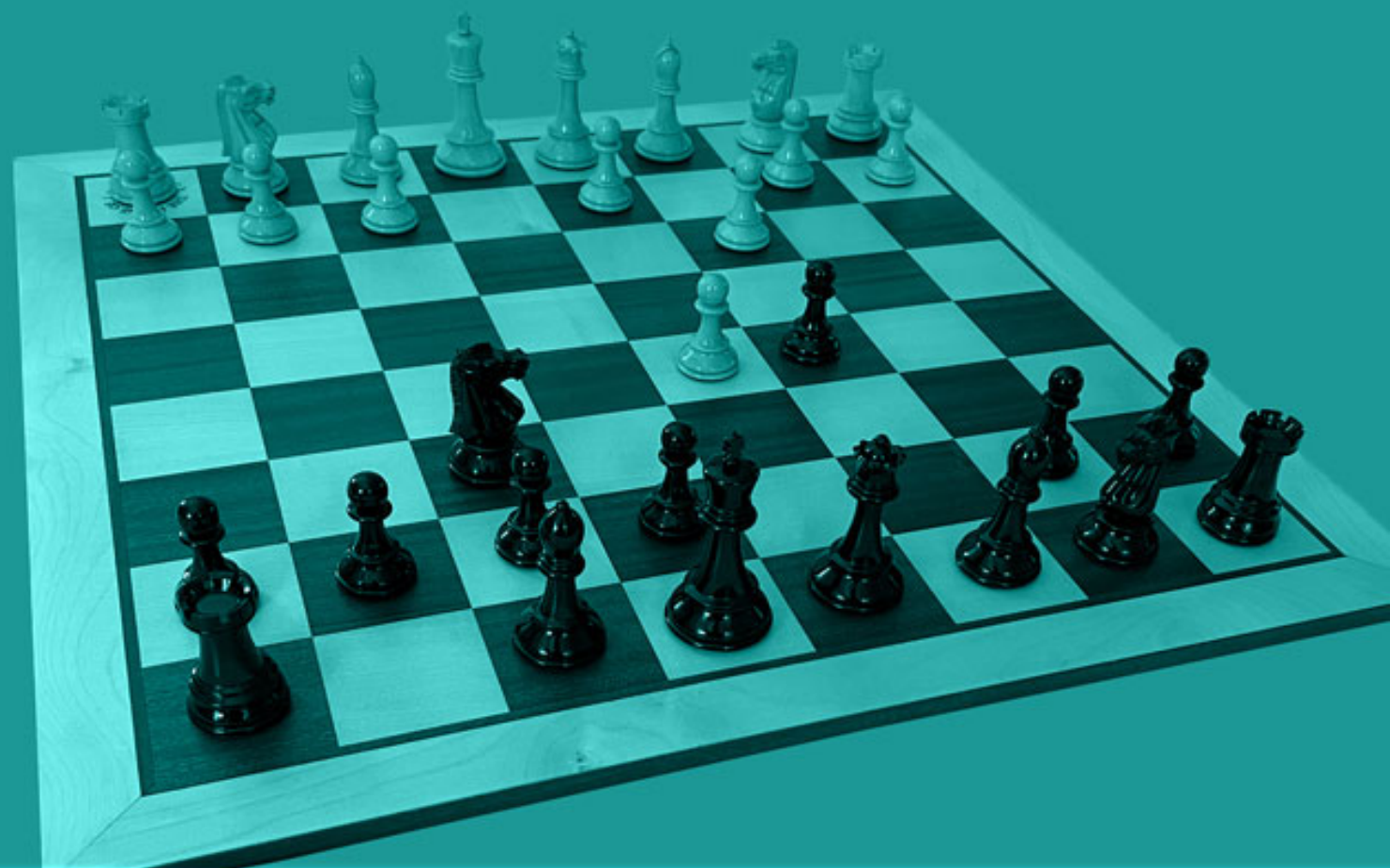


Opening Hacker Files

THE
**ANTI-ALAPIN
GAMBIT**

Death to the 2.c3 Sicilian



INTERNATIONAL MASTER

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FIDE MASTER & FIDE TRAINER

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Contents

[Title page](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1: 4.♗b5+](#)

[Chapter 2: 4.c4](#)

[Chapter 3: The Anti-Human 4.♖a4+](#)

[Chapter 4: 4.♘f3 Line: White play cxd4](#)

[Chapter 5: 4.♘f3 Line: White recaptures on d4 with Knight or Queen](#)

[Chapter 6: The 4...c5xd4 Move Order](#)

[Chapter 7: The 4...♘xd5 Move Order](#)

[Chapter 8: The 3.e4–e5 Dodge](#)

[Quick Repertoire](#)

[Index of Complete Games](#)

[Books by Carsten Hansen & Cyrus Lakdawala](#)

[Other Books By Cyrus Lakdawala](#)

[Other Books By Carsten Hansen](#)

The Anti-Alapin Gambit

Death to the 2.c3 Sicilian!

by

Cyrus Lakdawala & Carsten Hansen

2022

CarstenChess

The Anti-Alapin Gambit - Death to the 2.c3 Sicilian!

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2022

ISBN (ebook) 978-87-93812-36-9

ISBN (paperback) 978-87-93812-37-6

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www.WinningQuicklyatChess.com

Introduction

The Great Dehydration/Anti-Sicilian Phenomenon

Do you remember that fateful day in the late 1970s when everyone in the world spontaneously realized they needed bottled water when they left the house or risked death by dehydration? Neither Carsten nor I ever saw an obituary that read like this: “Michael Brady, age 33, passed away tragically when he took his dog Tiger for a 15–minute walk, forgetting bottled water when the temperature was a soaring 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Michael died of thirst just 12 feet from his front door! If only he had remembered the bottled water! Michael leaves behind his beloved wife, Carol, and their six children, Greg, Peter, Bobby, Marcia, Jan, and Cindy.”

An identical mass hysteria phenomenon happened with Sicilians just a bit later in the 1980s. When we were kids, if you met 1.e4 with 1...c5!, you were around 90 percent certain the game would enter an Open version against your favorite Sicilian. Then came that awful moment when virtually every player who played 1.e4 in the world became terrified to play 3.d4?? entering the Open versions of the Sicilian. In a frenzy, they all suddenly switched to some obnoxiously boring Anti-Sicilian, to the point where today, if you meet 1.e4 with 1...c5, you only have around a 50% chance of an Open version. This book aims to meet the hatefully solid 2.c3 Alapin Sicilian with a punishing (and sound) gambit, which may leave your opponents regretting their opening choice.

Not All Gambits are Risky Propositions

The nature of an intuitive sacrifice is it doesn't normally demand empirical evidence to back up its claim for soundness. However, another matter is a book on a gambit - and one where the gambiteer is down a move with the black pieces -. We attempt to lay out a case that the Anti-Alapin Gambit is completely sound. This is no shady gambit that, like fast food, addict us with salty, sweet, and oily food, resulting in clogged arteries that kill us before we hit age 60. More important than our opinion is that of the engines which in the chorus give the Anti-Alapin their blessing of soundness. Keep in mind that Kasparov said in an interview that engines actually don't sacrifice anything. For them, it's always the “bottom line,” which in this case is piece activity, freedom, initiative, development lead, and the potential for attacking chances which the engines deem a good deal for Black. Our goal in this book is to get you to shift your loyalties from the old, massively over-analyzed c3–Sicilian lines to the Anti-Alapin Gambit's not-so-radical viewpoint. As the heading suggests: not all gambits are gateway drugs to unsound sacrifices. Nobody thinks playing the Benko Gambit or the Marshall Gambit of the Ruy Lopez is all that risky for Black. We consider our Anti-Alapin Gambit to be in the same safe-and-sound zone. We reach our gambit's position after the initial moves:

1.e4 c5 2.c3

Get hit with too many Alapins in a row; then, like Pontius Pilate, we vow to wash our hands of Sicilian. Not anymore, since now we know about the Anti-Alapin Gambit, which brings the fun back into this Anti-Sicilian.

Note that our Anti-Alapin Gambit has blood ties to the gambit 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6; in this one, too, Black has a healthy plus score in our database.

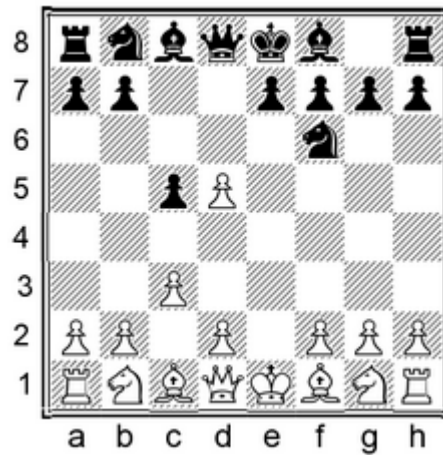
2...d5

After 2...♖f6 3.e5 ♗d5, Black can equalize if you want to learn a massive amount of theory!

3.exd5

Now, we replace the standard capture with the queen with...

3...♕f6!



Die Alapin Sicilian, die!

Your writers, the most angelic of children who only played soundly, now advocate for a gambit--with Black! If you think that the mind of zealotry views the world in terms of absolutes, then think again when it comes to this gambit.

Welcome to the Anti-Alapin Gambit, a cure against one of White's most obnoxiously solid lines against the Sicilian. As stated above, our gambit is anything but fanatical and, in the opinion of the humble writers, is entirely sound. Modern Opening theory borders on the oppression level of a totalitarian state. Actually, more accurate is to say that we in the chess world arrived at a Terminator-style dystopian future, where 3700-rated automatons and databases essentially command all our opening choices. Now is our chance to escape this fate with a nasty sideline gambit that may well throw your club-level Alapin Sicilian-loving opponent out of their theoretical preparation by move 4! A thousand times more important than buying a book is reading it (although we appreciate the "buying it" part!); a thousand times more important than reading it is putting what you read into practice. After testing this line in online blitz games, you will be ready to try it out in actual slow (or rapid) time control tournament games. We predict you will surpass your old stats against Alapin when you bang out the gambit against your baffled opponents. Best of luck in your Anti-Alapin insurrection.

3...♙xd5 Why waste perfectly good imagination when we can obediently follow theory's commands? Black can reach acceptable positions with the queen's recapture on d5, but only if you are willing to enter a 20+ move theory-memorization battle with your booked-up opponent.

Cyrus Lakdawala
San Diego, October 2022

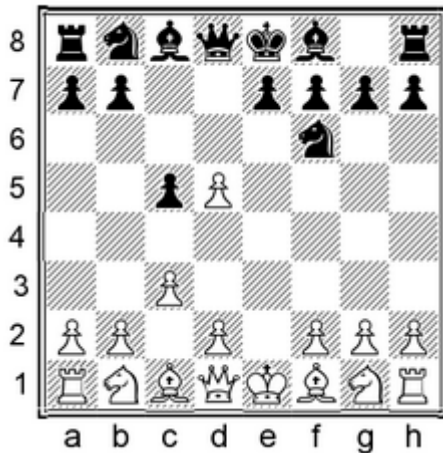
Chapter 1: 4.♘b5+

When White plays 4.♘b5+, this is an indicator that our opponent is willing to accept our gambit. For the pawn, we usually get the bishop pair, development lead, and an open f-file to attack the white king later.

This is the game that inspired this book.

Game 1
N. Grandelius (2635) – M. Carlsen (2864)
Chessable Masters (chess24.com) 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6!?



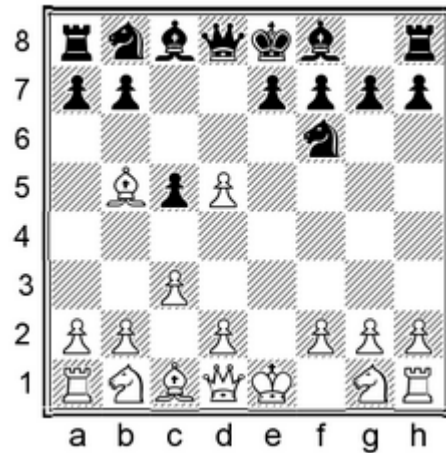
The times, they are a-changin'. Ha! Now you are forced to buy this book since the advocacy of a world champion is the highest endorsement. But let's not get ahead of ourselves since Magnus has also played 1.f2–f3!? in his tournament games. It's difficult to shake off a sense of "otherness" from Carlsen's last move when juxtaposed with the standard 3...♙xd5 lines.

What is Magnus doing? This isn't a simul game! Nils Grandelius is Sweden's top player and, at the time of this writing, rated 2655. Here we see Magnus opting for a thrill-seeking gambit of a pawn with the black pieces! The duties of kingship grew arduous for King Magnus since he lived life in constant preparation for his next (unsuccessful!) challenger. So, he abdicated his throne and now opts to play chess for fun, which for many in

our achievement-driven chess world, is a blasphemous concept!

This is the start of the Anti-Alapin Gambit. By contrast, 3...♙xd5 reboots the computer back to its factory settings and leads to normal Alapin lines, for which GM Grandelius was undoubtedly better prepared.

4.♘b5+



This is one of White's most logical tries. The light-squared bishop moves out before c2–c4 is played.

In later chapters, we also examine the lines:

a) 4.c4, b) 4.♙a4+, c) 4.♘f3, and d) 4.d4. Finally, e) 4.♘c4 scores well for White (only five games in the database, though, so too small of a sample) but really shouldn't. Black is completely equal after 4...♘xd5 This is a superior version for Black than the normal ...♙xd5 lines, since with the queen on d5, Black loses time.

4...♘bd7

This way, we induce White to give up the bishop pair (or lose time) when we toss in ...a7–a6. We believe the block with the knight is more logical than allowing a swap with 4...♘d7?!, which we won't cover in the book. After 5.♘xd7+ ♘bxd7 6.c4, Black scores

poorly from this position, and the engine clearly prefers White's position.

5.c4

This is White's bravest and most critical line. Grandelius hangs on to his extra pawn and dares Magnus to do something about it.

Later in the chapter, we look at 5.d4.

5.♘f3 is totally harmless for Black: 5...♗xd5 6.d4 e6 7.0-0 a6 8.♙xd7+ (8.♙a4 b5 is also just fine for Black) 8...♙xd7 9.♞e1 (9.c4 ♘f6 10.d5 ♞c7! 11.♙g5 0-0-0! leads to a sharp position with mutual chances) 9...♙e7 (9...cxd4 10.♞xd4 ♘f6 is also even) 10.♗bd2 cxd4 11.c4, ½-½, A.Kevorkov-M.Homuth, Eckernförde 2016; the players agreed to a draw in a position where Black stands better after 11...♗b4 12.♗xd4 ♗d3 13.♞e3 ♗xc1 14.♞xc1 ♞c7, Black's bishops are superior to White's knights in the open position. Also, 11.♗xd4 ♞c7 is better for Black due to ownership of the bishop pair.

5...a6

5...g6 lacks the urgency of ...a7-a6. 6.♘f3 ♙g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 Black lost both games from this position in the database, and we don't believe in Black's compensation.

6.♙xd7+

Giving up the bishop pair guarantees Black decent compensation. This way, White saves time. Later, we look at 6.♙a4 b5!.

6...♞xd7

As artificial as this looks, it's Black's main move and the one we recommend for this book. This way, we preserve our light-squared bishop for b7.

6...♙xd7 (we won't be covering this version in the book) 7.d4! scores well for White, yet the engine still believes Black is okay after the

untested 7...e6! Here is an example against a student: 8.dxe6 fxe6 9.♘f3 cxd4 10.♞xd4 (the engine suggests 10.0-0 ♙c5 11.♗xd4 ♞c7 with compensation for Black) 10...♙c6 (this is the engine's suggestion, but I was nervous about swapping queens being a pawn down; the development lead and bishop pair in the open position proved to be plenty of compensation for Black) 11.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 12.♗bd2 ♙d6 13.0-0 0-0 14.b3 (14.♞e1 can still be met with 14...e5) 14...e5 15.♞d1? (developing the bishop was correct) 15...e4 16.♗d4 ♙e5! (stronger than chopping on h2, which also favors Black) 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.♞b1 ♗g4 (it's clear that White is lost) 19.♙a3 (19.♞f1 e3 20.♗f3 e2 21.♞e1 ♙c3 also leaves White busted) 19...♙xh2+ 20.♔h1 ♙d6! (White loses material, no matter how he plays) 21.♙xd6 ♗xf2+ 0-1, G.Negus-C.Lakdawala, Training game (San Diego) 2022.

7.d4

In a few games, we look at 7.♗c3.

7...e6!

White's d5-pawn must be challenged.

8.♙e3?!

Novelty, which the engine doesn't like since the edge swings to Black.

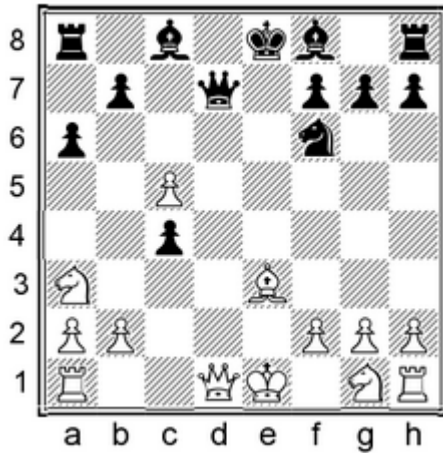
a) 8.♘f3 was previously played in all three other games in the database, which we look at in the next game.

b) 8.dxe6 is untested: 8...♞xe6+ 9.♗e2 ♞xc4 10.0-0 cxd4 11.♞e1 ♙e7 12.♗xd4 ♙g4 13.♗a3 ♞d5 14.f3 ♞d8 15.♗ac2 is equal, according to the engine.

8...exd5

Black is even in development and owns bishop pair, with an edge.

9.dxc5 dxc4 10.♖a3?!



This natural-looking move is incorrect.

10.♖c3 ♜xd1+ 11.♞xd1 ♕e6 12.♖ge2 ♞c8 13.♖a4 ♖d5 14.♕d4 f6 leaves White struggling as well, yet it is still the best option.

10...♖d5

This is okay and does give Black a clear edge. Magnus missed a far stronger continuation with 10...b5! which leaves White busted after 11.cxb6 ♕b4+ 12.♖f1 (12.♕d2 ♜e7+ is even worse for White after 13.♖e2 c3! and the trouble is 14.♕xc3 is met with the simple 14...♕xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♜xa3 winning a piece) 12...c3!, undermining support for the a3-knight; White is in deep trouble.

11.♕d4?!

11.♖xc4 was forced; however, 11...♖xe3 12.♖xe3 ♕xc5 is unpleasant for White yet still better than the game's continuation.

11...♖f4!

White faces dual threats on g2 and a knight check on d3. The engine already has Black up by a whopping -4.34!

12.♖f1

a) 12.g3?? hangs a piece to the simple 12...♖d3+ 13.♖f1 ♜xd4.

b) 12.♖xc4 ♜e6+ 13.♖e3 ♖xg2+ 14.♖f1 ♖xe3+ 15.fxe3 ♕d7 16.♖f3 0-0-0 is pretty awful for White, whose king is in danger and who lacks power on the light squares.

12...♜d5

Even stronger is 12...b5! and if 13.cxb6 Not capturing en passant is strategically hopeless for White. 13...♕b7 14.f3 0-0-0! 15.♖c2 ♕c5! wins.

13.♖f3

13.f3 ♕f5 is also lost for White.

13...♕f5!

A bishop check on d3 will be devastating.

14.♜a4+! ♕d7

The human move. The engine wants the inhuman 14...♖d8!! 15.♞d1 ♕d3+ is dead lost for White.

15.♜b4?



a) 15.♜xc4?? ♕b5! wins White's queen.

b) 15.♞e1+ ♕e7 16.♜d1 was forced. 16...♞d8 White is lost, yet better off than with the move played.

Exercise (combination alert): Magnus missed a devastating shot. What should he play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 15...♔h3! shortcircuits White's position.

15...b6?

If you are a Magnus fan, we urge you to lower your toasting champagne glass since the evaluation goes from -7.76 to nearly even after his last move!

Everyone blames the witch and forgets about the witch's familiar, who specializes in souring the milk from the udders of the victim's cows. 15...♔h3! is a game-ender: 16.♖a4+ ♕d8 (White is helpless) If 17.♞g1 ♜xf3 (Black threatens mate on e2) 18.♜xc4 ♘xg2 and game over.

16.♞e1+!

Maybe Magnus expected 16.♜xb6 f6! 17.♞e1+ ♕f7 when he was tempi-up from the game's position.

16...♘e6

16...♔e6 17.♘xc4 bxc5 18.♖a4+ ♖d7 19.♜xd7 + ♕xd7 20.♘b6+ ♕c6 21.♘xa8 ♔c4+ 22.♕g1 ♘e2+ 23.♞xe2 ♔xe2 24.♘e5+ ♕b7 25.♔e3, when if anyone stands better, it's White.

17.♜xb6 f6 18.♘c2 c3! 19.bxc3 ♕f7 20.♘e3 ♜c6!



We are reminded of the Nirvana lyrics:

*If she floats then she is not
A witch like we had thought*

*A down payment on another
One at Salem's lot*

Grandelius should be happy with the recovery, but maybe not enough to turn cartwheels on the lawn. Carlsen is down two pawns and is OK with a queen swap! For it, he gets:

1. Bishop pair.
2. Control over the light squares.
3. White's extra c-pawns are doubled, and the one on c5 is almost certain to fall.

The engine calls the game even here.

21.h3

21.h4! may be more accurate. White's problem is his sleeping h1-rook. By tossing in h2-h4, the rook may later be lifted to either h3 or even h4.

21...♘xc5

Make that one pawn down rather than two.

22.♜xc6 ♔xc6 23.♕e2?!

23.♞b1! ♘e6 24.♞b6 ♞c8 25.♕e2 ♘f4+ 26.♕d2 ♔d6! 27.♞xa6 ♞hd8 White is up two pawns, yet the engine calls it even due to Black's massive piece activity.

23...♘e6!

Now White must watch out for a knight check on f4.

24.g3?

Correct is 24.♞d1 ♘f4+ 25.♕f1 ♞d8, when Black only stands a shade better.

24...♘xd4+!

This either wins material or places the white king in dire danger.

25.cxd4

He was better off giving up the exchange with 25.♖xd4 ♗xh1 26.♖xh1 ♕c5, but, of course, White is losing here as well.

25...♗b5+ 26.♔d1

Of no help is 26.♔d2 ♗b4+.

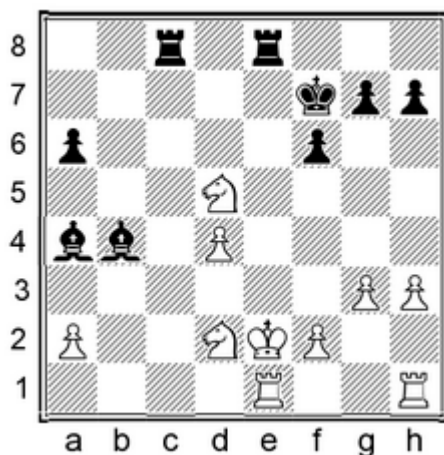
26...♗b4 27.♗d2

27.♖eg1 ♖ac8 28.♗d2 (28.♗e1 ♖hd8 29.♗1c2 ♗a4 30.♔c1 ♖xc2+! 31.♗xc2 ♖c8 wins) 28...♖hd8 29.♗b3 a5 30.♗c2 ♗c3 31.f3 a4 32.♗d2 ♗b2 33.♗e4 ♗xd4 is hopeless for White.

27...♖ac8 28.♗d5

Everything loses.

28...♗a4+ 29.♔e2 ♖he8+



Fear is made that much greater when we cannot put a name to it. The engine evaluation went to -8.66!

30.♗e3

a) 30.♔d3 is the merciful euthanasia route. 30...♗c2#.

b) 30.♔f3 ♗c6 is fatal for White.

c) 30.♔f1 ♗b5+ 31.♔g2 ♗c6 pins and wins.

30...♖c2

Let's look at the videotaped evidence against White's position: 30...♖c2 31.♖d1 ♖xa2 White lost both a-pawn and the exchange since the d1-rook can't move.

0-1

Game 2

M.Zumsande (2432) – E.Berg (2555)

German Bundesliga 2015

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♗f6

We dutifully give up our precious d-pawn, the way Abraham obeyed when God commanded him to sacrifice his son.

4.♗b5+ ♗bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 7.d4 e6 8.♗f3



White returns the pawn, seeking to catch up and even pass Black in development.

8...exd5 9.0-0

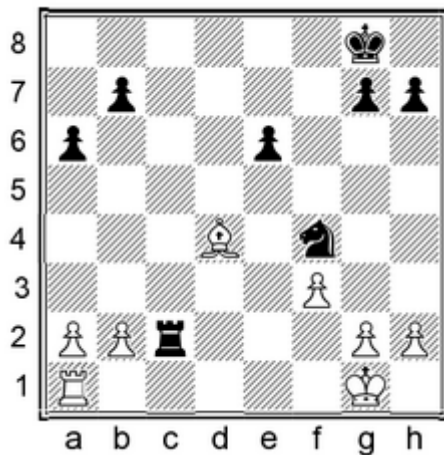
Now it is White who gambits the c4-pawn to enhance a development lead.

9...dxc4 10.♖e2+

Novelty. 10.♖e1+ ♗e7 11.♖e2 was played in F.Guido-A.Miatello, Verona 2007. In both database games, Black played 11...♖e6 with a decent game. Even stronger is the untested 11...cxd4! 12.♖xc4 0-0 13.♖xd4 ♖e8 and Black's bishop pair offers a slight edge.

10...♗e7 11.dxc5

a) 11.♖e1 cxd4! transposes to the note just above.



Threatening a fork on e2, as well as the simple capture on g2.

28. ♕e5

28. ♕f2 What happens when the guardian needs a bodyguard? 28... ♖xb2 is also lost for White.

28... ♜d3?!

Surely it was better to damage White's kingside structure with 28... ♜xg2!

29. ♕d4

29. ♕g3 is more accurate.

29... ♜f4! 30. ♕e5 ♜d3

As the song goes: Raindrops keep falling on my head. 30... ♜xg2!

31. ♕d4 ♜xb2 32. g3?!

He can't afford the weakening. His best shot to try and hold a draw is 32. ♕xb2 ♖xb2 33. a4.

32... ♜d3

32... b5! cuts off White's a2–a4 ideas.

33. ♖d1?

33. a4!

33... ♖c1!



34. ♖xc1

34. ♖f1 b5 is also dead lost for White.

34... ♜xc1 35. ♕e3 ♜xa2 36. ♕d2

The knight isn't trapped at all.

36... b5 37. ♖f2 b4 38. ♖e2 a5 39. ♖d3 a4

39... a4 40. ♖c2 b3+ 41. ♖b2 ♖f7 42. ♖a3 e5, and the problem is the a4–pawn can never be captured.

0–1

Game 3

E. Rozen (2386) – A. Erigaisi (2567)

Belgrade 2021

1. e4 c5 2. c3 d5 3. exd5 ♜f6

White immediately feels our edgy sense of challenge after our last move.

4. ♕b5+ ♜bd7 5. c4 a6 6. ♕xd7+ ♖xd7 7. ♜c3



White logically develops while backing up d5.

7...e6

The engine slightly prefers this to the more radical 7...b5 8.d3 e6 9.♖e2 ♗e7 10.dxe6 ♖xe6 ! 11.♗xe6 ♗xe6 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♘xb5 0-0 (Black is down two pawns, yet the engine pretty much calls it even!) 14.♘c3 (14.♘c7?! isn't an effective fork and is met with 14...♗xa2) 14...♘d5 15.♘ge2 ♘b4 16.0-0, T.Fiebig-H.Teske, Germany 2010; 16...♗fd8 regains one of the two sacrificed pawns while retaining full strategic compensation with the bishop pair, the potential for pressure down the a and b-files, and superior piece activity for Black.

8.dxe6

8.♖e2 ♗e7 9.dxe6 ♖xe6 10.b3 0-0 11.♗xe6 ♗xe6 12.♘ge2 b5! 13.♘f4 ♗f5 The engine slightly prefers Black's bishop pair and piece activity to White's extra pawn, P.Røyset-E.Alquist, Helsingør 2015.

8...♖xe6+!

We are hard-wired to avoid queen swaps after we sacrifice material, and this is the exception to the *principle*.

8...fxe6? 9.♘f3 The e5 is weak, and Black lacks full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

9.♖e2 ♗d6?

This move may be the start of Black's troubles. The bishop is actually better placed on e7 since this leaves the d-file clear for ...♗d8, pressuring both d3 and d4-squares.

The engine suggests the untested 9...♖xe2+! 10.♘gxe2 ♗f5 11.b3 (11.d4 cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♗d3! regains the sacrificed pawn, since 13.b3? is met with 13...♗b4 14.♘d2 (14.♗d2?? 0-0-0 15.♘f3 ♗he8+ 16.♘d1 ♘g4 It's time for White to resign) 14...♗e4 with huge compensation for Black, due to the unfortunate white king's exposed situation) 11...0-0-0 Black achieved loads of compensation for the pawn, with bishop pair and control over both d3 and d4-squares.

10.d3 0-0 11.♖xe6 ♗xe6 12.♘ge2

This way, both ♗f4, and ♘f4 hang over Black's head.

12.♘f3 was tried a few months later. 12...♗fe8 13.♗e3, G.Eulering-T.Schmitz, Rottach Egern 2021. Black gets decent compensation for the pawn after 13...♘g4 14.0-0-0 f5!.

12...♗f5

Going after the weak d3-point.

13.♗f4! ♗ad8 14.0-0-0 ♘g4!

Black must continue to generate threats before White consolidates the extra pawn.

15.♗hf1



15...♙xf4+?!

Erigaisi wants to regain his sacrificed pawn. There is no rush for this, and 15...♖fe8 looks like an improvement.

16.♜xf4 ♜xh2 17.♞fe1 ♜g4 18.♜cd5!

Threatening a fork on e7.

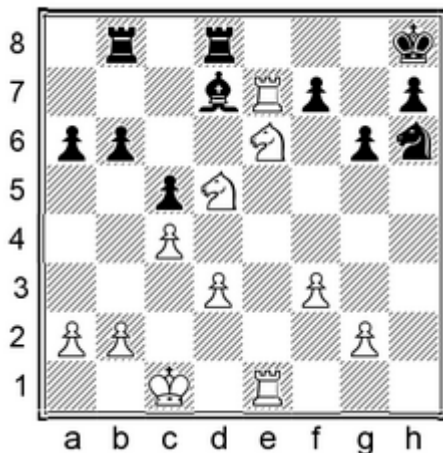
18...♙d7

18...♙h8 is a touch better.

19.f3 ♜h6 20.♜e7+ ♙h8 21.♞e5!

Gaining a tempo by attacking c5. White emerged from the opening in great shape, and Black is left fighting for survival.

21...b6 22.♞de1 g6 23.♜ed5 ♞b8 24.♞e7 ♞fd8 25.♜e6!?



Black's position feels as if it's overrun with a rat infestation. Keep in mind: flashy doesn't always equate with powerful. White retains a

large advantage after this trick, yet it was stronger to take the quiet route and squeeze Black with 25.g4!.

25...♙xe6 26.♞1xe6 ♙g7

GMs don't fall for 26...fxe6?? 27.♜f6 when Black is mated.

27.♞a7?!

White outsources his war to the queenside. 27.g4! still keeps Black under pressure.

27...♜f5!

The young Indian star wastes no time to activate his knight since his a6-pawn isn't hanging.

28.♞f6?!

a) 28.♞xb6?! ♞xb6 29.♜xb6 ♞xd3 is fine for Black.

b) 28.♙d2! retains White's advantage.

28...♞f8 29.♙d2

29.♞xb6 ♞xb6 30.♜xb6 h5! when both ...♞e8 and ...♜h4 are in the air, the engine calls it close to even despite White's extra pawns.

29...♜d4!

Worrying White about rook infiltration to e2. Believe it or not, the engine calls the game close to even here, despite Black's loose pawns on the queenside.

30.♞f4

The idea is to meet ...♞fe8 with ♞e4.

30.♞xb6? ♞xb6 31.♜xb6 ♞e8 32.♙d1 ♞e2 White is the one fighting for his life.

30...a5 31.a4 h5 32.♜c7 ♙h6!

Evading White's ♞xd4, followed by ♜e6+ trick.

33.♖e4?



33.♗b5 was necessary. The engine prefers Black after 33...♗f5.

33...f5!

White's former self-assurance is called into question.

34.♖e3

34.♖e7?? gets forked with 34...♗c6.

34...f4?!

Black missed a chance with 34...♖f7! 35.♗b5 ♖xa7 36.♗xa7 ♔g5! White is busted since Black's king will raid the kingside along the dark squares.

35.♖e4 ♗c6 36.♖a6 ♗b4 37.♖a7 ♖fd8

No draw. The engine prefers 37...♖f7.

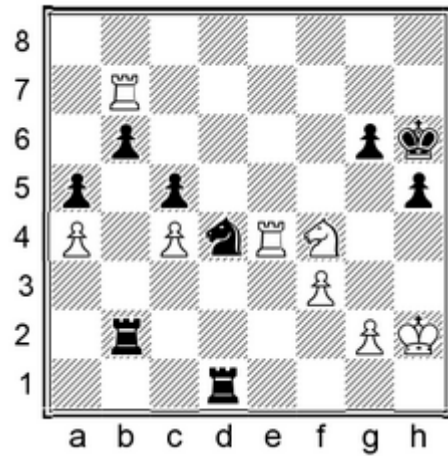
38.♗e6 ♖xd3+ 39.♔e2 ♖b3 40.♗xf4 ♖xb2+ 41.♔f1 ♖d8 42.♔g1

42.♖e6?? ♖d1+ 43.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 44.♔xe1 g5 45.♗e6 ♖xg2 46.♗f8 Threat: ♖h7 mate. 46...♗d3+ 47.♔d1 g4 Black wins.

42...♗c6 43.♖b7?!

43.♖f7 was necessary.

43...♖d1+ 44.♔h2 ♗d4!



f3 is under fire.

45.♖e7?

White had to try 45.♖e8 ♗xf3+ 46.♔g3 ♗d4 47.♖f7.

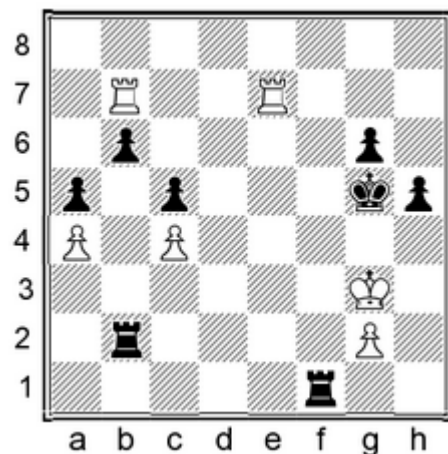
45...♖f1!

Stronger than the immediate 45...♗xf3+.

46.♗e6 ♗xf3+ 47.♔g3 ♗g5

Even stronger is 47...h4+! 48.♔h3 ♗g5+.

48.♗xg5 ♔xg5



It doesn't require the deduction skills of Sherlock Holmes to see that the rook ending is hopelessly lost for White, who could have resigned here.

49.♔h3 ♖h1+ 50.♔g3 h4+ 51.♔f3 ♖f1+ 52.♔e3 ♖xg2 53.♖e5+ ♖f5 54.♖xf5+ ♔xf5

Dodging White's last cheapo prayer 54...gxf5?? 55.♖g7+ skewering black king and rook.

55.♖xb6 h3 56.♔f3

White's position has become a tent city for the homeless and the destitute.

56...g5 and White resigned.

0-1

Game 4

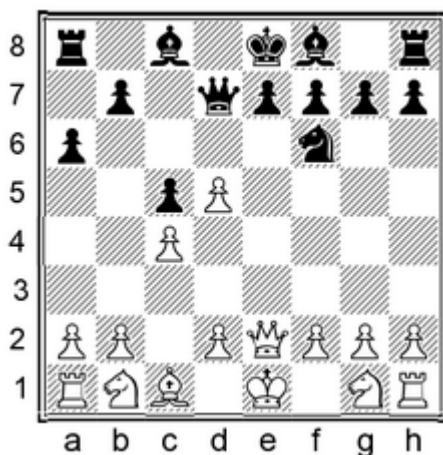
B.Besner (2114) – H.Teske (2486)

Austrian Team ch 2006

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6

Some opening lines are theoretically discredited, soon to be obsolete. Gifted clairvoyants, and your shepherds on this journey, predict the Anti-Alapin Gambit will not be joining this unfortunate group, not only due to our magical prowess but also to the engine's assessment, deeming it sound.

4.♙b5+ ♘bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 7.♖e2



Just like the last game, White wants to swap queens on e6.

After 7.♘c3 e6 8.♖e2 ♙d6 9.dxe6, the engine suggests the shocking 9...♖c6!? 10.♖f3! (White will have a tough time surviving the uber-greedy 10.exf7+?! ♔xf7 11.♖f3 ♖e8+ 12.♔f1 ♖xf3! 13.♘xf3 ♙f5 with a scary lead in

development for

Black) 10...♖c7 11.exf7+ ♔xf7! 12.h3 ♖e8+ 13.♘ge2 b5! 14.d3! (14.♖xa8?! ♙b7 15.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 16.0-0 bxc4 favors

Black) 14...♙b7 15.♘d5 ♙xd5 16.cxd5 ♖b7 17.♙e3 ♖xd5, Black gets full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

7...b5!?

A new move.

Fully payable

is 7...e6 8.dxe6 ♖xe6 9.♘f3 ♖xe2+! 10.♔xe2 ♙f5 11.d3 0-0-

0 12.♖d1 ♙d6 13.♙e3 ♖he8 14.♘c3, I.Haitin-G.Tarigan, Chess.com INT 2021. The engine calls it full compensation for Black after 14...♙f4, intending either ...♘g4 or ...g7-g5 next.

8.d3 e6

As always, Black must chip away at White's d5-point.

9.♘f3

9.dxe6 ♖xe6 10.♘f3 ♙e7 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♖xe6 ♙xe6 13.b3 ♖ad8 14.♔e2 ♖fe8! Black achieves compensation. Now, White should not play 15.cxb5? c4! 16.bxc4 ♙b4, leaving White in deep trouble.

9...♙e7 10.dxe6 ♖xe6 11.♘c3 0-0!

Teske, acting as if he were a CEO of a Fortune 500 company, invests further with the offer of a second pawn on b5, in the holy name of development and opening the game for Black's bishop pair.

12.♖xe6 ♙xe6 13.cxb5?!



This is awfully materialistic. White should probably refrain from this with 13.b3 ♖ad8 14.♔e2 ♜fe8 15.♙e3 ♙d7, Stockfish judges this close to even, despite White's extra pawn.

13...axb5 14.♗xb5 ♗d5 15.♙g5

15.♗c3 ♗b4 16.0-0 ♗xd3 offers Black full compensation for a pawn.

15...f6 16.♙e3 ♜fb8 17.♗c3 ♜xb2

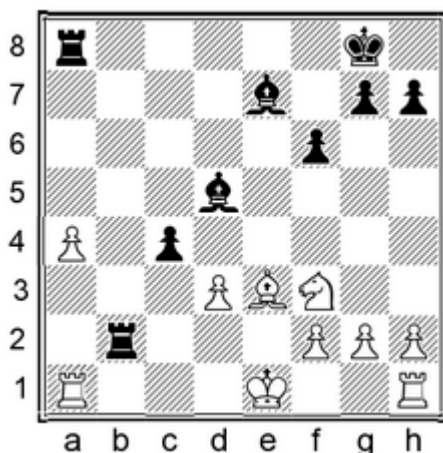
Slightly preferable was 17...♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♜xb2.

18.♗xd5 ♙xd5 19.a4?!

It's difficult to say "No" to playing for a win when you are up a pawn.

White was probably better off settling for 19.0-0 with a likely draw. 19...♜axa2 20.♜xa2 ♜xa2 Only Black has winning chances. 21.♜c1.

19...c4!



Suddenly we feel a real undertow of danger behind the placid externals.

20.0-0

No choice. 20.dxc4?? ♙xc4 leaves White's king caught in the middle.

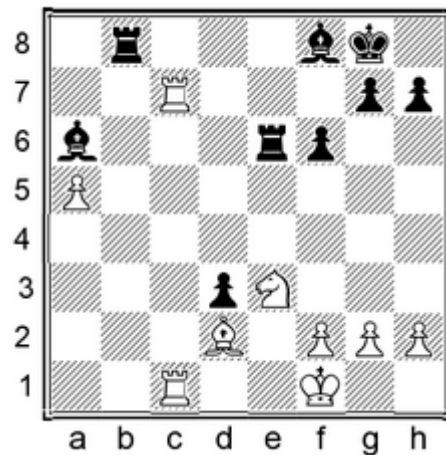
20...cxd3 21.♜fd1 ♙c4 22.a5 ♙a6

Black's d-pawn is more dangerous than White's a-pawn. Add bishop pair to Black's advantage, and it becomes worrisome.

23.♙c1 ♜b3 24.♗d4 ♜c3 25.♙d2 ♜c4 26.♗f5 ♙f8

The terms of the soldier's enlistment expired, and now he returns to life as a civilian. Moving to c5 is preferable.

27.♗e3 ♜c6 28.♔f1 ♜d8 29.♜ac1 ♜e6 30.♜c7 ♜b8 31.♜dc1?



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see Black's shot, which appears to be a blunder at first?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Moving our bishop to b4 works, even though we get pinned next move.

31.♔g1 was necessary.

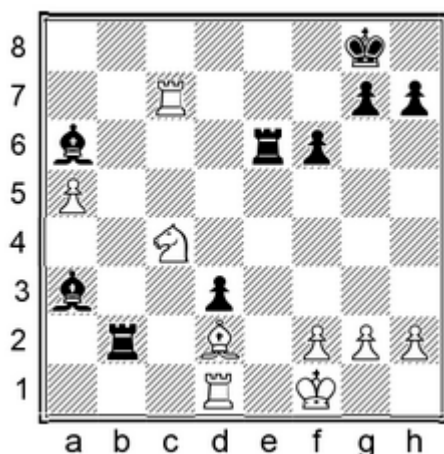
31...♙a3?

31...♙b4!! (this combination is based upon the **Principle:** If we see our opponent's coming

threat and choose to ignore it, we better be confident in our calculation) 32.♖b1; both sides probably saw this move and rejected the variation as unsound for Black. We need to look deeper and

notice: 32...♞e8! 33.♞xb4 (33.♞b2 ♕xd2 34.♞xd2 ♖b1+ 35.♜d1 ♞xd1+! 36.♞xd1 d2+ 37.♝g1 ♞e1+ and back rank mate next move) 33...♞xb4 34.♕xb4 ♞xe3! 35.♝g1 (35.fx e3? d2+ with discovered check, followed by promotion on d1) 35...♞e4 36.♕c3 ♞e2 37.♞d7 ♞c2! 38.♕e1 ♞c1 wins.

32.♞d1 ♞b2 33.♜c4??



Even Tarzan of the Apes would frown upon the knight's claim of its ability to swing from tree to tree.

Exercise (planning): Prove why White's last move was a blunder:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Pinned piece. Transferring the rook to c2 wins material.

Necessary was to offer White's king luft with a move like 33.g4

33...♞c2 34.♜xa3 ♞xc7 35.♕e3

This doesn't help, but White was dead lost anyway.

35...d2+ 36.♝g1 ♞c1! and White resigned.

0-1

Game 5

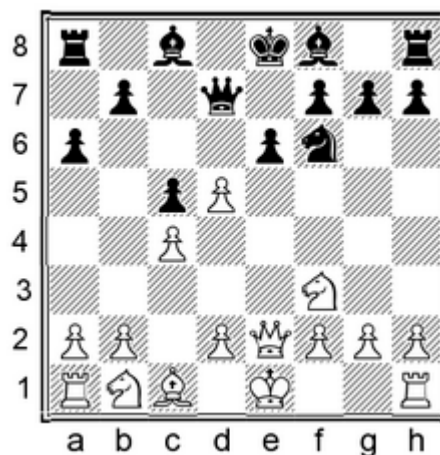
I.Delemarre (2215) – H.Teske (2500)

Regensburg 1997

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♟f6

The questioning of authority marks the birth of rebellion.

4.♕b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♕xd7+ ♞xd7 7.♜f3 e6 8.♞e2



We reach the season finale of the early queen moves to e2.

8...♕e7 9.dxe6 ♞xe6 10.d4

White wants to gain time on Black's queen with d4–d4, or ♜xd4, should Black exchange on d4.

10.♞xe6 ♕xe6 11.b3 was seen in N.Vlassov-T.Sahil, Chess.com INT 2022. Black achieves full compensation for the sacrificed pawn with 11...0-0-0 12.♕b2 ♞he8 13.0-0 ♜h5.

10...b5!?

Principles:

1. Open the position when leading in development.
2. Open the position when in ownership of bishop pair.

11.♟bd2

11. ♖xe6 ♗e6 12.d5 ♗f5 Black's development lead and bishop pair offer full compensation, and it's not even clear if White can hang on to the extra pawn.

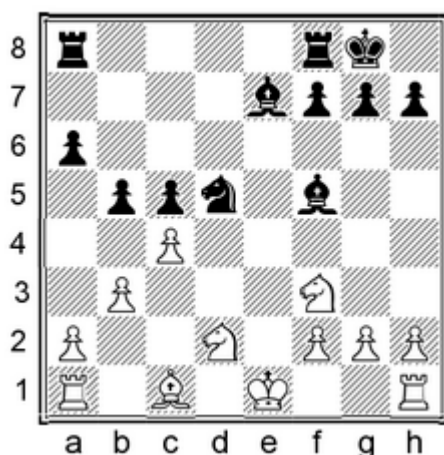
11...0-0

GM Teske just develops, having faith in his development lead and bishop pair.

12. ♖xe6 ♗e6 13.d5 ♗f5 14.b3?!

White can maintain rough equality with 14.0-0 bxc4 15.d6! ♗xd6 16.♖xc4 ♗e7 17.♞e1 ♗e6 18.b3.

14...♖xd5!?



This is a radical solution: Black gives up two minor pieces for a rook and pawns.

The engine prefers 14...♖h5! (Threat: ...♗f6) 15.♗b2 ♖f4 16.0-0 ♖d3 17.♗c3 b4 18.♗e5 g5! 19.h3 h5 White is in deep strategic trouble.

15.♗b2?

She should accept with 15.cxd5 ♗f6 16.♞b1 ♞fe8+ 17.♔d1 ♗xb1 18.♖xb1 ♞ad8 19.♞e1 ♞xd5+ 20.♔c2 was A.Lorenzo Bailador-T.Paarup, Madrid 2017. The engine calls it even after 20...♞xe1 21.♖xe1 ♗d4.

15...♖b4!

This octo-knight will soon turn into an eight-tentacled creature on d3.

16.0-0 ♖d3

Don't you hate it when some lout in a reprehensible breach of common courtesy violates your personal space and talks to you three inches from your face, just like this knight?

17.♗c3 b4 18.♗e5 ♞fd8

Even stronger is 18...g5! 19.h3 h5 20.♗h2 ♗f6 21.♞ad1 g4 22.hxg4 hxg4 23.♖e1 ♖b2 24.♞c1 ♗g5 25.f4 ♗f6 when White is in a horrible tangle and can resign here.

19.♗g3 ♗f6 20.♞ad1 ♖b2! 21.♞c1 h6

21...g5! is more vigorous.

22.♖b1



Retreat to your home square, and we risk the sad fate of the unemployed child forced to move back in with his parents at age 50. One cannot truthfully claim that White's b1-knight lives life in a fever of adventure. Words or assessments aren't necessary to explain why White's position is falling apart.

22.h3 a5 is also hopeless for White, who can only wait.

22...♞d7 23.a3

Petty disobedience is not the same as a direct challenge to authority. It only benefits Black to open the queenside. At this point, White must

have been wondering if she died and had arisen in hell since nothing worked:

a) 23.♙e5? ♜d3 24.♙xf6 ♜xc1 Black wins a full exchange.

b) 23.♜e5 ♙xe5 24.♙xe5 ♜d3 wins.

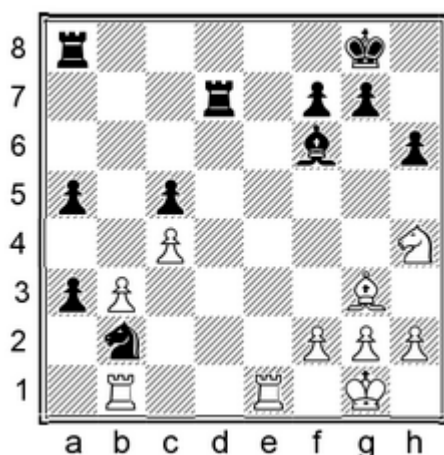
23...a5

The immediate 23...♙d3! 24.♞fe1 ♙xb1! 25.♞xb1 bxa3 with a crushing position for Black is simpler.

24.♜h4 ♙d3

He wants to lure this rook to e1, so ...♜d3 arrives with more force.

25.♞fe1 ♙xb1! 26.♞xb1 bxa3



Black is about to win significant material, and White can resign here.

27.♞f1

27.♞a1 ♜d3 28.♞f1 ♙xa1 29.♞xa1 ♜b4 is also completely hopeless for White.

27...a4! 28.bxa4 ♞xa4 and White resigned.

0-1

Game 6

T.Thimm (2174) – H.Teske (2486)

Bad Zwischenahn 2006

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♜f6 4.♙b5+ ♜bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙a4



White wants to hang on to the light-squared bishop and backs it up. It doesn't come for free since Black's next move arrives with great force.

6...b5! 7.cxb5

This greed-is-good stance is played in all 17 database games.

7.♙b3?! is weak and loses time. 7...bxc4 8.♙xc4 ♜b6 Black already stands slightly better.

7...♜b6

Next game, we look at 7...♜xd5.

8.bxa6+

This capture was played in all three database games.

8...♜xa4 9.♞xa4+ ♜d7

This is our tax dollars at work. Indigenous to the 6.♙a4 line are the following factors:

1. White will be one to two pawns.
2. White will seriously lag in development.
3. Black will pick up the bishop pair.
4. If the bishop pair is Black's, then control over the light squares follows.

The engine's preference is 9...♙d7 10.♚c4 e6! 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♚b5+ ♙d7 13.♚e2+ ♙e7 14.♜f3 as played in K.Pilgaard-M.S.Hansen, Copenhagen 1990. Black gets loads of compensation after 14...♙c8!.

10.♜f3

For some reason, the engine prefers White after the unnatural 10.a7 ♚b6 11.♜f3 ♜xa7; it feels like Black got full compensation to our human eyes.

10...♜xa6?!

Teske's passion for complications may exceed his position's tolerance. He incorrectly chooses to gain a tempo rather than grab the diagonal with the more natural and untested 10...♙xa6! White's inability to castle is indeed angst-fueling. We love Black's position here.

11.♚c2 e6 12.0-0

a) 12.dxe6? is too greedy. 12...♜xe6+ 13.♙d1 ♙d6 Black's attacking chances are worth more than White's two extra pawns.

b) The engine suggests 12.d4, which is unnatural for a human whose instinct is to castle and get the king the hell out of the center as quickly as possible!

12...exd5?!

12...♙b7! is correct and offers Black compensation.

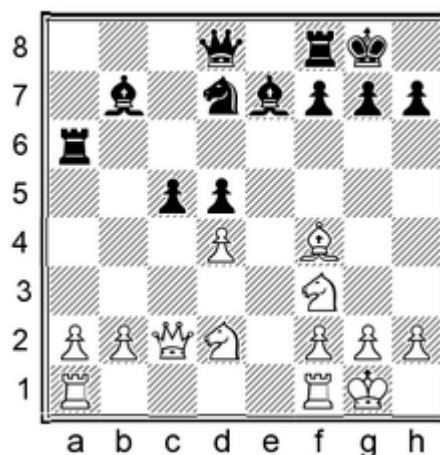
13.d4! ♙e7 14.♙f4

The engine points out the clever idea 14.dxc5! ♜xc5 15.♙g5! Black's compensation no longer feels adequate.

14...0-0 15.♜bd2?!

There is no reason to go passive, and the preferable was 15.♜c3.

15...♙b7



For the sacrificed pawn, Black received the following:

1. A slight development lead.
2. The bishop pair.
3. Central pawn influence.
4. A rook lifted to the third rank, which can swing over to c- or e-files, or the kingside.

It doesn't feel like enough. Those greedy corporations, known as the engines, agree and prefer White's chances.

16.♜fe1

White can also play for the d4-square with 16.dxc5 ♜xc5 17.♜d4.

16...♜c6

The immediate 16...c4 is preferable.

17.♚d3

After 17.♜b3! c4 18.♜a5 ♜b6 19.♜xb7 ♜xb7 20.b3, we no longer believe in Black's full compensation.

17...♙f6 18.♜e5

18.a4!? is an idea following the *Principle*: Passed pawns should be pushed.

18...♙xe5 19.♙xe5

19.dxe5?! ♖b6! Black's central pawns offer full compensation.

19...♖b6

Or 19...♗xe5 20.♞xe5 ♖b6 21.b3 ♕a6 22.dxc5 ♞xc5 when White still stands better.

20.♗f3 c4 21.♞c3 ♞a8

Black no longer has compensation for the pawn, and the grandmaster has been outplayed by his lower-rated opponent.

22.♞e3

22.♗h4!, intending to head for f5, looks dangerous for Black.

22...h6 23.a3?!

He wants to use his a1-rook. The problem is that Black may generate pressure down the b-file later.

If he is going to push the a-pawn, then he should commit with 23.a4

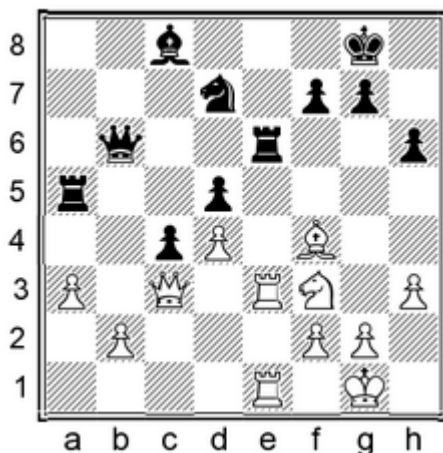
23...♞e6

After 23...♕c8! 24.♕g3 ♗f6 25.♗e5 ♞e6, it won't be easy for White to make use of his extra pawn.

24.♞ae1 ♕c8! 25.h3 ♞a5?!

Black intends ...♞b5. However, there is a tactical problem with it.

26.♕f4?!



White missed the engine's trick to re-post the bishop to a superior spot with 26.♕d6! ♗f6 27.♕b4!.

26...♗f6 27.b4!?

He gets two connected passed pawns, and the problem is they are, at least for now, blockaded on the light squares. Also, Black is given a protected and passed c-pawn.

27.♗d2 keeping Black's knight out of e4 is also an idea.

27...♞a8 28.♗d2?!

This is passive.

After 28.♕e5! ♗e4 29.♞xe4! dxe4 30.d5! ♞g6 31.♞xe4, White stands better, and 31...♕xh3 is met

with 32.♗h4 ♞g4 33.♞xg4 ♕xg4 34.♕xg7 ♞d6 35.♕h8 f6 36.♕xf6, which looks dangerous for Black's denuded king.

28...♞xe3 29.♞xe3 ♕f5

Black's position improved, and now he gets full compensation for his missing pawn.

30.♕e5 ♗d7 31.♗f3 ♕e4 32.♕f4 ♗f8 33.♗d2?!

33.♗e5 was necessary.

33...♕d3!

Now the a3 pawn is weak, and the advantage swings to Black.

34.♞e5??

In chess, as in life, we can go from abundance to destitution in an instant. This looks like a time pressure error where sometimes our traitorous hand moves faster than thought itself.

34...♗g6

Does Black's "combination spellbind you?" Us neither, yet such a simple tactic is often how we win under mutual time pressure. We feel the discordant note in White's position and are

reminded of one of those mean-spirited “You break it, you buy it” signs in shops. Black wins the exchange with a simple double attack.

After 34...♗g6 35.♙e3 ♜xe5 36.dxe5 ♖a6, the a3-pawn also falls.

0-1

Game 7
T.Porat (1870) – C.Lakdawala (2492)
 Training game (San Diego) 2022

Let’s look at a game in the Featherweight division. My student Tori, whose great-grandfather was an IM who drew a game against Bobby Fischer, is in the top 10 in the country for girls aged 12 and is already a WCM. At her age, I was rated in the 1100s.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6

A sacrifice is not a concession since, with it, we receive something we consider of equal value: energy. I entered this world as an Anti-Alapin Gambit player and will leave the world as an Anti-Alapin Gambiteer. Actually, no, I’m joking. The gambit was totally under our radar until we saw Magnus play it in his game against Grandelius.

4.♙b5+ ♜bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙a4 b5! 7.cxb5 ♜xd5



This way, we don’t allow White an opportunity to play ♘c3.

8.♘f3!

8.♘c3?! scores better for White, but it shouldn’t. Black stands slightly better after 8...♗b4!

8...♗5b6

This is the engine’s top choice: we either pick off the bishop pair or regain the sacrificed pawn.

a) 8...♖a5?! was played in C.Jahn-J.Borek, Graz 1993. After 9.b6 ♘5xb6 10.♙c6 ♖a7 11.0-0 ♜c7 12.♙e4, White stands better.

b) 8...g6 9.♘c3 ♘5b6 10.♙c2 axb5 11.♘xb5 w as R.Moran-L.Rust, ICCF email 2016; Black gets Benko-Gambit-like compensation after 11...♙a6.

9.0-0

Tori decides to hand over her light-squared bishop. 9.♙c2 axb5 10.0-0 ♙b7 11.d4 c4 doesn’t look like a promising isolani position for White.

9...♗xa4 10.♖xa4



10...♙b7 11.♘c3

11.d3 axb5 12.♖xb5 ♙xf3 13.gxf3 offers Black full compensation; in fact, we prefer Black’s chances.

11...axb5

I preferred to regain the sacrificed pawn rather than inflict damage upon White's kingside structure with 11...♙xf3 12.gxf3.

12. ♖f4

12. ♖xb5? loses the exchange for not insufficient compensation after 12...♙a6.

12... ♖b6

Covering the b5-pawn.

13. ♗g5?

Our level of despair is reached in two ways:

1. In slow degrees.
2. Instantly, one poor move prompts the sinking of our position into oblivion.

This is a case of number 2 on the list. The move is a misapplication of the *Principle*: The side ahead in development should create confrontation. The problem here is she loses time, thus negating her "side ahead in development" portion of the equation.

Correct

was 13.d4! cxd4 14. ♖xd4 b4 15. ♖xb6 ♗xb6 16. ♗b5 ♗d5 17. ♖d1 ♖c8 looks only a shade better for Black.

13...f6

"You just handed over two tempi free of charge!" I scolded after making this painfully obvious move. "Nonsense," replied Tori. "My plan is just too deep for you to understand!"

14. ♗f3 e5 15. ♖g3

She wants to make it difficult for me to develop my kingside.

15...b4

Her knights begin to get pushed around.

16. ♗e2 e4

The engine also likes 16...c4.

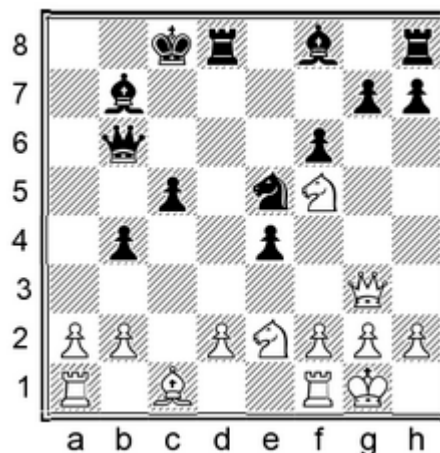
17. ♗h4

It gets worse and worse. 17. ♗e1 ♗e5 18.d3 0-0-0!, and if 19.dxe4, then 19...♙a6! is decisive.

17... ♗e5

I don't want White to be able to play either d2-d3 or even f2-f3.

18. ♗f5 0-0-0



White is strategically busted due to the following factors:

1. She is unable to develop the queenside pieces.
2. White's light squares bleed, the most prominent square of which is d3.
3. White is horribly cramped, and Black has a simple plan of pushing pawns on the kingside.

18...g5 is the engine's odd suggestion.

19. ♖h3

19. ♗xg7?? hangs the knight to 19...♖d3! 20.f3 exf3 21.gxf3 ♖g8 22. ♖h3+ ♗b8.

19... ♗b8 20.a4



a) 20. ♖e3 ♙a6 21. ♗g3 g6 22. b3 ♘d3 is also awful for White.

b) 20. a3 is met with 20... ♙a6 21. ♗eg3 g6 22. ♗e3 b3 White's queenside pieces are buried alive.

20...g6?!

Well, this is embarrassing. Your over-the-hill writer, not the greatest finisher in chess history who is an estimated ten months to one year away from senility, forgot that 20... ♗c8! is crushing. The threat is to win a piece with ...g7–g6. Of course, 21.g4 is not going to help White much after 21... ♗d3 22. ♗eg3 h5.

21.a5 ♙a6

This shuts down White's a5–a6 ideas.

22. ♗fg3 h5

...h5–h4 is in the air. I didn't want to allow 22...f5 23. ♗f4.

23. ♗e1

Even more awful are the lines
a) 23. ♗d1? h4 24. ♗f1 ♗c8, and
b) 23. ♗f4? ♗c8.

23...♗d3

Gaining a tempo while preventing ♗f4.

24. ♗d1 h4

I almost hallucinated but then saw that my intended queen "trap" 24... ♗c8 25. ♙h4 g5? is no trap at all since White can play 26. ♙xe4.

25. ♗f1 f5



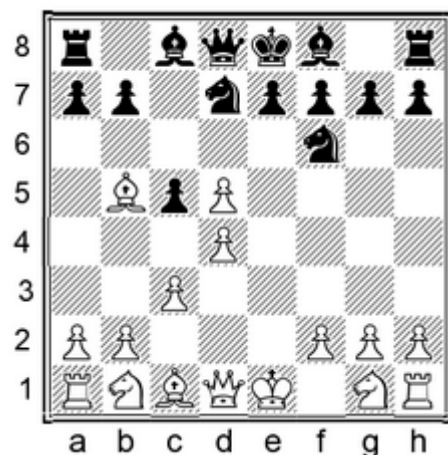
"Your position looks an awful lot like a small rodent in the anaconda's belly," I rudely commented to Tori, who normally refuses to resign when busted. Then she shocked me: "Fine," she replied, "let's start a new game."

25...f5 26. ♗e3 ♗d6 27. b3 f4 28. ♗g4 f3 is awful for White.

0–1

Game 8
P.Patil (2259) – V.Karthik (2457)
Bhubaneswar 2018

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♗f6 4. ♗b5+ ♗bd7 5.d4



White isn't interested in holding on to the gambit pawn and instead offers it back to free his position.

5...a6!

We prefer this immediate challenge 5...♖b6?! 6.♙c4! cxd4 7.♘f3! Black will either be down a pawn or if he swaps on c3, then lags in development where White gets a kind of super-Queen's Gambit Declined Tarrasch isolani position with colors reversed, T.Peiris-C.Priyankara, Malabe 2015.

6.♙xd7+!?

White wants to be up a pawn. It isn't for free since Black gets the bishop pair, light square control, and a development lead for it, even if it's an ending.

It is safer to back down with 6.♙e2 ♘xd5 7.♘f3 e6 8.c4 ♘5f6 9.♘c3 cxd4 10.♖xd4 ♙c5 with a balanced position, K.Shevchenko-A.Erigaisi, Chess.com INT 2021.

6...♖xd7!

a) 6...♙xd7? 7.dxc5 e6 8.d6 b6 9.♘f3! bxc5 10.♘a3 ♙c6 11.♙f4 is clearly in White's favor since the d6-pawn chokes Black.

b) 6...♘xd7? 7.c4! also heavily favors White.

7.dxc5

White goes for the piratical skull and crossbones version, where he grabs as many pawns as possible. Do you remember those thermometer guns that store owners used to check our temperature during the height of the pandemic? Who among us failed to flinch as it was placed on our forehead, as if our life was about to end, execution style, with a single bullet to the forehead? Not one among us died from that non-existent bullet. We need to learn NOT to flinch when White grabs a pawn (or even more than one pawn!), trusting in our natural compensation.

The untested 7.c4 e6 transposes to the Grandelius-Carlsen game, the first one in the book.

7...♖xd5!

Novelty. Black is not afraid to enter an ending a pawn down. We consider the ending excellent for Black and a possible improvement over 7...♘xd5 8.♘f3 e6 9.♖d4 was played in M.Bratmann-M.Jahraus, Wiesbaden 2018. After 9...♖c6 10.b4 ♙e7! 11.a3 ♙f6 12.♘e5 ♖c7 13.f4 b6 14.cxb6 ♘xb6, Black is down two pawns, yet the engine calls it dead even due to Black's bishop pair and development lead.

8.♖xd5 ♘xd5 9.♘d2

White plans to hang on to his extra pawn. If Black regains the sacrificed pawn, he will stand better due to the bishop pair and development lead.

Some alternatives are:

a) The engine suggests the inhuman 9.a3!? (intending c3-c4 next) 9...e5 10.c4 ♘e7 11.♘f3 f6 12.♘c3 ♙e6 13.♘d2 ♘c6 14.b4 a5 15.♘d5 ♖f7 16.♘c7 ♖d8 17.♘xe6 ♖xe6 18.♖b1 axb4 19.axb4 ♙e7 when Black's development and king position easily compensates for the missing pawn.

b) After 9.♘f3?! e6, White must return the extra c5-pawn and stand a touch worse since if greed kicks in and White plays 10.b4?! a5 11.♙d2 ♙e7 (intending ...♙f6) 12.a4 (intending to meet ...♙f6 with ♖a3) 12...f6 13.0-0 e5, when White's position looks awful to our human eyes and even the greedy engine gives Black an edge.

9...e5 10.♘gf3?!

The knight is misplaced on f3, and the engine already wants to return the pawn and accept inferiority with

a) 10.♘c4 f6 11.♘d6+ (11.♘b6 ♘xb6 12.cxb6 ♙c5 13.♙e3 ♙xe3 14.fxe3 ♙e6 15.b3 0-0-0 is also in Black's favor) 11...♙xd6 12.cxd6 ♙f5 13.♘e2 0-0-0 and Black regains the sacrificed pawn with advantage.

b) 10.♖b3? is too greedy: 10...a5! 11.a4 ♕e6 12.♗f3 f6 when ...♗xc3 is in the air, and White's position looks depressing due to the light square punctures and the imminent fall of the extra pawn.

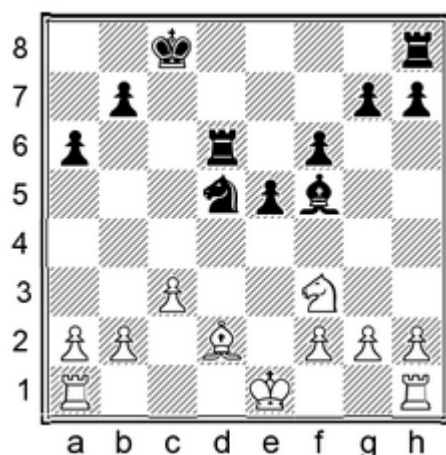
10...f6 11.♗e4

11.♗b3 a5 12.a4 ♕e6 is similar to the note just above. White is in trouble.

11...♕f5 12.♗d6+

12.♗fd2 ♗f4 13.0-0 ♗e2+! 14.♖h1 0-0-0 15.f3 ♗xc1 16.♖axc1 ♕xc5! and Black regains the sacrificed pawn with a huge advantage in the ending.

12...♕xd6 13.cxd6 0-0-0 14.♕d2 ♖xd6



This is NOT what White had in mind when he grabbed pawns in the opening. Black stockpiled the following arms in preparation for the coming battle:

1. Black regained both sacrificed pawns.
2. White lags seriously in development.
3. Black will seize control over the d-file, the only open one on the board.
4. The presence of opposite-colored bishops only helps Black since his bishop is the more potent model, offering power along the light squares.
5. Black's e5-pawn gives him superior central influence.

Conclusion: White is borderline lost, if not already there.

15.c4 ♗c7 16.♕b4

16.♕e3 ♖hd8 17.♗d2 ♗e6 is also highly unpleasant for White.

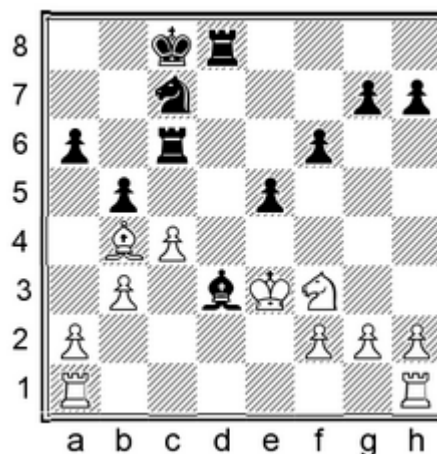
16...♖c6! 17.b3 ♕d3!

Black prevents castling on both wings.

18.♖d2

Having consulted numerous constitutional law chess scholars, they tell us that queenside castling, 18.0-0-0? is indeed legal. However, "legal" and "wise" are very different matters. The move is a blunder, which is met with the shot 18...♕xc4!, leaving White busted.

18...♖d8 19.♖e3 b5!



White's flammable position requires but a single spark to burn it down. **Principles:**

1. Create confrontation when leading in development.
2. Open the position when leading in development.

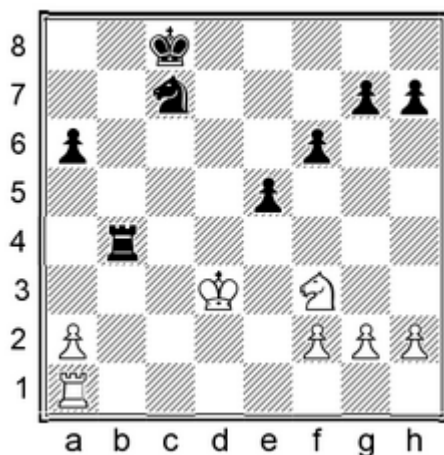
20.♖hd1

a) 20.♗d2 bxc4 21.bxc4 ♕xc4 is lost for White.

b) 20.cxb5? (White can't allow Black's knight to reach d5) 20...♕xb5 (Threat: ...♗d5+, followed by ...♗xb4) 21.♕a5 ♖d3+ 22.♖e4 ♖c2 is dead lost

for White. If 23.♖ac1 ♜e2+ 24.♔f5 “A good death is its own reward,” advised Sub-commander Faora-Ul, the sexy (yet evil) Kryptonian war criminal in the Man of Steel Superman movie. 24...♕d7#.

20...bxc4 21.bxc4 ♜xc4 22.♞xd3 ♞xd3+ 23.♔xc3 ♞xb4



Black is up a clean pawn with the superior position.

24.♗d2 ♞h4

It's better to centralize with 24...♔d7.

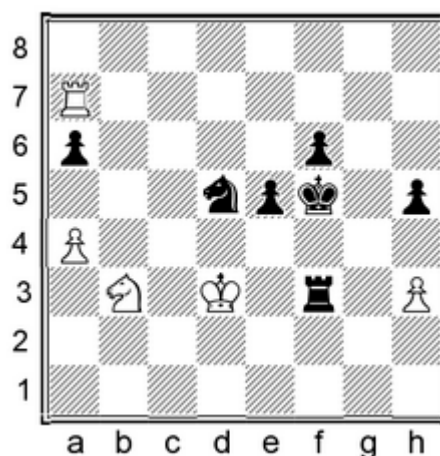
25.h3 ♗d5 26.♞c1+ ♔d7 27.♗b3 ♔d6

Playing it safe was unnecessary. Black had better go with 27...♗f4+! 28.♔d2 ♗xg2 29.♗c5+ ♔d6 30.♗xa6 ♞a4! 31.♗c7 ♞xa2+ forcing resignation.

28.♞c8 ♗f4+ 29.♔c2 ♗xg2 30.♞g8 ♞f4

30...g5! is more accurate, but everything wins at this stage.

31.♞xg7 ♞xf2+ 32.♔c3 h5 33.a4 ♗f4 34.♗d2 ♔e6 35.♞a7 ♗d5+ 36.♔d3 ♔f5 37.♗b3 ♞f3+



Winning the h-pawn.

38.♔c4 And White resigned at the same time.

After 38.♔c4 ♞c3+ 39.♔xd5 ♞xb3 40.♞xa6 ♞xh3 41.a5 h4, it's not even close.

0-1

Chapter 2: 4.c4

In this chapter, White hangs on to the extra pawn without a swap of light-squared bishops first, with a bishop check on b5. What are the differences between the two lines?

1. In the ♗b5+ version, White moves closer to castling, hoping to disrupt Black's attempts to regain the sacrificed pawn.
2. In the ♗b5+ versions, this bishop is often traded away. This means that Black gets bishop pair along with play on the light squares for the pawn.
3. With the 4.c3–c4 lines, White's bishop remains on the board. This slows down attempts to castle quickly.
4. In the 4.c3–c4 lines, White often ends up with a sorry-looking light-squared bishop since it is usually hemmed-in by a white pawn on d3.
5. In the 4.c3–c4 versions, White's bishop may be technically bad, yet White does not suffer light square problems in this version (as was so often seen in the previous chapter). Also, White's (future) backward pawn on d3 is not as weak since the light-squared bishop protects it.

Game 9

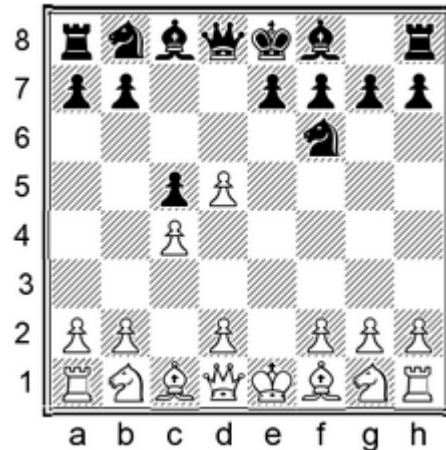
J.Nielsen-A.Heikkila

Nordic ch (Grenaa) 1973

1.e4 c5

One of my (Cyrus) students told me this chapter of the Anti-Alapin Gambit reminds him of a variation of the Portuguese Gambit of the Scandinavian, which goes like this: 1...d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.f3 ♗f5 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 ♗c6! where Black actually has a plus score in the database from this position.

2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖f6 4.c4



4...e6

This is the right way to handle the position. Black gambits a pawn with the knowledge that we receive greater piece play and that White's light-squared bishop is passively hemmed in due to the pawn on c4.

5.dxe6 ♗xe6

What did we get for the pawn?:

1. A big development lead.
2. d4 is a hole that amplifies Black's strategic virtues.
3. White's d-pawn is backward on an open file.

What does the engine think?: It gives White less than a "+=" edge, which means it believes our pawn sacrifice is sound, and in this case, the phrase "you get what you paid for" sounds like a decent deal for Black.

6.♖f3

White's overwhelming choice since the fight is for control over d4.

6...♗c6

Later in the chapter, we look at the Stockfish novelty 6...♞e7!.

7.♗e2 ♗e7

This way, Black retains control over d4, disallowing d2–a4.

a) We don't have room to cover 7...♙d6, which doesn't make as much sense to us since the bishop on d6 weakens Black's coverage of d4.

b) 7...♚d7 - we look at this one near the end of the chapter.

8.0-0

8.♘c3 0-0 9.0-0 ♚d7 10.♚a4! (this is an odd way of discouraging ...♗d4) 10...♙g4 (Black is winning the fight for control over d4) 11.♗e1?! (11.d3 looks correct, after which Black got loads of play for the pawn) 11...♙d6 12.♙xg4 ♗xg4 13.g3 was G.Machado-C.Viana, Brasilia 1999. White is in deep trouble after 13...f5 If 14.f4, the engine points out that 14...♙e5!! 15.fxe5 f4! delivers a winning attack for Black.

8...0-0 9.b3

Next game, we look at 9.a3.

9...♚b6

Black clears the way for ...♞ad8.

a) 9...♙f5 10.♙b2 was seen in I.Andrenko-A.Sulejmanova, Evpatoria 2007. Here the engine likes 10...♗h5!? 11.g3 ♙f6 and calls it just a shade better for White.

b) 9...♗h5!? is the engine's untested suggestion, after which it slightly prefers Black.

10.♙b2 ♞ad8 11.♗c3 ♚c7!?

11...♙f5 targeting d3 is a consideration.

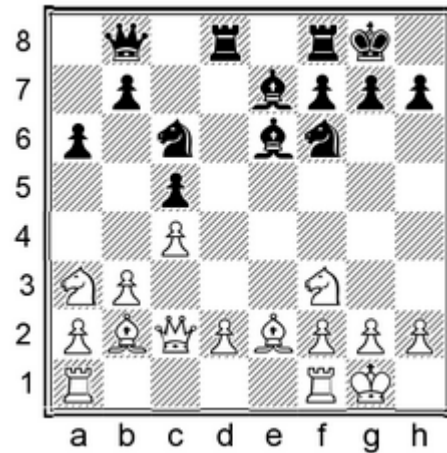
12.♗b5

This doesn't gain time. 12.♞e1 a6 13.♙f1 ♙g4 offers Black compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

12...♚b8 13.♚c2

13.d4? a6 14.♗a3 cxd4 15.♗c2 ♙c5 Black's d-pawn heavily cramps White, who is in grave strategic danger.

13...a6 14.♗a3?!



White falls prey to an inversion of perception. White wants to retain a degree of control over d4. The cost of decentralizing a piece is too high, though.

14.♗c3 looks correct, with dynamically balanced chances.

14...♚f4

14...♗h5! Keep in mind that the engine constantly wants to make this move!

If 15.g3? ♗f4! 16.gxf4 ♚xf4 gives Black a winning attack.

15.♚c3?

This wastes more time. 15.d3 was necessary. Black looks good after 15...♙g4.

15...♗d4! 16.♗xd4?

He had to

try 16.♞ae1 ♗g4 17.g3 ♚h6 18.h4 ♙f6 19.♗xd4 cxd4 20.♚b4 ♞d7.

16...cxd4 17.♚c2



a) 17. ♖d3 ♙f5 18. ♗f3 ♜e5 19. ♞fe1 ♙d6 is a winning position for Black. 20. ♗g3 is met with 20... ♜a5! 21. b4 ♗xb4 22. ♗b3 d3 leaving White busted.

b) 17. ♗f3? ♗xd2 18. ♙c1 ♜a5 White is lost since 19. ♘b1 is met with 19... d3 20. ♙xd3 ♜e5 21. ♘c3 ♙g4 22. ♙f4 ♗d4! Black wins a piece, no matter what White plays.

Exercise (combination alert): How does Black force the win of decisive material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Step 1: Decoy.

17...d3!

This removes the defender of g4.

18. ♙xd3 ♘g4! 19.g3 ♗h6

This creates a fatal weakness in White's camp.

20.h4 f5!

...f5–f4 will play havoc on White's king safety. 20... ♙xh4 is also winning for Black after 21. ♙xh7+ ♚h8!.

21. ♚g2

21.f4 ♙xh4 leaves White helpless.

21...f4 22.f3 ♘h2!

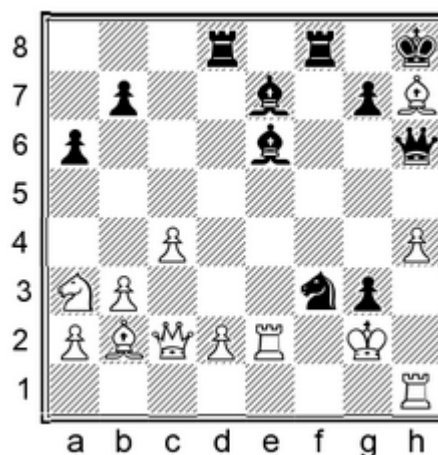
This doesn't require geometric martial arts; our eyes tell us it works. As piece sacrifices go, this one is so riskless that by comparison, we should praise the farmer's bravery in beheading a chicken for his family's dinner table.

22...fxg3! 23.fxg4 ♙xg4 with a winning attack for Black is also crushing.

23. ♙xh7+ ♚h8! 24. ♞f2

24. ♚xh2 fxg3+ 25. ♚g1 ♞xd2 26. ♗c1 ♜e3+ mates.

24...fxg3 25. ♞e2 ♘xf3 26. ♞h1



Some people have a high pain tolerance. Of course, it's clear that death is close, and there is zero chance for White's friendless and unarmed king.

26... ♘xh4+ 27. ♚g1 ♗f4 28. ♗b1 ♙c5+

White's king can no longer withstand the persecution, and it's mate in 3.

0–1

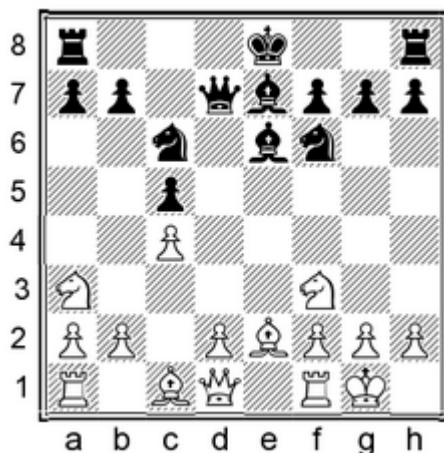
Game 10
A.Feelders– S.Ernst (2440)
Haarlem 2001

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6

Why do so many of us enter loveless marriages regarding our openings? The gambit is so much more fun than the over-analyzed 3... ♗xd5

4.c4 e6 5.dxe6 ♗xe6 6.♖f3 ♜c6 7.♗e2 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0

Or 8...♗d7 9.♖a3



The idea is to fight for d4 with a coming ♖c2. The problem is it costs White time. 9...♗d8 (9...0-0-0 is more fun!) 10.♖c2 0-0 11.b4 (White returns his extra pawn to seize control over the center) 11...♖xb4 12.♖xb4 cxb4 13.♗b2 W.Ma deira-A.Needleman, Sao Paulo 2004. The engine slightly prefers Black after 13...♖h5!

9.a3!? ♗d7

Black places the queen on d7 this game, rather than c7, to pile major pieces on to the open d-file.

10.b4!?



Novelty. This is not a case of all the rational people leaving and the extremists taking over. The idea contains intellectual kinship with both Benko-Gambit and Blumenfeld Countergambit,

with colors reversed. White offers the pawn back if, in return, he is allowed to seize control over d4, which is the foundational fight in this line.

10...♖d4!

Principle: Meet your opponent's wing attack with a central counter. In this case, declining is best.

10...cxb4?! plays into White's hands; after 11.d4, it feels as if White got a reversed Blumenfeld Countergambit without having to give up a pawn!

11.♖xd4

11.♖c3? ♖xf3+! 12.♗xf3 ♗xc4 leaves White in trouble.

11...♗xd4 12.♗b3!

White's rook is tactically defended. 12.♖c3?! ♗xc4 clearly favors Black.

12...cxb4

a) 12...♗xa1?? 13.♗b2 traps the queen for insufficient compensation for Black.

b) 12...b5 is met with 13.d3.

13.♗b2

13.axb4?? ♗xa1 14.♗b2 ♗a6 Oops. Black's queen isn't trapped, and White involuntarily gives up a rook.

13...♗e4!

This way, Black gains a tempo that allows him to hang on to the b4-pawn.

14.♗e1

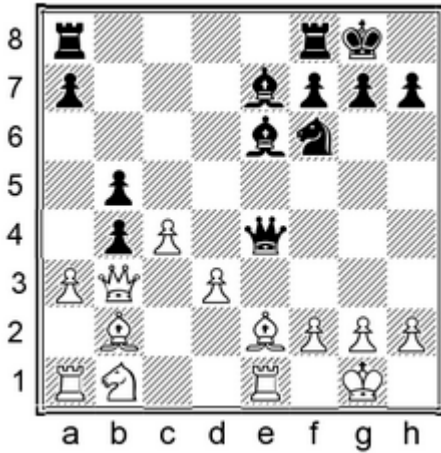
The rook defends the bishop, but until the queen's knight is moved, the rook is vulnerable, so the bishop on e2 cannot move due to the pin on the e-file.

14. ♖e3 evades Black's ...b7–b5 ideas. We still prefer Black after 14...a5.

14...b5

This tempting move may not be Black's best. 14...a5! 15.axb4 axb4 16.d3 ♖f4 17.g3 ♖d6 18.♘d2 b5 is slightly in Black's favor.

15.d3?!

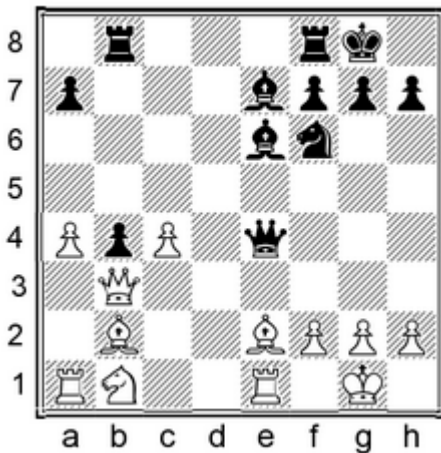


White ends up with an inferior structure after this inaccuracy. White can still maintain the balance after 15.axb4 bxc4 16.♖g3.

15...bxc4 16.dxc4 ♖ab8

16...a5 is even more tempting.

17.a4?



White is strategically lost after this angst-driven move, which gives Black:

1. A powerful and protected passed pawn on b4.

2. White has trouble developing his queenside if Black places a rook on d8 next.

3. White's c4–isolani is weak, and Black can keep hammering away on it with a future ...♞bc8.

4. There is a gaping hole on c5, and White may be vulnerable to a future ..♘d7, followed by ...♘c5.

5. White's e2–bishop is pinned since the e1–rook is, for now, undefended.

Or 17.♘d2 ♖f4 18.♖e3 ♖xe3 19.fxe3 Although still slightly unpleasant for White, he had to take this route.

17...♞bd8!?

It's a bit strange to move the already-developed rook to the d-file. More natural and probably more accurate is 17...♞fd8 intending to shift the b8–rook to c8 to apply pressure to White's weak c4–pawn.

18.♙xf6

Another concession that gives away both the bishop pair and power along the dark squares. But how does White develop his queenside frozen knight and rook if not this?

18...♙xf6 19.♞a2 ♙g5?

Principle: Don't offer charity if you don't have the money. We get that Black doesn't want to allow ♘d2. The move is based upon the miscalculation that White can't capture the b4–pawn next move.

Black should follow the **Principle:** Keep it simple when in a winning position. 19...a5 20.♘d2 ♖e5 21.♘f1 ♞d4 leaves White strategically lost.

20.♞c2?

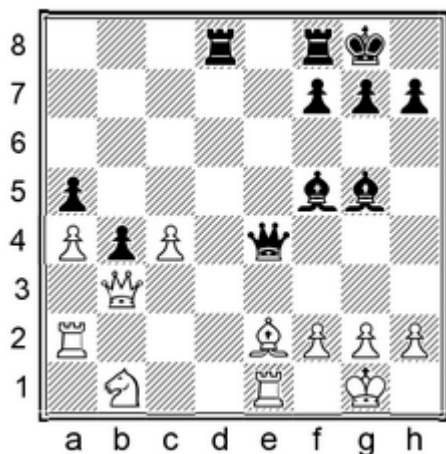
White believes his opponent, and the counterattack sinks into extinction.

He should have jumped on his chance and gone for corrective surgery with 20. ♖xb4! ♜b8 21. ♘c3! (both sides either overlooked or misassessed this zwischenzug) 21... ♗e5 22. ♘b5! a6 23. ♙g4! ♗f4 24. ♙xe6 fxe6 25. g3 ♗g4 26. ♗c5 axb5 27. cxb5, Black still stands better, yet it is no longer a simple matter to convert. White got two dangerous and connected passed pawns for the piece, and Black's e6-pawn is weak. White may well save the game here.

20... ♙f5!

Back into the dungeon with you, lad. White's unfortunate queenside pieces are once again caught between this world and the next in that they are technically alive, yet dead, from a standpoint of functionality.

21. ♜a2 a5



Now White is re-dead lost, and he could have resigned.

22. ♜f1 ♜fe8 23. ♜b2

White is close to zugzwang.

23... ♙f6 24. ♜a2

24. ♜d2?? fails to 24... ♜xd2 25. ♘xd2 ♗xe2.

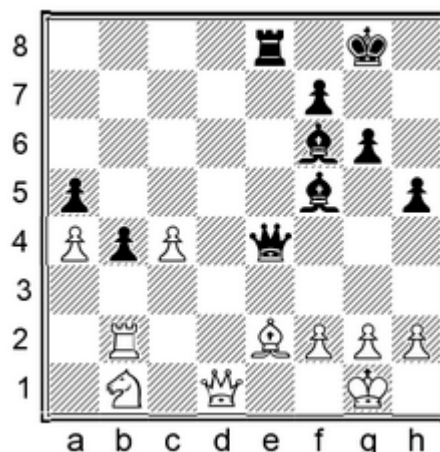
24... g6 25. ♜e1

25. ♙f3 ♗d3 26. ♗xd3 ♙xd3 27. ♜c1 b3 wins.

25... ♙g5

White just can't coordinate his klutzy pieces.

26. ♜b2 h5 27. ♜d1 ♜xd1+ 28. ♗xd1 ♙f6



A piece is lost. ChessBase gives the next few moves with the improbable 28... ♙f6 29. ♘d2?? (entertainment is good; unintentional entertainment, not so much; this is undoubtedly not what White played in the actual game, and we strongly suspect that it's simply an input error from ChessBase) 29... ♗d4? Dr. Freud? Dr. Jung? Do either of you understand the subconscious motivation behind NOT taking a free knight and rook? We are pretty confident a GM would spot 29... ♗xe2, winning a piece and a rook!

0-1

Game 11
P.Bisgaard – C.Lakdawala (2492)
Training game (San Diego) 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6

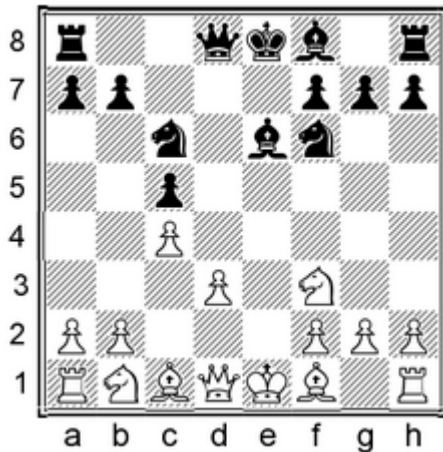
“Dear Miss Anti-Alapin Gambit, it has come to my attention that my feelings for you have proceeded further than mere friendship. Would you consider spending the remainder of your life with me?

Sincerely, Cyrus.”

4.c4 e6 5.dxe6 ♙xe6 6. ♘f3 ♘c6 7. ♙e2

Moving the d-pawn to the third rank may seem odd before completing development, 7.d3 The idea may be to take the steam out of Black's

...♖e7! ideas, which we look at later in my game against Isaac Wang. Usually, this will simply transpose to regular positions.



a) 7...♖d7 (we believe it is more in the spirit of our opening to castle long, hopefully on opposing wings) 8.♙e2 0-0-0 9.0-0 ♙f5 Okay, it's understandable that Black wants a return on his material investment by winning the pawn back. It costs time, though, and maybe more in the spirit is 10.♘c3 was T.Kett-F.Kwiatkowski, West Bromwich 2003. Here, 10...♙xd3 looks equal. But 9...h6, intending ...g7-g5 is more aggressive.

b) 7...♙e7 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖c7 is a bit tamer but also okay for Black, who receives plenty of strategic pressure down the d-file, with control over d4. White must avoid 10.d4? as in J.Suarez-M.Radding, IECC email 1998. Here Black should play 10...♘d4 11.♘d4 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♞ad8! 13.♗xa7 (or 13.♙f4 ♞xd4 14.♙xc7 ♙xc4 when Black has the better ending due to a lead in development) 13...♙xc4 14.♙xc4 ♘g4! (Zwisch enzug; ALWAYS be on the lookout for this move in our gambit) 15.g3 ♗xc4 when ...♙c5 is coming, and White is in grave danger. For instance, if 16.♗xb7?, then 16...♙c5 17.♘c3 ♘xf2 18.♞xf2 ♞fe8 19.♙f4 g5! 20.♙xg5 ♙xf2+ 21.♘xf2 ♗c5+ 22.♘g2 ♗xg5 with a winning attack for Black.

7...♖d7



Ignorance is bliss. My student Peter is a former National Master. We played this game before we began seriously studying the Anti-Alapin Gambit. The engine prefers moving the queen to c7. In such cases, you should, of course, embrace my unsubstantiated theory over that of the weakling 3700-rated engine, who, compared to an erudite guy playing the black pieces, knows nothing about chess.

8.0-0 0-0-0

An (unintended!) Novelty!

a) 8...♙e7 9.d3 0-0 10.♙e3 (10.♘bd2 ♞fd8 11.♘b3 ♗c7 12.♙d2 a5 13.♗c2 a4 14.♘c1 ♘g4 15.h3?? (15.♙c3 was necessary) 15...♘d4! with removal of the f3-guard, 0-1, H.Tsebekov-S.Petrov, Orel 1996) 10...♞ad8 11.♘bd2 b6 and Black had full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, and the engine calls it dead even, E.Rozentalis,-J.Diaz Diaz,J Trnava 1988.

b) 8...♙d6 9.♘c3 ♞d8 10.d3 h6 11.♘e4, A.Stamnov-Z.Sujoldzic, Bela Crkva 1989. Here the engine gets a touch weird and calls for 11...♘xe4 12.dxe4 g5, calling it dead even.

9.♘c3 ♙d6!?

Uhm...do you remember the advice we gave you earlier in the book not to post your bishop on d6 since it blocks our control over d4? Well, just ignore this game! My excuse is that I played this game before I understood the gambit.

9...h6 may be an improvement. After 10.d3 g5!, we get our normal play for the pawn.

10.d3

10.d4?! isn't a great idea since we simply regain our sacrificed pawn after 10...cxd4 when our d-pawn is tactically protected due to the discovered attack on h2.

10...h6?!

I have a bad feeling that C. Freddy is planning a fishy attack with...g7-g5 next. The engine frowns upon the move and wants the more strategic 10...♖he8.

11.a3 g5!?



Have you ever seen a bar patron flip out over nothing, where the waitress brings him his tropical drink without the little umbrella? I'm acting like this rude (and slightly drunk) bar patron. This attack shouldn't have worked. I wish ChessBase had a yeehaw symbol on the annotation pallet. What does the engine think? Well, to be honest, it likes White by nearly a point, but who's counting?

The engine, a bore at parties, disliked my last huffy move and still prefers the soberer 11...♖he8.

12.♖b1

I planned to meet 12.b4 with 12...g4 13.♗h4 ♕e5 14.♕b2 The engine slightly prefers White.

12...g4

I'm aware that structural hygiene standards are slipping on Black's side. My plan was:

1. Chase the f3-knight away, weakening White's control over d4.

2. Then set up a queen/bishop battery trained upon h2.

3. If White plays g2-g3, Black follows with ...h6-h5 and ...h5-h4, after which sacrifices are possible on g3, and the h-file opens as well.

13.♗d2?!

The advantage swings to Black after this admittedly logical-looking move, which loses time. It

prefers 13.♗h4! ♗d4 14.♕e3 ♕e5 15.♕xd4! cxd4 16.♗a4, still slightly favoring White.

13...♕e5

Seizing absolute control over d4 and preventing b2-b4.

14.♗de4 ♗xe4 15.♗xe4

Or 15.dxe4?? ♕xh2+! when declining the sacrifice is met with a deadly shift of the queen to c7, while acceptance loses White's queen to the simple black queen check on c7.

15...b6 16.b4

I'm not too fond of confessions that involve revealing ignorance, but here goes: to be honest, both Peter and I mis-assessed here, misbelieving that White was the one with the more potent attack. The engine at this stage clearly prefers Black.

16...f5

Gaining an important tempo.

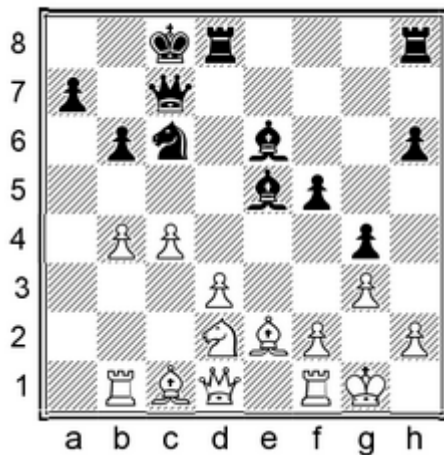
17.♗d2 cxb4

I hated to play this but knew Black couldn't afford to allow White to capture on c5 and open the b-file.

18.axb4!?

With hindsight, 18.♖e1! looks better since it clears f1 for the knight.

18...♖c7 19.g3?



He can't afford the time for this and should have just let his h-pawn go with 19.♙b2! ♕xh2+ 20.♖h1, when Black stands better yet, isn't winning.

19...h5

Sometimes no-brainer moves can still be good ones.

20.♖a4 h4

Black has a winning attack and threatens to capture twice on g3. If 20...h4 21.♖g2 ♜d4 22.♙d1 hxg3 23.fxg3 (23.hxg3 ♗h7 forces mate) 23...♞xh2+! 24.♖xh2 ♙xg3+ 25.♖g2 ♞h8 wins. If 26.♞h1 ♞xh1 27.♗e8+ ♖b7, and if the rook is recaptured, 28.♖xh1 ♗h7+ forces mate.

0-1

Game 12
J.Bibik (2270) – P.Martynov (2440)
 Lahti 1999

This game exemplifies how easy it is for White's position to fall apart if one incorrect move is tossed in completely.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♜f6 4.c4 e6 5.dxe6 ♙xe6 6.♜f3 ♜c6 7.♙e2 ♙d6!?



The show's theme music begins. Last game I played ...♗d7, ...♙d6, and later ...♗c7. This game attempts to gain a tempo over my move order against Peter Bisgaard from the previous game in the book by immediately setting up with ...♙d6 and ...♗c7. With this move order, Black's control over d4 weakens, and we must watch out for White's freeing d2–d4 breaks.

8.0-0 ♗c7

Novelty. 8...0-0 The engine says this is okay for Black. Your writers don't like it much since the more violent plan of castling long is more in the spirit of our line--not to mention more fun!

9.♜c3 a6

Of course, we must prevent ♜b5.

10.a3

The idea is to discourage ...0-0-0 since White can open lines with b2–b4.

10.d3 h6 11.♞e1 0-0-0 as Black can go for ...g7–g5 next, just as last game.

10...0-0-0!?

Do you remember when we said a2–a3 would discourage Black from castling queenside? Well, it didn't work!

10...♜d4 11.h3 0-0-0 is also possible, if 12.d3, then 12...♜xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙xc4! regains the sacrificed pawn. The engine calls the game even.

11.♜a2?



Is this an attacking move, or is it the image of a pacifist browsing in a gun shop?

Principle violations:

1. Don't move the same piece twice in the opening, especially in open positions.
2. Don't retreat/decentralize your pieces in the opening.

White rationalized that he needed this move to engineer b2–b4; It's just too slow for his position's needs.

a) 11.d3 ♖d4 12.h3 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♘xc4! The engine calls it dead even here.

b) 11.b4!? is also playable. Black can just ignore it with 11...♗d4! 12.h3 ♗xe2+! 13.♗xe2 (13.♙xe2?? only wastes time after 13...♞he8, threatening a discovered attack on h3: 14.bxc5 ♙xc5! 15.d4 ♙xc4 16.♙b2 ♙b3! Black stands clearly better, having regained the sacrificed pawn and in ownership of the superior structure and bishop pair) 13...♙xc4 14.bxc5 ♙xc5 15.d4 ♞he8 16.♙e3 ♗b8 17.♙c2 (17.♞c1? ♙xa3 is in Black's favor) 17...♙xe2 18.♙xe2 ♙a7 19.♞ab1 ♗a8 20.♞fc1 ♙d6 The engine slightly prefers Black's chances.

11...♗d4!

Principle: Meet the opponent's (future) wing attack with a central counter.

From this point on, Black's play is a model of efficiency.

12.♗xd4?

a) 12.d3 ♗xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♘h2+ 14.♗h1 ♙e5 is also strategically lost for White but still better than the game's continuation.

b) 12.h3 ♗xe2+ 13.♙xe2 ♞he8 White is busted.

12...♙h2+ 13.♗h1 ♞xd4

Threatening to swing the rook over to h4.

14.f4

Nothing works.

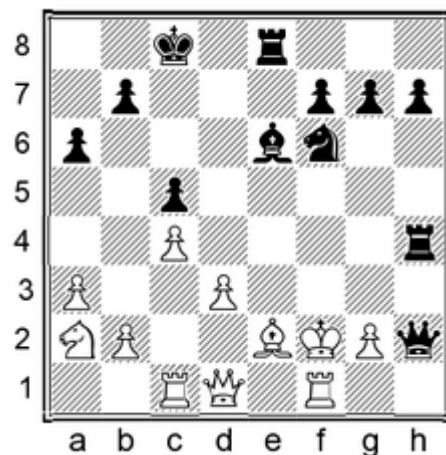
a) 14.g3 ♙xg3 and if 15.fxg3 ♙xg3, White is mated.

b) 14.d3 ♞h4 and White can resign.

14...♙xf4 15.d3 ♙xc1 16.♞xc1 ♞h4+ 17.♗g1 ♙h2+

Are you creeped out as well? The black queen's behavior forces us all to suffer flashbacks of the crazy college girlfriend who refuses to acknowledge that the relationship is over and who now stalks you, vowing revenge.

18.♗f2 ♞e8!



White can resign here. He is down a pawn and a million times worse, and his king is in dire danger of getting fried in the middle.

19.♙a4

19.♗c3 ♙g4 is also completely lost for White.

19...♙d7!

The bishop is switched over to a more effective diagonal, and Black's rook is suddenly given influence over the e-file.

20. ♖a5 ♘c6

g2 can't be defended.

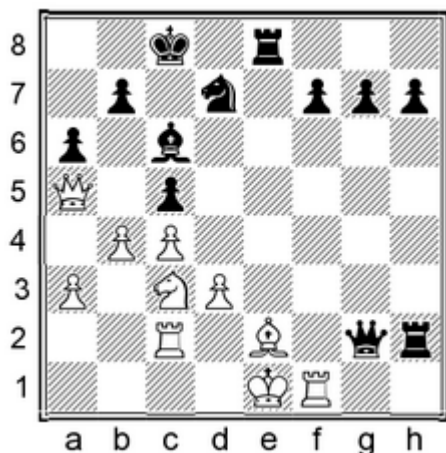
21. ♔e1

21. ♖g1 loses instantly to 21... ♖f4+ when a bishop block is simply chopped by the f4-rook.

21... ♖xg2 22. ♗c3 ♖h2 23. ♖c2 ♗d7!

Covering c5 while preparing ... ♗e5.

24.b4



a) 24. ♔d1 ♖xe2 undermines the protection of the f1-rook.

b) 24. ♖xf7 ♖h1+ and mate in 2.

Exercise (combination alert): The Feds are closing in. How does Black force the win?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Exploit the pin of White's bishop by playing 24... ♗f3!.

24... ♗f3! 25. ♖xf3

Now that White's rook vacated the first rank, a black rook check is deadly.

25... ♖h1+!

Even more accurate than the also mating 25... ♖xf3.

26. ♔d2

Or 26. ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 27. ♔d2 ♖g5#.

26... ♖g5+

It's mate next move.

27. ♖e3 ♖xe3#

0-1

Game 13

I. Wang (2218) – C. Lakdawala (2492)
Training game (San Diego) 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♗f6

Sick and tired of being perceived as a peaceful Brahmin, my last move is an application form to request permission to shift into the warrior caste.

4.c4

This isn't a case of teenage rebellion since my master-strength opponent was 12 at the time. Just a few weeks before this game, Isaac won the K-6th Grade U.S. Championship, so I realize perfectly well the days of beating him are numbered.

4...e6 5.dxe6 ♘xe6 6.♗f3

As we have seen, this move is almost automatic for White since our opponents want to castle early. The trouble with this move order is Black's next move. To avoid what happened in the game's continuation, White can use the (rare) move order 6. ♗e2, which renders ... ♖e7!, as was played in my game against Isaac, is inoperative, and we reach a normal position with 6... ♗c6 7. ♗f3 ♖d7 8.0-0, E.Rozentalis-J.Diaz Diaz, Trnava 1988.

6... ♖e7!



“If you want something done right, then do it yourself,” said no mob boss ever after ordering a hit. Confession: Stockfish generated this novelty, not me, and I was just the underling who carried out the hit. Our threat is to win our sacrificed pawn back with ... xc4+ . I was waiting to spring this novelty on one of my students!

7. Qe2 ?!

As it turns out, White’s queen placement on e2 clogs his development much more than Black’s queen placement on e7 bothers Black’s. When you get out booked in the opening, our mind harkens back to the third grade when we tried to pull “the dog ate my homework” defense on our teacher. It’s natural to want to hang on to our stuff, yet the engine already slightly favors Black after this move.

As White, I tried 7. Qe2 against Isaac and settled for an evenish position after 7... xc4 8. d3 Qe6 9. Qc3 Qc6 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Qe3 with chances for both sides.

7... Qc6 8. d3 0-0-0

The engine prefers the strategic route 8... Qd8 9. Qd2 g6.

9. Qd2 !?

The defense is so complex that even a tiny inaccuracy can be fatal for White. The move is inaccurate since the bishop is better off on e3, meaning White loses a (future) tempo. He wants to prevent ... Qb4 .

The engine prefers a) 9. a3 g6 10. Qc3 Qg7 , whereas b) 9. Qe3 ?? Qb4 leaves White completely busted.

9... g6



A fianchetto is natural for two reasons:

1. Black’s e7–posting of the queen is in the way of the bishop’s development.

2. The fight is for d4, so Black’s bishop on g7 takes direct aim at White’s weakest square.

10. a3

White’s development lag begins to take on dangerous proportions.

10. Qc3 ? Qb4 11. 0-0-0 Qxd3+ 12. Qb1 Qf5 13. Qa1 Qxe2 14. Qxe2 Qxf2 will leave White down a full exchange.

10... Qg7 11. Qc3 Qhe8 12. 0-0-0 Qc7

Notice how evident, and easy-to-find Black’s moves are? The queen shifts off the e-file, worrying White about discovered attacks with the light-squared bishop on White’s queen.

13. Qe3

13. Qb5 Qb6 14. Qe3 a6 15. Qc3 Qd4 is similar to the game’s continuation.

13... Qd4

Another obvious move that increases the pressure on White’s position.

14. Qxd4 ?

This is a fatal error that:

1. Gives Black the bishop pair.
2. Weakens White on the dark squares.
3. Loses time on White’s c3–knight.
4. Opens the c-file, enabling Black’s coming ...b5–b5.

14. Qe1 was necessary. 14... Qg4 15. h3 Qxe3 16. fxe3 Qf5 17. e4 Black’s domination of the dark squares is worth far more than White’s extra pawn. Still, this is much better for White than what occurred in the game’s continuation.

14... cxd4 15. Qe4

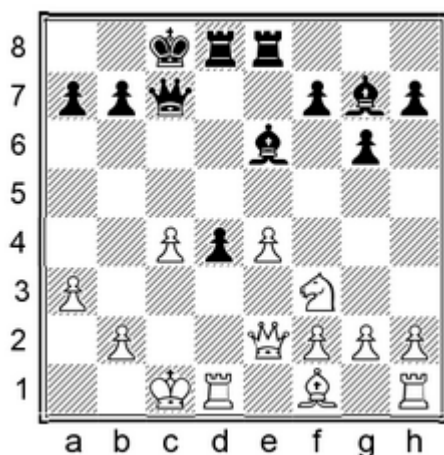
There are only unpleasant choices for White at this point.

a) 15. ♖b5 is also lost after 15... ♗b6, threatening to trap the knight with ...a7-a6 next.

If 16.a4 a6 17. ♖a3 ♖d7 18. ♗b1 ♖c5 with a crushing strategic bind for Black. 19. ♗c2 ♗f8 is completely lost for White.

b) 15. ♖b1? ♗h6+ 16. ♖bd2 ♗f5 traps White's queen.

15... ♖xe4 16.dxe4



16. ♗xe4? ♗xc4 wins.

16...b5!

Black's moves are just mindlessly easy to find.

17.c5

White can't survive 17.b3 bxc4 18.bxc4 ♗d6.

17...d3!

Clearance. The move opens the d-file for my rook and the diagonal for my dark-squared bishop.

I certainly didn't want to swap queens with 17... ♗xc5+? 18. ♗c2 ♗h6+ 19. ♖d2 ♗xc2+ 20. ♗xc2 a6 21. ♗d3 is only an edge for Black.

18. ♗xd3 ♗xc5+ 19. ♗b1

19. ♗c2 ♗h6+ 20. ♗e3 Forced.

(20. ♗b1 ♗a2+ 21. ♗xa2 ♗xc2 22. ♗c3+ ♗xc3 23. bxc3 ♗xe4 leaves Black up the exchange) 20... ♗xc2+ 21. ♗xc2 ♗xe3 22. fxe3 ♗d7 wins the ending.

19... ♗xd3 20. ♗xd3 ♗d8

White is fatally behind in development.

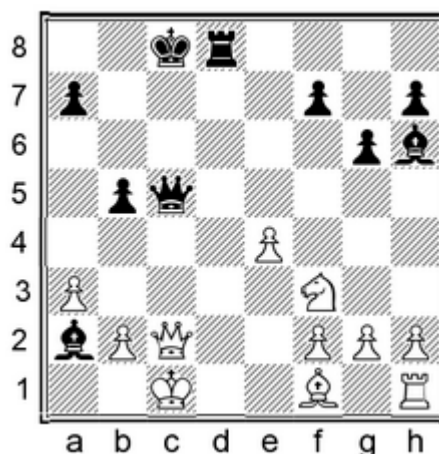
21. ♗c2

21. ♗e2 ♗b3 There is no remedy to the coming ... ♗d1+ since 22. ♖d2 is mated with 22... ♗c2+.

21... ♗a2+

Overloaded defender.

22. ♗c1 ♗h6+



White's kingside rook and bishop never had a chance to move.

0-1

Chapter 3: The Anti-Human 4.♔a4+

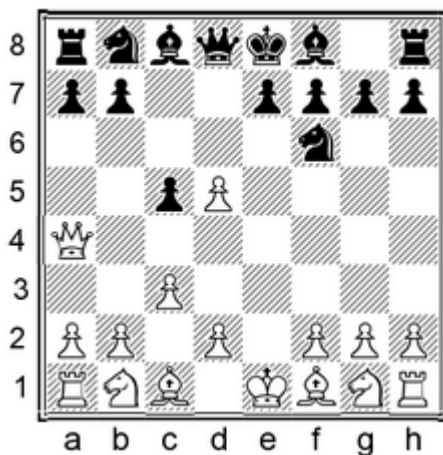
A queen check on a4 on the fourth move is about as counter-intuitive as it gets, which means, of course, that it's an artificial engine-generated idea. The idea is to hang on to the extra pawn without White giving away the bishop pair, as in the 4.♕b5+ line, or weakening the d4-square with 4.c3-c4.

Game 14

D.V.Pedersen (2254)-T.Jakslund (2277)

Danish Team ch 2014

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♔a4+



The engines are exemplars of how NOT to develop in the opening. For some mysterious enginey reason, both Stockfish 15 and Fritz 18 deem it perfectly acceptable to grab a pawn and then fall even further down in development with a random-looking queen check on a4.

The engine logic is this: after we respond with 4...♘bd7, White plays c3-c4. Black's knight on d7 discourages ...e7-e6 since when White swaps pawns, Black will be forced to recapture with the f-pawn creating further weakness in our camp. Fine with us humans, and we will take the extra weakness if it costs White more development time. Secondly, after our coming second (!) pawn sacrifice, we can even play ...♖b8, ...♖b6 and then play ...e7-e6, preparing to recapture with ...♗xe6, as in the coming Mahooti game, later in the chapter.

4...♘bd7

We don't like the artificial 4...♘d7 5.♗b3, which we won't be covering in the book.

5.c4

Later in the chapter, we look at 5.♗b3.

5...b5!?

This is the move of a player who would have been at home if he or she were born 100,000 years ago when it was socially acceptable to kill or maim anyone who got on your nerves! Intuition has the power to leap over logic, data gathering, and sensory consciousness. While it's true that we push our faith to its limits, the time has arrived for us humans to teach our (former) engine overlords a lesson. Development matters!

Please calm down and give us a chance to explain why we just chucked away a second pawn, which is not some wacky theory, up there with: "I firmly believe there is intelligent life on Saturn."

1. The second pawn sacrifice is actually the engine's top choice!
2. By sacrificing a second pawn, White's once slight development lag becomes far more ominous and our gamble - which your writers believe is a good one for our side - is that White won't survive, especially a human playing White, since our opponent's moves and defensive resources become challenging to unearth, from a practical standpoint.
3. How does the engine assess? At a mere +.33 at depth 37, which means the barest of edges for White, from an arithmetical standpoint.

So, let's go nuclear with this double pawn sacrifice.

Later in the chapter, we look at the more conservative version 5...e6

6. ♖xb5

This way, White preserves structural integrity at the heavy cost of falling even further behind in development.

a) 6. ♖c2 After this move, we wonder why White moved the queen to a4 in the first place since Black got the favorable ...b7–b5, free of charge. 6...bxc4 7. ♕xc4, D.Stevanic-A.Brcar, Ljubljana 2015. White cannot hang on to the extra pawn, and the engine already prefers Black after 7...g6 intending ...♗g7, ...0-0, ...♘b6 and ...♙b7.

b) 6.cxb5 is untested. We already prefer Black after 6...♗xd5 7. ♗f3 ♗7b6.

6...♞b8 7. ♖a4 e6

Later we look at 7...♞b6.

8.dxe6

Next game, we look at 8.♗c3.

8...fxe6 9.♗f3

a) 9.d3 ♕d6 10.h3?! White doesn't have the luxury of this precaution when already massively behind in development. (10.♗f3 0-0 11.♕e2 ♕b7 12.♗c3 ♗e5 looks pretty scary for White as well, yet is superior to the push of the h-pawn) 10...0-0 11.♗c3 ♗e5 12.♖c2 ♕b7 13.♕e3, H.Stevic-R.Makarjan, Schwarzach 2019. In the game, Black blundered with an unsound sacrifice by grabbing the g2-pawn. Instead, 13...♖b6 looks quite promising for Black. The engine changed its mind and even preferred Black.

b) 9.♗c3 was tried in J.Jarvenpaa-J.Sorvari, Tampere 2016. Here, Black incorrectly took time out to protect his worthless a-pawn. Instead, we already prefer Black's chances after the natural 9...♕b7.

c) 9. ♖xa7? Contentment is the art of discriminating between what you need and what you don't, knowing when to say: "I have had enough." Even those greedy oligarchs, Stockfish and Fritz, disapprove of this appalling level of greed! This move is rightly untested. White grabs a third pawn in an open position, acting much like Morphy's opponents, who believed development was meaningless. Black obviously has a highly promising attack after 9...♕d6 10.♗c3 0-0; we don't need to analyze further. We have seen too many Morphy versus Amateur games. Our eyes tell us that White is in deep trouble and unlikely to survive.

9...♕d6



There is no reason to protect our a-pawn, nor is there a reason to develop the bishop to the more passive e7-square. So what did we receive for the two (and maybe three, if White's queen is dumb enough to grab our a7-pawn!) sacrificed pawns?:

1. A monster development lead.
2. Our development lead is enhanced by the fact that the position is open.
3. An already opened f-file for our rook.
4. We envision swift attacks based upon either ...♗h5 or ...♗g4, White's king, if our opponent castles kingside.
5. Neither will the white king be safe on the queenside without our open b-file.

6. White's queen is way offside on a4. This matters because after we castle and move our f6-knight, White will be highly vulnerable to ... xf3 exchange sacrifices if White's king castles kingside.

Conclusion: The white position's charms are not evident to the untrained eye; neither are they obvious to the trained eye! We have more than enough compensation and don't even believe the engine's "+0.31" assessment. With humans playing, it will be a rough go for White.

10. e2 0-0 11. d3 b7 12. c2

It may have been wiser to develop with 12. c3 . Even then, 12... g4 ! 13. h3 ge5 looks scary for White.

12... e5

Also tempting are the lines a) 12... h5 and b) 12... g4 intending ... de5 next.

13. bd2

13. c3 xf3 + 14. xf3 xf3 15. gxf3 d7 won't be easy for White to survive, either.

13... fg4 !

Black opens the f-file and launches an attacker at the white king. Also, the knight reinforces e5.

14. h3 !

14. xe5 ? xf2 ! 15. ff1 xe5 and White is busted since 16. xf2 ? is met with 16... xf2 17. xf2 h4 + with a crushing attack for Black.

14... xf2 !?



The engine prefers 14... xf3 15. xf3 xf2 !

Exercise (critical decision): White's choices are between:

- Accepting the knight with 15. xf2 .
- Ignoring it with 15. 0-0.
- Ignoring it with 15. ff1 .

Two lines lose for White, while the third is close to even. Which one would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Only line c) may save White.

15. xf2 ?

We can't come back after a blunder and just pick up where we left off. This is the worst of White's choices.

Line b) 15. 0-0? hx3 + 16. gxh3 xf3 + 17. xf3 f5 is a winning attack for Black, who follows up with ... ff6 .

Only line c) saves White 15. ff1 ! xf3 16. xf3 xf3 ! 17. xf3 ! exd3 + 18. e2 e5 19. xf2 xc1 !+ 20. xc1 xb2 + 21. f1 xf2 + 22. xf2 d4 + 23. e2 xa1 24. xa1 xa1 , Black won't be able to convert the extra pawn, and the game is drawn.

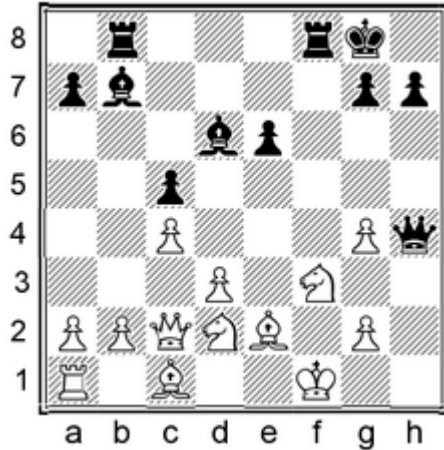
15... h4 + 16. f1

16. g1 xf3 ! 17. xf3 f8 ! 18. d1 xf3 19. xf3 xf3 + 20. gxf3 g3 + 21. f1 xf3 + wins.

16...♖g4!

Threatening mate on f2, not to mention a massive fork on e3.

17.hxg4 ♖xh1+ 18.♔f2 ♖h4+ 19.♔f1



19.♔g1 ♕h2+! 20.♔h1 (capture of the bishop leads to mate in 2) 20...♕xf3 21.♖xf3 ♖xf3 22.♕g5 ♖xg5 23.♕xf3 ♕e5 with fatal threats on the dark squares on both sides of the board.

Exercise (planning): Work out Black's forced mate:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Simply cut off the white king's escape squares by transferring the bishop to g3.

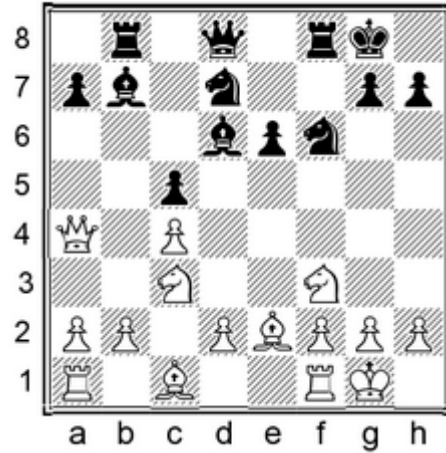
19...♕g3! It's mate in 3 at the most.

0-1

Game 15

A.Urla Martos (2139) – A.Roque Sola (1933)
Spanish Team ch (Linares) 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖f6 4.♖a4+ ♖bd7 5.c4 b5 6.♖xb5 ♖b8 7.♖a4 e6 8.dxe6 fxe6 9.♖f3 ♕d6 10.♖c3 0-0 11.♕e2 ♕b7 12.0-0?



In bowling terms, this is a gutter ball, and in basketball, an airball. A move as innocent as castling can be fatal in this variation. White had to try 12.d3 ♖g4 13.♕g5 ♕e7 14.♕xe7 ♖xe7 15.♖c2 ♕xf3 16.♕xf3 ♖de5 17.0-0-0! (17.♕xg4?? loses instantly to 17...♖xb2!) 17...♖xf3 18.gxf3 ♖e5, which the engine judges at even.

12...♖g4!

This is one of those wonderful attacks which gain easy momentum until it becomes too powerful for the opponent to contain. It almost feels like the attack becomes sentient and plays itself, thereby disassociating itself from you, its creator. Pay close attention to this attacking mechanism since it is repeated over and over in the chapter.

13.h3 ♕xf3

13...♖xf3! is even more crushing, according to the engine: 14.♕xf3 ♕xf3 15.gxf3 ♖ge5 and if 16.♖d1 ♖g5+ 17.♔h1 ♖h4 18.♔g2 ♖d3, White is mated.

14.gxf3?

White's only chance to keep playing is 14.♕xf3 ♖h2 15.♕e2 ♖xf1 16.♔xf1 ♖h4 17.♖d1, although this looks pretty bad for White as well.

14...♖h2! 15.♖e4

After 15.♖e1 ♖g5+ 16.♔h1 ♜xf3, White gets mated.

15...♙c7?!

15...♜xf3+! 16.♙xf3 ♖xf3 Now if 17.♜xd6 ♖g5+ 18.♔h2 and simplest is 18...♗h6 forcing mate.

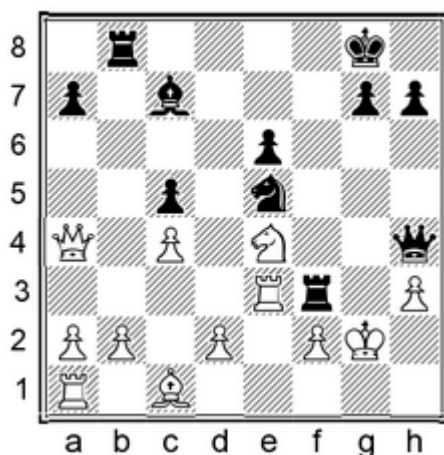
16.♖e1?

16.d3 was forced.

16...♜e5! 17.♔g2

17.♔xh2 ♜xf3+ 18.♔g2 ♜xe1+ 19.♔f1 ♖d4 20.♗c6 ♜d3 wins.

17...♜hxf3 18.♙xf3 ♖xf3 19.♖e3 ♗h4!



20.♜g3

20.♖xf3 ♖xe4 21.♗d1 ♖f8 22.d3 ♗c6 forces resignation.

20...♗f4! 21.♜h1

Look, we don't have a cure for White's ailments, and the universal TV doctor's prescription: "Get some rest, drink plenty of fluids and take aspirin to reduce the fever," just isn't going to cut it here. Reti and Nimzowitsch may approve but seeing such an awful concession is tough on the eyes.

21...♖f8

Too much heat is added to f2.

22.♖xf3

22.♖e2 is met with 22...♜g4! 23.hxg4 ♗h2+ 24.♔f1 ♖xh1#.

22...♜xf3

Look at White's unused rook and bishop on vacation on the queenside. This phenomenon seems to occur repeatedly in our line when White misplays it.

22...♜xf3 23.♜g3 ♜h4+ mates in 2.

0-1

Game 16

A.Wang (2180) – C.Lakdawala (2492)

Training game (San Diego) 2022

When I was eight years old and didn't study for a coming test the next day at school, I skillfully employed the following evasion measures:

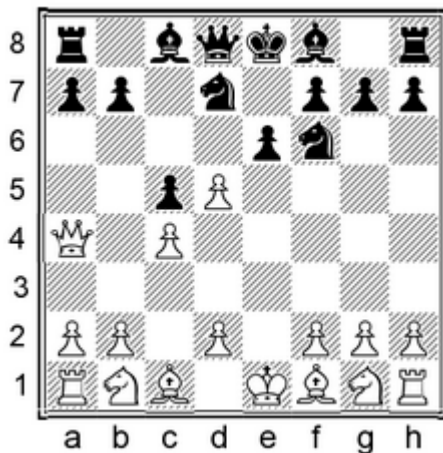
1. At dinner, I complained of a violent stomachache while powering down two helpings plus dessert.

2. Later, I would complain of a crushing headache while simultaneously watching a movie.

3. The following day, I complained of a raging fever. My mother would touch my cold forehead and say: "You are fine. Get dressed, grab your Pop-Tart and get to school!"

Fifty-four years later, I was shocked when this same fate befell my typically booked-up and well-prepared student. My almost-master young student Andrew is nightmarishly difficult to beat on the white side of the normal Alapin Sicilian. Then as an experiment, I tried the Anti-Alapin Gambit on him and was shocked when he lost a miniature in a training game. Andrew confessed that he hadn't even seen this Anti-Sicilian line before, despite playing Alapin for six years! This is the surprise value of the gambit you should also receive against club-level opponents.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖f6 4.♚a4+ ♜bd7 5.c4 e6



This is the slightly more chickenish version, where Black avoids the immediate ...5...b7-b5 second pawn sacrifice. Instead, Black immediately chips away at White's central point on d5.

In a second game, I tried 5...b5 6.♚xb5 ♜b8 7.♚a4 e6 8.dxe6 fxe6 (thus far, as seen in the previous main game) 9.d3 ♙d6 10.h3 0-0 11.♜c3 ♙b7 12.♜f3 ♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♜e5 14.♙e2 ♜h5, and here, we ran out of time in the lesson. It looks like full compensation for Black's sacrificed pawns, and the engine already slightly prefers Black's chances.

6.dxe6

This was played in every game in the database.

6...fxe6

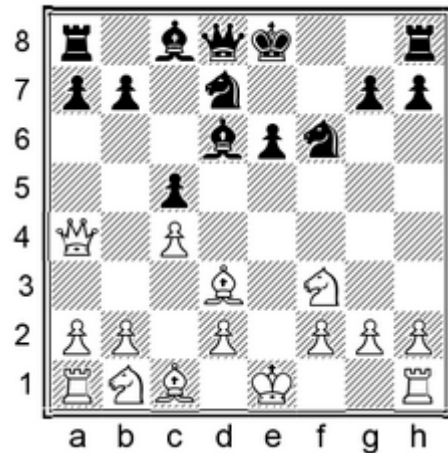
The f-file opens for our rook.

7.♜f3

7.♜c3 ♙d6 8.♜f3 0-0 9.♙e2 ♜e5 10.♚d1 ♜fg4 11.d3 was P.Zelbel-E.Berg, German Bundesliga 2017. Here, Stockfish suggests the radical theoretical novelty 11...b5!? and if 12.♜xb5 (12.♜e4 may be White's best try, then 12...♜xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♜e5 14.♙e2 ♙b7 with compensation for Black) 12...♙b7 offers Black

a monster initiative for the two sacrificed pawns. In fact, Stockfish prefers Black here.

7...♙d6 8.♙d3?!



When we encounter a problem, we react in two ways:

1. We acknowledge the problem and look for ways to defend against it.
2. We deny the existence of the problem and ignore it.

White's last move was an example of number 2 on the list. It's way too aggressive for a position that is in dire need of a defensive fix.

The bishop belongs on e2 to reinforce f3. Novelty and not a good one since it clogs White's queenside. I suspect Andrew was going for that classic Lasker-Bauer game, where Lasker placed one bishop on d3 and fianchettoed the other, followed by the sacrifice of both bishops on h7 and g7. I wasn't about to allow this to happen!

8.♙e2 0-0 9.♜c3 ♜e5 10.♚d1 transposes to the Zelbel-Berg note from above.

8...0-0 9.0-0?

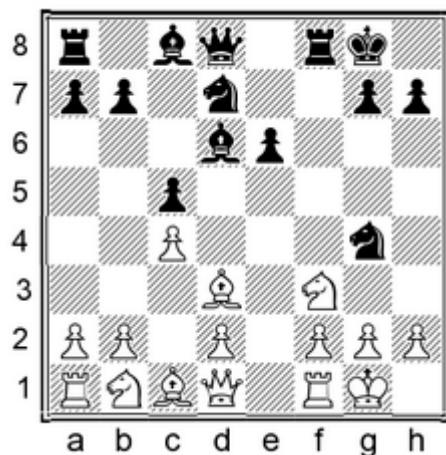
Just like we saw last game, White castles into an attack. His position reached the neither/nor point, where everything, from this point on, loses. He has no hope of covering his under-protected king while remaining far behind in development, with all his queenside pieces snoozing on their original squares.

9. ♖d1 was correct. Even then, Black looks better after 9... ♗e5.

9... ♗g4!

Strategic threat: ... ♖xf3, after which White's king has no hope of survival. As mentioned before, this maneuver is played repeatedly in our gambit. Now Black gets a vicious attack.

10. ♖d1



10. h3? is met

with 10... ♖xf3 11. gxf3 ♗h2 White has no chance of survival since all his defenders are on vacation on the queenside. 10. ♗e2 ♖xf3 11. ♗xf3 ♗xh2+ is decisive.

When Carsten and I were kids, doctors actually came to your house to heal you. Today, you call to make a doctor's appointment for your urgent medical problem in October, and more than likely, your appointment will be sometime in the new year, in January. I just described the white king's life.

Exercise (planning): What is Black's optimal continuation of his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Black's coming exchange sacrifice is self-evident.

10... ♖xf3!

Destruction of the defensive barrier. Sometimes obvious moves can also be devastatingly powerful.

11. ♖xf3

11. gxf3?? ♖h4 White is mated.

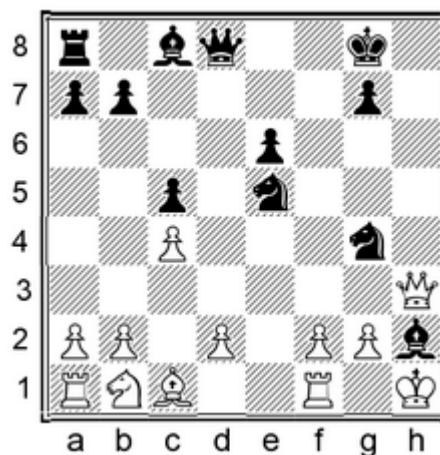
11... ♗xh2+

But not 11... ♗xh2?? 12. ♖h3 and White is winning since h7 hangs.

12. ♖h1 ♗de5

I will give you a moment to recover since you are undoubtedly lost in ecstatic contemplation of my attacking "skills." Well, okay, fine. It's not that brilliant, but it does win the game. The knight conveniently protects its g4-counterpart while inflicting White with a fatal double attack on f3/d3.

13. ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 14. ♖h3+ ♖g8



Andrew never got to use even one of his queenside pieces in the game.

14... ♖g8 15. f3 is met

with 15... ♖d3 16. fxg4 ♖xf1+ 17. ♖xh2 ♖f4+ 18. ♖g1 ♗xg4 19. ♖f3 ♖d4+ 20. ♖h1 ♗d7 (both ... ♖f8 and ... ♗c6 are in the air) 21. ♖xb7 is met with 21... ♖f8 and White is mated.

0-1

Game 17

J.Leisner (2179) – J.Mahooti

USA WS email ICCF email 2018

The following two games are instructive since they are between strong club-level opponents. Let's take a look at the doubled pawn sacrifice version. The guy playing Black is my former student Dr. James Mahooti, your go-to guy for dental surgery and kingside attacks.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♚a4+ ♘bd7 5.c4 b5 6.♚xb5 ♖b8 7.♚a4 ♖b6



The idea is to play 7...e7–e6, and if White exchanges, then Black has the option to recapture with the rook.

8.♘f3 e6 9.♘c3

9.dxe6 is untested. It looks dangerous to invite Black's rook to e6, yet the engine says it's playable for

White. 9...♞xe6+ 10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.♘c3 ♙xf3 12.gxf3 ♙d6 13.d3 0-0 14.♙e3 ♙e5. The engine slightly prefers White, while most humans wouldn't. Where is White's king going to go? There is no place on the board which looks safe for him.

9...exd5 10.cxd5 ♙d6 11.♙e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♙b7 13.♚xa7?



“What one person disdains or values lightly is appreciated by another, and what one person abandons is often picked up by another,” wrote Carl Menger. Was he talking about Black's a-pawn? Here we go again! When my father retired, he swore that he would write a book, but then always added: “But I can never find the time.” Huh? You are retired, and all you have is time! By grabbing the a7-pawn, White embraces my father's philosophy that he would like to develop his queenside pieces someday, but not now!

Correct is to free his queenside with 13.d4! ♘xd5 14.♘e4 ♘f4 15.♙xf4 ♙xf4 16.dxc5 ♞e6 17.♘c3 ♙b8 Black still has compensation for the sacrificed material, but at least White stands no worse here.

13...♘xd5 14.♚a4 ♞e8

Threat: ...♘xc3, followed by ...♞xe2.

15.♙d1

f3 must be nursed. 15.♙b5? makes it easy for Black: 15...♘xc3 16.dxc3 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♞xb5! 18.♚xb5 ♚h4 19.f4 ♚g4+ 20.♔h1 ♚f3+ 21.♔g1 ♞e6 and White is mated.

15...♘f4

This is bad news for White's king.

16.d3



16.g3 Bb4! 17.Qc2 Ne5! with a winning attack for Black.

Exercise (critical decision): Black has three candidate moves:

- 16...Nxd3, regaining one of the sacrificed pawns.
- 16...Bb4, gaining a tempo on White's queen.
- 16...Nxc2, sacrificing a piece.

All three moves favor Black. Which one is the strongest continuation?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Annihilation of the defensive barrier. The knight sacrifice on g2 is devastating.

16...Nxc2!

"I wouldn't dream of imposing," said every in-law through human history, who then proceeded to grossly overstay their welcome.

17.Qg4

Black's knight remains trapped. This doesn't prove to be a problem.

17.Nxc2 Bb4 White must hand over his queen since 18.Qc2? walks into a mate in 5 after 18...Bg4+ 19.Nh1 Qxf3+ (removal of the guard) 20.Qxf3 Wh4 and White is getting mated.

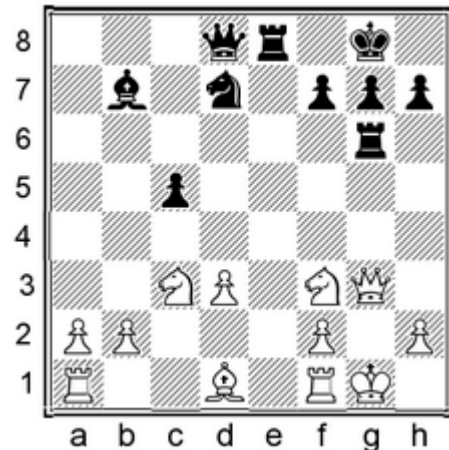
17...Nf4!

Clearance. This clearance sacrifice allows Black's b6-rook to enter the attack with great force.

18.Qxf4

18.Ne4 Nxd3 is also lost for White.

18...Qxf4 19.Qxf4 Rg6+ 20.Qg3

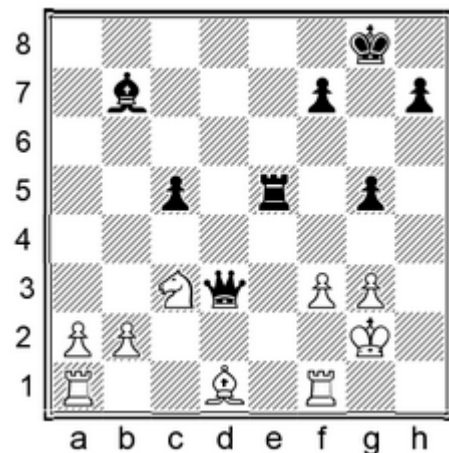


This is the equivalent of resignation. Also, hopeless is 20.Nh1 Ne5 and if 21.Ne4 Nxd3 22.Qh4 Qxe4 23.Qxd8 Rxd8, there is no remedy to the coming ...Ne5.

20...Ne5 21.Ne5 Rg3+ 22.hxg3 Rxe5 23.f3

23.Qe2 h5 is a winning attack for Black.

23...Qxd3 24.Ng2 g5!



Threat: ...g5-g4.

25.Rf2

25.g4 Qd4 Threat:

...Qxg4+. 26.Ng3 Qf4+ White is mated, no matter where his king moves.

25...g4 26.Rb1 Re1! 27.Qc2 Qxf3+ 28.Nh2 Qe3! The queen heads for h6.

0-1

Game 18

R.Andersen (2169) – T.Jaksland (2287)

Danish ch candidates (Svendborg) 2015

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♚a4+ ♘bd7 5.c4
b5 6.♚xb5 ♖b8 7.♚a4 e6 8.♘c3



In this version, White is well aware of the dangers of pawn grabbing. So he just continues to develop and returns the pawn.

8...♗b7!?

8...♗d6 is another version of the “Please capture on e6!” philosophy. 9.♘f3 0-0 10.dxe6 fxe6; Next game we look at 8...exd5

9.♘f3 exd5 10.cxd5 ♗d6!

More accurate than 10...♘xd5 11.♗e2.

11.♗b5

a) 11.♘b5 can be ignored with 11...0-0 12.♘xd6 ♚e7+ 13.♗e2 ♚xd6 14.0-0 ♖fe8 with loads of compensation for Black.

b) 11.♗a6 Black doesn't need to comply and can keep light-squared bishops on the board with 11...♗a8.

11...0-0 12.0-0 ♘b6 13.♚xa7?



Some things are not against the law yet are unwise. You wouldn't take a selfie with a thumbs-up pose at a funeral, would you? We think of basic *principle* violations like: Don't fall too far behind in development in the opening, the way we do an illness from another era, like the Bubonic Plague, feeling: “It's no longer here and can't hurt me.” Yet even titled players do it to this day, feeling that what they are doing is an exception to the *principle*: This pawn grab on a7 is firmly placed in the greed-is-good school of thought. White falls just too far behind in development after it. The engine, normally an inveterate pawn grabber, disapproves, suggesting 13.♚h4 ♘bxd5 14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗c4 ♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♖e8 I don't much like White's position here, yet the engine calls it even.

13...♘bxd5 14.♘xd5?

White's position is hopeless after this innocent swap. He had to try 14.♚a4 ♘b4 15.♗e2 ♘g4! 16.h3 ♗xf3! 17.♗xf3 ♘h2 18.♚d1 ♘xf1 19.♗xf1 Normally, two pawns for a sacrificed exchange is enough. Not here, though, since White remains massively behind in development, and the engine assesses as a winning position for Black.

14...♗xd5

Triple threats: 1. ...♖xb5. 2. ...♖a8, trapping White's queen. 3. ...♗xf3, inflicting severe damage upon the white king's pawn cover.

15.♚a4

15.♗e2?? covers two out of three of the threats. However, the statement: “Two out of three

ain't bad" is contradicted by the move 15...♖a8, trapping White's queen.

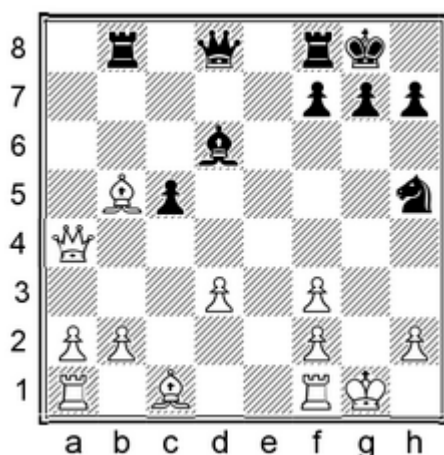
15...♗h5

It is stronger to just chop immediately with 15...♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♗d5 with a winning attack for Black, who threatens ...♖xb5! followed by ...♗h4.

16.d3?

He had to try 16.♙c6 ♖b4 17.♗xb4 cxb4 18.♙xd5, which admittedly is also lost for White, although not as much as in the game's continuation.

16...♙xf3 17.gxf3



Exercise (planning): As if in the pandemic, White's queenside pieces practice social distancing from their underdefended king. What is Black's strongest attacking plan?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: An exchange sacrifice on b5 leaves White's king exposed if accepted.

17...♗f6?

This is a serious error that allows White a chance.

Removal of a key defender with 17...♖xb5! wins on the spot. If 18.♗xb5 ♗h4 19.♖e1 ♗xh2+ 20.♗f1 ♙g3! 21.♗xc5 (21...♙e3 ♗f4! and mate next move) 21...♙xf2! 22.♗xf2 ♗g3+ 23.♗xg3 ♗xg3 is hopeless for White.

18.♗g4! ♖xb5

White may now be okay. Black still holds the better chances after 18...♗f4! 19.♙xf4 ♙xf4 20.♙c4 ♗h6 21.h4 ♖b6 22.♗h3! ♖g6+ 23.♗h1 ♖g5! 24.♖g1 ♗h5 25.♖g4 ♗h8 (intending ...f7-f5, chasing off a defender of h4) 26.♗g2! f5 27.♖xf4 ♗xf4 28.♗g3 ♗d4 29.♖e1, Black only stands a shade better.

19.♗xh5 ♖b4 20.♗g5??

Black's queen should not be allowed into f3. White can still save the game with 20.♖e1!; now, Black should avoid 20...♖h4? 21.♗g5 ♗d4 22.♙e3 ♗a4 23.b3 h6 24.♗xg7+ ♗xg7 25.bxa4 when it is Black who fights for the draw.

20...♗xf3

Threat: ...♖g4+.

21.h3 ♗xh3 22.f4

This is the only way to cover the threatened mate on h2 while keeping Black's rook out of g4.

22...♗xd3

White's queenside pieces are frozen. 22...♖e8 is also easily winning for Black.

23.a3

23.a4 ♖b3 24.♖a3 ♖xa3 25.bxa3 ♖e8 26.♙b2 ♙f8, White is unable to defend against the coming ...♖e3.

23...♖e4 24.a4 ♖e6

24...c4 is also a thought, keeping White's rook out of a3.

25.f5

25.♖a3 ♗d4+ 26.♗h2 ♖fe8 is also lost for White.

25...♗d4+ 26.♗g2

Now Black forces mate. 26.♗h1 ♖e4 White can resign.

26...♖e2+ 27.♗h1 ♖h2#

0-1

Game 19

A.Rupprecht (2389) – M.Warmerdam (2600)

German Bundesliga 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♟f6 4.♚a4+ ♟bd7 5.c4 b5

If a strong GM is willing to go in with guns blazing and empty two clips into the position with this double pawn sacrifice, it should also be good enough for us.

6.♚xb5

Robbing the opponent of money is not the same as robbing him of his power.

6...♞b8 7.♚a4 e6 8.♟c3

Like the last game, White is willing to let go of his crown jewel pawn on d5 to not fall too far behind in development.

8...exd5



Black in this version refuses to play a waiting game and captures immediately on d5.

9.cxd5

9.♟xd5 The engine doesn't like this version and responds 9...♟d6!/? rather than swapping on d5. 10.♟e3 0-

0 11.♟f3 ♟b7 12.♟e2 ♟h5! 13.g3 f5! ...f5–f4 is coming, and it appears Black got a kind of super version of a Ruy Lopez Marshall Gambit. The engine says White is in deep trouble.

9...♟d6 10.♟f3 0-0 11.♟e2 ♟b6 12.♚h4!

12.♚xa7?? isn't all that tempting since 12...♞a8 traps the queen.

12...♟b7 13.0-0 ♟bxd5 14.d4?!

This move, which prepares to develop White's queenside, is both natural and inaccurate, according to the engine who wants the inhuman 14.♟xd5 ♟xd5 15.♟c4!/? ♟xf3 16.gxf3 ♞b6 17.d3, which it assesses only a shade better for Black.

14...♞e8!

Threat: Here is the trouble with White's last move: he loses more time since Black threatens ...♟xc3 followed by ...♞xe2.

15.♟d3 cxd4?!

15...♟xc3! 16.bxc3 c4! 17.♟b1 (17.♟c2 ♞e2 18.♟e1 h6 is also unappealing for White) 17...♟xf3 18.gxf3 when nearly all of White's army sits on the back rank and Black stands clearly better.

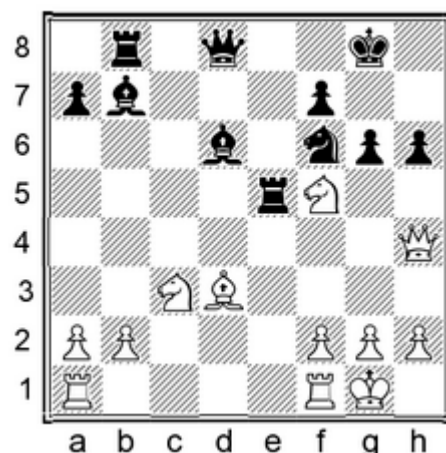
16.♟xd4 ♞e5

Threat: ...♞h5.

17.♟g5 h6

More energetic is 17...♞xg5! 18.♚xg5 h6 19.♚d2 ♟f4 White has no good way to protect g2 since 20.f3?? loses instantly to 20...♟e5!, winning material.

18.♟xf6 ♟xf6 19.♟f5 g6?!



Warmerdam wants his rook to shift to either h5 or g5, and damn the price! He pays too high a cost to bring the surly, fearsome f5–brute to heel. He shouldn't give away his power on the dark squares, and correct

was 19...♙c7 20.♞ad1 ♞e8 with full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

20.♜xd6!

20.♜xh6+?? ♔g7 - Threat: ...♞h5 and White is busted.

20...♞xd6 21.♞fd1?!

This is a case of the wrong rook. White stands slightly better after 21.♞ad1! ♞g5 22.♙e4! Black's once powerful initiative is now an inert mass, and he lacks full compensation for the missing pawn.

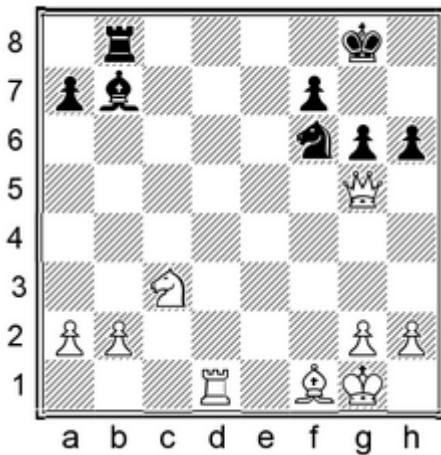
21...♞c6 22.♙f1 ♞g5

Threatening detonation on g2.

23.f3 ♞xf3?

23...♞b6+! 24.♞f2 ♙xf3! 25.♞d2 is equal.

24.♞xg5! ♞xd1 25.♞xd1?



The ending is equal. White missed that he could win a pawn with a zwischenzug.

Rupprecht must have kicked himself after the game for missing the not-so-difficult-to-find 25.♞xg6+! fxg6 26.♞xd1 with a pawn up and won ending for White. But of course, we are all so wise after the game and not so much during.

25...hxg5 26.b3 ♞e8 27.♙c4 ♔g7 28.h3 ♞e5 29.♞f1

29.♔f1 is a shade more accurate.

29...♙c6 30.♞f2 ♞e1+ 31.♞f1 ♞e3

The GM, who admittedly got lucky this game, doesn't want a draw against his lower-rated opponent, even though neither side has anything at this stage.

32.♜e2 ♜d5 33.♜d4 ♙a8 34.♜f3 f6 35.♔f2

Threat: ♙xd5.

35...♞c3 36.♞d1 ♜b6 37.♙e2 ♙xf3!?



This creates an imbalance that allows the GM to play for the full point.

38.gxf3

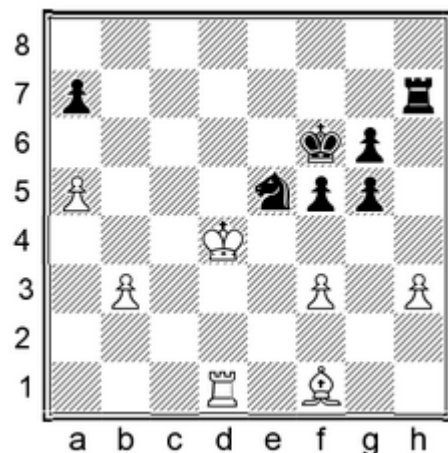
White doesn't see the need to speculate with the pawn

sacrifice 38.♙xf3!? ♞c2+ 39.♔e3 ♞xa2 40.♞c1 Sure, White should still hold a draw, but we all would prefer to play Black, the pawn-up side.

38...♔f7

38...♞c2 is met with 39.a4.

39.♙d3 f5 40.♔e3 ♞c7 41.♔d4 ♔f6 42.a4 ♞h7 43.a5 ♜d7 44.♙f1 ♜e5



The position remains dynamically balanced.

45.♔c5!

White wisely outsources his war to the queenside, where he owns: a potentially superior minor piece, strong king, and queenside majority, which offer full compensation for the loss of the f3-pawn.

45...♞c7+

After 45...♗xf3 46.b4, White's queenside majority is dangerous, and he has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

46.♔b5 ♗xf3

There is little profit in burglarizing a vacant, abandoned home. White has enough play on the other side to make up for it.

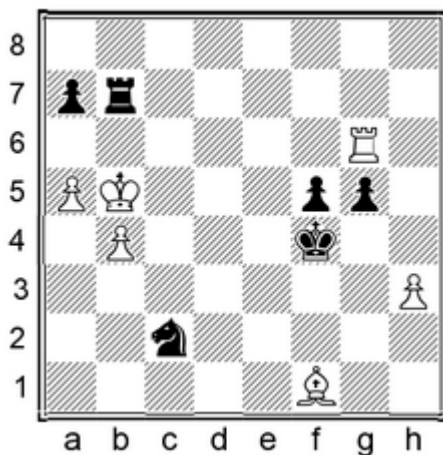
47.♞d6+

The more accurate was 47.♔a6!.

47...♔e5 48.♞xg6 ♗d4+ 49.♔a6 ♔f4! 50.b4 ♗c2! 51.♔b5

51.b5?? allows 51...♗b4#.

51...♞b7+



52.♔a6?

52.♔c5! ♗xb4 53.a6 ♞b8 54.♞g7 ♗xa6+ 55.♗x a6 ♞h8 is drawn.

52...♞e7?!

52...♞d7! 53.♔b5 (53.b5?? seals the white king's escape hatch: 53...♗b4#; the message is never comforting when your opponent gleefully bangs down his or her move and then announces:

“Mate!”) 53...♞d5+! 54.♔a4 ♞d1 55.♗g2 ♞g1 56.♗c6 ♞b1! offers Black winning chances after 57.♔b5 ♗xb4 58.♗a8.

53.♔b5 ♞e5+ 54.♔c6??

In chess, as in life, our fate rarely ends up the way we thought it would, and this is either a fatigue or time pressure error.

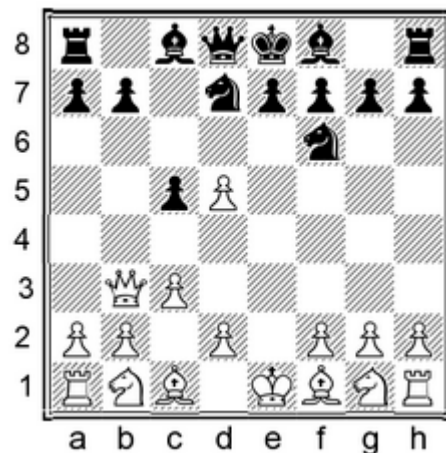
White should still hold the game after 54.♔a4 ♞e4 55.♔b3 ♗xb4 56.♞d6

54...♗xb4+ White's position bleeds out, and he will be left down two pawns for no compensation.

0-1

Game 20
Harika Dronavalli (2517) – V.Fedoseev
(2701)
Chess.com INT 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♗f6 4.♞a4+ ♗bd7 5.♞b3!?



Is there such a thing as an extraterrestrial opening variation? If so, this would be it. This is an engine suggestion, which it assesses as okay for White. But is it? Let's look at the instant replay:

1. White first grabs a pawn on d5.
2. White hopes to hold on to it with a queen check on a4, which hurts her development.
3. White moves the queen one more time to b3, still wanting to hang on to the pawn.

The engine assesses at just an edge for White. We don't believe it, and if the engine is correct, then Morphy was wrong about his theory of developing quickly in the opening!

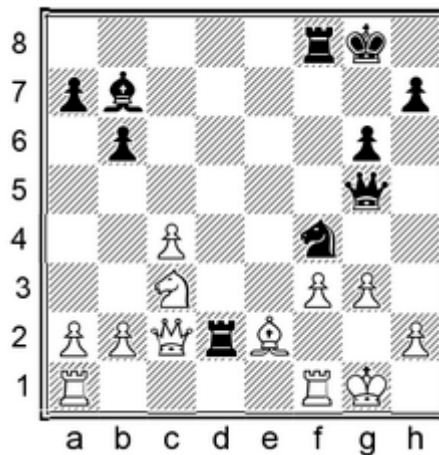
5...g6

Black gets on with his development and then will later focus on regaining or exchanging away the d5-pawn.

6.♭f3 ♘g7 7.d4

The theory comes to an end. GM Dronavalli naturally seeks to free the queenside congestion. The engine doesn't like the move and prefers

7.♙e2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.c4 (White is willing to lag far behind in development for a pawn. The engine still approves) 9...♙b7 10.♖c3 e6 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.d4!? (This violates the **Principle**: Don't open the position when lagging in development; Safer is 12.d3) 12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c5 Black begins to gain a lot of time. 14.♙d1 ♙e7 Preparing ...♙ad8 next. (14...♗fe4 is the engine's choice) 15.♗f3 ♙ad8 16.♙c2 e5 (again, the engine prefers 16...♗fe4) 17.♙g5 e4! 18.♗d2 ♗e6!? (I preferred this to the also playable 18...♗d3) 19.♙xf6?! (the inhuman 19.♙e3 ♗d4 20.♙xd4 ♙xd4 is about even, according to the engine) 19...♙xf6 20.♗dxe4? (he should have covered d4 by transferring his knight to b3) 20...♙xc3! 21.♗xc3 (21.bxc3 ♗f4 22.f3 ♙xe4 23.fxe4 ♙g5 24.♙f3 ♙d2! wins) 21...♗f4 (there are too many pieces aimed at White's king) 22.f3 ♙g5 (queen check on e3, followed by ...♙d2 is also winning) 23.g3 ♙d2!



0-1, G.Negus-C.Lakdawala, Training game (San Diego) 2022.

7...0-0!?

Also, tempting is to regain the pawn with 7...cxd4 8.♗xd4 0-0 9.♙e2 ♗c5 10.♙a3 ♙xd5 when Black stands slightly better.

8.♙e3!?

She wants to keep what is hers! It is possible to return the pawn and agree to stand just a shade worse after 8.♙e2 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗c5.

8...♗g4

This is not the optimal response. 8...♗b6! 9.c4 cxd4 10.♙xd4 e5! 11.♙c5 ♙e8 12.♙e2 e4 offers Black a dangerous initiative for the pawn.

9.♙g5! cxd4 10.cxd4 h6 11.♙h4 ♗b6 12.♗c3 ♗f6 13.♙xf6!

White will stand slightly worse if Black regains the sacrificed pawn on d5.

13...exf6! 14.♙e2 ♙e8 15.0-0



White owns an extra yet not-terribly valuable d5–pawn. For it, Black owns bishop pair in an open position and play against both white isolanis, and the engine judges it at an edge for White, while we humans are fine with Black’s game.

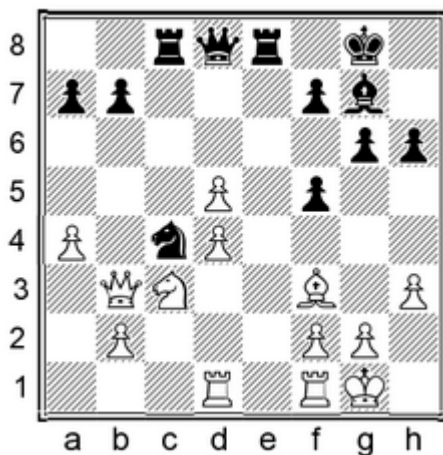
15...♙g4 16.h3 ♘xf3

The bishops of opposite colors will help Black.

17.♙xf3 f5 18.♞ad1 ♞c8 19.a4

Intending to displace Black’s knight with a4–a5 next and then go after b7.

19...♘c4!?



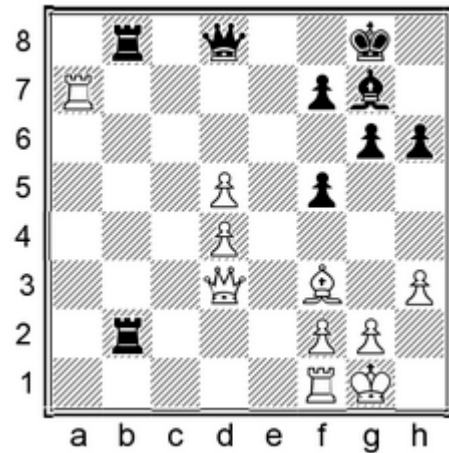
This is a radical response. Black gives up a second pawn for activity. The engine is actually okay with this move and still calls the game even.

19...♞e7 is the more sober choice, after which the game remains in dynamic balance.

20.♞xb7 ♞e7 21.♞b3 ♘d6

The pawns are firmly blockaded, and Black will gain play on the open queenside lines.

22.♘b5 ♞b7 23.♞d3 ♘xb5 24.axb5 ♞cb8 25.♞a1 ♞xb5 26.♞xa7 ♞xb2

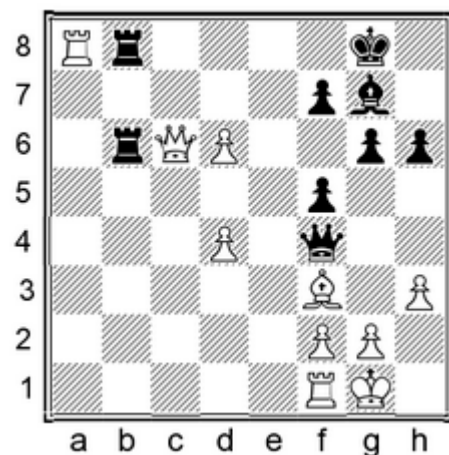


The game appears to be headed for a draw.

27.♞a4!?

We are eager to learn about the possibilities of our position. What we sometimes neglect is our position’s limitations. White, perhaps misguidedly, plays for the full point. She can ensure a draw with 27.d6! ♞xd6 28.♞c4 ♞f8 29.♙d5 ♖h7 30.♙xf7 ♞xd4 31.♞xd4 ♙xd4 and handshake/draw.

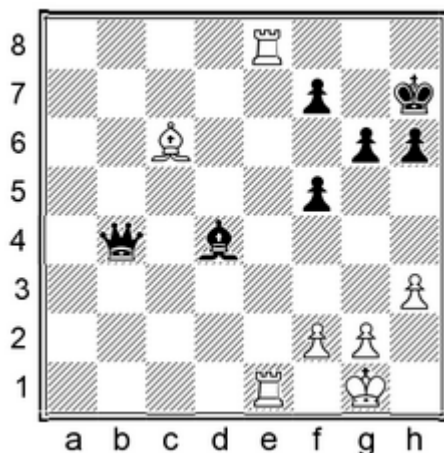
27...♞b3 28.♞c4 ♞g5 29.♞c7 ♞3b7 30.♞c6 ♞f4 31.d6 ♞b6 32.♞a8!?



We are not sure if we should label this happy-go-lucky or lucky-go-happy. GM Harika plays

with the misassumption that she is the one playing for the win. While her move is not technically a mistake, from a practical standpoint, it is so since only Black can play for the full point after this imbalance. She should go for 32. ♖d7 ♗xd6, which should be drawn.

32... ♖xc6 33. ♖xb8+ ♔h7 34. ♕xc6 ♗xd6 35. ♖c8 ♕xd4 36. ♖e1 ♗b4 37. ♖ce8??



37. ♖f1 was correct.

Exercise (combination alert): We are neither submerged in confusing data nor will an extensive database of tactical pattern recognition be required to prove why White's last move, undoubtedly a time pressure flub, is a mistake:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: A simple double attack by moving the queen to c5.

37... ♗c5! 38. ♖1e7 ♔g7!

Zwischenzug. The double attack on c6 and f2 remains.

38... ♗xc6?? 39. ♖xf7+ ♕g7 40. ♖ee7 induces Black to take the perpetual check with 40... ♗c1+ 41. ♔h2 ♗f4+.

39. ♕d7

She will not have time for ♕e6 since her king bleeds on the dark squares after f2 falls.

39... ♕xf2+ 40. ♔f1 ♕h4

Threatening mate on f2.

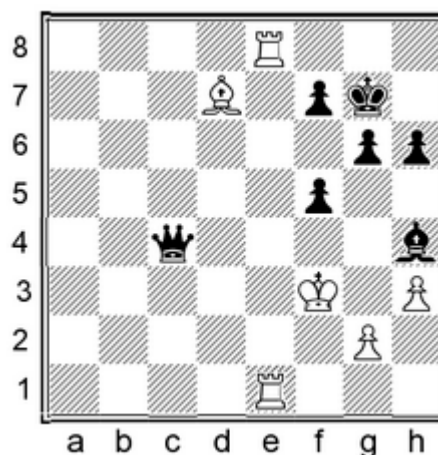
41. ♖e2 ♗c1+

Winning material, but it's even worse than you may think.

42. ♖e1 ♗f4+! 43. ♔e2

43. ♔g1 ♕xe1 44. ♖xe1 ♗d4+ wins the bishop as well.

43... ♗c4+! 44. ♔f3



44... ♗d5+ Double attack. Black queen and bishop simultaneously lick their lips in anticipation of the delicious buffet before them.

0-1

Chapter 4: 4.♘f3 Line: White play cxd4

When White plays 4.♘f3, this is an indicator that our opponent wants nothing to do with accepting our gambit and seeks instead to transpose to regular Alapin Sicilian lines. We will not allow this since we plan to recapture on d5 with our knight rather than our queen. This gains time compared to normal Alapin lines since, in our version, we don't have a vulnerable queen on d5, which gets chased around.

Game 21

P.Motwani – A.Summerscale

Hastings Challengers 1991

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♘f3



Next chapter, we look at 4.d4.

4...♘xd5

This is how we plan to mess up our opponent's intention to re-enter normal Alapin lines. By recapturing with our knight, we get the following alterations from the standard 4...♙xd5 line:

1. Clearly, our knight on d5 is far less vulnerable than our queen on that same square. We don't need to worry about time loss when White chases a queen from d5, with either a future ♗c3/♗bd2 and ♙c4/♗a3 and ♗b5,

threatening to fork on c7 (since Black's queen is on d5).

2. If White plays d2–d4 - which is virtually always, we exchange on d4. Most of your opponents will recapture with the c3–pawn since Alapin folk love to take on the isolani. When we get this, our knight sits nicely on the d5–blockade square, and as mentioned in number 1 on the list, we don't lose time with a queen on d5.

4...♙xd5 5.d4 reaches normal Alapin Sicilian positions, which we guarantee the reader, your opponent, will know well.

5.d4

This is played in nearly every game in the database.

5...cxd4

Here is another twist. Against these setups, we capture immediately on d4 rather than play ...e7–e6, which is closer to a structure your Alapin-loving opponent is accustomed to.

6.cxd4

We predict that most of your club-level opponents will play this way simply because taking on an isolani on d4 is instinctive for Alapin players.

Next chapter, we look at the lines

a) 6.♗xd4 and b) 6.♙xd4.

6...g6

This turns the game into a line of the Panov-Botvinnik attack, with ...g7–g6, rather than the more often played ...e7–e6 setups.

Your opponents will probably be more accustomed to the setups 6...♗c6 and 6...e6, which we don't cover in the book.

7.♙b3

White seeks to play a quick ♕c4 and ♖c3, adding heat to our knight. We soon look at a) 7. ♖c3 and b) 7. ♕c4.

7... ♕g7

We race to castle and won't look at 7... ♖c6.

8. ♕c4 e6

8... ♕e6? is refuted, not by grabbing the b7-pawn, but by simply developing with 9. ♖c3! and if 9... ♖xc3, then 10. ♕xe6 fxe6 11. bxc3 and White stands clearly better.

9. ♕g5

After 9. ♖c3 ♖xc3 10. bxc3 0-0, we reach a decent looking Grünfeldish position, where White's queen and c4-bishop look slightly misplaced and vulnerable to ideas like ... ♖c6 and ... ♖a5, and a simple pileup of major pieces from Black on the open c-file, e.g., 11. ♕f4 ♖c6 12. ♕b5, as played in C.Jaulneau-D.Povchanic, ICCF email 2010. Black looks slightly better after 12... ♖a5 13. ♖b4 b6.

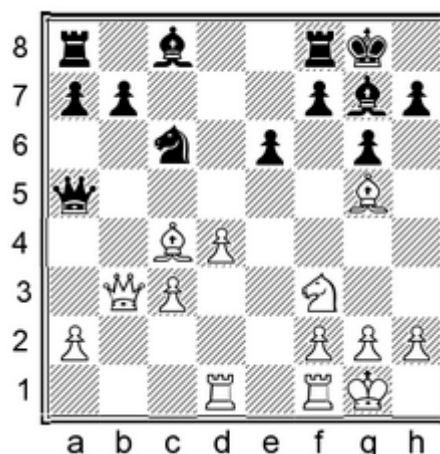
9... ♖a5+

9... ♖d6 is a major alternative: 10. ♕xd5 (10. ♖c3 ♖xc3 11. bxc3 0-0 is at least even for Black) 10... ♖xd5 11. ♖a3 (Threatening mate on the move; after 11. ♖xd5 exd5 12. ♖c3 ♕e6 13. ♖b5 ♖a6, Black stands no worse) 11... ♖e4+ 12. ♕e3 (12. ♖f1 f6 13. ♕e3 ♖c2! 14. ♖c3 ♕f8 15. ♖b3 ♖xb3 16. axb3 Black stands better in the ending since bishop pair and superior structure outweigh White's development lead) 12... ♖c6 13. 0-0 ♖a6! 14. ♖c1 ♖xa3 15. ♖xa3 ♖c6 Black's bishop pair and superior structure balance out with White's lead in development, T.Seymour-N.Pert, London 2018.

10. ♖c3

After 10. ♕d2, Black can offer to repeat moves by moving the queen back to d8, or we can play for the full point with 10... ♖c7 11. ♖c3 ♖xc3 12. ♕xc3 0-0 13. 0-0 ♕d7 14. ♖ac1 ♖b6 15. d5 ♖xb3 16. ♕xb3 exd5 17. ♕xd5 ♕c6 18. ♖fd1 ♕xc3 19. ♖xc3 ½-½, T.Thomas-R.Sciarretta, ICCF email 2019.

10... ♖xc3 11. bxc3 ♖c6 12. 0-0 0-0 13. ♖ad1



This feels like the wrong rook, and it is more natural to play a setup with ♖fd1 and ♖ac1.

13. ♖fd1 ♖c7 (threatening ... ♖a5, while cutting off ♕f4) 14. ♕e2 b6 15. ♖ac1 with dynamic equality, H.Teske-R.Schöngart, Dresden 2006.

13... ♖c7

Threat: ... ♖a5.

14. ♕e2 b6 15. c4 ♕a6!

Worrying White about ... ♖a5. Now we see why White's a1-rook may have been better off on c1 rather than d1.

16. ♖a3 ♖c8?!

We don't really understand this involuntary queen retreat.

After 16... ♖a5 17. ♖c1 ♖ac8 18. ♕d2 ♕b7 19. ♕xa5 bxa5 20. ♖e3 ♖c6, the game remains in dynamic balance.

17. ♖fe1

17. h4 is also tempting.

17...♖e8

17...h6 is perhaps a shade more accurate.

18.h4!



This is the precursor to a potential attack. While we can't claim that White's last move is the point in the movie where the bad hombre gunfighter rides into town, prompting frightened mothers to grab their children from their play and bring them into the house, neither should Black feel too secure, since he lacks play against White's hanging pawns

18...♗a5!?

This is dangerous, with White's attack brewing on the kingside.

Also to be considered is 18...h6 19.♕f4 ♗e7 20.d5! with an advantage for White.

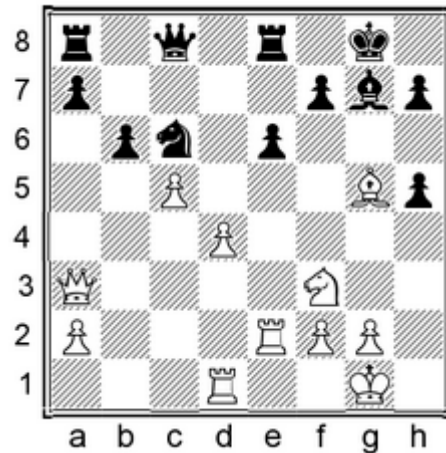
19.c5?!

19.h5! is promising. If 19...♗xc4, then 20.♖c1 ♗d6 21.♕xa6 ♖xa6 22.♗f4 ♗f5 23.h6 ♕h8 24.d5! leaves Black in trouble since 24...exd5? is met by 25.g4, and White wins material for insufficient Black compensation.

19...♕xe2 20.♖xe2 ♗c6

Once again, he should toss in 20...h6.

21.h5 gxh5!?



A move made with the philosophy: unlike life, in chess, outer appearances mean nothing, and only the position's truth matters. This is radical, and one can't truthfully call this a structurally pious decision. GM Summerscale may have feared a push to h6 or the threat to swap on g6 hanging over his head.

21...♖d7 looks better, or if not that, then at least it looks a bit less crazy than the move he played in the game!

22.♖e3

22.♖c1 is more accurate.

22...♗e7

22...♖d7 23.♕h6 f6 looks okay for Black.

23.♕xe7! ♖xe7 24.♗e5 ♖e8?!

The correct was 24...♖c7.

25.c6! ♖c8 26.♖c1?!

White loses his advantage with this natural move.

26.♗f3! leave Black in trouble. 26...f6? (26...♖d8 is correct, although White after 27.♗d7 retains the advantage) 27.♗d7 ♖f7 28.♖de1 is quite awful for Black.

26...♖ec7 27.♖ec2 ♖e7 28.♗f3 ♖d6! 29.♖e4 f6 30.♗d7!

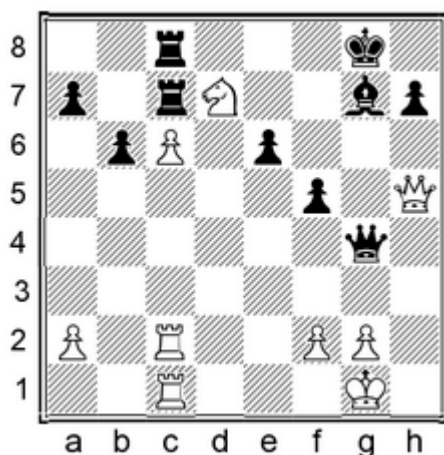
30. ♖f3 ♜d5! 31. ♞xd5 exd5 32. ♝c3 ♕h6! 33. ♖1 c2 White struggles in the ending.

30...f5! 31. ♞h4 ♜xd4

We are reminded of Yeats's poem: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, and the blood-dimmed tide is loosed everywhere."

With the fall of White's final central pawn, the advantage swings to Black.

32. ♞xh5 ♜g4!



Suddenly, White looks a bit overextended.

33. ♞h2!

33. ♞xg4? fxg4 34. ♝c4 b5! 35. ♝4c2 ♖f7 with a clear advantage for Black since White can do nothing much to improve his position.

33...f4!

Cutting off White's queen.

34.f3?

White has good chances to hold the game with 34.a4 f3 35. ♝c4 ♞xg2+ 36. ♞xg2 fxg2 37. ♖xg2.

34...♞g3?!

The more accurate is 34...♕d4+! 35. ♖h1 ♞g5 36. ♞h3 ♖h8! 37. ♞xe6 ♕e3 38. ♝d1 ♝xc6! 39. ♝xc6 ♞h4+ 40. ♞h3 ♞

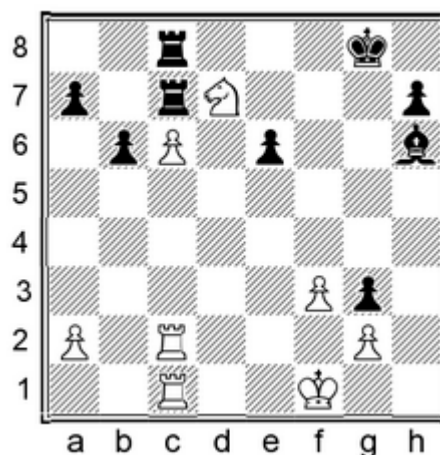
xh3+ 41.gxh3 ♝xc6 42. ♖e5 ♝c1 leaves White busted in the ending.

35. ♞xg3?

The alteration in structure is felt in disproportional impact since it enables ...♕h6!.

35. ♖h1! may well open the game, yet the phrase "may well" is saturated with a feeling of impermanence, and White "may well" also lose!

35...fxg3 36. ♖f1 ♕h6!



Removal of the guard. The move is freighted with ominous overtones since White's c1-rook is chased away, and Black wins a second pawn.

37. ♝e1 ♝xc6 38. ♝ce2 ♝d8 39. ♖f6+

39. ♖f6+ ♖f7 40. ♖g4 ♕g7 Black will consolidate.

0-1

Game 22

T.Porat (1870) – C.Lakdawala (2492)

Training game (San Diego) 2022

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖f6 4.d4

Oh, the callous ingratitude when we offer our opponent a gambit pawn through the goodness of our hearts, which is then rudely and laughingly declined.

Tori tried to hang on to the pawn with 4.♕b5+ in a game shown earlier in the

book and decided she wanted to play it safe this time.

4...♟xd5 5.♞f3 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 7.♙c4



7...♞g7

Also playable, and even is the line 7...♟b6 8.♙b3 ♞g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♟c3 ♟c6 11.d5 ♟a5 12.♞e1 ♞g4 13.h3 ♞xf3 14.♞xf3 ♟xb3 15.axb3 ♞e8 16.♙e3 ♞xc3 17.♙b6 ♞xb6 18.bxc3 ♞xb3 19.♞ab1, which is pretty drawish. Every game in the database but one ended in a draw.

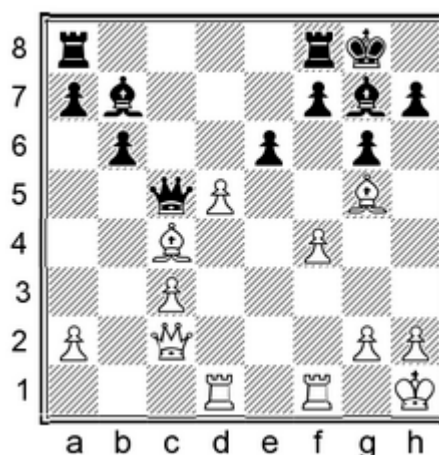
8.♞b3

My sneaky student Tori plays a clever move order which disallows ...♟xc3 since White held her b1-knight back from the square.

8...e6 9.♞g5

9.0-0 0-0 10.♞g5 (10.♟c3 - remember, we are always happy when White plays this and allows us to swap on c3 - 10...♟xc3 11.bxc3 ♟c6, we already prefer Black, P.Pultinevicius-J.Xiong, Chess.com INT 2020) 10...♞d6 (I was surprised to see this natural move is a novelty, although it's an improvement over the previously played 10...f6?! which unnecessarily loosens Black's central pawns) 11.♟c3 (or 11.♙xd5 ♞xd5 12.♞xd5 exd5 13.♟c3 ♙e6 when the engine gives Black a microbe of an edge due to bishop pair) 11...♟xc3 12.bxc3 ♟c6 (intending ...♟a5) 13.♞c2 (I don't really like this move

since White's queen will be vulnerable on the open c-file; she may have been better off with 13.♙e2 b6) 13...b6 14.♞ad1 (for some reason, the engine doesn't like this move and prefers 14.♞d2) 14...♙b7 15.d5?! (while tempting, the move may be a bit too huffy since it damages White's structure. The enhanced piece activity Tori expected from it never materialized; 15.♞e2 looks wiser) 15...♟e5! (she may have missed this idea and expected 15...exd5?! 16.♙xd5 ♞c7 17.c4 when White's piece activity makes up for her slightly inferior structure) 16.♟xe5 (the point of Black's last move is 16.dxe6?? ♟xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♞c5 - double attack - Black wins a piece and the game) 16...♞xe5 17.f4?! (this is weakening; she was better off giving up a pawn with 17.♞d2) 17...♞e3+ 18.♟h1 ♞c5



(Not the most accurate move; I wanted to get my queen out of the crossfire of the middle, but the engine wants 18...♞ac8!) 19.♙b3 ♙xd5 20.♙xd5 exd5 21.f5 (Tori hopes to generate play with a potential kingside attack) 21...♞fe8 (the human move. **Principle:** Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter; of course, the greedy engine prefers 21...♞xc3!?) 22.♞f2, after which she will attempt a lunge at my king) 22.f6 (I worried more about 22.♞a4) 22...♙f8 23.♞d2

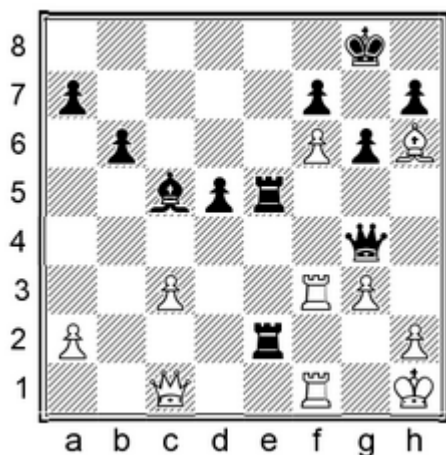
She plans to swap bishops and attempt to mate at g7 or pile up major pieces on the h-file. I felt

neither of these was too dangerous to my king for the following reasons:

1. I didn't see how White could deliver mate on g7 as long as I could defend with ...♖f8.

2. The plan of doubling on the h-file is too slow since Black will double rooks on the e-file and threaten White's weak back rank)

23...♖ad8 24.♙h6 ♖e4 25.♖f3 ♖de8? (the engine drops the evaluation by more than a point and a half after this natural move; it wants 25...♙xh6! 26.♖xh6 ♖f8 27.♖d2 ♖d6 28. h3 h6! 29.♖f4 ♖ee6 30.♖df1 ♙h7 31.♖d4 ♖xf6 32.♖xf6 ♖xf6 33.♖xd5 ♖f1+ 34.♙h2 ♖e7 ...♖c7+ is coming, and White is busted) 26.♖ff1? (now is not the time for passive defense, after which it's a death of a thousand paper cuts. Tori and I both hallucinated that Black's d-pawn couldn't be taken due to White's weak back rank, which, as it turns out, isn't so weak after 26.♙xf8! ♖xf8 27.♖xd5! - both of us hallucinated and thought this move was not possible - 27...♖e1+ - we don't require actual evidence to augment a pre-existing (mis-)belief - 28.♖f1 when it becomes apparent that Black's intended back rank mate was, in reality, a hallucination: 28...♖xd1 29.♖xd1 ♖e6 30.♖d4 White would regain her lost pawn and may save the game) 26...♖8e5 (now my extra-d5-pawn is secure, and Black is winning again) 27.♖c1 (getting out of the way of ...♖e2) 27...♖e2 28.♖f3 ♖c8! (I want initiative more than material and scoff at the greedy engine's wish to chop the useless a2-pawn) 29.♖g1 This is way too passive, but of no help was 29...♙c5 30.♖gf1 ♖g4 31.g3



(or 31.♖g3 ♖xg3! 32.hxg3 ♖h5#)

Exercise (combination alert): Gather round my children. White's king cannot withstand the persecution, and it's time for a Puzzle Rush-level combination. How does Black force mate?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier with a rook sacrifice on h2: 31...♖xh2+! 32.♙xh2 ♖h5+ (next switch the rook to the h-file) 33.♙g2 ♖h3# The queen discovers her brother's place of concealment. 0-1, T.Porat-C.Lakdawala, Training game (San Diego) 2022.

9...♖b6

9...♖d6 is also equal.

10.♙xd5 exd5 11.♙c3 ♖xb3 12.axb3 ♙e6 13. ♙b5 ♙d7!?



Do you want to sell your product? Then give the public what they desire. Unfortunately, we aren't doing a great job here since this is a gambit book where we promise excitement and get this boring ending instead. Keep in mind that it's very difficult for Black to dictate and order the exciting game when White is playing for simplification and a draw. With my last move, I offer the useless a7-pawn for a development lead. This is the only way to play for a win in this admittedly drawish position.

13...♙a6 is also equal since Black need not worry about the loss of b7. For example: 14.♙d6+ ♙d7 15.♙xb7 ♖hb8 16.♖xa

6 ♖xb7 17.♗d2 ♖xb3 18.♗c3 I thought this position was drawish, so I avoided it.

14.♗e5+!?

An unwelcome realization intruded upon my mind: She was trying to draw with the bishops of opposite colors.

I expected 14.♖xa7 ♖xa7 15.♗xa7 f6 16.♗e3 ♗a6 17.♗b5 ♖c8 18.♗c3 ♗f8 19.♗d2 ♖c6 20.♗e1 ♖b6 21.♗d3 ♖xb3 22.♗c2 ♖b6 Black regained the sacrificed pawn, although this won't be so easy to win, for either side.

14...♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗c6 16.♗f6 ♖hb8 17.0-0?!

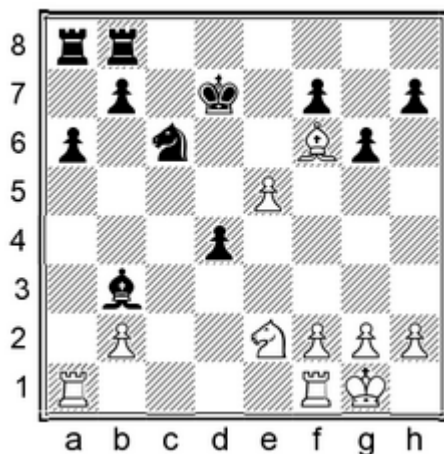
This move violates the *Principle*: Don't castle in an endgame. Instead, centralize your king and use him.

17.♗d2 is correct.

17...a6 18.♗c3!?

She may have been better off with 18.♗d6 a5 19.♖fd1 ♖a6, intending to switch the rook to b6, offers Black an edge.

18...d4 19.♗e2 ♗xb3



20.e6+!

20.♖a3? ♗c4 21.♖e1 ♗xe2 22.♖xe2 ♗e6.

20...fxe6?!

This was dumb because it leads to bishops of opposite colors, where Black's extra pawn may not be enough to

win. 20...♗xe6! 21.♗xd4 a5 offers Black better winning chances.

21.♗xd4

Ugh. I'm forced to swap knights, and Black's win comes into question, despite the extra pawn.

21...♗xd4 22.♗xd4 a5



Black's only chance to win is to push the queenside majority forward.

23.♖fe1

The engine doesn't like this and wants this rook to move to the c-file.

23...b5

Sometimes my feelings get hurt by the engine's constant criticism. It drops the evaluation after this natural move and wants 23...♖c8.

24.♖e3

The rook plans to probe for weakness on the kingside.

24...a4 25.♖h3 h5 26.♖d3

Threatening a not-so-difficult-to-see discovered check cheapo.

More accurate

was 26.♖g3 ♖g8 27.♖c1 ♗c4 28.♗e5.

26...♗d5 27.♖g3 ♖g8 28.♗e5 b4

Here comes the majority.

29.♖d3 ♖gc8 30.♖g3 ♗e4



The engine points out 30...a3! 31.bxa3 Bxa3! Playing upon White's weak back rank. 32.Bb1 Bxg3 33.hxg3 b3 is a certain loss for White, who is too tied down by the advanced passed b-pawn.

31. Bb1+ Kc8!

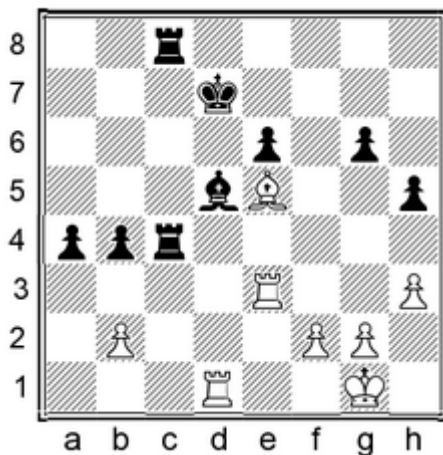
Principle: Sometimes, principles should be deliberately violated!

The harassment from White's checks comes to an end, even if it means decentralizing my king.

32. Be3 Bc4 33. h3 Qd5 34. Qd6

Cheapo threat: Bxd5.

34... Kd7 35. Qe5 Bxc8



My simple plan was to swap a pair of rooks, eliminating White's possible counterplay against my king.

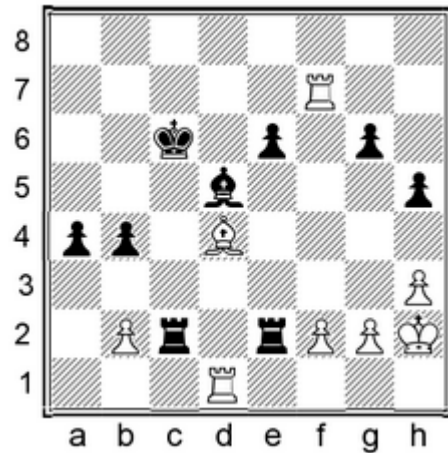
36. Kh2

36.f3 wouldn't have saved White.

36... Rc2 37. Bf3

37. Kg1 Kc6 is also lost for White.

37... Re2 38. Qg7 Bcc2 39. Bf7+ Kc6 40. Qd4



Black's position is extremely promising, yet "promising" means nothing if we fail to find the right plan. Black has two paths to win.

40... Bcd2

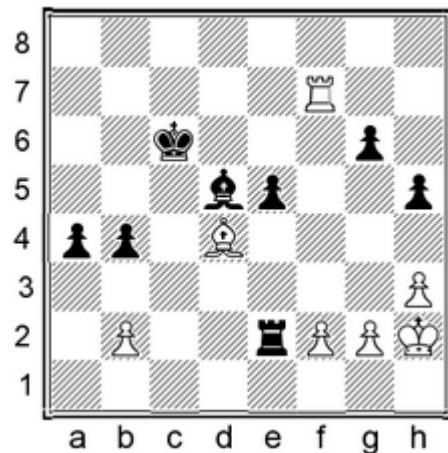
How wonderful when the cause of our past worry is destroyed. I knew it would be an easy win if one pair of rooks was forced off the board.

The engine prefers the flashy 40... Bxb2! 41. Qxb2 Bxb2 42. Bc1+ Kb6 43. Bf8 a3 44. Bb8+ Ka7 45. Bb5 a2 wins.

41. Bxd2 Bxd2 42. Qe5

42. Bf4? g5 disconnects the rook from the bishop.

42... Re2 43. Qd4 e5!



Removal of the guard. The b2-pawn falls.
 “You don’t fight fair,” scolded Tori. “Fairly,” I corrected with grammatical zeal.

43...e5! 44.♞e7 is met
 with 44...exd4! 45.♞xe2 a3 46.bxa3 bxa3 47.♙g3 d3 48.♞e1 a2 49.♙f4 d2 50.♞d1 ♚b3 wins.

0-1

Game 23

H.Nakamura (2787) – A.Giri (2782)

Leuven rapid 2016

1.♟f3

Huh? What? Don’t worry. We soon transpose. Our normal move order would be 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♟f6 4.♟f3 ♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 reaching the game’s position.

1.♟f3 d5 2.e3 ♟f6 3.d4 c5 4.c4 cxd4 5.exd4 g6 6.cxd5 ♟xd5



7.♟c3 ♟g7 8.♞b3 ♟xc3

This time Black has a knight to chop on c3, giving the game a Grunfeld-like flavor.

9.bxc3 0-0 10.h4!?



If a farmer’s dog is seen with bloody chicken feathers on his face, the farmer doesn’t need to go to the henhouse to confirm the suspected crime. Nakamura’s last move is objectively dubious since it violates the *Principle*: Don’t launch an attack when lagging in development. The engine frowns, but it’s now the law that we all must push our h-pawns at the slightest excuse! The move is also intimidating for Black since White doesn’t hide the intention to deliver mate. The push of the h-pawn doesn’t have great stats for White, yet favorable stats aren’t like an election, where the people have spoken and chosen a winner. If we are lax in our response, White can generate an attack that can soon grow out of control.

10.♟e2 ♟c6 11.0-0 b6 12.♞d1 ♟b7 13.♟e3 ♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♟a5 15.♞b5 ♞d5 Black already stood slightly better due to control over c4, A.Mirzoev-M.Kaminski, Bratislava 1993.

10...♟c6

10...♞c7 (the idea is to protect b7 to enable ...♟e6) 11.h5 ♟e6 12.♞c2 (Black also looks better after 12.♞a3 ♟d7) 12...♟c6 Threat: ...♟xd4. 13.♞d2 ♟d5 ...e7–e5 is coming, and White’s attempt to attack at this stage looks anything but dangerous, T.Frielingsdorf-O.Mücke, freechess.de 2016.

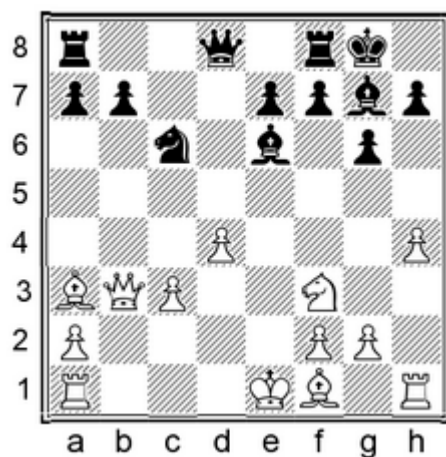
11.♟a3

Novelty. 11.h5 e5 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♟g5 ♞a5 14.d5 ♟d4! 15.♟xd4 exd4 White is

overextended, M.Martens-D.Dardha, Netherlands 2020.

11...♙e6!

We like this forceful pawn offer to White's attempted wing attack.



12.♚xb7?!

The engine hates this move and wants to go with the lamb-like and decidedly un-Nakamuraish 12.♚b2 ♘d5 13.♙e2 ♙xf3! 14.gxf3 (14.♙xf3 ♘xd4! 15.cxd4 ♙xd4 16.♚c1 ♚a5+! 17.♙f1 ♙xa1 wins) 14...♞b8 ...b7-b5 is coming, and White's attempt to attack Black's king looks fishy at best.

12...♙d5

Natural but not the best. Black threatens both ...♘xd4 and also possibly ...♙xf3.

12...♚a5! 13.♙b4 ♚d5 14.♚b5 ♘xb4 leaves White too far behind in development to survive.

13.♚a6 ♚c7

Threat: ...♘xd4!, uncovering an attack on c3.

14.♙c5?

14.♞c1 is correct. Even then, we aren't crazy about White's position.

14...e5!?



Giri offers the exchange on f8. He had stronger with the counterintuitive retreat

14...♞b8!! 15.♚a3 ♘d7! After which, White is in desperate trouble.

15.♙c4?!

He should try a) 15.♙b5 whereas b) 15.♙xf8? ♙xf8 (threat: ...♞b4! with a deadly double attack on a6 and c3) 16.♞c1 exd4 and White's position falls apart.

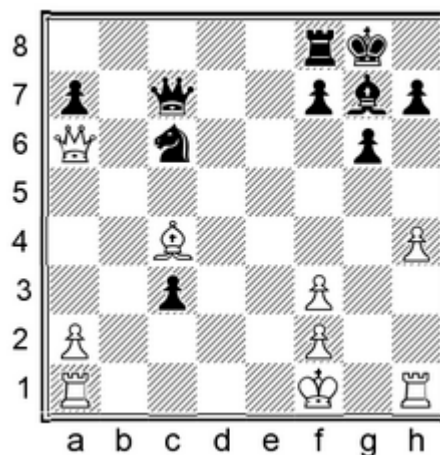
15...♙xf3

Serious strategic corruption creeps into Nakamura's structure.

16.gxf3 exd4 17.♙xf8 ♞xf8

...♘e5 is a deadly threat.

18.♙f1 dxc3



Order reasserts its authority upon a position Nakamura hoped would go out of control with complications. For the exchange, Giri got:

1. A killer passed pawn on c3.
2. Domination of the dark squares.
3. White's king is unsafe and will remain so.
4. Every white pawn on the board is an isolani.

Conclusion: White is strategically busted.

19. ♖e1 ♜e5

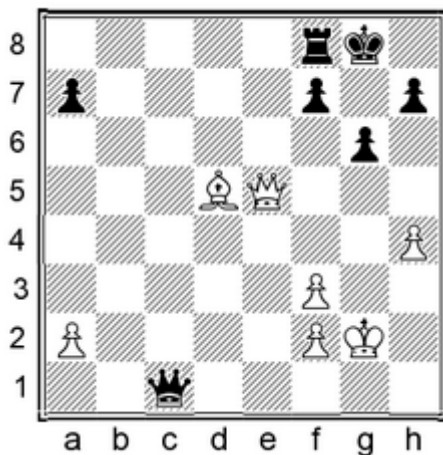
Even stronger

is 19... ♖b4! 20. ♖b5 ♜c2 21. ♖e4 ♜d4 22. ♖a4 ♜xf3

20. ♙d5 c2

This pawn will cost White his rooks since ... ♙h6 is coming.

21. ♔g2 ♙h6! 22. ♖e2 c1=♖ 23. ♖xc1 ♙xc1 24. ♖xc1 ♖xc1 25. ♖xe5



White's position has the wasted look of a Medieval plague victim. Black is up a full exchange, and White's hoped-for attack with h4–h5 is too slow.

25... ♖c8!

Intending ... ♖f5 next.

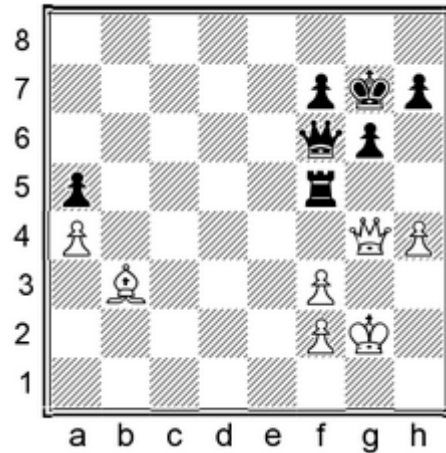
26. ♙b3

26.h5 ♖f5!; either the queens come off the board, or White loses his h-pawn.

26... ♖f5 27. ♖c7 a5 28. ♖e7 ♔g7 29.a4 ♖c8 30. ♖b7 ♖c5!

The goal is to double major pieces on the f-file on f5 and f6.

31. ♖a7 ♖e5 32. ♖d4 ♖f6 33. ♖g4 ♖f5!



34. ♔g3 ♖d6+

34... ♖d6+ 35. ♔g2 ♖b4 forces deadly simplification, which eradicates White's hopes.

0–1

Game 24

P.Charbonneau (2505) – W.So (2765)
PRO League Stage (Chess.com INT) 2019

1.c4

Guys, please stop messing with our move order! The Alapin version

runs: 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♜f6 4.♜f3 ♜xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 7.♜c3 ♙g7 8.♙c4 transposing.

1.c4 c5 2.♜c3 g6 3.♜f3 ♙g7 4.e3 ♜f6 5.d4 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.cxd5 ♜xd5 8.♙c4

This is White's overwhelming choice, but maybe it shouldn't be. We see why after So's 9th move. Placing the bishop on c4 has its own difficulties, as we soon learn.

a) 8. ♙b5+ doesn't make sense since White doesn't want swaps, especially of the light-squared bishops. 8... ♙d7 9. ♖b3 ♜xc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.0-0 ♜c6! (... ♜a5 is an annoying threat hanging over

White) 12. ♖e1 ♜a5 13. ♖d5 ♙xb5 14. ♖xb5 a6 15. ♖e2 e6 16.c4!? - otherwise, Black seizes control over c4 - M.Pavkovic-A.Saric, Rabac 2003. Here, Black should go for 16... ♙xd4! 17. ♜xd4 (17. ♖d1 ♙xa1 18. ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 is also in Black's

favor) 17...♖xd4 18.♗b2 ♗c5; White is down one pawn and may lose a second on c4. We don't believe in sufficient attacking chances for it, despite White's fierce-looking dark-squared bishops. The engine assesses in Black's favor as well.

b) 8.♗e2 is essentially a Queen's Gambit Declined Tarrasch Variation, with colors reversed. Black should be equal here.

8...♗xc3!

We believe Black gets the advantage after this exchange and is superior to 8...♗b6 9.♗b3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗c6 11.d5 ♗a5 is about even.

9.bxc3 ♗c7!

So exploits the pileup on the c-file to misplace White's queen. The move is more accurate than 9...0-0.

10.♗b3

a) 10.♗e2 is well met with the untested 10...♗g4! 11.♗xf7+!? (11.0-0 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 0-0 is unpleasant for White) 11...♗xf7 12.♗g5+ ♗e8 13.♗xg4 ♗xc3 + 14.♗d2 Forced, since moving the king to e2 (14.♗e2) loses to 14...♗c6!. 14...♗xa1+ 15.♗e2 ♗xd4 16.♗c8 + ♗d8 17.♗xb7 ♗d7 18.♗e6 ♗c8 19.♗c7+ (19.♗xg7+?? ♗f7 is completely lost for White) 19...♗f8! 20.♗f3+ ♗f6 21.♗xa8 ♗xa8 22.♗xa8 ♗f7 Black stands slightly better.

b) 10.♗b5+ ♗d7 11.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 when the swap of bishops benefitted Black, who can now play upon White's hanging pawns and the weak c4-hole. B.Warszawski-V.Bernadskiy, Warsaw 2014.

10...0-0 11.♗g5!?

As to the question of this knight's burst of speed, let's just say that it wouldn't be able to qualify for the varsity track team. White's loss of time by moving the knight is more critical than Black's apparent weakening of the dark squares with ...e7-e6. If one of our 1400-rated

students played this move, we would undoubtedly scold them. If a GM plays it, we must take notice. The idea is to force ...e7-e6, which may create dark square problems later around the black king. The problem, of course, is that White's move violates the *Principle*: Don't move the same piece twice in the opening without good reason. And this doesn't appear to be a good enough reason.

11.0-0 ♗c6 Black gains time with the threat: ...♗a5. 12.♗e2 ♗e6! More time gained. 13.♗a3 (13.d5? ♗a5 14.♗b5 a6 15.♗d3 ♗fd8 White can resign) 13...♗d5! 14.♗d1 ♗ac8 15.♗g5 ♗a5! (Threat: ...♗xf3, followed by ...♗xg5; this forces White into an unwanted queen swap) 16.♗xa5 ♗xa5 Black stood clearly better, with control over c4 and the potential pressure on White's hanging pawns. M.Beinoras-F.Rambaldi, London 2015; 17.♗xe7?? fails miserably to 17...♗fe8 18.♗b4 ♗xe2 19.♗xa5 b6 20.♗b4 a5 21.♗d6 ♗xa2 leaving White completely busted in the ending.

11...e6

Black isn't worried since he can later develop his light-squared bishop via fianchetto.

12.♗a3 ♗d8!

So isn't bluffed into passivity from fear of phantom sacrifices on e6 or f7, and he correctly avoids 12...♗e8.

13.0-0

13.h4? is untested since it's a case of misapplied aggression. 13...♗c6 Threat: ...♗a5. 14.♗e2 h6 15.♗e4 b6 White's push of the h-pawn served no purpose but to weaken White's king since pushing it to h5 is met with the bypass ...g6-g5. The engine hates White's position here.

13...♗c6

Threat: ...♗a5.

14.♔e2

14.♔d3 b6 15.♟fe1 Petz,S-Warmerdam,M
Dortmund 2022. Black stands better
after 15...♗a5 16.♞c2 ♖c4.

14...b6



Novelty. 14...♗a5 15.♞b4 b6 16.♟ad1 ♔b7 17.
♔f3?? (White already stood worse and was
busted after this
mistake) 17...♔xf3 18.♗xf3 ♔f8 19.♞a4 (Or 19
.♞b2 ♖c4) 19...b5!, 0–1, Black wins a piece,
G.Kosanovic-N.Friedrich, Porto Carras 2018.

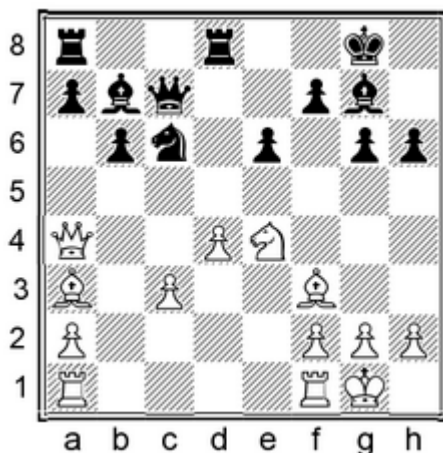
15.♔f3 ♔b7

...♗a5 is in the air.

16.♞a4?!

16.♟ad1 was necessary. Even
there, 16...♗a5 17.♞b2 ♖c4 is clearly in
Black's favor.

16...h6! 17.♗e4?!



17.♗h3 was necessary. White's position looks
pretty sorry after the unpleasant yet necessary
retreat: 17...♟ac8 18.♟ac1 ♗a5 19.♔xb7 ♞xb7
20.♗f4 ♞e4 21.g3 ♗c4 22.♟fe1 ♞f3 when
White's position is filled with light square
weakness and is strategically lost.

A knight sacrifice on e6 is obviously
insufficient.

Exercise (combination alert): There is
treachery afoot. How did So force the win of
material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Start with a knight sacrifice on d4.

17...♗xd4!

Cobra-quick So strikes.

18.cxd4 ♟xd4

Double attack. Black regains the piece with two
extra pawns' interest.

19.♞b3

The white queen's persecution isn't over yet.

19...♔xe4 20.♔b2

This is a mistake in an already lost
position. 20.♔xe4 ♟xe4 leaves White down two
pawns without compensation.

20...♟d3

We are struck dumb with shock when a GM
loses in 20 moves with the white pieces. At this
stage, his disheartened forces cannot put up any
resistance.

20...♟d3 21.♞b5 ♟d5! 22.♞b3 ♔xf3 23.♔xg7 ♔
xg2! is hopeless for White.

0–1

Chapter 5: 4.♘f3 Line: White recaptures on d4 with Knight or Queen

In this chapter, which is really an extension of the 4.♘f3 line, White does NOT take on an isolani and instead recaptures on d4 the 6th move with knight or queen. The main imbalance is that we instantly get opposing wing pawn majorities, with White's being on the queenside and ours central/kingside. We can sometimes make use of our superior central influence when we achieve ...e7–e5. Both positions tend to be equal, and White usually plays this line if our opponent is either out for a draw or is an endgame specialist.

Game 25

R.Procenko – A.Vitolinsh (2425)

USSR Trade Unions ch (Kherson) 1990

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♘xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4



We were shocked to discover this had been played more often than recapture with the c3–pawn, leading to the Alapin Sicilianer's beloved isolani positions. At the club level, we are confident that most of your opponents will recapture with the c–pawn, reaching a comfortable isolani position for Black, as seen in the last chapter.

Later in the chapter, we examine 6.♙xd4

6...a6

While 6...e5 and 6...e6 score well for Black, we don't have room in the book to cover them.

7.♙e2

The idea may be to shift the bishop to f3 later on.

a) 7.♙d3 - we examine this one in the next game.

b) 7.♙c4 - we look at this move in a couple of games.

7...g6

We recommend this setup, played in only three games, scoring 2.5 for Black. The fianchetto makes sense for the following reasons:

1. A bishop on g7 inhibits White's future c3–c4 since this would undermine control over the d4–square.

2. Black will later want to push the kingside majority with ...e7–e5 and possibly even ...f7–f5. Black's bishop is ideally posted via fianchetto since it covers e5.

8.a4

White plays this advance to inhibit ...b7–b5, which Black doesn't want to play this early anyway. White may also have eyes on b6, with ideas like ♘d2, a4–a5, and ♘c4.

a) 8.♙f3 ♘f6 9.0-0 ♙g7 10.♘d2 ♙c7 11.♙e2 0-0 12.♙c4 ♙d6 13.♙b3 ♘bd7 14.♘c4 ♙c7 15.a4 e5 16.♘c2 ♙b8 17.♙e3 b6 18.♙fd1 ♘c5 and draw agreed, ½–½, D.De Wit-S.Vanderwaeren, Antwerp 1997. Black shouldn't have agreed to a draw; the engine has Black up by over half a point.

b) 8.0-0 ♙g7 9.♙a4+ was played in S.Lobanov-A.Saveliev, St Petersburg 2020; the idea behind this check is to clear the d–file for White's

rook. However, Black looks just fine after 9...♘d7 10.♞d1 0-0 11.♚b3 ♚a5.

8...♙g7 9.♘a3

Destination c4.

9...0-0 10.0-0 e5

Principle: Push your pawn majority forward as quickly and as efficiently as possible. With this move, Black seizes a greater share of central control.

11.♘dc2?!



The idea is to challenge Black's d5-knight with ♘e3 at some point. The flaw with this plan is that ♘e3 will be met with ...♘f4. If White first plays g2-g3, the kingside light squares are weakened. It was correct to play 11.♘b3 ♘c6 12.♘c4 with a dynamically balanced position.

11...♘c6 12.♘c4?!

The engine doesn't like this one either, preferring to weaken the kingside light squares with 12.g3 ♙e6 13.♘e3 ♘ce7 14.♙f3 ♞c8; even here, Black looks a touch better.

12...♙e6 13.a5

White overrates the power of his control over b6.

13...♚c7 14.♘2e3?!

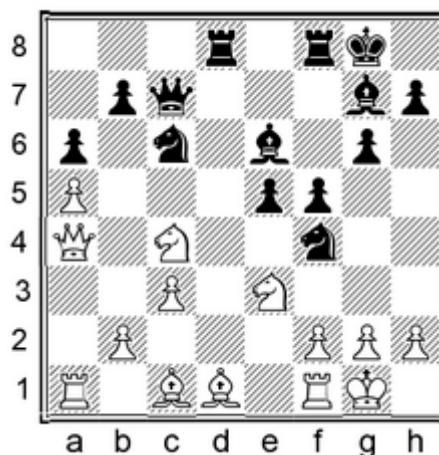
a) 14.♙g5 h6 15.♘2e3 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 hgx5 and Black won a pawn, and control over b6 isn't sufficient compensation.

b) 14.g3 ♞ad8 15.♙d2 f5 doesn't look like much fun for White either.

14...♘f4 15.♙f3 ♞ad8 16.♚a4 f5

...e5-e4 is coming.

17.♙d1



When you make a passive retreating move like this, it becomes clear that the opening setup doesn't work out how you hoped it would.

17.♙xc6 bxc6! (Black wants to retain queens on the board) 18.♘b6 ♘e2+ 19.♙h1 f4; ...f4-f3 is coming, further puncturing White's porous kingside light squares.

17...e4

Black is ready to jump into d3 with his f4-knight.

18.♙b3

18.♘b6 ♘e5 19.♙b3 ♚e7 20.♙xe6+ ♚xe6 provides Black with a winning bind.

18...♘e2+

18...♚f7! paralyzes the c4-knight since 19.♘d2?? is impossible due to 19...♘e2+ 20.♙h1 ♘xc1, undermining support for the d2-knight and winning a piece.

19.♙h1 f4

Here they come.

20. ♖b6

Uncovering an attack on the e6–bishop

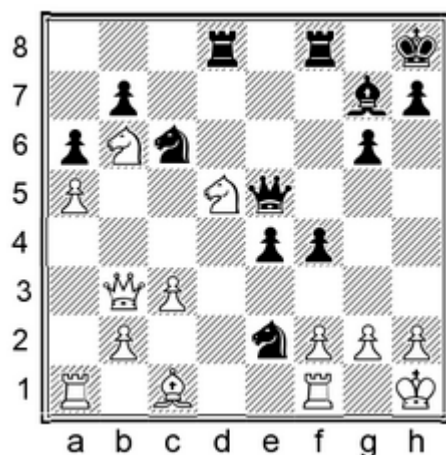
20... ♗xb3

20... ♗f7! was more accurate.

21. ♖xb3+ ♖h8 22. ♗ed5?!

22. ♖c4! was necessary 22... ♗xc1 23. ♗ed5! ♖e5 24. ♖fxc1 f3 25. g3 ♗h6 26. ♖e1 ♖fe8 and White's position is wretched, only not as much as in the game's continuation.

22... ♖e5



The queen heads straight for White's king.

23. ♖a4 f3 24. g3

It isn't paranoia if you really are being watched by evil and unseen eyes.

24. ♖c4 fxg2+ 25. ♗xg2 ♗xc1, and the problem is recapture is met with a queen check on g5, with a fatal double attack.

24... ♖e6!

The majority of White's force lounges on the queenside, and it becomes clear that Black has a winning attack since ... ♖h3 is coming.

25. ♗g5

It's not a good sign when the engine's top choice is to give away a rook with 25. ♖xe4 ♖xe4

25... ♖h3

Threatening mate on g2.

26. ♗e3



Exercise (combination alert): My (Cyrus') teacher Geshe Tenzin Kyabcho, a Buddhist monk who spent his early life in a monastery in India, visited San Diego. His eyes went wide when he entered a grocery store for the first time and saw that the shopper had a choice of around 25 different cheeses. This is undoubtedly how GM Vitolish felt about his choice of riches. There are a million ways for Black to win, yet only a single path to a forced mate in 5. Do you see it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Clearance sacrifice on g3.

26... ♖d3

Good enough. The e3–guard is removed.

26... ♗xg3+! 27. fxg3 ♖d2 White can only stall mate for three more moves by giving away a queen, with a spite check on g8, or offering a free rook on f2!

27. ♗bd5 ♗xg3+!

Now he sees it. White's exhausted position sinks to the ground.

27... ♖xg3+! 28.fxg3 ♜d2 and mate in 2.

0-1

Game 26

P.Vucinic (2254) – D.Kontic (2375)

Montenegro Team ch (Herceg Novi) 2006

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♗f3 ♘xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♗xd4 a6 7.♗d3



White believes Black will develop in the classic black-side of the Alapin way, with ...e7–e6, ...♗e7, and ...0-0. This way, the bishop on d3 makes a lot of sense. But not if Black fianchettoes!

7...g6!

Suddenly, White's light-squared bishop doesn't look all that well posted on d3 since it hits a wall on g6.

White undoubtedly expected either

a) 7...e6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗c2 0-0 10.♞d3 g6 11.♗h6 with a promising and typical c3–Sicilian for White.

b) 7...e5 8.♗f3 makes the protection of e5 slightly awkward for Black. 8...♞c7 9.0-0 ♗c6 10.♞e1 White looks better since there could be tricks involving ♗xe5 or even ♗d4 and Black lags in development.

8.0-0 ♗g7 9.♗f3!?

We doubt that ...♗xd4 was Black's intention, yet White didn't want it hanging over his head.

9.♞f3 0-0 10.♞d1 e6 looks fine for Black.

9...0-0 10.♗a3

10.♗bd2?? Natural doesn't always equate with best. This careless move hangs material to the simple discovered attack 10...♗xc3.

10...♗c6

We already prefer Black's position, while the engine calls it dead even.

11.♗e4!?

11.♞e1 is safer. Even there, we prefer Black.

11...♗f6! 12.♗xc6

It's too late to back down now. White gives up the bishop pair in an open position to hand Black a pair of isolanis. Who got the better of the transaction? The engine says Black.

12.♗c2?! is an admission that moving the bishop to e4 wastes time. Black looks comfortably better after 12...♞c7 13.♞e2 b5.

12...bxc6 13.♞xd8

This gives Black a free move, yet it feels logical since White can only exploit the superior structure in an ending.

13...♞xd8



14.♗e5 ♗b7

The engine wants the more dangerous line involving a strategic pawn sacrifice with 14...c5!? 15.♘c6 ♖e8 16.♙e3 ♙d7 17.♘e5 ♙f5 18.♙xc5 ♘d5 19.♙d4 f6 20.♘ec4 e5 21.♙c5 ♖ec8 22.♙d6 ♙d3 23.♗fd1 e4 The engine prefers Black's position, despite White's extra pawn.

15.♘ac4 a5

He can't allow ♘a5.

16.♖e1?!

White needs counterplay with 16.♘b6! ♘d5!? (safer and even is 16...♖a6 17.♘ec4) 17.♘xa8 ♙xe5 18.c4 ♖xa8 19.cxd5 cxd5 offers Black decent compensation for the exchange, similar to what happened in the game's continuation; the engine calls it dead even here.

16...♘d5!

Seizing control over b6.

17.♙e3 f6

Black's center begins to assert itself.

18.♘f3 a4

...♙a6 is in the air. 18...e5 19.♘b6 ♘xb6 20.♙xb6 ♖db8 is also in Black's favor.

19.♘d4?!

19.♘b6 should be played.

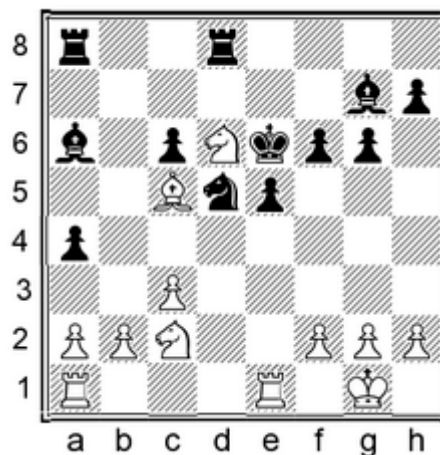
19...♙f7!

Covering the e6-invasion point while centralizing his king.

20.♘c2

...e7-e5 was coming.

20...e5 21.♙c5 ♙a6 22.♘d6+ ♙e6!



Principle: Centralize and activate your king in an ending rather than hiding him away in a corner. Black is unafraid of ghosts.

23.c4?

The weakness of the eternal optimist is blindness to the potential of failure and death. A mistaken idea takes its confused birth, and white mis-assessed the aftermath of Black's coming exchange sacrifice.

He should play

a) 23.♘e4 ♙d3 24.♘b4 ♘xb4! 25.cxb4! ♙xe4! 26.♖xe4 ♖d2 leaves White in trouble, less so than in the game's continuation.

b) On the other hand, 23.♘d4+ doesn't bother Black at all. 23...♙d7 24.♘c2 ♙c7 Black only benefitted from White's knight check on d4.

23...♖xd6!

This is a promising strategic exchange sacrifice.

24.♙xd6 ♙xd6 25.cxd5 cxd5



If White was looking for the lost city of fabulous riches, he didn't find it. What did Black get for the exchange?:

1. One extra pawn.
2. Bishop pair.
3. A massive central majority.
4. Possible pressure on the queenside.
5. A monster king in the center who will assist his central pawns up the board. Also, the king helps cover infiltration points c6 and c7.

Conclusion: White is in deep trouble, if not already lost.

26. ♖b4 ♗c4?!

Inaccurate. The bishop should move to b5.

27. ♖ac1?

He must open lines for his rooks and try 27.b3! after which White's once-dead position displays at least faint signs of reanimation. Black still has the advantage if he declines the offer with 27...♗b5!

27... ♖b8 28.a3?!

This essentially gives Black:

1. Another pawn since White's queenside majority becomes uselessly frozen.
2. The b4-square is an unstable post for the knight since Black can play ...♗f8! and then move his king, creating a second attacker on b4.

He should have tried 28.b3 ♗h6! 29. ♖b1 axb3 30.axb3 ♗b5.

28... ♗h6 29. ♖c2 ♖b6

This way, c6 is covered if Black wants to move the bishop from c4 later.

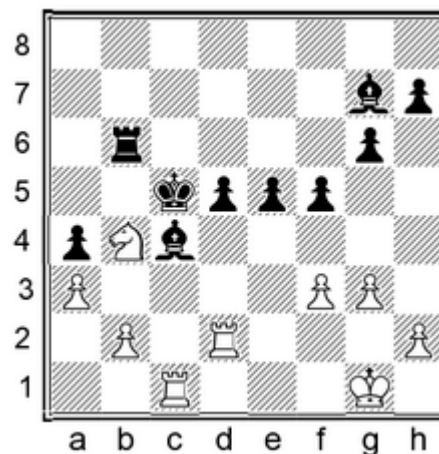
30.g3 f5

Black's plan is simple: push the central majority forward.

31.f3 ♗g7

Not the optimal plan. 31...♔e6! intending ...♗f8 is fatal for White.

32. ♖d2 ♔c5 33. ♖c1



Exercise (planning): Cheapo alert: ♖xd5+ is threatened. How should Black deal with this and make progress?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Offer a second exchange sacrifice, after which White's position reaches the limits of its endurance with this tiny shove to produce collapse.

33... ♖xb4!

This isn't one of those "No, I haven't thought things through, but I'm sure everything will work out just fine in the end" speculative sacrifices. Our eyes tell us that White's clunky rooks are ill-suited to deal with Black's two bishops, two extra central pawns, and active king.

34.axb4+ ♔xb4

White's barrier isn't all that impregnable after all. White may be technically up material, yet there are some things money can't buy. He is up two exchanges for two pawns. The problem, of course, is that his clunky rooks are weirdly

helpless against the forward pushes of Black's central pawns, coupled with the assistance of the bishops and Black's super-active king.

35.♖c3

35.♔f2 is better but wouldn't have saved White.

35...d4 36.♖cc2 e4

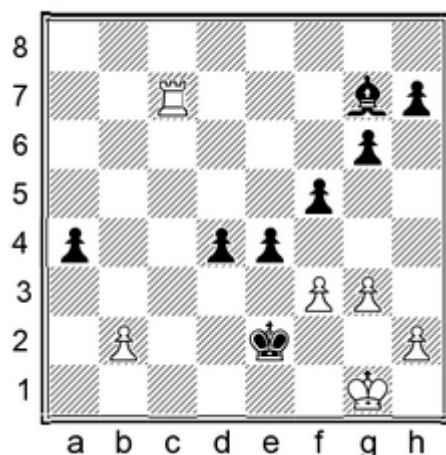
It becomes clear that the Armada can't be halted.

37.♖xc4+

Everyone seems to be obsessed with exchange sacrifices in this game. This is hopeless; the same goes for not handing back the exchange.

37.fxe4 fxe4 38.♖c1 d3 39.♔f2 ♕d4+ 40.♔e1 e3 41.♖g2 d2+ wins.

37...♔xc4 38.♖c2+ ♔d3 39.♖c7 ♔e2!



Black's last move is flashier than the also-winning 39...♕h6

40.fxe4

40.♖xg7 d3 41.♖d7 e3 wins.

40...d3!

30% of the global population is food insecure (we used to say "hungry"); Black's position is not in this group since a new queen is coming.

41.♔g2

41.exf5 ♕d4+ 42.♔g2 d2 Black promotes.

b) 41.♖xg7 d2 42.♖d7 fxe4 wins.

41...fxe4 42.♖xg7 d2 43.♖e7 e3 44.♖xh7 d1=♖

0-1

Game 27	
R.Potze (2132) – M.Racherbaeumer (2301)	
Groningen 2009	

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘f3 ♘xd5 6.♘xd4 a6 7.♕c4



After the bishop's development to c4, we suggest an abandonment of the fianchetto plan displayed in the last two games.

7...e6!

We need to be flexible and not too attached to the kingside fianchetto formation.

Against the ♕c4 setup, we don't recommend 7...g6?! due to the trick 8.♖a4+! ♕d7 9.♖b3 ♕c6 10.♘xc6 bxc6 with bishop pair and superior structure for White.

8.0-0

8.a4 ♕e7 9.0-0 0-0 is equal, C.Coca-C.Daianu, Bucharest 2022.

8...♕e7

8...♕c5!? J.Wastian-P.Terhuven, Willingen 2016, can be met with 9.♖f3 intending ♖d1 next, with an edge for White.

9.♖e1

The untested 9.♖f5! looks spectacular yet yields White nothing after 9...♙f6 10.♗e3 ♘xe3 11.♗xd8+ ♙xd8 12.♙xe3 ♙d7 with an even ending.

9...0-0 10.♗d2 b5

Black uses the fact that White refused to expend a tempo on a4.

11.♙d3

The bishop takes aim at Black's king, which shouldn't worry you.

Nor does White get anything from

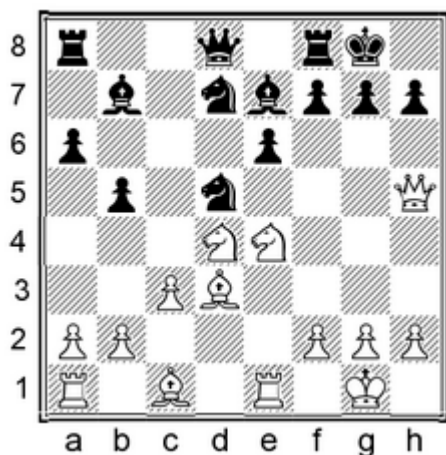
a) 11.♙b3 ♙b7 nor from

b) 11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.♙f3 ♗c6.

11...♙b7 12.♗e4 ♗d7

White clearly plans a lunge at Black's king, so it's wiser to develop the knight on d7, where it can later transfer to f6.

13.♗h5



Not so scary, and Black has access to plenty of defensive resources.

13...♗5f6

Principle: Swaps favor the side that is being attacked (although we may rightfully ask: “What attack?”).

14.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 15.♗h3 ♗d5

Black plans to swap queens into an even ending.

16.♙f4

♖e5 is in the air, so Black offers a queen swap.

16...♗h5 17.♗g3 ♗g4!

Miss come-and-go-as-she-pleases is getting on everyone's nerves. How annoying for White, who must wave bye-bye to his kingside attack. The ending remains even.

18.a4?!

This tempting move may not be accurate since Black wants to push the b-pawn to b4, which weakens White's queenside structure.

18.♗xg4 ♗xg4 19.♙e2 ♗f6 20.♗b3 is equal.

18...♗xg3 19.♙xg3 b4 20.a5

a) 20.♗f5 doesn't bother Black at all since he can sidestep with 20...♙c5.

b) 20.c4?? hangs material to 20...♖fd8 21.♖ad1 (21.♙e5?? a blunder, on top of another blunder, is met with 21...♗g4! Black wins a full piece) 21...♖xd4 22.♙xh7+ ♗xh7 23.♖xd4 ♙c5 White is busted.

20...♖fd8 21.♙f1 ♖ac8

Even better is 21...♗e4!.

22.♗e2?!

White should play 22.♙e5 ♗d7 23.♙g3 bxc3 24.bxc3 ♖xc3 25.♖ab1 ♗c5, but even here, White doesn't get quite enough play for the pawn.

22...♗e4! 23.♙e5 ♗d2



White is in deep trouble, about to lose bishop pair and with weak queenside pawns.

The engine slightly prefers 23...♞d5.

24.cxb4 ♜xf1 25.♞xf1 ♞xb4 26.♞c3 ♞c5

Principle: The player who owns the bishop pair shouldn't allow one of them to be swapped off.

27.♞ed1 f6!

Principle: Activate your pawn majority.

28.♞d4 ♞e7 29.♞b6 ♞xd1+ 30.♞xd1 ♞d5 31.♜c3 ♞c6 32.f3 ♞f7

32...f5!, denying White ♜e4 may be the most accurate path.

33.♞e2!?

Maybe White should give up a pawn to reach a bishop of opposing colors ending with 33.♜e4 ♞b5+ 34.♞g1 ♞c2 35.♜d6+ ♞xd6 36.♞xd6 ♞xb2, White has chances to hold the draw.

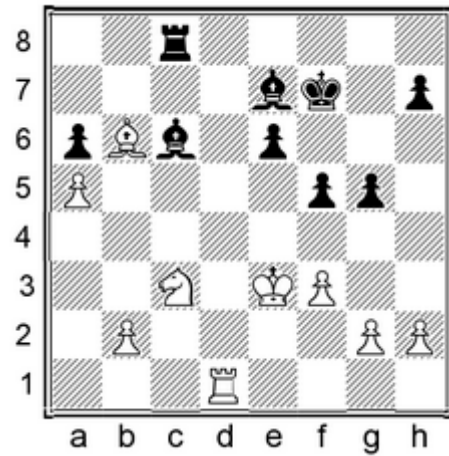
33...g5

33...f5! is again best.

34.♞e3

Again, White would have tried for the opposing-colored bishops with the pawn sacrifice 34.♜e4! ♞b5+ 35.♞f2 ♞c2+ 36.♞d2 ♞c1 37.♜d6+ ♞xd6 38.♞xd6 ♞c2+ 39.♞g1 ♞xb2.

34...f5!



Finally, someone listens to the writers of this book and prevents ♜e4.

35.g3?!

This weakens his light squares, and it was better just to shuffle.

35...h5?!

35...e5! is correct.

36.h3

36.f4 makes it much tougher for Black to make progress.

36...♞g8?!

The doctor's prescription contains no power to cure if we refuse to take the medication. 36...e5! was the way to go.

37.♞d4! e5?!

This is a case of implementing the right idea at the wrong moment. 37...♞c8 is better.

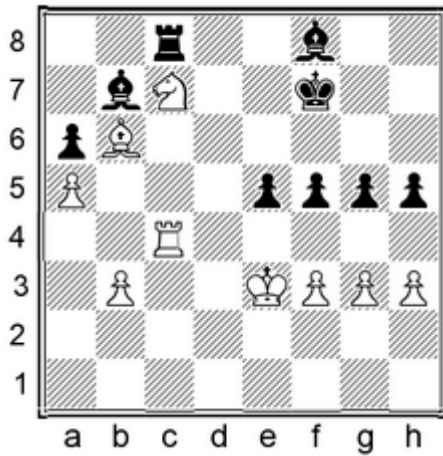
38.♞c4! ♞c8 39.♜d5

White should hold a draw with 39.g4! *Principle:* The bishop/knight side benefits from a more rigid structure.

39...♞f8 40.b3

White should again have played 40.g4!.

40...♞b7 41.♜c7?



Caissa isn't usually a big fan of second, third, and fourth chances, yet here she offers one. Once again, 41.g4! offers White excellent chances to hold a draw.

41...♙d6! 42.g4

This is a case of mistiming. The move, which was strong for so many moves, actually now accelerates defeat.

White puts up greater resistance with 42.♘d5 f4+! 43.gxf4 gxf4+ 44.♙f2 ♖e6 45.♙xc8 ♙xc8 46.♘c3 ♙d7 47.♘e4 ♙e7 is still lost for White since Black's king walks up the queenside via light squares.

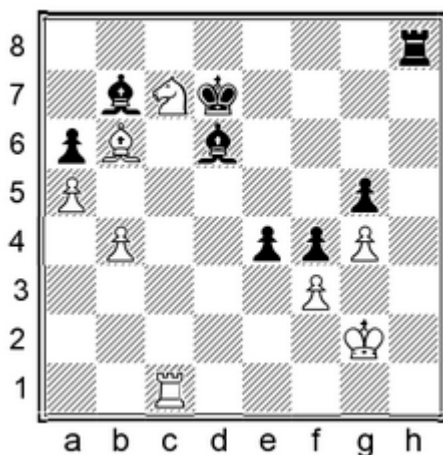
42...hxg4 43.hxg4 f4+ 44.♙f2 ♖h8! 45.♙g2 ♙e7

White's knight dangles in insecurity.

46.b4 ♙d7 47.♙c1

47.b5 ♙c8! 48.bxa6 ♙xa6! wins material.

47...e4



Now comes the start of the white king's persecution. Black's bishops and rook become the Dream Team.

48.♘xa6

Desperation. From this point on, there will be acute food shortages in White's realm.

48.fxe4 loses a piece

to 48...♙xe4+ 49.♙f2 ♖h2+ 50.♙e1 ♖h1+ 51.♙d2 ♖xc1 52.♙xc1 ♙xc7.

48...exf3+ 49.♙g1

49.♙f2 ♖h2+ is also awful for White.

49...f2+! 50.♙xf2 ♖h2+ 51.♙f1

a) 51.♙e1 ♙xa6 wins.

b) 51.♙g1 ♖h1+ wins the loose rook on c1.

51...♖h1+ 52.♙g1 ♙xa6+ 53.♙f2 ♙xb4

0-1

Game 28

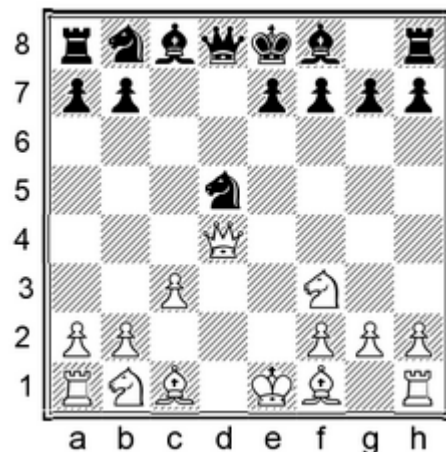
V.Okhotnik (2435) – J.Plachetka (2450)

Balatonbereny 1985

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5

Our line has similarities to this one in the c3–Sicilian: 2...♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 cxd4 5.♙xd4.

3.exd5 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♘xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♙xd4



Welcome to the Alternative Universe/Reversed Scandinavian Variation. White recaptures with the queen, maintaining control over e5. The obvious drawback is that Black will play ...♖c6, inducing White to either move the queen or give up the bishop pair with ♙b5 and ♗xc6.

6...♖c6

Black attacks the queen straight away. Next game, we look at 6...e6.

7.♙b5 e6 8.0-0

Nobody has tried 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.0-0 f6!, intending ...e6–e5 next, with at least even chances for Black.

8...♗d7 9.♗xc6

White regains the bishop pair, so this move isn't as radical as it looks.

9.♖e4 ♗e7 10.♗d3 ♖f6 is even.

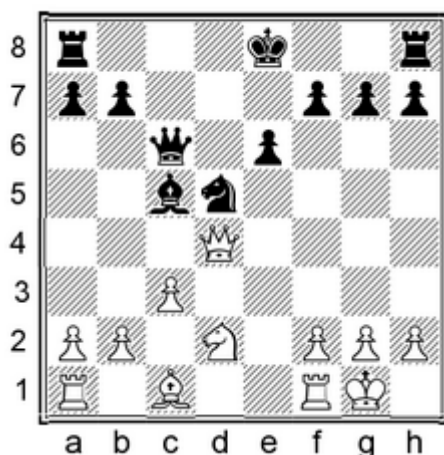
9...♗xc6 10.♖e5

White regains bishop pair but no advantage.

10...♖c7 11.♖xc6 ♖xc6 12.♖d2

This knight move was played in both database games.

12...♗c5!?



This radical move shakes an otherwise dull position as if with an Etch-a-Sketch, turning the

position into something brand new. Novelty. Veering from theory is not insubordination, as many of us believe, although the engine disapproves of Black's last move. The humans writing this book think it may be fun!

The pawn sacrifice is by no means obligatory. Black has the option to play calmly with 12...♖e7 13.♖e4 ♖d8 14.♖xc6+ ♖xc6 15.♖f3 f6 16.♗e3 T.Kulhanek-P.Garriga Cazorla, Prague 2022; here, 16...e5 is equal.

13.♖e4

Most humans are reluctant to enter a risky, engine-approved pawn-grabbing line with 13.♖xg7 The Netflix series Ozarks teaches us: if you agree to work for a drug cartel and things go awry, the more you try to free yourself, the more entangled your fate. Despite the engine's endorsement, we doubt many human opponents would agree to such a deal, which opens the g-file for Black's potential attack. 13...0-0-0 14.♖e5 ♖hg8 15.♖f3 f6 16.♖h5 e5 The engine frowns upon Black's pawn sacrifice, which most humans would be afraid to grab! But who cares what the engines think? We have become a society of technomancers who rely on our engine's magic opinion. Don't forget about the human factor: such a position would be difficult for White to play without error from a practical standpoint, which is part of Black's benefits package. If you like Black's compensation, play this line; if you don't feel it is enough, you can always fall back on the non-gambit version 12...♖e7, as shown in the notes above.

13...0-0

We already slightly prefer Black, who leads in development.

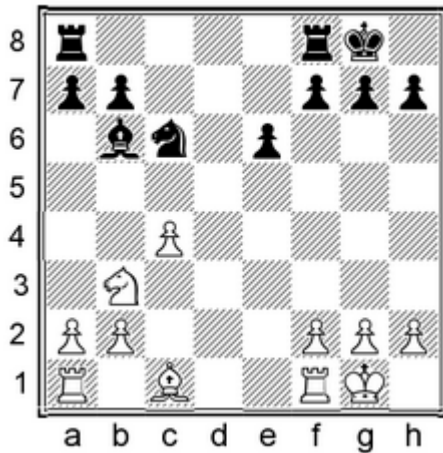
14.♖b3

14.♖f3 can be met with 14...f6 15.♖d1 ♖ad8 intending ...e6–e5 next, with an edge for Black.

14...♙b6 15.c4

White wants to get his majority going, which isn't all that effective with his knight on b3, blocking the b2-pawn's forward push.

15...♗e7 16.♙xc6 ♗xc6



The ending isn't quite even, and Black holds an edge due to the following factors:

1. Black leads slightly in development.
2. Black's majority is easier to roll forward than White's, which is impinged by the b3-knight's obstruction of the b2-pawn.
3. Black controls the d4-hole.
4. Black's king can centralize further up the board than White's after the plan ...f7-f6, ...e6-e5, ...♔f7 and if possible, ...♔e6.

17.♙d2

Destination: c3.

17.♙e3 is a case of swapping one problem for another. After 17...♙xe3 18.fxe3 ♗e5 Black's knight gets to nestle within the e5-hole, and Black's structure is superior to White's.

17...♙ac8 18.♙c3 ♙fd8 19.♙fd1 f6 20.♔f1 ♔f7 21.♔e2

Black also stands better after 21.f4 ♙c7 22.g3 e5!.

21...e5 22.f3 ♔e6



23.♙ac1

23.♙xd8 ♙xd8 24.♙d1 ♙c8 is still slightly in Black's favor.

23...♙xd1 24.♔xd1

This is probably the wrong piece since White's king shouldn't volunteer to descend.

24.♙xd1 looks a shade more accurate.

24...♗e7!

The knight heads for f5, where it gazes upon d4, e3, and h4-squares.

25.♙a5

a) 25.♗d2 ♙g1 26.h3 ♙e3 27.♔e2 ♙h6 is still unpleasant for White, who is weak on the central and kingside dark squares.

b) 25.♙b4 ♗f5 26.♔e2 h5 Again, White stands just short of equality.

25...♙e3

25...♙xa5! 26.♗xa5 b6 27.♗b3 h5 looks promising for Black.

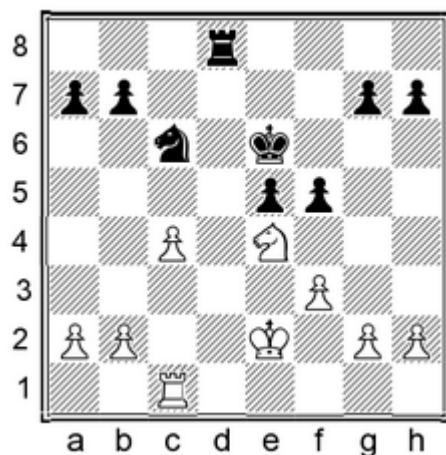
26.♙d2 ♙d8 27.♔e2 ♙xd2

He wants to weaken White's control over d4.

28.♗xd2 ♗c6 29.♗e4!?

The desire to live a life free is embedded within our DNA. White is tired of a passive stance and refuses to cover the d4-hole with 29.♖b3 b6

29...f5!



Black dares White to grab a pawn.

30.♖c5+

30.♖g5+? ♕f6; the h7-pawn isn't hanging since White's knight gets trapped if it chops h7.

30...♕f6 31.b3

The b7-pawn is untouchable. 31.♖xb7?? White is completely losing after 31...♖b8 32.♖c5 ♖xb2+.

31...♖d4+ 32.♕e3 b6 33.♖a6

33.♖d3 g5 34.♖b4 f4+! 35.♕f2 (35.♕e4?? loses on the spot to the clearance shot 35...♖xb3! threatening ...♖d4 mate. White loses after 36.♖d5+ ♖xd5!) 35...h5 Black's advantage remains intact, despite White's ownership of d5.

33...f4+! 34.♕f2

Centralization is usually a plus, yet here, 34.♕e4?? is a case of too much of a good thing. 34...♖e2 and Black mates next move.

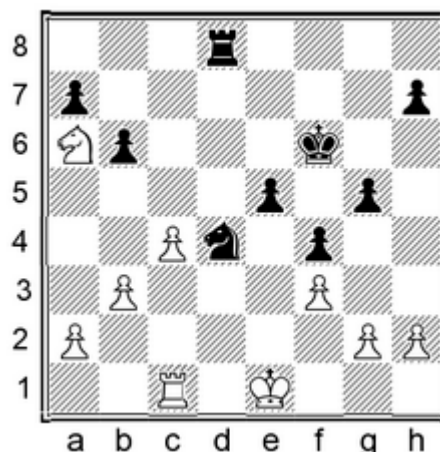
34...♖f5

Threatening rook infiltration to d2.

35.♕e2

The engine prefers 35.♕e1.

35...♖d4+ 36.♕e1 g5!



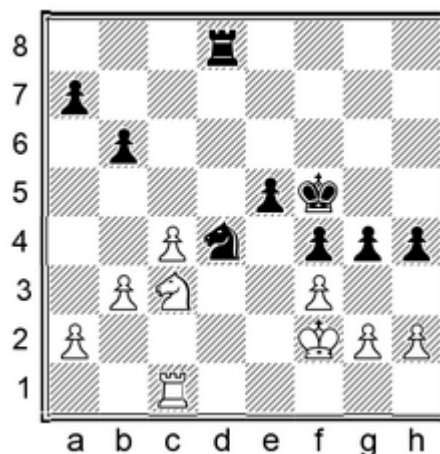
Principle: Push your pawn majority down the board as quickly as possible.

37.♖b4 h5 38.♕f2 g4 39.♖d5+

White makes natural moves, but the evaluation keeps going down for his side, mainly since his majority isn't moving.

39.c5? g3+! 40.hxg3 fxg3+ 41.♕e3 White's king and rook get forked if the g3-pawn is taken. 41...bxc5 42.♖xc5 ♖f5+ 43.♕e2 ♖h4 44.♖d5+ ♖xd5! 45.♖xd5 ♖xg2 White is busted since his king and rook cannot deal with Black's two passed pawns, backed up by the knight and black king.

39...♕f5 40.♖c3 h4?



This is premature, and preferable was 40...gxf3! 41.gxf3 h4.

41.h3?

Black's advantage reduces considerably after 41.fxg4+! ♔xg4 42.♖e1

41...g3+!

Now White's king will be in danger of back rank mates in the future. Also, f3 becomes a juicy sacrificial target. Also promising is 41...gxf3 42.gxf3 ♕e6.

42.♔f1 ♕e6 43.♖c2

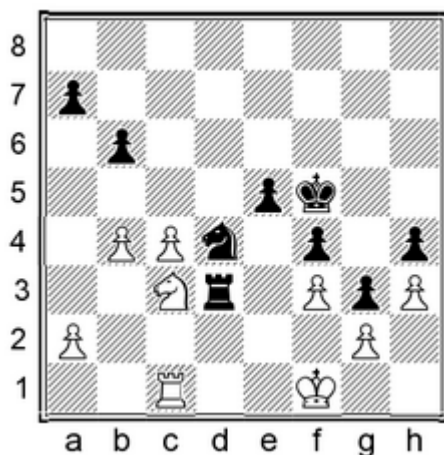
a) 43.♕d5 can be met with 43...b5!.

b) 43.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 44.♕xd1 e4 45.fxe4+ ♔xe4 46.♕c3+ ♔d3 is hopeless for White.

43...♖d3! 44.b4

44.♔e2 ♖e3+ sends the king to f1 since 45.♔d2? ♕d4 46.♖c1 ♕xf3+! 47.gxf3 ♖xf3 48.b4 g2 49.♖g1 ♖xc3! 50.♔xc3 f3 wins.

44...♕d4 45.♖c1



45...♖d2

It's difficult to fault the GM for backing down from the knight sacrifice on f3 since, in that one, White threatens to promote on c8 with a check. It does indeed win, though.

45...♕xf3! 46.gxf3 ♖xf3+ 47.♔g1 ♖f2 48.c5 f3 49.c6 ♖g2+ 50.♔f1 ♖h2 51.♔g1 f2+ 52.♔f1 ♖h1+ 53.♔e2 ♖xc1 wins.

46.c5 bxc5 47.bxc5 ♖f2+ 48.♔g1 ♔e6

The king assists in halting White's passed c-pawn.

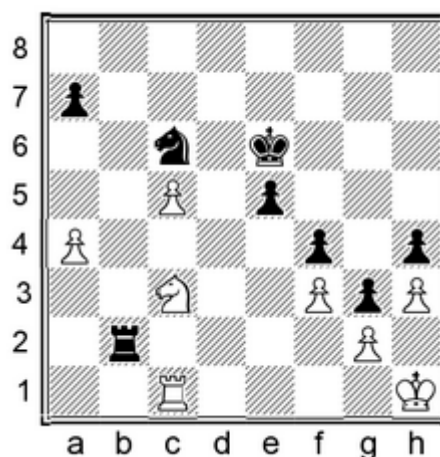
49.♔h1

White is almost in zugzwang. 49.♕e4?? gets forked to 49...♕e2+ 50.♔h1 ♕xc1.

49...♖b2 50.a4

50.♕e4 ♖xa2 51.c6 ♖c2 wins.

50...♕c6



Why blockade when the pawn can be won?

Sometimes our senses get dulled in winning positions since we lose our feeling of urgency. The GM missed the simple 50...♕b3! 51.♖d1 ♕xc5 wins.

51.♕b5 a6 52.♕d6 ♖a2 53.♕c4 ♖e2

53...e4! 54.fxe4 f3 55.gxf3 ♕d4! forces mate.

54.♕d6 ♔d5

The more accurate is 54...♕d4! 55.♕e4 ♕b3 56.♖d1 ♖c2.

55.♖d1+

This is a move born of frustration about his king's back rank issues, which tie White's rook down to perpetual defensive duties.

55.♕e4 ♖b2 56.♕c3+ ♔e6 is also lost for White.

55...♔xc5 56.♕f5 ♕d4 57.♕xh4 ♔d5 58.♕f5

58. ♖g6 ♔e6 is also hopeless for White.

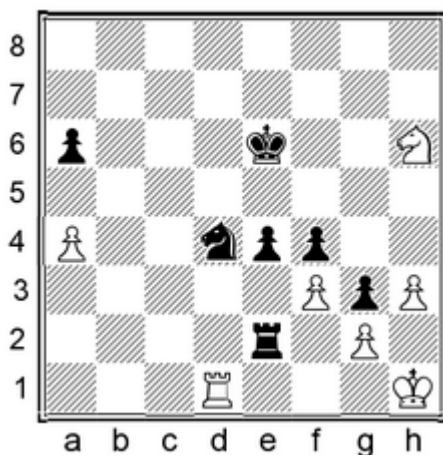
58... ♔e6 59. ♖h6

59. ♖xd4+ makes it easy for Black due to White's chronically weak back

rank: 59... exd4 60. ♔g1 d3! 61. ♔f1 ♖f2+ 62. ♔g1 d2 (zugzwang. White must move a pawn since moving the king to h1 allows ... ♖e2, followed by

... ♖e1+) 63. a5 (63. ♖a1 ♔e5 64. ♖d1 ♔d4 65. ♖a1 ♔e3 66. h4 ♔e2 67. h5 d1=♚+ 68. ♖xd1 ♔xd1 69. h6 ♖e2 70. h7 ♖e1#) 63... ♔f5 (zugzwang number 2) 64. h4 ♔g6 and Black's king walks over, chops the a-pawn, and then walks over to c2.

59... e4



This is less a diagram than an obituary photo of White's king, who is mated, whether the pawn on e4 is captured or not.

59... e4 60. fxe4 (60. ♖g4 e3 61. ♔g1 ♖d2 62. ♖b1 e2 wins) 60... f3 White is mated.

0-1

Game 29

M. Neulinger (2265) – J. Plachetka (2420)

Austrian Team ch 1995

1. e4 c5 2. c3 d5 3. exd5 ♖f6

Nobody works as hard to fulfill their desires as a junkie. As we saw last game, GM Plachetka was one of the early advocates for our Anti-Alapin gambit.

4. ♖f3 ♖xd5 5. d4 cxd4 6. ♚xd4 e6



The idea behind this waiting move is: ... ♖c6 isn't running away. If White now moves the light-squared bishop to e2, d3, or c4, then after ... ♖c6, White would be deprived of the ♔b5 option, losing a tempo.

In a few games, we look at the more radical 6... ♖c6 7. ♔b5 a6!? 8. ♔xc6+ bxc6

7. ♔g5

Novelty.

a) 7. ♔b5+ ♔d7 8. ♔xd7+ ♚xd7 9. ♖e5 ♖c6! 10. ♖xc6 ♚xc6 11. 0-0 ♔c5!? is just a more favorable version of the pawn sacrifice we looked at last game, H. Aryanejad-R. Rezaei, Teheran 1991. The engine assesses at dead even after 12. ♚xg7 0-0-0.

b) 7. ♖e5 White plans to meet ... ♖c6 with a swap on that square. 7... ♚c7 8. ♔b5+ ♖d7 Black has no problems, M. Jusup-L. Georgescu, Switzerland 2021.

c) 7. ♖bd2 ♖c6 8. ♔b5 ♔d7 9. ♔xc6 ♔xc6 10. ♖e5 ♚b6 11. ♖b3, D. McGowan-R. McKay, Glasgow 2012. Here the engine points out the bizarre idea 11... ♔b5! 12. c4 ♔a4! 13. cxd5 ♔xb3 14. ♚xb6 axb6 15. dxe6 f6! 16. ♖d7 ♔b4+ White is in trouble and must move his king since 17. ♔d2?? loses to 17... ♔xd2+ 18. ♔xd2 ♔xe6 19. ♖xb6 ♖a6, winning a piece.

7...♖c6

7...f6! 8.♙d2 ♗c6 looks at least even for Black, if not slightly better.

8.♙b5!?

This may be slightly inaccurate.

8.♙xd8 ♗xd4 9.♗xd4 ♖xd8 was better, although we slightly prefer Black due to the bishop pair.

8...f6! 9.♙h4?!

The bishop should retreat to d2. 9.♙d2 e5 10.♗e4 ♗de7 11.♙c4 ♙f5 12.♗e2 a6, intending ...♗a5 next, with an edge for Black.

9...♙d7 10.♙xc6?!

It's a bad idea to hand over bishop pair and light squares for no visible compensation. The trouble is White's position doesn't look all that fantastic after 10.♗d1 ♗b6 11.♗b3, although White is better off here than in the game's continuation.

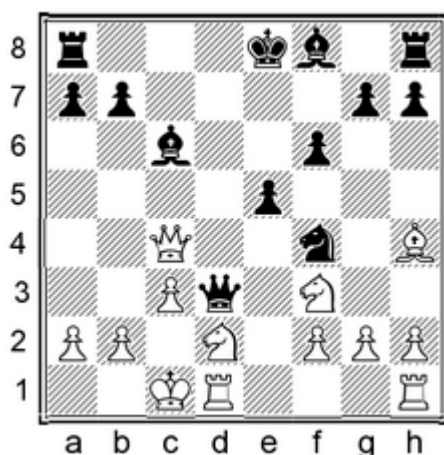
10...♙xc6 11.♗bd2 e5 12.♗c4

12.♗xe5!?! fxe5 13.♗xe5+ ♙e7 14.♗xg7 ♗f8 is n't enough compensation for the sacrificed piece since Black's pieces are too active.

12...♗f4 13.0-0-0

13.0-0 ♗d3! is also heavily in Black's favor.

13...♗d3!



Threat: ...♗e2 mate. It's going to be a rough ending for White.

14.♗xd3 ♗xd3+ 15.♖c2 ♗f4 16.♗hg1

16.g3 ♗h3 with dual threats to play ...♗xf2, and g7-g5, winning a piece.

16...♙c5

Black's minor pieces are monsters, and White is busted.

17.♙g3 ♗e2

This ensures Black will reach a two-bishops-versus-two-knights ending in a semi-open position that favors the bishops.

17...0-0-0 is also strong.

If 18.♙xf4 exf4 19.♗gf1 ♙b5 20.c4 ♙e8! is similar to the game's continuation.

18.♗gf1

This way, he can recapture on g3 with his h-pawn without losing his f2-pawn.

18...0-0-0 19.♗de1 ♙b5

He wants to provoke c3-c4.

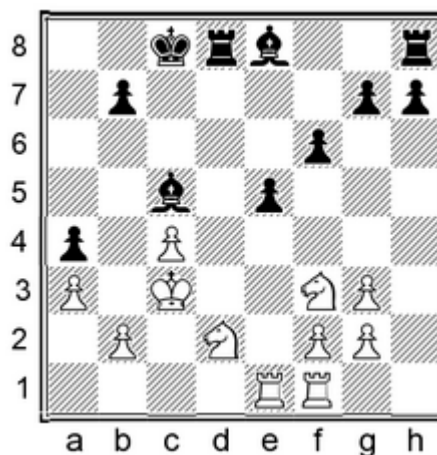
20.c4 ♗xg3 21.hxg3 ♙e8

21...♙d7 is also quite miserable for White.

22.♖c3 a5!

Preventing b2-b4 while leaving open the possibility of a bishop check on b4, followed by a bishop check on g6.

23.a3 a4!



White's queenside pawn majority is now officially hobbled.

24. ♖e4 ♗b6!?

This is essentially the sacrifice of his a4–pawn, which isn't necessary. e7 was a better square for the bishop.

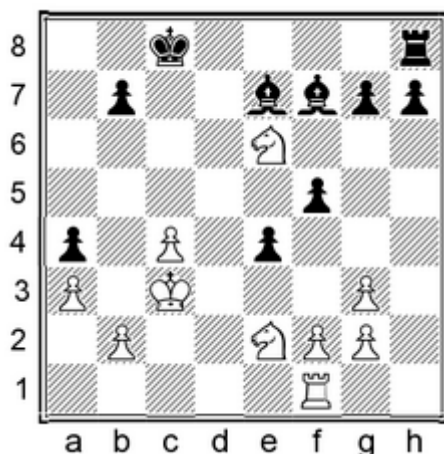
25. ♖b4!

This may be the best practical chance in an objectively poor position. White plays on the *Principle*: Activate your king in an ending. He threatens ♖c3 and ♖xa4 when Black has time to generate deadly play in the meanwhile.

25...f5! 26. ♖c3 e4 27. ♖g5 ♖d2

Not best. 27...♖d6! and if 28. ♖xa4, then 28...♗d8! 29. ♖h3 ♗e7 30. ♖b3 ♗f7! leaves White in terrible danger.

28. ♖e2 ♖xe2 29. ♖xe2 ♗d8 30. ♖e6 ♗e7+ 31. ♖c3 ♗f7!



32. ♖d4

32. ♖xg7?? hangs the knight to 32...♗f6+.

32...♗f6 33. ♖b4

He's back!

33...♖d8! 34. ♖xf5

34. ♖d1? is met with 34...♗h5!

34...♖d2

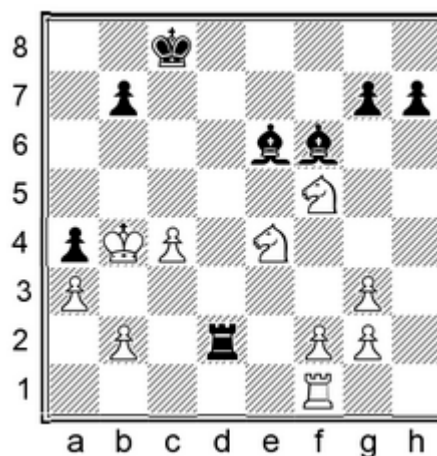
Double attack.

35. ♖c3 ♗e6

He understandably doesn't want to get forked on d6. The engine, whose spectrum of vision is more acute than a human's, points out the stronger

line 35...♖xb2+! 36. ♖xa4 ♗xc3 37. ♖d6+ ♖d7 38. ♖xf7 ♗d2! 39. ♖h1 ♖e6 40. ♖h8 (the only safe square for the knight!) 40...♗c3 41. ♖h4 ♖e2 and White is completely lost.

36. ♖xe4!



There is a type of frog that can swell its face to Jaba the Hut proportions to scare away predators. The fact that this ruse keeps this frog safe means one thing: bluffs can be effective. White's counterattack is, in reality, a bluff, which ends up partially working since Plachetka believes in its false power.

36...♖xb2+ 37. ♖c5

White avoids a pair of traps:

a) 37. ♖xa4?? ♗d7+ 38. ♖a5 ♗d8#.

b) 37. ♖a5?? ♗d8+ 38. ♖xa4 ♗d7#.

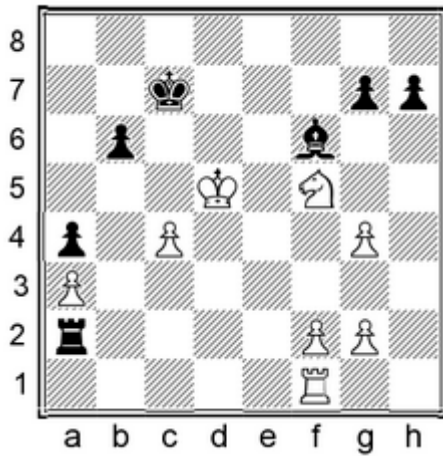
37...♗xf5

Of course, this doesn't win a piece since White can fork on d6, regaining it.

38. ♖d6+ ♖c7 39. ♖xf5 b6+ 40. ♖d5 ♖a2

The engine prefers 40...♖d2+! 41. ♖e4 ♖c6!.

41. g4?



41.♞d1! puts up greater resistance, e.g., 41...♞xa3 42.♜d6 (intending ♜e8+ and ♜xf6) 42...♞a1 43.♞xa1 ♞xa1 44.♜b5+ If 44...♜d7 45.c5 bxc5 46.♜xc5 and White should hold a draw.

41...♞xa3 42.g5 ♞b2 43.♞h1 ♞d3+ 44.♜e4 ♞d7

It's clear that Black's a-pawn will cost White heavily.

45.♜e3 ♞d4+

He gets whispery clues, yet Black can't seem to touch the position's essence. This is unnecessary. Black wins easily by keeping it simple with 45...a3 46.♜d5+ ♞xd5 47.♜xd5 a2.

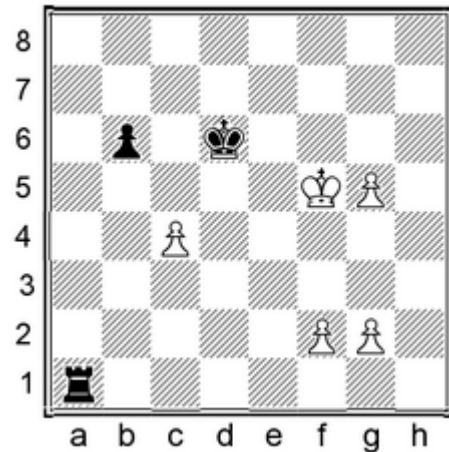
46.♜f5 a3 47.♞xh7 a2

47...♞d2! is more accurate.

48.♞xg7+ ♜d6 49.♞a7 a1=♚ 50.♞xa1 ♞xa1 51.♜c2

51.f4 ♞d2 52.g4 ♞d4 53.g6 ♞e2 is also lost for White.

51...♞d1 52.♜xa1 ♞xa1



White's pawns are way too slow.

53.♜f6 ♞a4! 54.g6

54.f4 ♞xc4 55.g3 b5 56.g6 ♞c8 is also an easy win for Black.

54...♞xc4 55.g7 ♞g4 56.f4 b5 and White resigned.

0-1

Chapter 6: The 4...c5xd4 Move Order

The idea of this move order is to deny White dxd4 options. By playing $\dots\text{c5xd5}$ early, we reduce our opponent to either cxd4 or c3xd4 lines.

Game 30

A. Van der Leij – J. Van der Wiel (2511)

Leiden 2007

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 dxf6 4.d4 cxd4



As mentioned above, the idea of playing this early is to deny White an dxd4 option.

5. cxd4

cxd4 dxd5 will lead to positions we previously examined in the book.

5... dxd5

In a couple of games, we look at $5\dots\text{cxd5}$

6.c4?!

This is White's main choice, however notable fashion critics Carsten Hansen and C. Freddy Lakdawala give it two thumbs down, both considering the idea difficult to find credible since it allows Black's knight a dominating post on b4 where it watches over weak squares c2 and d3.

$6.\text{d5}$ +, which we examine next game.

6... d4

We like this better

than $6\dots\text{a5}$ + $7.\text{d2 d4}$ 8. c3 d8c6 9. d3 e5 10. a3 e6 , White only looked slightly worse, P.Roberts-T.Hebesberger, Vejen 1993.

7. cxd8 + dxd8



Multiple issues haunt White:

1. c2 requires protection.

2. This means that White must move his king to d1, where it will be less safe than Black's in mid-board.

3. Or White can place a knight on a3. This means that Black's knight can't be removed from b4 since a2–a3 is taken off the table.

8. d3

This is White's superior option.

$8.\text{d1}$? is even worse since after $8\dots\text{f5}$ (threat: $\dots\text{c2}$) 9. d3 ! d8c6 ! (9... c2 ? is met with 10. h4 ! when White is fine) 10. d2 e6 ! 11. c3 e8 ! 12. a3 d3 13. d3 e3 14. b3 e5 White is in grave danger.

8... d8c6 9. e3 e5

Black stands better

after 9... e8 ! 10. d3 g6 11. d1 e7 12. d5 c2 + 13. e2 dxe3 14. fxe3 e8 .

10. ♖f3 e5?!

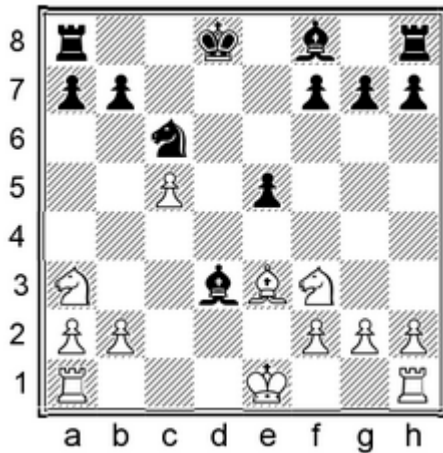
Incredibly, this natural move tosses away most of Black's advantage.

Black should fine-tune with 10...a6! 11. ♕e2 ♜c7 12. ♕f4+ ♜c8 13. 0-0 f6! 14. ♕e3 ♜c7 ...e7-e5 is coming, and Black stands clearly better.

11. ♕e2 ♖d3+!?

The position is full of contradictions. This natural move loses time. Perhaps Black should go for 11...a6 12. ♕b6+ ♜e8 13. 0-0.

12. ♕xd3 ♕xd3 13. c5?!



This wastes a lot of time.

13. 0-0-0! e4 14. ♖e1 ♖b4 15. ♜d2! We see the extinction of White's former strategic defilements, and he no longer stands worse.

13...e4 14. ♖g5 ♜e8 15. f3 f5 16. fxe4 fxe4 17. ♜d2?!

He should try 17. ♖h3, intending ♖f2 next.

17...♕e7 18. ♖ac1 ♜d8! 19. ♖e6 ♜d7 20. ♜e1!

20. ♖xg7+? ♜f7 21. ♖h5 ♖b4! 22. ♜e1 ♕a6! 23. ♖f4 ♕g5! Black wins material no matter how White proceeds.

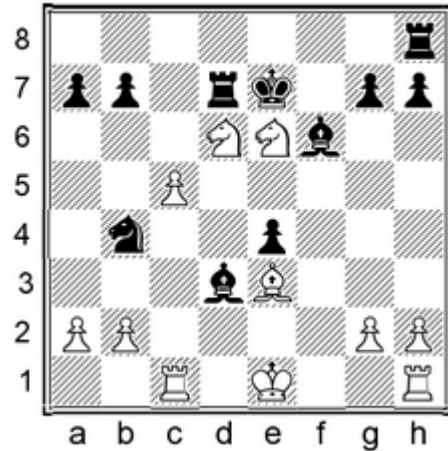
20...♕f6

Even stronger is 20...♜f7! 21. ♖g5+ ♜g6 22. ♖h3 ♖e5.

21. ♖c4 ♖b4 22. ♖d6+

White's knights are not Lords of the Skies as they believe and are surprisingly ineffective, despite their ominously deep posts.

22...♜e7



Cat-silent, Black's king proceeds forward, allowing the h8-rook into the fight.

What a mess! Van der Wiel is clearly winning the arms race, and the engine has Black up by almost five points!

1. White's king is insecure.
2. Black's bishop pair is incredibly powerful in the open position.
3. White is vulnerable to knight forks.
4. White's queenside pawns are vulnerable.
5. White's king feels uncomfortable, while Black's is just fine.

23. ♖d4

Otherwise ...♕xb2 follows.

23...g6

A practical move. Van der Wiel does not need to calculate white knight checks on f5 on every move.

24. a3 ♖d5 25. ♕g1

S.Megaranto-A.Indjic, Chennai OL 2022.

White looks better

after 15.♖d6+ ♕xd6 16.♞xd6.

b) 9...f6! This untested engine suggestion makes the line quite playable for Black after 10.♞d1 e5 11.♞e4 ♜c7 12.c4 ♗e7 13.♗c3 ♖f7 14.b3 ♕f5 15.♞e2 ♗g6, we slightly prefer Black due to the bishop pair and greater central influence.

10.♗bd2?!

White should dodge a queen swap with 10.♞a4! with an edge.

10...e6

10...♞xd4! 11.♗xd4 ♕d7 is even.

11.♞xb6!?

Once again, White may have done better retaining queens by shifting her to either a4 or h4.

11...♗xb6 12.b3

12.♗e5 a5! 13.♗xc6 a4! Offers Black full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

12...f6!

GM Shabalov seems to take an anti-development stance in this game and gets away with it!

13.♕b2?!

Inaccurate since the bishop will hit a pawn wall on e5. 13.♗e4 e5 14.c4 ♕f5 looks only a shade better for Black.

13...♗d5

Not best. 13...e5! 14.c4 ♗d7! 15.♗e4 ♗c5 16.♗fd2 ♕f5 Black stands clearly better in the ending.

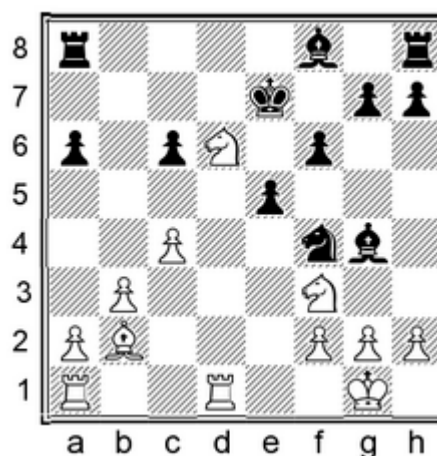
14.♞fd1 e5 15.c4

15.♗e4 ♕g4 is also in Black's favor.

15...♗f4

That is a nasty-looking knight since White weakens his light squares if it's chased away with g2–g3.

16.♗e4 ♕g4! 17.♗d6+ ♖e7!



Black's disjointedness is an optical illusion since his king will soon nest comfortably on e6. Also, White's d6–knight appears powerful. As it turns out, Black simply plays around it!

18.♕a3

No problem. Black's king is vacating the premises anyway.

18...♖e6 19.c5?!

This isn't a great idea since now Black has gained full control over d5. White's disadvantage is less after 19.♕c5.

19...♕e7 20.♞d2 ♕xf3

Now is the time to chop the f3–knight since White's last move unpinned it.

21.gxf3 ♞ad8!?

This feels like the wrong rook since it allows White harassment with the plan of ♞c1, ♞c4, and ♞a4. 21...a5! looks more promising.

22.♞c1 h5

Shabalov begins to gain kingside space.

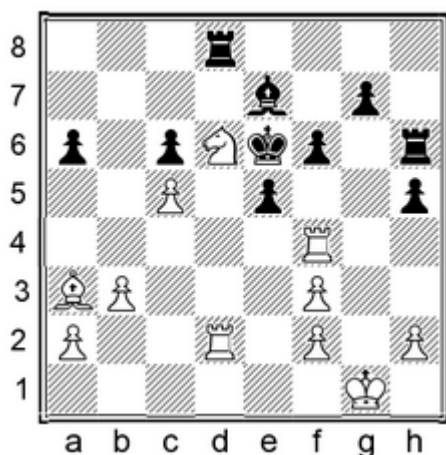
23. ♖c4!

Worrying Black about a shift over to a4.

23... ♖h6!?

He wants to go after White's undefended king!
Shaba's move is more aggressive than 23...g5.

24. ♖xf4?



We are officially past the point of no return.
This creative/unsound strategic exchange sacrifice is unsound, and it would be a double exclamation if it worked.

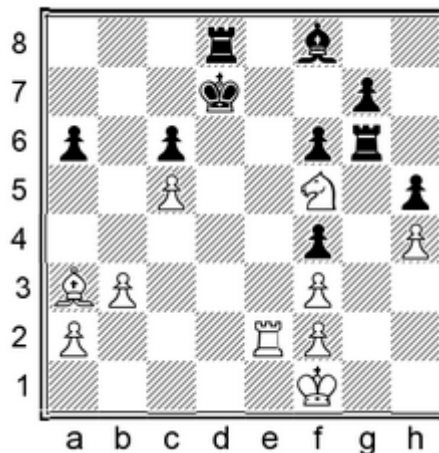
a) 24. ♖a4? ♖g6+ 25. ♔f1 ♖h3! 26. ♔e2 (26. ♖xa6?? ♖g1+ 27. ♔e2 ♖f4+ 28. ♔e3 ♖e1+ 29. ♖e2 ♖xe2#) 26... ♖g1 27. ♔d3 ♖a8 28. ♔c2 ♖f4 Black retains a winning position.

b) 24. ♔h1! is White's best defense since the ... ♖g6, ... ♖g2?? plan is refuted by ♖xf4, undermining support for Black's rook on the g-file; 24...g5! 25. ♖a4 ♖a8 Black still holds the advantage.

24...exf4 25. ♖e2+ ♔d7 26. ♖f5

Double attack? Actually, not since Black has a simple rook check/zwischenzug, which refutes White's idea.

26... ♖g6+ 27. ♔f1 ♔f8 28. h4



There remains but a single obstacle to Black's defensive well-being: how to extricate the g6-rook? Maybe White foresaw this position when he sacrificed the exchange, thinking he has compensation because Black's g6-rook is a prisoner, caught like a fly tangled within the spider's web. The problem is it's not a life sentence since the rook will escape when Black can eject White's admittedly mighty knight from f5.

28... ♖e8 29. ♖d2+ ♔c8

Black threatens to eject the knight with ... ♖e5 next.

30. ♖d6+

30. ♔b2 keeps Black's rook out of e5 at too high a cost. 30... ♔xc5 Black's plan is ... ♖d8, followed by ... ♖d5, unraveling his g6-rook. 31. ♖c2 ♔b4 32. ♖xc6+ ♔b7 33. ♖c1 ♖d8 ... ♖d5 is coming, and Black's g6-rook escapes its confinement.

30... ♔xd6 31. cxd6

Threatening a cheapo by pushing to d7.

31... ♔d7 32. ♖d4 ♖e5 33. ♖b4 ♖b5

Oh, no, you don't. White's rook is denied entry into Black's position. Even the audacious 33... ♔xd6 is playable, and Black wins in this version as well.

34. ♖a4 a5 35. ♖xf4 ♖d5 36. ♖e4 ♖d1+!



Shaba seizes control over g1, allowing his trapped g6-rook to escape. He confidently calculated that White's invading rook/bishop and passed d-pawn were not enough for White to save him.

We like Shabba's plan better than the more passive yet still winning 36...♖e5 37.♖a4

37.♖e2 ♖gg1

If you watch enough vampire and zombie-apocalypse movies, you begin to fear the dead since they always arise with a vengeance. Freedom at last for the formally trapped g6-rook. Black threatens mate on e1.

38.♖e7+ ♔d8 39.f4 ♖ge1+ 40.♖f3 ♖xe7

Now we see White's problem: his crown jewel rook has been swapped away for what was formally Black's trapped rook!

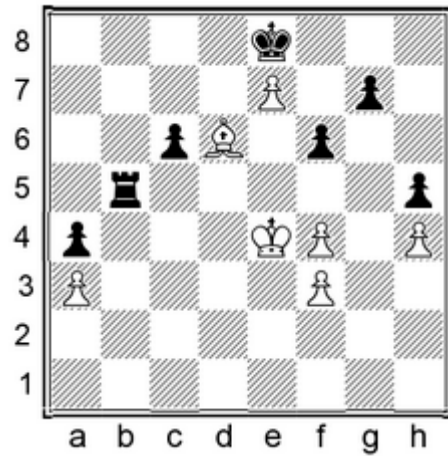
41.dxe7+ ♔e8 42.♙c5 ♖d2

Winning a pawn. White could have resigned here.

43.a3 ♖d3+ 44.♖e4 ♖xb3 45.f3 a4 46.♙d6

46.♖f5 is the euthanasia route which hangs the bishop to the simple pin 46...♖b5.

46...♖b5!



Cutting off the hoped-for white king raid to g6.

47.♖e3 ♖d5 48.♙b4 c5 49.♙c3 ♖xe7 50.f5

That's the spirit! We walas are fighters, whether Jhunjhunu or Lakda! As a fellow wala, it is my grave duty to inform White that this pawn sacrifice isn't going to be of much help, and he really should have resigned here against the GM since a 600-rated player would win easily with Black.

50...♖xf5 51.♖e4 ♖e6 52.f4 ♖d5 53.♙b2 c4 54.♙c3 f5+

The loss of the bishop finally induces White to resign.

0-1

Game 32
T.Lochte (2189) – K.Shirazi (2405)
Munich 2012

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 d5 4.exd5 ♘f6 5.♙a4+



Hey, it's a free country. This is another one of those artificial engine suggestions where White wastes time hoping to grab a pawn. We shouldn't fear this idea for one simple reason: the engine proves that White has no way to hang on to the extra loot and must return the pawn a few moves later.

5...♖bd7 6.♗xd4 ♖b6

How does White hang on to the stolen pawn? The answer is he doesn't.

7.c4

a) 7.d6 White, seeing that the d5-pawn can't be held, hopes to inflict a touch of damage to our structure. 7...e6!? (7...exd6 also looks playable. Honestly, immediate recapture doesn't look so bad for Black. We are easily compensated for our isolani through our (future) central influence when we push the pawn to d5) 8.♙b5+ ♕d7 9.♘a3; here we suggest the untested 9...a6 10.♙xd7+ ♖fxd7! 11.♙f4 ♗f6 12.♗xf6 ♖xf6 13.0-0 ♖fd5 14.♙g3 ♖d7 15.♘f3 (15.c4 can be met with 15...♖xc4! 16.♖xc4 ♗c8 17.b3 b5 18.♘f3 f6 and Black is just fine) 15...♙xd6!, Black is just fine since White's c3-c4 tricks don't work.

b) 7.♘f3 ♗xd5 8.♗xd5 ♖bxd5 looks relatively even, A.Bebel-G.Krogulski, Miedzyzdroje 2009.

7...e6

You meet a beautiful woman in a bar, who doesn't seem too interested in you, yet to your shock, she gives you her number: 123-456-78910. I just described our level of frustration when we believed we won material, only to realize later that we didn't! It's as simple as that: White's extra d-pawn falls, and Black stands no worse.

8.♘c3 exd5 9.cxd5



Theory ends here, and Black stands at least equal.

9.c5!? shouldn't worry us at all. 9...♖bd7 10.b4? (10.♙b5 ♙e7 11.♘ge2 0-0 12.♙xd7 ♖xd7 13.0-0 ♙xc5 14.♗xd5 ♗e8 Black's bishop pair and development lead in the open position offer full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, and in fact, we prefer Black) 10...a5 11.♙b5? (11.♙a3 was necessary, although Black still stands clearly better here) 11...axb4 12.♖xd5 ♖xd5 13.♗xd5 H.Klek-N.Grandadam, Wunsiedel 2013. White is fatally behind in development after 13...♙e7 14.♖e2 ♗a5 15.♖d4 0-0 16.0-0 ♖xc5.

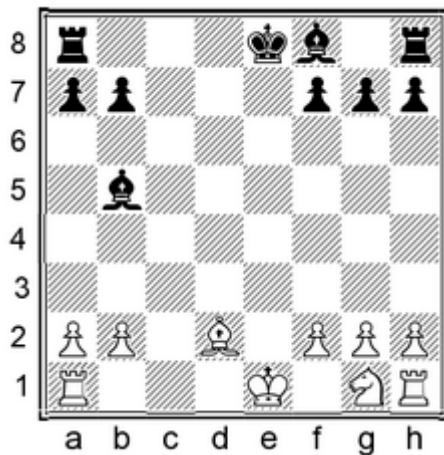
9...♖bxd5 10.♙b5+

10.♙d2 looks a shade better.

10...♙d7 11.♖xd5 ♖xd5 12.♗xd5?!

This gives away the bishop pair in an open position. 12.♙xd7+ ♗xd7 13.♙d2 ♖b4! 14.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 15.♖f1! looks just a smidgeon better for Black, who leads in development.

12...♗a5+ 13.♙d2 ♗xb5 14.♗xb5 ♙xb5



Advantage Black, who picked up bishop pair in an open position.

15.0-0-0?!

White minimizes his disadvantage with 15.♖f3 0-0-0 16.a4 ♕d3 17.0-0-0 f6 18.♗c3.

15...♗c5! 16.♞e1+

16.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 17.fxe3 ♞c8+ 18.♜b1 ♗c6 19.♗f3 ♗e4+ 20.♜a1 ♜e7 will be a tough ending for White to hold.

16...♜f8 17.♞e5?!

He needs to develop his kingside and should have played 17.♗h3 ♗c6! 18.f3 f6 19.♗f4 ♜f7 is also heavily in Black's favor.

17...♞c8

Threatening a fatal discovered check.

18.♜d1

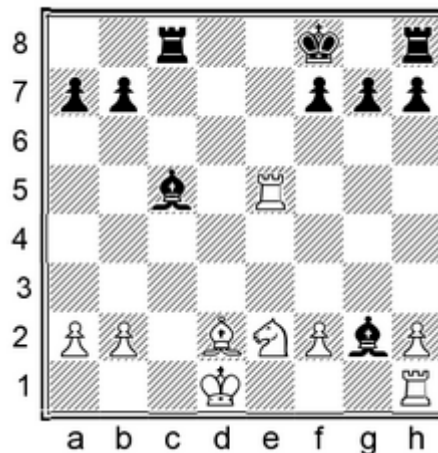
White menaces ♞xc5, followed by ♗b4. 18.♜b1 ♗d3+ 19.♜a1 ♗d4 wins since 20.♞d5? is met with 20...♗e4 21.♞xd4 ♗xg2 White can resign.

18...♗f1?

This tempting move allows White to come close to equality.

18...b6! maintains Black's considerable advantage.

19.♗e2 ♗xg2



Exercise (critical decision): White has a choice between 20.♞g1 and 20.♞xc5. One line equalizes, while the other lands White in a losing position. Which one would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Chopping the bishop on c5 is the correct path.

20.♞g1?

20.♞xc5! ♞xc5 21.♞g1 ♗e4 22.♗b4 b6 23.♞g3! g6 24.♗xc5+ bxc5 25.♞a3 ♜g7 26.♞xa7 ♞b8 27.b3 c4 28.bxc4 ♞d8+! 29.♜e1 ♗d3! Threat: ...♞e8. 30.♗c3 ♗xc4 31.♞a4 White will save the game.

20...♗d6!

White undoubtedly missed this zwischenzug, probably expecting 20...♗f3? 21.♞xc5! ♞xc5 22.♗b4 b6 23.♜d2 White stands no worse.

21.♞g5 ♗f3 22.♞xg7?

This loses material. White had to try 22.♗c3 ♞xc3! 23.bxc3 ♗xh2 24.♞e1 g6 25.♜d2 ♜g7 with a strategically won game for Black.

22...♞e8 23.♗e3



Exercise (calculation): Work out a sequence for Black to win material:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Step 1: Move the rook to d8, threatening awful, discovered checks with the d6-bishop.

23...♖d8! 24.♙c1

This idea fails as does:

a) 24.♙e1? (this is the point in the 1940's gangster movie where the "rat" is discovered and performs his dance jig as machine gun bullets tear into his tender rat's flesh) 24...♙b4+ 25.♘c3 ♖d1#.

b) 24.♖g4 ♙xh2+ 25.♙e1 ♙xg1 26.♙c5+ ♙e8 27.♖xg1 is also hopeless for White.

24...♙xe2 25.♙h6 ♖c8+! 26.♙d2 ♙c4!

How annoying for White, who lacks even a single effective discovered check with the g7-rook.

27.♖1g4

27.♖7g6+ ♙e7 28.♖e1+ ♙d7 wins.

27...♙e7 28.♖e4+ ♙d7

Or 28...♙e6, which is simpler.

29.♖d4 ♙e6

29...♙e6 30.♖e4+ ♙f5 31.f3 f6 White's counterattack is at an end, and Black soon consolidates the extra piece.

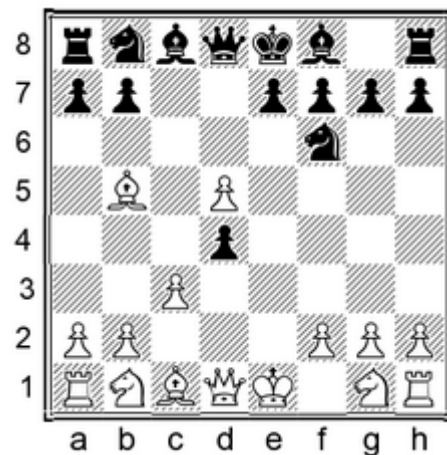
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Game 33

T.Lochte – R.Stiefel

Bad Wörishofen 2018

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♙b5+



We will give you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: this is one of White's more dangerous tries. The idea is to interfere with Black's ability to regain the d5-pawn.

5...♙d7!?

This is the braver gambit version.

5...♘bd7 is slightly safer. We still prefer White's position after 6.♖xd4 g6 7.♘f3 ♙g7 8.0-0 0-0 D.Farkas-A.Meszáros, Miskolc 2005; White looks more comfortable after the untested 9.♖d1 ♘b6 10.♖h4 ♘bxd5 11.♙c4 e6 12.♙g5 ♖c7 13.♘bd2.

6.♙c4!

This is White's annoying idea: Black's d7-bishop is in the way of recapturing on d5.

6...b5

We gain some queenside space free of charge.

7.♙b3 dxc3

We hate to play such moves that help White develop, but if we don't, White wins a pawn for not much compensation for our side.

8. ♖xc3 g6

We want to castle quickly and prefer this to 8...a5 R.Dolezal-T.Civin, Plzen 1999.

9. ♗f3 ♕g7 10. 0-0 0-0

The position resembles a Queen's Gambit Declined Tarrasch Variation, with colors reversed. White has an edge here since the d5-pawn digs into us like a tick on a Terrier.

11. ♖e1 a5

We gain more queenside space and make room for ...♗a6.

12. a4

12.a3 ♗a6 13.h3 ♗c5 14. ♕e3 L.Vajda-I.Nemet, Basel 2002. Black looks okay after 14...♖c8...

Here, an improvement was found with...

12...bxa4!



The idea is to clear b4 for the b8-knight.

12...b4? was played in R.Menkinoski-B.Nadj Hedjesi, Belgrade 2009. Here, White could seize a significant advantage with 13. ♗b5!.

13. ♗xa4 ♗a6 14. ♕e3

We prefer 14. ♗e5, eyeing c6.

14... ♕xa4! 15. ♖xa4 ♗b4

White lacks the resources to defend d5, allowing Black equality.

16. ♕c5

a) 16. ♖xb4!? (this ascetic path of self-denial is obviously risky and possibly on the way to an overpress) 16...axb4 17. ♕c5 ♖e8 18. ♗e5 ♜a5 19. ♕d4 ♗h5, Black stands no worse.

b) 16. ♗e5 ♖c8 c6 is covered, and d5 threatens to fall again, inducing White into 17. ♖xb4 axb4. The engine calls it dead even, giving White full compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

16... ♗fxd5 17. ♕xb4?



This should leave White down a pawn and groveling.

17. ♗g5! ♕f6 18. ♗xf7! ♖xf7 19. ♖xb4 ♗xb4 20. ♜f3 ♗g7 21. ♕xf7 ♖c8! (21...♗xf7?? 22. ♕xe7 l eaves Black busted) 22. ♖d1 ♜f8 23. ♕xb4 axb4 24. ♕b3 ♕xb2 25. ♜e4 Even though down a pawn, White should hold a draw without too much trouble.

17... ♗xb4 18. ♜xd8 ♖axd8 19. ♖xa5 e6 20. ♖a7



What? Why agree to a draw? Is this one of those 1980's sitcoms where the canned laughter button would be pressed here? We aren't sure why Black took the draw since he can win a pawn. For example:

- a) 20. Rxa7 Bxb2 21. Ba1 Bf6 Black can play on and on with the extra pawn since White cannot play the discovered attack 22. Bxe6?? fxe6; Black's knight can't be touched due to the threat of back rank mate.
- b) 20. Bb1 Nd3 21. Ra2 Rxc8 22. Bd1 Rfd8, threatening a fork on c1 and ...Nxb2; White must hand over the pawn since 23. Be2?? is met with 23...Nc1!.

1/2-1/2

Game 34

A.Gorlin – D.Ippolito (2394)

US Open (Framingham) 2001

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5

Our move order would run 3...Nf6 4.d4 cxd4 5. ♗xd4 ♗xd5.

4.d4 Nf6 5. Nf3 cxd4 6. ♗xd4

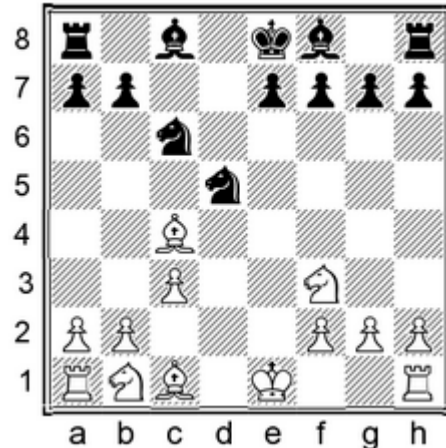
With our Anti-Alapin move order, we actually wouldn't reach the position after 6.cxd4.

6...Nc6 7. ♗xd5 Nxd5

No player in human history has reached this position from either side and thought: "Oh baby, you're casting a spell on me!" The

problem with playing the black pieces is that in most variations, if White wants a snoozer position, they have the power to reach it. We must beat our opponents by remaining more awake to the subtleties.

8. ♗c4



At least the pace is (slightly) quicker tempo than the funeral march procession of the bishop e2, as we see the next game. The placement on c4 isn't necessarily better, though, since Black chases the bishop around.

In a couple of games, we look at 8. ♗b5

8...Nxb6 9. ♗b3

a) 9. ♗b5 Black responded with 9...Nd7 in all four database games, winning two and drawing two. We suggest you try the untested (improvement?) 9...f6! and if 10. Nd4 a6! Black already stands better.

If 11. ♗xc6+?! bxc6 12. Nxc6 (12.0-0 ♗d7 is also slightly in Black's favor) 12... ♗b7 13. Na5 ♗xg2 14. Rg1 ♗h3 with bishop pair in an open position, with a clear advantage for Black.

b) 9. ♗e2?! is passive, and we already prefer Black after 9...e5.

9... ♗g4

This makes sense, with White's bishop on b3 rather than e2. 9... ♗f5 10. ♗e3 e6 also looks even.

10. Ng5!?

Weirdly enough, this spacewalk is White's main move. f7 is easy to protect.

10. ♖bd2 - here, we once again suggest our favorite untested idea 10...f6! intending ...e7-e5 next.

10...e6 11. ♗e3

11.0-0 ♗e7 12. ♖e4 ♗f5 13. ♖bd2 0-0 when Black is ready to place a rook on the d-file and already stands slightly better, J.Begemann-C.Schipp, Dortmund 2008.

11...♗e7



Novelty and a slight improvement over the previously played 11...h6 T.Lematschko-J.Plachetka, Belgrade 1988.

12. ♖e4 0-0

This feels slightly inaccurate since Black's king would be happier if he hung around closer to the middle. We suggest the improvement 12...0-0! 13. ♖bd2 ♗f5 with an edge for Black, who leads in development.

13. ♖bd2

13. ♖g3 (intending h2-h3) 13...e5 14. ♖d2 ♖fd8 15. f3 ♗d7 16.0-0-0 ♖a5 17. ♗xb6 axb6 18. ♖c4 looks balanced.

13...♖a5

13...♖d5! 14. ♗xd5 exd5 15. ♖g3 d4! 16.cxd4 ♖fd8 looks slightly in Black's favor.

14.f3

It may have been wiser to eliminate White's bishop pair with 14. ♗c5

14...♗f5 15. ♖e2!?

Principle: Use your king as a fighting piece in the center. With this decision, White must, of course, factor-in king safety.

White can also try a more radical approach with

a) 15. ♗xb6 axb6 16. ♗c2 b5 17.a3 with a balanced ending.

b) 15. ♗c5 ♗xc5 16. ♖xc5 ♖ac8 17. ♖ce4 ♖fd8 18.0-0-0 ♖xb3+ 19.axb3 ♖f8 White should be okay, although we still prefer Black.

15...♖fc8 16. ♗xb6!?



This may be an attempt to play for the full point. Black's bishops look slightly more valuable than the potential structural damage on Black.

16...axb6 17. ♖hd1!?

He should prevent Black's next move with 17. ♗a4!

17...b5!

...b5-b4 is in the air.

18. ♖g3?!

This only puts the knight out of play.

18.a3.

18...♙g6 19.♗de4?!

I suppose the value of suffering is that we don't want it repeated, which, in turn, induces beneficial change for the future. Sometimes it's better to absorb hurt pride and retract, following the *Principle*: It's preferable to voluntarily accept shame over the alternative, greater discomfort. The engine wants 19.♗ge4.

19...h5! 20.♙c2

20.♗f1 b4 is also heavily in Black's favor.

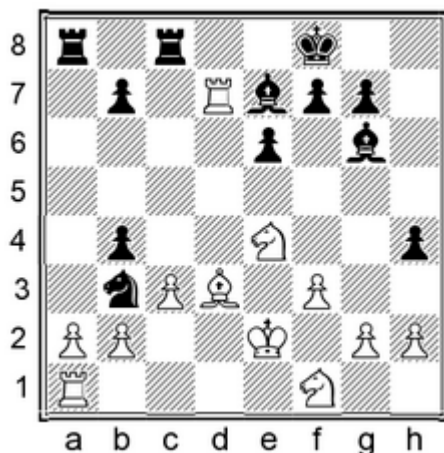
20...b4! 21.♞d7 ♘f8

21...bxc3! is even stronger since White must recapture with the b2-pawn, leaving himself with multiple targets. 22.♞xe7?? fails miserably to 22...cxb2 23.♞b1 ♞xc2+ when White can resign.

22.♙d3 h4 23.♗f1

Now comes a predatory incursion into White's territory.

23...♗b3!



Black has a buffet of tempting choices, and this may be the best among them.

24.♞b1 ♞xa2 25.cxb4

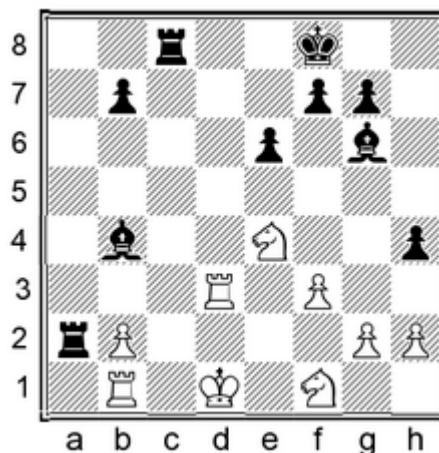
25.♞xb7 ♗a5 26.♞b5 f5 27.♗ed2 ♙e8 28.♞b6 bxc3 29.bxc3 ♞xc3 30.♞xe6 (30.♞a6 is met

with 30...♞aa3) 30...h3 31.g3 ♗c6! wins material.

25...♗c1+!

Even more accurate is 25...f5! 26.♗ed2 ♗c1+!.

26.♗d1 ♗xd3 27.♞xd3 ♙xb4



It isn't a pretty situation for White since Black's bishops and rooks rule the board.

28.♗fd2 b6 29.♞d4 ♙c5 30.♞c4 ♞d8 31.♗e1 ♞d4 32.♞bc1



He shouldn't give up the b2-pawn. He was losing anyway

after 32.♗e2 ♞xc4 33.♗xc4 f6 34.♗d3 b5 35.♗cd2 ♙b6 36.h3 ♗e7 37.♗c2 e5 with a winning ending for Black.

32...♞xb2 33.♞xd4

33.♗xc5? loses to the simple 33...♞dxd2.

33...♙xd4 34.♞c7 ♙e5! 35.♞c8+ ♗e7 36.g3

36.h3 ♕xe4! 37.fxex4 ♖d7 38.♖c4 b5 is an easy win for Black.

36...♕xe4! 37.♗xe4 ♖xh2

Obviously, White can resign here.

38.gxh4 ♖xh4 39.♖c6 ♖h1+ 40.♔e2 ♖b1 41.♗d2 ♖b2 42.♔d3 ♔d7

0-1

Game 35

H.Horther (2155) – L.Dobrovolsky (2430)

German League (Bavaria) 2002

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♗f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♕xd4 ♕xd5

With this peaceful recapture, Black embraces the philosophy: war is bad for business. The peaceful choice of recapturing with the queen on d5 is the safer/less adventurous path. If it's equality you want, you have it.

6.♗f3 ♗c6

We induce a queen swap into a balanced ending.

7.♕xd5

7.♕a4 is untested, yet also looks unwise since White's queen looks to be more of a target than Black's after 7...♕d7.

7...♗xd5 8.♕e2



White realizes that this bishop, a valuable piece, is safest on e2.

Next game, we examine 8.♕b5.

8...g6

This is Black's most common move. We recommend the nearly untested 8...e5! with only a single game in the database. It looks to us like a tempting alternative, grabbing central space. 9.0-0 Y.Amberlin-F.Mahe, Paris 2003. Black already stands slightly better after 9...f6.

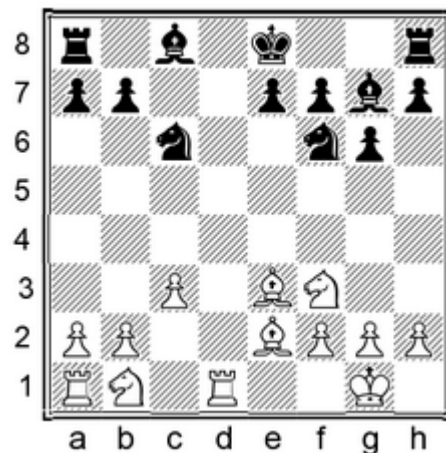
9.0-0 ♕g7 10.♖d1 ♗f6

The knight on f6 blocks the push of the f7-pawn and obstructs the g7-bishop.

a) 10...♗b6 G.Homs-A.Wojtkiewicz, Soest 1996. 11.a4 ♗a5 12.♕f4 ♕e6 13.♕b5+ ♕d7 looks dynamically balanced.

b) 10...e6 is untested and looks reasonable. 11.♗bd2 b6 12.♗c4 ♔e7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♕xe3 ♕b7 looks okay for Black, in the opinion of the humans, while the engine slightly favors White.

11.♕e3



Theory comes to an end here.

11.♗a3 0-0 12.♗b5 P.Rezzonico-T.Poennioe, Playchess.com INT 2004. 12...♕d7 looks balanced.

11...0-0

There are too many pieces on the board for Black's king to hang around uncastled in the center.

12. ♖d4

It may be better to continue developing and connecting rooks with 12. ♖a3

12... ♗xd4 13. ♕xd4 ♕g4 14. ♕xg4

14. ♕xf6 ♕xe2 15. ♖e1 ♕xf6 16. ♖xe2 Black can play for a win based on the imbalances of bishop versus knight and opposing wing pawn majorities.

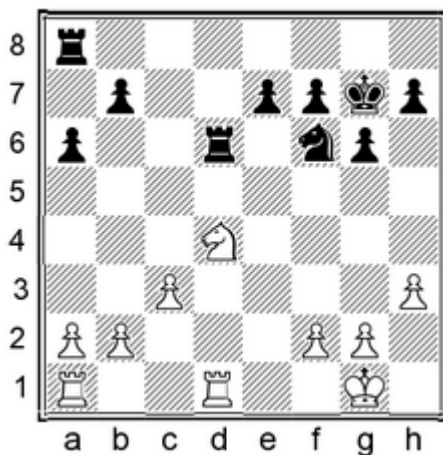
14... ♗xg4 15. ♕xg7

15. ♖a3 is more accurate.

15... ♕xg7 16. ♖a3

16. ♖d7? gives up several tempi after the simple 16... ♖fd8, playing upon White's weak back rank.

16... ♖fd8 17. ♗b5 a6 18. ♗d4 ♖d6 19. h3 ♗f6



So far, the game is a snoozer, which may appear to be heading for a draw. Yet your writers, both fonts of the wise council, advise you to play on in such endings. Have faith in your central majority, which may not look like much, but you can still extract points if your opponent misplays the ending.

20. ♖f1?!

20. ♗f3 ♖ad8 21. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 22. ♖e1 e6 23. ♖f1 ♗d7; it's unlikely the game will end up with a decisive result.

20... ♖ad8

Threat: ...e7–e5.

21. ♖e2

21. ♖e1 is more accurate.

21... ♗d5 22. g3

Covering against a knight, check on f4.

22... e5

22... ♗b6! is the only prayer for an edge.

23. ♗b3 b6 24. ♖d2 ♖f6 25. ♖ad1 ♖e6 26. a4

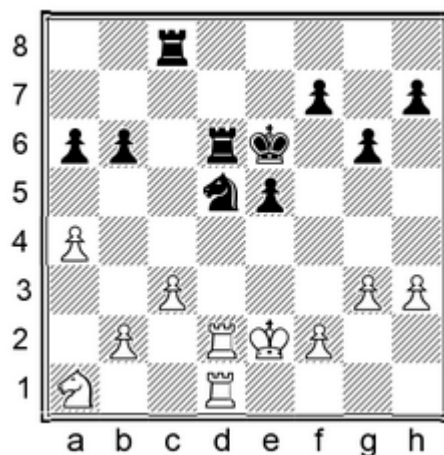
Worrying Black about a future a4–a5 push.

26... ♖c8!

a) 26... ♗f6 27. a5 is also close to even, although if given a choice, we pick White.

b) 26... f5 27. a5 looks like a tiny edge for White.

27. ♗a1!?



Reti is impressed, but we aren't. The idea is to reroute the knight via c2.

27. a5 is more natural. 27... b5 White is deprived of a knight check on c5, and we slightly prefer

Black due to the superior king position and the ability to expand the kingside pawn majority.

27...♖d7

27...♖c4 28.♗c2 is okay for White since 28...♖xa4?? loses material to the pile-up move 29.♗e3.

28.♗c2?!

It was actually better to retract with 28.♗b3.

28...♗f6! 29.♗e3

29.♖xd7 ♗xd7 30.♖a1 a5 is slightly in Black's favor.

29...♖xd2+ 30.♖xd2 ♗e4 31.♖d1 ♗c5 32.♖a1 f5

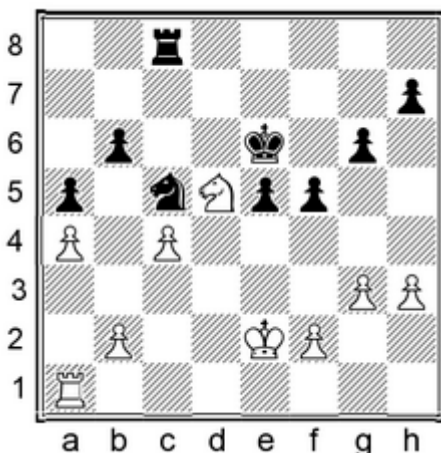
Black's majority is clearly superior to White's. Still, it's hard to believe that White can't hold the game.

33.c4?!

The inner compulsion to play actively is too alluring to resist. He shouldn't create a hole on b4, even if he gets d5 in return.

White should give up a pawn for activity with 33.a5! b5 34.♖d1 ♗b3 35.h4 ♖c6 36.♖d8 ♗xa5 37.♖e8+ ♔d6 38.h5.

33...a5! 34.♗d5?



34.h4 was correct.

Exercise (combination alert): White's hoped-for counterplay is a shadow of a shadow. Work out a way for Black to win material:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Step 1: Sink the knight into b3, with a double attack on a1 and c4.

34...♗b3! 35.♖a3 ♖xc4!

Step 2: Undermine support for White's knight.

36.♖xb3

36.♗xb6?? ♖b4 37.♗c8 ♗d4+ 38.♔d1 ♖xb2 wins.

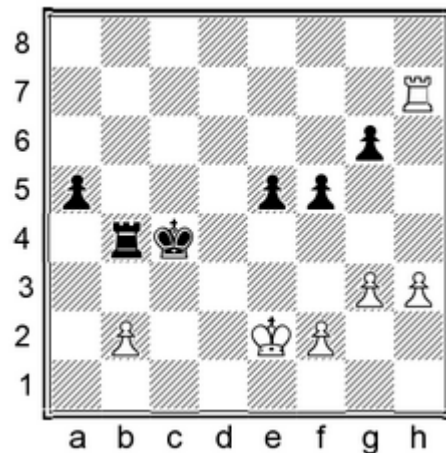
36...♔xd5 37.♖xb6 ♖xa4

Black won a pawn, and just as importantly, he also achieved a dominating king position.

38.♖b7 ♖b4! 39.♖d7+

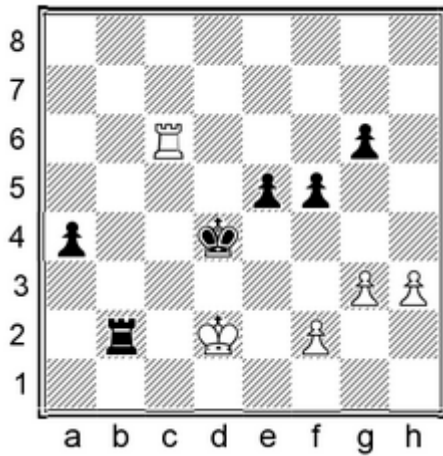
Of course, the king and pawn ending is dead lost for White if he swaps rooks.

39...♔c4 40.♖xh7



White's king and rook remain as detached and distant from events as the moon, reflecting its soft light upon us in the evening.

40...♖xb2+ 41.♔e3 ♖b3+ 42.♔d2 a4 43.♖c7+ ♔d4 44.♖c6 ♖b2+



45.♔c1

This guy is a stranger in a strange land. 45.♔e1 a3 The a-pawn costs White his rook.

45...♞xf2 46.♞xg6 a3 47.♔b1 e4

0-1

Game 36

H.M.H.Demir (1931) – M.Yilmazyerli (2320)

Turkish ch (Antalya) 2013

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♞xd4 ♞xd5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♞xd5 ♘xd5 8.♙b5



If this is playable, it is in the “just barely” category. We are tempted to give this Ruy Lopez’ish, natural-looking move a dubious since we, as Black, would be delighted if White chopped our c6-knight, and handed us bishop pair and light squares.

8...f6!

Not all novelties are acts of theoretical insubordination, and we feel this is an improvement over the far more often played 8...♙d7, which we won’t cover since it’s approximately equal. The point of 8...f7–f6 is that we call White’s bluff, and chopping on c6 favors Black. So, we use the time to ensure a central space advantage with ...e7–e5 coming next.

9.0-0?!

Now Black stands clearly better. White should try 9.♘d4 ♙d7 10.♘xc6 (sure, this inflicts slight damage upon Black’s structure; The cost of losing time feels heavier, though) 10...bxc6 11.♙a6 - even there, Black already looks slightly better after 11...e5.

9...e5

Cutting off ♘d4 while seizing a central space edge.

10.♞e1 ♙d7

The bishop belongs on e6.

Therefore, 10...♔f7! is better, eliminating White’s intention to play ♘d4. 11.♙c4 isn’t a problem at all due to 11...♙e6 with a clear advantage for Black.

11.♘bd2

11.♙c4 ♘b6 12.♙b3 isn’t an issue since Black’s king can castle queenside.

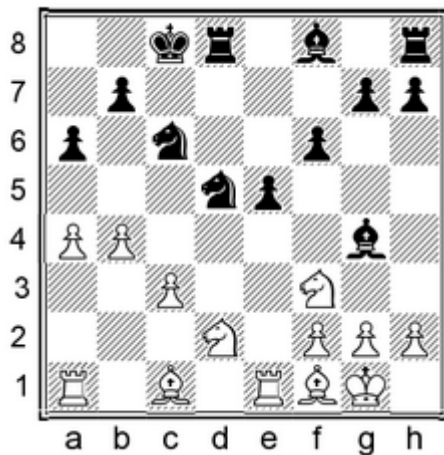
11...0-0-0 12.a4!?

This could be a potential weakening. But if not this, then what is White’s plan?

12...a6 13.♙f1 ♙g4

The bishop belongs on e6. Here, the attempt to disrupt with 13...♙e6 14.♘d4?? fails miserably to 14...♘xd4 15.cxd4 ♘b4! with dual threats to fork on c2 and the simple ...♞xd4.

14.b4?!



The ref blows the whistle and hands down a penalty for unruly conduct on the field. Mikhail Tal, we blame you for this. We all try and play like you did, only to discover that there was only one of you and millions of us who want to be like you but don't quite qualify! We can't bend the position to our will if the raw materials don't exist. The sacrifice is technically unsound, but it does have the benefit of greatly increasing the level of complications.

Objectively it is better to suffer slight inferiority with 14.g3.

14...♟xc3 15.b5

White hopes to open lines against Black's king. This should fail for two reasons:

1. Black's king is much safer now that queens have been removed from the board.
2. One result of the sacrifice is that Black's knights are allowed deep posts into White's position.

15...♟b4 16.♟b2

After 16.bxa6 bxa6 17.♟e3 ♟cd5 18.♟b3 ♟d7! 19.♟c4 ♟e6, White doesn't get enough for the sacrificed pawn.

16...♟cd5 17.♟ec1+ ♟d7!?

The king feels, rather than sees, evil eyes upon him. Black still stands better after this move. It was unnecessary, though. Black's king looks relatively safe after 17...♟b8! the opening of

the b-file isn't such a big deal with White's bishop clogging the file on b2.

18.♟c4?!

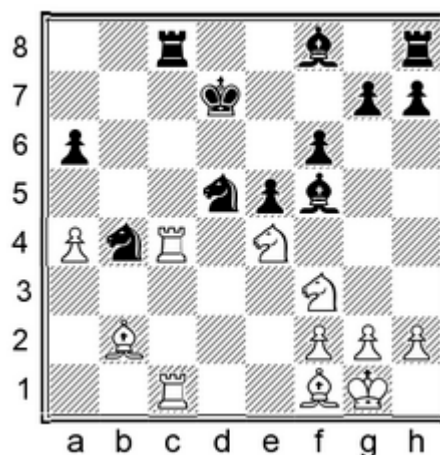
The attack on Black's g4-bishop only chases it to a superior spot.

White gives himself better chances to save the game with 18.♟a3 ♟e6 19.bxa6 bxa6 20.♟b3 ♟c8 21.♟xc8 ♟xc8 22.♟c1+ ♟d7 23.♟fd2.

18...♟f5 19.bxa6 bxa6 20.♟e4 ♟c8!

Principle: Piece swaps benefit the pawn-up side.

21.♟ac1??



The correct was 21.♟xc8 ♟xc8 22.♟fd2.

White's present trouble is merely a precursor to the misery which follows.

Exercise (calculation): It's not as if the position is so dense with complexity that it is difficult for mere words to penetrate its secrets. This one is not so tough. Work out a sequence to prove why White's last move blundered away material:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Step 1: Swap rooks.

21...♟xc4 22.♟xc4

Of course, White must recapture with his rook to cover his otherwise hanging e4-knight.

22...♖b6!

Step 2: Removal of the guard. Attack the rook, which holds up the e4-knight.

23.♞xb4

This desperate exchange sacrifice is the equivalent of resignation. Also, hopeless was 23.♖c5+ ♗c6! 24.♞xb4 ♙xc5 25.♞h4 ♞d8! (threat: ...♞d1, followed by ...♙d3) 26.g3 ♞d1 27.♙g2 ♖d5! (the threat is ...♞b1!, trapping White's dark-squared bishop; now if 28.♞c4, it's met with 28...♞xf1!, intending a bishop check on d3 next. After 29.♞xc5+ ♗xc5 30.♙xf1 ♗b4, the a4-pawn falls, and White can resign.

23...♙xb4 24.♖g3 ♙c2 25.♙xa6 ♙xa4 26.♖h5 ♙f8



Black is just up an exchange and a pawn in the ending, and White can resign.

Black may have worried about 26...♞g8 27.♙d3.

27.♖h4

Hey, I distinctly said: “ and White can resign!”

27...♗e6 28.g4 g6 29.♖g3 ♙c6 30.♖g2 ♙c5 31.♙d3 ♞d8 32.♖e1

This hangs more material, but it didn't make any difference at this stage.

32...♙b4!

The serial killer's to-do list:

1. Kill.
2. Dismember.
3. Dispose.

Black seems to be achieving all three on the list.

32...♙b4! 33.♖c2 ♞xd3 34.♖xb4 ♞d1+ 35.♖f1 ♙b5 wins the knight.

0-1

Game 37

E.Ortel (2301) – A.Meszaros (2324)

Hungarian Team ch 2009

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♞xd4

5.♖f3 ♖xd5 transposes to a position we already covered earlier in the book.

5...♞xd5 6.♞xd5



Swapping immediately is only a slight deviation from the previously seen 6.♖f3 and can easily transpose.

6...♖xd5 7.♙b5+

a) 7.♖f3 ♖c6 transposes to positions we already examined.

b) 7.♙c4 ♘b6 8.♙b3 e5 9.♙e3 ♘8d7 10.♘f3 f6
11.0-0 ♙c5 We already slightly prefer Black,
P.Rasmussen-T.Romsdal, Gausdal 2000.

7...♙d7

This was played in all three database games
from this position.

We suggest the
untested 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 f6! transposing to the
previous game in the book.

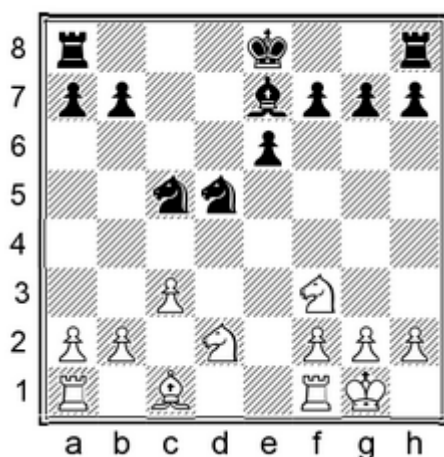
8.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 9.♘f3 e6

Pushing the pawn to e5 isn't as strong when
light-squared bishops have been swapped since
it places another pawn on the same color as
Black's remaining bishop. On the other hand,
Black gains central space, making it perfectly
playable. Chances look balanced
after 9...e5 10.0-0 f6.

10.0-0

It may be preferable to keep the king in the
middle with 10.♙e2.

10...♙e7 11.♘bd2 ♘c5!



Black eyes the d3 hole and already may hold an
edge.

12.♘b3 ♘d3

He wants White's bishop to create an
imbalance.

12...♘a4! is also annoying since it won't be
easy to unravel White's queenside.

13.♙d1 ♘xc1 14.♙axc1 ♙c8 15.♘bd4 a6 16.c4

16.♘f5 can be met with 16...♙f8 17.♙f1 g6,
ejecting the intruder.

16...♘b4

This wastes time, and White looks okay now.
After 16...♘b6! 17.b3 g6 18.♙c2 ♘d7, we
slightly prefer Black.

17.a3 ♘c6 18.♘xc6 ♙xc6 19.b4

Principle: Push your majority as quickly as
possible.

19...♙f6

19...b6! may be a touch more accurate.

20.♙c2

20.c5! should be met with 20...♙e7.
Here, 20...♙b2? wastes time
after 21.♙c2! Black must retreat the bishop to
f6,
since 21...♙xa3? 22.♘e5 ♙c7 23.♙a1! ♙xb4 24.
♘d3! ♙xc5 – forced - 25.♙xc5 leaves Black in
some danger
after 25...♙d7 26.♘e5+ ♙d6 27.♙xc7 ♙xc7 28.
♘xf7 ♙a8 White should be winning, although
it's still tricky since Black's passed pawns will
march up the board)

20...b6!

Inhibiting c4–c5.

21.c5!?

Hey, I just said, “inhibiting c4–c5!”

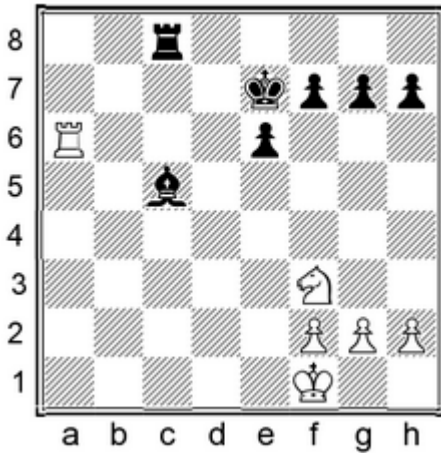
This is risky since White's pawns could
become vulnerable. White's liberties are not so
curtailed after 21.♙f1, which is the safer and
wiser option.

21...bxc5 22.♙xc5?

This is a strategic mistake, after which White's queenside pawns become a liability.

22.♖dc1 ♔d7 23.g4 (23.♙xc5?! ♜hc8 is dangerous for White since Black's king and bishop may later raid White's queenside) 23...h6 24.h4 g5 25.hxg5 hxg5 26.♔g2 ♜hc8 27.bxc5 White should hold the draw.

22...♙xc5 23.bxc5 ♔e7 24.♔f1 ♜c8 25.♙c1 ♙b2 26.♙c2 ♙xa3 27.♙a2 ♙xc5 28.♙xa6



Black won a pawn and may even own the superior minor piece. The problem, of course, is that the remaining pawns are few and all on the same side of the board, making conversion difficult.

28...♙b8

Threat: ...♙b2, targeting f2.

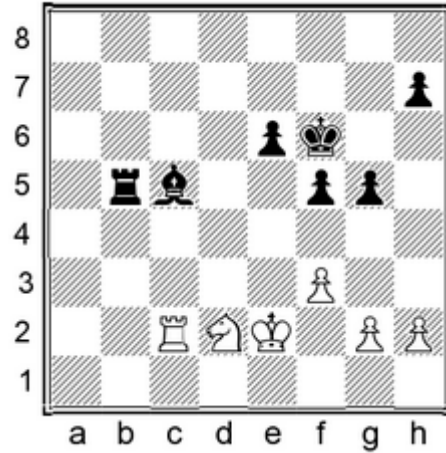
29.♙a2 f5

Black has no other plan but to slowly push his kingside pawns forward, hoping to create weakness in White's camp.

30.♙c2

30.♘e5 ♜b7 31.h4 ♔f6 32.♘d3 ♜a7 33.♙xa7 ♙xa7 34.f4 White's odds of drawing look better than Black's to win.

30...♙b5 31.♔e2 ♔f6 32.♘d2 g5 33.f3?!



This allows Black to create the weakness he needs to make progress.

33.g4! follows the *Principle*: The pawn-down side benefits from pawn swaps. White can't capture due to fork tactics on c5 and e4. 33...♙b4 34.gxf5 exf5 35.h3 White has decent chances to hold the draw.

33...h5

Slightly more accurate is 33...♙d6 34.g3 h5.

34.g3?

He has better drawing chances with 34.h3 h4 when White must eternally watch out for black king infiltration along the kingside dark squares.

34...g4! 35.fxg4 hxg4 36.♔f1 e5 37.♔g2 e4! 38.h3

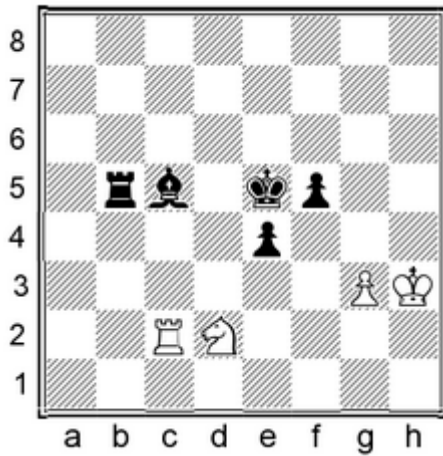
White is doing his best to eliminate as many pawns as possible, which isn't enough to save the game.

38...gxh3+?

He puts his win at grave risk with this mistake.

The more accurate was 38...e3! 39.♘c4 ♔e6 40.hxg4 fxg4 41.♔f1 ♔d5 42.♔e2 ♜b3 43.♘a5 ♜b1 44.♘c4 ♔e4 and White is busted.

39.♔xh3 ♔e5?



39...♙e3 was necessary to keep winning hopes alive.

Exercise (planning): Come up with a drawing plan for White:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Push the g-pawn to create a light square blockade.

40.♔g2?

40.g4! f4 41.♞c4! ♙d4 42.♞c8! Threatening a rook check on e8. 42...e3 43.♞e8+ ♔f6 44.♘f3 Black's pawns are blockaded on the light squares, and White will hold the draw.

40...♔d4

Now Black is winning again, even if it is with tarantula-slowness.

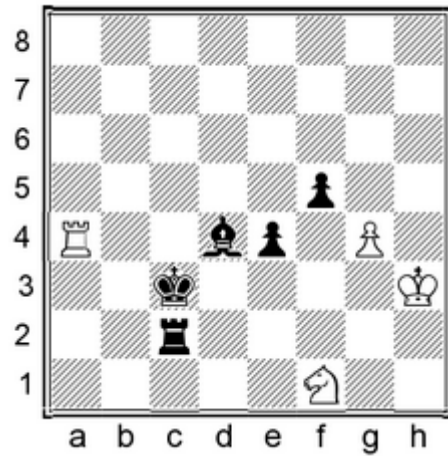
41.♞a2 ♔d3 42.♘f1 ♙d4 43.♞d2+ ♔c3 44.♞e2 ♞b8 45.♞a2

45.g4 ♞g8 46.♘h2 ♙e5 47.♔f1 ♙xh2 48.gxf5 ♞g1+! 49.♔f2 ♞g4 Black hangs on to his final pawn and wins.

45...♞b1 46.♞e2 ♞d1! 47.♞a2

47.g4 ♔d3! Zwischenzug. 48.♞a2 f4 wins.

47...♞c1 48.♞a3+ ♔b2! 49.♞a4 ♞c2+ 50.♔h3 ♔c3 51.g4



Giving Black two passed pawns is of no help. At this stage, everything loses.

51.♞a1 ♔d3 52.♞b1 e3 and game over.

51...f4 52.g5 e3 53.♘h2

Is White's position showing signs of revival, with a light square blockade? Actually, not after Black's next move.

53...♞xh2+!

We learned from the show Kung Fu that if you are a bounty hunter and your prey is wanted dead or alive, dead is much simpler since Kwai Chang Caine always Kung Fu-ed his way to escape if the bounty hunter foolishly went for the more lucrative "alive" option in expectation of a higher reward. With Black's last move, he wisely opts for the sure-bet "dead" option since there will be no blockade on the light squares.

53...e2 also wins, but Black's last move is the cleanest, most efficient path.

54.♔xh2 e2

White resigned as 54...e2 55.♞a1 ♔d3 wins for Black.

0-1

Chapter 7: The 4...♞xd5 Move Order

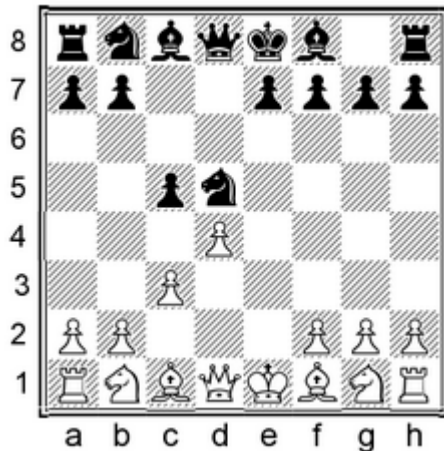
On this move order, we can continue to go with the book's spirit and offer the gambit of our c5-pawn with 4...♞xd5. We will also look at the safer, non-gambit option 4...c5xd4, after which White will either recapture on d4 with queen or c3-pawn.

Game 38

C.Virgillito (2215) – G.Needleman (2406)

Mar del Plata 2008

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♞f6 4.d4 ♞xd5!?



This way, we offer our c5-pawn as a gambit. We noticed that players with White in blitz games at this point always take a moment or two to orient themselves, something they are not used to because the knight usually doesn't end up on d5 this fast after playing ...d7–d5.

4...♞xd5 would transpose back into a normal Alapin Sicilian, and that is obviously not the point of playing our 3...♞f6 gambit version.

5.dxc5

a) 5.♞f3 cxd4 transposes to lines we already examined in the book.

b) 5.♙c4, and now, Black has two main options:

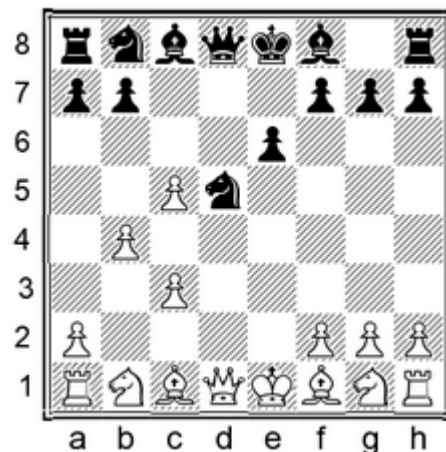
b1) 5...cxd4 6.♞xd4 e6 7.♙xd5 (7.♞f3 of course, a reasonable alternative is the developing 7...♞c6 8.♞e4 ♙e7 is

equal) 7...exd5 8.♞f3 ♞c6 9.♞e3+ ♙e7 10.0-0-0 The engine already prefers Black, who owns bishop pair and development lead, E.Postny-D.Kollars, Chess.com INT 2020.

b2) 5...e6 6.♞f3 ♙e7 (6...cxd4 7.♞xd4 transposes to b2) 7.0-0 0-0 8.♞d3 cxd4 9.♞xd4 (taking the isolated pawn does not provide White with enough compensation for structural weakness: 9.cxd4 ♞b4!?) 10.♞e2 a6 11.♞c3 b5 12.♙b3 ♞8c6 13.a3 ♞a5! 14.♙d1 ♞d5 15.♞e4 ♙b7 and Black has a comfortable position) 9...♞d7 10.♙xd5 ♞c5 11.♞c4 exd5 12.♞e2 ♞e8 13.♙f4 ♙f6 14.♞f3 was played in J.Mardell-K.Kristensen, Halmstad 2014, when Black should have continued 14...b6! 15.♞d1 ♙a6! with a clear advantage.

c) 5.c4 ♞f6! 6.♞f3 (6.d5 e6 7.♞c3 exd5 8.cxd5 ♙d6 is no worse for Black) 6...cxd4 7.♞xd4 ♞bd7 8.♞c3 e5! 9.♞d1 (9.♞xe5?? loses instantly to 9...♙c5) 9...♙b4, Black stands at least equal.

5...e6 6.b4?!



Uninhibited craving may be the most powerful force of inertia in the universe, and this is unwise since Black's development lead grows too dangerous. A warning for players who enter this line as White: Many people continue to build up their retirement accounts and assets, and some of them don't live to retire. This

move would be great if White could consolidate the extra pawn on the queenside, swap queens and other pieces, and reach a won ending. However, a won ending is far, far away, while danger is here in the omnipresent now.

We also examine 6.c4 and 6.♟f3 in separate games.

6...a5 7.♞c4

White has a couple of other options, but they are not overly impressive either, which lends further evidence that White's 6th move was not so wise:

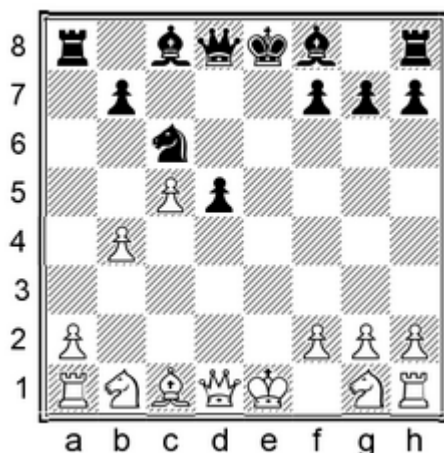
a) 7.♟f3 axb4 8.cxb4 ♟xb4 9.♞xd8+ ♔xd8 10.♟a3 ♞xc5 11.♞b1 ♞xa3 12.♞xa3 ♟c2+ 13.♟d2 ♟xa3 and Black was already winning in N.Vlassov-M.Chigaev, Chess.com INT 2022.

b) 7.♞b3 is a natural move, seemingly attempting to hold the queenside together while keeping options of ♞b2 in reserve should it be needed.

Black has several good options, for instance, 7...♟c6 8.♞b5 axb4 (or 8...♞d7 9.♞xc6 ♞xc6 10.♟f3 axb4 11.cxb4 ♞a4 is clearly in Black's

favor) 9.cxb4 ♞d7 10.♞xc6 ♞xc6 11.♟e2 ♞a4 12.♞c4 ♟e3! left White in deep trouble in J.Aledo Yanguas-D.Soham, Linares 2019.

7...axb4 8.♞xd5 exd5 9.cxb4 ♟c6!?



a) The tempting 9...♞f6? is refuted by 10.♞e2+! ♞e7 11.♞b2, and suddenly White is better.

b) 9...♟a6 is another perfectly reasonable option for Black. 10.♞d4 b6! leaves Black better.

10.b5?

a) 10.♞b3 ♞h4! favorably regains the pawn since 11.♞d2? is met with 11...♟d4 12.♞e3+ ♞e7 13.♟d1 0-0 with a crushing attack coming for Black.

b) 10.♟e2! White's best option is to cut his losses and return material with 10...♟xb4 11.♞e3 when White stands only a bit worse.

10...♞a5+ 11.♞d2?

The queen move makes things worse, but also 11.♞d2 ♞xb5 12.♟e2 ♞xc5, 13.0-0 0-0, and Black won a pawn and picked up bishop pair.

11...♞xc5

The text move is good enough for winning, but 11...♟b4! 12.♟c3 d4! and Black is winning at least a piece.

12.♞xa5 ♟xa5 13.♟e2



Exercise (combination alert): This one is not too tough. How does Black win decisive material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Exploit the pin of White's a2-pawn.

13...♖b3! There is a good reason why the widows of shot-up mob members don't allow open-casket funerals.

0-1

Game 39
D.Tokranovs (2325) – J.Stocek (2590)
 Pardubice rapid 2017

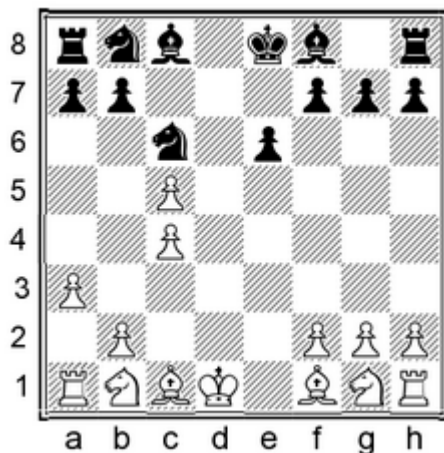
1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.d4 ♘xd5 5.dxc5 e6 6.c4



White chases the knight away from its perch on d5 and takes the queens off the board as well. It seems like an attractive option for White, which is, in reality, unproblematic for Black.

6...♖b4 7.♙xd8+

a) An important alternative is 7.a3 ♗xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘4c6



9.♗e3 (or 9.b4 a5 10.b5 ♘d4 11.♘d2 ♗xc5 looks good for Black) 9...♘d7 10.♘c3 ♗xc5 11.♘f3 (11.b4 ♗xe3 12.fxe3 a5 13.b5 ♘ce5 14.♘a4 b6 15.♘f3 ♘g4 and Black has a clear advantage, K.Pulik-P.Dobrowolski Jastrzebia Gora 2022) 11...♗xe3 12.fxe3 M.Strange-K.Kristensen, Allerød 2019. Black looks slightly better after 12...b6.

b) Whereas 7.♘c3 ♗xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♗xc5 is also acceptable for Black.

7...♔xd8 8.♘a3?!



White's miserable a3-knight is one of those Dickensian adult-like street waifs who somehow bypassed the "cute" child stage. This natural move looks wrong since it allows Black's b4-knight to sit on the square without fear of a2-a3.

White should probably have settled for 8.♔d1 ♗xc5 9.a3 ♘4c6 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.fxe3 ♘d7 If anyone stands better, it is Black.

8...♗xc5 9.♘f3 ♘8c6

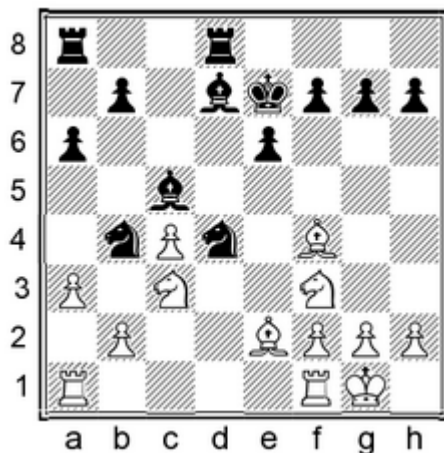
A similar idea is 9...♔e7 10.♗e2 ♘8c6 11.0-0 e5 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♗d8 and Black is clearly better. The White pieces and pawn structure just look worse than their Black counterparts.

10.♗e2 ♔e7 11.0-0 ♗d8 12.♘b5 ♗d7

Another idea is 12...♘d3 13.♗xd3 ♗xd3 14.♗d2 f6 15.♗ad1

♖d8 16.a3 a5 and Black is just better; the knight on b5 isn't really a problem since there are no specific threats connected with keeping the knight there.

13.♙f4 a6 14.♘c3 ♘d4 15.a3?



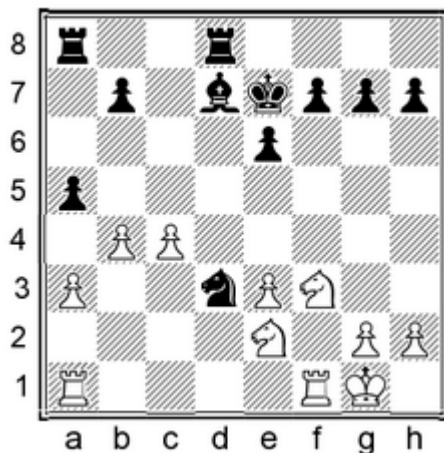
This move violates the **Principle**: Bishops tend to be more valuable than knights in open positions.

Thus, White should have captured on d4, 15.♘xd4 ♙xd4 is only a slight edge for Black.

15...♘xe2+ 16.♘xe2 ♘d3 17.b4 ♙a7

Black decides to keep the knight on d3 for now, but gaining the bishop pair is a strong alternative, for example, 17...♘xf4 18.♘xf4 ♙d6 19.♘e2 b6! will be a rough ending for White.

18.♙e3 ♙xe3 19.fxe3 a5



20.♖ad1

If 20.♖ab1 then 20...axb4 21.axb4 ♖a2 22.♘fd4 ♖a3 23.c5 e5 and Black's better-coordinated pieces take charge of the events: 24.♘f5+ ♙xf5 25.♖xf5 g6 26.♖ff1 ♖a2 27.♘c3 ♖c2 28.♘e4 f5 29.♘f2 e4 and Black is winning.

20...♙a4

Tempting but not the best.

After 20...♘b2! 21.♖d4 ♙e8! White suddenly struggles to keep all the pawns protected.

21.♖d2 axb4 22.axb4 ♙b3!?

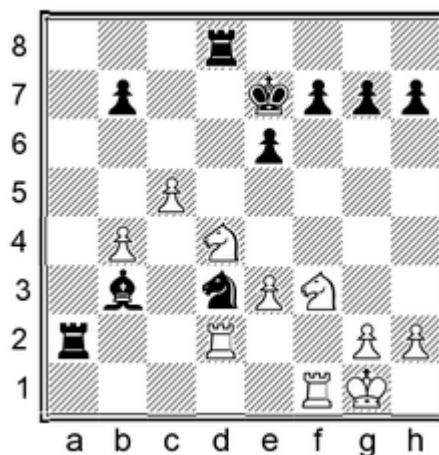
A practical decision to keep the pieces on the board pays off in the game. Black argues that more pieces equal greater opportunities for White to go wrong. According to the engine, the better option was 22...♘xb4! 23.♖b2 ♘d3 24.♖xb7+ ♖d7 White nurses three pawn islands to one, plus two isolated pawns.

23.c5 ♖a2?!

The players continue to crawl through the mud.

Black should have played 23...e5! 24.h4 f6 25.♘g3 ♙e6 and Black is somewhat better.

24.♘ed4?



Fortunes continue to fluctuate.

The engine, whose goal in life is to point out human incompetence, found the stronger line 24.c6!! which retains the balance for White, for

instance, 24...♖xd2 25.♗xd2 ♕a4 26.cxb7 ♕c6 27.b5 ♕xb7 and Black is, at best, marginally better.

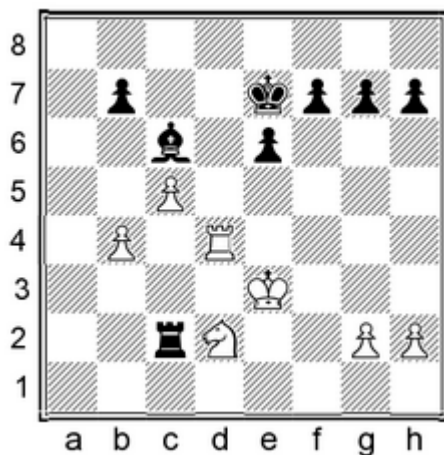
24...♖xd2! 25.♗xd2 ♕d5 26.♗c2 ♖a8! 27.e4 ♕c6 28.♖f3 ♖a2! 29.♖xd3 ♖xc2 30.♔f2

This hangs a pawn. White can put up more of a fight with 30.e5 f6 31.♗f3 fxe5 32.♖d2 ♖c1+ 33.♔f2 ♔f6, which is also lost for White. It really isn't such a great triumph to buy yourself a bit of time in an already hopeless situation.

30...♕xe4 31.♖d4 ♕c6

Or even better 31...f5! 32.♔f1 ♕c6 followed by ...♖b2, ...♔f6.

32.♔e3



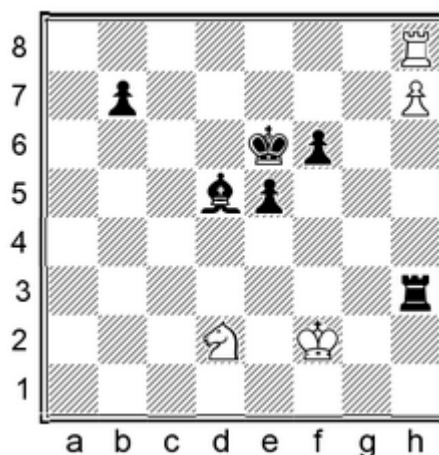
32...♕xg2

Black had an excellent alternative in 32...e5 33.♖h4 f5! 34.♖xh7 ♔f6 35.♖h8 ♕b5! when White had no realistic chance of survival.

33.♖g4 ♕d5 34.♖xg7 ♖b2 35.♖xh7 ♖xb4 36.h4 e5

Or 36...♔f8 37.♖h5 ♔g7 38.♖g5+ ♔f6 39.♖h5 ♖g4! and White can resign.

37.♖h5 ♔e6 38.♖h6+ f6 39.h5 ♖b5 40.♖h8 ♖xc5 41.h6 ♖c3+ 42.♔f2 ♖h3 43.h7



Threat: ♖e8+, followed by promotion, which is easy to prevent.

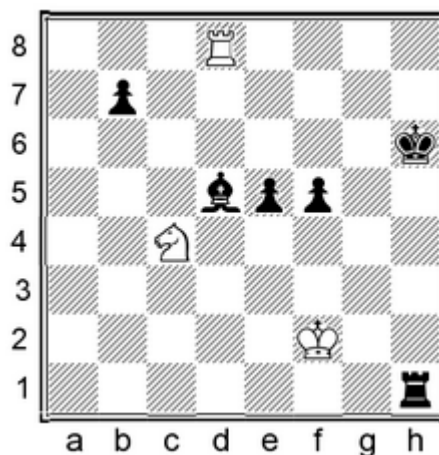
43...♔d7

There was no reason to retreat the king when he had 43...♕c6!.

44.♔e2 ♕c6 45.♔f2 ♔e6 46.♗c4 ♔f7 47.♗e3 ♔g7 48.♖g8+ ♔xh7 49.♖g1 f5 50.♖g5 ♕e4

A simpler win was 50...f4 51.♗f5 e4 and Black keeps all three pawns.

51.♗c4 ♔h6 52.♖g1 ♖h1 53.♖g8 ♕d5 54.♖d8



54...♖h2+

Capturing the knight was also an option, 54...♕xc4 55.♖h8+ ♔g5 56.♖xh1 f4, but clearly, Grandmaster Stoczek didn't see it as necessary to mess with that kind of ending at the conclusion of a rapid game, thus finding it

easier to convert the pure rook ending with split pawns.

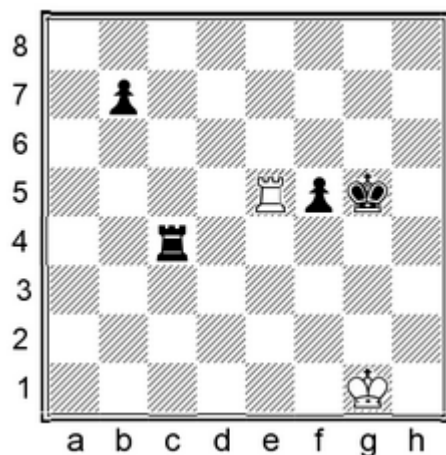
55.♔g1 ♖c2 56.♖xd5

56.♗xe5 ♕e4 is also lost for White.

56...♖xc4

Cutting out the minor pieces makes Black's win trivially easy, and White's position gives off a chicken-roasting-on-the-spit vibe.

57.♖xe5 ♔g5



This is a trivial win; thus, the remainder will not be accompanied by comments...

58.♖b5 ♖c7 59.♔f2 ♔f4 60.♔f1 ♖e7 61.♔f2 ♔e4 62.♔e2 ♔d4+ 63.♔f3 ♖f7 64.♔f4 ♔c4 65.♖b6 ♔c5 66.♖b1 b5 67.♖c1+ ♔d4 68.♖b1 ♖b7 69.♔xf5 b4 70.♖b3 ♔c4 71.♖b1 ♔d3 and White resigned.

0-1

Game 40

S.Tiviakov (2700) – R.Ponomarev (2704)

Pamplona 2005

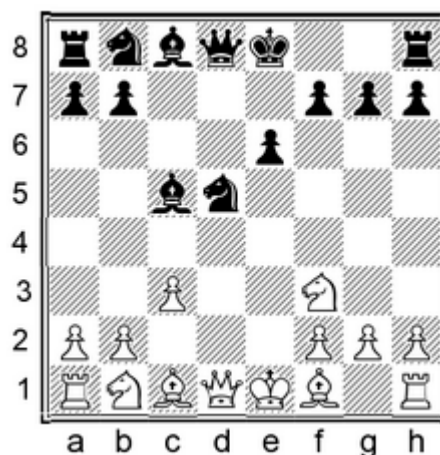
1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♗f6

Sure, go right ahead and mess with our book's move order. Our gambit move order runs: 2...d5 3.exd5 ♗f6 4.d4 ♗xd5 5.dxc5 e6 6. ♗f3



and then Black transposes to the game with 6...♕xc5.

3.e5 ♗d5 4.♗f3 d6 5.exd6 e6 6.d4 ♕xd6 7.dxc5 ♕xc5



8.♕d3

White has several alternatives in this position:

a) 8.♕c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♗c6 10.♗bd2 ♕e7 11.♖e1 M.Godena-N.Meskovs, Terme Catez 2022; 11...b6 is even.

b) 8.♕b5+ ♕d7 9.♕xd7+ ♗xd7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗bd2 ♖c7 12.♗e4 ♕e7 13.♖e2 was played in a game between two of the strongest players on the planet back almost a hundred years ago S.Tartakower-R.Retzi, Baden-Baden 1925, when Black now could have gained an edge with 13...♗7b6!

c) 8.♕e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗c6 (Black can also consider 9...♖c7 intending ...♗f4) 10.♗bd2 b6 11.♗b3 ♕d6 12.♖e1 ♕b7 13.♕f1 D.Mrudul-J.Fronza Pascua, Chess.com

INT 2020. Black already looks slightly better after 13...♖c7.

8...0-0

At this point, Black has a couple of alternatives to consider:

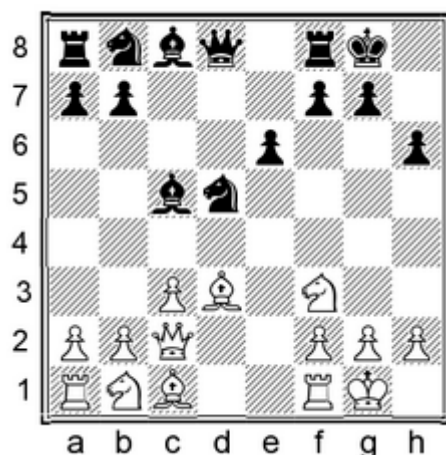
a) 8...h6 9.0-0 0-

0 10.♙c2 ♘c6 11.♚d3 ♗f6 12.♚e2 e5! 13.♗bd2 ♙b6 14.♗c4? was played in A.Kosteniuk-K.Tarun, Chess.com INT 2022, and here, Black should have played 14...e4! 15.♗fd2 (of course, 15.♙xe4?? ♞e8 16.♗cd2 ♙f5 loses instantly for White) 15...♙g4 16.♚e1 ♞e8 and Black would have had a strong initiative.

b) 8...♗c6 9.0-

0 ♙e7 (or 9...b6 10.♙g5 ♚c7 11.♗bd2 0-0 12.♞e1 h6 13.♙h4 ♙b7 with about equal chances) 10.♚e2 ♚c7 11.♙c2 ♗f6 12.♗bd2 0-0 13.♞e1 ♞d8 14.♗e4 ♗xe4 15.♙xe4 and White had the better chances in P.Potapov-T.Taysayev, Sochi 2018.

9.♚c2 h6 10.0-0



10...♗c6

The text move, while logical looking, isn't the best. He should play 10...b6! when 11.♞d1 ♗d7 12.a3 ♙b7 and, if anyone stands better, it is Black.

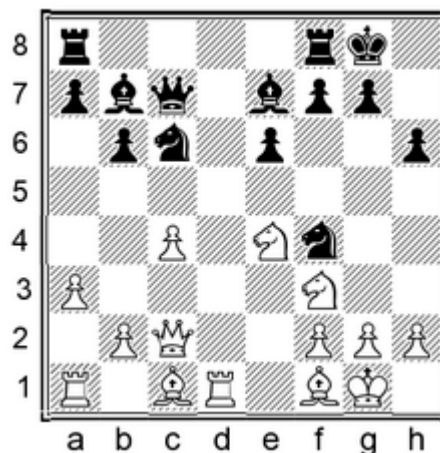
11.♞d1 ♚c7 12.a3 b6

12...a5 is a decent alternative.

13.♗bd2?!

13.b4 was better, keeping the chances about level.

13...♙b7 14.♗e4 ♙e7 15.c4 ♗f4 16.♙f1



16...♞ad8

It seems appealing to take a look at the c-pawn, for instance, after 16...♞ac8 17.b3 ♗e5 18.♗d4 ♗g4 19.g3 ♗g6 20.♙g2 ♗h4! 21.♙h1 ♙c5!, the engine gives Black a microbe of an edge.

17.♙e3 ♗g6 18.♞xd8 ♞xd8 19.♞e1 ♗ge5 20.♗xe5 ♚xe5 21.♗g3 ♙f6

21...♗d4! looks a shade more accurate: 22.♚c1 ♚f6 23.b4 e5 with an edge for Black.

22.b4 ♚b2

Again, better is 22...♗d4!

23.♚xb2

He probably shouldn't invite Black's bishop to b2. The more accurate is 23.♚a4!

23...♙xb2 24.♙c1 ♙c3 25.♞e3 ♙d4

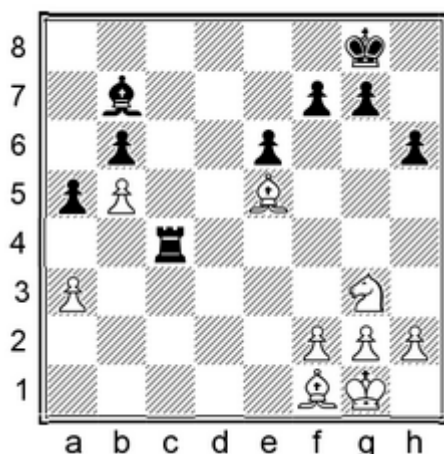
25...♙a1! is a shade better.

26.♞d3 a5!?

Black enters a forced sequence from which neither should divert. However, Black had a

reasonable, less forcing option in 26...f5, intending to grab some space, particularly the e4-square from White's g3-knight, before heading into the pure minor piece endgame. Is it enough to win? Probably not, but it does present White with some practical problems.

27.b5 ♖e5! 28.♞xd4 ♞xd4 29.♙b2 ♞xc4 30.♙xe5



Black deliberately allowed White to enter this endgame where White has two minor pieces vs. rook + pawn. At first glance, it may appear as if Black made a terrible mistake; White does have the bishop pair, after all. We view White's position with the following depressing outlook:

- a) His king is passively offside.
- b) The knight is poorly placed on the kingside.
- c) If Black can facilitate the exchange of the light-squared bishops, then White may lose both of his queenside pawns as they become difficult to defend.

30...♞c2 31.f3 ♙d5 32.♗e4 f6 33.♙d6 ♙xe4 34.fxe4 ♔f7

Time to bring the king along. Black has to be a little careful that he doesn't allow White too much freedom with his dark-squared bishop; for instance, ♙d6-b8-a7, attacking the b6-pawn can become rather messy with both sides commanding passed pawns, where Black fights with a lone rook and White with two bishops.

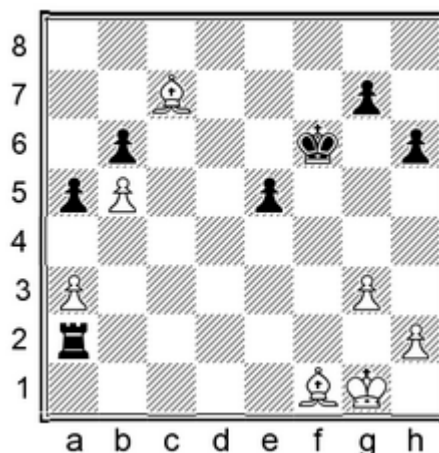
35.e5

If 35.♙b8 ♞a2, then White has to return with the bishop to 36.♙d6, because after 36.♙a7?? ♞xa3 37.♙xb6 a4, the a-pawn will cost White a bishop.

35...fxe5 36.♙xe5 ♞a2 37.♙d6 ♔f6 38.g3

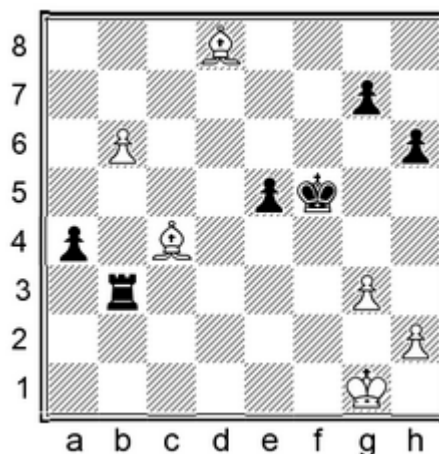
The more precise defense was 38.♙c7 ♞xa3 39.♙xb6 a4 40.♙c5 ♞b3 41.b6 ♔e5 and White should hold this position after 42.♙c4 ♞b2.

38...e5 39.♙c7?



Probably in time trouble, Tiviakov goes terribly wrong. The better defense was 39.♙g2 h5 40.h4 ♞b2 41.a4 ♞a2 42.♙c7 ♞xa4 43.♙xb6, leading to the pawn race we mentioned earlier...

39...♞xa3 40.♙xb6 a4 41.♙d8+ ♔f5 42.b6? ♞b3 43.♙c4



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black give a check on b1, or should he shift his rook to b4?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: In this case, the saying “Patzer sees a check, patzer gives a check does not apply! The rook check wins.

43...♖b4?

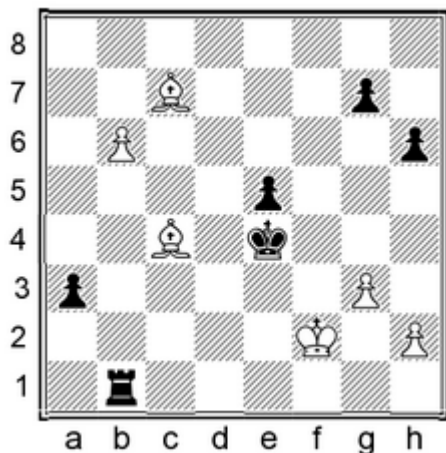
The drug cartel boss is only happy when shipments run smoothly.

43...♖b1+! 44.♔f2 ♕e4! (the participation of Black’s king is crucial) 45.♕e2 ♔d4 46.♙g8 e4 47.♙c7 (or 47.♙e7 ♖b2+ 48.♕d1 ♖xb6 wins) 47...♖b2+ 48.♕d1 ♔d3 49.♕c1 ♖b5 50.g4 e3 51.♙h7+ ♔d4 52.♕d1 a3; the defense is overwhelmed after 53.♙g8 ♖b1+ 54.♕e2 ♖b2+ 55.♕e1 a2.

44.♙d5 a3 45.♙c7 ♖b5

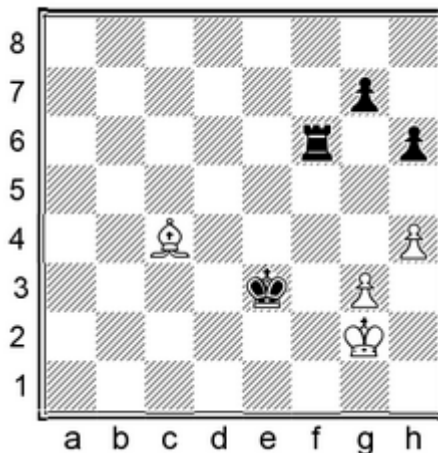
The engine still calls this clearly better for Black. Objectively, the winning chances are gone.

46.♙c4 ♖b4 47.♙d5 ♖b5 48.♙c4 ♖b1+ 49.♕f2 ♕e4



The a-pawn will cost White a bishop, but as we see moving forward, White has tricks that ensure he doesn’t lose.

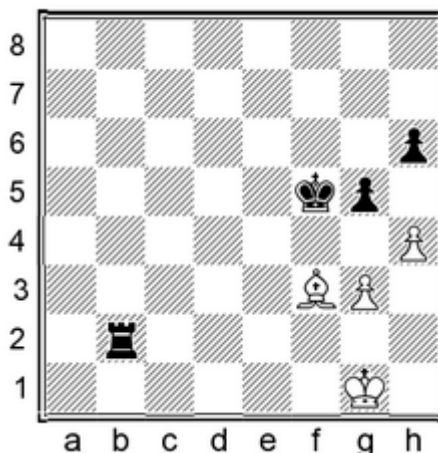
50.♙d6 ♔d4 51.♙g8 ♖b2+ 52.♕f1 ♖xb6 53.♙xa3 ♔d3 54.♙c5 ♖c6 55.♙a7 e4 56.h4 ♖a6 57.♙f2 ♖f6 58.♕g2 ♔d2 59.♙c4 e3 60.♙xe3+ ♕xe3



It usually doesn’t work when you try to kill someone, fail, and then ask: “Would you agree to a truce?” Yet White did just that. It looks as if Black is winning.

If you are studying to pass the evaluation bar (sorry, bad lawyer joke!), you could be fooled accordingly because this endgame is drawn despite Black’s exchange-up material advantage.

61.♙d5 ♖d6 62.♙b7 ♖d2+ 63.♕g1 ♖b2 64.♙c6 ♕d4 65.♙f3 ♕e5 66.♕f1 ♕f5 67.♕g1 g5



World-class players have overcome the habitual belief of seeing with ordinary eyes. Both sides realize the position is drawn (while at the club level, Black would undoubtedly play on till the 50–move draw rule, or Kingdom Come, whichever comes first!) Frustratingly for Pono, White achieved a fortress draw.

1/2–1/2

Game 41

R.Mokcsay (2300) – A.Meszáros (2345)

Hungarian Team ch 1996

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.c4?!



Criminals appear in inverse proportion to the rising power of the law. White hopes to artificially isolate and win our d4–pawn. We can prevent this fate with our next move.

5...e5!

The sharpest and possibly best. Next game, we look at the also favorable 5...e6.

6.♘f3

In this position, players have tried the hyper-aggressive and hyper-dubious 6.f4? which is effectively met

by 6...e4! 7.♖xd4 ♘c6! 8.♗f2 ♘b4 9.a3 ♘g4 10.♗d2 as seen in K.Shirazi-D.Andreikin, Chess.com INT 2017, and now 10...♗a5! 11.♘c3 (or 11.axb4 ♗xa1) 11...e3 12.♗d1 ♕f5 White can resign

6...♕d6?!

Black could do even better with 6...♕b4+! 7.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 8.♘bxd2 0-0 9.♗c2 ♖e8 10.♕e2 g6 11.0-0 ♕f5 12.♗b3 ♘bd7! and it becomes clear that Black's mobile majority is superior to White's blockaded version.

7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘b3 h6

The engine doesn't believe this is necessary and prefers 8...♖e8.

9.♕e2 ♘bd7 10.♗c2?



White's last move was a blurted-out, half-formed thought.

Exercise (combination alert): Violent upheaval is about to occur. Prove why White's last move was a blunder:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Attraction/double attack.

10...d3!

"Closer, just a little closer," prayers the archer, as his target is finally within range.

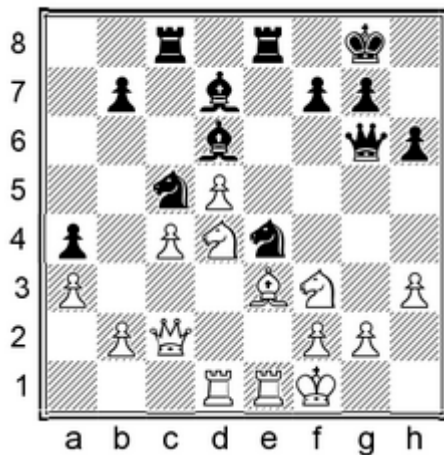
11.♕xd3 e4 12.♕xe4 ♘xe4

Essentially, White could have resigned here, and he has lost a piece and doesn't have the shadow of compensation.

13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♘bd4 ♘df6 15.a3 a5 16.♖b1 a4

Misery envelops White's position like a shroud. Black is not playing fair, eliminating all of White's potential sources of counterplay.

17.h3 ♕d7 18.♕e3 ♖c8 19.♗d3 ♘c5 20.♗c2 ♘fe4 21.♖fe1 ♗f6 22.♖bd1 ♗g6 23.♔f1



23...♟b3! 24.♞e2

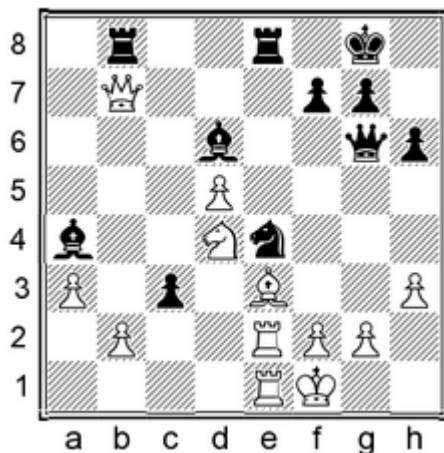
a) 24.♟xb3?? ♟g3+ The discovered attack wins White's queen.

b) 24.♞e2 ♟a5 25.♞c1 ♟f8! 26.♞ed1 ♞a6! The c4-pawn falls.

24...b5 25.♟xb3 axb3 26.♞xb3 bxc4 27.♞b7

27.♞a2 ♞h5! Threat: ...♟xh3. 28.♟g1 c3 is awful for White.

27...♟a4 28.♞de1 c3 29.♟d4 ♞b8



In the Middle Ages, musicians and actors were pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables if the performance was considered sub-par. This is about to happen to White's unfortunate queen.

29...♞b8 30.♞a7 (30.♞a6 ♟c5 31.♞a5 cxb2 costs White a rook) 30...♞a8 31.♞b6 ♞eb8 traps White's queen.

0-1

Game 42

R.Mokcsay (2295) – M.Ezsol (2325)

Gyor 1992

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♟f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.c4?!

At first glance, this pawn push looks like a reasonable solution but honestly, it belongs in the "Kids, don't try this at home" product label category, even if, by first appearances, looks like a reasonable move.

5...e6



5...e5! was covered in the previous game.

6.♞xd4

6.♟f3 exd5 7.cxd5 ♟b4+ 8.♟d2 ♟xd2+ 9.♞xd2 0-0 10.♟e2 ♞e8 11.♞xd4 ♟xd5 12.♟c3 ♟xc3 13.♞xd8 ♞xd8 14.bxc3 ♟c6 15.0-0 ♟f5 with the better pawn structure and superior piece-placement for Black.

6...exd5 7.♟g5?



This makes a difficult situation even worse.

a) 7.cxd5 is the best option. 7...♞xd5 8.♟f3 ♘c6 9.♞e3+ ♘e6 10.♟c3 ♘b4 11.♘e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♞a5, and Black has the upper hand.

b) 7.♟f3? ♘c6 8.♞d1 ♘b4+ 9.♘d2 0-0, and thanks to a lead in development, Black stands much better.

7...♟c6 8.♞e3+

Or 8.♘xf6 ♟xd4 9.♘xd8 ♟c2+ 10.♟d2 ♟xa1 1.♘a5 ♘f5 and White is busted.

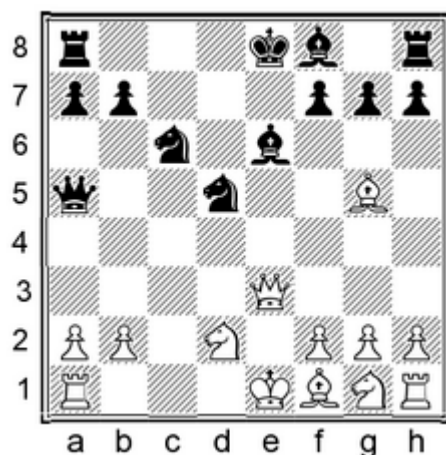
8...♘e6 9.cxd5?!

9.♟d2 puts up more resistance. 9...♘e7 10.♘xf6 ♘xf6 11.cxd5 ♞xd5 12.♘c4 ♞xg2 13.♘e6 fxe6 14.♞e4 ♞xe4+ 15.♟xe4 ♟b4, and Black has a decisive advantage.

9...♞a5+! 10.♟d2

Also, 10.♟c3 is a disaster: 10...♟xd5 11.♞d2 ♘b4 12.♞c1 h6 13.♘e3 ♞d8 and White won't survive Black's countless threats.

10...♟xd5



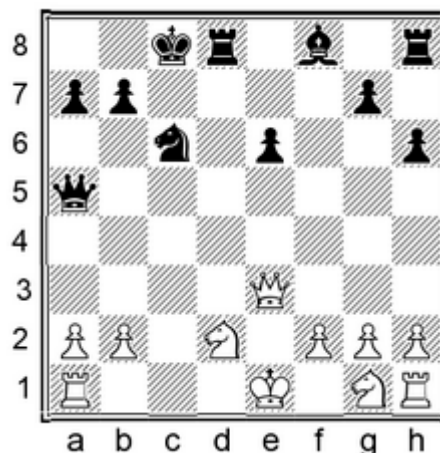
You finally graduated college and worked hard for your degree in Dance History. But now you are \$250,000 in student-loan debt, and the only job you can get with your Dance History credentials is Junior French Fry Attendant at Burger King. We just described White's situation. The pawn distribution may be

symmetrical, and the number of pieces developed on either side is almost identical, but White is completely lost since his pieces are getting kicked all over the place.

11.♞e4 h6 12.♘e3 0-0-0

Or 12...♟xe3 13.fxe3 0-0-0 14.♟gf3 ♘b4 15.0-0 ♞d5! is fatal for White.

13.♘c4 ♟xe3 14.♘e6+ fxe6 15.♞xe3



Exercise (combination alert): If White's position was one of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, it would be Famine. Do you see Black's game-ending shot?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Pinned piece. White's queen is unable to recapture on d2.

15...♞xd2! Boom! White resigned.

0-1

Chapter 8: The 3.e4–e5 Dodge

In this line, White, who opened with the Alapin move order, suddenly dodges with 3.e4–e5, perhaps hoping to trick Black into some kind of Advanced Caro Kann or Advance French. This falls under the heading: be careful about what you wish for. White indeed gets a Short Variation of the Advanced Caro Kann, but a full move down over normal, since in the Caro, Black first plays ...c7–c6 and only later plays ...c6–c5. In our version, we get ...c7–c5 in one go, saving a full tempo. This means that we achieve easy equality and possibly even a bit more.

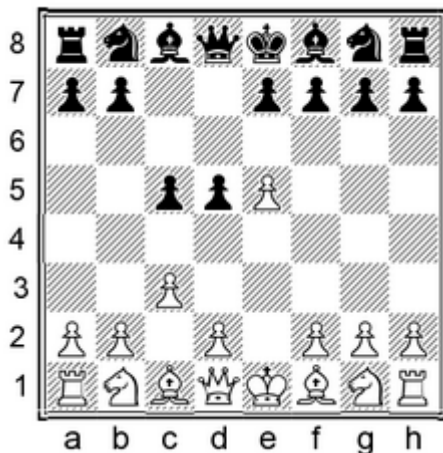
Game 43

E.Bogoljubow – G.Pfeiffer

Dortmund 1951

1.e4 c6

Our move order runs 1...c5 2.c3 d5 3.e5.



When White plays 3.e5, our opponent hopes to reach the Short Variation of the Advanced Caro Kann, but a lousy one for White since we, as Black, are up a full move over the Caro Kann version.

A few even more pathetic alternatives:

a) 3.d3 People who play this are normally endgame specialists who welcome a queen swap. There are many good setups for Black. If you are familiar with the structure, go for a reversed King's Indian or Old Indian

with 3...♖c6 4.♗d2 ♗f6 5.♗gf3 e5 6.g3 (or an Old Indian with 6.♙e2) 6...d4, Black obviously stands no worse.

b) 3.♙b5+ (this is totally milquetoast since a swap of bishops favors Black) 3...♙d7 4.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 5.d3 (5.exd5 ♖xd5 6.♗f3 is a normal Alapin Sicilian, except with all White's dynamism drained away, due to the swap of light squared bishops) 5...♖c6 6.♗f3 e6 is a French(ish) position with Black's potential bad bishop swapped away. The game is, at least, even for Black. If 7.0-0 ♙d6 8.♗bd2 ♗ge7 9.♖e1 The engine already slightly prefers Black, who controls more territory. If White pushes to e5, our opponent gets a French position where we have no bad bishop and stand better.

c) 3.d4?! Unlike our gambit, this one is pretty sorry-looking for White. 3...dxe4 4.dxc5 (White regains the pawn at the cost of time, or 4.♗d2 cxd4 5.♗xe4 ♗c6 6.♗f3 ♙f5 7.♗g3 ♙g4 when White doesn't have enough for the sacrificed pawn) 4...♖xd1+ 5.♙xd1 ♗c6 6.♙b5 as played in S.Jørgensen-K.Kristensen, Tromsø 2011. We love Black's position after 6...♗f6 7.♗d2 e5 8.b4 a5 9.♗c4 ♗d5. Finally, 3...♗c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 ♙f5 transposes to our main game.

2.c4

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♙f5 4.♗f3 e6 5.♙e2 c5 is the Short Variation of the Caro Kann. We reach this position with an extra move for Black since, in our version, we play ...c7–c5 in one go, while in the Caro version, Black takes two moves to move the pawn to c5.

2...d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.e5?!

4.exd5 leads to a Pseudo-Panov line, which is irrelevant to this book's scope since we can't reach this position via our Sicilian move order.

4...♟c6 5.d4 ♕f5

This is a dream Short Variation version of the Caro Kann for Black since, as mentioned above, we are up a full move over the Caro move order.

6.♕d3

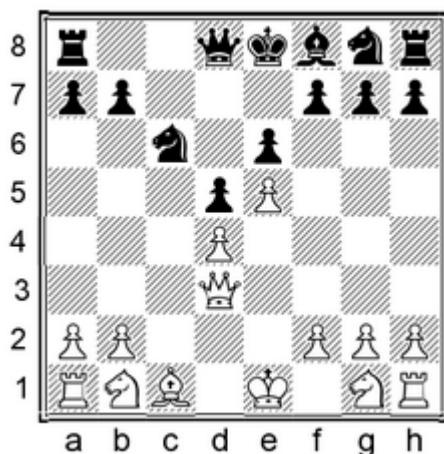
Bogo offers to swap off his excellent bishop. The reason is: Black's "bad" f5-bishop is an excellent piece on its current diagonal.

Next game we look at 6.♟c3.

6...♕xd3

Let's not fall for the idiotic 6...♟xd4?? 7.♞a4+ ♟c6 8.♕xf5, winning a piece.

7.♞xd3 e6



You can't see me now, but as a French Defense player, my mouth is watering in anticipation of a delicious middlegame. We go from a dream Caro Kann to a dream French since our side is no longer burdened with a bad bishop, usually stuck inside the pawn chain on d7.

8.♟f3 ♟ge7

White scores a sorry 27.6% from this position out of 29 games at the time of writing, so clearly, this is not a line that should make us tremble.

9.0-0 ♟f5

We are not afraid of g2-g4, which would weaken White.

10.♟c3

a) 10.♕e3 ♕e7 11.♟c3 0-0 12.♞ac1 ♞c8 13.b3?! Matveeva, O-Dragunov, V Perm 2008. Black looks clearly better after (13.♕d2 looks correct; even then, we prefer Black) 13...♟xe3 and if 14.fxe3 ♞a5 ...♕a3 is in the air, and White is in real trouble on the queenside.

b) 10.g4?! ♟h4 11.♟bd2 ♕b4! (intending ...♕xd2, undermining White's support of d4) 12.♟b3, J.Tajti-A.Nadassy, Hungary 2004; Black stands clearly better after 12...a5!, intending ...♟xf3+, followed by ...a5-a4 and then ...♟xd4. If 13.a4, then 13...h5! 14.g5 ♟xf3+ 15.♞xf3 ♟e7! when White's position bleeds on the kingside light squares.

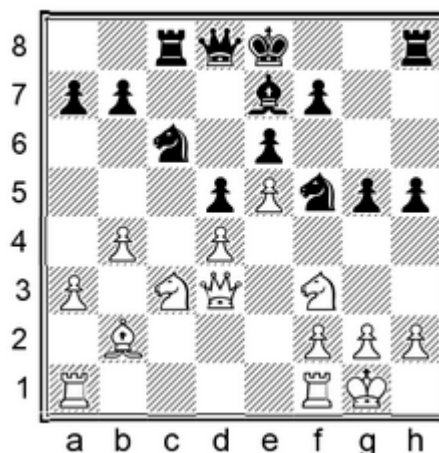
10...♕e7 11.a3 h5

This removes g2-g4 from the table.

12.b4

Bogo hopes his territorial advantage overcomes his bad bishop, which gets badder by the moment since White keeps placing pawns on the same color!

12...♞c8 13.♕b2 g5!?



Mr. Pfeiffer - may we call you Gerhard? - we just want to remind you that the Buddha only

attained enlightenment when he opted for the middle path, balancing between self-denial and the indulgence of desires. Pfeiffer's message to Bogo: "You played two matches for the World Chess Championship?" I don't care and am not intimidated and plan to beat you black and blue, even worse than Alekhine did!" The engine is okay with this move, despite its risky outer appearance.

Black's last move is more adventurous than the more strategic version 13...♖d7.

14.♜d1?!

He wants to challenge the f5-knight. The engine prefers the knight moving to e2.

14...g4 15.♜d2 ♕g5! 16.♜e3 ♜ce7

The f5-knight's understudy steps in, in case White swaps on f5. Black stands clearly better.

17.♞fc1 0-0

Stronger was 17...♜xe3! 18.fxe3 0-0 19.♞xc8 ♜xc8 20.♞c1 ♜d7 21.♞c2 ♜f5 22.♜f1 ♞c8 leaves White in deep trouble strategically, mainly due to that no-account bad bishop on b2, which in turn creates weak light squares.

18.♞xc8

18.♜df1 was correct.

18...♜xc8 19.♜df1 ♜d7?!

19...♜xe3! 20.♜xe3 ♕xe3! (this accentuates the power differential between the remaining minor pieces) 21.fxe3 (21.♜xe3? ♜c2! leaves White busted) 21...♜d7 22.♞f1 ♜f5 23.e4 dxe4 24.♜xe4 ♞d8 25.♜f4 ♜e7 leaves White struggling.

20.♕c1! ♕xe3 21.♜xe3

21.♕xe3 ♞c8 is in Black's favor.

21...♞c8 22.h3!



Bogo sees that going after Black's slightly aired-out king is the only way to generate counterplay.

22...gxf3!?

22...♜c6 is safer.

23.♜xf5 ♜xf5 24.♜xh3 ♜b5!?

Black goes for the full point. 24...♜e7 25.♜xh5 ♜h4 26.♜xh4 ♜xh4 27.♕e3 ♞c4 28.♞c1 ♞xc1+ 29.♕xc1 ♜f5 30.♕e3 b5 Even though down a pawn, Black can never lose since White's bishop stinks.

25.♜xh5 ♜d3 26.♕g5?!

Bogo overestimates his attack. The correct was 26.♕e3! ♜e4! 27.♜g5+ ♜h7 28.♜h5+ ♜g8 29.♜g5+ and just take a draw.

26...♜xd4! 27.♜h2

27.♕f6?? ♜e2+ 28.♜h2 ♜h7 leaves White lost in the ending.

27...♜f5

27...♜e2! forces a queen swap, after which White is unlikely to hold the game.

28.♜h4??



28.♖e1 ♗h7 29.♙h6 ♖f5 30.♗xf5 ♜xf5 31.♙e3 is a tough ending for White, yet still his best option.

Exercise (combination alert): Gravity stemming from defensive obligations begins to pull Bogo down. What did White miss after his last move?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Step 1: Grab the e5–pawn with a check.

28...♖c4?!

Don't you like free stuff? This still gives Black a winning position, yet he missed an immediate game-ender with 28...♗xe5+! White loses material on all blocks or king moves due to a discovered attack with Black's knight. 29.f4 (a) 29.♙h1 ♜f5 30.♙f6 ♗xa1+! 31.♙xa1 ♜xh4 leaves White down a rook; b) 29.♙f4 ♜f3+ 30.gxf3 ♗xa1 wins) 29...♜f3+ (discovered attack; "Thank you for your generous donation!" said the shoplifter) 30.gxf3 ♗xa1 31.♙f6 fails miserably to 31...♖c2+ 32.♙h3 ♗h1+, winning.

29.f4 ♖c2

Threat: ...♜f3+, forking white king and queen.

30.♖f1 ♗e4

Simplification with 30...♗h7! was stronger.

31.♗g4 ♗g6 32.♗h3 ♗h7! 33.♙f6

33.♙h4 fails to keep queens on the board after the simple 33...♜f5.

33...♗xh3+ 34.♙xh3

The ending is lost for White.

34...♙h7?!

34...♜f5! 35.♖h1 ♖c3+ 36.♙g4 ♖g3+ 37.♙h5 d4 38.♖c1 ♖c3 White is busted.

35.♖d1?

Bogo had to try 35.g4! and then pray to Alekhine for help.

35...♖c3+

35...♜f5! is again stronger.

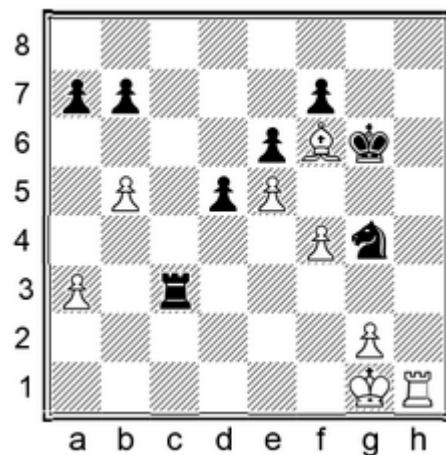
36.♙h2 ♜f5 37.b5

37.g4 ♜e3 38.♖g1 ♙g6 is lost for White.

37...♜e3 38.♖h1

White's operating (mis-)assumption is that he will somehow whip up a mating attack. Of course, he isn't since Black's king will be perfectly safe on g6.

38...♜g4+ 39.♙g1+ ♙g6



To play on for White is only for those who are gluttons for humiliation. Threat: ...♖c1 mate.

a) 39...♙g6 40.g3 ♖xg3+ 41.♙f1 ♜xf6 42.exf6 ♖xa3 leaves White a million pawns down.

b) 39...♔g8?? The losing side can always dream of a miracle. 40.♖h8#.

0-1

Game 44
Z.Grandic (2121) – B.Lalic (2411)
 Vodice 2022

1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.e5 ♘c6 5.d4 ♗f5 6.♘c3



This is White's most flexible move.

6...e6 7.♗e3



This is White's highest-scoring setup, leaving White's kingside minor pieces flexible. We saw what happened to White last game when he was quick to swap light-squared bishops, so this may be White's optimal line in an otherwise mediocre variation.

a) 7.♘f3 ♗g4 (this way, Black plans to swap off the light-squared bishop, leaving his central pawns on the opposite color of his remaining

one; this factor ensures that Black gets decent control over both colors) 8.♗e3 ♖b6 9.♖b1 ♘h6 (intending to add heat with ...♘f5; 9...♗xf3?! 10.♖xf3! ♘xd4?? 11.♗xd4 ♖xd4 12.♗b5+ ♔e7 13.0-0 with a crushing attack for White) 10.♗b5 ♘f5 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♖d3? (12.♗d3 was necessary; even then, Black stands better) 12...0-0 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘d2 was played T.Glisic-M.Andrijevic, Paracin 2016; White's position is strategically wretched after 14...♘xe3 15.fxe3 ♗h5, intending ...♗g6 next.

b) 7.a3 ♘ge7 8.♗e3, H.Schöpe-G.Dimitrov, ICCF email 2018; 8...h6 is even.

7...♘ge7

7...♗b4 (this way e7 is left clear for the g8-knight) 8.♖c1 ♘ge7 9.a3 ♗xc3+ 10.♖xc3 was J.Majstr-V.Vladyka, ICCF email 2005; The position is balanced after 10...h6.

8.g4!?



“The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful,” wrote the ever-so-wise Oscar Wilde. For a lower-rated player to bang such a move out against a GM, places him firmly in the “upstart” category. Novelty, but not one which should terrify us. With White's last move, the following shifts occurred:

1. White gained kingside space.
2. White seized control over f5, denying us ... f5 , which would have helped us unravel Black's kingside.
3. Castling kingside just got a bit scarier for us.
4. White opened himself up to the potential for future overextension.
5. Now it also becomes riskier for White to castle kingside. So where should he place his king? No spot on the board looks all that safe for him.
6. Black can counterattack with a future ... h7-h5 ! If White pushes the g-pawn to the fifth rank, he weakens all his kingside light squares, especially the hole on f5.

Conclusion: The move is neither good nor bad, and the alteration makes the game more complex for both sides.

8. c1 was seen in A.Mallik-S.Uddin, Dhaka 2016; The game looks even after 8... c8 9. h4 (intending to win a piece with g2-g4 next) 9... h6 (also playable is 9... h5 when Black stands no worse) 10. b5 (threatening a devastating check on d6) 10... g8 11. g4 h7 12. a3 a6 13. c3 ge7 ; the position is balanced between space and the potential for White's overextension. White should avoid 14. f4?! h5! 15. gxh5 f5 ; White is overextended and weak on the kingside light squares.

8... g6 9... d3 ?

This violates several *Principles*:

1. Don't swap away your good bishop for the opponent's bad bishop.
 2. A violation of number 1 on the list automatically means that White will be weak on the kingside light squares since he swapped off its steward.
 3. The side with extra space should not be seeking piece swaps.
 4. The side that seeks to attack should not be swapping pieces.
- 9... e2 should be played to discourage ... h5-h5 . After 9... f6! , Black stands at least equal.

9... xd3 10... xd3 h5!

Principle: A square our opponent controls should not be considered their private property since we look upon this same square with jealous eyes. Control over f5 switches from White to Black, creating a puncture on White's kingside light squares.

11.g5!?

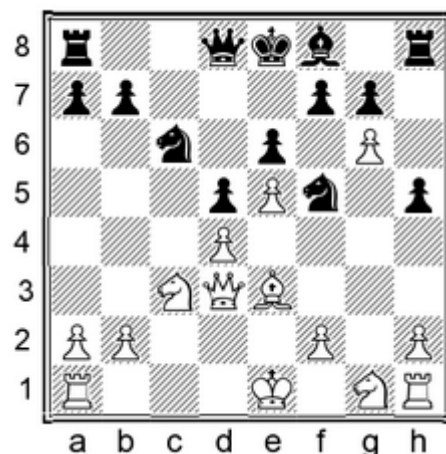
Nobody can truthfully claim that White's remaining bishop is a handsome man. Just like last game, White got saddled with a turkey of a remaining bishop, with too many pawns fixed on its own color. This automatically means that White will be weak on its opposite color, the white squares.

He was better off opening the g-file with 11. gxh5 hxh5 12.0-0 f5 13. dge2 h4 14. b1 g6 Even here, White's position stinks strategically.

11... f5! ?

11... g6 would have prevented White's next move and cemented the structure in Black's favor.

12.g6!?



12. dge2 g6 13. d g3 dxe3 14... xe3 wb6 15. d ge2 b4 16. f1 0-0 17. a3 xc3 18. bxc3 xfc8 won't be any fun for White.

A person who already considers himself (strategically) dead lives without fear since he has nothing to lose.

12... fxg6

This does create a hole on g5 and opens the g-file, but as the saying goes, a pawn is a pawn.

The engine prefers 12...f6 with a significant advantage for Black.

13. ♖f3?!

13. ♖h3! is the more flexible move, giving White more play than in the game's continuation.

13... ♗b4?!

He needs to fight for control over g5 with 13... ♗e7 14. ♖g1 0-0! 15. ♖xg6 ♗e8! with a fantastic French Defense-like position for Black. White is unable to play 16. ♖xe6? due to 16... ♖xe3 17. ♗xe3 ♗f7 18. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 19. ♖g5 ♗f5 White's position is resignable.

14. ♖g1 ♗xc3+ 15. bxc3

15. ♗xc3 0-0! is strategically lost for White. Black would love 16. ♖xg6 ♖c8 17. ♗d2 ♖b4! 18. ♗xb4 ♖xe3 White is busted.

15... ♖ce7?!

The g6-pawn isn't important. 15... ♗d7 16. ♖xg6 0-0-0 is still in Black's favor.

16. ♗c1?

Transferring the bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal is too slow.

16. ♗b5+! ♗d7 17. ♖b1 b6 18. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 19. a4 The engine calls the chances balanced.

16... ♖c8 17. ♗a3 ♖c6

17... 0-0 is more accurate.

18. ♗d6?!

This is just a waste of time. White minimizes his disadvantage with 18. ♖b1 ♗c7 19. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 20. ♖b3 0-0.

18... 0-0

Black was probably wise to avoid 18... ♖xd6 19. exd6 ♗xd6 20. ♖e5.

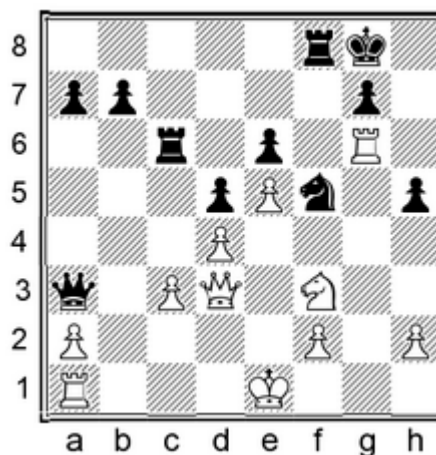
19. ♗xe7

He should have hung on to this bishop.

19... ♗xe7! 20. ♖xg6?

20. ♖c1 was necessary.

20... ♗a3!



Black's counterattack comes unexpectedly from the other side of the board. There is no way to protect c3.

Lalic's move is stronger than 20... ♗f7 21. ♖g2 ♖fc8 22. ♖c1 White remains in deep trouble.

21. ♖g5

21. ♖d2?? hangs a rook to the simple double attack 21... ♗b2+.

21... ♖xc3 22. ♗d1

White won't get the time for ♗xh5 and ♗h7 mate.

22... ♗b4!

Many other moves win for Black as well. The game may finish

22... ♗b4 23. ♖e2 (23. ♗d2 What is your preference: Dire fate I, or Dire fate II? 23... ♖xd4 wins) 23... ♖g3+! 24. hxg3 ♗c4+ 25. ♖e1 ♖e3+! Clearance. 26. fxe3 ♖f1+ 27. ♖d2 ♖f2+ and mate in 2.

0-1

Quick Repertoire

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♟f6

White accepts the gambit

- 1) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 7.d4 e6 8.♟f3 exd5
- 2) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 7.♟c3 e6 8.dxe6 ♚xe6+ 9.♚e2 ♚xe2+ 10.♟gxe2 ♙f5
- 3) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 7.♚e2 b5 8.d3 e6 9.♟f3 ♙e7 10.dxe6 ♚xe6
- 4) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 7.♟f3 e6 8.♚e2 ♙e7 9.dxe6 ♚xe6 10.d4 b5
- 5) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.c4 a6 6.♙a4 b5 7.cxb5 ♟b6 8.bxa6+ ♟xa4 9.♚xa4+ ♙d7 10.♚c4 e6!
- 6) 4.♙b5+ ♟bd7 5.d4 a6 6.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 7.dxc5 ♚xd5 8.♚xd5 ♟xd5
- 7) 4.c4 e6 5.dxe6 ♙xe6 6.♟f3 ♚e7 7.♚e2 ♟c6 8.d3 0-0-0 9.♙d2 g6
- 8) 4.♚a4+ ♟bd7 5.c4 b5 6.♚xb5 ♚b8 7.♚a4 e6 8.dxe6 fxe6 9.♟f3 ♙d6
- 9) 4.♚a4+ ♟bd7 5.c4 b5 6.♚xb5 ♚b8 7.♚a4 e6 8.♟c3 ♙b7 9.♟f3 exd5 10.cxd5 ♙d6!
- 10) 4.♚a4+ ♟bd7 5.♚b3 g6 6.♟f3 ♙g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♟xd4 0-0 9.♙e2 ♟c5

Lines with 4.♟f3

- 11) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 7.♚b3 ♙g7 8.♙c4 e6 9.♙g5 ♚d6
- 12) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 7.♙c4 ♙g7 8.♚b3 e6 9.♙g5 ♚b6
- 13) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 g6 7.♟c3 ♙g7 8.♚b3 ♟xc3 9.bxc3 0-0
- 14) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♟xd4 a6 7.♙e2 g6 8.a4 ♙g7 9.♟a3 0-0 10.0-0 e5
- 15) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♟xd4 a6 7.♙d3 g6 8.0-0 ♙g7 9.♟f3 0-0
- 16) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♟xd4 a6 7.♙c4 e6 8.0-0 ♙e7 9.♚e1 0-0 10.♟d2 b5
- 17) 4...♟xd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.♚xd4 ♟c6 7.♙b5 e6 8.0-0 ♙d7 9.♙xc6 ♙xc6 10.♟e5 ♚c7

Lines with 4.d4

- 18) 4...cxd4 5.♚xd4 ♟xd5 6.c4 ♟b4 7.♚xd8+ ♟xd8 8.♟a3 ♟8c6 9.♙e3 ♟e8
- 19) 4...cxd4 5.♚xd4 ♟xd5 6.♙b5+ ♟c6 7.♟f3 a6 8.♙xc6+ bxc6 9.0-0 f6!
- 20) 4...cxd4 5.♚a4+ ♟bd7 6.♚xd4 ♟b6 7.c4 e6 8.♟c3 exd5 9.cxd5
- 21) 4...cxd4 5.♙b5+ ♙d7 6.♙c4 b5 7.♙b3 dxc3 8.♟xc3 g6 9.♟f3 ♙g7 10.0-0 0-0
- 22) 4...cxd4 5.c4 e5 6.♟f3 ♙b4+ 7.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 8.♟bxd2 0-0 9.♚c2 ♚e8

The 3.e4-e5 (3.e5) Dodge

- 23) 3...♟c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 ♙f5 6.♙d3 ♙xd3 7.♚xd3 e6 8.♟f3 ♟ge7 9.0-0 ♟f5
- 24) 3...♟c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 ♙f5 6.♟c3 e6 7.♙e3 ♟ge7

Index of Complete Games

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Game 1: Grandelius-Carlsen | Game 23: Nakamura-Giri |
| Game 2: Zumsande-Berg | Game 24: Charbonneau-So |
| Game 3: Rozen-Erigaisi | Game 25: Procenko-Vitolinsh |
| Game 4: Besner-Teske | Game 26: Vucinic-Kontic |
| Game 5: Delemarre-Teske | Game 27: Potze-Racherbäumer |
| Game 6: Thimm-Teske | Game 28: Okhotnik-Plachetka |
| Game 7: Porat-Lakdawala | Game 29: Neulinger-Plachetka |
| Game 8: Patil-Karthik | Game 30: Van der Leij-Van der Wiel |
| Game 9: Nielsen-Heikkila | Game 31: Jhunjnuwala-Shabalov |
| Game 10: Feelders-Ernst | Game 32: Lochte-Shirazi |
| Game 11: Bisgaard-Lakdawala | Game 33: Lochte-Stiefel |
| Game 12: Bibik-Martynov | Game 34: Gorlin-Ippolito |
| Game 13: Wang-Lakdawala | Game 35: Horther-Dobrovolsky |
| Game 14: Pedersen-Jakslund | Game 36: Demir-Yilmazyerli |
| Game 15: Urla Martos-Roque Sola | Game 37: Ortel-Meszaros |
| Game 16: Wang-Lakdawala | Game 38: Virgillito-Needleman |
| Game 17: Leisner-Mahooti | Game 39: Tokranovs-Stocek |
| Game 18: Andersen-Jakslund | Game 40: Tiviakov-Ponomariov |
| Game 19: Rupprecht-Warmerdam | Game 41: Mokcsay-Meszaros |
| Game 20: Harika-Fedoseev | Game 42: Mokcsay-Ezsol |
| Game 21: Motwani-Summerscale | Game 43: Bogoljubow-Pfeiffer |
| Game 22: Porat-Lakdawala | Game 44: Grandic-Lalic |

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Beyond Chess Basics:

Chess Endgame Planning

Other Books By Cyrus Lakdawala

Play The London System (Everyman 2009)

A Ferocious Opening Repertoire (Everyman 2010)

The Slav: Move by Move (Everyman 2011)

The Caro Kann: Move by Move (Everyman 2011)

1...d6: Move by Move (Everyman 2011)

The Four Knights: Move by Move (Everyman 2012)

1...b6: Move by Move (Everyman 2012)

The Colle: Move by Move (Everyman 2012)

Capablanca: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

Botvinnik: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

Korchnoi: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

Larsen: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

The Modern Defence: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

Kramnik: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

The Scandinavian: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move (Everyman 2013)

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The Classical French: Move by Move (Everyman 2014)

Bird's Opening: Move by Move (Everyman 2014)

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Carlsen: Move by Move (Everyman. 2014)

Fischer: Move by Move (Everyman 2015)

The Trompowsky: Move by Move (Everyman 2015)

The Sicilian Sveshnikov: Move by Move (Everyman 2015)

Tal: Move by Move (Everyman 2015)

Opening Repertoire: 1e4 (Everyman 2015)

The Petroff: Move by Move (Everyman 2016)

Opening Repertoire ...c6 (with Keaton Kiewra, Everyman 2015)

Chess for Hawks (New in Chess 2016) (Winner of Instructional Book of the Year award)

Opening Repertoire: The French Defence (Everyman 2016)

First Steps: The Scandinavian (Everyman 2016)

First Steps: Fundamental Endings (Everyman 2016)

First Steps: The Colle and London Systems (Everyman 2017)

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Winning Ugly in Chess (New in Chess 2017)

How Ulf Beats Black (New in Chess 2018)

Opening Repertoire: 1d4 with 2c4 (Everyman 2018)

Opening Repertoire: The Sveshnikov (Everyman 2018)

Caruana: Move by Move (Everyman 2019)

Opening Repertoire: The Petroff Defence (Everyman 2019)

Rewire Your Chess Brain (Everyman 2019)

Opening Repertoire: The Modern Defence (Everyman 2019)

In The Zone (New In Chess 2020) (Winner: Instructional Book of the Year award)

How to Beat Magnus Carlsen (New In Chess 2020)

Nepomniachtchi: Move by Move (Everyman 2021)

Tactical Training (Everyman 2021)

Tactical Training in the Ending (Everyman 2021)

Nezhmetdinov: The Greatest Attacker (New in Chess 2022)

Opening Repertoire: Slav (Everyman 2022)

Opening Repertoire: Veresov (Everyman 2022)

Coming soon are:

Irrational Chess (Everyman Chess 2022)

Opening Repertoire: QGD Tarrasch (Everyman Chess 2022)

Other Books By Carsten Hansen

Winning Quickly at Chess Series:

- Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 1: Indian Defenses
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 2: 1.d4 d5
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 3: Flank Openings
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 4: Dutch, Benonis & d-pawn Specialties
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 5: Anti-Sicilians
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Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 7: Minor Semi-Open Games
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 8: 1.e4 e5
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening - Volume 9: French & Caro-Kann
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Winning Quickly at Chess Workbook Series:

- Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening Workbook - Volume 1: Indian Defenses
Catastrophes & Tactics in the Chess Opening Workbook - Volume 2: 1.d4 d5

Chess Miniatures Series:

- Winning Quickly at Chess: Miniatures in the Sicilian Najdorf
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Specialized Chess Tactics Series:

- Specialized Chess Opening Tactics: Budapest & Fajarowicz Gambits

For updates and accessible material, please visit www.winningquicklyatchess.com

Other books by Carsten Hansen:

The Sicilian Accelerated Dragon: Improve Your Results with New Ideas in This Dynamic Opening (with Peter Heine Nielsen, Batsford 1998)

The Gambit Guide to the English Opening: 1...e5 (Gambit Publications 1999)

The Symmetrical English (Gambit Publications 2001)

The Nimzo-Indian: 4 e3 (Gambit Publications 2002)

Improve Your Positional Chess (Gambit Publications 2004)

A Strategic Opening Repertoire (with John Donaldson, Russell Enterprises 2008)

Back to Basics: Openings (Russell Enterprises 2008) - also available as an e-book (Russell Enterprises 2016)

The Sicilian Dragon: Move by Move (Everyman Chess 2016)

The Closed Sicilian: Move by Move (Everyman Chess 2017)

The Chameleon Variation – Confronting the Sicilian on Your Own Terms (Russell Enterprises 2017)

The Full English Opening – Mastering the Fundamentals (New in Chess 2018)

The Sicilian Accelerated Dragon – 20th Anniversary Edition (with Peter Heine Nielsen - CarstenChess 2018)

Marvelous Modern Miniatures – 2020 games in 20 or less (Russell Enterprises 2020)

Back to Basics: Chess Openings (CarstenChess 2021)

Make Your Move (CarstenChess 2022)

Upcoming books:

The Modernized Accelerated Dragon (Thinkers Publishing 2022)

DEATH TO THE 2.C3 SICILIAN!

When you are ready for a great fighting game in the Sicilian Defense, there are few things there are more annoying than facing the hatefully solid 2.c3 variation, the so-called Alapin Variation.

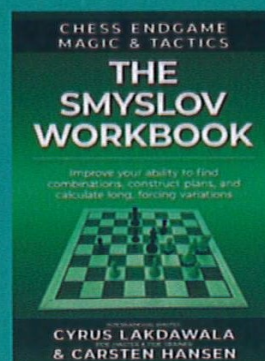
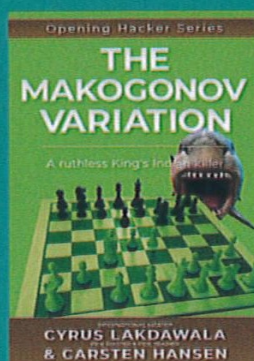
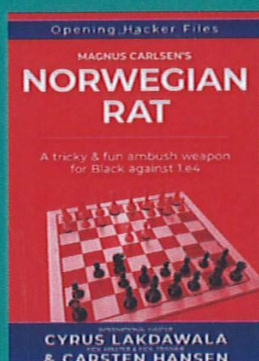
This is not a shady gambit but it is a weapon that has been used by several grandmasters, including World Champion Magnus Carlsen.

The gambit has the advantage of being unexplored and is still quite unknown. Therefore, this book constitutes the first work dedicated to this fun and tricky variation.

To get a good feel for the intricacies of the various lines, the authors took it upon themselves to play the opening in their online and training games where it proved remarkably effective.

In this work, you will find forty-four thoroughly analyzed main games with lots of explanations and additional analysis as well as a 'Quick Repertoire' that will allow you to play the opening in your games after a minimal amount of study time.

It is time to take your opponents out of their comfort zone and right into yours!



Other recent titles

International Master **Cyrus Lakdawala** is an award-winning author of more than sixty books, covering all aspects of the game of chess. He resides in San Diego, California.

FIDE Master Carsten Hansen is an Amazon bestselling and award-winning author of more than forty books. He is also a columnist in *American Chess Magazine* and *Chess Life*. He resides in Bayonne, New Jersey.

This is the fifth book they have written together.

