16. ♗ge4 cxb3 17. axb3 ♗c5! 18. ♗xc5 ♟xc5 19. ♗a4 ♟d6=) 10... ♗d7 11. ♗c3 ♞d3 12. ♗e1 ♞f5 13. f4 ♟c5+ 14. ♜h1 0-0 15. ♞c2 ♞g4 16. ♗e4 ♞g6 17. f5 ♞g4 18. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 19. d4 ♞xd4=.

7... ♗xd5



8. ♖e4

There are several exciting choices for White. This is the only part that gives me pause about recommending this defense. Here, you do have to memorize, but I found that if you just play through the analysis, it all starts to make sense because a good many of the lines are either forcing or natural developing moves anyhow. One warning: as with all lengthy analysis, you owe it to yourself to double-check it!

a) 8. cxd4 ♖xg5 9. ♗xb5+ ♔d8 10. 0-0! (10. ♗f3 exd4 11. ♗c6 ♖f4 12. ♗xa8 ♗g4 13. ♗b7 ♖d3+ 14. ♔f1 ♗d6 15. ♗b8+ ♔e7 16. ♗xh8? ♗e5 and mate follows; your opponent will think he just played Paul Morphy). Black's best seems to be 10... ♗b7 11. ♗f3 ♖b8! (11... exd4 12. d3 ♖f4 13. ♗xf4 [13. ♗b7 ♖h3+ 14. ♔h1 ♖xf2+ 15. ♔g1 ♖h3+] 13... ♗xb5 14. ♗g3 ♗d7 15. ♖d2) 12. dxe5 ♖e3! (12... ♖b4 13. d4 ♗g6 14. d5 ♗xd5 15. ♖d1 ♖xb5 16. ♖c3 looks good for White) 13. ♗h3 ♖xg2+ 14. ♗xg2 ♖xg2 15. d4 ♗e7 (15... f6 16. ♗e2 ♖h4 17. f4 ♖f5 18. ♖d1 fxe5 19. fxe5 ♗e7 20. b3 ♗a8 21. ♖c3 ♖f8 22. ♖a4 ♔e8=) 16. ♗c4 ♖h4 17. ♖d2 ♔e8 18. ♗e2 h5 19. ♖c4 ♖f3+ 20. ♗xf3 ♗xf3 21. ♗d2 h4 22. ♖fe1 h3 23. ♖e3 ♗d5 24. b3 ♗xc4 25. bxc4 ♗g5 26. ♖d3 ♗xd2 27. ♖xd2 ♖h4=. It's worth noting that the game can go in several different directions after move 20. Black is in the game, and over the board you'll probably find another direction. As much as I dislike going this deep in analysis, if you play this opening you should get used to really exploring endgames, which is ironic considering that the sharp opening moves hint at a short, brutal fight. I recall Hans Berliner's big win in the correspondence world championship which ended up in a masterful endgame in this Two Knights line. Thus, you really need to do some homework in this variation.

b) 8. h4 h6 9. ♖e4 ♖e6 10. ♗xb5+ ♗d7 11. ♗xd7+ ♗xd7, with play similar to the game.

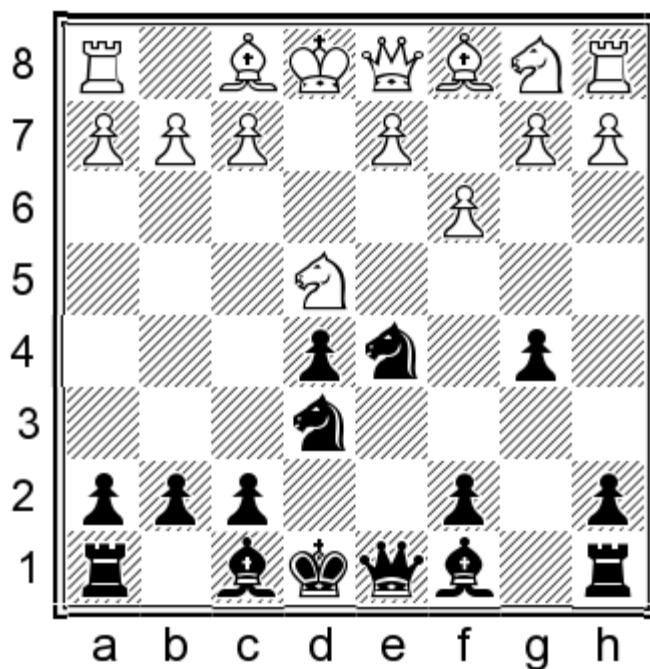
c) 8. ♖xf7 ♔xf7 9. cxd4 exd4 10. ♗f3+ (10. ♗xb5 ♗e7+ 11. ♗e2 ♗xe2+ 12. ♗xe2 ♖f4 13. ♗c4+ ♗e6 14. ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 15. 0-0 ♖f4 and Black actually has the better of it here; White will have to give the pawn back with 16. d3 ♖xd3 followed by ... ♖e8 and ... c7-c5 or ... ♗c5) 10... ♖f6 11. ♗xa8 ♗c5 12. ♗c6 ♗e8+ 13. ♗xe8+ ♖xe8+ 14. ♔d1 ♖g4 15. ♔c2 ♖xf2 16. b4 ♗d6 17. ♖g1 ♗h2 18. ♗xb5 ♗xg1 19. ♗xe8+ ♔xe8 20. ♖a3 ♗f5+ 21. ♔b3 ♗e6+ 22. ♔a4 ♖d3 and, for the exchange, Black has a pawn, a bind on White's position, and a vulnerable white king.

d) 8. ♖h3 ♗xh3 9. cxd4 ♗d7 10. dxe5 ♗h4 11. ♖c3 ♗c5 12. ♗f3 c6 13. ♗xb5 0-0 14. ♖xd5 cxb5 15. d3 ♖ae8 16. 0-0 ♖xe5 17. ♗e3 (embarrassing would be 17. ♖c3 ♗c6 18. ♗xc6 ♗xf2+!!) 17... ♗g4 18. ♗f4 ♖xd5 19. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 20. f3 ♖c2 21. fxg4 ♖xb2 with equal chances, though Black's a bit better with his queenside pawn majority, while

White's passed center pawn isn't really going anywhere.

8...♘e6

For now, chess engines have relegated Berliner's 8...♙h4 to the dustbin of opening theory.



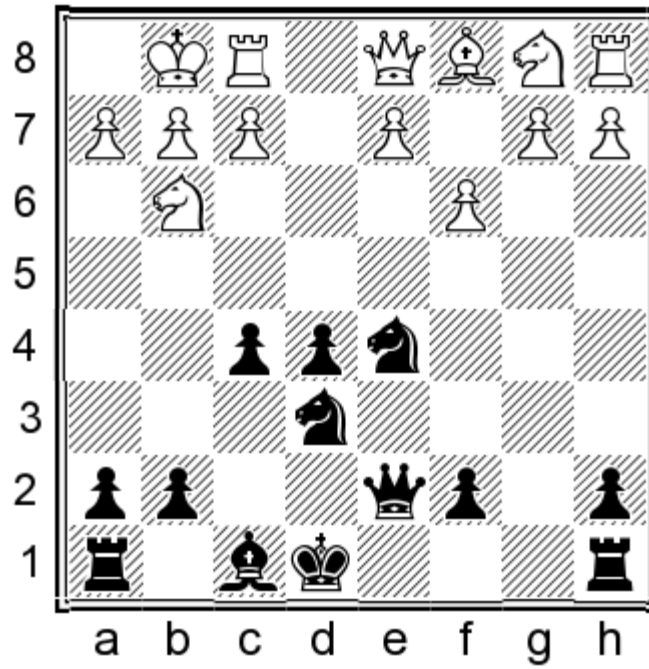
9.♙xb5+ ♘d7 10.♙xd7+

10.♙c4 ♘b6.

10...♙xd7 11.0-0 f5!?

More solid is 11...♙e7 12.d3 (12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 ♖d8=) 12...0-0 13.♙f3 ♖ad8 14.♘g3 ♗fe8 15.♙e1 ♘df4 16.d4 ♘g5 17.♙d1 ♙d5=, but Friedman's move is aggressive and good.

12.♘g3



Friedman had two choices here, 12...f4 and 12...g6. Again, he goes with the most aggressive alternative. It's a matter of temperament. B.Stein – M.Hermann, Bundesliga 1981, went 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘g5 d5 5.exd5 b5 6.♗f1 ♘d4 7.c3 ♘xd5 8.♗e4 ♗e6 9.♗xb5+ ♗d7 10.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 11.0-0 f5 12.♘g3 g6 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4 ♗g7 15.♗e2 and they called it a day. It may be equal, but it is not drawn. Black has natural moves like ...0-0 and ...♖ab8. With no effort, Black could have found out more about his opponent before being satisfied with a draw.

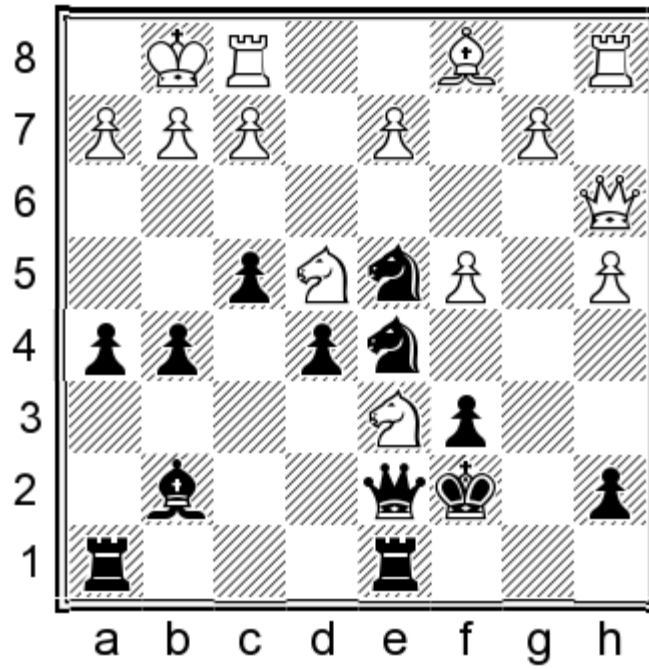
12...f4 13.♗e4 0-0-0

Ah, young blood! Aggressive can be good, but as you get older, you learn to temper it with 13...♗e7. That's one airy queenside!

14.♗f3 g5 15.a4 ♗g7

Now he gets conservative! Better was 15...h5! 16.♗d1 g4 17.d3 ♗e7 18.♖e1 f3 19.gxf3 ♘df4! 20.d4 exd4 21.fxg4 d3 22.♗e3 hxg4 23.♘bd2 ♗d6 24.♘f1 ♘h3+ 25.♗g2 ♗c6 26.♗xa7 ♗b7 27.♗d4 c5 28.♗xh8 ♘ef4+ 29.♗h1 ♘xf2+ 30.♗g1 ♘xd1. White's plan with a2-a4 and ♘a3-b5 was a bit slow, and putting the queen at f3 was a good way to lose time. It just goes to show the difficulty of defense in these kinds of lines.

16.♘a3 h5 17.♘b5 c6 18.♘bd6+ ♗c7 19.c4 ♘d4 20.♗a3



This is a good time to remind you that part of chess is knowing the fundamentals of attacking a kingside castled position. Friedman ignores the threat on his d5-knight. This is also a good time to consider the middlegame position with respect to the opening. Both sides have centralized knights. Black's pawn storm is very threatening; White's pawns are late to the party. All of Black's pieces are in the game to some degree; White's queen bishop and rook are still on their original squares and d2-d4 hasn't been played. White's king is castled – or, more accurately – cornered, while Black's looks less secure, but is actually more so than its counterpart. The reason is lost tempi. White needed to get in b2-b4 and ♖b1 early on, once Black castled queenside. Thus, the middlegame is the child of the opening. You don't need a chess engine to tell you Black is winning here. Friedman didn't have one in 1948 to do his prep, so you have to give him great credit for his imagination. He wraps this game up nicely.

20...f3 21.cxd5 ♖g4 22.♗b5+ cxb5 23.♙c5+ ♔b8 24.♘g3 h4 25.gxf3 ♘e2+ 0-1

How does this defense fit our principles? There are, indeed, some lines you really need to memorize, but not that many. Most of it is just good, old-fashioned development and centralization. You have to learn not to worry about being a pawn down or sacrificing a piece for the attack.

The next line is the classical Two Knights with Black creating problems along the open files and diagonals.

Model Game 29

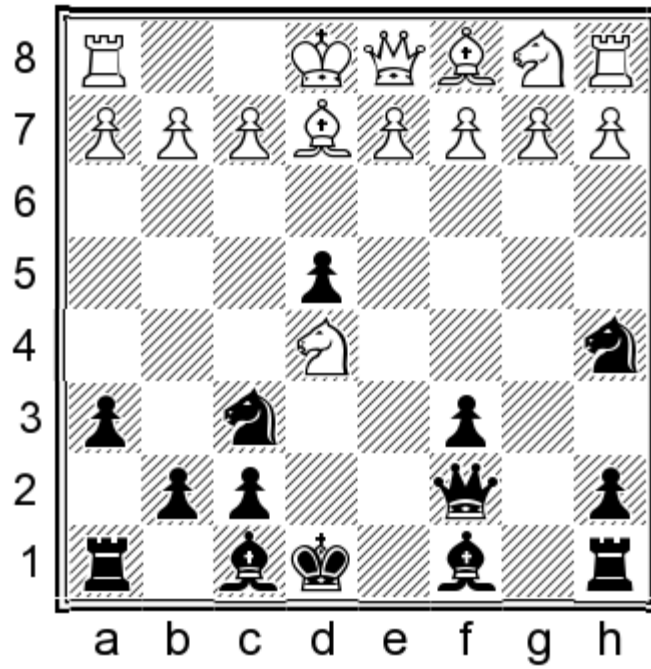
Spielmann – Eliskases

Match (7) 1936

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♘g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗a5 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2

We covered 8.♙f3 in the Primer – see p. 65.

8...h6 9.♘f3 e4 10.♘e5 ♙c7



I prefer this to the modern 10...♔d6. Black should wait to see if whether 11.f4 or 11.d4 is played. If 11.f4, then the bishop will find a better home on c5.

11.d4 exd3

This is the open-lines option: Black dissolves the center to create opportunities from the opened files and cleared diagonals.

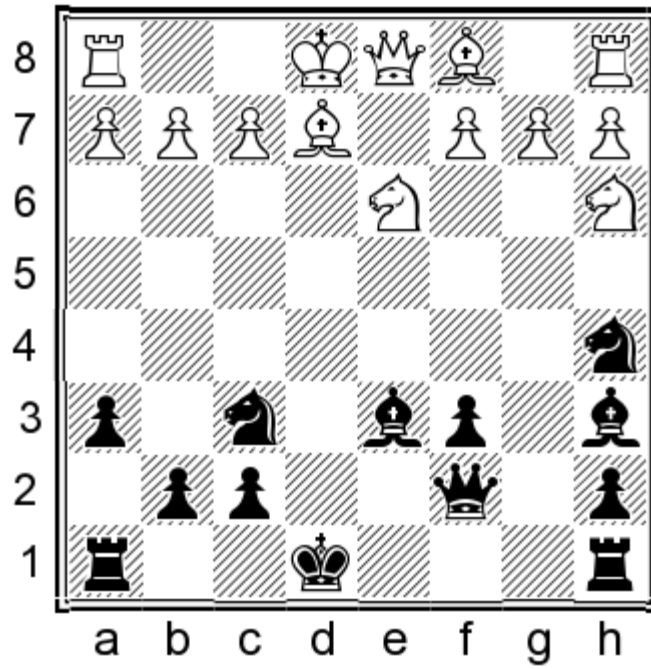
12.♘xd3 ♔d6

Stops White from castling while he gets his pieces developed. Time! Time!

13.♘a3

Apparently, the idea of ...c6-c5 bothers White, who will now be able to reply ♘b5. He knows Black won't capture on a3 because it would be foolish to exchange an active attacking bishop for a knight on the rim.

13...♔a6



What I like about the classical Two Knights is that moves like 13...0-0, 13...♘f5, and 13...♙e6 are all playable. Your fate doesn't hang on one move. With the Fritz, you have to know your stuff. Black must realize, though, that if White plays 14.♘c5 you don't want to play 14...♙xc5 because of 15.♙xa6, so you would redeploy to another diagonal: 14...♙c8. White is now desperate to castle, but his next move does leave holes at f3 and h3.

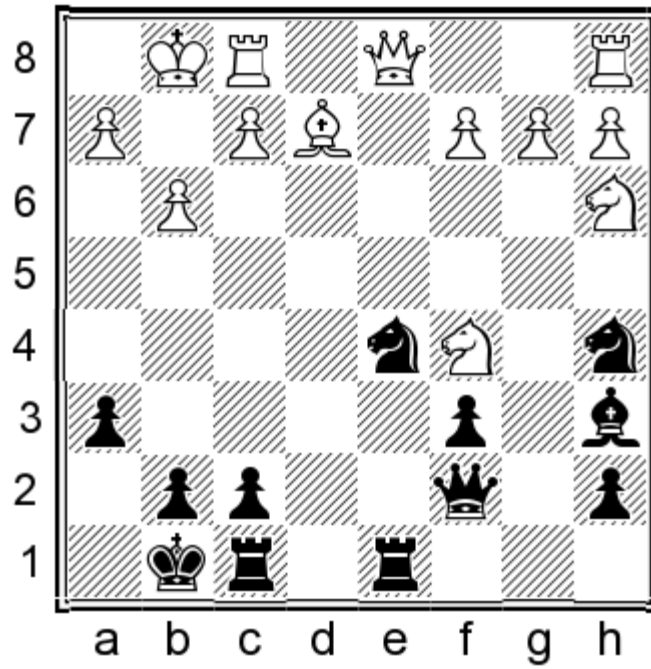
14.g3 0-0 15.0-0 ♖ad8

It is so natural to put the rooks on d8 and e8. Look at the long-range pressure with the indirect attack on the queen.

16.♙e3 ♘d5 17.♙c5

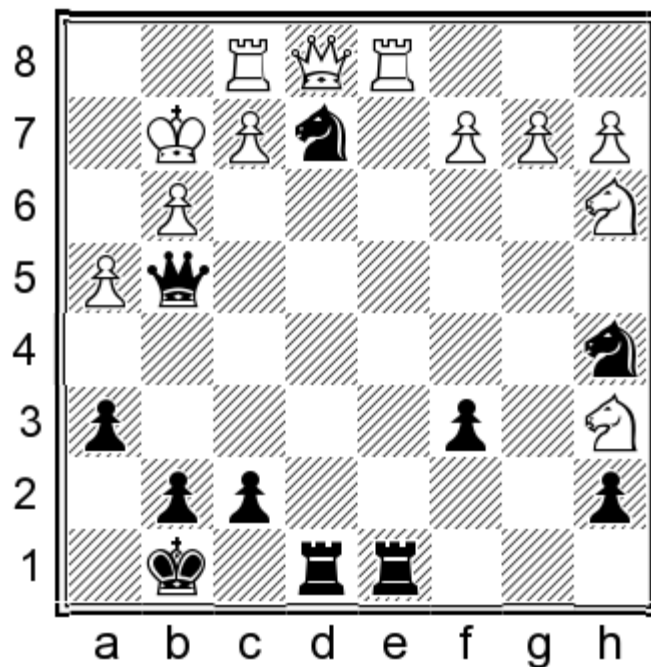
An attempt to exchange off pieces to relieve the pressure, but it doesn't work well. White could try to preserve the bishop with 17.♙d2, but then Black could take the a3-knight because its diagonal has been blunted with g2-g3. The knights would then take great squares that make the bishops look lame: 17...♙xa3 18.bxa3 ♘c4.

17...♙xc5 18.♘xc5



This is tactics time – the reward for having a rook on the file. The double discovered attack on the queen is decisive.

18...♖c3 19.♗xa6 ♕e5 20.♚e1 ♜xe2+ 21.♔h1 ♞fe8 22.♞d1 ♞h5 23.h4 ♞g4 24.♔g2



Black, after playing superbly, falters here. His choice keeps a slight advantage, but White fails to find the best defense and loses quickly. He should have played 24...♞xd1 25.♞xd1 ♞e3 26.♞d8+ ♔h7 27.♞c7 ♞f3+ 28.♔h2 ♞e4 29.♗c5 ♞xh4+ 30.gxh4 ♗f4 31.♞xf4 ♞xf4+ 32.♔g2 ♞g4+ 33.♔h1 ♞xh4+ 34.♔g2 ♞g5+ 35.♔f3 ♞xc5.

24...♗xg3?? 25.fxg3??

White misses 25.f3 ♞c8 26.♞xd8 ♞xd8 27.♔xg3 ♞xa6 28.♞f2 ♗b7.

25...♖e2+ 26.♜f2 ♜xf2+ 27.♚xf2 ♚xd1 0-1

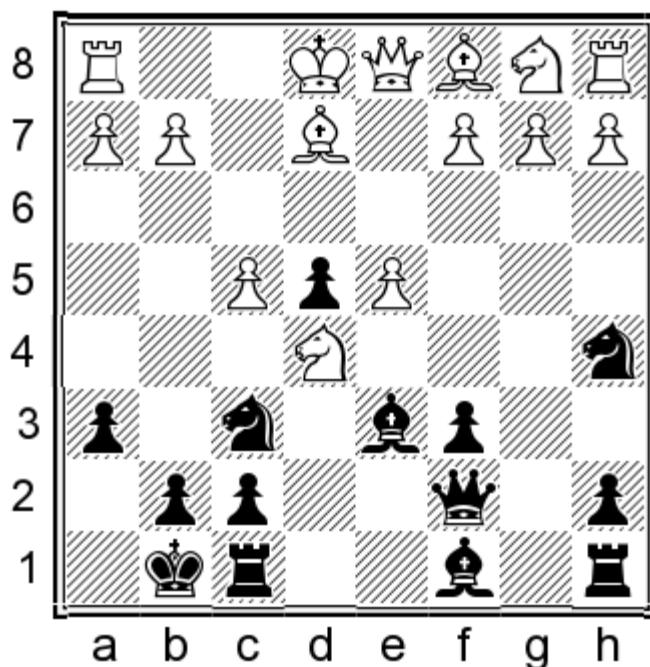
Black also has the option to avoid the *en passant* exchange in the center. This next game will show how this works. It was played by Mikhail Chigorin as one of nine games played simultaneously – *blindfolded!!* This game made me a Two Knights fan when I first saw it in my high school library's copy of *The Fireside Book of Chess*.

Model Game 30

Arnold – Chigorin

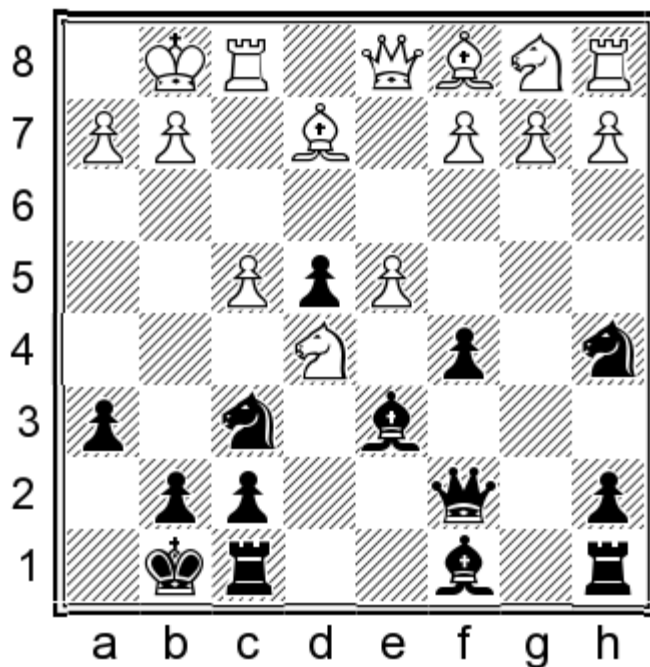
St. Petersburg (blindfold simul) 1885

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♗g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗a5 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗f3 e4
10.♗e5 ♚c7 11.f4 ♙d6 12.d4 0-0



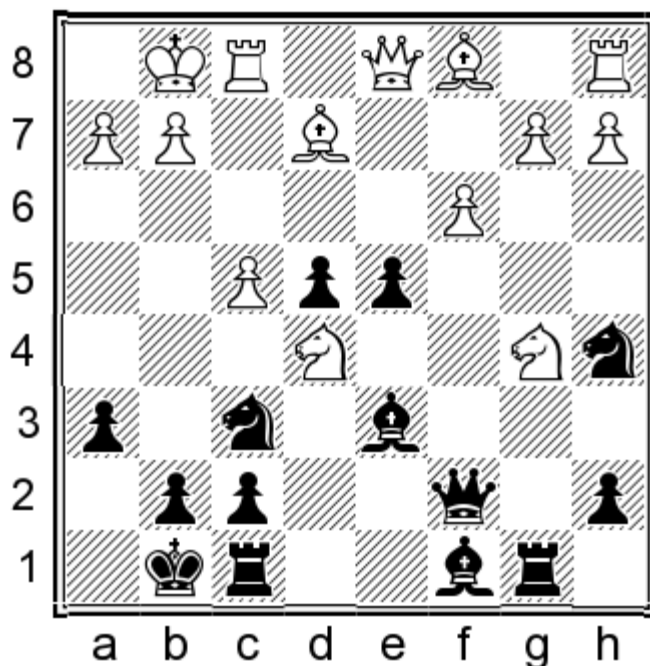
You saw the damage an open position can do. Why is Chigorin allowing White to have a strongly supported knight at e5? The answer is: he's not! Watch him get to work.

13.0-0 c5



He lets White establish his “center,” then tears it apart! I loved Chernev and Reinfeld’s comment here: “Just the kind of position that Chigorin loved: he is a pawn down, but he has a fine development, and open lines are a dime a dozen.”

14.c3 ♖b8 15.♘a3 cxd4 16.♘b5

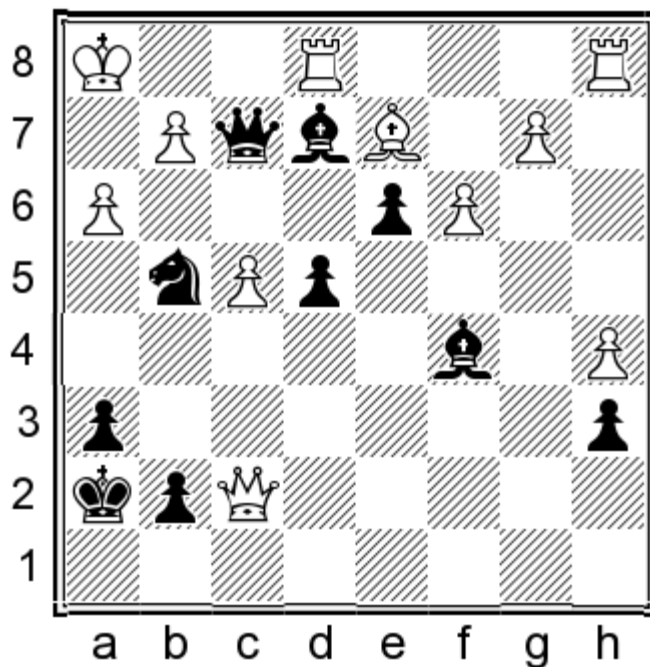


Expecting the queen to move. Oh, well.

16...♖xb5 17.♙xb5 ♖b6

Picking up an important tempo on the bishop and thus saving those two nasty pawns in the center. Isn’t it interesting that Chigorin kept his pawn on e4 rather than exchange it early on?

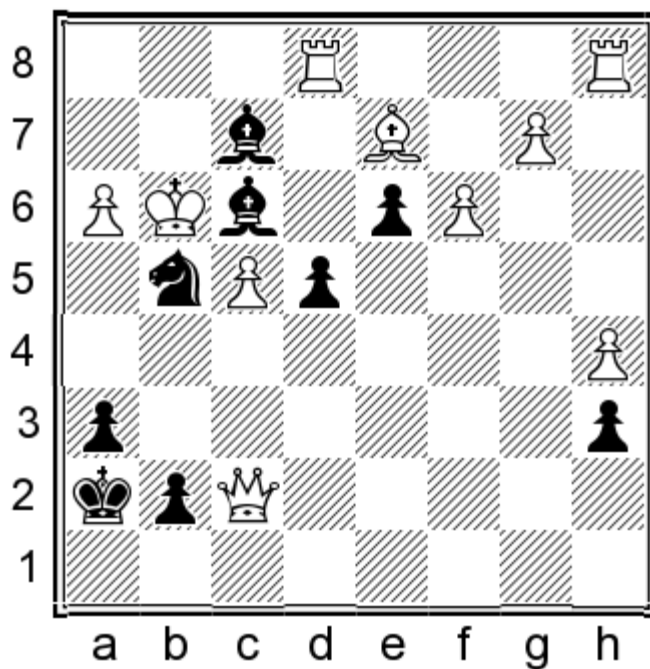
18.a4 d3+ 19.♔h1 a6 20.♖c4 ♗xc4 21.♙xc4 ♘g4 22.a5 ♚a7 23.♗a4 ♙e2 24.♞e1 ♗g4 25.h3 ♗f2
 26.♙d2 ♙c5 27.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 28.♗e8+ ♔h7 29.♗xf7



He's given up two rooks! There must be a mate here. Do you see it?

29...♗xg2+!! 0-1

After taking Black's queen, White will have a queen, two rooks, and a bishop vs. Black's two bishops and a knight, but it's mate: 30.♔xg2 ♙f3+ 31.♔g3 (31.♔f1 ♗h2#) 31...♙f2#!. Worth a diagram:



That made me a convert! How about you? You don't have to play blindfolded.

However, there is one approach for White that takes all the fun out of this sort of thing:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.♖e1

There's a lot of smoke but no fire in 6.♘c3 dxc3 7.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 8.♚d5+ ♔f6 9.♚xe4 ♙e7 10.♙g5+ ♔f7 11.♚f5+ ♙f6 12.♚d5+ ♔f8 13.bxc3 ♚e7.

6...d5 7.♙xd5

Ditto prior note: 7.♘c3 dxc3 8.♙xd5 ♙e6 9.♙xe4 ♚xd1 10.♖xd1 cxb2 11.♙xb2 f6.

7...♚xd5 8.♘c3 ♚a5

You need to be booked up to play 8...♚h5.

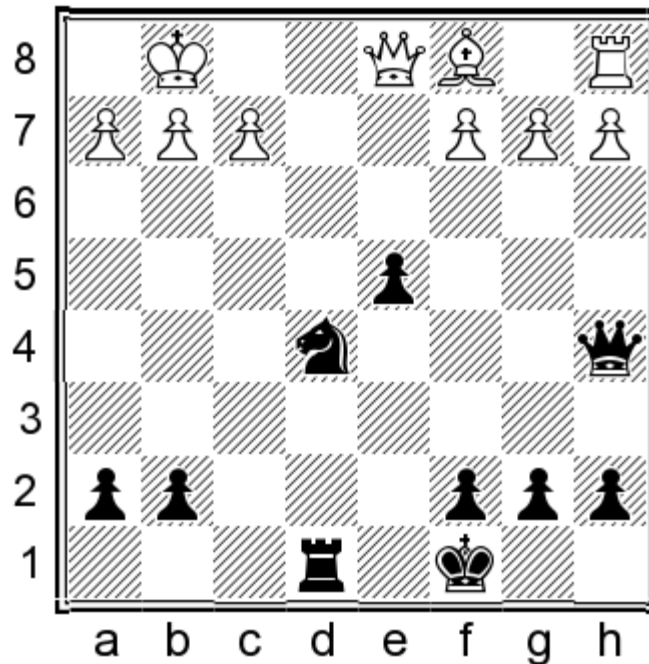
9.♘xe4 ♙e6 10.♘eg5

10.♙d2 ♙b4 [10...♚b5 11.a4 ♚d5] 11.♘xd4 ♙xd2 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.♚xd2 ♚xd2 14.♘d2 0-0-0

10...0-0-0 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♖xe6 ♙e7 (there are attempts to complicate with 12...♙d6, or 12...h6 and then 13...♙d6, but it is double-edged) **13.♘e5**

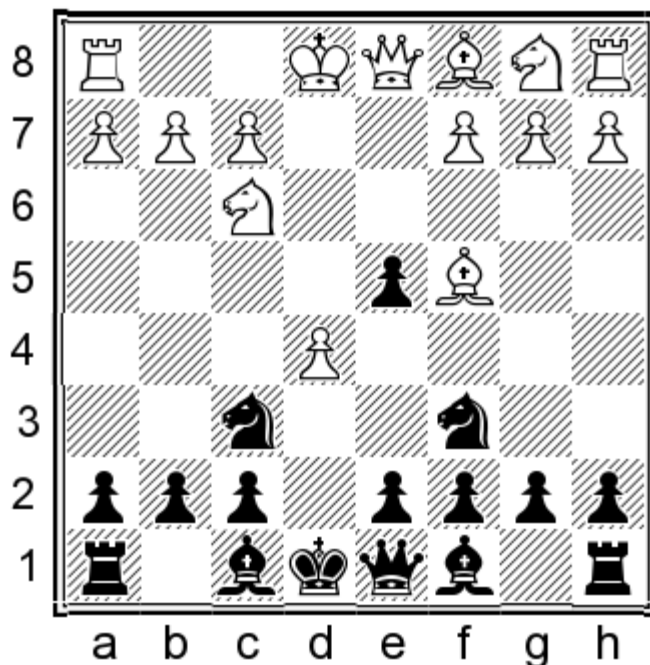
This is recommended over 13.♚d3 [13.♙d2 ♚b5; 13.♚e2 ♙f6; 13.h4 ♖he8 14.♚e2 ♚h5] 13...♚d5.

13...♘xe5 14.♖xe7 ♖he8 15.♖xe8 ♖xe8:



An equal game that should be a draw with best play. White is behind in development.

If you're Black, you can hope that White will play **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.e5:**



Why would you be happy? You played the Two Knights to fight for the initiative: here's your chance. A second reason is that *Chess Openings for White, Explained*, a very popular book (and deservedly so) promotes this move. I questioned this in a *Chess Life* book review. The authors made an effort to address the issue in their second edition, but as an amateur player, I wasn't really satisfied with it. So, I did what I have suggested that you do: worked on it myself with my friend Harry (*Houdini!*). And just as I suspected, there are a host of other variations to consider from move 7 on. Here are some highlights of the investigation:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.e5 d5 6.♙b5

Not 6.exf6? dxc4 7.fxg7 ♙xg7 8.0-0 0-0.

6...♘e4 7.♘xd4

Easy for Black is 7.0-0 ♙g4 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♚xf3 ♚e7 10.♞e1 ♚b4 11.♚e2 ♙c5 12.a3 ♚a5=.

7...♙c5 8.♙e3.

Wild is 8.♘xc6 ♙xf2+ 9.♙f1 and now there are two ways for Black to go, both of them quite lively:

a) 9...♚h4 10.♘xa7+ c6 11.♘xc8 (11.♘xc6 0-0) 11...♞xc8 12.♙e2 ♙c5 13.♚e1 ♙f2 14.♚d1 ♙d4 15.♚e1 ♙f2= with a draw by repetition; or

b) 9...bxc6 10.♙xc6+ ♙f8 11.♚d3 (11.♙xa8 ♙a6+) 11...♙f5 12.♚a3+ ♙g8 13.♙xa8 ♚xa8 14.♙e3 ♚c6 15.♘d2 (15.♙xf2 ♚xc2) 15...♙xe3 16.♚xe3 h5.

A modest White approach doesn't help: 8.c3 0-0 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.0-0 f6! 11.♙e3 ♙a6.

One common and critical line is 8.0-0 0-0 9.♙xc6 (9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.♙xc6 ♙a6 11.♚xd5 ♙xf1 12.♚xe4 ♙b5!!). Please remember this backwards bishop move; I once forgot it and played the losing 12...♚d1. Never forgot that again!) 9...bxc6 10.♘xc6 (10.♙e3 ♚e8 [avoid 10...f6? 11.♘xc6 ♚d7 12.♙xc5 ♘xc5 13.♚xd5+ ♚xd5 14.♘e7+] 11.♘d2 ♙xd4 12.♙xd4 c5 13.♘xe4 cxd4 14.♘c5 ♚xe5=) 10...♚d7 11.♘d4, and now Black can essay 11...♞e8, 11...♚e7, or 11...♙a6.

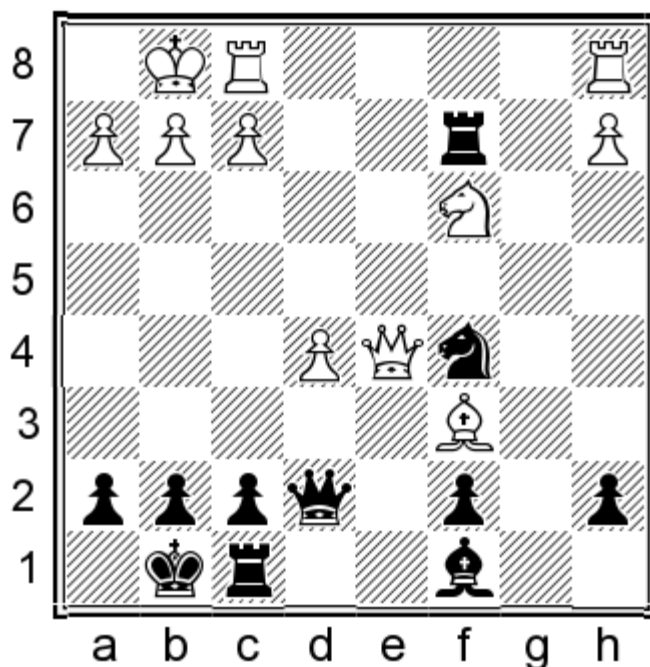
8...0-0 9.♘xc6

People will try 9. c6 bxc6 10.0-0 (10. c6 ?? xe3 ! 11. xd8 xf2 + 12. f1 a6 +; 10. f3 h4 +) 10... e8 11. d2 (11. f3 d6 !) 11... f5 .

9... bxc6 10. c5 xc5 11. c6 b8 !

11... a6 was the theoretical main line for years, but met its Waterloo with 12. c3 d4 13. xa8 dxc3 14. xd8 xd8 15. b4 !!.

12. xd5 e7 13. 0-0 xb2 14. c3 xc2



In my *Chess Life* review of *Chess Openings for White Explained*, I had asked what exactly was White's edge in this position. In their revised edition, the authors addressed my question by what is given in our parentheses below, but there was a better move for Black!

15. d4 e6 !

Explained gave 15... d8 16. d5 g5 17. h4 [Dzindzi puts 17. ad1 ? in parentheses, which does give White an appreciable edge] 17... d2 18. xd2 xd2 19. fd1 and White retains a slight edge – Dzindzichashvili; however, after the rook exchange and ... f8 , the edge – if any – is minuscule.

16. d3 b2 17. d5 c5 18. ac1 d4 19. f5 h8 20. cd1 h4 and it's an equal game, which goes to show that you have to check everything, even revised editions!

This raises one of the most annoying aspects of modern chess. I've had 1400-level players play this line. They got the book. For 14 moves I had to play against Dzindzi. Once you vary, they get lost, but it's getting harder. Is it your homework vs. their homework? Indeed it is. That's why I've tried very hard in these pages to give you playable lines that rely on *concepts*. The sunny side of playing this branch of the Two Knights is that I find the computer moves to be remarkably consistent with concepts like occupying open lines and fighting hard for the center.

The bottom line is that you can play this with confidence because a good many people who play this will probably follow this line, and you will be ready. You should also get a specialized book on the Two Knights

because there are a bunch of other sidelines that will reveal to you why this whole opening is an adventure.
Remember: question everything, even the above analysis!

The question you now have to answer is, once more: is this your style?

10. Playing Against the Scotch

Years ago, two excellent chess teachers and masters, John Collins and Edgar McCormick, both recommended to me the Scotch Opening as a great system for amateurs to learn first. It meets all of the criteria we have talked about here. The reason I went with the Four Knights and Vienna for the easier-to-understand lines was that both of those could be given a decent introductory explanation within the concept of this book, while the Scotch has so many ways to go that it would become unwieldy. Also, I wasn't exactly sure which line I would recommend. Nonetheless, if just playing over these games gives you some desire to play it for White, it will be a fine choice if you're willing to do the work.

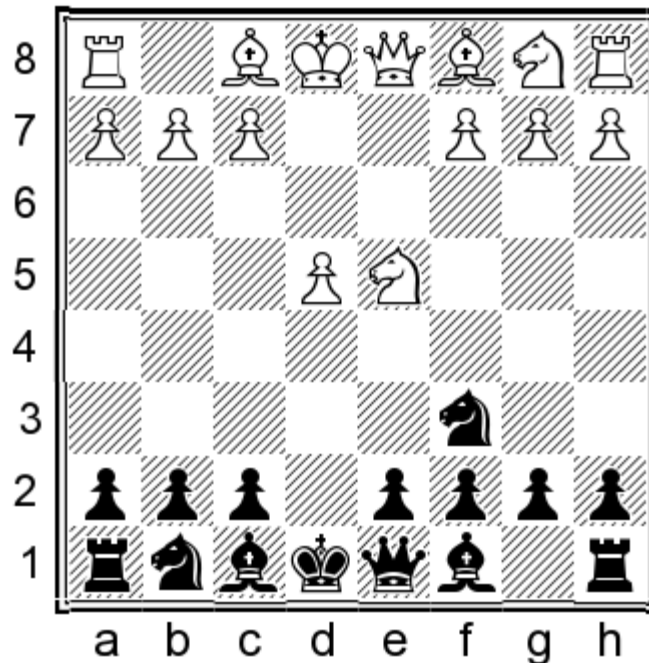
The question at this point, though, is how to deal with it. You'll start to see the complexity of it in the first game, while research into the line given in the second game will no doubt lead you into Kasparov's adventures with it in his world championship match play.

Model Game 31

Showalter – Gossip

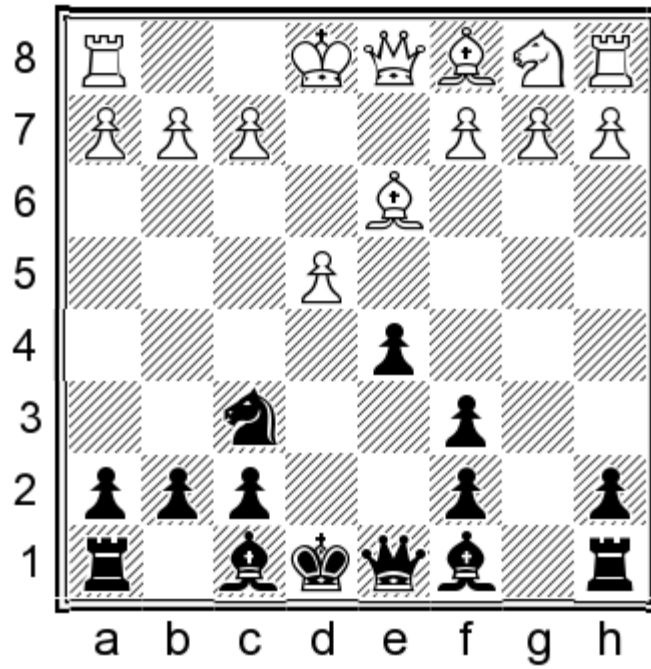
New York 1889

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4

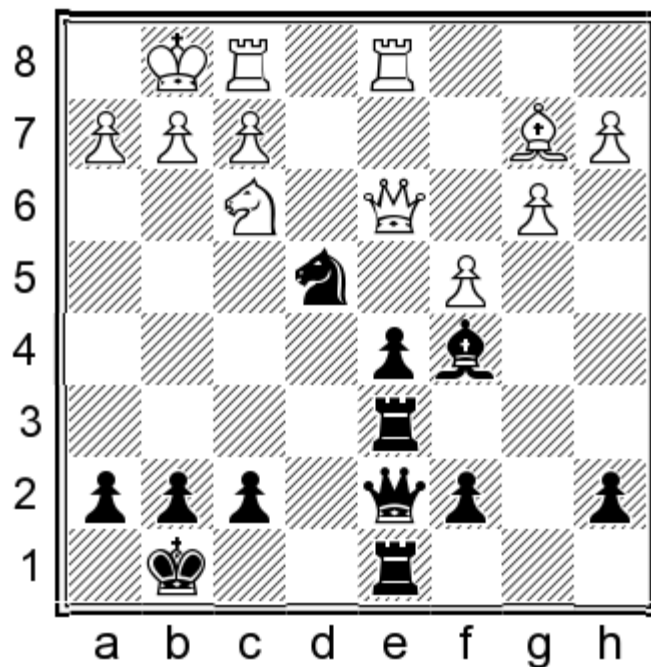


This is the Scotch, a fairly straightforward opening. White's pieces are ready to flow easily into the game. Black has choices – 4...♗c5 and 4...♘f6, the latter being more aggressive because of the counterattack on the e4-pawn.

4...♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.♗d3 d5



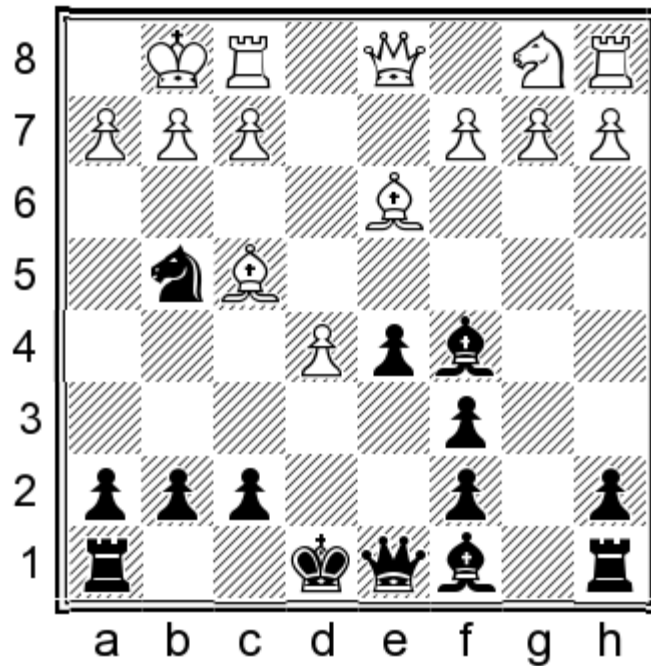
Black must react in the center. The game can now go two ways. Tartakower, in an exhibition against Capablanca, chose **7.exd5 cxd5 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗b5+ ♗d7 10.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 11.♘d2 0-0 12.b3 ♜fe8 13.♗b2 ♞ad8 14.♘f3 ♘e4 15.♞d3 ♗c5 16.♞ad1 ♞e6 17.c4 ♞d6**, reaching this position:



Capablanca has met all the attempts at initiative by White and has at least an equal game, if not a bit better because his tripling on the file will have some impact. This also reveals another difficulty with this Scotch line: the pawns can easily disappear from the center, leaving the game subject to exchanges and simplification.

Showalter–Gossip continued with:

7.e5 ♘g4 8.0-0 ♗c5 9.♗f4



White has pursued a very sharp line, and Black's reaction is good. However, you should notice that unless you know about the coming ...g7-g5 idea, it might not occur to many players who don't know about it, especially when it also includes castling short. The same ideas come up if White plays 9. ♖e2 ♗e7 10. ♕f4 g5 11. ♕d2 0-0 12. ♘c3 ♗xe5.

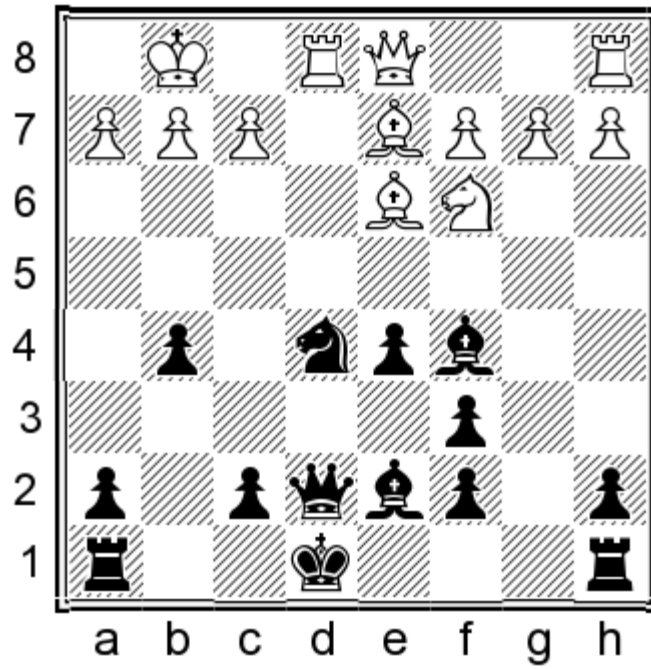
9...g5 10. ♕d2

Cautious. A good deal of excitement results from 10. ♕g3 h5 11. ♕e2 f5 12. exf6 h4 13. ♕xg4 hxg3 14. hxg3 ♗xf6 15. ♕h5+ ♖d8 16. ♘c3 ♗h6 17. g4 ♕xg4 18. ♗xg4 ♗xh5 19. ♗xh5 ♗xh5.

10...♘xe5

Better is 10...0-0 11. ♘c3 ♗e7, but Gossip (a 19th-century amateur) is a bit impatient.

11. ♖e1 ♗e7 12. ♘c3 ♕d7

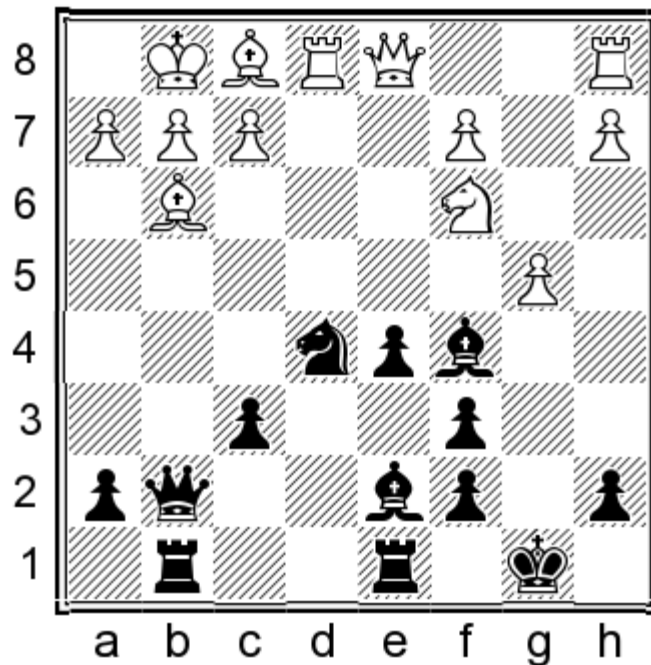


He could have more easily consolidated his pawn plus with 12...0-0 13. ♖h5 f6. Gossip sees grandiose visions of attack with ideas of queenside castling and rooks on h8 and g8.

13. ♖h5 0-0-0 14. ♗xg5 f6 15. ♗h4 ♖g7 16. ♗a6+ ♔b8 17. ♗g3 ♜hg8 18. ♖d1 ♞g4 19. ♗f1 ♞e5

19... ♖h6 20. ♝e2 ♞e5 21. ♖d2 ♖xd2 22. ♝xd2 ♗f5.

20. b4

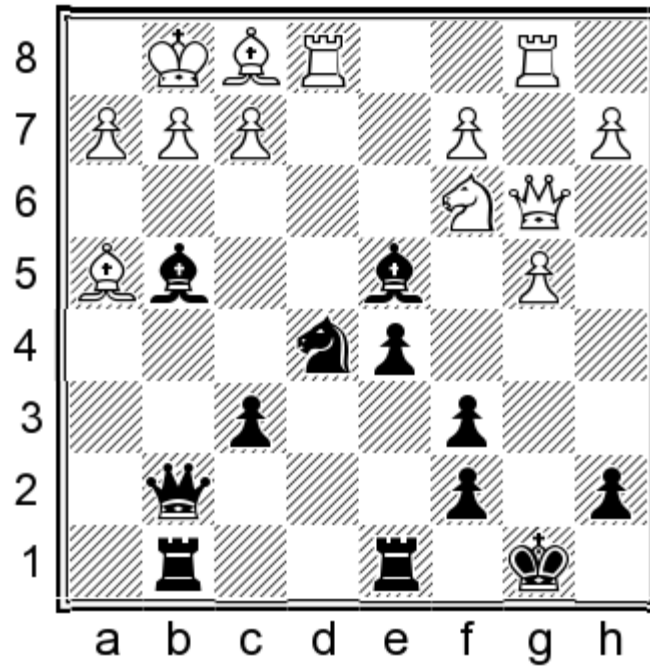


Showalter, a U.S. Champion, could see what was coming, so he must have felt the need to get something going on the queenside. He had retreated the queen to get it over to b1 for an attack down the b-file, as this pawn thrust indicates.

20...♔g4 21.♖b1

Maybe 21.♗d2, with more attention to defense, was in order.

21...♕d4 22.♗b3 h5 23.♞ab1 h4 24.♕xh4



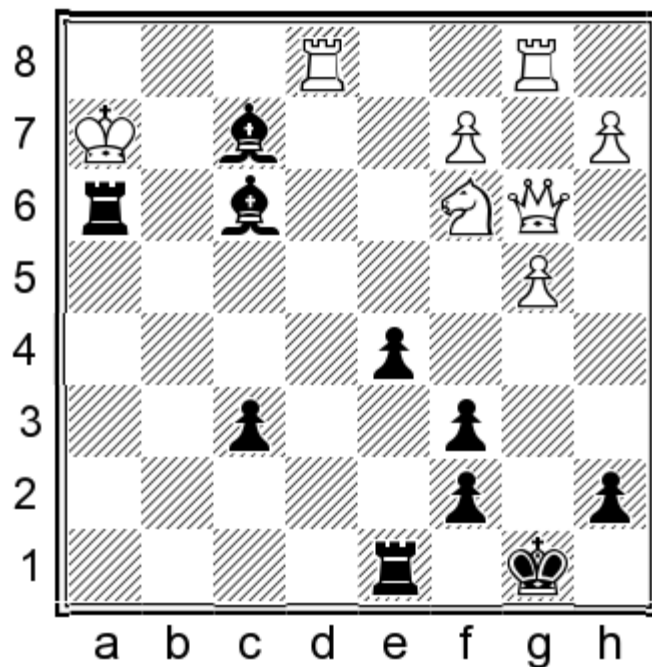
With his g- and h-pawns clearing a path, Gossip now uncorks a winning combination that was his glorious moment in chess history. See if you can work it out.

24...♗f3+ 25.gxf3

Declining the sac doesn't help: 25.♔h1 ♞h8 26.♕g3 ♗xh2 27.♔g1 ♗f3+ 28.gxf3 ♕xf3 29.♕g2 ♖xg3.

25...♕xf3+ 26.♕g3 ♖xg3+ 27.hxg3 ♞xg3+ 28.♔h2 ♕xf2 29.♕h3 ♞xh3+ 0-1

Another finish that deserves a diagram:



Beautiful!

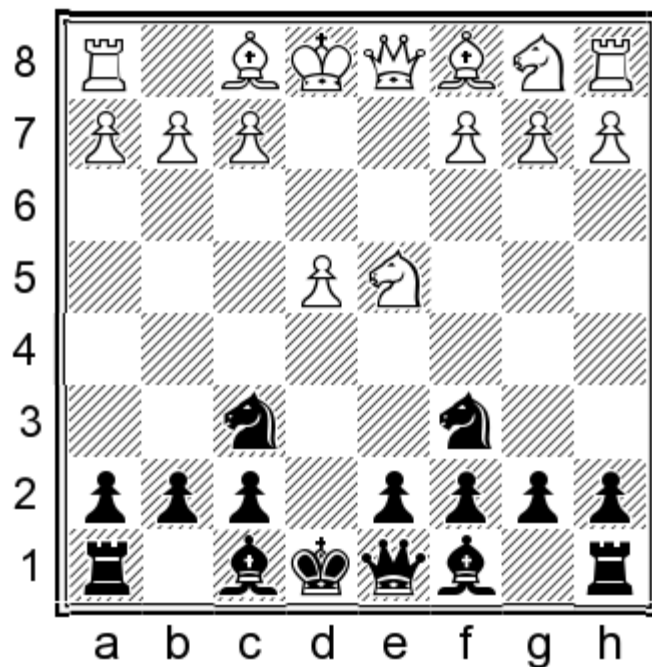
The other main way to play the Scotch for White is to follow the plan repopularized by Garry Kasparov. Before that, there was this old Mieses–Tarrasch match played in 1916 that was the last serious OTB discussion of the line until Kasparov, decades later, brought new ideas for White into the opening. Then, some years after that, Michael Adams adds to Black’s side. Chess moves on!

Model Game 32

Smeets – Adams

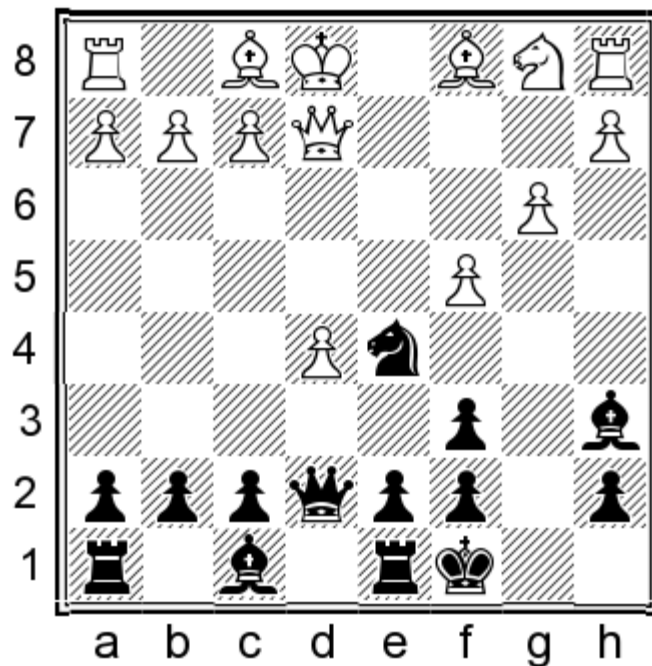
Staunton Memorial 2008

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6



White can play 5.♘c3 here, when Black's best reply is 5...♙b4 with an equal game.

5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♖e7 7.♙e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♗a6 9.b3 0-0-0



This is the *tabiya*, or setup, for this line. One thing you must learn as Black is that if White creates immediate threats, you have to meet them. There is no harmonious development here. The a6-bishop is horribly placed (except for the necessary pin), the f8-bishop is blocked in, and the king is castled on a breezy side of the board. On the other side of the board, White is blocking his own bishop, he's not castled, and he has no pieces past the second rank. Quite a mess, but a necessary one. White will defend his e-pawn and you can try to undermine it with ...d7-d6 or ...f7-f6 and even ...g7-g5 if he tries f2-f4. Your bishop could ease the pressure by checking on b4, so it would be good to move the queen.

10. ♖b2

“Fianchettoing” the queen is not much of an improvement: 10. ♖b2 ♗b6; 10.g3 f6 11. ♗g2 fxe5 12. ♖b2 ♗f6 13. 0-0 e4.

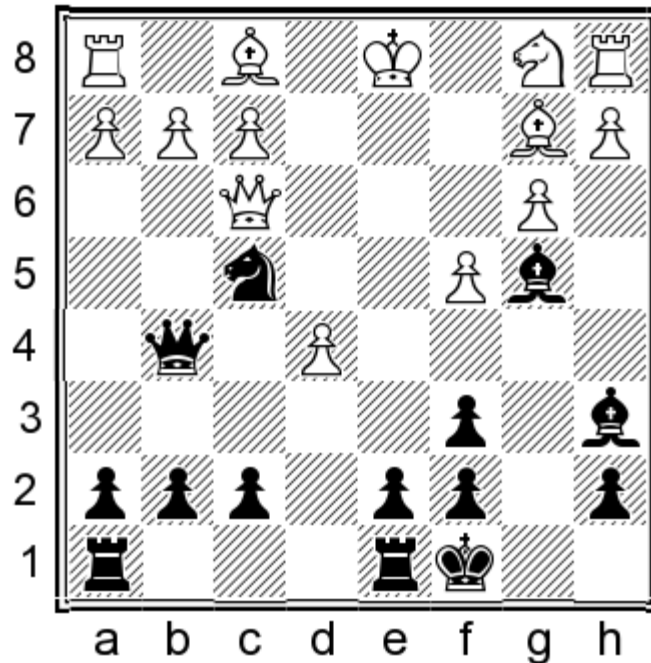
10... ♗g5 11. ♗f3

Trying to mix it up as 11. ♗d2 ♖b4 is good for Black.

11... ♖b4+

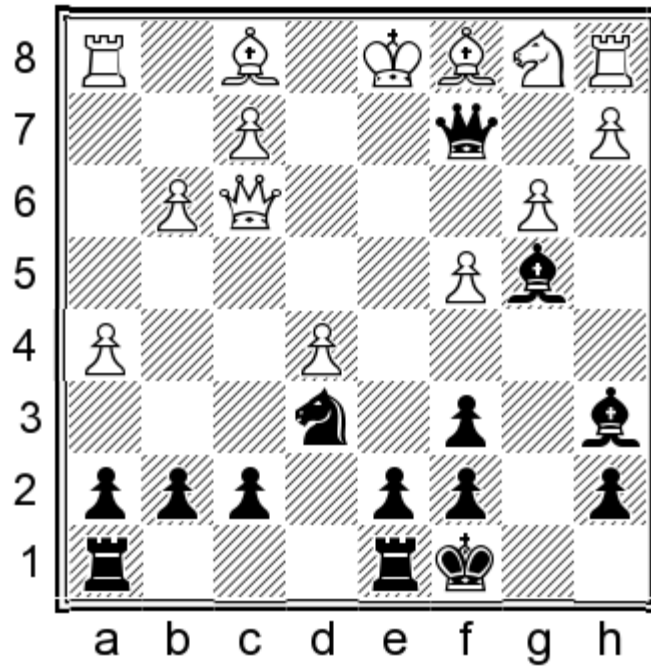
Having this move helps Black considerably to free himself. It’s a time-honored move in other open-game positions as well.

12. ♖d1 ♗f4



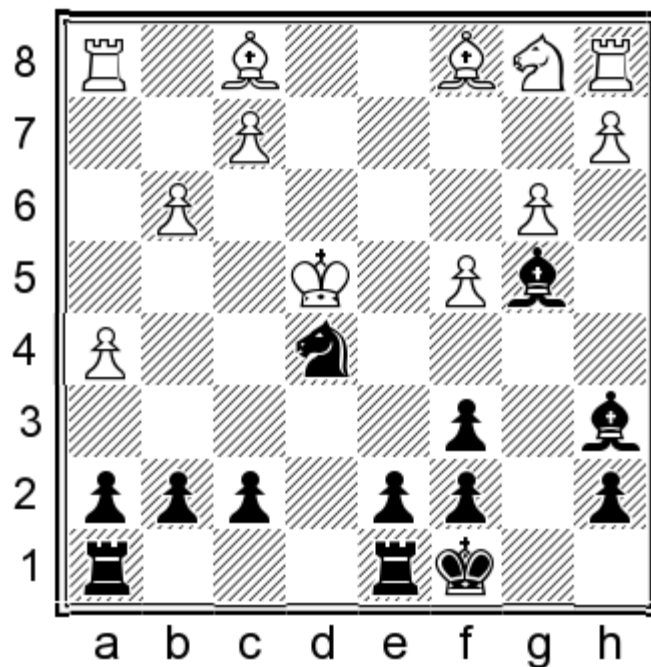
A very sharp move by Adams. If 13. ♖c1, then 13... ♗xe5; if 13.g3, then 13... ♗g6 combined with ... ♗he8 would put serious pressure on the e-pawn. White tries to chase the queen, but Adams has a surprise in store for him.

13.h4 ♗h6 14.g3 ♗e6 15. ♖c1 ♗g6 16.h5 ♗c2+



An unusual move in an early middlegame! Black had to see that ahead of time because any other move loses. Rudolf Spielmann called this a “pseudo-sacrifice,” as Black gets the queen right back.

17. ♖xc2 ♜d4+ 18. ♖d3 ♜xf3 19. ♖e4 ♜xe5



Despite his aggressive monarch, White is quite lost. The king is looking for trouble in all the wrong places, and gets it. Can White now take on e5? Nope! 20. ♖xe5 ♜e7 21. ♖f4 (21. ♜c3 ♜f6+ 22. ♖f4 ♜xc3 23. ♖b1) 21... ♜f6.

20. h6 ♜g4 21. hxg7 ♜hg8 22. ♖f5

22. ♖xh7 ♜f6+.

22...♞xg7 23.f3 ♘f2 24.♞h2 ♟c5

Adams, in *BCM*, pointed out 24...♞xg3 25.♞xf2 ♟c5 26.♞c2 ♞xf3+.

25.♟h6 ♞g6 26.♘d2 ♟d4 27.♟g5 ♞e8 28.♞xf2 ♞e5+ 0-1

If 29.♔f4 (29.♔g4 ♞exg5+) then 29...f6 30.♟d3 ♟e3+ 31.♔g4 ♞g5+ 32.♔h3 ♟xf2.

If you've learned anything from these two Scotch games, it's that you had best familiarize yourself with the sharp versions of this opening. The principles for Black are still the same: development, fighting for the center, meeting immediate threats with necessary moves, etc.

There's one more major open game: the Ruy López, but we're saving that for last.

If it does not seem as though you would like to put up with all the stuff White throws at you in the open games (all quite defendable – really!), but you would still like to play for a win, then the recommendation here is to play the Sicilian Dragon. You should pick up a book on it, because there are all sorts of lines that require going beyond what this book is trying to do, which is to introduce you to possibilities.

The Primer had some Dragon games showing White and Black doing well. The one thing the Primer games and the following games have in common is that the chances are you will face the overwhelmingly popular Yugoslav Attack or St. George Attack, whichever you prefer. If by looking at these games, you feel this might be what you're looking for, then do your book-hunting best to find IM Jeremy Silman's *Winning with the Sicilian Defense*. The Accelerated Dragon's popularity in U.S. chess is due in no small part to this book.

11. If You Don't Want to Play 1...e5 to Meet 1.e4

Some of you may find that defending the open games is not your cup of tea. Your most natural inquiry, then, might be which line in the Sicilian should you play? You should play a thematic version of the Sicilian that is relatively easy to understand. I have found that scholastic players take to the Sicilian Dragon very quickly.

The Sicilian Dragon

If statistics tell us anything, it is that the Sicilian Defense is the most popular defense to 1.e4. There are entire opening books devoted not only to the Sicilian, but to main variations of the Sicilian and even to sub-variations (e.g., the Chinese Dragon). The opinion we hold for amateurs is to play the Sicilian Dragon. We also have a soft spot in our heart for the Scheveningen, but we're sticking with the Dragon because it is the easiest variation to understand the fundamentals. Just about everybody plays the St. George Attack as White, so that will be the focus here. It is hoped that the three games that follow will give you an idea whether this suits you as Black. A cautionary note: the Dragon is good at club level, but as you start facing better players you're going to find yourself memorizing tons of lines and the latest analysis, and there goes one of the principles of this book. It's a decision for you to make, not me. From my experience with coaching players below 1800, you won't need to do that too much.

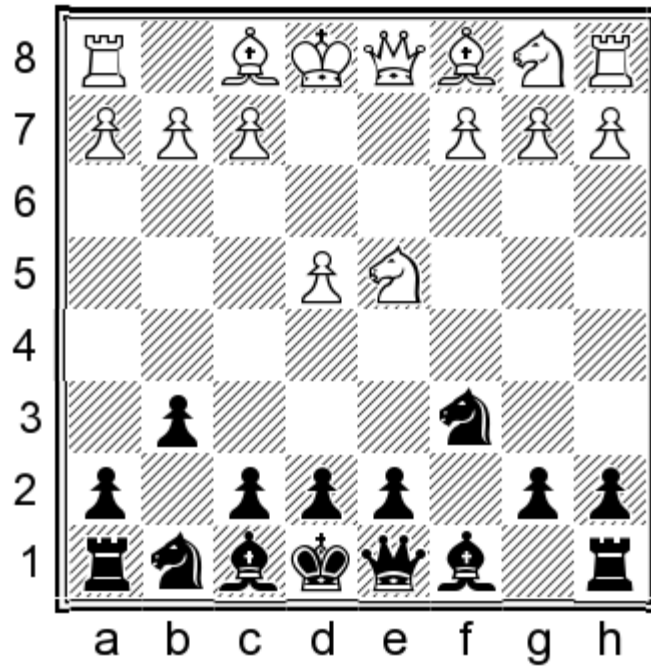
The first game is a 5-minute game that I played as Black on the ICC. Why should I show this? First of all, it's instructive for novices, and, secondly, I don't play the Dragon! I know about it, have played over games with it, but I have only managed to understand the basic concepts without deep study. The point is that if I can do it just by understanding the concepts, then you can, too!

Model Game 33

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6

It's worth pointing out to scholastic players that you may see 2...♙c4 or 3...♙c4 or even 4...♙c4! Novices do go for ♗f3 and ♗xf7 mate! It's not a good try against 1...e5 and it is just as ineffective here as an ...e7-e6 reply by Black blunts the diagonal. You can follow up by ...♘ge7 and still fianchetto, if you like, with the overall idea of playing ...d(6)7-d5, hitting the bishop.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6



This is the Accelerated Dragon (as opposed to the Hyper-Accelerated Dragon with 2...g6). It concentrates on piece development, attacking White's position, and hopefully saving a tempo (by avoiding 2...d6) in playing to d5 at one stroke. The regular Dragon involves playing ...d7-d6 first, to prevent e4-e5 by White.

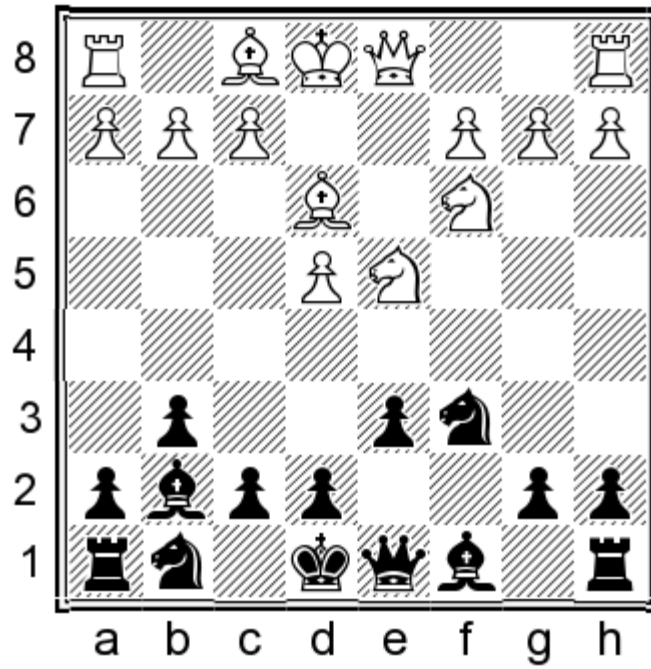
5. ♘c3

Some players will play 5.c4. Black can continue with 5...♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 ♚a5 8.♘b3 ♚c7 (if the queen is chased by ♘b5, b8 is a useful square). The text move is fine. It develops a piece toward the center and protects the e-pawn.

5...♙g7

Threatens the knight on d4.

6.♙e3 d6



Notice how Black has three men hitting the e5 square. This becomes a strong square for Black. The ...d7-d6 move also opens up the diagonal for the queen bishop and prevents White from playing e4-e5 when Black plays ...♘f6.

7.f3

This is akin to raising a battle flag! White signals that he is going to play ♔d2, castle queenside, get the queen rook over to the kingside, throw the pawns to g4 and h4, and then advance them toward the black king who will be castled on the kingside. At least, that's the plan!

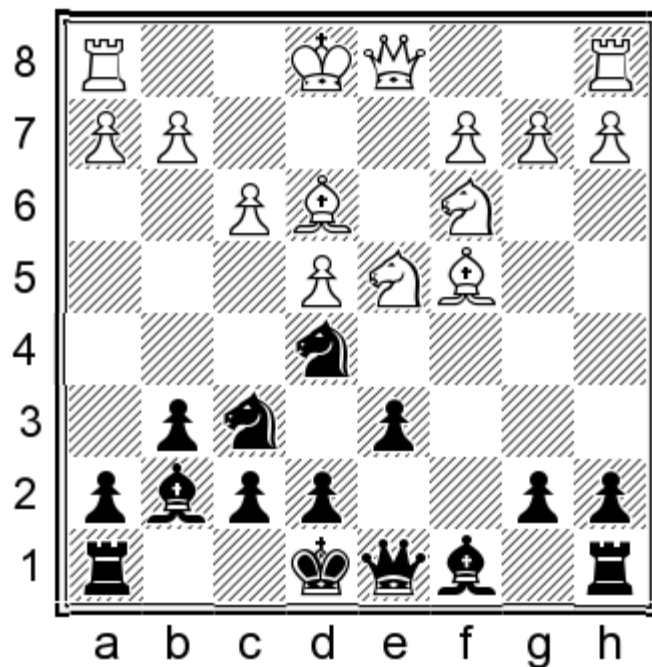
7...♘f6

Can't delay this developing move much longer.

8.♗c4

The bishop goes to c4 because White's plan is to push his pawn to h5, capture on g6, and force Black to recapture with the h7-pawn which opens the h-file to the king. The f-pawn can't take on g6 because it's pinned by the bishop on c4. That's chess strategy.

8...♘e5



A very interesting decision for me. If I castle, this guy will follow “the book” where some grandmaster tells him his next ten moves or so, too. I want to play my opponent, not some GM, so I play out of sequence to confuse him. It’s a good move because it hits the dangerous bishop. White won’t chase it later with f3-f4 because he needs the pawn on f3 to support g4.

9. ♖b3

Naturally, the bishop wants to stay on that diagonal.

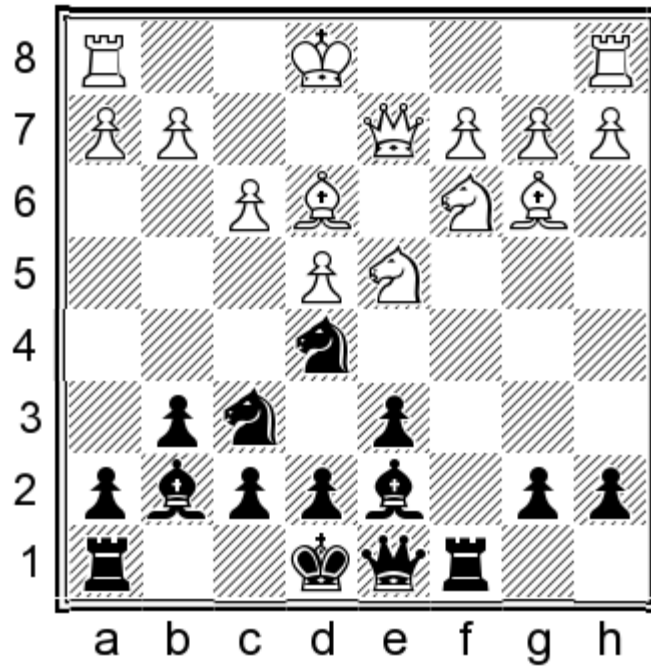
9... ♗d7

Black needs to get the rook to c8 (do you see why?), so the bishop goes to d7.

10. ♕d2

Part of White’s big plan. He intends to play the bishop to h6, and if Black exchanges, then the white queen will be peering in the window of Black’s house with her henchman, the rook, lurking behind. Once the h-pawn is pushed to h5 and captures on g6, then White will be able to mate Black with the queen and rook on the open file. An important reminder: there are sample games in the Primer as well with this line.

10... ♖c8

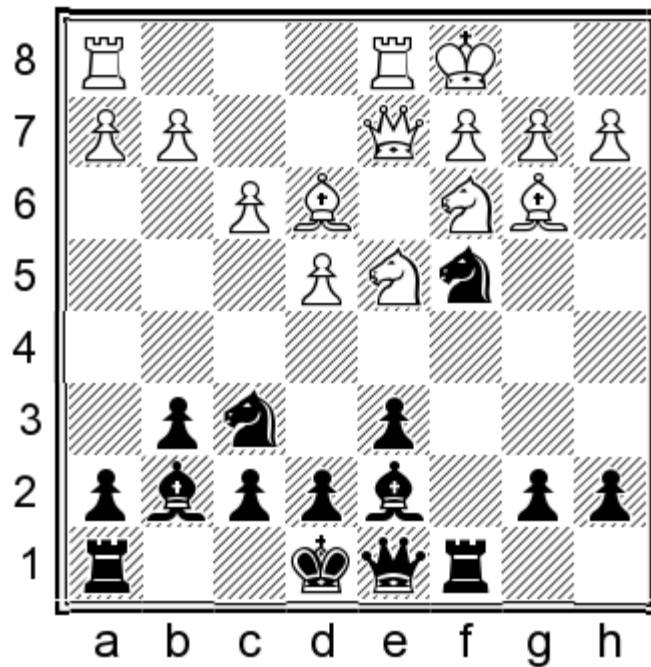


Part of Black's plan. Do you see it yet?

11.0-0-0

White waits until Black's expected castling and prepares for it by castling himself.

11...♖c4



This, on the other hand, was Black's plan. Did you see it? The dangerous bishop is blocked – and, worse for White, the knight is forking the queen and the other bishop that have in mind the attack on h6.

12.♙xc4

White decides that the queen/bishop combo is more important to save.

12...♖xc4 13.♔d3

White was not happy about this move, but it seems to him his best chance. Do you see why White can't play 13.♕h6? Remember when I wrote that the Dragon concentrates on development to attack White's position? Right! If 13.♕h6? ♖xd4!! 14.♔xd4 ♕xh6+ and Black has won two pieces for the rook and White's attack is over!

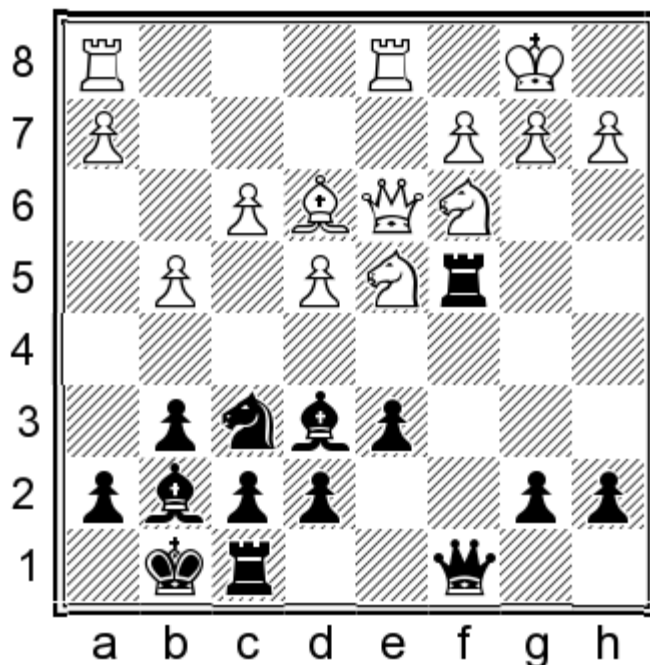
13...♔c8

Rather than retreat the rook, White doubles the queen and rook on the c-file. Picking c8 rather than c7 had to do with a possible ♘b5. Look at what Black is doing: the queen, rook, and bishop are all directly or indirectly attacking the knight on c3. Black expects at some point to take the knight with the rook (a sacrifice) to break up White's castled position. I have two books on my shelves devoted to that ...♖xc3 sacrificial idea. Concepts!!

14.♖b1

White doesn't like the king's standing opposite the black queen and rook. His best bet was to continue with his plan with g2-g4 and h2-h4 with two attacks going at the same time! It's what makes the Dragon exciting! This move also makes a point about amateur chess. Here's a fellow who seems to know this anti-Dragon attack, yet he gets timid when the other player gets aggressive. You can't expect your opponent to just sit there. This is speculation, but I don't think he has the heart of an attacking player – he was spooked. He just knew some moves.

14...0-0 15.g4 ♕e6



This is a very important move to understand. There is some thought behind it. First of all, too many beginners have heard that you should not give up a bishop for a knight, when it really depends on the position. In this position, 16.♘xe6 would open up the f-file for the rook and make trouble for the f3-pawn. The other thing the bishop does is to help attack the queenside where the white king is based.

16.h4

White continues with his plan. Remember from the comments above: he's a move behind where he should be in the attack!

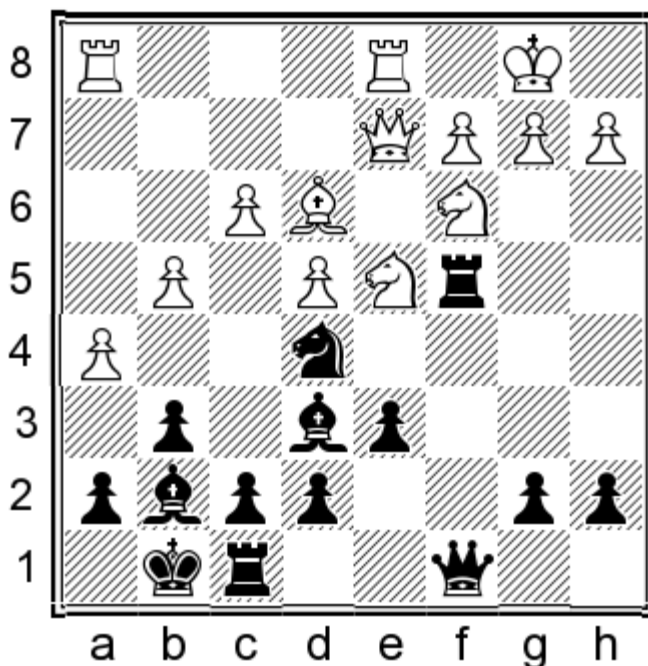
16...♞d7

This knight is not retreating because of the white kingside pawns moving up. Rather, the knight is giving itself better squares to land on: either e5 or c5 (as the bishop is defending the rook). If you take up the Sicilian Dragon, you'll eventually learn about GM Andy Soltis's idea of ...h7-h5 against White's onslaught... another important concept.

17.h5 ♞e5

The counterattack! Nice central square for that knight! Now the queen has to move.

18.♞d2



The best square to go to. In reply to ♞e2, Black would play ...♞xc3. We'll talk about that in a second. Now you can even peek at the next moves and imagine them happening in the diagram above. Do you see what's happening?

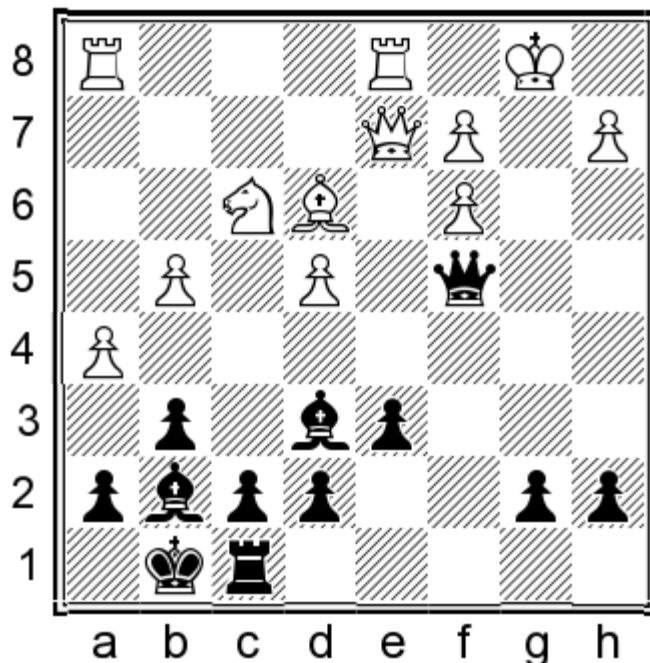
18...♞xf3!

This sacrifice is one of the ideas of the Dragon I was familiar with. Sometimes, there's a knight sac on e4. The idea is to open up the Dragon bishop's diagonal to attack c3. Watch how it works!

19.♞xf3 ♞xc3!

The second sacrifice! Black gives up his rook for the knight to break up White's castled position. Look at those two black bishops!

20. **bxc3** ♔c4



This is a picture of the complete strategic triumph of Black's ideas in the Dragon, and not one original thought went through my head in this entire game! The move order may have been a little off, but the ideas I had learned had come through. My opponent decides to fall on his sword and end the agony quickly.

21. ♔e1 ♙xc3 22. ♙d2 ♚xa2+ 23. ♖c1 ♚a1#

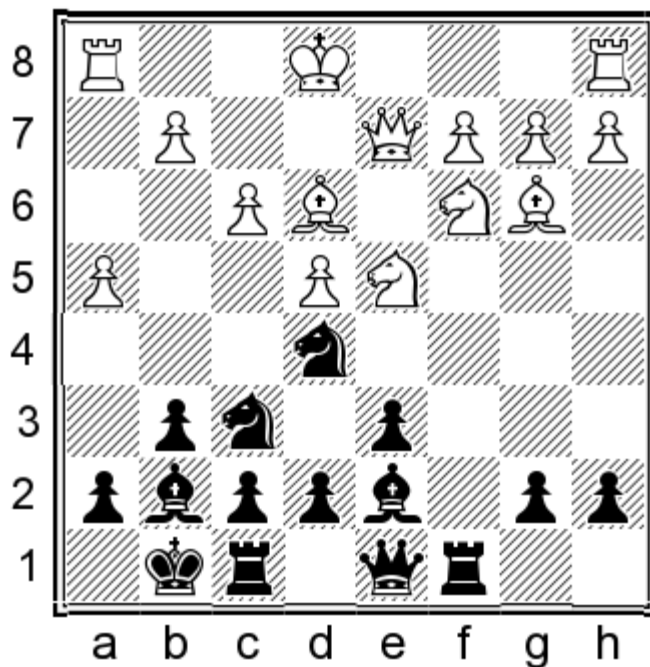
Some final thoughts: play over the game again. Even though we looked at it from Black's viewpoint, try very hard to understand what White is trying to do. This Sicilian Defense will see all sorts of different moves in different orders, so you can't rely just on memorizing moves. You can learn *ideas*, though. Remember how White can attack in this line and what you have to expect. Remember what's important for Black when playing the Dragon:

1. Quick piece development (that means no ...a7-a6 type moves – that's a different variation altogether).
2. Using the c-file to attack the c3-knight and breaking up the queenside castled position.
3. Finding good squares for knights on c4 and e5 at the right time.
4. Seeing the possibility of sacrificing a knight for a pawn on e4 or f3 so as to open the king bishop's diagonal toward the white king.

It's a fight! You have to be a fighter! The best fighter will be the one who fights armed with knowledge. That's what makes chess a great game.

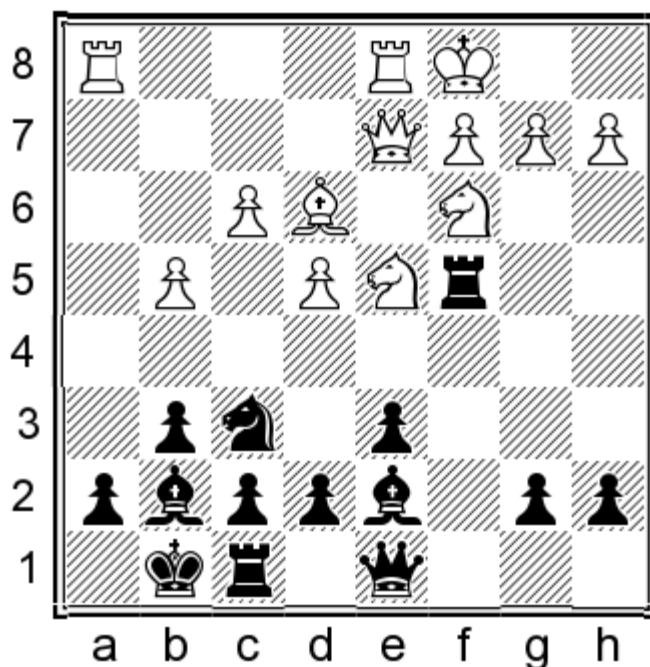
Now you will get a chance to see what happens when Black hesitates, just as White hesitated in the above game.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 ♗c6 8.♚d2 0-0 9.♘c4 ♘d7 10.h4 ♜c8 11.♙b3 ♗e5



Do you see the similarities to the previous game? The differences? Vasiukov was a very aggressive player. He goes with h2-h4 before castling. Most of you will see castling first, and it would help to know Soltis's ...h7-h5 move: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2 ♗c6 9.♘c4 ♘d7 10.0-0-0 ♜c8 11.♙b3 ♗e5 12.h4 h5 13.♙h6 ♗c4 14.♙xc4 ♜xc4 15.♙xg7 ♖xg7, with a typical Sicilian Dragon position.

12.h5 ♗xh5 13.0-0-0 ♗c4 14.♙xc4 ♜xc4 15.g4 ♗f6



16.♙dg1

Although we emphasize concepts, you can't just play them willy-nilly. Here you would have to calculate:
 16. ♖h6 ♗xh6 (16... ♘xe4 17. ♚e3 ♜xc3 18. bxc3 ♗xh6 19. ♚xh6 ♘f6 20. g5 ♘h5 21. ♜xh5 gxh5 22. ♜h1) 17. ♚xh6
 ♜xc3 18. bxc3 ♚a5. Apparently, Vasiukov did that.

16...e6

Black plays hesitantly. He had to get back in the game with 16...b5 17. ♚h2 ♜xc3 18. ♗g5 (18. bxc3 ♚a5)
 18...♜c8.

17. ♖b1 ♚a5 18. ♘b3 ♚c7 19. ♗f4 e5 20. g5

Alternatives were 20. ♗g5 and 20. ♗e3.

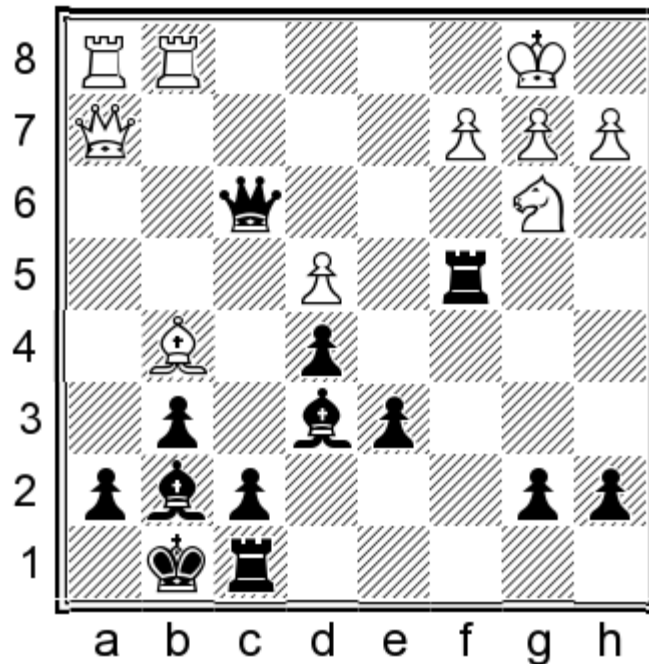
20... ♘h5 21. ♘d5 ♚d8 22. ♗e3 ♗e6 23. ♘f6+

Embarrassing for Black would also be 23. ♘a5.

23... ♘xf6 24. gxf6 ♚xf6

There was no hope after 24... ♗xf6 25. ♚h2 h5 26. ♚xh5.

25. ♗g5 ♚xf3 26. ♚h2



26... ♚h5?

Black is so concerned about his queen's being trapped by 26...h5 27. ♘d2 that he misses 27... ♜xc2 28. ♘xf3
 (28. ♖xc2 ♜c8+ 29. ♖b1 ♚d3+) 28... ♜xh2 29. ♜xh2 d5 30. exd5 ♗xd5 31. ♘d2 f5, with four connected passed
 pawns for the rook. He was resigned to his fate and didn't look. In the Primer we said never to resign. We
 should have added, "or be resigned."

27. ♚f2 ♗h3 28. ♚e3 h6 29. ♘d2 1-0

I recently wrote about a Dragon in my newspaper column. Here's one more game to pique your interest in it as a good defense for Black:

“The Sicilian Dragon is one tough defense, or counterattack, depending on your point of view. In this game from the Gibraltar Masters, Martin Burrows fails to find a way to deal with it against Rubén Felgaer.

“White follows what many books recommend. Controlling c5 with the knight seems like a good idea considering Black's pawn structure, but whether you should control it or occupy it is another question.

“Perhaps White was a bit slow with the kingside attack. Better might have been 15.h4 ♖b8 16.♗c4 ♗d8 17.♘c5 e5 18.♗f2 ♖e7 19.♗d2 ♗f5 20.♗hd1 ♗e6 21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.c3, but it's not that clear.

“Interestingly enough, Back plays a little slowly in reply as he delays the thematic ...e7-e5 move.

“For White, we gave this some thought: 16.c4 ♖a5 17.b4 (17.cxd5 ♗xd5) 17...♗a3+ 18.♗b2 ♖e3+ 19.♗d2 ♖a3+ and you have a perpetual, which is a moral victory for Black.

Later, even aggressive moves don't seem to pan out: 19.h4 ♘f4 20.♘d3 ♗xa2 21.h5 ♖g5.

Further on as well: 21.♗xd5 cxd5 22.♗he1 ♗ab8 23.♖g3 e4 24.c3 exf3 25.♗f1 d4 26.♗xf3 ♖e6 27.♗xd4 ♖xa2.

“Somebody on White's team had better start doing some homework!

“Felgaer, for his part, knows how to finish off a queenside castled position. His 23...♘c3!! is decisive. Taking the offered knight doesn't work: 24.bxc3 ♗b6! 25.♗e1 ♗xd2 26.♖xd2 ♗b1+. The power of that pin on the rook allows for the rook lift ...♗b6, and is also exemplified on move 25 when 25.♗d3 ♗b1 is mate.

“At the end, White resigns because Black just has too many pawns and his king is easily protected. This is a model game for Black and Sicilian Dragon fans.” (*Star-Ledger*, February 10, 2013)

Model Game 35

M. Burrows – Felgaer

Gibraltar Masters 2013

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♗d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♗d4 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 ♖b6 14.♘a4 ♖c7 15.♘c5 ♗d8 16.g4 e5 17.♗d2 ♖e7 18.♗f2 ♗e6 19.♘xe6 ♖xe6 20.♗c4 ♖f6 21.♗d2 ♖f4 22.♗d3 ♗ab8 23.♗e4 ♘c3 24.a3 ♗xb2 25.♘xb2 ♗xd2 26.♖xa7 ♘xe4 27.fxe4 ♖xe4 28.♗c1 ♗xh2 29.♖b8+ ♘g7 30.g5 ♗g2 0-1

There is something very important to understand about the Sicilian Defense, and I wish to illustrate its most essential feature by letting you go over the following two games featuring different systems – the Sicilian Dragon and the Scheveningen Variation.

Both of these games demonstrate where you eventually want to be as a player in terms of truly understanding what this opening is about. They are played at the highest level and their use and timing of the ...e7(6)-e5 and ...d6-d5 thrusts is central to the whole defense, no matter what variation you play. Getting a feel for these dynamic moves is a long process and lots of work for you. Ironically, both these brilliant efforts also offer an excellent rationale as to why you were given the open games as a defense to 1.e4 – the open games really are easier to understand. For those of you up to the challenge of the Sicilian, you must know these two games. For those of you who are not so called, they are fabulous battles. Playing them over can only benefit you.

Modern chess has contributed a key theme to opening theory: dynamic, unbalanced systems contesting White's initiative. These systems are the best ways to play for a win as Black.

The overwhelming favorite is the Sicilian Defense with its Dragons, Hedgehogs, Pelikans, Paulsens – you name it.

In the double e-pawn and d-pawn openings, Black often has to sacrifice a pawn to try to seize the initiative: the Marshall Attack and Schliemann in the Ruy López, the Falkbeer in the King's Gambit, and the Albin Countergambit against 1.d4.

The positionally dynamic systems don't sacrifice the pawn, but they also don't get their share of the center right away as do more straightforward defenses. What the King's Indian and Grünfeld are to the d-pawn openings, the Sicilian is to the e-pawn openings.

The asymmetry of the response means Black does not want to go toe to toe and start slugging it out right away. In the following game, Black wants to counterattack on the queenside using the c-file. White will attack on the kingside. The struggle in the center is therefore key to all of this.

Model Game 36

Pare – Trapl

15th World Correspondence Chp.

1/4 Final, Section 2, 1989-1992

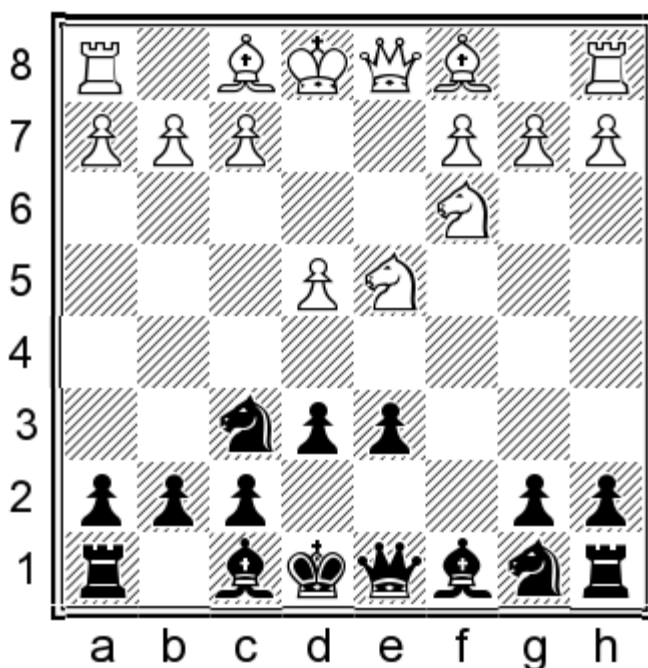
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6

Some players prefer 2...e6 to avoid the lines for White that we've given in this book.

3.d4

This is played so automatically that no one ever seems to ask why. Black is virtually obligated to take, which centralizes the white knight. White also may, down the road, play the queen rook over to d1 and the queen knight to d5. The idea is that if Black plays ...e7-e6 to dislodge the knight or to prevent its getting there, then the d6-pawn will be vulnerable. Black wants to get in a properly timed ...d6-d5, no matter which Sicilian system you use. White wants to make that as difficult and unpleasant as possible.

3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6



We end up in the most solid of all Sicilians – the Scheveningen (that “ch” is pronounced like a “k”). Black says

that with ...♙e7, ...♜c7, and the “right rook” to ♖d8, White cannot take advantage of the d6-pawn. Also, e4-e5 by White is discouraged. Some people avoid the specific way Black entered the defense in our game because now White can play the Keres Attack with 6.g4. IM Lorin D’Costa, in his book *The Sicilian Scheveningen*, recommends 6...h6 7.h4 ♘c6 8.♞g1 h5! 9.g5 ♘g4 with a very complicated game.

In the tournament book for the 2nd Piatigorsky Cup, GM Miguel Najdorf recommended playing 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 (instead of 2...e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6) 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e6 to avoid the Keres Attack, noting that you had to then be ready for 5.♘b5, but it was quite OK for Black.

Black’s disadvantage in our diagram is that White has more space and effortlessly builds up an attack directed right at Black’s king. Black must meet the flank attack with a vigorous counterattack in the center and on the queenside. The half-open c-file is somewhat of an avenue of opportunity for Black.

Timing is everything. GM Andy Soltis once wrote of this tension in his booklet on the Scheveningen: “...either side has a choice of several different good-looking moves at just about every point in the opening; and the difference between a good-looking move and the right move is what makes an advantage in the Sicilian.” Amen, brother! In other words, both sides have to pay attention and understand what they are doing!

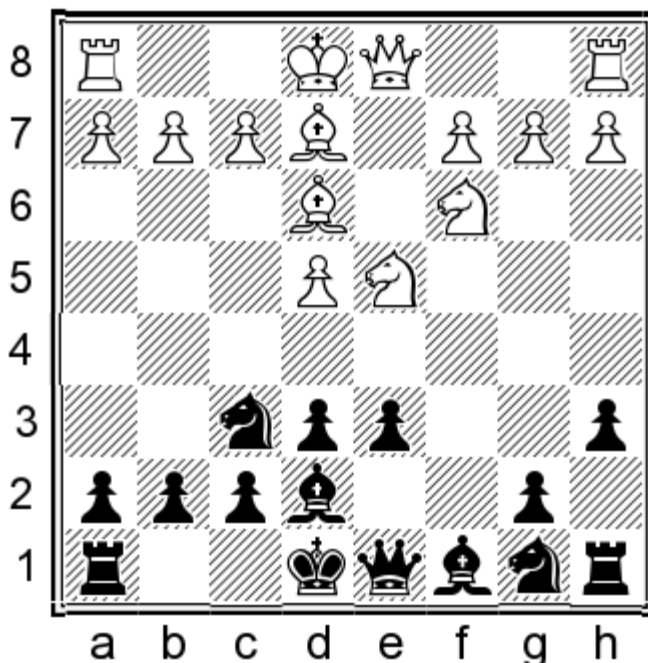
6.♙e2

White develops a piece, which will help in the kingside advance. Putting it on c4 would be more aggressive, but there it would be more vulnerable to prepared pawn advances to d5 and b5 and also to the black queen knight. When Fischer played ♙c4, he would make a point of quickly retreating to b3.

6...♙e7 7.♙e3

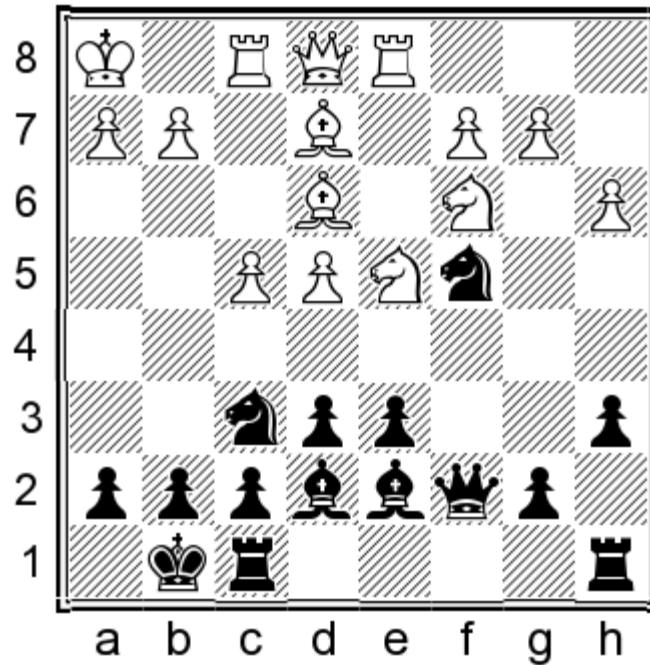
This move develops and also supports d4. It helps to keep Black off the a7-g1 diagonal, which would be a nice lane of operation for the black queen.

7...a6



A multi-purpose move, preparing the queenside counterattack with ...b7-b5 and helping Black to play ...♜c7 if he wishes, because now there is no way the white knight on d4 can go to b5 and harass both the queen on c7

11...♙d7 12.♖e1 ♘a5 13.♞d1 ♞c4



We saw the first advance of White's attack. Now we have Black's counter. See how Black uses the semi-open c-file to support his knight outpost at c4. White played ♞d1 so his e3-bishop could go to c1 to protect b2 from the knight without shutting in the a1-rook. Since White knew he was going to do that, you can now also understand the similarity in concept to the ♙h1 move that we discussed above. If your pieces are placed as part of a plan, even a two-move one, you will be better off.

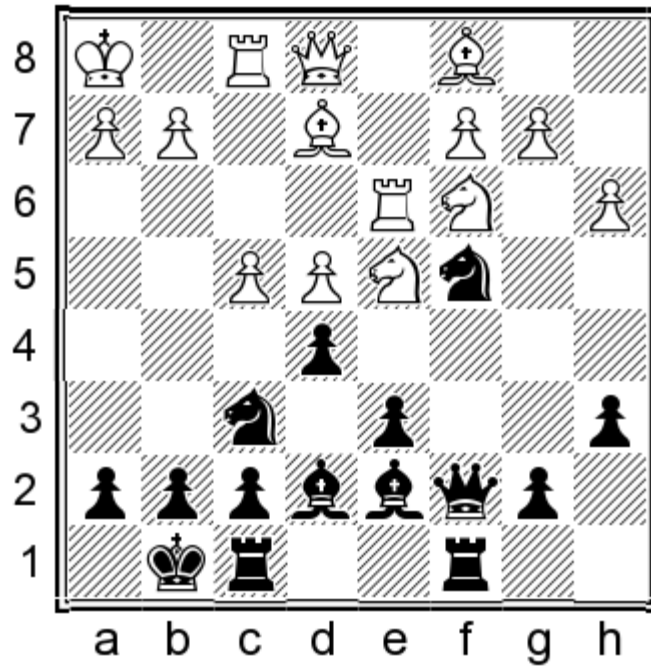
14.♙c1 ♞ac8

Note how Black continues lining up on the c-file. A key part of chess at master level is that the masters prepare for eventual access to the whole file. The pressure on c2, though indirect, is very real to White, who decides to go for broke on the kingside.

15.♞d3

Although the rook lift *looks* dangerous (remember Soltis's comment), it would have been better to precede it with 15.♙xc4 ♖xc4 16.e5 ♞e8 17.♞d3.

15...e5!!



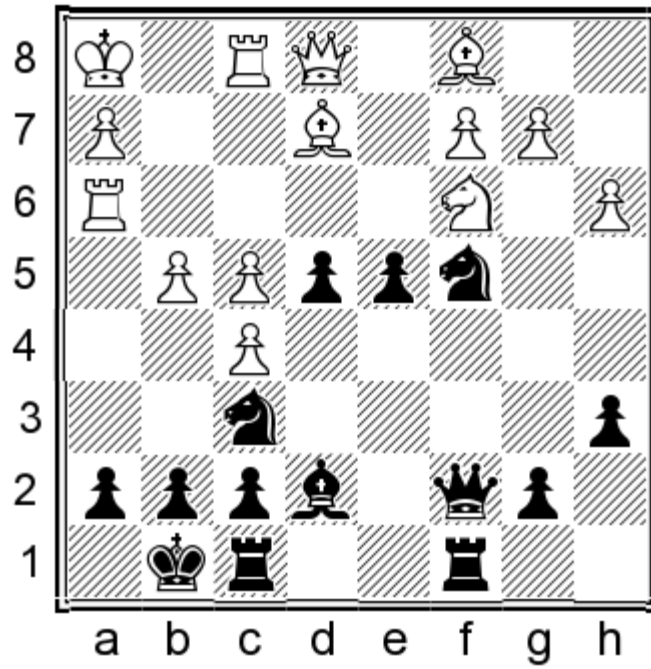
This kind of move is the sort of idea you have to learn in the Sicilian. The timing and strategic point are perfect. This advance is very strong because Black is fully developed. Here are the big ideas:

1. The ...exf4 and ...♗e5 threat is initiated. White can't play 16.fxe5 because of 16...♗xe5. Note that ...♗c4 also kept that possibility alive.
2. It "forces" White to play ♗f5, else his ♖d1-d3-h3 plan cannot take effect because of Black's light-squared bishop.
3. The freeing move in all king pawn openings is a well-timed and prepared thrust to d5. Black's ...e6-e5 prevents White from responding with e4-e5 when Black plays ...d6-d5.

16. ♗f5 ♗xf5 17. exf5 e4

By taking the knight and then declining to take the f4-pawn, Black has congested the f-file, obstructed the white queen bishop, and made f3 inaccessible to the white king rook. Cute trap: 18. ♗d5 exd3! (Trap!)

18. ♖h3 d5 19. g4 d4

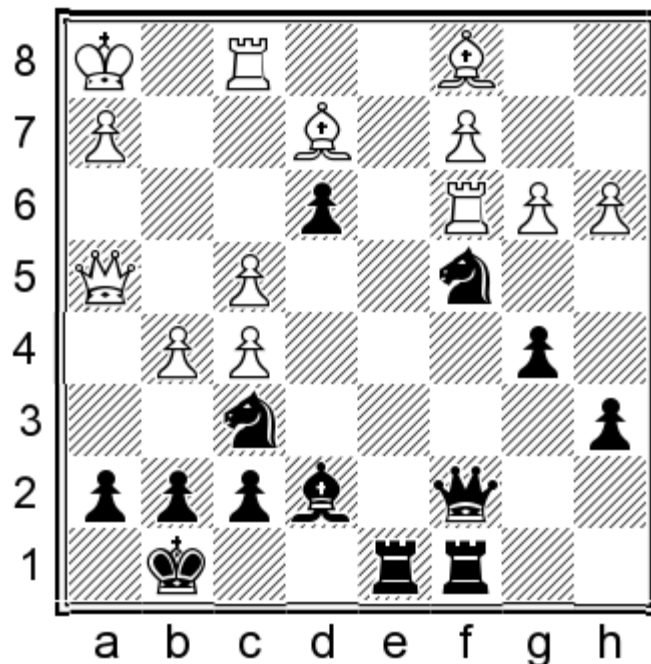


This position is why this game was chosen. It just does not get any better than this for a Sicilian player. What a model of counterplay against a kingside attack. Black can hold off White's advances long enough for Black to gobble up material and space in the center. White also compromised his king's position to promote this advance, so he has to be concerned about that. Let's watch the fireworks!

20.g5 dxc3 21.♔h4 ♖fd8!!

One of the reasons successful players of the Sicilian swagger a lot! Not only do they live for moves like this, but they show utter disdain for White's threats on their king. Here, White blinks first! He now realizes that 22.gxf6 ♗xf6 23.♕h7+ ♔f8 24.bxc3 ♕a5 makes those "eventual" threats on c2 very immediate nightmares.

22.♖xc3 b5 23.b3 e3!!

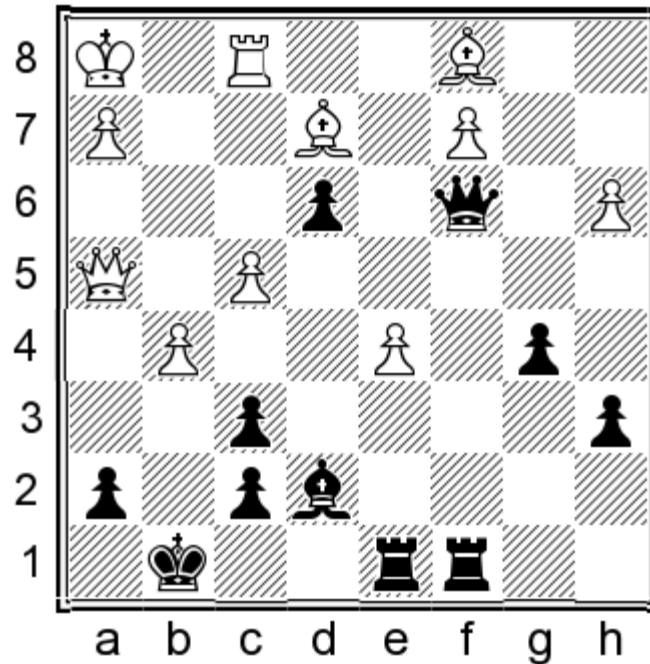


Lest we forget the long diagonal! Whose king is feeling the breeze now?

24.bxc4 ♖d5

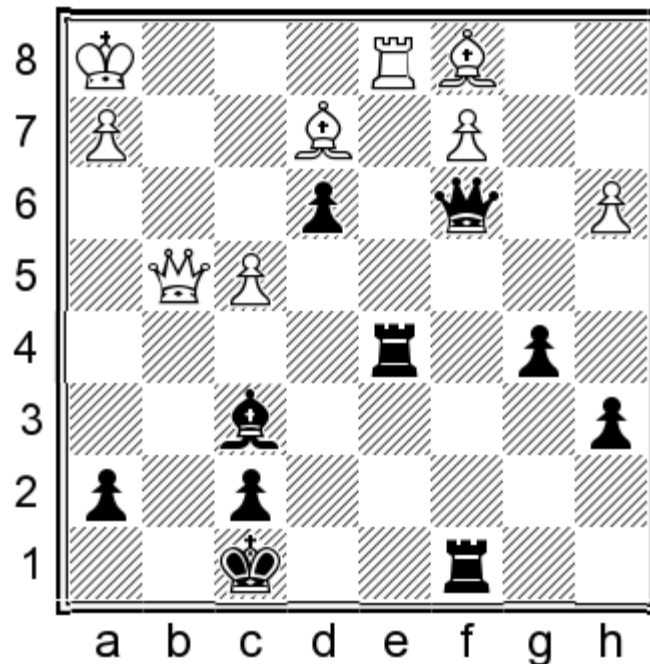
Let's see... attacks the rook, defends the e-pawn, attacks f4, and uncovers an indirect threat on the white queen – not bad for a single move!

25.cxd5 ♔xc3 26.f6 gxf6



Why not 27.♗d3 followed by ♖xh7+ and ♖h8 mate? Well, 27.♗d3 f5! 28.♗xf5 e2!!.

27.gxf6 ♗xf6 28.♖g4+ ♔f8 29.♗d1 ♗xd5



Why can't White take the rook? Solution at the end. No peeking!

30. ♖g1 ♜dd8 31. ♘f3 ♚e7 32. ♙b7 ♞g8 0-1

So, are you ready to play the Sicilian? Did you see 30. ♖xd5 ♚e1+ 31. ♗g1 ♗xe2 32. ♗xe3 ♗f1+ 33. ♗g1 ♗f3+ 34. ♗g2 ♗xg2+ 35. ♚xg2 ♞xc2+ 36. ♙d2 ♙c3. I wasn't kidding about "eventual."

Next is a phenomenal game by Botvinnik in a Sicilian Dragon that is not a Yugoslav Attack. How about that! Although we have a different system for White and Black, please note the importance of the similarities.

Model Game 37

Rauzer – Botvinnik

USSR Chp., Leningrad 1933

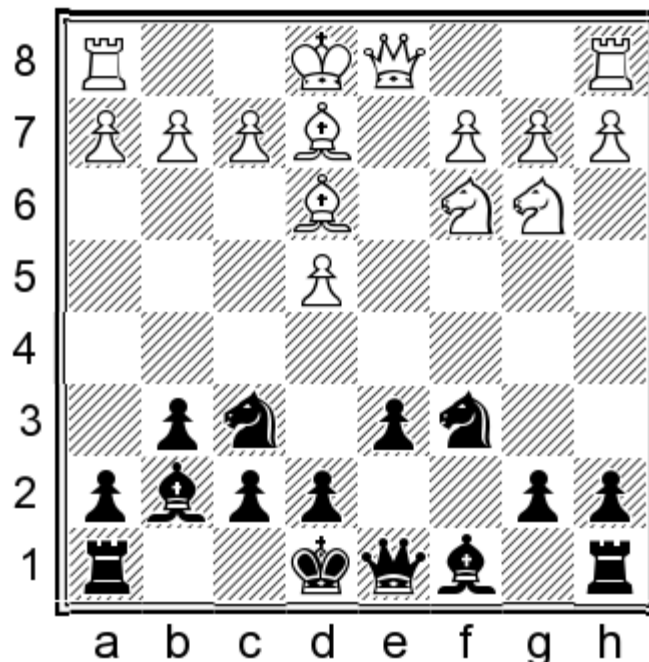
1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6

Today, Dragon players start with 2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 because it enables 5...g6, while 5...♘c6 now would invite the Rauzer Attack. Black in effect loses a developing move to avoid a potent attack. After this game, Rauzer invented the variation named after him (6. ♙g5), which prevents the Dragon with the move order used in this game. That's why Black plays 2...d6 and 4...♘f6 followed by 5...g6 instead of 2...♘c6 and 4...♘f6.

3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 d6 6. ♙e2

Yes, Rauzer went with 6. ♙g5 in later games, but let's clear something up: I'm not saying that 6. ♙e2 loses. It's just that 6. ♙g5 is stronger.

6...g6 7. ♙e3 ♙g7 8. ♘b3



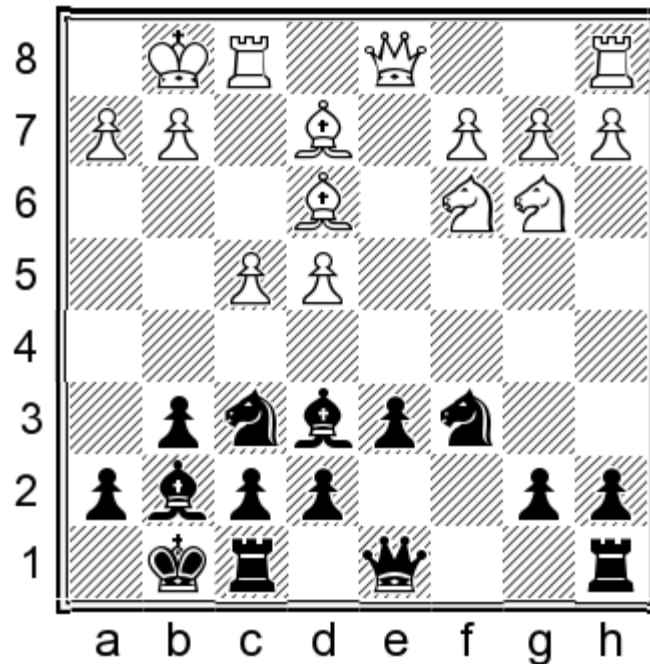
Botvinnik wrote that he did not like 8...a5 9.a4 for Black "since the weakness of the b5 square is more serious than that of the b4 square."

8...♙e6

Black is keying on the square c4 with ...♘c6-a5 in mind. It also helps support a ...d6-d5 break in the center. He's not worrying about moving the e-pawn right away. First priority is active piece play.

9.f4 0-0 10.0-0

Botvinnik played a famous game against Alekhine's 10.g4 which led to a draw at Nottingham 1936. Years later, Fischer improved on Alekhine and won against Reshevsky in their 1961 match.



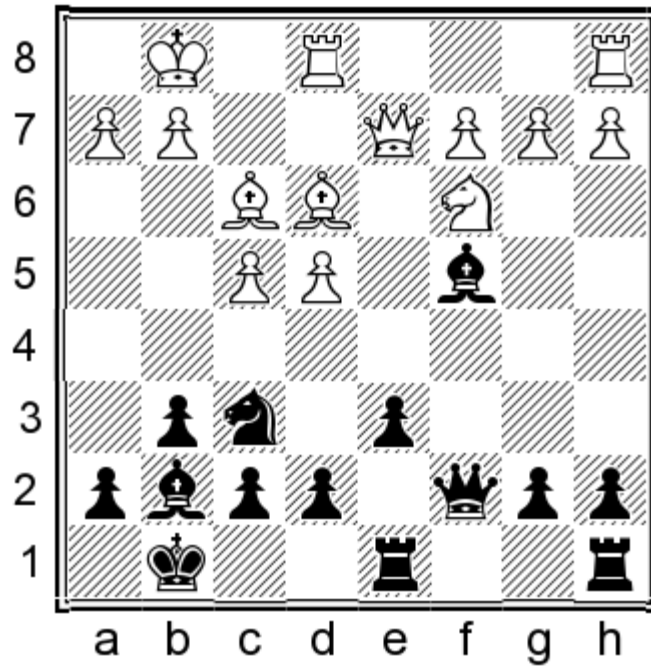
10...♘a5

“The other possible plan for Black involves 10...♙c8, establishing control over g4, and then 11...♞d8” (Botvinnik). Notice how he combines defense against g2-g4 with counterplay along the c-file.

11.♘xa5

Better was first 11.f5 ♙c4, then 12.♘xa5 ♙xe2 13.♙xe2 ♙xa5 with level play.

11...♙xa5 12.♙f3 ♙c4 13.♞e1 ♞fd8 14.♙d2 ♙c7

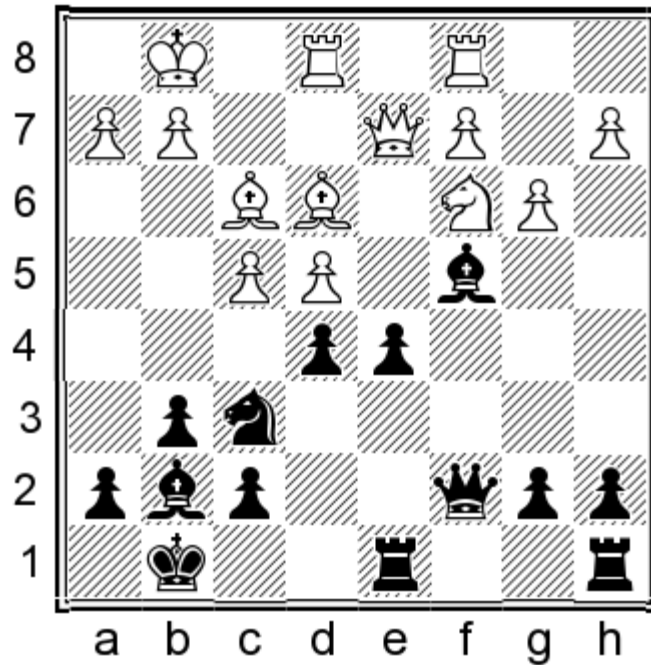


Botvinnik points out his desire to avoid a queen trade after ♖d5 by White. He's playing for a win!

15. ♖ac1 e5!

See? No need to worry about that e-pawn getting to move! White needs to exchange on e5 here since no knight can recapture. It would then be an equal game.

16. b3 d5!!



16...exf4 17. ♗xf4 ♕e6 18. ♖e3 ♖d7 19. ♗d5 ♗xd5 20. exd5 ♕e5 leads to easy equality. Black gets his outpost on e5; however, Botvinnik has a "Sicilian player" attitude. He wants complications.

Compare this position with the Scheveningen position above. Can you see the similarities in theme, and the

differences? Do you understand how important timing is and how critical real positional understanding is for playing like this?

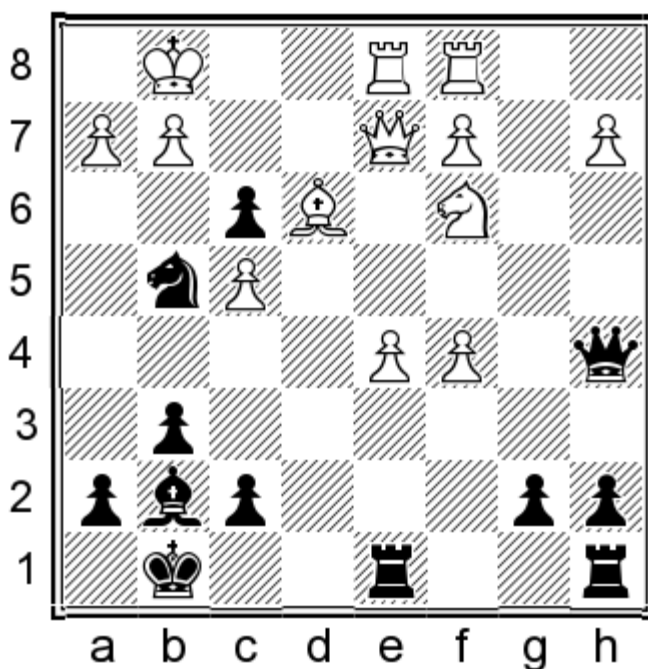
17.exd5 e4!

Botvinnik writes that this was the first game of his to appear in chess magazines around the world. He was very proud of this sequence and that it held up to the scrutiny of analysts around the world then (and of chess engines today!).

18.bxc4 exf3 19.c5 ♖a5 20.♞ed1

Botvinnik notes that better was 20.♞d3. It's easily met, though, by 20...♞ac8 and 21...b6 (Botvinnik).

20...♘g4!



And the Dragon diagonals explode on White: the h8-a1 line and the a5-e1 path all focusing on c3.

21.♙d4

The lesser of evils leading to the same, albeit delayed, result would be 21.♘e4 ♜xd2 22.♙xd2 ♙d4+ 23.♙h1 fxg2+ 24.♙xg2 ♞xd5.

21...f2+ 22.♙f1 ♜a6+ 23.♞e2 ♙xd4 24.♞xd4 ♜f6!

Nice lateral move! Always look for those.

25.♞cd1 ♜h4 26.♞d3 ♞e8 27.♞e4 f5 28.♞e6 ♘xh2+ 29.♙e2 ♜xf4 0-1

White is quite finished after 30.♞f1 ♘xf1 31.♙xf1 ♞xe6 32.dxe6 ♞e5.

If you really can respond to this style of play and are willing to do the work, then by all means, play the Sicilian!

It's all now up to you.

We will now move on to some d-pawn considerations:

1. What if I don't want to play 1.e4? (Botvinnik English)
2. How should I *solidly* defend the d-pawn systems? (Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Indian)
3. How can I *aggressively* defend the d-pawn systems? (Dutch)

12. The English Opening According to Botvinnik

For the next few games, we are going to look at how a world champion used an opening system with great success. Mikhail Botvinnik first won the world chess championship in 1948. By the time he had lost it for good (he had a fighting habit of winning rematches), he had been at the chess summit for fifteen years. Years ago, his collection of best games came out in a single volume and served as a kind of training manual for a fair number of masters who have mentioned this as an important book in their chess development.

Before his passing, Botvinnik collected more of his great games and put them in a three-volume set. Having remembered his first book, I decided it would be a good idea to go through this magnum opus. The set is a treasure trove of great performances, with themes that are both clear and sophisticated. I thought sharing a great master's games in a particular opening would show you that there is more than one way to learn chess openings.

You can do this with other masters' collections of games as well. When I was a kid, my uncle gave me a book of Morphy's games. Then I ran across Tarrasch's games. This was followed by Marshall, then Nimzowitsch.

With Morphy, Tarrasch, and Marshall I learned how to develop quickly and seize the initiative, and constantly strove for open positions. With Nimzowitsch, I kept the positions closed and my pieces centralized, and I overprotected my central squares with a vengeance.

At various stages of my life I became attracted to Alekhine, Capablanca, Keres, Smyslov, Tal, and most recently Benko – all because of great game collections that explained the style and philosophy of the book's hero.

You also learn which styles you are comfortable with and which ones are not. Comfort level is very important in choosing a chess opening. For many amateurs and beginners, it is a question of how much time you can spend on studying chess.

One of my private students likes to play the Sicilian Dragon as Black and the English Opening as White. So we study games from both. One of the discoveries for him is that the opening themes are the same and it makes for efficient use of study time.

I am using Botvinnik's games with him because Botvinnik was a premier player of the Sicilian and English. I thought I would start this little section with two games that show how you can learn a set of opening ideas for two openings at once!

Model Game 38

Botvinnik – Lundin

Stockholm 1962

1.c4

This is the English Opening. It is as good as 1.d4 or 1.e4 in the sense that it attacks a key central square and forces Black to fight for that square. Its only immediate drawback in comparison to the other two moves is that White's bishops can't access the center as easily. Not to worry, though – they find a way to exercise significant influence.

1...e5

A pretty logical move for Black, if he doesn't mind playing against the Sicilian Defense a move down. He, too,

knows it's important to fight for central squares. Botvinnik once wrote that 1...♘f6 2.♗c3 e5 3.g3 ♕b4 “was the simplest way of equalizing in this opening.” He also pointed out that, after 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♗c3 d5, Black could enter one of the many forms of the Grünfeld. There are chessplayers who swear by 1.c4 and 2.g3 with a quick 3.♕g2. Tony Kosten devoted a whole book to it (*The Dynamic English*). Another modest but excellent out-of-print book is Nigel Povah's *How to Play the English Opening*. A good place to search online is <http://www.vialibri.net/>. For our purposes, we are concentrating on the Botvinnik System because it's not trendy, but it's good. It also has parallels with it being a Sicilian reversed, which we just covered. Of course, having the extra move allows White to do more. There is a good deal of exploring to do if you wish to go down the English country road.

2.♗c3

Increasing the pressure on d5.

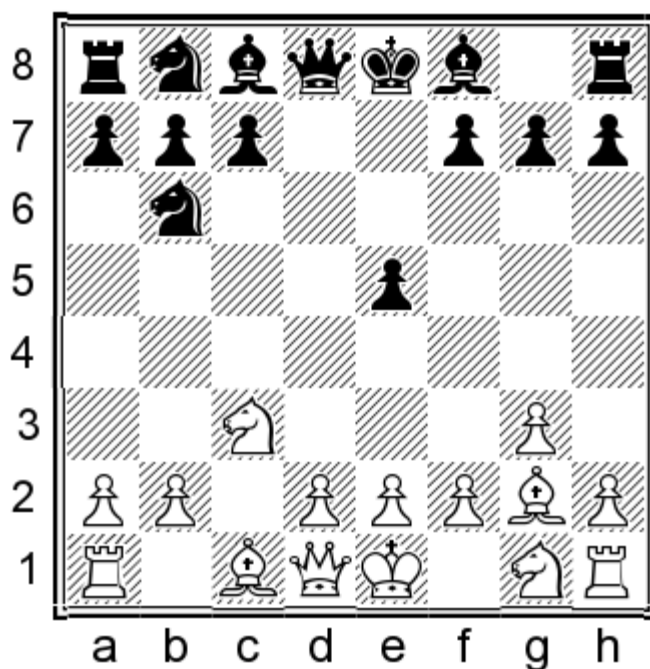
2...♘f6

Black is now ready to counter on d5, just as White does against the Sicilian.

3.g3

The bishop can now develop, by fianchetto, to g2 to lend support to the struggle for d5.

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♕g2 ♗b6



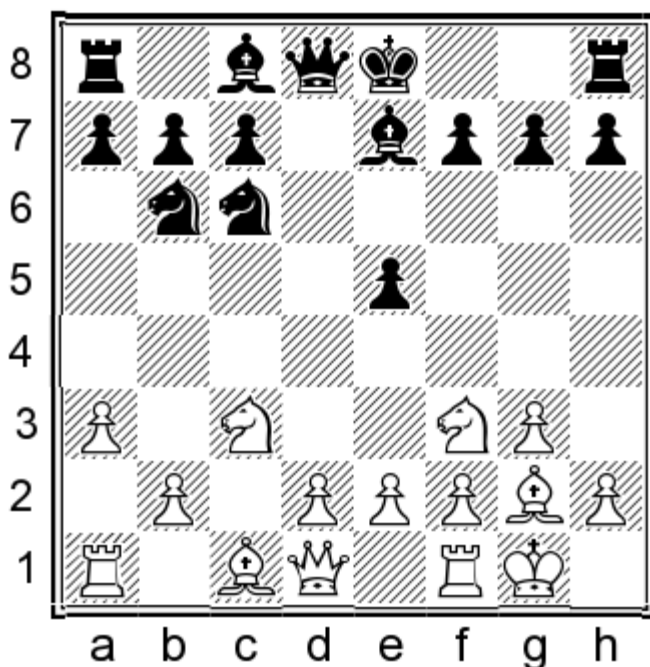
Now you can see why the English is troublesome for Black. If he protected the knight with 5...c6, it blocks the queen knight's development. If he protected it with 5...♕e6, then b7 is left vulnerable. But if he exchanged knights, that opens the long diagonal with an attack on b7 for the opposing bishop, it bolsters White's center, and it also allows for ♖b1 with even more pressure on b7. Is Black lost then if he exchanges? Of course not. The game is equal, but – to paraphrase *Animal Farm* – White's side is more equal than Black's. Black could play 5...♕e6, but as Botvinnik points out, he will have to move the knight eventually anyhow. Let's look at some possible lines:

- a) 5...♞xc3 6.bxc3 ♞c6. Here we will show you that the English can get pretty lively very quickly: 7.♞f3 e4 8.♞d4 ♞xd4 9.cxd4 ♖xd4 10.♞b1 c6 11.0-0 ♖c4 12.d3 ♖xa2 13.♙f4 exd3 14.exd3 ♙e7 15.♞e1 and, for the sacrificed pawn, White has considerable compensation with the two rooks' pressure;
- b) 5...♞e7 6.♞f3 ♞bc6 7.0-0 ♞f5 8.b4 ♙xb4 9.♞xe5 ♞xe5 10.♖a4+ and White not only gets the bishop, but Black has to figure out how to castle kingside;
- c) 5...♙e6 6.♞f3 ♞c6 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.d4. Because the knight has stayed on d5, it has masked the attack of the queen on the square d4. With White having the extra move in this Sicilian Reversed, this allows the freeing d2-d4. For Black in the Sicilian, achieving the advance to d5 is harder because he's a move behind. 8...♞xc3 9.bxc3 e4 10.♞d2 f5 11.f3 ♞xd4 12.fxe4, and White avoids losing the queen rook with check and hacks Black's center to death. Now you have a better idea why Lundin went to b6!

6.♞f3 ♞c6 7.0-0

Botvinnik earlier counsels not to play a2-a3 too quickly, giving a game with Dückstein in 1958 which went 7.a3 ♙e7 8.d3 0-0 9.b4 f5 10.b5 ♞d4 11.♞xe5 ♙f6 12.f4 ♙e6 13.♞b1 ♙xe5 14.fxe5 f4, and now he says White can't play 15.♙xf4 ♞xf4 16.gxf4 ♖h4+ 17.♞d2 ♖xf4+ 18.e3 ♖f2+ 19.♞e2 ♖xg2 20.exd4 ♙d5 21.♞g1 ♖xh2 because the white king's position would have given "serious cause for alarm." The chess engine *Fritz*, on the other hand, says White is winning. For the exchange, you can see why Botvinnik likes Black's position: both the bishop and the knight have prospects at d5, the white king is exposed. On the other hand, the white rooks will be troublesome on the g- and c-files. Certainly a position worthy of study.

7...♙e7 8.a3



Once the king is castled, the queenside expansion gets underway. That's where your play is in the English as White and in the Sicilian as Black. We should note that in the Dragon, because Black is a move down, he generally has no time for ...a7-a6. In this game, the king bishop is ideally suited to support an attack on Black's queenside, and the queen and queen rook work well together over there as well, but the foot soldiers must go first before bringing up the heavy artillery!

8...♙e6 9.d3

Botvinnik points out that now d2-d3 is necessary because of Black's maneuver ...♖d4 and ...♗b3, trapping the queen! Playing d2-d3 gives an escape square. A nice little nuance to know.

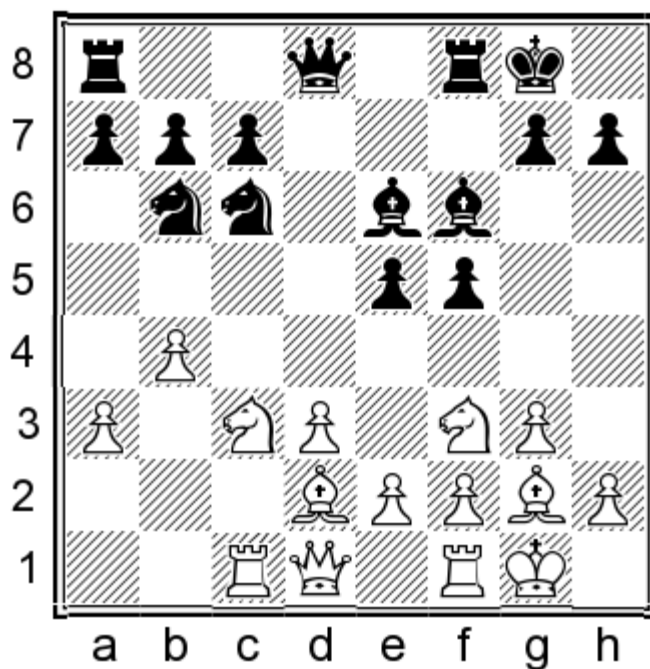
9...f5

In the next game, we will look at 9...a5. Basically, Black has two choices against these formations: to restrict his opponent's expansion on the queenside or to attack on the kingside. Let's look at the attempt to attack on the kingside.

10.b4 ♗f6 11.♗d2

A very critical move. Botvinnik ignores 11...e4 because of 12.dxe4 fxe4 13.♖xe4 ♗xa1 14.♔xa1 "with more than sufficient compensation for the exchange." He also points out that if he had played 11.♗b2, then 11...e4 12.dxe4 fxe4 13.♖d2 e3 14.fxe3 0-0 would give the edge to Black.

11...0-0 12.♞c1



Exactly where the rook belongs in this system. Aside from occupying a half-open file, the threat of the exchange sacrifice on c6, just as Black does on c3 in the Sicilian, is always a possibility. It's also worth pointing out that the queen knight can consider the ♖a4-c5 maneuver.

12...♗h8 13.b5 ♖a5

Black decentralizes his knight just to force White to move the rook back to b1. Who comes out better? Let's see.

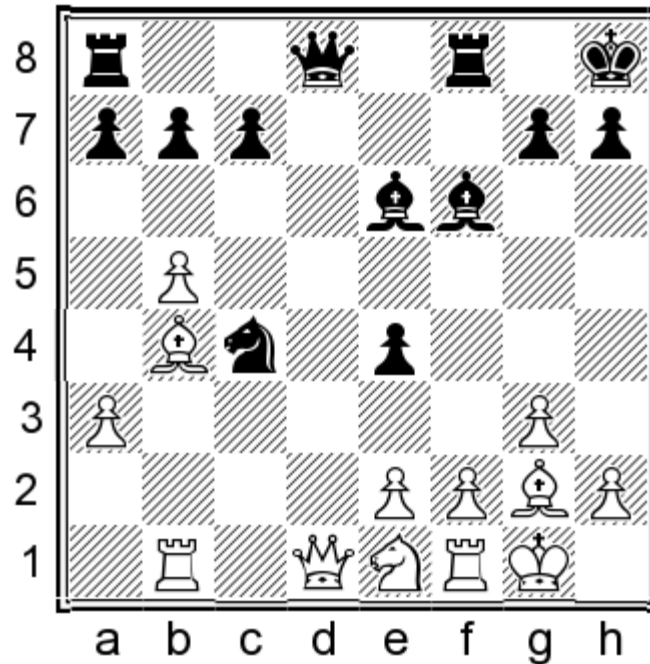
14.♞b1 e4

Taking advantage of the d3-pawn's responsibility to keep black knights out of c4.

15.♖e1

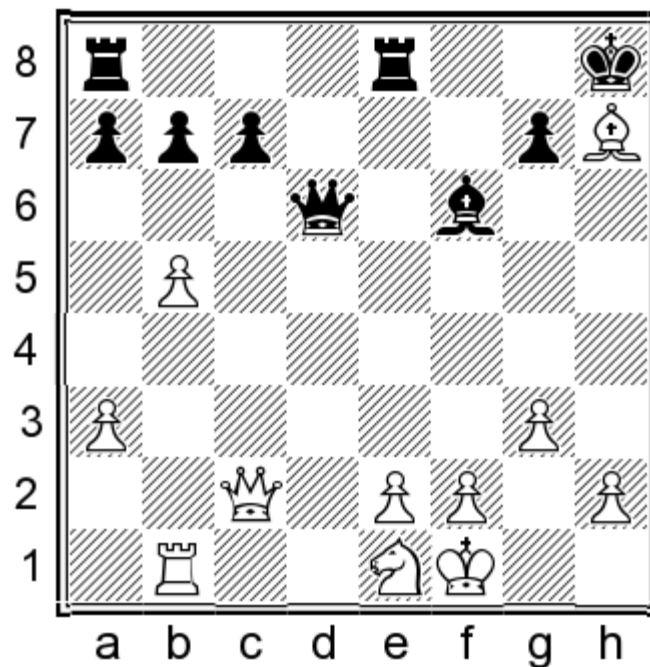
And now White gets to attack an overextended center. Botvinnik also notes that ...exd3 would open up that wonderful bishop diagonal. If you decide to play the English you will love this bishop!

15...♖ac4 16.dxc4 ♗xc4 17.♗xe4 fxe4 18.♗b4



Now you see the result of Black's pseudo-sacrifice: White gives back the material and has two very effective bishops. The black bishops are attacking air.

18...♖e8 19.♗xe4 ♗h3 20.♖c2 ♗xf1 21.♗xf1 ♗d6 22.♗xd6 ♖xd6 23.♗xh7



The way Botvinnik went into the exchange sacrifice is instructive. What was important to him? He notes the activity of his pieces, the destruction of Black's castled position, and the 4-to-1 pawn majority on the kingside.

23...♖ad8 24.♗f3 ♜f8 25.♙g6 ♚e6 26.♘g2

A piquant attacking move! He keeps the queen away from defending on the kingside light squares.

26...♗d5 27.e4 ♗d6 28.♞b4

A very fine horizontal threat to go to h4.

28...♙e7 29.♙f5 ♚h6 30.♞c4 ♙d8 31.e5

Botvinnik points out that now the coming ♗h4 is not preventable.

31...♗d5 32.♗h4 ♗d2 33.♞c3 ♘g8 34.♞f4

Not only cutting off the black rook's queen protection, but – as Botvinnik points out – also threatening 35.♙h7+ ♞xh7 36.♞c4+.

34...♗d5 35.♞f3 1-0

What do we learn from this game? We learn that White seeks to expand on the queenside and in the center. We also learn that if Black attacks on the kingside, White can counterpunch, gain tremendous activity for his pieces, and then actually initiate an attack on the kingside himself.

We have looked at how a world champion played one of the many lines of the English Opening as White. We saw Black try to attack on the kingside but run into a counterattack by White. Now, we consider one of the unanswered questions of the opening: what happens if Black tries to restrain White on the queenside? We have our second Botvinnik game to answer that question.

Model Game 39

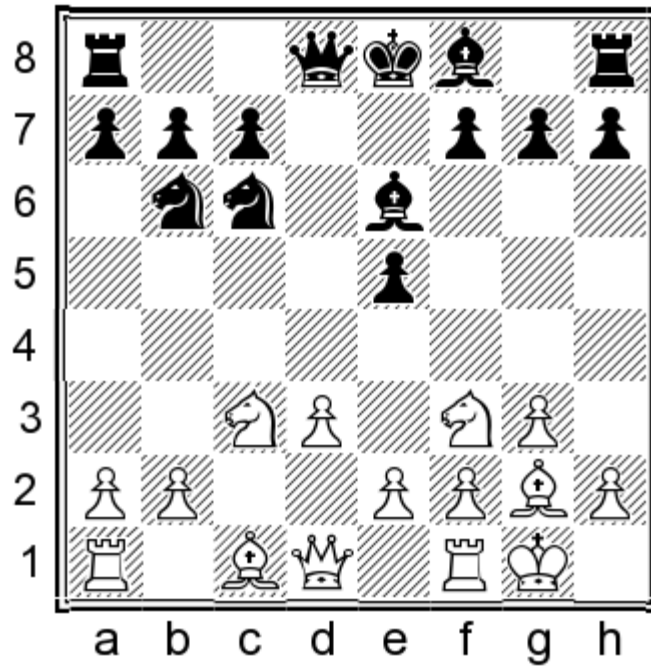
Botvinnik – Portisch

Monte Carlo 1968

1.c4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♙g2

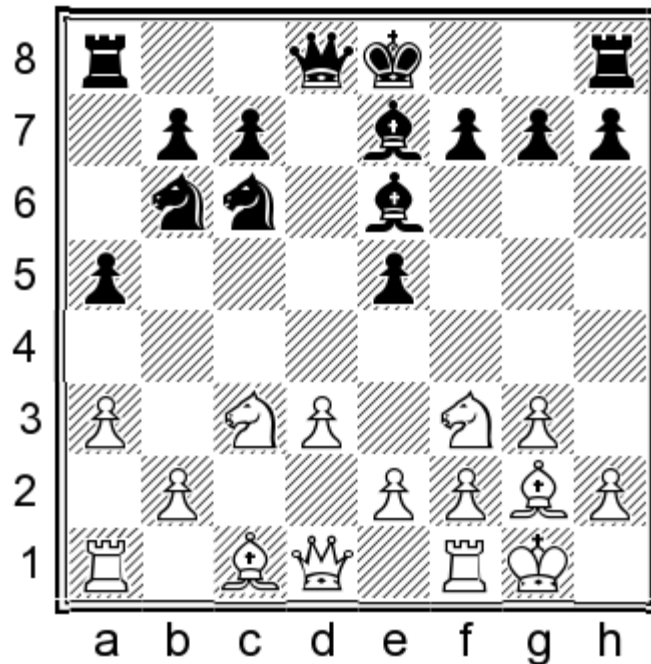
Botvinnik makes an interesting point here: Black is the one who decides in which direction the game goes. If he trades knights on c3, then White's plan for pressure will be along the b-file after bxc3. If he removes the horse to b6, then White will operate along the c-file. The king bishop is well adapted to either plan. That's what makes the English Opening so interesting: the pressure is subtle – it doesn't run out and attack you right away, but you cannot afford to underestimate the threats simmering under the surface. It's that way with the Sicilian as well. That's why studying and playing these formations as White and Black is mutually reinforcing.

5...♙e6 6.♗f3 ♗c6 7.0-0 ♗b6 8.d3



This is a very useful move. The pawn now has a say about who comes to c4 or e4. If you are a beginner, you should notice that White hasn't a single man past the third rank and yet the centralized knights, the d-pawn, and the as-yet masked king bishop all influence what happens in the center.

8...♞e7 9.a3 a5



OK, here we are! Portisch decides to prevent that nasty b2-b4. What is Botvinnik's response? He plays in Sicilian Dragon style by putting his bishop on e3 to support both the possibility of d2-d4 and also ♞a4-c5. Again, if you are new to chess, this may look strange as you are generally told by your chess teachers not to put bishops in front of the e- or d-pawns. That is very good advice if you open with 1.e4 or 1.d4; however, the English's big pawn moves involve d-pawn and b-pawn expansion; the e-pawn will be moved much later. You might recall that in the last game the move e2-e4 practically decided the contest on the spot, but it wasn't

played until move 27. Here it's not played at all! This is simply a different style of chess, although it's important to note that the fight for the center occurs in 1.e4, 1.d4, and 1.c4 and just about every other opening. It's a matter of taste and timing.

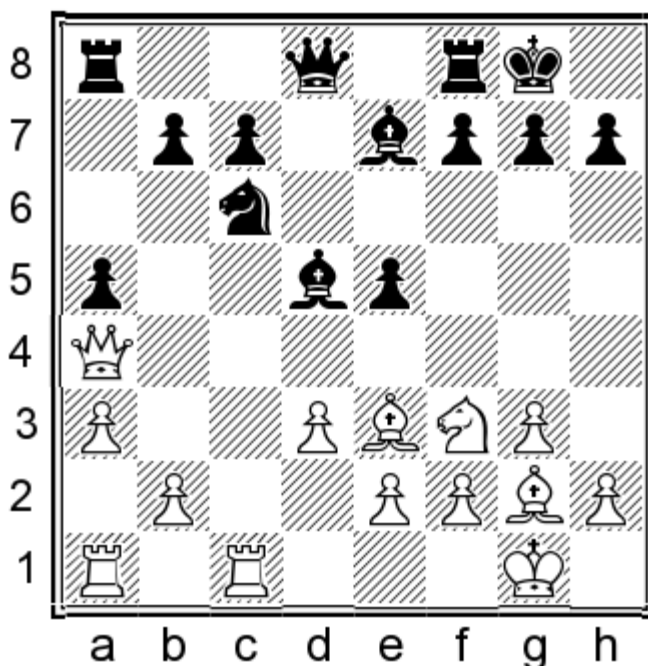
10. ♖e3 0-0 11. ♗a4 ♘xa4 12. ♚xa4

Botvinnik is critical of the exchange of knights initiated by Black. To him, it helps White develop the queen to an effective square, and the speed with which the rooks can now occupy the c-file will give Black "rookmares"!

12... ♗d5

Hoping to oppose the powerful king bishop's influence.

13. ♝fc1

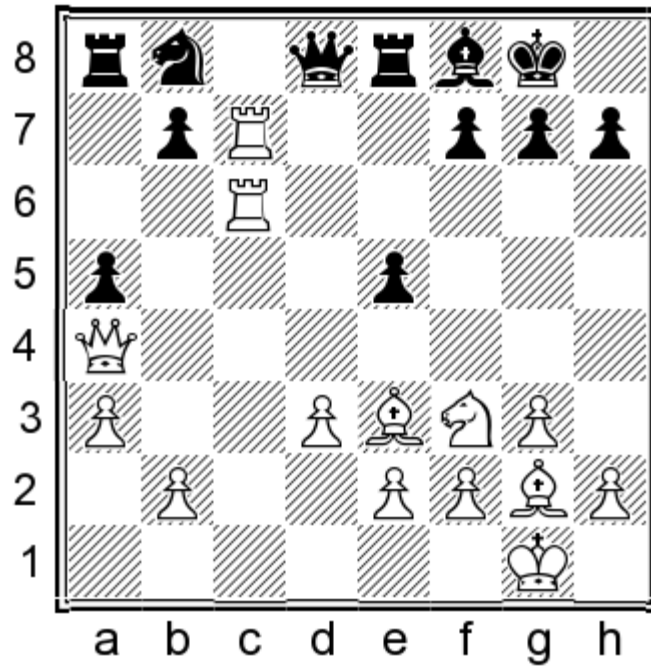


How do you know which rook to put there? The best advice I ever got was to mentally pick up both rooks and place them on the back rank on what you think are their best spots – and then put them there! In this position, b1 and c1 or d1 and c1 are the candidates to choose from to help either b2-b4 or d3-d4 as pawn advances. It's always nice to put a rook opposite a queen. All of this is just for future reference, though. In this position, White's going to double on the c-file because his queen has been cleared off the back rank courtesy of Black. Considering Smyslov's later suggestion, though, perhaps better would have been 13. ♝ac1 ♗e8 14. ♚b5 ♗f6 15. ♗d2 (15. ♚xb7 ♗d4) 15... ♗xg2 16. ♗xg2 ♚b8 17. ♗e4 ♗e7 18. f4.

13... ♝e8 14. ♝c2 ♗f8

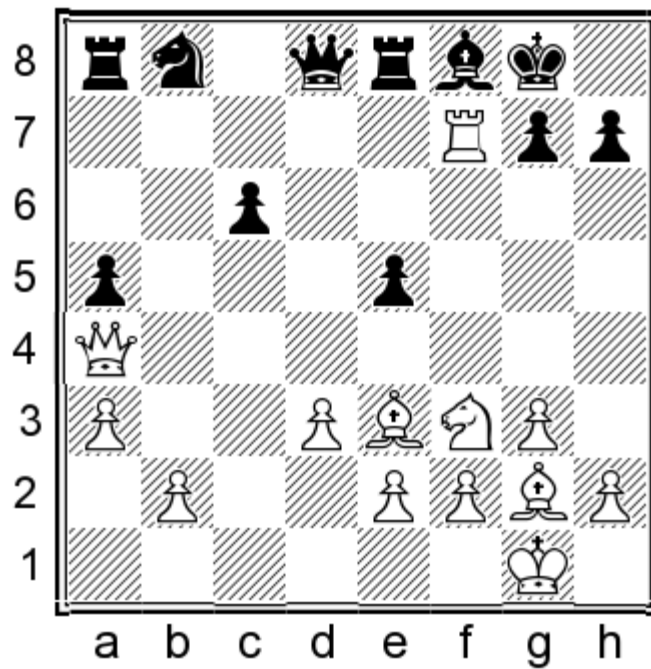
Botvinnik tells us that, after the game, Smyslov said that Black could have defended with 14... ♗d6 15. ♝ac1 ♗e7.

15. ♝ac1 ♗b8 16. ♝xc7 ♗c6 17. ♝1xc6



Let's just quote the big guy here: "Of course. Black also took this sacrifice into account, but he incorrectly thought the rook at c7 would remain trapped and would also have to be given up. But the bishop at c6 is no longer there, and the b7 square remains undefended! However, even this is not the main thing. The rook sacrifice has eliminated the enemy bishop, which was covering the light squares in Black's position."

17...bxc6 18.♖xf7!!



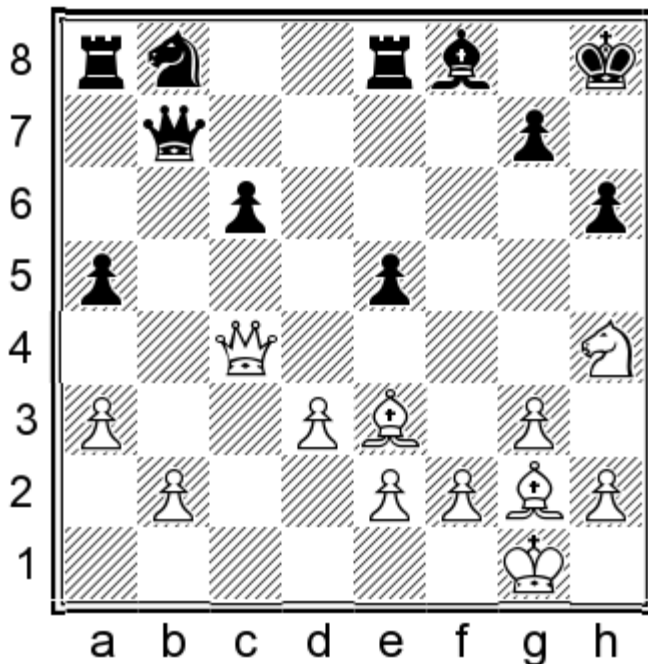
18...h6

You have to know that most famous of all mating patterns if he takes the rook: 18...♔xf7 19.♚c4+ ♔g6 20.♚g4+ ♔f7 21.♘g5+ ♔g8 22.♚c4+ ♔h8 23.♘f7+ ♔g8 24.♘h6+ ♔h8 25.♚g8#.

19. ♖b7 ♗c8 20. ♗c4+ ♔h8 21. ♘h4

Who cares about rooks? We have weak light squares to work with! Remember what Botvinnik said about the missing bishop.

21... ♗xb7



22. ♘g6+ ♔h7 23. ♕e4 ♘d6 24. ♘xe5+ ♗g6 25. ♕xg6+ ♔g7 26. ♕xh6+ 1-0

Black resigned because of 26... ♔xh6 27. ♗h4+ ♔g7 28. ♗h7+ ♔f6 29. ♘g4+ ♔e6 30. ♗xb7.

If anything, these two games should have disabused you of the notion that the English Opening is a dull positional opening. It is positional, but once things start opening up, it is as wild as a King's Gambit.

What have we learned in this second game? A lot of things: the importance of the c-file and rooks on it. That this opening requires you to know about all sorts of exchange sacrifices on c6 (or c3 in the Sicilian). Opening up the game tends to favor White because his pieces tend to be better placed for that eventuality. You have learned that it is not necessary to occupy the center, so much as to fight for control of it. You've learned that White's queenside activity is something serious that Black has to deal with at all times. And, hopefully, you've learned that the English is a good counterpunching opening just like its brother in the Sicilian.

Next, we'll show you some more interesting Botvinnik ideas in the English. Maybe you'll give it a try!

Model Game 40

Botvinnik – Söderborg

Stockholm 1962

1. c4 ♘f6 2. ♘c3 ♗g6

Black is being coy here. He wants White to commit himself in some way. Black is prepared to go into a King's Indian after 3. d4 d6. Botvinnik himself once recommended, *after* White has played ♘c3, the move 2... d5

which can transpose into a Grünfeld Defense. The frisky among you as Black could try the Bellón Gambit with 2...e5 3.♘f3 e4 4.♘g5 b5!?. The idea is that 5.cxb5 allows 5...d5. The alternatives for White are also double-edged. Another time.

3.e4

This move is associated with Botvinnik because he won some interesting games from both sides, as we saw last time out. He freely admitted it wasn't his idea. Players like Aron Nimzowitsch and Carl Carls were early pioneers with this idea. It certainly puts a stranglehold on d5!

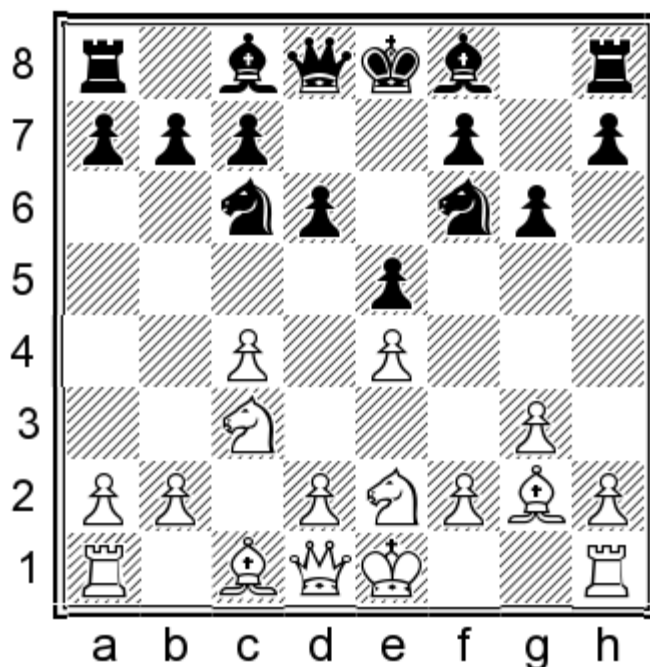
3...e5

If Black continued with 3...d6, Botvinnik was often happy to just take White's side of the King's Indian. He loved the Sämisch Attack.

4.g3

Now the game definitely heads for a reversed Closed Sicilian, where Botvinnik originally introduced his idea.

4...♘c6 5.♗g2 d6 6.♘ge2

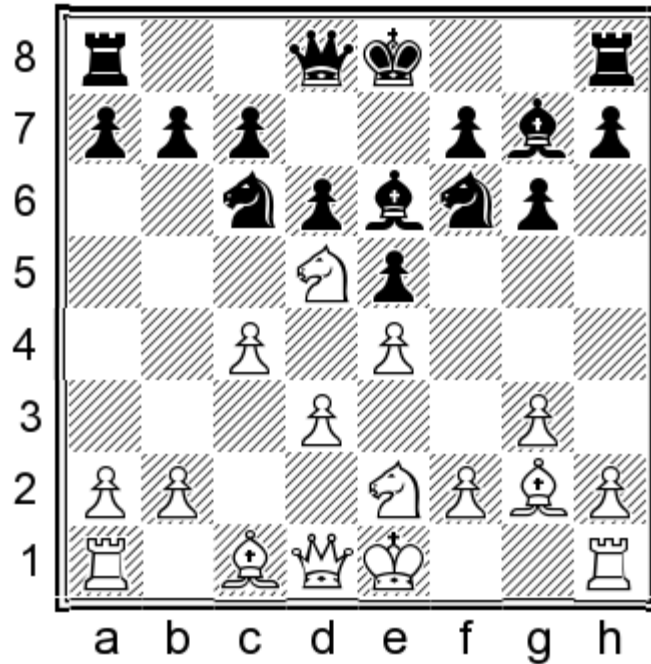


Why not 6.♘f3? There are several reasons: a) 6.♘ge2 keeps the path open for an eventual f4 pawn push for White; b) 6.♘ge2 can possibly offer support for the c3-knight's going to d5; c) 6.♘ge2 hits d4, where Black will try to play; d) just as with ♘f3, it can support an eventual d2-d4; e) the king bishop isn't blocked from influencing the central squares. Now *there's* a multi-purpose move!

6...♗g7 7.d3 ♗e6

Botvinnik criticizes this move because it allows ♘d5, which now cannot be taken by the king knight because of the resulting pawn fork. In our next game, we'll see what Botvinnik does when he has Black.

8.♘d5



What's interesting about the impact of this move – other than Black's not wanting to capture the knight, or even with the bishop because of the resulting c-file pressure – is that *Fritz* actually suggests 8...♔d7 in this situation. Even the computer has the jitters here!

8...♖e7

8...♗xd5 9.cxd5 ♖e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.d4 exd4 12.♖xd4.

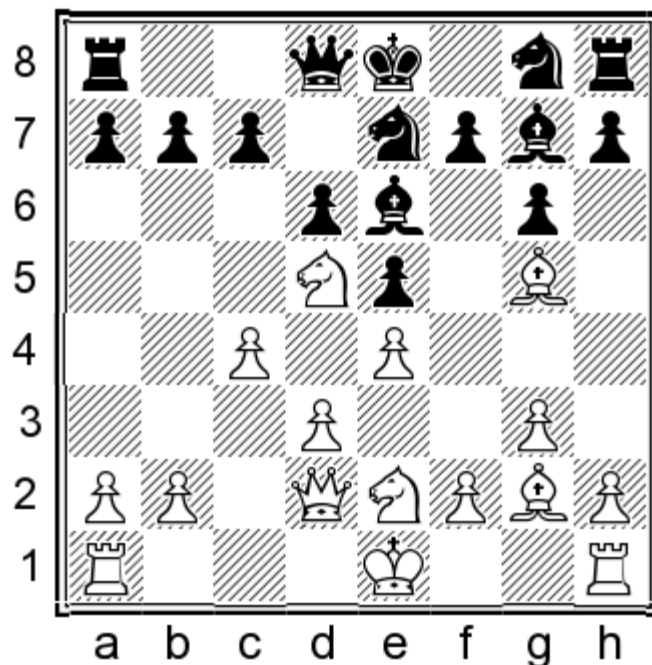
9.♗g5!

Development is good for grandmasters, too! 9.♖xf6+? ♗xf6 10.♗h6 g5 (10...♖g8) 11.h4 gxh4 12.gxh4 ♖g6 13.h5 ♖h4; 9.♗h6? ♗xh6 10.♖xf6+ ♔f8=.

9...♖fg8

If Black, because of the fear of opening the c-file, feels somehow compelled to do this, then there is something wrong with Black's position already, and it's a testimony to how subtly powerful the Botvinnik System can be if not properly met.

10.♗d2



At this point, Black has to be asking himself where he's going to castle. The queenside allows a quick pawn storm and is relatively unprotected. The kingside has this queen-and-bishop battery and possible pawn thrusts with f2-f4 or h2-h4 in view. And because of the lock on d5, there is little hope of central counterplay, the usual antidote against a wing attack.

10...h6 11.♙e3 c6

Black wants that knight out of there, which is understandable. However, there is a price to pay, as the d6 square is now weakened. At some point White will prepare d3-d4 and Black will not want to exchange because of the pressure on d6.

12.♘dc3 ♗f6

Preparing to castle, even though he can't because that would drop the h6-pawn. As you look at this position, you have to appreciate the options available to White. He can still advance on either side of the board.

13.f4 ♗d7

Botvinnik felt that if 13...♗g4 then 14.♙g1 was sufficient. A likely continuation he may have had in mind could be 14...f5 15.h3 ♗f6 16.0-0-0 ♖c7 17.c5 dxc5 18.♙xc5 ♗d8 19.♗e3 fxe4 20.dxe4, and White is doing well.

14.b3

Protects the pawn from the e6-bishop so that d3-d4 becomes a possibility. Black doesn't want to see d3-d4 because of the weak d6, so he plays:

14...c5

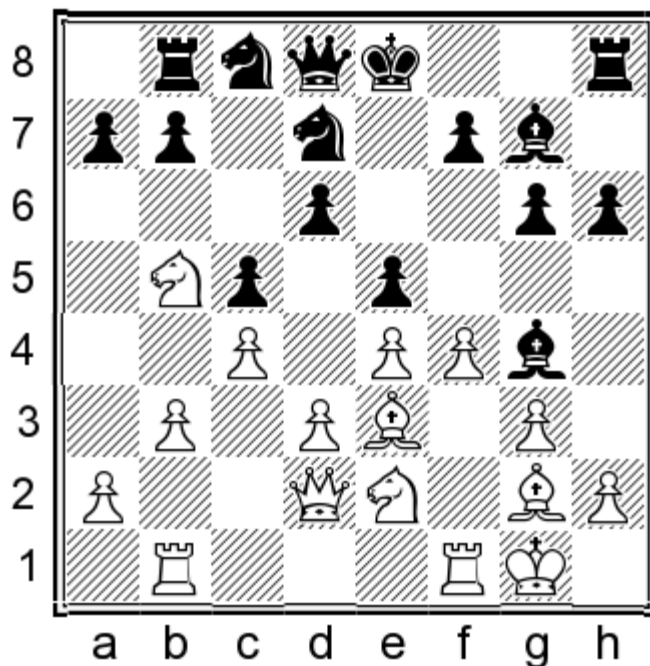
Even after all this, Botvinnik states in his notes that he can still advance on either side of the board!

15.♗b1 ♗b8 16.0-0 ♙g4?

Doesn't really do much and, in reality, concedes the two bishops. What's interesting is that Botvinnik doesn't even bother to hit the bishop with h2-h3. He just goes about his plan a move up!

17. ♖b5 ♗c8

Even though Black has this double defense move, look at his dreadful position. None of his pieces cooperate with any of their teammates.



18. b4

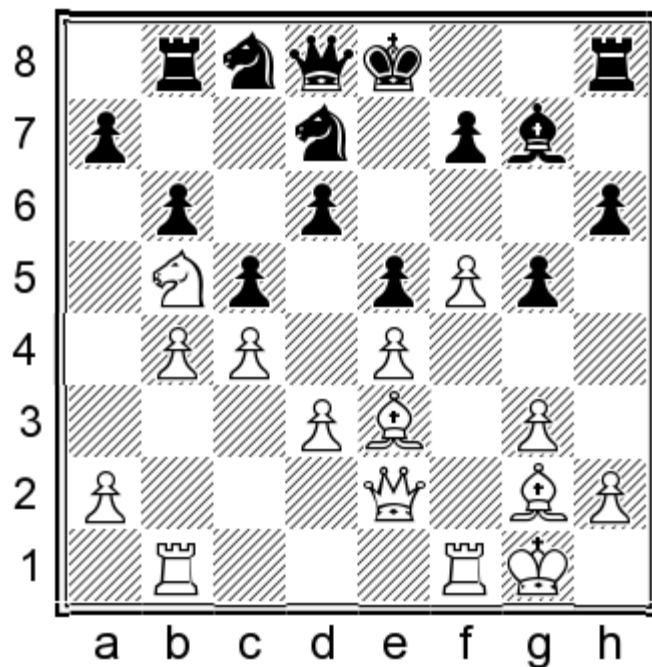
Botvinnik solves the problem of which side to advance on: he advances on both! This middlegame position must give you a clue to how Black has to react. If you are Black you can't just sit there with a locked center and wait to get crushed. Think about this. You can't advance on the queenside or in the center, so all you're left with is the kingside. Next time we'll show you how Botvinnik, as Black, plays an early ...f7-f5 to at least have a say in the game.

18...b6 19.f5 ♗xe2

Not only is the bishop rather stranded on g4 after f4-f5, but the e2-knight threatens to head to c3 at some point as we mentioned earlier. So Black tries to get at least one potentially dangerous piece off the board.

20. ♖xe2 g5

Trying to close the position so that White has no open lines. As you'll see with the ♗f5 sacrifice in the Ruy López chapter, knowing tactical and strategic patterns is useful. Just as Yates sacrificed a pawn to keep a line open, Botvinnik, in a completely different position, comes up with the exact same idea.



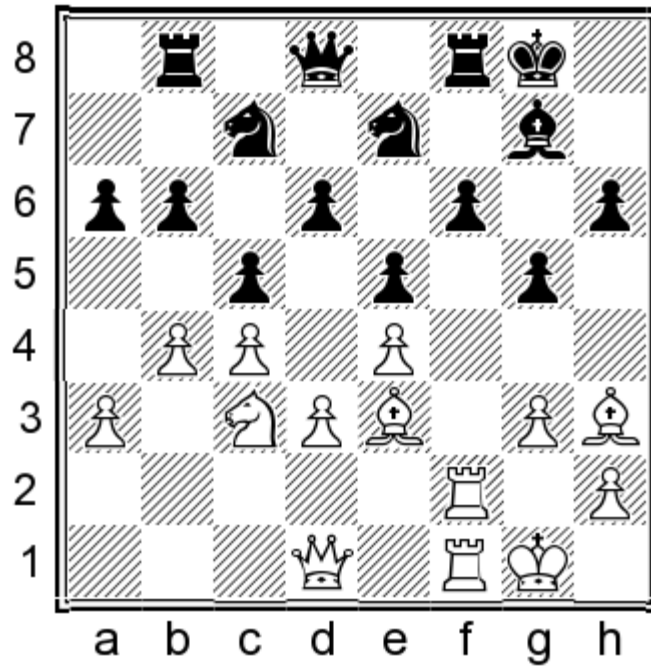
21.f6!

Botvinnik points out that not only is the f-file kept open, but the h3-c8 diagonal for his English bishop is an extra bonus.

21...♖xf6 22.♗h3 a6 23.♗c3 ♜e7 24.a3 0-0 25.♕d1

Never underestimate the power of moving backwards! This is especially true of bishops and queens. Here Botvinnik points out that this prepares ♖b2-f2 or ♕a4. Even though we are in the middlegame, do you see what ideas you should be looking for that started in the opening? The concepts of keeping f2-f4 as an option by playing ♜ge2 and locking the center so that you can advance on the queenside are now bearing fruit for Botvinnik.

25...♜e8 26.♖b2 ♜c7 27.♖bf2 f6



Oh, my! Black looks like he's setting his pawns and pieces up for a game of checkers! (27...♖e6 28.♗xf7 ♗xf7 29.♙xe6). If you thought I was a little crazy for putting in a "checkers" position in the Primer (#31), now you know what game I was thinking of!

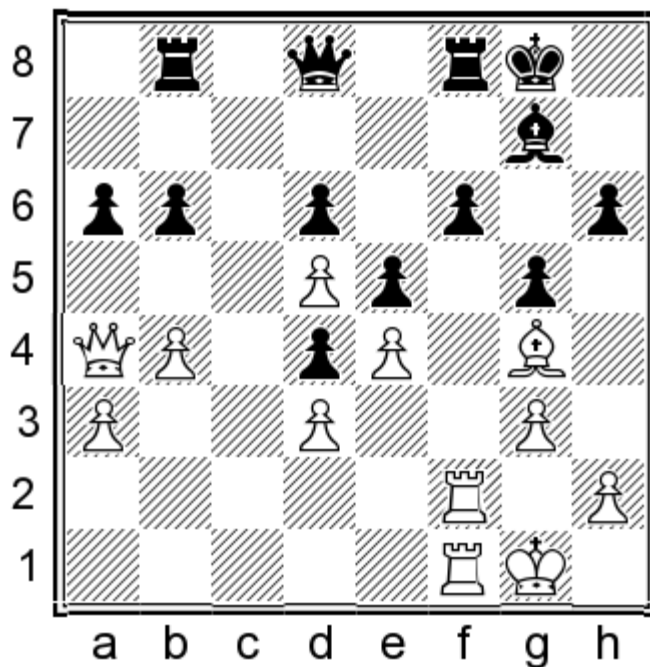
28.♙g4 ♜c6 29.♞d5

Heeeee's baaack!

29...♞d4 30.♙xd4

A no-brainer: inactive bishop for active knight. Now Botvinnik points out that even though the bishops are of opposite colors, White's is active and Black's is blocked by the other checkers – uh, pieces.

30...cxd4 31.♚a4 ♞xd5 32.cxd5



Black is trying to ease the pressure by exchanging, but as we mentioned before he allows White access to the c-file. Take a look at that bishop on g4. Remember when Botvinnik noted that playing f5-f6 opened the h3-c8 diagonal? Did you yawn? Well, look at c8: Black can't put a rook there because White sacrificed his f-pawn on the kingside to allow his bishop to control it from h3 – now, that's how you plan! Botvinnik uses his opening system to increase square control and then slowly to constrict his opponents until they are out of moves.

32...a5 33.♖c2 b5

If you have *Fritz*, do yourself a favor and get to this position. My computer went ballistic here and considered 34.♜xa5 a blunder, continuing to do so for the next several moves and giving Black as better. Maybe it needed more time to think. Botvinnik's plan is to seize the seventh rank with both rooks. If Black tries to stop it after 38.♞b7 by ♞c3, then Botvinnik was prepared to go ♞a2-a7. Truly precise chess!

34.♜xa5 ♜xa5 35.bxa5 ♞a8 36.♞c7 ♞xa5 37.♞fc1 ♞xa3 38.♞b7!! h5 39.♞cc7! ♞a1+ 40.♔f2 ♞a2+ 41.♔e1 ♞a1+ 42.♔d2 ♞fa8

Not as imposing a threat as it looks. White mates.

43.♞xg7+ ♔f8 44.♞bf7+ ♔e8 45.♔d7+ ♔d8 46.♞g8+ 1-0

Because of 46...♔c7 47.♔c6+ ♔b6 48.♞b7+ ♔a5 (48...♔c5 49.♞xb5#) 49.♞xa8+ ♔b4 50.♞xb5#.

It's a game like this that deepens your appreciation of positional chess. So many amateurs want to mate their guy before move 30. Wouldn't you rather play a game like this? Think about it.

Next, before you think this system is invincible, we will show you what happens when Pal Benko plays the Botvinnik system against Botvinnik, and it becomes an exciting game.

Model Game 41

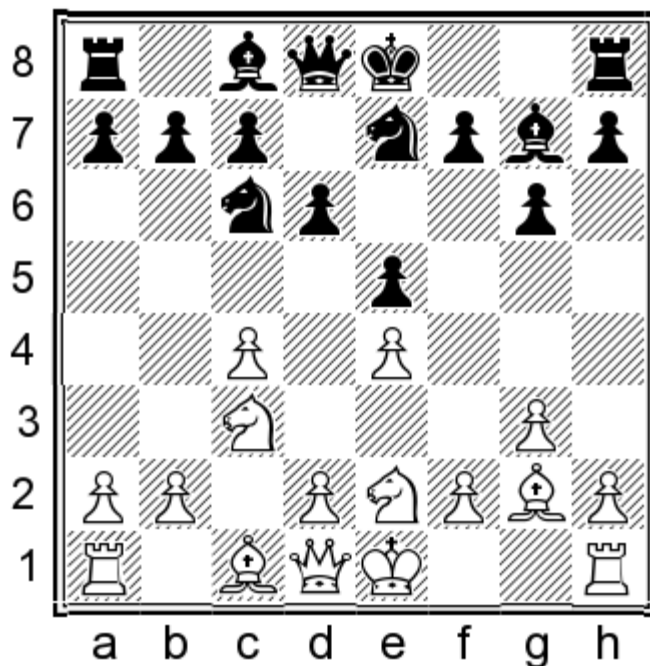
Benko – Botvinnik

Monte Carlo 1968

1.c4 g6 2.g3 ♗g7 3.♙g2 e5 4.♘c3 ♘e7

Why here at e7, as opposed to f6? It's the same reason why Botvinnik as White played his knight to e2: he wants to play ...f7-f5 at some point, rather than end up in that bind we saw in the previous game.

5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 ♘bc6

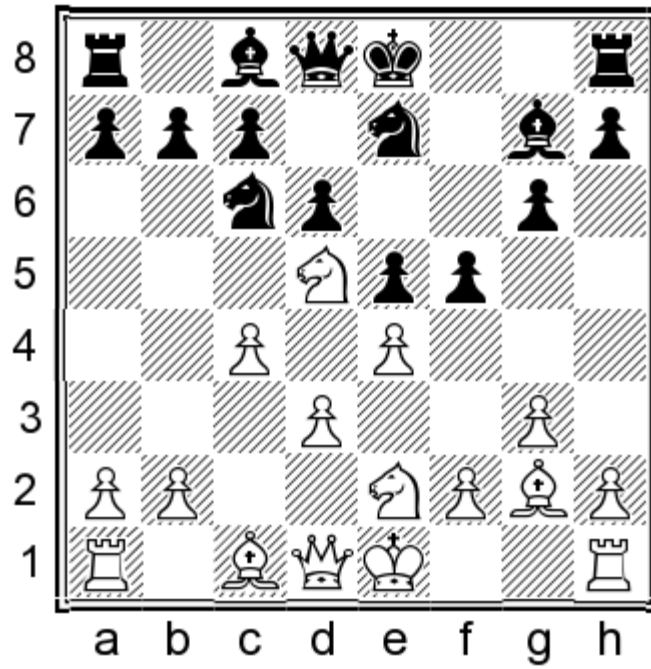


In his book, Botvinnik points out that his upcoming ...f7-f5 thrust was based on a game Robatsch played against him. However, Robatsch had played the queen knight to d7 after ...f7-f5, presumably to go to f6. Botvinnik prefers ...♘c6, which he views as more active. Indeed, it does fight for the d4 square. You should also notice that both Botvinnik and Benko as White held off on d2-d3 to save a tempo by playing to d4 in one swoop. They play moves they know they have to make and keep their options open, deciding what to do only after they have a better idea how their opponent is approaching the opening. 6...♙e6 7.d4 ♖c8 (7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘bc6 9.♘xe6 fxe6 10.f4 0-0 11.♙e3 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3; 7...♙xc4 8.♖a4+) 8.0-0 (8.d5 right away may be better because White is heading for d5 and might as well play it right away if he prefers that kind of position to one resulting from ...exd4 by Black) 8...0-0 9.d5 ♙d7 (9...♙h3 10.♙e3 [10.♙xh3 ♖xh3 11.♖b3 is also good] 10...♙xg2 11.♙xg2 f5 12.f3 – John Watson in Benko's book) 10.♙e3 b6 11.b4, Benko – Steiner, Budapest 1948.

7.d3 f5!

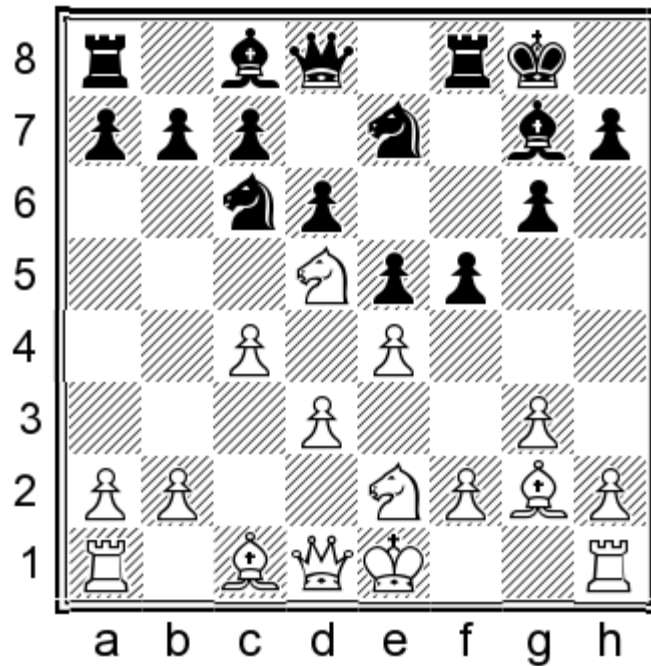
As we mentioned in the last game, Black can't just sit there and defend or even contemplate queenside counterplay. His only good choice is to get active on the kingside. Botvinnik believed that because White had played c2-c4, it gave Black a corresponding opportunity to play a pawn move. Look at the other pawns: both g-pawns have moved, both e-pawns have moved, and both d-pawns have moved. Because White opened with the c-pawn, Black, in also matching minor-piece moves, gets to advance his f-pawn first. We saw what happened when White got the initiative with f2-f4 and then f4-f5 and even f5-f6, so Botvinnik's contribution to what this struggle is about is very important for you to understand, no matter which side you are playing.

8.♘d5



Benko follows the formula. Botvinnik notes that if Benko had played 8.♘e3, he would have replied 8...♗d4 because then 9.♗xd4 exd4 is awful and 9.♘xd4 gives Black good play (8.♘e3 ♗d4 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.♗d5 c6 11.♗xe7 ♖xe7).

8...0-0



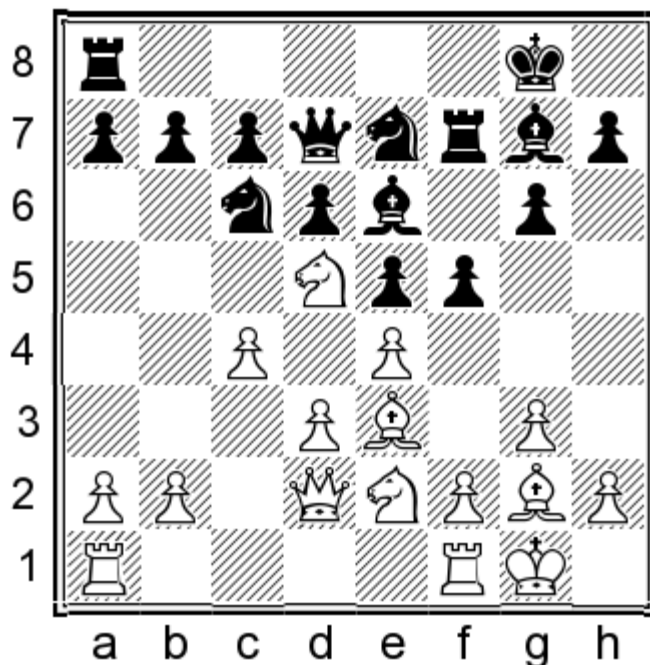
9.♘e3

Better is 9.0-0 a6 10.♘g5 h6 11.♘e3 g5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♖d2 ♗cd4 14.♘xd4 exd4 with a very complex game. Not as good is 9.f4 fxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘g4 11.♖d2 ♖d7 12.0-0 ♖ae8.

9...♘e6!?

Botvinnik points out that Benko, playing Black in this very position against Donald Byrne in the 1966/67 U.S. Championship, had played – instead of developing – the moves 9...h6 10.♖d2 ♗d7 11.0-0 ♜f7 and after 12.f4 had “conceded the initiative.”

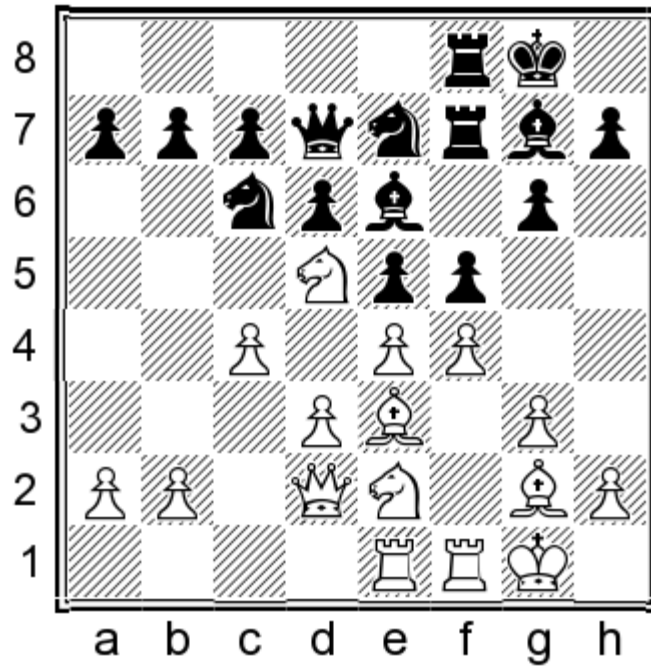
10.♖d2 ♗d7 11.0-0 ♜f7



12.♜ae1

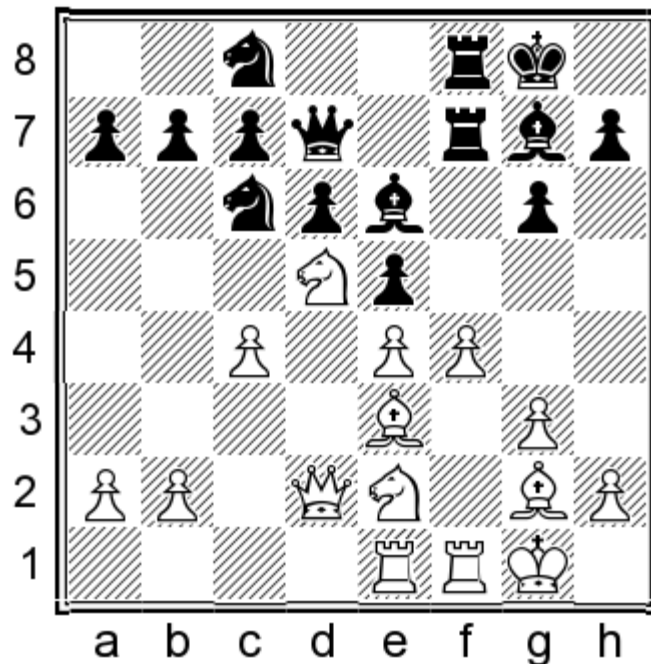
Botvinnik mentions that another plan is 12.♜ac1 ♜af8 13.f3 ♔h8 14.b3 ♘g8 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4, with an advantage in Csom – Gulko, Biel Interzonal 1976. Black does better with 15...♙xf5 16.f4 when now best is 16...♙h3, a move which is not possible after 15...gxf5. Thus, that old saying about retaking with the pawn being what every Russian schoolboy knows (to deny enemy piece access to e4; see the next chapter) has its limits as well.

12...♜af8 13.f4!



You need to take a close look at this position. It may look equal, yet Black is better here. His rooks being more actively placed on the f-file is an important plus. His rooks are putting considerable pressure on f4. Botvinnik himself explains: “First Black exchanges pawns on e4 (White is forced to recapture with the pawn, so as not to let the enemy knight in at f5), and then the light-squared bishops, in order to weaken the e4-pawn and the position of the white king, and finally he exchanges pawns on f4, opening the e-file for a frontal attack on the e4-pawn (White will be forced to recapture on f4 with the pawn, so as to control the e5 square). When the rook attacks the e4-pawn from e8, White will probably play ♞e2-g3 , after which the black h-pawn will advance, accentuating the weakness of the e4-pawn and the open position of the white king.”

13...fxe4 14.dxe4 ♖c8!



“By defending the c7-pawn with his rook, Black gains the opportunity to exchange the light-squared bishops.”

Very Lasker-like: he sees a skirmish victory and solves the problem of keeping an eye on c7 by realizing that his rook not only bears on the f-file, but also defends along the second rank.

Now there follows a very active decision for Benko. His pieces support play on the queenside and Botvinnik can't ignore it.

15.c5! ♖h3 16.b4

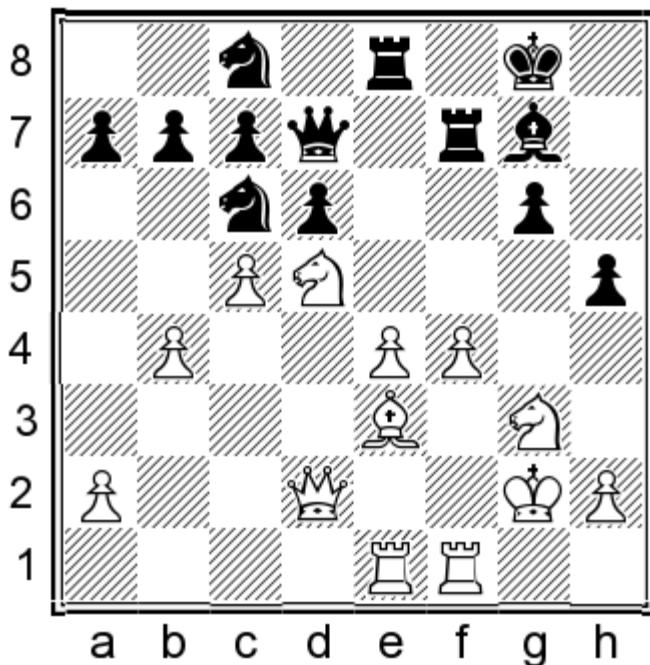
16.♙xh3 ♚xh3 17.♞f2 exf4 18.♘dxf4 was a try.

16...♙xg2 17.♜xg2 exf4 18.gxf4

Now White has the proverbial hanging pawns – no pawns to support them and nowhere to go in safety as the pressure builds on them.

18...♞e8 19.♘g3 h5

Botvinnik's plan in operation. White had to continue with his queenside action, but, instead of b4-b5, should have played cxd6 to take pressure off the hanging pawns.



20.b5

20.cxd6 ♘xd6 21.e5 ♘c4 22.♚d3 b5! 23.♙c5 seems more critical, but Botvinnik doesn't comment on this possibility. He sees two others: 20.h4, which leaves the h-pawn as a target, and 20.f5, which allows 20...h4 21.fxg6 ♞xf1 22.♞xf1 hxg3 23.♞f7 ♚g4 24.♞xg7+ ♜xg7 25.♙h6+ ♜xg6, winning.

20...♘6e7

20...♘d8 is suggested by Botvinnik, but 21.♙d4 c6 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.♙xg7 cxd5 24.♙c3 h4 25.♚d4 would have been tricky. He should have just stuck with his plan: 20...h4 21.bxc6 bxc6 22.♘c3 hxg3 23.hxg3 ♙xc3 24.♚xc3 ♞xe4.

21.f5!?

21. ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 22. cxd6 cxd6 23. ♖d3 is an alternative, but Botvinnik gives f4-f5 an exclamation!

21...h4! 22.fxg6?!

An attempt at complication, but Botvinnik is ready for that. 22.f6 ♗xd5 23. ♖xd5 ♖e5 24. ♖c4 ♗h8!! 25. ♗e2 ♖g4+.

22...♖xf1 23.♖xf1 hxg3 24.♖f7 ♗e5! 25.♗d4

25. ♗h6 gxh2.

25...♖g4 26.♖f4 ♖h5 27.♗xe5 ♖xh2+ 28.♔f3 ♖xd2 29.♗f6+ ♔g7 30.♗xe8+ ♔xg6 31.♖f6+ ♔h7 32.♗xg3 ♖d3+ 33.♔f2 ♖xb5 34.cxd6

What he should have done a long time ago.

34...♖xe8 0-1

If you choose the Botvinnik System, it will be worth realizing from these past few games that it is best to play it against an early ...♗f6 by Black. If Black holds off committing the knight to e7 or f6 you can go into a reversed Dragon system. If Black “stalls” like this: 1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗c6 3.♗g2 d6 4.♗c3 g6 5.d3 ♗g7, then you’re just in a Closed Sicilian reversed and have little to worry about after 6.♗f3. The English meets all our principles of opening selection.

13. The Nimzo-Indian and the Bogo-Indian

The Nimzo-Indian Defense is one of the most solid defenses to 1.d4. There is a lot of theory, but the really wonderful thing about the Nimzo is that you can play natural and thematic moves without memorizing much of those highly specialized lines that the big boys play.

The suggestion here is to go into a closed position with a capture on c3, playing ...d7-d6 after the initial ...e7-e6, and think about ...e6-e5 or perhaps even ...c7-c5. The ...e7-e5 push then has its own role to play. If White hits with a quick f2-f4, the black e5-pawn captures to allow a wonderful square for a knight on e5. Also, ...f7-f5, if properly prepared, also becomes a possibility. Although a small pawn front of e6 and d6 may at first look harmless, its support of the ...e6-e5 advance ensures a fight. It is solid yet retains winning chances and you don't have to memorize a lot of moves. The Queen's Indian also makes an appearance here, although actually it would be more accurate to say the Bogo-Indian. This was suggested years ago in the ICC lectures, and I was happy to see that Albur and company in *Chess Openings for Black, Explained* recommended the exact same combination of defenses. Let's look at some examples.

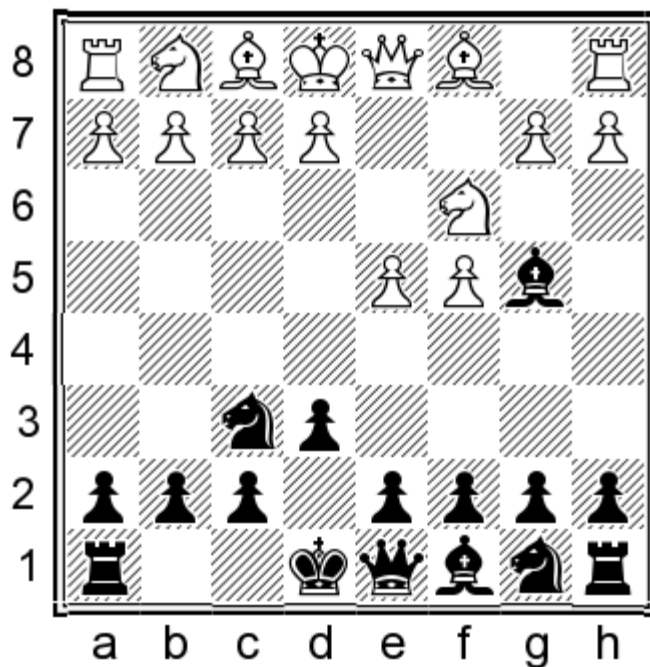
One of the most popular lectures I did was the series on the Nimzo, and the most popular game we went over was one won by the Dutch GM Jan Timman. The Timman game is an object lesson on how to play this style of defense. Let's see if you would like to play this way!

Model Game 42

Pinter – Timman

Las Palmas Interzonal 1982

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4

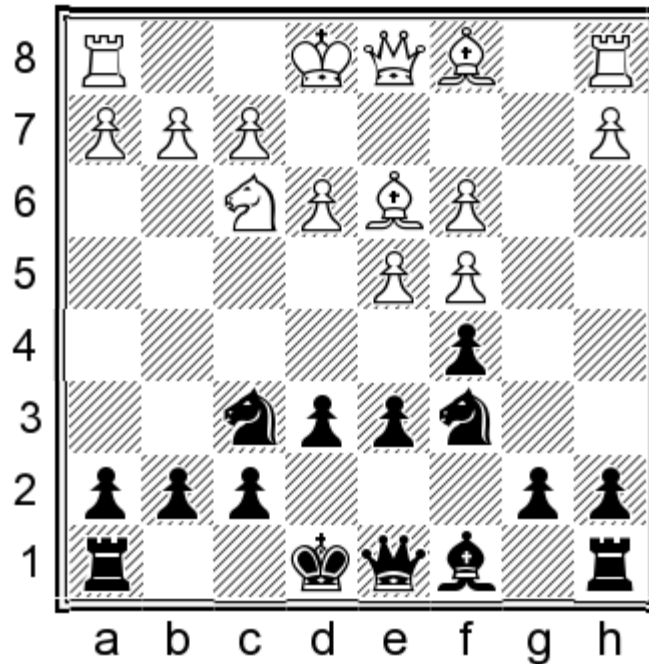


When White starts with 1.d4, the goal is to enforce e2-e4 at some point. Black here makes it clear that he is playing to prevent that.

4.♘f3 c5

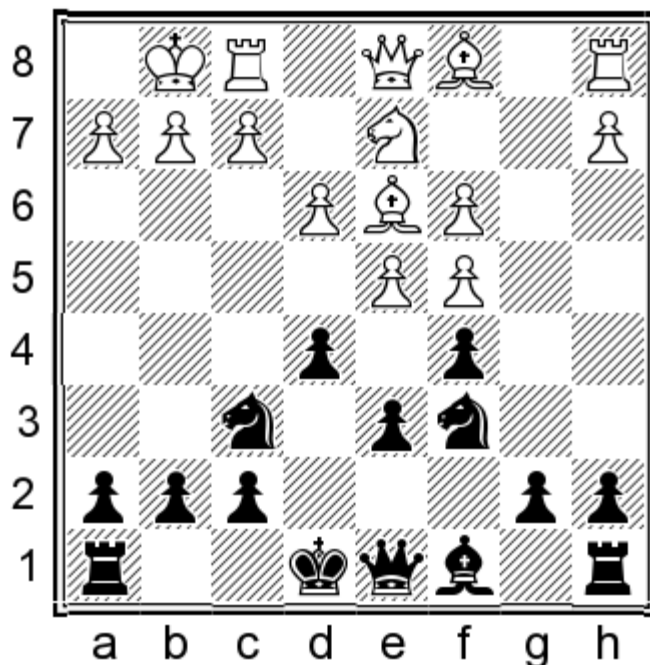
C.J.S. Purdy made an interesting comment back in the 1930s in his magazine. His general rule was that you played ...d7-d5 when White threatened to advance to e4. Otherwise, Black could get away with playing ...c7-c5 first. It's a very useful idea. If White plays 4.♖c2 or 4.f3 you can remember to play 4...d5. Yes, all sorts of other moves are playable, but now you can follow a theme when deciding what kind of pawn challenge in the center will follow. And there's more!

5.e3 ♘c6 6.♙d3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 d6



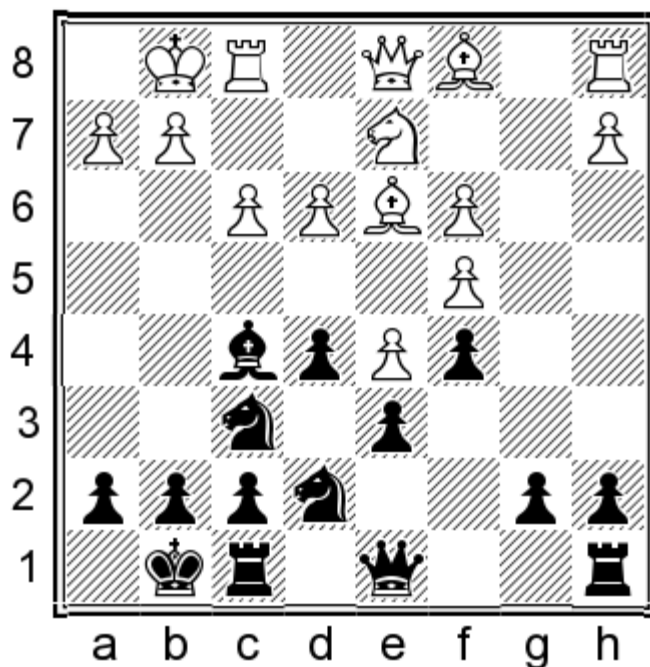
As you will see later, Black can go with ...d7-d5 lines, which are main lines, and wait for a2-a3 before exchanging on c3. However, here we are following the Hübner Variation. It's a very narrowly defined strategy, but easy to understand. The c4- and c3-pawns are doubled and weak if Black can get at them. If White plays d4-d5, they become even more vulnerable. Sometimes, Black even plays ...b7-b6, ...♘a5, and ...♙a6 to attack c4. The big idea of the Hübner, though, is to now get ...e6-e5 in to blockade the center because e3-e4 can no longer be prevented. Thus, you have two choices in all the Nimzo lines: preventing e3-e4 or preventing e4-e5 once e3-e4 has been played.

8.0-0 e5 9.♘d2



White plays a logical move. He wants to support e3-e4 and be ready to protect c4. He's not threatening f2-f4 because Black can either play ...♗g4 or exchange in the center as the second player has considerable pressure on d4; however, it's worth noting that winning a pawn right away has run into trouble in practical play: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 exd4 11.exd4 ♖xd4 12.♞e1+ ♗e6 (12...♗e6 13.♗e4 ♗xe4 14.♗e4 ♗c6 15.♗a3) 13.♗a3 0-0 14.♗b3 (Portisch – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1978), so Black continues his development with:

9...0-0 10.d5 ♗e7 11.f3 ♗f5!



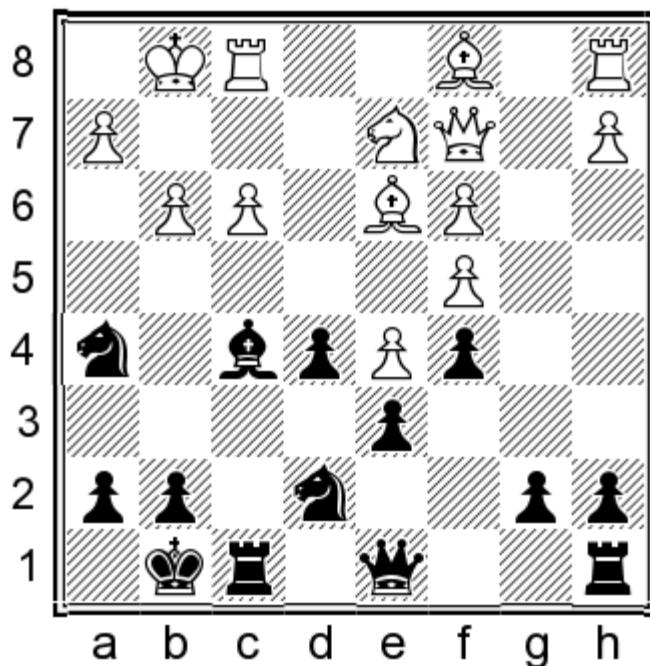
A great move! It challenges the white piece enjoying the greatest range and encourages White to play e3-e4, which is exactly what Black wants. Having to retreat to d7 is no big deal as this is a very methodical maneuvering game. Not only that, but the square f4 becomes significant for the knights, who are now flourishing in a closed position. Black will possibly have ...♗h5 and ...♗g6. For White to stop this with g2-g3,

as he does, allows Black active counterplay.

12.e4 ♘d7 13.♖c2 ♗h5 14.g3 f5 15.exf5

White could try 15.♞b1 to distract Black, but the latter is having all the fun after 15...f4 16.g4 ♗f6 17.♞xb7 h5 18.h3 ♗h7 19.♞f2 ♗c8 20.♞b1 ♞h4.

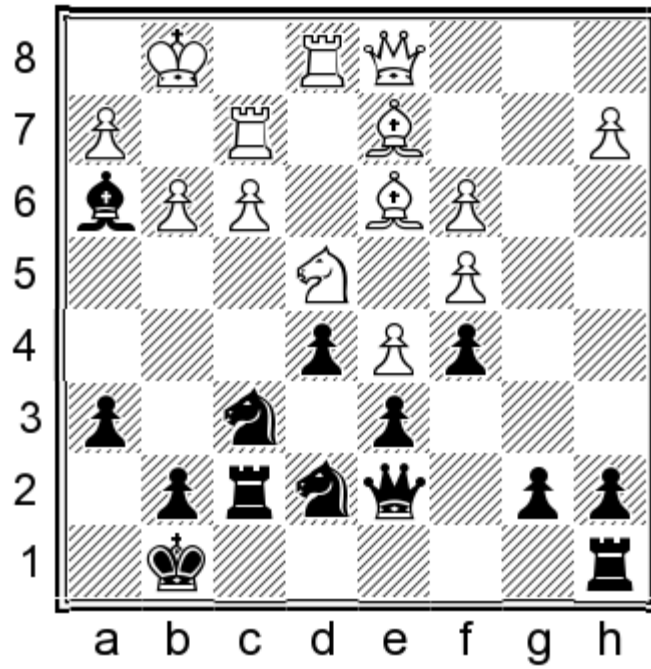
15...♙xf5



16.♗e4

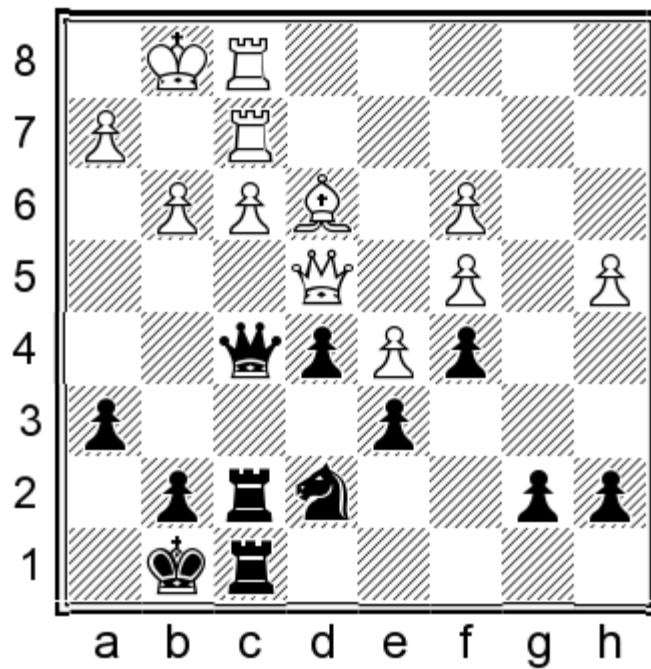
It would have been more of a fight with 16.♙xf5 ♗xf5 17.♗e4 ♞e8 (17...h6 18.g4 ♗h4 19.gxh5 ♗xf3+ 20.♔h1) 18.♗g5 (18.g4 ♞g6) 18...♞g6 19.♗e6 ♞f7. Don't worry so much about variations, since it's ideas that you're trying to remember. Now, Black prevents ♗g5 and then follows up his ...f7-f5 break with more kingside activity.

16...h6 17.♙d2 ♞d7 18.♞ae1 ♙h3 19.♞f2 ♞f7 20.♞d1 ♗f6!



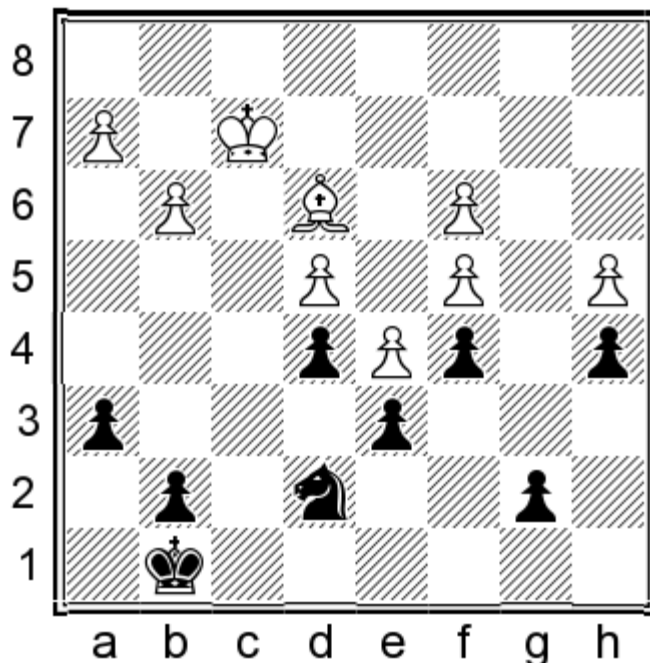
Can you see Black's plan here? To what end has he come to this point? His strategic plan was to lock the center, play ...f7-f5, open the file – and now what? Interestingly enough, it's that pawn over on a2 that's a matter of some interest. Black now wants to trade off pieces and head for an endgame where the pawn structure created in the opening is still relevant 20 moves and more later.

21. ♖e3 ♜xe4 22. ♖xe4 ♜f5 23. ♚c2 ♞af8 24. ♞ef1 ♜xe4 25. ♚xe4 ♞f5 26. a4



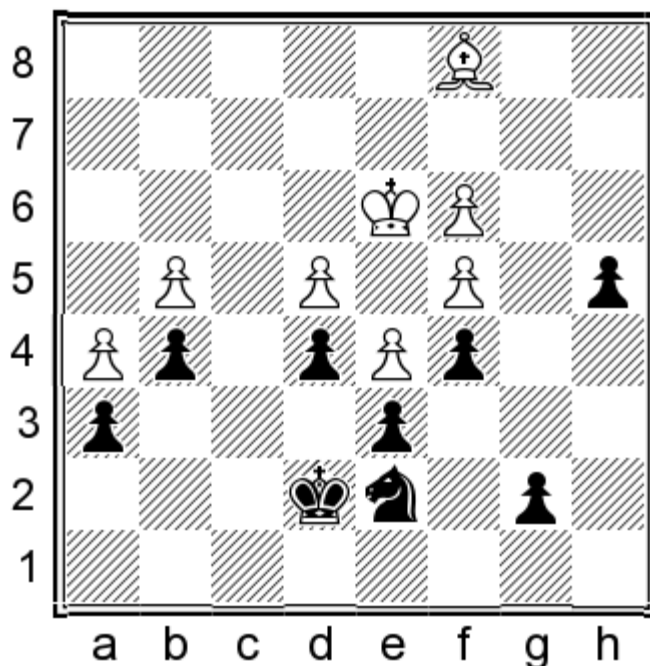
Although 26.a4 came in for criticism here for making it easier for Black to attack it, there is really very little White can do that will change the eventual course of the game: 26. ♞xf5 ♜xf5 27. ♜d2 g5 28. ♚g2 ♚g7, and Black's king goes to g6 with a long struggle for White; or 26. ♞b1 ♞xb1 27. ♞xb1 ♜c8 28. f4 e4 29. ♞fb2 ♜b6 and we're back to attacking the weak doubled pawn on c4! In any event, we have wholesale exchanges about to take place – all to Black's advantage.

26...♖xe4 27.fxe4 ♜xf2 28.♞xf2 ♜xf2 29.♔xf2 a5!



Fine endgame play! Black fixes the a4-pawn on a light square. White's bishop is less than useless because of this. The knight path of c8-b6xa4 is the clear threat in the position. White tries to deal with it utilizing his king, but to no avail.

30.♔e2 ♘c8 31.♔d3 ♘b6 32.h4 ♘xa4 33.♞c1 ♘b6 34.g4 ♔f7 35.♞d2 a4 36.♞c1 ♔f6 37.♞a3 g5 38.h5 ♔e7 39.♞c1 ♘d7!



As piquant a move as you could want to cast the decisive blow. The knight that has caused so much trouble on the queenside in this endgame now switches places with the king. The white king will be kept busy defending g4 and the black king will head over to a5 and make the decisive break with ...b7-b5.

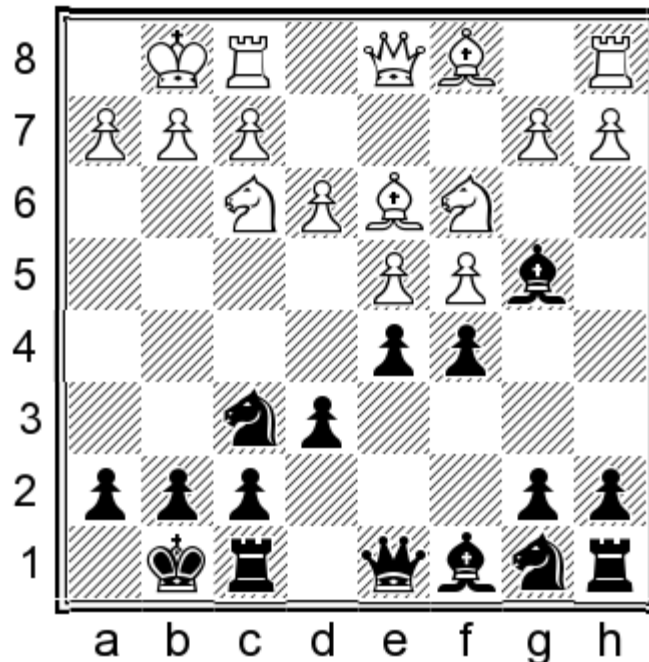
40.♔e2 ♖f6 41.♕f3 ♗d7 0-1

White sees it, too.

Is this a style you can be comfortable with? The strategic plan is relatively straightforward. It's very solid and yet offers opportunities to try for a win. It is played by the best players in the world: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 c5 5.♗f3 ♗c6 6.♗d3 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 d6 8.e4 e5 9.d5 ♗e7! 10.♗h4 h6! (10...♗g6 11.♗f5! – Gligorić) 11.f4 ♗g6! (Fischer's move in the 1972 World Championship) 12.♗xg6 fxe6 13.0-0 0-0 14.f5 b5! 15.cxb5 c4! 16.♗c2 gxf5 17.exf5 ♖b6+ 18.♗h1 ♖xb5 19.♗a4 ♖a6 20.♗c6 ♗b7 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 (Unzicker – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1981). A little different from our game, but the same in many ways.

If you would rather play a more open game, then you have to head for the ...d7-d5 Nimzos.

There is a sort of standard position or *tabiya* that is quite often reached:



There are, of course, variations on a theme:

Larsen's Interpretation: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 dxc4 9.♗xc4 (9.axb4 cxd4 10.♗xc4 dxc3 – Larsen) 9...♗a5 10.♖d3 a6 11.dxc5 ♖xd3 12.♗xd3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♗a5 14.♖b1 ♖d8 (Gligorić – Larsen, Sousse 1967). Now Larsen says that if White plays 15.♗c2, then the knight has a home on c4; if White plays 15.♗e2, the other knight has a home on e4; while if White plays 15.♖d1, then Black has the maneuver ...♗c8-d7-a4 along with ...♗d5-c3.

Smyslov's Interpretation: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♖e7 9.♖d3 (9.a3 ♗a5 10.♖c2 ♗d7 11.♗e4 cxd4 12.exd4 ♖c8) 9...♗bd7 10.a3 ♗a5 11.♗e4 ♗c7 12.b4 ♗xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗f6 14.♖h4 cxd4 15.exd4 ♗d5 16.♖e4 ♖d6 17.♖e1 ♗d7 18.b5 a6 19.bxa6 b5 20.♗d3 f5 (Knaak – Smyslov, Berlin 1979).

Parma's Interpretation: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗bd7 9.♖e2 (9.♖d3 a6) 9...b6 10.d5 ♗xc3! 11.dxe6 ♗e5! 12.exf7+ ♗h8 13.bxc3 ♗g4 14.e4 ♖e7 15.♖e1 b5! 16.♗xb5 ♗h5 (Gligorić – Parma, Yugoslav Chp. 1982).

It's entirely up to you. If we go back to thinking about our original criteria for picking an opening, the Hübner Variation fits the bill.

Having mentioned the Fischer game, let's take an "amateur" view of it. What can you take from it to

remember to play?

Model Game 43

Spassky – Fischer

World Championship (5)

Reykjavík 1972

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♝b4 4.♗f3 c5

Black is not in a hurry to play the more usual ...d7-d5 with ...c7-c5 positions. White can't take advantage of this omission with d4-d5 because of 5.d5 d6 6.g3 exd5 7.cxd5 0-0=.

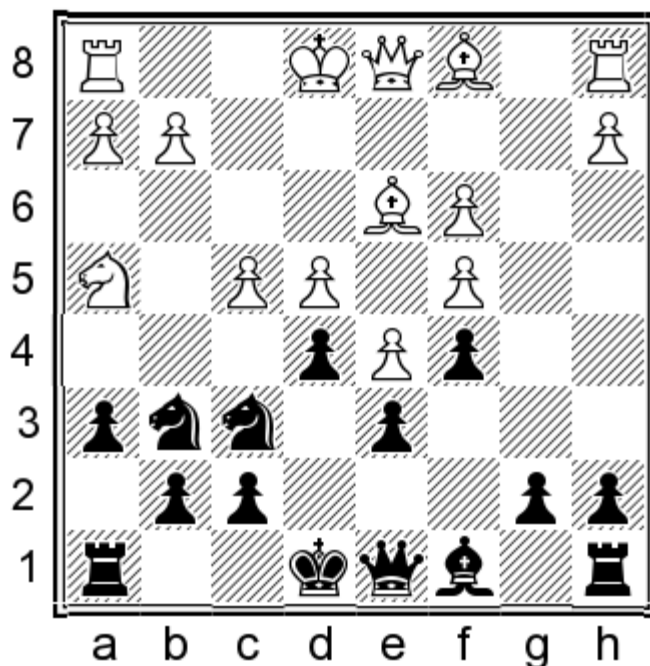
5.e3 ♗c6 6.♙d3

Again, let's look at the big worry of d4-d5: 6.d5 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♗e7 8.d6 ♗c6 9.♙d3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♖c2 ♙b7 12.h3 e5. This probably wasn't a line that either Fischer or Spassky envisioned, but the idea here is that the d6-pawn is not as effective as one might expect. The bishop has a diagonal and attacking c4 with ...♗a5 and ...♙a6 is possible. Black can preface his king knight move with ...h7-h6 in order to move the f-pawn and the d6-pawn might then come under pressure from ...♖f6 and ...♗f8. This may not come to pass, but you need to have some ideas ready to go if White doesn't come up with any! The idea here is to deal with your worst fears and see they're not so bad.

6...♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 d6 8.e4 e5 9.d5 ♗e7

Black is happy to have doubled the white pawns. They will always be potential targets, as we saw in the Timman game. Fischer wants to play ...♗g6 as we mentioned earlier, but he puts in an important preparatory move.

10.♗h4 h6 11.f4 ♗g6



Quite a radical idea when it seems that simply 11...exf4 gives that nice e5 square mentioned above.

12. ♖xg6 fxg6 13. fxe5 dxe5 14. ♕e3 b6

Fischer's thinking flies in the face of chess engines and contemporary thinking; however, let's balance the factors here. White has the two bishops, but one of them looks like a tall pawn. White has the open f-file, but so does Black. White can try to hit the b6-pawn with a2-a4-a5, but Black can defend it. Both sides need to castle. White has a supported passed d5-pawn, but it isn't going anywhere. Black has doubled g-pawns, but a ...g6-g5 advance can support a knight on f4 where it can always retreat to g6. It's an equal game.

15. 0-0 0-0 16. a4 a5

Truly an exasperating player! Who gives himself a backward pawn on a half-open file?

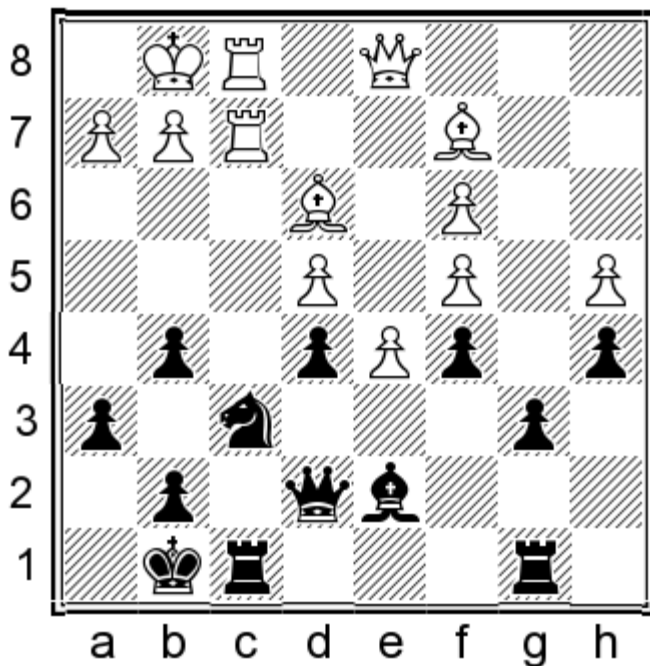
17. ♖b1 ♕d7 18. ♖b2 ♖b8

The b6-pawn is easily held after all. Spassky gives up and redeploys his rook for doubling on the f-file.

19. ♖bf2 ♕e7

Setting up for wholesale rook exchanges.

20. ♕c2 g5



Wonderful and alert! By moving to c2, the bishop has abandoned the idea of ♕e2 which in turn allows the knight path of ...♞f6-h5-f4. Knights are a force to be dealt with in closed Nimzo positions. Playing ...g6-g5 gives extra support to the upcoming knight move. Many of you will note that White has a protected passed d-pawn. Not to worry. As Nimzowitsch pointed out, a knight on d6 is very handy. Not only that, but if the d-pawn tries to advance, it will easily be either blockaded or captured.

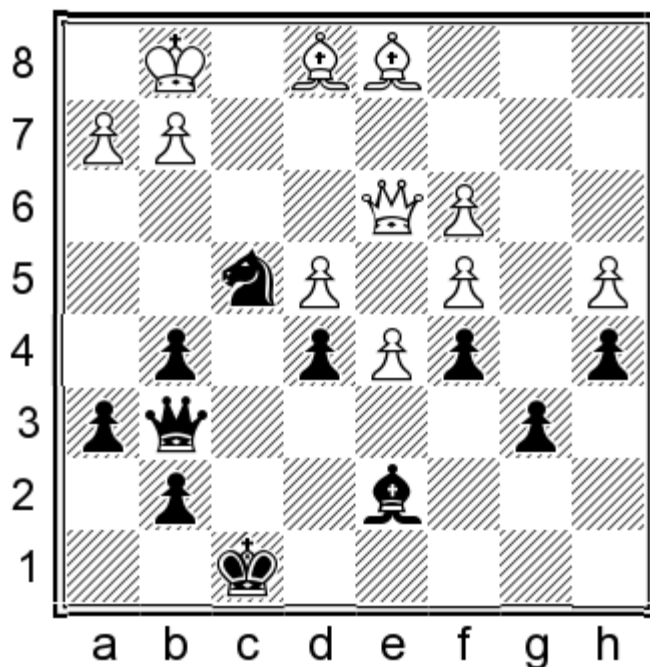
21. ♕d2 ♕e8 22. ♕e1 ♖g6

Worth noting. Black keeps improving his position as he prepares ...♞h5.

23. ♖d3 ♗h5 24. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25. ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 26. ♕d1

Bet he wished he'd had the bishop on that diagonal a bit earlier.

26... ♗f4



In an equal position, Spassky blunders. Let's look at the position for some useful ideas. Note the bishop on d7. It is useful on both sides of the board. The knight is well placed and the queen attacks e4 and supports a possible ...h6-h5. All of Black's pieces are coordinated to continue the pressure. White will have to take the knight with his bishop as g2-g3, chasing the horse, merely makes h3 available for Black. Black will recapture with the g-pawn and has another g-pawn ready to go! White's center is immobile, and that is one of the key points of the opening and a structural strategy you should remember.

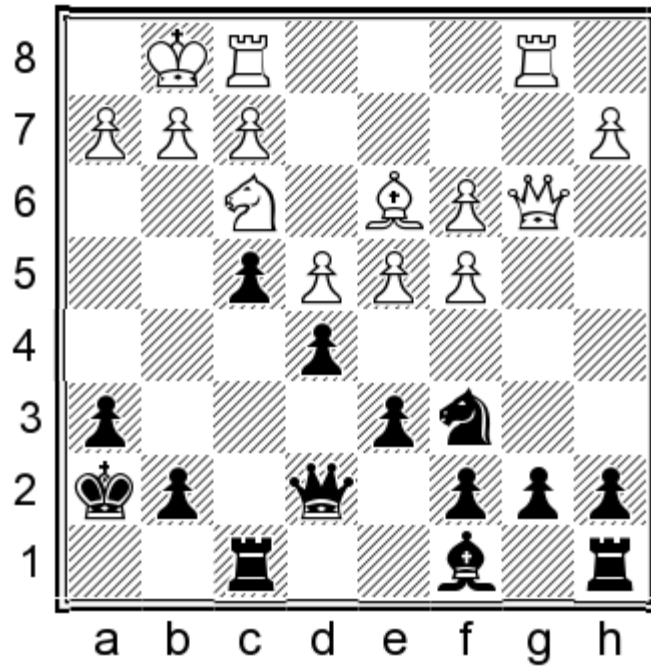
27. ♖c2 ♕xa4 0-1

Can Black play similarly against 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♕b4 4. ♖c2 or 4. ♕g5, should that come up? Let's quickly deal with 4. ♕g5:

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♕b4 4. ♕g5 h6 5. ♕xf6

5. ♕h4 c5 leads to complicated play you might want to study, but Black has done well in this line. Some aggressive lines even include g5 and b5.

5... ♕xc3+ (a *Zwischenzug* to create the pawn-structure problem before recapturing on f6) 6.bxc3 ♖xf6 7.e3 d6 8. ♕d3 e5 9. ♖b1 ♗c6 10. ♗f3 0-0 11. 0-0 ♖e7 12. ♖c2 f5 13.e4 f4 14. ♖b3 ♔h7:



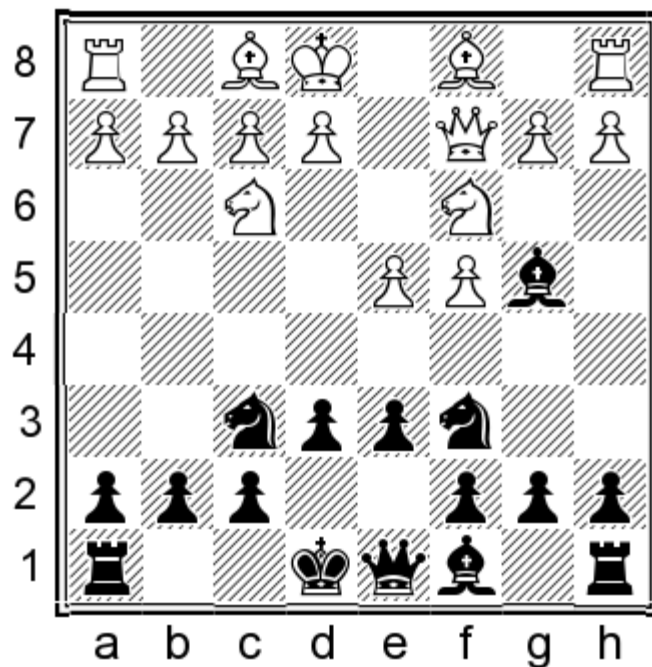
For all the huffin' and puffin' on White's part, Black is solid and his position will be more like the third little pig's house. The central white pawn mass is not really mobile, as none of the possible pawn moves is helpful..

How about the 4.♖c2 line? This is the favorite of many players of White, as it protects the knight and theoretically prevents the doubling of the pawns. It was Capablanca's favorite and has retained this popularity to this day.

In keeping with the e6/d6 initial pawn front idea, our next game is a little-known correspondence game played in 1943 between González and Perrine. Black is playing a move the British master P.S. Milner-Barry popularized in the 1930s:

Model Game 44

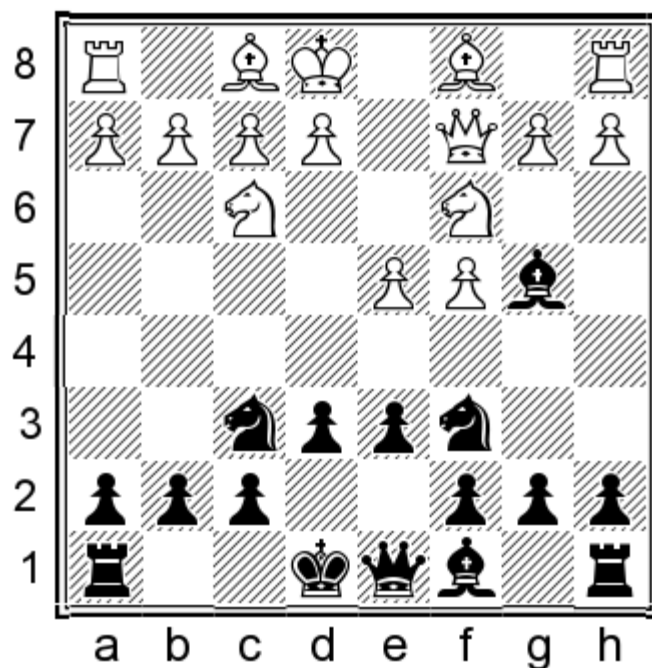
1.d4 ♠f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♞b4 4.♖c2 ♜c6



Development! No worry about d4-d5 here, either, as White would lose a pawn for no compensation. This works against 4. ♖b3 as well: 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♟b4 4.♗b3 ♟c6 5.♟f3 ♟xc3+ 6.♗xc3 ♟e4 7.♗a3 d6 8.g3 0-0 9.♟g2 a5 10.0-0 f5 and you have a Dutch-style position with equal chances.

5. ♟f3 d6

A critical juncture:



If 6.a3, then 6... ♟xc3 7.♗xc3 a5 and neither 8.b4 nor 8.e4 is good. The truly consistent and positional approach is 6.♟d2: White wishes to use his space advantage and force the black bishop to give itself up for no structural compensation.

Euwe – Alekhine, World Championship (22), Netherlands 1935, went: 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♟b4 4.♗c2

♠c6 5.♠f3 d6 6.♙d2 0-0 7.a3 ♘xc3 8.♙xc3 ♚e7 9.e3 e5 10.d5

10.dxe5 dxe5

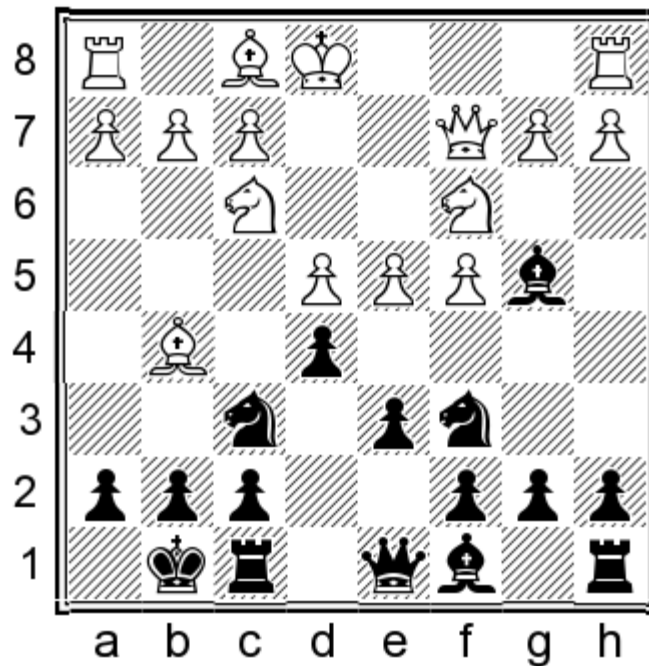
10...♠b8 11.♙d3 ♠bd7 12.♠g5 g6

12...h6 13.♠e4 ♠xe4 14.♙xe4 ♠c5 15.♙h7+ ♚h8 16.b4 f5 17.bxc5 ♚xh7

13.♠e4 ♠xe4 14.♙xe4 ♠c5 15.0-0 ♠xe4 16.♚xe4 ♙f5 17.♚f3 ♚h4 18.♚e2 1/2-1/2. No problems for Black.

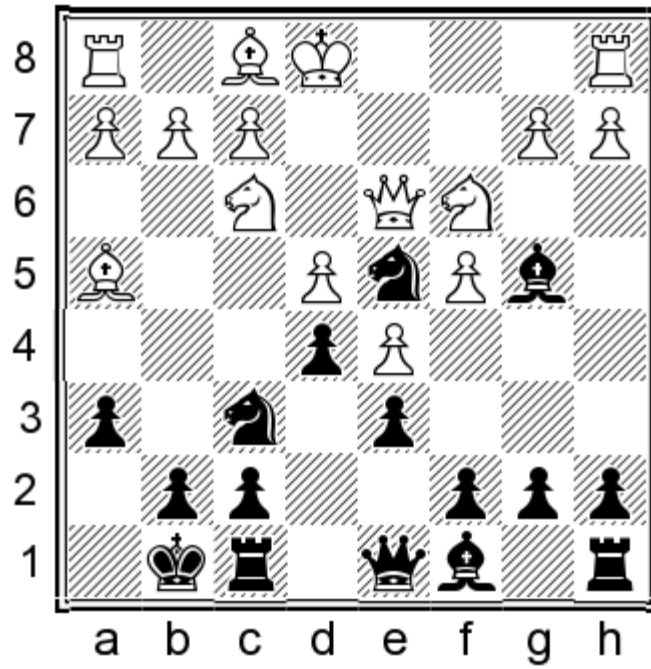
One maneuver that always concerns players is the pinning of the king knight. It can be very annoying. The game we are following deals with this and it's a good teaching example because it addresses that "...h7-h6 with ...g7-g5" question from the Primer. It also shows how the d6/e6 complex can be the basis for an attacking game.

6.♙g5 0-0 7.e4 e5



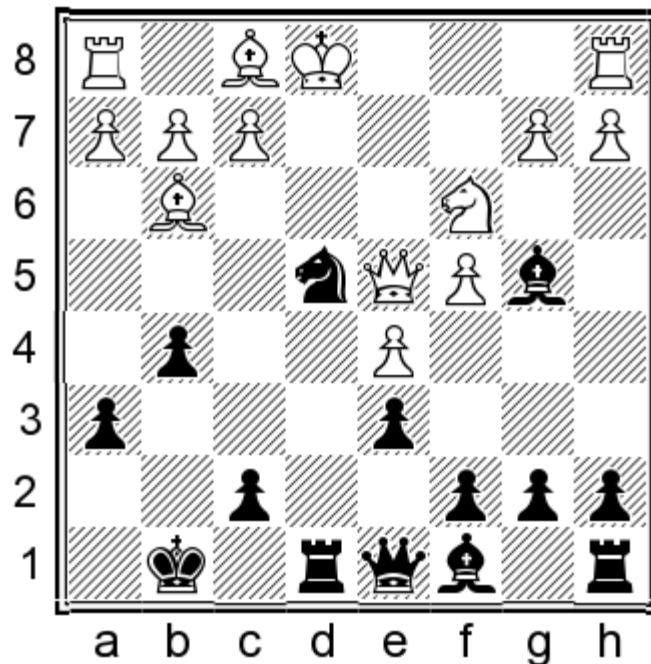
And here we are again! This becomes a troublesome position for White despite the “imposing” center. If he goes with the original plan for ♚c2, then 8.a3 ♘xc3+ 9.♚xc3 exd4 10.♠xd4 ♠xe4 11.♙xd8 ♠xc3 12.bxc3 ♚xd8 is a disaster for White. Or 8.0-0-0 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 with a vulnerable castled position; while if 8.dxe5 dxe5, Black’s access to d4 will be a concern. White chooses a tempting but flawed move.

8.d5 ♠d4 9.♚d3 h6 10.♙h4



This is no mere poke at the bishop. Both Black and White have major decisions to make here. If White retreats to d2, then we get 10.♔d2 ♖xf3+ 11.♚xf3 ♙g4 12.♚d3 ♖h5 13.h3 ♔d7 14.♚f3 ♖f4 15.g3 ♖g6 16.♙g2 f5, and you can see the ...f7-f5 and ...♖f6-h5-f4 attacking themes mentioned earlier. Taking the knight is the lesser of two evils, but even a simple plan works for Black: 10.♙xf6 ♚xf6 11.♙e2 ♖xe2 (11...♙d7 is more patient and objectively better as there is no need to give up the strongly posted knight quite yet) 12.♚xe2 ♙xc3, with ...♚g6 and ...f7-f5 to follow. By retreating to h4, White hopes that his opponent won't have the guts to play ...g7-g5, but Black demonstrates that is not the case! Can you see why this is one of those ...g7-g5 moments that work as we discussed in the Primer?

10...g5 11.♙g3 ♖xe4!! 12.♖xd4 exd4 13.♚xd4 ♙e8



Although White has gotten rid of the pesky d4-knight, another has taken its place, and Black's ...♙e8 forces

White to castle as 14.♔e2 ♖xc3 15.bxc3 ♚e7 16.0-0 ♘c5 is embarrassing. Then the destruction of the castled-position pawn structure will take place.

After White's next move, it will get a bit breezy on the queenside. Can you see the winning method? Evaluate your attacking plan. After the coming exchanges on c3, the dark-squared bishop will cover b2 and c1. The light-squared bishop, once out on f5, will cover d3, c2, and b1. The queen and queen rook need to get out. Moving the c-pawn will give the queen access to the queenside, and at some point ...b7-b5 will make the rook a presence on the b-file. As the king rook holds sway over the e-file, White's king cannot escape to the kingside.

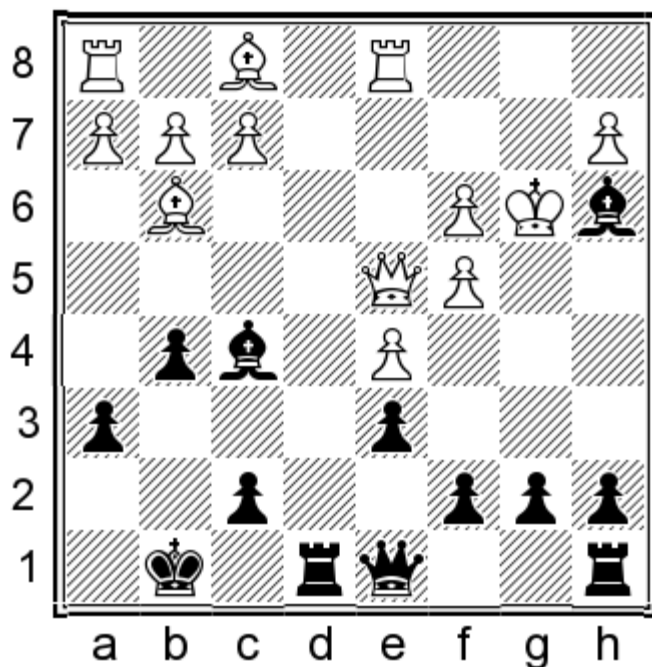
Now all you have to do is to time these ideas precisely. Try looking ahead to the bishop check on a3 and finding the winning approach to each of White's possible replies.

14.0-0-0 ♖xc3 15.bxc3 ♘a3+ 16.♔c2

Did you figure out the alternatives? 16.♕b1 ♙f5+ 17.♔a1 (17.♙d3 ♘c5) 17...♘c2; 16.♔d2 ♙f5.

16...♙f5+ 17.♔b3

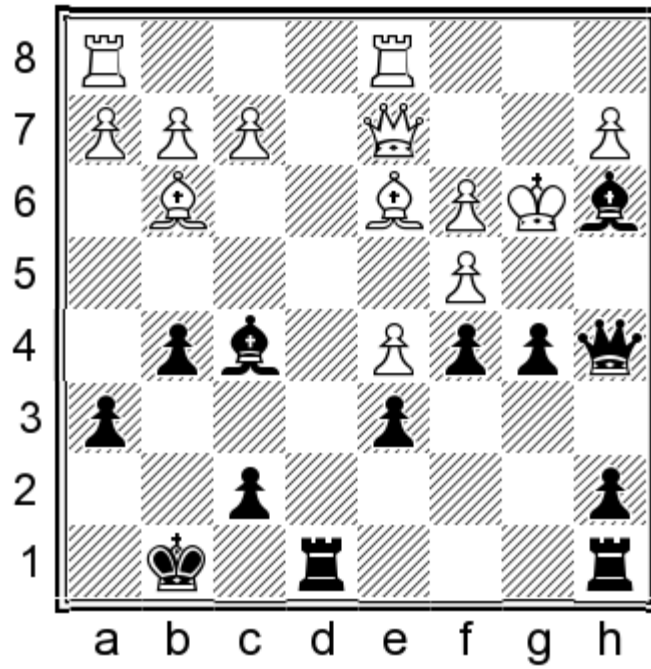
White attacks the bishop. A good many players would take the obvious route and play 17...♘c5 followed by 18...c6, which would be a good plan. In good positions there are often several good plans, just as in bad positions there are lots of bad moves. Black finds a dandy plan!



17...c5 18.♚d2

18.dxc6 ♘c5 19.♚d5 ♚b6+ 20.♔a4 ♘c2#.

18...♚a5 19.♙d3 ♖b5!



The big ouch! There's more to it here than just opening the b-file. Try and work it out to the end.

20.cxb5 ♖xd3 21.♗xd3 c4+ 22.♗xc4 ♜ac8 23.♗d3 ♞e4 24.♔c2 ♞ec4 0-1

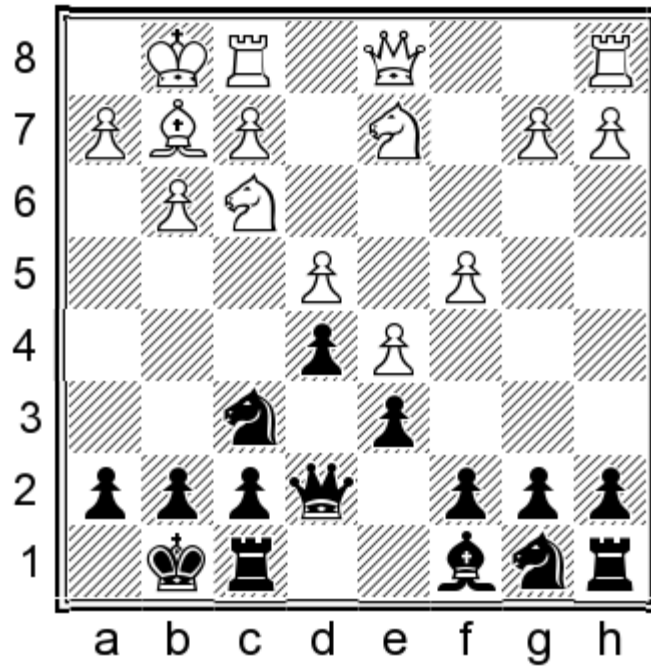
The d6/e6 Nimzo-Indian can be a very serviceable, tough, and active defense. You can learn regular lines and do quite well with them too. Either way, it is a thematic opening that does not require as much familiarity with reams of opening theory as other defenses.

If White refuses to cooperate and plays 3.♘f3 rather than 3.♘c3, then your best bet, to stay within this kind of structure, is to play the Bogó-Indian with 3...♙b4+.

The standard trunk line runs **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+ 4.♙d2 ♗e7 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♙g2 ♙xd2+ 7.♘bxd2**

7.♗xd2 ♘e4 [Black can go wrong with 7...0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.♘c3 e5 10.d5 ♘b8 11.♘h4 ♘a6 12.e4 g6 – to prevent ♘f5 – 13.♞ab1 ♘c5 14.b4 ♘cd7 and a pawn advance by White supported by rooks at b1 and c1 could be troublesome] **8.♗c2 ♗b4+ 9.♘c3 ♘xc3 10.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 b6 12.0-0 ♙b7** with equality. You don't even have to castle.

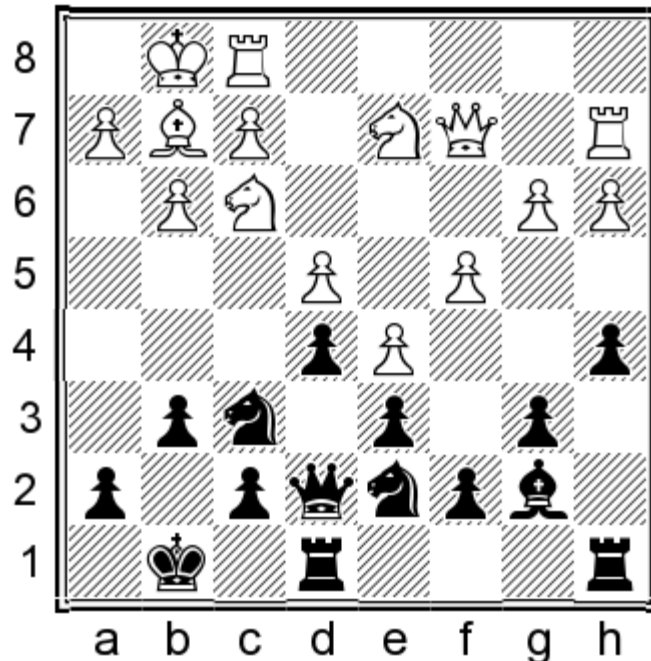
7...0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.e4 e5 10.d5 ♘b8:



This should look familiar, but there is a difference – no doubled pawns. White will want to get b2-b4 and c4-c5 in, but Black has ...a7-a5 to counter that. You will feel very confident playing over the next two games. The first game is a top-flight correspondence game from 1932 between Hans Müller and Erich Eliskases.

Model Game 45

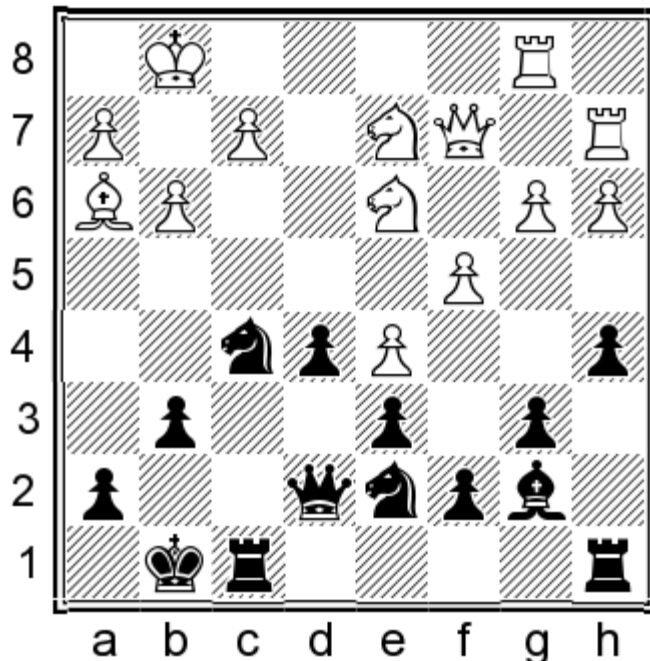
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+ 4.♙d2 ♚e7 5.g3 0-0 6.♙g2 ♙xd2+ 7.♘bxd2 d6 8.0-0 e5 9.e4 ♘bd7 10.♚c2 ♞e8 11.d5 a5 12.b3 b6 13.a3 ♙b7 14.♞a2 g6



You are familiar now with the basic ideas. This position brings up an interesting question: why did Black just play 14...g6? The answer is – to be active! Black has a plan. He will play his knight to h5 and g7 and his rook

back to f8 in order to play ...f7-f5. Why did he play the rook to e8 just to go back to f8? 10...♖e8 “encouraged” White to close the center with d4-d5 rather than deal with pressure on e4 after ...exd4. Now that the center is closed and maneuvering is the name of the game, ...♖e8-f8 is logical. A similar point is made in the Ruy López chapter with the Alexander–Pachman game.

15.♖b1 ♗h5 16.♘e1 ♗g7 17.♙h3 ♖f8 18.♘d3 f5 19.exf5 ♗xf5

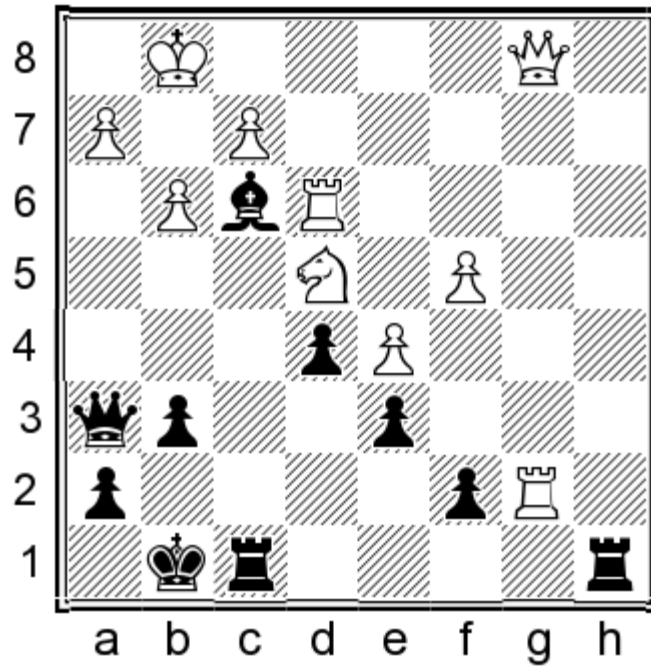


“Every Russian schoolboy knows you take with the pawn on f5 so as not to give White the square e4.” A magazine article 50 years ago on the Modern Defense once wrote something pretty close to this. One would hope that every Russian schoolboy would know that it depends on the position! The promising leap to d4 offsets a white knight on e4.

20.♖e1 ♕g7 21.♙g2 ♗c5 22.♘xc5 bxc5 23.♖b2 ♗d4 24.♗b1 ♙c8 25.b4 axb4 26.axb4 cxb4 27.♖xb4 ♙g4

27...♗h6

28.♖b7 ♗h6 29.♘e4 ♗f3+ 30.♙xf3 ♙xf3 31.♖e3



White has his attack on the queenside. Black has massed on the kingside and now has the threat of ...♔h3 at some point, but White is prepared and even sets a trap, so Black satisfies himself by sacrificing his rook on f2.

31...♙xe4

31...♚h3 32.♖xf3 ♜xf3 33.♘g5

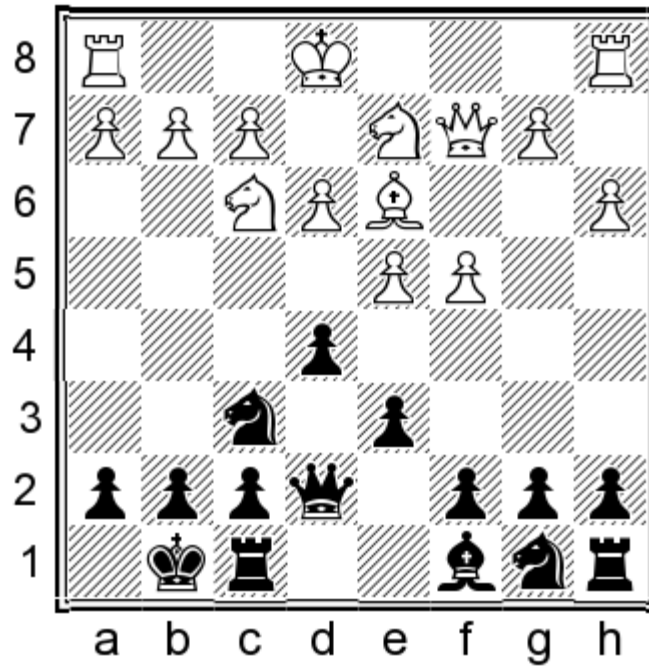
32.♚xe4 ♜xf2 33.♙xf2 ♚xh2+ 34.♙f1 ♜a1+ 35.♞e1 ♜a2 36.♞b8+ ♙g7 37.♚f3 ♚h3+ 38.♙g1 ♚h2+ 1/2-1/2

The attack along the f-file and the centralization of the knight are worth taking away as lessons from this game.

Here is one last game, from the team tournament in Hamburg 1930, between Abramavicius (Lithuania) and Ribera (Spain). You might be wondering why I use old games quite frequently. The point is that if the principles are sound, then the opening system doesn't stand or fall on the latest TN. Not only that, but I go where the games are instructive!

Model Game 46

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♙b4+ 4.♙d2 ♚e7 5.a3 ♙xd2+ 6.♘bxd2 d6 7.♚c2 0-0 8.e3 e5 9.♙d3



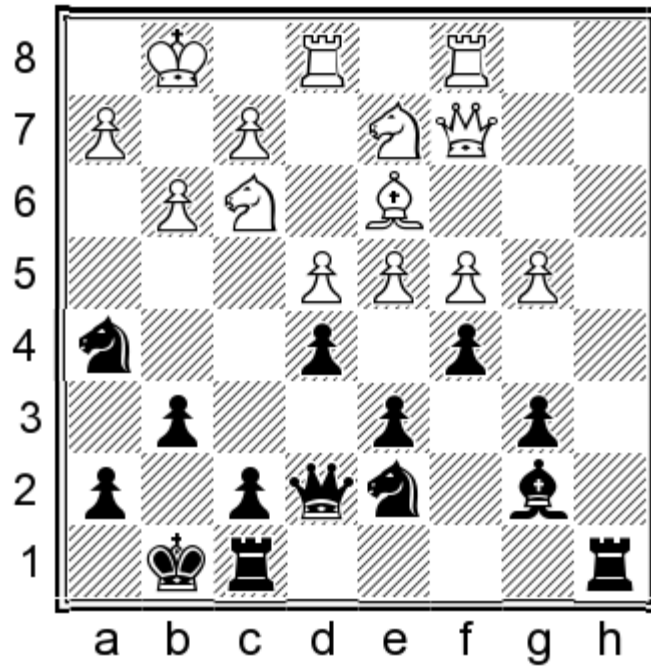
This is one of those important “choice” diagrams. No big combination here, but nonetheless a big decision. Black goes with 9...b6. It’s OK, but two other considerations should enter your decision-making process here: 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♖c6 11.0-0 ♜e8 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.b4 ♙d7; and 9...♙g4 10.0-0-0 ♖c6 11.d5 ♘b8 12.h3 ♙d7 13.♞dg1 ♗a6 14.g4 ♖c5 15.g5 ♖xd3+ 16.♚xd3 ♗h5. In the former line, you are setting up a solid position. In the latter line, you get to successfully defend against an attack.

The move Black chose had a shaky possibility in store, but happily White was not up to the task and gave us a chance to see a nicely developed attack.

9...b6 10.0-0 ♙b7 11.e4 ♘bd7 12.♞fe1 ♗h5 13.g3 g6 14.b4 a5 15.♞ac1

A better possibility for White was 15.c5 bxc5 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.dxe5 ♖xe5 18.♗xe5 ♚xe5 19.♞ab1 ♙c6 20.♙b5 ♙e8 21.♙xe8 ♞fxe8 22.♞b5 ♚d6 23.♗b3 ♗g7 24.♗xc5 ♗f5 25.♚c3 ♗d4 26.♞bb1 ♞ab8 27.♗b7 ♚c6 28.♚xd4 ♞xb7 29.♞bc1 ♚d6, but Black’s still in it.

15...axb4 16.axb4 c5

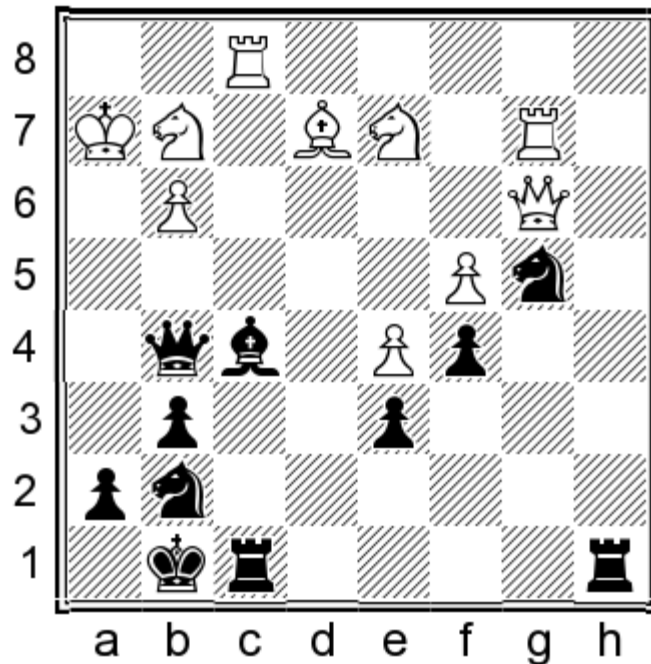


A delightful way of stopping wide pawn fronts. The center gets closed, and White can then proceed with the wing attack.

17.bxc5 bxc5 18.d5 ♖b8 19.♞b1 ♘a6 20.♞b2 ♘b4 21.♞b3 ♙c8 22.♙e2 f5 23.♘h4 ♘g7 24.f4 exf4 25.exf5 fxg3 26.hxg3 ♙xf5 27.♘g2 ♞g5 28.♚h2 ♞f6

28...♘h5 was better, but the book I have, *Cien Partidas de Ajedrez*, by Dr. Rey Ardid, mentions that Black already had to watch his clock.

29.♞f1 ♞g5



Black's strategy has succeeded. Even the "fianchettoed" knight gets into the act; however, how does that other black knight at b4 participate? Can you see a way?

30. ♖f4 ♗h5 31. ♙xh5 ♚xh5+ 32. ♜h4 ♞g5 33. ♜e4 ♙xe4 34. ♞xe4 ♞h5+ 35. ♜h4 ♞e5 36. ♞d2 ♞a1 37. ♞d1 ♞a2 38. ♞g1 ♞ff2 39. ♞d1 ♞b2 40. ♞e4 ♞xg2+ 41. ♜h3 ♞h2+ 42. ♜g4 ♞f6 0-1

It's a mate. You should work it out.

There is one other item of some interest. In the Primer, we promoted the idea of Grünfeld setups against the Colle System. If you have an opponent who goes with the Colle, you can always respond with the All-Purpose Defense, but, as we saw in the Primer, it was a tough road to equality. We leave you with the following game to play through, and what better two opponents: Colle playing his system vs. Capablanca! The clarity of Capa's play makes the Colle System look like all flash and no substance.

Colle – Capablanca, Karlsbad 1929: **1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 b6 3.e3 ♙b7 4. ♗bd2 e6 5. ♙d3 c5 6. 0-0**

6.c3 ♙e7 7. ♞e2 ♗d5 [to be able to meet e3-e4 with ...♗f4] **8.dxc5 bxc5 9. ♗f1 ♞c7 10. ♗g3 ♗c6 11. ♙d2 g5** was Ahues – Alekhine, San Remo 1930; **11...0-0.**

6...♗c6 (another way of preventing e3-e4 by White) **7.c3 ♙e7**

7...♞c7 is also good.

8.e4 cxd4 9. ♗xd4

9.cxd4 ♗b4 10. ♙b1 ♙a6 11. ♞e1 ♞c8 12.a3 ♗d3

9...0-0 10. ♞e2 ♗e5 11. ♙c2 ♞c8 (threatening ...♙a6) **12.f4 ♙a6 13. ♞d1 ♗c6**

13...♙xf1 14.fxe5

14. ♖f3 g6 15. ♗2b3 ♗xd4 16. ♗xd4 ♙b7 17. ♞e2 ♙c5 18. ♞h3 ♞c6 19.e5 ♗d5 20. ♞f2 ♙xd4 21.cxd4 ♞ac8 22. ♙d1 f6 23. ♞h4 ♖f7 24. ♙f3 ♞c4 25. ♙e3 ♗xe3 26. ♙xb7 ♗f5 27. ♞e1 ♞c7 28. ♙e4 ♞xd4+ 29. ♜h1 fxe5 30. ♙xf5 exf5 31.fxe5 ♞e7 32. ♞e3 ♞xb2 33.e6 dxe6 34. ♞xe6 ♜f7 0-1

There is another aspect to meeting the Colle System when you start out with the intention of playing the Nimzo. Here's the beginning of the game Colle – Flohr, Bled 1931:

1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 e6 3.e3 c5 4. ♙d3 b6 5. ♗bd2 ♗c6 6.c3 ♙e7 7. 0-0 ♙b7 8.e4 cxd4 9. ♗xd4

9.cxd4? ♗b4 10. ♙b1 ♙a6

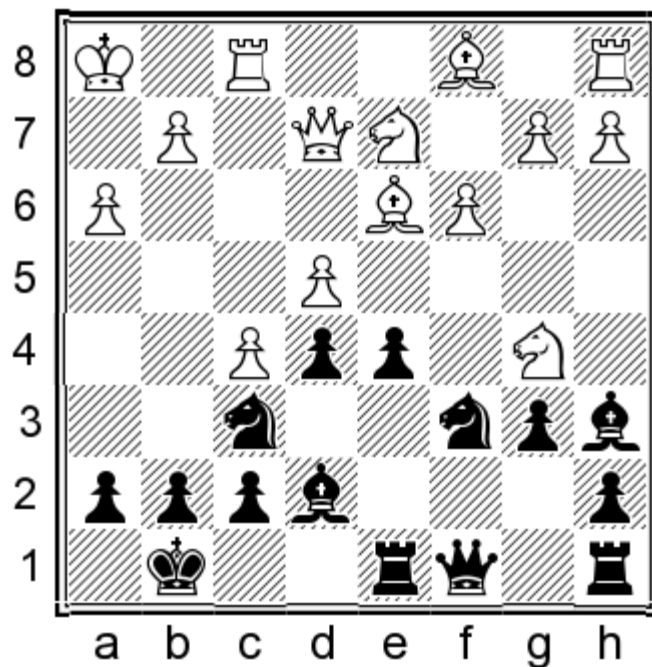
9...0-0 10. ♞e2 ♗e5 11. ♙c2 ♞c8!! (What a magnificent move! The queen gives the d8 square to the rook to support an eventual ...d7-d5 and also allows for the ...♙a6 move and the queen check on c5. You can't ask much more from a single move!) **12.h3 d6 13. ♜h1**

♗ot right away: **13.f4 ♙a6 14. ♗b5 ♞c5+.**

13...♞d8 14.f4 ♙a6 15. ♗b5 ♗c6 16. ♙d3

not **16.e5 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♙xb5 18. ♞xb5 ♞d5** – Kmoch in the tournament book.

16...e5 17.f5 d5, and this diagram should give you an “Aha!” moment:



We're in a Colle System, right? Remember those two Sicilians, comparing the Dragon and Scheveningen, with the advances to e5 and d5? Isn't this remarkably similar? That's why it helps to remember ideas from all sorts of openings – you never can tell when you might find one coming in handy.

This whole system is quite viable and fits the requirements we mentioned in our opening remarks on what to play against the Sicilian. If you like this, start investigating it. These model games are to give you a starting point with ideas. The rest is up to you.

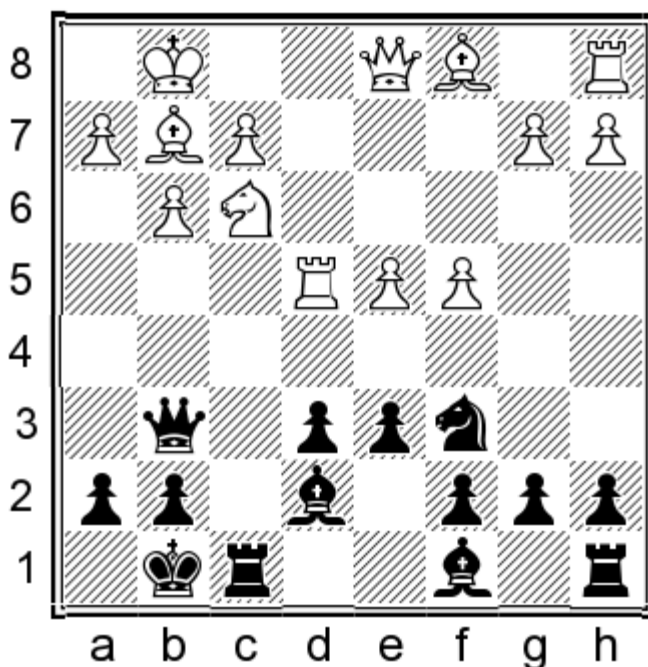
14. Considering the Dutch Defense

In the first section of this book, we pointed out that the Dutch Defense was a playable choice to deal with the booked-up, formulaic opening types who go for a setup with 1.d4 2.♘f3 3.♙f4, etc.. The Dutch is also not frequently seen because of defenses like the Nimzo-Indian, the Grünfeld, the King's Indian, and the Semi-Slav. Most amateurs with the white pieces lack the precise positional skills or the sense of timing necessary to play against it, so it's an equal game in more ways than just theory.

The Dutch is an uncompromising defense, but it does have very understandable themes, whether you pick the classical line with the e6/d6 pawn center or the Stonewall with pawns on e6 and d5. Both are tough customers, as we shall see. You will need to study both lines because sometimes White will vary in a way that allows you to make the decision a little later.

Years ago, when I first looked at the Dutch, the following was a line often offered to discourage players of Black who were looking for an aggressive, attacking approach:

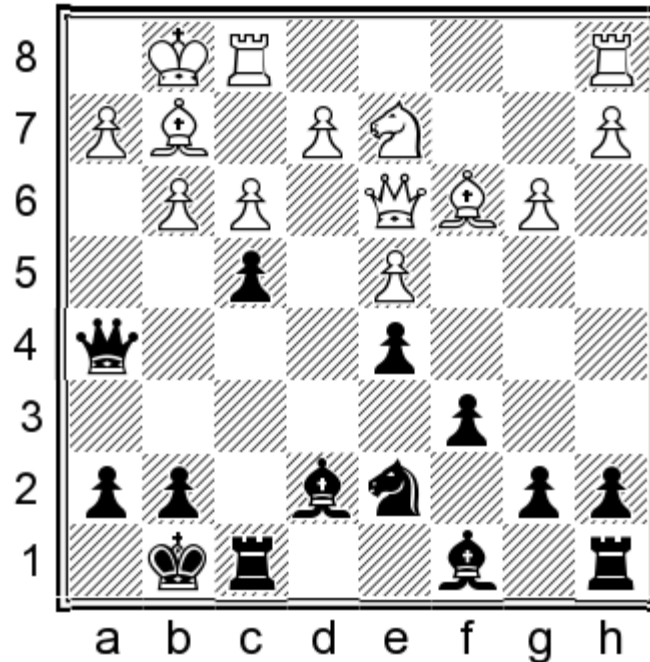
1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.♘f3 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.♘c3 ♚e8 8.♞e1 ♛g6 9.e4 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♜xe4 11.♞xe4 ♘c6



White's pressure along the e-file and on the square e5 did not inspire players of Black. Black can't play 11...♛xe4 due to 12.♘h4!. In the classic game between Euwe and Bronstein from Zürich 1953, Bronstein played 11...e5, which he noted would be best met by 12.♞e1. Euwe, however, chose 12.♛e2, and Bronstein eventually drew in a feisty struggle.

At that time Botvinnik was making good use of the Stonewall Defense. In his book (which we all studied back then!), Botvinnik presented the game Flohr – Botvinnik, Match (10) 1933, which opened with **1.d4 e6** (Botvinnik didn't like defending against the Staunton Gambit! More about that in a bit. He played the French Defense, so he didn't mind 2.e4 d5.) **2.c4 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7** (Botvinnik matter-of-factly explains that he skipped the bishop check to avoid simplification. Then he made an astonishing comment: "When this game was played it was considered that this variation ceded White unquestioned superiority, but the system

contains quite a lot of poison, and against an opponent who has not thorough knowledge of the game, it can be applied confidently.” He’s talking about his opponent, Salo Flohr, who in the late 1930s was considered a leading candidate for a world championship match!) **5.♘c3 d5 6.♗f3** (At this point, Botvinnik made an instructive comment. He pointed out that 5...0-0 would have been more accurate before 5...d5 in order to see whether White placed his knight at h3 or f3. ♗h3 would signal Black to play ...d7-d6 [to be able to have ...e6-e5 ready to meet ♗f4, which you could not play with the Stonewall’s ...d7-d5 move. ♗f3 would “allow” ...d7-d5. This concept still has validity today.) **6...c6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 ♖e8 9.♙b2 ♗bd7 10.♚d3 ♜h5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗d2 ♗e4 13.f3 ♗xc3 14.♙xc3 f4:**



This type of game got Botvinnik a lot of fans and Dutch Stonewall followers. Today, as we’ll see, Black puts his bishop on d6 rather than e7.

A common reason players of Black, including Botvinnik (!), avoid playing 1...f5 is the Staunton Gambit (2.e4) and similar wild lines including 2.h3, 2.g4, 2.♗c3, and the particularly annoying 2.♙g5 (see the Primer).

If you are uncomfortable playing against these lines, then you might consider just playing the Dutch against the English with 1.c4, or 1.♗f3. Even with those you might run into the occasional **1.c4 f5 2.e4** player, but after **2...fxe4 3.d3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e5 5.dxe4 ♙b4**, you’re OK.

There’s also **1.♗f3 f5 2.e4**, which has an undeserved popularity. This is my favorite (though perhaps not the best) line in that gambit: **2...fxe4 3.♗g5 ♗f6 4.d3 ♗c6 5.dxe4**

5.♗c3 d5 6.dxe4 d4 7.♙c4 [7.♗d5 ♗xd5 8.♙c4 e6 9.exd5 exd5 10.♜h5+ /10.♙d3 ♙b4+ 11.♔f1 g6 12.♗xh7 ♜d6 13.♜e2+ ♗e7 14.a3 ♙xa3 15.bxa3 ♜xh7 16.♙g5 ♙f5 17.♞e1 ♔d7 18.h4 ♞f8] 10...g6 11.♜f3 ♜e7+] 7...♗e5

5...d5.

Some quickie fixes:

2.h3 d5 3.g4 fxg4 4.♙g2 ♗f6 5.hxg4 ♙xg4.

2.♗c3 d5 (and then ...♗f6, ...e7-e6, and even ...c7-c6 with ...♙d6 and ...0-0). One line goes like this: **(1.d4 f5 2.♗c3 d5) 3.e4 dxe4 (not 3...fxe4 4.♜h5+) 4.f3 ♗f6 5.♙g5 ♗c6 6.d5 ♗b4 7.♙c4 c6 8.a3 cxd5 9.♙xf6 exf6**

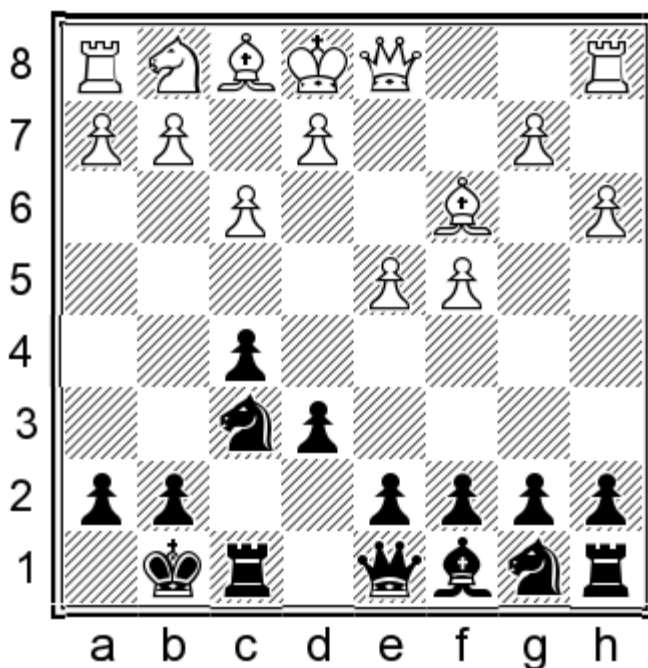
10. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 11. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 12. ♗xd5 e3. Another line out there is 1.d4 f5 2. ♖c3 d5 3. ♗f4 e6 4. ♗b5 ♗d6 5. ♖xd6+ cxd6 6. ♖f3 ♗c6 7.e3 ♗f6 8. ♗e2 0-0, when your best plan might be 9.0-0 ♖e7 10.c4 e5. Here's one possibility: 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.cxd5 exf4 13.dxc6 fxe3 14. ♖b3+ ♖h8 15. ♖xe3 ♖xe3 16.fxe3 bxc6 17. ♖d4 g6 18. ♖xc6 ♖e8 19. ♗f3 ♖xe3 20. ♖f2 ♖e8 21.b4 ♗e4+ 22. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 23. ♖fe1 ♖c4 24.b5 a6 25.a4 ♖c2+ 26. ♖g3 axb5 27.axb5 ♖xa1 28. ♖xa1 ♗b7=. The whole line is tough. You need to work on it.

2.g4 fxg4 3.h3 (3.e4 d5) 3...d5 4.hxg4 ♗xg4 5. ♖d3 ♗f6 (playable but uncomfortable is 5...♗c6 6. ♖xh7 ♖xh7 7. ♖xh7 ♗f6 8. ♖g6+ ♖d7 9.f3 ♗h5 10. ♖d3 e6) 6. ♗h3 ♗xh3 7. ♗xh3 ♗c6 8. ♗f4 ♖d7 9. ♖c3 0-0-0. Castling queenside is often useful in these wild lines.

2.c4 e6 3. ♖c3 ♗f6 4.f3 d5 5. ♗g5 ♗e7 6.e3 0-0 7. ♗d3 c5.

2. ♖d3 e6 3. ♖c3 ♗f6, or you can try 3...d5 4. ♗f4 ♗f6 5. ♗f3 ♗d6 6.e3 ♗e4 7. ♗e2 0-0 8. ♗xd6 cxd6. I prefer the latter.

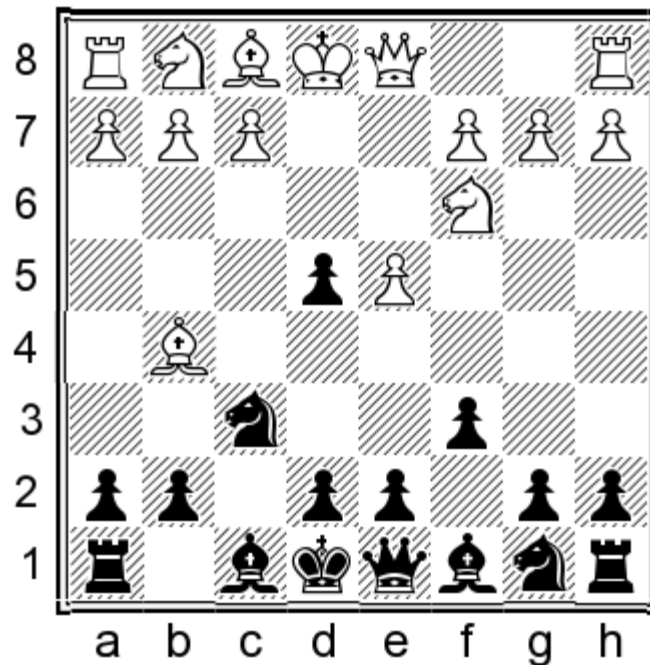
Another brief note. I recently played a game that went 1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♗f6 3. ♖c3 e6 4.f3 ♗b4 5. ♗d2 0-0 6.a3 ♗xc3 7. ♗xc3:



I did not know that this was a recommended line in a specialty book. I found out after the game that the only replies for Black given here were 7...b6 and 7...d6. Neither of those made sense to me. My thought process was that I had an obligation to make White's e2-e4 as hard as possible and that I didn't want to allow a well-timed d4-d5, increasing the scope of the c3-bishop. So, I played 7...d5. My opponent wasn't prepared for that as he was just playing someone else's moves. You have to take ownership of the moves you play by understanding the other possibilities and essentially what the demands of the position are. He went with 8.e3 (not exactly that dynamic push to e4 he wanted) and I played 8...b6 with the option of ...♗b7 or ...♗a6, depending on what he did. Use common sense.

The fearsome and ominous Staunton Gambit is overrated if you know how to play against it. The most popular line is 1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3. ♖c3!, as 3.e4 e5! works well for Black. Its popularity goes back to a famous Marshall–Chigorin game:

1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 c6!



5.♙xf6

Just about every annotator gives 5.f3!, but it's a bit more complicated than the exclamation mark may suggest: 5.f3 d5 (5...♖a5 6.♗d2) 6.fxe4 (6.♗e2 b5 7.a3 ♖a5) 6...dxe4 7.♗ge2 (7.♙xf6 exf6 8.♗xe4 ♖d5 9.♗e2 ♙b4+ 10.c3 ♗d8 11.0-0-0 [11.cxb4 ♖e8] 11...♖e8; 7.♗e2 ♖xd4 8.♖d1 [8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 9.♗xe4 ♙f5] 8...♖b4 9.♗d2 ♗bd7 10.♗ge2 ♖xb2 11.♗g3 e5 12.♗gxe4 ♗xe4 13.♗xe4 ♙b4 14.c3 ♖xd2+ 15.♖xd2 ♙e7) 7...♗a6 (there are still areas to investigate for improvements: 7...♖b6 8.♗d2 ♖xb2 [8...♙e6 9.♗g3 ♗a6 10.0-0-0 0-0-0 11.a3] 9.♖b1 ♖a3 10.♗g3 e6 11.♖b3 ♖a5 12.♗gxe4 ♙e7 13.♙d3 ♗xe4 14.♗xe4 ♖xd2+ 15.♙xd2 0-0; 7...♖a5 8.♗d2 ♗bd7 9.♗g3 e5 10.dxe5 e3 11.♙xe3 ♗xe5 12.0-0-0 ♙b4 13.♙d4 0-0 14.a3 ♙d6 15.♖e1 ♙c7 16.♗ce4 ♖xe1 17.♖xe1; 7...♙g4 8.♗d2 e6 9.h3 ♙f5 10.g4 ♙g6 11.♗f4 ♙f7 12.♙c4 ♙b4 13.♙xf6 ♖xf6 14.0-0; 7...♙f5 8.♗g3 e6 9.♙c4 ♗bd7 [9...♙e7 10.0-0] 10.♗cxe4 ♖a5+ 11.♙d2) 8.♗g3 ♖a5 9.♙xf6 exf6 10.♗gxe4 ♙e6 11.♙xa6 ♖xa6 12.♖h5+ ♙f7 13.♖g4 ♖a5 (13...h5 14.♖f5 ♙b4 15.0-0-0 ♖a5 16.♗d6+ ♗f8 17.♖d7 ♙xa2 18.d5) 14.0-0 (14.0-0-0 f5) 14...h5 and Black has equal chances.

5...exf6 6.♗xe4 ♖b6!?

More solid may be 6...d5, but 6...♖b6 causes more problems. Black is playing to win.

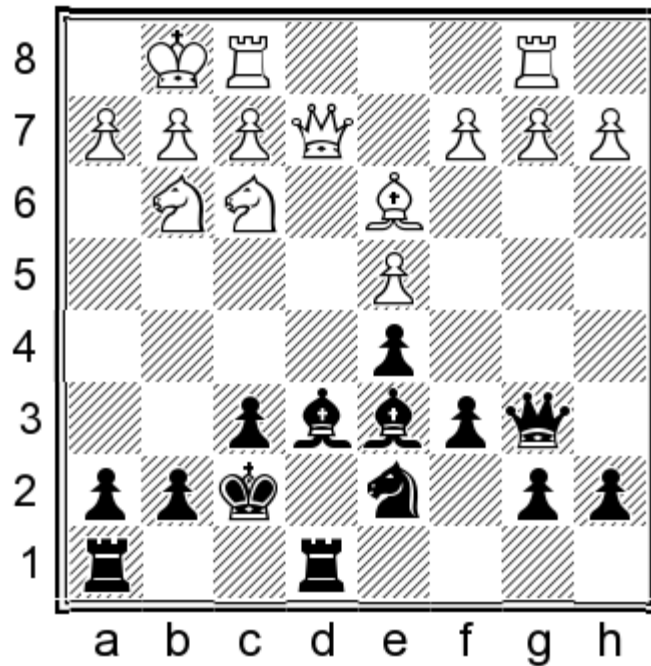
7.♖b1 d5

Also good is 7...♖a5+.

8.♗g3 ♙e6

Also good is 8...♙d6.

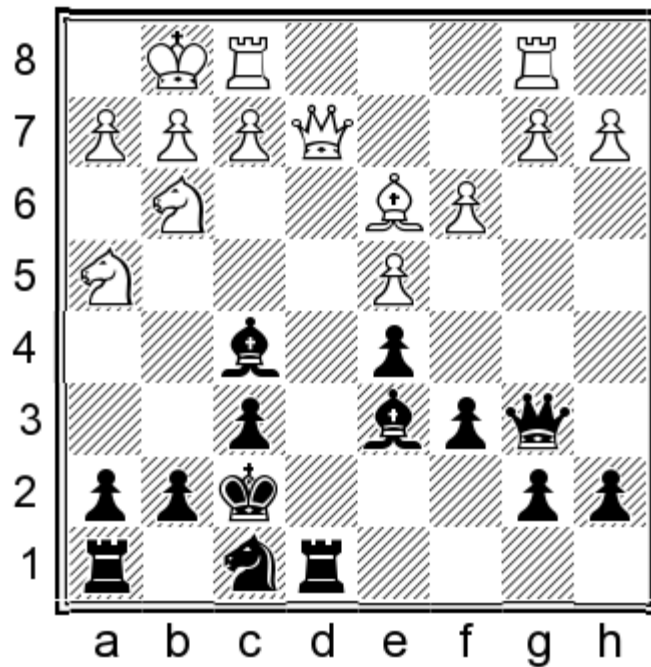
9.♙d3 ♗d7 10.♖e2 ♗f7 11.♗f3 ♖e8 12.0-0 ♙d6



Chigorin, who has been playing quite naturally, seems averse to playing the “weakening” 12...g6 here or later; either time would be good.

13.c3 ♖f8 **14.♗h4** ♙f5??

And, despite Marshall’s upcoming brilliance, there are two moves that would have saved the game: 14...♙c7; 14...g6. Instead, the Russian GM overestimates the discovered attack on the white queen.



15.♗hxf5 ♜xe2 **16.♗xd6+** ♗e6 **17.♗c8!!** ♙c7 **18.♙xe2** ♗f7 **19.♗f5!** ♗e6 **20.♗fd6+** ♗g6 **21.♙d3+** ♗h5 **22.♜be1** ♗f4 **23.♞e7** ♙a5 **24.♙b1** g6 **25.g3** ♗h3+ **26.♗g2** ♗g5 **27.♙d3** ♜xc8 **28.♗xc8** ♙d8 **29.h4** ♙xc8 **30.hxg5** 1-0

Heck of a finish. Try setting up the board after move 14 and visualizing all the next moves. This was a very impressive display by Marshall. Unfortunately, the blunder by Chigorin didn't help the line, although others played it in subsequent years with a similar lack of success. You really have to know this line inside out as White does have an aggressive position.

There are various ways to get mixed up with e2-e4 moves by White. One I see a lot of is 1.d4 f5 2.♘c3. It has a variety of ideas: e2-e4, ♕g5, ♕f4, f2-f3... all sorts of goodies. There is much in the way of transposition, especially into Staunton Gambit-type lines. Grischuk played a weird line against Nakamura with 2.♘c3 (noted below), but got nowhere in the opening. Anyhow, here's our first step:

1.d4 f5 2.♘c3 ♗f6

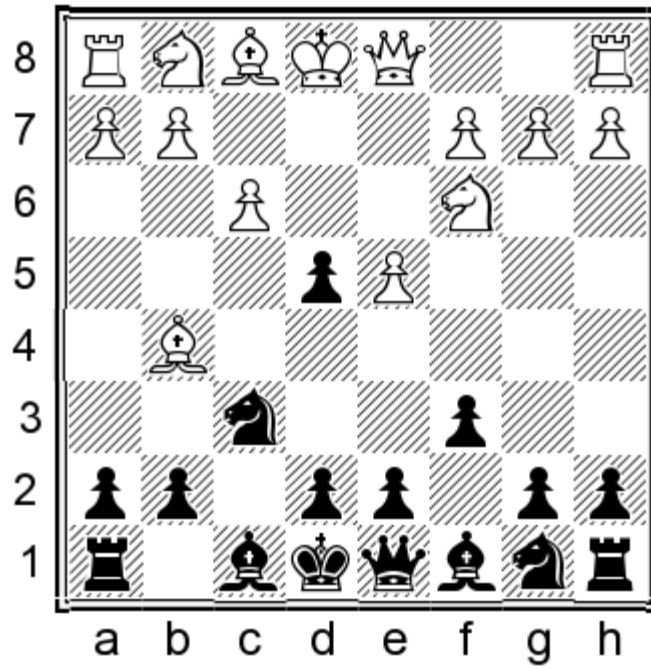
Quite principled also is 2...d5 3.e4 (Grischuk tried this against Nakamura at the 2011 Amber Tournament: 3.♕f4 ♗f6 4.♗b5 ♗a6 5.c4 c6 6.♗c3 dxc4) 3...dxe4 (3...fxe4 4.♖h5+) 4.♕b5+ (probably better than the immediate 4.♕c4 ♗c6 5.♗ge2 [5.♕f4 ♗xd4 /5...♖xd4 6.♖xd4 ♗xd4 7.0-0-0 c5 8.♗ge2 ♗e6 9.♕e3 ♗f6 10.♗b5 a6 11.♗f4 axb5 (11...♗xf4 12.♗c7#) 12.♗xe6 ♕xe6 13.♕xe6 g6 14.♕xc5 ♖a6 15.♕b3 e5] 6.♗d5 ♗e6 7.♗xc7+ ♗xc7 8.♕f7+] 5...♗f6 6.0-0 e5 7.dxe5 ♖xd1 8.♖xd1 ♗xe5 9.♕b3 ♕d6) 4...♕d7 5.♕c4 ♗f6 6.♗h3 ♗c6 7.♗g5 e6 8.♕xe6 ♕xe6 9.♗xe6 ♖d7 10.d5 ♗d8 11.♗xf8 ♖xf8 12.♕g5 ♗f7 (12...h6 13.♕xf6 ♖xf6 14.0-0 ♖d6 15.f3 ♖b6+ 16.♗h1 e3 17.♖d3 f4 18.♗e4 ♖g6 19.g3 ♗f7 20.gxf4 0-0-0 21.♖ae1 ♖xb2 [21...c6 22.c4 cxd5 23.cxd5] 22.♖xe3 ♖xa2 23.♖d1 ♖a5 24.♗g5 ♖f6 25.♗e6) 13.♕xf6 gxf6 14.f3 (14.♖d4 ♗e5 15.0-0-0 b6) 14...0-0-0 15.fxe4 fxe4 16.♖d4 ♗b8 (16...b6 17.0-0 f5 18.a4 ♗d6 19.a5 ♖g8 20.axb6 cxb6 21.♗e2 ♗b5 22.♖e5 ♖xd5 23.♖xf5 ♖xe5 24.♖xe5 ♖d2 25.♗g3 ♗d4 26.♖xe4) 17.♗xe4 ♖g4 18.h3 ♖h4+ (18...♖xg2 19.0-0-0) 19.g3 ♖h5 20.g4 (20.♗xf6 ♖f3) 20...♖xd5.

3.e4

3.♕g5 d5 (I'm not a big fan of 3...e6 4.e4 fxe4 5.♗xe4 ♕e7, which transposes into normal Staunton lines that are very comfortable for White) 4.♗f3 (4.♕xf6 exf6) 4...♗c6 5.e3 e6 6.♗e5 ♕d6 7.f4 0-0 8.♕b5 ♕d7 9.0-0 ♖e8.

3...fxe4 4.♕g5 c6 5.♕xf6

Also given great theoretical support over the years is 5.f3:



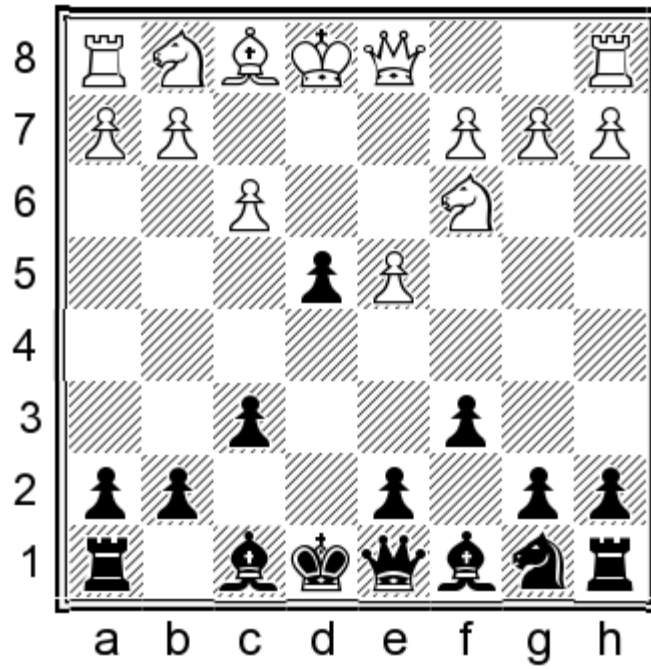
analysis

However, Black can play actively. Here's one idea variation: 5...d5 6.fxe4 dxe4 7.♘ge2 ♖a6 8.♘g3 ♚a5 9.♚d2 ♜b4 10.♞c1 (10.♙xf6? e3! – nice to know!; 10.♙c4? ♜xc2+ 11.♚xc2 ♚xg5; 10.♙e2 ♜xc2+; 10.h4 h6 11.♙e3 ♜g4) 10...h6 11.♙e3 (11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.a3 e3 13.♚xe3 ♜d5) 11...♜bd5 12.♜cxe4 ♚xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♜xe4 14.♜xe4 g6 (14...♙f5 15.♙d3 e6) 15.♙d3 ♙g7 16.c3 0-0 17.♜f2 e5 18.dxe5 ♜h7 19.0-0 ♙xe5 20.♞ce1 ♙g7 21.g4 ♙d7 22.h4 ♞ad8 23.h5 ♜f4 24.hxg6+ ♜xg6 25.♞e7 ♙c8 26.♞c7 ♞d7 27.♞xd7 ♙xd7 28.♙e3 a6. It's quite sharp, but it's no picnic for White, either. Look for improvements.

5...exf6

At this point, there are two popular ways to go, 6.f3 and 6.♘e4:

A. 6.f3



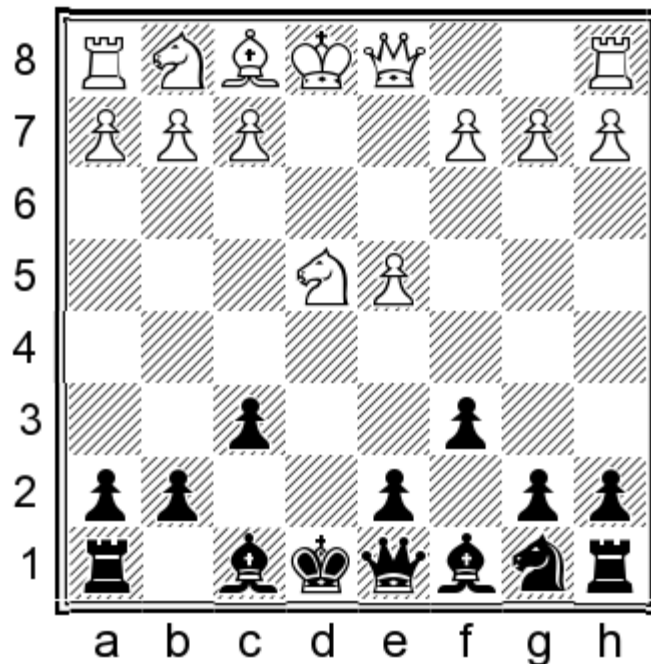
6...d5 7.fxe4 ♗b4! 8.exd5

8.e5 0-0 9.exf6 ♜xf6; 8.♗d3 dxe4 9.♗xe4 0-0

8...0-0 9.dxc6 ♜e8+

and you're in the game.

B. 6.♗xe4



If you're in a "solid citizen" mood, you can play 6...d5 and 7...♗d6. If you feel more frisky, à la Chigorin, then 6...♜b6 will be your ticket to excitement. It's up to you.

6...d5 7.♘g3

Or 7.♘c3 ♘d6 8.♖h5+ g6 9.♖h6 ♖e7+ 10.♙e2 ♙e6 11.0-0-0 ♖c7 (with a nasty threat of ...♙f4+) 12.♙b1 ♘d7 13.♙d3 0-0-0 and the queenside-castling idea comes in handy.

7...♖b6

Perhaps more solid is 7...♙d6 8.♖h5+ g6 9.♖h6 ♖e7+ 10.♙d2 ♙e6 11.♙d3 ♖g8 12.♘1e2 ♘d7 13.♖ae1 0-0-0.

8.♙d3

8.♖e2+ ♙f7 9.0-0-0 ♙d6 10.♖h5+ g6 11.♖h6 ♙f8 12.♖h4 h5; 8.♖b1 ♙d6 (8...♖a5+ 9.c3 ♙d6 [9...♖xa2 10.♙d3 ♙d6 11.♘f3 0-0 12.0-0 ♖a5 13.♖c2 h6 14.♘f5] 10.♙d3 0-0 11.♖h5 f5 12.♘xf5 g6 13.♘e7+ ♙xe7 14.♙xg6 hxg6 15.♖xg6+) 9.♙d3 0-0 10.♖h5 f5 11.♘xf5 g6 12.♘e7+ ♙xe7 13.♙xg6 ♙b4+ 14.c3 ♖c7 15.cxb4 hxg6 16.♖xg6+ ♖g7. Note the refined difference between having 13...♙b4+ after 13.♙xg6 in this last line with now the queen coming back to cover, as opposed to not having it in the 8.♖b1 ♙d6 subvariation.

8...♖xb2 9.♖b1 ♖xa2 10.♘1e2

10.♖h5+ g6.

10...♖a5+ 11.c3 ♙f7 12.0-0 ♙d6 13.♖e1 g6

A rather hair-raising draw emerges from 13...♘a6 14.♘f5 ♙xf5 15.♖xb7+ ♘c7 16.♙xf5 g6 17.♖b1 (17.♙d7 ♖ab8 18.♖xb8 ♖xb8 19.♙xc6 ♖a6 20.♙a4 ♖c4) 17...gxf5 18.♖xf5 ♖ad8 19.♖h5+ ♙f8 (19...♙g7 20.♘g3 ♖hg8 21.♘f5+ ♙h8 22.♖h4 ♖g6 23.♘xd6 ♖xc3 24.♘f7+ wins) 20.♖h6+ ♙f7.

14.♖c1 ♖d8 15.♖h6 ♖f8 16.♖e3 f5 17.♘f4 b5 18.♖f3 ♙xf4 19.♖xf4 ♖d8 20.♖e3 ♘d7 21.♙xf5 ♘f6 22.♙d3 ♖e8 23.♖be1 ♖xe3 24.♖xe3 a5 25.♖f3 ♙e6 26.♖h6 ♖h8

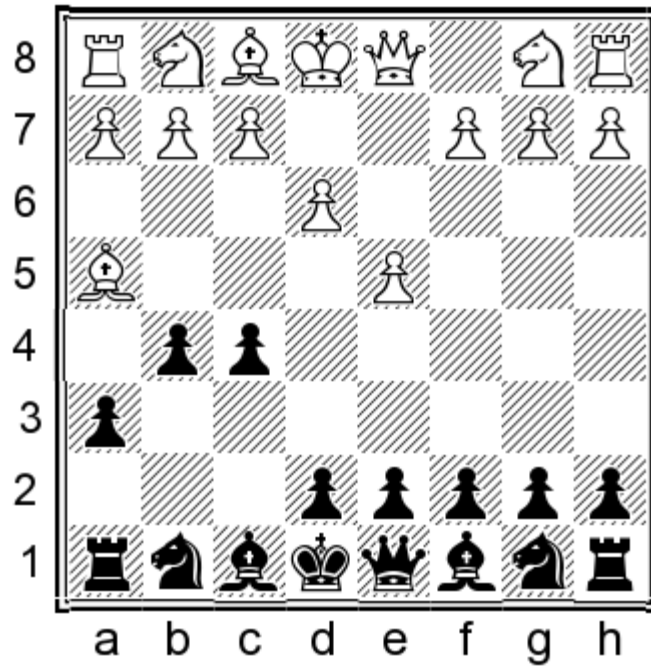
It seems that Black defends and keeps White wondering about that “A” train a-hurting down the track.

The one Anti-Dutch that has caught fire yet again (I remember a spate of them in the 1970s) is 2.♙g5. Maybe they should call it the Ruth Dutch (Bill Ruth’s 1.d4 d5 2.♙g5) or the Trompowsky Dutch (from 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5).

In their book *Win With the Stonewall Dutch*, Johnsen, Bern, and Agdestein favor 2...g6, and, indeed, several opening manuals do favor it. However, years ago I owned Kagan’s *Neuste Schachnachrichten* magazine from the 1920s. There was an article by Alekhine that impressed me when I was playing the Staunton Gambit. His idea was that ...g7-g6 was a natural target for h4-h5 with an attack. I wish I still had his analysis, but both Kaufman’s book and *Win With the Stonewall Dutch* have much to say on the topic.

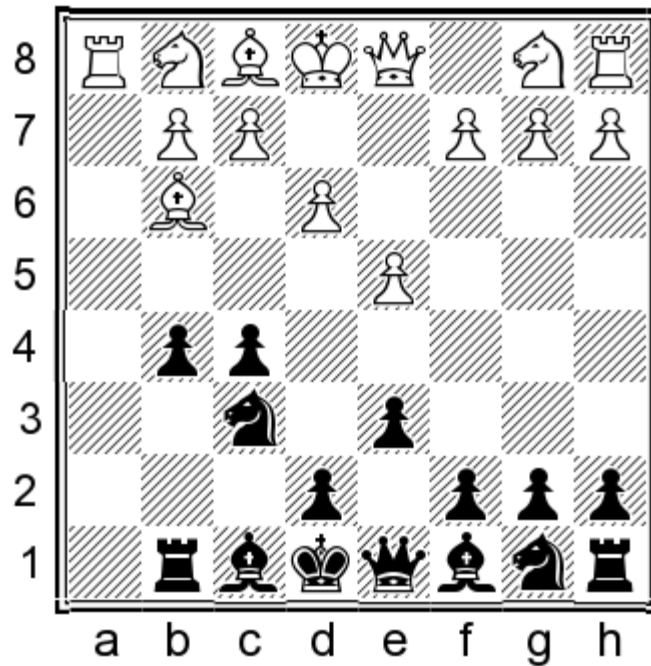
A fascinating possibility is the one that looks suicidal. Indeed, many of you might just have seen this old trap:
1.d4 f5 2.♙g5 h6 3.♙h4 g5 4.e3

where 4...gxh4?? leads to 5.♖h5#.



However, Black can simply develop with 4...♘f6 and almost everybody these days seems to get to this position after

1.d4 f5 2.♗g5 h6 3.♗h4 g5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗g3 d6 6.h4 ♖g8 7.hxg5 hxg5:



We're not here to get mired in variations. Let's concentrate on ideas and how you approach this position. Both sides will be castling queenside. You thus need to get your queenside pieces out. Knight on c6, bishop on d7, pawn on e6, queen on e7. As you are more cramped, you'll want to be very cautious about opening up the position. Here are two games for you to play through. You will see that the ideas are similar and the drawn outcome does not do justice to the fight. Both sides in each game had opportunities they chose not to take. Black won the first game because he saw a bit more than his opponent that day.

M. Gurevich – Illescas

Spanish Team Chp., Sanxenxo 2004

1.d4 d6 2.♗g5 h6 3.♗h4 g5 4.♗g3 f5 5.e3 ♘f6 6.h4 ♖g8 7.hxg5 hxg5 8.♘c3 e6 9.♗d2 ♗e7 10.0-0-0 a6 11.f3 ♘c6 12.e4 f4 13.♗f2 ♗d7 14.e5 ♘d5 15.exd6 ♗xd6 16.♘e4 ♗e7 17.♗c4 0-0-0 18.♘h3 ♘b8 19.♘b1 ♗c8 20.♗e1 ♖g6 21.♗b3 ♗g7 (21...♗h6 is safer) 22.♘hxg5 ♖xg5 23.♘xg5 ♗xg5 24.♗h4 ♗g7 25.♗xd8 ♘xd8 26.♗e5 ♗f7 27.♗h5 ♗d7 28.♗g6 ♘e3 29.♖d3 ♘f5 30.♖h8 ♗e7 31.a3 ♘a7 32.♘a2 a5 33.♗e8 ♗xe8 34.♖xe8 ♗d7 35.♖xe7 ♘xe7 36.♖d2 ♘f5 37.♗c4 ♘e3 38.♗d3 ♘c6 39.b3 a4 40.♗e4 axb3+ 41.cxb3 ♘e7 42.a4 ♗c6 43.♗xc6 ♘xc6 44.♘b2 ♘b6 45.♘c3 ♘a5 46.♖e2 ♘b4 47.♖e1 ♘bd5+ 48.♘b2 ♘b4 49.♖g1 ♘f5 50.♖c1 c6 51.♖c4+ ♘a5 52.♘a3 ♘fe3 53.♖c5+ ♘b6 54.♖c1 ♘xg2 55.♖h1 ♘ge3 56.♘b2 ♘f5 57.♖d1 ♘a5 58.♘a3 ♘de3 0-1

Kasparov – Illescas

Dos Hermanas 1996

1.d4 f5 2.♗g5 h6 3.♗h4 g5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗g3 d6 6.h4 ♖g8 7.hxg5 hxg5 8.♘c3 e6 9.f3 ♗e7 10.♗d2 ♘c6 11.0-0-0 ♗d7 12.e4 fxe4 13.fxe4 0-0-0 14.d5 exd5 15.exd5 ♘e5 16.♖e1 ♘b8 17.♘b1 ♗g7 18.a3 ♖h8 19.♖xh8 ♖xh8 20.♗xe5 dxe5 21.♘f3 e4 22.♗xg5 ♖h5 23.♗d2 ♗d6 24.♘d4 a6 25.♗c4 ♖h4 26.♗b3 ♖g4 27.♖e2 e3 28.♗xe3 ♘xd5 29.♘xd5 ♗xd4 30.♗e7 ♗xe7 31.♖xe7 ♗c6 32.♘xc7 ♖xg2 33.♗d5 ♖g1+ 34.♘a2 ♖g7 35.♖xg7 ♗xd5+ 36.♘xd5 ♗xg7 37.c4 ♘c8 38.a4 ♘d7 39.a5 ♘d6 40.b4 ♗d4 41.♘b3 ♗f2 42.♘f4 ♗e3 43.♘d3 ♘c6 44.♘a4 ♗g1 45.b5+ axb5+ 46.cxb5+ ♘c7 47.♘b4 ♗f2 48.b6+ ♘b8 1/2-1/2

2.♗g5 is a challenge, but no more so than any other line. As Botvinnik reminded us, the player who is more familiar with the themes has the advantage. Be that person!

In the Primer, it was suggested that you play a lot of 5-minute games with an opening to get the themes straight in your head. If you play over the games here and play online, you'll find that there is really not much to memorize because the themes are remarkably similar, and, after a while, you will quickly spot the traps.

Now, let's get on to the regular Dutch Defense variations! We have a Classical Dutch line with the e6/d6 center and a Stonewall Dutch line with the formation e6/d5/c6 – and the bishop on d6!

The first game is by GM Simon Williams and was deeply annotated by him in the April 2011 *British Chess Magazine* (pp. 207-213). He had recently given up on his old faithful 7...a5. GM Bent Larsen played this ...a7-a5 move as well (Piatigorsky Cup 1966). Williams now goes with 7...♘e4, whose motivation may well have something to do with the “discouraging” line we mentioned at the beginning of this section on the Dutch.

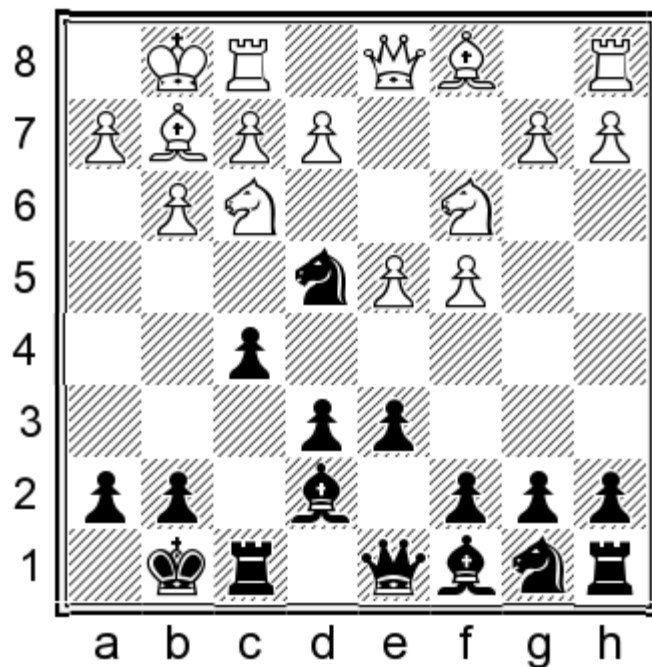
The e6/d6 line, no matter what variation you choose, does bring things to a head much quicker and is often more open than the more blocked and slower-developing Stonewall. Both, however, rely on ...e6-e5 as a freeing move. Always keep that in mind! Pick your style or do both just to make chess life more interesting!

Model Game 48

Su. Sen – Williams

England 2010

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.♘c3 ♘e4



8. ♖xe4

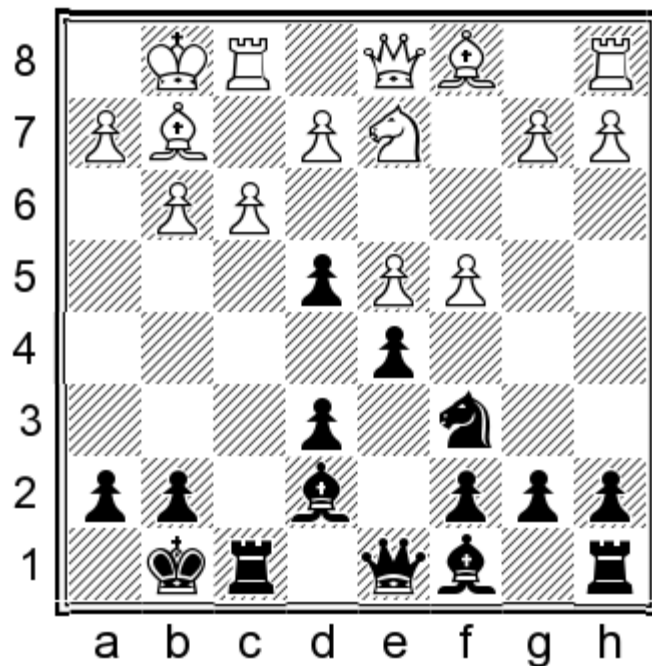
Back in 1989, I had bought a copy of *Dutch Defense* by Larry Christiansen and Jeremy Silman. They didn't have 7... ♖e4, just 6... ♖e4 (Alekhine). I had scribbled in these notes at the end of their first chapter (after 7... ♖e4):

8. ♗e1 ♗xc3 9. bxc3 c5 10. dxc5 (10. ♖d3 cxd4 11. cxd4 ♗f6 [Houdini likes 11... ♗c6]) 10... dxc5.

8. ♕c2 ♗xc3 9. bxc3 (Houdini looks at 9. ♕xc3 ♗d7 10. ♗e3 ♗f6 11. ♖ad1 ♕e8) 9... ♗d7 10. e4 ♗b6.

8. ♕d3 ♗xc3 9. bxc3 ♗c6 10. ♖b1 e5.

8... fxe4 9. ♗d2 d5 10. f3 ♗c6

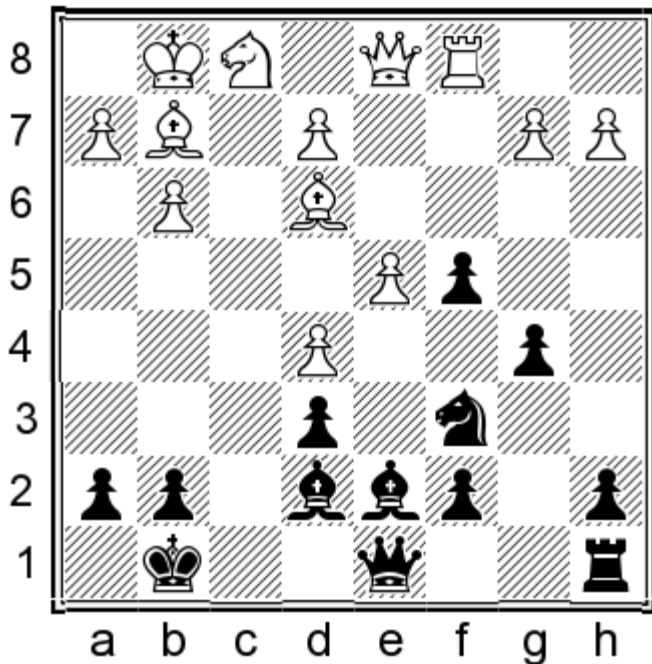


Williams's choice of ...♘c6 is very instructive. Taking on f3 only helps White get untangled. 10...♘c6 attacks d4 and makes ready for a freeing ...e6-e5. He also will uncover a triple attack on d4 when he plays ...dxc4. This is something active you must get into your brain. You have chosen a double-edged defense. This is the approach in thinking you need to take. Williams also dwells on 10...♙f6 as a candidate move.

11.fxe4 ♜xf1+ 12.♗xf1

The British GM ruminates about 12.♙xf1 dxc4 13.e3 ♗a5 14.♚a4, but after 14...b6 Black is OK. It's complicated, and a fight. That's why you're playing the line.

12...dxc4 13.♙e3 ♙d7 14.♞c1 b5 15.e5

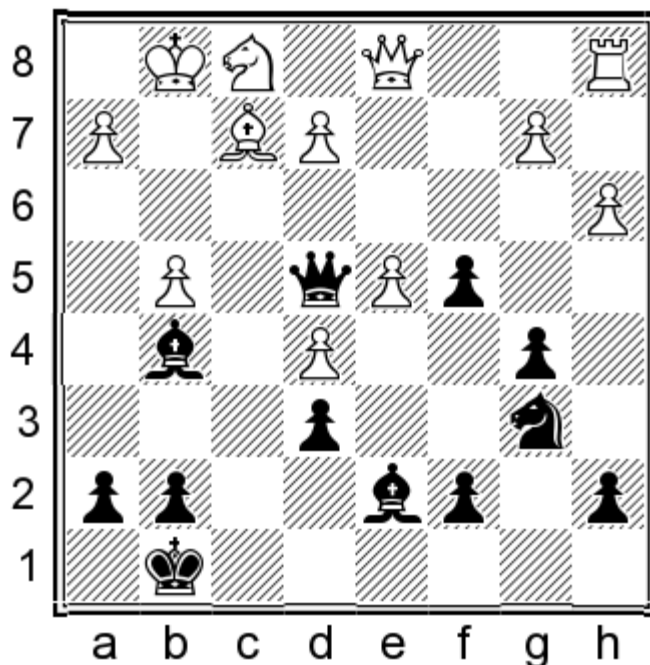


Our hero's next move is what makes us enjoy his games so much. Rather than go in for the sane 15...♙e8 (pressure on d4, nice diagonal on g6) 16.a4 a6 17.♙e4 ♞c8 (for an eventual support of ...c7-c5), he sacrifices the exchange! OK, White will be weaker on the light squares and d4-d5 will be harder to play, but what else is there? The two bishops can be useful. The queenside pawn majority is a possibility. It is murky but playable. Plus, being ahead the exchange sometimes make people not want to give that up, which can lead them to shy away from transitions into better endgames despite giving back the material.

15...♗b4 16.♙xa8 ♚xa8 17.a3 ♗d5 18.♙f2 ♗b6 19.g4

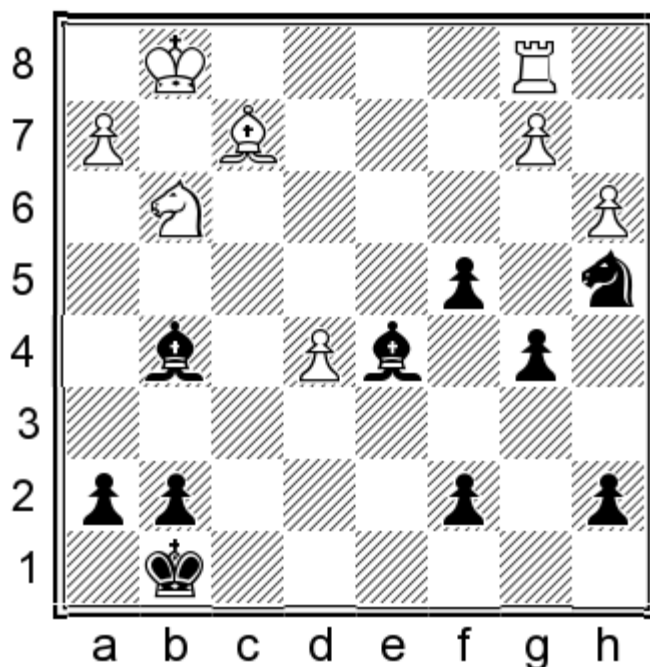
19.♗d2 ♙c6 20.h3.

19...♙g5 20.♞a1 ♚e4



Suddenly, the exchange sac seems to be working! The control of the long diagonal and especially d5 is important.

21. ♖g3 ♜xg4 22. e4 ♜xd1+ 23. ♞xd1 ♘a4 24. ♞b1 ♙c6 25. d5 exd5 26. exd5 ♙xd5



White misses a chance to draw with 27. ♙xa7. Perhaps he didn't like his bishop being blocked by 27...c5; however, to allow all four pawns to exist on the queenside just flat out loses. Black methodically takes away squares from the white bishop and knight, attacks the weak e-pawn, and advances the pawns until White concedes.

27. ♙d4 c5 28. ♙c3 ♖f7 29. ♖f2 ♖e6 30. ♖e2 g6 31. ♞f1 ♙e7 32. ♖e3 ♘xc3 33. bxc3 ♖xe5 34. ♞b1 a6 35. ♘e2 g5 36. ♞g1 h5 37. ♞b1 g4 38. ♞g1 a5 0-1

Two things should be remembered above all: Black's constant striving for activity for his pieces and his constant vigilance in the struggle for the center.

Now we have a contribution from GM Simen Agdestein from *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*.

Model Game 49

Turner – Agdestein

Tromsø 2008

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6

This opening dance makes me chuckle. With such seriousness, White players routinely hold off c2-c4 so there will be no ...♙b4+ to lessen the pressure (see the Primer). If Black is a Stonewall player, the chances are excellent that won't be happening anyway. Black wants that bishop on d6!

6.c4 c6

The GM's notes indicate that 6...0-0 is also OK, as 7.c5 is not as useful as it looks because it allows ...♙a6 later on.

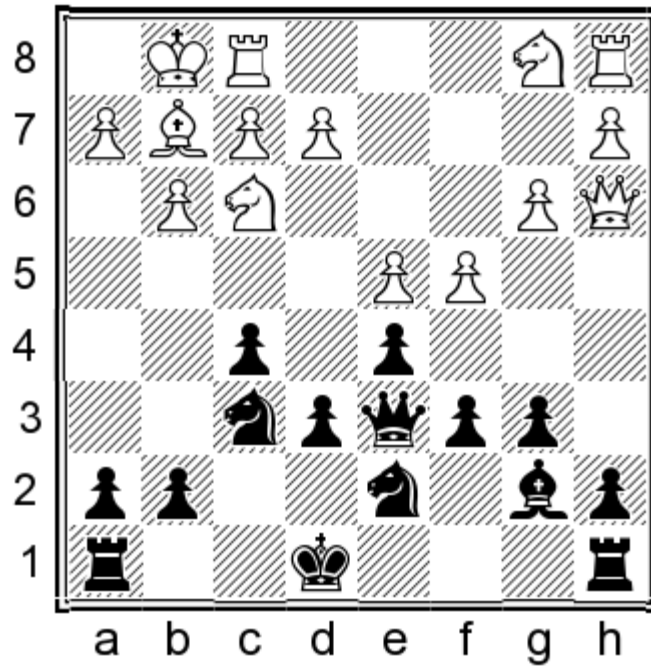
7.b3

A decidedly popular move to bring about exchanges along the a3-f8 diagonal. White stalls it a bit by simple development.

7...♙e7 8.♙b2 b6 9.♙c1 ♙b7 10.♙a3

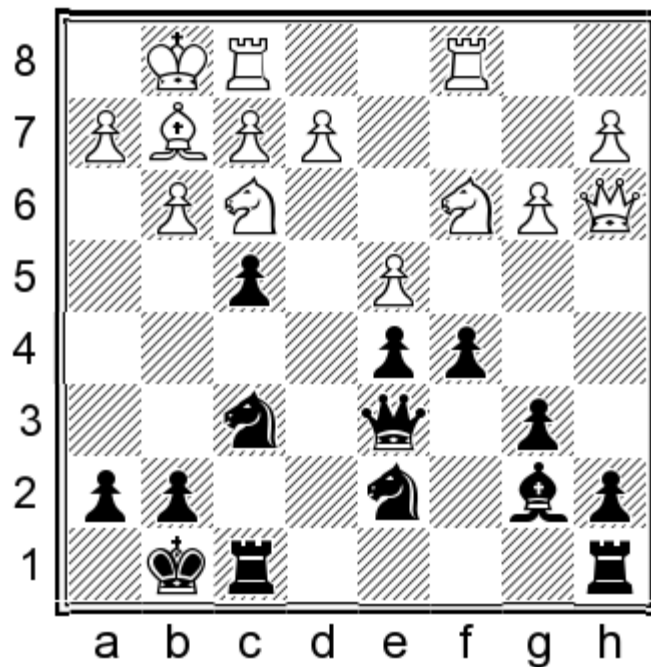
Here, Black can play 10...♙xa3 11.♙xa3 ♙xa3 12.♘xa3 ♘bd7 13.cxd5 exd5 (13...cxd5) with no worries. One nice thing about being able to delay castling is that Black can even play 11...♘bd7 12.♙xe7 ♔xe7 with a nice endgame spot and the rooks connecting.

10...♘bd7 11.♙xd6 ♙xd6 12.♙a3



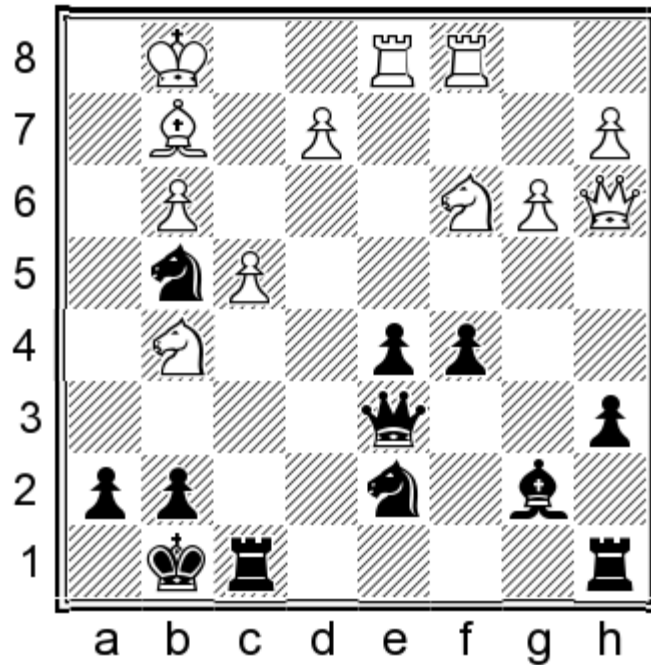
Black now has two choices: to play 12...♙xa3 with a very level game, or to play for more with 12...c5. Agdestein didn't play the Stonewall to make a draw. Take a second look at this outcome of the opening. White's d4-opening goal of implementing e2-e4 is not happening. Black has e4 for his knight, White doesn't have e5. Black has a choice as to the direction of the game. White has to wait to see what that will be.

12...c5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♖ac1 f4



This move is so common in the Dutch that it deserves a diagram. In both main lines, the underlying concept is to attack on the kingside. If you play over Botvinnik's games you will see that. The ...♙e8-h5 maneuver is demonstrated in the Primer; here, the queen has another role.

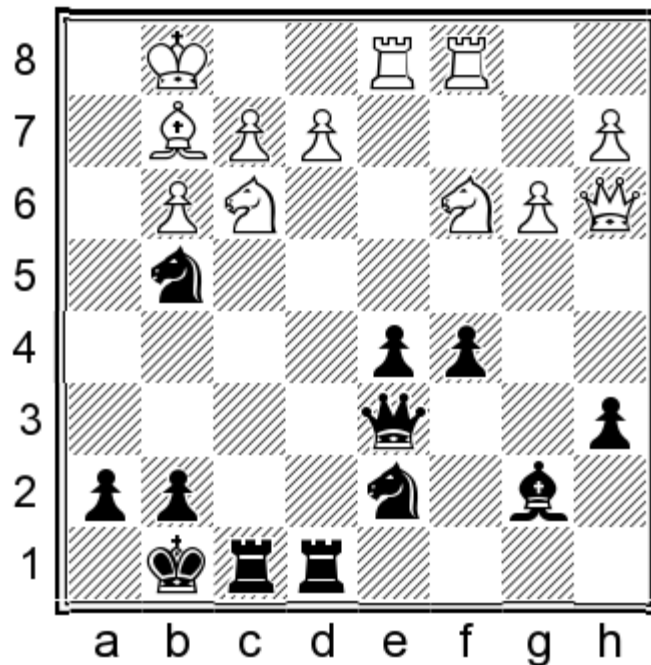
16.♖fd1 a6 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♘g5 fxg3 19.hxg3 ♘g4



analysis-puzzle

A little puzzle for you. If White plays 20.f4 as shown, what do you, as a Dutch player, do? Attack! 20.f4 ♖xf4 21.gxf4 (21.♙xd5 ♚h6 22.gxf4 ♚h2+ 23.♔f1 ♘e3+ 24.♔f2 ♖e8 25.♙g1 ♙xd5) 21...♚xf4 22.♘f3 ♚e3+ 23.♔h1 d4. An opening is more than just opening moves. The reason you should play over as many Dutch games as you can is to learn attacking ideas like this. White did, however, play:

20.♘f3 ♖ae8



Another timeout to look around. Black has all six of his pieces pointing toward White's castled position. Four of White's pieces are attacking Black's pawns on the queenside. Who's doing better?

The rest of the game features lots of fireworks, but our point is made with this last diagram: the Stonewall is

worth looking at.

21. ♖d4 ♜xf2

21... ♜e6

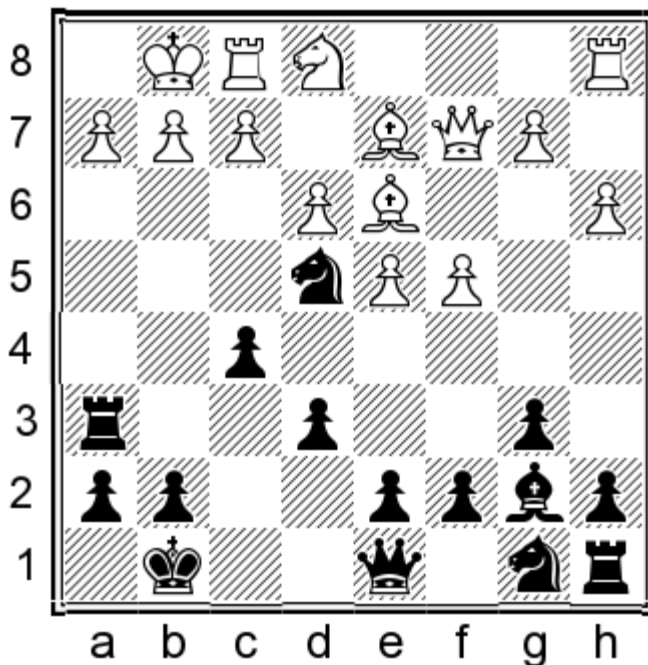
22. ♜xf2 ♜e7 23. ♞dd1 d4 24. ♜g1 ♜e3+ 25. ♜h2 ♜f6 26. ♜xc5 ♜g4+ 27. ♜h3 ♜f2+ 28. ♜h2 ♜g4+ 29. ♜h3 ♜f2+ 30. ♜h2 ♜xd1 31. ♜xd1 ♜h6+ 32. ♜g1 ♞c8 33. ♜g5 ♞xc5 34. ♞xc5 ♜d6 35. ♜e6 ♞xg2 0-1

I would be remiss not to mention one tiny item about the Dutch setup as it relates to the Bogo-Indian and even the Nimzo-Indian. It's a bit of cross-pollination, as John Watson would say. The Dutch formation in the next diagram speaks volumes. It's a brilliant performance. Play it through.

Lenič – Kuzubov

World Youth Stars 2005

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♜f3 ♞b4+ 4. ♜bd2 b6 5. a3 ♞xd2+ 6. ♞xd2 0-0 7. e3 ♞b7 8. ♞d3 ♜e4 9. ♜c2 f5 10. 0-0 ♞f6 11. ♜e1 ♞h6



12. f4?! d6 13. ♜f3 ♜d7 14. ♜g5 ♜xg5 15. fxg5 ♞h4 16. d5 ♜xg5 17. e4 f4 18. ♞xf4?! ♞xf4 19. g3 e5 20. ♜h1 ♞af8 21. gxf4 exf4 22. ♞g1 ♜h5 23. ♞f1 f3 24. ♞c3 ♞c8 25. ♜f2 ♜e5 26. ♜g3 ♞f6 27. ♞xe5 dxe5 28. ♞f2 ♞g4 29. b4 ♞g6 30. ♞f1 h6 31. c5 bxc5 32. bxc5 ♞f5! 33. ♜xe5 ♜g5 34. ♜g3 ♜e3 35. ♜h4 ♞g4 0-1

You now have an inkling of the possibilities in the Dutch. Approach your studies by bringing the ideas presented here into your research.

15. A Plea for the Ruy López

It might sound odd to plead for one of the most popular openings in chess. Having been a player, observer, and scholastic coach for over fifty years, this is what I've noticed: average players and scholastic players will try just about anything to avoid learning the Ruy López. Here's a sampling: Gambits (King's, Danish, Göring, Vienna, etc.); Formula Openings (Colle, Barry, Colle-Zukertort); Offbeat Openings (Orangutan, 1.b3, Spike, etc.). If we're honest, the reasons are pretty much the same. You're all counting on your opponent's unfamiliarity with the system to get you home before move 35. It's a good battle strategy to put your opponent on unfamiliar ground; however, the ground is a very narrow one in terms of your growth as a player, as mentioned earlier.

This book has tried to steer a middle course so you can eventually get to higher ground. There are opening systems herein that are a bit off the main track of current popularity, but they are fundamentally sound and allow for growth.

If you're an average player (1200-1800 rating range) in your 20s through 40s, there is still time for you to do what I'm about to suggest. If you're a scholastic player, then here is a special plea coming from someone who wished he had followed a TD's advice many years ago.

My plea is this: make the Ruy López an ongoing project while you play the Four Knights or Vienna Game. Take it move by move (as in the next chapter) and learn everything along the main line and the deviations. It may take a few years, but it will be worth it. Play both sides of it!

The Ruy López is a lifetime of study. If you're up to the task, you'll become a really fine chessplayer. The task, however, is quite daunting.

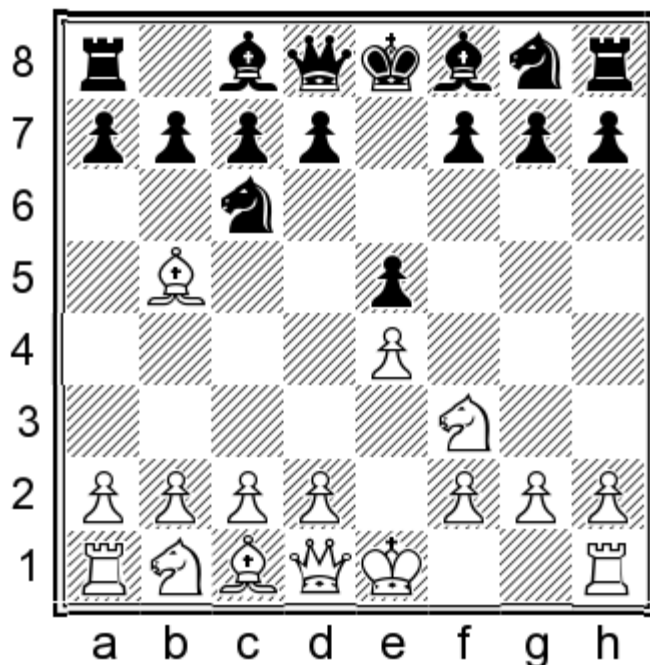
I've written rather detailed articles about the Ruy López over the years that – as you read them here – I hope will give you the incentive to take a closer look at this incredible facet of chess. The first game is from an article I wrote for *Atlantic Chess News*. The next selection of games is from one of my ICC lectures, the whole text of which ended up in *Chess Life* and won a Chess Journalists of America award. The third look at the Ruy is a review of recent books on it that also appeared in *Chess Life*. It gives a move-by-move overview of some variants this opening can lead to. If nothing else, the annotated games are chess lessons in and of themselves that you will enjoy if you love great chess.

Our introductory game about this opening is arguably the most exciting correspondence game ever played. The combatants were Nils Johansson-Tegelman (Sweden) and Dr. Rey Ardid (Spain) in a 1933-35 team match.

The annotations are meant to be instructional rather than analytical. If you want to dust off your chess engine, go ahead, but you may lose something in the process. Instead, you should try and put yourself inside the thought processes of these two players. See how they interpreted the position. Their ideas will be worth far more than finding out that 38.♖xc5 was better than 38.♖xe5. As you put yourself in their place, start asking if this is your place. There are more games to go over to see if this fits how you would like to play chess. Again, are you comfortable with these types of positions?

Model Game 50

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5



Credited to the famed Spanish bishop, Ruy López, this opening is also known as the Spanish Game. It is different from the Italian Game, 3.♘c4, in that it does not pressure f7, which can be defended fairly easily. The Spanish theme is more indirect: pressure on the center. In fact, White is not even threatening to win Black's e-pawn with 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.♞xe5, because 5...♚d4 wins the pawn right back.

Masters prefer the Ruy López to the Italian Game because the pressure lasts longer and involves more planning and strategic maneuvering, which tends to separate the wheat from the chaff in talent. There is less room for variation in the Italian Game; thus, weaker players can play into equalizing lines as Black that stronger players with White find it hard to avoid.

3...a6!

The best move. Yes, 3...f5, 3...♞f6, 3...♙c5, 3...g6, or 3...d6 are all quite playable. They became popular again right after Bobby Fischer started turning the Exchange Variation (4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0) into a deadly weapon. The defenses to the Exchange line are now more reliable.

4.♙a4

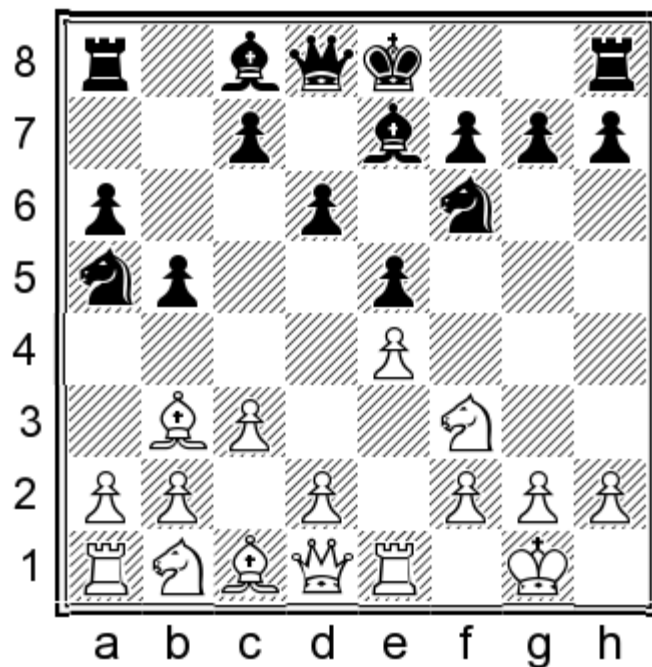
Why release the tension? Let's make Black work for equality. By the way, 4.♙c4 would be awful, because after 4...♞f6! you would be in a Two Knights' Defense with Black having received a tremendous gift, e.g. 5.♞g5 d5 6.exd5 ♞d4 or 6...♞a5 when White no longer has that bishop check on b5.

4...♞f6

Black develops and attacks the e-pawn.

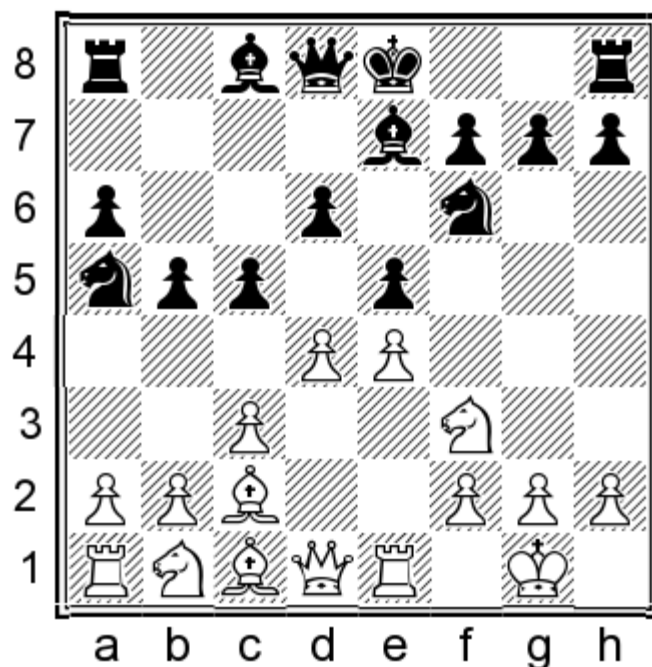
5.0-0 ♙e7

Known as the Closed Defense. The Open Defense, 5...♞xe4, is a bit more lively, but Capablanca long ago said the hole at c5 that developed after 6.d4! b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3 made it hard for Black to equalize. Much has changed since that opinion was expressed; however, it's still worth playing over Capa's games in this line to learn some ideas. 5...♙c5 is possible, but 6.♞xe5 ♞xe5 7.d4 ♞xe4 8.♞e1 ♙e7 9.♞e4 ♞g6 10.c4



Why bother if the bishop can simply go back? Because Black needs to play ...c7-c5 and then ...♘c6 to attack d4.

9.♙c2 c5 10.d4!?



Not so common today, because Black has shown that allowing ...♙g4 at some point gives counterplay. More usual is 10.h3 to prevent that. The text was a common move order in the '20s and '30s. It is worth pointing out that today the common move order is 7.♙b3, 7...0-0 (to get the rooks connected quicker in case White plays a2-a4) 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♙c7. This is not to say that 10.d4 is bad, because after 10...♙c7 11.a4! b4 12.cxb4 cxb4 13.♘bd2 0-0 14.h3 ♙e6 15.♘f1, White might generate some attacking chances.

Black should not give up the center with 10...exd4 11.cxd4 cxd4 12.♘d4, which has the added negative of leaving a weak d-pawn. As we explained earlier, White's theme is to maintain the tension; thus, the

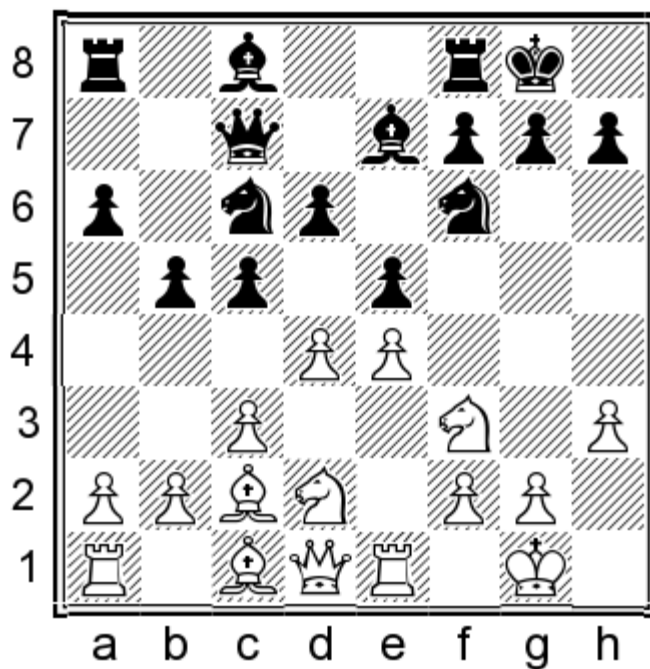
preference for 10.h3 today.

Why maintain the tension? When you have the initiative and a space advantage, exchanges tend to ease the more cramped position. Once you are completely developed against this restricted position, you release it to exploit good on that advantage, as your hemmed-in opponent cannot maneuver with the same freedom you can. Timing is everything.

10...♖c7 11.h3

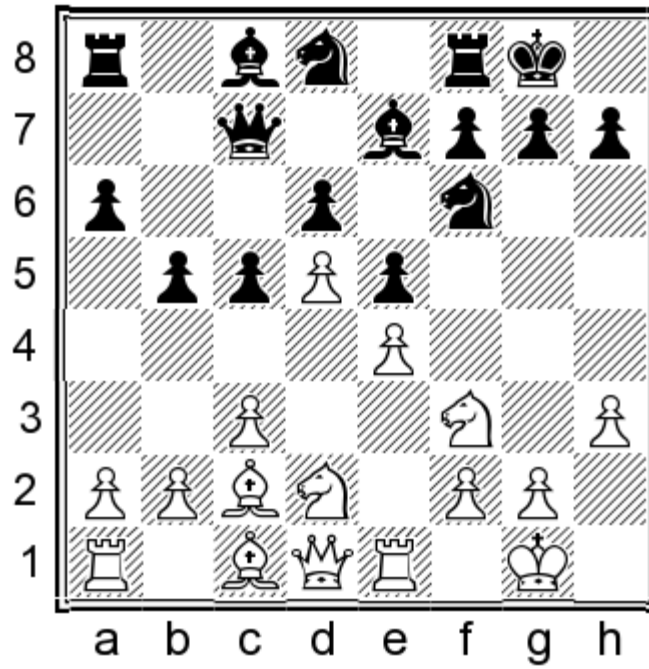
Even by 1935 they had learned that this move cannot be put off for too long. Note also that White will now be able to play g2-g4 in conjunction with ♖bd2-f1-g3 to initiate the kingside attack. It is worth noting that Paul Keres preferred 11.a4 in this position. It may be more accurate to delay h2-h3 a little bit longer: 11...♞b8 12.axb5 axb5 13.h3! ♜c6 14.♙e3, and “White is able to keep up the tension in the center as ...♞a5-c4 no longer constitutes a threat.” (Koenig, *Chess from Morphy to Botvinnik* – a fabulous book!). Also, if 11...b4 12.cxb4 cxb4 13.h3 0-0 14.♞bd2 ♙e6 15.♞f1 ♜fc8 16.♞e3! (Keres – Reshevsky, Stockholm 1937).

11...0-0 12.♞bd2 ♞c6



Now, 1930s and present-day chess meet at the same position. Mind you, 12...♞c6 is not the only move. The following have been tried: 12...♙b7, 12...♙d7, 12...♞d7, 12...♞e8, 12...♞d8, 12...cxd4 (followed by ...♞c6). After 12...♞c6, White is at a crossroads: either 13.dxc5 (or 13.dxe5), or 13.d5, or 13.♞f1. Fischer played 13.dxc5 (the Rauzer Attack) which seeks to exploit the d5 and f5 squares for the knights. When this game was annotated by contemporaries, 13.d5 got an exclamation mark! And just in case you're gambit-oriented, there is Lasker's 13.♞f1, which he played against Tarrasch in 1908. This whole line is a lifetime of study, but it does teach you key chess ideas.

13.d5 ♞d8



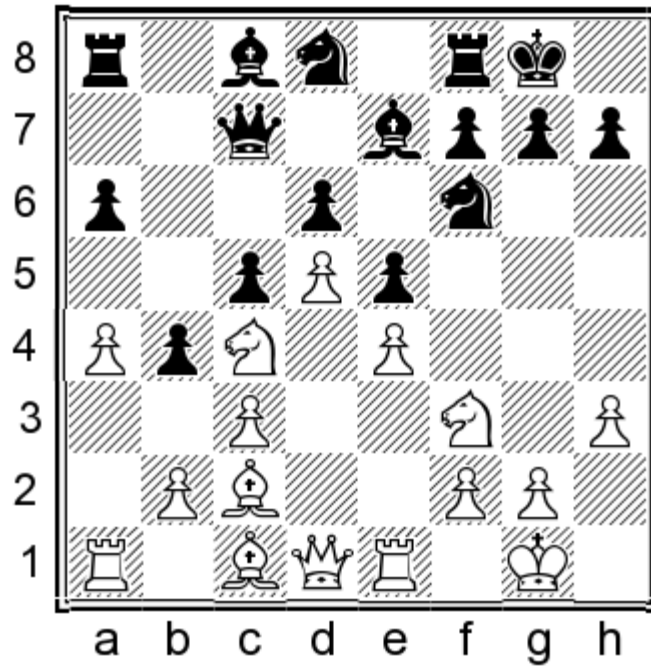
By closing the center, White can get his kingside attack set up. The downside of closing the center is that the tension is removed, allowing Black time to set up his own counter-plan. From this diagram you should visualize that Black's knights can reposition from d8 and e8 to f7 and g7 after the pawns go to f6 and g6 to provide for a defense of the castled position. Black does not choose this method in this game, but you should know about it. What Black does is to get really active on the queenside, forcing White to deal with the counterattack. Take a quick peek at the position after move 26 and you would think Black succeeded!

14.a4

A very thematic move. Black's queenside pawns are targets. White attempts to close up that side as well, so he can get back to the kingside business. 14...♖b8 would try to maintain the tension, but then 15.c4! (Grünfeld) 15...b4 16.♘f1 gets into what we discussed on moves 11 and 13.

14...b4 15.♘c4

What a wonderful spot for the knight! It supports a5, attacks b6 and d6, and also threatens to go to d3 from where it could hop to f5. This is a fine example of strategic thinking. There are two big concepts here: picking the best squares for your pieces, and being aware of knight paths to get to those squares.



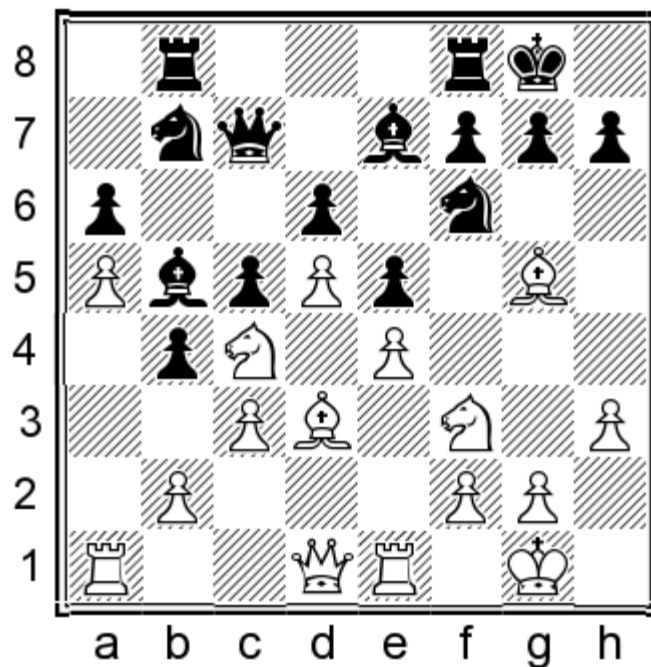
15...♖b7

Black was trying to avoid 15...a5? 16.♗fxe5! (always have to watch those checks and captures!) as in Capablanca – Vidmar, New York 1927.

16.a5

Black suggested in *El Ajedrez Español*, Dec. 1934, that 16.♗h2! ♗d7 17.♗f1 was better. Reuben Fine in *MCO-6* (1939) suggested 16.cxb4 cxb4 17.b3. Let's leave this debate to the pros.

16...♞b8 17.♙g5 ♙d7 18.♙d3 ♙b5



Now if White plays 19.♘fd2 to support his fellow knight, 19...♗xd5 would win! All because the white king bishop is unprotected. So, White's choice is clear.

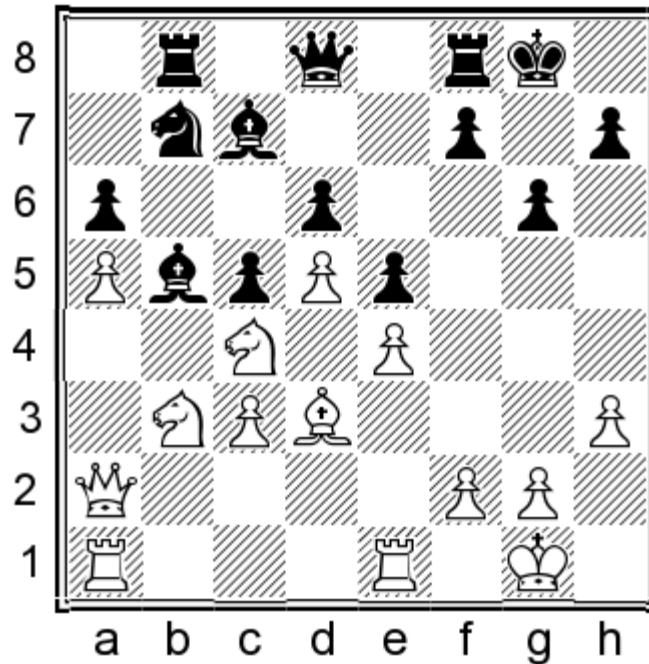
19.♙xf6 ♗xf6 20.♘fd2 ♗d8 21.♘b3

The war over the a-pawn goes on, and now 22.cxb4 cxb4 23.♖c1 is threatened. So...

21...bxc3 22.bxc3 ♖e7

The Argentinian master and author Marchisotti opined that 22...♕d7 right away was better.

23.♗e3 ♖d7 24.♖c2 ♗c7 25.♗c4 ♖d8 26.♖a2 g6!



While Black has been keeping White busy with the a-pawn, he now is ready to strike with another key move for Black in the defense to the López: 27...f5.

27.g4!

White must contest 27...f5; however, Black will now have weak dark squares on the kingside to attack. This also harks back to our discussion in the Primer of when to play g2-g4 type moves. White determined that he could get away with it. We will see how he does this. In the March 1998 *Chess Mail*, Harding writes, "This is where the game really begins." C.J.S. Purdy in *Chess World*, January 1947, notes that, "White's reply is exceedingly risky at first sight, and then begins the knife-edged play that continues to the end." Two moves later he continues, "Both sides flirt with death." Or, as Marchisotti put it, "La consigna es de luchar hasta la muerte."

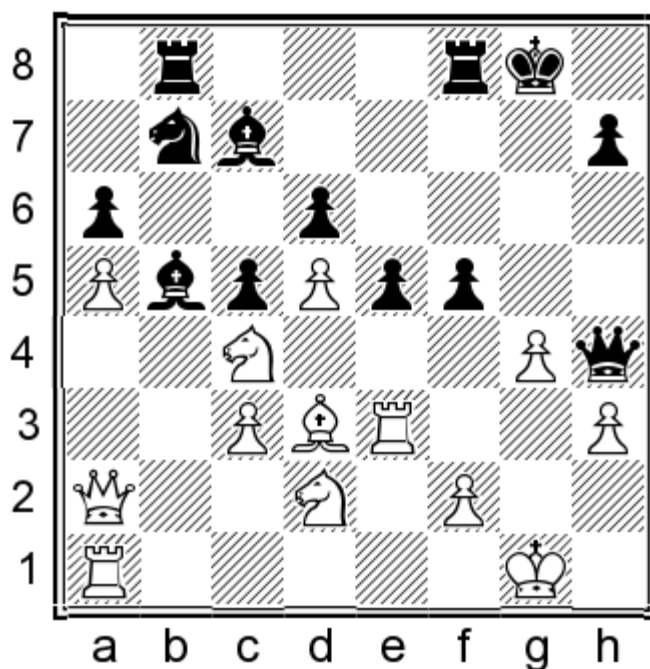
What does this mean for you? The great question of 1.e4 for all of us is whether to play the Ruy López with its long-range planning, or to play some slashing King's Gambit or Göring Gambit, or maybe a little more solid Italian game with 3.♙c4 or maybe the Vienna fianchetto line. I'm presenting some really first-rate classic Ruy López games to show you the incredible possibilities involved in learning this opening. If I had to do it all over again as a teenager, I would listen to that TD who recommended it. If you want to just have fun, then we answered that question in the Primer. If you want to get more out of chess, learn the old Spanish prelate's

opening. However you feel about it, finish playing through this game. It's considered one of the best ever played.

27...♖h4 28.♞e3 f5 29.exf5 gxf5

Black exploits the fact that White's bishop attacking the f5 square is doing double duty protecting the knight on c4.

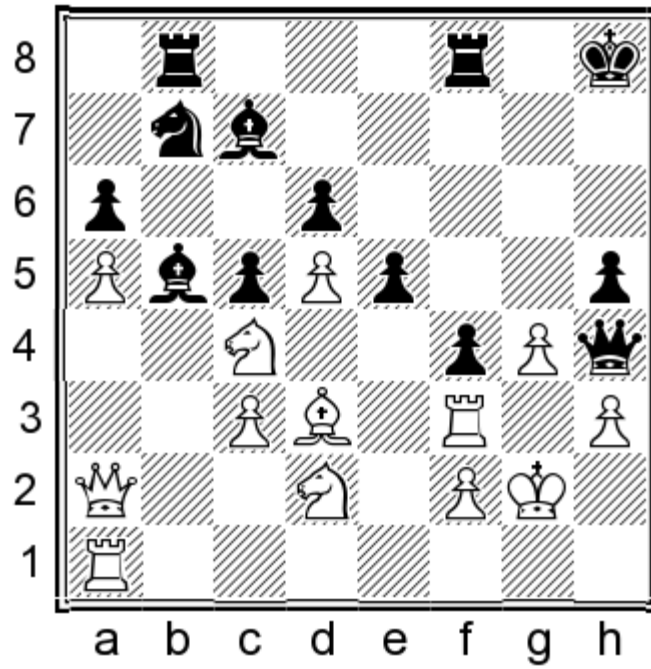
30.♘bd2



30...f4

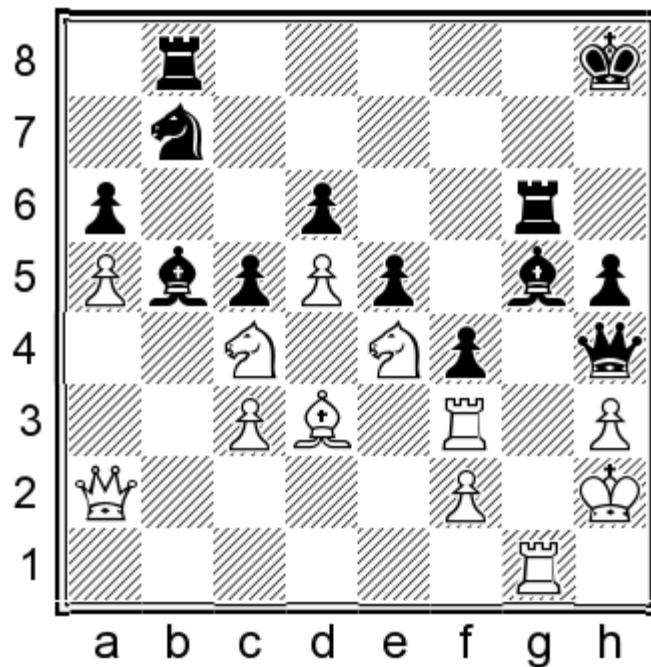
An ambivalent but necessary decision. The rule is generally to break open positions. Unfortunately, after 30...fxg4 31.♞g3 h5 32.hxg4 hxg4 33.♔g2! and, with ♜a1-h1 to follow, the tables are turned. This is the key as to why White felt he could play g2-g4: he saw that Black could not take as much advantage of it as he liked because his own king was on the same side.

31.♞f3 ♔h8 32.♔g2 h5



Harding makes an interesting observation: “I think the reason that Black’s attack fails is that the pawn structure has made it easier for White to feed reinforcements to the kingside, and in particular because Black’s 30th move ceded this fine square (e4) to the knight.” Basically, the latent attacking setup of the López makes it tough to counterattack.

33.♖h1 ♜f6 34.♘e4 ♜h6 35.g5 ♜g6 36.♙h2 ♚d8 37.♞g1 ♚xg5

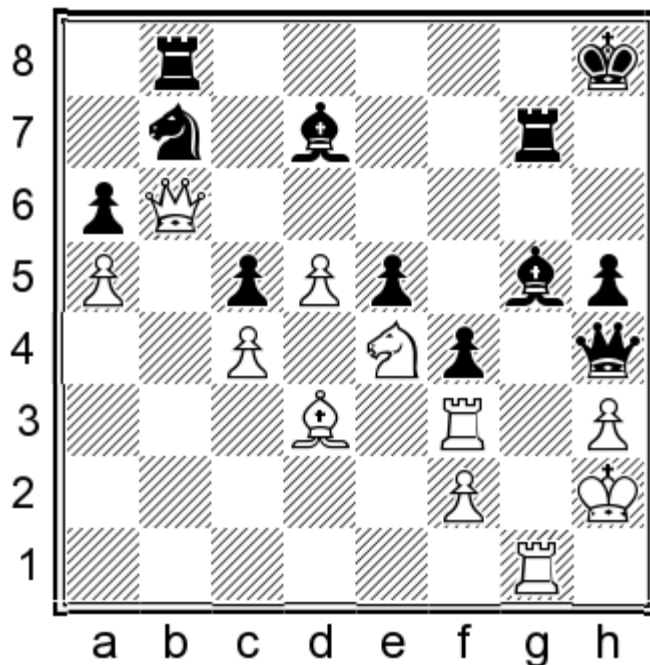


One of the most extraordinary middlegame positions in chess history! Suddenly the action has flowed to the kingside! When was the last time you saw two kingside attacks going on at the same time? Or such an ebb-and-flow to the middlegame? Who knows how many hours went into White’s next move. Purdy calls what follows “a deep and beautiful sacrifice. It was an exacting task to work it out to a forced win.” To say the least! The important question for amateurs is: What is the *idea* here? Oddly enough, it is so that White can

play his queen to b2 and eventually b6 and h6!! The d6-pawn, moving by dint of the capture of the knight on e5, clears the sixth rank for the planned foray of the queen to h6; hence the logical knight sacrifice. So easy to see in retrospect! The queen's penetration into b6 wreaks havoc with Black's position, but it had to be carefully calculated.

38. ♖xe5 dx5 39. c4 ♙d7 40. ♚b2 ♜g7 41. ♚b6

With the threat of 42. ♖xg5 ♜xg5 43. ♚h6+!



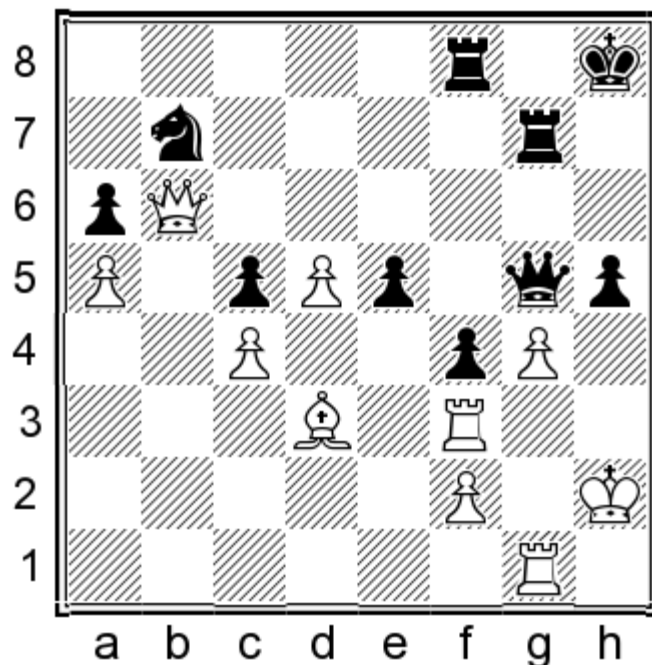
41... ♙g4!

Black isn't about to go quietly.

42. ♖xg5 ♜xg5!

If 42... ♙xf3 43. ♚h6+ ♖g8 44. ♚e6+ ♖h8 (44... ♖f8 45. ♖h7+ ♜xh7 46. ♜g8#) 45. ♖f7+ ♖g8 46. ♖xe5+ ♖h8 47. ♚h6+ ♖g8 48. ♚xg7#; 42... ♜xg5 43. ♚c7 ♜g7 44. ♚xb8+ ♚d8 45. ♚xe5 ♚c7 46. ♚xc7 ♜xc7 47. hxg4. Wow!

43. hxg4 ♜f8



Black seems to be threatening yet again. 44...hxg4 looks devastating. But White is not impressed – he allows it!

44. ♖xa6!! hxg4

Alternatively, 44...♟f6 45. ♖a8+ ♟g8 46. ♖b7 ♟h6 47. ♟h3 hxg4 48. ♖h7+! ♟xh7 49. ♟xh7#!!.

45. ♟h3+ ♔g8 46. ♖e6+ ♟ff7 47. ♟xg4!! 1-0

It's correspondence chess. He sees it: 47. ♟xg4 ♖xg4 48. ♖e8+ ♟f8 49. ♟h8+ ♔xh8 50. ♖xf8+ ♟g8 51. ♖h6#.

A masterpiece! Superlatives do not do this game justice. This is the quintessential Ruy López battle.

This was certainly an excellent example of long-term planning. One of the great attacking plans I learned came out of this opening. One of the first sacrifices of that nature I saw was in the Ruy López. I was playing in a high-school tournament at the time, and mentioned to another player who was also observing the game how impressed I was by this ♟f5 sacrifice with a black pawn on g6 able to take it.

I will never forget his reply, “Oh, that’s just the López sacrifice of the knight.” That was a revelation to me. You mean, there are attacking strategies that have themes? You mean he knew right away what to do?

Later on I.A. Horowitz, editor of *Chess Review*, had one of his games published with the idea, and it was my first experience with the theme as practiced by a master.

Model Game 51

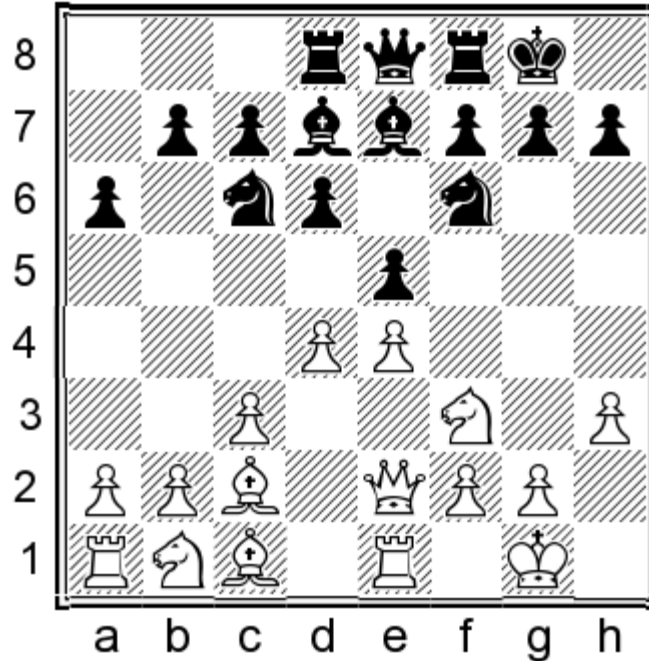
Horowitz – Martin

Boston 1938

1. e4 e5 2. ♟f3 ♟c6 3. ♟b5 a6 4. ♟a4 ♟f6 5. 0-0 ♟e7 6. ♖e2

Now, this move is not the normal 6. ♟e1, but we're going to a certain type of position, and you'll see many roads lead to Rome.

6...d6 7.c3 ♘d7 8.d4 0-0 9.♙c2 ♚e8 10.h3 ♞d8 11.♞e1



The rook opens the knight path for ♞bd2-f1-e3-g4. Now that's planning!

11...♙h8 12.♞bd2 ♜g8 13.♞f1 ♙f6?!

Black would be better served to try for one of the second player's breaks in the Ruy López: 13...f5 14.exf5 ♙xf5 15.♙xf5 ♞xf5 16.d5 ♞b8 17.♞g3 ♞f8 18.c4, with a slight edge for White.

14.♚d1

We would prefer getting into it right away by closing the center with 14.d5!.

14...♞ce7

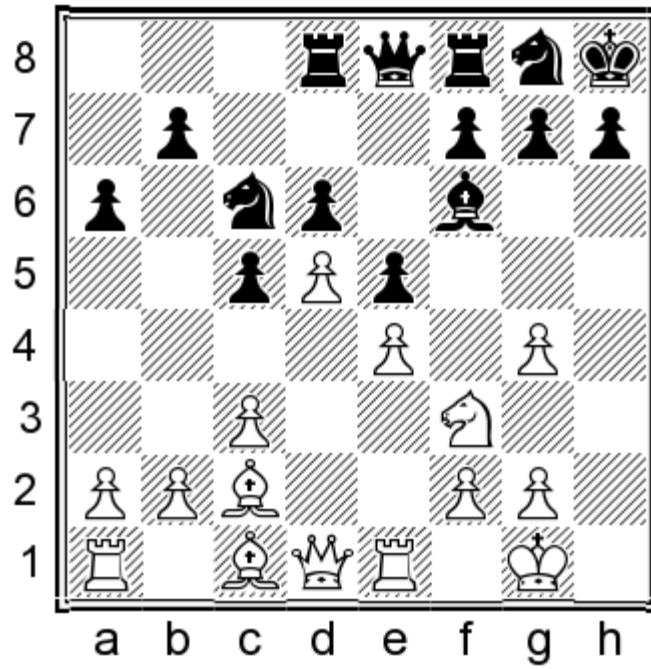
Black seems obsessed with keeping the position closed – which, considering White's space advantage, seems dubious. Again, better might be 14...exd4 15.cxd4.

15.♞e3 c5 16.♞g4 ♙xg4 17.hxg4 ♞c6?!

Again, 17...exd4 18.cxd4 cxd4 19.♞xd4 with a slight edge to White.

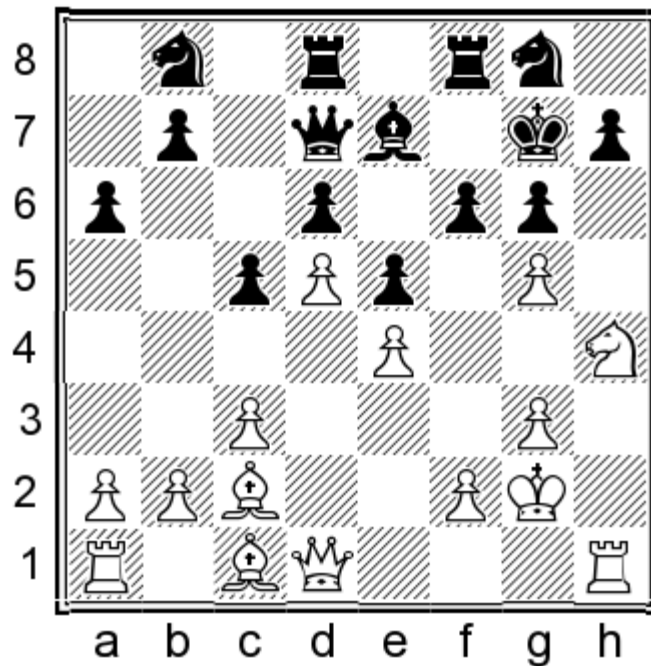
18.d5!

It's best to close the position in the center before attacking on the wing.



18...♖b8 19.g3 ♜d7 20.g5 ♙e7 21.♘h4 g6 22.♔g2 f6 23.♞h1 ♔g7?

23...♞e8 was relatively better, but White is still clearly superior. 23...♔g7 allows the thematic knight sacrifice on f5. The point of this lesson is that you have to recognize the attacking pattern that flows very naturally out of the opening and be ready for that key moment when making a significant piece sacrifice gives you that decisive edge. If you don't know this move, then you will find the game harder to win, or easier to lose if you get timid with, say, ♘h4-f3.



24.♘f5+! gxf5

24...♔f7 25.♞xh7+ ♔e8 26.♘g7+ ♔f7 27.f4! is crushing as Black's not going anywhere. Open some more lines!

27...fxg5 28.fxe5 and you can finish Black off any number of ways here.

25.♖xh7+!

Oh, yes, it helps to know about rook sacrifices, too! Look at the jumble of pieces in Black's camp.

25...♔xh7 26.♗h5+ ♜h6 27.♗xh6+ ♔g8 28.♗g6+

Lovely: White pushes the black king back onto the rook file for a final insult.

28...♔h8 29.♕e3 1-0

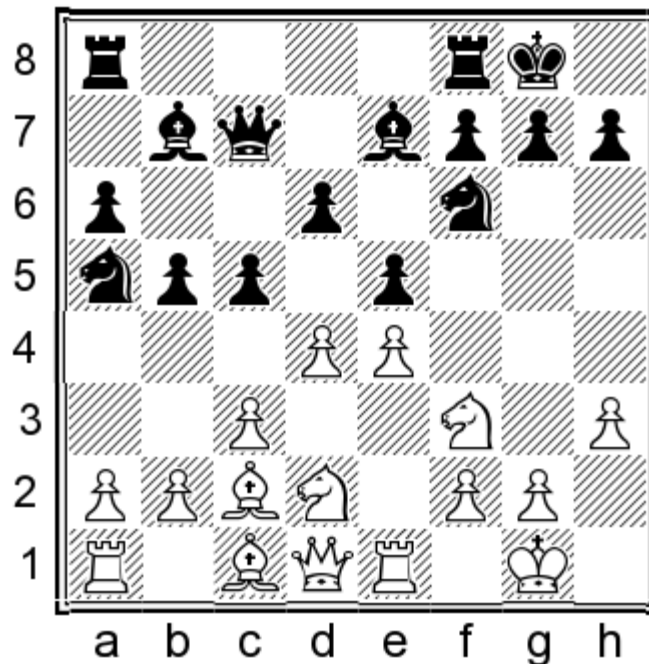
Mate is unstoppable. This was my first experience with a master game with the ♜f5 sacrifice. I got curious about other games with it and found a pretty nice selection. One game with this idea shows up in more books of collected brilliancies and instructional manuals than any other. We'll look at it next.

Model Game 52

Alexander – Pachman

Hilversum 1947

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♕a4 ♜f6 5.0-0 ♕e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♜a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♗c7 12.♘bd2 ♗b7



13.d5

This game is more like the Ruy López line you are familiar with, yet the same d4-d5 idea pops up early on. Note that White is still going to make the same knight maneuver. He has the time, in part, because the center is now locked. What happens if White plays 13.♘f1 before closing the center? Then we have 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 d5 and Black gets in a key counter-move.

13...♖c8

You might well ask yourself why a grandmaster would go ...♖c8-b7 and then go back with ...♖c8. The answer is that it's logical: White has closed the center, so there's nothing for the bishop to do on b7 any longer! The clergyman heads back to c8 to perhaps eventually get a chance to support the freeing ...f7-f5, something White always has to watch out for. Black could have exchanged on d4 first to keep the center fluid if he really wanted to keep the bishop on b7, but he apparently preferred the closed position.

14.♘f1

Same knight maneuver, same goal, slightly different position than last game. Many modern players shore up their queenside with 14.b3 to prepare c3-c4 and to keep that pesky queen knight off c4.

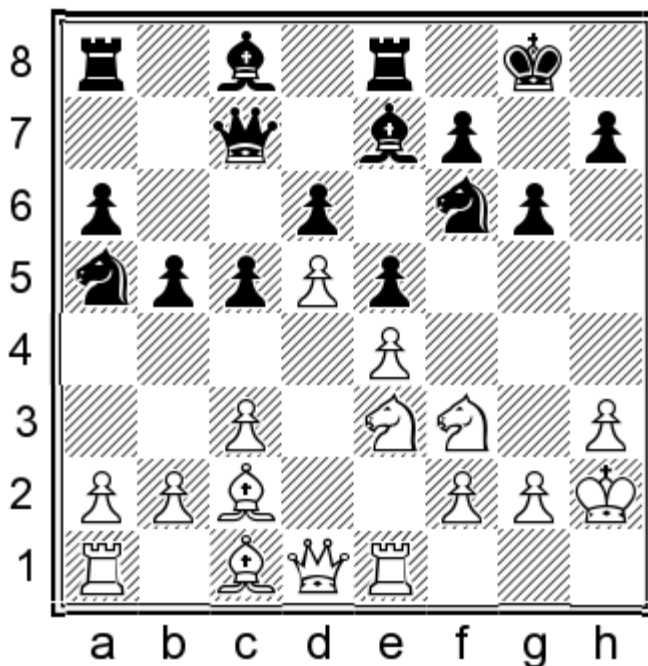
14...♖e8

A mysterious rook move? After all that about ...f7-f5, he moves the rook off the f-file? Again, there is a logical reason, actually several: Black wants to redeploy the bishop to f8 and g7 (after ...g7-g6, which does support ...f7-f5) and also give himself some "horizontal" defense with the option of the queen rook and queen defending along the second rank.

15.♔h2

White, too, has logical moves: after g2-g4 and ♘f1-g3, he will want his king rook on g1 to lend support to the attack. And lest we forget, the rook on g1 being opposite the black king can become important as things open up. Black always has to bear that in mind and will often move his king off the file.

15...g6 16.♘e3!!



And yes, you can go to e3 as well! Because Black was clever enough to play ...♖c8, White can't play the desired 16.g4 as with 16...♞d7 17.♘g1 h5 the attack with the ♞+♗ battery along the c8-h3 diagonal gives the initiative to Black!

16...♙f8 17.g4 ♗g7 18.♞g1

Even though there are a white pawn, black pawn, and black bishop in-between, Black takes ♞g1 seriously.

18...♜h8 19.♘g5!?

An intriguing move because playing 19...h6 only further weakens Black's position. It would be wiser, though, to challenge the knight a different way with 19...♙h6, especially before the knight can retreat to h3.

19...♞f8 20.h4

This adds to White's plan: if the knight gets chased, he can gallop to h3 and then support f4.

20...♘g8 21.♚e2

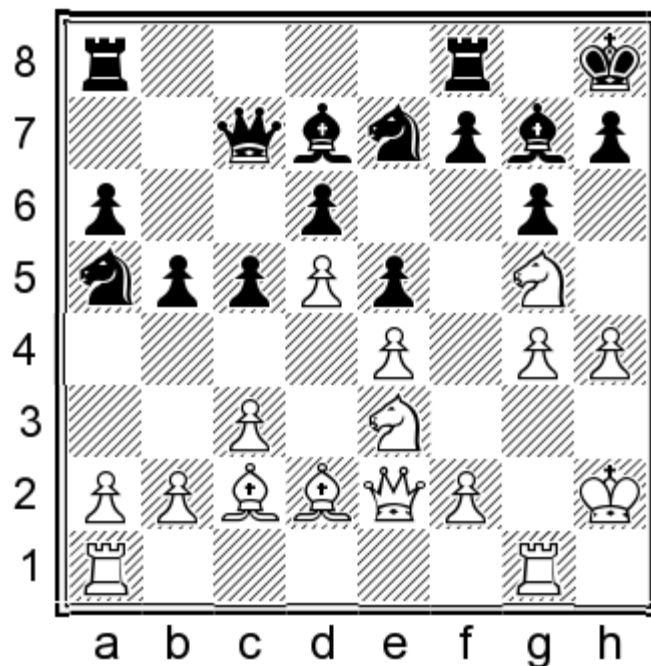
White may have been concerned about Black's playing ...♘a5-c4 at some point to liquidate that dangerous knight on e3. This stops that idea.

21...♙d7 22.♙d2

Connecting his rooks, which, as you have seen, can be dangerous if White pries open the h-file after a proper h4-h5 move.

22...♘e7

See how that ...f7-f5 idea for Black pops up again as the rook has returned to f8 after ...♙g7. Each side had the time to maneuver to implement a strategy. However, White gets the first shot in!



23.♘f5! gxf5

23...♘xf5 24.gxf5! ♜c4 25.♙c1 h6 26.♘f3! ♜h7 27.b3 ♜b6 28.♚e3 ♞g8 29.f6 ♙f8 30.♞h1 ♚d8 31.♘g5+ hxg5 32.hxg5 ♞h8 33.♜g2+ ♜g8 34.♞xh8+ ♜xh8 35.♚g3 ♜g8 36.♙e3 ♚c8 37.♞h1, winning. If you don't open the

line for your rook at g1, you can end up with this: 24.exf5 ♖c4 25.♙c1 ♚d8 26.♘f3 ♚c8 27.h5 gxf5 28.♘h4 e4 29.gxf5 ♜e8 30.♙xe4 ♙xf5 31.♘xf5 ♚xf5 32.♙xf5 ♜xe2 33.h6 ♙xc3!. Or 23...♙f6 24.♘h7! (24.♘xe7 ♙xe7 25.f4 may be worth investigating as an idea, but perhaps is better with b2-b3 already played) 24...♘h7 25.g5 ♙g7 26.♘xe7 ♜ae8 27.♘f5. Tartakower noted that taking the knight with the bishop or knight would only open the g-file for no material compensation.

24.gxf5 f6 25.♘h7!

You have to know how to break down a castled position.

25...♙e8

Desperately trying to keep the queen out of h5 (nothing else works: 25...♜g8 26.♘xf6; 25...♜f7 26.♚h5 ♘g8 27.♙h6; 25...♘h7 26.♚h5+ ♘g8 27.♜xg7+ – remember the ol' rook sac! – 27...♘xg7 28.♜g1+ ♘g6 29.♚xg6+ ♘h8 30.♚h6#), but White has the usual other options:

26.♜xg7!

26.♘xf8 ♙xf8 makes it harder. Don't just go grabbing for material when you have your opponent's king in a corner – mate him!

26...♘xg7 27.♘xf8 ♘xf8 28.♙h6+ ♘f7 29.♚h5+ ♘g6 30.fxg6+ ♘g8 31.♚f5

31.♙f8 c4 32.♚h6 ♚a7 33.♘h1 ♚d7 34.g7 ♚h3+ 35.♘g1 ♚g4+ 36.♘f1 ♚h5 37.♚xf6 would have been exciting and equally successful for White.

31...♚e7 32.♜g1 ♘c4 33.♙c1 ♙d7 34.♚f3 ♜f8 35.b3 ♘b6 36.h5

Another important lesson: there are other sub-strategies to finish Black off. The two connected passed pawns are brutal.

36...f5

A last hurrah!

37.♙g5 fxe4 38.♚e2 ♚e8 39.♙xe4 ♙f5 40.♙h6 ♜f6 41.♚f3 1-0

An epic contest!

Before you get excessively confident, there are some nuances you should be aware of.

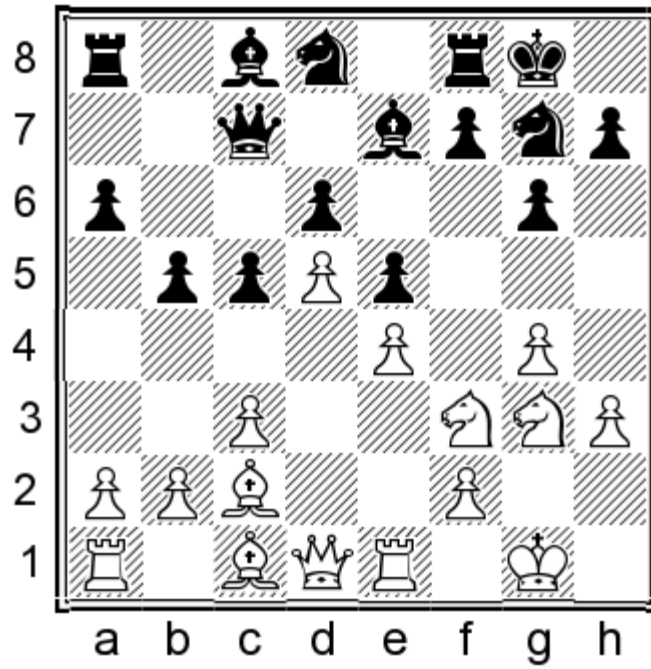
Here's a magnificent siege by the brilliant English player F.D. Yates – whose games, by the way, are some of the clearest and most instructive attacking performances you can find in any player's collected games. Worth looking for.

Model Game 53

Yates – Asztalos

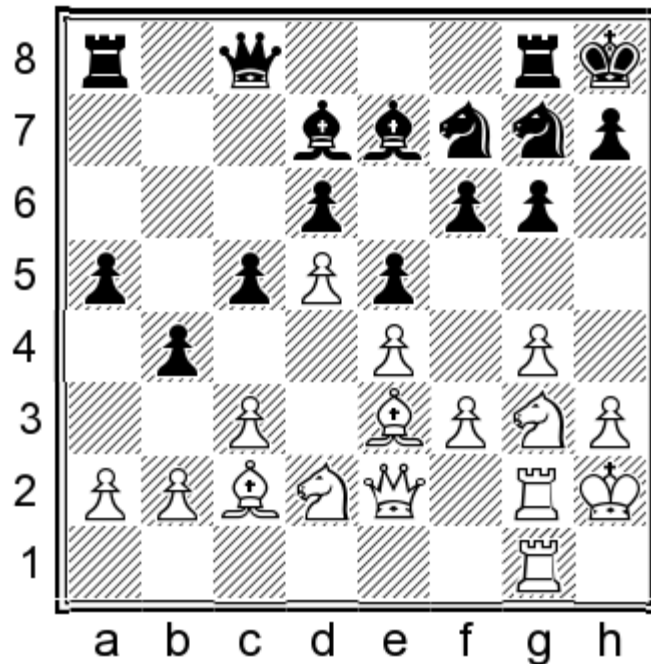
London 1927

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♜e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♚c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6 13.d5 ♘d8 14.♘f1 ♘e8 15.g4 g6 16.♘g3 ♘g7



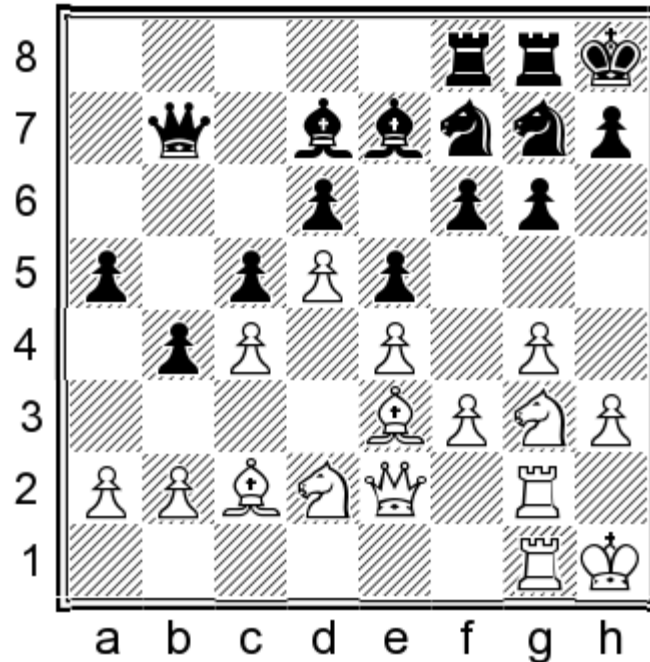
Here, after having seen Black fianchetto with his bishop, now we get to see Black fianchetto with his knight!
 The object, many times, is to threaten the previously mentioned freeing move ...f7-f5.
 However, Black has another idea. He is going to set up an “impregnable” fortress along his first two ranks.
 What do you do when encounter this style of play? Watch Yates’s patient buildup.

17. ♖h2 f6 18. ♙e3 ♘f7 19. ♞g1 ♙d7 20. ♞g2 ♖h8 21. ♚e2 ♞g8 22. ♘d2 ♚c8 23. ♞ag1 a5 24. f3 b4



By now, all this should be familiar in terms of White’s siege formation. But look at Black’s position! How do you get at a fellow with so many bodyguards?
 The principles are still the same. Yates keeps the game closed on the other side with c3-c4 and plays his king to h1 to get his rook on h2. Remember what we said about putting a rook opposite the black king.

25.c4 ♖b7 26.♔h1 ♜af8



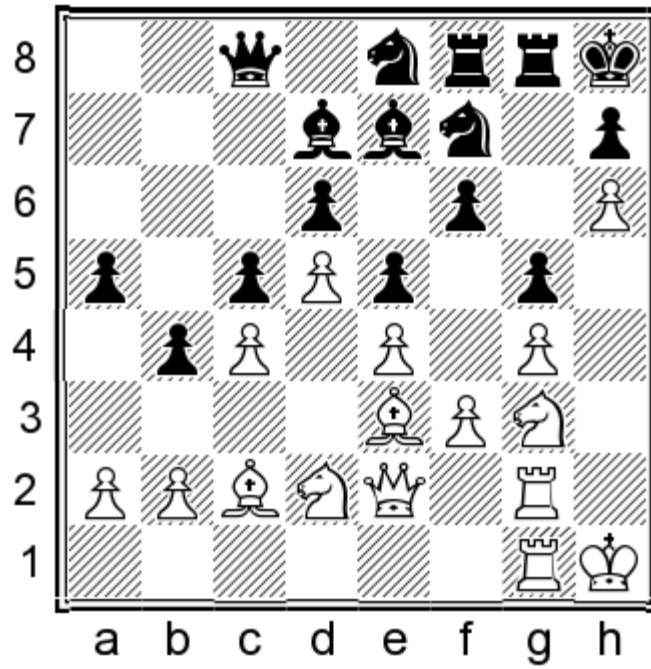
There comes a point in every buildup in chess when you have to actually act! The obvious target is the pawn on g6. If we get to open the h-file by exchanging the h-pawn we are about to advance, then getting to the king will be easy. Black, on the other hand, will try and keep it closed. Let's see what happens!

27.h4 ♖c8 28.h5 g5

As we mentioned, Black is not being cooperative. At this point, White realizes that allowing Black to blockade the position with 29...h6 must not be allowed. There would be no way to break through then, no matter how brilliant he is.

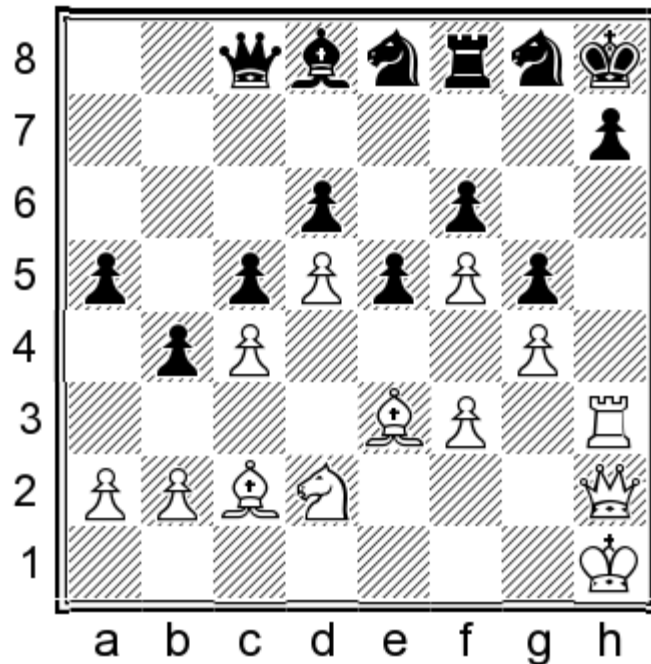
Thus, the coming pawn sacrifice is made on positional principles. If Black takes it, White will be able to build tremendous pressure on the rook file.

29.h6 ♘e8



Not all Nf5 moves are sacrifices! Look at that dominating outpost. Black will not be able to ignore its presence for long. In one sense the knight is being sacrificed: he gives up his life for his fellow knight, who after exf5 finds an unchallenged home on e4.

30. Nf5!! Qd8 31. Rh2 Rg6 32. Rg3 Qxf5 33. exf5 Rhx6 34. Rhx6 Nhx6 35. Wh2 Ng8 36. Rh3

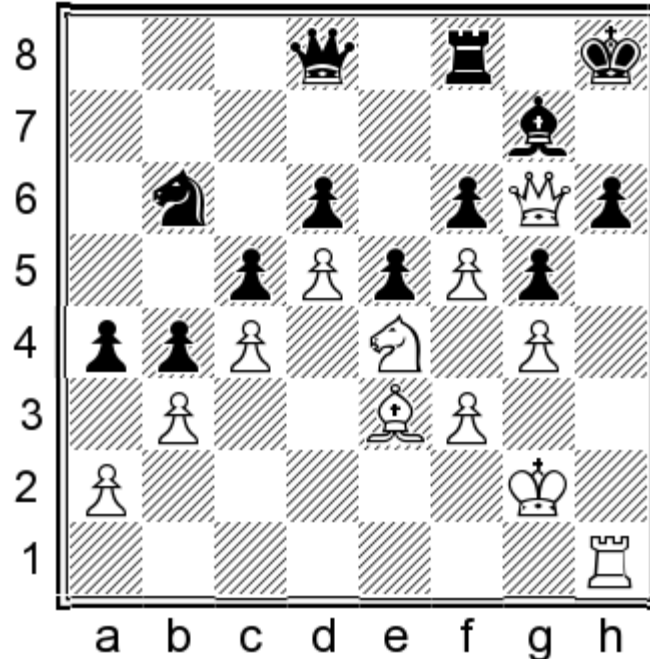


This is the position we were talking about previously. Black has won a pawn, but the resulting “unmasking” of the queen/rook battery on h7 is a huge threat. Note how Yates, having seemingly optimized his queen and rook positions, now sets about improving the positions of his minor pieces. And Black can only pass the time rearranging his deck chairs on the Titanic.

36... Rf7 37. Qa4 Qe7 38. Ne4 Wd8 39. Og1!!

A wonderful move! Yates has all day and decides to further improve his queen and rook by putting the queen in front. The king consequently makes way. If you think, as Yates did, in terms of what position you want to achieve, then you will find moves like ♔g1 relatively easy to discover.

39...♘c7 40.♚c2 ♘a8 41.♙h1 ♘b6 42.♙c6 ♙f8 43.b3 ♞g7 44.♚h2 ♙e7 45.♚h5 a4 46.♔g2 ♚b8 47.♙e8 ♚d8 48.♙g6 h6 49.♙f7 ♙f8 50.♙xg8 ♞xg8 51.♚f7 ♙g7 52.♚g6 ♞f8



Now is the moment for the coup de grâce.

53.♙xg5 1-0

In view of 53...fxg5 54.♘xg5 ♚xg5 55.♚xg5 ♞f6 56.♚h5.

I hope those of you who worry over openings will now have a deeper appreciation of how certain ideas flow naturally out of certain opening systems. Just consider what role the single opening concept of the knight path ♘b1-d2-f1-g3-f5 played in the middlegame.

For the sake of your chess development, you should not just memorize moves. Learn the middlegame plans, play over master games with your favorite lines, and really make a point of studying the themes you discover.

It is equally important to note that what is presented here is not the only possible strategy. It is one classic strategy you should know. Modern Ruy López players from Geller and Fischer to Anand and a host of others have put forward other themes: dynamic play on the queenside, keeping the center fluid, and even finding alternative ways to treat the d4-d5 closed positions.

Rather than trying to win in under 30 moves with offbeat openings, give the Ruy López a try. The richness of the opening for both sides will give you a whole new appreciation of the complex tapestry of chess. To give you a small survey of the richness, here is the book review. By the way, I hope you check back in the Primer about the flaw in the Schliemann that came back to bite me!

Challenging the Ruy López

(Adapted from a book review in *Chess Life* [Sept. 2010], with additional comments)

When the Spanish cleric Ruy López de Segura published his book on chess in 1561, he could not imagine the theoretical struggle he was initiating by advocating 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5. The move already appeared in the Göttingen manuscript in 1490 and in Lucena in 1497, but López's few lines of analysis raised it from a newborn to a toddler. It wasn't that it became a heated battle right away. By 1837, Alexandre's *Encyclopédie des échecs* devoted a whole 6 lines to it, none going beyond move 13.

In that book, there was López's analysis which opted for 3...♙c5 followed by 4.c3. Thus commenced the first theoretical dispute. López went with 4...♟ge7 and 4...♞e7. Cozio chose 4...♟f6. Salvio liked 4...d6 and Lolli favored 4...♞f6.

So, what's changed in 450 years? In one way, absolutely nothing has changed. Everybody has got their own idea about what to do with it and how to fight against it. Of course, the variations go into the first 30+ moves almost as a rule. One look at the Marshall Attack books for the past 50 years will convince you of this, and there is still no definitive conclusion about that!

One need look no further than the current in-print books about the Ruy López. Ivan Sokolov with his *The Ruy López Revisited* (New In Chess, 2009), or Sabino Brunello's *Attacking the Spanish* (Quality Chess, 2009) or Miloš Pavlović's *Fighting the Ruy López* (Everyman Chess, 2009) and Johnsen and Johannessen with their *The Ruy López: A Guide for Black* (Gambit, 2007) all take Black's side with a variety of different approaches.

One would think that if all these great opening theoreticians devoted countless hours to a book on how to defend the Spanish Opening, they would all come to the same conclusion. Not a chance! They all come to one similar conclusion: Black can defend the Ruy López! This is a far cry from Larry Evans's comment in *MCO-10*: "In fact, it may be said that the only thing wrong with the Ruy López is the Sicilian Defense."

According to these present-day authors, there are a host of defenses to White's opening strategy. J and J make a case for the Zaitsev Variation (1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♞e8).

Pavlović has his own ideas for using the Marshall Attack (1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 ♟xd5 10.♟xe5 ♟xe5 11.♞xe5 c6 12.d4 ♙d6 13.♞e1 ♞h4 14.g3 ♞h3).

Then, there are the real troublemakers. Brunello has three systems for you to look at: the Marshall Attack, the Schliemann or Jänisch (1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 f5), and the new kid on the block, the Gajewski (1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♟a5 10.♙c2 d5).

Sokolov's book is a nightmare for players of White. Not only does he tout the Jänisch, but he offers up the Delayed Jänisch (3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 f5), the Cozio (3...♟ge7), the Smyslov (3...g6), and the Bird's (3...♟d4), but he comes full circle with our buddy from 1561 by spending almost fifty pages on the Classical Variation (3...♙c5). Now, White has to be ready for anything starting with move three!

Of course, White may do his own opting out of the main line with the Exchange Variation (3...a6 4.♙xc6) or the C.A.R.L. (Center Attack Ruy López) lines with 6.d4 or even 5.d4. In *Confessions of a Grandmaster*, Andy Soltis confesses, "I'm reluctant to admit that I've never played the main line of the Ruy López...Once in a U.S. Championship, I got as far as move eight against Reshevsky but chickened out at the last minute with 9.d4..."

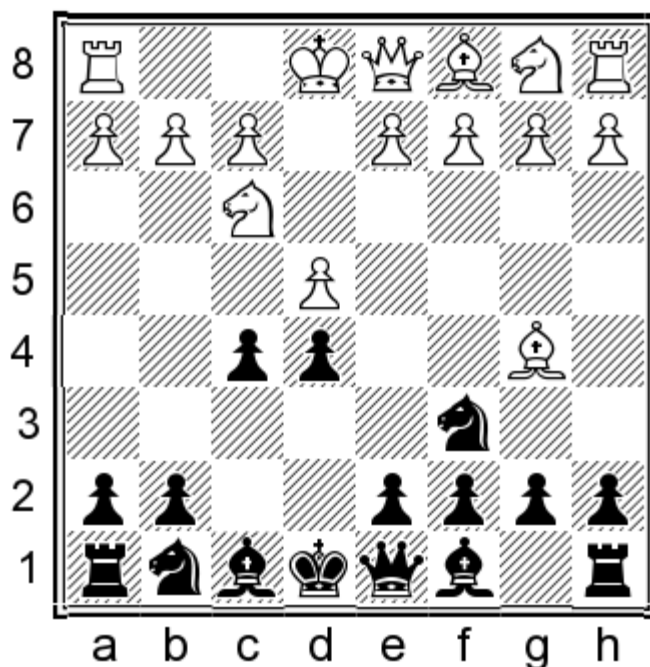
Thus, you have two groups of players. The first group is ready to dive into the main line and go with positional play like the Zaitsev and others or go with counterattacking play with the Marshall or the Gajewski. The second group generally wants to avoid all that with an early deviation. To paraphrase Evans's comment, the only thing wrong with the Marshall is that you never get to it, and heaven forbid somebody plays 3.♙c4 or 3.d4 or even 2.f4! Mihail Marin has a whole book on these other open games in his oddly titled *Beating the Open Games* (Quality Chess, 2007). Shouldn't it be, "*Winning with the Open Games*"? And even he has a section on the Exchange Variation of the Ruy López for some unfathomable reason. It is, however, an

excellent resource, and we recommend it, *en passant*.

Rather than take each book and go over its good and bad points, the best approach is to take the opening step by step and see what each has to contribute to this ongoing historical discussion.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5

The obvious first choice of most “early deviators” is the Schliemann/Jänisch Defense. Marshall loved it. Bisguier beat Spassky with it, and Spassky even played it! These days GM Tseitlin wrote a book on it with quite a few of his own games, and GM Radjabov lets everybody know it’s coming! It’s perfect for American tournament play. Black is playing for a win and avoids all those nasty early deviations by White. After 3...f5, the theory is just as crazy, maybe crazier, than the main lines.



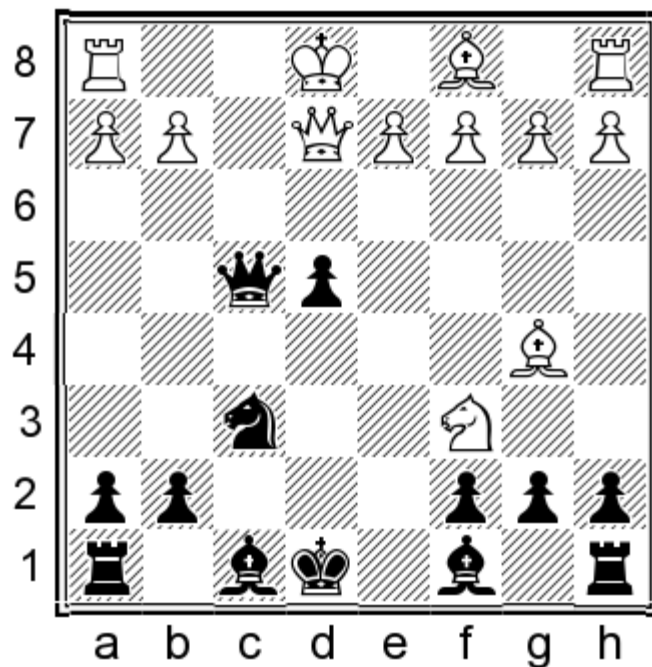
Two of our authors cover this defense. Sokolov’s main weapon comes after this well-known sequence of moves: **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 f5 4.♘c3 fxe4 5.♘xe4 d5 6.♘xe5 dxe4 7.♘xc6 ♔g5**

He thinks the old line loses after 7...♚d5 8.c4 ♚d6 9.♘xa7+.

8.♚e2 ♘f6 9.f4

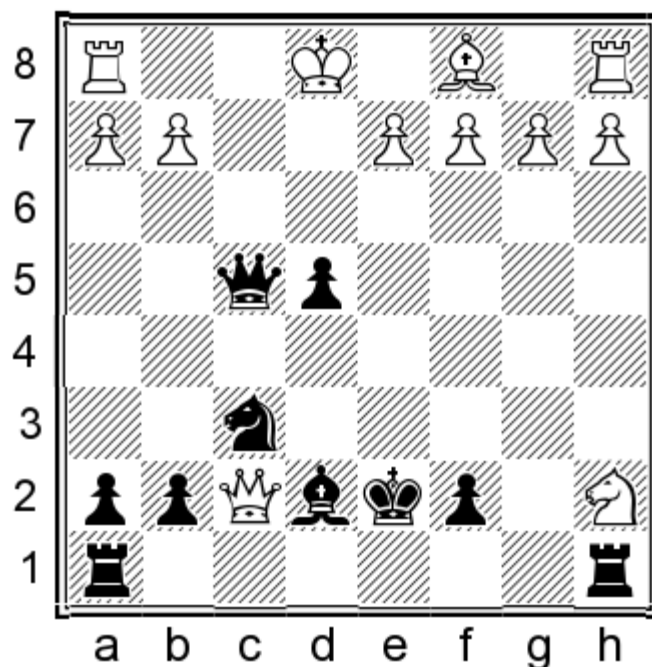
Sokolov notes that the following may be White’s best try: 9.♘xa7+ ♙d7 10.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 11.f4! ♚f5.

9...♚xf4 (9...♚h4+ is bad – Sokolov):



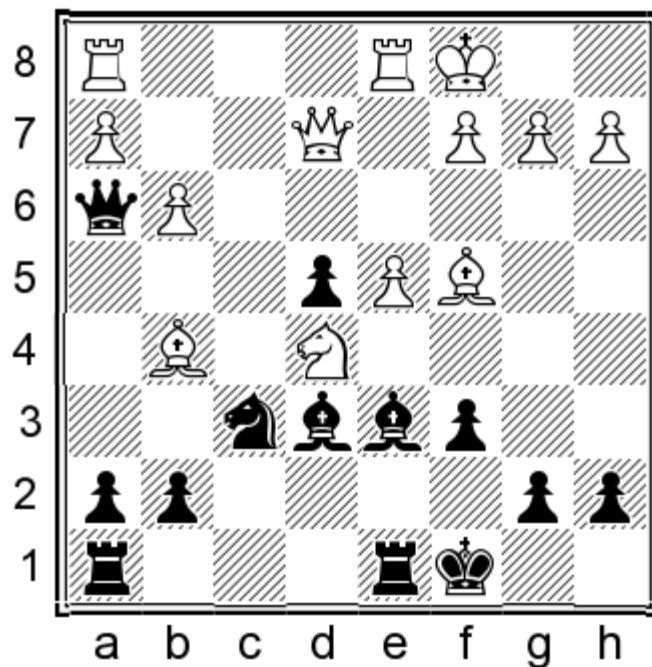
And, now, in this position for crazed lunatics, we have two critical roads:

10. ♖xa7+ ♜d7 11. ♜xd7+ ♔xd7 12. ♚b5+ ♔e6 13. ♚b3+ ♔d7 14. ♚xb7 ♜d6 15. ♚b5+ ♔e6 16. ♚b3+ ♔d7 17. ♚f7+ ♜e7



According to our author, this is playable for Black. What a mess! Staunton once wrote in annotating a position like this that he couldn't see how either player could save the game.

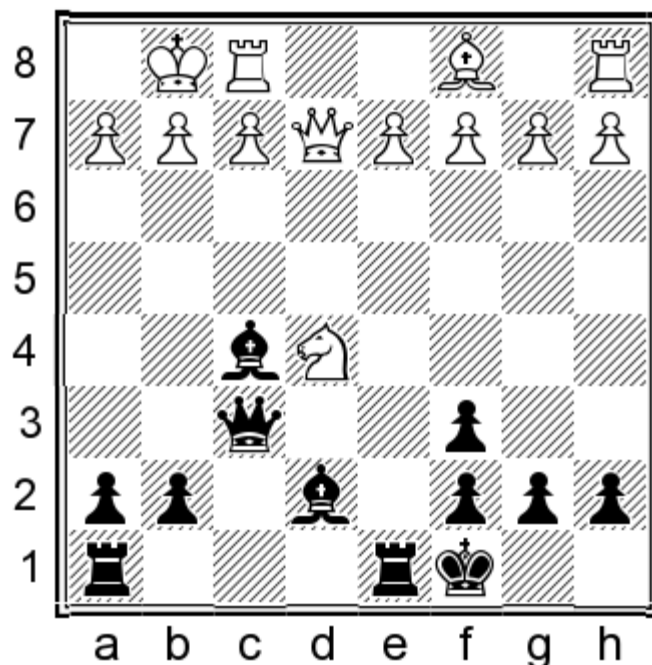
The other road: 10. ♜e5+ c6 11. d4 ♚h4+ 12. g3 ♚h3 13. ♜c4 ♜e6 14. ♜g5 ♜d6 15. 0-0-0 0-0-0, and we get a relatively normal-looking (for the Jänisch) position:



Sokolov is not done with viable ...f7-f5 defenses. He also supports **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 f5 4.♗c3 fxe4 5.♗xe4 ♗f6 6.♗xf6+**

6.d3 d5 is not covered; he gives as playable for Black 6.♚e2 d5 7.♗xf6+ gxf6 8.d4 ♘g7 [8...e4 9.♗h4 ♚e7 10.♙f4 ♜g8 11.0-0-0 ♙d7 12.♙xc7 ♙g4 13.f3 ♚xc7 14.fxg4 ♚f4+ 15.♙b1 ♚xg4 16.♚xg4 ♜xg4 17.g3 0-0-0 18.♙e2 ♜g8 19.♜hf1 ♙e7] 9.dxe5 0-0 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.e6 ♜e8 12.0-0 ♜xe6.

6...♚xf6 7.♚e2 ♙e7 8.♙xc6 dxc6 9.♗xe5 ♙f5 10.0-0 0-0-0, and Black has “good play for the pawn.” So, if you like kingside attacking chances for a pawn, here’s what you can set up:



(Let me insert an editorial note here. Playing 3...g6 or 3...♙c5 or 3...f5 fits in with our thematic idea of picking openings. You can avoid the complexity, if that is your wish, by choosing one of those. The book will help you. The

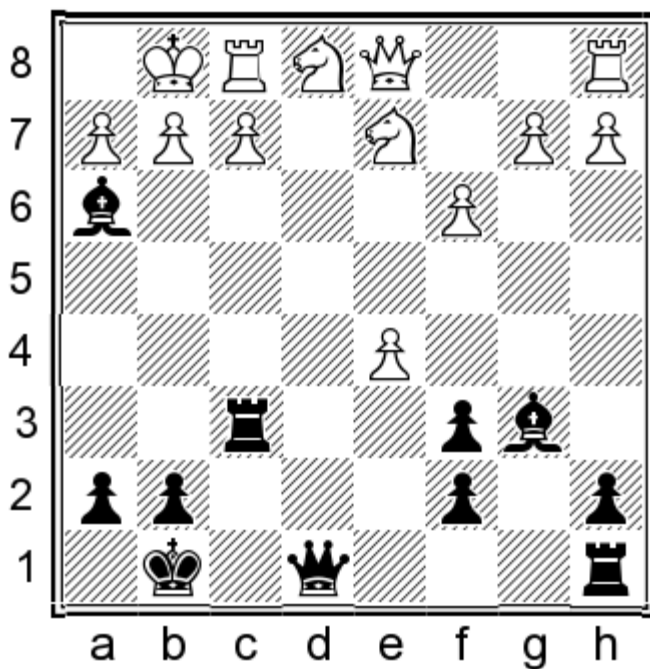
Smyslov line (3..g6) is probably the most solid. The only line left at this point to play in the Schliemann is 5...♘f6 as after 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 f5 4.♗c3 fxe4 5.♗xe4 d5 6.♗xe5 dxe4 7.♗xc6 neither the ...♙d5 nor the ...♙g5 lines seem to be holding up.)

These are the crucial concerns for both sides. Sokolov devotes 115 pages of analysis to the Schliemann. He covers the recently popular 4.d3 lines as well as 4.d4 and handles those with a good degree of thoroughness. The 4.d3 line attempts to turn the Schliemann into a positional struggle based on Black's weakness along the a2-g8 diagonal, usually involving the white queen's ending up on c4.

Brunello, who uses the 5...♗f6 line as the main weapon, covers 4.d3 with as much respect as Sokolov does. What's interesting about their presentations is what comes out of this position after **1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 f5 4.d3 fxe4 5.dxe4 ♗f6 6.0-0 ♙c5**

Brunello mentions only 6...d6, but Sokolov gives 6...d6 7.♙d3 a6! as quite viable.

7.♙xc6 bxc6 8.♗xe5 0-0 9.♙g5 ♙e8 10.♙xf6 ♗xf6 11.♗d3 ♙d4 12.c3 ♙b6 13.♗d2 d5 14.exd5 ♙h3! 15.♗e1:



Both authors seem to like the pawn sacrifice line, and here Brunello gives 15...♙g6 as best while Sokolov favors 15...♙g6. Where Sokolov was more thorough on move 6, Brunello really gets into this position, which will make people curious who look at this position through *Rybka* or *Fritz* and find 15...♙g6. This characterizes both books. Some lines fascinate one master. Other lines fascinate the other master. Buy both if you're going to play the line. Just remember, though, that the purpose of going into the Schliemann was to avoid knowing all those complicated main lines and deviations!

We're still on move 3 in our overview! Brunello covers the Gajewski, admits it's not the last word, and nobody else covers it. He also covers the Marshall. More about that later.

Sokolov deals with the other third moves. The "Berlin Wall" is not covered because it is not offbeat anymore – Arthur Bisguier is no longer the only master in the world playing it! He recommends the Cozio as an occasional weapon and Bird's Defense as playable with White getting a small edge if he knows what he's doing, which is basically true of most decent lines with Black as Sokolov points out.

Two pleasant surprises were the Smyslov Variation (also known as the Fianchetto Defense) and the Classical Variation. What was pleasant was a contrast. With the line that Smyslov made famous, he devotes a decidedly simple and correct ten pages, and – voilà! – you have an understandable defense to the Ruy López. The other approach with the Classical was to devote 60 pages to demonstrating that it's playable. He shows admirable objectivity by suggesting ways in which White can improve.

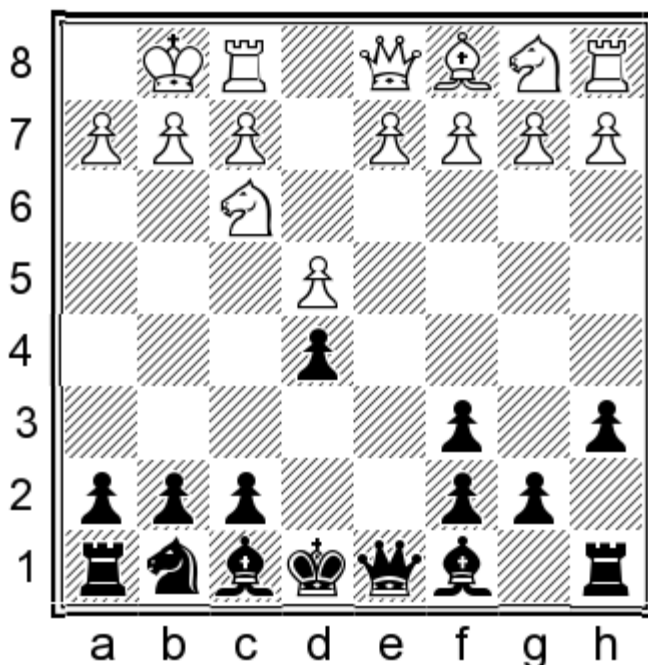
Final judgment on the two books? Both are good. Both have ideas the other does not. If you can only buy one on your budget and you're into avoiding 3...a6, go with Sokolov.

Let's continue our little journey through the moves. We left off with 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5. Now, the famous Morphy move:

3...a6

Now, we have to stop again because if you decide to defend the Ruy López, you have to be ready for the Exchange Variation with 4.♙xc6. Brunello should probably have dumped the Gajewski in favor of covering early Ruy deviations as long as he was doing the Marshall as well. So, he's eliminated from any comprehensive study of 3...a6.

We are left with Pavlović and the two Norwegians. We have some really divergent views here. After 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0:



Pavlović goes with 5...♙d6 6.d4 exd4 7.♙xd4 f6. Both Pavlović and Andrew Kinsman (*The Spanish Exchange*, Batsford, 1998) are rather keen on this defensive approach. Pavlović enhances this assessment with an excellent explanation of the fundamental ideas underlying the various approaches White and Black can take. Bravo!

Johnsen and Johannessen go with 5...f6 6.d4 exd4 7.♘xd4 c5. Apparently for variety's sake, they also throw in 5...♘e7 6.♘xe5 ♙d4 7.♙h5!?, and you have a much livelier position than their other suggestion.

One curiosity is that neither book dealt with this "...♘f4 line" popularized by Gert Iskov: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0, 5...♙g4 6.h3 h5 7.d3 ♙f6 8.♘bd2 ♘e7 9.♙e1 ♘g6 10.d4 ♘f4 11.dxe5

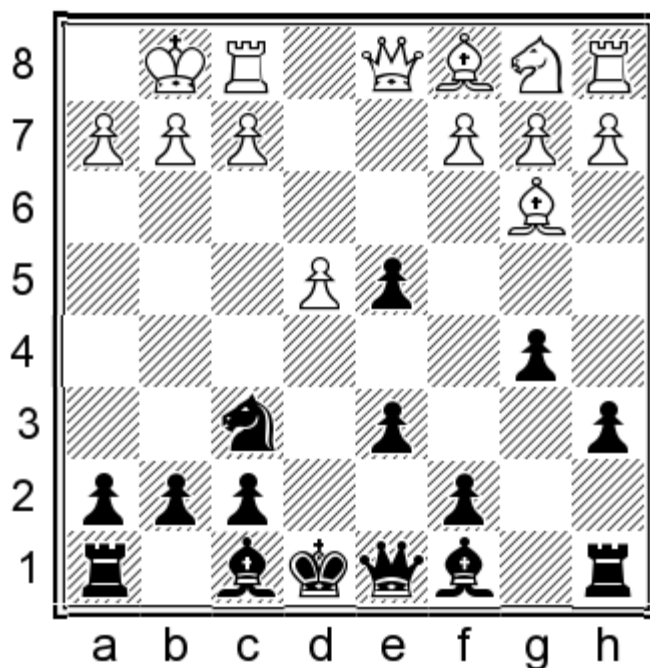
The fun line runs 11.hxg4? hxg4 12.♘h2 ♘xg2!! 13.♙xg2 [13.♞e2 ♘f4 14.dxe5 ♞xe5 15.♘df1 ♘xe2+ 16.♞xe2 f5] 13...♞xh2+! 14.♙xh2 ♞xf2+ 15.♙h1 g3, and White can resign.

11...♞g6 12.♘h4 ♙xd1 13.♘g6 ♘xg6 14.♞xd1 0-0-0, with equal play for Black. Another curiosity is that both books give scanty coverage to 5.d4, which is a good deal tougher than either one lets on, but their lines are OK. To return to our main path, we now have:

4.♙a4 ♘f6

At this point, the authors deal with 5.d4 as though it just transposed into C.A.R.L. – the Center Attack Ruy López, which really comes after 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.d4 exd4 with the choice of 7.e5 or the generally preferred 7.♞e1. They all seem oblivious to the other option Black has besides 5.d4 exd4.

In the December 1947, issue of *Chess Review*, Al Horowitz, who had done an analysis of C.A.R.L. in his August issue, pointed out that he thought Black's best continuation was 5...♘xd4 6.♘xd4 (6.♘xe5 ♘e6 7.0-0 b5 8.♙b3 ♙b7) 6...exd4 7.0-0 b5 8.♙b3 d6:



White has no real advantage here, and the amusing part that Horowitz points out is that neither 7.♞xd4 nor 9.♞xd4 can be played because of the Noah's Ark Trap with ...c7-c5-c4. This seems to be an important omission as Black should be aware of different and viable ways of meeting this attack. There is also the possibility of other fifth moves for White which are rarely seen – 5.♘c3 and 5.d3. Both books give adequate (if minimal) coverage, which is most likely due to their rarity and the need to reserve space for important stuff. Nonetheless, they can't be underestimated, as Sir George Thomas demonstrated many times with the former, while Steinitz and Anderssen were happy to play the latter.

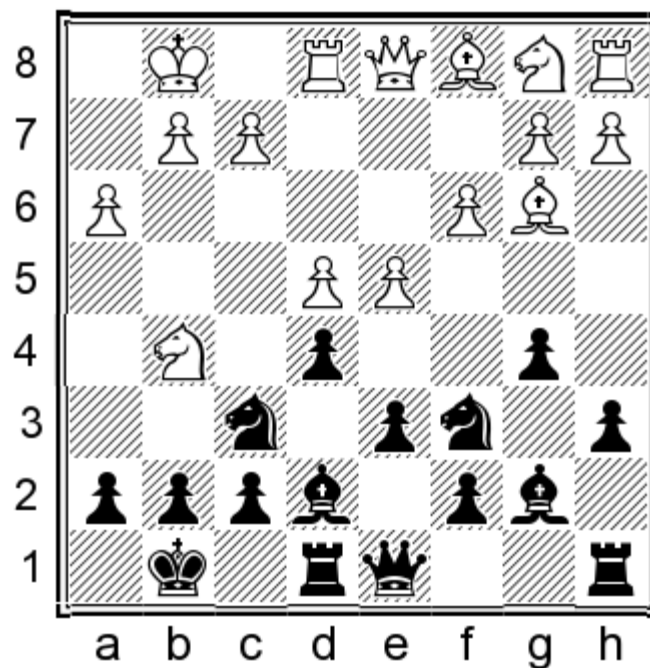
It was good to see both authors treat the Worrall Attack with some attention, although we should point out to our Norwegian friends that 5.♞e2 is the *Wormald* Attack. Pavlović treats it as simply a transposition. It can transpose, but there are differences after 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e2, which is the real Worrall Attack. In *The Art of Bisguier*, our favorite GM also misuses the nomenclature, and he played it a lot! It is time to straighten out the labels. A plus for Johnsen and Johannessen is that they do cover Flohr's 5.♙xc6 which tries to get an exchange line with a hopefully misplaced knight on f6. Pavlović ignores this possibility.

5.0-0 ♖e7

How did they do with the real C.A.R.L. with 6.d4 exd4? Considering that there was a book written on it, players of Black will have to do their homework to know the tricks White has up his sleeve here. Suffice it to say that many alternative moves are left out for both sides. Another opening which gave Black fits for a little while about 40 years ago was the DERLD. This acronym stands for the Delayed Exchange Ruy López Deferred, which starts with 6.♖xc6 dxc6 and then Black has to deal with some tough main lines, 7.d3, 7.♘c3, and 7.♙e1 being among the strongest. Perhaps because it has occurred more frequently in master play, they give this variation a decent overview. Bonus point to Johnsen and Johannessen for taking the time to show how to meet 6.c3?!. Another minor omission for the Serbian GM.

6.♙e1 b5 7.♖b3

The opening train now stops at Norway. Johnsen and Johannessen go their own way here. Instead of heading toward the Marshall Attack, they recommend the Zaitsev Variation. They humorously point out that this opening is responsible for more grandmaster draws than any other – helpful when you're Black against Karpov! Here it is: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♖b5 a6 4.♖a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♖e7 6.♙e1 b5 7.♖b3, 7...d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♖b7 10.d4 ♙e8 11.♘g5 ♙f8 12.♘f3 ♙e8 13.♘g5, and you have your repetition of position:



The Zaitsev is a highly sophisticated defensive system. Some fellow amateurs have expressed to me that it is too hard to understand. OK, chess is a challenge. It is a good opening system, rich with possibilities, and it is explained in an exceptional manner by Johnsen and Johannessen. You can tell they really love this opening, that they have played it themselves and love the chess it produces. You will learn from these guys if you're up to the challenge. That means you'll grow as a chessplayer, and that has to be good. You have two great teachers for thirteen cents a page! Amateurs (and many GMs) have a fondness for the Marshall, though, so let's go there.

7...0-0

Initiating an invitation to the Marshall Attack instead of playing 7...d6. At this point, many players of White leave the station with 8.d4, 8.a4, 8.h3, or 8.d3. Brunello gets on board again for the first two.

Pavlović recommends only 8.d4 d6, while Brunello gives 8...♟xd4 as well, showing it as dynamic and playable. For 8.h3, Pavlović opts for 8.h3 ♟b7 9.d3 d6 while Brunello spends his time on 8.h3 ♟b7 9.d3 d5. This is really interesting. If you've come this far, you've ditched the Zaitsev book because you probably want to play ...d7-d5 type games rather than ...d7-d6 games. If so, then Brunello is your obvious choice in terms of style of play. If you're not comfortable with ...d7-d6 Spanish games, then don't play them! With 8.d3, however, you're going to have to play ...d7-d6 at some point, but at least White hasn't got a pawn on d4. Both authors agree on 8.a4 b4 as the antidote to the this anti-Marshall. Back in the '60s and '70s this was so frowned on! People who understood chess would play 8...♟b7!. This is a testament to not getting too attached to theory.

8.c3 d5

There is one more anti-Marshall: the Thomas Emery Variation, 9.d4, which was given some attention back in the late '60s in *Chess Review*. Both authors follow accepted theory and Black is OK. Brunello gets the edge here for considering a few more lines.

9.exd5 ♟xd5 10.♟xe5 ♟xe5 11.♞xe5 c6

Finally! We've made it – the Marshall main line! Both books go into it in agonizing detail. Given space constraints, here are two lines you really need to know about: 12.d3, and 12.d4 ♟d6 13.♞e1 ♞h4 14.g3 ♞h3 15.♞e4. The well-known lines of the Marshall are covered well by both. These two moves are starting to show up more and there is not as much current theory on them.

After 15.♞e4, both works go to 15...g5!. Pavlović then spends some quality time on 16.♞f1 ♞h6!, which he tells us he has revived with personal analysis, and it looks pretty good. Brunello sticks with 16...♞h5. However, your reviewer found himself in this line, relying on Brunello, against an ICCF master and after hours of analysis found Brunello's presentation coming up short.

The 12.d3 line (to assist a later ♞e1-e4) is a relatively new swamp for players to wade through. Pavlović has his own ideas with 12.d3 ♟d6 13.♞e1 ♞h4 14.g3 ♞h3 15.♞e4 ♞f5 16.♟d2 ♞g6 17.♞e1 f5 18.a4 (18.f4!! – “one of the best moves ever played by White in the Marshall” – and then shows how to meet it) 18...♟h8 19.axb5 ♟f4 20.♟c4 ♟h3+ 21.♟g2 f4 22.♟xd6 ♞xd6 23.f3 (23.♞f3 ♟d7!!) 23...cxb5. This is wild stuff as you watch “decisive” go to “equal” on your chess engine with that 23...♟d7.

To Pavlović's credit, he also gives the 13...♟f5 line. Brunello looks only at 13...♟f5. It's a wonder at times that it never occurs to these authors that players of the *white* pieces might want to buy their books to see what the other fellow is up to. Can you imagine the chagrin of a player with White running into Pavlović's analysis for the first time simply because he bought only Brunello's book?

As with the other books, though, there are no clear-cut winners. If you're a serious tournament player, you're going to have to know all the minefields along the way. Buying a single book can be dangerous, as we've tried to demonstrate here. Maybe the best approach is to get a couple of friends together, each buying one book, and form a study group. We used to do that before computers made us isolated pawns!

So, here we are 450 years later. We know a lot more, yet the truth escapes us.

16. Final Thoughts

In my forty years of teaching American history, I always made a point of making sure my students came away with a conceptual understanding of history. I was upfront to them about memorization as well. It's an important tool. You need a knowledge of names, events, legislation, Supreme Court decisions, and the different eras all of these happened in. The memorization was the base; the really important thing was to use that knowledge to support your opinions about higher-order questions.

In chess, it's the same way. What's the point of coming up with a big strategic plan to get into a winning endgame if you don't know the elements of endgame play? What's the point of playing an aggressive opening if you don't know how to implement the attacking plans? That's why Fred Wilson's book, *Simple Attacking Plans*, has filled a void. Those of you between 1200 (or lower!) and 1900 need to better understand the game. And, yes, you do have to memorize variations. Just make sure you understand what the moves are doing. Don't just play the moves.

What are the concepts I wanted to get across in this book about openings for the club player?

First, you need to accept the idea that your games are full of mistakes. That's OK! All of our games have mistakes. Yours are generally more frequent and have a tendency to fall into some common categories. That's why the Primer is so important. You should be going through your games to see if these categories apply to you. Maybe you can create some new categories! I only picked three dozen! A very useful set of phrases I learned in the Army was, "No excuse, sir! I will make the correction." That's the first thing you need to do. Study your mistakes and eliminate them from your play.

Second, as we concentrated on the opening in this book, you probably noticed a "re-emphasizing" of certain ideas about what my fifty-plus years in chess has taught me:

1. Play what you're comfortable with.
2. Play openings you can grow with.
3. Don't try to pick systems that are too complicated or that promise you a winning attack in 30 moves or less.
4. I've given you openings that give you playable games with chances for the game to go in different directions, but which give you an opportunity to win. They all emphasize development and playing natural moves, with a few exceptions. None of them are too complicated or sophisticated to understand. There is no "straitjacket" series of moves to follow. You will find it easier to adapt to different replies. General principles will get you a long way in these openings if you simply understand the ideas presented here.
5. You need to play over games, especially your own, more than anything else. There are other tasks as well, as listed in the Primer, but, if I had to pick one, this would be it.

Third, yet not third in importance, is that you have to decide who you want to be. It's the first subject brought up in the Introduction. What's your goal – master? expert? A-player? serious player? Playing for fun? It's a very personal decision. If you're an adult player, with restrictions on the time that you can spend on chess, you'll go a long way with the openings presented here. If you're a scholastic player, these openings are introductions to possibilities for you. For any of you who are really serious, give some thought to the plea for the Ruy López.

Fourth, for all of you, look at the openings covered in here. Some are oriented toward endgames, some are oriented toward attacking play, some are positional in nature, and some are risky. You may not choose certain openings in here, but the openings you do seem to find yourself attracted to should fall into a certain pattern or style of play that you should take notice of.

Fifth, although I've chosen 1.e4 as the opening of preference for White, it doesn't mean that 1.d4, just like 1.c4

(and there are systems other than the Botvinnik), is bad. Based on my experience of going over amateur games to select for my newspaper column, there is more of a lack of understanding of the positional requirements for those openings than in the 1.e4 openings. If that's your choice, though, fine.

I have tried very hard to just be the veteran player at the club who sits down with you and makes suggestions on how to improve your opening play. The material here is not the last word on the best openings for you. You have that privilege. There are a good many valid hints, suggestions, and roads to take. I hope you take them more seriously than I did from that old TD that tried to help me.

Lastly, if you have questions on any opening matter, feel free to register on my message board (as given in the Introduction: <http://njscf.proboards.com/board/3>). You can even check into my puzzle column at www.arcamax.com (look for "games" and "chess"). Both are free and I'm friendly as are all of our contributors on the board. So, from my board here in Morristown, New Jersey, USA, to you at your board wherever you are, good luck and good chess!