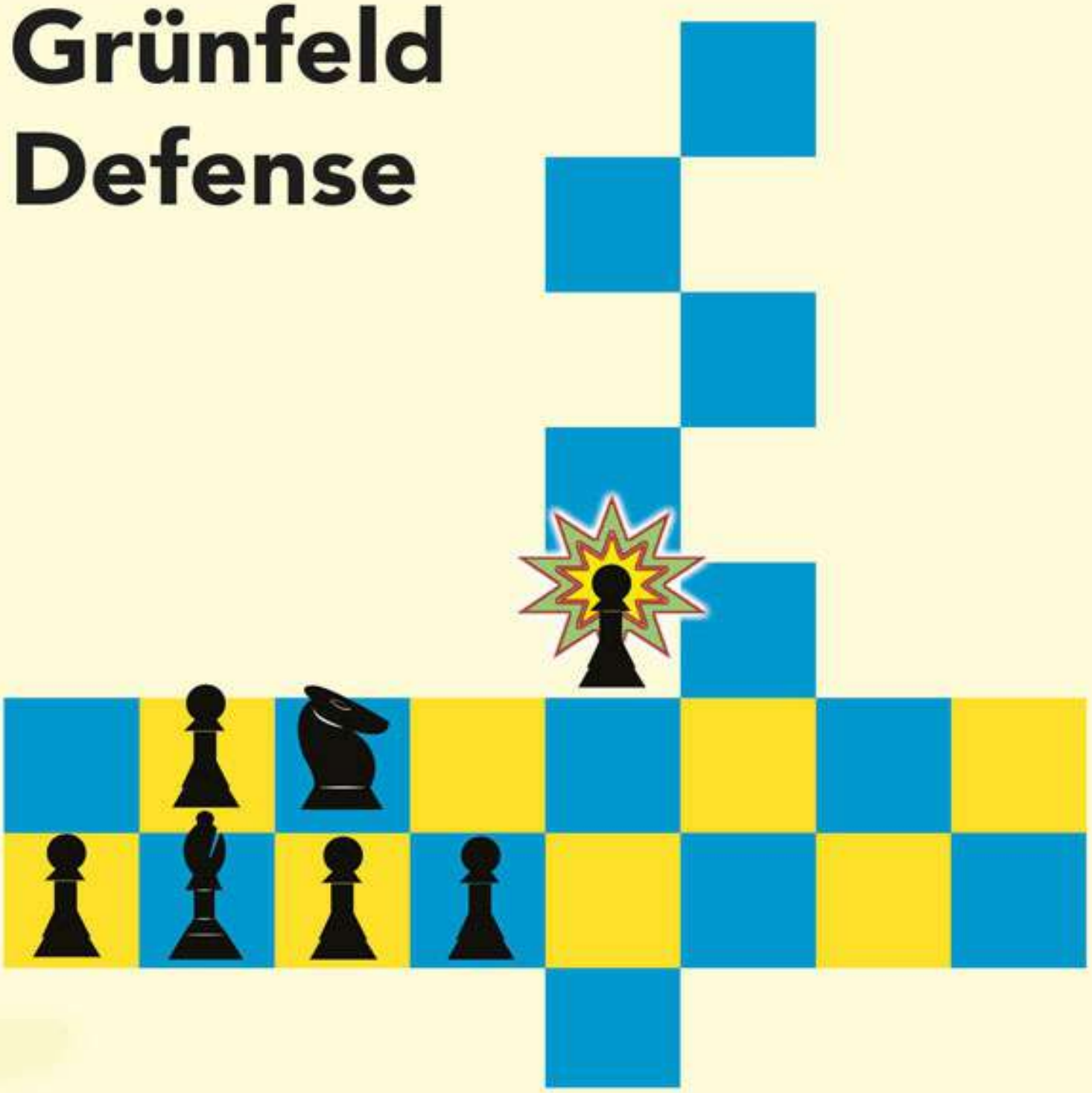
The Modernized Grünfeld Defense



Yaroslav Zherebukh

Thinkers Publishing

Table of Contents

Title page

Key to Symbols

Preface

Introduction

PART I – Exchange Variation (4.cxd5)

Chapter 1 – 7.♗c4

Chapter 2 – 7.♘f3

Chapter 3 – Other 7th moves

Chapter 4 – 5.♗d2

PART II – White plays 4.♘f3

Chapter 5 – 5.♕b3

Chapter 6 – 5.♗g5

Chapter 7 – 5.h4

PART III – Various 4th moves

Chapter 8 – 4.♗f4

Chapter 9 – 4.♗g5

Chapter 10 – 4.e3

Chapter 11 – 4.♕b3

PART IV – Various 3rd moves

Chapter 12 – 3.g3

Chapter 13 – 3.f3

PART V – Anti-Grünfeld

Chapter 14 – 5.♕a4+, 5.♕c2 and 5.♕b3

Chapter 15 – 5.e4, 5.h4 and 5.g3

Chapter 16 – 4.♕a4+

Conclusion

The Modernized Grünfeld Defense

by

Yaroslav Zherebukh

Thinkers Publishing 2020

www.thinkerspublishing.com

First edition 2020 by Thinkers Publishing

Copyright © 2020 Yaroslav Zherebukh

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

Email: info@thinkerspublishing.com

Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

Managing Editor: Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Typesetting: Mark Haast

Proofreading: Bob Holliman

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789492510792

D/2020/13730/7

Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⟳	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
⩱	with compensation for the sacrificed material
⩲	White stands slightly better
⩱	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
⇄	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⩿	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

Preface

I have played absolutely everything against 1.d4 from the Slav Defense, Queen's Gambit, Benko Gambit, King's Indian Defense, Nimzo-Indian Defense to the Dutch... you name it. Fortunately, my quest for finding the best opening ended once I discovered the Grünfeld Defense.

I immediately felt drawn to the dynamic positions the opening has to offer. I was also particularly attracted to the possibility of getting good play without resorting to a long passive defense. It's all simple: memorize a few lines and then go fight for the initiative from the very beginning.

I have spent well over 1,000 hours analyzing the Grünfeld throughout the years. It took a bit over 200 hours to review, update and incorporate everything into this book. Therefore, I am very proud to present this work and hope that you will enjoy it!

My motivation for writing this book was twofold:

1) To contribute to the opening theory of the Grünfeld Defense.

2) To inspire more people to play chess after seeing the beauty of the game through the Grünfeld Defense lenses. I have lost count of all the sacrifices and tactics in the 16 chapters of the book.

This book contains all my analyses, primarily done between January 2016 and January 2020. I have updated everything once again before the book went into print to account for new games and ideas and to reflect the most current state of opening theory as of January 2020.

You will see lots of novelties and exciting ideas that have never been played before.

I believe you will find them valuable and playable for many, many years. Remember: once you learn the Grünfeld, you won't need to learn any other opening!

I like to be concise and efficient, so I'll keep this preface short. Just one more thing.

I encourage any questions and criticism so please feel free to share your thoughts and feedback by emailing me at yarozchess@gmail.com.

Your feedback truly helps improving the book and the theory of this fabulous opening.

I wish you all good luck on your Grünfeld journey.

Yaro Zherebukh
January 2020, Chicago

Introduction

I hope all of you are hyped up for studying the Grünfeld Defense after reading the preface. So, let's get started!

A brief history

The Grünfeld Defense appeared on the chess scene in the 1920s thanks to the efforts of the Austrian GM Ernst Grünfeld.

Just a few years earlier, Lasker and Capablanca (the second and the third world champions, respectively) had announced to the world that chess is a draw. The only openings that make sense, they said, are the symmetrical ones: The Queen's Gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6)

and the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5).

Lucky for us, Grünfeld proved them wrong!

How to read this book?

It honestly doesn't matter where you start: it can be chapter 1, 10, or 8 followed by chapters 5, 7 or 9 – it really doesn't matter. Nowadays, White plays everything against the Grünfeld and there is no such thing as a main system anymore. Treat this book like a buffet: eat what you like whenever you like.

For the best results I would recommend reading every chapter.

Don't neglect chapters 14-16. While they don't strictly belong to the Grünfeld domain, they represent a common attempt to punish the Grünfeld players who want to get to the Grünfeld lines even if White starts the game with 1.c4 or 1.♘f3. I used to have a lot of trouble against the Anti-Grünfeld until I really took my time to work on it.

Whenever you see an upcoming diagram you can pause and think about the position on it. For the best learning experience try to either evaluate the position or to guess the move that will be played.

How to memorize the lines and practice the opening?

The memorization part is the trickiest. For those who use ChessBase: create a new database (*Ctrl+X* is the shortcut), then open a new board (*Ctrl+N*) and input all the moves from the chapter you are currently reading. Once complete you can click on *Training* and then keep seeing the moves for White and guessing the moves for Black before you see them played on the board. Eventually, you should be able to memorize the line. Remember though to do just one variation at a time!

If you don't have ChessBase, don't panic, you have options as well. You can use multiple online resources, including chess.com. On chess.com you can go to *Play –> Live Chess –> Analysis Board –> Start* and then input all the moves there. Use the same memorization technique as described in the ChessBase section above. Shoot me an email if you are struggling!

In general, I would not recommend playing a new opening in a tournament game without practicing it

first in less important games over the board or online.

You can practice online against other people or even against computers who will play you on demand anytime you like. As a rule of thumb, I want to play at least 10 games online before I can confidently play the opening in a tournament over the board game. The more you practice the better!

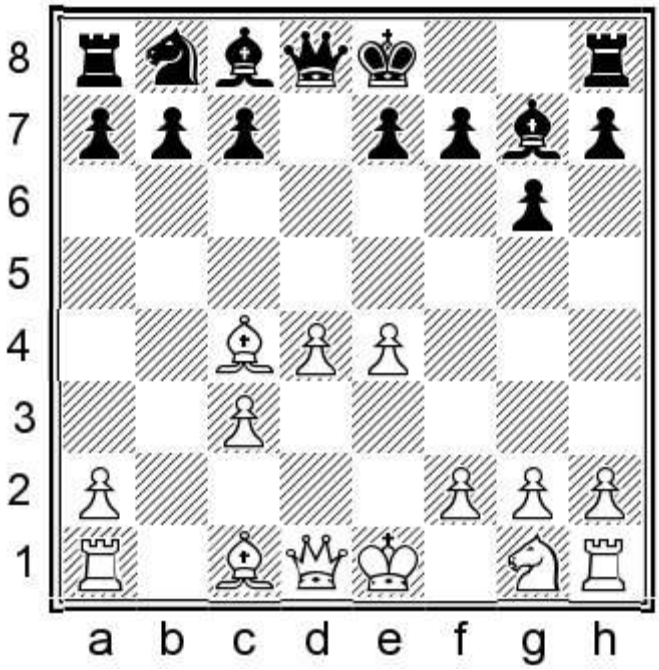
Regarding the time control for your practice games: it depends on personal preference. I like doing at least 15 minutes for each.

Now, on to the chess part!

Part I
Exchange Variation (4.cxd5)

Chapter 1
7.♗c4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – 7.♗c4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.dxc5 ♕c7

---

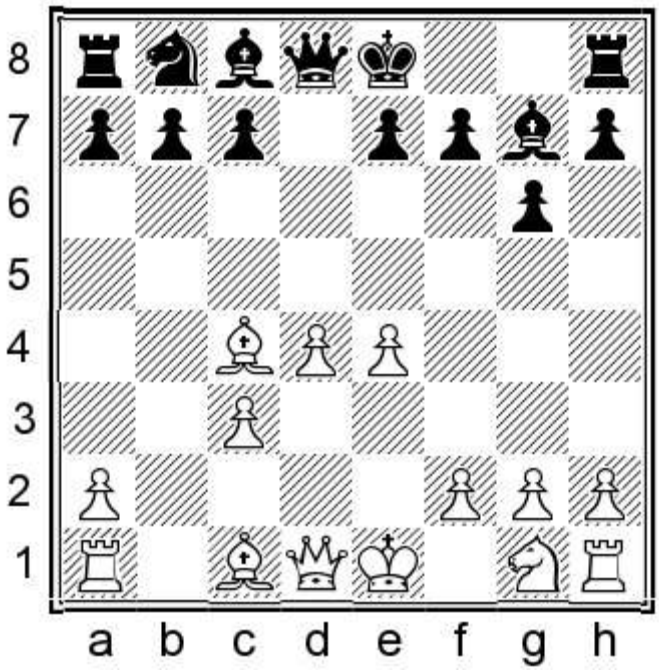
a) 10.--, 11.-- alternatives

b) 12.--, 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♘b5 ♕b8 14.♗d5

c) 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♘b5 ♕b8 14.♗e2

a) 10.--, 11.-- alternatives

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4



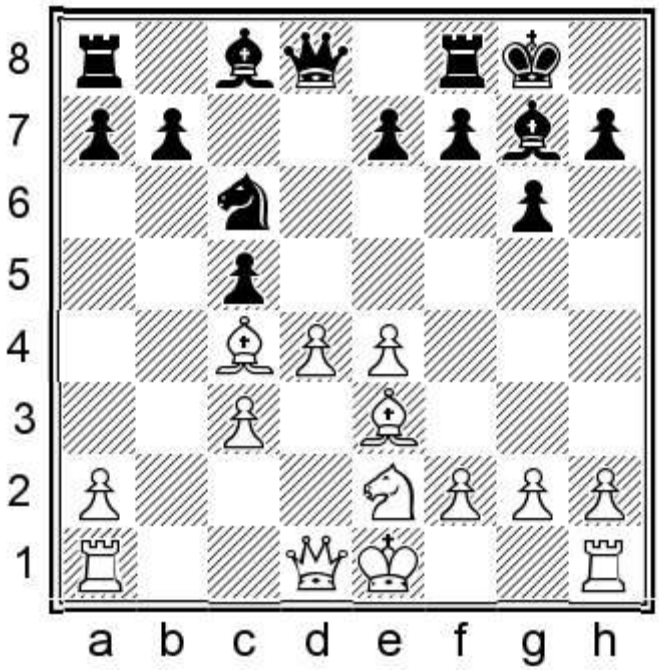
Position after: 7.♗c4

We are going to start our Grünfeld journey from the Classical system, which used to be quite popular before the early 2000s. White attempts to develop the pieces in the most visually appealing way: ♗c4, ♗e3, ♘e2, and 0-0. While maintaining control of the center, White further wants to expand his dominance by conquering even more space after d4-d5 and f2-f4. Our response will include the standard moves from the Grünfeld "toolbox": ...c7-c5, ...0-0, ...♘c6, ...b7-b6, ...♗b7, ...♖c8. We would be happy to trade our c-pawn for White's d-pawn after ...cxd4 as it opens the c-file for our rook on c8 and makes White's center significantly more vulnerable. On move 10 of the main line we will introduce another common idea for the Grünfeld: a pawn sacrifice. I bet by the time you finish this book you will be well accustomed and comfortable with the positional pawn sacrifices not only in the Grünfeld but in any other opening as well. Without further ado, let's jump right into it!

7...c5

The fundamental idea of Grünfeld is to challenge White's center with this move. As you will see in the later chapters, Black usually makes this move even if it entails a pure pawn sacrifice.

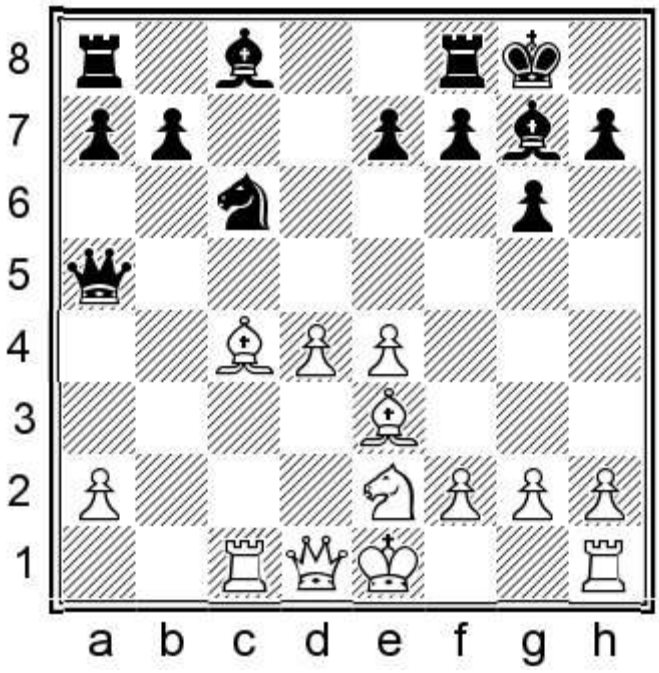
8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0



Position after: 9...0-0

10.0-0

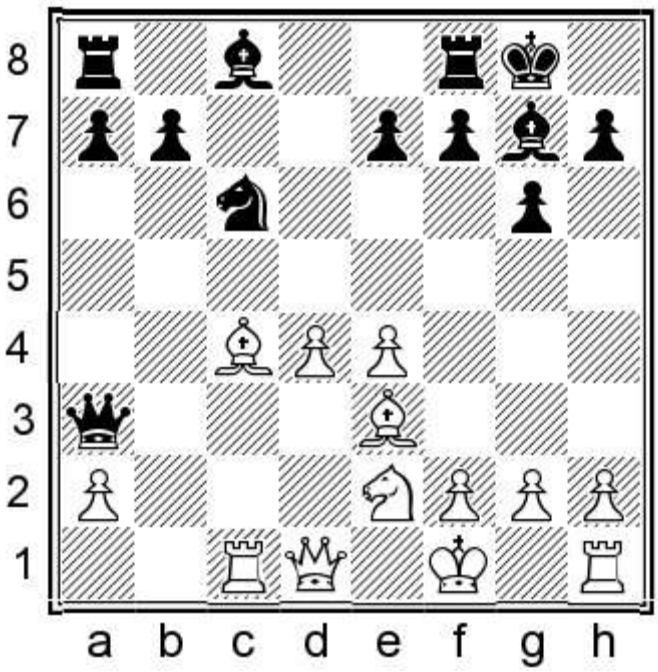
A) Other moves make less sense since they do not accomplish the major goal of any opening: rapid development. 10.♖c1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ An important check, which is quite common whenever White's kings hasn't castled.



Position after: 11...♕a5+

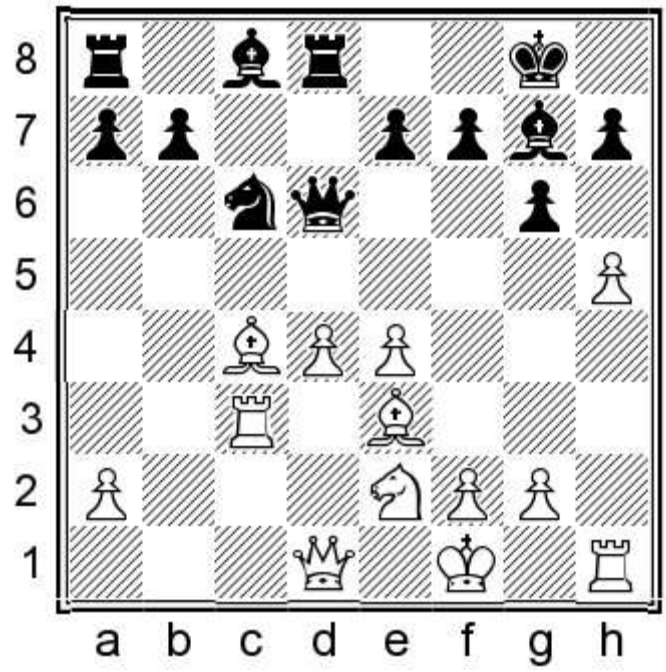
Black forces White to either trade queens or to move his king. The endgames (or queen less

middlegames as we still have almost all the pieces present) tend to be favorable to Black most of the time: 1) the pawn majority on the queenside (a & b versus a-pawn) makes it relatively easy to organize the passed pawn 2) our position is less cramped as we have fewer pieces (White's spatial advantage in the center doesn't matter as much). 12.♔f1 [12.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♖d8 14.d5 ♘a5 15.♗d3 e6 Another key move, aiming to break the center. 16.♘f4 exd5 17.♘xd5 ♗e6=; 12.♗d2 ♕h5 13.d5 ♘e5 14.0-0 ♘xc4 15.♖xc4 ♗d7 16.f3 ♖fc8=] 12...♕a3



Position after: 12...♕a3

13.♖c3 [13.♕b3 ♕xb3 14.♗xb3 ♖d8 15.d5 ♘a5 16.♗a4 b6 17.f3 e6∓; 13.♕d2? ♖d8 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♗b5 b6∓ 16.f4 ♘g4 17.♗d4 e5 18.♗b2 ♕xa2 19.♖a1 ♕b3 20.♗c6 ♖b8 21.♖xa7 ♘e3+ 22.♔f2 ♘c4 23.♕c3 ♕xb2 24.♕xc4 exf4–+ 0-1 (38) Ftacnik, L (2535) – Gurevich, I (2575) Biel 1993] 13...♕d6 14.h4 ♖d8 15.h5



Position after: 15.h5

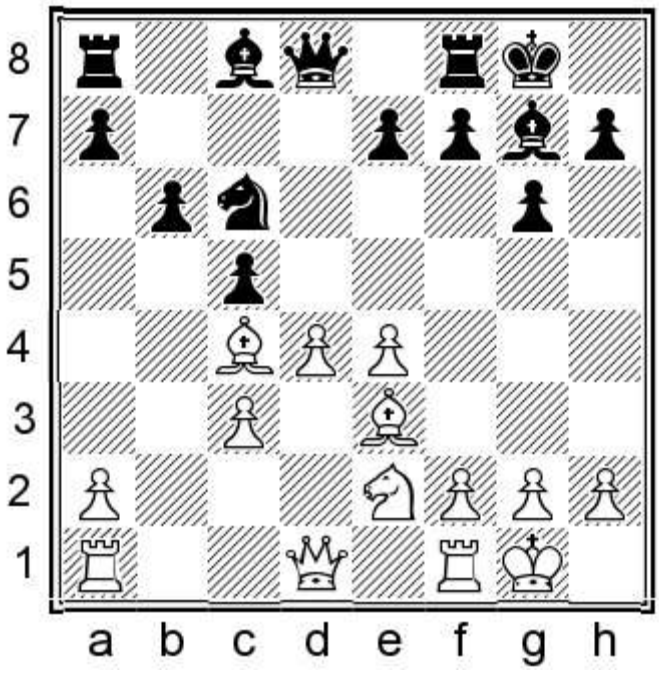
15...♗e6! 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.d5 ♖ac8 18.♗b3 ♗g4 19.♖c2 ♘a5 20.f3 ♗d7 21.♗d4 ♘xb3 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.axb3 ♗b5 24.♕c1 ♖xc2 25.♕h6+ ♔f6 ½-½ Weber, J (2573) – Kristjansson, A (2464) ICCF email 2016.

B) 10.h4 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ 12.♔f1 h5! 13.f3 e6 14.♕e1 ♗d7 15.♔f2 ♖fc8 16.♕xa5 ♘xa5 17.♗d3 ♘c4=

C) 10.♕d2 ♕a5 11.♖d1 ♗d7 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♕xd2 14.♖xd2 ♖ac8 15.♖b1 ♘a5 16.♗d3 a6! 17.f3 b5=

D) 10.♖b1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ 12.♔f1 ♕a3! 13.♕d2 ♘a5 14.♗d3 ♖d8 15.h4 h5 16.f3 ♗e6=

10...b6



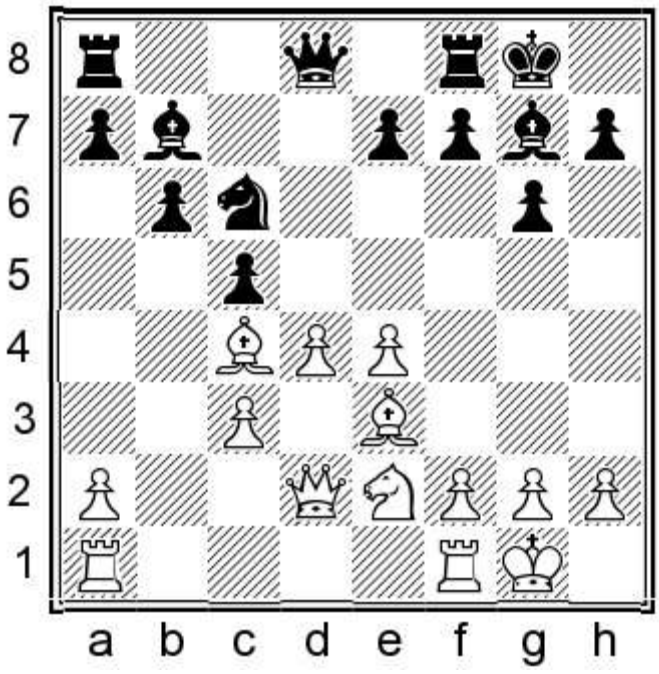
Position after: 10...b6

This move has received widespread approval relatively recently. The idea is simple: Black wants to develop the queenside pieces as fast as possible by playing ...♗b7, ...♘a5 ...cxd4, and then ...♖c8 (the actual move order may vary depending on White's choices). We are not worried about the fact that White may gain an extra pawn by playing dxc5. In that case, we will have easy play against White's a2 and c3 pawns (they are permanently isolated) and plenty of room for our pieces to be active. Before investigating the most normal move 11.dxc5, let's have a look at further options.

11.h4!?

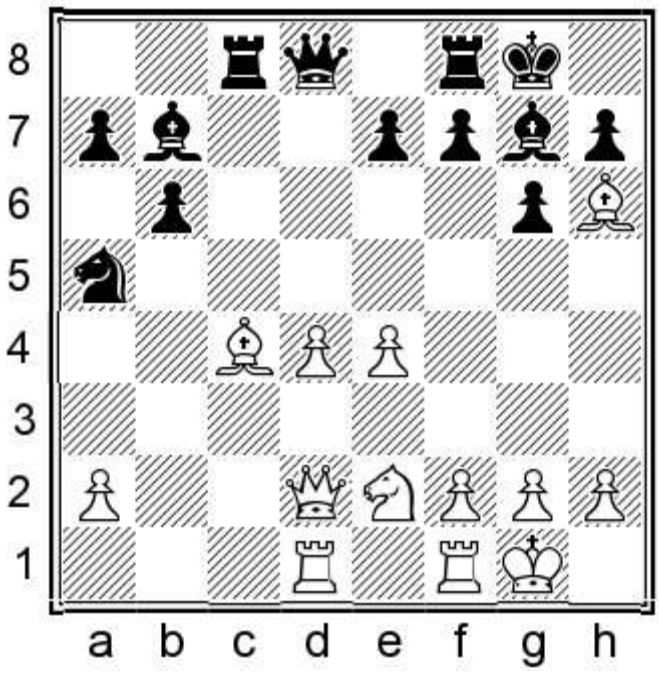
Quite ambitious and a dangerous idea: White wants to push the h-pawn to h5 and then either trade and open the h-file thus preparing for an attack on Black's king or to get a far advanced pawn after h5-h6 which may be extremely useful in the endgame. Regular moves here won't guarantee equal play for Black. As usual, whenever we face an aggression we need to bite back!

A) 11.♕d2 ♗b7



Position after: 11...♗b7

12.♖ad1 [12.♖ab1 ♖c8 13.♖fc1 ♘a5 14.♗d3 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖xc1+ 16.♖xc1 ♕d7 17.♗h6 ♗xh6 18.♕xh6 ♕a4 19.♕d2 ♖c8 20.♖xc8+ ♗xc8=; 12.♖fd1 ♖c8 13.♖ac1 transposes to 12.♖ac1; 12.♖ac1 e6 13.♖fd1 ♖c8 14.f3 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘a5 16.♗b5 ♖xc1 17.♖xc1 a6 18.♗d3 ♘c6=] 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 ♖c8 14.♗h6 ♘a5

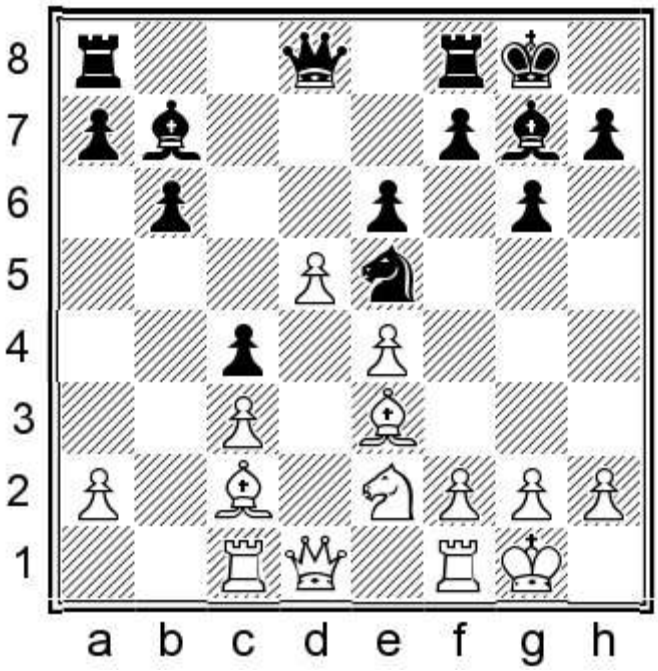


Position after: 14...♘a5

15.♗d3 [15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♗d3 e6 17.♖c1 ♕f6 18.♕e3 ♖fd8] 15...♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♖xc4 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7

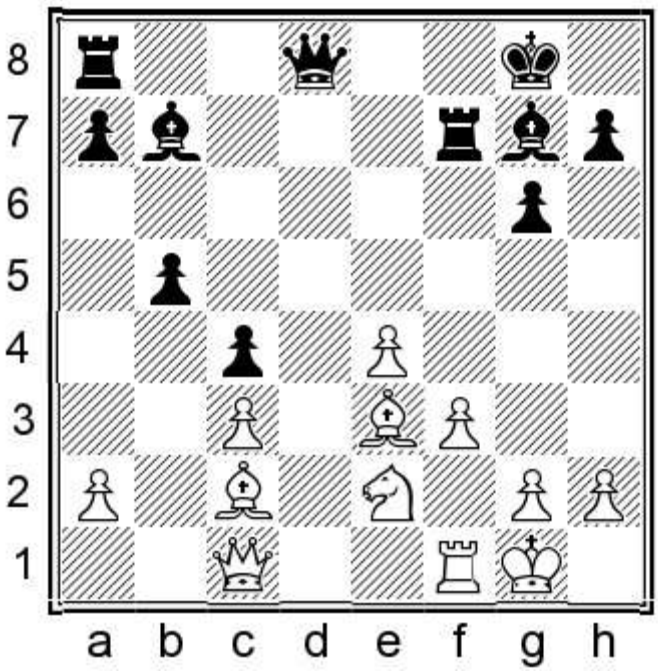
18.♘g3 e6= ½-½ (38) Navara, D (2734) – Ding, L (2805) Prague 2019.

B) 11.♖c1 ♗b7 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♗b3 c4 14.♗c2 e6!



Position after: 14...e6!

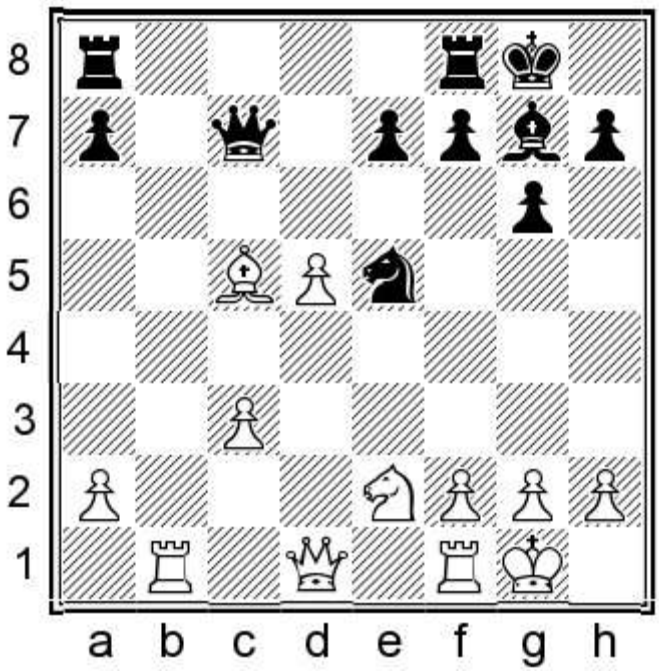
Whenever we see the pawn on d5 our first inclination should be to challenge White's ambitions in the center by playing ...e7-e6! 15.dxe6 ♘d3 a nice intermediate move, aiming at the rook on c1 and the pawn on e4. 16.♗xd3 [16.exf7+ ♖xf7 17.f3 ♘xc1 18.♕xc1 b5∓



Position after: 18...b5∓

I don’t think White has enough compensation here. Black may start pushing the a-pawn and try to create a passed pawn on the queenside.] 16...cxd3 17.exf7+ ♖xf7 18.♘d4 ♗xe4 19.f3 ♗f5 20.♘xf5 ♖xf5 21.♕b3+ ♔h8 22.♖cd1 ♕d7 23.♔h1 ♖c8 24.♗d4 ♖b5 25.♕a3 ♖a5 26.♕b3 ♖b5=

C) 11.♖b1 ♗b7 12.dxc5 ♘e5 13.♗d5 ♗xd5 14.exd5 bxc5 15.♗xc5 ♕c7



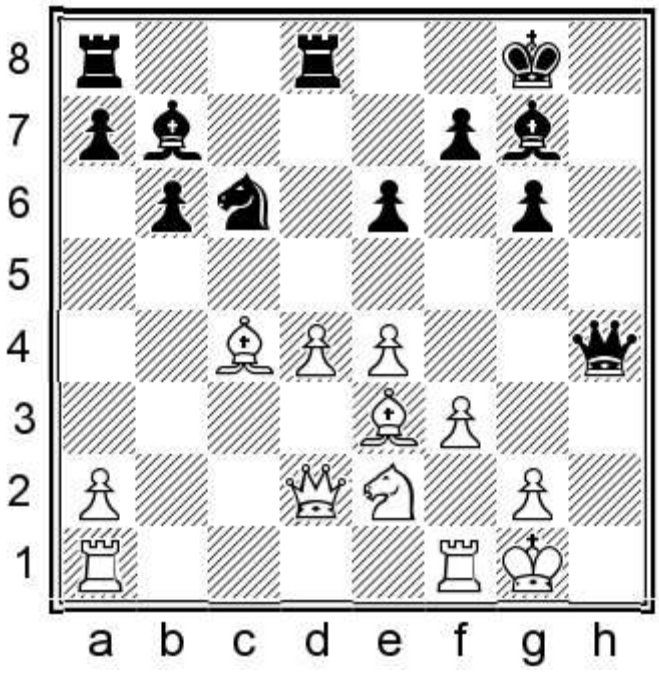
Position after: 15...♕c7

Black eventually wins either the c3 or d5 pawn. We have full compensation here as White cannot connect the c and d-pawns with c3-c4. 16.♗d4 ♖fd8 17.f4 ♘c4 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♕d4+ ♔g8 20.f5 ♖ac8 21.h4 ♕e5=

11...e6 12.h5 ♕h4

The queen forces White to trade the pawns and eliminates the possibility of h5-h6.

13.hxg6 hxg6 14.f3 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖d8 16.♕d2 ♗b7

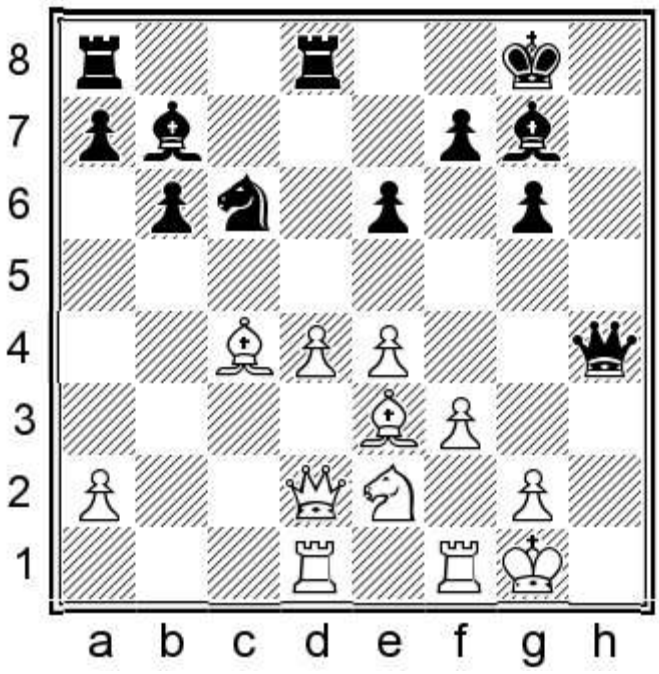


Position after: 16...♗b7

17.♖ac1

A very recent idea played by the young Russian talent GM Daniel Dubov.

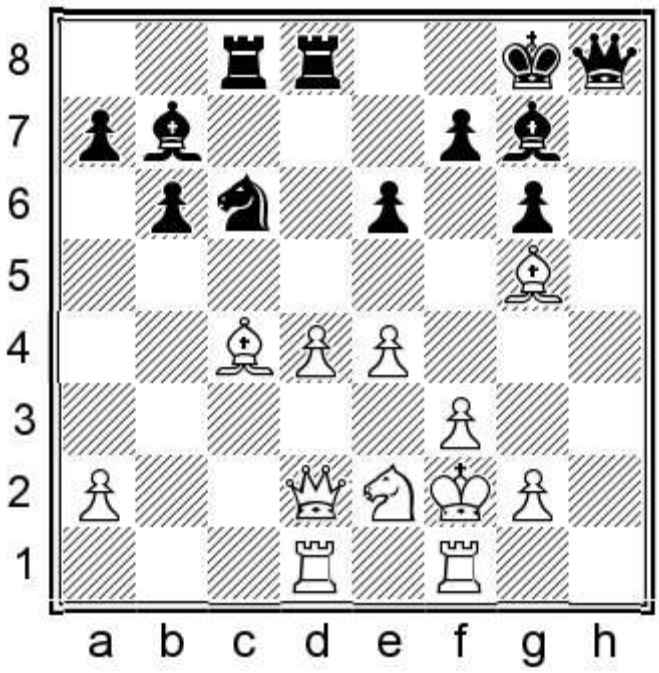
17.♖ad1 was attempted by former world #2 Vassily Ivanchuk in 2012.



Position after: 17.♖ad1

A) Top 10 GM Grischuk has slipped but managed to come out on top unpunished: 17...♖ac8? 18.♗g5!

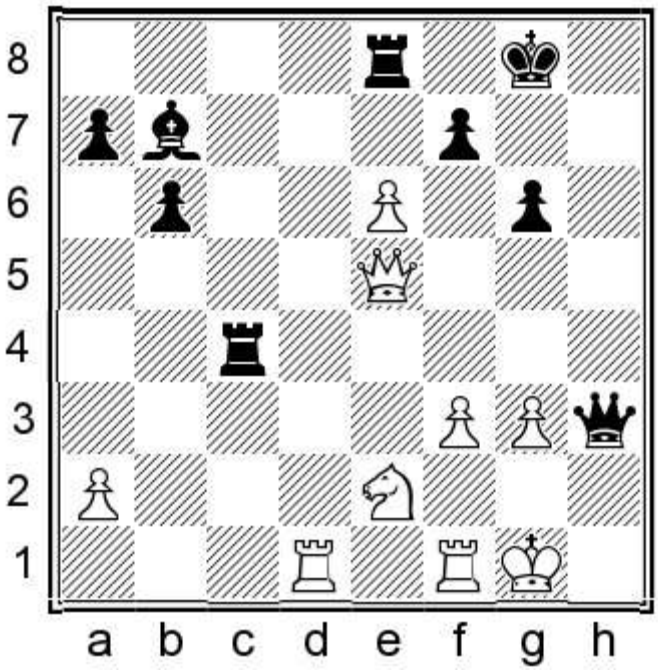
[18.d5 ♘a5 19.♗b5 ½-½ (26) Ivanchuk, V (2769) – Grischuk, A (2754) London 2012] 18...♕h8 19.♔f2!!



Position after: 19.♔f2!!

A profound illustration of the potential dangers for Black whenever the h-file is open. White is already winning. 19...♗xd4+ [19...♗f6 20.♖h1 ♕g7 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♕e3 e5 23.d5 ♘b4 24.♗b3 ♗a6 25.♖h3 ♗b5 26.♖dh1 ♔f8 27.d6!+–] 20.♘xd4 ♖xd4 21.♕f4 ♖xc4 22.♖h1 ♕b2+ 23.♖d2 ♖c2 24.♖xc2 ♕xc2+ 25.♔g3 f5 26.♕h4+–

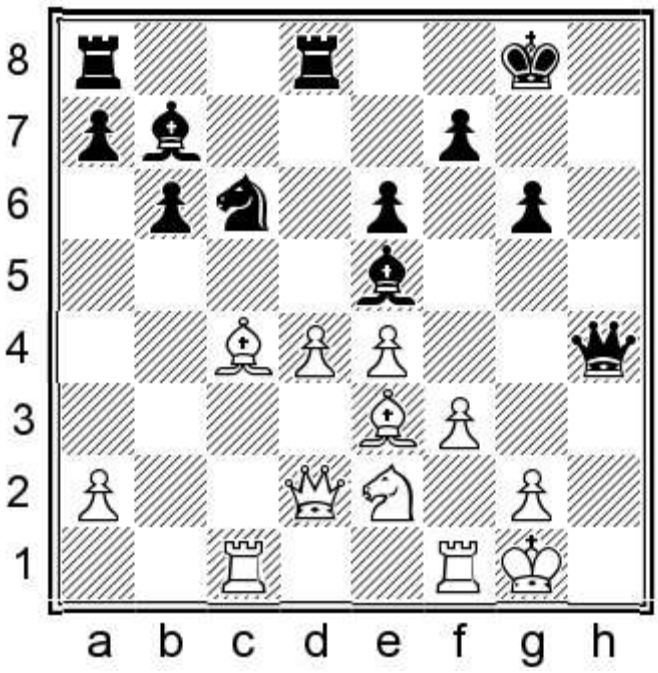
B) 17...♕e7! 18.♗g5 ♗f6 19.♗xf6 ♕xf6 20.e5 ♕h4 21.g3 ♕h3 22.♕f4 ♖ac8 23.d5 ♘xe5 24.♕xe5 ♖xc4 25.dxe6 ♖e8



Position after: 25...♖e8

26.♖d6 [26.exf7+ ♔xf7 27.♕b5 ♖c5 28.♖d7+ ♖e7 29.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 30.♕d3 ♕f5=] 26...♕f5 27.♕xf5 gxf5 28.exf7+ ♔xf7=

17...♗e5!

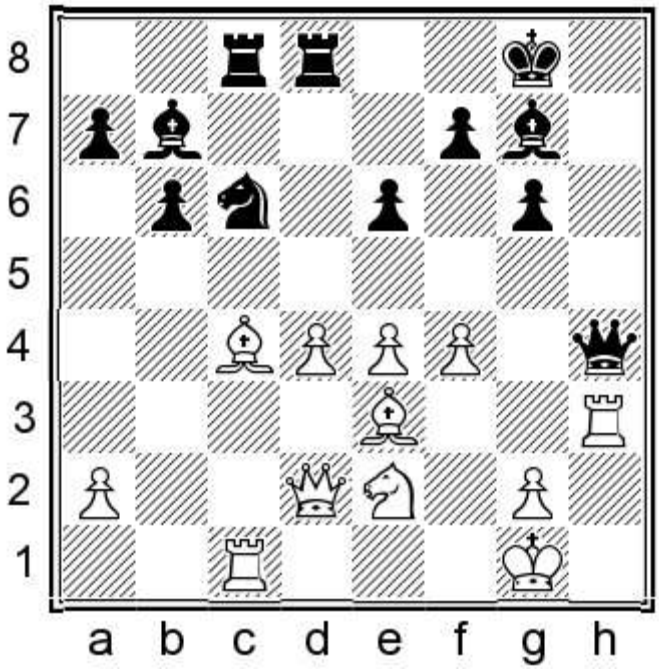


Position after: 17...♗e5!

The key move. Black needs to provoke White into playing f3-f4 otherwise the idea of ♗g5 and ♔f2

followed by ♖h1 is way too strong.

18.f4 ♗g7 19.♖f3 ♖ac8 20.♖h3

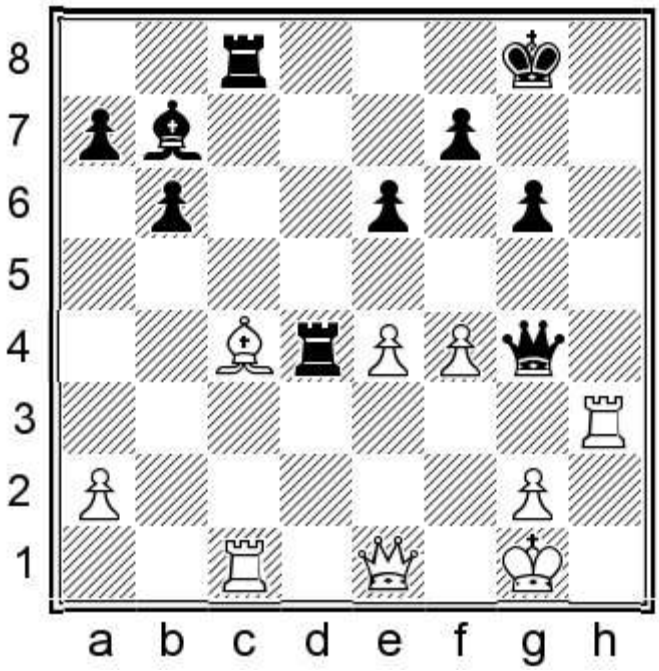


Position after: 20.♖h3

20...♕e7

20...♕g4? GM Svidler, a renowned Grünfeld expert, played a bit too ambitiously.

A) 21.♕e1? ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♗xd4 23.♗xd4 ♖xd4

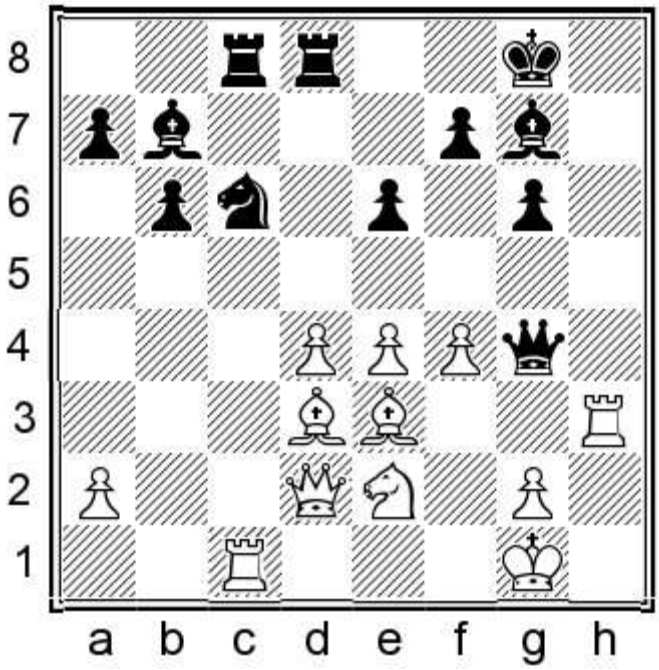


Position after: 23...♖xd4

24.♖h4? [24.♗d3 ♖xc1 25.♕xc1 ♕xh3!? 26.gxh3 ♖xd3 27.♕c7 ♗xe4 28.♕xa7 ♗d5 29.♕xb6 ♗xa2=] 24...♖xe4 25.♖xg4 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1 ♖xc4 27.♖e3 ♗d5 28.a3 ♔g7 29.♖h4 b5∓ ½-½ (44) Dubov, D (2676) – Svidler, P (2719) Hamburg 2019.

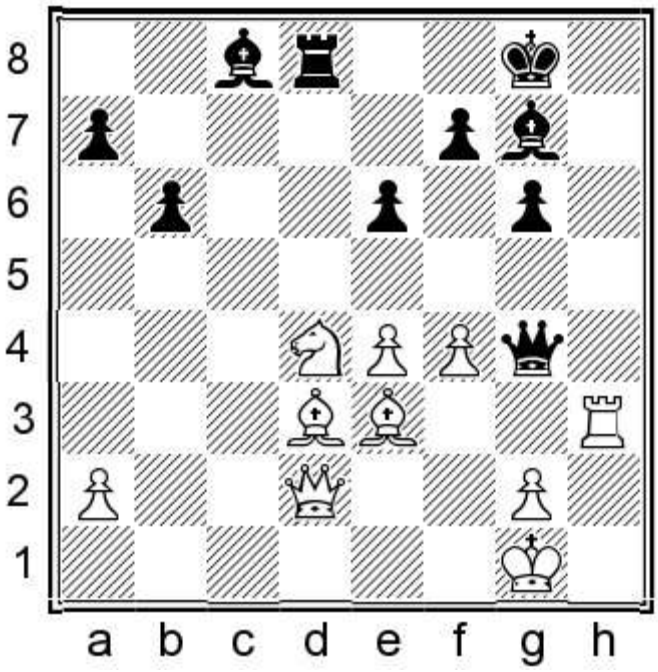
B) 21.♗f2!?

C) 21.♗d3! A nice and unexpected refutation. White's position is close to winning.



Position after: 21.♗d3!

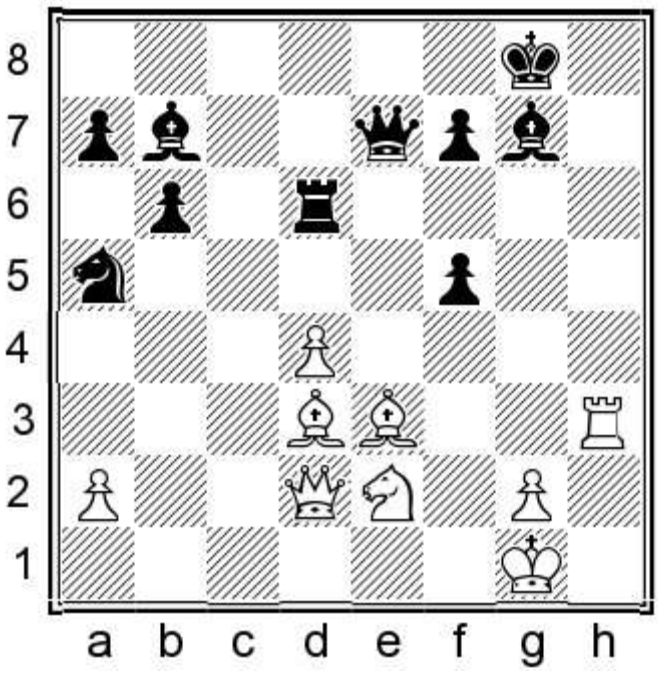
21...♘xd4 [21...♗f6 22.♖f1+–; 21...♘a5 22.♕e1 ♗f6 23.♖b1 ♘c4 24.♗f2 ♔g7 25.♖b4! ♗a6 26.♗h4!+–] 22.♖xc8 ♗xc8 23.♘xd4



Position after: 23.♘xd4

23...♖xd4 [23...♗xd4 24.♗xd4 ♖xd4 25.f5+–] 24.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 25.♔h2 e5 26.f5 ♕f4+ 27.♕xf4 exf4 28.♗c4±

21.f5 exf5 22.exf5 ♘a5 23.♗d3 ♖xc1+ 24.♘xc1 gxf5 25.♘e2 ♖d6!



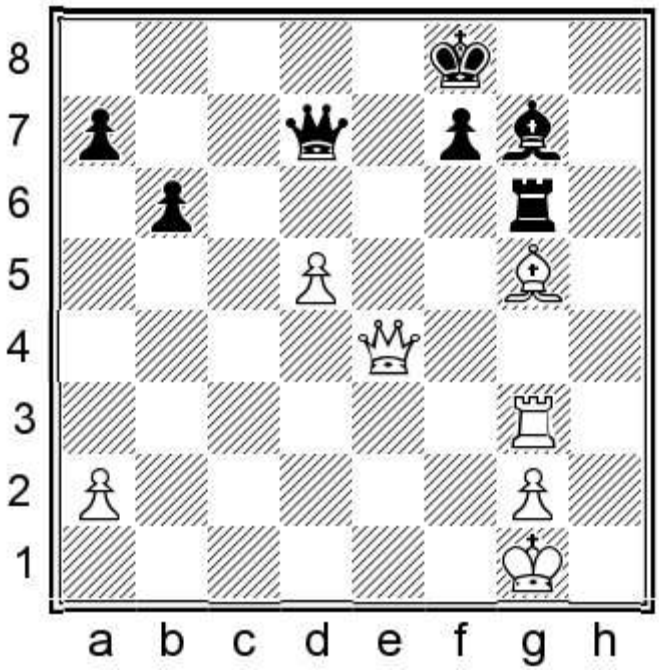
Position after: 25...♖d6!

What does White want to do on the next move? The answer is obvious: ♖g3 would be a devastating

move threatening ♗h6. That's why we played ...♖d6!

The rook on the 6th rank is the one and only antidote against White's plans.

26.♗g5 ♕d7 27.♕f4 ♗e4 28.♗xe4 fxe4 29.d5 ♘b7 30.♖g3 ♔f8 31.♘c3 ♘c5 32.♘xe4 ♘xe4 33.♕xe4 ♖g6=



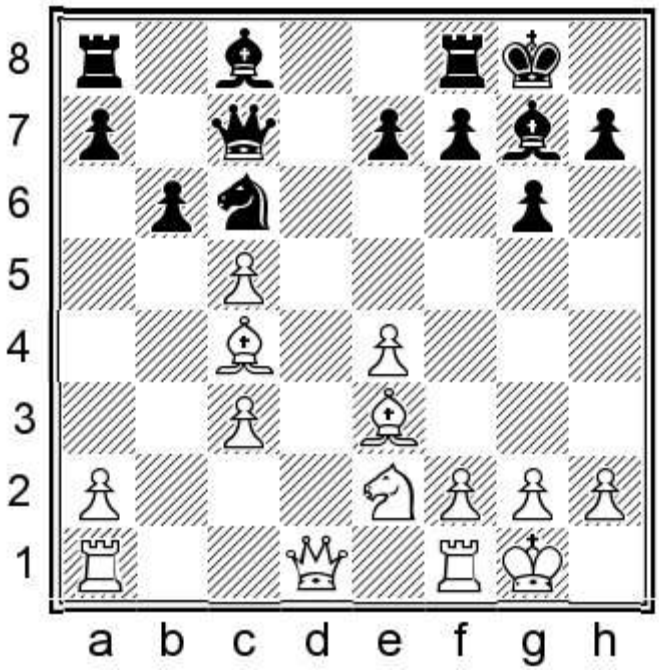
Position after: 33...♖g6=

b) 12.--, 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♘b5 ♕b8 14.♗d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.dxc5

Naturally, we need to look at the most obvious move first: what happens if White simply wins a pawn?

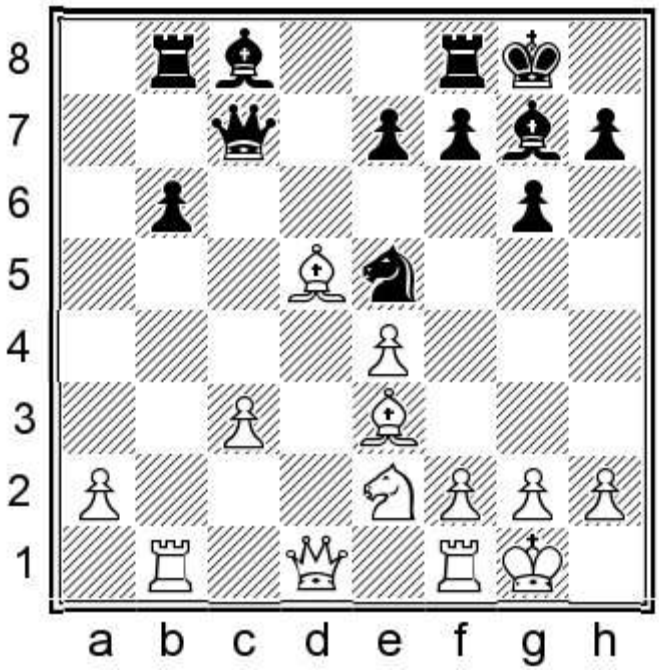
11...♕c7



Position after: 11...♕c7

12.♘d4

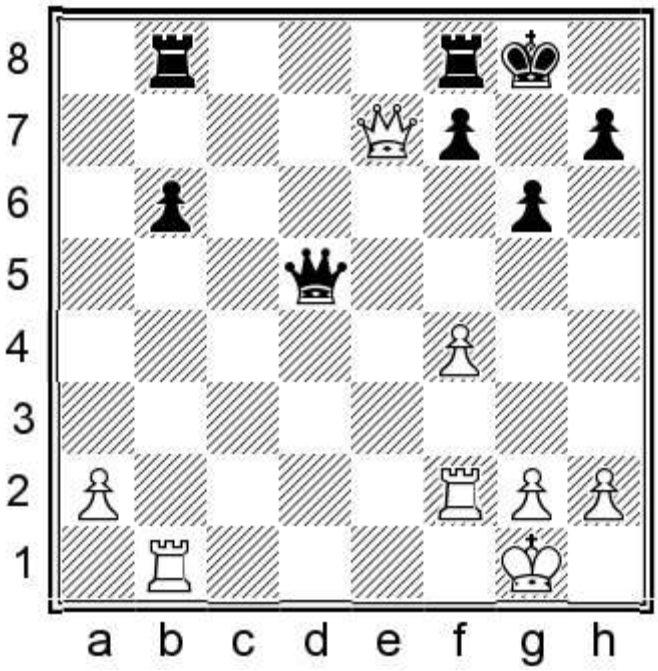
A) 12.cxb6 axb6 13.♖b1 ♘e5 14.♗d5 [14.♗b3 ♘c4 15.♗f4 ♕c5 16.♖e1 ♗a6 17.♕c1 e6 18.♗h6 ♗xh6 19.♕xh6 ♘e5 20.♕h4 ♗xe2 21.♖xe2 ♖ad8=] 14...♖b8



Position after: 14...♖b8

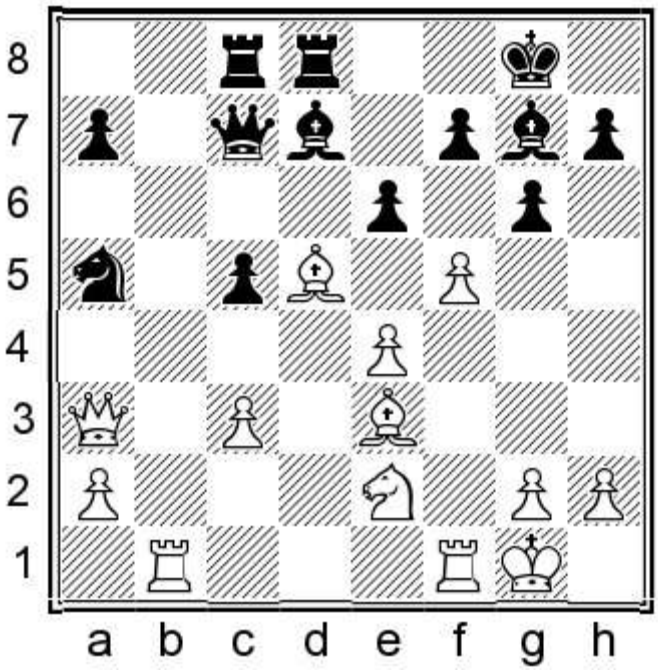
Black always has sufficient compensation in similar type positions. The main reasons are: 1) Black has no weaknesses 2) The open position provides plenty of room and good squares for all the pieces

3) White's a2 and c3-pawns are isolated and have difficulty advancing 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♗d4 ♗xd4+ 17.cxd4 ♘e3 18.♕c1 ♘xd5 19.exd5 ♕d6 20.♕c6 ♕a3 21.♘c3 ♗d7 22.♕xd7 ♕xc3 23.♕xe7 ♕xd4+ 24.♖f2 ♕xd5=.



Position after: 24...♕xd5=

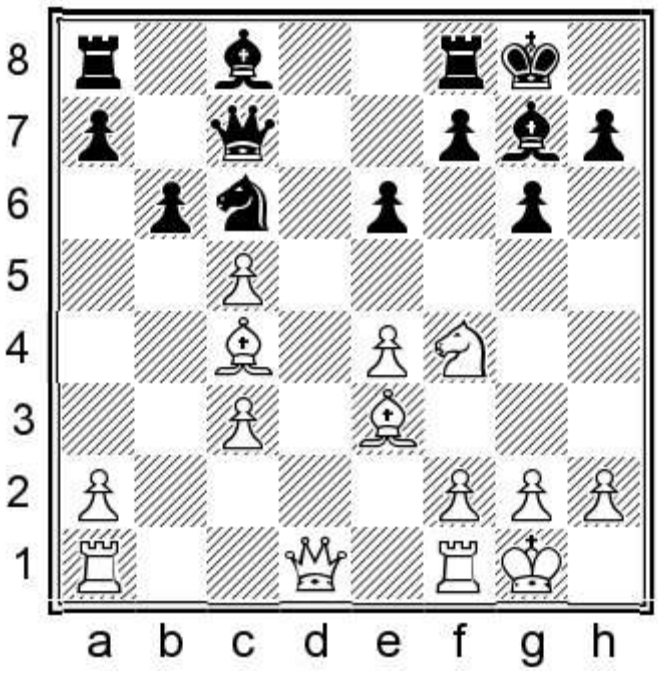
B) 12.f4 An interesting attempt by the world champion and perhaps the greatest player of all time. 12...bxc5 13.♖b1 ♖d8 14.♕a4 ♘a5 15.♗d5 ♗d7 16.♕a3 ♖ac8 17.f5 e6!



Position after: 17...e6!

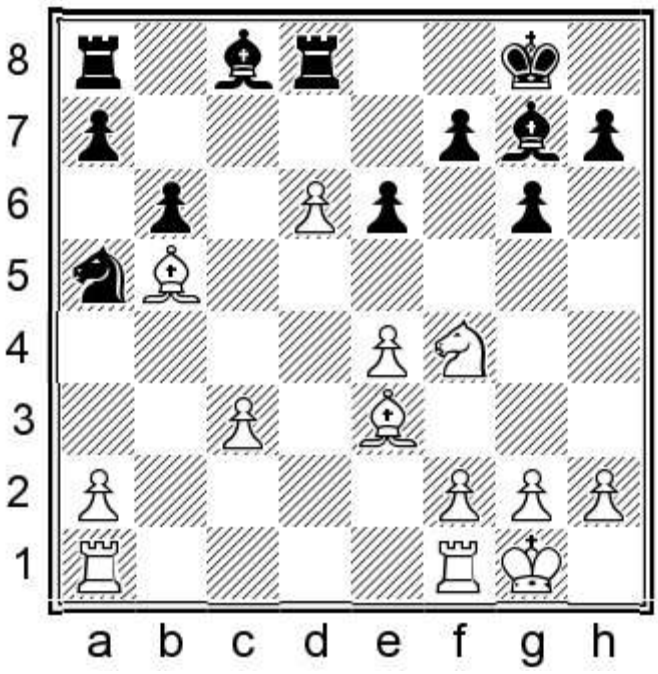
politely asking the bishop to leave... 18.♗f4 ♗e5 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.♗b3 ♘xb3 21.axb3 ♖f8= ½-½ (53) Carlsen, M (2826) – Svidler, P (2755) Moscow 2011.

C) 12.♘f4 e6 Of course, we need to stop ♘d5.



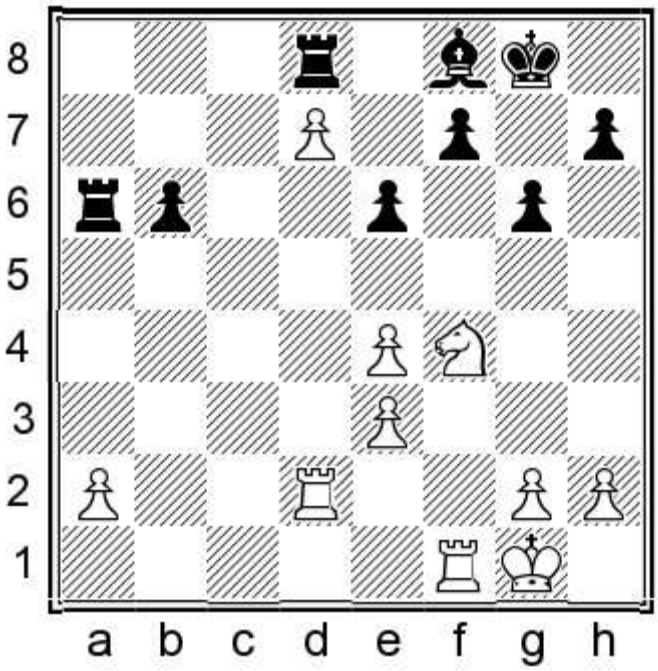
Position after: 12...e6

C1) A queen trade and an opportunity to undouble the c-pawns looks tempting for White but it is not particularly dangerous for Black. 13.♕d6 ♕xd6 14.cxd6 ♘a5 15.♗b5 ♖d8



Position after: 15...♖d8

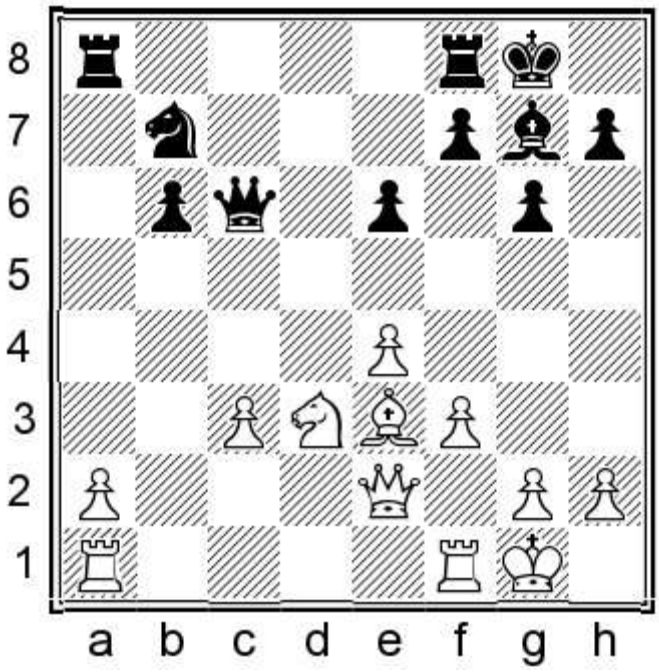
16.♖ad1 [16.♖fd1 ♗d7 17.♗a6 ♗c6 18.f3 ♗xc3 19.♖ac1 ♗e5∓] 16...♗d7 As we will observe in multiple instances trading the light-squared bishops is almost always beneficial for Black. 17.c4 ♗xb5 18.cxb5 ♘c4 19.d7 ♘xe3 20.fxe3 a6 21.bxa6 ♖xa6 22.♖d2 ♗f8∓



Position after: 22...♗f8∓

Black is better since the d7-pawn will eventually fall thus leaving Black with a clearly better pawn structure and the bishop is superior to the white knight. The recipe for capturing the d7-pawn: ...♖a7, ...♗c5, ...♔f8-e7.

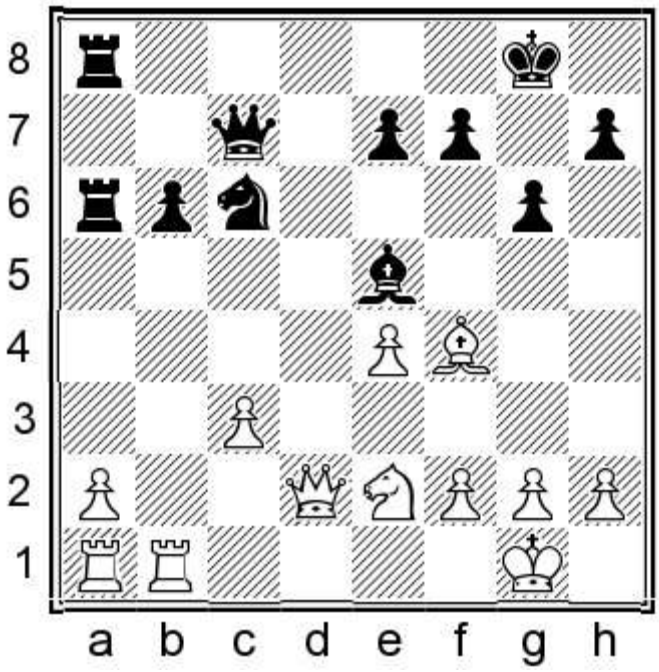
C2) 13.♘d3 the knight may look a bit weird but provides an extra layer of protection for the c5-pawn. 13...♘a5 14.♗b5 ♗b7 15.f3 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 ♕xc6 17.♕e2 ♘b7 18.cxb6 axb6



Position after: 18...axb6

We are aiming to eventually eliminate White's queenside pawns. 19.♖ab1 ♕c4 20.♖b4 ♖xa2 21.♖xc4 ♖xe2 22.♗xb6 ♖d2 23.♘b4 ♘d6 24.♖c6 ♘b5 25.♖c1 ♖b2 26.♘d3 ♘xc3 27.♘xb2 ♘e2+ 28.♔f1 ♘xc1 29.♖xc1 ♗xb2=

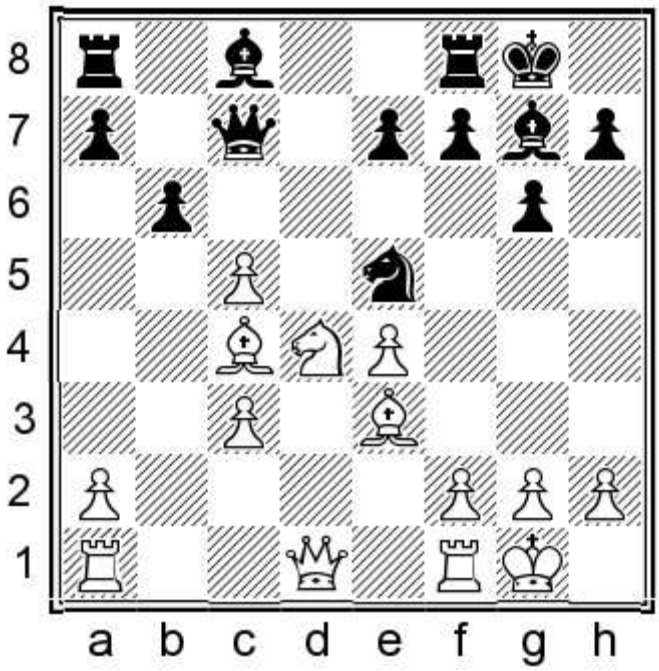
D) 12.♗f4 ♗e5 13.cxb6 axb6 14.♕d2 ♗a6 15.♗xa6 ♖xa6 16.♖fb1 ♖fa8=



Position after: 16...♖fa8=

Black achieves equal play by applying a lot of pressure on the a-file.

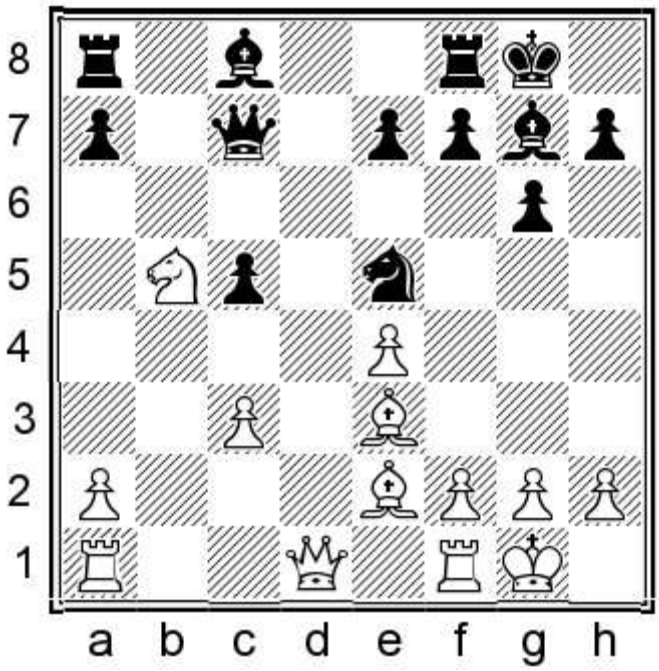
12...♘e5



Position after: 12...♘e5

13.♘b5

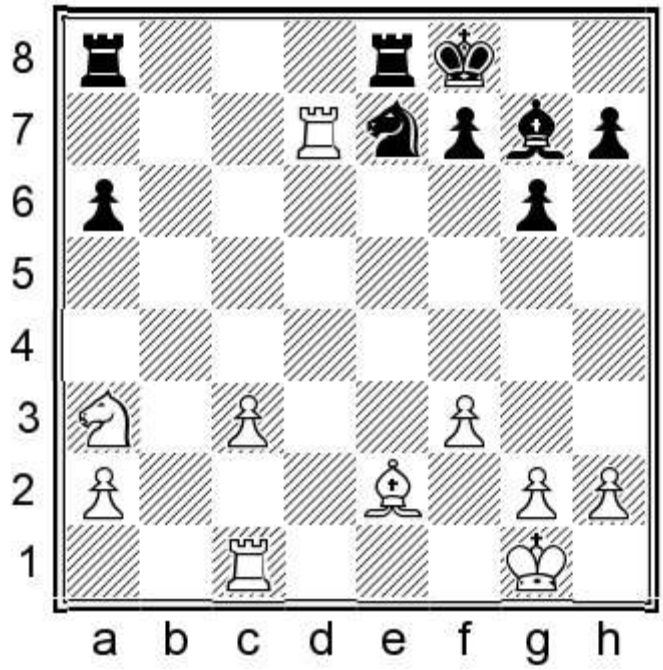
13.♗e2 bxc5 14.♘b5



Position after: 14.♘b5

A) 14...♕a5N 15.♗xc5 ♘c6 16.♗e3 ♖d8 17.♕e1 a6 18.♘d4 ♗xd4 19.cxd4 ♕xe1 20.♖fxe1 ♘xd4=

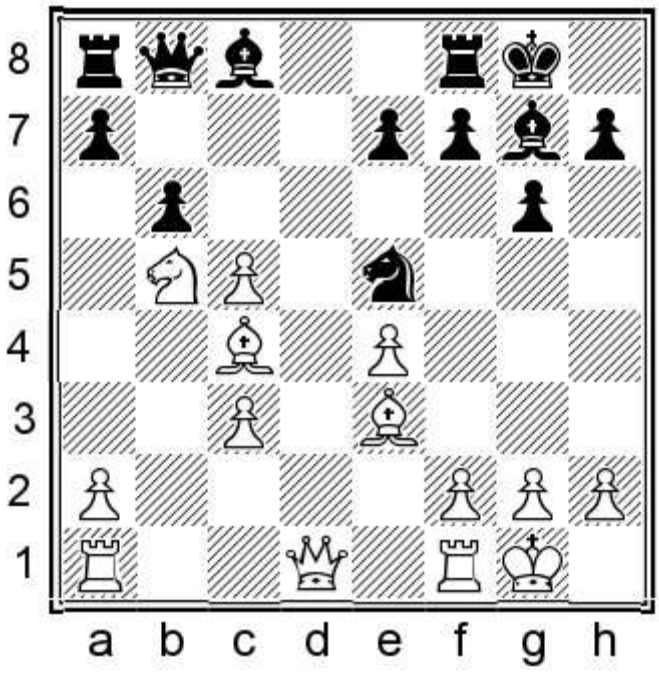
B) Also, not too bad is 14...♕c6 15.♕d5 [15.f4? ♕xe4 16.♗xc5 ♗b7 17.♖f2 0-1 (31) Dziuba, M (2559) – Molenda, M (2383) Katowice 2019 17...♖fd8! 18.♘d4 ♘d7 19.♗a3 ♕e3 20.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 21.♖xc1 e5 22.fxe5 ♘xe5∓] 15...♕xd5 16.exd5 a6 17.♘a3 ♗g4 18.f3 ♗f5 19.♗xc5 ♘d7 20.♗xe7 ♖fe8 21.d6 ♘b6 22.♖ad1 ♘c8 23.d7 ♗xd7 24.♖xd7 ♘xe7 25.♖c1 ♔f8



Position after: 25...♔f8

Normally, Black should be able to achieve a draw without too many difficulties due to the opposite color bishops and activity on the dark squares. In practice though, it is definitely easier to play with White who has an extra pawn and a small edge.

13...♕b8



Position after: 13...♕b8

Besides the main line 14.♗e2, White also has interesting ideas after

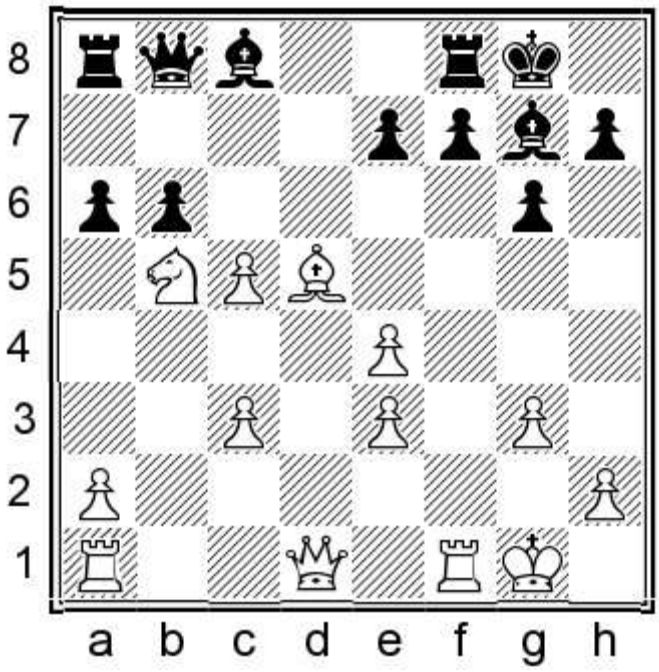
14.♗d5

which certainly may lead to a quick defeat if Black doesn't react well.

A) 14.♗f4 Having your opponent's knight pinned is usually great but not in this case since the f4-bishop doesn't have any support from White's army. 14...bxc5 15.♖b1 a6 16.♘d4 ♕d6= 0-1 (83) Paunovic, D (2320) – Jansa, V (2495) Vrnjacka Banja 1983.

B) 14.♗e2 - see the next subchapter.

14...♘g4 15.g3 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 a6

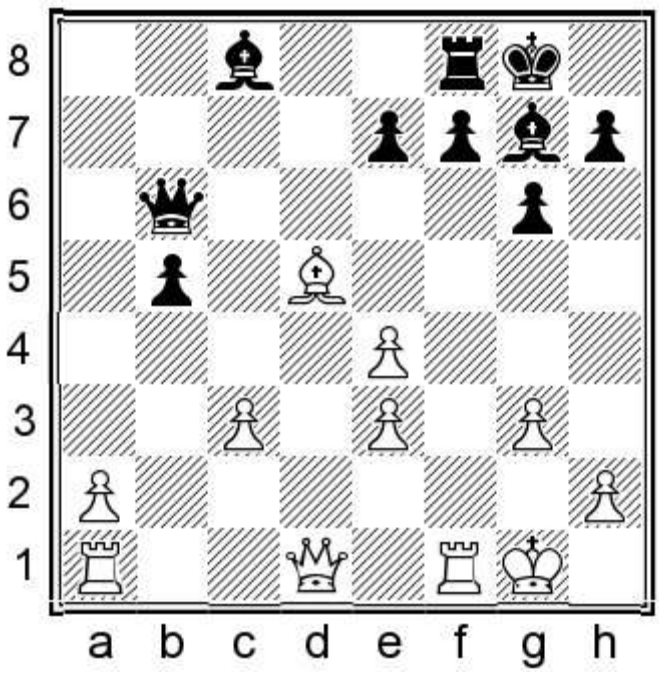


Position after: 16...a6

The a8-rook is a dead man walking. It is still breathing but we will give it up in every single line that follows.

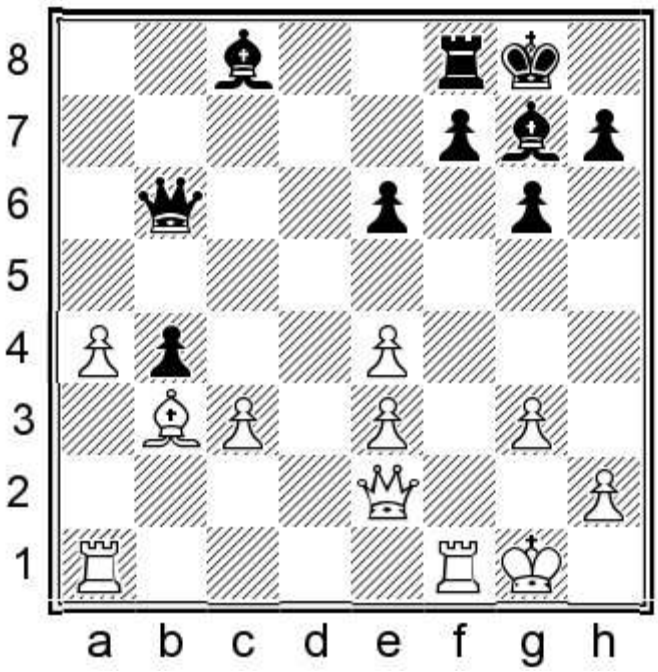
17.♗xf7+

A) 17.♗xa8 axb5 18.♗d5 ♕c7 19.cxb6 ♕xb6



Position after: 19...♕xb6

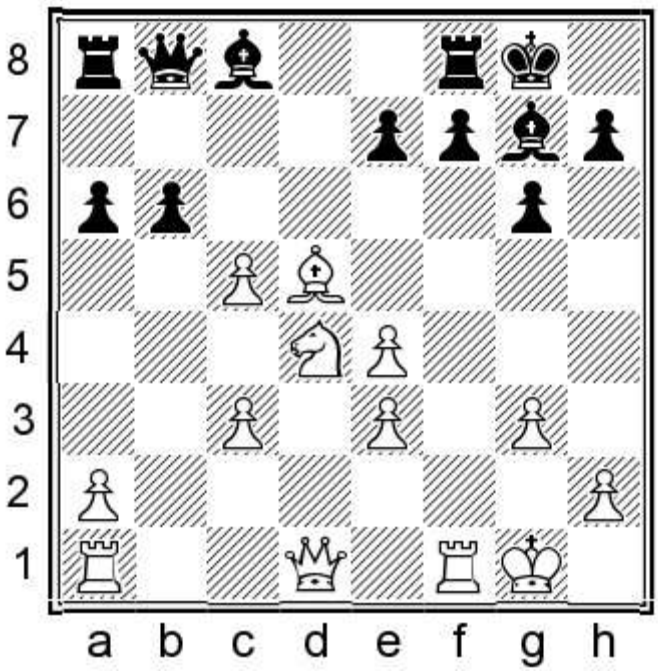
The activity of our pieces and multiple weak pawns in White's camp more than compensate for the sacrificed exchange. 20.♕e2 [20.♕f3 e6 21.♗b3 b4=] 20...e6 21.♗b3 b4 22.a4



Position after: 22.a4

[22.cxb4 ♗xa1 23.♖xa1 ♕xb4 24.♕c4 ♕a5 25.♖d1 ♗b7=] 22...♗xc3 [22...♕c6 23.♕c4 ♕b6 24.♔f2 ♗a6 25.♕xb4 ♕d8 26.♖fd1 ♕f6+ 27.♔g2 ♗e2 28.♖f1 ♗xf1+ 29.♖xf1 ♕d8] 23.♖ad1 ♗a6 24.♗c4 ♗b7=

B) 17.♘d4

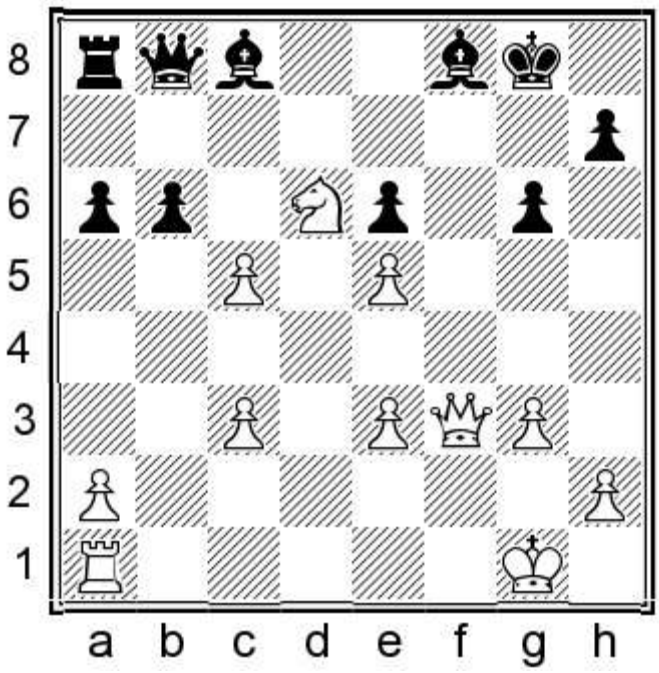


Position after: 17.♘d4

17...♗h3 [17...bxc5? 18.♖b1 ♕a7 19.♘c6 ♕c7 20.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21.♗xa8 ♗h3 22.♗d5 ♗xf1 23.♕xf1 ♗xc3 24.♕xa6± 1-0 (51) Karjakin, S (2750) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2778) Saint Louis 2019] 18.♗xa8 ♕xa8 19.cxb6 ♗xf1 20.♔xf1 ♖b8 21.♖b1 ♕xe4 22.♔f2 ♗h6 23.♘c2 e5=

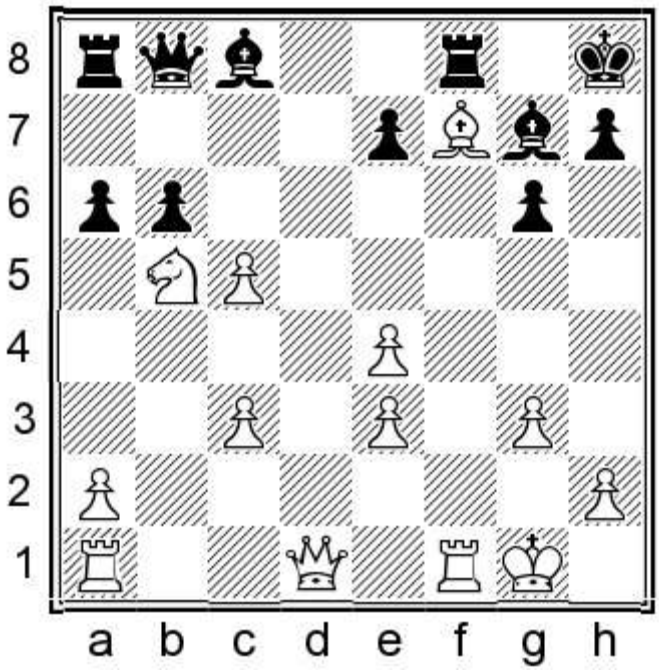
17...♔h8

The bishop is untouchable: 17...♖xf7?! 18.♕d5 ♗f6 19.♘d6 e6 20.♕d1 ♖f8 21.e5 ♗g7 22.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 23.♕f3↑



Position after: 23.♕f3↑

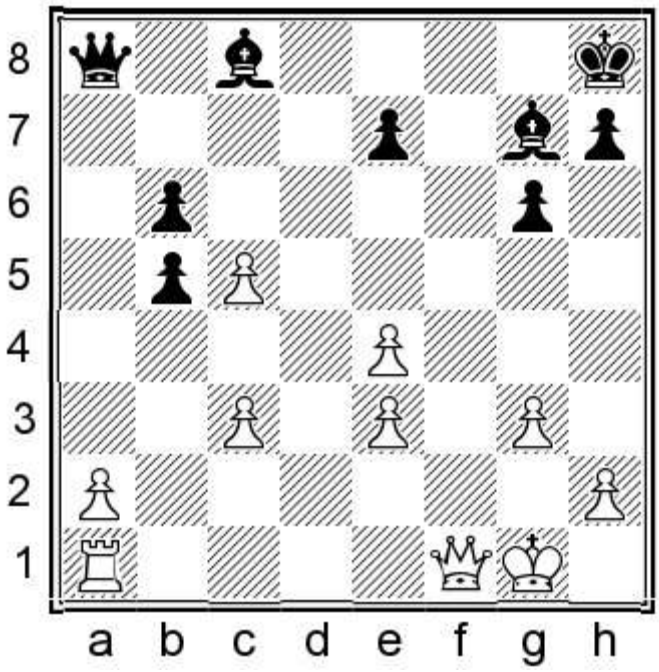
Despite being down a piece White develops a strong initiative by playing ♖f1 and pushing the h-pawn to h5 over the next few moves. One of the best chess engines in the world, Leela Chess Zero or Lc0, evaluates this position as +1 in White's favor meaning that White is much better.



Position after: 17...♔h8

18.♘d4

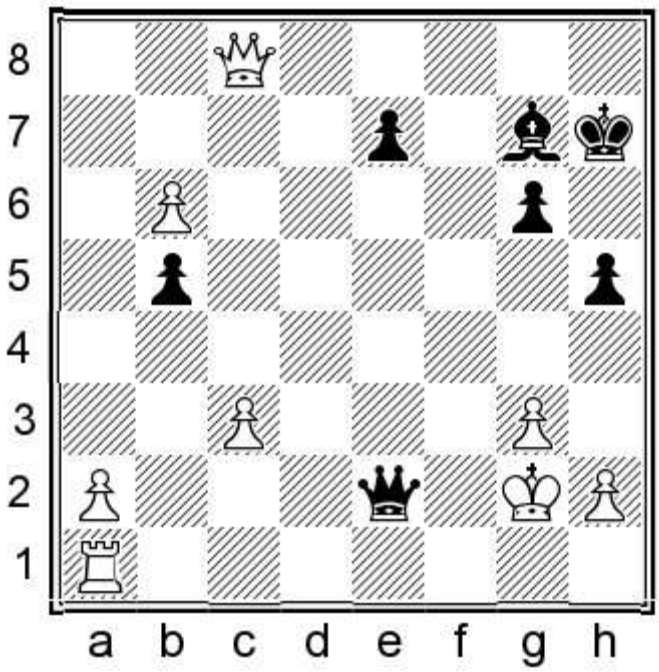
18.♗d5 ♖xf1+ 19.♕xf1 axb5 20.♗xa8 ♕xa8



Position after: 20...♕xa8

At first glance Black looks better because two bishops outweigh a rook most of the time. The chess engine, however, manages to find a perpetual check for White everywhere. 21.cxb6 [21.♕xb5 h5 22.♕e8+ ♔h7 23.♖f1 bxc5 24.g4 hxg4 25.♕xe7 ♕xa2 26.♕h4+ ♗h6 27.♕e7+ ♗g7 28.♕h4+ ♗h6=]

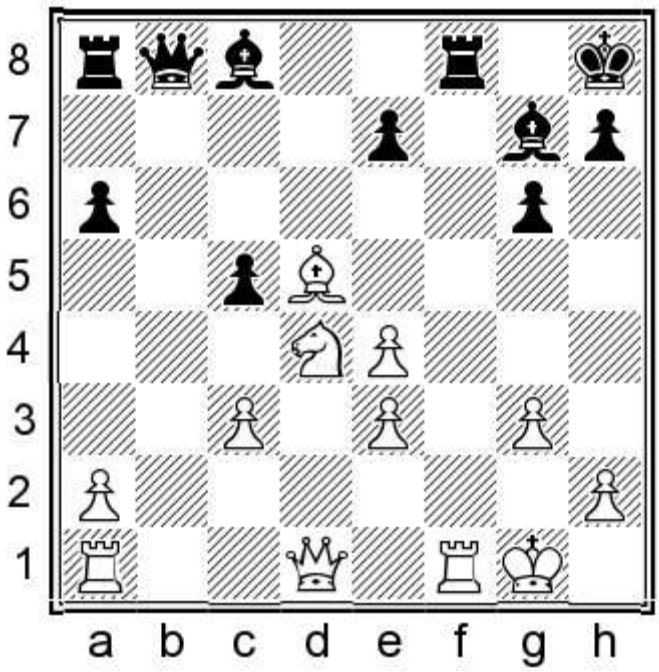
21...♕c6 22.♕d3 h5 23.♕d8+ ♔h7 24.♕c7 ♕xe4 25.♕xc8 ♕xe3+ 26.♔g2 ♕e2+



Position after: 26...♕e2+

27.♔g1 [It is never too late to lose the game: 27.♔h3?? g5 28.♕f5+ ♔h6 29.g4 e6–+ and the king is getting mated.] 27...♕e3+=

18...bxc5 19.♗d5

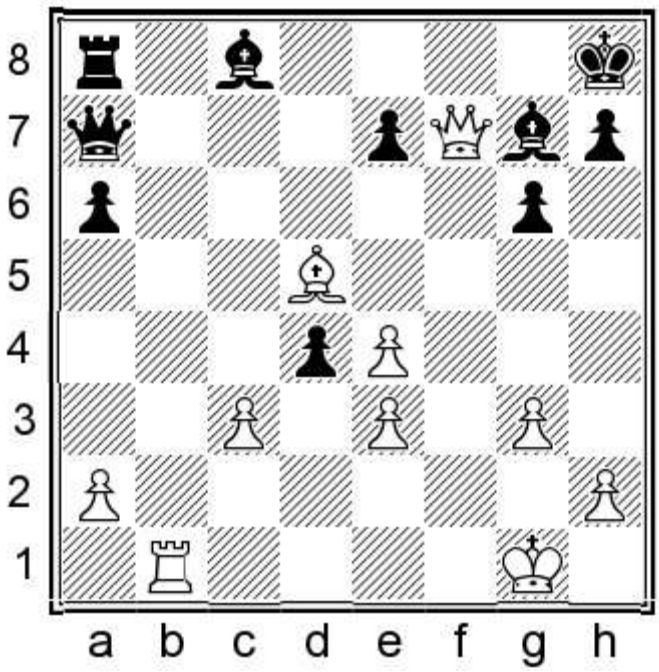


Position after: 19.♗d5

19...♖xf1+

19...cxd4 20.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 21.♖b1 ♕a7 22.♗xa8 ♕xa8 23.♕xd4+ ♔g8 24.♕c4++–

20.♕xf1 cxd4 21.♖b1 ♕a7 22.♕f7



Position after: 22.♕f7

22...♗e6!

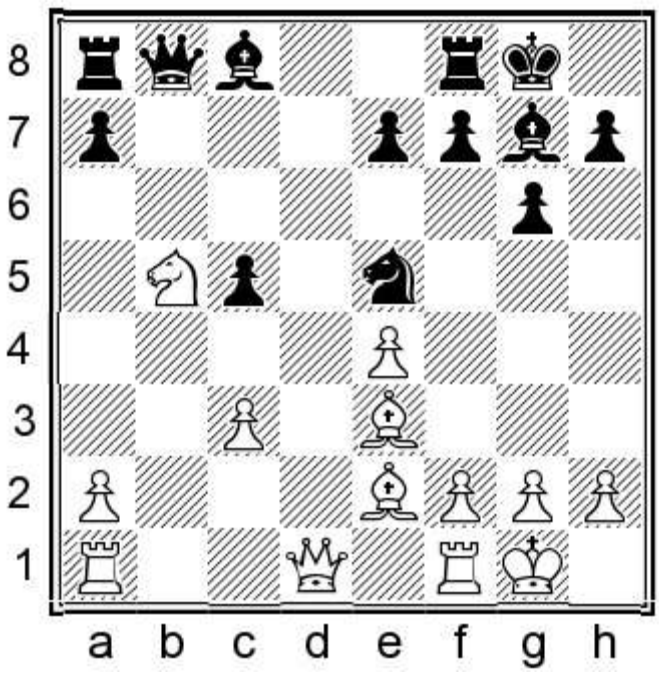
A pretty bishop sacrifice, followed by a rook sacrifice (I promised to sacrifice the a8-rook in every line!), which leads to a perpetual check.

23.♕xe6 dxc3 24.♗xa8 ♕xe3+ 25.♔g2 ♕e2+ 26.♔h3 ♕h5+ 27.♔g2 ♕e2+

½-½ (27) Vachier Lagrave, M (2719) – Gelfand, B (2764) Tromsoe 2013

c) 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♘b5 ♕b8 14.♗e2

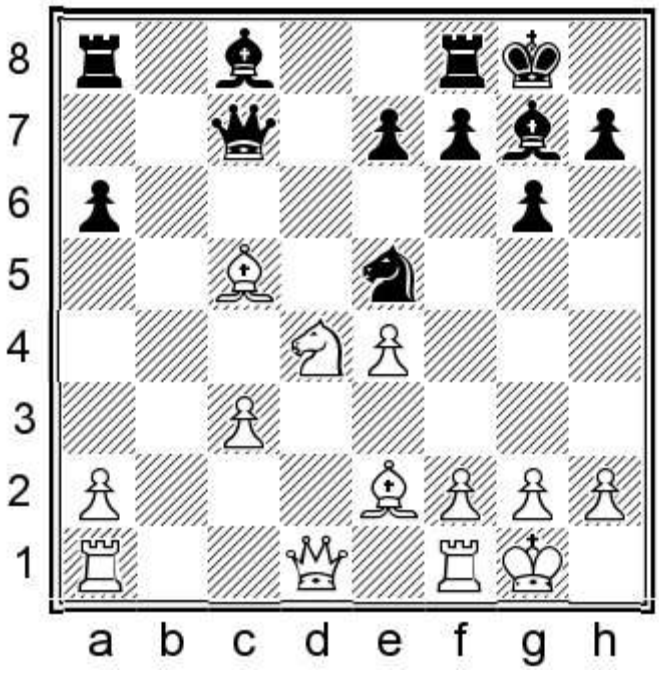
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.dxc5 ♕c7 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♘b5 ♕b8 14.♗e2 bxc5



Position after: 14...bxc5

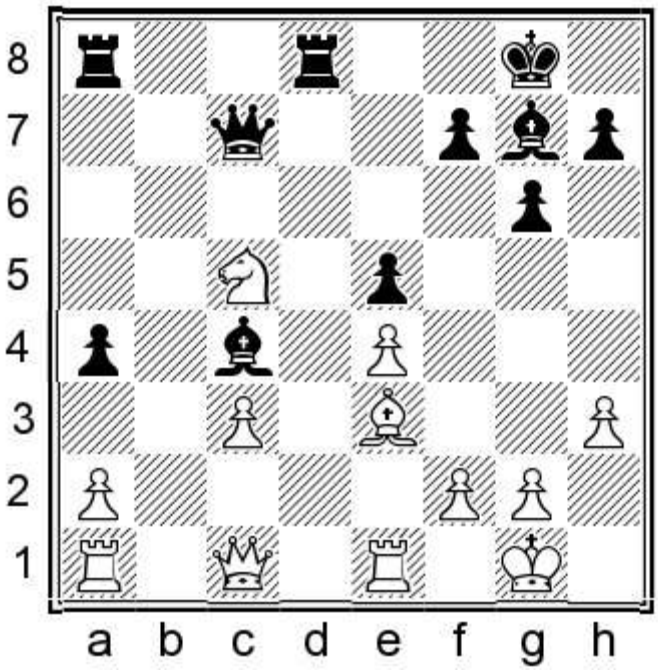
15.♖b1

A) 15.♗xc5 Looks the most natural but is in fact the least threatening move. 15...a6 16.♘d4 ♕c7



Position after: 16...♕c7

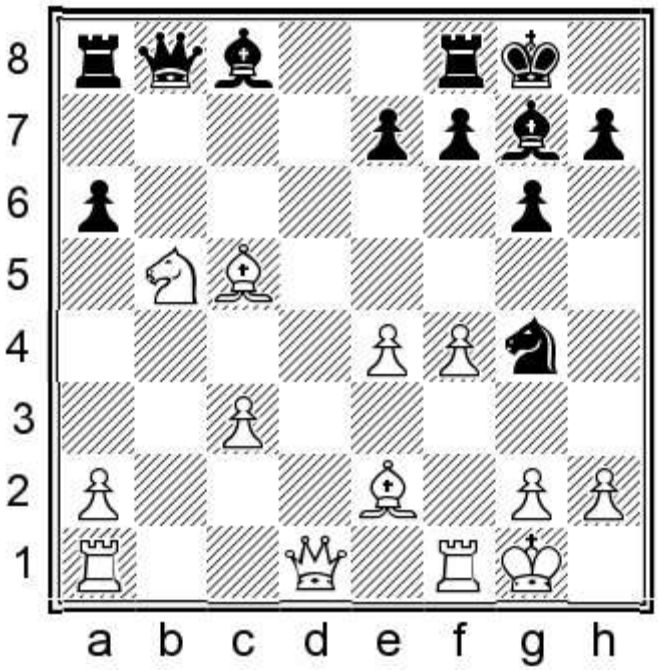
17.♘b3 [17.♗a3 ♗b7 18.♕c2 ♖fc8 19.♖fc1 ♘c4 20.♗xc4 ♕xc4 21.♖ab1 ♖ab8⩲; 17.♗b4 ♖d8 18.♕a4 a5 19.♗a3 ♗g4 20.♗xg4 ♘xg4 21.♘f3 ♖d3 22.h3 ♖xf3 23.hxg4 ♖xc3=] 17...a5 18.♗d4 a4 19.♘c5 ♖d8 20.♕c1 ♘g4 21.♗xg4 ♗xg4 22.h3 e5 23.♗e3 ♗e2 24.♖e1 ♗c4=



Position after: 24...♗c4=

25.♕c2 ♗f8 26.♘xa4 ♗d3 27.♕b3 ♕c6 28.♘b6 ♖a3 29.♕b2 ♗xe4 30.f3 ♗f5 31.♗f2 1-0 (54) Yakubboev, N (2569) – Le, Q (2715) Sharjah 2019 31...♖b8! 32.♖xe5 ♖a6 33.♕b5 ♖axb6 34.♗xb6 ♕f6!!–+

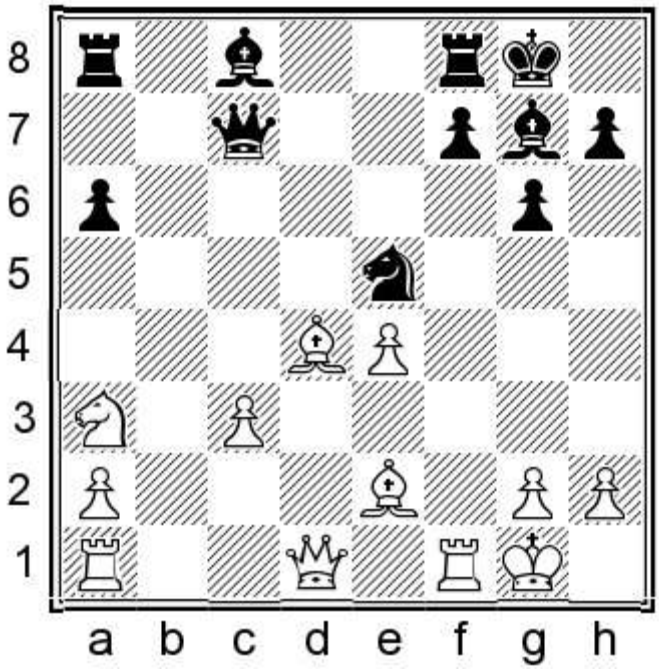
B) 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♗xc5 a6



Position after: 16...a6

17.♘a3 [17.♗xg4 ♗xg4 18.♕xg4 ♕xb5 19.♗d4 – 19.♗xe7 ♖fe8= – 19...♗xd4+ 20.cxd4 ♕b4 21.♖ad1

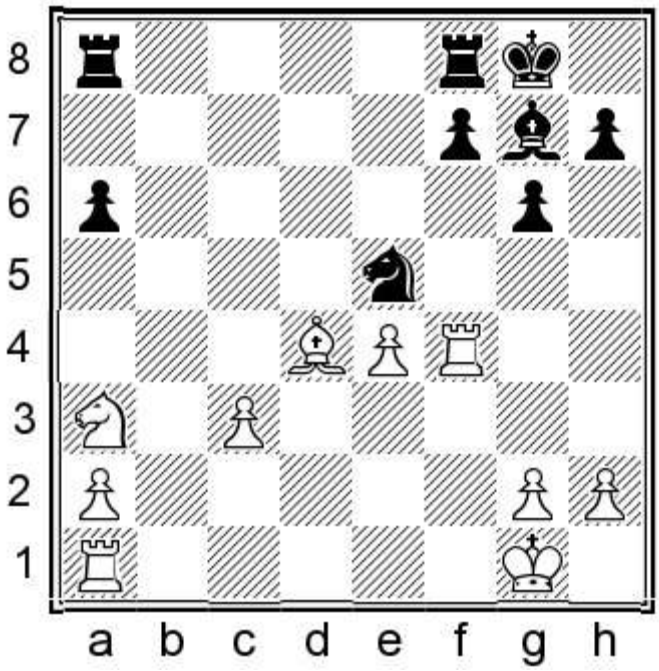
♖fd8=] 17...♕c7 18.♗d4 e5 19.fxe5 ♘xe5



Position after: 19...♘xe5

We have reached another critical position. Out of 19 games available in my database Black won once and drew the rest. What could be better proof that we have great play here?

B1) 20.♕c1 ♗g4 21.♗xg4 ♘xg4 22.♕f4 ♕xf4 23.♖xf4 ♘e5

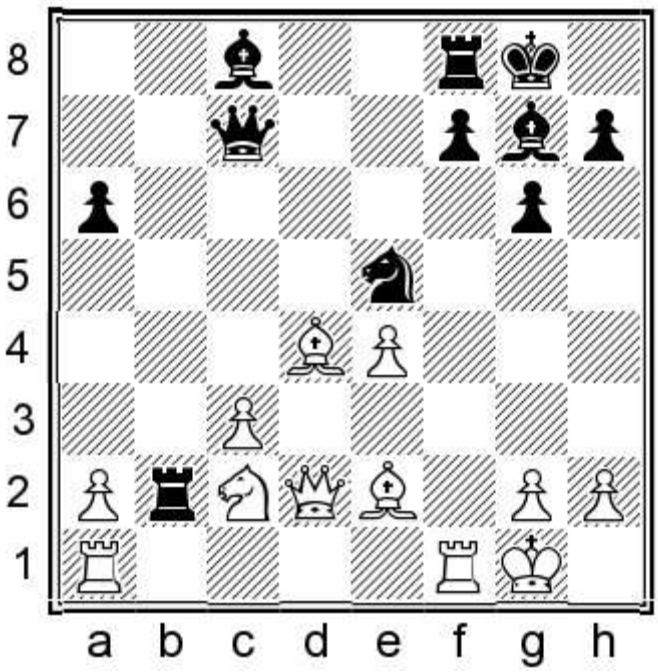


Position after: 23...♘e5

The endgame is close to equal/drawn since White simply has too many disconnected pawns and

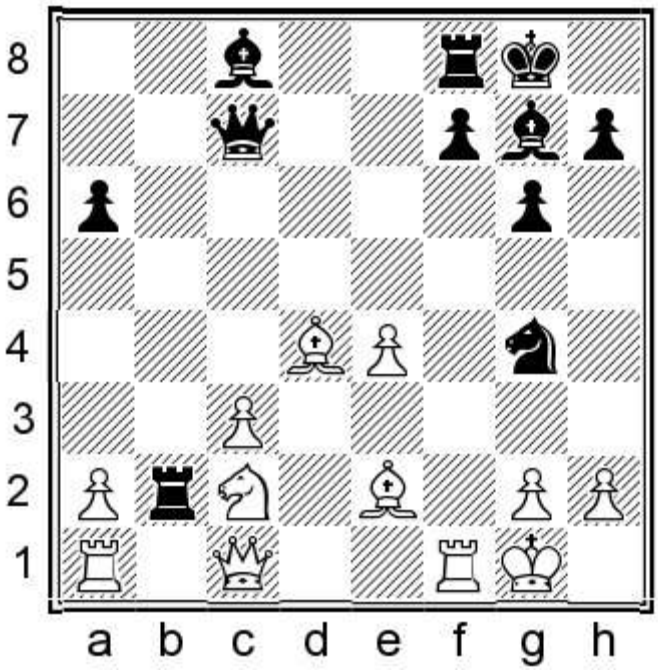
eventually will have to give up some of them. 24.♖b1 ♖ad8 25.♘c2 ♘c4 26.♖b4 ♖c8 27.♖a4 ♗xd4+ 28.♘xd4 ♘e5 29.♖xa6 ♖xc3 30.♖f1 ♖c4 31.♘f3 ♖xe4= ½-½ (31) Jakovenko, D (2733) – Svidler, P (2739) Tbilisi 2015.

B2) 20.♕d2 ♖b8 21.♘c2 ♖b2



Position after: 21...♖b2

22.♕c1 [22.♔h1?! ♖d8 23.♗d1? ♗e6∓ 0-1 (32) Bacrot, E (2720) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2762) Dubai 2014; 22.♖fb1 ♖xc2! A small combination leading to a drawn endgame. 23.♕xc2 ♘f3+ 24.gxf3 ♗xd4+ 25.♔g2 ♕xc3 26.♕xc3 ♗xc3 27.a3 ♗xa1 28.♖xa1 ½-½ (28) Shchepetnev, V (2332) – Barata, A (2300) ICCF email 2017 28...a5=] 22...♘g4

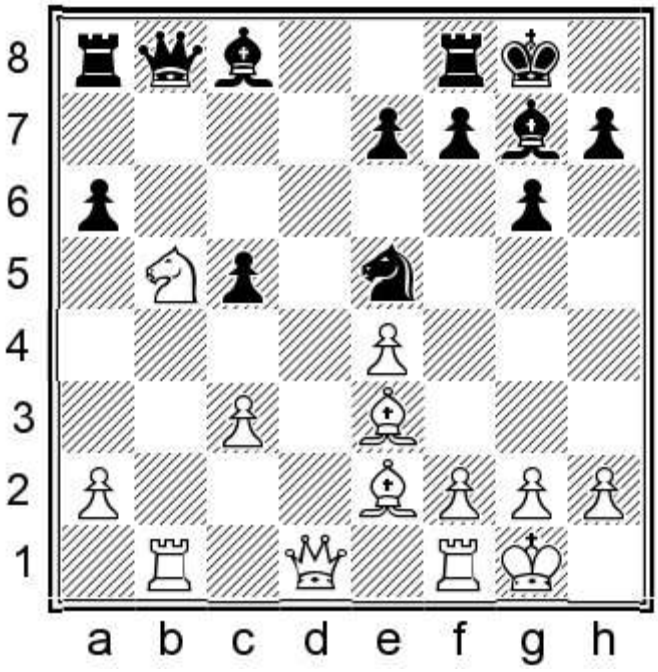


Position after: 22...♘g4

B2.1) 23.♗xg4 ♖xc2! 24.♕f4 [24.♕xc2? ♗xd4+ 25.♔h1 ♗xg4–+] 24...♕xf4 25.♖xf4 ♗xg4 26.♖xg4 ♖b8=

B2.2) 23.e5 ♖b8 24.♘b4 ♗xe5 25.♗xg4 ♗xd4+ 26.cxd4 ♕xc1 27.♖axc1 [27.♖fxc1 ♗xg4 28.♘xa6 ♖b2 29.♖cb1 ♖d2=] 27...♗xg4 28.♘xa6 ♖a8 29.♘b4 ♖a4=

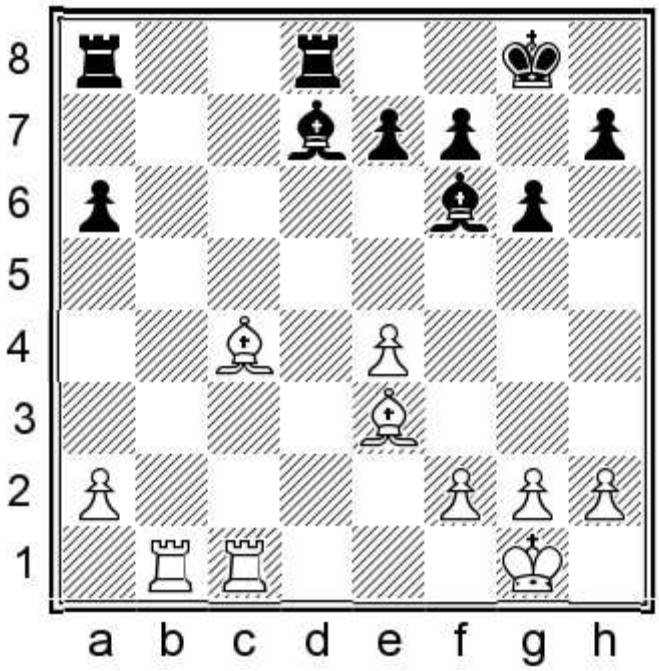
15...a6



Position after: 15...a6

16.♘a3

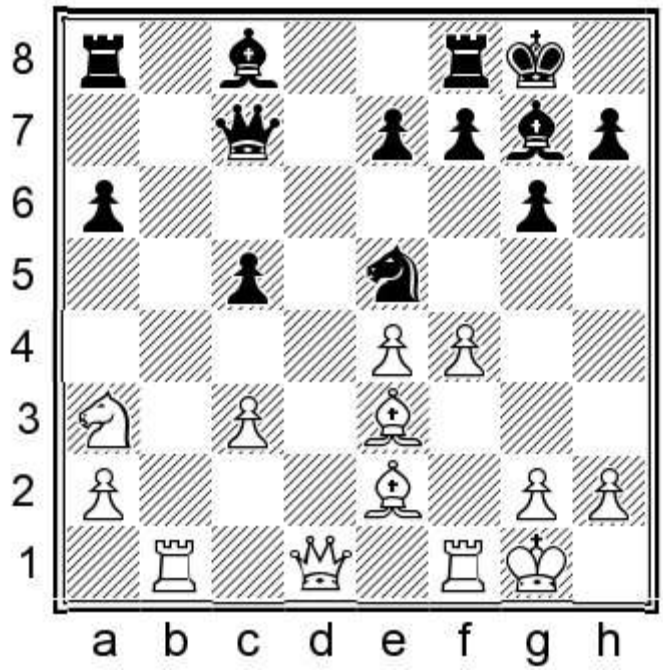
16.♘d4 ♕c7 17.♘b3 ♖d8 18.♕c2 c4 19.♘c5 ♘d3 20.♘xd3 cxd3 21.♗xd3 ♕xc3 22.♕xc3 ♗xc3 23.♗c4 ♗d7 24.♖fc1 ♗f6=



Position after: 24...♗f6=

0-1 (70) Ganguly, S (2619) – Giri, A (2715) Leon 2012. The endgame is absolutely equal. Anish Giri even managed to squeeze out a win against the Indian Grandmaster who recently won an extraordinarily strong open tournament in China for a cool $50, 000! To the outsiders questioning if chess can pay the bills: yes, it is possible to make money as a professional player.

16...♕c7 17.f4



Position after: 17.f4

17...♕a5!N

An important novelty securing good play for Black.

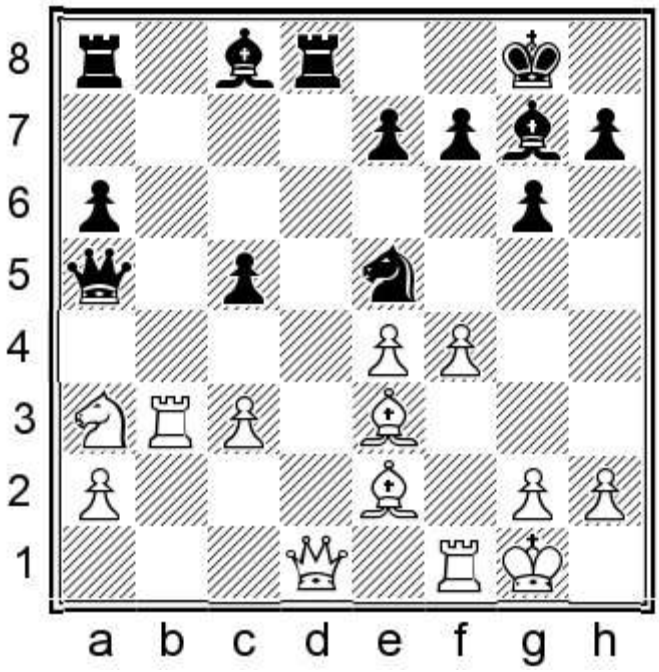
Previously Black played less precisely: 17...♖d8 18.♕c2 ♘g4 19.♗xg4 ♗xg4 20.f5 gxf5 21.♘c4↑ 1-0 (38) Karjakin, S (2782) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2789) Stavanger 2018.

18.♖b3

A) 18.♗c1 ♖d8 19.♕c2 ♘c6 20.♖b3 ♕c7 21.♘c4 ♘a5 22.♘xa5 ♕xa5=

B) 18.♕c1 ♗g4 19.♘c4 ♘xc4 20.♗xc4 ♗d7=

18...♖d8

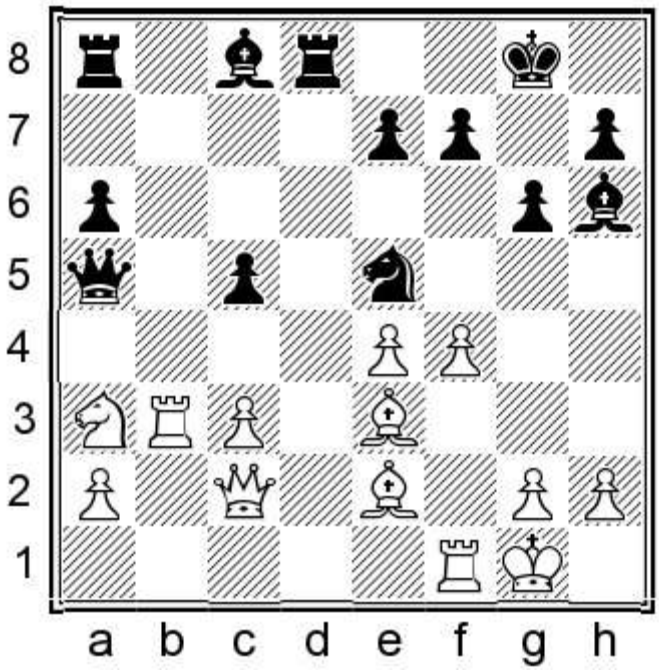


Position after: 18...♖d8

19.♕c2

19.♕b1 ♗g4! Whenever possible we should trade the light-squared bishops. 20.♘c4 ♘xc4 21.♗xc4 ♗d7=

19...♗h6!



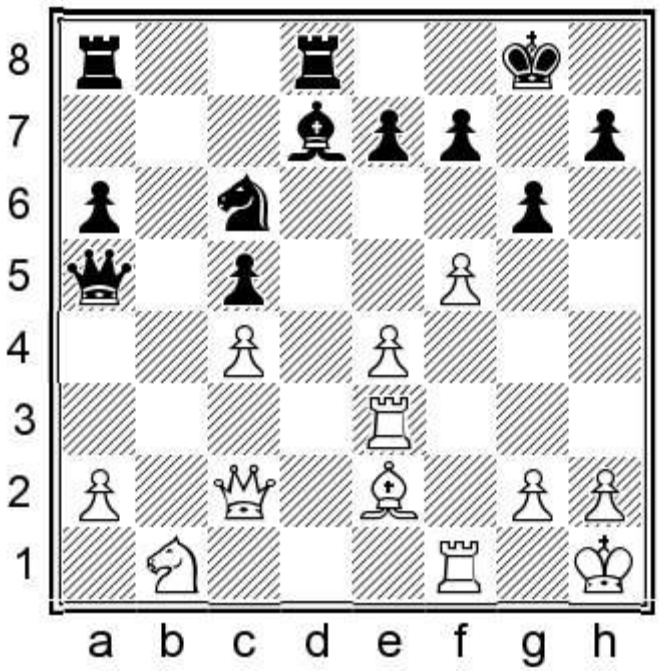
Position after: 19...♗h6!

A beautiful way of protecting the knight. This move makes the whole line playable for Black and justifies the novelty we introduced two moves earlier: 17...♕a5!.

The standard idea of trading the light-squared bishops does not work anymore since the bishop on e2 is protected by the queen 19...♗g4?? 20.fxe5+–.

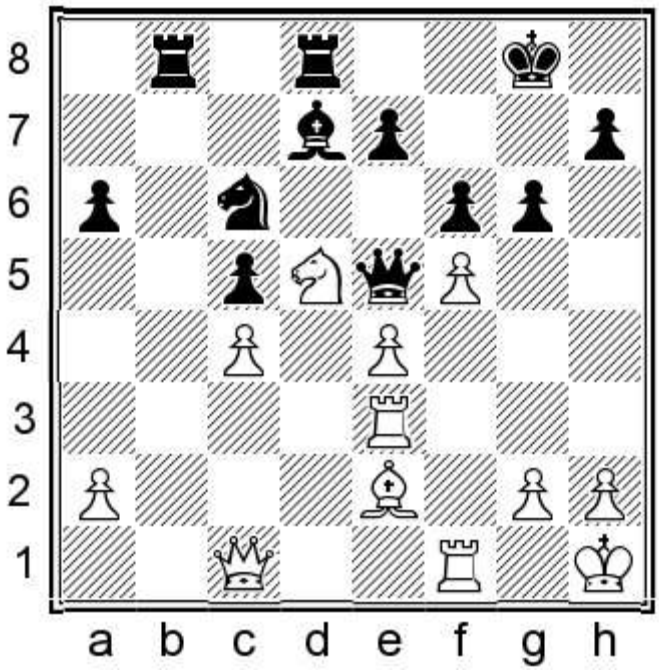
20.♘c4

White also may try to force the knight to leave its outpost on e5 and then try to attack the king. 20.♔h1 ♗e6 21.c4 ♘c6 22.f5 ♗xe3 23.♖xe3 ♗d7 24.♘b1



Position after: 24.♘b1

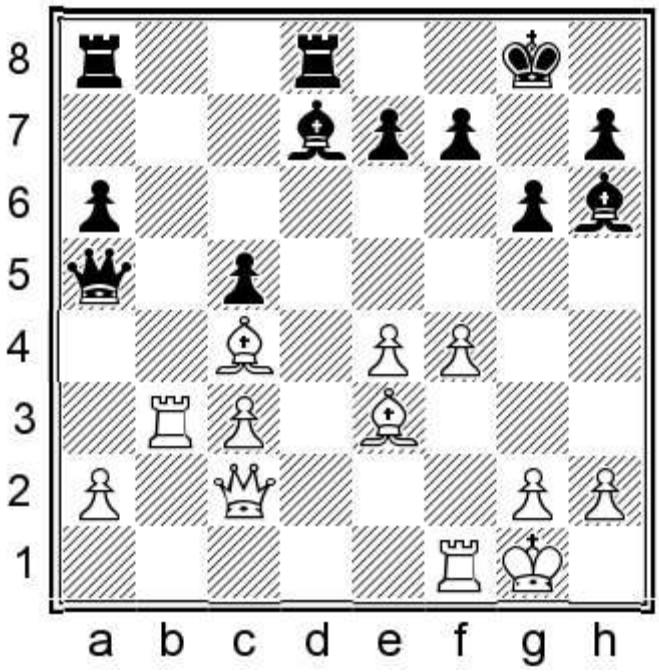
The improvement of the a3-knight is long overdue so White leads the knight to d5 via c3. 24...♕c7 25.♘c3 ♖ab8 26.♘d5 ♕e5! 27.♕c1 f6!=.



Position after: 27...f6!=

This position is dynamically balanced meaning that both sides have equal chances of winning. Black may want to lock the kingside and further secure the king's position after the thematic pawn move ...g6-g5.

20...♘xc4 21.♗xc4 ♗d7



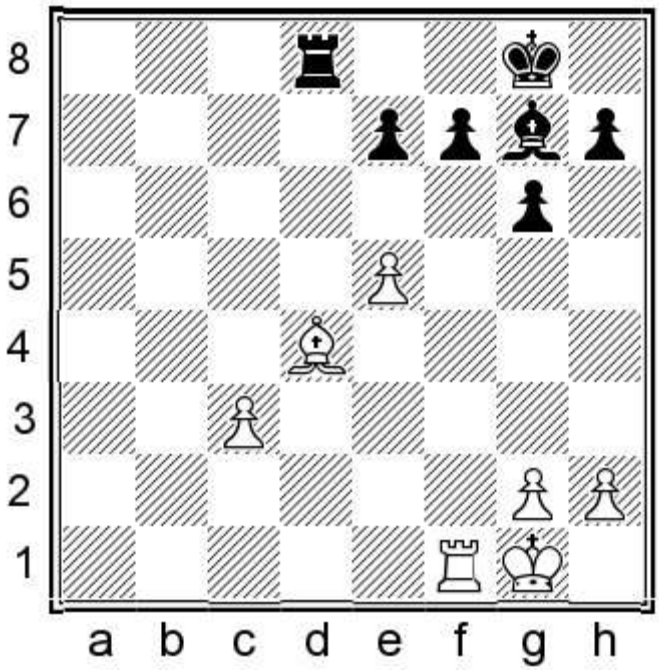
Position after: 21...♗d7

22.♕e2

Other moves don't promise as much.

A) 22.e5 e6=

B) 22.♕f2 ♗b5 23.♗xb5 axb5 24.♗xc5 ♕xa2 25.♕xa2 ♖xa2 26.♗d4 ♖e2 27.♖xb5 ♖xe4 28.♖e5 ♖xe5 29.fxe5 ♗g7=

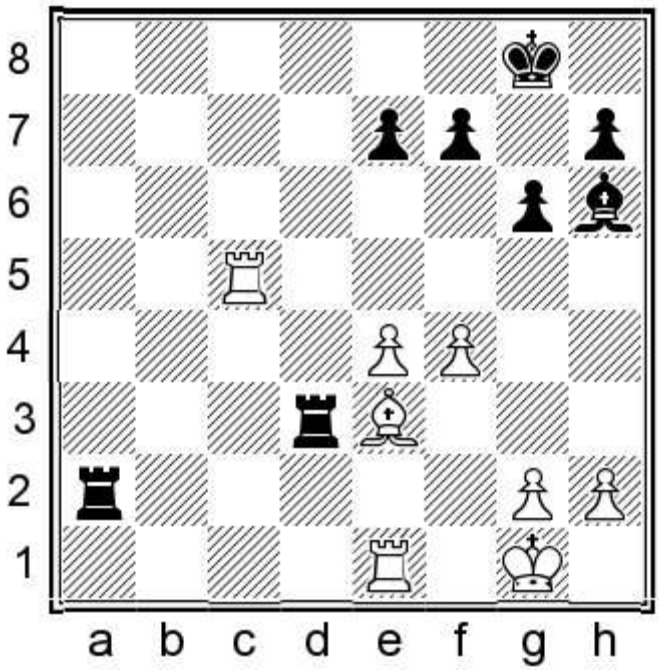


Position after: 29...♗g7=

22...♗b5!

We are happy to trade the light-squared bishops since our d7-bishop is clearly less active than White's c4-bishop. The ensuing trades significantly reduce the number of pieces on the board making a draw the most likely result.

23.♗xb5 axb5 24.♖xb5 ♕xc3 25.♖xc5 ♕d3 26.♕xd3 ♖xd3 27.♖e1 ♖xa2=



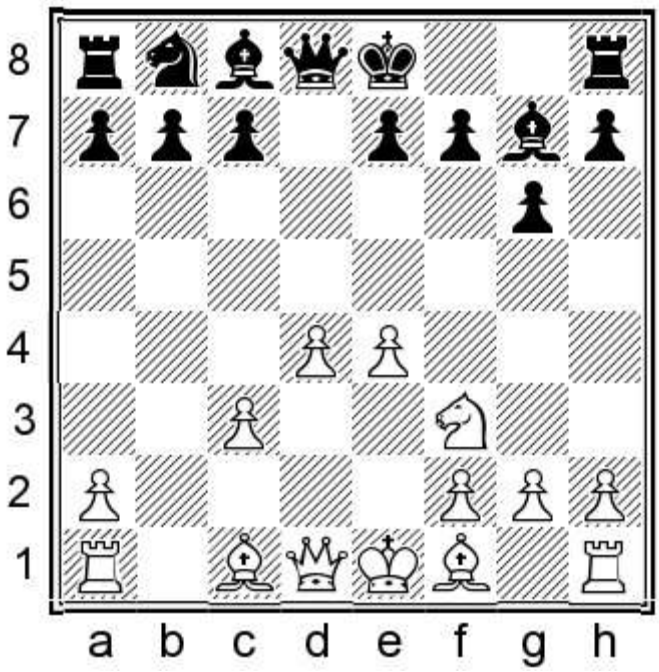
Position after: 27...♖xa2=

Black doesn't experience any problems in this endgame.

It is safe to say that most of the time such games would end in a draw. However, in the most optimistic scenario I could also picture Black successfully taking advantage of his temporary activity and squeezing a win out of the position.

Chapter 2
7.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 2 – 7.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5

a) 8.--

b) 8.h3

c) 8.♖b1

d) 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7 11.--

e) 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7 11.d5

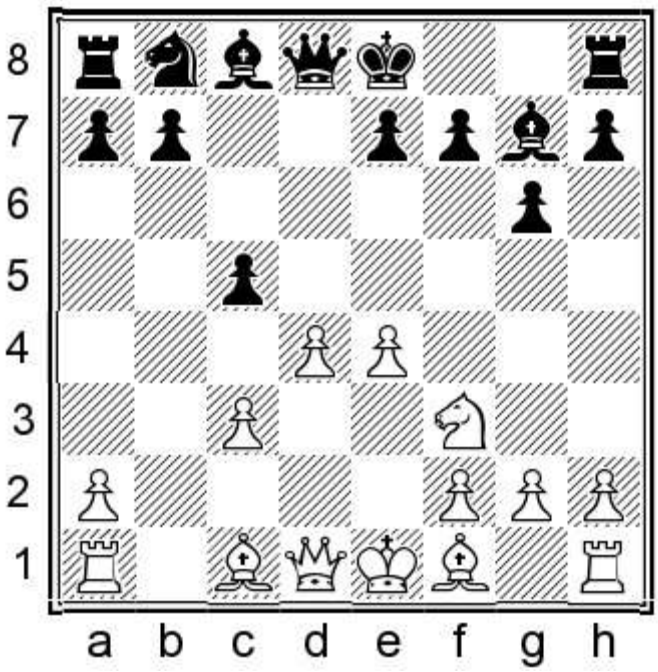
a) 8.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3

In the previous chapter we learned how to play against the “Classical system” where White develops the bishop on c4 and the knight on e2. In this chapter the pawn structure will be similar but the knight this time is going to develop on f3. Do not get mistaken by the similarities: when the knight is on f3 it

is a completely different beast compared to developing to e2. It significantly expands White's options enabling the light-squared bishop to develop on b5 and e2 in addition to c4 as we have seen before.

7...c5

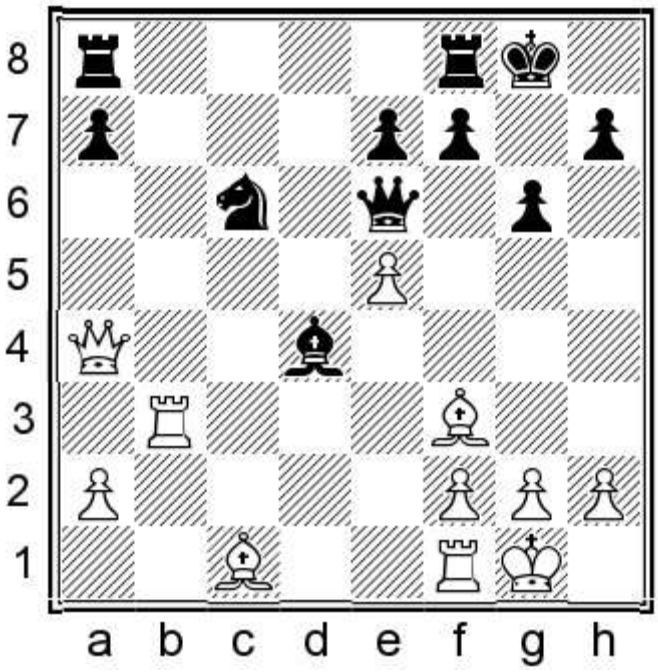


Position after: 7...c5

8.♗b5+

A tricky check which once caught me by complete surprise in 2017 in a game against GM Kacheishvili played in the chess capital of the United States: Saint Louis, Missouri. I did not respond correctly and got into huge trouble only managing to survive due to a lucky alignment of the stars in the sky (chess players tend to be pretty superstitious) and substantial help from my opponent (could be just that).

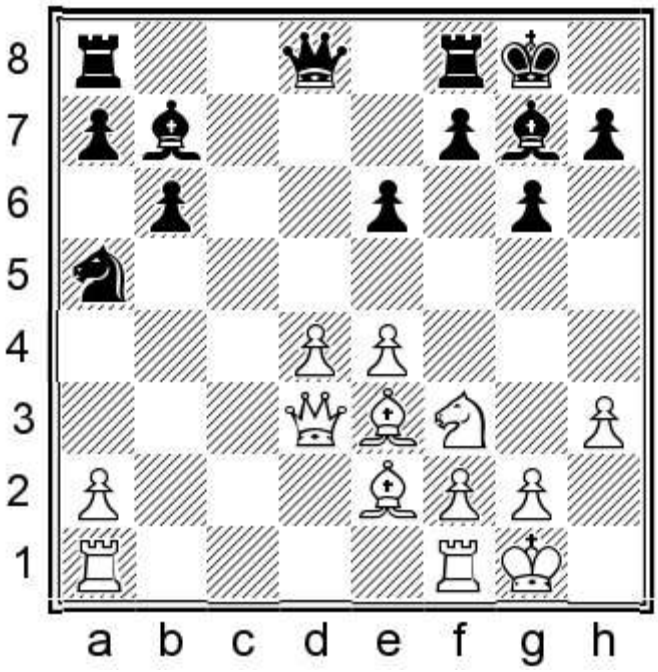
A) 8.♗e2 A bit too timid for my taste and does not causing Black too many problems. 8...♗g4 9.♖b1 0-0 10.0-0 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗xd4 13.♖xb7 ♘c6 14.♕a4 ♕c8 15.♖b3 ♕e6 16.e5



Position after: 16.e5

16...♖ac8! 17.♗xc6 ♕xc6 18.♕xd4 ♕xc1! Black exploits the weakness of the back rank. 19.e6 ♕c5 20.exf7+ ♖xf7= ½-½ (32) Andreikin, D (2719) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2763) St Petersburg 2018.

B) 8.♗c4 Usually, the bishop does not belong on c4 once White has developed the knight on f3. 8...0-0 9.h3 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♘a5 12.♗e2 b6 13.0-0 ♗b7 14.♕d3 e6=.

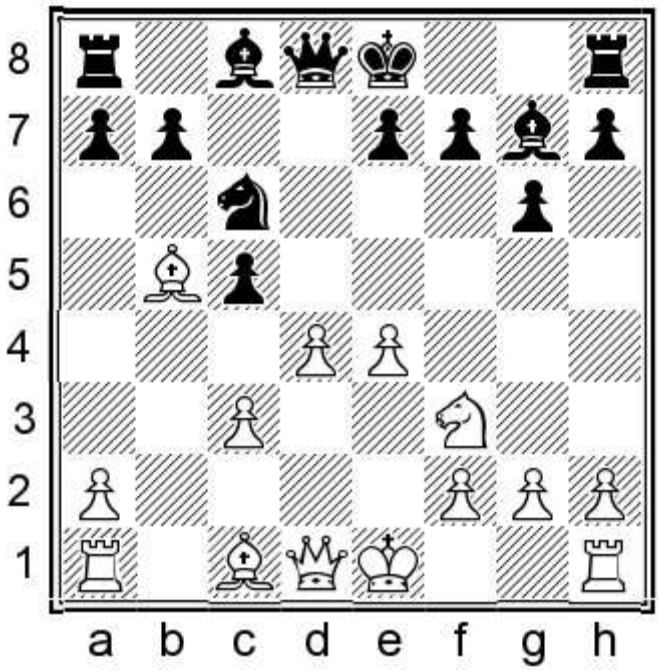


Position after: 14...e6=

We could keep going with the analysis but Black's position is so comfortable that further analysis is

not worth our time. I would simply state that the potential plan for Black could be ...♕d6, ...♖ac8, and ...♖fd8 with the idea to pressure White's center combined with pawn activity on the queenside with ...a6 and ...b5.

8...♘c6!

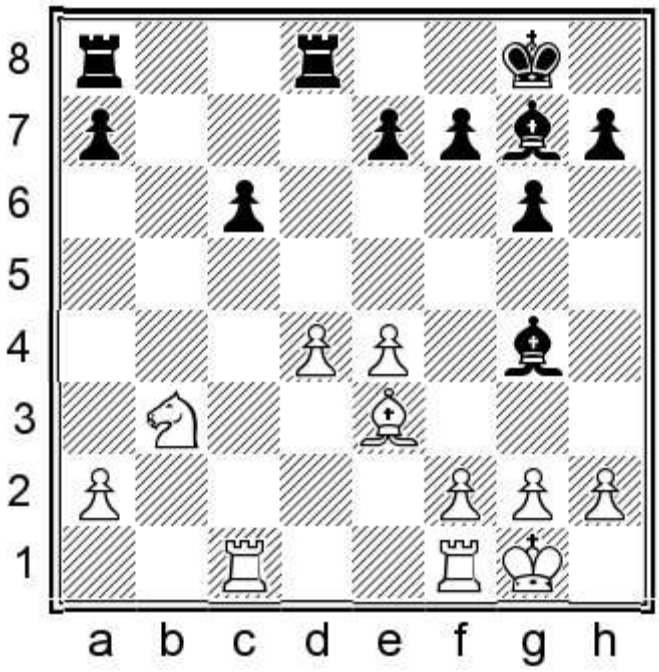


Position after: 8...♘c6!

Much less precise is 8...♗d7 9.♗e2! and now it is unclear what the bishop is doing on d7.

9.d5

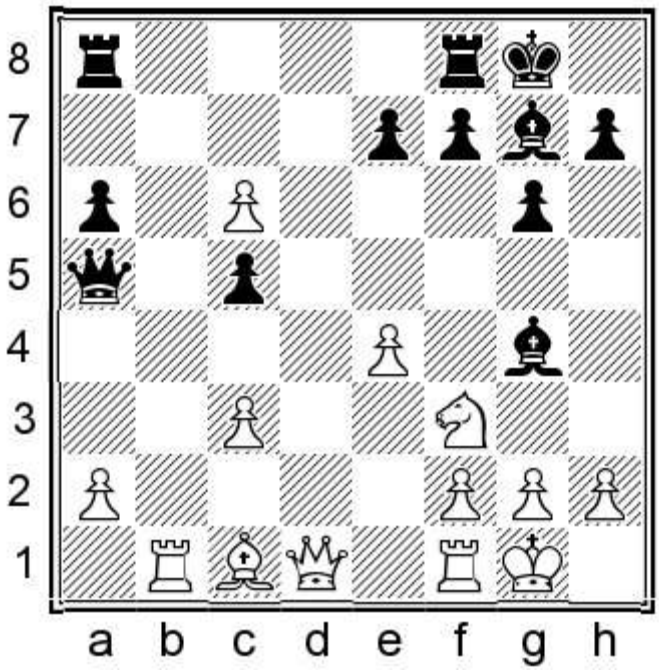
Pretty harmless is 9.0-0 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.♗e3 ♗g4 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♖c1 ♕a5 14.♕d2 ♕xd2 15.♘xd2 ♖fd8 16.♘b3



Position after: 16.♘b3

16...a5! We are preparing to attack the knight and capture the d4-pawn once the knight retreats. 17.♖xc6 a4 18.♘c5 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♖xd4 20.f3 ♖c8 21.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 22.♖c1 a3 23.♘b3 ♖d8 24.♖c7 ♗e6 25.♖a7 ♖d1+ 26.♔f2 ♗xb3 27.axb3 ♖d2+ ½-½ (27) Kramnik, V (2766) – Svidler, P (2728) Monte Carlo 2007.

9...♕a5 10.♖b1 a6 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 12.0-0 0-0 13.dxc6 ♗g4



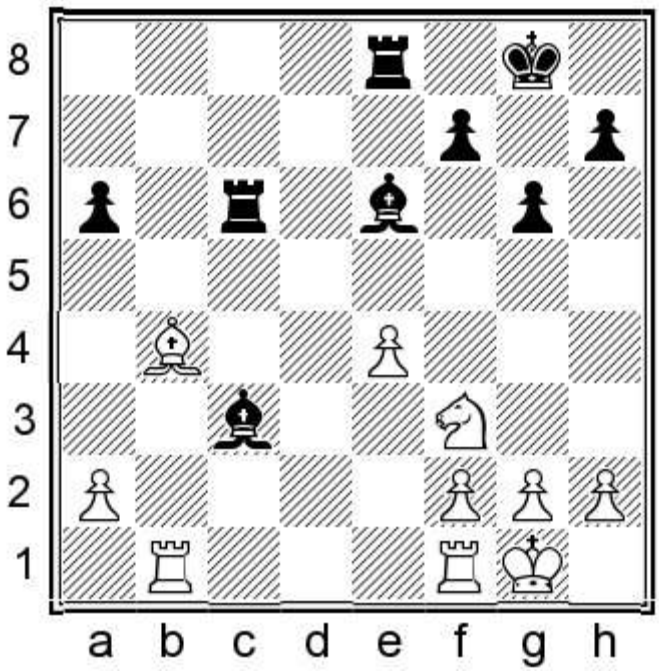
Position after: 13...♗g4

14.♗e3

A) 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♖ac8=

B) 14.♗f4 ♖ac8 15.c7 e5 16.♗e3 ♖xc7= ½-½ (31) Prasanna Raghuram, R (2458) – Muzychuk, A (2571) Caleta 2018.

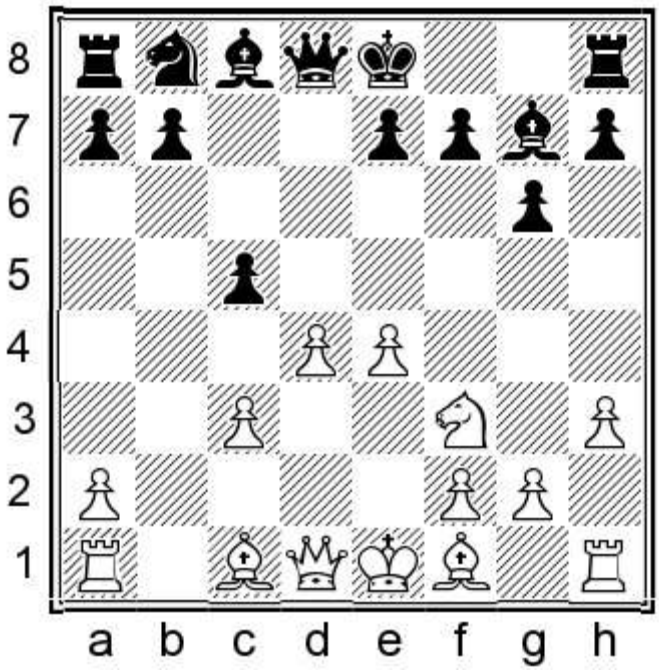
14...♖ac8 15.♕d5 ♗e6 16.♕xc5 ♕xc5 17.♗xc5 ♖xc6 18.♗xe7 ♖e8 19.♗b4 ♗xc3=



Position after: 19...♗xc3=

b) 8.h3

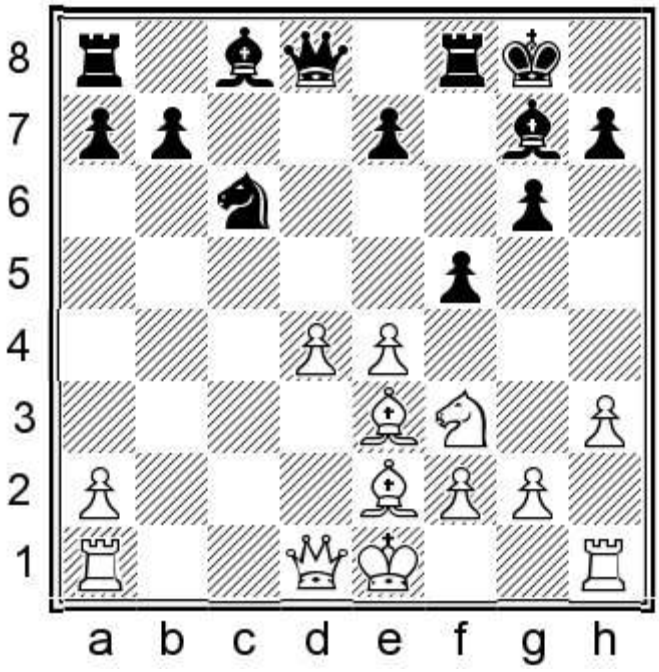
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.h3



Position after: 8.h3

White wants to keep the strong center and develop successfully while preventing Black's major idea ...♗c8-g4. While it certainly sounds like White wants a bit too much, Black still needs to know how to respond precisely. This makes the 8.h3 line an especially dangerous weapon for White in short time controls such as rapid and blitz. In these instances Black may not have sufficient time to recall how to counter White's opening plans.

8...0-0 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 f5!

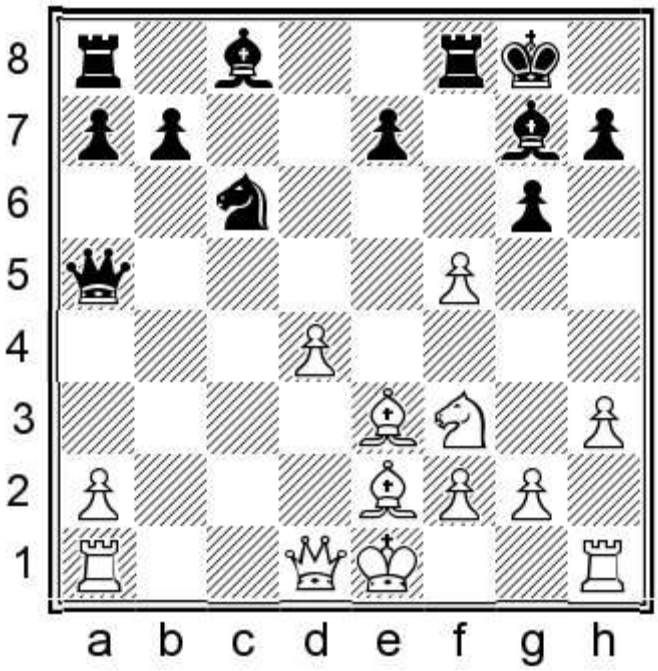


Position after: 11...f5!

The most effective way to target White's center. Remember the ...f7-f5 pawn push is one of the major ideas in the Grünfeld.

12.♗c4+

A) 12.exf5 ♕a5+!

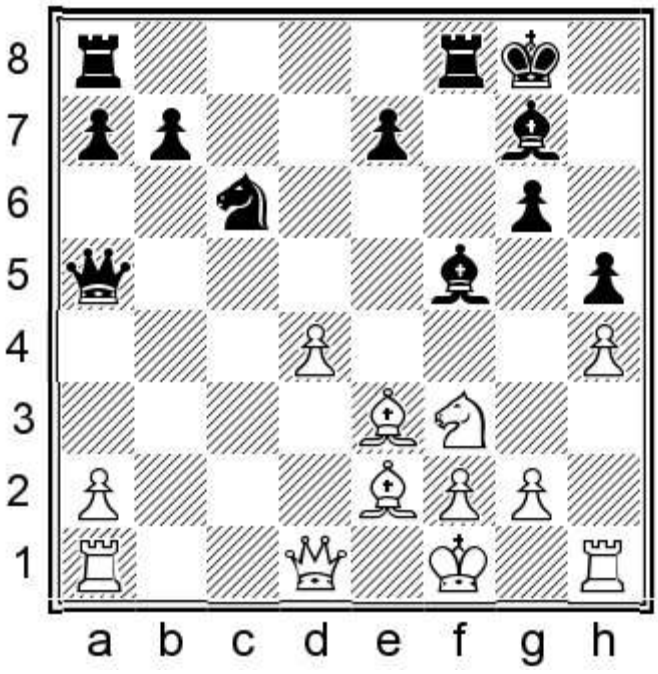


Position after: 12...♕a5+!

An important intermediate move. Prior to recapturing the f5-pawn we force White to make a choice between: a queen trade resulting in an equal endgame, playing ♔e1-f1 losing the right to castle or playing ♗e3-d2 weakening the defense of the d4-pawn.

A1) In case White prefers to castle Black doesn't need to worry about a typical h3-h4-h5 pawn push with some attack on the black king as there is no support from the rook on h1! 13.♗d2 ♕xf5 14.0-0 [14.♗c3 ♗e6 15.0-0 ♗d5∓] 14...♗e6 15.♗e3 ♗d5=

A2) 13.♔f1 ♗xf5 14.h4 [14.♕b3+ ♔h8 15.♖d1 0-1 (34) Korniushin, N (2470) – Yandemirov, V (2472) Tomsk 2001. 15...♖ad8 16.d5 ♘e5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♕xb7 ♖d7 19.♕a6 ♖xd5 20.♕xa5 ♖xa5 21.♗c4 ♖c8=] 14...h5!

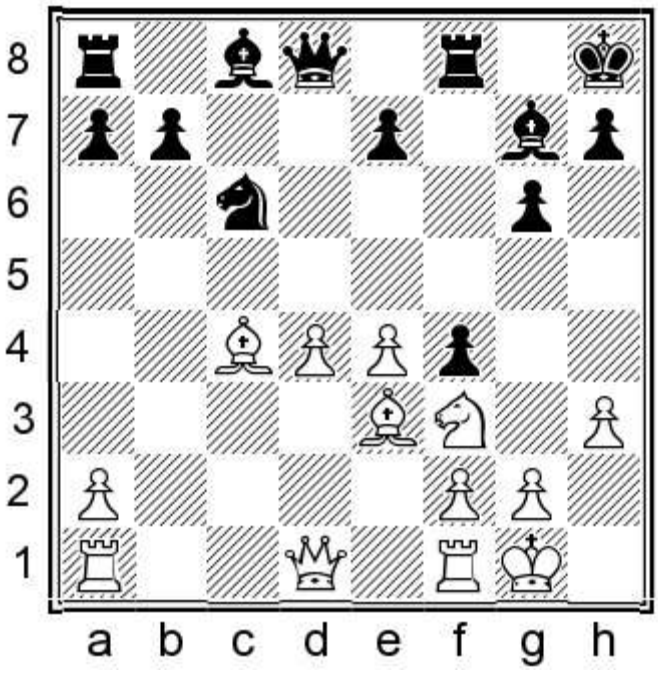


Position after: 14...h5!

Another typical Grünfeld idea. If you have already castled and have most of your pieces in the game then you should prevent White's h-pawn march with ...h7-h5. 15.♕b3+ ♔h8 16.♕xb7 ♗e4 17.♖h3 ♖ab8 18.♕a6 ♕xa6 19.♗xa6 ♗xf3 20.♖xf3 ♖xf3 21.gxf3 ♘xd4=.

B) Surprisingly, nobody has ever played 12.e5 even once! Black obtains comfortable play by establishing light square control after 12...♗e6 13.0-0 ♗d5=.

12...♔h8 13.0-0 f4

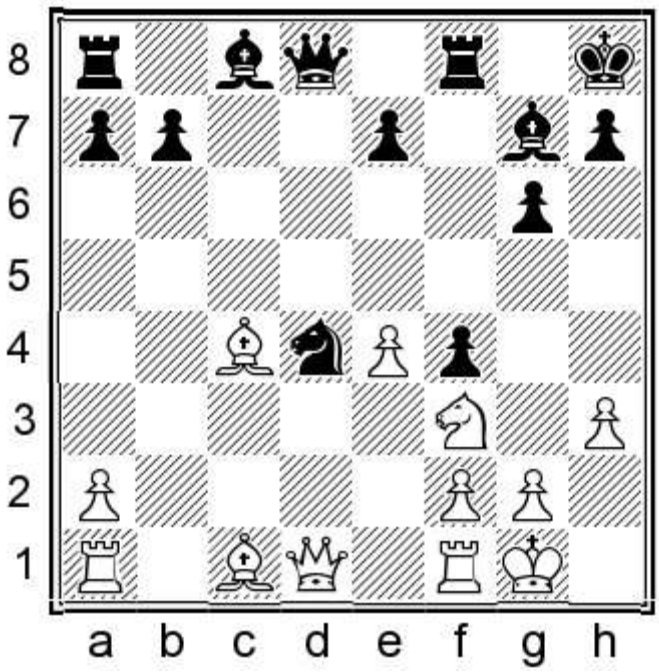


Position after: 13...f4

14.♗d2

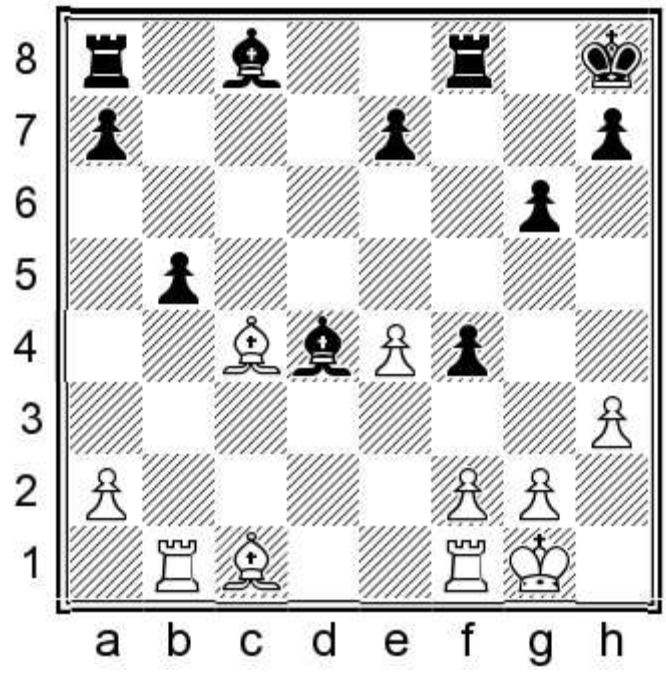
The main move, which was played 3 times more than the alternative 14.♗c1. White loses the d4-pawn but has full compensation by playing against Black's undeveloped queenside bishop and rook.

14.♗c1 A very fresh move which represents White's latest effort to test Black. 14...♘xd4



Position after: 14...♘xd4

A) 15.♘xd4 ♕xd4 16.♕xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖b1 b5! The most effective way to fight any gambit: accept a sacrifice and then give it back whenever it is the most appropriate!

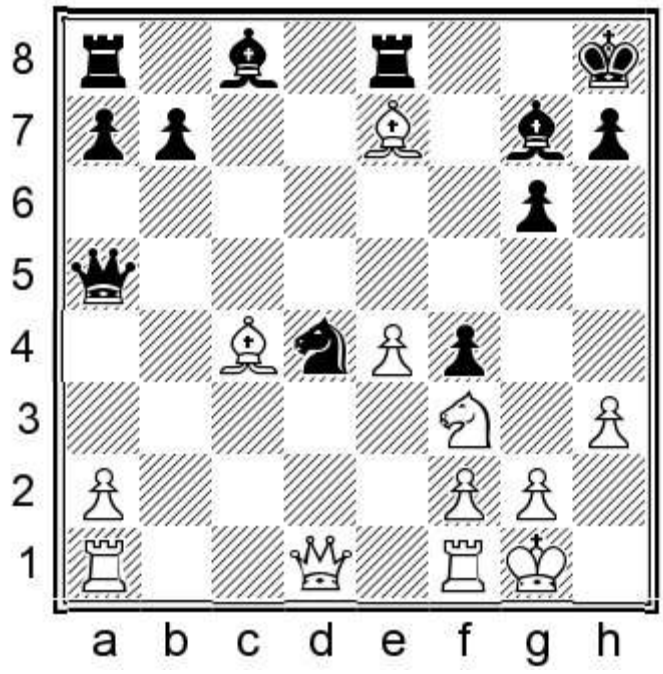


Position after: 17...b5!

18.♗d5 [18.♗xb5 ♗e6 19.♖d1 ♗e5 20.♗c6 ♖ab8 21.♖xb8 ♖xb8 22.♗d5 ♗xd5 23.♖xd5 ♗c7=; 18.♖xb5 ♗a6 19.♖b4 ♗xc4 20.♖xc4 e5 21.♗d2 ♖ad8=] 18...♖b8 19.♗a3 ♗f6 20.♖fc1 a5 21.♖c7 b4 22.♗b2 ♗xb2 23.♖xb2 e6 24.♗b3 ♖a8=. White obviously has full compensation for the sacrificed d4-pawn due to some activity but not more than that. Black is safe and can continue by playing ...♖f8-g8-g7 and ...a5 with ...a4 later.

B) 15.♖b1 b5! The most energetic and the only way to equalize the chances. 16.♗d5 ♘xf3+ 17.♕xf3 ♖b8 18.♗a3 a5 19.♗c5 ♕d7 20.♖fd1 ♗b7 The d5-bishop is way too active so it makes perfect sense to trade it off. Note that we don't even try to hold on to an extra pawn as it would severely limit the mobility of our pieces. 21.♕a3 ♗xd5 22.exd5 ♖bc8 23.d6 [23.♗xe7?? b4–+] 23...exd6 24.♗xd6 ♖f5 25.♕xa5 ♕c6=

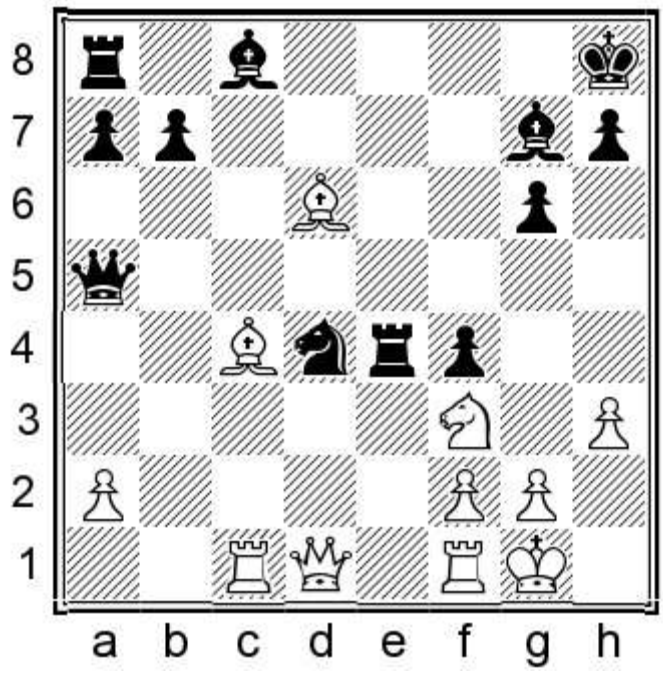
C) 15.♗a3 ♕a5 16.♗xe7 ♖e8



Position after: 16...♖e8

C1) 17.♘xd4 ♖xe7 18.♖c1 ♖xe4 19.♘b5 ♗e6 20.♗xe6 ♕xb5 21.♗c8 ♖d4 22.♕g4 ♕e8 23.♖fe1 ♕f8 24.♗xb7 ½-½ (24) Erdos, V (2612) – Ragger, M (2696) Skopje 2019. White decided not to push any longer. The game could have continued like this: 24...♖e8 25.♖xe8 ♕xe8 26.♖c8 ♖d8 27.♖xd8 ♕xd8 28.♕xf4 ♗d4 29.g3 ♔g7=. Despite an extra pawn White can't make much progress here due to the opposite colored bishops. The simplest option for Black is to follow up with ...♕d8-f6 and the game is absolutely drawn once the queens are gone.

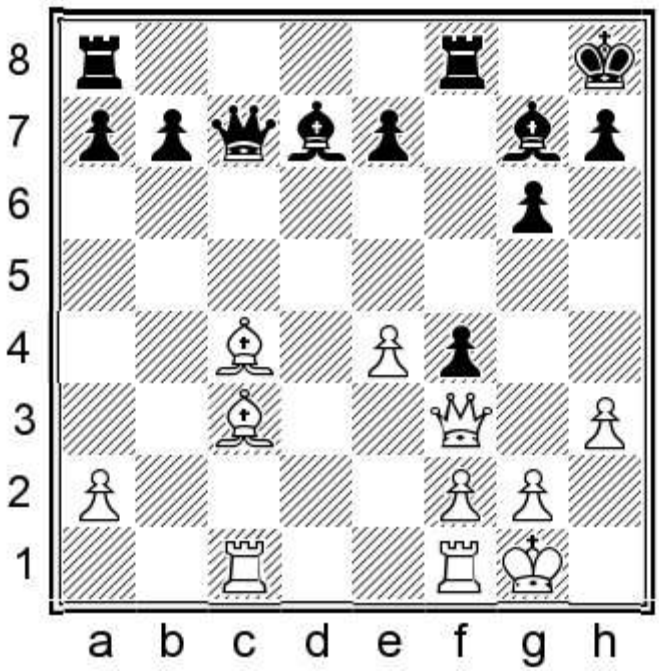
C2) 17.♗d6 ♖xe4 18.♖c1



Position after: 18.♖c1

18...♗d7!N An important novelty and a huge improvement to a relatively recent game from MVL. [18...♕d8? 0-1 (79) Van Foreest, J (2618) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2780) La Roche sur Yon 2019. A rising star of Dutch chess missed a lifetime opportunity to get a decisive advantage against a top 10 player: 19.♗c5! ♘xf3+ 20.♕xf3 ♗f5 21.♖fd1 ♕g5 22.♗d5 ♖ee8 23.♗xb7 ♖ad8 24.♗xa7+–.] 19.♗c7! ♕xc7 20.♗d3 ♘e2+ 21.♗xe2 ♕d8 22.♗c4 ♗e8 23.♕b3 ♖e7 24.♗d5 a5 25.♖fd1 ♖d7=

14...♘xd4 15.♗c3 ♘xf3+ 16.♕xf3 ♕c7 17.♖ac1 ♗d7

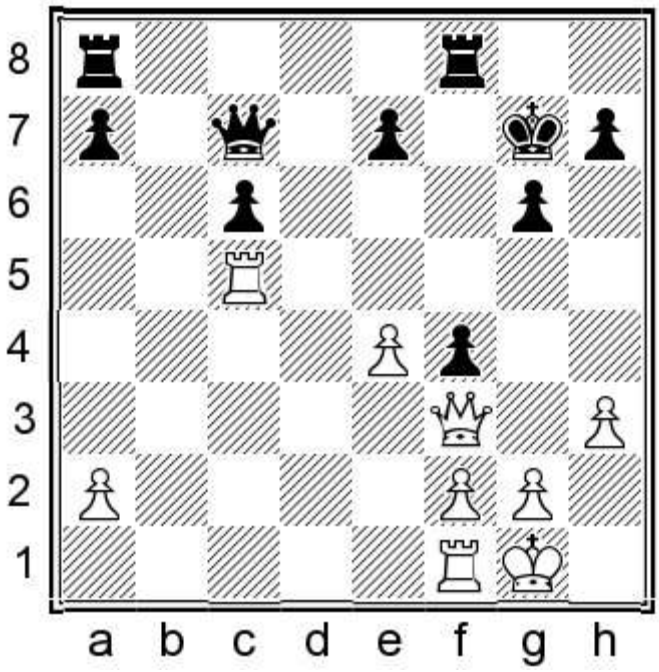


Position after: 17...♗d7

18.♗b5

White also tried 18.♖fd1 in a 2015 correspondence game. A quick opening tip: following correspondence games is a great way to save time on opening analysis since both players have already analyzed everything with the chess engines! 18...♗c6 19.♗d5 ♖ad8 20.♗b4 a5 21.♗e1 ♖d6 22.♕a3 ♖a8 23.♖c5 a4 24.♖dc1 h5 25.♗c3 e5 26.♕b2 a3 27.♕b5 ♕d7 28.♕b3 ♗xd5 29.♖xd5 ♖c8 30.♖e1 ½-½ Napalkov, V (2513) – Yloenen, O (2473) ICCF email 2015.

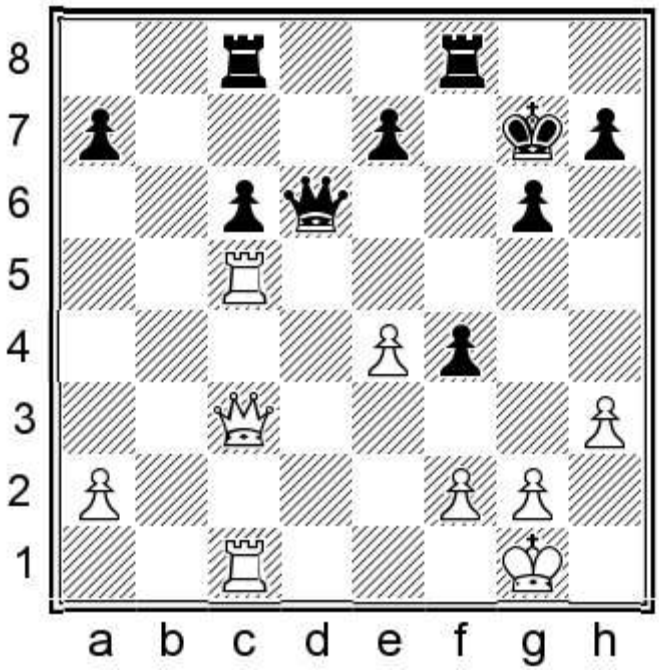
18...♗c6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 21.♖c5



Position after: 21.♖c5

21...♖ad8

Also playable but a bit less attractive option is 21...♖ac8 22.♖fc1 ♕d6 23.♕c3+



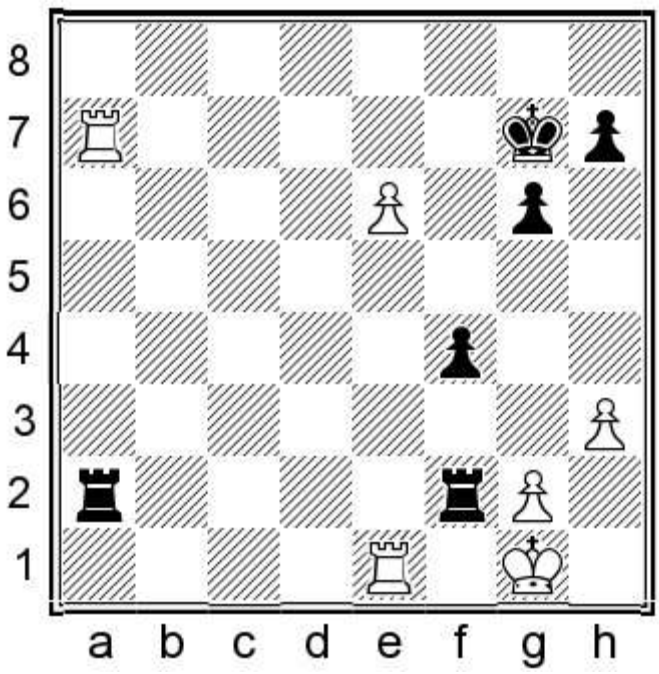
Position after: 23.♕c3+

A) 23...♕f6=

B) GM Svidler, Grünfeld expert and one of the top players in the world, has attempted the fancy

looking 23...♔f7!? and successfully defended. I believe his task may have been a lot harder if White was less content with a draw. 24.h4 ♕f6 25.♕xf6+ exf6 26.♖xc6 ♖xc6 27.♖xc6 ♖e8 28.♖a6 ♖xe4 29.♖xa7+ ♔e6 30.h5 gxh5 31.♖xh7 ½-½ Wagner, D (2501) – Svidler, P (2739) Gibraltar 2015.

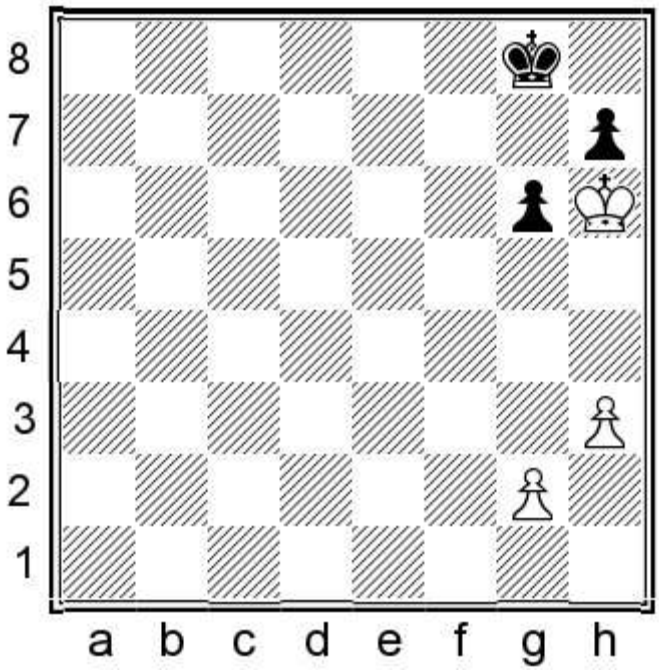
22.♕c3+ ♖f6 23.e5 ♖f5 24.♖e1 ♕d7 25.♖xc6 ♕d2 26.♕xd2 ♖xd2 27.♖c7 ♖xa2 28.♖xe7+ ♖f7 29.♖e8 ♖c7 30.e6 ♖cc2 31.♖a8 ♖xf2 32.♖xa7+



Position after: 32.♖xa7+

½-½ Gefenas, V (2473) – Murray, T (2556) ICCF email 2015. The correspondence players agreed to a draw and rightfully so. The game is heading to a drawn pawn endgame.

32...♖xa7 33.♔xf2 ♔f6 34.♔f3 ♖e7 35.♔xf4 ♖xe6 36.♖xe6+ ♔xe6 37.♔g5 ♔f7 38.♔h6 ♔g8=

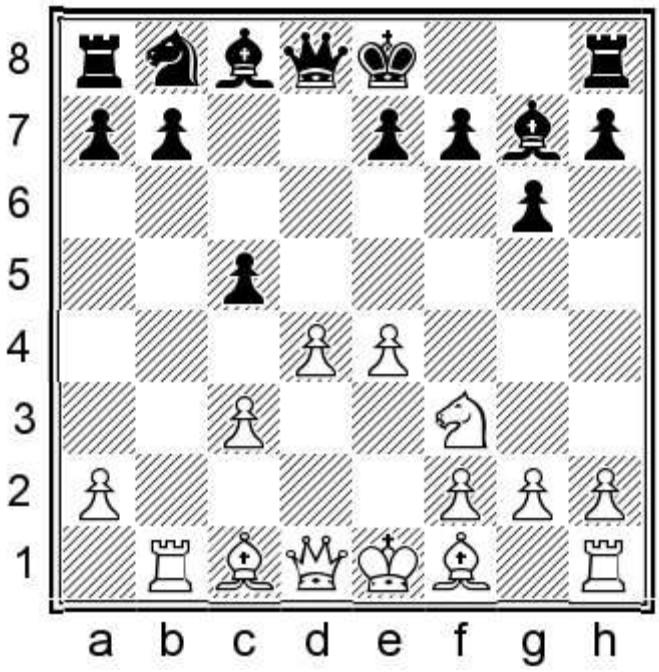


Position after: 38...♔g8=

Draw! Welcome to modern opening analysis: Grandmasters often analyze until the result of the game is clear.

c) 8.♖b1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♖b1

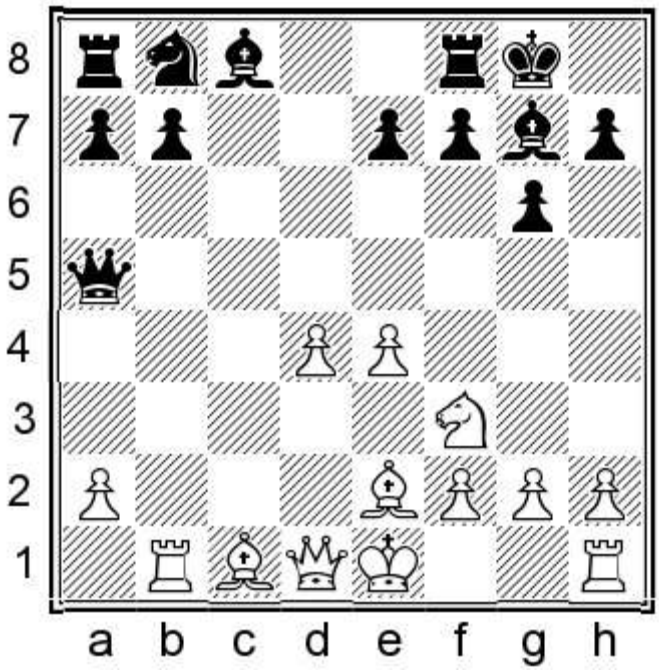


Position after: 8.♖b1

Another major move which requires a lot of knowledge from both sides. In general I would not say that any of the ensuing lines are too challenging for Black. The challenge rather lies in the volume of information that we will need to learn and memorize. On the bright side, once you get the work done, you will be confident enough to face any opponent over the board and won't need to change your opening for years!

Here are some of the key takeaways from the upcoming lines to make your job easier: 1) As usual, the queen trade is good for Black. 2) We will initially win the a2-pawn but we shouldn't hold on to our extra material for too long. The smart decision would be to finish development with ...♘c6 and ...♗g4 thus giving up the b7-pawn but obtaining active play. 3) The "quarterback" (the most important player using an analogy with American football) for Black is the a-pawn. It is always a good idea to push it as far as our opponent allows us.

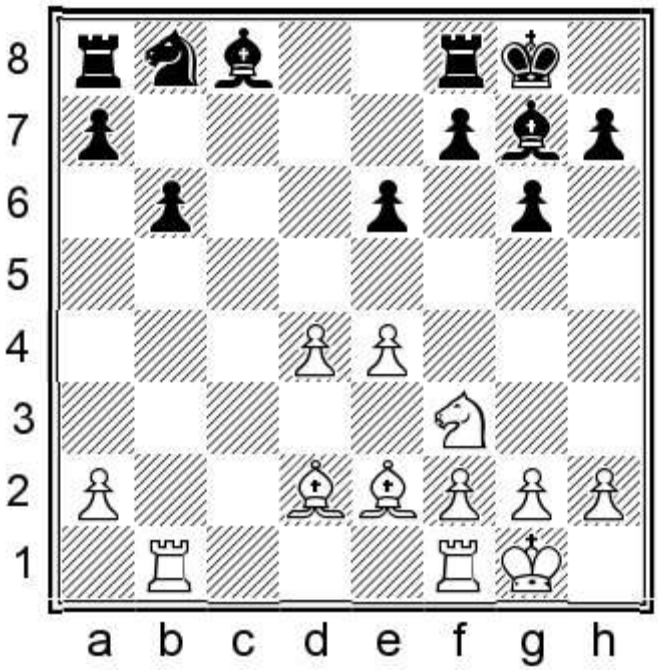
8...0-0 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♕a5+



Position after: 10...♕a5+

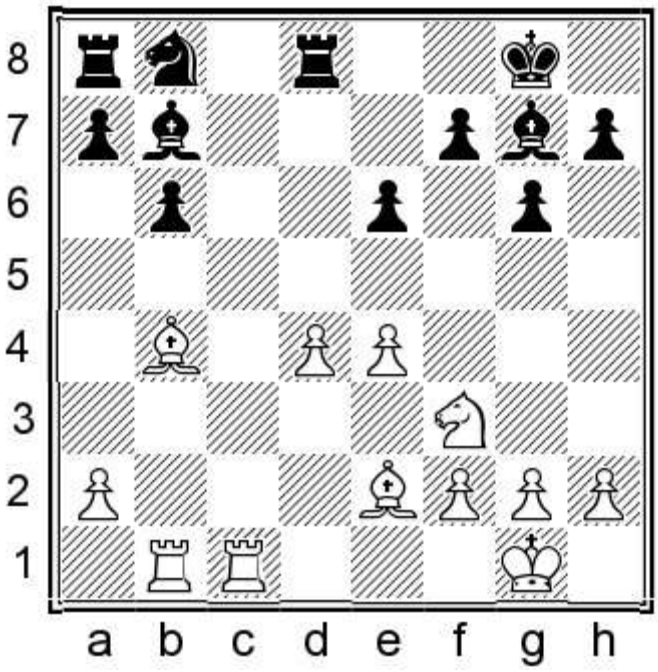
11.♗d2

11.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 12.♗xd2 e6 it is imperative to not allow the appearance of White's pawn on d5 whenever the queens are off the board! In my opinion this queenless middlegame does not carry any great amount of risk for Black. 13.0-0 b6



Position after: 13...b6

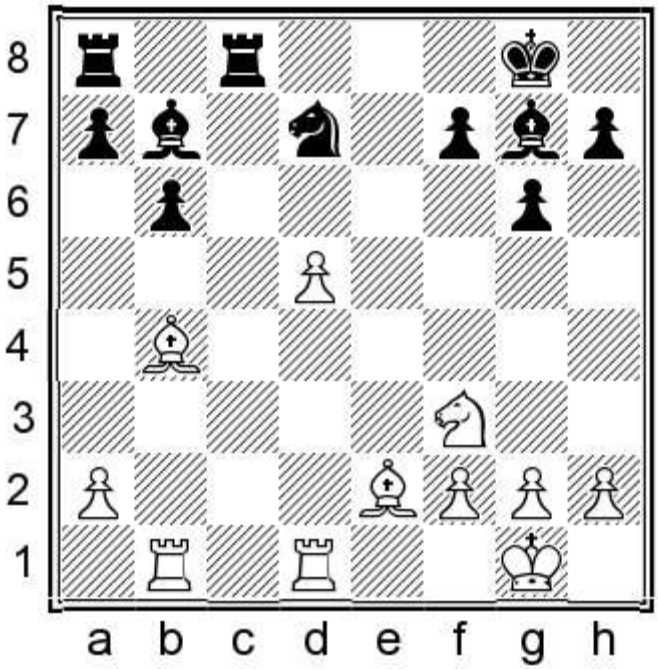
A) White may put Black to a test after 14.♖fc1!?. I would strongly recommend memorizing the following forcing moves in order to get at least equal chances without too much effort. 14...♗b7 15.♗b4 ♖d8



Position after: 15...♖d8

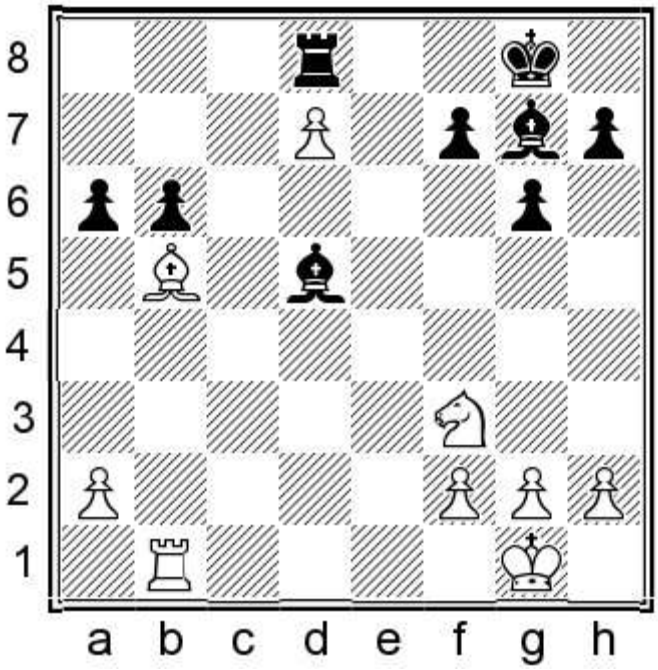
16.♗b5 [16.♖c7 ♗xe4 17.♖bc1 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♗f6 19.♗e7 ♗xe7 20.♖xe7 ♘d7 21.♖c7 ♘f8 22.♖xf7 ♖xd4 23.f4 a5 24.♖g7+ ♔h8 25.♖gf7 ♔g8=] 16...♗h6! 17.♗e7 ♗xc1 18.♗xd8 ♗h6=

B) 14.♖fd1 ♗b7 15.d5 exd5 16.exd5 ♘d7 17.♗b4 ♖fc8



Position after: 17...♖fc8

18.♗b5 [18.♗e7 ♗f6 19.d6 ♔g7= ½ – ½ (36) Karpov, A (2700) – Kasparov, G (2740) Seville 1987] 18...♘f6 19.d6 ♘d5 20.d7 ♖d8 21.♖xd5 ♗xd5 22.♗e7 a6 23.♗xd8 ♖xd8

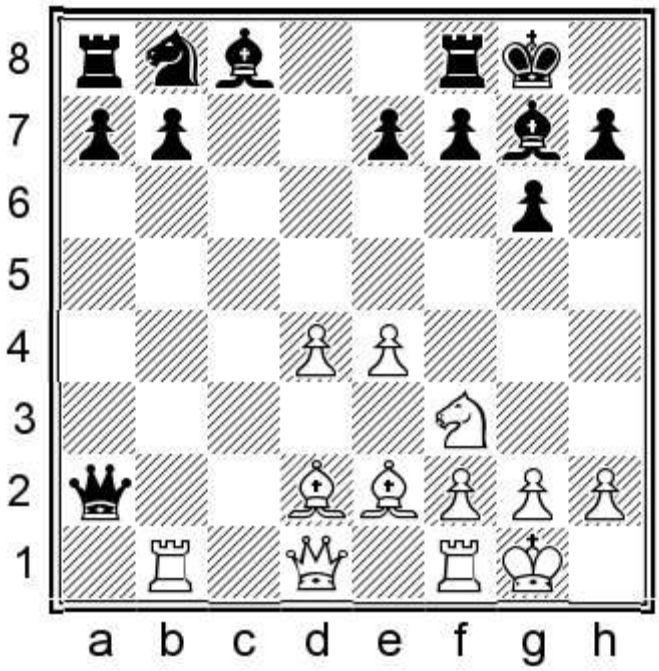


Position after: 23...♖xd8

24.♗xa6 [24.♖e1 ♗e6 25.♗xa6 ♗xd7∓] 24...♖xd7 25.♖xb6 ♗xa2 26.g3=

C) 14.♖bc1 ♗b7 15.♗b4 ♖d8 16.♗b5 ♗a6 17.a4 ♗xb5 18.axb5 a6=

11...♕xa2 12.0-0



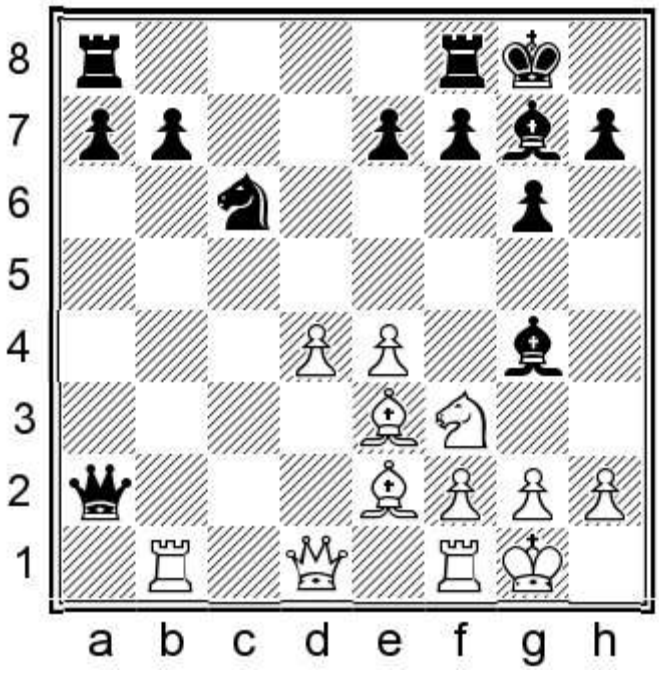
Position after: 12.0-0

12...♗g4

For those who have a great appetite for risk and are willing to gamble a little I suggest the following line: 12...b6!? 13.♕c1 ♗b7 14.♗c4 ♕a4 15.♗b5 ♕a2 16.♖e1 ♖c8 17.♕d1 ♕c2 18.♕e2 ♘c6!? and Black should be alright. Just do not blunder your queen!

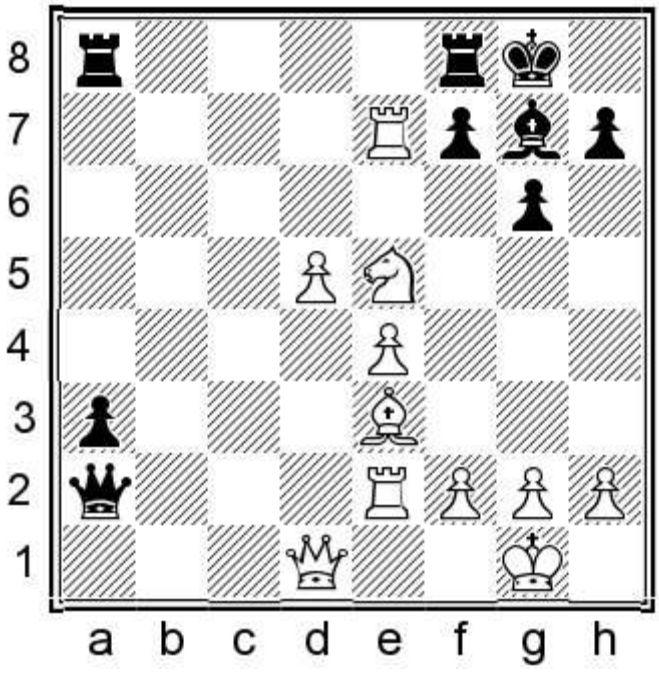
13.♗g5

A) 13.♗e3 ♘c6



Position after: 13...♘c6

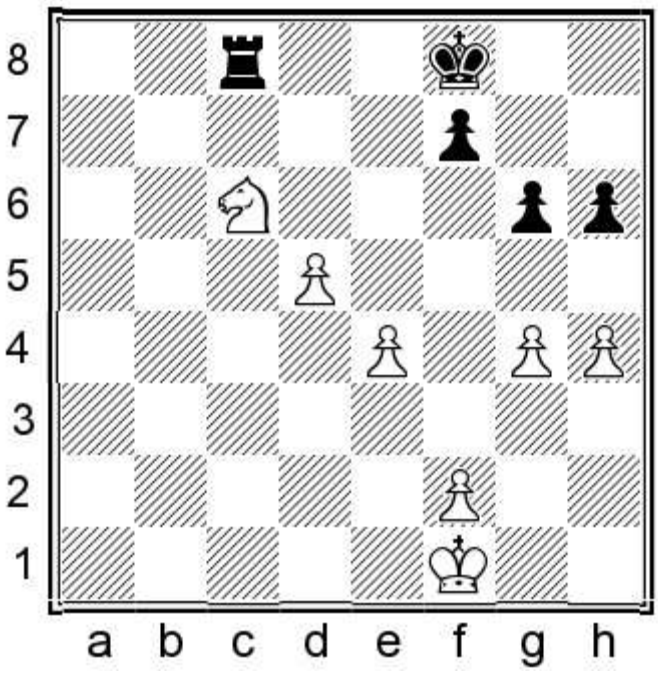
A1) 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♖xb7 a5 The a-pawn is on the move! As mentioned before, it is the most important player for Black in the whole 8.♖b1 variation. Without the passed pawn, Black would have been suffering tremendously. 16.♖xe7 a4 17.♖e1 [17.♗d4 ♘xf3+ 18.♗xf3 ♗xf3 19.gxf3 ♗xd4 20.♕xd4 a3 21.d6 ♕b2=] 17...a3 18.♘xe5 ♗xe2 19.♖xe2



Position after: 19.♖xe2

19...♕xe2 A temporary queen sacrifice aids Black with the promotion of the a-pawn. 20.♕xe2 a2

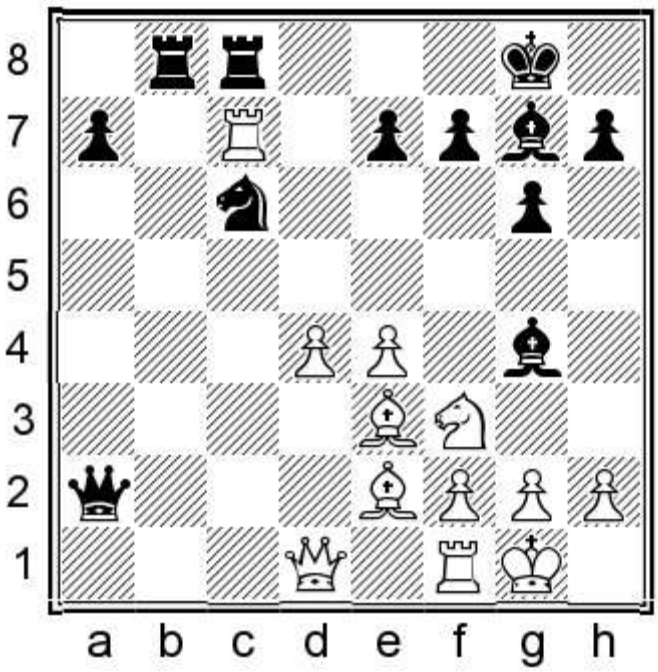
21.♗d4 a1=♕+ 22.♗xa1 ♖xa1+ 23.♕f1 ♖xf1+ 24.♔xf1 ♗f6 The bishop forces White to part with the rook. 25.♘c6 ♗xe7 26.♘xe7+ ♔g7 27.♘c6 ♖c8 28.g4 h6 29.h4 ♔f8



Position after: 29...♔f8

This endgame should be drawn. To my knowledge, Caruana was still following his preparations up to here. 30.h5 gxh5 31.gxh5 ♖a8 32.♔g2 ♖a1 33.f3 ♖d1 34.♘e5 f5= ½-½ (51) Karjakin, S (2772) – Caruana, F (2783) Shamkir 2014.

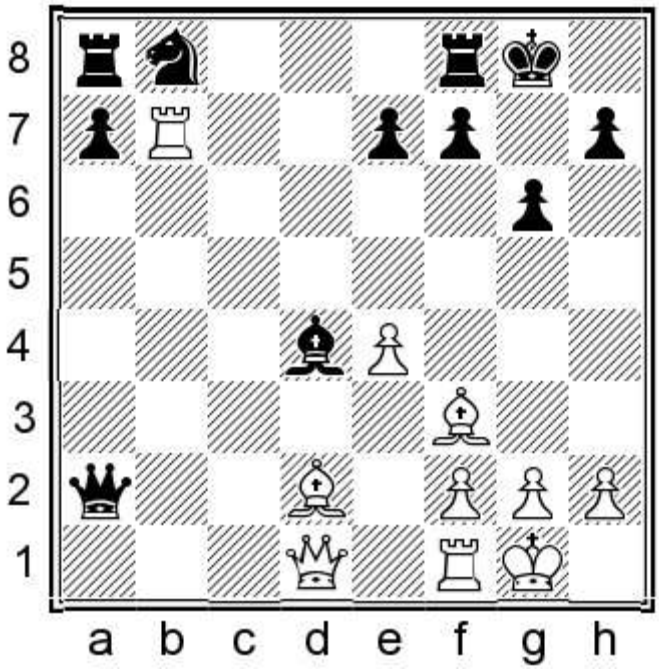
A2) 14.♖xb7 ♖ab8 15.♖c7 ♖fc8



Position after: 15...♖fc8

Since White's rook is overly active on the 7th rank our first priority is to get rid of it by "making an offer he can't refuse". 16.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♖d8 19.d5 ♘e5 20.♕c1 [20.♗e2 e6 21.♖e1 exd5 22.exd5 ♖xd5=] 20...♘c4 21.♗g5 ♖e8 22.♕b1 ♕xb1 23.♖xb1 a5 24.♖c1 ♘d6 25.♖c7 ♖a8 26.♗xe7 ♗e5 27.♗xd6 ♗xd6 28.♖c6 a4 29.♗e2 a3 30.♗c4 ♗e5 31.♗a2 ♖a4 ½-½ (31) Onischuk, A (2662) – Volokitin, A (2639) Baku 2015.

B) 13.♖xb7 Surprisingly enough, this most natural-looking move is also the least challenging for Black. 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗xd4

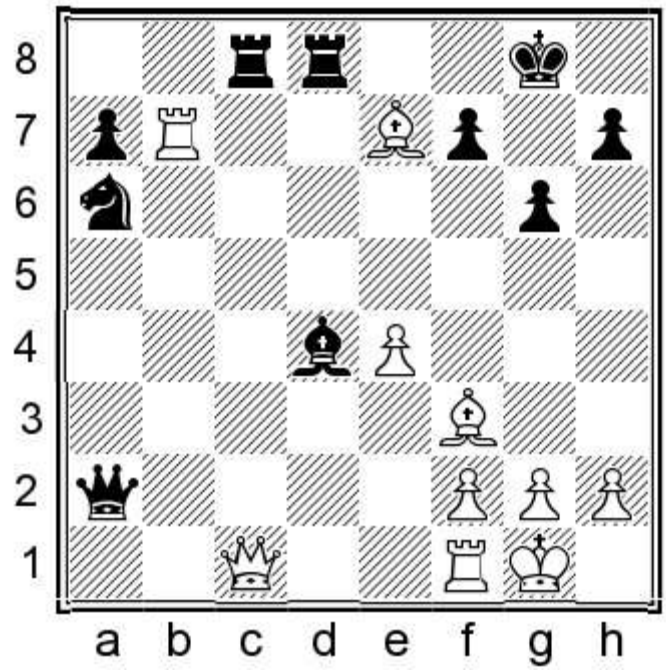


Position after: 14...♗xd4

B1) 15.e5 ♘a6 16.♖xe7 [16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.fxe3 ♖ad8 18.♕a1 ♕xa1 19.♖xa1 ♘c5 20.♖xe7 ♖fe8 21.♖axa7 ♖xe7 22.♖xe7 ♔f8 23.♖a7 ♖e8 24.♗d5 ♖e7 25.♖a8+ ♔g7 26.e6 ♘xe6= ½-½ (31) Ponkratov, P (2624) – Riazantsev, A (2678) Khanty-Mansiysk 2014; 16.♗g5 ♖ad8 17.♕b1 ♕xb1 18.♖fxb1 ♘c5 19.♖xe7 ♘e6=] 16...♖ad8 17.♕e2 ♗c5 18.♗g5 ♕xe2 19.♗xe2 ♗xe7 20.♗xe7 ♘c7 21.♗xd8 ♖xd8 22.♖a1 ♖d5 23.♖xa7 ♖xe5 24.♖xc7 ♖xe2= ½-½ (30) Pulvett Marin, D (2405) – Flores Rios, M (2492) Barbera del Valles 2013.

B2) 15.♖xe7 ♘c6 16.♖d7 ♗g7 17.♖d5 ♘d4=

B3) 15.♗b4 ♖d8 16.♕c1 [Of course not 16.♗xe7?? because of 16...♗xf2+ and Black wins the queen.] 16...♘a6 The knight is temporarily being developed to an awkward position on a6. However, our plans include improving the knight's living arrangements very soon by moving it to c5. 17.♗xe7 ♖ac8

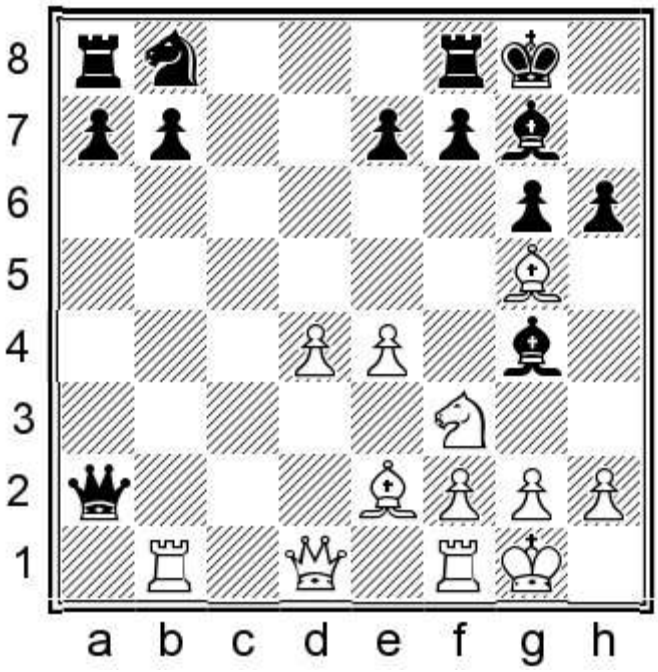


Position after: 17...♖ac8

18.♕f4 [18.♕g5 ♘c5 19.♗xc5 ♗xc5 20.♗g4 ♖d2 21.♖xf7 ♔xf7 22.♗xc8 ♗xf2+ 23.♔h1 ♕c4 24.♕f4+ ♔g7 25.♕e5+ ♔h6 26.♕f4+ ½-½ (28) Radjabov, T (2713) – Caruana, F (2783) Shamkir 2014] 18...♘c5 19.♗xd8 ♘xb7 20.♗f6 ♗xf6 21.♕xf6 ♘c5= ½ – ½ (41) Aronian, L (2815) – Svidler, P (2753) Stavanger 2014.

C) 13.d5 ♘d7 14.♖xb7 ♖fb8 15.♕b1 ♕xb1 16.♖fxb1 ♖xb7 17.♖xb7 ♘c5 18.♖xe7 ♗f8 19.♖c7 ♘xe4= ½-½ (24) Ivanov, S (2440) – Lukin, A (2435) St Petersburg 1992.

13...h6

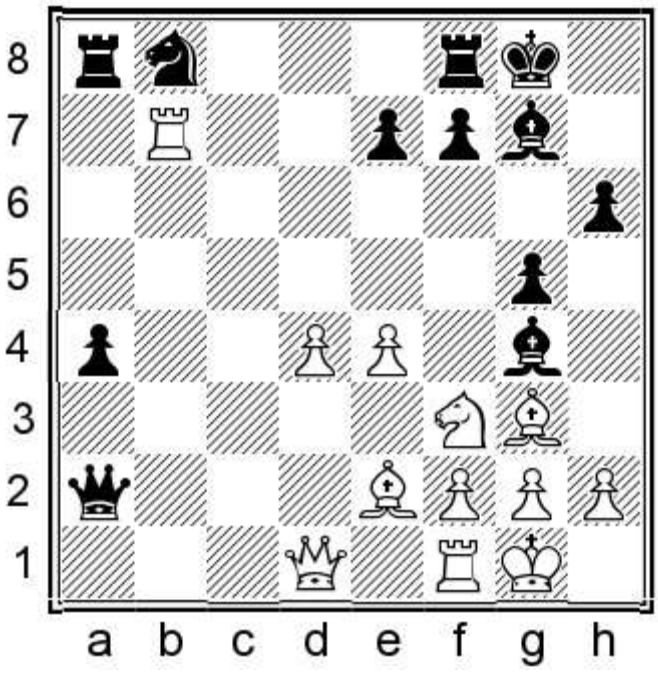


Position after: 13...h6

The philosophy of modern day Grandmasters: if they attack you, attack back immediately! Only the lesser experienced players tend to stick to passive defense.

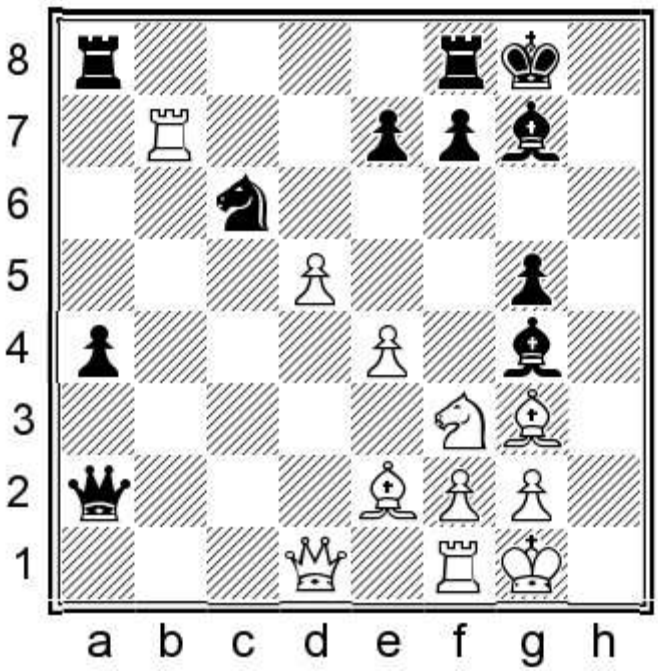
14.♗e3

A) 14.♗h4 a5 15.♖xb7 g5 16.♗g3 a4



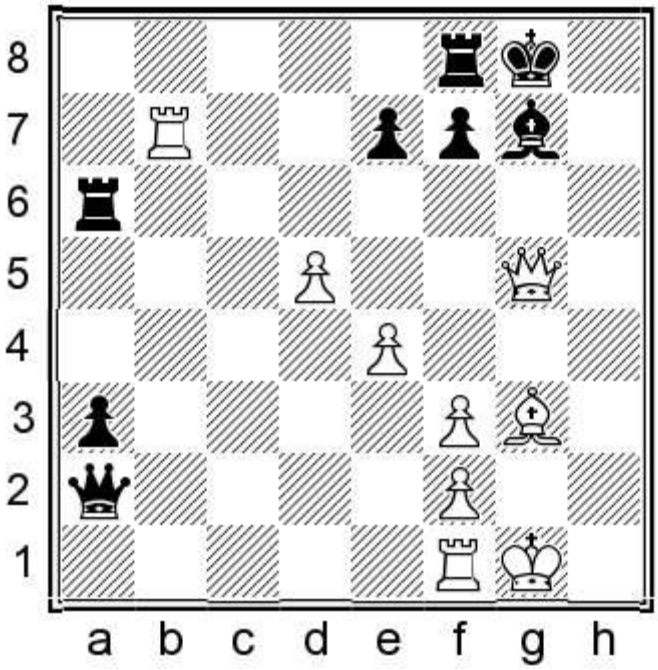
Position after: 16...a4

17.h4 [17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♘c6 19.e5 ♕c4 20.♖b2 ♕xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘xd4 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖fb1 ♔h7 24.♖a2 a3=] 17...♘c6 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.d5



Position after: 19.d5

19...♗xf3 An important thing to note: a dream square for our knight is typically d4 and the best way to get there is to eliminate White's knight. 20.♗xf3 ♘d4 21.♕c1 [21.d6 a3 22.dxe7 ♖fe8 23.e5 ♘xf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♕e6 25.♖a1 a2 26.♕e2 ♖xe7 27.♖xe7 ♕xe7 28.♖xa2 ♖xa2 29.♕xa2 ♗xe5=] 21...a3 22.♕xg5 ♘xf3+ 23.gxf3 ♖a6!

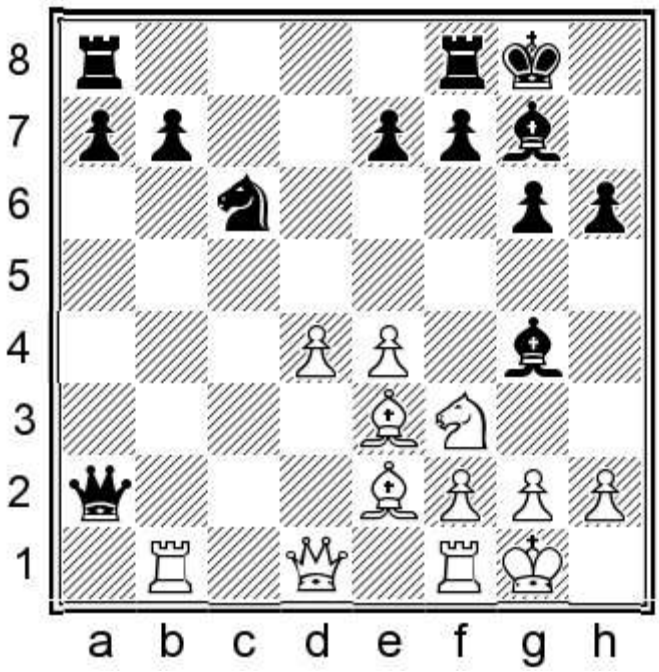


Position after: 23...♖a6!

Another common idea: one way or another we want to transfer our a-rook to the kingside. The purpose is twofold: to protect our king and create support for an attack on White's king. 24.♔g2 [24.♖c1 ♕e2 25.d6 exd6 26.♖xf7 ♖xf7 27.♖c8+ ♖f8 28.♕d5+ ♔h7 29.♕h5+ ♔g8 30.♕d5+=] 24...♖g6 25.♕e3 ♕c2 26.♖a7 a2 27.e5 ♖xg3+ 28.♔xg3 ♕g6+ 29.♔h3 ♕h5+ 30.♔g3 ♕g6+=

B) The capture of the e7-pawn wouldn't promise White much at all: 14.♗xe7 ♖e8 15.♖xb7 ♘d7 16.♗b4 ♖xe4 17.h3 ♖xe2 18.hxg4 ♘f6 19.♗d2 ♖ae8∓. Black has slightly better prospects here due to a clear target on g4, more active pieces and the potential for the a-pawn to advance and become a truly dangerous passed pawn.

14...♘c6



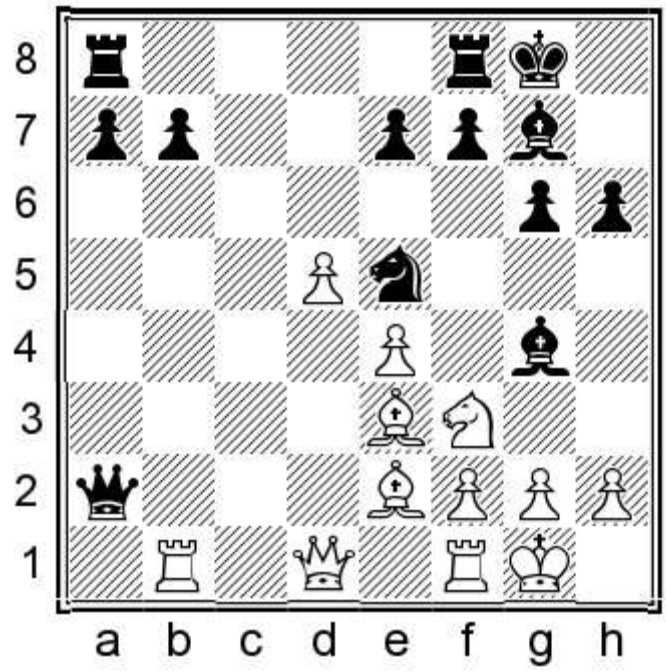
Position after: 14...♘c6

15.d5

A) 15.♖xb7 ♖ab8 16.♖xb8 ♖xb8 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 a5 19.e5 ♘b4 20.♕a1 e6=

B) 15.♖a1 ♕b2 16.♖b1 ♕a2=

15...♘e5

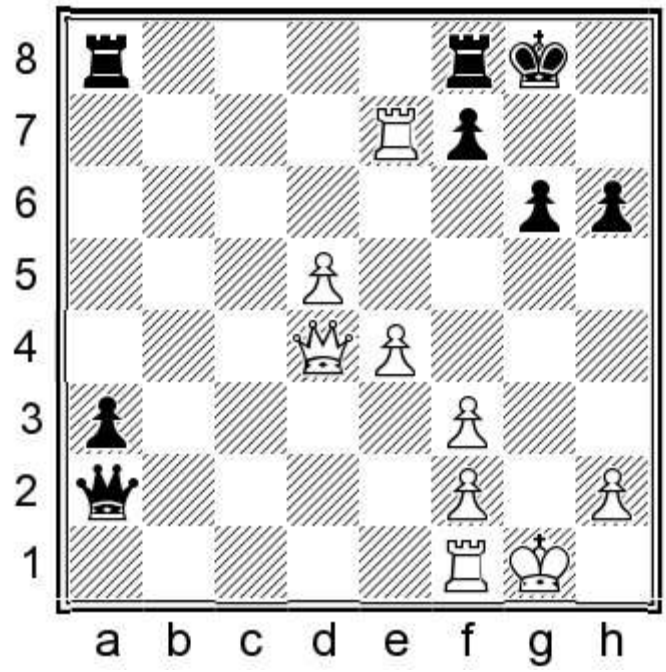


Position after: 15...♘e5

16.♖xb7

16.♖e1 ♘xf3+ 17.gxf3 [17.♗xf3 ♗xf3 18.♕xf3 b6∓] 17...♗h3 18.♗d4 ♗xd4 19.♕xd4 ♕a3 20.♖xb7 ♖fb8=

16...a5 17.♖xe7 a4 18.♗d4 ♘xf3+ 19.♗xf3 ♗xf3 20.gxf3 ♗xd4 21.♕xd4 a3

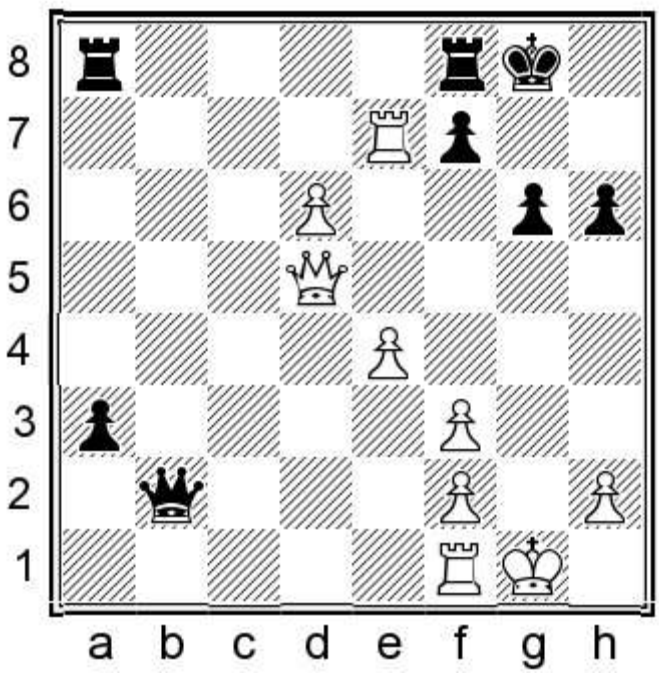


Position after: 21...a3

22.d6

22.♔g2 ♕b2 23.♕xb2 axb2 24.♖b1 ♖fb8 25.d6 ♔f8 26.♖c7 ♖a1 27.♖xb2 ♖xb2 28.♖c8+ ♔g7 29.d7 ♖d1 30.d8=♕ ♖xd8 31.♖xd8 h5=

22...♕b2 23.♕d5

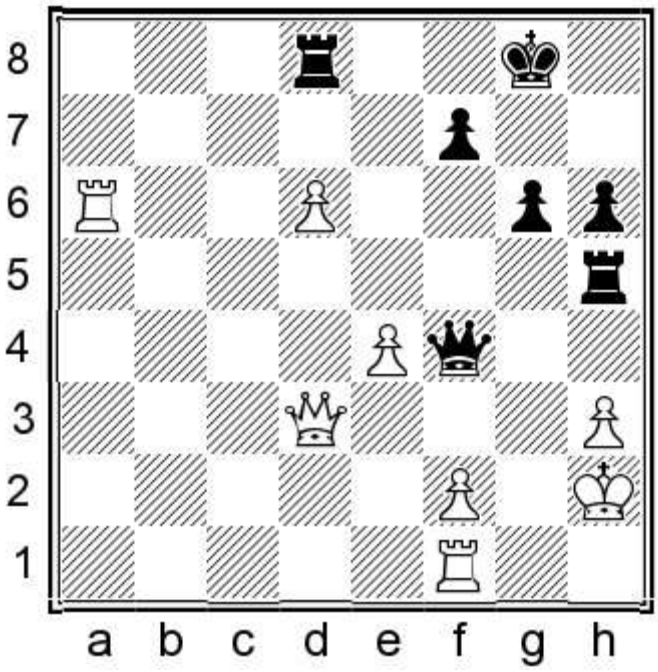


Position after: 23.♕d5

23...♖ab8!

A second example of the a-rook transfer to the kingside. Here, Black is content with giving White a perpetual check and securing a draw.

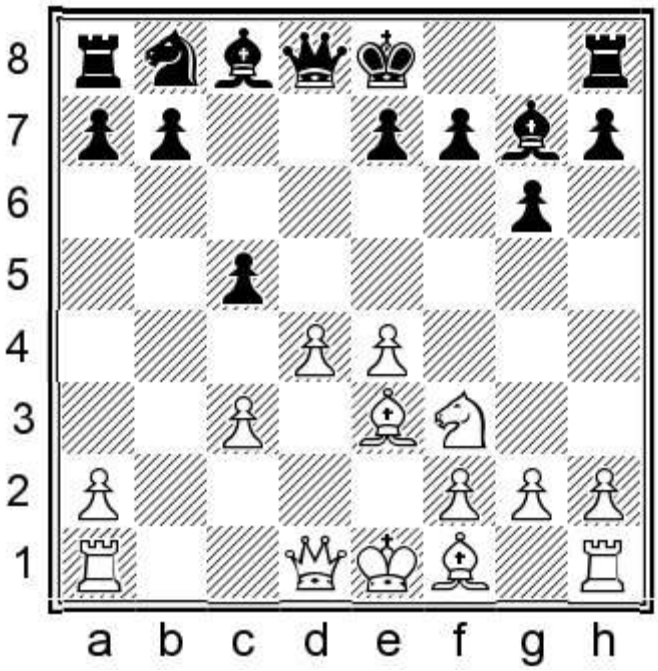
24.♖a7 ♖b5 25.♕d3 ♖g5+ 26.♔h1 ♕e5 27.♖xa3 ♖h5 28.f4 ♕xf4 29.h3 ♖d8 30.♖a6 ♕g4 31.♔h2 ♕f4+=



Position after: 31...♕f4+=

d) 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7 11.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♗e3

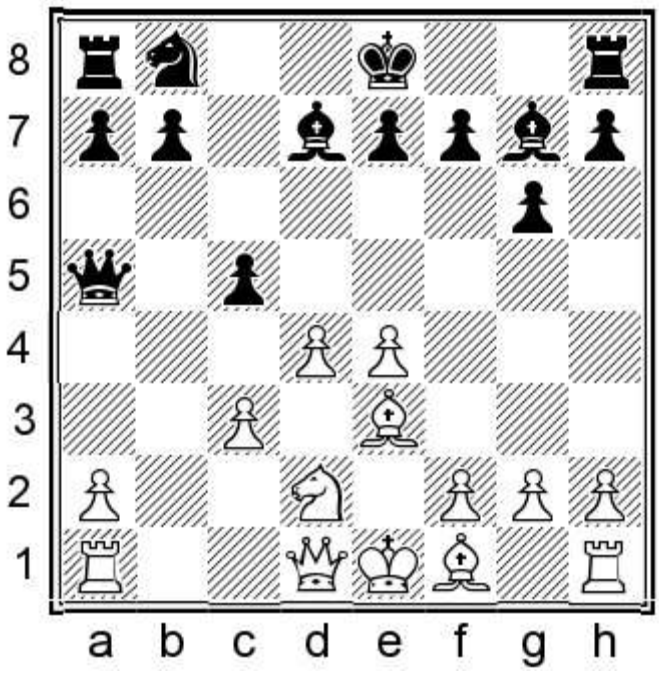


Position after: 8.♗e3

The most natural continuation.

8...♕a5 9.♕d2

9.♘d2 ♗d7



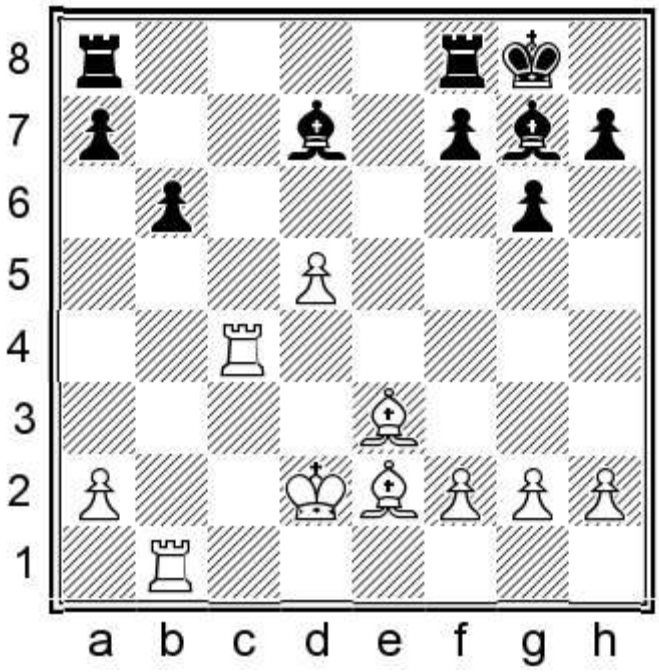
Position after: 9...♗d7

A) 10.♘b3 leads to a quick draw: 10...♕xc3+ 11.♗d2 ♕b2 12.♗c1 ♕c3+ 13.♗d2 ♕b2=. Neither side can reasonably avoid the move repetition thus a draw is inevitable. I have found 14 games in the ChessBase online database that finished in a draw like this. As time goes on I bet we will see more and more "accidentally" drawn games in this line.

B) 10.♖c1 cxd4 11.cxd4 [11.♘c4 ♕a4 12.♕xa4 ♗xa4 13.cxd4 0-0=] 11...0-0 12.♗c4 ♗a4 13.♗b3 ♗b5 14.a4 ♗a6 15.♗c4 ♘c6 16.0-0 ♖ac8 17.d5 ♘d4 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 19.♘b3 ♕b4=

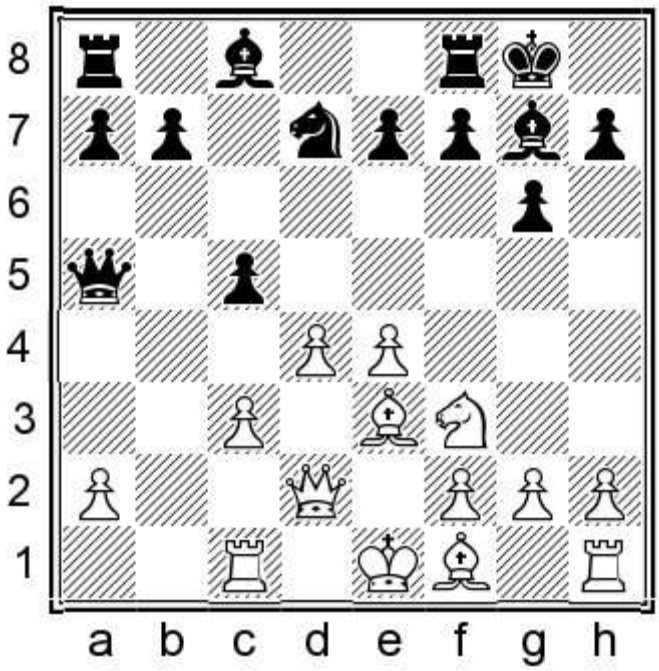
C) 10.♗e2 ♗a4 11.♕c1 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.cxd4 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘d4 15.♗d3 0-0 16.♕b2 e5 17.0-0 ♗c2! 18.♘c4 ♕c7 19.♗xc2 ♕xc4 20.♗d1 b6=

D) 10.♖b1 cxd4 11.♘c4 [11.cxd4 ♘c6 12.♖b5 ♕c3 13.♖b3 ♕a5 ½-½ (15) Korobov, A (2689) – Najer, E (2683) Novi Sad 2016] 11...♕c7 12.cxd4 0-0 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.d5 [14.0-0 b5! 15.♘a3 a6=] 14...♘a5 15.♖c1 ♘xc4 16.♖xc4 ♕a5+ 17.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 18.♔xd2 e6 19.♖b1 exd5 20.exd5 b6=



Position after: 20...b6=

9...0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7

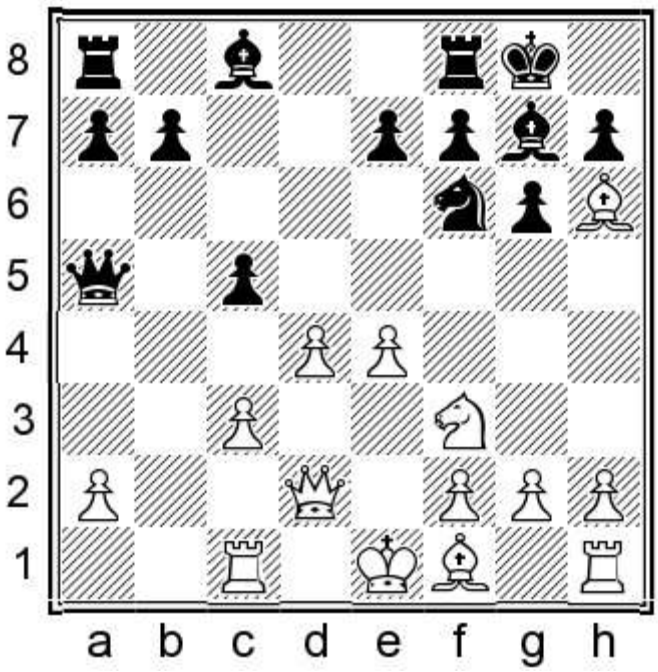


Position after: 10...♘d7

This move has become fashionable relatively recently. Black's knight is deviating from a traditional route on c6 and is looking to relocate to the kingside. Option 1: develop and castle as quick as possible.

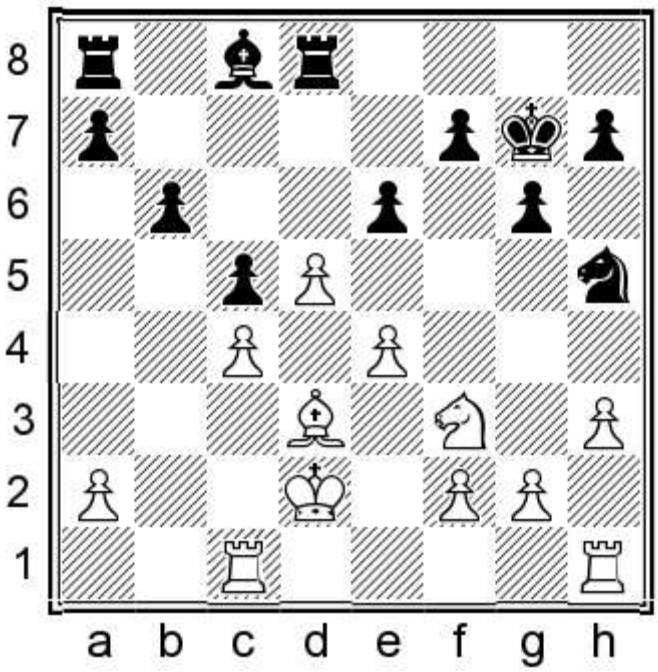
11.♗d3

Option 2. Trade the bishops aiming to alleviate Black's pressure on the d4-pawn and to weaken the king. 11.♗h6 ♘f6



Position after: 11...♘f6

A) 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♗d3 ♖d8 14.h3 b6 15.d5 e6 16.c4 ♕xd2+ 17.♔xd2 ♘h5!

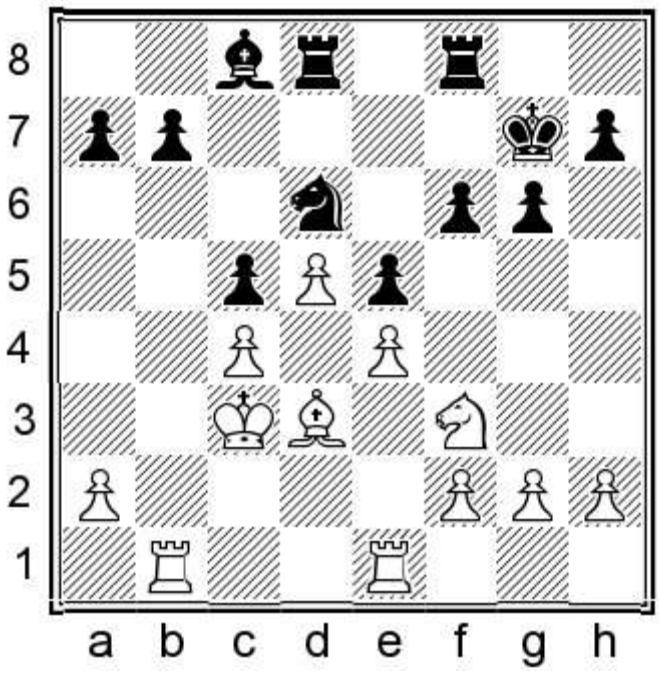


Position after: 17...♘h5!

As the famous saying goes: "a knight on the rim is always grim" just not in this case! Now Black wants to attack White after ...f7-f5 and even ...b7-b5. In addition, the knight may try to irritate White

after jumping to f4 attacking the bishop and the g2-pawn. 18.♖hd1 exd5 19.exd5 b5! 20.cxb5 ♖xd5 21.♔e1 ♗e6=.

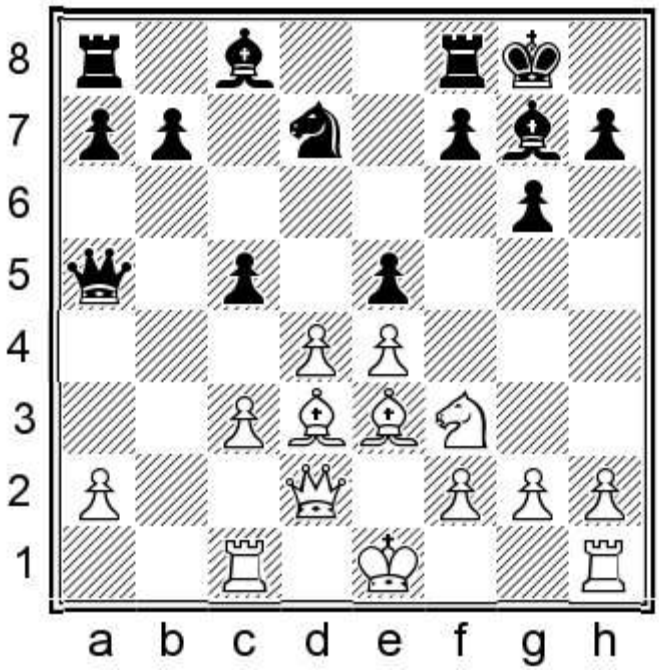
B) 12.♗d3 ♗g4 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘e5 ♖ad8 15.d5 ♗c8 16.c4 ♕xd2+ 17.♔xd2 e6 18.♖he1 ♘e8 19.♔c3 ♘d6 20.♖b1 f6 21.♘f3 e5



Position after: 21...e5

A typical Grünfeld pawn structure. White's passed pawn on d5 is successfully blocked by the knight. Black is in great shape. Note that we usually prefer blocking the d5-pawn specifically with the knight as other pieces are prone to be a lot more vulnerable to the opponent's attack (especially the queen). 22.♘d2 ♗d7 23.a4 h5=.

11...e5

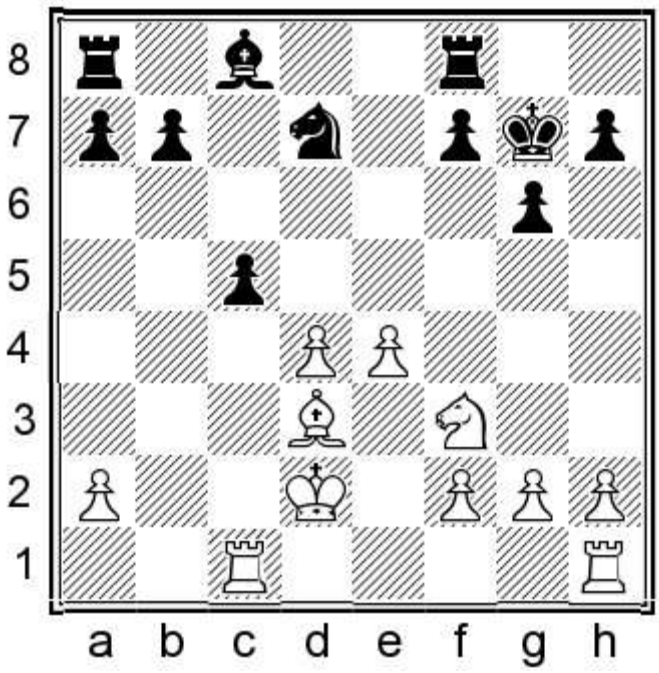


Position after: 11...e5

12.d5

A) Not threatening at all is 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗c4 ♗e6! 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.0-0 ♕c7 17.g3 ♖ad8 18.♕e2 c4= ½-½ (31) Gledura, B (2615) – Vidit, S (2707) Malmo 2018.

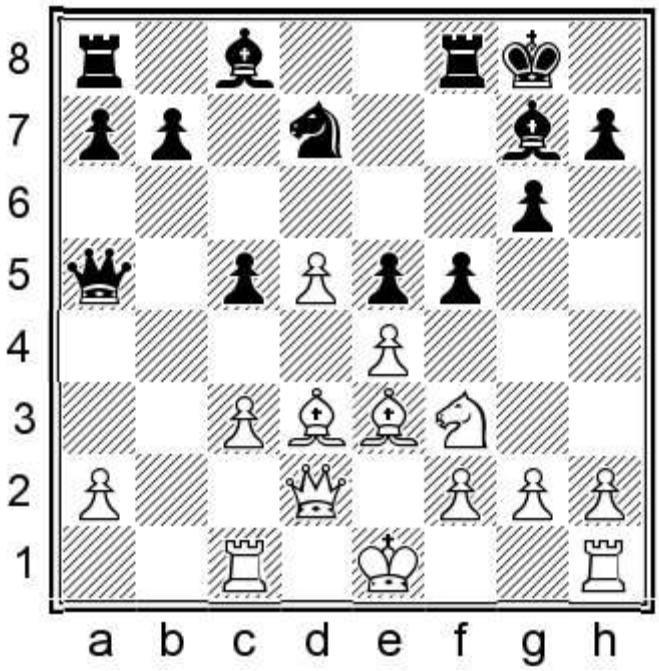
B) 12.♗h6 exd4 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.cxd4 ♕xd2+ 15.♔xd2



Position after: 15.♔xd2

15...cxd4 [15...b6?! 0-1 (68) Ding, L (2805) – Wei, Y (2736) Abidjan 2019. 16.♗b5!±] 16.♖c7 [16.♘xd4 b6 17.♔e3 ♘c5 18.♖hd1 ♗d7=] 16...b6 17.♖hc1 ♘c5 18.♘xd4 ♗d7 19.f3 ♖fc8 20.♖xc8 ♖xc8=

12...f5

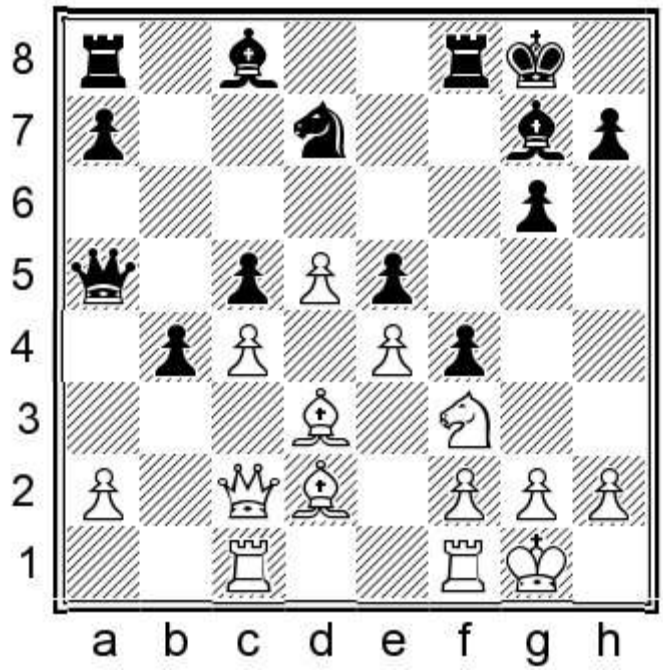


Position after: 12...f5

13.♗h6

A) 13.♗g5 c4 14.♗xc4 fxe4 15.d6+ ♔h8 16.♘h4 ♕a4 17.♗b3 ♕a6 18.c4 ♘c5 19.0-0 ♗e6=

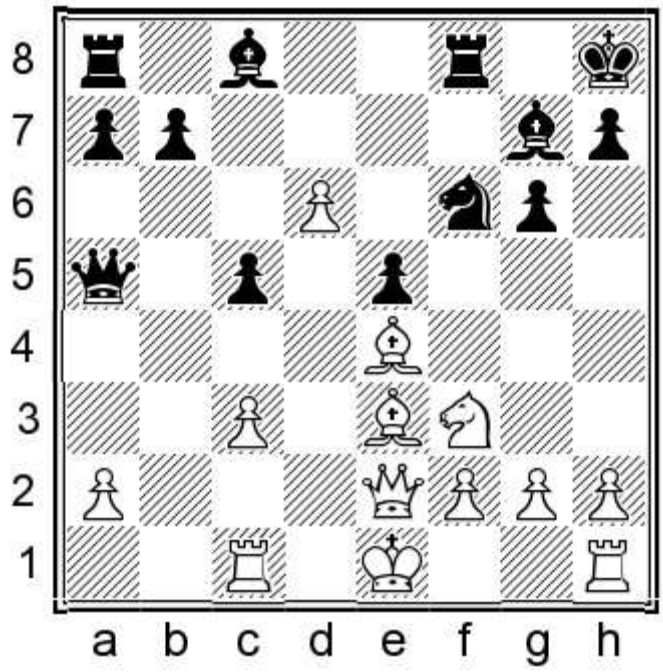
B) 13.♕c2 f4! 14.♗d2 b5 15.c4 b4 16.0-0



Position after: 16.0-0

16...♕b6 [16...♕c7 17.a3 a5 18.axb4 axb4 19.♖a1 ♖a7 20.♖xa7 ♕xa7 21.♗c1 ♘b6 22.♗b2 ♕e7 23.♖a1± 0-1 (93) Nakamura, H (2754) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2775) Paris 2019] 17.a3 a5 18.axb4 axb4 19.♖a1 ♖a7 20.♖xa7 ♕xa7 21.♗c1 ♖f6 22.♗b2 ♖a6=

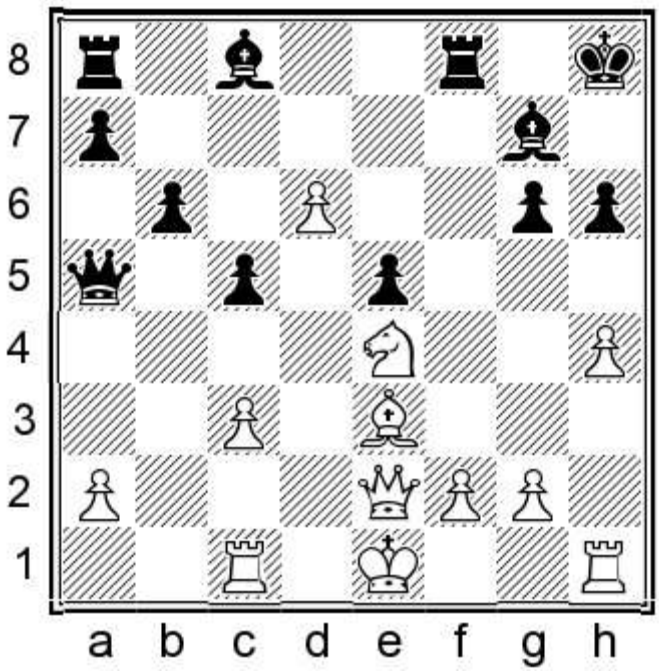
C) 13.♕e2 fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♘f6 15.d6 ♔h8



Position after: 15...♔h8

16.♘g5 [16.♕c4 ♗d7 17.♘g5 ♗b5 18.♘f7+ ♔g8 19.♘h6+ ♔h8 20.♘f7+ ♔g8=; 16.♗b1 ♕b6 17.♕c4

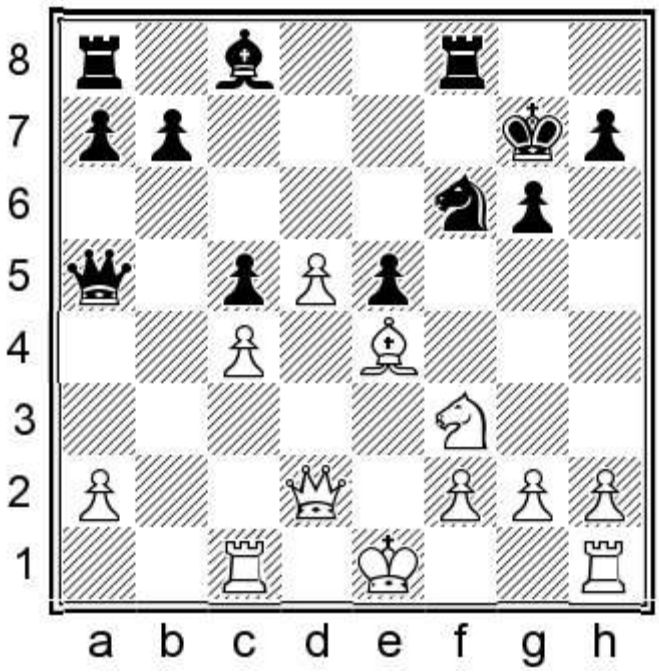
♕xd6 18.♘g5 ♕c6 19.0-0 b6 20.♘f7+ ♖xf7 21.♕xf7 ♗e6 22.♕e7 ♖e8 23.♕xa7 ♖a8 24.♕e7 ♖e8=]
16...h6 17.h4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 b6



Position after: 18...b6

19.h5 [19.0-0 ♕a4 20.c4 ♗f5 21.f3 ♖ad8 22.♖cd1 ♗e6 23.♖c1 ♗f5 24.♖cd1 ♗e6=] 19...♗a6 20.♕d2
♕a4! 21.c4 ♗b7 22.hxg6 ♗xe4 23.♗xh6 ♕b4! 24.♖c3 ♕b1+ 25.♖c1 ♕b4 26.♖c3 ♕b1+=

13...fxe4 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♗xe4 ♘f6 16.c4

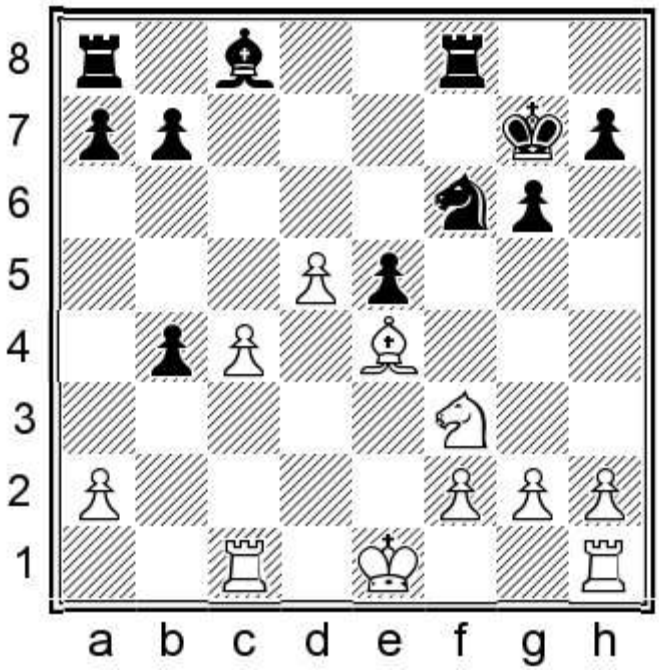


Position after: 16.c4

16...♕b4!

16...♕a6? does not lead to equality because of 17.♕c2!±. [Not so good is 17.♗b1 e4 18.♘g5 ♗f5 19.♕c3 ♖ae8 20.0-0 h6 21.♘h3 ♕d6= ½-½ (35) Stupak, K (2570) – Zinchenko, Y (2547) Paleochora 2017]

17.♕xb4 cxb4

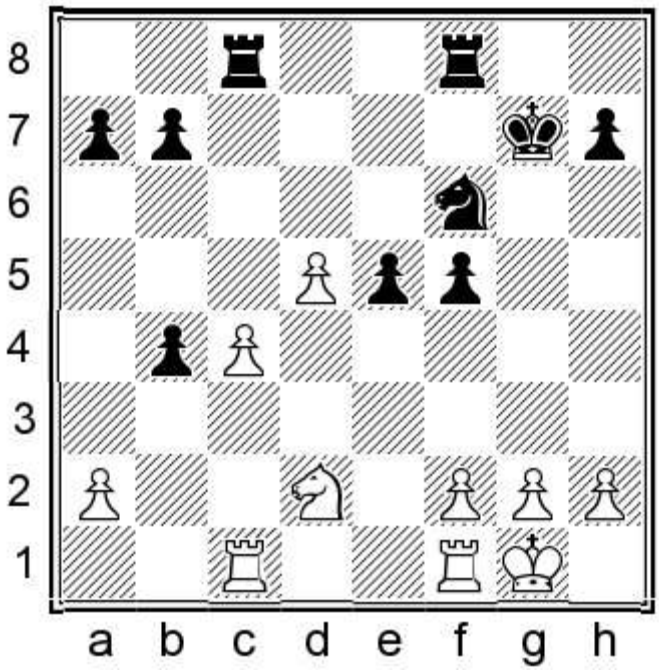


Position after: 17...cxb4

Even though it looks like Black's pawn structure has been compromised, Black gets comfortable play by developing the bishop and then transferring the knight to the strong outpost on c5 via d7.

18.♘d2 ♗f5 19.f3

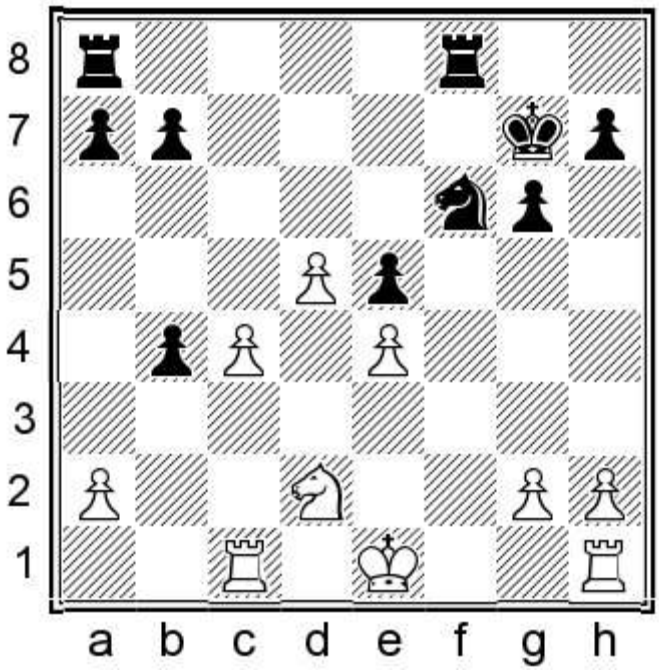
19.♗xf5 gxf5 20.0-0 ♖ac8



Position after: 20...♖ac8

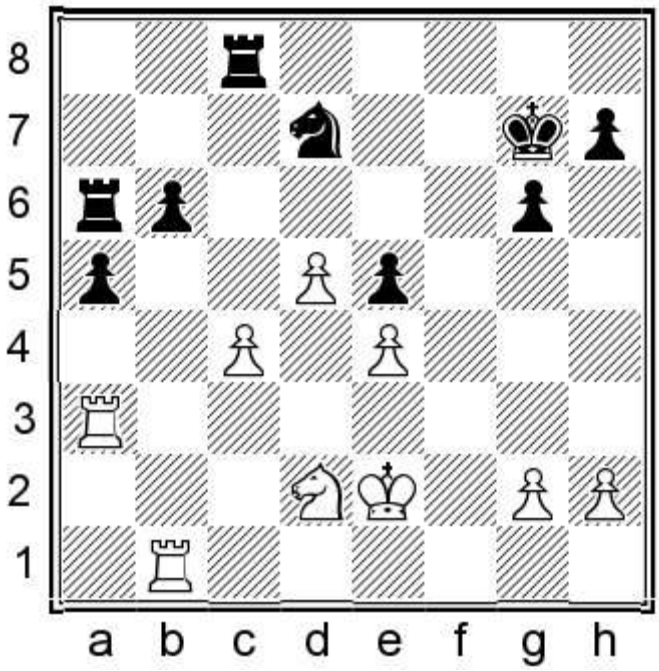
21.♖fe1 [21.♖b1 a5 22.a3 b5 23.axb4 bxc4 24.bxa5 c3 25.♖b7+ ♖f7 26.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 27.♘f3 ♘xd5 28.♘xe5+ ♔f6 29.♘d3=] 21...e4 22.♘b3 b5 23.cxb5 ♘xd5 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♖d1 ♘c3 26.♖d7+ ♔g6 27.♖xa7 ♘xb5=

19...♗xe4 20.fxe4



Position after: 20.fxe4

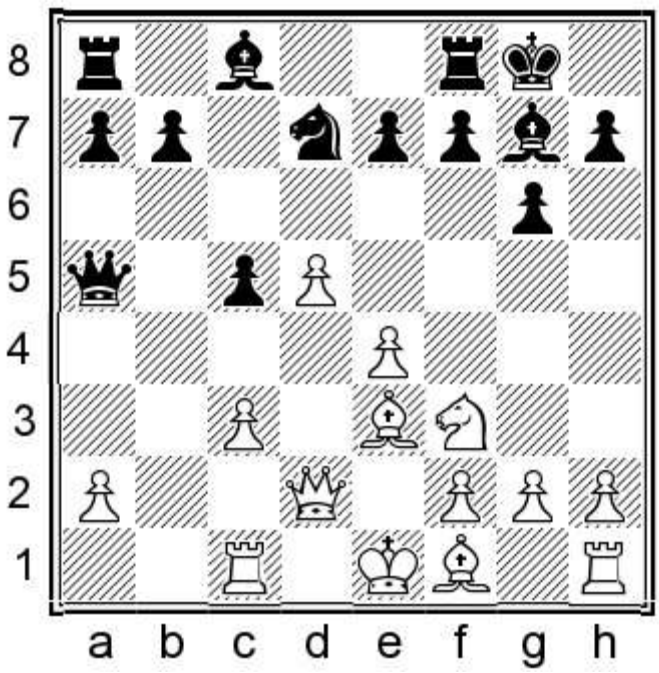
20...♘d7 21.♔e2 ♘c5 22.♖b1 a5 23.a3 bxa3 24.♖b5 ♖fc8 25.♖a1 ♖a6 26.♖xa3 b6 27.♖b1 ♘d7=



Position after: 27...♘d7=

e) 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7 11.d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.♖c1 ♘d7 11.d5

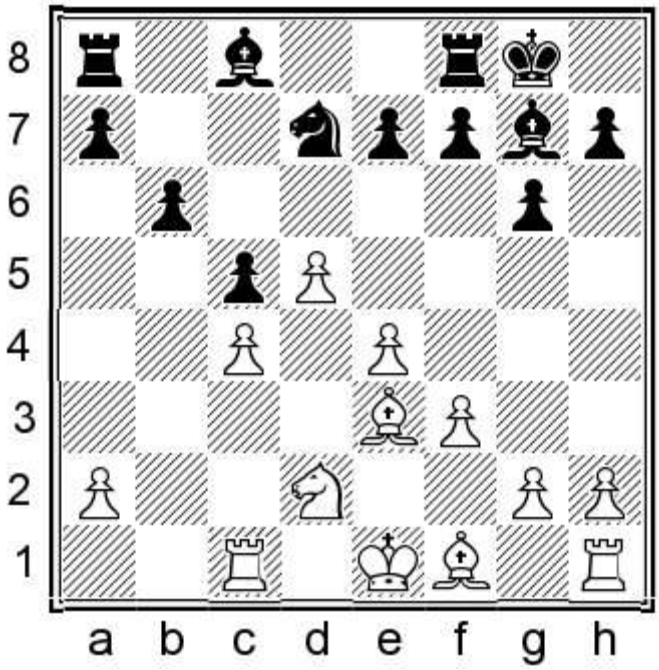


Position after: 11.d5

11...♘f6 12.c4 ♕xd2+ 13.♘xd2 b6 14.f3

A logical follow-up.

14...♘d7!



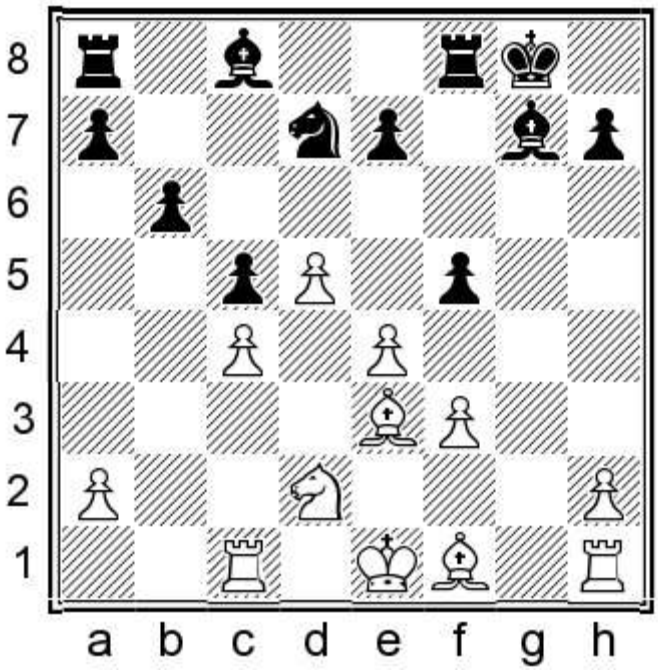
Position after: 14...♘d7!

The key move which justifies 10...♘d7.

The point is that after White has played d5 & f3 the knight is no longer needed on f6. We retreat back to d7 to launch an attack on White's center with ...f5, ...e5, or...e6.

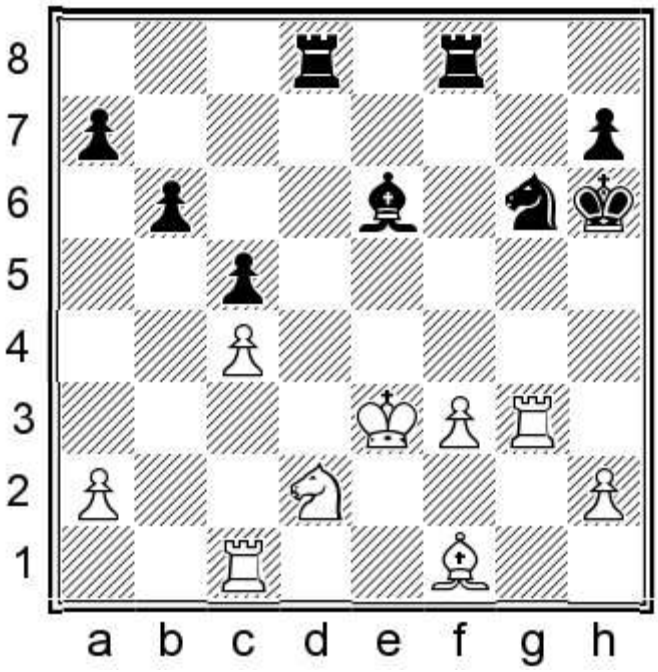
15.♗e2

A) Overly ambitious is 15.g4 f5! 16.gxf5 gxf5



Position after: 16...gxf5

A1) 17.exf5? ♘e5 18.♖g1 ♗xf5 19.♗h6 ♘g6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♔f2 ♖ad8 22.♔e3 e6 23.dxe6 ♔h6 24.♖g3 ♗xe6∓ ½-½ (70) Mikhalevski, V (2578) – Zherebukh, Y (2631) Sturbridge 2019.



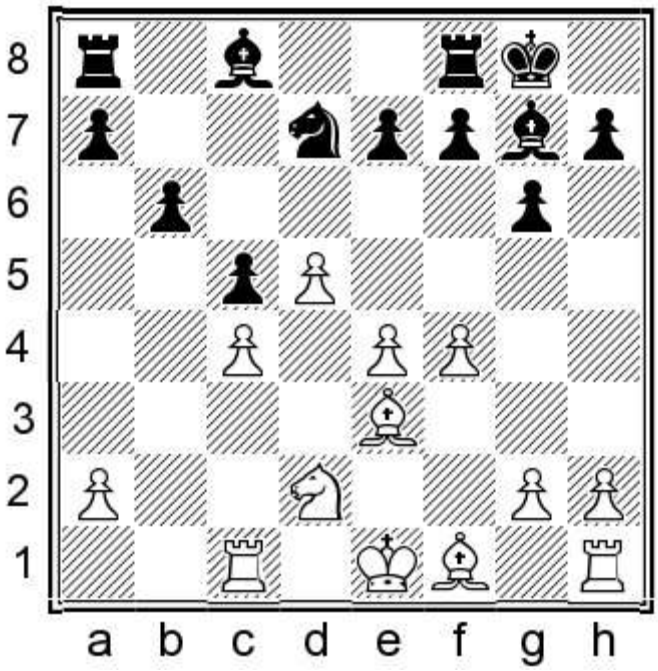
Position after: 24...♗xe6∓

Your author got dealt a perfect opening scenario against one of the Grünfeld experts, Israeli GM Victor Mikhalevski. Black has no weaknesses and plenty of targets to attack: the king and the weak pawns. Unfortunately for me, the game ended in a draw 5,5 hours and 100 moves later. We finished the game at 12:30 AM! Since the tournament was played in a small town and no taxis were

available, I thought I was stranded at the tournament venue for the entire night. Luckily, my opponent was kind enough to give me a ride back to the hotel. It was probably the only time I was happy about not winning a game!

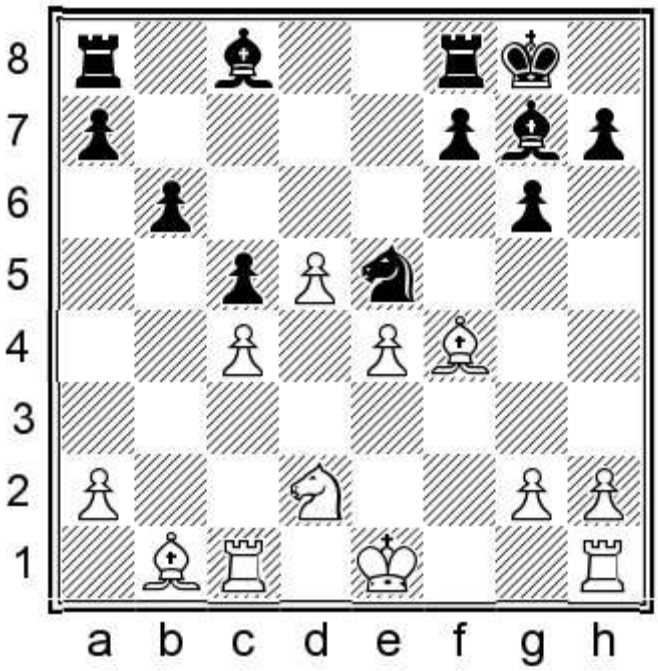
A2) 17.♗g5 ♖f7 18.♖g1 ♔h8 19.exf5 ♘f8 20.♗d3 ♗xf5 21.♗xf5 ♖xf5 22.♔e2 ♘g6=

B) 15.f4



Position after: 15.f4

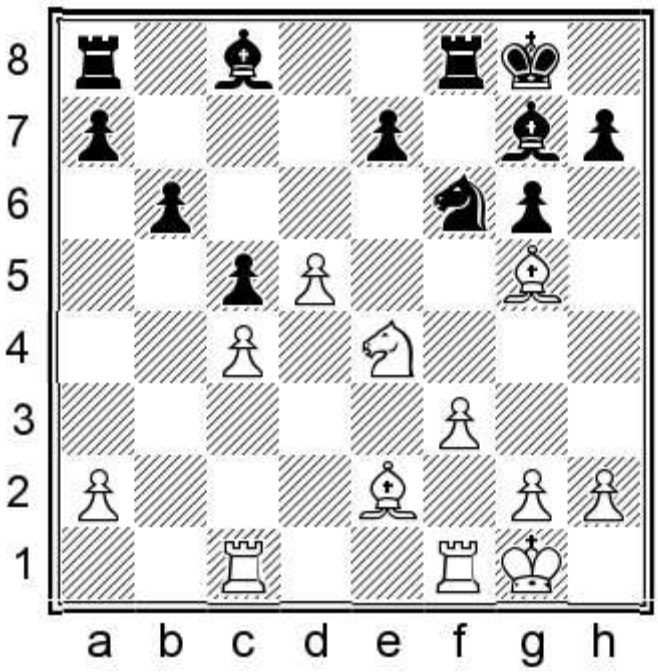
15...e5! [It is important to note that we cannot push 15...f5 due to 16.e5 and White is enjoying having too much control of the center.] 16.♗d3 exf4 17.♗xf4 ♘e5 18.♗b1



Position after: 18.♗b1

18...f5 Now is the time! 19.0-0 fxe4 20.♗xe4 ♗d7 21.d6 ♖ae8 22.♗d5+ ♔h8 23.♖ce1 ♘d3 24.♖xe8 ♗xe8 25.♗e3 ♖xf1+ 26.♔xf1 ♗e5 27.♘e4 ♗d7 28.a3 ♔g7=

15...f5 16.♗g5 fxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘f6 18.0-0

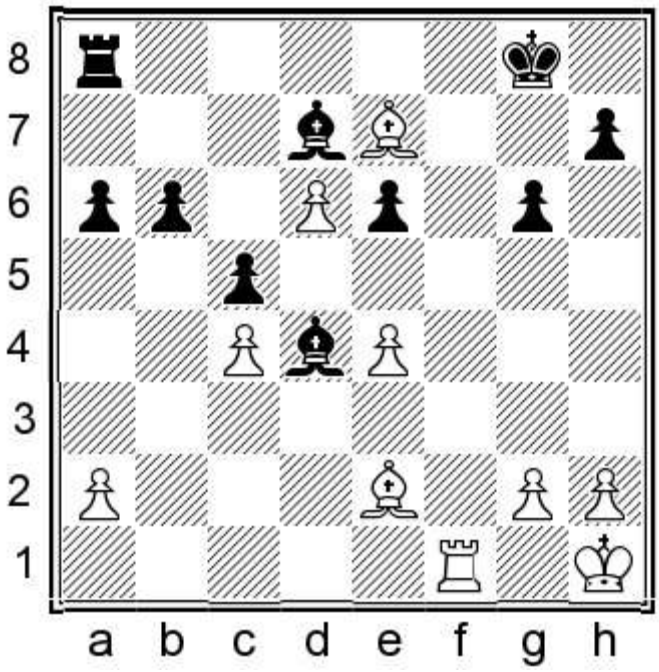


Position after: 18.0-0

18...e6!

A common idea in the Grünfeld. We need to fight fiercely against the d5-pawn otherwise White will enjoy a decent spatial advantage and increased mobility of his pieces.

19.d6 ♘xe4 20.fxe4 ♗d4+ 21.♔h1 ♗d7 22.♗e7 ♖xf1+ 23.♖xf1 a6=

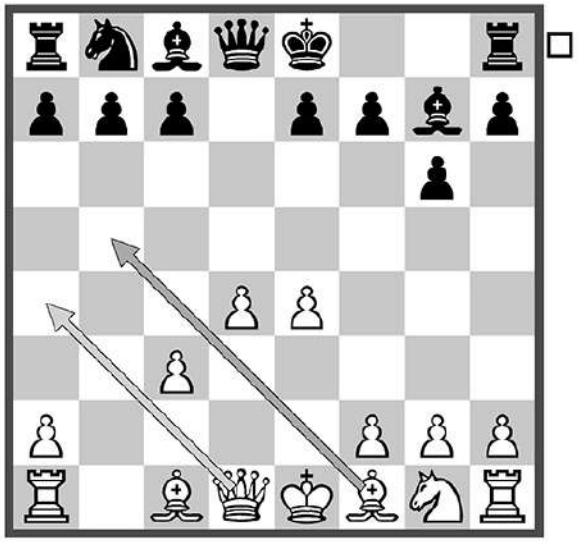


Position after: 23...a6=

We have successfully blocked White's d-pawn and are ready to launch our counter response on the queenside with ...b6-b5. Therefore, the position is balanced, promising equal chances for White and Black.

Chapter 3
Other 7th moves

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7



Chapter Guide

Chapter 3 – Other 7th moves

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7

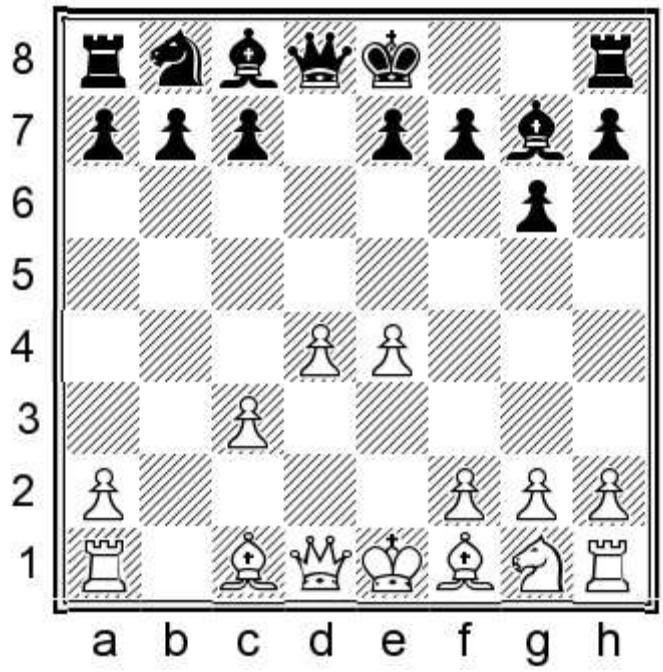
a) 7.--

b) 7.♗b5+

c) 7.♕a4+

a) 7.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7



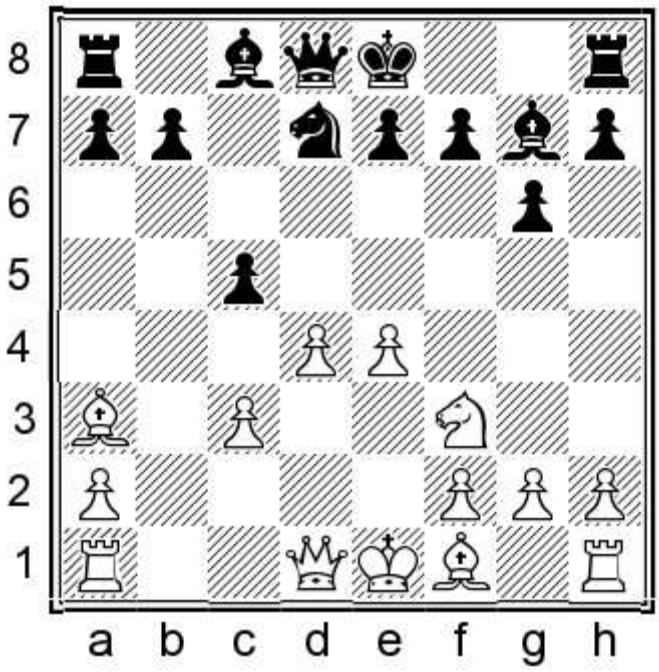
Position after: 6...♗g7

In this chapter, we are going to explore everything White can reasonably play except ♗c4 and ♘f3. These were covered in chapters 1 and 2, respectively.

7.♗g5

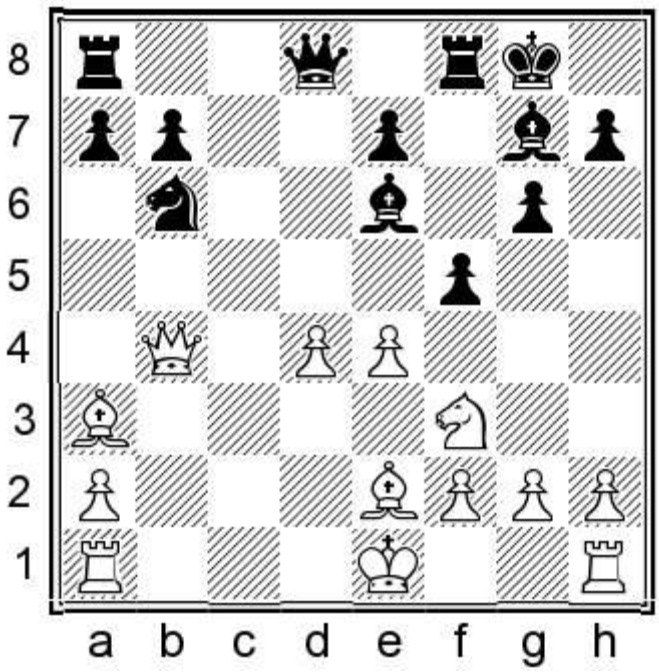
Quite frankly, it looks like the bishop on g5 has lost his sense of direction and walked into the wrong neighborhood by mistake. It's primary role so far has been to be the main guard of White's center, namely the d4-pawn. Still, we need to consider it seriously since it was frequently employed by top 10 GM Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

A) 7.♗a3 White temporarily stops ...c5 but we will play it nonetheless in a couple of moves. 7...♘d7 8.♘f3 [8.♗c4 c5 9.♕b3 0-0 10.♘f3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘b6 12.♗e2 transposes to 7.♗a3 ♘d7 8.♘f3 main variation.] 8...c5!



Position after: 8...c5!

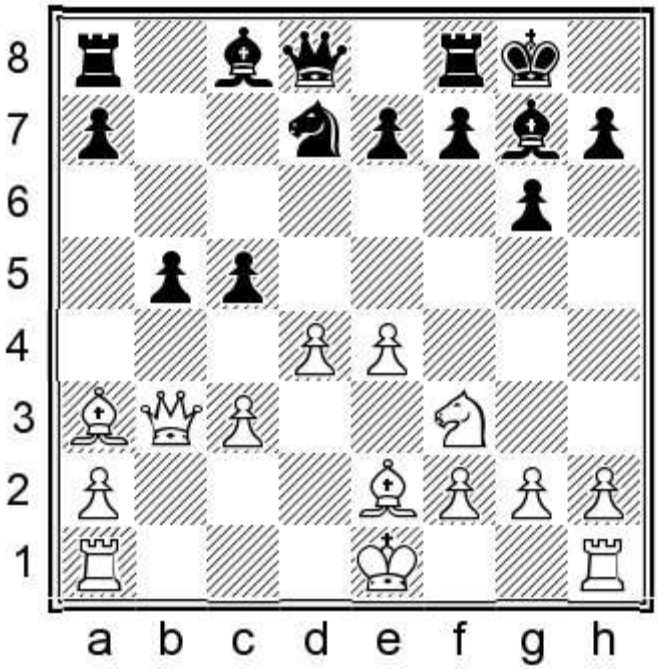
A1) 9.♗c4 cxd4 10.♕b3 0-0 11.cxd4 ♘b6 12.♗e2 ♗e6 13.♕b4 f5!



Position after: 13...f5!

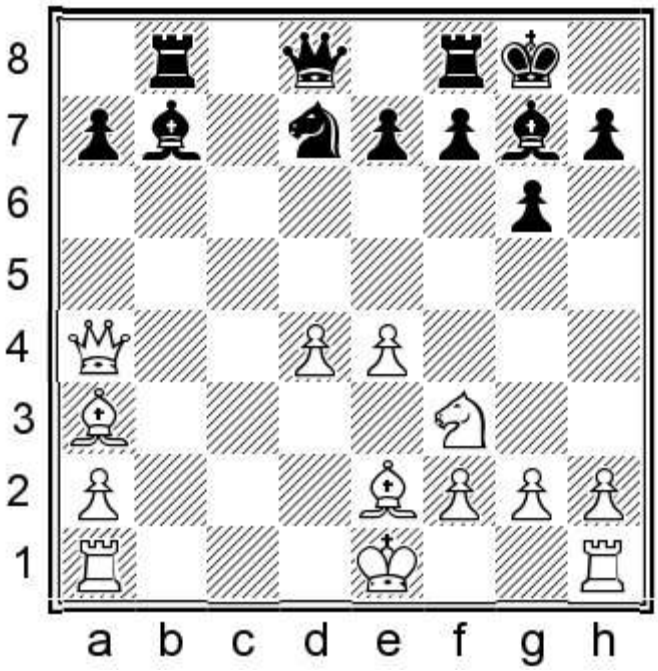
14.e5 [14.♕xe7 ♕xe7 15.♗xe7 ♖fe8 16.♗g5 fxe4 17.♘e5 ♖ac8∓; 14.♘g5 ♕xd4 15.♕xd4 ♗xd4 16.♘xe6 ♗xa1 17.♘xf8 ♗c3+ 18.♔d1 ♖xf8 19.♗xe7 ♖e8 20.♗c5 ♖xe4 21.♗f3 ♖e5 22.♗xb6 axb6 23.♗xb7=] 14...♘d5 15.♕d2 ♖c8 16.0-0 ♘c3 17.♗d3 ♗d5 18.♘g5 ♕d7 19.♖fc1 ♗h6 20.h4 ♘e4 21.♗xe4 fxe4= 0-1 (35) Dinerchtein, V – Wister, F (2280) ICCF email 2009.

A2) 9.♕b3 0-0 10.♗e2 b5!?N



Position after: 10...b5!?N

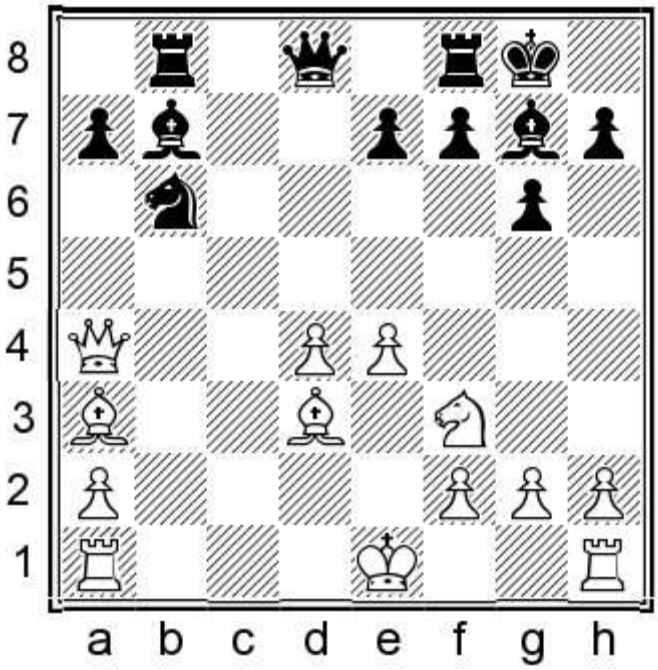
We can't help but notice that ...b7-b5 is being played quite often by Black in this chapter. The idea in this case is to open the files and diagonals while the white king is still in the center. 11.♕xb5 [11.0-0 ♖b8 12.♖fe1 a6 13.♖ad1 ♕c7 14.e5 ♗b7 15.e6 c4 16.♕b4 fxe6 17.♕xe7 ♖be8 18.♕d6 ♕xd6 19.♗xd6 ♖f5=] 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 ♖b8 13.♕a4 ♗b7



Position after: 13...♗b7

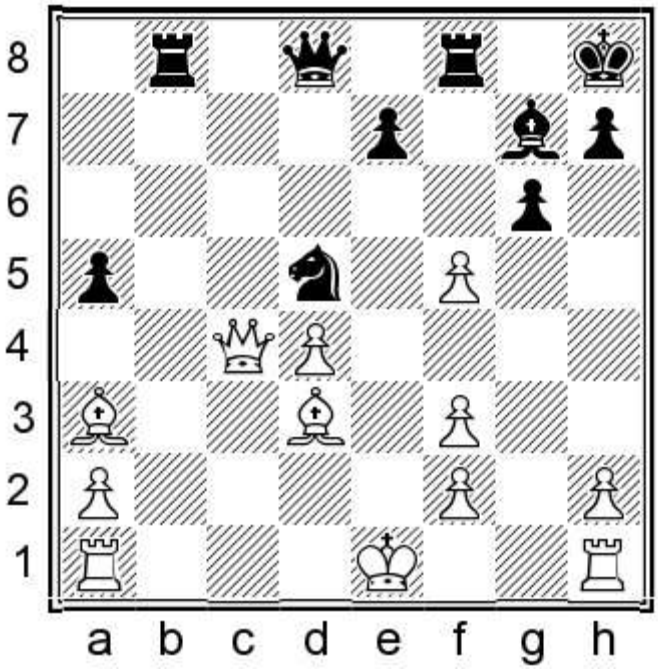
A2.1) 14.e5 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘b6 16.♕b4 a5! 17.♕c5 [17.♕xe7 ♕xd4 18.0-0 ♖fe8 19.♕c5 ♕xc5 20.♗xc5 ♘c4=] 17...♖c8 18.♗c6 ♘a4 19.♕c4 ♘b6 20.♕c5 ♘a4=

A2.2) 14.♗d3 ♘b6



Position after: 14...♘b6

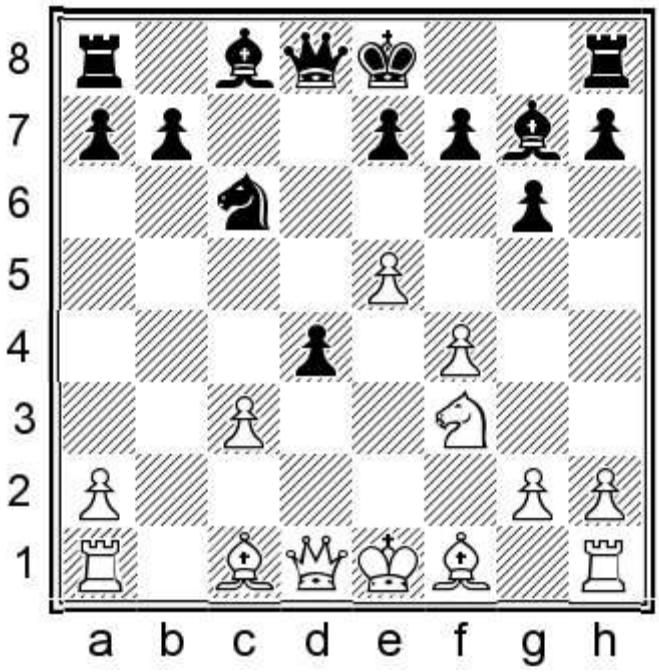
15.♕b4 [15.♕b3 ♘d7 16.♕a4 ♘b6 17.♕b3 ♘d7=] 15...f5 16.exf5 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 a5 18.♕b3+ ♘d5 19.♕c4 ♔h8♒



Position after: 19...♔h8♒

Black's compensation for the two sacrificed pawns is obvious: the white king does not have a reliable shelter from our attack. In addition, White has a weak pawn structure and no targets to attack. I believe such positions are much easier to play with Black than White in any long time control tournament game.

B) 7.f4 Is not likely to be played by seasoned players since White neglects the main rule of any opening: rapid development. 7...c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.e5 cxd4

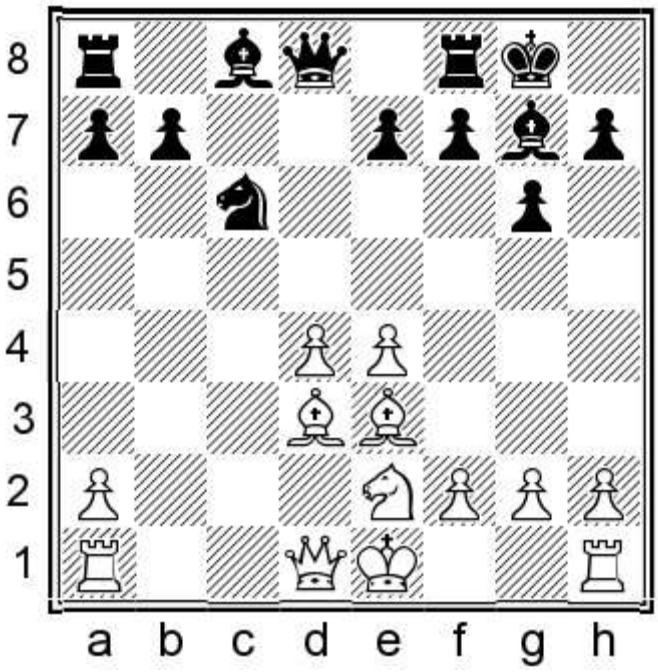


Position after: 9...cxd4

10.♘xd4 [10.cxd4 ♗e6 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♗d5 13.♗e3 ♖c8 14.♕d2 e6∓] 10...f6 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♗e3 c5 15.♘e2 ♖c8∓.

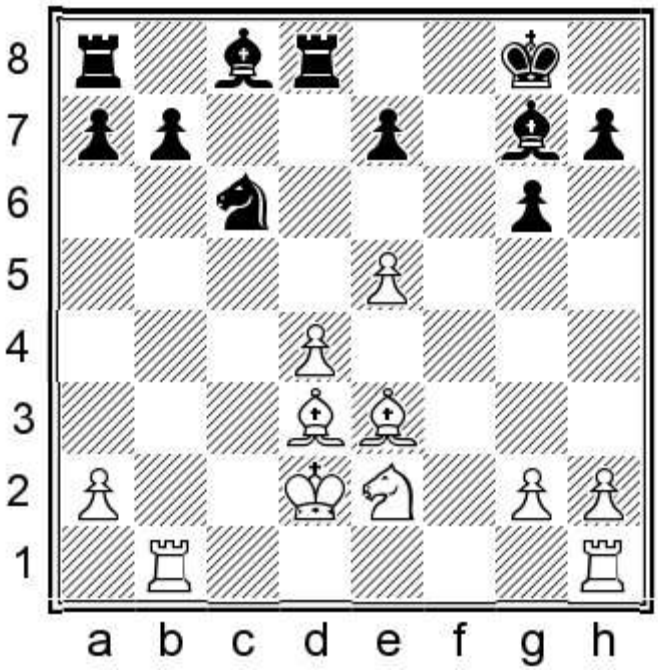
C) 7.♖b1 0-0 8.♘f3 c5 see chapter 2.

D) 7.♗d3 Better than 7.f4 but also insufficient to claim any opening advantage. The connection between the d4-pawn and the d1-queen has been interrupted making White's center prone to an unpleasant attack: 7...c5 8.♘e2 0-0 9.♗e3 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘c6



Position after: 10...♘c6

D1) 11.e5 It's obvious now that the bishop on d3 should have been elsewhere. White needs to waste a move to protect the d4-pawn instead of castling. 11...♕a5+ 12.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♖d8 14.♖ab1 f6 15.f4 fxe5 16.fxe5

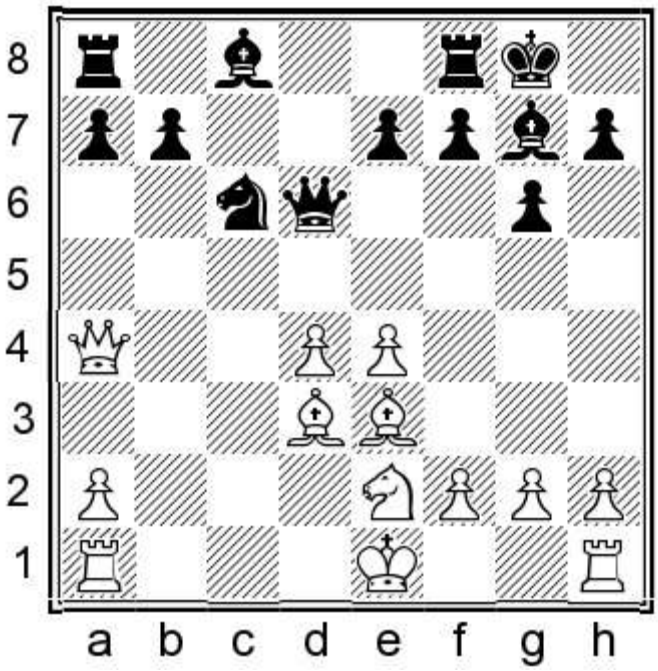


Position after: 16.fxe5

16...♗xe5! The fact that this sacrifice works without queens on the board is truly fascinating. 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘c1 ♗f5 19.♖b3 ♖ac8 20.♗xa7 ♖xc1! 21.♖xc1 ♘xd3 22.♖c7 ♘c5+ 23.♔e2 ♘xb3 24.axb3

♖d7 25.♖xd7 ♗xd7=

D2) 11.♕a4 ♕d6N



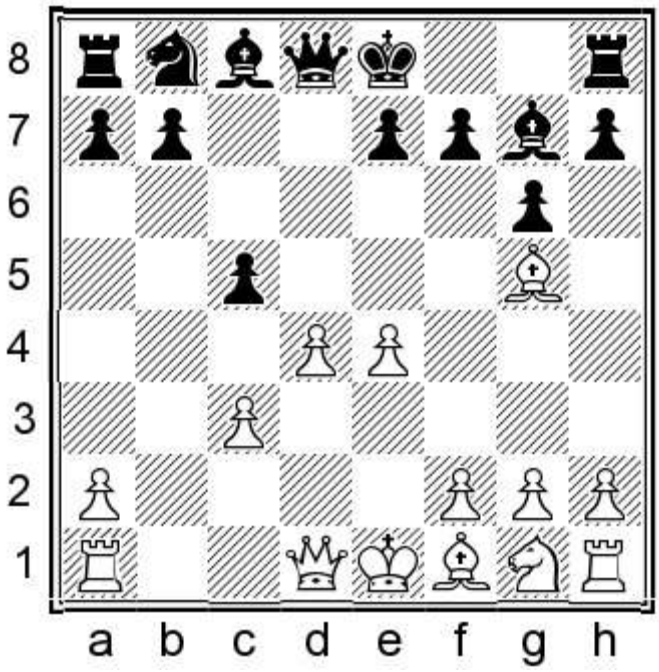
Position after: 11...♕d6N

D2.1) 12.0-0?! ♗d7 13.♗b5 a6 14.e5 ♕e6 15.♗xc6 [15.♗c4 ♘xe5 16.♗xe6 ♗xa4∓] 15...♗xc6 16.♕b4 ♕d7∓

D2.2) 12.♖d1 ♗d7 13.e5 ♕b4+ 14.♕xb4 ♘xb4 15.♗e4 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖d2 ♖fb8=

E) 7.♗e3 c5 8.♕d2 ♕a5 9.♖c1 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘d7 see chapter 2.

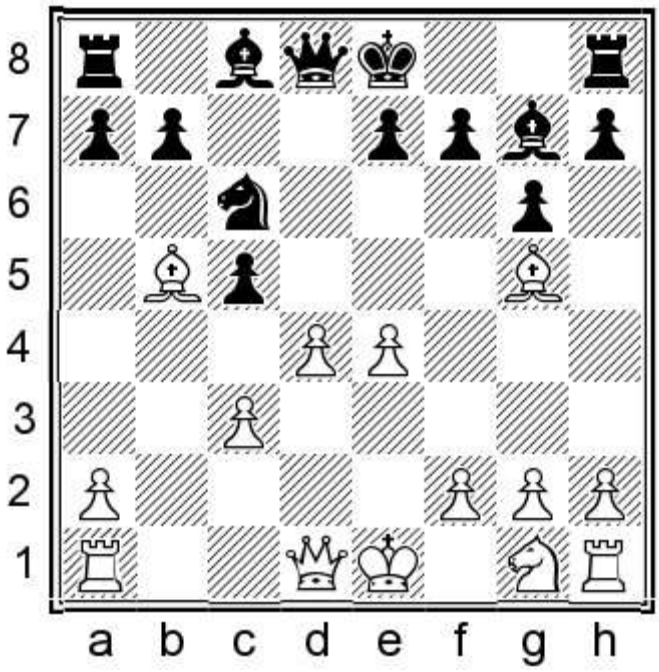
7...c5



Position after: 7...c5

8.♖c1

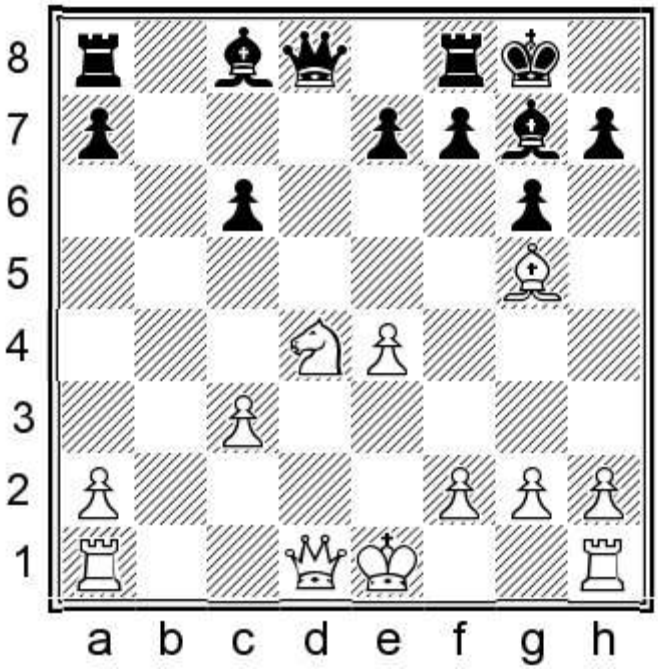
A) 8.♗b5+? Following the example of its brother, the light-squared bishop also loses his sense of direction. 8...♘c6



Position after: 8...♘c6

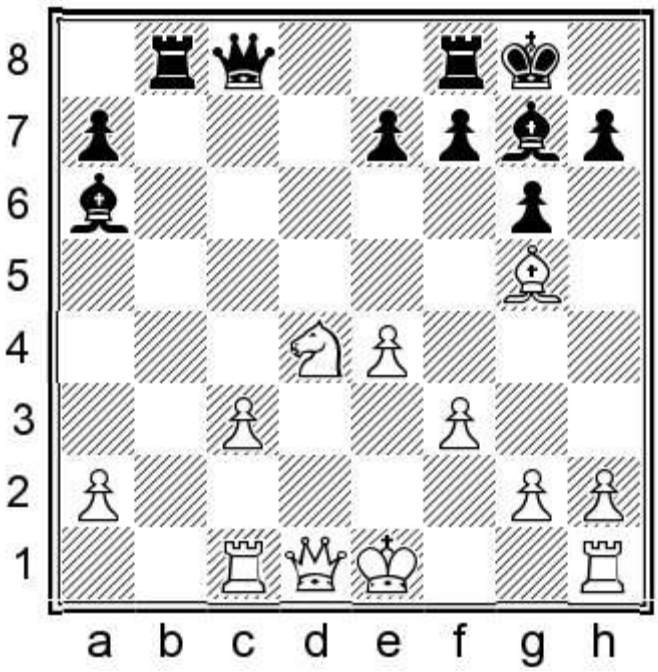
9.♘e2 [9.d5 ♕a5 10.♖b1 ♗xc3+ 11.♗d2 a6 12.♗xc6+ bxc6 13.♘e2 ♗xd2+ 14.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 15.♔xd2 cxd5 16.exd5 ♖a7 17.♖hc1 ♖c7∓ A healthy extra pawn gives Black great chances for a win.] 9...cxd4

10.♘xd4 0-0 11.♗xc6 bxc6



Position after: 11...bxc6

A1) 12.♘xc6 ♕e8! A creative pawn sacrifice, the point of which will become clear in a couple of moves. 13.♘xe7+ [13.♘d4 ♗a6 14.f3 ♕c8 15.♖c1 ♖b8!–+



Position after: 15...♖b8!–+

White's king surely has seen better times. Will it be able to castle? No, not today.] 13...♔h8 14.0-0 ♗a6 15.♖e1 f6! The point of 12...♕e8! White faces an ugly choice: to lose the bishop or the knight.

16.♗f4 ♕xe7 17.♗d6 ♕e8 18.♗xf8 ♗xf8–+

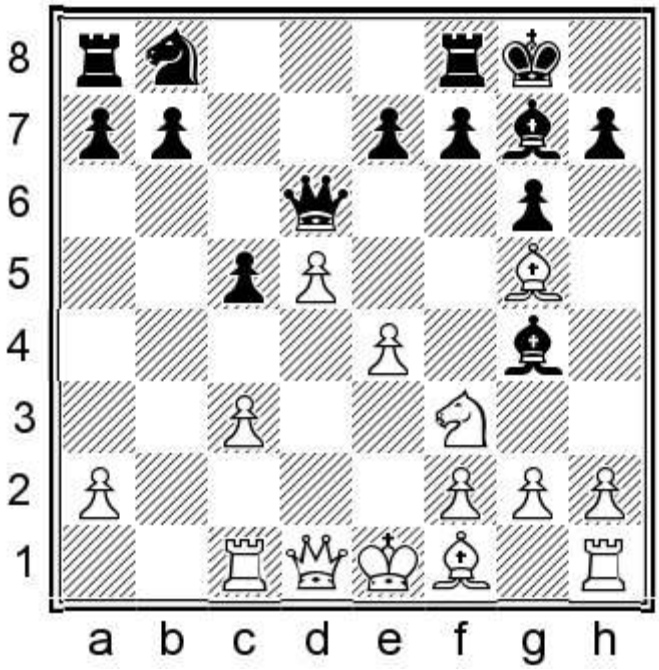
A2) 12.0-0 ♕c7 13.♕c2 c5 14.♘f3 ♗e6∓ A bishop pair is almost always better than the knight and bishop in an open position like this one.

B) 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗b5 cxd4 10.♘xd4 0-0 transposes to the 8.♗b5? main line.

8...0-0 9.♘f3

9.d5 ♕d6 10.♕d2 ♘d7 11.♘f3 e6 12.dxe6 ♕xe6 13.♗d3 ♘f6∓

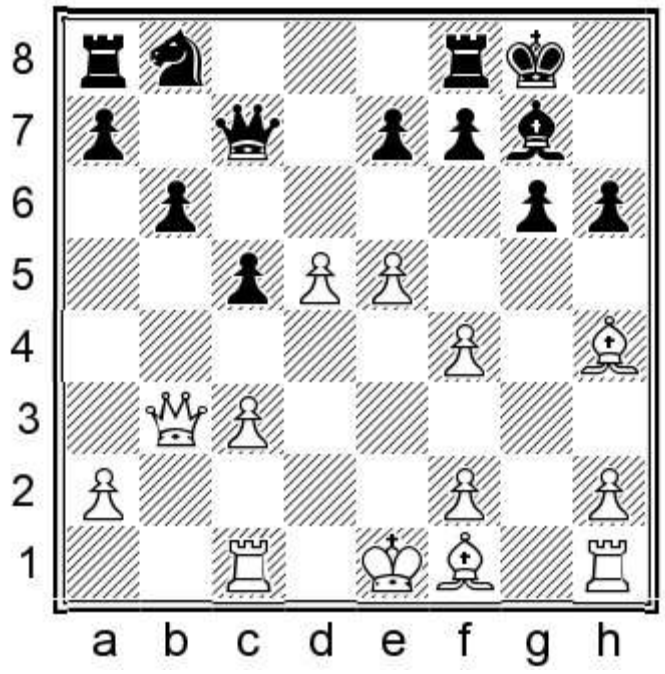
9...♗g4 10.d5 ♕d6



Position after: 10...♕d6

11.♗e2

A) 11.♕b3 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 b6 13.♗e3 [13.f4? h6! 14.e5 ♕c7 15.♗h4

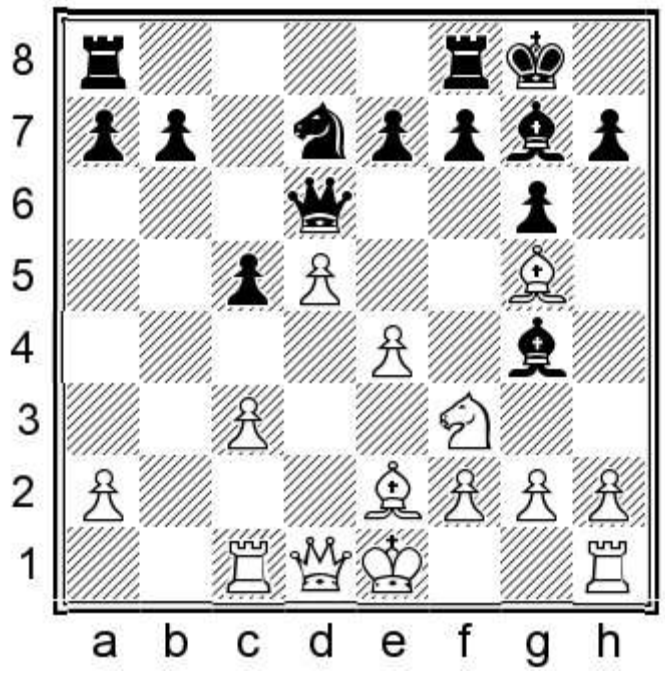


Position after: 15.♗h4

15...♗xe5!! A common tactic in the Grünfeld, which I highly suggest remembering. 16.fxe5 ♕xe5+ 17.♗e2 ♕e4! A double attack on the rook and the bishop justifies our previous sacrifice. 18.0-0 ♕xh4–+.] 13...f5 14.h4 ♘d7 15.h5 ♘e5↑

B) 11.♕d2? ♗xf3 12.gxf3 ♘d7 13.c4 f5∓

11...♘d7

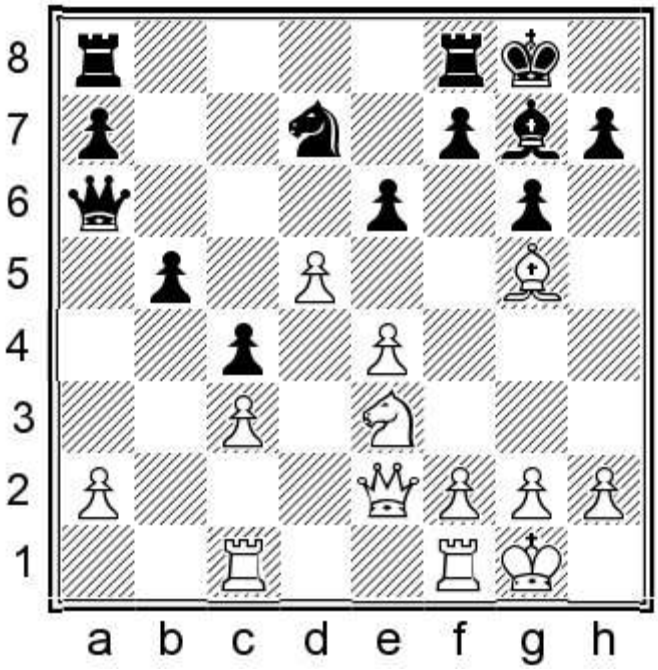


Position after: 11...♘d7

12.0-0

A) 12.c4 e6 13.0-0 exd5 14.exd5 ♖fe8=

B) 12.♘d2 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 e6 14.♘c4 ♕a6 15.♘e3 b5 16.0-0 c4



Position after: 16...c4

17.♖fd1 [17.f4 1-0 (47) Harsha, B (2481) – Melkumyan, H (2660) Caleta 2019. 17...f6! 18.♗h4 ♘c5∓] 17...♖fe8=

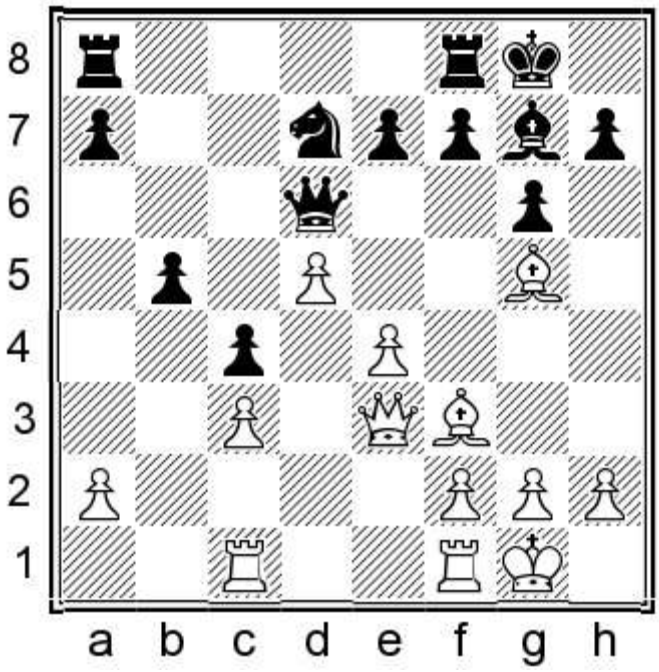
12...♗xf3

Normally, we shouldn't shy away from trading the g4-bishop for the f3-knight in the Grünfeld.

13.♗xf3 b5 14.♕d2 c4

White's bishops are not very effective and we have a better pawn structure on the queenside. Therefore, the position remains balanced with equal chances for both sides.

15.♕e3



Position after: 15.♕e3

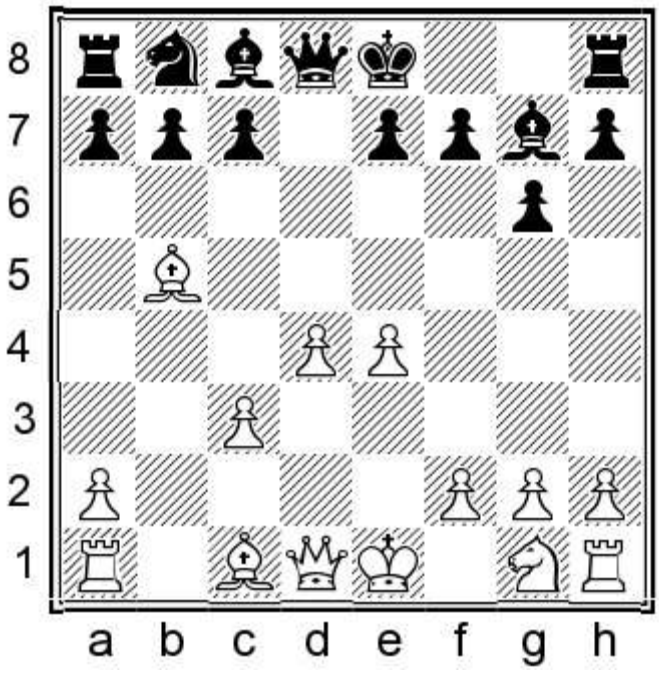
15...e5N

An important move aimed against the potential threat of ♗e2, f4, and then e5 at some moment.

16.dxe6 ♕xe6 17.♖fd1 ♘e5 18.♗e2 ♖fe8 19.♖d5 a6=

b) 7.♗b5+

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗b5+



Position after: 7.♗b5+

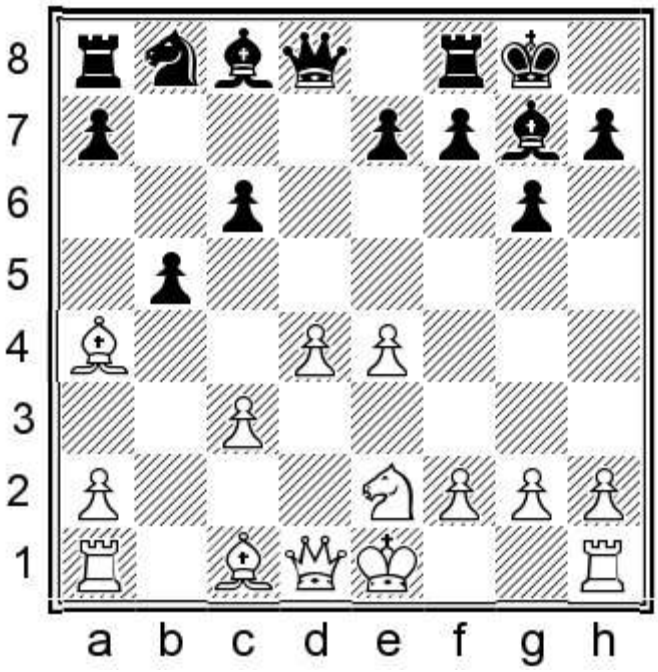
Along with 7.♕a4, the most ambitious attempt to gain an opening advantage. White would be happy to provoke either ...♘d7 or ...♗d7 and prevent the thematical attack on the center with ...c7-c5. This move also leads to unusual pawn structures in some lines such as a2-c3-d4-e4 for White and a4-b5-c6-e7 for Black. Our plan would be to fight for the light squares with ...♘d7-b6, ...♗e6-c4, and a potential breakthrough in the center ...e7-e5.

7...c6 8.♗a4

A) 8.♗c4 c5 transposes to 7.♗c4 (chapter 1)

B) 8.♗e2 c5 9.♘f3 transposes to 7.♘f3 c5 8.♗e2 (chapter 2)

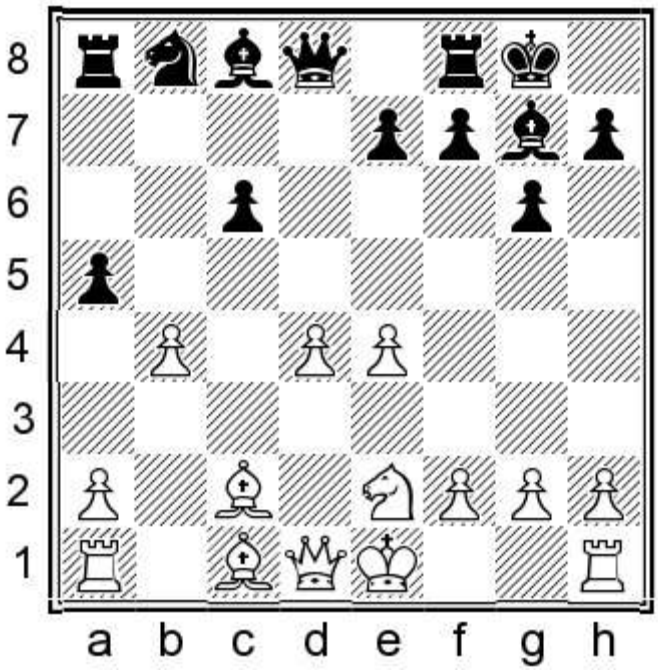
8...0-0 9.♘e2 b5



Position after: 9...b5

10.♗b3

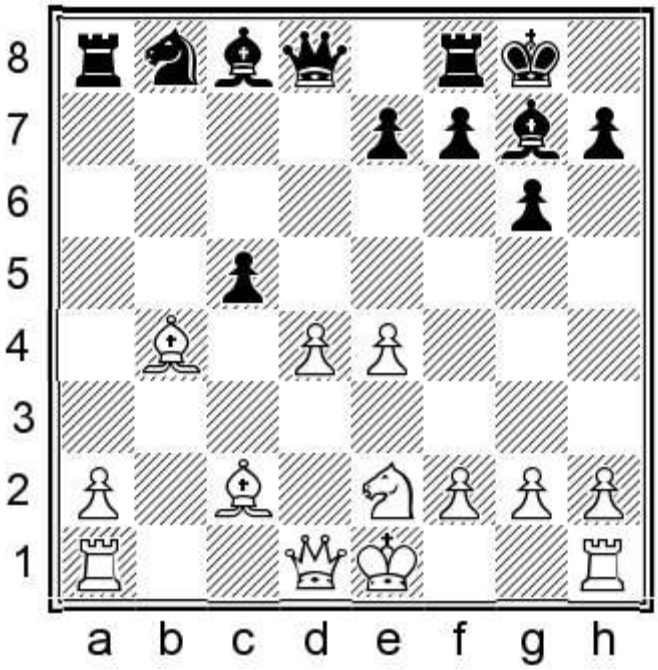
10.♗c2 b4N A cute novelty, although not terribly important as only 6 games have reached this position according to the ChessBase online database. Still, let's enjoy the underlying idea. 11.cxb4 a5!



Position after: 11...a5!

A) 12.bxa5 c5∓ The last three pawn moves remind me of checkers: Black is begging White to take all of the pawns to get to the grand prize, the d4-pawn.

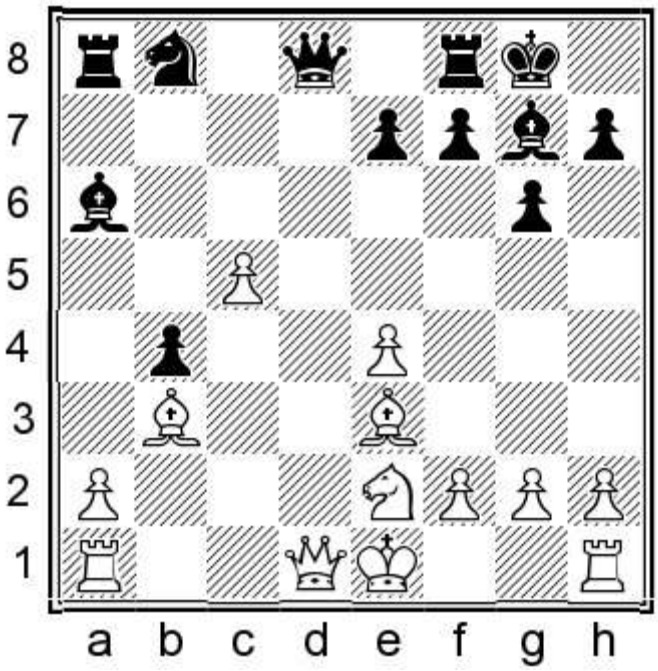
B) 12.♗d2 axb4 13.♗xb4 c5! And yet one more pretty pawn sacrifice.



Position after: 13...c5!

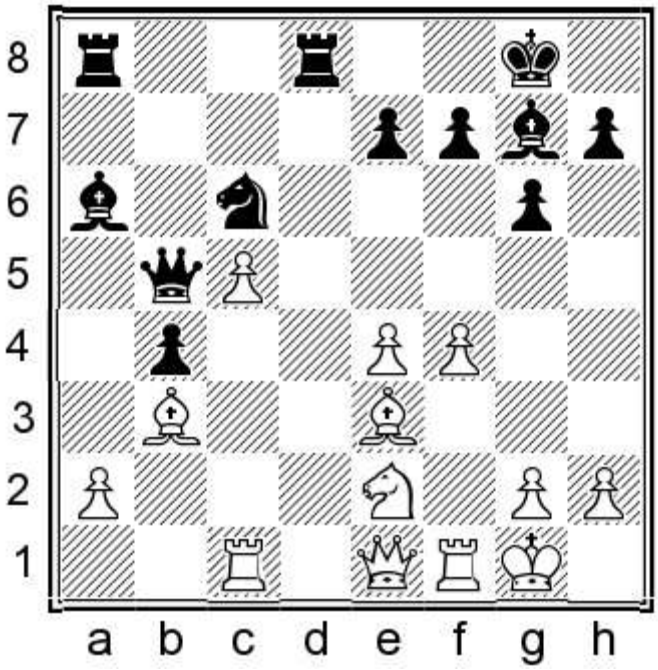
14.♗xc5 [14.dxc5 ♗xa1 15.♕xa1 ♗a6–+] 14...♘a6 The bishop on c5 suddenly doesn't have any good squares. Note that it cannot retreat to a3 because we would win it after the devastating ...♕a5+ followed by ...♕xa3. If 15.♖b1 ♘xc5 16.dxc5 ♕a5+ 17.♕d2 ♕xc5 18.♗d3 ♗e6∓ we are about to recapture the extra pawn White currently enjoys and then our bishop pair would be vastly superior to White's knight and bishop.

C) 12.♗e3 axb4 13.♗b3 c5 14.dxc5 ♗a6



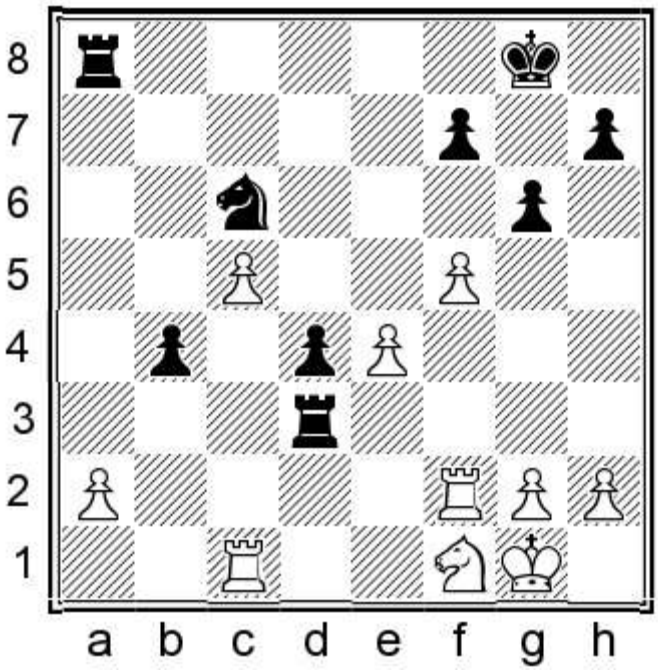
Position after: 14...♗a6

C1) 15.♖c1 ♘c6 16.f4 ♕a5 17.0-0 ♖fd8 18.♕e1 ♕b5 19.♘g3 ♕a5 20.♘e2 ♕b5=



Position after: 20...♕b5=

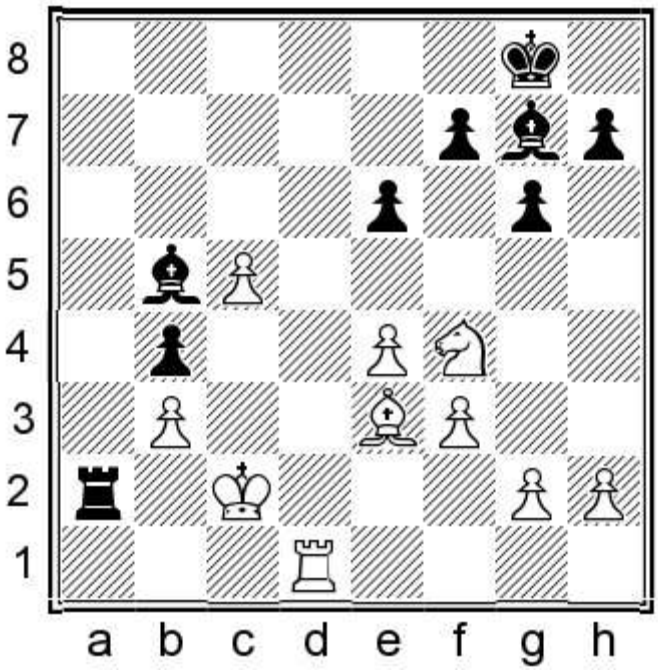
Neither White nor Black are interested in pushing for more than a draw. Let's see why. 21.♖f2? ♕d3 22.♘g3 ♗c3 23.♕e2 ♕d7 24.♗c4 ♗xc4 25.♕xc4 e5 26.f5 ♕d3 27.♕xd3 ♖xd3 28.♘f1 ♗d4 29.♗xd4 exd4∓



Position after: 29...exd4∓

Even though Black is technically down a pawn, Black is much better here. The main reasons are more active pieces, vulnerability of the a2, c5, and e4-pawns, and the potential to eventually start pushing the d-pawn towards the promotion square on d1. Our next couple of moves could be ...♖c3 and ...♖a5, getting the c5-pawn and then enjoying the initiative for free.

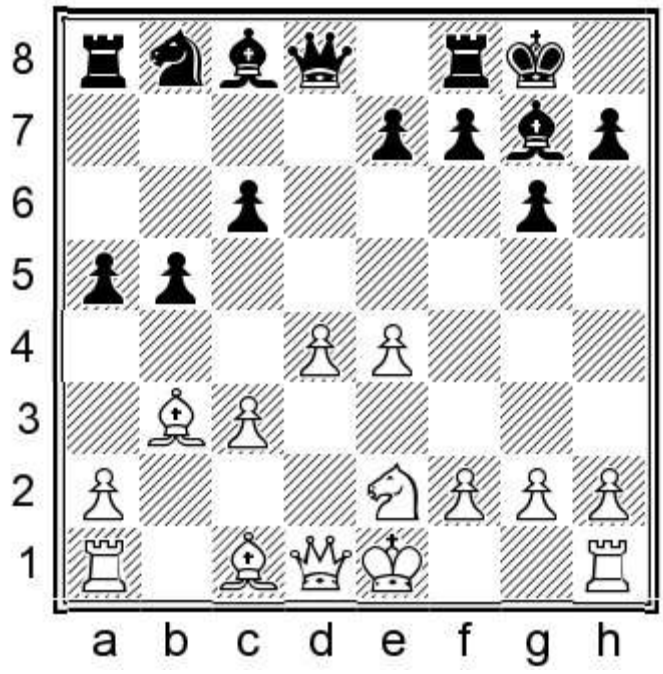
C2) 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 17.♔xd1 ♘c6 18.♘f4 e6 19.♔c2 ♗b5 20.♖d1 ♘a5 21.f3 ♘xb3 22.axb3 ♖a2+ 23.♔b1 ♖a1+ 24.♔c2 ♖a2+=



Position after: 24...♖a2+=

The perpetual check secures us a draw.

10...a5

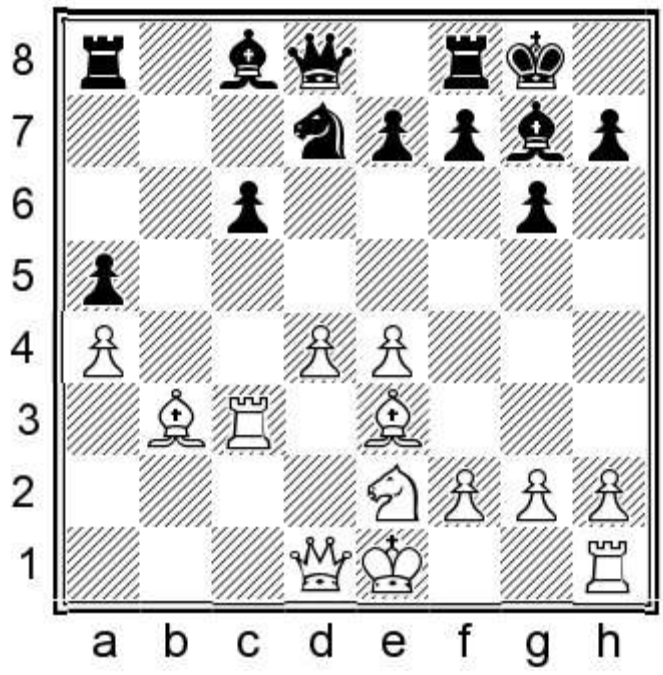


Position after: 10...a5

The critical position. White has 5 different moves here leading to completely different and unique positions.

11.0-0

A) 11.a4 b4 12.♗e3 [12.cxb4 axb4 13.♗e3 c5 14.♖c1 cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♗d7 16.0-0 ♕e8 17.♖c4 ♗xa4 18.♖xb4 ♗xb3 19.♕xb3 ♘c6 20.♘xc6 ♕xc6 21.♖c1 ♖a1 22.♖xa1 ♗xa1= ½-½ (30) Svidler, P (2729) – Grischuk, A (2794) Sochi 2015] 12...bxc3 13.♖c1 ♘d7 14.♖xc3

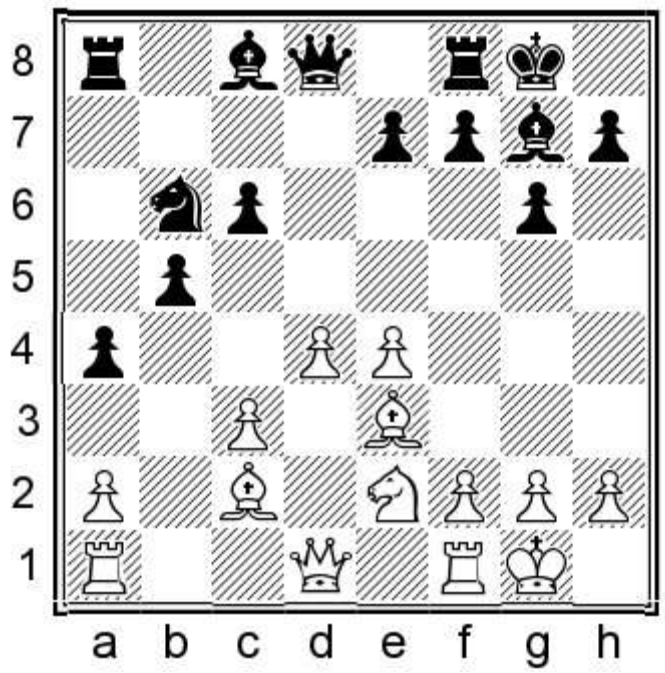


Position after: 14.♖xc3

A1) 14...e5? 15.0-0 [15.d5! cxd5 16.♗xd5 ♖b8 17.♕c2! ♘f6 18.♗c6 ♗a6 19.0-0±] 15...♗a6 16.♗c4 exd4 ½-½ (16) Liang, C (2524) – Ni, H (2638) Jinan 2005.

A2) 14...c5N 15.0-0 ♗a6 16.♗c4 cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♕xd4 ♗xc4 19.♕xc4 ♖b8=

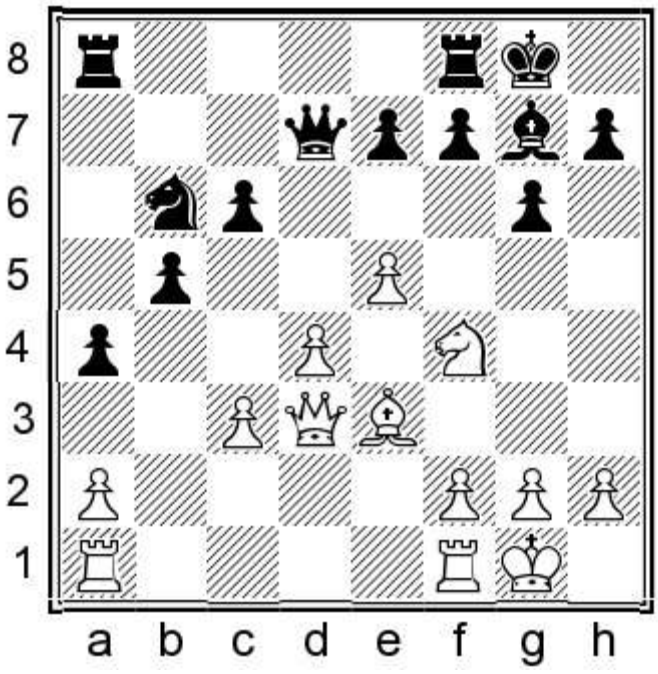
B) 11.♗e3 a4 12.♗c2 ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘b6



Position after: 13...♘b6

B1) 14.♕c1 ♘c4 [14...♗e6 15.♖e1 ♗c4 16.♗h6 c5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7= 1-0 (65) Eljanov, P (2723) – Salgado Lopez, I (2622) Dubai 2014] 15.♗h6 ♗xh6 16.♕xh6 e5=

B2) 14.♗d3 ♗e6 15.♘f4 ♗c4 16.e5 ♗xd3 17.♕xd3 ♕d7=

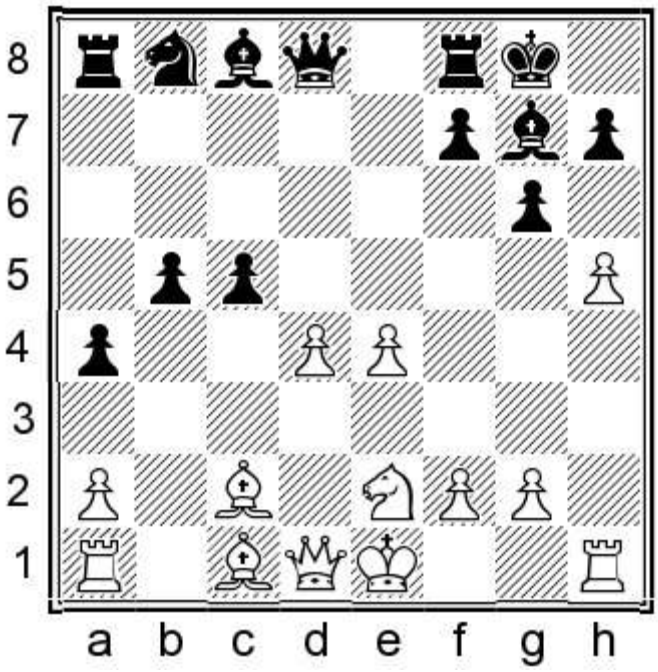


Position after: 17...♕d7=

The position is equal since White's control in the center is balanced by Black's control of the light squares.

C) 11.a3 c5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗b7 14.♗c2 ♘c6 15.♗e3 ♖c8 16.♖e1 e6=

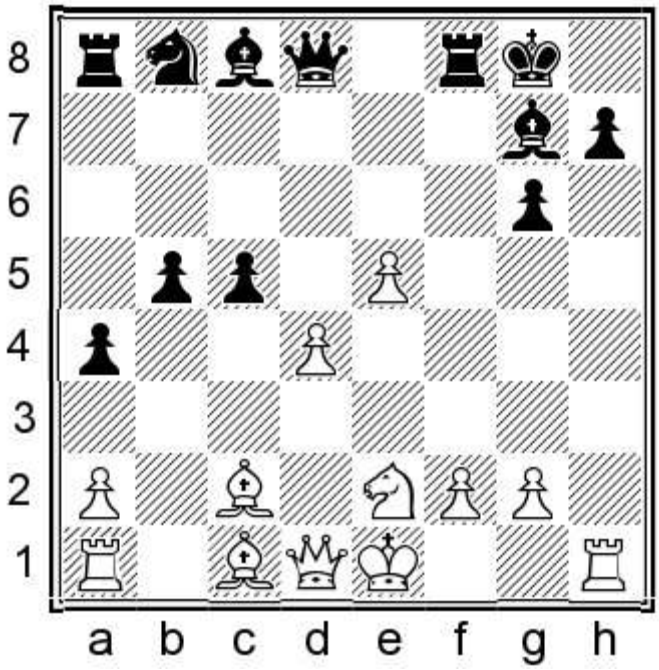
D) 11.h4 a4 12.♗c2 e5 13.h5 exd4 14.cxd4 c5



Position after: 14...c5

15.hxg6? [15.♖b1 cxd4 16.h6 ♗h8 17.♖xb5 ♗a6 18.♖d5 ♕b6 19.♗a3 ♖d8 20.♖xd8+ ♕xd8=] 15...fxg6

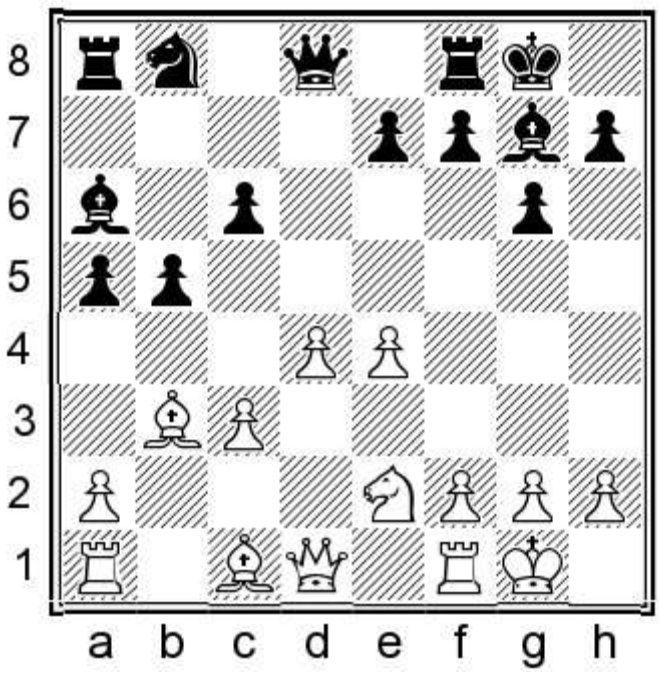
16.e5



Position after: 16.e5

16...♕d5? [16...♘c6! 17.♗e4 ♖a6 18.♖b1 cxd4 19.f4 ♖b6∓] 17.♘f4→ ½-½ (33) Ivanchuk, V (2775) – Rodshtein, M (2645) Porto Carras 2011.

11...♗a6!

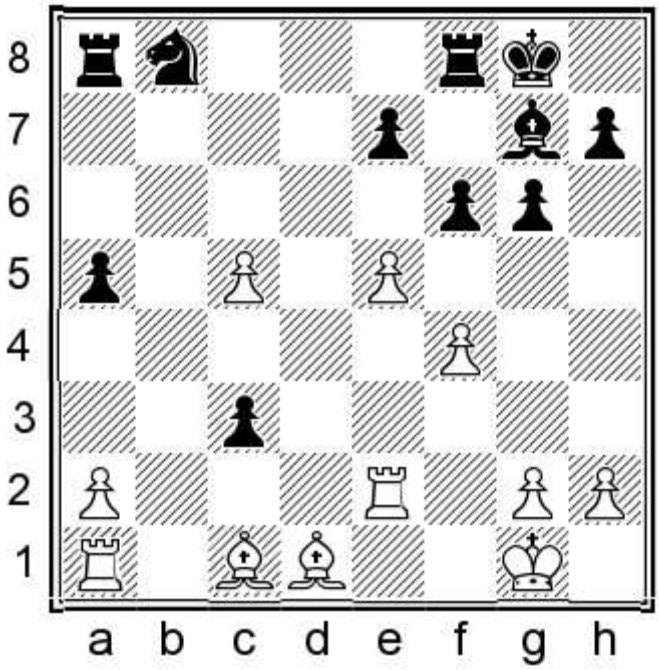


Position after: 11...♗a6!

Not very “Grünfeld-y” of the bishop, is it? Indeed, we haven’t seen the bishop on a6 yet. The point is to apply the maximum pressure on the White’s center after aggressive pawn attacks like ...a4 or ...b4.

12.♗e3

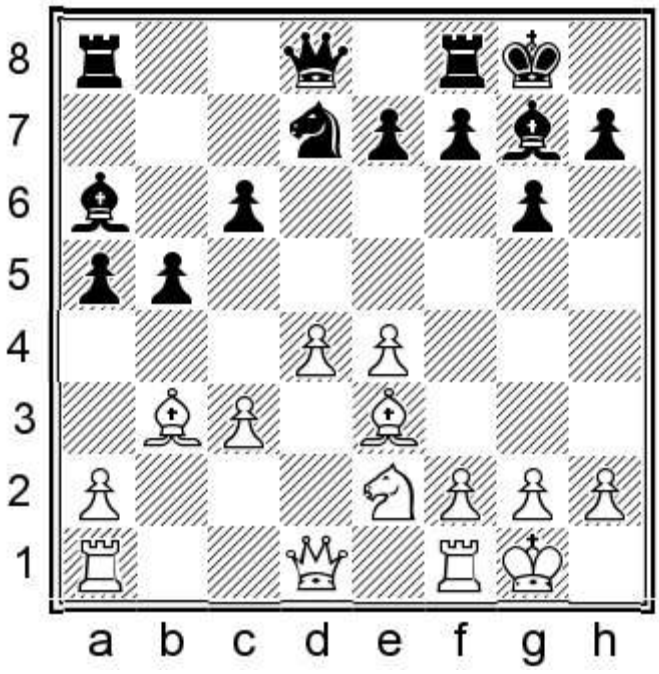
White may also try 12.e5 Now the point of the bishop being on a6 will become crystal clear. 12...b4! 13.f4 c5! 14.dxc5 [White loses a major central pawn and the game after 14.d5? c4 15.♗c2 ♗b7 16.♗e4 e6–+.] 14...♕xd1 15.♗xd1 bxc3 16.♖e1 ♗xe2! We need to destroy the knight before it collects our c3-pawn. 17.♖xe2 [17.♗xe2 ♘c6 18.♗f3 ♖ac8 19.♗e3 f6=] 17...f6 The lifeblood of the Grünfeld is our dark-squared bishop and it always needs to be active. Otherwise, the Grünfeld Defense would not make much sense.



Position after: 17...f6

The move ...f6 attempts to open up the a1-h8 diagonal. If White doesn’t take the pawn on f6 we will take on e5 and start attacking the remaining extremely vulnerable e5-pawn with ...♘c6. 18.♗b3+ ♔h8 19.♗d5 ♖a7 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.♗e3 ♖c7 22.♖b1 ♘c6 23.♗xc6 ♖xc6 24.♖b6 ♖cc8=

12...♘d7



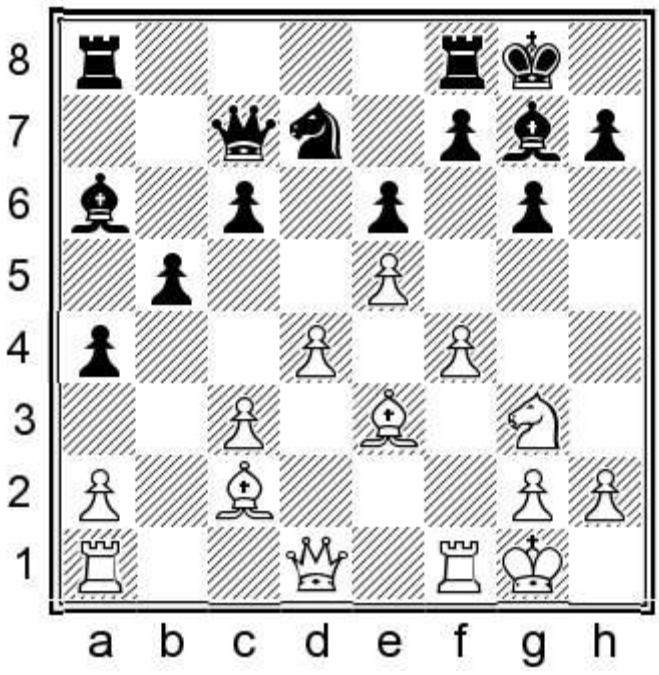
Position after: 12...♘d7

13.a3

A) 13.♕d2 ♕c7 14.♖fd1 ♖fd8 15.♗h6 c5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘g3 a4 18.♗c2 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♘e5 20.♕f4 ♘f3+ 21.♕xf3 ♕xc2= ½-½ (31) Murden, C (2442) – Siefring, C (2484) ICCF email 2015.

B) 13.e5 e6 14.♖e1 c5 15.a3 ♗b7 Since the bishop is no longer needed on a6, we conveniently relocate it to b7 where it enjoys the open h1-a8 diagonal. 16.♘f4 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♘b6=

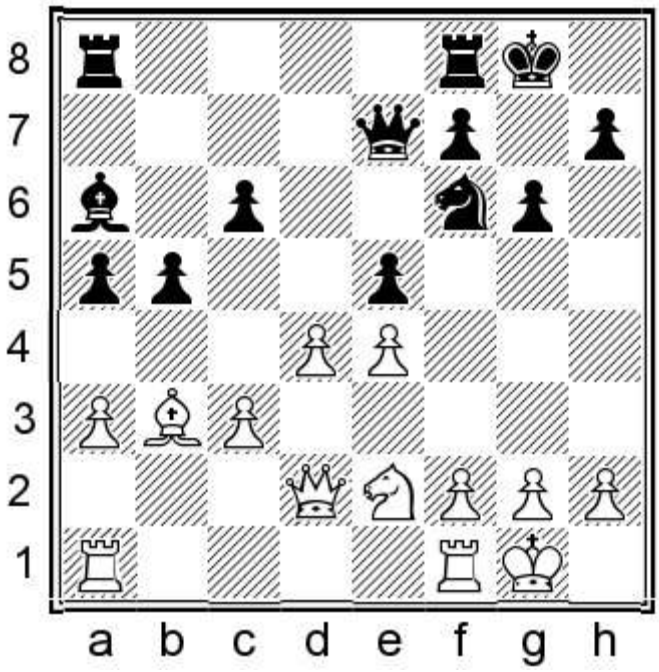
C) 13.f4 e6 14.e5 ♕c7 15.♘g3 a4 16.♗c2



Position after: 16.♗c2

16...f5!∓ Another standard idea worth remembering. Black stops ♘e4, limits the active scope of the c2-bishop and secures complete light square control for Black. Our further plan would be ...♘b6-d5, ...♖fd8, ...♖ac8, and then quite possibly ...c5.

13...e5 14.♕d2 ♕e7 15.♗g5 ♗f6 16.♗xf6 ♘xf6=



Position after: 16...♘xf6=

17.♘g3?

17.♖fe1! ♖fe8 18.f3 c5=

17...a4 18.♗a2 b4!

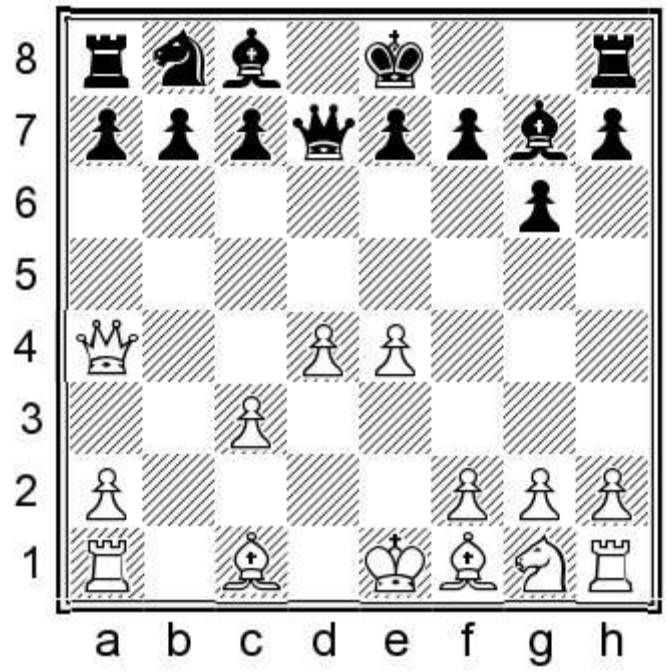
The culmination of the bishop's successful career on a6: it dies with glory to win the rook on f1.

19.cxb4 ♗xf1 20.♖xf1 exd4 21.♕xd4 ♖ad8–+

0-1 (38) Lautier, J (2645) – Van Wely, L (2605) Monte Carlo 1998.

c) 7.♕a4+

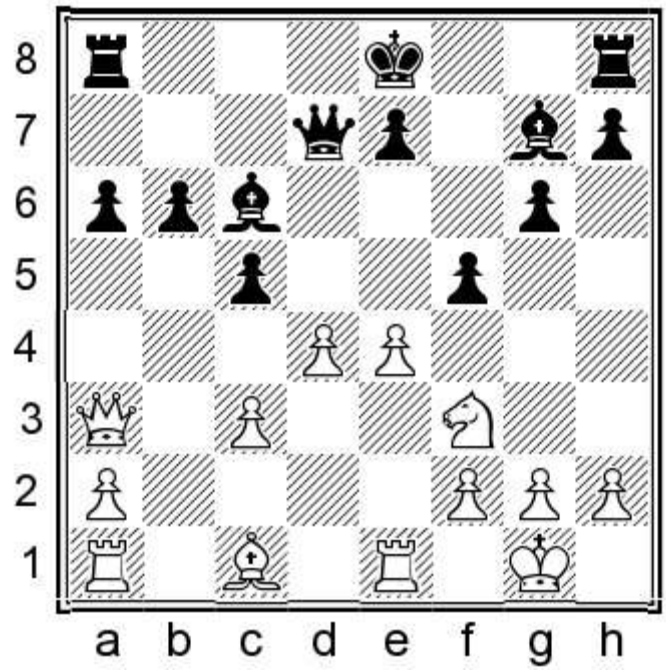
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♕a4+ ♕d7



Position after: 7...♕d7

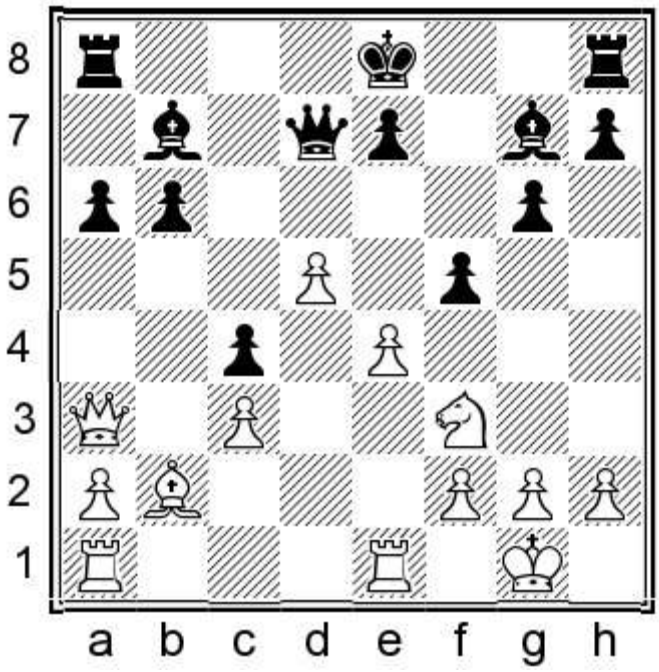
8.♕b3

A) 8.♕a3 b6 9.♘f3 c5 10.♗d3 ♘c6 11.♗b5 a6 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.♗xc6 ♗xc6 14.♖e1 f5



Position after: 14...f5

A1) 15.d5 ♗b7 16.♗b2 c4! An absolutely necessary move. Otherwise, White plays c4 and trades the dark-squared bishops leaving us with the dummy on b7 versus the beautiful knight on f3.

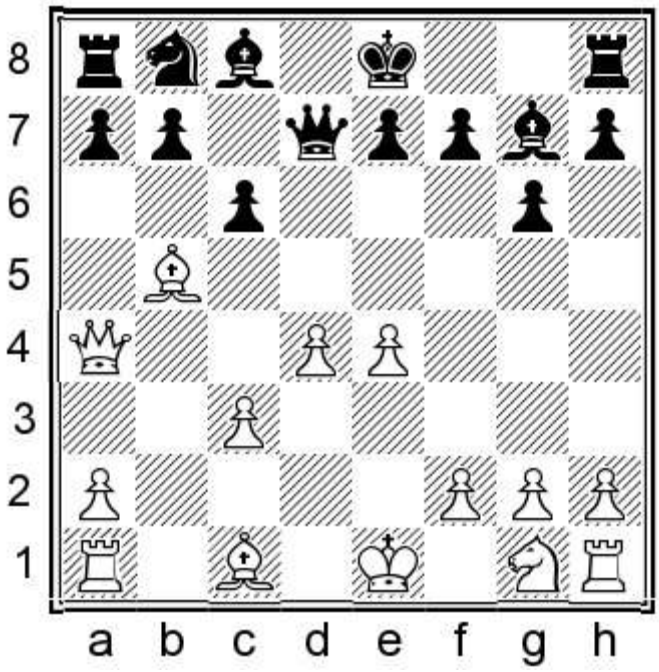


Position after: 16...c4!

17.exf5 ♗xd5 18.♖ad1 0-0 19.fxg6 ♕f5 20.gxh7+ ♔h8 21.♕xe7 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♕xf3 23.♕e3 b5=

A2) 15.dxc5 fxe4 16.♘d4 bxc5 17.♕xc5 ♗d5 18.♗a3 ♖c8 19.♕a5 0-0 20.♗xe7 ♖fe8 21.♗g5 ♗c4= ½-½ (56) Mamedyarov, S (2765) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2775) Riga 2019.

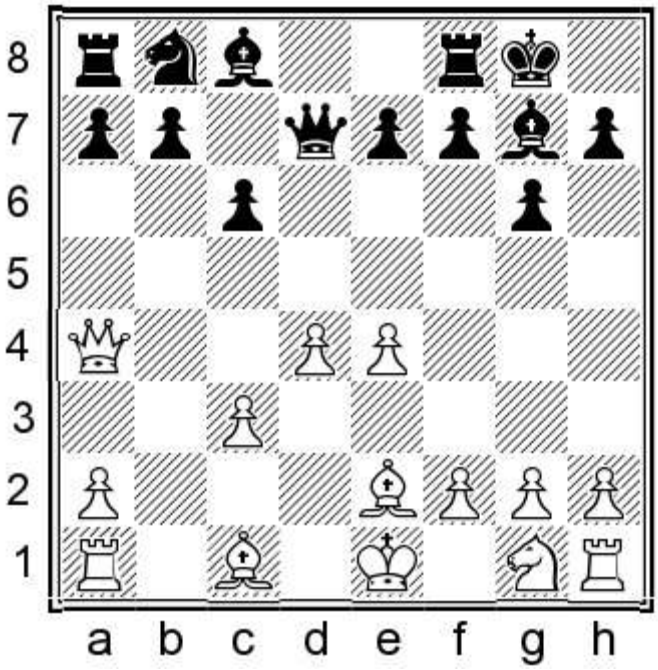
B) 8.♗b5 c6



Position after: 8...c6

9.♗e2 [9.♗d3 0-0 10.♘f3 c5 11.♕xd7 ♗xd7 12.♖b1 b6 13.♗e3 ♖d8 14.0-0 ♗a4 15.♖fc1 e6 16.h3

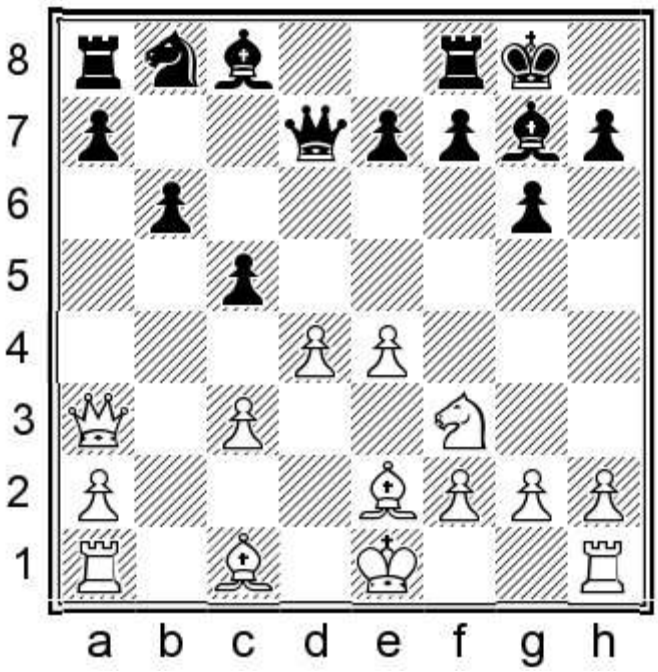
♘d7= ½-½ (44) Mamedyarov, S (2801) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2779) Saint Louis 2018] 9...0-0



Position after: 9...0-0

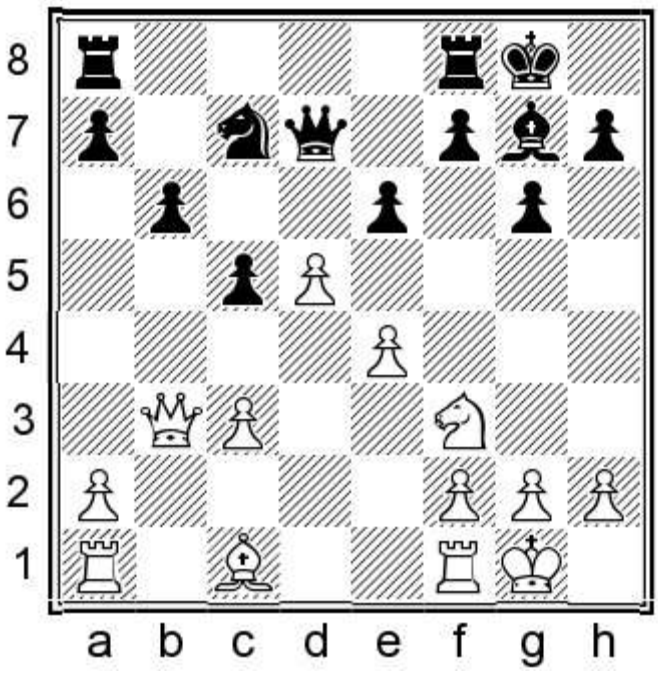
B1) 10.♘f3 c5 11.♗b5 [11.♕xd7 ♗xd7 12.♗a3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗c6 14.♗d3 ♖d8 15.♔e2 ♗xd4 16.♘xd4 ♖xd4∓ 0-1 (33) Levin, F (2528) – Socko, B (2604) Germany 2017] 11...♕g4 12.0-0 cxd4 13.♗a3 ♘c6 14.cxd4 ♕xe4 15.♖fe1 ♕d5 16.♗c4 ♕a5 17.♕xa5 ♘xa5 18.♗d5 ♘c6 19.♗xe7 ♖e8 20.♗c5 ♗e6= ½-½ (33) Ivanisevic, I (2633) – Giri, A (2720) Al Ain 2012.

B2) 10.♕a3 b6 11.♘f3 c5



Position after: 11...c5

B2.1) 12.d5 0-1 (28) Alekseenko, K (2638) – Svidler, P (2737) St Petersburg 2018. 12...♗a6!N Here is the refutation! 13.♗xa6 ♘xa6 14.0-0 ♘c7 15.♕b3 e6

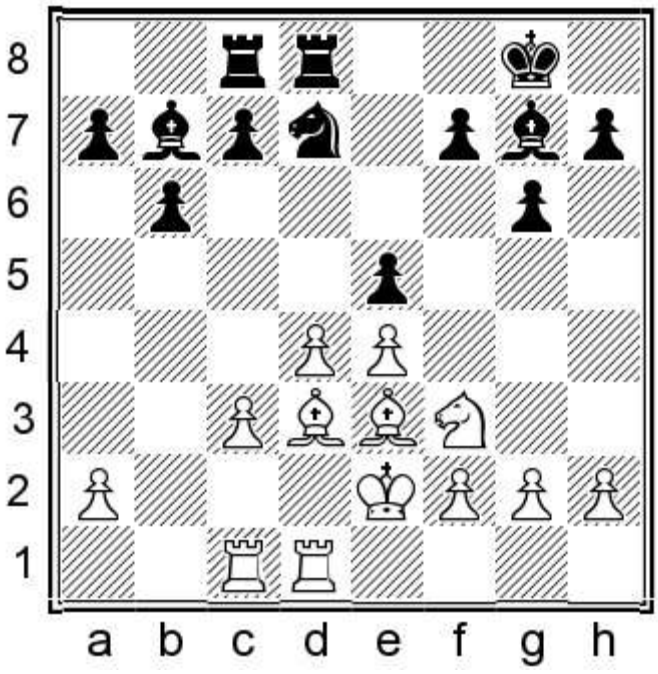


Position after: 15...e6

White is forced to trade the central pawns leaving Black with a much better pawn structure and substantial advantage. White was just one move short from being completely fine after playing ♖b1 and then connecting all of the pawns with c4. As an old chess adage says: chess is a tragedy of one tempo. 16.dxe6 ♕xe6∓

B2.2) 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.d5 e6 14.♗e3 exd5 15.♖ad1 ♘c6 16.exd5 ♘e7 17.c4 ♘f5 18.♗f4 ♖fe8 19.♗d3 ♘d4 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.♖b1 ♕g4 22.♕c1 ♗c8 23.♕d2 ♗d7 24.♖be1 ♗c3 25.♕xc3 ♕xf4= ½-½ (30) Onischuk, A (2672) – Xiong, J (2665) Saint Louis 2018.

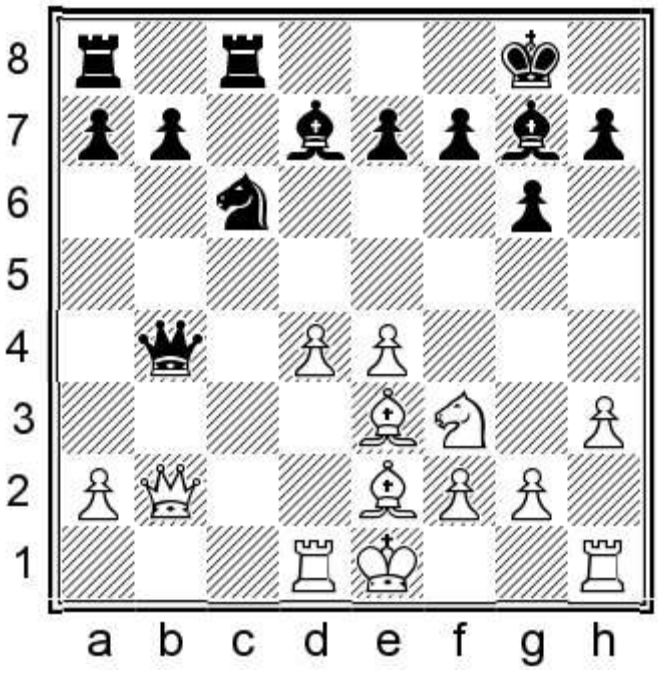
C) 8.♕xd7+ Black welcomes this trade pretty much anytime and anywhere in the Grünfeld. 8...♘xd7 9.♗e3 [9.♘f3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘c5N 11.♘d2 ♘a4 12.♖c1 ♗d7 13.♘b3 e5 14.♗e2 c6 15.0-0 ♗e6=] 9...0-0 10.♖c1 ♖d8 11.♘f3 b6 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.♔e2 e5 14.♖hd1 ♖ac8



Position after: 14...♖ac8

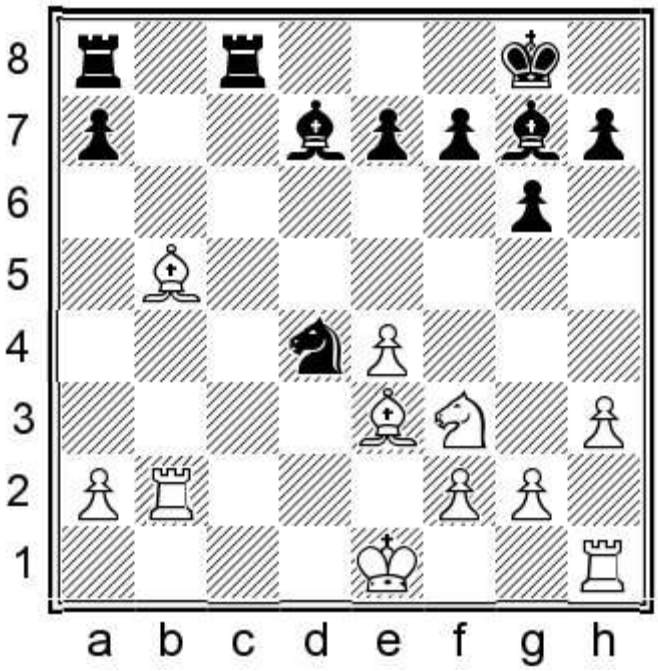
15.d5? [In the future White may want to try 15.a4!? with the idea to harass Black's queenside after a5. 15...exd4 16.cxd4 ♘f6 17.♘d2 ♘g4 18.h3 ♘xe3 19.fxe3 c5 20.d5 ♖c7 21.g4 ♗c8 22.♖g1 h6∞] 15...c6 16.c4 ♗f8 17.♔f1 f6 18.♗e2 ♘c5 19.♘d2 ♘a4 20.♘b1 f5∓ 0-1 (42) Riazantsev, A (2659) – Mamedyarov, S (2772) Sochi 2017.

D) 8.♕c2 c5 9.♘f3 0-0 10.♗e3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c6 12.♖d1 ♕d6 13.h3 ♗d7 14.♗e2 ♖fc8 15.♕b2 ♕b4+



Position after: 15...♕b4+

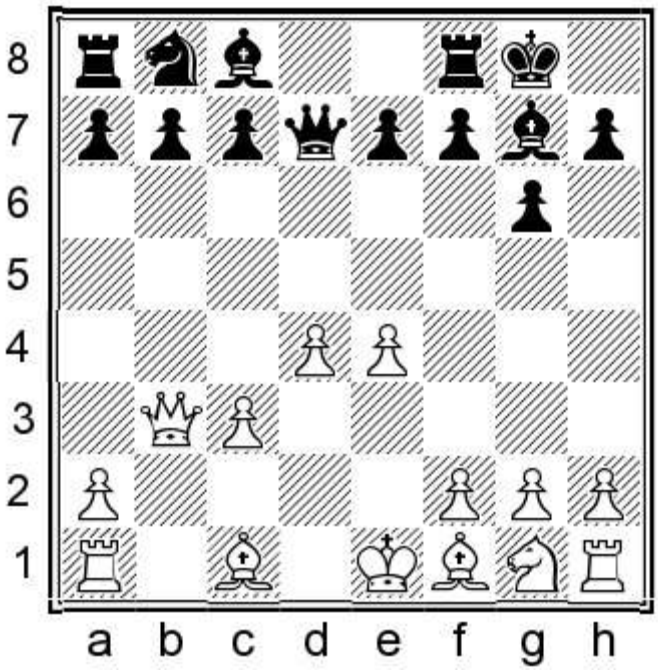
The queen trade is mandatory. Since the endgames are almost always fine for Black, we would want to take any opportunity to trade queens. 16.♖d2 ♕xb2 17.♖xb2 b5!? Not the only move but certainly the most assertive. 18.♗xb5 [18.0-0 a6 19.♖d1 ♘a5 20.♘e5 ♗e8=] 18...♘xd4



Position after: 18...♘xd4

19.♗xd7 [19.♘xd4? ♗xb5 20.♖xb5 ♗xd4 21.♔e2 ♗xe3 22.♔xe3 ♖c3+ 23.♔d2 ♖a3 24.♖a1 ♖d8+ 25.♔e1 ♖d4 26.f3 ♖da4∓] 19...♘xf3+ 20.gxf3 ♗xb2 21.♗xc8 ♖xc8=

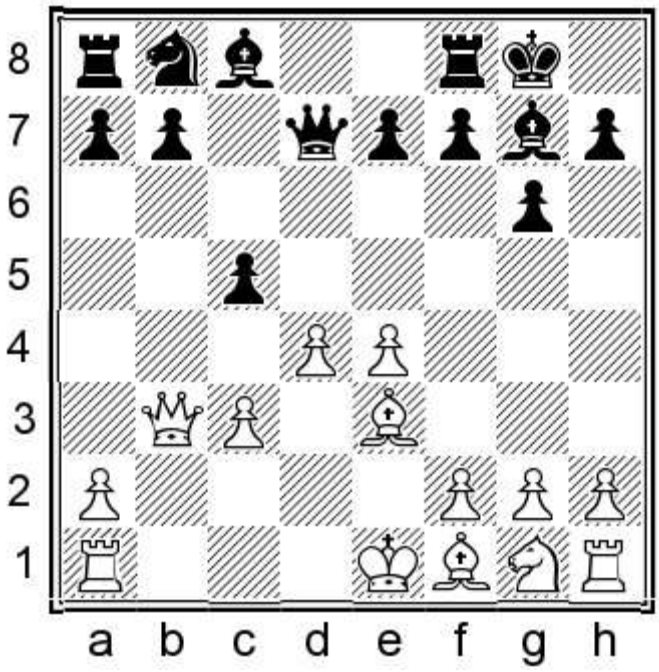
8...0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

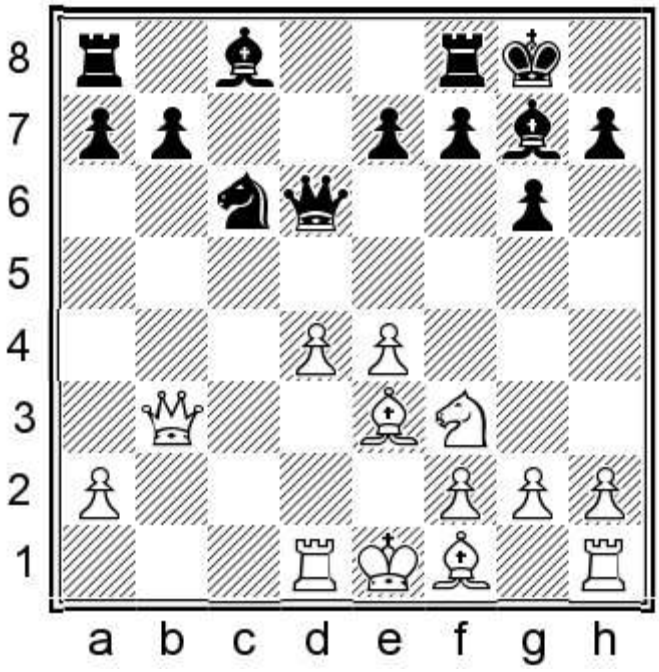
9.♘f3

9.♗e3 c5



Position after: 9...c5

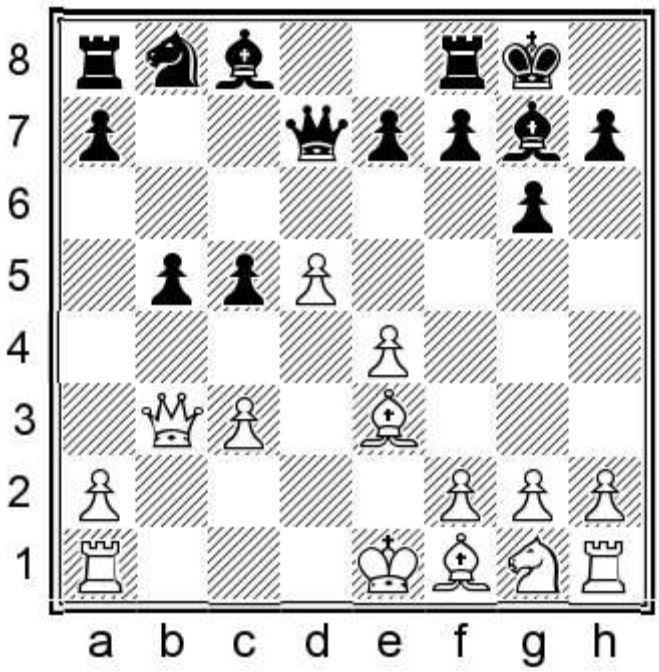
A) 10.♘f3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c6 12.♖d1 ♕d6



Position after: 12...♕d6

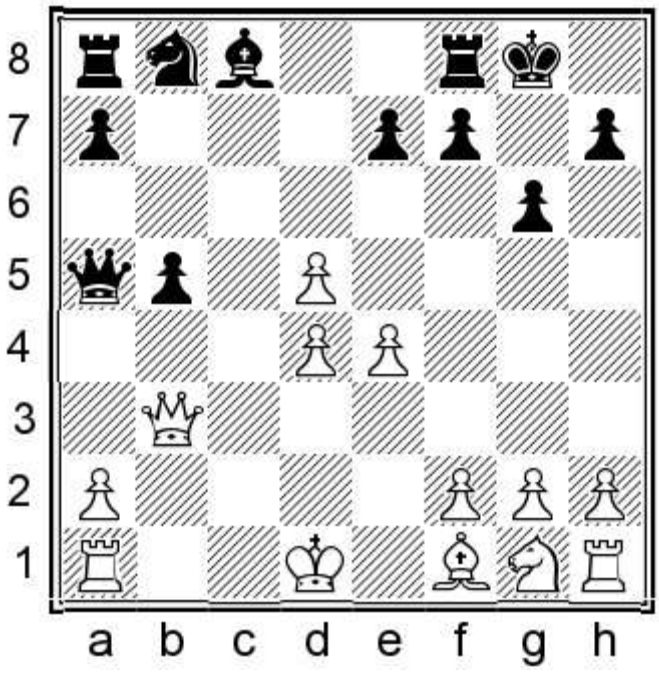
13.♗e2 [13.e5 ♕b4+ 14.♕xb4 ♘xb4 15.♗c4 ♗f5∓ ½-½ (45) Moiseenko, A (2706) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2717) Riga 2013. 13.h3 e6 14.♗e2 b6 15.0-0 ♗b7=] 13...♗g4 14.d5 ♘e5 15.0-0 ♘xf3+ 16.♗xf3 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♗e5 18.h3 b6=

B) 10.d5 b5!



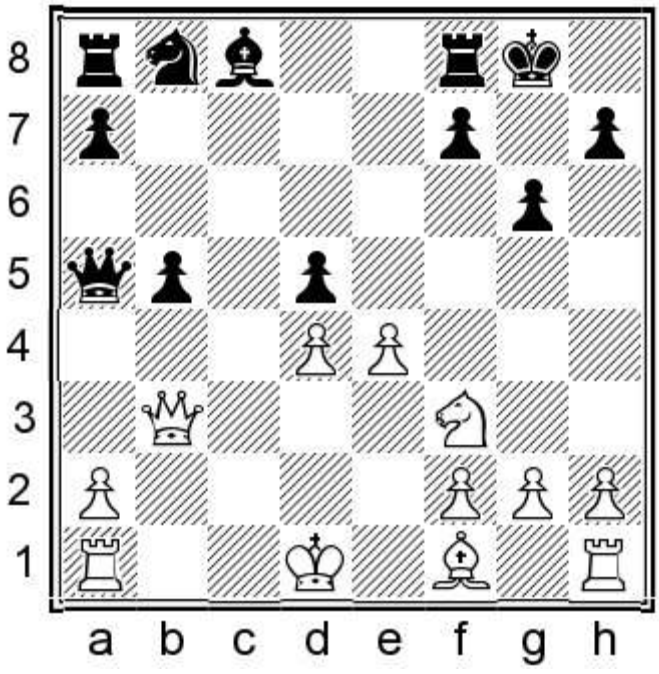
Position after: 10...b5!

By now you should be accustomed to the move ...b5. It always works as long as White is behind in development. 11.♗xc5 [11.♗xb5 ♕g4 12.♗e2 ♕xe4 13.♗f3 ♕d3 14.♘e2 ♘d7 15.♖d1 ♕a6∓ 0-1 (30) Raznikov, D (2486) – Jakovenko, D (2719) Rhodes 2013] 11...♕c7 12.♗d4 ♗xd4 13.cxd4 ♕a5+ 14.♔d1



Position after: 14.♔d1

14...e6!?N Black may also try to give up even more pawns with this move. I think it makes White's job a lot harder than the below alternative, even if both moves lead to an objectively balanced position. [14...♗d7 15.♗d3 ♖c8 16.♘e2 ♘a6 17.♖c1 ♘b4 18.♗b1 ♖c4 19.♖xc4 bxc4 20.♕c3 ♖b8= ½-½ (65) Nakamura, H (2781) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2793) Gibraltar 2018] 15.♘f3 exd5



Position after: 15...exd5

B1) 16.♕xd5?! ♗g4 17.♗d3 [The greedy 17.♕xa8 will not go unpunished: 17...♕c3 18.♖c1 ♗xf3+

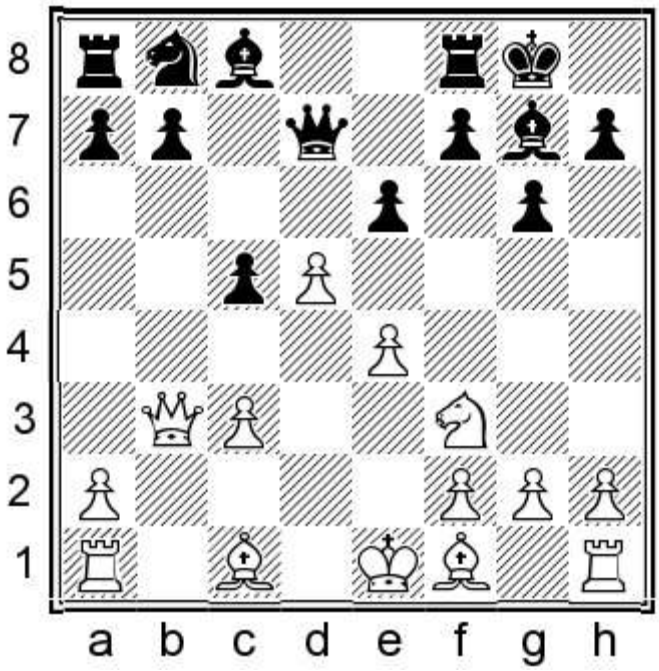
19.gxf3 ♕xd4+ 20.♔e1 ♕b4+ 21.♔d1 ♖d8+–+.] 17...♕b6 18.♔e2 ♘c6 19.♔e3 ♗xf3 20.gxf3 ♖fd8 21.♕c5 ♘xd4 22.♕xb6 axb6∓

B2) 16.♕xb5 ♕a3 17.♕b3 ♕e7 18.♕xd5 ♗b7 19.♕e5 ♕a3 20.♗c4 ♘c6 21.♕c5 ♘b4 22.♖b1 a5 23.♖b3 ♕a4 24.d5 ♘xa2 25.♔d2 ♖fc8 26.♕b5 ♖xc4 27.♕xa4 ♖xa4 28.♖xb7 ♖xe4=

9...c5 10.d5

10.♗e3 transposes to the 9.♗e3 c5 10.♘f3 line.

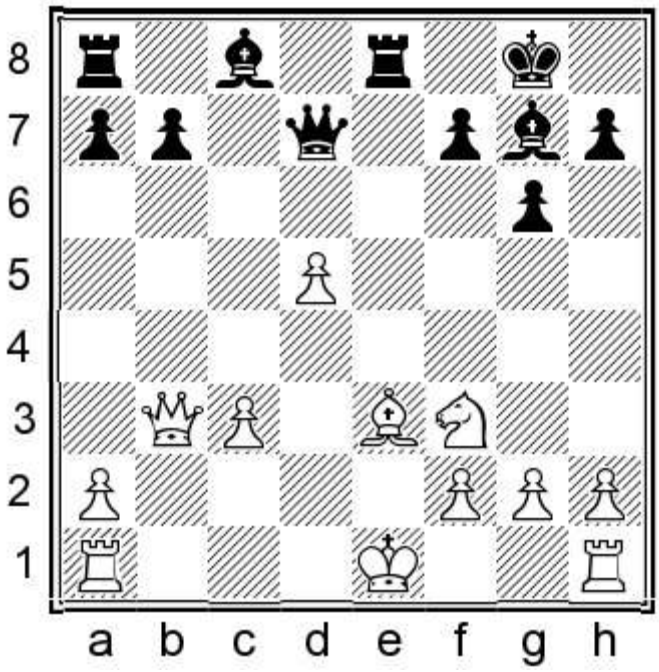
10...e6



Position after: 10...e6

11.♗e3

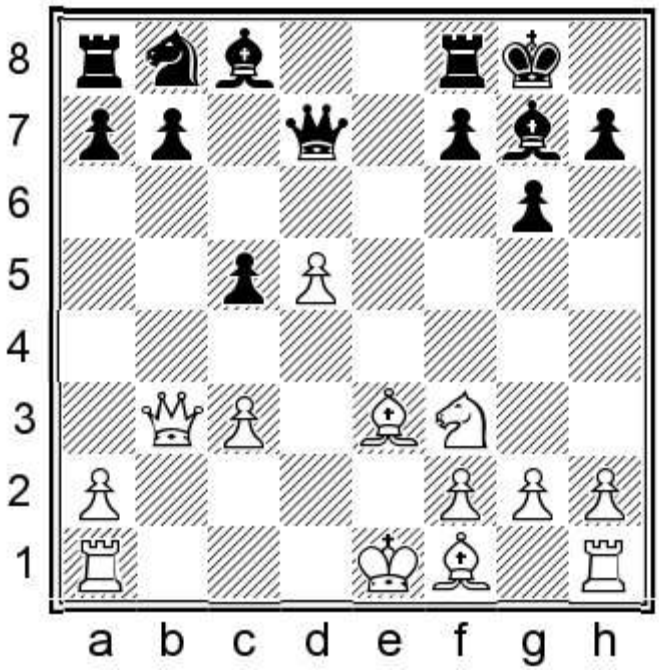
11.♗c4 exd5 12.♗xd5 ♘a6 13.♗e3 [13.♗f4 ♘c7 14.0-0 ♘xd5 15.exd5 b5∓] 13...♘c7 14.♗xc5 ♘xd5 15.exd5 ♖e8+ 16.♗e3



Position after: 16.♗e3

16...b5!N I must emphasize that we would like to prevent c4 by White which would strengthen the d5-pawn. [16...b6 17.0-0 ♗a6 18.c4! ♗xa1 19.♖xa1 ♖ac8 20.♘d2↑ 1-0 (43) Bologan, V (2655) – Sutovsky, E (2642) Poikovsky 2014] 17.0-0 ♗b7 18.♖fd1 ♖ad8 19.d6 ♖e6 20.♗f4 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♗e5 22.♗g3 ♗xg3 23.hxg3 ♕c6=

11...exd5 12.exd5

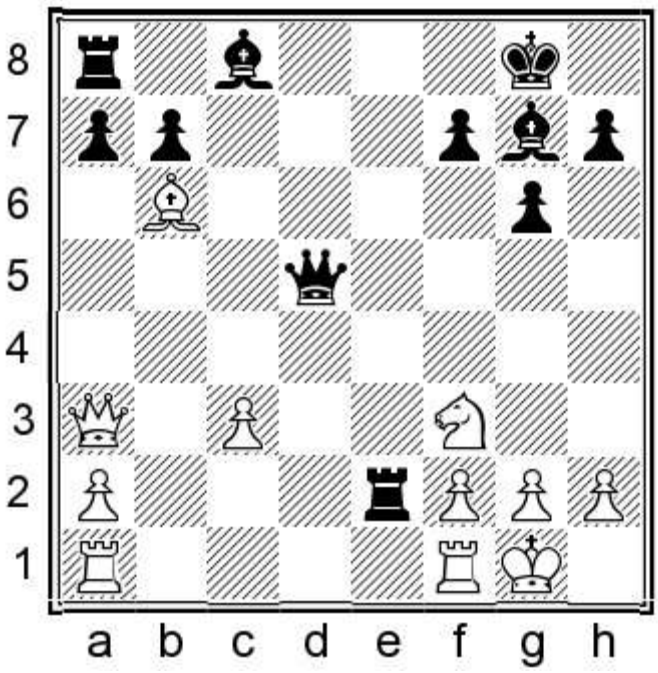


Position after: 12.exd5

12...♕d6N

12...b6 13.♗b5 ♕d6 14.0-0 ♗d7 15.a4± 1-0 (36) Nakamura, H (2791) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2819) chess.com 2016.

13.♗e2 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♘b6 15.♕a3 ♕xd5 16.♗xc5 ♖e8 17.♗xb6 ♖xe2



Position after: 17...♖xe2

18.♖ad1

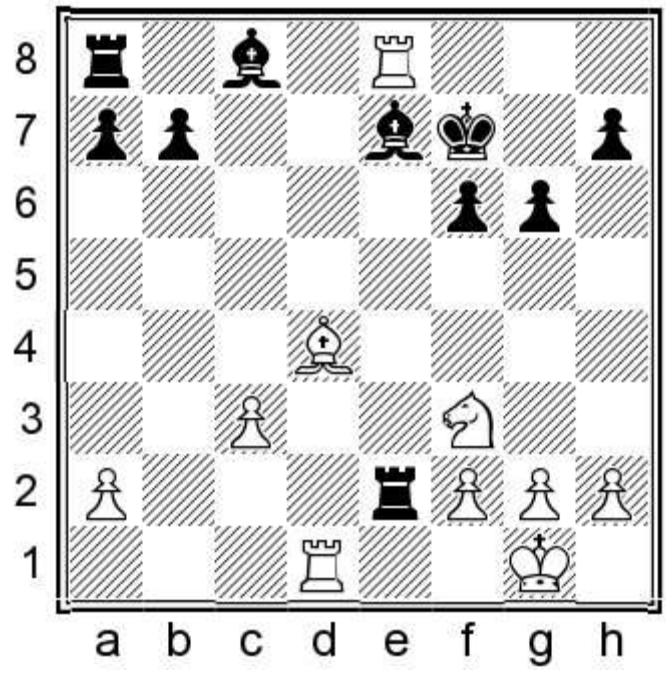
18.♖fd1 ♕b5 19.♖d8+ ♖e8 20.♘d4 ♕e5 21.♘f3 ♕b5 22.♘d4 ♕e5=

18...♗f8!

Intermezzo!

The queen retreat from d5 is unsatisfactory due to the back-rank problems after ♖d8. But the dark-squared bishop saves the day as it always does in the Grünfeld.

19.♖xd5 ♗xa3 20.♖d8+ ♔g7 21.♗d4+ f6 22.♖d1 ♗e7 23.♖e8 ♔f7 24.♖h8 ♔g7 25.♖e8 ♔f7=

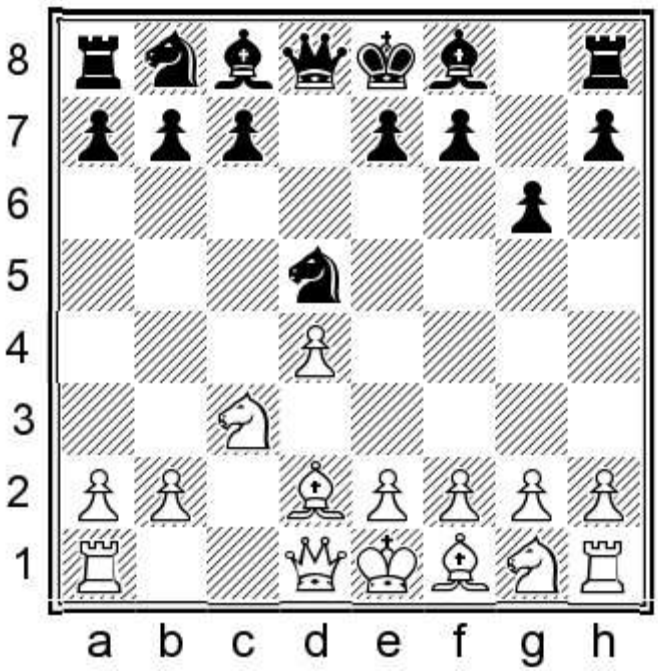


Position after: 25...♔f7=

White's rook is under perpetual attack thus he should be content with a draw.

Chapter 4
5.♗d2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗d2



Chapter Guide

Chapter 4 – 5.♗d2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗d2 ♗g7 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.♗xc3 0-0

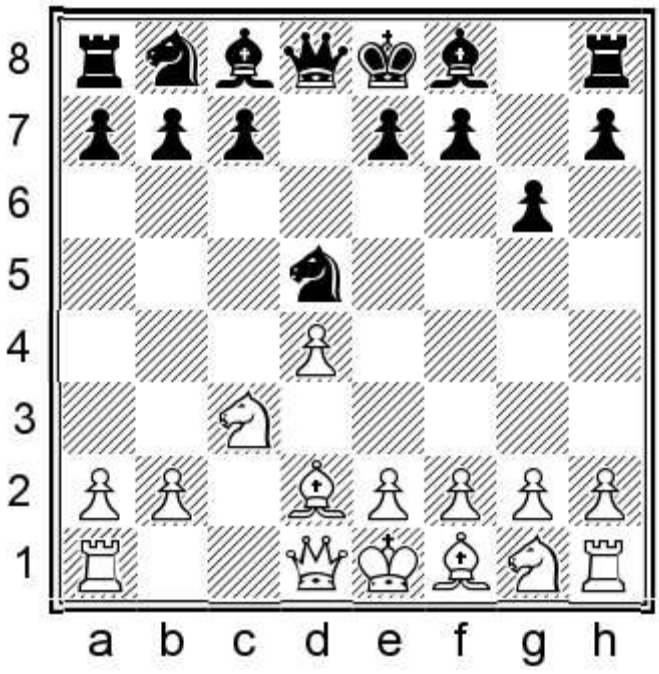
---

a) 8.--

b) 8.♕d2

a) 8.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗d2



Position after: 5.♗d2

In this line White wants to force a knight trade after e4 and then recapture with the bishop. White wants to avoid having a c3-pawn which often becomes a liability rather than an asset. For example, recall chapter 1 where White had an extra pawn but no real advantage because of the extremely weak a2 and c3-pawns.

5...♗g7

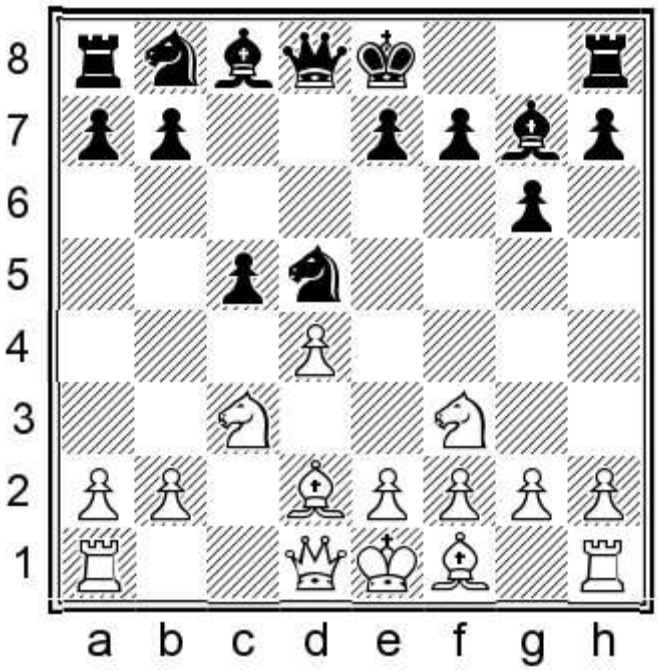
The easiest and the most forcing way to get great play.

Another playable option for Black is 5...♘b6 after which White has tried many different approaches here including 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.♗g5.

6.e4

Other moves allow Black to break the center comfortably after ...c5.

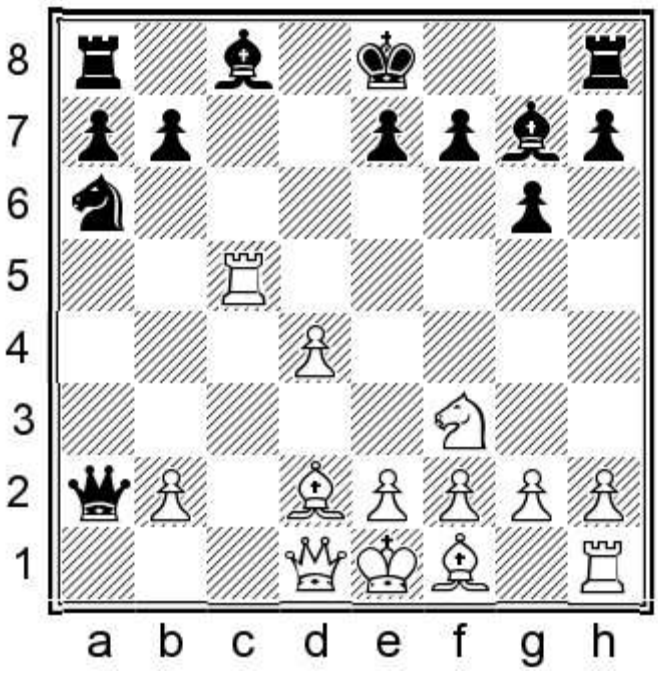
A) 6.♘f3 c5 As a rule of thumb, whenever the position permits, we should be playing ...c5 before castling.



Position after: 6...c5

A1) 7.dxc5? ♘xc3 8.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕a5 10.♕d4 0-0 11.♕b4 ♕c7 12.e3 ♘d7∓ Black is about to pick up the c5-pawn and then White will be suffering with the weak a2 and c3-pawns, whereas Black does not have any weakness.

A2) 7.♘xd5 ♕xd5 8.♖c1 ♕xa2 9.♖xc5 ♘a6

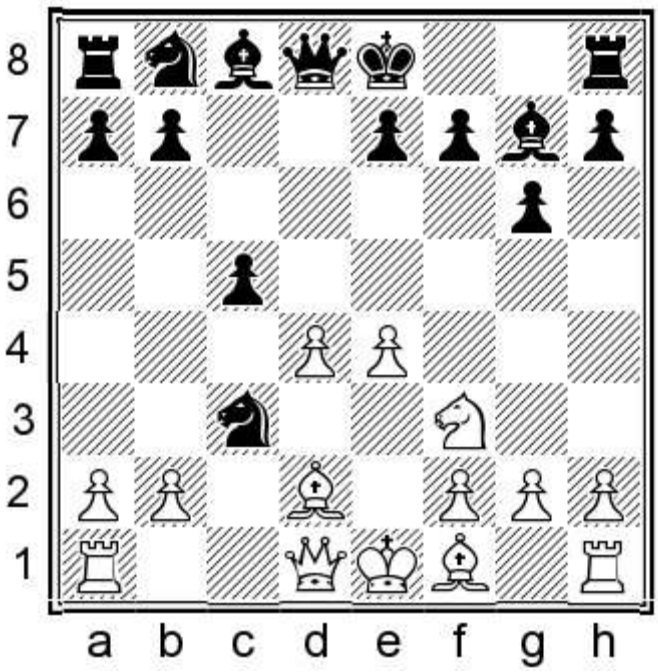


Position after: 9...♘a6

White is forced to give up a pawn without reasonable compensation. 10.♖c1 [10.♖c2 ♗f5 11.e4 ♗xe4

12.♗b5+ ♔f8 13.♖c1 ♕d5 14.♗c4 ♕f5 15.♖c3 ♘c7 16.0-0 ♘d5∓] 10...♕xb2 11.e3 0-0 12.♗c4 ♕b6 13.0-0 ♘c7 14.h3 ♗f5 15.♕e2 ♗e4 16.♘g5 ♗d5 17.♗xd5 ♘xd5 18.♖b1 ♕c6 19.♖fc1 ♕d7 20.♕b5 ♖fd8 21.♕xb7 a5∓

A3) 7.e4 ♘xc3

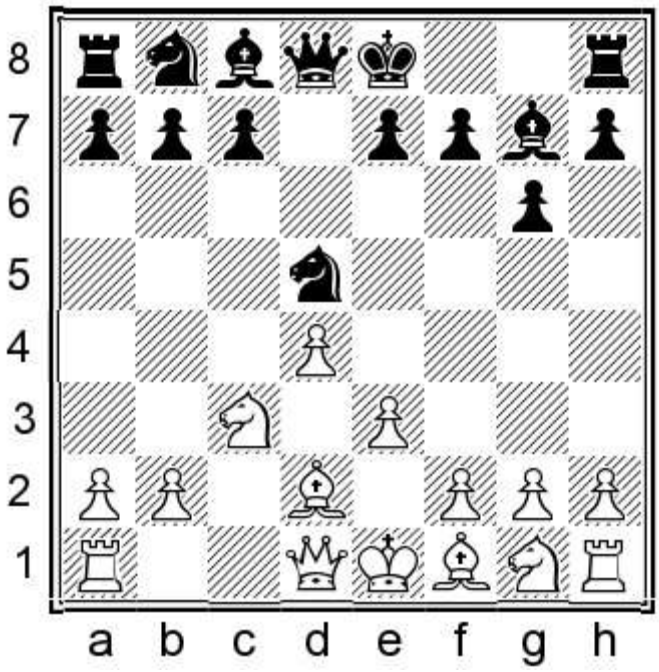


Position after: 7...♘xc3

8.♗xc3 A very sterile line leading to multiple trades and a likely draw. [8.bxc3 0-0 9.♖c1 ♗g4 10.♗e3 ♕a5 11.♕d2 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 e6 13.d5 exd5 14.exd5 ♘d7 15.c4 ♕c7=] 8...cxd4 9.♗b5+ ♗d7 10.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♕xd4 0-0 13.♕xd7 ♘xd7 14.♖c1 ♖ac8=

A4) 7.♖c1 ♘xc3 8.♗xc3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 0-0 10.e3 ♗d7 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.♘b3 ♗e6 13.0-0 ♗xc3 14.♖xc3 ♕b6= The symmetrical pawn structure doesn't necessarily mean the game will end up in a draw. Black is a tad more active due to some pressure on the queenside.

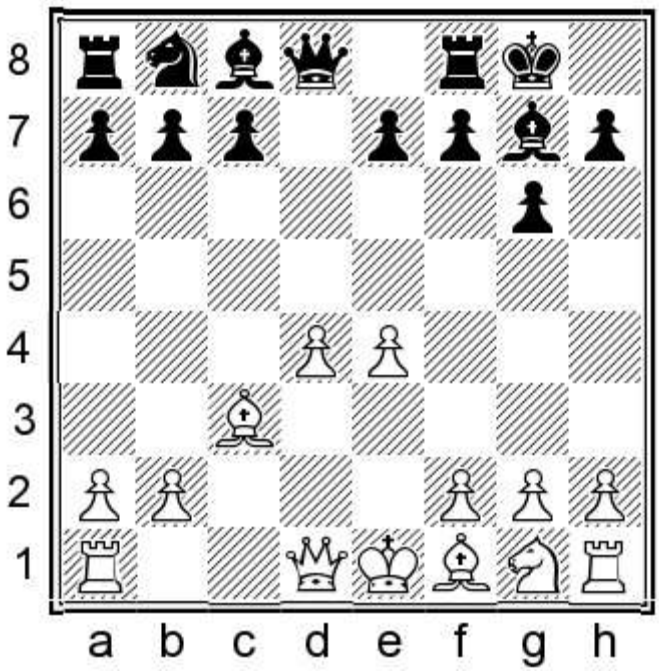
B) 6.e3



Position after: 6.e3

Timid and inconsistent with the main ideas of the 5.♗d2 system. 6...c5 7.♗c4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 0-0 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.0-0 b6 11.♕e2 ♗b7 12.♖ad1 e6=

6...♘xc3 7.♗xc3 0-0

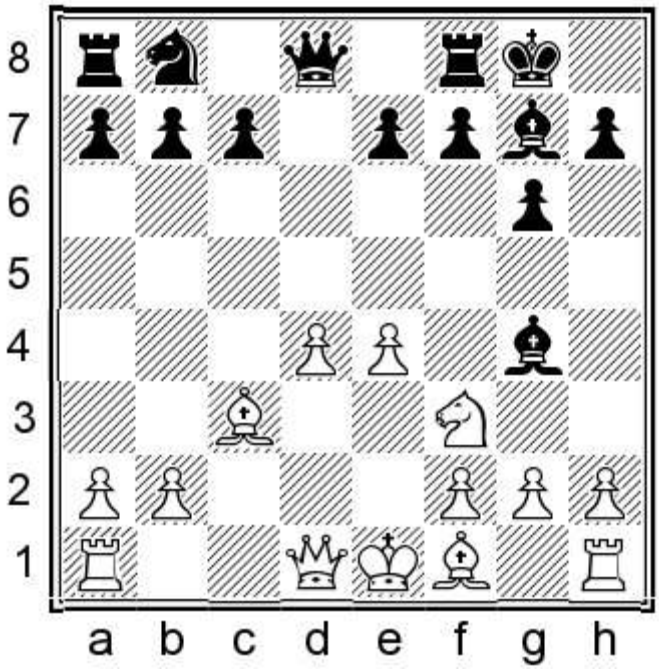


Position after: 7...0-0

8.♖c1

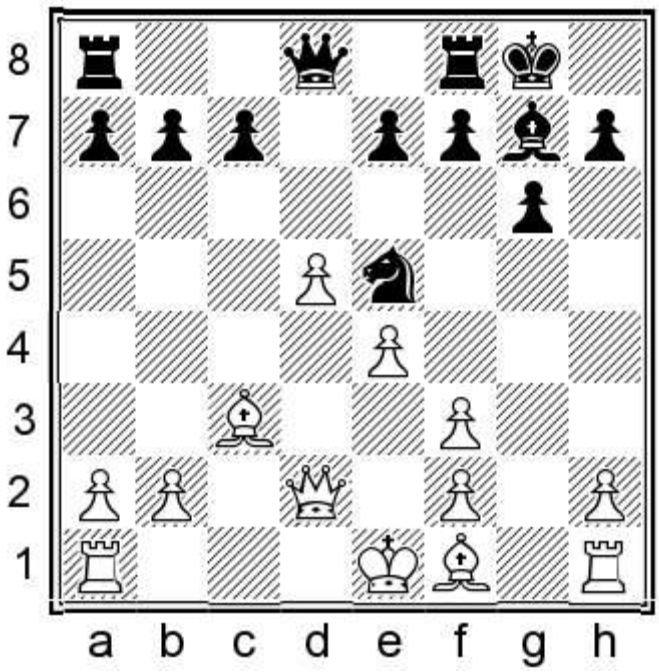
White prepares for Black's ...c7-c5 by protecting the c3-bishop, getting ready to capture d4xc5 and holding on to the extra pawn on c5 as long as possible.

A) 8.♘f3 is quite harmless because of 8...♗g4 and Black has an attack on White's center.



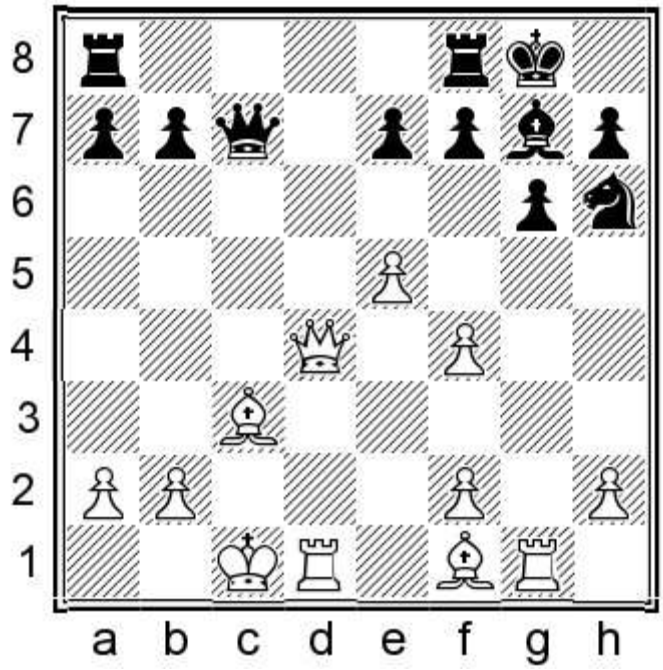
Position after: 8...♗g4

9.♕d2 [9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘e5 13.♗e2 c6 14.♕d4 ♕c7 15.0-0 cxd5 16.exd5 ♖fd8 17.c4 ♖ac8 18.♖ac1 b6= Objectively, the chances are equal right now. However, White has to be careful not to get a worse bishop versus knight endgame.] 9...♗xf3 10.gxf3 ♘c6 11.d5 ♘e5



Position after: 11...♘e5

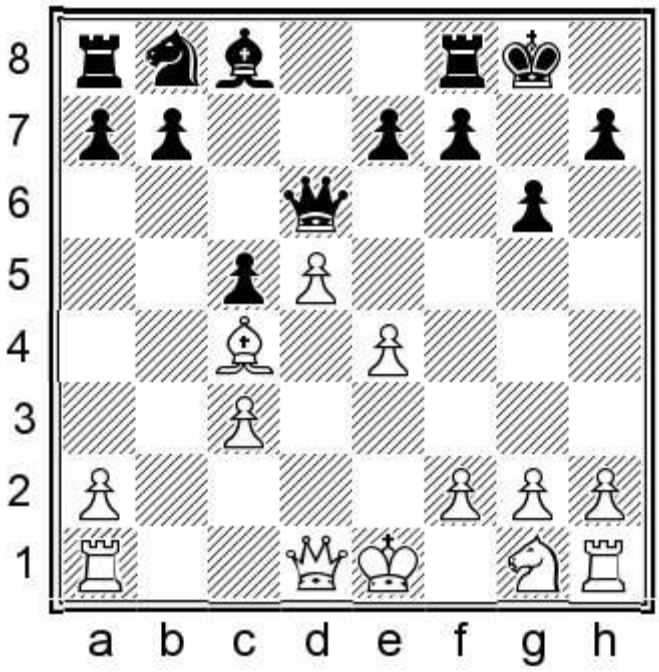
12.0-0-0 [12.♗e2 c6 13.f4 ♘d7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.0-0-0 ♘f6 17.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 18.♗f3 ♖db8= 19.e5? ♘d5 20.♗xd5 cxd5 21.♖xd5 ♖b4! 22.f5 gxf5 23.♖d7 e6 24.♖g1+ ♔f8∓] 12...c6 Whenever ...e6 doesn't work, we want to attack the d5-pawn with ...c6. [Naive would have been snacking on the f3-pawn: 12...♘xf3?? 13.♕f4 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♕d6 15.♕xf3+–] 13.f4 ♘g4 14.e5 cxd5 15.♖g1 ♘h6 16.♕xd5 ♕b6 17.♕d4 ♕c7=



Position after: 17...♕c7=

The position is balanced, and Black has comfortable play. The further plan could be to establish the knight on f5 and bring the rook to the open files with ...♖ac8 and ...♖fd8. The exact move order may vary depending on what White is going to do.

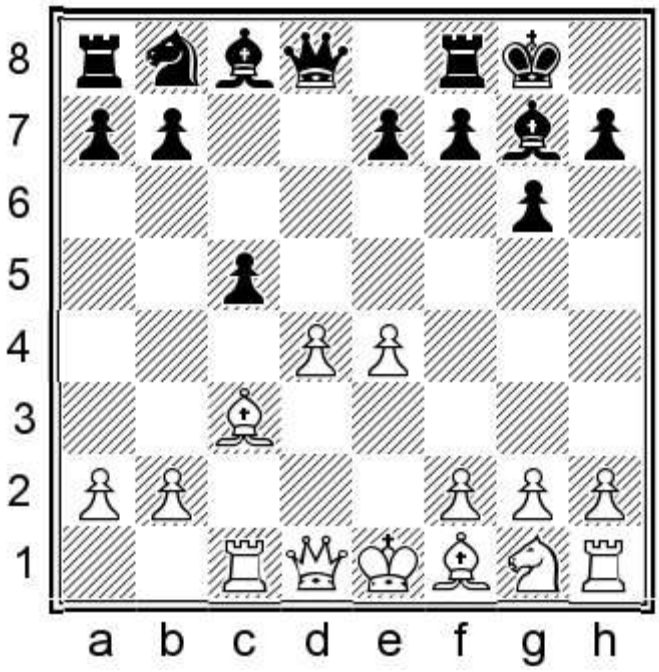
B) 8.♗c4 This logical spot for the bishop is, in fact, quite ineffective as Black provokes d4-d5 and forces the c4-bishop to stare at its own pawn. 8...c5 9.d5 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♕d6



Position after: 10...♕d6

11.♘f3 [11.♘e2 ♘d7 12.0-0 f5 13.exf5 ♘e5 14.♗b3 ♗xf5= The weakness of the e7-pawn is balanced by the weakness of the d5-pawn, and, therefore, the chances are even.] 11...♗g4 12.e5 ♕c7 13.0-0 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♕xe5 15.♖ab1 ♘d7 16.♖fe1 ♕d6 17.♖xb7 ♖fb8= ½-½ (21) Grachev, B (2653) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2730) Moscow 2010.

8...c5

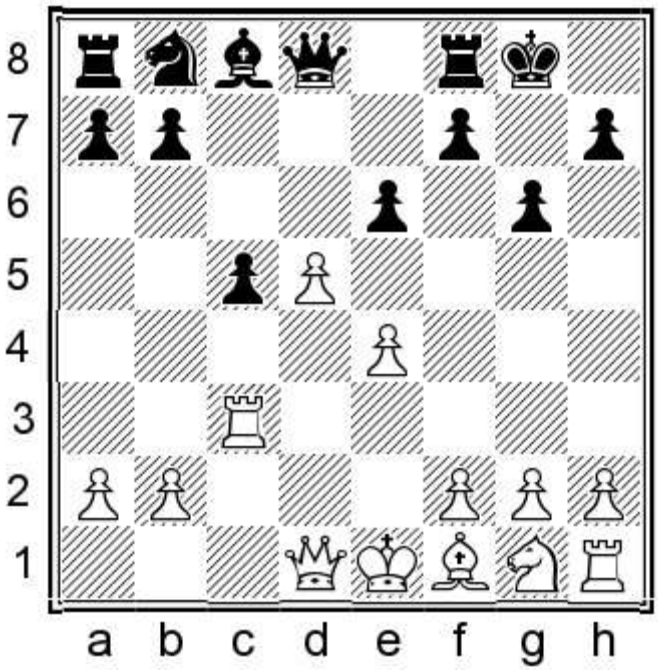


Position after: 8...c5

As usual, ...c7-c5 is an integral part of Black's strategy in the Grünfeld. We make this move even if it means sacrificing a pawn and not getting it back immediately.

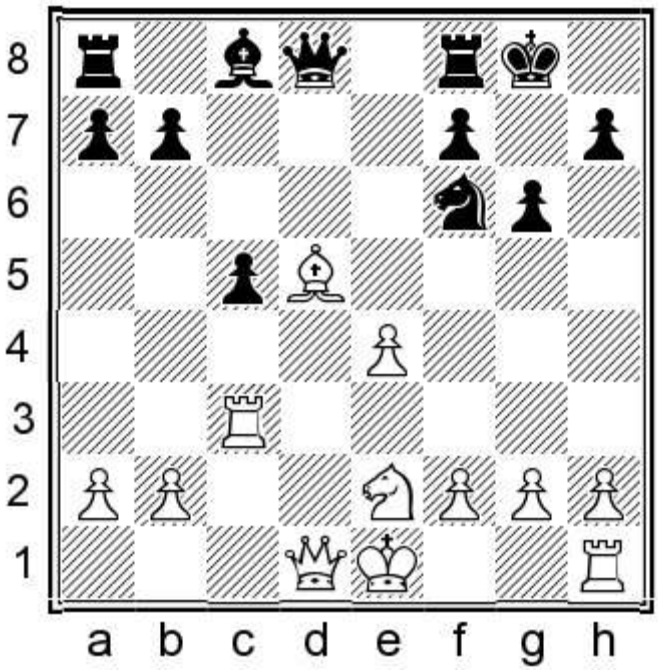
9.dxc5

9.d5 ♗xc3+ 10.♖xc3 e6!



Position after: 10...e6!

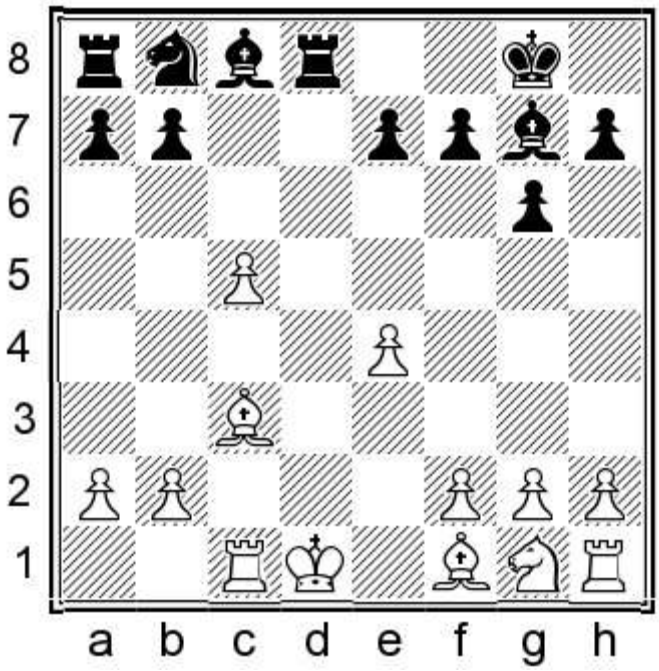
Breaking White's center is more important than wasting time defending the c5-pawn. 11.♗c4 [11.♖xc5 ♘d7 12.♖c2 ♘f6 13.dxe6 ♕xd1+ 14.♔xd1 ♗xe6 15.f3 ♗xa2=] 11...exd5 12.♗xd5 ♘d7 13.♘e2 ♘f6



Position after: 13...♘f6

14.♖xc5 [14.0-0 ♘xd5 15.exd5 b6 16.♖e3 ♗a6 17.♖e1 ♗xe2 18.♖1xe2 ♕d6= ½-½ (23) Shirov, A (2726) – Sutovsky, E (2651) Kallithea 2008] 14...♕e7 15.♕d4 ♖d8 16.♘c3 b6 17.♖c6 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♖xd5 19.♕xd5 ♗b7 20.0-0 ♖d8 21.♕c4 ♗xc6 22.♕xc6 ♕b4= Black's initiative is sufficient for equal play.

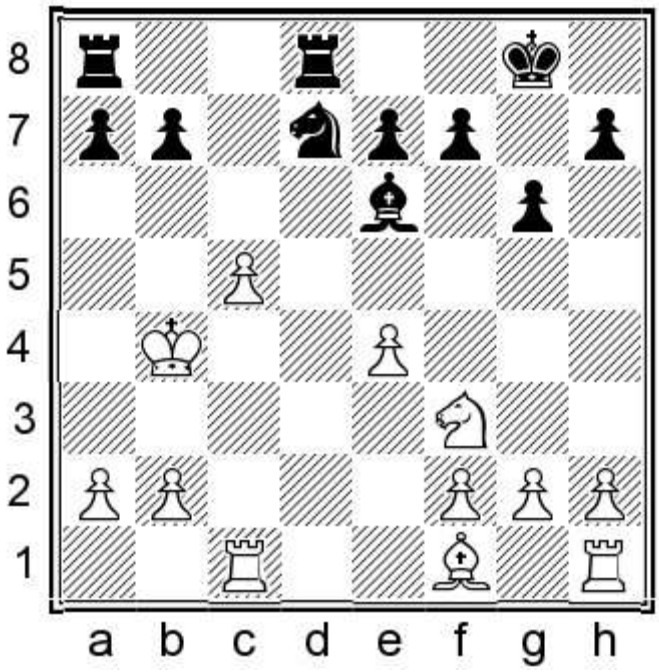
9...♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 ♖d8+



Position after: 10...♖d8+

11.♔e1

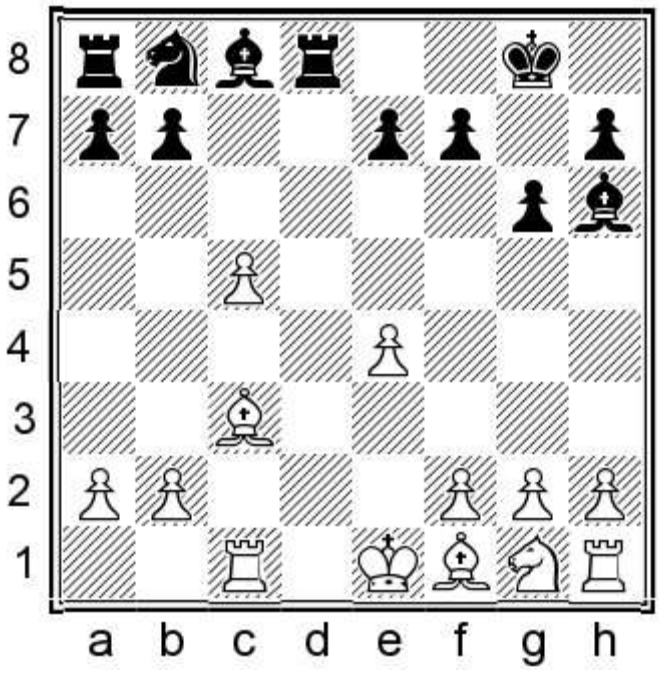
11.♔c2 ♗xc3 12.♔xc3 ♗e6 13.♘f3 ♘d7 14.♔b4



Position after: 14.♔b4

White goes to great lengths attempting to save the c5-pawn. The exotic (and unsafe) position of the king on b4 though deems such strategy quite questionable and insufficient for an advantage. 14...♖ac8 15.♘g5 [15.♗e2 ♘f6 16.♗c4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe6 fxe6= 0-1 (55) Perelshteyn, E (2517) – So, W (2701) Calgary 2013] 15...♘f8 16.♘f3 ♘d7=

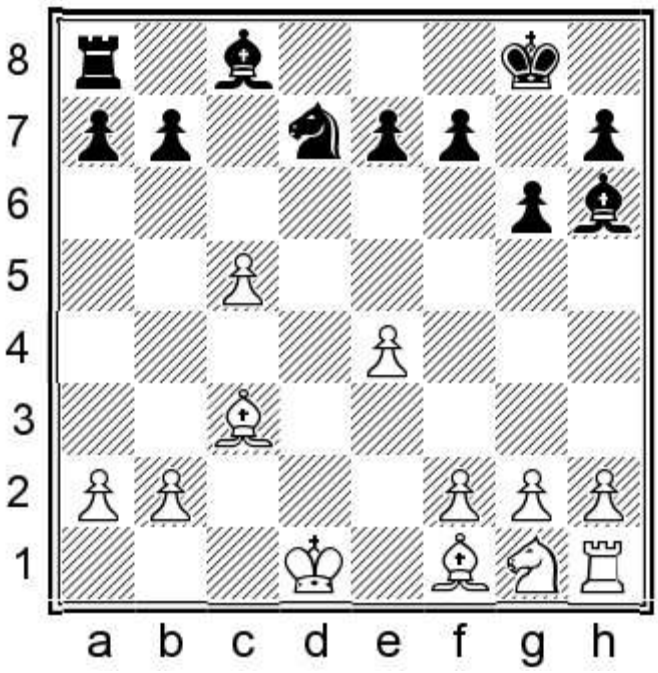
11...♗h6



Position after: 11...♗h6

12.♖c2

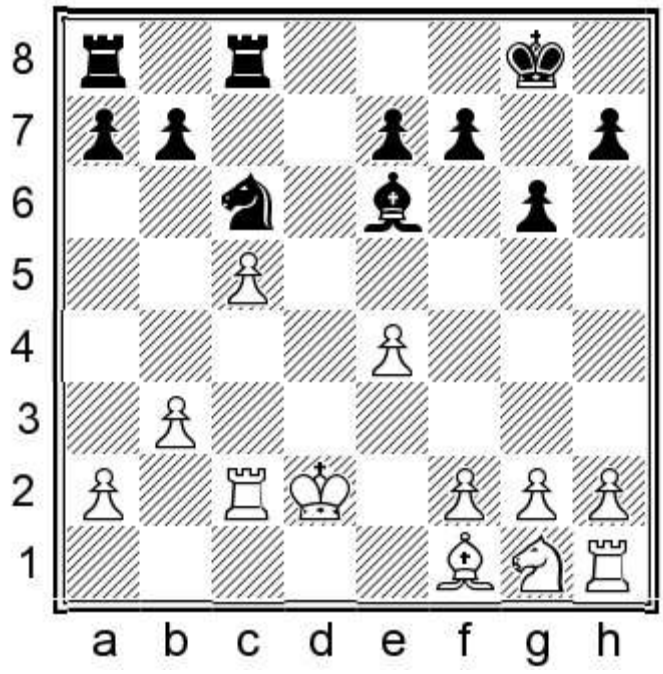
Black also equalizes easily after 12.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 13.♔xd1 ♘d7



Position after: 13...♘d7

14.c6 [14.b4 a5 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 ♗g7 17.♔c2 ♗xc3 18.♔xc3 ♘f6 19.f3 ♗e6 Unfortunately for White, his kingside development doesn't happen as fast as one can hope. 20.♘e2 ♖a3+ 21.♔c2 ♖a2+ 22.♔d3 ♖a3+ 23.♘c3 ♖b3 24.b5 ♘d7=] 14...bxc6 15.♘e2 ♘c5 16.f3 ♗e6=

12...♗e6 13.b3 ♖c8 14.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♘c6



Position after: 15...♘c6

Preparing ...♘b4 which will force White to give up either the c5 or a2-pawn.

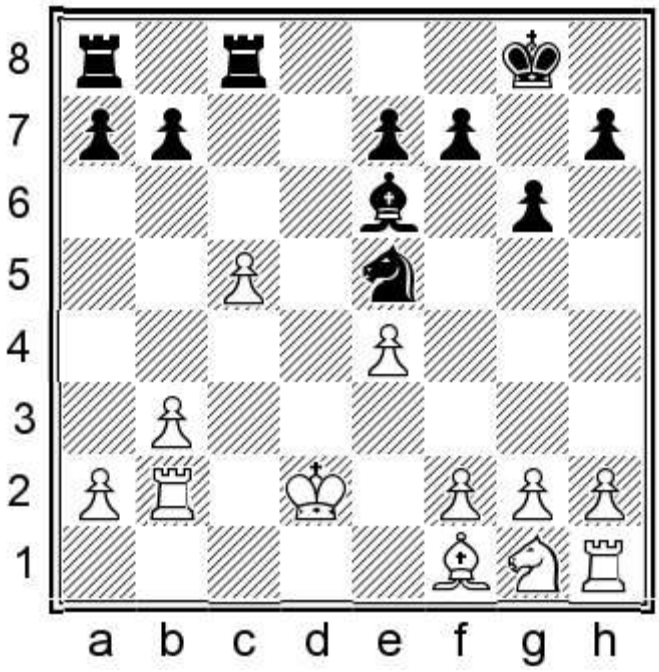
16.♖b2

Naturally, White prepares for it.

16...♘e5 17.♖c2 ♘c6!

The knight retreat goes against the basic chess principles but reinforces the old threat of ...♘b4 and thus forces White to be content with the move repetition.

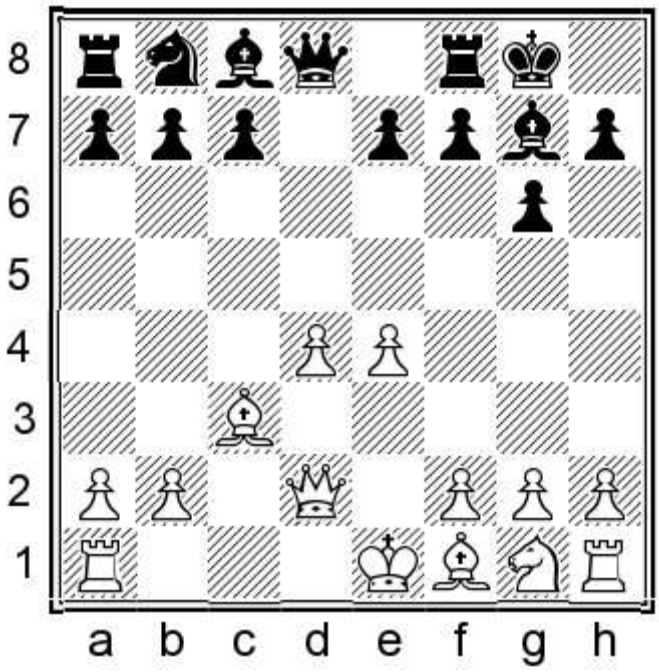
18.♖b2 ♘e5=



Position after: 18...♘e5=

b) 8.♕d2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗d2 ♗g7 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.♗xc3 0-0 8.♕d2



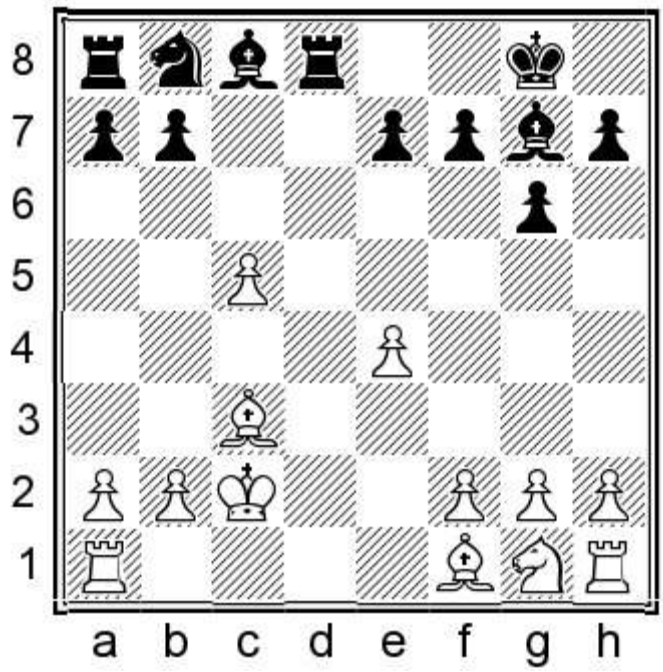
Position after: 8.♕d2

As we have previously seen normal developing moves like 8.♖c1, 8.♘f3, or 8.♗c4 allow Black to achieve great play without much effort. Therefore, 8.♕d2 wins the contest for the most popular move.

White has many ideas here: 1) to prepare for ...c7-c5 by playing d4-d5 and being able to capture the bishop after ...♗g7xc3 with the queen 2) prepare ♗c4, ♘e2 and avoid getting pinned after ...♗c8-g4 3) have the option to castle long side, if necessary 4) have the option to develop the rook on c1 or d1 based on circumstances.

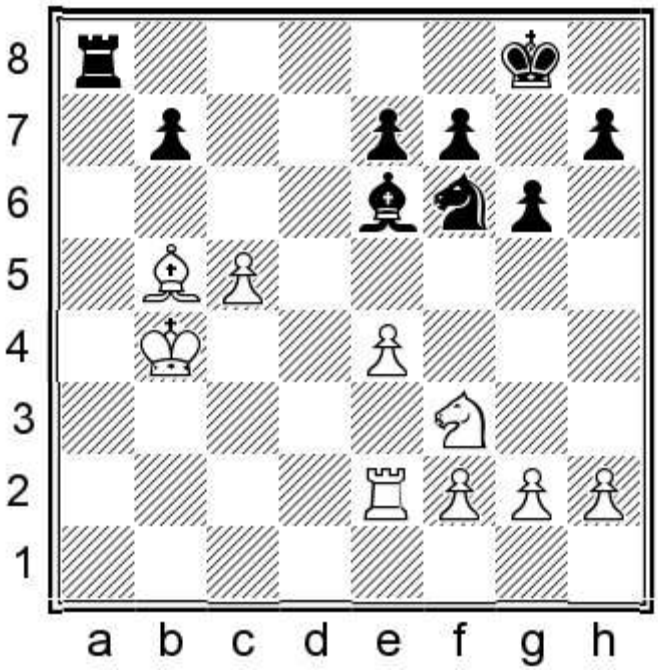
8...c5 9.d5

9.dxc5 doesn't promise much: 9...♕xd2+ 10.♔xd2 ♖d8+ 11.♔c2



Position after: 11.♔c2

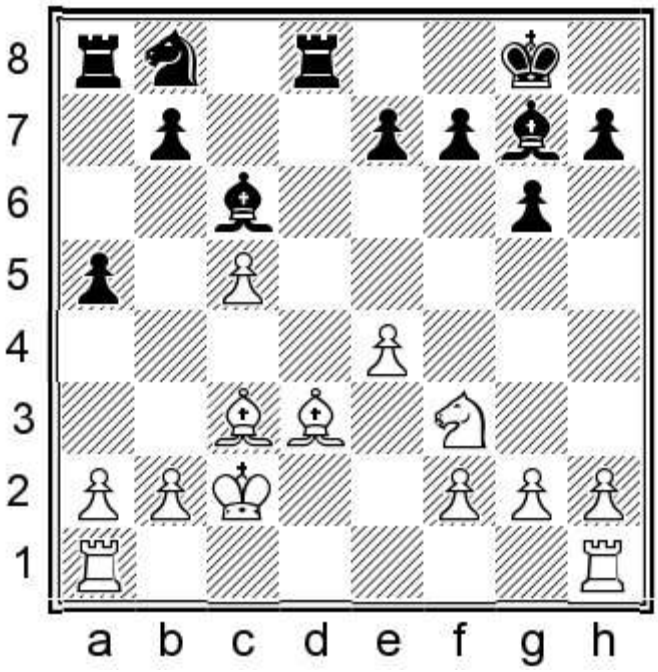
A) 11...♗xc3 12.♔xc3 ♗e6 13.♘f3 ♘d7 14.b4 a5 15.♗b5 ♘f6 16.♖he1 axb4+ 17.♔xb4 ♗xa2 18.♖e2 ♗e6 19.♖xa8 ♖xa8



Position after: 19...♖xa8

20.♘d4! [20.♘e5 allows Black to escape: 20...♖a1 21.f3 ♖b1+ 22.♔a5 ♖a1+ 23.♔b6 ♖b1 24.♖d2 g5 25.♔a5 ♖a1+ 26.♔b6 ♖b1 27.♘d3 ♘d7+ 28.♔a5 b6+ 29.cxb6 ♖a1+ 30.♔b4 ♘xb6 31.♘e5 ♖c1 32.♘d3 ½ – ½ (32) Dreev, A (2668) – Roiz, M (2635) Dagomys 2009] 20...♗d7 21.♘b3!± The knight goes to a5 making Black's defense very difficult.

B) 11...♗d7! Much better than the immediate dark-squared bishop trade. 12.♘f3 ♗c6 13.♗d3 a5



Position after: 13...a5

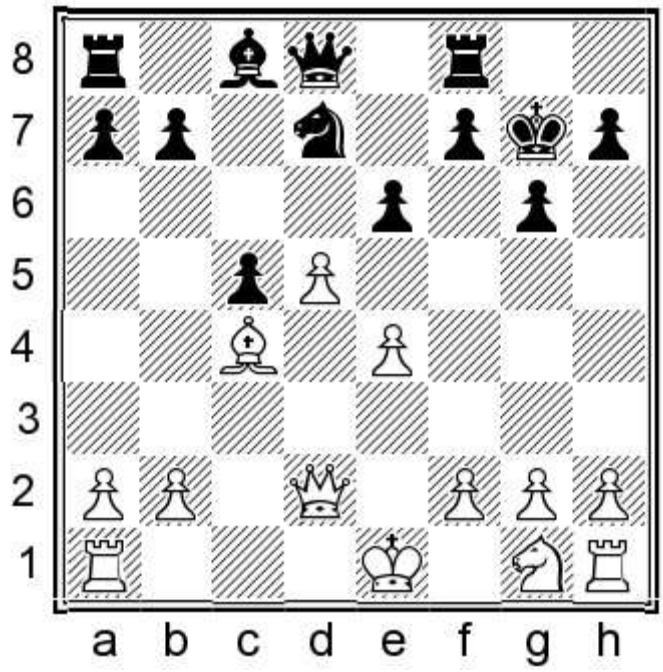
We need to stop White from playing b4 and supporting the c5-pawn. 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♘e5 f6 16.♘xc6 ♘xc6 17.♖ad1 ♖ac8 18.♗c4 ♘d4+ 19.♔c3 e5 20.b4 b6 21.a3 axb4+ 22.axb4 bxc5 23.b5 ♖b8=

9...e6

Whenever we have e4 and d5 white pawns versus a black c5-pawn we almost always need to disturb White with ...e6.

10.♗c4

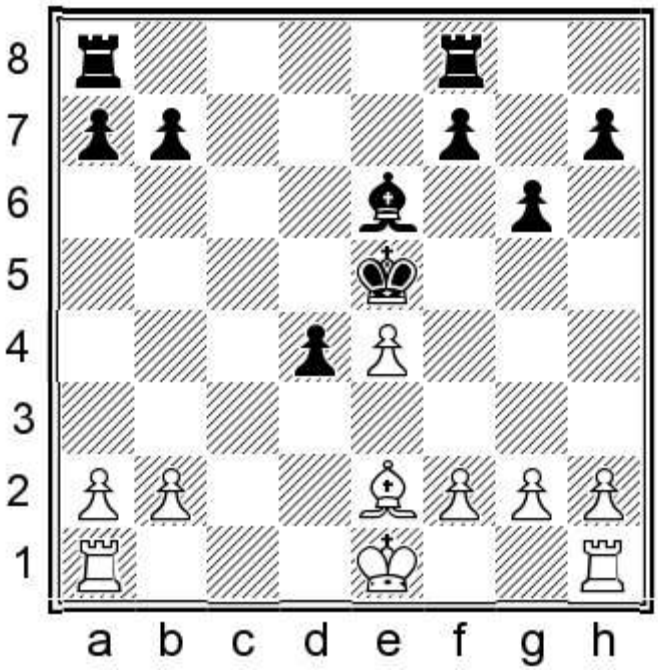
10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.♗c4 ♘d7!



Position after: 11...♘d7!

Black develops as fast as possible ignoring White's attack on the e6-pawn.

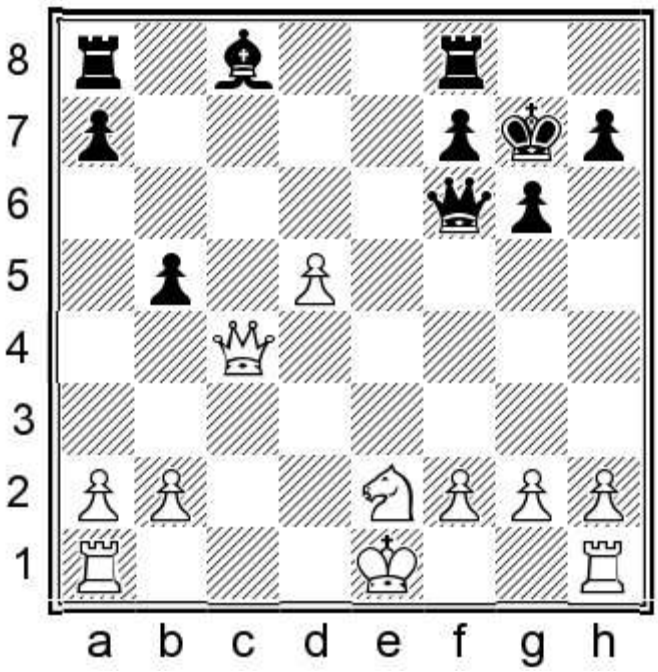
A) 12.dxe6 ♘e5 13.♕c3 ♕d4 14.♕xd4 cxd4 15.♗e2 ♗xe6 16.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 17.♗xf3 ♔f6 18.♗e2 ♔e5



Position after: 18...♔e5

Black improves the king to the maximum for the upcoming endgame. I think White should still be able to make a draw relatively easily. 19.f3 ♖fc8∓

B) 12.♘e2 ♘b6 13.b3 [13.♗b3 c4 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♕c3+ ♕f6 16.♕xc4 exd5 17.exd5 b5!

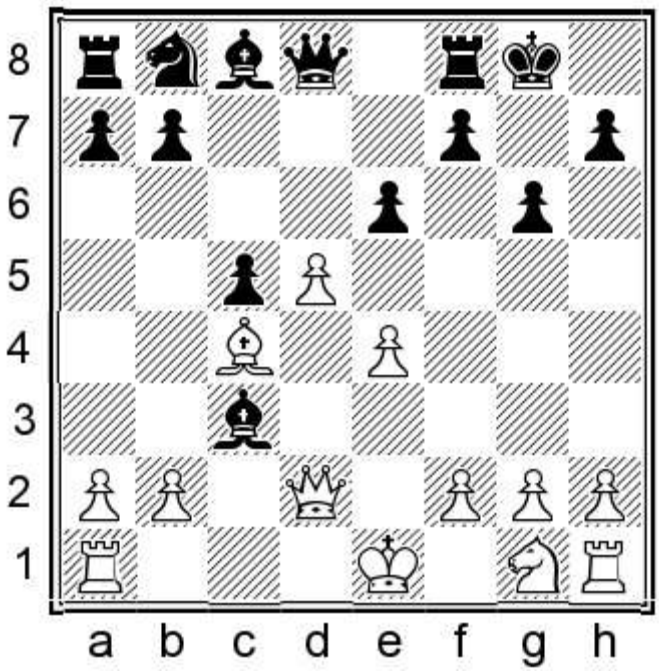


Position after: 17...b5!

A common idea which is employed mostly if White has not castled. 18.♕c3 ♕xc3+ 19.♘xc3 ♗b7 20.♘xb5 ♗xd5 21.f3 ♖ab8 22.a4 a6 23.♘c3 ♖fe8+ 24.♔f2 ♖xb2+ 25.♔g3 ♖e5 26.h4 ♗a8∓] 13...♕h4

14.♘g3 exd5 15.♗xd5 ♖d8=

10...♗xc3

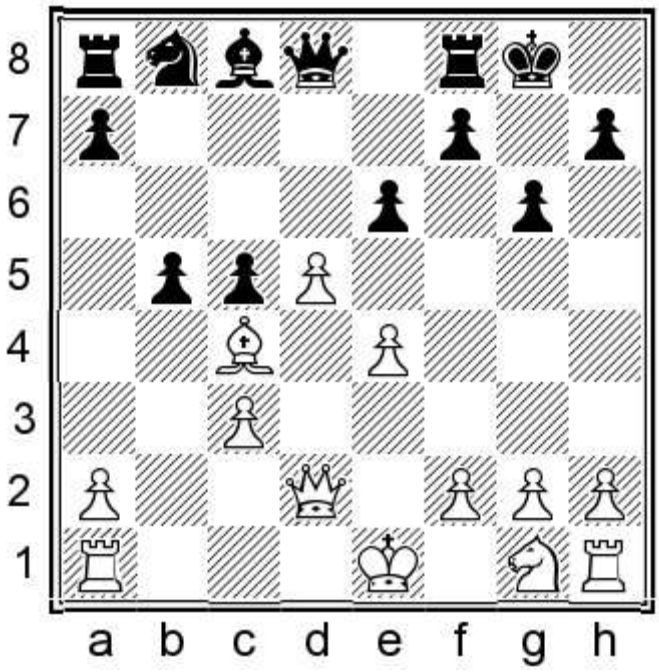


Position after: 10...♗xc3

11.bxc3

11.♕xc3 runs into 11...b5!. Trading the b-pawn for the central d5-pawn is in Black's favor. 12.♗xb5 exd5 13.exd5 ♕xd5 14.♘f3 ♕e4+ 15.♔f1 ♘d7 16.h4 ♖b8 17.♗xd7 White needs to start trading pieces and playing for a draw before it gets too late. 17...♗xd7 18.h5 ♕b4=

11...b5!

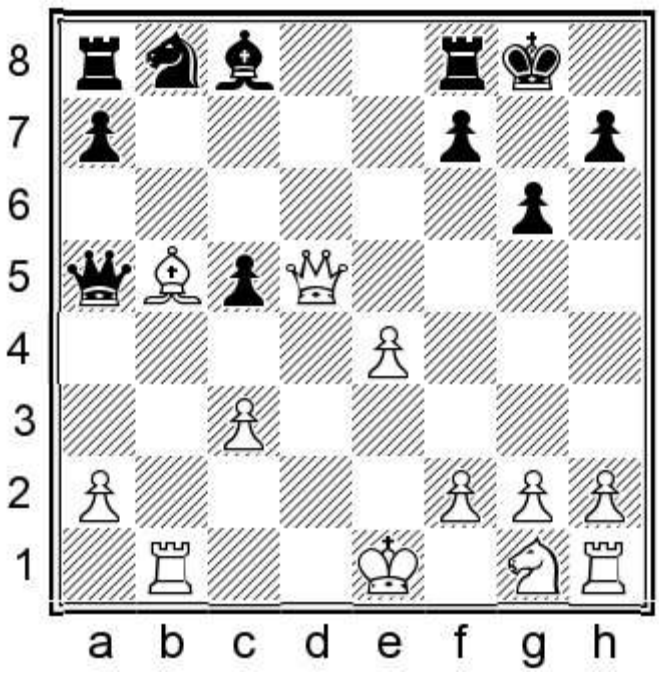


Position after: 11...b5!

The main purpose of this now thematic pawn sacrifice is to distract the c4-bishop from its perfect position and to cause a significant discoordination in White's camp.

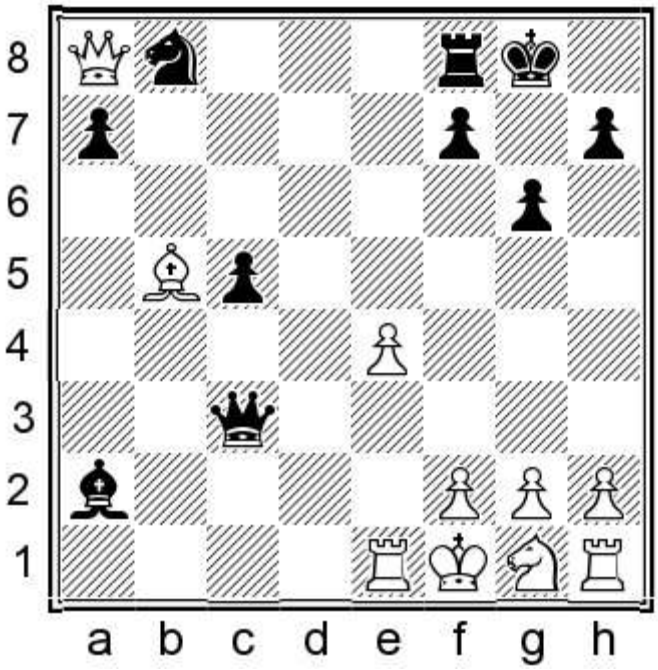
12.♗xb5 exd5 13.exd5

The most interesting and tactically intense play occurs after 13.♕xd5 ♕a5 14.♖b1



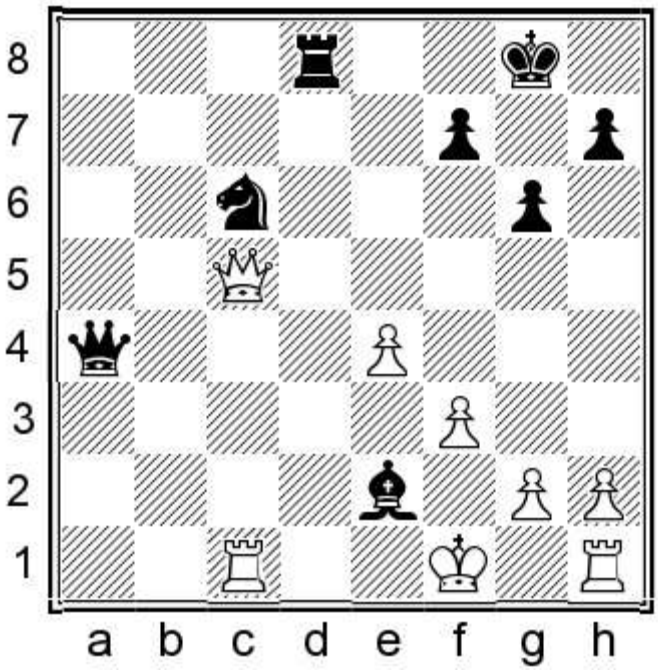
Position after: 14.♖b1

now it’s time for some fireworks: 14...♗e6!! 15.♕xa8 ♕xc3+ 16.♔f1 ♗xa2 17.♖e1



Position after: 17.♖e1

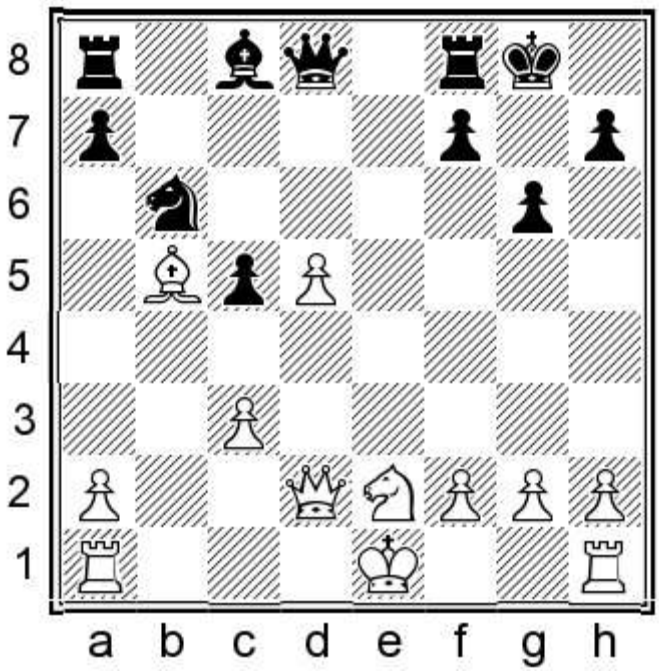
On the surface White’s position looks great. White has an extra rook, his king is relatively safe and the queen on a8 is about to re-join the White army by taking the pawn on a7 or escaping through b7. What possibly can go wrong? 17...♕b2!! 18.♗a4 [18.♗e2? ♕b6–+] 18...♗c4+ 19.♘e2 ♕a2 20.♕xa7 ♘c6 21.♕xc5 ♕xa4 22.♖c1 ♖d8 23.f3 ♗xe2+



Position after: 23...♗xe2+

24.♔f2!!= One of the most unexpected and beautiful moves I have ever seen in chess! Ignoring the bishop on e2 and using it as a cover against the potential invasion of the rook on the second rank via d2 is the most effective way for White to get a dynamically balanced position. As an old saying goes, “chess is not checkers - you don’t have to take everything you see”. I encourage the readers to do some homework and consult the chess engine about 24.♔f2. Why is this position equal? [24.♔xe2 ♕a2+ 25.♔f1 ♖d2 26.h4 ♘d4–+]

13...♘d7 14.♘e2 ♘b6



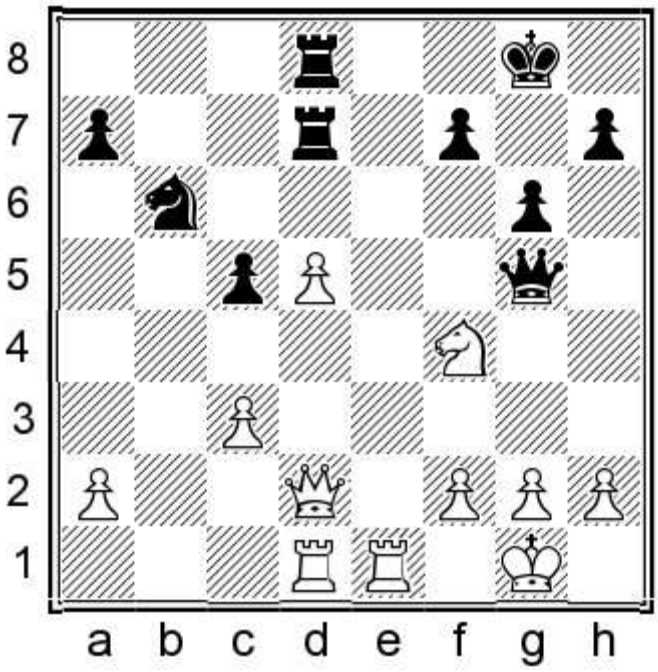
Position after: 14...♘b6

The d5-pawn is now much weaker since the bishop has left its post on c4 and Black intends to take full advantage of it.

15.♗c6

15.0-0 ♗b7 16.♘f4 ♘xd5 17.♖fd1 ♘f6=

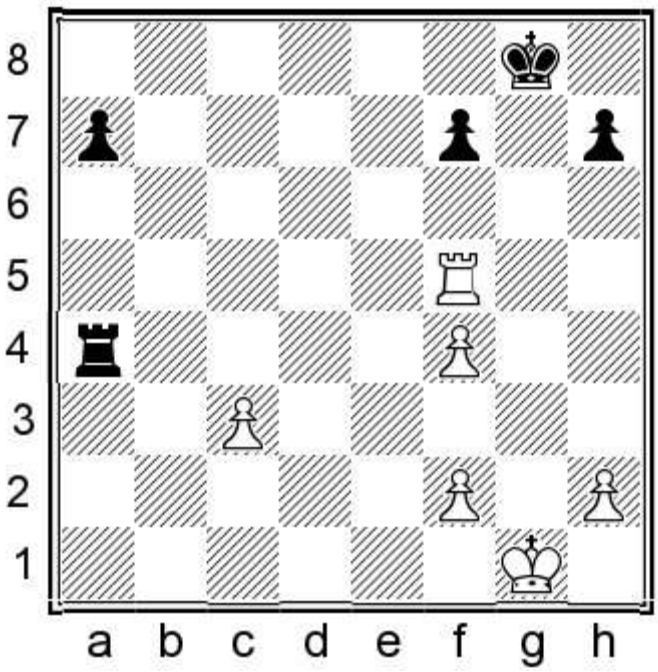
15...♖b8 16.0-0 ♗b7 17.♗xb7 ♖xb7 18.♖ad1 ♖d7 19.♘f4 ♕g5 20.♖fe1 ♖fd8



Position after: 20...♖fd8

White is unable to save the d5-pawn and, therefore, the position is very close to equality.

21.♕e3 ♕f5 22.g3 ♘xd5 23.♕xc5 ♘xf4 24.♕xf5 gxf5 25.♖xd7 ♖xd7 26.gxf4 ♖d2 27.♖e5 ♖xa2 28.♖xf5 ♖a4=



Position after: 28...♖a4=

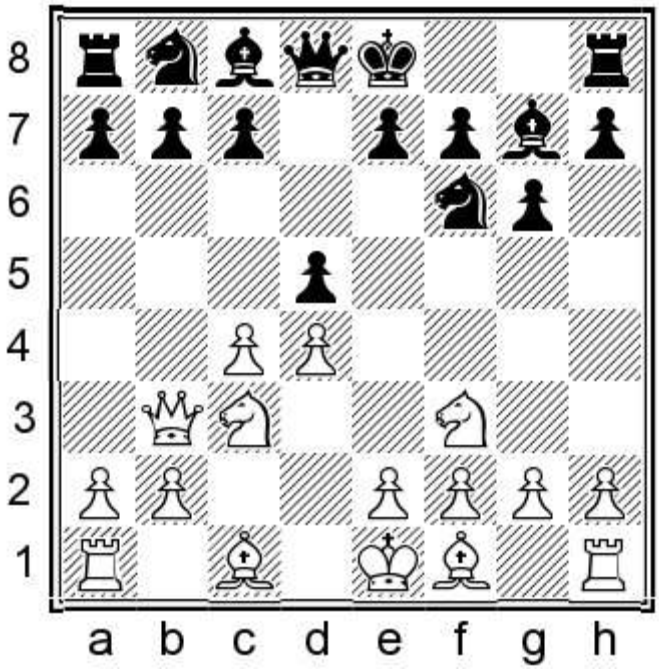
In true Grandmaster style I had to analyze until a draw. Black is going to get the c3-pawn after ...♖c4

and lose the a7-pawn after White plays ♖a5. The 3 pawns versus 2 pawns rook endgame is a simple draw, especially considering the doubled f-pawns. Even if White had just h2 and f2 pawns and Black had no pawns at all, it's still a theoretical draw! Again, it's highly unlikely most of you will ever get this position in a tournament game. Instead, as usual, memorize the first 15 moves or so and use the remaining moves as a reference for understanding the key ideas in the Grünfeld middlegame.

Part II
White plays 4.♘f3

Chapter 5
5.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – 5.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♗e2 e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♕xd4 c6

---

a) 7.♗f4 alternative

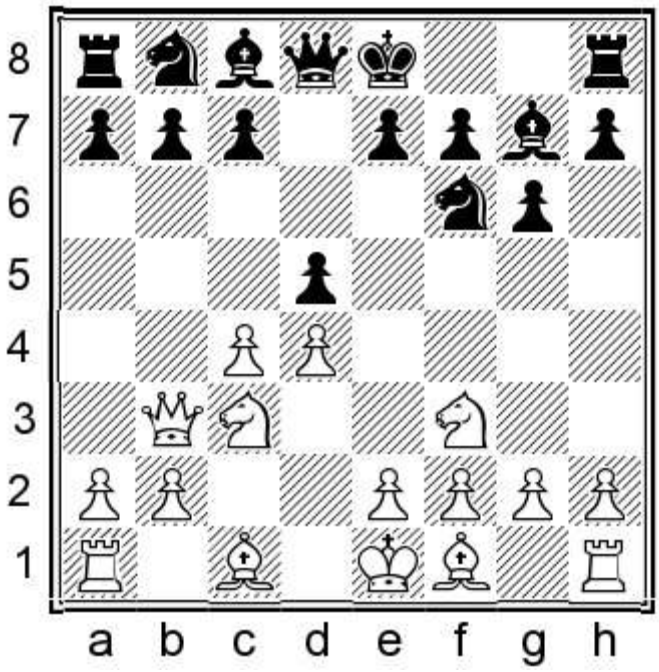
b) 8.-- alternatives

c) 12.--, 12.♕c4 b5 13.♕xc6 ♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8 15.--

d) 12.♕c4 b5 13.♕xc6 ♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8 15.e5, 15.f3

a) 7.♗f4 alternative

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3

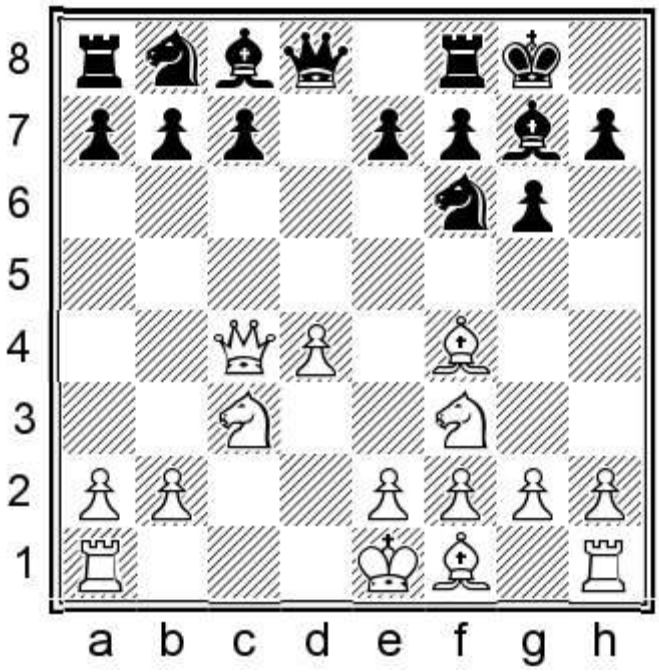


Position after: 5.♕b3

This old system was favoured by five out of the six first world champions, only Steinitz did not play it. But I would speculate that he would also have adopted this approach given his weakness for early king and queen moves. He simply did not live long enough to see the birth of this opening in the 1920s.

White's plan is blatantly obvious: to take the pawn on d5. White wants to force Black to trade the d5-pawn for the one on c4 and then conveniently conquer the center after e2-e4. Over a few decades, Black has managed to develop a few optimal responses against the ♕b3 system thus causing the decline of the early queen aggression. In this chapter, I will suggest the most fun way to achieve good play for Black. As usual we will see many pawn sacrifices (the Grünfeld is hardly playable without these) and even more.

5...dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.♗f4

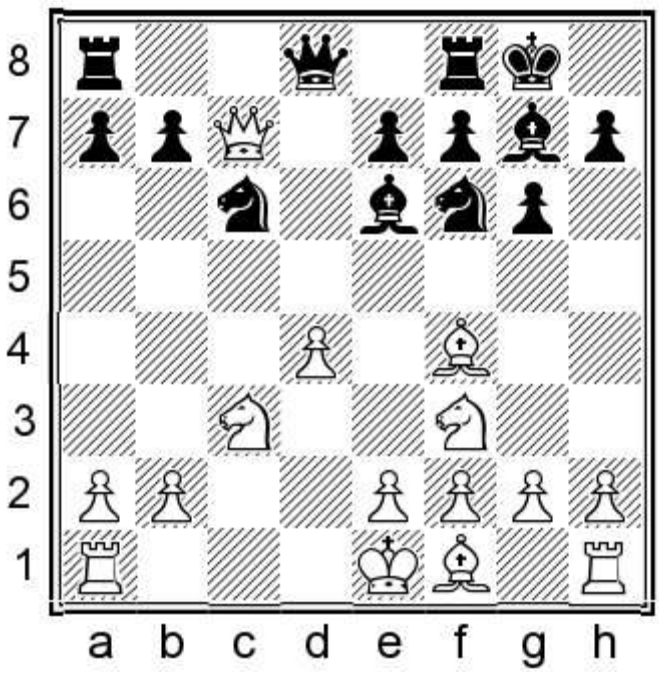


Position after: 7.♗f4

A legend says that once Alekhine, the fourth world champion, overlooked the idea of 7.♗f4 and simply blundered the pawn on c7. Whether true or not, Black doesn't even have to defend it!

7.e4 – see the next subchapters.

7...♗e6 8.♕xc7 ♘c6

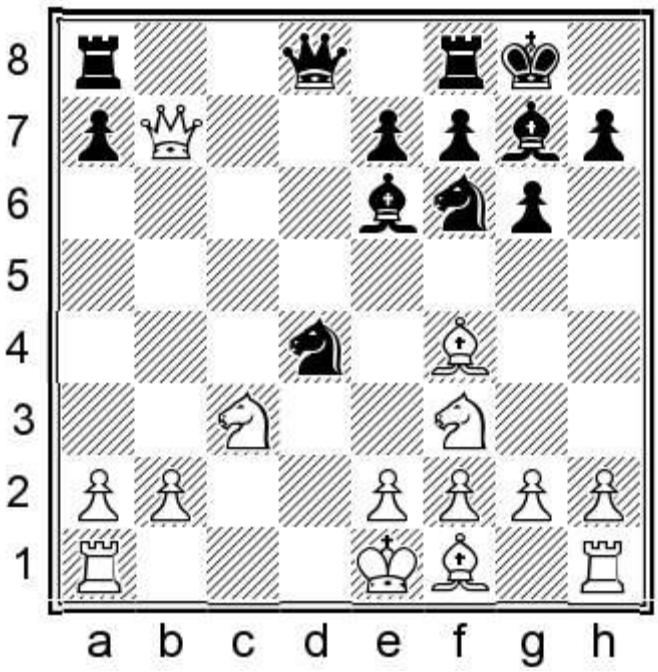


Position after: 8...♘c6

The best opening strategy is to play for the fastest development. Pawns usually don't matter.

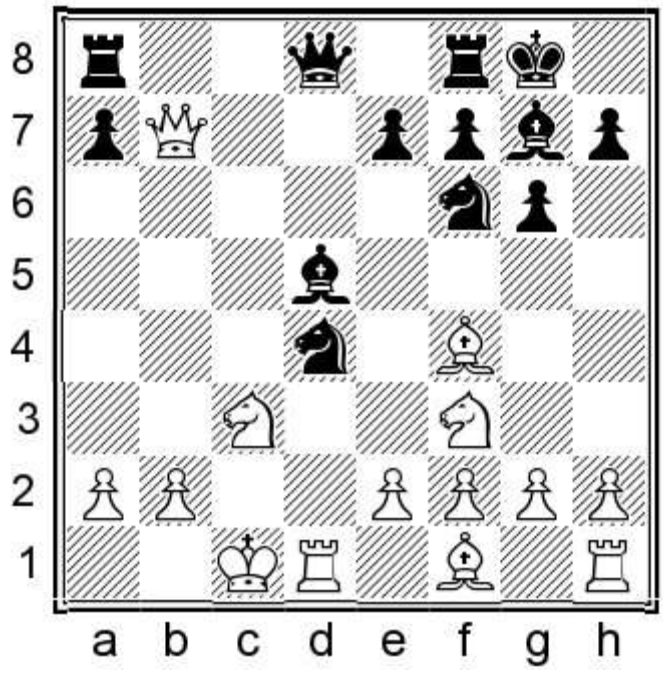
9.♕xd8

Way too risky would be to pick up yet another pawn after 9.♕xb7. In the upcoming variations notice that Black usually doesn't mind the queen trade as long as there are enough pieces in the game to attack the white king. 9...♘xd4



Position after: 9...♘xd4

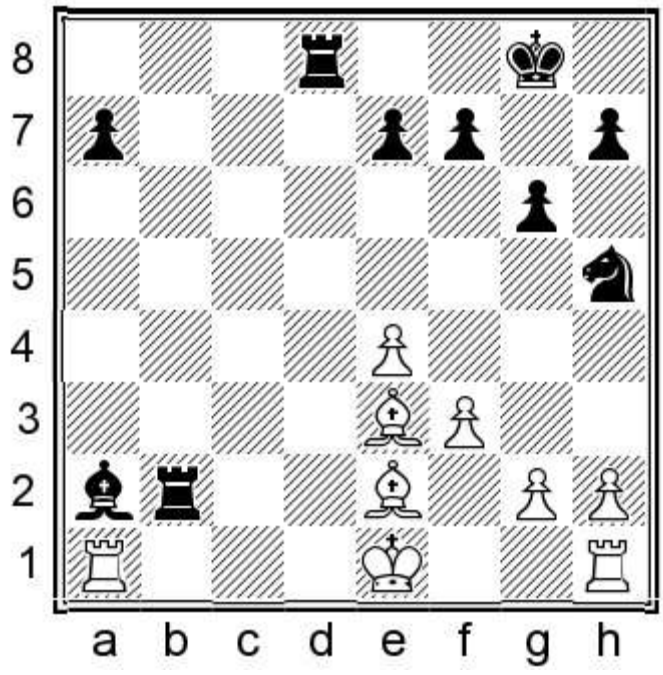
A) 10.0-0-0? As tempting as it is to attack the knight on d4, the long castle cannot be recommended. White loses in all lines. 10...♗d5



Position after: 10...♗d5

11.♕c7 [11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.♘xd4 ♘xf4 13.e3 ♖b8 14.♕xa7 ♕c8+ 15.♔b1 ♕c3 16.b3 ♖a8 17.♕b7 ♗xd4 18.exd4 ♖fb8–+] 11...♘e6 12.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 13.e3 ♖ac8 14.♗a6 ♖c6 15.♗b7 ♖c5 16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♖d2 ♖dc8–+

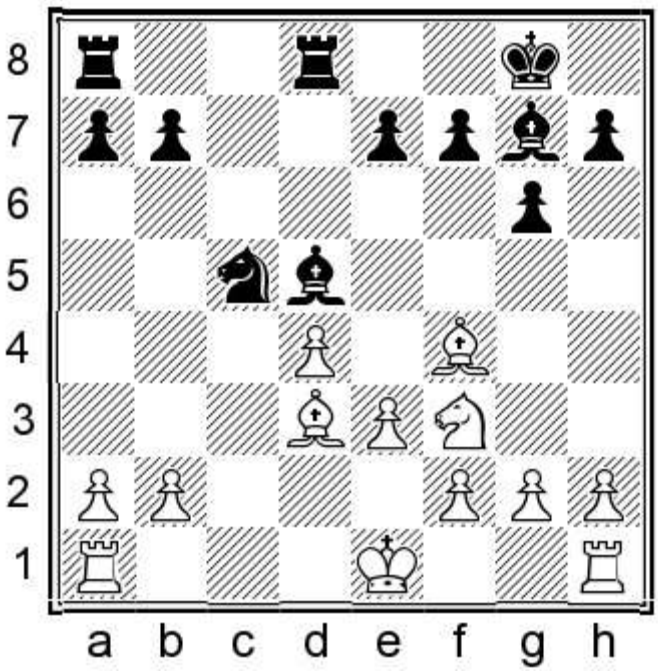
B) 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.e3 ♕c5 12.♕b5 ♖ac8 13.♕xc5 ♖xc5 14.e4 ♘h5 15.♗d2 ♖b8 16.♘d1 ♗xb2 17.♘xb2 ♖xb2 18.♗d3 ♖c8 19.♗e3 ♖d8 20.♗e2 ♗xa2 21.f3∓



Position after: 21.f3∓

White most likely should save the game with best play but I can hardly imagine anyone enjoying this torture.

9...♖fxd8 10.e3 ♘b4 11.♔d2 ♘bd5 12.♘xd5 ♘e4+ 13.♔e1 ♗xd5 14.♗d3 ♘c5!

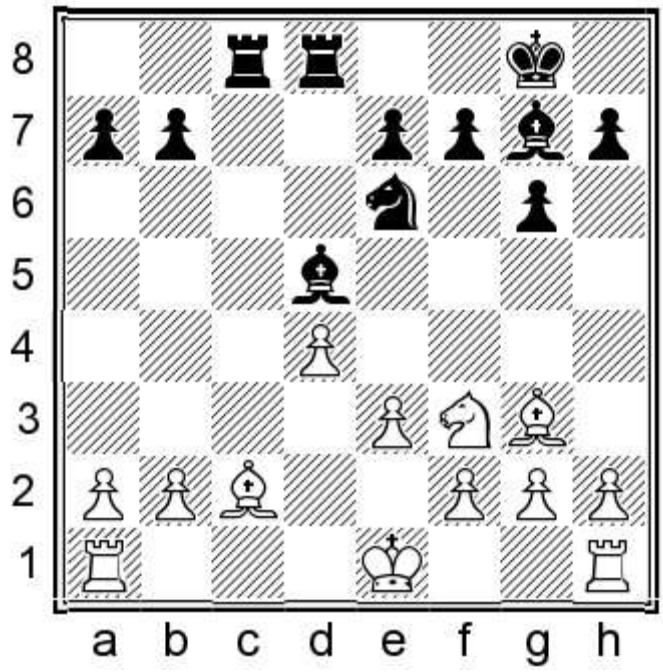


Position after: 14...♘c5!

The key move, securing Black equal play. I suggest memorizing the 7.♗f4 lines at least until this point.

15.dxc5

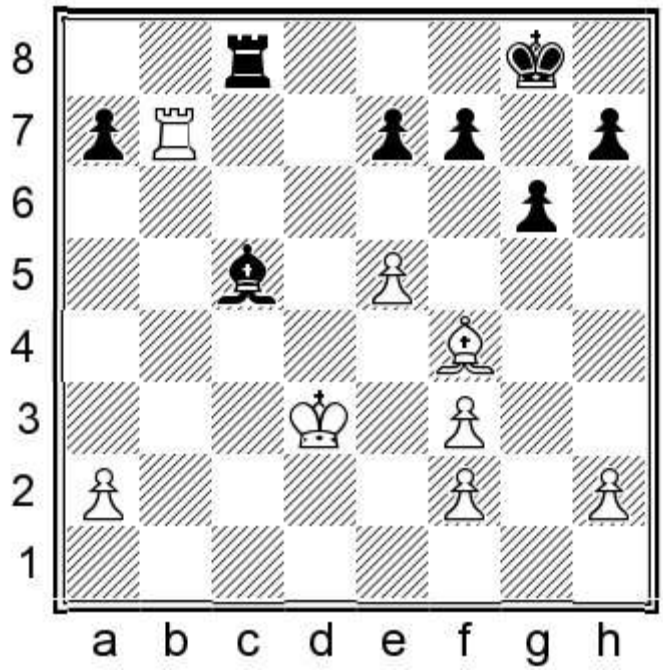
15.♗c2 ♘e6 16.♗g3 [16.♗e5 ♖ac8 17.♗b3 f6 18.♗xd5 ♖xd5 19.♗g3 ♖c2 20.b3 f5 21.♔d1 ♖b2 22.♖e1 ♘xd4 23.exd4 ♗xd4 24.♘xd4 ♖xd4+ 25.♔c1 ♖dd2 26.♗e5 ♖dc2+ 27.♔d1 ♖d2+=] 16...♖ac8



Position after: 16...♖ac8

17.♗d3 [17.♗b3 f5 18.♗xd5 ♖xd5 19.♗e5 ♖c2=] 17...f5 18.♔e2 f4 19.♗xf4 ♘xf4+ 20.exf4 ♗xf3+ 21.♔xf3 ♗xd4=

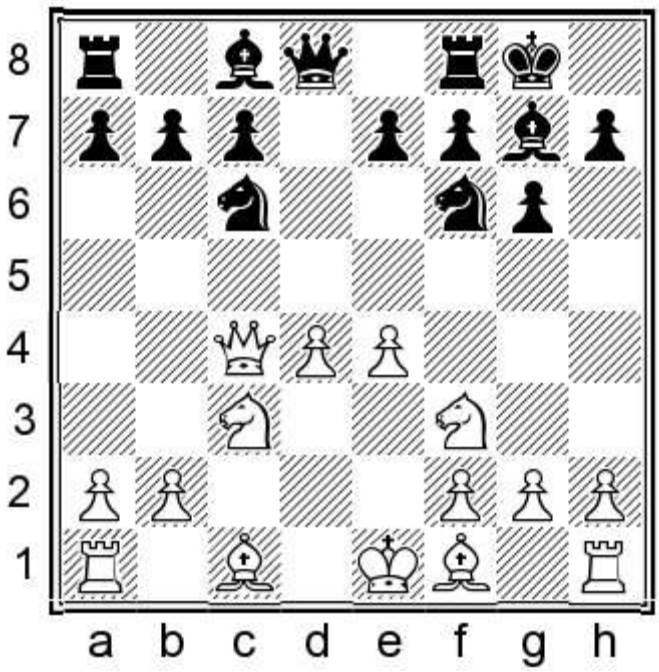
15...♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♖xd3 17.♔e2 ♖ad8 18.e4 ♗xb2 19.♖ab1 ♗a3 20.♖xb7 ♗xc5 21.♖c1 ♗d6 22.e5 ♗a3 23.♖c8 ♖xc8 24.♔xd3 ♗c5=



Position after: 24...♗c5=

b) 8.-- alternatives

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6



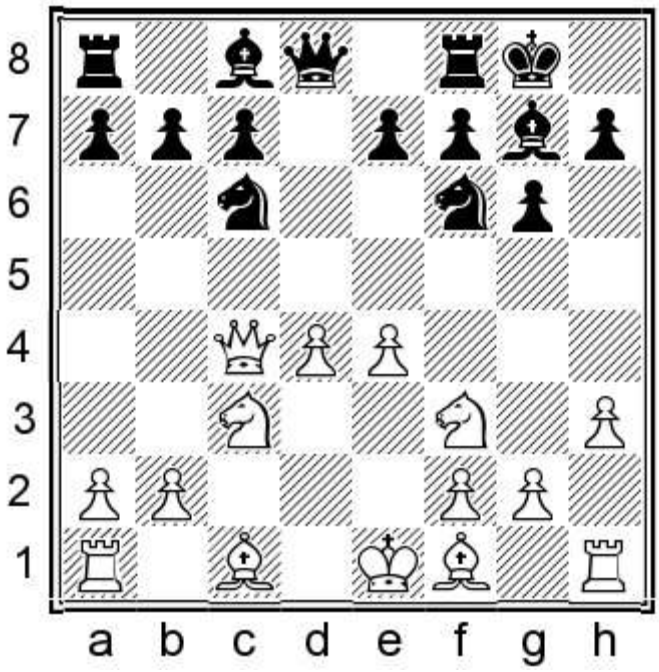
Position after: 7...♘c6

One of the many playable moves. I believe it leads to the most exciting and complex game compared to 7...a6, 7...♘a6 or 7...♗g4.

8.♗f4

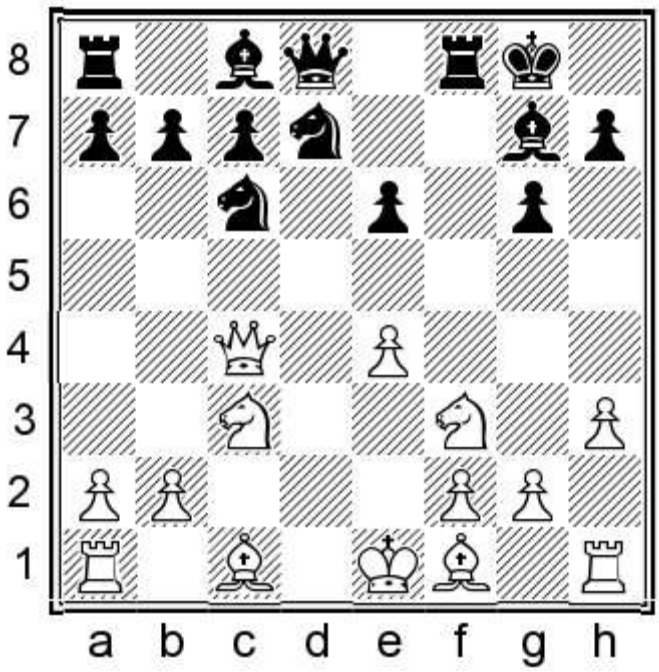
The second most common move in the current position. Jumping a little bit ahead I assume 8.h3 will become the second best move relatively soon.

A) 8.h3 For a while I was even doubting if I should include this move in the book. After all, it looks so modest and not threatening, doesn't it? It wasn't until the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, tried it himself and won against the top Grandmaster well known as MVL that I decided to take a closer look.



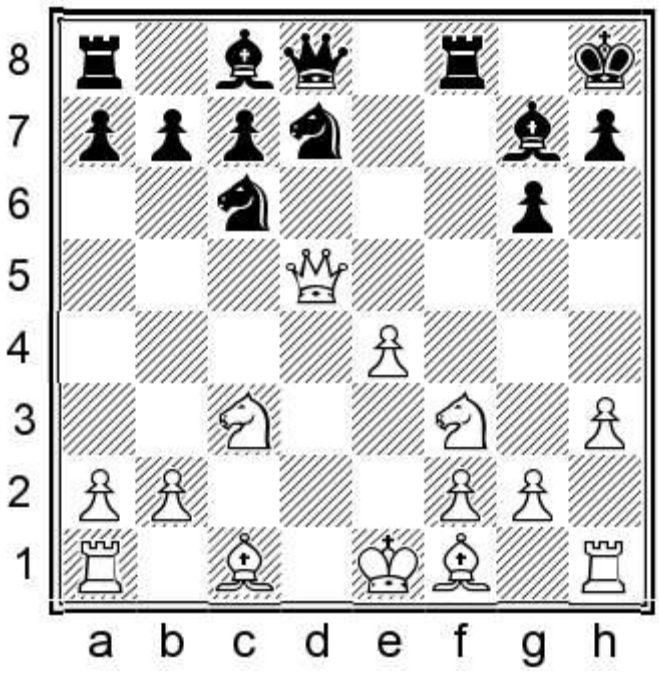
Position after: 8.h3

8...e5 Strictly the only move. [Much worse is 8...♘d7? 9.♗e3 ♘b6 10.♕c5 a5 11.♖c1 ♘d7 12.♕a3 e5 13.d5 ♘d4 14.♘b5 c5 15.dxc6 ♘xc6 16.♗e2± White must make two moves before getting complete control over the queenside and the c and d-files in particular: 0-0 and ♖fd1.] 9.dxe5 [9.d5? ♘d4 wouldn't make much sense as we transposed to something like the main lines but with the useless pawn move h3.] 9...♘d7 10.e6 fxe6



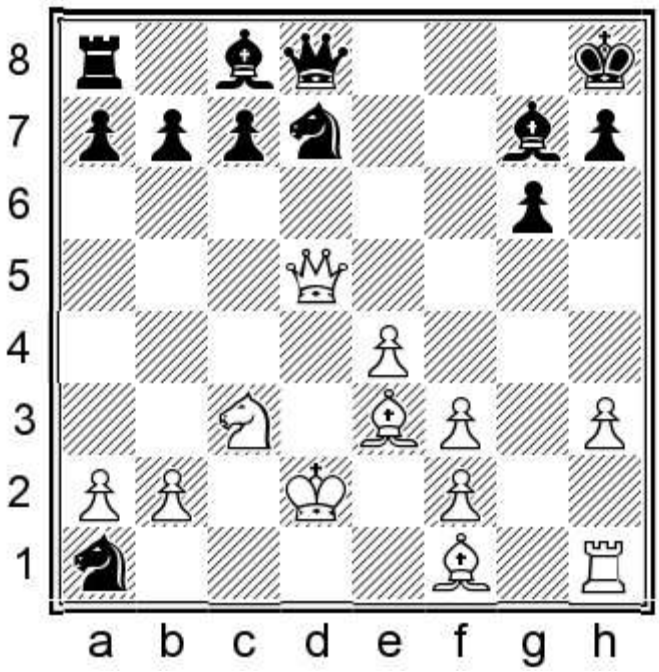
Position after: 10...fxe6

11.♕xe6+ [11.♗e3 ♘de5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♕a4 b6 14.♖d1 ♕e7 15.♗e2 ♗d7 16.♕b3 c5 17.0-0 ♘c6=] 11...♔h8 12.♕d5



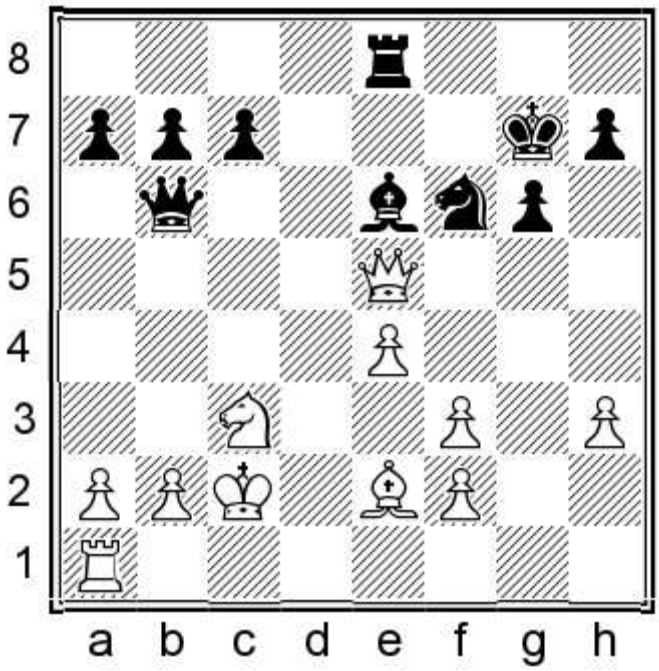
Position after: 12.♕d5

A1) 12...♖xf3? This old theoretical line was played by one of the greatest players in the chess history, Victor Korchnoi. Today the engine Leela Chess Zero (or, affectionately, Lc0) accepts the sacrifice, cold heartedly refutes Black's futile attempts and ends up with a healthy extra pawn. 13.gxf3 ♘d4 14.♗e3 ♘c2+ 15.♔d2 ♘xa1



Position after: 15...♘xa1

16.♗d4!N This critical novelty brings Black's exchange sacrifice into doubt. Before trying to get the knight on a1, White wants to trade the dark-squared bishops and mitigate the effectiveness of Black's attack on the a1-h8 diagonal. [16.♗d3 ½-½ (56) Portisch, L (2620) – Korchnoj, V (2600) Bad Kissingen 1983. 16.♗e2 ½-½ (41) Georgiev, K (2590) – Schmidt, W (2470) Warsaw 1987] 16...♕f8 17.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 18.♕d4+ ♘f6 19.♗d3 ♗e6 20.♖xa1 ♖d8 21.♕e5 ♕b4 22.♔c2 ♕b6 23.♗e2 ♖e8

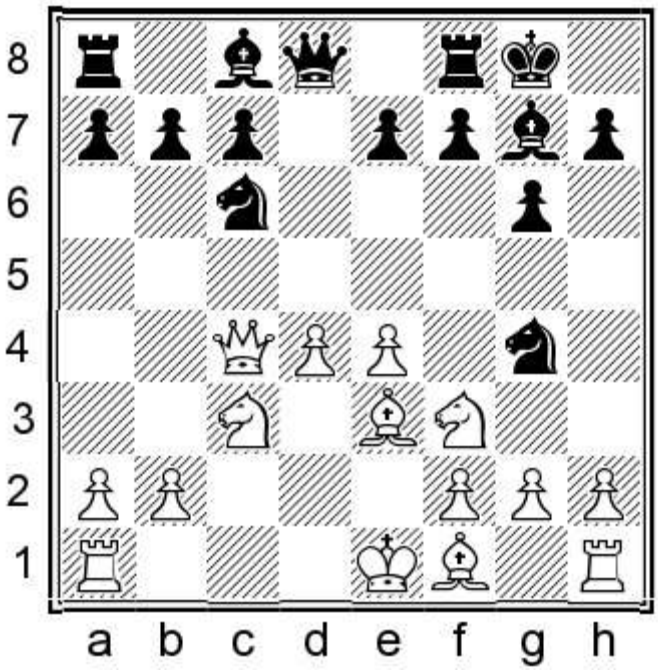


Position after: 23...♖e8

24.♕h2! Looks ugly but nonetheless the only way to keep the advantage. The queen temporarily protects the f2-pawn 24...♕c5 25.h4±.

A2) 12...♘b4!N 13.♕b3 ♘d3+ 14.♗xd3 ♘c5 15.♕d5 ♘xd3+ 16.♔e2 ♘xc1+ 17.♖axc1 ♕f6 18.♕d3 ♗e6 19.♖hd1 ♖ae8⩱ Black's active bishop pair fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

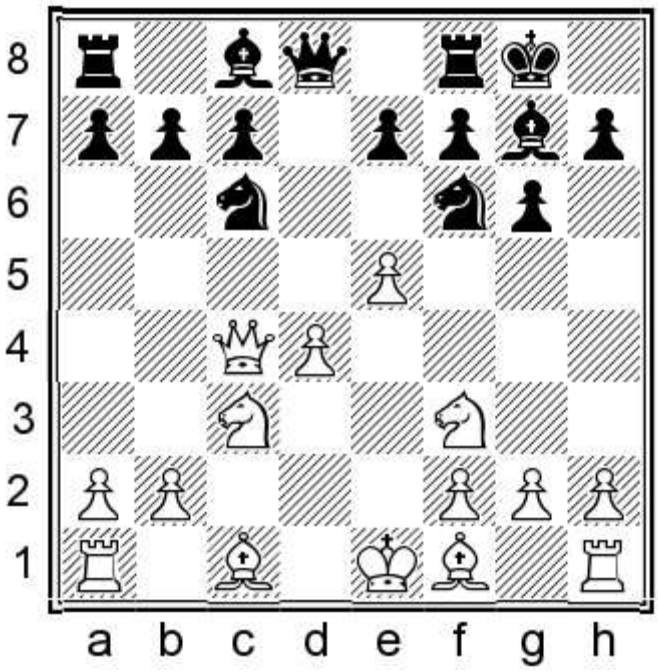
B) 8.♗e3 The bishop on e3 reminds me of a stereotypical overprotective parent: it's great but usually unnecessary. 8...♘g4



Position after: 8...♘g4

9.e5 [9.♖d1 ♘xe3 10.fxe3 e5∓] 9...♗e6! [9...♘xe3? 10.fxe3 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 e6 13.h4± 1-0 (36) Nepomniachtchi, I (2767) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2780) Jerusalem 2019] 10.♕a4 ♗d7 11.♕b3 ♘xe3 12.fxe3 e6 13.♗d3 ♘e7 14.♗e4 ♖b8 15.♕a3 ♘f5=

C) 8.e5



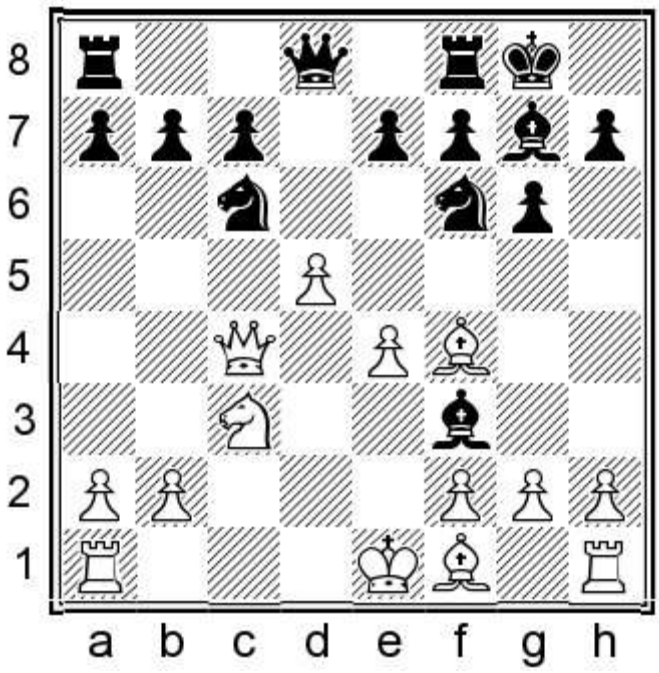
Position after: 8.e5

Better than 8.♗e3 but still not following the opening principles of quick development. 8...♘d7 [Note

that the three minor pieces are much better than Black's queen after 8...♗e6 9.exf6! ♗xc4 10.fxg7 ♔xg7 11.♗xc4 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗e2] 9.♗e3 [9.♗e2 ♘b6 10.♕c5 a5 11.0-0 ♗f5 12.♖d1 ♘d7 13.♕c4 ♘b6 14.♕b5 ♘b4=] 9...♘b6 10.♕c5 a5 11.♗e2 ♘b4 12.0-0 ♘c2 13.♖ad1 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 c6=.

D) 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♕a4 c6 Once the d5-pawn is gone Black has nothing to worry about. 10.dxc6 ♘xc6 11.♗e2 a6 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♖d1 ♕b8 14.♕c2 ♖c8=.

8...♗g4 9.d5 ♗xf3

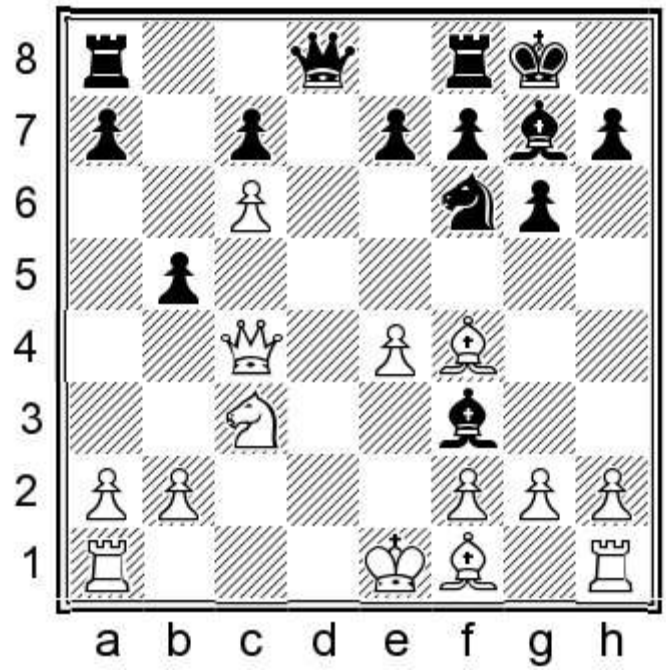


Position after: 9...♗xf3

10.dxc6

10.gxf3 ♘h5 11.♗e3 ♘e5 12.♕e2 c6 13.f4 ♘d7 14.dxc6 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♕c7 16.♗g2 ♕xc6 17.0-0 ♕c7=

10...b5



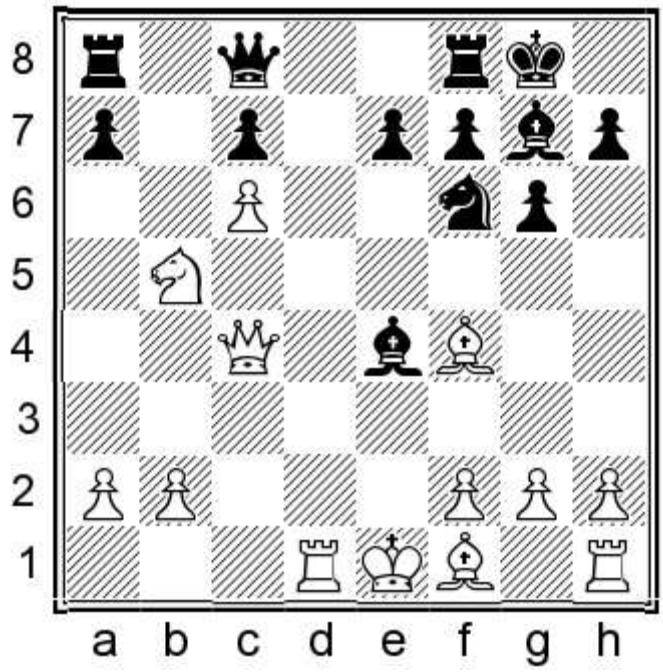
Position after: 10...b5

The natural bishop retreat is unplayable because of the c-pawn taking the b7-pawn. Consequently, Black needs to get more creative! Here, ...b5 distracts White's defense of the e4-pawn which we would really like to capture.

11.♘xb5

11.♕xb5? ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.♖d1 ♕c8 14.♖d7 ♗f5 15.♗c4 [15.♖xc7 ♕e6+ 16.♗e3 ♕xa2 17.♗e2 ♕b1+ 18.♗d1 ♗c3+! 19.♔e2 ♖fd8–+] 15...a6 16.♕d5 ♗e6 17.♕d3 ♗xd7 18.cxd7 ♕b7 19.0-0 ♖fd8 20.♖d1 c5 21.♗d5 ♕xd7 22.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 23.♕xd7 ♖xd7 24.♖xd7 ♗xb2∓

11...♗xe4 12.♖d1 ♕c8

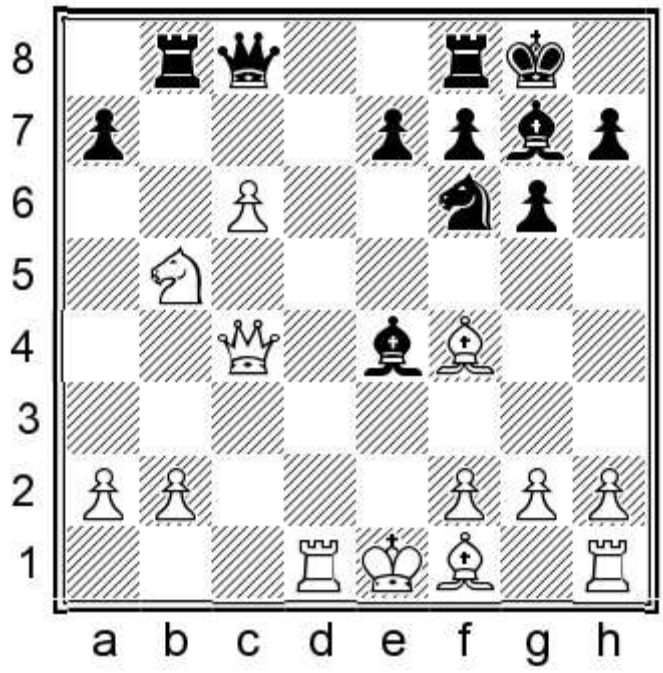


Position after: 12...♕c8

13.♘xc7

13.f3? fails due to 13...♕f5! 14.♗xc7 ♗xf3!! [Also sufficient for a significant advantage is 14...♗d5 15.♕c5 ♖fc8 16.♗d3 ♕g5 17.0-0 a6–+ 0-1 (23) Vanheirzeele, D (2125) – Pujos, S (2301) France 2010] 15.gxf3 ♕xf3 16.♖g1 [16.♗e2 ♕xh1+ 17.♔f2 ♕e4–+] 16...♕e3+–+

13...♖b8 14.♘b5

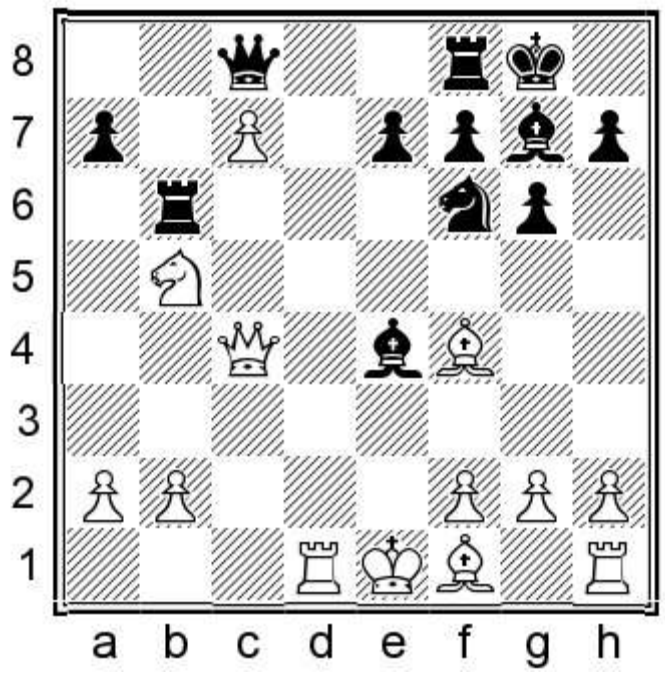


Position after: 14.♘b5

14...e5!

When your opponent remains uncastled for too long, we always want to open the central files as soon as possible.

For those of you who like mind-boggling complications, I recommend 14...♖b6!? 15.c7 The rest of the moves in this line are very computer-like, so let's just sit back and enjoy the spectacle that is about to unfold.



Position after: 15.c7

15...♕a8 16.♕c5 ♘d5 17.♘xa7 ♖xb2 18.c8=♕ ♖xc8 19.♘xc8 ♗c3+ 20.♗d2 ♖xd2 21.♖xd2 ♗xd2+ 22.♔xd2 ♕xa2+ 23.♔e1 ♕b1+ 24.♔d2 ♕b2+ 25.♔e1 ♕b1+ 26.♔d2=

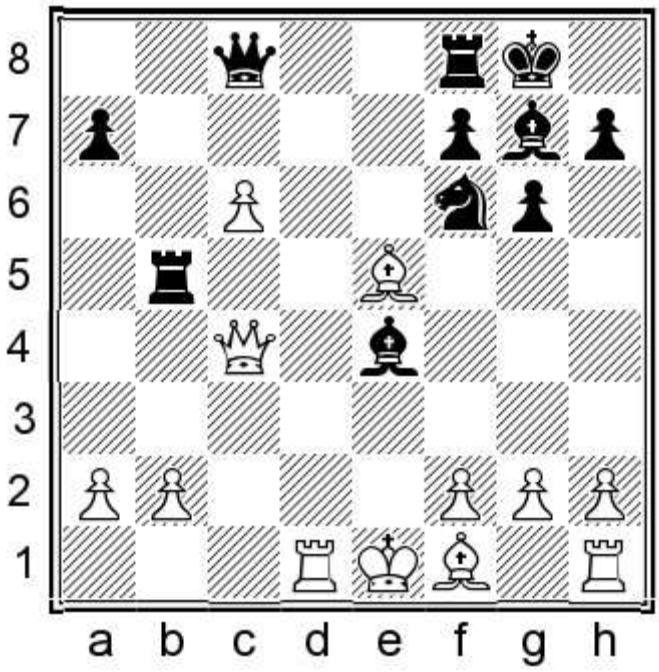
15.♗xe5

Other moves do not lead to an advantage for White.

A) 15.♘d6 ♕xc6 16.♗xe5 ♗xg2 17.♖g1 ♗f3 18.♕xc6 ♗xc6 19.♗c4 ♖bd8 20.f4 ♘d7 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7=

B) 15.♗g5 ♕xc6 16.f3 ♗xf3!? 17.gxf3 ♕xf3 18.♖g1 ♘e4 19.♕e2 ♘xg5 20.♖xg5 ♕f6 21.♖g3 e4∓

15...♖xb5!

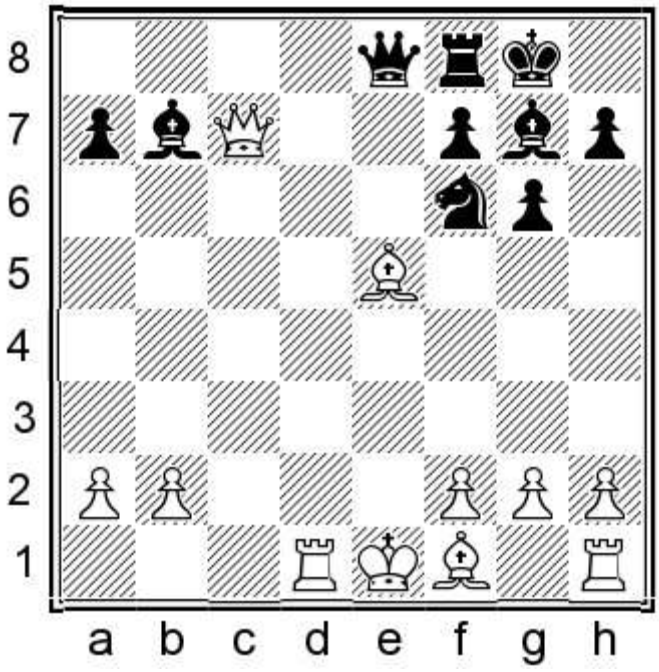


Position after: 15...♖xb5!

One more sacrifice to eliminate the idea of ♘d6, which was coming on the next move.

As frequently occurs with major complications like these there are some massive trades, simplifications, and, inevitably, an equal game.

16.♕xb5 ♗xc6 17.♕a6 ♗b7 18.♕c4 ♕e8 19.♕c7

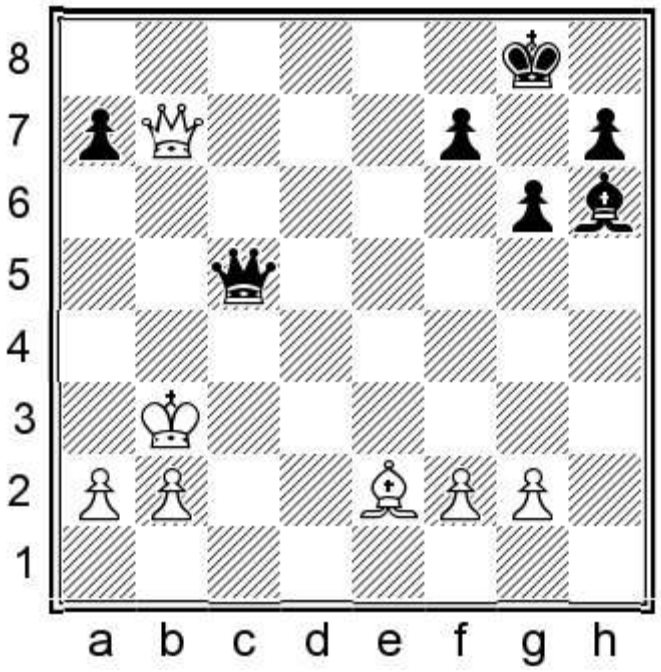


Position after: 19.♕c7

19...♘g4!

19...♗a8 20.♗e2 ♘d5 21.♖xd5 ♗xd5 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.f3 ♕e3 24.♕c3+ ♕xc3+ 25.bxc3 ♗xa2=

20.♕xb7 ♕xe5+ 21.♗e2 ♖e8 22.♕f3 ♘xh2 23.♖xh2 ♕xh2 24.♖d7 ♕g1+ 25.♔d2 ♗h6+ 26.♔c2 ♕c1+ 27.♔b3 ♖b8+ 28.♖b7 ♖xb7+ 29.♕xb7 ♕c5∓



Position after: 29...♕c5∓

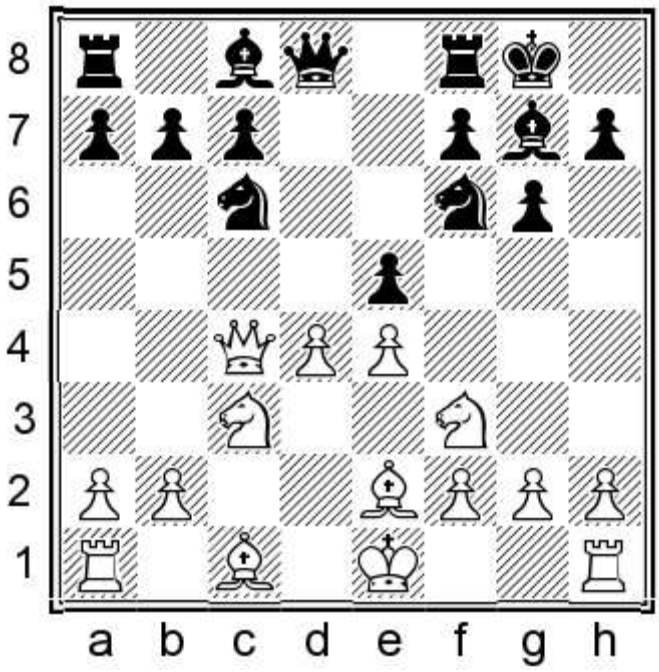
Black has a slightly more pleasant position due to a more potent bishop. However, White should be able to hold a draw with a precise defense.

c) 12.--, 12.♕c4 b5 13.♕xc6 ♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8 15.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♗e2

The most common line. If White manages to castle without any interruptions Black will be in trouble due to White's dominance in the center.

8...e5!

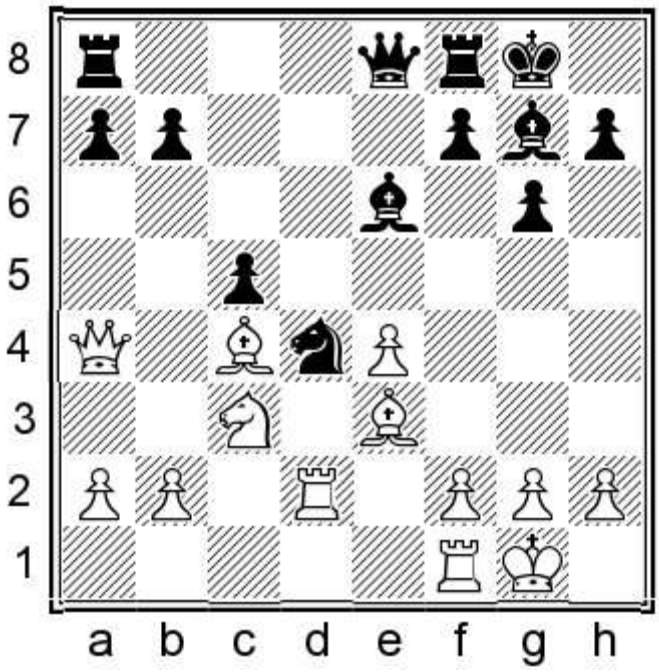


Position after: 8...e5!

This move really can't wait. The time to fight against the center is now!

9.d5

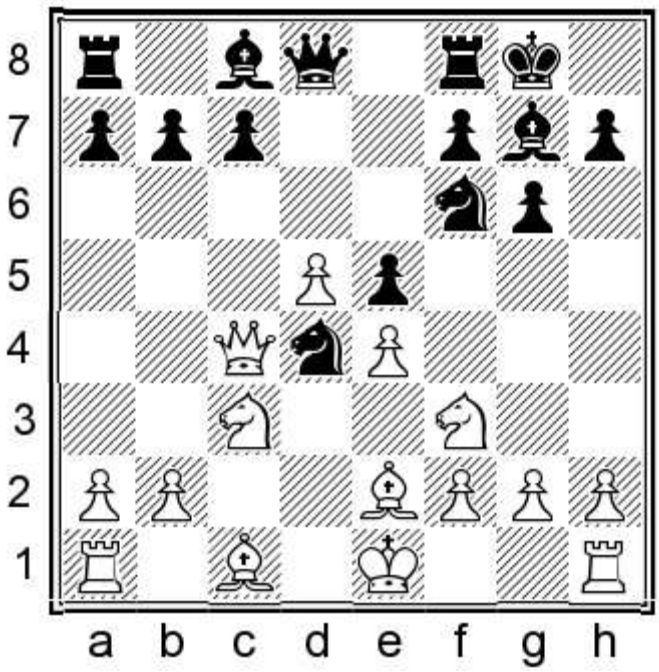
9.dxe5 ♘g4 We were forced to play the passive 9...♘d7 in the 8.h3 line. In this case, we are taking full advantage of the absence of the h3-pawn and are playing a lot more actively. 10.0-0 ♘gxe5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♕a4 [12.♕b3?! ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♘d4 14.♕d1 ♗e6∓] 12...♘c6 13.♗e3 ♘d4 A dream outpost for the knight. 14.♖ad1 c5 15.♖d2 ♗e6 16.♗c4 ♕e8=



Position after: 16...♕e8=

White is temporarily better developed but the beautiful knight on d4 more than compensates for this minor inconvenience.

9...♘d4

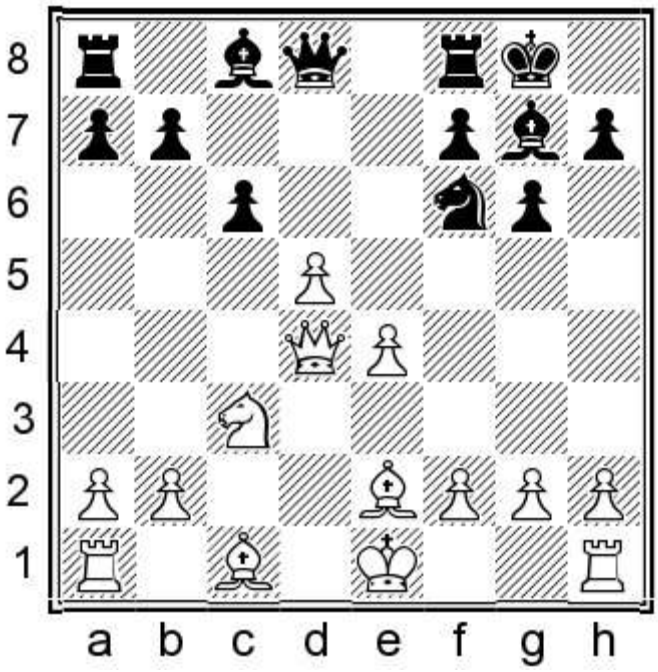


Position after: 9...♘d4

10.♘xd4

If 10.0-0 then 10...c6. Given the opportunity we should always fight against the d5-pawn with either ...c6 or ...e6. 11.dxc6 ♗e6 12.♕d3 ♘xc6 13.♖d1 ♕xd3 14.♗xd3 ♖fd8 15.♘g5 ♗d7 16.♗c4 ♗e8 17.♗e3 ♘d4 18.♖ac1 ♖ac8=

10...exd4 11.♕xd4 c6

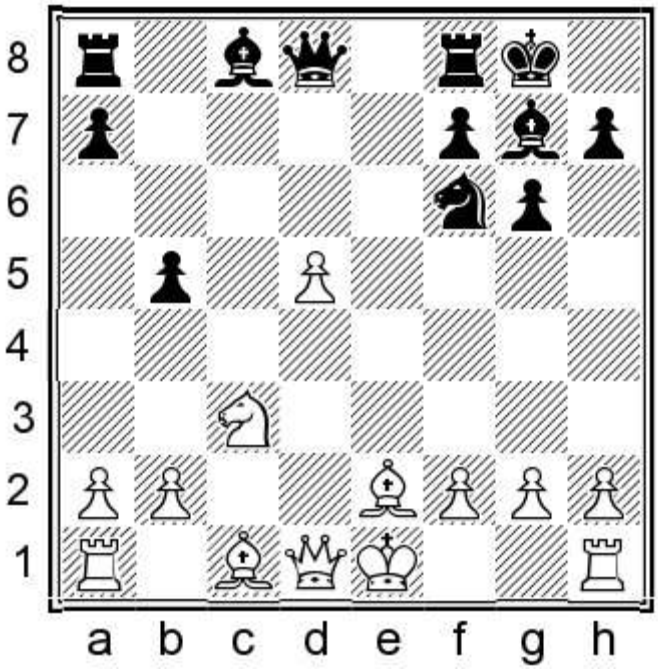


Position after: 11...c6

The first critical position. White has a variety of squares for the queen's retreat considering our immediate threat of ...♘xd5. Therefore, we need to carefully examine each option.

12.♕c4

A) 12.♕d1 cxd5 13.exd5 b5! We can hardly overestimate the importance of the b-pawn.

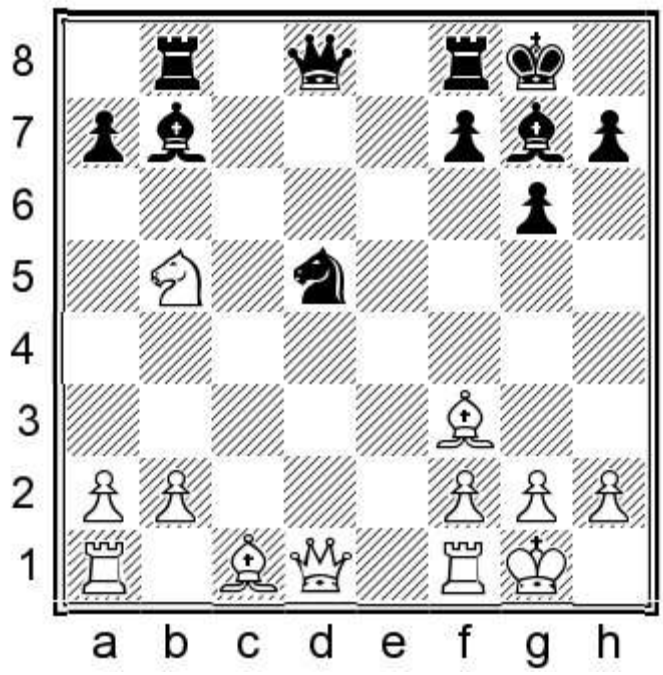


Position after: 13...b5!

Now, it prepares our capture of the d5-pawn or forces White to procrastinate by short castling.

A1) 14.0-0 b4 15.♘a4 ♕xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗f3 ♗e6 18.♖d1 ♖fd8 19.♘c5 ♖ac8 20.♗g5 ♖d6 21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.♖ac1 ♖xc1 23.♗xc1 ♖c6 24.♔f1 a5 25.♗f4 ♖c4 26.♖xd5 ½-½ (26) Xu, Y (2538) – Vidit, S (2723) Moscow 2018.

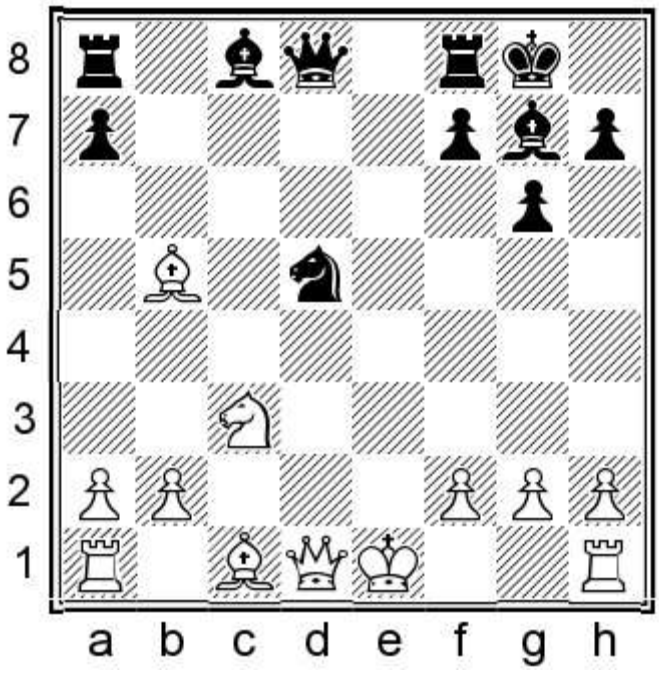
A2) 14.♘xb5 ♘xd5 15.0-0 ♗b7 16.♗f3 ♖b8



Position after: 16...♖b8

17.♖b1 [17.a4 a6 18.♘a3 ♗a8 19.♕d3 ♕a5 20.♘c4 ♕c5 21.♗d2 ♖fd8 22.♕e2 ♖e8 23.♕d3 ♖ed8 24.♕e2 ♖e8 25.♕d3 ♖ed8 26.♕e2 ½-½ (26) Makhnyov, D (2338) – Lorparizangeneh, S (2425) Ulaan-baatar 2015] 17...♗a8 18.♕d3 ♕a5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♕xd5 ♖xb5 21.♕d3 ♕xa2 22.♕xb5 ♕xb1 23.♕a6 ♕c2= ½-½ (25) Tin, J (2406) – Lorparizangeneh, S (2425) Ulaanbaatar 2015.

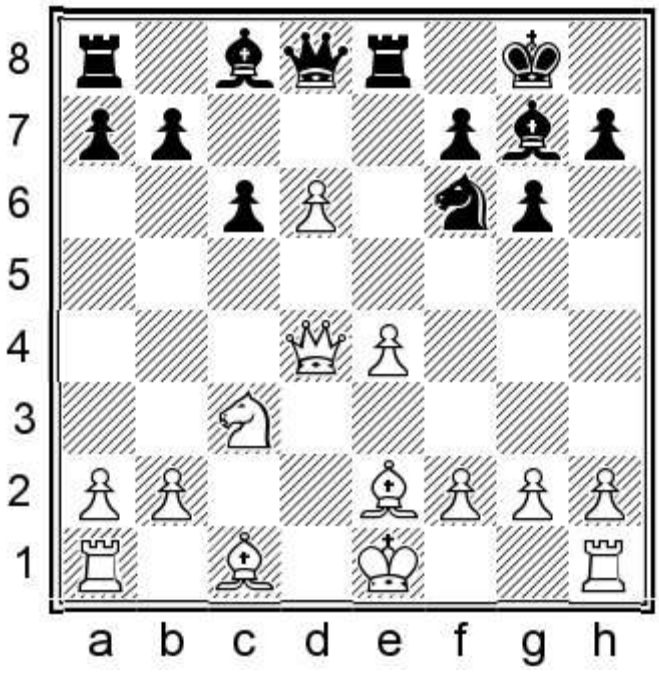
A3) 14.♗xb5 ♘xd5



Position after: 14...♘xd5

15.0-0 [15.♘xd5 ♕a5+ 16.♘c3 ♗xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♕xb5 18.♕e2 ♕c6 19.0-0 ♗a6 20.c4 ♗xc4 21.♕c2 ♗d5 22.♕xc6 ♗xc6=; 15.♕xd5?? loses the queen 15...♗xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♕xd5–+] 15...♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 ♗xc3 18.♗a3 ♗xa1 19.♗xf8 ♔xf8 20.♖xa1 ♗e6=

B) 12.d6 ♖e8

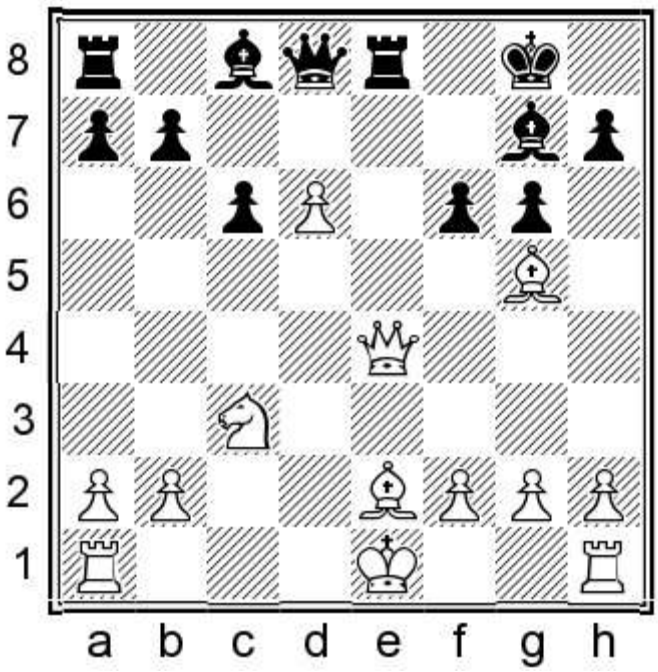


Position after: 12...♖e8

B1) 13.e5 ♘d5 14.f4 ♕xd6 15.♗e3 ♕b4! The queen trade is mandatory. It is interesting to note that

other moves lead to a better position for White. 16.♕xb4 ♘xb4 17.0-0-0 ♗e6 18.a3 ♘d5 19.♘xd5 ♗xd5 20.♗f3 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 f6 22.♖d7 fxe5 23.♖xb7 exf4 24.♗xf4 ♖f8 25.♗g3 ♖xf3 26.♖d1=

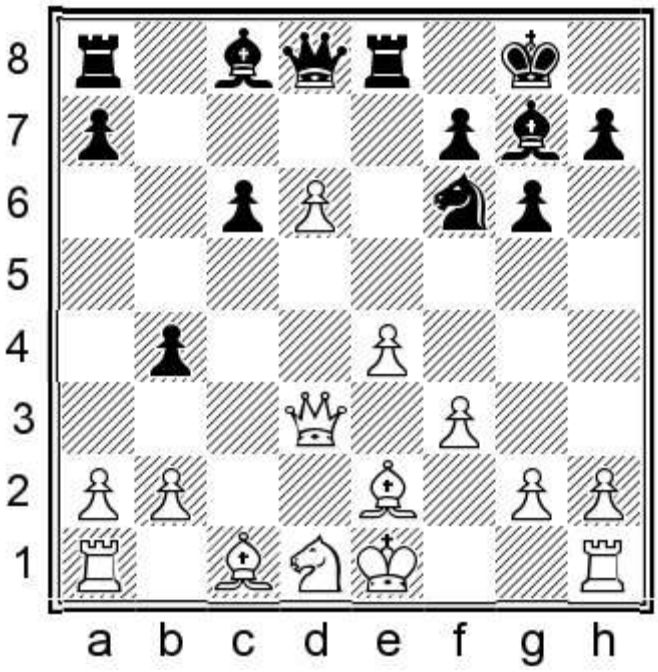
B2) 13.♗g5 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 f6



Position after: 14...f6

15.♗xf6 [15.♕c4+ ♗e6∓] 15...♗xf6 16.♕d3 ♗e5 17.♖d1 ♗f5 18.♕d2 ♕f6 19.f4 ♗xc3 20.♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 21.bxc3 ♗g4 22.♖d2 ♖ad8 23.♔f2 ♖xe2+ 24.♖xe2 ♗xe2 25.♔xe2 ♖xd6=

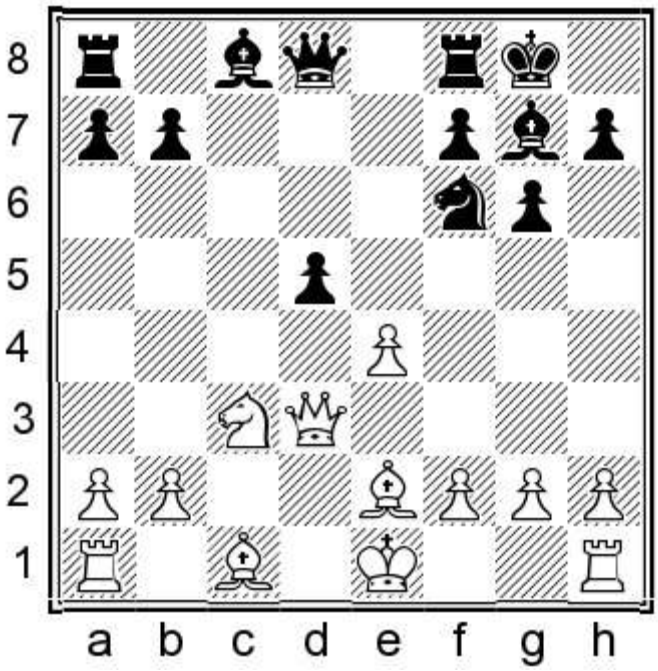
B3) 13.♕d3 b5 14.f3 b4 15.♘d1



Position after: 15.♘d1

15...a5 An improvement to the 2011 game played by MVL. It makes sense to prepare the light-squared bishop trade since we can't really find any useful square for it otherwise. [15...♖e6? 16.♕c2 ♘h5 17.♗e3 ♗e5 18.g3 ♖xd6 19.♕c5± 1-0 (43) Morozevich, A (2694) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2722) Biel 2011] 16.♘f2 ♗a6 17.♕d2 c5 18.0-0 ♗xe2 19.♕xe2 ♕xd6=

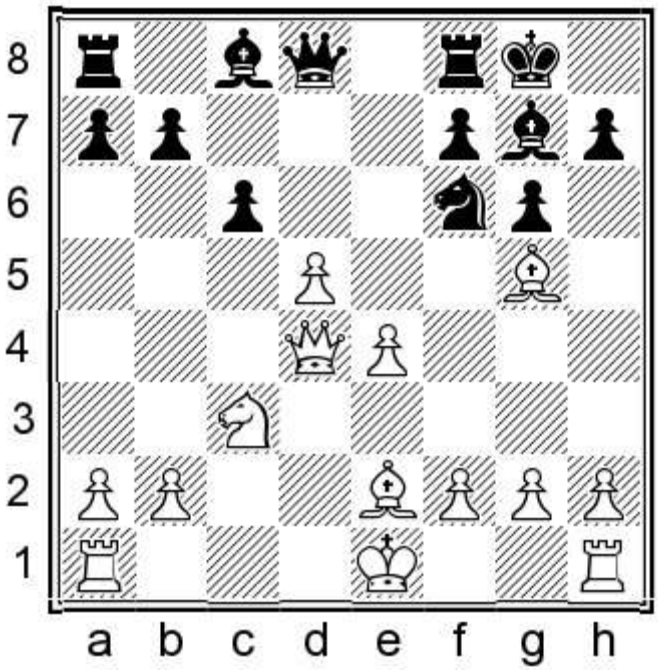
C) 12.♕d3 cxd5



Position after: 12...cxd5

13.exd5 [13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♕xd5 15.exd5 ♖e8 16.♗e3 ♗xb2 17.♖b1 ♗c3+ 18.♔f1 b6 19.g4 ♗b7 20.♗f3 ♖ed8 21.♖d1 ♖ac8=] 13...♗f5 14.♕d1 ♘e4 15.0-0 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♗xc3 17.♗h6 ♗g7 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7=

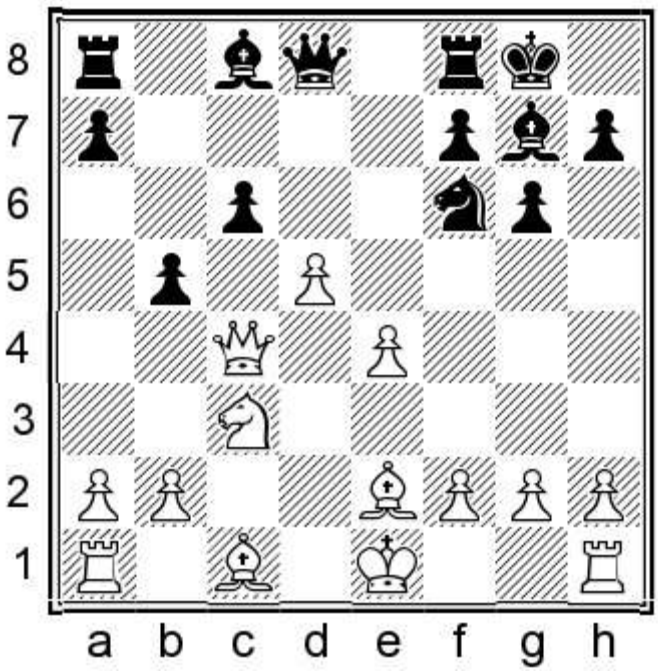
D) 12.♗g5?



Position after: 12.♗g5?

Misses a common tactic: 12...♘xe4 13.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 14.♗xd8 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♖xd8 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♗c4 ♖b8 18.0-0 ♖b2∓.

12...b5!



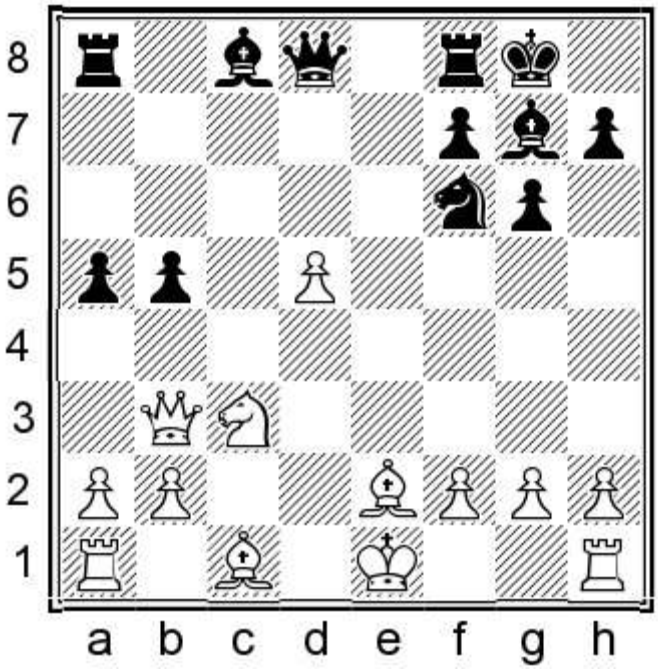
Position after: 12...b5!

The excitement begins! We are ready to sacrifice the second pawn in order to exploit the vulnerability

of White's queen and the pawn center. Note that we are absolutely obligated to attack White ferociously while the king is still on its initial position. Otherwise, White simply castles and retains an extra pawn with no visible compensation for Black.

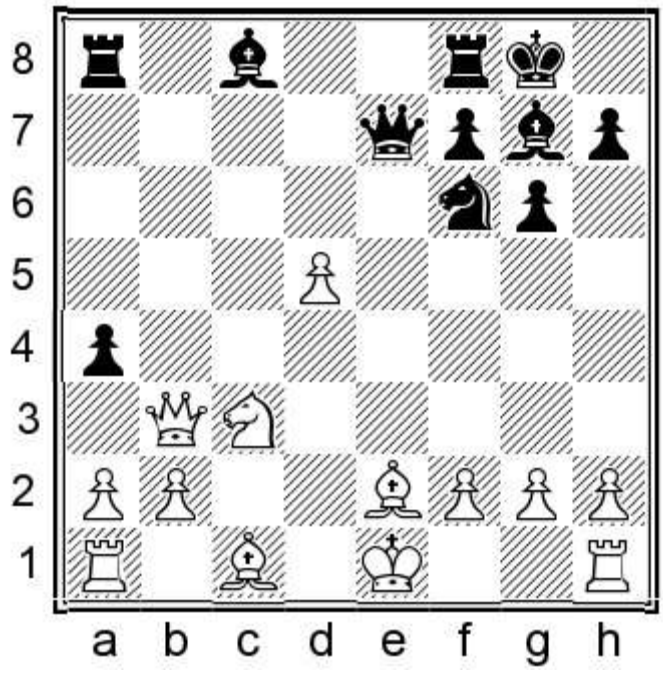
13.♕xc6

A) A lot less challenging is 13.♕b3 cxd5 14.exd5 and now another pawn sacrifice: 14...a5!



Position after: 14...a5!

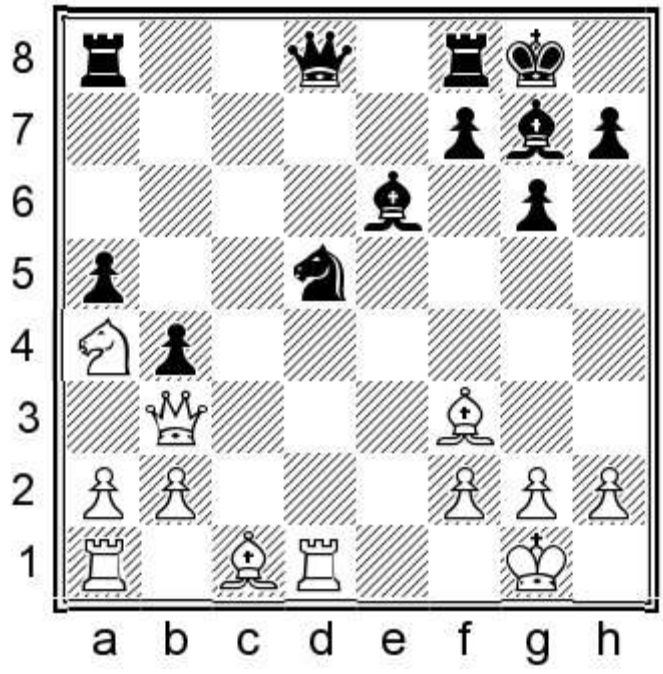
A1) 15.♗xb5 ♕e7+ 16.♗e2 [16.♔f1 a4 17.♘xa4 ♖b8↑ Black is "only" down three pawns, but the initiative is on our side. White has tremendous issues with development and the king's protection.] 16...a4!



Position after: 16...a4!

17.♕d1 [17.♘xa4 ♗a6 18.♘c3 ♘g4–+] 17...a3 18.0-0 ♘e4∓

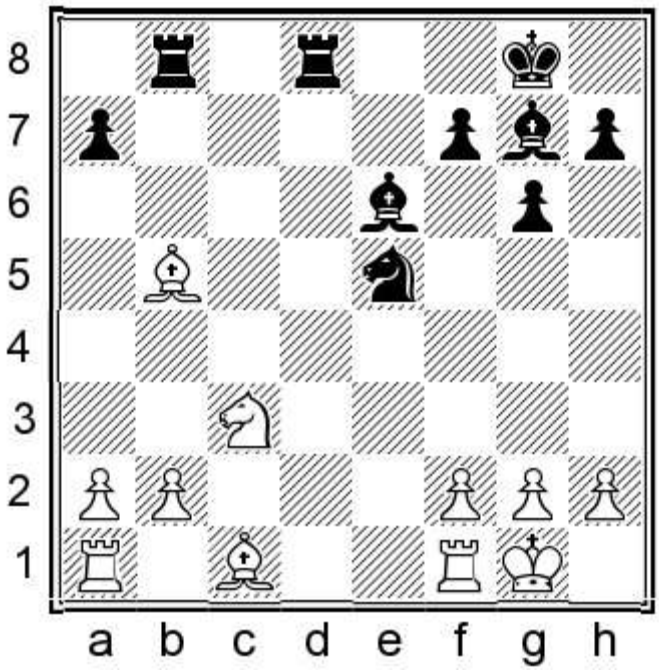
A2) 15.0-0 b4 16.♘a4 ♘xd5 17.♗f3 ♗e6 18.♖d1



Position after: 18.♖d1

18...♕e8! A nice trick, saving the day. 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♕xd5 [It's never too late to lose: 20.♖xd5?? ♕e1#.] 20...♕xa4=

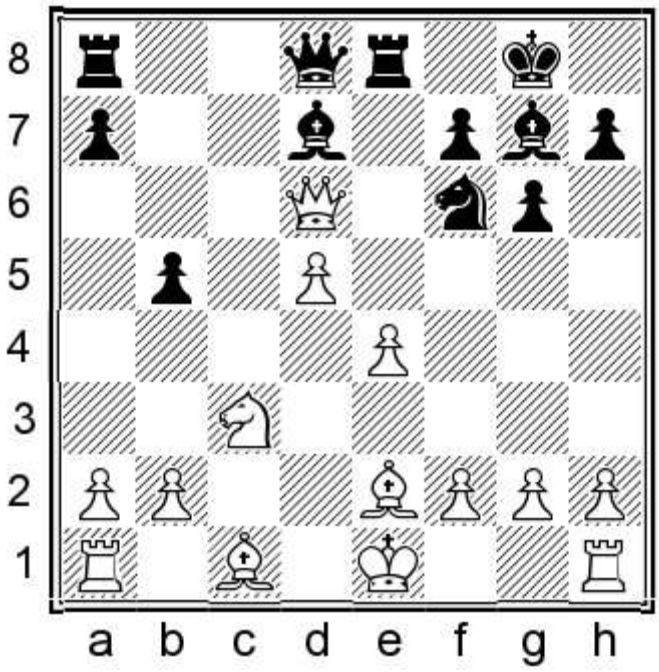
B) 13.♕c5 cxd5 14.e5 ♘d7 15.♕xd5 ♖b8 16.♗xb5 ♘xe5 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 18.0-0 ♗e6



Position after: 18...♗e6

Black always has full compensation in similar positions due to overwhelming activity and complete absence of any weaknesses. 19.a4 ♗c4 20.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 21.♘xd1 ♗xb5 22.axb5 ♘d3 23.♗e3 ♖xb5 24.♖xa7 h5=

13...♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8

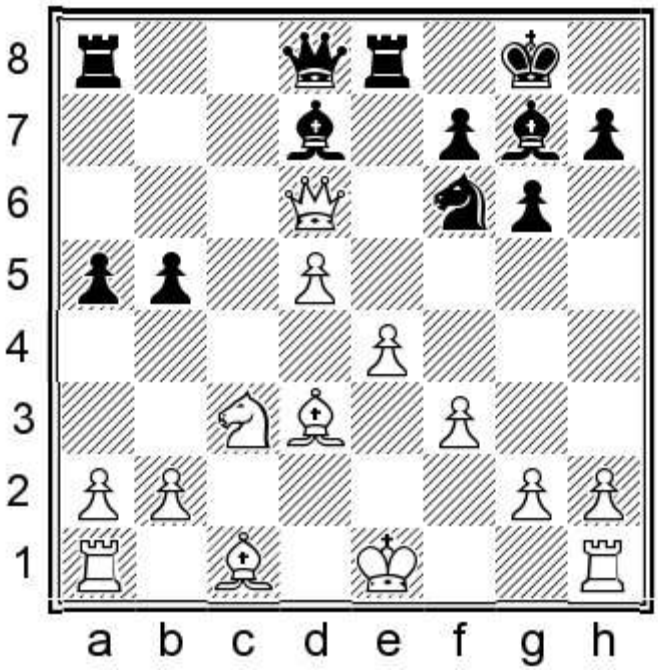


Position after: 14...♖e8

The second critical position. Besides the main line of the current subchapter, study especially carefully the 15.f3 and 15.e5 lines (next subchapter), which require a great deal of precise knowledge.

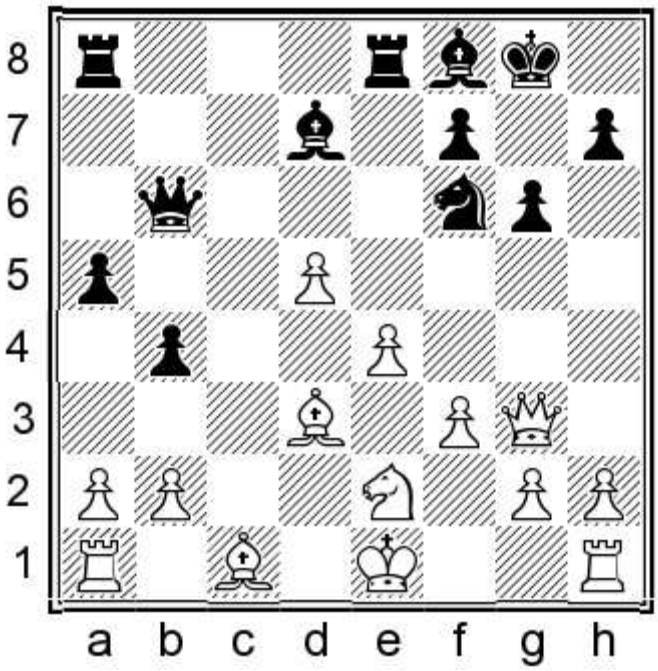
15.♗g5

A) 15.♗d3 a5 16.f3



Position after: 16.f3

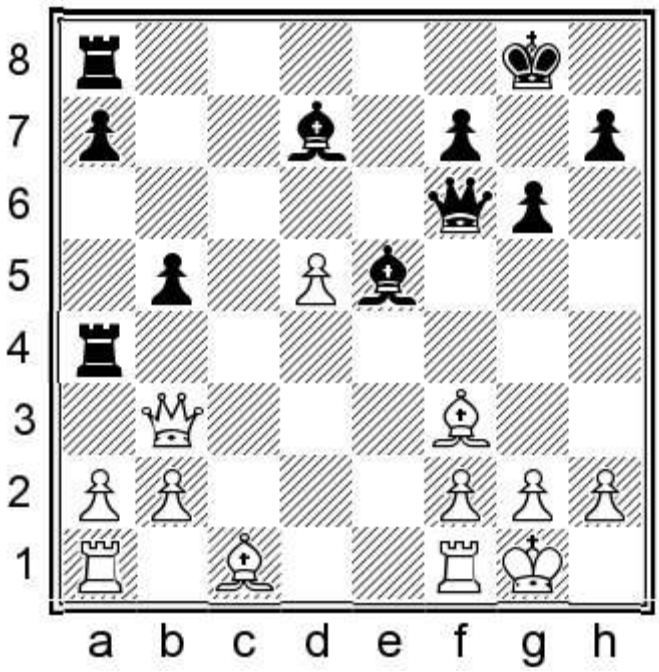
16...b4 [16...♘h5!? 17.♗e3 b4 18.♘e2 ♗xb2 19.♖d1 ♗e5 20.♕b6 ♗c7 21.♕c5 ♖c8=] 17.♘e2 ♗f8 18.♕g3 ♕b6



Position after: 18...♕b6

19.♗g5 [19.♕g5!! ♗c5 20.h4! ♗f5!! 21.exf5 ♖ad8 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♗xg6 ♖xd5 24.♗f5+ ♔f8 25.♕h6+ ♔g8=] 19...♘xd5! A tactical improvement to the 2018 MVL game. Black equalizes easily. [19...♖ac8 0-1 (38) Navara, D (2726) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2794) Germany 2018] 20.exd5 ♗b5 21.♖d1 ♖ac8 22.♗xb5 ♕xb5 23.0-0 ♖xe2 24.d6 ♕d7= The d6-pawn is too weak and will soon fall. Further we have the idea of doubling the rooks on the second rank.

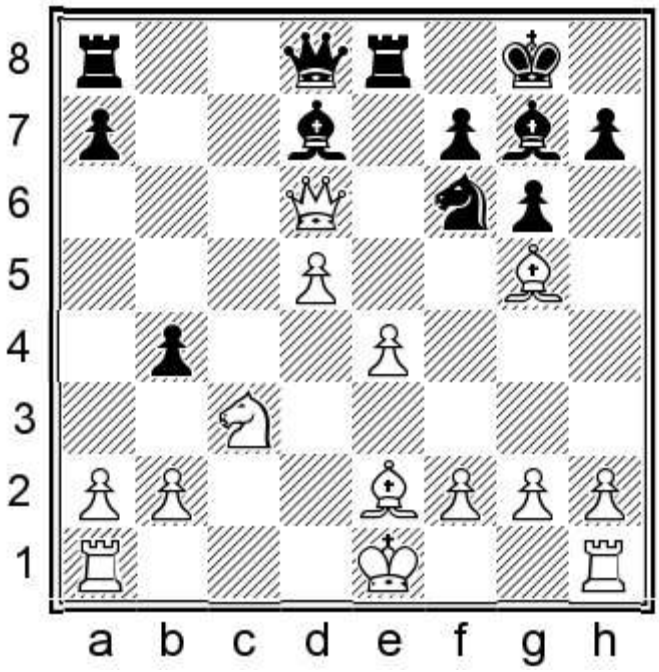
B) 15.0-0 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♖xe4 17.♗f3 ♗e5 18.♕a3 ♖a4 19.♕b3 ♕f6↑



Position after: 19...♕f6↑

White has clear problems with his queenside development. As we have previously seen the extra pawn doesn't matter much.

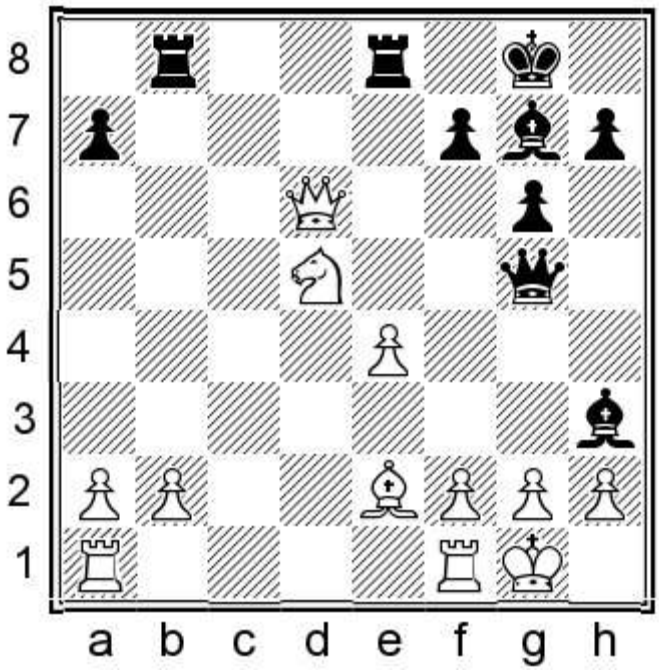
15...b4!



Position after: 15...b4!

Every chess player has heard the phrase “Pawns don’t matter” and this position is a good example. Black forces the queen to take the b-pawn, which allows us to execute a small tactical operation and get the bishop pair versus the knight and bishop.

16.♕xb4 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♕xg5 18.0-0 ♖ab8 19.♕d6 ♗h3



Position after: 19...♗h3

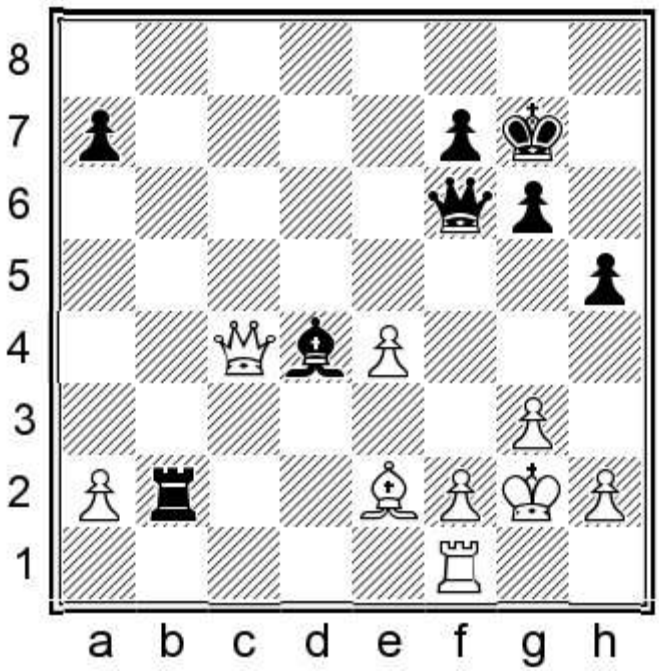
The bishops do extremely well in such open positions.

20.♘f4

A) 20.♗f3 ♗e5 21.♕c5 ♖xb2 22.♕xa7 ♗e6 23.g3 ♗xd5 24.exd5 ♕f6 25.♕e3 ♖c8 26.♔g2 ♖cc2 27.♖ac1 ♖xa2=

B) 20.♕g3? ♕xg3 21.hxg3 ♖xb2 22.♗d1? [22.♗d3 ♗d7=] 22...♗d7 23.♗b3 ♖xe4 24.♖ab1 ♔f8 25.♖xb2 ♗xb2 26.♖d1 ♖d4 27.♖xd4 ♗xd4∓ 0-1 (69) Miton, K (2622) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2680) Belfort 2012.

20...♗g4 21.♗xg4 ♗e5 22.♕d7 ♕xf4 23.g3 ♕f6 24.♖ad1 h5 25.♗e2 ♖e7 26.♕d5 ♖xb2 27.♖d2 ♖xd2 28.♕xd2 ♗d4 29.♕c2 ♔g7 30.♔g2 ♖b7 31.♕c4 ♖b2=

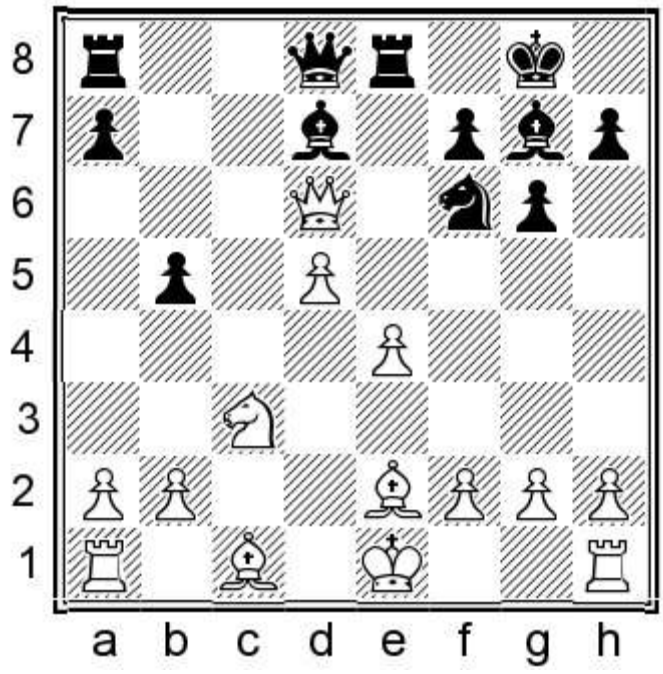


Position after: 31...♖b2=

The opposite colored bishops are notorious for their drawish tendencies plus Black is more active than White. Therefore, Black should be able to hold at least equal chances quite easily. A draw is the most likely result.

d) 12.♕c4 b5 13.♕xc6 ♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8 15.e5, 15.f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♗e2 e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♕xd4 c6 12.♕c4 b5! 13.♕xc6 ♗d7 14.♕d6 ♖e8



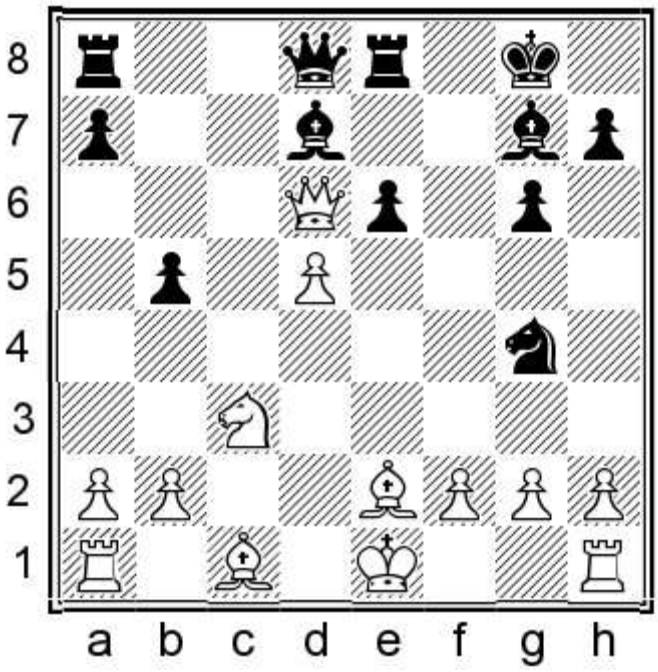
Position after: 14...♖e8

15.f3

This leads to mind-boggling complications. Good news for the readers: I have spent countless hours walking through the jungle with Stockfish and Lc0, picked all the best fruits, and presented them here in this book. True chess fans and aficionados are up for a real treat!

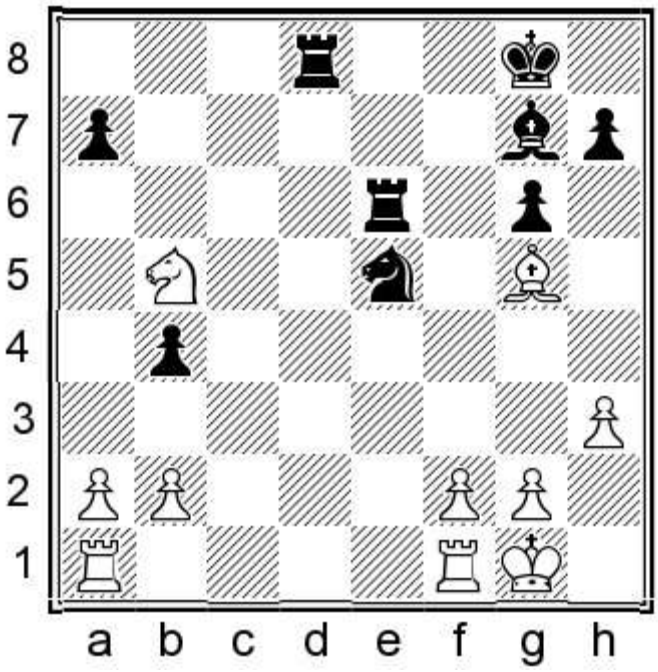
15.e5 Is a late addition to the book as this move was played only twice; the first game was played by the Chinese Grand Master Yu Yangyi against MVL. I think everybody has observed by now that MVL is a big fan of the 7...♘c6 line against the 5.♕b3 system.

15...♘g4 16.e6 fxe6



Position after: 16...fxe6

A) 17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♕xd8 ♖axd8 19.0-0 b4 20.♘b5 ♗d7 21.♗c4+ ♗e6 22.♗e2 ♗d7 23.♗c4+ ♗e6 24.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 25.h3 ♘e5 26.♗g5

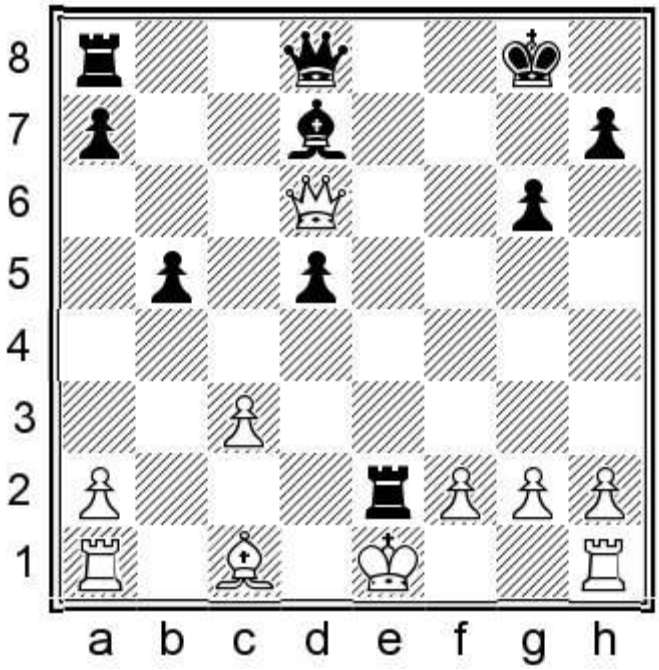


Position after: 26.♗g5

26...♘f3+!? [26...♖d7 27.♖fd1 ♖b6 28.♘xa7 ♖a6 29.♘c8 ♖xa2=] 27.gxf3 ♖d5 28.♗e3 ♖xb5= ½-½ (35) Lysyj, I (2596) – Ponkratov, P (2644) Mali Losinj 2019.

B) 17.♗xg4 exd5+ 18.♗e2 ♗xc3+ 19.bxc3 ♖xe2+! and that's why we did not really blunder the knight

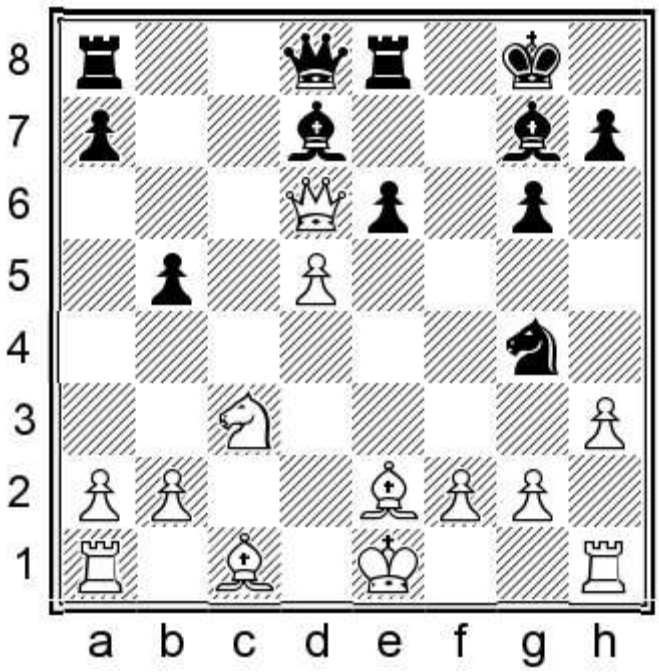
earlier.



Position after: 19...♖xe2+!

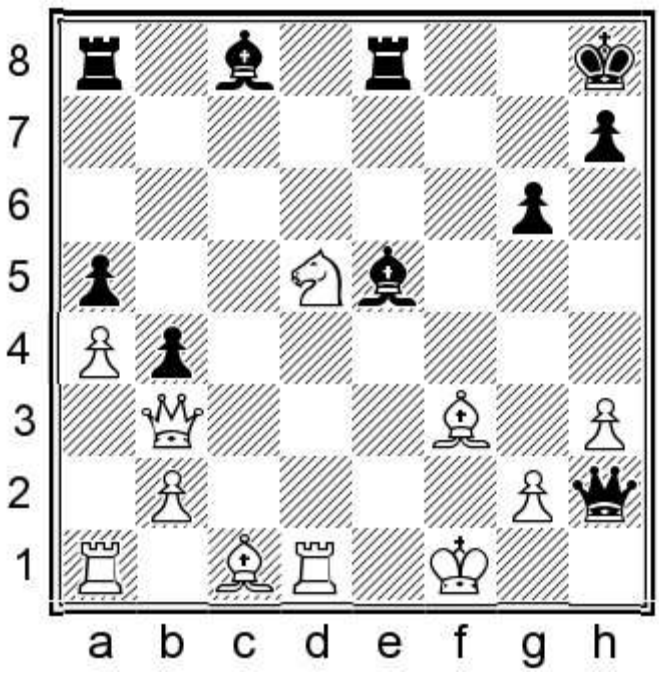
20.♔f1 Surprisingly, the position remains about equal. Black has the following interesting try: [20.♔xe2?? ♗g4+–+] 20...♕e8!? 21.♗e3 ♖xe3 22.fxe3 ♕xe3 23.♕xd5+ ♗e6 24.♕xa8+ ♔g7 25.♕b7+ ♔h6 26.♕xb5 ♕xc3 27.♕e2 ♗c4=.

C) 17.h3



Position after: 17.h3

C1) Another option for Black is to attack the queen and then sacrifice the knight on f2. This game is definitely not for the faint-hearted... 17...♗e5!? 18.♕b4 ♘xf2! 19.♔xf2 [19.0-0 ♘xh3+ 20.gxh3 exd5 21.♗f3 ♗xh3 22.♖f2 ♖c8⩱] 19...exd5 20.♖d1 a5 21.♕b3 ♕h4+ 22.♔g1 ♕g3 23.♘xd5 ♕h2+ 24.♔f1 ♔h8⩱ 25.♗f3 b4 26.a4 ♗c8!

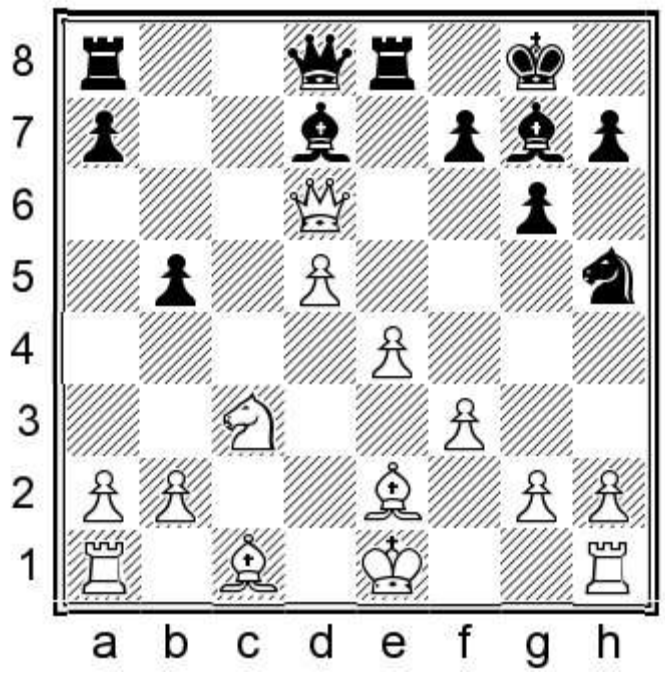


Position after: 26...♗c8!

A golden rule: everybody should be involved in the attack. Our bishop takes this notion to the next level by being ultra effective from the a6-square. 27.♗e3 ♖f8 28.♗d4 ♗a6+ 29.♔f2 ♕g3+ 30.♔g1 ♕h2+=

C2) 17...♘e5 18.dxe6 ♗xe6 19.♕xd8 ♖axd8 20.♗xb5 ♗c4 21.♗xe8 ♘d3+ 22.♔f1 ♗xc3 23.bxc3 ♘xc1+ 24.♔g1 ♘e2+ 25.♔h2 ♖xe8= ½-½ (36) Yu, Y (2763) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2774) Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

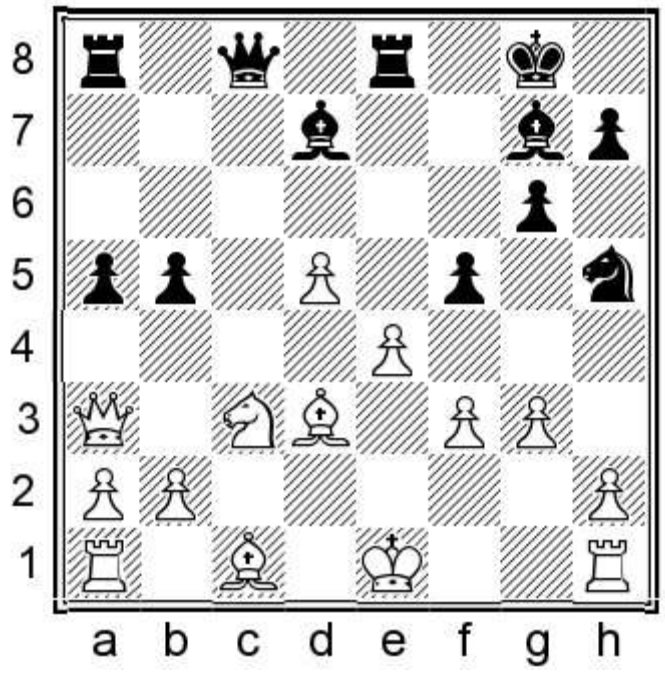
15...♘h5



Position after: 15...♘h5

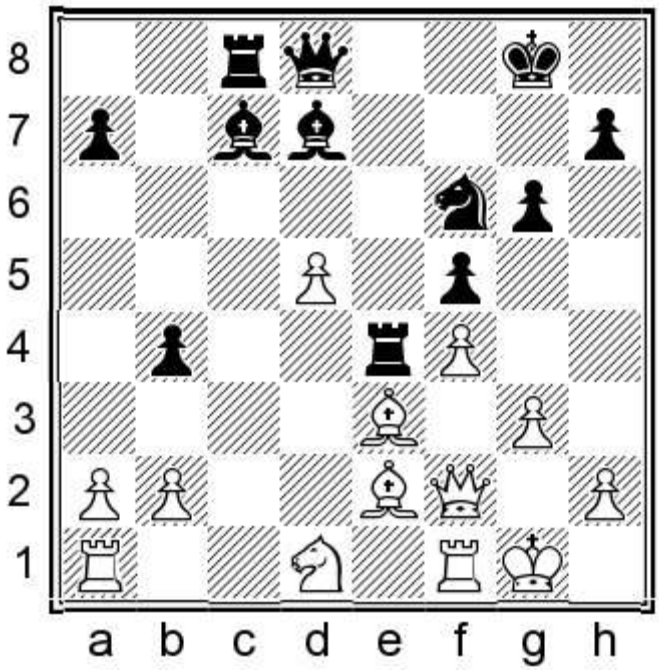
16.♗e3

16.g3 f5 17.0-0 [17.♗d3 ♕c8 18.♕a3 a5



Position after: 18...a5

19.d6 b4 20.♕b3+ ♗e6 21.♘d5 ♕d7 22.♗c4 ♕xd6 23.♗e3 fxe4 24.♖d1 ♕c6 25.fxe4 ♖ac8 26.♗e2 ♘f6 27.0-0 ♘xe4 28.♗g4 ♔h8 29.♗xe6 ♕xe6 30.♕d3=] 17...♗e5 18.♕c5 ♖c8 19.♕f2 b4 20.f4 ♗c7 21.♘d1 ♖xe4 22.♗e3 ♘f6∞

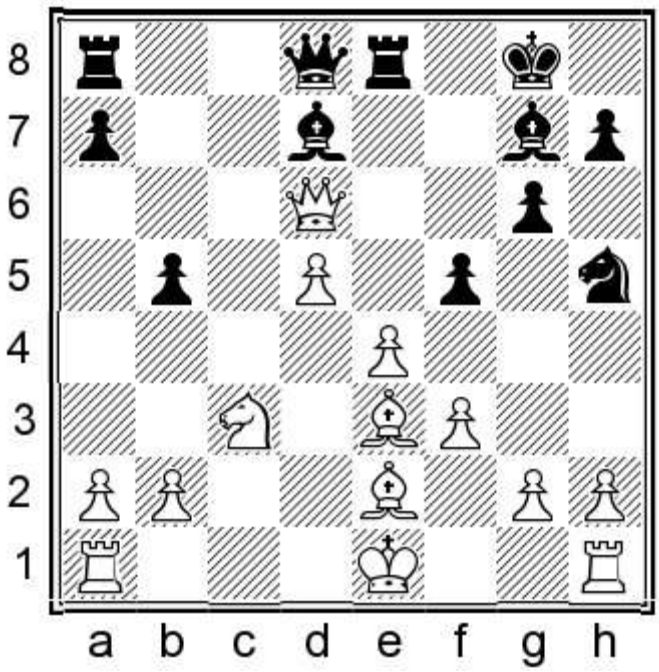


Position after: 22...♘f6∞

Black is still down a pawn, but the vulnerability of the d5-pawn coupled with Black's activity should be enough to maintain a balanced position.

Here, for the first and only time in this book, I purposely used the archaic pre-computer evaluation "unclear". It usually indicates that the commentator got a bit lazy and didn't want to analyze further to achieve more clarity. Guilty as charged.

16...f5

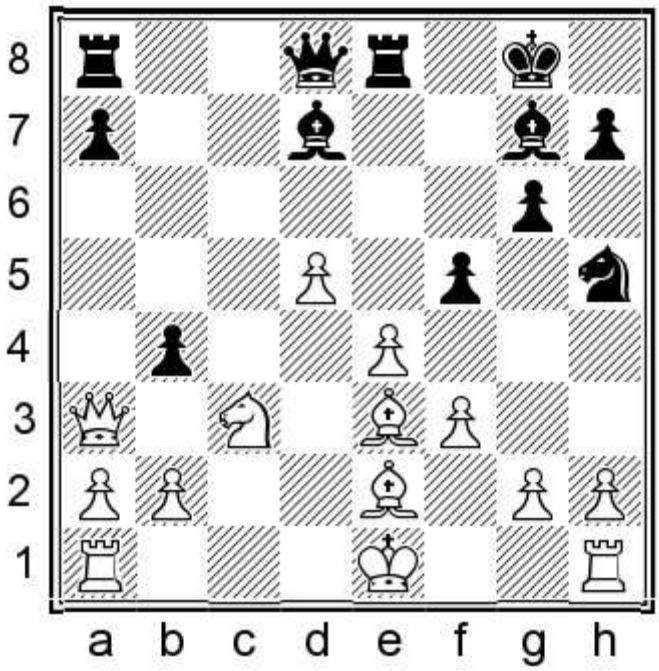


Position after: 16...f5

17.♕a3

17.0-0 ♗e5 18.♕c5 ♕h4 19.f4 ♘xf4 20.♗xf4 ♗xf4 21.g3 ♗xg3 22.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 23.♔h1 ♕h3+ 24.♔g1 ♕g3+=

17...b4!



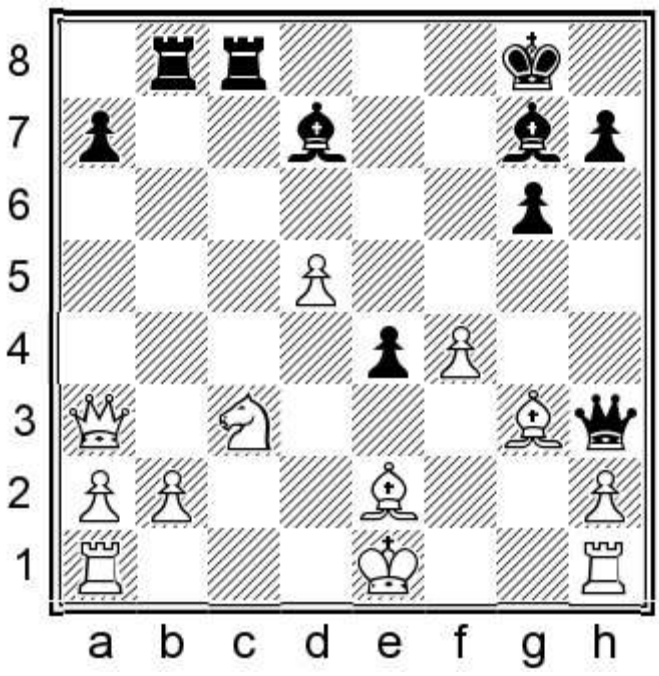
Position after: 17...b4!

The b-pawn is the true selfless hero of the Grünfeld Defense.

18.♕xb4 ♖b8 19.♕a3 fxe4 20.f4 ♕h4+ 21.g3 ♘xg3 22.♗f2 ♕h3 23.♗xg3

Black is down a piece. White's king looks OK. Black doesn't have any immediate tactics. Is this a good time for despair?

23...♖ec8!!



Position after: 23...♖ec8!!

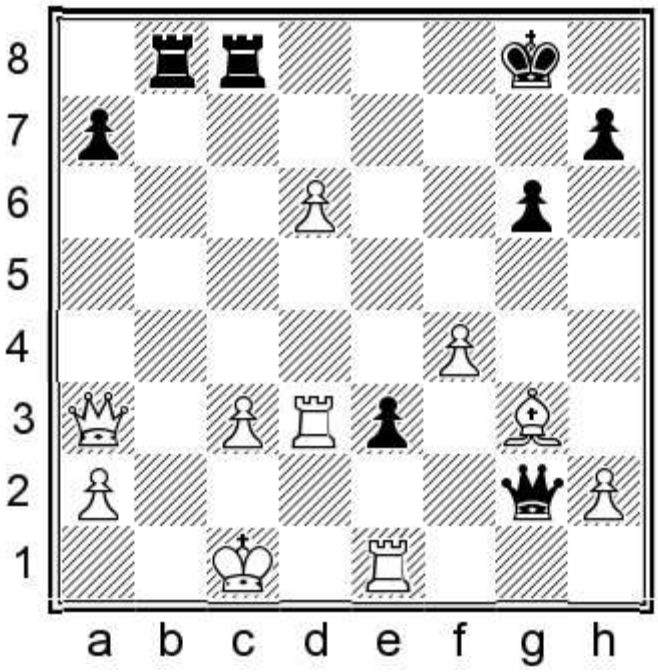
The point: more power is needed for attack. We need to remain calm like a war general lighting a cigar on a battlefield amid the enemy's gunfire.

24.♖f1

A) 24.♖g1 ♗d4 25.0-0-0 ♗c5 26.♕a5 ♕f5 27.♖g2 ♗b4 28.♕xa7 ♗c5 29.♕a6 ♖a8 30.♕b7 ♖ab8 31.♕a6 ♖a8=

B) 24.♗f1 ♕g4 25.♗e2 ♕h3 26.♗f1 ♕g4 27.♗e2=

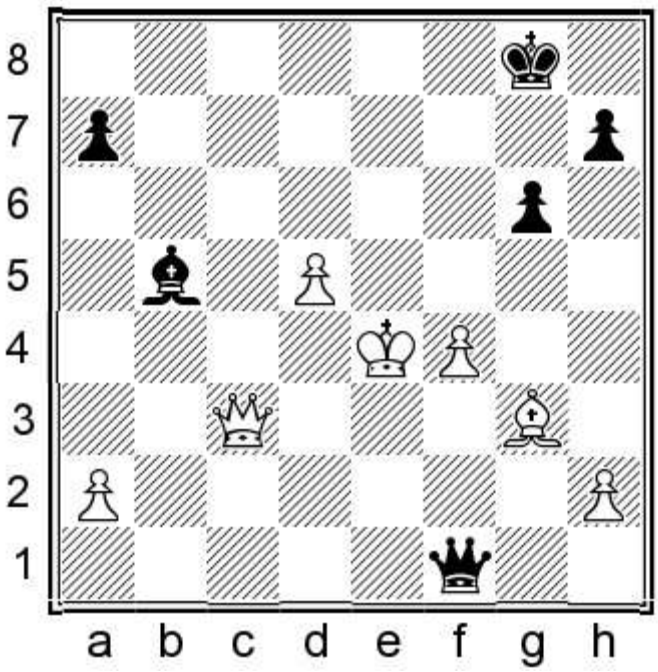
C) 24.0-0-0 ♕g2! 25.♖he1 ♗f5 26.d6 ♗xc3 27.bxc3 e3 28.♗d3 ♗xd3 29.♖xd3



Position after: 29.♖xd3

29...♖xc3+!! 30.♕xc3 ♕xa2–+ Black only has a pawn for a rook and a bishop but the checkmate threat on b1 gives us a winning position.

24...♖xb2 25.♖c1 ♗xc3+ 26.♖xc3 ♖xe2+ 27.♔xe2 ♖xc3 28.♕xc3 ♗b5+ 29.♔e3 ♕xf1 30.♔xe4

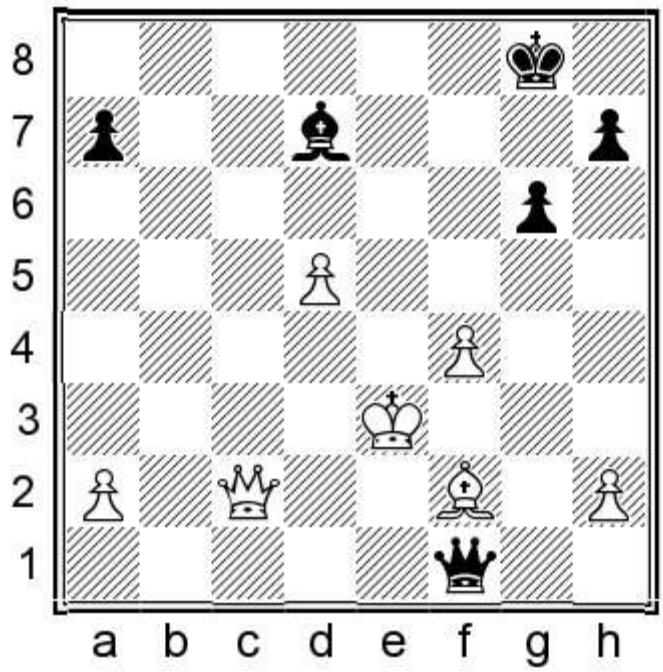


Position after: 30.♔xe4

30...♕b1+

30...♕c4+ 31.♕xc4 ♗xc4 32.a3 ♔f7 33.♔d4 ♗b3 34.♔c5 ♔e7 35.♔c6 a6 36.♗h4+ ♔e8 37.♔d6 ♔f7=

31.♔e3 ♕g1+ 32.♗f2 ♕f1 33.♕c2 ♗d7!=

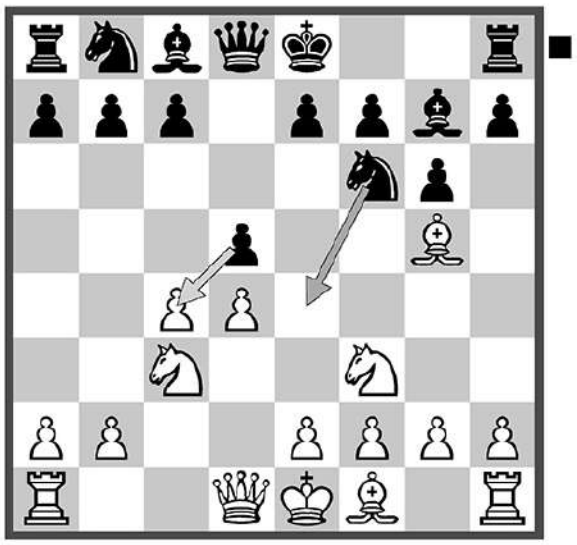


Position after: 33...♗d7!=

As I mentioned previously, the major complications usually lead to an equal position or sometimes a draw. Don't worry about it too much: your opponents are very unlikely to get to this point and are very likely to make a ton of mistakes on the way. Just keep it complicated and give your opponent options.

Chapter 6
5.♗g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗g5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 6 – 5.♗g5

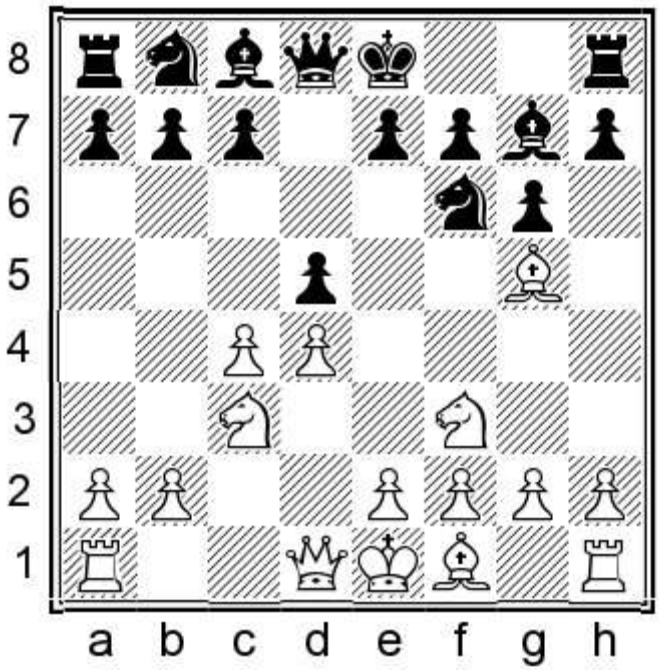
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗g5

a) 5...♘e4, 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.♗xc4

b) 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.dxc5, 7.d5

a) 5...♘e4, 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.♗xc4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗g5

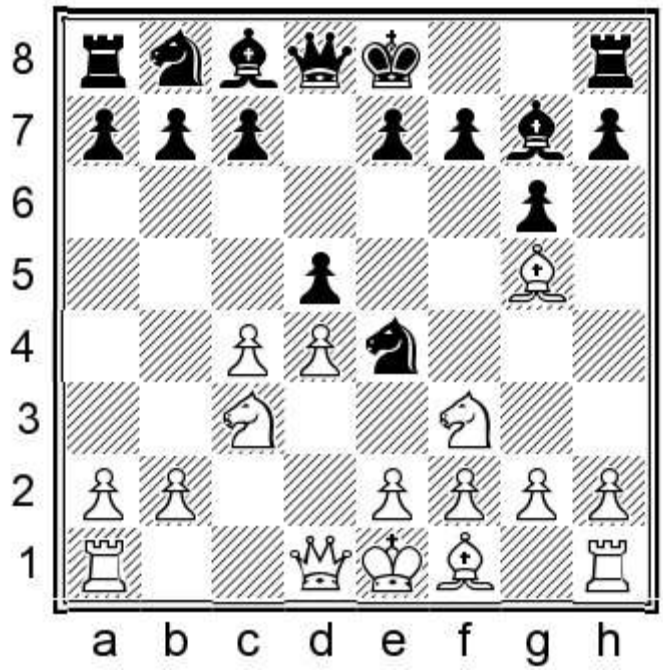


Position after: 5.♗g5

5...dxc4

A rare and even somewhat neglected continuation for Black; undeservingly so, I believe. After putting a significant amount of time into the analysis of this aggressive and most forcing solution I have grown to like it a lot. Instead of patiently trying to equalize chances in the main lines arising after 5...♘e4, we will seek complications from the start. This approach will pressure White who will need remember long forcing lines or else will end up in an unpleasant situation very soon.

I recognize that some of the readers may want to try 5...♘e4, which is currently the most popular response for Black. For those reasons, I have provided some of notable examples of how Black should play the 5...♘e4 line.

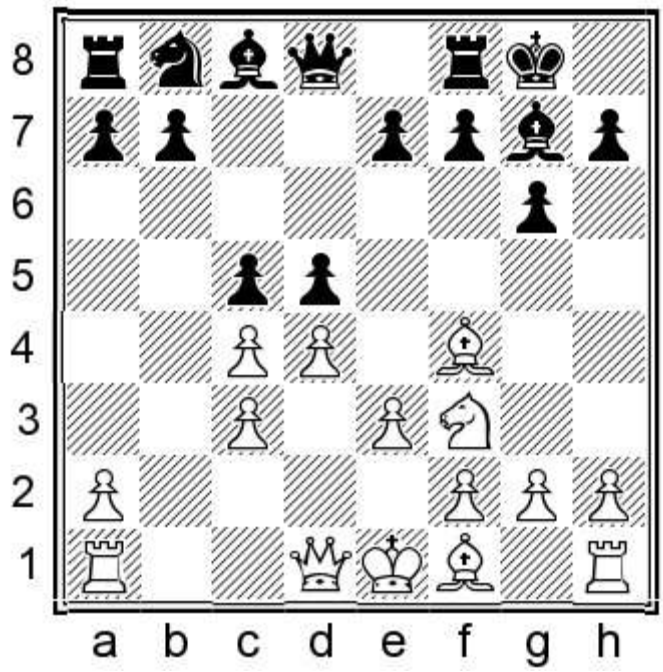


Position after: 5...♘e4

A) 6.♗h4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.♕a4+ c6 9.♕xc4 ♕a5 10.e3 ♗e6 11.♕b4 ♕xb4 12.cxb4 ♘d7 0-1 (44) Hillarp Persson, T (2586) – Gupta, A (2569) Wijk aan Zee 2009.

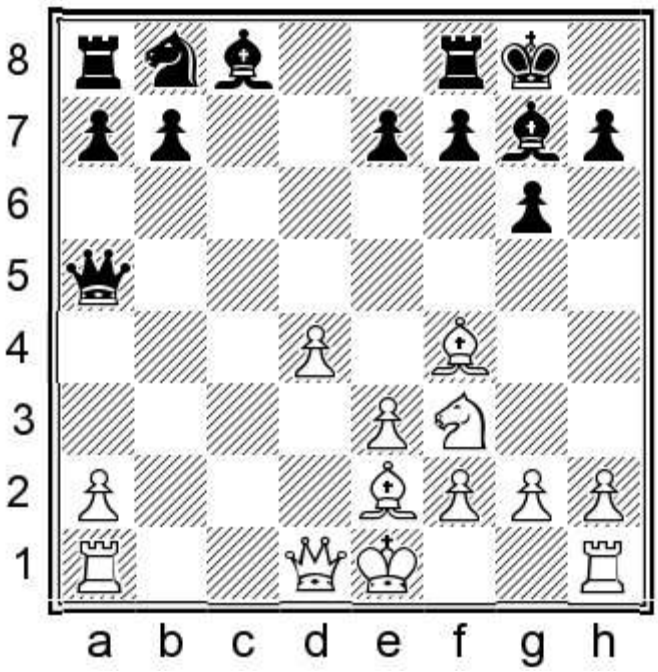
B) 6.cxd5 ♘xg5 7.♘xg5 e6 8.♕d2 exd5 9.♕e3+ ♔f8 10.♕f4 ♗f6 11.h4 h6 12.♘f3 ♔g7 ½-½ (50) Nakamura, H (2774) – Giri, A (2690) Monte Carlo 2011.

C) 6.♗f4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.e3 0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

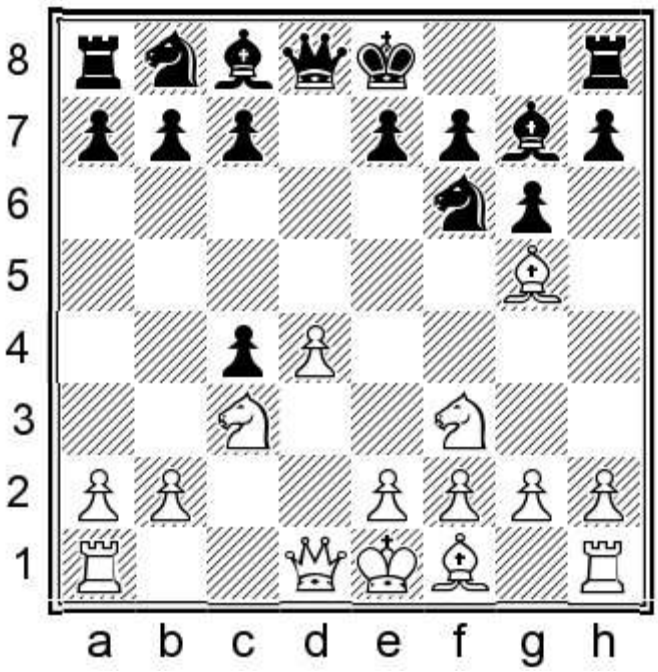
9.cxd5 [9.♗e2 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♘d7 11.0-0 ♘b6 12.♗b3 c4 13.♗c2 ♘d5 14.♕d2 ♘xf4 15.exf4 ♗e6 0-1 (45) Eljanov, P (2765) – Caruana, F (2804) Shamkir 2016] 9...♕xd5 10.♗e2 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+!



Position after: 11...♕a5+!

A very important check, which helps Black to trade queens and reach a comfortable queenless middlegame, and, eventually, endgame. 12.♕d2 ♘c6 13.♕xa5 ♘xa5 14.♔d2 ♗e6 15.♖hc1 ♖fc8 ½-½ (48) So, W (2780) – Wei, Y (2729) Internet 2018.

Back to 5...dxc4.



Position after: 5...dxc4

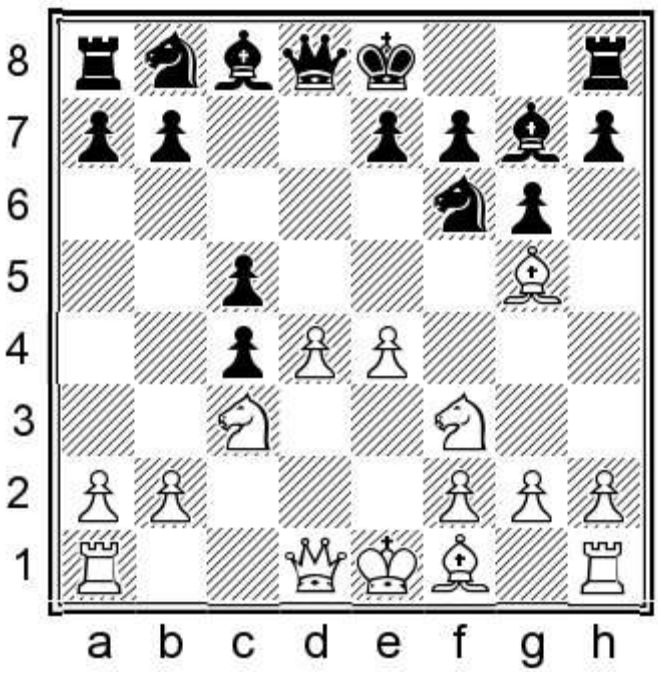
6.e4

Other moves allow Black to equalize the chances rather easily.

A) 6.♕a4+ c6 7.♕xc4 ♗f5 8.e3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♕b6 11.♕b3 h6 12.♗f4 ♖fc8 13.♖fc1 ♕xb3 14.axb3 c5=

B) 6.e3 ♗e6 7.♗e2 [7.♘e5? ♘d5 8.♘xc4 c5∓] 7...0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.a4 ♘a6 10.e4 ♘b4 11.♕d2 a5 12.♖ad1 ♕b6 13.h3 ♖fd8 14.♗e3 ♕a6=

6...c5



Position after: 6...c5

7.♗xc4

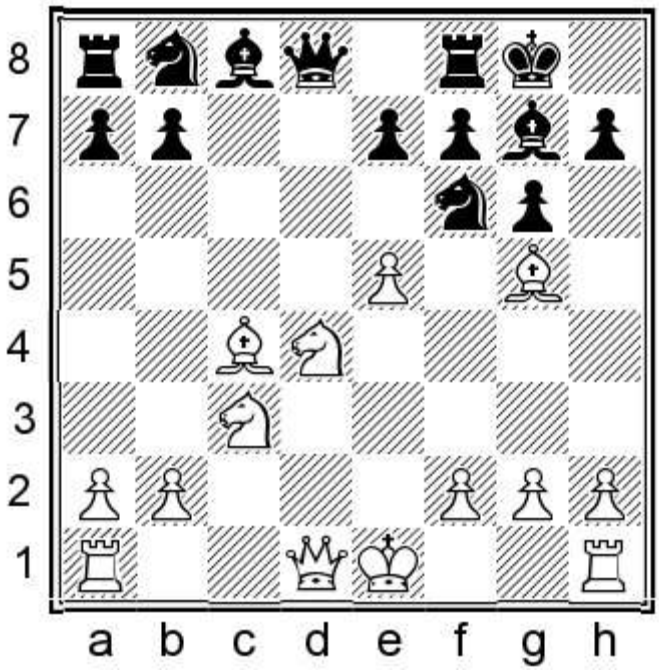
Quite rare but an extremely challenging move.

7.e5? loses a pawn: 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘g4 9.♗xc4 ♘xe5 10.♗b5+ ♗d7∓.

7...cxd4 8.♘xd4

8.♕xd4 ♕xd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♗xd4 11.0-0-0 ♘c6 12.♖he1 ♗e6 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♗e3 ♖d8∓

8...0-0 9.e5



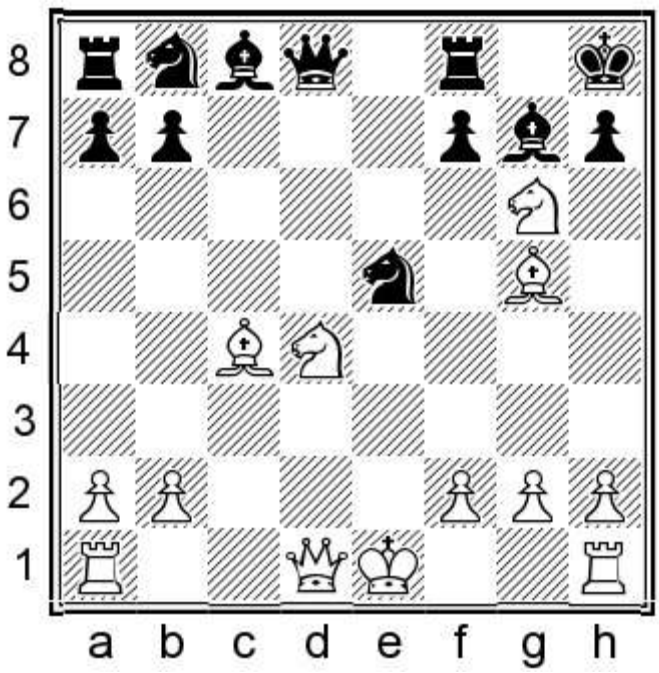
Position after: 9.e5

9...♘g4

9...♘fd7 10.♘d5 ♖e8 11.e6 ♘e5 12.exf7+ ♘xf7 13.♘b5±

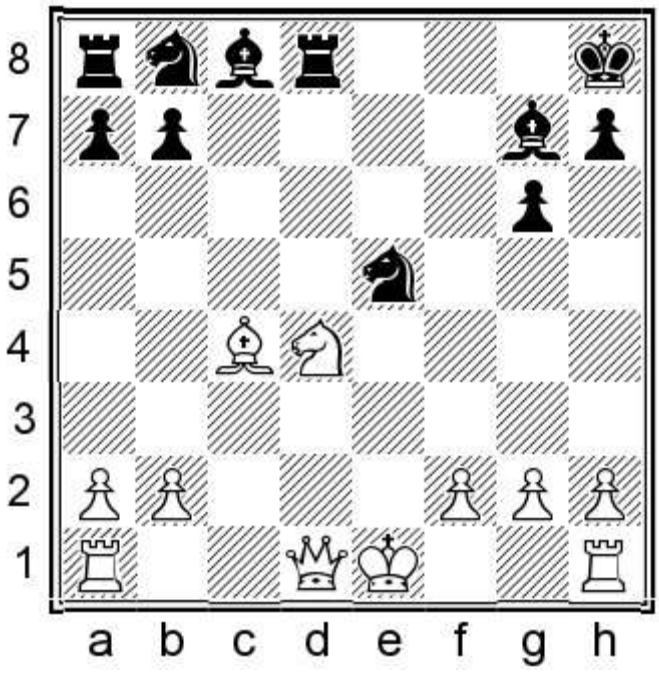
10.♘d5 ♘xe5 11.♗xe7

11.♘xe7+ ♔h8 12.♘xg6+



Position after: 12.♘xg6+

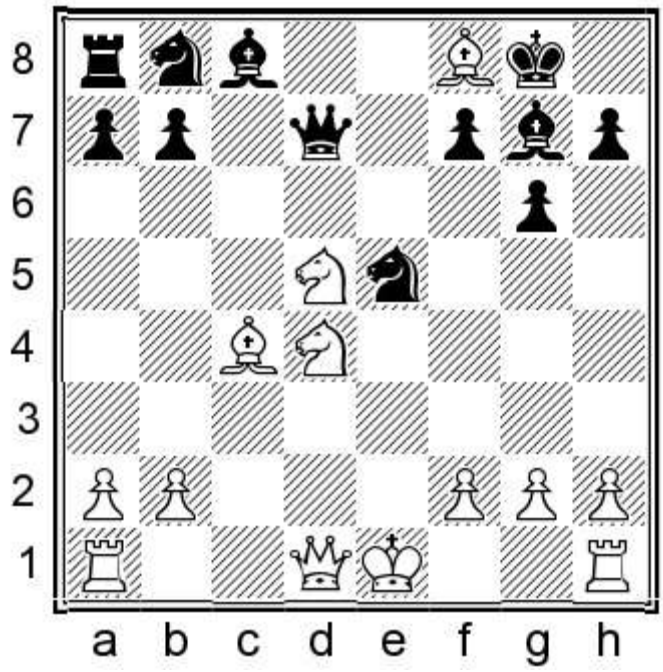
12...fxg6! Counterintuitive at first: aren't we supposed to recapture toward the center? In this case, the concrete considerations prevail over the dogmatic principles: we need to remove the pawn from f7 or else it will be captured by White in a few moves. [12...hxg6 13.♗xd8 ♖xd8 14.♕a4 ♘xc4 15.♕xc4 ♗xd4 16.♕xf7+–] 13.♗xd8 ♖xd8



Position after: 13...♖xd8

We only have two minor pieces for a queen and pawn right now, but we are about to gain some more material. 14.♕a4 ♘xc4 15.♕xc4 ♗xd4 16.0-0 ♘c6= The game is objectively equal, although I would much rather have Black.

11...♕d7 12.♗xf8

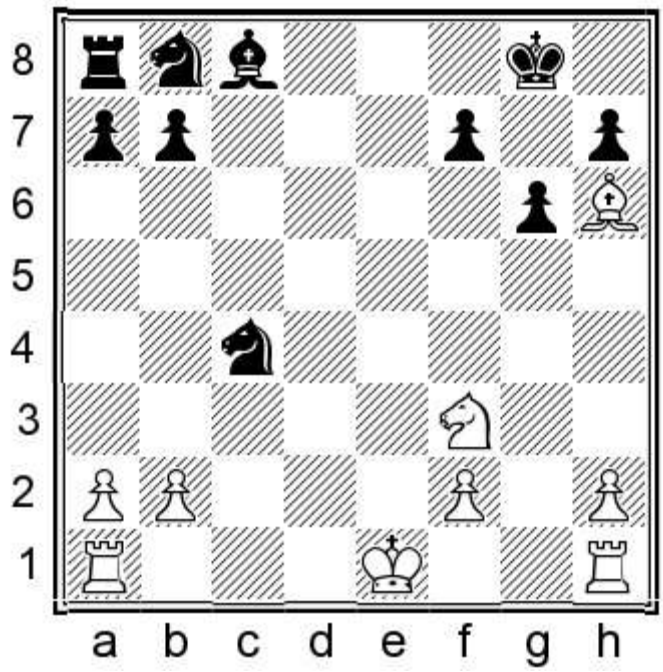


Position after: 12.♗xf8

12...♘xc4

12...♔xf8 13.♗b3 ♘bc6 14.♘e2±

13.♗xg7 ♕xd5 14.♗h6 ♕xg2 15.♕f3 ♕xf3 16.♘xf3

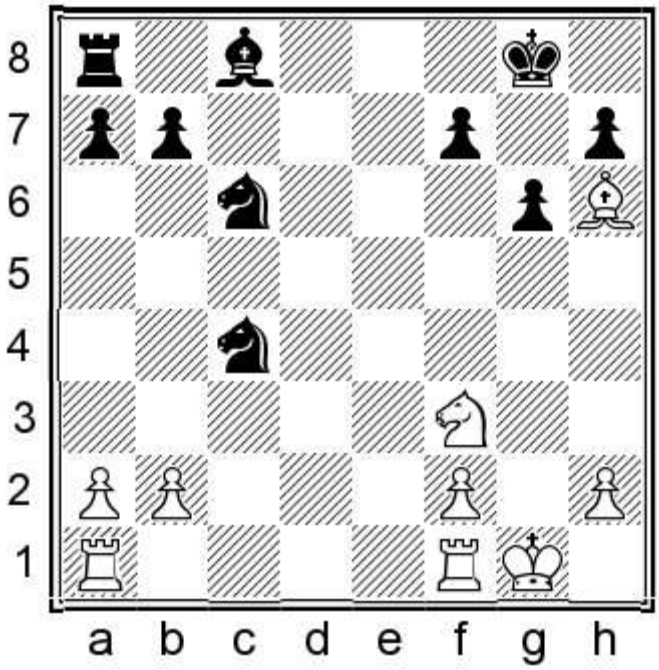


Position after: 16.♘xf3

16...♗g4!

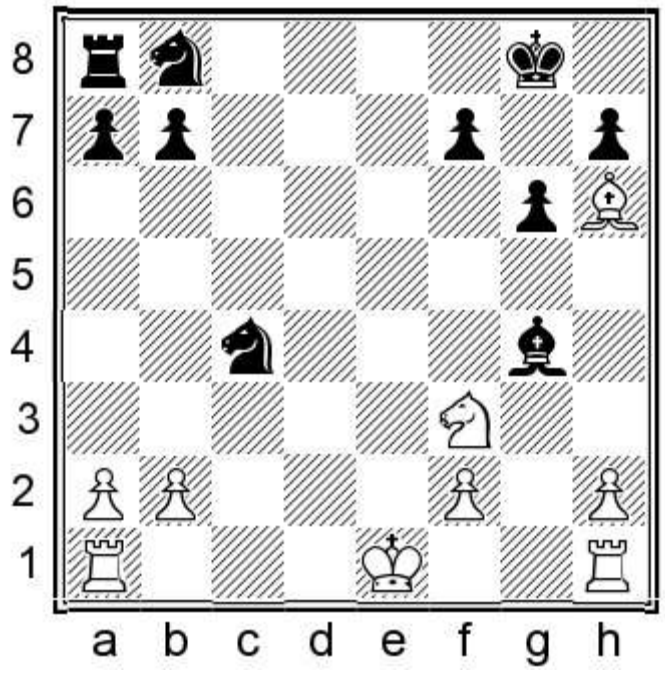
We need to force White to trade the knights or our fate in this game will become difficult.

16...♘c6 17.0-0! Even in the endgame it makes sense to ignore the pawns and strive for rapid development.



Position after: 17.0-0!

[The greedy 17.b3 would let Black off the hook after 17...♗g4 18.bxc4 ♗xf3 19.0-0 ♘d4 20.h3 f6=.] 17...♗g4 [17...♘xb2 18.♖ab1 ♘c4 19.♖fe1 ♗g4 20.♘g5! ♘d6 21.f3! ♗h5 22.♘e4 ♘xe4 23.fxe4 ♘d8 24.♖bc1 ♘e6 25.♖c3±] 18.♔g2!±



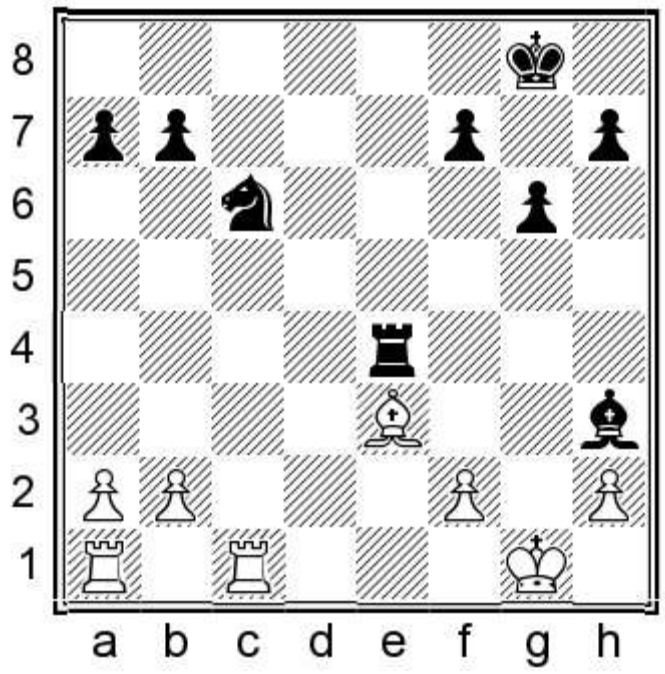
Position after: 16...♗g4!

17.♘d2

A) 17.♘d4 ♘c6 18.♘xc6 ♖e8+ 19.♗e3 ♗f3 20.0-0 ♗xc6=

B) 17.♘g5 ♗f5 18.0-0 f6 19.♘f3 ♘c6 20.b3 ♘4e5 21.♘xe5 ♘xe5 22.f3 ♗d3 23.♖f2 ♗b5 24.♗d2 ♗c6=

17...♘xd2 18.♗xd2 ♘c6 19.♗e3 ♖e8 20.0-0 ♗h3 21.♖fc1 ♖e4=

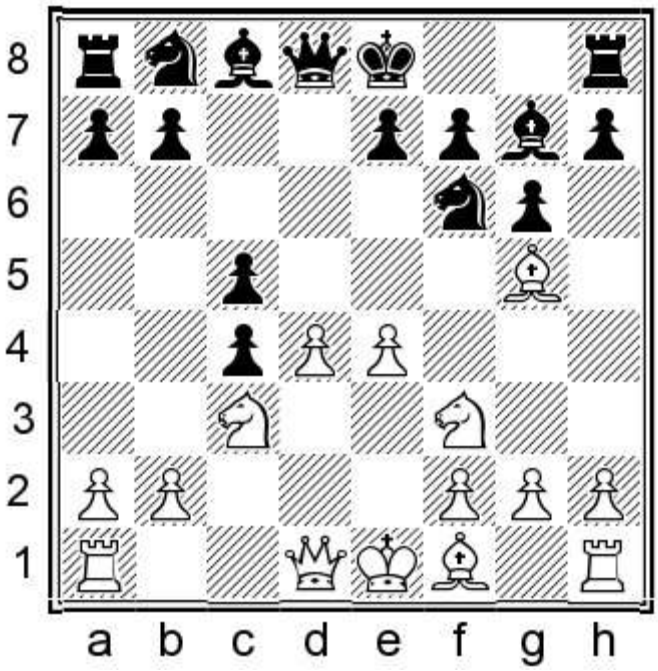


Position after: 21...♖e4=

The position is balanced. Black should be alright here since all of his pieces are taking an active part in the game.

b) 5...dxc4 6.e4 c5 7.dxc5, 7.d5

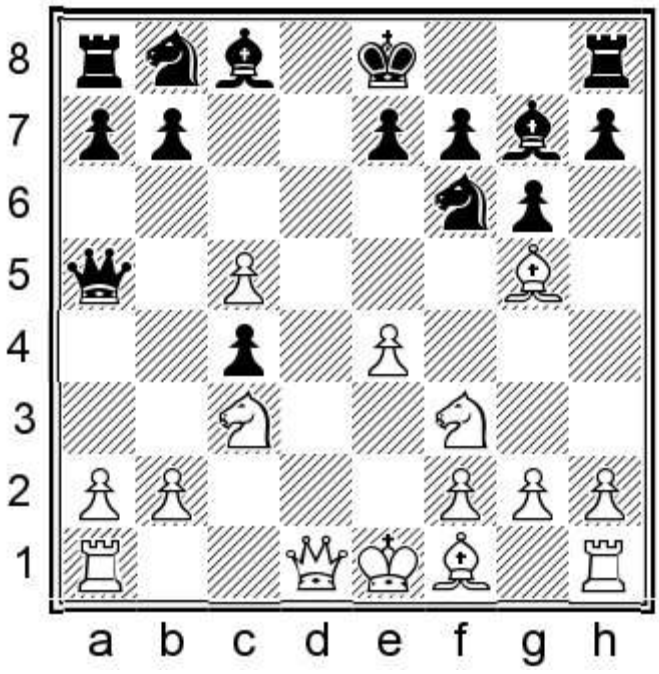
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗g5 dxc4 6.e4 c5



Position after: 6...c5

7.d5

A) 7.dxc5 ♕a5



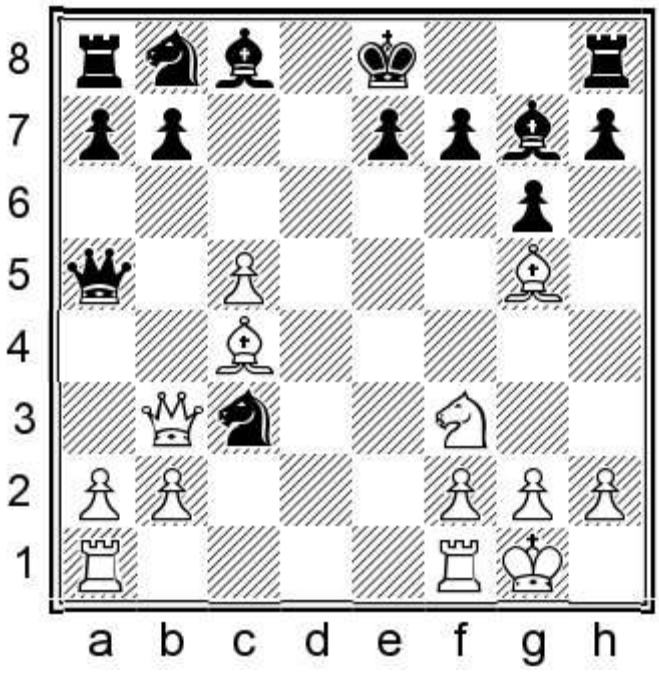
Position after: 7...♕a5

A1) 8.♗xf6 ♗xf6 9.e5 ♗g7 10.♗xc4 0-0 11.0-0 ♗g4 [11...♕xc5 12.♕b3!?] 12.♘d5 ♘c6 13.b4 ♕d8 [13...♘xb4 14.♕e1 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♘c6 16.♘xe7+ ♔h8 17.♘xc6 ♕xc5 18.♘a5 b6 19.f4 bxa5 20.♖c1 ♕e7] 14.♗e2 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♗xe5 16.♖c1 e6 17.♘e3 ♕c7 18.♗xc6 bxc6=

A2) 8.e5 Doesn't work because of the simple 8...♘g4 and the pawns on c5 and e5 are ready to fall.

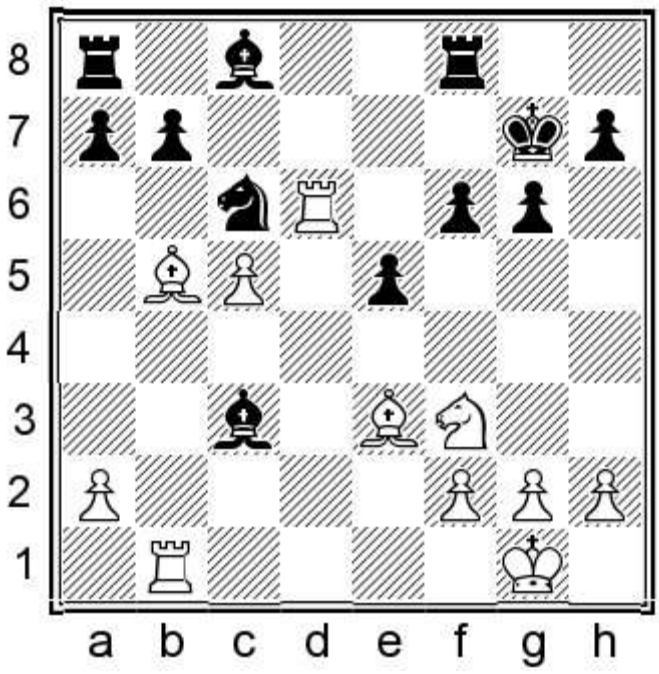
A3) 8.♘d2 ♗e6 9.♘xc4 ♕xc5 10.♗e3 ♕c8 11.♕a4+ ♘c6 12.♗e2 0-0 13.0-0 ♖d8 14.♘a5 ♘xa5 15.♕xa5 ♗c4 16.♗xc4 ♕xc4=

A4) 8.♗xc4 White plays in a gambit style, preferring development over the central e4-pawn. 8...♘xe4 9.0-0 ♘xc3 10.♕b3



Position after: 10.♕b3

10...e6 We need to dodge a few bullets here and not get tempted by the preservation of our extra knight at the expense of the king's safety. [10...♘e4? 11.♗xf7+ ♔f8 12.♗xe7+! ♔xe7 13.♖ae1 ♔f8 14.♖xe4 ♗f6 15.♖fe1 ♔g7 16.♗xg6!+–] 11.bxc3 ♘c6 12.♗b5 0-0 13.♖fd1 ♕xc3 14.♕xc3 ♗xc3 15.♖ab1 f6 16.♗e3 e5 17.♖d6 ♔g7 White has reasonable compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



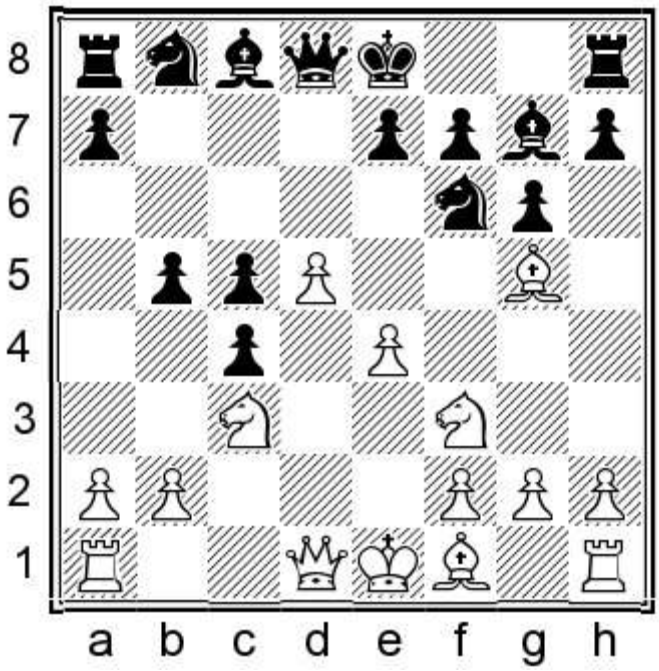
Position after: 17...♔g7

We need to employ the best strategy for fighting any gambit: accept the sacrifice but return the

material at the opportune time, especially if it involves trades and simplifications. 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.♖xc6 ♗f5=

B) 7.e5? loses a pawn to 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘g4 9.♗xc4 ♘xe5 10.♗b5+ ♗d7∓.

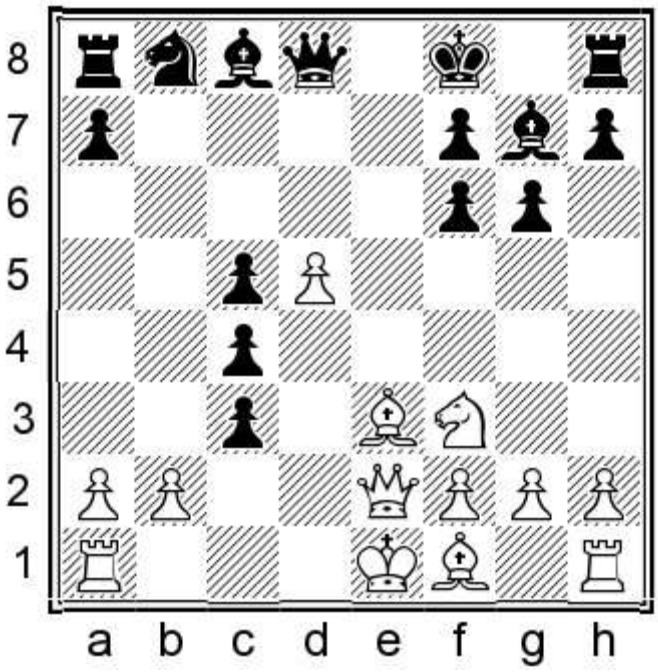
7...b5



Position after: 7...b5

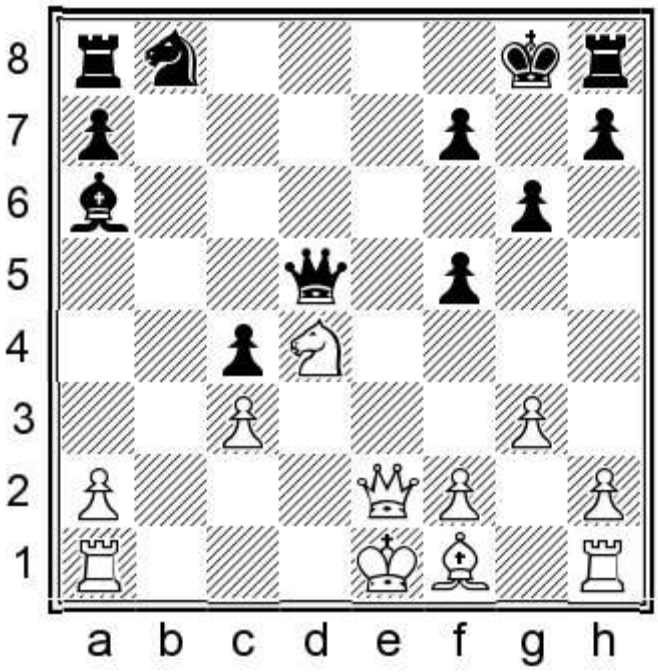
8.d6

A) 8.e5 b4 9.exf6 exf6 10.♕e2+ ♔f8 11.♗e3 [11.♗d2 bxc3 12.♗xc3 ♗h6! 13.♘d2 ♔g7 14.♘xc4 ♖e8 15.♘e3 ♗b7 16.0-0-0 ♘d7 17.g3 ♘b6 18.♗g2 ♘a4∓] 11...bxc3



Position after: 11...bxc3

12.bxc3 [12.♗xc5+ ♔g8 13.bxc3 f5 14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♘xd4 ♕xd5 16.♕xc4 ♕e5+ 17.♕e2 ♘d7=]
12...♗a6 13.♗xc5+ ♔g8 14.g3 f5 15.♗d4 ♗xd4 16.♘xd4 ♕xd5

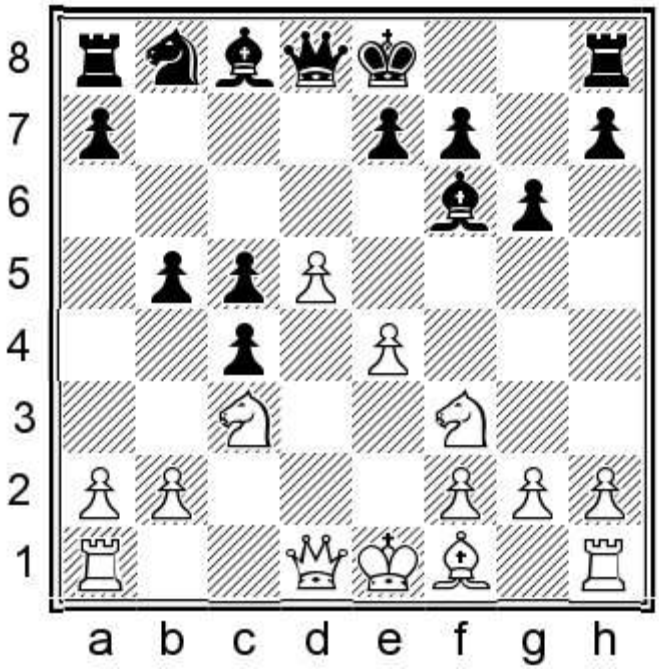


Position after: 16...♕xd5

17.♗g2 White must resort to the bishop sacrifice in order to stay even 17...♕xg2 18.♕e8+ ♔g7 19.♕e5+ ♔g8 20.♕e8+ ♔g7 21.♕e5+=.

B) 8.♗xf6 The most innocuous move. White can't hope for any advantage without the dark-squared

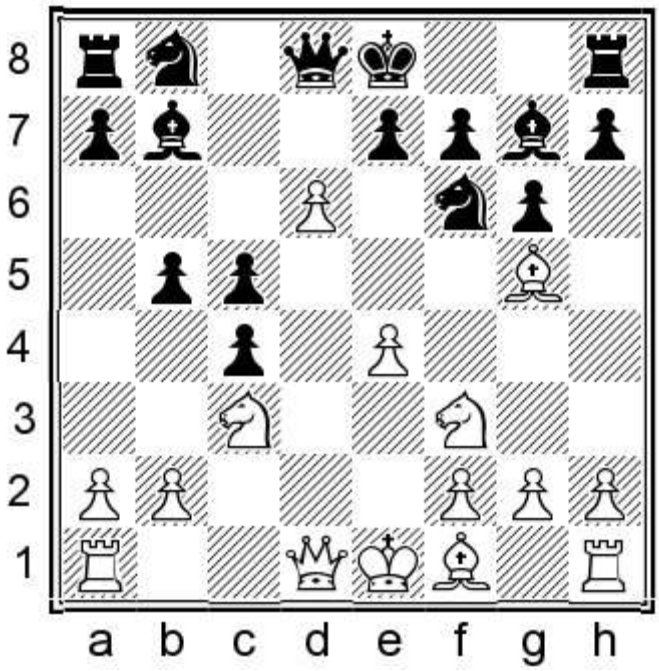
bishop. 8...♗xf6



Position after: 8...♗xf6

9.♘xb5 [9.e5 ♗g7 10.♘xb5 0-0 11.♗xc4 ♗g4 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♗e2 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘xe5 15.♗e2 ♖b8 16.♖b1 ♕a5 17.♘c3 ♘d7 18.♕c2 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 ♗d4 20.♖bc1 ♔g7∓] 9...♕b6 10.e5 ♕xb5 11.exf6 exf6 12.♕c2 0-0 13.0-0-0 ♗f5 14.♕xc4 ♕a5 15.♗d3 ♗xd3 16.♖xd3 ♘d7 17.♔b1 ♖ab8 18.♕c3 ♕a4 19.♖c1 ♖fe8∓ Black is slightly better due to his safer king.

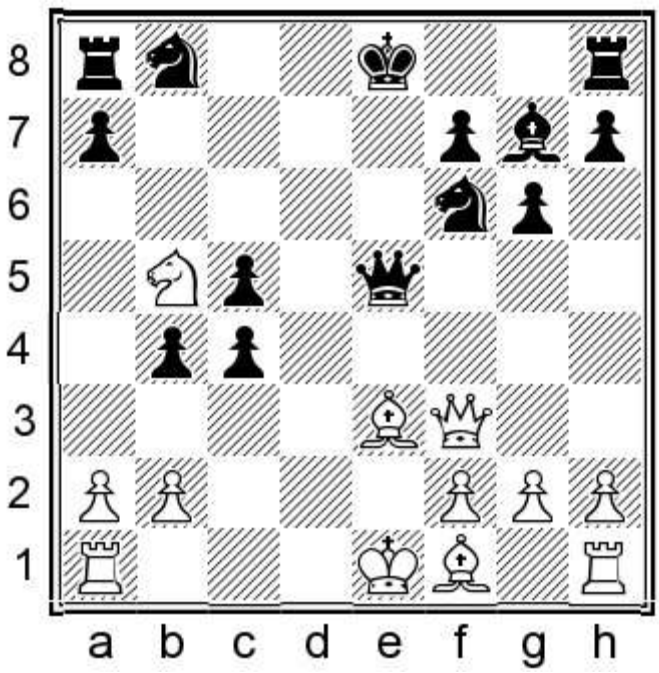
8...♗b7



Position after: 8...♗b7

9.e5

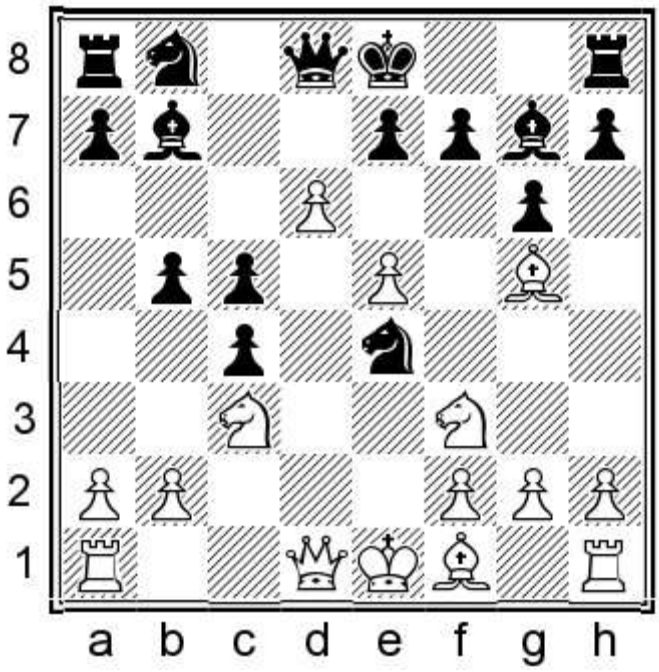
A very exciting game was played after 9.dxe7. Both players were making the best moves (according to the chess engine) until the end of the game. 9...♕xe7 10.e5 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♕xe5+ 12.♗e3 b4 13.♘b5



Position after: 13.♘b5

13...0-0! 14.♕xa8 c3! Black is down a rook but the precarious positions of the white king and knight secure Black adequate compensation. 15.bxc3 a6 16.♖d1 axb5 17.♗xb5 c4 18.♕b7 ♕xc3+ 19.♔e2 ♕c2+ 20.♖d2 ♕f5 21.♖d4 ♕c2+ 22.♖d2 ♕f5 23.♖d4 ♕c2+ ½-½ Raetsky, A (2394) – Fier, A (2555) Llucmajor 2019.

9...♘e4

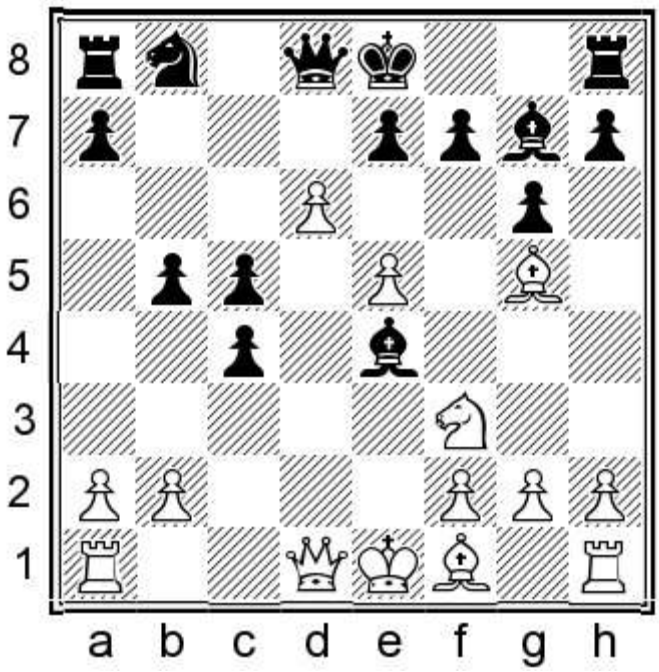


Position after: 9...♘e4

10.♘xe4

10.♗xe7 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♕d7 12.a4 a6 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.♗f6 ♗xf6 15.exf6 0-0 16.0-0 ♕e6 17.♖e1 ♕xf6∓

10...♗xe4



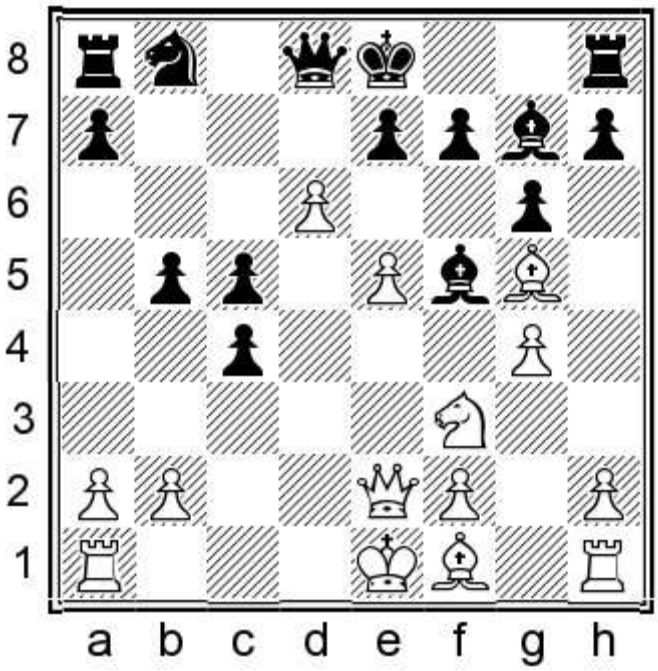
Position after: 10...♗xe4

11.a4

White needs to fight the queenside pawns otherwise Black will be better.

A) 11.♗xe7 ♕a5+ 12.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13.♘xd2 ♗d5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♗h4 ♗h6 16.♗g3 f6∓

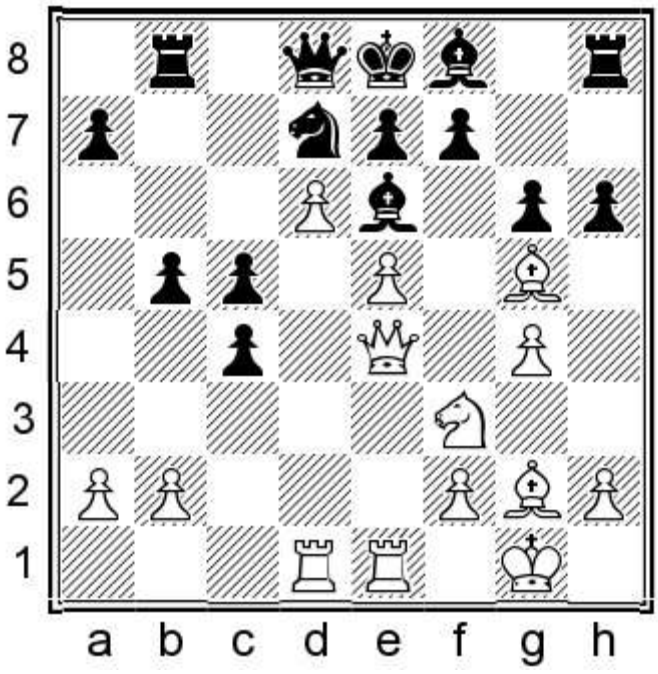
B) 11.♕e2 ♗f5 12.g4



Position after: 12.g4

An interesting attempt by former World Champion, Vladimir Kramnik, who has recently announced retirement from professional chess.

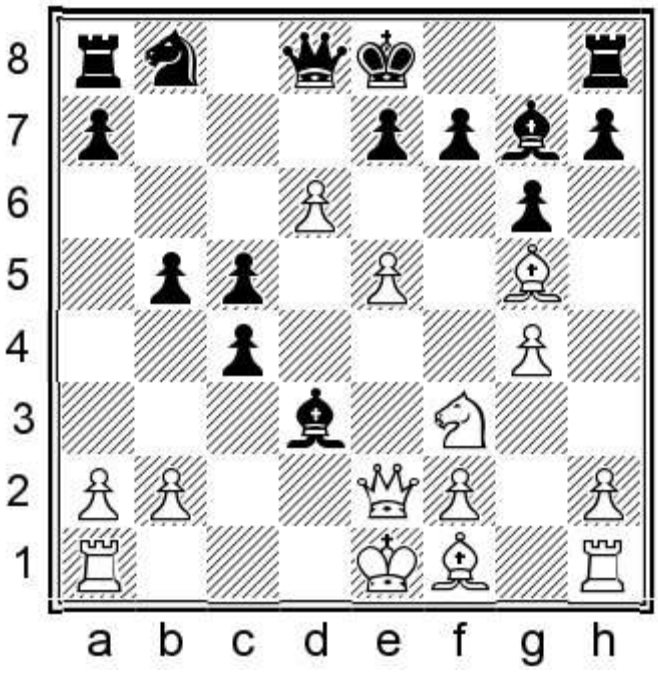
B1) I wasn't satisfied with the outcome after 12...♗e6? 13.♕e4 ♘d7 which occurred in Kramnik, V (2760) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2714), Sochi 2014. Although Black won in 28 moves (!), I believe White could have taken over with 14.♗g2!N 14...♖b8 15.0-0 ♗f8 16.♖ad1 h6 17.♖fe1!.



Position after: 17.♖fe1!

Black's position is so bad that White can even afford to sacrifice the bishop for a pawn. [17.♗h4 g5⇄] 17...♖b6 [17...hxg5 18.♘xg5 ♖g8 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.g5 ♘b6 21.♗h3 ♕d7 22.♖e3 ♖g7 23.♖f3+–] 18.♗h4±

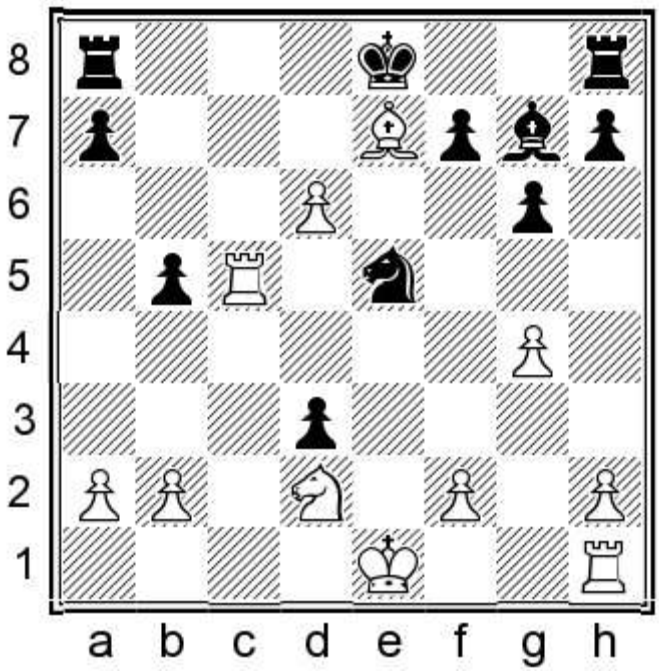
B2) 12...♗d3!N



Position after: 12...♗d3!N

13.♕e3 [13.♕d2 ♕d7 14.♗xd3 cxd3 15.♕xd3 exd6 16.0-0-0 0-0 17.♕e4 ♕c6 18.♕xc6 ♘xc6

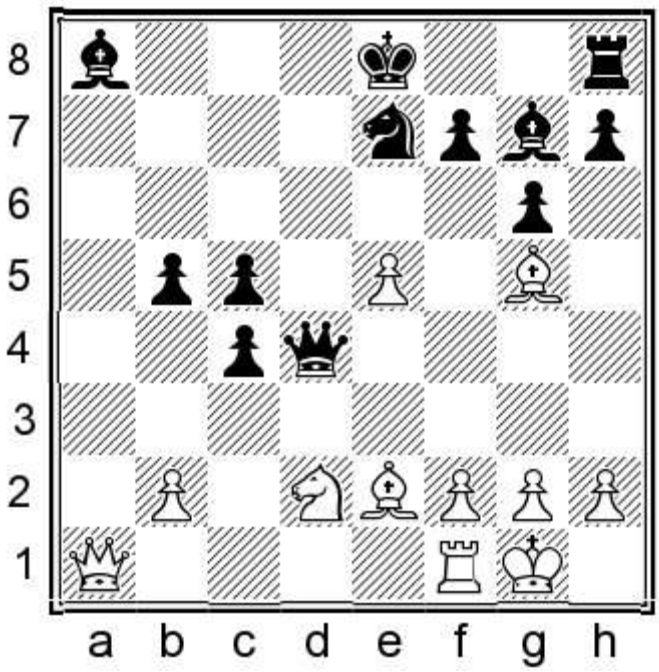
19.exd6 f5!↑] 13...♕a5+ 14.♘d2 ♘c6 15.♗xd3 cxd3 16.♕xc5 ♕b6 17.♖c1 ♕xc5 18.♖xc5 ♘xe5 19.♗xe7



Position after: 19.♗xe7

19...♔d7 20.♖c7+ ♔e6 21.0-0 ♖hc8 22.♖b7 ♖ab8 23.♖xa7 ♖a8 24.♖b7 ♖ab8=

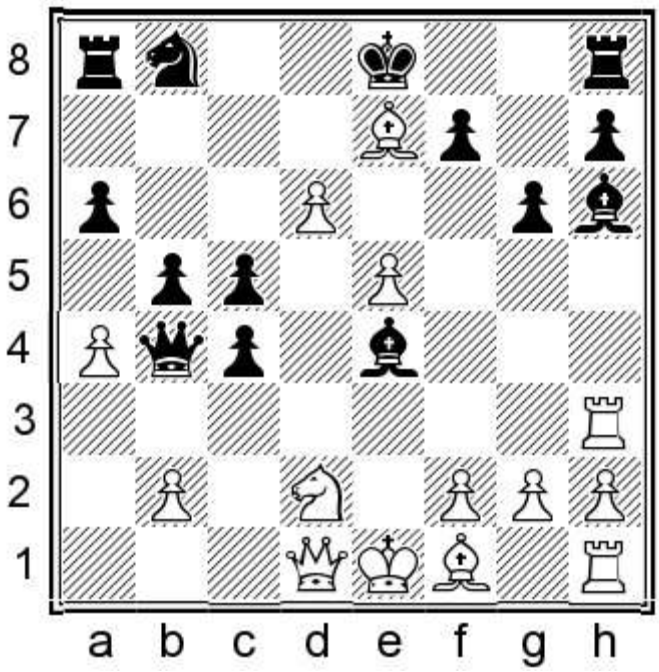
C) 11.♘d2 ♗b7 12.a4 [12.♗xe7? ♕d7 13.f4 ♘c6 14.♗h4 ♘d4∓; 12.dxe7 ♕d4∓] 12...a6 13.dxe7 ♕d4 14.♗e2 ♘c6 15.axb5 axb5 16.♖xa8+ ♗xa8 17.0-0 ♘xe7 18.♕a1



Position after: 18.♕a1

18...0-0! 19.♗xe7 ♖e8 20.♘xc4 bxc4 21.♗d6 ♗xe5 22.♕a4 ♖c8 23.♖d1 ♕f4 24.♗xe5 ♕xe5 25.♗xc4 ♔g7=

11...a6 12.♗xe7 ♕a5+ 13.♘d2 ♗h6 14.♖a3 ♕b4 15.♖h3



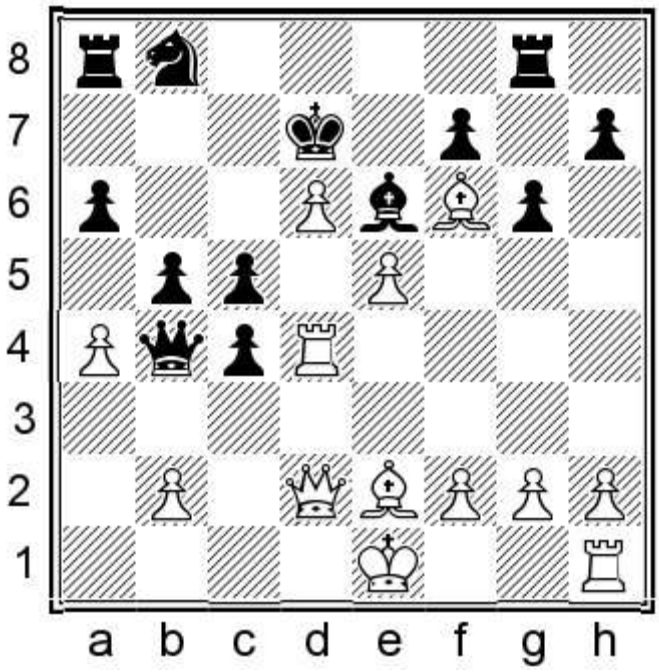
Position after: 15.♖h3

15...♗f4!N

The idea of this waiting move is to provoke White into playing ♖h4. The rook on the 4th rank will be a lot less mobile than on the 3rd, which, obviously, suits our plans.

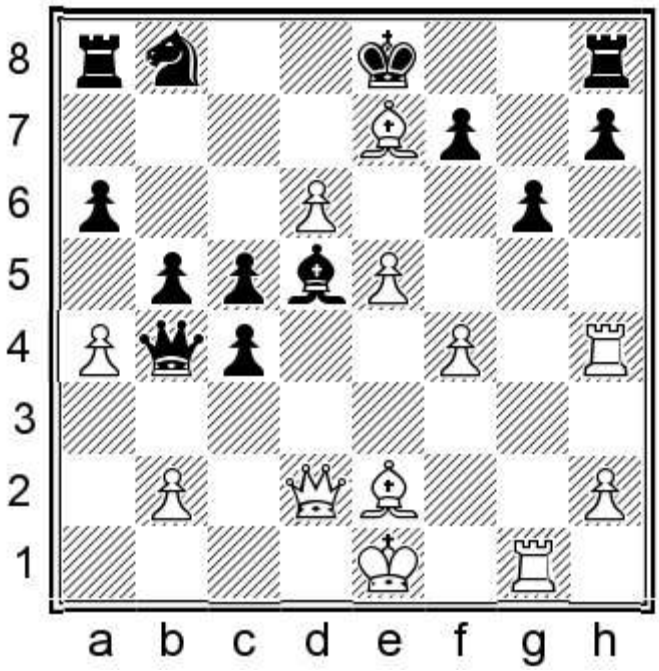
16.♖h4 ♗xd2+ 17.♕xd2 ♗d5 18.♗e2!

18.♖d4 ♗e6 19.♗f6 ♖g8 20.♗e2 ♔d7∓



Position after: 20...♔d7∓

18...♗xg2 19.♖g1 ♗d5 20.f4



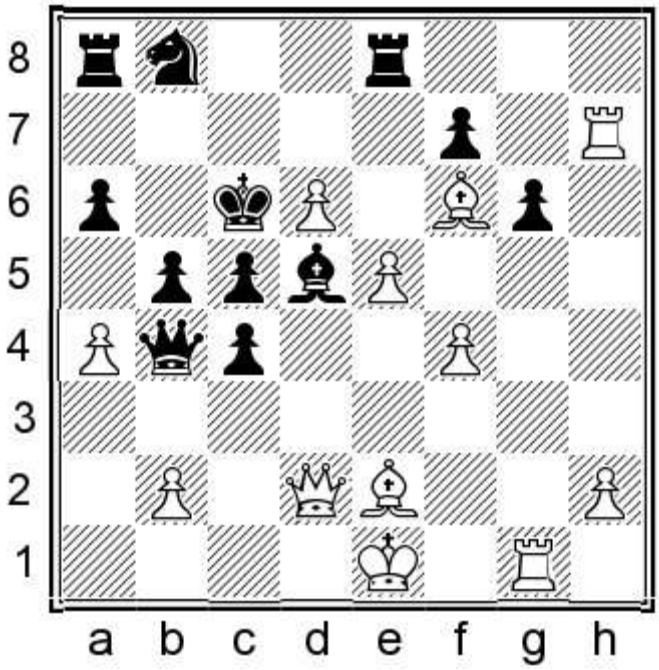
Position after: 20.f4

20...♔d7!

The king marches to c6 and the knight will be developed to d7. The position remains balanced. Intuitively, I would rather be Black here since the pawn avalanche on the queenside looks more

threatening than White's bishop pair at this point.

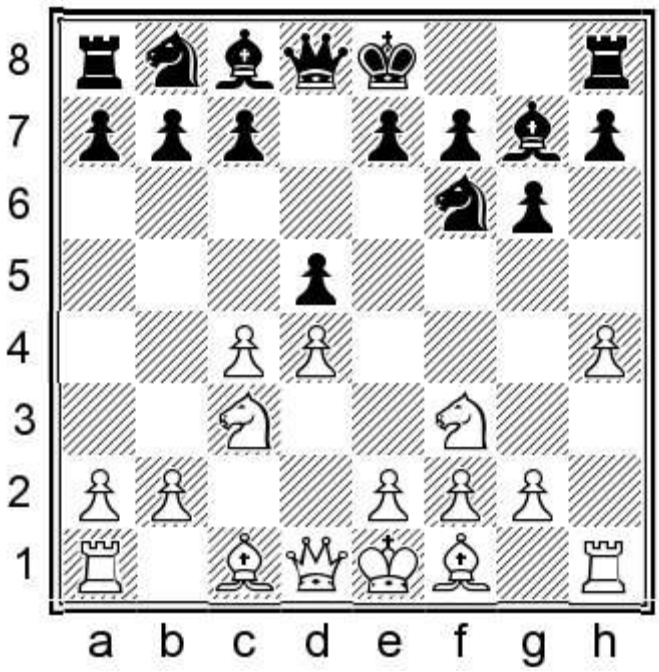
21.♗f6 ♖e8 22.♖xh7 ♔c6!=



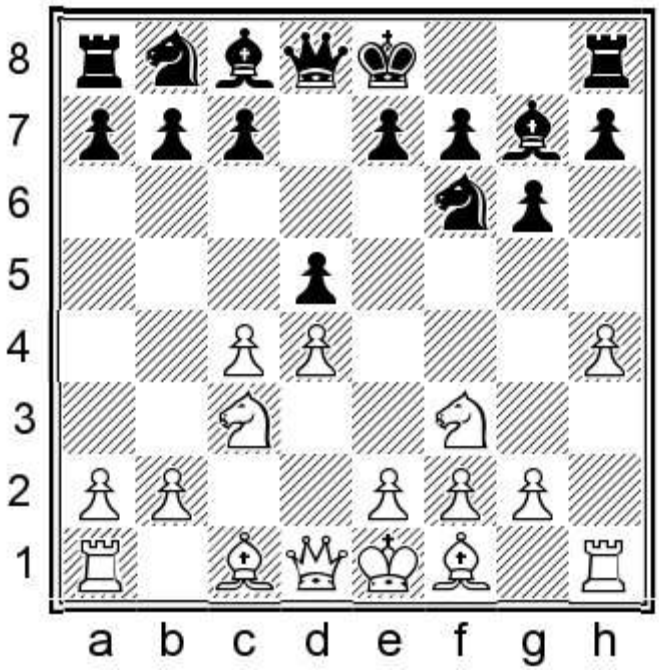
Position after: 22...♔c6!=

Chapter 7
5.h4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.h4



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.h4



Position after: 5.h4

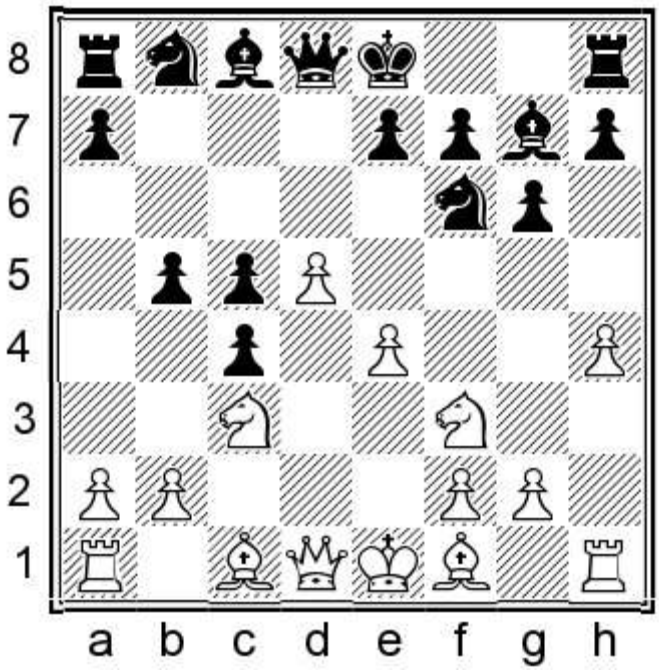
This variation has become popular relatively recently as White has struggled to come up with challenging questions for Black in all the other Grünfeld lines.

When I first encountered the move 5.h4 my initial reaction was a slight smirk and disbelief that one can play like this in a classical, long time control game. Come on now I thought, we are not playing "bullet" (1 minute for each) on chess.com! However, I soon realized that finding an appropriate line of defense for Black has proved to be a lot more complicated. As the readers may have already observed, I do not like nor recommend playing passively against an open aggression like 5.h4. Therefore, I am not in favor of 5...c6 which is rarely a good idea in the Grünfeld and certainly does not make our g7 bishop as active as it could have been after the standard push ...c7-c5.

5...dxc4

5...c6 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♗f4 0-0 8.e3 ♘c6 9.♕b3 ♘a5 10.♕a3±

6.e4 c5 7.d5 b5

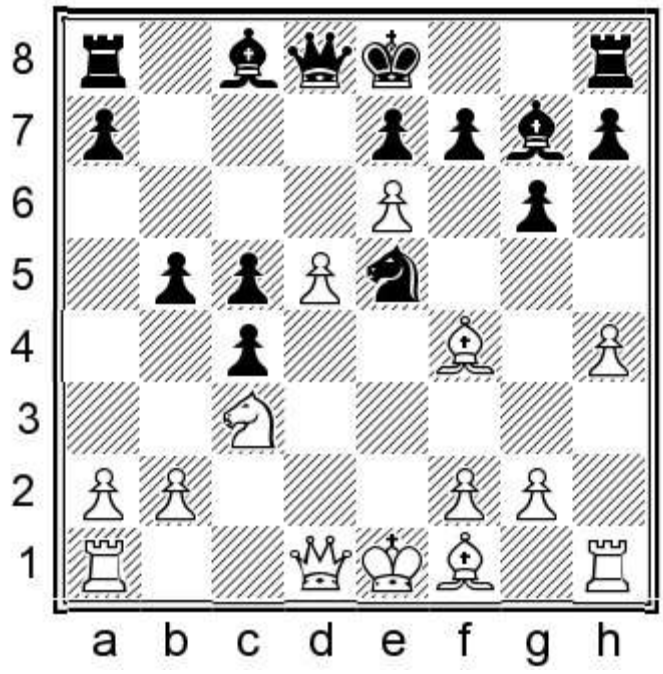


Position after: 7...b5

8.h5

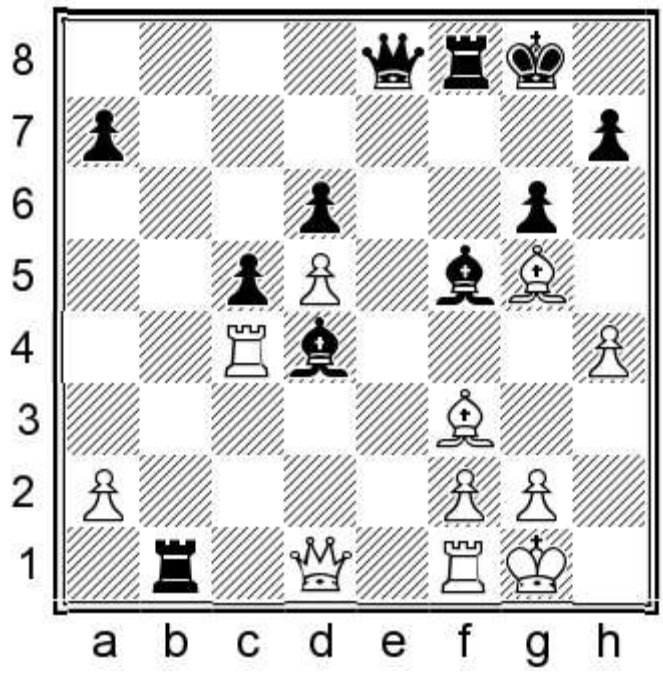
If you say "A" then you should say "B"... in other words White should be consistent and keep pushing the h-pawn.

A) 8.e5 ♘g4 9.♗f4 ♘d7 10.e6 ♘de5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5



Position after: 11...♘xe5

12.exf7+ [12.h5 fxe6 13.hxg6 ♘xg6 14.♗h6 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 exd5 16.♕h5 ♕d6 17.0-0-0 ♗e6 18.f4 ♗f7 19.♕f5 e6 20.♕g5 ♖g8–+ 0-1 (28) Shtyrenkov, V (2337) – Ajrapetjan, Y (2502) Simferopol 2013] 12...♘xf7 13.♘xb5 0-0 14.♗xc4 ♘d6 15.♘xd6 exd6 16.♗g5 ♕e8+ 17.♗e2 ♗f5! 18.♖c1 ♗xb2 19.♖c4 ♗d4 20.0-0 ♖b8 21.♗f3 ♖b1



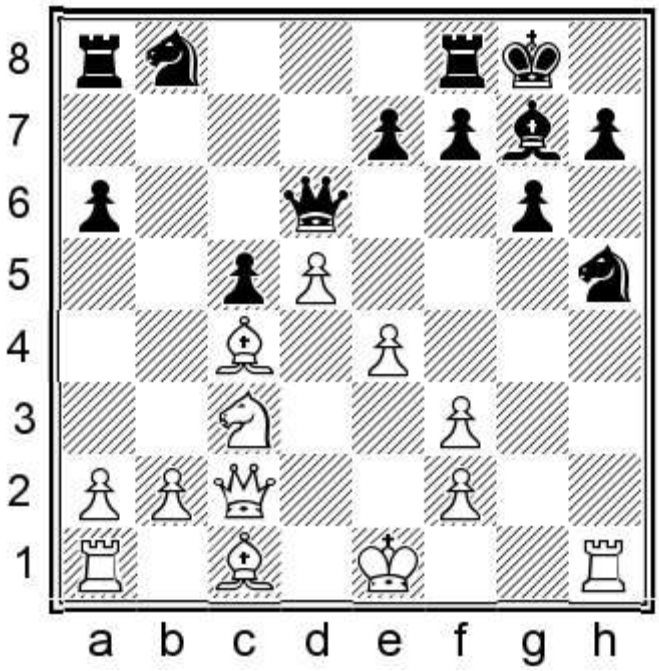
Position after: 21...♖b1

22.♖c1 [22.♕d2 ♖xf1+ 23.♔xf1 ♕e5 24.♔g1 ♗e4–+] 22...♖b2–+

B) 8.♘xb5 ♕a5+ 9.♘c3 ♘xe4 10.♗d2 ♘xd2 11.♕xd2 ♘d7 12.♗xc4 ♕b4∓

8...0-0

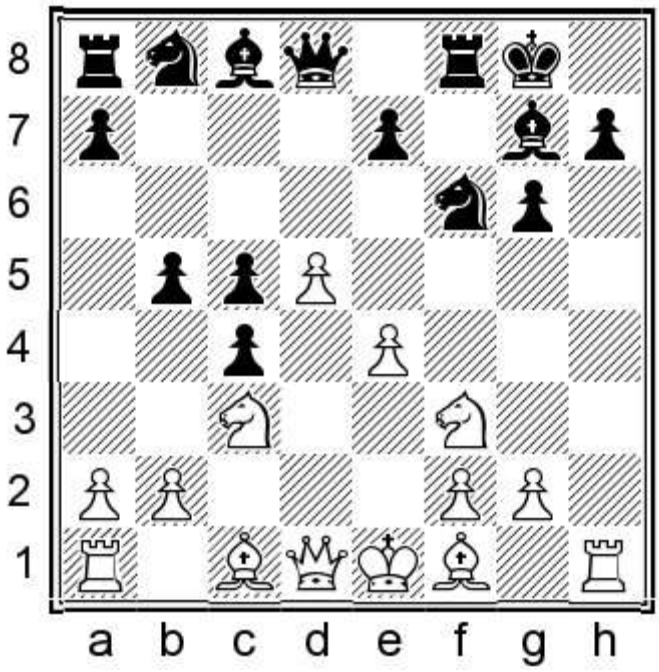
8...♘xh5 has been played quite frequently but I have concluded that it is not playable against a strong opponent. 9.♘xb5 0-0 10.♗xc4 ♗g4 11.♕c2 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 a6 13.♘c3 ♕d6



Position after: 13...♕d6

14.♖xh5! That's why I can't recommend 8...♘h5. Why would it make sense for White to give up the h1 rook for the h5 knight? The reason is simple: White permanently compromises the black king's position and will slowly build up pressure on Black's kingside by bringing the a1 rook to the kingside after queenside castling. The usual value scale that every beginner gets introduced to is simply not valid on a higher level. As a 7-year-old boy I was taught that the rook is worth 5 points, while bishops and knights were worth 3 points each. The true value of the pieces should be judged on a case by case basis. 14...gxh5 15.f4 ♘d7 16.♗e3 ♗d4 17.0-0-0↑

9.hxg6 fxg6

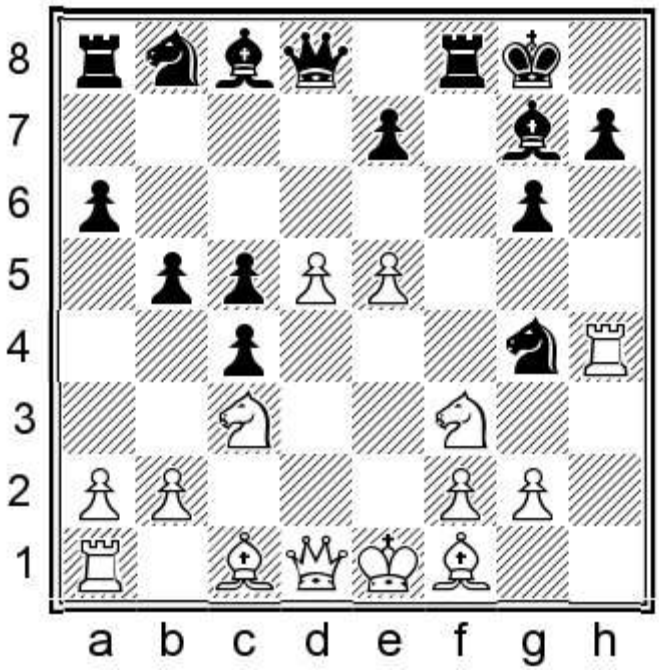


Position after: 9...fxg6

Up to this point, both sides had virtually no worthwhile deviations. White now has a plethora of possible continuations at his disposal with each leading to unique positions and pawn structures. Let's examine them more closely.

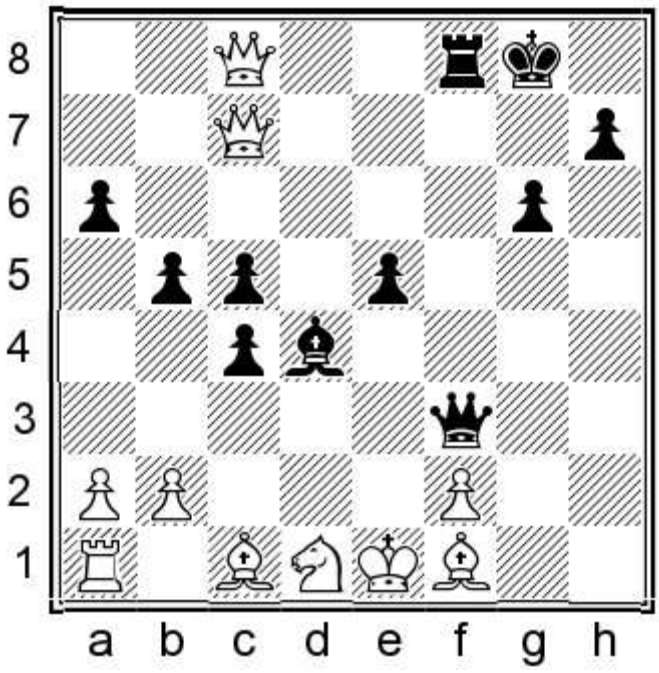
10.e5

A) 10.♖h4 a6 11.e5 [11.♗e2 h5 12.♘g5 e6 13.dxe6 ♕xd1+ 14.♔xd1 ♘c6 15.a4 ♖d8+ 16.♔e1 ♘d4 17.e7 ♖e8 18.axb5 ♘c2+ 19.♔d1 ♘xa1 20.♗xc4+ ♔h8 21.♘f7+ ♔h7 22.♘g5+ ♔h8 23.♘f7+=] 11...♘g4



Position after: 11...♘g4

12.d6 [12.e6 ♘f6 13.♗h6 ♗xh6 14.♖xh6 b4 15.♘a4 ♗b7 16.♗xc4 ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♕xd5 18.♕xd5 ♘xd5 19.♘xc5 ♘f4 20.♔f1 ♖a7 21.♖d1 ♖c7 22.♘d7 ♖fc8=] 12...♘xe5 13.♕d5+ e6 14.♕xa8 ♘xf3+ 15.gxf3 ♕xh4 16.♕xb8 ♗d4 17.♘d1 e5 18.♕c7 ♕h1 19.d7 ♕xf3 20.dxc8=♕



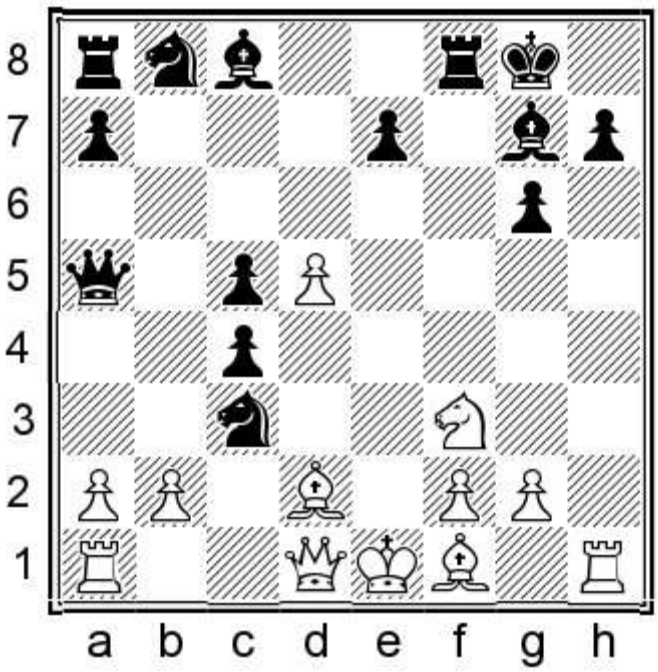
Position after: 20.dxc8=♕

How often do you have four pawns for a queen, knight, and a bishop? I hope the answer is “not very often” or “never” or else this book is probably a bit too advanced for you.

Jokes aside, Black has consciously gone for this position, aiming for perpetual check. 20...♗xf2+ 21.♘xf2 [21.♔d2 ♕d5+ 22.♔c2 ♕e4+ 23.♔c3 b4+ 24.♔d2 ♗e1#] 21...♕xf2+ 22.♔d1 ♕xf1+ 23.♔d2 ♕d3+ 24.♔e1 ♕f1+ 25.♔d2 ♕d3+=

B) 10.d6 e6 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♖xh7 transposes to the main line.

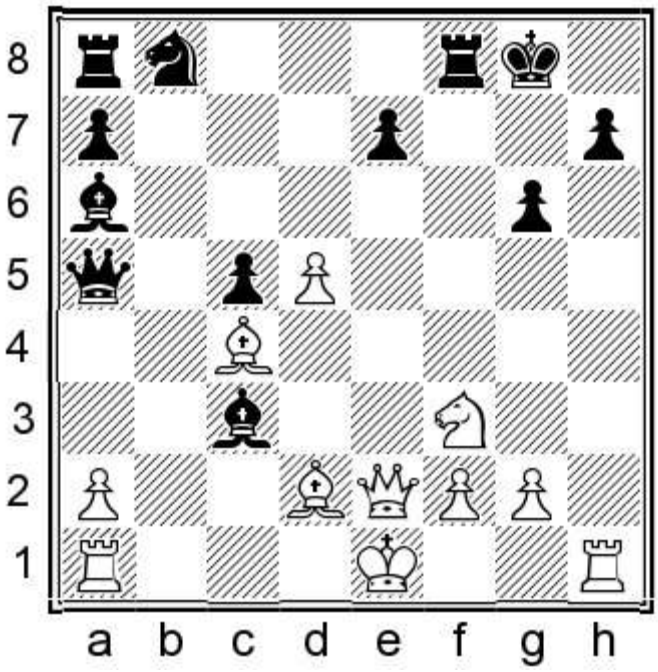
C) 10.♘xb5 ♕a5+ 11.♘c3 ♘xe4 12.♗d2 ♘xc3



Position after: 12...♘xc3

C1) 13.bxc3

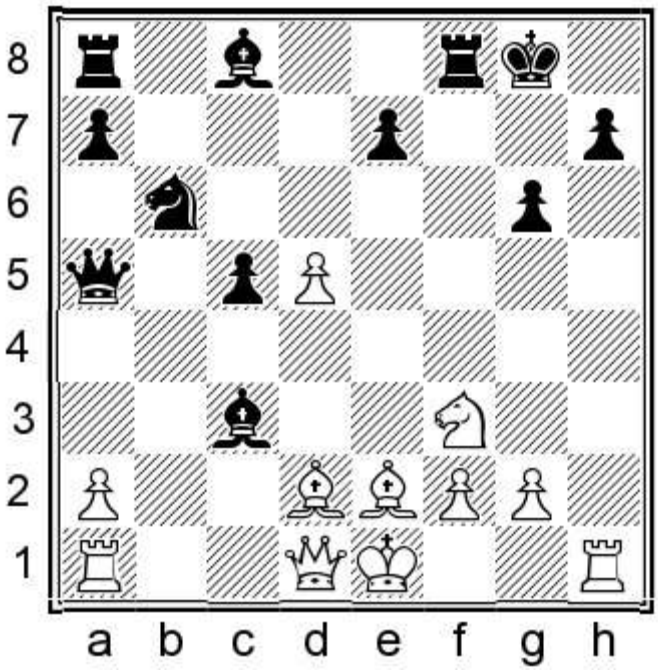
C1.1) 13...♗xc3? 14.♗xc4 ♗a6 15.♕e2



Position after: 15.♕e2

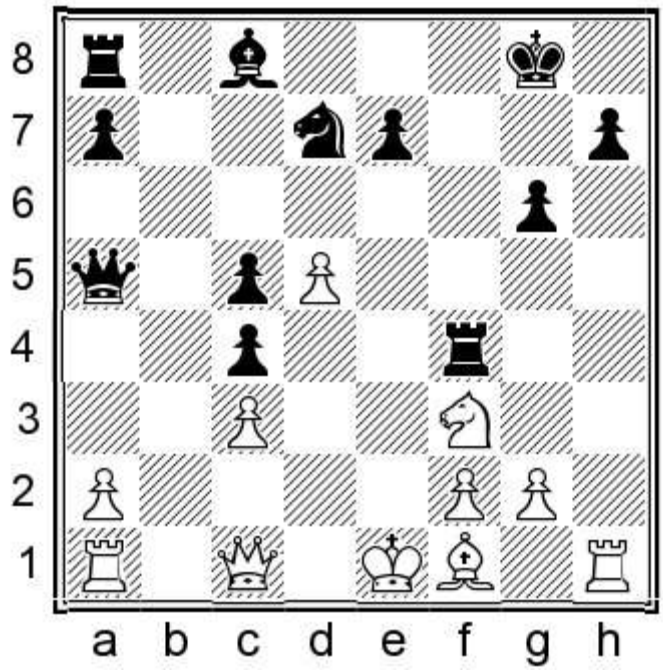
15...♗xc4? [15...♖f7! 16.♕e6 ♗xd2+ 17.♘xd2 ♕c3 18.♖b1 ♕f6=] 16.♕e6+ ♖f7 17.♖xh7! ♗xd2+ 18.♘xd2 ♔xh7 19.♕xf7+ ♔h8 20.♕f8+ ♔h7 21.♕xe7+ ♔g8 22.♕e8+ ♔g7 23.♖b1!+– 1-0 (35) Li, C (2732) – Xiong, J (2634) chess.com 2018.

C1.2) 13...♘d7! Black is developing and preparing to target the light-squared bishop once it takes on c4. 14.♗xc4 ♘b6 15.♗e2 ♗xc3∓



Position after: 15...♗xc3∓

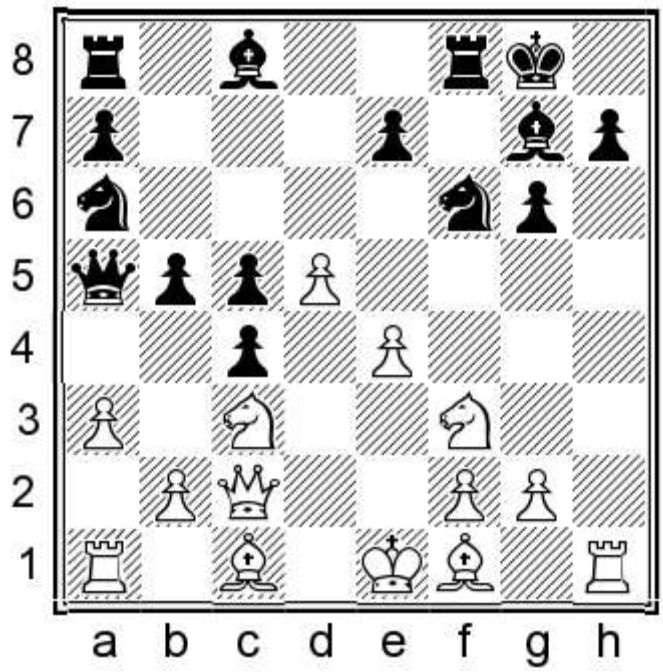
C2) 13.♕c1 ♘d7 14.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖f4!∓



Position after: 15...♖f4!∓

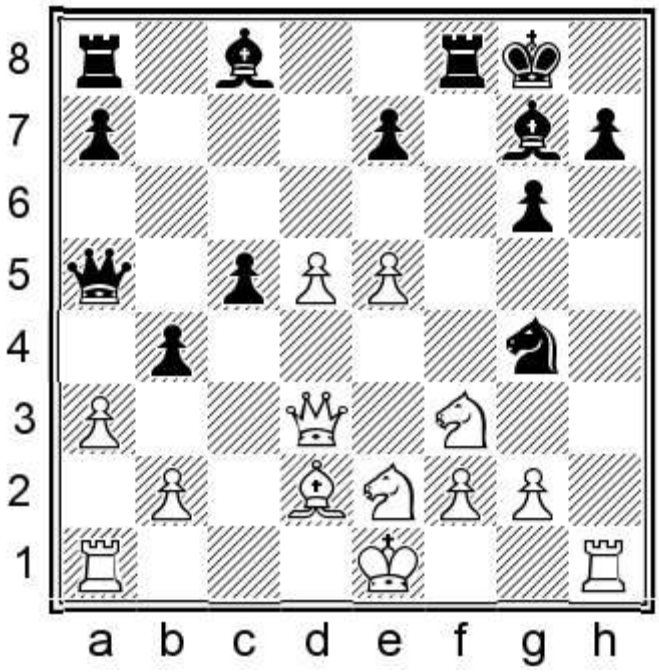
The rook protects the c4 pawn and gets ready to harass the king from e4. It is untouchable because of ...♕xc3+.

D) 10.♕c2 ♘a6 11.a3 ♕a5



Position after: 11...♕a5

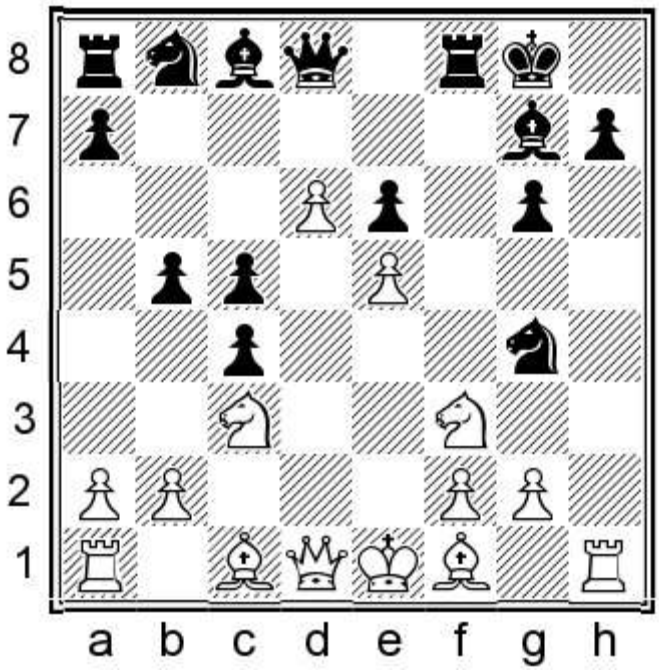
12.♗e2 [12.♗d2 ♘b4 13.♕b1 ♘d3+ 14.♗xd3 cxd3 15.♕xd3 b4 16.e5 ♘g4 17.♘e2



Position after: 17.♘e2

17...♖xf3! A standard exchange sacrifice for the initiative. 18.♕xf3 ♘xe5 19.♕e3 ♕a6→] 12...♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♗xc3+ 14.♔f1 ♗f5 15.♕e3 [15.♕xe7 ♖f7 16.♕e3 ♗f6∓] 15...♗d4! 16.♘xd4 cxd4 17.♕xd4 ♕b6 18.♕xb6 axb6∓

10...♘g4 11.d6 e6

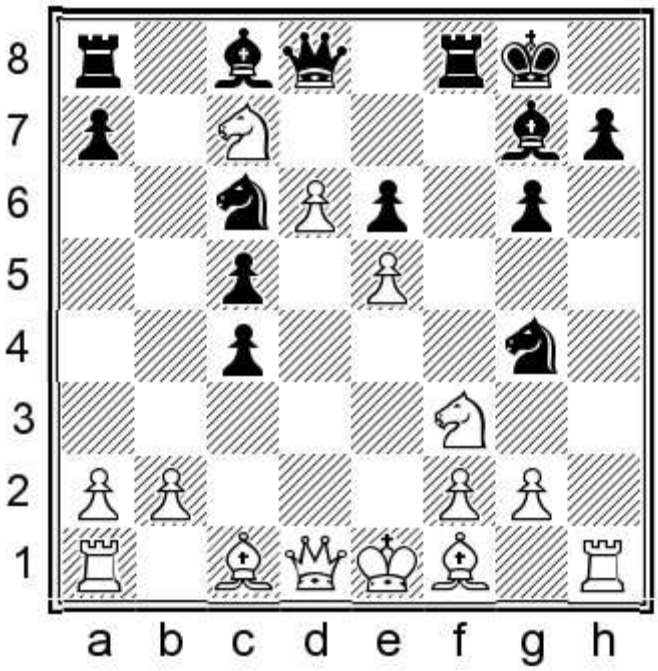


Position after: 11...e6

12.♖xh7

Welcome to the era of computer chess! I can hardly imagine cigarette smoking and puffing second world champion Lasker playing sharp lines like this at the dawn of the 20th century. However, the advancements in the development of chess engines has expanded our understanding of chess to levels previously unimaginable by the greatest chess minds of the past.

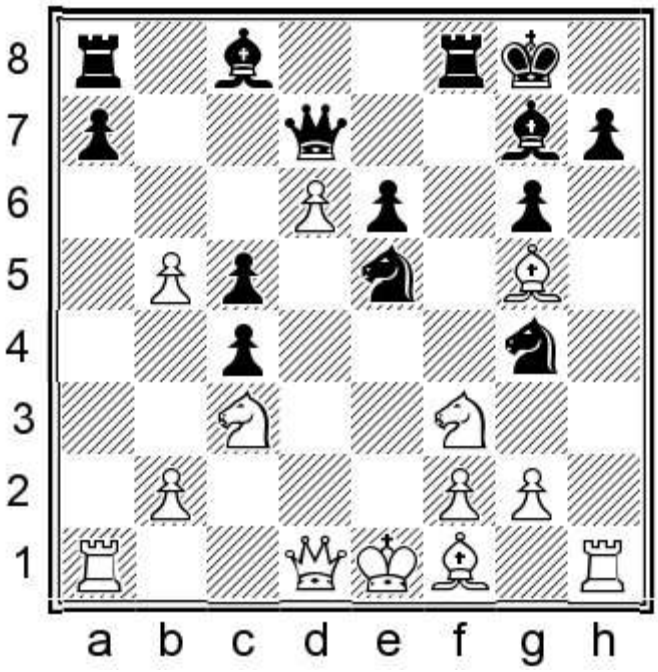
A) 12.♘xb5 ♘c6 13.♘c7



Position after: 13.♘c7

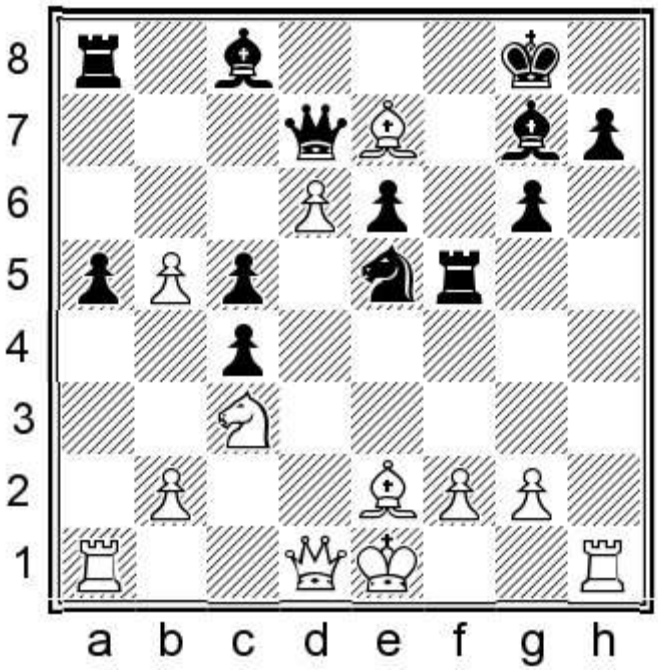
13...♘cxe5! 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♘xa8 ♗b7 16.♖h3 ♗xa8 17.♗e3 ♗d5 18.♖c1 ♕xd6∓

B) I would suggest studying 12.♗g5 for White as it is the most dangerous alternative to the main move 12.♖h7. 12...♕d7 13.a4 ♘c6 14.axb5 ♘cxe5



Position after: 14...♘cxe5

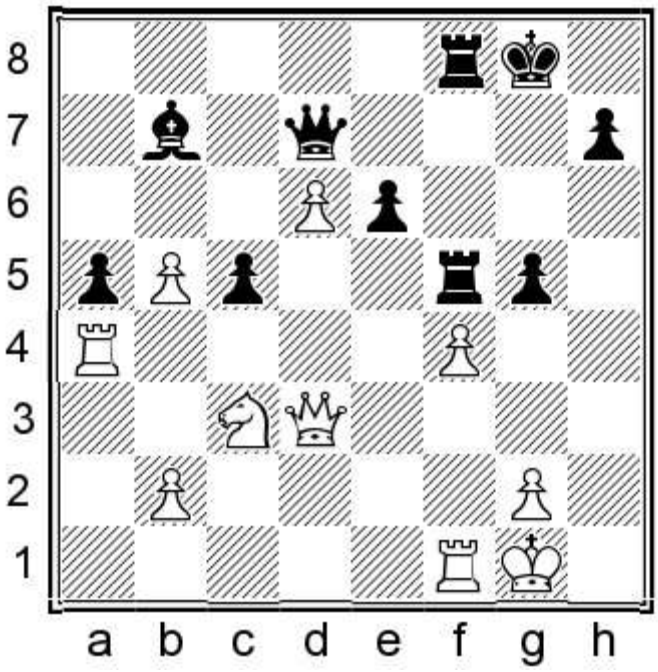
We have to part with our pawn mass on the queenside but in exchange we are getting the important e5-pawn. 15.♘xe5 [15.♗e2 ♘xf3+ 16.♗xf3 ♘e5 17.♗xa8 ♘d3+ 18.♔f1 ♘xf2 19.♕c2 ♘xh1+ 20.♔g1 ♘g3–+] 15...♘xe5 16.♗e2 ♖f5 17.♗e7 a5!



Position after: 17...a5!

The a-pawn is the only significant weakness in our position, so we need to take care of it immediately.

B1) 18.0-0 ♗b7 19.♖a4 ♗f8 20.f4 ♘d3 21.♗xd3 cxd3 22.♗xf8 ♖axf8 23.♕xd3 g5→

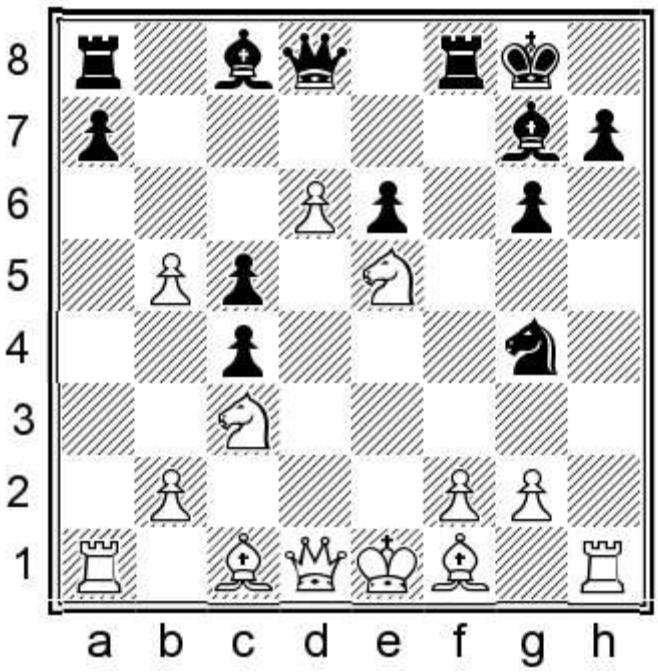


Position after: 23...g5→

Black has a nice initiative. Note that if the pawn was still on a7, White would have had the crushing move ♖xa7 pinning the bishop and destroying Black's attacking plans.

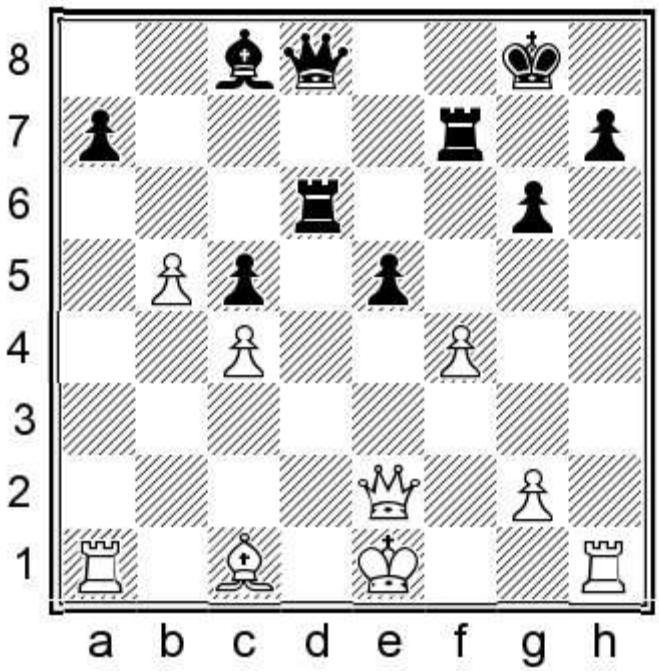
B2) 18.bxa6 ♖xa6 19.♖xa6 ♗xa6 20.0-0 ♗b7 21.♕a4 ♗c6 22.♕a5 ♗f8 23.♗xf8 ♔xf8=

C) 12.a4 deserves attention as well. White attempts to challenge Black's dominance on the queenside right away. 12...♘c6 13.axb5 ♘cxe5 14.♘xe5



Position after: 14.♘xe5

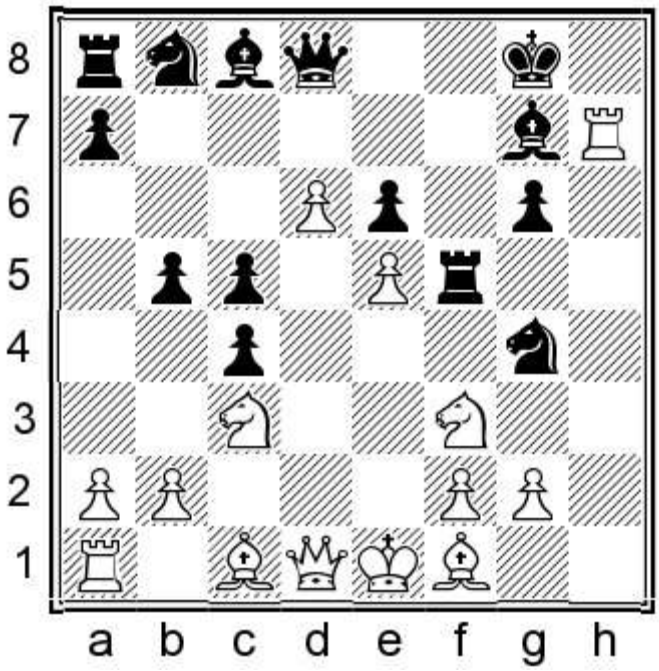
14...♘xe5 [14...♘xf2 Doesn't work because of 15.♘d5 ♘xd1 16.♘e7+ ♔h8? 17.♘5xg6#] 15.f4 ♘d3+ 16.♗xd3 cxd3 17.♕f3 ♖b8 18.♕h3 ♗xc3+ 19.bxc3 ♖f7 20.♕xd3 ♖b6 21.c4 ♖xd6 22.♕e2 e5!



Position after: 22...e5!

23.0-0 [23.fxe5? ♖d4–+] 23...♖e6 24.fxe5 ♕d4+ 25.♗e3 ♖xf1+ 26.♖xf1 ♕xe5 27.♗h6 ♕d4+ 28.♕f2 ♖f6 29.♕xd4 ♖xf1+ 30.♔xf1 cxd4 31.♔e2 a6= We have an extra pawn but the opposite colored bishop endgame is obviously drawn.

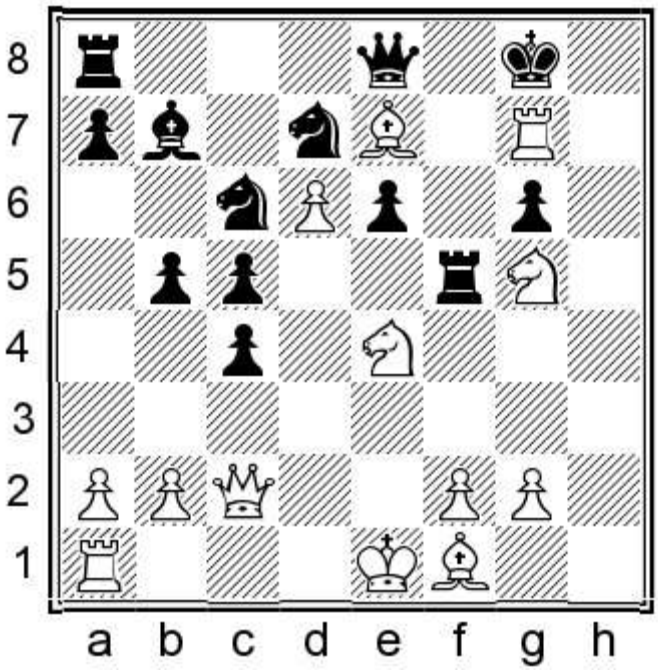
12...♖f5



Position after: 12...♖f5

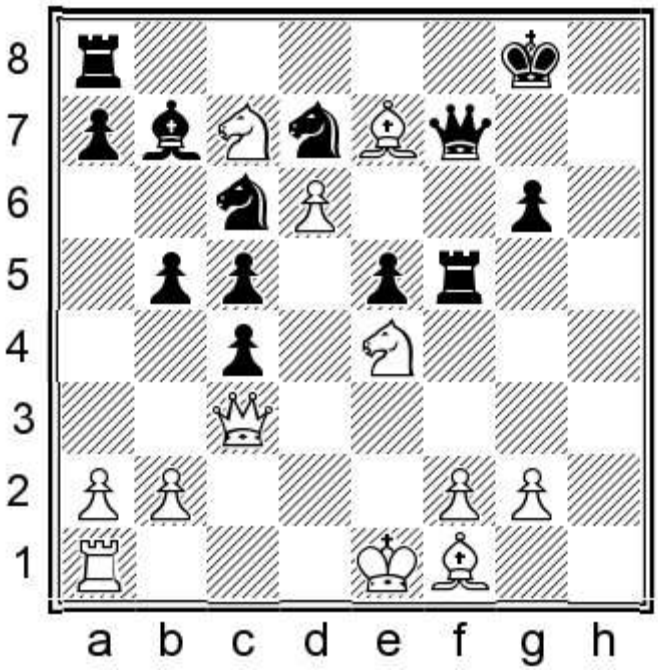
13.♖h3

A) 13.♘e4 White must bring everybody to the party and wasting time to long castle is the last thing on White's agenda. 13...♘d7 14.♗g5 ♕e8 15.♗e7 ♘gxe5 16.♘fg5 ♗b7 17.♕c2 ♘c6 18.♖xg7+



Position after: 18.♖xg7+

The bishop on g7 is too good of a defender therefore White needs to eliminate it at some point to have any chances for success. 18...♔xg7 19.♕c3+ e5 20.♘e6+ ♔g8 21.♘c7 ♕f7

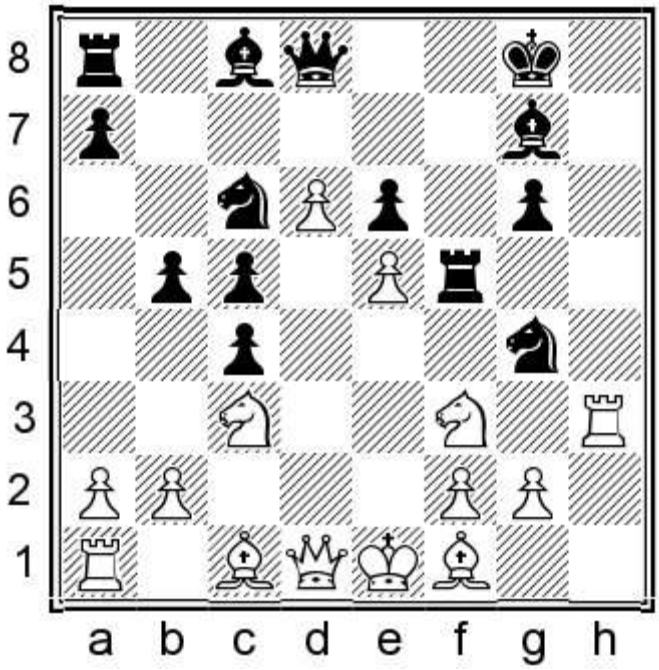


Position after: 21...♕f7

22.♘xb5 [22.♘xa8 ♘xe7 23.dxe7 ♗xe4 24.♘c7 ♕xe7 25.♘xb5 ♘b6 26.♗xc4+ ♔g7 27.♗f1! Don't ask me to explain this move...it looks like f1 is the only safe square for the bishop. 27...♗d5=] 22...♘d4 23.♘c7 ♘b5 24.♕g3 ♘xc7 25.dxc7 ♗xe4 26.♗xc4 ♕xc4 27.♕xg6+ ♔h8 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♕g6+=

B) 13.♖xg7+ is not as silly as it looks. White has reasonable compensation. This move certainly requires more testing on the Grandmaster level. 13...♔xg7 14.♘e4 ♘d7 15.a4 ♘dxe5 16.axb5 ♗b7 17.♘fg5 ♗d5 18.f3 ♘f6 19.♘g3 ♕xd6! 20.♘xf5+ gxf5=

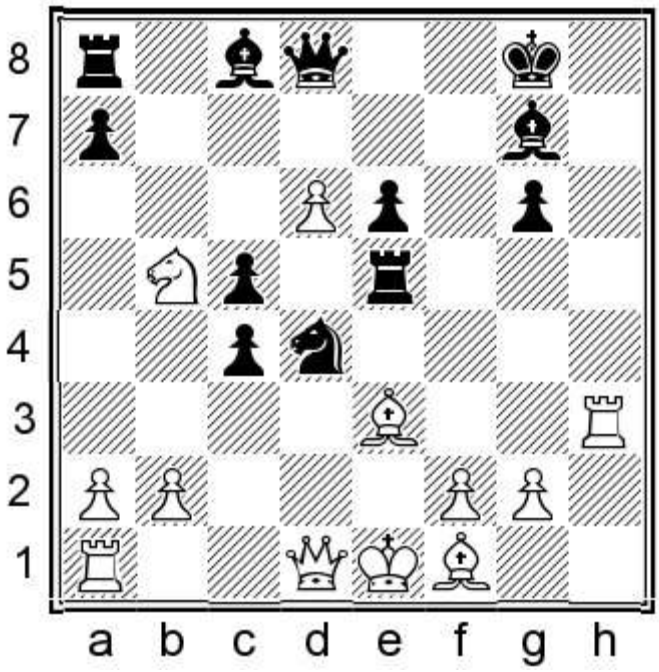
13...♘c6



Position after: 13...♘c6

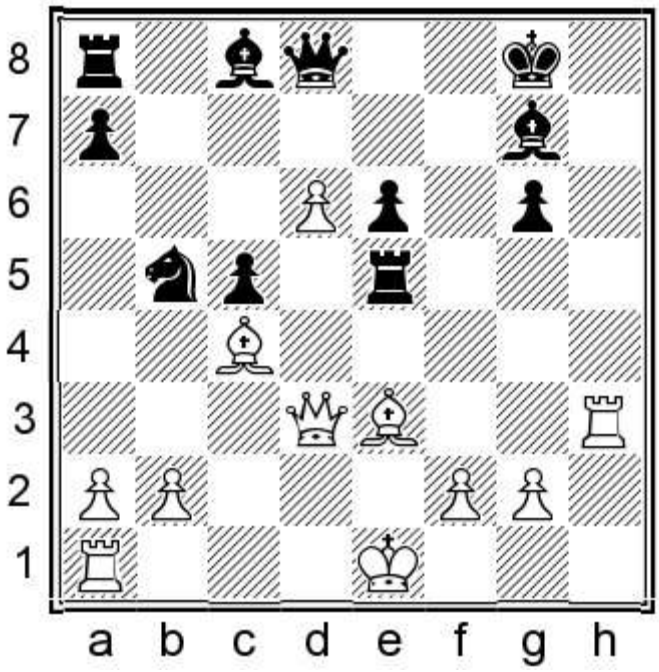
14.a4

A) 14.♘xb5 The most obvious capture of the b5-pawn leads to a forced draw if both sides are playing perfectly. 14...♘gxe5 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5+ 16.♗e3 ♘d4



Position after: 16...♘d4

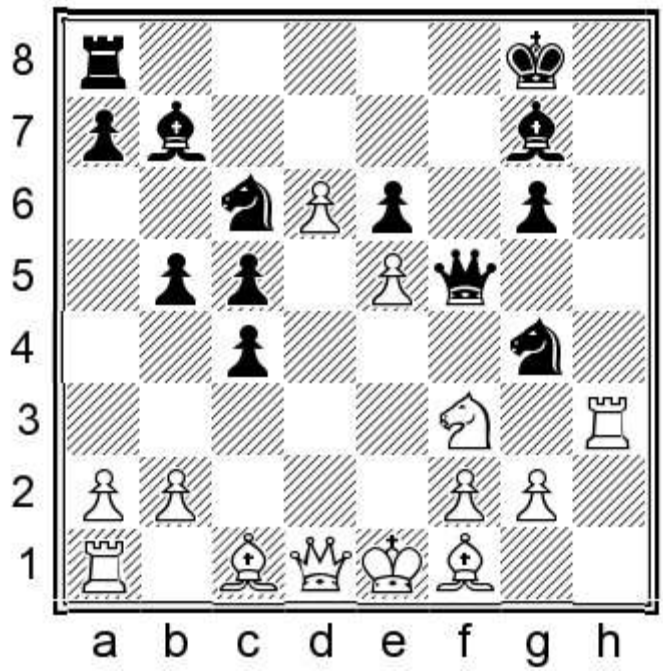
17.♗xc4 [17.♘xd4 cxd4 18.♕xd4 ♕a5+ 19.♕d2 c3 20.bxc3 ♖d5 21.♗d4 e5 22.♗b6! axb6 23.♗c4 ♗e6 24.♗xd5 ♕xd5 25.♕xd5 ♗xd5∓] 17...♘xb5 18.♕d3!



Position after: 18.♕d3!

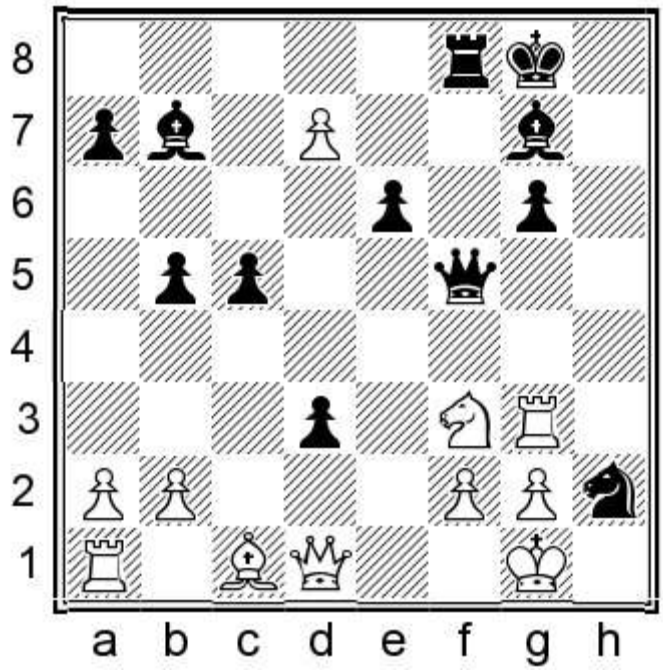
I'm very happy about the fact that it is White who needs to come up with a few tricks to save the game. Black is freerolling! 18...♘d4 19.♕xg6 ♕f6 20.♕e8+ ♕f8 21.♕g6 ♕f6 22.♕e8+ ♕f8 23.♕g6 ♕f6 24.♕e8+ ♕f8 ½-½ Gledura, B (2615) – Tari, A (2603) Malmo 2018.

B) 14.♘e4 ♗b7 15.♘g3 ♕f8 16.♘xf5 ♕xf5



Position after: 16...♕xf5

Black has successfully given up the f5-rook for the beautiful e4-knight and now White doesn't have enough resources for an attack. 17.♗e2 ♘cxe5 18.♔f1 ♘d3 19.♗xd3 cxd3 20.♖g3 ♖f8 21.d7 ♘h2+ 22.♔g1



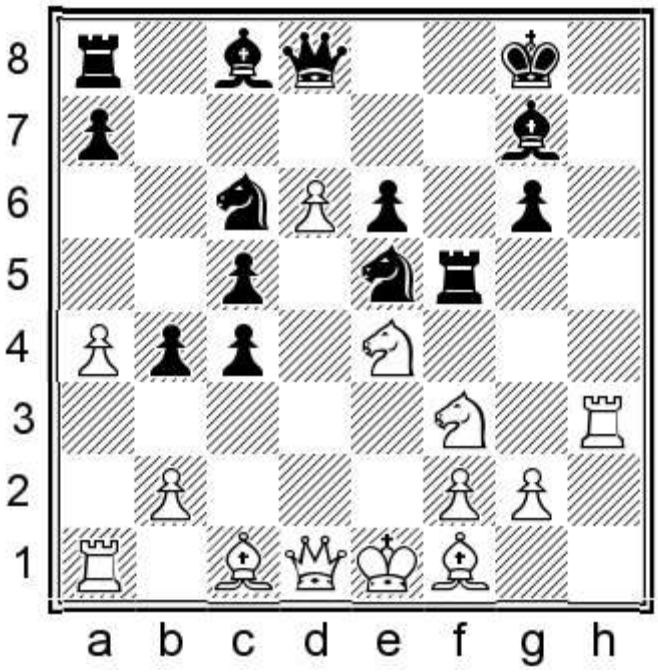
Position after: 22.♔g1

22...♘xf3+ 23.gxf3 ♗f6 24.♕d2 ♖d8 25.♕h6 ♖xd7 26.♖xg6+ ♖g7 27.♖xg7+ ♗xg7–+ Black is

winning since White will be mated much sooner than the bishop and rook will come into play.

C) 14.♗e2 ♗d7 15.♘xb5 ♘cxe5 16.♘c3 ♖b8∓

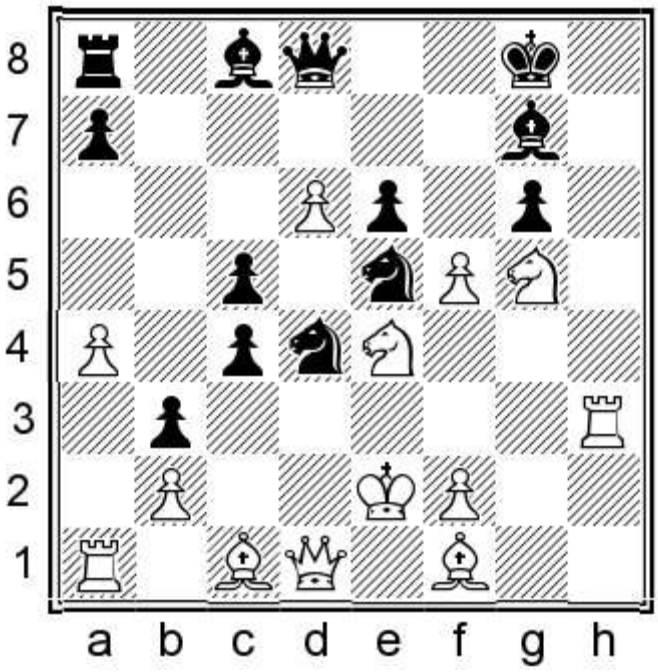
14...b4 15.♘e4 ♘gxe5



Position after: 15...♘gxe5

16.♘xe5

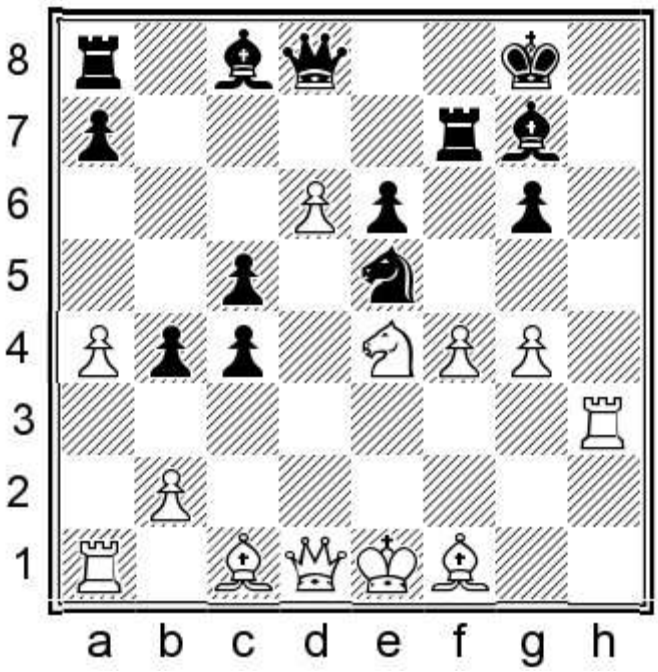
A pretty perpetual check occurs after 16.♘fg5 b3 17.g4 ♘d4 18.gxf5 ♘c2+ 19.♔e2 ♘d4+



Position after: 19...♘d4+

20.♔e1 [This is the wrong time to be ambitious and decline a draw: 20.♔d2? exf5–+ Black is winning one of the knights and will soon launch a devastating attack on the king stuck on d2.] 20...♘c2+=

16...♘xe5 17.g4 ♖f7 18.f4



Position after: 18.f4

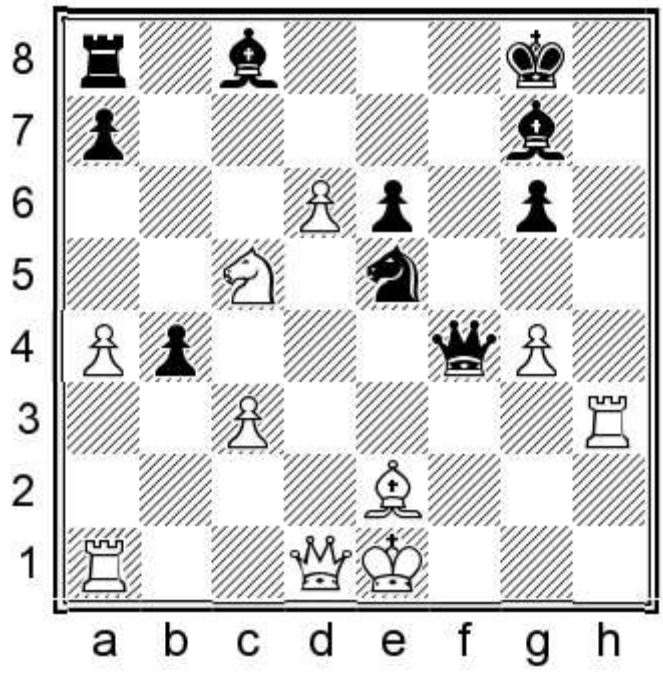
18...♕f8!

The best defense is to counterattack! White would have been close to winning after any other move.

19.♘xc5

19.♗e2 ♖xf4 20.♗xf4 ♕xf4 21.♘xc5 c3 transposes to the main line.

19...♖xf4 20.♗xf4 ♕xf4 21.♗e2 c3 22.bxc3



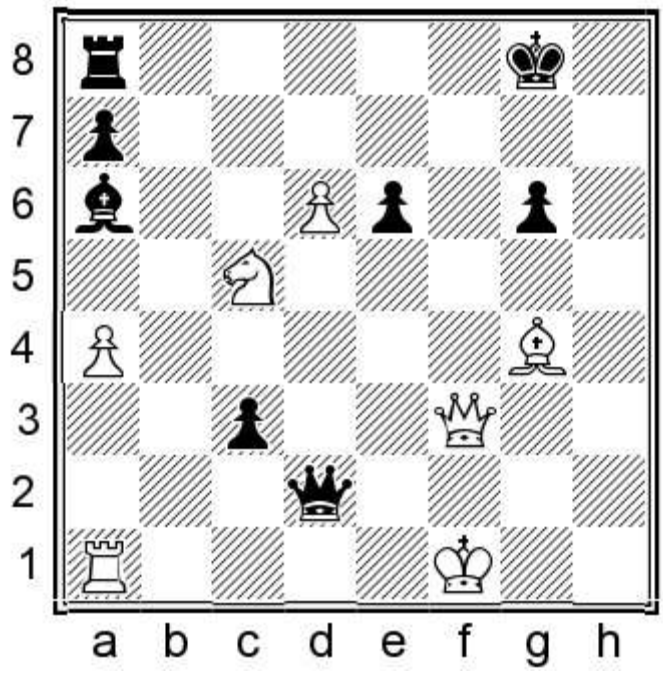
Position after: 22.bxc3

22...♘xg4!

Forces a draw in a few moves.

While these lines are not strictly necessary, they serve as an example of how the game may develop and the common strategic and tactical ideas.

23.♗xg4 ♗xc3+ 24.♖xc3 bxc3 25.♕f3 ♕d2+ 26.♔f1 ♗a6+!

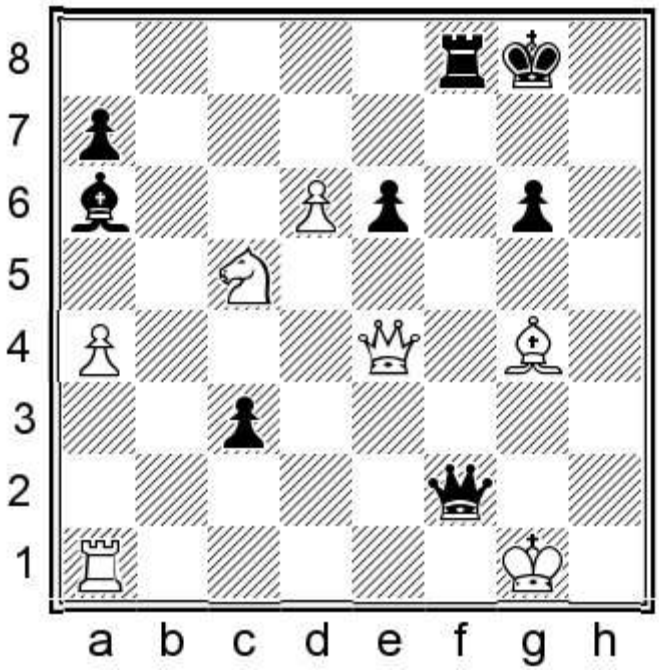


Position after: 26...♗a6+!

27.♔g1

27.♘xa6? ♖f8 28.♗xe6+ ♔g7 29.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 30.d7 c2 31.♘c5 ♔e7 32.♘b7 c1=♕+ 33.♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 34.♔g2 ♕b2+ 35.♔f1 ♕xb7–+

27...♖f8 28.♕e4 ♕f2+ 29.♔h1 ♕h4+ 30.♔g1 ♕f2+=



Position after: 30...♕f2+=

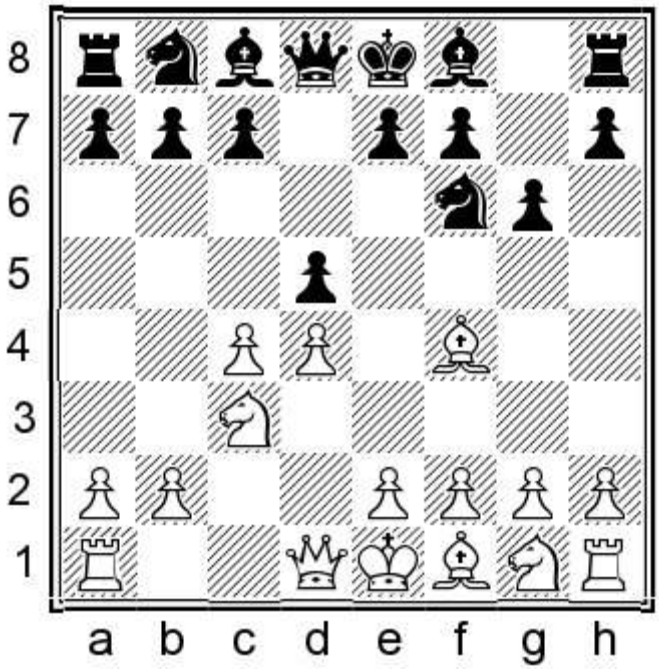
Applying the method of Grandmaster preparation, we have explored the 5.h4 line up to perpetual check. Don’t feel intimidated, you don’t need to memorize every single move in this chapter.

Rather, play through the variations and try to remember a few significant moments. For the 2200+ level players, I recommend memorizing a few sidelines and the main line until 18...♕f8 to be confident and prepared against any opponent.

Part III
Various 4th moves

Chapter 8
4.♗f4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 8 – 4.♗f4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4 ♗g7

---

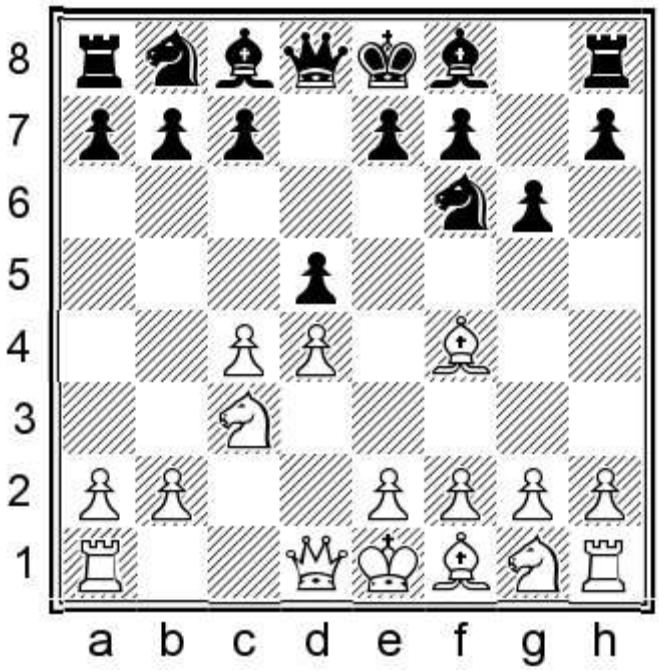
a) 5.--

b) 5.♘f3

c) 5.e3

a) 5.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4



Position after: 4.♗f4

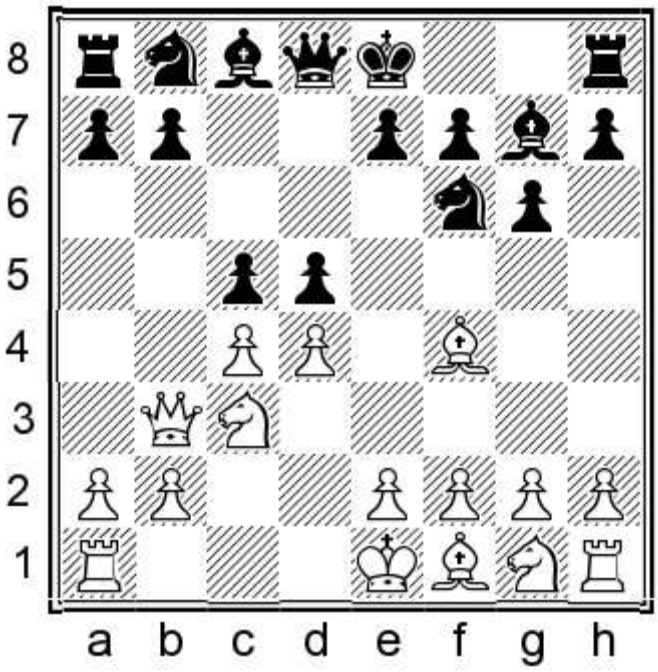
Any beginner's guide to chess will insist on developing your kingside first, castling and only then taking care of the queenside pieces. As players advance in their chess understanding they learn when to break the rules. This system is a good example of when to break the rules.

White takes a lot of precautions against Black's activity on the a1-h8 diagonal by developing the bishop to f4 and the rook to c1 thus trying to tame our dark-squared bishop. Despite White's preparations, our strategy will remain the same: an early ...c5 pawn break followed by active development of the queenside.

4...♗g7 5.♖c1

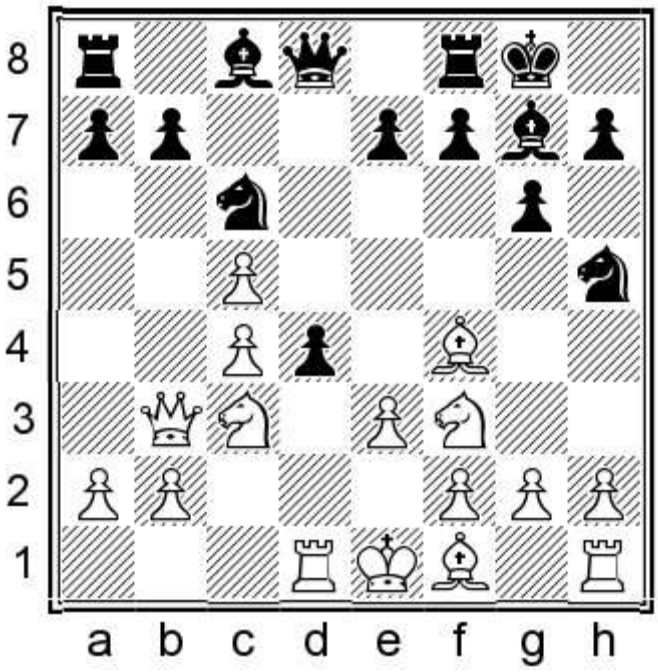
One possibility is to procrastinate even longer with e3.

A) 5.♕b3 White hopes to force us to give up the center by taking the c4-pawn but we have something better 5...c5.



Position after: 5...c5

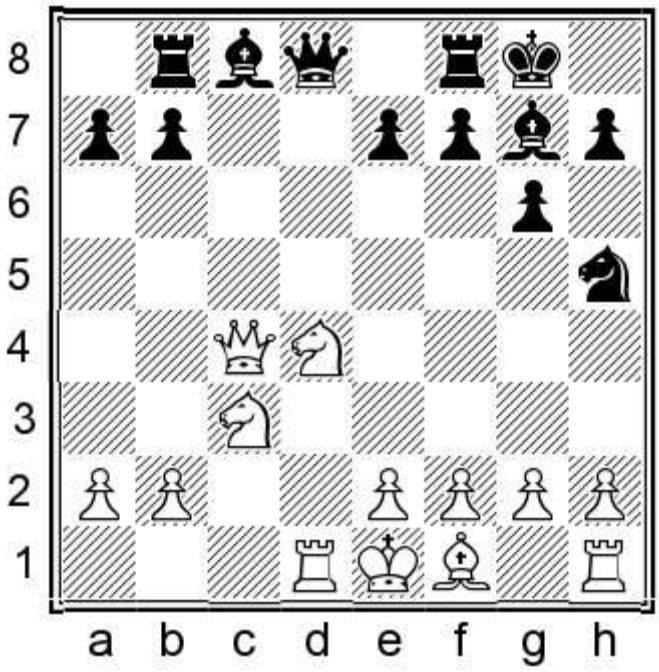
A1) You might be surprised how quickly White gets in trouble after an ordinary-looking 6.dxc5? d4! 7.♖d1 0-0 8.e3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♘h5!



Position after: 9...♘h5!

By aggressive attacking White gets no time to continue his development. 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♕a5 14.♗xc6 dxc3–+

A2) 6.♘f3 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘h5 A recurring idea in this line. 8.♗xb8 dxc4 9.♕xc4 ♖xb8 10.♖d1 0-0

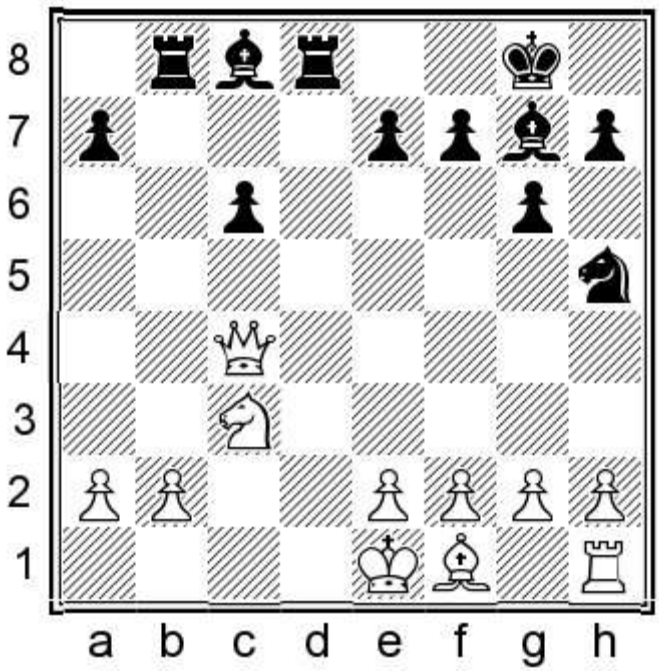


Position after: 10...0-0

I have to confess it's shocking how the engine didn't even bother a second to remove the queen from the explicitly dangerous rendez-vous with the d1-rook. A discovered double attack after 11.♘c6? No worries, we will just sacrifice the queen!

A2.1) 11.♘f5 ♕b6↑

A2.2) 11.♘c6 bxc6! 12.♖xd8 ♖xd8

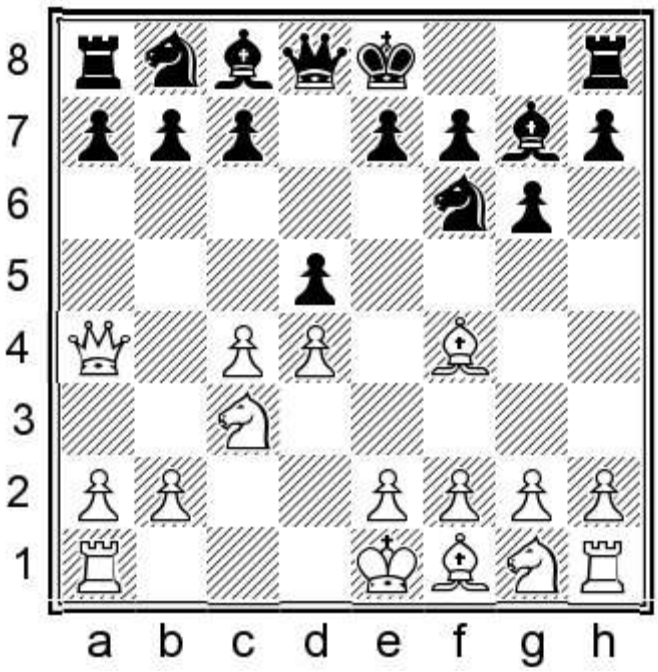


Position after: 12...♖xd8

Nominally, White has a material advantage. However, we are more active and about to restore the material balance by capturing one of White's queenside pawns. 13.♘d1 ♗e6 14.♕c1 ♗xa2 15.e3 ♗d5 16.♗e2 ♘f6 17.0-0 ♘e4∓

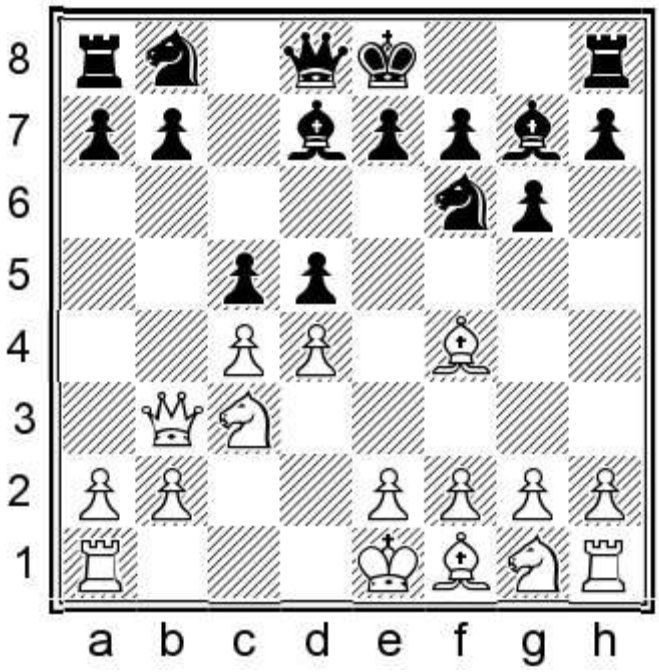
A2.3) 11.e3 ♕b6 12.♕b5 ♕xb5 13.♗xb5 ♖d8 14.0-0 a6 15.♗c4 ♘f6∓ The bishop pair secures Black a slight advantage.

B) 5.♕a4+



Position after: 5.♕a4+

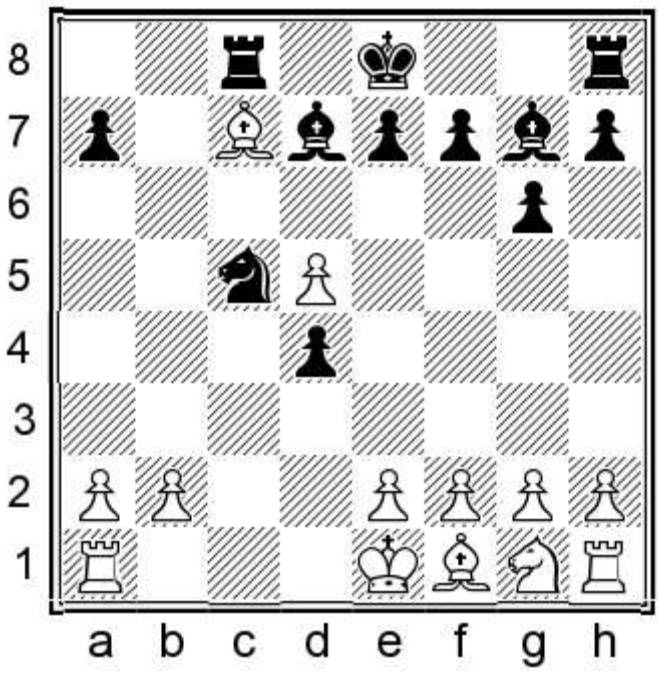
The purpose of this check is always the same: 1) if Black goes ...c7-c6 then the typical pawn break ...c7-c5 is difficult to execute 2) if Black protects the king with ...♗d7 then White retreats with the queen to b3 and the d5-pawn lacks an appropriate level of defense (note the apparent disconnect between the d7-bishop, d8-queen and d5-pawn). 5...♗d7 6.♕b3 c5!



Position after: 6...c5!

As you have seen so far, this moves saves Black all the time.

B1) 7.dxc5? As usual, capturing the c5-pawn and allowing ...d5-d4 only brings White disappointment and a nearly lost position. 7...d4 8.♘d5 ♘a6 9.♕xb7 ♘xd5 10.cxd5 ♘xc5 11.♕c7 ♕xc7 12.♗xc7 ♖c8

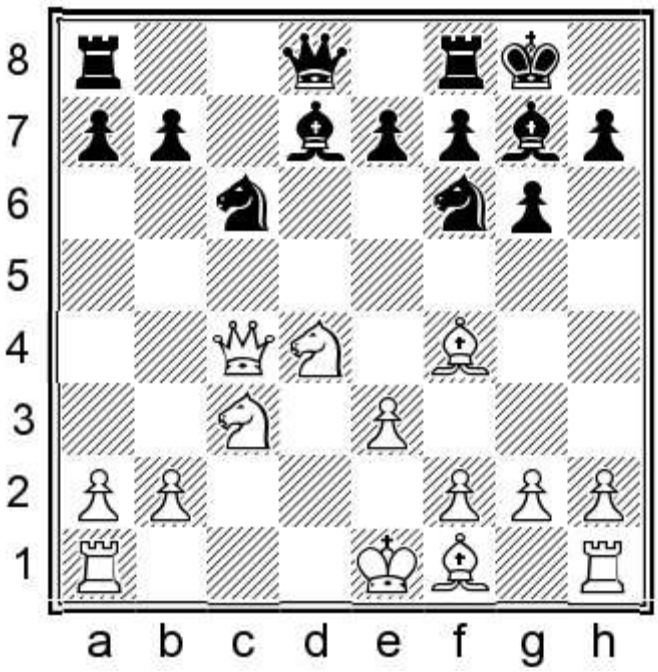


Position after: 12...♖c8

Ironically, Black has a winning position even after the queen trade. 13.♗f4 ♘e4 14.g3 ♖c2 15.♗g2

f5–+ Black is objectively winning due to his overwhelming activity. In order to castle, White will need to give up the e2 and b2 pawns, giving Black an extra pawn.

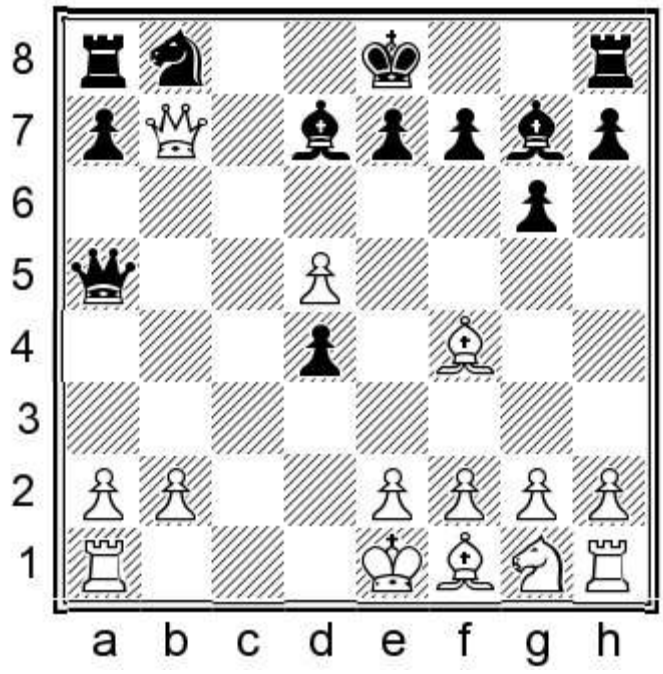
B2) 7.♘f3? Sometimes, simply developing your pieces according to the basic rules of chess is not good enough! 7...dxc4 8.♕xc4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 0-0 10.e3 ♘c6



Position after: 10...♘c6

White has clearly failed to conquer the center and the queen on c4 looks purposeless. Black is significantly better due to the absence of any weaknesses and his superior development. 11.♖d1 ♘xd4 12.exd4 ♖c8 13.♕b3 ♕a5 14.♕xb7 ♗c6 15.♕a6 ♕f5 16.♗g3 ♘d5∓

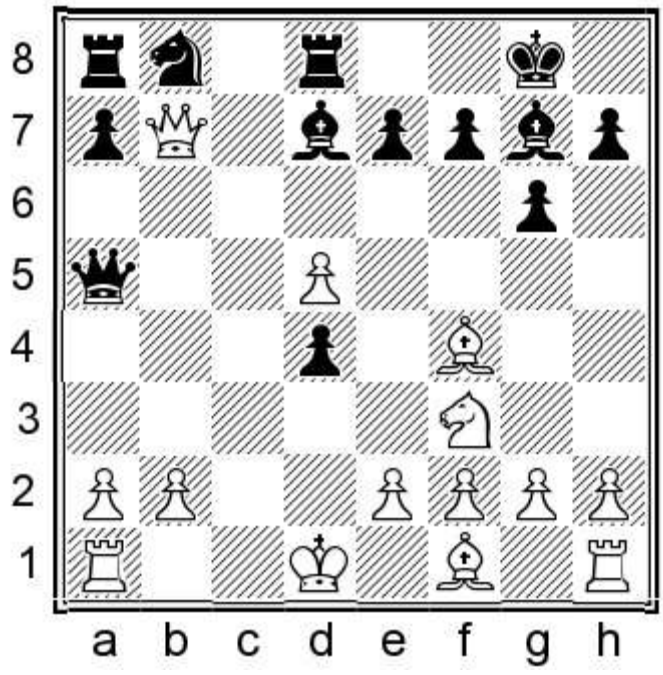
B3) 7.♘xd5 ♘xd5 8.cxd5 cxd4 9.♕xb7 ♕a5+



Position after: 9...♕a5+

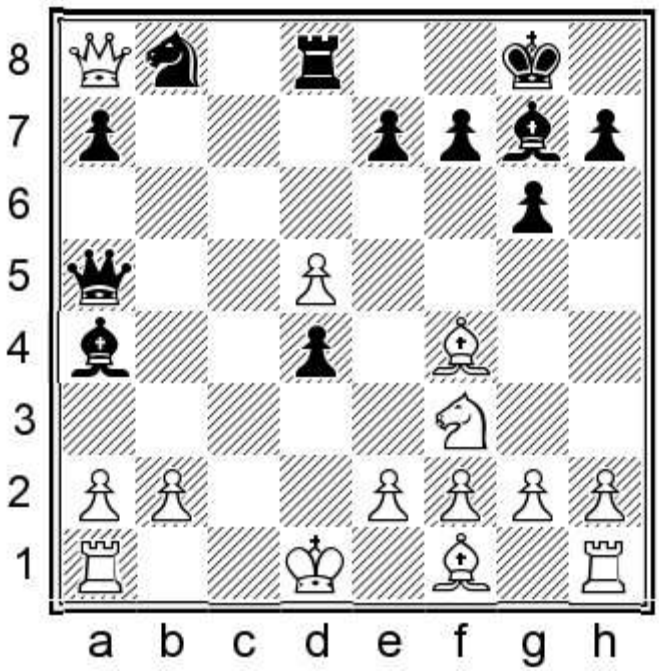
B3.1) 10.♗d2? ♕b6 11.♕xb6 axb6 12.♘f3 0-0 13.g3 ♘a6 14.♗g2 ♗b5! 15.a3 ♘c5 16.♗b4 ♖fc8∓ White will not be able to castle without losing the valuable e2-pawn or even the b2-pawn in case Black pushes ...d4-d3. Therefore, Black has a significant advantage.

B3.2) 10.♔d1? 0-0 11.♘f3 ♖d8! Mark Dvoretsky, who was a famous Russian chess coach and author, had a chapter in one of his numerous books called Mysterious Rook Moves. I wish this one made it to his famous collection!



Position after: 11...♖d8!

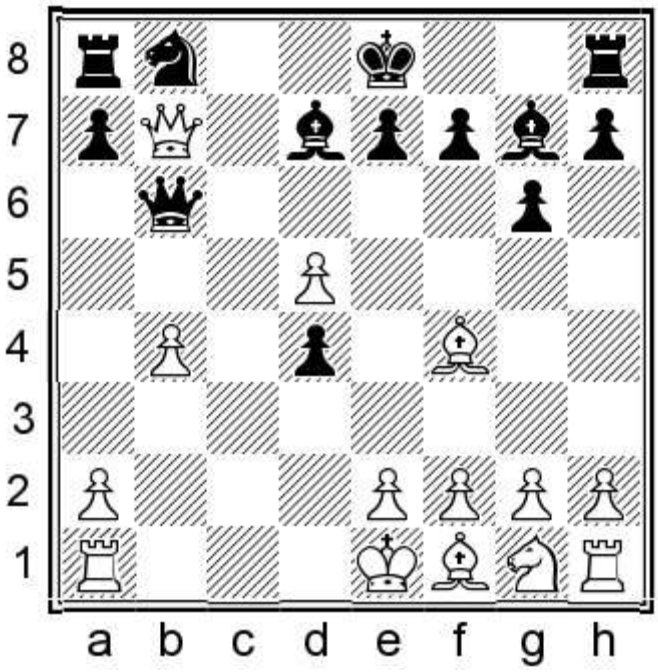
To this day I have no idea why the rook has to go to d8 and humbly admit the greatness of Leela Chess Zero (the mastermind behind 11...♖d8!). 12.♕xa8 [12.♗c7 ♗a4+ 13.b3 ♗xb3+ 14.♕xb3 ♕xc7–+; 12.♗d2 ♕b6 13.♕xb6 axb6 14.g3 ♗a4+ 15.♔e1 ♗b3 16.d6 ♖xd6 17.♗g2 ♘c6 18.a3 e5 19.♘g5 f5–+ Black has a winning position since White can never castle and Black's domination in the center is undeniable.] 12...♗a4+



Position after: 12...♗a4+

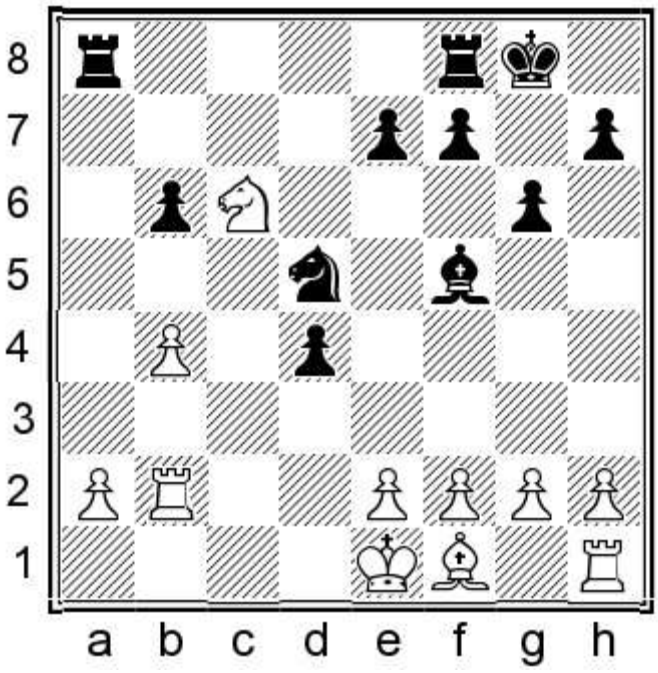
13.♔c1 [13.b3 ♗xb3+ 14.axb3 ♕xa1+ 15.♔d2 ♖c8–+ The mate is coming way sooner here than the White Walkers in Game of Thrones. Just 9 moves!] 13...♕c5+ 14.♔d2 ♕b4+ 15.♔c1 ♖c8+–+

B3.3) 10.b4 ♕b6



Position after: 10...♕b6

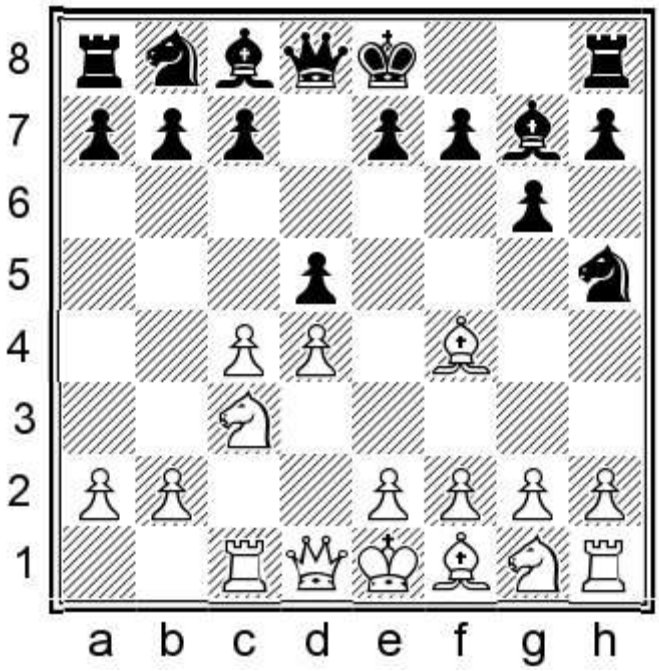
11.♕xb6 [The rook is untouchable: 11.♕xa8? 0-0 12.a3 ♘a6 13.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 14.♖c1 d3 15.exd3 ♗b2 16.♖c4 ♗xa3–+] 11...axb6 12.♘f3 ♘a6 13.♖b1 0-0 14.♗e5 ♗f5 15.♖b2 ♗xe5 16.♘xe5 ♘c7 17.♘c6 ♘xd5



Position after: 17...♘xd5

18.g3! White barely maintains equality. [18.♘xd4 ♘c3 19.e3 ♖fd8 20.♗e2 ♖xa2 21.♖xa2 ♘xa2∓] 18...♗d7 19.♘xd4 ♖a4 20.♗g2 ♘xb4 21.0-0=

5...♘h5

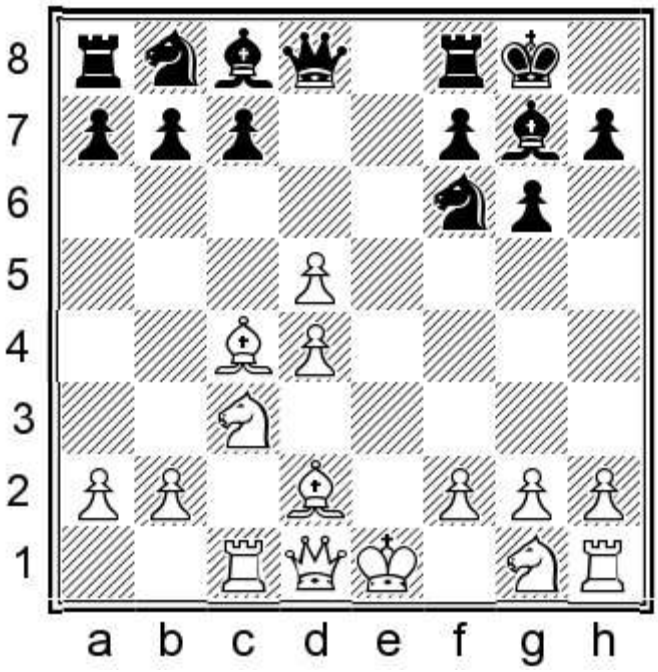


Position after: 5...♘h5

I hope that after reading this book most of the readers will learn to think creatively and will realize that sometimes the basic positional rules can be tossed out of the window! Instead of castling, Black attacks White immediately.

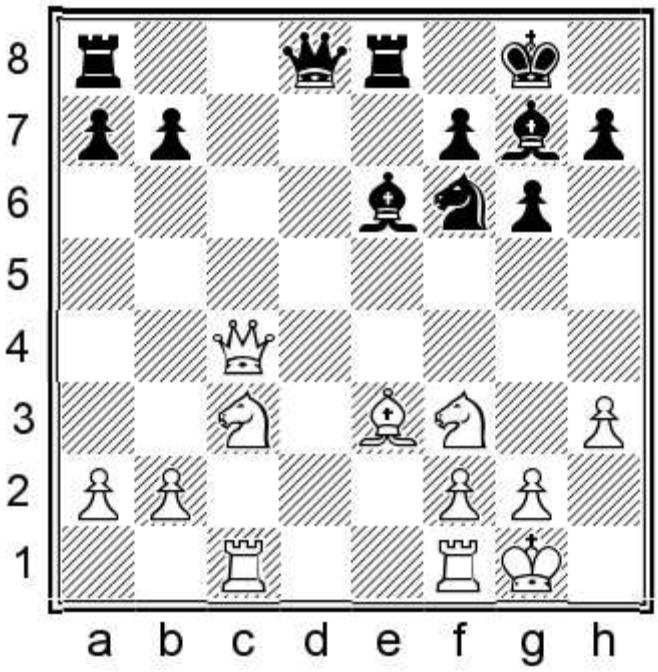
6.♗g5

6.♗d2 e5!? An incredibly creative idea, played by one of the most talented youngsters, GM Vladislav Artemiev. 7.e3 exd4 8.exd4 0-0 9.cxd5 ♘f6 10.♗c4



Position after: 10.♗c4

A) Black can even try a pawn sacrifice: 10...c6!? 11.dxc6 ♕xd4 12.♕e2 ♘xc6 13.♘f3 ♕d8 14.h3 ♘a5 15.0-0 ♖e8 16.♗e3 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 ♗e6

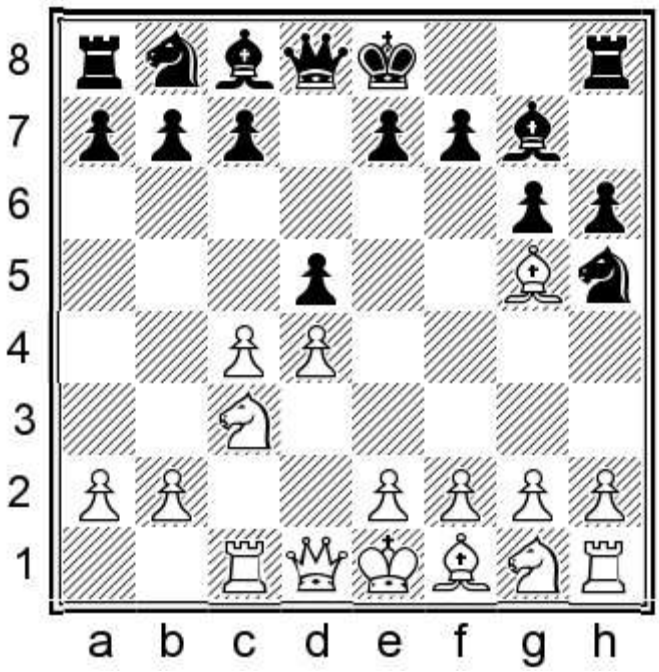


Position after: 17...♗e6

As stated previously in the book, a bishop pair in an open type position almost always serves as enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn. 18.♕a4 ♘d5 19.♗d4 ♘b6 20.♕b4 ♗f8 ½-½ (20) Aleksandrov, A (2559) – Artemiev, V (2682) Minsk 2017.

B) 10...♘bd7 11.♗b3 ♘b6 12.♘f3 ♖e8+ 13.♘e5 ♘bxd5 14.0-0 ♗e6 15.♖e1 c6= We have simple play against the isolated pawn. Our next couple of moves could be ...♕d6 and ...♖ad8.

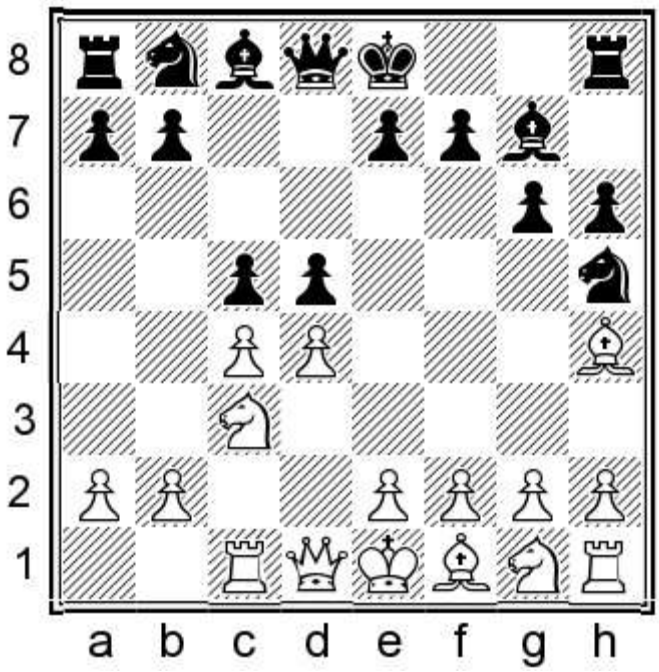
6...h6



Position after: 6...h6

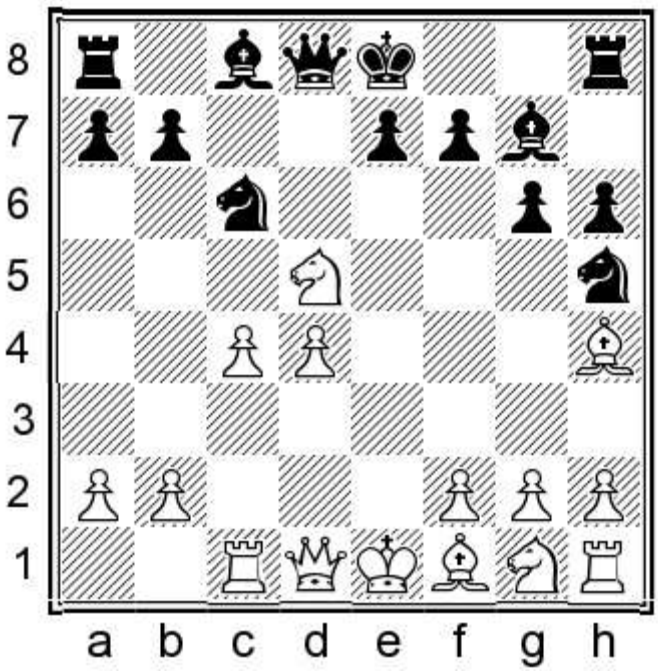
7.♗d2

7.♗h4? c5!



Position after: 7...c5!

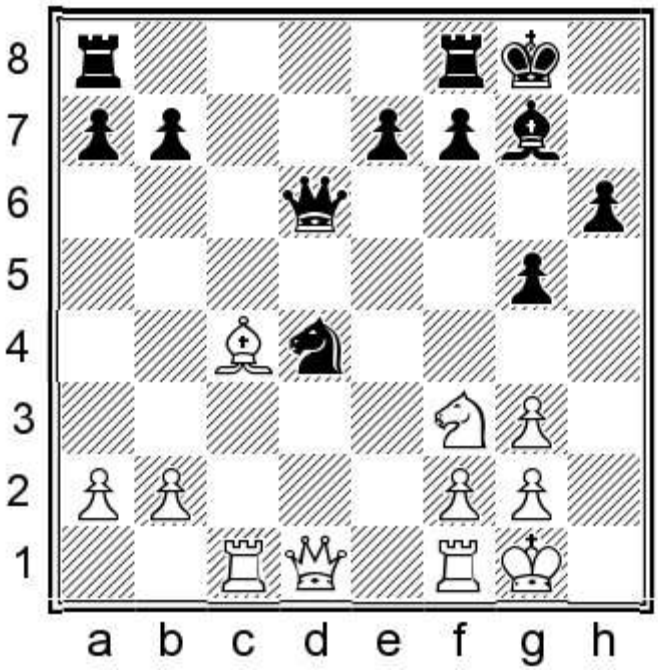
A) 8.♘xd5 ♘c6 9.e3 cxd4 10.exd4



Position after: 10.exd4

A1) 10...♗xd4?! it's fascinating how captures usually tend to slow down the pace of attack. 11.♗xe7 ♗xf2+ 12.♔xf2 ♘xe7 13.♕a4+ ♗d7 14.♕b4 White gained time to breath after 10...♗d4 and now makes our life difficult by preventing short castling by Black.

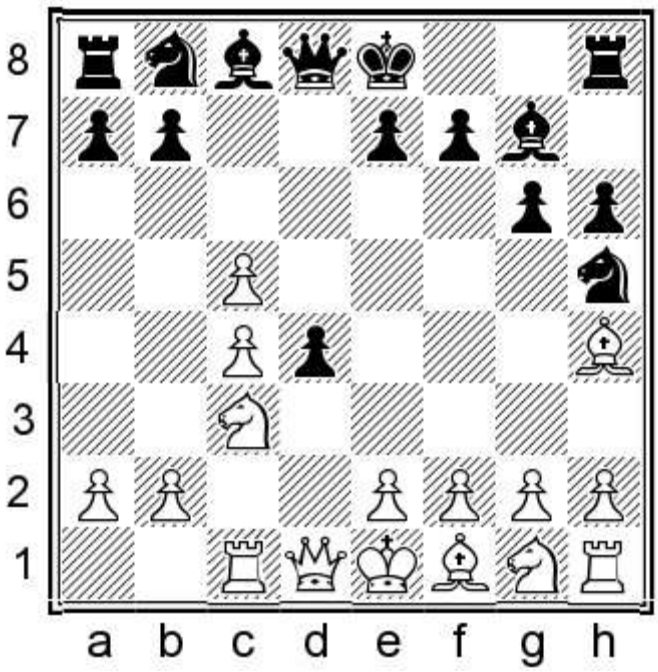
A2) 10...♗e6! 11.♘f3 0-0 12.♗e2 ♗xd5 13.cxd5 ♕xd5 14.0-0 g5 15.♗c4 ♕d6 16.♗g3 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♘xd4∓ We are up a pawn and have every reason to play to win.



Position after: 17...♘xd4∓

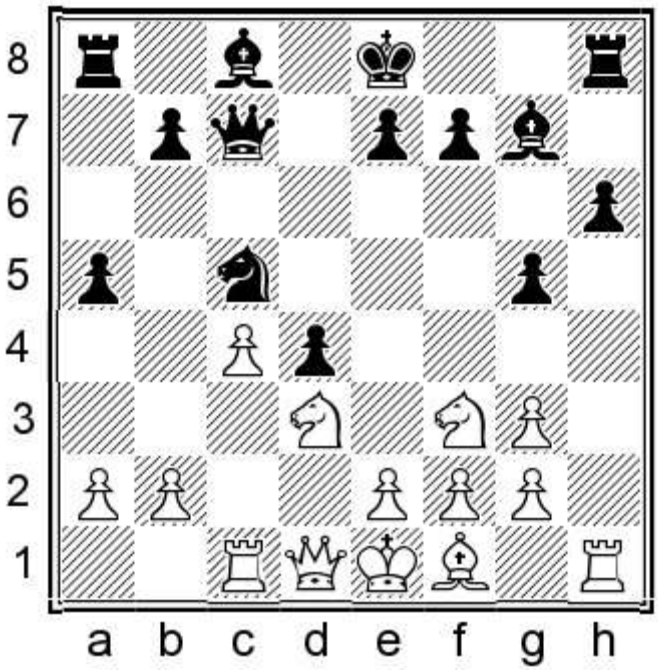
The opposite colored bishop doesn't guarantee White a draw. In fact, the opposite colored bishop usually amplifies the attack whenever the heavy pieces are involved.

B) 8.dxc5 As we have learned from the previous lines in this chapter, taking on c5 and allowing ...d5-d4 is never a good idea for White. This position is no exception. 8...d4.



Position after: 8...d4

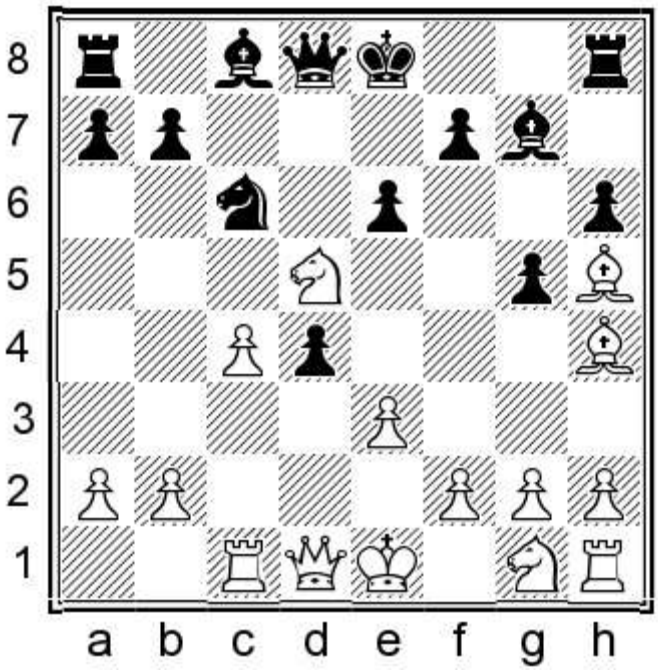
9.♘d5 [9.♘b1 g5 10.♗g3 ♘xg3 11.hxg3 ♕a5+ 12.♕d2 ♕xa2 13.b4 ♕xd2+ 14.♘xd2 ♘a6 15.♖b1 ♗f5 16.♖b2 d3 17.♖b3 dxe2 18.♗xe2 ♗c2 19.♖a3 ♘xb4–+] 9...g5 10.♗g3 ♘xg3 11.hxg3 ♘d7 12.♘f3 ♘xc5 13.♘b4 a5 14.♘d3 ♕c7–+ The bishop on f1 is the most miserable bishop I have seen in a while.



Position after: 14...♕c7−+

Black's superior pawn structure combined with the activity of his bishops means White is doomed to a substandard existence and eventual loss of the game.

C) 8.e3 cxd4 9.♘xd5 [9.exd4 dxc4 10.♗xc4 0-0 11.♘ge2 g5 12.♗g3 ♘xg3 13.hxg3 ♘c6∓] 9...♘c6 10.♗e2 g5 11.♗xh5 e6!

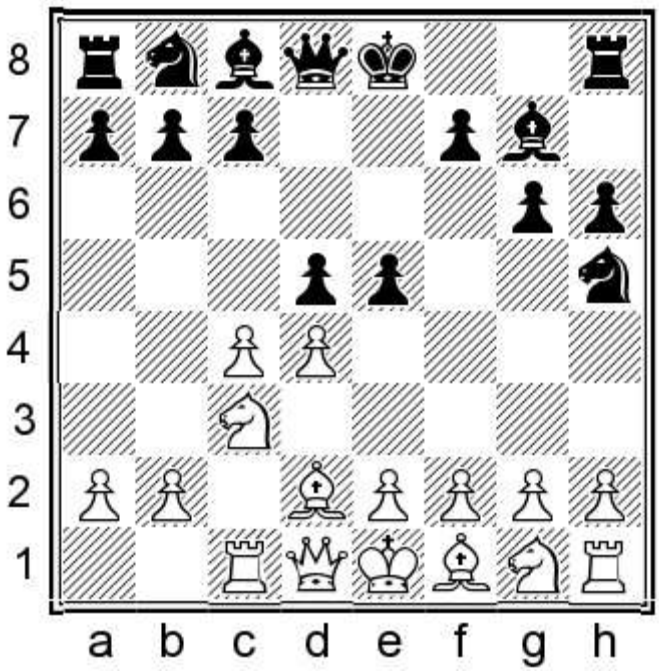


Position after: 11...e6!

The knight on d5 causes us way more troubles than the h4-bishop, so it makes sense to take care of it

first. 12.♗g3 exd5 13.♘f3 dxc4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.exd4 0-0 16.0-0 [16.♖xc4 ♖e8+ 17.♔f1 ♗e6 18.♖c1 ♗xd4–+] 16...♗e6 17.♗e5 ♗xe5 18.dxe5 ♕xd1 19.♗xd1 ♖ad8∓

7...e5



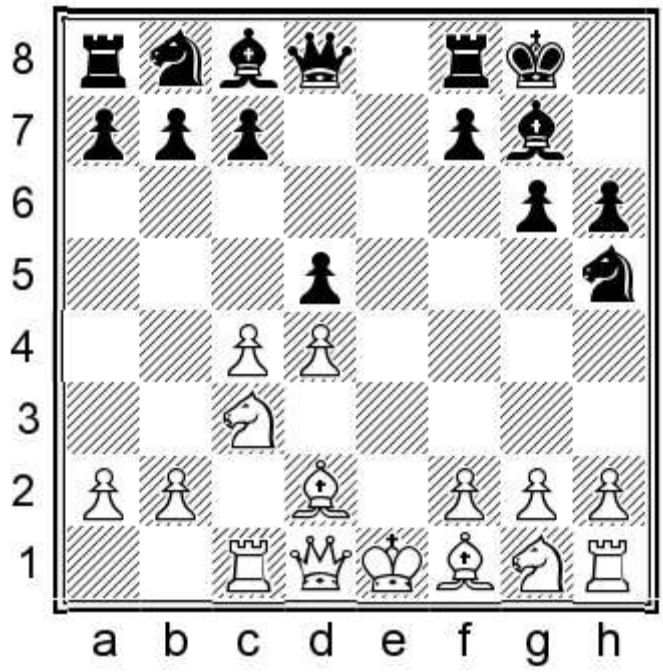
Position after: 7...e5

8.e3

White needs to resort to modest play and simply finish his development.

The overly active and ambitious 8.dxe5 leads to a slightly worse position after 8...d4 9.♘d5 c6 10.♘b4 ♗xe5 11.♘f3 ♗g7 12.♘d3 0-0 13.g3 ♘f6 14.♗g2 ♖e8 15.0-0 ♘e4∓.

8...exd4 9.exd4 0-0

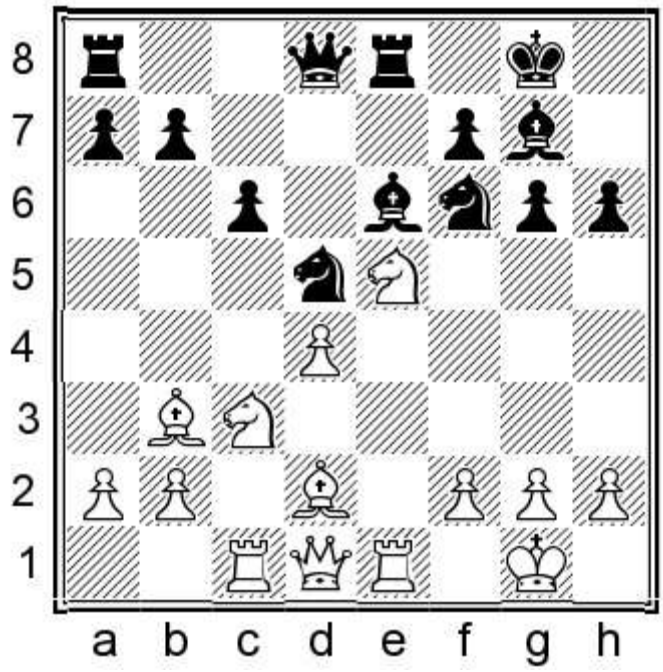


Position after: 9...0-0

10.cxd5

Acceptable, although admittedly a lot riskier, is 10.♘f3 c5 11.♗e3 [11.dxc5 ♖e8+ 12.♗e2 d4 13.♘b5 d3–+] 11...♗g4 12.♗e2 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♗xe2 14.♘cxe2 dxc4 15.0-0 ♘f6 16.♖xc4 ♘d5= Black has comfortable play and can easily develop the queenside knight and rook in the next couple of moves.

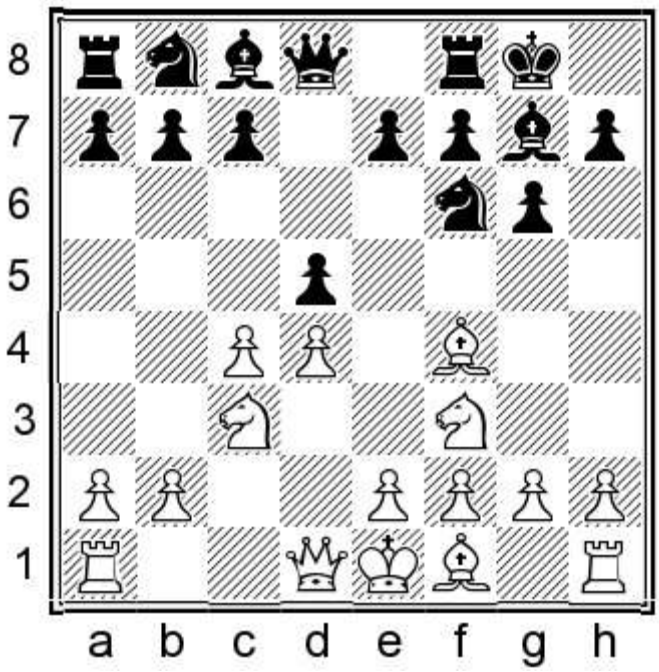
10...♘d7 11.♗c4 ♘b6 12.♗b3 ♘f6 13.♘f3 ♖e8+ 14.♘e5 ♘bxd5 15.0-0 ♗e6 16.♖e1 c6=



Position after: 16...c6=

b) 5.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0



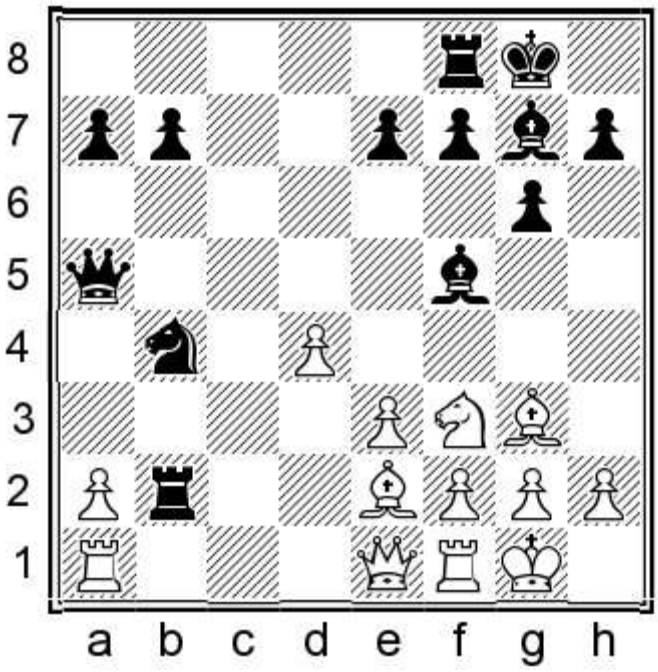
Position after: 5...0-0

6.♖c1

It may seem to be counter-intuitive to develop your queenside before the kingside but here it makes sense. White is fully ready to meet ...c7-c5, so Black needs to come up with a different line of play.

A) 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♕a5 8.♖c1 dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♕xc5 transposes to the main line (next subchapter).

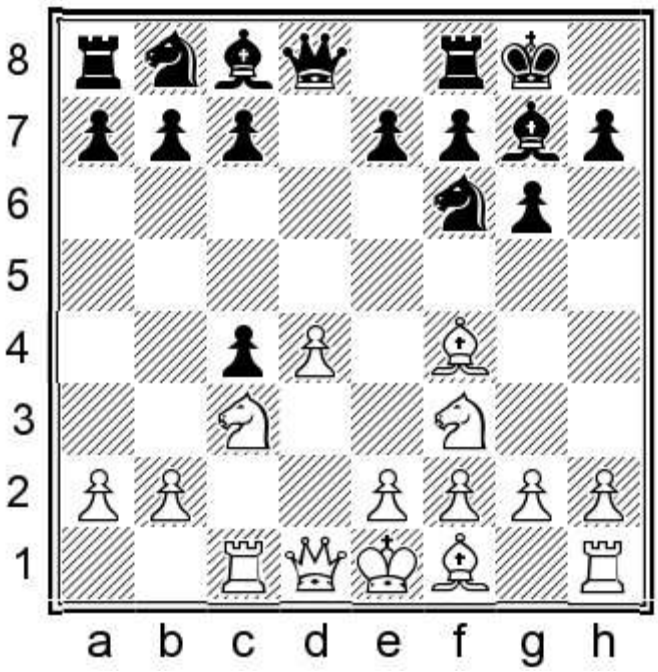
B) 6.cxd5? The c7-pawn is not worth putting White's kingside development on hold. Black ruthlessly punishes White for this transgression. 6...♘xd5 7.♘xd5 ♕xd5 8.♗xc7 ♘c6 9.e3 ♗f5 10.♗e2 ♖ac8 11.♗g3 ♕a5+ 12.♕d2 ♘b4 13.0-0 ♖c2 14.♕e1 ♖xb2



Position after: 14...♖xb2

15.♘e5 [15.♗c4? ♕a3 16.♗b3 ♘c2∓ 17.♕c3? ♖c8 18.♗c7 ♖xb3 19.axb3 ♘xa1–+ 0-1 (43) Gunina, V (2502) – Muzychuk, A (2576) Monaco 2017] 15...♕a4∓

6...dxc4

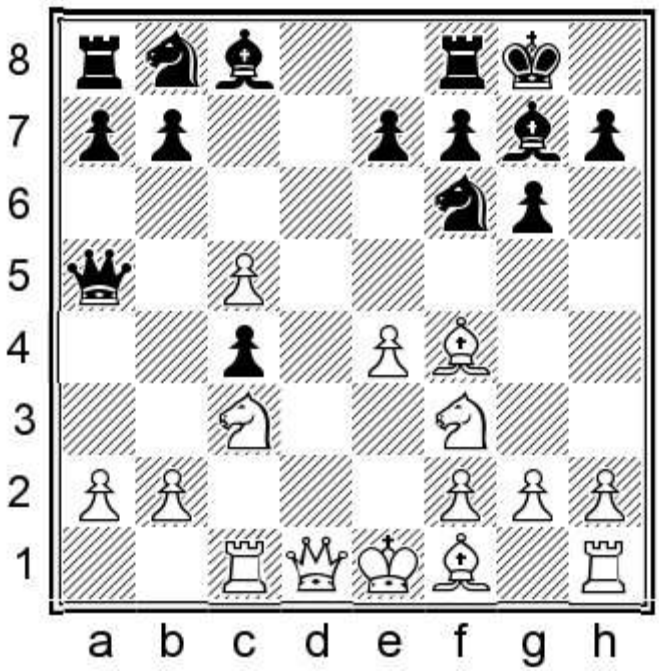


Position after: 6...dxc4

White still maintains two options for the e-pawn's development.

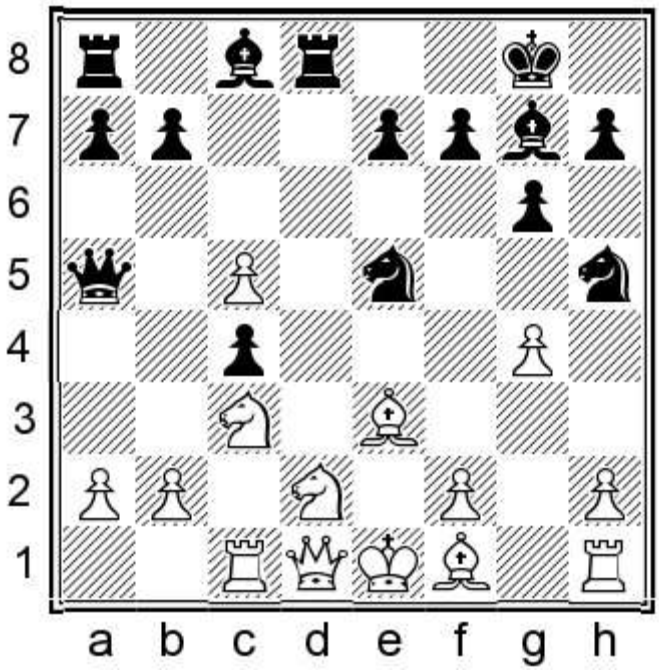
7.e3

7.e4 c5 8.dxc5 ♕a5



Position after: 8...♕a5

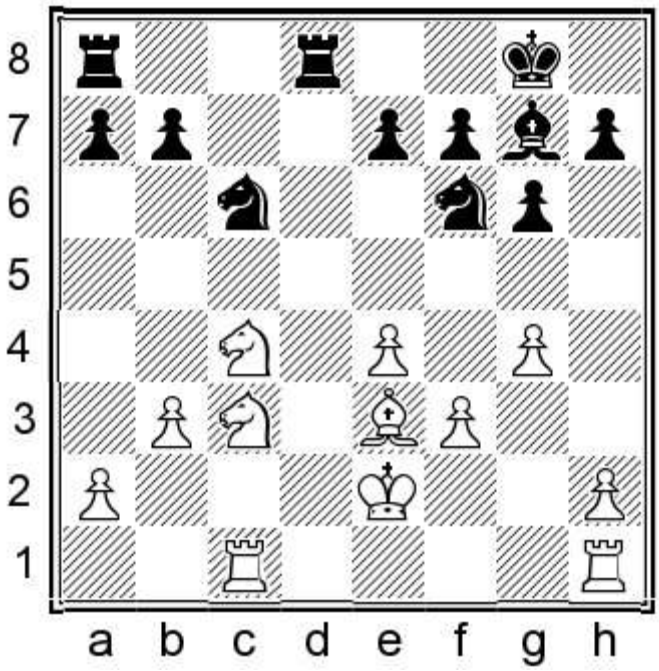
A) 9.e5 ♘h5 10.♗e3 ♖d8 11.♘d2 [11.♕a4 ♕xa4 12.♘xa4 ♘c6 13.♗xc4 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.0-0 ♗d7= 0-1 (56) Roselli Mailhe, B (2425) – Cori Tello, J (2549) Linares 2014] 11...♘c6 12.g4 ♘xe5!



Position after: 12...♘xe5!

Not wasting a single move on saving the useless h5-knight. 13.gxh5 ♗g4 14.♗e2 ♘d3+ 15.♔f1 ♗xe2+ 16.♘xe2 ♘xc1 17.♕xc1 b5∓ Black is a lot more active on the queenside, has a better king and the d8-rook looks more promising than the knights on the second rank. Therefore, Black has an advantage.

B) 9.♘d2 ♗e6 10.♗xc4 ♗xc4 11.♘xc4 ♕xc5 12.b3 ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♕h5 14.♕xh5 ♘xh5 15.g4 ♘f6 16.f3 ♖fd8 17.♔e2

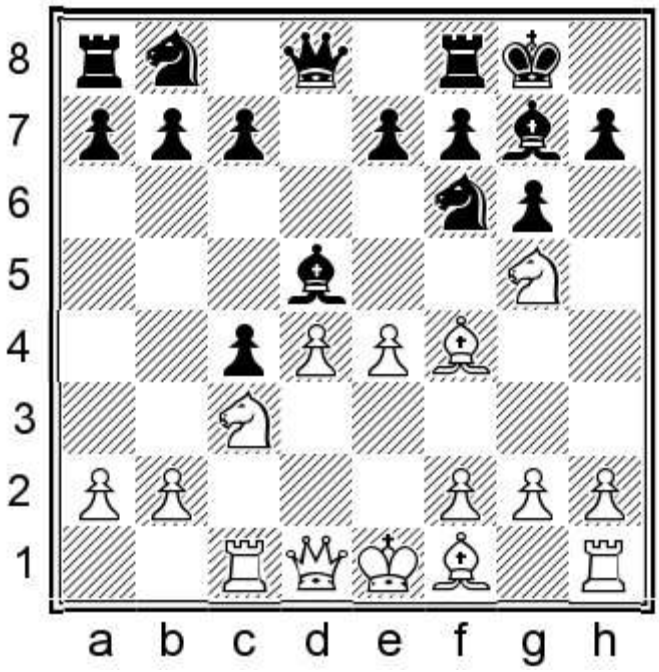


Position after: 17.♔e2

B1) One of the top grandmasters in the world and in the United States wasn't very accurate here: 17...♘d4+?! 18.♔f2 ♘c6 ½-½ (60) Eljanov, P (2760) – So, W (2773) Wijk aan Zee 2016. It looks to me like Black has simply wasted one tempo. Nonetheless, Wesley still managed to make a draw rather comfortably.

B2) 17...♘e8= White has slightly more space on the kingside but in the absence of any weaknesses in Black's camp the position remains equal.

7...♗e6 8.♘g5 ♗d5 9.e4

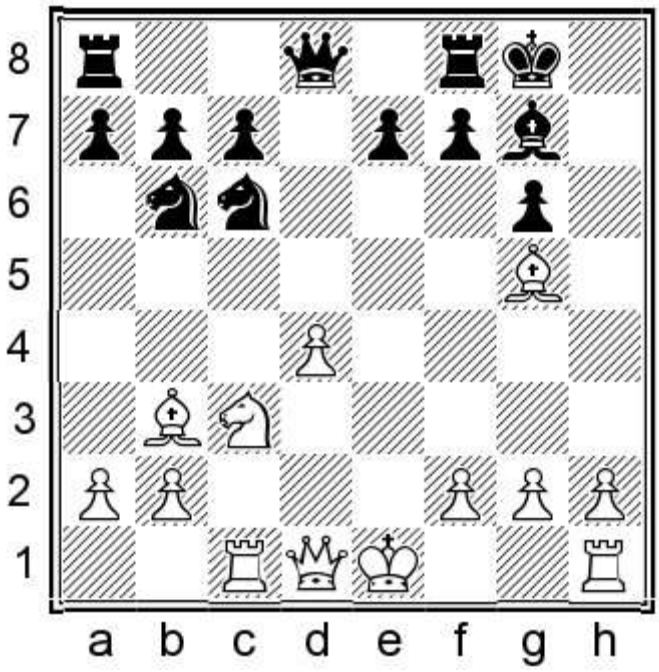


Position after: 9.e4

9...h6

I can't stress enough the importance of this move. In case of the bishop retreat to c6, instead of hitting the knight with ...h6, White would have achieved a dream position and total control of the center after d5 followed by ♗c4.

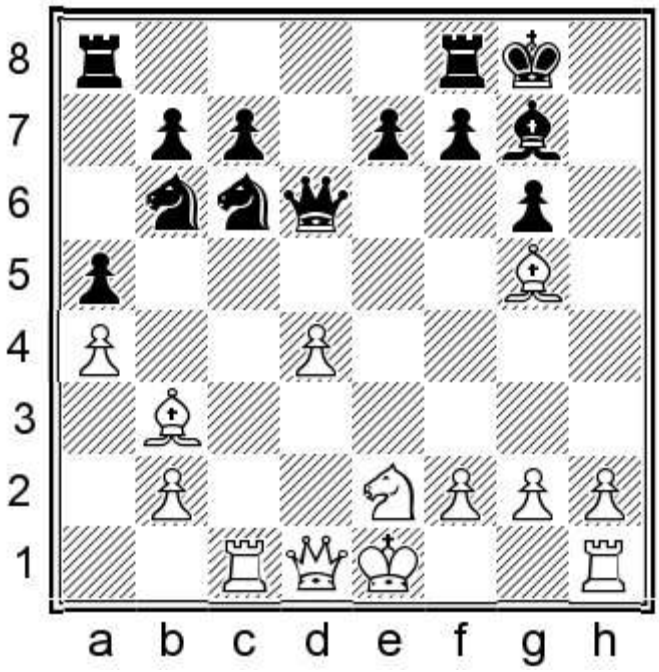
10.exd5 hxg5 11.♗xg5 ♘xd5 12.♗xc4 ♘b6 13.♗b3 ♘c6



Position after: 13...♘c6

14.d5

14.♘e2 a5 15.a4 ♕d6



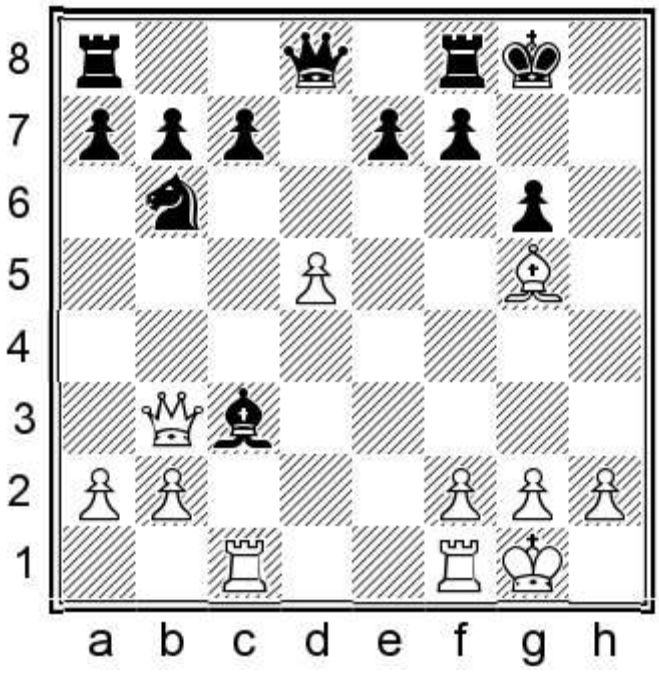
Position after: 15...♕d6

16.h4 [16.♗f4 e5 17.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 18.♖xd1 ♗xe5=; 16.0-0 ♖ad8=] 16...♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♗xd4 18.♔f1 ♗xb2 19.♕xd6 cxd6 20.♖c7 e6 21.h5 ♖fc8 22.♖xb7 ♖ab8 23.♖xb8 ♖xb8 24.hxg6 ♘d7 25.gxf7+ ♔xf7=

14...♘d4 15.0-0 ♘xb3 16.♕xb3

16.axb3 ♖e8 17.h4 ♕d7=

16...♗xc3



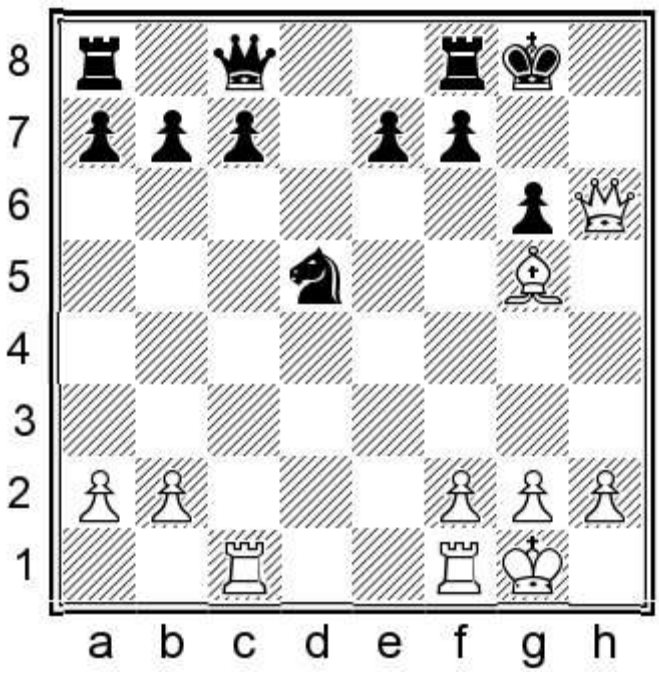
Position after: 16...♗xc3

We are usually not too happy to give up the g7-bishop in the Grünfeld but in this case the purpose of winning the d5-pawn justifies the trade.

17.bxc3

A) 17.♖xc3 ♕xd5 18.♗xe7 ♖fe8 19.♗c5 ♖e2= 0-1 (56) Van Wely, L (2632) – Borisek, J (2565) Reykjavik 2015.

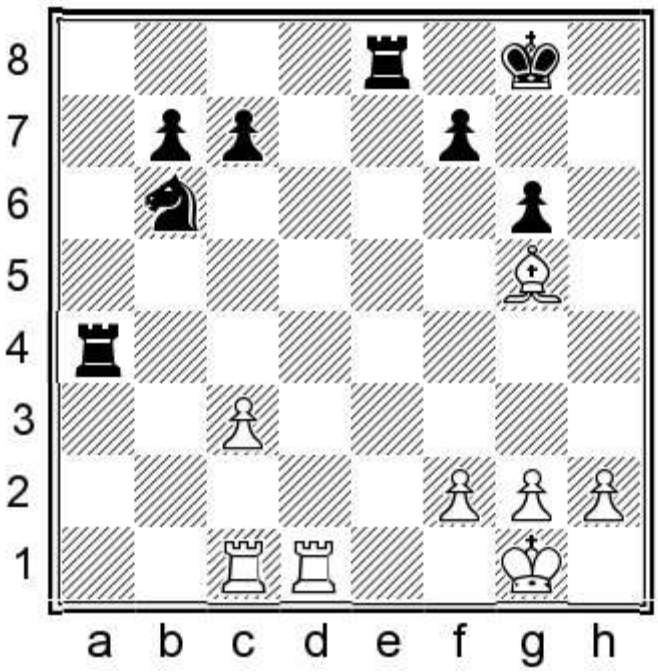
B) 17.♕xc3 ♘xd5 18.♕h3 ♕c8 19.♕h6



Position after: 19.♕h6

19...♕g4 [19...♕f5 20.♖c4 f6 21.♖h4 ♔f7 22.♕h7+ ♔e6 23.♖e1+ ♔d6 24.♖d4 ♖ae8∞] 20.♖fe1 ♖ad8 21.♖e5 ♖fe8 22.h3 ♕h5 23.♕xh5 gxh5 24.♗d2 ♘f6 25.♗g5 ♘d5 26.♗d2 ♘f6=

17...♕xd5 18.♗xe7 ♕xb3 19.axb3 ♖fe8 20.♗g5 a5 21.♖fd1 a4 22.bxa4 ♖xa4=

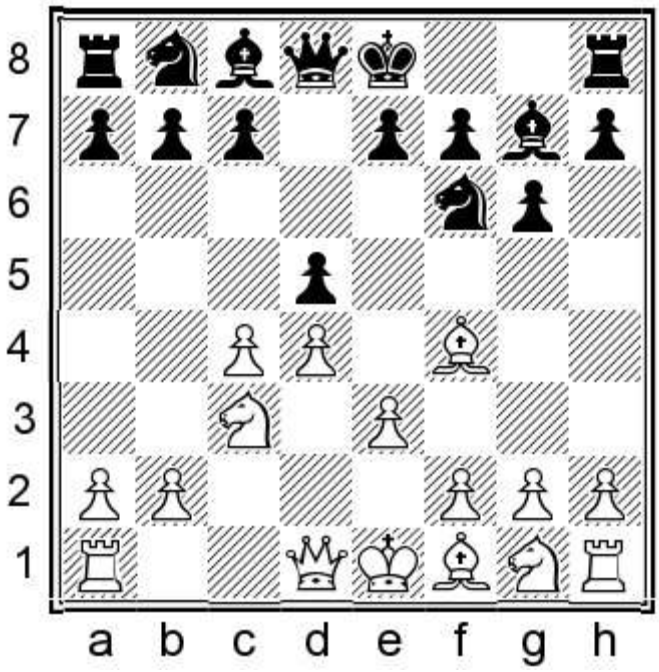


Position after: 22...♖xa4=

½-½ (22) Dreev, A (2657) – Mareco, S (2643) Forni di Sopra 2019.

c) 5.e3

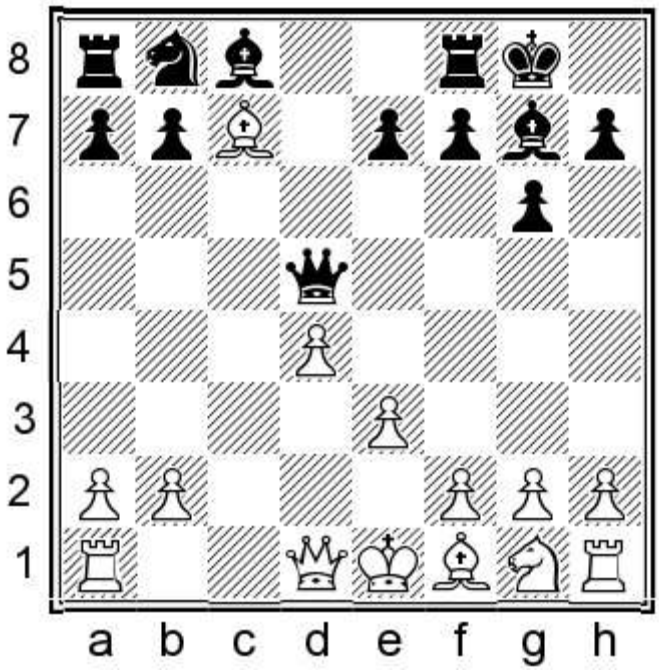
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4 ♗g7 5.e3



Position after: 5.e3

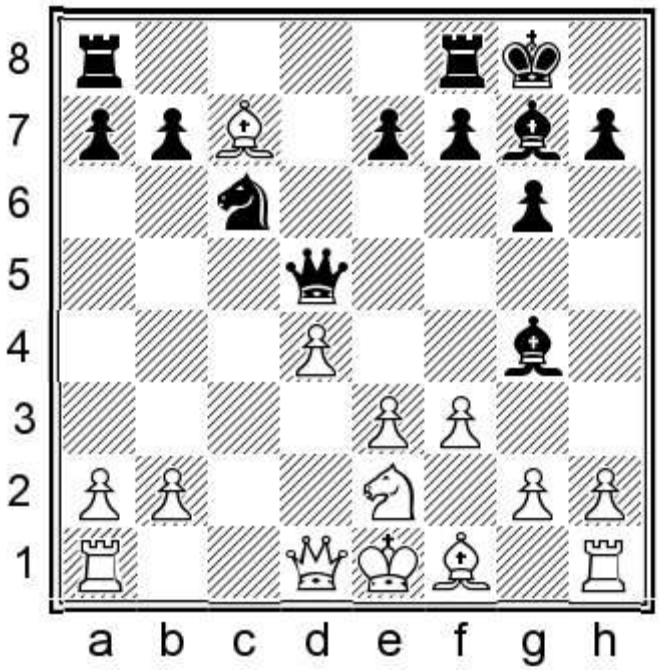
5...c5!

In case of 5...0-0 I am not thrilled to play a slightly worse/close to equal endgame that arises after a series of forced exchanges that Black cannot avoid: 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘xd5 ♕xd5 8.♗xc7



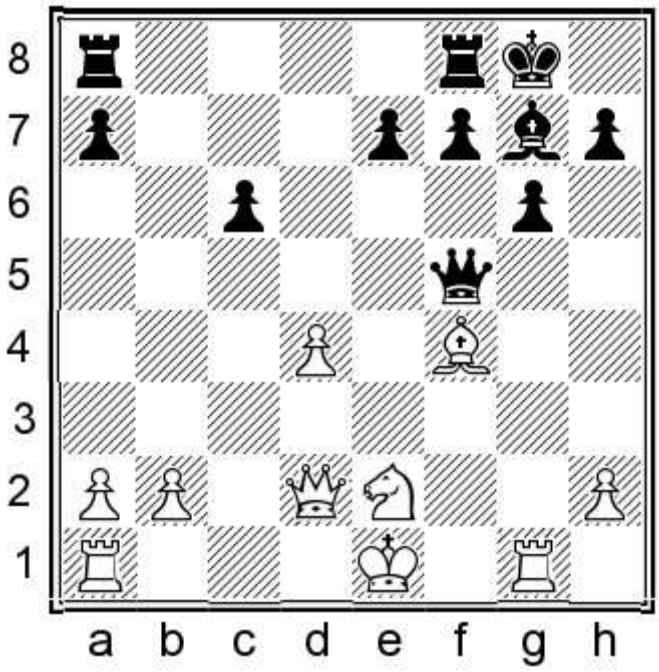
Position after: 8.♗xc7

A) Creative but insufficient for full compensation is 8...♘c6 9.♘e2 ♗g4 10.f3.



Position after: 10.f3

A1) Those who value fun in chess and not 100 percent result-oriented may try 10...♗xf3!? 11.gxf3 ♕xf3 12.♖g1 ♕xe3 13.♗f4 ♕e4 14.♗g2 ♕f5 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♕d2+–



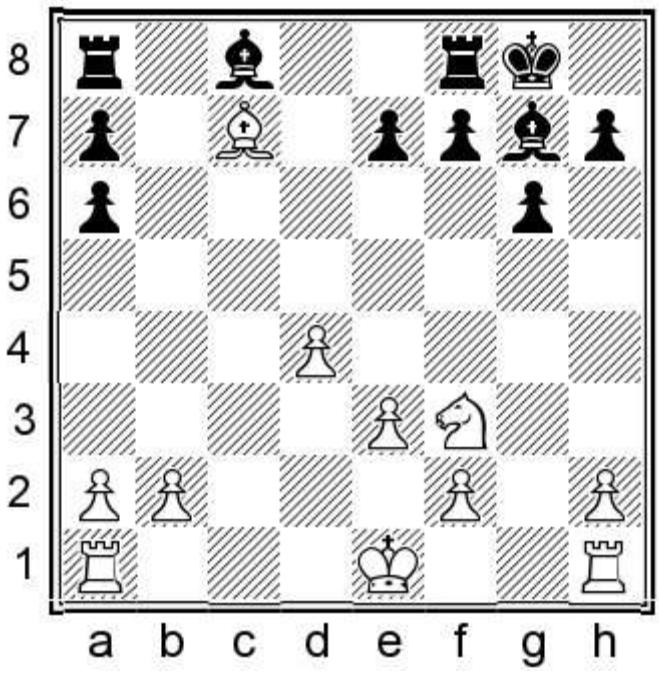
Position after: 16.♕d2+–

This position is objectively lost for Black. However, I think it is playable on any level below 2200, especially in blitz games.

A2) 10...♖ac8 11.♘c3 ♕e6 12.♗f4 ♘xd4 [12...♗xd4 13.fxg4 g5 14.♗xg5 ♖fd8 15.♕c1 ♘b4

16.♗e2+–] 13.fxg4 ♖fd8 14.♖c1!N Objectively, Black does not have enough play to compensate for the sacrificed material.

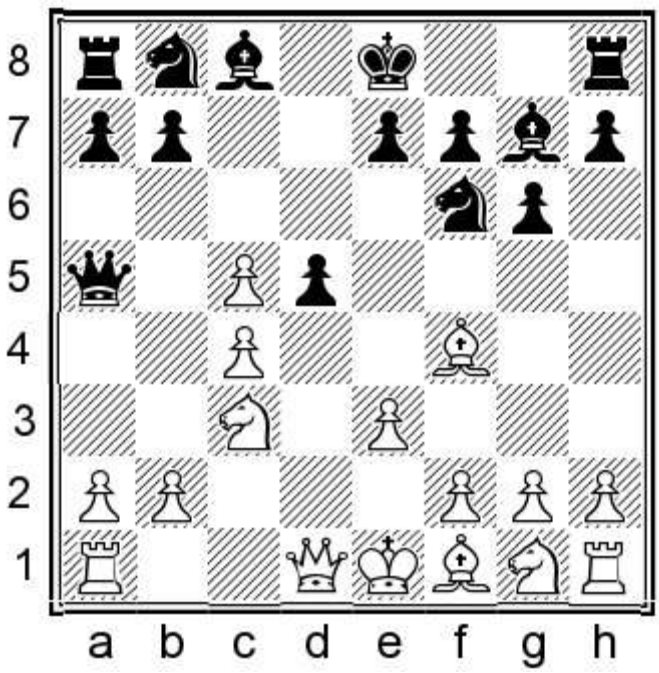
B) 8...♘a6 9.♗xa6 ♕xg2 10.♕f3 ♕xf3 11.♘xf3 bxa6



Position after: 11...bxa6

Even though Black should be able to reach equal chances in this endgame, White has much easier play against Black's deformed pawn structure on the queenside.

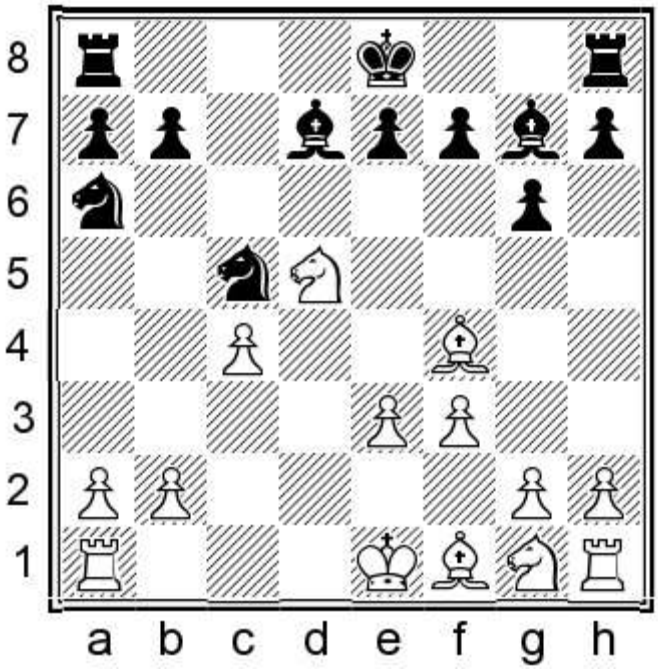
6.dxc5 ♕a5



Position after: 6...♕a5

7.♖c1

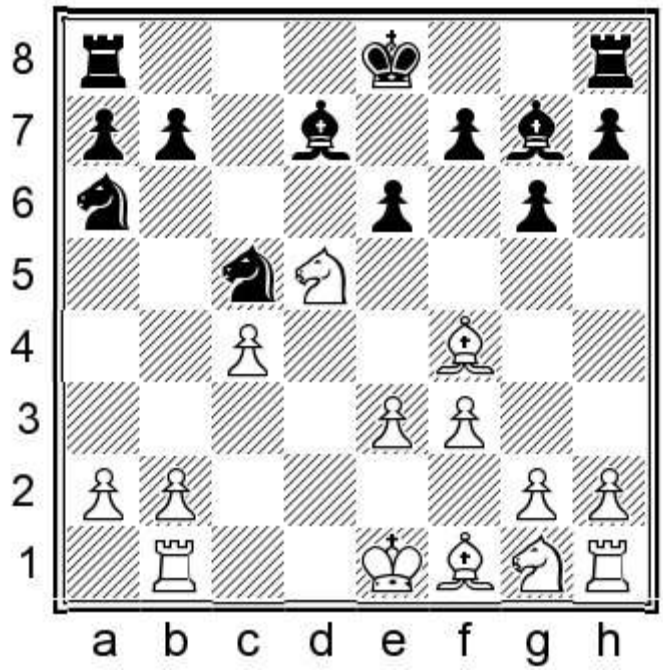
A) 7.♕a4+ A reasonable attempt to get rid of the hyperactive queen on a5. 7...♕xa4 8.♘xa4 ♗d7 9.♘c3 ♘e4! A standard pawn sacrifice as we value activity more than pawns. 10.♘xd5 ♘a6 11.f3 ♘exc5



Position after: 11...♘exc5

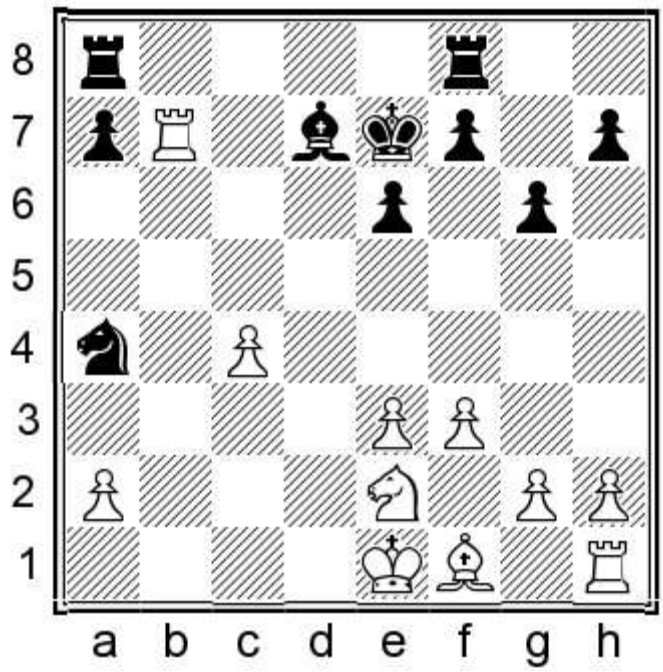
A1) 12.0-0-0 e6 13.♘c3 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 f6= Black achieves easy play against the doubled c-pawns. 15.e4 e5 16.♗e3 ♖c8 17.♖d5?! ♗e6 18.♔d2 ♔e7 19.♘h3 b6 20.♗e2 ½-½ (34) Akobian, V (2647) – So, W (2786) Saint Louis 2018. 20...♘b7! 21.♔c2 ♘a5 22.c5 ♗xd5 23.♗xa6 ♗b7–+

A2) 12.♖b1 e6



Position after: 12...e6

13.♘c7+ ♘xc7 14.♗xc7 ♘a4 15.♗d6 ♘xb2 16.♗a3 ♘a4 17.♖xb7 ♗f8 18.♗xf8 ♖xf8 19.♘e2 ♔e7

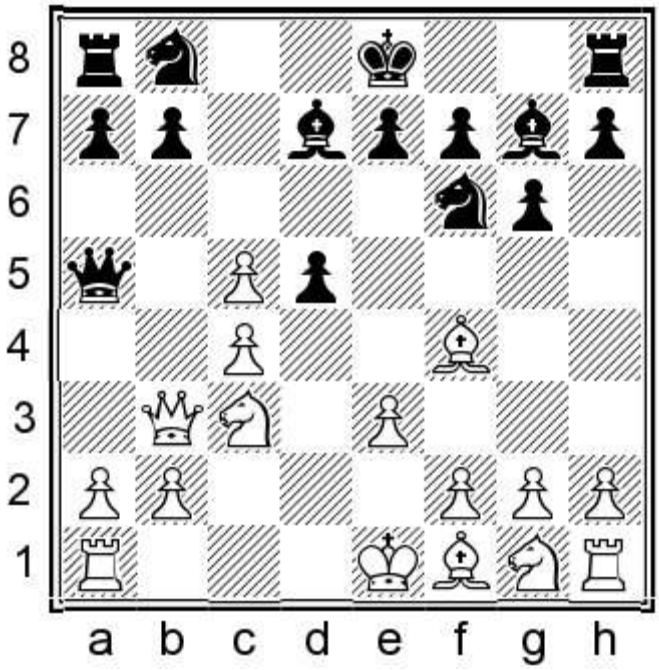


Position after: 19...♔e7

White can't capitalize on the extra pawn because of his lack of kingside development. Black has sufficient compensation and the game is most likely heading to a draw if both opponents are playing optimally. 20.♔d2 [20.♘d4 ♘c5 21.♖b4 ♖fb8 22.a3 a5 23.♖xb8 ♖xb8 24.♘b5 ♘a4 25.♔d2 ♗xb5 26.cxb5 ♖d8+ 27.♔c2 ♖c8+ 28.♔b3 ♘c5+ ½-½ (28) Novikov, I (2545) – Sutovsky, E (2575)

Koszalin 1998] 20...♖fb8 21.♖b3 ♘c5 22.♖a3 ♘a4 23.♘c3 ♘xc3 24.♔xc3 ♖b1 25.g3 ♖e1 26.♔d2 ♖b1 27.♔c3 ♖e1=

B) 7.♕b3 ♗d7

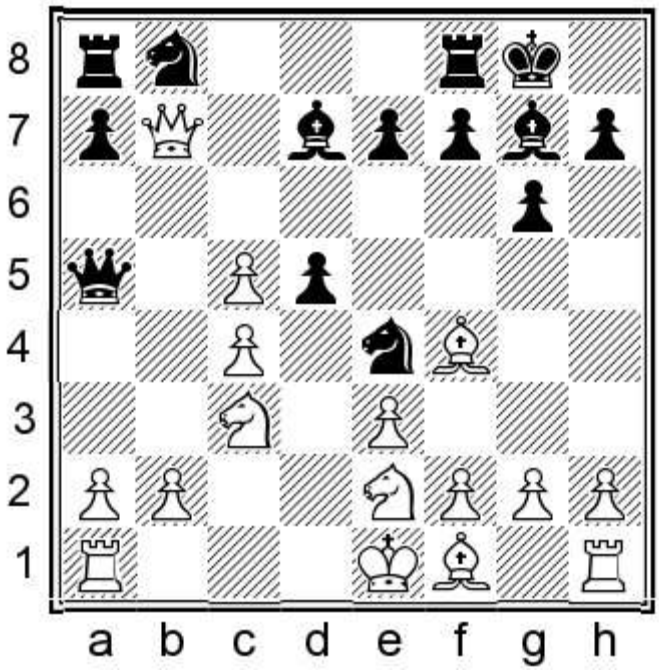


Position after: 7...♗d7

I have spent quite a lot of time trying to understand this mysterious bishop move.

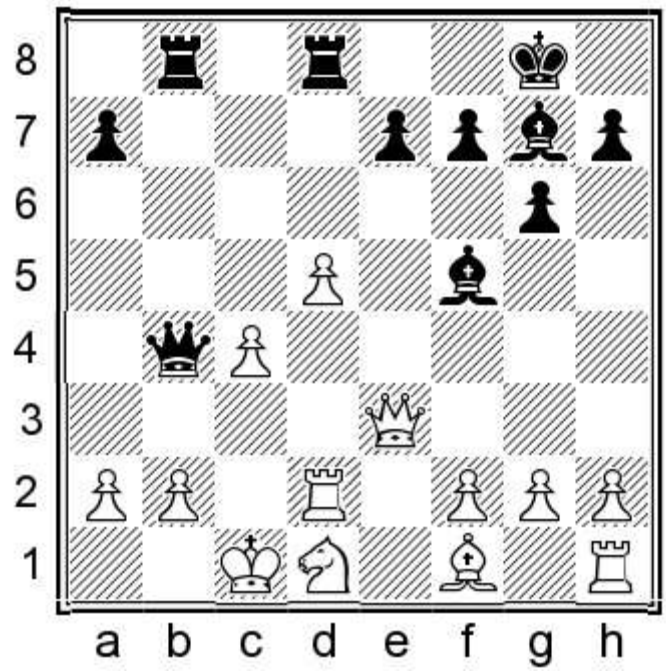
Finally, I realized that it stops the main idea behind 7.♕b3 which is 8.♕b5(+). The goal of 8.♕b5(+) is to push our queen away from a5 and alleviate the pressure on the c3-knight.

B1) 8.♕xb7 ♘e4 9.♘ge2 0-0



Position after: 9...0-0

White doesn't have time for the a8-rook since the king's position is on fire. 10.♗c7 ♕xc5 11.♕xd5 ♕xc7 12.♕xe4 ♘c6 13.♘d4 ♘xd4 14.exd4 ♕b6 15.0-0-0 ♗f5 16.♕e3 ♖fd8∓ Consider the two sacrificed pawns on the previous moves as an investment in the future attack on the king. 17.d5 ♕b4 18.♖d2 ♖ab8 19.♘d1

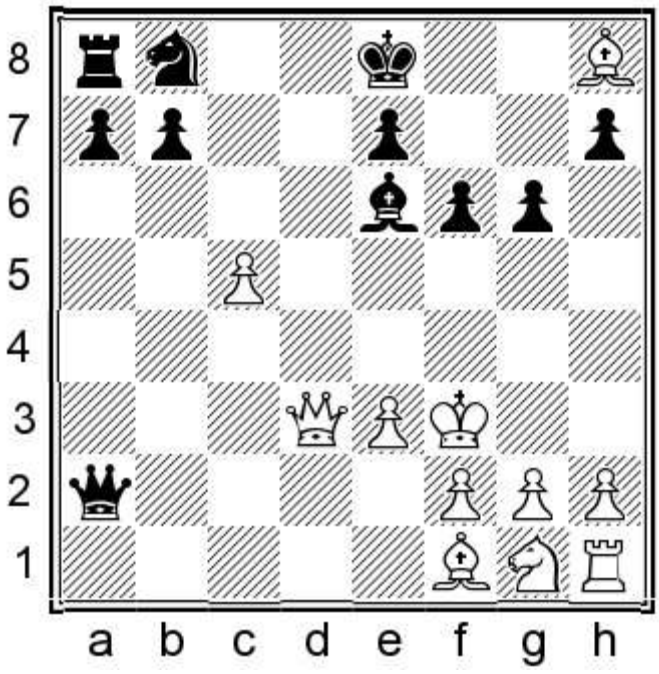


Position after: 19.♘d1

19...♖xd5!–+ Jackpot! Black is cashing out and wins the game.

B2) 8.♗e5 dxc4 9.♗xc4 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘a6= 0-1 (63) Lautier, J (2645) – Ivanchuk, V (2740) Monte Carlo 1998. Black simply recaptures the c5-pawn and then brings the rooks into the game after ...♖fd8 and ...♖ac8.

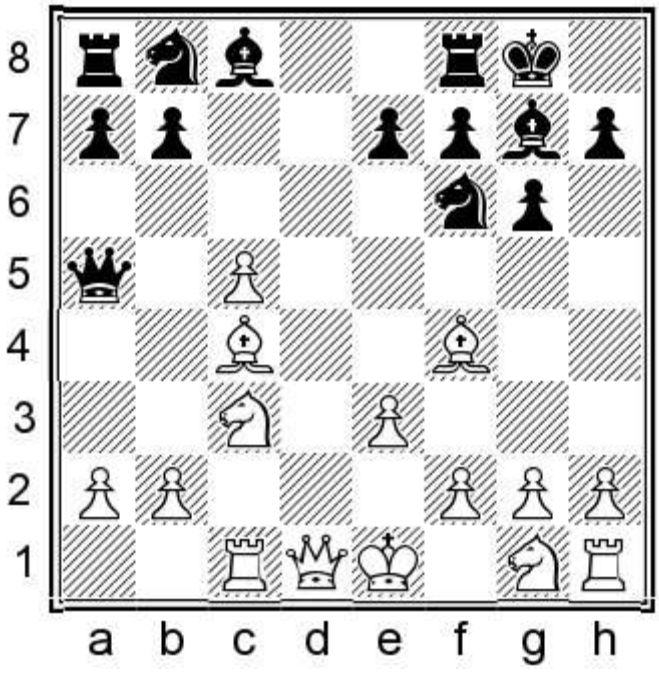
C) 7.cxd5?! The only reason this move doesn't get a question mark is that somehow White still manages to survive Black's upcoming attack. Let's see how it goes. 7...♘xd5 8.♕xd5 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕xc3+ 10.♔e2 ♕xa1 11.♗e5 ♕b1 12.♗xh8 ♗e6 13.♕d3 ♕xa2+ 14.♔f3 f6!



Position after: 14...f6!

The bishop needs to be trapped. Now White faces an unpleasant task of defending the overly advanced king on f3, the trapped bishop on h8 and developing the still dormant kingside. While the engines may find a draw here for White, I doubt most human chess players can do the same. 15.♗g7 ♘d7 16.♔g3 ♔f7 17.♗h6 ♘xc5 18.♕d4 ♕c2 19.f3 ♘b3! 20.♕b4 ♕c7+ 21.♗f4 a5 22.♗xc7 axb4 23.♘h3 ♖a1 24.♘f2 ♘d2 25.♗e2 ♖xh1 26.♘xh1 b3 27.♗a5! b2 28.♗d3 ♗c4 [The pawn promotion would have been premature: 28...b1=♕ 29.♗xb1 ♘xb1 30.♗b4.] 29.♗c2 ♗b3=

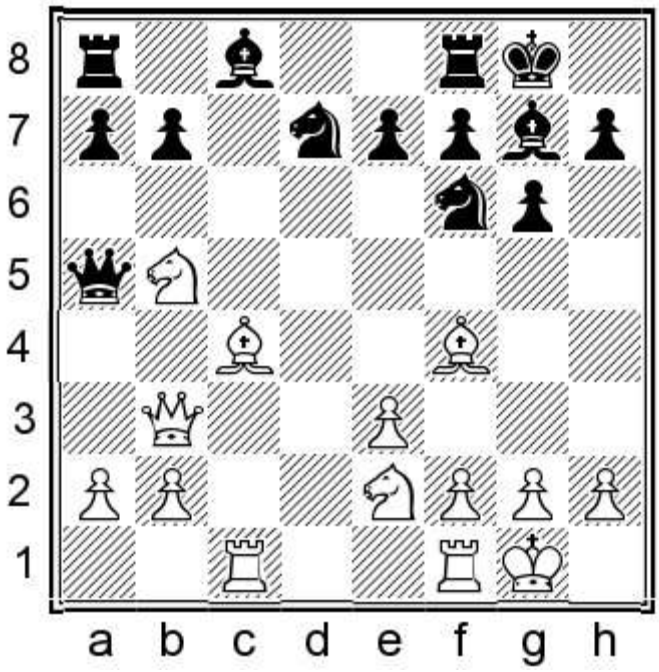
7...dxc4 8.♗xc4 0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

9.♘f3

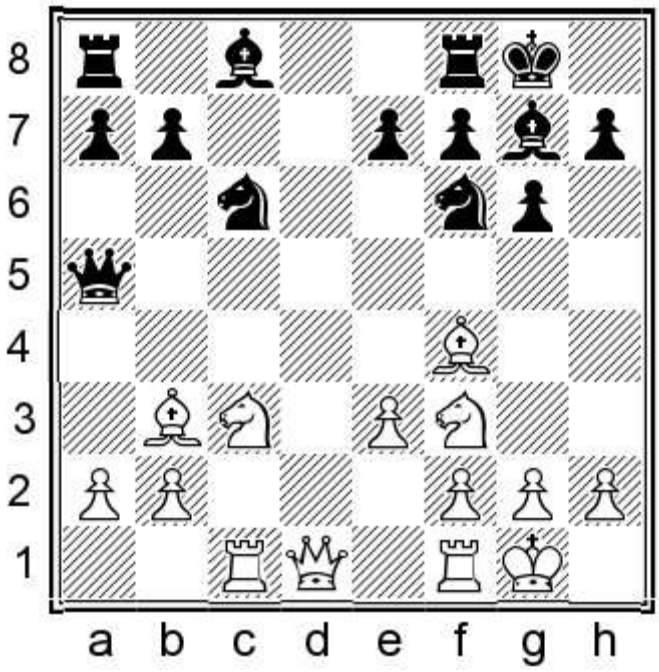
9.♘ge2 ♕xc5 10.♕b3 ♕a5 11.0-0 ♘bd7 12.♘b5



Position after: 12.♘b5

[12.♖fd1 ♘c5 13.♕b5 ♕xb5 14.♘xb5 ♗e6 15.♗xe6 ♘xe6 16.♗e5 ♖fc8 17.♘ed4 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 ♘e4 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.f3 ♘d6= ½-½ (30) Matlakov, M (2691) – Li, C (2730) Novi Sad 2016] 12...♘b6 A significant improvement to the recent game between two terrific players and the regulars of the elite super tournaments. I secretly (maybe not so secretly anymore) hope that Mamedyarov will read this book and hire me as his second. By the way, once I had to say no to the top 10 player's offer to play and work with him because I got a job offer and had to move to a different state in the US. [12...♘e4?! 1-0 (67) Wojtaszek, R (2724) – Mamedyarov, S (2781) Moscow 2019. 13.♘c7! ♘d2 14.♕b5 ♕xb5 15.♗xb5 ♘xf1 16.♘xa8 ♘d2 17.f3±] 13.♘c7 ♖b8 14.♖fd1 ♗d7 15.♘d5 ♘fxd5 16.♗xb8 ♖xb8 17.♗xd5 e6 18.♗f3 ♗a4 19.♕a3 ♗f8 20.♕c3 ♕xc3 21.♘xc3 ♗xd1 22.♘xd1 ♗d6=

9...♕xc5 10.♗b3 ♘c6 11.0-0 ♕a5

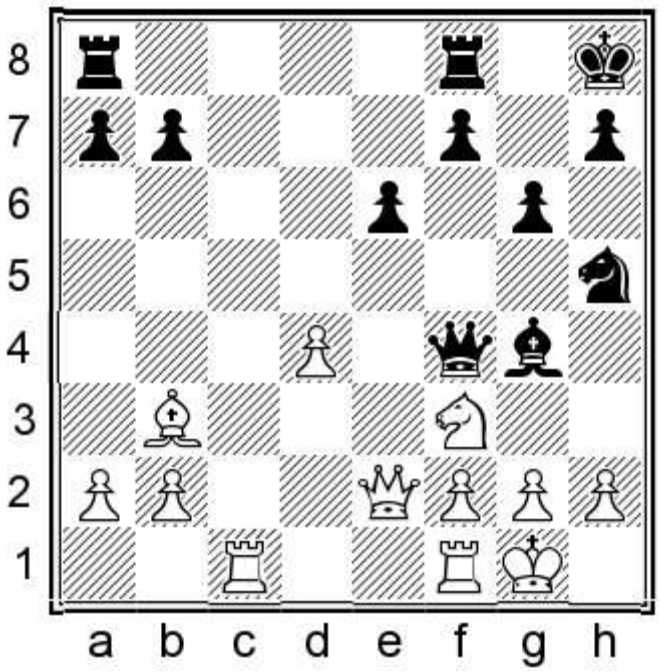


Position after: 11...♕a5

12.h3

White needs to stop ...♗g4.

12.♕e2 ♘h5 13.♗g5 ♗g4 14.♘d5 e6 15.♘e7+ ♔h8 16.♘xc6 ♕xg5 17.♘cd4 ♗xd4 18.exd4 ♕f4



Position after: 18...♕f4

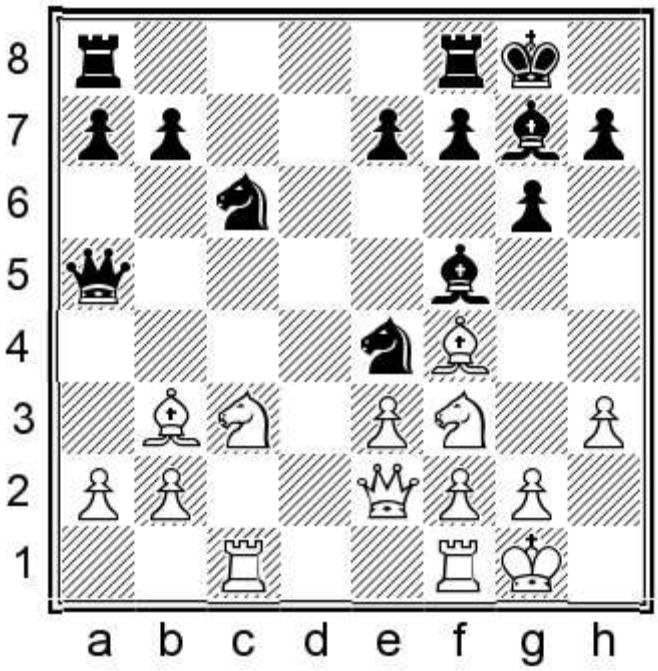
0-1 (29) Roussel Roozmon, T (2439) – Mikhalevski, V (2572) Montreal 2005. 19.♖c3 ♖ac8 20.g3 ♗xf3

21.♕xf3 ♕xf3 22.♖xf3 ♔g7 23.d5 exd5 24.♗xd5 ♖c7=

12...♗f5 13.♕e2

13.♘g5 e5 14.♗g3 ♖ad8 15.♕f3 h6 16.♘ge4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♕b4 18.♘c3 ♖d3= ½-½ (33) Meshalkin, Y – Churkina, N ICCF email 2013.

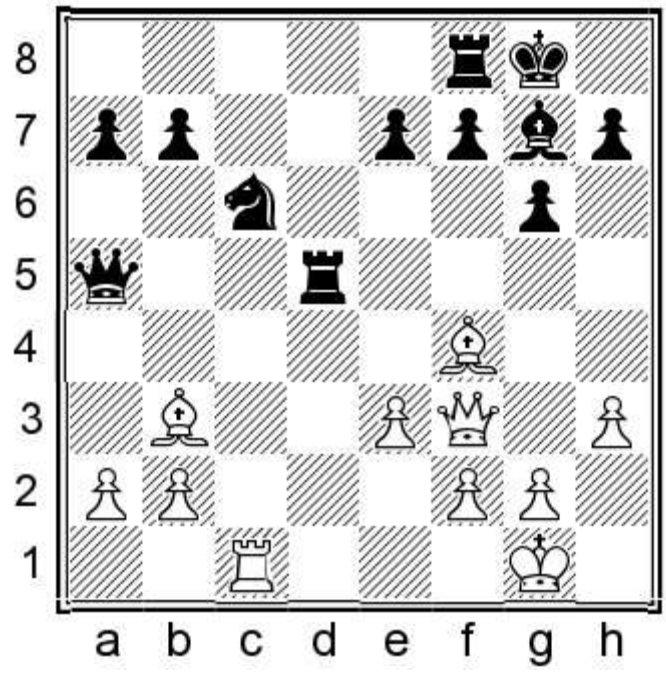
13...♘e4



Position after: 13...♘e4

14.♘d5

A) 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.♖fd1 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♖ad8 17.♖d5 ♖xd5

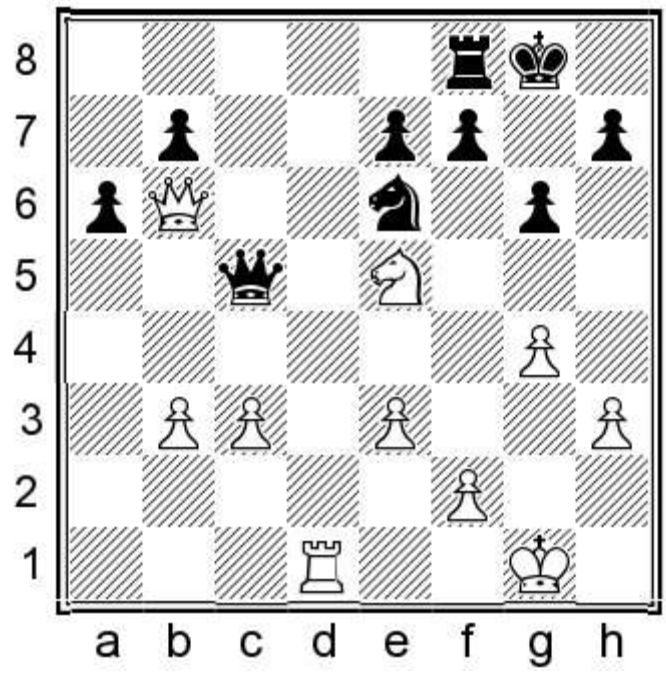


Position after: 17...♖xd5

A1) 18.♕xd5?! ♗xb2 19.♖c5? ½-½ (56) Lysyj, I (2631) – Mikhalevski, V (2610) Biel 2010. [19.♕xa5 ♘xa5 20.♖c7 ♗f6 21.♗c2=] 19...♕e1+! 20.♔h2 ♗f6∓

A2) 18.♗xd5 ♗xb2 19.♖b1 ♕d2 20.♕e4 ♘b4 21.♗xb7 ♘d3 22.♗g3 ♕c2 23.♖f1 ♗f6 24.♗a6 ♖d8=

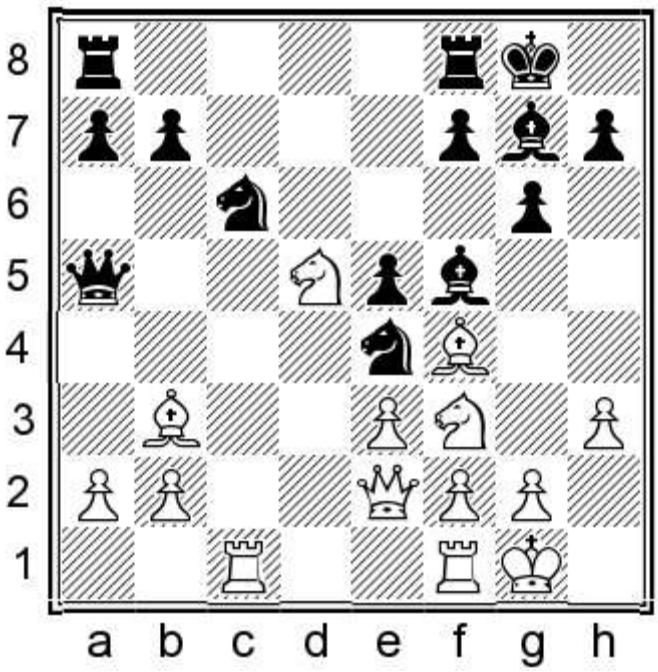
B) 14.g4 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♗d7 16.♖fd1 ♖ad8 17.♖d5 ♕a3 18.♖cd1 ♗e6 19.♖xd8 ♘xd8 20.♕b5 ♗xb3 21.axb3 a6 22.♕b6 ♘e6 23.♗e5 ♗xe5 24.♘xe5 ♕c5=



Position after: 24...♕c5=

25.♕xc5 ♘xc5 26.b4 ♘e4 27.♖d7 ½-½ (27) Tomashevsky, E (2699) – Svidler, P (2722) Moscow 2010.

14...e5



Position after: 14...e5

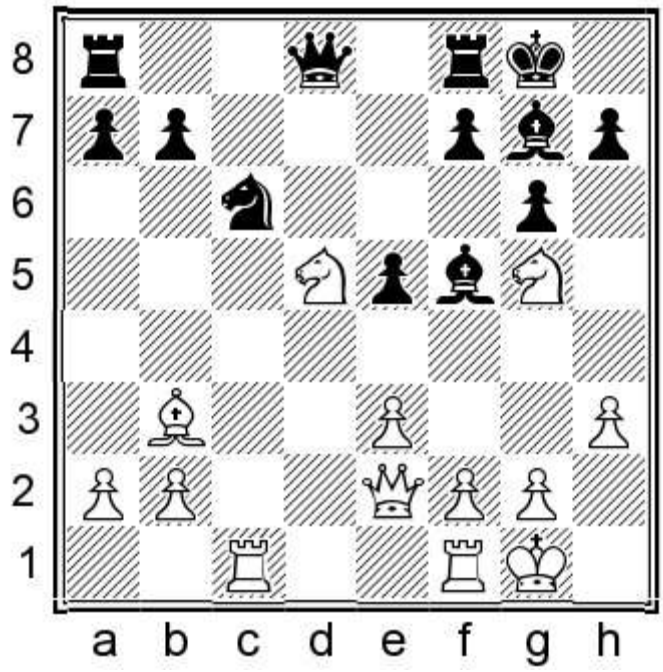
15.♗g5

This counter-intuitive move is White's best attempt to fight aggressively for the advantage. The classical school of chess says that, in most cases, a bishop pair is more valuable than a knight and bishop, especially in the endgame. As an 8-year old kid, I remember reading a book by the early 20th century GM Siegbert Tarrasch, dedicated entirely to the bishops who once famously said "The future belongs to he who has the bishops". Now I know that the correct statement is "it all depends on a concrete position".

A) 15.♗h2 ♗e6 16.♖fd1 ♖fd8 17.♕c4 ♘f6 18.e4 ♖ac8 19.♘g5 ♘d4 20.♘e7+ ♔f8 21.♘xe6+ ♔xe7 22.♘xd8 ♖xc4 23.♗xc4 ♘xe4 24.♘xf7 ♕b6 25.♘xe5 ♗xe5 26.♗xe5 ♘f3+ 27.gxf3 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1 ♕xf3+ 29.♔h2 ♕f2+ 30.♔h1 ♕f3+ ½ – ½ (30) Timman, J (2630) – Ivanchuk, V (2735) Hilversum 1991.

B) 15.♖xc6 bxc6 16.♘e7+ ♔h8 17.♘xc6 ♕b6 18.♘cxe5 ♗e6 19.♗xe6 ♕xe6 20.♕c2 f5 21.♕a4 g5 22.♗h2 ♖ad8 23.♘d4 ♕e8∓

15...♘xg5 16.♘xg5 ♕d8

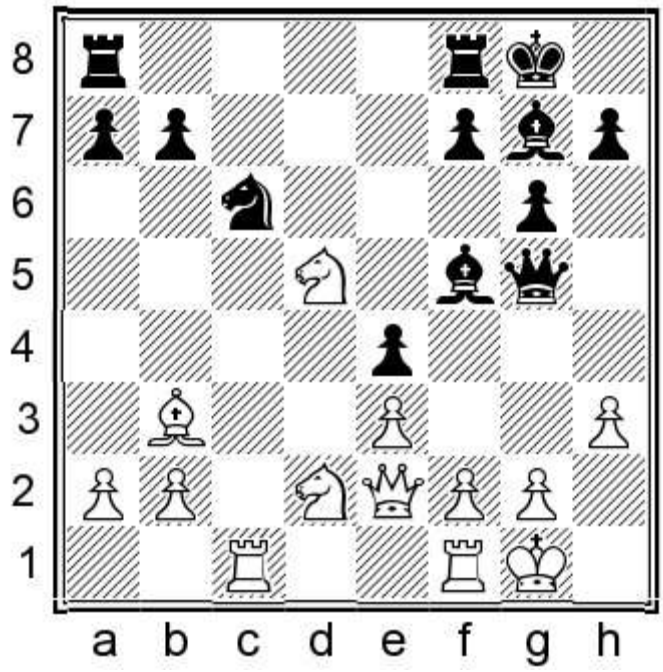


Position after: 16...♕d8

17.h4

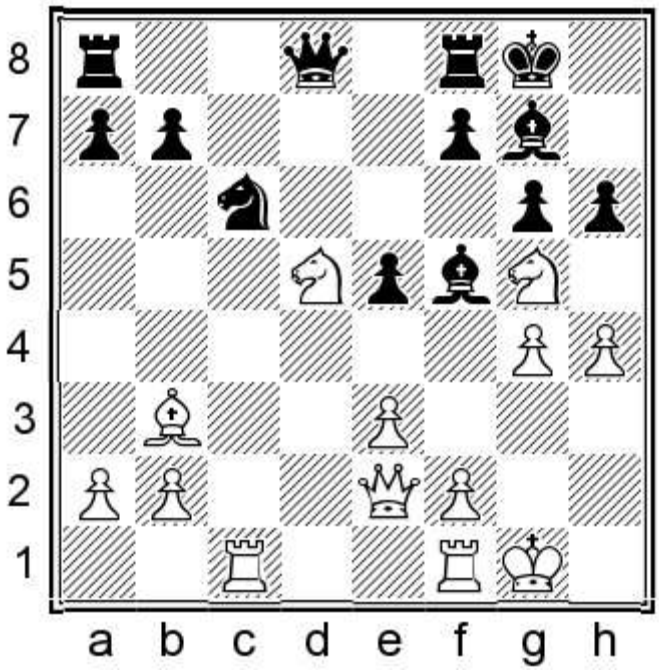
A mandatory move otherwise 15.♗g5 doesn't make much sense. White needs to keep the attack going.

17.♘f3 e4 18.♘d2 [18.♘h2 ♗e6 19.♖fd1 ♘d4 20.exd4 ♗xd5∓ ½-½ (57) Burkart, P (2381) – Wiedenkeller, M (2429) Bonnevoie 1999] 18...♕g5↑



Position after: 18...♕g5↑

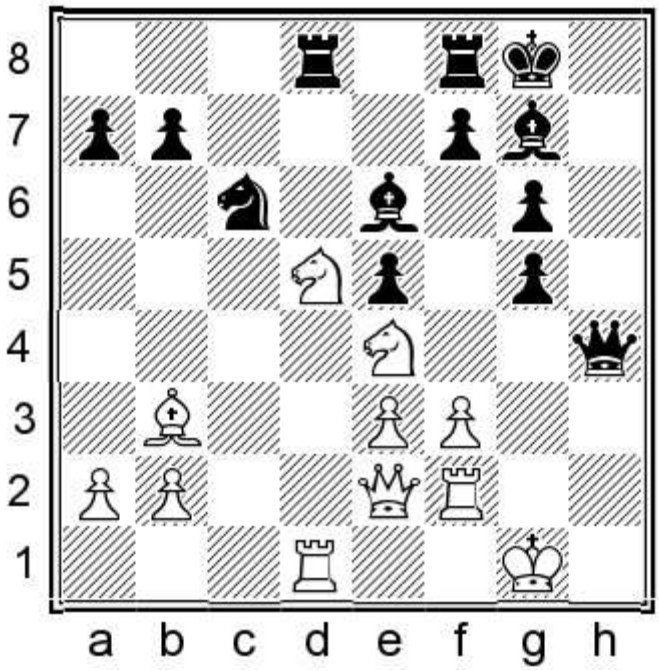
17...h6 18.g4



Position after: 18.g4

18...♗d7

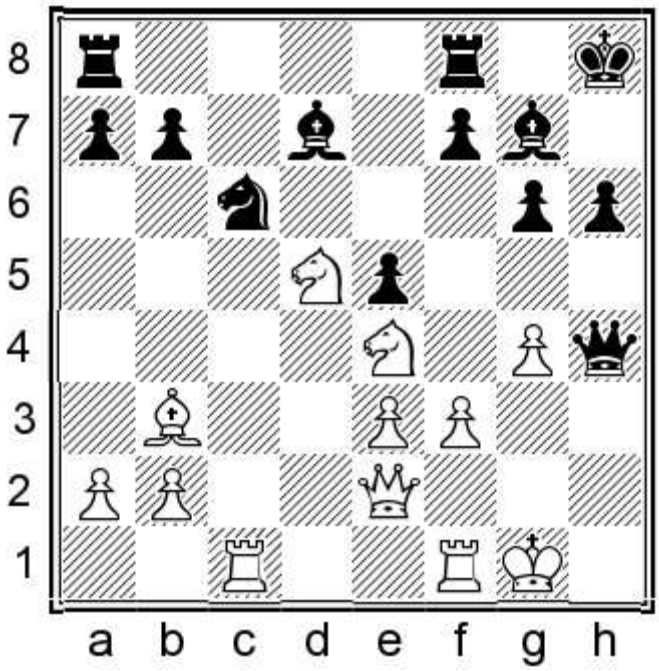
A bit too risky for my taste was another possible bishop retreat chosen by the legendary GM Peter Svidler: 18...♗c8?! 19.♘e4 ♗e6? [Playable was 19...♕xh4 20.f3 ♘a5!? 21.♖c7 ♘xb3 22.♘e7+ ♔h7] 20.♖cd1 [Rising star GM Dubov missed an opportunity to gain an initiative after 20.♕f3! ♗xd5 21.♗xd5 ♕xh4 22.♔g2↑] 20...♕xh4 21.f3 ♖ad8 22.g5 hxg5 23.♖f2



Position after: 23.♖f2

23...♘d4?? The only way to explain such a blunder from a top GM is that this was a blitz game. [23...♗xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖xd5 25.♖h2 ♖d7 26.♖xh4 gxh4∓] 24.♘e7+ ♔h7 25.exd4+– 1-0 (27) Dubov, D (2690) – Svidler, P (2723) Moscow 2019.

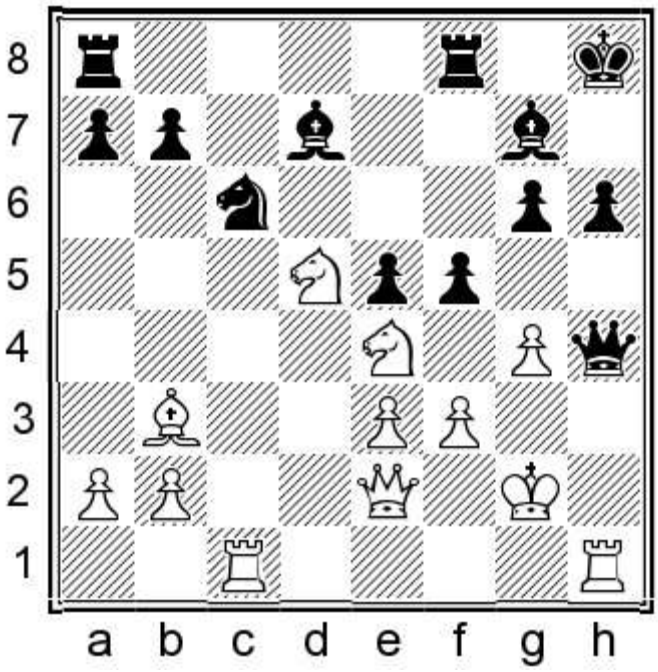
19.♘e4 ♕xh4 20.f3 ♔h8



Position after: 20...♔h8

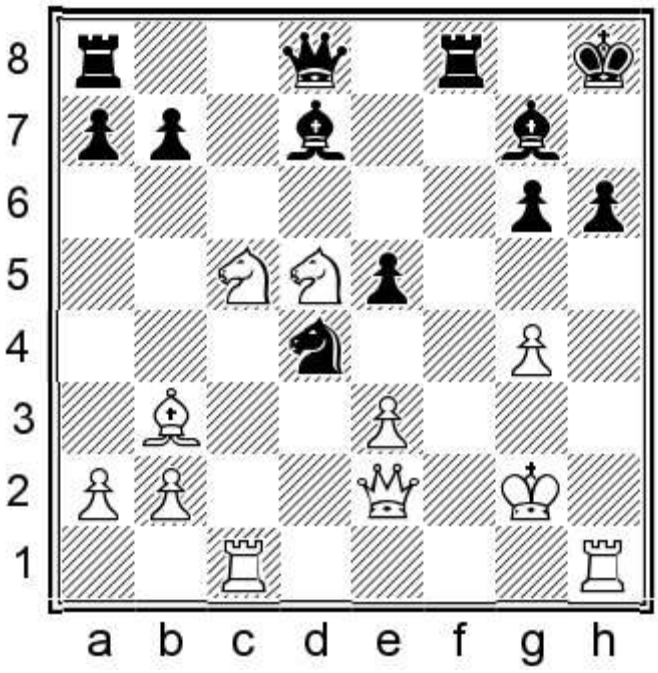
21.♖f2

The standard 21.♔g2 f5 22.♖h1



Position after: 22.♖h1

wouldn’t work because of 22...♕d8! [22...fxe4? 23.♖xh4 exf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♖xf3 25.♔xf3 e4+ 26.♔g2 g5 27.♖hh1 ♗xg4 28.♗d1 ♗f5 29.♗e2± 1-0 (79) Lysyj, I (2617) – Salem, A (2469) Biel 2009] 23.♘c5 [23.gxf5 gxf5 24.♘c5 ♘a5∓] 23...fxg4 24.fxg4 ♘d4! This is why the king needs to be on g1!

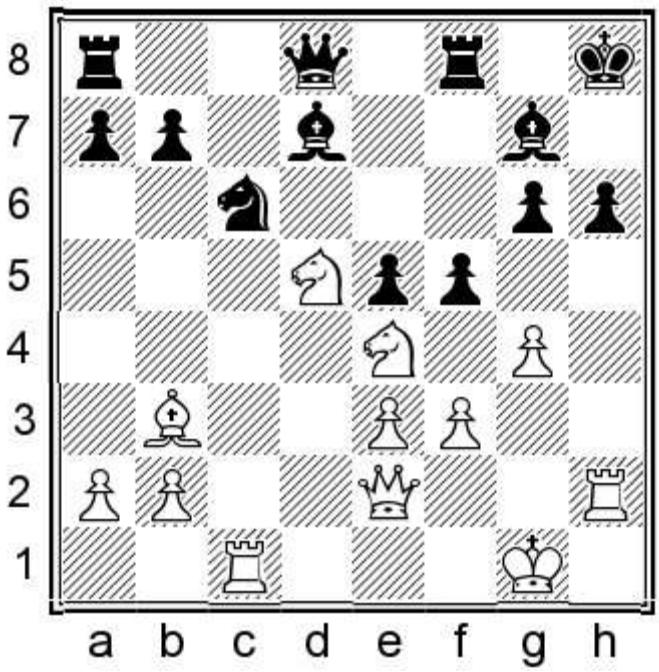


Position after: 24...♘d4!

After 25.exd4 ♗c6 with the king on g1 our combination with ...♘d4 and ...♗c6 wouldn’t make any sense as there would be no pin and the d5-knight can go anywhere it pleases. 26.dxe5 ♗xd5+ 27.♗xd5

♕xd5+ 28.♕e4 ♕d2+ 29.♔h3 ♖ad8 30.♖hf1 ♖xf1 31.♖xf1 ♕xb2–+

21...f5 22.♖h2 ♕d8

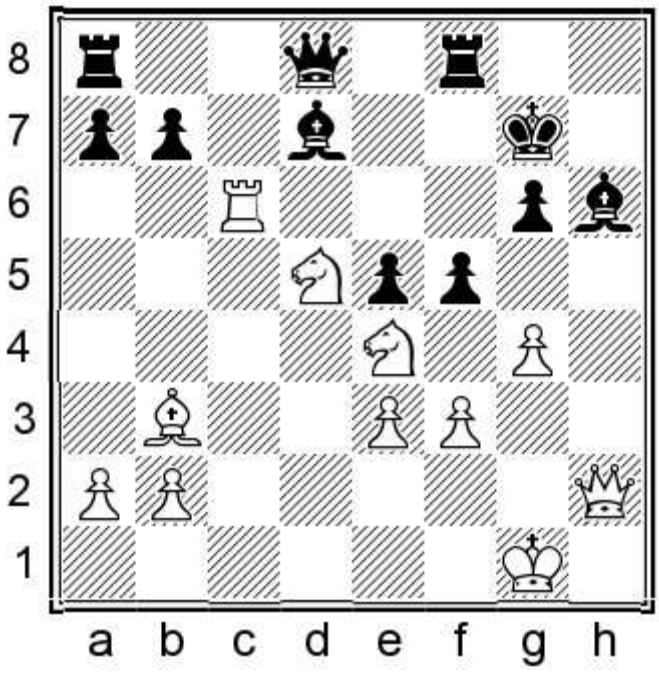


Position after: 22...♕d8

23.♖xh6+

Rook sacrifice #1! White needs to resort to extreme measures to get a draw.

23...♗xh6 24.♕h2 ♔g7 25.♖xc6

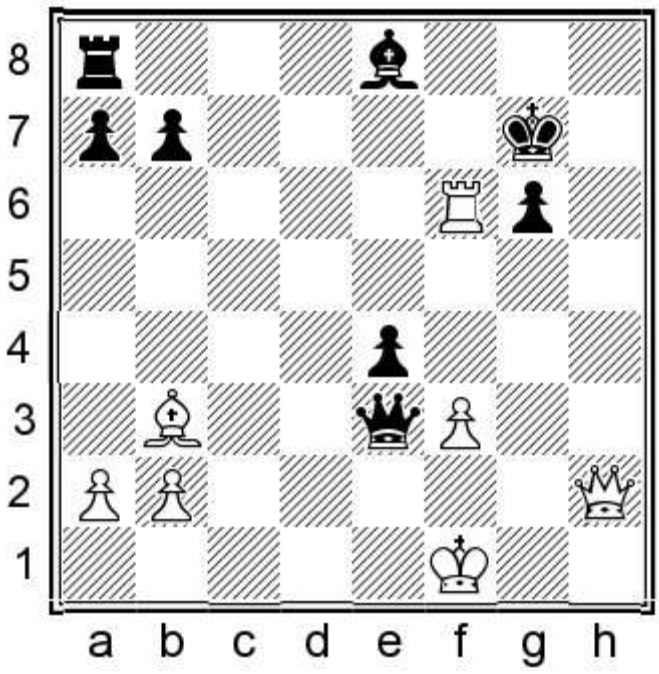


Position after: 25.♖xc6

Rook sacrifice #2!

25...♗xc6

We can also play like very strong Grandmaster and Grünfeld expert, Alexander Areshchenko. I wish I listened to him when he was telling me about Bitcoin all the way back in 2011! 25...fxe4 26.♕xe5+ ♔h7 27.♘f6+ ♖xf6 28.♖xf6 ♗e8 29.g5 ♕d2 30.gxh6 ♕xe3+ 31.♔f1 ♔xh6 32.♕h2+ ♔g7



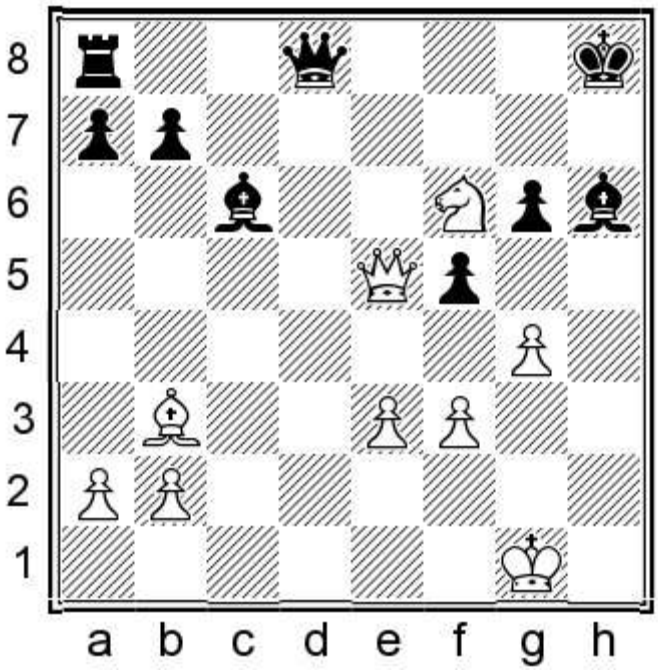
Position after: 32...♔g7

33.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 34.♕d6+ ♔h7 35.♕e7+ ♔g6 36.♕d6+ ♔h7 37.♕e7+ ♔g6 38.♕d6+ ½-½ (38) Jobava, B (2734) – Areshchenko, A (2702) Burgas 2012.

26.♕xe5+ ♔h7 27.♘ef6+ ♖xf6 28.♘xf6+ ♔h8 29.♘g8+ ♔h7

Unfortunately, we can't escape the perpetual check: 29...♗g7?? 30.♕h2+ ♗h6 31.♕xh6#.

30.♘f6+ ♔h8=



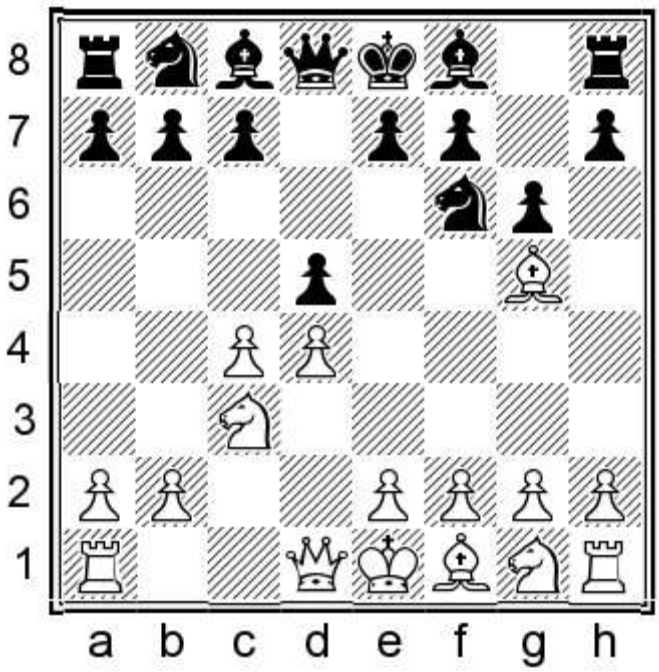
Position after: 30...♔h8=

White is forced to give a perpetual check. I will say it is a pretty good result if your opponent has White, is down a rook and is forced to make a draw.

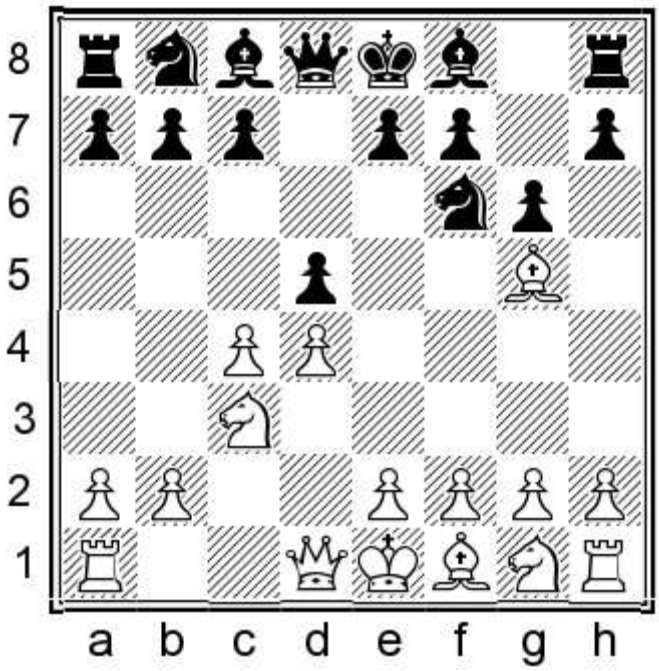
Keep in mind the likelihood of your opponent knowing all of these moves is minimal and you have a lot of upside potential if White deviates from any of the lines provided above.

Chapter 9
4.♗g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗g5



1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗g5



Position after: 4.♗g5

One of the most straightforward attempts to gain an opening edge against the Grünfeld. White's idea is obvious: to take the knight on f6 and win the d5-pawn. At the same time, White is happy to provoke ...♘f6-e4 on the next move and thus deviate from the more common Grünfeld pawn structures which have proven to be extremely flexible and playable for Black.

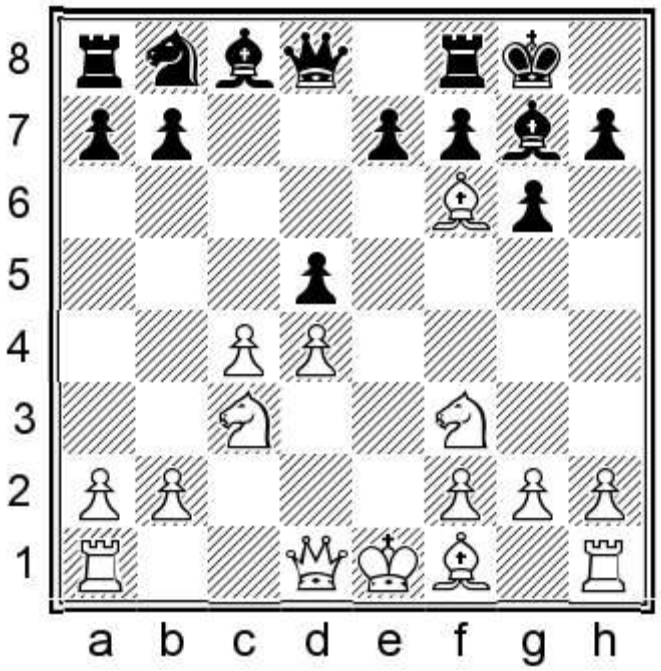
4...♗g7!

For years I used to think that 4...♘e4 was the only response. However, I have recently discovered quite a few interesting ideas for Black after 4...♗g7 and have upgraded it to the main response against 4.♗g5. Why does 4...♗g7 look so appealing to me now? I would say for two reasons: 1) It is a rebellious statement against White's plans. You want to take my knight and win a pawn? Sure, go ahead, I am not particularly concerned. 2) Quick development. We neglect the threat and develop as fast as we can. We bet that if White takes our knight, our domination on the dark squares and the a1-h8 diagonal plus the bishop pair advantage is full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

5.♗xf6

The most principal response is to accept Black's challenge.

A) 5.e3 allows Black to equalize the chances rather easily with the typical 5...c5! 6.♘f3 [6.dxc5 ♕a5 7.♗xf6 ♗xf6 8.♖c1 dxc4 9.♗xc4 0-0 10.♘f3 ♕xc5 11.♕e2 ♗g7 12.0-0 e6 13.♖fd1 ♕e7=] 6...cxd4 7.exd4 [7.♘xd4 ♘e4 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♕a4+ ♗d7 10.♕a3 ♘c6=] 7...0-0 8.♗xf6



Position after: 8.♗xf6

A2) 8...exf6 I believe this unusual recapture is the simplest way to get an equal game. 9.♘xd5

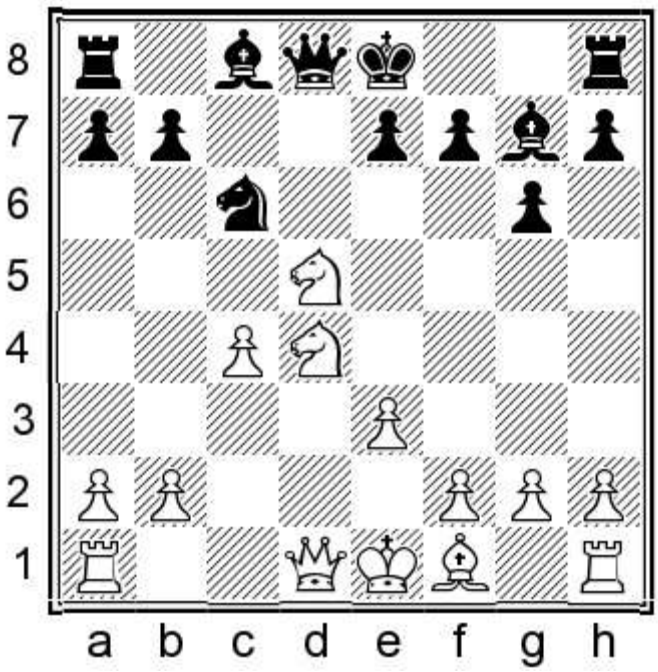
[9.cxd5 ♘d7 10.♗e2 ♘b6 11.♕b3 a5 12.a4 ♕d6 13.0-0 ♕b4 14.♖a3 ♗d7 15.♕d1 ♕d6 16.♕b3 ♕b4= While White is technically up a pawn, Black is doing great due to a lack of weaknesses and the bishop pair advantage over the knight and bishop.] 9...♗g4 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 f5 12.♖e1 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘xd4=

A2) Also playable is 8...♗xf6 9.♘xd5 ♗g7. The only reason I prefer 8...exf6 to 8...♗xf6 is that Black doesn't have to waste a tempo retreating with ...♗g7. In the 8...exf6 line Black can win the d4-pawn. 10.♘c3 ♗g4 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘a5=

B) 5.♘f3 transposes to the main position in chapter 5.

5...♗xf6 6.cxd5

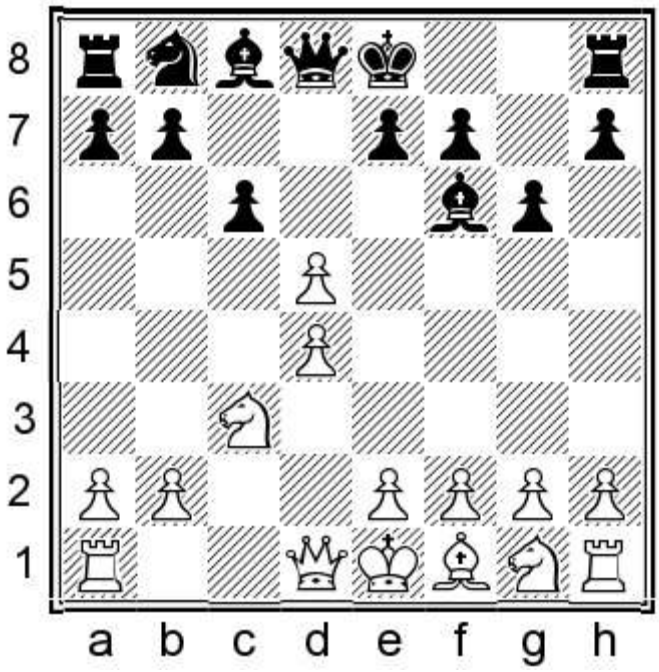
Black would definitely welcome 6.♘xd5?! ♗g7 7.e3 c5! 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6↑



Position after: 9...♘c6↑

and we are cruising through the game. Our control of the dark squares on the a1-h8 diagonal puts White in a precarious position. For example, 10.♗e2 ♘xd4 11.exd4 e6 12.♘c3 ♕xd4 13.0-0 ♗d7 14.♗f3 ♕xd1 15.♖fxd1 ♖c8 16.♘b5 ♔e7 17.♖ac1 a6 18.♘d6 ♖c7 19.♘xb7 ♗xb2 20.♖b1 ♗e5∓.

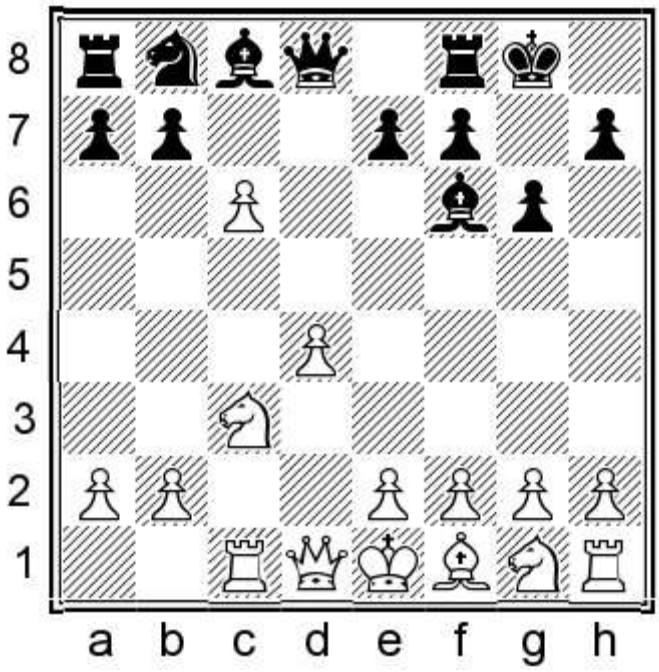
6...c6



Position after: 6...c6

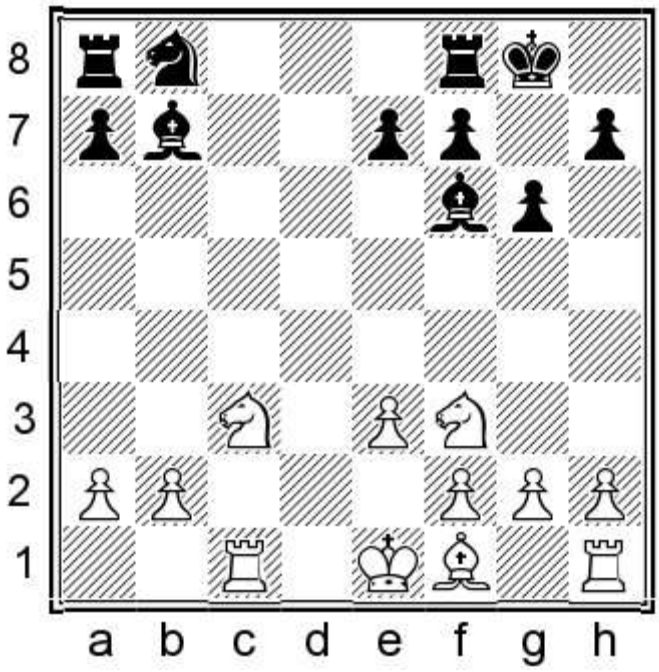
7.e4

A) 7.♖c1 0-0 8.dxc6



Position after: 8.dxc6

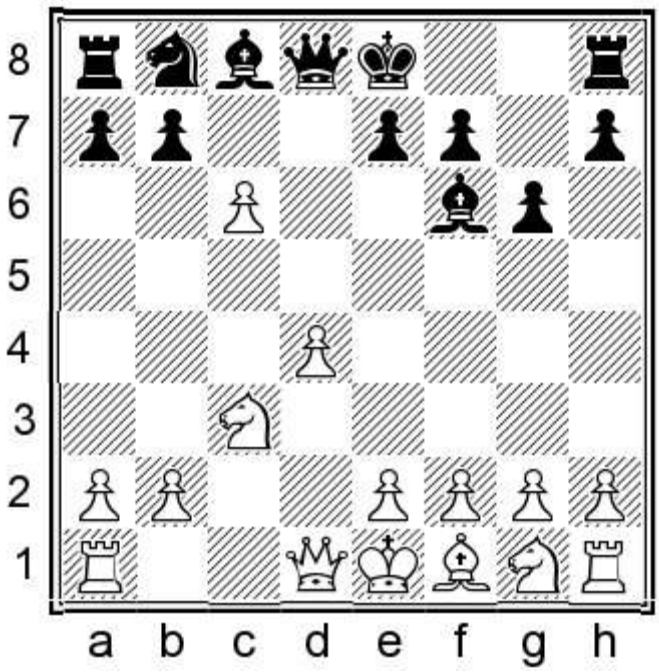
8...♕xd4 The only move. [8...♗xd4 leads to a slightly worse endgame with no realistic chances to win. 9.c7 ♗xc3+ 10.♖xc3 ♕xd1+ 11.♔xd1 ♘c6 12.e4 ♗d7 13.♘f3 ♖fc8 14.♗b5 ♖xc7 15.♔d2 f6 16.♖hc1 e5 17.♘e1 ♗e8 18.♘d3 ♖d8 19.♔e3±] 9.♕xd4 ♗xd4 10.cxb7 ♗xb7 11.♘f3 ♗f6 12.e3



Position after: 12.e3

12...♖d8 [12...♘d7 13.♗b5 ♖fd8 14.0-0 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♖ab8 16.♖b1!±] 13.♗b5 ♘a6 14.0-0 ♖ab8 15.♗c4 ♖bc8⩲ Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

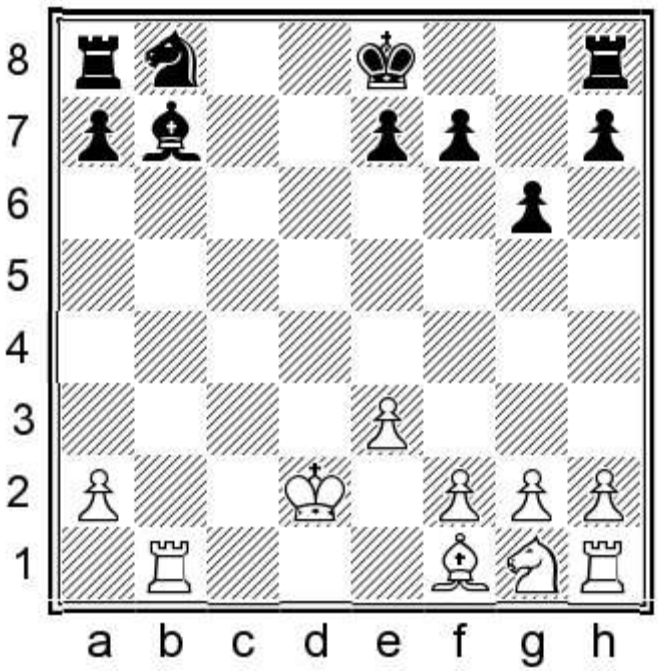
B) 7.dxc6 White may also adopt this greedy approach and collect all the pawns that Black has to offer.



Position after: 7.dxc6

Not a particularly dangerous line, but annoying since it may be difficult for Black to win if White buckles up and seeks a draw. 7...♗xd4 8.cxb7 ♗xb7 9.e3 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♕a5 11.♖b1 [11.♕b3 0-0

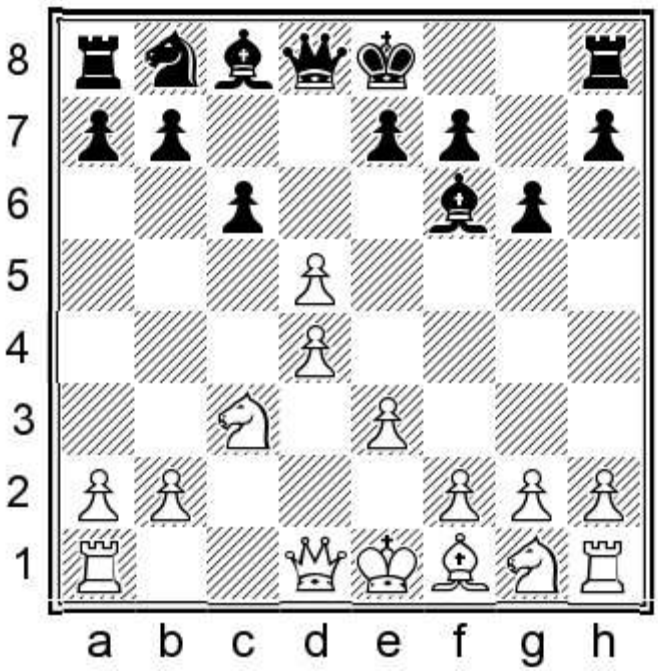
12.♕b4 ♕c7 13.♘f3 ♖c8 14.c4 ♘c6 15.♕c3 ♕a5 16.♖c1 ♖ab8 17.♗e2 ♗a6 18.0-0 ♕xc3 19.♖xc3 ♖b2 20.♖e1 ♖xa2=] 11...♕xc3+ 12.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2



Position after: 13.♔xd2

13...♘a6!? Not the only way to equalize but the most aesthetically pleasing. [13...♗d5 14.♗b5+ ♔f8 15.♘f3 ♔g7= 0-1 (36) Georgiev, V (2553) – Svane, R (2477) Copenhagen 2014] 14.♗b5+ [14.♖xb7 0-0-0+–+] 14...♔f8 15.♘f3 ♔g7 16.♖hc1 ♖ac8=

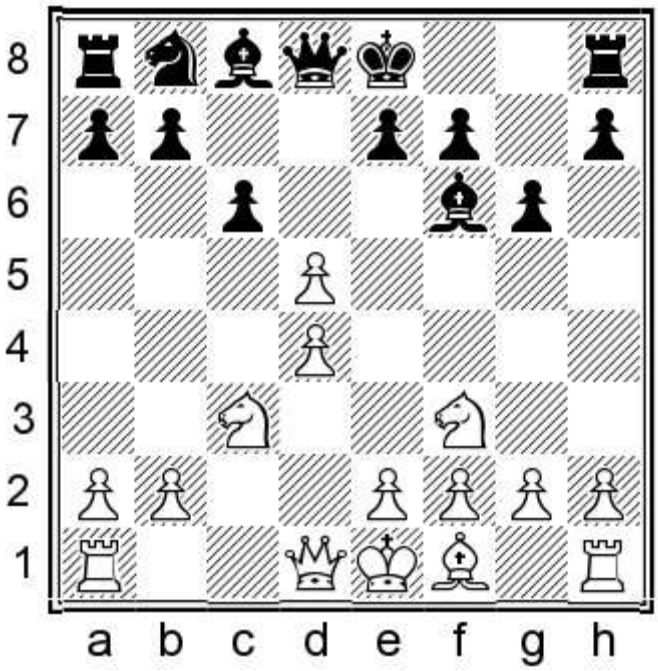
C) 7.e3 The least challenging line for Black.



Position after: 7.e3

Be happy if your opponent plays something like this against you: most likely he or she gives you a lot of respect and may even be scared of you! 7...cxd5 8.♗b5+ ♔f8 9.♘f3 ♔g7 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 e6 13.♖ac1 a6 14.♗a4 b5 15.♗b3 ♘d7 16.♖fd1 ♖c8= 0-1 (58) Fressinet, L (2693) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2682) Nancy 2012.

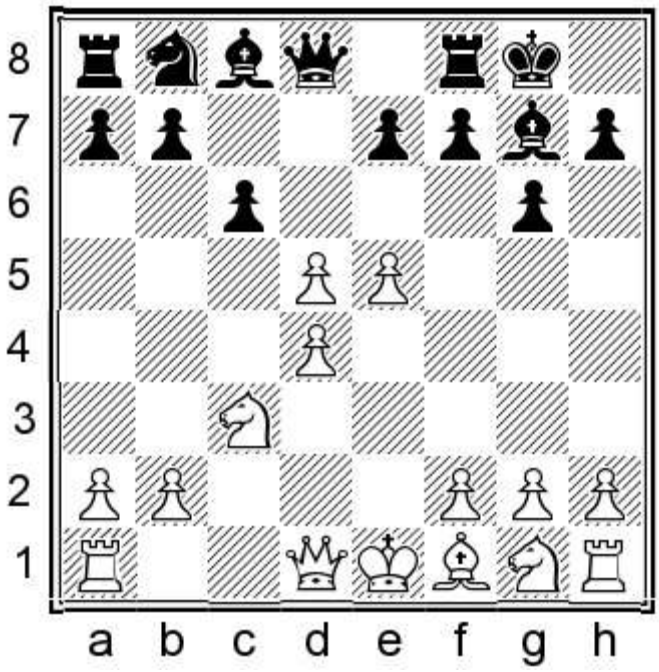
D) 7.♘f3



Position after: 7.♘f3

The knight move may look more ambitious than 7.e3 but, in a nutshell, leads to about the same position. 7...cxd5 8.♕b3 e6 9.e3 0-0 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 ♘a5 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.b4 ♘c6 14.♕b2 ♖c8 15.♖ac1 ♕e7 16.b5 ♘a5 17.♘b1 ♖fd8 18.♘bd2 ♕d6=

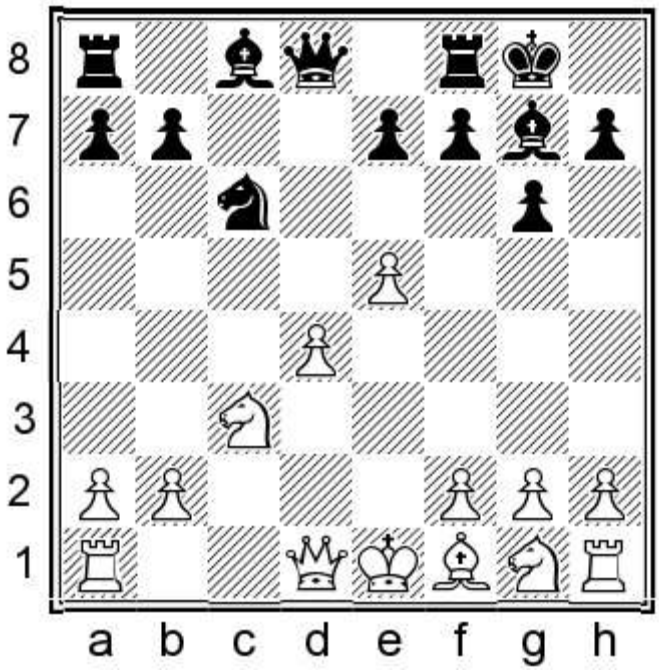
7...0-0 8.e5 ♗g7



Position after: 8...♗g7

9.♗c4

A) 9.dxc6? ♘xc6 only aids Black in developing his pieces.



Position after: 9...♘xc6

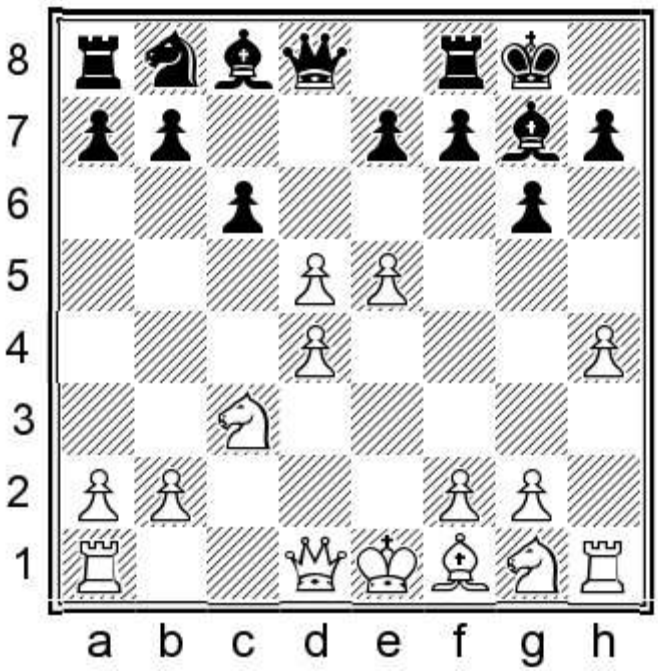
A1) 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.♗e2 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘xd4 13.0-0 ♗xe5 14.♗xb7 ♖b8 15.♗e4 ♖xb2–+

A2) 10.♘ge2 ♕b6 11.♕b3 ♘b4 12.♘a4 [12.♖d1 ♗f5–+] 12...♕a5 13.♘ec3 ♗e6 14.♗c4 ♗xc4

15.♕xc4 ♘c2+ 16.♔e2 b5 17.♕d3 ♘xa1–+ 0-1 (27) Yuffa, D (2563) – Artemiev, V (2703) Cheliabinsk 2018.

A3) 10.f4 The d4-pawn is undefendable. 10...♘xd4 11.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 12.♕xf3 ♗e6∓ A bishop pair in an open type position like this gives Black a significant advantage. Black should continue building up pressure with ...♕b6 and ...f7-f6.

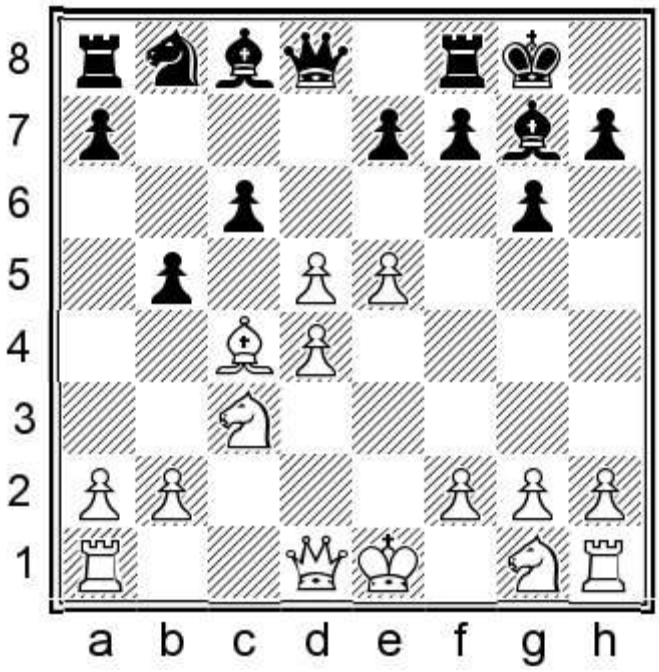
B) 9.h4!?



Position after: 9.h4!?

A rare but challenging move requiring Black to immediately counter in the center in order to avoid getting a much worse position. 9...c5! [The normal response would lead to a long-lasting advantage for White due to the passive g7-bishop. 9...cxd5 10.h5 ♘c6 11.hxg6 fxg6 12.♕d2 ♗f5 13.f4 ♖c8 14.g3! e6 15.♗h3±] 10.dxc5 ♗xe5 11.♘f3 ♗g7 12.h5 ♕a5 13.♕d2 ♕xc5 14.hxg6 hxg6=

9...b5



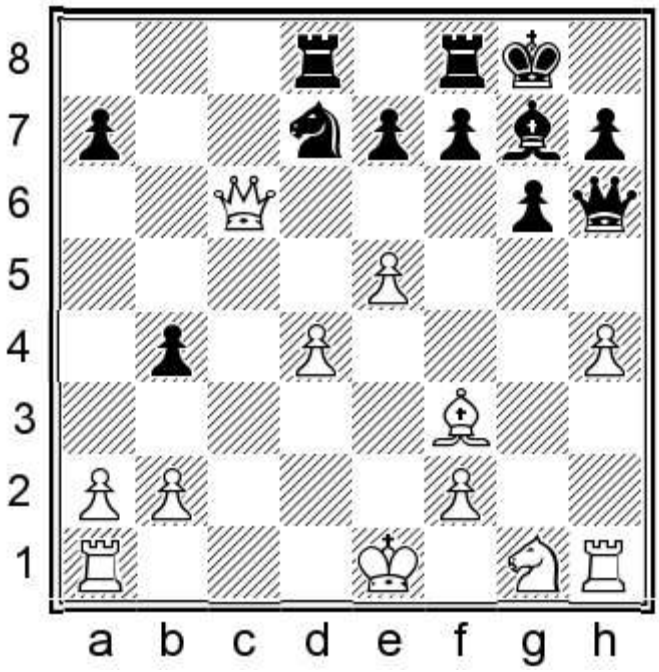
Position after: 9...b5

10.♗b3

Other bishop retreats help Black to achieve equal play easily.

A) 10.♗e2 b4 11.♘a4 ♕xd5 12.♘f3 ♘d7 13.0-0 c5 14.♖c1 cxd4 15.♗c4 ♕a5 16.e6 ♘e5 17.exf7+ ♔h8 18.♘xe5 ♕xe5=

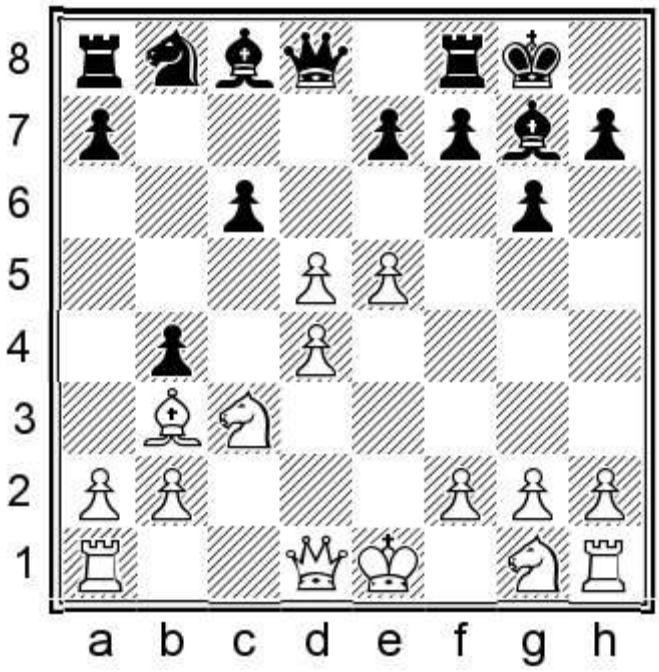
B) 10.♗d3 b4 11.♘ce2 ♕xd5 12.♘f3 ♗g4 13.♕c2 [13.♘f4? loses the knight. 13...♗xf3 14.♘xd5 ♗xd1 15.♘xe7+ ♔h8 16.♖xd1 ♖e8 17.♘xg6+ hxg6∓] 13...♗xf3 14.gxf3 ♕xf3 15.♗e4 ♕h3 16.♘g1 ♕h5 17.h4 ♘d7 18.♗f3 ♕h6 19.♕xc6 ♖ad8=



Position after: 19...♖ad8=

The engine evaluates this position as equal but I would take Black here on any day. Humans are prone to err, so I would anticipate White to score less than 50% in the current position. The reasons are simple: White is behind in development and Black has plenty of targets to attack.

10...b4

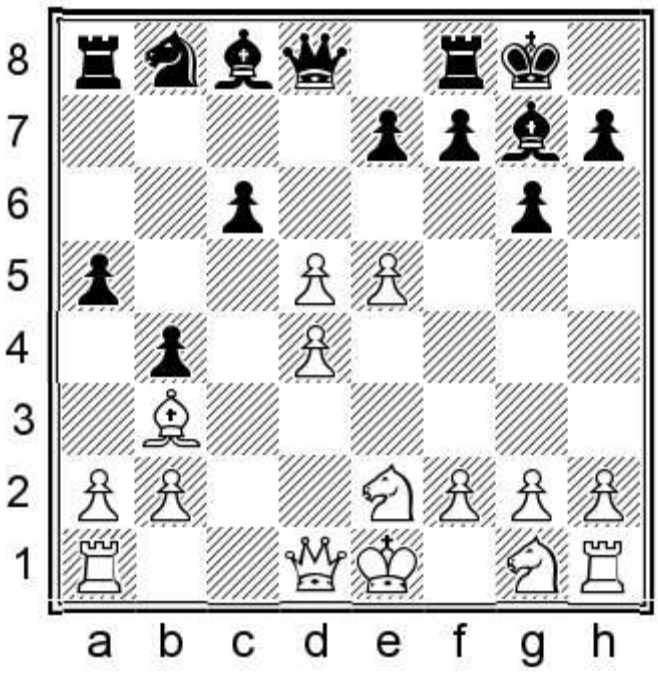


Position after: 10...b4

11.♘ce2

11.♘a4 the knight aims for a potential outpost square on c5. Our job is to stop that obvious plan. 11...cxd5 12.h4 [12.♘e2 e6 13.0-0 ♘d7=] 12...h5 13.♕d2 ♘a6 14.♘f3 ♗d7=

11...a5!N

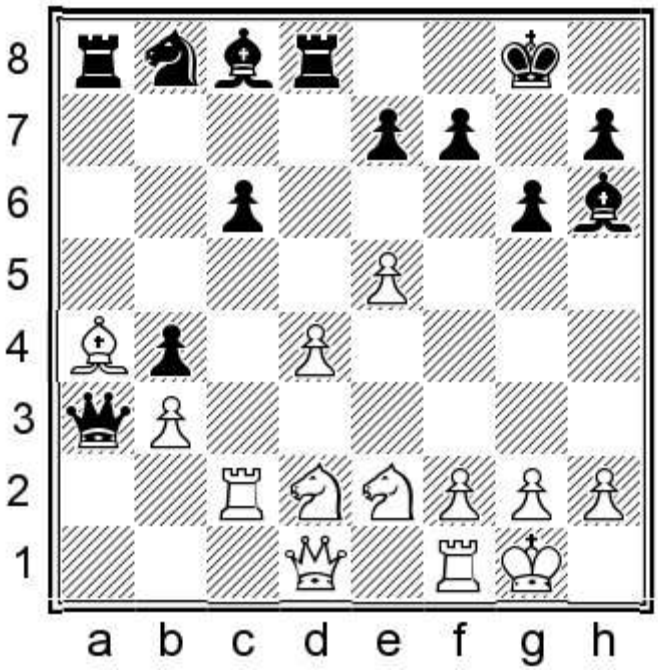


Position after: 11...a5!N

An observant reader has probably already noticed a somewhat recurring Grünfeld theme: we keep using our a-pawn as an indirect attack against White's center. Our goal is crystal clear: by sacrificing the a-pawn, we distract White's pieces from their primary duties concerned with maintaining the stability of the central pawn mass. Recall chapter 3 where we have seen another example of this fantastic a-pawn activity.

12.h4

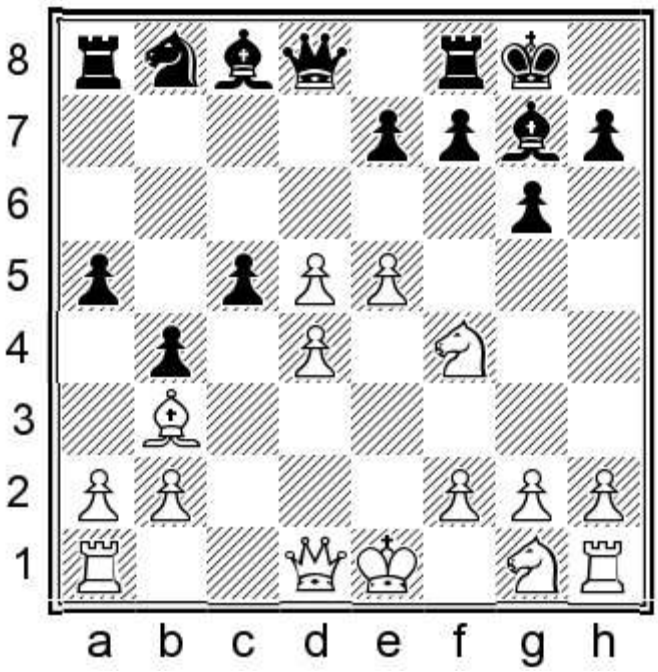
A) 12.♖c1 a4 13.♗xa4 ♕xd5 14.♘f3 ♕xa2 15.b3 ♖d8 16.0-0 [16.♖a1 ♕b2 17.0-0 ♗h6 18.♖b1 ♕a2 19.♖a1 ♕b2=] 16...♗h6 17.♖c2 ♕a3 18.♘d2



Position after: 18.♘d2

18...♖xa4! It is necessary to free up space for our queen which was about to get trapped after ♘c4 on White's next move. 19.bxa4 ♕xa4 20.♖b2 ♕xd1 21.♖xd1 c5 22.f4 ♗g4 23.♘f3 ♘c6⩱

B) 12.♘f4 c5!

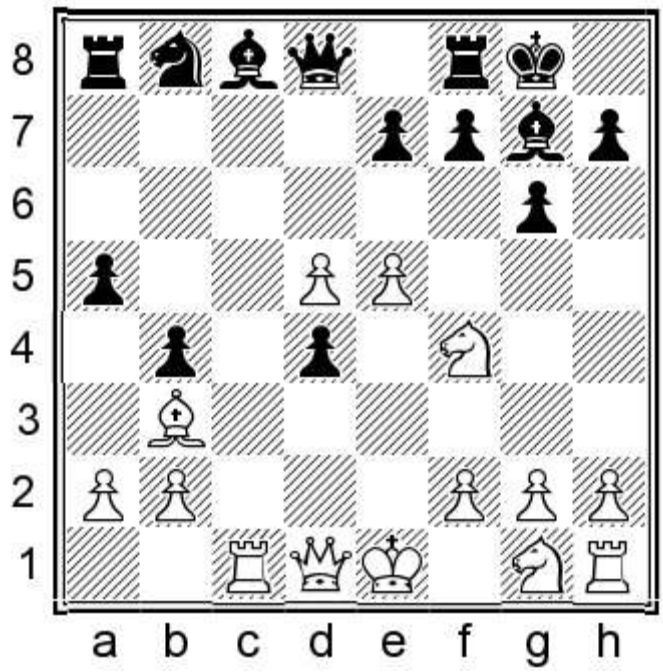


Position after: 12...c5!

One of my favourite moves in the entire book. We have seen countless ...c5 pawn breaks, so what makes this one unique? Perhaps the fact that this one is being played when least expected. By playing

6...c6 we have emphasized our plans to capture the d5-pawn, but then we show enough flexibility to switch our targets once the d5-pawn gets enough protection.

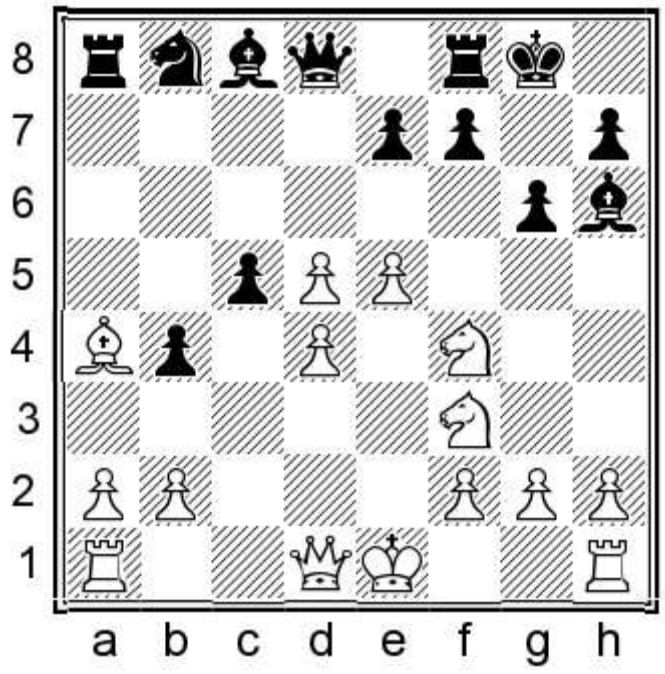
B1) 13.♖c1 cxd4



Position after: 13...cxd4

14.♘f3 [14.♕xd4 a4 15.♗d1 ♘d7 16.♘f3 ♗a6 17.♗xa4 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♕d6∓ The knight on e5 is falling and so is White's king on e1 which has nowhere to go.] 14...♗g4 15.♕xd4 ♗xf3 16.gxf3 a4 17.♗d1 ♖a5 18.0-0 e6 19.♕xb4 ♘a6 20.♕e1 ♘c5∓ We are down two pawns, but our position is objectively slightly better. How is that possible? The point here is that White has too many weaknesses and Black's position is rock solid. I would anticipate a quick fall of the e5-pawn and a highly unpleasant attack on the white king.

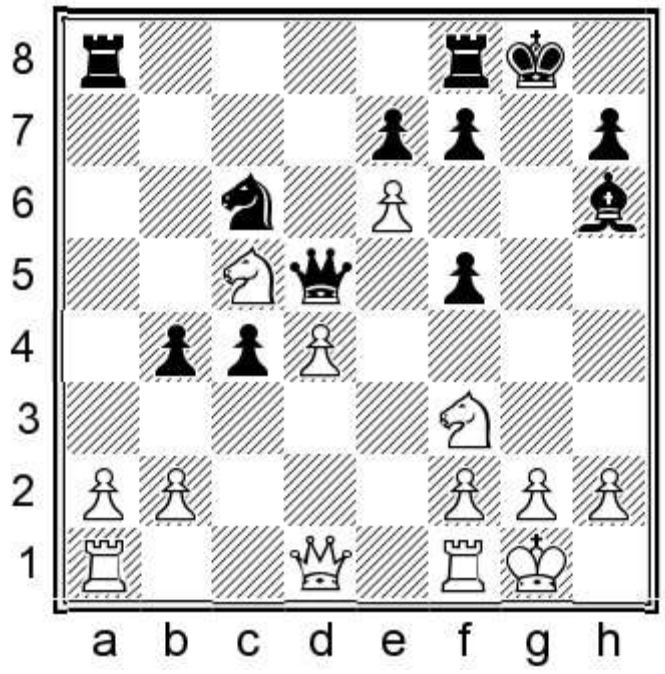
B2) 13.♘f3 a4 14.♗xa4 ♗h6



Position after: 14...♗h6

B2.1) 15.♘e2 ♕xd5 16.dxc5 ♕xc5 17.0-0 ♗b7∓ Black is slightly better as the e5-pawn is likely to be lost at some point after ...♗xf3. On top of that, White's pieces are clearly uncoordinated and lack good outpost squares.

B2.2) 15.♘d3 c4 16.♘c5 ♕xd5 17.♗c2 ♗f5 necessary as White was threatening 18.♗e4. 18.0-0 ♘c6 19.♗xf5 gxf5 20.e6.

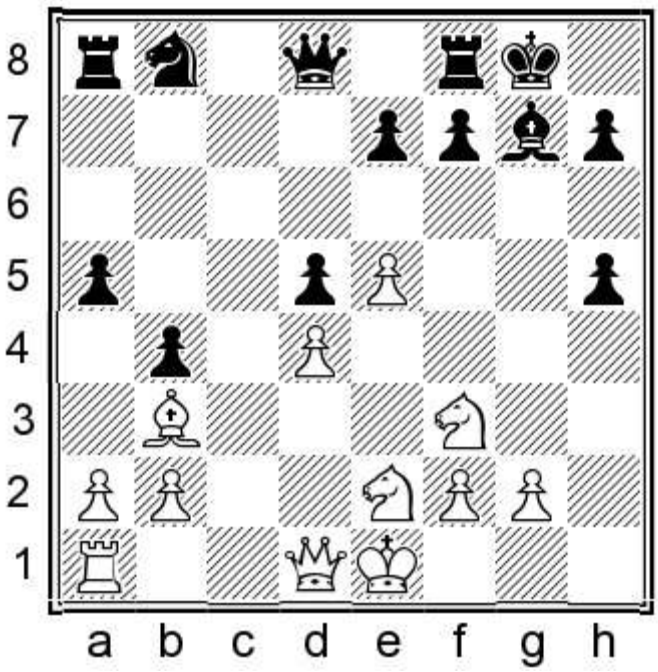


Position after: 20.e6

Otherwise Black would play ...e7-e6, ...♖f8-d8, and the days of White's central pawns d4 and e5 are numbered. 20...fxe6 21.♘xe6 [21.♖e1 ♖f6∓] 21...♕xe6 22.d5 ♕d6 23.dxc6 ♕xd1 24.♖fxd1 c3 25.bxc3 bxc3 26.♖d5 c2 27.♖c5 c1=♕+ 28.♖axc1 ♗xc1 29.♖xc1 ♖xa2=

C) 12.dxc6 Prompts Black's knight development and is hardly challenging. 12...♘xc6 13.♖c1 ♗b7 14.♘f3 e6 15.0-0 ♘e7⩱ Since the d4 and e5 pawns are immobile and we control the h1-a8 diagonal, Black should have easy play here.

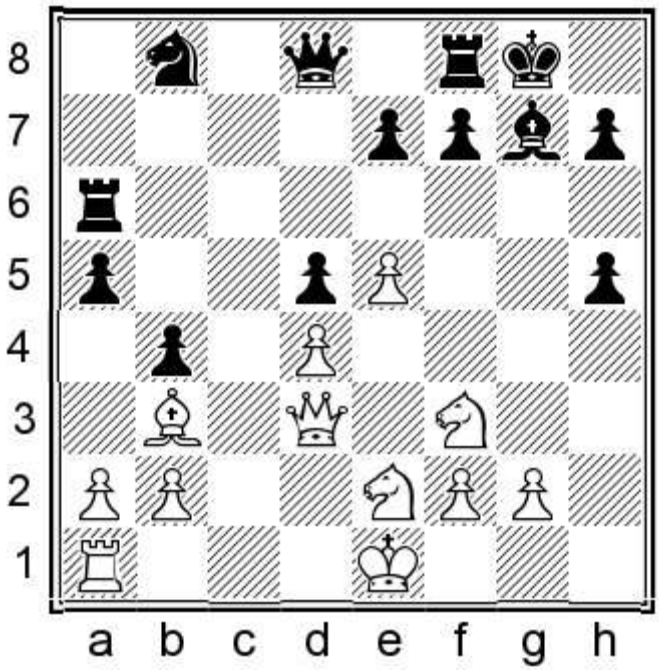
D) 12.♘f3 deserves serious consideration. White is waiting for Black to stabilize the pawn structure in the center after ...c6xd5 and then hopes to push the h-pawn to weaken the Black king position. 12...♗g4 13.h4 cxd5 14.h5 ♗xh5 15.♖xh5 A typical exchange sacrifice. Black must be careful and take all measures to ensure his king's safety. 15...gxh5



Position after: 15...gxh5

D1) 16.♘f4 ♗h6! 17.♘xd5 [17.♘xh5 ♔h8 18.♕d3 f5∓] 17...a4 18.♗c4 ♔h8∓

D2) 16.♕d3 ♖a6

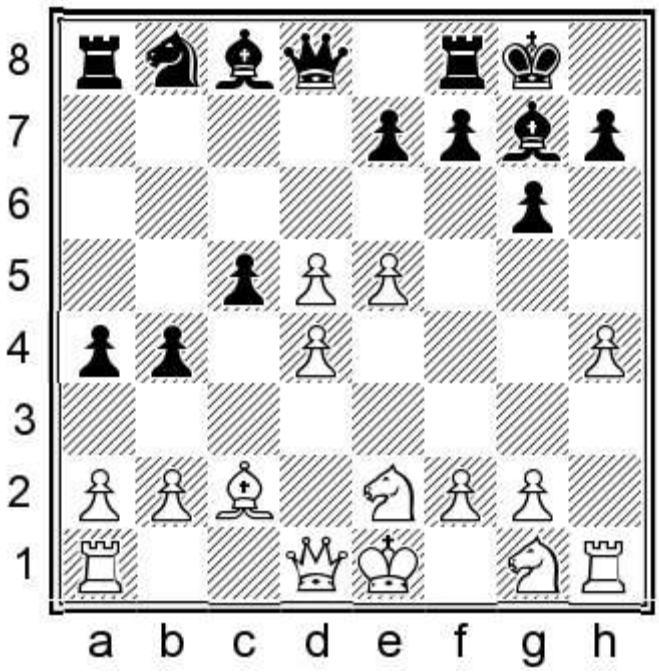


Position after: 16...♖a6

We absolutely must bring the a-rook to the kingside for the king's protection. Without this move, White would have simply been winning after 17.♘f4 or 17.♗c2. 17.♘f4 h4 18.♔e2 ♖h6=

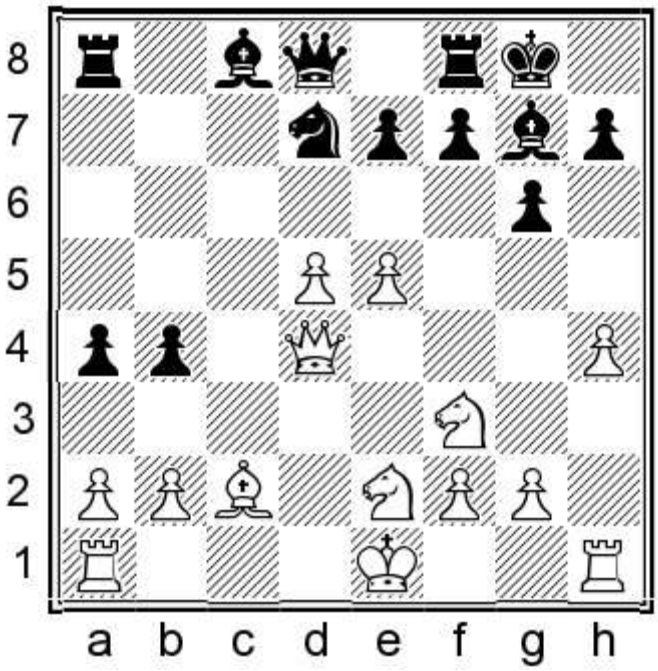
12...a4 13.♗xa4

13.♗c2 c5!



Position after: 13...c5!

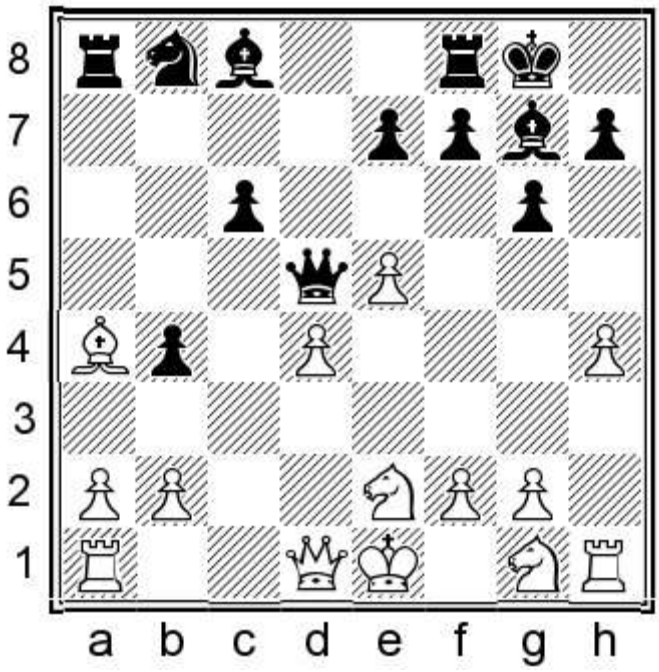
I hope the readers appreciate the amount of deception Black has put into the whole line: it seemed like we were going to settle for the recapture of the d5-pawn but, instead, we have opted for the sneaky blow up of White's center when it was least expected. 14.♘f3 cxd4 15.♕xd4 ♘d7



Position after: 15...♘d7

Despite being down a pawn, our position is already better. White simply cannot keep the e5-pawn alive and our dark-squared bishop is about to be very happy about its living standards in this game. 16.h5 [16.0-0 ♕c7; 16.♕e3 ♗b7 17.♖d1 ♕c7] 16...♕c7!∓

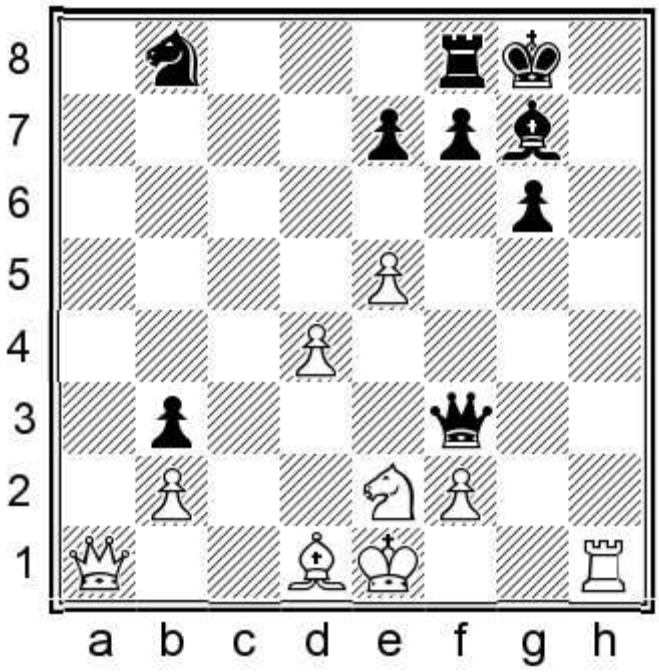
13...♕xd5



Position after: 13...♕xd5

14.♘f4

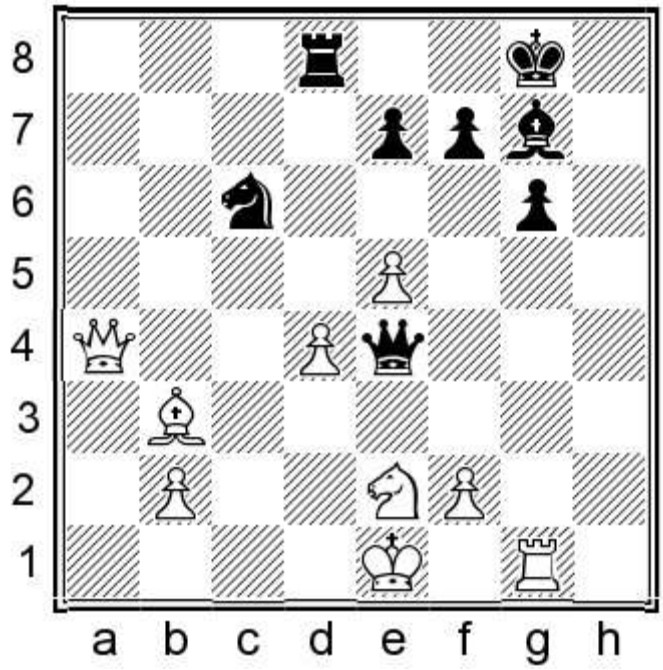
14.♘f3 c5 15.h5 ♗g4 16.hxg6 [16.♗b3 c4 17.♗c2 b3 18.axb3 ♖xa1 19.♕xa1 cxb3↑ Black has a nice initiative.] 16...hxg6 17.♗b3 c4 18.♗c2 b3 19.axb3 ♖xa1 20.♕xa1 cxb3 21.♗d1 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♕xf3



Position after: 22...♕xf3

As usual, I would not expect the readers to memorize everything until the end of the line, in this case until move 30. Rather, the long variations are meant to illustrate how the game may potentially develop

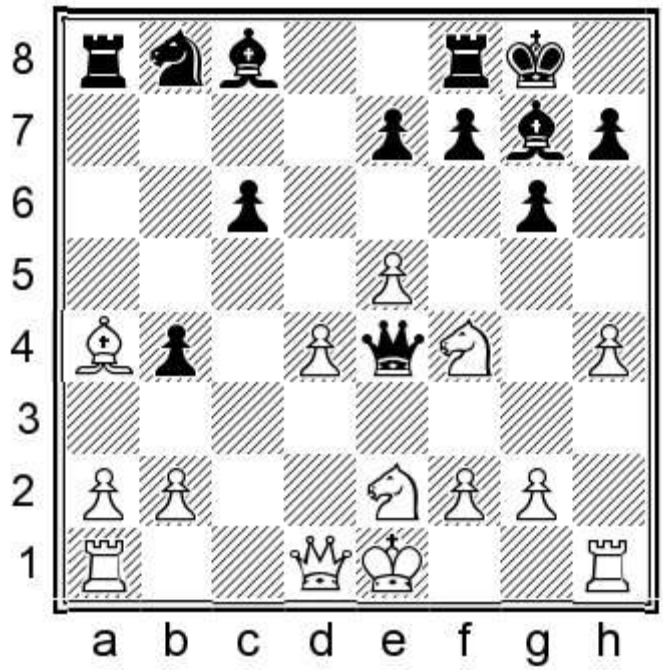
and thus provide a middlegame roadmap. 23.♖g1 ♘c6 24.♕a4 ♕e4 25.♗xb3 ♖d8



Position after: 25...♖d8

26.♗c2 ♕d5 27.♖g4 ♕h1+ 28.♖g1 ♕d5 29.♗b3 ♕e4 30.♗c2 ♕d5=

14...♕e4+ 15.♘ge2

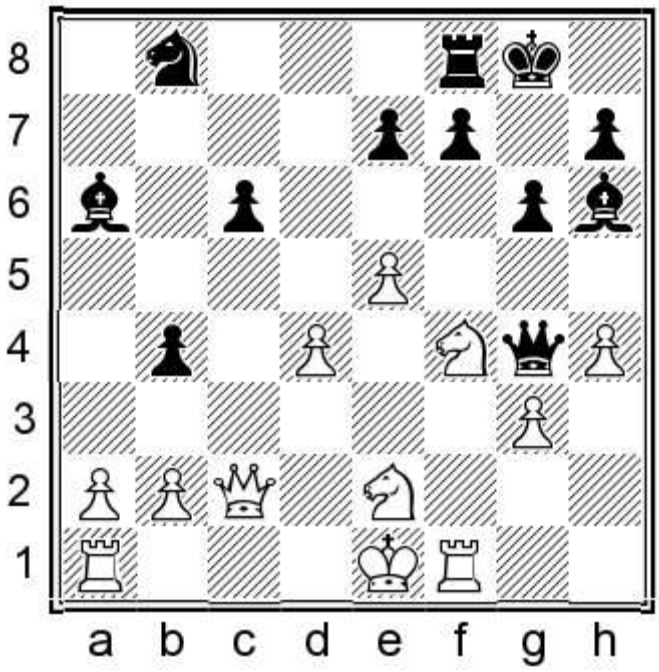


Position after: 15.♘ge2

15...♖xa4!

In the style of the 9th World Champion, Tigran Petrosian, Black sacrifices an exchange to gain a substantial initiative and dangerous attack on White's king. In addition to forcing the queen to leave the king, Black ensures the safety of his own queen on e4 which was about to get trapped in the center after ♗a4-c2.

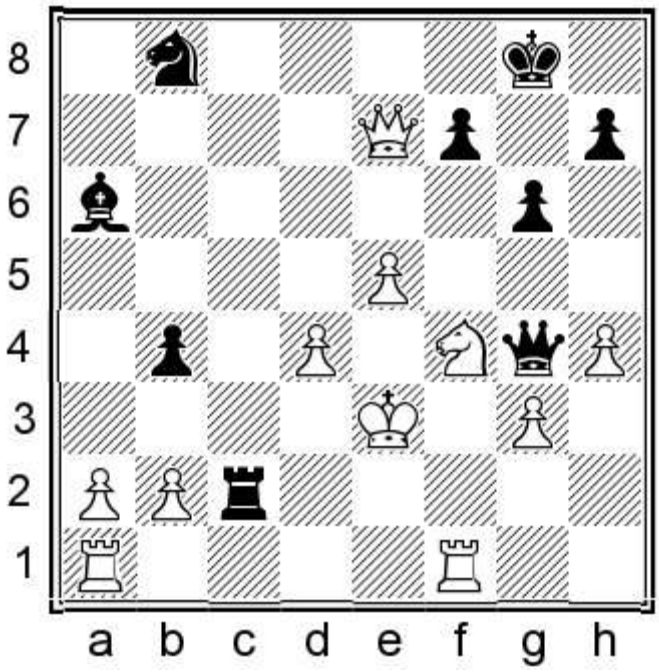
16.♕xa4 ♗h6 17.f3 ♕e3 18.g3 ♗a6 19.♕c2 ♕xf3 20.♖f1 ♕g4



Position after: 20...♕g4

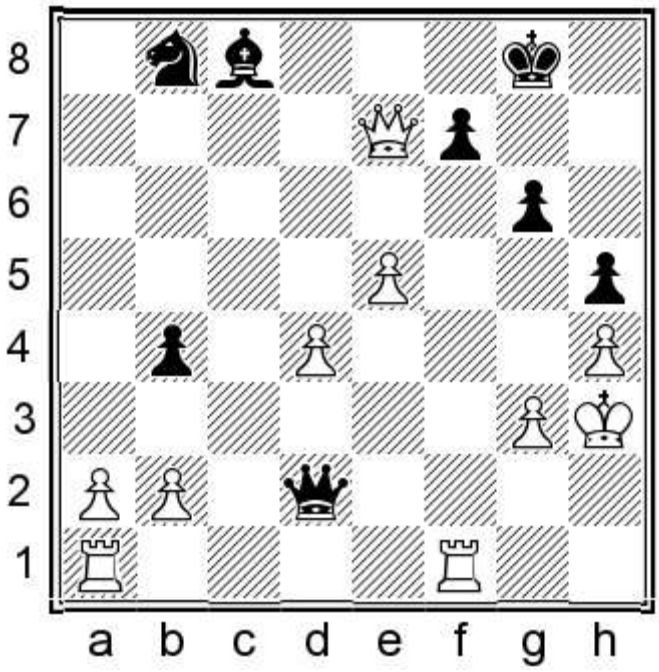
21.♖d1

White can also try to make an artificial kingside castle with 21.♔f2. But after 21...c5 Black has a tremendous initiative in every line. The best scenario for both parties is the forced perpetual check on move 36! Should I have stopped analyzing a bit sooner? Probably, but I just couldn't stop enjoying the beautiful equilibrium of Black's attack and White's defense. 22.♕xc5 [Especially dangerous is Black's initiative after 22.dxc5 ♘d7 23.♖ad1 ♘xe5 24.♕e4 ♗g7↑] 22...♗xf4 23.♘xf4 ♖c8 24.♕xe7 ♖c2+ 25.♔e3



Position after: 25.♔e3

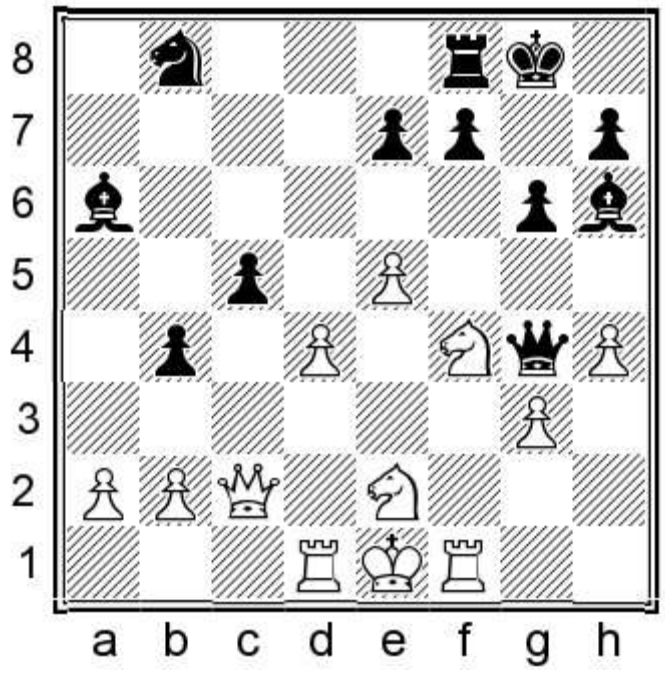
25...♖e2+ Leads to a perpetual check. It's truly fascinating how much safer the king is on e3 compared to e1. 26.♘xe2 ♕xe2+ 27.♔f4 ♕d2+ 28.♔g4 h5+ 29.♔h3 [29.♔f3 ♕e2+ 30.♔f4 ♕d2+=] 29...♗c8+



Position after: 29...♗c8+

It almost looks like mate, but it isn't... 30.g4 ♗xg4+ 31.♔g3 ♕e3+ 32.♔g2 ♕h3+ 33.♔f2 ♕f3+ 34.♔g1 ♕g3+ 35.♔h1 ♕h3+ 36.♔g1 ♕g3+=.

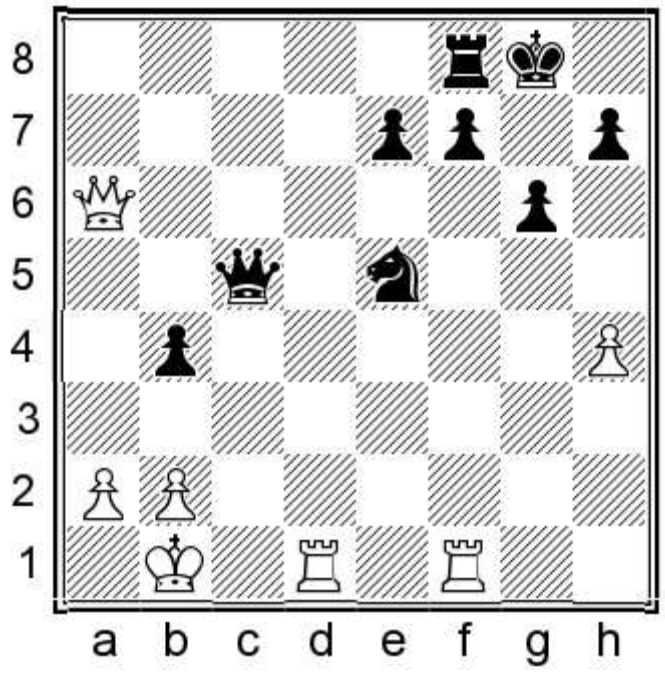
21...c5!



Position after: 21...c5!

As we have learned the c-pawn again and again proves to be an incredibly useful component of Black's Grünfeld strategy. Here, it sacrifices itself to open up the c6 square for the knight.

22.dxc5 ♘c6 23.♕a4 ♗xf4 24.♕xa6 ♗xg3+ 25.♘xg3 ♕xg3+ 26.♔d2 ♘xe5 27.♔c1 ♕e3+ 28.♔b1 ♕xc5=

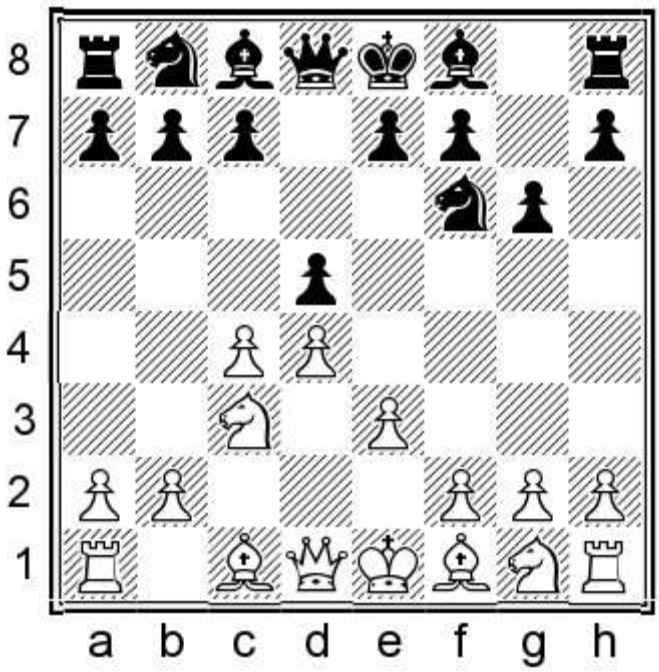


Position after: 28...♕xc5=

The game is dynamically balanced. From here it all depends on the skill level of the players. Black would want to start exploiting the pawn mass on the kingside by pushing the e- and f-pawns and transitioning to a favorable endgame by trading queens.

Chapter 10
4.e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 10 – 4.e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♗g7

---

a) 5.cxd5, 5.♕b3

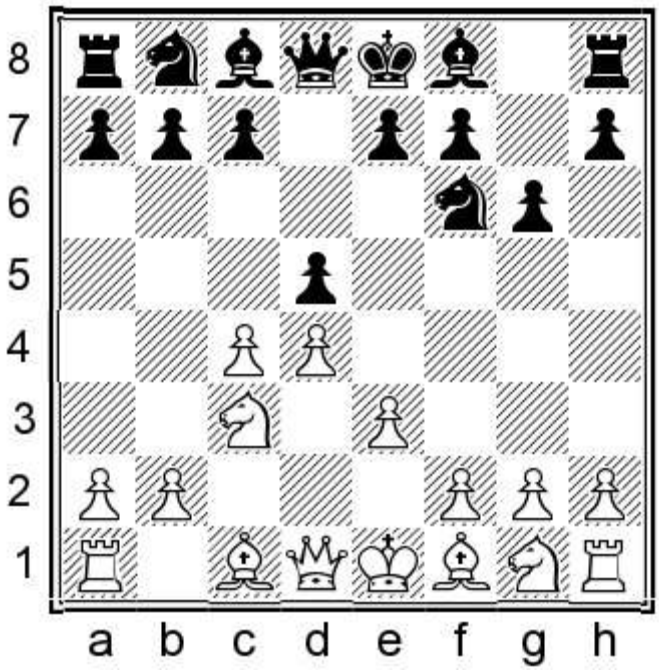
b) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.--

c) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.cxd5, 6.b4

d) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2

a) 5.cxd5, 5.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3

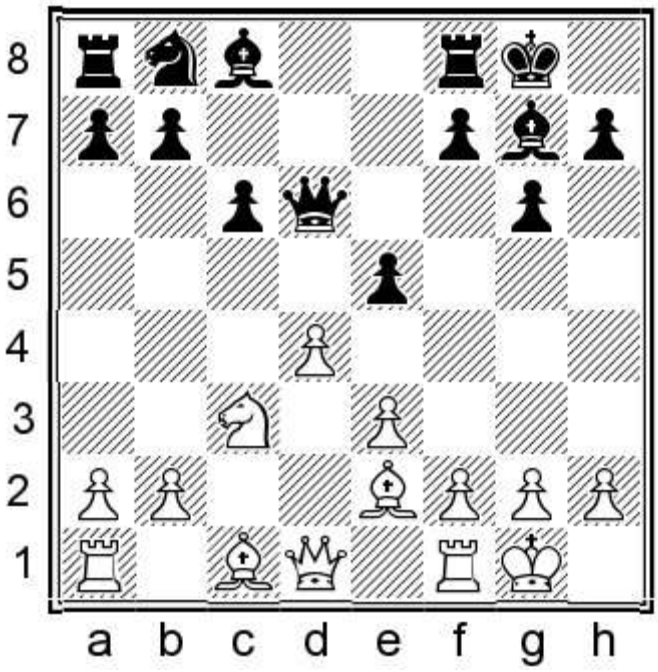


Position after: 4.e3

The system with the pawn on e3 is typically employed whenever White wants to avoid theoretical battles. White aims to get a complex playable position suitable for outplaying Black in the later stages of the game. As such, White has tried virtually every imaginable set up after 4.e3. In this chapter, we will survey the majority of White's possibilities and come up with the best recipes for getting comfortable positions no matter how much your opponents are trying to surprise you.

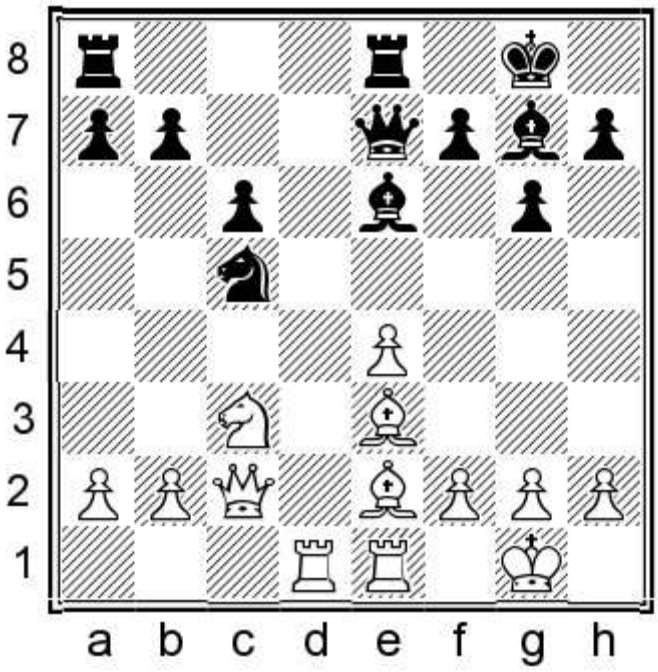
4...♗g7 5.♕b3

5.cxd5 This early capture doesn't appear to be very ambitious. 5...♘xd5 6.♘xd5 ♕xd5 7.♘e2 0-0 8.♘c3 ♕d6 9.♗e2 c6 10.0-0 e5



Position after: 10...e5

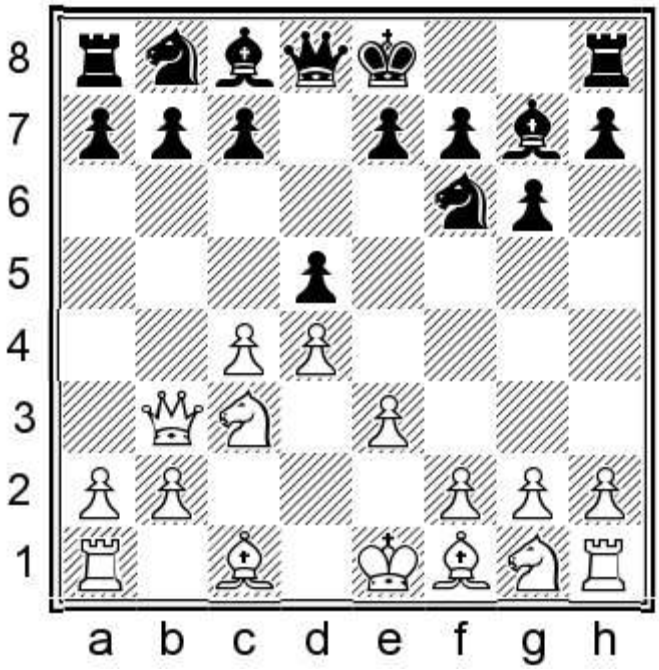
The pawn on c6 limits White's knight so our e-pawn takes on an important responsibility: to clear the a1-h8 diagonal for the dark-squared bishop. 11.dxe5 [11.d5 cxd5 12.♕xd5 ♕xd5 13.♘xd5 ♘c6=] 11...♕xe5 12.e4 ♘d7 13.♗e3 ♘c5 14.♕c2 ♖e8 15.♖ad1 ♕e7 16.♖fe1 ♗e6



Position after: 16...♗e6

17.♘d5 [Black is more than comfortable if White lets us have 3 pawns versus 2 on the queenside. 17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.♖xd4 ♖ad8 19.♖ed1 ♖xd4 20.♖xd4 a5= 0-1 (36) Rakhmanov, A (2653) – Li, C (2732)

Riadh 2017] 17...cxd5 18.exd5 ♖ac8 19.dxe6 ♘xe6 20.♕b3 b6=

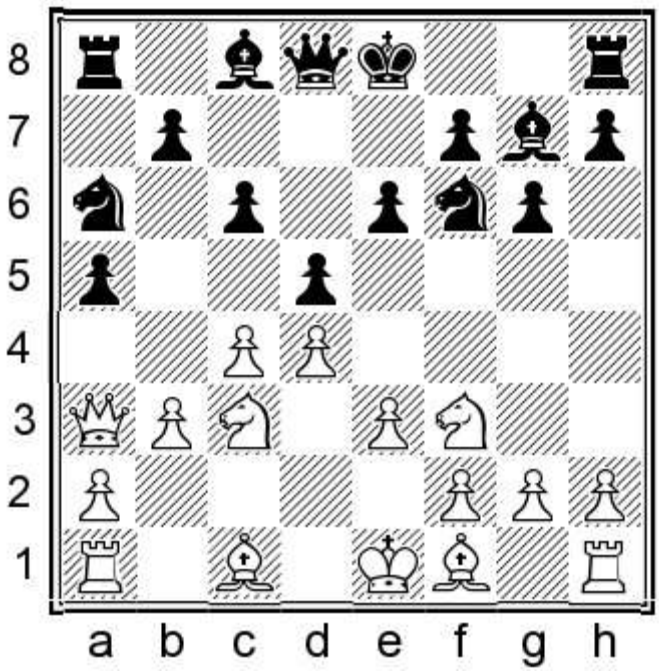


Position after: 5.♕b3

5...e6 6.♕a3

This funny looking queen manoeuvre actually has a definitive purpose: White wants to stop us from castling.

6...c6 7.♘f3 a5 8.b3 ♘a6

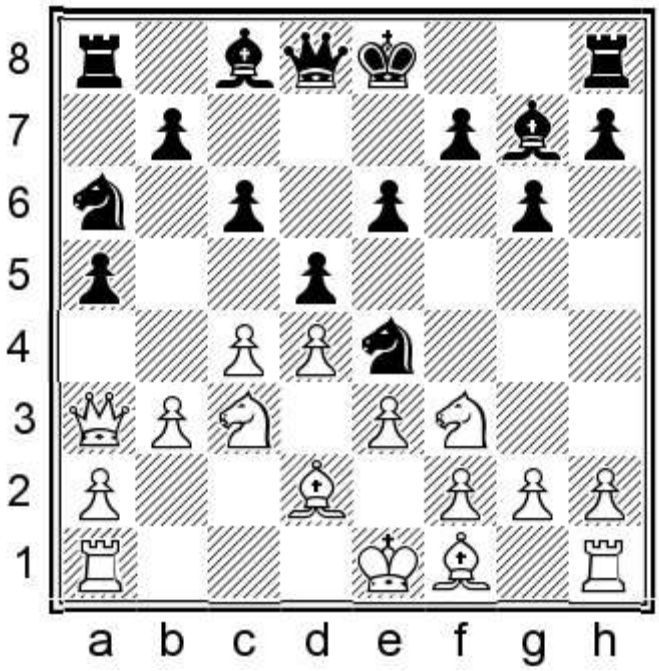


Position after: 8...♘a6

Now the idea of the a-pawn move becomes clear: the knight is going to b4 which will enable us to castle.

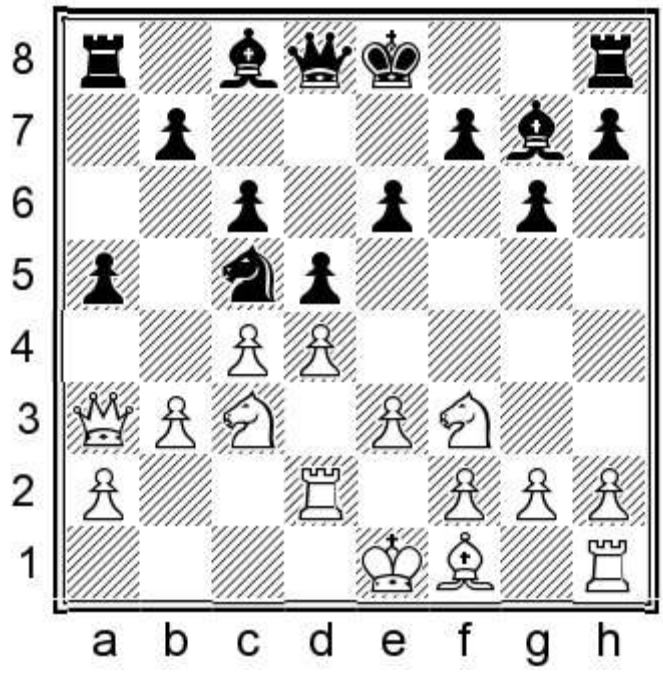
9.♗e2

9.♗d2 ♘e4



Position after: 9...♘e4

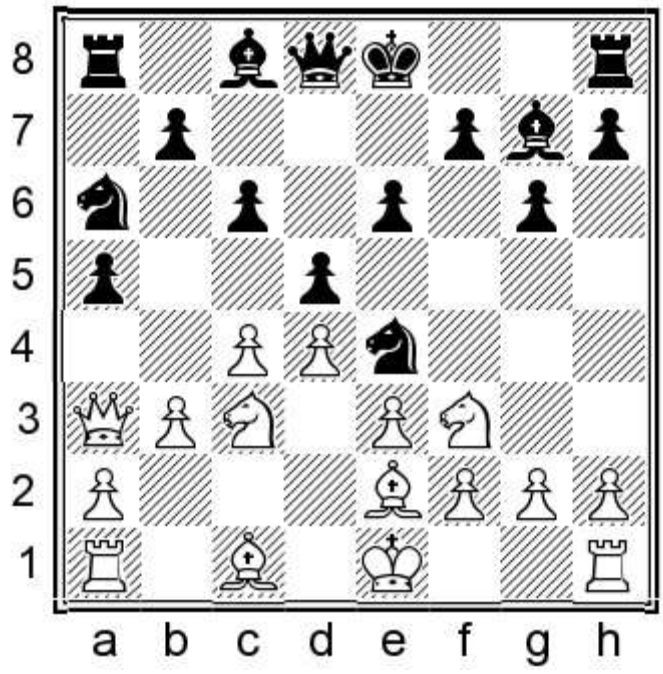
10.♖d1 [10.♕b2 ♘xd2 11.♕xd2 b6 12.♗e2 0-0 13.0-0 ♗b7=; 10.♘xe4? dxe4 11.♘g1 c5 12.♗xa5 ♘b4 13.♕a4+ ♗d7 14.♕xb4 ♖xa5 15.♕d2 cxd4 16.exd4 0-0 17.♘e2 ♖a3 18.♘c3 ♗c6 19.♖d1 ♕a5 20.♗e2 ♖d8–+] 10...♘xd2 11.♖xd2 ♘c5!



Position after: 11...♘c5!

You won't see the knight attacked like this every day! Who would have predicted such a star career for the b8-knight after its humble beginnings of ...♘b8-a6?! 12.♖c2 [12.dxc5? ♗xc3–+; 12.♕xc5? ♗f8–+] 12...♘e4 13.♘a4 ♗f8 14.♕b2 ♗b4+ 15.♔d1 ♗d6 16.♔c1 0-0 17.c5 ♗c7 18.♗d3 ♘f6=

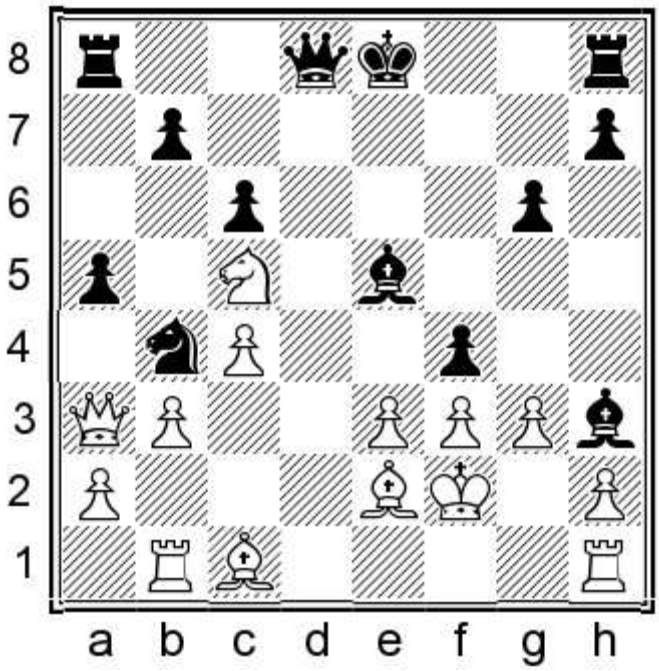
9...♘e4



Position after: 9...♘e4

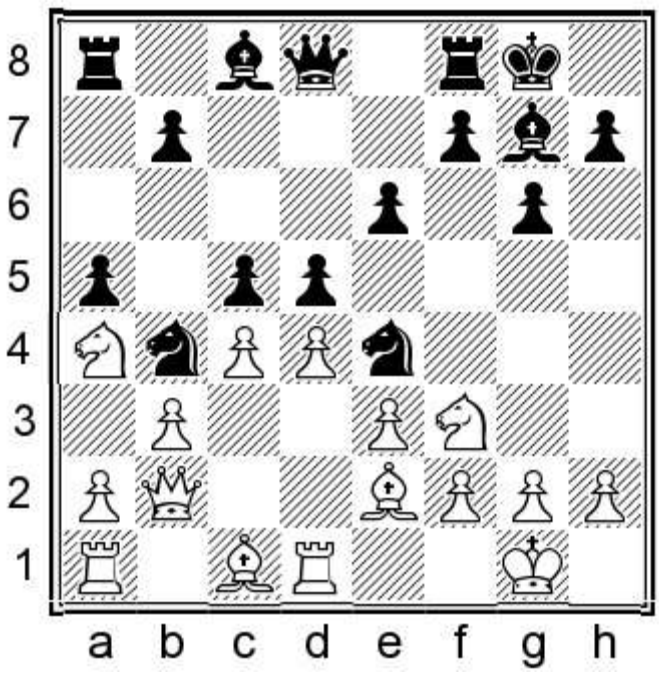
10.♕b2

A) 10.♘xe4? dxe4 11.♘d2 [11.♘e5 f6 12.♘g4 h5–+] 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♗xe5 13.♖b1 [13.♗b2? ♗d6 14.♕a4 ♘c5–+] 13...♕g5→ 14.g3 ♗h3! 15.♘xe4 ♕d8 16.f3 ♘b4 17.♔f2 f5 18.♘c5 f4!–+ Black has a winning attack. Note how ridiculous the queen looks on a3.



Position after: 18...f4!−+

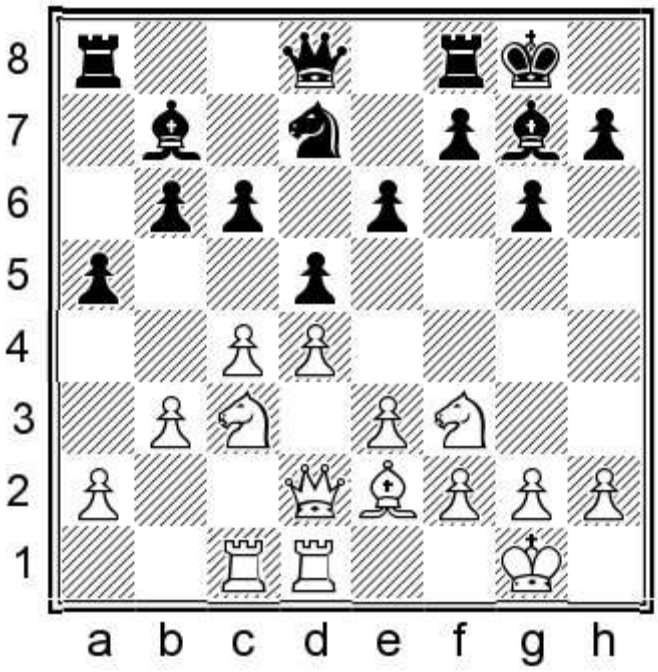
B) 10.♘a4 ♘b4 11.♕b2 c5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖d1 ½-½ (42) Kortschnoj, V (2659) – Krasenkow, M (2661) Lvov 2000.



Position after: 13.♖d1

Only 19 years later did I realized that the game was played in my hometown in the Ukraine and my father took me to the chess club to witness it live! Little did I know then what role chess would play in my life and that the legends were playing in front of me. 13...♗d7 14.♘c3 ♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♖c8=

10...0-0 11.0-0 b6 12.♖d1 ♗b7 13.♗d2 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 ♘b8 15.♖ac1 ♘d7=

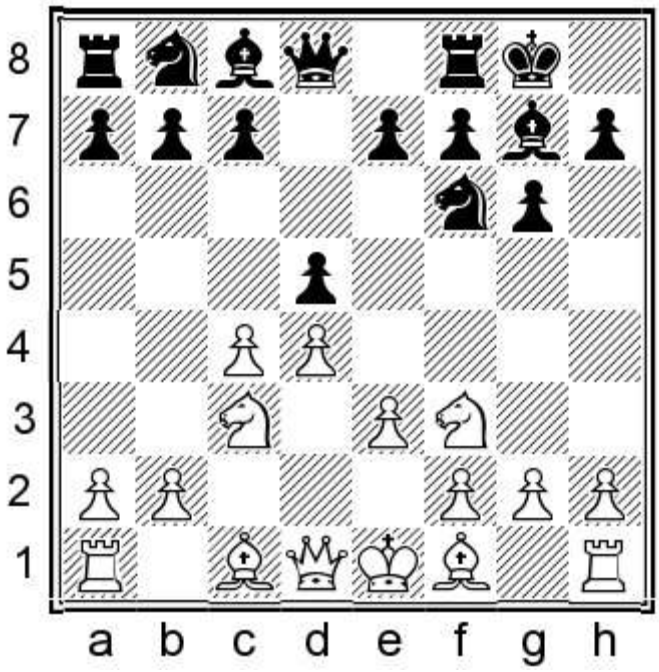


Position after: 15...♘d7=

½-½ (84) Nakamura, H (2775) – Caruana, F (2774) Thessaloniki 2013.

b) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0

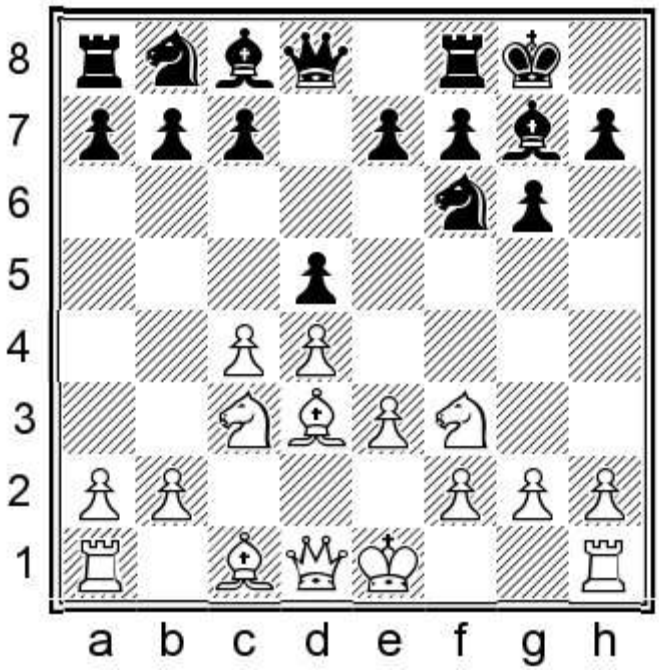


Position after: 5...0-0

6.♗d2

Usually I call such bishop moves “half-moves”. This line makes some sense as White intends to develop the queenside first, preparing for ...c7-c5 and also hoping to develop the f1-bishop to c4 in one move.

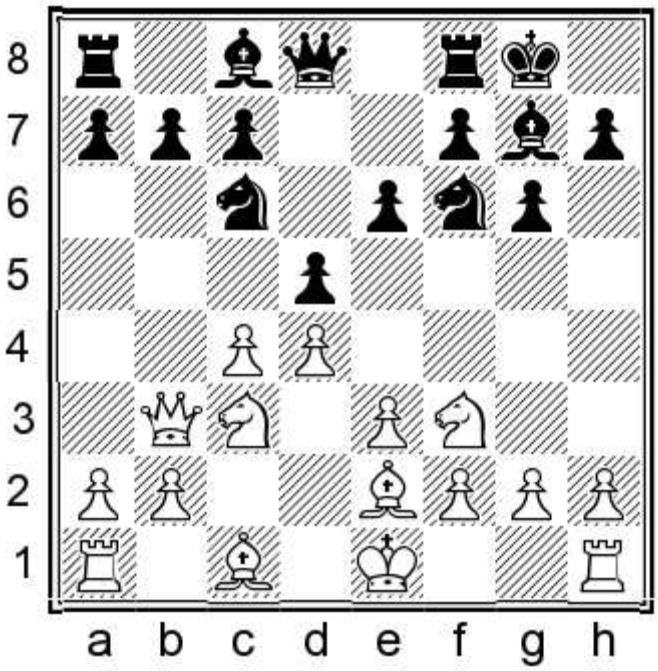
A) 6.♗d3



Position after: 6.♗d3

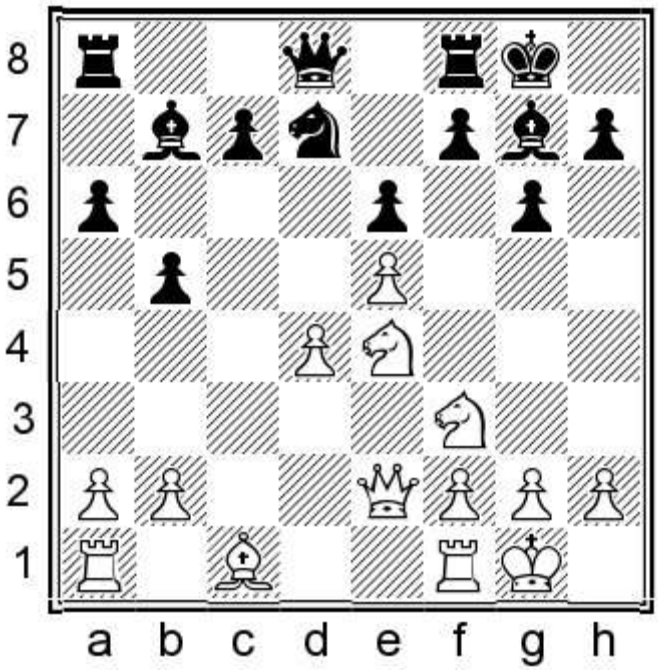
Putting the bishop on d3 in similar positions is rarely a good idea for White. It doesn't protect White against a potential pin after ...♗c8-g4 and has to waste a tempo after ...d5xc4. 6...c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 ♘c6 9.h3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♘a5 11.♗d3 ♗e6 which transposes to the main line

B) 6.♕b3 Is hardly a threatening variation. The queen missed its train a move ago (see the line 5.♕b3 e6 6.♕a3 earlier in this chapter). 6...e6 7.♗e2 ♘c6



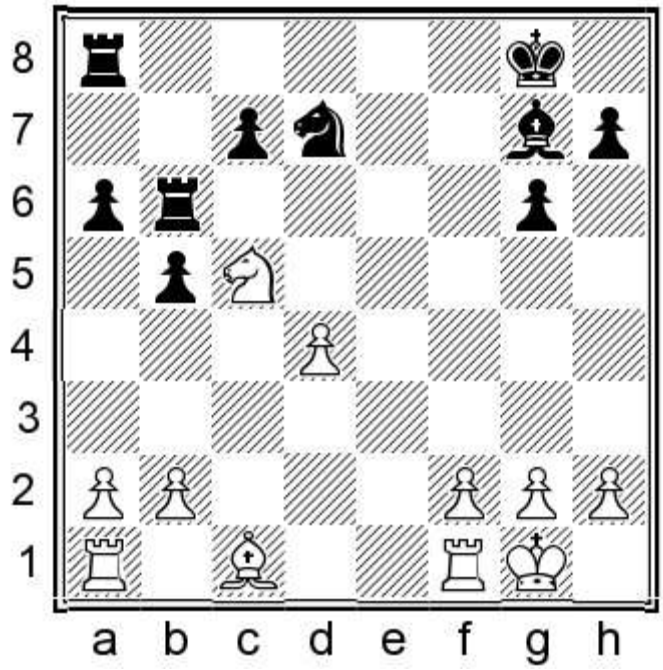
Position after: 7...♘c6

8.0-0 [8.cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 ♘e7 10.♗d2 c6 11.♖fc1 ♘f5∓] 8...♘a5 9.♕a4 ♘xc4 10.♗xc4 dxc4 11.♕xc4 a6 12.e4 b5 13.♕e2 ♗b7 14.e5 ♘d7 15.♘e4



Position after: 15.♘e4

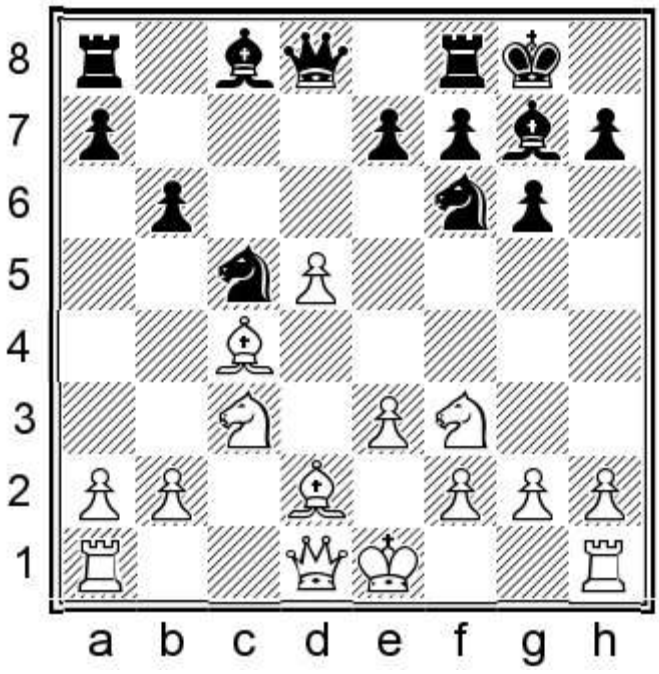
½-½ (33) Miron, L (2471) – Ponomariov, R (2697) Batumi 2018. 15...f5!? A slight improvement of the former FIDE World Champion's play. Black radically changes the pawn structure and, more importantly, fights against the e4-knight right away. 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.♘c5 ♗xf3 18.♕xf3 ♘d7 19.♘xe6 ♖xf3 20.♘xd8 ♖f6 21.♘b7 ♖b6 22.♘c5



Position after: 22.♘c5

22...♗xd4! A nice tactical trick allowing us to equalize the chances. The knight on d7 will get trapped after the next move. 23.♘xd7 ♖d6=

6...c5 7.dxc5 ♘a6 8.cxd5 ♘xc5 9.♗c4 b6!?

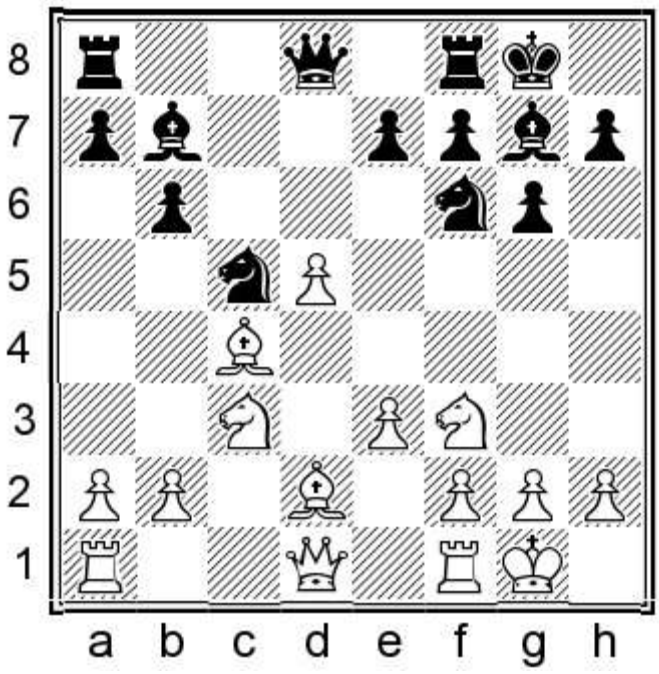


Position after: 9...b6!?

According to the ChessBase online database this move has only seen light in 3 games out of 233 available! Therefore, we can already say it is almost a novelty. The concept is new: we develop the bishop on b7 rather than f5 and then attack White's center indirectly with ...a6 and ...b5.

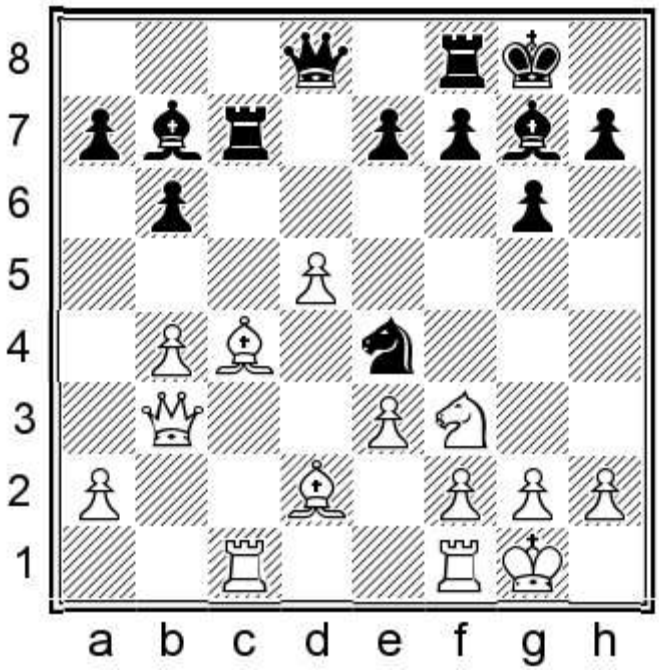
10.♕e2

Black also gets sufficient compensation for the pawn after 10.0-0 ♗b7



Position after: 10...♗b7

11.b4 [White eventually loses the d5-pawn after 11.♗e1 ♖c8 12.♖c1 ♘ce4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.b3 a6 preparing ...b6-b5. 15.a4 ♕d7 16.♕e2 ♘d6 17.♗b4 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.♗d3 ♗xd5 20.♘d2 ♖fd8=] 11...♘ce4 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕b3 ♖c7!



Position after: 14...♖c7!

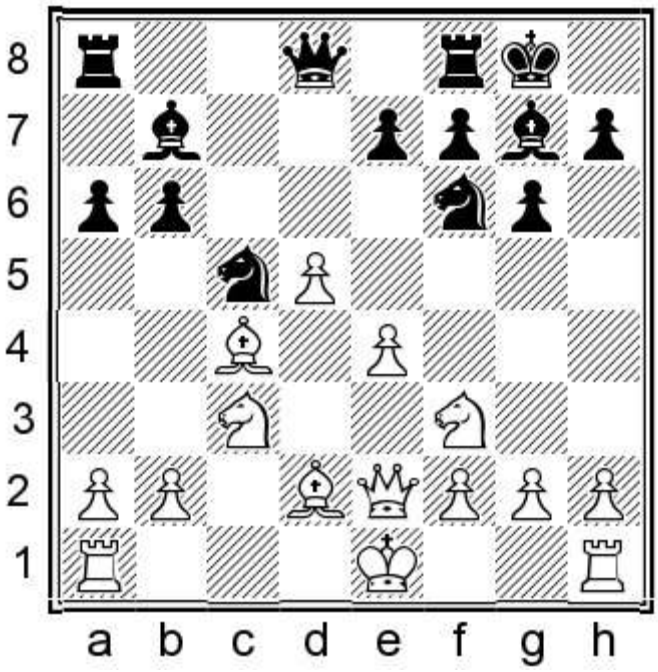
the rook is getting ready to put extra pressure on the d5-pawn after ...♖c7-d7. 15.♕d3 ♘xd2 16.♘xd2 [16.♕xd2 ♖d7 17.e4 e6 18.♖fd1 exd5 19.♗xd5 ♕e7 20.h4 ♗xd5 21.exd5 ♖fd8 22.a3 h6=] 16...♕c8 17.♖cd1 ♖d8 18.e4 e6=.

10...♗b7!N

As I am not satisfied with the outcomes in the other lines, I had to offer something better. Here comes another pure pawn sacrifice!

10...♘fe4? happened in two old games 0-1 (70) Sideif Sade, F (2340) – Dvoirys, S (2445) Aktyubinsk 1985 and ½-½ (40) Radnoti, G – Kiss, V Hungary 1993. White gets a clear advantage by castling and then protecting his healthy extra pawn on d5 by playing ♖f1-d1: 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.♖fd1 ♘d6 13.b3±.

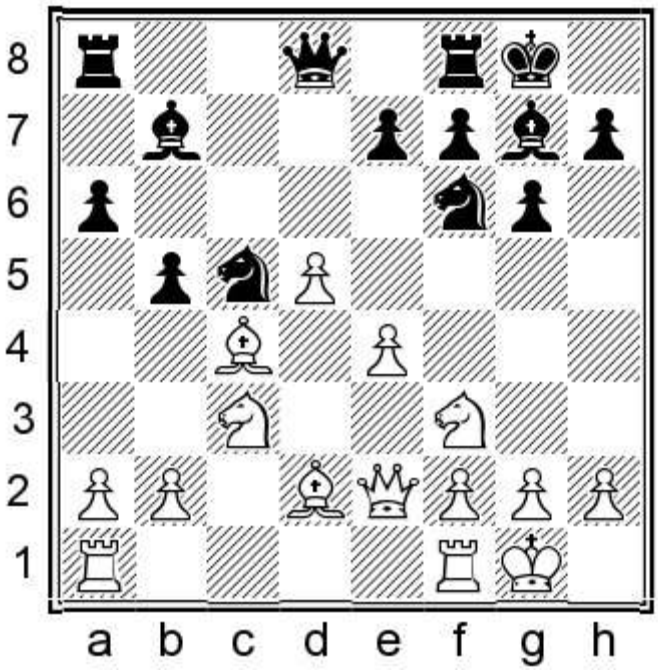
11.e4 a6



Position after: 11...a6

12.♖d1

A) 12.0-0 The most natural move allows Black to get great play immediately with 12...b5



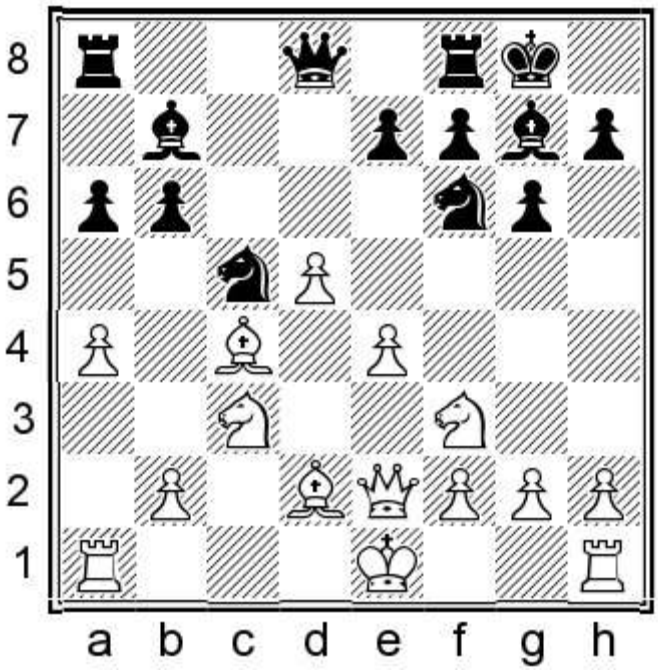
Position after: 12...b5

A1) 13.♗b3 b4 14.♘a4 ♘fxe4 15.♘xc5 ♘xc5 16.♗c4 [16.♗xb4 ♘xb3 17.axb3 ♕xd5∓] 16...♗xd5 17.♗xb4 ♗xc4 18.♕xc4 ♘e6 19.♖ab1 ♕d7=

A2) 13.♗d3 b4 14.♘d1 a5 15.♖e1 e6 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗c4 exd5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.exd5 ♕xd5∓

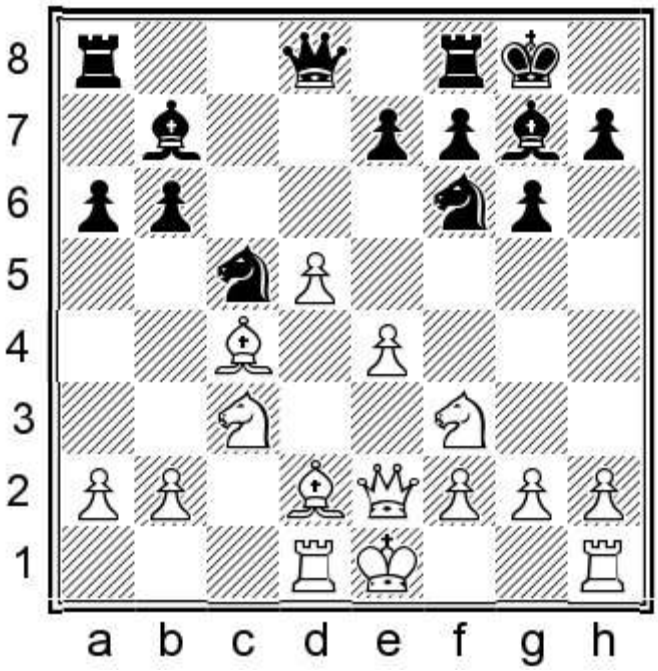
A3) 13.e5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗b4 a5 17.♖fd1 ♕c6 18.♘d4 ♕b6=

B) 12.a4?



Position after: 12.a4?

Fortunately, White can't stop ...b6-b5. 12...b5! 13.axb5 axb5 14.♖xa8 ♕xa8 15.♗xb5 ♘cxe4! 16.♗c6 ♘xd2 17.♘xd2 ♘xd5 18.♗xb7 ♕xb7∓



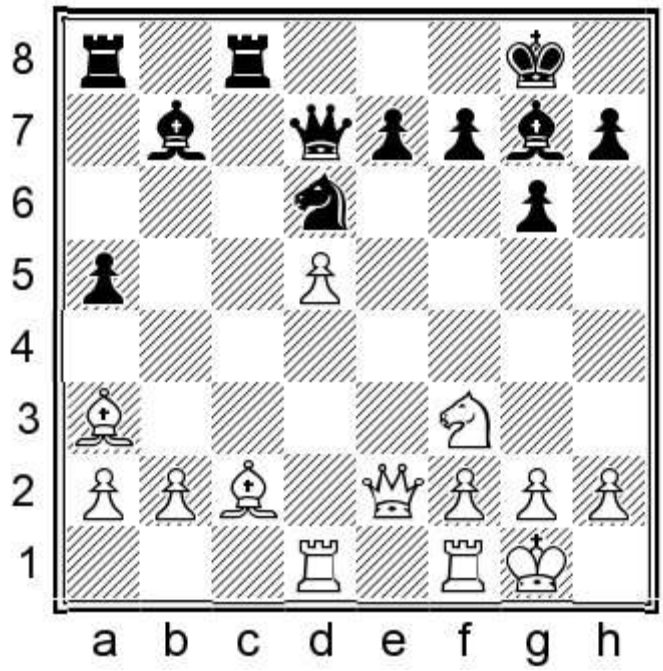
Position after: 12.♖d1

12...b5 13.♗b3 b4 14.♘a4 ♘fxe4 15.♗xb4 ♘xa4 16.♗xa4 a5 17.♗a3 ♘d6 18.♗c2

18.♘e5 ♗a6 19.♘d3 ♘f5 20.♕e4 ♖b8 21.0-0 ♗xd3 22.♕xd3 ♗xb2=

18...♕d7 19.0-0 ♖fc8

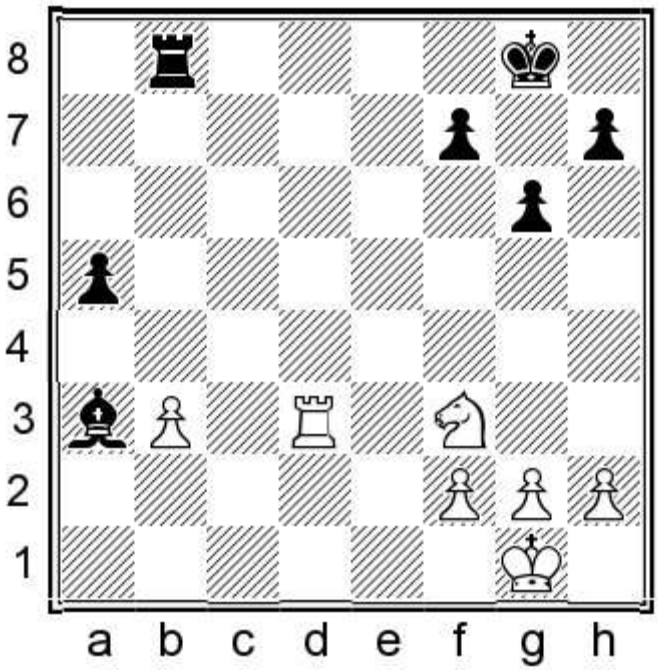
Black has full compensation because of his activity and the weakness of the d5 and b2 pawns.



Position after: 19...♖fc8

For example:

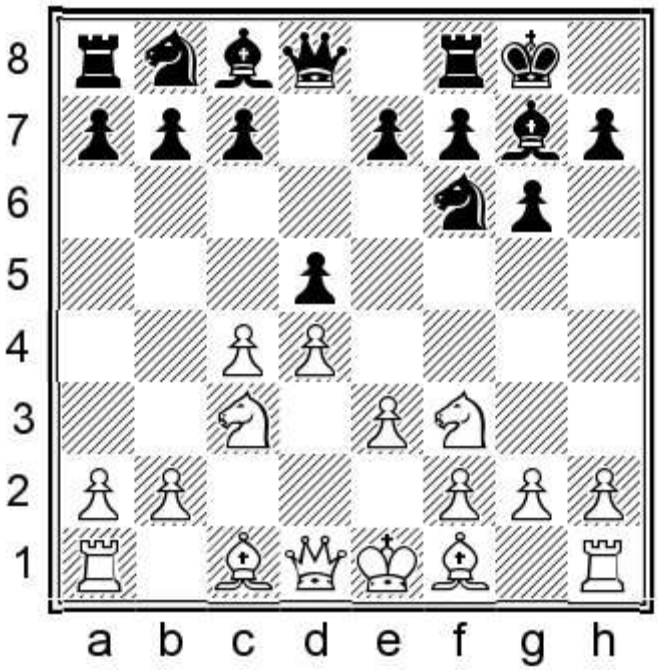
20.♖fe1 ♘c4 21.♕xe7 ♕xe7 22.♖xe7 ♘xa3 23.bxa3 ♗xd5 24.♗b3 ♗xb3 25.axb3 ♗f8 26.♖b7 ♖ab8 27.♖xb8 ♖xb8 28.♖d3 ♗xa3=



Position after: 28...♗xa3=

c) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.cxd5, 6.b4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0

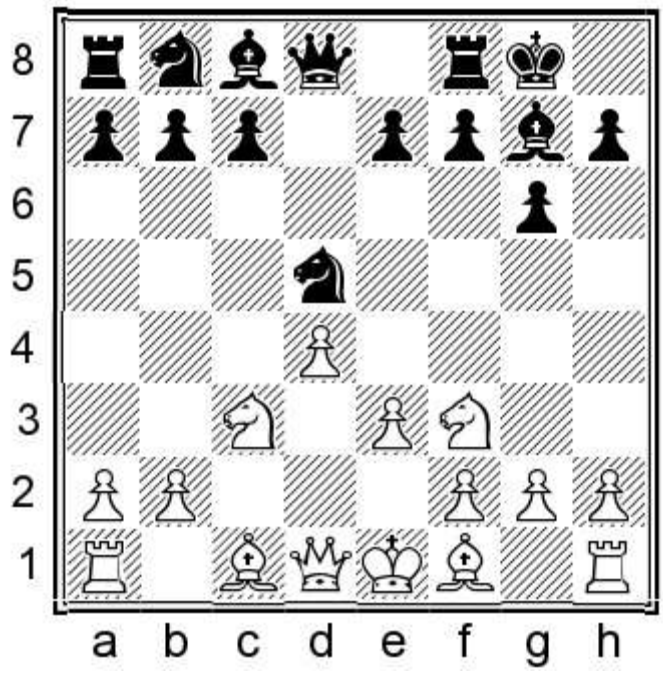


Position after: 5...0-0

6.b4

Not the most frequent move but certainly the most ambitious. White starts winning space on the queenside and desires to stop ...c7-c5 forever.

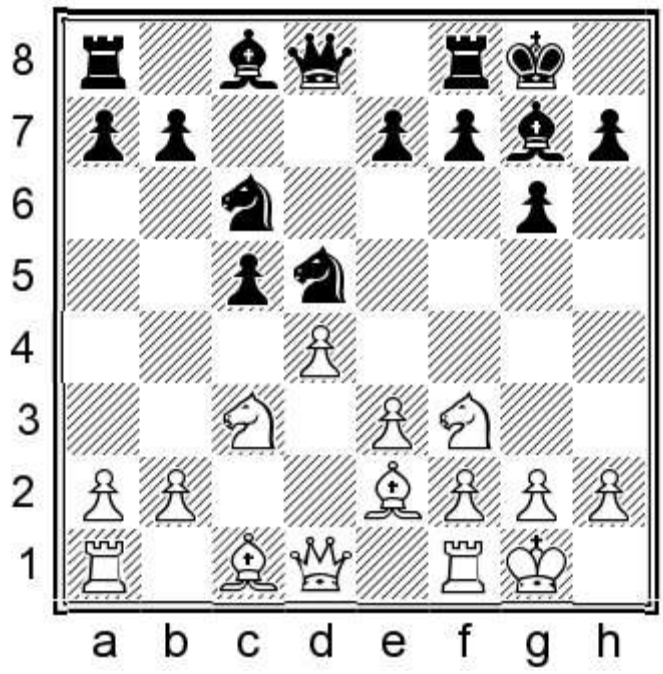
6.cxd5 The main idea is to develop the bishop to c4 and then castle right after. 6...♘xd5



Position after: 6...♘xd5

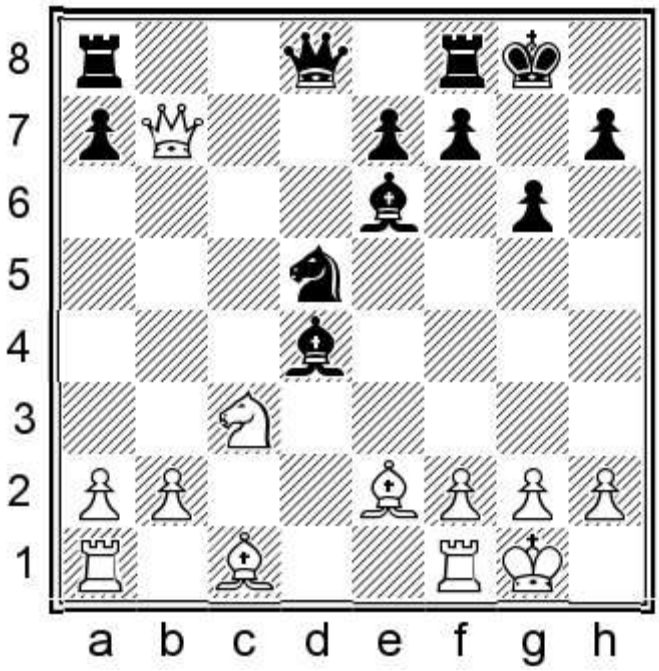
A) 7.♕b3 ♘b6 8.♗e2 ♗e6 9.♕c2 ♗f5 We keep chasing the queen until it returns to its initial position. 10.♕d1 c5 11.0-0 cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♗d7 13.e4 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6=

B) 7.♗e2 Way too modest and allows Black to get a better position very early in the game. 7...c5 8.0-0 ♘c6



Position after: 8...♘c6

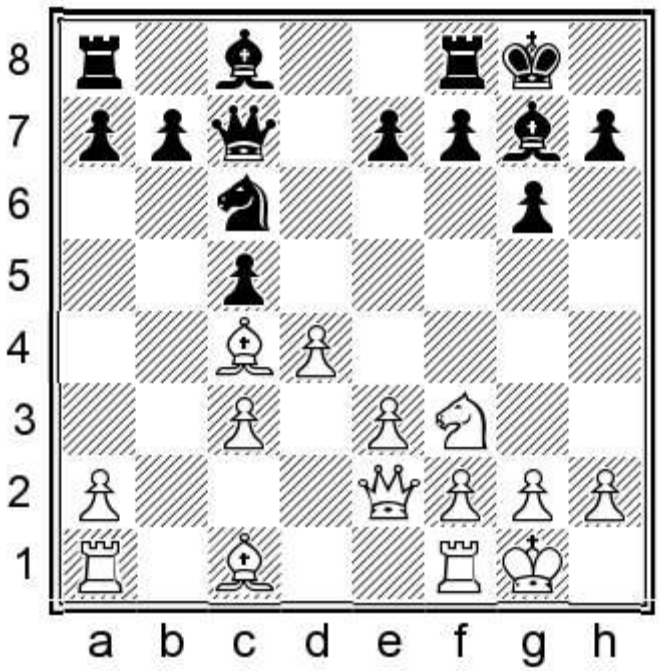
9.♕b3 [9.♘xd5? ♕xd5 10.dxc5 ♕xc5 11.e4 ♗g4 12.♗e3 ♕b4∓ 0-1 (25) Othman, A (2275) – Inarkiev, E (2682) Dubai 2014] 9...♗e6! 10.♕xb7 cxd4 11.exd4 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♗xd4



Position after: 12...♗xd4

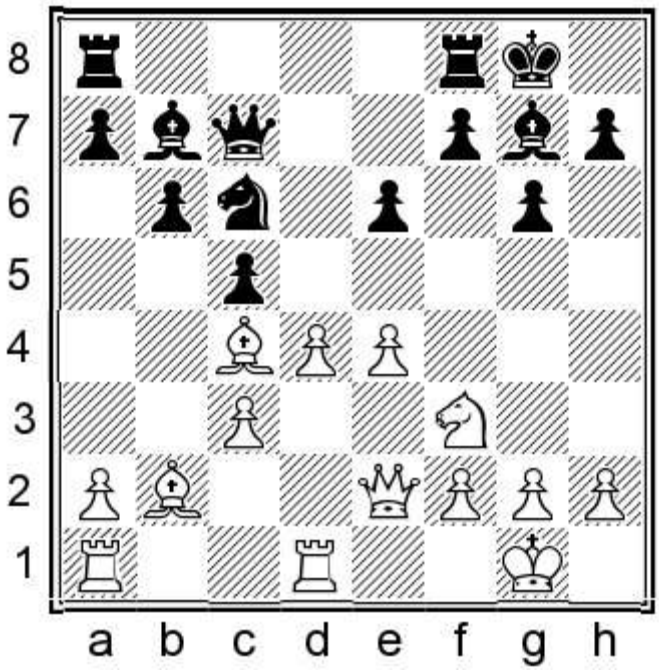
13.♖d1 [13.♗h6 ♖b8 14.♕a6 ♖xb2 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗xf8 ♔xf8 17.♖ad1 ♖xa2 18.♕d3 ♖a4∓] 13...♖b8 14.♕c6 [14.♕a6 ♘b4 15.♕a4 ♕b6∓] 14...♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♗d5 16.♕a4 ♗xc3∓

C) 7.♗c4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 c5 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.♕e2 ♘c6



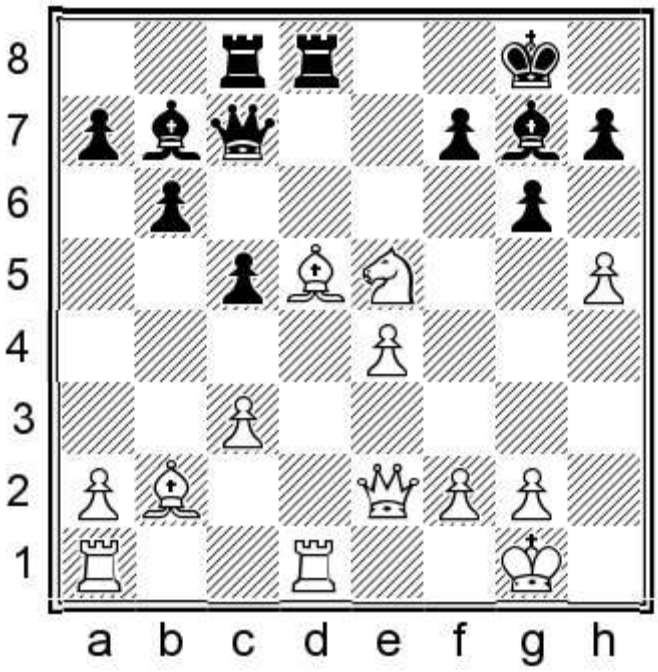
Position after: 10...♘c6

This line resembles the main variation from chapter 1 with one major difference: White keeps the pawn on e3, preparing the delayed activity in the center with e3-e4. 11.♖d1 [11.♗a3 b6 12.♖ac1 ♗b7 13.♖fd1 ♘a5 14.♗d3 ♖fd8 15.h3 ♖ac8=] 11...b6 12.♗b2 ♗b7 13.e4 e6



Position after: 13...e6

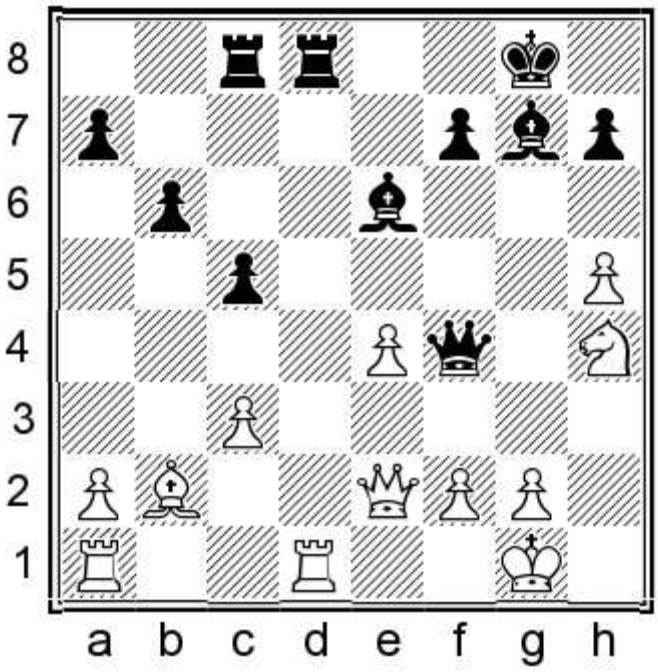
We do the same thing as usual: develop the bishop to b7 and prepare for ...d5 with ...e6. In the next few moves our plan is to connect the rooks after ...♖fd8, ...♖ac8, and then prepare simplifications in the center after ...c5xd4. 14.h4 Just like in chapter 1, White keeps pushing the h-pawn intending to weaken our king. 14...♖fd8 15.h5 ♖ac8 16.d5 exd5 17.♗xd5 ♘e5 18.♘xe5



Position after: 18.♘xe5

18...♗xd5! An important intermezzo, which guarantees Black excellent play. [A big mistake would have been an automatic recapture 18...♗xe5? 19.c4 ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xd5 21.exd5± 1-0 (65) Hjartarson, J (2524) – Sulypa, O (2481) Reykjavik 2018]

C1) 19.♘xg6? ♗e6 20.♘h4 ♕f4!

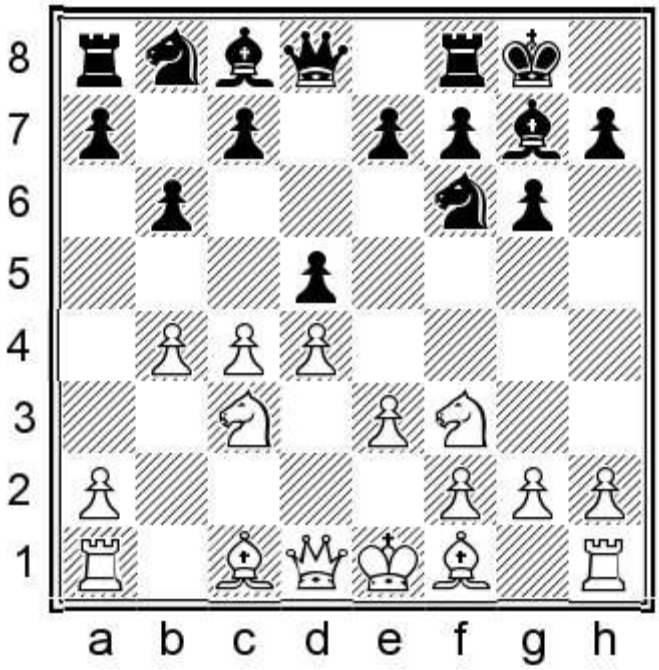


Position after: 20...♕f4!

21.♘f3 [21.♘f5 ♗xf5 22.exf5 ♕xf5∓] 21...♗g4∓

C2) 19.c4! ♗e6 20.f4 ♖xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖d8=

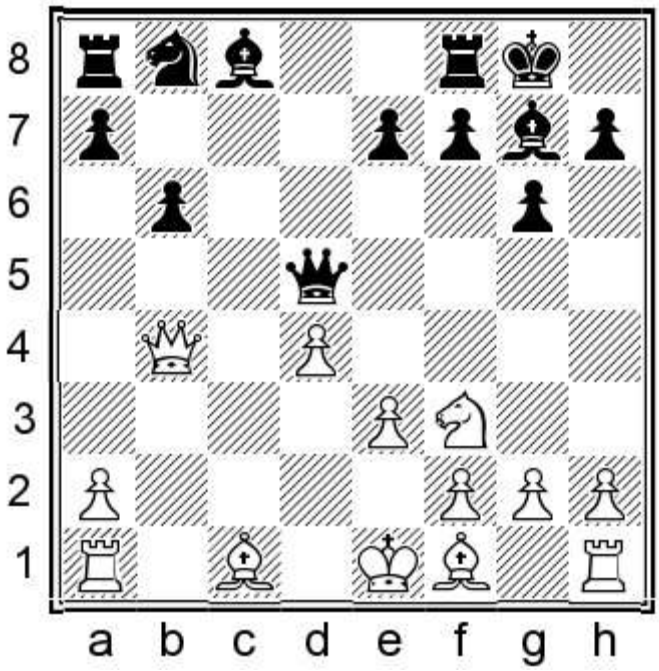
6...b6



Position after: 6...b6

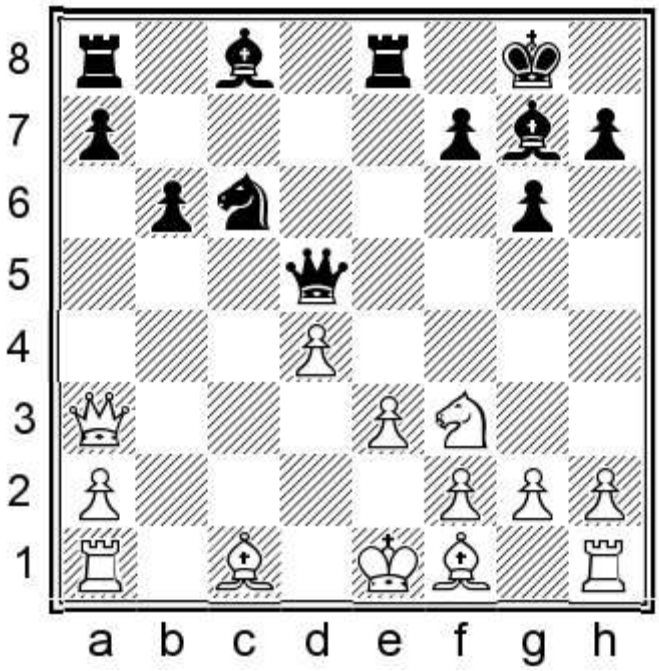
7.♗a3

A) 7.♕b3 c5 8.cxd5 [8.bxc5 bxc5 9.cxd5 ♘bd7 10.♗e2 ♖b8 11.♕a3 ♗b7 12.0-0 ♘xd5 13.♗d2 cxd4 14.♘xd4 0-1 (41) Akobian, V (2624) – Ponomariov, R (2739) Khanty-Mansiysk 2009. 14...♘f4 15.exf4 ♗xd4=] 8...cxb4 9.♕xb4 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 ♕xd5



Position after: 10...♕xd5

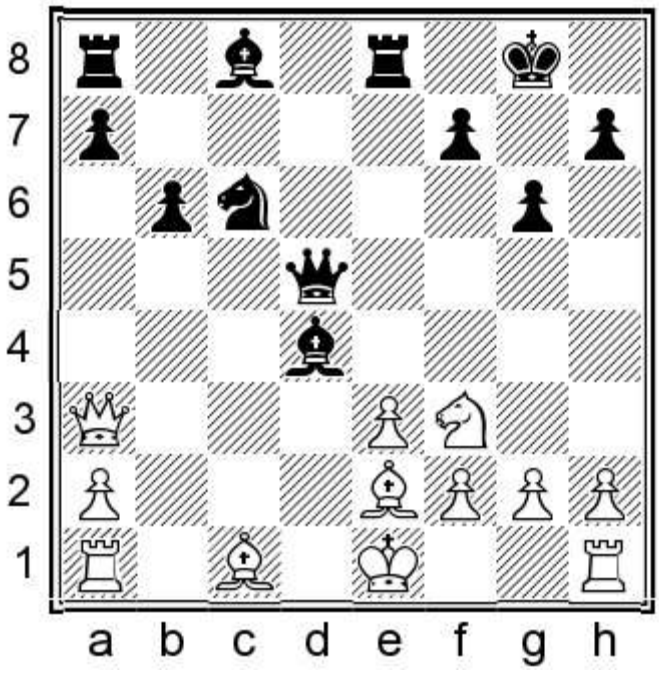
Black isn't bothered by the loss of the e7-pawn since White is significantly behind in development. 11.♕xe7 [11.♗c4 ♕d7 12.0-0 ♗a6 13.♗xa6 ♘xa6 14.♕b1 ♖fc8 15.♗d2 ♘c7 16.♕b3 ♘e8 17.a4 ♘d6=] 11...♘c6 12.♕a3 ♖e8



Position after: 12...♖e8

A1) 13.♗b2 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 [14.♘xd4? ♗xd4 15.♖d1 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2 ♕a5+ 17.♕d2 ♕a4–+ 0-1 (63) Gorenstein, R – Volchok, A Kiev 1961] 14...♗xd4 15.♖d1 ♕c5 16.♕xc5 ♗xc5∓

A2) 13.♗e2 ♗xd4! White will have had a healthy extra pawn if allowed to short castle on the next move so the time to act decisively is right now!

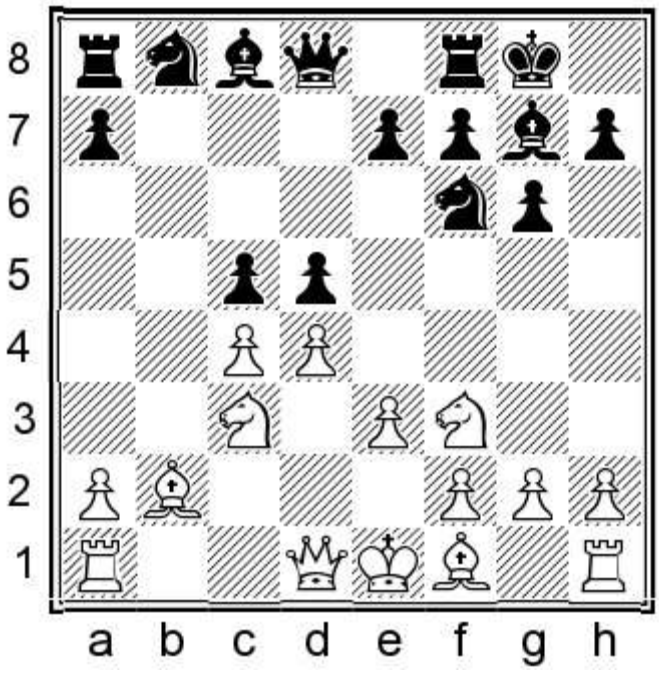


Position after: 13...♗xd4!

A2.1) 14.exd4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♕xd4 16.0-0 [16.♗b2 ♖xe2+! 17.♔xe2 ♗a6+! 18.♕xa6 ♕xb2+ 19.♔f3 ♕c3+ 20.♔f4 ♖e8 21.h4 f5! 22.♖he1 ♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♕xe1 24.♕c8+ ♔g7 25.♔g3 ♕e7∓ We are up a pawn but in practice White should be able to get a draw although he will struggle for some time.] 16...♖xe2 17.♗e3 ♕e4 18.♖ae1 ♖xe1 19.♖xe1 ♗e6∓

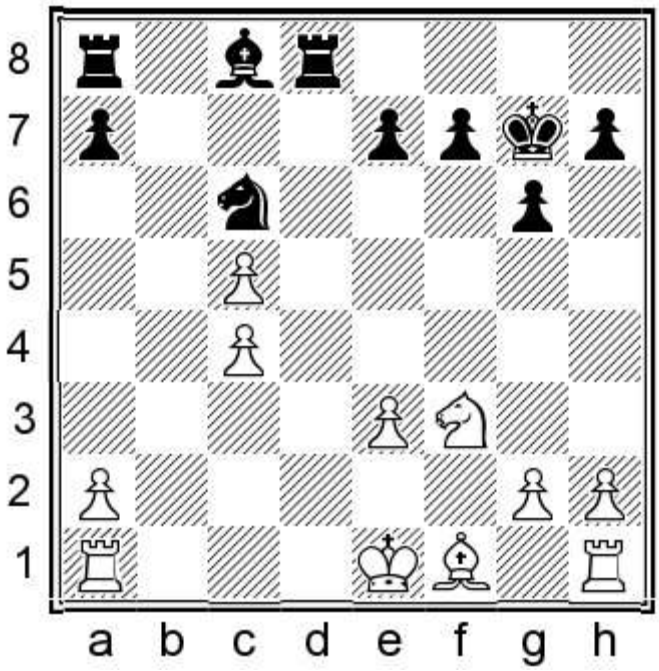
A2.2) 14.♖b1 ♗g7 15.♖b5 ♕d7 16.0-0 ♗b7 17.♖d1 ♕e7=

B) 7.♗b2 The bishop doesn't belong on b2. While it gives extra protection to the knight, it doesn't fight against ...c7-c5. 7...c5 8.bxc5 bxc5



Position after: 8...bxc5

B1) 9.dxc5 ♘c6N 10.♘xd5 [10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♗xb2 12.♖b1 ♖b8 13.♕d2 ♗f5 14.♖xb2 ♖xb2 15.♕xb2 ♕xd5∓] 10...♘xd5 11.♗xg7 ♘xe3 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.fxe3 ♔xg7



Position after: 13...♔xg7

14.♖b1 [14.♔f2 ♗f5 15.♗e2 ♖dc8 16.♖hd1 ♘d8∓] 14...♗f5 15.♖b5 ♖ac8 16.♗e2 a6 17.♖b7 ♔f8 18.0-0 ♘a5 19.♖b2 ♖xc5 20.♘g5 ♘xc4 21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 22.e4 h6 23.♘xf7 ♔xf7 24.exf5 g5=

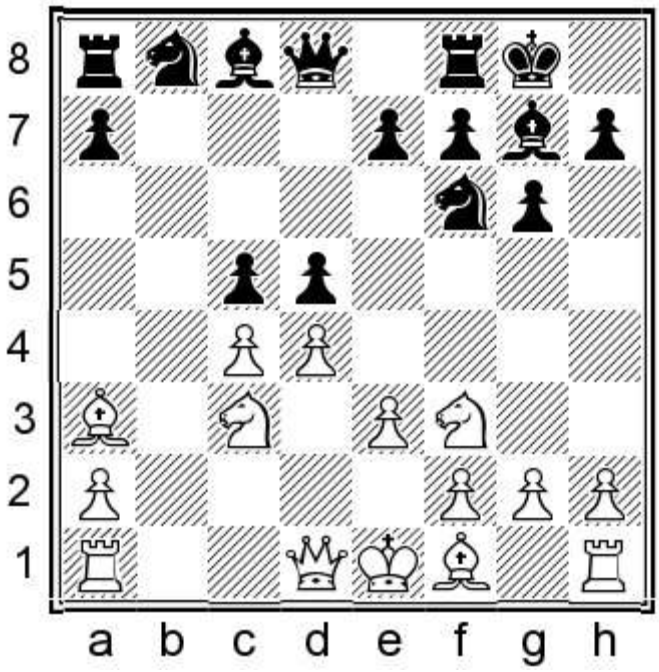
B2) 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♖c1 cxd4 11.♘xd5 ♕xd5 12.♗xd4 ♕xa2 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♕d4+ ♔g8∓

B3) 9.♖c1 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♗b7 11.♗e2 dxc4 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♗xc4 ♕b6 15.♗a1 ♖fd8 16.♕b3 e6=

7...c5

Despite all of White's efforts we still make our standard play happen.

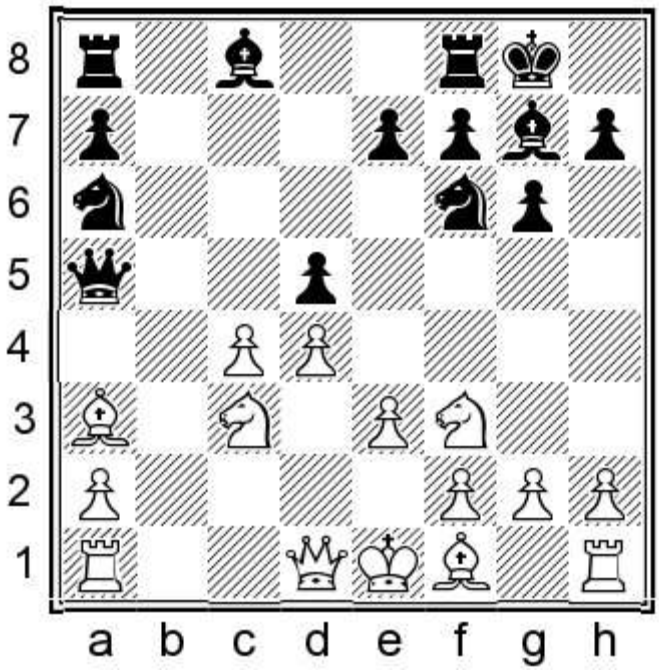
8.bxc5 bxc5



Position after: 8...bxc5

9.♖c1

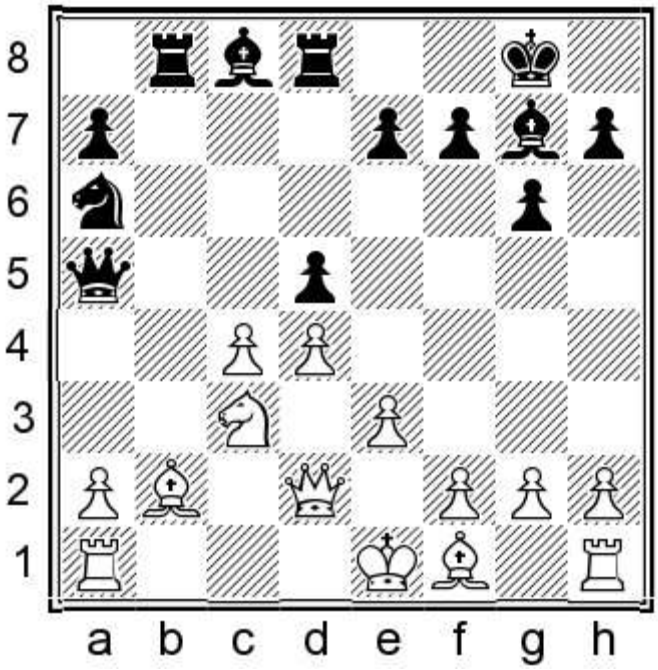
9.♗xc5 ♘a6 10.♗a3 ♕a5



Position after: 10...♕a5

A) 11.♗b2 ♖b8 12.♕d2 ♕b4 13.♘d1 [13.♗c1 ♘e4 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♘g1 ♗e6 16.♕xb4 ♘xb4 17.♔d2 ♖fc8–+] 13...♘e4 14.♕xb4 ♘xb4 15.♖c1 ♘xa2 16.♖a1 ♘b4 17.♖c1 ♗f5∓

B) 11.♕c1! ♘e4 12.♗b2 ♖b8 13.♘d2 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 ♖d8!



Position after: 14...♖d8!

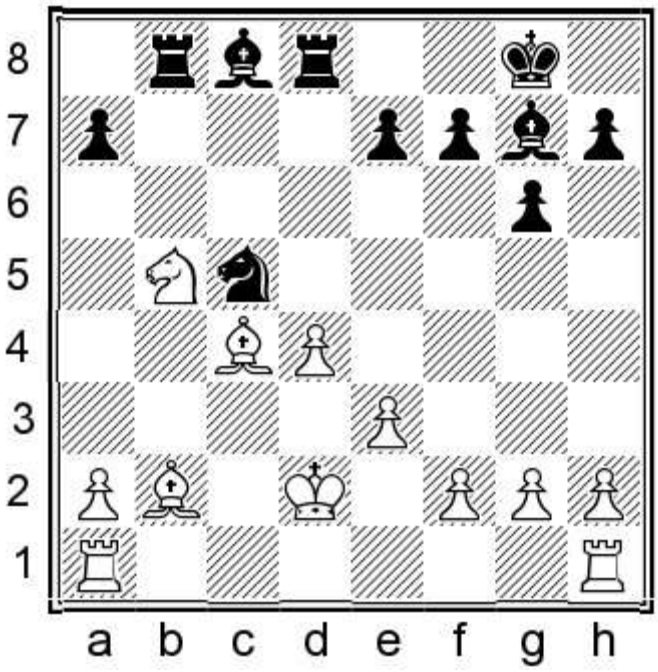
The f8-rook is also needed in the game. It will be especially useful once we trade the queens and force White's king to d2.

B1) 15.c5? ♘xc5 16.♖c1 [16.dxc5? ♖xb2 17.♕xb2 ♗xc3+–+] 16...♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♕xd2+ 18.♘xd2 ♖xb2∓

B2) 15.cxd5 ♘b4 16.♗c4 ♗f5

B3) 15.♘d1 ♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 e5 17.♖c1 ♘b4 18.a3 ♘c6 19.cxd5 ♘a5! 20.♔e1 exd4 21.♗xd4 ♗xd4 22.exd4 ♖xd5 23.♗e2 ♖xd4∓

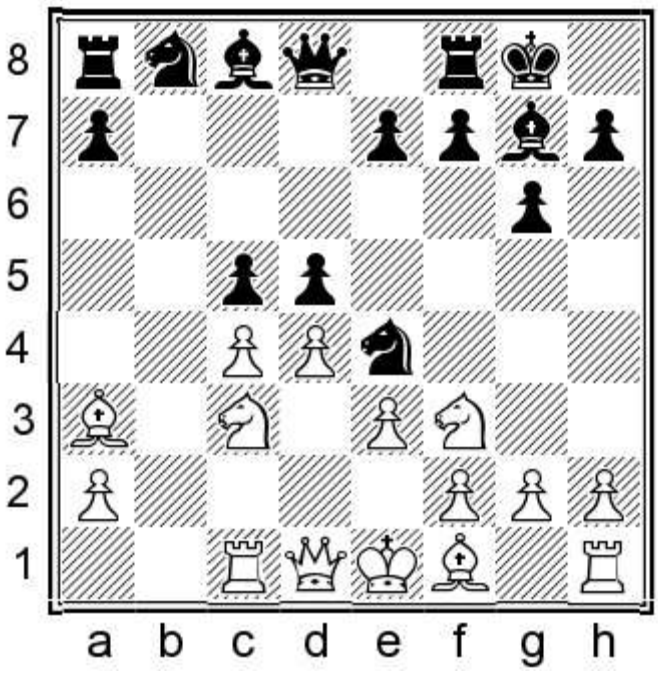
B4) 15.♘b5 ♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 dxc4 17.♗xc4 ♘c5



Position after: 17...♘c5

Now we can fully appreciate the value of 14...♖fd8! 18.♗a3 ♘e4+ 19.♔e1 e5 20.f3 ♗d7 21.fxe4 ♗xb5 22.♗xb5 ♖xb5 23.d5 ♖a5 24.♗b2 ♖a4 25.♔e2 ♖xe4 26.♖hd1 ♖a4 27.♖d2 f5∓.

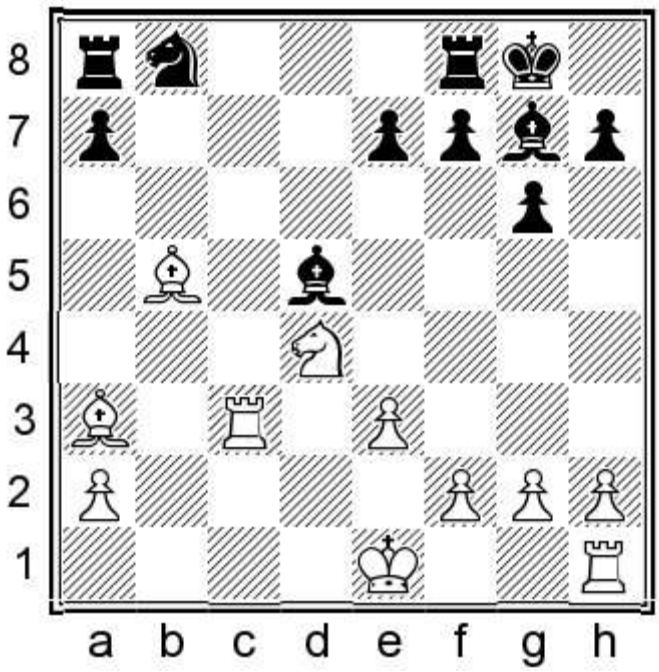
9...♘e4



Position after: 9...♘e4

10.♗xc5

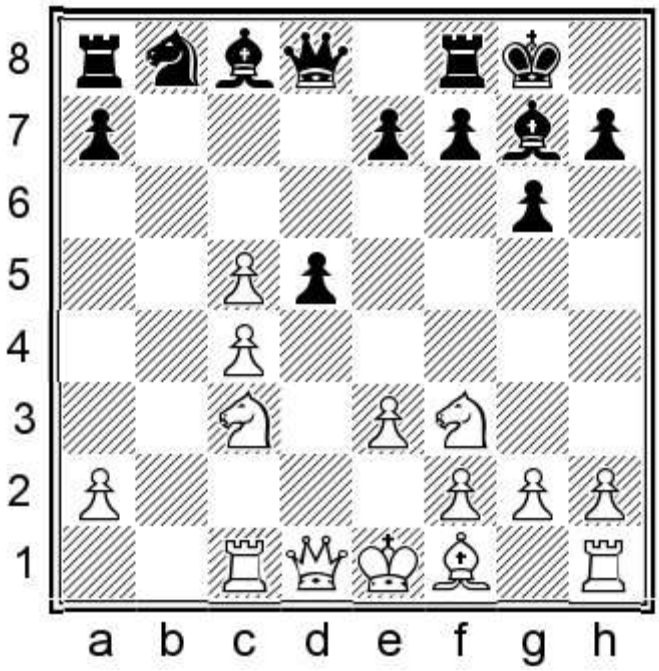
10.cxd5 ♘xc3 11.♖xc3 cxd4 12.♘xd4 [12.exd4 ♘d7 13.♗e2 ♘b6 14.0-0 ♘xd5 15.♖c5 ♗b7=] 12...♕xd5 13.♕b3 ♗e6 14.♕xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗b5



Position after: 15.♗b5

15...a6! 16.♗a4 ♖a7= ½-½ (37) Dimitrov, R (2424) – Hansen, E (2472) Athens 2012. Black's position looked a bit suspicious but the last two moves have equalized the chances. The rook on a7 does a great job protecting Black against the bishops.

10...♘xc5 11.dxc5

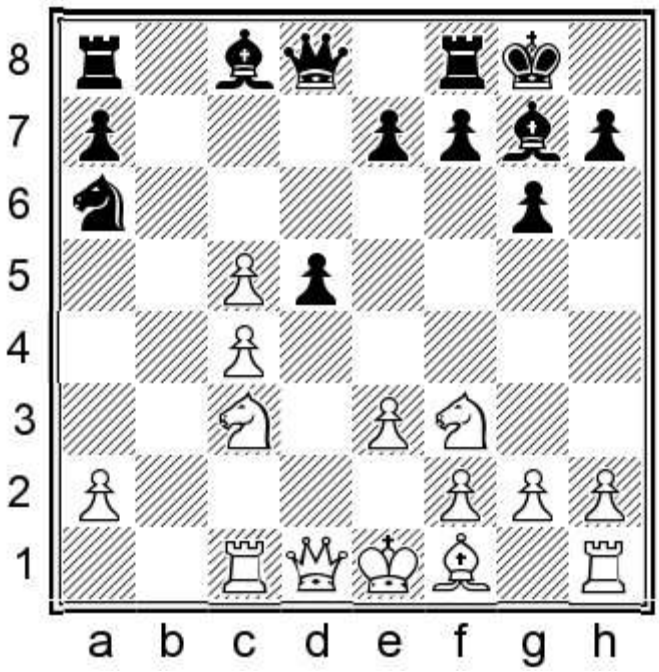


Position after: 11.dxc5

11...♘a6

The quickest way to get a good game is to get the knight and the a8-rook in the game.

11...♕a5 12.♕d2 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♘c6 14.♘d5± ½-½ (33) Rezan, S (2438) – Ruck, R (2567) Sibenik 2012.

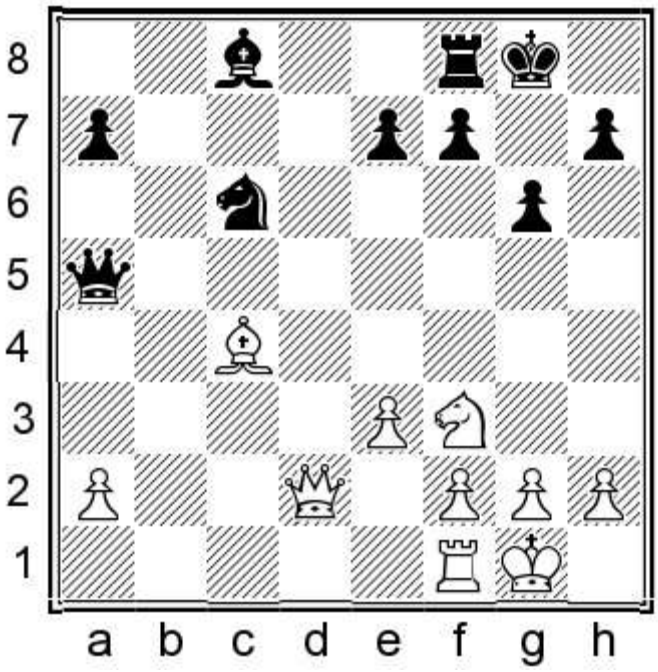


Position after: 11...♘a6

12.c6

12.cxd5 ♘xc5 13.♘d4 ♗b7 14.♗c4 ♕a5 15.0-0 ♖ac8 16.♕e2 ♖fd8 17.♖fd1 ♘d7 18.♘cb5 ♘b6=

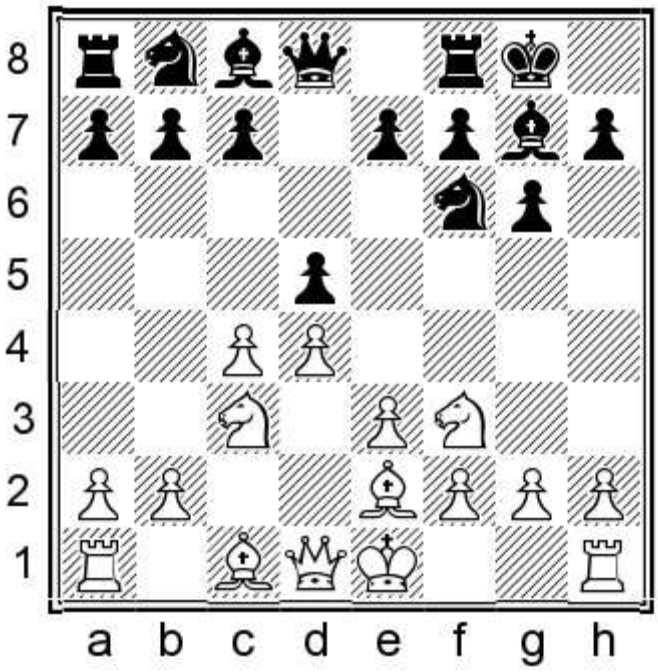
12...♗xc3+ 13.♖xc3 ♖b8 14.♕d2 ♖b1+ 15.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 16.♕xc1 dxc4 17.♗xc4 ♕a5+ 18.♕d2 ♘b4 19.0-0 ♘xc6=



Position after: 19...♘xc6=

d) 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2



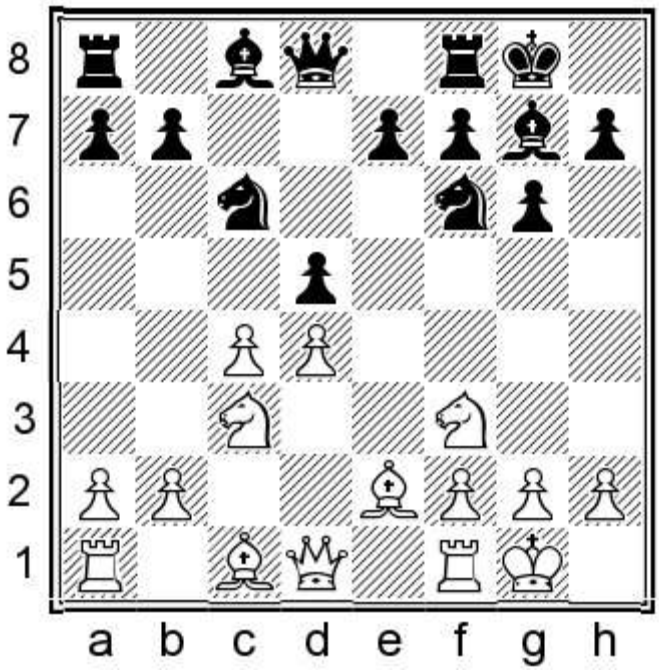
Position after: 6.♗e2

An unpretentious and hardly threatening line. White just wants to castle and play normal chess. Unfortunately for White, we will respond with an early aggression in the center with our favourite

move, ...c7-c5!

6...c5 7.dxc5

7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 [8.♘xd4 dxc4 9.♗xc4 a6 10.a4 ♕c7 11.♕e2 ♗d7 12.b3 ♘c6 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♗b2 ♖fd8 15.♖fd1 ♕a5=] 8...♘c6

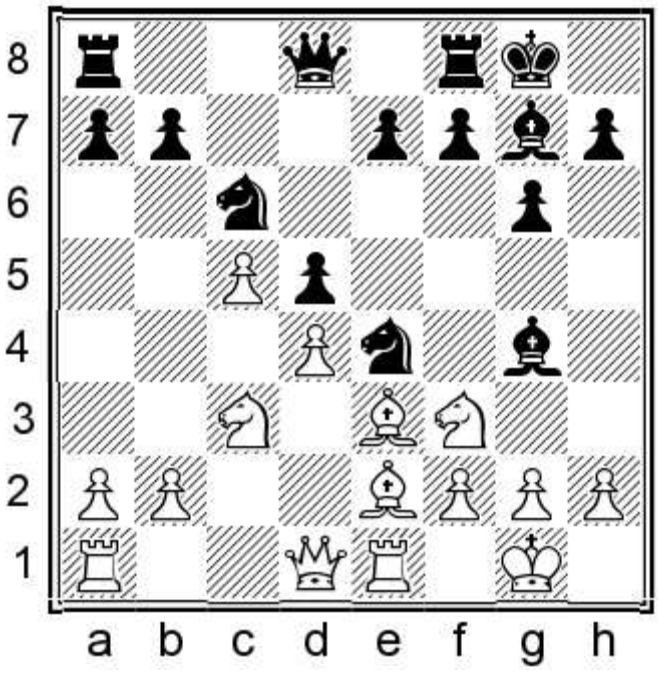


Position after: 8...♘c6

Black has perfect play against White's hanging pawns on d4 and c4. In most cases the isolated pawn on d4 emerges after we trade d and c-pawns. For the sake of completeness, I have provided the model play for Black after every conceivable White move. Jumping ahead Black is doing great everywhere!

A) 9.♗f4 I can't make sense of this move but still had to include it in the book since it was once played by the former world #2 Ukrainian legend Vassily Ivanchuk. 9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 dxc4 12.d5 ♘b4 13.d6 e6 14.♕a4 ♕b6∓ White doesn't have enough for the sacrificed pawn. The d-pawn is easily stoppable and our knight is eyeing the d3-square.

B) 9.♖e1 ♗g4 10.c5 ♘e4 11.♗e3

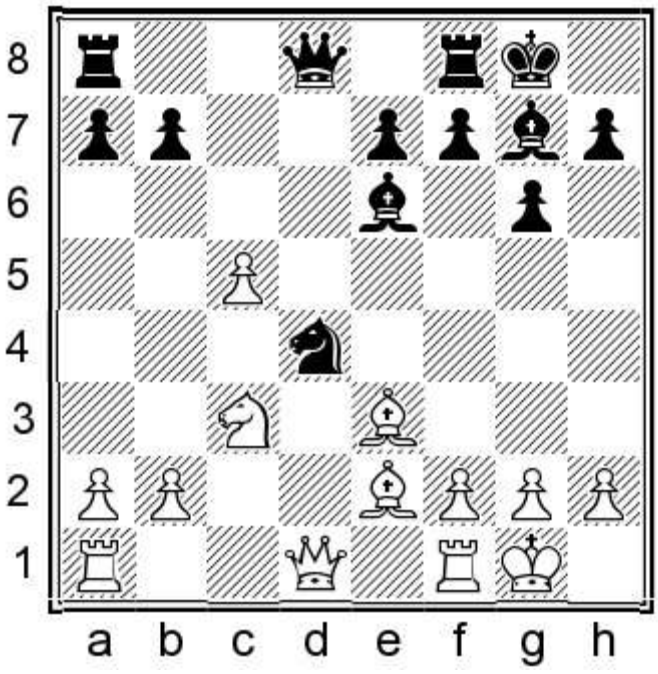


Position after: 11.♗e3

11...♘xc5 This simple tactic is the easiest way to equalize. We also could have tried to play differently. 12.dxc5 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 d4 14.♕b3 dxe3 15.♖xe3 ♖b8=

C) 9.♗e3 A solid protective move which doesn't give White much hope for an advantage but also makes it hard to get into trouble. 9...dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♗g4 11.d5 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘e5 13.♕e2 ♘xc4 14.♕xc4 ♕d7= Black has comfortable play against the d5-pawn.

D) 9.♗g5 ♗e6 10.c5 ♘e4 11.♗e3 ♘xc5 12.dxc5 d4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4



Position after: 13...♘xd4

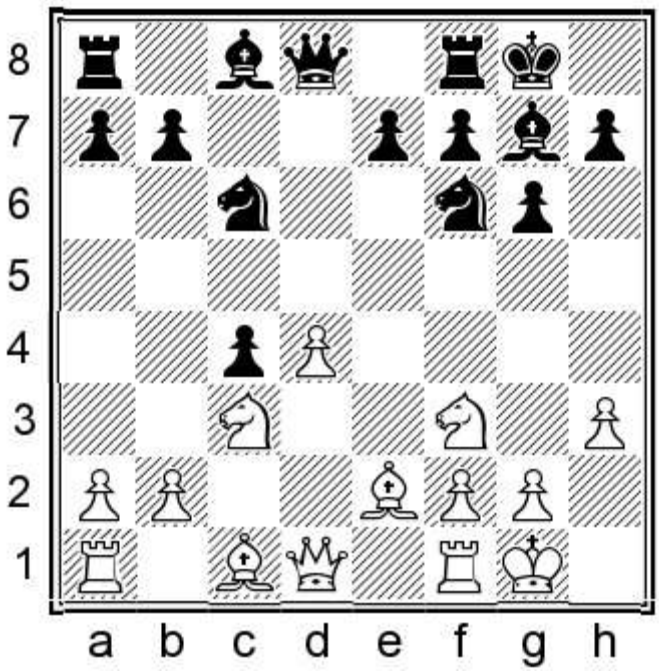
14.♖c1 [14.♗f3 ♖c8 15.♗xb7 ♖xc5∓ 0-1 (43) Gogolev, A (2420) – Teterev, V (2504) St Petersburg 2017] 14...♕d7 15.♗f3 ♖fd8∓

E) 9.c5 ♘e4 10.♗e3 b6 It helps to get rid of the advanced c5-pawn. We benefit from the fact that White can't support the pawn after b2-b4. 11.cxb6 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 axb6 13.♕d2 ♗a6∓

F) 9.b3 ♘e4 10.♗b2 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗g4 12.♖c1 e6 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♖e8=

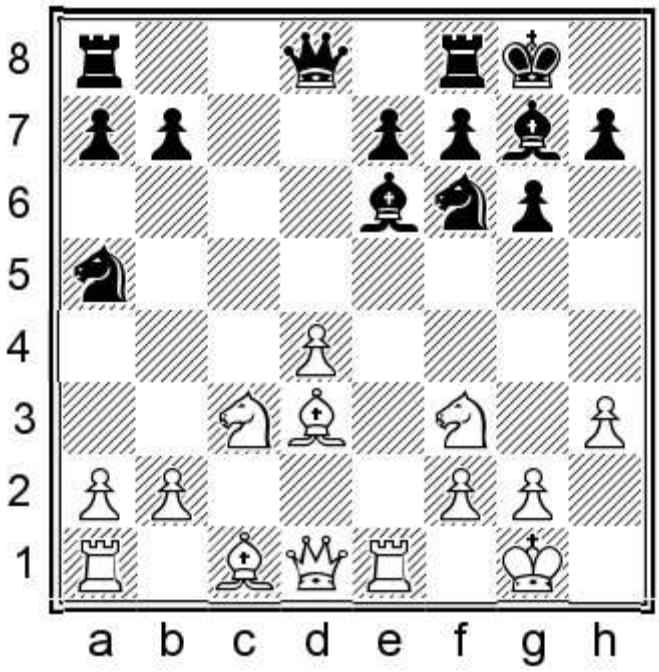
G) 9.a3 ♗g4 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♗g5 ♘b6 13.♕c1 ♖c8∓ ½-½ (60) Bregadze, L (2435) – Zherebukh, Y (2625) Rockville 2014. While writing the book I was surprised to find out I played this opening in a tournament game 5+ years ago. Black is better. We have no weaknesses and White needs to take care of the weak isolani on d4.

H) 9.h3 dxc4



Position after: 9...dxc4

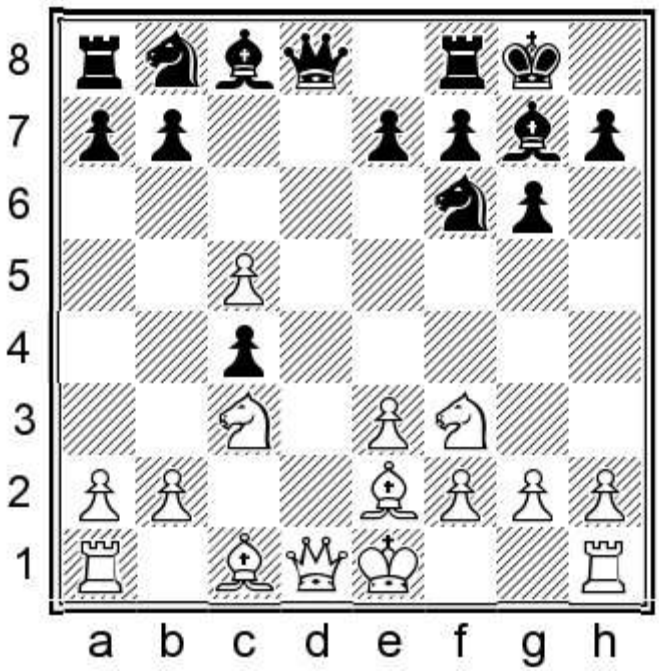
10.♗xc4 [10.d5 ♘a5 11.♗f4 ♗d7 12.♘e5 ♖c8 13.♗f3 b5∓] 10...♘a5 11.♗d3 [11.♗e2 ♗e6 12.♘e5 ♖c8 13.♗e3 ♘d5∓] 11...♗e6 12.♖e1



Position after: 12.♖e1

12...♘c6 [It was necessary not to play the most obvious 12...♖c8? because of 13.♖xe6! fxe6 14.♘g5↑.] 13.♗c2 [13.♖xe6? fxe6 14.♘g5 ♘xd4∓] 13...♕d6 14.♗b3 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 b6 16.♗e3 e6=

7...dxc4

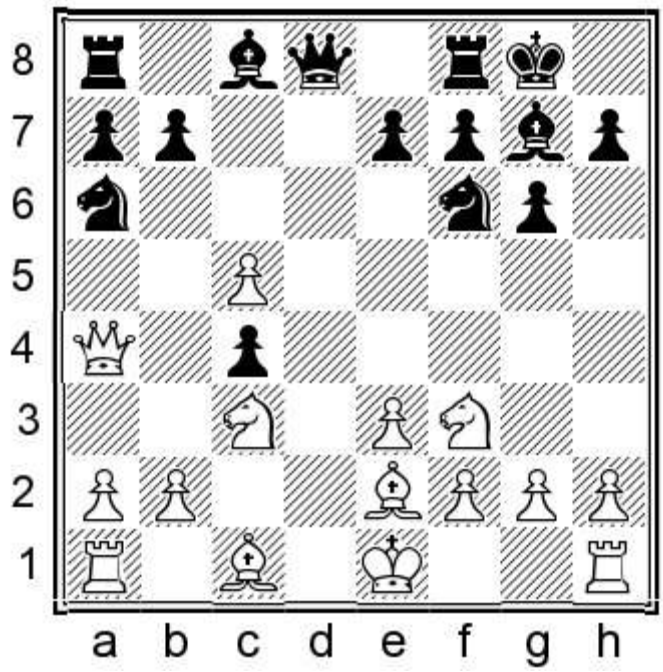


Position after: 7...dxc4

8.0-0

A) A safe option mostly played by timid players is 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♗xc4 ♘bd7 10.c6 bxc6 11.0-0 ♘b6 12.♗e2 c5= Black is comfortable here as White has issues with queenside development.

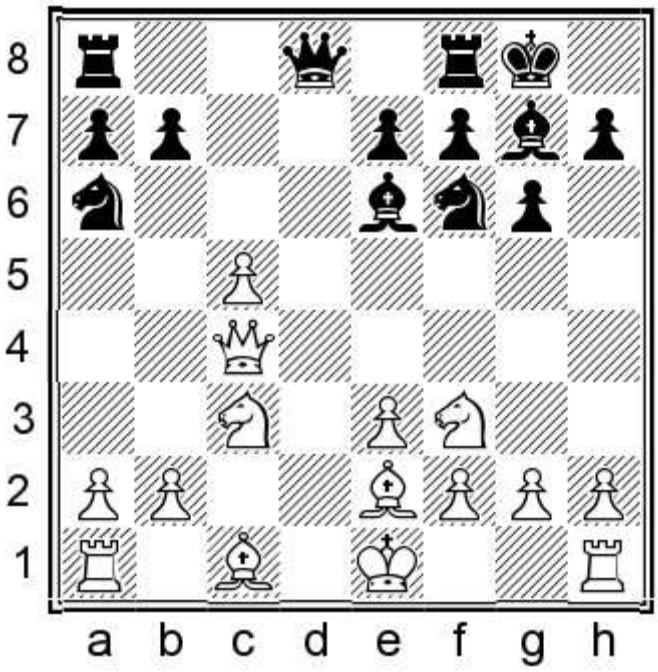
B) 8.♕a4 is a more ambitious line than 8.♕xd8. White's plan is to play ♕xc4, frequently followed by ♕h4, e4, and ♗c1-h6. 8...♘a6



Position after: 8...♘a6

B1) 9.c6 bxc6 10.♕xc4 ♕b6 11.♘a4 ♕b4+ 12.♗d2 ♕xc4 13.♗xc4 ♘e4= ½-½ (30) Jakubiec, A (2522) – Robson, R (2680) Las Vegas 2015. The game was played in the now extinct Millionaire Open. Your author has some bittersweet memories from being there: I managed to oversleep and forfeit the only game in my life. And it was the game for $10, 000 against Robson... Former top 10 in the world, Evgeny Bareev, told me I must have nerves of steel to not wake up for an 11 AM game. Ouch!

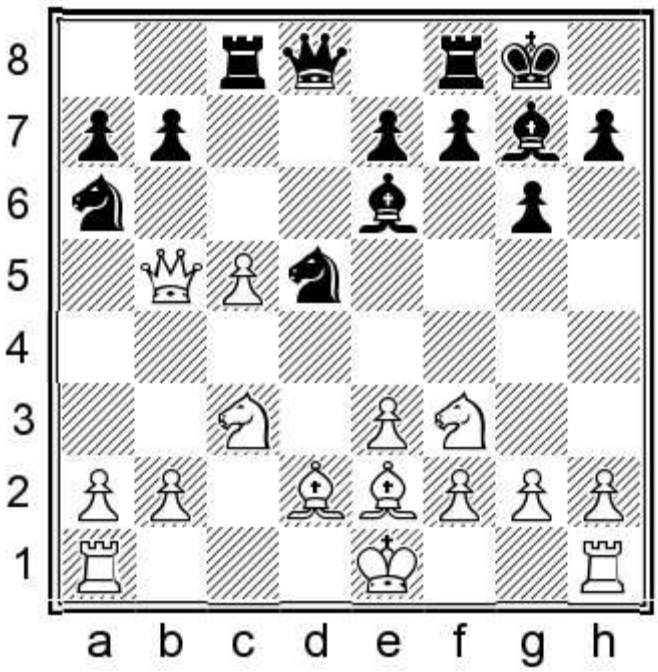
B2) 9.♕xc4 ♗e6 A common idea whenever White has the queen on c4. We develop and win a tempo at the same time.



Position after: 9...♗e6

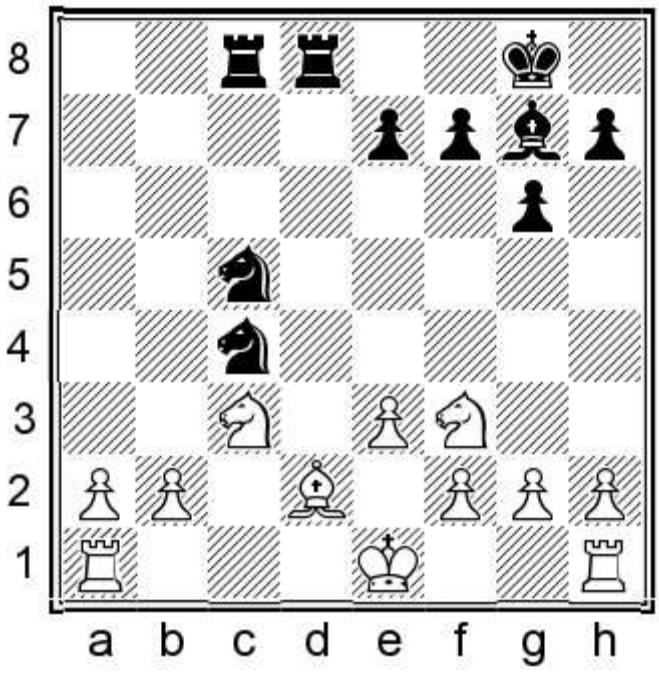
B2.1) 10.♕h4 ♘xc5 11.0-0 ♗d5!? 12.♖d1 e6 13.♕b4 ♕e7 14.♗d2 b6 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♕a3 a5=

B2.2) Much worse is 10.♕b5 ♘d5 11.♗d2 ♖c8



Position after: 11...♖c8

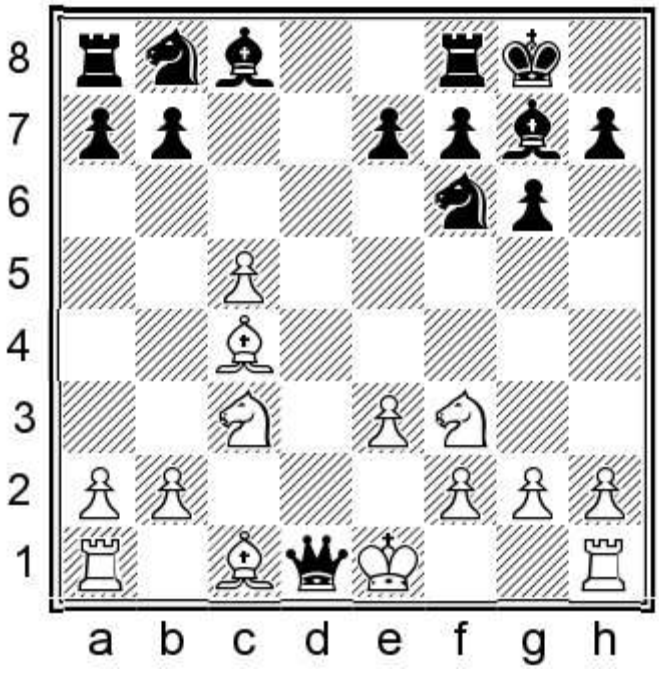
12.0-0 [Overly indulgent snacking on Black's pawns leads to a severe lack of development: 12.♕xb7 ♘xc5 13.♕xa7 ♘b6 14.♕a5 ♗c4 15.♗xc4 ♘xc4 16.♕xd8 ♖fxd8



Position after: 16...♖fxd8

The queens are off the board, so Black's attack is over, right? Quite the opposite: Black is just getting started. 17.♔e2 ♘d3 18.♖ab1 ♘dxb2 19.♗e1 ♖a8 20.♘d2 ♘xe3 21.fxe3 ♗xc3∓ Black has restored the material balanced and kept the initiative. White is facing an extremely unpleasant defense.] 12...♘xc5 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.♖fd1 e6 15.♖ac1 b6∓

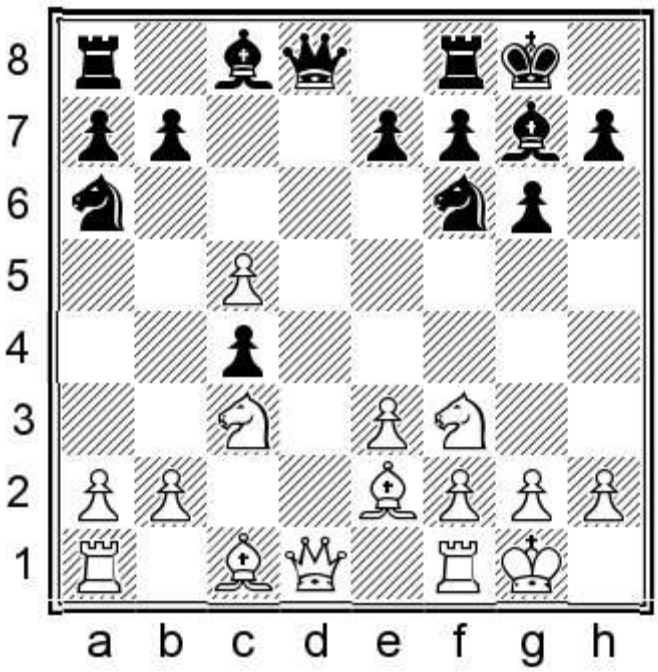
C) 8.♗xc4 This is not the time for the bishop to move as Black gets the best version of the queen trade and keeps pressuring White's queenside: 8...♕xd1+



Position after: 8...♕xd1+

9.♔xd1 [9.♘xd1 ♘e4 10.0-0 ♖d8 11.♖b1 ♘c6 12.b4 ♗f5 13.♖b3 a5 14.a3 axb4 15.axb4 ♖a4∓] 9...♘bd7 10.♗d2 ♘xc5 11.♔e2 b6 12.♖ac1 ♗b7 13.♖hd1 ♘fe4∓

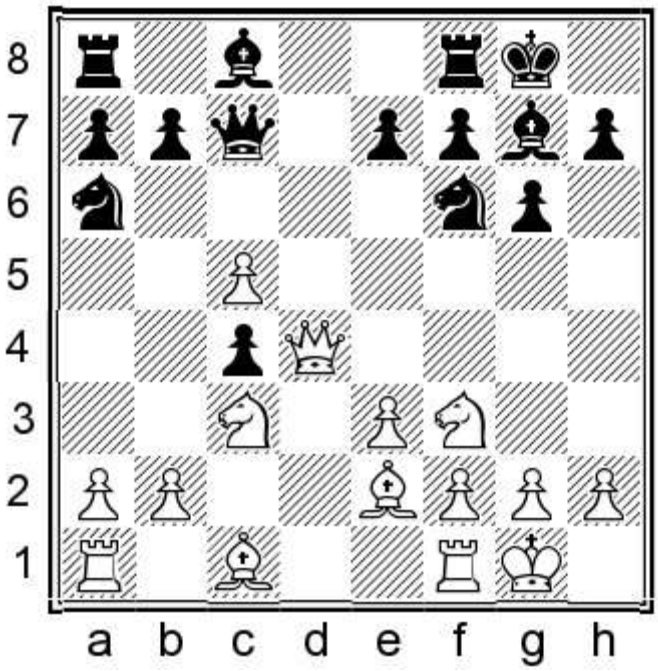
8...♘a6



Position after: 8...♘a6

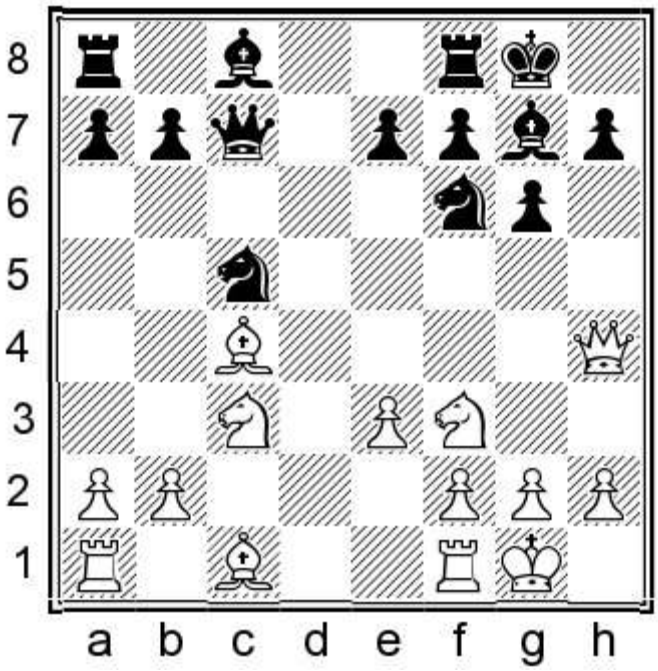
9.c6

A) 9.♕d4 A reasonable move to expect from any good player as it does accomplish two goals: the queen protects the c5-pawn and attacks the c4-pawn. 9...♕c7



Position after: 9...♕c7

The simplest way to get a good game: we will recapture the c5-pawn and the position is likely to transition to a very symmetrical endgame. 10.♗xc4 [10.♕xc4 ♘xc5 11.b4 ♘a6 12.♕xc7 ♘xc7 13.♗b2 ♗f5 14.♖fd1 ♖fd8 15.♖ac1 ♖ac8=] 10...♘xc5 11.♕h4

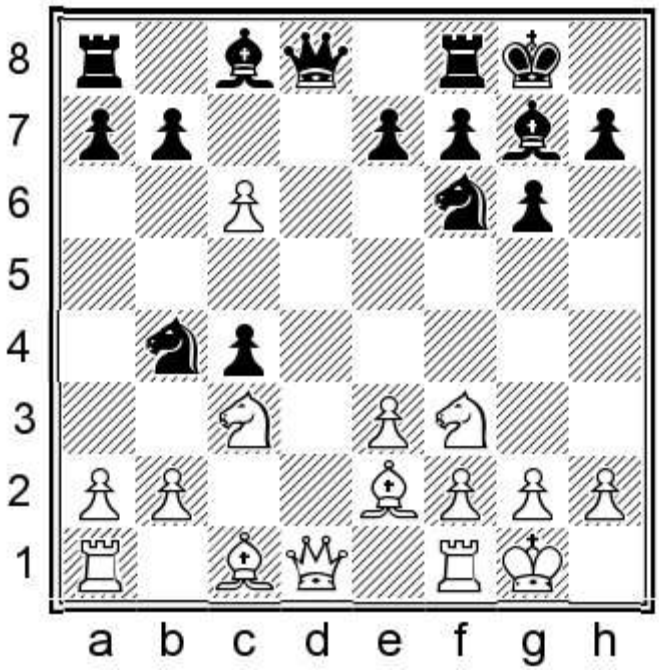


Position after: 11.♕h4

11...♗f5 [11...♗e6? 12.♗xe6 ♘xe6 13.e4= 1-0 (51) Mamedyarov, S (2764) – Giri, A (2720) Beijing 2012] 12.b3 h6 13.♗b2 g5 14.♕d4 ♖fd8 15.♕e5 ♕xe5 16.♘xe5 e6 17.♖fd1 ♘fd7 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.♗e2 ♖ac8 20.♖ac1 ♘e5=

B) 9.♗xc4? ♘xc5 10.♕e2 ♘fe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♖d1 ♕b6∓ Black is better since White is facing a tough question: how to develop the queenside without losing the b2-pawn.

9...♘b4N

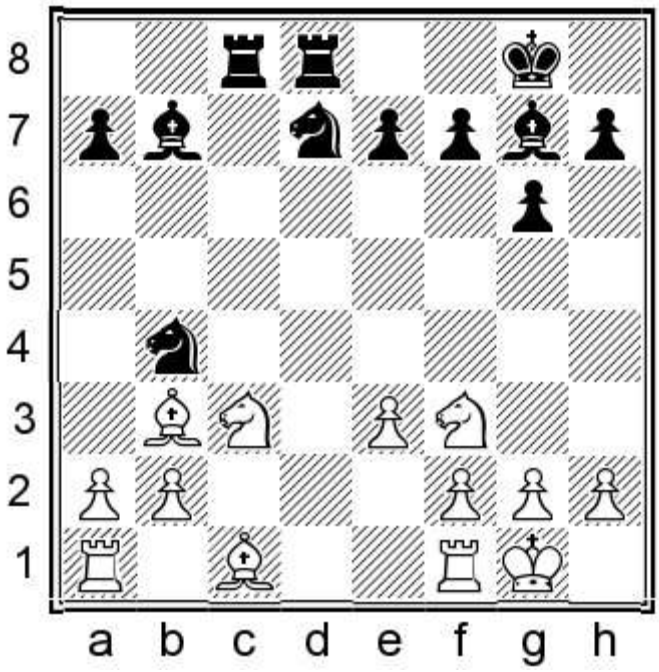


Position after: 9...♘b4N

I have lost count of how many pawns we have sacrificed in this book. As I have stated numerous times before, activity outweighs the pawns.

10.cxb7

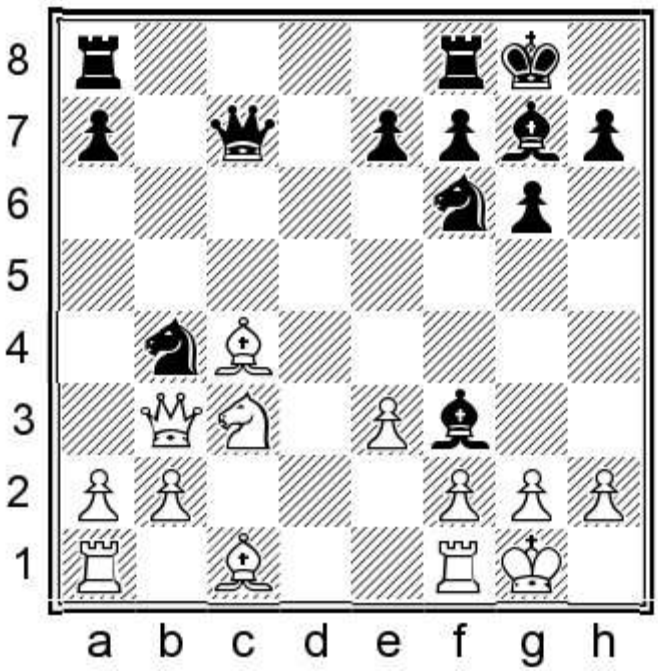
10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.cxb7 [11.c7 ♖d7 12.♗xc4 ♖xc7 13.♗b3 b6 14.♖d1 ♗a6 15.♘d4 ♖d8 16.a3 ♘d3∓; 11.♗xc4 ♘xc6 12.e4 ♘a5 13.♗e2 ♗e6 14.♗e3 ♗c4 15.♖fe1 ♗xe2 16.♖xe2 ♘c6=] 11...♗xb7 12.♗xc4 ♖ac8 13.♗b3 ♘d7



Position after: 13...♘d7

Our pressure on White's queenside always fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn. 14.♘a4 ♘d3 15.♗d2 ♘b6 16.♗a5 ♖d6=

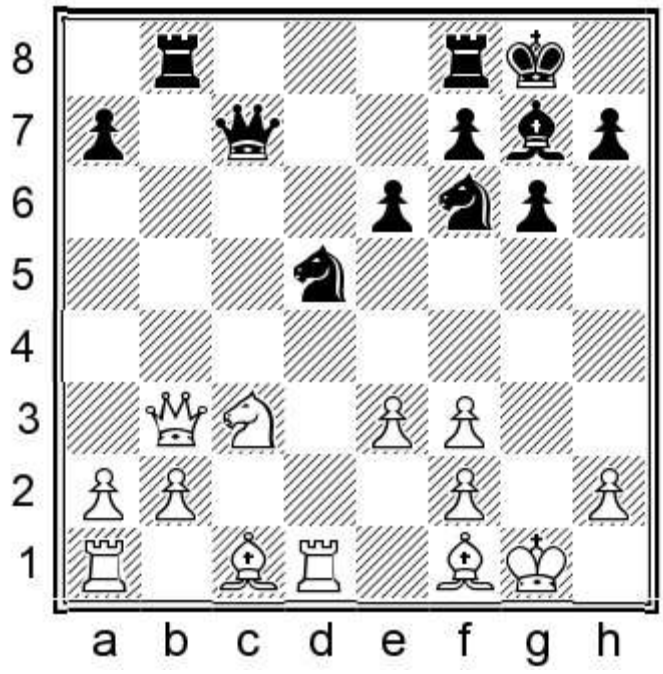
10...♗xb7 11.♗xc4 ♕c7 12.♕b3 ♗xf3



Position after: 12...♗xf3

It certainly helps to compromise White's king position.

13.gxf3 ♖ab8 14.♖d1 e6 15.♗f1 ♘bd5

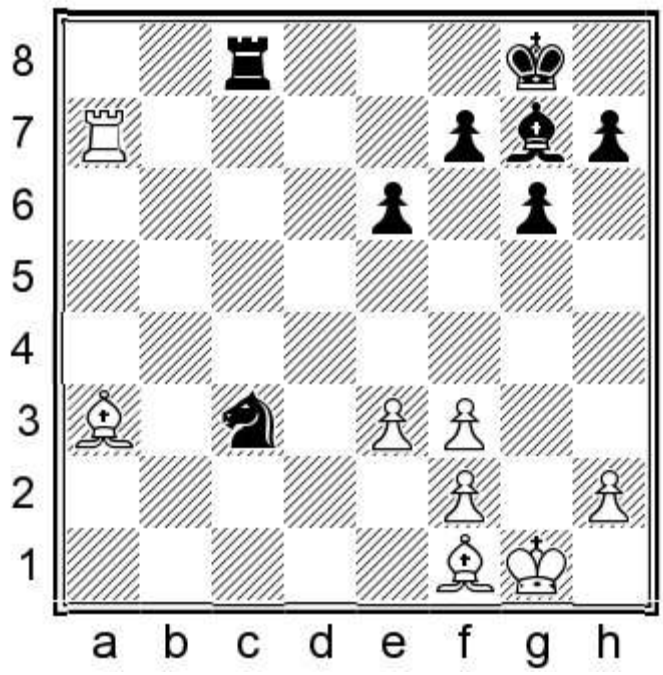


Position after: 15...♘bd5

16.♕a3

16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♕c4 [17.♕a3 ♖fc8∓] 17...♕e7 18.♕e2 g5!⩱ We need to prevent White from playing f4 as this will slightly improve his pawn structure, king's safety and prepares ♗f1-g2.

16...♘xc3 17.♕xc3 ♕xc3 18.bxc3 ♘d5 19.♗a3 ♖fc8 20.♖ab1 ♖xb1 21.♖xb1 ♘xc3 22.♖b7 ♘xa2 23.♖xa7 ♘c3=



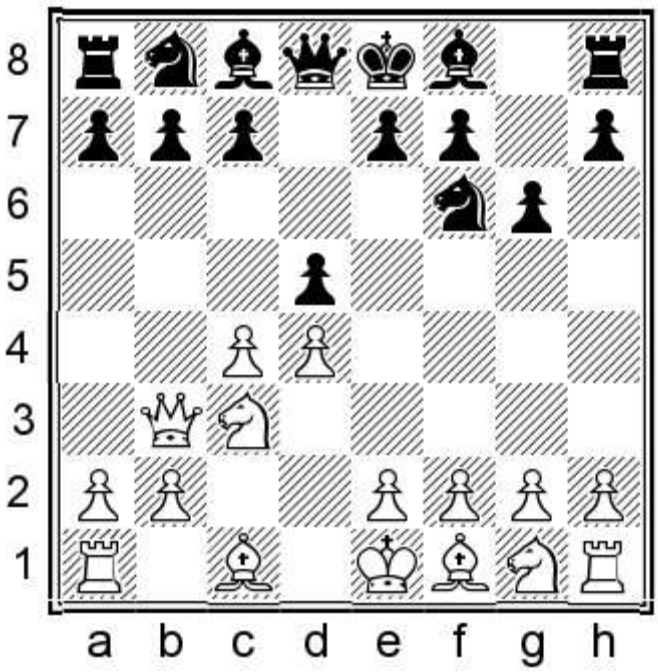
Position after: 23...♘c3=

The game most likely is going to end up in a draw.

White’s bishop pair doesn’t matter much since we don’t have any weaknesses and the amount of pawns is diminished to 4 versus 4.

Chapter 11
4.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕b3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 11 – 4.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕b3 dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗e6 6.♕b5+ ♗d7

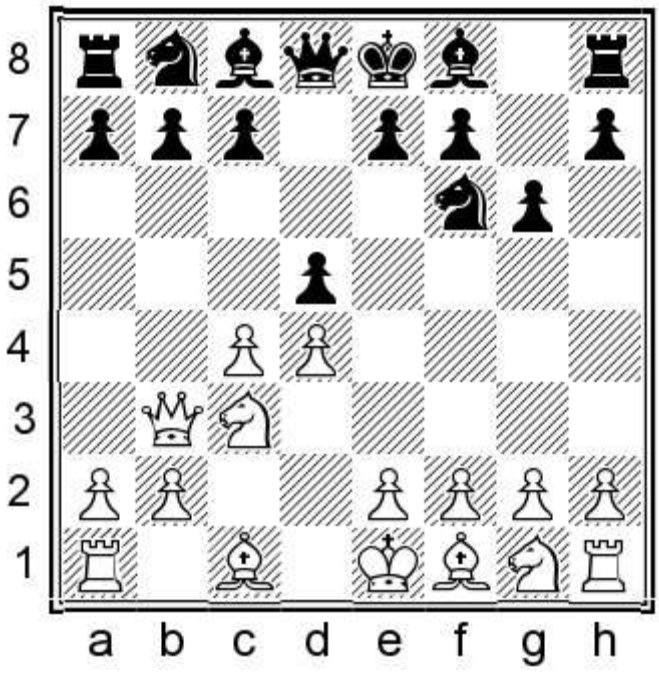
---

a) 7.♕d3, 7.♕xb7

b) 7.♕b3

a) 7.♕d3, 7.♕xb7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕b3

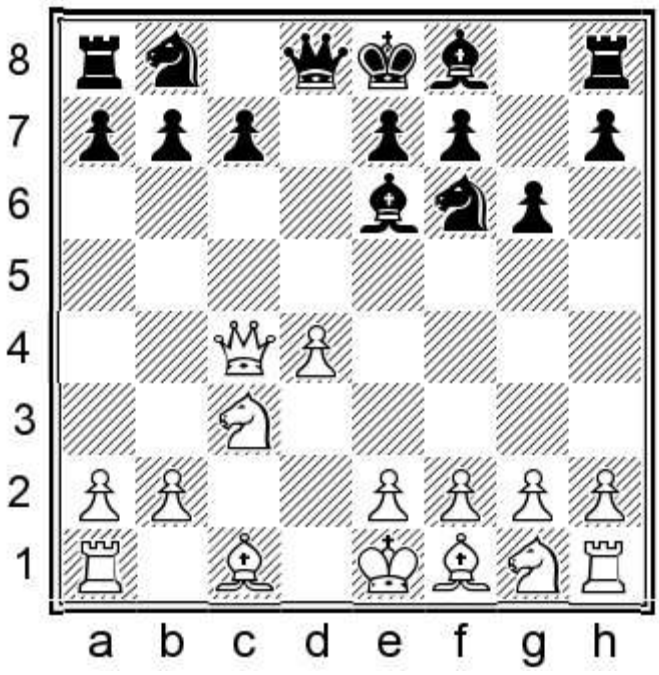


Position after: 4.♕b3

Let's take a little break from the common lines in chapter 11 and examine something rare. My bet is that your opponents will get sick of your successful play in the main Grünfeld lines and will try to play an off-beat line against you from time to time.

This early queen development has some venom. White wants to force Black to take the pawn on c4 immediately and then to proceed with an early e2-e4 pawn push while holding the g1-knight back.

4...dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗e6!

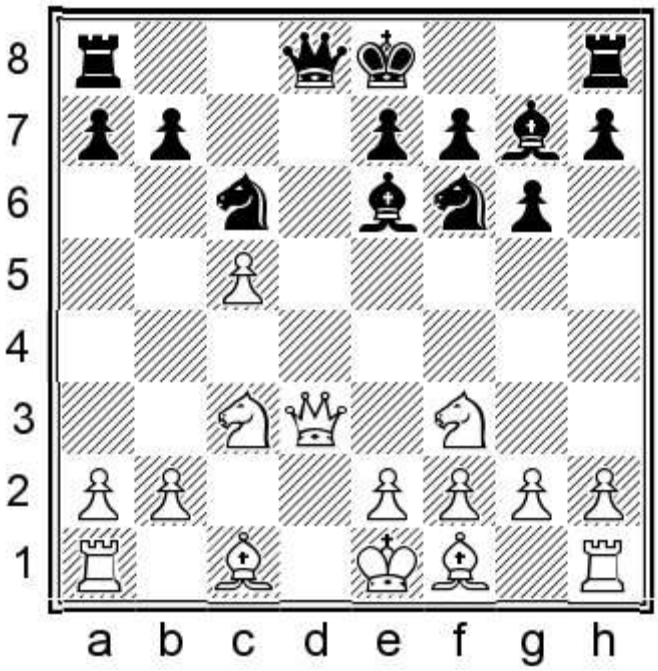


Position after: 5...♗e6!

The most precise move as it directly interferes with White's plan to establish control in the center after e2-e4.

6.♕b5+

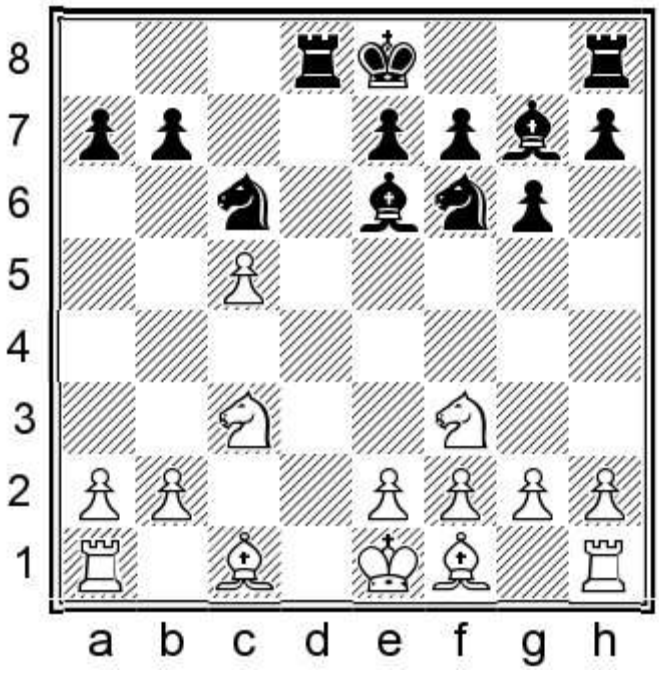
A) 6.♕d3 c5 7.dxc5 [7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.dxc5 ♗g7 transposes to the main line in 6.♕d3] 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗g7



Position after: 8...♗g7

A1) 9.e4 0-0 10.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 11.♗e2 ♘d7 12.♗e3 ♘b4 13.♖c1 ♘xa2 14.♘xa2 ♗xa2 15.b4 a5 16.bxa5 [It is too risky for White to leave our a-pawn alive: 16.b5 a4 17.c6 bxc6 18.bxc6 ♘f8 19.c7 ♖dc8 20.0-0 ♘e6 21.♗b6 ♗b2 22.♖c2 a3–+] 16...♖xa5 17.0-0 ♖c8 18.♘d2 ♘xc5 19.♘c4 ♗xc4 20.♖xc4 b6 21.♖b1 ♖a1 22.♖xa1 ♗xa1∓

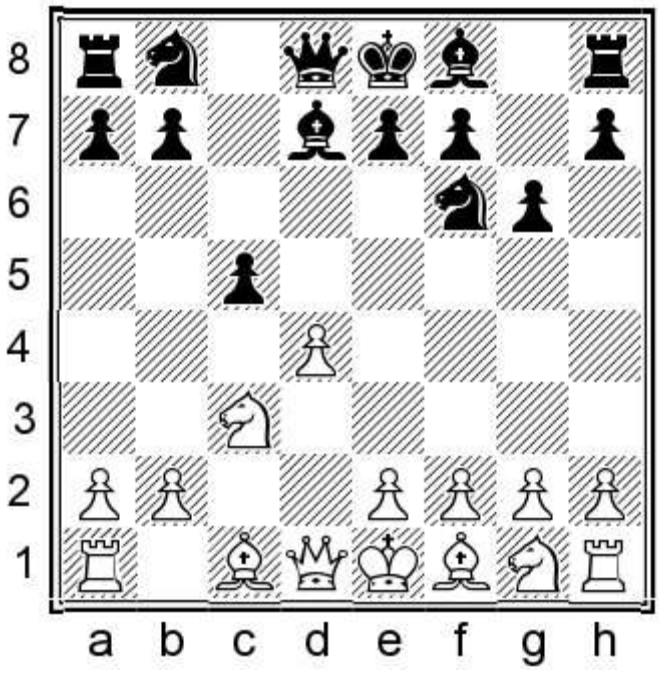
A2) 9.♕xd8+ ♖xd8



Position after: 9...♖xd8

We don't mind playing a middlegame without queens while a pawn down since we are ahead in development and will easily recapture the c5-pawn. 10.e4 ♘b4 11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13.♔e2 ♘c2 14.♖b1 ♘xc5 15.♖d1 0-0 16.♗g5 f6 17.♗d2 e5=

B) 6.♕a4+ ♗d7 7.♕d1 c5!

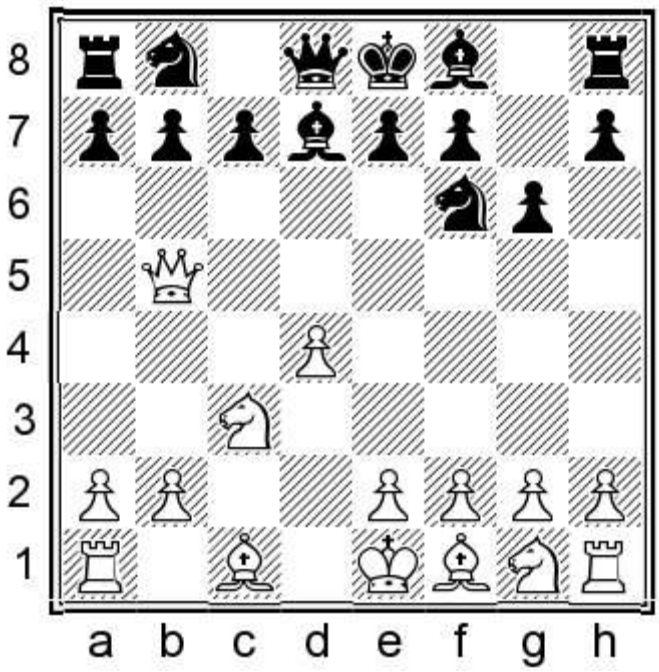


Position after: 7...c5!

Otherwise Black gets a worse position after e2-e4. When in doubt about what to do about White's

central pawns always play ...c5! 8.dxc5 ♘a6 9.♘f3 ♘xc5 10.g3 ♗g7 11.♗g2 0-0 12.0-0 ♗c6 13.♗e3 ♕a5 14.♕c2 ♖ac8 15.♖ac1 ♘e6=.

6...♗d7

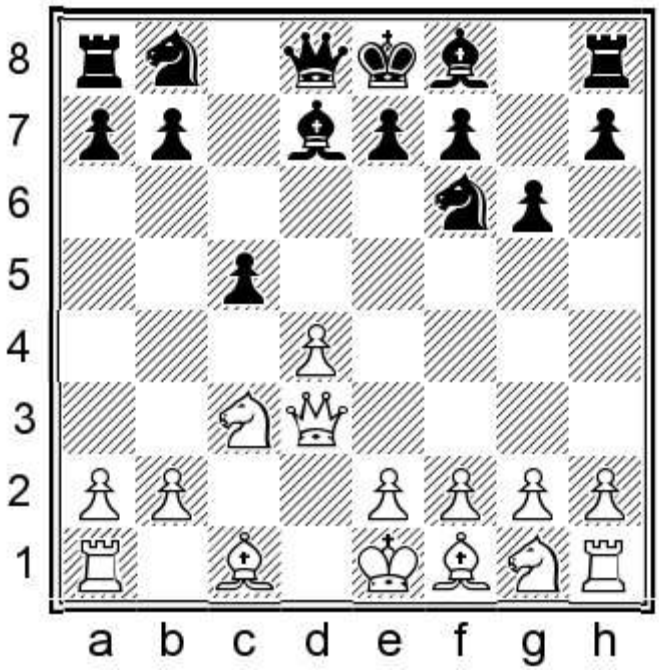


Position after: 6...♗d7

The most natural response that we need to examine is the obvious capture of the b7-pawn. Black's advantage in development will more than compensate for the sacrificed pawn.

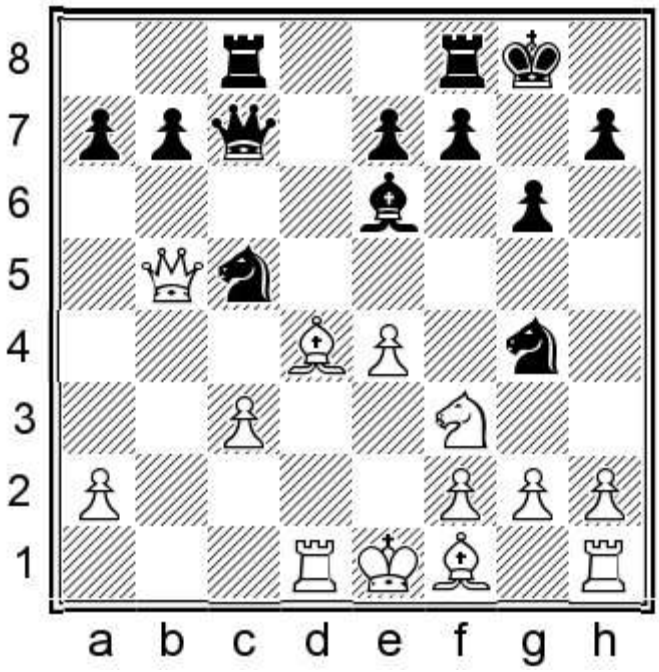
7.♕xb7

7.♕d3 The weakest out of all possible queen retreats. Black gains an advantage in all lines. 7...c5



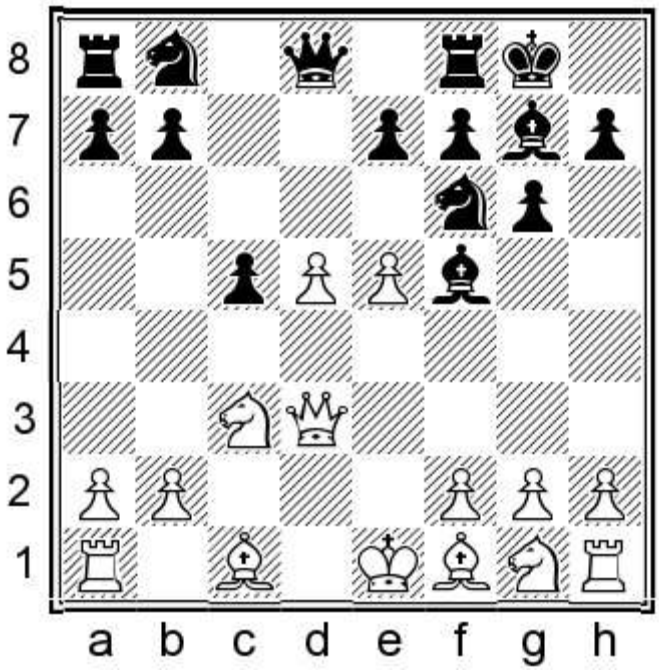
Position after: 7...c5

8.d5 [8.dxc5 ♘a6 9.♕c4 ♗g7 10.♘f3 0-0 11.e4 ♗e6 12.♕b5 ♖c8 13.♗e3 ♘g4 14.♖d1 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♕c7 16.♗d4 ♘xc5∓



Position after: 16...♘xc5∓

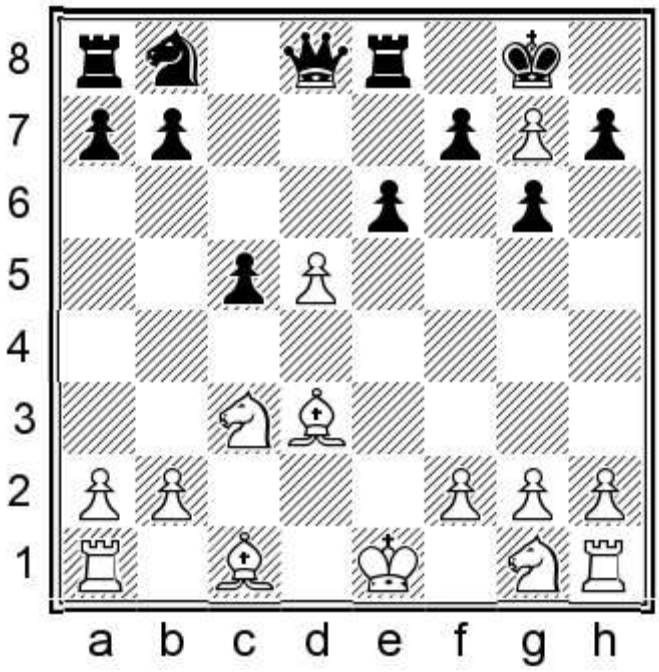
We are freerolling here: material is even and on top of that we are attacking White's king and the weak e4 and c3 pawns.] 8...♗g7 9.e4 0-0 10.e5 ♗f5



Position after: 10...♗f5

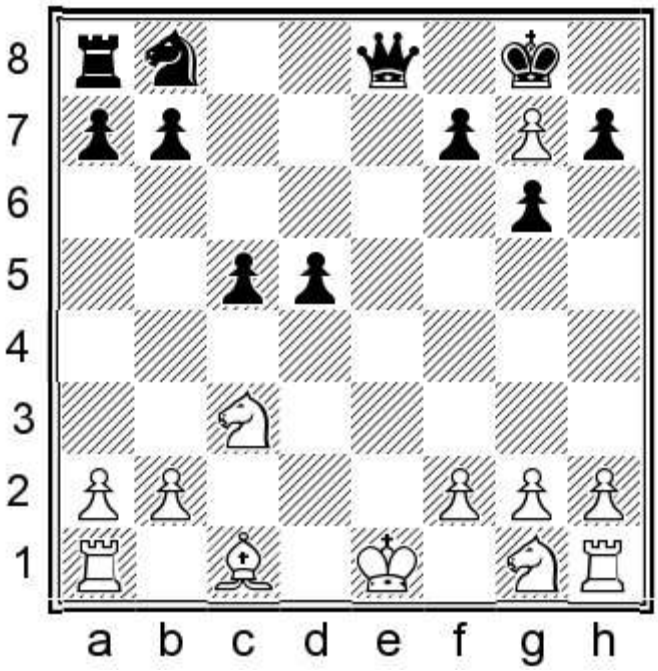
A) 11.♕c4 ♘fd7 12.f4 ♘a6 13.a3 [13.♗e3 ♘b6 14.♕b3 ♘b4 15.♖c1 ♘4xd5–+] 13...e6 14.d6 f6 Immediately breaking up White's center gives us a winning game. 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♘f3 ♘b6 17.♕a2 ♕xd6–+

B) 11.exf6 ♗xd3 12.fxg7 ♖e8 13.♗xd3 e6 White has 3 pieces for the queen thus he is fine in material terms. However White will need to give up the d and g-pawns to be able to castle.



Position after: 13...e6

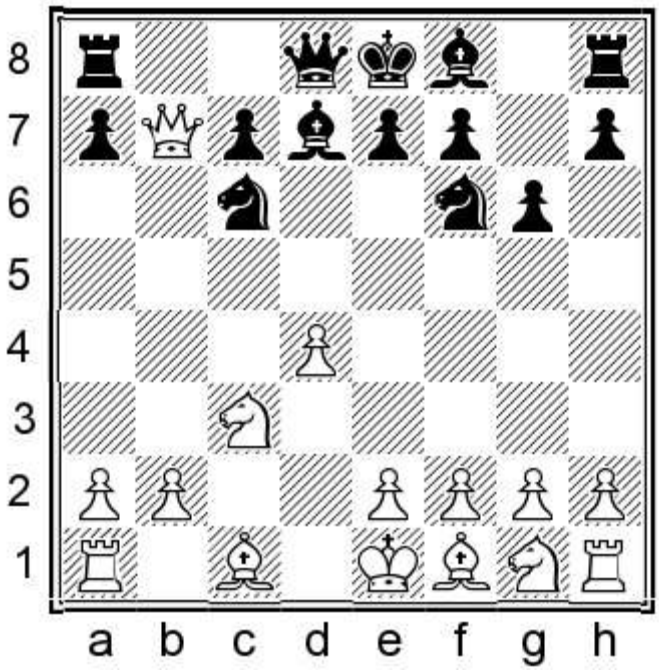
14.♗b5 [14.d6 ♕xd6 15.♗b5 ♘c6 16.♘f3 ♔xg7 17.0-0 a6 18.♖d1 ♕xd1+ 19.♘xd1 axb5∓ The material correlation is in Black's favor therefore we are much better.] 14...exd5+! We don't have to waste time saving the rook. Our target is the king and we can't let it castle. 15.♗xe8 ♕xe8+



Position after: 15...♕xe8+

16.♘ge2 [16.♘ce2 d4 17.♔f1 ♕b5 18.g3 ♘c6 19.♔g2 ♖e8 20.♘f4 ♖e1 21.♘f3 ♖xh1 22.♔xh1 ♕f1+ 23.♘g1 ♕xf2–+] 16...d4 17.♘d5 ♕e5 18.♘df4 ♘c6 19.♗d2 g5 20.♘d3 ♕f5 21.♘dc1 ♕c2–+ White is unable to defend Black's multiple threats thus Black is winning. Note that White has no active pieces.

7...♘c6



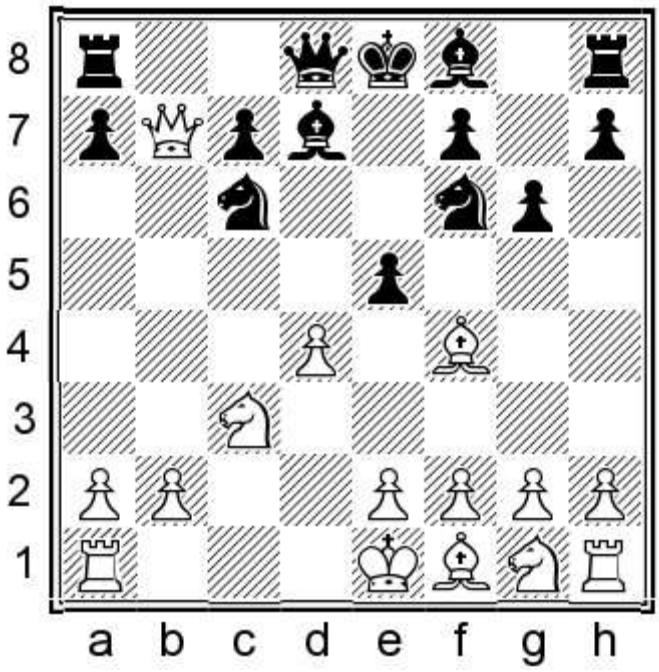
Position after: 7...♘c6

8.e3

White needs to make this modest-looking pawn move to secure the square on e2 for the queen's escape from Black's persecution. Other moves lose rather quickly.

A) 8.♘f3 ♖b8 9.♕a6 ♘b4–+ due to inevitability of a check and double attack (...♘c2+) on the next move, White is hopeless.

B) 8.♗f4 e5! Pawns don't matter if we aggressively bring our pieces into the game and punish White for his lack of development.



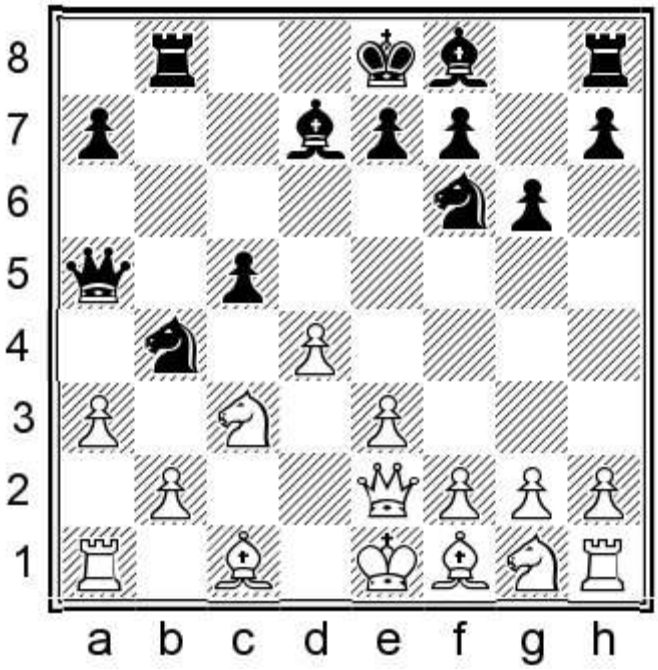
Position after: 8...e5!

9.♗xe5 [9.dxe5 ♖b8 10.♕a6 ♘h5 11.e3 ♖xb2–+ Black has a winning position due to a variety of threats, including the deadliest ones like ...♗b4 and ...♘b4.] 9...♖b8 10.♕xc7 ♕xc7 11.♗xc7 ♖xb2 12.e3 ♗b4 13.♘ge2 ♘d5–+ This double attack on the knight and bishop effectively finishes the game.

8...♖b8 9.♕a6 ♘b4 10.♕e2 c5 11.a3

11.dxc5 ♕a5 12.a3 ♗f5 13.axb4 ♕xa1 14.♕d2 a6∓

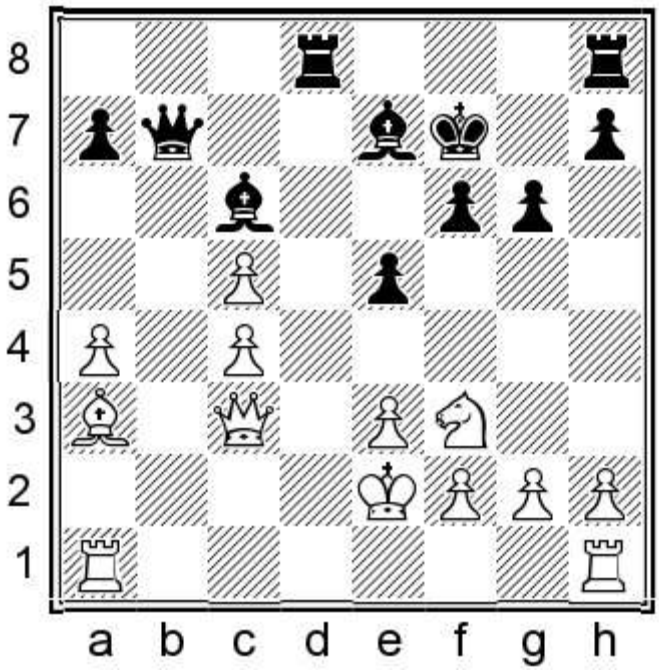
11...♕a5



Position after: 11...♕a5

12.♕d1

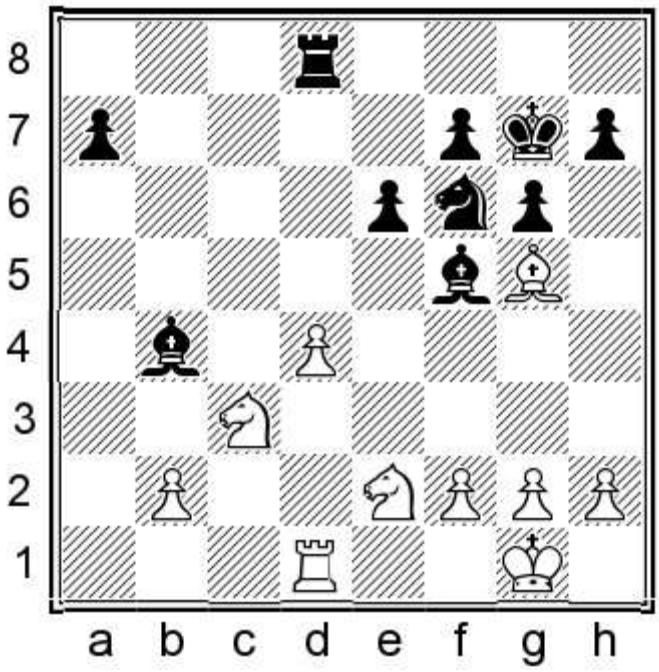
12.dxc5 ♘e4 13.♕d1 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♘a6 15.♗xa6 ♕xa6 16.♕d4 f6 17.♘f3 ♗c6 18.c4 ♖d8 19.♕c3 ♕b7 20.♔e2 e5 21.a4 ♗e7 22.♗a3 ♔f7∓ Here is another testimony to the superiority of activity over pawns.



Position after: 22...♔f7∓

Black is down 2 pawns (!) but is better due to the more active pieces and safer king. In addition, the c-pawns have neither mobility nor value.

12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♗f5 14.♗b5+ ♖xb5 15.axb4 ♕xa1 16.♘xb5 e6 17.♘e2 ♗xb4+ 18.♘bc3 0-0 19.0-0 ♖d8 20.♗g5 ♕xd1 21.♖xd1 ♔g7∓

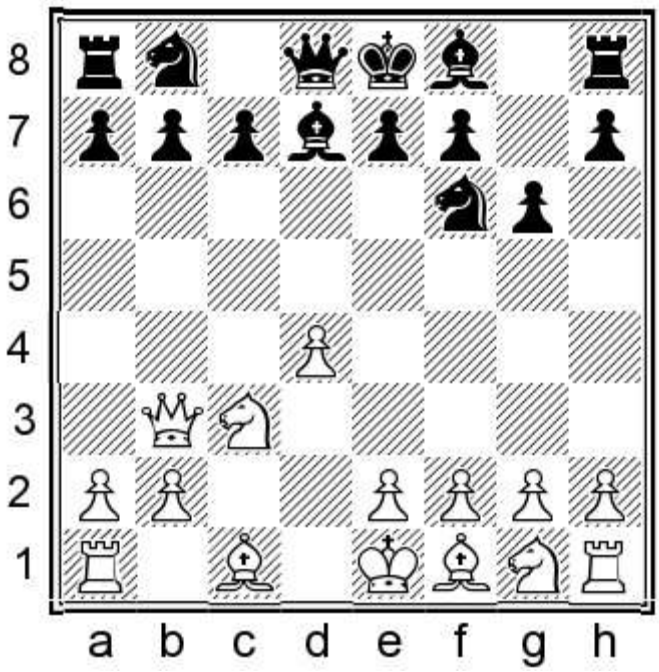


Position after: 21...♔g7∓

The bishop pair and White's isolated d-pawn secure Black slightly better prospects.

b) 7.♕b3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕b3 dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗e6! 6.♕b5+ ♗d7 7.♕b3



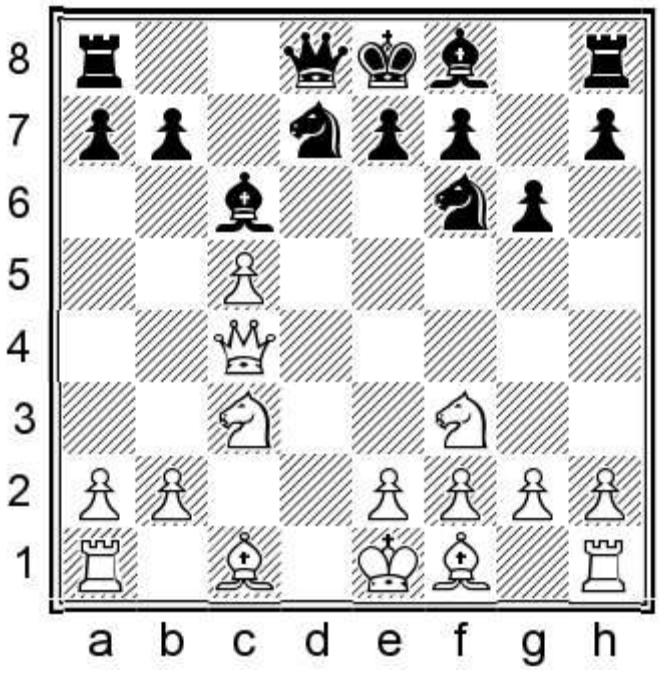
Position after: 7.♕b3

7...c5!

It is all about eliminating White's center and clearing up the a1-h8 diagonal for our dark-squared bishop.

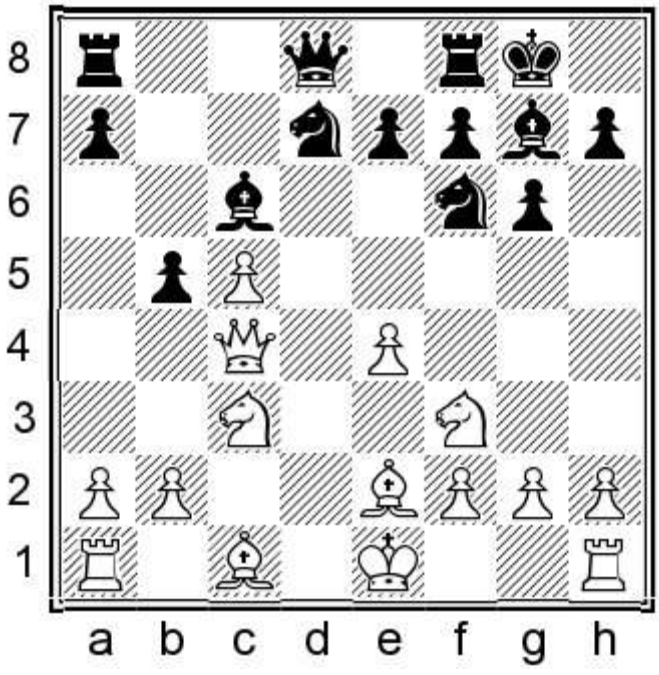
8.d5

A) 8.dxc5 ♗c6 9.♕c4 [9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.e3 ♘bd7 11.♕a3 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 0-0 13.♗g2 ♕c7 14.0-0 ♕xc5=] 9...♘bd7 10.♘f3



Position after: 10.♘f3

A1) 10...♗g7 11.e4 0-0 12.♗e2 b5!



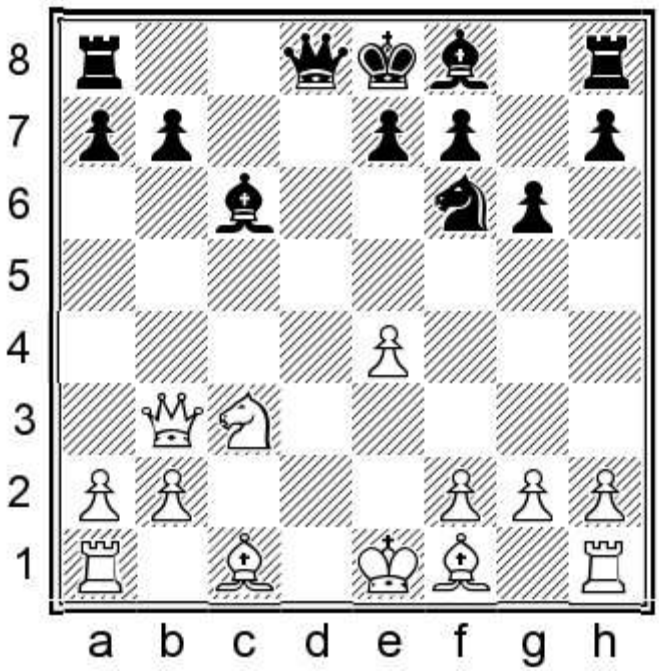
Position after: 12...b5!

13.♘xb5 [13.cxb6 ♕xb6 14.0-0 ♖ac8⩱] 13...♗xb5 14.♕xb5 ♖b8 15.♕c4 ♕a5+ 16.♗d2 ♕xc5 17.e5 ♕xc4 18.♗xc4 ♘e4 19.e6 ♘xd2 20.♘xd2 ♗xb2 21.♖b1 ♘e5 22.exf7+ ♔g7 23.♗b3 ♗d4 24.0-0 ♘xf7=

A2) 10...e6! A quite unusual case: even though we have played ...g7-g6 intending to develop the

bishop on g7, we abruptly change our plans to attack the c5-pawn. 11.♘d4 [11.♗e3 ♖c8 12.♖d1 ♗g7 13.g3 0-0 14.♗g2 b6 15.0-0 bxc5 16.♘g5 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕b6=] 11...♗d5 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♕a4 ♗xc5 14.g3 0-0 15.♗g2 ♖e8 16.0-0 ♘e4=

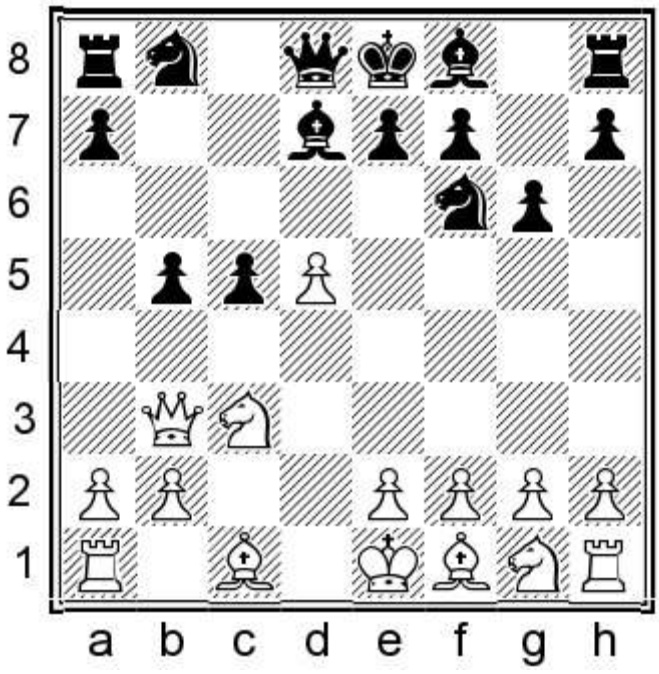
B) 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘xc6 ♗xc6 11.e4!



Position after: 11.e4!

11...♗g7 [11...♘xe4? 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.♗b5+ ♗c6 14.♗xc6+ bxc6 15.♕c3! f6 16.♕xc6+ ♔f7 17.0-0±] 12.♗b5 0-0 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.0-0 ♕b8! 15.♕c2 ♘g4 16.g3 ♖d8 17.♔g2 ♕b7=

8...b5!

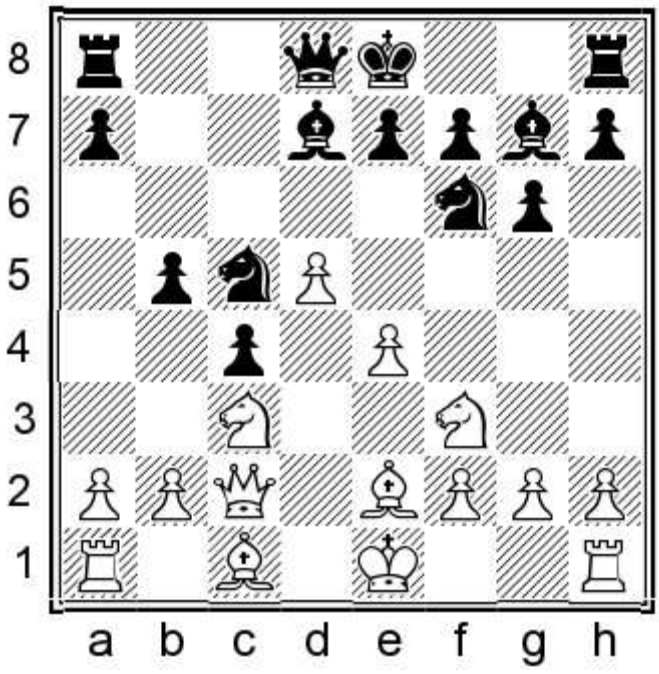


Position after: 8...b5!

Gambit style! Instead of resorting to passive defense of such a secondary character as the b-pawn, we play for the initiative and rapid development. The absence of the b-pawn will allow us to create great pressure on the b-file after ...♖a8-b8 which closely resembles the fundamental ideas in the Benko gambit (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 2...c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6).

9.♘xb5

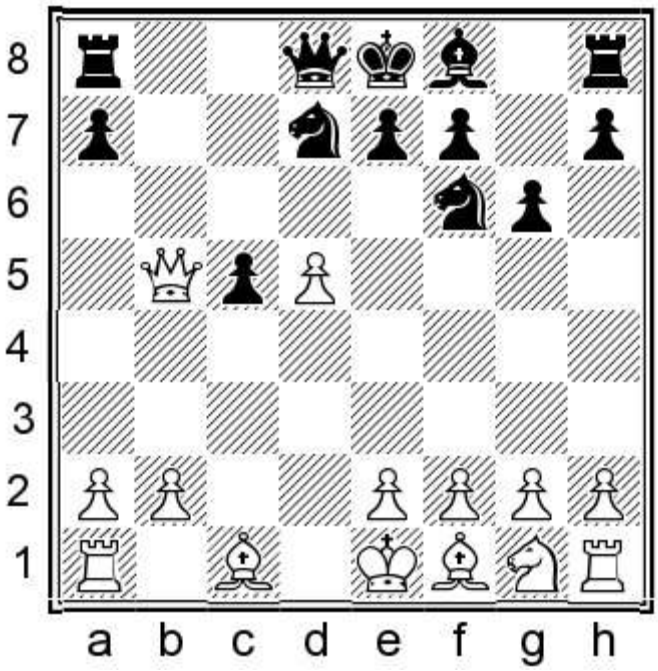
9.e4 c4 10.♕c2 ♘a6 11.♘f3 ♗g7 12.♗e2 ♘c5



Position after: 12...♘c5

13.♗e3 [13.0-0? b4 14.♘d1 ♘cxe4 15.♕xc4 0-0 16.♕xb4 a5 17.♕d4 ♗f5 18.♗f4 ♘xd5 19.♗e5 ♘f4 20.♕e3 ♘xe2+ 21.♕xe2 f6 22.♗c3 e5 23.♘e3 ♗e6∓] 13...♖c8 14.♘d4 ♕a5 15.0-0 b4 16.e5 bxc3 17.exf6 ♗xf6 18.♕xc3 ♕xc3 19.bxc3 0-0=

9...♗xb5 10.♕xb5+ ♘bd7



Position after: 10...♘bd7

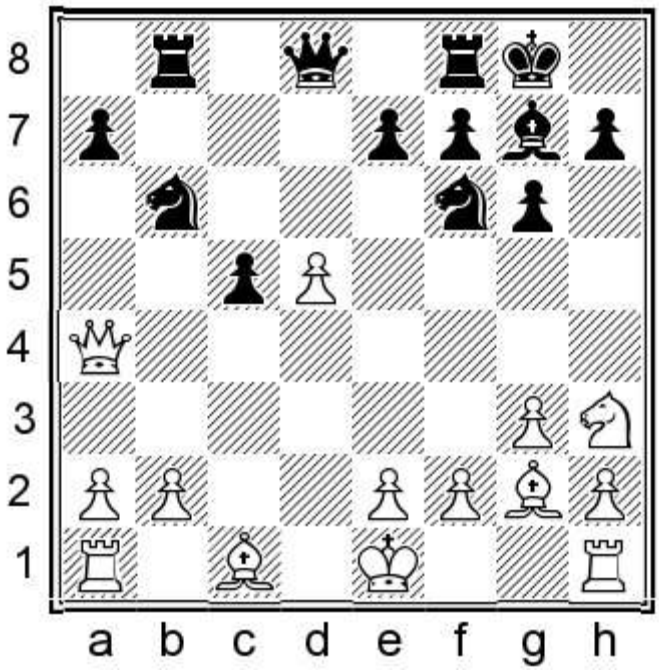
11.g3

11.♘f3 ♗g7 12.e3 0-0 13.♗e2 ♘xd5 14.0-0 ♕c7 15.♕c4 e6=

11...♖b8 12.♕a4

12.♕c4 ♗g7 13.♗g2 0-0 14.♘h3 [14.♘f3 ♘b6 15.♕xc5 ♕xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘fxd5 17.0-0 ♘a4=] 14...♘e8 15.0-0 ♗xb2 16.♗xb2 ♖xb2=

12...♗g7 13.♗g2 0-0 14.♘h3 ♘b6



Position after: 14...♘b6

15.♕xa7

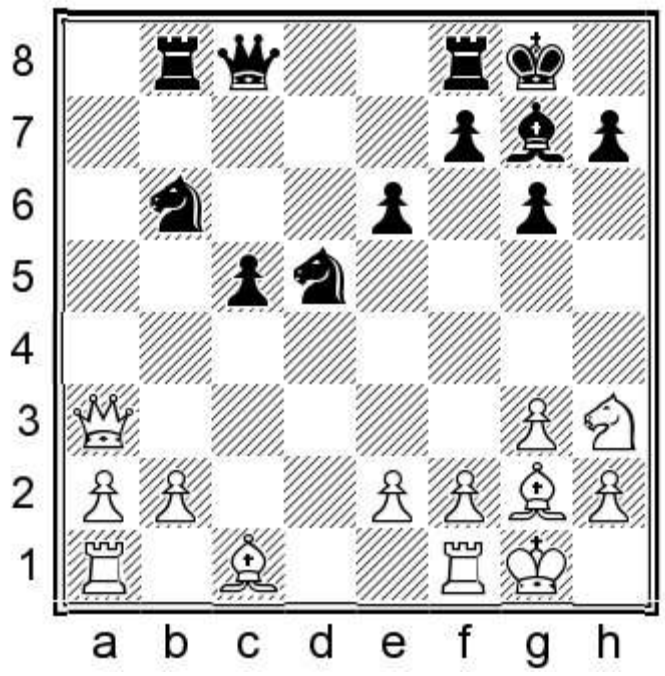
15.♕c2 ♘fxd5 16.0-0 c4=

15...♘fxd5 16.0-0

16.♘f4 ♖a8 17.♕b7 ♖b8 18.♕a7 ♖a8=

16...♕c8 17.♕a3 e6

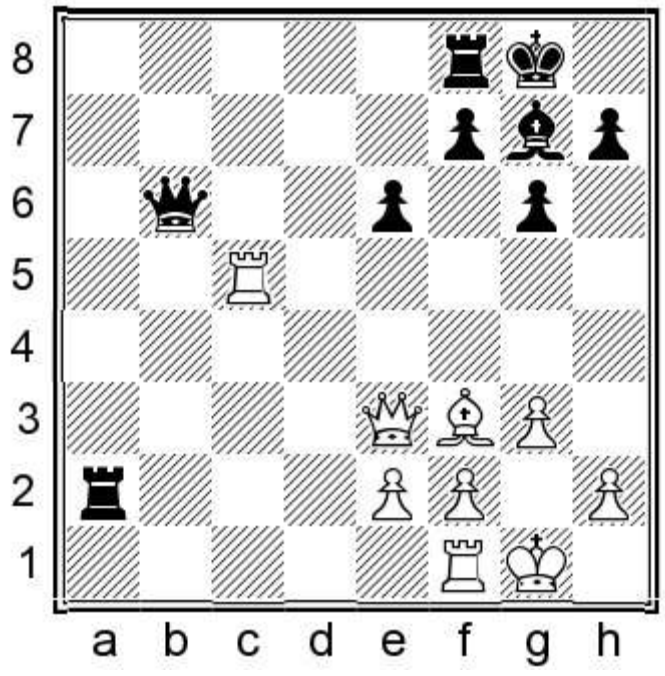
Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn: active pieces, substantial pressure on the b2-pawn and no weaknesses.



Position after: 17...e6

To avoid a worse position White needs to give up an extra pawn and finish the development of his queenside.

18.♘f4 ♘c4 19.♕f3 ♘xf4 20.♗xf4 ♖xb2 21.♖ac1 ♘d2 22.♗xd2 ♖xd2 23.♕e3 ♖xa2 24.♖xc5 ♕a6 25.♗f3 ♕b6=



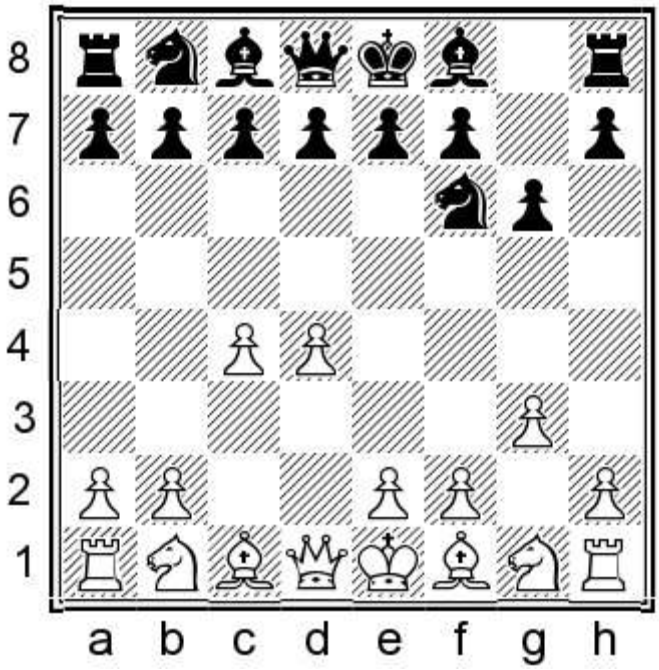
Position after: 25...♕b6=

Black has a very comfortable position and potentially can push for a win should White misplay. Objectively, White should be able to make a draw with accurate play.

Part IV
Various 3rd moves

Chapter 12
3.g3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 12 – 3.g3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 ♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 e5 10.d5 ♘a5

---

a) 5.♘f3 alternative

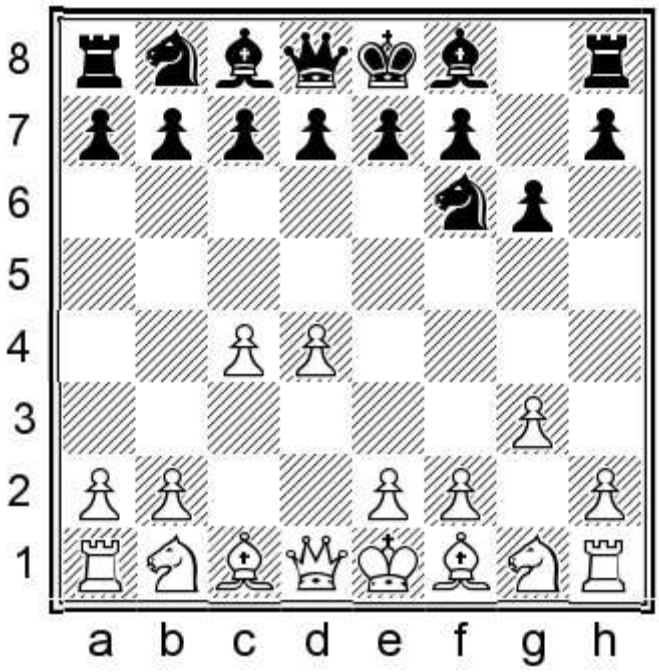
b) 6.e4 alternative

c) 11.♘d2, 11.b3

d) 11.e4

a) 5.♘f3 alternative

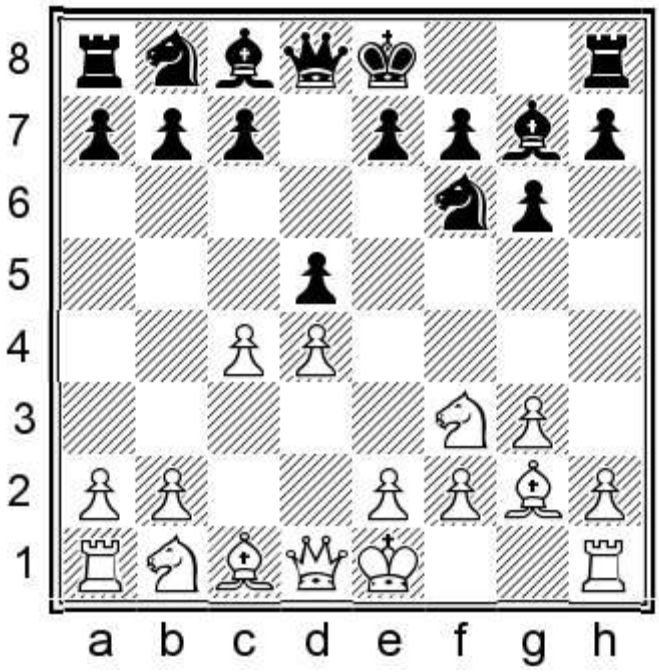
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3



Position after: 3.g3

In this chapter, we are going to explore White's possibilities connected with the bishop fianchetto on g2. The general tendency of such positions is to have bullet proof safety of the king after castling. Therefore, we typically would want to play in the center and the queenside leaving the white king alone.

3...♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.♘f3

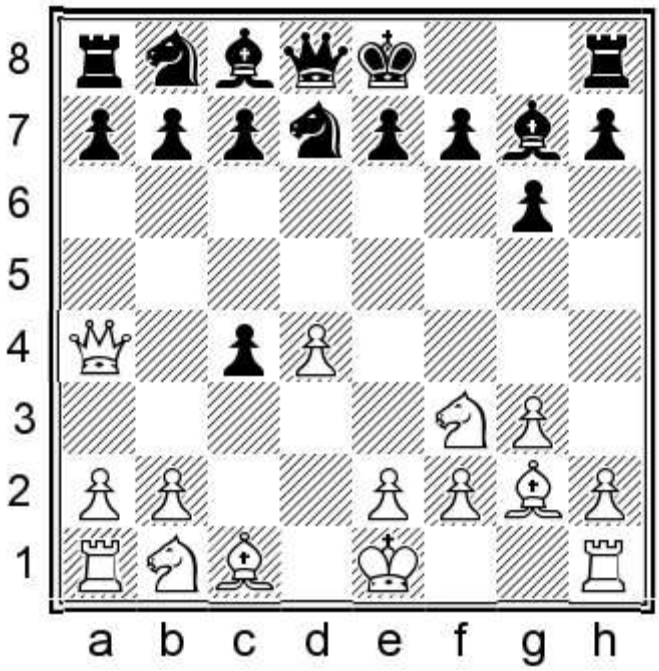


Position after: 5.♘f3

Before entering the main debate (5.cxd5), we'll briefly examine the other option which leads to positions like the Catalan.

5...dxc4 6.♘a3

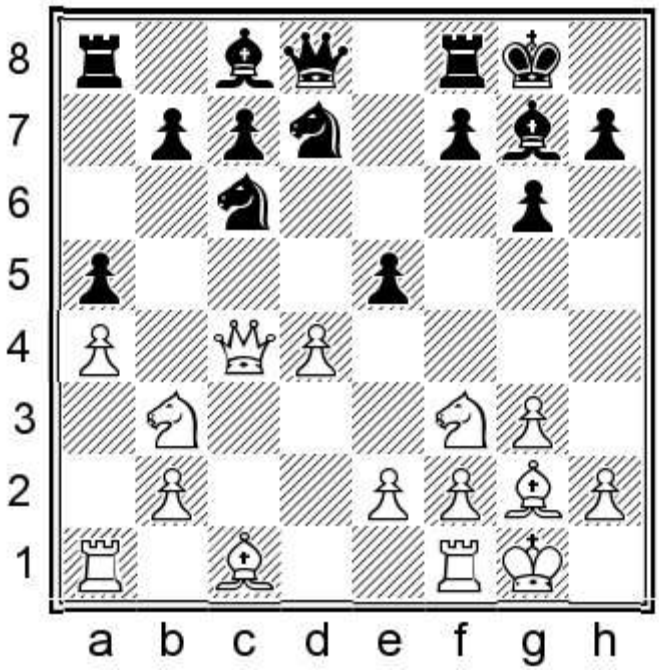
A) 6.♕a4+ A logical check to recover the c4-pawn immediately. 6...♘fd7



Position after: 6...♘fd7

Unlike in the Catalan, here we are able to transfer the f6-knight to the queenside where the main events are happening. The knight will have a major impact on White's center stability after attacking the queen from b6.

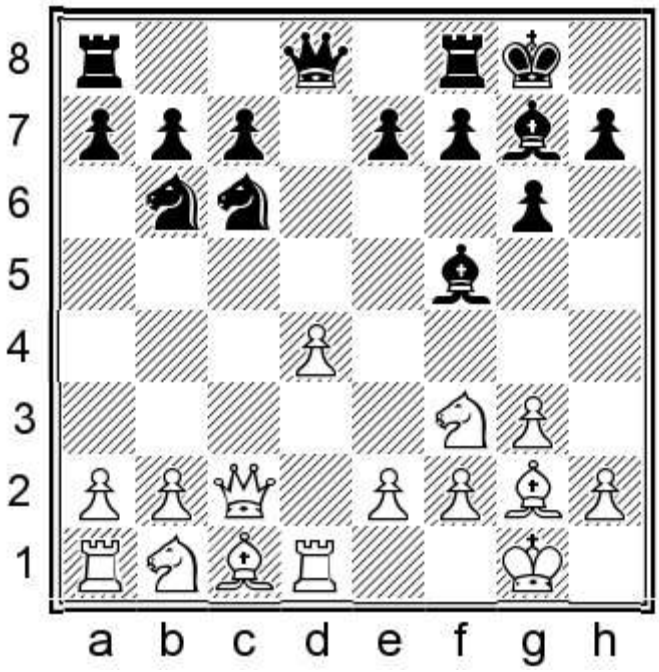
A1) 7.♘bd2 White may opt to procrastinate but will ultimately be forced to take the c4-pawn. 7...a6 8.♕xc4 ♘c6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘b3 a5 11.a4 [11.♖d1 a4 12.♘c5 ♘xc5 13.♕xc5 ♕d6!=; 11.♗e3 a4 12.♘c5 ♘xc5 13.♕xc5 ♕d6=] 11...e5



Position after: 11...e5

Note how patient the d7-knight is. For now, it supports our activities in the center, but it is ready to attack the queenside at the first convenient moment. 12.♗g5 ♕e8 13.d5 ♘b6 14.♕c5 ♘b4 15.e4 ♘xa4 16.♕xc7 f6 17.♗d2 ♖f7 18.♕c1 b6=

A2) 7.♕xc4 ♘b6 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖d1 ♗f5!



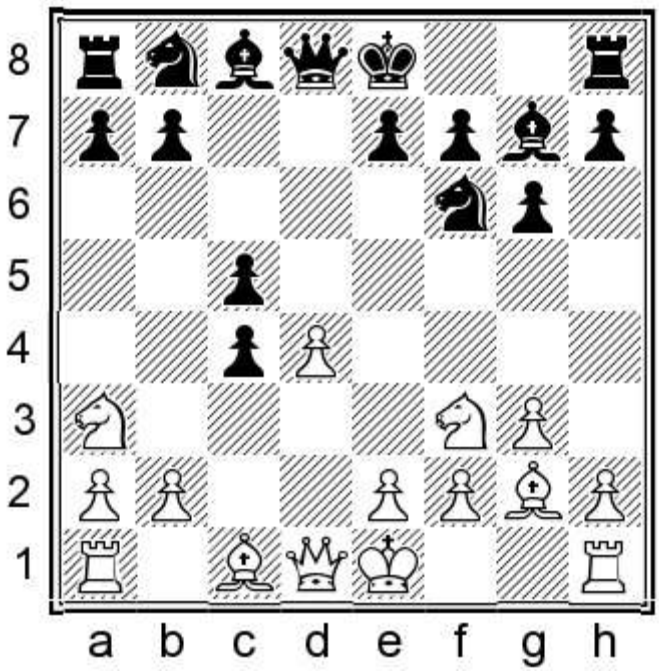
Position after: 10...♗f5!

Why would Black welcome White's original idea with e4? 11.e4 ♗g4! The point of the previous

move was to provoke e4 in order to have a powerful attack on White's d4 pawn. 12.d5 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘d4 14.♕d3 c6= 0-1 (21) Fauland, A (2406) – Shimanov, A (2519) Oberwart 2010. Black controls the a1-h8 diagonal and the dark squares. Whenever our g7-bishop has this much activity we are never in trouble.

B) 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘a3 transposes to 6.♘a3.

6...c5

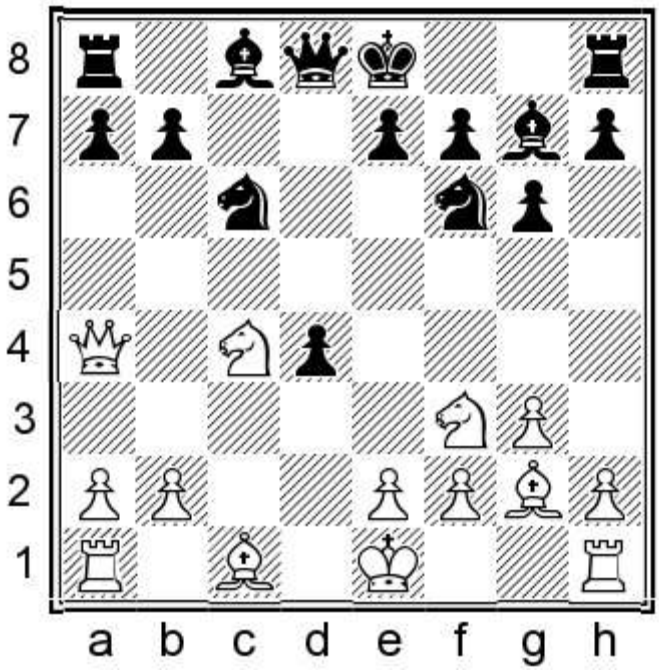


Position after: 6...c5

7.0-0

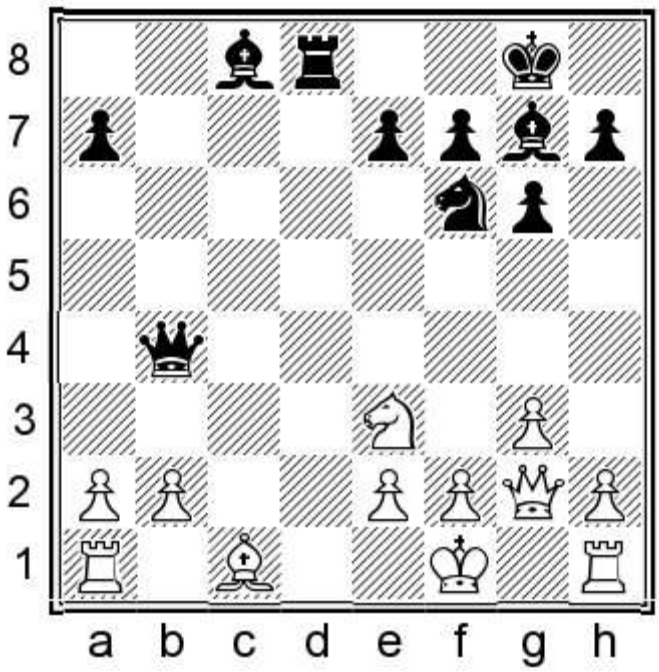
7.♘xc4 ♘c6

A) 8.♕a4 cxd4



Position after: 8...cxd4

We are not afraid to accept the challenge. 9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 11.♕xc6+ ♕d7 12.♕xa8 0-0 Black is down an "exchange", but White is in trouble. How is White in trouble? There is no such thing as an exchange since the rooks, bishops and knights are equivalent until the endgame. Recall one of the examples from chapter 7 after 8...♘xh5, where White plays 14.♖xh5! 13.♕g2 ♕b5 14.♘e3 ♕b4+ 15.♔f1 ♖d8→

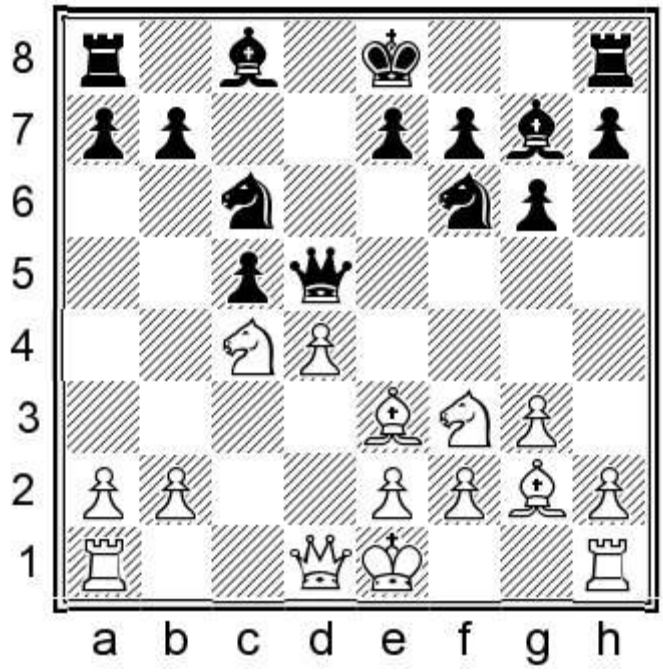


Position after: 15...♖d8→

Black has a dangerous attack, and I think that this position is unsavable for White in a practical game.

B) 8.dxc5 ♕xd1+ 9.♔xd1 ♗e6 10.♘fe5 0-0-0+ 11.♗d2 ♘g4 12.♘xg4 ♗xc4 13.♘e3 ♗e6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♖b1 ♗d4 16.♔e1 ♗xc5∓

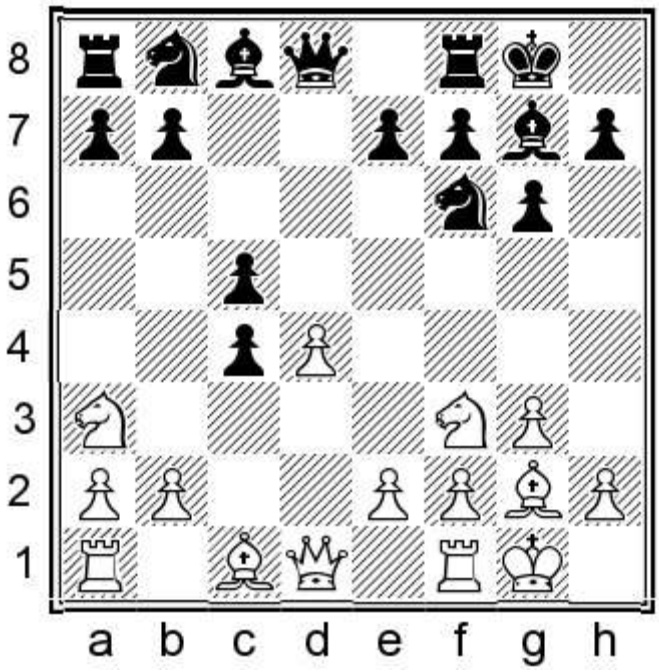
C) 8.♗e3 ♕d5!?N A new move and the easiest way to equalize. We are about to trade on d4 and get White's dark-squared bishop.



Position after: 8...♕d5!?N

9.♖c1 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘xd4 11.♕xd4 0-0 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♕xd5 ♗xd5 14.♘fe5 ♖ac8=

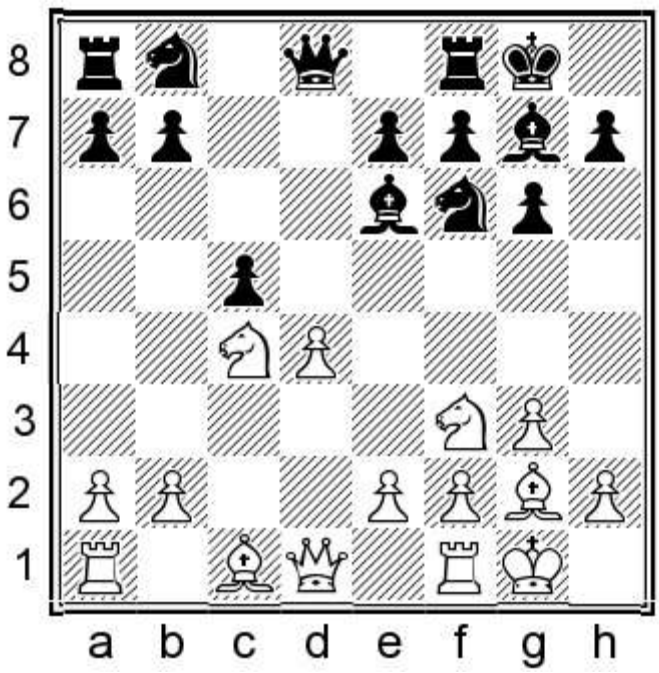
7...0-0



Position after: 7...0-0

8.dxc5

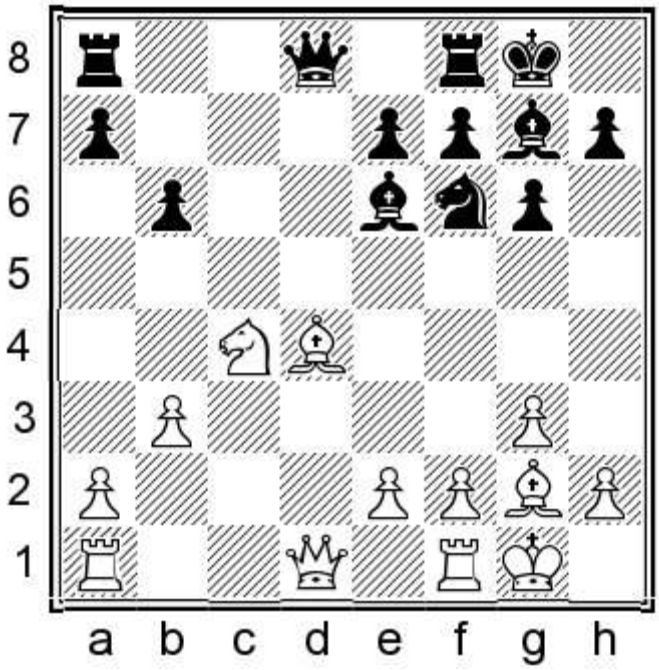
Perhaps the most challenging move is 8.♘xc4. White's only advantage at this point is the superiority of the g2-bishop over its colleague on c8. If we are able to improve our c8-bishop significantly and to successfully finish queenside development, we should have equal play. 8...♗e6



Position after: 8...♗e6

A) 9.b3 ♘c6 10.♗b2 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 [12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘d5 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7=]

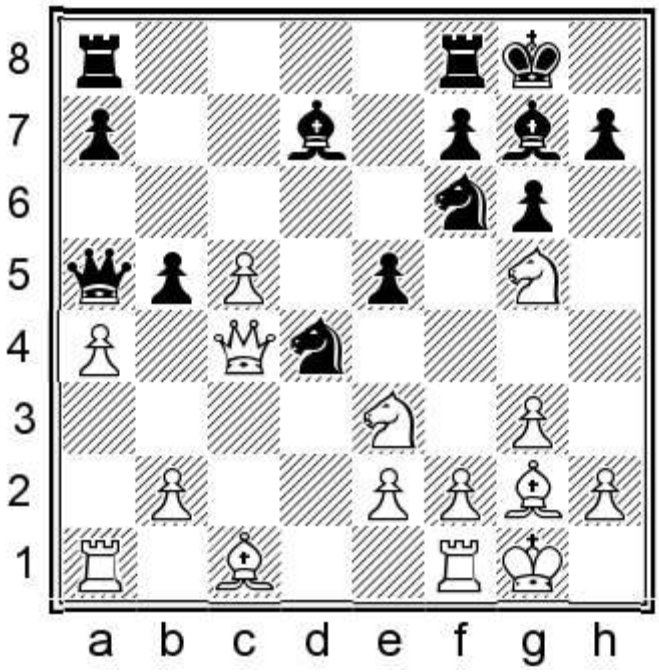
12...b6!



Position after: 12...b6!

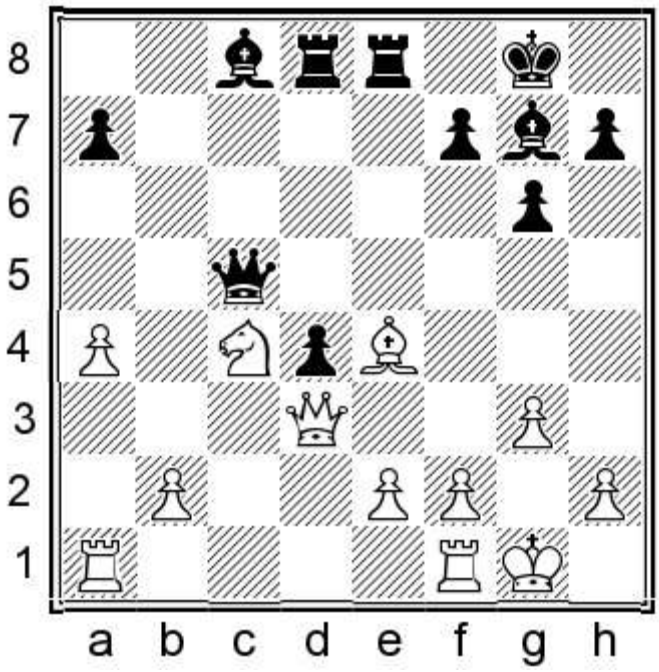
Yet another sacrifice which neutralises the pressure of the light-squared bishop on our queenside. 13.♗xa8 [13.♘e5 ♗d5 14.♘c6 ♗xc6 15.♗xc6 ♖c8 16.♗f3 ♘e8 17.♗xg7 ♘xg7=] 13...♕xa8 14.♕c2 [White doesn't have enough time to cover up the h1-a8 diagonal and prevent a checkmate threat after ...♗e6-h3. 14.f3? ♖d8 15.e3 ♗xc4 16.bxc4 e5–+] 14...♗h3 15.f3 ♗xf1 16.♖xf1 b5 17.♘e3 ♖c8 18.♕b2 a6=

B) 9.♘e3 looks unnatural as it creates a clear conflict between the e3-knight and the c1-bishop. 9...♘c6 10.dxc5 ♕a5 11.♘g5 ♗d7 12.♕c2 ♘d4 13.♕c4 e5 14.a4 b5!



Position after: 14...b5!

A typical idea employed whenever White's queen on c4 feels too safe and comfortable. 15.cxb6 ♖ac8 16.♕d3 ♕xb6 17.♗d2 ♖cd8 18.♗c3 ♗c8 19.♗xd4 exd4 20.♘c4 ♕c5 21.♘e4 ♘xe4 22.♗xe4 ♖fe8⩱

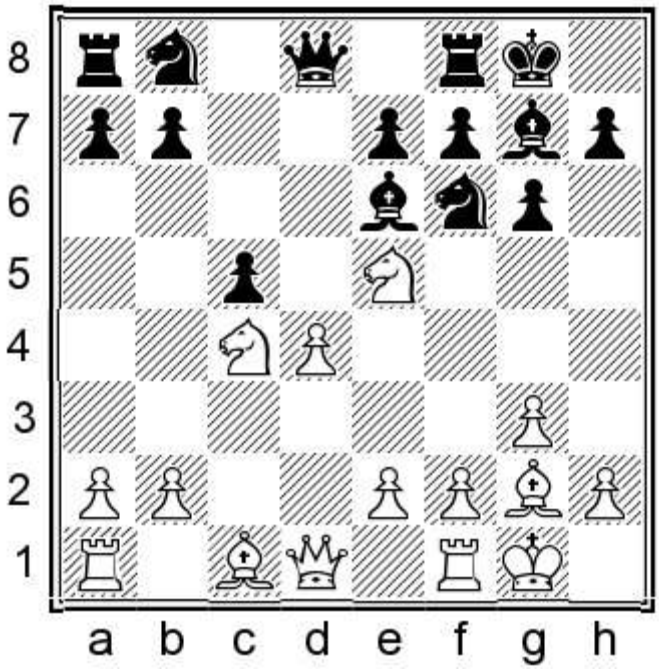


Position after: 22...♖fe8⩱

A bishop pair and overall activity gives us pleasant play and well-defined compensation.

C) 9.♘ce5 cxd4 10.♕xd4 ♕xd4 11.♘xd4 ♗d5 12.♖d1 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♖d8 14.♗f4 ♘d5 15.♘df3 ♘a6= ½-½ (35) Nakamura, H (2777) – Caruana, F (2822) Saint Louis 2018.

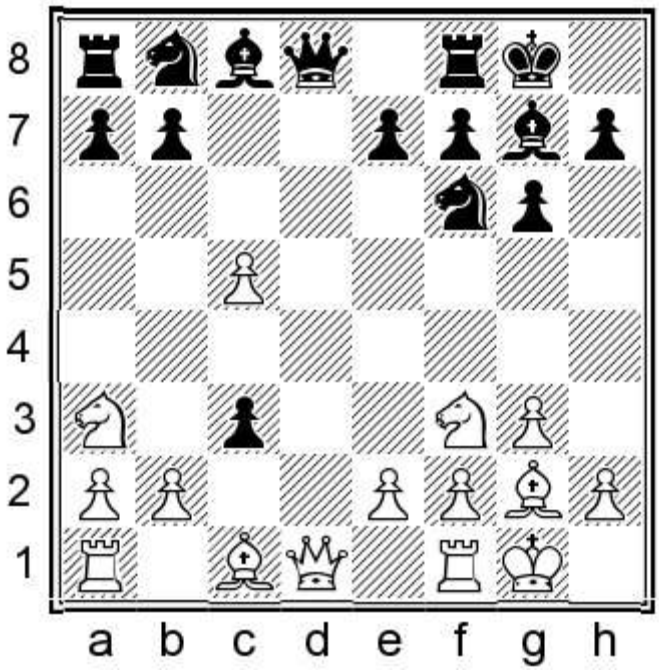
D) 9.♘fe5



Position after: 9.♘fe5

9...♕c8 10.dxc5 ♘fd7 11.♘xd7 ♘xd7 12.c6 bxc6 13.♘a5 White wins the pawn back. Black needs to be precise to secure full compensation for the pawn. 13...♗d5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♕xd5 ♘f6 16.♕f3 ♕e6 Black is temporarily a pawn down but White will need to give it back to develop the bishop and the a1-rook. 17.♖d1 ♘e4 18.♘b3 ♖fd8 19.♗e3 ♗xb2 20.♖ab1 ♗f6 ½-½ (20) Banusz, T (2612) – Gledura, B (2621) Budapest 2018.

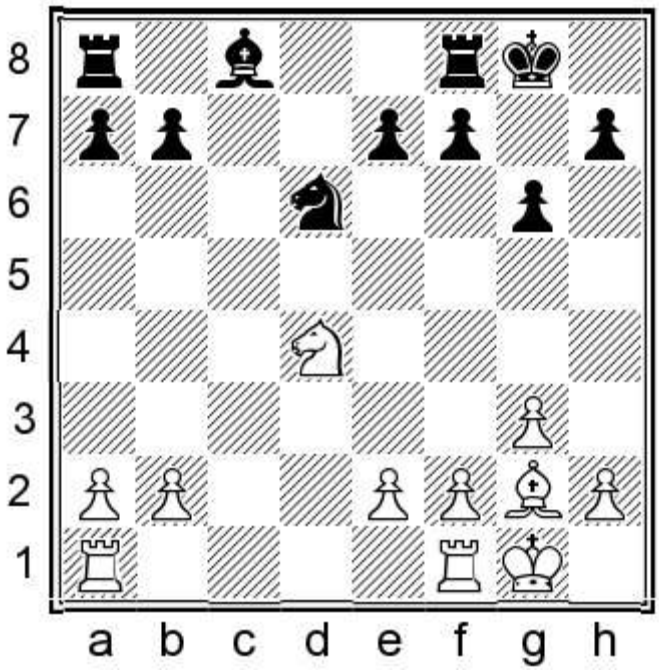
8...c3



Position after: 8...c3

Our c-pawn is doomed but we still want to give it up in the best way possible. Here we are forcing White to pick it up in two moves: ♘b5 and ♘b5xc3, which will give us just enough time to win the c5-pawn after ...♘a6 and ...♘a6xc5.

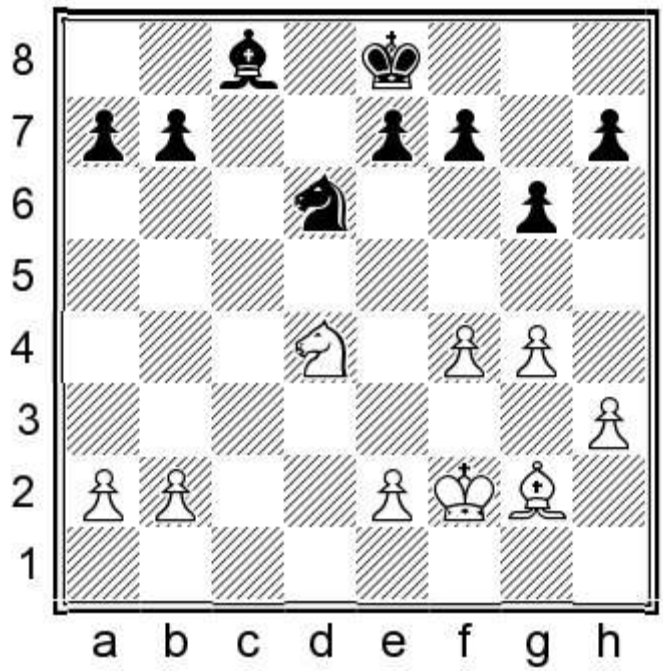
9.♘b5 ♘a6 10.♘xc3 ♘xc5 11.♗e3 ♘fe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗d4 ♗xd4 14.♕xd4 ♕xd4 15.♘xd4 ♘d6



Position after: 15...♘d6

The endgame is almost equal. Black only needs to make a few precise moves to coordinate his pieces and trade the rooks.

16.♖fc1 ♖d8 17.f4 ♔f8 18.♔f2 ♗g4 19.h3 ♗d7 20.♖c7 ♖ac8 21.♖ac1 ♔e8 22.g4 ♖xc7 23.♖xc7 ♖c8 24.♖xc8+ ♗xc8=

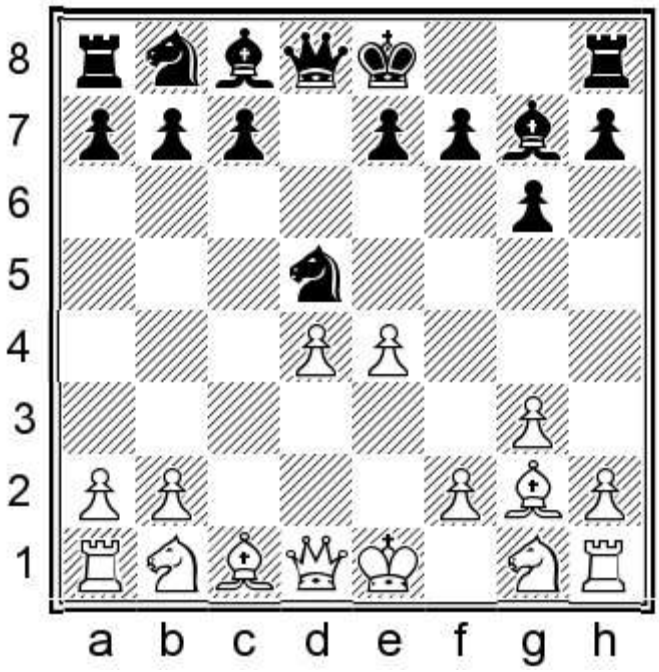


Position after: 24...♗xc8=

½-½ (42) Karjakin, S (2750) – Caruana, F (2818) Saint Louis 2019. The world's #2 held this position very easily. Our plan may include moves like ...f7-f6, ...e7-e5, ...♗c8-d7.

b) 6.e4 alternative

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4

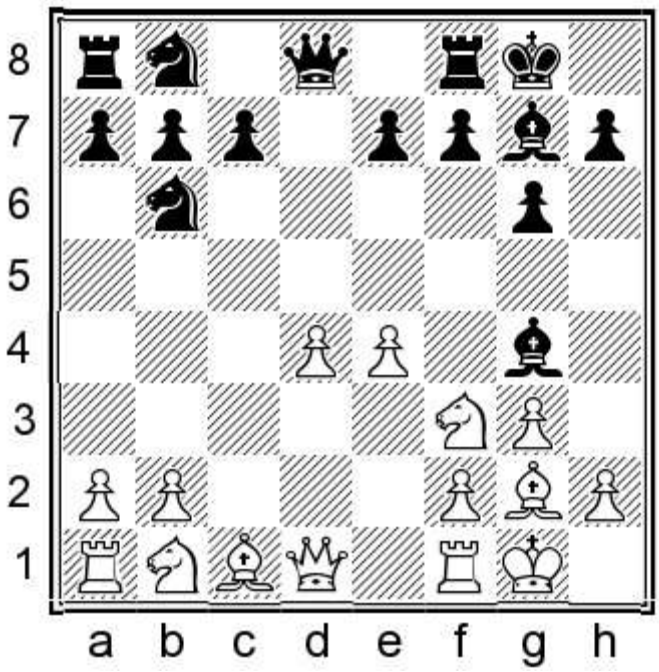


Position after: 6.e4

This line would not have been possible if White started with 3.♘f3 and then 4.g3. That's why we started chapter 12 with 3.g3 to account for all of the set ups for White.

6...♘b6 7.♘e2

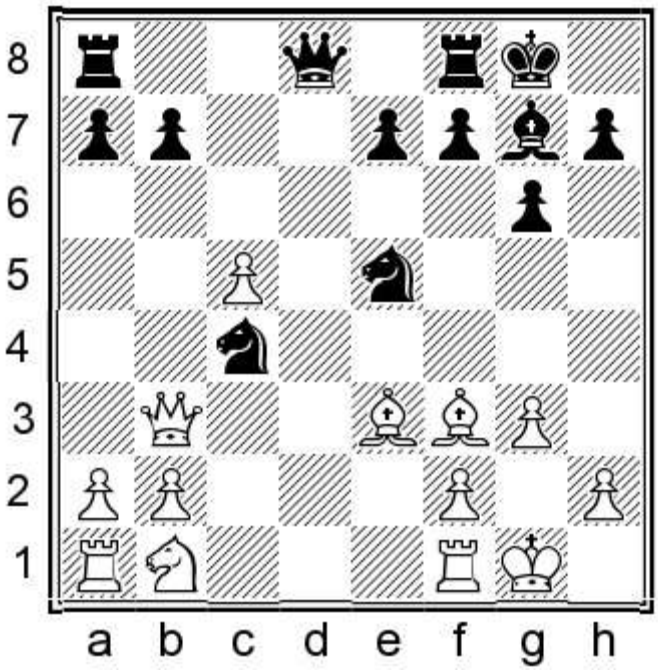
A) 7.♘f3 The knight on f3 usually makes less sense since Black can easily pin it after ...♗c8-g4 and then put a lot of pressure on the d4-pawn. 7...0-0 8.0-0 ♗g4



Position after: 8...♗g4

A1) 9.e5 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♕d7 11.♘c3 ♖ad8∓

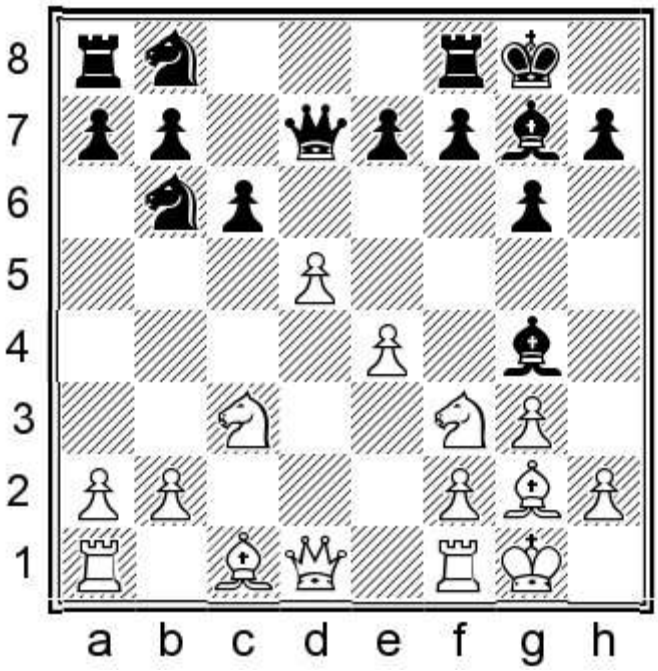
A2) 9.♗e3? c5 10.e5 ♘c6 11.dxc5 ♘c4 12.♕b3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘6xe5



Position after: 13...♘6xe5

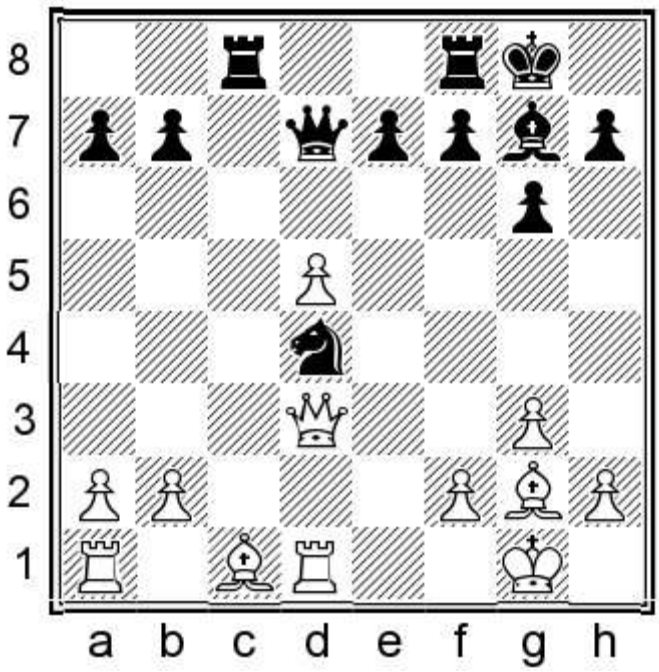
14.♗e2 [14.♗g2 ♘xe3 15.♕xe3 ♘c4 16.♕e2 ♗xb2 17.♕xc4 ♗xa1 18.♗xb7 ♖b8 19.c6 ♕a5∓] 14...♘xe3 15.♕xe3 ♘c6 16.♘c3 ♗d4 17.♕g5 ♕a5∓

A3) 9.d5 ♕d7 The queen helps to maintain the pin on the f3-knight by stopping h3. Now White must deal with our light-squared bishop for much longer than in other lines. 10.♘c3 c6



Position after: 10...c6

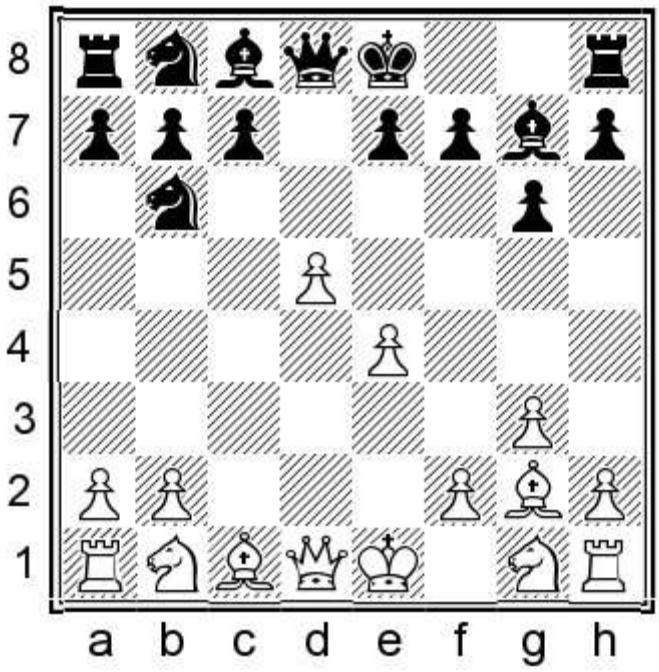
11.♕b3 [11.a4 cxd5 12.exd5 ♘a6 13.a5 ♘c4∓ ½-½ (22) Romanishin, O (2585) – Anand, V (2715) New York 1994. 11.♖e1 ♘a6 12.dxc6 ♕xc6 13.♘d5 ♕d7 14.♗g5 ♖fe8 15.h3 ♗e6 16.♘xb6 axb6 17.♕xd7 ♗xd7 18.e5 ♘c5=, 11.♗f4 cxd5 12.exd5 ♘a6 13.♖e1 ♖ad8 14.♗e5 ♗xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xd1 16.♘xd7 ♖xd7 17.♖axd1 ♖fd8=] 11...cxd5 12.♘xd5 ♘c6 13.♖d1 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♘d4 15.♕d3 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♖ac8=



Position after: 16...♖ac8=

Black has a perfect position. The control of the c-file and the a1-h8 diagonal is more than enough for equal play.

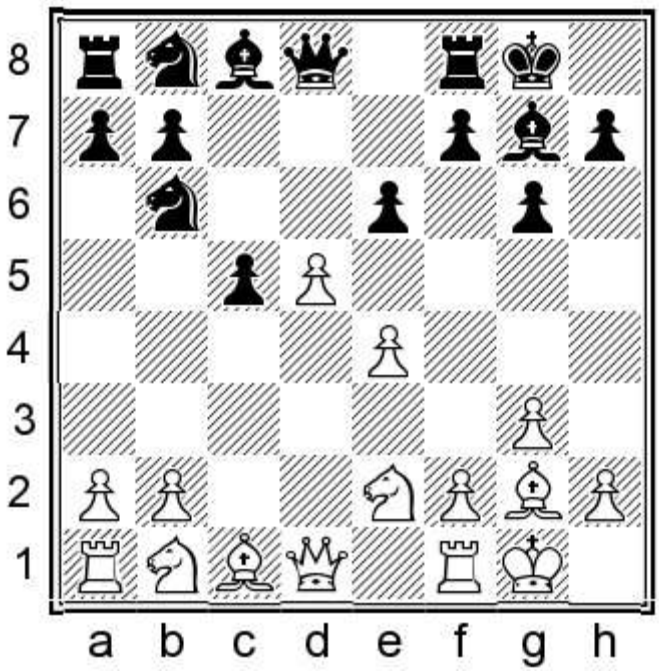
B) 7.d5 Makes our g7-bishop really good and therefore it can't be dangerous for Black.



Position after: 7.d5

7...0-0 8.♘e2 e6 9.♘bc3 exd5 10.exd5 c6 11.0-0 cxd5 12.♘xd5 ♗g4 13.♘xb6 ♕xb6 14.h3 ♖d8 15.♕e1 ♗xe2 16.♕xe2 ♘c6=

7...c5 8.d5 e6 9.0-0 0-0



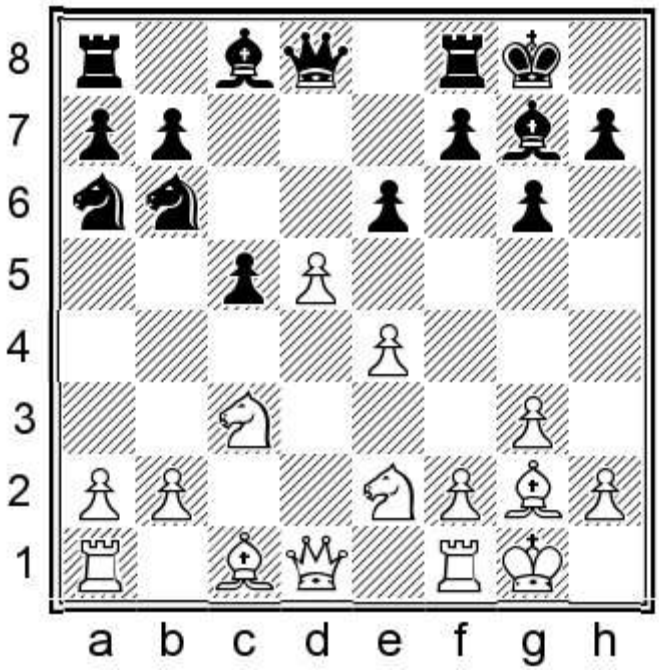
Position after: 9...0-0

White is at a crossroads. He has two options for his knights: 1) ♘ec3 and then ♘d2 or 2) ♘bc3 and then

♘f4.

10.♘ec3

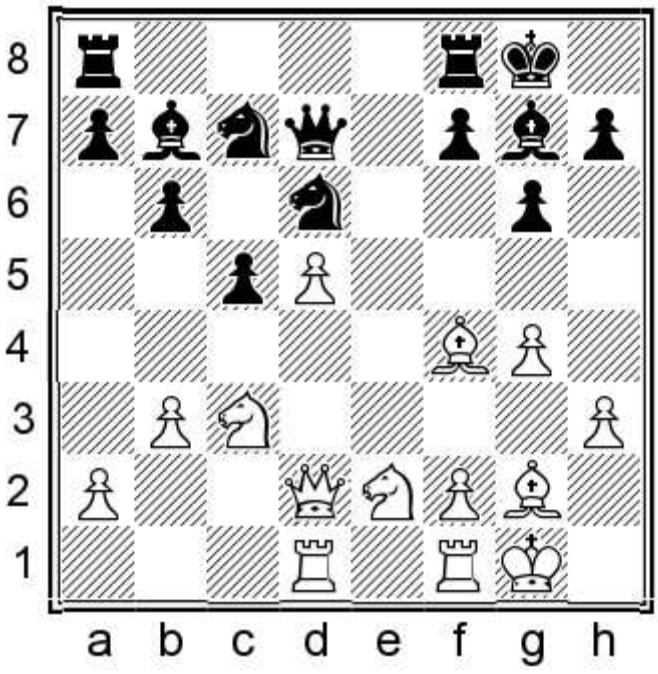
10.♘bc3 ♘a6



Position after: 10...♘a6

Who doesn't know the famous saying "the knight on the rim is always grim"? The a6-knight though doesn't dwell on it and gets ready to be catapulted to a "money spot", the d3-square, after ...c5-c4 and then either ...♘c5-d3 or ...♘b4-d3, depending on the circumstances.

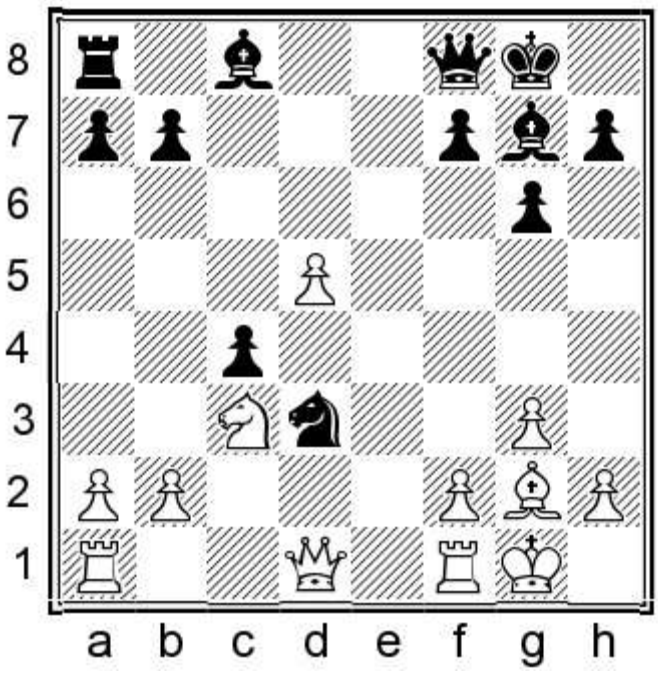
A) 11.h3 exd5 12.exd5 ♘c4 13.b3 ♘d6 14.♗f4 b6 15.♕d2 ♗b7 16.♖ad1 ♘c7 17.g4 ♕d7=



Position after: 17...♕d7=

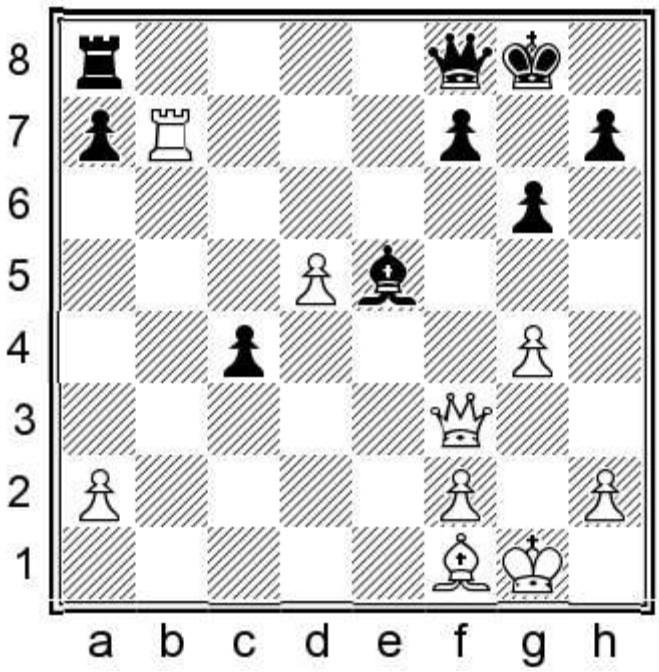
0-1 (24) Karpov, A (2619) – Kasparov, G (2812) Valencia 2009. Kasparov and Karpov played 5 matches for the World Championship against each other between 1984 and 1990. They both came out of retirement in 2009 to face each other once again. I was truly surprised to see how well Kasparov was prepared in the openings. In 2020, Karpov is going to play his first long time control tournament in decades. Should we expect Kasparov to follow suit?

B) 11.♘f4 exd5 12.♘fxd5 ♘b4! [12...♘xd5 13.exd5±] 13.♗e3 ♘6xd5 14.exd5 [14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.exd5 b6 16.♕d2 ♗f5= ½-½ (45) Markus, R (2605) – Cheparinov, I (2706) Skopje 2013] 14...c4! 15.♗c5 ♘d3 From rags to riches - that's how the knight feels finally getting to d3. 16.♗xf8 ♕xf8



Position after: 16...♕xf8

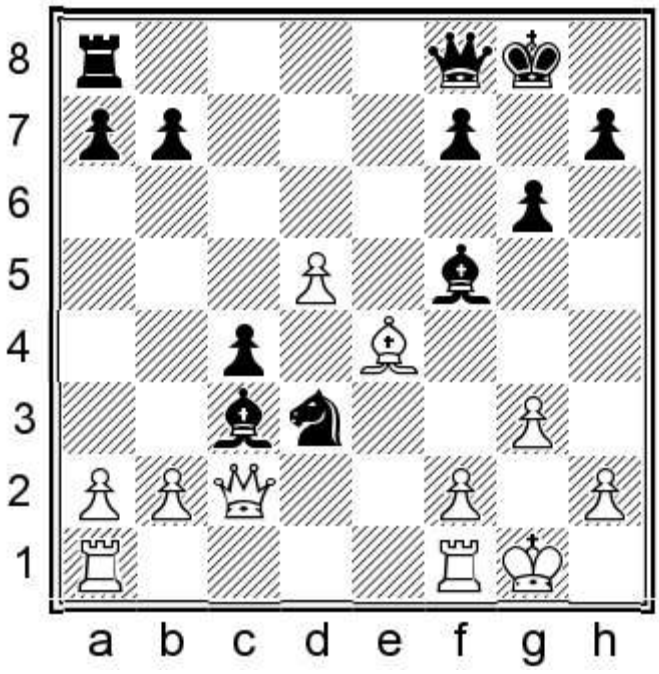
B1) 17.♖b1 ♗f5 18.g4 ♘xb2 19.♖xb2 ♗xc3 20.♖xb7 ♗d3 21.♕f3 ♗xf1 22.♗xf1 ♗e5



Position after: 22...♗e5

23.d6 [23.♗xc4 ♖c8 24.♗b3 ♖c7 25.♖xc7 ♗xc7 26.♕f6 ♕d6= The opposite-colored bishop endgame is an elementary draw since White can't create two passed pawns and the single passed pawn on d5 is easily blockaded.] 23...c3 24.♗c4 c2 25.♗xf7+ ♔h8 26.♖c7 ♖c8 27.♕e3 ♗b2 28.♗e6 ♖xc7 29.dxc7 c1=♕+ 30.♕xc1 ♗xc1 31.c8=♕ ♕xc8 32.♗xc8 g5= Again, an easy draw since White is incapable of creating even one passed pawn.

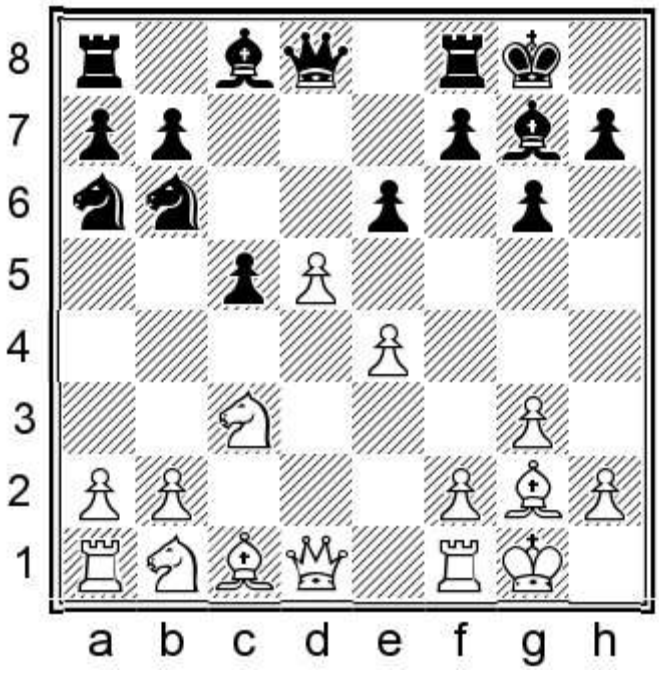
B2) 17.♕c2 Other lines also prove that Black has enough activity to compensate for the slight material deficit. The position is dynamically balanced. 17...♗f5 18.♗e4 ♗xc3



Position after: 18...♗xc3

19.♗xf5 [19.♗xd3 ♗xd3 20.♕xc3 ♗xf1 21.♖xf1 ♕c5 22.♖d1 ♖d8=] 19...♗xb2 20.♖ab1 [20.♗xd3 ♗xa1 21.♖xa1 cxd3 22.♕xd3 ♖d8=] 20...gxf5 21.♕xc4 [21.♖xb2 ♘xb2 22.♕xb2 ♕e7=] 21...♘e5 22.♕f4 ♕g7! 23.♖fd1 [23.♖xb2? ♘d3–+] 23...♘g6 24.♕xf5 b6 25.d6 ♖d8= ½-½ (54) Acevedo Villalba, A (2551) – Peschke, U (2486) ICCF email 2013.

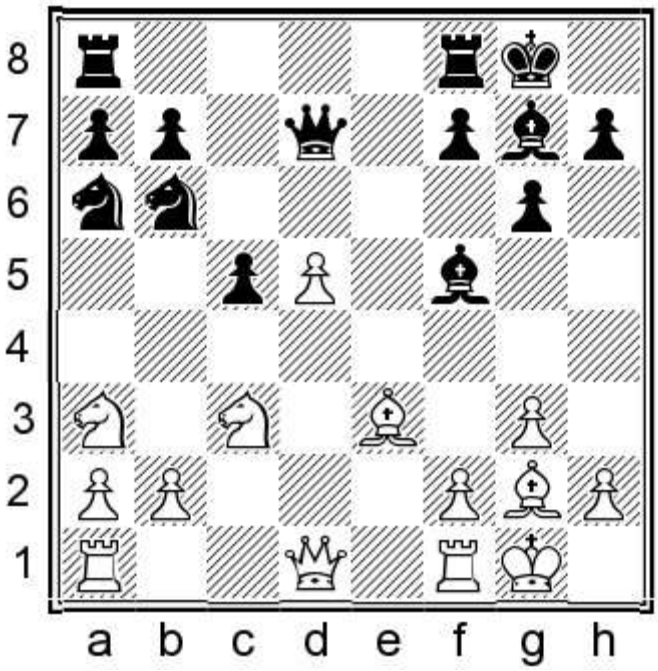
10...♘a6



Position after: 10...♘a6

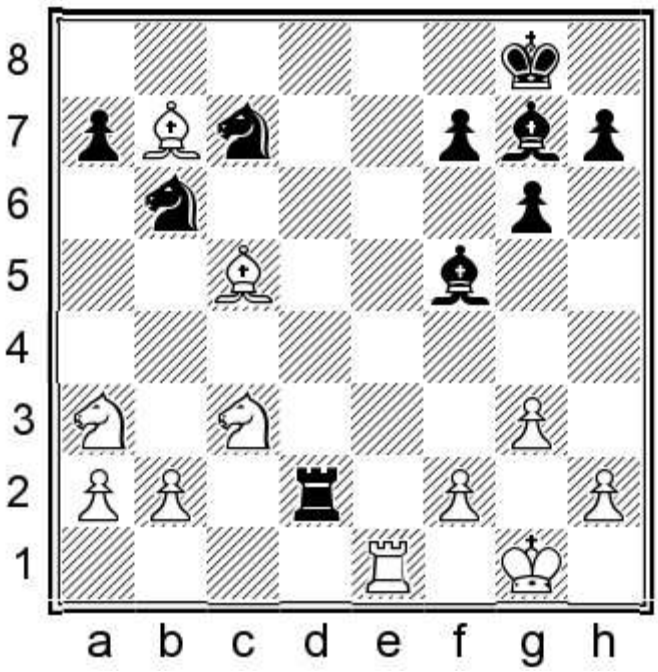
11.♗f4

A) 11.♘a3 Prevents Black from blocking the d5-pawn with ...♘b6-c4-d6. 11...exd5 12.exd5 ♗f5 13.♗e3 ♕d7



Position after: 13...♕d7

A1) 14.♕d2 White prepares to connect the rooks after ♖a1-d1 and ♖f1-e1. White is aware that the d5-pawn will fall eventually and, therefore, tries to go d5-d6 with the idea to give up the d-pawn but win the b7-pawn with the g2-bishop. 14...♖fe8 15.d6 ♖ad8 16.♖ad1 ♖e6 17.♖fe1 ♖xd6 18.♕xd6 ♕xd6 19.♖xd6 ♖xd6 20.♗xb7 ♘c7 21.♗xc5 ♖d2

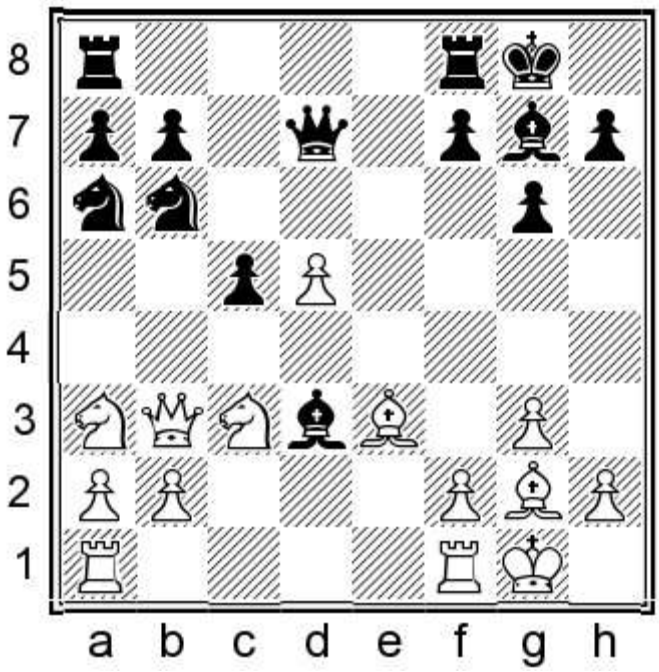


Position after: 21...♖d2

We have enough activity for full compensation. 22.♘d1 ♗g4 23.f3 ♗e6 24.♘b1 ♖c2 25.♘bc3 ♘c4 26.♖e2 ♖xe2 27.♘xe2 ♘xb2 28.♘xb2 ♗xb2 29.a4 a6=

A2) 14.♖e1 Doesn't change much as compared to 14.♕d2. The only difference is that White wants to wait a little bit with ♖a1-d1 and first attempts to trade the dark-squared bishops after ♕d1-d2 and ♗e3-h6. 14...♖ac8 15.♕d2 ♘b4 16.♗h6 ♖fd8 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.b3 ♘4xd5 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♖ad1 ♘f6 21.♕xd7 ♖xd7 22.♖xd7 ♗xd7 23.♗xb7 ♖e8=

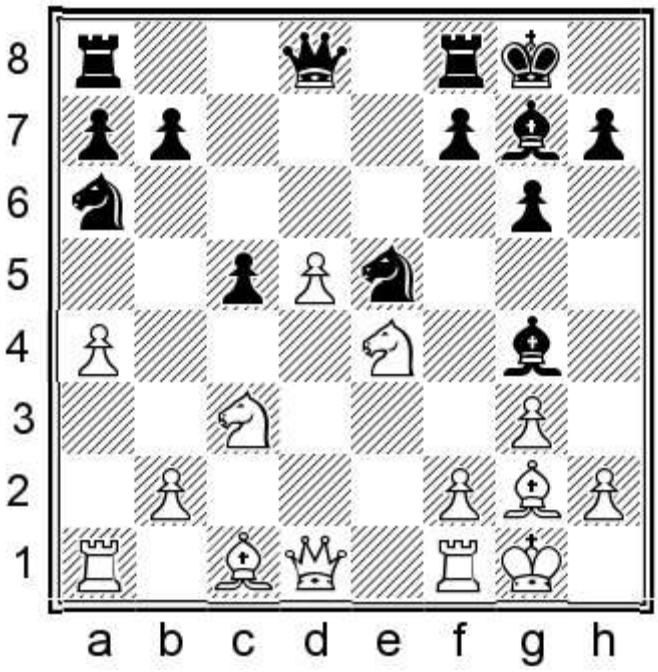
A3) 14.♕b3 White has tried other moves as well but without much success. I'm not surprised as the d5-pawn alone is not enough for an advantage. Black has enough resources to block it successfully. 14...♗d3



Position after: 14...♗d3

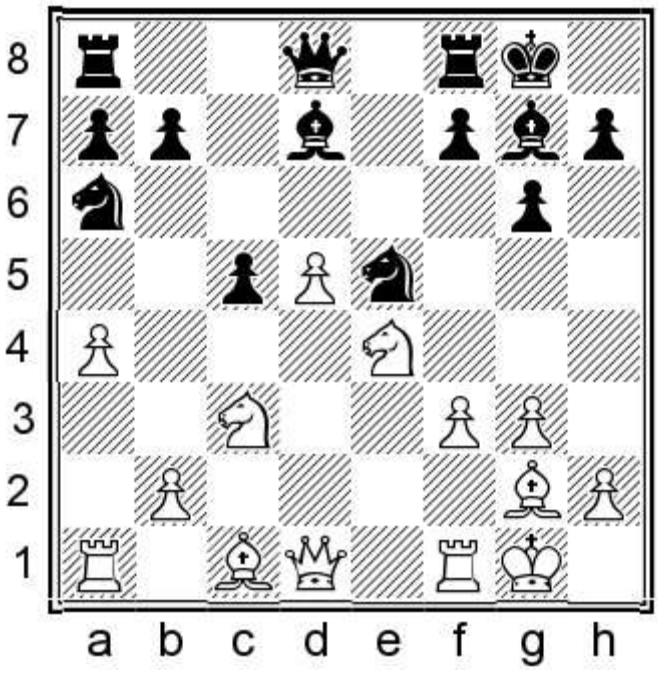
Taking advantage of the queen being on b3. We are establishing a great outpost on d3 for the bishop. Besides the apparent activity of the d3-bishop, we are also hoping to cut off the White rooks' access to the d5-pawn. 15.♖fd1 c4 16.♕b5 ♖fd8 17.d6 ♕xd6 18.♗xb7 ♘c7 19.♕a5 ♖ab8 20.♗f4 ♕d7 21.♗g2 ♖bc8 22.♖ac1 ♘e6 23.♗e3 ♘d4=

B) 11.a4 Makes less sense than 11.♗f4 or 11.♘a3 as it pushes Black to improve the b6-knight which was already on Black's agenda. 11...exd5 12.exd5 ♘c4 13.♘d2 ♘e5 14.♘de4 ♗g4



Position after: 14...♗g4

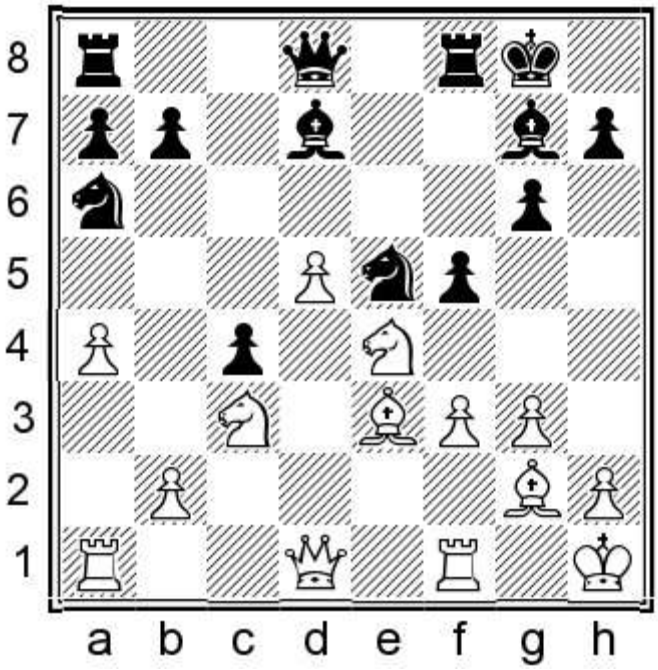
15.f3 [15.♕b3 Has never been played before but definitely deserves further exploration on White's part. Play may go 15...♘f3+ 16.♔h1 ♕c8 17.d6 c4 18.♕b5 ♗d7 19.♕a5 b6 20.♕d5 ♘b4 21.♘f6+ ♗xf6 22.♕xf3 ♗g7 23.♕xa8 ♕xa8 24.♗xa8 ♖xa8⩲] 15...♗d7



Position after: 15...♗d7

B1) 16.♗g5 f6 17.♗f4 f5 18.♘d6 ♘b4 19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♘c4 ♗d4+ 21.♔h1 f4∓ 0-1 (49) Navara, D (2706) – Bacrot, E (2695) Belfort 2012.

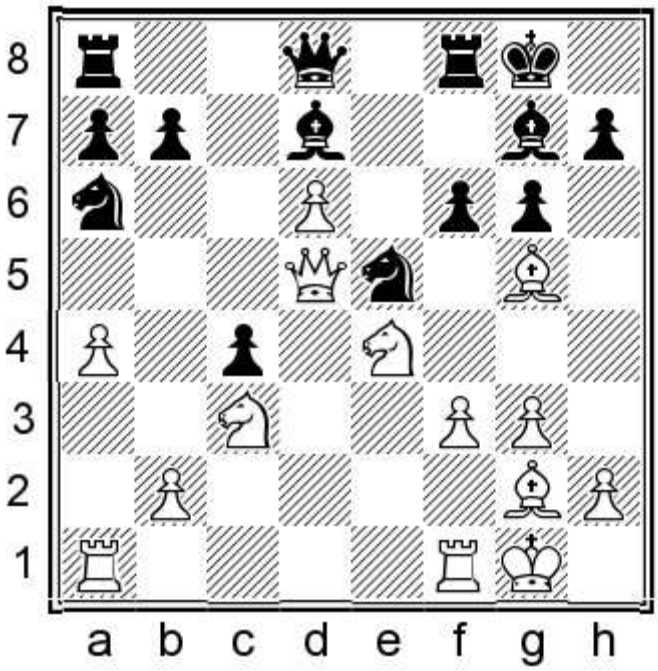
B2) 16.♔h1 c4 17.♗g5 f6 18.♗e3 f5



Position after: 18...f5

19.♘d2 [19.♘f2 ♖e8 20.f4 ♘f7 21.♗d4 ♗xd4 22.♕xd4 ♘d6 23.♖ab1 ♕b6∓ 0-1 (41) Kempinski, R (2602) – Areshchenko, A (2710) Germany 2012] 19...♕c8=

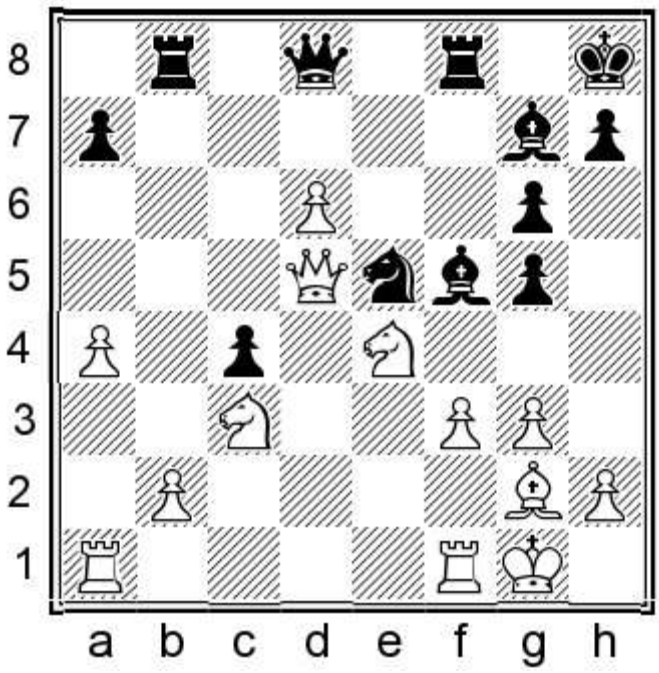
B3) 16.d6 Anything else could get White in trouble fast. 16...c4 17.♗g5 f6 18.♕d5+



Position after: 18.♕d5+

18...♔h8 [Also possible is 18...♖f7 19.♕xb7 ♖b8 20.♕xa6 ♗c8 21.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22.♗xf6 ♕xf6

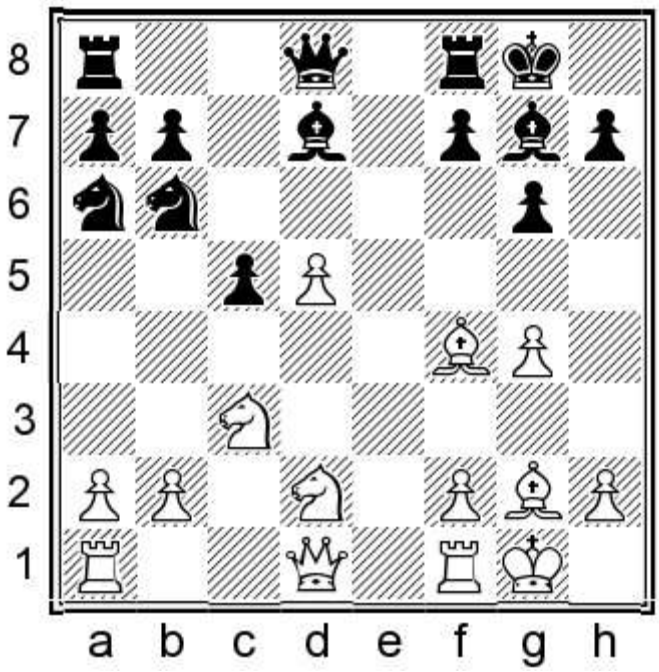
23.♕a5 ♘d3♖ and Black has compensation according to the engine. I find the 18...♔h8 line much easier and enjoyable to play.] 19.♕xb7 fxg5 20.♕xa6 ♗c8 21.♕b5 ♗f5 22.♕d5 ♖b8♖



Position after: 22...♖b8♖

The bishop pair plus pressure on the b-file compensate for the sacrificed pawn. White's d6-pawn is not really a concern for Black since it can't move to d7.

11...exd5 12.exd5 ♗f5 13.g4 ♗d7 14.♘d2

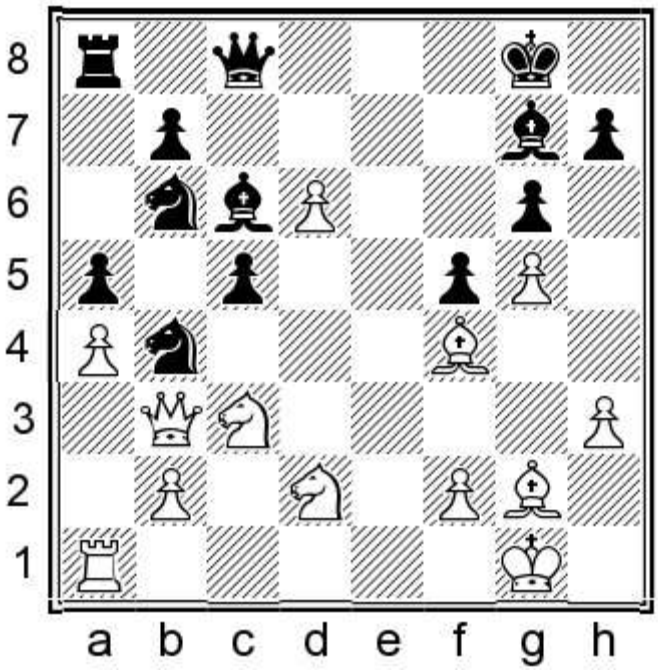


Position after: 14.♘d2

14...♘b4!

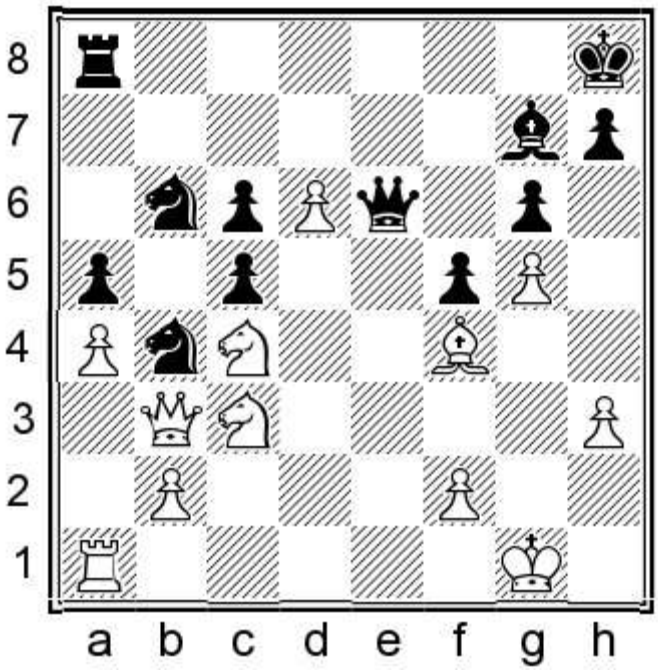
The most common theme in the 6.e4 system: Black needs to get the knight to d3 at the expense of the f8-rook.

Initially I tried to make 14...♕c8 work but it just didn't despite all of the effort. 15.h3 [Premature would have been 15.g5? ♗g4 16.f3 ♗f5 17.♘de4 ♘b4=] 15...f5 16.g5 ♘b4 17.a4 a5 18.♖e1 ♖e8 19.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 20.d6 ♗c6 21.♕b3+



Position after: 21.♕b3+

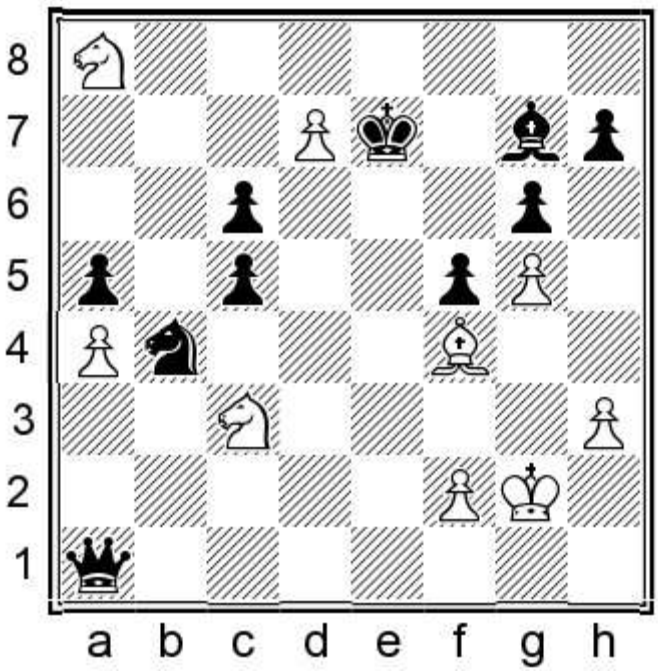
A) 21...♔h8 loses in a beautiful way: 22.♘c4 ♕e6 23.♗xc6! bxc6



Position after: 23...bxc6

24.♘xb6!! ♕xb3 25.♘xa8 ♕g8 [25...♕xb2 26.♖d1+–] 26.♖d1!+–

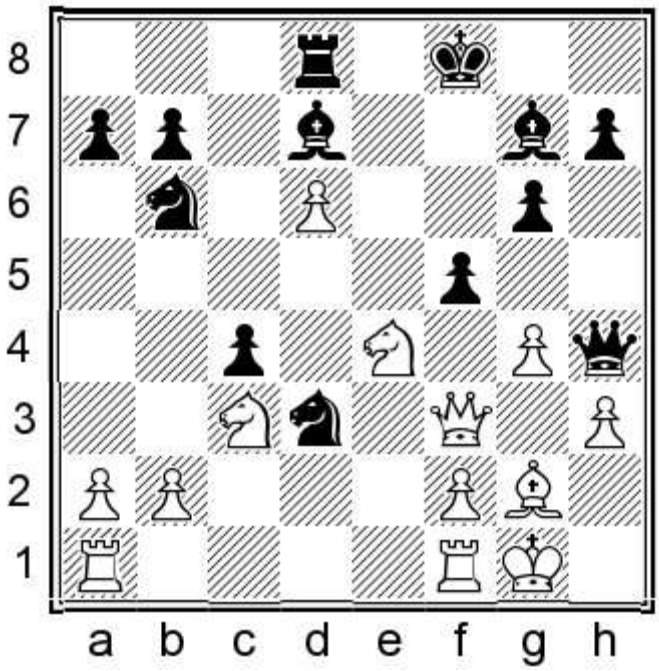
B) 21...♔f8 22.♘b5± [White should be careful not to repeat the same tactical play from the 21...♔h8 line. 22.♘c4 ♕e6 23.♗xc6 bxc6 24.♘xb6 ♕xb3 25.♘xa8 ♕xb2 26.d7 ♕xa1+ 27.♔g2 ♔e7!–+



Position after: 27...♔e7!–+

The king is close enough to the d-pawn to stop it just in time.]

15.♘de4 c4 16.♗d6 ♘d3 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8 18.♕f3 ♕h4 19.h3 f5 20.d6 ♖d8♒

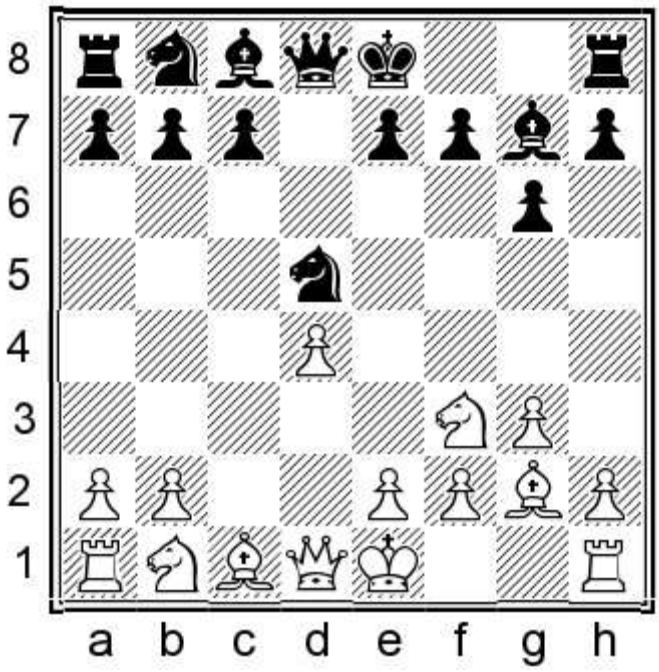


Position after: 20...♖d8♒

This position is a treat for anybody who likes irrational and complicated games. Black has enough compensation and great dynamic play. The next move could be ...♔g8 which would unleash a full-blown attack on the kingside.

c) 11.♘d2, 11.b3

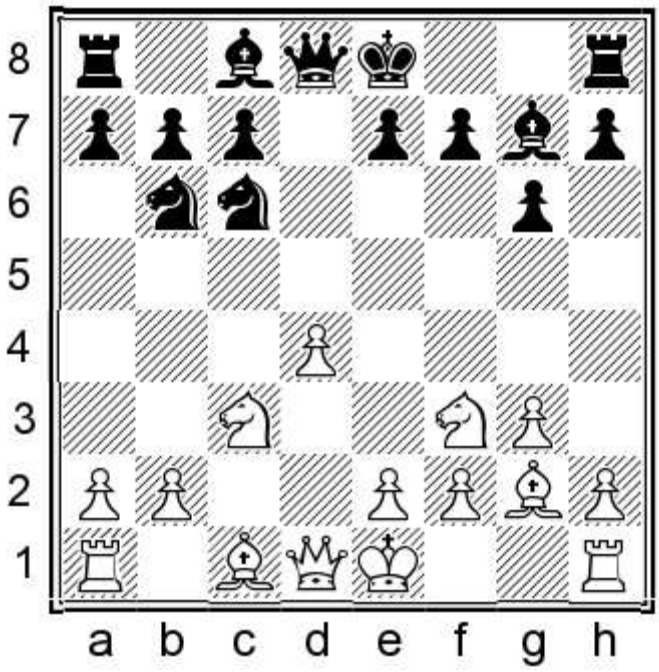
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3



Position after: 6.♘f3

The main line. White continues his kingside development and waits with the e2-e4 push. 6.♘c3 ♘b6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 transposes to the main line.

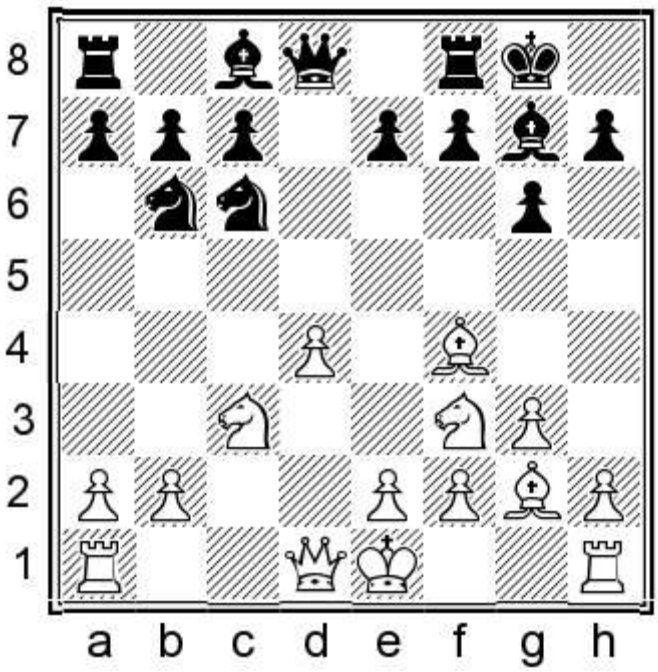
6...♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6



Position after: 7...♘c6

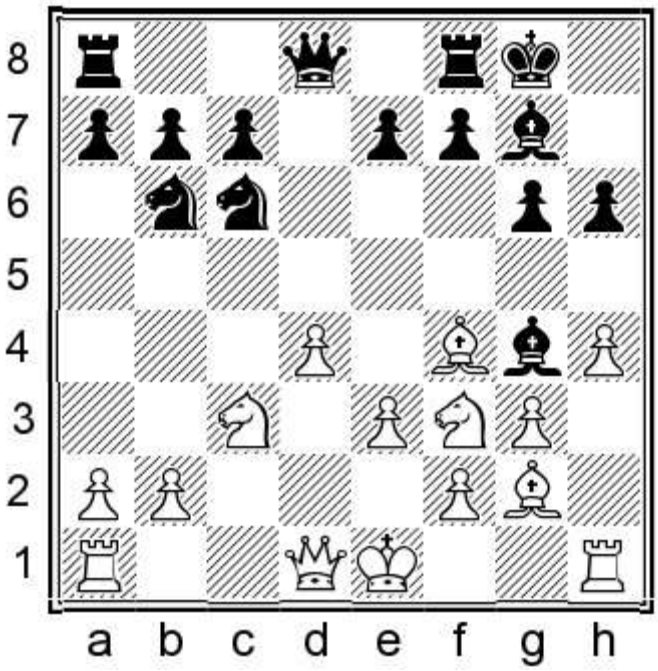
8.e3

A) White occasionally plays the tricky line 8.♗f4. I would suggest memorizing the next few moves to stay out of trouble, especially in the 9.0-0 line. 8...0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

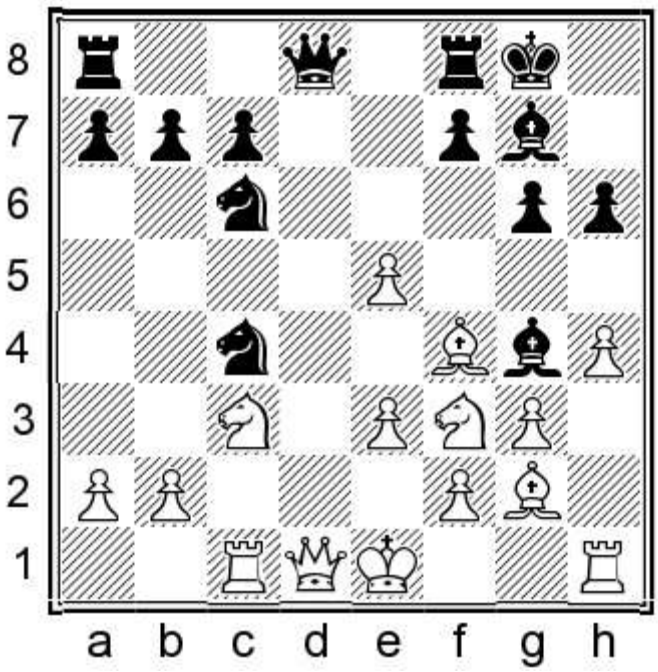
9.e3 [9.0-0 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 e5! That's the key! 11.♘c6 ♕xd1 12.♘e7+ ♔h8 13.♖fxd1 exf4 14.♘xc8 ♖axc8 15.♗xb7 ♖b8 16.♗a6 fxg3 17.hxg3 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♖fd8=] 9...h6 10.h4 ♗g4



Position after: 10...♗g4

11.♖c1 [11.0-0 e6 12.♕c2 ♕e7 13.♘e4 ♘d5 14.♕c5 ♗f5 15.♕xe7 ♘cxe7=] 11...e5! Breaking White's

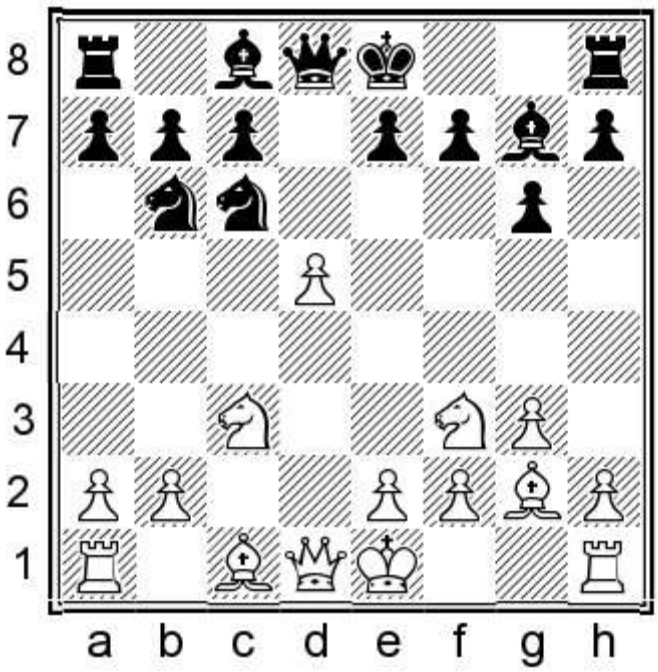
center is the fastest way to get great play. Playing other moves would have been a lot more passive and would have left White with decent chances for getting an advantage. 12.dxe5 ♘c4



Position after: 12...♘c4

13.♕d5 [13.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 14.♘h2 ♗d7 15.0-0 ♘4xe5 16.♖fd1 ♗f5 17.e4 ♖xd1+ 18.♖xd1 ♗e6 19.♘d5 ♖d8=] 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘6xe5 15.♗e2 ♘xb2 16.♗xe5 ♕xd5 17.♘xd5 ♗xe5 18.f4 ♗d6 19.h5 ♔g7 20.♔f2 c6 21.♘c3 ♗b4=

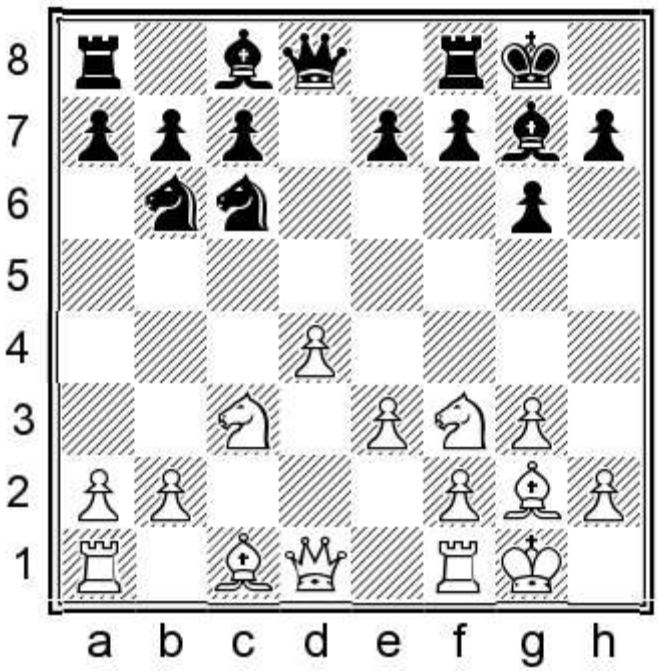
B) 8.d5?!



Position after: 8.d5?!

A bit too early for aggression as White has not completed his development. 8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕xd5 10.♕xd5 ♘xd5 11.♘d4 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 c6∓ White doesn't have enough compensation for the pawn.

8...0-0 9.0-0



Position after: 9.0-0

The first critical position. Note that we can reach it through many move orders including 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.0-0 ♘b6 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.e3.

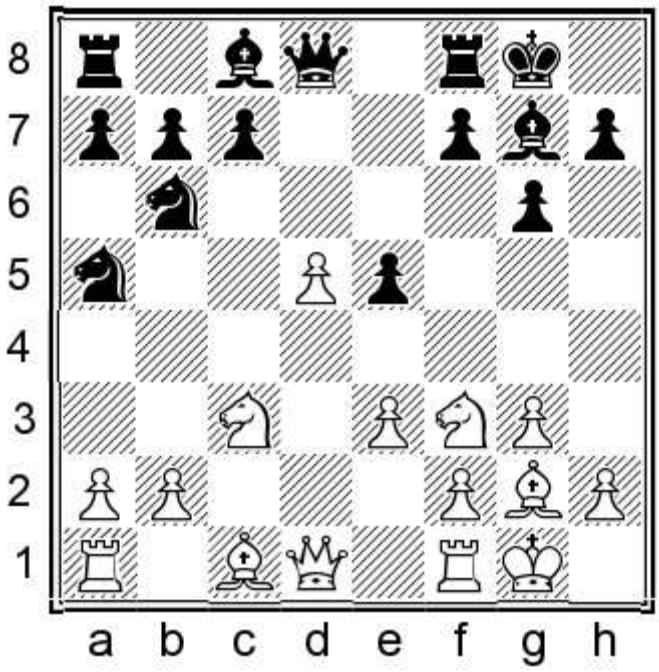
9...e5

I believe this move leads to a much easier to play position than the more frequently played 9...♖e8. Nowadays, many lines are being re-evaluated from unplayable to playable and vice versa due to rapid advancement of understanding thanks to the chess engines. The memories of AlphaZero, who learned chess in 4 hours and then convincingly beat Stockfish, are still fresh.

10.d5

Not threatening at all is 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♗xe5 13.e4 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗e6 15.f4 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♖fd8=

10...♘a5

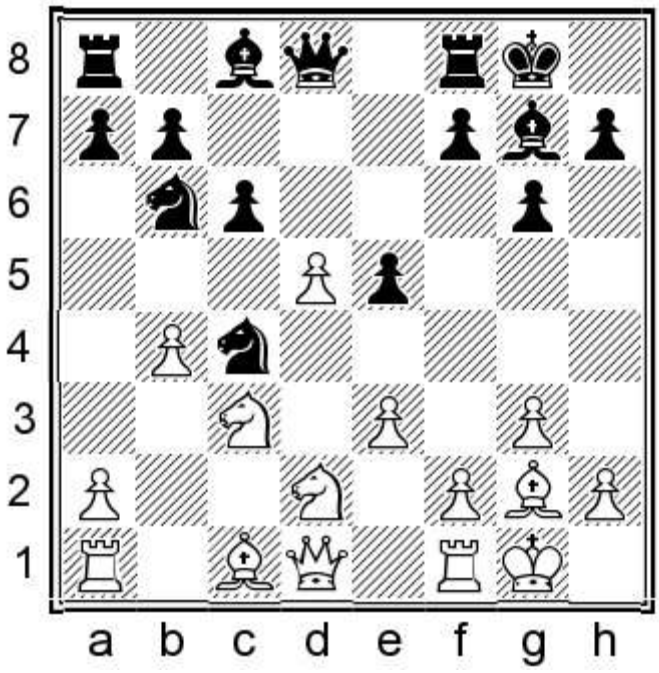


Position after: 10...♘a5

11.b3

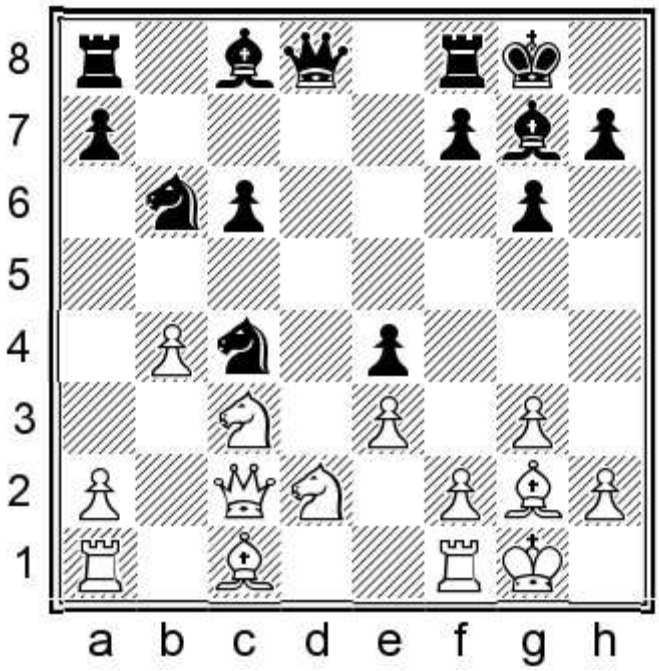
The most challenging alternative to the main line.

11.♘d2 White waits with e3-e4 to be better prepared for ...c7-c6, which Black has to play in any case. 11...c6! Getting rid of the d5-pawn is the most important task for Black. [Insufficient for equality is 11...♘ac4? 12.b3 ♘d6 13.e4 f5 14.a4! a5 15.♗a3 ♖f7 16.♖c1 ♗d7 17.♕e2±. 11...f5 12.e4 ♘ac4 13.♕e2 ♘d6 14.b3 ♖f7 15.a4±] 12.b4 ♘ac4



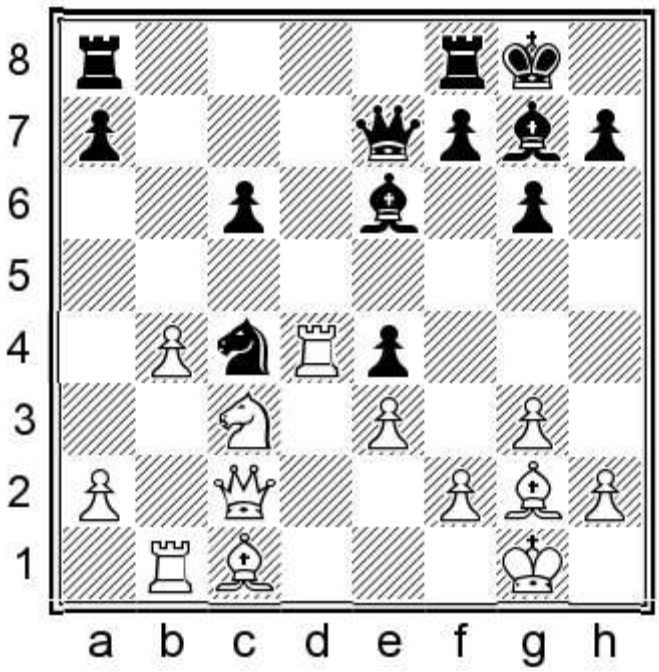
Position after: 12...♘ac4

A) 13.dxc6 The point behind 11.♘d2 is that White's g2-bishop actively participates in the game and puts Black's queenside under a lot of pressure. 13...e4 14.♕c2 bxc6



Position after: 14...bxc6

A1) 15.♘xc4 ♘xc4 16.♖d1 ♕f6 17.♖d4 ♗e6 18.♖b1 ♕e7

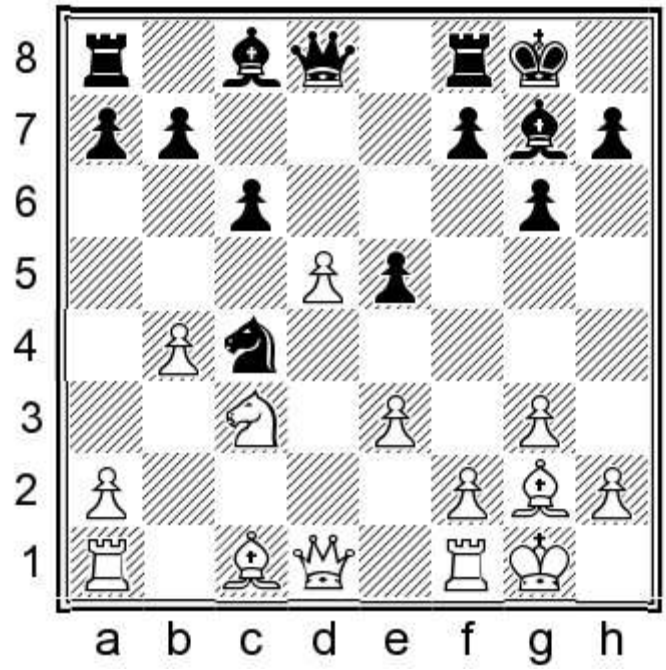


Position after: 18...♕e7

19.♖xe4 Ambitious but it doesn't work. [19.♖d1 f5∓] 19...♖fd8! [Tempting is 19...f5? but it fails because of 20.♖xe6 ♕xe6 21.b5±.] 20.♗h3 f5 21.♖xe6 ♕xe6∓

A2) 15.♘dxe4 ♗f5 16.♖b1 ♕e7∞ Black has sufficient compensation due to the overwhelming pin by the f5-bishop.

B) 13.♘xc4 ♘xc4

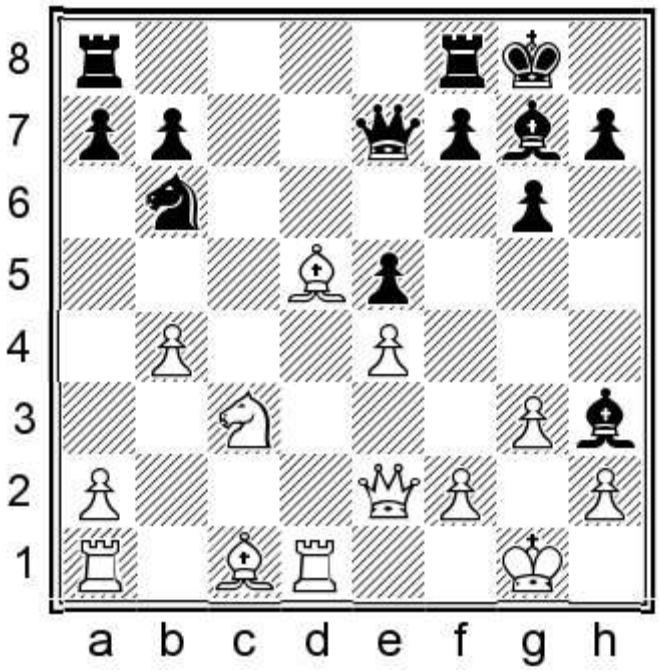


Position after: 13...♘xc4

B1) 14.dxc6 e4 15.♖b1 [15.♕c2? ♕f6 16.♘d5 ♕xa1 17.♕xc4 bxc6 18.♘e7+ ♔h8∓] 15...♕xd1 16.♘xd1 ♖e8 17.cxb7 ♗xb7∓ Black is better despite being down a pawn because White's pieces are too uncoordinated.

B2) 14.e4 cxd5 15.♘xd5 ♗e6=

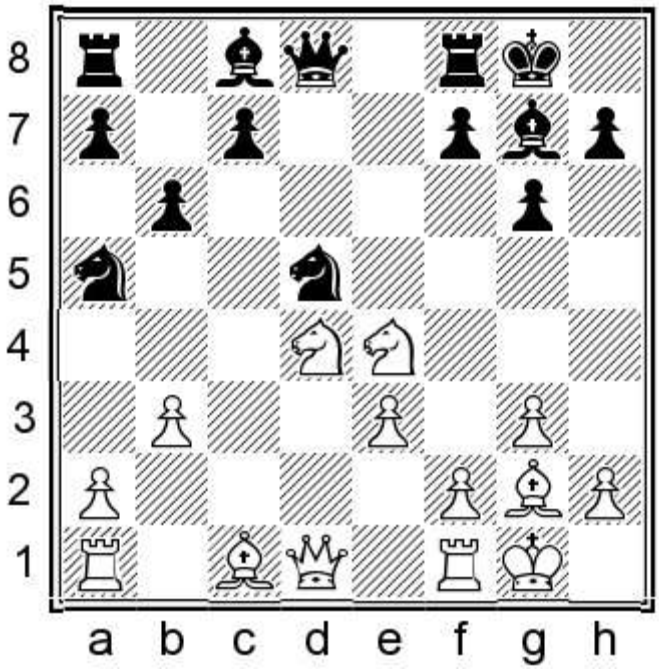
B3) 14.♕e2 cxd5 15.♗xd5 ♘b6 16.e4 ♗h3 17.♖d1 ♕e7=



Position after: 17...♕e7=

The game is about equal. Our next couple of moves could be ...♖ac8 and ...♖fd8.

11...e4 12.♘d4 ♘xd5 13.♘xe4 b6

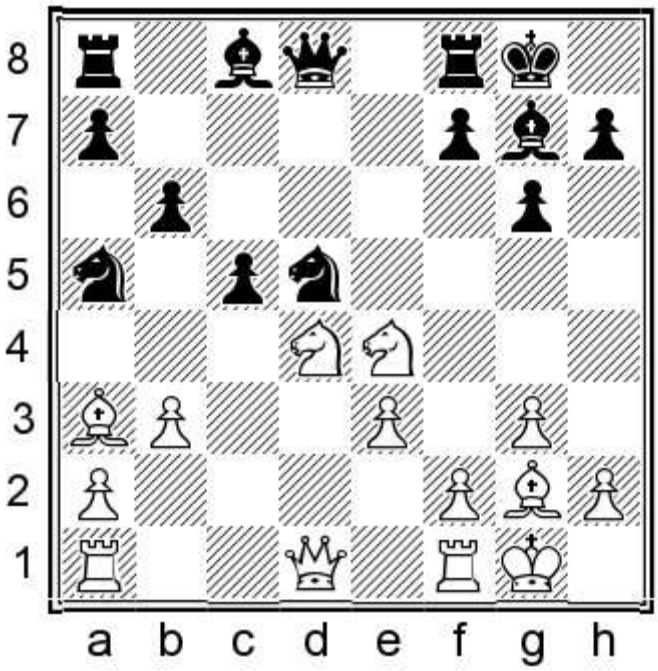


Position after: 13...b6

14.b4!

This unexpected pawn sacrifice makes our path to achieving equality the most difficult.

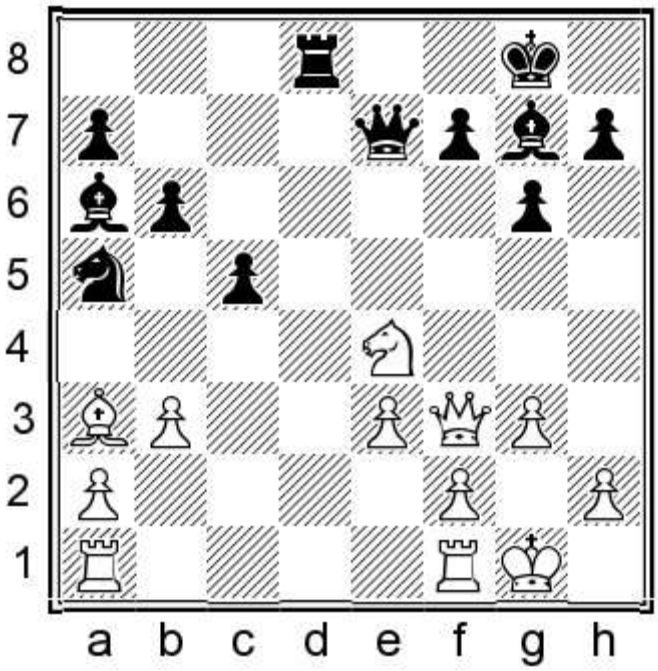
A) 14.♗a3 also leads to fascinating complications: 14...c5



Position after: 14...c5

A1) 15.♘e2 ♗b7 16.♖c1 ♖e8 17.♕c2 ♕e7 18.♘xc5 bxc5 19.♗xc5 ♕g5 20.b4 ♘c6 21.♖fd1 ♘cxb4 22.♕b3 ♖ab8 23.♗xb4 ♘xb4 24.♗xb7 ♖xb7 25.a3 a5 26.♘f4 ♕e7 27.axb4 ♕xb4 28.♕d5=

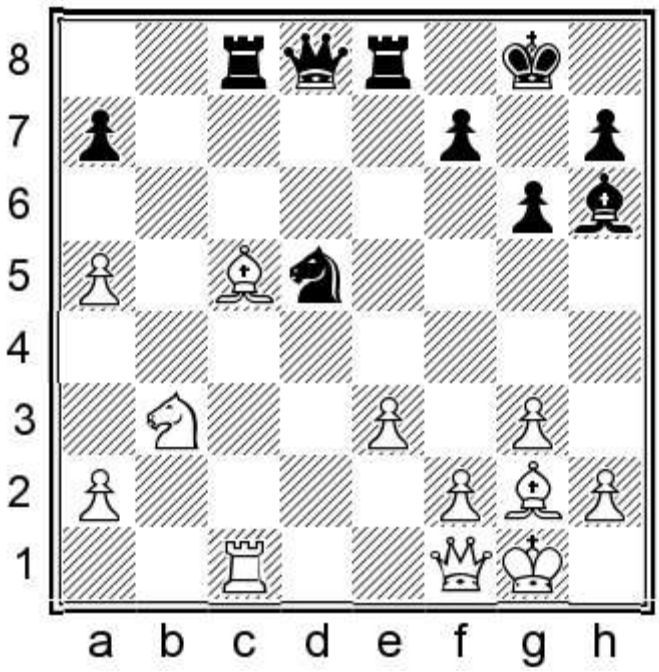
A2) 15.♘b5? ♗a6 16.♘ed6 ♘c7! [16...♘c3? 17.♘xc3 ♗xf1 18.♕xf1 ♕xd6 19.♖d1 ♕e6 20.♗xa8 ♖xa8= ½-½ (32) Bu, X (2290) – Navara, D (2275) Oropesa del Mar 1998] 17.♘xc7 ♕xc7 18.♗xa8 ♖xa8 19.♕f3 ♖d8 20.♘e4 ♕e7!



Position after: 20...♕e7!

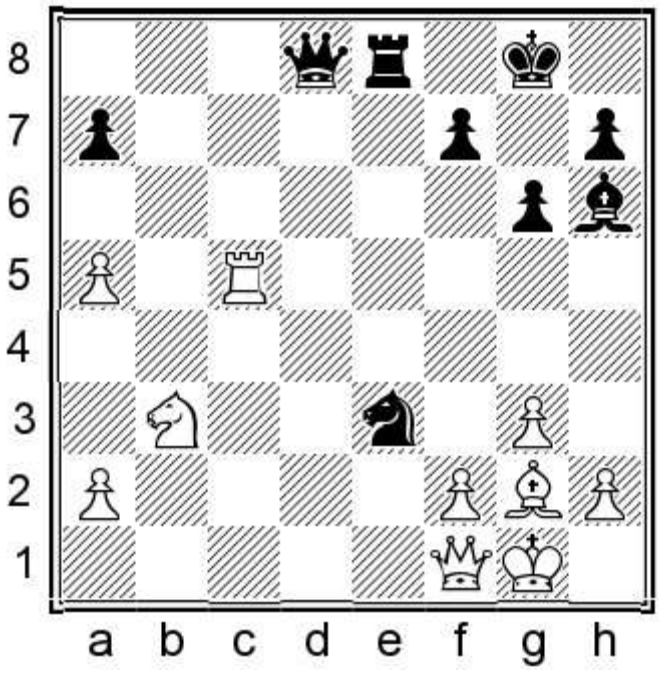
A knight is usually best in the center but here White is simply losing it. 21.♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♗b7 23.♕f4 ♗xe4–+

A3) 15.♘xc5 bxc5 16.♗xc5 ♖e8 17.b4 ♗a6 18.bxa5 ♖c8 19.♖c1 ♗xf1 20.♕xf1 ♗h6 21.♘b3



Position after: 21.♘b3

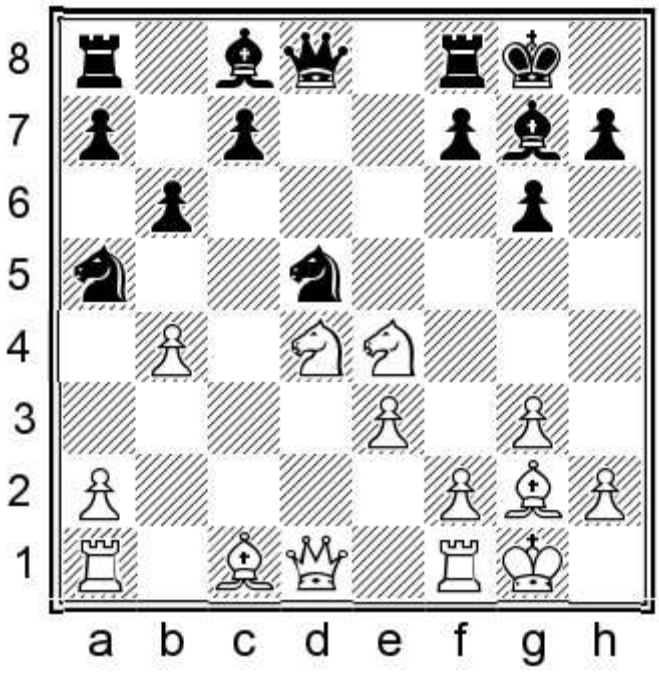
21...♖xc5! The simplest and most exciting way to get equal play. In case Black doesn't perform this tactical operation, White will be better due to his better piece coordination since our knight and bishop don't have stable outposts nor are they as effective as we would want them to be. 22.♖xc5 ♘xe3!



Position after: 22...♘xe3!

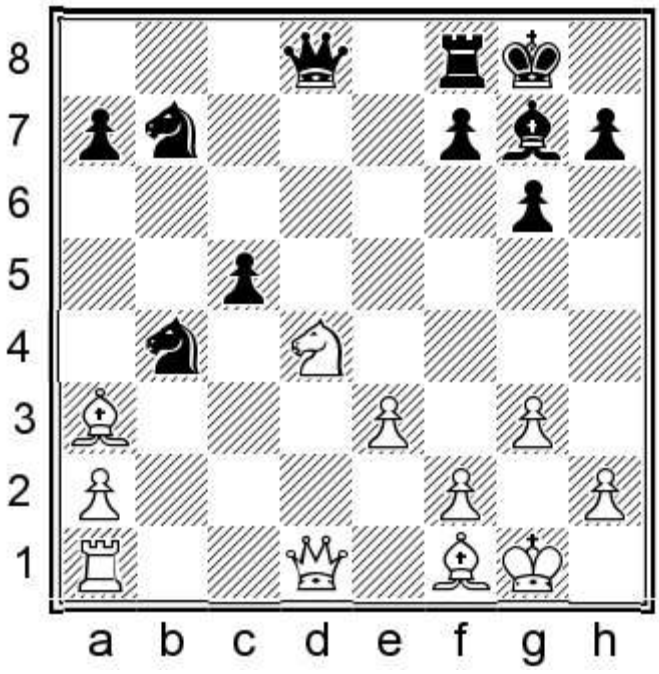
23.♕a1 [23.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 24.♔h1 ♗xc5 25.♘xc5 ♕xa5 26.♘e4 ♖e6=] 23...♘xg2 24.♔xg2 ♕a8+ 25.♔g1 ♖e2 26.♘d4 ♖d2 27.♖c2 ♖xc2 28.♘xc2 ♕d5=

B) 14.♗d2? c5 15.♘xc5 bxc5 16.♗xa5 ♕xa5 17.♗xd5 cxd4 18.♗xa8 dxe3 19.♖c1 ♗a6 20.♕d5 ♕xa2 21.fxe3 ♗xf1 22.♖xf1 ♗h6∓



Position after: 14.b4!

14...♘xb4 15.♗a3 c5 16.♘xc5 bxc5 17.♗xa8 ♗a6 18.♗g2 ♗xf1 19.♗xf1 ♘b7



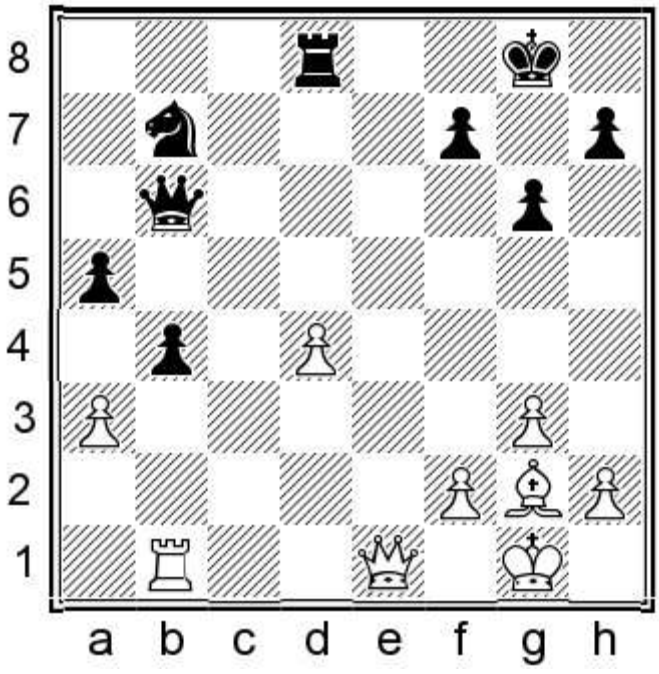
Position after: 19...♘b7

The critical position. White has a choice between taking on b4 immediately or slightly procrastinating about it.

19...cxd4? 20.♗xb4 ♖e8 21.♖c1 ♘b7 22.♗a6! [22.exd4 ♗xd4 23.♕f3 ♘d6 ½-½ (23) Simek, P (2330) – Plat, V (2552) Marianske Lazne 2019] 22...♕d7 23.exd4+–

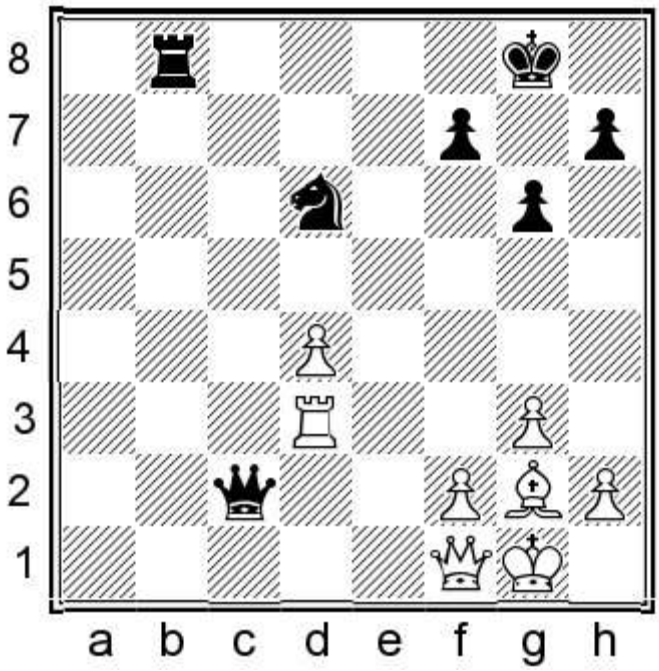
20.♗xb4

20.♗g2 ♕b6 21.♖b1 ♖d8 22.♗xb4 cxb4 23.♕e1 a5 24.a3 ♗xd4 25.exd4



Position after: 25.exd4

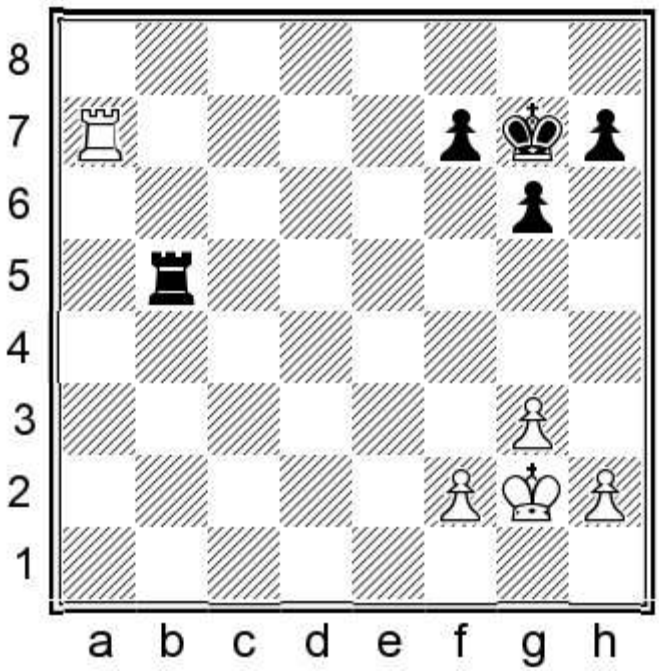
25...♘d6 [25...♖xd4? 26.♗xb7 ♕xb7 27.♕e8+ ♔g7 28.♕e5+ ♔g8 29.♕xd4+–] 26.axb4 a4! 27.♖a1 ♖e8 28.♕d2 a3! 29.♖a2 ♖b8 30.♕d3 ♕xb4 31.♖xa3 ♕e1+ 32.♕f1 ♕d2 33.♖d3 ♕c2=



Position after: 33...♕c2=

The d-pawn is securely blocked, and our activity compensates for the small material disadvantage.

20...♗xd4 21.exd4 cxb4 22.♖b1 ♕a5 23.♕d2 b3 24.♕xa5 ♘xa5 25.axb3 ♖d8 26.b4 ♘c6 27.b5 ♘xd4 28.♖a1 ♖d7 29.♔g2 ♖b7 30.♖a2 ♘xb5 31.♗xb5 ♖xb5 32.♖xa7 ♔g7

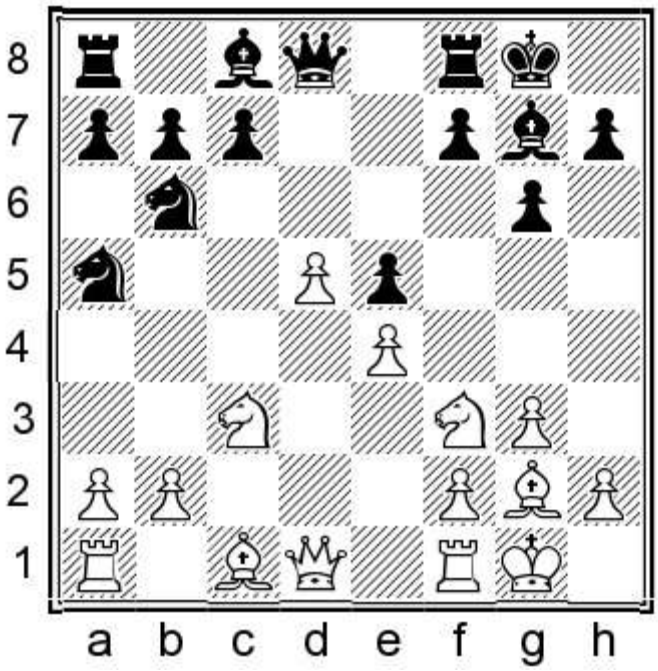


Position after: 32...♔g7

½-½ (32) Mamedyarov, S (2817) – Radjabov, T (2757) Wijk aan Zee 2019.

d) 11.e4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 ♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 e5 10.d5 ♘a5 11.e4



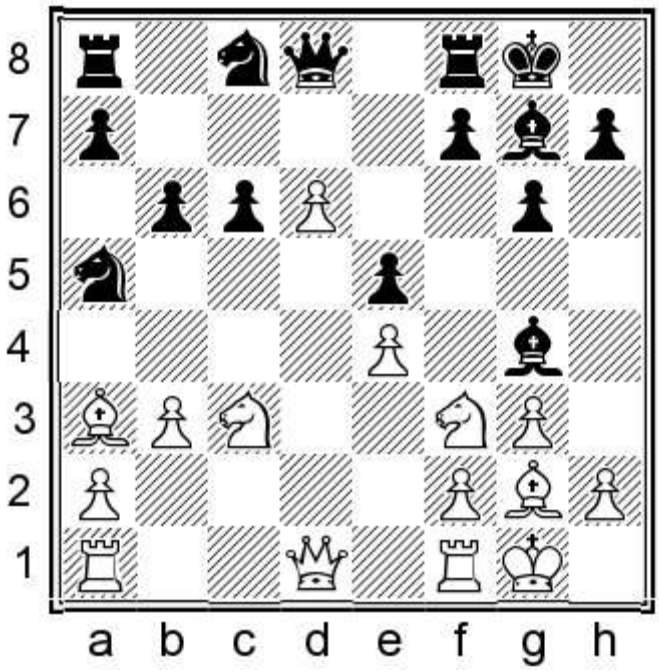
Position after: 11.e4

Finally, we will look at the old main line 11.e4. This is still the main move even nowadays despite the bigger challenges for Black in the 11.♘d2 or 11.b3 lines. White's idea is to develop the queenside bishop and rook as quickly as possible.

11...c6 12.♗g5

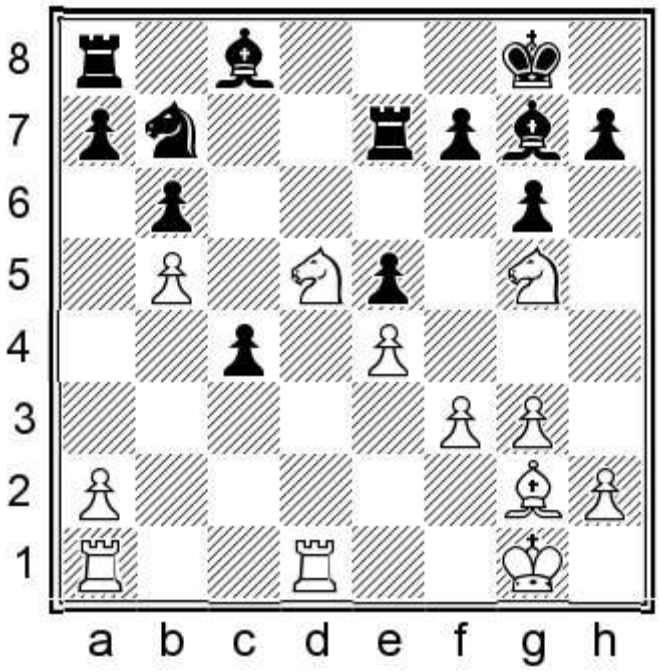
White has lots of other moves but none of them present any particular threat for Black. We will still explore all of them for the sake of completeness.

A) 12.d6 Saves the pawn from the unwanted trade but creates a clear target for Black's pieces. Sometimes a remedy is worse than the disease. 12...♗g4 13.b3 ♘c8 14.♗a3 b6!



Position after: 14...b6!

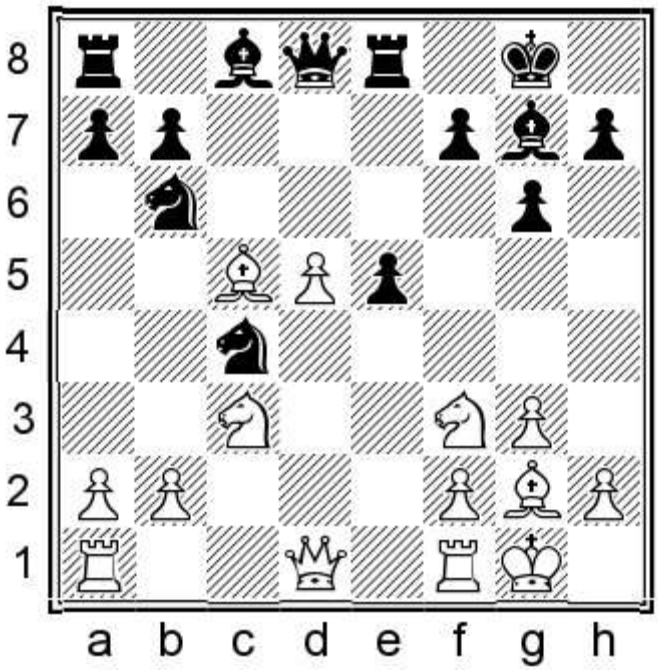
Preparing to block the a3-bishop and opening up an escape square on b7 for the knight on a5. 15.d7 ♘e7 16.♕d3 c5 17.b4 c4 18.♕d6 [18.♕d2 ♘ac6 19.♕d6 b5!? 20.♘xb5 ♖b8 21.♘c3 ♖b7∓] 18...♘b7 19.♕d2 ♕xd7 20.♕xd7 ♗xd7 21.b5 ♖fe8 22.♖fd1 ♗e6 23.♘g5 ♗g4 24.f3 ♗c8 25.♗xe7 ♖xe7 26.♘d5



Position after: 26.♘d5

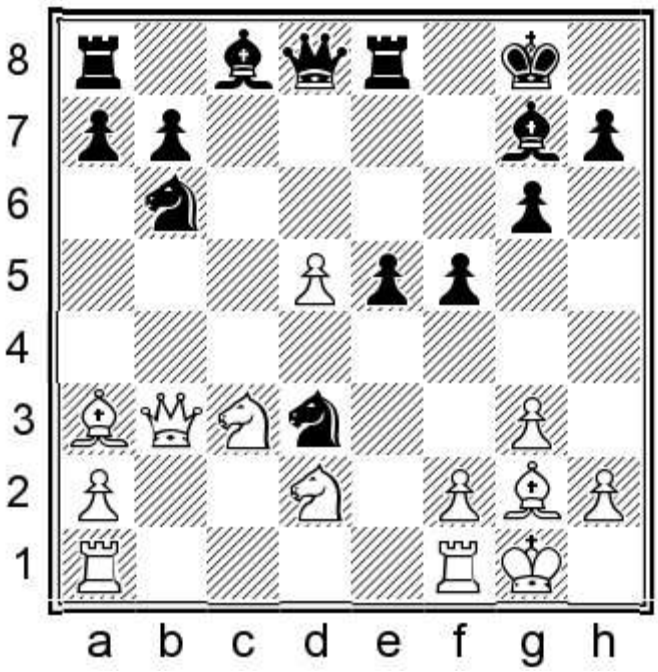
26...♗f8!∓ A beautiful trick giving Black better chances. White would have virtually no good pieces left should he choose to accept our “gift”.

B) 12.♗e3 Is a logical alternative to 12.♗g5. White doesn't spend time on provoking ...f7-f6 and gets to business right away. The bishop intends to support White's kingside activities from c5. 12...cxd5 13.exd5 ♘ac4 14.♗c5 ♖e8



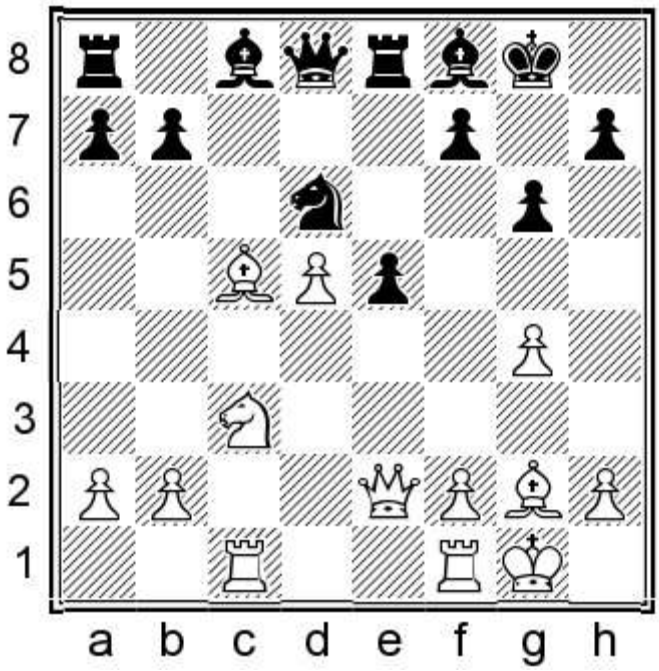
Position after: 14...♖e8

15.♘d2 [15.b3 ♘d7! A nice intermediate move targeting the bishop. Once we get the dark-squared bishop our position will be a lot better than White's. 16.♗b4 ♕b6 17.bxc4 ♕xb4 18.♘e4 f5 19.♖b1 ♕a3 20.♘eg5 e4 21.♘d4 ♘f8∓] 15...♗f5 [The greedy 15...♘xb2 doesn't work: 16.♕b3 ♘d3 17.♗a3 f5



Position after: 17...f5

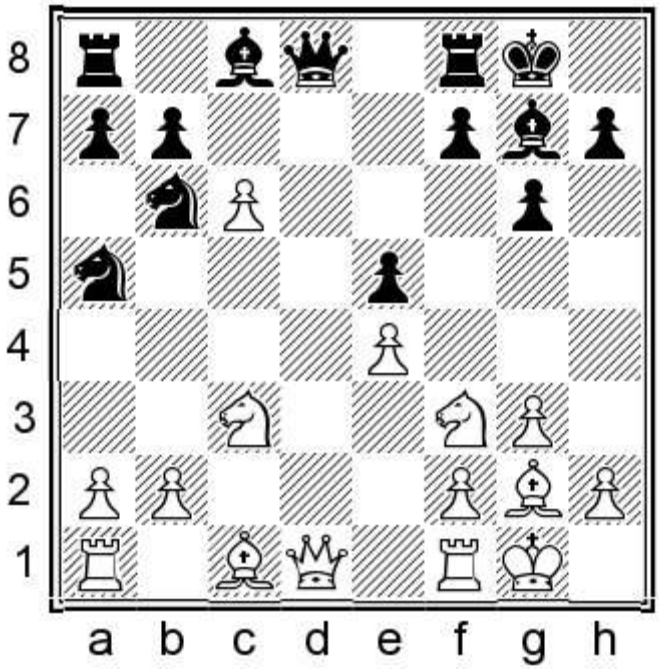
18.♘ce4!! fxe4 19.♘xe4 ♘f4 20.gxf4 exf4 21.♖ae1 h6 22.♘c5 ♗f5 23.♘e6 ♕d7 24.♘xg7 ♔xg7 25.d6 ♗e6 26.♕f3 ♖ac8 27.♕xf4+–] 16.♘xc4 ♘xc4 17.♕e2 ♘d6 18.g4 ♗c8 19.♖ac1 ♗f8! Preparing ...♗d7 and ...♖c8.



Position after: 19...♗f8!

20.♖fd1 ♗d7 21.♗xd6 ♗xd6 22.♘e4 ♗xg4 23.♕xg4 f5 24.♕g3 fxe4 25.♗xe4 ♔g7=

C) 12.dxc6 Helps Black solve all the problems at once and, therefore, can't be recommended.



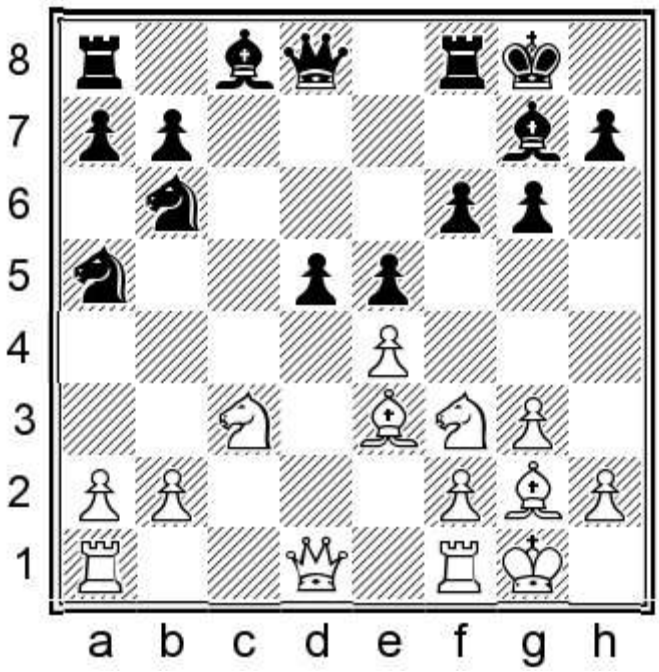
Position after: 12.dxc6

12...♘xc6 13.♗g5 ♕xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♗g4 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘d4 17.♗g2 ♖fc8!? 18.♔f1 ♗f8=

D) 12.b4 White hopes to get a better pawn structure after 12...♘ac4 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♕c2 White got the desired pawn structure but the pawn on c6 is inaccessible. 14...♕e7 15.♖b1 a5 16.bxa5 ♖xa5=

E) 12.♖e1 is too cautious and allows Black to put extra pressure on the f3-knight and d5-pawn. 12...♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 cxd5 15.♘xd5 [15.exd5 ♘ac4 16.♖d1 ♘d6=] 15...♘c6 16.♗e3 ♘xd5 17.exd5 ♘d4=

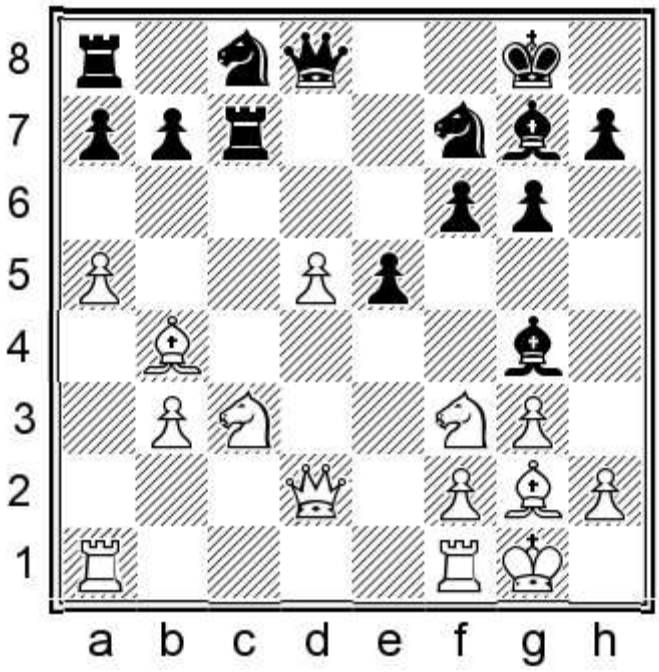
12...f6 13.♗e3 cxd5



Position after: 13...cxd5

14.♗xb6

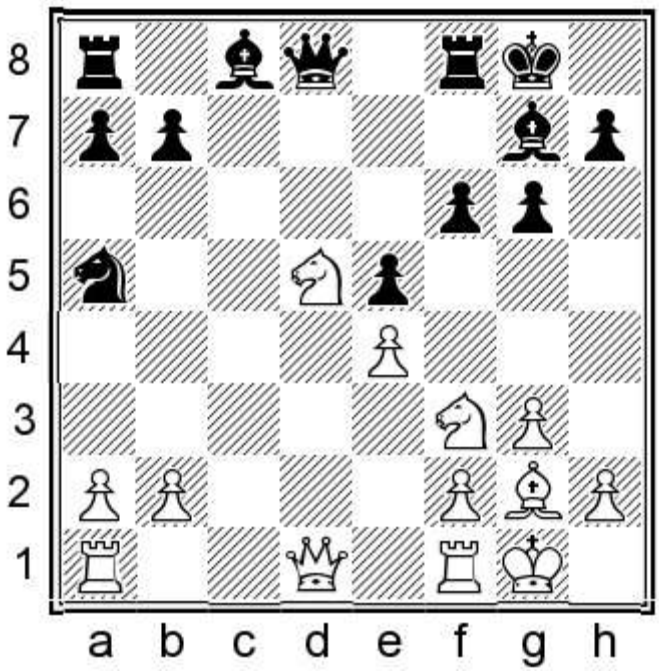
14.exd5 ♘ac4 15.♗c5 ♖f7 16.b3 ♘d6 17.a4 ♗g4 18.a5 ♘bc8 19.♕d2 ♖c7N 20.♗b4 ♘f7!



Position after: 20...♘f7!

The knights have perfect harmony: one selflessly retreats to a worse square so the more passive one can get to d6. The net result is positive! 21.♘e4 ♗h6 22.♕b2 ♘cd6 23.♘fd2 ♖ac8 24.♘xd6 ♘xd6=

14...♕xb6 15.♘xd5 ♕d8



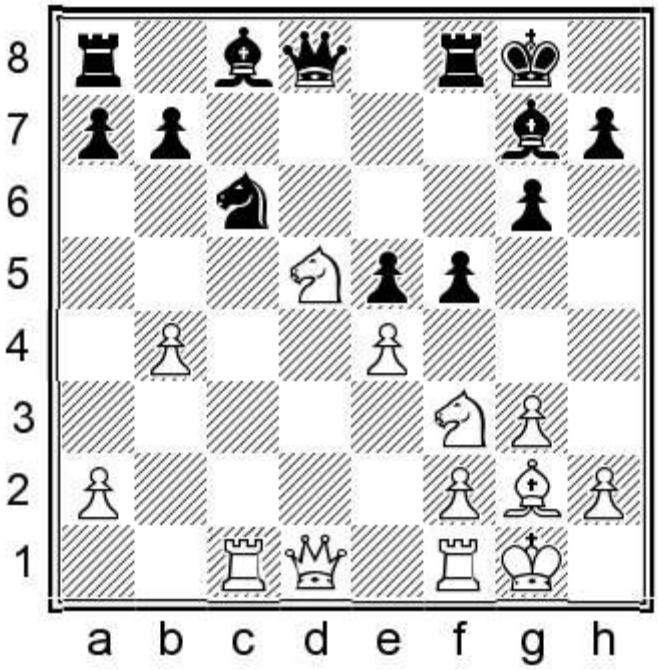
Position after: 15...♕d8

16.♖c1

16.b4 ♘c6 17.b5 ♘e7 18.♕b3 ♗e6 19.♖fd1 ♘xd5 20.exd5 ♗f7 21.♕e3 ♕b6! Since we have the bishop pair, we are happy to trade queens and approach the endgame where the bishops will be even more effective. 22.♕xb6 axb6 23.♘d2 f5 24.♘c4 e4∓

16...♘c6 17.♕b3

A true fist fight occurs after 17.b4 f5!?

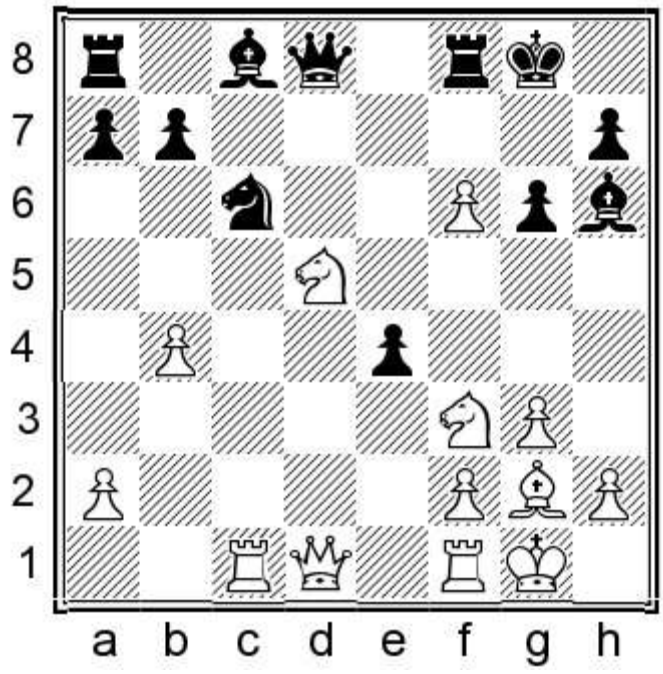


Position after: 17...f5!?

White punches us on the queenside and we answer with the same on the kingside!

A) 18.b5 fxe4 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.♘xe5 [20.♖xc6 exf3 21.♗xf3 ♔h8 22.♗g2 ♗b7=] 20...cxd5 21.♘c6 ♕d7 22.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 23.♘e7+ ♔h8 24.♘xd5 ♗f5=

B) 18.exf5 e4 19.f6 ♗h6

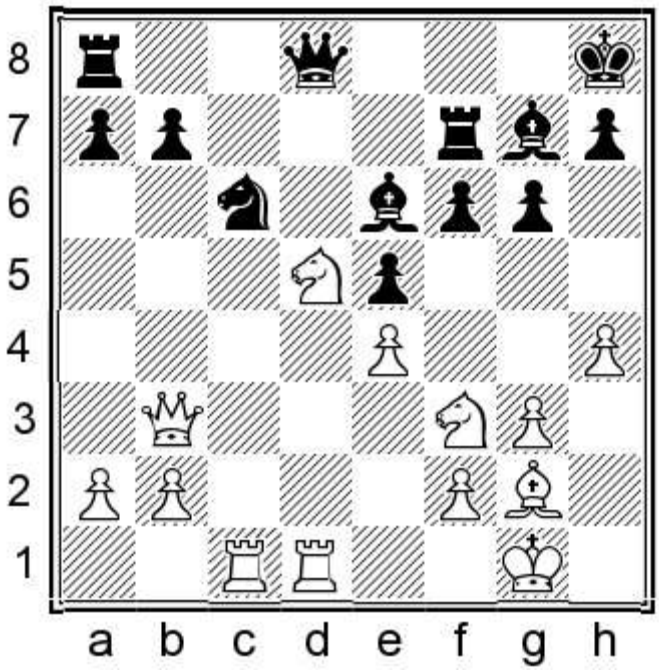


Position after: 19...♗h6

White has many continuations, all of them leading to balanced positions. It makes sense after all: in open type positions, the bishops typically perform the best and, in this case, protect the exposed g8-king especially well. 20.♖xc6 [20.♖c5 exf3 21.♕xf3 ♗g5 22.♖d1 ♗xf6 23.b5 ♗d4 24.♘f4 ♕b6 25.♕d5+ ♔h8 26.♖xc6 ♗xf2+ 27.♔h1 bxc6 28.♕e5+ ♔g8 29.♘h5 gxh5 30.♕g5+ ♔h8 31.♕e5+ ♔g8 32.♕g5+=] 20...bxc6 21.♘e7+ ♔h8 22.♕xd8 ♖xd8 23.♘e5 ♖f8 24.♗xe4 ♗e6 25.♘7xc6 ♖xf6 26.a4 ♖e8! 27.♗g2 ♗f8=

17...♖f7 18.♖fd1 ♗e6 19.h4 ♔h8

A necessary prophylaxis, preventing any potential threats on the a2-g8 diagonal.

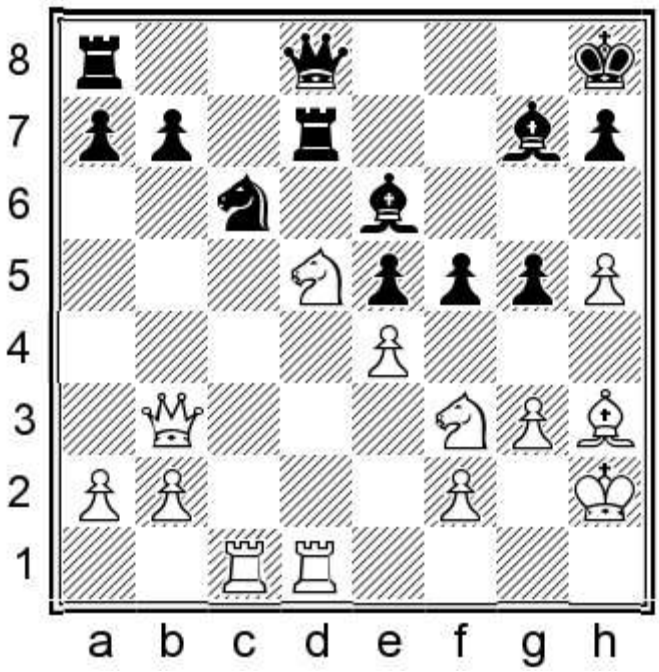


Position after: 19...♔h8

20.♔h2

Now White needs to prepare the light-squared bishop trade to maintain equality.

20...♖d7 21.♗h3 f5 22.h5 g5!N



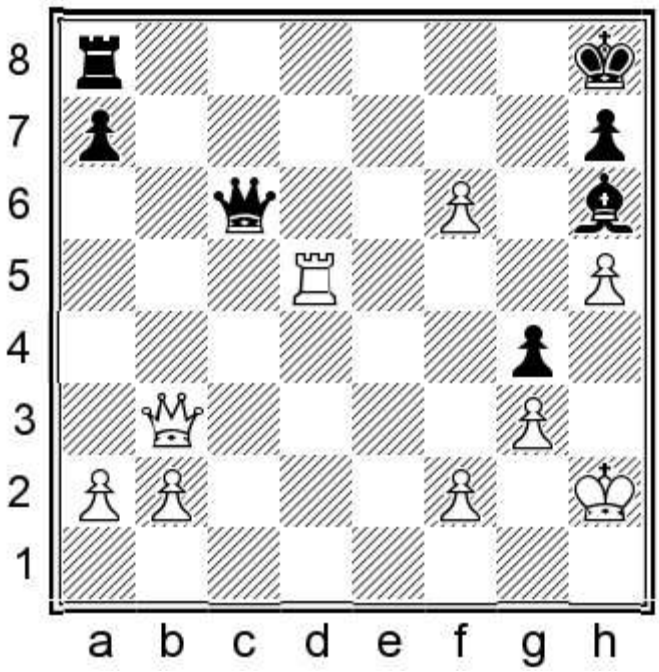
Position after: 22...g5!N

An aggressive novelty! Black is not content with passive defense and goes for an active offense.

23.♗xf5 ♗xf5 24.exf5 g4 25.f6 ♗h6 26.♖xc6

A necessity. Otherwise Black wins after ...♘c6-d4.

26...bxc6 27.♘xe5 cxd5 28.♘xd7 ♕xd7 29.♖xd5 ♕c6!=

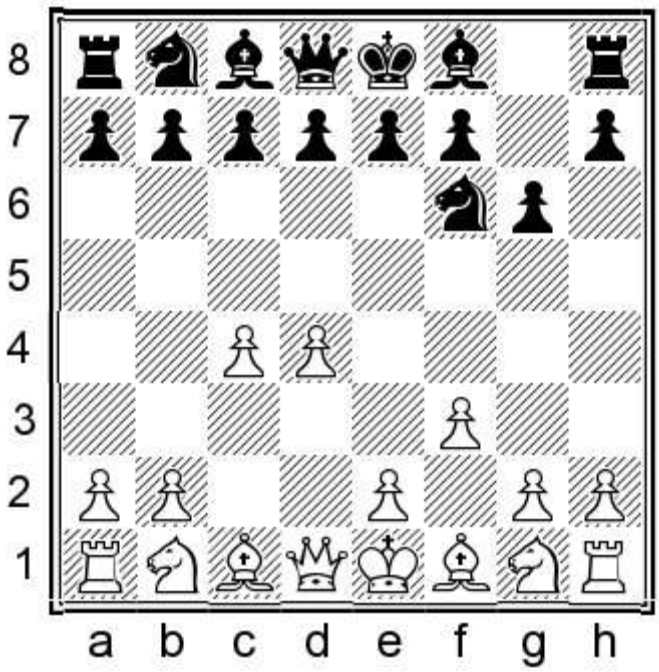


Position after: 29...♕c6!=

We have a dynamically balanced position. Our first goal is to get the rook in the game after ...♖f8 and then take care of the f6-pawn.

Chapter 13
3.f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 13 – 3.f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 e5 9.d5 c6 10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.h5 ♘f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.0-0-0 ♗d7 15.♔b1 ♖c8

---

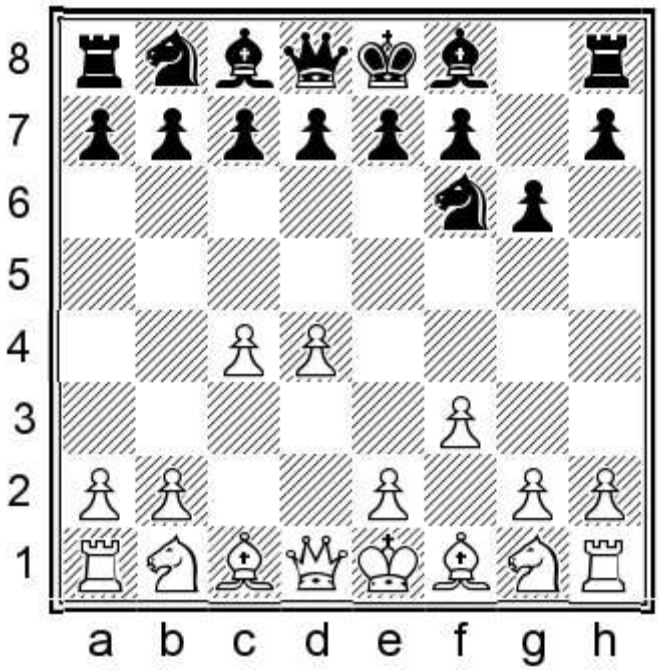
a) 10.0-0-0 alternative

b) 16.♔a1, 16.♘h3

c) 16.d6

a) 10.0-0-0 alternative

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



Position after: 3.f3

This move has gained in popularity relatively recently and for good reasons: White prepares e4 immediately and aims for the King's Indian pawn structures rather than Grünfeld structures.

3...d5

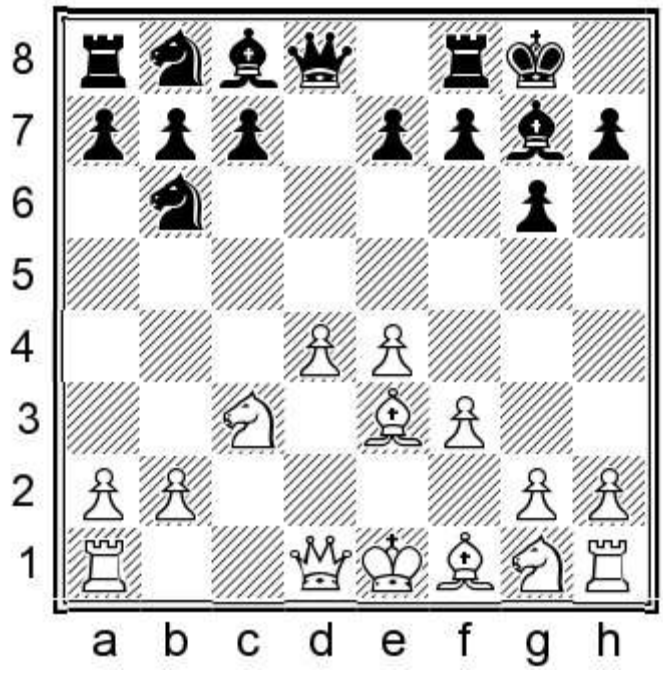
I advocate sticking to this traditional Grünfeld move. It has lost popularity in recent years, but I believe the novelty I'm going to unveil on the 21st move will change the current opinion of chess theory.

3...c5 is quite popular but leads to the King's Indian Defense after 4.d5 e6 5.e4 d6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♘ge2 If you happen to like playing the King's Indian, you can try this option as well. Personally, I believe 3...d5 is easier to play than 3...c5.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3

As compared to the other systems, White managed to avoid the knight trade and now wants to prove the superiority of the c3-knight over its colleague on b6.

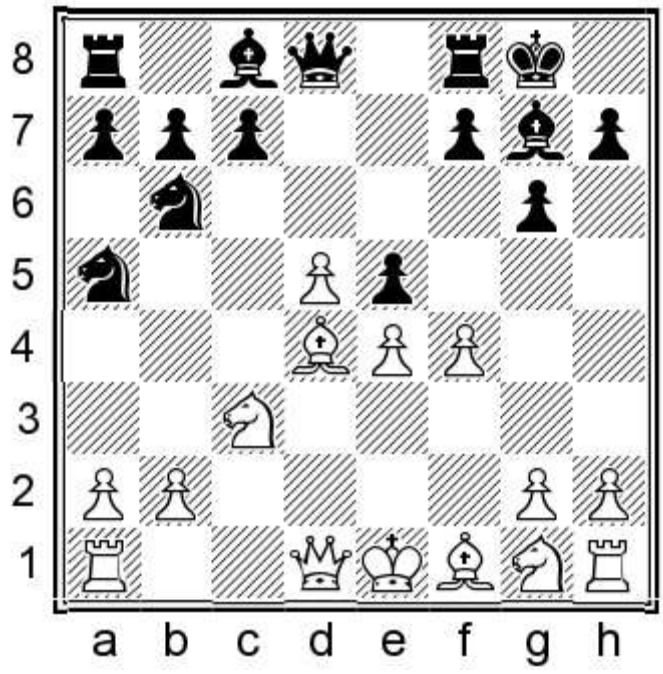
6...♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0



Position after: 7...0-0

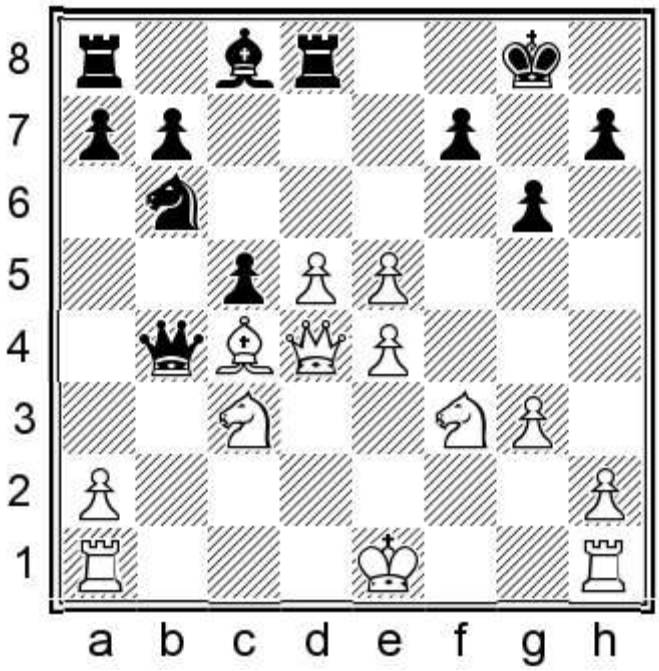
8.♕d2

White may also attempt to fight for the advantage with 8.f4 and we certainly need to know how to react properly in order to avoid getting in trouble. Generally, the more aggressive the move is, the more precise our response should be. 8...♘c6 9.d5 [9.♘f3 allows black to develop the c8-bishop very comfortably after 9...♗g4 and then maintaining the solidness of White's center is beyond challenging. 10.d5 ♘a5 11.♗d4 ♗xf3 12.gxf3 e6 13.h4 exd5 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♕d4+ ♔g8∓] 9...♘a5 10.♗d4 e5!



Position after: 10...e5!

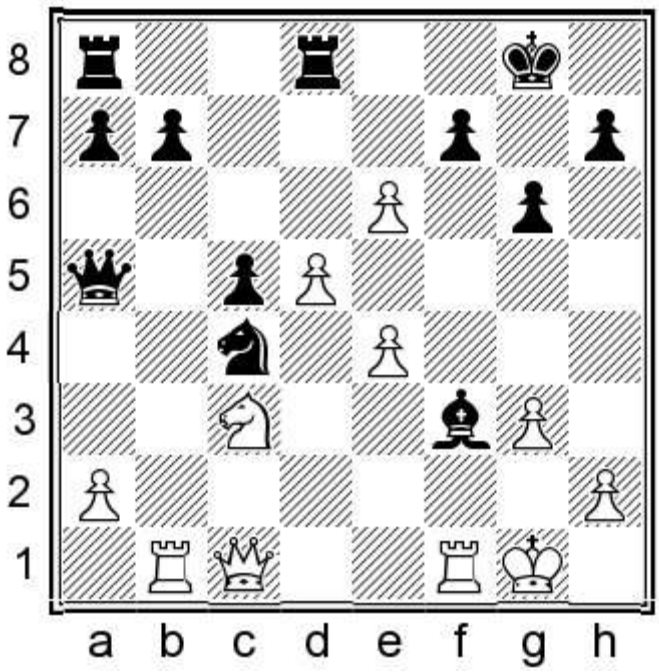
An effective way to break White's center. 11.♗xe5 [11.fxe5 c6 12.b4 ♘ac4 13.♘f3 ♗g4 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.0-0 ♘xe5 16.♔h1 a5∓] 11...♗xe5 12.fxe5 ♕h4+ 13.g3 ♕e7 14.♕d4 ♖d8 15.b4 ♘ac4 16.♗xc4 ♕xb4 17.♘f3 [17.h3 ♕xc4 18.♖d1 c6 19.♘f3 ♗d7=] 17...c5!



Position after: 17...c5!

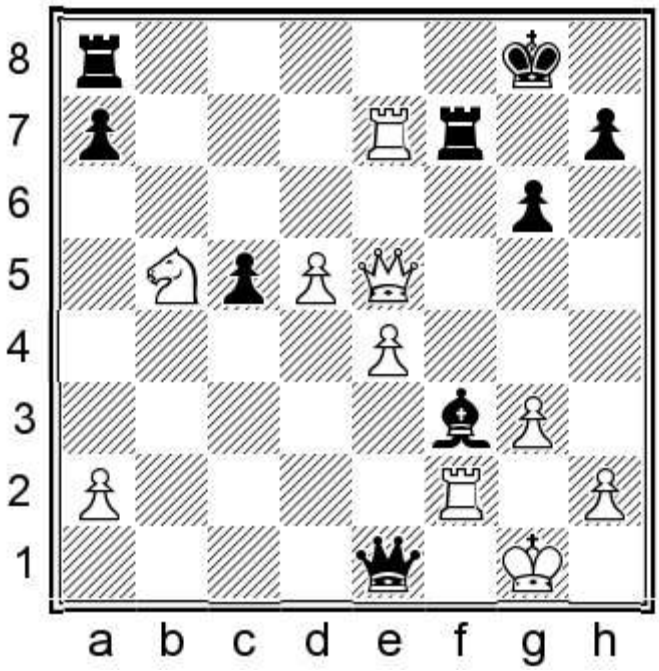
The immediate capture on c4 would have left Black with a weak pawn on c7.

A) 18.♕d2 ♘xc4 19.♕c1 ♗g4 20.0-0 ♗xf3 21.♖b1 ♕a5 22.e6!



Position after: 22.e6!

Don’t panic: White’s creative play is only good enough for a forced draw. 22...♘e5 23.exf7+ ♔g7 24.♖xb7 ♖f8 25.♖e7 ♕b4 26.♘b5! ♖xf7 [26...♕xb5? 27.♕a1 ♔h6 28.♕xe5+–] 27.♕g5 ♔g8 28.♕xe5 ♕d2 29.♖f2 ♕e1+ 30.♖f1 ♕e3+ 31.♖f2 ♕e1+=

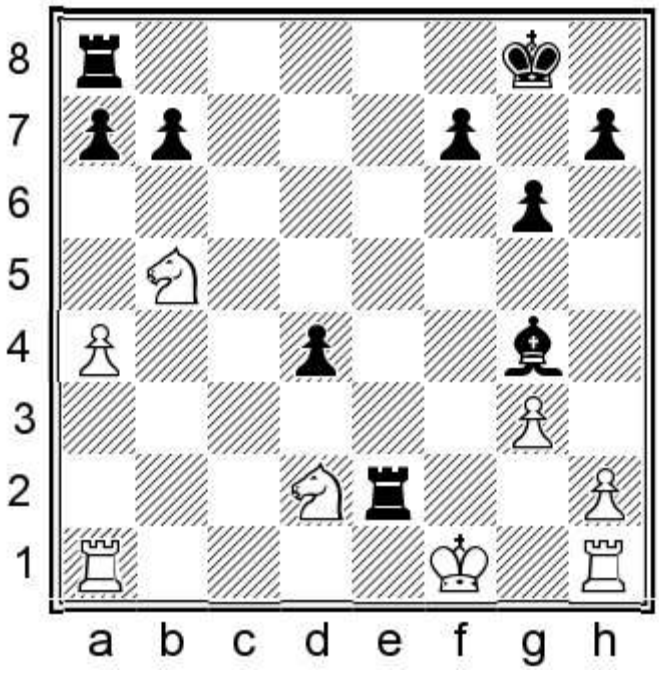


Position after: 31...♕e1+=

Grandmasters are really good at finding perpetual check in any position and I am living proof of this!

On a serious note, modern chess engines have enabled us to analyze the openings and reach a definitive result rather than stop the analysis prematurely with the evaluation “unclear” as Grandmasters did back in the 80s and 90s.

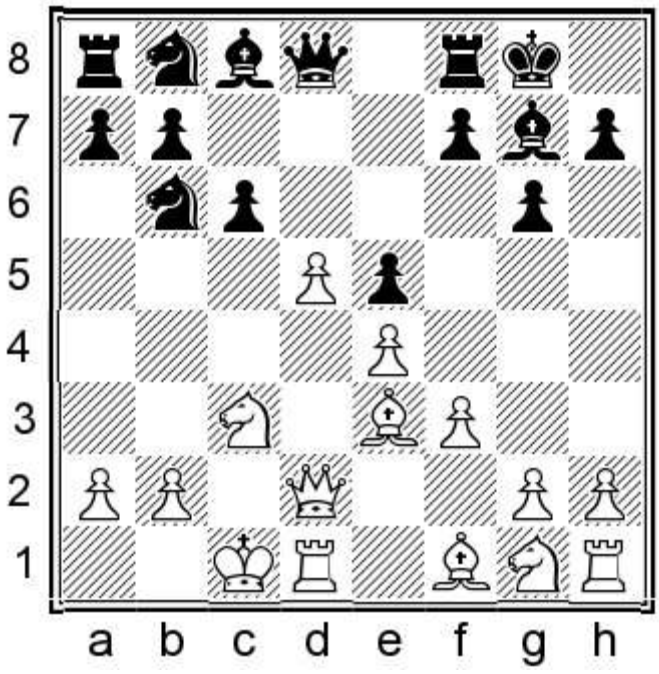
B) 18.♕d3 ♕xc4 19.♕e3 ♗g4 20.♘d2 ♕d4 21.♕xd4 cxd4 22.♘b5 ♘xd5! As we have seen previously, Black should not be shy about using the most energetic and drastic ways to destroy White’s center. 23.exd5 ♖xd5 24.a4 ♖xe5+ 25.♔f1 ♖e2



Position after: 25...♖e2

Black has great play in this endgame: three pawns for the knight, the active rook on the second rank which will soon be joined by the rook on a8. The activity of the rooks ensure at least equality for Black. The game may continue like this: 26.h3 ♖xd2 27.hxg4 ♖c8 28.♘xa7 ♖cc2 29.♘b5 ♖f2+ 30.♔e1 ♖fe2+=

8...e5 9.d5 c6 10.0-0-0?

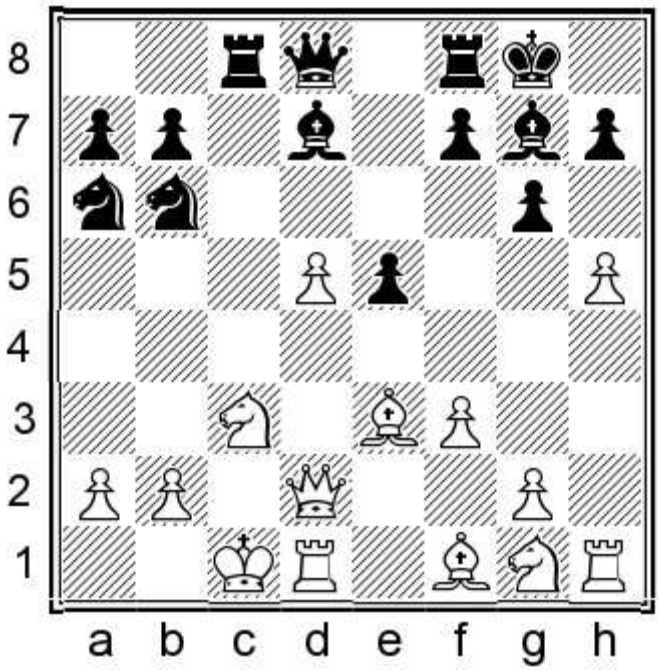


Position after: 10.0-0-0?

Surprisingly, long castling is a huge mistake for White. Black's attack on the king is going to be much faster than White's.

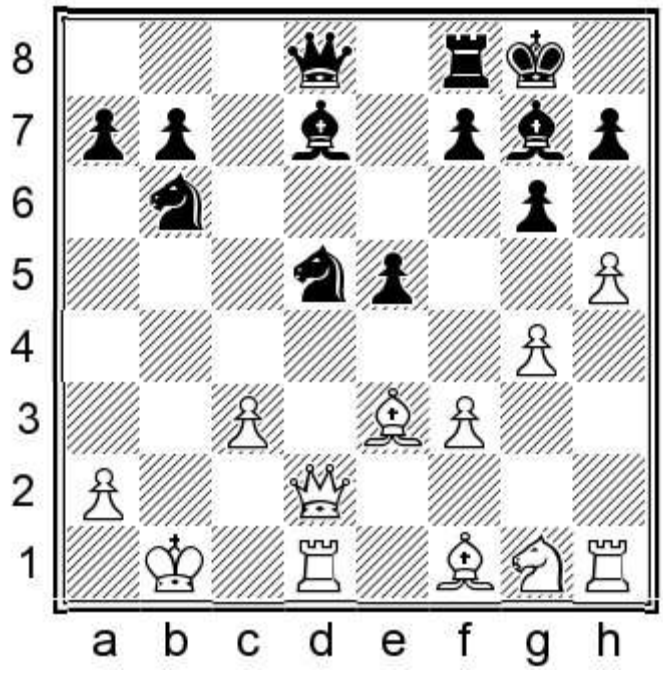
10...cxd5 11.exd5 ♘a6 12.h4 ♗d7 13.♔b1

13.h5 ♖c8



Position after: 13...♖c8

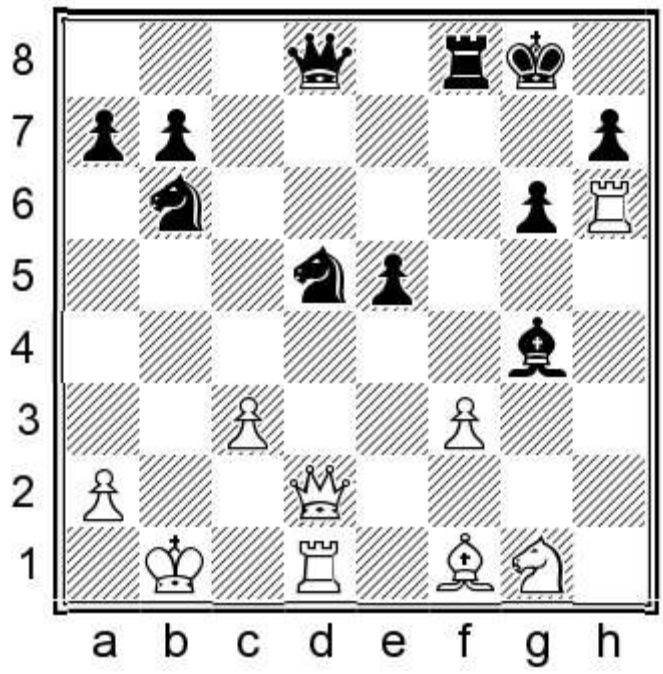
14.♔b1 [14.hxg6 ♘b4! Emphasizes how far behind White is in attacking the black king. This is the major flaw of 10.0-0-0. We don't even need to recapture White's g6-pawn! 15.♖xh7 ♗f5 16.♖e1 ♘6xd5–+] 14...♘b4 15.g4 ♖xc3! 16.bxc3 ♘4xd5



Position after: 16...♘4xd5

A) 17.♗h6 ♗xh6 18.♕xh6 ♘xc3+ 19.♔a1 [19.♔c2 ♗a4+ 20.♔xc3 ♕xd1–+] 19...g5 20.♖d2 [20.♗d3 e4 21.♗xe4 ♘xe4 22.fxe4 f6 23.♘f3 ♕c7 24.♖c1 ♕f4 25.♖hf1 ♗b5–+] 20...f6–+

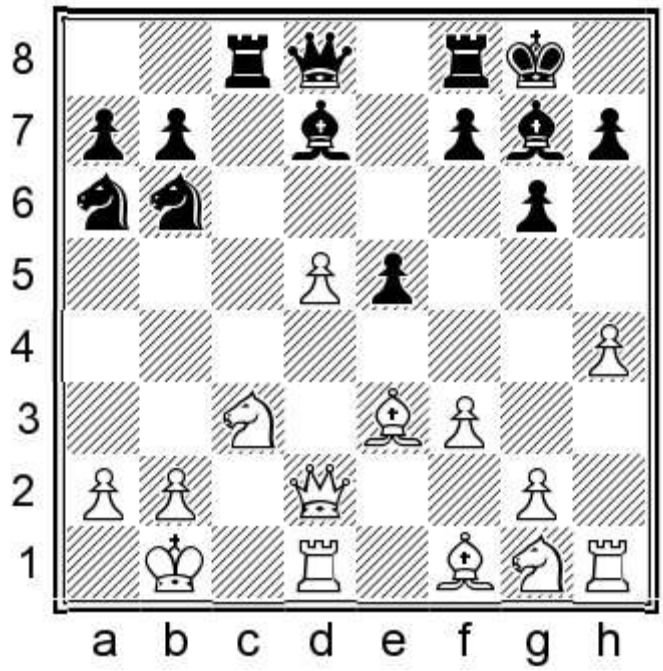
B) 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.♗h6 ♗xh6 19.♖xh6 ♗xg4!



Position after: 19...♗xg4!

Fully justifies 15...♖xc3! More tactical fireworks are coming. 20.fxg4 [20.♔a1 ♕f6! 21.fxg4 ♕xf1! 22.♖h1 ♕c4 23.♖c1 ♖f1 24.♘h3 ♖xh1 25.♖xh1 ♕xg4–+] 20...♘xc3+ 21.♔c2 ♘xd1–+

13...♖c8

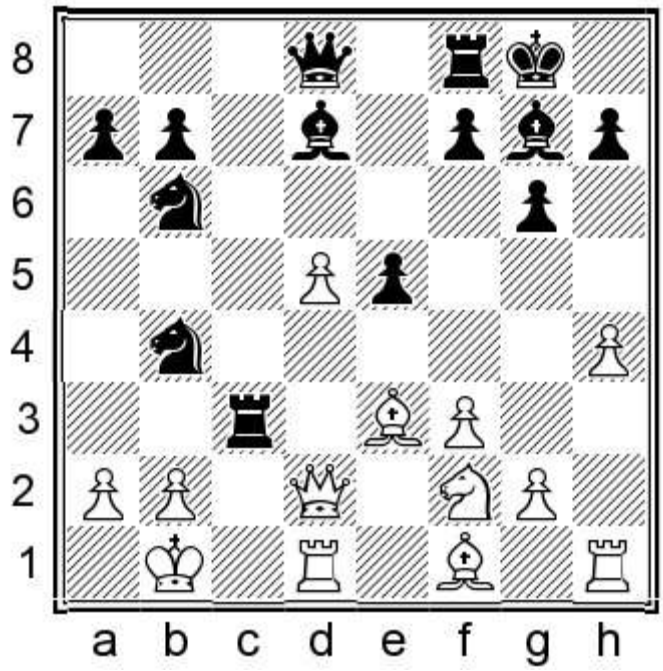


Position after: 13...♖c8

14.♗g5

A) 14.h5 ♗f5+ 15.♘e4 [15.♗d3 ♘c4 16.♕e2 ♘xb2 0-1 (16) Khmelniker, I (2494) – Avrukh, B (2576) Beersheba 2013] 15...♘c5∓

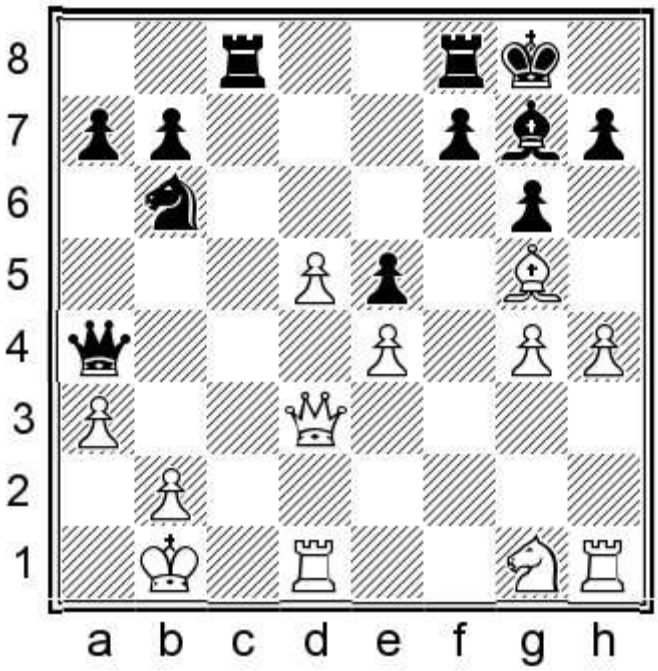
B) 14.♘h3 ♘b4 15.♘f2 ♖xc3!



Position after: 15...♖xc3!

A typical move in the 3.f3 d5 line: it destroys the white king's position and wins the d5-pawn. 16.bxc3 [16.♕xc3 ♘6xd5 17.♕d2 ♘xe3 18.♕xe3 ♗f5+ 19.♗d3 ♕d5 20.b3 ♕a5–+] 16...♘4xd5 17.♘e4 ♗a4 18.♗c5 ♖e8 19.♖c1 f5 20.♘d6 ♖e6 21.c4 e4 22.cxd5 ♖xd6 23.♗xd6 ♕f6 24.♖c3 ♕xd6–+

14...♕e8 15.♘e4 ♗f5 16.g4 ♗xe4+ 17.fxe4 ♕a4 18.♗d3 ♘b4 19.a3 ♘xd3 20.♕xd3

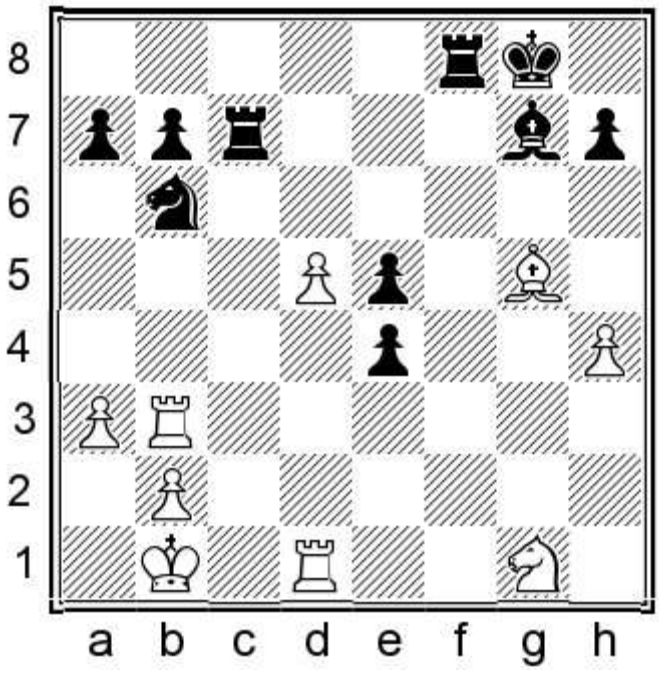


Position after: 20.♕xd3

20...f5!

Opens the file for our f8-rook and wins the e4 pawn. White can't take on f5 twice since it will bring our dark-squared bishop into a deadly attack after ...e5-e4.

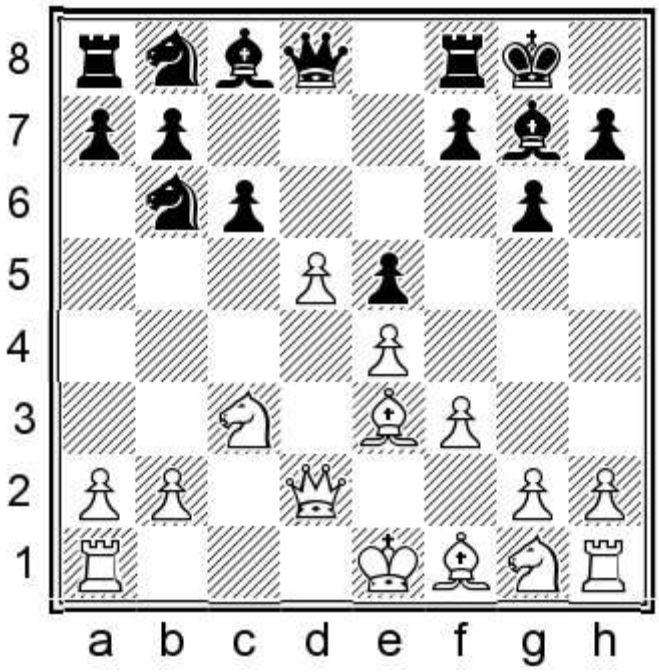
21.gxf5 gxf5 22.♖h3 fxe4 23.♕b3 ♕xb3 24.♖xb3 ♖c7∓



Position after: 24...♖c7∓

b) 16.♔a1, 16.♘h3

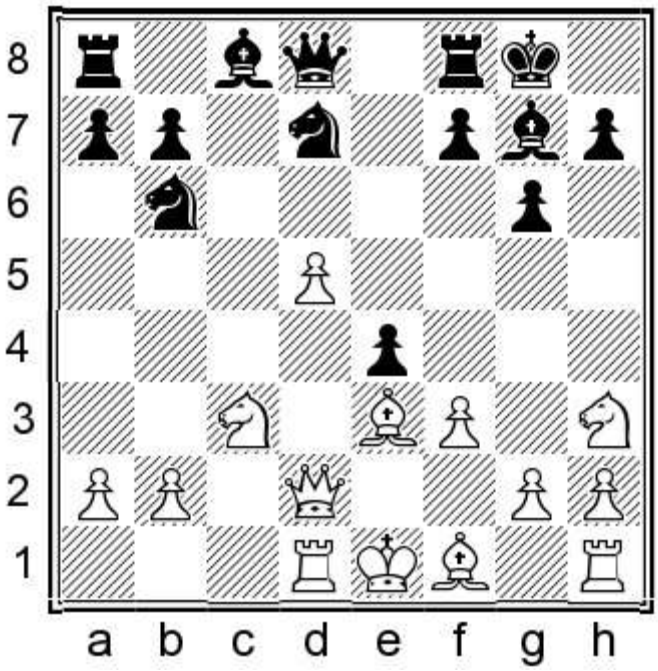
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 e5 9.d5 c6



Position after: 9...c6

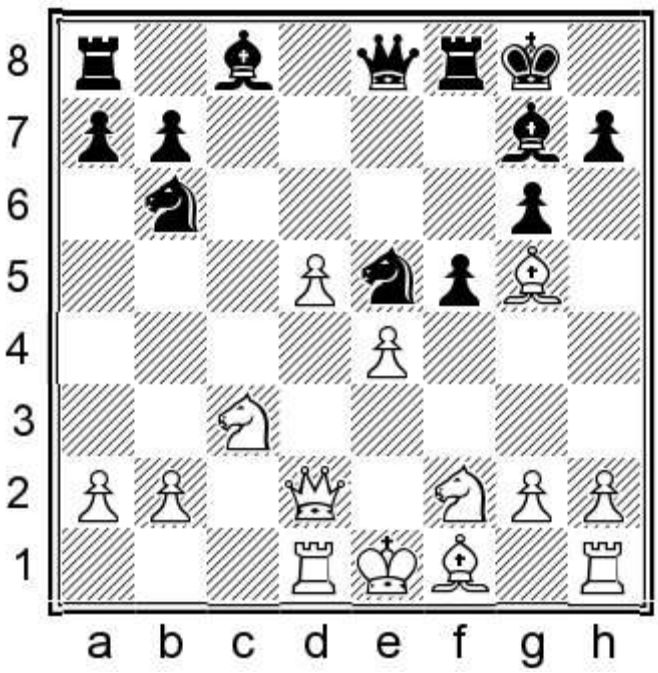
10.h4

White can also choose a fundamentally different approach and try to short castle. 10.♖d1 White's plan is to develop the kingside, castle and then squeeze Black with d5-d6. 10...cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.♘h3 e4!



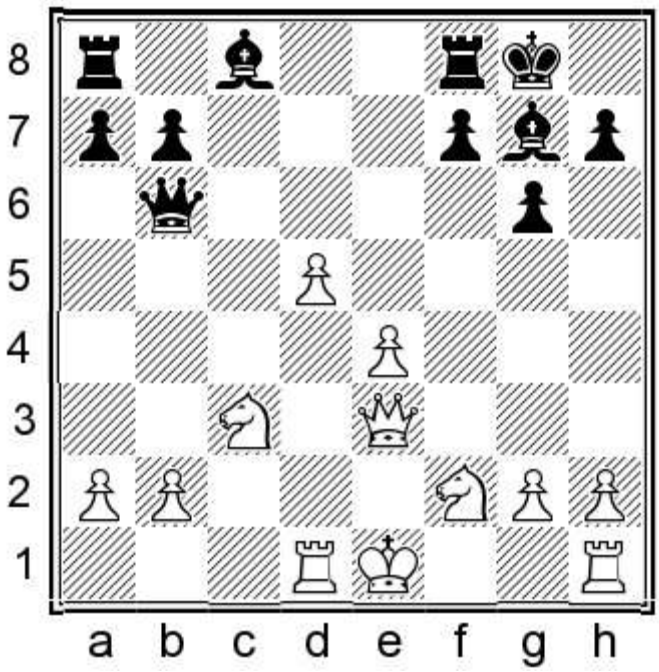
Position after: 12...e4!

This sacrifice activates our g7-bishop and allows the d7-knight to gain a convenient outpost on e5. 13.fxe4 ♘e5 14.♘f2 ♘bc4! [Other options are significantly worse. For example, White gets a dangerous initiative in case of 14...f5 15.♗g5 ♕e8



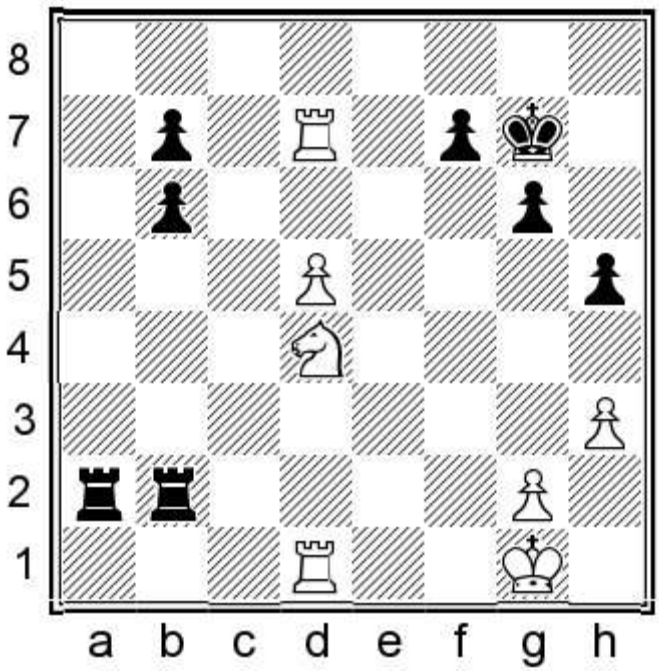
Position after: 15...♕e8

16.d6! fxe4 17.♗b5 ♕e6 18.0-0 ♘bc4 19.♕c1 ♘xd6 20.♗a4 ♔h8 21.♗b3 ♘dc4 22.♘cxe4↑] 15.♗xc4 ♘xc4 16.♕e2 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♕b6!



Position after: 17...♕b6!

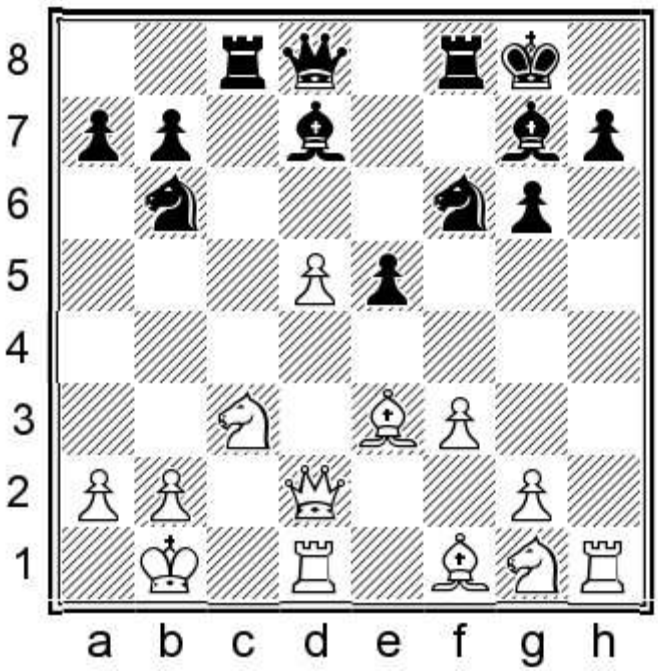
A queen trade usually is great when we have the bishop pair. 18.♕xb6 axb6 19.0-0 ♗d7 20.h3 h5! Stops White from improving the f2-knight after ♘f2-g4-f6. 21.♘d3 ♖fe8 22.♘b4 ♗e5 23.♖f3 ♔g7 24.♘c2 ♗xc3 25.♖xc3 ♖xe4! [25...♖xa2? 26.♖c7 ♗a4 27.♖f1!± 1-0 (75) Bologan, V (2672) – Cheparinov, I (2678) Poikovsky 2013] 26.♖c7 ♖e2! We are going to collect the a2 and b2 pawns and give up the bishop. 27.♘d4 ♖xb2 28.♖xd7 ♖axa2



Position after: 28...♖axa2

White can’t avoid a perpetual check on the second rank. 29.d6 ♖xg2+ 30.♔f1 ♖h2 31.♔g1 ♖ag2+ 32.♔f1 ♖a2=

10...cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.h5 ♘f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.0-0-0 ♗d7 15.♔b1 ♖c8

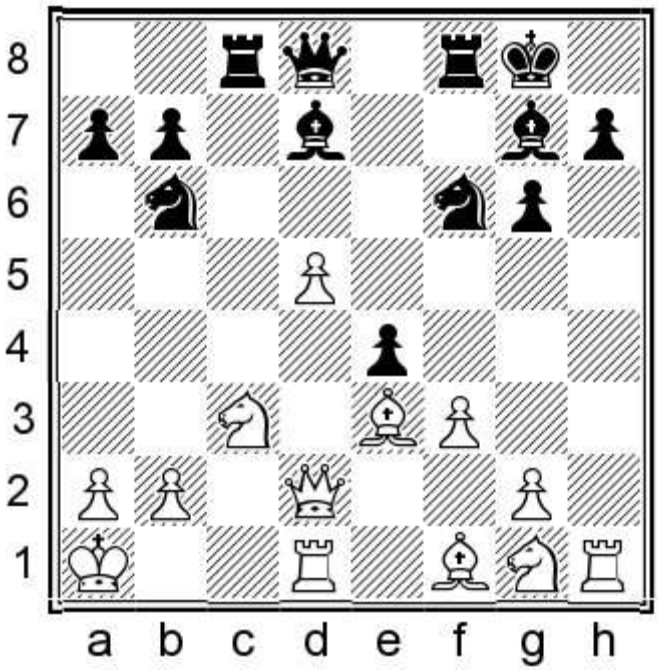


Position after: 15...♖c8

The first critical position. White has an option to push d6 right away (next subchapter) or to improve the king and the g1-knight first.

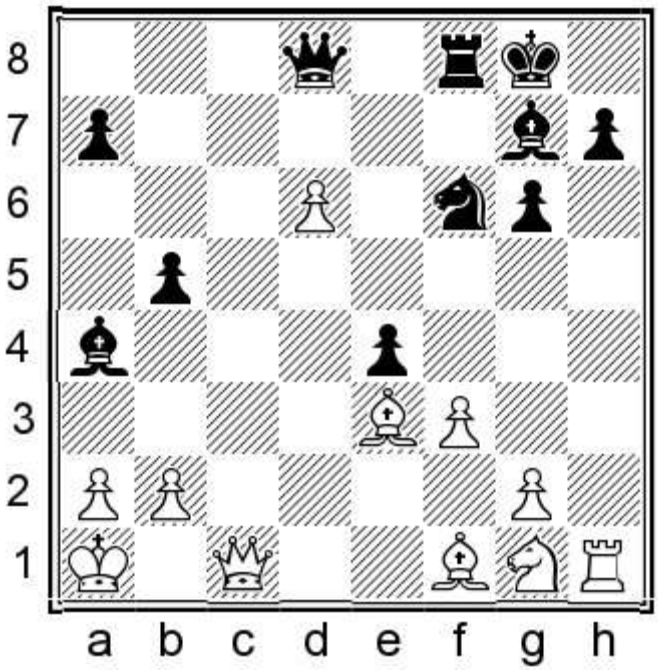
16.♘h3

16.♔a1 e4



Position after: 16...e4

A) 17.d6 ♘a4 18.♘xa4 ♗xa4 19.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 20.♕xc1 b5! The bishop on a4 can't be happy about this arrangement but it's more important for us to stop ♗c4 and ♕c4.



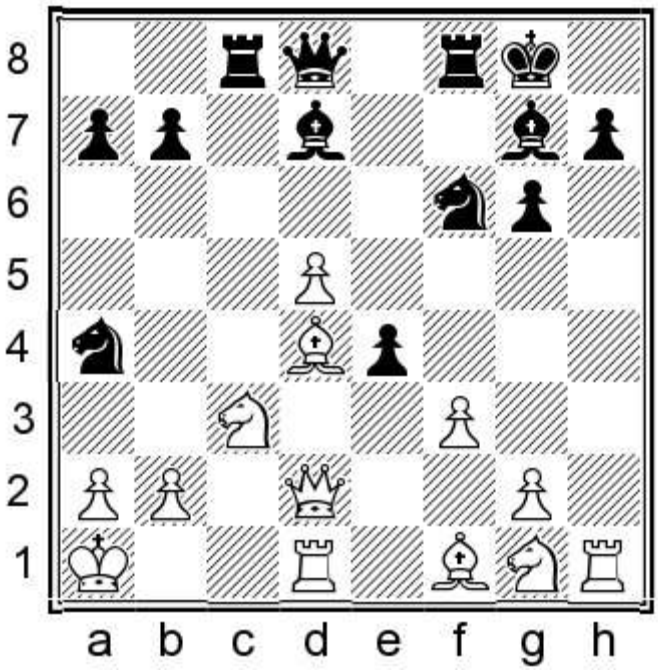
Position after: 20...b5!

The next few moves are more or less forced and lead to a draw. As usual, keep in mind that if your opponent deviates from the lines provided in this book, your position should be better. 21.♘e2 ♖e8 22.♗c5 ♕a5 23.♔b1 exf3 24.gxf3 ♘d7 25.♗d4 ♖xe2 26.♗xe2 ♗xd4 27.♕c8+ ♘f8 28.♗c4+ bxc4

29.♕xc4+ ♔h8 30.♕xd4+ ♔g8 31.♕c4+ ♔h8 32.♕d4+ ♔g8= One more perpetual check to the collection of perpetual checks in chapter 13!

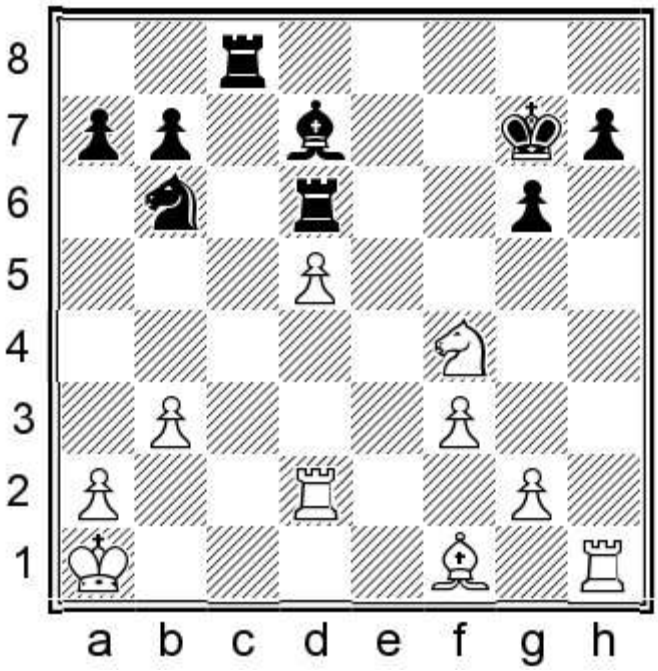
B) 17.♘xe4? loses instantly: 17...♘xe4 18.fxe4 ♖xf1! 19.♖xf1 ♘c4 20.♕e2 ♗xb2+ 21.♔b1 ♗e5–+

C) 17.♗d4 ♘a4



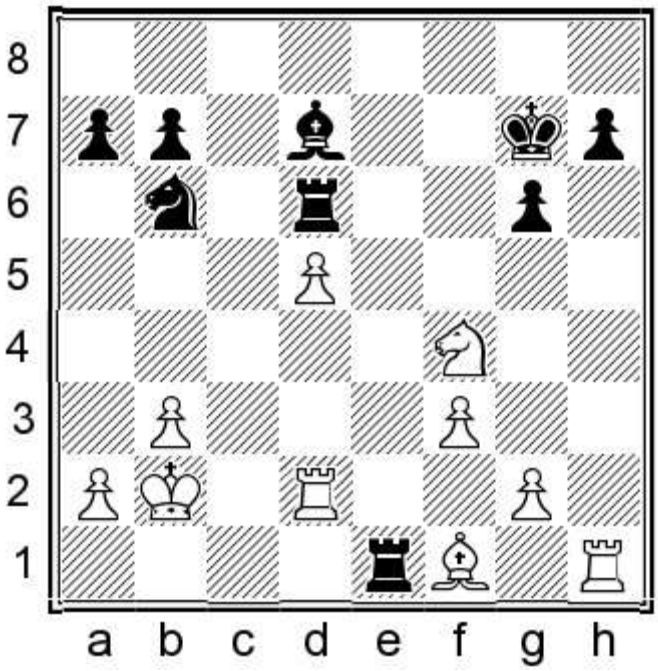
Position after: 17...♘a4

C1) 18.♘ge2 ♕a5 19.♘xe4 ♕xd2 20.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 21.♖xd2 ♖d6 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.b3 ♘b6 24.♘f4



Position after: 24.♘f4

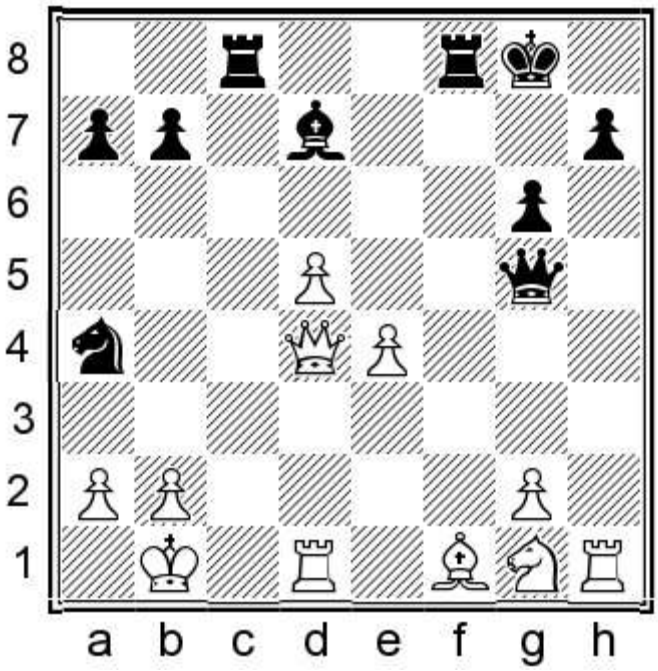
24...♖c1+! A huge improvement to the 2013 game played between two Russian Grandmasters. [24...♗e8? 25.♗d3 ♗f7 26.♗e4 ♘d7? 27.g4+– 1-0 (60) Vitiugov, N (2712) – Timofeev, A (2616) Loo 2013] 25.♔b2 ♖e1



Position after: 25...♖e1

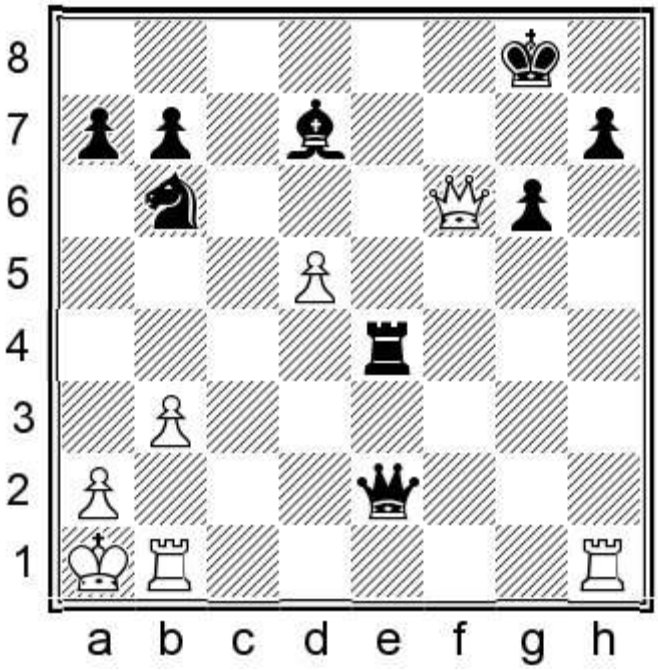
Black's activity keeps White from saving the d5-pawn. 26.g4 ♗b5 27.♗g2 ♖xh1 28.♗xh1 ♔f6 29.♗g2 ♗c6 30.♗f1 ♗xd5=

C2) 18.♘xe4 ♘xe4 19.fxe4 ♗xd4 20.♕xd4 ♕g5 21.♔b1



Position after: 21.♔b1

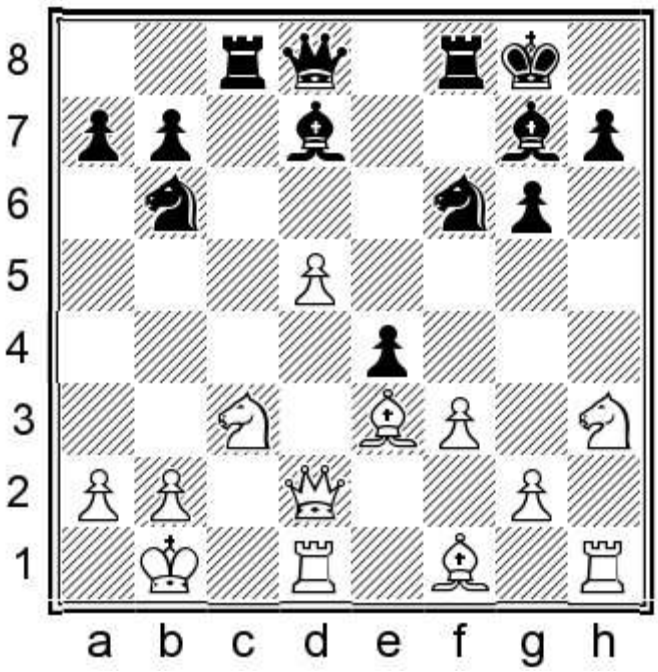
21...♖xf1! 22.♖xf1 ♕xg2 23.♘e2 ♕xe2 24.♔a1 ♖c3! 25.♖b1 ♖e3 26.♕f6 ♖xe4 27.b3 ♘b6



Position after: 27...♘b6

I would assume that Black is winning here due to his material advantage and activity. Well, I think you guessed correctly where all of this is going. White has a perpetual check. 28.♖bf1 ♗f5 29.♖xf5 gxf5 30.♕g5+ ♔f8 31.♕d8+ ♔g7 32.♕g5+ ♔f8=

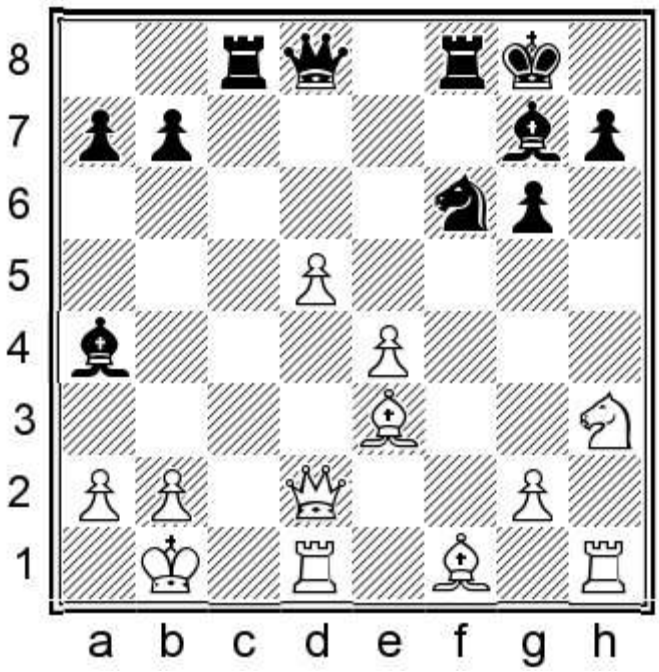
16...e4



Position after: 16...e4

17.d6

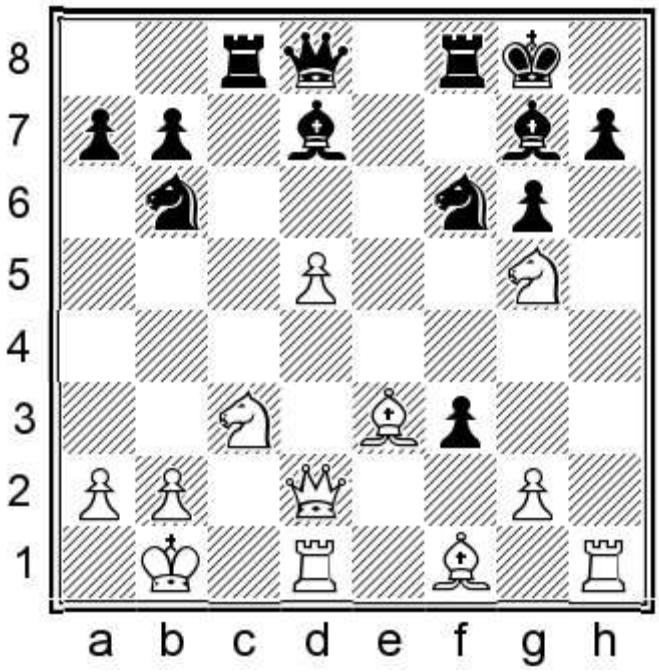
A) 17.fxe4 ♘a4 18.♘xa4 ♗xa4



Position after: 18...♗xa4

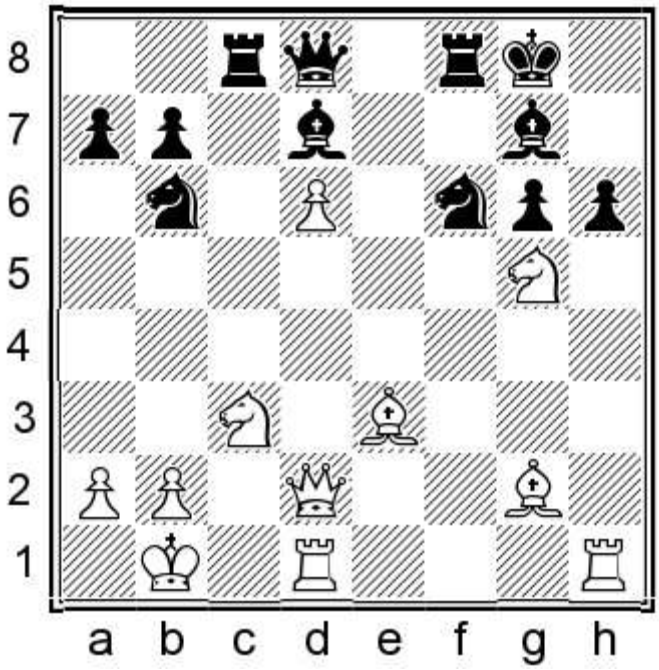
19.♗d3 [19.♘g5 ♖c2 20.♕d4 ♘g4 21.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 22.♘e6+ ♔g8 23.♘xd8 ♘xe3 24.♖e1 ♘xg2 25.♗xg2 ♖xg2 26.♘e6 ♖ff2 27.♖hf1 ♖xb2+ 28.♔a1 ♖xa2+ 29.♔b1 ♖gb2+ 30.♔c1 ♖f2∓] 19...♗xd1 20.♕xd1 ♕d6 21.♘g5 h5 22.♗d4 [22.♘e6 ♘g4–+] 22...♗h6 23.♘e6 ♖c1+ 24.♕xc1 ♗xc1 25.♖xc1 ♕g3∓ One of the rare cases where we are technically up in material. Somehow, it's only slightly better for Black.

B) 17.♘g5 exf3



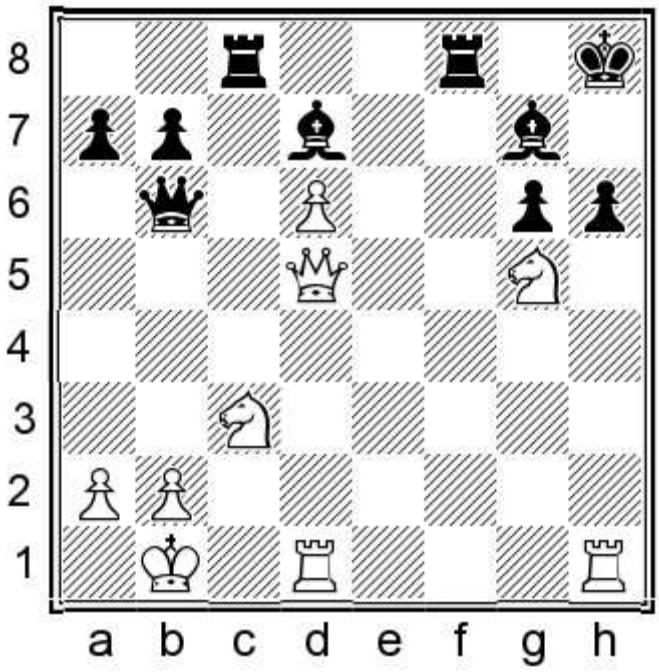
Position after: 17...exf3

B1) White can also sacrifice a pawn after 18.d6 fxg2 19.♗xg2 h6



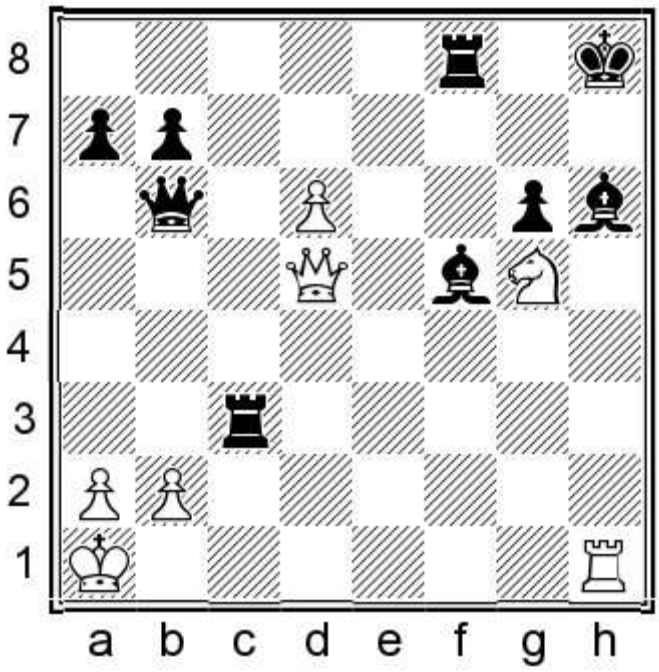
Position after: 19...h6

20.♗xb6 While Black's position looks somewhat worrisome, we maintain equal chances in all variations. [20.♘ge4 ♘c4 21.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22.♗d5+ ♖f7 23.♗xc4 ♖xc4 24.♗xh6 ♖d4 25.♗xg7 ♖xd2 26.♗xf6 ♖xd1+ 27.♖xd1 ♖xf6 28.♘e4 ♖f8=; 20.♘d5 ♘c4 21.♕d4 ♘xd6∓] 20...♕xb6 21.♗d5+ ♘xd5 22.♕xd5+ ♔h8



Position after: 22...♔h8

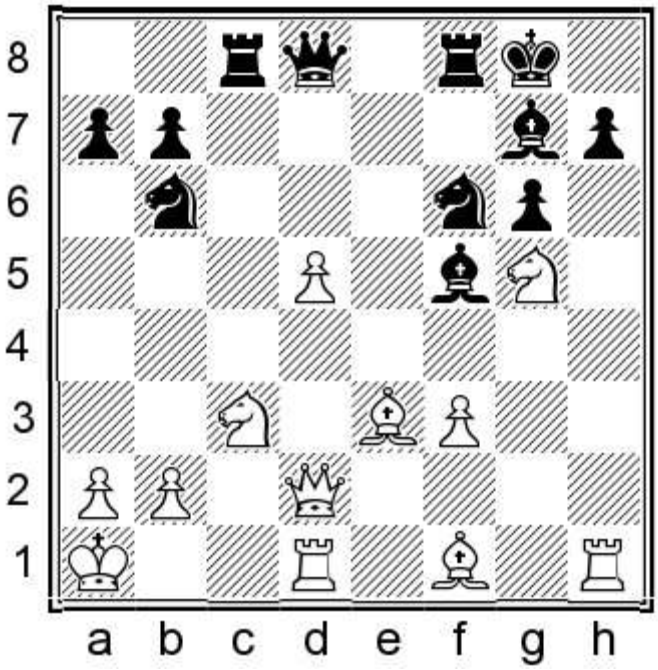
23.♖xh6+ Looks like checkmate is coming but this sacrifice leads to a draw. 23...♗xh6 24.♖h1 ♗f5+ 25.♔a1 ♖xc3!



Position after: 25...♖xc3!

Before White gets too proud, we show that we can sacrifice rooks as well. Other moves were not as good for us. 26.♕e5+ ♔g8 27.bxc3 a6 28.♕d5+ [28.d7 ♕b5 29.♕xb5 axb5 30.♖xh6 ♖d8–+] 28...♔g7 29.♕e5+ ♔g8 30.♕d5+=

B2) 18.gxf3 ♗f5+ 19.♔a1

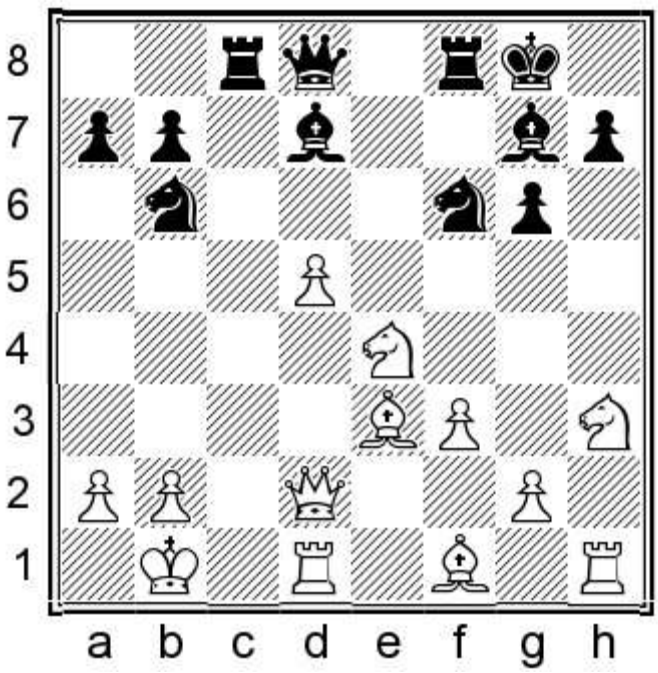


Position after: 19.♔a1

19...♘fxd5! 20.♘xd5 ♖c2! 21.♕b4 ♗xb2+ 22.♕xb2 ♖xb2 23.♔xb2 ♘xd5 24.♗c4 ♕f6+ 25.♗d4 [25.♖d4 ♗e6–+] 25...♕xg5 26.♗xd5+ ♖f7 27.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 28.♖xh7+ ♔e6 29.♖xb7 ♕g2+ 30.♔a1 ♕xf3 31.♖e1+ ♔d5=

C) 17.♘f4 exf3 18.gxf3 ♘c4N 19.♗xc4 ♖xc4 20.♔a1 ♕c7=

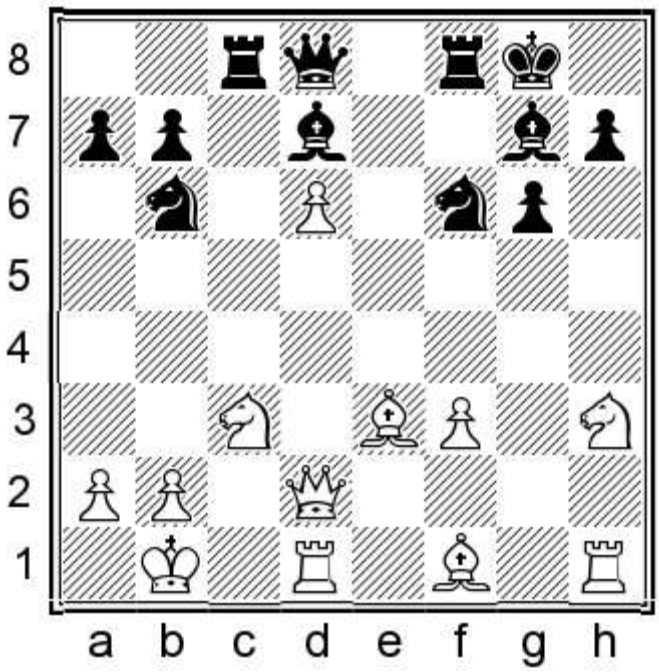
D) 17.♘xe4?



Position after: 17.♘xe4?

17...♘xe4! [17...♗f5? ½-½ (39) Carow, J (2407) – Antal, G (2524) Vienna 2015] 18.fxe4 ♗a4 19.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 20.♕xc1 ♕e7 21.♗d3 ♖c8 22.♕d2 ♘c4 23.♗xc4 ♖xc4 24.♘f2 ♖c2–+

17...exf3 18.gxf3

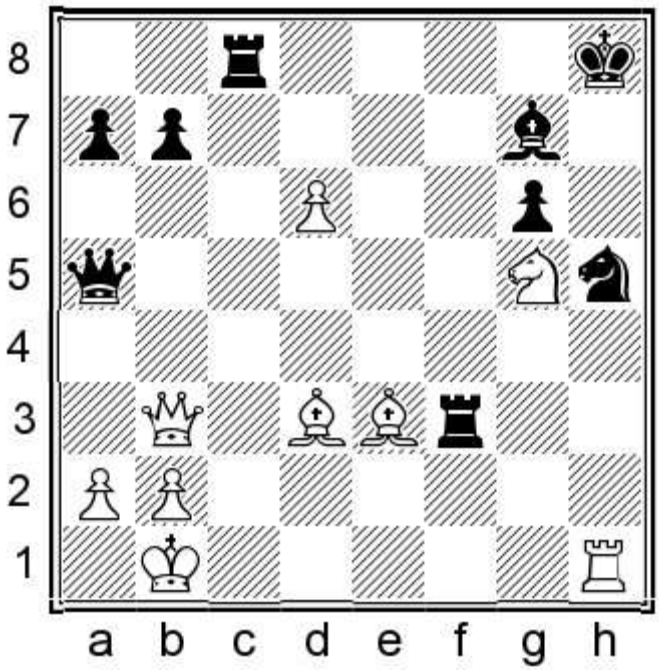


Position after: 18.gxf3

18...♘c4!N

The intent of this move is to get rid of the f1-bishop which causes Black too many problems in the other lines.

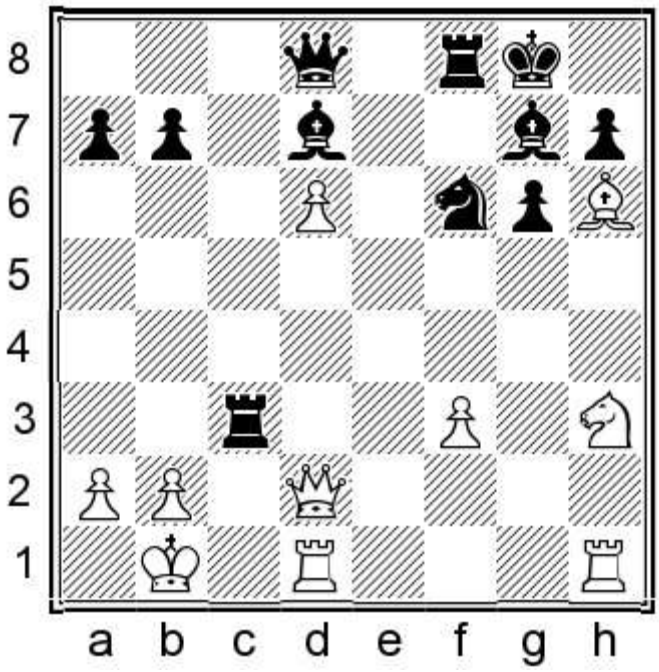
18...♘a4? 19.♘xa4 ♗xa4 20.♘g5!? ♗xd1 21.♕xd1 ♕a5 22.♕b3+ ♔h8 23.♗d3 ♘h5 24.♘xh7 ♖xf3 25.♘g5



Position after: 25.♘g5

25...♖f5 [25...♖xe3 White announces a checkmate in 5 moves: 26.♖xh5+ gxh5 27.♘f7+ ♔g8 28.♘h6+ ♔h8 29.♕g8+ ♖xg8 30.♘f7#] 26.♕e6 ♕d5 27.♖xh5+ gxh5 28.♘f7+ ♔g8 29.♕xc8+ ♔xf7 30.♕xf5+ 1-0 (30) Adhiban, B (2663) – Mikhalevski, V (2516) Stockholm 2016.

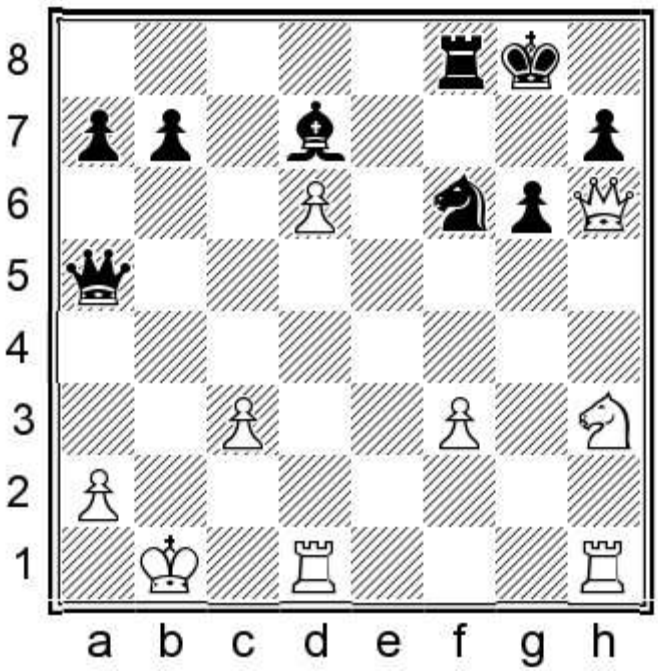
19.♗xc4+ ♖xc4 20.♗h6 ♖xc3!



Position after: 20...♖xc3!

The sole purpose of the rook in the 3.f3 d5 system is to sacrifice itself for the knight on c3. Black starts an attack on the white king and secures sufficient counter play against White's attack on our king.

21.bxc3 ♗xh6 22.♕xh6 ♕a5

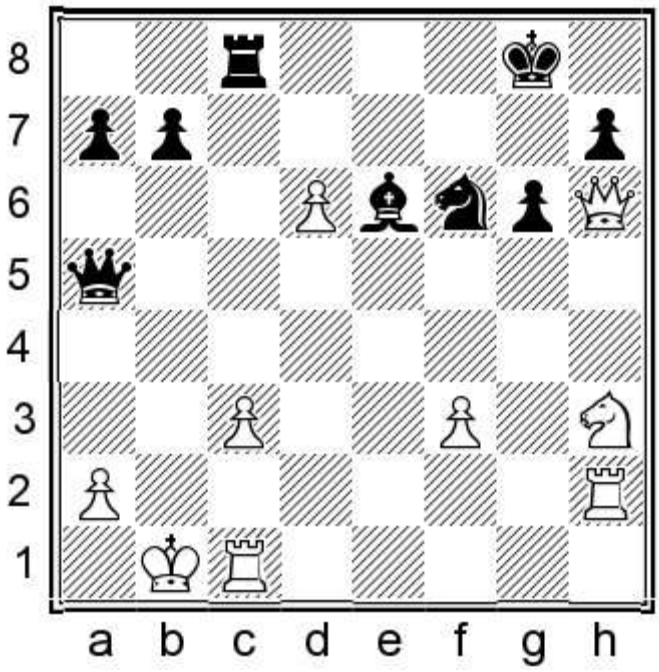


Position after: 22...♕a5

23.♖c1

23.♘g5 ♕xc3 24.♘e4 ♗f5 25.♕f4 ♗xe4+ 26.fxe4 ♕b4+ 27.♔a1 [27.♔c2 ♖c8+ 28.♔d3 ♘d5 29.♕f3 ♖c3+ 30.♔e2 ♕b5+ 31.♖d3 ♖xd3 32.♕xd3 ♘f4+–+] 27...♕c3+ 28.♔b1 ♕b4+=

23...♗e6 24.♖h2 ♖c8



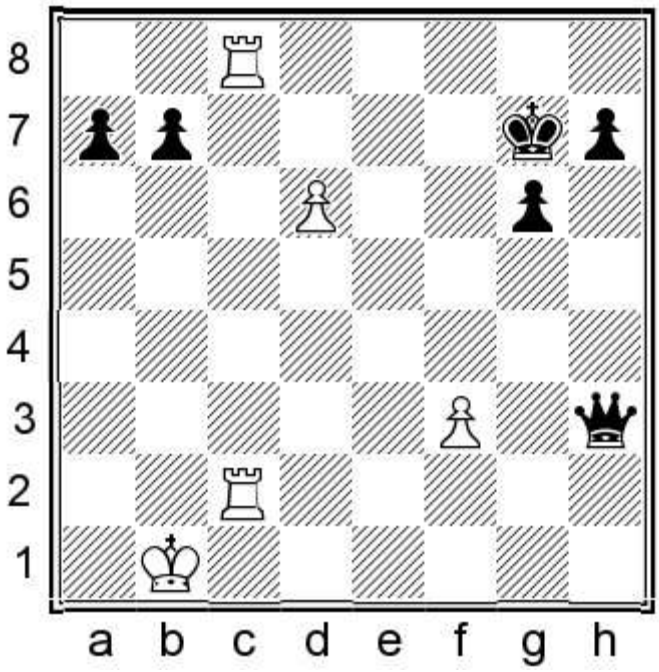
Position after: 24...♖c8

25.♕f4

A) 25.♘g5 ♗f5+ 26.♔a1 ♖xc3 27.♖e1 [27.♘e4 ♗xe4 28.fxe4 ♕c5 29.♖xc3 ♕xc3+ 30.♖b2 ♕e1+ 31.♖b1 ♕c3+ 32.♖b2 ♕e1+=] 27...♖c8 28.♕h4 ♕c3+ 29.♖b2 ♕c1+ 30.♖b1 ♕c3+ 31.♖b2 ♕c1+=

B) 25.♕g5 ♗f5+ 26.♔b2 ♕b5+ 27.♔a1 ♖xc3 28.♖b2 ♕e5 29.♘f2 ♖xc1+ 30.♕xc1 ♘e8∞

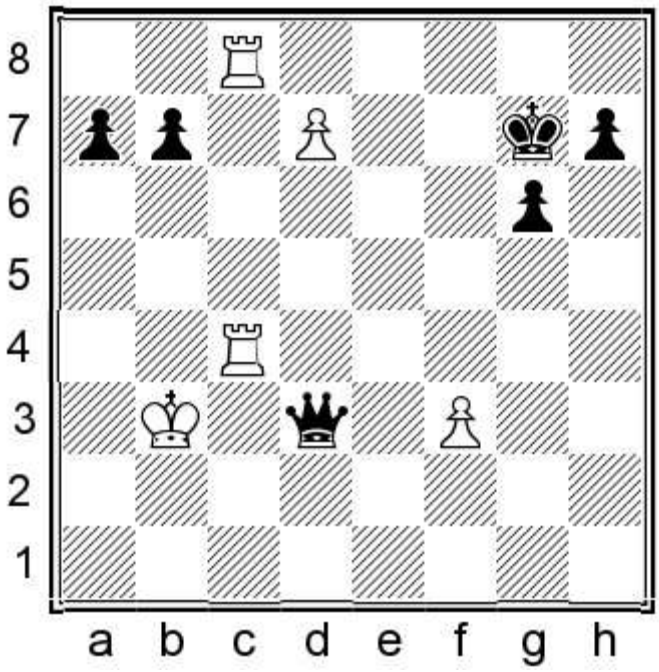
25...♘d5 26.♕d2 ♘xc3+ 27.♔a1 ♗xa2 28.♕xa2+ ♘xa2 29.♖xc8+ ♔g7 30.♖xa2 ♕e5+ 31.♔b1 ♕f5+ 32.♖ac2 ♕xh3



Position after: 32...♕xh3

I do not expect the readers to memorize everything until this moment. I have provided this extensive analysis to prove the playability of Black's position.

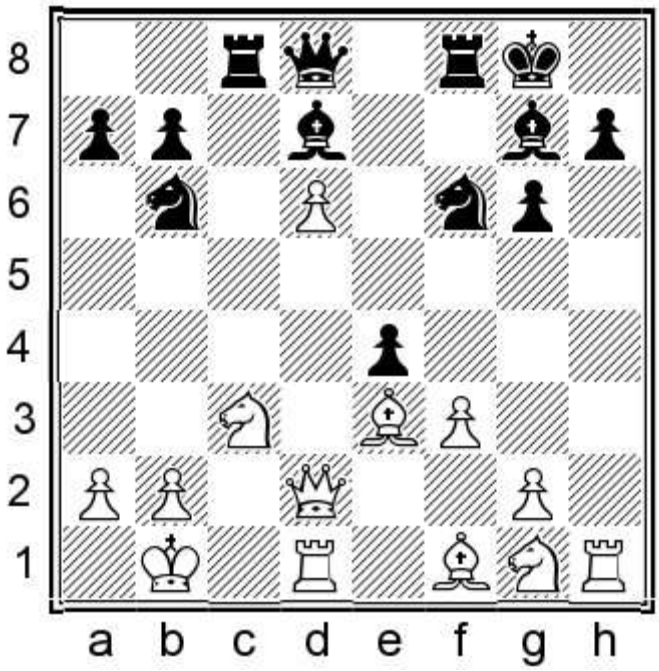
33.d7 ♕f1+ 34.♔b2 ♕b5+ 35.♔c1 ♕f1+ 36.♔d2 ♕f2+ 37.♔c3 ♕e3+ 38.♔b2 ♕d4+ 39.♔b3 ♕d5+ 40.♖2c4 ♕d3+=



Position after: 40...♕d3+=

c) 16.d6

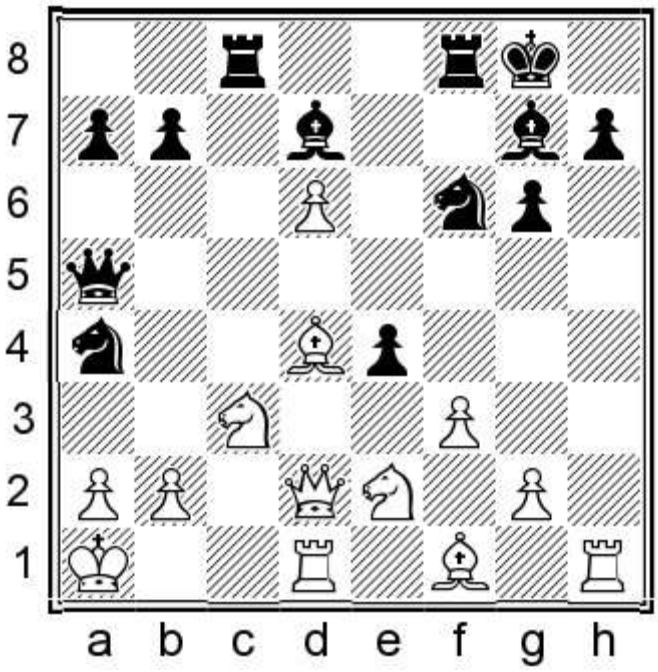
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 e5 9.d5 c6 10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.h5 ♘f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.0-0-0 ♗d7 15.♔b1 ♖c8 16.d6 e4!



Position after: 16...e4!

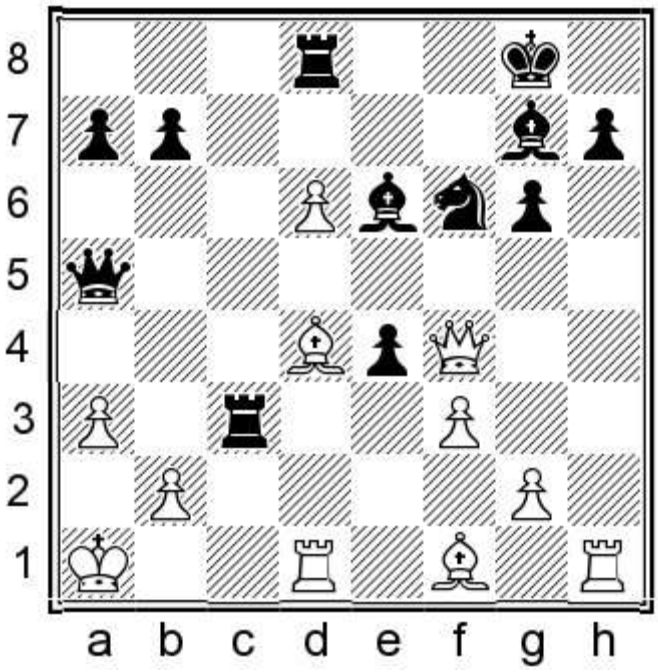
17.fxe4

A) 17.♔a1 ♘a4 18.♘ge2 [18.♘xa4 ♗xa4 19.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 20.♕xc1 b5 21.♘e2 transposes to the 16.♔a1 e4 17.d6 line, examined earlier.] 18...♕a5 19.♗d4



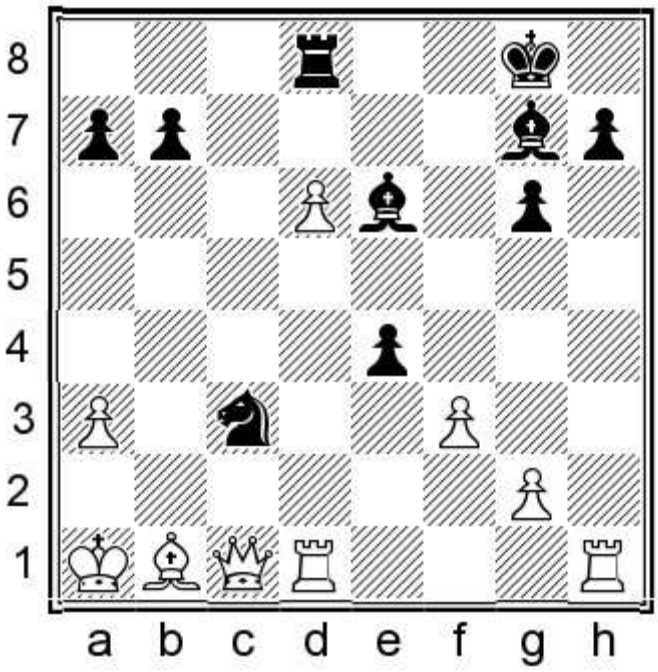
Position after: 19.♗d4

19...♘xc3!N [19...♘c5? 20.♘c1! ♗e6 21.♘d5+– 1-0 (43) Baron, T (2532) – Aharon, O (2320) Maalot Tarshiha 2018] 20.♘xc3 ♗e6! 21.a3 ♖fd8 22.♕f4 ♖xc3!



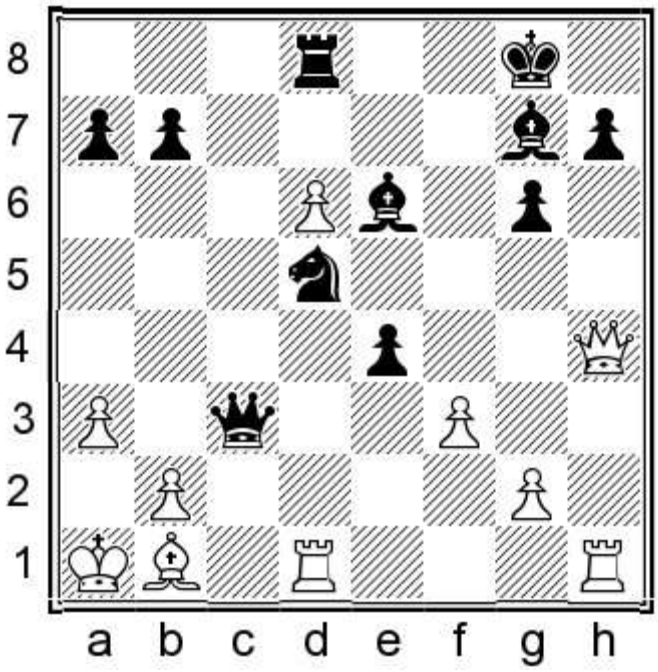
Position after: 22...♖xc3!

This sacrifice secures our queen's access to a4 and then b3. 23.♗xc3 ♕a4 24.♗d3 ♕b3 25.♗b1 ♘d5 [25...♕xc3!? 26.bxc3 ♘d5 27.♕c1 ♘xc3



Position after: 27...♘xc3

28.♔b2 ♘e2+ 29.♔c2 ♘xc1 30.♔xc1 exf3 31.gxf3 ♗f8 32.♗e4 ♖xd6 33.♖xd6 ♗xd6 34.♗xb7 ♗xa3+ 35.♔c2=] 26.♕h4 ♕xc3! Forces White to resort to a perpetual check.

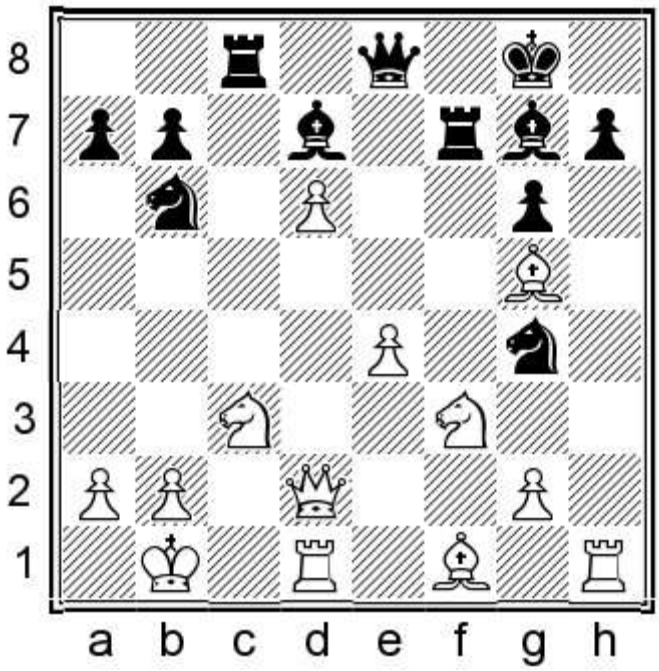


Position after: 26...♕xc3!

27.♕xd8+ ♔f7 28.♕d7+! ♔f8 29.♕d8+ ♔f7 30.♕d7+ ♔f8=

B) 17.♗h6 ♘a4 18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.♕xd5+ ♔h8 20.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 21.fxe4 ♕b6 22.♕e5+ ♔g8 23.♕d5+ ♔g7 24.♕e5+ ♔g8 25.♕d5+ ½-½ Ding, L (2749) – Gelfand, B (2751) Wenzhou 2015.

17...♘g4 18.♗g5 ♕e8 19.♘f3 ♖f7

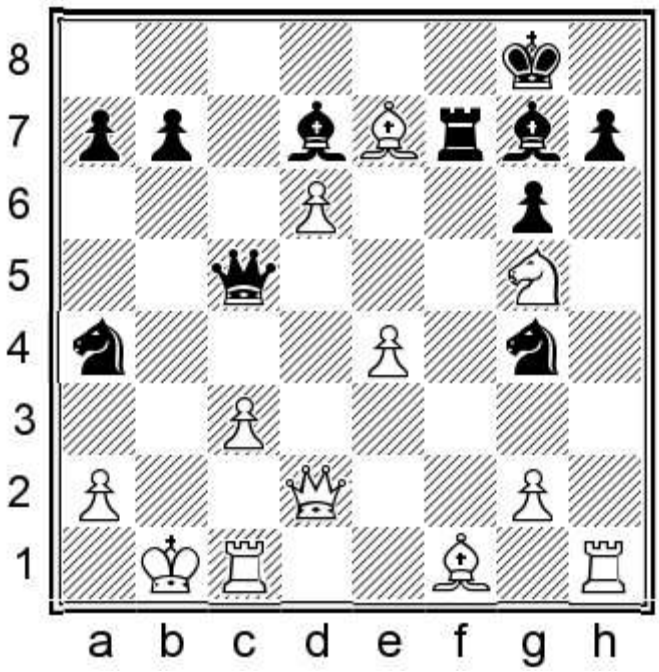


Position after: 19...♖f7

We have reached the second critical position. Besides the main line with 20.♕e1, I suggest focusing on 20.♗e7. Make sure you memorize the next few moves to stay out of trouble.

20.♕e1

A) 20.♗e7 ♖xc3! 21.bxc3 ♕c8 22.♖c1 ♘a4 23.♘g5 ♕c5!

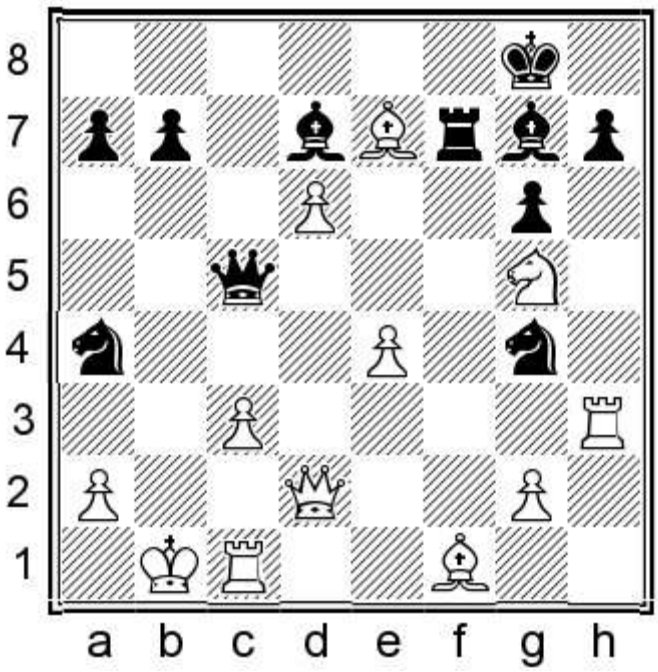


Position after: 23...♕c5!

The key move, leading to a forced draw or an equal endgame. Titled players should memorize the lines at least until 23...♕c5.

A1) 24.♘xf7 leads to a forced draw. 24...♘xc3+ 25.♖xc3 ♗xc3 26.♘h6+ ♔g7 27.♕d5 ♕b4+ 28.♕b3 ♕xe4+ 29.♕c2 ♕e1+ 30.♕c1 ♕e4+= Grischuk, A (2779) – Dominguez, L (2723) Thessaloniki FIDE Grand Prix 2013.

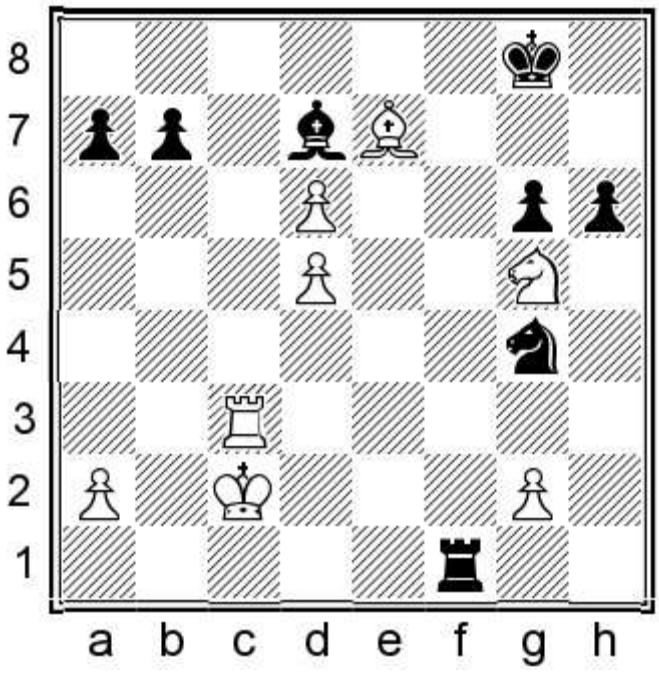
A2) 24.♖h3



Position after: 24.♖h3

24...♖xf1! Leads to a highly entertaining yet forced draw. Both Iranian players have played impeccably showcasing the greatness of their home preparation. 25.♖xf1 ♕b5+ 26.♔c2 ♕b2+ 27.♔d1 ♕a1+ 28.♔c2 ♕xa2+ 29.♔c1 ♕a1+ 30.♔c2 ♕b2+ 31.♔d1 ♕b1+ 32.♔e2 ♗b5+ 33.♔f3 ♕xf1+ 34.♔xg4 ♗d7+ 35.♔h4 ♗xc3 36.♕d5+ ♔g7 37.♗f6+ ♕xf6 38.♖f3 ♗c6 39.♕d1 ♘b2 40.♕b3 ♗e1+ 41.♔h3 ♕xg5 42.♖f7+ ♔h6 43.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 44.♕f7+ ♔h6 45.♕f8+ ♔h7 ½-½ (45) Tabatabaei, M (2507) – Maghsoodloo, P (2575) Moscow 2017.

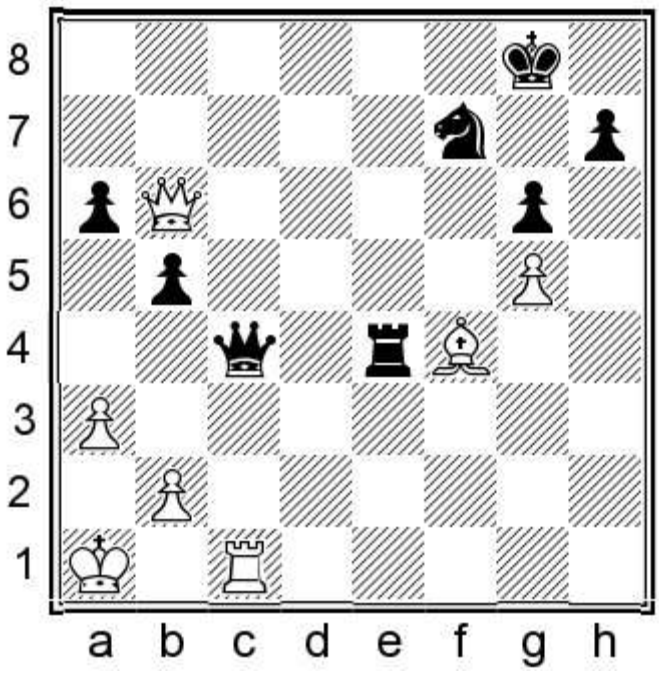
A3) 24.♕d5 ♕xd5 25.exd5 ♖f2 26.♖h3 ♘xc3+ 27.♖cxc3 ♖xf1+ 28.♔c2 ♗xc3 29.♖xc3 h6!



Position after: 29...h6!

We have reached an equal endgame where our main job is to get rid of the knight on g5 and attack the d-pawns. 30.♘f3 ♗f5+ 31.♔b3 ♖b1+ 32.♔a3 [32.♔a4 ♖d1 33.♘h4 ♗d7+ 34.♔a3 ♘e5 35.♗f6 ♘g4 36.♗e7 ♘e5=] 32...♖d1 33.♖c7 ♖xd5 34.♖xb7 g5 35.♖xa7 ♘e3 36.♔b4 ♘xg2=

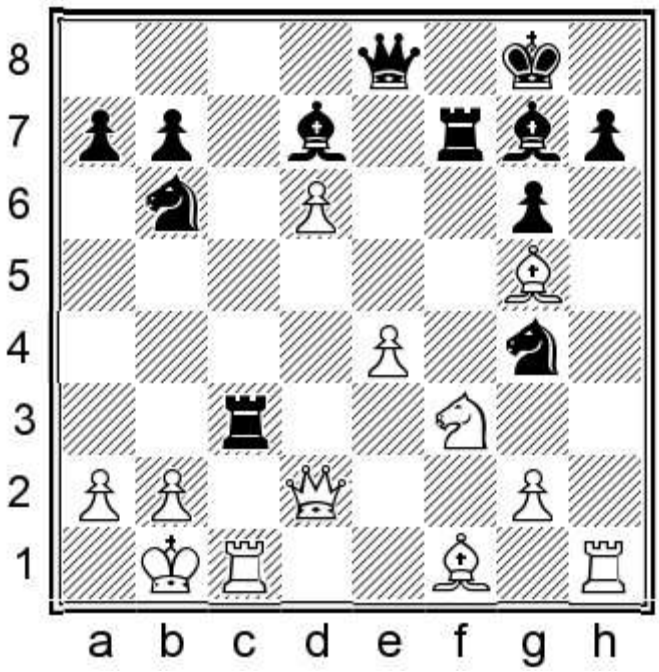
B) 20.♖e1 ♘e5 21.♗h6 ♘bc4 22.♗xc4 ♘xc4 23.♕c1 ♗e5 24.♘xe5 ♕xe5 25.♖hf1 ♘xd6 26.♖xf7 ♘xf7 27.♗f4 ♕e6 28.♕e3 a6 29.g4 ♗c6 30.g5 ♖e8 31.♔a1 b5 32.♕b6 ♕c4 33.a3 ♗xe4 34.♘xe4 ♖xe4 35.♖c1



Position after: 35.♖c1

35...♕d4! 36.♖c8+ ♔g7 37.♕b8 ♕d1+ 38.♗c1 ♖e8! 39.♖xe8 ♕xc1+ 40.♔a2 ♕c4+ 41.♔a1 ♕c1+ 42.♔a2 ½-½ (42) Wojtaszek, R (2735) – Dominguez Perez, L (2760) Tromsoe 2014.

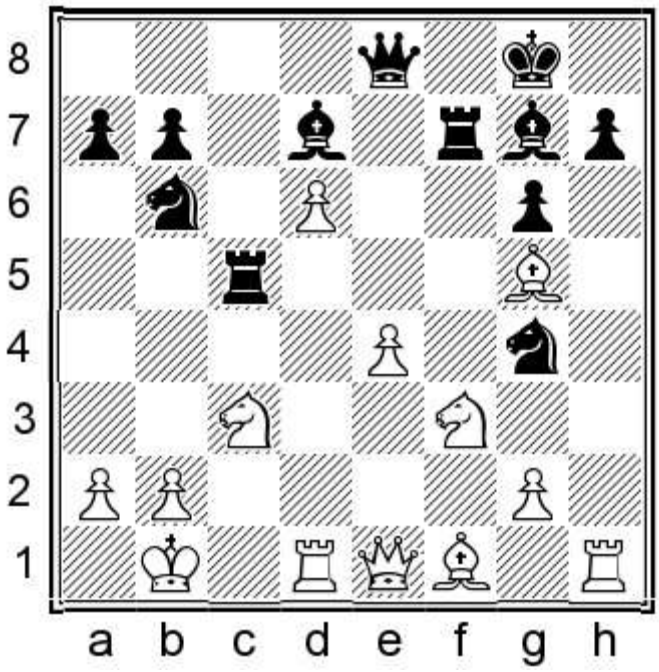
C) 20.♖c1 ♖xc3!



Position after: 20...♖xc3!

21.♖xc3! [21.bxc3 can't be recommended for White. 21...♕xe4+ 22.♕c2 ♕c6 23.♕b3 h6 24.♗d2 ♕xd6 25.♖e1 a5!→ Black has a very unpleasant attack on the white king.] 21...♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♕xe4+ 23.♔a1 ♘c4 24.♗xc4 ♕xc4 25.♖b1 b6=

20...♖c5!

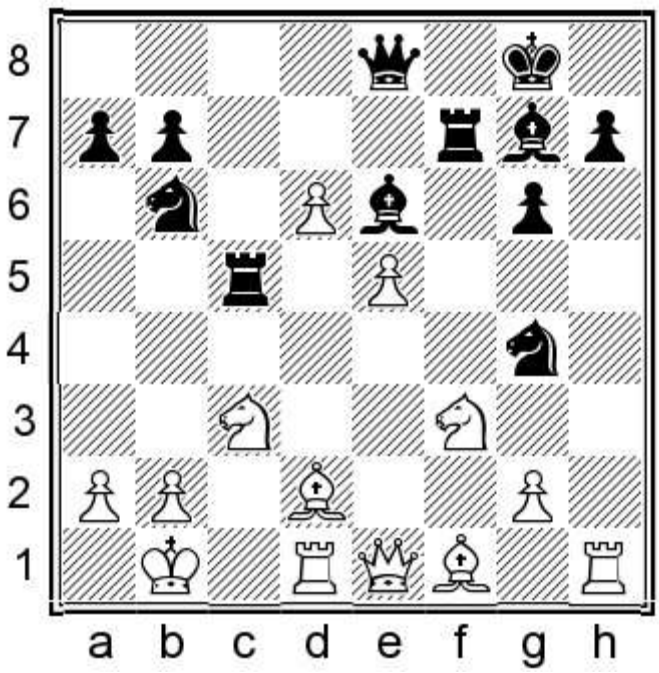


Position after: 20...♖c5!

21.♗e7

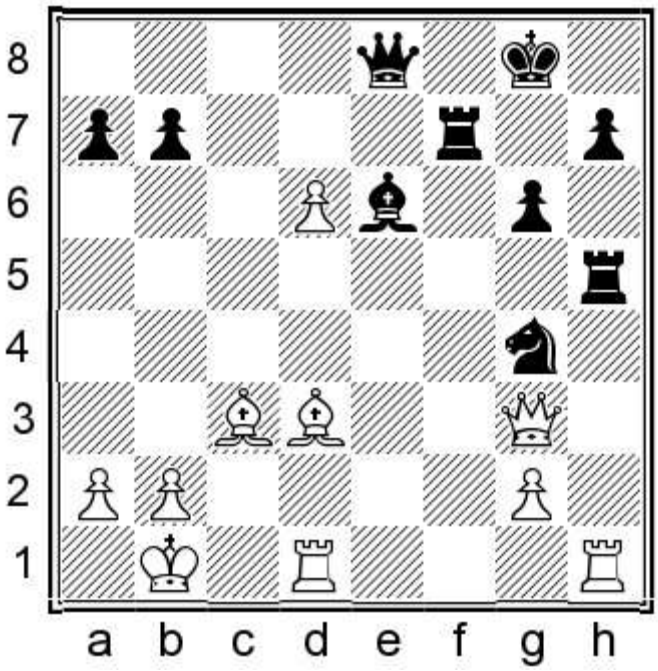
A) 21.♖c1 ♕e6 22.♗e7 [22.♕d2 h5 23.♗h4 ♗h6 24.♘g5 ♕f6 25.♘xf7 ♗xd2 26.♗xf6 ♘xf6 27.♘d8 ♗xc1 28.♔xc1 ♘xe4 29.♘xb7 ♖c8=] 22...h6 23.♗d3 ♘c8 24.♕g1!? b6 25.♘d4 ♕e5 26.♘f3 ♕e6 27.♘d4 ♕e5=

B) 21.♗d2 ♗e6 22.e5



Position after: 22.e5

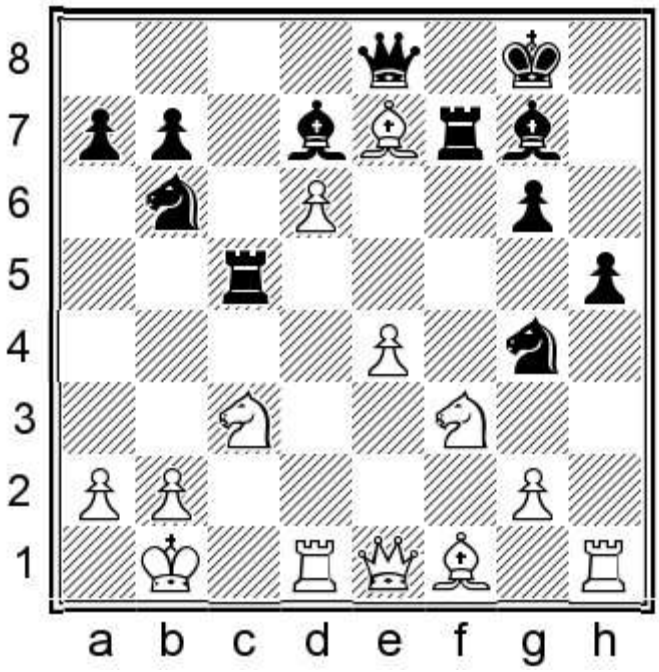
22...♘a4! A significant improvement to the relatively recent game played by the two top 10 players Ding Liren and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. [22...♗xe5? 23.♗d3!± ♘a4? 24.♘xe5 ♖xe5 25.♕h4 ♖h5 26.♕g3 ♘xc3+ 27.♗xc3+–



Position after: 27.♗xc3+–

27...♕a4 28.d7 ♖d5 29.♗c2 ♕xd7 30.♗b3 ♖xd1+ 31.♖xd1 ♕c8 32.♕h4 ♘f6 33.♖d6 ♗xb3 34.♖xf6 1-0 (34) Ding, L (2805) – Mamedyarov, S (2774) Stavanger 2019] 23.♘e4 ♗f5 24.♗c1 ♖c8 25.♔a1 ♗xe5 26.♘xe5 ♕xe5 27.♘c3 ♘xc3 28.♕xe5 ♘xe5 29.bxc3 h5 30.♖d5 ♘c4 31.♗e2 ♖d7 32.♗f4 ♘b6=

21...h5!N



Position after: 21...h5!N

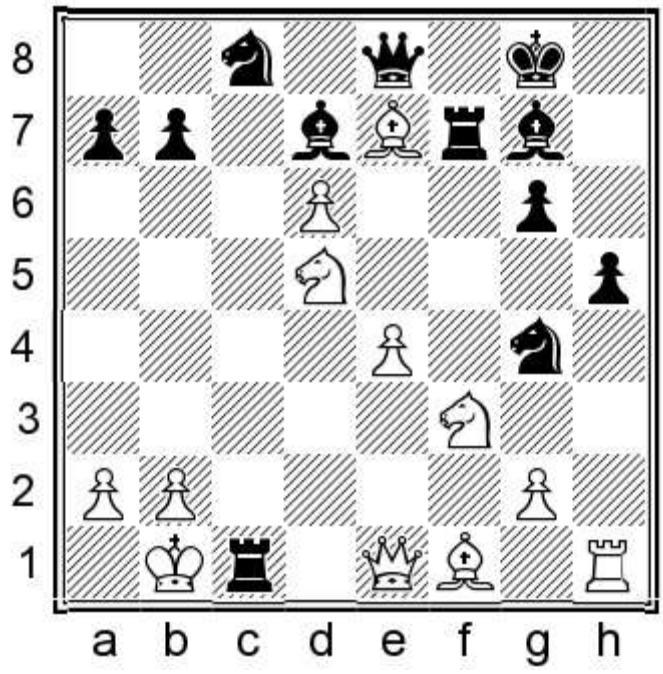
This novelty saves the day and rehabilitates the 3...d5 response against 3.f3.

A) 21...♖xc3? 22.bxc3 ♕c8 23.♖d4!+– 1-0 (35) Baron, T (2532) – Globus, O (2387) Maalot Tarshiha 2018.

B) 21...♖xe7? 22.dxe7 ♕xe7 23.♖c1± [23.♘d4? h5!∓ 1-0 (30) Vocaturo, D (2570) – Wagner, D (2579) Germany 2016]

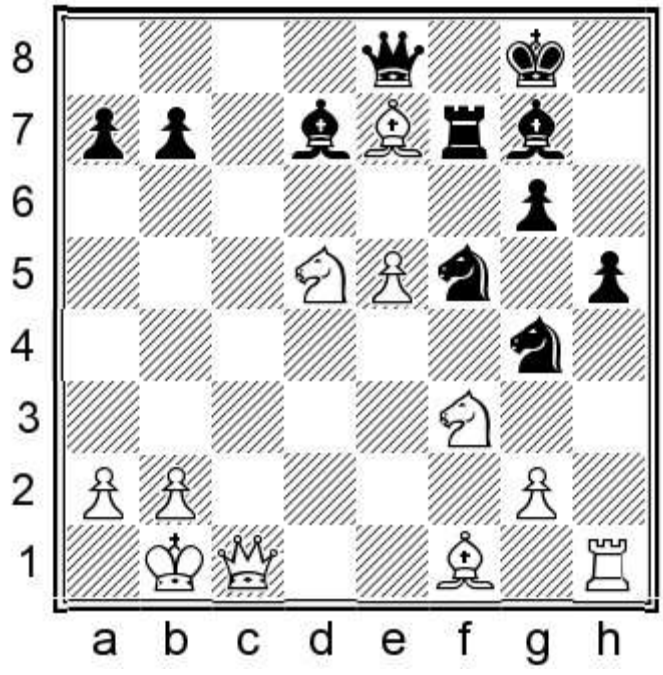
22.♗e2

A) 22.♖c1 ♘c8 One of the very few cases where our knight goes to c8. It helps us to fight the e7-bishop and the d6-pawn. 23.♘d5 ♖xc1+



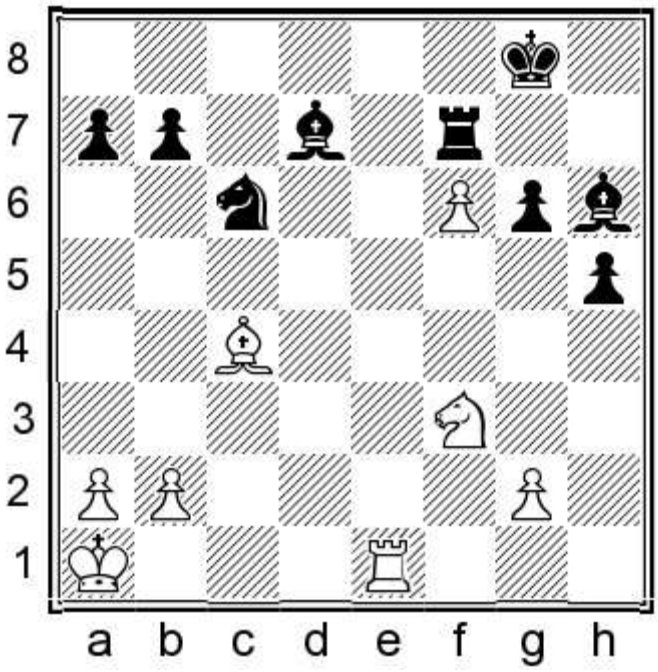
Position after: 23...♖xc1+

A1) 24.♕xc1 blunders a pawn: 24...♘xd6! 25.e5 [25.♗xd6 ♕xe4+] 25...♘f5



Position after: 25...♘f5

A1.1) 26.♘f6+ ♘xf6 27.exf6 ♗h6 28.♕c7 ♘xe7 29.♗c4 ♗f5+ 30.♔a1 ♘c6 31.♖e1 ♕d7 32.♕xd7 ♗xd7

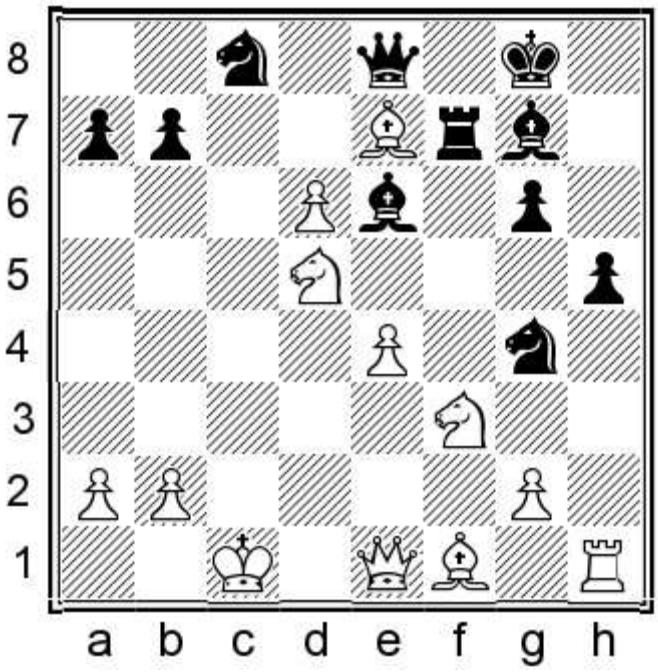


Position after: 32...♗xd7

33.♘e5 [33.♘h4 ♗g5 34.♘xg6 ♗xf6 35.♖f1 ♔g7 36.♗xf7 ♔xf7 37.♘f4 ♗e5 38.♘xh5+ ♔e7∓] 33...♘xe5 34.♖xe5 ♗f8–+

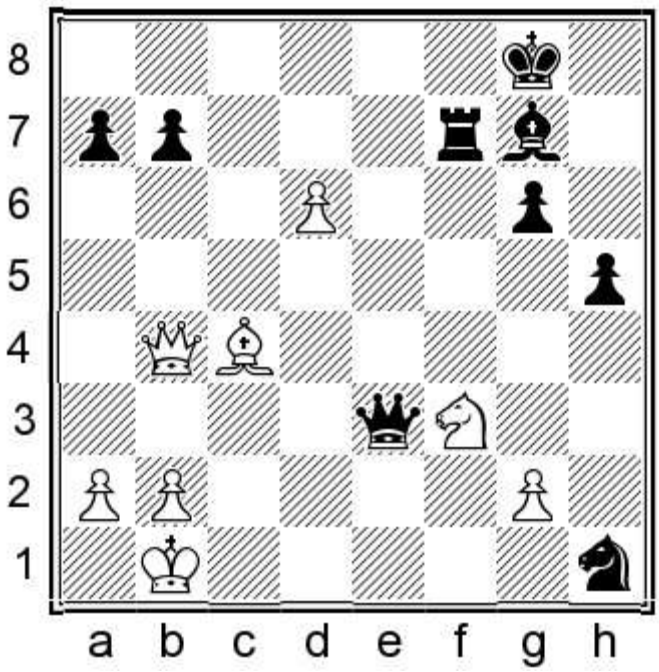
A1.2) 26.♗f6 ♗xf6 27.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 28.exf6 ♕e4+ 29.♔a1 ♖xf6 30.♗c4+ ♗e6 31.♗xe6+ ♕xe6 32.♖e1 ♕c6 33.♕f4 ♔g7 34.a3 ♖e6 35.♖xe6 ♕xe6 36.♕b8 ♕b6 37.♕e5+ ♕f6 38.♕b8 ♘e3 39.♕xb7+ ♔h6∓

A2) 24.♔xc1 ♗e6



Position after: 24...♗e6

A2.1) 25.♕b4 ♗xd5 26.exd5 ♘xe7 27.dxe7 ♕xe7 28.d6 ♕e3+ 29.♔b1 ♘f2 30.♗c4 ♘xh1



Position after: 30...♘xh1

31.♗xf7+ [31.♕xb7 ♕d3+–+] 31...♔xf7 32.♕xb7+ ♔g8 33.♕d5+ ♔h8 34.d7 ♗f6 35.d8=♕+ ♗xd8 36.♕xd8+ ♔g7=

A2.2) 25.♔b1 ♕d7 26.♕d2 ♘xd6 27.♗xd6 ♕xd6 28.♗c4 ♔h8 29.♗b3 ♖f8∓

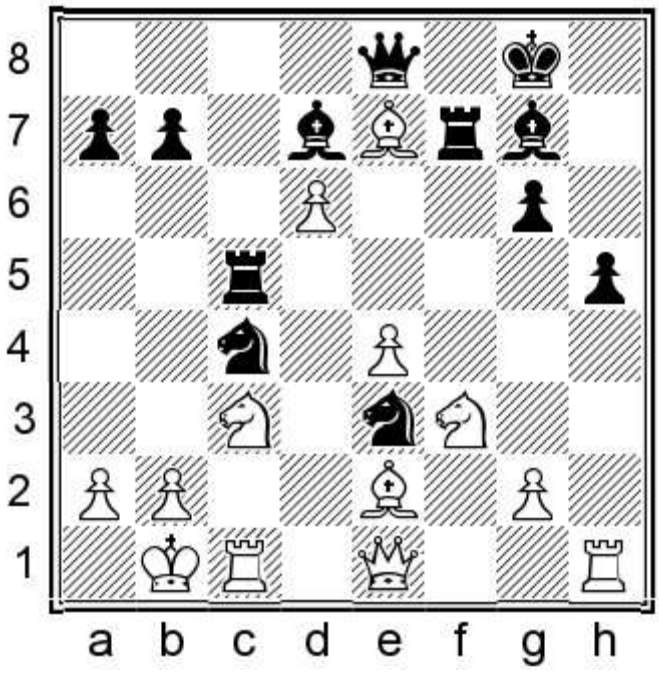
A2.3) 25.♕a5 Other moves also allow Black to get equal play. 25...♗xd5 26.♕xd5 ♘xe7 27.dxe7 ♘e3 28.♕b3 ♘xf1 29.♖xf1 ♔h8 30.♔b1 ♖xe7 31.♘g5 ♕d7=

B) 22.♖h3 ♕c8 23.♖c1 ♗h6 24.♘d2 ♘a4↑

22...♘e3 23.♖c1

23.♖d3 ♘xg2 24.♕g1 ♘f4 25.♕xc5 ♘xd3 26.♗xd3 ♖xf3 27.♗e2 ♖f4=

23...♘bc4

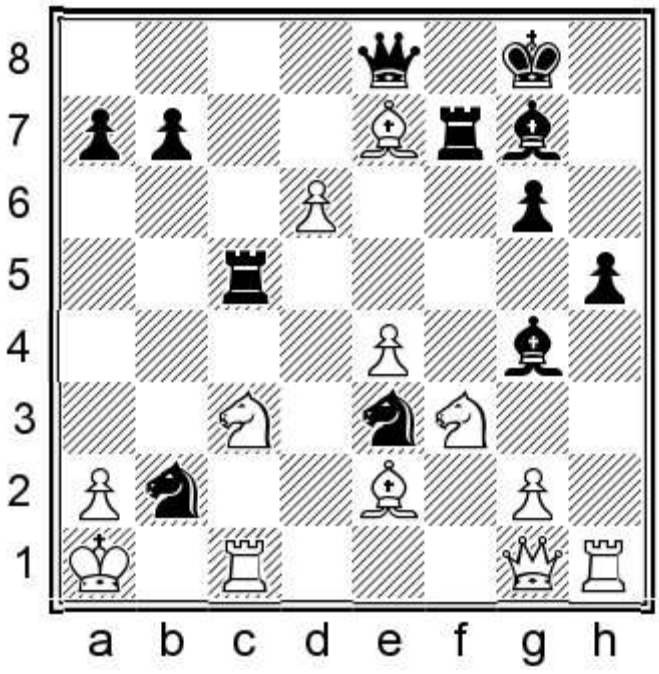


Position after: 23...♘bc4

24.♔a1

White can't afford to give up the light-squared bishop just yet: 24.♗xc4? ♘xc4 25.♘d2 ♗e6 26.♘xc4 ♖xc4 27.♕d2 ♕c6→

24...♗g4 25.♕g1 ♘xb2!



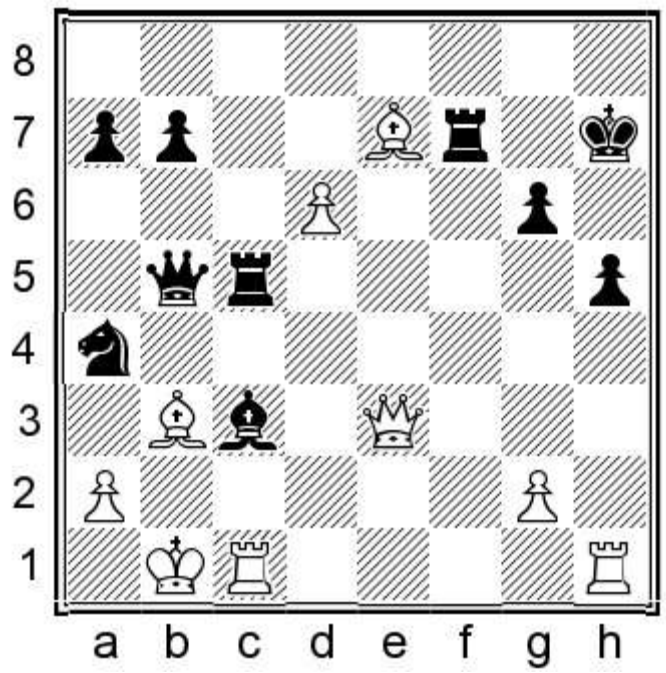
Position after: 25...♘xb2!

A standard tactic clearing the diagonal for the bishop and making the king on a1 extremely uncomfortable.

26.♕xe3 ♘a4 27.e5

White needs to tame the g7-bishop. This move forces a series of exchanges and thus diminishes the attacking potential of the Black army.

27...♗xf3 28.♗xf3 ♗xe5 29.♔b1 ♗xc3 30.♗d1 ♕b5+ 31.♗b3 ♔h7!

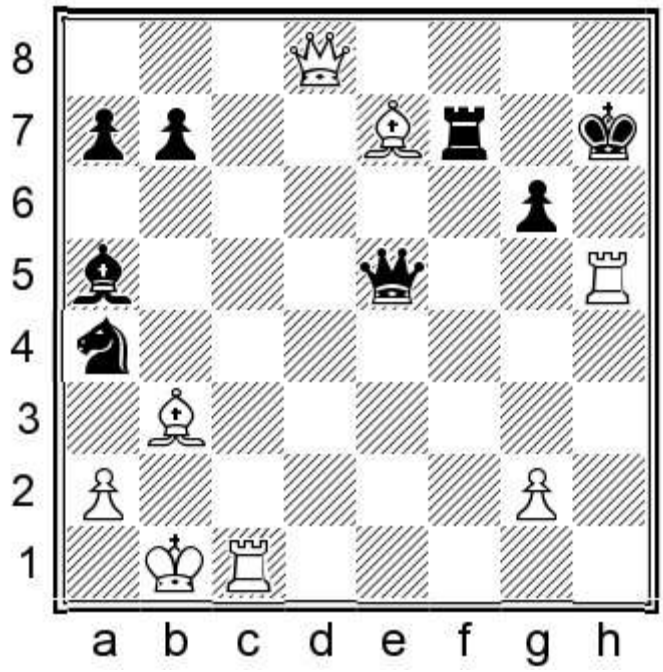


Position after: 31...♔h7!

Brings our king to safety and enables the f7-rook to participate in the game again.

The ensuing complications lead to a forced perpetual check and a draw.

32.d7 ♖e5 33.♕xe5 ♕xe5 34.d8=♕ ♗a5 35.♖xh5+!



Position after: 35.♖xh5+!

The only way for White to stay in the game.

35...gxh5 36.♕d3+

The queen escapes our bishop's attack with check giving White valuable time to protect his king against another decisive threat - ...♕b2#.

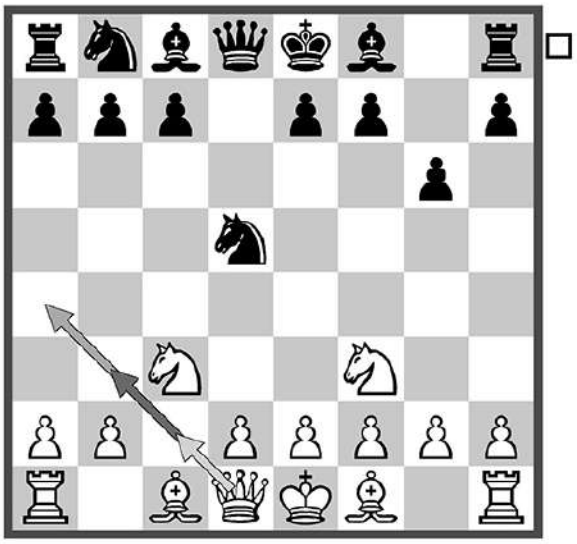
36...♔g7 37.♗a3 ♘c3+ 38.♔a1 ♘d1+ 39.♔b1 ♘c3+=

A great finish to this tactically intense chapter! Neither side benefits from avoiding the perpetual check, so the fairest result is a draw.

Part V
Anti-Grünfeld

Chapter 14
5.♕a4+, 5.♕c2 and 5.♕b3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 14 – 5.♕a4+, 5.♕c2 and 5.♕b3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

---

a) 5.♕a4+, 5.♕c2

b) 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.e4

c) 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗g5, 7.♗f4

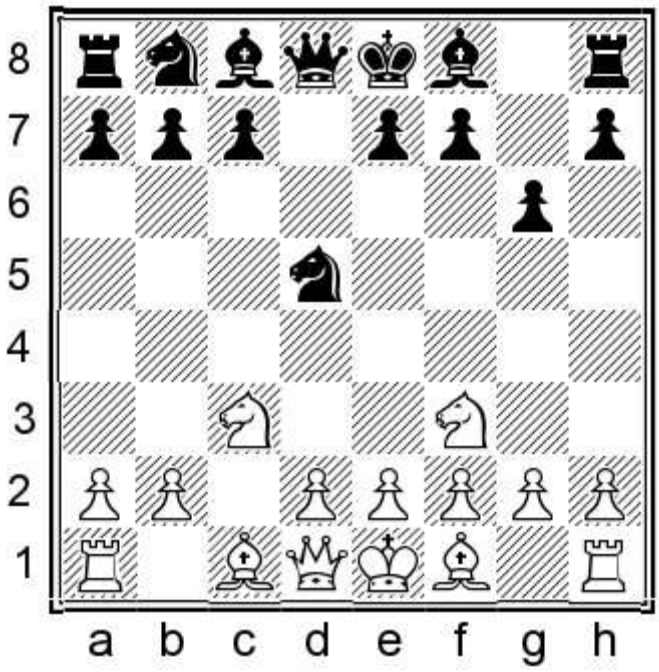
a) 5.♕a4+, 5.♕c2

In chapters 14, 15 and 16, we are going to study the so-called “Anti-Grünfeld”. It occurs when White starts the game with either 1.♘f3 or 1.c4 and then reaches the position after 3...d5.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5

White also has 4.♕a4+, which we will examine in chapter 16.

4...♘xd5



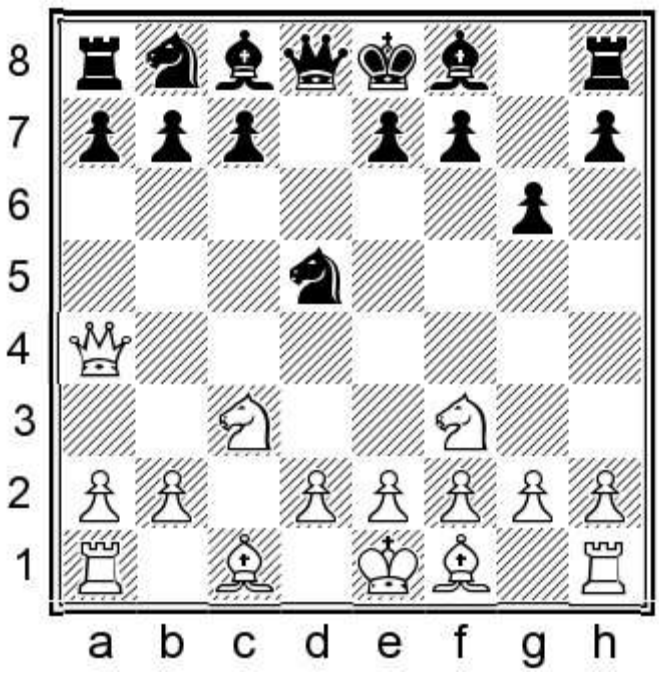
Position after: 4...♘xd5

This is the primary Anti-Grünfeld position we will work on. Here we will explore three queen moves: 5.♕b3, 5.♕c2 and 5.♕a4. In chapter 15 we are going to study 3 pawn moves: 5.h4, 5.g3 and 5.e4.

5.♕c2

I used to get in trouble after this move but having spent many hours looking for the best response, I have decided that 5...♘c6 is the best response. But first...

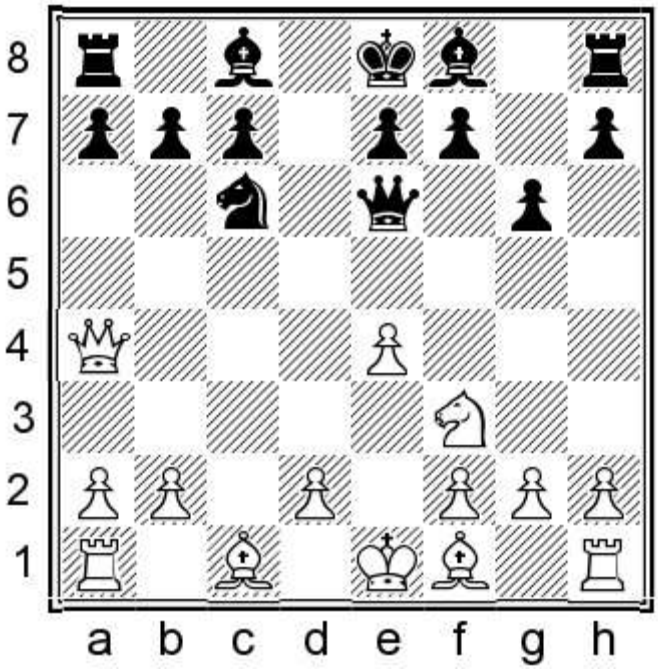
5.♕a4+



Position after: 5.♕a4+

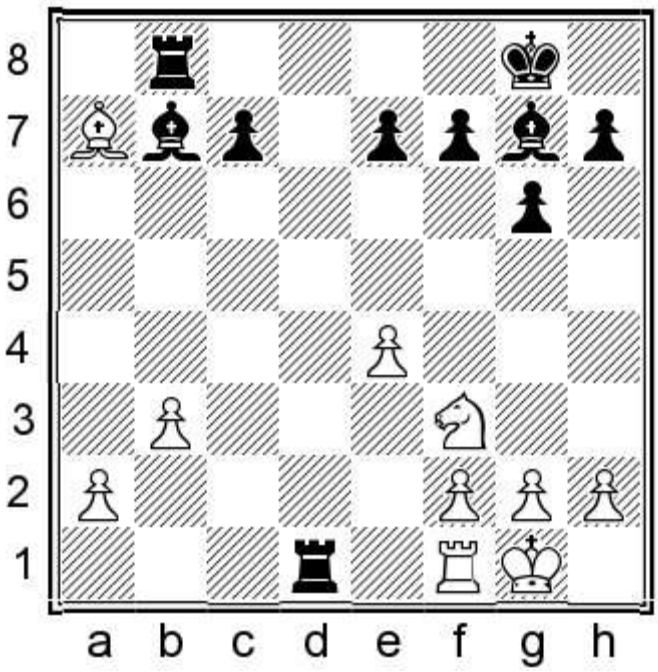
A commonly played move in the past which has considerably lost its punch due to 5...♘c6!.

A) 6.♘xd5 ♕xd5 7.e4 ♕e6!



Position after: 7...♕e6!

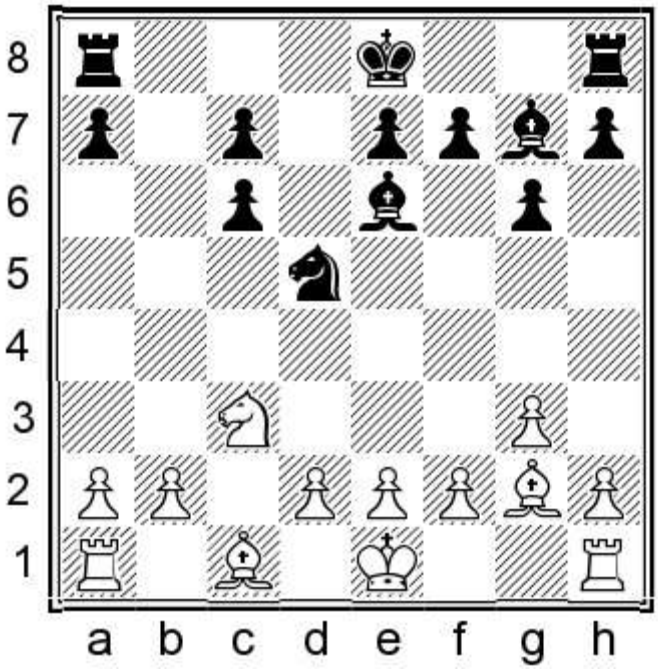
Throwing away any dogmatic principles and making sure White can't play d2-d4 on the next move. The queen on e6 may look weird but it's very functional. 8.♗b5 ♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗xc6 ♕xc6 11.♕xc6 bxc6 12.d4 ♖b8 13.b3 c5 14.♗e3 ♖d8 15.♖ad1 cxd4 16.♗xd4 ♗b7 17.♗xa7 ♖xd1



Position after: 17...♖xd1

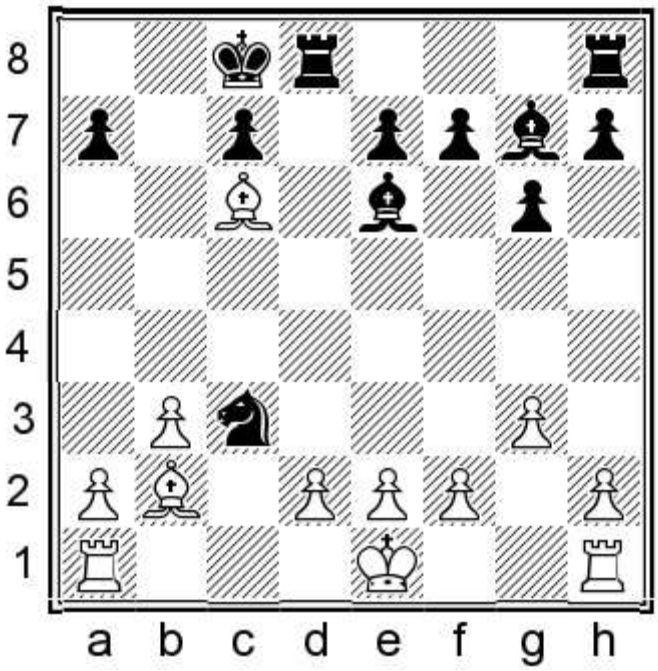
18.♗xb8 [18.♖xd1 ♖a8 19.♗c5 ♖xa2 20.♗xe7 h6=] 18...♖d7 19.♖e1 ♗c3 20.♖c1 ♗b2 21.♖e1 ♗c3=

B) 6.♘e5 ♕d6 7.♘xc6 ♕xc6 8.♕xc6+ bxc6 9.g3 ♗g7 10.♗g2 ♗e6



Position after: 10...♗e6

Everybody vaguely familiar with chess has heard that doubled pawns are bad and should be avoided at all cost. However, in the current position, Black's initiative and healthy development compensates for the defects in his pawn structure. 11.b3 [11.0-0 0-0 12.♖b1 ♖ab8 13.b3 ♘xc3 14.dxc3 c5 15.♗e3 c4 16.♗xa7 cxb3 17.♗xb8 bxa2 18.♗xc7 axb1=♕ 19.♖xb1 ♗xc3=] 11...0-0-0 12.♗b2 ♘xc3 13.♗xc6

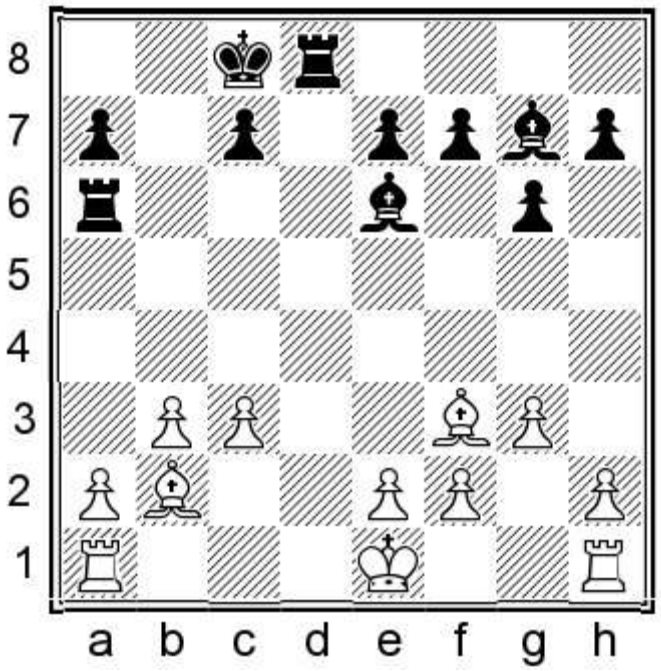


Position after: 13.♗xc6

[13.♗xc3 ♗xc3 14.dxc3 ♖d6= ½-½ (22) Bruzon Batista, L (2668) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2695) Havana 2010]

B1) One time I forgot my own analysis and played 13...♗d5? I still managed to make a draw after 14.♗xd5 ♖xd5 15.♗xc3 ♗xc3 16.dxc3 ♖hd8 17.f4 ♖d2 18.♖f1 ♖b2 ½ – ½ (48) Matsenko, S (2531) – Zherebukh, Y (2605) New York 2017. The point: follow my advice in this book but doublecheck whatever I do in tournament games.

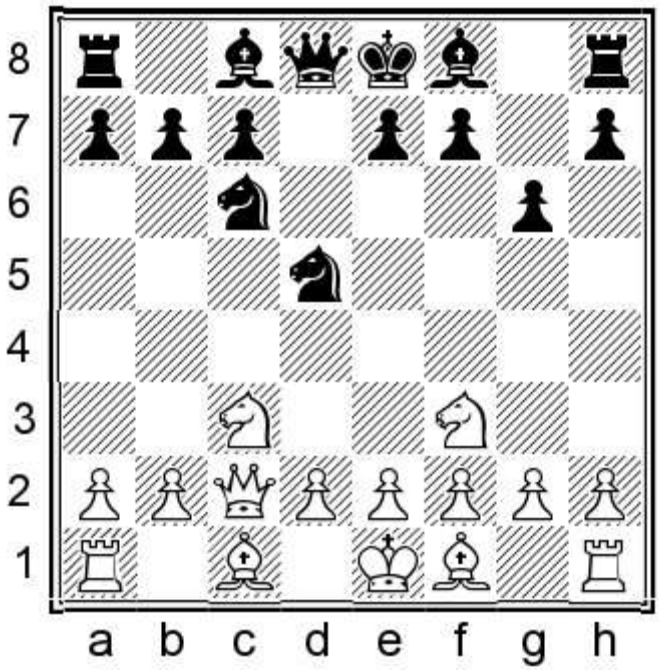
B2) 13...♖d6! 14.♗f3 ♖a6 15.dxc3 ♖d8



Position after: 15...♖d8

16.♗e4 [16.e3 c5 17.♔e2 c4 18.b4 ♖d3 19.♖hc1 ♖ad6⩲] 16...♖ad6 17.♗d3 ♗f5 18.0-0-0 ♗xd3 19.♖xd3 ♖xd3 20.exd3 ♖xd3 21.f4 ♖f3 22.♖e1 e6 23.♔d2 ♖f2+ 24.♖e2 ♖f1 25.♖e1 ♖f2+ 26.♖e2 ♖f1=

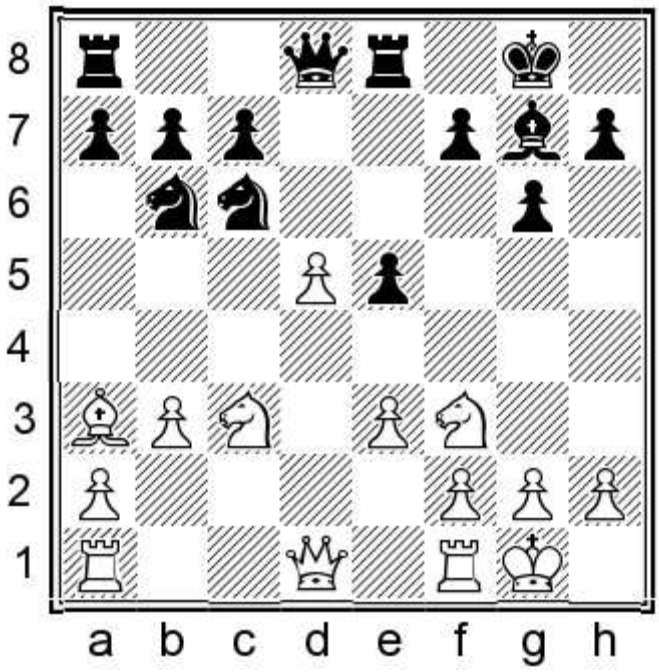
5...♘c6!



Position after: 5...♘c6!

6.d4

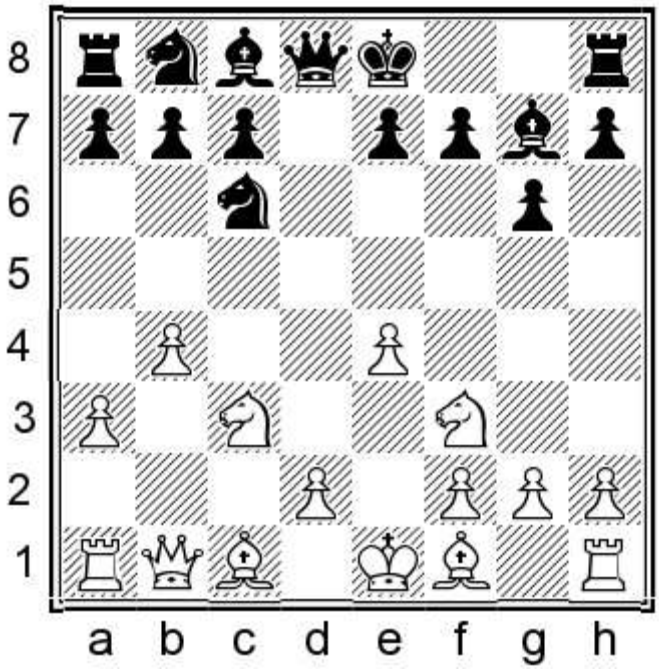
A) 6.♕b3 ♘b6 7.d4 ♗e6 8.♕d1 ♗g7 9.e3 0-0 10.♗e2 ♗c4 11.♗xc4 ♘xc4 12.0-0 ♘b6 13.b3 e5 14.♗a3 ♖e8 15.d5 ½-½ (94) Ipatov, A (2660) – Swiercz, D (2645) Saint Louis 2017.



Position after: 15.d5

15...♘e7 16.e4 c6 17.dxc6 ♘xc6 18.♘b5 ♕xd1 19.♖axd1 ♖ed8=

B) 6.e4 ♘db4 7.♕b1 ♗g7 8.a3 ♘a6 9.b4 ♘ab8!

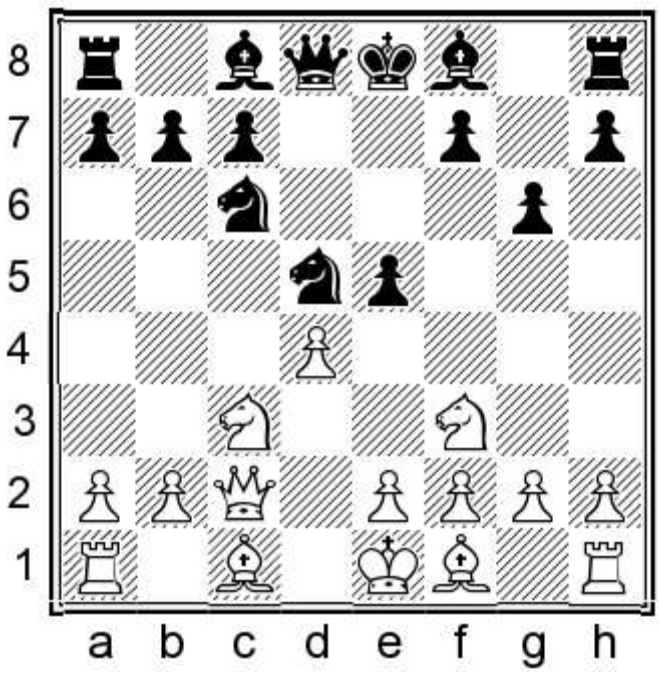


Position after: 9...♘ab8!

A funny looking move which secures an advantage! If you looked at this position out of context would you be able to tell that the knight on b8 actually started its journey from g8? 10.h3 0-0 11.♗b2 ♘d4∓ ½-½ (29) Varga, Z (2455) – Bagi, M (2364) Budapest 2012.

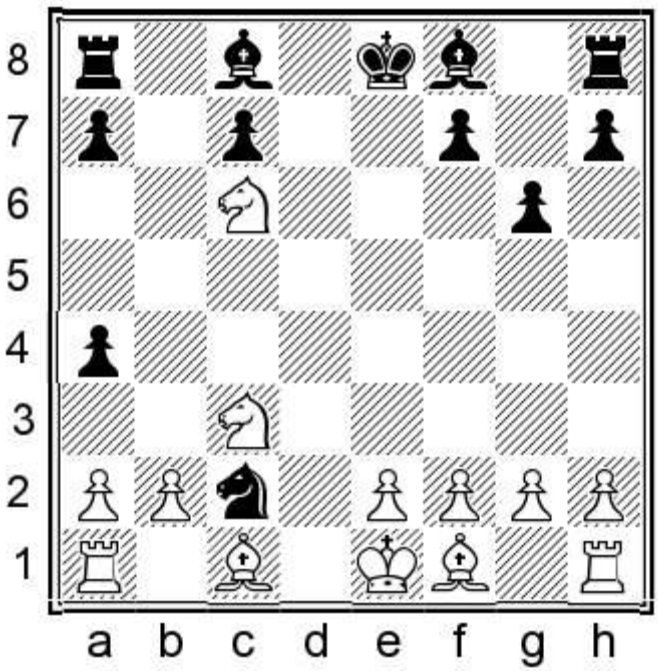
6...♘db4

For avid Grünfeld fans I would suggest exploring an additional playable move: 6...e5!?



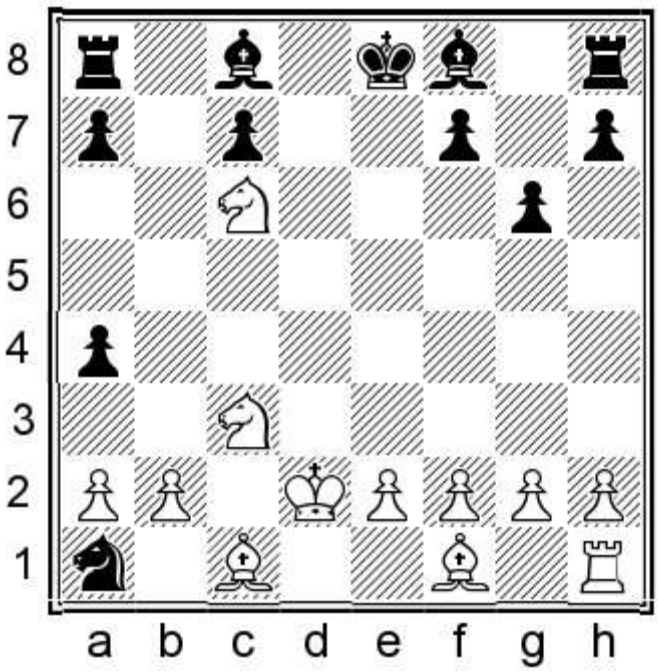
Position after: 6...e5!?

7.♘xe5 [7.dxe5 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♗g7=] 7...♘db4 8.♕a4 ♕xd4 9.♘f3 b5! 10.♘xd4 bxa4 11.♘xc6 ♘c2+



Position after: 11...♘c2+

12.♔d2 [12.♔d1 ♘xa1 13.e4 ♗g7 14.♘d5 ♗b7 15.♗b5 0-0 16.♗xa4 f5↑] 12...♘xa1

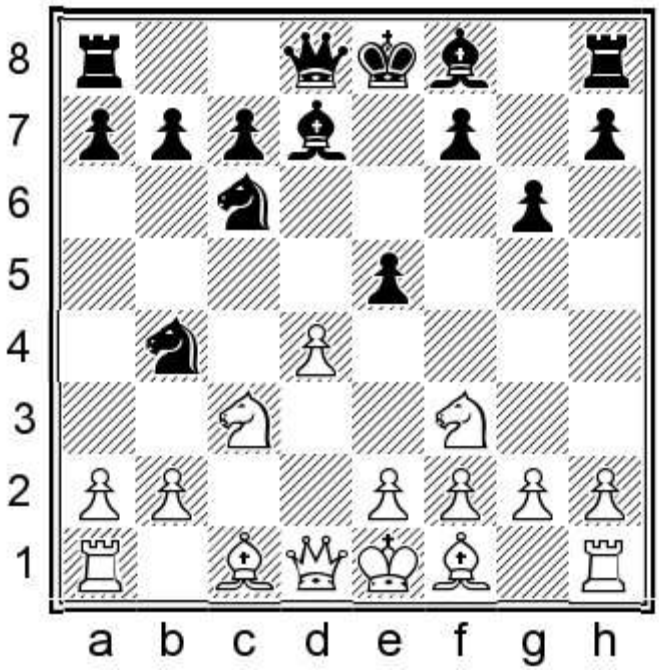


Position after: 12...♘xa1

The play here is as imbalanced as it gets which makes it a perfect option for those desperately trying to

win or looking to confuse the opponent early in the opening. Black should be in good shape after any continuation including the chess engine's main line 13.e3 a6 14.♗c4 ♗b7 15.♗d5 ♗g7 16.♖d1 a5! 17.♘xa4 ♖d8! 18.♘xd8 ♗xd5 19.♔e2 ♗xa2 20.♗d2 0-0=.

7.♕a4 ♗d7 8.♕d1 e5!



Position after: 8...e5!

The Anti-Grünfeld is not playable for Black without ...e5!.

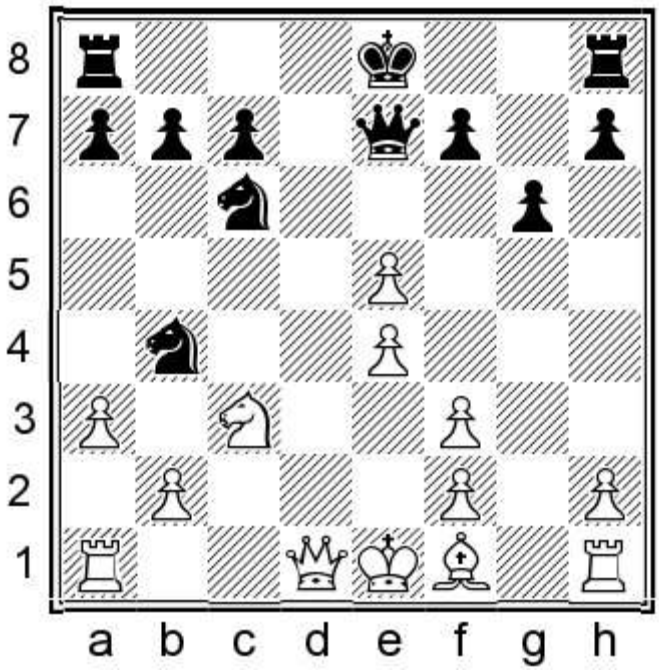
9.dxe5

9.a3 exd4 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♗g7 12.♗d2 0-0 13.e3 ♕f6 14.♖c1 a5 15.♗e2 a4 16.0-0 a3∓

9...♗f5 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.e4 ♗g4 13.a3 ♗xf3

It's always a good idea to ruin your opponent's pawn structure.

14.gxf3

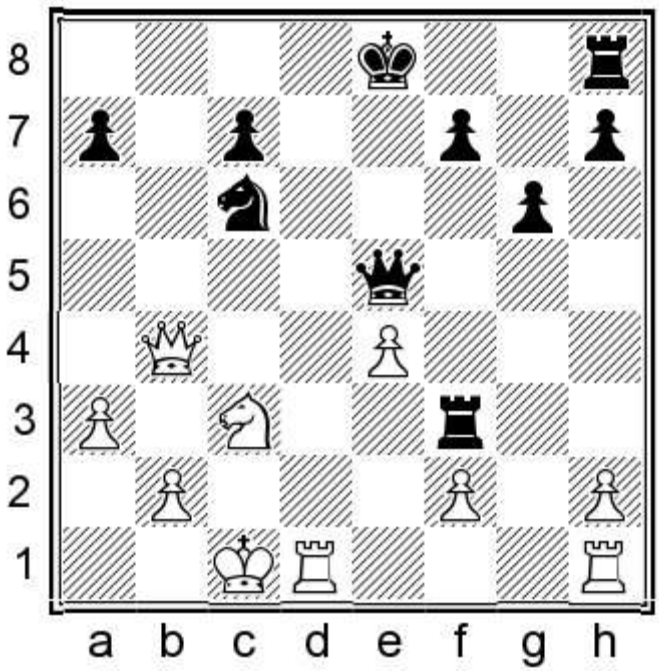


Position after: 14.gxf3

14...♖d8

Of course, we don't retreat to a6.

15.♕a4 ♘d3+ 16.♗xd3 ♖xd3 17.♕b5 ♖xf3 18.♕xb7 ♘d8 19.♕b4 ♕xe5 20.0-0-0 ♘c6



Position after: 20...♘c6

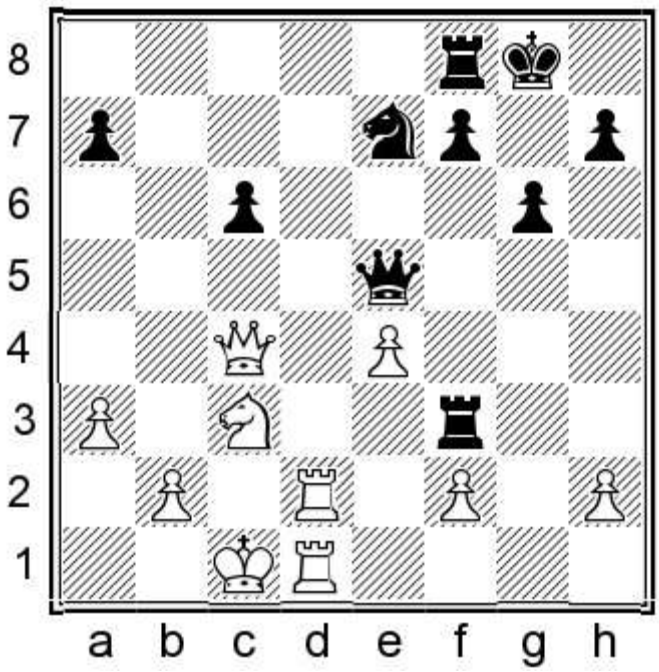
The last thing we need to do before equalizing the chances completely is hide the king in a safe place.

Therefore, we need to bother the queen on b4, which prevents us from castling.

21.♕c4

21.♕a4 ♕e6 22.♖d8+ ♔xd8 23.♕d1+ ♔c8 24.♕xf3 ♖d8 25.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 26.♕xd1 f5=

21...♘e7 22.♖d2 0-0 23.♖hd1 c6=

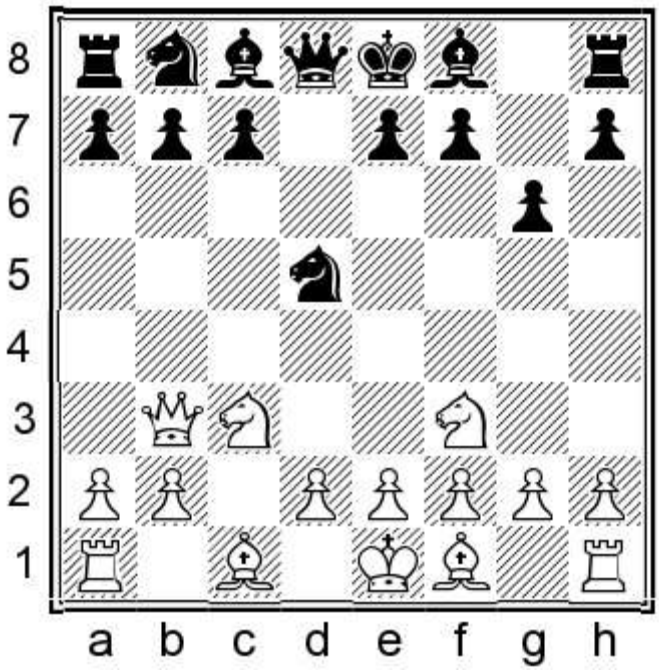


Position after: 23...c6=

We have limited the white knight's scope of activity with our last move and now we have great play due to the active rook and queen and the absence of any weaknesses.

b) 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.e4

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕b3



Position after: 5.♕b3

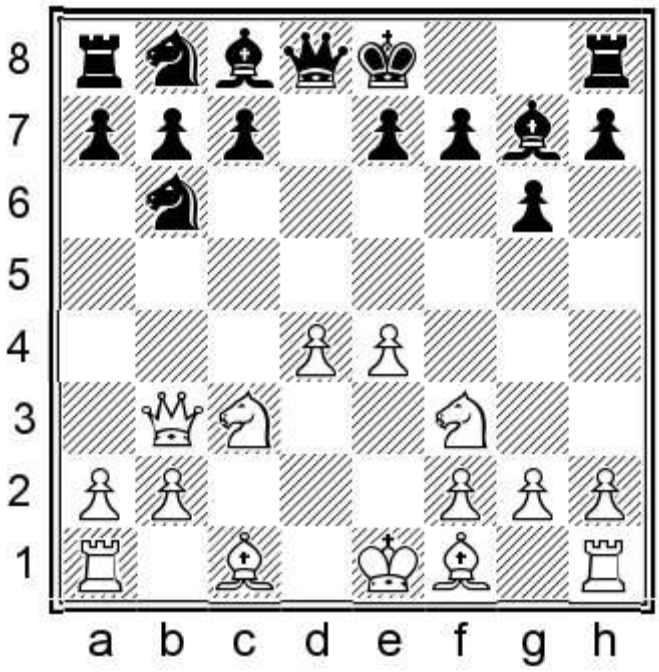
The main move and the most direct attempt to gain the initiative. White wants to force the d5-knight to retreat and then occupy the center with d2-d4 and e2-e4.

5...♘b6 6.d4

A naive try to win right away does not bring White any benefits 6.♘g5 e6 7.d3 ♗g7 8.g3 ♘c6 9.♗g2 ♘d4 10.♕d1 0-0 11.0-0 e5= Black controls the center and has easy play. The next few moves for Black may be ...c6, ...♗g4, ...♕d7 and ...♖ad8.

6...♗g7 7.e4

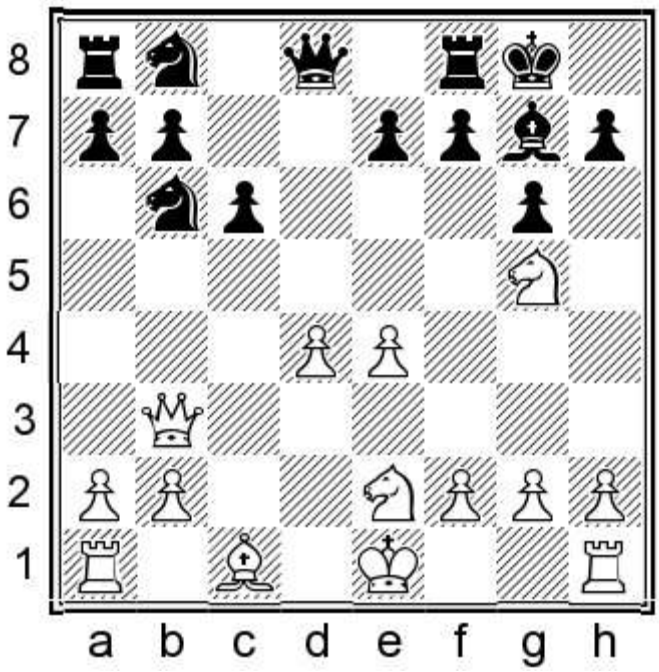
Thanks to moves like this chess is always fun and enjoyable.



Position after: 7.e4

Would you be able to predict right now that White has a rook sacrifice in mind in one of the lines?

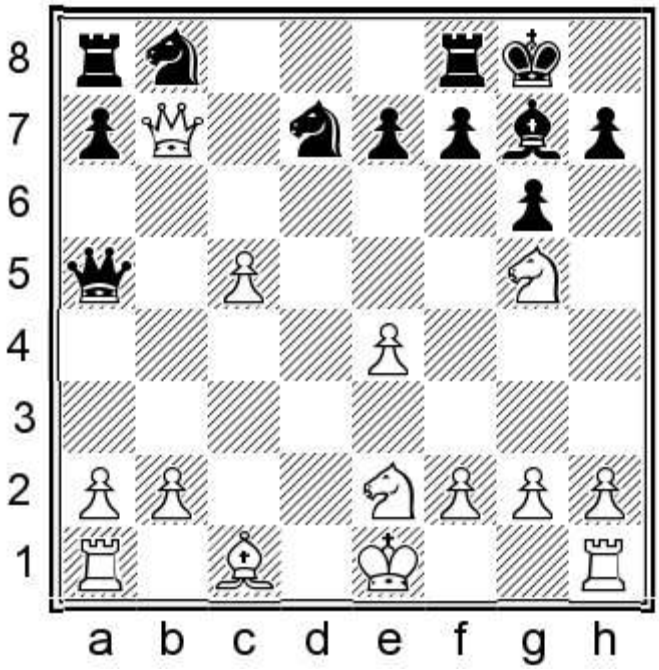
7...♗g4 8.♗b5+ c6 9.♘g5 0-0 10.♗e2 ♗xe2 11.♘xe2



Position after: 11.♘xe2

11...♘a6

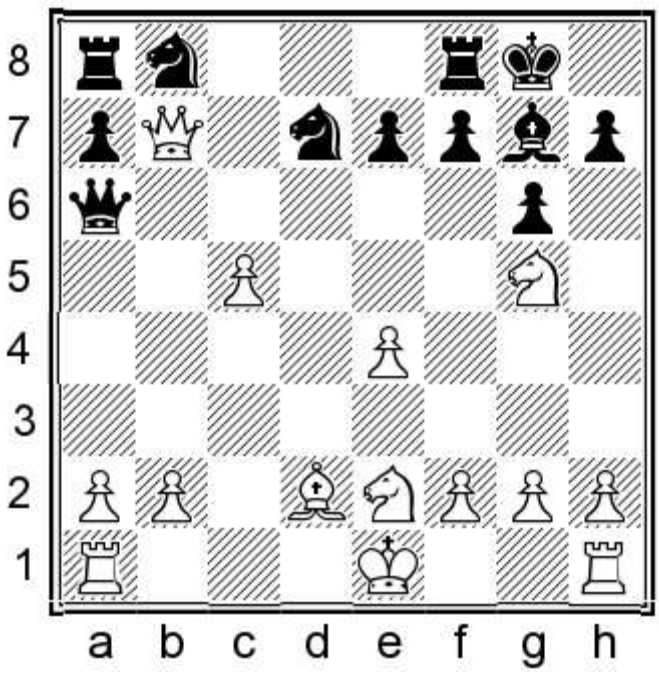
An additional playable option is 11...c5!? 12.dxc5 ♘6d7 13.♕xb7 ♕a5+



Position after: 13...♕a5+

A) 14.b4 ♘xc5 15.bxa5 [15.♕xa8 ♘d3+ 16.♔f1 ♕a4 17.g3 ♗xa1 18.♔g2 ♕c2–+] 15...♘xb7 16.♖b1 ♘xa5∓.

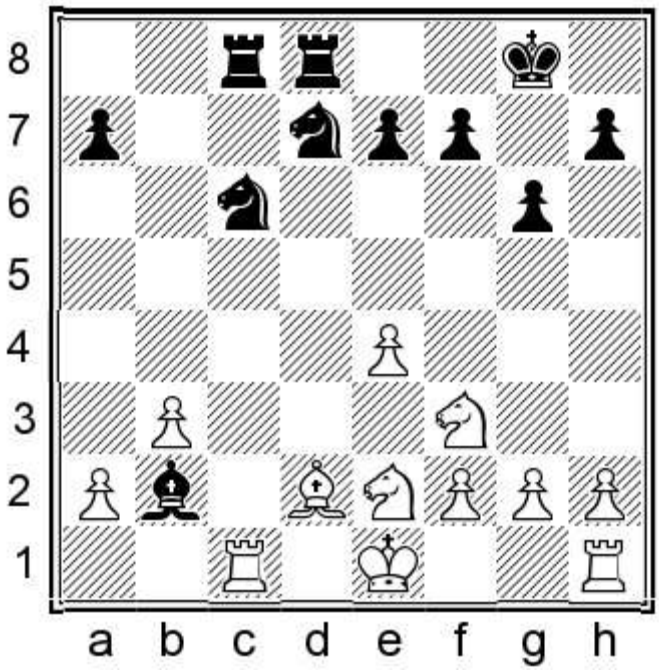
B) 14.♗d2 ♕a6



Position after: 14...♕a6

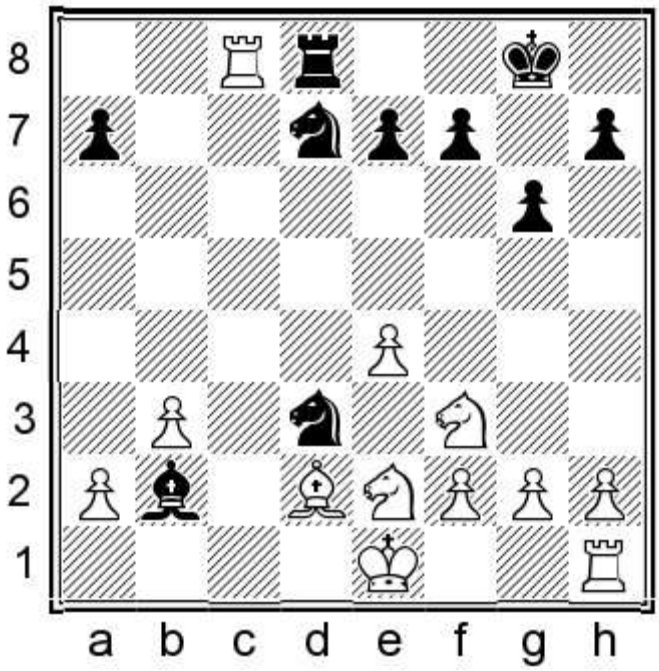
Our goal is to trade queens and then collect back the sacrificed pawns. Black is doing alright

everywhere but I still think that 11...♘a6 is an easier move to play, particularly if you desperately need to win. 15.c6 [15.♕xa6 ♘xa6 16.c6 ♗xb2 17.♖b1 ♘e5 18.0-0 ♘c4!N 19.♗c1 ♗f6 20.♘f3 ♖fc8=; 15.♕xa8 ♘c6 16.♕xf8+ ♔xf8–+] 15...♕xc6 16.♕xc6 ♘xc6 17.♖c1 ♖ac8 18.b3 ♖fd8 19.♘f3 ♗b2!



Position after: 19...♗b2!

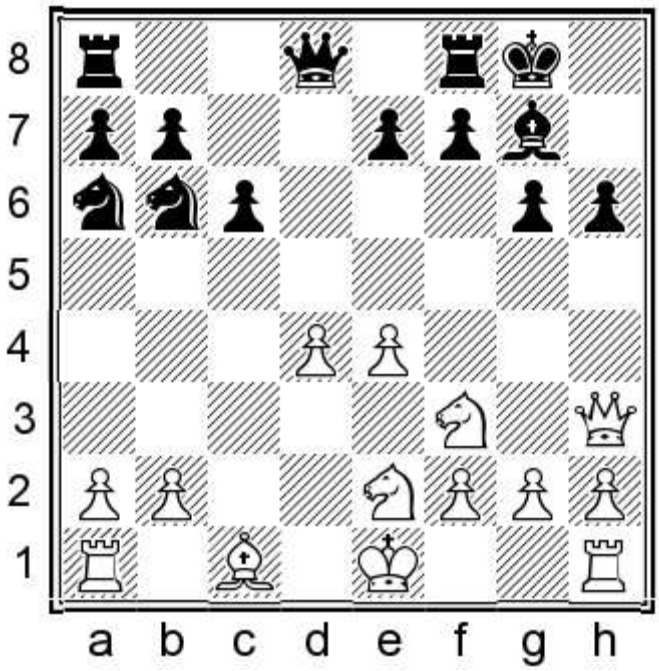
The key move for Black in the 11...c5 line. The bishop forces the rook to move to a less convenient square and indirectly impedes White's ability to castle. 20.♖d1 [20.♖c2 ♘ce5 21.♖xc8 ♘d3+!



Position after: 21...♘d3+!

A very important intermediate move preventing the king from castling otherwise, White is much better. 22.♔f1 ♖xc8 23.♘e1 ♘xe1 24.♔xe1 ♘c5 25.♘g3 h5 26.h4 ♗e5=; 20.♖b1 ♘de5!⩱] 20...♘c5 21.♘g3 ♘d3+ 22.♔e2 ♘cb4 23.♗xb4 ♘xb4 24.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♖d1 ♖xd1 26.♔xd1 ♘xa2=

12.♕h3 h6 13.♘f3

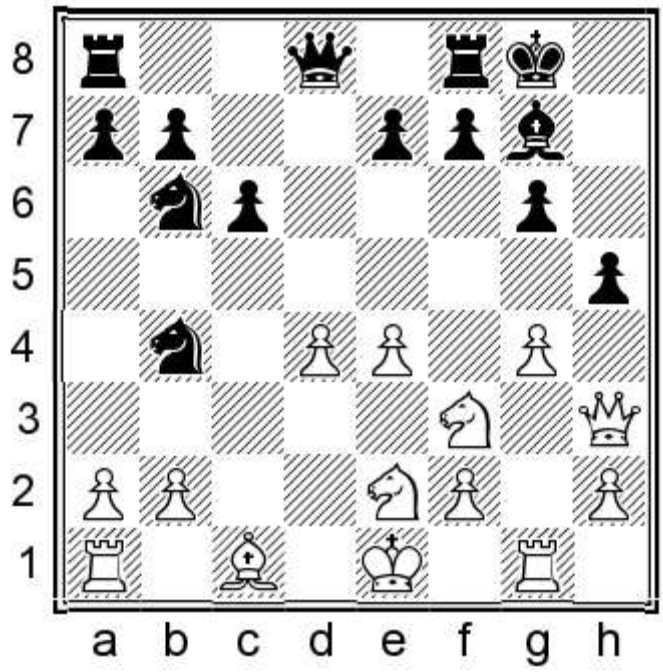


Position after: 13.♘f3

13...♕d7!

The only move! I was shocked to learn that it was played 12 times out of 26 available games, or less than 50%!

The more common move, played by such Grünfeld experts as Mamedyarov, Volokitin and Sutovsky, among others, loses rather quickly. 13...h5? 14.♖g1! ♘b4 15.g4!! Who cares about the rook on a1... White is going all-in!



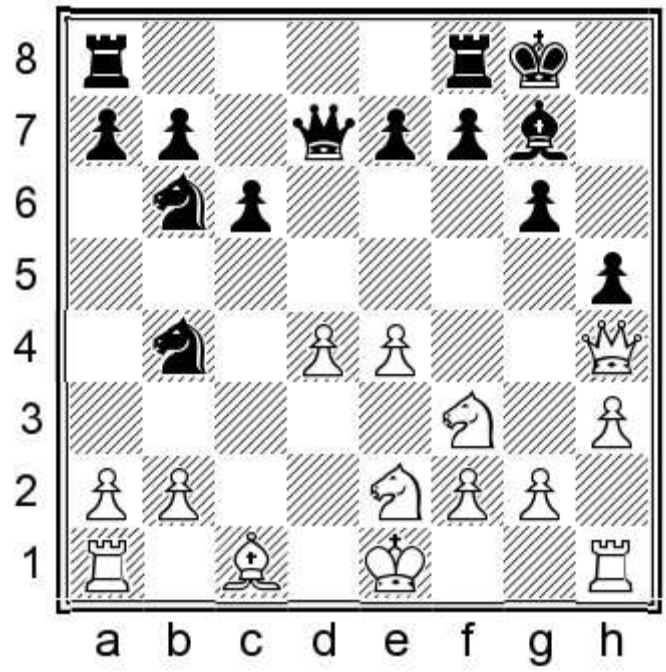
Position after: 15.g4!!

To those who are too scared to sacrifice: nobody is going to count how many pawns or pieces you are down in the end when you checkmate your opponent's king. 15...♕d7 [15...♘c2+ 16.♔f1 ♘xa1 17.gxh5 ♕d7 18.♕h4 ♗f6 19.♗g5 ♗xg5 20.♖xg5 ♔g7 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 23.♘e5+ ♔g7 24.♘xd7 ♘xd7 25.♕g4+ 1-0 (25) Garayev, K (2252) – Karpov, A (2201) Donskoj 2018] 16.♕h4 ♘c2+ 17.♔f1 ♘xd4 18.♘exd4 ♗xd4 19.gxh5 ♗f6 20.♗g5 ♗xb2 21.♖e1 ♕d3+ 22.♔g2 f6 23.♗h6 g5 24.♘xg5 ♖f7 [24...fxg5 25.♕xg5+ ♔h8 26.♗xf8 ♖xf8 27.♕h6+ ♔g8 28.♔h1++–] 25.♘xf7 ♔xf7 26.♖e3 ♕c2 27.♖g3 ♗d4 28.♖g7+ ♔e6 29.♕g4+ ♔d6 30.♗e3 ♗xe3 31.♕g3+ 1-0 Wojtaszek, R (2745) – Mamedyarov, S (2772) Shamkir 2017.

14.♕h4 h5 15.h3

Now 15.♖g1? doesn't work because of 15...♕g4∓.

15...♘b4

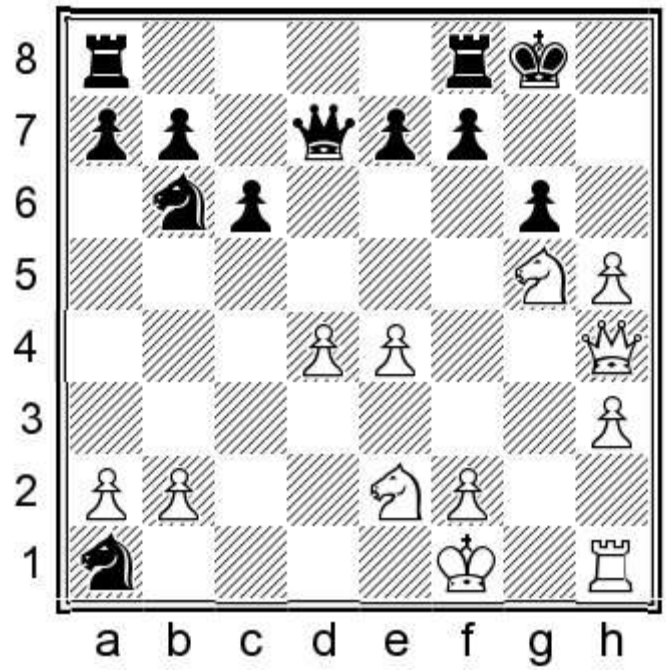


Position after: 15...♘b4

16.g4

Contrary to all of White's ideas in this line is 16.0-0 which helps Black obtain an equal position effortlessly. 16...♘c2 17.♖b1 ♘xd4 18.♘exd4 ♗xd4 19.♘xd4 ♕xd4 20.♕xe7 ♖fe8 21.♕xb7 ♕xe4 22.♗h6 ♖e7 23.♕a6 ♕f5 24.♗e3 ♕b5 25.♕xb5 cxb5 26.♖fd1 ♖c8=

16...♘c2+ 17.♔f1 ♘xa1 18.gxh5 ♗f6 19.♗g5 ♗xg5 20.♘xg5



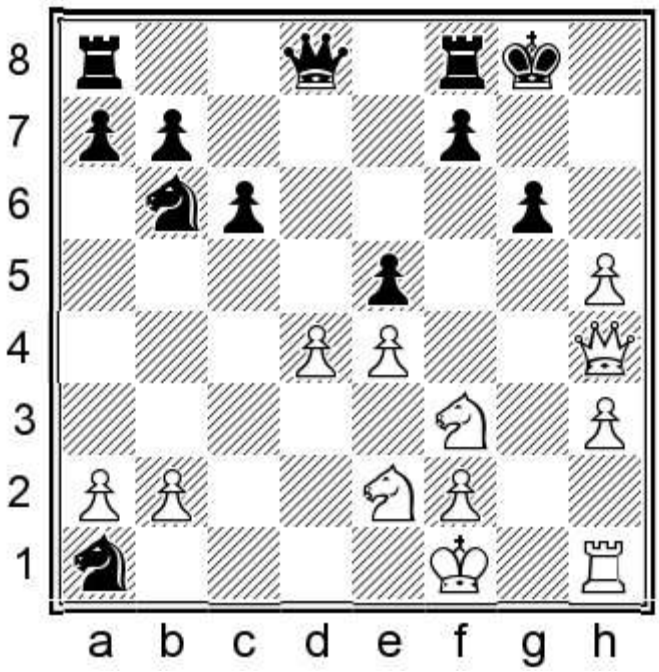
Position after: 20.♘xg5

White is down a rook again and attacking our king... Quite reminiscent of the 13...h5 line, isn't it? However, we are safe in this case after the only move, which is...

20...e5! 21.♘f3

21.dxe5 ♘c4 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.e6 ♕e7 24.♔g2 ♘c2 25.♖c1 ♘d6 26.♕g4 [26.♖xc2 ♘xe4 27.♕xe4 ♕xg5+ 28.♘g3 ♖ae8–+] 26...♘b4 27.♖d1 ♖ad8∓

21...♕d8



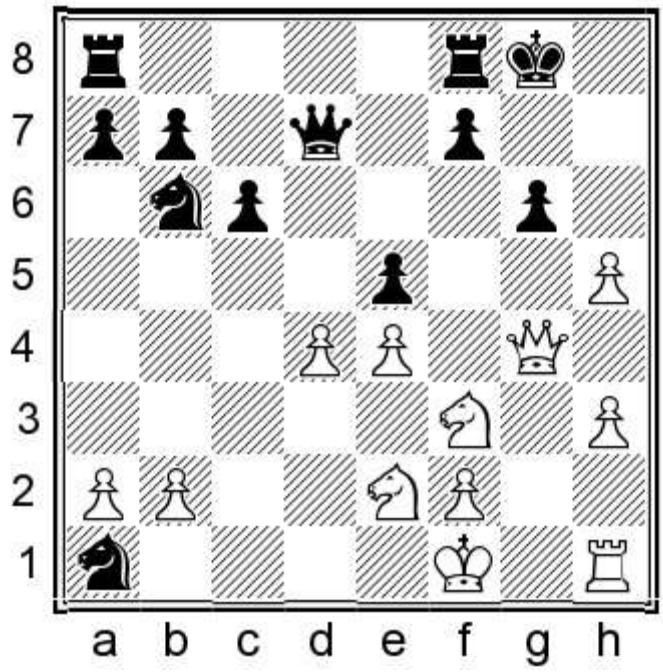
Position after: 21...♕d8

22.♕g4

A) 22.♘g5 ♕e7 23.dxe5 ♘d7 24.♔g2 ♘c2 25.♖c1 ♘b4–+

B) 22.♕g3 exd4 23.hxg6 f5–+

22...♕d7 23.♕h4 ♕d8 24.♕g4 ♕d7=

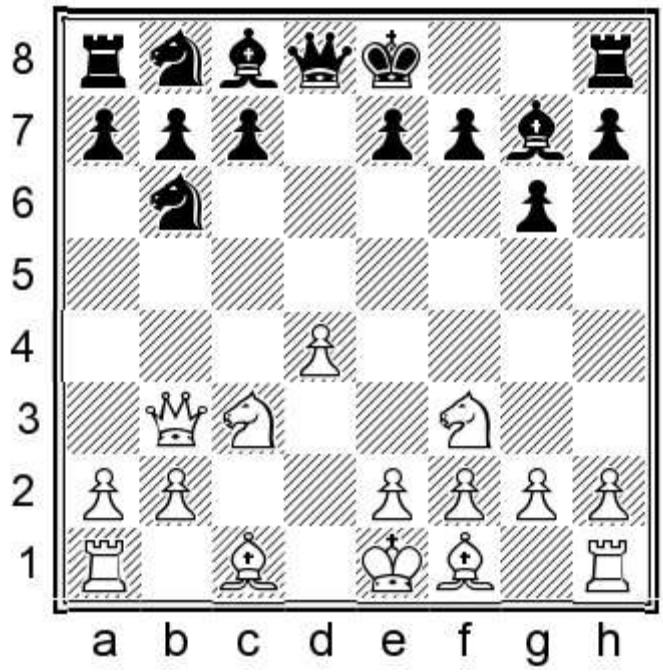


Position after: 24...♕d7=

Neither White nor Black can afford to stop the dance of the queens so a draw is the most logical outcome.

c) 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗g5, 7.♗f4

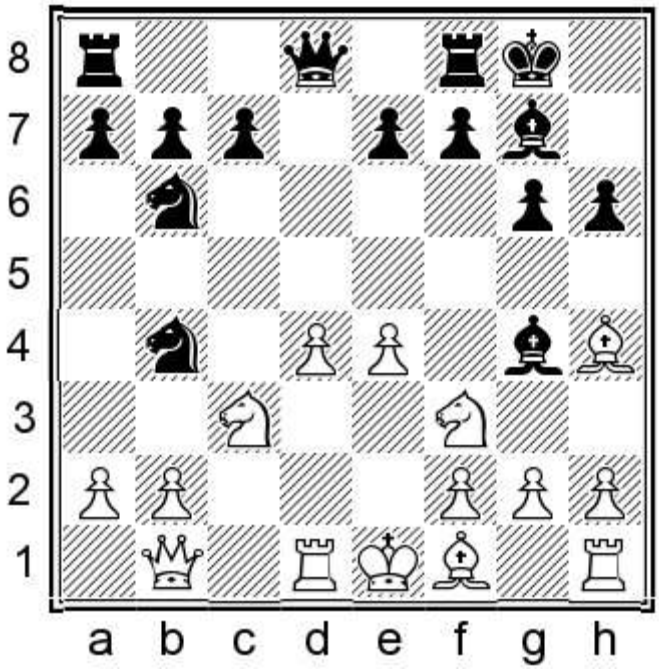
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7



Position after: 6...♗g7

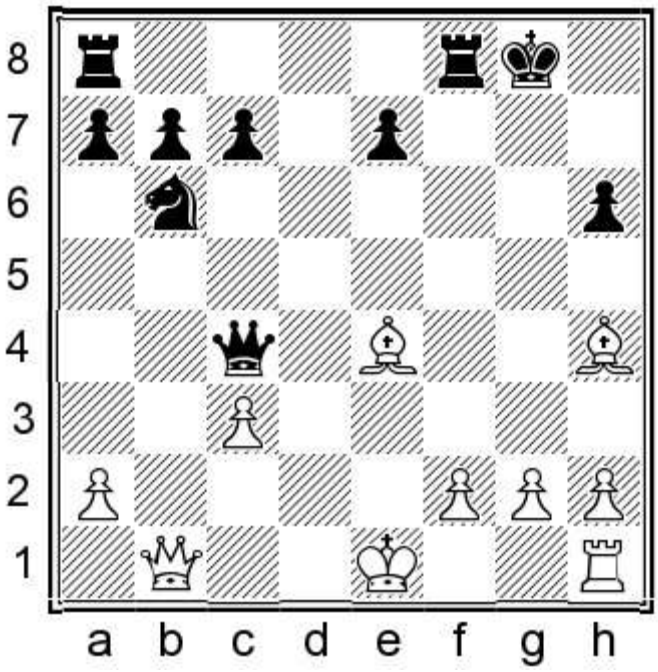
7.♗f4

7.♗g5 An aggressive bishop development which, however, is quite harmless. All you need to do is to memorize the next 15 or so forcing moves which is a piece of cake. 7...♗e6 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.♖d1 h6 10.♗h4 ♘b4 11.♕b1 0-0 12.e3 ♗f5 13.e4 ♗g4



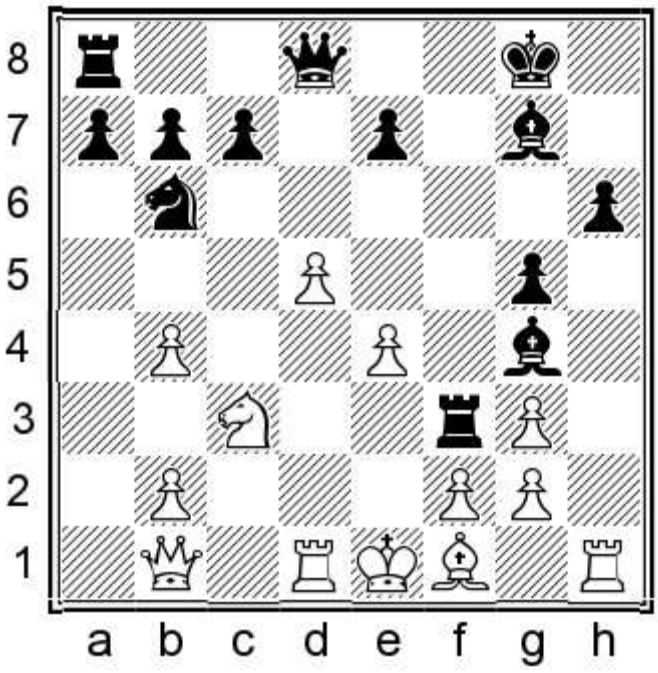
Position after: 13...♗g4

It's not the first time we encounter this idea to provoke e4 with ...♗f5 and then play ...♗g4. Recall the same idea played in the line 5.♘f3 dxc4 6.♕a4 in chapter 12. 14.d5 [An interesting forced draw happened after 14.♗e2 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘c6 16.d5 ♘d4 17.♗g4 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.♖xd4 ♗xd4 20.♗xf5 ♗xc3+ 21.bxc3 ♕xd5 22.♗e4 ♕c4



Position after: 22...♕c4

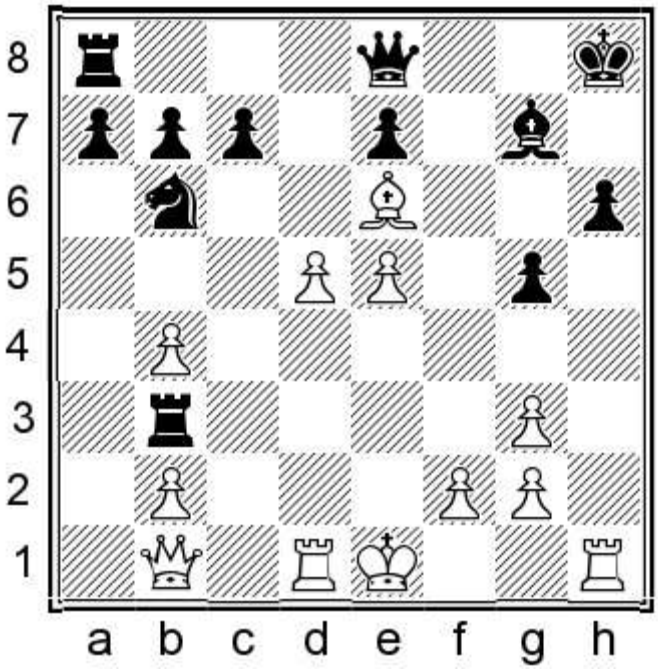
23.♗d5+ ½-½ (23) Holroyd, K (2397) – Lebled, P (2391) ICCF email 2013. 23...♕xd5 24.♕g6+ ♔h8 25.♕xh6+ ♔g8 26.♕g6+=] 14...f5 15.a3 g5 The best attack is the counterattack, so we waste no time on saving the knight. 16.♗g3 f4 17.axb4 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♖xf3!



Position after: 18...♖xf3!

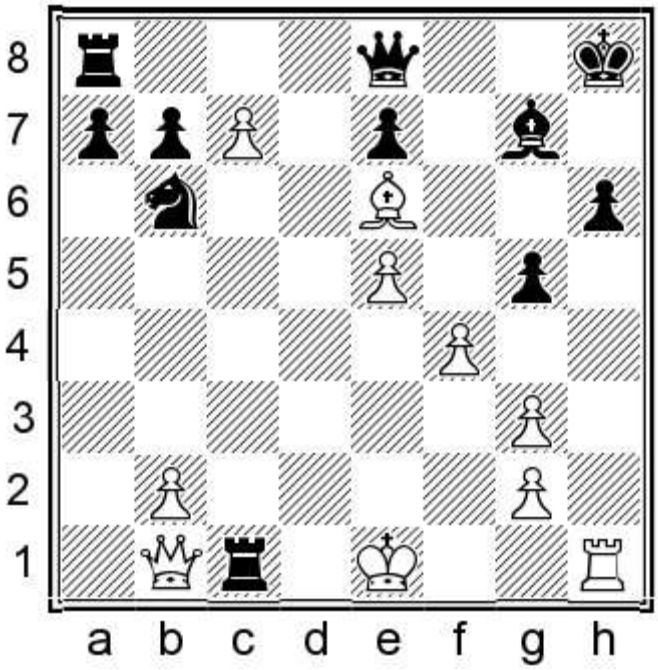
A pretty unique situation: I can't recall seeing this sacrifice in any other line of the Grünfeld. 19.♗e2 [19.gxf3 ♗xf3 20.♖h2 ♗xd1 21.♕xd1 ♕d6=] 19...♖xc3! 20.♗xg4 ♖b3 Our rook is on steroids. Watch it

give White perpetual check a few moves from now. 21.♗e6+ ♔h8 22.e5 ♕e8



Position after: 22...♕e8

23.♕f5 [23.d6 ♖xb4 24.dxc7 ♖b5 25.f4 ♖c5 26.♖c1 ♖xc1+

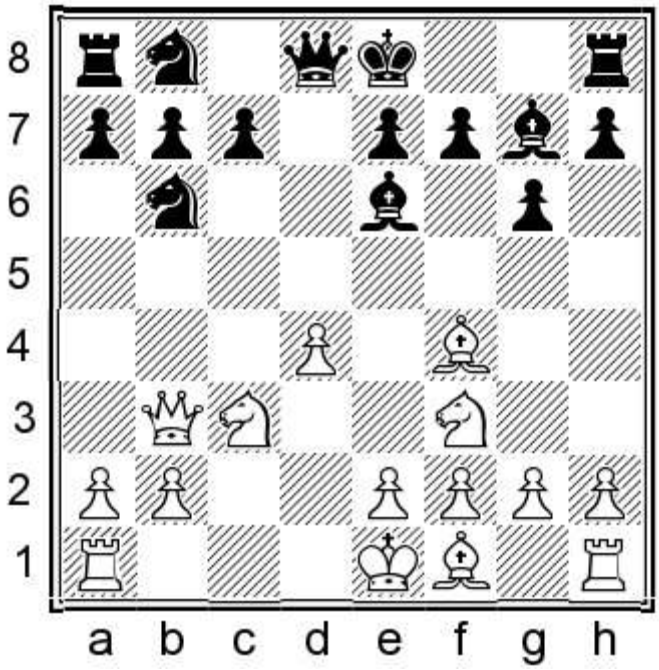


Position after: 26...♖xc1+

The rook finally leaves the game after its heroic route ...♖f8-f3-b3-b4-b5-c5-c1. 27.♕xc1 ♕b5 28.c8=♕+ ♘xc8 29.♗xc8=] 23...♘c4 24.♕xg5 ♕f8 25.d6 ♖xb2 26.♗f5 e6 27.dxc7 exf5 28.♖d8 ♖b1+ 29.♔e2 ♖b2+ 30.♔e1 ♖b1+ 31.♔e2 ♖b2+ ½ – ½ (31) Bauer, C (2602) – Svidler, P (2723) Germany

2004.

7...♗e6



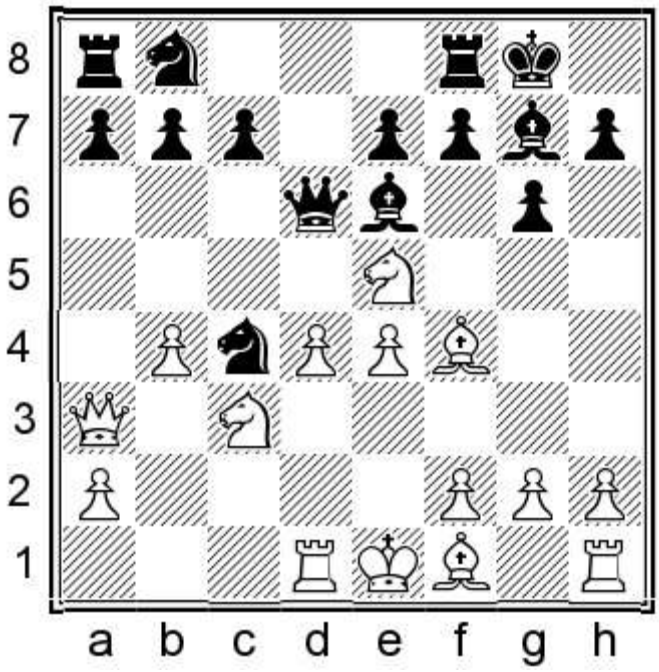
Position after: 7...♗e6

8.♕a3

8.♕c2 is much worse here for White than after 7.♗g5. 8...♘c6 9.♖d1 ♘b4 10.♕b1 ♘4d5 11.♗e5 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xe5 13.♘xe5 [13.dxe5 ♕c8∓] 13...♕d5∓ ½-½ (30) Ghaem Maghami, E (2594) – Chirila, I (2529) Las Vegas 2014.

8...0-0 9.e3

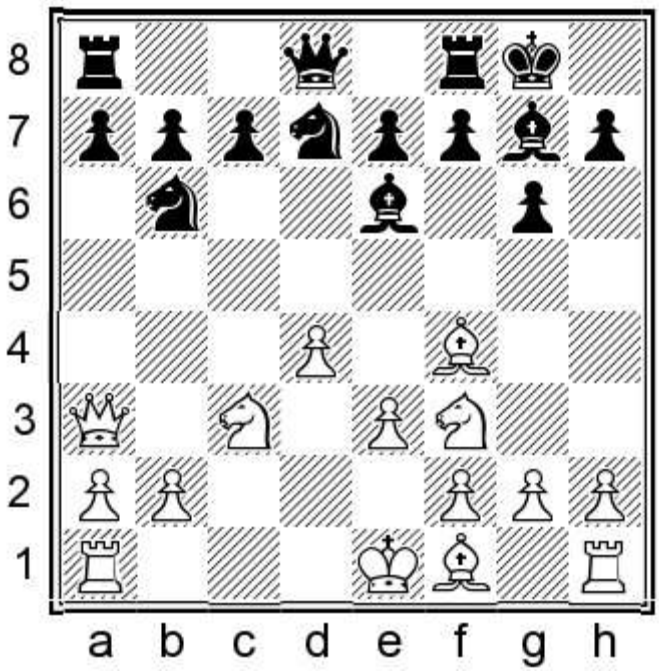
9.e4 ♗g4!? 10.♘e5 ♗e6 11.♖d1 ♕d6 12.b4 ♘c4!



Position after: 12...♘c4!

White has gained a bit too much space for my taste thus we would certainly be happy to trade some pieces and get some air to breathe. 13.♗xc4 ♗xc4 14.♘xc4 ♕xf4 15.b5 e6 16.0-0 ♘d7 17.♖fe1 ♘b6=

9...♘8d7

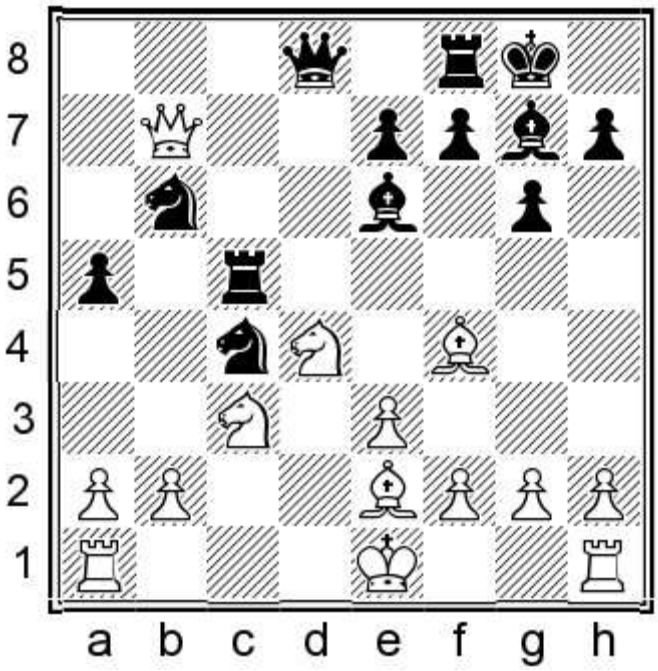


Position after: 9...♘8d7

10.♖d1

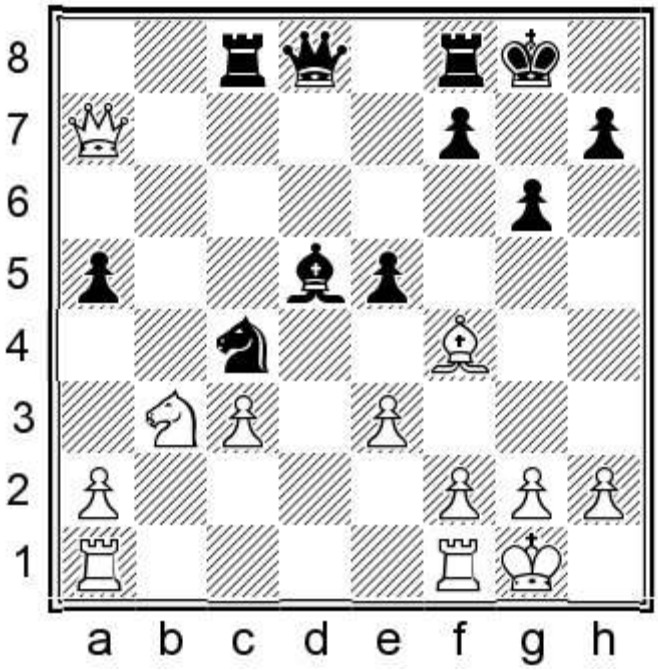
Stops Black from playing c5 on the next move.

10.♗e2 c5 11.dxc5 ♘c4 12.♕b4 a5 13.♕b5 ♖c8 14.♘d4 ♖xc5 15.♕xb7 ♘db6



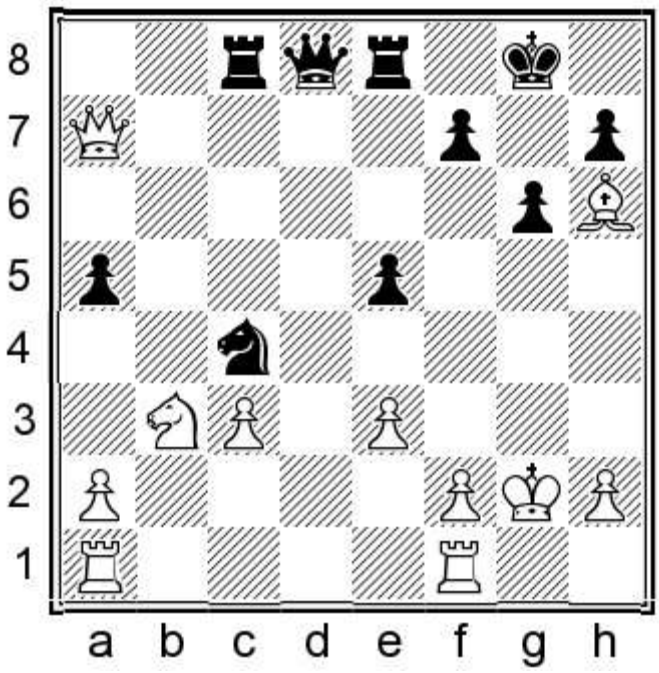
Position after: 15...♘db6

16.♘b3 [16.0-0-0? ♗d5 17.♕a6 ♘xb2 18.♔xb2 e5 19.♗h6 exd4 20.♘xd5 ♘xd5 21.♗xg7 ♕b8+ 22.♔a1 ♘b4 23.♖c1 ♔xg7 24.♖xc5 ♘xa6 25.♗xa6 ♕b6 26.exd4 ♕xa6 0-1 (26) Mikhalevski, V (2545) – Troff, K (2543) Calgary 2016] 16...♗xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♗d5 18.♕a7 ♖c8 19.♗xc4 ♘xc4 20.0-0 e5



Position after: 20...e5

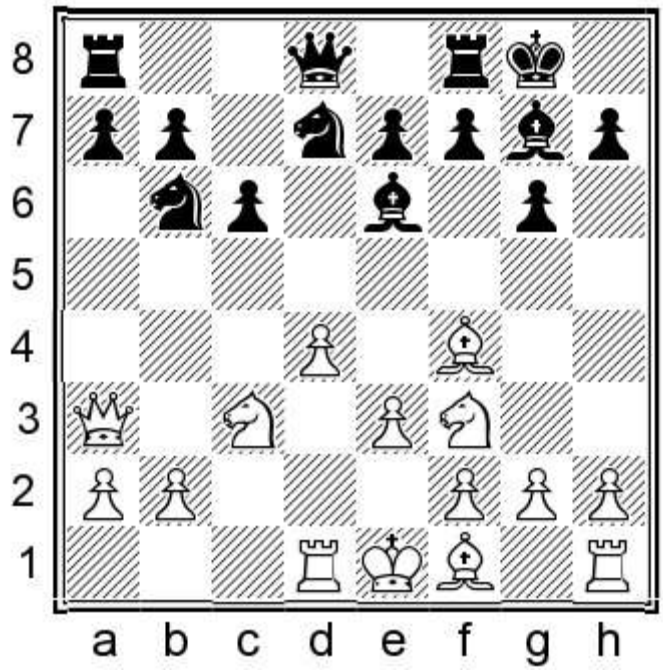
21.♗h6 [21.♗g3 f6! 22.♖fd1 ♖f7 23.♕a6 ♖d7 24.e4 ♖a8 25.♕b5 ♖b8 26.♕c5 ♗e6 27.♖xd7 ♕xd7 28.f3 a4–+] 21...♗xg2!? 22.♔xg2 ♖e8 We sacrificed the bishop just to make a defensive rook move next?!



Position after: 22...♖e8

Yes, I was also shocked when I saw this chess engine suggestion for the first time. Nonetheless, it works. We want to play ...♕h4 on the next move and trap the white bishop. 23.e4 White's best attempt to save the bishop lets us give a perpetual check after 23...♕h4 24.♗c1 ♕g4+ 25.♔h1 ♕f3+ 26.♔g1 ♕g4+=.

10...c6



Position after: 10...c6

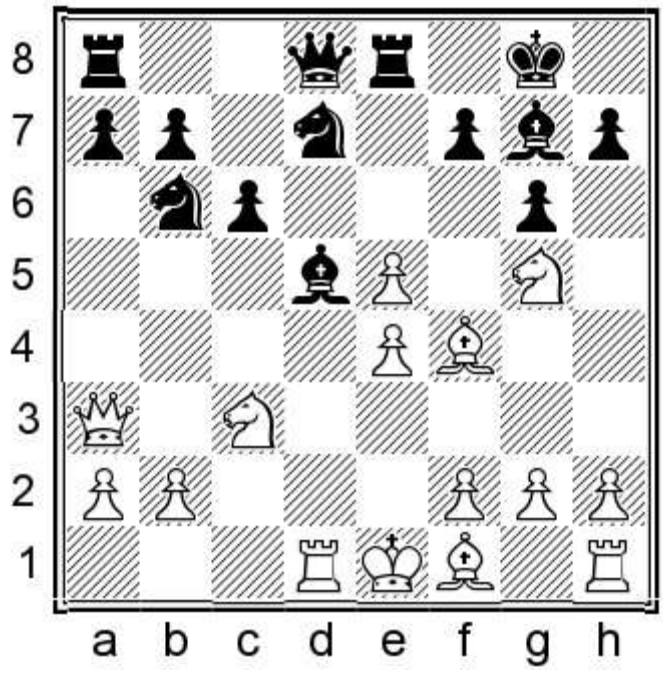
11.♘g5

11.♘e4 ♘d5 12.♗g3 ♕b6 13.♗e2 a5 14.0-0 ♕b4 15.♖c1 ♘5b6=

11...♗d5 12.e4 e5!

A much better response than the passive 12...♗c4. Wait until the next move to see the main idea.

13.dxe5 ♖e8!!

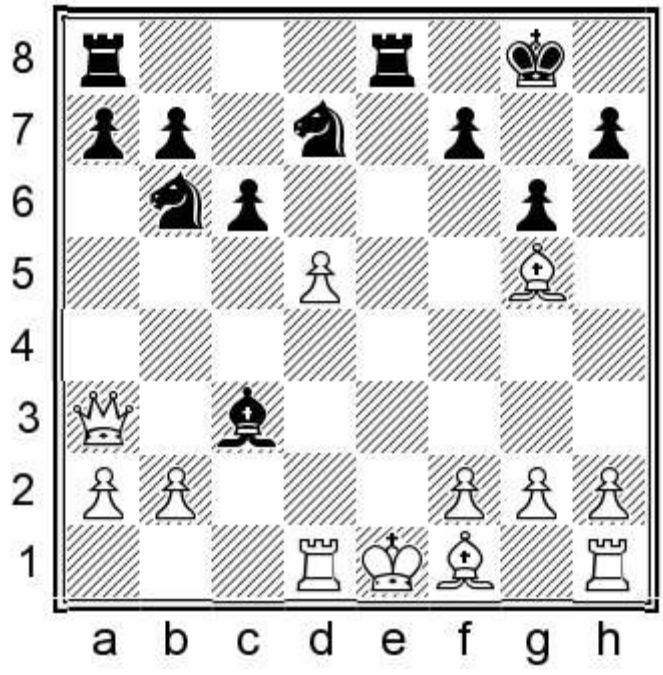


Position after: 13...♖e8!!

That's why I love chess! It has an infinite number of unexpected moves like 13...♖e8!! and never ceases to amaze even seasoned veterans like me (despite being 26 years old at the moment of writing this book, I have already spent almost 20 years playing chess!).

14.♘xd5

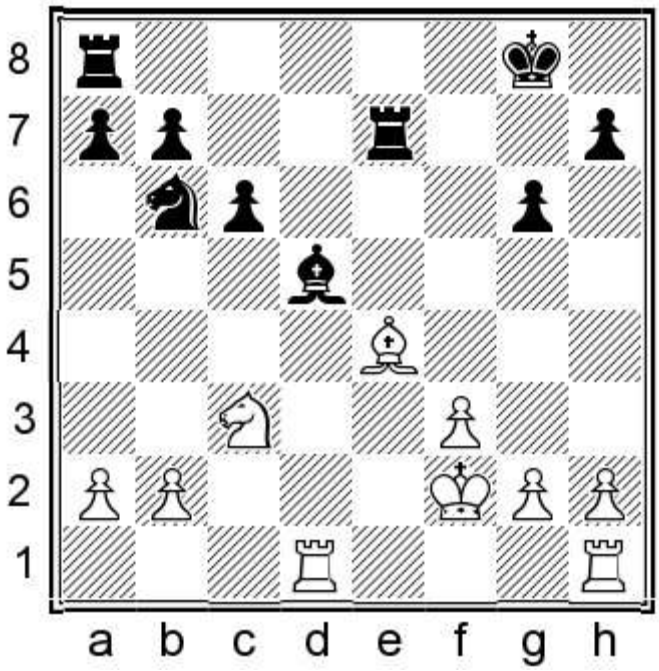
A) 14.exd5 ♗xe5 15.♗e2 [White can't save the extra piece after 15.♗e3 because of 15...♕xg5!!–+ 16.♗xg5? ♗xc3#



Position after: 16...♗xc3#

] 15...♗xf4 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♘ge4 ♕e7 18.♕b3 a5 19.a3 a4 20.♕a2 ♘f6 21.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22.0-0 ♗e5 23.♖d3 ♖ad8=

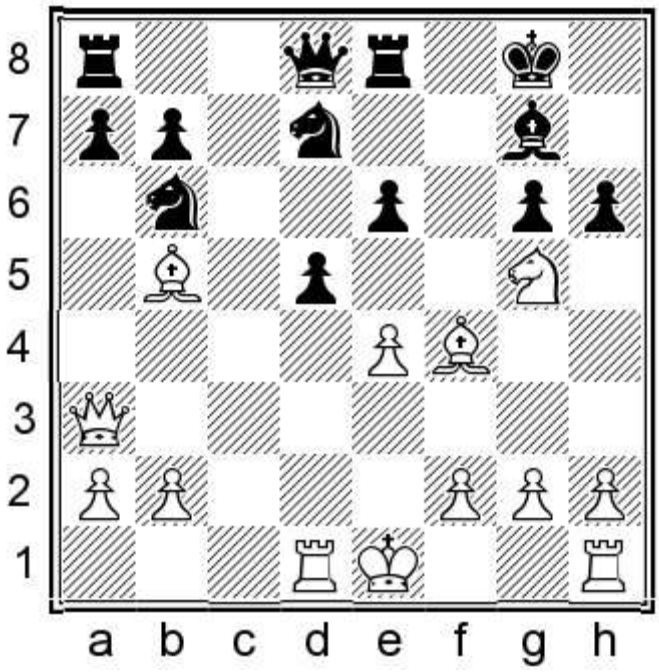
B) 14.♘f3 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖xe5 17.♗d3 ♕e7 18.♕xe7 ♖xe7 19.f3 f5 20.♔f2 fxe4 21.♗xe4



Position after: 21.♗xe4

21...♗xe4 22.♘xe4 ♘d5 23.♖he1 ♔g7 24.a3 ½-½ Jakovenko, D (2709) – Grischuk, A (2742) Sharjah 2017.

14...cxd5 15.e6 fxe6 16.♗b5 h6



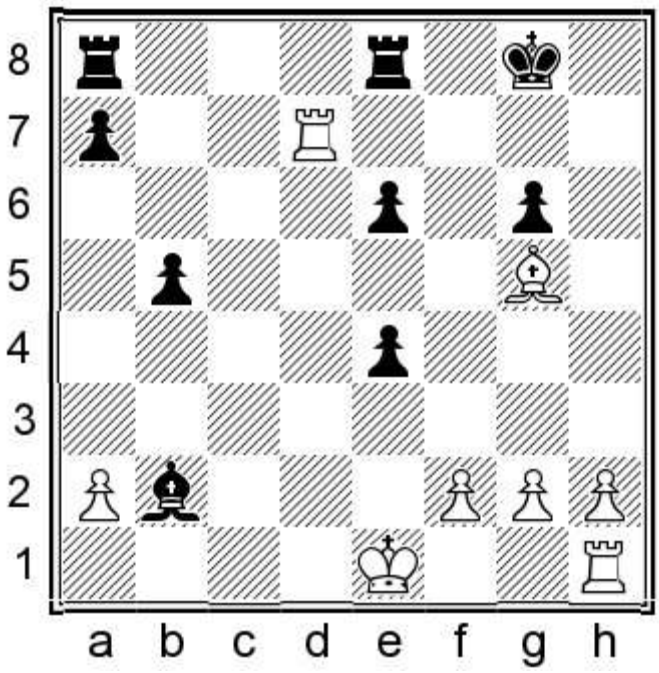
Position after: 16...h6

Time to get rid of the active knight on g5.

17.♘f3 ♕f6

Pushing the bishop away while also preparing to capture the e4-pawn.

18.♗e3 dxe4 19.♘g5 hxg5 20.♗xd7 ♘xd7 21.♖xd7 ♕xb2 22.♕xb2 ♗xb2 23.♗xg5 b5=

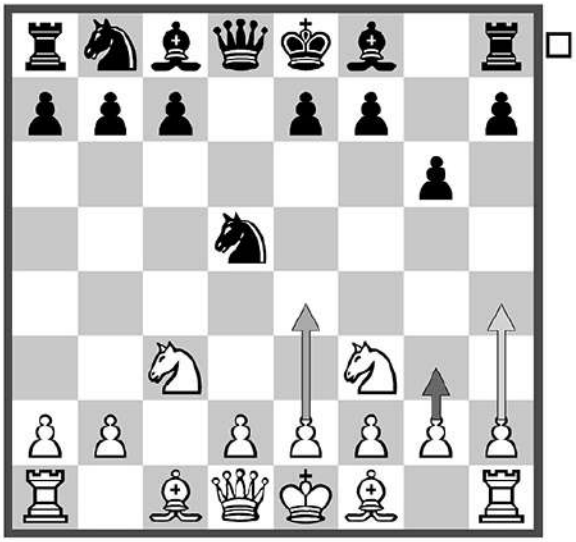


Position after: 23...b5=

We have reached a relatively uneventful and equal endgame. White is down a pawn, but we can't reasonably hope to win this position against any strong opponent due to the flaws in our pawn structure and White's activity on the 7th rank. That being said, we can't lose this either, thus a draw is the most likely result.

Chapter 15
5.e4, 5.h4 and 5.g3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 15 – 5.e4, 5.h4 and 5.g3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

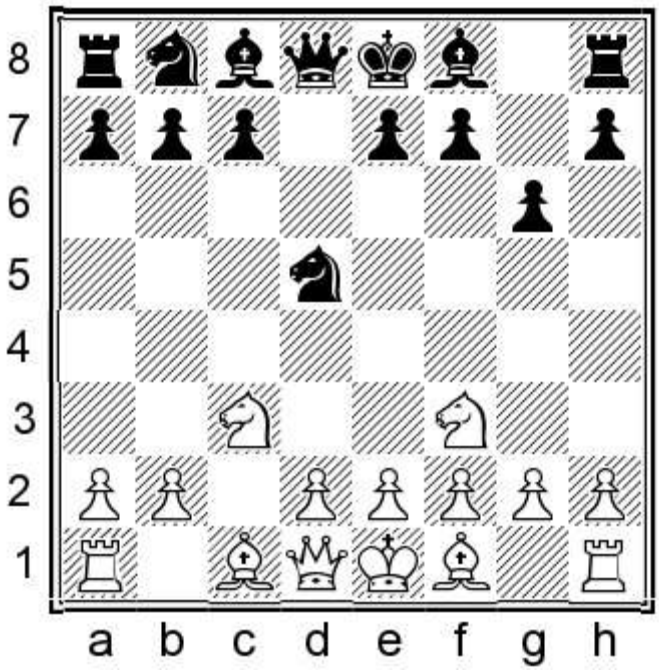
a) 5.e4, 4.h4

b) 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5 7.--

c) 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5 7.0-0

a) 5.e4, 4.h4

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5



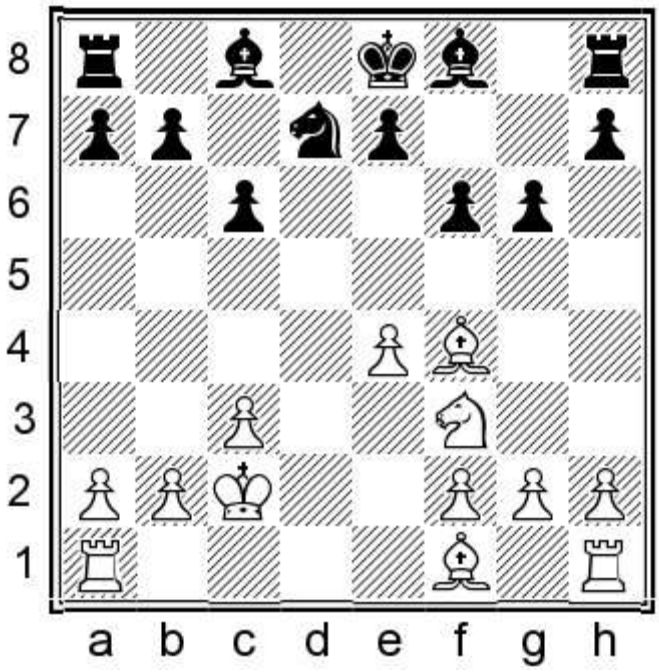
Position after: 4...♘xd5

As we continue to study the Anti-Grünfeld we now turn our attention to three pawn moves: 5.h4, 5.g3 and 5.e4.

5.h4

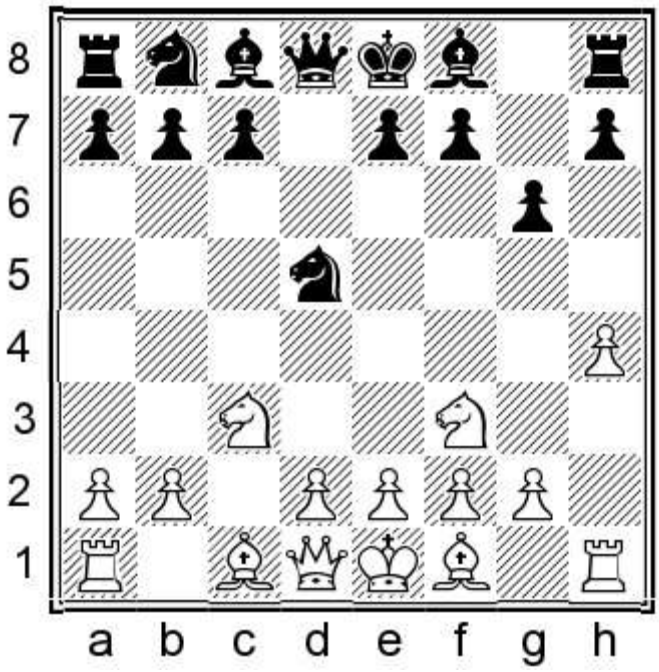
The readers may recall a very similar looking line 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.h4, which we covered in detail in chapter 7. In the Anti-Grünfeld this particular variation deserves special attention since Black, according to my analysis, has only one way to obtain equal play!

5.e4 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 [6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.d4 c5 transposes to the main position from chapter 2.] 6...♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 ♘d7 8.♗f4 c6 9.♔c2 f6! It makes more sense to prepare ...e7-e5 and then ...♗f8-c5 than the standard development of the bishop to g7.



Position after: 9...f6!

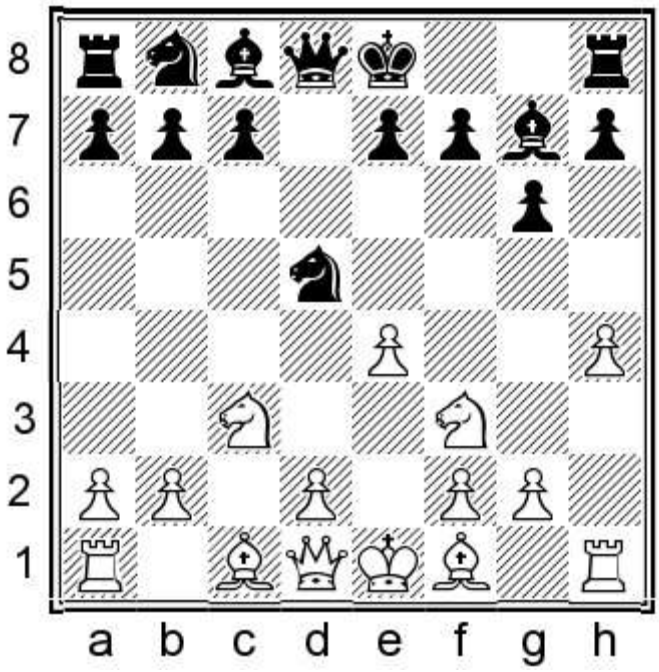
Whenever you face a similar pawn structure and the queens are off the board, the pawn on c3 stops any activity on the a1-h8 diagonal making the bishop on g7 significantly less useful than usual. 10.♘d2 e5 11.♗e3 ♗c5 12.♗xc5 ♘xc5 13.b4 ♘e6 14.♘c4 ♔e7=



Position after: 5.h4

5...♘xc3!

The natural 5...♗g7 unfortunately, allows White to gain an initiative and a better position after 6.e4!

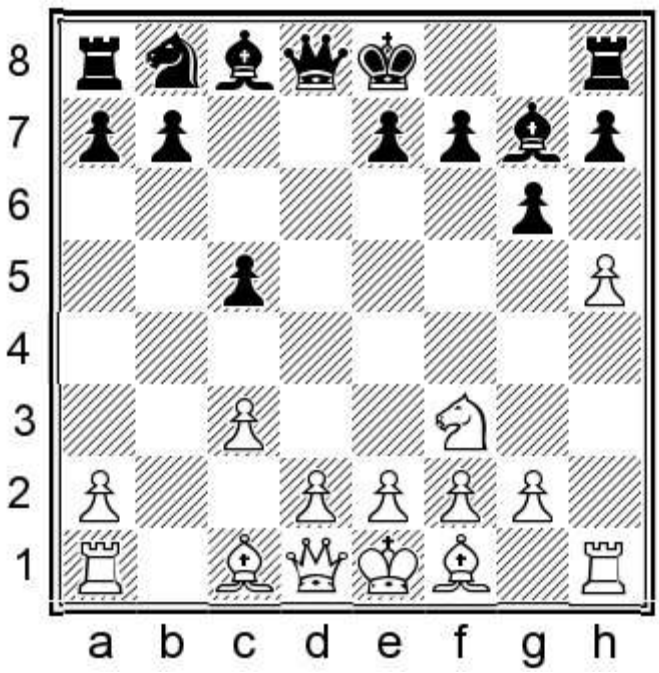


Position after: 6.e4!

6...♘xc3 [6...♘b6 7.d4 ♗g4 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♗e2±] 7.dxc3 ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘d7 [8...♗g4 9.♔c2 ♘d7 10.♗e3 ♘f6 11.♘d2±] 9.h5 ♘c5 10.h6 ♗f8 11.e5!±

6.dxc3

6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.h5 c5



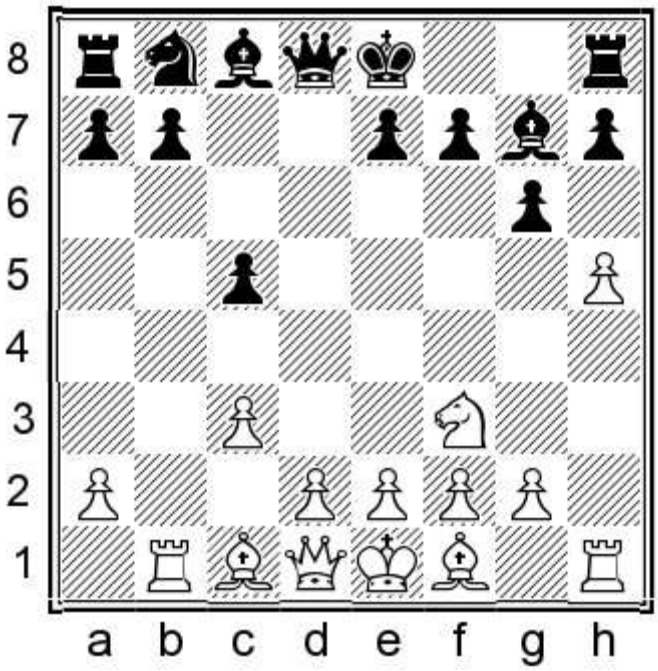
Position after: 7...c5

A) 8.g3 b6! We need to counter the upcoming bishop on g2 with our own bishop on b7. Once we successfully protect the h1-a8 diagonal White runs out of anything to attack. 9.♗g2 ♗b7 10.d4 [10.a4 ♘c6 11.♗a3 ♘e5 12.0-0 ♘xf3+ 13.exf3 0-0∓ ½-½ (43) Miroshnichenko, E (2690) – Shishkin, V (2511) Eforie Nord 2009] 10...♘c6 11.0-0 cxd4 12.cxd4 0-0 13.h6 ♗h8 14.e3 ♖c8 15.♗d2 e5=

B) 8.♕a4+ ♕d7 9.♕h4 ♗f6 10.♕f4 ♘c6 11.g3 ♕f5 12.♗h3 ♕xf4 13.gxf4 ♗f5 14.♗a3 b6 15.♗xf5 gxf5 16.0-0-0 e6=

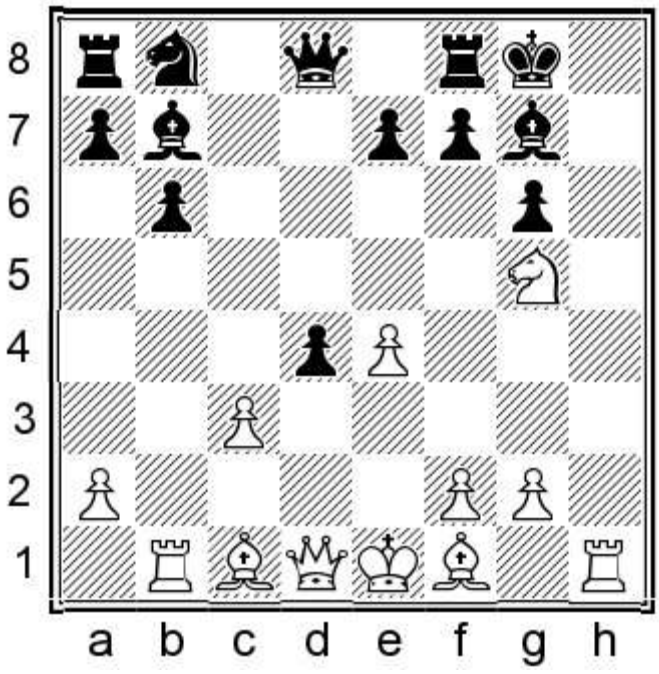
C) 8.hxg6 hxg6 9.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 10.♕a4+ ♘c6 11.♗a3 ♕d6! 12.d4 ♗d7 13.♕c2 b6 14.♖d1 ♕c7 15.e4 ♗g7=

D) 8.♖b1



Position after: 8.♖b1

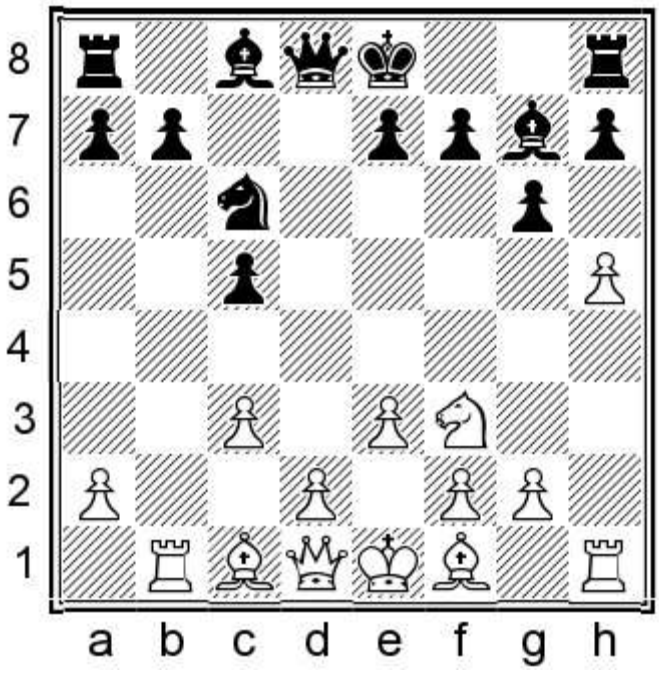
D1) 8...b6? It is a bit too soon to develop the bishop on b7 if White hasn't declared an intention to develop the bishop to g2 with g3. 9.e4 0-0 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.d4 ♗b7 12.♘g5 cxd4



Position after: 12...cxd4

13.♗c4! The World Champion and perhaps the best player in the history of chess missed this opportunity! [13.♕g4? ♘d7 14.♕h3 ♘f6 15.e5 ♘h5∓ ½-½ (59) Carlsen, M (2875) – Mamedyarov, S (2774) Zagreb 2019] 13...♘d7 14.♕b3 ♘e5 [14...e6 15.cxd4+–] 15.cxd4 ♕xd4 16.♕h3 ♖fd8 17.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 18.♕h7+ ♔f8 19.♘e6+ ♔e8 20.♘xd4+–

D2) 8...♘c6 9.e3



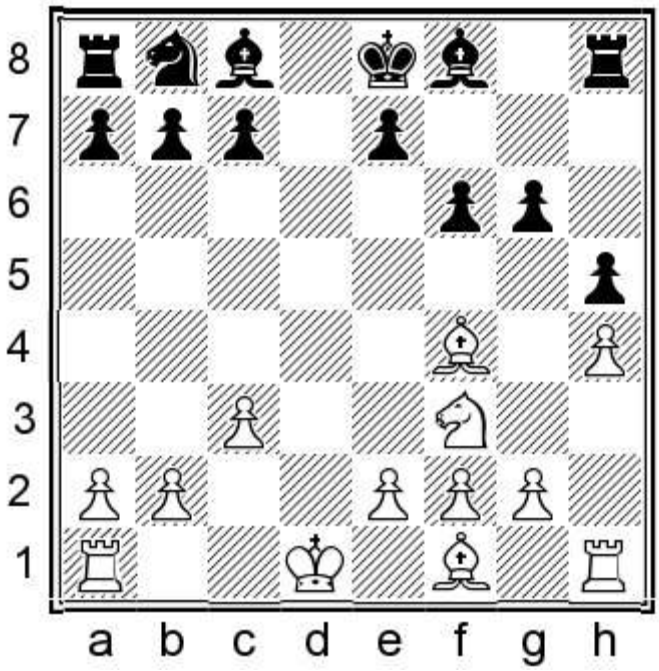
Position after: 9.e3

[9.e4 0-0 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♗e2 b6 12.♔f1 ♕d6 13.♕c2 ♖d8 14.♗a3 e5=]

D2.1) Premature castling leads to a lost position! More than 15 years ago I learned from the Ukrainian legend, Vassily Ivanchuk, that castling should be avoided unless you have no other useful moves. 9...0-0? 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♘g5!± b6? 12.♕a4! ♕c7 13.♕h4+–

D2.2) 9...b6! 10.d4 0-0 11.♗d3 ♗g4 12.hxg6 hxg6=

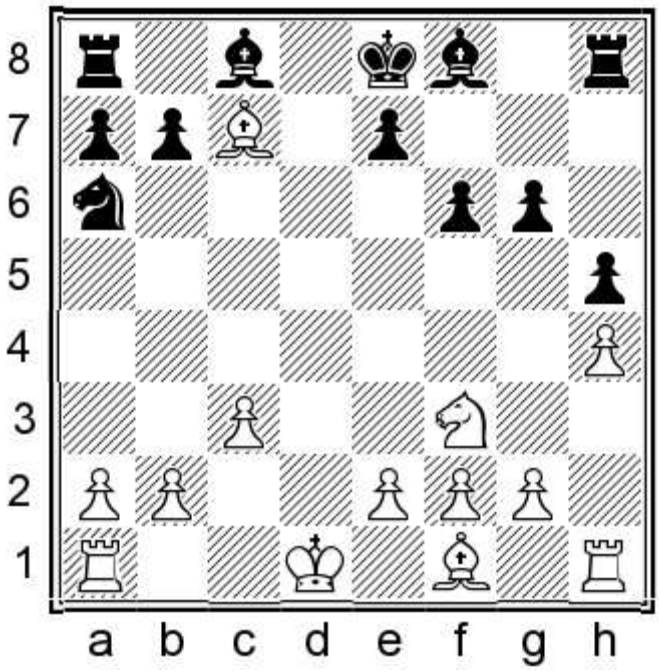
6...♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 h5 8.♗f4 f6!



Position after: 8...f6!

What a beautiful pawn sacrifice! Chess nowadays has evolved to the point where positional pawn sacrifices have become an integral part of opening theory. The basic chess equation can now be written concisely as: Initiative + No weaknesses > Pawn.

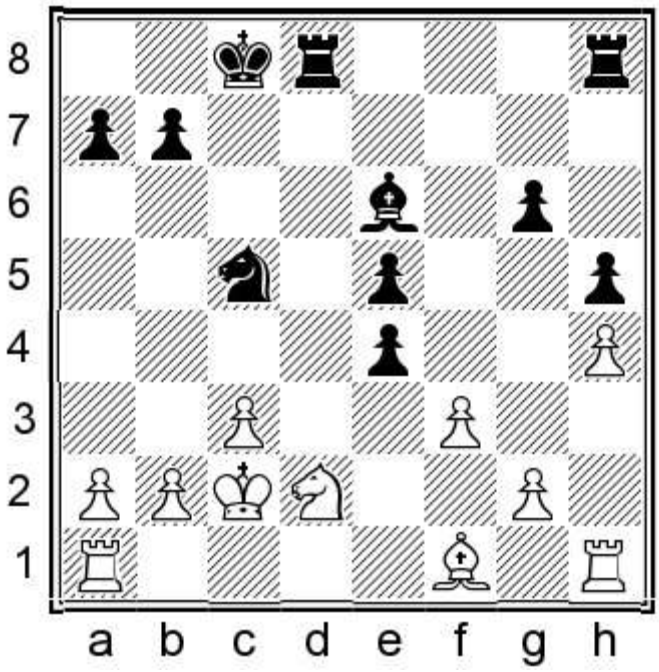
9.♗xc7 ♘a6



Position after: 9...♘a6

10.♗g3

A) 10.♗f4 e5 11.♗e3 ♗c5 12.♗xc5 ♘xc5 13.♘d2 ♗e6 14.e4 0-0-0 15.♔c2 f5 16.f3 fxe4

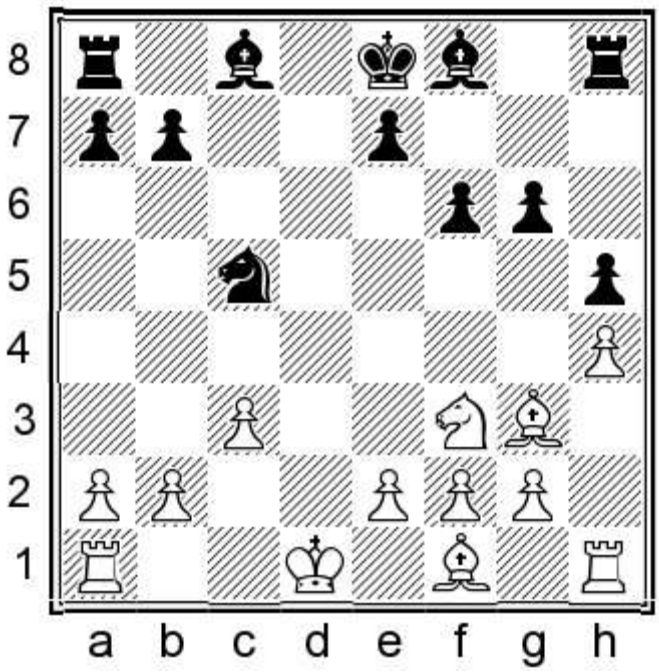


Position after: 16...fxe4

17.♖e1 [17.fxe4 ♖hf8 18.♖e1 ♗g4! 19.♘f3 ♗xf3 20.gxf3 ♖xf3 21.♗c4 ♖f4∓; 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.fxe4 ♖hf8 19.♖e1 ♗g4 20.♔c1 ♖f2∓] 17...exf3 18.gxf3 ♗f5+ 19.♔c1 ♖he8=

B) 10.♗h2 ♘c5 11.♘d2 ♗h6 12.e3 ♗f5 13.♗b5+ ♔f8 14.♘b3 a6! 15.♗e2 ♘a4 16.♔c1 e5 17.♖d1 ♔e7⩱

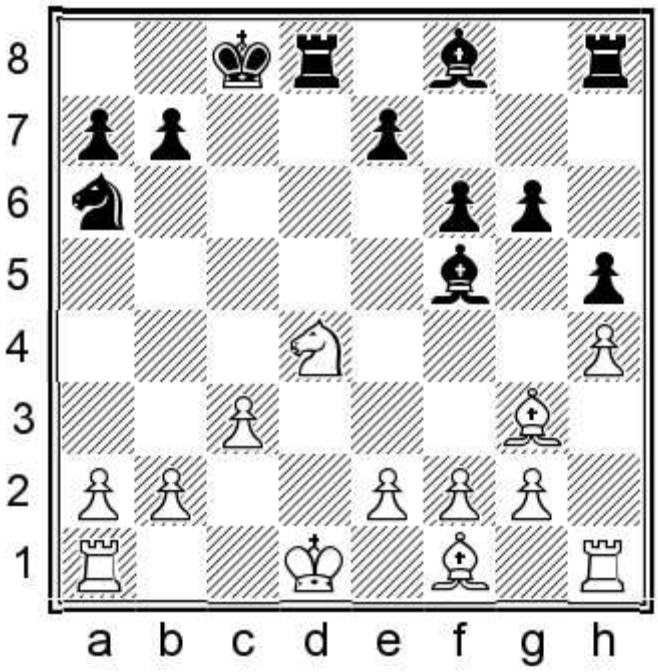
10...♘c5!N



Position after: 10...♘c5!N

An important novelty which fully justifies the pawn sacrifice and enables Black to obtain full compensation. The threat of ...♘e4 on the next move forces White to resort to defense.

10...♗f5? was played by a renowned Grünfeld expert and a former top – 20 in the world, Emil Sutovsky. Unfortunately for Black, this moves appears to be a waste of time as the bishop will need to retreat to a less active position on d7 after White plays ♘f3-d4. 11.♘d4 0-0-0

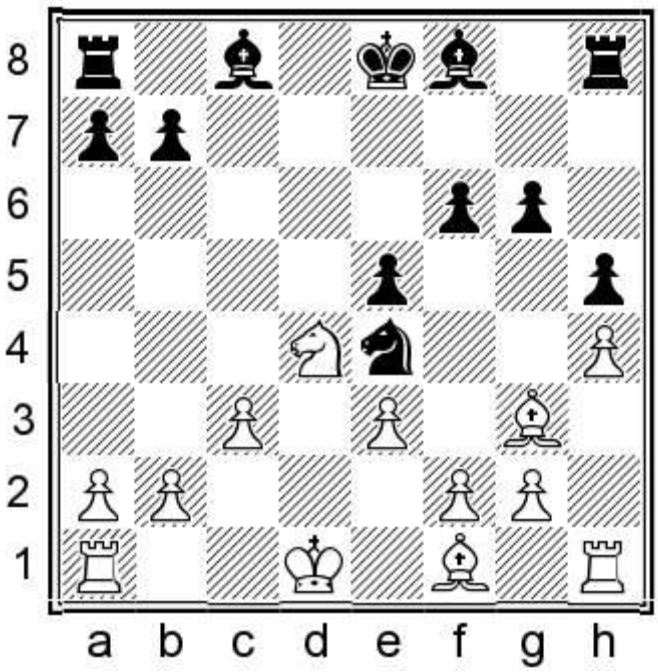


Position after: 11...0-0-0

12.♔e1! [12.♔c1 1-0 (39) Korobov, A (2678) – Sutovsky, E (2647), Poikovsky 2018] 12...♗d7 13.♘b3 e5 14.♖d1 ♘c5 15.♘xc5 ♗xc5 16.e4 ♗e6 17.b3± White has a healthy extra pawn and great chances to convert it to a win.

11.♘d2

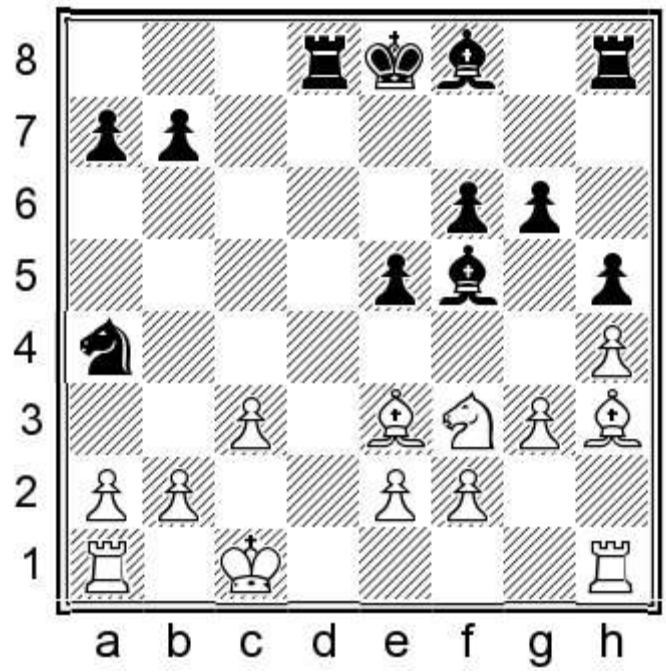
A) 11.♘d4? ♘e4 12.e3 e5



Position after: 12...e5

13.♘f3 [13.♘b5 ♗g4+ 14.♔e1 0-0-0 15.♘xa7+ ♔b8 16.♘b5 ♗h6! 17.♗h2 ♖d2 18.f3 ♗xe3 19.♗g1 ♗f4 20.♗h2 ♗xh2 21.♖xh2 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♖xh2 23.fxe4 ♖d8 24.a4 ♖xb2 25.a5 ♖h2∓] 13...♗c5 14.♗b5+ ♔e7 15.♔e2 ♗f5 16.♗h2 ♖hd8∓

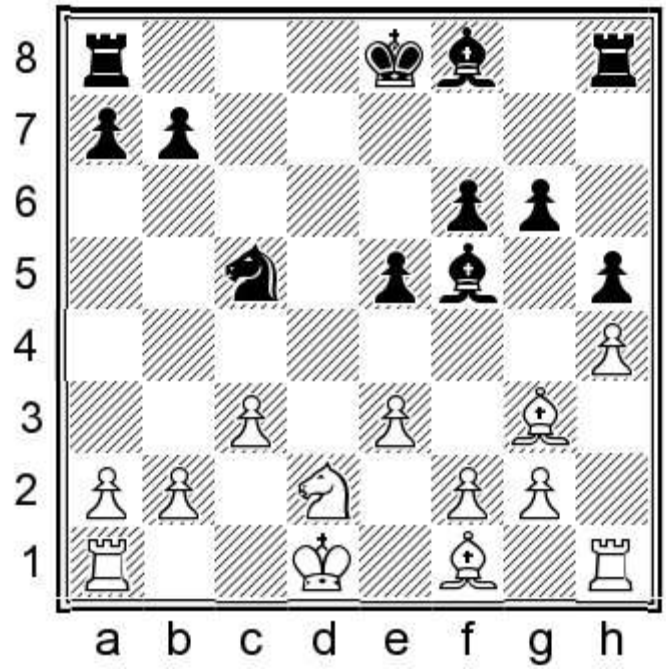
B) 11.♗f4 e5 12.♗e3 ♘a4 13.♔c1 ♗f5 14.g3 ♖d8 15.♗h3



Position after: 15.♗h3

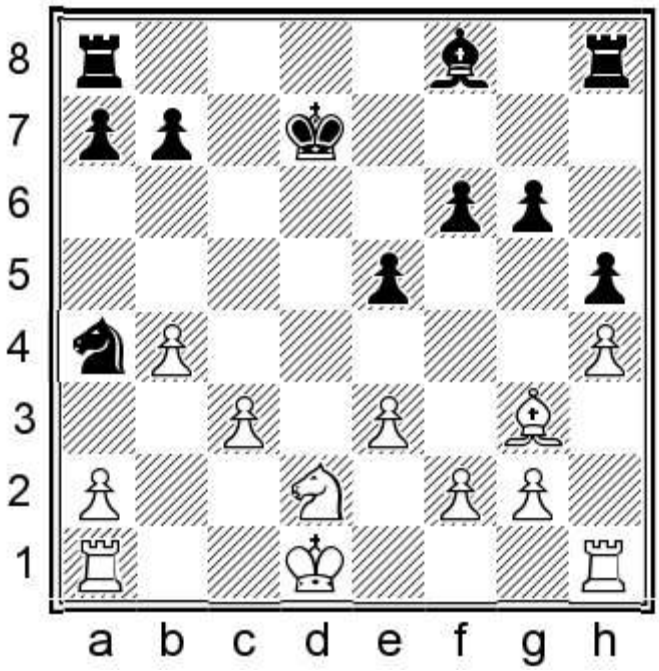
15...♘xc3! 16.♗xf5 [16.bxc3 ♗a3#] 16...♘xe2+ 17.♔c2 gxf5 18.♖ae1 e4 19.♖xe2 exf3 20.♖ee1 ♔f7 21.♗xa7 ♖a8 22.♗d4 ♖xa2=

C) 11.e3 e5 12.♘d2 ♗f5



Position after: 12...♗f5

13.b4 [13.♗b5+ ♔e7 14.a4 ♗h6 15.♔e2 ♖hd8 16.♖hd1 ♖ac8⩲] 13...♘a4 14.♗b5+ ♗d7 15.♗xd7+ ♔xd7

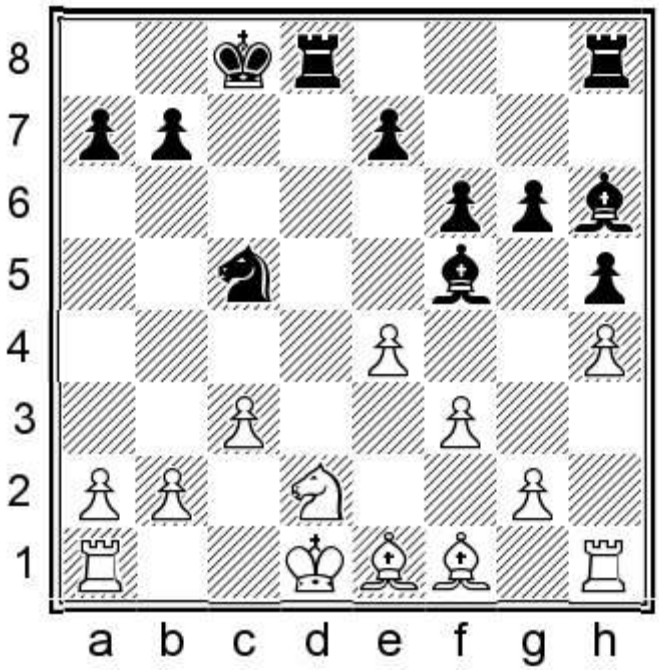


Position after: 15...♔xd7

16.♔c2 [16.♖c1 ♖c8 17.♘b1 ♗e7 18.♔c2 b5 19.♔b3 a5 20.f3 ♔e6 21.e4 ♖hd8↑] 16...♖c8 17.♔b3 ♘xc3 18.♖hc1 ♘d5 19.♖xc8 ♔xc8 20.♘e4 ♗e7=

11...♗f5 12.♔e1

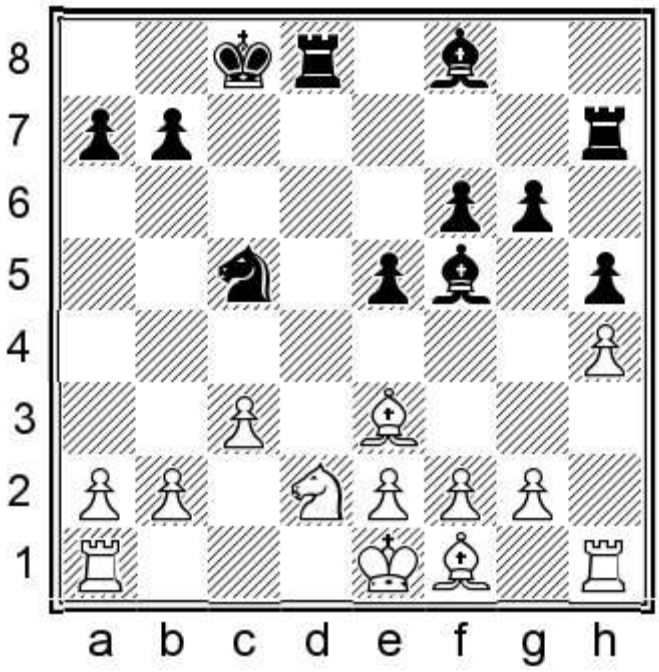
12.f3 ♗h6 13.e4 0-0-0 14.♗e1



Position after: 14.♗e1

14...♗xe4! a simple “kindergarten” level tactic. I like to jokingly call it “kindergarten” level and say that even my cat would probably find it in no time. 15.fxe4 ♗xd2 16.♔c2 ♗f4∓ Black has a clear advantage. Black’s domination on the dark squares, more active pieces and control over the d-file outweigh the usual importance of the bishop pair.

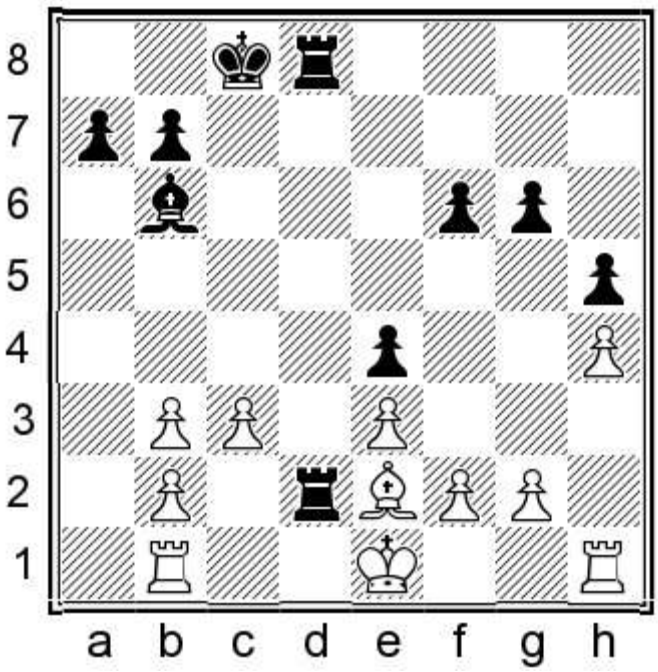
12...0-0-0 13.♗f4 e5 14.♗e3 ♖h7!



Position after: 14...♖h7!

A very typical rook lift which is worth remembering and applying not just in the Grünfeld but in other openings as well. Black is going to double the rooks on the d-file.

15.♗xc5 ♗xc5 16.♘b3 ♗b6 17.e3 ♖hd7 18.♗e2 ♗c2 19.♖c1 ♗xb3 20.axb3 ♖d2 21.♖b1 e4



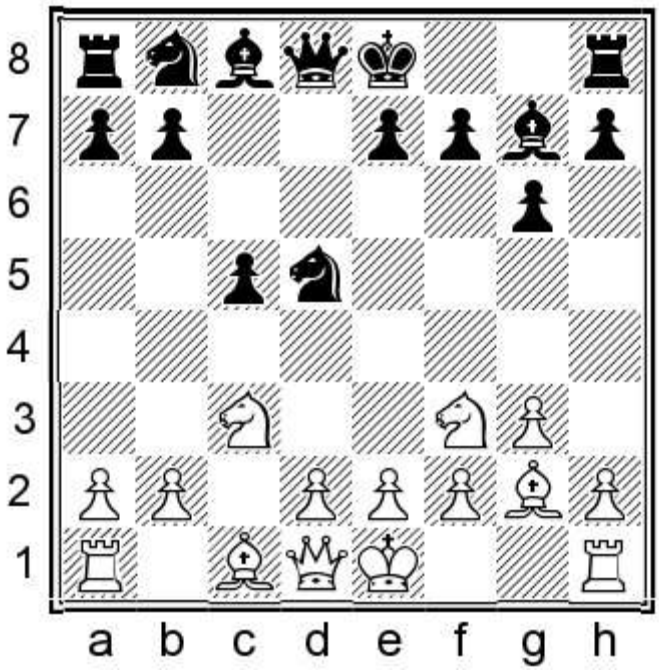
Position after: 21...e4

Black has full compensation for the pawn. The following moves are not strictly necessary and are provided to illustrate how the game may evolve should both sides play the best moves according to the chess engine.

22.♖h3 ♗c7 23.g4 hxg4 24.♗xg4+ f5 25.♗e2 f4 26.exf4 ♗xf4 27.h5 gxh5 28.♖h4 ♖f8 29.♖xf4 ♖xe2+ 30.♔xe2 ♖xf4=

b) 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5 7.--

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5

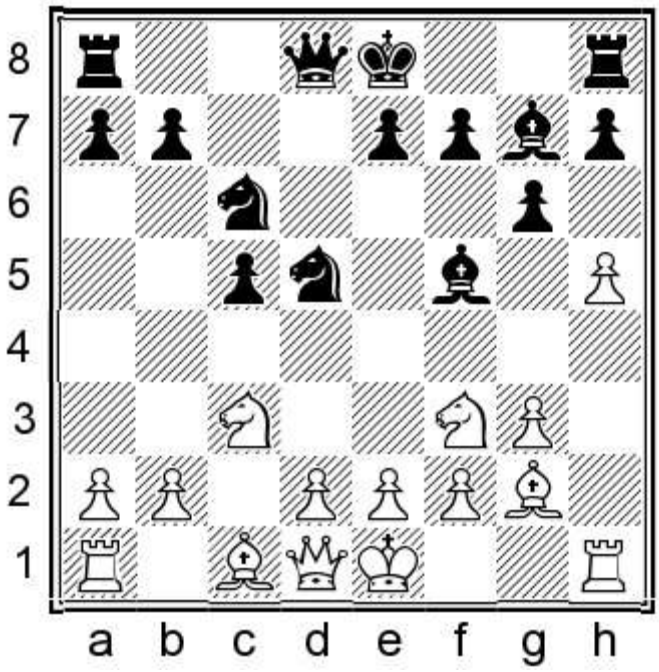


Position after: 6...c5

7.♕a4+

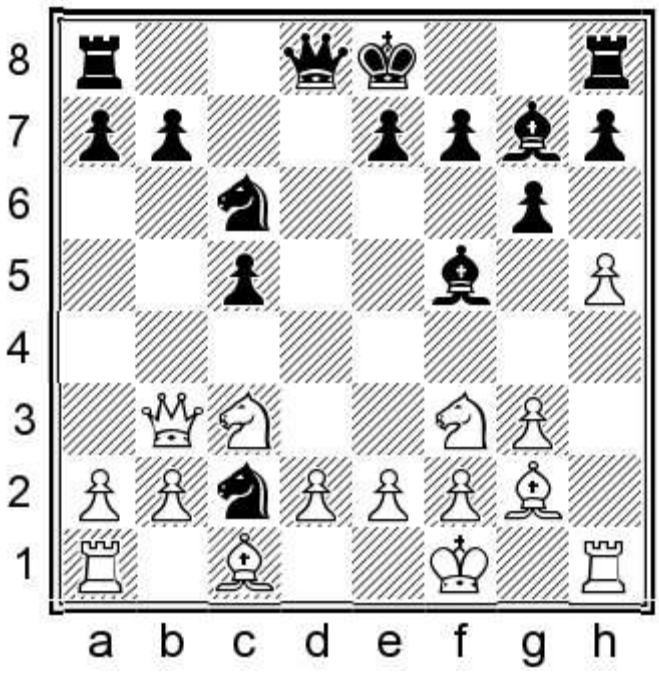
A) 7.♘g5 e6 8.♘ge4 ♘a6 9.d3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♗g5 f6 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♘c3 ♗e6 14.♗f4 ♕d7 15.d4 ♖ad8= ½-½ (49) Vitiugov, N (2729) – Kramnik, V (2796) Nizhnij Novgorod 2013.

B) 7.h4 ♘c6 8.h5 ♗f5



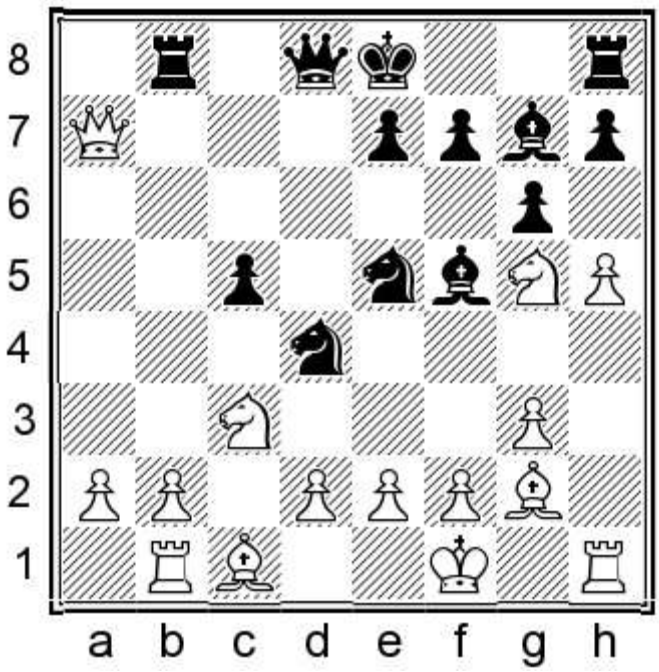
Position after: 8...♗f5

9.♕b3 [9.♘h4 ♗e6 10.♘f3 ♗f5=; 9.♕a4 ♘b6 10.♕b5 ♖c8 11.d3 a6 12.♕b3 c4 13.dxc4 ♘a5 14.♕b4 ♘c6 15.♕b3 ♘a5=] 9...♘db4 10.♔f1 ♘c2



Position after: 10...♘c2

11.♘g5 [11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 13.♖b1 ♕b6∓ 0-1 (50) Vachier Lagrave, M (2768) – Leko, P (2734) Bilbao 2014. 11.♖b1 ♘2d4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♕xb7 ♖b8 14.♕a6 ♗xb1 15.♘xb1 ♕b6∓ 0-1 (97) Kovalenko, I (2659) – Swiercz, D (2637) Martuni 2017] 11...♘e5 12.♖b1 ♘d4 13.♕xb7 ♖b8 14.♕xa7 ½ – ½ (28) Van Wely, L (2695) – Dominguez Perez, L (2739) Internet 2017.



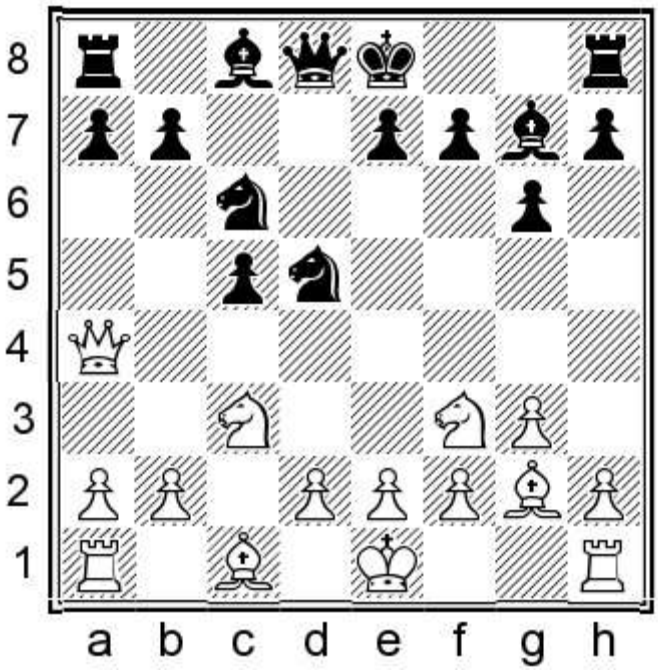
Position after: 14.♕xa7

14...♘xe2!! 15.♔xe2 0-0!! This beautiful knight sacrifice induces the king to leave its safe position on f1. 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♘d5 ♖e8 18.♖a1 ♗d3+ 19.♔d1 e6–+

C) 7.d4 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 cxd4 transposes to 7.0-0.

D) 7.♕b3 ♘b4 8.a3 ♘4c6 9.d3 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♕a4 ♗b7 12.♕h4 ♕d7=

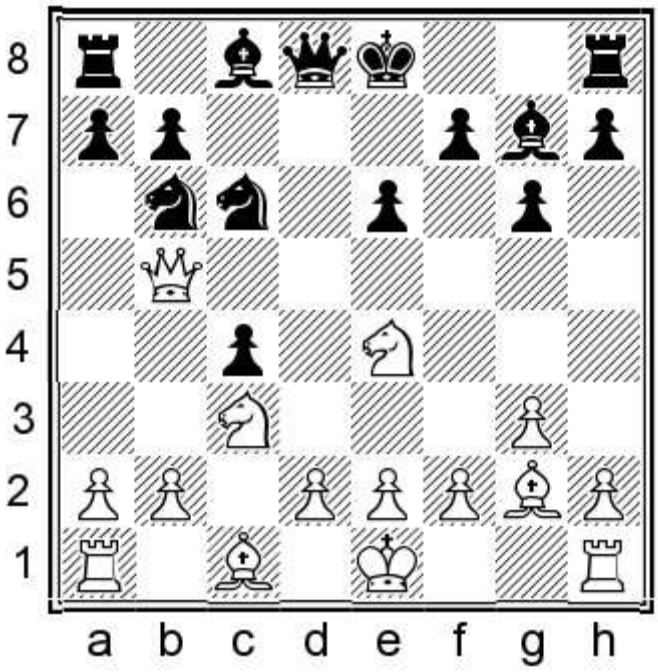
7...♘c6



Position after: 7...♘c6

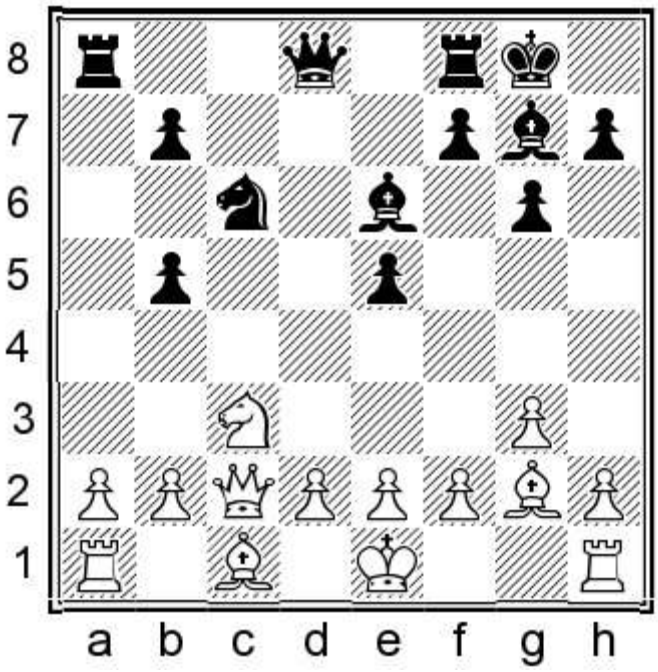
8.♕c4

A) 8.♘g5 e6 9.♘ge4 ♘b6 10.♕b5 [10.♕d1 c4 11.d3 cxd3 12.exd3 0-0 13.0-0 h6 14.♗e3 f5 15.♘c5 e5=] 10...c4



Position after: 10...c4

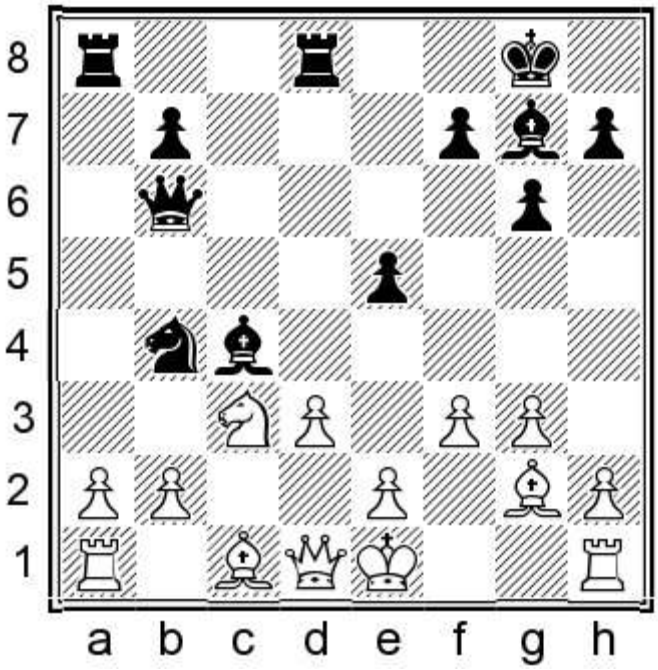
11.♘a4 [11.♕c5 ♗f8 12.♕g5 ♕xg5 13.♘xg5 h6 14.♘f3 ♗g7 15.0-0 0-0∓] 11...0-0 12.♘xb6 axb6 13.♕xc4 e5 14.♕c2 ♗e6 15.♘c3 b5!



Position after: 15...b5!

A typical pawn sacrifice, commonly employed to disturb White's queenside and open the files for attack. 16.♘xb5 [16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.b3 ♗f5 18.d3 e4! 19.dxe4 ♗xe4 20.♘xe4 ♗xa1–+ 0-1 (35) So, W (2779) – Vachier Lagrave, M (2731) Saint Louis 2015] 16...♘b4 17.♕d1 ♗d5! 18.f3 [18.0-0 ♗xg2

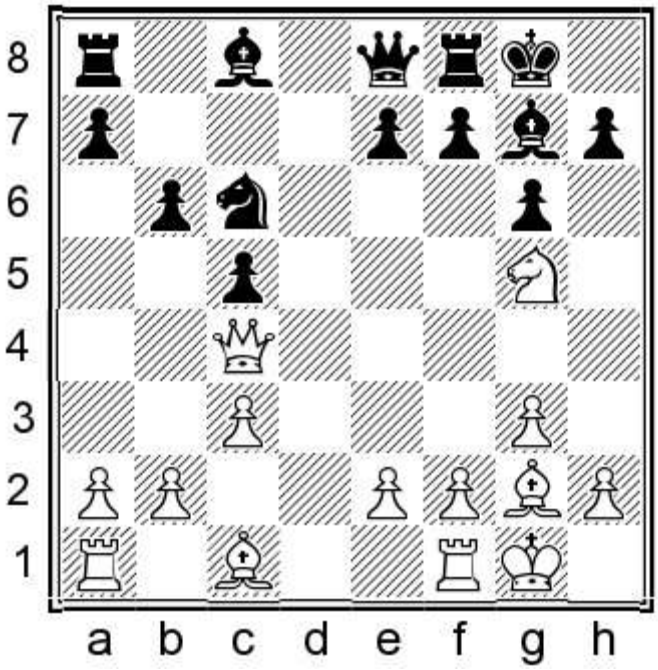
19.♔xg2 ♕d5+ 20.f3 ♕xb5–+] 18...♕b6 19.♘c3 ♗c4 20.d3 ♖fd8–+



Position after: 20...♖fd8−+

B) 8.♕b5 ♘db4 9.0-0 ♕b6 10.d3 ♕xb5 11.♘xb5 0-0 12.a3 ♘c2 13.♖b1 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘2d4 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4=

C) 8.0-0 0-0 9.♕c4 ♘xc3 10.dxc3 b6 11.♘g5 ♕e8!

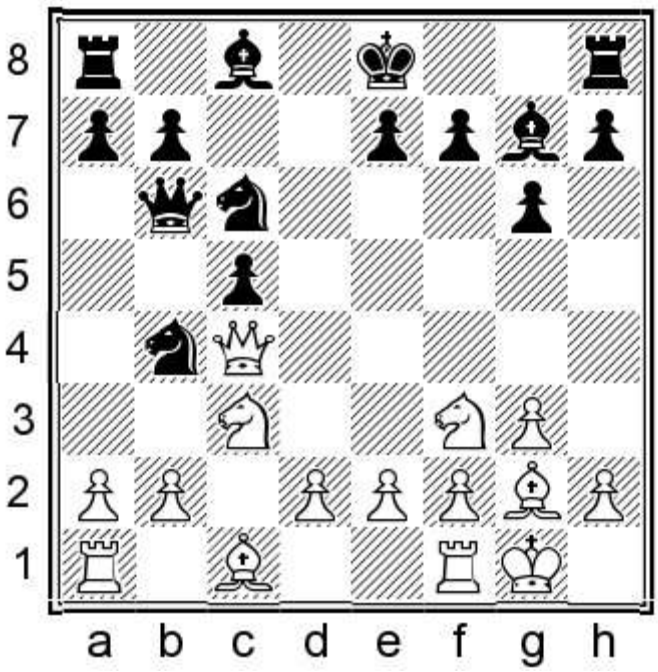


Position after: 11...♕e8!

A precise move which leaves our bishop with an option to be developed to a6 once the white queen

leaves c4. 12.♕h4 h6 13.♘f3 ♔h7 14.♗e3 ♗a6 15.♖fe1 ♖c8= ½-½ (28) Matlakov, M (2684) – Kovalenko, I (2667) Poikovsky 2016.

8...♘db4 9.0-0 ♕b6



Position after: 9...♕b6

10.♘a4

10.d3? ♗e6 11.♕h4 ♘c2 12.♘a4 [12.♖b1 ♗xc3–+] 12...♕b4–+

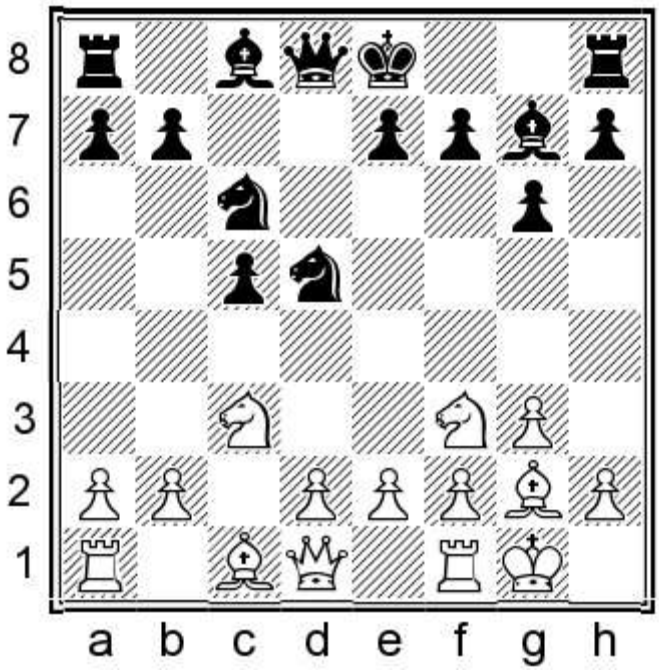
10...♕a6! 11.♕xa6 ♘xa6 12.d3 0-0 13.♗d2 b6=

c) 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5 7.0-0

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 c5 7.0-0

In practice White has managed to try any conceivable move in the current position but none of them usually present any danger for Black.

7...♘c6



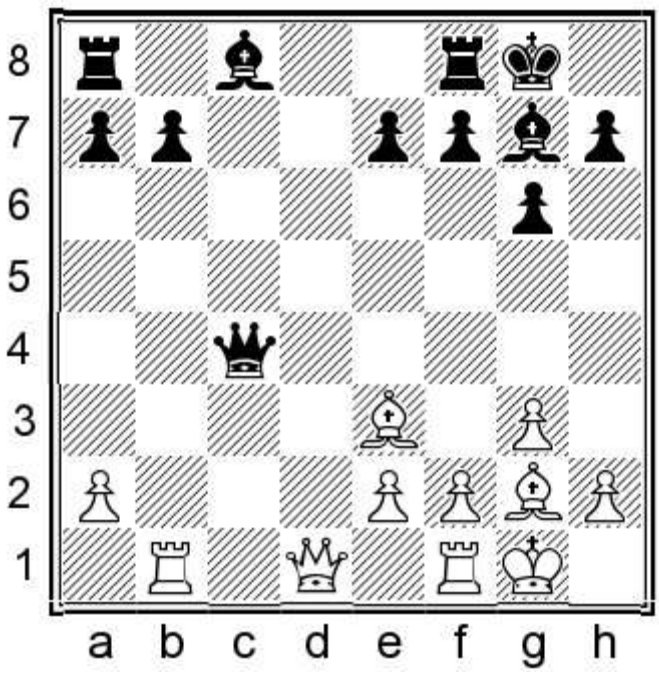
Position after: 7...♘c6

8.♘xd5

A) 8.♕a4 transposes to 7.♕a4.

B) 8.♘g5 e6 9.♘ge4 b6 10.♕a4 ♗d7 11.♘d6+ ♔e7 12.♘de4 ♘d4 13.♕d1 ♗c6 14.e3 ♘f5∓

C) 8.d4 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♕xd4 12.♖b1 0-0 13.♗e3 ♕c4



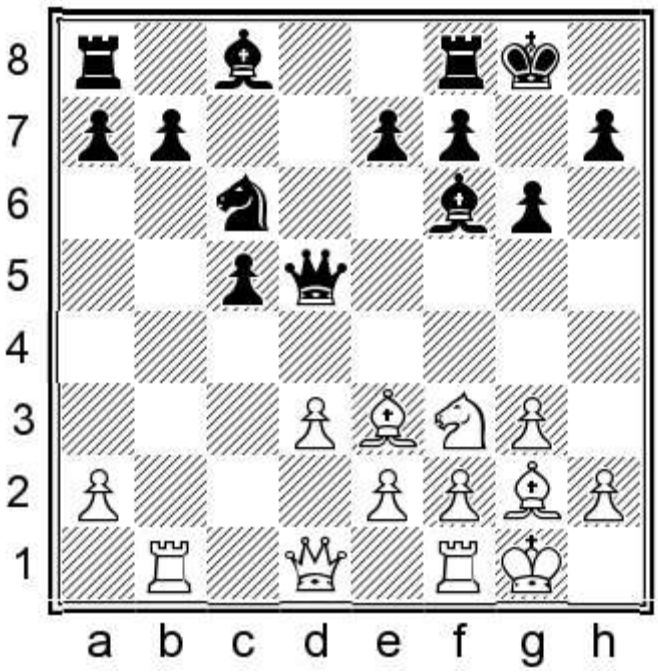
Position after: 13...♕c4

C1) 14.♕d2 ♗e6 15.♖xb7 [15.♖fc1 ♖ad8 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.♖xc4 ♗xc4 18.♗xa7 b5 19.♗c6 ♗xa2 20.♖xb5 ½-½ (50) Shankland, S (2671) – So, W (2786) Saint Louis 2018] 15...♖ad8 16.♕a5 ♕xe2=

C2) 14.♗d5 ♕a6 15.♕b3 ♕xe2 16.♗c5 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 ♕xe6 18.♕xe6 fxe6 19.♖xb7 ♖f5 20.♖c7 a5 21.♗xe7 [21.♖e1 ♗e5 22.♖c6 ♔f7 23.g4 ♖g5 24.h3 ♗g7 25.♖c7 ♗f6=] 21...♗d4=

D) 8.♕b3 ♘c7 9.d3 0-0 10.♗d2 b6 11.♖ac1 ♗b7 12.♖fd1 ♕d7∓ ½-½ (45) Harikrishna, P (2743) – Swiercz, D (2646) Doha 2015.

8...♕xd5 9.d3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♗xb2 11.♖b1 ♗f6

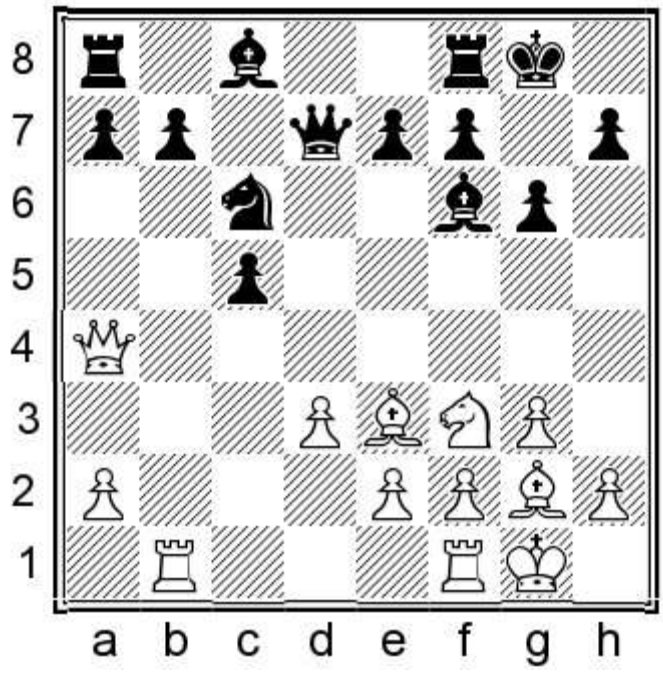


Position after: 11...♗f6

12.♕a4

12.♘d4 ♕xa2 13.♘xc6 [13.♖a1 ♕b2 14.♖b1 ♕a2=] 13...bxc6 14.♗xc6 ♗h3 15.♗xa8 ♖xa8 16.♖e1 ♗c3 17.f3 c4 18.dxc4 ♗xe1 19.♕xe1 ♕xc4= ½-½ (46) Malakhov, I (2442) – Votava, J (2520) Pardubice 2012.

12...♕d7!



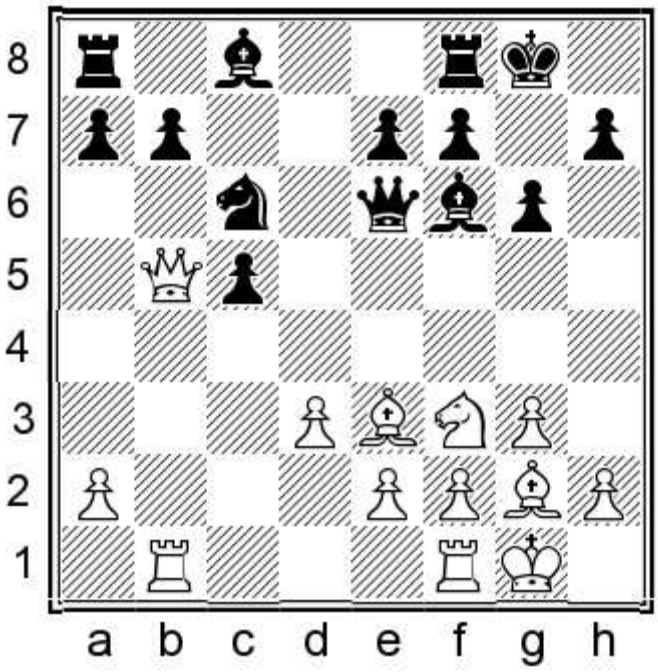
Position after: 12...♕d7!

A fabulous idea. Black gives up an extra pawn but forces a series of trades thus neutralizing White's initiative.

The recent decline in popularity of old-fashioned gambits like the King's Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.f4) is explained by the increased awareness about the following strategy: accept the sacrificed pawn and then, rather than holding on to it, give it back at the most appropriate time.

13.♗xc5

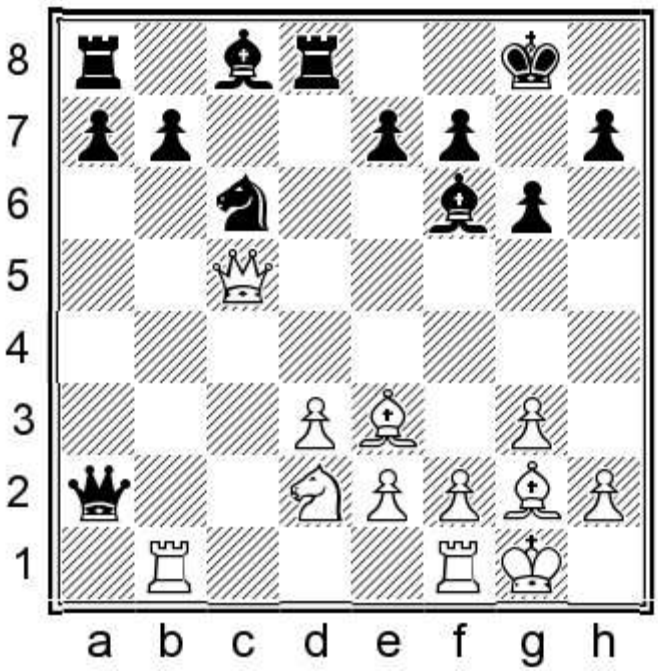
13.♕b5 ♕e6



Position after: 13...♕e6

A) 14.♕a4 ♖d8 15.♗xc5 ♕xe2 16.♖fe1 ♕xd3 17.♖bd1 b5! [17...♕f5 ½-½ (27) Petrosian, T (2607) – Wei, Y (2714) Moscow 2016] 18.♖xd3 bxa4 19.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 20.♗xe7 ♗xe7 21.♖xe7 ♔f8∓

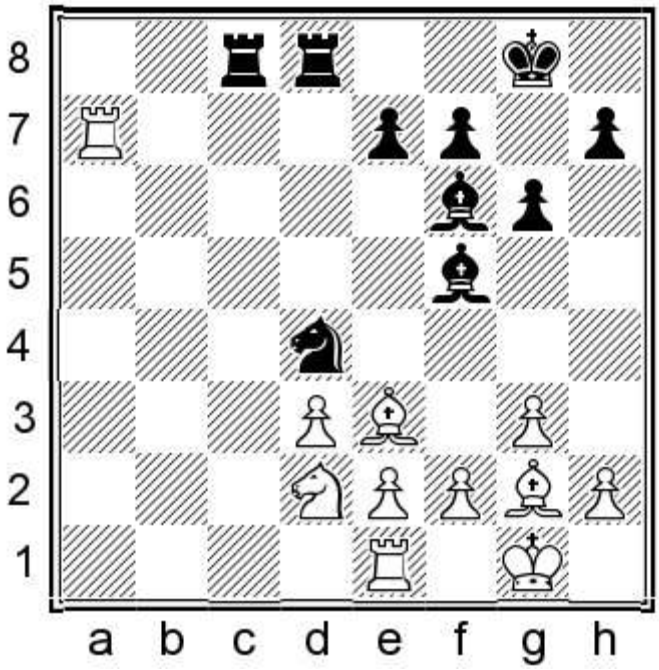
B) 14.♕xc5 ♕xa2 15.♘d2 ♖d8



Position after: 15...♖d8

16.♖fe1 [16.♘e4 ♕xe2 17.♘xf6+ exf6 18.d4 ♕h5 19.♕xh5 gxh5 20.d5 ♘e7 21.♖fd1 ♘f5 22.♗f4 ♘d6=] 16...♗f5! We need to develop the queenside at any cost! 17.♖xb7 ♘d4 18.♖c7 ♖ac8 19.♕xa7

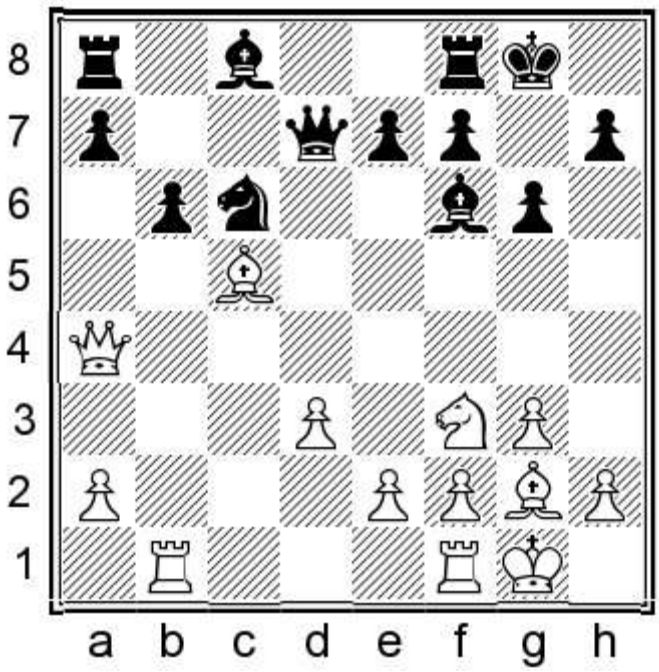
♕xa7 20.♖xa7



Position after: 20.♖xa7

20...♖c1! 21.♔f1 ♘xe2! Black gets back a pawn and equalizes the chances. 22.♘e4 [22.♔xe2 ♗xd3+ 23.♔f3 ♖xe1] 22...♖xe1+ 23.♔xe1 ♗xe4 24.dxe4 ♘d4=

13...b6

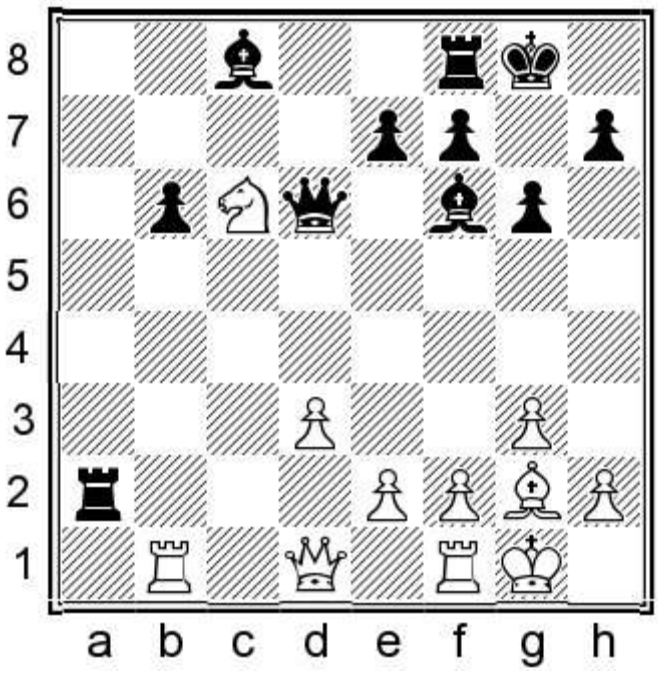


Position after: 13...b6

14.♗xb6

14.♗e3 ♘d4 15.♕d1 ♗b7 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♘xd4 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♕xd4 19.♕b3 ♖ac8= ½-½ (30) Wang, H (2713) – Wei, Y (2706) China 2015.

14...♘d4 15.♕d1 axb6 16.♘xd4 ♖xa2 17.♘c6 ♕d6!



Position after: 17...♕d6!

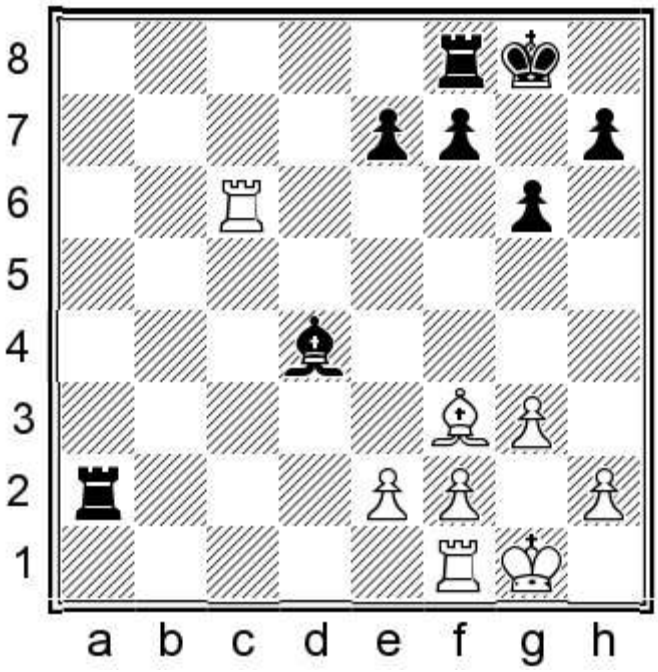
Preparing ...♗g4 and neglecting the unimportant pawn on b6.

18.d4

A) 18.♖xb6 ♗g4 19.♘b4 ♕xb6 20.♘xa2 ♕b2 21.♘c1 ♖c8∓ White is so passive that we are better even being down a pawn.

B) 18.♘b4 ♖a5 19.d4 ♗d7 20.e3 ♖c8=

18...♗d7 19.♖xb6 ♗xc6 20.♖xc6 ♕xd4 21.♕xd4 ♗xd4 22.♗f3

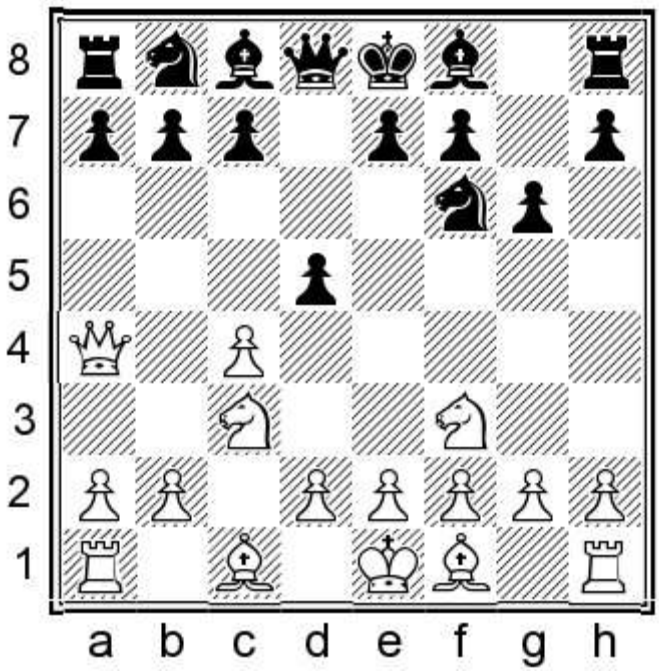


Position after: 22.♗f3

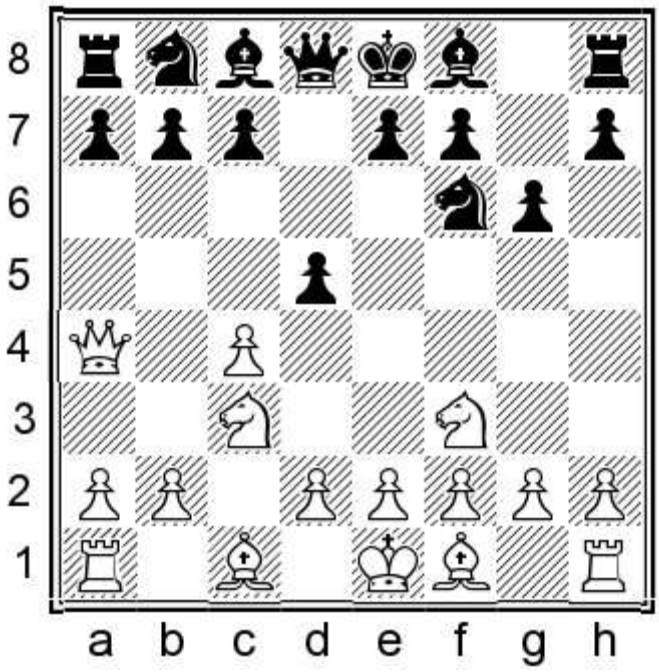
½-½ Pantsulaia, L (2590) – Fier, A (2579) Tbilisi 2014.

Chapter 16
4.♕a4+

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕a4+



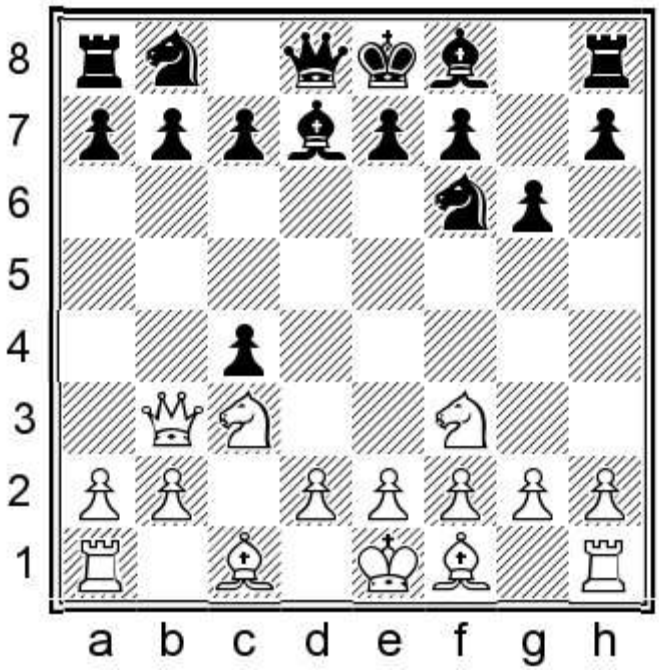
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕a4+



Position after: 4.♕a4+

A tricky check attempted in a bit over 1000 games. White wants to disrupt Black's normal course of development by provoking either ...c6 or ...♗d7, neither of which is necessary in the fight against White's center.

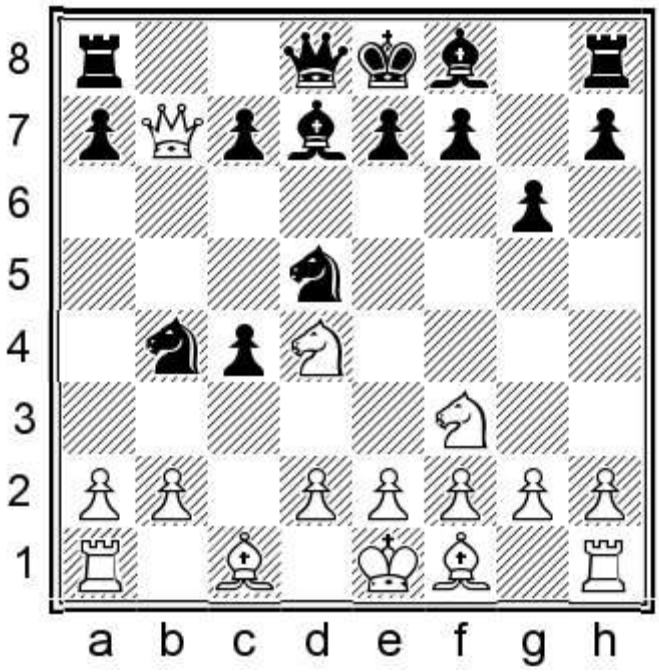
4...♗d7 5.♕b3 dxc4



Position after: 5...dxc4

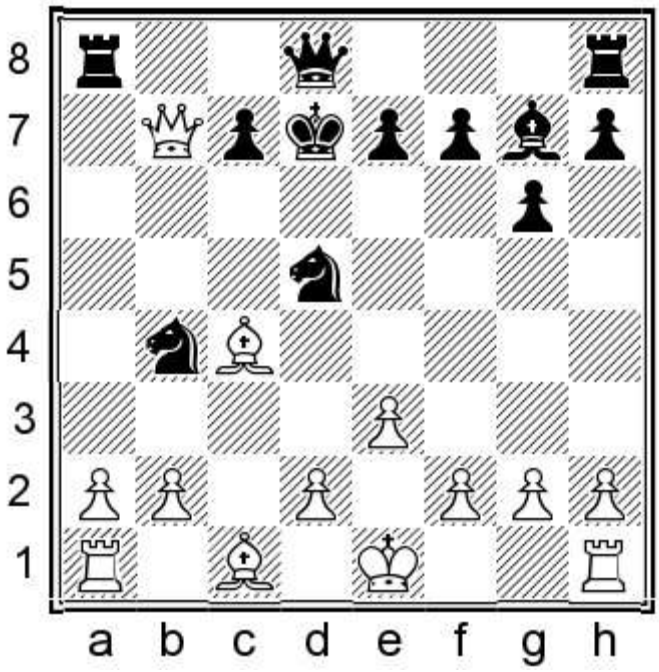
6.♕xc4

6.♕xb7? I was astonished to learn that White got excited about the b7-pawn in only 1 (!) game out of 833. Seems like nowadays everybody knows not to endanger his or her own queen by taking suspicious pawns early in the game. 6...♘c6 7.♘b5 ♘d5 8.♘bd4 ♘cb4



Position after: 8...♘cb4

Believe it or not, Black is winning on move 8! 9.♘e5 ♖b8 10.♕xa7 ♗g7 11.♘xd7 ♖a8 12.♕b7 ♗xd4 13.e3 ♗g7 14.♗xc4 ♔xd7



Position after: 14...♔xd7

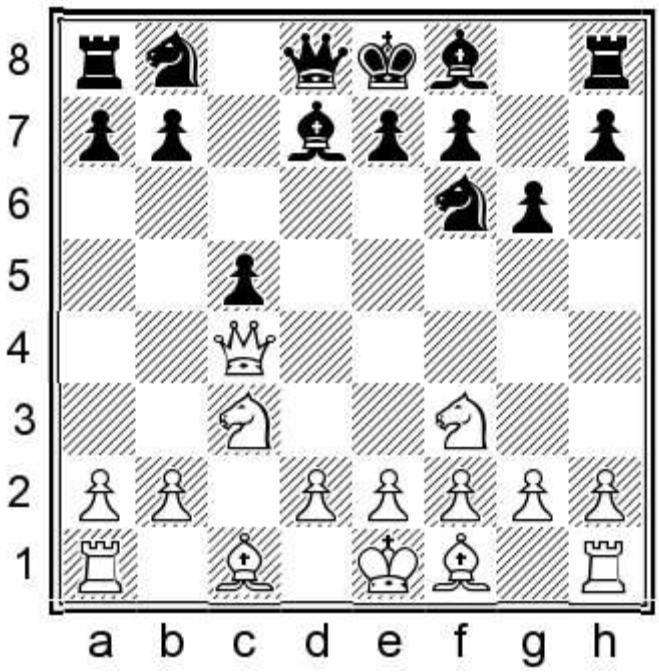
A rare case when the king is actually useful in the opening. Wilhelm Steinitz, the first world champion and a big fan of early king moves in the opening, would have been very happy to see this! On a side note, he has invented a bizarre looking line 1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4 exf4 4.d4!? ♕h4+ 5.♔e2. 15.♗xd5

♖b8 16.♕a7 ♘xd5–+

6...a6

The easiest option for Black.

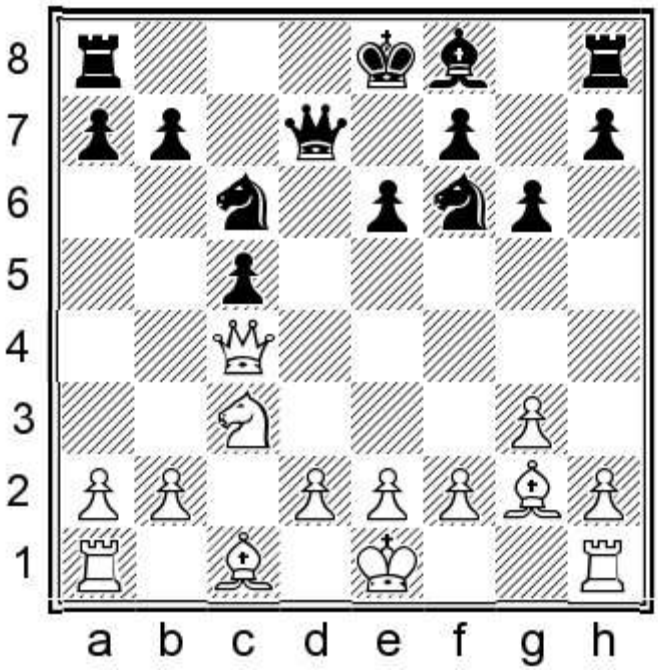
Deserving of a lot of attention is yet another pawn sacrifice 6...c5!?



Position after: 6...c5!?

It took me hours of intense analysis to fully understand why it works. To summarize the conclusions in a brief form: Black prevents d2-d4 thus fighting effectively against White's major idea of building a powerful center, Black has sufficient compensation in case White accepts the pawn sacrifice due to faster development and vulnerability of the white queen. Now, let us see how the concrete variations work out.

A) 7.♘e5 e6 8.g3 ♘c6 9.♘xd7 ♕xd7 10.♗g2

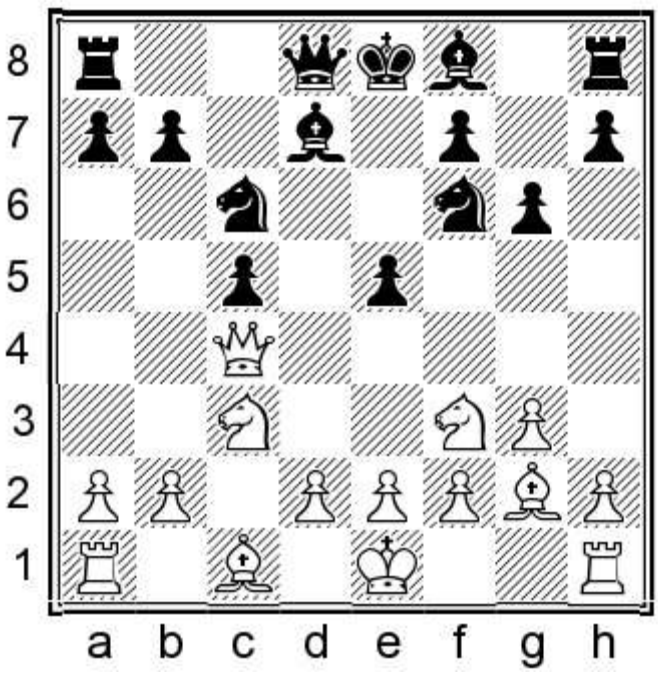


Position after: 10.♗g2

10...♖c8 [10...♘d4 11.0-0 ♖c8 12.a4 ♗e7 13.b3 0-0= ½-½ (60) Pelletier, Y (2581) – Sutovsky, E (2696) Porto Carras 2011] 11.0-0 b6 12.♕a4 ♗g7 13.d3 0-0=

B) 7.♕xc5 ♘c6 8.e4 e5 9.♕b5 ♗g7 10.♕b3 0-0 11.d3 ♗e6 12.♕d1 h6 13.♗e2 ♘h5⩲

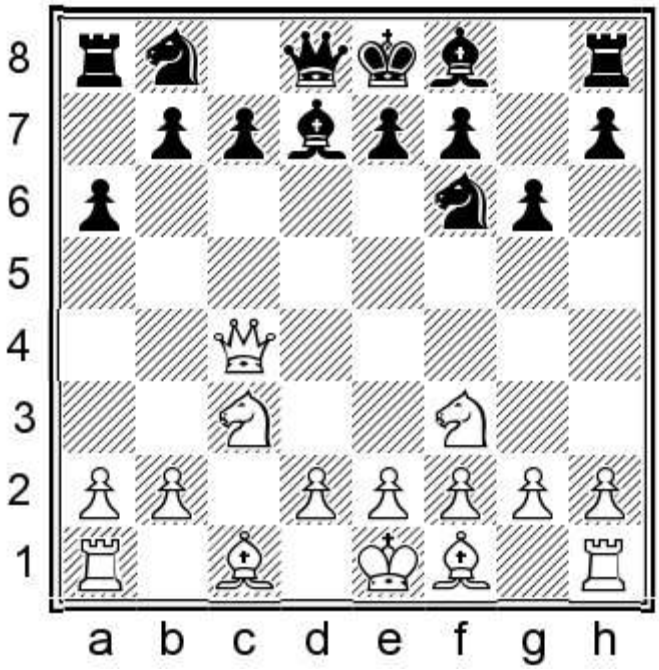
C) 7.g3 ♘c6 8.♗g2 e5



Position after: 8...e5

9.♘g5 [9.0-0 h6! 10.b3 ♗e7=] 9...♕e7 10.d3 h6 11.♘ge4 ♖c8 12.0-0 b6 13.♗e3 ♗g7 14.♖ac1 0-0=

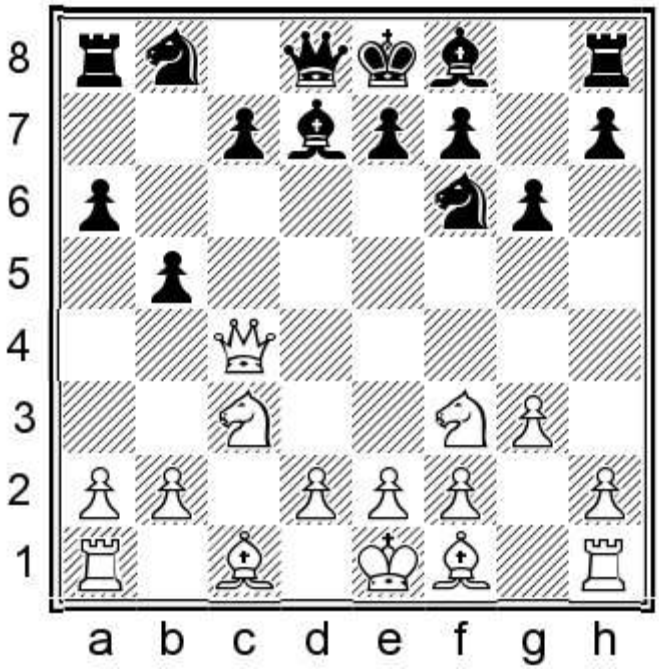
Back to 6...a6.



Position after: 6...a6

7.d4

A) Quite uncommon and for good reasons is the bishop fianchetto: 7.g3 b5

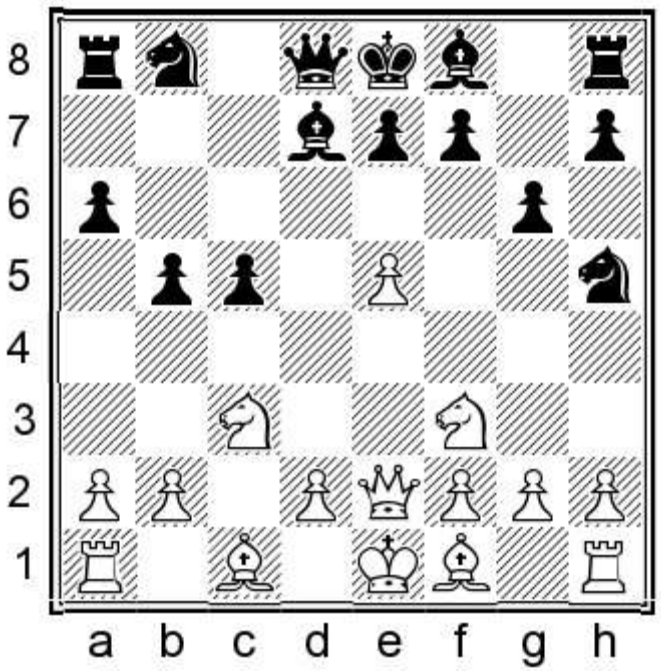


Position after: 7...b5

8.♕b3 [8.♕h4 c5 9.♗g2 ♗c6 10.0-0 ♗g7 11.d4 cxd4 12.♖d1 ♘bd7 13.♕xd4 ♕c7=] 8...c5 9.d3 ♘c6

10.♗g2 ♗g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗e3 ♘a5 13.♕c2 ♖c8=

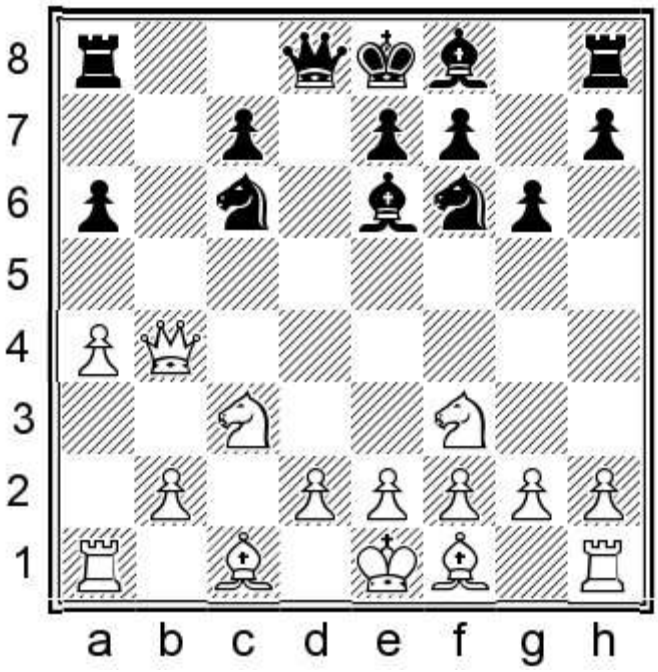
B) 7.e4 b5 8.♕e2 [8.♕b3 c5 9.e5 ♗e6 10.♕d1 ♘d5 11.a4 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 b4 13.cxb4 cxb4 14.d4 ♗d5∓] 8...c5 9.e5 ♘h5



Position after: 9...♘h5

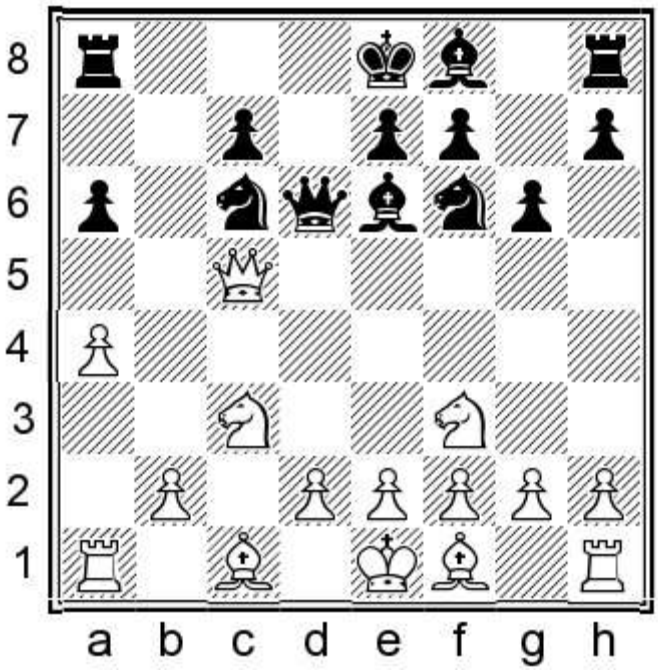
The best move is 10.a4 which leads to an unexpected forced draw if both sides play objectively the strongest moves. [10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c6 12.♘b3 b4 13.♘d5 ♗e6 14.♘f4 ♘xf4 15.♗xf4 ♗g7 16.♕e3 0-0 17.♗e2 ♗xb3! 18.axb3 ♘d4∓; 10.♘e4 ♘c6 11.♘xc5 ♗g4 12.♕e4 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♘d4 14.♕e4 ♖c8 15.b4 f5 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.♕d3 e5 18.♗b2 ♗xc5 19.bxc5 ♕d5!→] 10...♘c6 11.axb5 axb5 12.♖xa8 ♕xa8 13.♕e4 b4 14.♘d5 ♕a1 15.♔d1 ♕a4+ 16.♔e1 ♕a1=

C) 7.♕b3 b5 8.a4 ♗e6 9.♕a3 b4! 10.♕xb4 ♘c6



Position after: 10...♘c6

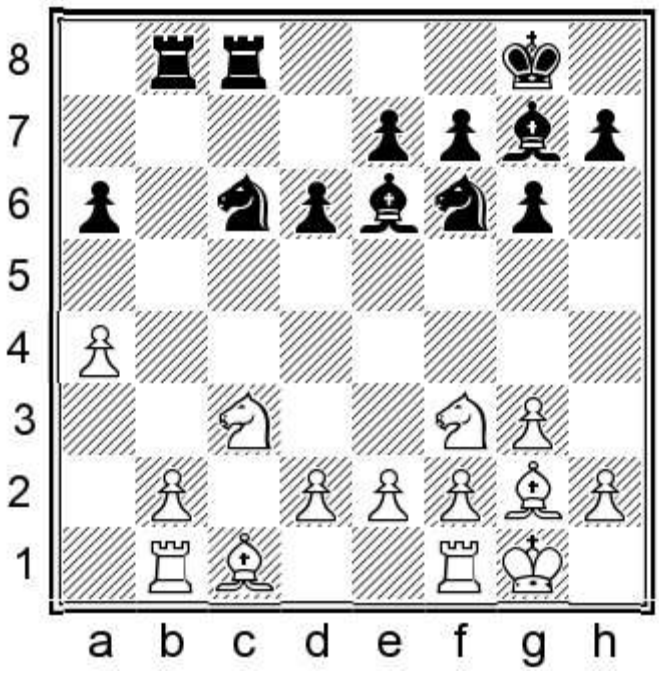
11.♕c5 [11.♕h4 ♕d6 12.d3 ♖b8 13.♖b1 ♗g7 14.♗h6 0-0 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕g5 ♖b3 17.♕c1 ♖fb8∓] 11...♕d6!



Position after: 11...♕d6!

Not only do we sacrifice a pawn but also trade queens?! Yes, and we get full compensation for it. The upcoming position reminds me once again of an improved version of the Benko gambit (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5): Black sacrifices a pawn for undisturbed development, active pieces and constant

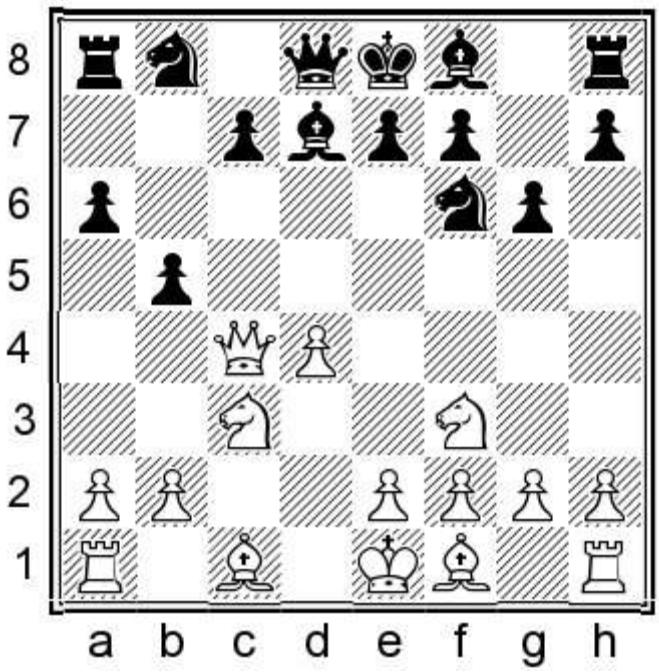
pressure on the b and c-files (in a regular Benko, it is the a and b-files). 12.♕xd6 cxd6 13.♖b1 ♗g7 14.g3 0-0 15.♗g2 ♖ab8 16.0-0 ♖fc8



Position after: 16...♖fc8

17.d3 ♗b3 18.♗e3 ♗c2 19.♖bc1 ♖xb2 20.♘d1 ♖a2 21.♘c3 ♖b2 22.♘d1 ♖a2 23.♘c3 ½-½ (23) Bogner, S (2558) – Negi, P (2657) Germany 2013.

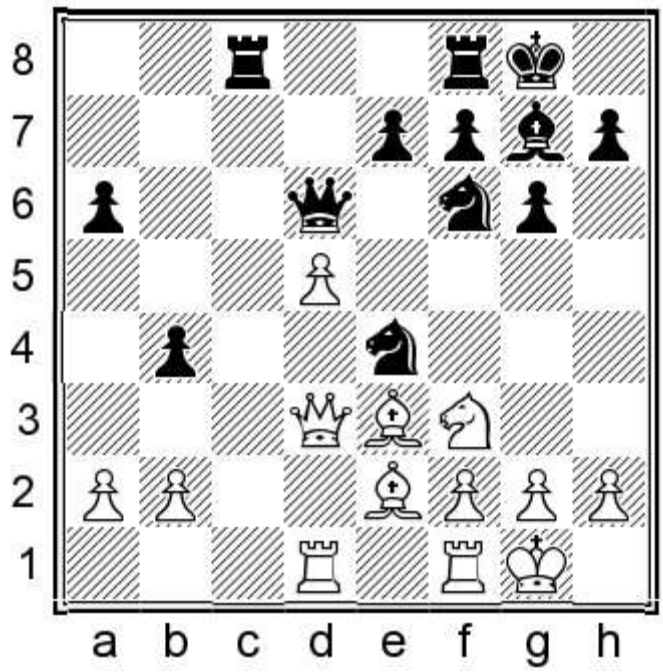
7...b5



Position after: 7...b5

8.♕d3

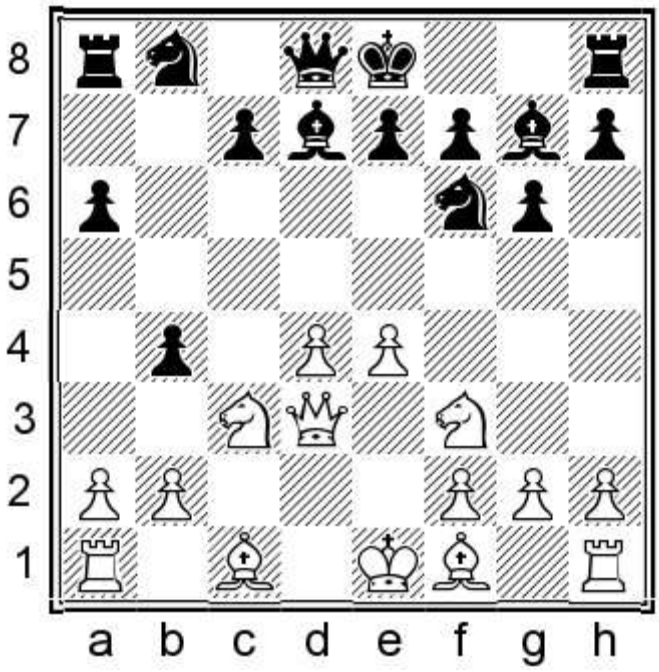
8.♕b3 transposes: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 0-0 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 a6. In chapter 5 I recommended playing 6...♘c6 as the easiest option, eliminating many other possibilities for White after 6...a6. 8...c5 9.dxc5 ♗g7 10.e4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♗e6 12.♕c2 ♘bd7 13.♗e3 ♖c8 14.♖d1 b4 15.♘d5 ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♘xc5 17.0-0 ♘ce4 18.♕d3 ♕d6!.



Position after: 18...♕d6!

It looks weird but by now we are no strangers to positional pawn sacrifices followed by hard-to-explain queen trades. I have found 62 games with this position. Black has proven the playability of this position, generally achieving equal play effortlessly. 19.♕xa6 [19.g3 ♖fd8 20.♗f4 ♕xd5 21.♕xa6 ♕a8 22.♕xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24.♘e5 ♘d5 25.♖d1 ♖d6 26.♘xg6 ♘xf4 27.♘xf4 ♖xd1+ 28.♗xd1 ♗xb2=] 19...♖c2 20.♗d4 ♘c5 21.♕xd6 exd6 22.♗b5 ♘fe4 23.♖c1 ♖xc1 24.♖xc1 ♖a8 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♖a1 ♘a4 27.♗c6 ♖a7 28.♗xa4 ♖xa4 29.♘d4 ♘f6 30.♔f1 ♘xd5= ½-½ (67) Giri, A (2755) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2740) Moscow 2016.

8...♗g7 9.e4 b4

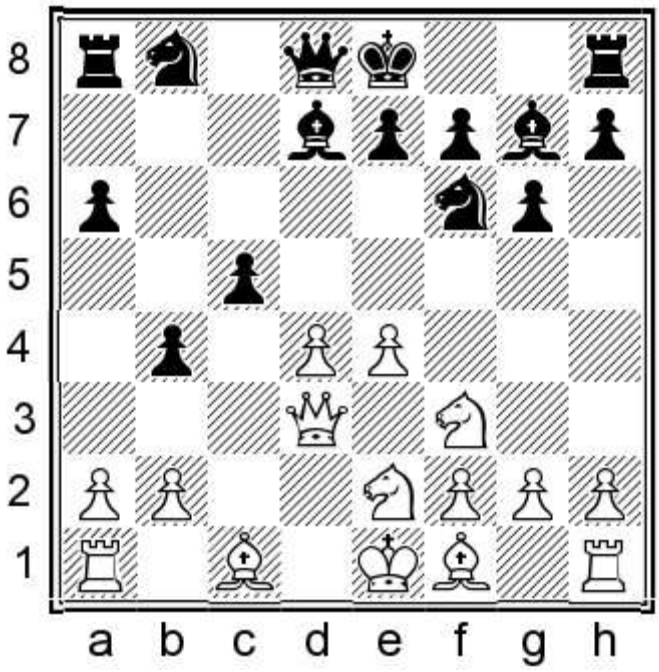


Position after: 9...b4

10.♘e2

10.♘d1 0-0 11.e5 ♘d5 12.♕c2 ♗f5 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 c5 15.dxc5 e6 16.♗g5 ♕c7 17.♘e3 ♕xc5 18.♘xd5 exd5 19.0-0 ♘d7=

10...c5



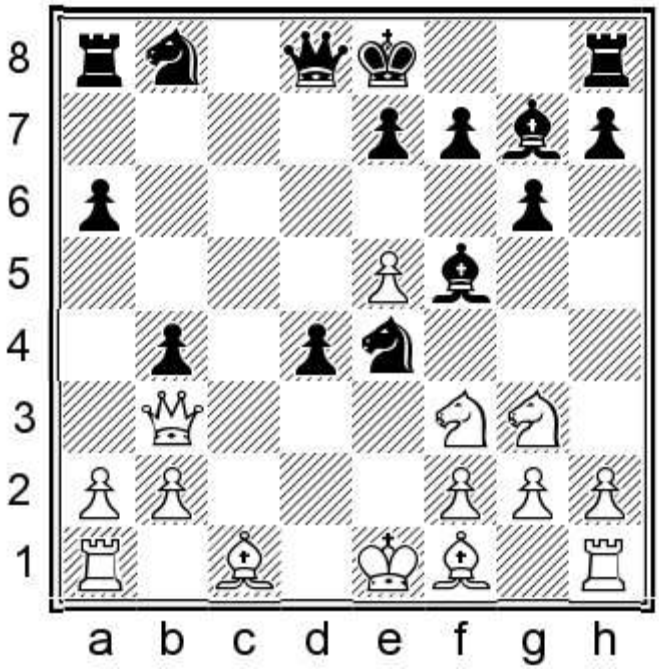
Position after: 10...c5

Breaking White's center with ...c7-c5 is our main job in the Grünfeld.

11.dxc5

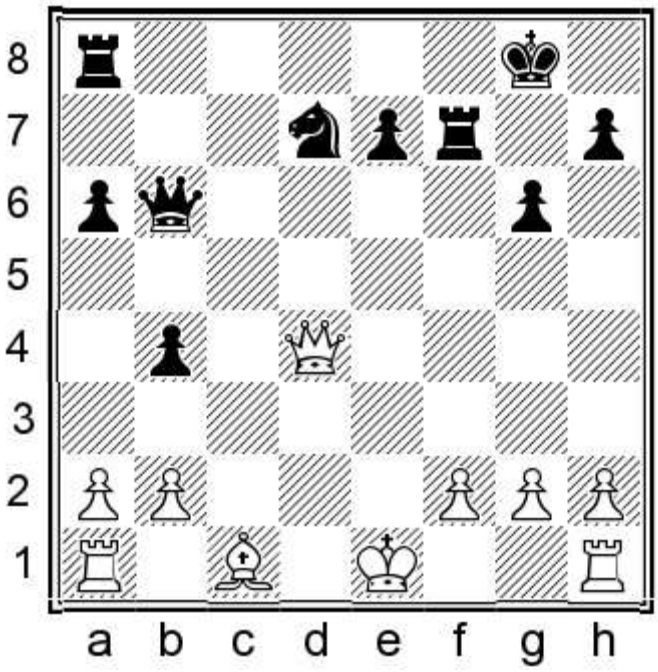
A) White may also try to fight for the initiative by not taking the pawn and developing fast. Black should not experience any issues though as our pieces are way more active than White's. The variations below prove this point. 11.♘f4 ♗b5 12.♕c2 cxd4 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗xb5+ axb5 15.0-0 0-0 16.♖d1 e6=

B) 11.e5 ♗f5 12.♕b3 ♘e4 13.♘g3 cxd4



Position after: 13...cxd4

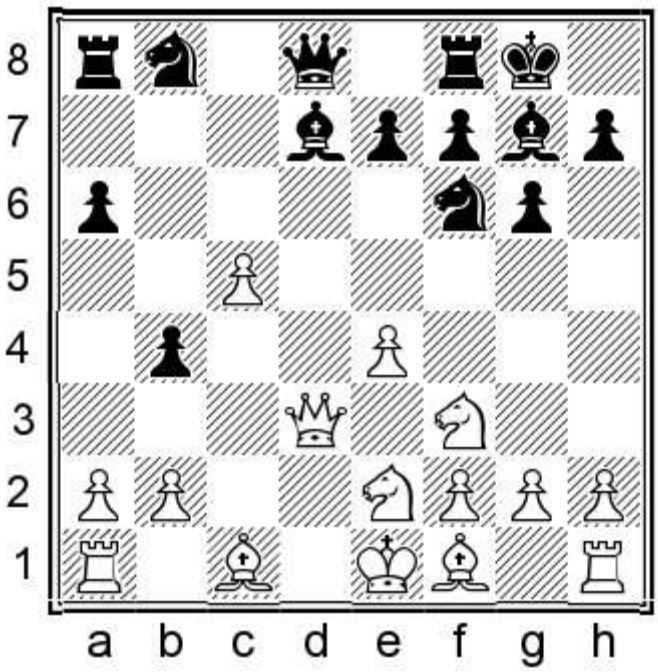
14.♘g5 [14.♘xf5 gxf5 15.e6 fxe6 16.♕xe6 ♕d7∓] 14...♘xg5 15.♘xf5 ♘e6 16.♘xg7+ ♘xg7 17.♗c4 0-0 18.e6 fxe6 19.♗xe6+ ♘xe6 20.♕xe6+ ♖f7 21.♕e4 ♘d7 22.♕xd4 ♕b6=



Position after: 22...♕b6=

23.♕xd7? ♕xf2+ 24.♔d1 ♕xg2 25.♖e1 e5 26.♕d3 ♖aa7!–+ White is defenceless against ...♖a7-d7 on the next move.

11...0-0

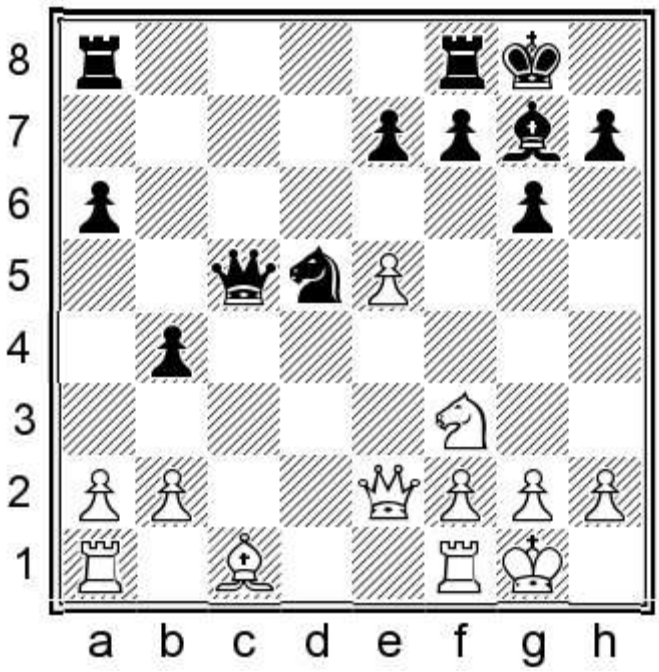


Position after: 11...0-0

12.♘ed4

12.e5 ♘g4 13.♕e4 ♘c6∓ 0-1 (32) Matsenko, S (2489) – Sychev, K (2414) Moscow 2015.

12...♕c7 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗e2 ♘c6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.0-0 ♗b5 17.♕e4 ♗xe2 18.♕xe2 ♕xc5=



Position after: 18...♕xc5=

Black enjoys comfortable play due to the absence of any weaknesses, active pieces and a great knight on d5 which we will further strengthen with ...e7-e6.

Conclusion

The key to successful memorization of the countless opening lines can be understood in one word: repetition. Personally, I prefer going briefly over the opening lines on a bi-weekly basis. Over time, you will notice that you are able to reproduce most of the moves in this book with minimal effort.

After 16 chapters and thousands of moves it makes sense for us to look back and have a quick recap of the most significant moments in our Grünfeld journey.

Chapter 1 kicks off our acquaintance with the Grünfeld by introducing the old main line 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4. While Black has many playable options, I advocate for the pawn sacrifice with 10...b6 and the most natural development plan with ...♗b7, ...♘a5, ...cxd4 and ...♖c8. Pay special attention to 11.h4 and the relatively recent game Dubov-Svidler. I offer an improvement to Svidler's play: a new move 20...♕e7.

Chapter 2 represents White's effort to be more flexible compared to 7.♗c4 in the first chapter and decide later what to do with the light-squared bishop by playing 7.♘f3. (7...c5) The most challenging lines are 8.h3 and 8.♗e3. Study them most carefully, especially the novel plan with 10...♘d7 in the 8.♗e3 line. The line 8.♖b1 only requires a bit of memorization but overall is not threatening.

Chapter 3 covers everything meaningful White can play except 7.♗c4 and 7.♘f3 which are reviewed in the first two chapters. Notice how Black utilizes all three queenside pawns to fight White's center in the 7.♗b5+ line. We also introduce a novelty, 12...♕d6, in the 7.♕a4+ line.

Chapter 4 shows how to neutralize the 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗d2 system. Our best plan is to challenge White's center with the typical moves ...c7-c5 and ...e7-e6. Especially interesting is the pawn sacrifice 11...b5 in the 8.♕d2 subchapter. Take your time and enjoy the tactical play with the rook sacrifice occurring after 13.♕d5.

Chapter 5 is my favorite chapter in the book. I have spent many enjoyable hours analyzing tactically infused variations arising after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3. I recommend 7...♘c6 after White's main move 7.e4, which leads to some extreme complications and fun play for both sides although mainly for Black!

Chapter 6 examines 5.♗g5 instead of 5.♕b3. Black has an option to fight aggressively for the initiative with 5...dxc4. We sacrifice an exchange in the main line and achieve great play. For those who prefer the usual response 5...♘e4, I provide some model games and guidance in the side notes.

Chapter 7 introduces an ultra-modern h-pawn push in the Grünfeld: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.h4!? I recommend not shying away from the complications and play the most principled 5...dxc4! I suggest memorizing the main lines at least until 12.♖h7, and even further, to be well prepared against any opponent. The perks of playing the Grünfeld Defense: once you do your

homework properly, you won't need to change anything!

Chapter 8 provides guidance against 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4. Unlike in many other variations, White attempts to develop the queenside first and to be fully prepared for the typical ...c7-c5 attack. I suggest focusing on the 4...♗g7 5.♘f3 subchapter as Black's optimal play there is quite different from what we are typically accustomed to see (maneuvers like ...♗e6-♗d5 and the very unusual bishop trade ...♗g7xc3 on move 16).

Chapter 9 explores 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗g5. Following the modern approach to openings we are happy to sacrifice the pawn for dark-square control and the initiative by playing 4...♗g7! This chapter contains plenty of pawn and exchange sacrifices. Note the novelty 11...a5 which employs a new concept in the 4.♗g5 system: the a-pawn is used for an indirect attack of White's center.

Chapter 10 covers everything White can play after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3. While this system is not the most ambitious and is commonly played to avoid the major theoretical battles, I still recommend memorizing the precise move orders for Black. In my opinion, White may have some venom in the 5.♘f3 6.b4 system which I suggest studying in detail.

Chapter 11 takes us on a little detour from the most common lines and studies the unusually early queen development after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕b3!?. Despite the rarity of this line we need to have precise knowledge here as well. Note how relentlessly and aggressively Black persecutes the queen (4...dxc4, 5...♗e6, 6...♗d7). As you may have noticed from the previous chapters, the cornerstone of our strategy is active play against White's center with ...c7-c5.

Chapter 12 examines the bishop fianchetto system after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3. White's king is typically extra safe in such pawn structures, so our normal plan is to attack the center and focus on the queenside. The exception is the subchapter 6.e4 where we sacrifice an exchange (again!) for the long-term initiative.

Chapter 13 provides a safe line of defense against an extremely sharp and ambitious 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3. Recently, Black has tried many different responses (usually unsuccessfully), leading to King's Indian pawn structures. In the true Grünfeld spirit I suggest playing 3...d5 and show an extensive analysis covering all White's major attempts to gain an opening advantage. This chapter is, perhaps, the heaviest in terms of memorization – you will certainly need to learn and remember the lines to fight 3.f3 successfully. On the bright side, you won't need to look for another weapon!

Chapters 14-16 take a deep dive into the Anti-Grünfeld mainly studying the positions after 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 (the move order may vary). The Anti-Grünfeld can be extremely unpleasant if you forget your lines so I would certainly recommend memorizing the precise move orders against all of White's possibilities.

I am happy for the readers who made it thus far — I appreciate your dedication to studying and extending your knowledge in the Grünfeld. My final words of advice:

1) Don't get too overwhelmed by trying to learn everything at once. Rome wasn't built in a day. Learn

one chapter at the time.

2) Practice makes perfect. Try playing the Grünfeld in online games on chess.com, lichess.com or any other major chess websites. Analyze your games and use this book as your opening reference.

Finally, if you have any questions or comments feel free to reach out to me at yarozchess@gmail.com.

I would be happy to help you improve your Grünfeld learning experience.

Table of Contents

Title page	4
Key to Symbols	5
Preface	6
Introduction	7
Chapter 1 – 7.Bc4	9
Chapter 2 – 7.Nf3	51
Chapter 3 – Other 7th moves	97
Chapter 4 – 5.Bd2	136
Chapter 5 – 5.Qb3	160
Chapter 6 – 5.Bg5	203
Chapter 7 – 5.h4	227
Chapter 8 – 4.Bf4	249
Chapter 9 – 4.Bg5	295
Chapter 10 – 4.e3	319
Chapter 11 – 4.Qb3	363
Chapter 12 – 3.g3	382
Chapter 13 – 3.f3	434
Chapter 14 – 5.Qa4+, 5.Qc2 and 5.Qb3	477
Chapter 15 – 5.e4, 5.h4 and 5.g3	509
Chapter 16 – 4.Qa4+	536
Conclusion	550