

CHESS DEVELOPMENTS

Semi-Slav 5 Bg5

BRYAN PAULSEN

EVERYMAN CHESS



Chess Developments: Semi-Slav 5 Bg5

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- Includes the Botvinnik, Moscow, Anti-Moscow and Cambridge Springs
- Packed with key new ideas and critical lines

Bryan Paulsen is a National Master in the US. He has 10 years of experience coaching scholastic players and adults alike. He's also worked as an openings analyst for several titled players.

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by Bryan Paulsen

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Dedicated in loving memory to William James Kaucky (05/28/1972-10/02/2011)

This book is dedicated to the greatest man I will ever know, William James Kaucky (05/28/1972-10/02/2011), the man who became the father and family I never had growing up in our short time together. My memories with you will always be my most cherished, and words cannot express my gratitude for everything you did for me. None of this was possible without you.

EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES (formerly Cadogan Chess)

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Introduction

1 d4

One of the two classical methods of taking control of the centre and preparing rapid development. Unlike its cousin, 1 e4, White stakes out queenside space and looks to accrue positional advantages in place of kingside attacks and open positions.

1...d5

Following the dictates of classical chess - to control the centre with pawns - the logic of White's first move also applies to Black's possible first moves. Black prevents White from establishing the central pawn pair on d4 and e4, and takes his share of the space.

1...Nf6 is the most popular alternative, and can even reach the topic of this book after a bit of fencing. 2 c4 e6 sees Black 'threaten' the Nimzo-Indian in response to 3 Nc3, so White often plays 3 Nf3 in order to reduce the effectiveness of ...Bb4+. Black can now switch track from the Indian Defences (3...Bb4+ is the Bogó-Indian Defence, and 3...b6 the Queen's Indian Defence) with 3...d5 when White often continues in classical vein with 4 Nc3, after which 4...c6 brings about the Semi-Slav Defence, and 5 Bg5 is what this book is all about.

2 c4

This move introduces the Queen's Gambit. White hopes that by distracting the d-pawn from the centre he will have a useful central majority, and after recovery of the pawn, the better position as a result.

2...c6



The 'short' advance of Black's c-pawn introduces the Slav Defence to the Queen's Gambit. He refuses to trap his light-squared bishop behind his pawns, such as with 2...e6, and preserves maximum flexibility. One prominent aspect of the c-pawn is that it can easily become a future defender of his b-pawn after ...dxc4, and then a further ...b5 to keep the extra pawn.

2...dxc4 3 e4 represents the whole idea behind White's gambit; the c-pawn will prove too hot to hold on to, and the central pair restrict Black's mobility. Of course this is a topical position in its own right, but some people prefer to deny White any fun.

2...e6 is typically thought of as being the Queen's Gambit Declined, although it is sometimes used as a way to reach the Semi-Slav. Black defends the pawn in a simple manner, and opens up the potential development of the bishop on f8, and quick kingside development. The downside is that the bishop on c8 is trapped behind pawns, although this isn't fatal by any means. However, White has some additional options in contrast to 2...c6. One example is 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 c6 5 e3 with a position from which the Semi-Slav cannot truly be reached due to the lack of a threat to White's c-pawn.

3 Nc3

White continues to place pressure on Black's central strongpoint, and prepares a quick e4.

3 Nf3 is another popular move order quite likely to transpose into the Semi-Slav Defence after 3...Nf6 as White often sees nothing better than 4 Nc3. This is the move order I have chosen for the chapter introductions, because it is the most common one used to reach the subject of this book. There are other independent, important paths, but they are outside the scope of this book.

3...Nf6



Much like White's previous had two purposes, so does Black's response: d5 receives further support, and e4 is further controlled.

3...e6 is typically thought of as the Noteboom Semi-Slav due to some independent possibilities, but White can also play 4 e4 which is the Marshall Gambit. This is more relevant to adherents of the Noteboom, but for those desiring the Semi-Slav it is an unnecessary allowance.

4 Nf3

As White has no concrete threats as yet, he places his other knight on its most centrally active square. Now Black can use this opportunity to play as in the standard Slav Defence with 4...dxc4, or he can play 4...e6.

Instead, 4 cxd5 cxd5 brings about the Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence. Sadly, for Semi-Slav players, there is no perfect route to their beloved defence. White can always opt for something that takes the fun out of the game, but this is true of any opening.

4...e6

At long last the Semi-Slav Defence has appeared. At first sight the mixture of the moves ...c6 (typically played to develop the light-squared bishop outside of the pawn chain), and ...e6 (which usually relies on ...c5 in one move as a freeing break) leaves a strange impression, but there are other trumps in the position that benefit the move. Black has shored up his centre, and is now in a position to not just capture ...dxc4, but to make an earnest attempt to hold on to the gambit pawn with ...b5, while ...e6 has made any dynamic d4-d5 break much less effective. Now, at long last, White should set about a concrete decision. The 'safe' path is 5 e3, providing immediate protection to c4, but blocking in the bishop on c1. The classical, and optically most ambitious choice, however, is:

5 Bg5



This brings us, at long last, to the subject of this book. White has developed his pieces to active squares as fast as he possibly can. Black, for his part, has what I regard to be four important options from this point.

a) He can play 5...Be7, a quiet and solid move with a reputation for being passive. I call this the 'Queen's Gambit Declined Hybrid' due to the inclusion of a move commonly associated with that opening, and it is covered in [Chapter One](#).

b) He can play 5...Nbd7, a move whose apparently quiet nature only masks the potential complications stemming from future rapid pressure on the a5-e1 diagonal. This is typically called the Cambridge Springs Defence, and is covered in [Chapter Two](#).

c) He can play 5...dxc4, introducing very sharp play right from the outset should White take up the gauntlet. The famed Botvinnik Variation is covered in [Chapter Three](#).

d) Finally, he can play 5...h6, the Moscow Variation, a move that gives White the option of the solid and positional 6 Bxf6, covered in [Chapter Four](#), or the razor-sharp Anti-Moscow Gambit beginning with 6 Bh4, seen in [Chapter Five](#).

Thank you too to all of the people that wished me good fortune in this endeavour. There have been more than I can possibly list here, and I hope this effort does not disappoint them. This has been a learning experience, and I hope I greatly improve in my future attempts at writing.

Chapter One

The Queen's Gambit Declined Hybrid

([View in Game Format](#))

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 Be7



Black plays much as in the Queen's Gambit Declined (referred to as the QGD from here on), but with ...c6 included. Given ...c5 is Black's most usual freeing move in that opening, the fact Black has already lost a tempo should be considered a little disheartening. However, it isn't as easy as just claiming White is better on that premise alone. Passive play does not mean the side with the initiative can play however they please.

5...h6 6 Bh4 typically heads towards the Anti-Moscow Gambit, but there is an independent line that deserves a look, and belongs here. It could even be called the QGD-Moscow Hybrid. After 6...Be7!? the insertion of the two moves does appear to have a significant impact on the position, because White's options are considerably narrowed. The nuances are covered in [Grischuk-Tkachiev](#).

6 e3

Steady does it.

6 cxd5, as White may try in the Cambridge Springs Variation, is also possible, but doesn't work as well here. Due to White's early inclusion of Nf3 he has obtained an inferior version of the QGD, Exchange Variation, because ...Bf5 will prove unavoidable after 6...exd5: 7 Qc2 (7 e3 Bf5 is even easier for Black) 7...g6! 8 e3 (8 e4 dxe4 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 Qxe4+ Qe7 is nothing for White; Black has the bishop-pair, and d4 is a nice target for later use) 8...Bf5 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3. Despite access to a potential minority attack, White has very little in the way of prospects; minority attacks typically don't win games by themselves, and Black's problem piece has been comfortably solved.

6...0-0



The most flexible choice, keeping all variations related to cxd5 barred as a try for an edge. Alternatively:

a) 6...Nbd7 is possible, and quite likely to transpose. Given this greatly reduces the efficacy of any Exchange Slav structure, here 7 cxd5 is an independent option, and now 7...Nxd5 (7...cxd5 leaves the knight on d7 misplaced for the resulting play, and 7...exd5 is a QGD, Exchange Variation transposition more likely to be seen from the Cambridge Springs Variation) 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Bd3 0-0 10 0-0 Nxc3 11 bxc3 b6 12 e4 Bb7 13 Re1 Rfd8 14 a4 e5 was a bit more comfortable for White in M.Millstone-J.Roos, correspondence 2008. The central space and Black's restrained queenside give White the freer play, although Black remains solid.

b) 6...h6 isn't as demanding of White as it is on the previous move. Here 7 Bf4!? would be a 5 Bf4 QGD where Black has gained the often-useful ...h6, but chosen a passive line with an early ...c6. I am inclined to prefer White in that particular opening variation, but people could investigate the position further if they find 6...h6 to be of some particular interest. For my part I find it less exacting than on the previous move. Instead, 7 Bh4 transposes to 5...h6 and 7 Bxf6 Bxf6 can be reached from the Queen's Gambit Declined proper. The approaches involving the capture of the knight often only pose practical problems to the second player, but as they must be taken seriously, John Cox's recent work on the QGD, *Declining the Queen's Gambit*, could be referenced to work out the nuances. As is so often the case in this book, where true QGD positions arise, it feels prudent to direct the reader to that particular

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7 Qc2

White attempts to avoid the loss of tempo seen in 7 Bd3, and remain flexible. This probably isn't necessary, but neither is it ruled out as a try for an advantage. Others:

a) After 7 cxd5 cxd5! the knight on b8 can head to c6, and represents one reason 6...0-0 might reasonably be preferred. The bishop on g5 isn't too usual for the Exchange Slav, and the reduced pressure on Black's queenside should allow him to adopt a structure with ...a6 more typical of the Chebanenko Variation's Exchange Slav play. After 8 Bd3 Nc6 9 0-0 b6 10 Rc1 Bb7 11 a3 Rc8 12 Qe2 h6 13 Bh4 Ne4 14 Bxe7 Nxe7 Black had no problems in D.Solak-F.Berkes, Vogosca 2007. However, 7...Nxd5 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Bd3 is slightly better for White, much as it was against 6...Nbd7, while 7...exd5 8 Qc2 Nbd7 9 Bd3 takes the game into QGD, Exchange Variation waters.

b) 7 Bd3 is, like after the continuation with ...h6 and Bh4 flicked in, the most critical continuation. Then the thematic 7...dxc4 8 Bxc4 b5 9 Bd3 is examined in [Beliavsky-Zhigalko](#).

c) Set-ups involving 7 Rc1 are the subject of [Yusupov-Goloshchapov](#).

7...Nbd7



At this point White has tried a number of set-ups, but probably the best among them is:

8 Rd1

This is examined in [L'Ami-Zvjaginsev](#).

8 a3 is the least important option, and doesn't require special attention: 8...b6! (the rook would much rather be on c1 in the resulting positions, and the queen on c2 is only in the way, complicating White's task of obtaining an edge) 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 Bd3 Bb7 11 0-0 h6 12 Bh4 Rc8 and Black had no worries in this Exchange Slav position, drawing comfortably in J.Alzate-F.Munoz, Barranquilla 1972.

Otherwise, 8 Rc1 is covered under [Yusupov-Goloshchapov](#), and the extremely ambitious 8 0-0-0 is looked at in [Kaidanov-Bu Xiangzhi](#).

Conclusion

White's task of achieving an advantage is considerably more difficult in the continuation with 5...h6 6 Bh4 Be7, because of the possibility of possible transpositions to Lasker's Defence in the QGD, and some knowledge of nuances being necessary to navigate even the 'best' continuation with 8 Bd3.

Should Black elect to avoid flicking in the h-pawn move, then White gains greater levity in his pursuit of an edge, as the set-ups with Rc1 and Qc2 gain independent significance; i.e. a Lasker's Defence without ...h6 is a cheap knock-off due to the potential gain of time against Black's h-pawn. White retains a theoretical advantage with precise play regardless of which version of the hybrid Black chooses, but overall the key point for the reader is that White should play Bd3 as early as possible.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 Be7

5...h6 6 Bh4 Be7 – [Grischuk-Tkachiev](#)

6 e3 0-0 7 Qc2

7 Bd3 – [Beliavsky-Zhigalko](#)

7 Rc1 – [Yusupov-Goloshchapov](#)

7...Nbd7

8 0-0-0 – [Kaidanov-Bu Xiangzhi](#)

8 Rd1 – [L'Ami-Zvjaginsev](#)

 The QGD Hybrid
 in Game Format
[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 ♙e7 Black plays much as in the Queen's Gambit Declined (referred to as the QGD from here on), but with ...c6 included. Given ...c5 is Black's most usual freeing move in that opening, the fact Black has already lost a tempo should be considered a little disheartening. However, it isn't as easy as just claiming White is better on that premise alone. Passive play does not mean the side with the initiative can play however they please.

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6.e3 Steady does it.

[6.cxd5 , as White may try in the Cambridge Springs Variation, is also possible, but doesn't work as well here. Due to White's early inclusion of Nf3 he has obtained an inferior version of the QGD, Exchange Variation, because ...Bf5 will prove unavoidable after exd5 : 7.♖c2 (7.e3 ♙f5 is even easier for Black) 7...g6! 8.e3 (8.e4 dxe4 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.♖xe4+ ♖e7 is nothing for White; Black has the bishop-pair, and d4 is a nice target for later use) 8...♙f5 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♖xd3 . Despite access to a potential minority attack, White has very little in the way of prospects; minority attacks typically don't win games by themselves, and Black's problem piece has been comfortably solved.]

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[a) 6...♘bd7 is possible, and quite likely to transpose. Given this greatly reduces the efficacy of any Exchange Slav structure, here 7.cxd5 is an independent option, and now ♘xd5 (7...cxd5 leaves the knight on d7 misplaced for the resulting play,; and 7...exd5 is a QGD, Exchange Variation

transposition more likely to be seen from the Cambridge Springs Variation) 8.♙xe7 ♖xe7 9.♙d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 b6 12.e4 ♙b7 13.♖e1 ♖fd8 14.a4 e5 was a bit more comfortable for White in M. Millstone-J.Roos, correspondence 2008. The central space and Black's restrained queenside give White the freer play, although Black remains solid.]

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7.♖c2

[White attempts to avoid the loss of tempo seen in 7.♙d3 , and remain flexible. This probably isn't necessary, but neither is it ruled out as a try for an advantage. Others:]

[a) After 7.cxd5 cxd5! the knight on b8 can head to c6, and represents one reason 6...0-0 might reasonably be preferred. The bishop on g5 isn't too usual for the Exchange Slav, and the reduced pressure on Black's queenside should allow him to adopt a structure with ...a6 more typical of the Chebanenko Variation's Exchange Slav play. (However, 7...♘xd5 8.♙xe7 ♖xe7 9.♙d3 is slightly better for White, much as it was against 6...Nbd7,; while 7...exd5 8.♖c2 ♘bd7 9.♙d3 takes the game into QGD, Exchange Variation waters.) After 8.♙d3 ♘c6 9.0-0 b6 10.♖c1 ♙b7 11.a3 ♖c8 12.♖e2 h6 13.♙h4 ♘e4 14.♙xe7 ♘xe7 Black had no problems in D.Solak-F.Berkes, Vogosca 2007.]

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continuation. Then the thematic dxc4 8.♟xc4 b5 9.♙d3 is examined in Beliavsky-Zhigalko.]

[c) Set-ups involving 7.♞c1 are the subject of Yusupov-Goloshchapov.]

7...♜bd7 At this point White has tried a number of set-ups, but probably the best among them is:

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[8.a3 is the least important option, and doesn't require special attention: b6!

(the rook would much rather be on c1 in the resulting positions, and the queen on c2 is only in the way, complicating White's task of obtaining an edge) 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♙d3 ♟b7 11.0-0 h6 12.♟h4 ♞c8 and Black had no worries in this Exchange Slav position, drawing comfortably in J.Alzate-F.Munoz, Barranquilla 1972.]

[Otherwise, 8.♞c1 is covered under Yusupov-Goloshchapov,]

[and the extremely ambitious 8.0-0-0 is looked at in Kaidanov-Bu Xiangzhi.]

□ **Grischuk,A**
 ■ **Tkachiev,V**
 Khanty-Mansiysk
[Bryan Paulsen]

D66

2009

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♜c3 ♜f6 4.♜f3 e6

5.♟g5 h6 The most precise move order to get the positions with ...Be7 and ...h6 inserted.

6.♟h4 ♟e7 A position with perhaps more importance to individuals who simply do not want to play the black side of the Anti-Moscow, but one of quite some theoretical importance. It is perpetually underestimated, and merits a close study.

7.e3 0-0 8.♙d3 Easily the best choice, with the alternatives easing Black's task:

[a) 8.♞c2 ♜e4 should be heading towards a Lasker's Defence in the Queen's Gambit Declined. My esteemed editor, John Emms, mentioned the additional possibility of 9.♟xe7 ♞xe7 10.♜xe4 dxe4 11.♜e5 , intending to pick up Black's e-pawn. In my opinion Black must play ♞b4+!

and be prepared to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative in the event of 12.♙d1 c5 13.a3 ♞b6 14.dxc5 ♞xc5 15.♞xe4 . Given the position of White's king, I am inclined to think Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.]

[b) 8.♞c1 ♜e4 will result in a rather amusing (to me, anyway) transposition to the main line of Lasker's Defence to the Queen's Gambit. This is not something that should be relished by the ambitious white player given Black's rock-solid standing there.]

8...dxc4 Playing as in the Meran Variation of the Semi-Slav Defence, and granting Black a no-nonsense approach to completing development and freeing his position.

[Instead, 8...♜bd7 9.0-0 (9.cxd5 is likely headed towards a QGD, Exchange Variation due to the placement of Black's knight on d7) 9...b6 (despite the long history of 9...♞e8 , it can hardly be recommended, since White is not obligated to play cxd5, and so he can play better versions of continuations without it;; however, 9...dxc4 10.♟xc4 b5 would be a transposition to the main game) 10.♞c1 ♟b7 11.♞e2 c5 12.♞fd1 looks like a Tartakower Defence to the QGD in which Black is down a full tempo. White should be slightly better in this scenario due to his activity. (Here 12.cxd5 is also possible, with a similar evaluation.)]

9.♟xc4 b5 10.♙d3 Keeping in touch with the important e4-square that often serves as pivot for a knight.

♜bd7

[10...♟b7 11.0-0 ♜bd7 reaches the same position as the game, but denies Black one of his more important options,]

[but 10...a6 might be just as accurate for Black, keeping tabs on the a3 and b4 idea:

A) 11.0-0 transposes to the main game, note to Black's 11th move.;

B) 11.a3 c5 12.dxc5 ♟xc5 appears to be tenable enough to equalize.;

C) 11.♞c2 ♜bd7 12.♙d1 (certainly a critical try to keep the clamps on Black's intended freeing break, but it doesn't seem too problematic) ♟b7 (12...c5 13.♟xf6! is very uncomfortable for Black)

C1) 13.0-0 ♞c8 puts Black in a good position to play ...c5. The position of White's queen only serves to augment Black's freeing move.;

C2) 13.a3 ♞a7!? . Due to a tempo having been spent on Rd1, b4 can be better met with ...a5, when the pawn on b4 can easily prove weak. The real point of Black's move becomes obvious after 14.0-0 (14.b4 a5 15.♞b2 axb4

16.axb4 ♘d5 17.♙xe7 ♚xe7 18.♜xd5 exd5 19.0-0 ♖a4 gives Black enough counterplay on the a-file and against the b-pawn to prevent White's typical Rfe1 and e4 idea) 14...c5! (the usual) 15.dxc5 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♙xc5 when White's damaged kingside pawns offset his bishop-pair, and Black is doing okay.;

C3) , and now: 13.--;

D) 11.--]

11.0-0 White has played what can only be called 'good moves' to this point, but despite this Black is quite close to equality. Again there are alternatives:

[a) 11.a3 isn't a problem for Black:

A) 11...a6 (the most accurate as usual; Black would do well to remember that ...Nbd7 and ...a6 can be mixed and matched, but ...Bb7 is best avoided) 12.b4 a5 13.♖b1 axb4 14.axb4 ♖a3! creates problems for White's ambitious 11th move; ...Bxb4 followed by ...Qa5 is a real nuisance.;

B) 11...♙b7 12.0-0 a6 (12...a5 13.♖c1 ♖c8 transposes to the main game, but avoiding the 11...a6 continuation) 13.b4 a5 14.♖b1 (14.♚b3 c5! has tested well for Black in correspondence games; the key point is that the bishop on d3 is hanging after a continuation like 15.bxc5 ♜xc5 16.dxc5 ♚xd3) 14...axb4 15.axb4 ♜d5 16.♙xe7 ♚xe7 17.♚b3 ♖a7 sees Black's position remain resilient. However, I think the change in structure after 18.♜xd5 exd5 19.♖fe1 ♖fa8 20.e4 should give White nagging pressure. The pawn on c6's weakness will be further highlighted, or White will obtain a significant spatial advantage after a further e4-e5.;

C) 11.--]

[b) 11.♖c1 in no way threatens to slow down ...c5, so Black can continue as usual with a6 12.a4 . This looks like a problem for Black optically, but correspondence play has shown that the counterintuitive bxa4 13.♜xa4 ♚a5+ 14.♜d2 ♙b4 15.♜c3 c5 eliminates Black's only weakness, and simplifies the pawn structure to one in which White can only rely on his piece activity; this usually isn't enough for more than a dissipating advantage.]

[c) 11.♚c2 a6 transposes to 10...a6 in the previous note.]

Returning to the critical 11 0-0:

11...♙b7 Developing sensibly, but not the most pointed move.

[11...a6 is another important move order, intending to force through ...c5 immediately. This seems to undermine most of White's typical tries, and appears perpetually underestimated:

A) 12.e4 , more than any other continuation, serves to drive home the importance of the insertion of ...h6 and Bh4: ♙b7 (instead, 12...c5 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♙xe7 ♜xe7 15.♙e4 ♖b8 16.♖c1 was N.Rua-N.Santos Morales, Bucaramanga 2008, and here c4 would have kept play balanced; taking ownership of d5 isn't out of the realm of possibility, Black's queenside majority could become a major player, and his position is quite sound) 13.e5 (13.♖c1 c5 14.e5 ♘d5 15.♙xe7 ♚xe7 16.♜e4 cxd4 17.♙b1 ♜f4 looked completely satisfactory for Black in M.Palacios Perez-T.Zoltek, Mondariz 2004; there is no way to effectively prepare a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal) 13...♜d5 14.♙xe7 ♚xe7 15.♜e4 (15.♜xd5 cxd5 followed by ...Rfc8 and ...Nf8 if necessary keeps the black position well covered) 15...c5 16.♜d6 (an optically impressive knight to be sure, but one that is surprisingly harmless) ♖ab8 17.dxc5 ♜xc5 18.♖c1 ♜xd3 19.♚xd3 ♙a8 . Due to the strength of the bishop on a8, ...f6 can follow shortly after, and the damage to Black's structure will be balanced by his activity.;

B) 12.a4 b4 13.♙xf6 ♜xf6 14.♜e4 ♜d7 15.♖c1 ♙b7 transposes to the note to Black's 11th in our main game.;

C) 12.♚c2 c5 13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 is no problem at all for Black. Note that the bishop is used for the recapture so that the knight will hit the bishop on d3 in the event of a recapture on c5.;

D) 12.♖c1 c5 13.a4 bxa4 14.♜xa4 cxd4 15.♜xd4 ♙b7 16.♙g3 ♖c8 was satisfactory for the second player in O. Romanishin-D.Campora, Biel 1988. It is difficult to retain pressure when the queenside liquidates.;

E) In my estimation 12.♙xf6! is the critical try for an advantage: ♜xf6 (12...gxf6?! 13.♙c2!? c5 14.♚d3 f5 15.e4 looks plainly dangerous to Black's health,; but 12...♙xf6 13.♜e4 just transposes, as

Black has little better than ♖e7) 13.♗e4 and now:

E1) 13...♗b7 is probably critical, but is untried: 14.♗c5 (14.♗xf6+ gxf6 is not at all clear due to the difficulties White will have stopping ...c5) 14...♗xc5 15.dxc5 . The position is a lot closer to equal than some others that appear this way, but the fixture of Black's c-pawn does provide a long-term problem for the second player; how to make the light-squared bishop useful?;

E2) 13...♗d7 14.♖c2!? (understanding the consequences of 14.♖c1 ♗b7 makes the choice of 14 Qc2 more obvious; here 15.♗b1!? f5 16.♗c5 ♗xc5 17.dxc5 ♖xd1 18.♖fxd1 was the continuation seen in Y.Shulman-J.Haarr, Reykjavik 2012, and now ♖fd8!? would have been very close to equal: the queen exchange has prevented White from any meaningful kingside attack, and the weaknesses at c6 and e6 are manageable; perhaps this isn't very exciting for prospective black players, but would be fine for certain circumstances where a draw is needed) 14...♗b7 15.♖fd1 ♖b6 (15...♖c8 16.♗c5! ♗xc5 17.dxc5 also favours White for the same reasons) 16.♖ac1 sees Black labour under White's control of c5. Given queens will most definitely stay on the board, unlike after 14 Rc1, White will have greater opportunity to make something of his positional advantage by attempting to generate a later initiative on the kingside. That said, Black's solidity guarantees White will have to play at a very high level to realize his advantage.;

E3) 13...--;

F) 12.--]

12.♖c1 Certainly natural, but possibly not the best:

[a) The 12.♖e2 b4 13.♗a4 ♖a5 14.b3 c5 15.♗e5 of L.Gofshtein-D.Zoler, Ramat Aviv 2000, can be met by ♖ad8 (15...♖fd8 16.♖ac1 cxd4 17.♗c4 ♖c7 18.♗cb6 would win the exchange, demonstrating the need for the a8-rook to make its way to d8) , and now 16.♗xd7 ♖xd7 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♗b5 ♖d5 19.♗xc5 ♗xc5 20.dxc5 ♖xc5 21.♗c4 looks roughly equal.]

[b) 12.♖c2 might be the best way to make use of Black's move order. White intends to

sensibly complete development with Rfd1, reserving the rook on a1 for a4 breaks, or Rac1: a6 13.♖fd1 ♖c8 14.♗e5!? ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗d7 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.f4 with the intention of making use of the weak d6-square gives White at least a nibble, as in A.Pantazi-H.Hamann, correspondence 2011.]

12...♖c8 Again refusing the more typical ...a6, but Black has another idea in mind.

[However, 12...a6 is probably Black's best attempt: 13.♗xf6 (13.a4 b4 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗e4 ♗d7! keeps Black focused on his intended ...c5; after 16.♗b1!? ♖c8 followed by ...c5 his problems are a thing of the past, since threats on the b1-h7 diagonal can be safely met by ...g6, and the idea of h4-h5 by ...Qa5) 13...♗xf6 14.♗e4 ♗d7 transposes to the note on 11...a6, and not the most favourable continuation for White.]

13.a3!? As in the Meran White intends to rule out ...c5 breaks with b4 when possible.

Otherwise:

[a) 13.♖e2 b4 14.♗a4 ♖a5 15.b3 g5!? 16.♗g3 c5 17.♖fd1 cxd4 18.♗xd4 ♖fd8 and although Black's position looked a bit loose in T.Neuer-O.Klatt, correspondence 2009, White was unable to generate any sort of kingside attack.]

[b) 13.♗xf6 is much less effective without ...a6 in, because it may not be needed at all now: ♗xf6 14.♗e4 ♗d7 15.a3 c5 was essentially the ideal opening success for Black's concept in I.Novikov-E.Ubilava, Cuba 1987.]

[c) 13.♗e5 is more incisive, and the further b4 (13...♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♗d7 15.♗xe7 ♖xe7 16.f4 ♗c5 17.♗b1 ♖fd8 18.♖c2 g6 19.♖fd1 is a bit more pleasant for the first player; further advances of Black's queenside pawns will likely become weaknesses, while the bishop on b7 will remain a problem) 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗a4 was great for White in E.Janosi-G.Buzaz, correspondence 2007. Black's control of c5 should never be this poor.]

13...a5 The closest thing to activity Black can manage given the circumstances.

[Instead, 13...a6 14.b4 dooms him to a long, passive defence.]

14.♗e5

[Instead, 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗e5 ♗d6 16.f4 ♖e7 was solid enough in H.Lohmann-S.Kim, correspondence 2004; Black is well positioned for ...b4 followed by ...c5.]

[Likewise, 14.♖e2 b4 15.axb4 axb4 16.♙xf6 ♟xf6 17.♞e4 c5 18.♞xc5 ♙xc5 19.dxc5 ♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♞d7 21.c6 ♞e5 22.♙b5 ♖d5 held the balance in Y.Shulman-G.Kaidanov, Saint Louis 2009.]

14...♞e8 Too passive, and allowing White to set up his central bind.

[14...♞xe5 is the most obvious retort to White's novelty, and it's not at all clear that it is bad. Here 15.dxe5 ♞d7 16.♙xe7 ♖xe7 17.f4 ♞c5 18.♙b1 ♖fd8 19.♖c2 g6 looks like a logical enough continuation, and it isn't easy for White to turn his pleasant enough position into something tangible. Compare this position to 13 Ne5, and note that the insertion of a3 and ...a5 can only make White's task more difficult by providing something to advance against.]

15.♙xf6 A common theme as the reader has seen from some of the earlier examined variations. Given White's dark-squared bishop is essentially locked out of play, it performs a great service in weakening Black's control of c5.

[15.f4 would have been my preference, though, simply reinforcing the knight immediately. There was no rush to exchange on f6.]

15...♞xf6 16.♞e4 ♞c7?! It is difficult to explain what Black envisioned behind this move, even more so considering the problems it causes later.

[16...♞d7 17.♞xd7 ♖xd7 18.♞c5 would have also greatly favoured White, but at least Black wouldn't have faced what came about in the game.]

17.f4! The position is similar to those more often seen in the Moscow Variation where Black has obtained the bishop-pair, but allowed White to clamp down on the centre. The only thing that ever comes from such approaches is a long, tiring defence, and one very difficult to hold against stronger players. ♞d7 18.♖h5 ♖f8 19.♞g4 White eyes a killshot, and suddenly Black's entire position is on the verge of collapse.

♞f6

[19...c5 seems well met by 20.f5! with an ongoing attack.]

20.♞exf6+ ♙xf6 21.♖f3 Nearly all of White's pieces are coordinated on the kingside while the bishop on b7 and rook on c7 form a pitiful picture.

♞e8 Providing an escape for the king, but not good enough to stave off concessions.

22.♞g3 ♟f8 23.♞xf6 ♖xf6 24.♙xb5!

With the extra pawn and more active position for White, it is only a matter of time before Black succumbs.

♞d8 25.♖c5+ ♖e7 26.♖c3 ♖dc8 27.♙c4 f6 28.b4 axb4 29.axb4 White has ruled out the only hope Black might ever have at counterplay, namely ...c5.

♞b8 30.♖d3 ♟g8 31.♖g6

[31.f5 ♙c8 32.♖e4 ♖xb4 33.fxe6 would have left Black hopelessly restricted.]

31...♟h8 32.♙d3 f5 33.e4 ♙c8

[33...♖f8!? 34.exf5 ♖f6 35.♖h5 ♖xb4 36.fxe6 ♖xe6 might have given Black a lot more hope to survive than he had any right to earlier.]

34.♞e1 ♖xb4 35.♞ge3 ♖xd4 36.exf5 ♖f6 37.♖e8+ ♟h7 38.fxe6+ g6 39.e7

The e-pawn will finalize its destiny, and there is nothing that can be done to prevent it.

Summary:

While 5...h6 with 6...Be7 is passive, it is not that easy for White to obtain an advantage. Significant precision is required, which explains the difficulties club players often have when facing it. From Black's perspective, nursing a relatively passive position to a difficult-to-draw finish line is only for the most nihilistic amongst us when better options are available.

1-0

D55

□ **Beliaevsky,A**

■ **Zhigalko,S**

Warsaw (rapid)

2004

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 c6 4.♙g5 ♞f6

5.♞c3 ♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♙d3 Much like in Grischuk-Tkachiev this allows White to get down to business without courting the QGD, Lasker's Defence, and represents his most accurate move order.

dxc4 8.♙xc4 b5 9.♙d3 ♙b7

[9...a6 10.0-0 ♙b7 11.♖c1 ♞bd7]

[and 9...♞bd7 10.♖c1 are favourable transpositions to Yusupov-Goloshchapov that avoid the Lasker's Defence transposition demonstrated there.]

10.♙xf6

[Due to White's move order this early capture is quite effective, but he has an alternative: 10.0-0 ♞bd7 11.♖c1

is yet another favourable transposition to Yusupov-Goloshchapov.]

10...♟xf6 11.♞c2 h6 12.0-0

[12.♞e4 can be played, and compares to the variations seen in Grischuk-Tkachiev: ♞d7 13.0-0 ♟e7 14.♞fd1 ♞b6 15.♞ac1 ♞ac8 16.♞c5 and White had much the better of K.Angskog-P.Thomsen, Helsingor 2009. These scenarios where c5 is lost to Black are strategically undesirable. Without that freeing move White will retain the upper hand, and Black can only hope to simplify to a draw.]

12...♞d7 13.b4 The c5 clamp is present. Now Black can only fight back against the b-pawn and hope to break the bind. Otherwise, he's in deep trouble.

[13.♞e4 would transpose to the note to White's 12th move, and is also very good.]

13...a5 14.a3 axb4 Probably too rushed, but the psychological effect of White's bind on c5 was likely felt. Simplification as a means of easing the burden on one's position is a logical, if not foolproof idea.

[14...e5 would be my attempt. If Black can make the bishop on f6 something of a nuisance, and pressure White's centre, maybe he can get play. That said, the b7-bishop remains a problem. After 15.♞e4 exd4 16.♞xd4 ♟xd4 17.exd4 ♞f6 18.♞c5 ♞xe4 19.♟xe4 axb4 20.axb4 ♞g5 White is definitely a bit better, but breaking Black's resistance is not trivial.]

15.axb4 ♞xa1 16.♞xa1 e5 Similar to the note to Black's 14th move, but now the a-file is a headache.

17.♞e4 exd4 18.♞xf6+ ♞xf6 19.♞a7! It is now clear ...axb4 was premature, and that Black is in for a difficult defence.

♞b8 20.♞xd4 ♞d6 21.♞c3 c5 This is like that scene in 'Braveheart' where William Wallace screams "Freedom!".

22.bxc5 ♞xc5 23.♞f5 ♞f8 24.♟xb5 ♟xg2?? And this is the scene where he gets decapitated. However, even after other tries White has a pawn and the better position, but at least he could be made to work for his point.

25.♟xg2 ♞xb5 26.♞e5 The pinned knight seals Black's fate.

♟h7 27.♞d6 ♞d3 28.♞e4+ Black resigned due to the impending Qxd3.

Summary:

7 Bd3 avoids the move order problems implicit in 7 Rc1, although the two moves are closely

related. Much like in the continuation with an early ...h6, White retains an edge.

1-0

D66

□ **Yusupov,A**

■ **Goloshchapov,A**

German League

2008

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 ♞f6 4.♞c3 ♟e7

5.♟g5 0-0 6.♞c1 c6 7.e3 By a small transposition of moves we've reached the positions for 7 Rc1. In general, it seems that this early commitment of the rook is premature, and that Black can eke out equality as a result by aiming for Lasker's Defence in the QGD.

♞bd7 It seems weird to say, but Black may have already gone astray with this natural developing move.

[7...h6 would definitely be my preference given the circumstances. Black must seek to make use of e4 before it leaves his control entirely: 8.♟f4 (otherwise, 8.♟h4 ♞e4 is the Queen's Gambit Declined, Lasker's Variation,; while 8.♟xf6 ♟xf6 is a position from the Queen's Gambit Declined, Classical Variation with a sound reputation for Black) 8...♞bd7 9.♟d3 dxc4 10.♟xc4 b5 11.♟d3 a6 12.0-0 c5 13.a4 c4 14.♟b1 ♞b6 was satisfactory for Black in J. Bolbochan-V.Pirc, Stockholm Olympiad 1937.]

8.♟d3 As is typically the case, White is best served by getting this in as soon as possible. Now that it is on the board, any hope of making use of e4 with ...Ne4 is gone from the game entirely.

[8.♞c2 continues the waiting game, but doesn't particularly upset Black: a6 9.a3 (9.cxd5 is often viewed as a punishment method, but it doesn't seem to do much here: cxd5!? 10.♟d3 h6 11.♟h4 b5 12.a4 b4 worked out well enough for Black in J. Enel-G.Maroczy, Bad Sliac 1932) 9...b6 10.♟e2 ♟b7 11.0-0 dxc4 12.♟xc4 c5 and Black had a fully viable position in V. Babula-Z.Hracek, Rijeka (rapid) 2010.]

8...dxc4 The typical prescription to Bd3, but as will be seen, Black's Meran-styled play is tepid.

[8...h6 is still possible, but not as good as on the previous move: 9.♟h4 ♞e4 10.♟xe7 ♞xc3 11.bxc3!? ♞xe7 12.cxd5 exd5

13.0-0 ♖f6 . Black's position is playable, but the pawn structure should slightly favour White after a further c4.]

9.♟xc4 b5 10.♞d3 ♜b7 11.0-0 a6

So far all according to Black's usual plan.

[Instead, 11...♞c8 12.a3 a5 13.♞e5 (it might be possible to meet 13.♟xf6 ♖xf6 14.♞e4 with ♖xe4 15.♟xe4 ♞d6 16.♞e2 ♞e7 intending ...c5 with equality) 13...♞xe5 14.dxe5 ♞d7 15.♟xe7 ♞xe7 16.f4 gives White the sort of central space that makes turning Black's advanced queenside into a future liability possible.]

12.♞e4 Not the most exact execution of White's method of clamping down on c5, but a good example of how easily White can let the advantage slip through his fingers.

[12.♞e2 c5 lets Black gets his freeing break with no opposition,]

[but 12.a4 ♞c8 13.♞e2 h6 14.♟h4 b4 15.♞e4 ♖xe4 16.♟xe7 ♞xe7 17.♟xe4 a5 18.♞d2 followed by redirecting the knight to b3 will clamp down on c5, and hit the soft a5-pawn, giving White a firm edge.]

[12.♟xf6 also works: ♖xf6 13.♞e4 ♞d7 14.♞c2 g6 15.♞fd1 ♞c8 16.♞c5 favoured White in Y.Gozzoli-L.Aiglon, Saint Affrique 2011. The bishop on b7 will be a jumbo pawn for some time, and White can entertain kingside attacking ideas.]

12...♖xe4 13.♟xe7 ♞xe7

[13...♖xf2 has been played a fair number of times, but runs into 14.♟xh7+! ♜h8 (14...♜xh7 15.♞c2+ nets Black's queen) 15.♞xf2 ♞xe7 16.♟e4 with queenside pressure and kingside attacking potential due to Black's missing h-pawn.]

14.♟xe4 ♞ac8 The bishop on e4 is vulnerable to ...Nf6, and ...c5 would then become viable.

This represents the flaw to White's 12th move.

15.a4 Discouraging ...c5, but now...

♖f6 16.♞d2 e5! ...hits White's centre before he can coordinate.

17.dxe5 ♞xe5 18.♟f3?!

[18.♞c2 may have been a better choice, but after ♖xe4 19.♞xe4 c5 20.♖xc5 b4 the pinned knight isn't easy to solve.]

18...♞xb2 19.♞b3 ♟a8 Here a draw was agreed, although Black could have easily played on despite White's compensation.

Controlling the c-file makes it difficult to make too much use of the extra pawn, but White is only playing for the half-point.

Summary:

Against early Rc1 approaches, Black is best

served including an early ...h6 with the intention of an immediate ...Ne4 following the retreat of the bishop to h4. Otherwise, equality seems an unreasonable expectation. ½-½

D61

□ **Kaidanov,G**

■ **Bu Xiangzhi**

Shanghai

2002

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♖f3 ♖f6 4.♞c3 e6 5.♟g5 ♟e7 6.e3 ♖bd7 7.♞c2 0-0 8.0-0-0

Certainly a critical approach to dealing with Black's set-up, intending unadulterated violence via kingside pawn thrusts, but White's king also represents a target.

[Instead, 8.♞d1 is seen in L'Ami-Zvjaginsev,]

[while 8.♞c1 doesn't particularly worry Black, who can now switch plans: a6 9.a3 b6!

(the 9...h6 10.♟h4 b6! 11.♟d3 ♟b7 12.0-0 ♞c8 of O.Lehner-K.Bischoff, Austrian League 2001 also looks okay; the Tartakoweresque ...dxc4 and ...c5 combination looks to give Black fine counterplay) 10.♟d3 ♟b7 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.0-0 ♞c8 13.a4 was T.Dusik-G.Ihnat, Presov 2002, and now ♖e4!? 14.♟xe7 ♞xe7 looks fine for Black.]

8...a6!? Intending to follow up with ...b5 at some point, and keeping options open.

[8...dxc4 doesn't look nearly as reliable without Bd3 inserted: 9.♟xc4 b5 10.♟d3 ♟b7 11.♜b1 h6 12.h4 b4 just might be the best Black can come up with, going on to hold the draw in G.Von Buelow-M.Alvarenga de Carvalho, Rio de Janeiro 2011, but here 13.♟xf6 ♖xf6 14.♞a4 is a position in which I'd much rather be White due to the attacking chances on the kingside.]

9.♜b1 Getting off the potentially open c-file.

[9.h4 h6 10.♟d3 b5 11.c5 was preferred in R.Fakhretdinov-Z.Karmov, Sterlitamak 2008, and now an idea more familiar from the Chebanenko Slav, ♖g4!? with the idea of ...e5, seems to hold the balance.]

9...h6

[9...b5 commits Black's structure in an unfortunate manner. The further 10.c5 b4 11.♞a4 would favour White's intention to meet ...h6 with Bf4!.]

10.♟f4 Now that the dark-squared bishop no

longer has access to the Bxf6 intermezzo that weakens Black's control of c5, he can go ahead with a freeing manoeuvre.

[10.h4 b5 is similar to 9 h4.]

10...dxc4

[10...b5 11.c5 ♘h5 12.♙e5! with the idea of g4 to follow would have represented the point of White's idea.]

11.♙xc4 b5 As usual.

12.♙e2 By placing the bishop on such a passive square, White hopes to make use of the d-file through Ne5. Of course, such passivity can hardly hope for an advantage in positions with kings castled on opposite sides.

[12.♙d3 ♙b7 13.♘e5 ♖b6 with the idea of ...c5 to follow would have been perfectly defensible. Even though Black didn't win a tempo with ...dxc4, the bishop being on f4 makes the entire plan okay due to the lack of indirect pressure on c5.]

12...♙b7 13.♘e5 ♖c8 14.♙f3 ♖b6

Both sides have completed their development naturally, and placed their pieces on good squares. However, White cannot prevent Black from freeing himself soon.

15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.g4!? Hinting at a kingside attack, but it is obvious that White is a long way off achieving anything in that sector.

b4 Typically Black shouldn't seek to let White conquer c5, but it works out okay here for concrete reasons.

[16...c5! would have been a completely natural follow-up to all of Black's previous play. After 17.♙xb7 ♖xb7 18.d5 c4 Black would have been okay, and could even dream of an attack of his own.]

17.♘a4 ♖b5 18.♘c5 ♘xc5 19.dxc5 ♖xc5

Black has picked up a pawn, and now even if White wins it back, it becomes likely that the position will reach absolute equality.

20.♖d7 ♙a8 21.♖e2 Keeping material on the board in the hope of exploiting his superior activity.

[Instead, 21.♖xc5 ♙xc5 22.♖hd1 ♙b6 23.♙d6 ♖fd8 24.♙xb4 ♖xd7 25.♖xd7 c5 26.♙xa8 cxb4 is quickly headed towards a draw.]

21...e5!? Black looks towards rapid simplification to ease the pressure.

[21...♖cd8 22.♖hd1 ♖xd7 23.♖xd7 would have left White with significant compensation.]

22.♖c1

[22.♙g3!? ♙f6 23.♖xa6 b3!? 24.axb3 ♖b8

would have made it so that White was the one up a pawn, but with an open king.]

22...♖b5 23.♖xe7 exf4 24.exf4 b3 25.a3 Solid, but unambitious and allowing Black to easily reduce the material at no cost.

[25.axb3 ♖xb3 26.g5 hxg5 27.fxg5 c5 28.♙xa8 ♖xa8 29.♖xc5 is undoubtedly slightly better for White's extra pawn, but it is unlikely he can turn it into anything of substance due to the exposed king.]

25...c5 26.♙xa8 ♖xa8 27.♖xb5 axb5

28.♖xc5 b4! 29.a4

[29.axb4 ♖a4 30.♖e3 ♖xb4 would have been quite easy for Black to hold. White's extra pawn, being doubled, is unlikely to mean much.]

29...♖fd8 30.♖e3 ♖d1+ 31.♖c1 ♖d4

32.♖xb3 ♖xf4 33.f3 ♖xa4 34.♖d3 ♖a6

35.♖e1 With material even, and neither side in possession of significant weakness, the opponents agreed to a draw.

Summary:

The approach with opposite-sided castling seems comfortable for Black. His queenside play seems a tiny bit faster.

½-½

D61

□ L'Ami,E

■ Zvjaginsev,V

European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011
[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙e7

5.♙g5 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.♖c2 c6 8.♖d1

A multipurpose move that aims to fight against both the ...b6 set-ups that cause some difficulties for the Qc2 and Rc1 development scheme, and the ...a6, ...dxc4, ...b5, and ...c5 scheme.

h6 9.♙f4 Keeping the bishop away from simplifications seems the most precise choice, even if significantly less popular.

[Indeed, 9.♙h4 b6 10.♙d3 ♙b7 11.0-0 c5 12.cxd5 (12.dxc5 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖c7 14.♙e2 ♘xc5 brought about an eventual draw due to the symmetrical pawn structure and mutual lack of weaknesses in L.Mauro-I.Shugalya, correspondence 2002)

12...♘xd5 13.♙xe7 ♖xe7 14.♘xd5 ♙xd5 was satisfactory for Black in S.Ivanov-V. Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2002.]

9...a6 Forcing White to find a useful move other than developing his bishop.

[9...b6 10.♔d3 ♗b7 11.0-0 ♖c8 12.a3 c5 13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.♜xd5

A) better than the 14...♔xd5?!

of D.Trotsenko-A.Mikleeva, Cheliabinsk 2008, where White missed the shot 15.♔a6! , picking up material as ♖a8 (or 15...♖c6 16.♔b7) is met by 16.e4!;

B) 14...exd5 15.dxc5 seems slightly better for White due to his pawn structure.]

10.a3 Making possible b2-b4, denying ...b5-b4 in some cases, and putting the ball back in Black's court to determine how he wants to develop without creating weaknesses.

b6 11.h3

[Too slow. White should make it a point to finish his development efficiently, and ...Nh5 can always be met by Be5. Indeed, now that Black has played ...b6, making ...b5 require two tempi, there is no reason to avoid developing the light-squared bishop: 11.♔d3 ♗b7 12.0-0 c5 13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.♜xd5 exd5 (14...♔xd5 15.dxc5 ♜xc5 16.♔h7+ ♜h8 17.b4 ♜d7 18.♔e4 represents a critical difference from our main game; with 0-0 instead of h3 White's position is much faster and Black cannot achieve a symmetrical structure without penalty) 15.dxc5 was played all the way back in M. Tal-A.Lutikov, USSR Team Championship 1967. Although Black managed to draw, White had a small advantage to this point.]

11...♔b7 12.♔d3 c5 The typical freeing move has been achieved, and now one is really left to wonder why h3 was played.

13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.♜xd5 exd5

[14...♔xd5! 15.♔h7+ ♜h8 16.♔e4 c4 looks completely acceptable for Black.]

15.0-0 ♜f6 If White is going to make anything of these positions, he must assent to the so-called 'hanging pawns' structure.

16.♞e2 Too quiet, and this accomplishes nothing other than taming a potentially open c-file.

[Instead, 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.e4! strikes while the iron is hot. By luring Black's pawn duo to advance certain weaknesses are created, which is the classic way of dealing with them: d4 (17...dxe4 18.♔c4 ♞b6 19.♜e5 ♖ad8 20.♜g6 ♖fe8 21.♜xe7+ ♖xe7 22.♞b3 ♞a5 23.♞g3 gives more than enough play for the pawn investment) 18.♜d2 looks like it slightly favours White. Black's central pawns are stopped in their tracks, and White can set about preparing

the march of his f- and e-pawns.]

16...♔d6 17.♜e5 ♞e7 Black's problems seem to be over, and the opponents agreed to a draw in this roughly balanced position.

Summary:

The set-up with 7 Qc2 and 8 Rd1 is a reasonable try for an advantage, because Black's typical equalizing methods are complicated by the presence of the rook, although, of course, in the game Black did himself no favours with the very early ...Nbd7. Had Black inserted ...h6 much earlier, though, the Lasker's Defence transposition would have eliminated 7 Qc2 altogether as a try for an edge.

½-½

Chapter Two

The Cambridge Springs Defence

([View in Game Format](#))

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7



The starting point of the Cambridge Springs Defence. Black defends his knight in order to play ...Qa5 without Bxf6 disrupting his pawn structure. The underlying basis of Black's play is tactics, and this is precisely why club players often fall for some of the early traps it contains. Suffice to say there are some famous ways to hang the bishop on g5, and they don't bear repeating here.

6 e3

Paving the way for the light-squared bishop to develop. As Black hasn't ceded the centre with 5...dxc4 (the Botvinnik), or attacked the bishop with 5...h6 (the Moscow/Anti-Moscow), White must take a more restrained approach, as was the case with 5...Be7.

6 cxd5 is a great choice for people too lazy to learn theory, who prefer to play 'natural chess', or who don't like sacrificing pawns. From a certain perspective it could even be an argument against adoption of the Cambridge Springs due to the quiet nature of play. After 6...exd5 (6...cxd5 would be an undesirable Exchange Slav where the knight on d7 is misplaced) 7 e3 play is likely to become a Queen's Gambit Declined, Exchange Variation, and this is covered in [Schwenck-Jegorovas](#). Note that a survey of this entire complex is outside of the scope of this book, and I have elected to focus on continuations that are distinctly Semi-Slav in flavour due to the opening move order: for example, developing the bishop on f8 to d6.

6...Qa5

Black's queen sets up X-ray possibilities on the g5-bishop, and ...Ne4 becomes possible due to the pin. White must be exact in order to try for an advantage; lackadaisical play allows quick equality, and careless play can easily hang a piece.

6...Be7 was seen in [Chapter One](#), since that move better defines Black's solid but passive intentions. The spirit of the Cambridge Springs Defence cannot be found there.



7 cxd5

The most aggressive choice available to White, and the one that best maintains the initiative.

7 Nd2 positionally solves the problem of the diagonal, but removing a piece from the centre is usually not a recipe for success. After the natural 7...Bb4 8 Qc2 0-0 9 Be2 there are three important tries available to Black:

- a) 9...c5 represents what is, to me, an equalizer, as examined in [Ibrahimov-Esen](#)
- b) 9...dxc4 is passive, and the subject of [Lupulescu-Esen](#).
- c) 9...e5 is seen in [Gerasimov-Taylor](#), and strikes me as slightly inferior to 9...c5 for reasons pointed out in the notes.

7...Nxd5

Black indicates his intention to pick up White's a-pawn in various continuations, and commits himself to the defence against White's central majority and activity.

7...exd5 is a sideline of minor importance, more reminiscent of the continuation with 6 cxd5.



However, it does have one continuation worth mention, as Black intends to pick up the bishop-pair at the price of a loss of time. Anything else will just result in some sort of QGD, Exchange Variation where the queen on a5 is sorely misplaced. 8 Bd3 Ne4 9 0-0 Nxc3 10 bxc3 Qxc3 is just dangerous for Black; M.Rabe-D.Zagorskis, correspondence 2008, continued 11 Qe2 h6 12 e4! hxg5 13 exd5+ Kd8 14 Nxc5 Kc7 15 Nxf7 Rh6 16 Nxe6 gxe6 17 Qe3 with a slight material advantage, and the better position due to Black's exposed king) 10 Nxc5 Be7 11 f4 (with the elimination of his dark-squared bishop it is okay for White to place the majority of his pawns on dark squares) 11...Nf6 12 Rc1 h6 13 Nf3 was easier to play for White in M.Pacher-F.Haring, Banska Stiavnica 2013. Here e5 is a powerful outpost for the knight, and Black's kingside can easily prove vulnerable. Making matters even better for the first player's cause is that Black's freeing break with ...c5 isn't particularly effective, leaving him passive.

Instead, 7...Ne4 is met by the no-nonsense 8 dxe6! when the threat to the knight on d7 cancels out Black's threats to c3 and g5. After 8...fxe6 9 Bh4 Bb4 Black's rapid development hopes to compensate for the pawn, but it isn't likely to be enough. The calm 10 Nd2 Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bxc3 12 Rc1 Nf6 13 Bd3 e5 14 0-0! was better for White in E.Jenicek-I.Reitingerova, Czech League 2005. The attempt to grab the knight with 14...Bxd2 runs into 15 Rc5 Qxa2 16 Bc4 Bg4 17 Rxe5+ Kf8 18 Bxa2 Bxd1 19 Rxd1 with the much better position due to the bishop-pair, better king placement, and overall activity.

8 Qd2

A stubborn refusal to sacrifice any material, and the traditional main line.

8 Rc1!? is covered in [Kramnik-Shirov](#), and represents what I believe to be the most critical try for an edge at this time.

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The point of Black's set-up to this point. If he's not going to apply pressure to c3, then there is a very real risk of being shoved backwards.

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Theory has settled on this move as best, driving the g5-bishop on to a square that is inferior in future scope, even if it remains on the same diagonal for now.

10 Bh4 c5 11 a3



The old main line is covered in [Smeets-Illescas Cordoba](#) and represents one reason to endorse the relatively new 8 Rc1!?.

Instead, 11 Bc4 is a new try seen in [Anand-Shirov \(Wijk aan Zee 2011\)](#). Special attention should be paid to the note to Black's 11th move, where 11...N7b6 seems to keep things approximately equal, with no more than a very tiny pull for White.

Conclusion

The health of the Cambridge Springs Variation has not changed all that much as time has passed. 6 cxd5 will

The health of the Cambridge Springs Variation has not changed all that much as time has passed. 6 cxd5 will always be something of a thorn in the side of those that wish to reach the main lines, as the positions with ...Bd6 don't seem all that special. Thankfully for Black's cause, as far as I know, the QGD, Exchange Variation transposition isn't unfavourable to him.

7 Nd2 appears to be waning as a try for an advantage thanks in large part to the continuation with 9...c5, which means positional players should probably look towards the 6 cxd5 deviation and the Carlsbad structure that results. In the main line with 7 cxd5 it appears to me that 8 Qd2 is possible to manage for the second player with some accuracy, and that he can be reasonably satisfied with the positions both practically and theoretically. 8 Rc1, on the other hand, is what I would regard as a problem continuation where Black needs to put in some work.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7 6 e3

6 cxd5 – [Schwenck-Jegorovas](#)

6...Qa5 7 cxd5

7 Nd2 Bb4 8 Qc2 0-0 9 Be2

9...dxc4 – [Lupulescu-Esen](#)

9...e5 – [Gerasimov-Taylor](#)

9...c5 – [Ibrahimov-Esen](#)

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8...Bb4 9 Rc1 h6 10 Bh4 c5

11 a3 – [Smeets-Illescas Cordoba](#)

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□ **The Cambridge Springs Defence**
 ■ **in Game Format**
[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 ♘bd7 The starting point of the Cambridge Springs Defence. Black defends his knight in order to play ...Qa5 without Bxf6 disrupting his pawn structure. The underlying basis of Black's play is tactics, and this is precisely why club players often fall for some of the early traps it contains. Suffice to say there are some famous ways to hang the bishop on g5, and they don't bear repeating here.

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8.♖d2 A stubborn refusal to sacrifice any material, and the traditional main line.

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□ **Schwenck,M**
■ **Jegorovas,A**

Correspondence
[Bryan Paulsen]

D35

2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♖f3 ♖f6 4.♖c3 e6 5.♗g5 ♖bd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e3 ♗d6

Keeping a true Semi-Slav flavour to the position, but despite its superficial activity it may make Black's more difficult due to the pin on the knight.

[7...♗e7 would be my preference, with a transposition to the QGD, Exchange Variation.]

8.♗d3 Possibly best.

[8.♖c2 is a good deal slower, but might also suffice. After ♖f8 9.♗d3 (9.♖e5 isn't as effective when compared to the main game: ♖e7 10.f4 h6 11.♗h4 g5! and Black had reasonable counterplay in N. Sanjay-A.Albonni, Beirut 2009) 9...♖g6 10.0-0 ♗g4 (10...h6 11.♗xf6 ♖xf6 12.e4! efficiently exploits Black's slow opening manoeuvre with the knight) 11.♖h4! ♗e6 12.f4! looked pleasant for White in P. Harikrishna-A.Lahiri, Mumbai 2000; Rae1 and f4-f5 will do much to aid his kingside

attacking chances.]

8...♖f8 Black hopes to catch the bishop on g5, but it won't be that easy.

[8...0-0 represents a more typical try, but here too Black struggles: 9.♖c2 h6 10.♗h4 ♖e8 11.0-0 ♖f8 12.♖ae1 ♗g4 13.♖d2 ♗h5 14.f4! (the key theme for dealing with these ...Bd6 positions effectively) ♗e7 15.h3 ♗g6 16.f5 ♗h7 17.♗f2 ♖8d7 18.g4 and Black never recovered from the sidelined bishop on h7 in S.Boehme-I. Basilev, correspondence 2011.]

9.♖e5! ♖g6 Black's manoeuvre is completed, but now White's thematic counter keeps Black in a rather tight spot. Otherwise:

[a) 9...♖b6 10.0-0 ♗xe5 11.dxe5 ♖6d7 12.♖a4 ♖a5 13.f4 ♖g6 14.e6 fxe6 was J.Wempe-A.Vul, Hoogeveen 2005, and here we have a bizarre engine recommendation: 15.h4!? . Presumably the idea is h4-h5, but then what? Let's take a look: ♖b4!? (intending to route the queen to d6) 16.♖c2 ♖e7 17.♗xh7 ♖f6 18.♗g6+ ♖f8 19.a3 ♖d6 20.♗d3 . White must be slightly better, but in such an unusual position it isn't easy to come up with plans; Rad1 and e4 do seem to suggest themselves, though.]

[b) 9...♖e7 10.f4 h6 11.♗h4 g5 (this is similar to the variation seen after 8 Qc2, but with additional flexibility for White) 12.♗f2 gxf4 13.exf4 ♖g4 14.0-0 ♗xe5 15.fxe5 ♗e6 16.♖b3 ♖xf2 17.♖xf2 when Black's weak f-pawn and White's better space gave the first player a significant advantage in R.Oortwijn-S. Nichols, correspondence 2011.]

10.f4! Now it isn't enough for Black to simply develop, because White's space will begin to tell.

0-0 11.0-0

[11.♖c2 would be a typical piece deployment, and should also suffice for an edge. Indeed, ♖e8 12.0-0 ♗b4 13.♖ac1 ♗xc3 14.♖xc3 h6 15.f5! gave White a pleasant initiative in M.Perunovic-S. Cvetkovic, Belgrade 2013.]

11...h6 12.♗xf6 ♖xf6 13.♖b3!?

Not the most common deployment for the queen, but one that restrains the bishop on c8. ♖xe5 Very counterintuitive, and acquiescing to an inferior structure. It's not as immediately fatal as it looks for tactical reasons, but that's all that can be said for it.

[Instead, 13...♖e7!? 14.e4 leaves Black

with certain development issues,]
 [and 13...♘h4 14.e4 is about the same.
 However, these may have been relatively
 better choices, even if White is still better.]

14.fxe5 ♖e7 15.e4 White sets about getting
 rid of his own weakness, and prepares to
 march through in the centre.

[15.exd6? ♗xe3+ would regain the material
 with interest.]

15...♙c7 16.exd5 ♗b6 17.♙h1 ♙xd4

Black has avoided material loss, but the
 advanced white pawns will continue to roll.

18.e6! fxe6 19.♞xf8+ ♙xf8 20.♞f1+ ♙g8

21.♞c4! A cute tactical resource, exploiting
 Black's woeful development.

c5 Just when it seems Black has shored
 everything up, there comes a powerful riposte.

[However, 21...♙xc3 22.♞e4 would force
 Black to accept mate, or the loss of his
 queen.]

22.d6! ♞xd6 23.♙c2 ♙f6

[23...♞a6 doesn't save the day since
 White's attack will go on until judgement day.
 Witness: 24.♙b5 ♙f6 25.♞d3 e5 26.a4
 e4 27.♞xe4 ♙e6 28.♞xf6! gxf6 29.♞g6+
 ♙f8 30.♞xf6+ ♙g8 31.♞g6+ ♙f8
 32.♞xh6+ ♙e7 33.♞g5+ ♙f8 34.♞xc5+
 . The only way Black could ever win this if
 it's a 1-minute game on the internet, and
 white flags.]

24.♞e4 The invasion of h7 will prove fatal.

Summary:

Black should prefer the placement of his dark-
 squared bishop on e7, entering Queen's
 Gambit Declined, Exchange Variation waters.
 White can fully expect to obtain an advantage
 after the lines involving ...Bd6.

1-0

□ **Lupulescu,C**

■ **Esen,B**

Sarajevo

[Bryan Paulsen]

D52

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♙f3 ♙f6 4.♙c3 e6
5.♙g5 ♙bd7 6.e3 ♞a5 7.♙d2 ♙b4 8.♞c2
0-0 9.♙e2 dxc4 Revealing the attack on the
 bishop, and making White capture on f6 in
 order to regain the pawn on c4. Black aims to
 rely on his solid structure and bishop-pair to
 obtain counterplay, but he will be left with a
 lack of space.

10.♙xf6 ♙xf6 11.♙xc4 ♞c7 The main

move, preparing to finish development
 without providing a target.

12.0-0 Natural, but perhaps not precise.

[12.a3! limits Black's options. After ♙e7
 13.b4 White's clamp on c5 considerably
 hampers the typical ...b6 and ...Bb7 idea
 Black would like to use. However, he can
 employ a different scheme of development
 that doesn't seem too bad: ♙d7 (13...b6
 14.0-0 ♙b7 15.♙f3 ♞ac8 16.♞fc1 ♞fd8
 17.♞ab1 ♙d5 18.♙e4 g6 19.♞b3

was A.Hermlin-B.Lodziewski,
 correspondence 1981, where White had
 some pressure due to Black's inability to
 safely free himself) 14.0-0 ♞fd8 15.♞fd1
 (15.♞ac1 transposes to the note to Black's
 14th in the main game, and should be
 preferred) 15...♙d5 16.♙e4 b6 17.♙e5?!
 a5 brought Black good play in B.Nielsen-E.
 Bogoljubow, Munich 1941. This is a good
 example of trying to hit White's pawn wedge,
 with the bishop on d7 serving better to aid
 the queenside action than it would on b7.
 However, White is better off avoiding this
 scenario if possible.]

12...♞d8 13.♞ac1 ♙d7 14.a3 ♙f8!?

A possibility available due to the move order
 (12 a3 would prevent this). Now ...g6 and ...
 Bg7 represents a potential redeployment in
 addition to keeping the second rank clear for
 future piece transfers. This point will become
 more relevant later in the game.

[After 14...♙e7 15.b4 ♙d5 16.♙d3 g6
 17.♙e4 ♙b6 18.♙a5 ♞ab8 19.f4!

in A.Kovacs-D.Frigato, correspondence
 2008, White's space was significant enough
 to never allow his opponent to get his
 counterplay off the ground. Positions
 without active play are extremely dangerous
 to the second player, and he should always
 look for more active alternatives. If you
 compare the positions from this variation to
 those after the 9...c5 of Game 9, it becomes
 clear this line just isn't as good.]

15.b4 ♙e8 16.♞fd1 ♞ac8 17.e4 In general
 I'm not the biggest fan of this advance as it
 just seems to loosen White's centre.

[17.♙e4 ♙xe4 18.♞xe4 looks slightly
 better for White due to his extra space. It
 is difficult for Black to organize any sort of
 play, while f2-f4 can always be used to
 further clamp down. From that point the
 possibility of play on both wings opens up
 while Black can hardly do more than sit and
 wait.]

17...♟d7 18.e5 f6 Black reckons that this is the only freeing move that won't backfire. As the game goes he is proved correct.

[18...f5 might be a more accurate way of carrying out Black's idea. Compare to the note to White's 19th, where he's gained a tempo.]

19.exf6 Attractive, but also abandoning White's primary claim to an edge – his spatial advantage.

[19.f4!? f5 might close things up just enough to let Black survive. Of course, that's all he's playing for, and White still retains the better prospects.]

19...gxf6 Black seems to barely be hanging on due to his pair of bishops.

[19...♟xf6?! is ugly. After 20.♞e5 ♟d6 21.♞b3 the sensitivity of e6 becomes apparent.]

20.♟d3

[Transferring the queen to the kingside makes a lot of sense given the amount of air around the black king. However, Black seems to hold on after 20.♞e4

. For example, ♟f7 21.♞h4 f5 22.♟h5 ♟xh5 23.♞xh5 ♟f6 24.♞e2 ♞e7 25.♞d3 ♟d5 seems safe enough.]

20...f5 Respect must be given for Black's willingness to play whatever defence is demanded of him. Now e6 is ugly, but with White's pieces huddled on the queenside it cannot be won.

[The engine seems to have a strong opinion of 20...♟h6 21.♞e3 (21.♟xh7+?! ♟g7 gives Black the threats of 22...Bxc1 and 22...f5 to work with) 21...f5 , considering Black to be okay. Indeed, White's piece coordination seems to be off just enough to prevent anything meaningful.]

21.♞e2 ♟f7 22.♞e3 ♟g7 The worst seems to be over, and Black has emerged unscathed. His weaknesses can be covered, and White has no way in.

23.♞e2 ♞e8 24.♞h3 ♟f8 25.f4 ♟g6 26.♞f3 ♞cd8 27.♞f2 ♞e7 28.♟b1 ♞d7

29.♞d3 After a bit of prodding both sides elected to split the point, not wishing to take any unreasonable risks.

Summary:

White can play just a bit more incisively than he did in this game, but can only expect to maintain an advantage through precision and the continual restriction of Black's position. That is solid, and not easy to break down, but

Black is definitely slightly worse.

½-½

D52

□ **Gerasimov,V**

■ **Taylor,Te**

Correspondence

2009

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.♟f3 ♟f6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♟c3 ♟bd7 5.♟g5 c6 6.e3 ♞a5 7.♟d2 ♟b4 8.♞c2 0-0 9.♟e2 e5 10.0-0! Straightforward development is best in this case.

[Instead, 10.♟xf6 ♟xf6 11.dxe5 ♞e4 gives Black just enough counterplay to hold the balance: for example, S.Zylla-P.Daus, correspondence 2007, continued 12.♟dxe4 dxe4 13.0-0-0!? ♟xc3 14.♞xc3 ♞xa2 with sufficient counterplay due to the possibility of opening up the queenside.]

[10.dxe5 is a pretty important continuation, but mass simplifications take the sting out of it: ♞e4 11.♟cxe4 dxe4 12.♞d1 ♞xe5 13.0-0 ♟xd2 14.♞xd2 ♞xd2 15.♞xd2 ♟e6 16.b3 . While White eventually managed to win in T.Otterson-P.Stadler, correspondence 1999, the possibility of eliminating the bishop-pair after ♟g6! with ...f6 to follow looks completely equal.]

10...exd4 Black attempts to obtain as good a structure as possible as a reward for his impending passivity.

[10...♟d6 allows White to favourably resolve the central tension with 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♞b5 ♟b8 13.dxe5 ♟xe5 14.♟f3 producing a favourable anti-IQP position. Black's development is poor, and altogether ill-equipped for dynamic play.]

11.♟b3 ♞c7 The best that can be said of this choice is that the queen does not present a target here.

[11...♞b6 12.exd4 (12.♟xd4 ♟xc3 13.bxc3 dxc4 14.♟xf6 ♟xf6 15.♟xc4 ♞c5 16.♟e2 ♞e8 was satisfactory for Black in G. Tunik-S.Smagin, St. Petersburg 1998; the position has been simplified a bit, and White's kingside pawns are not threatening to mobilize) 12...dxc4 13.♟xc4 a5 14.♞e4! ♟xe4 15.♞xe4 a4 16.a3 ♟d6 17.♟d3 g6 18.♟d2 gave White significant activity and an airy kingside to work against in Zhonghan Ma-Lie Yu, Ningbo 2011.]

12.♟xd4 dxc4

[12...♟xc3 13.bxc3 dxc4 14.♟xc4

transposes to the game continuation.]
13.♟xc4 ♟xc3 14.bxc3 White's structure has been damaged, but unlike in the variations with 9...c5, Black will find it difficult to exploit. The queenside pawns can still be used as a sort of minority attack, and the unopposed dark-squared bishop is a nuisance.

[However, 14.♞xc3?! ♞e4 15.♟f4 ♞xf4 16.exf4 ♞xc3 17.bxc3 would leave White with a structure from which he cannot possibly hope to win.]

14...♞e5 The queen aims to find activity on Black's fourth rank while harassing the bishop.

[Instead, 14...♞e5 15.♟e2! safeguards the light-squared bishop, and provides for the mobility of the kingside pawn majority: ♞e7 16.♞ad1 h6 17.♟xf6 ♞xf6 18.f4 ♞g4 19.♞f3 ♞h4 20.h3 ♞f6 21.♟d3 followed by e4 gave White the initiative in F.Velilla Velasco-M.Seris Granier Gonzales, correspondence 2005.]

15.♞f3 Too slow.

[Instead, the 15.♟f4! ♞c5 16.♟b3 of W.Paschall-L.Gonda, Budapest 2006, is quite interesting. After the game's ♞e5 worth consideration was 17.h3 providing h2 for the bishop, and preparing the eventual march of the kingside pawns. Relatively passive-looking moves can be strategically beneficial when one possesses the bishop-pair if they safeguard it against threats, or as a means to setting a pawn roller in motion. Of course, this requires the possessor of the bishop-pair to have a solid pawn structure that cannot be targeted. If Black's c-file were open, and he had a pawn on e6, the evaluation would definitely slide more Black's way due to the isolated pawn on c3.]

15...♞c5 16.♟d3 The most popular retreat, but possessing a slight flaw. On d3 the bishop is exposed, and Black can use this to improve his position.

h6 17.♟h4 ♞e7 18.♞d4 ♞c5

Now the bishop finds itself needing to move again, and Black is more or less okay.

19.♟f5 Acquiescing to equal chances, because without the bishop-pair White can hardly claim anything, and without a mobilized kingside majority the c5 outpost gives Black sufficient chances.

♞d8 20.♞ad1 ♟xf5 21.♞xf5 ♞e4 22.♞xe4 ♞cxe4 23.♟xf6 ♞xf6 24.f3 The smoke has cleared, and the position is roughly balanced.

Despite the simplifications the c-pawn is still not much of a liability.

h5 Preparing ...g6.

25.e4 ♞e8 Keeping the white knight out of d6.

26.♞g3 g6 27.e5 f6! Without a strong passed e-pawn it is impossible for White to make anything of his position. The rest of the game is given without comment; Black simply plays actively, and White finds it impossible to generate any significant edge.

28.f4 ♞xd1 29.♞xd1 fxe5 30.fxe5 ♟f7 31.♞d7+ ♟e6 32.♞xb7 ♟xe5 33.♞e7+ ♟f6 34.♞h7 ♞g7 35.♞e4+ The forthcoming repetition sealed the draw.

Summary:

If Black is going to obtain counterplay against a damaged white pawn structure, he needs to have open files that make it possible to actually pressure it. Due to this, 9...e5 must be judged as a bit inferior to 9...c5, as seen in the next game.

½-½

D52

□ **Ibrahimov,R**

■ **Esen,B**

Turkish Team Championship

2011

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.♞f3 d5 2.d4 ♞f6 3.c4 c6 4.♞c3 e6 5.♟g5 ♞bd7 6.e3 ♞a5 7.♞d2 ♟b4 8.♞c2 0-0 9.♟e2 c5 Black simply intends to leave White with an isolated d-pawn, blockade it, and force White to recognise that his set-up with Qc2, Be2, and Nd2 is not the most ambitious. The structures that follow share significant similarity with the Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian; typically held in high regard for Black.

10.0-0 The most natural move, but perhaps not the best:

[a) 10.♟xf6 ♞xf6 11.♞b3 ♞c7!

is an additional option granted by White's move order; the dark-squared bishop no longer being present to harass the black queen. After 12.dxc5 dxc4 13.♟xc4 ♟xc5 14.♞xc5 ♞xc5 followed by ...Bd7-c6 Black even managed to win in N.Dzagnidze-H. Stefansson, Kaupthing 2008. The symmetrical pawn structure prevents White from doing anything other than playing for a draw.]

[b) 10.dxc5 gives Black a pleasant choice:

dxc4 (or 10... ♖xc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3
 dxc4 13.♙h4 b6 14.♞fd1 ♙b7 15.♜xc4
 ♙d5 when White's bishop-pair was offset by
 his isolated c-pawn in D.Anagnostopoulos-A.
 Payen, London 1994) 11.♜xc4 ♖xc5
 12.♙xf6 ♜xf6 13.a3 ♙xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♙d7
 15.0-0 ♞ac8 gave Black an easy game in P.
 Voronov-S.Nadyrhanov, Krasnodar 2002.]
 [c) After 10.♜b3 ♖a4! (on-going usage of
 the pin is important to Black's cause)
 11.♙xf6 ♜xf6 12.dxc5 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖c6
 (aiming to regain the pawn with threats to c5
 and g2) 14.0-0 ♙xc5 15.♜xc5 ♖xc5
 16.♜e4 ♜xe4 17.♖xe4 ♖b6 , despite his
 temporary lead in development, White has
 been unable to demonstrate anything in
 practice. There have been a multitude of
 draws from here, most recently in S.Maze-A.
 Dreev, European Championship, Plovdiv
 2012.]

[d) 10.♙f4!? is perhaps the future for the
 variation with 9...c5, highlighting the
 weakness of d6. Following cxd4 11.exd4
 dxc4 12.♜xc4 ♖d8 (the most solid, Black
 relies on exchanges to ease his task;
 instead, 12... ♖d5 13.0-0! ♖xd4 14.♙g3
 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♖e4 16.♖b2 gave White
 good compensation in E.Najer-E.Bareev,
 Russian Team Championship 2006, when
 untangling Black's queenside without falling
 prey to Nd6 was no trivial task) 13.0-0 ♜b6
 14.♖b3 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♜xc4 16.♙xc4
 all that's left is for Black to solve his
 development issues and to limit the
 effectiveness of White's bishop-pair. After
 ♖a5 (16...b6!? 17.♙d3 ♙b7 also looks
 quite solid; White might retain a slight pull
 due to his a4-a5 idea, but Black's lack of
 another weakness limits it to no more than
 that) 17.♞fe1 ♙d7 18.♞e5 ♖c7 19.♙d3
 b5!? 20.♖c2 ♞fc8 21.♞c1 White had
 something to play for due to his bishop-pair
 in R.Ponomarev-A.Dreev, Spanish Team
 Championship 2011, but the pressure on the
 c-file gave Black his share of the play.]

10...cxd4 11.exd4 The most obvious decision,
 and perhaps not the most challenging, but
 Black seems to have no serious problems in
 the variation with 9...c5. This would explain
 Semi-Slav expert Alexey Dreev's frequent use
 of it.

[11.♜b3 is the most common choice in the
 position, but careful play appears to prevent
 White from claiming anything:

A) 11...♖b6 12.♜a4! (12.exd4 dxc4

13.♙xc4 ♖c7 14.♜b5 ♖c6 15.a3 ♙e7
 16.♞e2 a6 17.♜c3 b5 18.♙d3 ♙b7
 saw Black complete his development
 when he had no real problems in S.Bilsel-
 A.Ponting, correspondence 2009)
 12... ♖c7 13.♜xd4 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♙d6
 15.♞ac1 ♙xh2+ 16.♜h1 ♙d6 17.♜b5
 ♖c6 18.♜xd6 (18.♞fd1 ♙b8
 should have been okay for Black in Li
 Ruofan-I.Sukandar, Jakarta 2007; the
 extra pawn provides material fodder that
 can be returned if necessary, and White's
 king position can be exploited to
 generate sufficient counterplay) 18... ♖xd6
 19.♞fd1 ♖e5 20.♙f4 and White had clear
 compensation for the pawn due to Black's
 inability to safely untangle his queenside in
 A.Grischuk-A.Shirov, Moscow 2010.;

B) After the correct 11... ♖d8!
 (not tempting White into attacking the
 queen anymore) 12.♜xd4 (the 12.exd4
 dxc4 13.♙xc4 of J.Gralkha-J.Mirski,
 Polanica Zdroj 2010, can be safely met by
 the typical b6 with sufficient counterplay
 based on control of d5; the knight on b3 is
 not well placed for an IQP structure)
 12... ♙xc3! 13.bxc3 (13.♖xc3 ♜e4!
 is a familiar tactic from the 4 Qc2 Nimzo-
 Indian; Black triggers a wave of
 simplification that solves his opening
 problems: 14.♙xd8 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♞xd8
 16.cxd5 exd5 was soon agreed drawn in
 A.Delchev-V.Malakhov, Pamplona 2008)
 13...dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♖c7 15.♙d3 b6
 Black was perfectly solid and had a target
 on c3 to offset White's bishop-pair in M.
 Catarineu-H.Ingersol, correspondence
 2008.;

C) 11...--]

11...dxc4 12.♙h4

[Instead, 12.♙xf6 ♜xf6 13.♜xc4 ♖c7
 14.♖b3 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 b6 16.♜e5 ♙b7
 left the second player well placed in J.
 Gregor-J.Suran, Czech League 1997.]

12...♜b6 A typical resource for this variation.
 Black seeks further exchanges.

13.♜xc4

[13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♙xc4 ♙d7 is complicated,
 but once again White cannot attempt to
 force anything without the position
 simplifying.]

13...♜xc4 14.♙xc4 ♙d7! One of those
 moves that a player might shy from making
 over the board, but that has its merits based
 on concrete factors; damaging Black's

kingside will result in a tidal wave of simplification.

[However, 14...♗e7 15.♞fd1 leaves White in good position to achieve the desirable d4-d5 break. M.Lorenzi-H.Abdala, correspondence 2004, continued ♞h5?! 16.♗g3 ♞d8 17.♗e2 ♞h6 18.♗f3 when Black struggled to develop his queenside, giving White the better chances.]

15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.d5 ♗xc3 17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.bxc3

[The relatively exposed black king isn't enough for White to claim any sort of advantage, Black being fully able to rapidly mobilize against the white c-pawn. This position also occurred in V.Kramnik-V. Ivanchuk, World Team Championship, Lucerne 1993, with those titans agreeing to the same peaceful conclusion after 19.bxc3 ♞ac8 .

Summary:

9...c5 seems to be in good health for the second player. He can reasonably expect equality, but he needs to know the nuances.]

1/2-1/2

□ **Kramnik,V**

■ **Shirov,A**

Moscow

[Bryan Paulsen]

D52

2010

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♟f3 ♟f6 4.♟c3 e6

5.♗g5 ♟bd7 6.e3 ♞a5 7.cxd5 ♟xd5

8.♞c1!? A rather straightforward attempt to jettison the a-pawn without spending time on Qd2. As the position has been tested surprisingly few times, it is worth taking a look at due to the attention it has received of late.

h6 Not the only option, but in keeping with typical Cambridge Springs play. Others:

[a) 8...♟xc3 9.bxc3 ♞xa2 is a critical possibility, immediately grabbing the pawn as retribution for White's move order. Here 10.♗d3 ♞a5 11.0-0 ♗d6 12.e4 is certainly thematic enough, but after e5 White missed his chance in R.Magerciak-M.Palka, Slovakian League 2008. Indeed, after 13.♟h4! h6 14.♟f5 ♗a3 15.♗d2 ♗xc1 16.♞xc1 his compensation for the exchange would have been substantial. Black's king has no safe haven, and the knight on f5 is

a headache for him. Note that the game continuation effectively avoids this possibility due to the presence of the bishop on h4.]

[b) 8...♗b4 9.a3 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♞xa3 11.♞d2 h6 12.♗h4 is another way to reach the position seen in the game.]

9.♗h4 ♗b4 10.a3 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♞xa3

The most logical continuation of Black's play. If he doesn't grab the pawn there is little point in his opening to this point.

[Instead, 11...b6 12.♟d2! made good use of the white queen still being at home in L. Mkrtchian-I.Madl, Paks 2011. The game saw ♟xc3?? 13.♞c2 ♟d5 14.♞xc6 0-0 15.♞xa8 with a decisive advantage for White. While Black didn't have to go down so quickly, the threat of Nc4 is very uncomfortable.]

12.♞d2

[The best square for the queen, but this is best appreciated after its alternative is looked at: 12.♞c2 0-0 13.♗d3 was seen in P.Oatthotse-B.Gaealafshwe, Gaborone 2010, and seems well met by e5 when the queen appears to be inferior on c2 to the more typical d2-square. The typical manoeuvre of the bishop to b1 is prevented, in addition to any dark-squared influence the queen would have in the event of the movement of the e-pawn.]

12...b5 Making possible the development of the light-squared bishop, and turning c4 into an outpost. However, the move is also quite slow.

[The most critical alternative, and possibly best continuation is 12...e5 , challenging the centre: 13.e4 (13.♗d3 exd4 14.exd4 0-0 15.0-0 was played in B.Lalic-Y.Zherebukh, Cappelle la Grande 2012; now Black should have seriously considered preparing f8 for the knight in case of a Bb1 and Qd3 battery with ♞e8!?) 13...♟e7 (13...♟5f6!? 14.♗d3 ♞e7 15.0-0 0-0 16.♗b1 looks like typical compensation for White; an exchange on e5 followed by f2-f4 would give him a nice initiative to work with) 14.♗d3 ♟g6 15.♗g3 ♞e7 16.h4 h5!? 17.0-0 0-0 caused problems for the second player in D. Wiedermann-F.Volkman, Austrian League 2011. With Black's weakness on the kingside created by the lunge of the h-pawn, it is tempting to prepare White's f-pawn for launch via 18.♟g5!?, with definite compensation for the pawn due to the

possibility of attacking h5.]

[Instead, 12...b6 13.e4 ♘e7 14.♙d3 ♘g6 15.♙g3 was a bit more comfortable for White in E.Danielian-A.Galliamova, Rostov on Don 2011. Black's position is passive, while h4-h5 and e4-e5 will keep pressure on the black kingside. The extra pawn will take a long time to assume importance, and Black has to find a way to finish his development.]

13.♙d3 Simple development, but not the only serious choice.

[Indeed, 13.e4 ♘5b6 14.♙d3 ♙b7 15.0-0 brought White compensation in M.Fominykh-M.Romanko, Moscow 2012. The black king still lacks a safe home, while Qe3, Nd2, and f2-f4 could potentially cause problems.]

13...0-0

[13...b4!? is possible, intending to turn c3 into an outpost, but unfortunately for Black 14.c4! (14.cxb4 ♙xb4 15.♙xc6 a5 appears quite complex, but White's bishop-pair does appear to be offset by the relative ineffectiveness of the sidelined bishop on h4) 14...♘c3 15.0-0 leaves the black queen in a precarious position.]

14.0-0

[14.e4 ♘5b6 15.0-0 looks similar to 13 e4, but with the key difference that Black's king is already housed on the soon-to-be-attacked flank.]

14...♙b7 15.c4!? Kramnik goes his own way in attempting to cause problems for Shirov, preferring queenside pressure over more direct kingside attacks.

[15.e4 would probably be my preference, looking for a more violent conclusion to the game. There can be no question that White has full compensation and the initiative.]

15...bxc4 16.♙xc4 ♘5b6

[16...♙fc8!? intending ...c5 is interesting, and similar to the game without decentralizing the well-placed knight. Black would like nothing more than to eliminate one of his weaknesses while retaining his extra pawn. I'm not sure what White had in mind against Black's intended freeing move. Continuations like 17.e4 ♘5b6 18.♙e2 do seem to prevent the intended break, but here a5 might be okay. White is no longer well placed to both prevent ...c5 and undertake meaningful action elsewhere.]

17.♙d3 ♙fc8 18.♙b1 c5! Of course.

19.dxc5

[19.♙e7!? ♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♘d5 21.♙d6 ♙c6

22.dxc5 ♙ac8 23.e4 ♙xf3 24.exd5 ♙xd6! 25.cxd6 ♙g4+ with a repetition is something spit out by the engine. It is probable that both players saw this as validation for 18...c5, and Kramnik decided he would fight on with his bishop-pair despite the pawn minus.]

19...♘xc5 20.♙d6 ♙a4! Great tactical defence. The knight on c5 is defended by virtue of the mini-combination with ...Bxf3 and ...Qxh4.

21.♘d4 ♙d7

[Looking to simplify with 21...♘b3 made sense. White would have a depressing task ahead of him in defending against the passed a-pawn.]

22.♙f4 g5?! Not throwing the game, but very unnecessary. To this point Black had put in a fine effort in shepherding his tiny edge, but now it's gone.

[22...a5 23.♙g4 ♙d5 24.f3 ♘bd7 25.♙fd1 ♙e5 would have left White with some ongoing headaches. Here Black's king is safe, and the a-pawn a significant player.]

23.♙f6 gxh4 24.♙xh6 f5

[24...♘e4 doesn't stop the initiative. After 25.♙xc8+ ♙xc8 26.f3 ♘c5 27.♙h7+ ♘h8 28.♙c1 ♘ba4 29.♙c2+ White has an ongoing attack.]

25.♙xc5! ♙xc5 26.♘xe6 The point of White's 25th move, establishing the octopus on e6. Now Black has to tread very carefully.

♙ac8 27.♙g6+ ♘h8 28.♙f6+ ♘g8 29.♙xf5 ♙xf5! 30.♙xf5 ♙d5

[30...♙e7 would have kept White out of the dark squares on the kingside, and probably secured the draw. Of course, this is only easy to say with an engine – most people would not want this defensive task.]

31.♙g5+ ♘f7 32.♘f4 ♙c4 33.♙a1 ♙g8

34.♙h5+ ♘f8 35.♙xh4 White has full material compensation, and the safer king. Indeed, Black is at a severe disadvantage.

♙f7 36.h3 ♙g7 37.♙h8+ ♙g8 38.♙f6 ♘d5 39.♙d4 ♙f5 40.♙xa7 ♘xf4 41.exf4

At this point the pawns outweigh the minor piece, and Black is very close to lost.

♙d5 42.♙b4+ ♘g7 43.♙e7 ♘h8 44.♙h4+ ♙h5 45.♙f6+ ♙g7 46.f5 ♘g8 47.♘h2 ♙e2 48.♙d4 ♙c4 49.♙xc4! Kramnik correctly evaluates the pawns versus minor piece as being decisively in his favour. The rest is a matter of technique.

♙xc4 50.♙xg7+ ♘xg7 51.g4 ♘f6 52.♘g3 ♘e5 53.h4 ♙d5 54.h5 ♙b3 55.h6 ♙g8

56.♖h4 ♜f6 57.f3 ♙h7 58.♖h5 ♙g8

59.g5+ A roller coaster of a game in which you feel bad that either side had to lose after some inspired thrust and parry action.

Summary:

This entire game is a great example of how difficult it can be for White to turn his compensation into something concrete, as well as the tribulations Black must endure to ensure his extra pawn is enough to keep pace with White. From a theoretical perspective 8 Rc1 must be taken very seriously, and it will only continue to grow in popularity with an edge, or at the very least the initiative, being a reasonable expectation for White.

1-0

D52

□ Smeets,J

■ Illescas Cordoba,M

Spanish Team Championship

2010

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♜f6 4.♗c3 e6

5.♙g5 ♜bd7 6.e3 ♖a5 7.cxd5 ♜xd5

8.♖d2 ♙b4 9.♞c1 h6 10.♙h4 c5 11.a3

White's typical attempt to jettison the a-pawn, but as the game will show, Black should just get on with his life instead of capturing it.

[11.♙d3 cxd4 12.exd4 b6 looks like a sort of Nimzo-Indian Defence with the rather unusual ...Qa5 and Qd2 inserted. After 13.a3 ♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♙b7 15.♙g3 ♜5f6 Black was okay in K.Sakaev-V.Filippov, Smolensk 2000. The bishop-pair is offset by Black's better pawn structure and adequate central control.]

11...♙xc3 12.bxc3 b6! 13.c4 An attempt to avoid the ...Ba6 idea, and exploit the bishop-pair and greater space, but Black will ultimately lack weaknesses.

[Instead, 13.♙d3 ♙a6 14.0-0 cxd4 15.♙xa6! (the beginning of a fairly long sequence resulting in a material imbalance) ♖xa6 16.♖xd4 0-0 17.e4 ♜f4 18.♖xd7 ♜e2+ 19.♖h1 ♜xc1 20.♞xc1 ♖xa3 (if White could stir up trouble against Black's king the two minor pieces would be powerful players; however, it is difficult to see how this comes to fruition without Black's extra pawn becoming enough of a problem to obtain the draw) 21.♖d2 a5 saw Black hold the balance in V.Svetnik-A.Lazar, correspondence 2008.]

13...♖xd2+ 14.♜xd2 ♜e7! Keeping options open.

[Instead, 14...♜5f6 15.f3 effectively keeps the knight on f6 out of play, and gives the bishop-pair a chance to shine. Black has taken a beating from this position, first played in E.L'Ami-M.Mueller, German League 2004.]

15.f3 Creating luft for the bishop on h4.

[The combination of ...c5 and ...f5 is a pretty common Indian Defence-style theme to keep control of the centre without the presence of central pawns. Here 15.♙d3 f5 16.♙g3 ♙b7 17.0-0 ♜f7 18.♞fd1 ♞ac8 kept Black approximately equal in V.Kramnik-A.Shirov, Shanghai 2010. The central pressure prevents White from slowly trying to grind out the advantage of the two bishops.]

15...♜f5 16.♙f2 cxd4! A two-part sequence preparing for the demolition of White's centre.

[16...♙a6 17.♙d3 ♜e7 18.0-0 slightly favoured White in M.Carlsen-V.Ivanchuk, Leon (rapid) 2009. The bishop on a6 seems misplaced, fortified as c4 is, and White seems ready to begin pushing Black back due to his central advantage (a4-a5 in particular might create some weaknesses).]

17.exd4 e5! 18.dxe5

[18.d5 ♙a6 19.♙d3 ♜d6 20.0-0 0-0 21.♞fe1 ♞ac8 looks defensible. White still has a4-a5, but Black is strong on the dark squares. As usual, once the hanging pawns advance they become stagnant, and equal parts weakness and strength.]

18...♜xe5 19.c5 White liquidates his final weakness, but now his slow development begins to show; he cannot obtain the advantage with a bishop-pair alone when Black's knights are so well posted.

0-0 20.♙e2

[20.c6 ♞d8 21.♜e4 ♜d3+ 22.♙xd3 ♞xd3 should hold the balance. The c-pawn doesn't seem a real threat to queen with the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.]

20...♞d8 21.♜c4 ♜d3+ 22.♙xd3 ♞xd3

23.cxb6 ♙a6 24.0-0

[Here the players agreed to a draw as 24.0-0 ♙xc4 25.♞xc4 axb6 26.♙xb6 ♞axa3 leaves little to fight for.

Summary:

The 'Old Main Line' of the Cambridge Springs Defence doesn't seem to pose a serious problem for Black these days,

although the positions retain practical interest due to the arising imbalances.]
½-½

□ Anand,V
■ Shirov,A
Wijk aan Zee
[Bryan Paulsen]

D52

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6
5.♙g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 ♗a5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5
8.♗d2 ♙b4 9.♞c1 h6 10.♙h4 c5 11.♙c4!?

Not the most usual square for the bishop, but rapidly developing and placing some pressure on the knight on d5.

♘xc3 Shirov's latest attempt to defend the Black cause.

[11...cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 0-0 14.0-0 ♘5b6 15.♙b3 was already slightly better for White in the earlier L.Aronian-A. Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 2011. Black's development is still an issue, and his kingside may come under pressure.]
[11...♘7b6 has been the most popular, and I'm not sure what is wrong with it aside from a general lack of ambition. Here 12.♙xd5!? (the 12.♙d3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 of D.Berczes-I. Madl, Zalakaros 2011, seems well met by ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♙a3 15.♞b1 ♙d7 with good counterplay due to the weak c-pawn) 12...♘xd5 13.a3 ♙xc3 14.bxc3 was the interesting course of D.Solak-D. Blagojevic, Serbian Team Championship 2005. It is an open question as to whether White has anything of substance due to the simplifications and the threat to the a-pawn becoming more significant. The position requires more practical testing. One observation I can offer is that the bishops of opposite colours do seem to amplify the drawing chances given the absence of a clear attacking plan for White.]

12.bxc3 ♙a3 13.♞b1 Compare this with the note on 11...N7b6, and notice how White's position looks better with his solid pawn structure and still-present bishop-pair.

a6 14.♙e2 A recognition of the impending ... b5, although there was no need to rush.

[14.0-0 would have ended up in the same place.]

14...0-0 15.0-0 b5 16.c4! Breaking up the black queenside pawns, and hoping to assume the initiative.

♙b4 17.♗c2 ♙b7 18.♞fd1 To this point both sides have played logically, but the next move looks unnecessarily rushed.

bxc4

[18...♞ac8!? was possibly the most logical follow-up to the previous moves played by both sides, taking aim at the white queen on the c-file. However, after 19.d5 exd5 20.cxd5 c4 21.a4! White retains the better chances anyway. The queenside pawns should prove to be more of a weakness than a strength, while the passed d-pawn is something White can centralize around.]

19.dxc5 The easiest way to cement White's pull.

[19.♘d2 is an engine suggestion, but seemingly decent. Play might go ♙d5 20.♘xc4 ♙xc4 21.♙xc4 ♘b6 22.d5 ♘xd5 23.♙xd5 exd5 24.♞xd5 with a slight advantage due to the precariously placed bishop on b4.]

19...♘xc5 20.♞d4 ♞ab8 21.♘e5 Pressure on c4 is appealing enough, but f7 will also become a point of emphasis in the near future.

[21.♙g3!? ♞bd8 22.♗xc4 ♙xf3 23.♙xf3 ♙c3 24.♞dd1 should also be slightly better for White due to the bishop-pair and the lack of a secure outpost for the knight on c5.]

21...♙d5 22.♙e7 ♞fe8?! Black misses his best chance.

[22...♙e4! is a stubborn tactical defence pointed out by silicon monster, and one that comes quite close to equalizing. After 23.♞xe4 ♘xe4 24.♘c6 ♗f5 25.♙f3 ♘d2! 26.♗xf5 exf5 27.♞xb4 ♞xb4 28.♙xb4 ♘xf3+ 29.gxf3 ♞e8 White will carry a small edge into the endgame, but converting it will not be easy.]

23.♙d6 ♞bd8?? Unfortunately missing the hammer blow about to fall on the classic f7 weakness.

[23...♞b7 allows Black to hold on, although White is still better after 24.♘xc4 ♙xc4 25.♗xc4 ♙a3 26.♞xb7 ♘xb7 27.♙xa3 ♗xa3 28.♞d7 when the a-pawn will probably fall in the future.]

24.♙h5! Suddenly f7 is impossible to defend without material loss.

♞xd6 25.♙xf7+ ♘f8 26.♙xe8

Black resigned due to a major material deficit, and the likely loss of more.

Summary:

11 Bc4 is very interesting and will likely continue to see more testing. I'm not entirely

convinced that White can secure an edge,
though, as Black's cause seems decent
enough after 11...N7b6.

1-0

Chapter Three

The Botvinnik Variation

([View in Game Format](#))

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4



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It is necessary to hold the pawn.

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Due to the pin Black's next couple moves are forced.

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The most flexible defence.

10...Be7 allows White to remove his problem piece and weaken Black's dark squares as in [Hoffmann-Vishnu](#)

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The most accurate move order should White hold any hope of obtaining something from the opening.

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Simple development.

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The only move that effectively protects b5, and prepares ...c5. Given that the pin is now broken, White has no other choice but to play...

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...regaining his piece. Unlike in the Anti-Moscow Variation, it is Black that has sacrificed a pawn in the early going. Of course, this is the rather weak pawn on f6, but Black won't regain his material so easily.

13...0-0-0

13...c5 14 d5 0-0-0 15 0-0 is a frequent transposition.

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Both sides completed development on their last move, and now the stage is set for the play to diversify.

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The principled choice, freeing Black's position on the queenside, aiming to take advantage of his rook's opposition to the white queen, and clearing the long diagonal in the hopes of weakening White's king.

14...Ne5 and its complexities are examined closely in [Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo-Gonzalez Barcina](#) while 14...Bh6 is a continuation I particularly dislike, but gets coverage in [Le Quang Liem-Nguyen Huynh Minh](#).

15 d5

Keeping the position under control, but begging Black's next move.

15...b4



As remarkable as it might seem, White has a choice at this point. Underlying each possibility is the reality that White must actively fight for the initiative, or Black will equalize quickly.

16 Na4

Gaining time on the queen, but putting the knight on a square from which it has no immediately apparent future. If White can solve this problem, then obtaining an advantage isn't out of the question. However, that's a mighty big 'if'.

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Logical, keeping the queen's eyes on the wayward knight, and away from the potentially open a-file.

16...Qd6 is no good despite its centralized nature: 17 Bf4! e5 18 Be3 Bh6 19 Qc1 Bxe3 20 Qxe3 was V.Kramnik-V.Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1996. The d-pawn painfully limits Black's activity, while the extended queenside is likely to become a target of opportunity for the opening of files for White's rooks.

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The point of this move is less about weakening Black's queenside pawns, and more about simply providing another defender for the knight on a4 after the exchange of pawns.



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Instead, 19...a6 20 Qg4 Bd6 21 Nb6+ Kc7 22 Nxd7 Rxd7 23 Rfe1 a5 24 Bf4 worked out great for White due to Black's vulnerable king in K.Mroczek-P.Bahr, correspondence 2008.



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20 Qg4+ is, perhaps, just a tad premature, but receives a look in [Mroczek-Zemlyanov](#).

Conclusion

The early deviations in the Botvinnik continue to offer nothing significant for either side that elects them (White equalizes, Black ends up worse). Although they all have interest for practical play, they cannot be recommended for correspondence usage.

The position in the main line after 16 Na4 continues to be the critical test for the entire opening concept, and I don't believe Black has adequately solved all his problems in the traditionally popular continuations. Of course, White must contend with 17...Nb8, and I do not believe the first player can be happy with the current state of theory only granting him equality there.

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6 a4 – [Ipatov-Smeets](#)

6...b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5

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9...Nd5 – [Troia-Boudignon](#)

10 Bxg5 Nbd7

10...Be7 – [Hoffmann-Vishnu](#)

11 g3

11 exf6 – [Aronian-Van Wely](#)

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11...Qa5 – [Muzyka-Montella](#)

11...Rg8 – [Fagerstrom-Clowes](#)

12 g3 Qb6 13 Bg2 0-0-0 14 0-0 c5

14...Ne5 – [Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo-Gonzalez Barcina](#)

14...Bh6 – [Le Quang Liem-Nguyen Huynh Minh](#)

15 d5 b4 16 Na4

16 Rb1 – [Bubir-Dell'Isola](#)

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 in Game Format
[Bryan Paulsen]

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D44

□ Ipatov,A
 ■ Smeets,J

Wijk aan Zee

2013

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.a4 Not a bad alternative to the

Botvinnik proper, but Black needn't fear it. He has a multitude of good options, depending on his temperament.

♙b4 The most natural response, and the cleanest equalizer. The alternatives:

[a) 6...h6 7.♙xf6 ♖xf6 8.e3 ♙b4 9.♙xc4 ♗d7 10.0-0 gave White what looked like a comfortable Moscow Variation in I.Nyzhnyk-I.Bukavshin, Kemer 2007. It's hard to justify the early ...dxc4 without making White lose a tempo on recapturing.]

[b) 6...b5 is an important try: 7.axb5 (otherwise, 7.e4?! ♖b6 8.♙xf6 gxf6 9.♙e2 ♙b7 10.0-0 a6 favours Black's extra pawn and bishop-pair, as in R.Insolia-S.Kireev, correspondence 2010,; while 7.e3 is tepid; natural play beginning with ♙b4 8.♙e2 ♙b7 9.0-0 a6 10.♗e5 ♗bd7 11.♖c2 ♖b6 gave Black his full share of the play in M.Grabarczyk-M.Luch, Mrzezyno 2011) 7...cxb5 8.♗xb5 ♖b6 9.♗a3 (or 9.♗c3 ♖xb2 10.♙d2 ♗d5 11.♖c1 , as in A.Timofeev-I.Bukavshin, Moscow 2012, and now the engine's ♗d7!? seems to keep it level; ...Qb3 and returning the extra c-pawn being the main ideas) 9...♙xa3 10.♖a4+ ♗c6 11.♖xa3 ♗e4! (an important in-between move, hitting the bishop and making d4 more vulnerable) 12.e3 ♖b4+ 13.♖xb4 ♗xb4 14.♖c1 ♗d3+ 15.♙xd3 cxd3 16.♙f4 g5!? 17.♙g3 (A.Moiseenko-R.Vasquez Shroder, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2013) 0-0!? 18.♗d2 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 ♗g7! . The g-pawn can now be covered with ...h6, and Black's drawing chances remain very high.]

[c) 6...c5 7.e3 cxd4 8.exd4 (8.♗xd4 hasn't been played much, but probably for good reason; the straightforward ♙e7 9.♙xc4 ♙d7 10.0-0 ♗c6 looks okay for Black, since aggressive continuations such as 11.♗db5 0-0 12.♗d6 can be met with ♗e5 13.♙e2 ♙c6 and full equality) 8...♙e7 9.♙xc4 0-0 10.0-0 ♗c6 11.♖e1 reaches a position better classified as a Slav (i.e. 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 e6 is the more common route taken), and has received substantial high-level testing in recent years.

The general consensus is that Black is okay after something like ♙d7 12.♖e2 ♗b4 13.♗e5 ♖c8 14.h4 ♙e8 15.♖ad1 ♖c7 16.♙b3 ♗fd5 , as in M.Pellen-J.

Marcinkiewicz, correspondence 2011. The problem with these positions is that while

White has the better activity and space, Black is rock-solid. The bishop on b3 being relatively out of play (it would rather be on b1) makes any kingside attack unlikely. For Black's part, it is difficult to formulate an active plan beyond just sitting and waiting.]

[d) 6...♖bd7 is yet another good option: 7.e4 (or 7.e3 ♖a5 8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 9.♙xc4 ♙b4 10.♖c2 0-0 11.0-0 c5 12.♖e4 ♖xe4 13.♖xe4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♖f5!? 15.♖xf5 exf5 16.♖e5 , as in O.Reeh-T.Luther, German League 1993, and now ♙e6 would have equalized completely; the advance of the d-pawn is not desirable, and the exchange of bishops suits Black just fine, since a bishop on d6 can battle for e5) 7...h6 8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 9.♙xc4 e5 10.0-0 ♙d6 11.d5 0-0 12.a5 ♖d8 was no problem for Black in E.Moradiabadi-N.Brunner, Meurthe et Moselle 2007. The position is reminiscent of a Moscow Variation, but White has a bizarre, far-flung a-pawn.]

7.e4 White sets off a sequence in which Black can, by the upcoming sequence of moves, achieve a desirable structure.

♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♖a5 9.e5 ♖e4 10.♙d2 c5!

Black intends to reduce the structure to one that might be seen from a Semi-Tarrasch Defence, but with numerous simplifications taking the sting out of any white initiative. White's bishop-pair is not long for this world, and his position is too slow to achieve much.

11.♙xc4 ♖xd2 12.♖xd2 cxd4 13.cxd4

Most natural, but further aiding the simplification idea. Alternatives:

[a) After 13.♙b5+ ♙d7 14.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 15.cxd4 ♖d5 16.0-0 0-0 Black's position was easily solid enough to maintain equal chances in S.Hatzl-H.Flatz, correspondence 2011.]

[b) 13.♖xd4 is strategically suspect, splitting White's pawn structure. However, it was tried in A.Gupta-P.Eljanov, Moscow 2012, and after ♖c6 14.♖e3 ♙d7 15.0-0 ♖e7 16.♙b5 ♖c7 the second player had consolidated, leaving White the task of playing more carefully to hold the balance.]

13...♖xd2+

[13...♖c6 14.♙b5 ♙d7 15.♖xa5 ♖xa5 16.♖e2 ♖c8 17.♖hd1 was V.Ikonnikov-J. Smeets, Dieren 2012, and here ♙c6 is perhaps the easiest way to keep things level, although there are other options. The general idea is that White doesn't have

enough material available to do anything of consequence with his spatial advantage.]

14.♙xd2 A principled move for endgame play, but one that doesn't challenge Black's development.

[14.♙xd2 is the most ambitious, but here too White doesn't have enough: 0-0 15.♖e4 ♖c6 16.♖d1 ♙d7 17.♖c5 ♙c8 18.0-0 ♖d8 19.d5 ♖xe5 20.dxe6 ♙xe6 21.♙xe6 fxe6 22.♖xb7 and White's better structure was not enough for him to win in P.Poellen-H. Denecke, correspondence 1989.]

14...♖c6 15.♖hc1 ♖e7 16.♖ab1 ♖b8

17.♖e3 f6 A dynamic approach, but not particularly necessary.

[17...♖d8 is solid, and asks White if he can make progress. The further 18.♙d3 ♙d7 looks basically impregnable.]

18.exf6+ gxf6 19.♙d3 Stepping away from potential ...Na5 ideas and keeping an eye on the isolated h-pawn, but not a game-changer at all.

[19.d5 would at least eliminate White's lone weakness and split Black's pawns. Following exd5 20.♙xd5 ♙d7 21.♖f4 White's play should be a bit easier, but the weakness of the a-pawn means Black should never be in any real danger of losing.]

19...♙d7 20.g4!? An attempt to change the character of the position, but not particularly useful.

h6

[20...b6 should also suit the second player since 21.g5 can be met by fxg5 22.♖xg5 h6 23.♖e4 when Black is fine.]

21.♖h4 ♖d6 22.f4 ♖hg8

[Black had shored up any potential weakness in his position, and now 22...♖e7!?, threatening ...Bxa4, would have been a logical continuation. The attempt to get the pawn out of danger with 23.a5 runs into ♖hg8 24.h3 h5 and White's kingside pawns become something of a liability.]

23.h3 h5 24.♖g6 Now that ...Ne7 is ruled out, the knight on c6 doesn't have as much of an impact as it could have had.

hxg4 25.hxg4 ♙e8 26.f5 ♙xg6 27.fxg6 ♖e7 28.♖f1 b6 29.♖d2

[Not 29.♖xf6?? ♖d5+ , winning.]

29...f5 30.gxf5 exf5 31.♙xf5 ♖xf5 32.♖xf5 ♖xg6 Neither side has any trumps left, and the game ends peacefully.

33.♖h1 ♖bg8 34.♖d3 ♖g1 35.♖h6+ ♖8g6 36.♖xg6+ ♖xg6 37.♖f7 a6 38.♖a7 ♖g3+

39.♔c4 b5+ 40.axb5 axb5+ 41.♔xb5

Summary:

6 a4 is not a threat to the Botvinnik Variation, and Black is flush with decent options against it.

½-½

□ Van Seben,E

■ Kireev,S

Correspondence

[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2009

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6
5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5
9.exf6 The muted approach. White elects to sacrifice a pawn in order to damage Black's structure.

gxh4 10.♗e5 The only approach that may trouble Black; White threatens to hold the pawn on f6 with Qf3.

[Instead, 10.a4 ♙b7 11.♗e5 ♖xf6

is seen in note 'a' to White's 11th move,]

[while the flaw with 10.♗xh4 , unlike with 10 Ne5, is that after ♗d7 , c6 is not hanging in any scenario. Now 11.g3 ♗xf6 12.♙g2 ♗d5 was satisfactory for Black in A.Zedek-J. Kosek, Czech League 1995. White will come to miss his dark-squared bishop.]

10...♖xf6 11.g3 White opts for a typical bishop deployment for the Botvinnik Variation. Alternatively:

[a) 11.a4 tries to undermine the queenside before Black can complete development: ♙b7! 12.axb5 (or 12.♙e2 ♗d7 13.♗xd7 ♗xd7 14.♙f3 a6 15.0-0 , J.Kerekes-A. Zaremba, correspondence 2002, and here ♗c7!? would have taken all of the sting out of Ne4-c5 sorties, and left White with dubious compensation for his pair of pawns) 12...cxb5 (12...c5?! is dangerous to Black's health more than White's: 13.♙e2 ♙xg2 is supposed to be the point of Black's 12th, but now 14.♖g1 h3 15.b6! cxd4 16.♖a4+ ♗d8 17.b7!! caused Black to resign on the spot in U.Baumgartner-P. Canizares Cuadra, correspondence 2005; the point is that after a further ♙xb7 18.♖a5+ ♗e8 19.♖b5+ ♗d8 20.♖g4 ♙d6 21.♖xd4 ♙d5 22.♗xd5 ♖xe5 23.0-0-0! White's attack is irresistible) 13.♙xc4! (the 13.♗xb5 ♙b4+ 14.♗c3 0-0 15.♙xc4 ♗c6 16.♗d7 of P.Butterworth-D.Buckley, Bristol 1999, can be met in turn with ♖g7 17.♗xf8

♗xd4 18.♗d7 ♖d8 with a dangerous initiative for the second player due to White's problems on the d-file) 13...a6! (13...bxc4?? 14.♖a4+ ♗d8 15.♖a5+ gives White a decisive attack) 14.♗xb5 axb5 15.♙xb5+ ♗d8 16.♖xa8 ♙b4+ 17.♗f1 ♙xa8 18.♖a4 ♙xg2+! 19.♗xg2 ♖g8+ 20.♗f1 ♙d6 21.♖a5+ ♙c7 22.♖c3 was eventually drawn in V.Moskalenko-M. Panelo Munoz, Sabadell 2009. Both kings are too open to obtain anything meaningful, and a draw by repetition is the likely result.] [b) 11.♙e2 is too slow: ♗d7! 12.♗xc6 ♙b7 13.♙f3 a6 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♗e5 ♙xf3 16.♗xf3 ♙e7 17.♖e2 0-0! and although Black's extra pawn is just the doubled h-pawn, he also has other advantages: d4 is weak, and his dark-squared bishop occupies precisely the complex of squares White most struggles to keep tabs on. Black went on to win convincingly in M.Kozakov-G. Sarthou, Mulhouse 2004.]

11...♗d7! Possible due to White's exposure on the long diagonal.

12.♖e2

[12.♗xc6?! ♙b7 13.♙g2 ♖c8 14.d5 was H.Teske-N.Friedrich, Arco 2006, and now exd5 15.♖e2+ ♖e6 16.♗xa7 b4 17.♗xc8 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♙c5 would have left Black with a significant advantage after picking up the knight.]

12...♙b7 Perhaps the most flexible choice, but no better than the chief alternative.

[After 12...♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♖e7 14.♙g2 ♙b7 15.0-0-0 ♙g7 16.f4 0-0 17.♗e4 ♖ad8 18.♗d6 ♙a8 White had compensation for his two pawns, but no more in F.Gheorghiu-V.Georgescu, Romania 1961. The d6-knight will prove possible to undermine with ...f6, which will hold the balance despite the weakness it incurs.]

13.♙g2 ♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♖g5!? An unusual square for the queen, and practically begging f2-f4, but then ...Qd8 and a repositioning on the queenside will leave White's dark squares sensitive.

[Instead, 14...♖e7 transposes to the note to Black's 12th, above.]

15.♖d1 Cutting out the ...Qd8 idea, but now Black has other things in mind.

[A.Van Schyndel-W.Oudheusden, correspondence 2008, ended with White's resignation after 15.f4? ♖d8 16.♖d1 ♖b6 17.♖h5 hxg3 18.hxg3 ♖e3+ , which makes it clear why f2-f4 must be avoided.]

15...hgx3

[15...Bd8 is also possible, but here 16.f4 works a bit better: Bxd1+ 17.Qxd1 Bb8+ 18.Qc2 hgx3 19.hgx3 Qe7 . White has compensation similar to the game, but it is difficult to overcome the two pawn minus.]

16.hgx3 Bd8 17.0-0 Qc5 As is typically the case in these structures White has some compensation due to potential invasions of the knight, but Black is doing well regardless; he is fully developed and has no weaknesses of note.

18.Qh2 Cutting out ...Qxg3 ideas.

Bd3!? Black practically begs White's next, but after...

19.Qe4 Bd5!? ...the ante has been upped. Capturing the rook would only empower Black's pawn mass, and remove the source of all White's play, the e4-square. In the game White wisely decided on a different course.
20.f4 Qe7 21.Qh5 White's position looks threatening, but there is little substance to his activity, since f4-f5 is hardly available at the moment.

b4 22.Qa4 Bg8 The taunting continues. Capturing d5 is no more desirable than it was previously, and so White is forced to try to hold the balance.

23.Qh7 Bg7 24.Qxh6 White has picked off Black's most sickly pawn, and now Black decides to sacrifice the exchange.

Bxh7!

[24...Qf8 25.Bxd5 cxd5 26.Qxc5 Qxc5 27.f5 exf5 28.Qxf5 is dangerous for Black; e5-e6 and Be6 are possible, and Black's king has shaky shelter.]

25.Qxh7 Qd4 Due to the time gained from sacrificing the exchange, Black has gained the ability to ban the knight on a4 from the play.

26.f5 exf5 27.Bxf5 Qc8 Now the bishop will be activated, and it will become impossible for White to make any progress.

28.Bh5 Qd8 29.e6! Angling for a draw, because more passive play will surely play into the hands of the bishop-pair. The rest of the game better resembles engine-inspired testing of the waters, and bears little resemblance to anything humans would be doing.

Qxe6 30.Bxd5+ cxd5 31.Qh5 Qe3 32.Bxd5+ Qc7 33.Qc5 Qf6 34.Qe2 Qh6+ 35.Bh5 Qg6 36.Bd5 Qh7+ 37.Bh5 Qb1 38.Qa6+ Qd6 39.Qg2 Agreed drawn on account of various perpetual checks being the

only available outcome.

Summary:

9 exf6 is a decent practical try for those looking to leave theory behind (relative to the Botvinnik proper), and just play chess. White's compensation can typically be regarded as safe, but the same can be said for Black's position. Theoretically, Black is doing perfectly fine.

½-½

D44

□ **Troia,E**

■ **Boudignon,S**

Correspondence

2007

[*Bryan Paulsen*]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Qf3 Qf6 4.Qc3 e6 5.Qg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Qh4 g5 9.Qxg5 Qd5? I am forced to attach a question mark to this move owing to the fact that analysis has sufficiently established that Black is basically lost. This move still gets wheeled out every now and then in practical situations, but is the equivalent of playing Russian Roulette with five rounds loaded into a 6-shooter; knowing this, it is impossible to recommend it. Black hopes that he will be able to generate sufficient counterplay in the centre before White's material advantage starts to tell.

10.Qxf7! The most direct attempt at refutation, after which it isn't at all clear Black can even obtain a manageable position against perfect play.

[10.Qf3 is a less forcing alternative, but possibly not irrelevant as a try for an edge. White has regained his material, and hopes to develop simply. Note that the control of the h4-d8 diagonal cuts out the idea of ...0-0-0, considerably hampering Black's play should he intend to simply gang up on the knight on c3. With this in mind, he should switch tracks to the more thematic ...c5: Qa5 11.Bc1 Qb4 12.Qd2 Qd7 13.Qe2 c5! 14.0-0 Qb7 15.Bfd1 Bc8 was tested a few times in the 1980s, and here W.Uhlmann-V. Ikirov, Sofia 1986, continued 16.Bc2!? Q7b6 with a draw shortly afterward. Worth mentioning is the engine's suggestion of 17.Qf6!? when it isn't at all clear that Black has achieved equal play: for instance, following the removal of the pesky bishop with Qxf6 18.exf6 , the appearance of an

idea involving Qf4-g3-g7 suddenly causes very real headaches.]

10...♖xh4 11.♜xh8 ♜b4 12.♞c1!

The easiest way to deal with the ...c5 idea.

[12.♞d2 is also possible, and c5 13.0-0-0!? is quite interesting, but cxd4 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4 15.♞xd4 ♜xc3 16.bxc3 ♜c6 17.♞g4 ♜xe5 was kind of unclear in G.Marciniak-P. Rouzaud, Condom 2004. If the position favours anyone it is White, but one is left asking why he isn't just busying himself learning the refutation with 12 Rc1.]

12...♞e4+ Desperation.

[12...c5 was entirely refuted in P.Nielsen-E. Sveshnikov, Kemerovo 1995. After the sensible 13.dxc5 ♜d7 14.♜e2 ♜xe5 15.0-0 ♜b7 16.♜xb5 ♜xc5 White uncorked 17.♜g6! ♜xg6 18.♞xc4 ♜df4 19.♞xc5 ♞d8 20.♜d6+ ♞xd6 21.♜b5+! ♜f7 22.♞xd6 , and Black's threatening-looking position collapsed in a puff of smoke.]

13.♜e2!

[13.♞e2 is met by ♞xd4 when Black's play has been thoroughly validated.]

13...♜f4 The critical moment. White absolutely must know that the threat to g2 is irrelevant.

[Instead, 13...♜xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♜f8 15.0-0 ♜g7 16.♜f3 ♞f5 17.♞e1 ♞d3 18.♞xd3 cxd3 19.♞ed1 ♜xh8 20.♞xd3 saw the rook and two pawns outweigh the pair of knights in Z.Saule-S.Boudignon, correspondence 2008. The exposed black king and wall of white kingside pawns pose certain problems that will never go away.]

14.♞d2! Creating luft for the king on d1. **♜d3+**

[14...♜xg2+ 15.♜d1 ♜e3+ 16.♞xe3 ♞xh1+ 17.♜c2 ♞xh2 18.♜f3 ♞h4 19.♜xb5 was hopeless for the second player in S.Plischki-D.Mikulas, Plzen 2009. Regaining the material sacrificed often isn't enough for Black to survive the game in this variation, hence the dubious reputation it enjoys.]

15.♜f1 ♜xc1 16.♞xc1!

[16.♜xe4?! focuses too much on simplification, and probably just loses the claim to an advantage. Indeed, after ♜xd2 17.♜xd2 ♜xa2 18.♜e4 a5! Black's queenside pawns are energetic enough to upset White.]

16...♞xd4 17.♞xh6 ♜d8 Black's final attempt to find play in this variation, aiming to find salvation for his beleaguered king.

[17...♜xc3 18.bxc3 ♞xc3 regains the

material, but after 19.g3 Black proved unable to develop and provide shelter to his airy king in A.Lastin-E.Sveshnikov, Vrnjacka Banja 1999.]

18.♜f7+ ♜c7 19.h4 ♜xc3 20.bxc3 ♞xc3 Once again Black has regained his material, but here the white kingside pawns provide a certain advantage.

21.g4 ♜a6 22.♞e3?! It is difficult to explain why White felt the need to exchange queens, although even here he should be significantly better.

[22.♞g5 would have cleared the way for the march of the h-pawn, and I'm not sure if Black can put up meaningful resistance: for example, after the logical ♜b7 23.♜d6 ♜c5 24.h5 it looks like the play should lead to some sort of endgame where the connected passed pawns will lead to a win.]

22...♞xe3 23.fxe3 ♜d7 24.♜e1 ♜b4 25.h5 ♜xa2 Although White's play has been slow, his pawns still have the more immediate impact on the game.

26.♜d6

[The point of White's play to this point had been pushing his pawns, so why not continue? One continuation I checked runs 26.h6! ♜e8 27.♞f1 ♜xf7 28.♞xf7+ ♜b6 29.h7 c3 30.♜d1 ♜b4 31.g5 ♞d8 32.g6 ♜d3+ 33.♜e2 ♜xe5 , and now 34.♜c2! ♞d2+ 35.♜e1 ♜xf7 36.g7! ♞xc2 37.g8♞ is probably just winning for White.]

26...c3 27.♜d1 a5 28.♜c2? White has paid far too much respect to Black's queenside pawns, and now there is no easy win in sight.

[28.h6 is almost too late now, but even here a4 29.♜d3 ♜b4 30.♜e4 ♜d5 (30...a3 31.♜xb5+ is the point of White's previous move) 31.h7 with the push of the g-pawn to follow looks to win.]

28...a4 29.♞a1 b4 30.♞xa2 b3+ 31.♜xc3 bxa2 32.♜b2 ♞f8 33.♜e4 c5 34.♜f6 ♜c6 35.♜xa2

[35.♜a1 is very subtle, but eliminates Black checking ideas. The idea of advancing the g-pawn may still prove too much for Black: ♞d8 36.g5 ♞d2 37.♜c4 ♞g2 38.g6 ultimately leads to various wins for White in many of the variations I checked.]

35...♜d5+ 36.♜a1? Again passive play haunts White.

[Even here 36.♜a3!? ♞d8 37.g5 doesn't look possible for Black to hold.]

36...♜b3 37.g5 c4 38.♜e4 ♞g8 39.g6 a3 Now the advanced black pawns ensure the

draw. A very sad outcome for the first player.

40.♖d2 ♘c6 41.♗xc4 ♘d5 42.e4+ ♘d4
43.♗d2 ♙c2 44.♙g4 ♖g7 45.♗f3+ ♘xe4
46.♗g5+ ♘xe5 47.h6 ♖xg6 48.h7 ♖h6

Summary:

While Black managed to salvage a half-point, the entire variation with 9...Nd5 is still busted, and serves as little more than a surprise weapon against the very unwary, although the existence of 10 Nf3 makes one wonder if that function is even worthwhile. Moreover, there are better surprises to be launched within the main body of Botvinnik theory.

½-½

□ Hoffmann,M

■ Vishnu,P

Vlissingen

[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6
5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5
9.♗xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♙e7 Immediately
breaking the pin, but unfortunately for Black
also leaving distinct weaknesses on the dark
squares.

11.exf6 ♙xf6 12.♙xf6! Instead of wasting
time, White simply establishes Black's dark
squares as a long-term weakness.

[12.♙e3 is strategically inferior chiefly owing
to the disparity between the two bishops (the
one on e3 is now relegated to being a pawn,
while Black keeps his important dark-
squared bishop): ♙b7 13.♖f3 (13.a4 a6
14.♖f3 ♗d7 15.♗e4 ♙e7 was also okay
for the second player in G.Burgess-P.Haugli,
Aarhus 1989) 13...♗d7! 14.♙e2!?
was B.Culp-J.Lund, correspondence 2001,
and now ♙e7! seems to be satisfactory for
Black. It is not clear how White can improve
his position, whereas the second player can
continue developing with ...Qc7, etc, and
15.♗xb5? can easily be met with ♖b6! .]

12...♖xf6 13.g3 As usual White wastes no
time preparing to occupy the long diagonal.
♗a6

[13...♙b7 14.♙g2 ♖e7 15.0-0 should just
transpose to the game after a further ♗a6
because the alternatives are either slow, or
hang the b-pawn in the case of ...Nd7.]

14.♙g2 ♙b7 15.♗e4 ♖e7 16.0-0 0-0-0

Completing development, and providing the
logical ending to the previous sequence of

moves.

[Instead, 16...f5 17.♗c5! ♗xc5 18.dxc5
♖xc5 19.♖e1 gives White lasting
compensation due to his safer king, activity,
and better pawn structure. These factors
combined to give him the full point in S.
Bhawoodien-J.Meintjes, Pretoria 2012.]

17.a4 The critical fork in the road for the
entire variation.

♙b8

[The main alternative runs 17...f5 18.♗c3!
b4 (18...♙b8 needs mention primarily due
to the need for White to sacrifice a piece if
he is to expect any sort of initiative; after
19.♖e2 b4 20.♖xc4! bxc3 21.bxc3
Black's knight and bishop cannot both be
activated at the same time, while White
will retain certain queenside prospects on
the b-file and the long diagonal, and in J.
Kratochvil-J.Salonen, correspondence 2009,
Black proved unable to hold the balance)
19.♗e2 and now: -- (19...♗c5 20.♖c2
♗b3 21.♖ad1 ♙a6 (J.Bartholomew-J.
Becerra Rivero, Philadelphia 2008)
22.♙xc6!? allows White to hang on to a
small edge due to his material advantage.;
19...e5 20.♖c2 exd4 21.♖xc4 c5
22.♙xb7+ ♖xb7 was J.Hobaica-H.Walsh,
correspondence 1998, and now 23.♗f4
looks difficult for Black due to his light-
squared weaknesses on the queenside and
in the centre.; 19...c5 20.♖c2 ♙xg2
21.♙xg2 ♖b7+ 22.f3 ♖d5 23.♖ac1 c3
24.bxc3 b3 (S.Gonzalez de la Torre-O.
Korneev, Elgoibar 2005) 25.♖b2!? c4
26.♗f4 followed by Ng6-e5 may give White
a little something in this position, although
Black will retain some compensation due to
his far-advanced b-pawn.)]

18.♖d2 A 'developing move', but White isn't
only after that as a5 is a touch sensitive.

e5

[After 18...♗b4 19.♖fd1! ♗d3 20.axb5
cxb5 21.♖a5 ♙c6 22.♖xd3! (the point of
White's play to this point) cxd3 23.♗c5
♙xg2 24.♙xg2 ♗a8 25.♖xb5 ♖d6
26.♖xd3 White has won twice from this
position in correspondence, first tested in
A.Castellano-R.Parkes Navea,
correspondence 2005. His material
compensation and safer king makes it
difficult for Black to generate counterplay.]

19.axb5 ♖xd4

[19...cxb5 20.♖a5 ♖xd4 just transposes to
the game.]

20.♖a5 cxb5 21.♗xb5 Black's pawn structure and king safety is something only a mother could love, because at this point everything is going White's way.

♗h6 A sad, necessary defence of the knight.

22.♗fe1

[22.♗a5! was tested in R.Raijmaekers-S. Hauser, correspondence 2009, and probably represents an important refinement. After ♗d5 23.♗a4 ♕c6 24.♗a1! ♖b4 25.♗d1 ♖c2 26.♗c1 ♗xd1+ 27.♗xd1 ♖d4 28.♗g4 White had consolidated his position, and retained the initiative.]

22...♖c7?! Too passive, and playing into White's hands.

[22...♗b6!? 23.♗a5 ♗d5 24.♗c3 ♖b4 looks quite interesting. The natural 25.♗xc4 ♗d4 26.♗e2 f5 27.♖c3 ♗xg2 28.♗xg2 ♖d3 may give Black just enough play for his pawn to hold the balance.]

23.♗c5! ♗xc5 24.♖xc5 ♗xg2 25.♗xg2

Black's pawn structure is a cause enough for worry, but it is the h-pawn that spells doom.

♗b6 26.♗xe5 ♗xb2 27.♗f5

[27.h4 right away looked more to the point: for example, ♗dd2 28.♗f5 ♖e6 29.♖a4 ♗b7 30.h5 with insurmountable difficulties for Black.]

27...♖b5

[27...♗d5 might have been more stubborn. Following 28.♖a6+ ♗c8 29.♗xf7 ♖b5 30.♗a4 ♖d6 31.♗xa7 ♗f5 32.h4 ♗bxf2+ 33.♗h3 White would still have some work to put in.]

28.♗xf7 Suddenly Black has to be very careful not to lose a decisive amount of material.

♗d5

[28...c3 is more stubborn, but here too 29.♗f8+ ♗c7 30.♖e6+ ♗b7 31.♗f7+ ♗b6 32.♖xd4 should prove to be decisive.]

29.♖d7+ ♗b7 30.♖f6+ ♗c6 31.♖xd5

The rest, as they say, is a matter of technique.

♗xd5 32.h4 c3 33.h5 c2 34.♗c1 ♖d4

35.h6 ♗b1 36.♗d7+ ♗e6 37.♗xd4 ♗xc1

38.♗c4 ♗f7 39.♗c7+ ♗g8 40.g4

Black resigned in view of the easily won endgame.

Summary:

10...Be7 isn't a terrible move, but the elimination of dark-squared bishops favours White more than the defender, as the dark squares are the very ones Black so often struggles to keep tabs on.

1-0

D44

□ **Aronian,L**

■ **Van Wely,L**

Dresden Olympiad

2008

[Bryan Paulsen]

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

9.♖xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♖bd7 11.exf6

Formerly the main line and White's most topical choice, but it has since been found wanting.

[This game will demonstrate why 11.g3 has surpassed it as a winning try.]

11...♗b7 12.g3 c5 13.d5 ♖xf6 The critical independent choice that attempts to make use of the early capture of the knight. Others:

[a) 13...♗b6 14.♗g2 transposes to 11.g3 and the main line.]

[b) 13...♗h6 is another important try in this position, and seems to fall short only by the smallest of margins: 14.♗xh6 ♗xh6 15.♗d2 (15.♗g2 b4 16.♖e4 ♖xf6 was no problem for the second player in V.Bagirov-A.

Yusupov, USSR 1981; the pressure on the long diagonal easily keeps Black level)

15...♗xf6 16.♖e4 (16.0-0-0 ♗f8! 17.h4 b4 18.♖e4 c3 19.bxc3 ♗g7 20.dxe6

♗xe4 21.exd7 ♗d8 22.♗b5 ♗xh1 23.♗xh1 also proved sufficient for Black in A.

Raessler-S.Boudignon, correspondence 2009; White has compensation thanks to his great d-pawn, but his king is also enough of problem to give Black sufficient

resources) 16...♗f3! (leaving the rook on h6 hanging and giving White a fork is the sort of thing foresight and preparation make possible; instead, 16...♗e5 17.♗g2 ♗xd5

18.0-0-0 ♗h5 19.f4 ♗c7 20.♗e2 ♗h8 21.♖d6+! ♗xd6 22.♗xd5 left Black doomed

due to the attack with f4-f5 following on the next move in L.Machycek-K.Weber, correspondence 2000) 17.♖d6+ ♗e7

. In this sharp tabiya White has:

A) 18.♗xh6 ♗xd6 19.dxe6 ♖e5

20.exf7+ ♗e7 was G.Baier-B.Ketelhoehn, correspondence 2007. I find this position fascinating. Despite White's significant

material advantage, not even a queen trade brings him to the promised land: for example, 21.♗f4 ♗xf4 22.gxf4 ♖f3+ 23.♖d1 ♗d8+ 24.♖c1 ♗d2 25.♗g2 ♗xf2 26.♗xf3 ♗xf3 27.♗e1+ ♗xf7 and despite White's extra exchange, he will find himself unable to free the rook on a1,

keep his kingside pawns, and develop a meaningful initiative.;

B) 18.♖g1 was tried in Z.Y.Zhao-B.Kelly, Scarborough 2001, and now ♗e5 19.♗xb7 ♖xh2! gives Black just enough of an initiative to hold the balance.;

C) 18.♗xb7 ♖h5 19.d6+ (a rather unusual position was reached after 19.♖g1 ♖xd5 20.♙g2 ♖xd2 21.♙xf3 ♖xb2 22.0-0-0 ♖xa2 23.♙b1 ♖a3 in A.Zontakh-V.Popov, Bydgoszcz 2001, and following 24.♗xc5!? ♖d8 25.♗xd7 ♖xf3 26.♗e5 ♖xd1+ 27.♖xd1 ♖xf2 28.♖d7+ ♙e8 29.♖xa7 ♖xh2 a draw is the likely result; it is unlikely White will be able to retain the g-pawn, at which point it doesn't matter if Black loses his remaining pawns) 19...♙e8 20.♖g1 c3 21.bxc3 ♖e5+ 22.♙e2 ♖xe2+ 23.♖xe2 ♖xc3+ 24.♙f1 ♖xa1+ 25.♙g2 ♖e5 26.♖xe5 ♗xe5 27.♖b1 (with foresight White should kill off the most dangerous of the black pawns: 27.♗xc5! ♖c8 28.♖c1 ♖c6 29.h4 ♖xd6 30.h5 should grant White a favourable endgame) 27...♗d7 28.♖xb5 ♖b8 and Black managed to hold this precarious ending in O.Sivenkov-T.Koskela, correspondence 2008, due to the not-readily-apparent strength of his c-pawn and the b-file pin. A remarkable game in its own right.;

D) 18.--]

We now return to 13...Nx6:

14.♙g2 ♙e7 Simple, solid chess. Black keeps his cards close to his chest.

[14...♙h6 isn't as solid, but performs well: 15.♙xf6 ♖xf6 16.0-0 0-0-0 17.♗xb5 a6 18.♗c3 exd5 19.♗a4 looked dangerous for the second player in A.Blinchevsky-J.Walden, correspondence 2011. I can't help but feel that despite Black holding in correspondence play, he is always on the brink of disaster due to his shaky central pawns.]

15.0-0 White has finished development, but now reality sets in.

[15.♗xb5 ♗xd5 16.♙xe7 ♖a5+! suited Black just fine in I.Cheparinov-A.Rainfray, Montpellier 2000. This in-between move allows Black to exploit White's uncastled king before regaining his material.]

15...♗xd5 16.♙xe7 ♙xe7! 17.♖e1

White simply desires to capture on c3 with the queen.

[17.♗xb5 is critical, and possibly just best.

However, here too, White struggles to find anything after very precise play: ♖b6 18.♗a3 c3 (18...♖h4 19.♖c1 ♖a6 20.♖e2 ♖g8 21.♖xc4 was safely better for White in H.Baum-A.Roberts, correspondence 2008; White has an extra pawn to go with his better structure, and Black's kingside attacking chances will eventually burn out) 19.♗c4 ♖c7 (19...♖a6 20.b3! ♖ag8 21.♖f3 ♖g6 22.♖fe1 ♖f6 , as in D.Blau-P.Ax, correspondence 2007, represents what is possibly the critical line for this sideline; here 23.♖e2!? should still be slightly better for White's structure and well-centralized pieces, although Black does have compensation due to his c-pawn and kingside pressure) 20.♖b1 ♖ad8!? (untried, but this looks critical; instead, 20...cxb2 21.♖d2 ♖ag8 22.♖xb2 ♗b6 23.♙xb7 ♗xc4 24.♖c3 ♗d6 25.♙f3 ♖b8 was G.Aalderink-V.Calugaru, correspondence 2007, and now 26.♖bc1 c4 27.♖fe1 looks a bit favourable for White, since the h-pawn can be advanced some, and Black's king may prove shaky) 21.♖c1 ♙a6 22.b3 ♙b7!

. With the c-pawn's presence cemented, and White's coordination interrupted, Black is free to develop enough pressure on the kingside to have a pleasant position.]

17...♗xc3 18.♙xb7 ♖b8 19.♖xc3

The point of White's 17th, although it is hard to believe there is much left to play for.

[Otherwise, after 19.bxc3 ♖xb7 20.♖e5 f6 21.♖xc5+ ♖d6 22.♖e3 ♖d3 Black's pawns are a bit loose, but his better activity easily kept things level in A.Onischuk-J.Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2005,]

[and after 19.♙g2 ♗a4 20.♖d1 ♖c7 21.♖d2 (D.Woods-W.Green, correspondence 2002) ♖hg8!? , with no way for White to invade Black's position, the queenside pawns should hold the balance.]

19...♖xb7 20.♖fd1 ♖b8! Black sees to the defence of his queenside, because White can only hope for anything should it crumble.

21.a4 a6 22.axb5 axb5 23.b3 ♖d8

24.bxc4 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 bxc4 26.♖xc4

♖e5 The passed h-pawn is balanced by the lack of material and influential c-pawn. There is very little either side can do to change the outcome, and Black is fully equal.

27.♖h4+ ♖f6 28.♖h5 ♖c7 29.♖d3 ♖f5

30.♖h4+ ♖f6 31.♖a4 ♖e5 32.♖d1 ♖b7

33.h4 ♖f5 34.♗a5 ♜d7 35.♞a1 ♜d3
36.♗a8 ♜d2 37.♞a7+ ♜d7 38.♞a1 ♜d2
39.♞a7+ ♜d7 Summary:

11 exf6 is still dangerous, but with very precise play Black should hold the balance should he attempt to deviate from the transposition to the main line of 11 g3. For practical purposes a transposition seems more likely, because a lot of the positions just covered require walking a tightrope in order to hold the balance, and that sort of thing is only easy in correspondence with a database, engines, and plenty of hours to devote to studying the position.

½-½

□ Muzyka,Y
■ Montella,S
Correspondence
[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2007

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6
5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5
9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♘bd7 11.exf6 ♗a5
12.g3 By a small transposition of moves the critical position for 11 g3 Qa5 12 exf6 has been reached. Black has some tricky resources here, and they are worth some coverage.

b4

[12...♙a6 13.♗f3 b4 14.♘e4 ♗d5 is an independent try, but not one likely to overwhelm. After 15.♙e3 (by delaying Bg2 White has taken the wind out of ...c3 ideas, and after this move his position is pretty much consolidated) c5 16.♞d1 ♞d8 17.♙g2 c3 (certainly energetic play from Black, developing quickly, and preventing castling, but White need not fear) 18.♘xc5! ♗xf3 19.♙xf3 ♙xc5 20.dxc5 ♘e5 21.♞xd8+ ♘xd8 22.♙e4 ♙d3 (22...♘d3+ aims to find a happy outcome due to the bishops of opposite colours, but Black is probably lost in the ending after 23.♙xd3 ♙xd3 24.bxc3 bxc3 25.f3!? due to White's pair of extra pawns, and the potential impact of the h-pawn) 23.♙xd3 ♘xd3+ 24.♘d1! ♘xb2+ 25.♘c2 Black's queenside pawns will go nowhere, while White still has his small material advantage and the better minor piece.]

13.♘e4 ♙a6 14.♙e3 The typical set-up the first player needs to know to aim for. He no

longer has any loose pieces, and he waits until the right time to determine the position of the bishop on f1.

0-0-0 15.♗f3 The final piece to the puzzle that nullifies Black's chances in this variation. His early queenside initiative has no way to make headway, and the f1-bishop undercuts any ...c3 ideas.

c5 Black's position is pulled forward by inertia; his structure and material deficit do not promise him good long-term prospects, and so something must be tried quickly.

16.♙g2 As usual, White plays Bg2 once everything else has been seen to.

cx d4

[16...♘b8 is a move only an engine's programmer could love, but it may be better than the text (which is damning with faint praise). With 17.0-0 (17.dxc5 c3 gives Black more activity than he deserves) 17...cx d4 18.♙f4 White wants to lure ...e5 in order to prevent ...Qh5 and similar ideas. After that is achieved, he can go about undermining Black's advanced pawns. Black has regained his material after e5 (18...♗h5 19.g4! is one point of White's 18th; h2 has protection) 19.♙d2 , but the f7-pawn is particularly weak to Ng5, the h1-a8 diagonal will cause headaches, and Black's queenside pawns should prove possible to undermine.]

17.♙xd4 ♘e5 18.♙xe5 ♗xe5 19.0-0 ♞d3

[19...♗xb2 is just a mistake. White has many options, but the simplest may be 20.♞ad1 ♗e5 21.♞xd8+ ♘xd8 22.♞d1+ ♘c7 23.♘d6 followed by Nxf7, and the collapse of Black's position.]

20.♗e2 ♗h5 21.♗xh5 ♞xh5 22.h4

Black's only possible hope lies in his queenside majority, but the location of his king, and the relative ineffectiveness of the bishop on f8 makes it unlikely he can achieve sufficient play. Compare this position to those seen in the main lines, and it becomes clear that a knight on e4 is a much bigger headache than one on a4.

♘c7

[22...♙h6 23.♞fd1 should significantly favour White, as the reduction in material also comes at the cost of Black's activity.]

23.♞fe1 ♞hd5

[23...♙h6 only serves to mobilize White's kingside after 24.f4 .]

24.b3! ♞a5

[24...c3 25.♙f1 forces the sacrifice of an

exchange, something the passed c-pawn is not worth.]

25.♟f1 ♞d4 26.♞g5 ♜c5 27.♜xc4 ♜xc4 28.bxc4 From this point on Black's hopes of surviving are nil. His c-pawn amounted to naught, and White's pawns are ready to roll. ♞d2 29.♞e4 ♞c2 30.g4 ♜d4 31.♞ad1 ♞xc4

[31...e5 32.g5 ♞a3 33.♞xd4 exd4 34.h5 is curtains. Black's pawns cannot match the speed of White's kingside fleet.]

32.h5 ♜c3 33.h6 ♞g5 34.♞xg5 ♞xg4+ 35.♞h2 ♞xg5 Desperation on Black's behalf, but there was little else. The rest of the game requires no comment.

36.♞h1 ♜xf6 37.h7 a5 38.♞dg1 ♞d5 39.♞g8 ♞d7 40.♞a8 ♞f5 41.♞g2 ♞c6 42.♞f8 ♜d4 43.h8 ♞ ♜xh8 44.♞h8 ♞b5 45.♞h7 f6 46.♞e7 ♞d5 47.♞xe6 ♞d2 48.a3 bxa3 49.♞b8+ ♞c5 50.♞a6 ♞c4 51.♞xa5 a2 52.♞ba8 ♞b3 53.♞a3+ ♞c4 54.♞xa2 ♞d7 55.♞f8 A fine performance by White, effectively keeping Black from ever getting his footing.

Summary:

It seems safe to say that Black cannot expect equal chances in the continuation with 11 g3 Qa5.

1-0

□ Fagerstrom,B

■ Clowes,M

Correspondence

[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2008

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 d5 4.♞c3 c6 5.♜g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♜h4 g5 9.♞xg5 hxg5 10.♜xg5 ♞bd7 11.g3 ♞g8

The most important deviation from the main line with 11 g3. Black aims to obtain two minor pieces for a rook and pawn, and White must play very carefully in order to realize an edge due to the imbalance.

12.h4! Come get some!

[Instead, after 12.♜xf6 ♞xf6 13.exf6 ♞xf6 14.♜g2 ♜b7 15.a4 (or 15.♞xb5 cxb5! 16.♜xb7 ♜b4+ 17.♞f1 ♞d8 and due to White's inability to castle, Black has the freer play thanks to the weakness on d4, B. Berger-J.Fichtl, Budapest 1954) 15...0-0-0! (as usual 15...b4?! goads White into making a desirable move towards the centre: 16.♞e4 safely favoured White in V.

Smyslov-D.Bronstein, Budapest 1950)

16.axb5 cxb5 17.♜xb7+ ♞xb7 18.♞xb5 ♞f5 19.♞c3 (19.♞xa7+ ♞b6 20.♞a4 ♞b1+ 21.♞e2 ♞d3+ was drawn by

repetition in I.Dugo-C.Leone, correspondence 2011) 19...♜g7 20.♞a4 ♜xd4 21.♞a6+ ♞b8 22.♞b5+ ♞xb5 23.♞xb5 ♜b6 Black's slightly worse pawn structure was tolerable in N.Hnatovsky-M. Marko, correspondence 2010. The dark-squared bishop ensures the h-pawn will not easily guarantee an edge, and Black has sufficient activity.]

12...♞xg5 13.hxg5 ♞d5 14.g6! The critical move, weakening Black's structure.

fxg6

[After 14...♞a5?! 15.gxf7+ ♞d8 16.♞d2 White has everything under control, and the f-pawn is a serious headache for Black.]

15.♞g4! Immediately making an issue of the pawn on g6.

[Instead, if 15.♞h7 ♞a5 when the rook on h7 just beats the air, so Black can safely begin a queenside sortie: 16.♞f3 (R.Knaak-L.Neckar, Leipzig 1977) ♜b4 (16...♜a3!? is tricky, but after 17.♞d1 ♞xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♞f8 19.♞f7+ ♞d8 20.♞f6+ a draw by repetition will result) 17.♜h3 ♜xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♞xc3+ 19.♞xc3 ♞xc3 20.♜xe6 ♞f8 21.♜f7+ ♞d8 22.♞g7 ♞d5 . The position is heavily imbalanced, but should not be a bad one for the second player given the activity the bishop on c8 should end up demonstrating, especially when compared to the main game.]

15...♞e7 Guarding the e-pawn is a necessary evil.

[Indeed, 15...♞a5 16.♞xe6+ ♞d8 17.♜g2 ♞xc3 18.♜xc6 ♞b8 19.♞f1! ♞e4 20.♞d5 brought about Black's swift demise in R. Castro Salguero-M.Cusicanqui, correspondence 2009.]

16.♜g2! Although this move looks fairly routine there is an important point that lies beneath the surface, and is quite unorthodox.

[16.♞xg6+ is premature: ♞f7 17.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 18.♜g2 ♞g8! and the h-file was neutralized in D.Komarov-R.Kasimdzhanov, French League 2010, when Black's minor pieces quickly asserted control. This is essentially what the second player hoped 11...Rg8 would become.]

16...♞7b6 Reinforcing the knight, and avoiding the Bxd5 idea in the notes. The alternatives:

[a) 16...♔d8 17.♙xd5! (the punishment for the failure to reinforce the d5-knight) cxd5 18.♖xg6 ♖b8 (18...♙g7 19.♜xb5 ♗b4+ 20.♜f1 ♗xb5 21.♖xg7 ♗xb2 22.♖e1 ♗b6 23.♖h6 a5 24.♖g8+ ♔c7 25.♖xe6 ♗xe6 26.♖xe6 ♜c5 27.♖e7+ ♔d8 28.♖h7 ♜e6 29.f4! brought Black to ruin in R.Cerrato-I.De Carlos Arregui, correspondence 2009) 19.♖h7 ♗e8 20.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 21.f4 and do just compare the kingside control of this position to that of the note to White's 16th. E.Bacrot-L.Fressinet, Val d'Iserre 2002, continued b4 22.♜e2 ♙a6 23.g4 c3 24.b3! ♙d3 25.f5 ♖b6 26.♜f4 with a significant edge for White due to the mobile kingside pawns. That said, this may remain Black's best practical try despite his disadvantage should he insist on playing 11...Rg8.]

[b) 16...♖f7 17.♙e4! ♜e7 18.♜xb5 cxb5 19.♙xa8 ♜b6 20.♙e4 and there was nothing to justify Black's sacrifice in J.Merilo-K.Soederberg, correspondence 2012.]

[c) 16...♙b7 17.♙xd5 exd5 18.♖xg6+ ♖f7 19.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 20.f4 ♔g8 (M.Amanov-M.Mulyar, Philadelphia 2011) 21.♖h5 when White's activity and impressive kingside pawns give him a small edge so long as the bishop-pair stays under control.]

17.♖xg6+ ♖f7 18.♙e4 The exchange of queens isn't opposed on the grounds that Black's king will gum up any effective piece coordination.

♖xg6 19.♙xg6+ ♔d7 Now White sets about making his pieces more active while Black scrambles for cover.

20.♖h7+ ♙e7 21.♜e4 ♔c7 22.g4! With Black's entire army huddled on the queenside, the passed g-pawn endeavours to make itself felt as quickly as possible. White cannot take his time, because the whole variation is a race to punish Black before he can organize his position.

♜d7 23.0-0-0 White wastes no time in getting the rest of his forces moving.

[Instead, 23.♙f7 ♜f8 24.♖g7 ♔b6 25.0-0-0 ♙b7 26.♙h5 ♖d8 27.g5 should have proved decisive eventually in A.Sanga-F.Kroes, correspondence 2009, but White eventually went astray at a critical moment.]

23...♜f8 24.♖g7 ♜xg6 25.♖xg6 Black has an unopposed bishop-pair now, but how to activate them both? The bishop on c8 is a particularly sad sight.

♙d7 26.♖h1 c5 27.dxc5 ♖f8 28.♖h7 ♔d8 29.♖gg7 ♙c6 Black has kept the piggies on the seventh rank from eating everything in sight, but the g-pawn still looms large at a point where Black has finally brought everything to decent squares.

30.a3 White decides there is no rush on playing g4-g5, and spends a move to keep Black out of the b4-square in various continuations.

[30.g5! also works, since b4 isn't too big of a deal: ♜f4 31.♜f6 ♙xc5 32.♔d2 ♙b6 33.♖h4 ♜d3 34.f4 became decisive for the first player in M.Canovas Pardomingo-R.Mayer, correspondence 2009. The pawns are just too difficult to stop.]

30...a5 Too slow. Now White picks up his play again with gusto.

[30...b4! was a better try, if not perfect. White should immediately get on with the direct 31.g5! when he should still be winning, albeit with more complications than in the game.]

31.g5 ♜f4 32.♜f6 ♙xc5 33.g6! ♜d3+ 34.♔d2 ♜xe5 35.♖b7! Simply wonderful. This is a great tactical point.

♙xb7 Forced, else 36.Rb8 is mate.

36.g7! ♜g6 37.gxf8♖+ ♜xf8 38.♖xb7 ♙d4 39.♖b8+ ♔e7 40.♜g8+ ♔f7 41.♜h6+ ♔g7 42.♔c2 White has consolidated his material, and Black has run out of moves.

♔xh6 43.♖xf8 b4 44.♖a8 bxa3 45.bxa3 The a-pawn will prove unstoppable, while Black's pawns are the exact opposite.

Summary:

11...Rg8 is dangerous to Black's health if White knows what he is doing. However, should White slip in even seemingly harmless ways, the tables can easily turn.

1-0

D44

 **Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo,F**

 **Gonzalez Barcina,F**

Correspondence

2006

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♜f3 e6 4.♜c3 ♜f6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♜xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♜bd7 11.exf6 ♙b7 12.g3 ♗b6 13.♙g2 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♜e5

One of those moves that is likely to catch an unwary white player napping, because the solution is not the most intuitive.

15.dxe5! A positional queen sacrifice, and the only way to punish Black's 14th.

[15.♔e3 is the natural response, but one that is only risky to the first player's health. Following c5 16.dxc5 ♕xc5 17.♕xc5 ♜xc5 18.♕xb7+ ♖xb7 19.♗e4 ♜d5 20.♞e2 ♜h3 21.f4 ♜d4+ 22.♗f2 ♗d3 23.♞e4+ ♞xe4 24.♗xe4 ♜d4 Black was doing well in G. Beck-X.Merrheim, correspondence 2011, and went on to win after some overambitious play from White. However, the simpler 25.♗f2 would have kept the position level after the further ♗xf2 26.♞xf2 ♜h6 .]

[With 15.♞e2 instead of defending d4, White just banks on the fact it's an extra pawn. Unfortunately, this isn't ambitious enough to draw Black's strategy into question: ♞xd4 16.♔e3 ♜d3 17.♞fd1 ♞xe2 18.♞xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♗xe2 ♗d3 20.b3 ♖c7 21.bxc4 bxc4 22.♕xa7 c5 and White's sidelined bishop left him with nothing better than to seek a draw in V. Smyslov-M.Botvinnik, World Championship (Game 5), Moscow 1954.]

15...♞xd1 16.♞axd1 I had thought this the best recapture prior to sitting down to investigate the line thoroughly as part of writing this book, but I ultimately found that it may be insufficient. It still merits coverage as the main game, though, because of the complexity.

[With the queen's rook stationed on its starting square, the a-pawn will prove less of a problem to defend, something relevant to the main game. After 16.♞fxd1! Black has:

A) 16...♕c5?! 17.♗e4 ♕d4 18.♗d6+ ♖c7 19.♗xf7 ♞f8 20.♗d6 ♕xe5 21.♔e3 ♞a6 22.♗e4 ♕c8 23.♕c5 and Black's position was effectively strangled in J. Vilela de Acuna-K.Frey Beckman, Havana 1985.;

B) After 16...c5 17.♕f4 b4 18.♗e4 ♕d5 19.♞d2! (19.♞xd5 exd5 20.♗g5 ♕h6 21.♗xf7 ♕xf4 22.gxf4 ♞g8 23.♗d6+ ♖d8 is approximately equal as per numerous correspondence games) 19...♞c6 20.♞e1 ♞g8 21.h4 a5 22.♞xd5! exd5 23.♗g5 Black resigned in B. Holzhauer-J.Fiala, correspondence 2008. He won't be able to stand up to White's soon-to-be-rolling e-pawn.;

C) 16...b4 is the best attempt to exploit White's recapture with the f1-rook, in my estimation. However, White can force a

favourable transposition: 17.♗e4 c5 and here White should try to transpose to variation 'b' with 18.♕f4 . (Instead, after 18.♞dc1 ♕d5 19.♗d2 ♞h5 20.♕f4 ♞c6 21.♕f1 ♞f5 22.♕xc4 ♞xf4 23.gxf4 ♖b8 White's airy king gave Black good play in J. Lara Ruiz-G.Morais, correspondence 2010.;; while 18.a3 went very well for White in M.Rensen-R.Schild, correspondence 2009, but I'm not sure how he continues after a5!? as those queenside pawns can quickly become lethal.);

D) 16...--]

16...c5 One of two ways to get Black's queenside moving.

[The other is 16...b4 17.♗e4 c5 18.♕f4 ♞a6 (18...♕d5 is a stubborn defence, but White may do well with the patient 19.♞fe1 ♞c6 20.h4 when Rxd5 becomes a more potent threat) 19.h4 ♞g8 (after 19...♕d5 20.♞fe1 ♞xa2 21.♞a1 ♞xb2 22.♞xa7 c3 23.♗d6+ ♖b8 24.♞ea1 ♞xa1+ 25.♞xa1 ♕xd6 26.exd6 Black didn't have enough for his piece in M.Konstatinov-B.Meulemans, correspondence 2010) 20.♞d2 ♖c7 21.♞fd1 ♕c6 , but A.Kazoks-J.Kracht, correspondence 2011, saw Black's position put through the wringer after 22.♞d8! ♞xa2 23.♗g5 ♞xb2 24.♗xf7 c3 25.♗g5 ♞xg5 26.hxg5 c2 27.♞c1! ♕xg2 28.g6!! ♖xd8 29.g7 ♕xg7 30.fxg7 ♕d5 31.g8♞+ , and by this point White's extra rook was enough for the eventual win.]

17.♕xb7+ This may be, despite the gaudy statistics, insufficient for an edge. The reason for such a statement will become clear in a few moves.

[Instead, 17.♗e4!? ♞a5!? 18.♕f4 was tried in A.Pourramezanali-S. Lorparizangeneh, Iran 2012. Now ♕xe4!? 19.♕xe4 c3 20.bxc3 c4 should let Black solve the problem of his dark-squared bishop's development.]

17...♞xb7 18.♞fe1 The knight is destined for e4.

♞a6

[18...b4 19.♗e4 ♞c7 20.♕f4 ♞g8 21.♞c1 ♞a5 22.♞xc4 ♞xa2 23.♞ec1 ♞xb2 24.♗d6+ ♕xd6 25.exd6 soon gave White a winning attack in M.Gessat-J.Diana, correspondence 1999.]

19.♕f4 ♖c7? Way too slow. Practice has seen too:

[a) 19...♞g8? (there is no point at all to this move; Black needs to be playing to destroy

the white queenside) 20.♖e4 ♖a4 21.♗c1 ♗b4 22.♙g2 ♗xb2 23.♗b1 ♗xa2 24.♗xb5 saw White eventually develop a winning attack due to Black's hog-tied kingside pieces in H.Baum-S.Kireev, correspondence 2010.]

[b) 19...b4! (we now begin your regularly scheduled pawn buffet) 20.♖e4 ♗xa2 21.♙g5 ♗xb2 22.♙xf7 ♗c2! 23.♙xh8 ♗h7! and despite White winning in S.Cade-B.Jones, correspondence 2010, Black doesn't look too bad here. The queenside pawns are uncontested, and White's rooks are not ideally coordinated yet.]

20.♖e4 ♙c6 21.♗d8 By this point it should be obvious Black is in considerable trouble. White has fully coordinated and invaded the weaknesses.

♗xa2 22.♙g5 ♗a5 23.♗ed1 ♗c7 24.♗e8 b4 25.♗dd8 c3 26.bxc3 b3 27.♗b8 ♙d6

A last gasp for air, but White methodically eliminates all resistance.

28.♗xh8 ♗xb8 29.♗xb8 ♙xb8 30.♙c1 ♙xe5 31.♖e4 ♙d5 32.f3 ♙c4 33.h4

The passed pawn will be crowned a queen, and there's nothing to be done to stop it.

Summary:

White must sacrifice his queen to challenge Black, but the play remains very complex. There is, though, good reason to believe White can retain an appreciable edge with perfect play.

1-0

D44

□ **Le Quang Liem**
 ■ **Nguyen Huynh Minh**

Ho Chi Minh City

2010

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♙f3 ♙f6 4.♙c3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♙xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♙bd7 11.g3 ♙b7 12.♙g2 ♗b6 13.exf6 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♙h6

A simplistic attempt to exchange off White's defender of the pawn on f6, but it has the unfortunate side-effect of ignoring the centre. Ignoring the centre in such a fashion violates my chess sense, and as such I have nothing but contempt for it.

15.♙e3 White keeps his centre solid, and is fine with returning the pawn.

[15.♖e4 is a slightly inferior version of exchanging on h6, although even here Black

has an uphill struggle ahead of him: c5 16.♙xh6 ♗xh6 17.♗d2 ♗g6 18.a4 ♙xf6 19.♙xf6 ♙xg2 20.♙xg2 ♗xd4 21.♗e2 ♗xf6 22.axb5 ♗b7+ 23.♙g1 was F.Kolendo-L. Stasiunaite, Poznan 1995. The engine's ♗f5 keeps a hold on Black's weaknesses, and may allow him to hold the ending, although the h-pawn will undoubtedly leave White with the slightly better chances.]

[However, 15.♙xh6 might work even better than the main line: ♗xh6 16.b3! c5 (16...cxb3 17.axb3 ♙xf6 18.♗d2 ♗h5 19.♗fd1 brought White the full point in A.Voyna-H.Namyslo, correspondence 2001; the passed h-pawn will weigh heavily on the position, while Black will remain cramped due to White's open files on the queenside) 17.d5! cxb3 18.♗xb3 a6 19.a4 b4 20.dxe6 ♗xe6 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♙xb7+ ♙xb7 23.♖e4 gave White an irritating edge in the ending of A.Bozyavkin-M.Genchev, correspondence 2008. The best Black seems to have is various ways to sacrifice the exchange, but the queenside pawns shouldn't prove sufficient for it given White has passed pawns of his own.]

15...c5 Unfortunately for Black, this perfectly demonstrates how pointless ...Bh6 is: if he wants to play ...c5, then he doesn't need that move. Don't play unnecessary moves!

[15...♙xf6 is too casual. The straightforward 16.♗f3 ♙xe3 17.fxe3 ♗h6 18.♗f4 ♗dh8 19.♗f2 brought White the much better position in V.Huuskonen-B.Lindstrom, correspondence 1985. The f-file pressure and the ability to further break up Black's queenside gives White a clean initiative, while the potential loss of the h-pawn isn't overly concerning.]

16.dxc5 ♙xc5 17.♙xc5 ♗xc5 18.♙xb7+ ♙xb7 19.♗f3+ ♗c6 20.♖e4! White has kept his extra pawn, and Black's bishop is misplaced compared to White's centralized knight.

♗d5

[20...♗d4 21.♗fe1 ♗hd8 22.h4 ♗d5 23.♗e2 a5 24.♗ae1 was safely better for White in V.Ivanchuk-J.Piket, Wijk aan Zee (blitz) 1999. The queenside pawns are no particular threat, and White can set about preparing to advance his kingside pawns at his leisure.]

21.♗fe1 ♗hd8 22.♗e2 b4 23.♗ae1

The typical set-up White is aiming for, and one which effectively leaves Black without

any constructive plan.

♙d2 24.♞b1 a5 25.h4 Black's queenside is going nowhere, but the game ended after the unfortunate:

♜b6?? 26.♞xd2

[Black resigned due to 26.♞xd2 ♞xd2 27.♜xd2 ♞xd2 28.♞e3+ , picking up the rook. The reader may be wondering why I picked a game that ended so suddenly. The answer lies in 14...Bh6 having multiple pleasant options for White, rendering the whole continuation of little theoretical worth. Alas, despite my pessimism, I couldn't just give it one single footnote, so we got the cited game.

Summary:

14...Bh6 has nothing positive to offer Black, not even the sort of complications in which an opponent can easily get lost order the board. Preparing multiple variations in which you are worse is only for masochists.]

1-0

□ **Bubir,A**
■ **Dell'Isola,V**

Correspondence
[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♜c3 ♜f6 4.♜f3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♜xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♜bd7 11.g3 ♙b7 12.♙g2 ♞b6 13.exf6 0-0-0 14.0-0 c5 15.d5 b4 16.♞b1 I must admit to having a terrible fondness for this approach. There's just something about thumbing your nose at a threat to your piece for not-immediately-apparent reasons, and daring Black to capture.

♞a6 The best move, and only real option in the position, as we can see from:

[a) 16...bxc3 is bad, of course, otherwise 16 Rb1 wouldn't merit coverage. 17.bxc3 ♞a6 18.♞xb7! reveals the whole point of White's 16th, and now Black loses catastrophic amounts of material: for example, ♞xb7 19.dxe6 ♞b6 20.e7 is curtains.]

[b) 16...♜e5 17.♞e2 ♜d3 18.dxe6 ♙xg2 19.♜xg2 bxc3 (now that White's bishop has gone the knight can be captured, but here's that pawn fork again) 20.e7 ♞c6+ 21.♜g1 ♙xe7 22.fxe7 ♞d5 23.♞g4+ and Black's pretty knight was far from enough to equalize in M.Mahjoob-B.Nadera, Cebu

2007.]

[c) 16...♙h6 is awful, much like it tends to be when played too early. The only thing that can be said for it is that it doesn't lose gobs of material by force. After 17.♙xh6 ♞xh6 18.b3! bxc3 19.bxc4 ♞a6 20.♞xb7! (the next time there's a movie made that incorporates people playing chess at some point, one of these Rxb7 variations should be the one chosen; it's flashy, makes for great theatrics, and just once I'd love to play it, striking a cocky pose at the board, like I invented it) ♞xb7 21.dxe6 ♞a6 22.♞c1 ♞xf6 23.exd7+ ♞xd7 24.♞xc3 ♞e7 Black managed a miracle and drew in T. Mustonen-V.Dmitriev, correspondence 2006, but there's no question White has more than full compensation for his exchange sacrifice.]

17.dxe6 ♙xg2 18.e7 Such a pretty pawn.

Sadly, it can't win the game by itself.

[Some people don't like forking pieces, though. For what reason? You'll have to ask them. Indeed, after 18.♞e1?! bxc3 19.exd7+ ♞xd7 20.♞e8+ ♜c7 21.♙f4+ ♙d6 22.♞xh8 ♙xf4 Black's bishop-pair, in particular the light-squared bishop, guarantees him fine chances thanks to White's airy king.]

18...♙xf1 Greed is good, so says the overweight bishop.

[Otherwise, after 18...♙b7?! 19.exd8♞+ ♜xd8 20.♜e2 ♜c8 21.♞c2 ♙d6 22.f3 ♞e8 23.♙f4 ♙e5 24.♞bd1 White's material gave him an almost immediately decisive edge in E.Hadet-E.Janosi, correspondence 2003,]

[while 18...♙a8?! 19.exd8♞+ ♜xd8 20.♜e2 ♜c8 21.♞c2 ♞e6 22.f3 ♙d6 23.♞bd1 ♙c6 24.h4 was W.Utesch-D. Kuhne, correspondence 2004. Once again White's extra material and consolidated position gave him a basically winning position.]

19.♜xf1 Finally the bishop receives royal punishment. Now Black has two equally good options, both of which eliminate 16 Rb1 as a try for an edge.

[19.♞d5 is possible, but in no way superior to the main line: ♞e8 20.♜e4 ♙h6 21.♙xh6 ♞xh6 22.♞xf7 ♞hh8 23.♞xf1 ♞c6 24.♞xc4 ♜xf6 25.♜xf6 ♞xf6 26.♞xc5+ ♜b7 27.♞xb4+ when White's pawn collection and Black's exposed king was enough to collect a draw in J.Rivas Maceda-G.Figlio,

correspondence 2007.]

19...♖c6 Perhaps the simplest defence.

[19...♗e7 is complicated if you've never seen it before, and don't know what to look for, but after 20.fxe7 ♔dg8 21.♗e4 ♔xg5! Black exploits the softness of the pawn on e7 in order to generate just enough threats to fully equalize the position: for example, 22.♗xg5 ♔e8 23.♖e2 ♖g6 24.♗e4 ♔xe7 25.♔e1 ♗d8! 26.♖xc4 ♖g4 27.♔e2 ♖f3 28.♔e3 ♖h1+ 29.♗e2 ♗b6! and Black held on through precise defence in N.Latronico-J.Marcinkiewicz, correspondence 2009.]

20.exd8♖+ ♗xd8 21.♗d5 ♔xh2 22.♗g1 ♔h8 23.♗f4 ♗c8 Black wisely shifts his king to the queenside to protect his queen.

[In D.Myakonikikh-C.Belmar Juaranz, correspondence 2007, White's kingside pawns proved to be of great value after 23...♗d6 24.♗xd6 ♖xd6 25.♖f3 ♖e5 26.♔d1 ♖h5 27.♖xh5 ♔xh5 28.f4 ♔h8 29.g4 .]

24.♖f3 ♗b7 25.♔d1 ♗h6! Black gives White no time to breathe. Without the dark-squared bishop White will have no attack. This is one of the few times ...Bh6 merits an exclamation mark.

[25...♗b6 gives White time to consolidate after 26.♖g2 and provides him reason to hope for a small edge.]

26.♖h5 ♗g7! Inviting a draw by repetition after 27.Qf3 and 27...Bh6, so White attempts to decline.

27.♖xf7 ♗xf6 28.♔e1 ♔f8 29.♖h5 ♗xb2

30.♔e7 ♗d4 However, now White has no better than to play for a draw in view of Black's powerful pawns.

31.♖h7 The game was agreed drawn at this point, with engine-assisted draws by repetition in the offing.

Summary:

16 Rb1 has good entertainment value, but has been mapped out to satisfactory positions for the second player. The likelihood that any improvements are possible for White's cause is as close to absolute zero as it gets given Black has a choice in equalizing defences.

½-½

□ **Khalifman,A**

■ **Lauk,U**

Puhajarve (rapid)

2011

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6 5.♗g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♗bd7 11.g3 ♗b7 12.♗g2 ♖b6 13.exf6 0-0-0 14.0-0 c5 15.d5 b4 16.♗a4 ♖a6 This move experienced something of a renaissance recently due to a new idea, one of serious merit. I'm of the opinion White should side-step it.

17.a3 The typical way to deal with the wayward knight.

[Instead, after 17.dxe6 ♗xg2 18.e7 ♖c6 19.exd8♖+ ♗xd8 20.♔e1 ♗h1 21.f3 ♗xf3 22.♖c2 ♗d6 White's exposed king and Black's bishops provided more than enough for the exchange in B.Zhorov-P.Pfiffner, correspondence 2006.]

17...♗xd5 18.♗xd5

[18.axb4 is also possible, but not impressive. The natural ♗xg2 19.♗xg2 ♖c6+ 20.f3 cxb4 21.♖d4 ♗b6 was decent enough for the second player in M. Massimini Gerbino-Z.Sanner, correspondence 2004.]

18...♗e5 19.♗xc5!? An interesting tactical twist on the position, and one I quite like. The alternatives:

[a) 19.axb4 ♔xd5 20.♖e2 just transposes to variation 'b'.]

[b) 19.♖e2 ♔xd5 20.axb4 cxb4 21.♗c3 (after 21.♔fc1 ♖b5 22.♗f4 ♗h6 23.b3 ♗xf4 24.bxc4 ♔d1+ 25.♔xd1 ♖c6 26.♔d3 ♗xd3 27.♖xd3 ♗e5 28.♔a2 ♔d8

Black had a significant advantage to this point in G.Kacheishvili-D.Yang, Saint Louis 2011; the f-pawn will likely fall, restoring the material balance, and White's knight is utterly useless) 21...♖d6! (the concept that revitalized Black's hopes with 16...Qa6) 22.♗xd5 ♖xd5 23.f3 ♗d3 24.♗e3 (24.h4 ♗c5+ 25.♗g2 ♔d8 should be satisfactory for Black with his activity and queenside pawns; h4 may not be the most valuable move when compared to Be3, but tests are certainly needed) 24...♗c5 25.♗xc5 ♖xc5+ 26.♗g2 ♔d8 saw White win a fine game in P.Harikrishna-L.Van Wely, Philadelphia 2011, after Black missed a draw, but at this point the second player has good compensation for his material. It is not at

all easy for White to make progress, while Black can try to advance on the queenside. I look forward to more tests of this idea, but at this point I do not rate Black's chances as inferior.]

19...♙xc5 20.♚e2!

[After 20.axb4?! ♙xf2+ 21.♖xf2 ♖xd5 the loss of White's f-pawn considerably exposes his king, and this paid dividends for the black pieces in L.Simeonov-P.Pfiffner, correspondence 2009. Notice that this Pfiffner fellow had some good fortune when playing 16...Qa6.]

20...♖xd5

[20...exd5 leaves Black without counterplay following 21.♚xe5 bxa3 22.♙e3! ♙xe3 23.♚xe3 ♖he8 24.♚c5+ ♔b7 25.♚b4+ ♚b6 26.♚xa3 . White has scored rather poorly from this position (1½/2) in correspondence, but that was primarily due to failing to exploit Black's shady structure, and advancing his passed h-pawn. Indeed, White should have an edge here.]

21.axb4! Only now!

♚b7

[An important game for this variation saw 21...♚c6 22.bxc5 ♖xc5 23.f3 ♔d3 24.♙e3 ♖b5 and here in M.Ragger-M.Amanov, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010, I suggest the seemingly passive 25.♖ab1!? . Unlike typical Botvinnik positions, Black's queenside pawns have been broken up, and I think this should slightly favour the first player if you also consider his extra pawn. Black does retain some compensation due to his activity, but b2-b3 may produce favourable complications for White.]

22.bxc5 ♔d3 Active, but probably not sufficient to equalize.

[22...♖xc5 23.f3 ♔d3 24.♙e3 ♖ch5 25.h4 ♖g8 26.♔h2 should favour White too. The kingside pawns should prove ready to advance soon.]

23.f4?! Trapping the bishop outside of the pawns strikes me as a very weak move without concrete reasoning.

[Returning the bishop to its standard square (for this variation) seems called for with 23.♙e3! . If Black tries to go after the king with ♖dh5 then 24.h4 stops him dead in his tracks.]

23...♖xc5 24.b3 A queenside attack minus the sidelined minor piece must be doomed to failure.

♖b5? Completely uncalled for.

[Instead 24...♚b6 could have produced some bizarre results. One possibly critical continuation is 25.♔g2 cxb3 26.♚xd3 ♚c6+ 27.♔g1 ♖c2 28.♚f3 ♚b6+ 29.♖f2 b2 30.♖b1 ♖c1+ 31.♔g2 ♖xb1 32.♚a8+ ♔d7 33.♖d2+ ♔c7 34.♖c2+ ♔d6 35.♖d2+ ♔c5 36.♚xh8 ♖g1+ 37.♔xg1 ♔c4+ 38.♔g2 b1♚ 39.♔h3 when Black must be better, but good luck proving it without an engine! That continuation is by no means forced, but the whole line is certainly chaotic and seems to tilt in Black's direction.]

25.bxc4?? Strangely enough, White rewards Black's play.

[25.f5! was White's only chance to get the bishop back in the game, and justify the f-pawn lunge. After ♖xb3 26.fxe6 ♚b6+ 27.♚e3 ♔c5 28.♚d4 ♔xe6 29.♚xb6 ♖xb6 30.♙d2 the superiority of the bishop over knight may be enough for just a tiny edge, but this was more than White deserved after that f2-f4 play.]

25...♖b2 26.♚f3 ♚b6+ White must shed game-ending material to avoid mate, and so resignation proved the prudent course.

Summary:

19 Nxc5 requires more tests, but as now I favour White's chances over the more normal 19 axb4/19 Qe2, despite the unclear nature of play there not being unfavourable to White. 16...Qa6 remains an interesting try, but compared to 16...Qb5, it appears to be lacking in solidity.

0-1

D44

□ Schulz,K

■ Ottesen,S

Correspondence

2008

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 ♔f6 2.♔f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♔c3 c6
5.♔g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♔h4 g5
9.♔xg5 hxg5 10.♔xg5 ♔bd7 11.exf6 ♔b7
12.g3 c5 13.d5 ♚b6 14.♔g2 0-0-0 15.0-0
b4 16.♔a4 ♚b5 17.a3 ♔b8! The exclamation is used to indicate that this may be Black's best continuation on the evidence of the numerous correspondence games tested from this position. The knight intends to work its way to c6, from where it will no longer congest the d-file, and have access to the d4-square.

18.axb4

[18.♖g4 ♗xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖xd5 20.axb4 cxb4 is likely to transpose to the main game. The attempt to play independently with 21.♗e3 ♘c6 22.♖fc1 just looks fine for Black after the further ♗e5 23.♗e4 ♗c6 of R.Astrom-B.Svensson, Gothenburg 1990.]

18...cxb4 19.♖g4 A natural square for the queen in the Botvinnik complex, but not much more can be said in favour of it – it threatens nothing. Others:

[a) 19.♗e3 isn't particularly challenging. The further ♗xd5 20.♗xd5 ♖xd5 21.♗e2 ♘c6 22.♖fc1 gives Black two important options: ♗a5 (22... ♗e5 is the most natural continuation, moving towards the centre; after 23.b3 c3 24.♗xc3 bxc3 25.♖xc3+ ♔b8 26.♗c2 ♗d6 27.♗xa7+ ♔b7 28.b4 ♖d3 White had no more than enough for his piece in J.Grifoll-W.Loeffler, correspondence 2008) 23.b3 c3 24.♗xc3 bxc3 25.♖xc3+ ♔d7 26.♗c2 ♘c6 27.♖c1 ♗d8 is an amusing-looking defence, but White has no way to break through. Black held comfortably in S.Klimakov-M.Pellen, correspondence 2010.]

[b) 19.♗d4 is White's other serious option, but here too perfect play by Black keeps his head above water. After ♘c6 20.dxc6 (20.♗b6+ was used by no less than Magnus Carlsen in 2010, but after axb6 21.dxc6 ♗xc6 22.♗xc6 ♗xc6 23.♖g4 Jan Smeets could have played the correspondence-approved ♔b7! 24.♖fd1 ♗c5 with fully satisfactory counterplay, and the easier-to-play position due to the secure advanced queenside pawns) 20...♖xd4 21.cxb7+ Black has to move his king, but should he go forwards or behind the pawn with

A) 21...♔b8 22.♗e3 e5 23.b3 c3 24.♖fd1 (24.♖ad1 is also possible, but no matter A.Borstnik-A.Efremov, correspondence 2011, ended in a draw by reputation after ♖d6 25.♖fe1 a5 26.h4 ♖d3 27.♗e4 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♗h6 29.♗c5 ♗d2 30.♗d6+ ♔a7 31.♗c5+ , etc) 24...♗h6 25.♖xd4!? (after 25.♗xd4 exd4 26.♖xd4 c2 27.♖c4 ♗xc4 28.bxc4 ♖d8 29.♗f3 c1♗+ 30.♖xc1 ♗xc1

White's nominal material advantage is fully neutralized by the passed b-pawn and coordinated Black position) 25...exd4 26.♗xd4 c2 27.♗c5 ♖e8 28.♗f1 ♗c6 29.♗a6+ ♔xb7 30.♗g2 c1♖+ 31.♖xc1

♗xc1 32.♗xc6+ ♔xc6 33.♗xb4+

. After some further complications J. Mroczek-Z.Sanner, correspondence 2011, eventually concluded in a draw. The existence of the queenside pawns ensures Black is entirely safe, and that White is the one who must exercise caution.;

B) 21...♔c7 is also possible, and quite similar. However, the king is potentially more exposed here. After 22.♗e3 e5 23.♗c3 bxc3 24.bxc3 ♗c5 25.cxd4 ♗xd4 26.♖fb1 ♗c5 27.♖a6 c3 28.♖c6+ ♗xc6 29.♗xc6 c2 30.♖c1 ♔xc6 31.♖xc2+ ♔xb7 Black eventually secured the draw in L.Trembecki-M.Stoeckert, correspondence 2009, but this is not an easy position to diagnose. Instead of exchanging bishops and giving Black counterplay with a passed d-pawn, maybe the push 32.h4 might have been better. A continuation like ♗xe3 33.fxe3 a5 34.♔g2 will leave Black's king stranded, while White will be able to escort his kingside pawns.;

C) 21...♔b8 ?]

19...♗xd5 20.♖fc1 ♘c6 The knight has found its way to its desired square, and now a tactical sequence gets underway.

21.♗xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖xc4 ♖xg5 23.♗d4 ♔b8

[Note too 23...♔c7 24.b3 ♖hh5 25.♗xa7+ ♗b7 26.♗xb7+ ♔xb7 27.♖ac1 ♗a5 28.♖c7+ ♔a6 29.♖xf7 ♗d6 30.♖c8

. The two games Black has stumbled into this position have ended in decisive victories for the first player, and serve to highlight a simple reality: the king needs to get off the c-file.]

24.♖xc6! ♖xg3+! Tit for tat!

[Instead, 24...♗xc6 25.♗f4+ ♔b7 26.♗xg5 gives White a much better version of the game since he still has his extra pawn.]

25.fxg3

[25.hxg3? ♗xc6 suddenly creates problems for White's king.]

25...♗xc6 26.♖d1 ♗c7! It is this quiet defensive move that appears to keep Black fully alive in this entire variation. The defence will not be easy, but it is just enough.

[However, 26...♗h6?! allows the white knight to get back in the game, rendering Black's move dubious: 27.♗c5 ♔a8 28.h4 ♖c8 29.♗e4 ♗c2 30.♗f2 saw White consolidate in A.Brugger-D.Frigato, correspondence 2008, and the kingside pawns soon proved decisive.]

27.b3 White has made room for the knight to

enter the game later, but the threat of ...Bc5 stalls even that idea.

[Instead, after 27.♔f1 ♖h5 (27...♙xh2 28.♗d8+ ♜c8 29.♘b6! ♗xd8 30.♙xd8+ ♔c7 31.♙xf8 axb6 32.♙xf7+ ♔d6 33.♙b7 ♔e5 34.f7 leaves Black with an extremely difficult ending) 28.♗d8+ ♜c8 29.♙d7 (29.b3 ♙d5 30.♙xd5 exd5 31.♗xd5 ♗a6+ is responsible for numerous draws, such as P.Dhanish-M.Noble, correspondence 2008; White's exposed king makes avoiding a perpetual unlikely) 29...♙f5+ 30.♔g2 ♙xf6 31.♗xc8+ ♔xc8 32.♙xa7 the a4-knight continues to be a problem, so Black probably isn't worse here even if he must be careful. Reasonable is ♔d8 33.♙a8+ ♔e7 34.♙b8 ♙h6 35.♙xb4 ♙e3 36.h4 ♙f2+ 37.♔h3 f5! when making use of White's extra pawn is very difficult, if not impossible, due to Black's activity.]

27...♔c8 A critical position for the whole continuation, but how to continue?

28.♗e4

[Otherwise, 28.♗d3 ♙c5+ 29.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 30.♔f1 ♜c3 31.♗xc3+ bxc3 soon fizzled out in A.Ponting-M.Van der Kamp, correspondence 2008,]

[while after 28.♗e3 ♔b8 29.♗d2 ♙c5+ 30.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 31.♗d4 ♜c3 32.♗xc3 bxc3 Black has successfully held this rook endgame numerous times, such as in G. Goncharenko-A.Efremov, correspondence 2012.]

28...♔b8 29.♙d4 ♙h5?! As it turns out the rook is misplaced for the resulting endgame, and that gives White enough time to do something.

[With 29...♙d6! Black has, at long last, completed development. Both kings are fairly exposed, and White's knight on a4 does close to nothing. Moreover, it isn't at all clear how White can mobilize his kingside pawns. One game went 30.♔g2 ♖h5 31.h4 ♙e5 32.♗d3 ♜c6+ 33.♔h3 ♙d5 34.♙xd5 with a draw agreed in H. Tazelaar-J.Schwarte, correspondence 2011. Indeed, the further exd5 35.h5 ♜c1 36.♗xd5 ♗f1+ 37.♔g4 ♗xf6 does not look inspiring for the first player.]

30.♗e2 ♙c5 31.♘xc5 ♗xc5 32.♗c4 a5

33.g4 Giving White just this single tempo will prove to be Black's undoing.

♗xc4 34.♙xc4 ♙d5 35.h4! Suddenly the h-pawn is a headache, and Black's pawns strangely impotent.

♙d3 36.g5 ♙xb3 37.♔f2 Keeping the rook out of g3, and paving the way for more advances.

♙b2+ 38.♔e3 ♙b3+ 39.♔d2 ♙g3 40.♙c5 Dual-purpose: Black's pawns cannot advance, and now g5 will be defended in the event of h4-h5.

♙g2+

[40...♙h3 41.♙b5+ ♔c7 42.♙xa5 ♙xh4 43.♙a7+ ♔d6 44.♙xf7 is a trivial win.]

41.♔e3 ♙g3+ 42.♔f2 ♙g4 43.h5 ♔b7

44.h6 When I first saw this game I found it bizarre Black could so quickly lose such a seemingly harmless endgame, but the wayward ...Rh5 made it all possible. This game probably only serves to demonstrate that Black must exercise caution, but he does have the much superior 29...Bd6, after which it is unclear how White can make headway.

Summary:

Given the very forced nature of many of the continuations after 17...Nb8, it has begun to resemble something of a theoretical dead-end, one in which black players satisfied with a draw can seek safe shelter in correspondence, and play where his chances are not worse over the board. The ball is in White's court, and surprising resources will have to be found if there is to be any hope for an advantage.

1-0

D44

□ Nakamura,H

■ Smeets,J

Wijk aan Zee

2011

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♘bd7 11.g3 ♙b7 12.♙g2 ♗b6 13.exf6 c5 14.d5 0-0-0 15.0-0 b4 16.♘a4 ♗b5 17.a3 exd5 18.axb4 cxb4 19.♙f4

[A more ambiguous posting of the bishop than 19.♙e3 , but one with a good deal of sting.]

19...♙h6 Eliminating the piece that cuts across Black's queenside is prudent. The reader should make note of the fact that Black is only playing ...Bh6 after the centre has been seen to.

[Instead, 19...♘c5 only serves to demonstrate why the bishop is best eliminated. After 20.♘xc5 ♙xc5 21.♙e1 a6

22.♖e7! ♗xe7 23.fxe7 ♜dg8 24.♞d4 ♔d7
25.♞e5 ♞c5 26.♙f3 ♕e8 27.♞d1
White's compensation was overwhelming in
A.Strangmueller-K.Sakai, correspondence
2005.]

20.♞d2 A quiet, natural continuation, but not
one that will trouble Black outside of this
game.

[20.♙d6 ♙f8 is part draw offer, and part
invitation to play 21.♙e7 . At this point the
calm ♖e8 22.♖e1 ♗xe7 23.fxe7 ♜h7
puts Black on the verge of equalizing after
the intended ...f6 and ...Rhxe7. White can
try 24.b3 c3 25.h4 f6 26.♖e6 ♜hxe7
(26...d4!? almost works, but 27.♙xb7+
♞xb7 28.♞xd4 ♜hxe7 29.♔c5 ♔xc5
30.♞xc5+ ♕b8 31.♖xe7 ♖xe7 32.♞d1
gives White enough of an initiative to claim
an edge) 27.♙f1 and now ♞xf1+!?
has been successfully tested in two
correspondence games, but it's incredibly
complex, and needs more testing to reach
any definitive conclusion. L.Fric-T.Kukla,
correspondence 2010, went 28.♔xf1 ♖xe6
29.♞d4 ♖c6 30.♞d1 a5 31.♖c1 ♙a6+
32.♔g2 ♙b5 and Black held on to secure
half a point. My impression is that Black
seems to have just enough for the queen.]

20...♙xf4 21.♞xf4 ♙c6?! Rarely does this
attempt to pressure the knight on a4 show
gold in the pan, and it's no different here.

[21...d4! is definitely Black's best, liquidating
the pressure on the long diagonal: 22.♞xd4
(22.♔c3!? ♞e5 23.♙xb7+ ♔xb7 24.♞f3+
♕b8 25.♔d5 ♞h5 26.♞xh5 ♖xh5
27.♔xb4 is basically equal, since f6 will fall,
establishing a material balance) 22...♙xg2
23.♔xg2 ♞c6+ 24.f3 ♔xf6 25.♞xa7 ♞d2+
26.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 27.♔xf2 ♖xh2+ 28.♔g1
♖h1+! 29.♔xh1 . Black's draw by repetition
is assured, and V.Sutkus-S.Sergiev,
correspondence 2011, was agreed drawn
here. The simple ♞xf3+ 30.♔g1 ♞xg3+
leaves White without a safe haven.]

22.♞d4 ♕b8 23.♖fe1 ♖he8 24.♖e7 ♞a5
25.♖xf7 ♙xa4 Black has picked up the errant
knight, but now other problems crop up.

26.♙xd5 The natural, human move.

[Houdini is in love with 26.h4 , but for no
reason readily apparent to me. It seems
content to sit on the pinned a4-bishop, and
not rush the position at all. After a
continuation such as ♔e5 27.♞f4 ♕a8
28.♖e7 ♔g6 29.♞c7 ♞xc7 30.♖xc7 ♞d7
31.♖c5 ♙b3 32.♖xd5 ♖xd5 33.♙xd5+ ♕b8

34.♙f7 Black can, indeed, resign, so maybe
this was better than the text move chosen in
the game. However, is there any human out
there that would have paused in such a
fashion when they have the initiative?]

26...♞c5 Black makes good use of White's
previous, breaking the pin and forcing a
reshuffling of White's pieces.

27.♞f4+ ♔e5 28.♙e4 ♞d7

[28...♙d7 isn't much better. After 29.♖g7
♔c8 30.f7 ♖e6 31.♖g5 Black is teetering
on the brink of disaster.]

29.♖g7 ♙b5 Black has finally removed his
bishop from harm's way, but White still has
substantial compensation and the initiative.

30.♖xd7

[30.♖a5!? is possible and messy. One line I
looked at went ♔c7 31.f7 ♖f8 32.♖g5 ♖e7
33.♖xa7+ ♞xa7 34.♖xe5 ♖exf7 35.♖e7+
♔d8 36.♖xa7 ♖xf4 37.gxf4 ♖xf4 38.f3
when White's split pawns make the win far
from trivial.]

30...♙xd7 31.♙g6 ♖f8 32.♖e1 The piece will
be regained, and Black will only get a pawn for
it.

♞d6 33.♞xe5 ♖xf6 34.♞xd6+ ♖xd6

The endgame has been established, and now
White sets about making effective use of his
extra pawn.

35.♙f7 ♞d2 36.♙xc4 ♖xb2

Three connected passed pawns against two,
and Black hopes his advanced b-pawn will
make it possible to do some damage.

Unfortunately, it's just not enough.

37.h4 ♙g4 38.♔g2 a5 39.♖e5 ♖c2

40.♖b5+ ♔c7 41.♙d5 ♞d2 42.♙f7

The bishop stays on the a2-g8 diagonal to
discourage ...b3 after Rxa5.

♙d7 43.♖xa5 ♙c6+ 44.♔f1 Black hopes
that the harried white monarch and the b-
pawn will be enough to secure a draw. Alas,
the bishops aren't on opposite colours.

♙f3 Black hopes that the harried white
monarch and the b-pawn will be enough to
secure a draw. Alas, the bishops aren't on
opposite colours.

45.♖a1 ♔d6 46.♙b3 Step one. All White
needs to do is break the hold of the bishop on
f3, and his pawns will become decisive.

♞d3 47.♖b1 ♔c5 48.♔e1 ♕b5 49.♙d1

The siege has been broken, and now the pair
of extra pawns prove decisive.

♙xd1 50.♖xd1 ♖c3 51.h5 b3 52.♔d2 ♖c8
53.♖c1 ♖f8 54.f4 ♕b4 55.♖h1 ♕a3 56.♔e3
b2 57.g4 ♖c8 58.♖b1 ♕a2 59.♖xb2+

♟xb2 60.h6 ♞c3 61.g5 The rook cannot possibly stop the pawns by itself, while the white king body-checks his adversary. A testament to Nakamura's tactical wizardry. Summary:

19 Bf4 is a good practical try for an advantage, but correspondence play, as is almost always the case with the Botvinnik Variation, has highlighted the variation in which Black has good chances of equalizing.

1-0

D44

□ **Mroczek,J**
 ■ **Zemlyanov,S**
 Correspondence 2008
[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♞f3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♞xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♞bd7 11.exf6 ♙b7 12.g3 c5 13.d5 ♙b6 14.♙g2 0-0-0 15.0-0 b4 16.♞a4 ♙b5 17.a3 exd5 18.axb4 cxb4 19.♙e3 ♞c5 20.♙g4+ The approaches involving Qg4+ are a try unto themselves, but they are less flexible than the continuation seen in the next game.

♞c7 The only way to reward White's behaviour, by making it easy. Black can do better:

[a) 20...♞d7 and now:

A) 21.♞xc5 ♙xc5 22.♙xc5 (22.♙g7 ♞hd8 23.♙xc5 ♙xc5 24.♙h3 ♞c7 25.♙xd7 ♞xd7 is a testament to how much people will trust an engine's evaluation; White's score from this position is miserable, even in correspondence, but he persisted with it for awhile – instead of focusing on the various ways for White to get steam-rolled by the queenside pawns, I'll just mention his own try to draw, which is the limit of his ambitions: **26.♙g5 ♞b6 27.♞fe1 d4 28.♙xc5+ ♞xc5 29.♞e7 ♙c6 30.♞xd7 ♙xd7 31.♞xa7 ♙e6 32.♞a5+** saw White resort to a perpetual check to save the game in D.Garcia Roman-S.Savchenko, Palma de Mallorca 2008) **22...♙xc5 23.♞fe1 ♞hd8 (23...♞c7** transposes to our main game after **24.h4) 24.♙f4!** (cutting across Black's plan of playing ...Kc7; after **24.♞e7 ♞c7 25.♞ae1 ♙c6** Black has once again achieved his set-up for preparing a queenside advance, and you are left

wondering what exactly the queen on g4 has accomplished aside from facilitating it) **24...♙d6 25.♙d4 ♙b6 26.♙xb6 axb6 27.♙h3 ♙c6 28.♞e7 c3 29.♞d1** with a substantial edge due to the vulnerability of Black's queenside pawns and the pinned rook in A.Nekhaev-K. Stepanov, correspondence 2010.;

B) 21.♙g7 . A Botvinnik Variation text would not be complete without the mention of this nutty idea. White sacrifices his queen for a powerful g-pawn, some minors, and an attack. Unfortunately, the engines have basically worked it out: **♙xg7 22.fxg7 ♞g8 23.♞xc5 ♞xg7 24.♙h3 f5 25.♙xf5 ♞gf7 26.♙h3 ♞h7** was soon drawn by repetition in G.Caprio-M.Parpinel, Verona 2009. Black has other options, but this one shows that he has no problems at all.;

C) 21.--]

[b) **20...♙d7** might be the best solution available. After **21.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 22.♞fd1 ♞h5 23.♙xa7 ♞c7 24.♙e3 ♙d6** the vulnerability of f6 and the sidelined a4-knight gave Black sufficient play in L.Introini-F.Kroes, correspondence 2011.]

21.♞xc5

[**21.♙f4+!** is best, and it's not even close. With the king on c6 after **♞c6 22.♞xc5 ♙xc5 23.♙g7 ♞hf8 24.♞ae1** Black cannot hope to achieve his ideal coordination and advance his queenside. White went on to win in D.Lybin-Y.Igoshev, correspondence 1994.]

21...♙xc5 22.♙xc5 ♙xc5 23.♞fe1 ♞d7

[**23...♞he8** seems to be an appreciable improvement compared to the game. After **24.♙h5 ♞xe1+ 25.♞xe1 ♞f8 26.♞e7+ ♞b6** (now this is a good square) **27.♙h6 ♞c8 28.♙h7 a5 29.♙xf7 ♙c6 30.♙e6 ♞f8!** Black's queenside pawns soon rolled up White in J.Johnston-A.Walczak, correspondence 2007.]

24.h4 a5

[**24...♞hd8** should probably be met with **25.h5** , because if White's h-pawn doesn't become a threat, then Black's queenside will take over.]

25.♞e7 ♞xe7 26.fxe7 ♞e8 27.h5! ♞b6

[After **27...f5 28.♙f4+ ♞b6 29.♞e1 ♞xe7 30.♞xe7 ♙xe7 31.h6 c3 32.bxc3 bxc3 33.♙xf5 ♙c7 34.♙c2** , with Black's pawns effectively stalemated and White's free to advance, White had a decisive advantage in A.Nekhaev-V.Napalkov, correspondence

2010.]

28.h6 ♖xe7 29.♗d4+ ♜c5 30.♗f6+ ♜c6
31.♗g7 c3 32.♞c1 ♗g6 33.♗d4+ ♜c7
34.♗d2 White's queen has danced around in
such a way as to keep h6 covered while
attacking c3. His better coordinated position
and safer king grants him an edge that will
turn decisive in the next few moves.
♞e6 35.bxc3 b3 36.c4 ♖xh6 37.♗xa5+
♜b8 38.♞b1 dxc4 39.♙xb7 ♜xb7 40.♗b5+
♜c7 41.♗xc4+ Summary:

I am sceptical of 20 Qg4's ultimate worth, and
question exactly what White gains from the
immediate excursion. Invasions of g7 only
seem to take up valuable time that allows
Black to organize his queenside play.

1-0

□ Mantovanelli,M

■ Lautenbach,W

Correspondence

[Bryan Paulsen]

D44

2004

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♙f3 ♙f6 4.♙c3 e6
5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5
9.♙xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♙bd7 11.g3 ♙b7
12.♙g2 ♗b6 13.exf6 0-0-0 14.0-0 c5 15.d5
b4 16.♙a4 ♗b5 17.a3 exd5 18.axb4 cxb4
19.♙e3 ♙c5 20.♙xc5 White simply
eliminates his problem piece, and is prepared
to make the argument that Black's king is
sufficiently weak to develop an edge.
♙xc5 21.♙xc5 ♗xc5 22.♞e1!

A more desirable move than immediately
placing the queen on g4. This difference
allows for some additional flexibility.

[22.♗g4+ is poorly timed, because Black
can play ♜b8 23.♞fe1 ♞he8 and his king
will be much less of a problem than usual.]

22...♗b6 An attempt to keep an independent
flavour to the position, but it doesn't work out.

[Instead, 22...♞he8 can be met by 23.♗h5!
, threatening f7 and causing Black some
discomfort. This represents one more
reason to delay the development of the
queen.]

[22...♞d7!? might be best, inviting a
transposition to the 20 Qg4 lines after
23.♗g4 . However, there too White seemed
to be on top of things.]

23.♞e7 ♗xf6 24.♗e1! Hitting b4 and
covering e7.

♗b6 25.♗e5 There is a certain geometric

quality to White's Qe1-e5 manoeuvre. He
continually highlights the weakness of Black's
dark squares.

f6 26.♗f4 ♗d6 Hoping for an exchange of
queens, but Black was already under
significant pressure.

27.♗e3 The a-pawn is now White's national
sport, and Black finds himself struggling to
keep his weaknesses defended.

♞d7

[27...a6 28.♞a5 ♞h5 29.♞e6 ♗d7 30.♗b6
gives White a winning attack.]

28.♞e6 ♗c7 29.♗xa7 White has regained his
pawn, and now Black's king proves to be quite
shaky.

♞d6 30.♞xd6 ♗xd6 31.♞a5 Now Rc5 is
threatened, and there is little Black can do
about it.

♞h5 Solving potential problems on d5, but
now...

32.h4 ...opens up the uncomfortable
possibility of Bh3+.

♗c7 33.f4 ♙d7 34.♙f3 ♞h7 35.♙xd5

[The ending after 35.♙xd5 ♙xd5 36.♞xd5+
♜e6 37.♗d4 cannot be salvaged. White's
attack is on-going, and he will likely pick up
at least one queenside pawn.

A very linear game, but one that
demonstrates White can profitably delay
Qg4, only playing it in the case of 22...Rd7.
Summary:

16...Qb5 should be combined with 17...Nb8,
as only there can Black hope for equal
chances as far as I can tell, based on the
evidence of the simplicity with which White
obtains an advantage here.]

1-0

Chapter Four

The Moscow Variation

([View in Game Format](#))

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6



Black forces White to make an immediate decision; forfeit the bishop-pair, or prepare to sacrifice a pawn.

6 Bxf6

The conservative choice. In surrendering the bishop-pair White intends to rely on his lead in development and spatial advantage to cement an advantage, but as will be seen, these factors do not trump the bishop-pair. The positions are quiet enough that positional play is a significant factor that was missing from the previous chapter.

6 Bh4 is covered in the [Anti-Moscow Gambit chapter](#) that follows this one.

6...Qxf6



7 e3

White forsakes attempts to quickly play e2-e4, defends c4, and intends to quietly develop. He also has:

- a) The straightforward attempt to get through e2-e4 in one go with 7 Qb3 is given scrutiny in [Ernst-Smeets](#).
- b) 7 Qc2 leaves the c-pawn to its fate, and leads to complications examined in [Vallejo Pons-Erdos](#).
- c) The attempt to play in Catalan style with 7 g3 is gone over in [Ruck-Baramidze](#)

7...Nd7



The most flexible move available to Black. The options of the dark-squared bishop are kept open.

7...g6 is more committal, but recently it has spiked in popularity. [Shimanov-Motylev](#) provides a survey of what I believe to be the critical continuations of a line which I expect to continue growing in popularity.

8 Bd3

Acquiescing to the loss of tempo exchange on c4, but there is nothing better:

a) 8 Rc1 Bd6 9 Bd3 0-0 (9...dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qe7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Ne4 transposes to a position from [Moiseenko-Shirov](#), mentioned in the note to 9...Bd6) 10 0-0 Qe7 11 Qc2 dxc4 12 Bxc4 e5 proved satisfactory in J.Capablanca-G.Levenfish, Moscow 1936.

b) 8 Qc2 g6 holds very little promise for White. Should he attempt to stay on independent paths with 9 cxd5 exd5, the Carlsbad structure is not enough to ensure any sort of advantage.

8...dxc4 9 Bxc4 g6

The most fighting attempt, but definitely not the only serious try at equality.

9...Bd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Ne4 Qe7 12 Nxd6 brings about a position looked at in [Moiseenko-Shirov](#). The discovery that playing à la Lasker's Defence from the QGD is satisfactory for Black makes the whole continuation with 9...Bd6 theoretically viable as an equalizer. Instead, 12 Rc1 Bc7 is the traditional way of handling White's opening, but cannot be recommended in my opinion. The course of [Carlsen-Shirov](#) details why 12...b6! should be preferred.

10 0-0 Bg7



Both sides have completed their development after a very logical sequence of moves. White's difficulty in finding a particularly effective plan is evident enough by the wide range of 11th moves he has tried.

11 Re1

White thoroughly prepares e4-e5 while also preparing a cute Re3 idea aimed at the ...Bg4 resource that undermines 11 e4. We will also see:

a) 11 b4 was once considered a critical try for an edge due to the restriction of Black's queenside, but has been entirely defanged. [Ivanchuk-Karjakin](#) provides the solution.

b) 11 Rc1 is the most popular move in the databases, but Black has been doing just fine. [Beliavsky-Kramnik](#) provides a look at what White has tried.

c) 11 Qc2 is practically dangerous, but theoretically tame. [Mamedyarov-Gelfand](#) goes over the chief nuance Black needs to know to effectively handle it.

d) 11 e4 is met by 11...e5. [Leko-Gelfand](#) does a good job demonstrating the drawback of White's early pawn lunge.

11...0-0 12 e4 e5!



[Kramnik-Aronian](#) saw this, the critical continuation for 11 Re1's future theoretical standing. Instead, 12...Qe7 is too passive, allowing White his e4-e5 wedge in a satisfactory manner, as in [Kaufman-Bartholomew](#).

Conclusion

The Moscow Variation is in genuinely good shape these days, with White struggling to pose any problems of consequence. Black's new continuation with 7...g6 is especially annoying for White, because it highlights that Black's position is quite sound, and that White is short of ideas that effectively control the game. Alexei Shirov's resurrection of the ...Bd6 idea in conjunction with Lasker's Defence themes only further serves to compound White's problems.

All of that said, even the traditional main lines where White has deviated on move 11 do not appear to be superior to any other choice, so one must consider Black's health in the Moscow complex to be a deterrent to any prospective white player seeking a theoretical advantage.

prospective white player seeking a theoretical advantage.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 e3

7 Qb3 – [Ernst-Smeets](#)

7 Qc2 – [Vallejo Pons-Erdos](#)

7 g3 – [Ruck-Baramidze](#)

7...Nd7

7...g6 – [Shimanov-Motylev](#)

8 Bd3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 g6

9...Bd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Ne4 Qe7

12 Rc1 – [Carlsen-Shirov](#)

12 Nxd6 – [Moiseenko-Shirov](#)

10 0-0 Bg7 11 Re1

11 b4 – [Ivanchuk-Karjakin](#)

11 Rc1 – [Beliavsky-Kramnik](#)

11 Qc2 – [Mamedyarov-Gelfand](#)

11 e4 – [Leko-Gelfand](#)

11...0-0 12 e4

12...Qe7 – [Kaufman-Bartholomew](#)

12...e5 – [Kramnik-Aronian](#)

□ **The Moscow Variation**
 ■ **in Game Format**
[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 Black forces White to make an immediate decision; forfeit the bishop-pair, or prepare to sacrifice a pawn.

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[6.♙h4 is covered in the Anti-Moscow Gambit chapter that follows this one.]

6...♞xf6 7.e3 White forsakes attempts to quickly play e2-e4, defends c4, and intends to quietly develop. He also has:

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[7...g6 is more committal, but recently it has spiked in popularity. Shimanov-Motylev provides a survey of what I believe to be the critical continuations of a line which I expect to continue growing in popularity.]

8.♙d3 Acquiescing to the loss of tempo exchange on c4, but there is nothing better:

[a) 8.♞c1 ♙d6 9.♙d3 0-0 (9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♞e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘e4 transposes to a position from Moiseenko-Shirov, mentioned in the note to 9...Bd6) 10.0-0 ♞e7 11.♞c2 dxc4 12.♙xc4 e5 proved satisfactory in J.Capablanca-G. Levenfish, Moscow 1936.]

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8...dxc4 9.♙xc4 g6 The most fighting attempt, but definitely not the only serious try at equality.

[9...♙d6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘e4 ♞e7

A) Instead, 12.♞c1 ♙c7 is the traditional way of handling White's opening, but cannot be recommended in my opinion. (The course of Carlsen-Shirov details why 12...b6! should be preferred.);

B) 12.♘d6 brings about a position looked at in Moiseenko-Shirov. The discovery that playing à la Lasker's Defence from the QGD is satisfactory for Black makes the whole continuation with 9...Bd6 theoretically viable as an equalizer.]

10.0-0 ♙g7 Both sides have completed their development after a very logical sequence of moves. White's difficulty in finding a particularly effective plan is evident enough by the wide range of 11th moves he has tried.

11.♞e1 White thoroughly prepares e4-e5 while also preparing a cute Re3 idea aimed at the ...Bg4 resource that undermines 11 e4.

We will also see:

[a) 11.b4 was once considered a critical try for an edge due to the restriction of Black's queenside, but has been entirely defanged. Ivanchuk-Karjakin provides the solution.]

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[d) 11.e4 is met by ♙e5 . Leko-Gelfand does a good job demonstrating the drawback of White's early pawn lunge.]

11...0-0 12.e4 e5! Kramnik-Aronian saw this, the critical continuation for 11 Re1's future theoretical standing.

[Instead, 12...♞e7 is too passive, allowing White his e4-e5 wedge in a satisfactory manner, as in Kaufman-Bartholomew.]

D43

□ **Ernst,S**
 ■ **Smeets,J**

Dutch Championship, Eindhoven
[Bryan Paulsen]

2010

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♞xf6 7.♞b3 White's idea is simple: to play e4 without ...Bb4+ interfering.

a5! The most forceful way of dealing with White's plan. There are two possible uses of the a-pawn lunge:

- 1) It is useful in advancing up to a3 to force b4 into becoming a certain weakness.
- 2) It is useful in supporting ...Bb4+.

Others:

[a) 7...dxc4 8.♖xc4 ♘d7 9.♞d1 g6 10.g3 ♙g7 11.♙g2 0-0 12.♖b3!? ♜e7 13.0-0 b6 14.e3 ♙b7 might be okay for the second player, but the final result of V.Ivanchuk-D. Navara, Prague (rapid) 2009, made it clear that Black has to maintain a certain degree of caution.]

[b) 7...♘d7 8.e4 dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♜f4 10.♙d3 e5 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♞fe1 exd4 13.♘xd4 0-0 14.♙c2 ♘c5 15.♖c3 ♞d8 16.♞ad1 ♙g4 17.f3 , stemming from G. Sargissian-V.Malakhov, Copenhagen 2007, is cited as equal by Dreev after ♙d7 , but 18.♘g3 sees White retain some pressure with b2-b4 and c4-c5 ideas.

I don't see any reason for Black to suffer these approaches where patient defence is asked for, when he can take the fight to White.]

8.e4 a4 The consistent follow-up to the previous move, but not the only option of value.

[8...dxe4 is the other method of causing White some discomfort, and equally satisfactory. It could easily be considered the superior winning try when compared to the game's continuation. 9.♘xe4 ♙b4+ 10.♘d1 ♜f4 11.♖e3 (11.♙d3 f5 12.♘g3 c5 13.a3 a4 14.♖c2 ♙a5 looks more comfortable for the second player; indeed, in R.Bagirov-V.Popov, Vladimir 2008, he was never worse) 11...♖xe3 12.fxe3 ♙e7 13.c5 0-0 was basically equal in R.Scherbakov-N. Vitiugov, Russian Team Championship 2005. The c8-bishop is not a problem that is impossible to solve. Black should play to arrange ...b6 even at the cost of a damaged structure, because the bishop-pair will more quickly become a major player due to White's king placement.]

9.♖c2 a3! It's move 9, Black has pushed his a-pawn three times, and he is totally okay. This is all made possible by White wasting tempi in response to each push.

[However, 9...dxe4?! is an inconsistent follow-up to Black's 8th move. The thematic 10.♘xe4 ♙b4+ 11.♘d1 ♜f4 12.c5 0-0 13.♙d3 a3 14.♖b1 ♞d8 15.♘e2

left Black woefully underdeveloped on the queenside in J.Chazal-R.Clark, correspondence 2008.]

10.cxd5 One of a number of tries, but none particularly set themselves apart:

[a) The 10.e5 axb2 11.♖xb2 ♜d8 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♖b1 of T.Winkler-G.Albarran, correspondence 1996, seems easily met by ♖b8 with ...b6 to follow.]

[b) 10.b3 dxe4 11.♖xe4 ♙b4 12.♞c1 c5 perfectly demonstrated the point of Black's advance to a3 in A.Dunne-S.Priam, correspondence 2001. The dark squares on the queenside are at Black's mercy, and he has the initiative.]

[c) 10.c5 axb2 11.♖xb2 ♜g6!? 12.♘e5 ♜f6 (offering a draw by repetition) 13.♞c1 ♙xc5! 14.♘b5 0-0 15.♞xc5 ♘a6 16.♞c1 cxb5 was satisfactory for Black in S.Calleri-A. Shikalov, correspondence 2000.]

10...axb2 11.♖xb2 exd5! The correct recapture.

[Instead, 11...cxd5? 12.♙b5+ ♘c6 13.exd5 exd5 14.♘xd5 nets White a useful extra pawn,]

[although 11...♙a3 also works, because after 12.♖b3 exd5 13.♙d3 (13.exd5 transposes to our main game) 13...0-0 14.0-0 dxe4 15.♘xe4 ♜e7 the game was equal and agreed drawn in P.Murdzia-R. Kuczynski, Polish League 2009.]

12.exd5

[12.♙d3 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♜d8 14.0-0 ♙e7 was satisfactory for the second player despite the final result in R.Derichs-R. Kuczynski, German League 1995. White's substantial lead in development isn't enough to stop Black from castling on the next turn, after which the bishop-pair will pull the weight of Black's position.]

12...♙a3 13.♖b3 ♜e7+! An important intermezzo which allows Black to coordinate his forces.

14.♙e2 ♙b4 Using tactical pressure to discourage castling.

15.a4

[Otherwise, 15.0-0?? ♞a3 wins a piece,]
[and 15.a3 0-0 16.♞a2 ♙xc3+ 17.♖xc3 cxd5 is completely equal, possibly even easier to play with Black due to the ease with which a3 is attacked.]

15...0-0 16.♘e5 c5?! The wrong way to undermine the knight on e5.

[Instead, 16...♘d7! 17.0-0 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♙c5 gives Black the bishop-pair to work with,

as regaining the pawn will prove to be trivial. Continuations like 19.e6 fxe6 20.dxc6 bxc6 shouldn't concern Black. White's better pawn structure is offset by the bishop-pair, and pressure on f2.]

17.0-0! ♕f5 18.d6?! After this the tension will dissipate, and equality results.

[18.♖b5!? cxd4 19.♗xd4 ♕e4 20.♗d3 ♕d6 21.♕f3 ♕xd3 22.♞xd3 looks slightly more comfortable for White due to squares like f5 and b5 being easy to access on top of his extra pawn.]

18...♞xd6 19.♗b5 ♞e7 20.♕d3 cxd4 21.♕xf5

[After 21.♕xf5 ♞xe5 22.♞xb4 ♞xf5 23.♞xd4 ♗c6 it's equal.

Summary:

7 Qb3 requires energetic defence. Quiet play early on easily leads to a long defence for Black.]

½-½

□ **Vallejo Pons,F**
 ■ **Erdos,V**

German League
 [Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2011

1.♗f3 d5 2.d4 ♗f6 3.c4 c6 4.♗c3 e6 5.♕g5 h6 6.♕xf6 ♞xf6 7.♞c2

[Yet another attempt by White to force through e4 in one move. However, unlike with 7.♞b3 , the pawn on c4 is undefended, and this forms the easiest basis for counterplay.]

7...dxc4 Throwing down the gauntlet.

8.e3 The only way to effectively fight to regain the pawn.

[After 8.e4?! b5 9.a4 ♕b4 10.♕e2 ♕b7 11.0-0 a6 12.b3 cxb3 13.♞xb3 ♞e7 , due to his missing pawn, White was forced to grovel hard for the draw in V.Savon-V. Neverov, St Petersburg 1996.]

8...b5 9.a4 Hoping to exploit the potentially open a-file, White sets about regaining his pawn by attacking b5.

[He can win the exchange via 9.♗xb5 cxb5 10.♞e4 , but ♕b4+ 11.♗d1 0-0 12.♞xa8 ♕d7 gives Black the initiative as a result of White's misplaced king.]

9...♕b7 10.axb5 Immediately seeking to regain the pawn.

[After 10.♗e5 ♕d6 11.axb5 cxb5 12.♗xb5 ♕xe5 13.dxe5 ♞xe5 14.♕xc4 0-0 15.0-0

♞c8 at a glance it is obvious Black has no coordination problems and no weaknesses. The further 16.♞fd1 ♕d5 17.b3 a6 18.♗c3 ♕xc4 was agreed drawn in V.Iotov-F.

Caruana, Plovdiv 2008.]

10...cxb5 11.♗xb5 ♕b4+ 12.♗c3

Prudent and logical. White has regained his pawn, and the knight is no longer in the wilderness.

[Instead, after 12.♗d2 0-0 13.♗c7 e5! 14.♕xc4 exd4 15.0-0-0?! (engine insanity; humans usually shirk castling into the opposing army) ♞c8 16.♗xa8 (A.Raessler-M.Tritt, correspondence 2008) ♗c6! Black can pick up the cornered knight whenever he pleases, and the white king will be in need of constant protection, giving Black full compensation for his material investment.]

12...0-0 13.♗e5!? The latest attempt to make something of White's superior structure and to exploit the isolated pawn on c4. However, it falls short of achieving White's dreams, as do:

[a) 13.♕xc4 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♞xf3 15.♞g1 ♗d7 left Black for choice due to his safer king and more harmonious position (compared to White's disconnected rook on g1) in H.Lopez Martin-Y.Komissarov, correspondence 2006.]

[b) 13.♕e2 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♞fc8 15.♞fc1 a5 16.♗a4 ♞ab8 17.♞d1 e5 18.♞xc4 ♞xc4 19.♕xc4 was agreed drawn in A.Beliavsky-V. Kramnik, Dortmund 1998. After ♕xf3 20.♞xf3 ♞xf3 21.gxf3 exd4 22.exd4 White's extra pawn would have been offset by his horrible structure and the prospect of bishops of opposite colours.]

13...♞c8 14.♕xc4 ♗c6! Black correctly identifies White's inability to hold the pawn.

[14...♕xg2 is quite risky, but perhaps tenable: 15.♞g1 ♕b7 16.♗f1 ♗c6 17.♗d7 ♞e7 18.♗e4 ♗h8 19.♞xg7 ♗xg7 20.♗ef6 ♞xf6 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♞e4 was J.Sadorra-H.Nezad, Manila 2013, and now the engine's ♗a5!? might have kept Black's game together.]

15.♗xc6 ♞xc6 16.♕d3 ♞ac8 17.0-0 ♕xc3

18.bxc3 ♞xc3 19.♞b1 ♕d5 20.♕h7+

[Black would meet 20.♞xa7 with ♞b3 , driving White backwards.]

20...♗h8 21.♕e4 ♕xe4 22.♞xe4 ♞3c7

The heavy piece ending is drawn even if the a-pawn drops, and even that isn't guaranteed.

23.g3 g6 24.♞a5 ♗g7 25.♗g2 ♞b8 26.♞a2 ♞b5 27.♞fa1 a5!? Black is content to shed

the pawn, knowing that his arising activity plays to the principle that rook activity is worth a pawn in endgames. Black is able to hold on due to the ability to restrict White to one active rook at a time.

28.♖xa5 ♖b2! 29.♗f3 ♖cc2 30.♖f1 h5

This is an idea more typically used in the four versus three with rooks on each side ending. Black forever rules out h4-h5 ideas that increase White's winning chances. It's a useful idea to know that masters take for granted, and novices often stumble into by not finding anything better.

31.h3 ♖d2 32.g4 hxg4 33.hxg4 ♗xf3+ 34.♙xf3 ♖dc2 35.g5 ♖d2 36.♙g3 ♖dc2 37.♖e5 ♖a2 38.♖b5 ♖d2 39.♖b3 ♖dc2 40.♖b8 ♖a5 41.f4 ♖a3 42.♖e1 ♖d2 43.♖b4 ♖c3 44.♙f3 ♖h2 45.♙e4 ♖h3 46.♖b2 ♖a3 47.♖d2 ♖g3 48.d5 exd5+ 49.♖xd5 ♖h3 50.♖d8 ♖b3 51.♖e8 ♖a3 52.♖e2 ♖b3 53.♖a8 ♖h8 54.♖xh8 ♙xh8 55.♖d2 ♙g7 56.♖d7 ♖a3 57.♙d4 ♖a4+ 58.♙e5 ♖a5+ 59.♖d5 ♖a3 60.e4 ♖a1 61.♖d7 ♖b1 62.f5 gx f5 63.ex f5 ♖e1+ 64.♙d6 ♖d1+ 65.♙e7 ♖e1+ 66.♙d6 ♖d1+ 67.♙c7 ♖f1 68.♖d5 ♖g1 69.g6 fxg6 70.fxg6 Summary:

While White's innovation is certainly critical, it is not enough to make Black's defences crumble. 7 Qc2 will remain a decent practical try should Black forget his way, but that's the best that can be said about it.

½-½

□ **Ruck,R**
 ■ **Baramidze,D**
 Austrian League
[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2008

1.♙f3 d5 2.d4 ♙f6 3.c4 c6 4.♙c3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♗xf6 7.g3 A Catalan-style attempt, but a fairly rare idea can take it to task by force.

♙d7 Preparing to capture on c4 without allowing the typical Ne5xc4 resource.

8.♙g2 dxc4 Principled now that White cannot easily regain the pawn.

9.0-0

[Instead, 9.e3!? e5!? 10.0-0 ♙e7 looked okay for Black in S.Kiupel-K. Solzbacher, correspondence 2003. White will take some time to pick c4, and Black is already threatening ...exd4 followed by ...Nb6.]

9...e5!? Taking the fight to White. Black is prepared to argue that White's set-up is slow, and that regaining his pawn will give him time to harmonize his position.

10.d5

[10.♙e4!? ♗e6 11.dxe5 ♙xe5 12.♗d4 was preferred in E.Goossens-A.Ait Messaoud, Belgian League 2000. Now f6!? , simply shoring up the knight on e5 and providing the queen with a retreat square on f7, seems reasonable enough. White isn't well placed to exploit the loose black kingside, and 13.♖fd1 ♙e7 14.♖ac1 0-0 15.♙c5 ♙xf3+ 16.♙xf3 ♗f7 17.♗xc4 ♗xc4 18.♖xc4 ♙xc5 19.♖xc5 ♙e6 is just equal.]

10...♙b6 11.♙e4 Aiming to give Black doubled c-pawns, but this is hardly fatal.

[After 11.♙d2!? ♙d7 (Black wants to avoid the doubled c-pawns Catalan players just love to focus their efforts on) 12.♗c2 ♙f5!? 13.♙ce4 ♗g6 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 Black obtained a small advantage in A. Fernandez Ballon-J.Gonzalez, correspondence 2005, thanks to his extra pawn and bishop-pair.]

11...♗e7 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♗c2 f5!

14.♙ed2 e4 Now that Black has accepted the inferior structure as the price for his extra pawn, he must play energetically.

15.♙d4 ♗d7 Too slow and passive.

[Correct was 15...♗f6!? , avoiding the gumming up of his development, while covering c6, and keeping f5 under surveillance (g3-g4 is a very real future threat in other variations where the queen's defence is lacking). After 16.e3 ♙a6! suddenly the c-pawn is just as much a strength as a weakness, and Black enjoys a spatial plus. Then 17.♖fd1 (17.f3 ♙d5! makes sport of the tender e-pawn) 17...♙c5 18.♙f1 ♙xd4 19.exd4 0-0 20.♙xc4+ ♙xc4 21.♙xc4 ♙xc4 22.♗xc4+ ♙h7 sees the isolated d-pawn and c-pawn offset each other, leaving the game equal.]

16.e3 c5 17.♙xf5!? White manages to obtain a small material advantage, but now Black's bishop-pair becomes a major factor.

[17.♙e2!? leaves Black with a very suspect position: ♗d3 18.♗d1 h5!? (ruling out g3-g4 ideas that undermine e4) 19.♙f4 ♗d6 20.h4 ♙a6 21.♗c2 ♗f6 (21...c3 22.♙xe4! fxe4 23.♖ad1 ♗f6 24.♙xe4 puts Black in hot water) 22.♖fd1 followed by Bf1 to regain the pawn leaves White with the better pawn structure and fewer weaknesses.]

17...♟xf5 18.♞xe4 ♟e6 19.♞xa8 ♞xa8
20.♟a4+ ♟d7 21.♟xd7+ ♞xd7 22.♞xc4

The two bishops nearly compensate completely for the material deficit, but as a practical matter they can be very hard to contain.

♞e7

[22...♞b5!? 23.♟fc1 ♞b6 would have had the advantage of keeping the bishop-pair around.]

23.♟fd1 ♞b6 24.♞d6+ ♞xd6 25.♟xd6 ♞e7

The light squares will continue to plague White, while the knight and bishop happen to coordinate very well.

26.♟d2 ♞e6 27.♟c1 ♟c8 28.b3

[28.f4 represents an attempt to mobilize his pawns, but Black would have sought to pressure the queenside with a5 29.e4 a4 30.a3 ♞b3 , when he probably has full compensation for the material.]

28...a5 29.e4 a4 30.♟c3 ♞d7

[30...axb3 31.axb3 ♞d7 might have been a tiny bit more accurate, not giving the option available in the next note.]

31.f4

[31.b4!? c4 32.f4 ♞f6 33.♟d4 would have forced Black to maintain a bit more accuracy due to the increased activity and effective spatial control given by the advanced pawns.]

31...axb3 32.axb3 ♟b8 33.♟dd3 ♟b4

[33...♟a8 looks like the easiest route to a draw. With the white rooks tied down, Black's is free to create pressure.]

34.♟e3 ♞f7 35.♞g2 ♟b5 36.g4 g5 37.♞g3 gxf4+ 38.♞xf4 ♞f8 39.♟h3 ♞g6+?!

[39...♟b6 is fully equal. If White should capture c5, then b3 falls.]

40.♞e3 ♞e5 41.♞f4 ♞g6+ 42.♞g3 ♞xb3

43.♟xh6 ♞e5 44.♞f4 c4 45.h3?!

Oddly passive.

[45.♟ch3! ♞d1 46.♟h7+ ♞f7 47.g5 ♞f8 48.♟a3 ♟b3 49.♟h3 looks tricky for Black. The c-pawn is easily restrained, while White's passed pawns will quickly grow in strength.]

[45.h4 is another serious possibility.]

45...♞d3+ 46.♞e3 ♞b4 47.♟h7+ ♞f6?!

[47...♞e6! keeps the king on a closed file and goes a long way to ensuring the draw.]

48.♟c1 ♞a2?

[48...♞c2+ followed by ...Kg6 after Rf1+ might have been the best defence.]

49.♟f1+ ♞e6 50.♟f5

[50.♟h5! would have left Black facing a very

difficult defence. White's pawns are much more difficult to stop than Black's.]

50...♟xf5 51.♟xf5+ ♞d6 52.f6 c3 53.f7 ♞e7 54.f8♟+ ♞xf8 55.♟c7 c2 56.♞d2

After 57 Rxc2 there will be nothing left, so the opponents agreed to cease hostilities.

Summary:

This Catalan-style approach can be tamed by force, rendering it of little theoretical importance. Black players should learn a dependable solution, though, otherwise it could cause problems over the board.

½-½

D43

□ **Shimanov,A**

■ **Motylev,A**

Moscow

2010

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♞f3 ♞f6 4.♞c3 e6

5.♞g5 h6 6.♞xf6 ♟xf6 7.e3 g6!?

[This tricky move order may prove to be just as good as the much more popular 7...♞d7 , but it is much less explored. Black's idea is to proceed along common lines without committing his pieces or structure too early.]

8.♞d3

[8.♞e2 may be the sneakiest way of dealing with Black's move order, but Black has a way to deal with it:

A) 8...♞g7 9.e4 0-0 10.0-0 dxe4 (10...dxc4 11.♞xc4 ♞d7 12.e5 ♟e7 13.♟e1 transposes to Kaufman-Bartholomew, covered later in this chapter) 11.♞xe4 ♟f4 12.♟c2

was a favourable version of the Moscow in B.Gelfand-R.Kasimdzhanov, London 2012. A clamp with c4-c5 is coming soon, after which the bishop on c8 will be a game-long headache.;

B) 8...♞d7 9.0-0 (or 9.e4!? dxe4 10.♞xe4 ♞b4+ 11.♞f1 ♟f4 12.♟c2 and despite being unable to castle, White seems to have reasonable chances of setting up his c5 bind due to Black's time spent on misplacing the bishop on b4; after ♞e7 13.g3 ♟c7 14.♞g2 0-0 15.c5 I wouldn't mind playing White) 9...♞g7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b4 0-0 12.b5 ♟d6 13.bxc6 bxc6 14.♟c1 ♞b6 15.♞a4 and in T.Polak-A.Saric, Split 2003, White had achieved a fairly comfortable minority attack with the black bishops not

particularly well placed.;

C) c) After 8...dxc4! 9.♗xc4 ♘d7 suddenly the game is back in standard Moscow waters, and White's move order accomplished nothing in particular.;

D) 8...--]

8...♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 The most principled reaction to Black's opening, but also the one that most rewards Black's move order.

Otherwise:

[a) 10.♖c1 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘d7 is Beliavsky-Kramnik.]

[b) 10.♖c2 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘d7 is Mamedyarov-Gelfand.]

[c) 10.♖e1 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘d7 is Kramnik-Aronian.]

10...dxe4 11.♗xe4 ♖d8 12.♖d2 The most popular reaction to this particular position, but an energetic approach makes one wonder if it isn't deserving of the '?!' annotation.

[12.c5!? would typically be the approach to Black's set-up with ...Nd7 on the board, but it still remains an interesting pawn sacrifice here. After ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♖xd4 14.♖c2 ♘d7 15.♖ad1 ♖g7 16.♖fe1 ♗f6 White had sufficient compensation for his pawn in P.Tregubov-A.Dreev, Barcelona 2009, but whether it is possible to obtain more is unclear.]

[Instead, 12.♗c2 fully validates Black's opening, since he can transpose back into more normal waters. The Bc2 move would never happen in the event Black had played ...Nd7 earlier. Here ♘d7 13.♖e2 e5 freed up Black's bishop-pair to wreak havoc in Y.Gorishniy-S.Okrugin, Kostroma 2010.]

12...f5! 13.♗c3 g5! Suddenly the pawn on d4 is more sensitive than ever.

14.♖e3

[14.♗h1 was played in V.Gunina-N.Paikidze, Moscow 2010, but here g4 15.♗e1 ♖xd4 would have completely rewarded Black's opening with a healthy extra pawn.]
[14.h3 isn't any better. Following ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♖xd4 16.♖ad1 ♖f6 White will have a long, hard fight ahead of him justifying the pawn sacrifice.]

14...g4 15.♗e5 c5! Now d3 is a problem.

16.♗e2

[16.dxc5?? ♗xe5 17.♖xe5 ♖xd3 was the point of Black's 15th.]

16...♖g5

[16...cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♖g5 also looks like trouble for White. There are too many pieces on the long diagonal.]

17.f4 gxf3 18.♖xf3 cxd4 19.♗xd4 ♘d7

Thanks to the bishop on g7 White's entire position has been made untenable. Material losses are forthcoming.

20.♗xe6 ♖xe3+ 21.♖xe3 ♗xe5 22.♖f1 ♖e8 23.♗c7 ♗d4 24.♗xe8 ♗xe3+ A pawn is a lousy replacement for a bishop, and the rest is a matter of technique.

25.♗h1 f4 26.♗d6 ♗e5 27.♗e4 ♗e6

28.b3 ♖d8 29.♗xb7 ♖d2 30.a4 f3 31.h3 f2

32.g4 h5 A brutal game to watch for any 6

Bxf6 advocate, and one which advertises why White should try to take the game into more typical waters earlier on.

Summary:

7...g6 is here to stay, although given the option of 8 Be2 it is unlikely to have much independent significance from the more standard variations.

0-1

□ **Carlsen,M**

■ **Shirov,A**

Foros

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6

5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♖xf6 7.e3 ♘d7 8.♖c1

♗d6 9.♗d3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♖e7 11.0-0 0-0

12.♗e4 ♗c7 Via a slightly unusual move order the key position for the variations involving ...Bd6-c7 has been reached.

Eschewing exchanges in favour of complexity, Black keeps his bishop-pair in the hopes of obtaining active counterplay later.

[12...b6 13.♗xd6 ♖xd6 would transpose to the next game. This would be my recommendation to black players interested in defending the variations involving ...Bd6.]

13.♗b3 Hampering the development of Black's light-squared bishop via ...b6 and ...Bb7, and thereby restraining his entire position.

♖d8 14.♖c2 a5!? Alternatively:

[a) 14...♗f8 is the most common move, but releases control of e5, which White most definitely should immediately pursue. After 15.♗e5 ♗d7 16.f4 he obtained a pleasant spatial advantage in Z.Sturua-V.Shalimov, Swidnica (rapid) 1997. Black should never allow White to effectively clamp down on all of his viable freeing moves. Activity should always be preferred. It is for this reason that 12...Bc7 cannot be advised – the

chances of Black effectively freeing himself aren't good.]

[b) 14...♖b8 15.♗fd1 ♘f8 16.♙e5 was similar to variation 'a' in D.Kumaran-O. Berezin, Halle 1995. In general the ...Nf8 manoeuvre does not impress much as it cedes the centre to White.]

[c) 14...♙f6 15.♗fd1 ♕d7 16.♙c5 left Black struggling due to his cramped position in E.Alekseev-V.Burmakin, Sochi 2005.]

15.a3!? A bit early, but it is also true that Black isn't going anywhere.

[Also possible is 15.♗fd1 ♘b6 16.a3 . Only now that ...a4 is a threat does White make room for bishop on a2, and after a4 17.♕a2 ♘d7 18.♙c3 ♘b6 19.♙e5 Black was terribly cramped in S.Osipov-O. Bogun, correspondence 2006.]

15...♖b8 In the interest of full disclosure I don't know what the point of this move is. The b-pawn isn't going anywhere, as Qxc6 Bb7; Qc2 keeps e4 covered.

[That said, 15...e5 is met by 16.d5 with a traffic jam on the c-file favouring White.]

16.♗fd1 ♘f8 17.♙e5 A typical leap. **♕d7 18.♙xd7!?** An unusual decision to exchange when possessing the superior space. It works out well in the game due to the final result, but not due to the inherent power of the choice. This is one of those examples where exchanges aid the defender.

[The stereotypical handling of the position would have been 18.f4 . After ♕e8 19.♙c5 f6 20.♙ed3 ♕g6 21.♖c4 White would still retain an advantage due to his space and pressure, although Black's light-squared bishop problem would have been solved for once.]

18...♙xd7 19.g3 A good sign White has abandoned any pretensions to an advantage and is settling in for a protracted manoeuvring affair. Black shouldn't fear this due to his lack of weaknesses and no bad pieces.

♙f6 20.♖c5 ♖xc5 21.♙xf6+ gxf6 22.♖xc5 ♖a8 Despite the fractured kingside pawns, it is not enough for White to lay claim to any sort of an advantage. They are easy enough to defend, and the opposite-coloured bishops ensure high drawing chances due to the lack of exposed weaknesses.

23.♙g2 ♕d6 24.♖c2 f5 25.♕c4 a4!?

It was certainly also possible to simply improve the position of the black king before

committing pawns any further.

[25...♙g7 intending ...Kf6 would be one example of such an idea. How White is supposed to make any progress is something of a mystery.]

26.♕e2 ♕e7 27.♕f3 ♖a5 28.♖c4 ♕f6

29.♖dc1 e5!? Making Black's task ever-so-slightly more difficult than it needed to be.

Instead, simply improving the king's position would have made it very difficult for White to generate any progress. However, one must also respect Shirov's determination to seek a fight.

30.dxe5 ♕xe5 31.♖b4 ♖d7 32.♖c2 ♙g7 33.♙f1 ♕f6 34.♖cc4 ♖a8 The weakness of b2 makes the weakness on a4 a non-issue.

35.♖f4 ♖a5 36.♙e2

[After 36.♖xa4 ♖xa4 37.♖xa4 ♕xb2

38.♖a7 Black is under some pressure due to the threat of Bxc6, but holding shouldn't prove impossible.]

36...♖c5 37.♖fc4 ♖xc4 38.♖xc4 ♕xb2

39.♖xa4 c5 40.♙f1 b6 41.♕e2 ♕c3 42.♕b5

♖d1+ 43.♙g2 ♕a5 The position is completely equal. Now both sides begin testing the waters without venturing into anything risky.

44.♖f4 ♙g6 45.a4 ♕c3 46.g4 fxf4 47.♕e8 ♕e5 48.♕xf7+ ♙g5 49.♖e4 ♙f5 50.♖c4

♖d7 51.♕h5 ♖g7 52.a5 bxa5 53.♖xc5 ♖a7

54.♖c4 ♖g7 55.♖c5 ♖a7 56.♖c4 ♖g7

57.♖c6 ♖a7 58.♕g6+ ♙g5 59.♕c2 a4

60.♖g6+ ♙h5 61.♖e6 ♕g7?? Throwing away the draw Black had earned up to this point with accurate defence.

[61...♕b8 was necessary to keep the white king out of g3.]

62.♙g3 Suddenly the black king finds itself in a mating net.

♖a5 63.♕g6+ ♙g5 With mate in two forthcoming via the advance of the f- and h-pawns, there was no reason to continue. Summary:

One must conclude that the idea with 12...Bc7 is too slow, and that White can effectively limit Black's counterplay and claim a comfortable advantage.

1-0

□ Moiseenko,A

■ Shirov,A

Saratov

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6
5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♖xf6 7.e3 ♘d7 8.♙d3
dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♙d6 The classical method of
development, typically linked with attempts to
free his position with ...e5, or ...b6, Bb7, and
...c5. While it had been thought that White
was doing well in the resulting positions, it
isn't at all clear if he actually has anything
following some ambitionless play by the
second player.

10.0-0 0-0!? A sign that Black is willing to
return the bishop-pair. I find it mildly
surprising that it took black players this long
to come around to the possibility.

[10...♖e7 11.♘e4 ♙c7 was the subject of
the previous game. (Instead here 11...0-0
just transposes to 10...0-0.)]

11.♘e4 The principled reaction, accepting the
challenge. Others:

[a) 11.♖c2 b6!? is untested, but seems
most in keeping with the entire theme of
Black's play: for example, after 12.♘e4 ♖e7
13.♘xd6 ♖xd6 it is difficult to imagine the
queen on c2 is in any way better than on the
more usual e2-square.]

[b) 11.♙c1 ♖e7 12.♘e4 b6 would usually
transpose to the main game, but White tried
13.♖d3 in D.Bocharov-V.Dobrov, Serpukhov
2007. Now a5 14.♘xd6 ♖xd6 15.e4 ♙b7
16.♙fd1 ♙fd8 17.e5 ♖e7 18.♖e4 ♘f8
was comfortably equal for the second player,
having cut out any potential threat to h7. In
these sorts of positions ...a5 is typically
played as a means of eliminating Ba6 ideas,
and recognizing that after ...c5 the
resulting structures will still be satisfactory
for Black. The manoeuvre with ...Rd8 and ...
Nf8 is also worth remembering to protect
against threats to h7.]

11...♖e7 12.♘xd6 ♖xd6 13.♙c1 It is notable
that the great Semi-Slav expert Alexey Dreev
feels that White retains a slight positional
advantage here, but there's something
significant at play here. Firstly, those familiar
with Lasker's Defence in the Queen's Gambit
Declined will recognize that the preceding
exchanges of minors considerably ease
Black's defensive task. Secondly, White is
hard-pressed to obtain anything concrete

against Black's solid structure and sensible
plan of development.

[After the 13.♖e2 b6 (the 13...e5!?
14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♙ad1 of A.Spiller-A.
Ludwig, Fort Worth 1951, just runs into
♘xf3+ 16.♖xf3 ♖e7 with a position that is
very close to fully equal; White retains
perhaps the tiniest of pulls owing to
ownership of the d-file, but turning this into
something concrete against competent play
is nearly unimaginable) 14.♙fd1 of V.Anand-
A.Shirov, Leon (rapid) 2011, the position
looks reasonably likely to transpose to the
main game after ♙d8!?, as White hardly
has anything better than 15.♙ac1 .]

13...b6 14.♖e2 ♙b7

[14...♙d8 is also possible, of course. If
White is intent on Ba6, Black can seek to
make it a non-issue for as long as possible.]

15.♙fd1

[15.♙a6 ♙xa6 16.♖xa6 ♙fc8 is also fine
for Black. After a further ...Rc7 he has no
weaknesses, and White possesses no clear
plan to make progress.]

15...♙fd8 Both sides have completed
development in a very typical manner, and
now White attempts to obtain something via
another exchange. This must leave the reader
with the distinct impression that White has
nothing at all, as Black is the only one with
relevant freeing moves at this point.

16.♙a6 ♙xa6 17.♖xa6 c5! This all-
important freeing move typically signals the
end of White's hopes for an advantage when it
has been sufficiently prepared.

18.a3

[18.dxc5 ♘xc5 19.♙xd6 ♘xa6 20.♙xd8+
♙xd8 results in an easy-to-hold endgame.]

18...♖e7 19.h3 e5! Forcing the issue in the
centre.

20.♖b7

[20.dxe5 ♘xe5 21.♘xe5 ♖xe5 22.b4
cxb4 23.axb4 ♖b2 is sufficient to maintain
the balance. In general, these heavy piece
endings are difficult for White to achieve
anything in, much like in the
aforementioned Lasker QGD.]

20...♖e8 White has finally run out of ways to
delay the upcoming simplification, and now
he accepts the game drifting towards a
peaceful conclusion.

**21.♖e4 exd4 22.♖xe8+ ♙xe8 23.exd4
♙ac8 24.dxc5 ♘xc5** The central tension has
been resolved, and Black finds himself with
complete equality. This represents the goal of

Black's play begun on move 10.

25.♟f1 ♘b3 26.♞xc8 ♞xc8 27.♞d2 ♞d8
28.♟e2 ♞e8+ 29.♟f1 ♞d8 30.♟e2 ♞d4+
31.♟e1 ♞c2+ 32.♟e2 ♞d4+ 33.♟e1

Draw agreed on account of the mutual lack of winning chances.

Summary:

A game very emblematic of the difficulties White faces in demonstrating an advantage against this patient approach to the Moscow Variation. The similarities to Lasker's Defence in the Queen's Gambit Declined do not appear to be even slightly unfavourable for Black.

This realization makes the Moscow Variation even less appetizing for the ambitious white player, because the continuations with ...Bd6 have typically been frowned upon by theory. Not anymore, though!

½-½

□ Ivanchuk,V
■ Karjakin,S

Foros

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2006

1.♞f3 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 d5 4.d4 c6
5.♟g5 h6 6.♟xf6 ♞xf6 7.e3 ♞d7 8.♟d3
dxc4 9.♟xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♟g7 11.b4

White aggressively grabs space on the queenside.

0-0 However, Black does not care. His structure is sound, and White must be very careful about how he chooses to open the position.

12.♞c1

[12.a4 e5 13.a5 exd4 14.exd4 ♞d8 15.♞b3 b5! has done extraordinarily well for Black in practice; ...b5 ensures White's presence on the a2-g8 diagonal is reduced, and ...Nf8 will solve all coordination issues should White not capture the pawn. Indeed, 16.♟d3 ♞f8 17.♞ac1 ♟g4 18.♟e4 ♞ac8 slightly favoured Black's superior pawn structure in A.Riazantsev-P.Smirnov, Moscow 2007.]

12...♞e7 13.♞b3 White has developed sensibly behind his advanced pawns, while Black has placed all of his developed pieces on secure squares. All that is left is to develop the bishop from c8 and find a freeing move. White, for all of his space, will spend just as much time maintaining it as doing anything else.

[13.b5 doesn't accomplish much. After c5 Black is quite okay, having nothing to fear from the extended white queenside.]

13...b6 The simplest antidote to White's set-up. Although Black's scheme seems slow, White is unable to crack the position open without allowing the bishop-pair its say in matters.

14.b5 An attempt to break open Black's position directly, but no more impressive than the alternatives:

[a) 14.e4 ♟b7 15.♞fe1 a6!?

is an interesting Hedgehogesque approach (note the spines on Black's fourth rank), as seen in F.Lorin-X.Pichelin, correspondence 2006. Black retains the flexibility to develop his rooks as he sees fit, and ...a5 or ...c5 can free his position later. White, on the other hand, struggles to advance in any manner that doesn't free the bishop-pair.]

[b) 14.a4 ♟b7 15.♞fd1 c5 16.d5 (16.bxc5 ♟xf3 17.gxf3 bxc5 18.d5 ♞ab8

looks like fine counterplay for Black; the damaged kingside pawns ensure potential targets, and he has good activity) 16...cxb4 17.d6 was agreed drawn in A.Samraoui-M. Silva, correspondence 2003, and it is true there is no question that Black is doing well after the further ♞f6 18.♞xb4 ♞ac8 due to the d-pawn being more of a curse than a blessing to White.]

[c) 14.♞fd1 ♟b7 15.e4 looks similar to variation 'a', and Black can handle it the same; the rook being on d1 is not an improvement to it standing on e1, and has no real impact on Black's play. Indeed, he can adopt the same Hedgehog structure with ...a6, and then choose where to place his rooks based on his intended freeing break.]

14...♟b7 The simplest choice, completing development before doing anything else.

[14...c5 also works. The natural 15.d5 ♞e5 16.♞xe5 ♟xe5 17.♞fd1 ♞d8 was agreed drawn in C.Gatto-J.Lueers, correspondence 1999, and represents another satisfactory defence. Indeed, White must exercise some caution in any endgame that results due to Black's passed c-pawn.]

15.bxc6 ♟xc6 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8 17.♞b1 ♟b7 Black has no structural weaknesses, or loose pieces. As a general rule this typically means White must now be careful not to become worse due to the opposing bishop-pair. Of course, in a game between elite players this isn't a major concern, but the rest of us

mortals should beware!

18.♔d3 ♖ac8 19.♙e4 The elimination of the bishop-pair usually reduces the game to a quiet equality where any positive chances Black may have lie in his queenside pawn majority and bishop versus knight advantage, but these are counterbalanced by White's central majority, which ensures a good enough presence to hold the balance.

♙f6 20.♙xb7 ♖xb7 21.♙e2 ♙e4 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♙d2

[23.♖c1 was perhaps just a tad more straightforward an attempt to secure the immediate half-point, avoiding the next note.]

23...♙d6

[23...♖a6!? 24.♙xe4 ♖xe2 would have given Black the more active position to play with, leaving White a long defensive task better suited to the engines.]

24.♖c1 With the upcoming exchange of rooks, it is unlikely either side can generate anything of note, and so the point was split here.

Summary:

11 b4 just doesn't impress as a try for an advantage. Simple and logical play from Black will equalize without exposing him to risks.

½-½

□ **Beliafsky,A**

■ **Kramnik,V**

Dresden Olympiad

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♙f3 ♙f6 4.♙c3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♖xf6 7.e3 ♙d7 8.♔d3 dxc4 9.♙xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♙g7 11.♖c1 0-0

The simplest response.

[11...♖e7 has excellent statistics, but it is only just barely enough to hold on. After 12.e4 0-0 13.e5 c5 14.♖e1 cxd4 15.♖xd4 ♙b6 16.♙e4 ♙d7 17.♙f6+ ♙h8

Black has held on in the two correspondence games to reach this position, but White must be at least a tiny bit better after 18.♙b3 ♙c6 19.♖f4 due to Black's restricted position.]

12.♙b3 This should be called the Beliafsky Variation due to how often he has played it, and gives 11 Rc1 the most independent character available. Others:

[a) 12.b4 ♖e7 transposes to our last encounter.]

[b) 12.♖e1 is too slow and accomplishes nothing: ♖d8 13.♖c2 ♖e7 14.a3 b6 15.e4 ♙b7 16.e5 a6 17.♙a2 ♖ab8 18.♖cd1 a5 19.♖d2 b5 20.♙e4 c5 and Black's slow play equalized fully in S.Peschardt-F.Zanetti, correspondence 2000. White cannot just sit on his space and hope things work out, since Black controls the freeing breaks available.]

[c) 12.e4 e5 (the typical response that best justifies why Black simply played 11...0-0) 13.d5 ♖d8 14.h3 ♙b6 15.♙b3 ♙d7 16.♖e2 ♖ac8 17.♖fd1 ♙e8 is a typical piece deployment for both sides. Black has completed development while not prematurely capturing d5, and White has placed all of his pieces on the best squares they can reach. J.Kuiper-A.Kochemasov, correspondence 2009, continued 18.♖c2 cxd5 19.exd5 ♖d6 20.♖e1 f6 21.♙e4 ♖b4 with equal chances.]

12...♖e7 Typical.

13.♙a4

[Instead, after 13.♙e4 b6!? (or 13...♖d8 14.♖c2 e5 15.♖fe1 ♙h8 16.♙g3 ♖e8 17.♖c4 , as in J.Lara Ruiz-J.Mercadal Benejam, correspondence 2008; although Black was okay in that game, here e4 18.♙d2 f5 19.♙e2 ♙h7 also looks okay, since the d5-square after ...Nb6, and stable kingside pawns should keep Black fully level) 14.♙a4 (14.♖xc6 ♙b7 is the point; either White sacrifices the exchange or e4 falls) 14...c5 15.♙c6 ♖b8 16.♖a4 ♙b7 17.♙xb7 ♖xb7 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.b3 f5 20.♙ed2 g5 Black's mobile kingside pawns kept the chances even in I. Khokhlov-U.Strautins, correspondence 2009. White was never able to casually target c5 and win it.]

13...♖d8

[13...e5 is satisfactory, as usual: 14.♖c2 (otherwise, 14.d5 e4 15.♙d4 cxd5 16.♙c3 ♙f6 17.♙xd5 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♙h3! 19.♙xe4 ♖xe4 20.gxh3 ♖ad8 21.♖g4 was agreed drawn in S.Halkias-S.Bhat, Beniform 2009, since the simple ♖xg4+ 22.hxg4 ♙xd4 23.exd4 ♖xd4 leaves nothing to play for.; and after 14.h3 ♙h7 15.♖c2 e4 16.♙d2 f5 17.♖fe1 ♙b6 18.♙c3 ♙d7 19.♙c4 ♖fd8 20.♙xb6 axb6 Black had no fears in G.Caradonna-M.De Carolis, correspondence 2011, which is yet another example where White could obtain nothing on the queenside) 14...e4 15.♙d2

♟f6 16.♞c3 ♟f5 17.h3 h5 suited the second player just fine in N.Latronico-S. Norrelykke, correspondence 2009. Black's pawn wedge on e4 cannot be undermined, while White has no queenside initiative to speak of.]

14.♞c2 ♟f8 A remarkably passive approach, but one that well demonstrates the difficulty White has generating an advantage even here.

15.♞fd1

[15.♞e5 ♟d7 16.f4 ♞ac8 is similar to the game. Despite White's evident spatial advantage and better activity, the entire set-up with ...Be8 to follow doesn't look possible to crack.]

15...♟d7 16.♞c5

[Instead, the 16.♞e5 ♟e8 17.f4 ♞ac8 18.♞c5 of J.Gustafsson-T.Henrichs, German League 2008, can be met by ♞c7!? when White doesn't have any clear plan to make progress.]

16...♞xc5 17.♞xc5 ♞ab8 18.♞e5 ♟e8

This position suits former World Champion Kramnik, and reminds me of his tastes for the very cramped Slav positions he employed against Topalov, and the Berlin endings against former World Champion Kasparov. There is little White can do to prevent the gradual equalizing of the position.

19.f4 ♞d7 20.♞cxd7 ♟xd7 21.♞xd7 ♞xd7

22.♟f2 ♞bd8 Bishops of opposite colours? Check. No weaknesses? Check. The rest of the game requires no commentary.

23.♟e2 ♟f8 24.♟c2 ♟g7 25.♟e4 c5

26.dxc5 ♞xd1 27.♞xd1 ♞xd1 28.♟xd1

♟xc5 29.♟e2 b6 30.g4 Summary:

11 Rc1 suffers from what I would call 'Does Nothing Syndrome'. Hypothetically, at some point, it might be productive, but as Black controls the freeing breaks, it never achieves anything. As can be seen from the game, Black has little trouble gaining equality.

½-½

□ **Mamedyarov,S**

■ **Gelfand,B**

Moscow (blitz)

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2007

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 d5 4.♞c3 c6

5.♟g5 h6 6.♟xf6 ♞xf6 7.e3 ♞d7 8.♟d3

dxc4 9.♟xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♟g7 11.♞c2

This move is better connected to ideas pressuring the kingside than anything else, and represents one of White's more purposeful plans.

0-0 12.♟b3

[12.♞e4 ♞e7 13.♟b3 is a frequent transposition to the game.]

12...♞e7 13.♞e4 Restraining the possibility of ...b6 and ...Bb7, but also denying White any potential pawn wedge.

[Instead, 13.♞ad1 b6 takes advantage of White's reluctance to slow down the fianchetto. Following the 14.e4 ♟b7 15.♞fe1 ♞fd8 16.e5 b5 17.♞e2 of M.Cebalo-S.Savchenko, Bled 1996, Black can continue with b4 18.♞e4 c5, obtaining his full share of counterplay. It is usually a bad sign for White should his pawn wedge on e5 become a liability of any sort.]

13...e5 The most direct challenge of White's idea.

[13...♞d8 14.♞fd1 ♞f6 15.♞e5 ♞d7 16.f4 looks quite comfortable for White. The knight is much more useful on e4 than a4 as seen in Beliavsky-Kramnik.]

14.♞c3 Not the most intuitive move, but it has a point.

[Instead, 14.♞g3 ♟h8 (staying away from any ideas involving Nh5 that may occur after ..Kh7) 15.♞ad1 (15.♞ac1 ♟e8 16.♞fe1 e4 17.♞d2 f5 18.♞e2 ♞f6 was complex enough in M.Eldridge-G.Evans, correspondence 2009, for Black to claim equal chances based on potential kingside expansion, and any white queenside advance being slowed by the wayward bishop on b3) 15...♞e8 16.dxe5 ♞xe5 17.♞xe5 ♟xe5 18.f4 ♟g7 19.e4 ♟g4 was agreed drawn in G.Castaneda-I. Yagupov, Tula 2007. While the kingside pawn majority is often enough to claim some advantage, White lacks a way to sufficiently coordinate behind it to make good use a potential pawn wedge on e5. For example, after 20.♞d3 ♞ad8 21.e5 ♞xd3 22.♞xd3 ♞d8 23.♞e3 ♟f8 Black's bishops and ownership of the d-file grant him sufficient play.]

14...♟h7! Because there is no knight on g3 to threaten the h5-square, the king finds itself better placed here than in the aforementioned note.

15.♞fe1

[15.♞ad1 ♞e8 16.d5 ♞c5 17.d6

just overextends the d-pawn, and after ♖d7 18.♟d5?! e4 19.♟e1 cxd5 20.♜xc5 d4! Black was slightly better in S.Halkias-V. Potkin, German League 2007.]

15...♞e8

[15...f5 was seen in P.Harikrishna-B. Predojervic, Dresden Olympiad 2008, but here 16.e4! would have been an appropriate way to continue. The King's Indianesque f4 17.d5 seems slightly favourable to White due to the ability to stall on the kingside with h2-h3, and the ease with which the queenside will open.]
[Instead, 15...b6!? 16.h4 ♙b7 17.h5 ♞ae8 , as in M.Ragger-A.Braun, Austrian League 2009, and then 18.g3!? with the idea of Nh4 is surprisingly annoying for Black. The best way to prevent it may well be ♙f6 , but after 19.♞ad1 White is well positioned and Black lacks his needed ...f5 advance.]

16.♞ad1 Relatively rare, but no worse than the alternative.

[Indeed, 16.♞ac1 e4 17.♟d2 f5 18.♟e2 ♟f6 19.♟f4 ♙d7 20.a3 b6 was agreed drawn in A.Ringsborg-M.Sadowski, correspondence 2009. Black's ability to advance on the kingside will always secure him good counterplay, while it is unclear how White's queenside play will ever do more than hold the balance.]

16...e4 17.♟d2 f5 Black, upon having reached this structure, should consider himself to be doing quite well.

18.♟c4

[18.a3!? intending Ba2 and attempting to advance the queenside pawns was also interesting, but doesn't change the overall verdict: Black is quite okay.]

18...♟b6 19.♟xb6 axb6 The doubled pawns do nothing to harm Black's position, and worse yet, eliminate the effectiveness of queenside play by White.

20.a3 ♙d7 21.♞d2 b5 Cutting out Na4-c5 ideas, so White attempts another means of creating play.

22.d5 ♜c5 23.dxc6 ♙xc6 24.♟e2 ♜xc2 25.♞xc2 ♞ed8 The strong bishop on g7 is offset by the much more ineffective one on c6. Of course, Black's rook controls the best file on the board, and eliminates the possibility of White's knight being a major player. Black's position is the easier to play, but White isn't doing too poorly.

26.h4 ♞d3 27.♙f7 ♞d7 28.♙b3 ♞d3 29.♙f7 ♞f8 30.♙a2 ♞f8 31.h5 ♙e5 32.♞c5?!

[32.hxg6+ ♜xg6 33.♟f4+ ♙xf4 34.exf4 ♞d2 35.♞e2 ♞xe2 36.♞xe2 is probably a draw in the making, although White must be careful.]

32...♙d6?! A blitz oversight. Both sides had played very well to move 31, and inaccuracies starting to creep in are just a reflection of the time control and nothing more.

[32...♞d1! 33.hxg6+ ♜xg6 34.♟f1 ♞xe1+ 35.♟xe1 ♙xb2 would've netted Black an extra pawn to go with his superior activity, giving him excellent winning chances.]

33.♞c2 ♙e5 34.♞c5?!

[34.hxg6+! transposes to the note to White's 32nd, above.]

34...♙d6

[And here 34...♞d1! transposes to 32...Rd1!.]

35.♞c2 ♙e5 36.hxg6+ ♜xg6 37.♞c5

[37.♟f4+ ♙xf4 38.exf4 , getting rid of the bishop-pair, seemed the most prudent choice, if requiring a long and passive defence.]

37...♟f6 38.♟g3?! The knight is just not well placed.

♙xg3

[38...♙e8! ruling out Nh5 ideas and preparing to follow with the powerful ...Rd2 would have probably given Black a close to winning advantage; the bishops entirely prevent White from doing any damage. Of course, this is also one of those moves you know would have been found at a longer time control.]

39.fxg3 ♞d1 40.♟f1 ♞8d2 41.♞xd1 ♞xd1+ 42.♟e2 ♞g1 43.♟f2 ♞a1 44.♙g8

[44.♙d5 was a faster way to draw: for example, ♞b1 45.b4 ♞b2+ 46.♟f1 ♙xd5 47.♞xd5 ♞a2 48.♞xb5 ♞xa3 with a draw forthcoming.]

44...♞b1 45.♞c2 ♟e5 46.♞d2 ♞c1 47.♙b3 ♞b1 48.♙a2 ♞a1 49.♙b3 ♞b1 50.♙d1

White has achieved a sort of fortress, and the superior activity of the black rook isn't enough by itself.

♙d5 51.g4 fxg4 52.♙xg4 ♙c4 53.♙e2 ♙xe2 54.♟xe2 h5 55.♟f2 h4 56.♟e2 ♟f5 57.♞d5+ ♟g4 58.♞xb5 ♞g1?! Opening the door for some interesting drama.

[58...♟g3! 59.♞g5+ ♟h2 60.♞g4 ♞xb2+ 61.♟f1 ♞b1+ 62.♟e2 ♞b2+ was more direct.]

59.♟f2 ♞c1 60.♞xb7 ♞c2+ 61.♟f1 ♞c1+ 62.♟f2 ♞c2+ 63.♟g1 ♞e2?

[63...h3! was probably the way to hold; i.e.

64.gxh3+ ♔f3! with just enough headaches to prevent White from cashing in on his 3(!) pawn advantage.]

64.♖g7+?

[64.a4! exploits the problem with ...Rxe3 – no access to a3.]

64...♔f5 65.♖f7+ ♔e5 66.a4 ♖xb2

Now Black can reasonably expect to survive, as holding a4 and e3 at the same time is all but impossible.

67.♖e7+ ♔f5 68.♖f7+ ♔e5 69.♖h7 ♖a2

[69...♖b1+ 70.♔h2 ♖e1! 71.♖h5+ ♔f6 72.♖xh4 ♖xe3 should eventually result in a draw without much drama.]

70.a5 ♖a3 71.♔f2

[71.a6 is possible due to the immunity of the pawn, since should Black capture he gets skewered after Rh5-h6. That said, the game should still be drawn.]

71...♖a2+ 72.♔g1 ♖a3 73.♖h5+ ♔f6 74.a6

♔g6 75.♖xh4 ♖xe3 76.♖h8 ♖a3 77.♖a8 Although Black must know what he is doing, this ending is a draw. The g-pawn can never force Black's king off g7, and his rook can harass the white king for eternity.

e3 78.a7

[78.♔f1 reveals one of those cases where engines are useless. After ♔g7 79.a7 ♖a6 80.♔e2 ♖a3 81.g4 ♔h7 82.g5 ♔g7 83.g6 ♖a6 84.♔xe3 ♖a4 the game is in fact a draw; White can never make progress.]

78...♔g7 79.♔f1 ♖a2 80.♔e1 ♔h7 81.g4

♔g7 82.g5 ♔h7 A hard-fought game, and while blitz isn't usually the best medium for ideas to be tested due to the high error content, Black's play was lucid enough in the early stages to show he is okay regardless of what White tries.

Summary:

11 Qc2 is okay for Black, with the moment of high drama being relegated to knowing where the king goes based on White's placement of his knight from e4. Once Black safely establishes the pawn structure with ...e4 and ...f5 he can consider himself fully equal.

½-½

D43

□ Leko,P

■ Gelfand,B

2nd matchgame, Miskolc (rapid)

2010

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♔f3 ♔f6 4.♔c3 e6
5.♔g5 h6 6.♔xf6 ♖xf6 7.e3 ♔d7 8.♔d3
dxc4 9.♔xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♔g7 11.e4 e5!

As usual!

[Instead, 11...0-0! 12.e5 ♖e7 13.♖e1 is seen in our next game, and best avoided.]

12.d5 ♔b6

[12...0-0 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.h3 ♔b6 15.♔e2 was perhaps a bit more comfortable for White in S.Solcanean-A.Diulger, Techirghiol 1999. There is no reason at all for Black to allow an inferior structure with no fight.]

13.♔b3 ♔g4! Black sets out to damage the white pawn structure, and guarantee the weakened dark squares will give him enough play to hold the balance.

[The quiet approach with 13...0-0 is often thought to give White an easier time trying to get something. For instance, 14.♖e1 gives White a version of 11 Re1 he would like to see and is looked at in Kramnik-Aronian.]

14.♖c1 0-0 15.h3 ♔xf3 16.♖xf3 ♖xf3

17.gxf3 Although it isn't immediately apparent, the position isn't entirely without poison.

♖fc8 The approach that best denies White any positional trumps, and steers play towards a draw.

[17...♖fd8 is also fine: 18.♖fd1 ♔f6 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21.♔d1 ♖c8 22.♔e3 ♔g7 23.♖c5 ♔e7 has proved satisfactory for Black in practice. E.Alekseev-P.Maletin, Irkutsk 2010, continued 24.♖c2 c5 when both sides could easily cover their weaknesses, making a draw easy enough.]

18.dxc6 ♖xc6 19.♔d5 ♔f8 20.♔xb6 axb6 21.♔d5

[21.♖fd1 was E.Podvoysky-S.Abramov, correspondence 2011, where Black steered for a draw at once with ♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♔c5 23.♖d1 ♖e8 24.♖d7 ♖e7 25.♖xe7 ♔xe7 knowing that the bishops of opposite colours ending is easily held.]

21...♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♔c5 23.♔f1 ♔f8 24.a3 ♖b8 25.♔e2 ♔e7 26.b4 ♔d6 Endings with bishops of opposite colours and a rook each can be very tricky, but it is difficult to see any actual plan for White here.

27.♖c3 f5 Active defence is almost always advised in endgames, and Boris Gelfand is not content to rest on his laurels.

28.♗d3 f4 29.♗c2 ♗d7 30.♗b3 b5 31.♗f7 g5 32.♗h5 ♖a8 White's bishop is sidelined, and the b-pawns being on light squares is not a problem for the defender. White still has no invasion points.

33.♗g4+ ♗d8 34.♗f5 ♗e7 35.♗c8 ♖b8 36.♖c1 ♗d8 37.♗f5 ♖a8 38.♗e6 ♗e7 39.♗d5 ♖b8 40.♖c3 ♗d8 41.♗e6 ♖a8 42.♗g4 ♖b8 43.♖c1 ♖a8 44.♗e6 ♗e7 45.♗c8 ♖b8 46.♗f5 ♗d8 47.♖c3 ♖a8 48.♖c2 ♖b8 49.♗e6 ♗e7 50.♗d5 ♗d8 51.♖c1 ♗d7 52.♗f7 ♖a8 53.♗h5 ♗d8 54.♗g4 ♖b8 55.♖h1 ♗c7 56.♖c1+ ♗d8 57.♗f5 ♖a8 58.♖d1 ♗c7 59.♖c1+ ♗d8 60.♖c3 ♖b8 61.♗c2 ♖a8 62.♗g4 ♗e7 63.♗c8 ♖b8 64.♗b3 ♗d8 65.♗g4 ♖a8 66.♖c1 ♖b8 67.♗e6 ♗e7 68.♗f5 ♗d8 69.♖c3 ♖a8 70.♗e6 ♖b8 71.♗d5 ♗e7 72.a4 White finally acquiesces to reality; no progress can be made without simplifications. **bxa4+ 73.♗xa4 ♖a8+ 74.♗b5 ♖a1 75.♗xb7 ♖b1 76.♗c6 ♖xb4 77.♗c8 ♖b2 78.♗g4** Summary:

The presence of bishops of opposite colours undermines 11 e4 as a serious winning try against equal opposition.

½-½

□ Kaufman,L
 ■ Bartholomew,J
 Arlington
 [Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♗xf6 7.e3 ♗d7 8.♗d3 dxc4 9.♗xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.e4 ♗g7 12.♖e1 0-0 13.e5 A few different move orders can reach this particular position, but it is here we find a line that definitely tilts in White's direction. Black will not be able to undermine the e5 wedge easily, and White's space very much matters.

♗d8 14.♗d3 White prepares pressure on the h1-a8 diagonal.

♖b8 Alternatively:

[a) 14...b6 15.♗e2 ♗b7 (otherwise, 15...♖b8 is a common transposition to the game,; and 15...a5 16.♖ad1 ♗b7 17.♗e4 b5 18.h4 ♗b6 19.♗b1 c5 20.♗xb5 ♗a6 21.♗d3 was safely better for White in D.

Bocharov-I.Yagupov, Miass 2007) 16.♗e4 ♖ac8 shouldn't be superior to the typical deployment with ...Rb8. The standard 17.♖ad1 b5 18.h4 should grant White a durable initiative.]

[b) 14...b5 15.♗c2 ♗b7 16.♗e4 ♖ab8 17.♖ad1 a6 18.h4 transposes to the note to White's 19th move, below.]

15.♗e2 b6 16.♖ad1 This is seen as something of an incentive for White to play without an early Rc1.

[The position after 16.♖ac1 is usually seen from other move orders, but the move is possible here. It's not really clear that it's any worse: for example, ♗b7 17.♗e4 b5 18.♖ed1 a6 19.h4 ♗a8 20.♖c2 ♖dc8 21.♖dc1 and White had a small advantage in M.Carlsen-V.Topalov, Sofia 2009, for similar reasons to the main game's note to White's 19th move.]

16...♗b7 17.♗e4 b5 Making room for the knight and grabbing additional queenside space. Black has little else to do due to his cramped position.

[17...♗f8 18.h4 ♖d7 was seen in E. Alekseev-N.Vitiugov, Moscow 2006, when 19.a3!? with the idea of b2-b4 would have left Black very restricted.]

18.h4 a6

[18...♗b6 detracts from control of c5. S. Lputian-D.Yevseev, Russian Team Championship 2006, continued 19.♖c1 a6 20.♗b1 ♖dc8 , and now the quiet 21.♗c2!? would have kept effective control of the game.]

19.g3?! An unnecessary move that doesn't further White's positional aims, and loosens the long diagonal.

[19.♗c2 has effectively shown itself a superior choice in a couple of contests. J. Van Oosterom-A.Lanc, correspondence 2005, continued ♖dc8 20.a3 c5 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 22.♗e4 ♖cc7 23.♖c1 c4 24.♖cd1 ♖b8 25.h5 with a nice initiative eventually converted into a full point. Due to Black's inability to free himself (his constant problem in this variation), White's spatial advantage is more heavily felt.]

19...♗b6 The idea of this is less about ...Nd5 or ...Nc4, but rather playing ...b4 without Na4 being available, and then playing ...c5. As the game goes this works beautifully, and represents the reason White should never allow it.

20.h5 In better scenarios this can effectively

open up Black's position. Here, however, White has wasted time and Black has simple play.

g5 21.♖h2 Now Black's strategy comes into full bloom.

b4! 22.♖b1 c5 23.♗xb7 ♜xb7 24.dxc5 ♘d7 25.♖g4 ♘xc5 White's position is quite loose, while the knight on g4 is a little bit removed from the action. These aren't reasons for a rapid collapse, but Black now has the initiative.

26.♞e3?! White will be rapidly punished for allowing Black better control of the d3-square.

[26.♞d2 was a better try, preparing simplification to ease the defensive task and covering b2.]

26...♞b5! 27.f4 gxf4 28.♞xf4?? White pins his hopes on Nxh6, but it is insufficient.

[28.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 29.gxf4 was the lesser evil. Black is certainly better, but there would be a lot of work left.]

28...♘d3 29.♖xh6+ ♗xh6 30.♞xh6 ♘xe1

31.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 32.♞g5+ ♖h7 33.♞xd8

♞e2 With mate or material losses forthcoming, White resigned.

Summary:

11...Qe7 cannot be recommended despite the final result of the game. White can grab a comfortable hold of the position and methodically put the screws on Black with precise play.

0-1

□ **Kramnik,V**

■ **Aronian,L**

1st matchgame, Zurich

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2012

1.♖f3 d5 2.d4 ♖f6 3.c4 c6 4.♖c3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♞xf6 7.e3 ♘d7 8.♗d3 dxc4 9.♗xc4 g6 10.0-0 ♗g7 11.♞e1

Supporting the advance of the e-pawn, and containing a hidden resource should Black try to pin the knight on f3.

0-0 12.e4 e5! It is important for Black not to allow the pawn wedge.

[Instead, 12...♞e7 would be Kaufman-Bartholomew.]

13.d5 Given Black possesses the bishop-pair, it is in White's best interest to keep the position closed.

♞d8! Quietly lining up on the white queen.

[13...♖b6 represents a stereotyped

approach to the position; Black will complete development, and then will hope for full equality as a result. It is here that White's idea comes to fruition: **14.♗b3 ♗g4 15.♞e3!** is hardly fatal to Black, but certainly poses problems to the idea of damaging White's pawn structure. Without doubled f-pawns, as in the continuation with 11 e4, White's chances for an edge increase. Indeed, after **♞fd8 16.h3 ♗d7 17.♞e2** White's pawn wedge on d5 is difficult for Black to work around, having eliminated his own active advances related to ...b5 by virtue of the knight sortie. In V.Golubenko-E.Kachkina, St Petersburg 2003, White proceeded to improve her position via a2-a4, Nd2, and Nc4, further building up queenside pressure and achieving a nice win.]

14.♞e3 In keeping with the idea used against ...Nb6 and ...Bg4, but Black has other intentions.

[14.h3 is logical enough, and was first tested in A.Grigoryan-S.Ter Sahakyan, Martuni 2011, but note that Aronian's idea might work here as well: **b5!? 15.dxc6 bxc4 16.cxd7 ♞xd7 17.♞c2 ♞a6!?** when Black seems to hold the balance without too much drama. His pawn structure is worse, true, but the light-squared bishop is a capable defender and will usually find a comfortable home on e6. One point I have noticed in positions where White's queenside pawns are uncompromised is that if Black can safely get his isolated c-pawn to c4, it can easily prove a cramping presence on the queenside.]

14...b5! The idea of thrusting forward the b-pawn seems to take all sting out of the Re1-related approaches, and is much better than hunkering down and trying to slowly defuse pressure. In the Semi-Slav activity is a prized possession, and failure to seize the moment can lead to White achieving a real bind. Before this game I had been considering recommending the white cause due to failing to appreciate the latent energy in Black's position; prior it he had always allowed himself to be slowly squeezed. The theoretical depth of the opening is heavily related to Black always finding ways to escape a moment before White achieves anything real. This is one of those cases.

15.dxc6 bxc4 16.♘d5 ♞e6! Black avoids gumming up the d-file, recognizing the need

for sustained activity.

[After 16...♞d6 17.cxd7 ♘xd7 18.♟d2 ♘b5 19.♞c2 in V.Gunina-A.Muzychuk, Gaziantep 2012, White had a clear target on c4 to work against, the better activity, and the superior pawn structure.]

17.cxd7 ♘xd7 Black has already equalized, and now the bishop-pair has the opportunity to come into its own. This is the trademark to Black's resilient formation; if White isn't careful Black can very quickly unfurl, and have two bishops staring down at White's extended position.

18.♞a4 ♘b7 19.♞xc4 White has picked up the loose c-pawn in a bid to eliminate Black's bishop-pair.

♘xd5

[19...♞c8!? 20.♞a4 ♘xd5 21.exd5 ♞xd5 would have also left Black with a small advantage. When you have secured a static advantage for the endgame, such as the better minor piece and qualitatively superior pawn majority, avoiding exchanges can make the life of the defender much more difficult.]

20.exd5 ♞xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞xd5 22.♞ae1 ♞e8 23.g4!? White has recognized he faces an uphill battle, and sets about trying to discourage the advance of the f-pawn. Should he do nothing he would run the very real risk of slowly getting pushed backwards with no counterplay.

♟h7 Slow and steady does it. White has to sit and wait, so Black should not hurry.

[Indeed, 23...f5 would reward White's idea.

After 24.♟h4 fxg4 25.♟xg6

Black's structure has been damaged, increasing the likelihood of White surviving.]

24.g5!?

[24.♞3e2 is passive, but solid. White ensures minimal exposure on the dark squares. Something like f5 25.gxf5 gxf5 26.♟h4 would give him reasonable hope of surviving.]

24...hxg5 25.♟xg5+ ♟g8 White has gained some activity at the cost of a further weakened structure. However, he is still not all that badly off should he exercise caution.

26.f4? Aiming towards simplifications and a peaceful resolution, but now Black pounces.

[26.♞a3 a5 27.♞e2 looked much more stubborn.]

26...♞b8! 27.fxe5 ♞xb2 28.♟f3 ♞xa2 29.e6 fxe6 30.♞xe6 Passed a-pawns and knights do not mix.

♞f5 31.♟h4 ♞f4! 32.♞6e4

[32.♟xg6?? ♘d4+ 33.♟h1 ♞ff2 is fatal.]

32...♞f6 33.♞g4 ♟f7 34.♞c1 ♘h6 35.♞c7+ ♟e8 36.♞e4+ ♟d8 37.♞h7 ♘f8 38.♞d4+ ♟c8 39.♞c4+ ♟b8 40.♞d7??

Making Black's task much easier, but the final result was no longer in doubt.

[Indeed, 40.♞c1 a5 should win for Black as well. The knight is just about useless against the passed rook pawn.]

40...g5 41.♟g6 ♘d6 White resigned due to the threats of mate and of capturing the knight on g6.

Summary:

This game effectively righted Black's theoretical ship in a continuation in which he had faced some problems, and has sent white players back to the drawing board in the hope of finding something new to trouble him with.

0-1

Chapter Five

The Anti-Moscow Gambit

([View in Game Format](#))

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4



The Anti-Moscow Variation is a true gambit in every sense of the word. White offers the c-pawn in return for the speedier development and inflicting some weaknesses in Black's structure. The play is often very sharp, and engines usually have the last say. Admittedly, the positions do not often lend themselves to instructional prose, but rather long sequences of 'If P, then Q', with post hoc rationalization of what just happened. Such is life in very sharp positions.

6...dxc4

Black has won his pawn, and over the next couple of moves will make sure he keeps it.

6...Be7 is an important alternative looked at back in the [QGD Hybrid section](#), but 6...g5 7 Bg3 dxc4 8 e4 b5 is another way of reaching the critical position after Black's 8th move, below.

7 e4

The principled reaction to Black surrendering the centre, and the move the Queen's Gambit Accepted would most like to see (comparing 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4).

7...g5

The defining feature of the entire complex. Black is satisfied to have a weakened structure in return for the ability to reinforce c4. 7...b5 8 e5 g5 transposes directly to the Botvinnik Variation, although why Black wouldn't just play 5...dxc4 to get there is unclear.

8 Bg3 b5



Black's ownership of his extra pawn is complete, and now White must set about finding a way to pose problems.

9 Be2

The most common, and easiest move to find. Instead of trying to initiate immediate complications White simply develops. Others:

- a) 9 e5 was mentioned briefly at the start of [Chapter Three](#).
- b) 9 h4 g4 10 Ne5 h5 11 Be2 is an attempt to get into the old main line of the Anti-Moscow with 10 h4, only to run into 11...b4!, as studied in [Caruana-Kobalia](#).
- c) 9 Ne5 Nbd7 is given the ninth degree in [Nakamura-Anand](#)

9...Bb7!

After some trial and error where Black was taking some horrendous practical and theoretical beatings in other continuations, it was finally settled on that this unassuming continuation was His best choice. Only one of the alternatives strikes me as playable:

a) 9...Nbd7?! 10 d5! Bb7 11 dxe6 fxe6 12 Nd4 Nc5 13 e5 Nd5 14 Bh5+ Kd7 15 0-0 Kc7 16 Ne4 Bc8 17 Nd6 Bxd6 18 exd6+ Kb7 19 a4 was I.Stohl-A.Ziegler, German League 1999. Black's position is falling apart, and the king is no safer on the queenside than it was on the kingside.

b) 9...b4?! has been discredited for a while now, although Black has successfully wheeled it out in correspondence a few times in recent years. 10 Na4 Nxe4 11 Be5 Nf6 12 Nc5! c3 is the continuation largely responsible for trying to keep Black afloat.



However, after 13 bxc3 bxc3 14 0-0 g4 15 Qb3!! Bxc5 16 dxc5 Nbd7 17 Bxc3 Rb8 18 Qa4 gxf3 19 Bxf3 Bb7 20 Rfd1 Rg8 21 Rab1 White had invested a full piece in J.Sawinieć-W.Bachmann, correspondence 2012, and it later proved fully correct with the full point. Black's forces are passive, split, and his king is effectively stuck in the centre.

c) 9...Bg7?! cannot be recommended. The simple 10 h4 g4 11 Ne5 b4 12 Na4 Nxe4 13 Bf4 Nd7 14 Bxc4 brought White full compensation in E.Kopasov-P.Kesselheim, correspondence 2007.

d) 9...Bb4 is the best of Black's 9th move alternatives, and it isn't clear that it's actually as bad as its reputation. After 10 Qc2 Black has:



d1) 10...g4 11 Ne5 Qxd4 12 0-0 Bxc3 13 bxc3 Qxe4 sees Black pick up three pawns, but his sorry development soon catches up with him. White has won every correspondence game to reach the position after 14 Qd2 Nbd7 15 f3 Qd5 16 Qf4 Qc5+ 17 Kh1 Qe7 18 fxg4 Nd5 19 Qxf7+ Qxf7 20 Nxf7, with not a single draw surrendered. This leads me to believe Black is simply busted.

d2) Following 10...Bb7 11 Rd1 (this position is related to [Anand-Shirov \(Leon 2011\)](#), but more properly belongs to 9...Bb4 than there) 11...Nbd7 12 Ne5 (12 0-0 Nh5! reveals the reason for 12 Ne5; White's attempt to punish it with 13 d5 Nxg3 14 hxg3 Qe7 15 b3 cxd5 16 exd5, as in A.Khalifman-D.Yevseev, Russian Team Championship 2012, can be met with the engine's 16...0-0!? 17 dxe6 Qxe6 18 Nxb5 cxb3 19 axb3 Rac8, which is probably just fully equal) 12...Qe7 13 Nxd7 Nxd7 14 0-0 0-0 15 f4 f6 Black's position does look a bit ugly, but he's held on in the correspondence games here thanks in large part to the extra pawn.

Finally, we return to 9...Bb7:



10 0-0

Again the most natural, but there are some important alternatives:

a) 10 Qc2 Nbd7 11 Rd1 is a relatively new try that has scored White some nice victories, such as in

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c) 10 h4 g4 11 Ne5 Nbd7! reveals the simplest antidote to 10 h4, and is examined in [Fagerstrom-Zhak](#). Instead, 11...Rg8 gives Black good reason to believe he can equalize with great accuracy, as in [Vachier Lagrave-Gelfand](#), although after 11...h5?! White has the better prospects as seen in [Grischuk-Karjakin](#).

10...Nbd7 11 Ne5

White opts for active piece play, considering Black's loosened structure to be enough without the provocation of h2-h4.

11...Bg7

The conservative choice.

[So-Nolte](#) seemed to point Black in the direction best suited for getting a playable game with the ambitious 11...h5. The resulting positions are really rather incredible, making this ideally suited as a possible winning try.



12 Nxd7

Black is forced to put a piece on d7 that disrupts his coordination, but the answer to 'which piece?' has been known for quite some time now.

12 Nxf7 was first brought to public attention in V.Topalov-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2008, with the former earning the full point, but it has since faded. While significant analysis could be spent exploring the various highways and byways where Black can commit hara-kiri, one specific game is all that's needed to highlight how Black can thoroughly neutralize it as a theoretical attempt: 12...Kxf7 13 e5 Nd5 14 Ne4 Ke7 15 Nd6 Qb6 16 Bg4 Raf8 17 Qc2 Rhg8 18 Qg6 Nc7 19 Qe4 Kd8 20 f4 Ba8 (this set-up is effectively bullet-proof, and now some brief tactical complications emerge) 21 fxg5 hxg5 22 Rad1 c5! 23 Qh7 cxd4 24 Rxf8+ Rxf8 25 Qxg7 d3+ 26 Kh1 Qe3. The white king has just as many problems as his opposing majesty, and in J.Aupi Royo-T.Santamaria Perez, correspondence 2008, the opponents agreed to a draw after 27 Nf7+ Kc8 28 Nd6+ Kd8 due to the repetition.

12...Nxd7!

The safest capture, keeping White away from the idea of a quick e4-e5 with Ne4-d6.

13 Bd6



White denies Black the luxury of castling, but now...

13...a6

...asks White, "What can you do to improve your position?" As it turns out, the answer is not easy, and if White plays too slowly Black stands ready to free his position.

14 a4

The most direct threat to Black's opening with 11...Bg7.

Instead, 14 Re1 is subtle, but Black has forcefully solved it. [Miton-Wojtaszek](#) shows the solution.

14...b4!

This is the subject of [Topalov-Gelfand](#) and represents what is probably Black's best try in the main line of the Anti-Moscow Gambit.

The 14...e5 of [Anand-Leko](#) is thought by some to be a draw with perfect defence, but I am not certain that is the case. Pay careful attention to the notes.

Conclusion

Of Black's 9th move deviations, 9...Bb4 isn't in as bad a shape as I thought when first starting to write this book. None of White's deviations on move 9 pose Black any problems greater than those in the main line, but he must be sure to avoid slipping into [Grischuk-Karjakin](#).

The continuation with 9 Be2 Bb7 10 0-0 still has some life in it, as the sharp positions are by no means completely solved. Note, for example, [Topalov-Gelfand](#), where Black must demonstrate some heady defence to reach what can only be described as a very unusual position. All of that said, Black's chances in the Anti-Moscow Variation seem to be holding up, and White needs some new heroes to go to out to bat for his side.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 Bg3 b5 9 Be2

9 h4 – [Caruana-Kobalia](#)

9 Ne5 – [Nakamura-Anand](#)

9...Bb7 10 0-0

10 Qc2 – [Anand-Shirov \(Leon 2011\)](#)

10 e5 – [Houska-Sykora](#)

10 h4 g4 11 Ne5

11...h5 – [Grischuk-Karjakin](#)

11...Rg8 – [Vachier Lagrave-Gelfand](#)

11...Nbd7 – [Fagerstrom-Zhak](#)

10...0-0 11 Ne5 Bg7

11...h5 – [So-Nolte](#)

12 Nxd7 Nxd7 13 Bd6 a6 14 a4

14 Re1 – [Miton-Wojtaszek](#)

14...b4 – [Topalov-Gelfand](#)

14...e5 – [Anand-Leko](#)

□ **The Anti-Moscow Gambit**
 ■ **in Game Format**
[Bryan Paulsen]

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continuation was his best choice. Only one of the alternatives strikes me as playable:

[a) 9...♟bd7?! 10.d5! ♟b7 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.♟d4 ♟c5 13.e5 ♟d5 14.♟h5+ ♟d7 15.0-0 ♟c7 16.♟e4 ♟c8 17.♟d6 ♟xd6 18.exd6+ ♟b7 19.a4 was I.Stohl-A.Ziegler, German League 1999. Black's position is falling apart, and the king is no safer on the queenside than it was on the kingside.]
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Black's position does look a bit ugly, but he's held on in the correspondence games here thanks in large part to the extra pawn.;

C) 10...--]

Finally, we return to 9...Bb7:

10.0-0 Again the most natural, but there are some important alternatives:

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12...♖xd7! The safest capture, keeping White away from the idea of a quick e4-e5 with Ne4-d6.

13.♖d6 White denies Black the luxury of castling, but now...

a6 ...asks White, "What can you do to improve your position?" As it turns out, the answer is not easy, and if White plays too slowly Black stands ready to free his position.

14.a4 The most direct threat to Black's opening with 11...Bg7.

- [Instead, 14.♖e1 is subtle, but Black has forcefully solved it. Miton-Wojtaszek shows the solution.]

14...b4! This is the subject of Topalov-Gelfand and represents what is probably Black's best try in the main line of the Anti-Moscow Gambit.

- [The 14...e5 of Anand-Leko is thought by some to be a draw with perfect defence, but I am not certain that is the case. Pay careful attention to the notes.]

D43

□ **Caruana,F**

■ **Kobalia,M**

Russian Team Championship
[Bryan Paulsen]

2010

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♖f3 ♖f6 4.♖c3 e6 5.♖g5 h6 6.♖h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♖g3 b5 9.♖e5

- [Note that the position that results can also be reached from 9.h4 g4 10.♖e5 , when Black has little better than h5 .]

9...h5

- [9...♖bd7 is our next game, Nakamura-Anand.]

10.h4 g4 11.♖e2 White's move order is intended to achieve a transposition to more favourable variations, but Black can throw a very large wrench in his plans.

b4! Normally this advance can only spell trouble for Black, but in this particular scenario it works surprisingly well.

- [Instead, 11...♖b7 transposes to Grischuk-Karjakin, and represents what White most

hopes for.]

12.♖a4 ♜xe4 13.0-0 White is considerably ahead in development (five pieces to one!), but Black has a pair of extra pawns, even if one is likely to be regained.

[13.♙xc4 ♜xg3 14.fxg3 ♙g7 15.♜c5 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♞xd1+ 17.♞xd1 ♜d7 18.♜xd7 ♙xd7 has tested well in practice for the second player. Most recently S. Ganguly-B.Adhiban, Ashhad 2011, saw Black hold the draw with minimal effort.]

13...♙g7 Not the only move Black has tried, but certainly a logical way to make use of his advanced g-pawn. However, he can do better:

[a) 13...♙d6 14.♞c2! , keeping queens on is an important option gained in comparison to 13 Bxc4. After ♜xg3 15.fxg3 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♞d4+ 17.♙h2 ♜d7 18.♙xc4 ♜xe5 19.♙b3 in H.Ingersol-R.Thierry, correspondence 2009, Black's king ended up getting caught in the crossfire due to all the open lines and the loose structure.]

[b) 13...♙a6!? 14.♙f4 ♙h6 15.♞c2 ♙xf4 16.♞xe4 ♙xe5 17.♞xe5 ♞h6 gave Black a suspect position in N.Papenin-Z.Karacsony, correspondence 2010, and he proved unable to coordinate his position before White developed a threatening initiative.]

[c) 13...♜xg3! must be Black's best option in my estimation, and leads to a small skirmish after 14.fxg3 ♙g7 15.♜xf7 ♞xd4+ 16.♙h2 ♞xd1 17.♞axd1 0-0! . White's compensation cannot be doubted, but turning the two pawn deficit into an advantage appears difficult: 18.♜d6 (the most challenging; 18.♜g5 simplifies Black's task, letting him develop without issue, and the further ♜d7 19.♙xc4 ♜b6 20.♜xb6 axb6 21.♞fe1 ♞e8 22.♜xe6 ♙xe6 23.♙xe6+ ♙h8 was agreed drawn in A.Bozyavkin-P.Thirion, correspondence 2009) 18...♙a6 19.♜xc4 ♞xf1 20.♙xf1 ♙f8 21.♜c5 ♙e7 22.♞e1 ♙c8 23.♜d3 ♜d7 24.♜xb4 ♙b7 25.♜d3 ♞h8 26.♜f4 with ample compensation for the pawn in O. Hole-T.Runting, correspondence 2009. Black was able to draw with some great defence, but there were points later where digging deeper may reveal something to break Black's position. (Here 26.♜e3!? is mentioned by NM Mark Morss on the ChessPublishing forum, and is another way to proceed of approximately equal value.)]

14.♙f4 White correctly preserves the bishop that Black should have chopped off last move.

[14.♙xc4 was tried in V.Akobian-D.Ceballas Hornero, Alajuela 2006, but here ♜xg3 15.fxg3 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♞xd1 looks better for the second player due to the safe extra pawn.]

14...♞xh4 15.♞c2?!

[15.♙xc4 was a better try. Here g3 16.fxg3 ♜xg3 17.♙xg3 ♞xg3 18.♞f3 ♞h4 19.g3! followed by Nxf7 would have favoured White.]

15...g3! While this move does win material, White can still put up a fight due to Black's undeveloped queenside.

16.fxg3 ♜xg3 17.♙f3?

[17.♜c5!? is a mess that needs investigation. One continuation I examined went ♜d7 18.♜e4 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 ♜xe4 20.♞xe4 ♙b7 21.♙xc4 ♞e7 where White has some compensation for the material, and the resulting position is quite unclear. The dark squares in particular require constant watching.]

17...0-0

[17...♜xf1 18.♞xf1 favours Black's heavy material advantage, but it will be a long defence before it becomes decisive.]

18.♞d2 ♜d7!? Black is fine with returning material to complete development.

[18...♜xf1 19.♞xf1 ♙xe5 looks suicidal, but 20.♙xe5 f6 may work out. I wouldn't want to play this way, but an engine might be able to get away with it.]

19.♜xc6 ♙a6 20.♞fe1

[20.♙xg3 ♞xg3 21.♜e7+ ♙h8 22.♙xa8 ♞xa8 23.♞xf7 ♞f8 slightly favours Black due to the initiative likely to develop because of the bishop-pair, but was better than the game continuation.]

20...♜f5 White's initiative has now dissipated, and Black's worries have all but disappeared. His position features completed development and is now well coordinated.

21.♞e4?! It is difficult to see the point of this as it just seems to beg Black to improve the position of the knight on d7.

♜f6 22.♞e5 ♜g4 23.♞xf5 exf5

The material advantage is secure, and White has no clear pressure.

24.g3 ♞h3 25.♜e7+ ♙h8 26.♜xf5 ♜h2

[26...♞ae8 would have been a straightforward solution. The threat of ...c3 threatens to activate the light-squared bishop, and White's king would then inherit a dubious position.]

27.♙xa8 ♞xf5 Black's extra pawn and safer

king ensure a substantial disadvantage for the first player.

28.♟g2 ♘g4 29.♘c5 ♖d8! Caruana moves in for the kill.

30.♘xa6 ♜xd4+ 31.♙h1 c3! Pushing the queen away from the important defensive square on d2, and now White's position promptly collapses.

[31...♘f2+ 32.♙h2 h4 would have also developed a winning attack.]

32.bxc3 bxc3 33.♞e2 c2 34.♞c1 ♘f2+ 35.♙h2 ♘g4+ 36.♙h1 ♘f2+ 37.♙g1 ♘d3+ 38.♙h1 ♘xc1 39.♜xc1 ♜e5 The attack isn't over, and White is going to lose more material. Black finishes in efficient fashion.

40.♙h2 ♖d1 41.♜h3 ♜xg3+ 42.♙g2 ♞d5+ 43.♙xg3 ♖xc1 44.♞e3 ♖g1+ Summary:

The continuation with 11...b4 seems very important for the variation given the assessment of Grischuk-Karjakin, because it would then be Black's best way to avoid a disadvantage. Pay particular attention to the notes to Black's 13th move, where 13...Nxg3 may be the only option that doesn't cause him grief.

0-1

□ **Nakamura,H**

■ **Anand,V**

Bilbao

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2011

1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♟g5 h6 6.♜h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♟g3 b5 9.♘e5 ♘bd7!? A significantly different approach from that seen in Caruana-Kobalia. Black returns his extra pawn in the hopes of speedy development and the dissipation of White's initiative.

10.♘xc6 The critical test.

[10.♞e2 allows Black to liquidate the invading knight, although he can aim for a transposition to Caruana-Kobalia after

A) Moreover, 10...♘xe5 11.♞xe5 ♟g7!? (11...♞e7 has been the choice in correspondence contests, and after 12.♞c1!? ♟b7 13.♞e3 ♖g8 14.0-0 ♘d7 15.♟g3 ♞b6 16.a4 a6 17.a5 ♞a7 18.♖ad1 White had plenty of compensation in A.Kochemasov-P.Pasko, correspondence 2012; the continuation with 11...Be7 needs more testing, but my impression is that White gets the sort

of play he's after in the Anti-Moscow)

12.h4 ♟b7 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.♖xh8+

♟xh8 15.♞c1

A1) 15...♞a5!/? is possibly a better try, hoping for 16.♞xg5 (a continuation like 16.f3 0-0-0 17.♞xg5 ♘d7 18.♟xh8 ♖xh8 looks fairly safe for Black, although the natural 19.0-0-0 ♞d8 20.♞e3 ♞e7 may give White a small pull owing to his better pawn structure and lack of weaknesses) 16...♘xe4 , and speeding up the process of getting the king to safety;

A2) 15...b4?! 16.♘a4 ♞e7 17.♘c5 followed by Qxg5 left White with a significant advantage in V.Mikhalevski-E. Bareev, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007.;

B) 10...♟b7 . It is possible that this may be White's best choice given the way the main game goes.]

10...♞b6 11.d5

[11.♘e5 ♟b7 12.f3 ♖d8 was I.Paulicka-Z. Banduka, Piestany Pressburg 2009, where Black's pressure on the d-file combined with ...Nh5 gave him easy play.]

11...♟b7 The knight must be challenged immediately.

[11...♟g7 runs into 12.a4! when exd5?! (H.Nemtsas-P.Kalofonos, Petropoli 2011) 13.axb5 is completely unappealing for Black. Even the engine's attempt beginning with d4 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4 15.♘xd4 ♘b6 just leaves Black down a pawn with weaknesses to tend to.]

12.a4

[Instead, 12.♞e2 ♜xc6 (12...a6 13.0-0 ♜xc6 14.dxc6 ♞xc6 15.e5 ♘d5 was D.Yevseev-V.Gorkavij, St Petersburg 2010, and now 16.♟f3!/? looks like enough compensation for White; Black must be wary of a2-a4 breaks, and Ne4-d6 can cause problems) 13.dxc6 ♞xc6 14.e5 ♘e4 15.♟f3 ♟b4 16.0-0 ♜xc3 17.bxc3 0-0-0!? followed by ...Ndc5, ...Rd3, and meeting Qe2 with ...Nxg3 might be enough to hold the balance.]

12...a6 13.♞e2 ♜xc6 Simple and straightforward.

[13...♟g7 is a very stubborn test. Indeed, it's not at all clear White can obtain anything of consequence. H.Baum-G.Goncharenko, correspondence 2010, continued 14.0-0 0-0 15.♟d6 (15.♟f3 g4!/? 16.♟xg4 ♘xg4 17.♞xg4 ♜xc6 18.dxc6 ♞xc6 doesn't seem to be a problem for Black; the

knight on c3 will begin to have Meran-like problems after ...b4, and there is no apparent attack forthcoming) 15...♙xc6 16.dxc6 ♖xc6 17.e5 ♜d5 18.♙f3 ♜xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙xe5 20.♜xd5 exd5 21.♙xd5 ♖c5 22.♙xa8 ♖xa8 with just enough compensation for the exchange to hold the draw.]

14.dxc6 ♖xc6 15.axb5

[15.e5 is also possible, but doesn't scare Black: ♜d5 16.♜xd5 exd5 17.0-0 ♜c5 (keeping e6 under supervision; 17...bxa4 18.♙f3 ♜b6 19.♙h5 ♙g7 20.e6 0-0 21.♙xf7+ ♖xf7 22.exf7+ ♜xf7 23.f4 gives White the initiative due to Black's exposed king) 18.axb5 axb5 19.♖xa8+ ♖xa8 20.♙f3 ♙g7 21.♙xd5 ♖c8 and Black has drawn this position in every correspondence game to reach it, such as N. Papenin-L.Ljubcic, correspondence 2010.]

15...axb5 16.♖xa8+ ♖xa8 17.0-0

[17.♜xb5 ♖a5+ 18.♜c3 ♜xe4 19.0-0 ♜xg3! would ensure White doesn't have time to exploit Black's lack of development.]

17...♖c6 Safeguarding b5. Black's defence at this point has eased considerably, with White unable to improve his pieces.

18.e5 ♜d5 19.♜xd5 ♖xd5 20.♖a1 ♙g7 [20...♖b7 has an amusing defensive idea behind it. After 21.♙f3 ♖b6 22.♖a8+ ♜e7 Black's king is safe and snug in the centre, while development can be completed with ...Bg7.]

21.♖d1 ♖c5 22.♖a8+ ♜e7 23.♖b7 ♖d8

24.♙f3 ♙xe5?!

[24...♖c8 25.♖xb5 ♖c7 is a defence concocted by the engine, and perfectly logical: e5 is pressured, and should it fall it will be unlikely White can win any resulting ending.]

25.♙xe5?! Giving up the fight, and allowing the cessation of hostilities.

[25.♙c6! would have been a more usual continuation of White's pinning theme. After ♙xg3 26.hxg3 b4 27.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 28.♖xd7+ ♜f6 29.♖d8+ ♜g7 30.♙e8 it is difficult to imagine that Black has equal chances, since f7 will require work to cover, and any isolated passed pawn on the queenside will be possible to quickly blockade.]

25...♖xe5 26.♙c6 ♜f6!

Now the circumstances under which d7 will be won are markedly inferior: Black will pick up a third pawn.

27.♙xd7 ♖xb2 28.♖f1 c3 The pawn is a nuisance, and now White elects to play for a draw.

29.♖c7 ♖a8 30.♙xe6 fxe6 31.f4 ♖a1

Black correctly keeps the white rook from joining the attack, and now a repetition ensues.

32.fxg5+ ♜xg5 33.♖g7+ ♜h5 34.♖f7+ ♜g5 35.♖f6+ ♜h5 36.♖f7+ ♜g5 37.♖g7+ ♜h5 38.♖f7+ An almost perfect defensive performance by the World Champion.

Summary:

9...Nbd7 doesn't seem to have any problems with it at all. White may be best advised to play 10 Be2, and hope for a transposition to Caruana-Kobalia.

½-½

D43

□ Anand,V

■ Shirov,A

2nd matchgame, Leon (rapid)

2011

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♜f3 ♜f6 4.♜c3 e6 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♙g3 b5

9.♙e2 ♙b7 10.♖c2!? White's latest try of significance in a long line of attempts on the 10th move. Indeed, Black must be careful so as to avoid emerging worse, but I think his best chance will soon start regularly appearing in practice.

♜bd7 The most natural.

[10...g4 may win a pawn, but is only dangerous for the second player: 11.♜e5 b4 (11...♖xd4 12.♖d1 ♖b6 13.♜g6! causes extreme difficulties for Black; even the best defence beginning with ♖g8 14.♜xf8 ♖xf8 15.e5 ♜d5 16.♜e4 ♖a5+ runs into the quiet 17.♜f1 with h2-h3 to follow, and the d6-square will be causing permanent headaches) 12.♜a4 ♖xd4 (T.Feng-E.Schon, Mooroolbark 2011) 13.f3 b3!? 14.♖xc4 ♖xc4 15.♜xc4 gxf3 16.gxf3 bxa2 17.♜d6+ ♙xd6 18.♙xd6 gives White significant compensation for his pawn minus after the ensuing Rxa2.]

11.♖d1 ♜h5! The best try to equalize by force, denying White the ability to slowly build up before committing himself.

[Otherwise, 11...♙b4 transposes to 9...Bb4, as seen at the start of this chapter, and may just be another decent choice,]

[but 11...♖b6 12.h4 g4 13.♜e5 ♙g7

14.0-0 ♖d8 15.b3 cxb3 16.axb3 offered White one of the better Anti-Moscow positions he can hope to achieve in M.Kaufmann-A.Mueller, correspondence 2008.]

12.d5! Otherwise Black simply picks up the bishop-pair, and safely completes development.

♟xg3 Definitely premature.

[It is only 12...cxd5! that can hope to set Black's game on the right path. The specific sequence 13.exd5 exd5 14.♟xd5 ♟xg3 15.hxg3 ♗g7 is Black's safest defence, finally receiving a practical test in G.Froewis-A.Schenk, Austrian League 2012. Now 16.♟e3!? (16.0-0?! was seen in the game, and now the simple 0-0! tucks the king away, making White's compensation questionable) , intending to transfer the knight to f5, grants White some compensation, but Black should be okay if he exercises caution. In general it's hard to say anything definite about the position, and continuations like 16...♞a5+ 17.♙f1 ♖d8 18.♟f5 ♙f8 require deep analysis in order to reach any definite conclusions. I don't, though, believe the second player has anything to fear.]

13.hxg3 ♞b6? A lemon. Now Anand immediately sets about ruining Black's pawn structure and regaining his material.

[Black should again play 13...cxd5 ,]
[since 13...♗g7 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.e5! ♞e7 16.♞g6+ (due to the disruption of castling it is clear White has significant compensation, but bringing home the bacon is another matter entirely) ♙d8 (16...♙f8 17.♟e4 ♟xe5 18.♟xe5 ♗xe5 19.♖xh6 ♖xh6 20.♞xh6+ ♗g7 21.♞g6 resulted in an almost effortless win in N.Vitiugov-A. Korobov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011) 17.♟d4 ♗xe5 18.♟xe6+ ♙c8 (A.Gupta-M.Paragua, Ho Chi Minh City 2012) 19.♖xh6 ♖xh6 20.♞xh6 looks comfortably better for White, although he shouldn't underestimate Black's queenside pawns.]

14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♟xg5 ♗c5 16.♗h5+ ♙e7 17.♟xe6!

[17.♟f3 definitely favours White as well, but lacks the flair of the text. As is typically the case in the Anti-Moscow, a failure by the second player to extract concessions when returning material usually just leads to a lost position.]

17...♟e5

[17...♟xe6 18.♗g4+ ♙f7 19.♖xd7+ followed by e4-e5 will result in a winning attack.]

18.♟xc5 ♞xc5 19.♗e2 ♖af8 20.0-0

White is up a pawn, has the safer king, and only needs to improve the position of his pieces to bring home the point.

♖hg8 21.b4

[21.♞c1 is another way to achieve the same goal, and more efficient. After ♖xg3 22.b4 ♞b6 23.♞xh6 Black's king will again get caught in the crossfire.]

21...♞xb4 22.♞d2 ♞c5 23.♞xh6 ♗c8

Black is much worse, and can only hope White doesn't spot the breakthrough. Of course, when you're playing the World Champion it's only a matter of time before the axe falls.

24.♞h4+ ♙e6 25.♞h6+ ♙e7 26.♞h5 ♙f6

27.♞h4+ ♙e6 28.♟d5! Finally the breakthrough arrives, and now Black's defences crumble.

cxd5 29.♖xd5 ♞b6 30.♞h5 ♞b8

[Shortening the finish, but the alternative is not much better: 30...♟d7 31.♗g4+ ♖xg4 32.♖xb5 ♞c6 33.♞xg4+ ♙e7 34.♖h5 ♞e6 35.♞h4+ gives White the material and the attack.]

31.♖fd1 ♖f6 32.♖xe5+ ♞xe5 33.♗g4+ ♖xg4

34.♞e8# A cute ending, and a game demonstrative of the dangers Black faces should he be inaccurate. A high-level clash can probably be expected in the near future in this relatively fashionable line.

Summary:

12...cxd5 is Black's best shot, and he should obtain good counterplay there. If, for some reason, 12...cxd5 is found wanting, then 11...Bb4 seems to be in reasonably good shape.

1-0

D43

□ **Houska, Ji**

■ **Sykora, J**

Correspondence

2007

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♟c3 e6 4.♟f3 ♟f6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♗g3 b5 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.e5!? The most accurate way to achieve the desired positions with an early e4-e5, as mentioned earlier.

♟d5 The principled move, but not the only important option.

[In my opinion 10...♖h5 is a strategically questionable decision owing to the bishop on g3 representing little more than a pawn, but it might just barely work out: 11.a4! b4! (11...a6?! 12.♖xg5! ♖xg3 13.♖xf7! ♖xf7 14.fxg3 ♖g7 15.♗g4 gives White an incredibly dangerous initiative for his piece that has been analyzed out to a nearly decisive advantage in other books) 12.♖e4 c5 13.♖f6+ ♖xf6 14.exf6 ♗d5! . Holding the c-pawn seems to keep Black's entire position intact, if just barely. A.Fier-D.Larino Nieta, Barcelona 2009, continued 15.♖c2 (probably not the best, even if a reasonable attempt to round up the c-pawn), when the atypical b3!? 16.♖c1 ♖d7 17.♗xc4 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 cxd4 19.♗b5 a6 might have been able to keep Black in the game without much strife.]

11.♖d2 A good multipurpose move. The a5-e1 diagonal is shorn of its sting, e4 is now available for the knight (on f3 the knight is pretty well restrained), and ...b4 is further discouraged due to the possibility of both white knights coming around to team up on the d6-square. Others:

[a) 11.h4 is a reasonable try. Play proceeds similarly to the main line: g4 12.♖d2 h5 13.♖de4 ♖d7 14.0-0 ♖b6 15.a4 a6 when White's most successful try has been 16.a5 ♖a7 17.♖xd5 cxd5 , as in G.Rajna-P.Kiss, Hungarian League 1989, and here 18.♖d6+!? ♗xd6 19.exd6 0-0-0 is very complex. Black has his extra pawn, while White has the sturdy d-pawn. Whether White can make any inroads is an open question.]

[b) 11.0-0 can be met by ♖xc3 12.bxc3 h5
A) 13.h4 g4 14.♖g5 can be met with the calm ♗e7 , (or the active 14...c5);
B) 13.h3 ♖d7 14.a4 a6 of T.Pranitchi-D. Kuerten, correspondence 2010. Black's position is very sound, and the exchange of the knights on c3 heavily took away from White's typical play involving the Ne4-d6 manoeuvre.]

11...♖d7 12.0-0

[12.a4 a6 13.0-0 ♖b6 is just another transposition. Both sides are simply playing the typical moves until the critical position is reached after White's 14th move.]

12...♖b6 13.a4 a6 Black's position has been successfully primed for the thematic ...c5 advance, and it is precisely that move which seems to solve his problems in the

continuation with 10 e5 Nd5.

14.♖de4 c5! There is an element of risk inherent in opening the position with the king still in the centre, but it works out well for very concrete reasons. Practice has also seen:

[a) 14...0-0-0 15.♖d2 c5 is just way too slow. Black cannot afford the tempo to castle, as it turns out: 16.axb5 axb5 17.♖xd5 ♗xd5 18.♖c3 ♗b7 19.d5 ♗g7 20.b3! ♗xe5 (J.Stocek-E.Najer, Chicago 2010) 21.♗xe5! ♖xe5 22.♖e3 gives White the initiative. For example, after the continuation ♖d7 23.bxc4 b4 24.♖b5 exd5 25.♗g4 Black's king will find itself the target of various tactics such as Na7+ and attacks on the h2-b8 diagonal.]

[b) 14...♗e7 is, however, a valid alternative. After 15.♖d6+ ♗xd6 16.exd6 c5 17.dxc5 ♖xc5 18.♗f3 I had initially thought this position to be quite dangerous for Black, but H.Grabner-E.Cattani, correspondence 2011, was quite interesting. That game went 0-0!? 19.h4 ♖xc3 20.bxc3 ♖ab8 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 22.axb5 axb5 and although White had good compensation, it ultimately amounted to naught, and Black went on to win!]

15.♖xd5 ♗xd5 16.♖c3 cxd4! It takes some foresight to know that clearing the path for White's e-pawn can be safely handled. The consequences of such a structural change would be difficult to handle over the board, indicating why the Anti-Moscow Gambit requires lengthy preparation for both sides.

17.♖xd5 exd5 Black's saving grace is his two extra pawns; if it were even one less, White's position would be essentially won.

The fact White must spend an additional tempo to get the bishop on e2 to a more active square is Black's manna from heaven.

18.♗h5 ♗e7! This is the best try for Black. To some players it may be intuitive due to the blocking of the soon-to-be-opened e-file, but others may be more inclined to fianchetto the bishop.

[However, 18...♗g7? 19.e6! 0-0 20.exd7 is much better for White, and compares favourably to the game. Black's pawns are impressive, but the extra material on the board favours the attacking player.]

19.e6 ♖xe6 20.♖e1 ♖f6 21.♗g4 0-0!

Black has correctly seen that the three pawns offer full compensation for the piece, and that White's attacking potential will be reduced through exchanges.

22.♗xd7 ♔d6 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖xa8 ♖xa8
25.♗xd6 ♖xd6 26.♗xb5 d3! White has
regained one of his pawns, but the bishop is
sorely misplaced, b2 is weak, and the pawn on
d3 is obnoxious.

27.h4 ♖b8 28.hxg5

[After 28.hxg5 ♖xb5! 29.♖e8+ ♔h7 30.♖f3
♖g6 White's initiative will always allow Black
at least a perpetual check of his own.

Summary:

A critical game for the evaluation of the
entire variation stemming from 10 e5.

Black's piece sacrifice seems to be entirely
sound, putting the ball firmly in White's
court.]

½-½

□ Grischuk,A

■ Karjakin,S

Sochi

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6
5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♗g3 b5
9.♗e5 h5 10.h4 g4 11.♗e2 ♗b7

Once the main line of the Anti-Moscow with 10
h4, but now relegated to a theoretically less
solid footing than the continuations seen in
our next two games. If White could somehow
force a transposition to this particular line I
would be prepared to argue he might have
something worth trying for.

[11...b4! would have effectively undermined
the transposition White achieved in this
game, as we saw in Caruana-Kobalia.]

12.0-0 ♗bd7 13.♖c2

[13.f3 has a very specific flaw. After ♗xe5
14.♗xe5 ♗d7! White must retreat the
bishop, giving Black comfortable play. U.
Duessel-M.Nekrasov, German League 2007,
continued 15.♗g3 (15.♗xh8?? g3!
followed by ...Qxh4 leads to a decisive win
of material for Black) 15...♗e7 16.fxg4 hxg4
17.♗xg4 ♗xh4 with at least equal chances
for the second player.]

13...♗xe5 Alternatively:

[a) 13...♗g7 is quite similar to variations in
which White elects not to play h2-h4, but
here White can direct his energy to quickly
conquering the d6-square. Indeed, 14.♗xd7
♗xd7 15.e5 ♖b6 16.♗e4 c5 17.♗d6+
left White with sufficient compensation and
then some in V.Zakhartsov-S.Matsenko,

Voronezh 2006; e4-e5 combined with Ne4-
d6 is typically desirable in response to ...

Bg7.]

[b) 13...♗e7 14.♖ad1 ♖b6 15.b3 cxb3
16.axb3 left the black king without a safe
wing to occupy in A.Zontakh-J.Dlugosz,
Krakow 2000. While Black has completed
development, he also does not have any
means of active counterplay and must wait
for White to engineer a breakthrough with d4-
d5 or f2-f3.]

14.♗xe5 ♗g7 A critical juncture where a few
different moves have been tried, all posing
certain problems, but one seems to have
paramount importance:

[a) It isn't at all clear what 14...♗h6
is supposed to accomplish beyond
developing a piece. The bishop is mostly out
of play, and it doesn't interfere with White's
typical piece deployment. After 15.b3 cxb3
16.axb3 0-0 17.♖fd1 ♖e7 18.♗g3 ♗d7
19.e5 f5 20.exf6 ♗xf6 although Black won
in I.Krush-S.Erenburg, Las Vegas 2007,
his position was extremely questionable.
Bd3, Re1, Be5, and Ne2-f4 in some order
would threaten to invade all of the weak
kingside squares.]

[b) 14...♖g8 15.♖fd1 (given Black has
forfeited any idea of castling kingside, White
can afford to keep his queen's rook on a1 in
an attempt to discourage queenside castling
as well) ♗d7 (if 15...♖g6 16.g3
shoring up h4, while the bishop on e5 has
little to fear; ♗d7 17.♗f4 a6 18.e5 ♗b6
was A.Moreno-R.Hameister,
correspondence 2009, and now 19.♗f1 ♗d5
20.♗g5 followed by Bg2 and Ne4 would
have given White ample compensation,
since Black's king would still be in need of
shelter in the forthcoming battle) 16.♗g3
♖b6 17.b3 cxb3 18.axb3 was quite
comfortable for the first player in H.Verhoef-
C.Gatto, correspondence 2002. Positions
where Black has to fear both d4-d5 and e4-
e5 with Ne4-d6, without having active play of
his own, are precisely what he has to
avoid.]

15.b3! Without taking time to commit a rook,
White simply opens more lines. There are,
however, two important alternatives:

[a) 15.♗g3 is an ambitious sacrifice of a
second pawn that was recommended in the
series of books penned by Khalifman, when
Black is probably best off accepting the
pawn: -- (15...0-0 16.e5 ♗d5 17.♗e4

♖e7 18. ♖d6 ♖f5 19. ♖xf5 exf5 20. ♗xf5
 ♗d5 21. f3 ♗xd4+ brings about a position in
 which Dreev thought Black to be doing well,
 but his position just looks dubious to me.
 Indeed, 22. ♖f2! ♗xb2 23. ♖af1 eventually
 gave White a winning attack in M.Hrubaru-W.
 De Waele, correspondence 2009. Maybe
 Black can find a way to return some material,
 but his open king and White's ideas of
 Bd1-c2 and Bf4 only seem to compound his
 problems.; 15... ♗xd4! 16. ♖fd1 ♗b6 17. a4
 a6 18. a5 ♗a7 19. ♗d2 was the suggestion
 of the aforementioned repertoire book by
 Khalifman, but U.Ruggieri-U.Peschke,
 correspondence 2007, continued ♖h6
 20. ♖c7 ♖g6 , proving to be okay for Black;
 ...c5 is on the cards, and White struggles to
 make further inroads without his d-pawn.)]
 [b) Unfortunately it seems that 15. ♖ad1
 is too slow: 0-0 16. ♖g3 (16. f3
 seems destined to the draw first seen in D.
 Tyomkin-I.Novikov, Edmonton 2000;
 following ♖h7! 17. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 18. fxc4
 ♗xh4 19. gxh5 ♖g5 20. ♗d2 ♖h3+
 21. gxh3 ♗g3+ 22. ♖h1 ♗xh3+ neither side
 can profitably avoid the perpetual) 16... ♖d7

A) 17. e5!? is the most harsh test of
 Black's defences; indeed, c5 (but 17... f5
 18. exf6 ♗xf6 19. b3 ♖b6 was okay for
 the Black in C.Issler-F.Balabaev,
 correspondence 2006, when it seems that
 Black's position is just barely holding on
 thanks to White's inability to win c4)
 18. ♖xb5 cxd4 19. ♖xd4 ♖c8 20. f4
 leaves Black in some difficulties, as
 analysed by Dreev;

B) 17. f3 c5 18. dxc5 ♗e7 19. fxc4 ♖xc5
 20. ♖d6 ♗xh4 21. g3 ♗g5 22. ♖f4 ♗e7
 has resulted in a draw by repetition in
 numerous correspondence games, most
 recently J.Ballow-H.Panman,
 correspondence 2009.]

We return to the critical 15 b3:

15... cxb3 The most typical response.

[Instead, 15... 0-0 16. bxc4 ♖h7!? 17. ♖xg7
 ♖xg7 18. e5!? is a straightforward sacrifice
 of material. When I saw this position I had
 no interest in going hunting for the b-pawn,
 playing d4-d5, or doing anything other than
 hunting the black king. It has received a
 testing in at least one game, with C.
 Rodriguez Amezcua-S.Petkov,
 correspondence 2009, continuing ♗xh4
 19. ♖e4 c5 20. d5 (20. dxc5!? bxc4
 21. ♖fb1!? ♖c6 22. ♗xc4 ♖g5 23. ♖f6

looks favourable for White's well
 centralized position) 20... bxc4 21. ♖xc4
 ♖xd5 22. ♖xd5 exd5 23. ♖d6 ♗g5 24. ♖fe1
 ♗g6 whereupon a draw was agreed. After
 25. ♗xc5 ♖g5 White would have had some
 compensation for his pawn, but no more.]

16. axb3 0-0 17. ♖g3 Now, unlike the
 variations with 15 Bg3, the d-pawn is laced
 with poison due to Black having castled.

c5

[17... ♗xd4 18. ♖ad1 ♗b4 19. e5 ♖d5
 20. ♖e4! followed by Ng5 will begin to cause
 very real problems for Black's king.]

[Instead, 17... ♖d7 18. e5 f5 19. exf6 ♖xf6
 20. ♖ad1 followed by the invasion of the
 white queen on g6 gave White more than
 sufficient compensation in A.Pashikian-S.
 Ter Sahakyan, Yerevan 2008.]

18. e5 ♖d5

[And here 18... ♖d7 19. ♖e4 ♖xe4 20. ♗xe4
 with Bd3 to follow put Black under serious
 fire in Y.Shulman-D.Baramidze, Dresden
 2008.]

19. ♖xb5! cxd4 20. ♖d6 ♖b8 21. ♗d2!

[21. ♖c4 doesn't seem quite the right way to
 build up White's attack. After ♖b4! 22. ♗d2
 ♖d5 23. ♖fe1 ♖xc4 24. bxc4 ♖c6

Black had a sound enough position thanks
 to the elimination of the light-squared
 bishops in V.Dell'Isola-K.Stalmach,
 correspondence 2008.]

21... ♖c3 22. ♖d3 a5! Making things more
 difficult for White by refusing to surrender his
 extra material – the lone claim to anything
 Black has in the resulting positions.

[Unsurprisingly 22... ♖d5 23. ♖xa7
 proved much better for White in V.Akobian-
 K.Szabo, Gibraltar 2009.]

23. ♖a3 ♖d5 24. ♖c2! On the evidence of the
 five games to reach this position it is evident
 there is a substantial amount of danger for
 Black. He has been unable to equalize or
 even hold a draw over the board or in
 correspondence. The b1-h7 diagonal cannot
 be easily dealt with, while Black has a number
 of loose pawns in his position (a5, d4, and h5).
♖b6 The defender has tried too:

[a) 24... ♗c7 25. ♗d3 ♖fd8 26. ♗h7+ ♖f8
 27. ♖d3 ♖xb3 28. ♖f4 a4 29. ♖c1 ♖d7
 30. ♖aa1 ♗a5 31. ♖e1 ♗b6 32. ♗xh5
 followed by Bh6 left Black under more
 pressure than he could handle in A.Rawlings-
 F.Mayr, correspondence 2009.]

[b) 24... f5 25. exf6 ♖xf6 (25... ♗xf6
 26. ♗d3 ♗h6 27. ♖xa5 ♖a8 28. ♖fa1 ♖xa5

29. ♖xa5 again left Black under severe pressure in G. Pezzica-J. Kuiper, correspondence 2008) 26. ♖e1 ♖b6 27. ♖c4 ♖a6 28. ♖g5 left Black an untenable position after the eventual capture on a5 in R. Pierzak-G. Pezzica, correspondence 2008.]

25. ♖e1 a4

[25...f5 26. exf6 ♖xf6 27. ♖c4 ♖b4 28. ♖xd4! still leaves White with a dangerous attack after the ensuing ♖b5 29. ♖d3 ♖xc4 30. bxc4 ♖xa3 31. ♖h7+ ♖f8 32. cxd5 ♖h6 33. ♖d3 ♖xc2 34. ♖xc2 ♖xd5 35. ♖d1 ♖f5 36. ♖c8+ ♖f7 37. ♖d7+ ♖g6 when Black's slight material edge is ruined by his horrid coordination.]

26. ♖d3 The attack must go on!

f5 27. exf6 ♖xf6 28. ♖c4 ♖xc4

[28...♖c6 29. ♖e5 followed by bxa4 wouldn't alleviate Black's problems.]

29. bxc4 Black has eliminated one attacker, but the unmolested battery single-handedly ruins his hopes of a playable position.

♖e7 30. ♖xd4! ♖xa3 31. ♖xb6 e5 32. ♖d8+ ♖f8 33. ♖a5! White correctly calculated the consequences of Black's miniature attempt at freedom, and now he can set about destroying all of the loose black pawns.

e4 34. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 35. ♖xe4 a3 36. ♖e3 ♖f7 37. ♖xa3 ♖xc4 In some circumstances Black may have hopes for a draw due to the pawns all being on one side of the board, but this isn't one of them.

38. ♖a5 ♖f7 39. ♖e5 ♖h6 Black holds h5, but now g7 becomes the target.

40. ♖d8+ ♖h7 41. ♖e7 Black resigned due to further material losses after Be5, and the possibility of easily won pawn endings at the very least.

Summary:

This game is absolutely critical to the entire Anti-Moscow with 10 h4, and represents the reason Black has flocked towards other continuations than 11...h5.

1-0

□ Vachier Lagrave, M

■ Gelfand, B

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2010

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♖c3 ♖f6 4. ♖f3 e6
5. ♖g5 h6 6. ♖h4 dxc4 7. e4 g5 8. ♖g3 b5
9. ♖e2 ♖b7 10. h4 g4 11. ♖e5 ♖g8

Instead of posing any questions to the knight on e5 Black simply activates his rook on what will typically be an open g-file.

[Theoretically it doesn't seem to be inferior to 11...♖bd7 , but practically Black seems to spend more time neutralizing pressure than in the aforementioned variation.]

12. ♖xg4 Much like against 11...Nbd7, White again tries to lead with the bishop. This is the usual choice these days:

[a) 12. ♖xg4 ♖bd7 13. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 14. ♖d2 b4 15. ♖a4 c5 16. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 17. dxc5 ♖xc5 18. 0-0-0 ♖xe4 19. ♖d7+ ♖f8 20. ♖c7 ♖e7 21. ♖xc4 ♖d8! soon resulted in a draw by repetition in P. Eljanov-V. Akopian, Elista 2008. In the past few years there has been no major update to 12 Nxg4, and not surprisingly White has abandoned it as a try for an advantage.]

[b) 12. 0-0 ♖bd7 13. ♖xg4 b4! 14. ♖a4 ♖xe4 15. ♖xc4 h5 16. ♖e3 ♖f6 17. ♖xh5 ♖h6 18. ♖f3 ♖d2 19. ♖e2 ♖xf1 20. ♖xf1 left White with some compensation for the exchange, but not enough for any sort of advantage in M. Wallinger-W. Schueler, correspondence 2007.]

12...♖bd7 13. ♖xd7 ♖xd7! The most accurate.

[13...♖xd7 14. 0-0! (14. ♖f3 ♖b6 transposes to our next game) 14...♖b6 15. ♖h5 makes good use of the fact White hasn't wasted a tempo on Bf3. K. Zpevakova-M. Jones, correspondence 2007, continued ♖f6 16. ♖e5 ♖xh5 17. ♖xh5 b4 18. ♖a4 ♖b5 19. ♖c5 ♖xc5 20. dxc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖fd1 ♖g6 22. ♖d2 c3 23. bxc3 bxc3 24. ♖c2 ♖a5 25. ♖xc3 ♖d8 , and here 26. ♖ac1 leaves Black with serious coordination problems; Rc5 and g2-g3 followed by manoeuvring the queen back into the game via f3 looks very uncomfortable for Black.]

14. ♖f3 b4 Risky, and requiring more precise defence than one of the alternatives:

[a) 14...0-0-0 15. ♖d2! c5 16. d5 exd5 17. 0-0-0! ♖d6 18. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 19. exd5 b4 20. ♖b5 ♖b6 21. ♖xh6 gave White the initiative in T. Schmidt-J. Soudny, correspondence 2008. In general these positions with the powerful d-pawn make it difficult for Black to sustain any counterplay, hence the general avoidance of even the mere possibility.]

[b) Another good option is 14...c5 15. e5 (15. dxc5 b4 16. ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 17. ♖b5 ♖c8 equalized fully in the later B. Gelfand-P. Leko,

7th matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2010)
 15...d5 16.d4 0-0-0 17.0-0 Rxb3!
 18.Rxb3 d4 19.dxc5 Bc7 20.Rxb7+
 Bxb7 21.Bf3 Bxf3 22.gxf3 , which gave
 Black sufficient play for the exchange in B.
 Gelfand-P.Leko, 5th matchgame, Miskolc
 (rapid) 2010, and here I like the engine's
 suggestion of Rg7!?, targeting the e-pawn
 with extreme prejudice.]

15.d4 c5 16.dxc5 Rxc5 17.dxc5 dxe4!
 [The correct capture, as 17...Rxe4 18.Rd6
 0-0-0 19.Bd4 Rxf3 20.gxf3 dxe8 21.Bxc4
 Bc6 22.Rc1 slightly favoured White in N.
 Kuosa-V.Leupold, correspondence 2008.
 The safety of Black's king will be an
 ongoing issue, while White will be able to
 coordinate an attack easier.]

18.Rxd7+ Rxd7 19.0-0-0+! A critical
 innovation that poses problems to Black's
 entire concept beginning with 14...b4.
 However, as will be seen, the second player's
 cause isn't without hope.

[Previously, 19.Rd1+ Re7 20.Rd6+ Re8
 21.0-0 a5 22.Rf4 dxc5 allowed Black to
 just barely hold the balance in R.Holmberg-J.
 Van Oosterom, correspondence 2007.]

19...Re8

[19...Rc8 20.Rhe1 f5 21.Rxe4 Rxe4
 22.Rd6 d5 23.c6 makes it difficult for
 Black due to his vulnerable king.]

20.Rf4! The core of White's idea is based on
 the knight's inability to combat passed rook
 pawns, and the superiority of bishop against
 knight.

dxc5 21.Rxb7 dxb7 22.Rxh6 dxc5

[22...Rxb3 23.Re3 keeps the knight on b7
 locked out of play, and makes White's task
 of carrying out his idea much easier.]

23.Re3 d3+ 24.Rb1 Rxb2 Black has won
 a pawn and has an optically attractive position,
 but he must exercise serious caution. The h-
 pawn is a real problem, and won't go away
 easily.

25.h5 f5 26.h6 Rf7?? Apparently a very
 serious mistake; the king's lack of coverage of
 d7 proves to be a big deal.

[26...Re7! might be the best way to go
 about challenging the h-pawn judging from
 what occurs in the game. Indeed, 27.h7
 Rh8 28.b3 dxf2 29.Rd4 dxe1 30.Rxe1
 Rc8 31.bxc4 Rg4 32.Rc5+ Rd7 33.h8 R
 Rxh8 34.Rxh8 a5 35.Ra8 Rxc4
 gives Black very real drawing chances due
 to his activity and the possibility of rook
 and bishop versus rook arising.]

27.h7 Rh8 28.b3! Black is tied down
 watching the h-pawn, and now the rook on d1
 joins the fray.

e5

[Now 28...dxf2 , as in the continuation with
 26...Ke7, fails to 29.Rd7+ Re8 30.Rxa7
 dxe1 31.Ra8+ Rf7 32.Rxh8 Rh2 33.bxc4
 with a significant advantage.]

29.bxc4 dxf2 30.Rxf2 Rxf2 31.c5!

Suddenly Black cannot keep an eye on both
 passed pawns, and White's edge becomes
 decisive.

Rf3 32.c6 Rc3 33.Rd7+ The flaw with ...Kf7
 is now obvious, and Black's resistance cannot
 hold out for long.

Rg6 34.c7 f4 35.Rd6+ Rg7 36.Rg1+ Rf7
37.Rd8 One of the pawns will queen, forcing
 Black to sacrifice a rook, and so he resigned.
 A well-played game by White, who never let
 Black off the hook.

Summary:

11...Rg8 is fully playable, and can be
 defended. It does, however, require more work
 than the continuation seen in the next game.

1-0

D43

 **Fagerstrom,B**

 **Zhak,B**

Correspondence

2009

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d3 d6 4.d3 e6
5.Rg5 h6 6.Rh4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.Rg3 b5
9.Re2 Rb7 10.h4 g4 11.d5 dxd7

Of late this has been considered the solution
 to all of Black's woes in the 10 h4 Anti-
 Moscow, but there are still some unanswered
 questions. That said, this should be Black's
 preference from both a theoretical and a
 practical point of view.

12.Rxg4!? White's best try to procure
 something from the opening, although Black
 seems to be doing well if he knows what he's
 doing. Otherwise:

[a) 12.d3 b4!? 13.dxf6+ dxf6 14.d4
 dxe4 15.Re5 Rg8 16.Rxc4 (16.Rf3 Rd5
 17.Rxe2 f5 effectively prevented White from
 opening the position in D.Lekic-D.Pavlovic,
 Cetinje 2010) 16...Rd6 17.Rh5 c5 18.Rd1
 cxd4 19.Rxd4 Bc7 20.Rxd6 dxd6
 21.Rxe6 Rxg2 22.Rg1 Rg6 was a mess
 that favoured neither party in F.Lorin-P.
 Ruiz Vidal, correspondence 2009.]

[b) 12.♖xd7 ♗xd7 13.♙e5 ♖e7 14.♙xg4 (14.0-0 ♖g8 15.b3 b4 16.♗a4 c3 17.♗d3 ♗d7 18.♙g3 h5 19.a3 a5 20.axb4 axb4 21.♗c5 ♖xa1 22.♗xb7 ♗e5 23.♖xa1 ♗xd3 24.♖a8+ ♗d7 25.♙xd3 ♗f6 was the spectacular game A.Grischuk-L. Aronian, Ohrid 2009, and now 26.e5 ♗h6 27.♖a7 ♗c8 28.♗a5 c2 29.♖a8+ ♗c7 30.♖a7+ is likely the final word on the entire variation – a draw) 14...♖g8 15.♙f3 ♗d7 16.♙g3 0-0-0 17.♗c2 e5 solved Black's problems in P.Tregubov-M.Godena, Haute 2007.]

12...♗xe5! The most precise move order, limiting White's options.

[Instead, 12...♖g8 13.♗xd7 ♗xd7 14.♙f3 is Vachier Lagrave-Gelfand.]

13.♙xe5 ♖g8 14.♙f3 ♗d7 15.♙g3 ♗b6! Combined with the idea of ...Bg7, the pressure exerted on White's centre provides a clear picture of why Black has scored very well from here.

16.0-0 The most natural.

[16.a4 b4 17.a5 ♗a6 18.♗e2 c5 gave Black good play in I.Brooks-C. Jaulneau, correspondence 2008,]

[while 16.♗d2 leaves the queen to be harassed on the d-file after 0-0-0 .]

16...0-0-0 Thematic, and in my opinion, definitely best.

[16...♖d8 was seen in G.Cardelli-V. Lyukmanov, correspondence 2009. Although Black commits his king to the centre as a result, it does retain the function of defending f7. I'm of the opinion White should continue 17.a4 ♙g7 18.♗e2 probably with Qc1-f4 to follow, leading to what is probably quite good compensation due to the black king's position.]

17.♗h1!? Nullifying potential problems associated with ...Rxc3 and pins on the d-pawn. Other tries are:

[a) Avoiding exchange sacrifices with 17.♙h2 makes a lot of sense. However, ♙g7 18.♙h5 ♖df8 (V.Vayser-C.Jaulneau, correspondence 2008) 19.♙d6 ♗xd4 compares favourably to the main game for Black, where Kh1 is desirable to play f2-f4.]

[b) 17.a4 e5! pointed out the flaws associated with the opposition of the queen and rook on the d-file in D.Harika-Y. Shulman, Philadelphia 2006.]

17...♙g7 Building pressure on d4.

[17...♖xc3!? is still interesting, as is often the case. Continuations like 18.fxc3 ♗e5

19.♙h5 ♖xd4 20.♗e2 ♙g7 21.♙xf7 c5 certainly appear to give Black a significant amount of compensation.]

18.♙h5 ♖gf8 19.♙d6 ♗xd4 Offering the exchange of queens when you are sacrificing the exchange seems a bit strange.

[Instead, 19...♙xd4 20.♗d2 c5 21.♙xf8 ♖xf8 looks reasonable for Black due to his dominance of the d4-square, and is where I would look. White lacks any clear plan, while Black's central presence and queenside majority always guarantee a lot of play.]

20.♙xf8

[There is no rush to capture on f8 here, and to that end taking steps to lock out the g7-bishop with 20.f4!? seems prudent. A continuation like ♗c5 21.♙xf8 ♙xf8 22.♗xd4 ♖xd4 23.e5 b4 24.♗d1 slightly favours White's extra material.]

20...♖xf8 21.f4 ♗c5 Up to this point White's play had been reasonable, but now he misses his chance to logically follow it up.

22.♗g4 It's hard to guess at exactly what the point of this move was supposed to be.

[22.e5!? ♗xd1 23.♖axd1 seems like a better way to go. It is not clear that Black has full compensation due to the limited activity of both bishops.]

22...f5! Now White can no longer restrict the black bishops, and Black's compensation becomes apparent.

23.♗g3 fxe4 24.♖ad1 ♗d3 Black has no problems remaining, and White heads for the draw.

25.♗xe4! ♗xe4 26.♗xg7 ♖xf4 27.♙g4 c5 28.♙h3 ♙d5 29.♗h2 ♗d4 Draw agreed on account of possible perpetual checks that neither side can profitably avoid.

Summary:

While the majority of games featuring 12...Nx5 have taken place in correspondence contests, I am of the opinion it deserves to be Black's primary choice moving forward. The counterplay he obtains is quite convincing and dangerous.

½-½

□ So,W
■ Nolte,R

Manila

[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2010

1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♗c3 e6
5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♙g3 b5
9.♙e2 ♙b7 10.0-0 ♗bd7 11.♗e5 h5

Essentially ushering in the exchange of knights, but further loosening the kingside pawn structure.

[This is a much more fighting choice when compared to the more solid 11...♙g7 , but quite possibly not at all inferior.]

12.♗xd7 ♖xd7 13.♙e5 ♖h6 14.♖c1

The critical choice, taking aim at g5 without the queen being exposed to ...b4 and ...Nxe4.

[Instead, 14.f4 g4 15.f5 exf5 16.exf5 0-0-0 looked okay for the second player in Y. Bezotosniy-V.Ilyushenko, Moscow 2009. In general the ability to meet f2-f4 with ...g4 takes a lot of the sting out of White's intended opening of the position.]

14...♗g4! Forcing White to capture on g4, and then hoping to get the king to safety, consolidate, and finally put the bishop-pair to good use. Of course, the devil is in the details.

[14...♖g6 15.♖d1 (15.♙xf6 ♖xf6 16.♖xg5 ♖g6 17.♖e3 0-0-0 18.♖ad1 h4 19.♙f3 ♙h6 was good enough for Black to achieve full counterplay in V.Papin-M.Kobalia, Moscow 2010; the active dark-squared bishop and lines against White's king keep him from thinking too seriously of opening up Black's king) 15...♗g4 16.♙g3 f5 17.h3 favoured White in Ding Liren-N.Battulga, Zaozhuang 2012. Black's play is overambitious, and it is unlikely he'll be able to prevent his kingside pawns from being unfavourably broken up.]

15.♙xg4 hxg4 16.♖xg5 ♖g6 Now White is presented with a wide choice of squares for the queen, and it isn't clear which is best.

17.♖f4!?

[White keeps the queen away from the potential threat seen after 17.♖e3 . Then c5! 18.dxc5 b4 19.♗e2 ♖c6 20.♗g3 ♙xc5 looked good for Black's bishop-pair in S.Salzmänn-M.Hrubaru, correspondence 2009.]

17...♙e7 Solid play. Black finishes development without giving White anything to bite on.

[Instead, 17...c5 18.dxc5 b4 19.♖ad1 ♖c6

20.♗d5! represents the point of White's queen move.]

18.♖fd1 This might be the wrong rook, but to discover why isn't at all obvious on the surface.

[It is quite possible with the possibility of ...f6 and ...Kf7 that the rook on f1 will be useful where it is, so 18.♖ad1!? could be indicated. Then f6 19.♙b8 ♖d8 (19...g3 20.fxg3 ♗d8 21.♙e5! is possible due to the rook being on f1) 20.♙c7 ♖d7 21.♙a5 ♗f7 22.e5 ♖h8 (22...c5!? is possibly Black's best try, even with the changed rooks; if White tries to exploit his rook's position after 23.♗e4 ♖d5 24.♖fe1 f5 25.dxc5 ♖c6 26.♖d6 ♙xd6 27.exd6 then ♖f8 might be okay for Black) 23.♗e4 f5 24.♗c5 ♖c8 is similar to the game. The position is very unclear, but White's position is the easier to play.]

18...f6 19.♙b8 ♖d8 Chasing the bishop seems to accomplish little, even if it seems attractive to chase it to the Siberia on a5.

[19...g3!? is a rather bizarre suggestion by the engine that seems to be entirely based on denying Qg3. After 20.fxg3 ♗d8 21.e5 ♖xb8 22.exf6 ♙d6 23.♖f3 ♗c7 Black might be doing pretty well.]

20.♙c7 ♖d7 21.♙a5

[21.♗e2 e5! seems to throw a wrench in White's plans to reorganize with Qg3 and Bf4.]

21...♗f7 22.e5 ♖h8 A logical enough move, but Black may have missed a chance to free his position more convincingly.

[22...c5! looks like it frees Black's position despite the mess. The wayward bishop on a5 makes it nearly impossible to prevent Black from claiming equal chances. Moreover, 23.d5 ♙xd5 24.♗xd5 exd5 25.♖e1 ♗g7 looks better for Black, who has escaped from the woods with an extra pawn.]

23.♗e4 f5 24.♗c5 ♖c8 25.♙d2 ♖h5?!

[25...♖g7 with the idea of ...Rgh7 looks good enough. It's not clear how White can generate anything, as 26.f3 ♙g5 27.♖g3 ♙h4 is a draw by repetition.]

26.b3 Typical, but probably not necessary at this point.

[26.♖e3 with the idea of f4, Be1-g3, and then opening the queenside is an idea pointed out by the engine, and does, indeed, look good for an advantage. Black's position is reliant on the h-file, due to the giant pawn

on b7, and if White can safeguard it he's in good standing.]

26...c3?

[26...Bg8 27.bxc4 Bgh8 28.h3 gxh3 29.g3 would also favour White, but there was little reason to just return the pawn for nothing at all.]

27.fxc3 Bgh6 28.fxd2

[28.h3 gxh3 29.g3 h2+ 30.fh1 puts an end to Black's counterplay and cements White's advantage. All that would be left would be to open the queenside, or find a way to make g2-g4 work, and Black would have nothing.]

28...f5 29.Bxg5!?

[29.Bg3 Bxh2 30.Bxh2 Bxh2 31.fh2 also looks better for White's two rooks, although there would be a lot of work left to do before converting the point.]

29...Bxg5 30.f5 White has full material compensation for the queen, the much better pieces, and now sets about opening lines for his rooks.

Bg6 31.f4 Bg8 32.a4 b4! Black correctly keeps the position as closed as possible.

33.Bac1 Bd8 34.f3 a5 35.f3 f3

36.Bc5 Ba6 37.Bd2 Bd5 38.Bxd5 cxd5

Black has defended well to this point, and made it so that there is no invasion point on the c-file. The position is roughly equal, but requiring more caution from the second player.

39.Bd1 f6 40.h4 gxh3 41.gxh3 Ba8

[41...f8 in order to make use of the nearly useless bishop looked like it might have been a better try. When facing a long and difficult defence one should always strive for maximum activity.]

42.Bc1 Ba6 43.Bd1 Ba8 44.f2 Be8

45.Bc1 fxa4? Black had conducted the defence admirably to this point, and White had basically consented to the draw, but now he is lost.

[45...Ba8 keeps the game level.]

46.Bc7+ The black king is now caught in the crossfire, and he is unable to put up any resistance on the dark squares.

[Likewise, 46.bxa4 Bxa4 (46...b3 47.f3 would result in the eventual death of the b-pawn, handing White an easy win) 47.Bc7+ f8 48.f6 Ba2 49.Bg7+ f8 50.f3 would have been a trivial conversion. After White picks up the black e-pawn, his own will quickly queen under supervision from the other pieces.]

46...f8 47.bxa4 Bxa4 48.f3 Bb5

49.f3 f7 50.f6+ f6 51.f3 Bf1

52.f8 Bg1+ 53.f4 Black is out of checks, and mate cannot be stopped.

Summary:

11...h5 remains a fascinating try, and it doesn't seem to me that Black is doing poorly.

The positions are extremely complex, and can only stand to reward diligent homework.

1-0

D43

□ Miton,K

■ Wojtaszek,R

Polish Championship, Warsaw

2011

[Bryan Paulsen]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.f3 f6 4.f3 e6

5.f5 h6 6.f4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.f3 b5

9.f2 f7 10.0-0 f7 11.f5 f6

12.f3 f3 13.f6 a6 14.Be1

A mysterious rook move primarily attributed to the Russian Grandmaster Ernesto Inarkiev.

White hopes to utilize the rook via support of e5 or occasional d4-d5 breaks. He's also tried:

[a) 14.f5 f8 15.f8 Bxf8 16.d5

(16.e5 Bb6 17.b3 0-0-0 18.bxc4 fxe5

19.c5 Ba5 20.f4 f4 21.f2 f5

22.fxc4 fxe4 23.fxe6+ f8 24.Be1 Bc3

25.Bxe4 Bb2 26.f3 f4 was equal in P.

Eljanov-V.Anand, Kemer 2007; it is impossible for White to hold on to his pawn

on d4, and Black has enough activity to offset his jumbo pawn on b7) 16...cxd5

17.exd5 f6! 18.dxe6 Bxd1 19.f7+

f7 20.Baxd1 Bfd8 21.f2 f4!

and in T.Radjabov-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2008, the white e-pawn wasn't strong enough to claim an advantage, and the black queenside pawns guaranteed enough counterplay to hold the draw.]

[b) 14.e5 c5! (the typical response to e4-e5; the bishop on d6 is just as much a target as

a nuisance) 15.d5 (15.f5 f8 16.f8

f8 17.f3 Bd7 18.d5 exd5 19.f3

exd5 20.Bxd5 Bxd5 21.f3 Bb8

gave White limited compensation for his

pawn and an uphill battle for a draw in A.

Peters-V.De Bari, correspondence 2009)

15...f5 16.dxe6 f3 17.exf7+ f7

18.f3 cxd3 19.Bxd3 Bf6 drew easily

enough in F.Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo-M.Seris Granier Ganzales, correspondence 2007.]

14...f8 The passive, but safe approach.

[14...c5!? invites complications, but not dangerous ones: 15.♘d5!? (15.dxc5 ♖c8 16.a4 b4 17.c6 was E.Inarkiev-L.Aronian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, and now ♖xc6 18.♙xb4 ♗b6 19.♙a3 ♙d4 20.♖f1 ♙c5 is equal without much chance of danger; without the dark-squared bishop, it is unlikely White can create any substantive pressure) 15...♖c8 (15...exd5 16.exd5 cxd4 17.♙xc4+ ♜e5 18.♙xe5 0-0 19.♙xg7 ♜xg7 20.♙b3 followed by Re4xd4 looks a bit favourable for White due to his ability to create play against Black's kingside) 16.♙h5 ♙xd4 17.♗g4 ♜f8 18.♙e7 ♗xe7!? 19.♜xe7 ♜xe7 20.♗f3 ♜g6 is a fascinating variation mentioned by Dreev. After 21.♙xg6 fxg6 22.♖e2 ♖cf8 Black does have significant compensation for the queen, and it isn't clear how White can make real progress.]

15.♙g3 ♙g7 16.e5!? Blunting the effect of the g7-bishop, while preparing Ne4-d6. Of course, this is also committal, and Black's ...c5 gains in importance.

0-0 Normally a risky endeavour, but with ...c5 around the corner Black has little to fear.

[Instead, 16...c5 17.d5 0-0 18.♙f3 exd5 (18...♗b6 19.d6 gives White definite compensation for his pawn; after the exchange of light-squared bishops White can set about undermining g5 with h2-h4 or f2-f4) 19.♙xd5 ♙xd5 20.♗xd5 ♗e8! 21.♖ad1 ♖d8 seems to limit White's compensation to manageable levels; ...Qe6 or ...Nxe5 makes it difficult for him to do anything of importance.]

17.♙f3 ♗e7!? Not the most typical square to support ...c5, but it ends up working out well enough.

[17...♗b6 is the most natural choice, and probably just a clear equalizer. Following 18.h4 gxh4! 19.♙xh4 c5 20.♙xb7 ♗xb7 21.♜e4 cxd4 22.♙f6 ♜h7! 23.♙xg7 ♜xg7 24.♗g4+ ♜h7 25.♜g5+ hxg5 26.♗h5+ ♜g7 27.♗xg5+ a draw by repetition results. Given the alternatives for White are even less pleasing, it provides a clear reason why 14 Re1 won't be sticking around despite its initial popularity.]

18.♜e4 c5 Black has achieved his freeing break, and allows White to regain his material in the pursuit of more active play.

19.♜xg5! hxg5 20.♙xb7 ♖ab8 21.♙e4! Aiming to put the fear of mate in Black's king, and paying little regard to the potentially

massive black queenside pawn mass.

[White has little else he can do, and is really just fighting to keep things level. Indeed, 21.♙f3 ♖bd8 22.d5 exd5 23.♗xd5 ♖fe8 24.e6 ♜e5! forces White to sacrifice his queen for questionable compensation.]

21...cxd4 22.♗h5 As scary as this might look, there is no real threat.

♖fd8

[Another option was 22...♖fc8 23.f4 ♜f8! with a fully defended kingside and a still-formidable queenside build-up.]

23.h4 gxh4?!

[23...♜f8! was possible, analogous to the previous note, and should have been preferred.]

24.♙xh4 ♗c5 25.♙xd8?!

[25.♙h7+! ♜f8 26.♗g5 would have made use of the black queen's departure from e7. Following d3 27.♖e3 Black's king would have become a very real concern.]

25...♖xd8 Despite White having won the exchange, Black is in possession of much the greater activity, and has no targetable weaknesses.

26.♗h4 ♖e8 27.f4 d3+ 28.♜h1 ♗d4

Black is fully centralized, and White's rooks are effectively kept out of the game by the opposing pawn mass.

29.♖ad1 ♜c5 30.♙h7+ ♜f8 White's position has taken a turn for the desperate, and Black simply intends to create connected passed pawns.

31.b3? Making things easier, but there was little hope.

[Even engine defences like 31.b4 ♜a4 32.♖d2 fail to ♜c3 when White is paralyzed, and Black can aim to time his own ...f6 break to create additional lines to use for himself.]

31...c3 32.♗h3 ♖d8 With no way to stop one of the pawns from eventually queening without material loss, White resigned.

Summary:

14 Re1 is completely dead as a try for an advantage. Black has a couple of different ways to achieve a fully equal game, and White must be careful not to end up worse.

0-1

□ Anand,V
■ Leko,P
Moscow
[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2009

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♟f3 ♟f6 4.♟c3 e6
5.♟g5 h6 6.♟h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♟g3 b5
9.♟e2 ♟b7 10.0-0 ♟bd7 11.♟e5 ♟g7
12.♟xd7 ♟xd7 13.♟d6 a6 14.a4 e5
[Much more popular than the 14...b4
of our next note, but incredibly dangerous to
the second player's health. Some sources
believe Black to be able to just barely
escape, but I'm not even sure that is true.]

15.♟g4 Alternatively:

[a) 15.d5 c5 16.b4 ♟b6 17.bxc5 ♟xc5
18.♟xc5 ♟xc5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♟xa8+
♟xa8 21.♟a1 0-0 22.♟a5 ♟b8 23.♟b1
♟f8 24.♟xb5 ♟xb5 25.♟xb5 ♟xb5
26.♟xb5 ♟b7 27.♟xc4 ♟a6 28.♟f1 ♟xb5
29.♟xb5 was drawn in J.Gustafsson-L.
Aronian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, and
represents the final word on 15 d5 as a try
for an advantage. The extra pawn means
approximately nothing due to the presence
of bishops of opposite colours.]
[b) 15.♟e1 ♟f6 16.♟a3 ♟f8 17.♟g4 ♟d8
18.axb5 axb5 19.♟xf8 ♟xf8 20.♟xd7 ♟xd7
21.dxe5 ♟e6 22.♟h5 ♟c8!? is proposed
by Dreev on his treatise on the Moscow and
Anti-Moscow complexes. After 23.f4 gxf4
24.♟f1 ♟g6 25.♟xg6 fxc6 26.♟xf4+
he evaluates the endgame as unclear, and I
see no reason not to think Black is doing
okay.]

15...exd4 16.e5 c5 17.♟e1 Again, White has
alternatives:

[a) 17.♟f3 ♟xe5! 18.♟xb7 ♟xd6 19.♟xa8
0-0 20.♟e4 ♟c7 21.axb5 ♟xa8
was eventually agreed drawn in J.Rodriguez
Rey-T.Santamaria Perez, correspondence
2008. Aside from having adequate
material compensation for the exchange, the
mass of pawns would give Black the better
practical chances over the board.]
[b) 17.f4 dxc3 18.bxc3 ♟f8 19.♟e2 ♟xd6
20.exd6+ ♟f8 21.fxc5 hxc5 22.♟e6 ♟h7
23.♟c2 was E.Bacrot-L.Aronian, Novi Sad
2009, and now ♟g7 just barely holds the
balance according to a significant amount
of additional analysis done by Dreev in his
'Moscow & Anti-Moscow Variations'.]

17...♟xe5!

[17...dxc3? 18.e6! exposes Black to a

furious attack.]

18.♟xe5 0-0 19.♟xg7 ♟xg7 20.♟e2 f5
21.♟h5 f4 22.♟xd4!

[Instead, 22.b4 d3! 23.bxc5 b4 24.♟d4
was promptly agreed drawn in M.Umansky-
M.Voss, correspondence 2008. Black's
pawns cut an extremely imposing figure.]
22...cxd4 23.♟e6 Black's position is quite
difficult, and it's not clear he can hang in there
for a draw even in the distant future.

♟c8?!

[23...♟f6 24.♟e1 ♟d5 (24...♟xe6
25.♟xe6 ♟c7 26.♟e1 c3 27.bxc3 dxc3
28.♟d1 gave White a winning attack in A.
Grigoryan-T.Kotanjian, Yerevan 2010)
25.♟e7+ ♟g8 26.axb5 ♟d6 27.♟g4 ♟f7
28.♟e5 axb5 29.♟xa8+ ♟xa8 30.♟e6 ♟c5
31.♟e8+ ♟g7 32.♟xa8 ♟e7 33.♟a1 d3
34.h4! is a long continuation aiming to
squeeze blood from the position, but in V.
Grabliauskas-M.Avotins, correspondence
2009, White did precisely that. Worse yet is
that even with engine assistance Black was
unable to hold – a very bad sign. Readers
can check for themselves, but I feel this
game to be the last word on the entire
variation.]

24.♟g6+ ♟h7 25.axb5 ♟f6 26.♟xf6 ♟xf6
27.♟c2+ ♟f5 28.♟xc4 White has regained
all of his material, and Black's king remains a
target.

♟c8 29.♟d5 axb5 30.h3 A desperate
defence now ensues; Black's nominal
material advantage is nothing in the face of
White's attack.

♟h8 31.♟xb5 ♟f8 32.♟a6 ♟g7 33.♟d6 d3
34.♟b6 ♟e5 35.♟g6 There was already little
that could be done to stop White's attack
without a concession that gives White a
technically won endgame.

d2 36.♟xf5 ♟xf5 37.♟d4+ ♟h7 38.♟xd2
At long last White is the one with the material
advantage, and still his initiative is not gone.
Black's punishment for his advanced kingside
pawns has been a long time in the coming, but
the bell now tolls for him.

♟f7 39.f3 h5 40.♟d5 ♟g6 41.♟a5 ♟g7
42.h4 ♟b1+ 43.♟h2 ♟xb2 44.♟xg5 ♟xg5
45.♟xg5 A miserable outing for the black
cause, but it's not clear his game can be
saved even with the 'improvement' available
on move 23.

Summary:

It is my firm belief that the 14...b4 of Topalov-
Gelfand is the future, and 14...e5 will become

a footnote. Failing that, there is always the 11...h5 of So-Nolte.

1-0

□ Topalov,V
■ Gelfand,B
Monaco (rapid)
[Bryan Paulsen]

D43

2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6
5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♙g3 b5
9.♙e2 ♙b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♘e5 ♙g7
12.♘xd7 ♘xd7 13.♙d6 a6 14.a4 b4!

Most likely Black's most accurate defence, but still requiring some tremendously heady play to avoid an outright loss.

15.♘b1!? A typically fighting novelty from the aggressive Bulgarian world title candidate. White has no pretensions about keeping material close, and looks for the initiative.

[15.d5!? is another fighting continuation, and one would that would be scary for an unprepared Black player. After bxc3 16.dxe6 ♘e5 17.♙h5 a fork in the road is reached in the two games to reach this position. The question is whether capturing on b2 is worth it, but the evidence seems to suggest it probably isn't: ♙c8 (17...cxb2 18.♖b1 ♙c8 19.exf7+ ♘xf7 20.e5 ♙f8 21.♖f3 ♖a7 22.♖xc6+ ♖d7 23.♖xc4 ♖e6 24.♖c6+ ♖d7 25.♖c3 was probably the fruits of preparation in I.Cheparinov-S.Ter Sahakyan, Aix-les-Bains 2011; Black is hopelessly tied down, while White will pick up a second pawn for his piece and continue building up the pressure) 18.exf7+ (18.e7? ♖d7 19.f4 gxf4 20.♖xf4?? was E.L'Ami-T.Henrichs, Vlissingen 2010, and now cxb2 21.♖b1 c3 is just winning for Black according to the engine; he must be very careful, but the passed pawns are very powerful and he can always return the piece if need be) 18...♘xf7 19.e5 ♙e6!? 20.bxc3 ♙f8 21.♖e1 ♖d7 22.♖b1!? ♙e7 is a position where White has ongoing compensation for his piece, but being able to turn it into anything real is extremely difficult.]

[Instead, 15.♙xb4 ♖b6 16.♙a3 ♖xd4 17.♖c2 c5 18.♖ad1 ♖e5 19.♙xc4 has been tested a few times, most notably in B.Gelfand-P.Leko, 3rd matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2010. Despite White's superior

pawn structure, Black's activity and dark-squared influence keep White from claiming any sort of real advantage; you can blame it on the wayward bishop on a3.]

15...♘f6

[15...c5?! 16.dxc5 ♙xb2 17.♘d2 ♙xa1 18.♖xa1 ♖f6 19.e5 gives White a great initiative due to Black's inability to castle.]

16.e5 ♘e4 17.♙xb4 c5 18.♙a3 cxd4?!

[Instead, 18...♖xd4 19.♖xd4 cxd4 20.f3 d3 21.♙d1 ♙xe5 22.fxe4 favours White due to the better minor piece and Black's inability to castle.]

[Originally I was rather enthusiastic for the white cause after seeing Topalov's result with this game, and how impressive his play looked. However, 18...g4!! , resembling outright nonsense, throws a giant wrench in White's dreams. No longer is the knight able to be trapped due to g5 being available, and Bf3 is denied in one stroke. Three lines that demonstrate the problems this causes for White: 19.-- (19.f3 ♘g5 20.♙xc5 gxf3 21.gxf3 ♖c8 and Black threatens ...Bxe5. Note that the white king is unusually vulnerable to the g-file and b7-bishop here.; 19.♘c3 ♖xd4 20.♖xd4 cxd4 21.♘xe4 ♙xe4 22.♙xc4 ♙c2! holds the balance due to the threat of ...d3-d2-d1.; 19.♙xg4 cxd4! works now because after 20.♙f3 ♙xe5! 21.♘d2 ♖h4! 22.g3 ♖g8 the knight on e4 is defended. The reader might notice that the position after White's 20th move is the exact same as the game, but with the disappearance of the g5-pawn. After 23.♘xe4 ♙xe4 24.♖e2 ♙xf3 25.♖xf3 ♖c8 26.♖fe1 ♙h8 27.♖b7 ♖d8 28.♖xa6 ♖d7 a complicated position arises, but is possibly just equal. Some practical tests will be necessary to reach a conclusion, but maybe White can make something out of Black's split forces.)]

19.♙f3 ♙f8 Black has to do something about the obnoxious bishop on a3 due to his voluntary removal of his own c-pawn.

20.♖e1 ♙xa3 21.♘xa3 ♘c5 22.♘xc4

Now d6 is a headache, and White has regained his material without making any concession. As per the usual when Black doesn't extract concessions for returned material, he is in grave danger.

0-0 23.b4 ♙xf3 24.♖xf3 ♘d7 25.h4!

Typical Topalov, highlighting Black's loose king. The absence of dark-squared bishops makes White's attack inherently hard to resist.

♖c8 26.♚d3 ♚c7 27.♖ac1 ♜b6 28.♜d6!

Correctly recognizing the queen is worth more than the pair of rooks, White focuses on the black king.

♚xc1 29.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 30.♔h2 ♖c3

31.♚xd4 ♜d5 32.hxg5 hxg5 33.♚g4

Black resigned in view of further material losses forthcoming, and an inability to ever activate the rook on f8 due to f7.

Summary:

15 Nb1 really requires more testing, because even in what I believe to be Black's best defence the play remains razor sharp.

1-0

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