

MILOS PAVLOVIC

THE
MODERNIZED
PETROV'S
DEFENSE



Thinkers Publishing

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The Modernized Petrov's Defense
A Complete Opening Repertoire for Black

by
Milos Pavlovic

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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

Introduction

The Petrov Defence (also known as the Petroff or Russian Defense depending on which part of the world you are in) is a fantastic opening. In today's chess, where every line has been extensively developed and analyzed, avoiding many of those openings and systems with the Petrov against 1.e4 is a potentially significant gain for players of the black pieces.

Another important aspect is that it is such an old opening, dating from as far back as the first part of the 19th century. When looking for the earliest possible games I found that some positions that we consider as a tabiya today are of old origin.

To reinforce this point, I will give an example: After 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♖c6 we reach a position which is a starting point of one of Black's main development plans, and to my great surprise it is Paul Morphy who played it! Obviously, due to the efforts of Alexander Petrov, we can surely add Morphy as the main developer of this system.

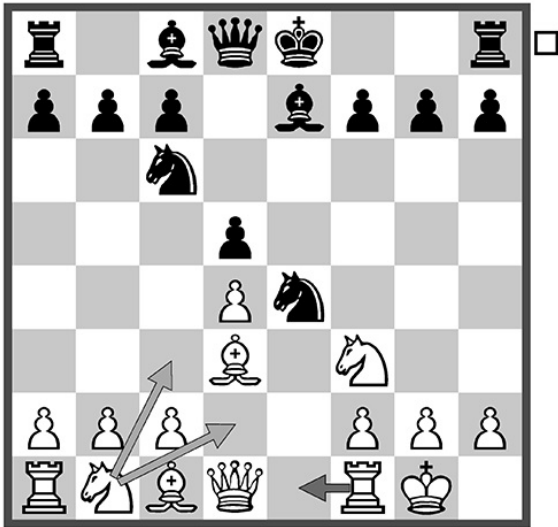
In my books, I try to present the material in a friendly and readable way but not at the expense of sacrificing quality. This is the philosophy I followed in my Petrov book as well.

Milos Pavlovic, February 2025

Part I
3. ♘xe5 – Classical Tabiya

Chapter 1
Various 8th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♘c6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Various 8th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♘c6

a) 8.♘bd2

b) 8.♘c3

c) 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c4

d) 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c3 f5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.--

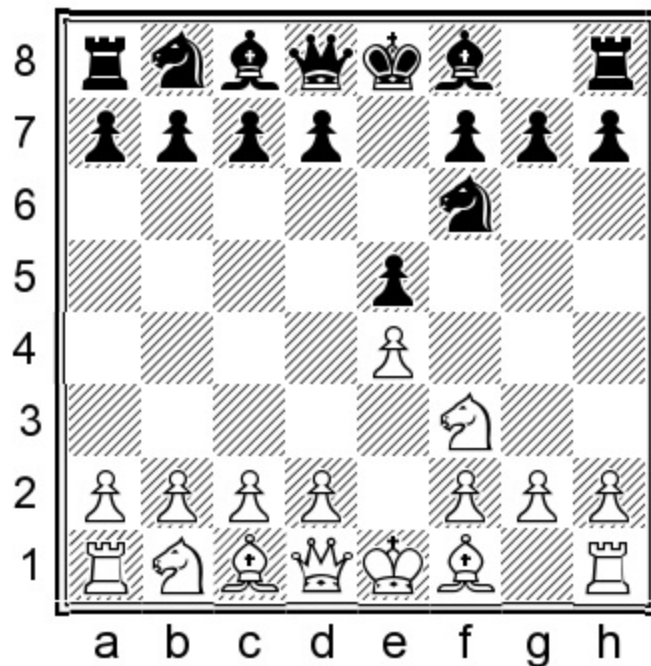
e) 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c3 f5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♞b3 ♘a5

f) 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c3 f5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♞b3 ♖h8 12.♞xb7 ♜f6 13.♞b3 ♜b8 ♞a4

g) 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c3 f5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♞b3 ♖h8 12.♞xb7 ♜f6 13.♞b3 ♜b8 ♞c2

a) 8.♘bd2

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

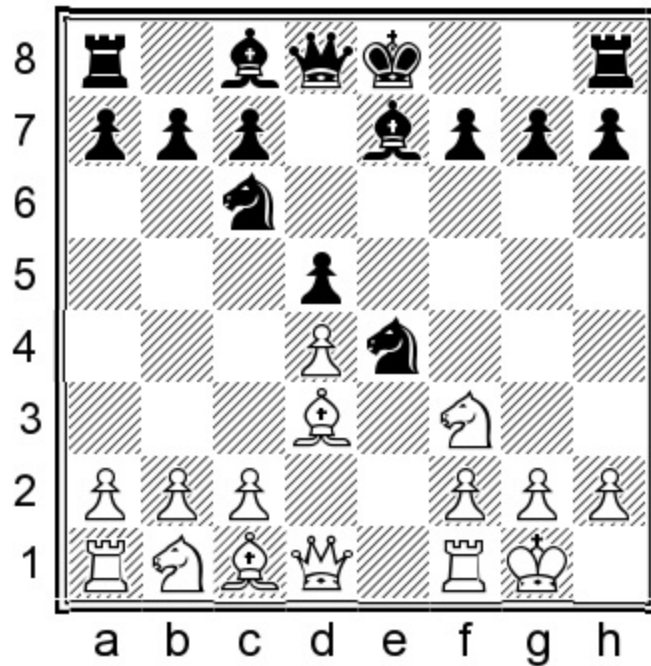


Position after: 2... Nf6

The Petrov (sometimes Petroff in English, or Russian Defense as it is called in Eastern Europe, but we will stick with Petrov throughout) is one of the most solid openings against 1.e4. It is really for those who prefer to simplify and, as we say, “dry out” positions so that balanced or equal positions can be reached. It is not as popular as the Ruy Lopez, for instance; the reason for that is that today, even with the black pieces, players are not entirely happy to get simplified positions and only play for a draw. Apart from that, we can see that on a high level – such as the Candidates and World Championship matches – it is often employed.

3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Qd3 Qe7 7.0-0 Nc6

Our starting position in this classical set-up in the Petrov. Surprisingly, this position was seen all the way back in the Paul Morphy and Howard Staunton era. The oldest games connected to a specific player is Morphy in 1858, and Staunton later reached exactly this position! This is fabulous. First, we will examine ideas that at first sight might appear simple to handle, but things are not so easy. Black must be aware of how to handle such continuations.

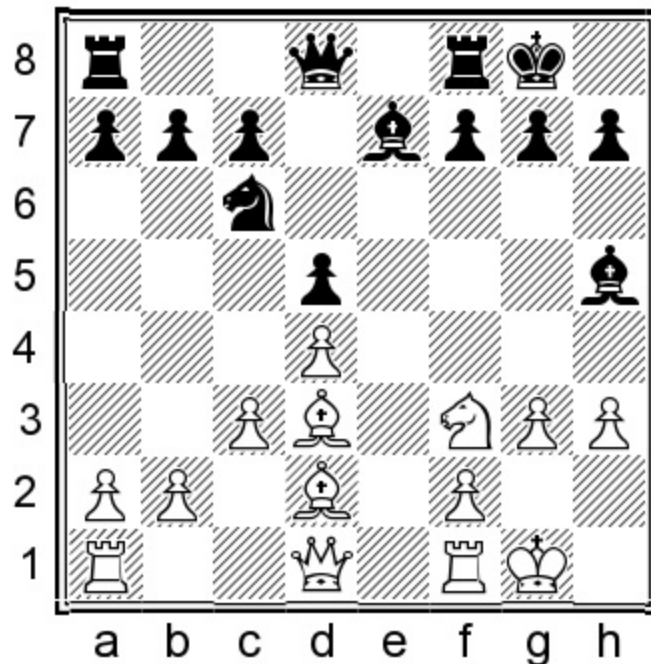


Position after: 7... Nc6

8. Nbd2

White can develop the knight in a slightly different manner – 8. Nc3 – and we will analyze this move later. It has to be said, though, that in both cases the idea is simply faster development – control over the e-file is what White is counting on, while Black is simply looking to exchange pieces to eliminate pressure.

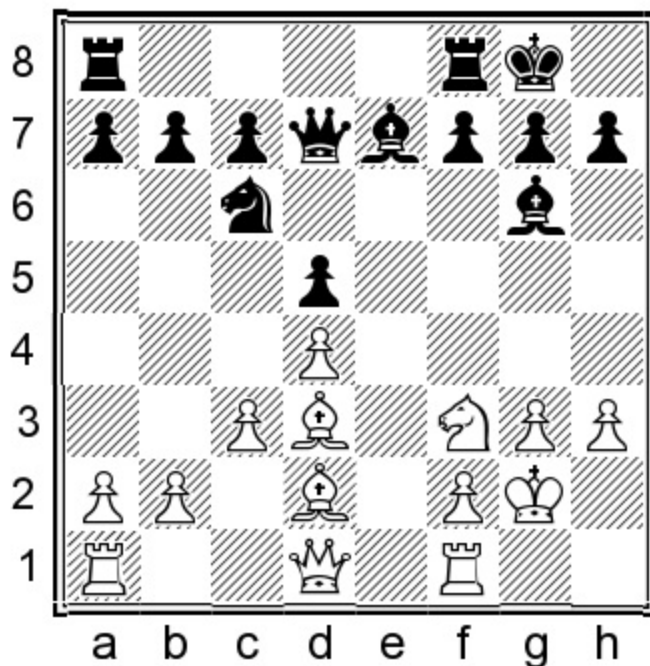
8... Nxd2 9. Qxd2 Qg4 10. c3 0-0 11. h3 Qh5 12. g3



Position after: 12.g3

A modern idea; the king is coming to g2, and the idea is later to put the queen on c2.

12...♚d7 13.♙g2 ♜g6



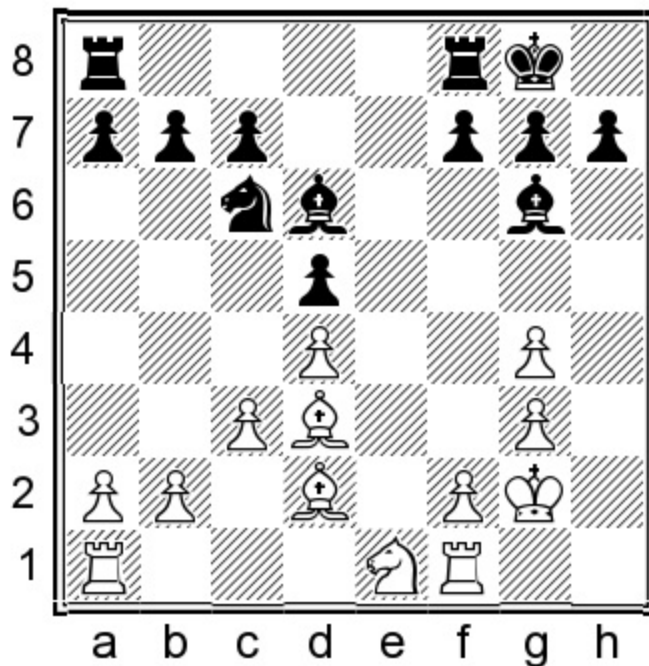
Position after: 13...♜g6

14.♜f4

White has options here:

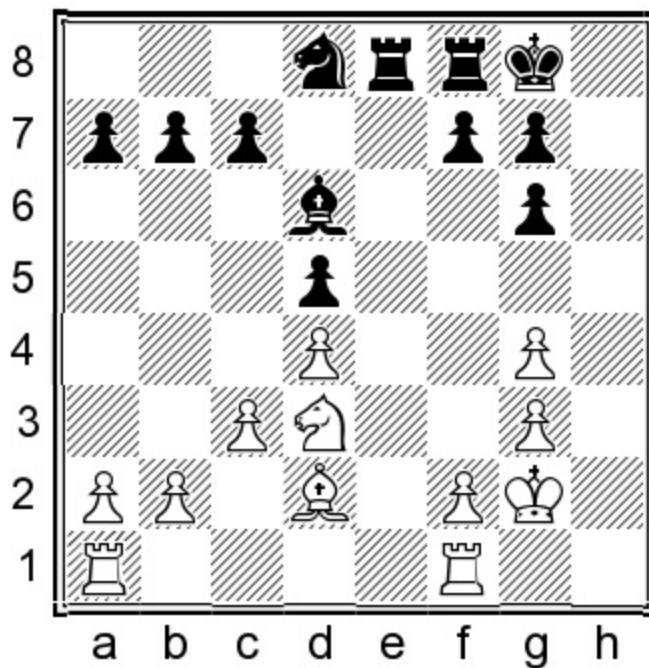
A) 14.♚c2 ♜xd3 15.♚xd3 a6 16.♖ae1 ♜ae8 17.♜f4 f6 18.h4 ♜d6 Black achieved equality. ½ – ½ (18) Popovic, D (2494) – Sychev, K (2532) Bajina Basta 2024.

B) 14.♞e1 ♜d6 15.♚g4 This is the idea; White is hoping to generate pressure in the endgame. 15...♚xg4 16.hxg4



Position after: 16.hxg4

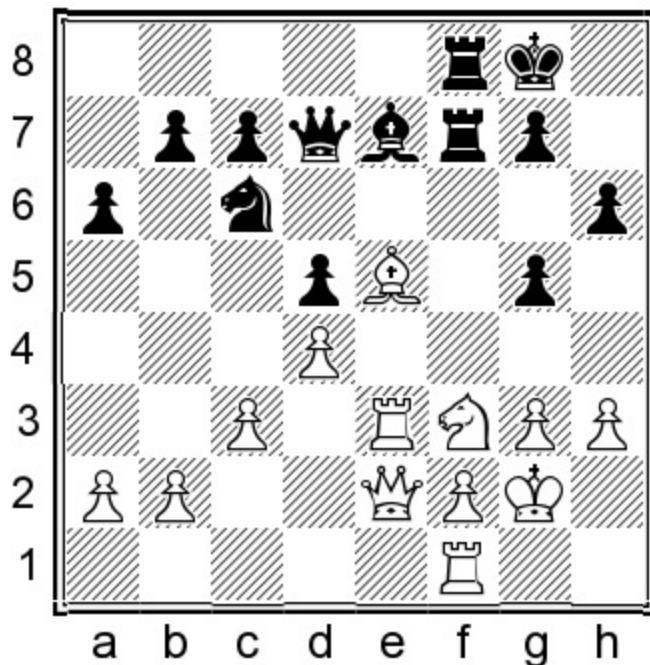
16...♖ae8! [16...♗fe8 17.♙xg6 hxg6 18.♘d3 f6 19.g5 ♔f7 20.♗h1 White has some pressure here. ½ – ½ (37) Caruana, F (2810) – Dominguez Perez, L (2713) Dortmund 2016] 17.♙xg6 hxg6 18.♘d3 ♘d8!?



Position after: 18...♘d8!?

This is the point – only with the a8-rook on e8 can Black play this manoeuvre. 19.g5 ♘e6 20.♗h1 f6 21.gxf6 gxf6 22.♗h2 g5 23.♗ah1 ♘g7 Black is doing OK.

C) 14.♙xg6 fxg6 15.♙f4 [15.♚c2 ♜ae8 16.♙f4 ♜f5 17.♞ae1 ♞ef8 18.♞e3 g5 19.♙e5 h6 20.♚d3 a6 21.♚e2 As in the Vidit – Abasov game below, Black is doing OK. ½-½ (21) Müller, G (2576) – Vinchev, S (2511) ICCF 2022] 15...h6 16.♚d3 g5 17.♙e5 ♜f7 18.♞ae1 ♞af8 19.♞e3 a6 20.♚e2

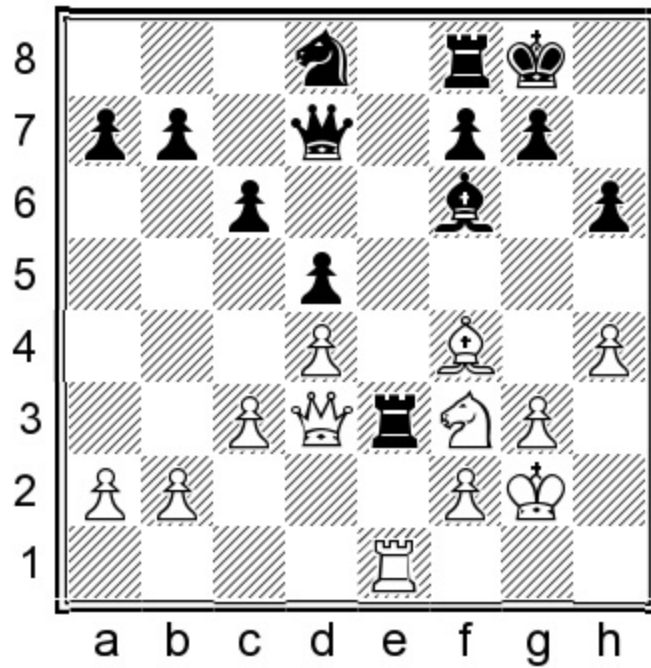


Position after: 20.♚e2

20...♜f5 21.b4 ♜5f7 22.a4 ♘a7 23.g4 ♘c8 24.a5 ♙d6 25.♞e1 ♚d8 26.♜f1 ♘e7 27.♚d3 ♚d7 28.♙g1 ♘c6 29.♙g2 ♘e7 This was played in the Candidates and it seems that Black, with a waiting strategy, has managed to balance the game. ½ – ½ (31) Vidit, S (2727) – Abasov, N (2632) Toronto 2024.

14...♞ae8 15.♙xg6

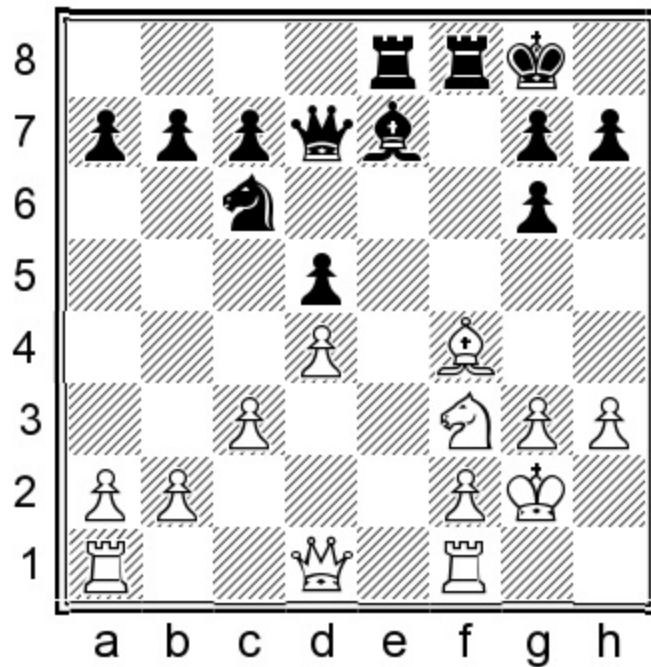
White can still wait: 15.♞e1 ♙xd3 16.♚xd3 ♘d8 17.h4 h6 18.♞e5 c6 19.♞ae1 ♙f6 20.♞5e3 ♞xe3



Position after: 20...♖xe3

21.♖xe3 ♜e8 22.♙e5 ♙e7 23.a4 ♙f8 Black is fine here as well. ½ – ½ (23) Duda, J (2733) – Yu Yangyi (2703) Almaty 2024.

15...fxg6

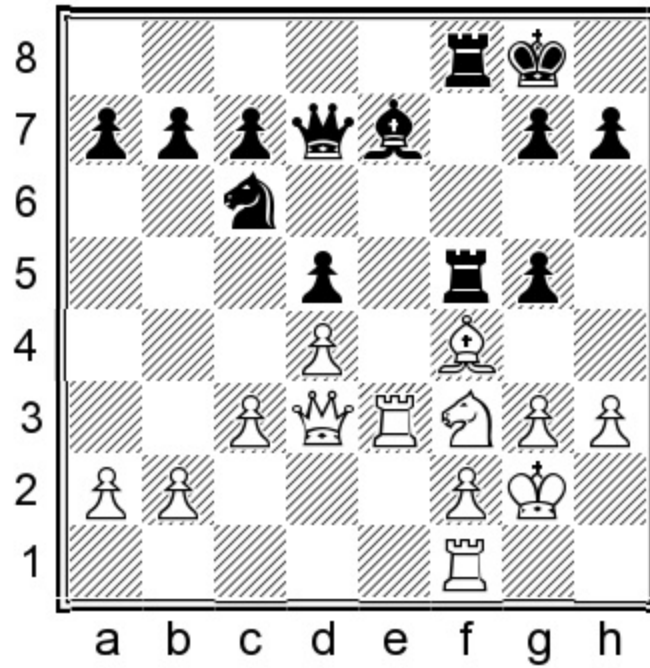


Position after: 15...fxg6

It is essential to react in this way otherwise White has a possible h4-h5 plan, which can create

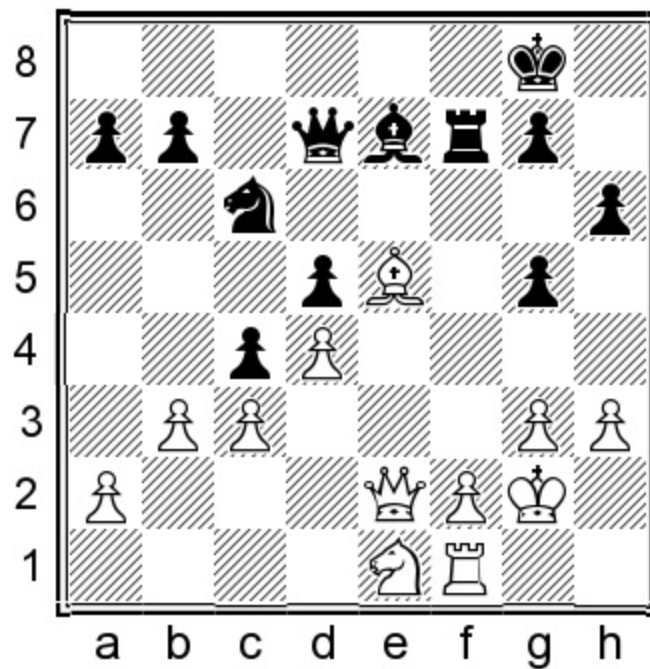
disturbance.

16.♚d3 ♜f5 17.♞ae1 ♞ef8 18.♞e3 g5



Position after: 18...g5

19.♞e5 h6 20.♚e2 ♞5f7 21.♘e1 ♘a5 22.b3 c5 23.♞f3 ♘c6 24.♞xf7 ♞xf7 25.♘d3 c4 26.♘e1



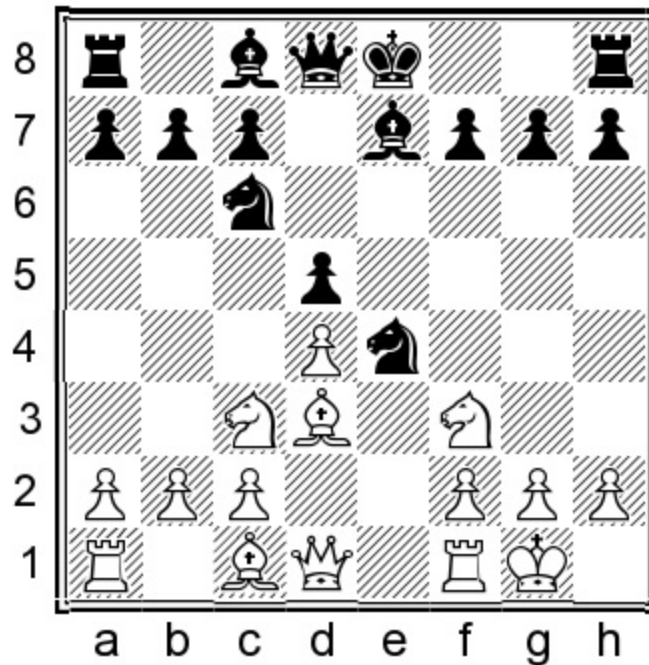
Position after: 26.♘e1

26...b5

Black is fine. He used a similar strategy as in a few other games I gave. ½ – ½ (26) Volokitin, A (2667) – Gelfand, B (2658) Ajka HUN 2024.

b) 8.♘c3

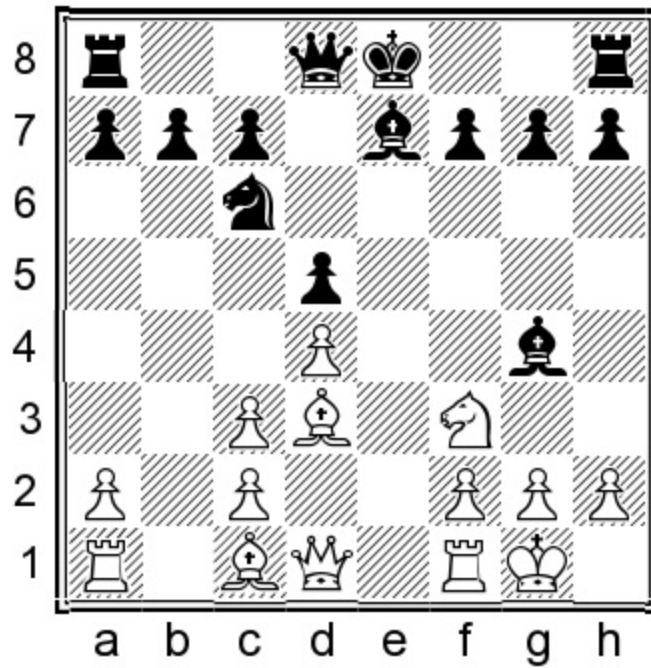
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘c3



Position after: 8.♘c3

This is another important approach that has become popular in recent years: White will eliminate the knight on e4 and prepare the stage for central play in which will try to be faster with his plans along the e-file.

8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♙g4

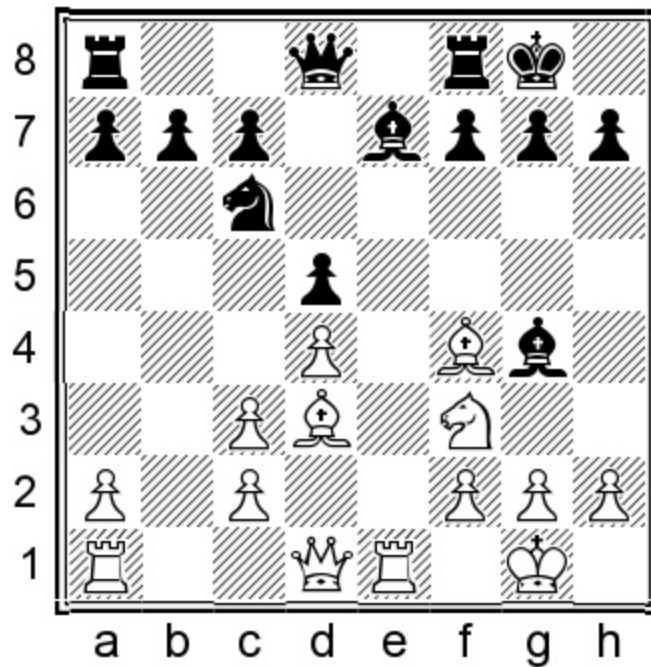


Position after: 9... Kg4

10. Bb1

White has a couple of ideas here:

A) 10. Re1 0-0 11. Qf4

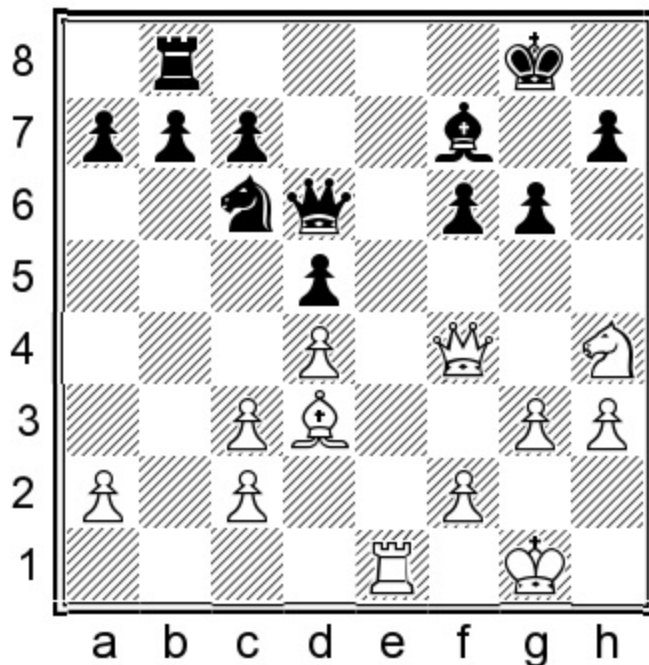


Position after: 11. Qf4

A1) 11... Qd6 12. Qxd6 Qxf3 13. Wxf3 Wxd6 14. Rab1 b6 15. Re3 Rae8 16. Rbe1 Re7 17. Wh3 h6

18.♞xe7 ♘xe7 19.♚e3 ♞e8 White doesn't have the resources to increase the pressure and that is actually the entire point of Black's play in this game. ½-½ (19) Martín Sánchez, C (2443) – Roubaud, D (2555) ICCF 2016.

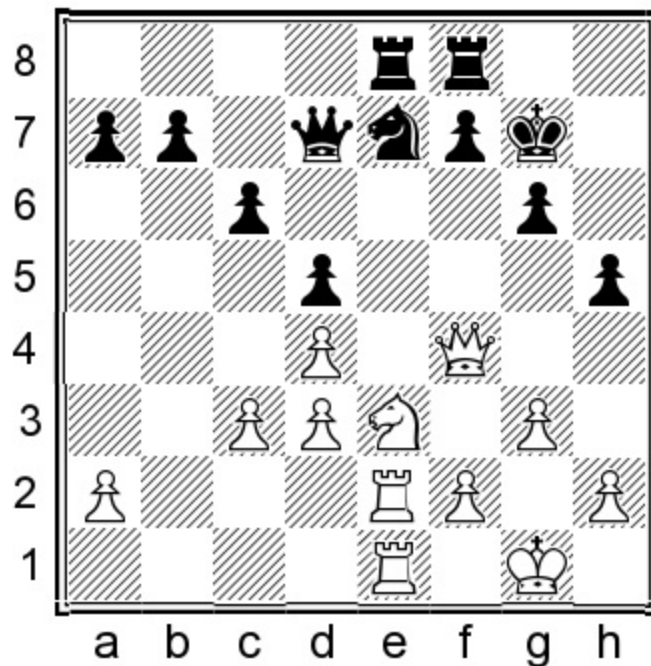
A2) 11...♞b8 The idea is ...b5. 12.h3 ♘h5 13.♚e2 ♘d6 14.♚e3 f6 15.♘h4 ♞e8 16.♚g3 ♘xf4 17.♞xe8+ ♘xe8 18.♚xf4 g6 19.♞e1 ♘f7 20.g3 ♚d6



Position after: 20... ♚d6

21.♚g4 ♞e8 22.♞xe8+ ♘xe8 23.♘f5 ♚d7 24.♘h6+ ♜g7 25.♚f4 ♚d6 Black doesn't have serious problems creating a balanced game. ½ – ½ (35) Degerhammar, R (2502) – Matyukhin, S (2509) ICCF 2016.

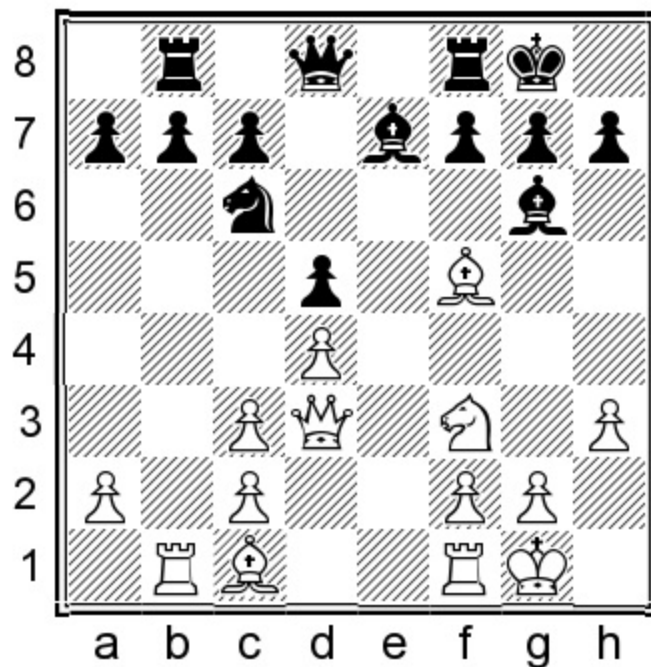
A3) 11...♘h5 12.♚e2 ♘d6 13.♘d6 ♚xd6 14.♚e3 ♘g6 15.♘h4 ♘xd3 16.cxd3 ♚d7 17.♚f3 g6 18.g3 ♞ae8 19.♘g2 ♘e7 20.♘e3 ♜g7 21.♞e2 c6 22.♞ae1 h5 23.♚f4



Position after: 23. ♖f4

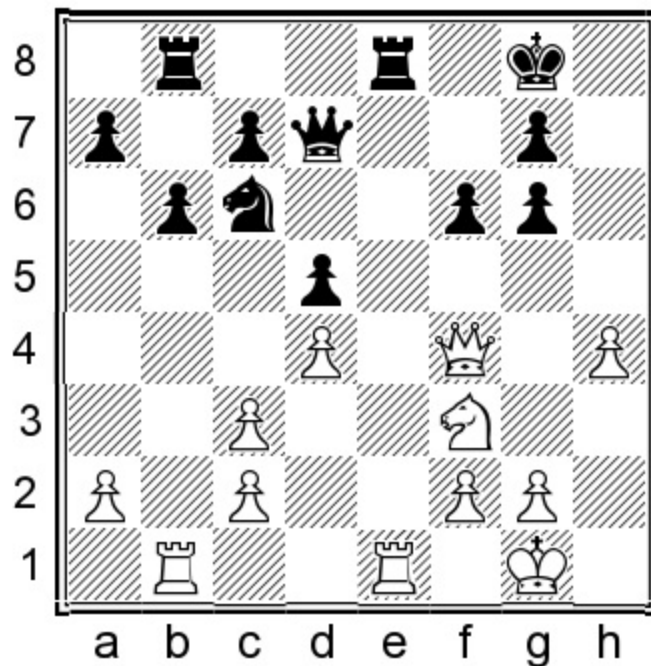
23... ♜g8 24. ♔g2 ♜e6 25. h3 ♛d8 26. g4 ♛h4 Black had equalized and later won the game. 0-1 (83)
Ivic, V (2510) – Mamedov, N (2615) Konya TUR 2019.

B) 10. h3 ♙h5 11. ♜b1 ♜b8 12. ♙f5 0-0 13. ♛d3 ♙g6



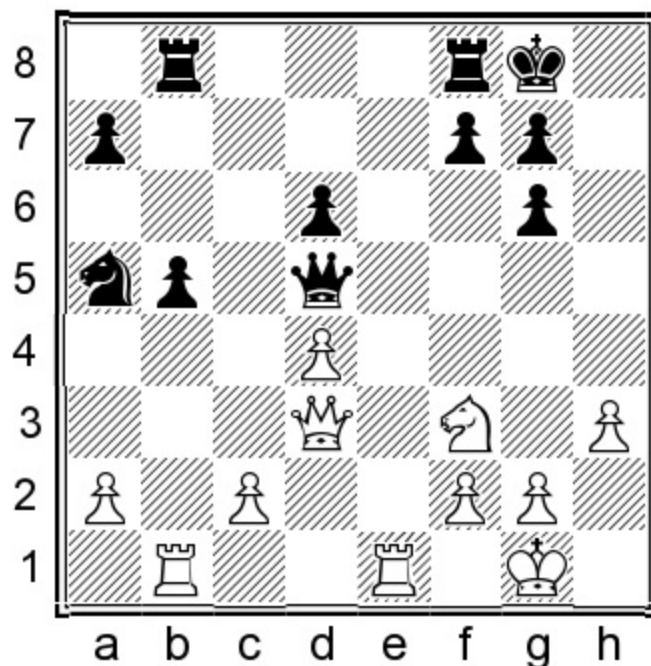
Position after: 13... ♙g6

14. ♙xg6 [14. ♙f4 ♙d6 15. ♙xg6 hxg6 16. ♙xd6 ♛xd6 17. ♜fe1 b6 18. ♛e3 ♛d7 19. ♛f4 ♜fe8 20. h4 f6!



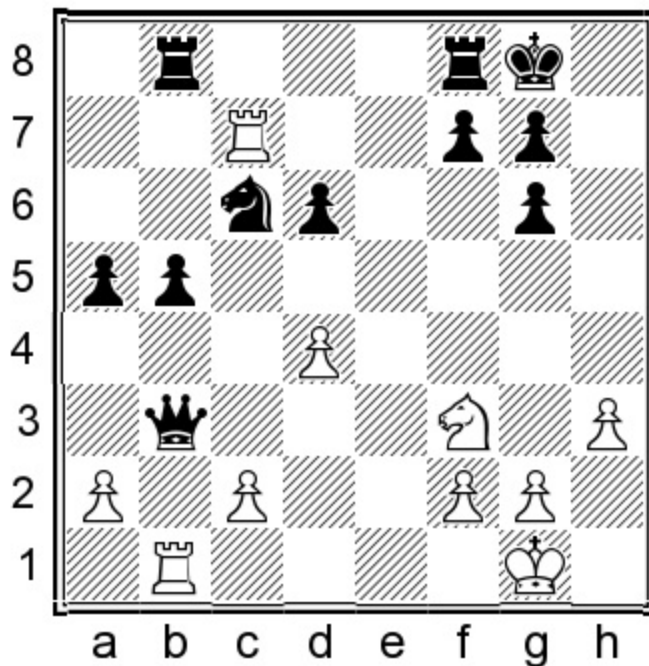
Position after: 20...f6!

Black has achieved good play. 0-1 (49) Kotronias, V (2518) – Mamedov, N (2602) Nakhchivan AZE 2018] 14...hxg6 15.c4 ♘a5 16.cxd5 ♚xd5 17.♞e1 ♙d6 18.♙a3 b5 19.♙xd6 cxd6



Position after: 19...cxd6

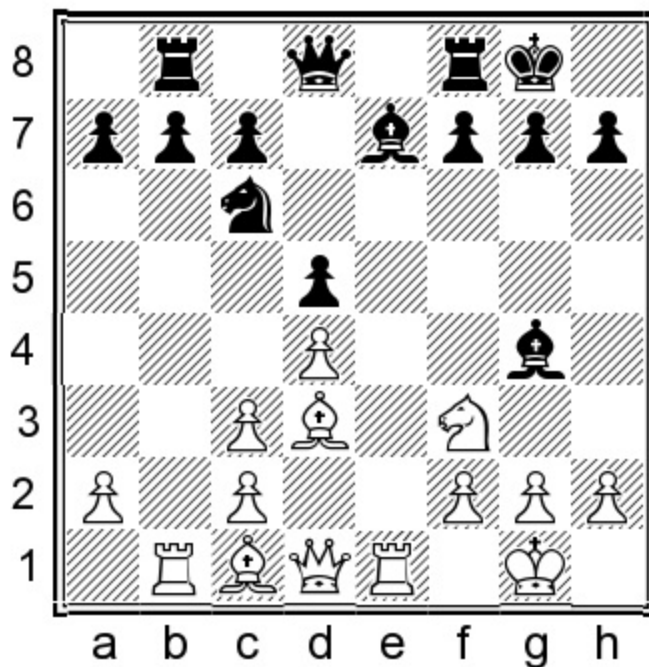
20.♞e7 This position is popular among correspondence players. Here we have: 20...♘c6 [20...♘c4 21.♞xa7± 1-0 (61) Csjernyik, J (2456) – Jandek, S (2500) ICCF 2013] 21.♞c7 a5 22.♚b3 ♚xb3



Position after: 22... ♖xb3

23.cxb3 [23.axb3 ♜fc8 24.♞d7 ♜b4↗; 23.♞xb3 ♜b4 24.♞a7 ♞a8 25.♞xa8 ♞xa8 26.♞b2 ♞c8↗]
 23...♞fc8 24.♞d7 ♜b4 25.♞b2 [It is overoptimistic for White to try: 25.♜g5 ♜xa2↗] 25...♞d8
 26.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 27.a3 ♜d5 Overall we can say that Black is able to control the game, in the sense of reaching equal chances, without many difficulties. ½ – ½ (38) Pasko, P (2541) – Hall, R (2598) ICCF 2017.

10...♞b8 11.♞e1 0-0

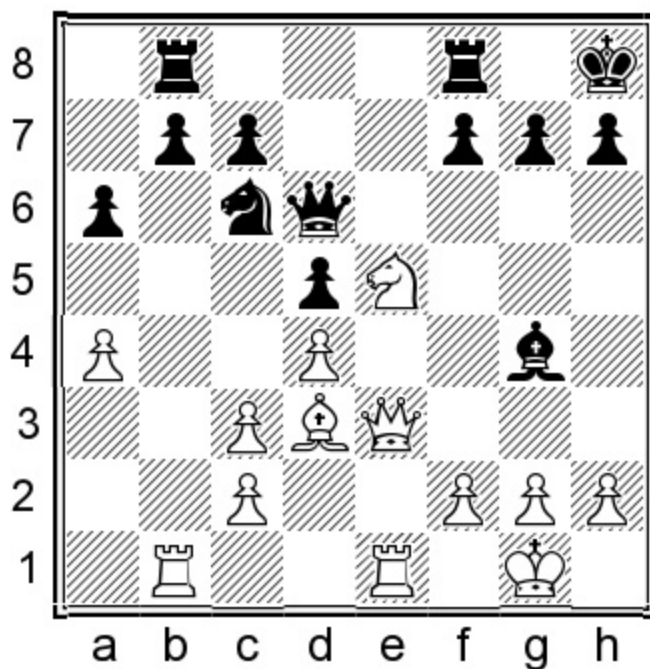


Position after: 11...0-0

12.h3

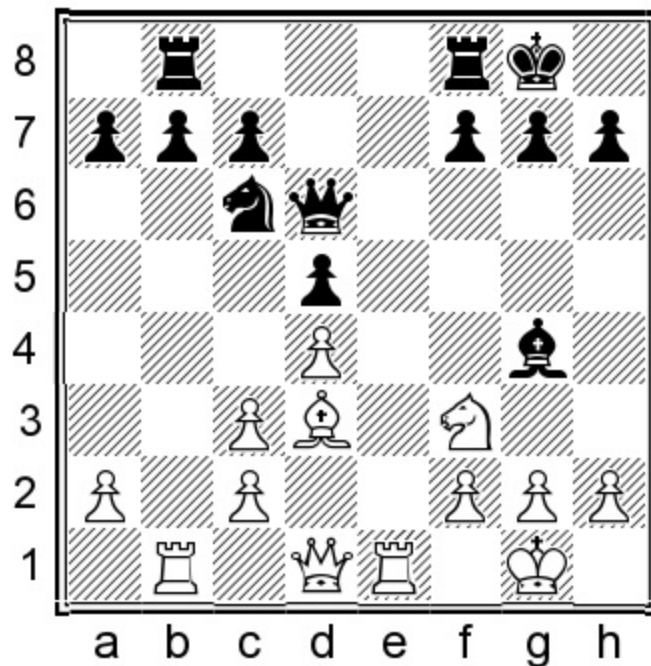
The alternative is the logical idea to place the bishop on f4 immediately...

12.♔f4 ♕d6 Probably best is to deal with this strong bishop on f4... [12...a6 13.a4 ♖h8 14.♚e2 ♕d6 15.♚e3 ♚d7 16.♔xd6 ♚xd6 17.♘e5



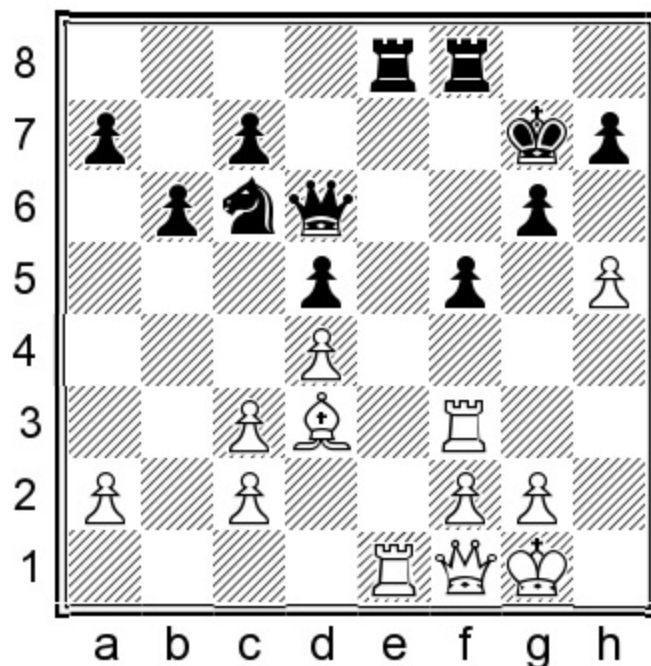
Position after: 17.♘e5

17...♘e5 18.dxe5 and White has some initiative. ½ – ½ (34) Huschenbeth, N (2600) – Laurusas, T (2573) Walbrzych POL 2024] 13.♔xd6 ♚xd6



Position after: 13... ♖xd6

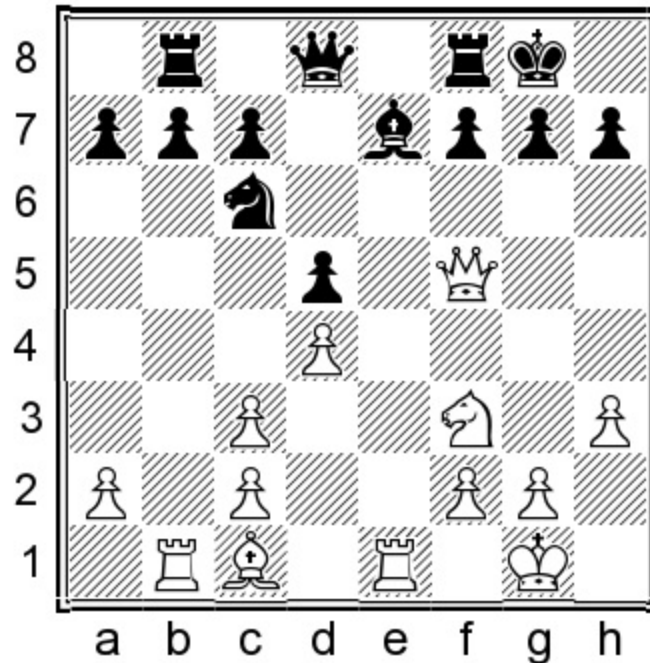
14. ♖e3 [14. ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 15. ♘g5+ ♔g6 16. ♗xg4 f5-+] 14... f5 15. ♖e1 [Another idea might be:
15. ♗f1 ♕xf3 16. ♖xf3 g6 17. h4 b6 18. h5 ♖be8 19. ♖e1 ♔g7



Position after: 19... ♔g7

20. ♖g3 ♗f6 21. f4 ♖xe1 22. ♗xe1 ♖f7 23. ♗f2 ♘d8=] 15... b6 [15... ♘a5 16. ♗e2 ♖bd8 17. h3 ♕xf3
18. ♗xf3 g6 19. ♖e5↑ 1-0 (30) Rogic, D (2552) – Seyb, A (2412) Austria 2015] 16. ♕b5 ♖be8 17. ♗d3
♕xf3 18. ♗xf3 g6 19. ♗d3 ♔g7=

12...♙h5 13.♘f5 ♘g6 14.♚d3 ♘xf5 15.♚xf5



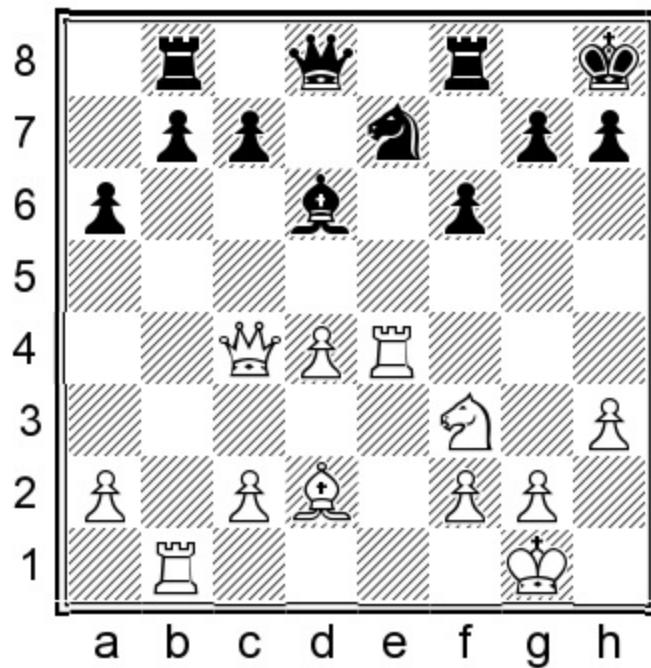
Position after: 15. ♚xf5

Now, from two examples, we can see how the game might continue for both sides:

15...♙d6

15...b5 16.♘f4 g6 17.♚d3 a6 18.♞e2 ♙d6 19.♚d2 ♘xf4 20.♚xf4 ♔g7 21.♞be1 ♚d6 Black had achieved counterplay and later won: 0-1 (48) Quesada Perez, Y (2631) – Dominguez Perez, L (2732) Matanzas 2016.

16.♙g5 f6 17.♙d2 ♔h8 18.c4 dxc4 19.♞e4 ♘e7 20.♚b5 a6 21.♚xc4



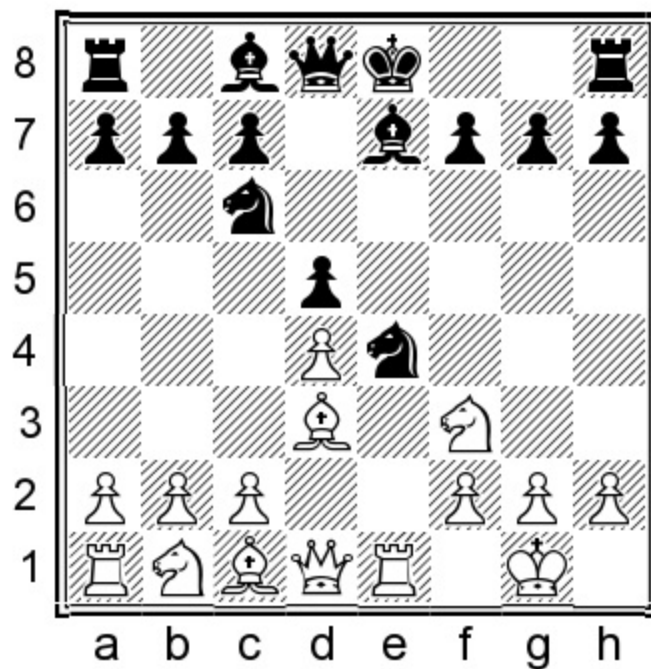
Position after: 21. ♖xc4

21...b5

This gives Black adequate play. ½ – ½ (42) Perry, D (2503) – Dunlop, G (2536) ICCF 2019.

c) 8. ♖e1 ♗g4 9. c4

1. e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗f6 3. ♗xe5 d6 4. ♗f3 ♗xe4 5. d4 d5 6. ♗d3 ♗e7 7. 0-0 ♗c6 8. ♖e1



Position after: 8. ♖e1

Together with 8.c4 (which we will see in later chapters) this is the main idea, creating pressure on a knight on e4.

8... ♗g4

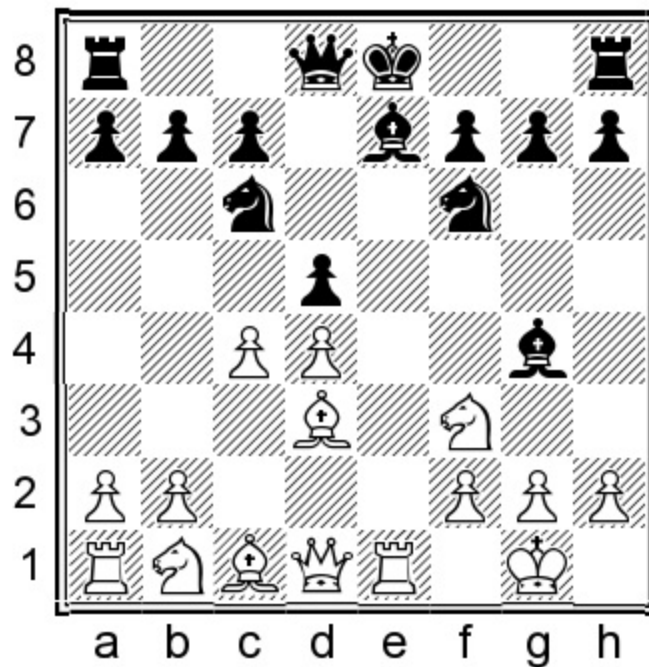
This is an old and, in my opinion, critical reaction; it is essential material for any book on the Petrov.

9.c4

We will also later examine the more popular and probably more critical 9.c3.

9. ♗xe4 dxe4 10. ♖xe4 ♗xf3 11. ♙xf3 ♘xd4 12. ♙d1 ♘e6= This is the main point that gives Black an easy game.

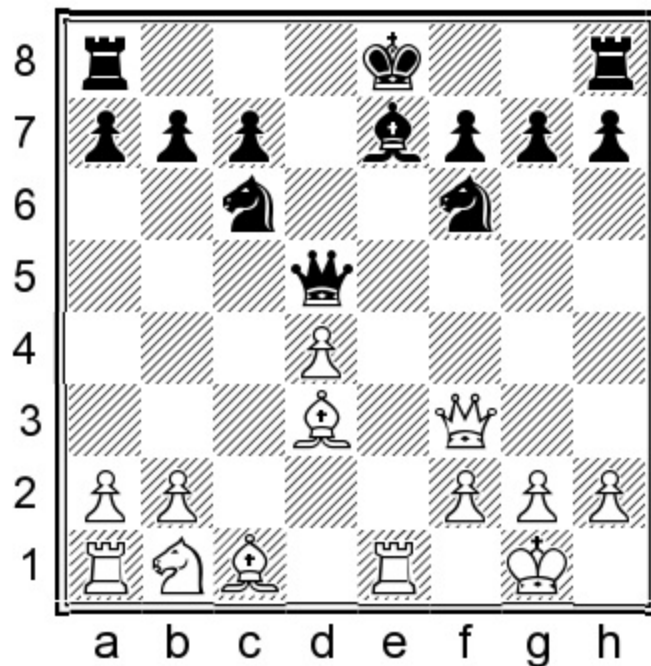
9... ♘f6



Position after: 9... ♘f6

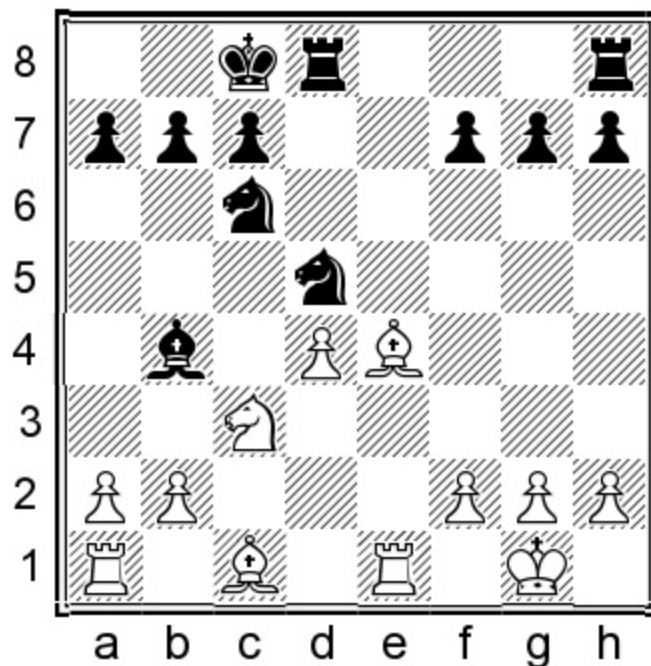
10. ♘c3

10.cxd5 ♗xf3 11. ♙xf3 ♙xd5



Position after: 11... Qxd5

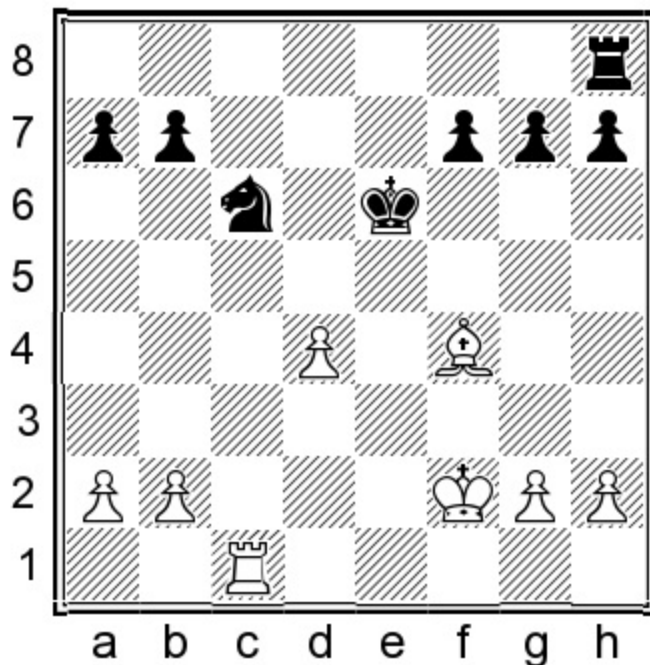
12. Qxd5 [12. Qh3 Qxd4 13. Nc3 Ng4 14. Rf1 h5 The idea is queenside castling; Black is fine. ½ – ½ (14) Bellahcene, B (2499) – Debray, C (2367) Chalons en Champagne FRA 2021; 12. Qg3 Qxd4 13. Nc3 0-0 Black is again OK.] 12... Nxd5 13. Nc3 0-0-0 14. Ke4 Kb4



Position after: 14... Kb4

15. Qxd5 [15. Qd2 Nf6 16. Qxc6 bxc6 17. Ke3 Nd5 18. Rac1 Nxe3 19. fxe3 c5 20. Rf1 f6 21. Rf5 Rhe8 Here it is only Black who can create pressure. ½ – ½ (67) Kamsky, G (2695) – Karpov, A (2740)

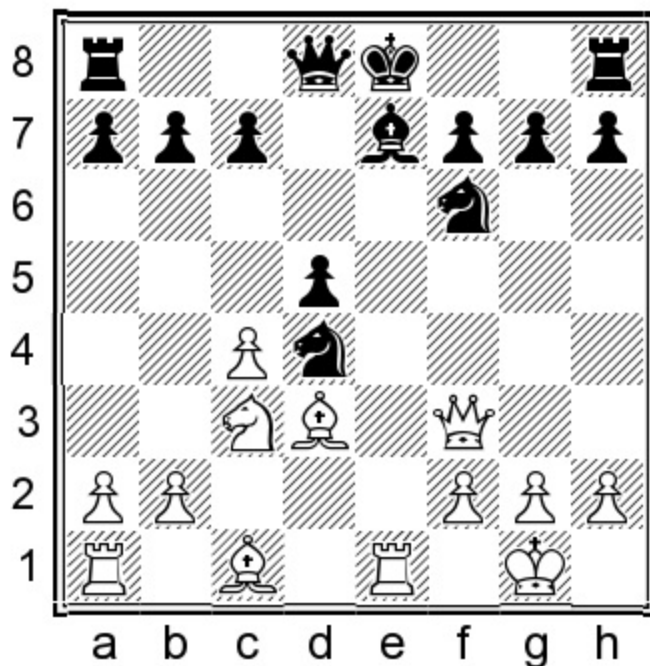
Linares 1994] 15...♖xd5 16.♘xd5 ♕xe1 17.♘xc7 ♕xf2+ 18.♔xf2 ♖xc7 19.♕f4+ ♖d7 20.♖c1 ♔e6



Position after: 20...♔e6

21.♔e3 ♖d8 22.♖c4 ♘e7 23.♔d3 ♘d5 Black is fine in this endgame. 1-0 (37) Kantans, T (2513) – Ioannidis, E (2413) Chorzow POL 2019.

10...♕xf3 11.♖xf3 ♘xd4



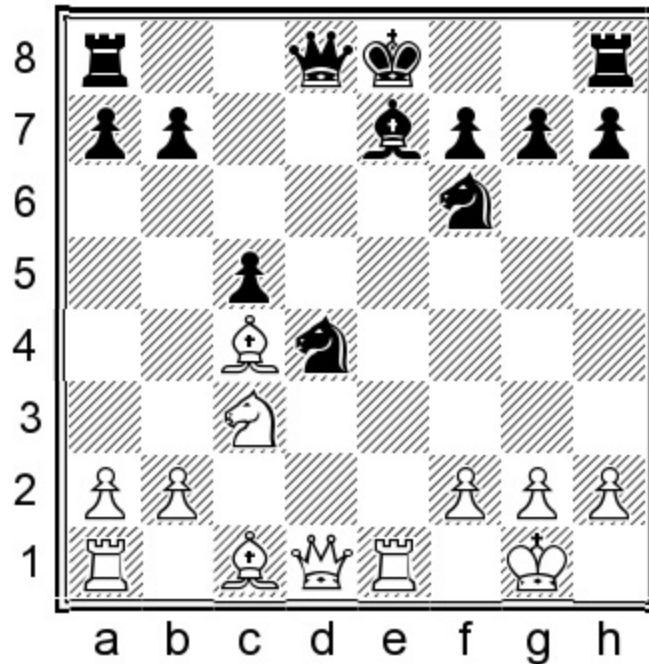
Position after: 11...♘xd4

White sacrifices a pawn in order to grab the initiative. There are now a few main ideas where to go with the queen:

12. ♖h3

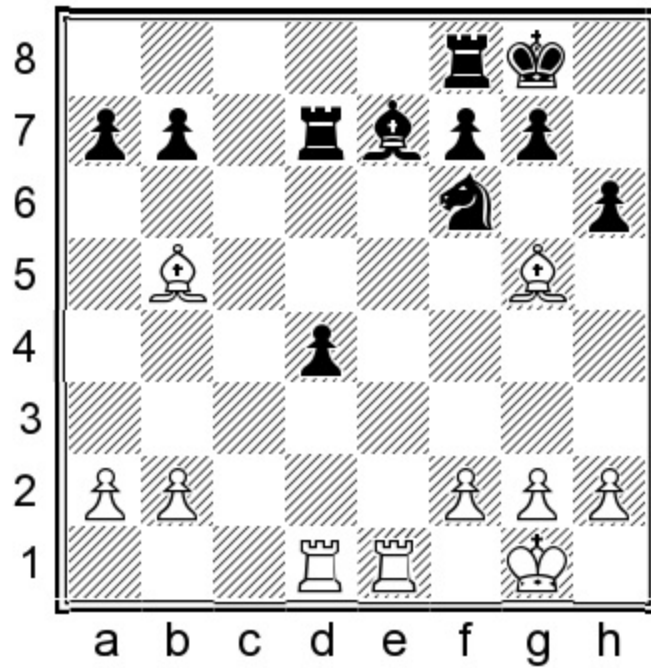
A) 12. ♖g3 dxc4 13. ♗xc4 0-0 14. ♗g5 ♗d6 15. ♖d3 ♘e6 16. ♗h4 ♘f4 17. ♖f3 ♘g6 18. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19. ♖xf6 gxf6 20. ♘d5 ♔g7 21. ♘e3 ♘e7 and Black kept his pawn. ½ – ½ (72) Van Foreest, J (2688) – So, W (2772) chess24.com INT 2021

B) 12. ♖d1 dxc4 13. ♗xc4 c5



Position after: 13...c5

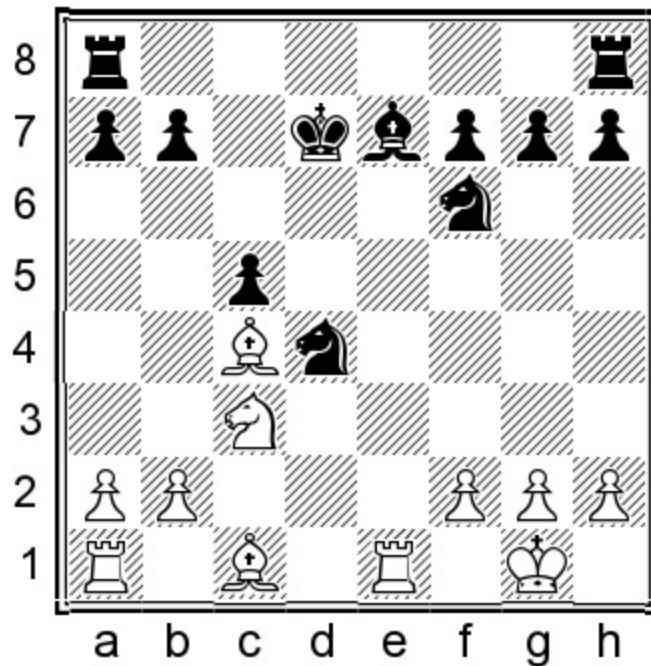
B1) 14. ♗g5 0-0 15. ♖d3 [15. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 16. ♘d5 ♖d6 17. ♘xf6+ gxf6 18. ♗h6 f5+] 15... ♖d6 16. ♖h3 ♖ad8 17. ♖ad1 h6 18. ♘b5 ♖d7 19. ♘xd4 cxd4 20. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 21. ♗b5



Position after: 21. ♖b5

21... ♜d5 22. ♘c4 ♜d7 23. ♖b5 ♜d5 24. ♘c4 ♜d7=

B2) 14. ♙a4+ ♜d7 15. ♙xd7+ ♔xd7



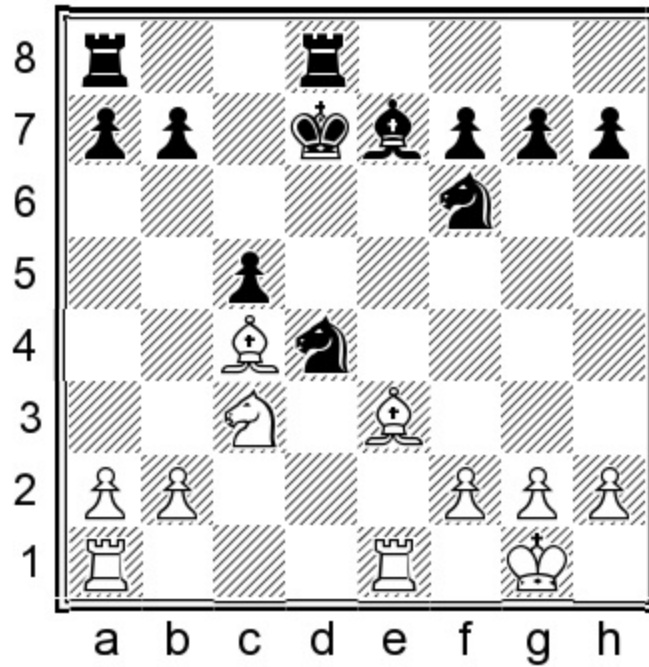
Position after: 15... ♔xd7

Now we have an endgame. Black is a pawn up but obviously the two bishops offer good compensation here.

B2.1) 16.♔g5 h6 17.♔h4 ♖ad8 18.♔xf7 g5 19.♔g3 ♜hf8 20.♔g6 ♔d6= ½ – ½ (20) Schmidt, T (2425) – Sheretyuk, A (2427) ICCF 2018.

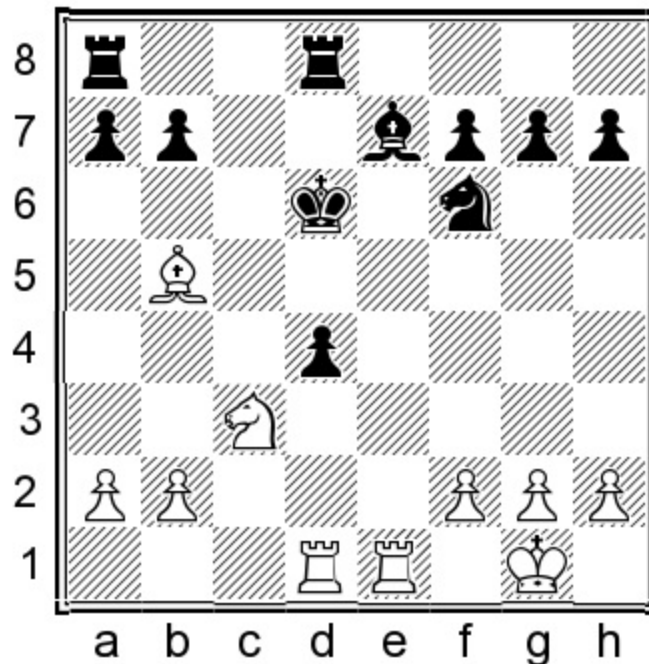
B2.2) 16.♔xf7 ♘c2 17.♞d1+ ♜c6 18.♞b1 ♖ad8 19.♔g5 ♞xd1+ 20.♞xd1 h6 21.♘d5 ♔d8 22.♔xf6 ♔xf6 23.♔g6 This is also equal. ½ – ½ (23) Petukhov, S (2375) – Dolin, B (2391) ICCF 2012.

B2.3) 16.♔e3 ♞hd8



Position after: 16...♞hd8

Preparing to go to e8! 17.♔xd4 [17.♞ad1 ♜e8! 18.♘b5 ♘xb5 19.♔xc5 ♞xd1 20.♔xb5+ ♘d7 21.♞xd1 ♔xc5 22.♔xd7+ ♜e7] 17...cxd4 18.♔b5+ ♜d6 19.♞ad1 ♜c5 20.♞e5+ ♜d6 21.♞e1



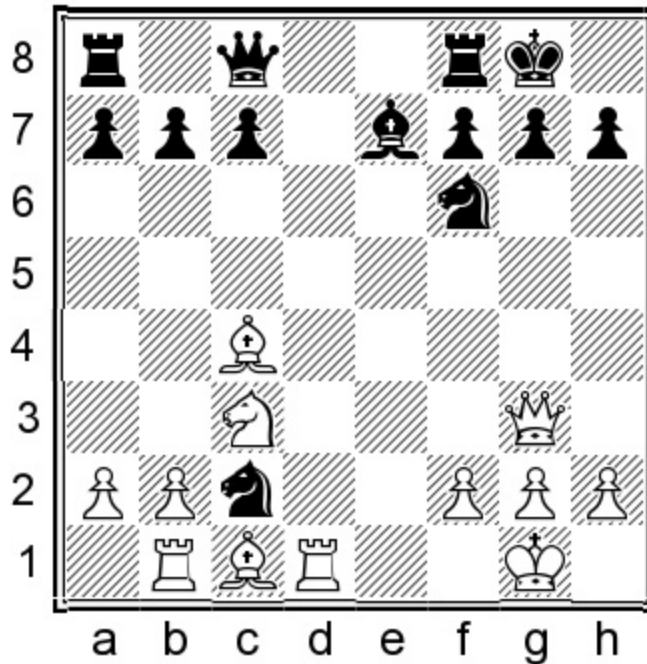
Position after: 21. ♖e1

21... ♖c5 22. ♖e5+ The game is equal.

12... dxc4 13. ♗xc4 ♘c2 14. ♖d1 ♕c8 15. ♖g3

15. ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 16. ♖b1 0-0 17. ♗b3 ♘b4 18. ♗e3 a5 19. a3 ♘a6 20. ♘d5 ♘xd5 21. ♖xd5 b6 22. ♗c4 ♘c5 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (55) Van Foreest, J (2681) – Rapport, R (2740) Wijk aan Zee NED 2023.

15... 0-0 16. ♖b1



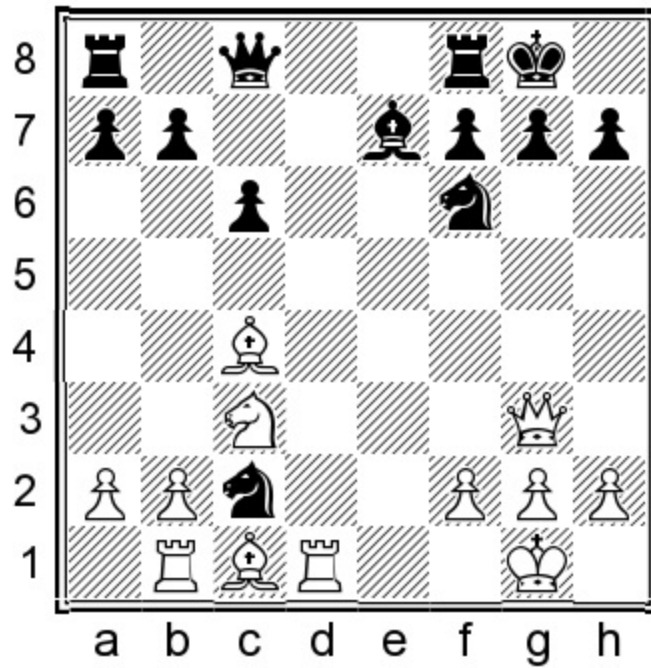
Position after: 16. ♖b1

16... ♗d6

Black has options here:

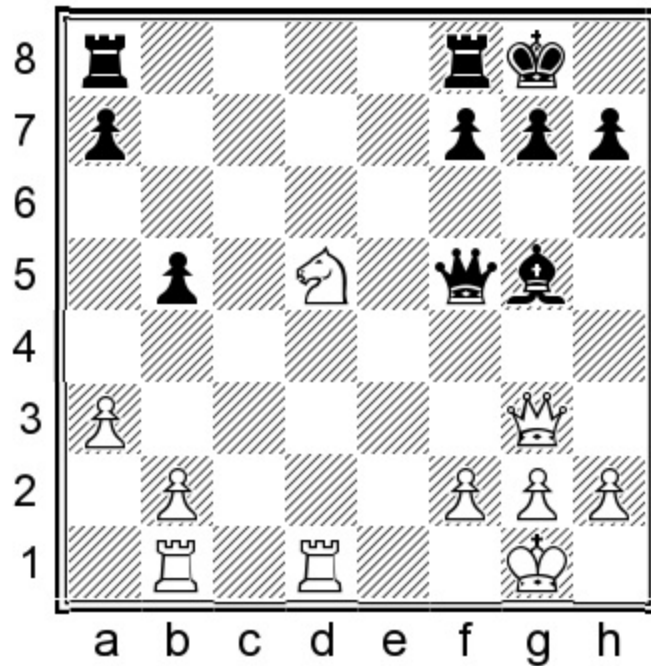
A) 16... ♘b4 17. ♗h6 ♖g4 18. ♖xc7 ♖ac8 19. ♖xe7 ♖xc4 20. ♗g5 White has some edge. ½ – ½ (87) Djukic, N (2516) – Kadric, D (2601) Niksic MNE 2023.

B) 16... c6!?



Position after: 16...c6!?

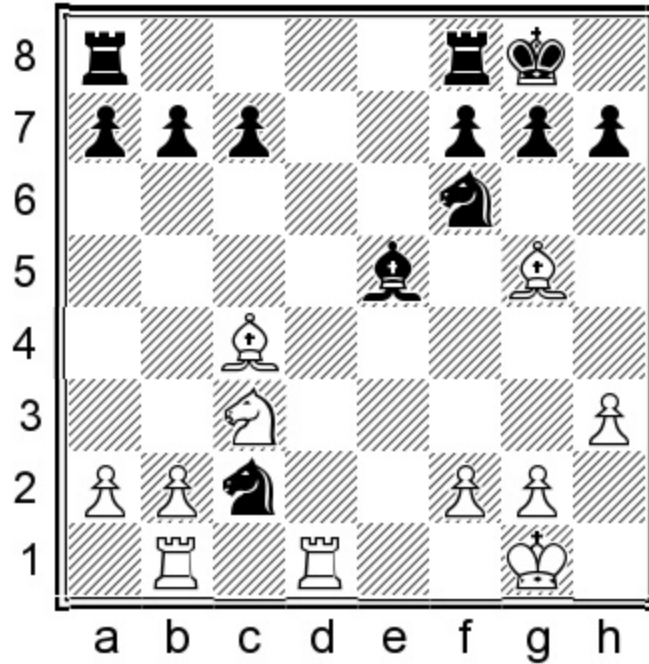
17.♙g5 [17.a3 ♜d8 18.♙g5 ♘d4 19.♞e1 ♙d6 20.♞h4 ♘f5 21.♞h3 ♘d4=] 17...b5 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6
 19.♘e4 ♙e7 20.♙b3 ♘b4 21.a3 ♘d5 22.♙xd5 cxd5 23.♘c3 ♞f5 24.♘xd5 ♙g5



Position after: 24...♙g5

25.♞d3 ♞xd3 26.♞xd3 ♞fc8 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (33) Dunlop, G (2536) – Ludgate, A (2468) ICCF 2021

17. ♖h4 ♗g4 18. ♖xg4 ♘xg4 19. h3 ♘f6 20. ♗g5 ♗e5

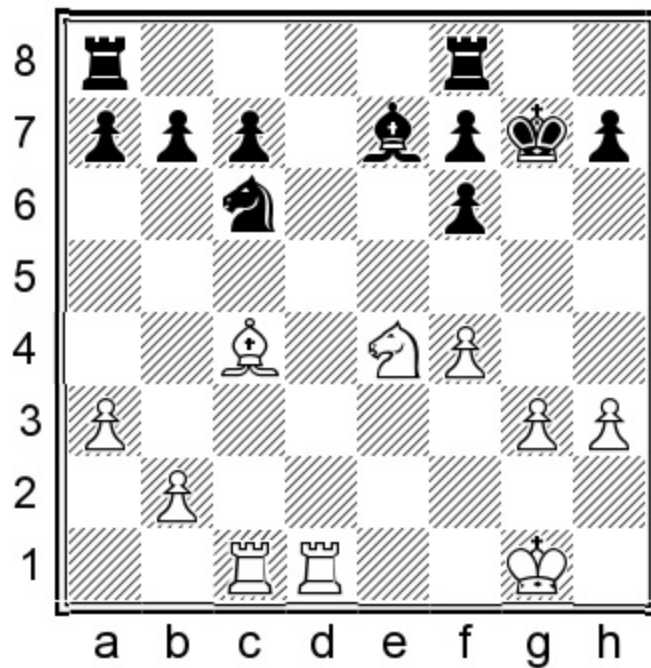


Position after: 20... ♗e5

21. ♖bc1

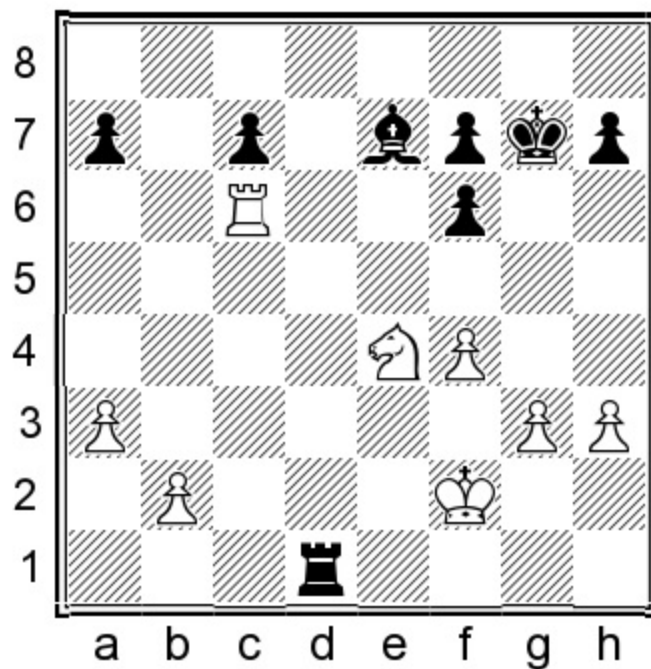
21. ♘d5 c6 22. ♘e7+ [22. ♗xf6 saw an early draw: ½ – ½ (22) Caruana, F (2670) – Gelfand, B (2755) Biel 2009. Black is OK.] 22... ♖h8 23. ♘f5 ♖ad8 24. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 25. ♗xf7 h6 26. ♘h4 ♗c7 27. ♗xf6 gxf6 28. ♗h5 ♖d2=

21... ♘b4 22. f4 ♗d6 23. ♗xf6 gxf6 24. a3 ♘c6 25. g3 ♖g7 26. ♘e4 ♗e7



Position after: 26...♙e7

27.♜d7 ♜ac8 28.♙b5 ♜fd8 29.♜xd8 ♜xd8 30.♙xc6 bxc6 31.♜xc6 ♜d1+ 32.♚f2



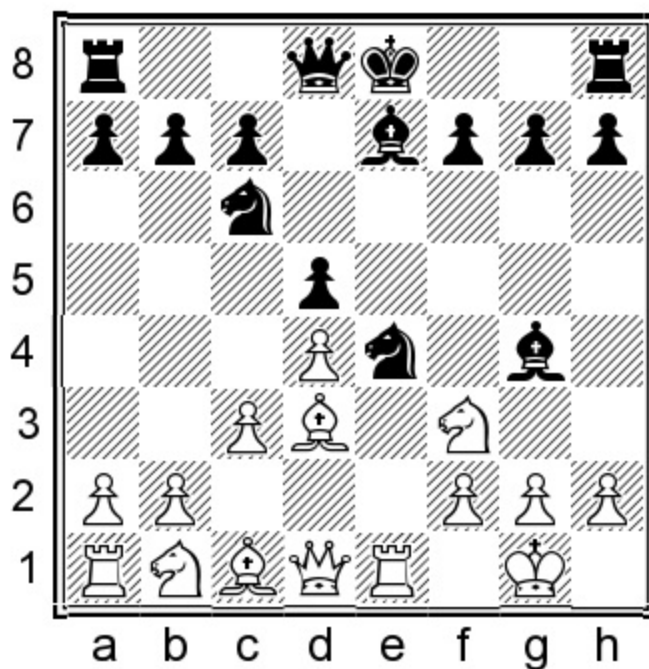
Position after: 32.♚f2

32...f5

White is unable to increase the pressure, so the game is balanced. ½ – ½ (39) Montero, J – Orekhov, D (2335) ICCF 2022.

d) 8.♖e1 ♔g4 9.c3 f5 10.♞bd2 0-0 11.--

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♞c6 8.♖e1 ♔g4 9.c3



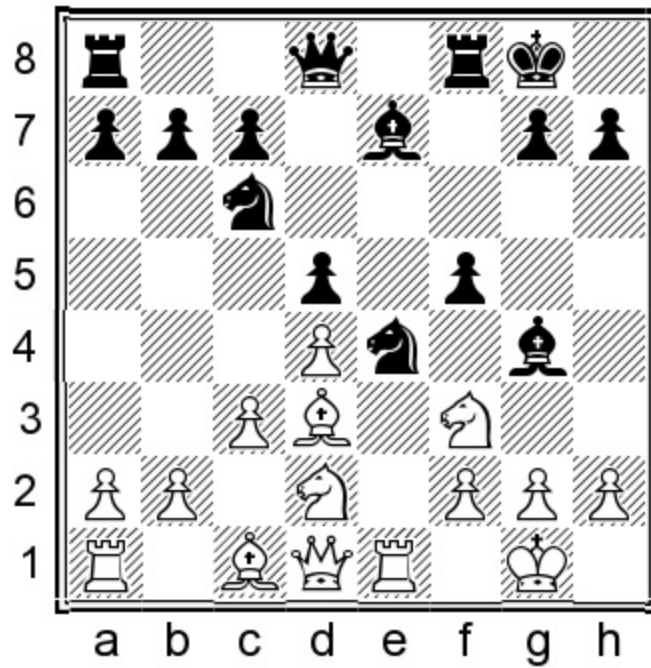
Position after: 9.c3

9...f5

This is a particularly important line and was extremely popular in the past. Both sides are going for very sharp play: Black is trying to use a strong outpost on e4 to create attack, while White is heading toward queenside play, combining with possible occupation of the e5-square.

10.♞bd2 0-0

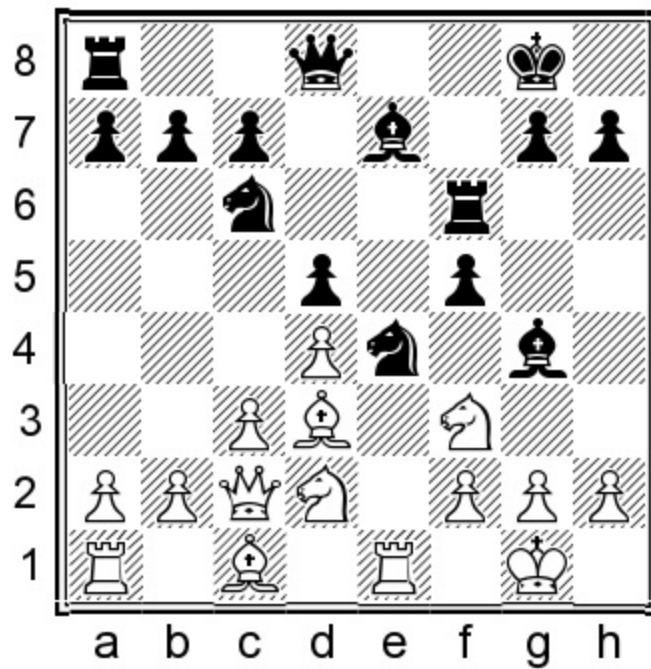
In this subchapter we will deal with less-played but important ideas for White because we entered tactical game and every detail counts. In subsequent chapters we will continue with the main plan 11.♙b3.



Position after: 10...0-0

11.♘f1

Another idea is: 11.♙c2 ♖f6



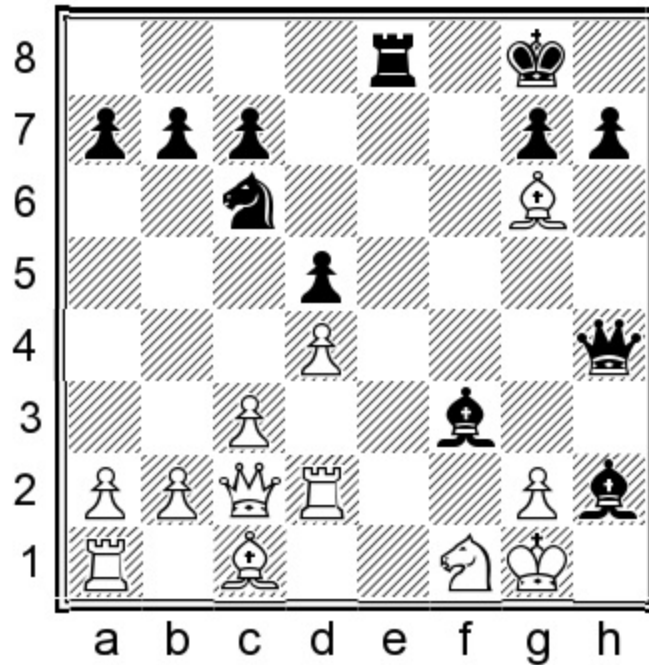
Position after: 11...♖f6

A) 12.♘e5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♖g6 14.♘f1 [14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♙e2 ♙d7 0-1 (20) Pierrot, P – Guinefolleau, M (1834) ICCF 2020] 14...c6 15.♙e3 ♙g5

B) 12.♘f1 ♜g6 13.♘3d2

B1) 13...♙h4 14.♘g3 ♜d6 15.♘df1 ♜f8 16.a4 ♘d8 17.b3! [17.b4 ♘e6 ½ – ½ (31) Ayrosa, P (2323) – Au Cardero, R (2305) ICCF 2008] 17...♘e6 18.♙a3 c5 19.dxc5 ♘6xc5 20.c4 This is a bit unpleasant for Black.

B2) 13...♙d6! 14.f3 ♜h4 15.♞e2 ♘xd2 16.♞xd2 ♙xf3 17.♙xf5 ♞e8! 18.♙xg6 ♙xh2+



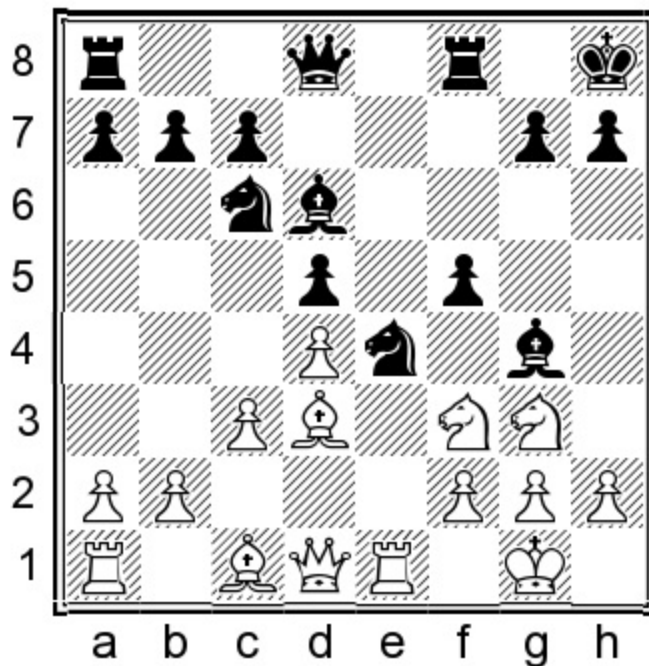
Position after: 18...♙xh2+

19.♘xh2 ♞e1+ 20.♘f1 ♞xf1+ 21.♙xf1 ♜h1+ 22.♙f2 ♜xg2+ 23.♙e3 ♜g3! Nice tactics that secure Black a draw.

11...♙h4

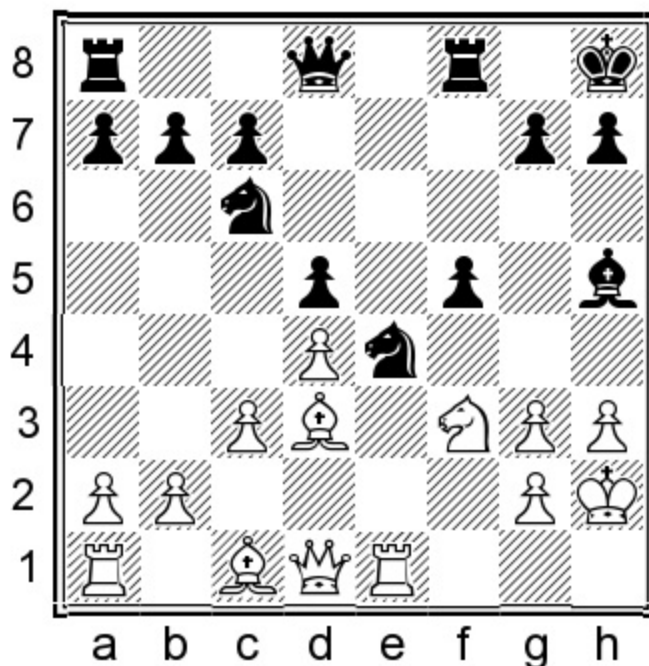
Provoking g3. Black can also place the bishop on a different diagonal:

11...♙d6 12.♘g3 ♙h8



Position after: 12... ♔h8

13.h3 [13. ♕e2 ♕xf3 14. ♕xf3 ♖h4 15. ♗b3 ♜e7 16. ♞e2 b6 17. ♕d2 c5 Black has the initiative.]
 13... ♕xg3 14. fxg3 ♕h5 15. ♔h2

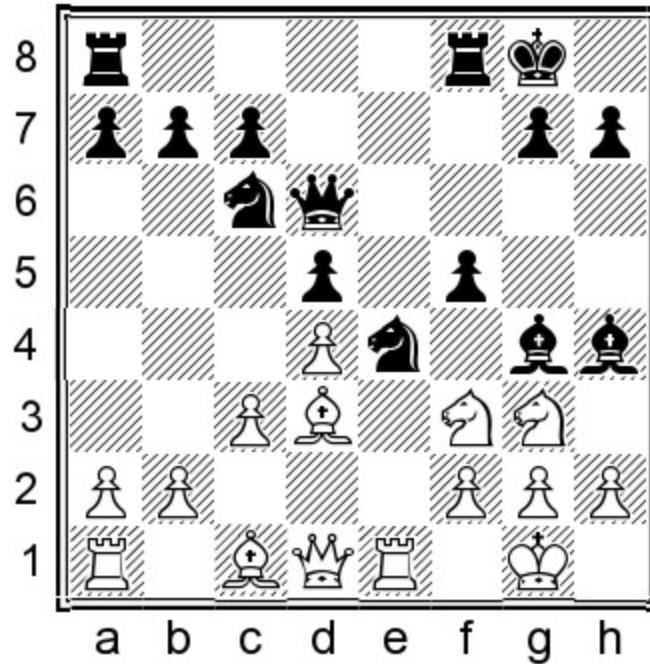


Position after: 15. ♔h2

15...g5 [15... ♜e7 16. ♗b3 ♜g6 17. ♜e5 ♜xe5 18. dxe5 1-0 (64) Asadli, V (2563) – Deac, B (2702) chess.com INT 2023] 16. ♗b3 ♕xf3 17. gxf3 ♖d6 18. f4 ♜e7 19. ♗a3 ♖e6 20. fxg5 ♜g6 21. ♞f1 f4 22. gxf4 ♞ae8 and Black has the initiative.

12.g3

12.♘g3 ♚d6!?



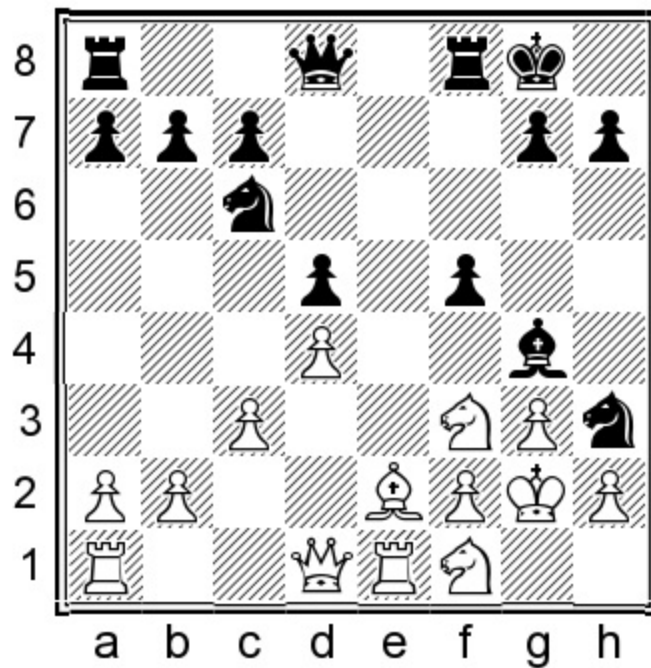
Position after: 12... ♚d6!?

[Black can also take on f2, although the implications are far from clear: 12...♘xf2 13.♙xf2 f4 14.♙xf4 ♜xf4 15.♙e2 ♙xg3+ 16.hxg3 This has been seen in some correspondence games and is unclear. 0-1 (61) Jimena Bonillo, S – Polo Molina, R E/A/008 2004] 13.♚c2 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♘xg3 15.fxg3 ♙xg3 16.♞e2 ♙f4 17.♙xf5 g6 18.♙xf4 ♚xf4 19.♙e6+ ♙g7 20.♚b3 ♞ae8 21.♚xd5 ♘d8 22.♞ae1 ♘xe6 23.♞xe6 ♞xe6 24.♚xe6 ♚xf3=

12...♙g5 13.♙xg5

13.♙e2 ♙xc1 14.♞xc1 f4 15.c4 fxg3 16.hxg3 ♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♚f6 0-1 (21) Morosi, D (2239) – Herrera, A (2191) ICCF 2007.

13...♘xg5 14.♙e2 ♘h3+ 15.♙g2



Position after: 15. ♔g2

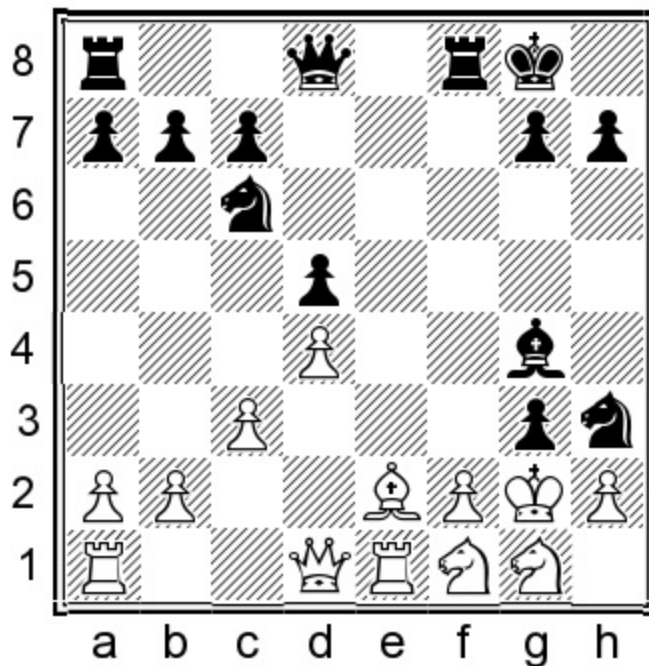
15...f4

This is the point of Black's plan; now there is pawn contact and Black continues his pressure.

16. ♖g1

16. ♖3d2 ♙xe2 17. ♚xe2 f3+ 18. ♘xf3 ♚d7 19. ♘e3 ♜f6 20. ♖d1 ♚g4 21. ♚e3 ♜af8 22. ♖g1 ♜h6 23. f3 ♚h5 24. ♚e2 ♘xg1 25. ♔xg1 ♜xf3=

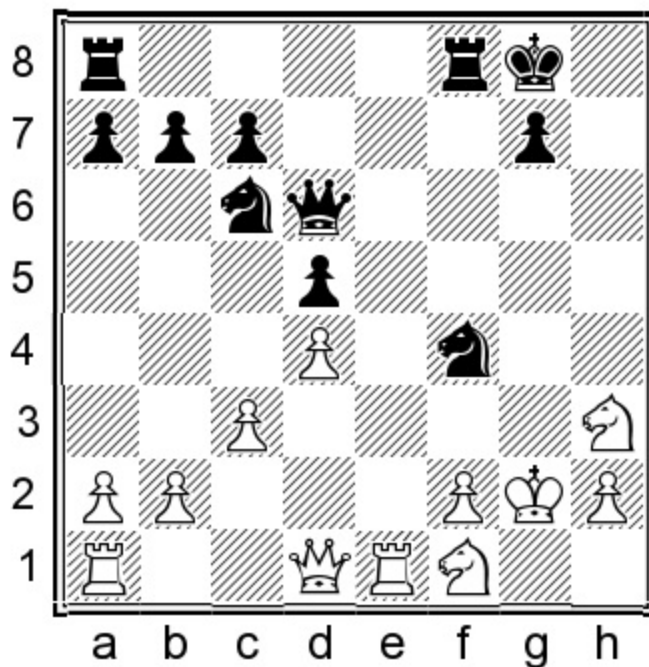
16...fxg3!?



Position after: 16...fxg3!?

16...♙xe2 17.♖xe2 ♘g5 18.♘d2 ♖d7 19.h4 fxg3 20.fxg3 ♘f7 21.♗e6 ♗xe6 22.♝xe6 ♝ae8 23.♝ae1 ♘d6= ½ – ½ (41) Van Foreest, J (2624) – Ozen, D (2431) Manavgat TUR 2018.

17.♙xg4 ♘f4+ 18.♗xg3 ♖d6 19.♘h3 h5 20.♙xh5 ♘xh5+ 21.♗g2 ♘f4+



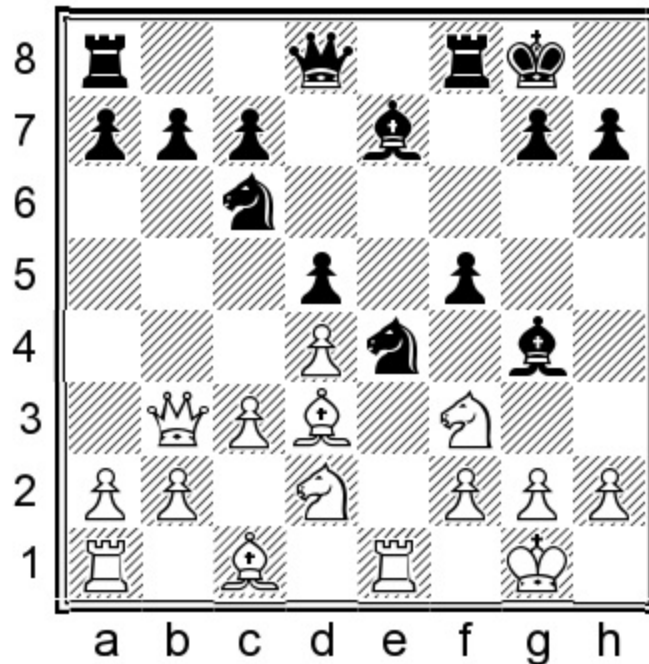
Position after: 21...♘f4+

22.♘xf4 ♝xf4 23.♗h5 ♝af8 24.♝e2 ♘e7=

e) 8.♖e1 ♔g4 9.c3 f5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♙b3 ♞a5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♞c6 8.♖e1 ♔g4 9.c3 f5
10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♙b3

The main reply – best and critical. White creates immediate pressure on the e4-knight and b7-pawn.



Position after: 11.♙b3

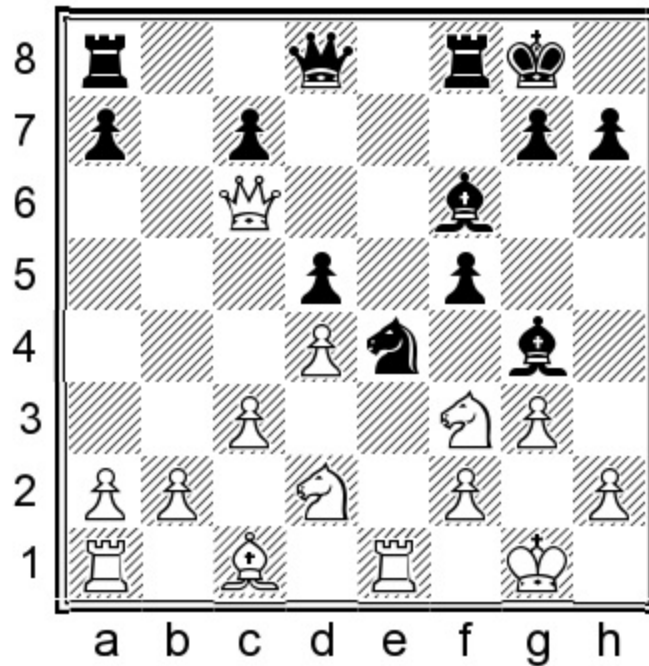
11...♞a5

First, we will start with this move. Black doesn't want to give up the pawn on b7 after 11...♙h8, which we will analyse in our next sub-chapter.

12.♙c2

White has two logical retreats, and both are interesting:

12.♙a4 ♞c6 13.♙b5 ♙h4 14.g3 ♙f6 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♙xc6

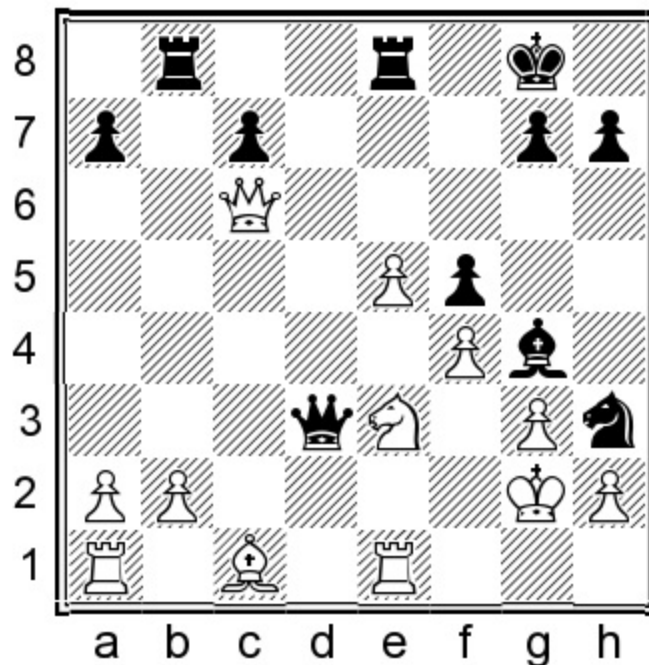


Position after: 16. ♖xc6

Now in both cases Black is fine: 16... ♖e8 [16... ♖b8 17. ♗e6+ ♖f7 18. ♘xe4 dxe4 19. ♘e5 ♙xe5 20. dxe5 ♖b6 21. ♗c4 ♗e8 22. ♙f4 An early draw but the position is riskier for White ½ – ½ (22) Hertel, P (2643) – Velilla Velasco, F (2566) ICCF email 2010] 17. ♘e5 ♙xe5 18. dxe5 ♘g5 19. f4 ♘h3+ 20. ♔g2 ♖b8 21. c4

A) Even with... 21... ♔h8!? 22. c5 [22. ♗xd5 ♗e7 23. ♗d3 ♖ed8 24. ♗e3 c5–+] 22... g5 23. ♘b3 gxf4 24. ♙xf4 d4 25. ♗f6+ ♗xf6 26. exf6 ♘xf4+ 27. gxf4 d3 Black is not in any danger.

B) 21... dxc4 22. ♘xc4 ♗d3 23. ♘e3



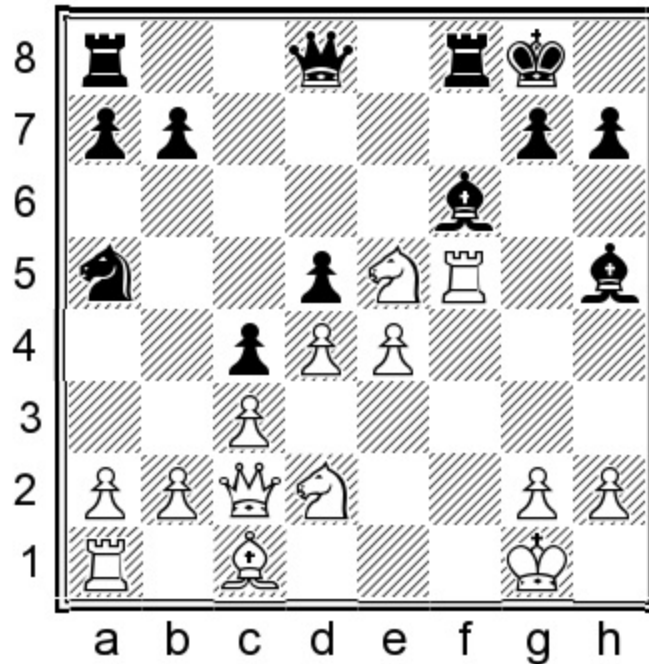
Position after: 23. ♖e3

½ – ½ (23) Rosche, E (2499) – Markus, R (2482) Remote email 2014. There is a forced draw after...
23... ♜xb2+ 24. ♙xb2 ♚d2+ 25. ♗h1 ♘f2+ 26. ♗g1 ♘h3+=

12... ♖c6

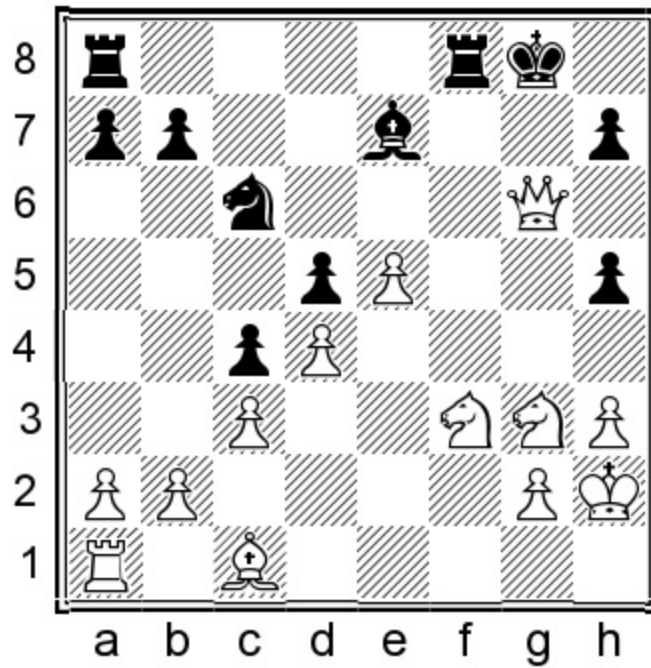
Black is OK with repeating moves at an early stage of the game. We are interested in the truth in this book, and in any case the Petrov is not an opening with which to play for a win at any cost.

I am not very fond of the other idea, as after: 12...c5 13. ♖e5 ♙h5 14.f3 ♙h4 15. ♜f1 c4 16. ♙xe4 fxe4 17.fxe4 ♙f6 18. ♜f5!



Position after: 18. ♜f5!

18...g6 19. ♜xh5 gxh5 20. ♖ef3 ♚d7 21.e5 ♙e7 22. ♖f1 ♚g4 23.h3 ♚g7 24. ♗h2 ♖c6 25. ♖g3 ♚g6
26. ♚xg6+!



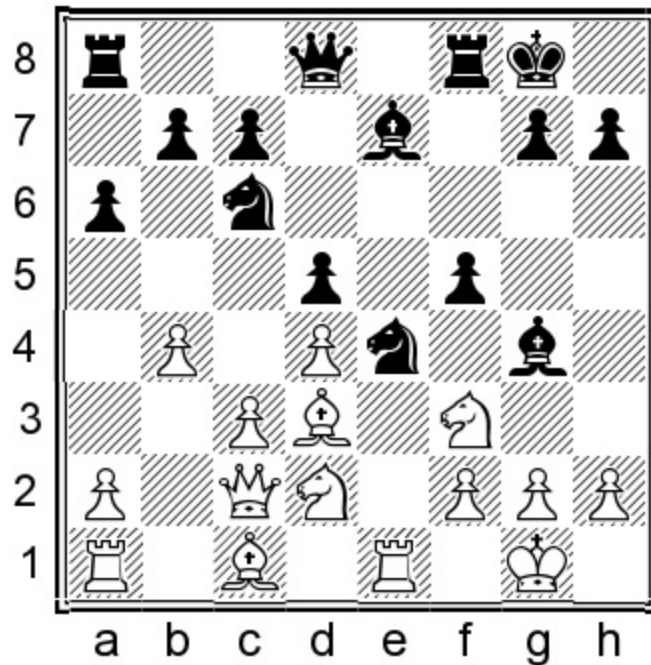
Position after: 26. ♖xg6+!

26...hxg6 27. ♘e2! The knight is going to f4 with tremendous pressure and compensation. 1-0 (55)
 Grego, L (2305) – Gauna, J (2244) ICCF 2016.

13.b4

White's main plan.

13...a6

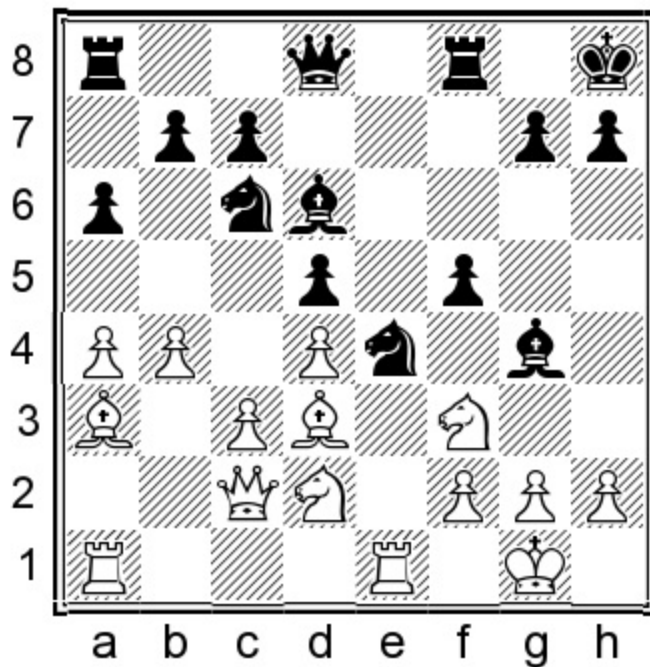


Position after: 13...a6

Now White has couple of ideas how to continue:

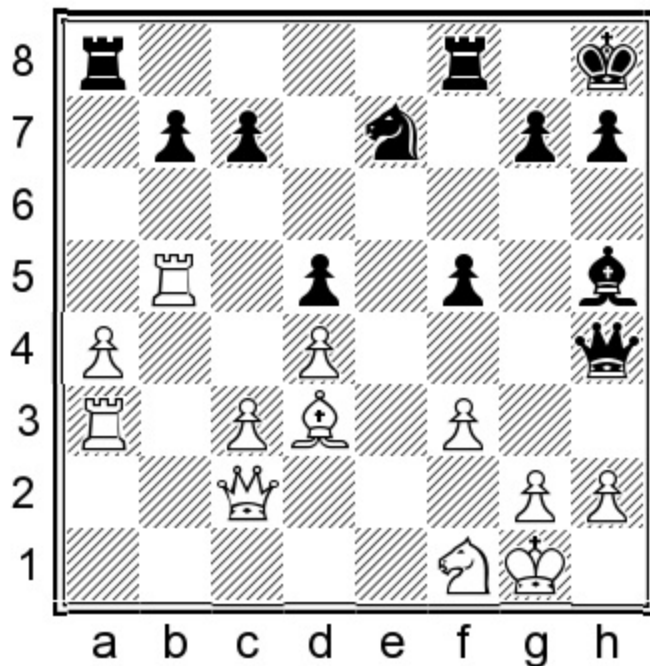
14.♖b1

14.a4 ♕d6 15.♕a3 ♔h8



Position after: 15...♔h8

A) 16.♖eb1 ♗xd2 17.♗xd2 ♕h4 18.♗f1 ♗e7 19.f3 ♕h5 20.b5 ♕xa3 21.♖xa3 axb5 22.♖xb5

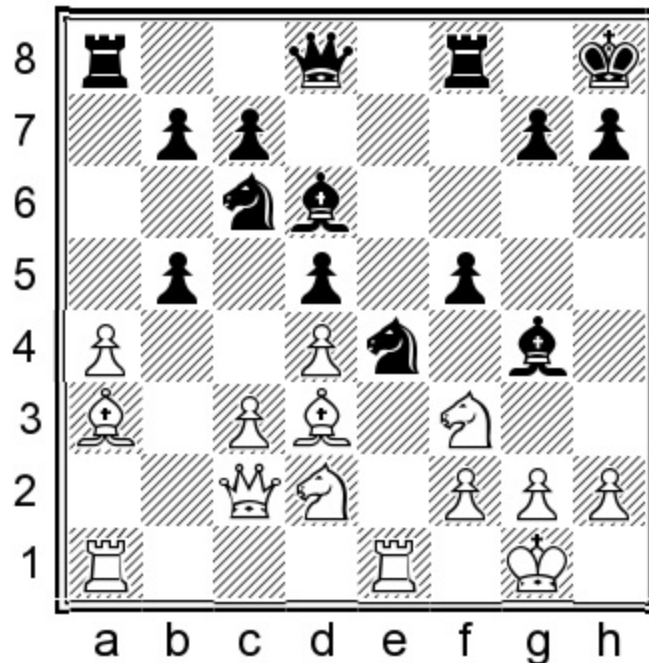


Position after: 22. ♖xb5

22...b6 23. ♖a1 ♜f6 24. ♗e3 ♙e8 25. ♖bb1 ♙d7 26. ♙b5 ♜d6 27. ♖e1 c6 Black is not inferior. 1-0 (51) Morozevich, A (2774) – Gelfand, B (2723) Yerevan 2008.

B) 16. ♜b2 ♗e7 17. ♗e5 ♙xe5 18. dxe5 ♗g6 19. f3 ♜g5 20. fxg4 ♗xd2 21. ♜c2 ♗h4 22. ♖ad1 ♗hf3+ 23. gxf3 ♗xf3+ 24. ♔g2 fxg4 25. ♖e2 ♜f4 26. ♔h1 ♗h4 27. ♖g2 ♜f3 28. ♖f1 ♜xg2+ 29. ♜xg2 ♗xg2 30. ♔xg2 ♖xf1 31. ♙xf1 ♖e8 32. ♙c1 ♖xe5 33. ♙f4 ♖e6 A long tactical struggle but it seems that Black was not worse at any moment. ½ – ½ (33) Stalmach, K (2565) – Kunzelmann, F (2463) ICCF email 2010.

C) 16.b5 axb5

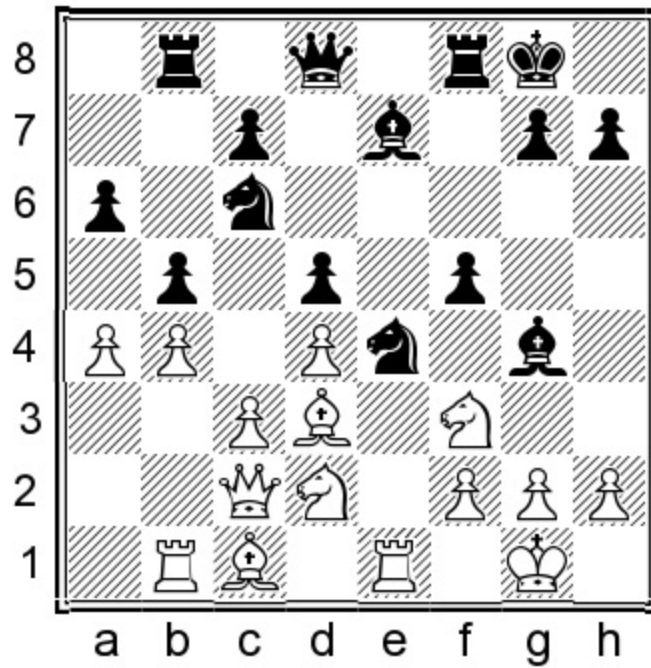


Position after: 16...axb5

C1) 17. ♙xb5 ♗a5 18. ♖eb1 ♜e7 19. ♙xd6 cxd6 20. ♙f1 ♖fc8 21. ♖a3 ♖c6 22. ♖b5 ♙xf3 [22... ♜c7?! 23. ♗xe4!↑ 1-0 (29) Amonatov, F (2608) – Raja, R (2316) Kolkata IND 2018] 23. ♗xf3 ♜c7 Black is fine.

C2) 17. ♙xd6 cxd6 18. axb5 [18. ♙xb5 ♗a5 19. h3 ♙xf3 20. ♗xf3 ♖c8 21. ♖a3 ♖c7 22. ♙d3 ♜c8 Black is OK here. ½ – ½ (22) Bienkowski, A – Endean, A LSS 2011] 18... ♗a5 19. ♖a3 ♖c8 20. h3 ♙h5 21. ♗h2 b6 22. ♗df1 f4 23. ♙xe4 dxe4 24. ♜xe4 d5 25. ♜b1 f3 26. ♗g3 ♙g6 ½ – ½ (31) Elent, M (2410) – Roos, J (2409) ICCF 2010.

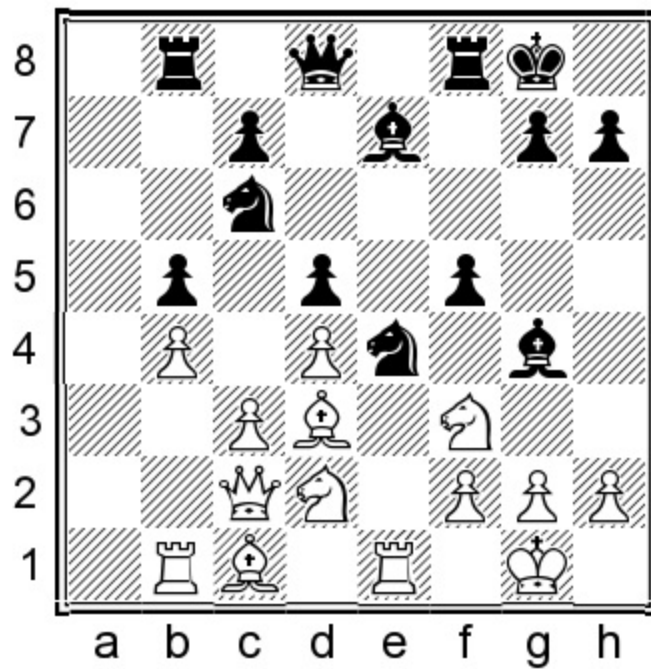
14...b5 15.a4 ♖b8



Position after: 15...Rb8

16. Ra1

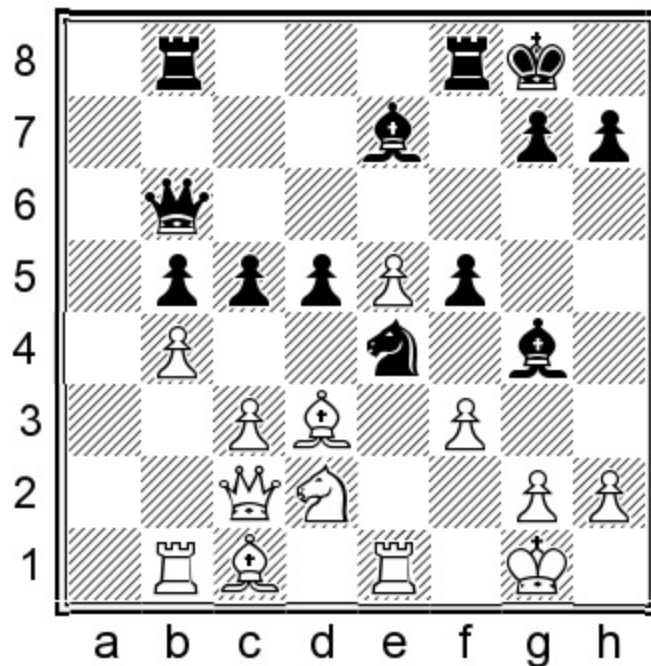
16...axb5



Position after: 16...axb5

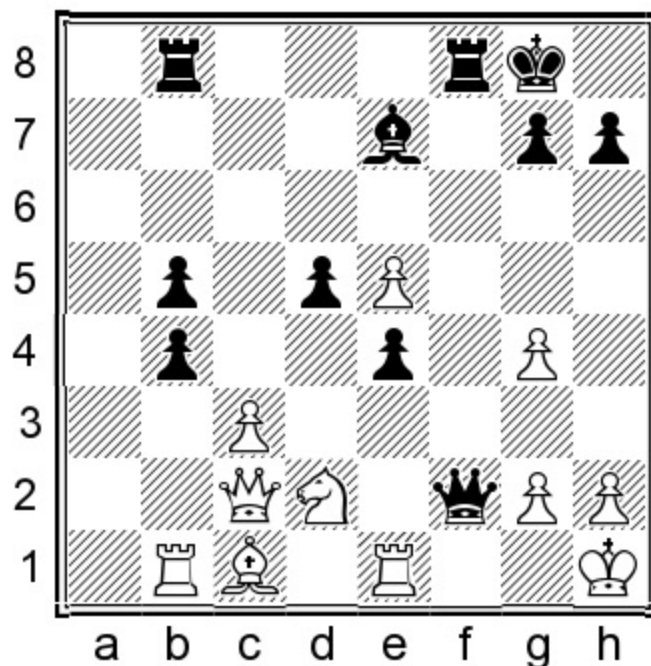
A) 17. Ra1 Rb6 (see 16. Ra1)

B) 17. Qe5 Qxe5 18. dxe5 c5 19. f3 Qb6



Position after: 19... ♖b6

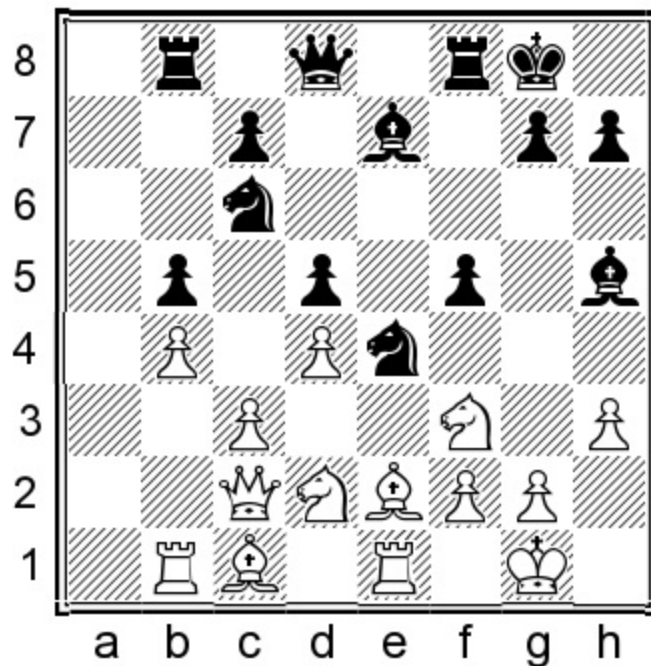
20. ♙xe4 [20. ♘b3 c4+ 21. ♙e3 cxd3 22. ♖xd3 ♖c6 23. fxg4 fxg4 24. ♙d4 ♖a8 25. ♘c5 ♙xc5 26. bxc5 ♘xc5 27. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 28. ♖xb5 ♘d3=] 20...fxe4 21. fxg4 cxb4+ 22. ♔h1 ♖f2



Position after: 22... ♖f2

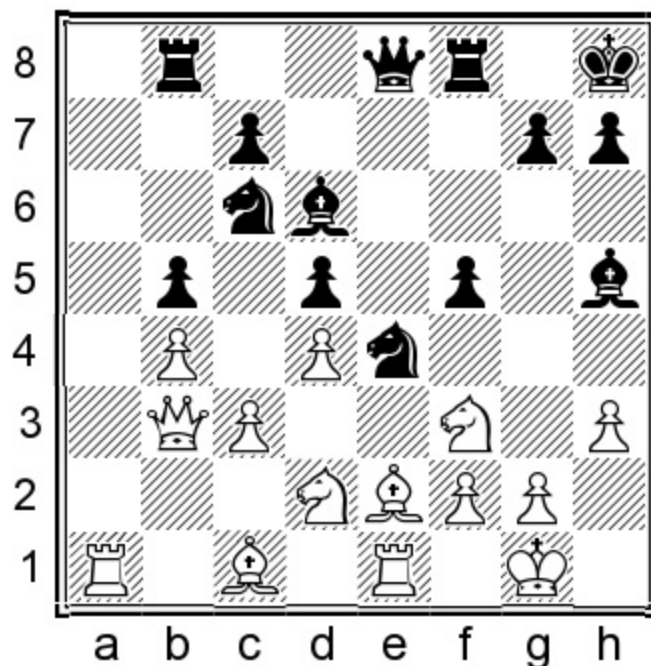
23. ♖g1 [23. ♖d1? bxc3+ 0-1 (31) Amonatov, F (2648) – Kunin, V (2533) Moscow 2009] 23... ♙c5 24. ♙b2 e3 25. cxb4 ♙xb4 26. ♖b3 ♙xd2 27. ♖xd5+ ♖f7 28. e6 ♖e7 29. ♖a1 b4 Black has enough play.

C) 17. h3 ♙h5 18. ♙e2



Position after: 18. ♔e2

18... ♛e8!? [18... ♙h4 19. ♖f1 ♜e8 20. ♘xe4 ♟e4 21. ♘xh4 ♙xe2 22. ♛xe2 ♛xh4 23. ♛g4± ½ – ½ (32) Bruzon Batista, L (2620) – Nielsen, P (2649) Havana 2007] 19. ♖a1 ♙d6 20. ♛b3 ♚h8



Position after: 20... ♚h8

Black is fine; everything is protected from a tactical point of view.

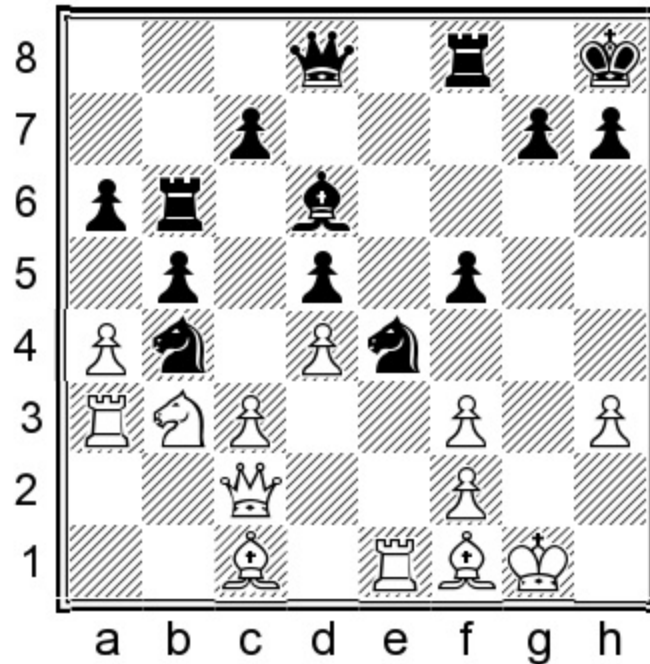
D) 17. ♘f1 ♙d6 18. ♘g3 ♛f6 19. ♖b2 ♖b6 20. ♔e2 ♚h8 21. ♛d3 ♖bb8 22. h3 ♙xf3 23. ♛xf3 ♙xg3 24. fxg3 ♘e7 A highly unclear position. ½ – ½ (49) Grego, L (2317) – Murin, P (2284) ICCF 2013.

16...♖b6

Preventing the rook from coming to a6 and also having in mind placing a bishop on d6.

17.♙e2

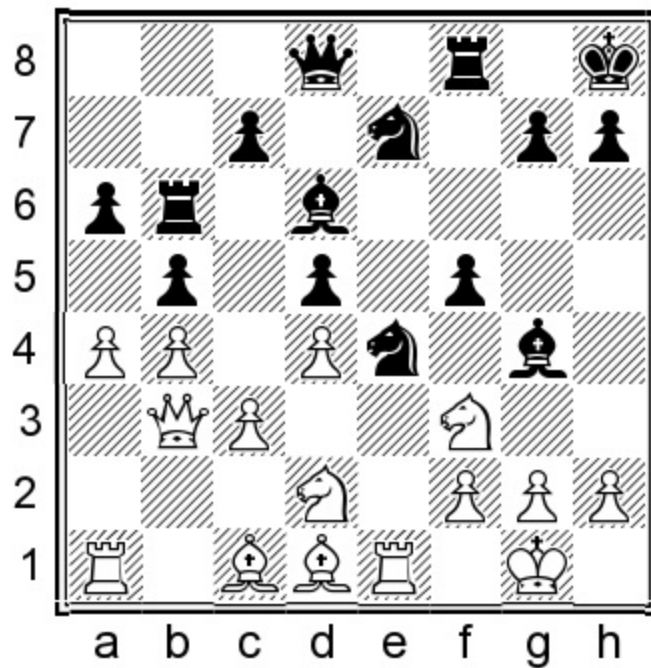
17.♖a3 ♕d6 18.♙f1 ♖h8 19.h3 ♕h5 20.♗b3 ♕xf3 21.gxf3 ♗xb4



Position after: 21...♗xb4

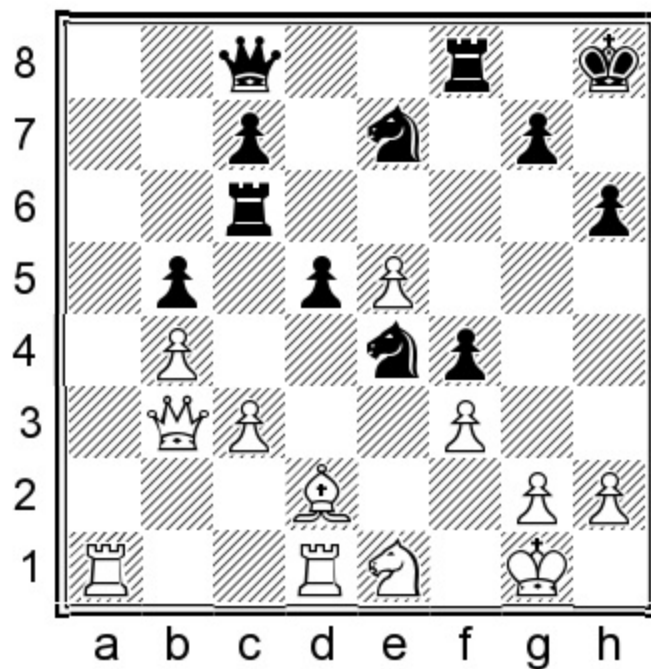
22.cxb4 ♕xb4 23.fxe4 ♖g6+ 24.♙g2 f4 25.f3 ♕xe1 26.e5 ♕b4 27.♖a2 ♗h4 28.axb5 ♗e1+ Again the tactics work well here for Black. ½ – ½ (28) Gonzaga Grego, L (2402) – Llorente Alvarez, J (2198) ICCF 2017.

17...♕d6 18.♕d1 ♗e7 19.♗b3 ♖h8



Position after: 19... ♔h8

20. axb5 axb5 21. ♖e5 ♙xd1 22. ♗xd1 h6 23. ♘df3 ♚c8 24. ♘e1 ♙xe5 25. dxe5 ♜c6 26. ♙d2 f4 27. f3



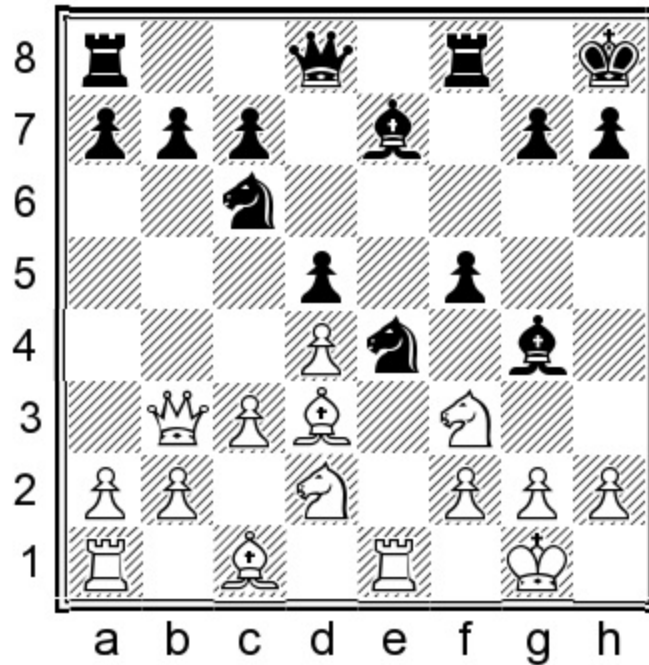
Position after: 27.f3

27... ♘g5

Black has counterplay. ½ – ½ (31) Jones, K (2345) – Procopi, J (2339) ICCF 2020.

f) 8.♖e1 ♘g4 9.c3 f5 10.♞bd2 0-0 11.♙b3 ♔h8 12.♙xb7 ♜f6 13.♙b3 ♞b8 ♙a4

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♞c6 8.♖e1 ♘g4 9.c3 f5 10.♞bd2 0-0 11.♙b3 ♔h8



Position after: 11...♔h8

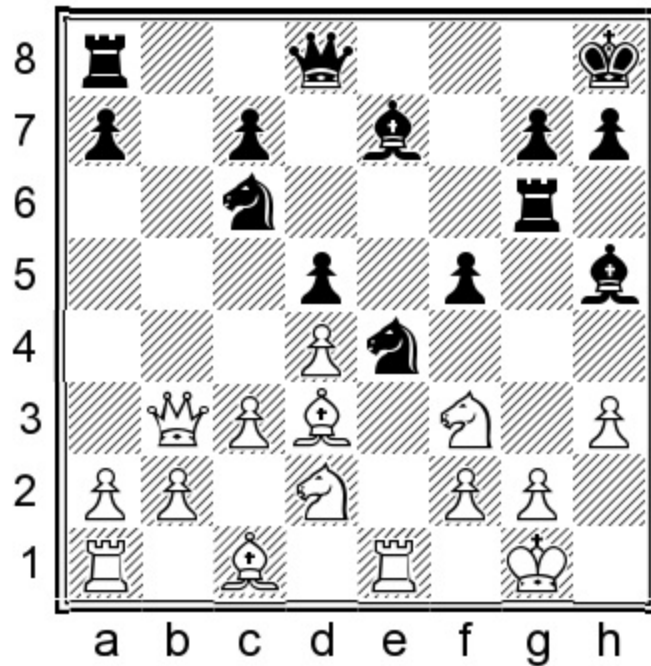
This is another plan – riskier, but not necessarily bad. Black sacrifices a pawn but in return will get tempi to go for an attack.

12.♙xb7

The critical response but there are other options here:

A) 12.♞e5 ♞xe5 13.dxe5 ♞xf2!-+

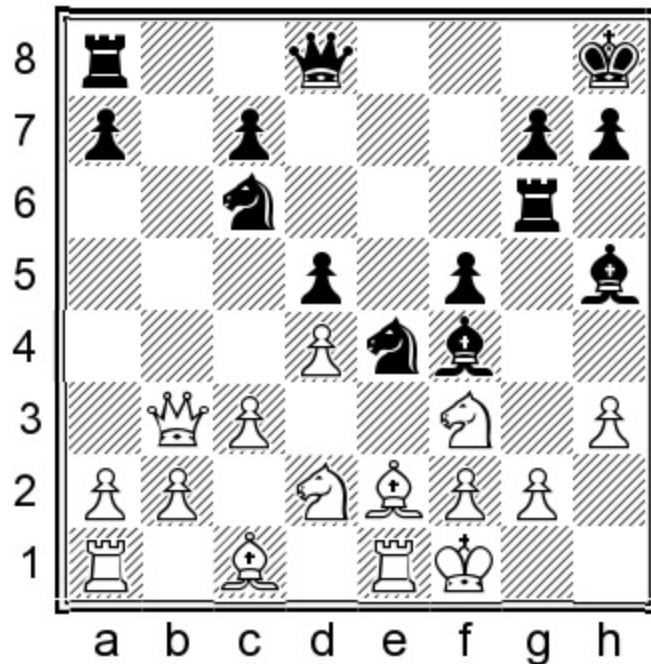
B) 12.h3 ♙h5 13.♙xb7 ♜f6 14.♙b3 ♞g6



Position after: 14... ♖g6

Black doesn't lose time placing a rook on b8. 15. ♕e2 [15. ♕b5 ♜b8 16. ♚a4 ♜h4 ♣ Now 17. ♝f1? ♜xd2 18. ♜xd2 ♚g5 wins on the spot.] 15... ♕d6

B1) 16. ♔f1 ♜f4!



Position after: 16... ♜f4!

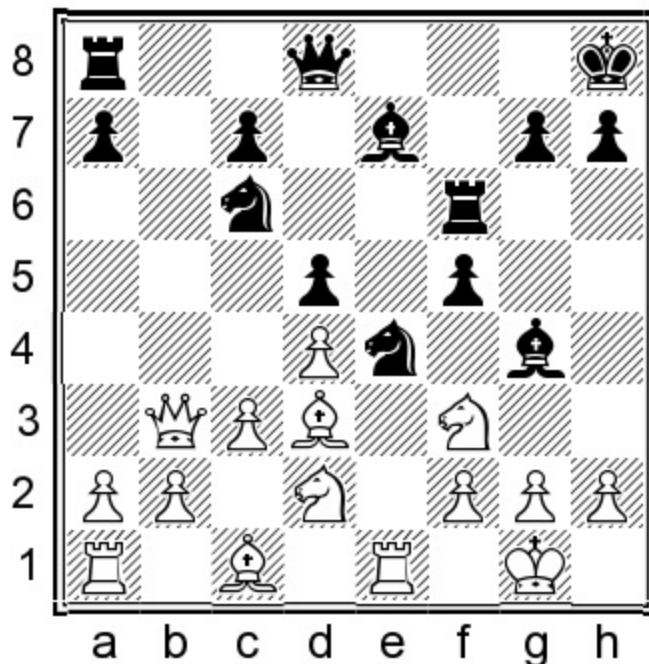
17. ♚c2 ♚d6 18. ♜h4 ♜xe2+ 19. ♝xe2 ♜xd2 20. ♕xd2 ♚h2 21. ♜xg6+ hxg6 22. ♝xe4 fxg4 23. ♚c1 ♝f8 24. ♕e3 ♜e7 Black has strong counterplay.

B2) 16. ♖d1 ♜f6 17. ♗f1 ♙xf3! 18. ♙xf3 ♜h4 This gives Black typical attacking play.

B3) 16. ♗f1 ♙xf3! 17. ♙xf3 ♜h4 Black has much the better position.

B4) 16. ♗e5 ♜xg2+ 17. ♔xg2 ♜g5+ 18. ♔f1 ♜h4 19. ♗xe4 fxe4 20. ♙xh5 ♜xh3+ 21. ♔g1 ♗xe5 22. dxe5 ♙xe5 23. ♙e3 ♙h2+=

12... ♜f6 13. ♜b3

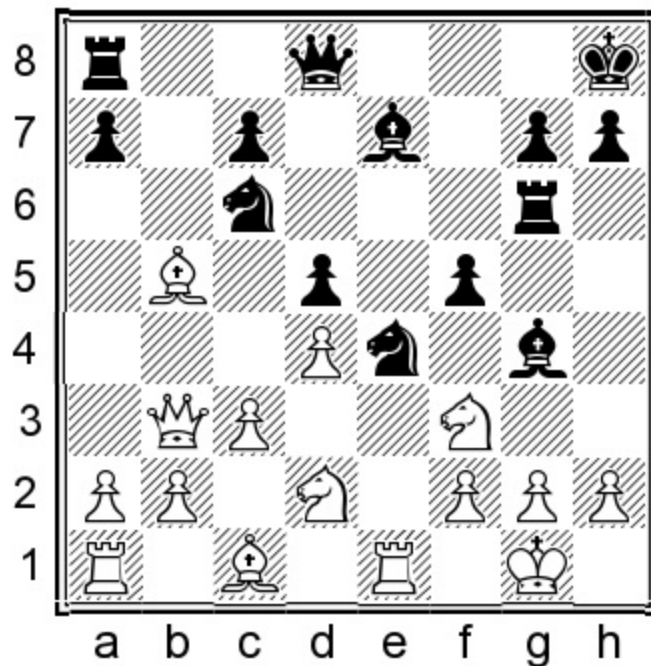


Position after: 13. ♜b3

13... ♜b8

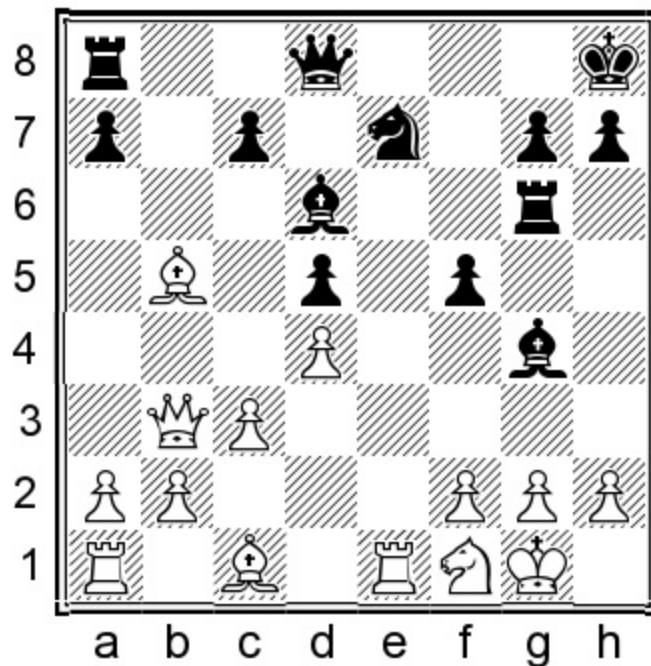
Probably best although I will also give here an alternative that hasn't received much attention. Still, perhaps it is playable:

13... ♜g6 14. ♙b5!



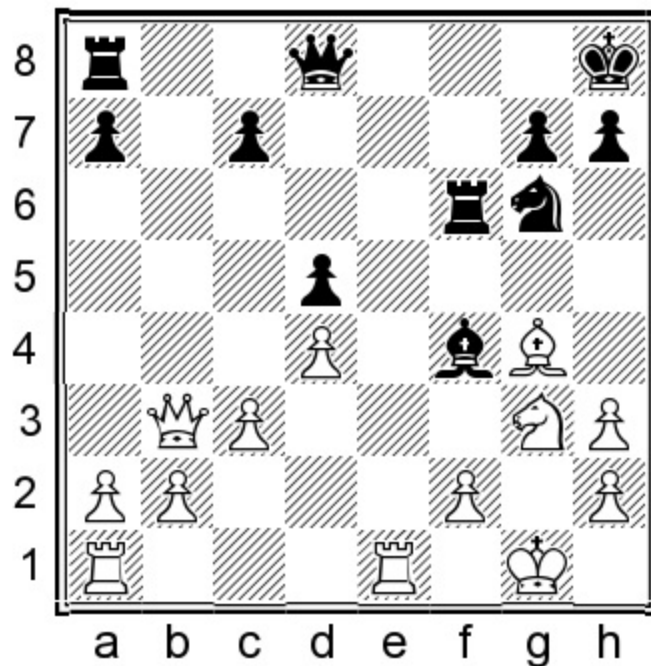
Position after: 14. ♖b5!

This is a key moment here. 14... ♗xd2 [14... ♜b8 15. ♚a4 ♕h4 16.g3 Without h3 included this is winning now for White.] 15. ♗xd2 ♕d6 16. ♗f1 ♗e7



Position after: 16... ♗e7

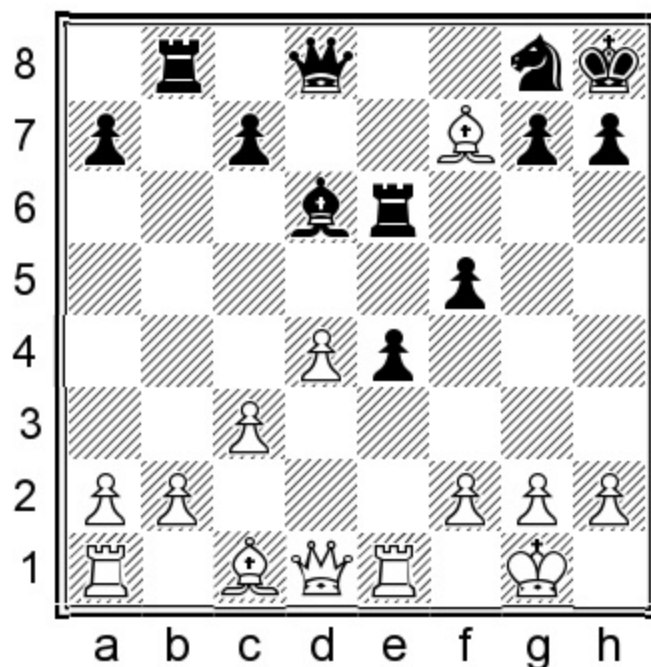
A) Another idea is: 17. ♕e2 ♕h3!? 18. ♗g3 f4 19. ♕xf4 ♕xf4 20.gxh3 ♜f6 21. ♕g4 ♗g6!



Position after: 21... Nf6!

This is perhaps even more precise, although in our quoted game Black didn't have a bad position either. On the contrary... [21... Rb8 22. Qc2 Nf6 23. Rad1 Qd6 24. Nf5 Nf4 25. Nxd6 Bxd6 26. Re3 Rbf8 27. Qh1 c5 Black is two pawns down, but the knight on f4 is a tremendous piece. ½ – ½ (68) Portych, V (2250) – Deforel, J (2244) ICCF 2020] 22. Qh5 It seems that in the other line as well Black can achieve compensation: [22. Re2 Rf8 23. Rae1 Rb8 24. Qc2 Qd6 25. Nf5 Nf4] 22... Qg8 23. Qxg6 Rxg6 24. Rf1 Rf8 25. Rae1 h5

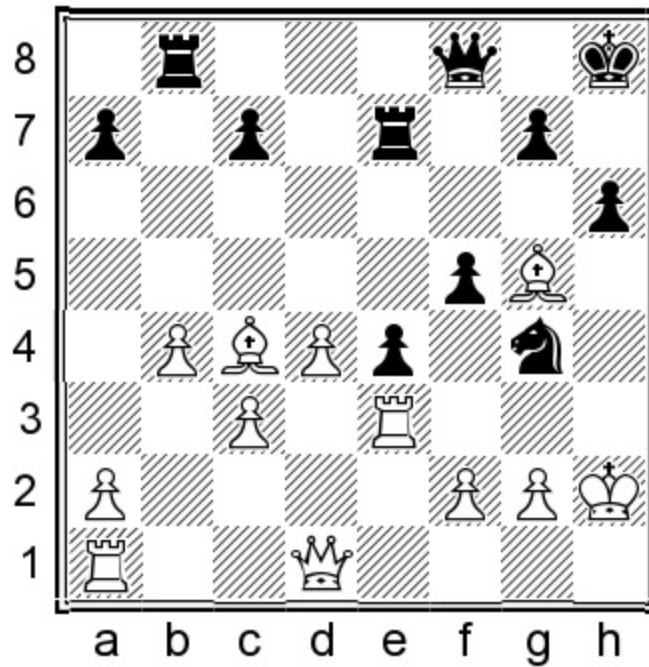
B) 17. Qd3 Qf3 18. Nf3 Qe4 19. Qe2 Nf8 20. Qh5 Rb8 21. Qd1 Re6 22. Nxe4 dxe4 23. Qf7



Position after: 23. ♔f7

Black has a few ideas here:

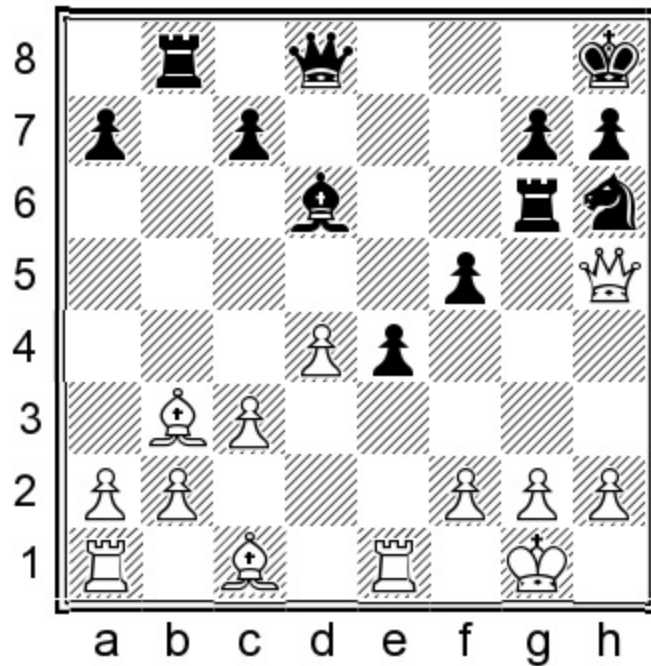
B1) 23... ♖e7 24. ♕g5 [24. ♕c4 ♜f6 25. ♕g5 ♚f8 26. b4 h6 27. ♖e3 ♕xh2+ 28. ♔xh2 ♜g4+



Position after: 28... ♜g4+

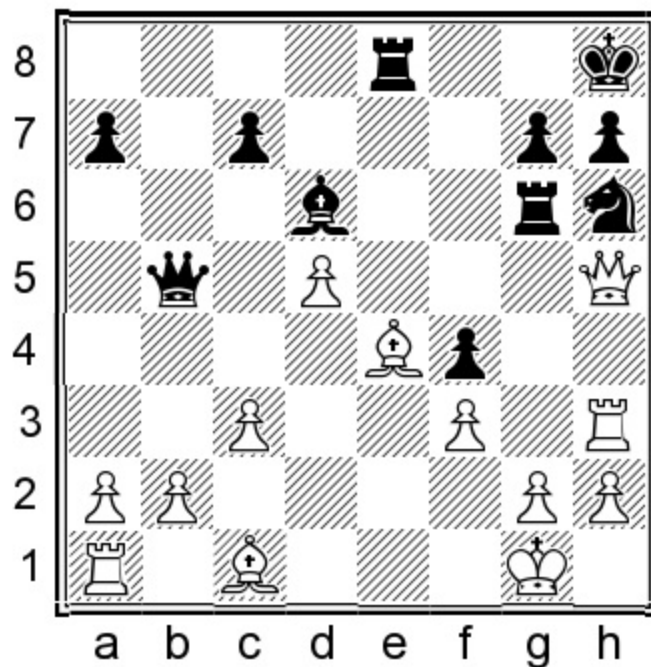
29. ♔g1 hxg5 30. ♖h3+ ♜h6∞ 0-1 (40) Saitou, A (2138) – Deforel, J (2239) ICCF 2021] 24... ♜f6 25. ♕xf6 gxf6 26. ♚h5 ♖xb2 27. ♕c4 ♚c8 28. ♚h6 ♖g7 29. ♖ab1 White has some initiative, but Black is still not far from equalizing. ½ – ½ (36) Colombo Berra, F (2215) – Deforel, J (2237) ICCF 2019.

B2) 23... ♖f6!? 24. ♕b3 [24. ♕g5 ♕xh2+ 25. ♔h1 ♕f4 26. ♕xf4 ♖xf7∞] 24... ♖g6 25. ♚h5 ♜h6!?N



Position after: 25... ♖h6!?N

Perhaps this idea is worth a closer look. [25... ♕d7 26. ♖h3 ♘f6 27. f3 exf3 28. ♖xf3 ♘e4 29. ♖f1 ♖f8 30. ♙f4± ½ – ½ (43) Prokopp, H (2428) – Korze, D (2441) ICCF 2006] 26. ♖e3! is an engine suggestion. [26. f3? exf3 27. ♖xf3 ♖h4±; 26. h3 ♕d7 27. ♙d2 ♘g8 28. ♙h1 ♖f8 Black is gradually increasing the pressure.] 26... ♕d7 27. ♖h3 f4 28. ♙c2 ♖c6 29. ♕d1 [29. d5 ♕d7 30. ♙xe4 ♖e8 31. f3 ♖b5!



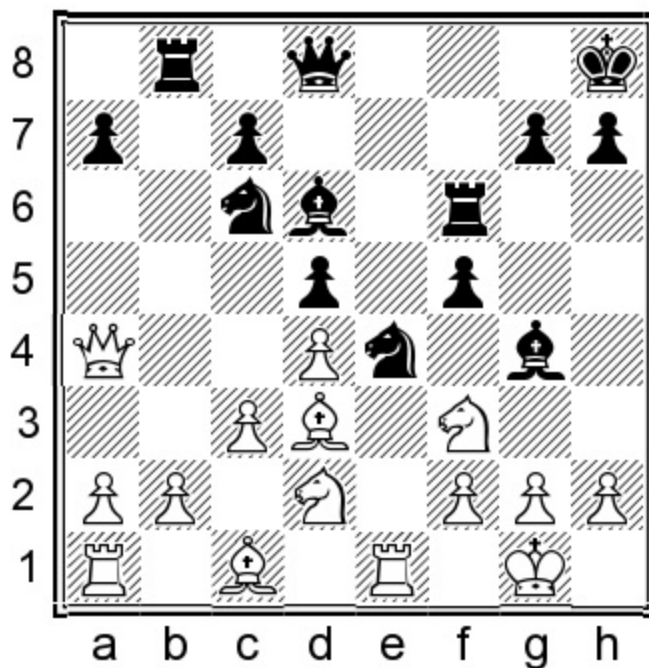
Position after: 31... ♖b5!

...wins for Black!] 29...f3 30.g3 ♘g4 31.♖h5 ♕e8 Black has compensation. I am not sure that the entire position is forced after 17.♙d3, but if so then this line is somewhat underestimated.

14.♕a4

We will deal with 14.♕c2 in our next file.

14...♙d6



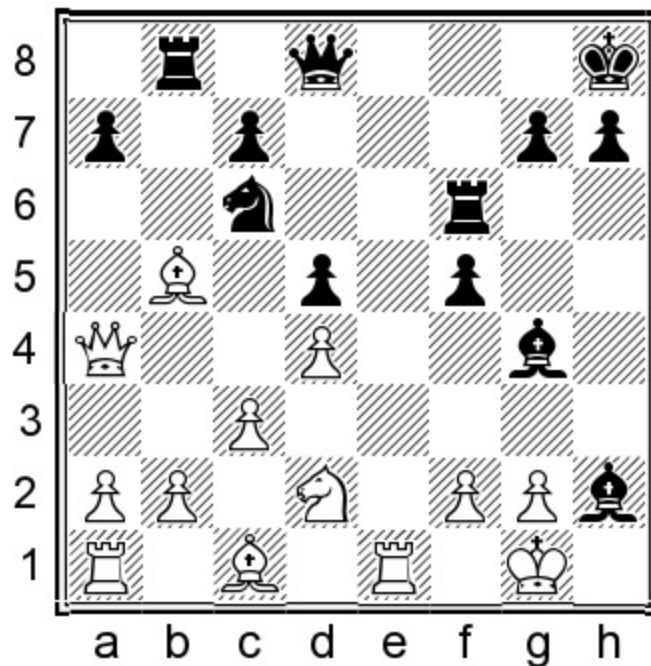
Position after: 14...♙d6

Black aims all his pieces towards the white king.

15.h3

Probably best but there are few other ideas worth considering:

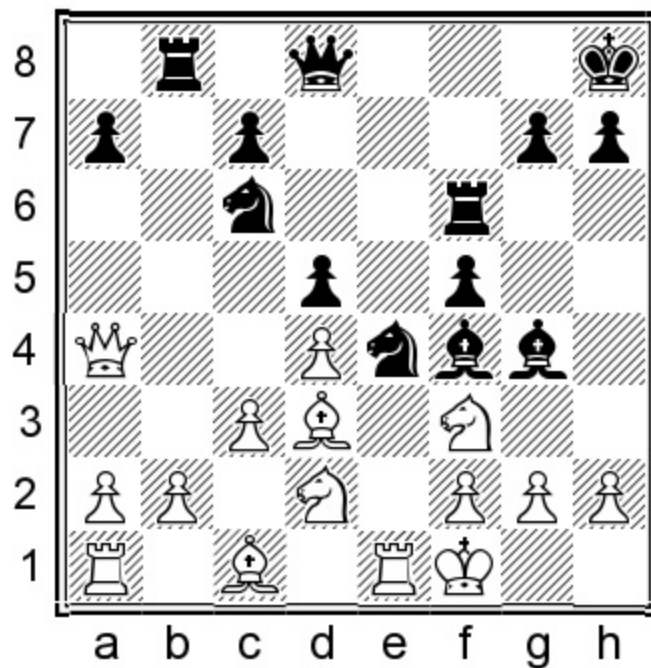
A) 15.♙b5 ♘xd2 16.♘xd2 ♙xh2+!



Position after: 16... Qxh2+!

17. Qf1 [17. Qxh2 R6+ 18. Qg1 W4+] 17... Ne7 and Black is fine.

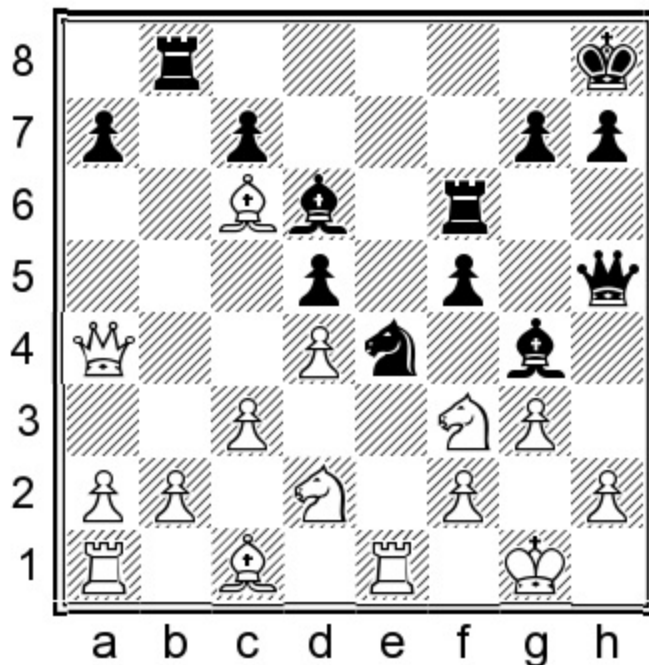
B) 15. Qf1 Qf4!



Position after: 15... Qf4!

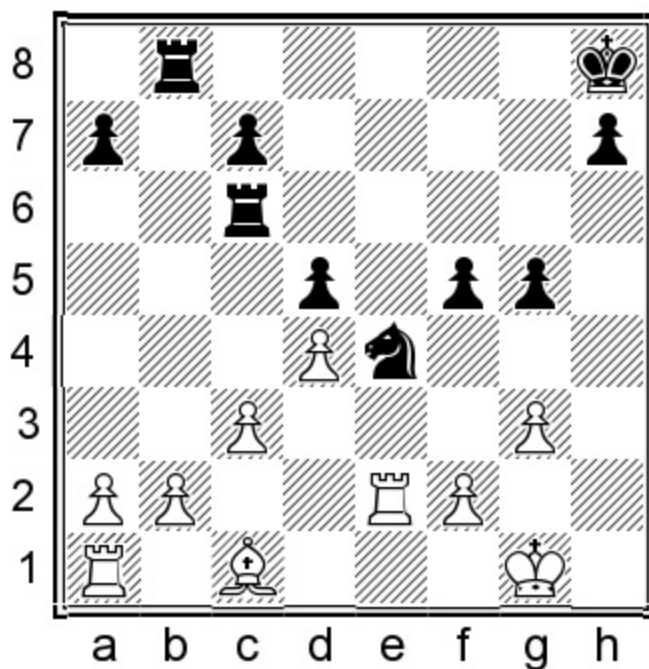
16. Qb5 Ne7 17. g3 Qxd2 18. Qxd2 f4 19. Qxe4 dxe4 20. Qxf4 Wf8 21. Rxe4 Nd5 Black has enough counterplay for the sacrificed material.

C) 15.g3 ♔e8!? 16.♙b5 ♚h5 17.♙xc6



Position after: 17. ♙xc6

17...f4! Playing for a win. [17...♙xf3 18.♘xf3 ♚xf3 19.♚c2 ♙xg3 20.hxg3 ♜xc6 21.♚e2 ♚xe2 22.♜xe2 g5



Position after: 22...g5

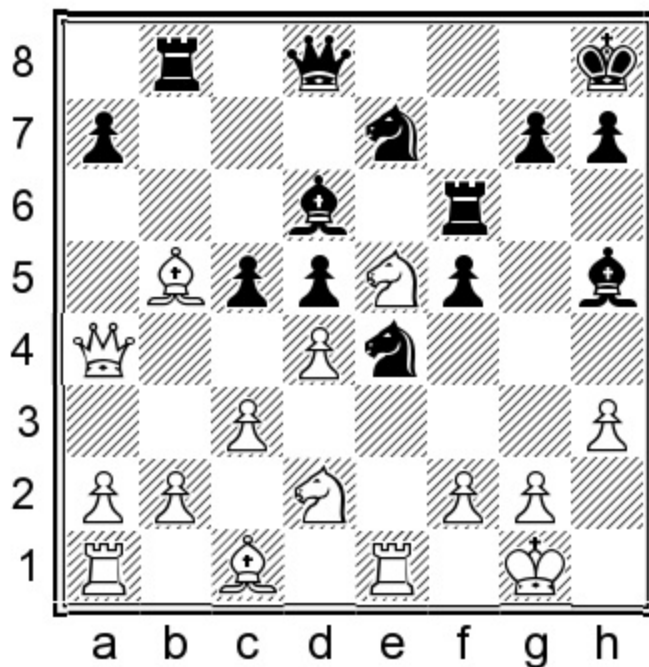
23.♙g2 ♜e6 24.f3 ♘c5 25.♜xe6 ♘xe6 26.b3 ♜e8 This is also OK. ½ – ½ (26) Nouveau, L (2096) – Deforel, J (2187) ICCF 2012] 18.♜xe4 dxe4 19.♙xe4 fxg3 20.hxg3 ♜bf8 21.♚b3 ♙xf3 22.♙xf3 ♜xf3

23. ♖xf3 ♚xf3 24. ♕f4 ♕xf4 25. ♚d1 ♚xd1+ 26. ♖xd1 ♕d6 Black stands better.

15... ♕h5 16. ♕e2

White can also go for:

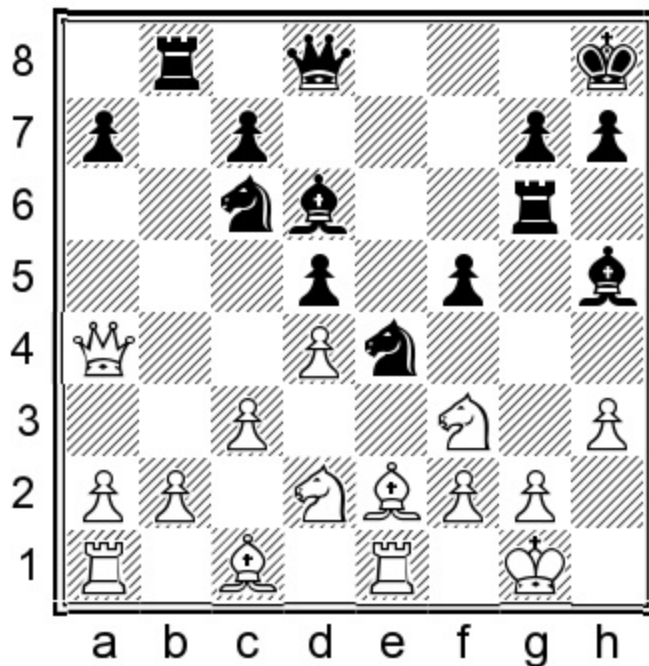
16. ♕b5 This is a better version compared to 15. ♕b5. 16... ♗e7 17. ♗e5 c5!N



Position after: 17...c5!N

18. ♕d7 [18. ♗df3 c4 19. ♕d7 h6] 18... cxd4 19. cxd4 ♖b4 20. ♚xa7 ♕b8 21. ♚a8 ♖xd4 22. ♗b3 ♖b4 23. ♕f4 g5 24. ♕d2 ♗xd2 25. ♗xd2 ♖xb2=

16... ♖g6



Position after: 16... Rg6

17. ♖c2

White has other ideas here but none appear to offer anything:

A) 17. ♘e5 ♘xe5 18. ♙xh5 ♖xg2+! [18... ♗d3 19. ♙xg6± 1-0 (44) Gosh, C (2140) – Minhazuddin, A (2398) Dhaka BAN 2017] 19. ♕xg2 ♚g5+ 20. ♕f1 ♚xh5 21. dxe5 ♚xh3+ 22. ♕e2 ♚g4+–+ and next Black wins the queen on a4.

B) 17. ♕f1 ♙f4 18. ♗b3 ♙xf3! [18... ♙xc1 19. ♖axc1 ♚d6∞ 1-0 (48) Ivanchuk, V (2740) – Shirov, A (2710) Dortmund 1998 CBM 066 [Lukacs]] 19. ♙xf3 ♚h4 20. ♖e2 ♙xc1 21. ♖xc1 ♚f4 22. ♖ce1 ♚h2±

C) 17. ♗xe4 fxe4 18. ♗g5 ♖xg5 19. ♙xg5 ♚xg5 20. ♙xh5 ♗e7 21. ♚d1 [21. ♙g4 h5 22. ♙d7 ♗g6 Black has a very strong, almost unstoppable, attack. ½ – ½ (23) Potrata, J (2304) – Benko, B (2262) ICCF email 2000] 21...g6 22. ♙g4 h5 23. ♙d7 ♖d8 24. ♙b5 ♗f5 25. ♖e2 ♖f8 26. ♙d7 ♗g3 27. ♖c2 ♚f4 28. ♚e1 ♗e2+ 29. ♕f1 ♗g3+= Black has at least a draw.

17... ♚f6 18. ♙d1

A) 18. ♗e5 ♘xe5 19. ♙xh5 ♖xg2+ 20. ♕xg2 ♚g5+ 21. ♕f1 ♚h4 22. ♗xe4 ♚xh3+ 23. ♕g1 ♗f3+ 24. ♙xf3 ♙h2+ leads to a draw.

B) 18. b4 ♖e8 19. ♙d1 ♖e6 20. ♕f1 h6 21. b5 ♗d8 with complications not unfavourable for Black.

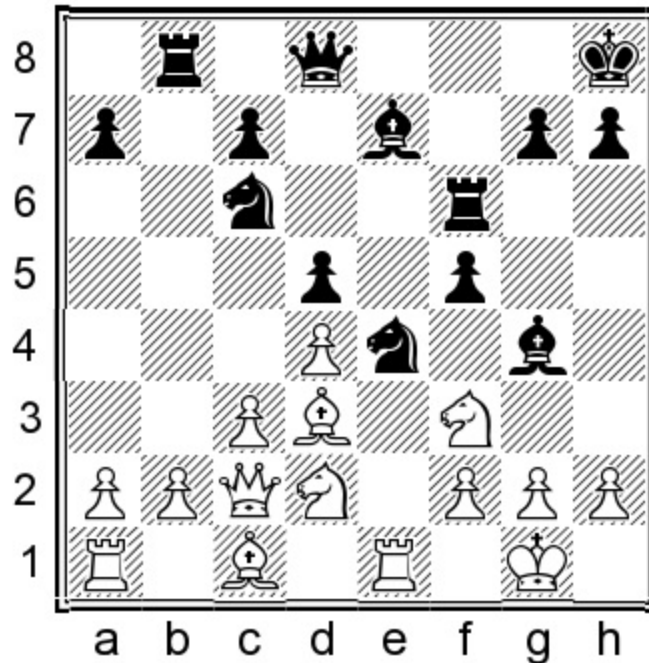
18... ♖f8 19. ♕f1 ♕g8 20. b4 ♗d8 21. ♗b3 ♗e6 22. ♗c5 ♙xf3 23. ♙xf3 ♚h4 24. ♗d3 ♖gf6 25. ♗e5 ♙xe5 26. dxe5 ♖6f7 27. ♙e3 g5 28. ♖ad1 g4 29. hxg4 fxg4 30. ♙xe4 dxe4 31. ♚xe4 ♖xf2+ 32. ♕g1 ♖8f3 33. ♙xf2 ♚xf2+ 34. ♕h1 ♚h4+

½ – ½ (Drake Diez de Rivera, P (2468) – Etchechoury, G (2555) ICCF email 2004.)

An interesting game. It seems that Black has adequate play for the sacrificed pawn.

**g) 8.♖e1 ♘g4 9.c3 f5 10.♞bd2 0-0 11.♚b3 ♔h8 12.♙xb7 ♜f6 13.♙b3 ♝b8
♚c2**

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♞c6 8.♖e1 ♘g4 9.c3 f5
10.♞bd2 0-0 11.♚b3 ♔h8 12.♙xb7 ♜f6 13.♙b3 ♝b8 14.♚c2



Position after: 14.♚c2

This is critical.

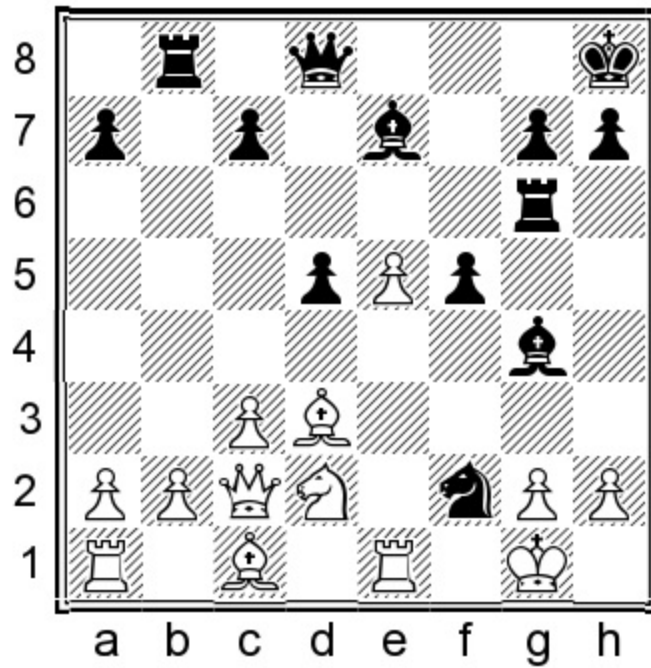
14...♜g6

Now White is no longer able to go h3 and that is the crucial difference between this move and 14...♙d6.

15.b4

A) 15.♙e2 ♙d6 16.g3 transposes to 15.g3

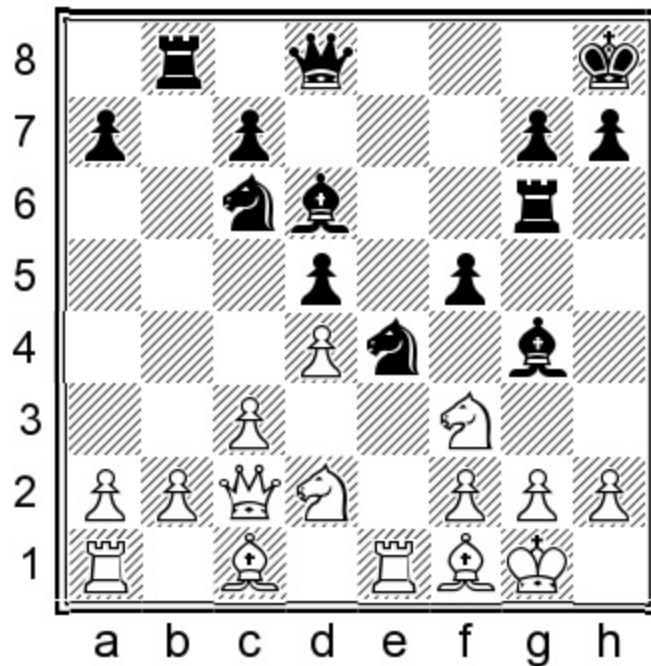
B) 15.♞e5 ♞xe5 16.dxe5 ♞xf2!



Position after: 16... Nxf2!

17. Qxf2 Rxc5+ 18. Qf1 Qh4 19. Nb3 Qxh2 Black has a winning attack.

C) 15. Qf1 Rxd6



Position after: 15... Rxd6

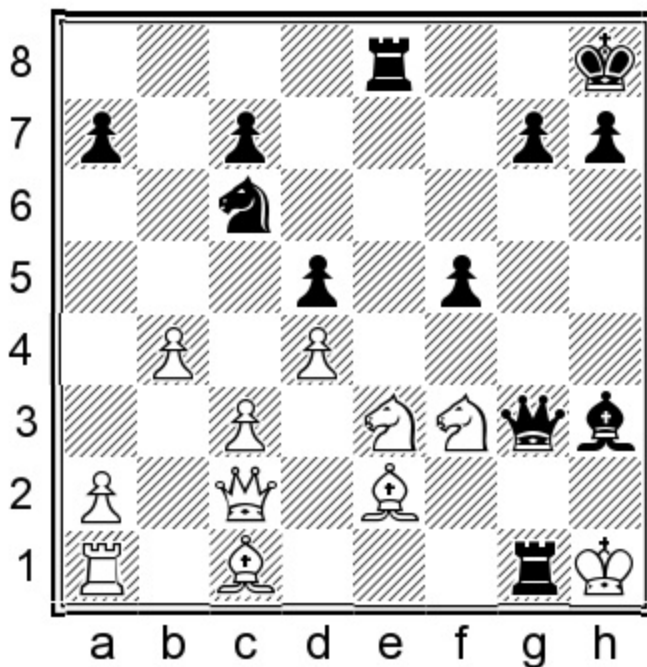
16. Re3!? An unusual reaction, but interesting one to have in mind.

C1) 16... f4?! 17. Re1? [17. Rxe4! dxe4 18. Qxe4 Qd7 19. d5 Qe7 20. Nc4 White has very good game

now.] 17...♖xd2 18.♖xd2 ♔h4 Black has a strong attack. 1-0 (63) Hajek, R – Hamornik, J Slovakia 1998.

C2) 16...♖g5!? 17.♖xg5 ♔xg5 18.♖g3 ♔h5 19.♖b3 f4 Black is better.

D) 15.g3 ♕d6 16.♕e2 [16.♕f1 ♖xd2 17.♖xd2 f4 18.♕g2 ♔f6 19.♖f1 ♖e7 Black has enough activity for the sacrificed pawn.] 16...♕h3 17.b4 ♕xg3 18.hxg3 ♖xg3 19.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 20.♖h2 ♔d6 21.♖c4 ♖g2+ 22.♖h1 ♔g3 23.♖e3 ♖e8 24.♖g1 ♖xg1+



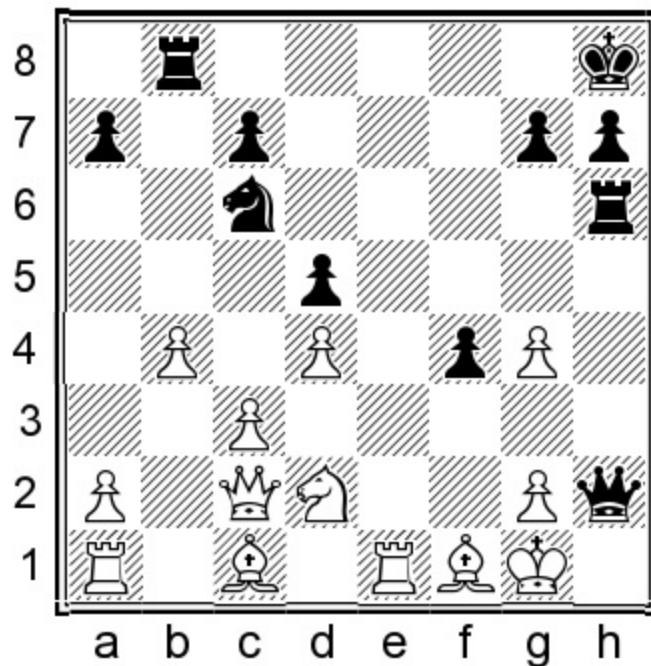
Position after: 24...♖xg1+

25.♖xg1 ♖xe3 ½ – ½ (33) Schuster, J (2345) – Ringsborg, A (2414) ICCF 2011.

15...♕d6 16.g3

Other ideas are:

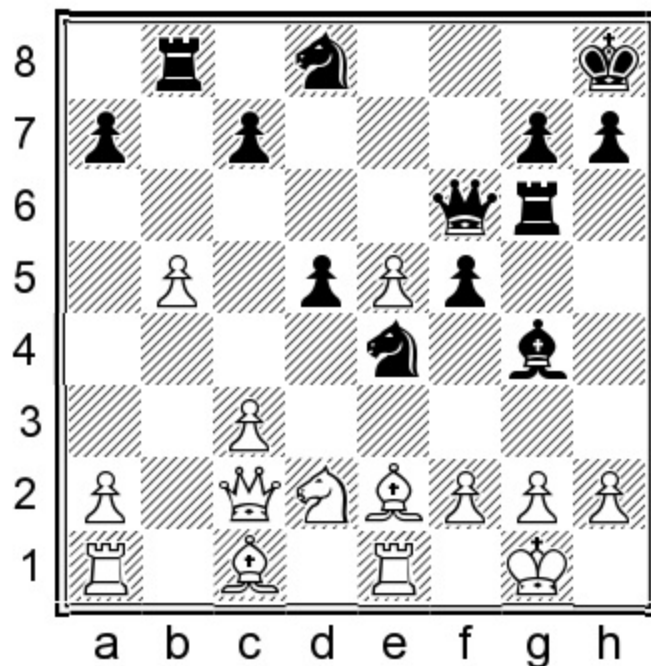
A) 16.♕f1 ♖xd2 17.♖xd2 ♕xh2+ 18.♖xh2 ♖h6+ 19.♖g1 ♔h4 20.f3 f4 21.fxg4 ♔h2+



Position after: 21... ♖h2+

22. ♔f2 ♕g3+ 23. ♔g1 ♕h2+ leads to another draw.

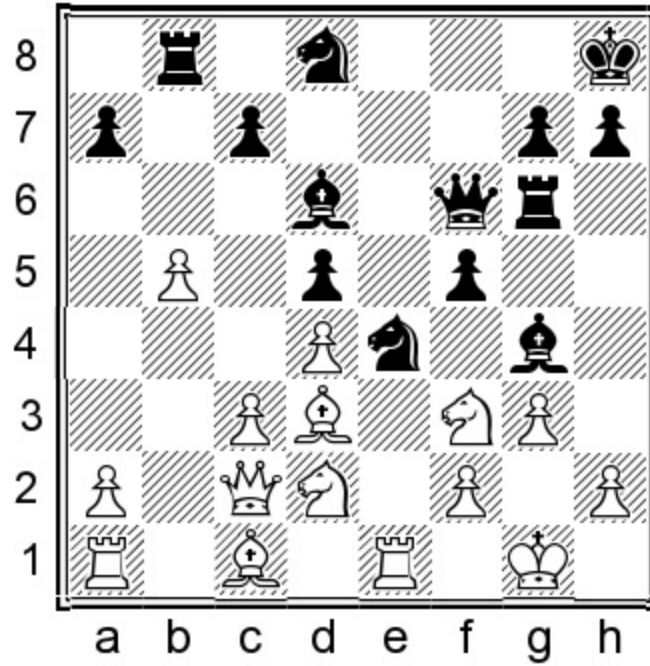
B) 16. ♙e2 ♖f6 17. b5 ♘d8 18. ♞e5 ♙xe5 19. dxe5



Position after: 19.dxe5

19... ♕h4! [And not: 19... ♕b6? 20. ♞xe4 fxe4 21. ♙xg4 ♖xg4 22. h3 ♖g6 23. c4 when White is winning. 1-0 (35) Popilski, G (2193) – Cohen, O (2221) Givataim 2007] 20. ♞xe4 dxe4 21. g3 ♕h3 22. ♙xg4 ♖xg4 23. ♕b3 ♖h4 24. gxh4 ♕g4+ 25. ♔f1 ♕h3+ leads to perpetual check.

16...♔f6 17.b5 ♘d8

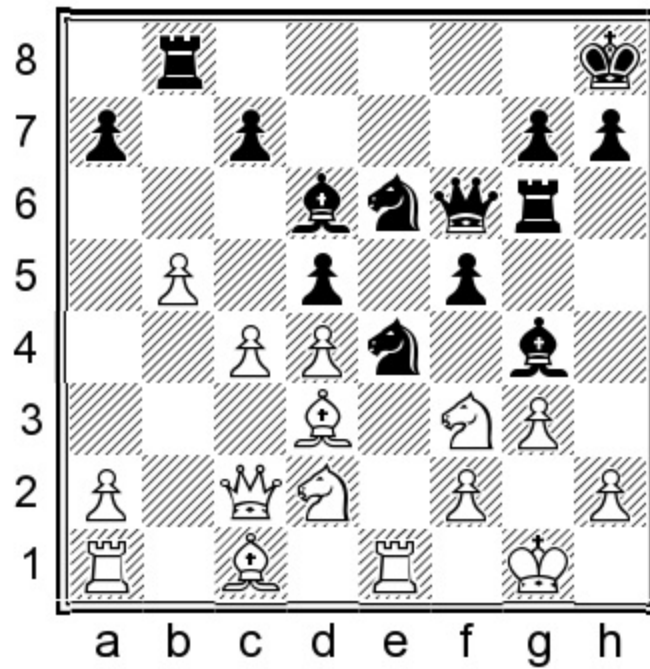


Position after: 17... ♘d8

We are entering a very sharp position...

18.♔b3

18.c4 ♘e6!



Position after: 18... ♘e6!

19.♙b2 [19.c5 ♕f4!-+] 19...♗xd2 20.♗xd2 ♗g5 21.c5 ♕f4

18...♗e6 19.♖xd5 ♜f8 20.♖c6 ♖f7

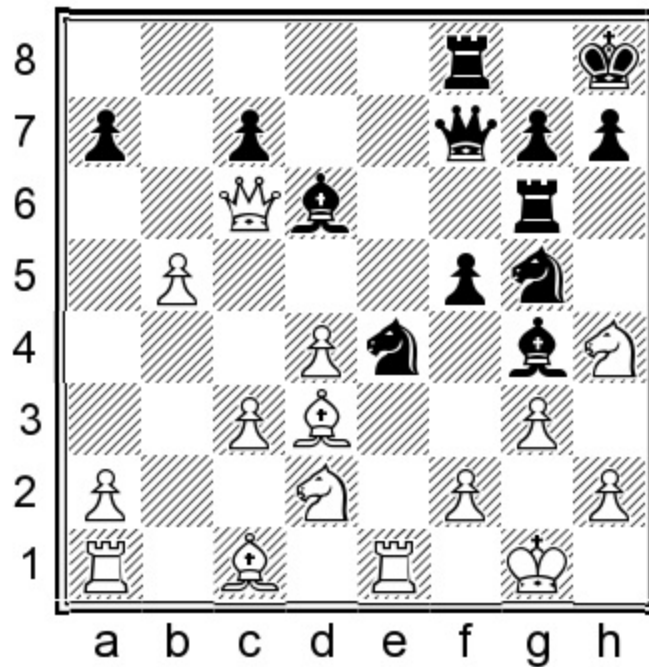
Black sacrificed another pawn but all his pieces are directed towards the attack.

21.♗h4

21.♕c4 ♗xf2! 22.♞xe6 ♗h3+ 23.♔h1 ♞xe6 24.♕a3 f4 25.♕xe6 ♖xe6 26.♞e1 ♖xa2=

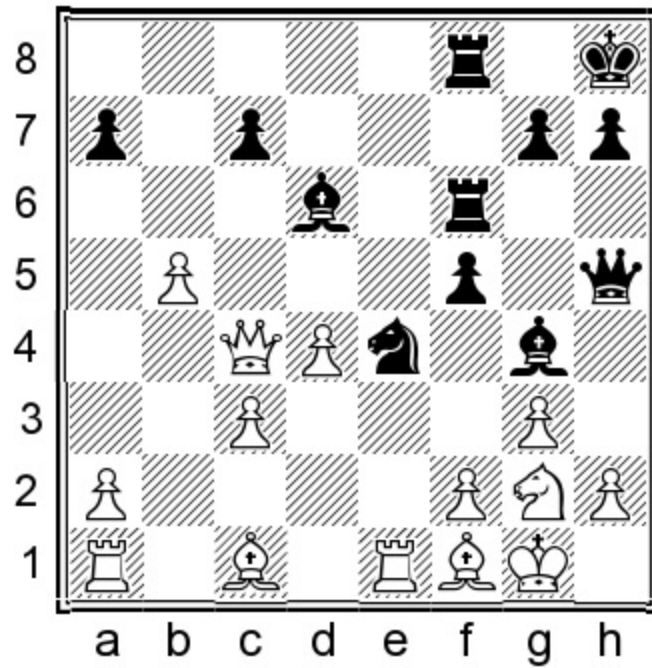
21...♗6g5!?

Black has fantastic resources!



Position after: 21...♗6g5!?

22.♕f1 ♜f6 23.♖c4 ♖h5 24.♗xe4 ♗xe4 25.♗g2



Position after: 25. ♖g2

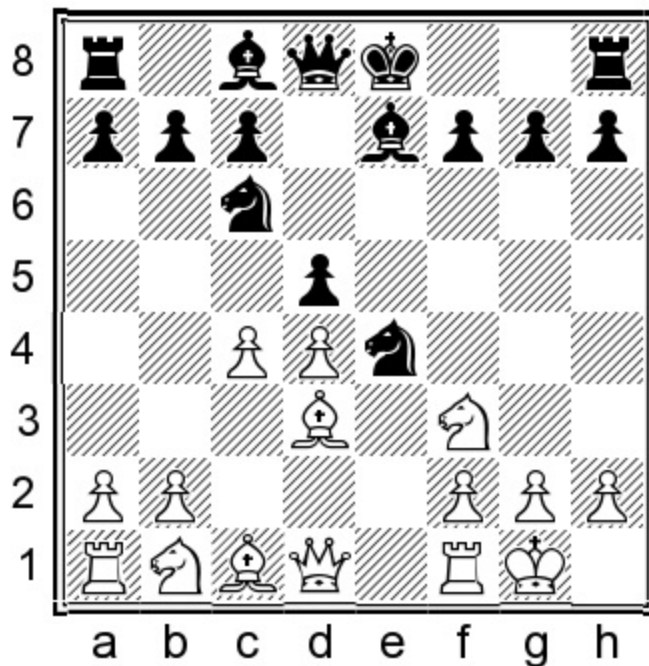
25...g5

Black played a series of fantastic tactical ideas that can only really be seen in correspondence chess. In any case, Black is doing fine. 0-1 (36) Suffield, M (2090) – Taylor, W (2034) ICCF 2019.

Chapter 2

8.c4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.c4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 2 – 8.c4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.c4 0-0

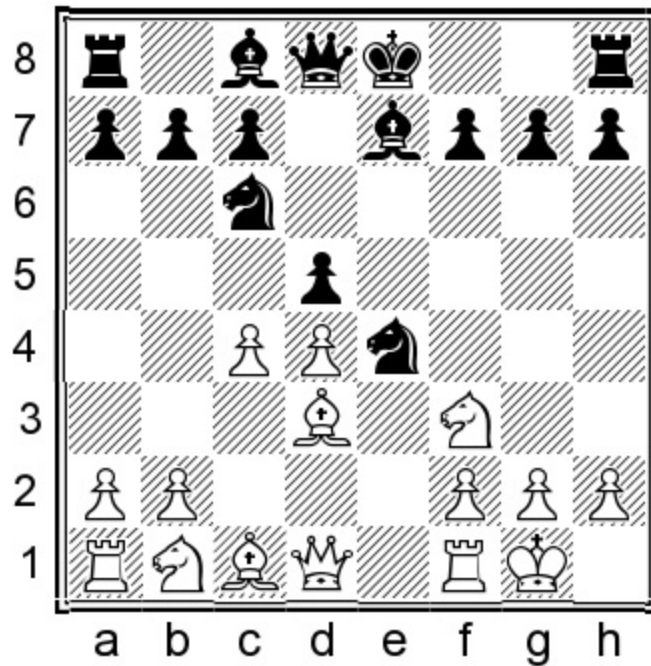
a) 9.-- & 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10.♗c3

b) 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10.♞e1 ♙f5 11.♗c3 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♞ae8 13.--

c) 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10.♞e1 ♙f5 11.♗c3 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♞ae8 13.♙f4

a) 9.-- & 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10.♗c3

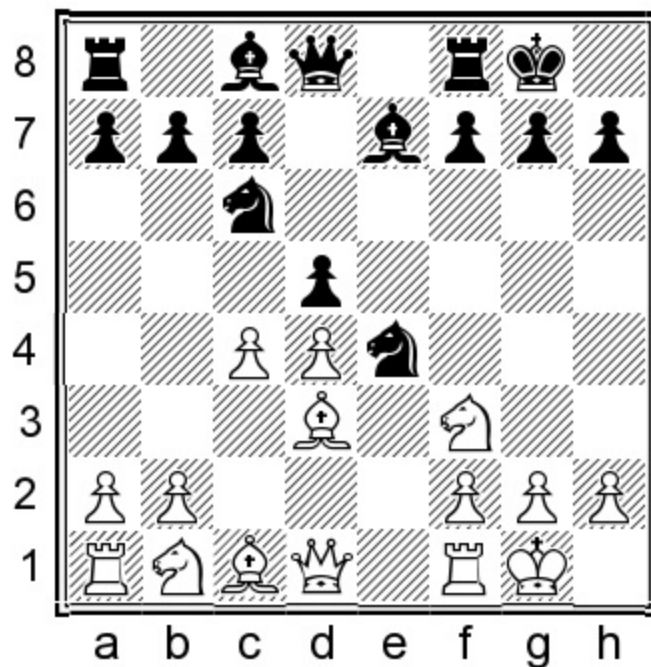
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.c4



Position after: 8.c4

The main reaction. White strikes at once directly in the centre, undermining the knight on e4. On the other hand, White is ready to play either with an isolani on d4, or to have a c3-d4 pawn structure which may be targeted or an asset depending on specifics.

8...0-0



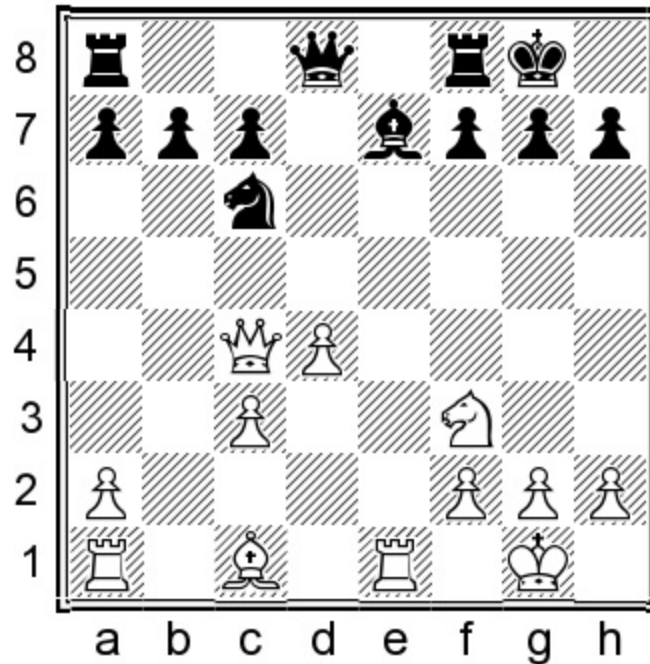
Position after: 8...0-0

9.cxd5

The main choice, but White can also wait with this.

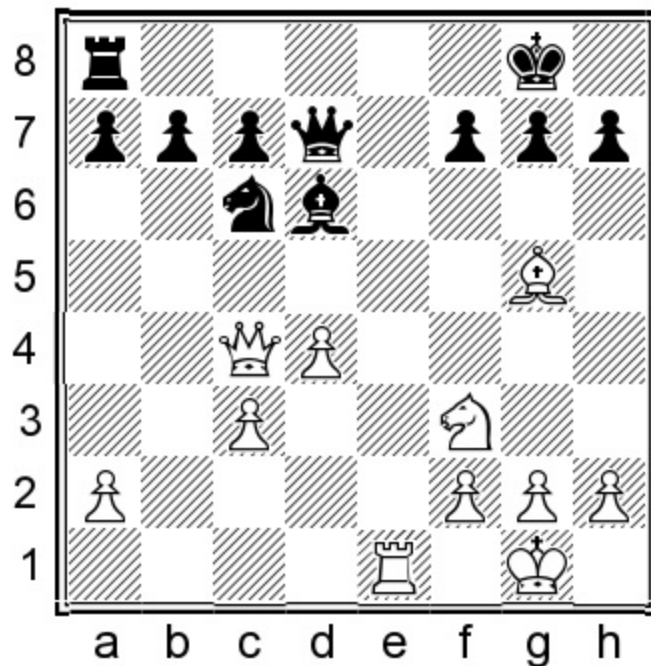
A) 9.a3 This move more commonly arises from the 5.c4 line, which will be analysed in chapter 5.

B) 9.♞e1 ♞f5 This might transpose to the next file, where we deal with the main aspect of the line after 10.cxd5 ♜xd5. Instead... 10.♞c3 ♞xc3 11.bxc3 ♞xd3 12.♜xd3 dxc4 13.♜xc4



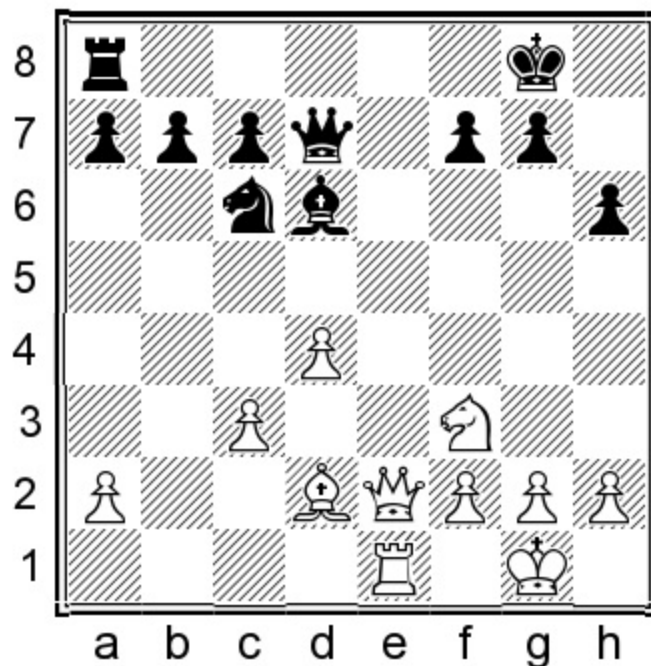
Position after: 13.♜xc4

This is yet another way of handling this line. 13...♞d6 The best position for this bishop. Also possible is: [13...♜d7 14.♞b1 b6 15.♜d3 ♞fe8 16.♞f4 h6 17.d5 ♞f6 18.c4 ♞a5 19.♞d2 ♞g5 20.♞xg5 hxg5 21.♞f3 ♞xe1+ 22.♞xe1 ♞e8 and the game is equal. ½ – ½ (28) Tsydypov, Z (2507) – Triapishko, A (2473) Sochi RUS 2024] 14.♞b1 ♞e8 15.♞g5 ♞xe1+ 16.♞xe1 ♜d7



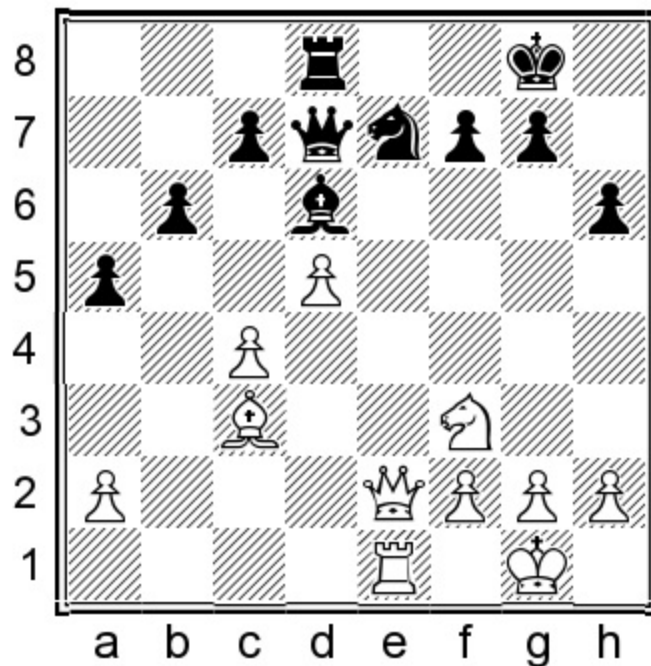
Position after: 16...♙d7

17.♙e2 Gaining control over the e-file. [17.♙h4 ♖e8 18.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 19.♙g3 h6 20.♙xd6 cxd6 In general such a structure is seen as OK for Black. 21.♙d5 ♗e6 22.♙xe6 fxe6 23.♙f1 b5 24.♙e2 ♗a5 25.♗d2 ♙f7 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (42) Carlsen, M (2839) – So, W (2753) chess.com 2023] 17...h6 18.♙d2



Position after: 18.♙d2

B1) 18...♖d8 19.c4 b6 20.♙c3 a5 21.d5 ♗e7

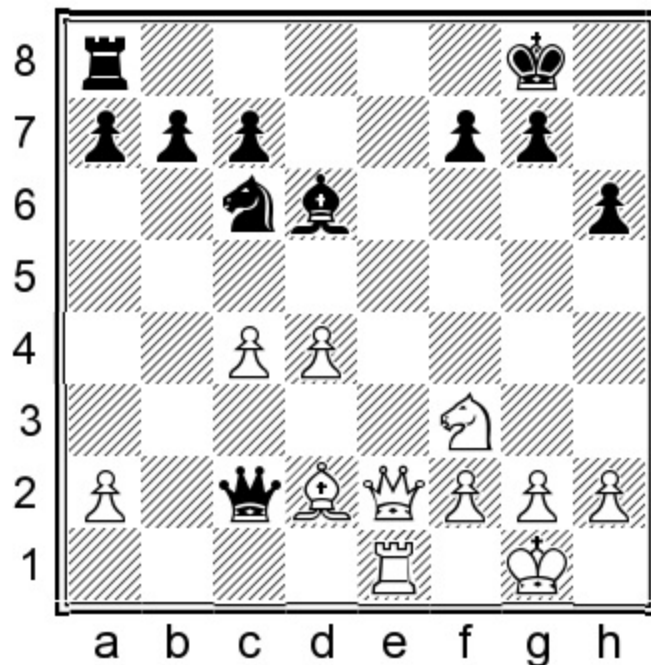


Position after: 21... Nxe7

22. Nxe5 [22. Qb2 Nf5 23. g4 Nxe7 24. h3 f6 25. Nh4 Very sharp but probably also just unclear.]
 22... Qf5 23. g3 a4 24. Qg2 b5 ½ – ½ (64) Paravyan, D (2620) – Iljiushenok, I (2519) Sochi 2024.

B2) 18... Nxe7 19. c4 c5 20. d5 b5 21. cxb5 Nxd5 22. g3 Nb6 23. Qc3 Qg4 This is also a balanced game.

B3) 18... Qf5!? 19. c4 Qc2



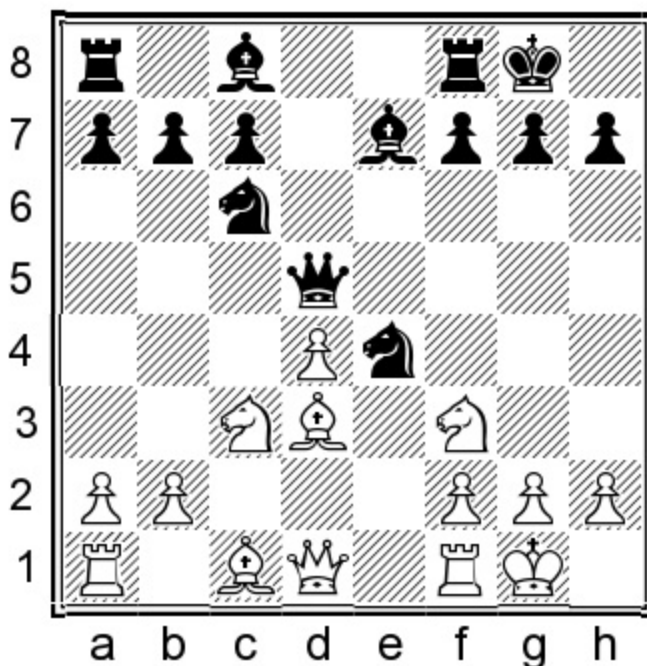
Position after: 19... Qc2

20.d5 [20.c5 ♕f8 21.d5 ♖e7 Black is not in any danger here.] 20...♗b4 21.♗d4 ♔d3 22.♗b5 ♕xe2 23.♖xe2 ♗d3 24.♕c3 a6 25.♗xd6 cxd6 26.♖e3 ♗c5 27.♕b4 ♖c8 Black has equalized.

9...♕xd5 10.♗c3

In this sub-chapter we analyse this direct plan, whereas in our next file we will see the mainline after 10.♖e1.

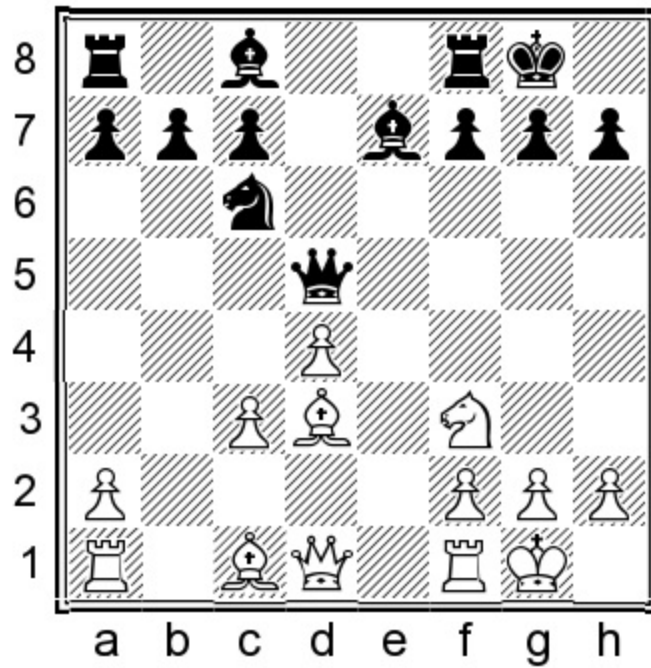
Another option is:



Position after: 10.♗c3

10.♕xe4 ♕xe4 11.♗c3 ♕f5 12.d5 ♗b4 13.a3 ♗d3 14.♕e2 ♕d6 15.♗e4 ♗c5 16.♗xd6 cxd6 Black is fine.

10...♗xc3 11.bxc3

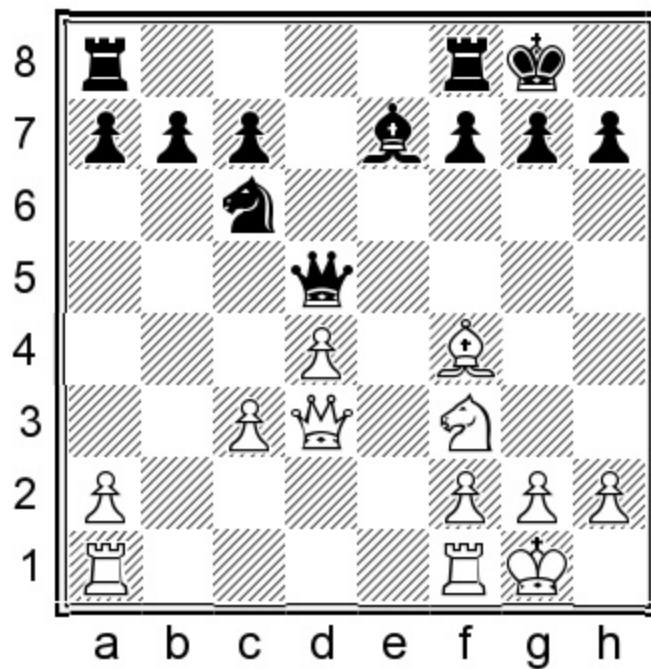


Position after: 11.bxc3

11...♙g4

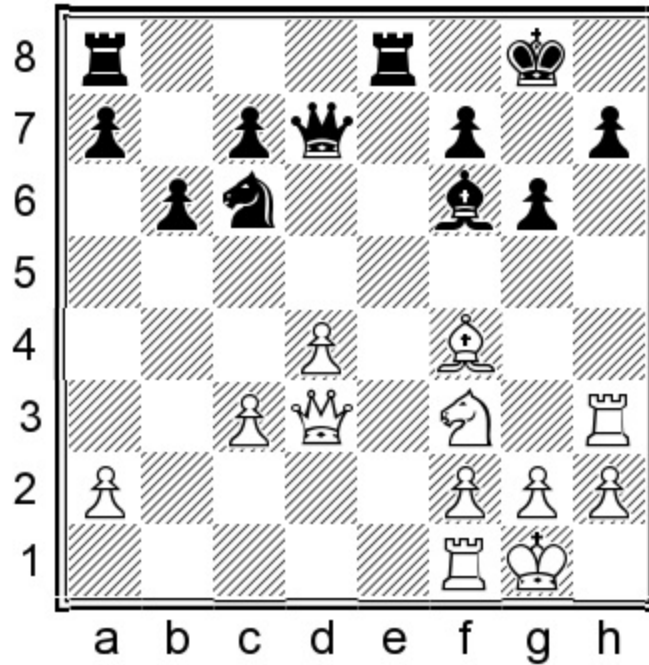
An old reaction and a solid one, but Black has an interesting alternative:

11...♙f5 Now White has choices: 12.♙f4 [12.♞e1 ♞ae8 transposes to the next file; 12.c4 ♞d7 13.d5 ♞b4 14.♙xf5 ♞xf5 15.♞d4 ♞g6 16.♞b3 ♙d6 17.♙e3 ♞b6 18.♞ad1 ♞ae8∞] 12...♙xd3 13.♞xd3



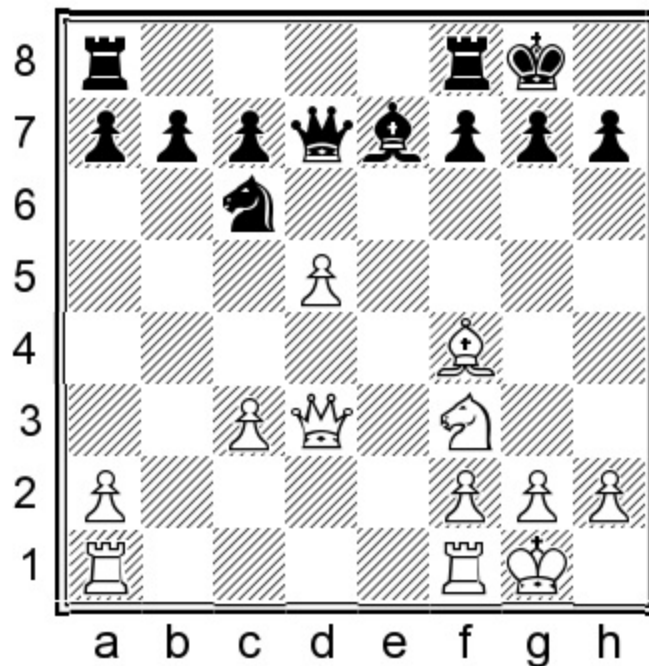
Position after: 13.♞xd3

13...♚d7!? This is also interesting and shows a rare type of play here. [13...♙d6 14.♘g5 f5 This position was played in some correspondence games but I am not fond of such a structure.] 14.d5 [14.♞ab1 b6 15.♞b5 ♞fe8 16.♞h5 g6 17.♞h3 ♙f6



Position after: 17...♙f6

18.♘g5 ♙xg5 19.♙xg5 ♘e7 20.c4 ♞f5 21.♚d2 f6 22.♙f4 ♞d7 23.d5 ♘f5 Black is OK.]

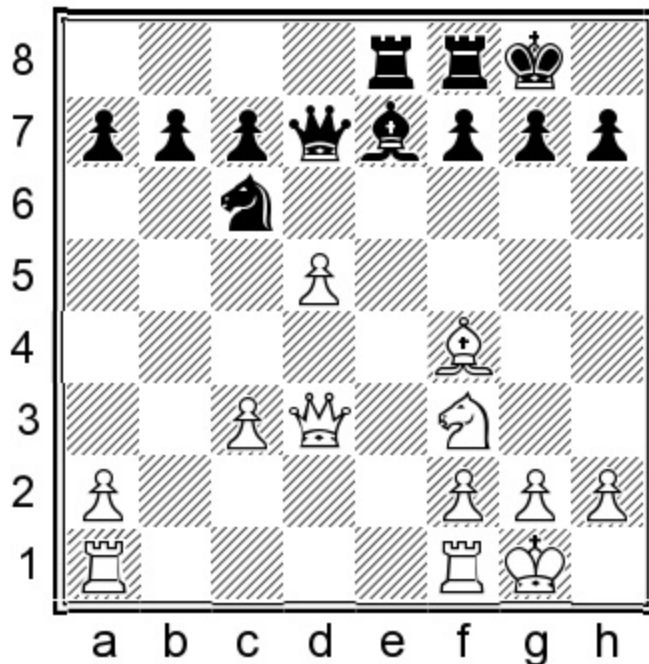


Position after: 14.d5

A) 14...♙f6 15.♞ad1 ♘e7 16.c4 ♞ae8 17.c5! [17.♙e5 ♙xe5 18.♘xe5 ♞d6 19.♞fe1 ♘g6= ½ – ½ (25)

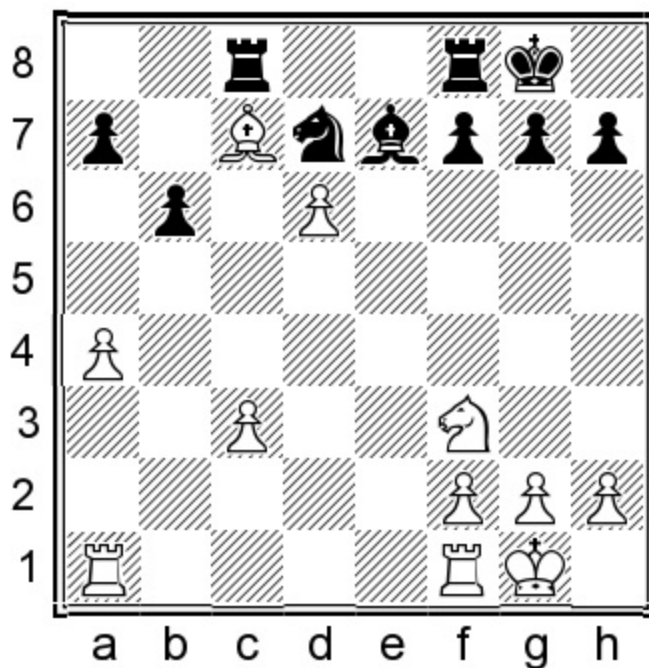
Qiu, M (2149) – Ren, X (2250) Fuling 2022] 17...c6 18.d6 ♖d5 19.♙g3 b6 20.♞c1 It seems that White has much the easier game here – the pawn on d6 is very strong.

B) 14...♞ae8!?



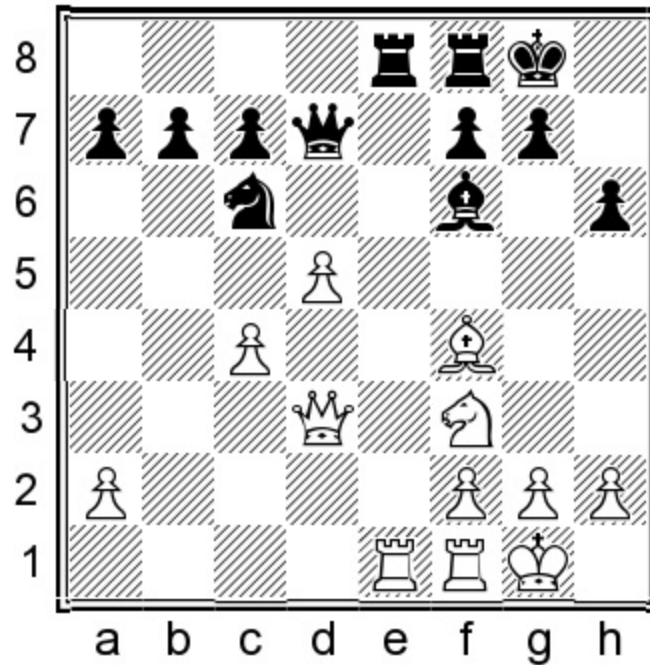
Position after: 14...♞ae8!?

It is very important to bring all the pieces to the centre as soon as possible. 15.♞ae1 Strongest in my opinion. [15.♞b5 ♖e5 16.♞xb7 ♖xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♙d6 18.♙g3 ♞f5♖; 15.♞ad1 ♖a5 16.♞fe1 b6 17.h3 ♙f6 18.c4 ♖b7=; 15.a4 b6 16.♞b5 ♖b8 17.♞xd7 ♖xd7 18.♙xc7 ♞c8 19.d6



Position after: 19.d6

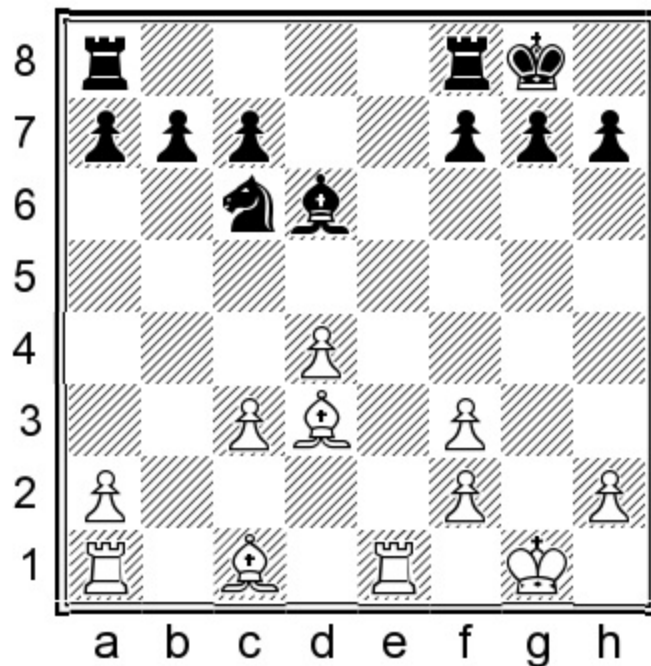
19...♙d8 20.♙xd8 ♖fxd8=] 15...♙f6 16.c4 h6!?



Position after: 16...h6!?

17.h3 [17.♙a3 ♘d4!⇒] 17...b6 18.♙g3 [18.g4 ♘a5 19.♙g3 ♖e7 20.♖xe7 ♙xe7 21.♘e5 ♙a4 Black has achieved counterplay.] 18...♖e7 19.♖xe7 ♘xe7 20.♘e5 ♙xe5 21.♙xe5 ♖e8 22.♙g3 ♘f5 23.♙f4 ♘d6 24.♖c1 ♙e7= Black has an equal game. The knight in this case serves very well on d6.

12.♖e1 ♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♙d6



Position after: 14...♔d6

Black manages to place a bishop on this strong diagonal, maintaining the momentum. Although White has the bishop pair, Black has good pieces and a healthy structure.

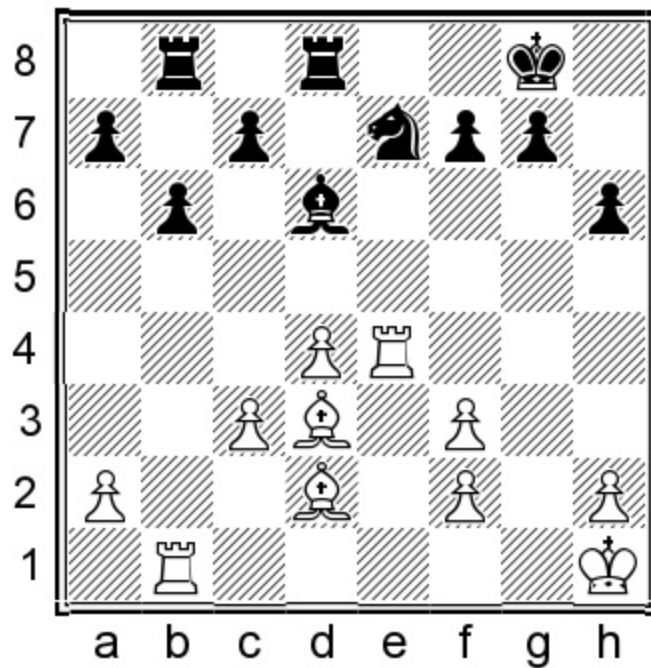
15.♖b1

Another interesting game where we saw this endgame continued:

15.♔e3 ♘e7 16.c4 c6 17.♖ab1 b6 18.a4 ♖ab8 19.♖b3 h6 20.♖eb1 ♖fd8 21.♔c2 ♔c7 22.a5 ♕f8 23.♕g2 ♕e8 The position is equal: the bishop on c7 is very strong, whereas the bishop pair is unable to increase the pressure. ½ – ½ (65) Timman, J (2675) – Jussupow, A (2620) Belfort 1988.

15...♖ab8 16.♔e3

16.♔g5 h6 17.♔d2 b6 18.♖e4 ♘e7 Black has established the desired set-up. 19.♕h1 ♖fd8

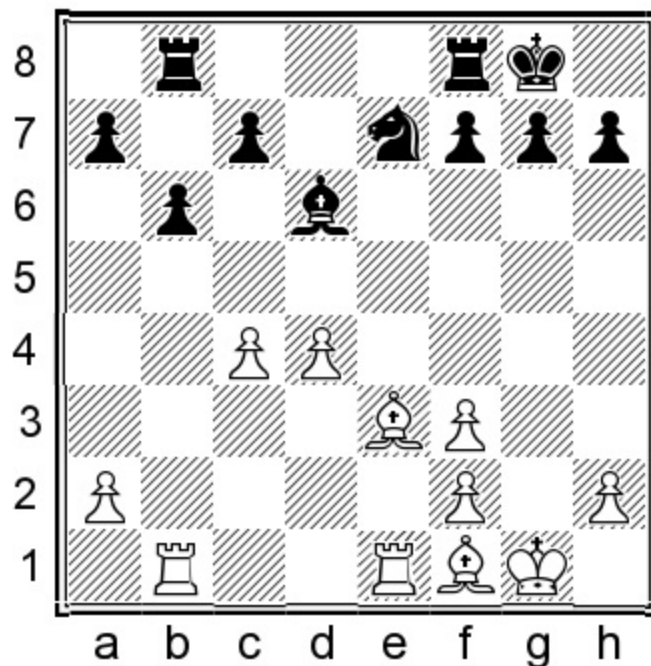


Position after: 19...♖fd8

[19...f5?! 20.♖e6↑ ½ – ½ (45) Lastin, A (2583) – Turov, M (2561) Krasnoyarsk 2007] 20.♖g1 ♔f8
 21.♖eg4 ♕e5! Black is fine; having a bishop on f6 actually gives Black easy play.

16...b6 17.f4

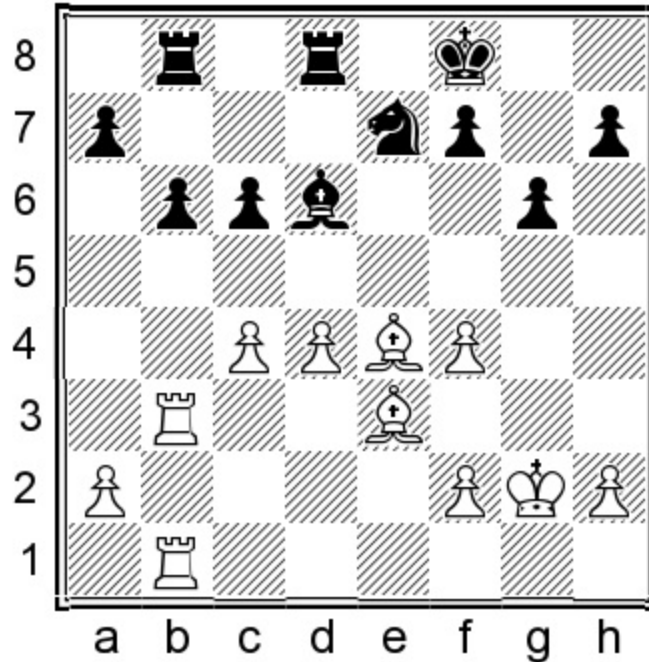
17.♕f1 ♞e7 18.c4



Position after: 18.c4

18...♖g6! Getting control over f4 square gives Black easy play. [18...♗f5 19.♙d3 ♘xe3 20.fxe3 g6 21.f4 c5 22.d5 f5= ½ – ½ (41) Antoniewski, R (2446) – Andres Gonzalez, A (2362) Aviles 2000]

17...♗e7 18.c4 c6 19.♔g2 ♜fd8 20.♞b3 ♕f8 21.♞eb1 g6 22.♙e4



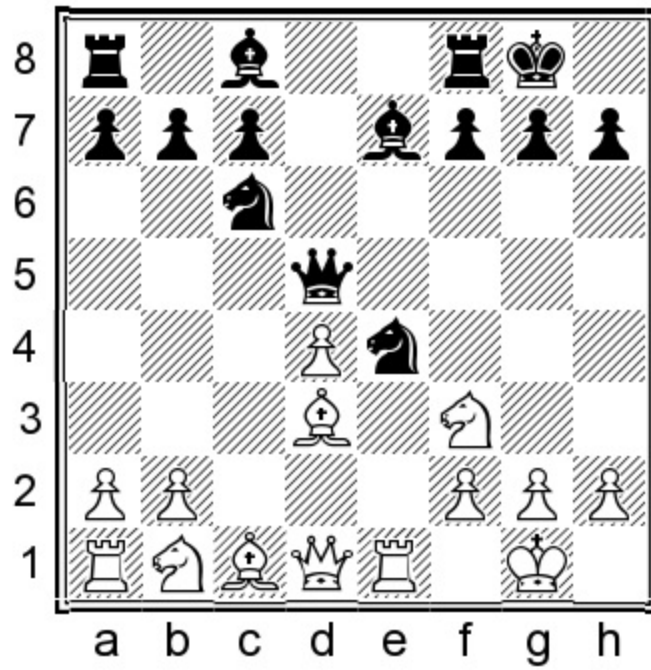
Position after: 22.♙e4

22...♞dc8

Equal game similar to Timman – Jussupow game. 1-0 (44) Kotronias, V (2528) – Langrock, H (2249) Hamburg 2001.

b) 9.cxd5 ♜xd5 10.♞e1 ♙f5 11.♗c3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♞ae8 13.--

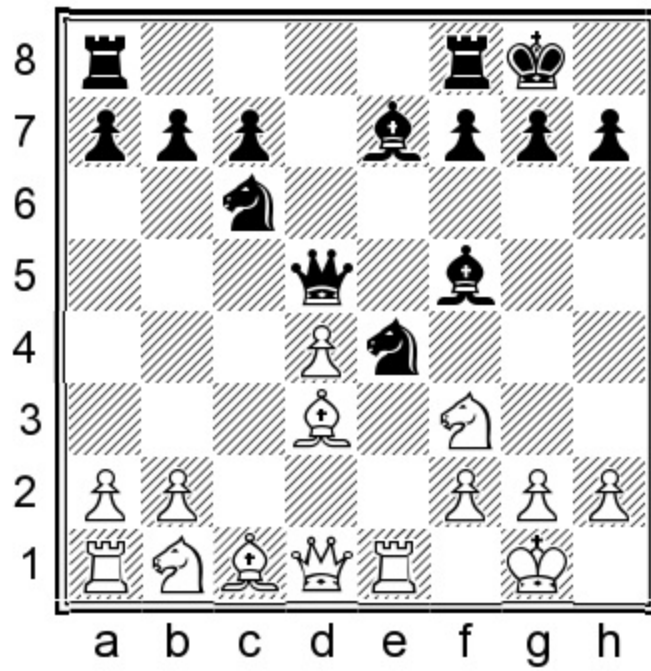
1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♙d3 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.c4 0-0 9.cxd5 ♜xd5 10.♞e1



Position after: 10. ♖e1

The main idea.

10... ♕f5

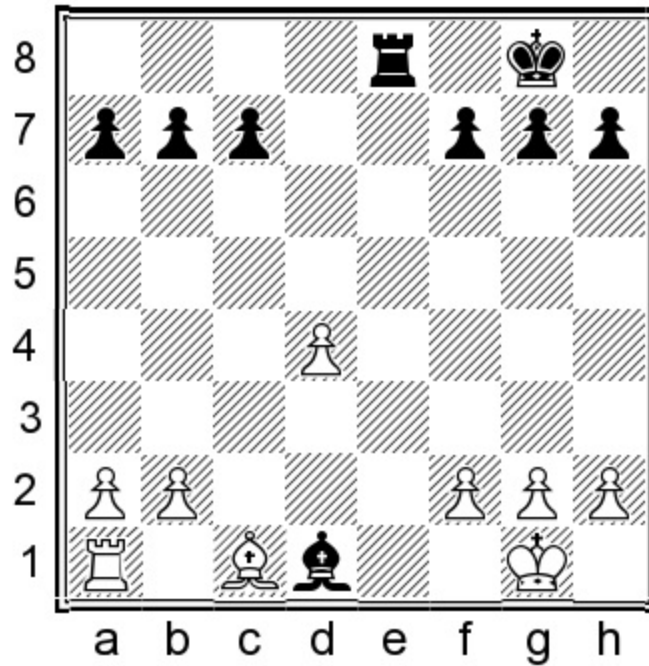


Position after: 10... ♕f5

11. ♘c3

The main reply and best by far.

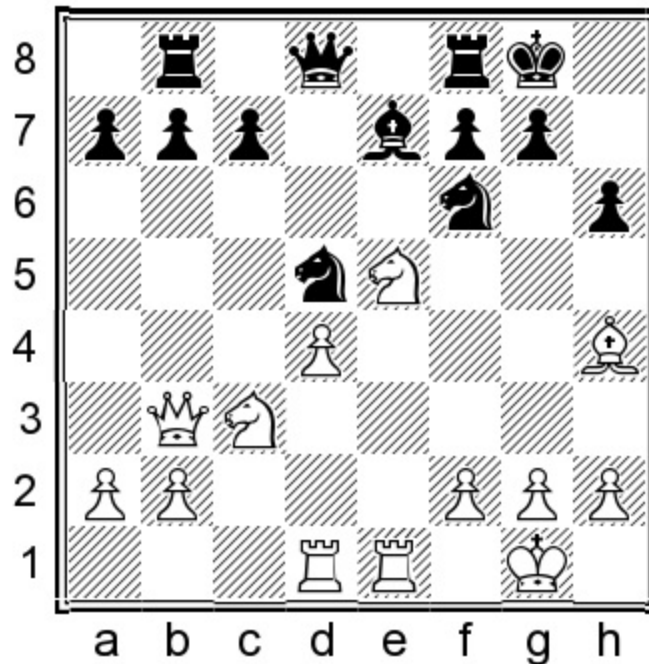
A) 11. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 12. ♘c3 ♖xf3 13. ♘xd5 ♖xd1 14. ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 15. ♖xe7 ♖fe8 16. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8



Position after: 16... ♖xe8

17. ♖e3 ♖a4! 18. d5 ♖d8 19. b3 ♖e8 20. ♖xa7 ♖xd5 21. f3 f6 22. ♖b8 ♖d7 23. ♖e1 ♖f7=

B) 11. ♖e2 ♘f6 12. ♘c3 ♖xd3 13. ♖xd3 ♖d7 14. ♖g5 h6 15. ♖h4 ♘b4 16. ♖c4 ♘bd5 17. ♘e5 ♖d8 18. ♖b3 ♖b8 19. ♖ad1

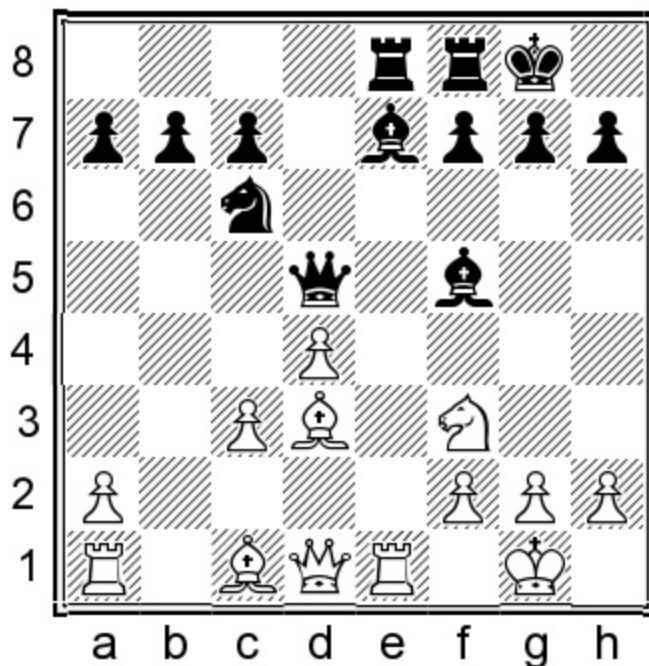


Position after: 19. ♖ad1

19...c6 The position is equal. 1-0 (43) Teclaf, P (2453) – Psyk, R (2343) Szklarska Poreba 2020.

C) 11.♘f4 ♘b4 12.♞e3 ♞fe8 13.♞a3 ♘xa3 14.bxa3 ♞d6 Black stands fine here. ½ – ½ (18) Dvoirys, S (2583) – Savitskiy, S (2323) Cheliabinsk 2011.

11...♞xc3 12.bxc3 ♞ae8



Position after: 12...♞ae8

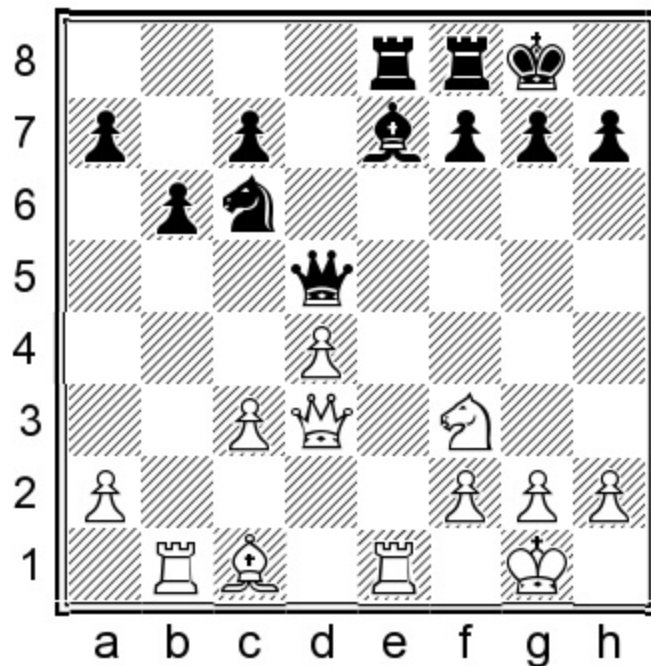
It is essential to bring all the pieces into the game. Pressure along the e-file is not something to be neglected. This is the starting position of our main line: Black has developed all his pieces and the rook on f8 is useful against potential attacking plans.

13.♞b1

13.c4 ♖d7 14.d5 ♘f6 15.♘xf5 ♞xf5 16.♘a3 ♘xa1 17.♞xa1 ♞xe1+ 18.♞xe1 ♞e5 19.♞xe5 ♞xe5 20.♞xe5 ♞e8 21.♘b2 f6=

13...♘xd3 14.♞xd3 b6

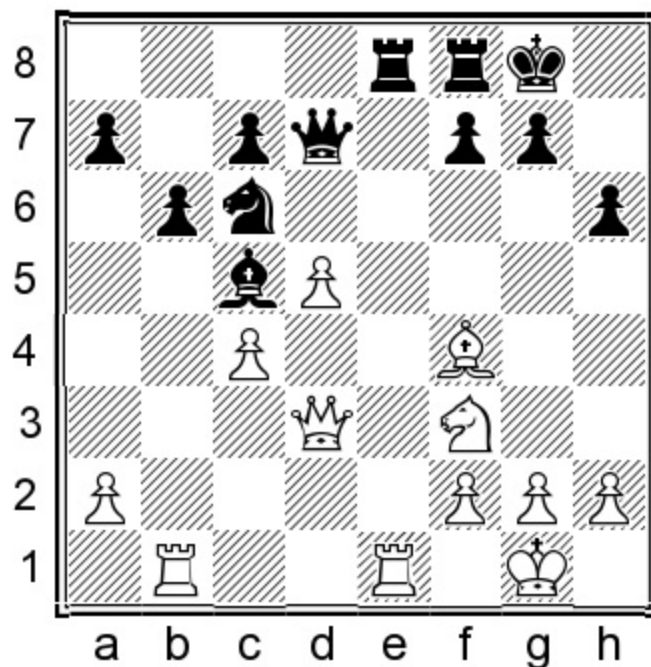
With a further split of lines:



Position after: 14...b6

15.♙f4

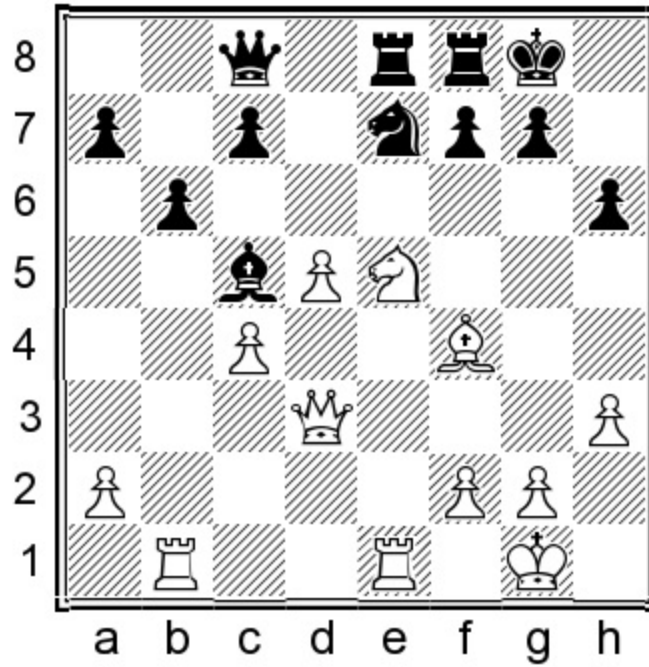
15.c4 ♔d7 16.♙f4 [16.d5 ♙d6! 17.♙a3 ♙xa3 18.♔xa3 ♖a5=] 16...h6 It is always useful to include this move whenever possible. 17.d5 [17.h3 ♙d6 18.♙xd6 cxd6=] 17...♙c5!



Position after: 17...♙c5!

A good tactical idea. 18.h3 [18.♖bd1 ♗xe1+ 19.♗xe1 ♖a5 20.♗e5 ♗e8! Another important asset.

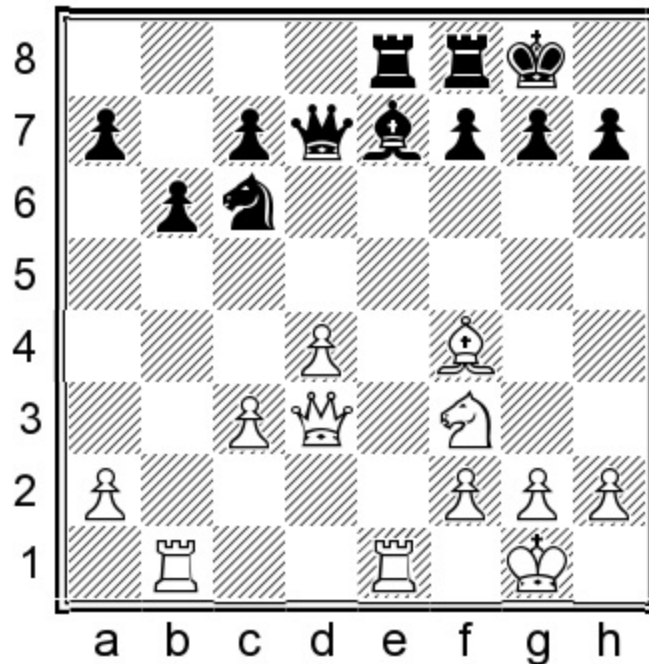
21.h4 ♖c8 22.♞e2 ♙d6 23.♞e3 ♞e7 24.h5 ♖e8 25.♞f5 f6 26.♘g4 ♞xe3 27.♘xe3 ♘b7 Black has found a way to get counterplay and ease their position.] 18...♘e7 19.♘e5 ♖c8



Position after: 19... ♖c8

20.♙h2!? [20.♞e2 ♘g6! 21.♘xg6 fxg6 22.♙g3 ♞xe2 23.♞xe2 ♞e8 24.♞d2 ♞f5 Black is fine.]
 20...♘g6! 21.♘c6 ♞d7 22.♘xa7 [22.♙f1 f5 23.♘xa7 ♞f7 24.♘b5 f4] 22...♞xe1+ 23.♞xe1 ♞a8
 24.♘b5 ♞xa2 25.♙g3 c6 26.♘c3 ♞a3 27.♞d1 cxd5 28.cxd5 ♖c8! =

15... ♖d7!?



Position after: 15... ♖d7!?

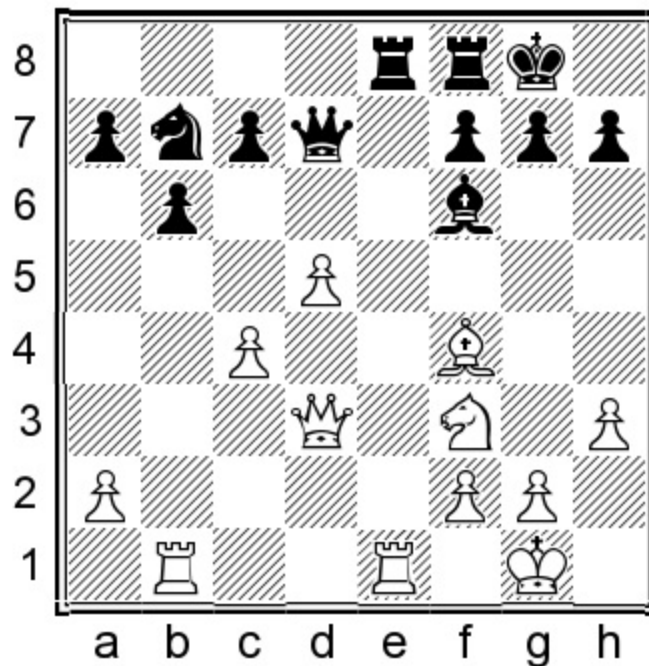
This is best in my opinion.

15... ♖d6 16. ♘g5 f5± Black is counting on taking the pawn on a2, as played in some games, but again it is not to be recommended. 17. ♙xd6 cxd6 18. h4 h6 19. ♞h3 ♚xa2 20. ♚b5 ♜c8 21. ♘f4 ♚f7 22. h5 White has strong pressure. 1-0 (34) Yu Yangyi (2714) – Radjabov, T (2723) Samarkand 2023.

16.d5

16. ♜e3 ♙d8 17. ♜be1 ♜xe3 18. ♜xe3 ♞e7 19. c4 ♞g6 20. ♙g3 ♙e7 21. h4 h5 This is also OK for Black.

16... ♞a5 17. h3 ♙f6 18. c4 ♞b7



Position after: 18... ♞b7

19. ♞e5

19. ♙e5 ♙e7 20. ♞d4 ♙d6 21. ♙xd6 ♞xd6 22. ♞c6 a5 23. ♜ec1 ♞b7 Again Black is able to get a balanced game.

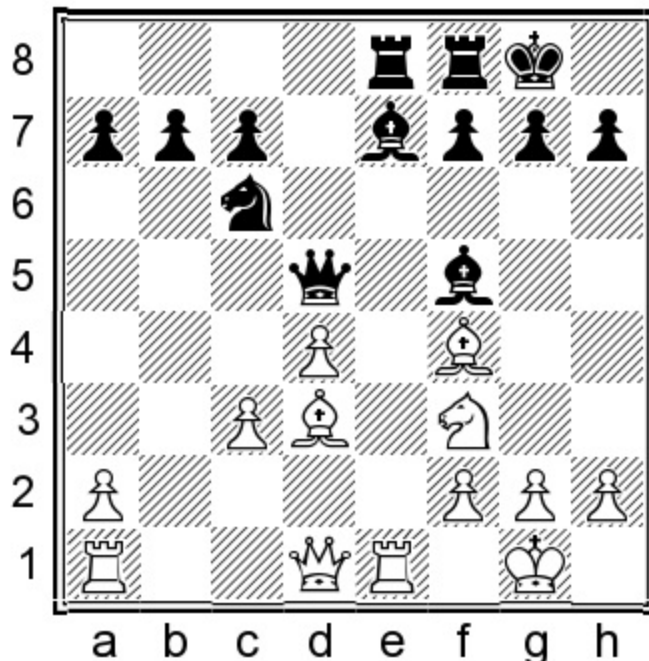
19... ♙xe5 20. ♙xe5 ♜e7 21. ♙f4 ♜fe8 22. ♜xe7 ♜xe7

This is fine for Black as well. ½ – ½ (25) Korn, C (2343) – Milde, L (2259) ICCF 2021.

c) 9.cxd5 ♚xd5 10. ♜e1 ♙f5 11. ♞c3 ♞xc3 12. bxc3 ♜ae8 13. ♙f4

1.e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞f6 3. ♞xe5 d6 4. ♞f3 ♞xe4 5. d4 d5 6. ♙d3 ♙e7 7. 0-0 ♞c6 8. c4 0-0 9. cxd5 ♚xd5

10.♖e1 ♘f5 11.♗c3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♜ae8 13.♙f4



Position after: 13. ♙f4

13...♙d8!?

In my opinion best, going for further simplifications.

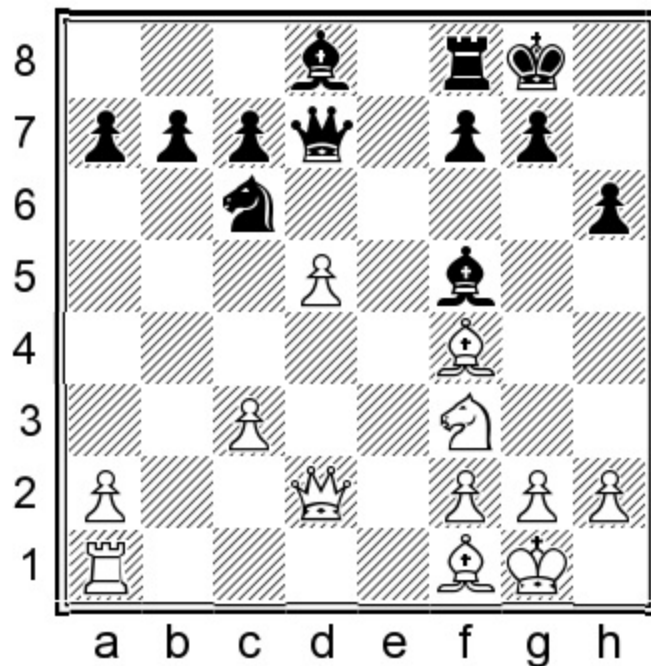
13...♙xd3 14.♚xd3 ♙d6 15.♗g5 f5 Similar to the Yu – Radjabov game given above, it seems that now Black has to take the pawn on a2 if White doesn't defend it. This has been tested in tournament practice and it is a demanding line mostly for Black.

14.♙e2

Probably the main choice but this line has not really been investigated too much, so there is a place for other ideas as well:

A) 14.♖e3 ♜xe3 15.fxe3 ♙xd3 16.♚xd3 ♜e8 17.♗d2 ♗e5 18.♙xe5 ♜xe5 19.e4 ♚d7 20.♗c4 ♜e8 The game is equal; the bishop is OK here versus the knight. ½ – ½ (30) Vocaturo, D (2616) – Ferreira, J (2499) Chennai 2022.

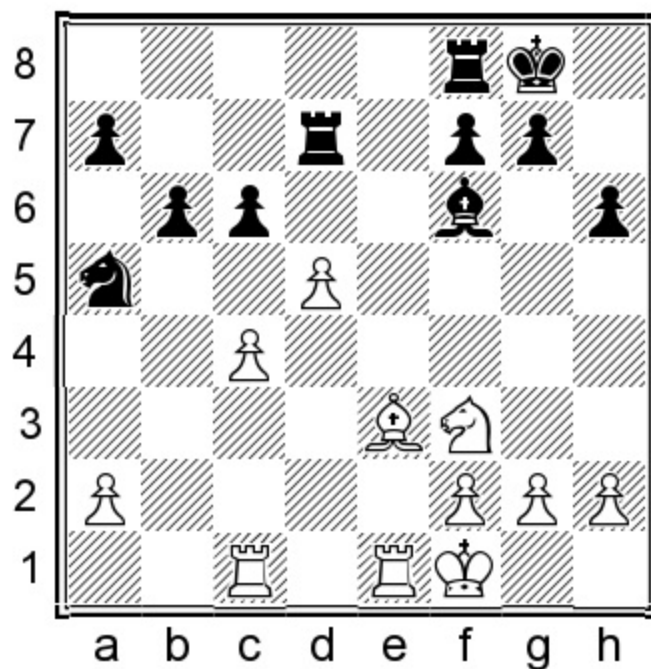
B) 14.♙f1 ♜xe1 15.♚xe1 ♚d7 16.♚d2 h6 17.d5



Position after: 17.d5

17...♖e7 18.c4 ♗g6 19.♙g3 ♙g4 20.♗d4 ♙g5 21.♚d3 c5 22.♗f3 ♙xf3 23.♚xf3 ♜e8 24.h3 ♙h4 25.♙h2 ♙f6 26.♞b1 ♙d4 This is just an example but Black is fine.

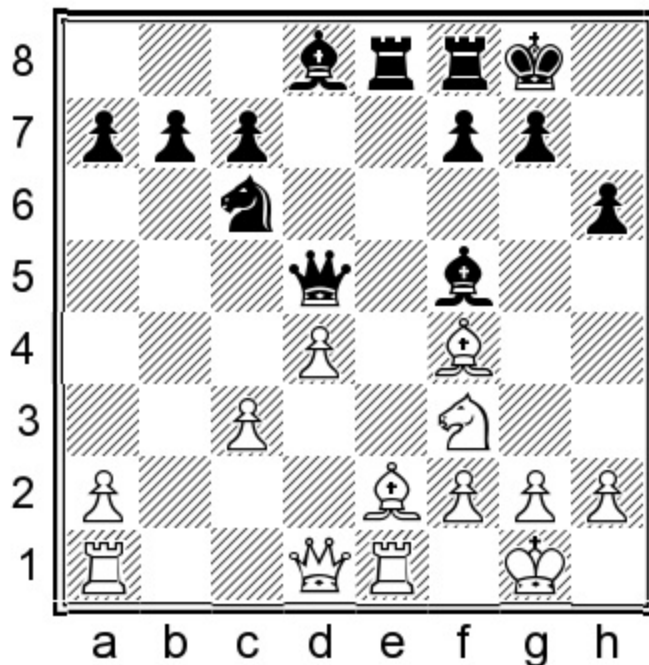
C) 14.c4 ♚d7 [Or: 14...♞xe1+ 15.♚xe1 ♚d7 16.♙xf5 ♚xf5 17.♙g3 ♙f6 18.♞d1 ♚d7 19.d5 ♜e8 20.♚d2 ♗e5 21.♙xe5 ♙xe5 22.♚a5 ♙d6! 23.♚xa7 b6 24.♚a6 ♙c5 Black has good compensation. ½ – ½ (42) Mista, A (2592) – Bai, J (2593) Saint Louis USA 2019] 15.♙xf5 ♚xf5 16.♚d2 [16.♙e3 ♙f6 17.♞b1 b6 18.♚a4 ♚d7 19.♞bd1 ♜e7 20.♗f1 h6 21.d5 ♗a5 22.♚xd7 ♞xd7 23.♞c1 c6!



Position after: 23...c6!

Black stands well. This is a good example of how to conduct the Petrov. 0-1 (45) Paehtz, E (2479) – Koneru, H (2560) Skolkovo RUS 2019] 16...♘a5 17.♞ec1 ♞e4 18.♙e3 c5 19.♞ab1 ♘xc4! 20.♞xc4 ♞xe3 Black has the initiative, though later ½ – ½ (58) in Anand, V (2783) – Li Chao (2739) Baden Baden 2017.

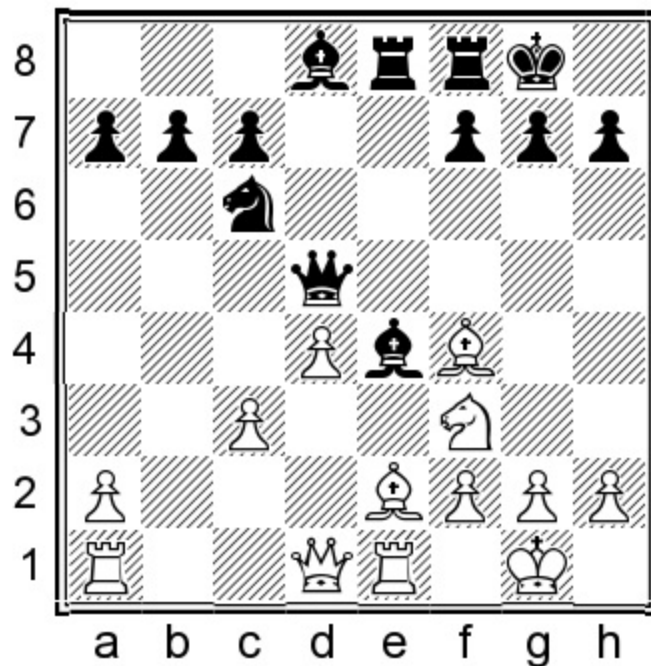
14...h6!?N



Position after: 14...h6!?N

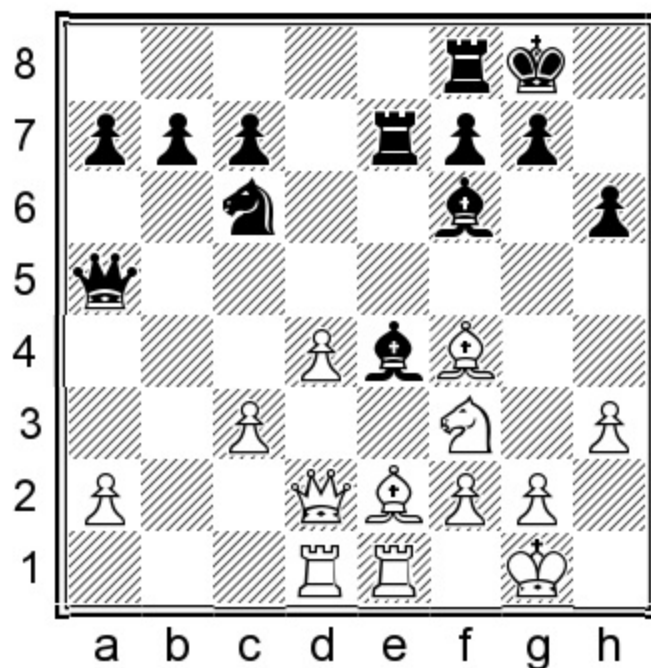
The entire point here is that both sides are trying to find useful moves and to force the other to give up on the tension. Actually, the alternative is similar, though there are some differences as well:

14...♙e4



Position after: 14...Ke4

A) 15.Ke3 Qa5! 16.Qd2 Probably best. [16.Qb3 Kxf3 17.Kxf3 Nxd4; 16.Qc1 Kxf3 17.Kxf3 Kg5 18.Qb2 Nxd4 Black took over the initiative but ½ – ½ (24) Paravyan, D (2631) – Rakhmanov, A (2653) Moscow RUS 2021] 16...h6 17.Rad1 Kf6 18.Kf4 Re7 19.h3



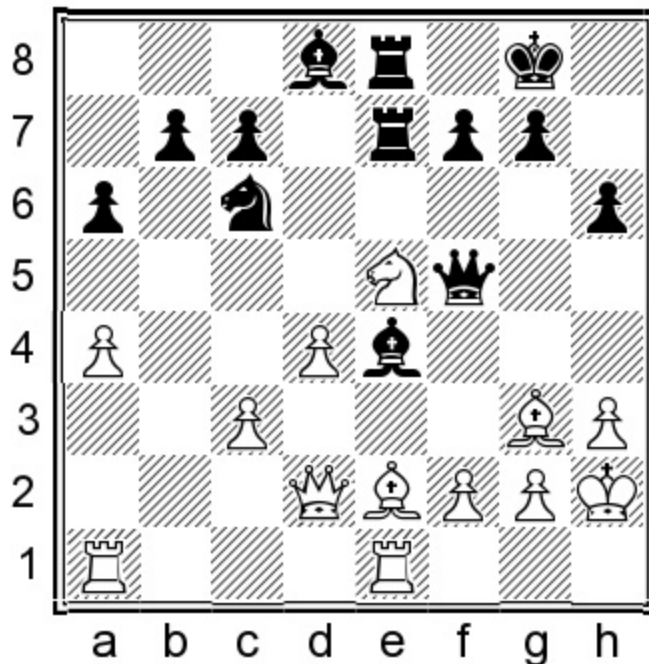
Position after: 19.h3

19...Rfe8 Black establishes fine play in the centre.

B) 15.Qb3 Qf5 16.Ke3 Na5 17.Qb2 Kd3 18.Kxd3 Qxd3 19.Ne5 Qf5 20.Qb4 c6 21.h3 Kc7 22.Re3

b6 23.♖ae1 ♜c8 The idea is next ...f6, when Black is OK. ½ – ½ (31) Shuvalova, P (2456) – Rakhmanov, A (2614) Aktobe 2024.

C) 15.♜d2 h6 16.h3 a6 17.a4 ♜f5 18.♙g3 ♖e7 19.♔h2 ♜fe8 20.♞e5



Position after: 20.♞e5

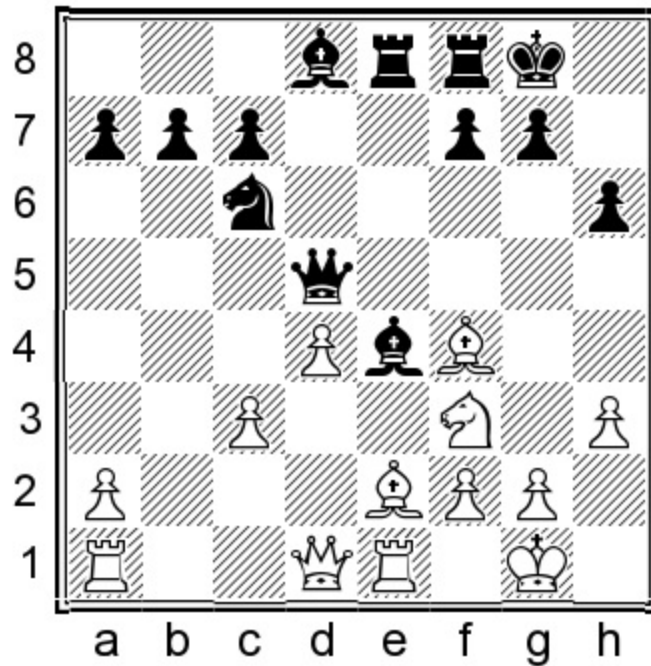
20...♞xe5 21.dxe5 ♜d7 22.♜e3 ♜g6 23.♙h5 ♜xh5 24.♜xe4 c6 25.f4 ♙a5 26.♜e3 g6 27.♙e1 ♜f5 28.♜xf5 gxf5 Black has counterplay. This was a very interesting game with many details involved. ½ – ½ (53) Asin Velazquez, J (2134) – Koronowski, H (2113) ICCF 2022.

15.♞d2

White has other options as well:

A) 15.♜b3 ♙e4 16.♞e5 ♞xe5 17.♙xe5 ♜d7 18.♙c4 ♜g4 19.♙g3 ♜g6 20.f3 ♙d3=

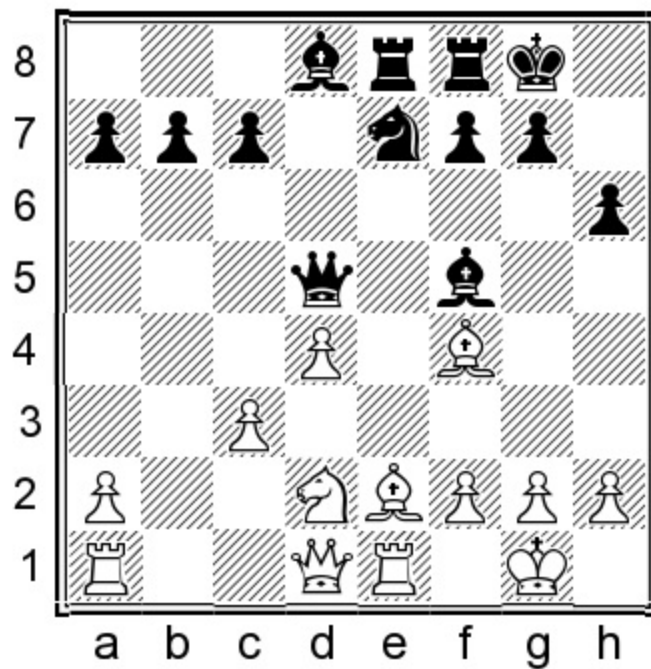
B) 15.h3 ♙e4



Position after: 15...♙e4

This is similar to 14...♙e4 16.♚d2 [16.♙g3 ♚a5 17.♚d2 ♙e7! Coming to d6 is fine for Black.]
 16...♚f5 17.♜h2 [Another waiting idea might be: 17.♙d1 ♜e7 18.♙g3 ♞fe8 19.♚h2 ♚d7 20.♚b2 b6
 21.♜e5 ♜xe5 22.dxe5 ♚c6 23.f3 ♙f5 with complications.] 17...♜e7 18.♙e5 [18.♜g4 ♜g6 19.♙xh6
 ♙xg2] 18...♚d7 19.♙f3 ♙xf3 20.♜xf3 ♜g6 Black has equalized without many problems.

15...♜e7!



Position after: 15...♜e7!

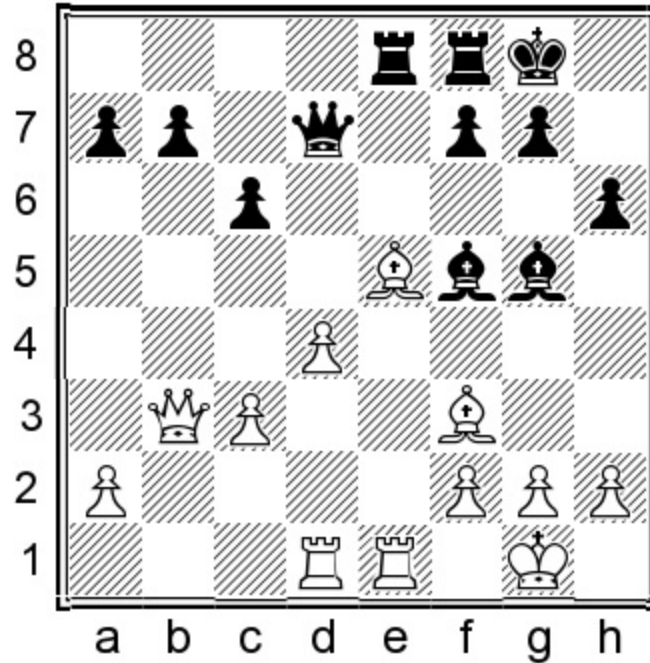
16.♔f3 ♚d7 17.♘c4

17.♙xb7 c5 18.♔f3 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♕a5 20.♖e3 ♚xd4 Black is fine.

17...♘g6 18.♘e5

18.♔g3 ♜xe1+ 19.♚xe1 b6 20.♘e3 ♞e8 21.♚d1 ♕e4 Black is OK.

18...♘xe5 19.♔xe5 c6 20.♚b3 ♕g5 21.♖ad1



Position after: 21.♖ad1

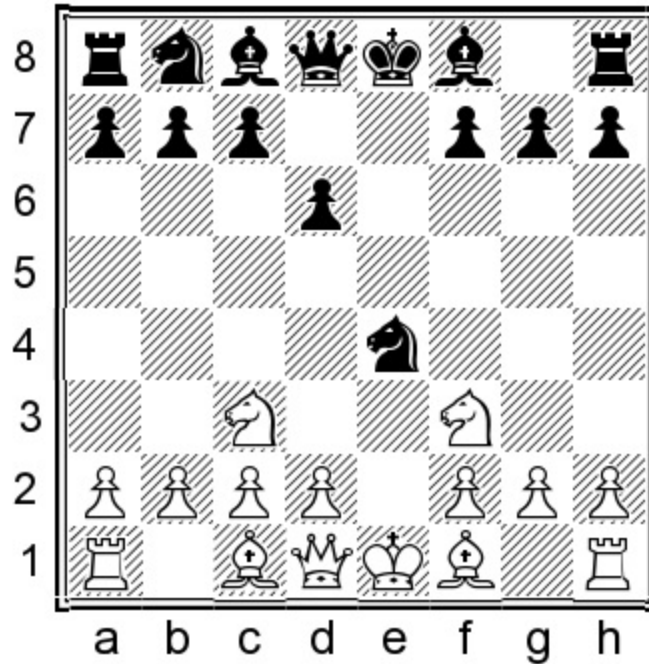
21...♞e7

The game is equal.

Chapter 3

5.♘c3 – Modern Line

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.♗c3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 3 – 5.♘c3 – Modern Line

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.♗c3 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 ♙e7

a) 7.-- & 7.♙f4

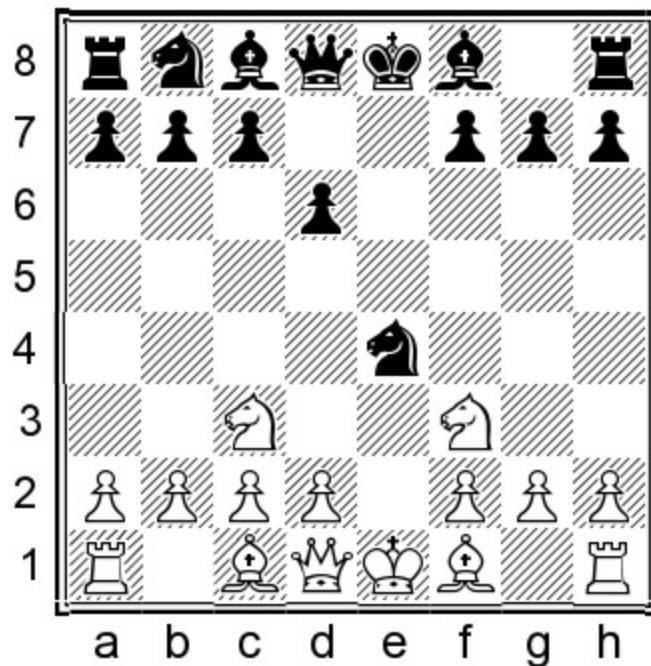
b) 7.♙e3 ♗d7 8.--

c) 7.♙e3 ♗d7 8.♙d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♗f6 10.♙d3 ♙e8 11.--

d) 7.♙e3 ♗d7 8.♙d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♗f6 10.♙d3 ♙e8 11.♙he1

a) 7.-- & 7.♙f4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.♗c3



Position after: 5. ♖c3

This has become a hugely important line in the last few decades and is probably the most difficult for Black to generate counterplay. Suddenly, the game heads into positions more typical of the Sicilian.

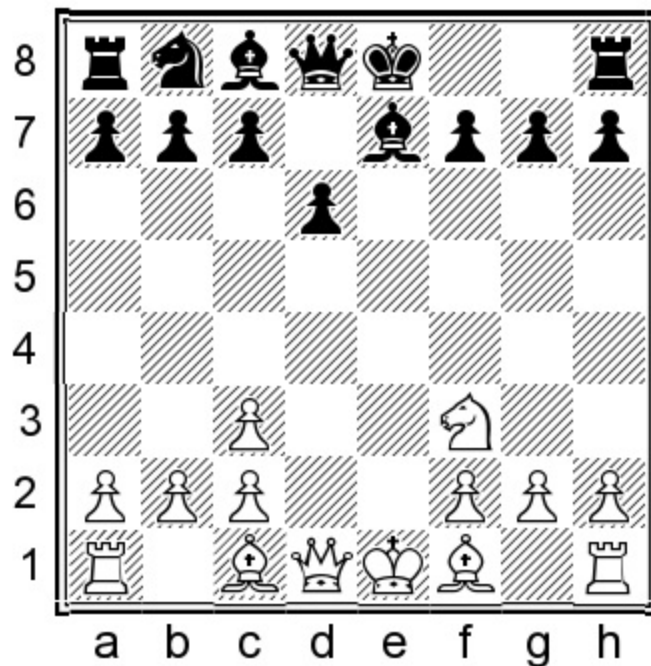
5... ♘xc3

This is critical. I can't really say that the knight retreat to f6 is bad, far from it, but this is in the spirit of the Petrov.

6.dxc3

The main idea: White speeds up his development and prepares queenside castle actually. This is a very sharp line so one must be prepared.

6... ♗e7



Position after: 6... Ke7

Obviously, White will go for queenside castling as his massive pawn structure helps in hiding the king. It is therefore essential for Black to find an antidote to this plan, otherwise White's plan is rather simple – push the kingside pawns and deliver a strong attack.

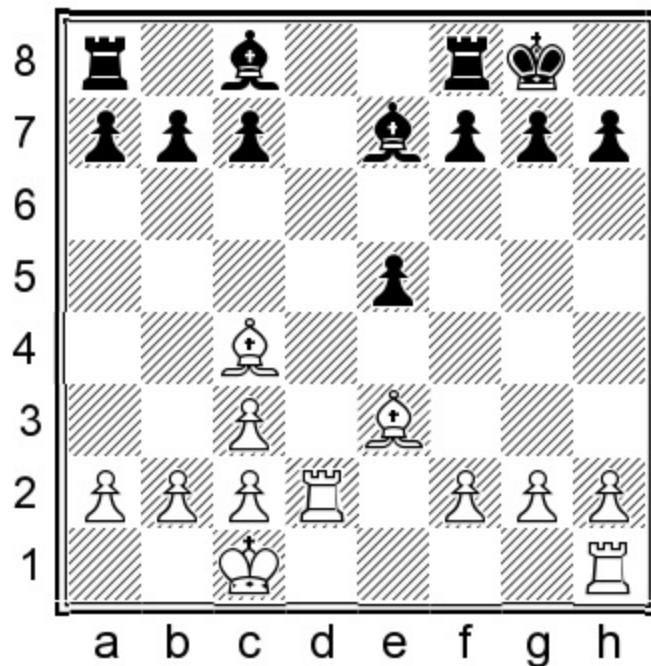
7. Ke4

This was the most popular idea for a while; we will see the mainline 7. Ke3 next. Other, less popular but interesting, ideas are:

A) 7. Ke3 0-0 8. Ke3 Nf7 9. Qe2 Nc5 transposes to 7. Ke3 note under 8. Ke3

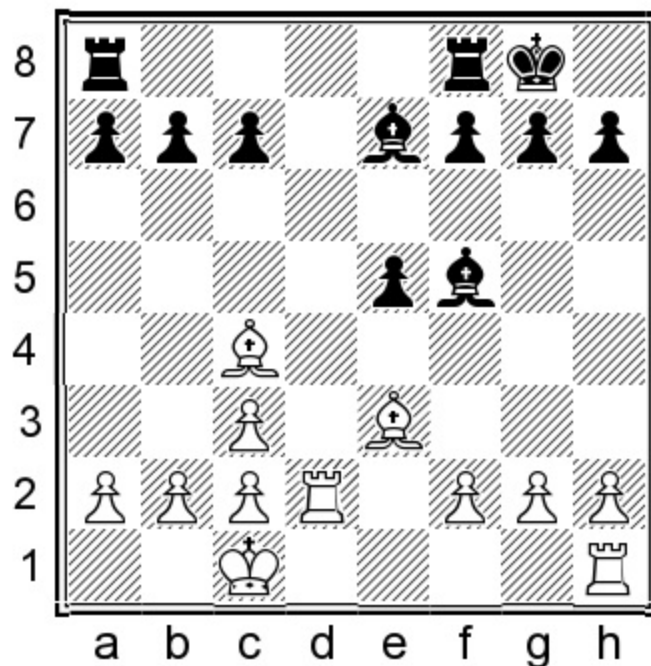
B) 7. Qd4 0-0 8. Ke3 Nf7 9. 0-0-0 Nf6 10. h3 c5 11. Qf4 Qa5 12. a3 Ke6 13. Ke3 d5 14. Qh4 h6 15. Kxh6 gxh6 16. Qxh6 Ne4 In any case, White can't hope for more than a draw. 0-1 Sedlak, N (2519) – Ilincic, Z Sombor 2004.

C) 7. Kc4 Nc6 8. Ke3 0-0 9. Qd2 Ne5 10. Nxe5 dxe5 11. 0-0-0 Qxd2+ 12. Kxd2



Position after: 12. ♖xd2

An interesting endgame has arisen: White has good bishops but Black has a slightly better pawn structure. 12... ♗f5 The main choice but there is something else: [12...b6 13. ♗d5 ♖b8 14. b4 a5 15. a3 ♗d6 16. ♖b2 ♗b7 17. ♖b3 ♗xd5+ 18. ♖xd5 f5 19. f3 ♖f7 20. ♖hd1 ♖e6 21. ♖c4 ♖fc8 22. a4 ♖a8 This endgame is fine for Black. ½ – ½ (40) Solak, D (2609) – Ladva, O (2500) Batumi GEO 2018]



Position after: 12... ♗f5

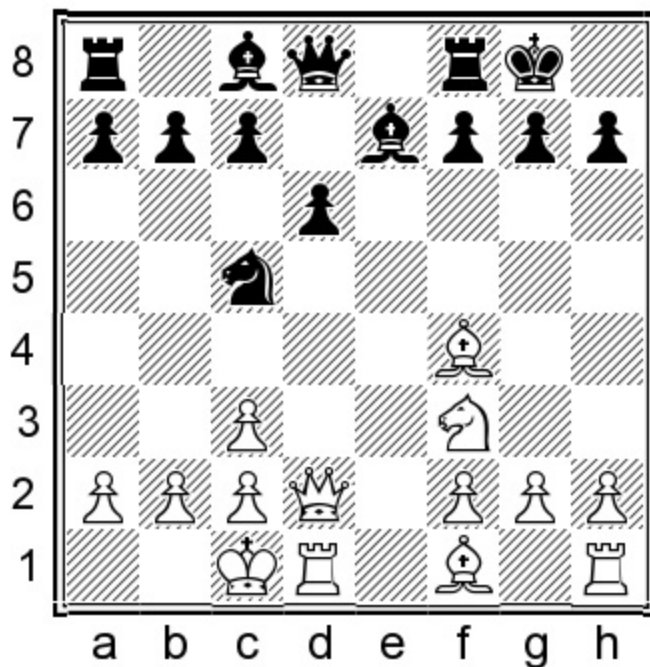
C1) 13. ♖hd1 a6 14. f3 h5 15. g4 hxg4 16. fxg4 ♗xg4 17. ♖g1 ♗e6! 18. ♗d5 ♗xd5 19. ♖xd5 f6 20. ♖d7

♖f7 Black is clearly better. 0-1 (26) Gunina, V (2528) – Kashlinskaya, A (2440) Satka RUS 2018.

C2) 13.♙d3 ♘e6 14.a3 ♜ad8 15.♙e4 ♜xd2 16.♙xd2 ♜d8+ 17.♙e2 f5 18.♙xb7 ♙c4+ 19.♙f3 g5 20.g3 ♜b8 21.♙c6 ♜xb2 Black is better. It is clear that it is much easier for Black if he manages, as in this game, to exchange one pair of rooks. 0-1 (28) Garcia, A (1097) – Zarate, M (1521) IECC 2006.

C3) 13.♞e1 ♞fe8 14.a4 a6 15.h3 h5 16.♞de2 ♙d6 17.f3 ♙e6 18.♙d3 b5 19.a5 ♜ad8 20.b4 f6 21.♙g6 ♙f7 22.♙e4 ♙e6 Black is OK. ½ – ½ (34) Marbourg, D (2374) – Rau, M (2309) ICCF 2018.

7...0-0 8.♞d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♘c5



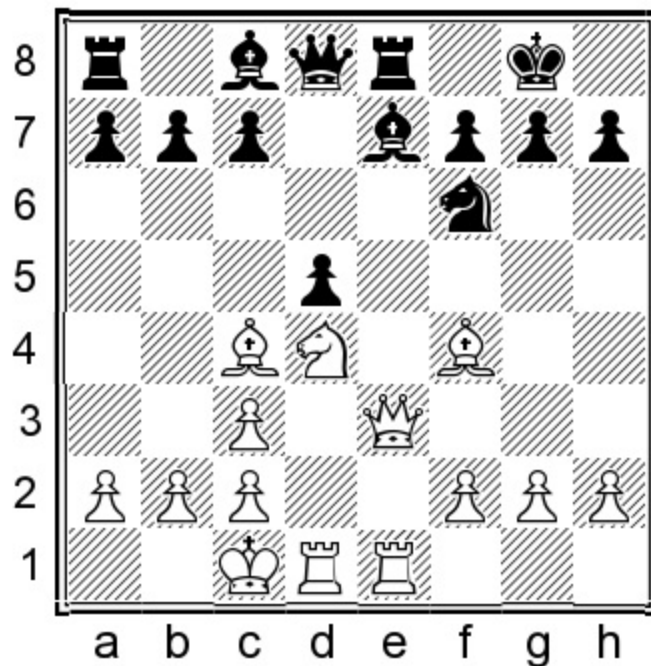
Position after: 9...♘c5

10.♙c4

This is the main approach but there are interesting options here as well:

A) 10.♙e3 ♘e4 11.♞d3 ♘c5=

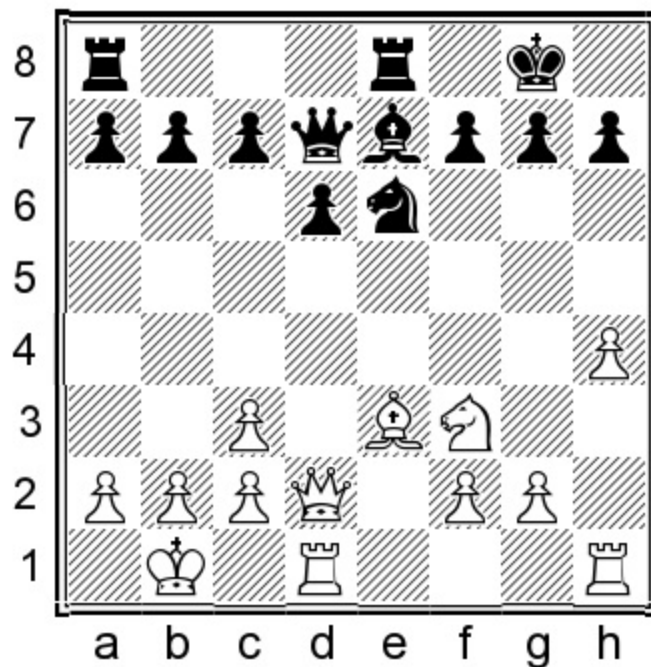
B) 10.♘d4 ♘e4 11.♞e3 ♘f6 12.♙c4 ♞e8 13.♞he1 d5



Position after: 13...d5

14.♙b5 ♘d7 15.♙xd7 ♚xd7 16.♘f3 ♜ad8=

C) 10.♙b1 ♜e8 11.♙c4 ♙e6 12.♙xe6 ♘xe6 13.♙e3 The same position as the mainline but with a king on b1 and rook on e8. Both have their points... 13...♚d7 14.h4

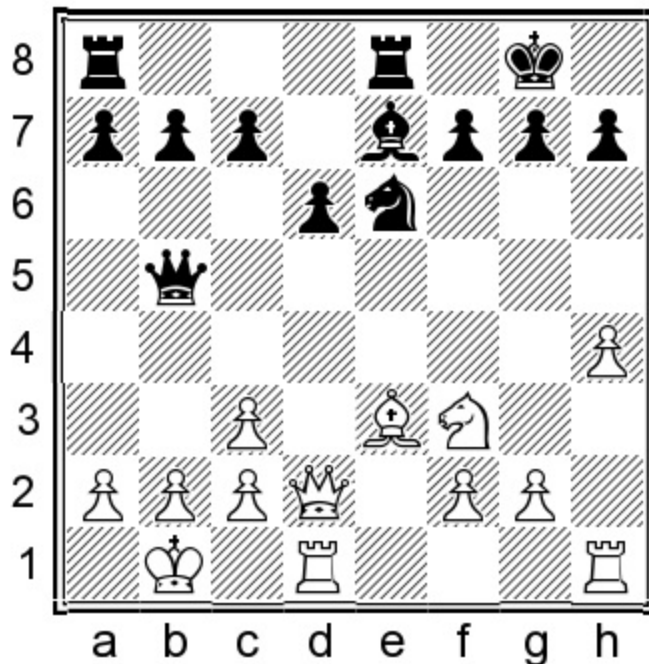


Position after: 14.h4

C1) Another interesting idea is to place the queen on c6: 14...♚c6 15.♚d3 a5 16.♚f5 a4 17.a3 g6 18.♚d3 ♙f6 19.h5 ♜a5! 20.hxg6 hxg6 21.♚d2 ♚e4 22.♜de1 ♚c6 23.♜e2 ♜b5 24.♙d4 ♘xd4

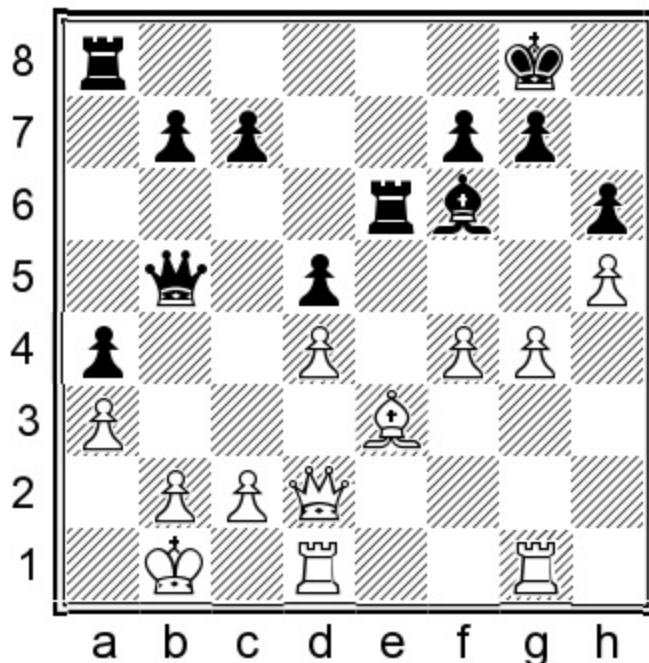
25.♞xd4 ♜xe2 26.♝xe2 ♘xd4 27.cxd4 ♔g7 28.f3 Black has managed to create timely placed counterplay. ½ – ½ (28) Craciuneanu, V (2510) – Velilla Velasco, F (2579) ICCF 2009.

C2) 14...♝b5!



Position after: 14...♝b5!

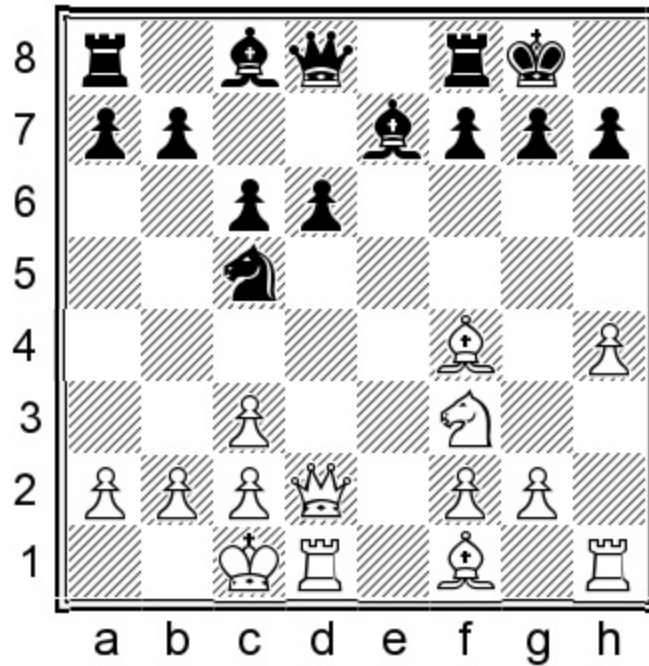
The queen is on a good square. 15.g4 a5 16.♞hg1 a4 17.h5 [17.a3 ♜ad8 18.h5 d5 19.♔a1 c5 20.g5 g6∞] 17...h6 18.a3 ♘f6 19.♞d4 ♞xd4 20.cxd4 ♜e6 21.f4 d5



Position after: 21...d5

22.g5 ♕e7 23.♔a1 ♖e8 Black has strong counterplay along the e-file. ½ – ½ (39) Copar, A (2510) – Schramm, A (2527) ICCF 2014.

D) 10.h4 c6



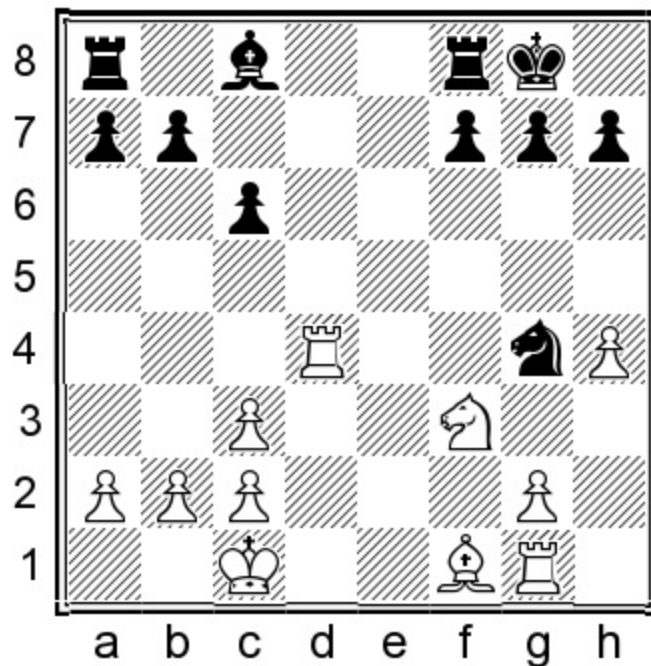
Position after: 10...c6

D1) 11.♖e1 d5 12.♕d3 ♕d6 13.♕xd6 ♜xd6 14.♔b1 ♕d7 15.h5 h6 16.♘e5 ♖ae8 17.f4 ♗e7 18.g4 ♜fe8∞ ½ – ½ (22) Baklan, V (2546) – Finek, V (2402) Czech Republic 2024.

D2) 11.c4 ♖e8 12.♖e1 ♕g4 13.♘d4 ♕f6 14.♖xe8+ ♜xe8 Black is fine here. 1-0 (40) Gabrielian, A (2555) – Saduakassova, D (2348) Taganrog 2014.

D3) 11.h5

D4) 11.♕xd6 ♕xd6 12.♜xd6 ♜xd6 13.♖xd6 ♘e4 14.♗d4 ♘xf2 15.♖g1 ♘g4

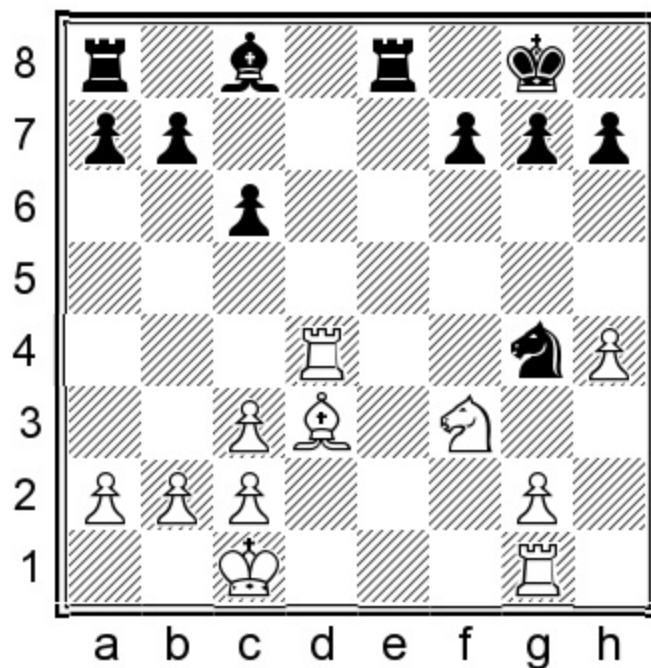


Position after: 15... Nf4

D4.1) 16.a4 R8e8 17.Qd3 h6 18.a5 Qe6 19.R8e1 Nf6= 1-0 (57) Topalov, V (2801) – Gelfand, B (2723) Monte Carlo 2006.

D4.2) 16.Qc4 Qf5 17.Qd3 Qxd3 18.cxd3 Nf6 19.g4 c5 20.Rd6 Rfd8 21.Rxd8+ Rxd8 22.g5 Nd5 23.Qd2 Nf4 24.d4 cxd4 25.Nxd4 Ng6 Interesting play but it is an equal endgame. ½ – ½ (25) Velilla Velasco, F (2564) – Bocanegra Moreno, R (2450) ICCF email 2011.

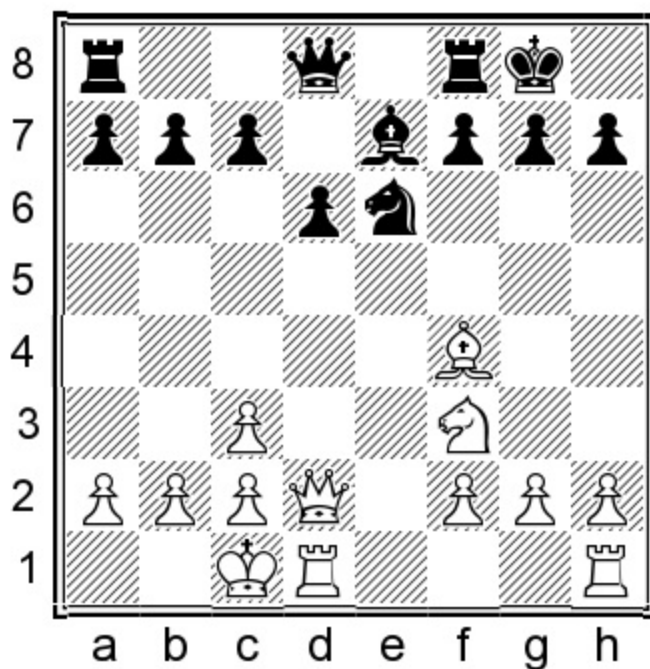
D4.3) 16.Qd3 R8e8!



Position after: 16...♖e8!

It is important to take the open file. 17.♘g5 h6 18.♗e4 ♘e5 19.♗d6 ♗xd3+ 20.♙xd3 ♖e2 Black is OK.

10...♗e6 11.♗xe6 ♘xe6



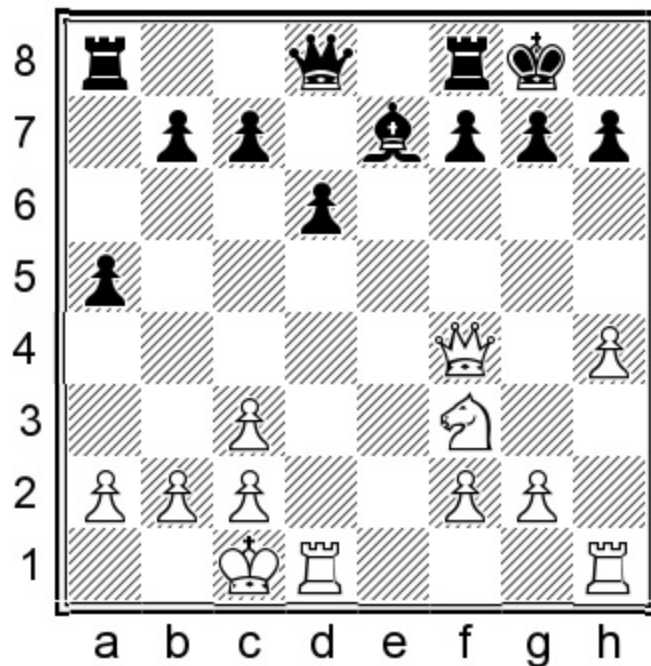
Position after: 11...♘xe6

This line was popular in the past (and still is a bit) but it seems that Black is doing OK.

12.♗e3

12.h4 Now Black can take or continue in the usual manner:

A) 12...♗xf4 13.♙xf4 a5!?



Position after: 13...a5!?

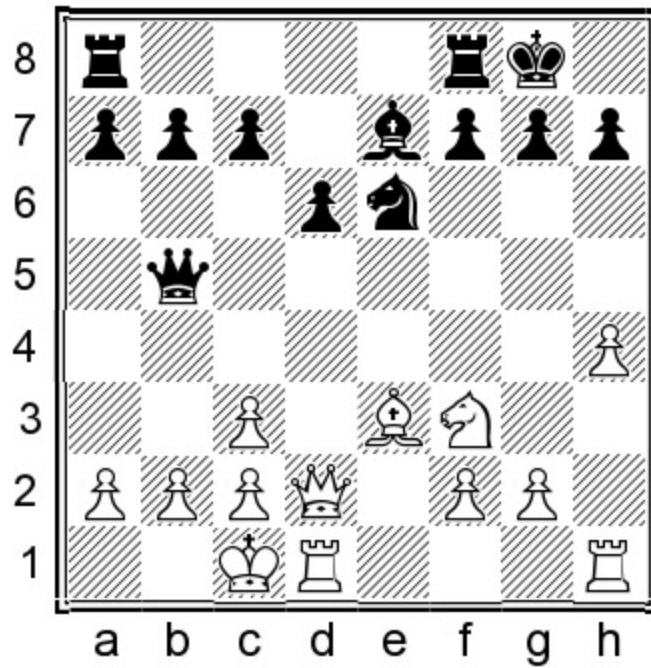
This is a rare position... 14.h5 [14.♔b1 a4 15.a3 c6 16.g4 d5 17.♘d4 ♖e8 18.g5 ♙d6 19.♚f3 ♜e4 with complications.] 14...h6 15.g4 ♙g5 16.♘xg5 ♚xg5 17.♚xg5 hxg5 18.♞d5 f6 19.♞e1 ♔f7 20.♔d2 b6= ½ – ½ (28) Ventimiglia, C – Esnaola San Sebastián, J ICCF 2005.

B) 12...♚d7 13.♙g5 ♜fe8 14.♔b1 ♙f8 15.♙e3 a5 16.♚d3 a4 17.♞h3 ♞a5! Black is having counterplay. 0-1 (35) Tahay, A (2421) – Bellahcene, B (2497) Chartres 2023.

12...♚d7

Another practical example was also OK: 12...a5 13.h4 a4 14.a3 ♚d7 15.♔b1 ♚c6 16.♚d3 ♜fe8 17.♘g5 ♘f8 18.h5 ♙xg5 19.♙xg5 ♘e6 20.♙e3 ♞a5 21.f4 h6 22.g3 This is also OK for Black. ½ – ½ (22) Adhiban, B (2672) – Erigaisi, A (2626) Sharjah 2021.

13.h4 ♚b5

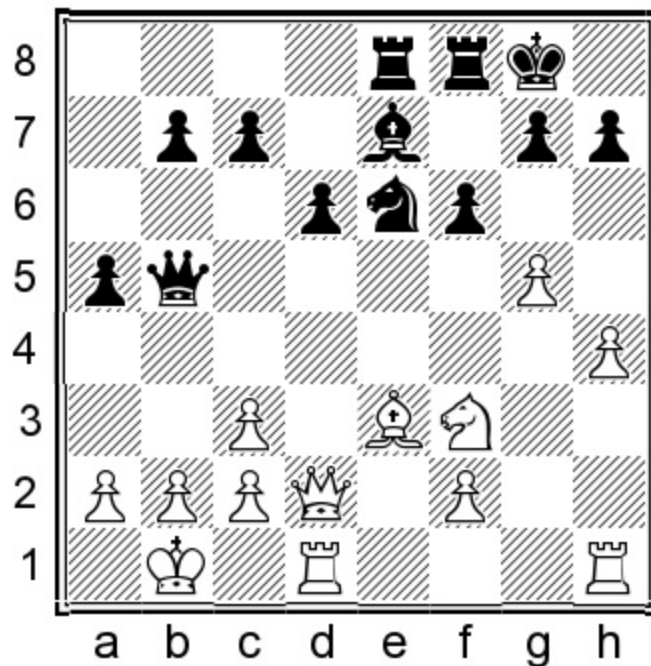


Position after: 13...♙b5

Black takes all the light squares and doesn't allow the white queen from d2 to find a more active spot.

14.h5

14.♙b1 a5 15.g4 ♖ae8 This is also an interesting plan... 16.g5 f6!

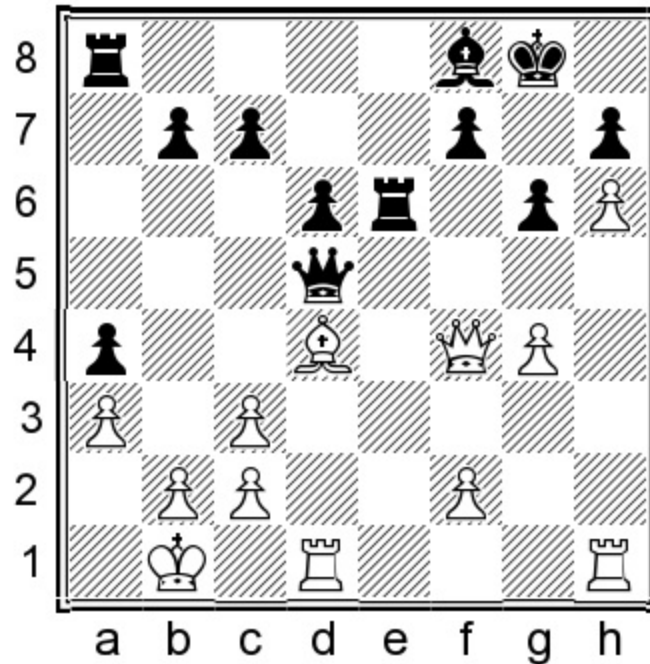


Position after: 16...f6!

17.♖h3 ♕d8 18.♖dh1 f5 19.♙d1 f4 20.♕c1 ♙f5 21.a4 d5 Black is fine. We can see from this game

that Black can use a central strategy to fight against the typical Sicilian attack h4-g4 and so on... ½ – ½ (39) Voll, A (2547) – Obertin, F (2428) ICCF 2020.

14...a5 15.♘d4 ♔d5 16.♙b1 a4 17.a3 ♘xd4 18.h6 g6 19.g3 ♖fe8 20.♙xd4 ♙f8 21.♚f4 ♗e6 22.g4



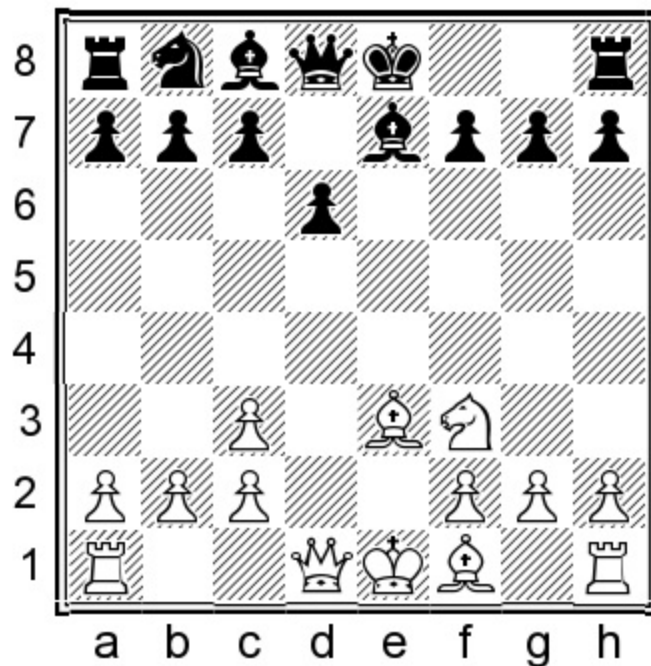
Position after: 22.g4

22...♖ae8

Black is more than fine here. ½-½ (22) Giaccio, A – Barreras García, A (2401) ICCF 2008.

b) 7.♙e3 ♘d7 8.--

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♙e7 7.♙e3



Position after: 7. ♔e3

This is definitely the critical approach and I identified two main aspects of White's play here, plus some less-played plans, so we have two files covering this line.

7... ♖d7 8. ♕d3

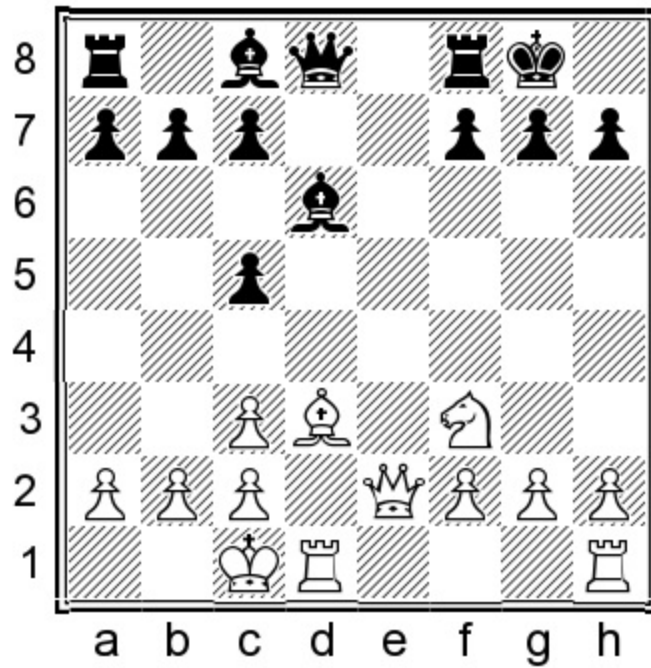
In the next subchapter we will analyse the main and critical idea, 8. ♕d2. It is fair to say that this plan is also an important one to note, plus alternatives:

8. ♕d3 ♖c5 9. ♕xc5 dxc5 10. ♕xd8+ ♕xd8 11. ♕c4 0-0 12. 0-0-0 ♖e8 13. ♖he1 ♖xe1 14. ♖xe1 ♕d7 15. h4 ♔f8 16. ♖g5 b5 17. ♖xh7+ ♔g8 18. ♕d3 ♕xh4 Black is fine in this endgame. ½ – ½ (37) Grandelius, N (2672) – Karjakin, S (2743) Wijk aan Zee 2022.

8... 0-0 9. ♕e2

This is a rather different way of handling this line.

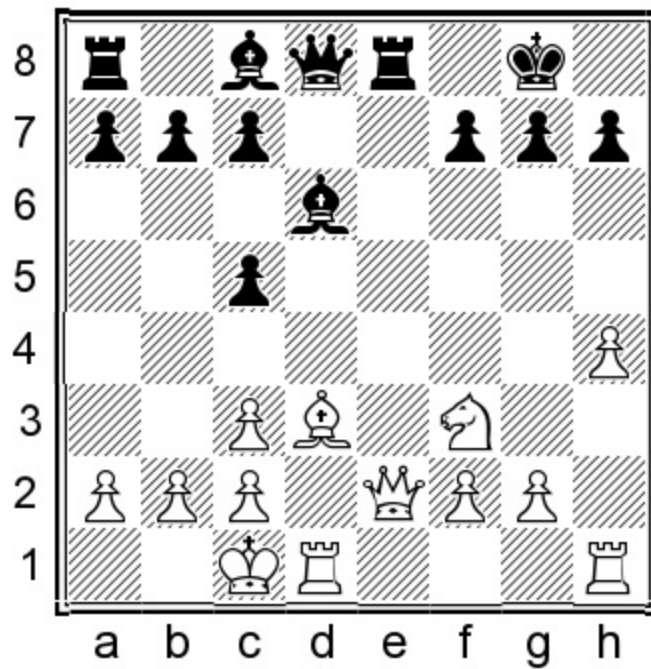
9... ♖c5 10. ♕xc5 dxc5 11. 0-0-0 ♕d6



Position after: 11...♔d6

12.♖he1

12.h4 ♖e8!

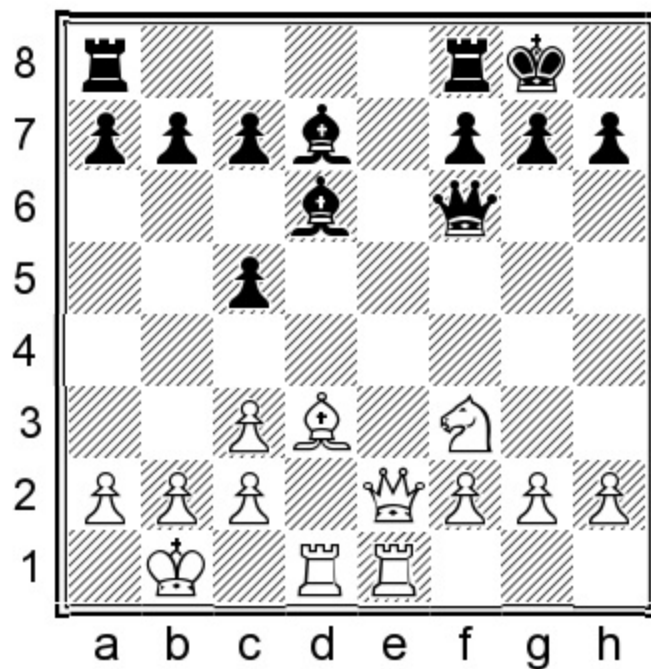


Position after: 12...♖e8!

13.♔d2 [The typical sacrifice doesn't work here: 13.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 14.♖g5+ ♔g8 15.♗h5 ♗f6 16.♗h7+ ♔f8 17.♖he1 ♕e6 wins for Black.] 13...♗f6 14.♖he1 ♕g4 15.♔b1 ♕xf3 16.gxf3 ♕f4 Black

is better. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (20) Muniz, A (2096) – Wilczek, R (2052) Lechenicher SchachServer 2016.

12...♖f6 13.♔b1 ♕d7!?



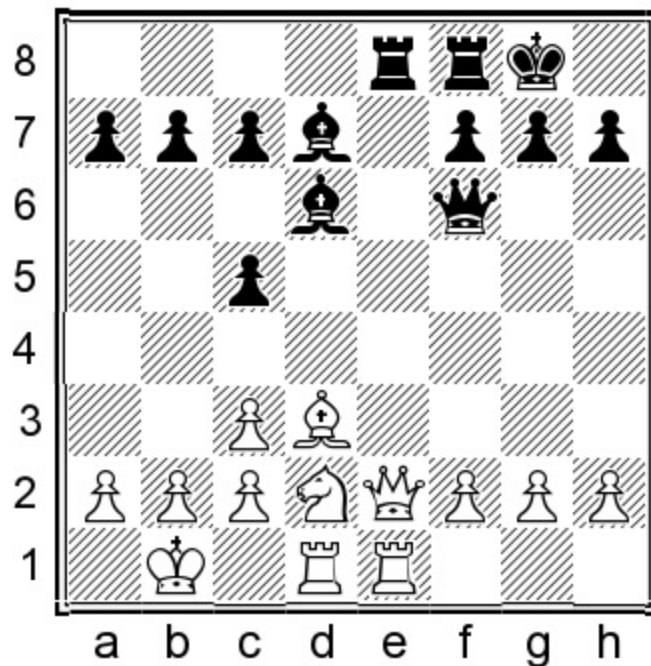
Position after: 13...♕d7!?

Preparing either rook to come to e8.

13...♕e6 14.♘d2! ♜ae8 15.♘e4↑ $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (33) Topalov, V (2740) – Wei Yi (2736) Abidjan 2019.

14.♕e4

A) 14.♘d2 ♜ae8!



Position after: 14...Rae8!

15.♘e4 ♖g6 16.♘xd6 ♜xe2 17.♙xg6 ♜xe1 18.♜xe1 fxg6 19.♘e4 ♙c6 20.f3 ♜e8 21.♚c1 ♙xe4 Black has a fine endgame.

B) 14.♘e5 ♙e6 15.♚e4 g6 16.f4 ♜ad8 17.g3 c6 18.h4 ♜fe8 This is not bad at all for Black. 0-1 (42) Nestorovic, N (2498) – Lenderman, A (2611) Herndon 2018.

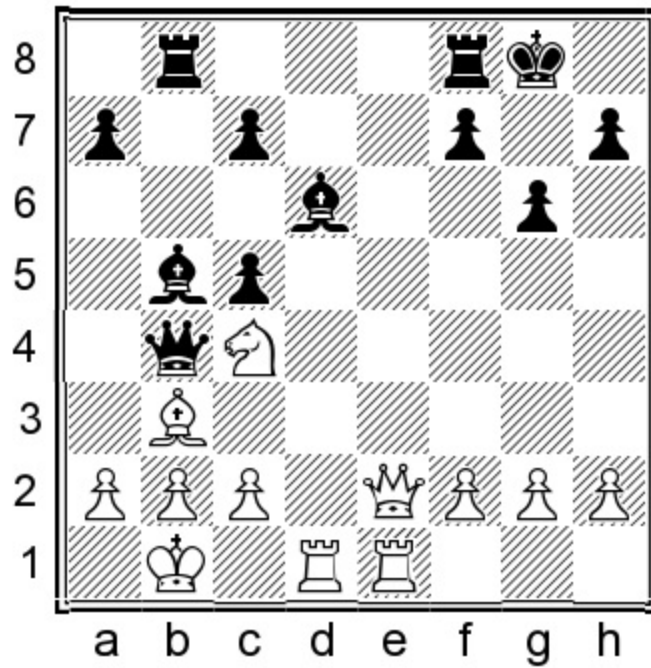
14...g6

14...Rab8 15.♘d2 ♜fe8 This is also fine for Black.

15.♙xb7

15.♚d3 ♜ab8 16.h4 b5 17.♙d5 ♙g4 Black is OK here too.

15...Rab8 16.♙d5 ♚xc3 17.♙b3 ♚b4 18.♘e5 ♙b5 19.♘c4



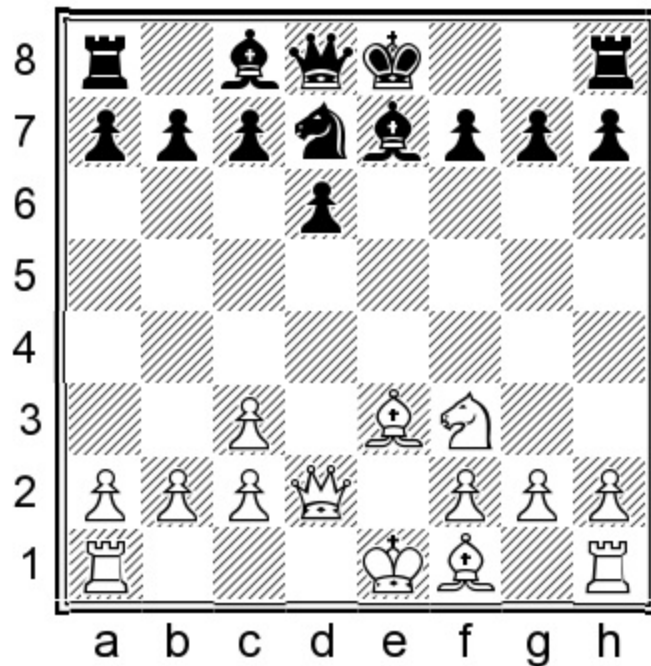
Position after: 19. d4

19... f8

Black had the better play and later won 0-1 (33) in Alekseenko, K (2650) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2024.

c) 7. e3 d7 8. d2 0-0 9. 0-0-0 f6 10. d3 e8 11.--

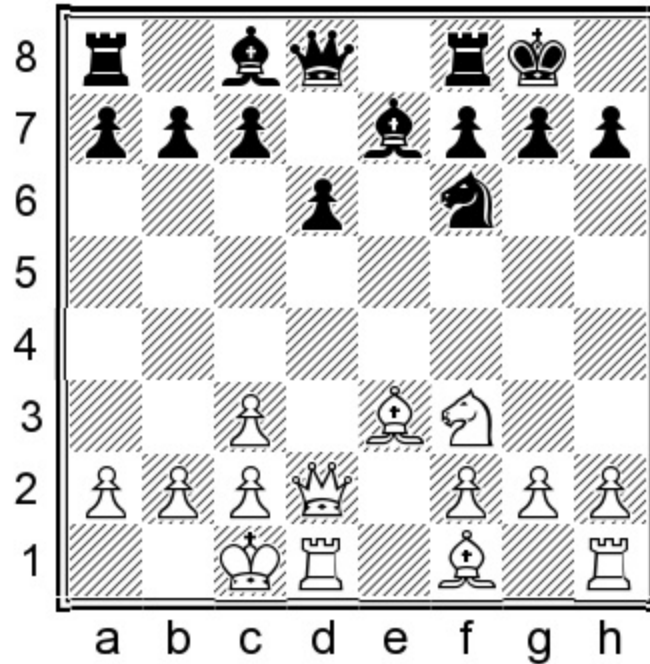
1. e4 e5 2. f3 f6 3. xe5 d6 4. f3 xe4 5. c3 xc3 6. dxc3 e7 7. e3 d7 8. d2



Position after: 8. ♖d2

This is the real mainline. White is ready to go for the attack and at the same time keeps options for developing the bishop from f1.

8...0-0 9.0-0-0 ♘f6



Position after: 9... ♘f6

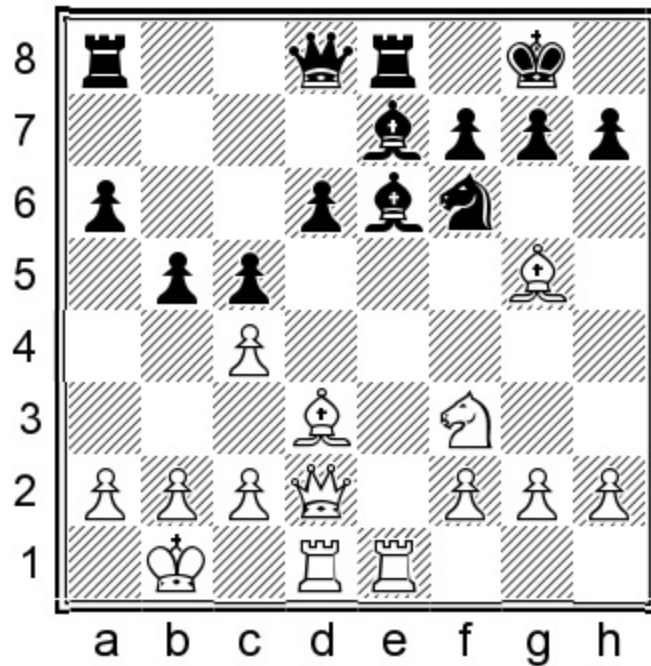
Black's main system in recent years. Black is trying to use the e4 square and the knight on f6 additionally secures the position around the king.

10. ♘d3

This is a main tabiya, but positions have tendencies to transpose so before we continue with the mainline, I will point out some specifics here:

A) 10. ♖b1 transposes to the note under 11. ♖b1 after 11... ♖e8 12. ♘d3

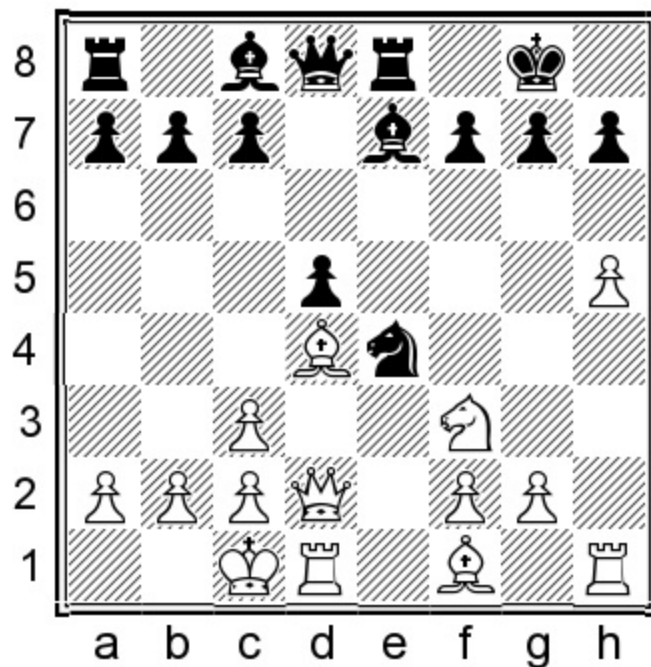
B) 10. c4 ♖e8 11. ♘d3 This position may occur also after 10. ♘d3 ♖e8 11. c4 11... ♘d7 [Another interesting try is: 11... a6 12. ♖b1 c5 13. ♖he1 b5 14. ♘g5 ♘e6



Position after: 14...♙e6

15.♞f4 bxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙xc4 17.♞xc4 d5 18.♞d3 ♜b8 Black is doing fine. 0-1 (28) Ivic, V (2596) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2770) chess.com 2024] 12.♞d4 ♞g4 13.♙f4 ♙f6 14.♞f3 ♙c6 15.♞he1 ♞e5 16.♙xe5 ♙xe5 17.♞xe5 dxe5 18.♙e4 ♞f6 Black is OK. 0-1 (37) Loeffler, M (2267) – Stojanovic, M (2476) Basel 2024

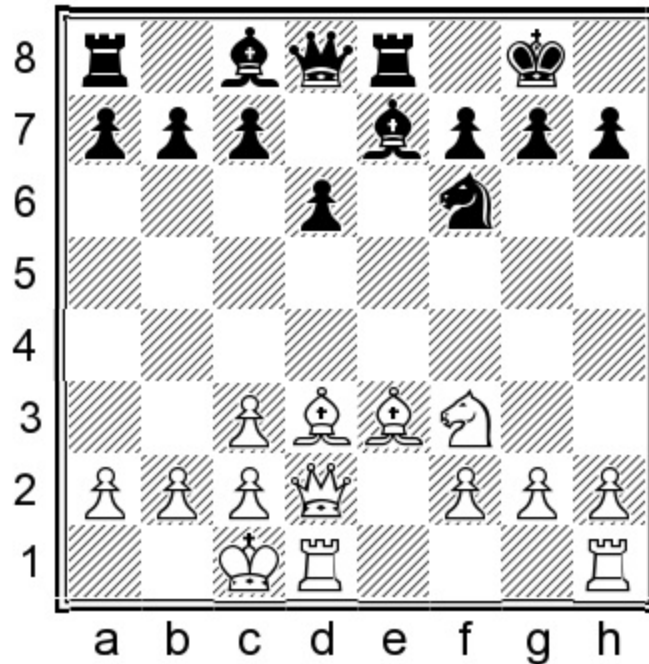
C) 10.h4 ♜e8 11.♙d4 An independent idea. [11.♙d3 transpose to the line analysed under note 11.h4 below.] 11...d5!N I think I can safely say that this is a novelty. 12.♙xf6 [12.h5 ♞e4!



Position after: 12...♞e4!

13. ♖f4 ♕d6 12... ♕xf6 13. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 14. ♗xd5 c6 15. ♗d2 ♕g4 16. ♕e2 ♖e4 17. h5 [17. ♕d1 ♕xf3 18. ♕xf3 ♖xh4 This is equal.] 17... ♗ae8 18. ♔d1 g6 19. hxg6 hxg6 20. a3 ♖g7 This is just a draw.

10... ♗e8



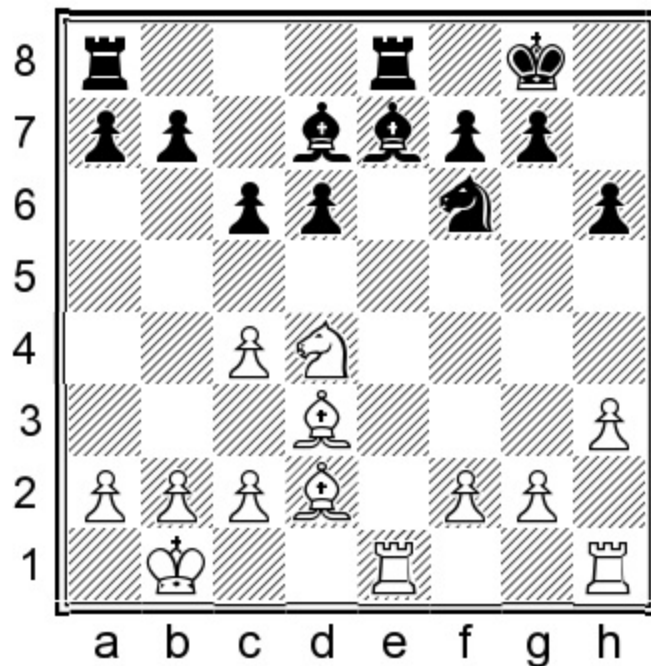
Position after: 10... ♗e8

The main set up. The bishop is forced to come to d3 sooner or later in order to defend the e4-square and to develop.

11. h4

In this file, we will analyse all approaches for White except for 11. ♖he1, which we will see in the next subchapter.

A) 11. ♗de1 c6 12. ♔b1 ♖a5 13. c4 ♖xd2 14. ♕xd2 ♕d7 15. h3 h6 16. ♘d4

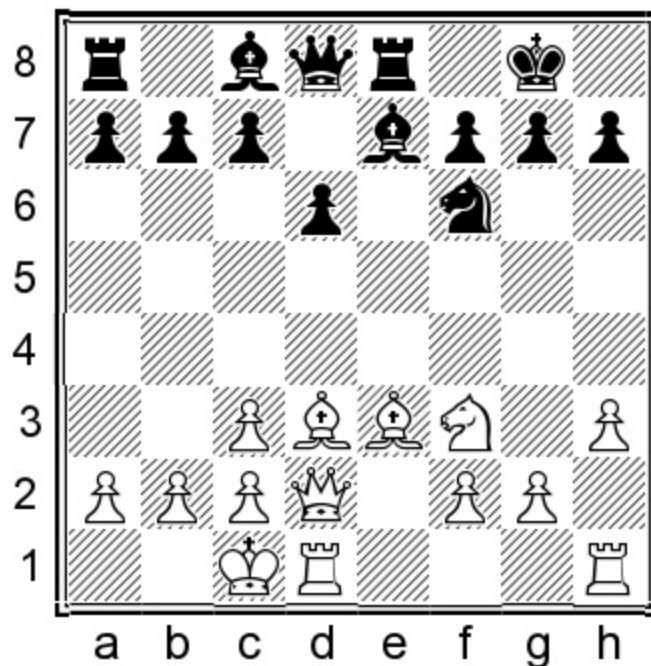


Position after: 16. ♖d4

16...d5 Black has nothing to worry about. ½ – ½ (77) Nikitenko, M (2529) – Ivanchuk, V (2609) Sharjah 2024.

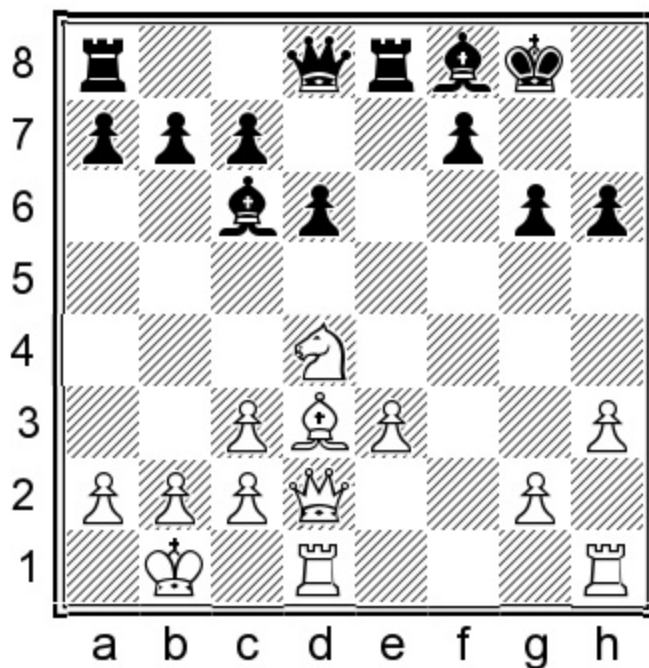
B) 11. ♗b1 d5 12. ♖he1 ♗g4 13. h3 ♗xf3 14. gxf3 transpose to the next file with 11. ♖he1 under 14. ♗b1

C) 11. h3



Position after: 11. h3

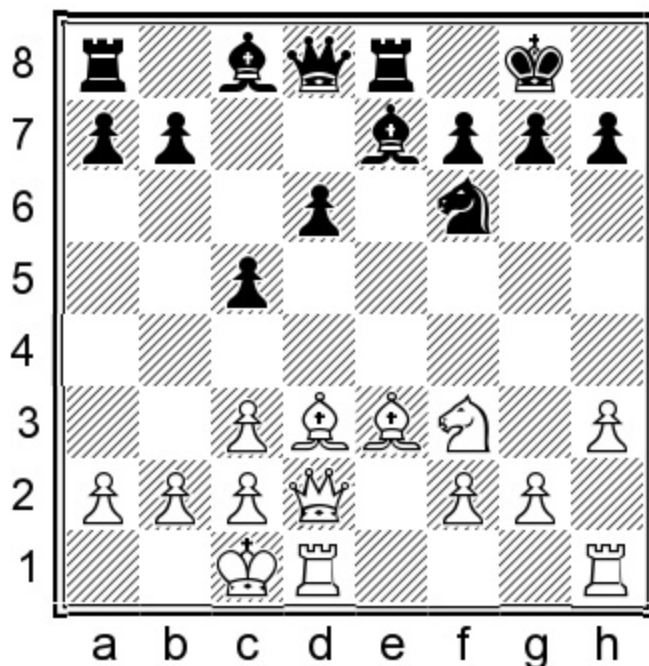
C1) A recent example from the Olympiad is also interesting: 11...♔d7 Now I found two ideas:
 12.♖he1 [12.♘g5 h6 13.♙e4 ♕c6 14.♘g3 ♘d5 15.♙f5 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 ♕f8 17.♗b1 g6 18.♘d4



Position after: 18.♘d4

18...♙g5 Again Black emerged from the opening with a good position. 1-0 (70) Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son (2633) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2023] 12...c5 13.♕g5 h6 14.♕xf6 ♕xf6 15.♕e4 ♗a5 16.a3 ♖ab8 17.♗f4 b5 18.♖xd6 b4 19.♖xf6 bxc3 Black is not in any danger. ½ – ½ (26) Erigaisi, A (2778) – Bu Xiangzhi (2693) Budapest 2024.

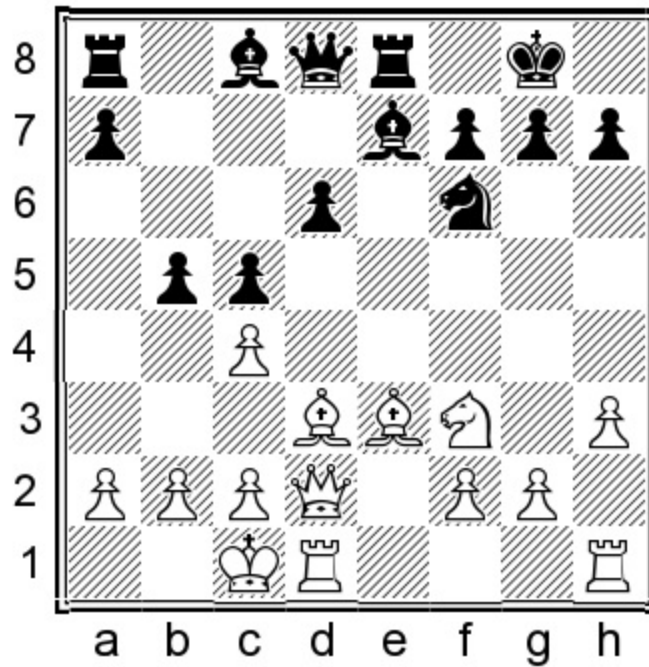
C2) 11...c5!



Position after: 11...c5!

White can focus on central play or push the g-pawn...

C2.1) 12.c4 b5!

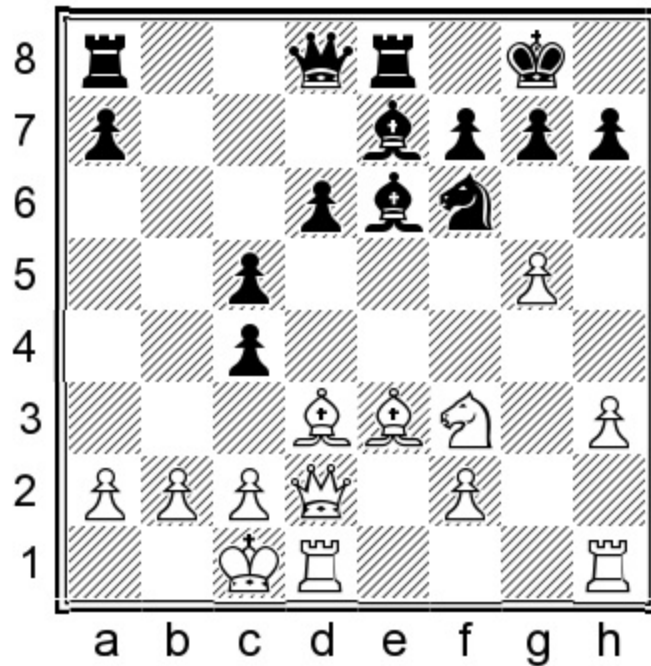


Position after: 12...b5!

13.cxb5 a6 14.a3 d5 Black is fast here with counterplay.

C2.2) 12.♖he1 ♕e6 13.♔b1 h6 14.g4 d5 15.♗b5 ♜f8 16.♗d3 ♞e4 17.♚e2 ♞a5 18.♗f4 ♗f6 19.♞e5 ♜ad8 20.c4 ♞g5 Black is doing OK. I find correspondence games very interesting, especially in this opening phase where you can see various interesting plans based on good tactics. 0-1 (55) Isea Fernandez, G (2024) – Arambulo Urdaneta, H (2026) ICCF 2017.

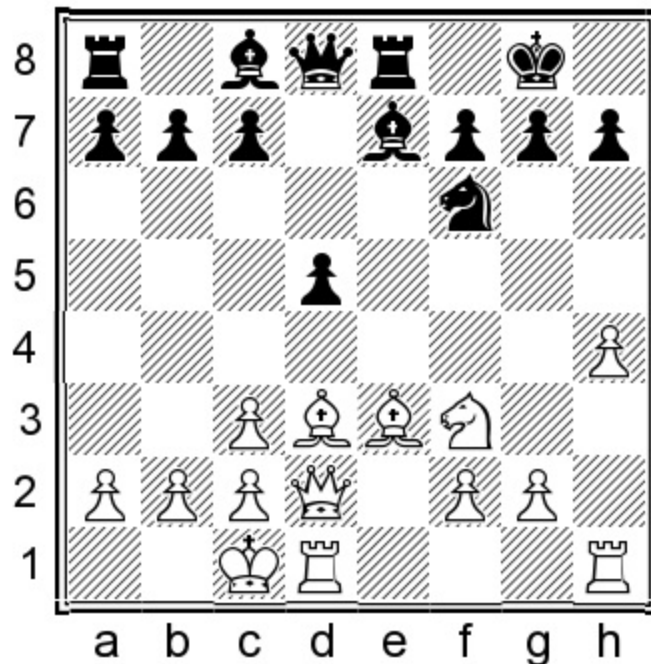
C2.3) 12.g4 ♕e6 13.g5 [13.c4 b5 14.g5 bxc4!



Position after: 14...bxc4!

15.gxf6 ♟xf6 16.♟f1 c3 17.bxc3 ♖a5 18.♛d3 ♟xc3 A quick win! 0-1 (18) Sadler, K (1810) – Hofer, R (2375) ICCF 2016] 13...♞d5 14.h4 ♞xe3 15.♛xe3 d5 16.♞e5 ♟d6 17.f4 ♛c7 18.♛g3 ♟ad8 19.♞he1 c4 20.♟f1 ♞h8 21.♛f3 f6 22.gxf6 gxf6 23.♞g4 ♛g7 24.♞e3 b5 25.♞b1 a5 Again a complex correspondence game in which both sides have chances. ½ – ½ (33) Pirs, M (2510) – Bondars, G (2423) ICCF 2017.

11...d5



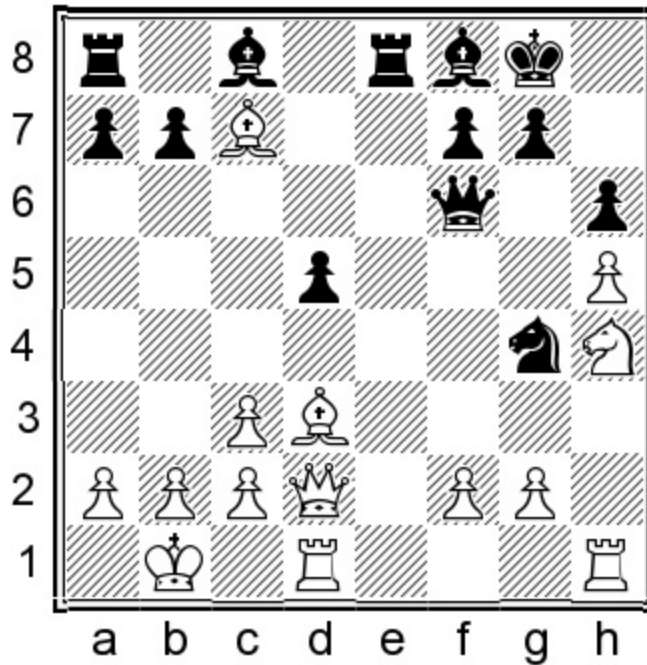
Position after: 11...d5

Going for knight to e4 ideas...

12. ♘g5

This is a sharp plan, aiming for f3-g4 with a possible piece sac. Other ideas are:

A) 12.h5 h6 13. ♖b1 [13. ♙xh6 ♜e4↗] 13... ♙f8 14. ♜h4 ♜g4 15. ♙f4 ♚f6 16. ♙xc7



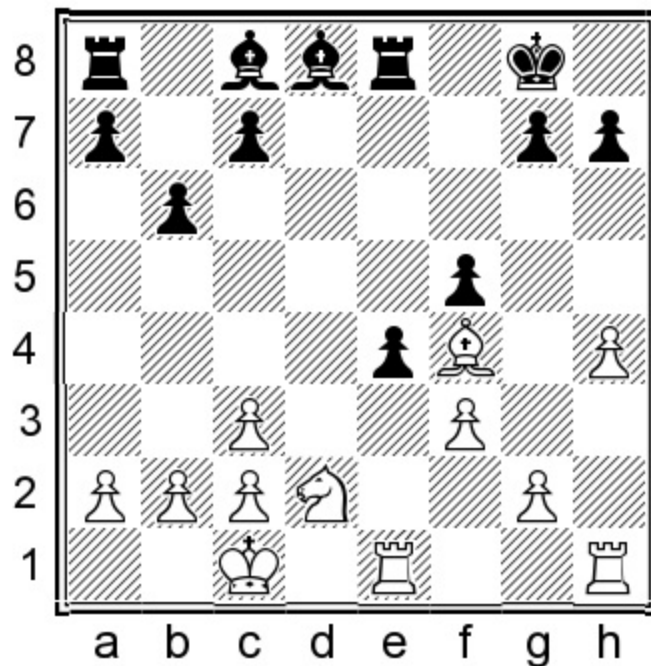
Position after: 16. ♙xc7

16... ♚xf2 Black is doing fine.

B) 12. ♙g5 ♙g4 13. ♖de1 ♙xf3 14. gxf3 ♚d6 15. ♖eg1 ♙f8 16. h5 ♖ad8 The position is unclear. We will see something similar a little later.

C) 12. ♖b1 ♙g4 13. ♖de1 ♙xf3 14. gxf3 ♙f8 This is also similar to what we encounter later.

D) 12. ♖de1 ♜e4 13. ♙xe4 dxe4 14. ♚xd8 ♙xd8 15. ♙f4 b6 16. ♜d2 f5 17. f3

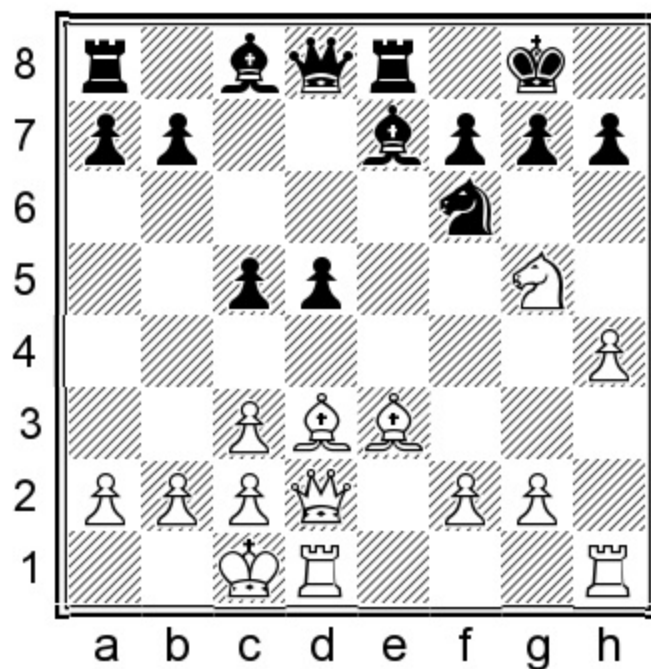


Position after: 17.f3

17...♙b7 This endgame is fine for Black. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (17) Standke, W (2496) – Dunlop, G (2511) ICCF 2020.

E) 12.c4 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖xd2+ 14.♙xd2 c6 15.a4 ♙f5 16.♘d4 ♙g6 17.f3 h5 18.♘e2 ♜ad8 19.♘f4 ♙f5 20.♞he1 g6 The position is equal. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (24) Pheby, I (2422) – Halliwell, T (2400) ICCF 2020.

12...c5!?

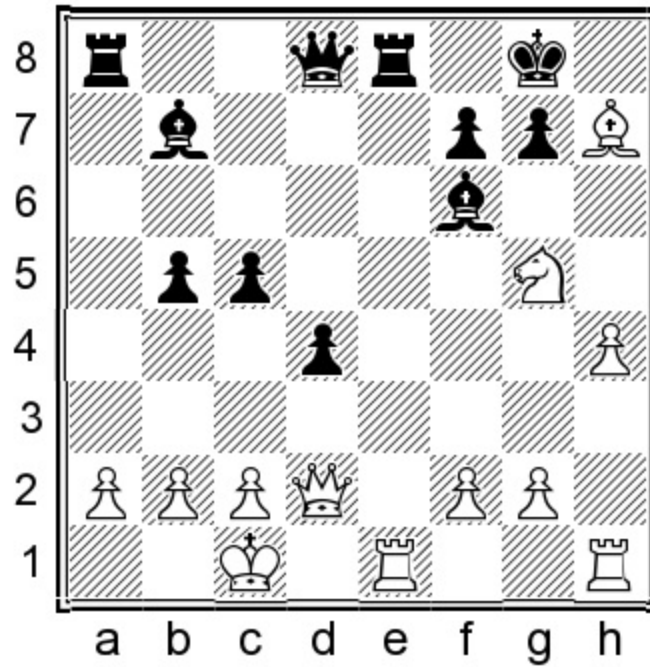


Position after: 12...c5!?

13.c4 d4 14.♙f4 b5 15.♖de1

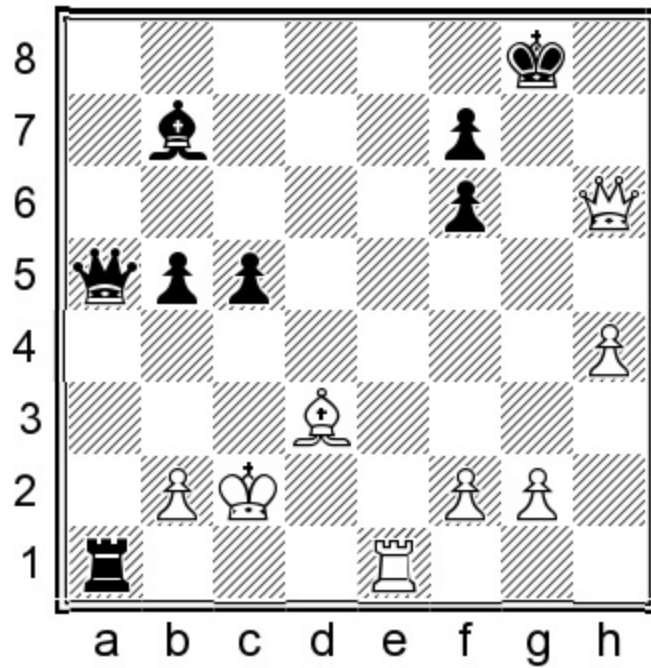
15...cxb5 ♙b7 16.f3 a6 17.b6 ♖xb6 18.g4 ♙d5+

15...♙b7 16.cxb5 a6 17.♙e5 axb5 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♙xh7+



Position after: 19. ♙xh7+

19...♔f8 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♖e1 ♖d8 22.♙d3 ♖xa2 23.♘h7+ ♔g8 24.♘xf6+ gxf6 25.♖h6 ♖a1+ 26.♔d2 ♖a5+ 27.c3 dxc3+ 28.♔c2 ♖a4+ 29.♔xc3 ♖a5+ 30.♔c2



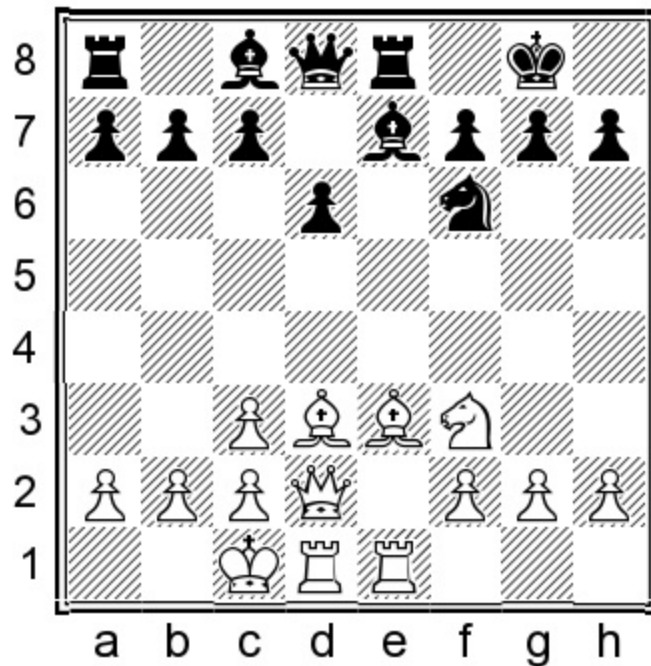
Position after: 30. ♔c2

30... ♚a4+

Leading to a fascinating draw.

d) 7. ♘e3 ♖d7 8. ♚d2 0-0 9. 0-0-0 ♖f6 10. ♘d3 ♜e8 11. ♞he1

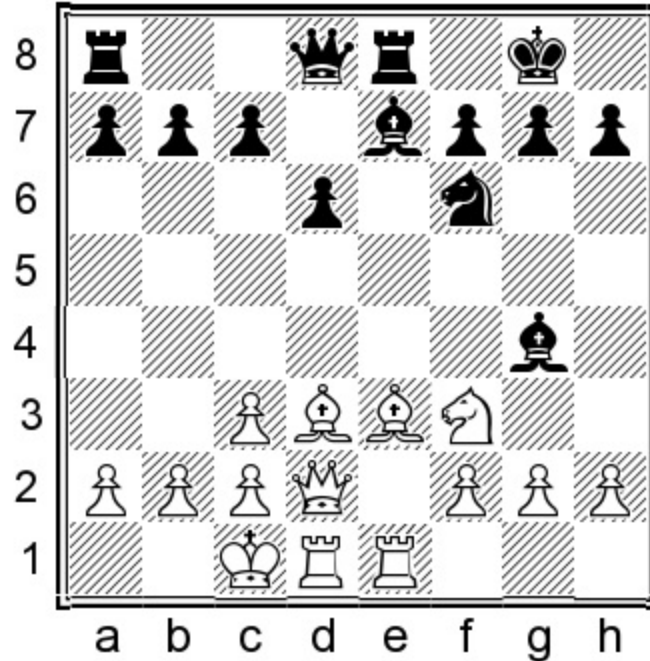
1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖f6 3. ♖xe5 d6 4. ♖f3 ♖xe4 5. ♖c3 ♖xc3 6. dxc3 ♘e7 7. ♘e3 ♖d7 8. ♚d2 0-0 9. 0-0-0 ♖f6 10. ♘d3 ♜e8 11. ♞he1



Position after: 11. ♖he1

We can consider this as a main tabiya position and it has indeed been tested among grandmasters.

11... ♗g4!

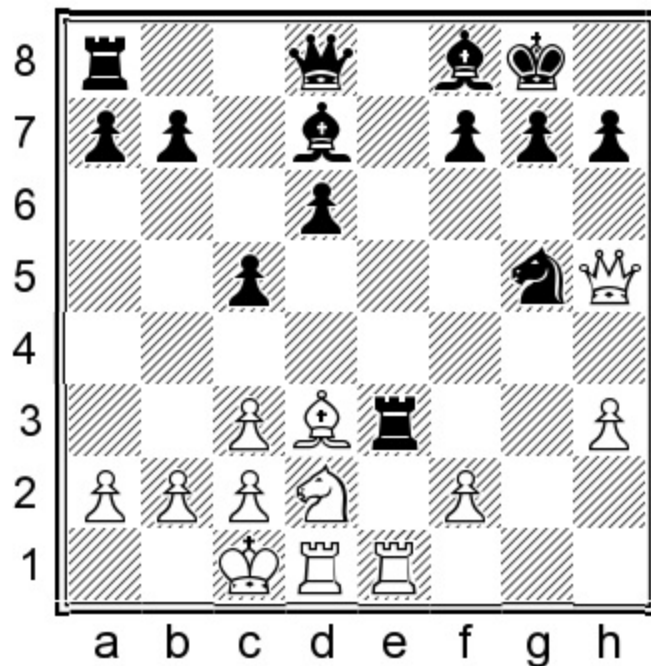


Position after: 11... ♗g4!

Now the main point is revealed; Black voluntarily gives up the bishop pair but his kingside is safe and he will continue to play in the centre.

12.h3

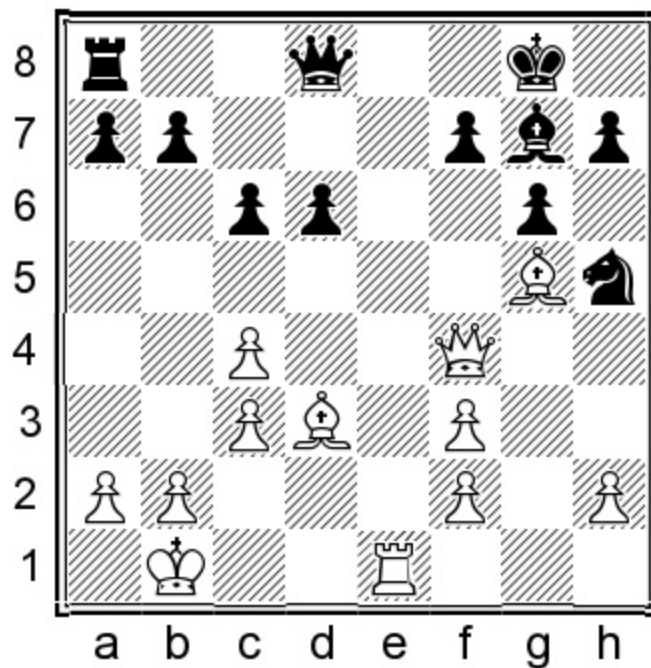
A) 12. ♖e2 ♗f8 13.h3 ♗d7 14.g4 c5 15.g5 ♘e4 16. ♘d2 ♘xg5 17. ♖h5 ♖xe3!



Position after: 17... Rxe3!

18. Rxe3 g6 19. Wh4 Ne6 20. Wxd8 Rxd8 Black has nice compensation.

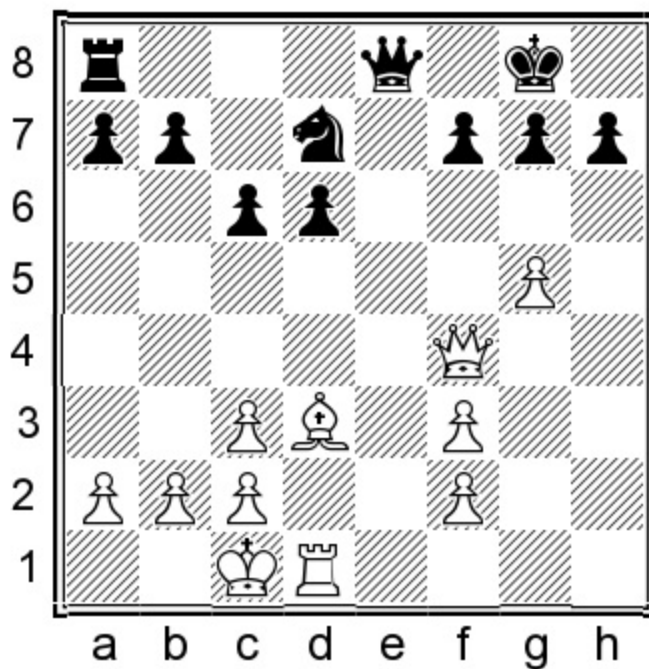
B) 12. c4 g6 13. Qb1 Rf8 14. Qg5 Rxe1 15. Rxe1 Qxf3 16. gxf3 Qg7 17. Wf4 c6 18. c3 Nh5



Position after: 18... Nh5

19. We3 Qf6 20. f4 Wb6 The position is balanced; both sides have chances. 1/2-1/2 (37) Magalhães, L (2517) – Dunlop, G (2537) ICCF 2019.

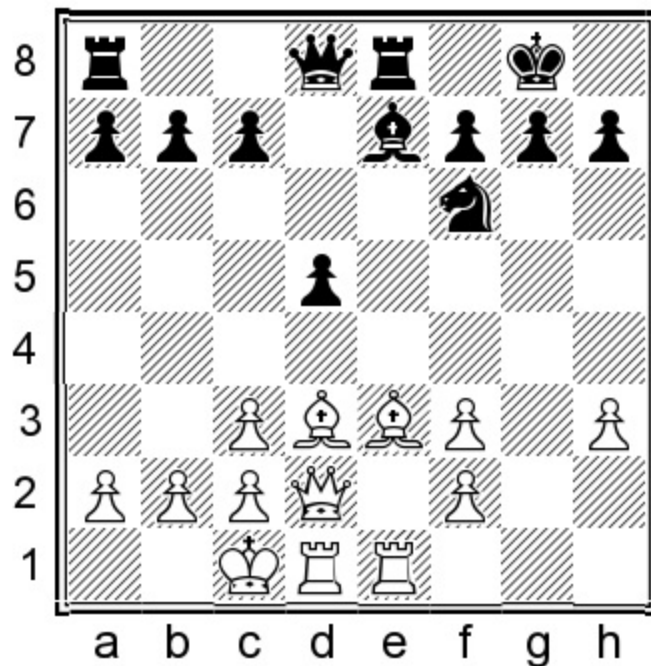
C) 12.♙g5 ♘d7 [Another recent idea is: 12...♘h5 13.h4 ♗d7 14.♙xe7 ♜xe7 15.♞xe7 ♗xe7 16.♞e1 ♗f6 17.♙e4 c6 18.c4 h6 19.♘h2 ♙e6 20.g3 ♗d8 21.♙d3 d5 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (46) Suleymanli, A (2609) – Gelfand, B (2660) Baku 2023] 13.h4 c6 14.♗f4 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♙xg5 16.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 17.hxg5



Position after: 17.hxg5

17...♗e7 18.♗g3 ♞e8 19.f4 g6 20.f5 ♘e5 Black is OK here, controlling the important open e-file. ½-½ (46) Wunderlich, H (2572) – Klügel, J (2527) ICCF 2022.

12...♙xf3 13.gxf3 d5!



Position after: 13...d5!

The idea is to place the queen on d6.

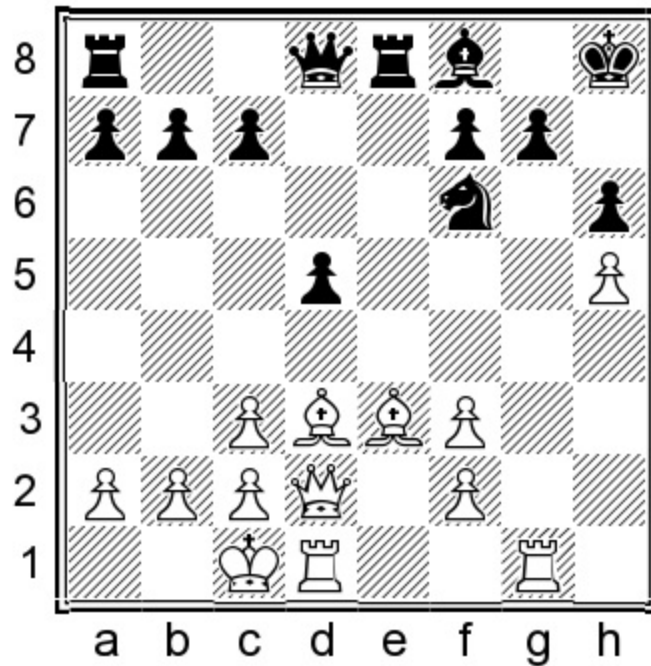
14. ♔b1

A sensible choice and although there are other ideas they will mainly all lead to similar positions:

A) 14. ♕d4 c5 15. ♕e5 ♕d6 16. f4 ♖c7 Black is OK.

B) 14. c4 dxc4 15. ♕xc4 ♖xd2+ 16. ♔xd2 ♕d6 This is yet another decent endgame.

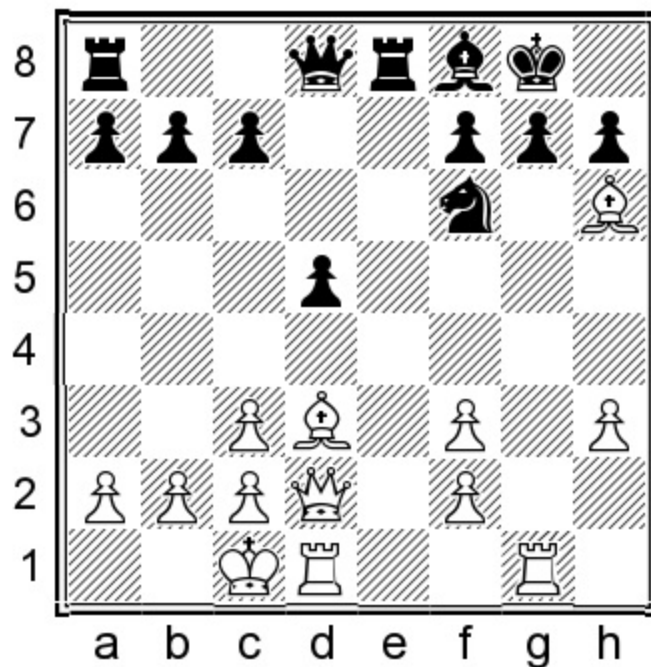
C) 14. h4 ♕f8 15. ♖g1 ♔h8 16. h5 h6



Position after: 16...h6

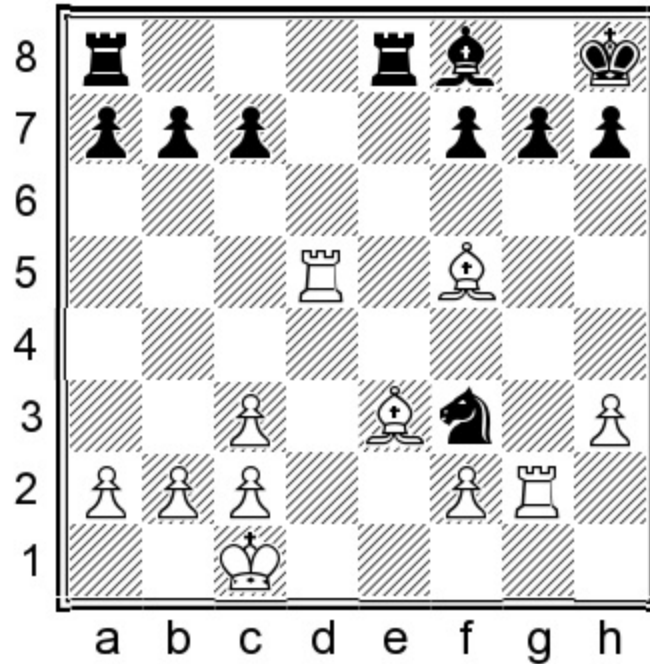
17.♖g2 [17.c4 c5 18.♔b1 d4 19.♙f4 ♜b6 20.♞g2 ♞e6 21.♞dg1 ♞ae8 22.a3 ♛c6] 17...♞e5 18.f4 [18.♙d4 ♞xh5 19.♞dg1 c5⇝] 18...♞xh5 19.♙d4 ♛d6 20.♙e5 ♞xe5 21.fxe5 ♛xe5 This is fine for Black. The setup with the knight on f6 and bishop on f8 is almost impossible to attack in this pawn formation. This is the entire point of 11...♙g4. 0-1 (51) Aronian, L (2742) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2779) chess.com 2023.

D) 14.♞g1 ♙f8 15.♙h6!? This was my game as Black in Bratislava 2023 with Simona Bohnickova. She tried to create an attack...



Position after: 15. ♔h6!?

15...♖h8 16.♙g5 ♗d6 17.♞g2 ♜d7! 18.♙f5 ♞e5 19.♝xd5 [19.♞f4? h6! and Black is winning. This actually happened in the game.] 19...♝xd5 20.♞xd5 ♞xf3 21.♙e3



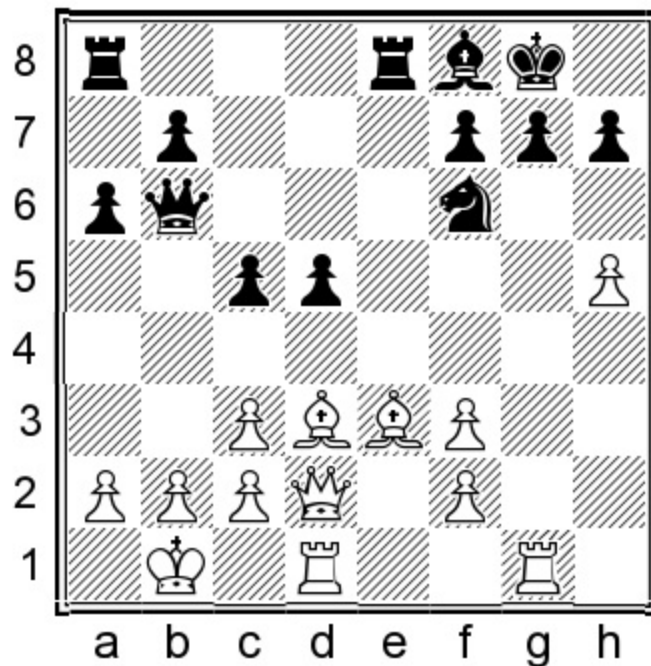
Position after: 21. ♙e3

21...c6! gives Black an initiative although it is not at all that easy.

14...♙f8

Logical but not the only idea.

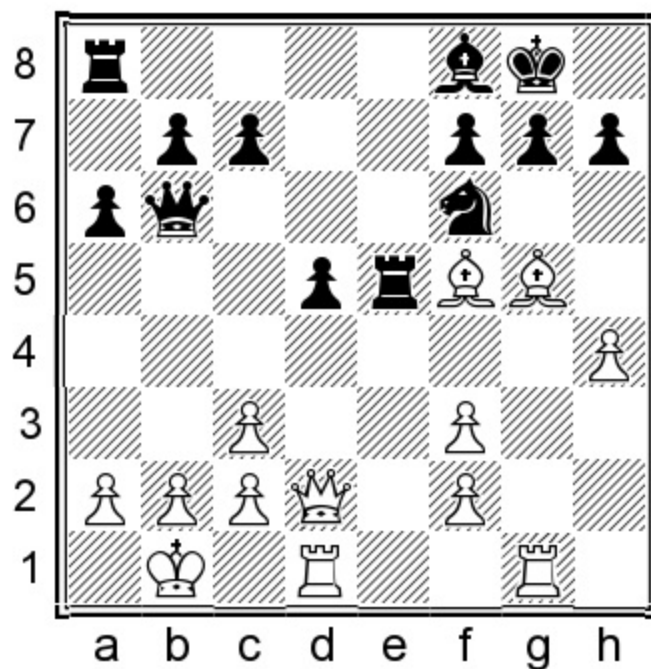
Another interesting plan is to go for a pawn expansion on the queenside: 14...a6 15.h4 c5 16.♞g1 ♗b6 17.h5 ♙f8 Now two interesting ideas:



Position after: 17...♙f8

18.♖g5 [18.h6 g6 19.♙f1 ♖ad8 20.♙g2 ♗c6 21.♖ge1 b5 22.♙g5 ♖d6 23.♖xe8 ♘xe8 24.f4 ♗d7 25.♗e2 ♘c7 It seems that there is nothing wrong with this plan for Black. ½ – ½ (34) Schilcher, A (2535) – Turgut, T (2617) ICCF 2015] 18...♖e6 19.♖dg1 ♖ae8 20.c4 d4 21.♙f4 ♗c6 22.♗d1 b5 23.a3 ♘h8 24.♙d2 h6 25.♖5g3 b4 Black is better. ½ – ½ (37) Borstnik, A (2612) – Blitsko, B (2504) ICCF 2020.

15.♖g1 ♗d6 16.h4 a6 17.♙f4 ♗b6 18.♙g5 ♖e6 19.♙f5 ♖e5 20.♙d3 ♖e6 21.♙f5 ♖e5



Position after: 21...♖e5

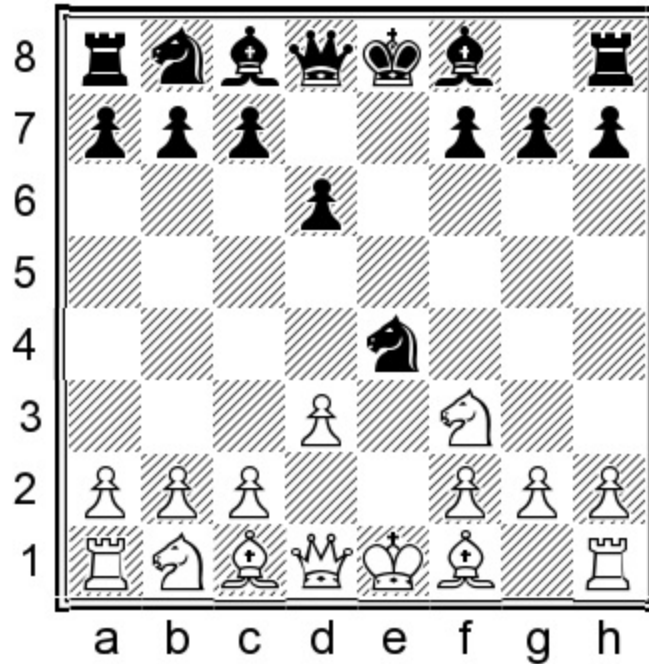
22.♗d3

Repetition of moves tells us that Black is doing fine. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (22) Santoso, L (2200) – Junge, W (2368)
ICCF 2020.

Chapter 4

5.d3

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 4 – 5.d3

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d3 ♗f6 6.d4 d5 7.♙d3 ♙d6 8.0-0 0-0

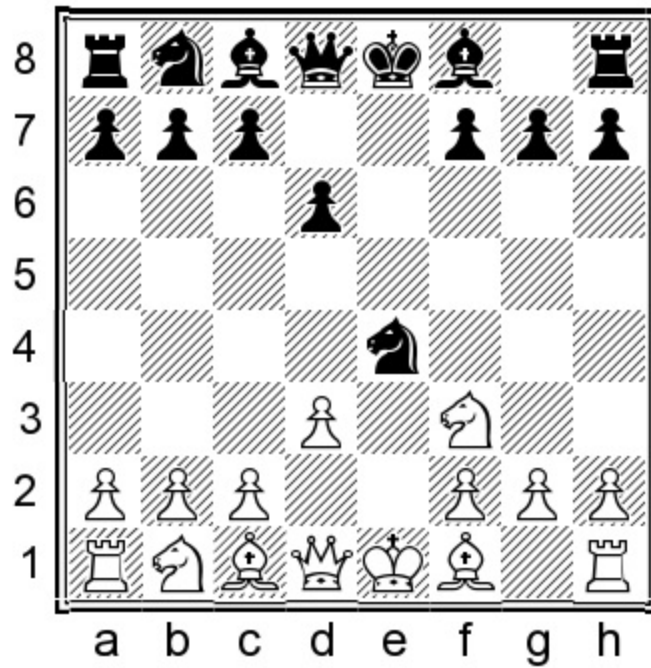
a) 9.h3

b) 9.♙g5 ♙g4 10.♗bd2 ♗bd7 11.h3

c) 9.♙g5 ♙g4 10.♗bd2 ♗bd7 11.c4

a) 9.h3

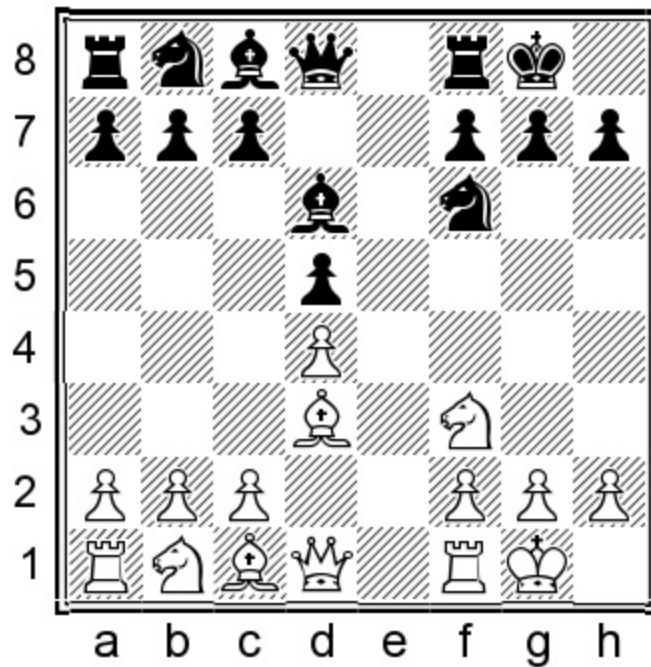
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d3



Position after: 5.d3

A solid line but in general nothing that should worry Black in terms of a very sharp game. Instead, Black has to focus on positional details, such as how to conduct this position with only one open file.

5...♘f6 6.d4 d5 7.♙d3 ♗d6 8.0-0 0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

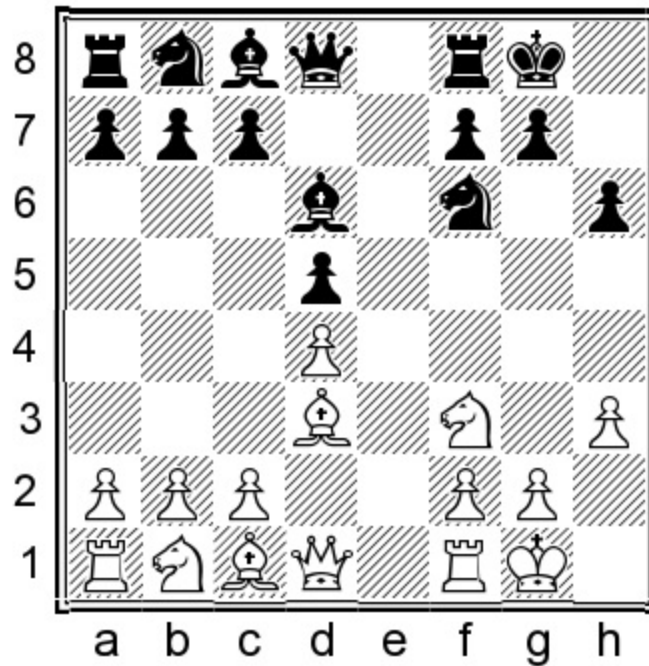
This is the starting position of the line. It is White to move in this symmetrical position but that is not

so relevant, because Black is very solid.

9.h3

Preventing the bishop from landing on the good g4-square. In the next file we will deal with the main choice, 9.♙g5

9...h6

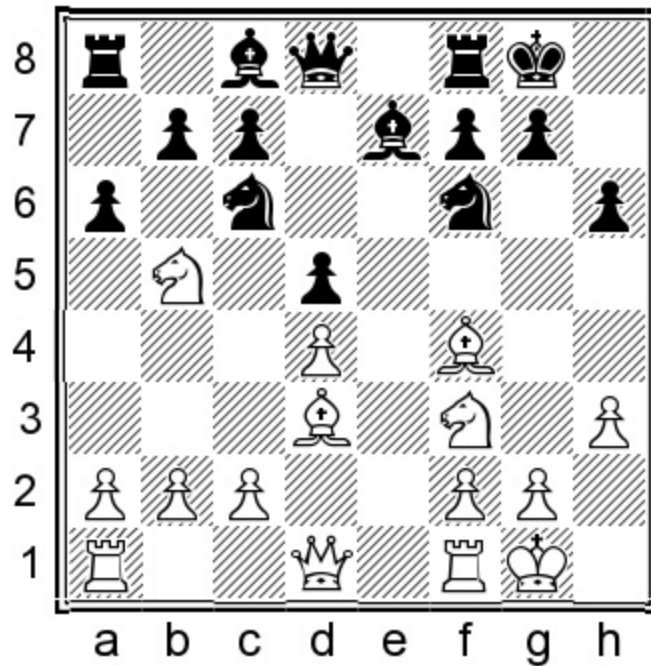


Position after: 9...h6

10.c4

Direct play, with transposition to an isolated queen pawn (IQP) type of game. There are a few other interesting ideas:

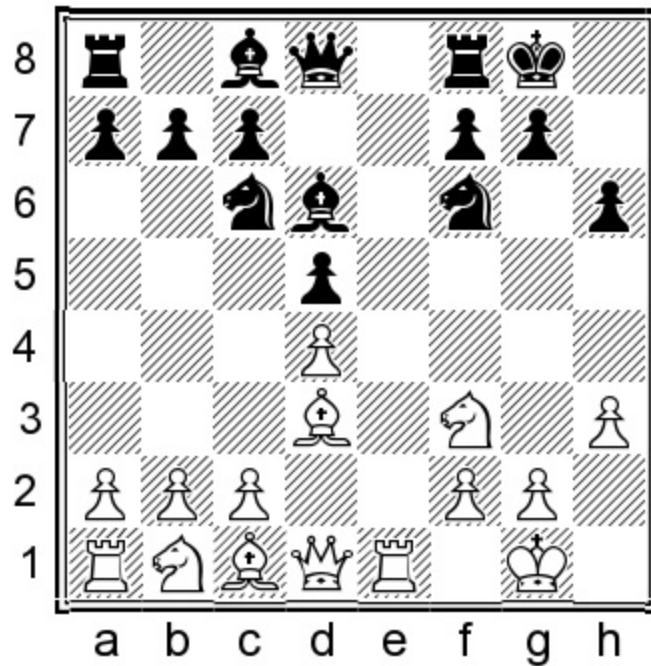
A) 10.♘c3 ♘c6 The entire system is about the e5-square so, Black, in my opinion, should develop as quickly as possible. 11.♘b5 This is critical. [11.a3 ♘e7 12.♘b5 ♙f5 13.♘xd6 ♚xd6 14.♘e5 ♜fe8 15.c3 ♘d7 16.♙f4 ♘xe5 17.♙xe5 ♚d7 18.a4 ♙xd3 19.♚xd3 ♜ad8 This is fine for Black. ½ – ½ (30) Maia, V (2332) – Matozo, P (2272) ICCF 2019] 11...♙e7 12.♙f4 a6!



Position after: 12...a6!

13.♘c3 ♘b4 14.♞e1 ♘xd3 15.♚xd3 ♞e8 16.♙g3 ♙e6 17.♙h4 c6 18.♞e3 a5 19.b3 b5 20.♘e2 ♘e4 21.♙xe7 ♚xe7 Black's fine strategy has secured an equal game. ½-½ (32) Gutiérrez Dopino, J (2337) – Castillo Dieguez, R (2341) ICCF 2021.

B) 10.♞e1 ♘c6

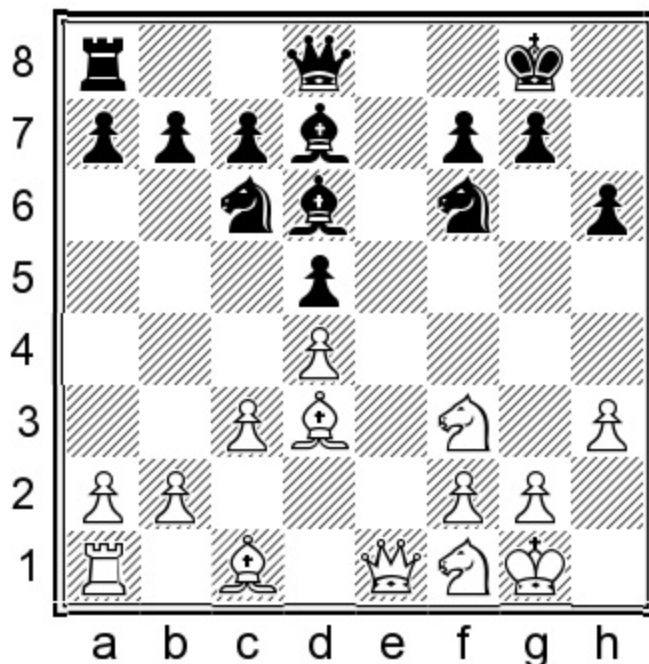


Position after: 10...♘c6

Alternatives lead to interesting positions:

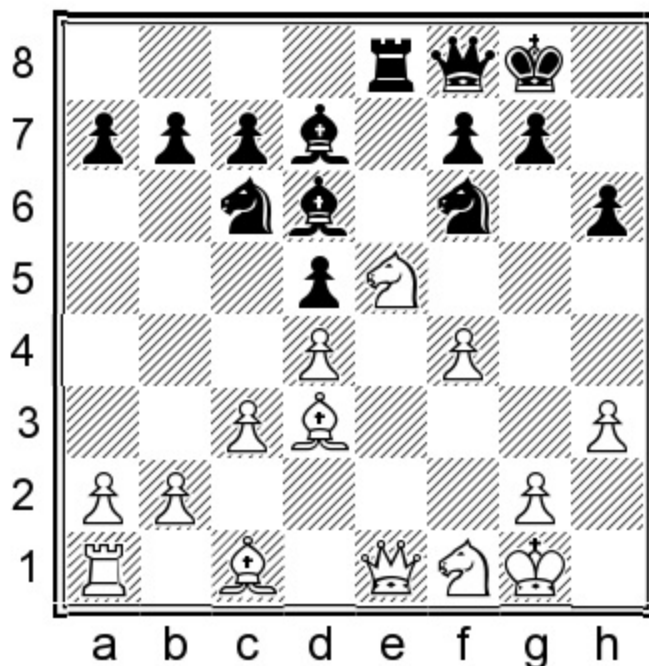
B1) 11.a3 a6 12.♘c3 ♕d7 13.♕d2 ♖c8 14.♞e2 ♜e8 15.♞g3 ♝xe1+ 16.♚xe1 ♘xg3 17.fxg3 ♕f5 18.g4 ♕xd3 19.cxd3 ♚d7 20.♚f2 ♜e8 21.♝f1 An unusual pawn structure; the position is balanced. ½ – ½ (21) Egelstaff, R (2343) – Adams, J (2387) ICCF 2018.

B2) 11.c3 ♜e8 12.♞bd2 ♕d7 13.♞f1 ♝xe1 14.♚xe1



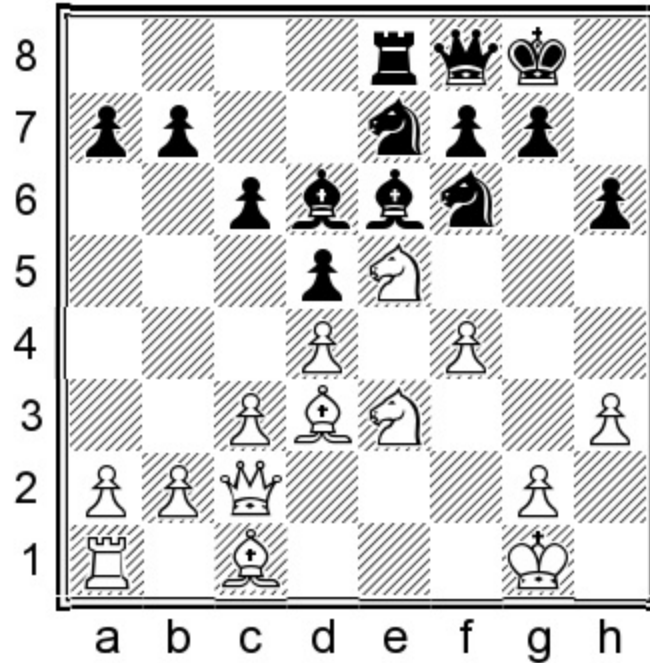
Position after: 14.♚xe1

B2.1) In the game Black also had good chances... 14...♚f8 15.♞e3 [A complex game arises from: 15.♞e5 ♜e8 16.f4



Position after: 16.f4

This is a plan in any case... 16...♙c8 17.g4 ♘e4!↗] 15...♖e8 16.♚d1 ♘e7 17.♚c2 c6 18.♘e5 As I said, it is all about handling a piece on e5... 18...♙e6! [18...♙xe5?! 19.dxe5 ♘h5 20.♘g4↑ 1-0 (46) Antipov, M (2602) – Kramnik, V (2753) chess.com 2024] 19.f4

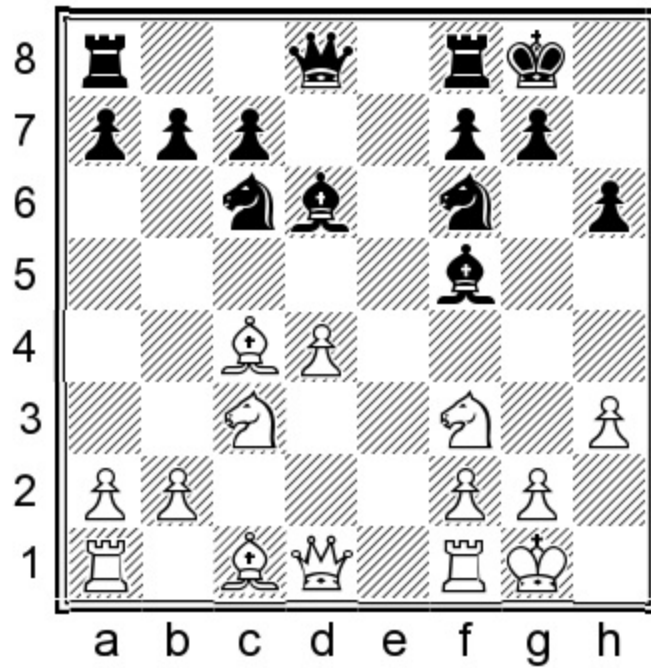


Position after: 19.f4

19...♘e4!↗

B2.2) 14...♘e7! 15.♘g3 ♙xg3 16.fxg3 ♙f5 Black is fine here.

10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♘c6 12.♘c3 ♙f5

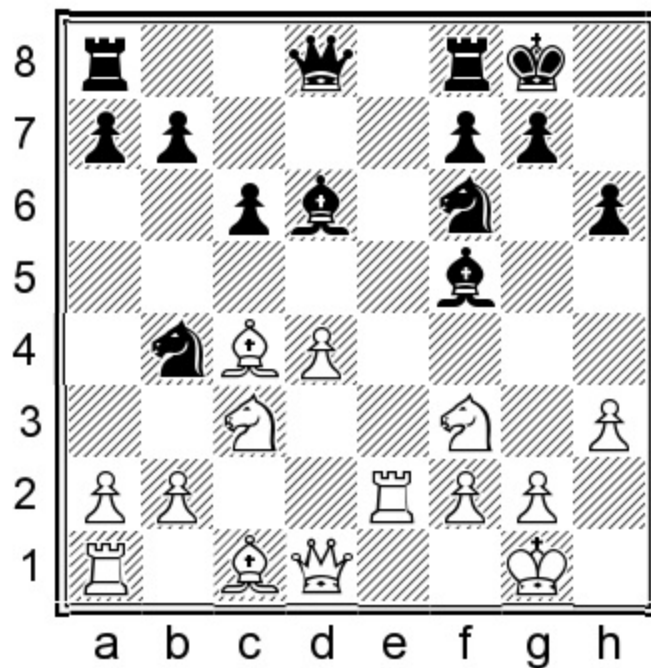


Position after: 12...♙f5

13.♞e1

13.a3 a6 14.♞e1 ♞e8 15.♙e3 ♚d7 16.♙f1 ♞ad8 17.♞c1 ♘e4 18.♚a4 ♘xc3 19.bxc3 ♘e5 20.♚xd7 ♘xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♙xd7 Black is better in this endgame. 0-1 (54) Martinez Alcantara, J (2612) – Kramnik, V (2753) Madrid 2024.

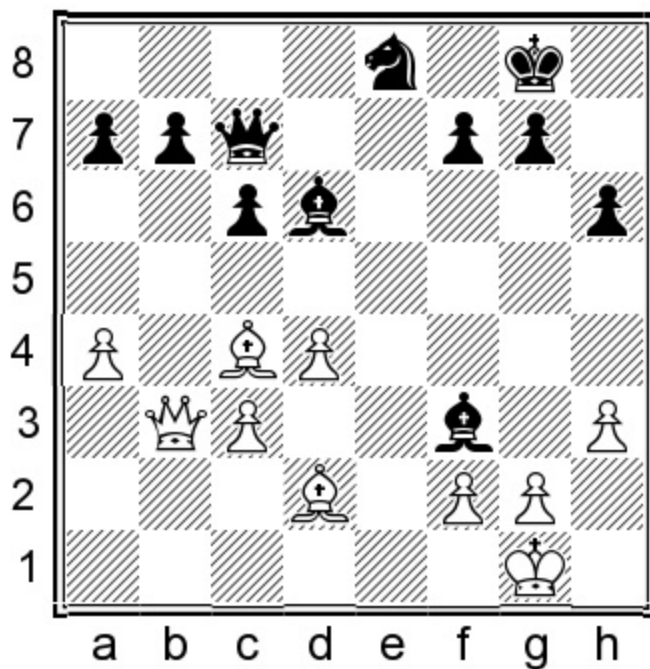
13...♘b4 14.♞e2 c6



Position after: 14...c6

15.♘e5

15.a3 ♘bd5 16.♙d2 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♚c7 18.a4 ♜ae8 19.♞xe8 ♞xe8 20.♝b3 ♙e4 21.♞e1 ♙xf3
22.♞xe8+ ♘xe8



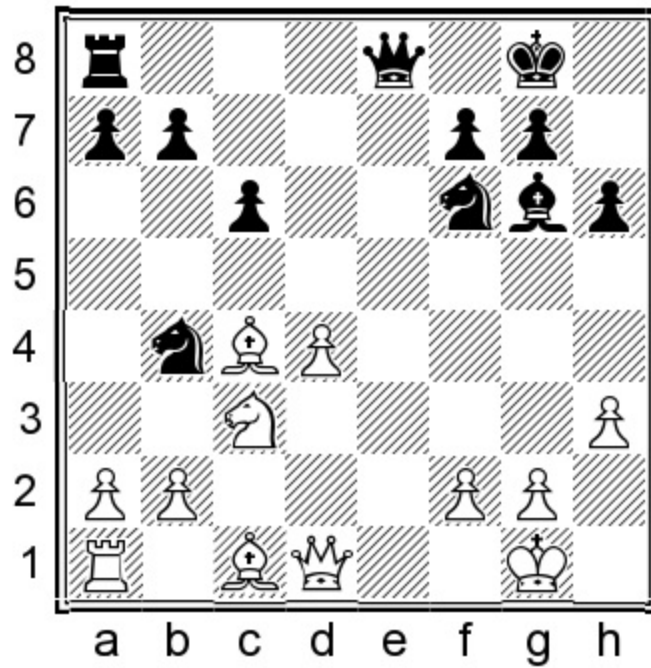
Position after: 22...♘xe8

23.gxf3 ♚d7 24.♙g2 ♘f6 Black has a fine position. ½ – ½ (39) Totsky, L (2481) – Socko, B (2559) Pardubice 2001.

15...♙xe5 16.♞xe5

16.dxe5 ♚xd1+ 17.♘xd1 ♘fd5 18.♘e3 ♘xe3 19.♙xe3 ♞fd8 gives Black a good endgame.

16...♙g6 17.♞e2 ♞e8 18.♞xe8+ ♚xe8



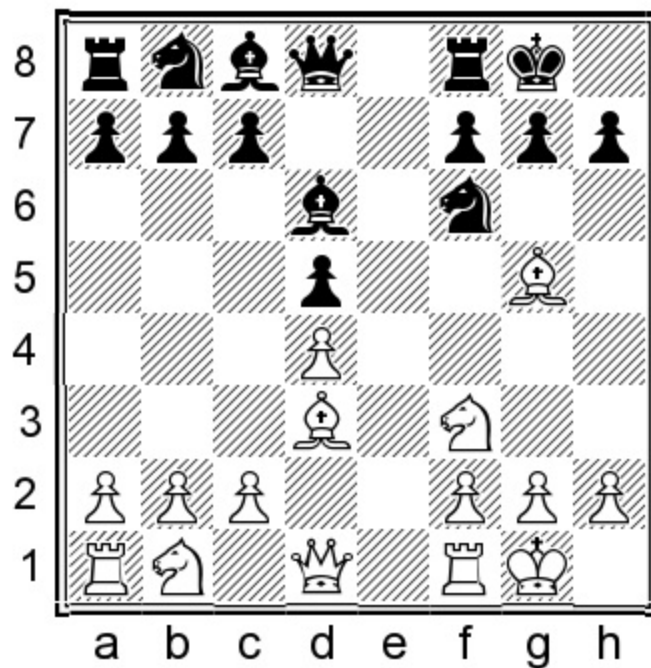
Position after: 18... ♖xe8

19. ♘f4 ♜d8 20. ♙c7 ♜d7 21. ♙e5 ♜d8 22. ♝c1 ♞bd5

The position is equal. 0-1 (30) Sindarov, J (2674) – Xiong, J (2646) chess.com INT 2024.

b) 9. ♙g5 ♙g4 10. ♞bd2 ♞bd7 11. h3

1. e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞f6 3. ♞xe5 d6 4. ♞f3 ♞xe4 5. d3 ♞f6 6. d4 d5 7. ♙d3 ♙d6 8. 0-0 0-0 9. ♙g5



Position after: 9. ♖g5

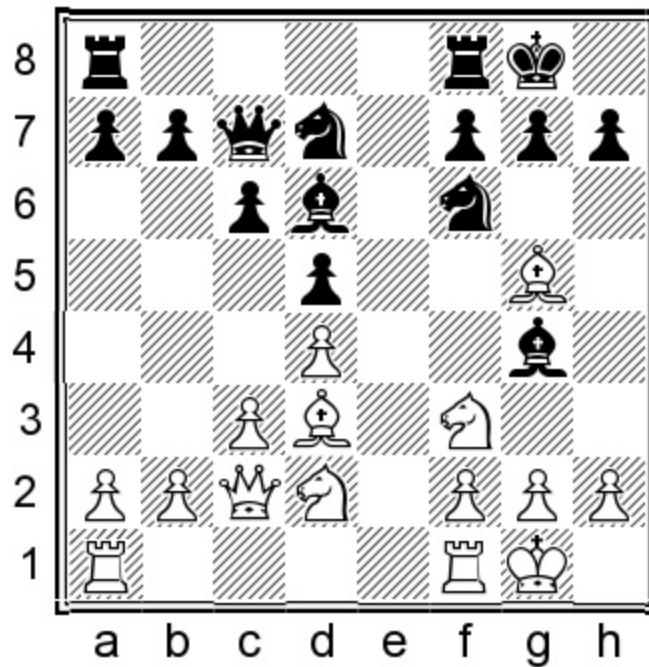
A direct idea and the most popular move.

9... ♗g4 10. ♘bd2 ♘bd7

White has a couple of choices how to continue from here. In this subchapter we will focus on less-played ideas (or at least less popular today). In the next file we will deal with 11.c4

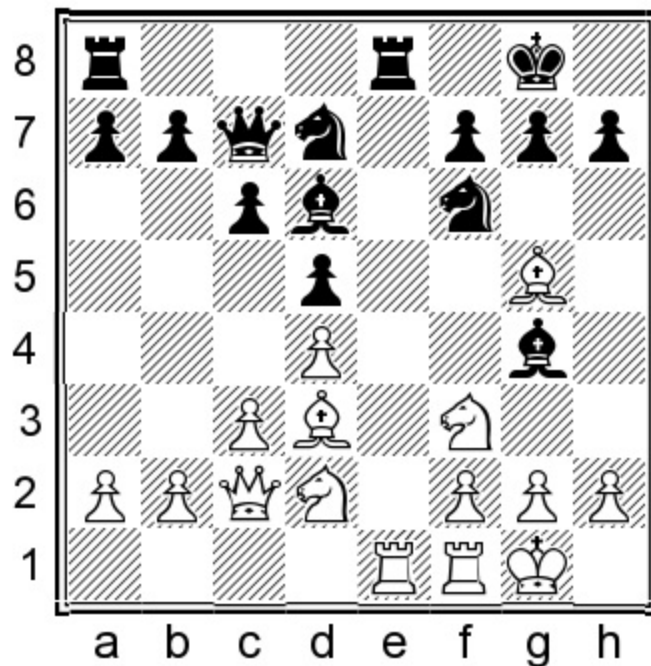
11.h3

Alternatively: 11.c3 c6 12. ♖c2 ♖c7



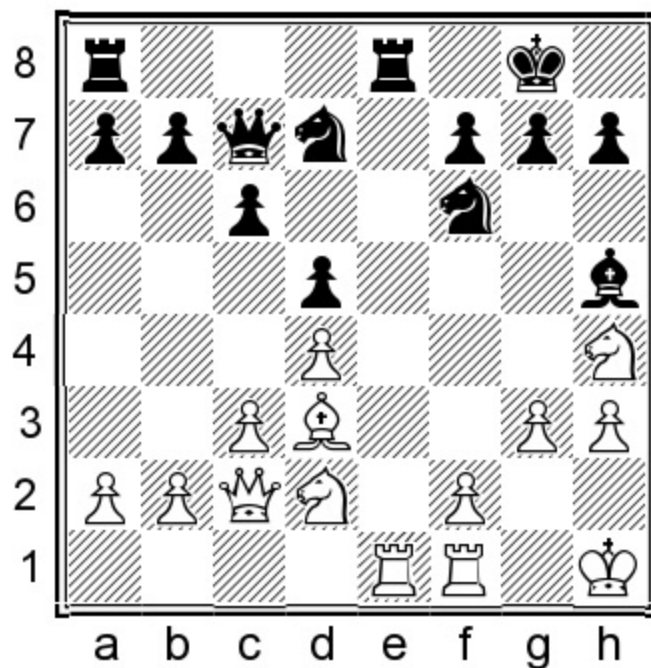
Position after: 12... ♖c7

13. ♖ae1 [13. ♖fe1 ♗h5 14. ♗h4 h6 15. ♗g3 ♗xg3 16. hxg3 c5=] 13... ♖fe8 Either rook can come here but I prefer this one because the knight or bishop can sometimes use the f8-square. Also, there is ...c5 in the air and in that case, it is better to keep rooks flexible.



Position after: 13... Rfe8

14. h3 Qh5 15. Nh4 An old idea, played more than one hundred years ago! 15... Qh2+ 16. Kh1 Qf4
17. Qxf4 Rxf4 18. g3 Rc7



Position after: 18... Rc7

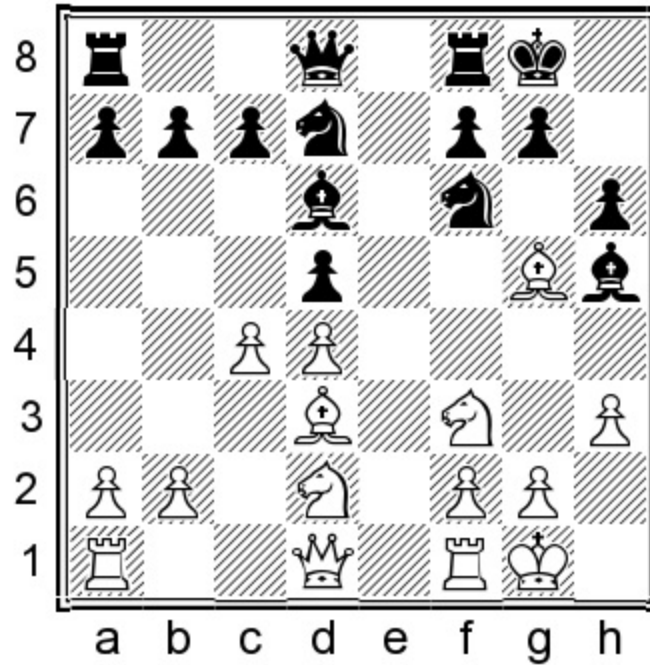
19. Kg2 [More aggressive is... 19. f4 c5 20. Rb1 Qg6 though Black is fine.] 19... a6 20. Rb1 c5 21. Nd3
Qxf3+ 22. Nxf3 g6 Black is OK.

11...♙h5 12.c4

A very interesting attempt...

12...h6

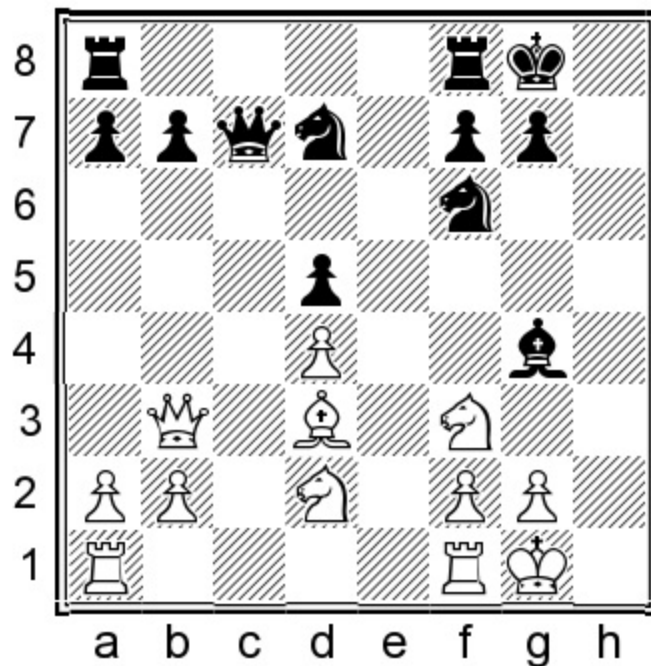
Now White has a choice:



Position after: 12...h6

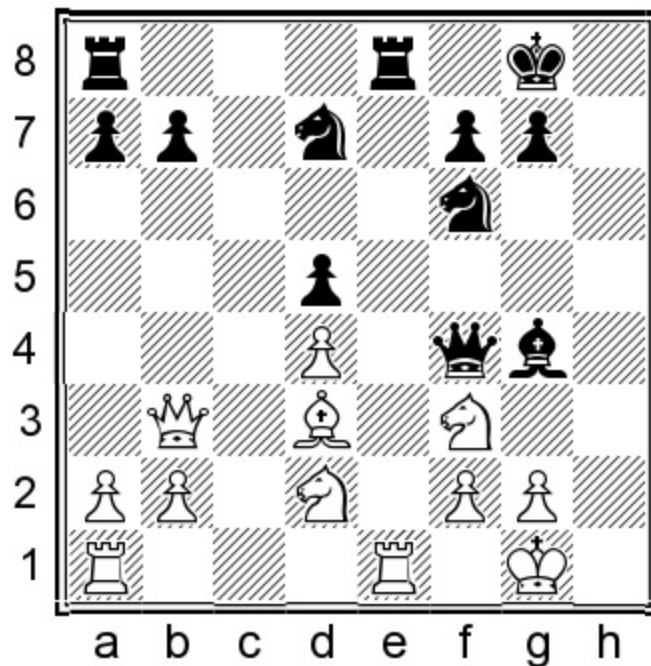
13.♙xf6

A) 13.c5 hxg5 14.cxd6 g4 15.hxg4 ♙xg4 16.dxc7 ♚xc7 17.♚b3



Position after: 17. ♖b3

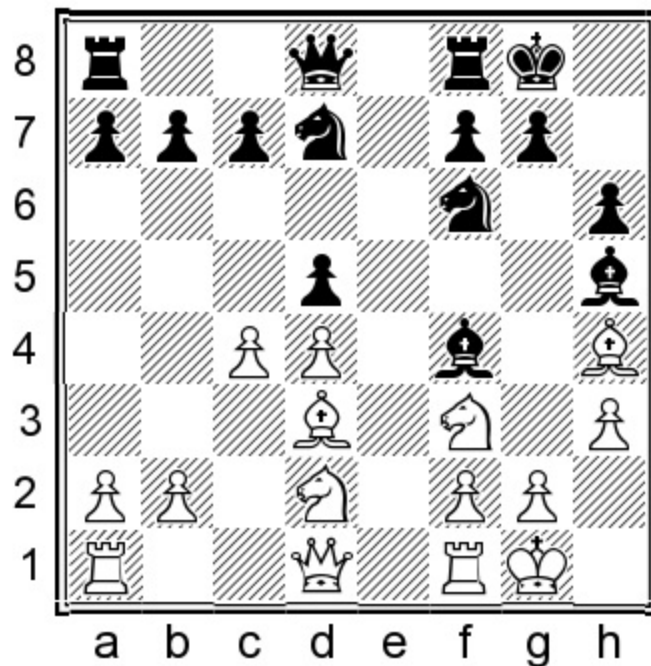
17... ♗f4!? [17... ♜ac8 18.g3 ♜fe8 19.♔g2 ♗d6 20.♞h1 g6 21.♞ae1 ♞xe1 22.♞xe1 b6= 1-0 (48)
 Gutovskiy, M – Bennewitz, B (1973) ICCF email 2009] 18. ♜fe1 ♜fe8



Position after: 18... ♜fe8

This is fine for Black. For example... 19. ♗xb7 g6! 20.g3 ♗h6 21.♙f1 ♔g7 22.♙g2 ♙h3 23.♙xh3 ♗xh3 24.♘g5 ♗f5 25.♘df3 ♘e4 26.♗c7 ♘b6 It is Black who is creating pressure.

B) 13. ♙h4 ♙f4



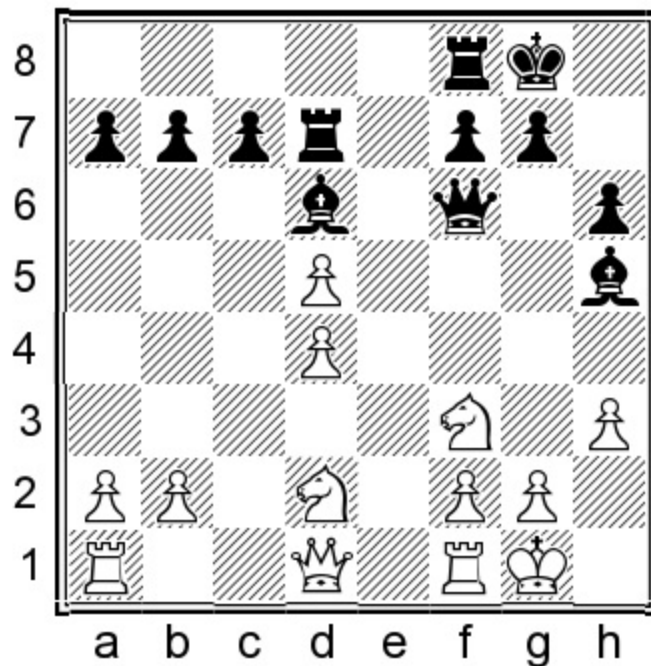
Position after: 13...♙f4

B1) 14.cxd5 ♙xd2 15.♖xd2 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♘b6 17.♖ac1 ♘bxd5 18.♖fe1 ♖d7 Two bishops versus two knights in this position gives us an equal but imbalanced game.

B2) 14.g4 ♙g6 15.♙xg6 fxg6 16.♖c2 g5 17.♙g3 ♙xg3 18.fxg3 ♖e7 19.♖fe1 ♖d6 20.♙g2 ♖ae8 with complications that are not unfavourable for Black. ½ – ½ (39) Kobryn, W – Pluemmer, R LSS 2018.

B3) 14.♖e1 ♙xd2 15.♖xd2 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♘b6 18.♙b3 ♖d6 19.♙g3 ♖d7 20.♙h2 ♘h7 The idea is to provoke f4. 21.♖e5 c6 22.f4 ♘f6 23.♖g1 ♘bd5 24.♖d3 ♙h8 25.a3 a5 26.♖ge1 a4 27.♙a2 ♖fe8 28.♖e2 ♖ed8 Black is solid; we can say that it is a balanced game. ½ – ½ (26) Mager, F (2221) – Emrich, E (2339) ICCF 2017.

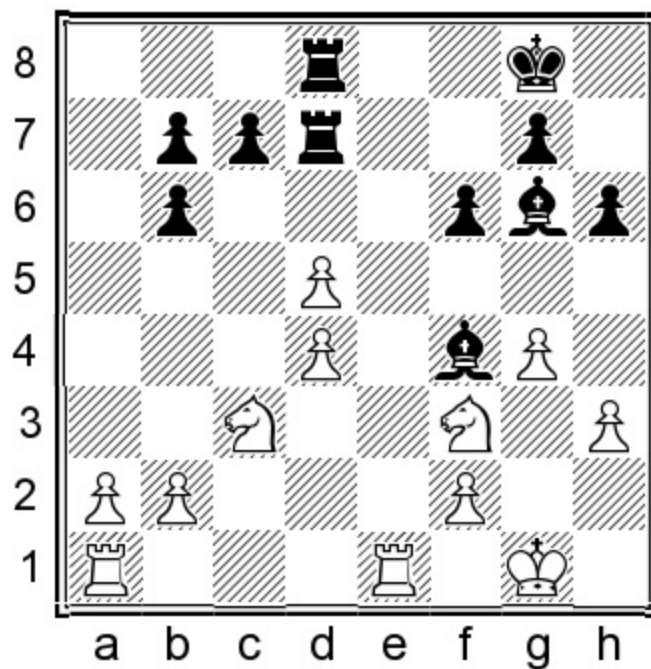
13...♖xf6 14.cxd5 ♖ae8 15.♙b5 ♖d8 16.♙xd7 ♖xd7



Position after: 16...Rxd7

17. ♖b3

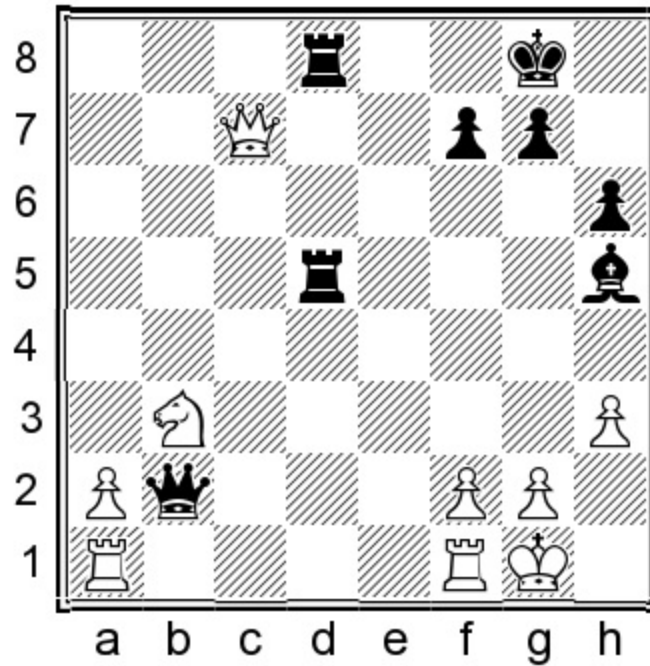
17. ♖e1 ♜f4 18. ♘e4 ♜b6 19. g4 ♜g6 20. ♜b3 ♜fd8 21. ♜xb6 axb6 22. ♘c3 f6



Position after: 22...f6

23. ♖e6 ♜f7 24. ♖e4 ♜d6 25. a3 ♜f8 26. ♖c1 b5 Again, a very interesting game in which Black showed a way of handling this position. 0-1 (73) Krett, V (1901) – Dröbner, U (2300) ICCF 2017.

17...♔f4 18.♚xb7 ♔xd2 19.♗xd2 ♚xd4 20.♗b3 ♚xb2 21.♚xa7 ♜xd5 22.♚xc7 ♜fd8



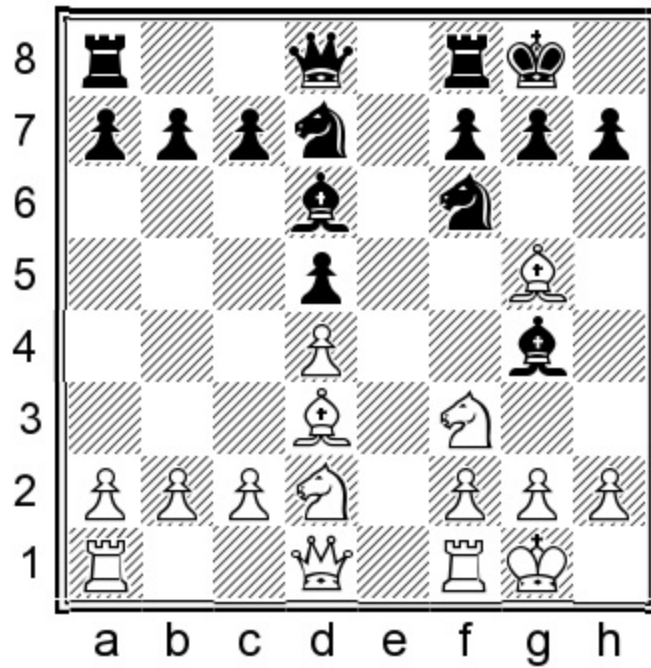
Position after: 22...♜fd8

23.♜fe1

Despite being a pawn down this is just a draw. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (23) Betker, J (2446) – Obolenskikh, D (2333) ICCF email 2012.

c) 9.♔g5 ♔g4 10.♗bd2 ♗bd7 11.c4

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d3 ♗f6 6.d4 d5 7.♔d3 ♔d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♔g5 ♔g4
10.♗bd2 ♗bd7

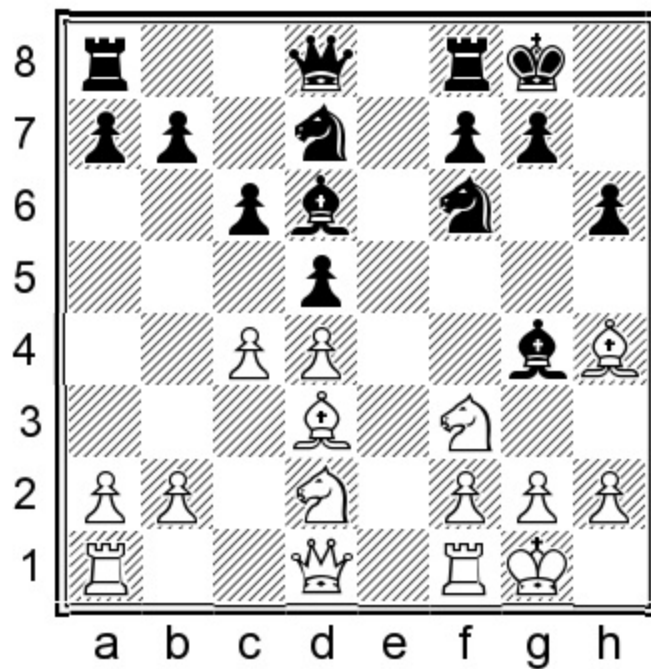


Position after: 10... Nbd7

11.c4

We can consider this to be a main position and is very popular nowadays.

11...h6 12.g4 c6

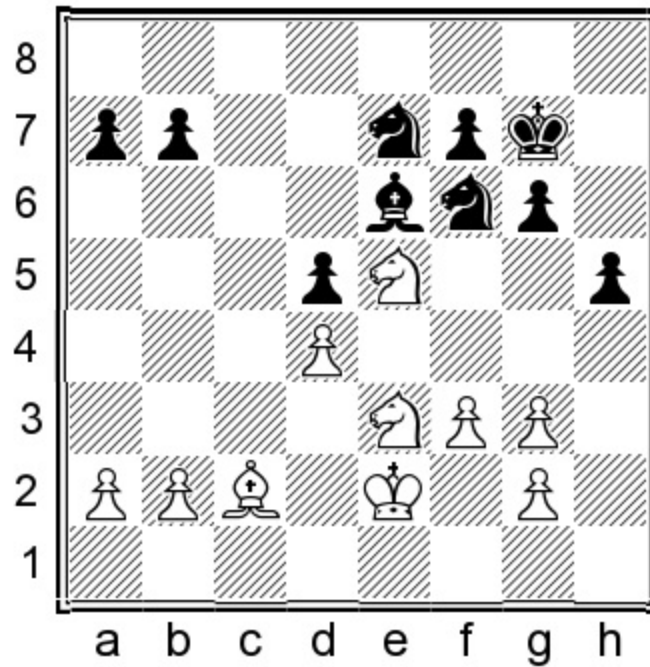


Position after: 12...c6

13.c5

Gaining more space.

13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♖b3 ♜b8 15.♙g3 ♙xg3 16.hxg3 ♚a5 17.♞fc1 g6 18.♜f1 ♜g7 19.♞e3 ♙e6 20.♞c2 ♞b6 21.♞xb6 ♜xb6 22.♞ac1 ♞bc8 23.♞e5 h5 24.f3 ♞xc2 25.♞xc2 ♞c8 26.♜f2 ♞xc2+ 27.♙xc2 ♜c8 28.♜e2 ♞e7



Position after: 28...♞e7

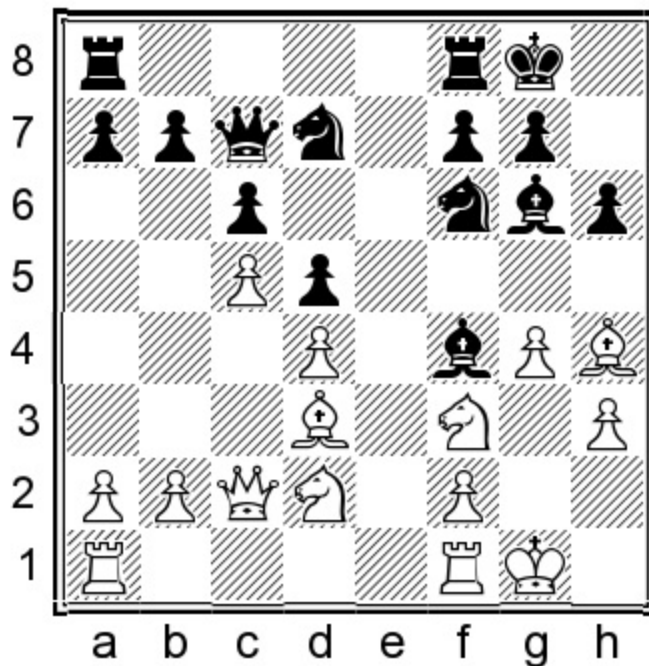
29.♜d2 ♞e8 30.♞d3 g5 31.♙b3 ♞d6 with good play. I gave all the moves on purpose because they are logical and strong. ½ – ½ (58) Elias, B (1960) – Pessoa, F (2519) ICCF 2012.

13...♙f4

This is the point behind implementing 11...h6. Now the bishop is going to a more active square.

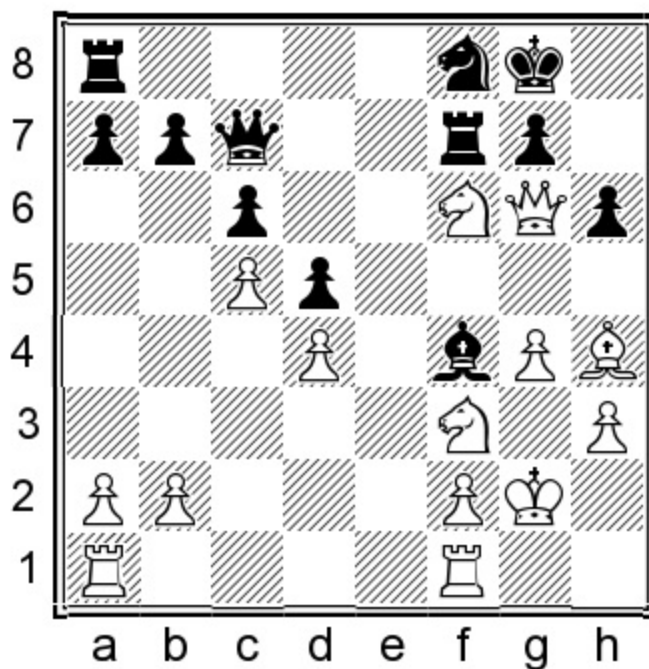
14.♞c2

14.h3 ♙h5 15.♞c2 ♞c7 16.g4 ♙g6!?



Position after: 16...♙g6!?

17.♙xg6 fxg6 18.♚xg6 ♖f7 19.♔g2 ♜e4 20.♞xe4 ♞f8 21.♞f6+



Position after: 21.♞f6+

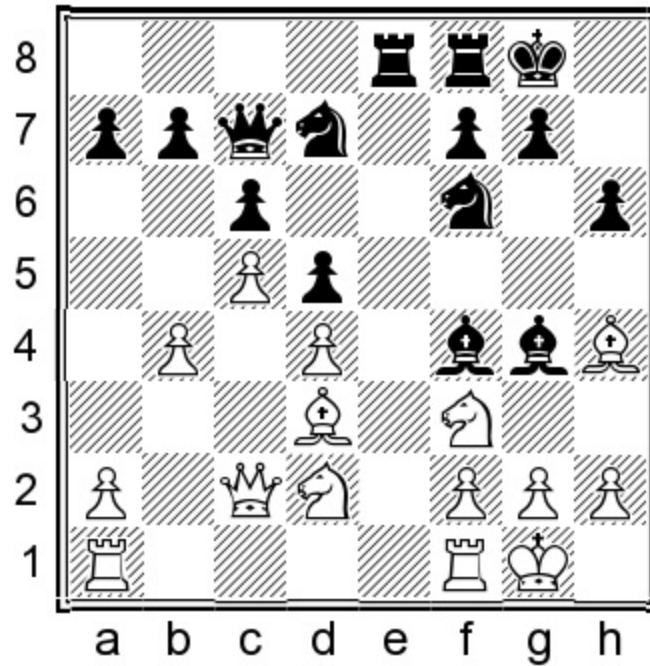
21...♖xf6 22.♚d3 g5 23.♙g3 ♜g6 24.♖ae1 ♚h7 25.♔g1 ♖af8 Black has fantastic control of the game.

14...♚c7 15.b4

15.♖fe1 ♖ae8 16.b4 ♖e6 17.a4 ♖fe8 18.♖xe6 ♖xe6 19.♙g3 ♜h5 20.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 21.♞xe1 ♞f8= ½ – ½

(33) Salamon, W (2358) – Anreiter, A (2326) ICCF 2006.

15...♖ae8

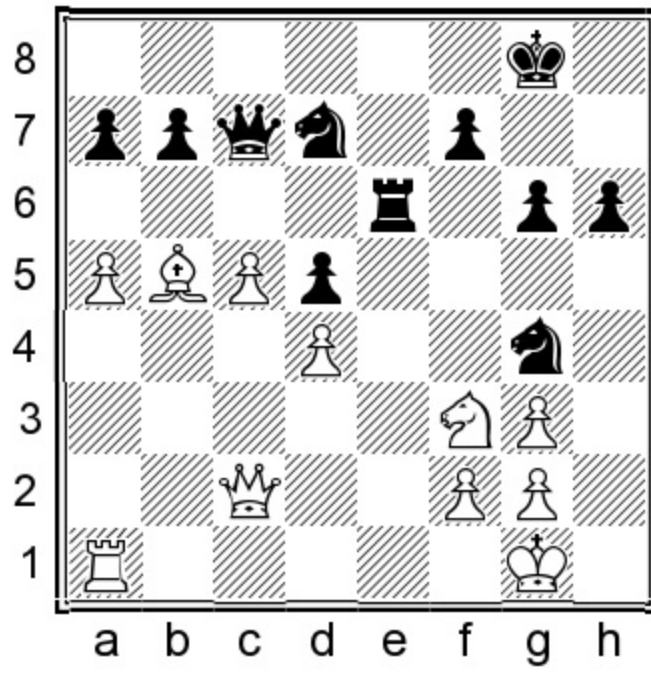


Position after: 15...♖ae8

16.♙g3

16.a4 ♖e6 17.b5 ♖fe8 18.♗fb1 ♘e4 19.♙g3 ♘df6 This is a plan for Black in case White focuses only on queenside play.

16...♙xg3 17.hxg3 ♖e6 18.♗fe1 ♖fe8 19.♗xe6 ♗xe6 20.a4 g6 21.b5 ♙xf3 22.♘xf3 ♘g4 23.a5 cxb5 24.♙xb5



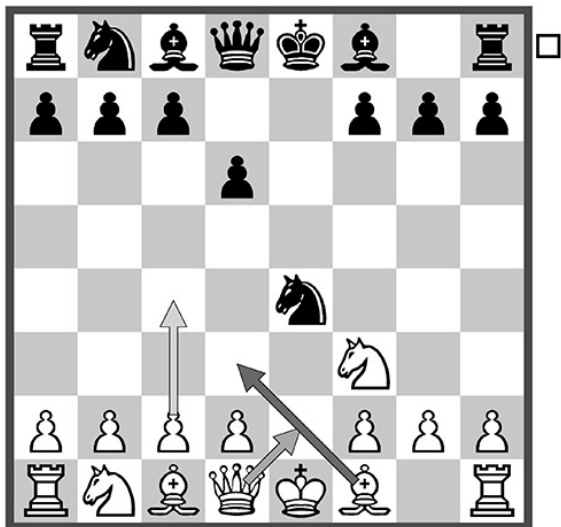
Position after: 24. ♔xb5

24... ♞df6=

Chapter 5

Various 5th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – Various 5th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4

a) 5.♕e2 ♖e7 6.d3 ♘f6 7.♙g5

b) 5.♕e2 ♖e7 6.d3 ♘f6 7.♗c3

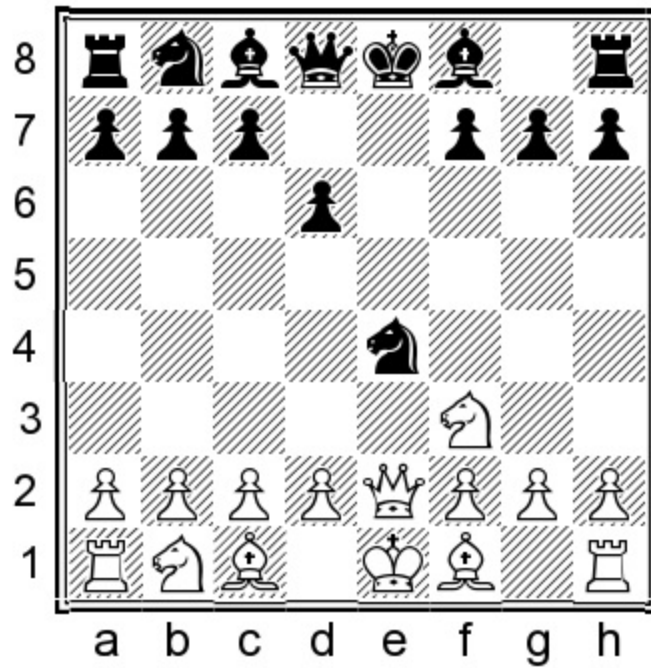
c) 5.c4

d) Millenium Attack – 5.♙d3 ♘f6

e) Millenium Attack – 5.♙d3 d5

a) 5.♕e2 ♖e7 6.d3 ♘f6 7.♙g5

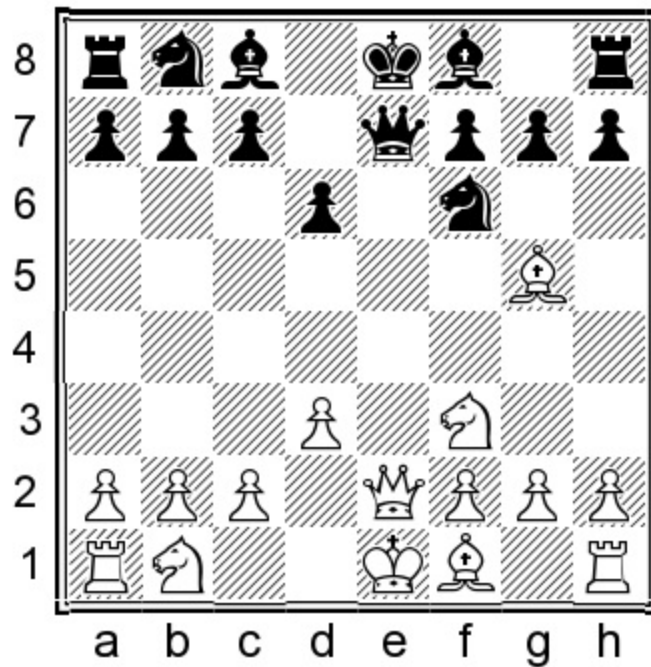
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.♕e2



Position after: 5. ♔e2

Still a popular line and for those who enjoy endgames it is fine to play in this manner. But Black has various ideas as to how to equalize here although some caution and precise play is needed.

5... ♙e7 6.d3 ♘f6 7. ♖g5

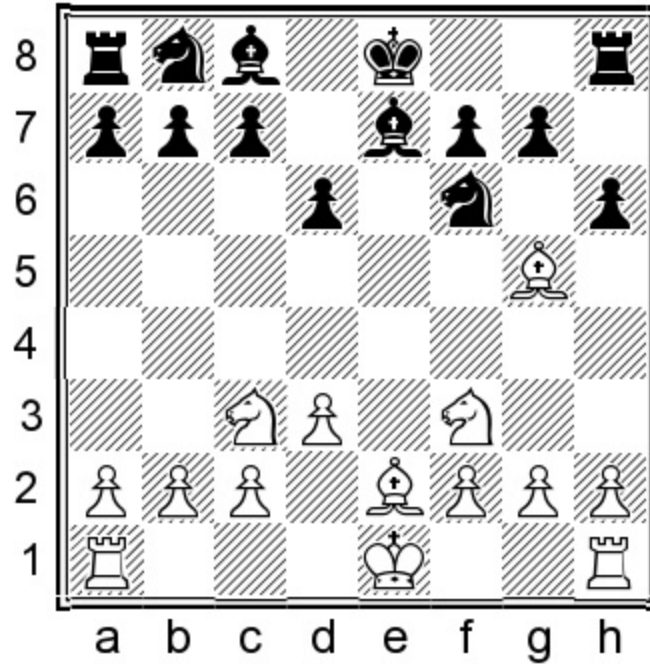


Position after: 7. ♖g5

The alternative 7. ♘c3 is much more interesting than it may appear at first sight and will be examined

in our next file.

7...♙xe2+ 8.♘xe2 ♕e7 9.♖c3 h6



Position after: 9...h6

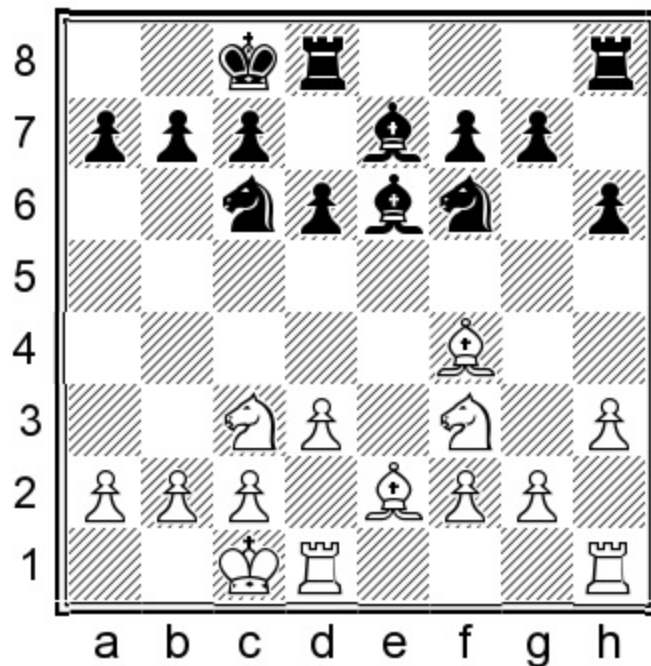
It is important for Black to challenge the bishop on g5 before deciding how to continue development.

10.♘d2

At first, I didn't pay much attention to this reply, until I found the present game and decided to make it our main continuation. Other options are not dangerous for Black:

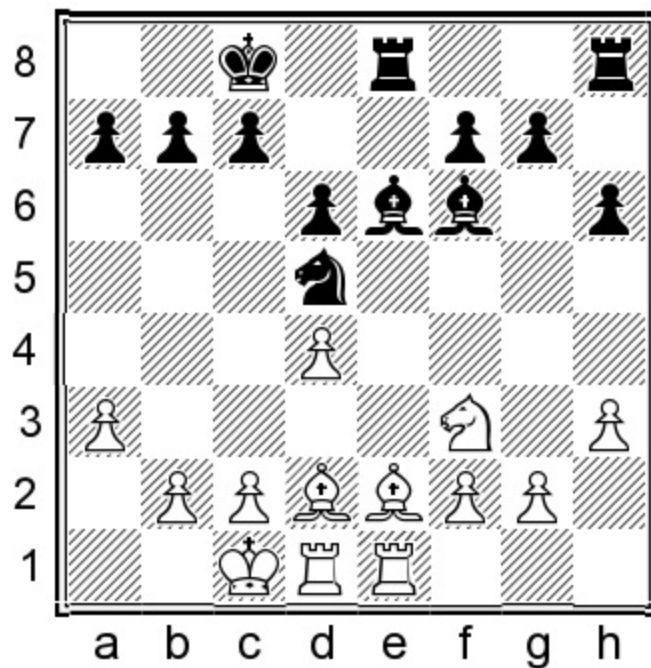
A) 10.♘f4 ♖c6

A1) 11.h3 ♕e6 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 We have a couple of games here that tested this position.



Position after: 12...0-0-0

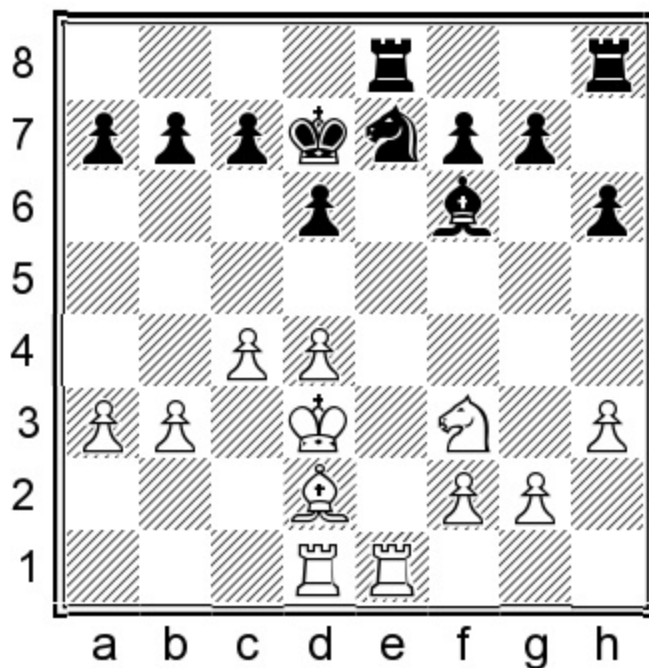
13.♞he1 [13.d4 ♜b4 14.a3 ♜bd5 15.♞xd5 ♜xd5 16.♙d2 ♜b6 17.b3 ♙f5 18.♞he1 ♙f6 19.♙f1 ♞de8 20.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 21.♞e1 ♞xe1+ 22.♙xe1 ♙e4 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (34) Wegerle, J (2430) – Krejci, J (2503) Germany 2016] 13...♞de8 14.d4 ♜b4 15.a3 ♜bd5 16.♞xd5 ♜xd5 17.♙d2 ♙f6



Position after: 17...♙f6

Now we have a further split of ideas though, in general, the nature of the position doesn't change:
18.c4 [18.♙d3 ♜e7 19.c3 ♙d5 20.♙e4 b5 21.♙xd5 ♜xd5 Black is fine. 1-0 (68) Bacrot, E (2700) –

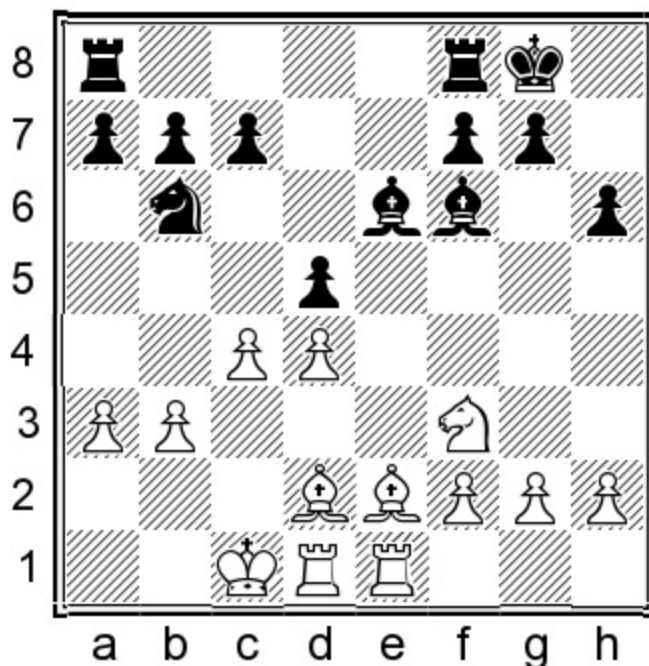
Wang, Y (2734) Khanty-Mansiysk 2009] 18...♖e7 19.♙d3 ♘f5 20.♗c2 ♙xd3+ 21.♗xd3 ♖d7 22.b3



Position after: 22.b3

22...c6 The knight is coming to f5 and the game is equal. [22...a6 23.d5 c6 24.dxc6± ½ – ½ (39) Timofeev, A (2548) – Paravyan, D (2620) Sochi 2024]

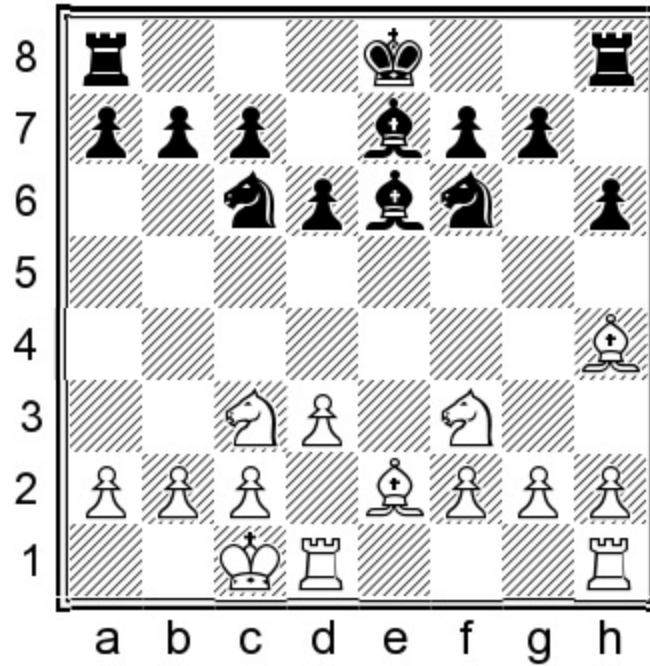
A2) 11.0-0-0 ♙e6 12.d4 [12.♖he1 0-0-0 13.d4 ♖b4 14.♙d2 ♖he8 ½ – ½ (14) Gheorghiu, F (2520) – Smyslov, V (2620) Las Palmas 1972] 12...♖b4 13.a3 ♖bd5 14.♖xd5 ♖xd5 15.♙d2 ♖b6 16.b3 0-0 17.♖he1 ♙f6 18.c4 d5



Position after: 18...d5

19.c5 ♖d7 20.♙f4 b6 21.c6 ♜b8 22.♚b2 ♜xc6 23.♙xc7 ♜ac8 24.♙e5 ♜xe5 25.dxe5 ♙e7 26.♜d4 ♜c7 27.♜c1 ♜fc8 28.♜xc7 ♜xc7 29.♜c1 ♙xa3+ 0-1 (29) Belov, A (2421) – Paravyan, D (2597) chess.com 2023.

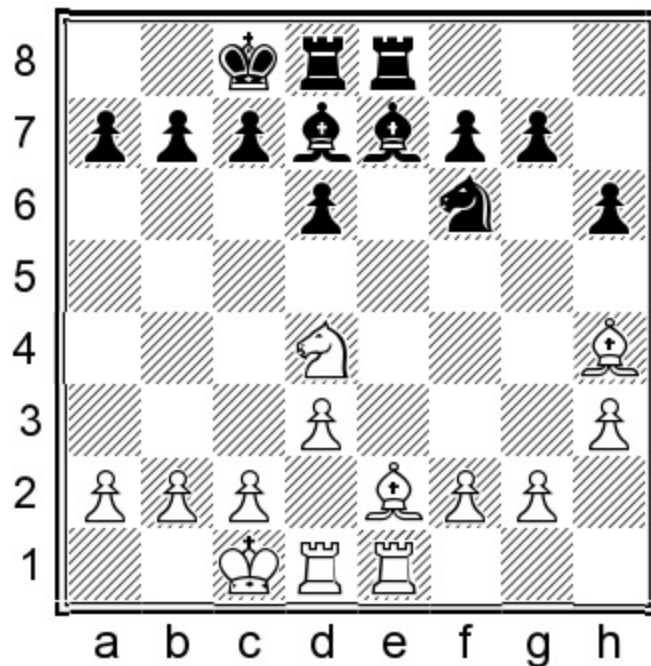
B) 10.♙h4 ♜c6 11.0-0-0 ♙e6



Position after: 11...♙e6

B1) 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.d4 ♜b8 14.h3 0-0 Giving up on bishops does not bring White anything.

B2) 12.♜b5 0-0-0 13.♜he1 ♜he8 14.♜fd4 ♜xd4 15.♜xd4 ♙d7 16.h3



Position after: 16.h3

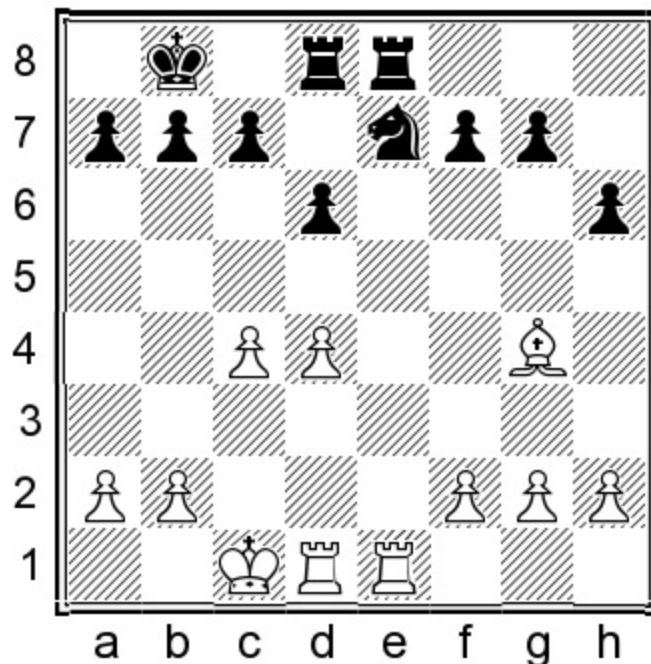
16...♖g8 17.♙xe7 ♜xe7 18.♙f3 ♜de8 Black is fine here. ½ – ½ (22) Tseshkovsky, V (2595) – Kochyev, A (2555) Ordzhonikidze 1978.

B3) 12.♜de1 0-0-0 13.♖b5 ♙d7 14.♖fd4 ♖xd4 15.♖xd4 ♜de8=

B4) 12.♜he1 0-0-0 13.d4 ♖d5 [13...d5 14.♙b5!± This is White's point, to preserve some initiative. This is known from a long time ago. ½ – ½ (30) Capablanca, J – Marshall, F New York, 1915]

14.♖xd5 ♙xd5 15.♙xe7 ♖xe7 16.c4 Draw agreed but let us go a bit further... (½ – ½ (16)

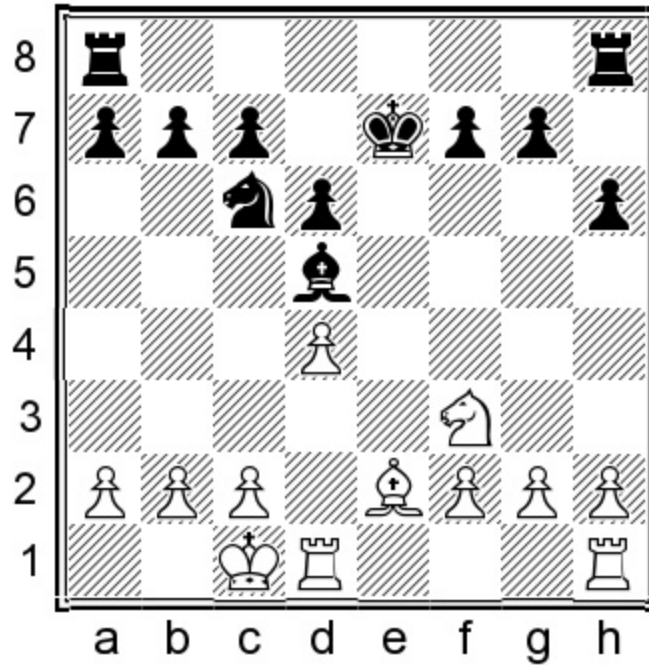
Kochyev, A (2490) – Gheorghiu, F (2545) Le Havre 1977) 16...♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♜he8 18.♙g4+ ♖b8



Position after: 18...♔b8

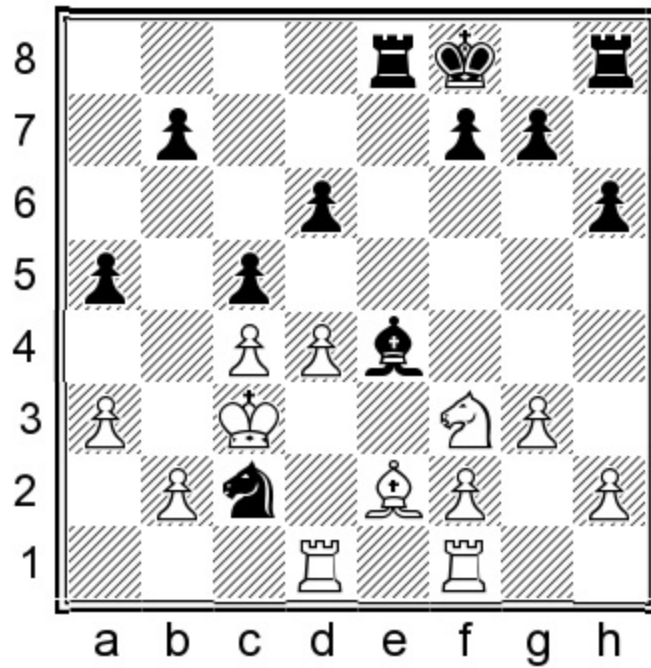
19.♞e3 [19.♞d2 ♖c6 20.♞xe8 ♞xe8 21.♙f3 ♞e1+ 22.♕c2 ♕c8 23.g3 ♕d7 This is also OK for Black. 0-1 (49) Ginzburg, Y (2405) – Weishaeutel, M (2438) chess.com 2023] 19...♘g8! 20.♞de1 ♖f6 21.♙f3 c6 22.♕d2 ♕c7 with equality.

B5) 12.d4 There are other ideas as well: 12...♘d5 13.♘xd5 ♙xd5 14.♙xe7 ♕xe7



Position after: 14...♕xe7

15.♞he1 [15.♘h4 ♞he8 16.♙f3 ♙xf3 17.♘xf3 ♕d7 Black is fine. 0-1 (38) Albornoz Cabrera, C (2566) – Ivanchuk, V (2677) Havana 2019] 15...♕f6 [15...♕f8 This is also possible... 16.c4 ♙e4 17.g3 ♞e8 18.♕d2 a5 19.♕c3 ♖b4 20.a3 ♖c2 21.♞f1 c5!

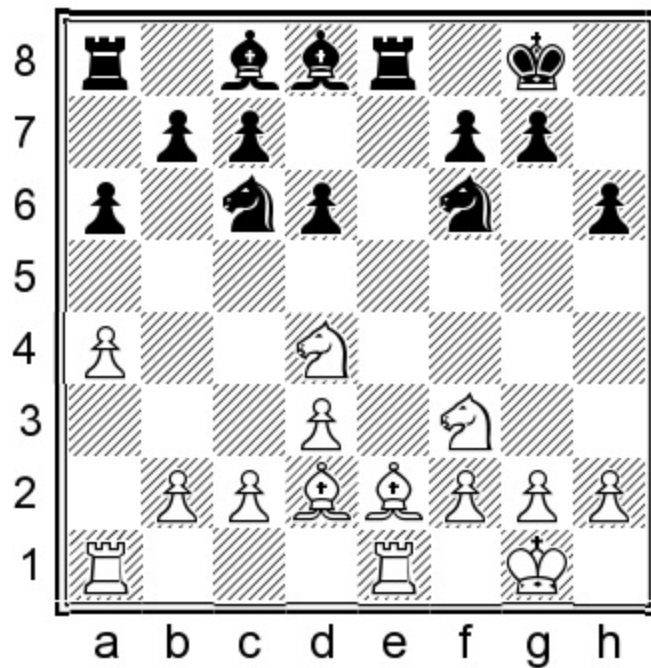


Position after: 21...c5!

22.dxc5 dxc5 23.♞d6 ♔e7 24.♞d2 ♔f6! Black is fine again.] 16.♘e5 A tactical idea suggested by engines in order to improve on the Ivanchuk game... 16...dxe5 17.dxe5+ ♘xe5 18.♞xd5 ♞hd8 19.♞b5 b6 20.♞b4 g5 21.♙h5 ♘g6 Again we have equal chances.

10...♘c6 11.0-0-0

11.♘b5 ♙d8 12.a4 0-0 13.0-0 ♞e8 14.♞fe1 a6 15.♘bd4



Position after: 15. ♖bd4

15... ♗d7 16. ♘xc6 ♗xc6 17. ♘d4 ♗d7 18. ♗f3 c6 with a balanced endgame. ½ – ½ (56) Matinian, N (2435) – Paravyan, D (2592) chess.com 2022 [18... ♖xe1+ 19. ♗xe1 c6 20. a5 ♘h7 21. c3 ♗f6 22. ♘c2 ♖e8 23. ♗d2 ♘g5 24. ♗d1 ♗f5]

11... ♗e6

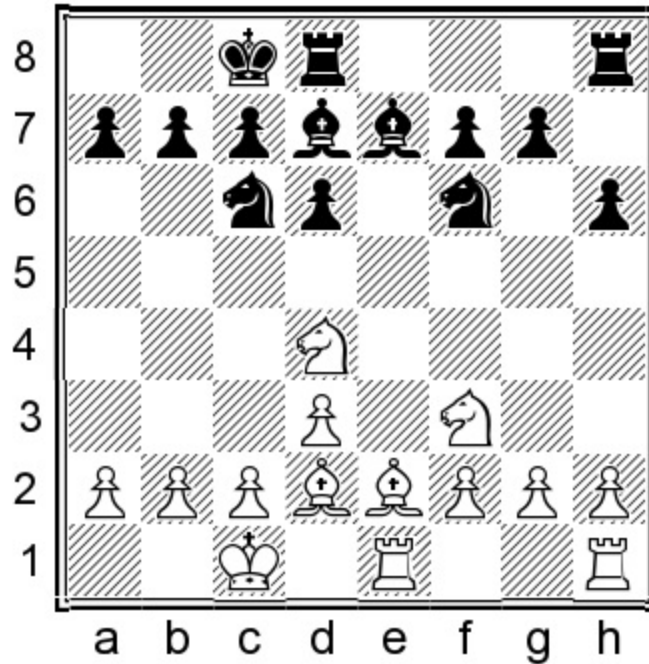
An alternative is to be considered:

11... ♗d7 12. d4 0-0-0 13. d5 ♘e5 14. ♗e3 ♘xf3 15. ♗xf3 ♗g4! Black is fine. ½ – ½ (32) Shimanov, A (2582) – Nesterov, A (2601) chess.com 2024.

12. ♖de1!?

This is the main point. Here we will see an interesting method showing how to conduct this, on first look, rather simple position. Other options offer nothing:

A) 12. ♘b5 0-0-0 13. ♘bd4 ♗d7 14. ♖de1

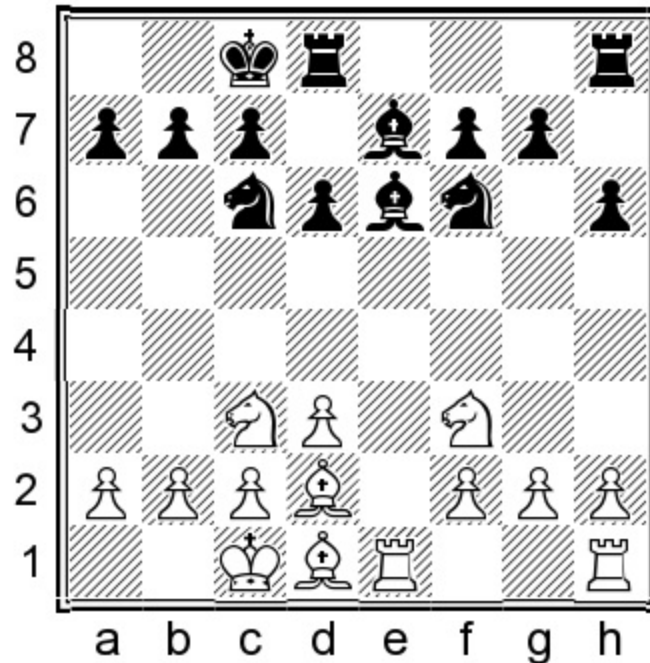


Position after: 14. ♖de1

14... ♖he8 15. h3 ♘xd4 16. ♘xd4 c5 17. ♘f3 ♗c6 This is also OK for Black. ½ – ½ (21) Muzychuk, A (2537) – Koneru, H (2574) Moscow 2019.

B) 12. d4 0-0-0 13. h3 ♘b4 14. a3 ♘bd5 15. ♘xd5 ♗xd5! [15... ♘xd5?! 16. c4 ♘f6 17. d5 ♗f5 18. ♗e3 ♘d7 19. ♘d4↑ 1-0 (80) Demchenko, A (2608) – Samunenkov, I (2531) chess.com 2023] 16. c4 ♗e4 17. d5 ♘d7 This is fine for Black.

12...0-0-0 13.♔d1



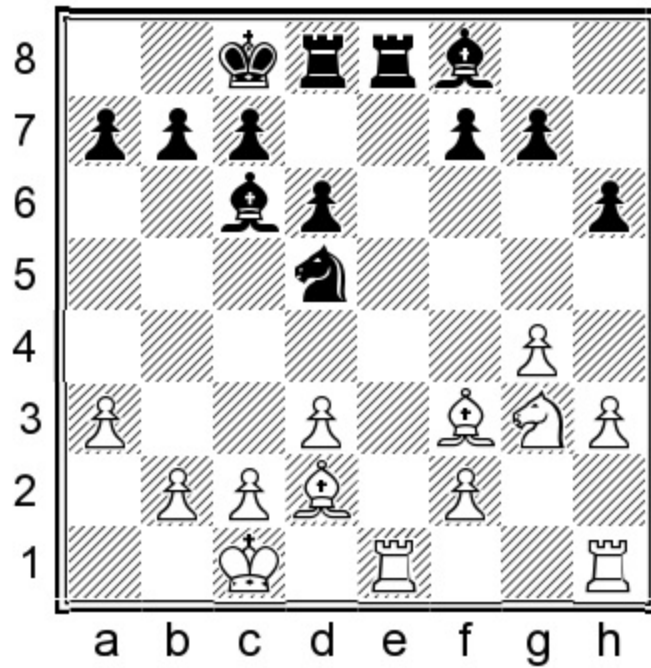
Position after: 13.♔d1

This is an interesting idea; White regroup his pieces.

13...♖de8!

Black should keep the other rook on the kingside.

13...♖he8 14.h3 ♘d5 [14...d5 15.♘e2 d4 16.a3 This is actually a very interesting endgame: White is going for g4 with further expansion on kingside, but while the engines are saying 0.00 it is more complex than it may appear.] 15.♘e2 ♕f8 16.a3 ♕d7 17.g4 ♘e5 18.♘g3 ♘xf3 19.♕xf3 ♕c6



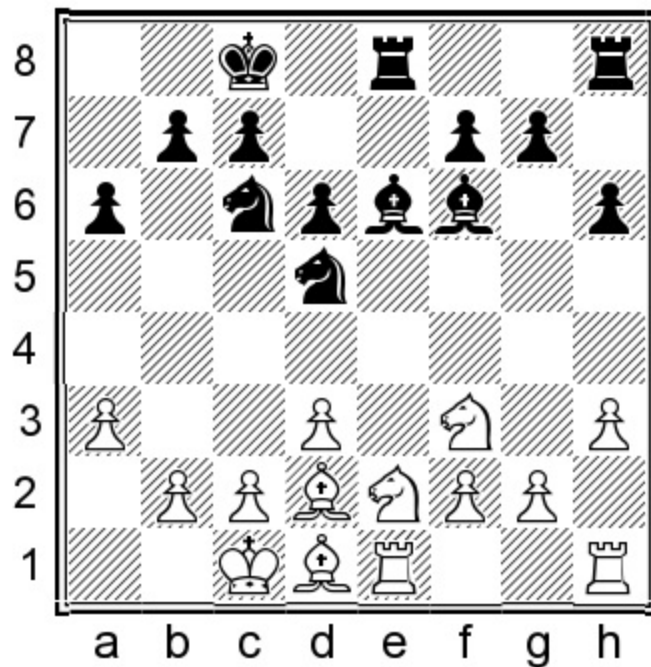
Position after: 19...♔c6

20.♖hg1 ♘e7 21.♙d1 ♘g6 22.f4 White has achieved some pressure in this endgame; a very instructive game. 1-0 (74) Onischuk, V (2610) – Paravyan, D (2620) chess.com 2024.

14.h3 a6 15.♘e2

15.g4 ♘d7 16.♘e2 ♘de5 17.♘f4 ♙d7∞

15...♘d5 16.a3 ♙f6

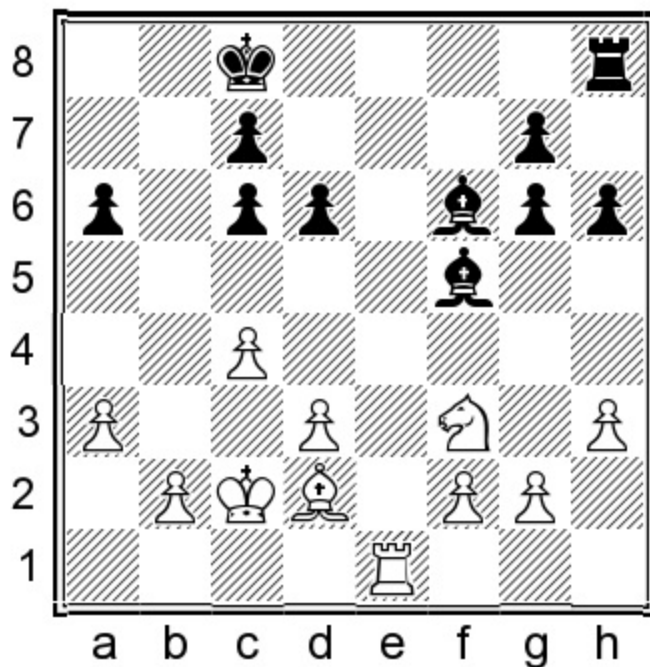


Position after: 16...♔f6

17.c4

17.g4 b5 18.♘g3 g6∞

17...♞de7 18.♜f4 ♔f5 19.♙a4 ♞g6 20.♞xg6 fxg6 21.♙xc6 bxc6 22.♚c2 ♜xe1 23.♝xe1



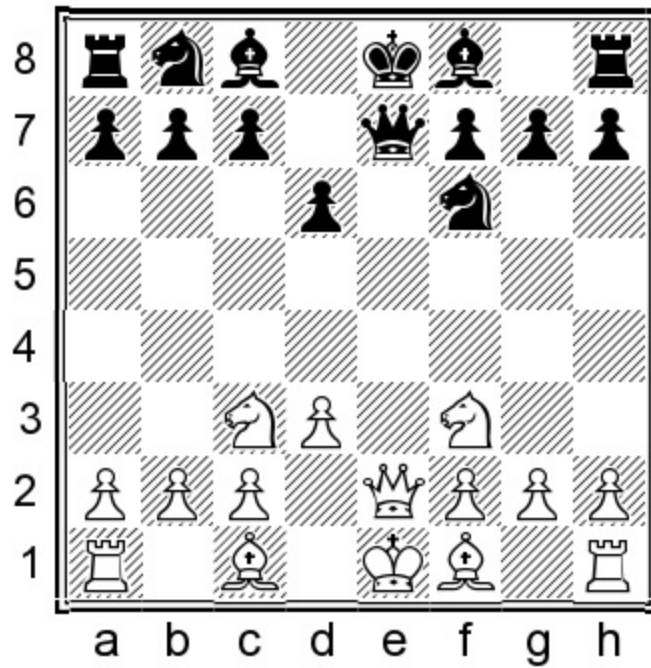
Position after: 23.♝xe1

23...♝f8

This is equal, but in any case, the plan used in this game is something to be considered for both White and Black in future.

b) 5.♙e2 ♙e7 6.d3 ♞f6 7.♞c3

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.♙e2 ♙e7 6.d3 ♞f6 7.♞c3



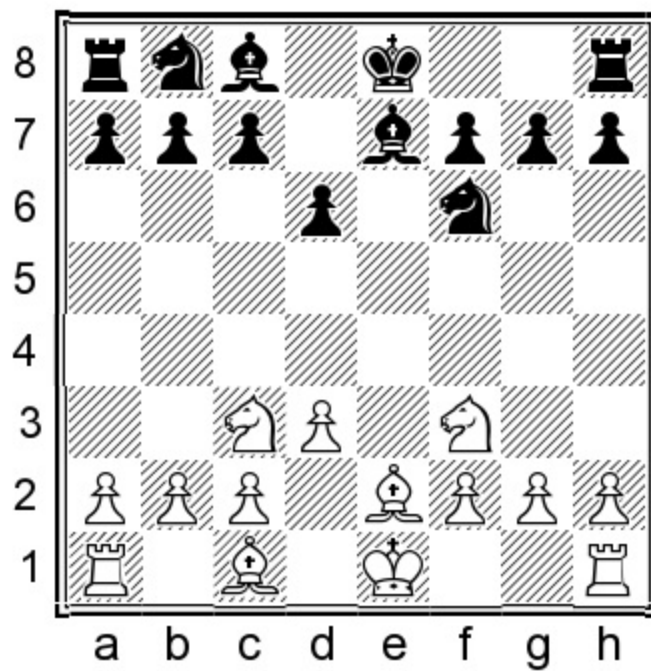
Position after: 7. ♘c3

This is yet another plan for White here: the idea is to go bishop to e3 and castle queenside...

7... ♙xe2+

Best in my opinion is to go for an endgame.

8. ♖xe2 ♘e7



Position after: 8... ♖e7

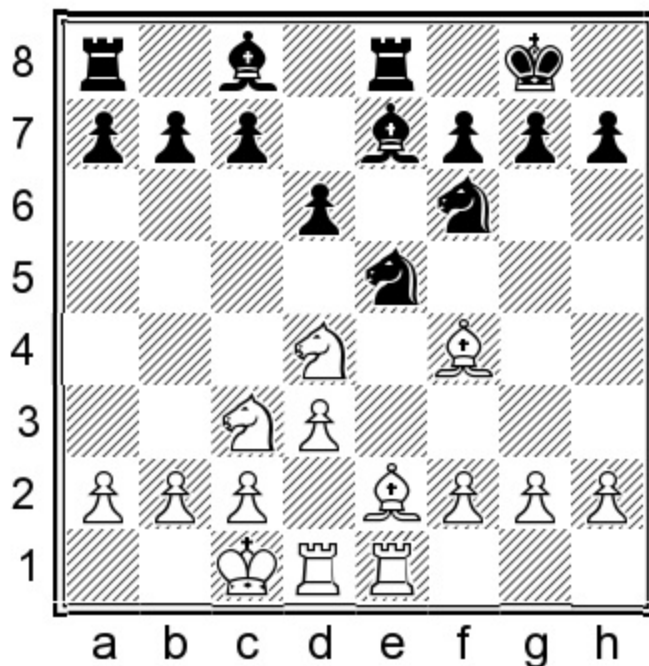
Now White has options. Going for 9. ♗g5 will transpose to the main line.

9.0-0

This is the most popular among the other options.

A) 9. ♘d4 0-0 10. ♗f4 ♜e8 11. 0-0-0 ♞bd7 transpose to 9. ♗f4

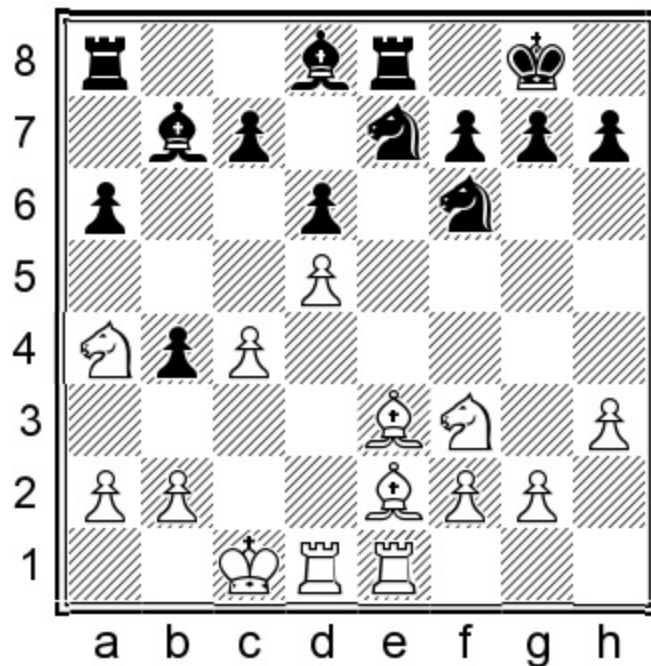
B) 9. ♗f4 0-0 10. 0-0-0 ♜e8 11. ♞he1 ♞bd7 12. ♘d4 ♞e5



Position after: 12... ♞e5

13. ♞db5 ♗d8 14. ♗g3 a6 15. ♘d4 ♗d7 This seems very much OK for Black. ½ – ½ (48) Almeida, J – Suchitra, R CXEB/InterAjedrez 2007.

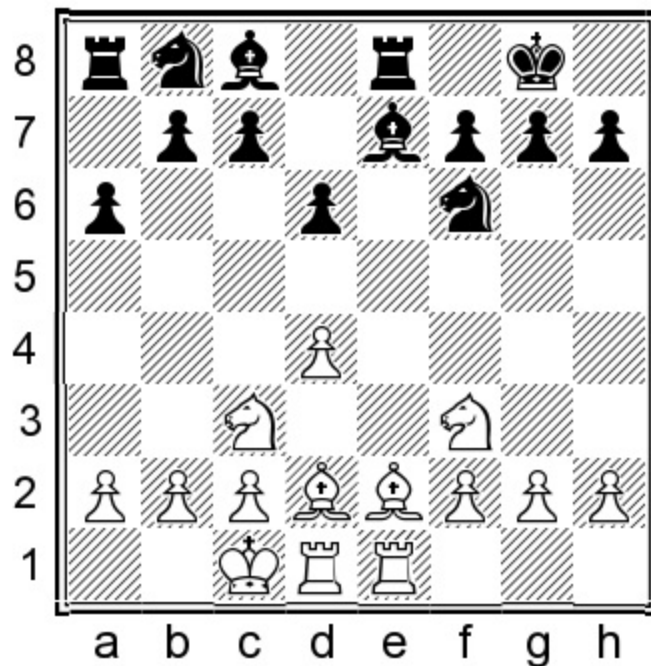
C) An interesting strategy was seen in the following game: 9. ♞b5 ♗d8 10. c4 0-0 11. ♗e3 ♞c6 12. h3 ♜e8 13. 0-0-0 a6 14. ♞c3 b5 15. ♞he1 ♗b7 16. d4 b4 17. ♞a4 ♞e7 18. d5



Position after: 18.d5

18...c6! [18...♙c8 19.♙d3 ♘d7 20.b3 ♙xa4 21.bxa4 a5± 1-0 (42) Carlsen, M (2830) – Fedoseev, V (2690) chess.com 2024] 19.c5 cxd5 20.cxd6 ♖c8 21.d7 ♖xd7 22.♗c5 ♖xc5 23.♙xc5 ♙e7 24.♙d3 ♗f8 Black is fine.

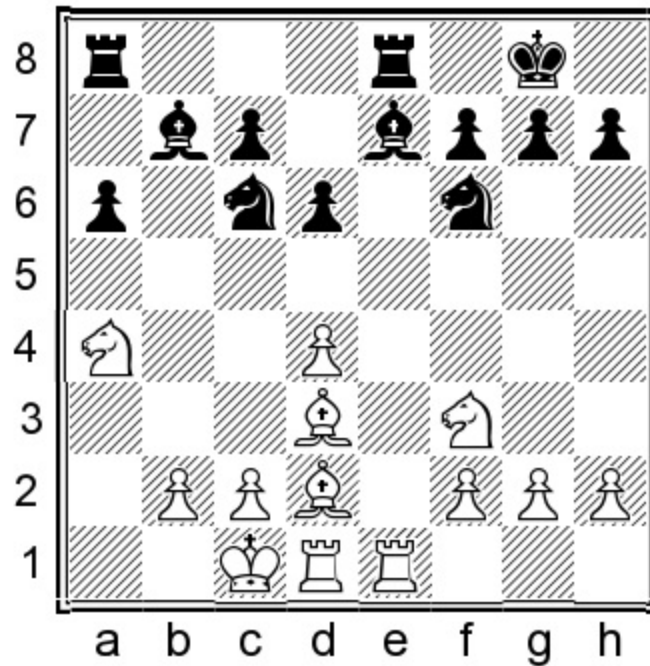
D) 9.♙d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♞he1 ♞e8 12.d4



Position after: 12.d4

12...b5! [12...h6 13.♙d3 ♙g4 14.h3 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♖c6 16.♗e2 ♖h7 17.♞g1 ♙g5 18.f4 ♙h4 19.♞g2

♖f8± Passive play. ½ – ½ (93) Carlsen, M (2839) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2771) chess.com 2023]
 13.♙d3 ♘b7 14.a4 bxa4 15.♗xa4 ♗c6!



Position after: 15... ♗c6!

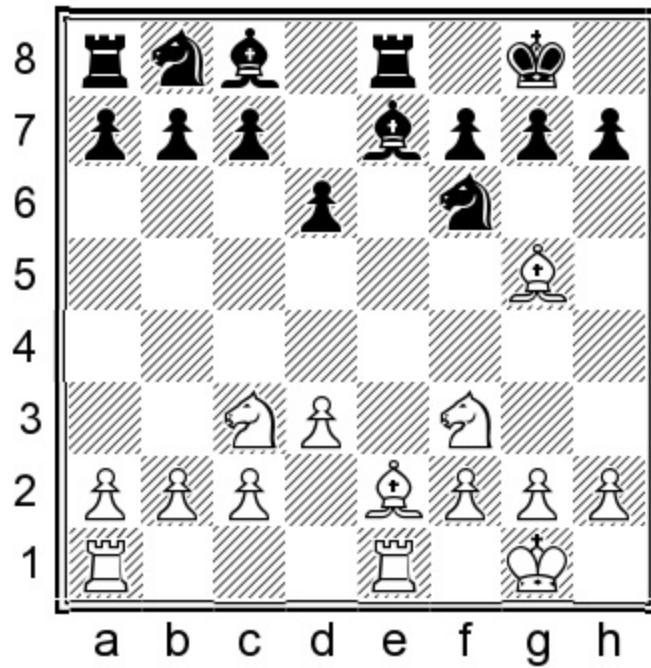
16.♗c3 [16.♙c4 ♗d8 17.♗c3 d5 18.♙b3 ♗e6↗] 16... ♗b4 17.♙f1 h6 Black is fine here.

9...0-0 10.♗d4

The point of this move is to place the bishop on f3 and create pressure on the queenside. Other possible ideas are:

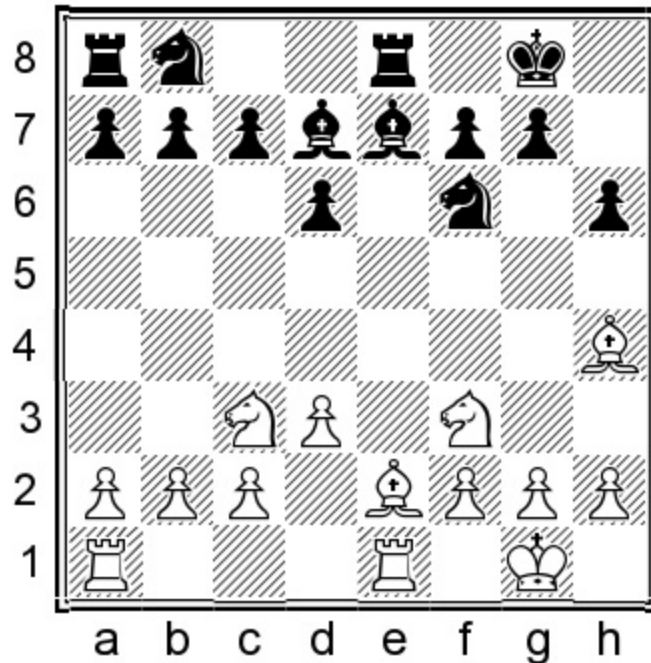
A) 10.♙g5 h6 11.♙f4 ♗c6 12.♖fe1 ♙e6 13.♗b5 ♗d5 14.♙g3 a6 15.♗bd4 ♙d7 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖ac1 ♙f6 Black has a good game. 0-1 (58) Wang, J (2444) – Lenderman, A (2640) Philadelphia 2019.

B) 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♙g5



Position after: 11. ♖g5

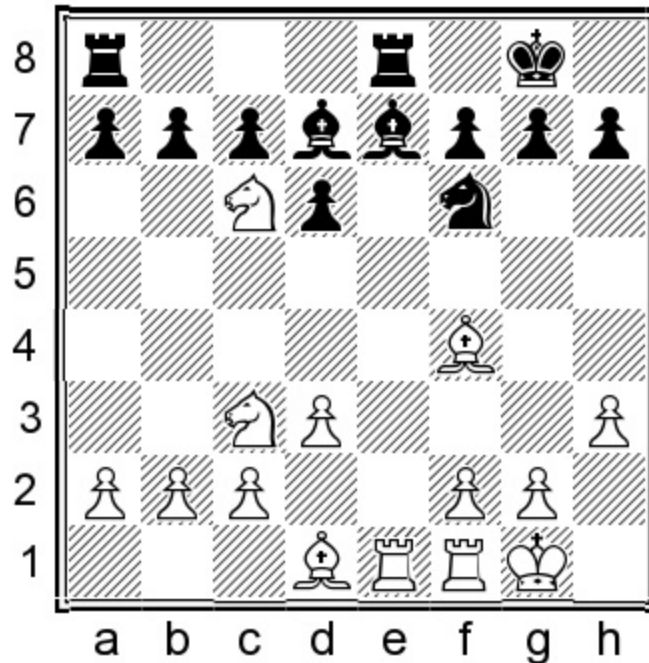
11...h6 [11...♜f8 as played in some games looks passive due to... 12.♞b5! ♞a6 13.c4±] 12.♙h4
♙d7!



Position after: 12...♙d7!

13.♞d4 [13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.d4 ♞c6 15.♞d5 ♙d8 16.c3 ♞e7 This is also not a problem for Black.]
13...♞c6 14.♞cb5 ♞xd4 15.♞xd4 This is OK for Black.

10...♖bd7 11.♗f4 ♜e5 12.h3 ♘d7 13.♞ae1 ♞fe8 14.♙d1 ♜c6 15.♜xc6



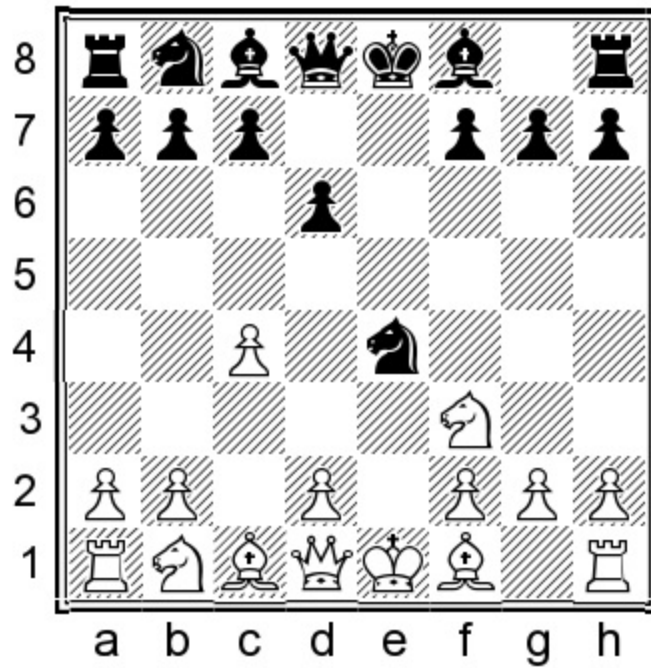
Position after: 15.♜xc6

15...♙xc6

The game is balanced. This important motif to have in mind (and we already saw it against 9.♜d4) is to go ...♜bd7 and then to e5. ½ – ½ (25) Vallejo Pons, F (2650) – Ivanchuk, V (2729) Morelia/Linares 2006.

c) 5.c4

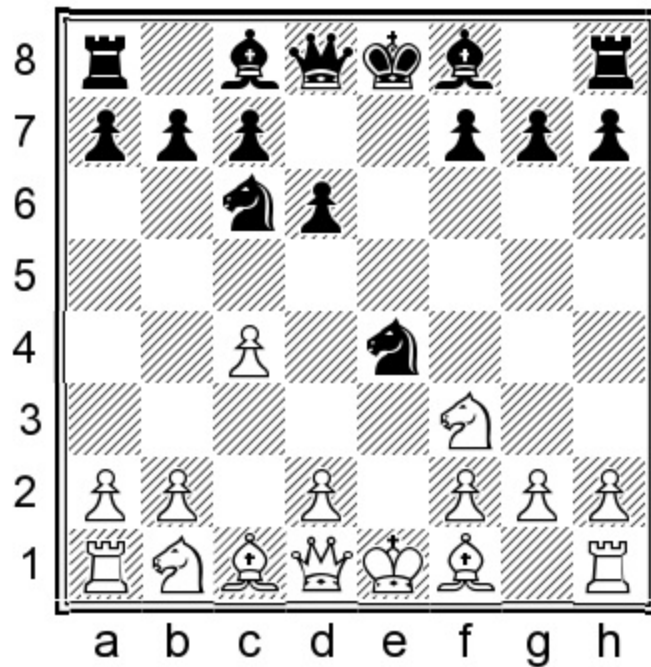
1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜f6 3.♜xe5 d6 4.♜f3 ♜xe4 5.c4



Position after: 5.c4

A very important line, somehow under a shadow in modern theory. It is far from simple and there are some new ideas here, so I decided to go for what I think looks playable for Black.

5...♞c6



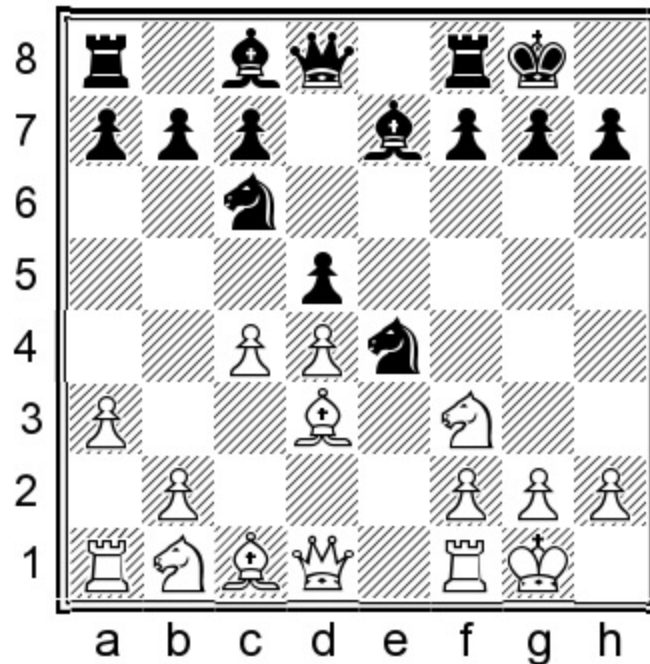
Position after: 5...♞c6

The plan is to fight against the direct 6.d4 with 6...d5.

6.♘c3

The main idea here but it is important to see how to react to other plans:

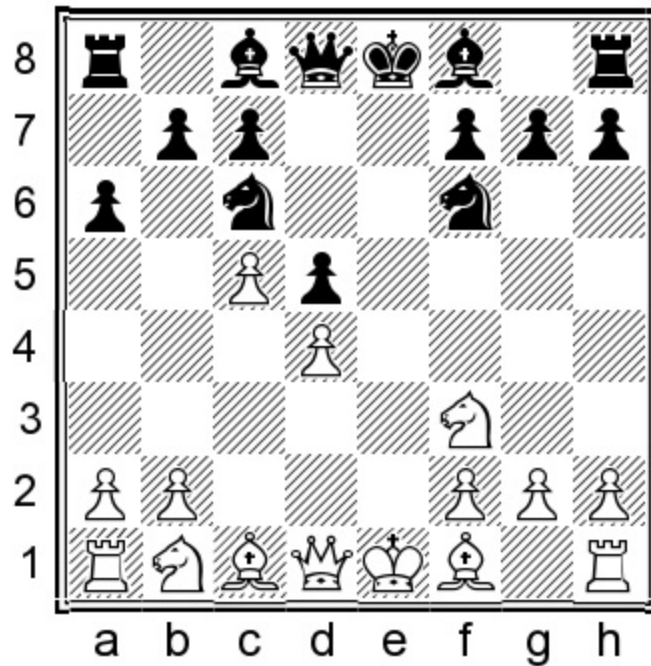
A) 6.d4 d5 The entire point is to be prepared for 6.d4. 7.a3 Black is quick now bringing a bishop to b4, e.g. [7.♘c3 ♘b4 8.♙c2 0-0 9.♙e3 ♞e8 10.cxd5 ♚xd5 11.♙d3 ♙g4 12.0-0 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♘g5 and Black is fine.] 7...♙e7 8.♙d3 0-0 9.0-0



Position after: 9.0-0

This position can arise from the Classical line as well but I decided to cover it here. 9...♙g4 10.♘c3 [10.cxd5 ♚xd5 11.♘c3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 The same as the Classical line except that there the rook is on e1 and here the pawn is on a3.] 10...♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♘a5 12.cxd5 ♚xd5 13.♙b1 b6 14.♙e1 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♙d6 This is an OK position: we already analysed similar positions in the Classical line.

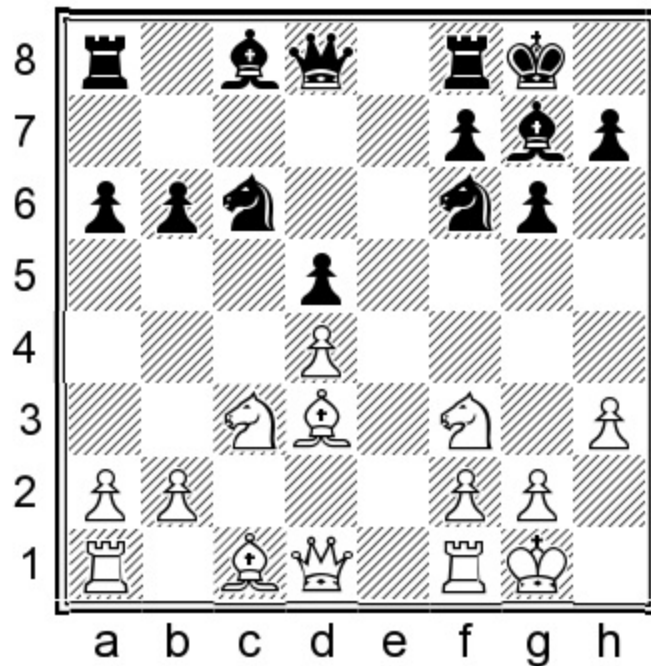
B) 6.d3 ♘f6 7.d4 d5 8.c5 a6 Preventing the bishop from coming to b5 is not obligatory but this is my personal preference.



Position after: 8...a6

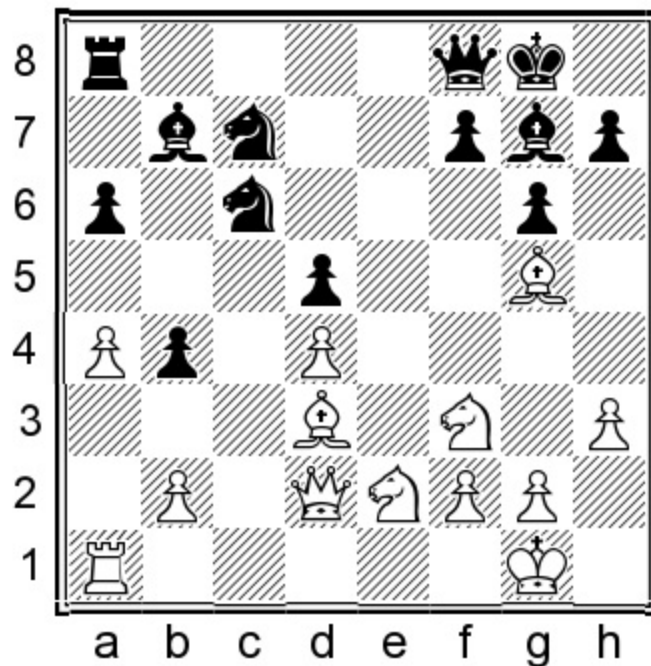
9.♘c3 g6 10.♙d3 ♙g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.h3 b6 White has a few options, taking or not:

B1) 13.cxb6 cxb6



Position after: 13...cxb6

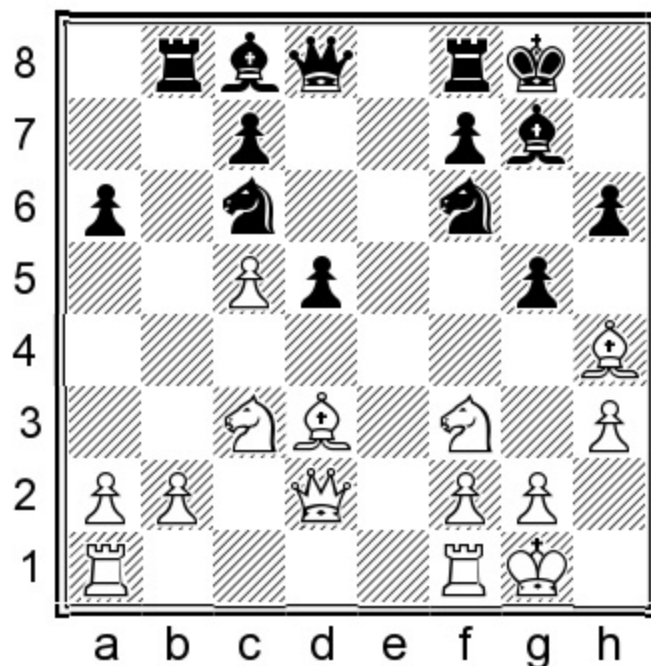
Again there is a choice of where to place the bishop from c1: 14.♙g5 [14.♙f4 ♙b7 15.♞e1 ♞e8 16.♞d2 b5 17.♞xe8+ ♘xe8 18.♙g5 ♞d6 19.a4 b4 20.♘e2 ♘c7 21.♙f4 ♞e7 22.♙g5 ♞f8



Position after: 22... ♕f8

23.a5 ♘b5 Black finds a good manoeuvre for the knight. ½ – ½ (32) Rallabandi, P (2498) – Lockwood, A (2401) ICCF 2020] 14... ♙b7 15. ♖d2 ♜e8 16. ♞fe1 ♛d6 17. ♞ac1 b5 18. ♙h6 ♞ac8 19.a3 ♞xe1+ 20. ♞xe1 ♙xh6 21. ♛xh6 ♘a5 22. ♘e2 The position is balanced ½ – ½ (22) Neto, H (2580) – Finocchiaro, F (2591) ICCF 2017.

B2) 13. ♙g5 h6 14. ♙h4 bxc5 15. dxc5 ♞b8 16. ♖d2 g5



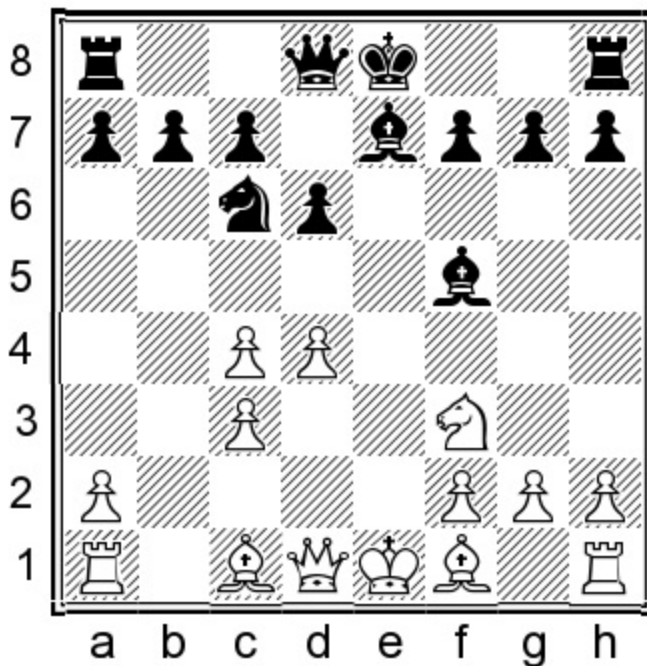
Position after: 16...g5

17.♔g3 ♖e4 18.♗xe4 ♜xb2 19.♚d1 dxe4 20.♙xe4 ♗d4 21.♗xd4 ♚xd4 22.♚xd4 ♙xd4 23.♞ac1 ♞e8 24.♙f3 ♙e5 25.♞fe1 f6 Black is OK in this endgame. ½ – ½ (52) Nasuta, G (2585) – Stohl, I (2422) Czech Republic 2024.

6...♗xc3 7.dxc3

This is best here but taking with the b-pawn is possible as well:

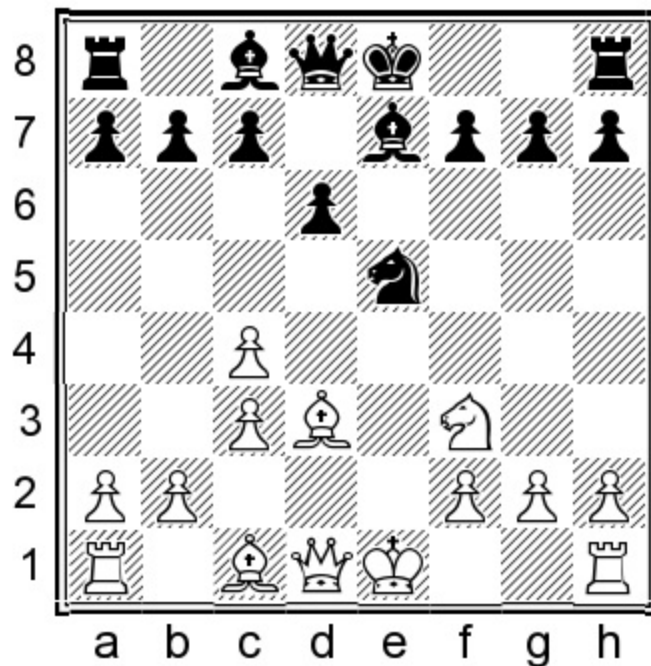
7.bxc3 ♙e7 8.d4 ♙f5



Position after: 8...♙f5

9.♙d3 [9.♙e2 0-0 10.♙f4 ♙f6 11.0-0 ♗a5 12.♞e1 ♞e8 13.♚a4 b6 14.♞ad1 ♞e7 15.♚b4 h6 Black has actually created a good version of a Nimzo-Indian-type position. ½ – ½ (81) Piorun, K (2476) – Fridman, D (2646) Wroclaw 2009] 9...♚d7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e1 ♗a5 12.♗c2 ♙xd3 13.♚xd3 f5 14.♙f4 ♙f6 15.♞ae1 ♞ae8 This is also a good position for Black, who is counting on placing the queen on f7 in order to increase the pressure on the c4-pawn. ½ – ½ (32) Antipov, M (2584) – Huzman, A (2572) Jerusalem 2016.

7...♙e7 8.♙d3 ♗e5



Position after: 8... Nxe5

Not the most popular idea but it seems to be OK.

9. Nxe5 dxe5

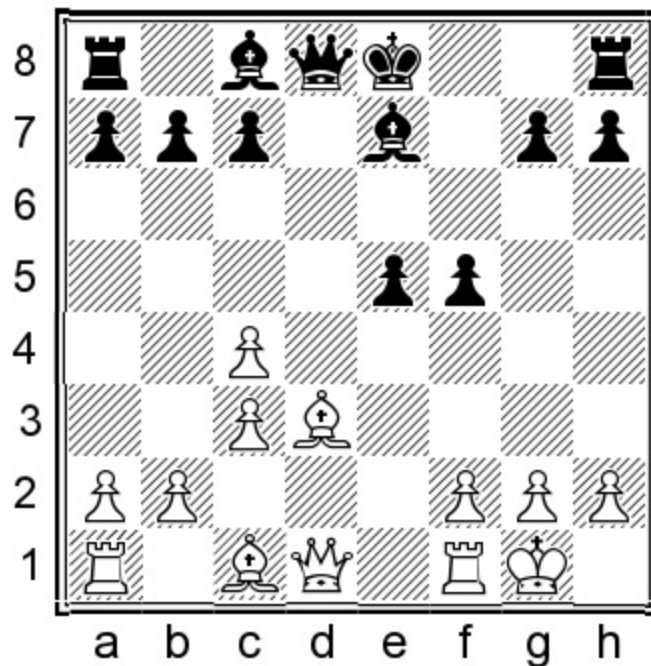
The pawn structure favours Black in a purely positional sense (a clear 4vs3 kingside majority) but White has slightly better development.

10. Qc2

Preventing ...f5 and also preventing castling.

A) 10. Qe2 Qd6 11. 0-0 f5 12. f3 0-0 13. Qe3 Qg6 14. Rad1 Qf6 15. Qc2 Qe6 Black is OK here.

B) 10. 0-0 f5!



Position after: 10...f5!

11. ♖e2 ♜f6 12. ♟e3 ♞e7 13. ♞ad1 0-0 Next, the bishop will come to e6 with fine play.

10...♟e6 11.0-0

White can also try queenside castling:

11. ♟e3 ♞d7 12.0-0-0 ♞c6 13.b3 0-0-0 14. ♟e4 ♞a6 15.f3 g6 16.g4 h5 17.g5 ♞a3+ 18.♔b1 h4∞

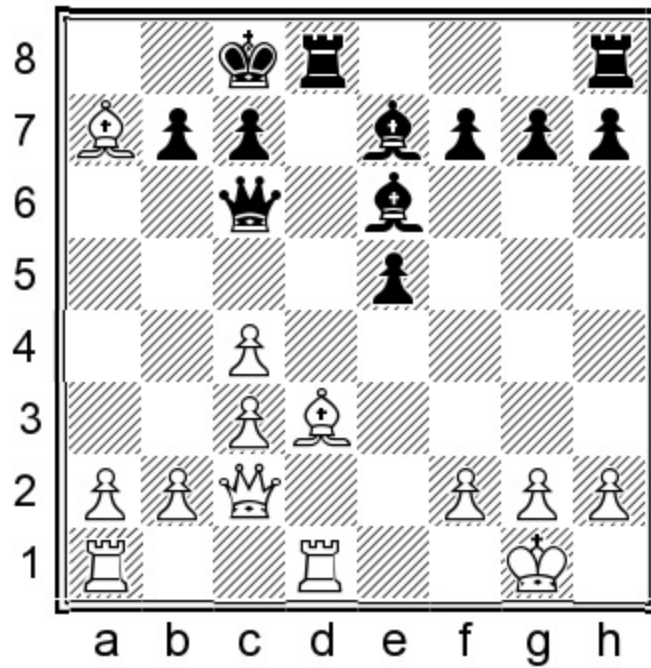
11...♞d7 12.♟e3

12. ♞d1 0-0-0 13. ♟e3 ♞c6 transposes below.

12...0-0-0 13.♞fd1

13. ♟e4 ♔b8 14. ♞ad1 ♞c8 This is OK for Black with ...f5 next.

13...♞c6 14.♟xa7



Position after: 14. ♖xa7

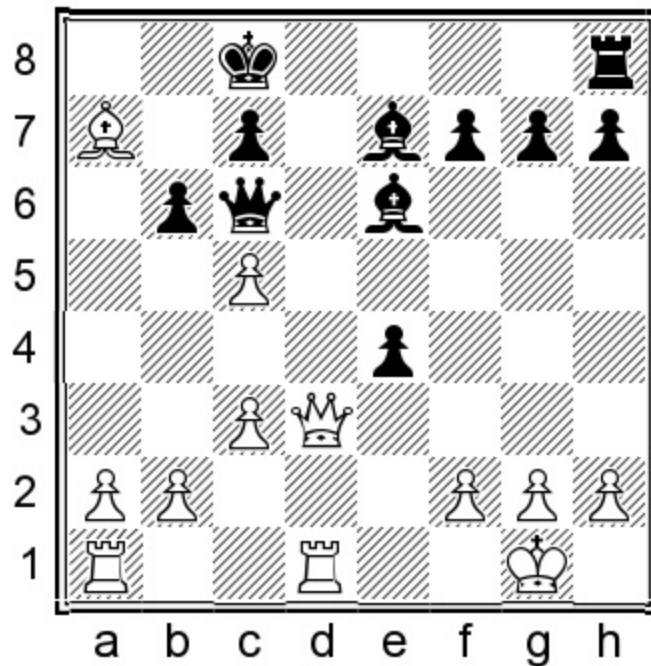
The critical idea.

14.b3 g6 15.♗e4 ♔a6 16.♗d5 f5 is fine for Black.

14...g6!

If this is OK, then I guess there is nothing here for White...

Another possibility is to try to trap the bishop: 14...b6 15.c5 ♜xd3 16.♞xd3 e4



Position after: 16...e4

It seems that Black is doing OK here as well: 17.♖a6+ [17.♖d4 ♕xc5 18.♖xg7 ♜e8 19.b4 ♕f8 20.♖xh7 e3! Black is quick with his play.] 17...♖b7 18.♖a3 ♕xc5 19.b4 ♕e7 20.♖a4 e3 21.fxe3 ♕g5 Black has strong counterplay.

15.♕e3

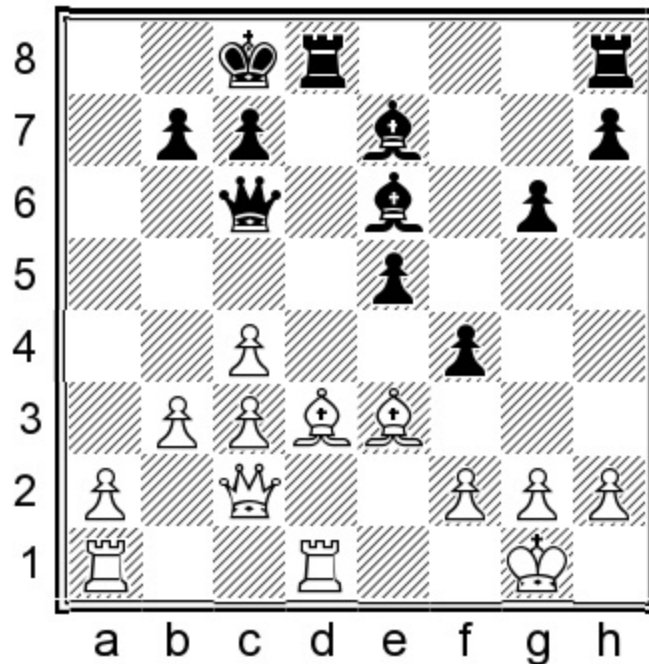
15.♖e2 This is also important... 15...b6 16.c5 ♜xd3 17.♖xd3 ♔b7 18.cxb6 cxb6 19.♕xb6 ♔xb6 20.b4 ♜c8 21.♖e3+ ♔b7 22.♖xe5 ♖xc3 23.♖b5+ ♔a7 24.♖a5+ ♔b7 A perpetual is most likely; the two bishops are strong.

15...f5

Going for the initiative.

15...♕xc4 16.♕e4 ♖e6 is also possible.

16.b3 f4

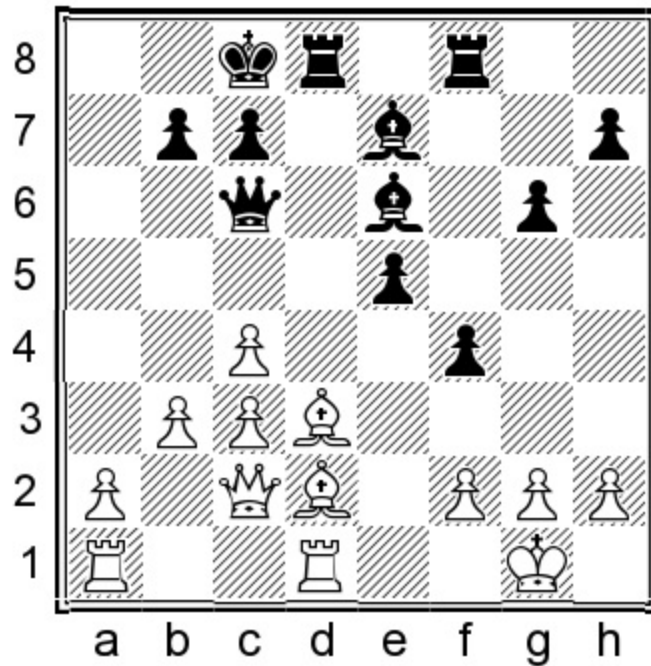


Position after: 16...f4

17.♕d2

17.♕e4 ♕f5! 18.♕xf5+ gxf5 19.♖xf5+ ♔b8 20.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 21.♖xe5 ♜g8 22.g3 ♕d6 23.♖d5 ♖xd5 24.cxd5 fxe3 25.fxe3 ♔a7 This is better for Black; the bishop is strong.

17...♜hf8!?



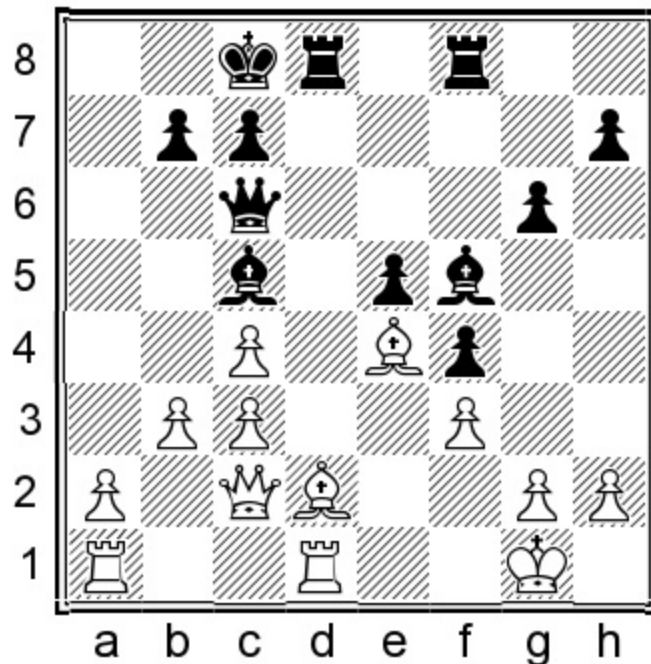
Position after: 17... ♖hf8!?

My idea; to play in a more human way.

17... ♖g4 18. ♖e4 ♖xd1 19. ♖xd1 ♔a6 20. a4 g5 21. ♖e1 ♕b8 22. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23. c5 ♖e7 24. c6 g4 25. cxb7 ♖d8 The engines are happy with Black's chances but it is very unclear: White is cramped but the bishop on e4 is very strong. 0-1 (35) Borisovs, L (2330) – Ilzig, G (2327) ICCF 2021.

18. ♖e1

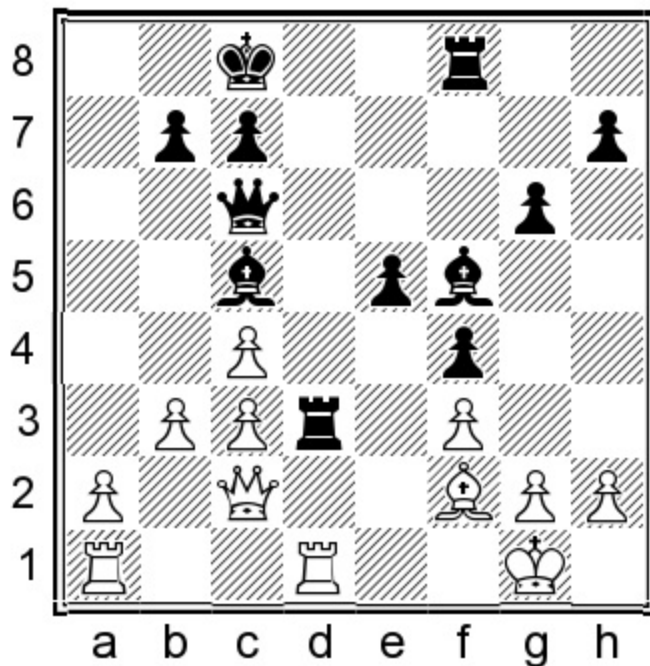
18. ♖e4 ♖f5! 19. f3 ♖c5+



Position after: 19...♙c5+

20.♖f1! [20.♖h1 ♘xe4 21.♚xe4 ♚xe4 22.fxe4 ♜d3 Black is much better.] 20...♙b6 21.♙e1 ♘xe4 22.fxe4 g5 Black has the initiative.

18...♙f5 19.f3 ♙c5+ 20.♙f2 ♜xd3!



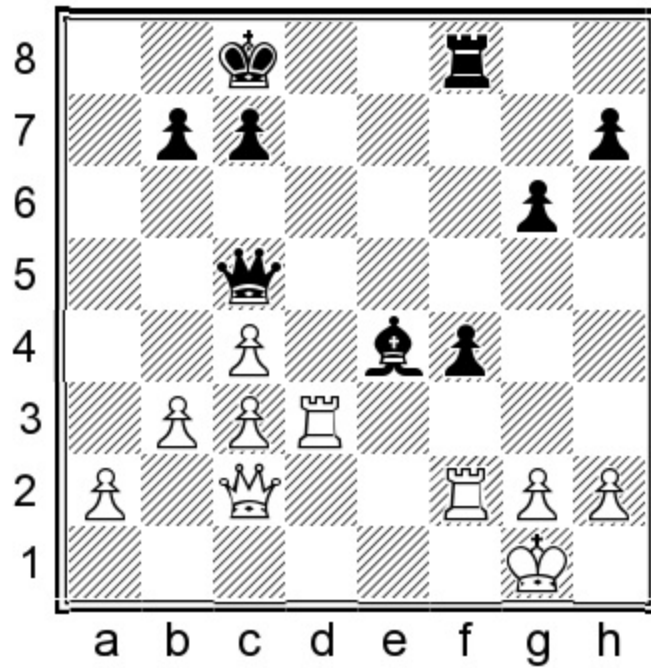
Position after: 20...♜xd3!

21.♜xd3

Now it seems that in both cases Black is doing OK:

21...♙xf2+

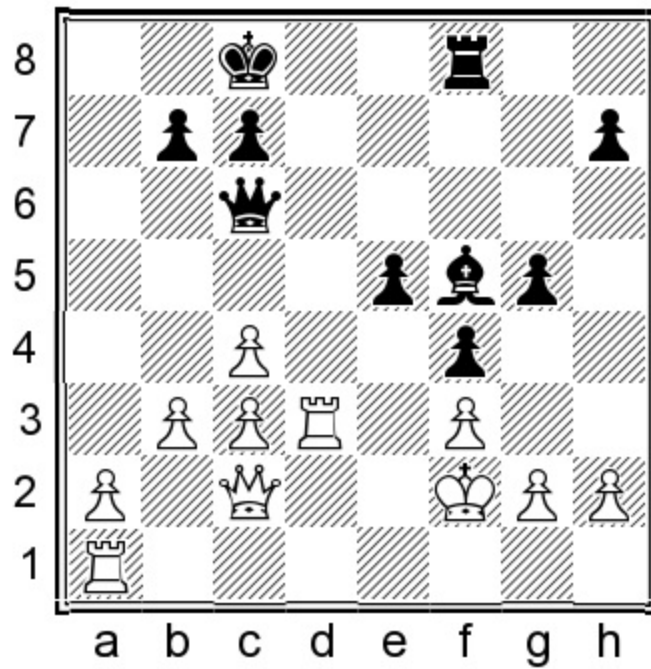
21...e4 22.fxe4 ♘xe4 23.♜f1 ♙xf2+ 24.♜xf2 ♚c5



Position after: 24... ♕c5

25. ♖e2 ♗xd3 26. ♕xd3 ♜d8 27. ♖f3 g5 28. h3 ♖b8 29. ♔h2 ♞e8 Black is very active.

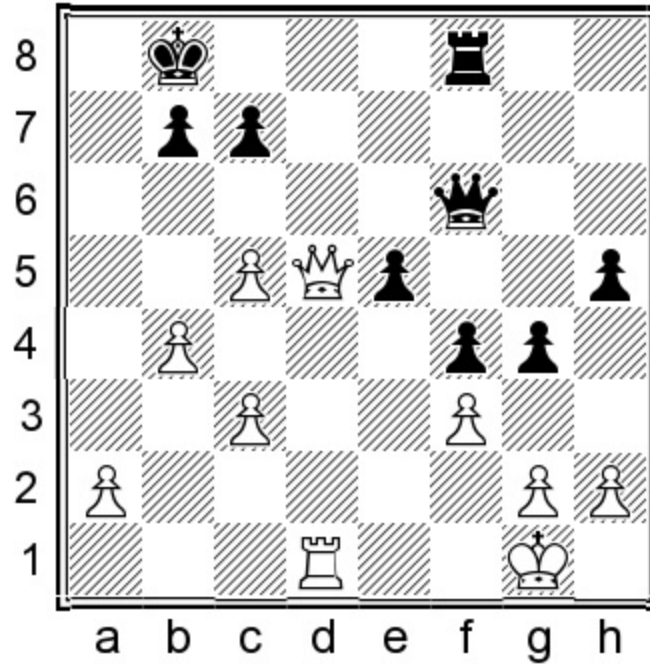
22. ♔xf2 g5



Position after: 22... g5

Or: 22... e4 23. fxe4 ♖xe4 24. ♞ad1 ♖c6 25. ♖e2 ♞e8 26. ♖f3 ♖e6 27. ♔g1 ♗xd3 28. ♕xd3 g5 29. h3 ♖b8

23.♔g1 h5 24.♞ad1 ♕xd3 25.♞xd3 g4 26.♞d5 ♞f6 27.b4 ♔b8 28.c5



Position after: 28.c5

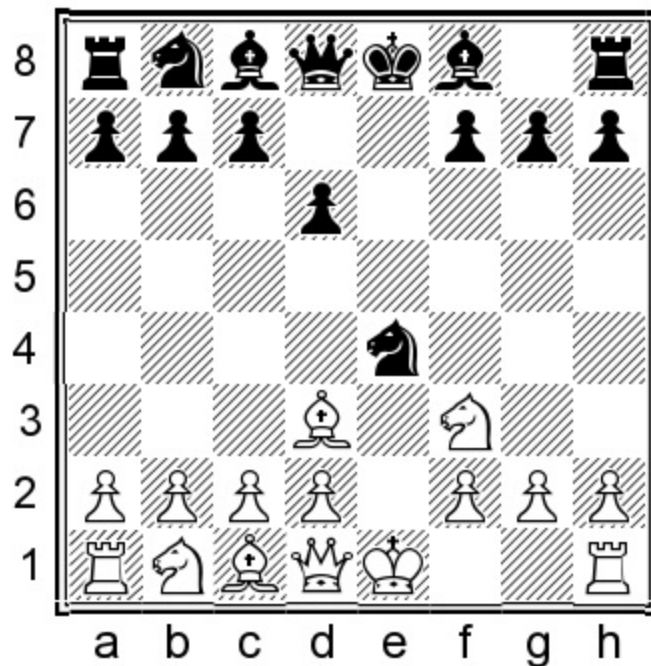
28...♞e8

It is obvious that Black has compensation in various ways.

d) Millenium Attack – 5.♕d3 ♞f6

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.♕d3

Another somewhat unusual-looking reaction but so typical of modern chess. In this case, I should point out that Black must be careful how he plays here.



Position after: 5. ♕d3

5... ♖f6

I decided to give two options for Black for the reason that none of the lines established itself as clearly superior. So, it is better to direct your attention to a few options and practice will tell us what is best. In the next file we will focus on 5...d5.

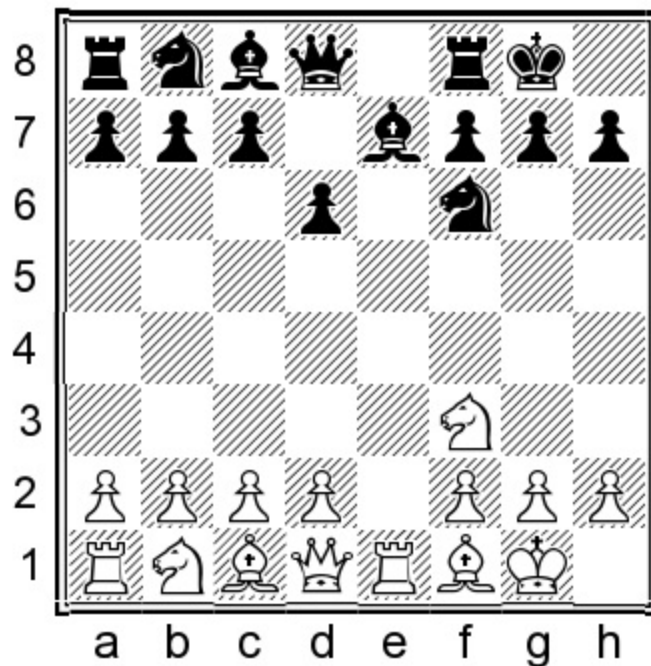
6.0-0 ♗e7

Here we have two basic plans for White: one is to place the bishop on c2, which is the original idea; the other is more recent – to bring the bishop all the way back to f1.

7.c3

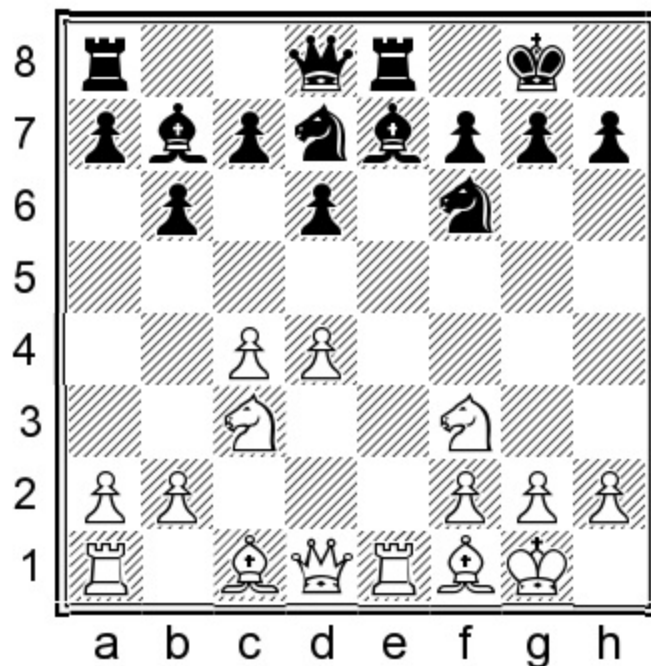
I was in a dilemma about what to give as the main line here, but I finally decided to go for this move, although I believe they are actually equally important.

7. ♖e1 0-0 8. ♗f1



Position after: 8. ♔f1

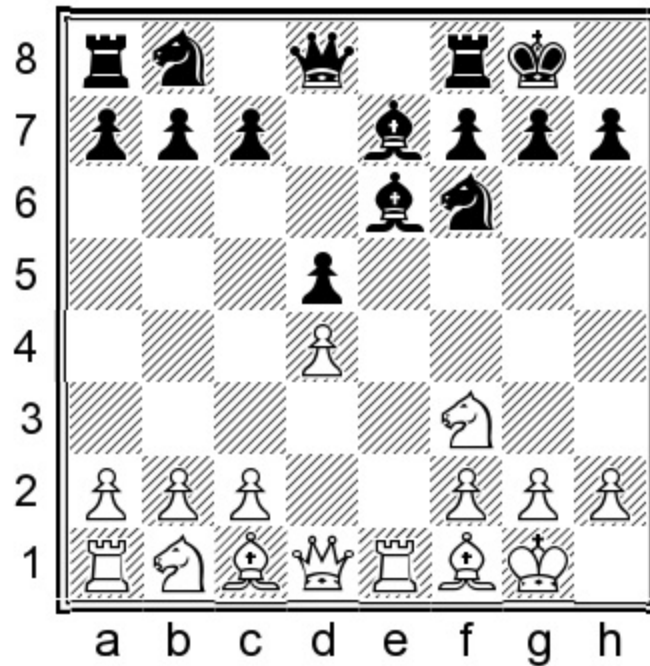
A very good idea; I was searching through games and realized that there is more here than meets the eye. White is ready to go for a d4/c4 pawn structure and that is the main reason why bishop retreats to f1. 8...d5 Now using a plan from the other line with 8...b6 is not so good because after: [8...b6 9.d4 ♕b7 10.c4 ♖bd7 11.♘c3 ♜e8



Position after: 11... ♜e8

12. ♕f4 White has an easy game due to having much more space.] 9.d4 The real question is how to

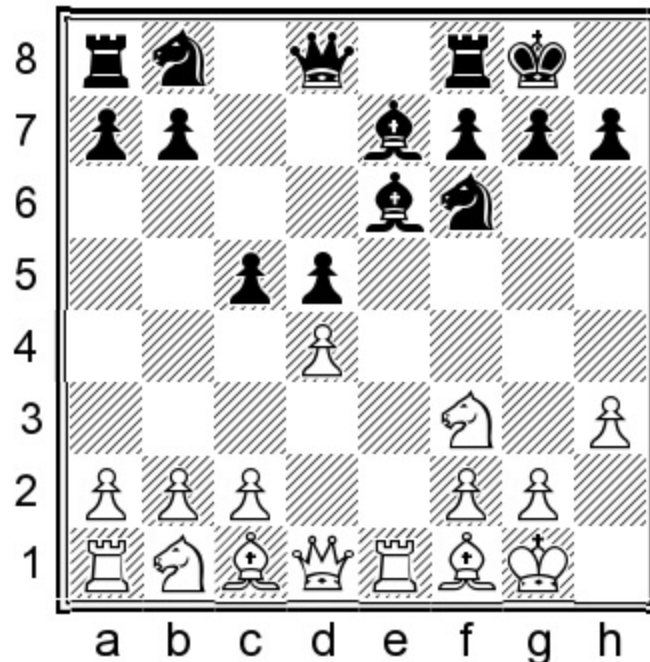
continue from here!?! White still hasn't committed to anything and it is not easy to find a plan. 9...♙e6!?! Played in a couple of correspondence games only, Black effectively stops the c4-plan.



Position after: 9...♙e6!?!

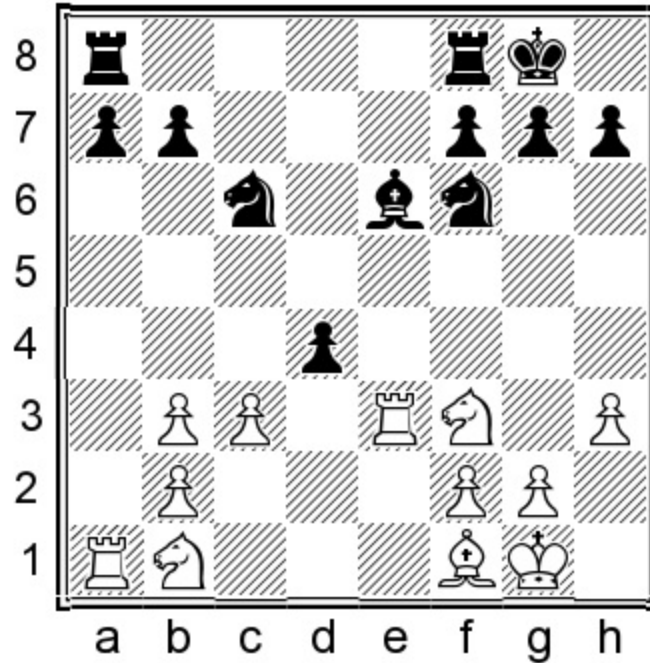
A) 10.♙f4 c5 11.♞bd2 ♞c6 [11...c4 12.c3 ♞c6 13.♞e5 ♞c8 ½ – ½ (38) Onder, E (2347) – Spagnoli, E (2318) ICCF 2019] 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 13.♞b3 ♙b6 14.♙e3 ♙g4 15.h3 ♙h5 16.c3 ♞e8 Black is fine here (compared to many lines in French, for instance). Black is simply quicker with counterplay.

B) 10.h3 Best for sure; this is a useful move. 10...c5



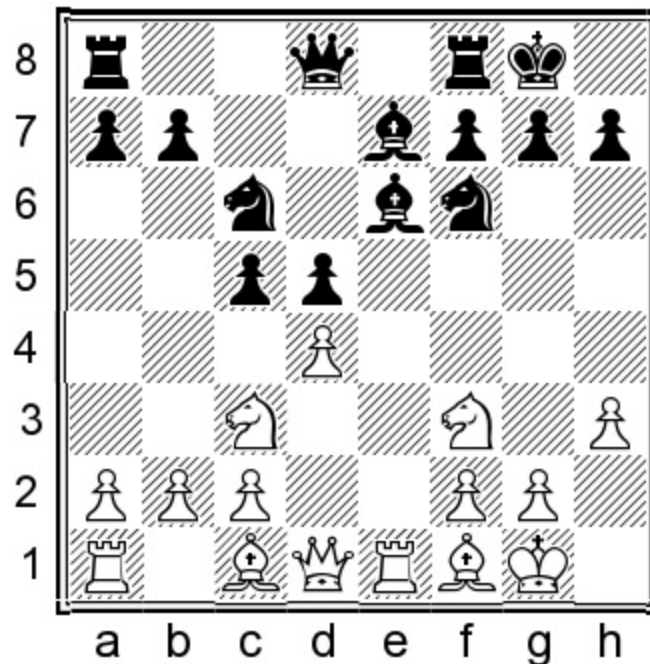
Position after: 10...c5

The main point for Black; his strategy is the same as in the French... 11.♘c3 This was played in a game but I analysed some alternatives here: [11.dxc5 ♙xc5 12.♙e3 ♙xe3 13.♞xe3 ♘c6 14.c3 ♚b6 15.♚b3 ♚xb3 16.axb3 d4!



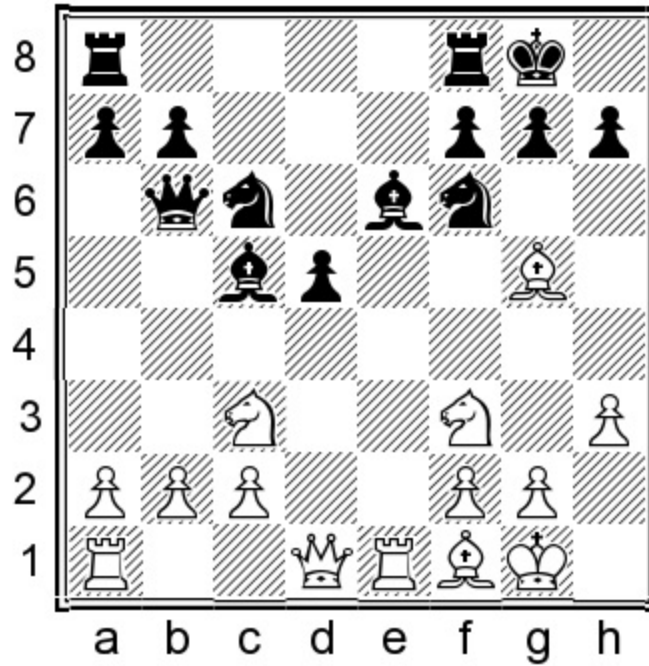
Position after: 16...d4!

17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.cxd4 ♜fd8 19.♞d3 a6 20.♘a3 ♞d7 21.♘c4 ♞ad8 22.♞ad1 ♙f5 23.♞3d2 ♘e4=; 11.♙e3 c4 12.b3 ♘c6!? 13.bxc4 dxc4 14.a4 a6 15.♘a3 ♙xa3 16.♞xa3 ♚d6 17.♚c1 b5 18.♙f4 ♚d7 19.♘e5 ♚b7 20.♘xc6 ♚xc6 Black is fine here.] 11...♘c6



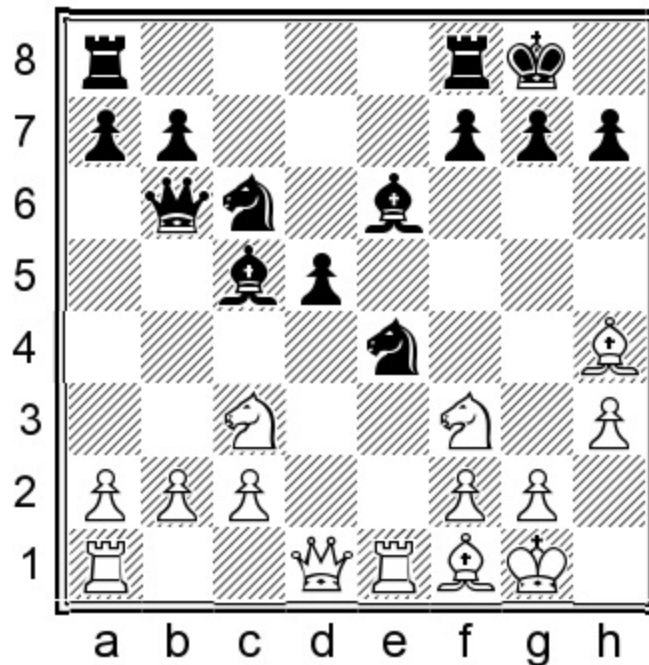
Position after: 11... ♖c6

B1) 12.dxc5 ♗xc5 13.♗g5 ♚b6!



Position after: 13... ♚b6!

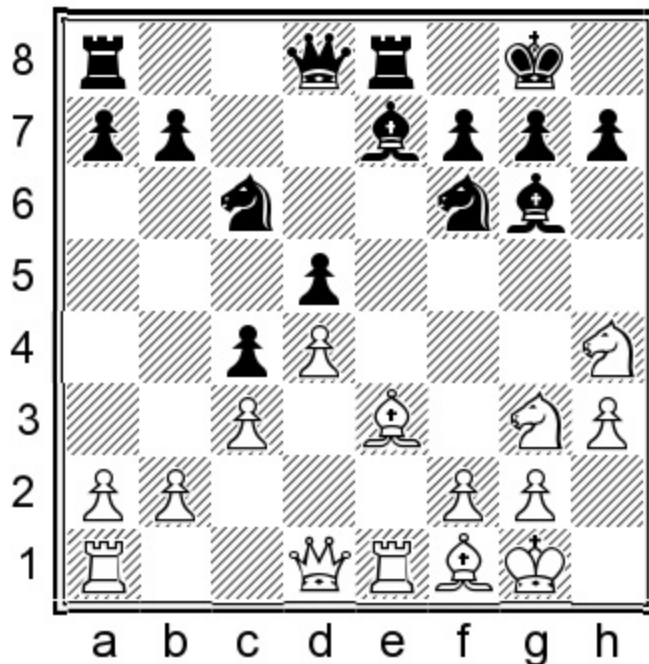
Black is fine in the tactics that ensue: 14.♗h4 Safest. [14.♚d2 ♖e4+; 14.♗xf6 ♗xf2+ 15.♕h1 ♗xe1 ♚xb2 20.♖b1 ♚a3+] 14... ♖e4!



Position after: 14... ♖e4!

15. ♖xe4 dxe4 16. ♝xe4 ♜xb2 17. ♞b1 ♜xa2 18. ♗g5 ♞ad8 19. ♞e1 ♙d5 20. ♞a1 ♜b2 21. ♞b1 ♜a2 with a possible repetition of moves.

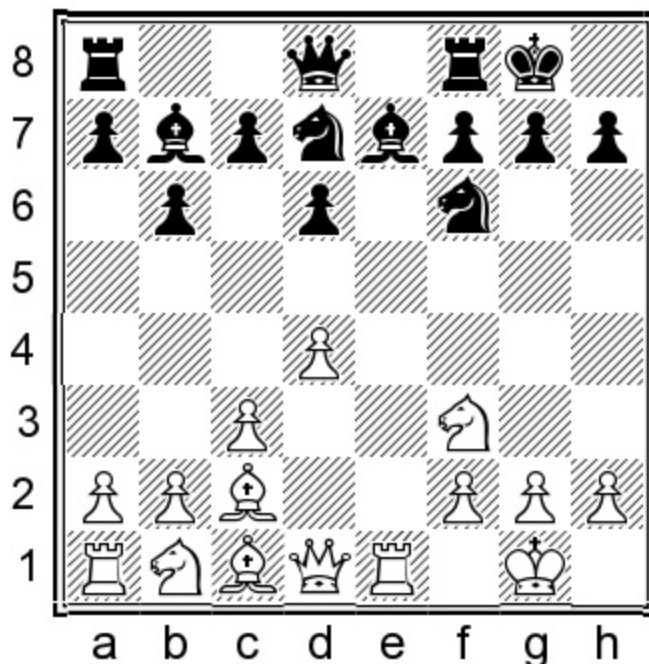
B2) 12. ♗e2 Again there are options: 12... ♙f5 13. c3 ♞e8 14. ♙e3 c4 15. ♗g3 ♙g6 16. ♗h4



Position after: 16. ♗h4

16... ♞d7! [16... ♙d6 17. ♗gf5 ♙c7 18. ♞f3 is less clear. ½-½ (55) Pospíšil, L (2450) – Deforel, J (2217) ICCF 2021] 17. ♞f3 b5 18. ♗gf5 ♙d8 19. g4 ♗e4∞

7...0-0 8. ♙c2 b6 9. d4 ♙b7 10. ♞e1 ♗bd7



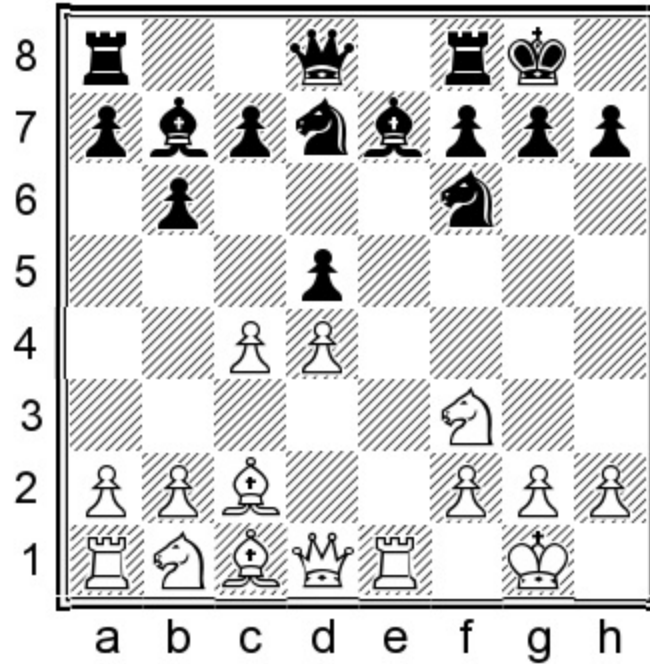
Position after: 10... ♖bd7

Black solves the problem of development in a harmonious way: the plan is to go rook to e8 and bishop to f8. We can see here that – with pawns on d4 and c3 – White doesn't have an active plan in a centre.

11. ♖bd2

Apart from this move there are a few other ideas:

A) 11.c4 d5!

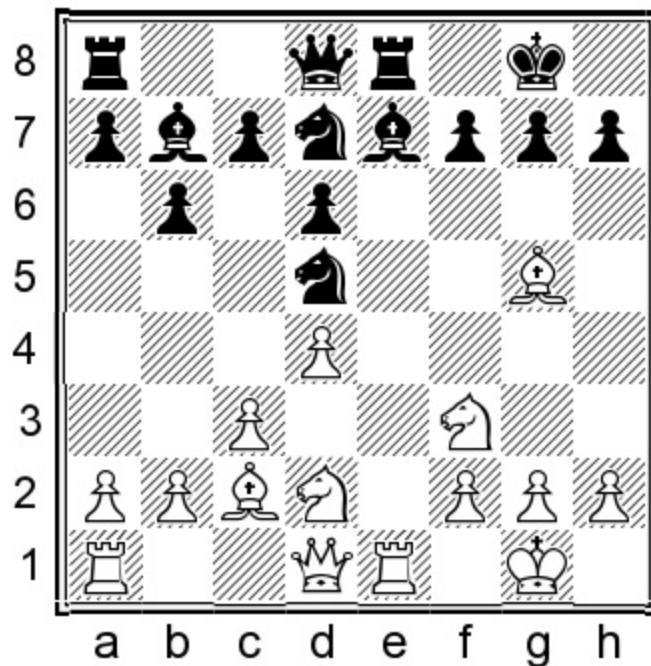


Position after: 11...d5!

12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13. ♖c3 ♖7f6 14. ♖e5 c5=

B) 11. ♔g5 ♜e8 We have a further split of ideas:

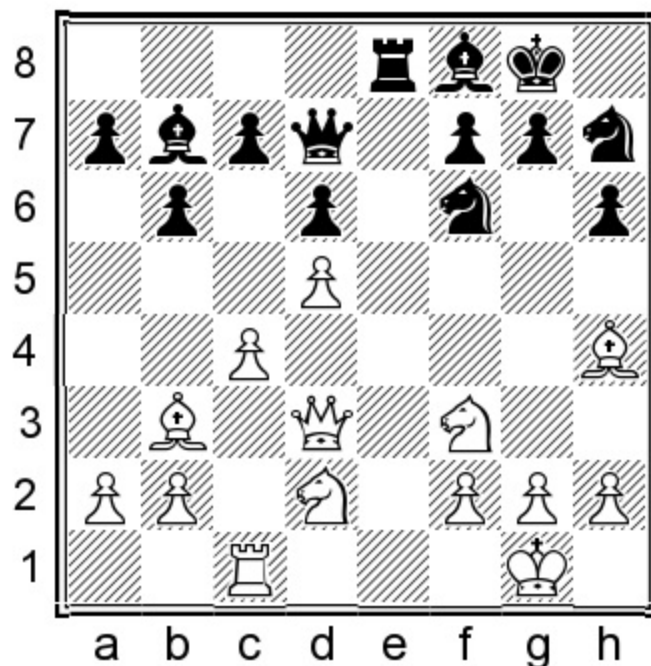
B1) 12. ♖bd2 ♖d5!



Position after: 12... Nd5!

13. ♖xe7 ♜xe7 14. ♘e4 ♘5f6 This is a level position. [In the following game, Black played a bit carelessly: 14... ♘f4 15. ♚d2 ♘g6 16. h4↑ 0-1 (33) Gunina, V (2506) – Lei Tingjie (2507) Hengshui 2019].

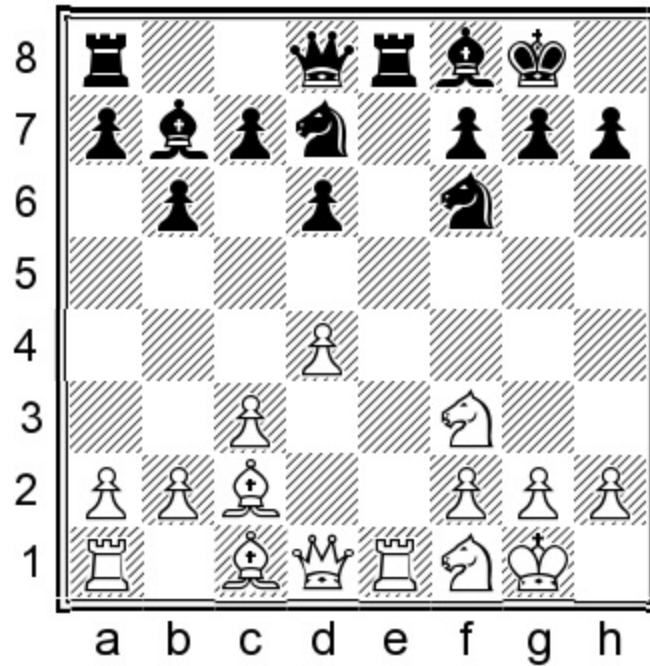
B2) 12. ♚d3 h6 13. ♖h4 ♘f8 14. ♘bd2 ♚d7 15. ♖b3 ♘8h7! We see that including ...h6 was an important part of the strategy. 16. d5 ♖f8 17. c4 ♜xe1+ 18. ♜xe1 ♜e8 19. ♜c1



Position after: 19. ♜c1

19...♘h5! Black is fine. ½ – ½ (28) Sadhwani, R (2611) – Delgado Ramirez, N (2614) Ovar 2022.

11...♖e8 12.♘f1 ♕f8



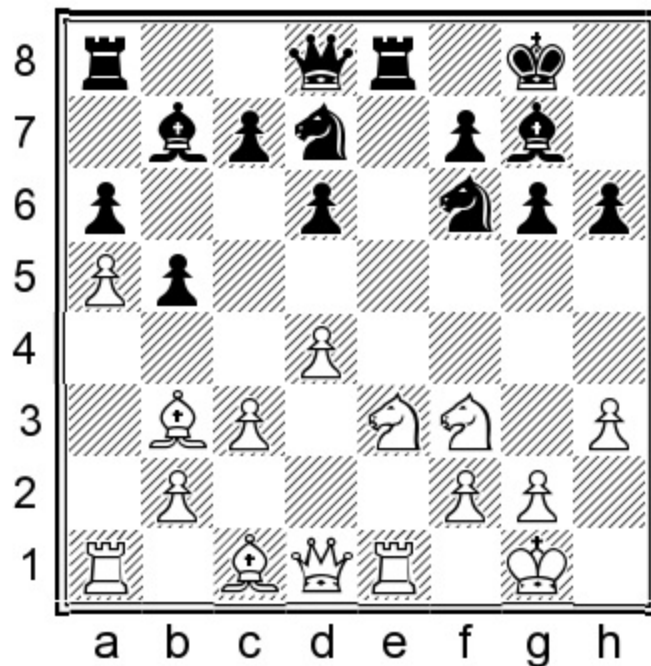
Position after: 12...♕f8

Both sides play in a solid manner. Now White has various options:

13.♖xe8

A) 13.♕f4 ♖xe1 14.♘xe1 ♚e7 15.♘g3 g6 16.♘f3 ♖e8 17.h3 a6 18.♚d3 ♕g7 Black has no problems whatsoever. ½ – ½ (62) Leko, P (2730) – Dominguez Perez, L (2754) Beijing 2013.

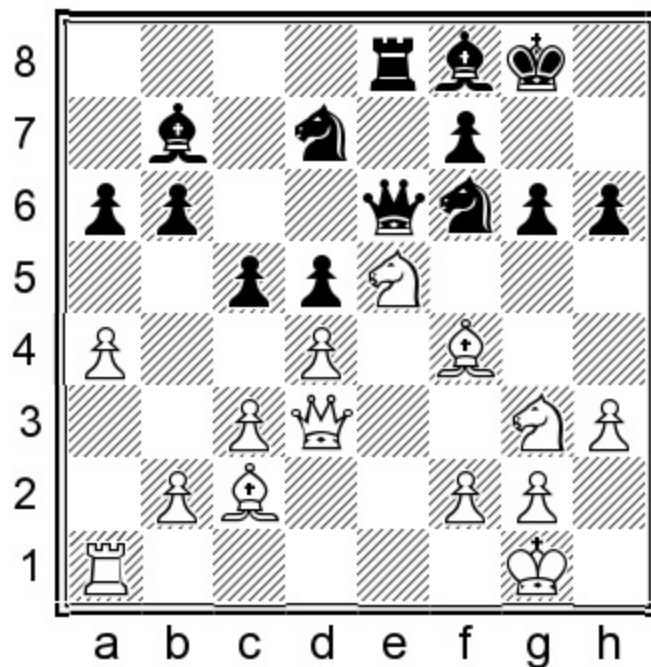
B) 13.♘e3 g6 14.a4 a6 15.h3 ♕g7 16.♕b3 h6 17.a5 b5



Position after: 17...b5

18.d5 ♖c5 19.♙a2 ♚d7 and again Black didn't experience any difficulties. 0-1 (47) Bortnyk, M (2442) – Indjic, A (2641) chess.com 2023.

13...♙xe8 14.a4 a6 15.♙g5 ♙e6 16.♘g3 ♜e8 17.♙d3 h6 18.♙d2 g6 19.h3 d5 20.♙f4 c5 21.♘e5



Position after: 21.♘e5

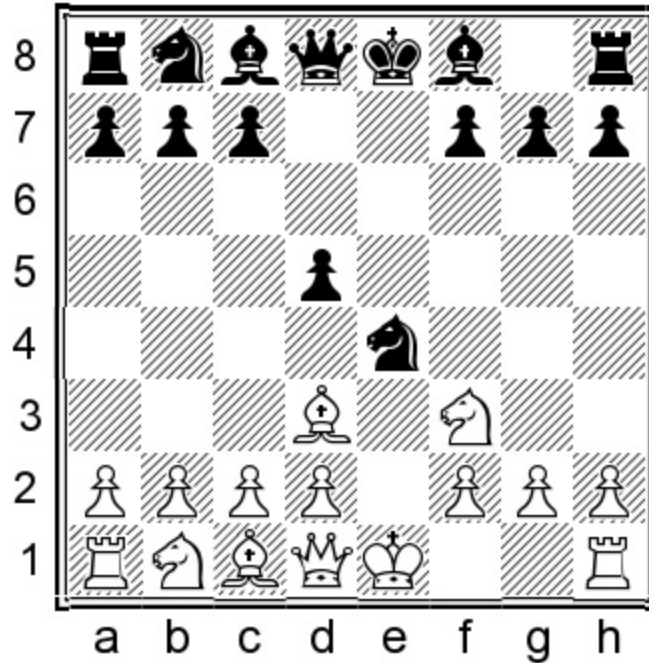
21...♘e4

e) Millenium Attack – 5.♙d3 d5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.♙d3

Another plan that I decided to cover is:

5...d5

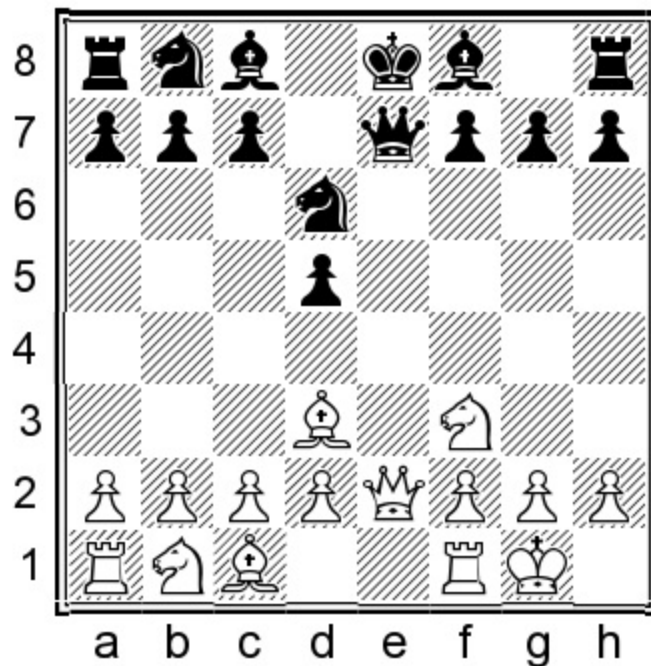


Position after: 5...d5

6.♙e2

6.0-0 ♙e7 7.♖e1 ♗d6 This leads to the same position as after 6.♙e2.

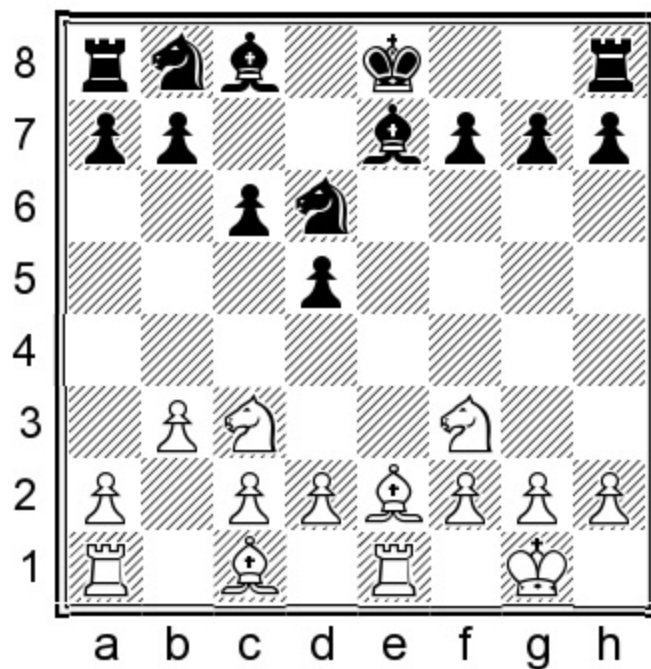
6...♙e7 7.0-0 ♗d6



Position after: 7... Nxd6

8. Qd1

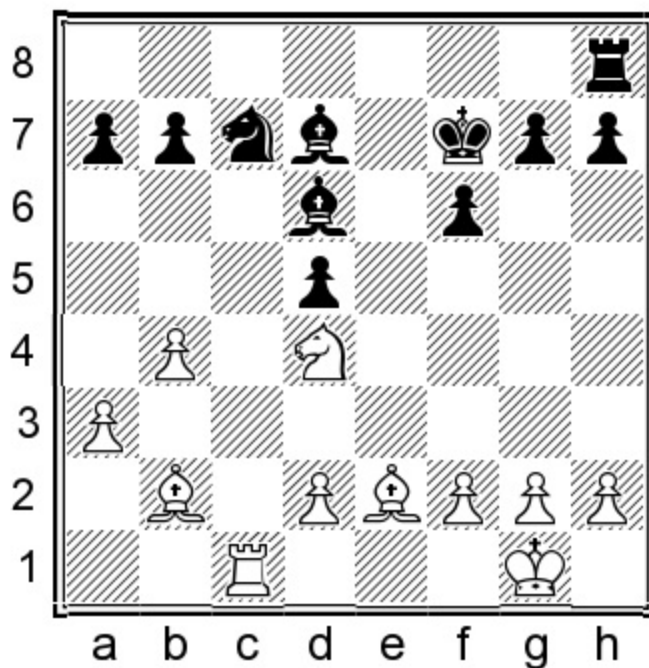
The alternative is very interesting: 8. Re1 Qxe2 9. Qxe2 Qe7 10. Nc3 c6 11. b3



Position after: 11. b3

A) 11... f6 And now: 12. Nd1 [12. Na4 Qf7 13. c4 dxc4 14. bxc4 Rd8 15. Qb2 Qa6 = 1/2 - 1/2 (54)
Demchenko, A (2610) – Bezgodov, A (2452) Chelyabinsk 2021] 12... Qf7 13. Ne3 Nf5 14. Nxf5

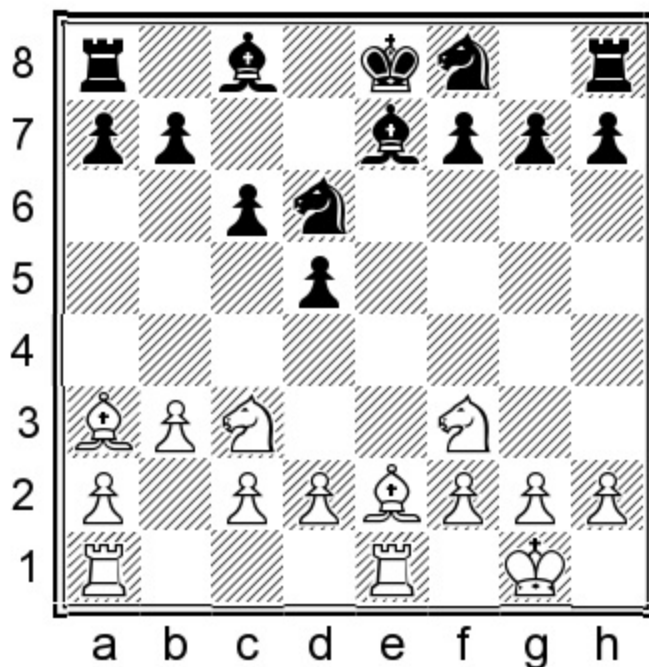
♙xf5 15. ♜d4 ♚d7 16. c4 ♙c5 17. ♙b2 ♜a6 18. cxd5 cxd5 19. ♞ec1 ♞ac8 20. a3 ♚d6 21. b4 ♞xc1+
 22. ♞xc1 ♜c7!



Position after: 22... ♜c7!

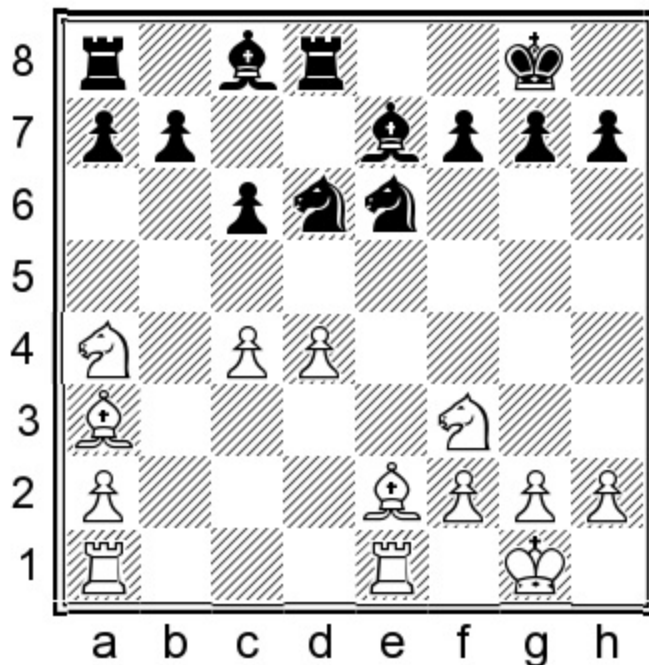
[22...g6 23. $\text{♙b5} \pm \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (31) Baroin, B (2361) – Sneddon, I (2363) ICCF 2020] 23. ♙f3 h5 24. h4 g6
 25. g3 ♞e8=

B) 11... $\text{♜d7!?$ Perhaps this idea is worth considering. 12. ♙a3 ♜f8



Position after: 12... ♜f8

B1) 13.♖a4 ♘e6 14.c4 dxc4 15.bxc4 0-0 16.d4 ♜d8

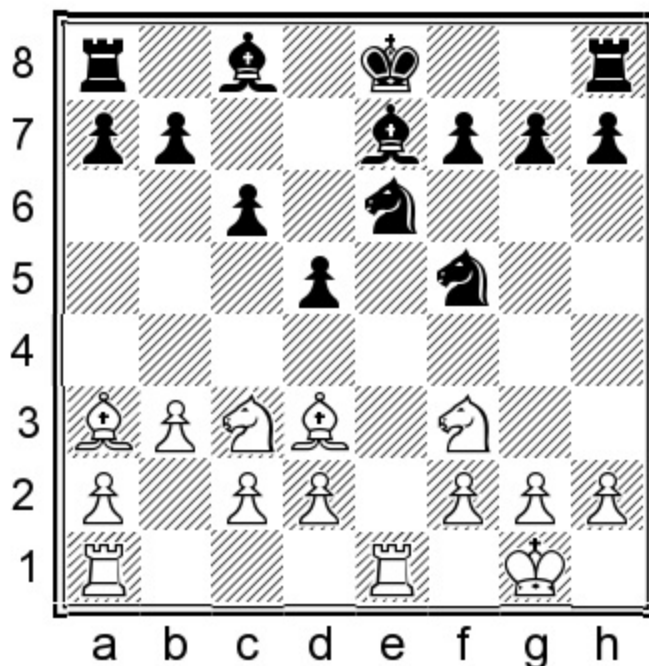


Position after: 16...♜d8

17.♗c3 ♜f8 This is an OK endgame for Black.

B2) 13.♙d3 ♘e6 14.♗e2 0-0 15.♗ed4 ♜e8 16.♞e2 [16.♗xe6 ♜xe6 17.♗d4 ♜f6! =] 16...♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♜f6 18.♞ae1 ♞xe2 19.♗xe2 ♗e8 20.c3 ♙d7 =

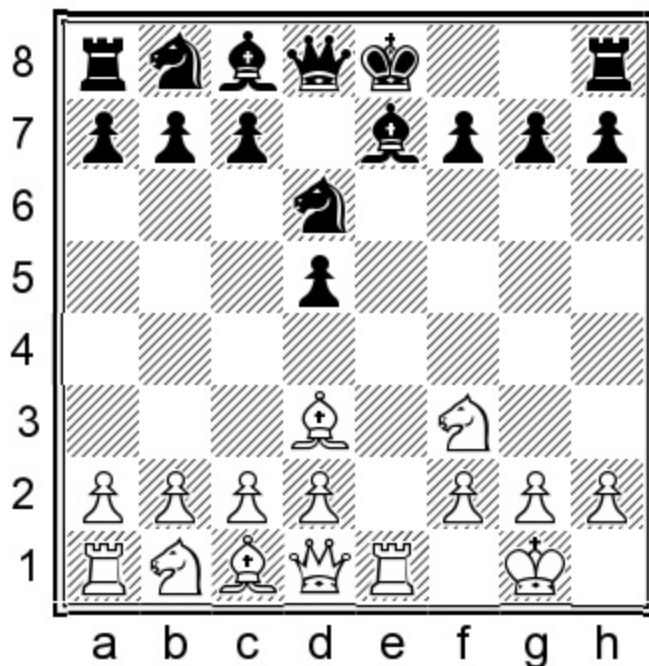
B3) 13.♙c4!? A tactical idea. 13...♗f5 [13...♗e6 14.♙xd5!± This is the point.] 14.♙d3 ♘e6!



Position after: 14...♘e6!

15.♙xe7 ♖xe7 16.♗e2 0-0 17.♗ed4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 ♖e8 19.♞e3 ♙d7 20.♞ae1 ♔f8 21.f4 ♞ad8
 22.b4 g6 23.♕f2 b6=

8...♞d8 9.♞e1+ ♙e7



Position after: 9...♙e7

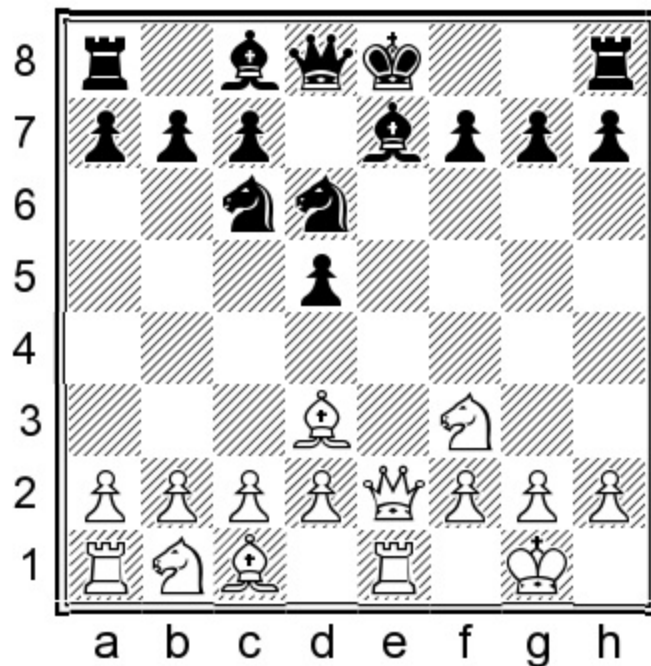
Black is playing in very solid manner: the knight on d6 serves a good purpose (as always in the Petrov) especially in helping to exchange bishops on f5.

This is the same position as after 6.♞e2, so for that reason Black is playing in a very practical way.

10.♗c3

The most dangerous move. Alternatives are:

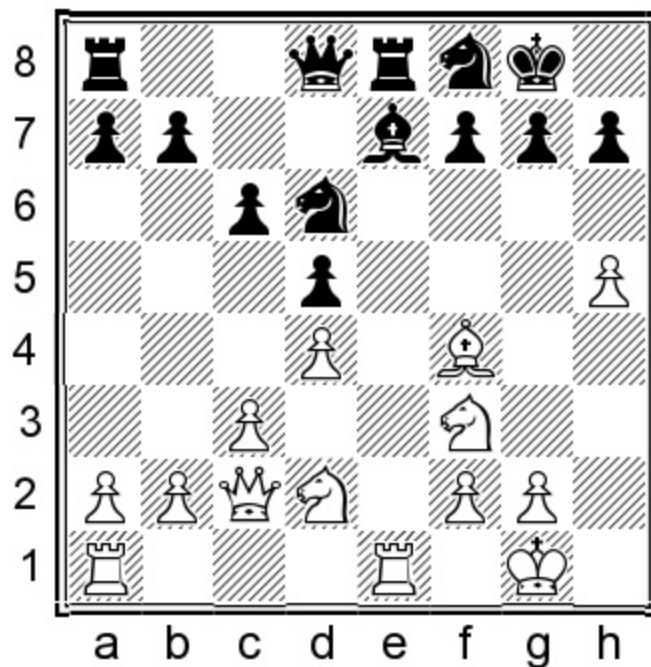
A) 10.♞e2?! ♗c6!



Position after: 10... Nc6!

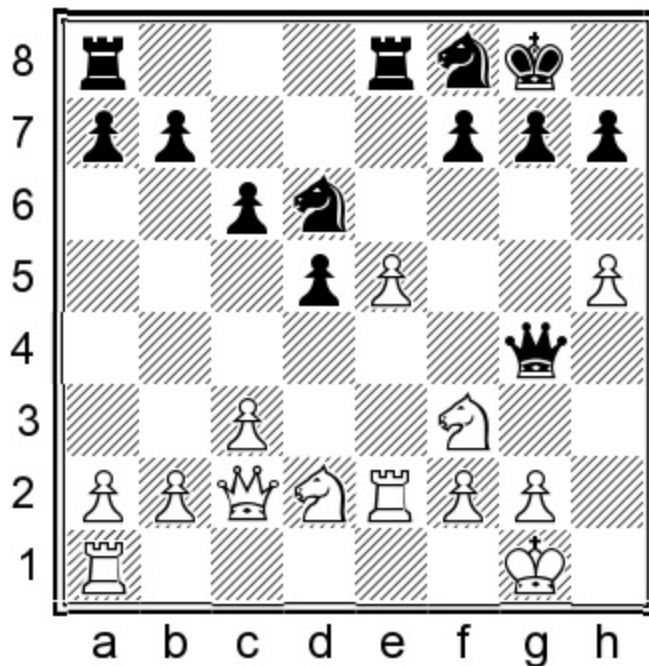
11. Nc3 Qe6 12. Nb5 Qf6 13. Nxd6+ Qxd6 14. Qf5 0-0 15. Qxe6 fxe6 16. Qxe6+ Qxe6 17. Rxe6 Nd4 18. Rxf6 Rfe8! ½ – ½ (53) Neelash, S (2446) – Nemeth, Z (2247) Cala Gonone 2022.

B) 10. c3 0-0 11. Qc2 c6 12. d4 Qf5 13. Qf4 Qxc2 14. Qxc2 Nd7 15. Nbd2 Re8 16. h4 Nf8 17. h5



Position after: 17.h5

17... Qd7 [Black can also stop the advance of the h-pawn at once with... 17... h6 18. Qxd6 Qxd6 19. Rxe8 Qxe8 20. Re1 Qd7 21. Ne5 Qxe5 22. Rxe5 Re8=] 18. Re2 Qf6 19. Qe5 Qxe5 20. dxe5 Qg4!



Position after: 20... ♕g4!

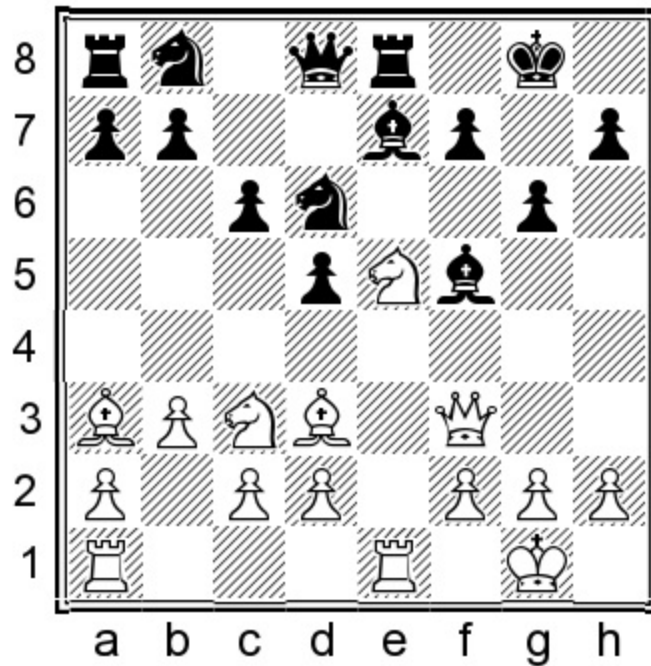
21. ♖ae1 ♜b5 with complications that are OK for Black. 0-1 (39) Gledura, B (2644) – Fedoseev, V (2674) chess.com 2023.

C) 10. ♕f1 0-0 11. d4 ♕f5 12. ♕f4 ♜d7 13. c3 c6 14. ♖b3 ♜f6!? [14... ♜b6 15. ♜bd2 ♜e4 16. a4± ½ – ½ (36) Praggnanandhaa, R (2690) – Lenderman, A (2572) chess.com 2023] 15. ♜bd2 [15. ♕xd6 ♕xd6 16. ♖xb7 ♖b8 17. ♖xc6 ♖b6 18. ♖a4 ♖xb2 19. ♜bd2 ♕f4↑] 15... a5 16. a4 ♜fe4 17. ♜xe4 ♕xe4 18. ♜d2 ♕g6 19. ♖ad1 ♖d7=

10...c6 11. ♖e2

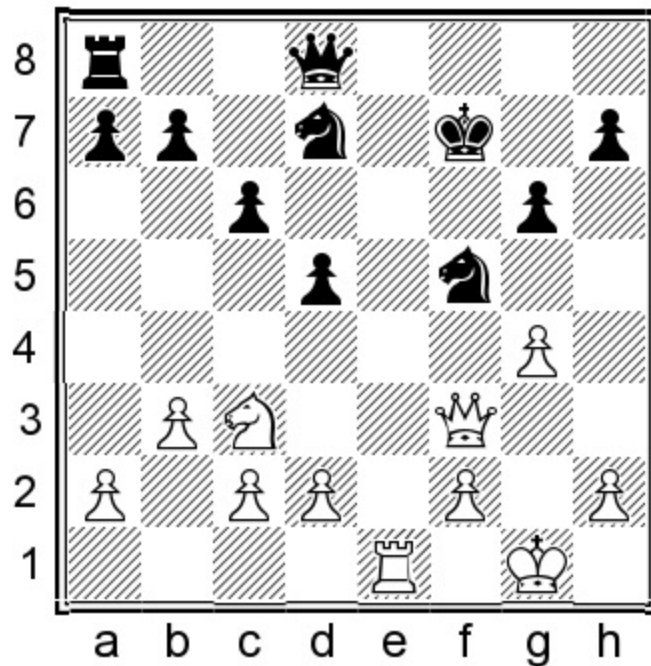
Preventing castling.

11. b3 0-0 12. ♕a3 ♖e8 13. ♜e5 g6 14. ♖f3 ♕f5 It seems that “blitzkrieg” doesn’t work here:



Position after: 14... Qf5

15.g4 [15.Qxd6 Qxd6 16.Nxf7 Rxe1+ 17.Rxe1 Qxf7 18.Qxf5 gxf5 19.Wxf5+ Qg8 20.Wg4+ Qh8 21.Wd4+ Qg8 with perpetual check; 15.Qxf5 Nxf5 16.Nxf7 Qxf7 17.Qxe7 Rxe7 18.g4 Rxe1+ 19.Rxe1 Nd7!

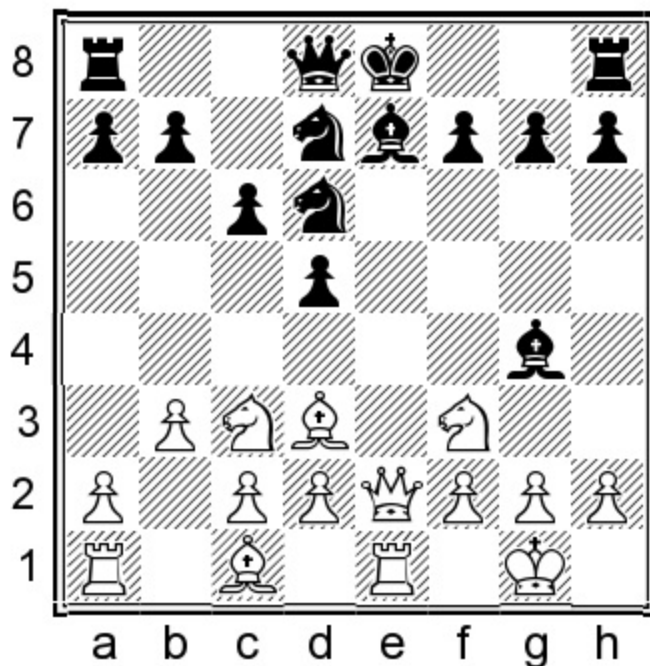


Position after: 19... Nd7!

20.gxf5 Wg5+ 21.Qf1 Wxf5 22.Wxf5+ gxf5 23.Ne2 Re8 24.Nd4 Rxe1+ 25.Qxe1 Qf6 Again we have an equal endgame.] 15... Qe6! 16.Na4 b6 17.Re2 Wc7 18.Rae1 Nd7 19.Qb2 Nxe5 20.Qxe5 Wd7 Black

has developed everything in time and now the position is fine. ½-½ (58) Pospíšil, L (2450) – Bredenhof, B (2300) ICCF 2021.

11...♔g4! 12.b3 ♘d7



Position after: 12... ♘d7

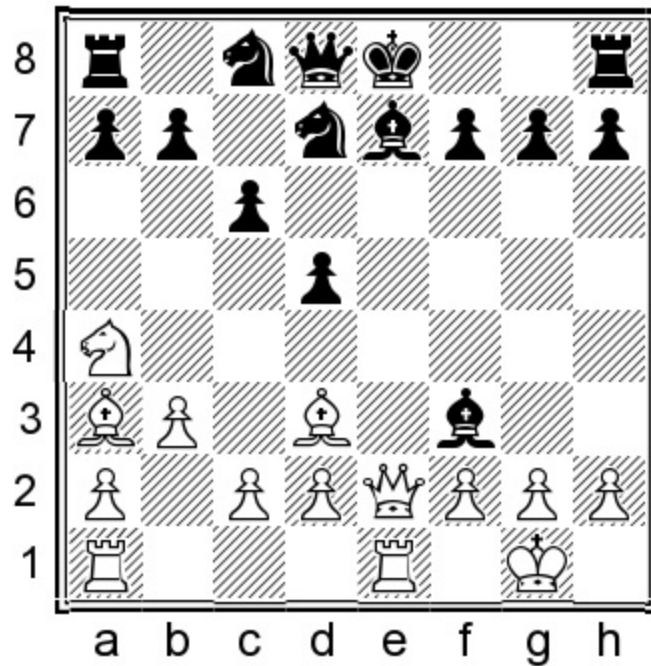
13.♔a3

13.♔b2 ♘c5 14.♘a4 ♔xf3 15.♚xf3 ♘xd3 16.♚xd3 Black stands well. ½ – ½ (16) Morozevich, A (2748) – Kramnik, V (2758) Wijk aan Zee 2000.

13...♘c8 14.h4!?

An interesting approach. Alternatively;

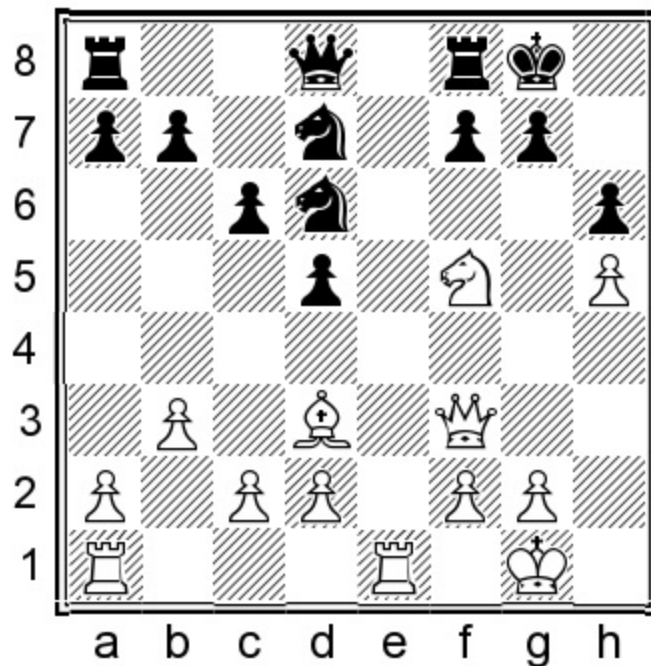
14.♘a4 ♔xf3



Position after: 14...♙xf3

15.gxf3 [15.♙xf3 0-0 16.♙xe7 ♘xe7 17.♖e2 ♘f6 18.♗ae1 ♖e8 19.♗f4 b6 20.♘b2 ♗d7 This is also equal.] 15...♗f8 16.♙b2 ♙d6 17.f4 ♘e7 18.♗f3 ♘g6 19.♙f5 ♘f6 The king on f8 is fine; White doesn't have enough firepower to put Black under pressure.

14...♙xf3 15.♙xf3 0-0 16.♙xe7 ♘xe7 17.h5 h6 18.♘e2 ♘c8 19.♘d4 ♘d6 20.♘f5



Position after: 20.♘f5

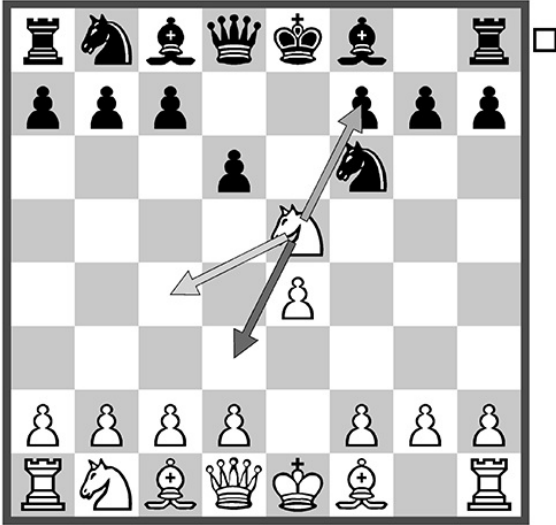
20...♙f6

Again Black doesn't experience any serious problems and we can say that the position is equal: $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$
(23) Krebs, J (2319) – Höxter, H (2309) ICCF 2021.

Chapter 6

Various 4th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6



Chapter Guide

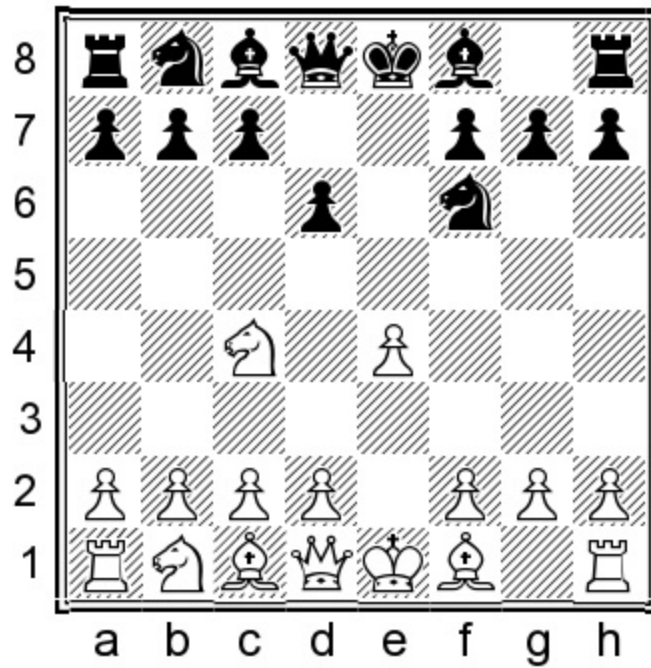
Chapter 6 – Various 4th Move Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6

- a) 4.♘c4 – Paulsen Variation
- b) 4.♘xf7 – Cochrane Gambit
- c) 4.♘d3 – Karklins Variation - Sideline
- d) 4.♘d3 – Karklins Variation - Mainline

a) 4.♘c4 – Paulsen Variation

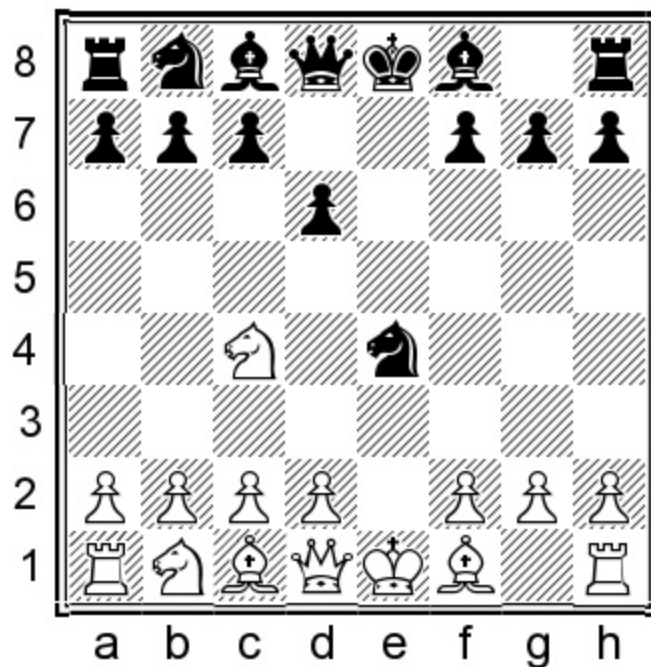
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘c4



Position after: 4. Nc4

This is yet another way to handle this opening: the knight is going to e3 from where it will create pressure on the d5-square or pawn (depending on whether Black has ...pushed d5 or not). This line is not so popular but it can lead to some interesting positions.

4... Nxe4

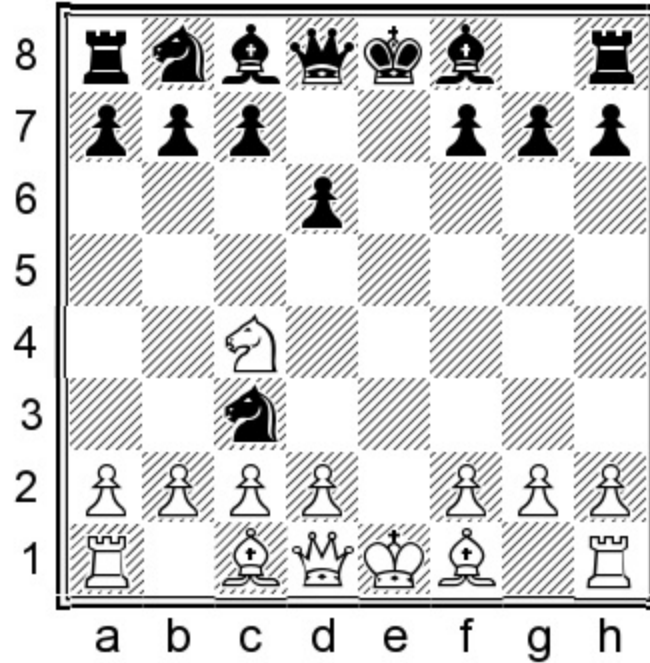


Position after: 4... Nxe4

5.d4

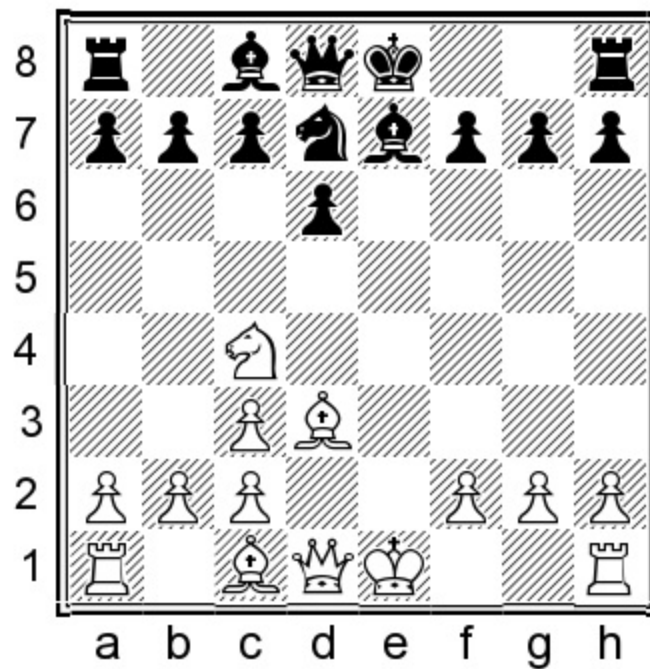
The main reply and best but there are other ideas as well, from which I think only going for an endgame with 5.♞e2 is sensible:

A) 5.♘c3 ♘xc3



Position after: 5...♘xc3

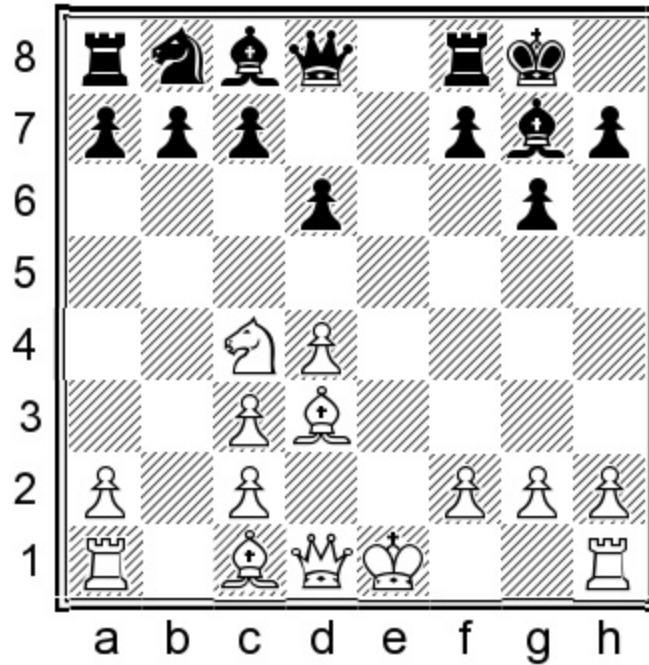
A1) 6.dxc3 ♙e7 7.♙d3 ♘d7



Position after: 7... ♖d7

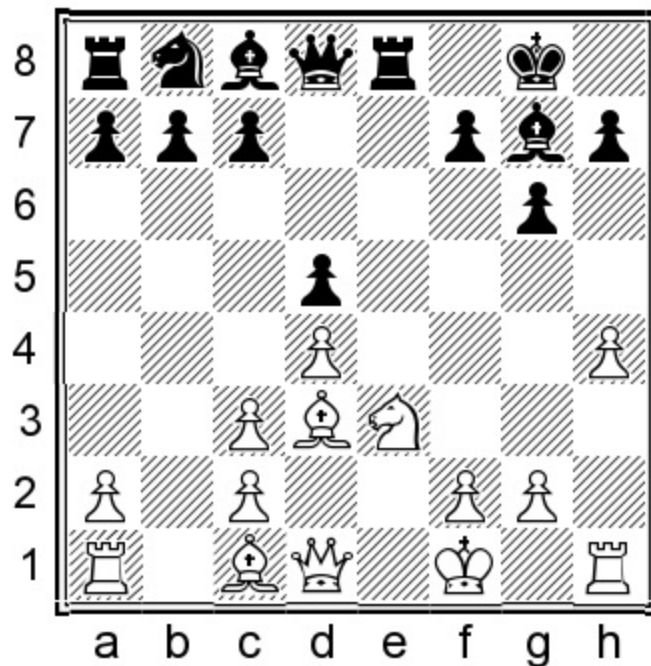
8.0-0 [8. ♖e3 d5 9. ♗d2 ♗e5 10. ♖e2 with an easy game for Black. ½ – ½ (10) Rozentalis, E (2570) – Solodovnichenko, Y (2602) Oslo 2012] 8... ♗c5 9. ♗e3 0-0 10. ♗d5 ♗xd3 11. cxd3 c6 12. ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 13. ♖f4 ♖e6 Another game in which Black didn't face any problems. ½ – ½ (13) Sirotine, K (2227) – Korniushev, N (2448) Krasnodar 2002.

A2) 6.bxc3 This is more aggressive compared to the alternatives: 6...g6 7.d4 ♖g7 8. ♖d3 0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

A2.1) Sharp – but probably unsound – is: 9.h4 ♖e8+ 10. ♔f1 d5 11. ♗e3

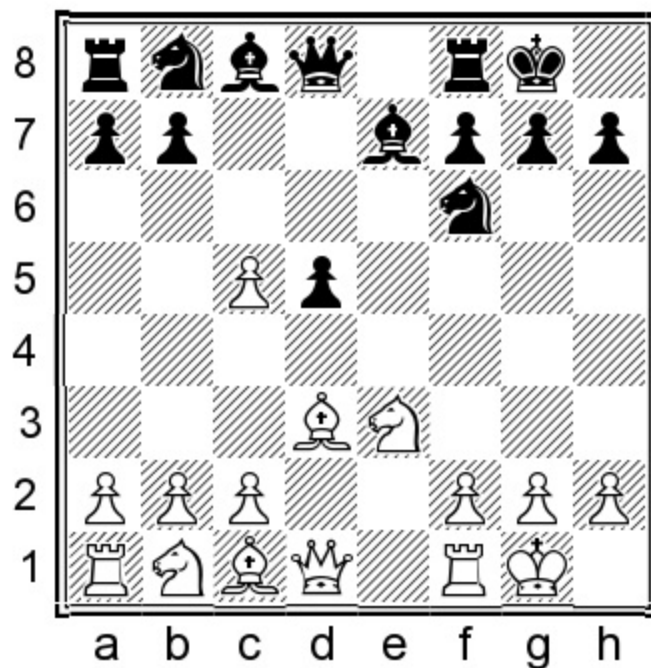


Position after: 11. ♞e3

11...♞d7 [11...c5 12.♞b1 ♞c6 13.h5 c4 Unusual play and the early draw doesn't tell us much. ½ – ½ (13) Simacek, P (2490) – Cernousek, L (2462) Ceske Budejovice 2018] 12.h5 ♞f6 13.♞f3 c5 also looks good for Black.

A2.2) 9.0-0 ♞d7 10.♞f3 ♞b8 11.a4 b6 12.♞e3 ♞f6 13.♞d5 ♞xd5 14.♞xd5 ♞b7 Black is fine. 0-1 (60) Vavulin, M (2425) – Fridman, D (2639) Riga 2014.

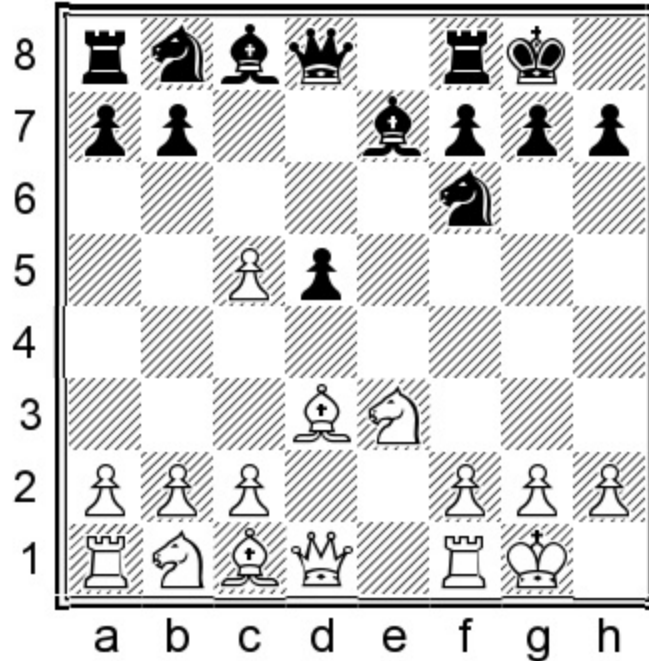
B) 5.d3 ♞f6 6.d4 d5 7.♞e3 ♞e7 8.♞d3 0-0 9.0-0 c5 10.dxc5



Position after: 10.dxc5

10...♞c6 11.♞d2 ♟xc5 12.♞f3 ♞e8 Black has a fine position; the knight on e3 stands in the way of harmonious development for White.

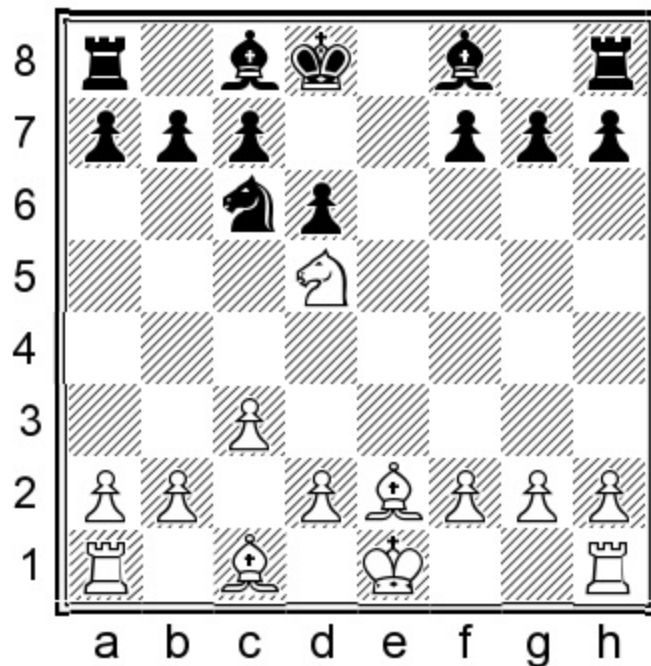
C) 5.♞e2 ♞e7 6.♞e3 ♞c6!



Position after: 6...♞c6!

The same position can arise from the 4.♞d3!? line if White now goes for 7.♞d5, which we will extensively analyse in the file on 4.♞d3, but here we will focus on differences.

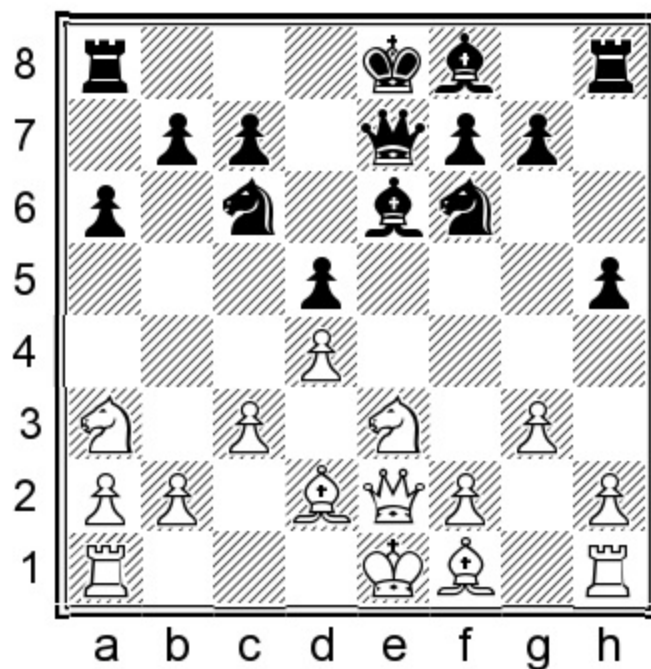
C1) 7.♞c3 ♞f6 8.♞ed5 ♞xe2+ 9.♟xe2 ♞xd5 10.♞xd5 ♞d8 11.c3



Position after: 11.c3

11...♘e7! [11...♙e6 12.♘f4 ♕f5 13.d4± 1-0 (56) Griffith, K (2341) – Mekhitarian, K (2569) chess.com 2022] 12.♘f4 c6 13.d4 ♖c7 14.0-0 ♙d7 15.♙d2 ♜e8 16.♞fe1 g6 The position is equal.

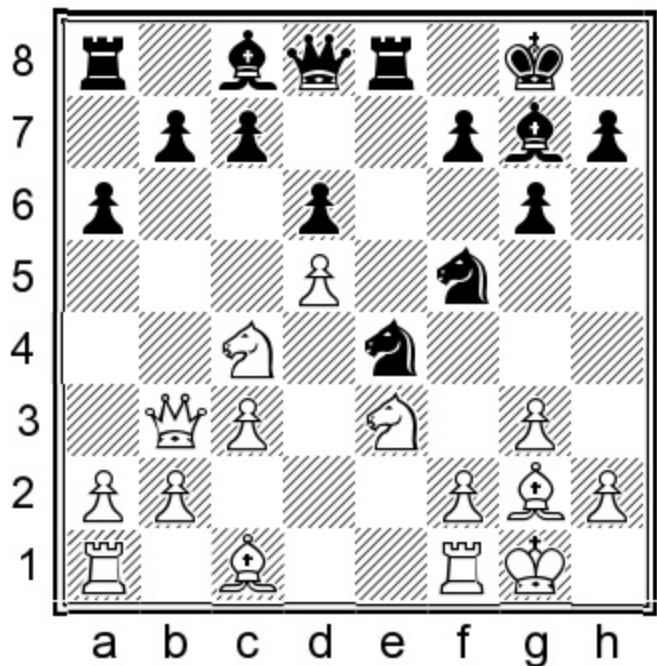
C2) 7.c3 ♘f6 8.g3 [8.d4 h5 9.♘a3 a6 10.♙d2 ♙e6 11.g3 d5



Position after: 11...d5

12.♙g2 ♜d7 13.♘ac2 ♙e7 14.h3 ♘a7 15.f4 g6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.c4 ♞he8 Interesting play from both sides. Black is not worse, for sure. 0-1 (53) Sasikiran, K (2675) – Bacrot, E (2671) Linares

2019] 8...g6 9.♔g2 ♔g7 10.d4 0-0 11.♘d2 ♚e8 12.0-0 ♛d8 13.♗b5 ♜e7 14.d5 ♞f5 15.♞dc4 a6
 16.♗b3 ♞e4!



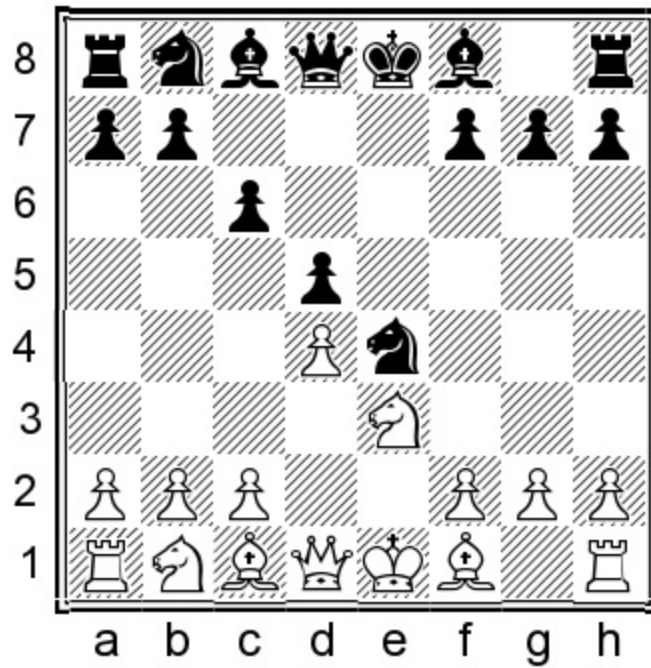
Position after: 16...♞e4!

17.♗d1 ♞c5 This also offers good play for Black. 0-1 (34) Shabalov, A (2529) – Lenderman, A (2637) chess.com 2019.

5...d5 6.♞e3

Our starting position. As I said, the knight on e3 plays a significant role in creating pressure in the centre.

6...c6

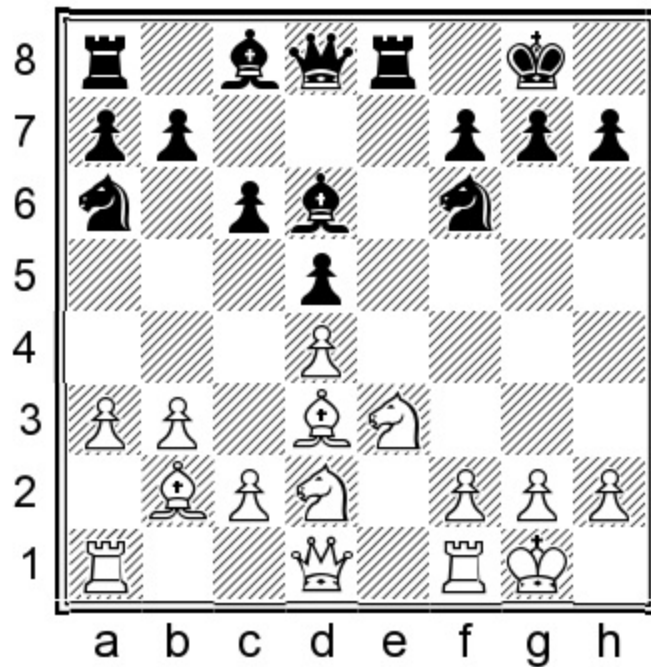


Position after: 6...c6

7.♘d3

White can also challenge the knight on e4 at once with:

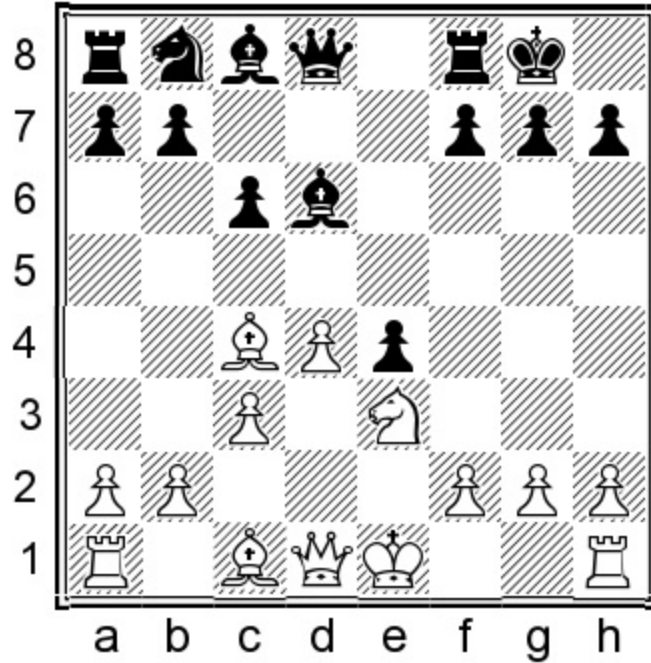
7.♘d2 ♘d6 [Black can retreat as well: 7...♘f6 8.♘d3 ♘d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.b3 ♖e8 11.♘b2 ♘a6 12.a3



Position after: 12.a3

12...♘c7 13.c4 ♘e6 14.♖e1 ♘f4 15.♘f1 This is also another way to handle this line and to me it looks

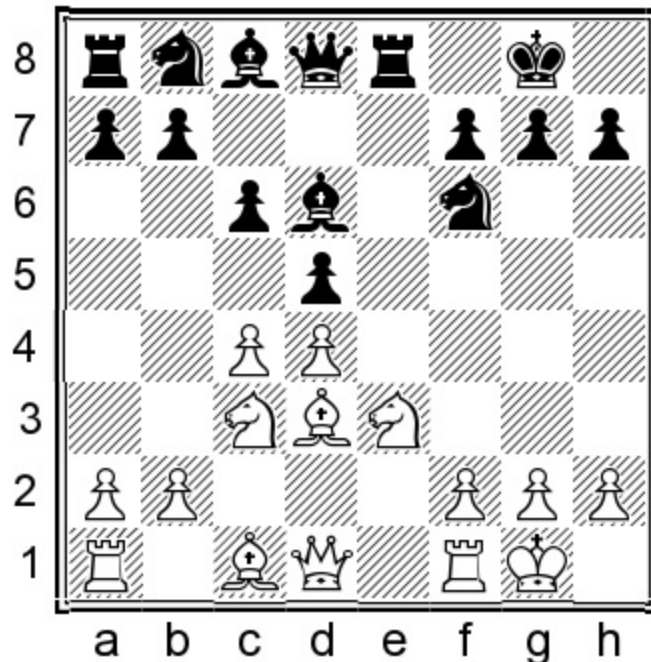
perfectly playable for Black.] 8.♖xe4 dxe4 9.♙c4 0-0 10.c3



Position after: 10.c3

10...♗d7 It is best to continue to develop... [10...♙h4 11.g3 ♙h3 12.♙f1 ♙e6 13.♙g2 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♖e8 15.f3 ♗f6 16.fxe4 ♗xe4 17.♗f5± ½ – ½ (39) Sonnet, J (2243) – Wochnik, M (2135) ICCF email 2003] 11.0-0 ♗f6 12.a4 ♙e7 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.b3 ♙d7 15.♙b2 ♖ad8 16.♙f1 ♗d5 This is a good position for Black.

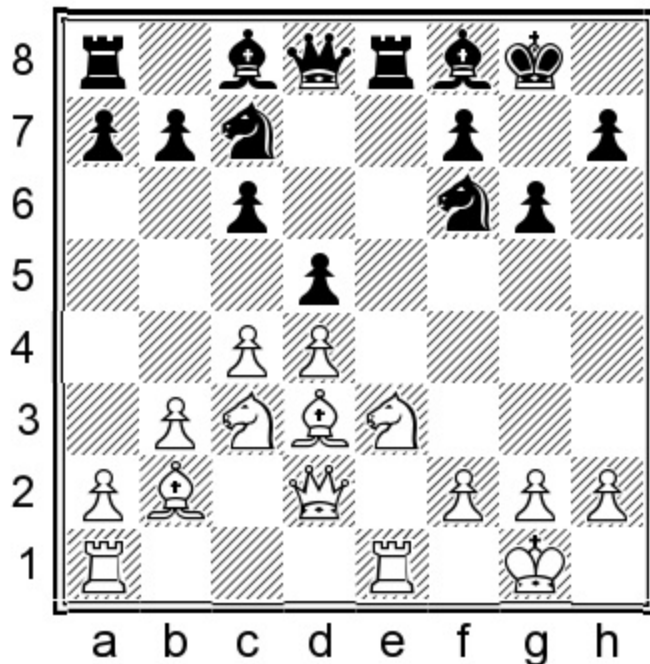
7...♙d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.c4 ♗f6 10.♗c3 ♖e8!?



Position after: 10...♖e8!?

This is such a rare position in tournament practice. Let's have a closer look:

11.b3 ♘f8 12.♘b2 ♗a6 13.♙d2 ♖c7 14.♗fe1 g6

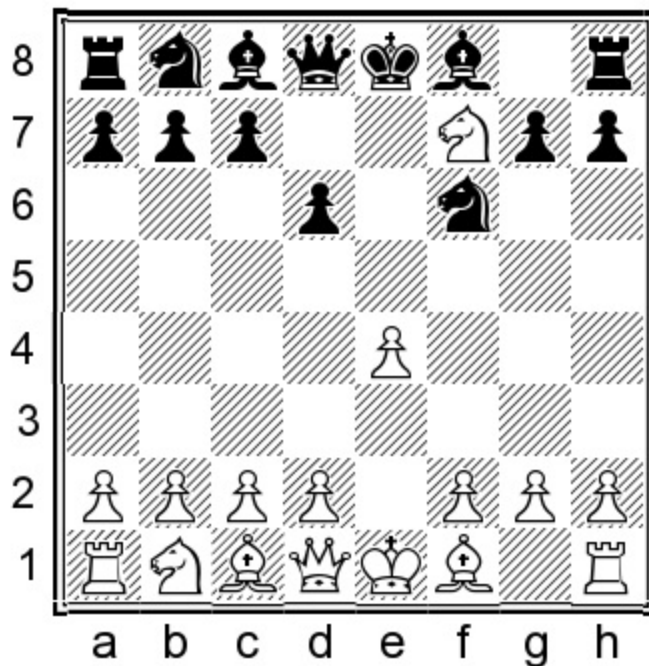


Position after: 14...g6

With complications, in which Black is not worse.

b) 4.♗xf7 – Cochrane Gambit

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗xf7



Position after: 4. ♖xf7

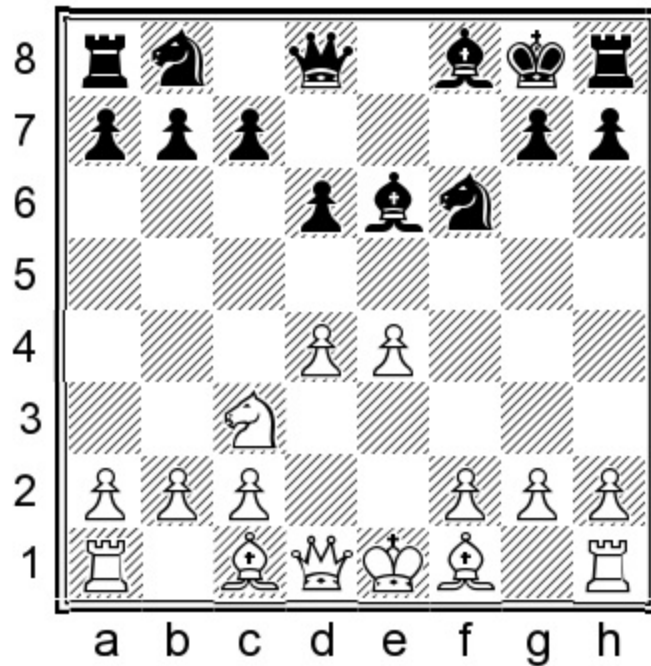
A famous piece sacrifice from the romantic period and Paul Morphy's era, named after Scottish lawyer and chess master, John Cochrane. I must say that things are not at all as easy as they may appear.

4... ♕xf7 5.d4

Not the only choice, but probably the best chance. White has two other ideas here:

A) 5. ♕c4+ d5! 6.exd5 ♕d6 7.0-0 ♖e8 8. ♖c3 ♕f5 9.d4 ♖bd7 and Black is better.

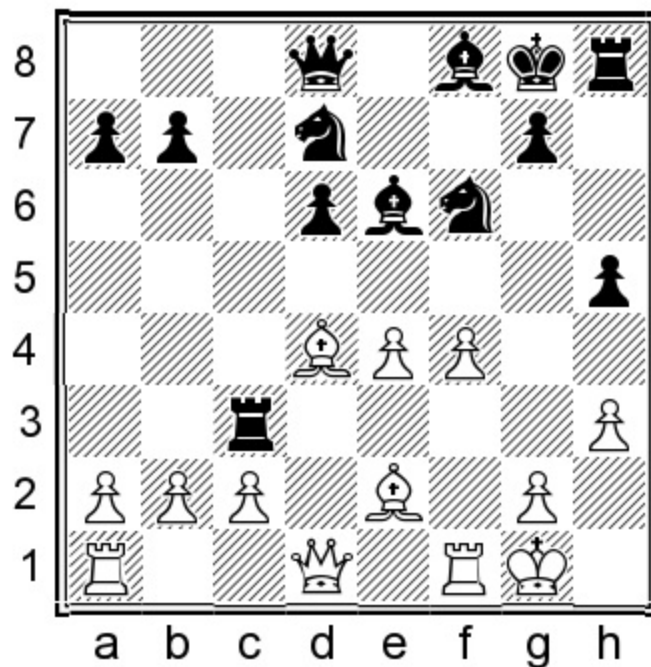
B) 5. ♖c3 ♕e6 6.d4 ♕g8



Position after: 6...♔g8

White is counting on his massive central play but Black is safely a piece up. Let's see some examples:

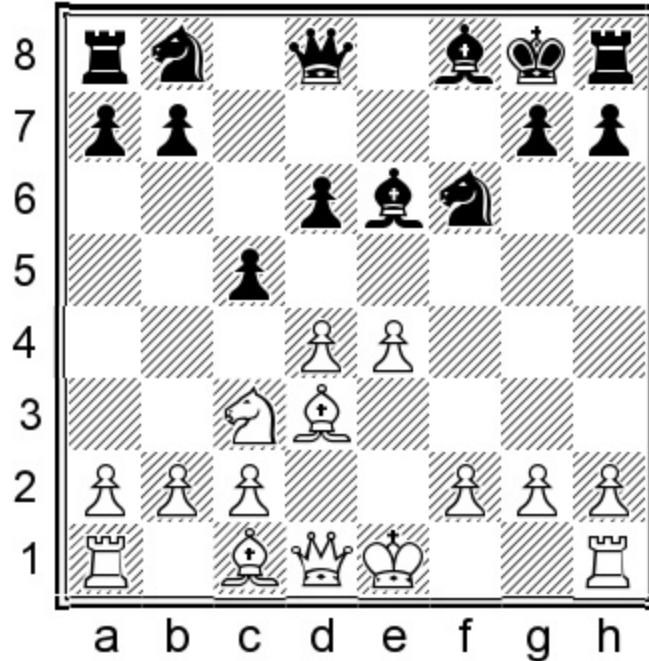
B1) 7.f4 ♖bd7 8.♗e2 [8.♗e3 ♜e7 9.♞f3 ♗f7 10.e5 ♞e8 11.0-0-0 ♜b6 12.h3 ♜fd5 13.♗d2 ♜xc3 14.♞xc3 ♞e6 15.b3 c5⌘ This is just one possible idea to confront White with here.] 8...c5 9.♗e3 [9.d5 ♗f7 10.♗f3 ♞a5 11.♞d3 ♞e8 12.0-0 a6 13.♗d2 b5 Black is clearly better. 0-1 (21) Roggensack Hanspach, P (2075) – Gesicki, J (2270) LSS email 2011] 9...♞c8 10.0-0 h5 11.h3 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♞xc3!



Position after: 12...♞xc3!

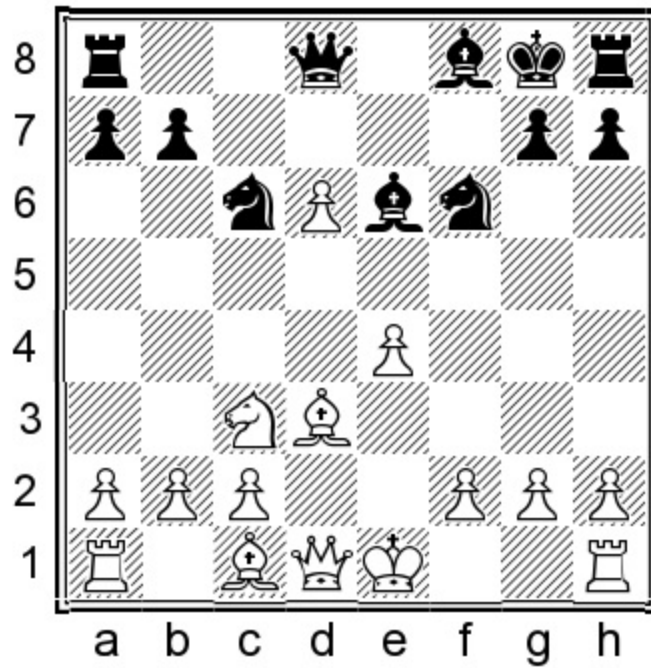
13.♙xc3 ♜xe4 14.♙d4 ♜g3 15.♞e1 ♜xe2+ 16.♚xe2 ♙f7 We simply transpose to favourable position using Sicilian motifs. Black is fine overall.

B2) 7.♙d3 c5



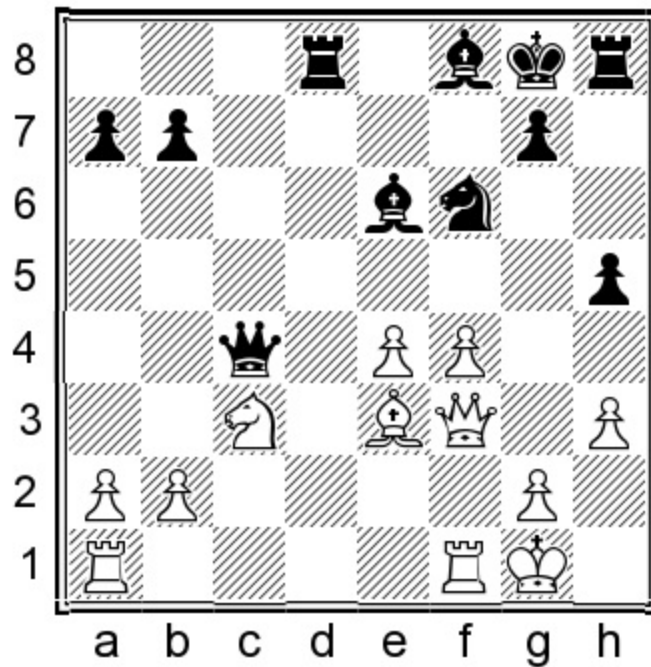
Position after: 7...c5

8.dxc5 [8.d5 ♙f7 9.b3 ♜bd7 10.0-0 h5 11.a4 h4 12.f4 a6 13.♚f3 ♙h5 14.♚e3 ♚c7 15.♙c4 ♜b6 16.♙d2 ♜xc4 17.bxc4 ♞e8 Black is a piece up all the way. 0-1 (26) Poelvoorde, H (2304) – Corbat, P (2421) ICCF 2022] 8...♜c6 9.cxd6



Position after: 9.cxd6

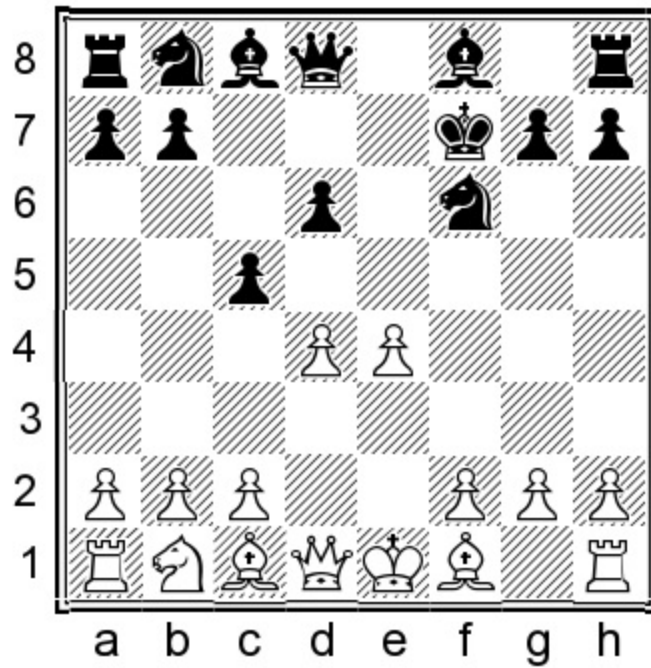
9...♙xd6 [9...♚xd6 10.h3 ♜d8 11.0-0 h5 12.♙e3 ♞e5 13.f4 ♞xd3 14.cxd3 ♚xd3 15.♚f3 ♚c4



Position after: 15...♚c4

16.♞fd1 ♞xd1+ 17.♞xd1 ♙d7 18.♞d4 ♚c6 19.♚e2 g6 0-1 (28) Blondel, F (1802) – Schulz, G (2435) ICCF 2022] 10.0-0 h5 11.h3 ♞g4! 12.f4 ♞xd3 13.cxd3 ♚xd3 14.♚f3 ♚c4

5...c5



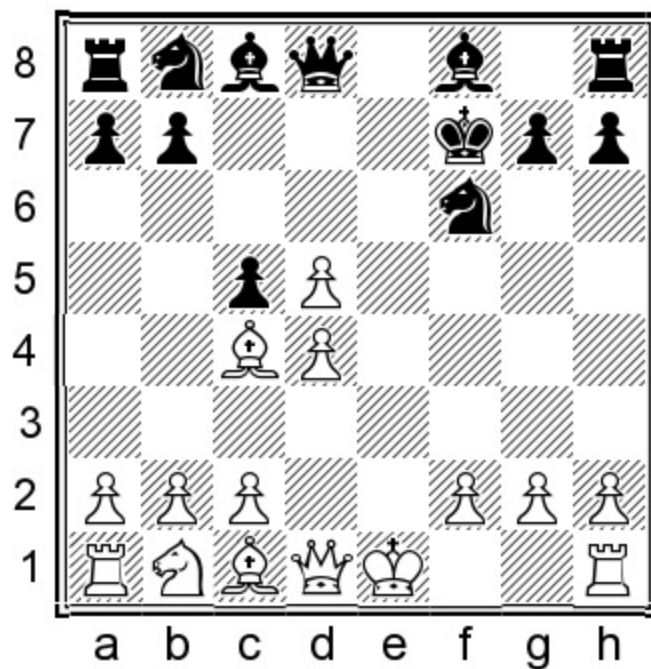
Position after: 5...c5

Going for a direct refutation.

6. ♘c3

It is not easy to give a clear evaluation or what the best continuation is for White here, but it seems that nothing offers chances even for equality.

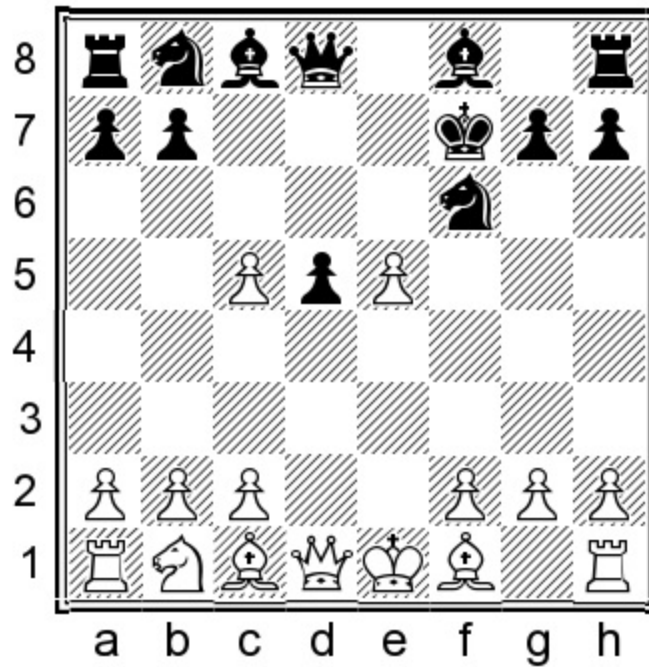
A) 6. ♙c4+ d5! 7. exd5



Position after: 7.exd5

7...b5! 8.♔e2 [8.♔xb5 ♚xd5 9.0-0 ♘b7 10.f3 ♚xd4+♞] 8...cxd4 9.0-0 ♔d6♞

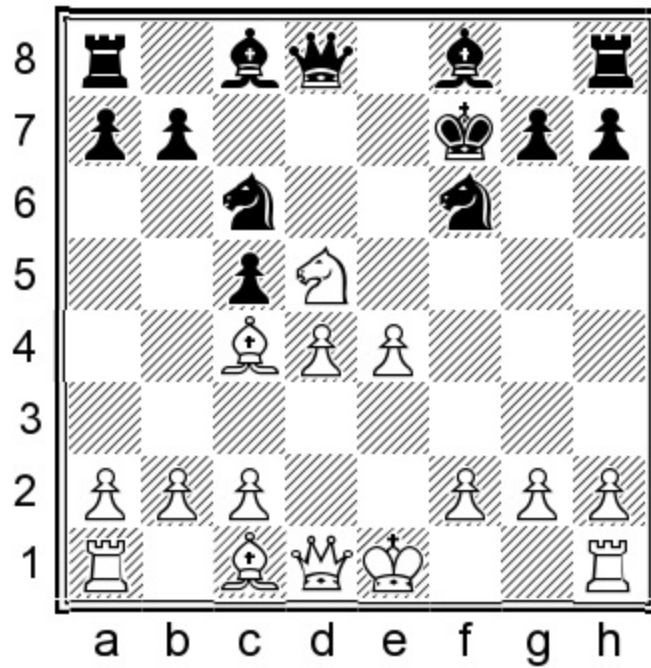
B) 6.dxc5 d5 7.e5



Position after: 7.e5

Now there are a couple of good moves: 7...♗g4 [7...♚e8 8.f4 ♔xc5! 9.♔e2 ♗bd7 10.exf6 ♗xf6 Black is much better already, for instance... 11.♗c3 ♚c6 12.h3 ♞e8 13.♔f1 ♔d7 Black has a fantastic position; instead of being attacked, Black is now the one doing the attacking!] 8.♔c4 [8.b4 ♗xe5 9.♔b2 ♔g4 10.♚d2 ♗bc6 11.♗c3 d4♞] 8...♔xc5 9.♚xd5+ [9.♔xd5+ ♔e8 10.0-0 ♚h4 winning for Black.] 9...♚xd5 10.♔xd5+ ♔e6 11.♔xb7 ♔xf2+ 12.♔e2 ♗d7 13.♔xa8 ♔c4+ 14.♔d1 ♞xa8 15.h3 ♗gxe5 Clearly better for Black. 0-1 (39) Spitz, P (2498) – Copar, A (2502) ICCF 2011.

6...♗c6 7.♔c4+ d5 8.♗xd5



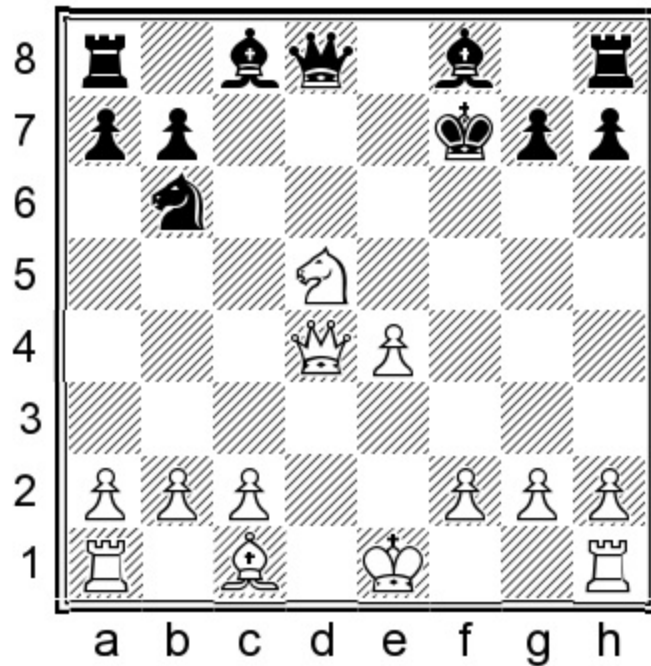
Position after: 8. ♘xd5

8. exd5 ♗xd4+

8...b5

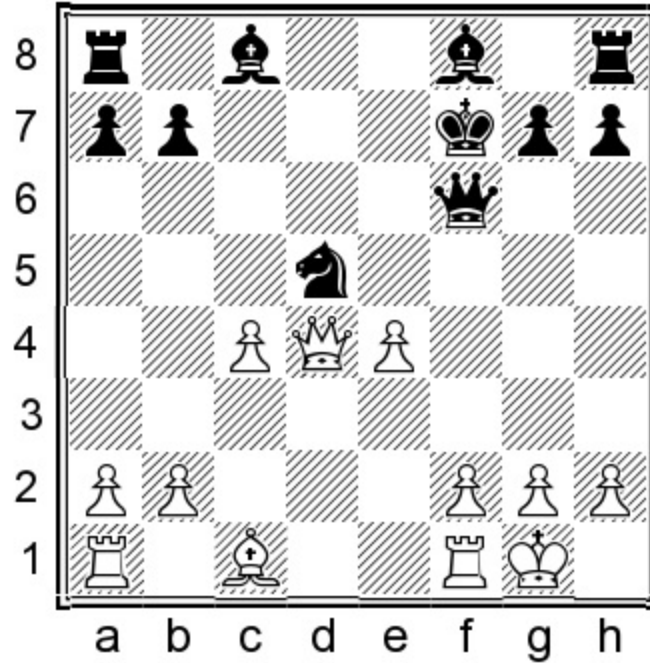
Black is forcing matters.

Another good idea is: 8... ♗a5 9. ♗xf6+ ♗xc4 10. ♗d5 cxd4 11. ♕xd4 ♗b6



Position after: 11... ♗b6

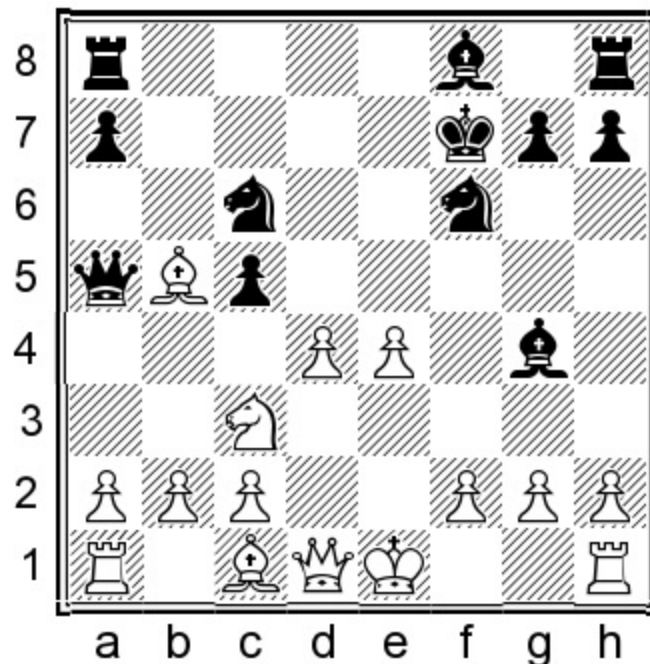
12.c4 The only chance. [12.0-0 ♖xd5 13.c4 ♕f6!



Position after: 13... ♕f6!

14.e5 ♗f4 15.♗xf4 ♕f5 16.♕d5+ ♗e6 17.♕xb7+ ♗e7 18.♗e3 ♗hb8 19.♕c6 ♗c8 20.♕b7 ♗xc4 Black is close to winning. 0-1 (39) Markovic, M (2470) – Savic, M (2545) Novi Sad 2018] 12... ♖xd5 13.cxd5 ♗d6 14.0-0 ♗e8 15.♗e3 ♕e7 16.f3 ♗d7 17.♗fc1 b6 White has a pawn centre but Black is a piece up and the two bishops are strong.

9.♗xb5 ♕a5+ 10.♗c3 ♗g4



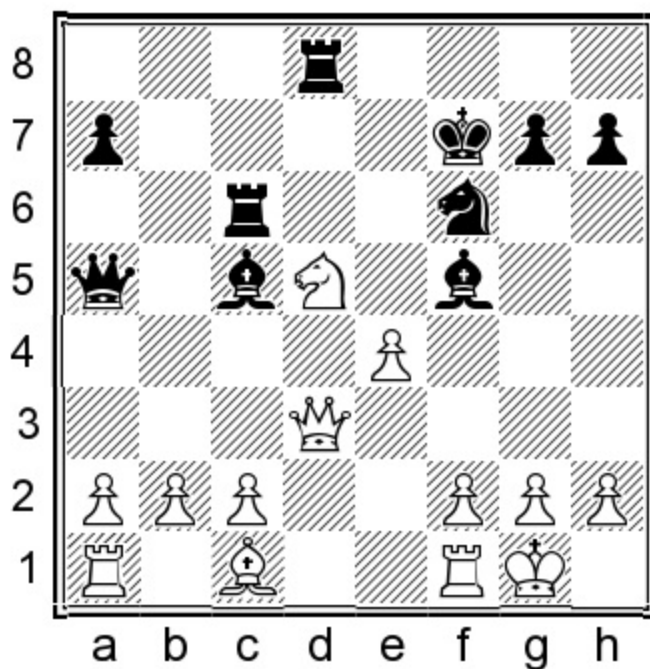
Position after: 10...♔g4

A fantastic line.

11.♔c4+

White has a couple of ideas here:

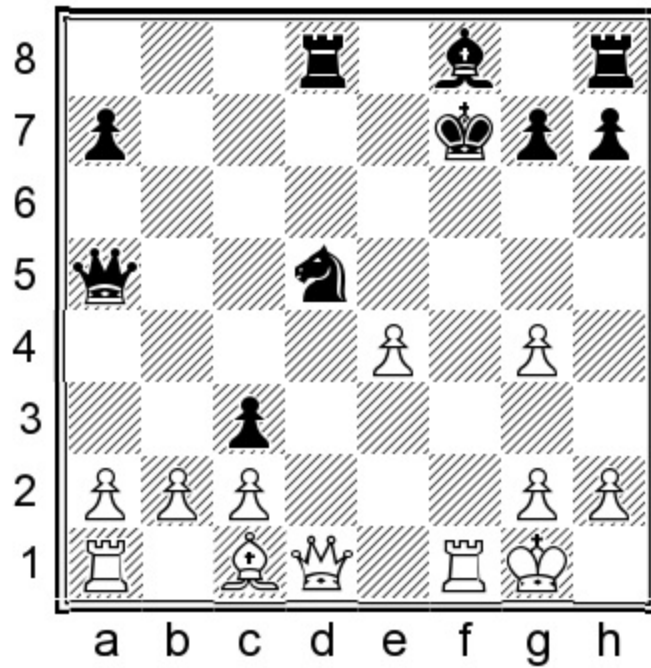
A) 11.♛d3 cxd4 12.♔xc6 ♖c8 13.♛xd4 ♖xc6 14.0-0 ♔c5 15.♛d3 ♖d8 16.♞d5 ♔f5!



Position after: 16...♔f5!

17.♛b3 ♔xe4 18.♛b7+ ♖d7 19.♛xc6 ♖xd5 20.♛b7+ ♔g6 21.♛b3 ♛c7 Tremendous tactics and Black is much better. 0-1 (21) Mantu, E – Diele, R www.bdf-fernschachbund.de 2008.

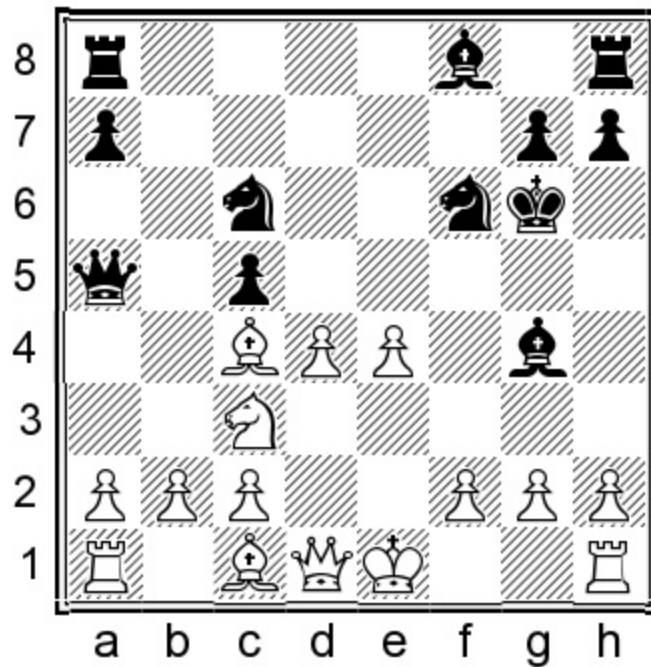
B) 11.f3 cxd4 12.♔xc6 ♖d8 13.♔d5+ ♞xd5 14.0-0 dxc3 15.fxg4+



Position after: 15.fxg4+

15...♘f6 16.♙e2 h6 17.e5 ♚c5+ 18.♔h1 ♜e8 19.♞f4 cxb2 Black is clearly better once again. 0-1 (27) Caviglia, M – Ottenweller, W LSS 2020.

11...♔g6!

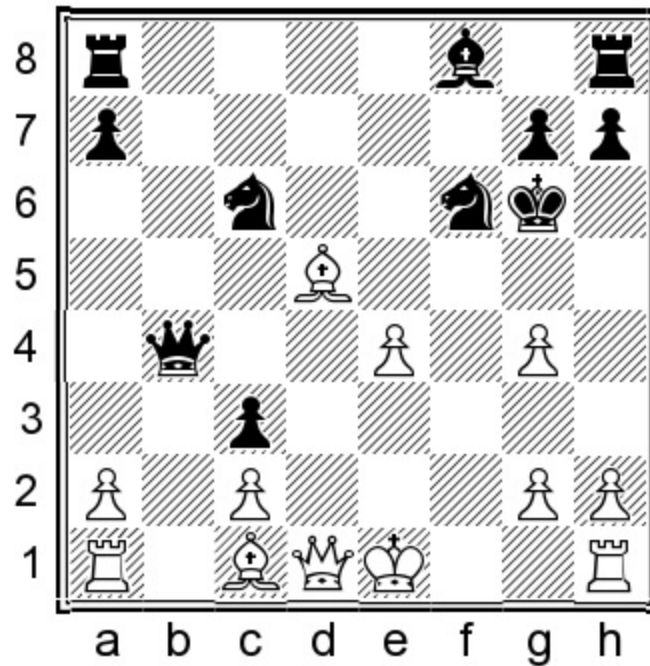


Position after: 11...♔g6!

We have a further split of entertaining ideas:

12. ♖d2

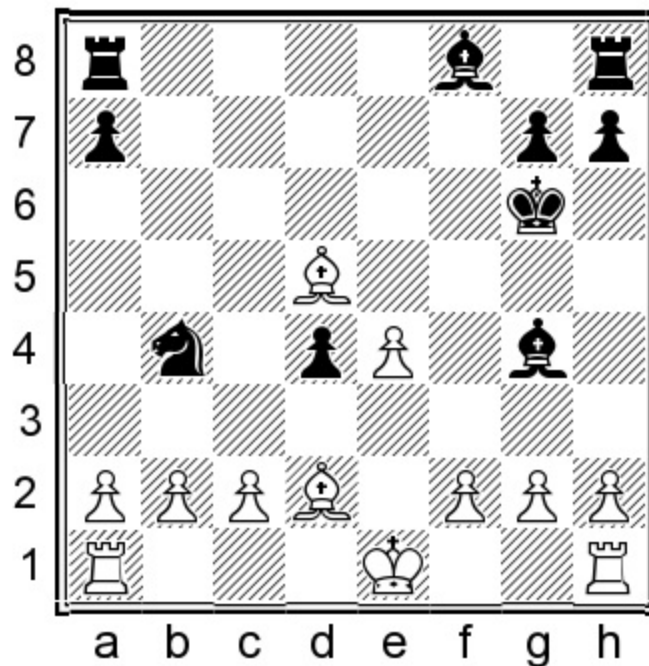
12.f3 cxd4 13.fxg4 dxc3 14.b4 ♖xb4 15.♙d5



Position after: 15. ♙d5

15...♘e5!? This looks natural to me. [Alternatively: 15...♞e8 16.♙xc6 ♞e6 17.0-0 ♖c5+ 18.♔h1 ♖xc6 19.g5 ♘e8 20.♞f4 ♘d6 21.♞h4 h5 22.gxh6 gxh6 23.♖g4+ ♔f7 24.♖f3+ ♔e8 25.♞b1 ♙e7+ A great correspondence game. ½ – ½ (52) Wurschner, M (2408) – Norrelykke, S (2437) ICCF email 2009] 16.♙xa8 ♙c5 17.g5 ♘fg4 18.♖d5 ♖b6 Black has a winning attack.

12...cxd4 13.♘d5 ♖xd2+ 14.♙xd2 ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♘b4!



Position after: 15... Nxb4!

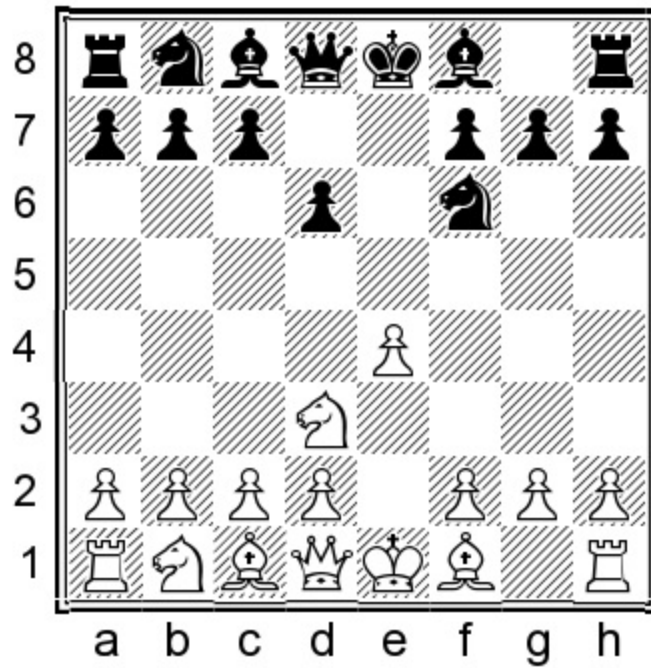
16. Qb3 Rxe8 17. f3 Qe6

OK, it's not so easy to convert the piece up into a full point, but it seems that Black is doing fine. ½ – ½ (19) Blauhut, H (2497) – Selyanchin, N (2495) ICCF email 2008.

c) 4. Nxd3 – Karklins Variation - Sideline

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nxd3

An unusual retreat that is mostly due to a recent trend where players are trying to implement unusual ideas at an early stage. It has to be said that the main ideas here are based on positional chess.

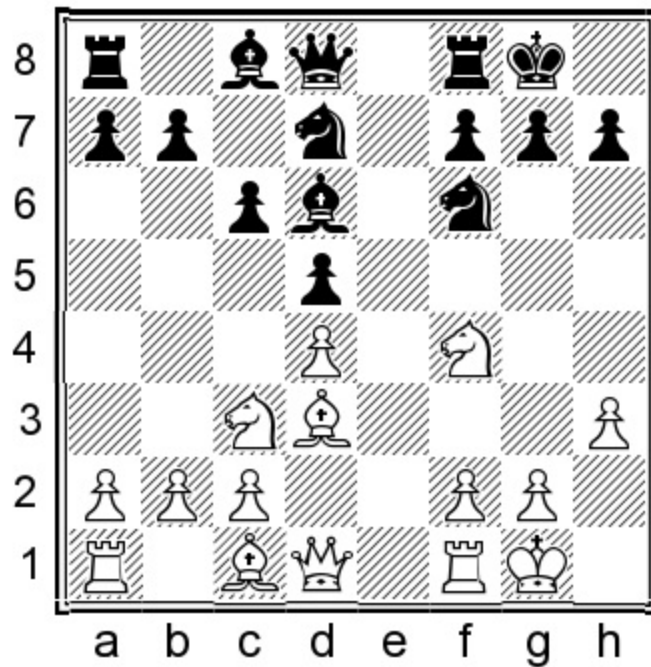


Position after: 4...d3

4...d3 5.e2

This is unsurprisingly not the only move here.

A) 5.c3 f6 6.f4 d5 7.d4 c6 8.d3 d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 bd7

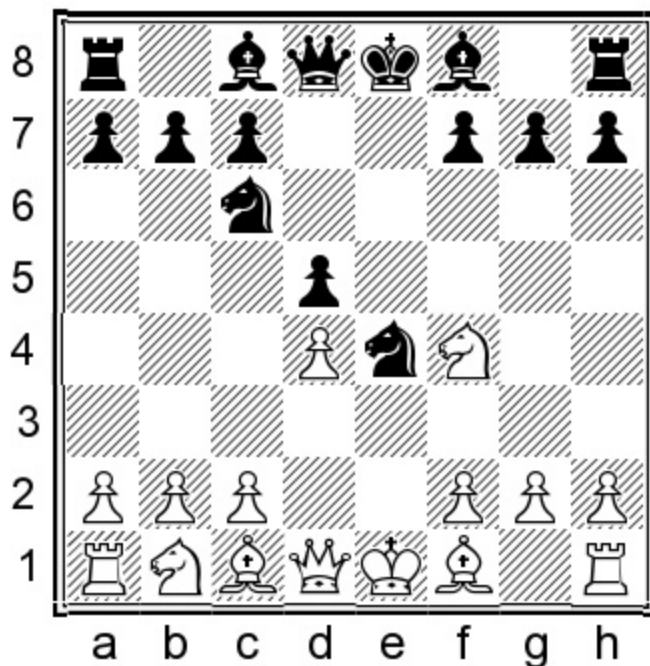


Position after: 10...bd7

11.e1 e8 12.e3 f8 This is OK position for Black. ½ – ½ (75) Brodsky, D (2515) – Paravyan,

D (2612) chess.com 2024.

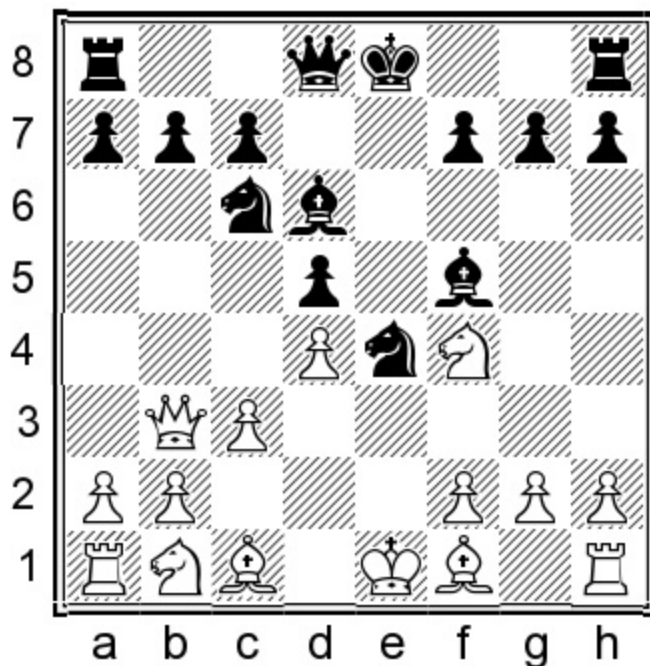
B) 5.♘f4 d5 6.d4 Similar play to the 4.♘c4 plan: White is trying to organize play with pressure on d5. 6...♘c6



Position after: 6...♘c6

B1) 7.♙e2 ♙f5 8.c3 ♘f6 [8...g5?! 9.♘h5 ♚d6 10.♘d2 0-0-0 11.♘xe4 ♙xe4 12.0-0 ♚g6 13.♘g3± 1-0 (34) Alekseenko, K (2650) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2024] 9.♘d2 ♙d6 10.♘f1 0-0 11.♘g3 ♙g6 12.0-0 ♚d7 This is level.

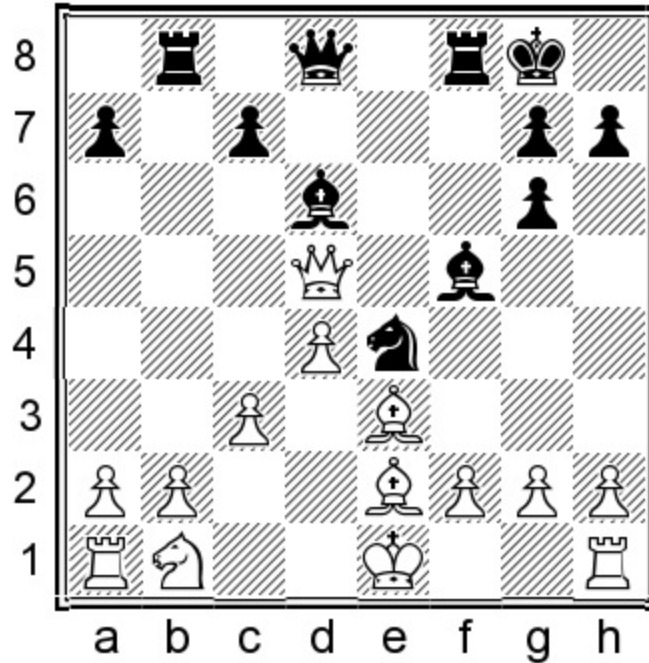
B2) 7.c3 ♙f5 8.♚b3 ♙d6!



Position after: 8...♔d6!

9.♖xd5 [9.♖xb7 ♘e7 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♜b8 12.♖a6 ♙xf4 13.♙xf4 ♘g6 14.♙c1 ♘h4!

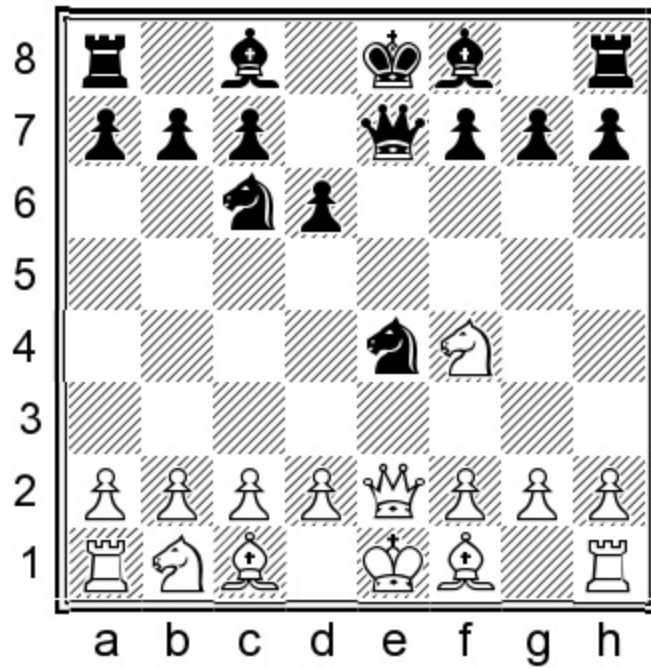
Surprisingly, Black is already winning: the rook is coming to b6.] 9...♘e7 10.♖xb7 [10.♖b3 0-0 11.♙e2 c5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘c6 14.♖d1 ♖f6 This is also fine for Black.] 10...0-0 11.♙e2 ♘g6 12.♘xg6 fxg6 13.♙e3 ♜b8 14.♖d5+



Position after: 14.♖d5+

14...♔h8 15.b3 ♖h4 Black has a serious attacking position. 0-1 (26) Maximov, D (2491) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2023.

5...♖e7 6.♘f4 ♘c6



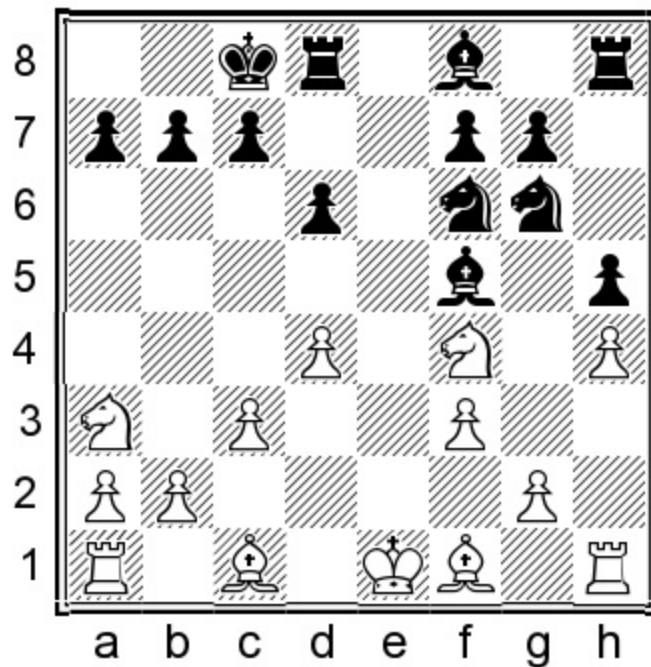
Position after: 6... Nc6

If the knight now lands on d5 we will have the same position as in the 4. Nc4 line. As in that file, we will see differences and also what exactly happens when White goes for the direct 7. Nd5

7. Nd5

This is the main point here but White can also go for less forced lines:

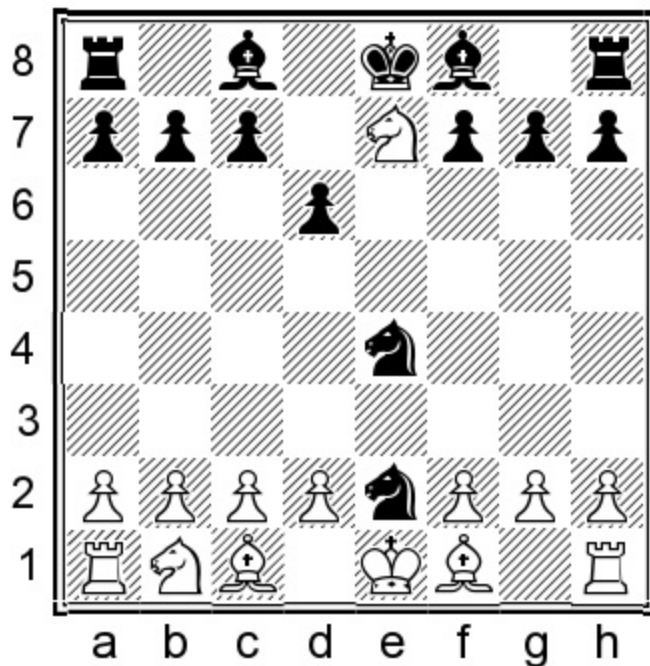
The alternative is: 7. c3 Nf6 8. h4 h5 9. d4 Qf5 10. f3 0-0-0 11. Wxe7 Nxe7 12. Na3 Ng6



Position after: 12... ♖g6

13. ♗xg6 ♕xg6 14. ♖g5 ♕e7 15. ♗c4 ♖d5 16. ♔f2 ♕xg5 17. hxg5 h4= 0-1 (46) Motylev, A (2641) – Nguyen, T (2577) Tornelo 2021.

7... ♗d4 8. ♗xe7 ♗xe2



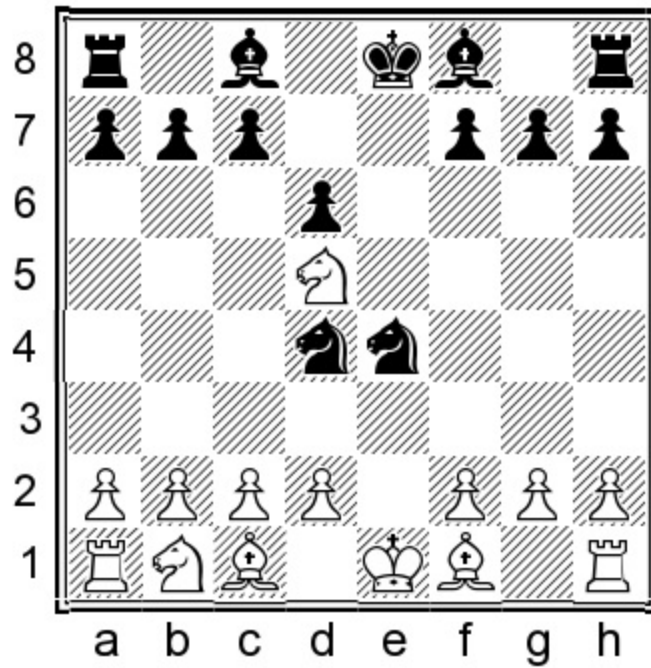
Position after: 8... ♗xe2

This position deserves a diagram – three knights on the e-file at an early stage!

9. ♗d5

9. ♕xe2 ♕xe7 10. d3 ♖f6 11. ♗c3 ♕d7 12. ♖f3 0-0-0 13. ♕d2 ♜he8 14. 0-0-0 c6 with an equal game. 0-1 (49) Kleiman, J (2399) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2024.

9... ♗d4



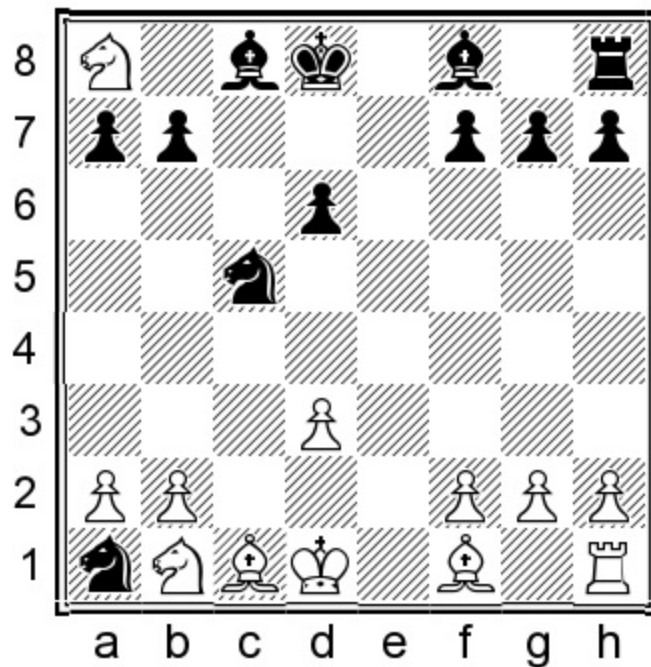
Position after: 9... Nxd4

Now there are many possibilities:

10.d3

In this file, we will focus on the tactical aspect of the line, meaning sharp reactions. In the next subchapter, we will see the positional 10. Nxa3.

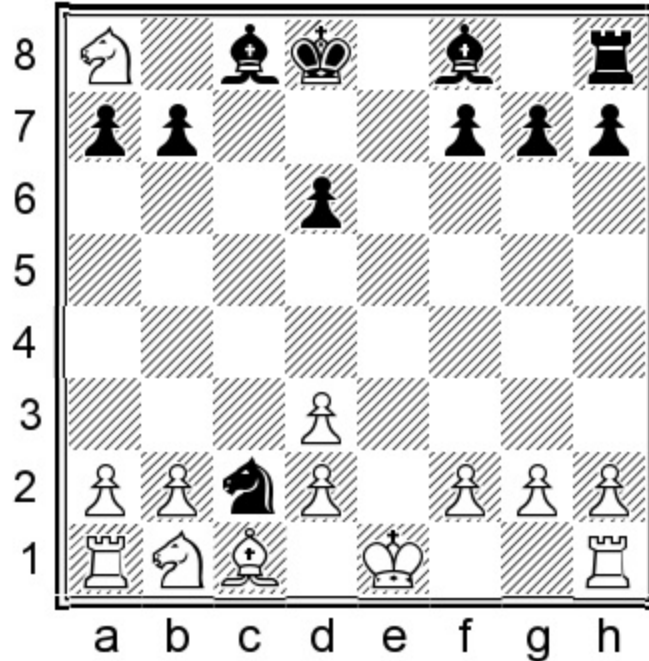
A) 10. Nxc7+ Qd8 11. Nxa8 Bxc2+ 12. Qe2 Bxa1 13. d3 Bc5 14. Qd1



Position after: 14.♔d1

14...♙g4+ 15.f3 ♕f5 16.♖c3 ♕e7 17.♕e3 ♔d7 18.♔d2 ♖xa8 19.g4 ♙g6 20.♙e2 ♗ab3+ 21.axb3 ♗xb3+ 22.♖c2 ♗a5 Black has a favourable endgame.

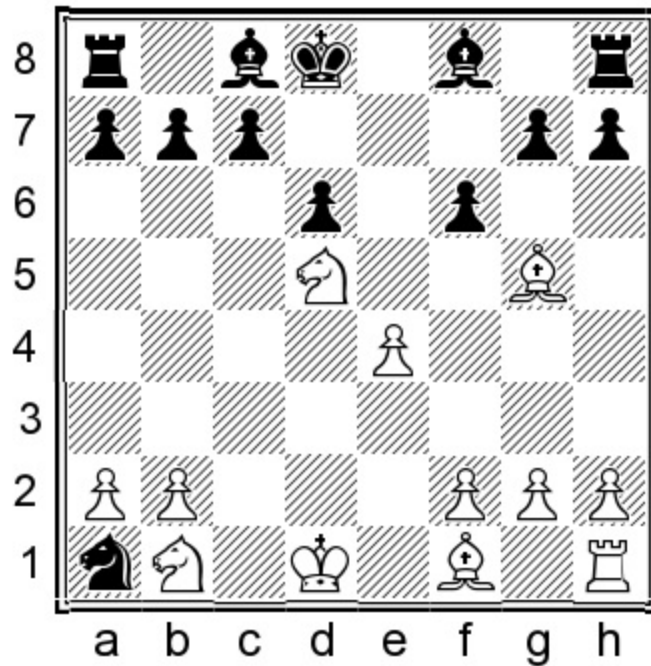
B) 10.♙d3 ♗c5 11.♗xc7+ ♔d8 12.♗xa8 ♗xd3+ 13.cxd3 ♗c2+



Position after: 13...♗c2+

14.♔d1 ♗xa1 15.b4 ♙g4+ 16.f3 ♙e6! [16...♙f5 17.♙b2 ♙xd3= 0-1 (37) Draskovic, L (2449) – Zlatin, A (2243) Skopje 2019] 17.♙b2 ♙xa2 18.♙xa1 ♙xb1 19.♖e2 ♙a2 20.♙d4 a6 21.♗b6 ♙e6 22.♖b1 ♙e7 23.b5 axb5 24.♖xb5 ♖c7 25.♖f2 f6 26.♖b1 ♖e8=

10...♗xc2+ 11.♔d1 ♗xa1 12.dxe4 ♔d8 13.♙g5+ f6



Position after: 13...f6

14.♙e3

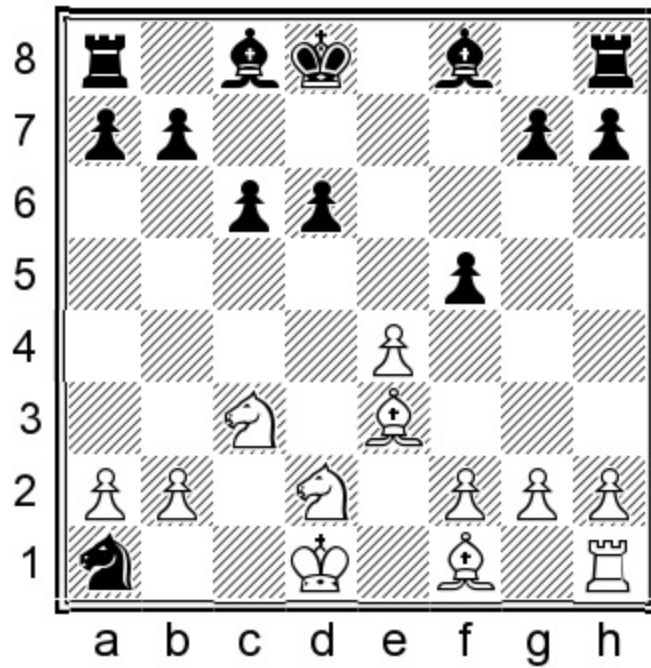
14.♙f4 c6 15.♘e3 a5 16.♘c3 b5 17.♚d2 ♙e6 18.♙d3 ♙xa2 19.♖xa1 ♙e6 20.♘c2 ♙e7 21.♘d4 ♙d7 with an unclear position. The rook and two pawns for two pieces sounds like a balanced trade. 0-1 (52) Wagner, D (2570) – Esipenko, A (2692) chess.com 2022.

14...c6

Now there are two main options here for White:

15.♘f4

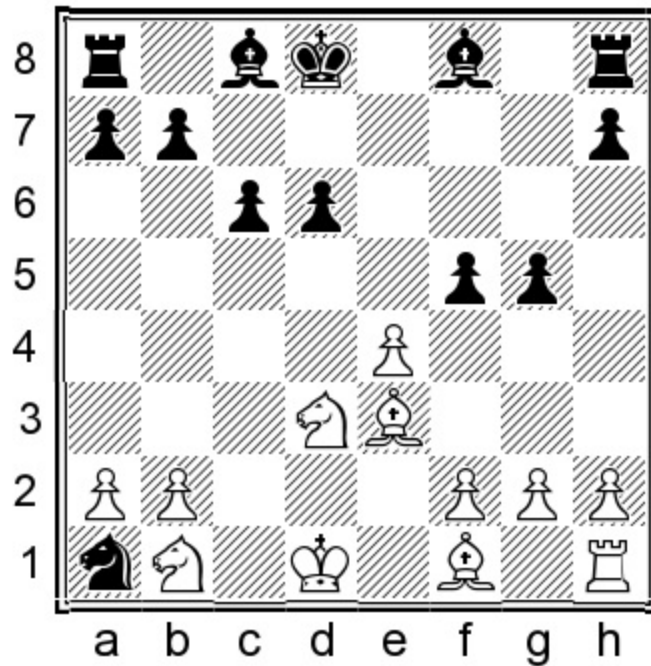
Alternatively: 15.♘dc3 f5 16.♘d2



Position after: 16. ♖d2

16...fxe4! [16...♙e7 17.♙d3 fxe4 18.♖dxe4 d5 19.♖g5± 0-1 (27) Suyarov, M (2407) – Paravyan, D (2612) chess.com 2024] 17.♖dxe4 b5! 18.♖g5 ♗e8 19.♙d3 b4 20.♖e2 b3⚡

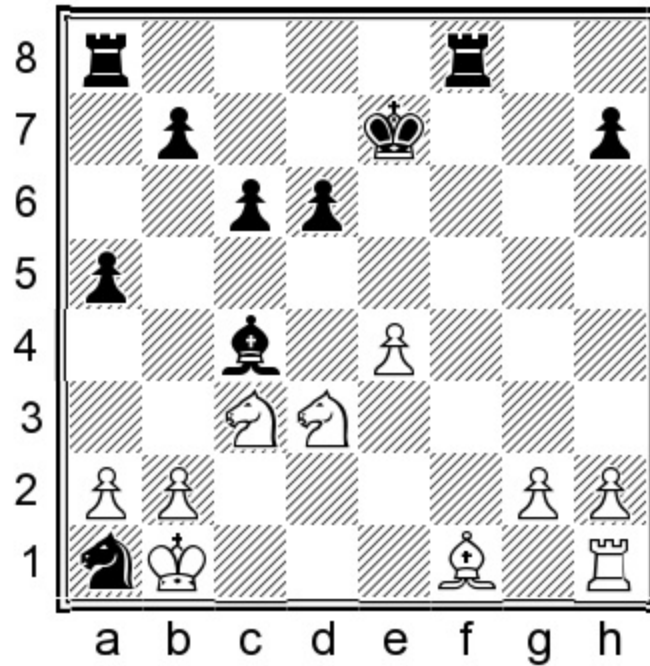
15...g5 16.♖d3 f5!?



Position after: 16...f5!?

16...♙e6 17.♖c3 b5 18.♙d2 a5 19.♙e2 ♖b3+ 20.axb3 ♙xb3 21.♙d1± 0-1 (56) Pasztor, B (2410) –

17.♙xg5+ ♘e7 18.♙xe7+ ♔xe7 19.f3 fxe4 20.fxe4 a5 21.♖c1 ♙e6 22.♘c3 ♜hf8 23.♖b1 ♙c4!



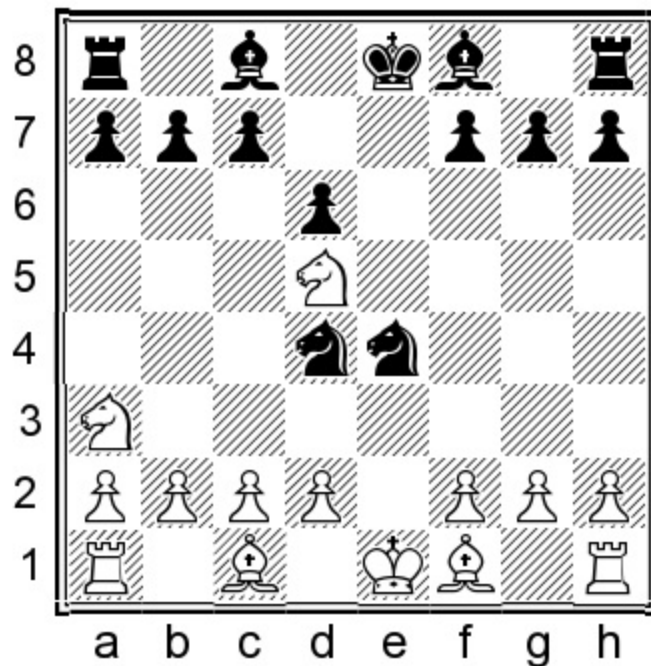
Position after: 23...♙c4!

24.♙e2 ♙xd3+ 25.♙xd3 ♜f2 26.e5 dxe5 27.♙xh7 ♜xg2 28.♔xa1 ♜h8 29.♙e4 ♜gxh2

It is clear that Black has a couple of ways to maintain a balanced game.

d) 4.♘d3 – Karklins Variation - Mainline

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘d3 ♘xe4 5.♙e2 ♙e7 6.♘f4 ♘c6 7.♘d5 ♘d4 8.♘xe7 ♘xe2 9.♘d5 ♘d4 10.♘a3



Position after: 10. Nc3

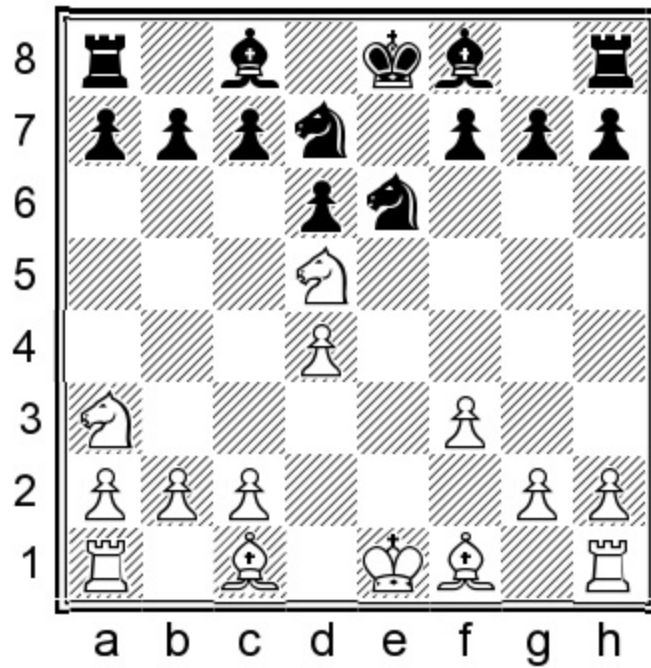
This is the positional reaction and we now enter a very interesting endgame.

10... Nc6 11. f3

It is useful to have the f2-square for the king sometimes, or perhaps some play with g4.

11. d3 N4c5 12. d4 Nd7 13. Nb5 Qd8 14. Bf4 Nf6 15. Qd3 c6 16. Bxe6+ Qxe6 17. Nc3 Qe7 18. Qd2 Qc7 19. a4 a5 20. h4 h5 21. Ne2 Nd5 with equality. ½ – ½ (56) Van Foreest, J (2668) – Gurel, E (2578) Orosei 2024.

11... N4c5 12. d4 Nd7

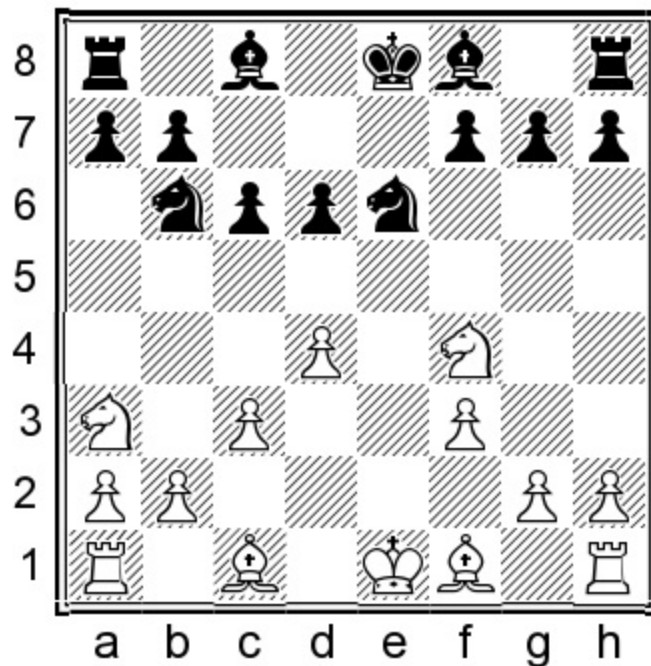


Position after: 12... Nxd7

13.c3

13. Nxb5 Kd8 14. Nf4 Nb6 15. Qe3 c6 16. Bc3 Bxf4 17. Qxf4 Qe6 18. Qd3 Kd7 Black has equal play in this endgame.

13...c6 14.Nf4 Nb6



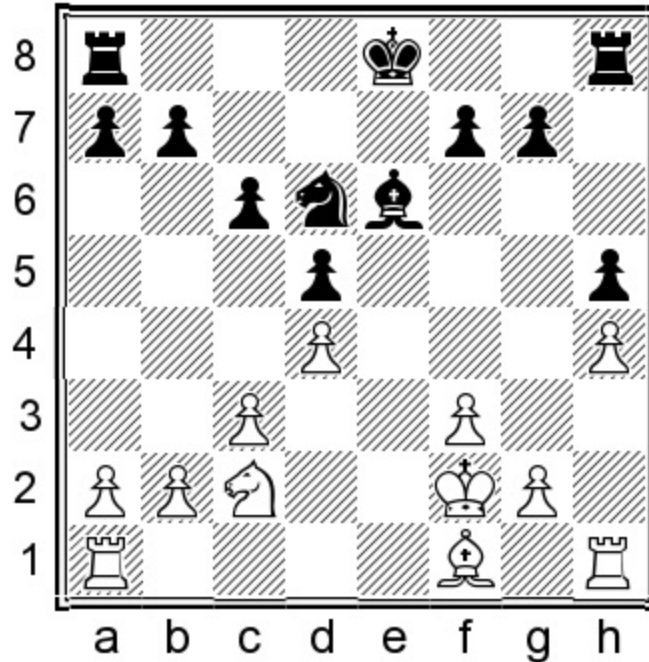
Position after: 14... Nb6

15.♙d3

There are a few other plans, some easy to handle and some needing more precision:

A) 15.♗c4 ♗xc4 16.♙xc4 d5 17.♙d3 ♙d6 18.♗xe6 ♙xe6 19.♖f2 h5 20.h4 a5 21.a4 ♖d7 This is a level endgame. ½ – ½ (28) Ibarra Jerez, J (2558) – Deac, B (2639) chess.com 2021.

B) 15.♗c2 d5 16.♗xe6 ♙xe6 17.♙f4 ♗c8 18.♖f2 ♙d6 19.♙xd6 ♗xd6 20.h4 h5



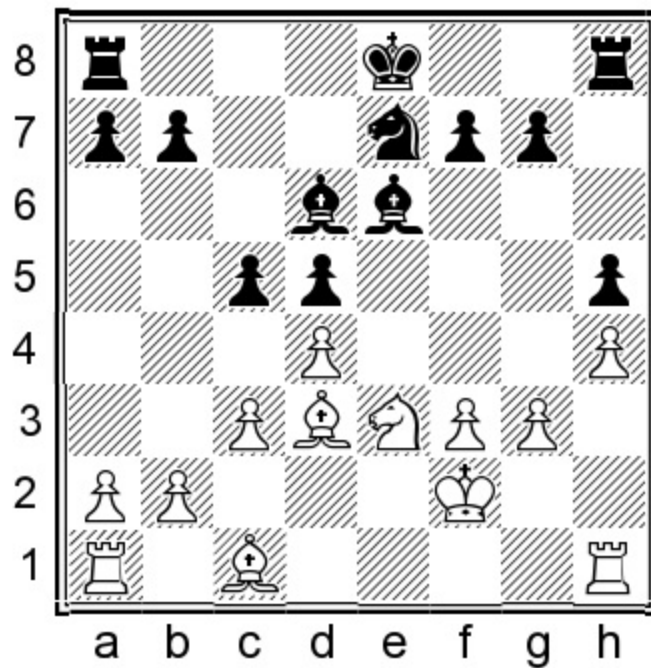
Position after: 20...h5

21.g3 g6 22.♙d3 ♖f8 23.♞ae1 ♖g7 24.♗e3 ♙d7 25.♞e2 ♞ae8 26.♞he1 ♞e6 27.♗g2 ♞xe2+ 28.♞xe2 ♙f5 29.♗f4 ♙xd3 30.♗xd3 ♞e8 31.♞xe8 ♗xe8 32.♖e3 ♗d6 This is drawn.

15...d5 16.♗c2 ♙d6 17.♗xe6 ♙xe6 18.♖f2 h5 19.h4 ♗c8 20.♗e3 ♗e7 21.g3

The plan is to bring the bishop on f4 but first placing a knight on g2.

21...c5!

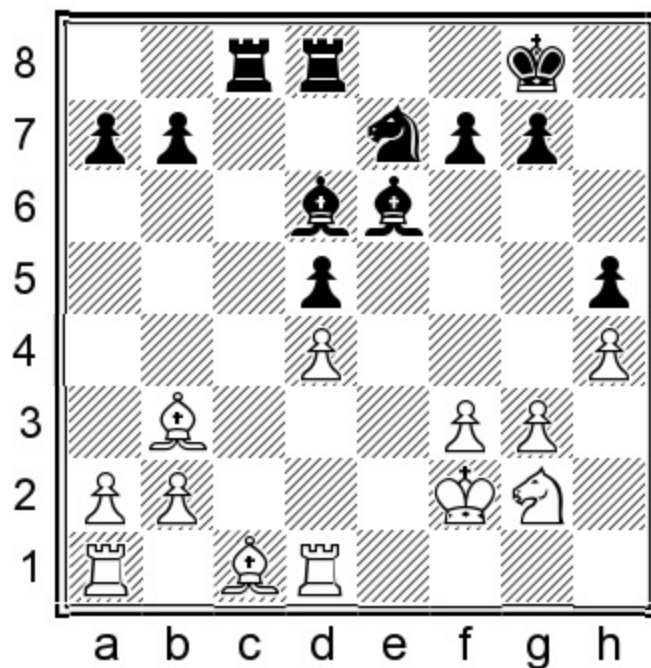


Position after: 21...c5!

22.♙c2

22.dxc5 ♗xc5 23.♔g2 d4 24.cxd4 ♗xd4 25.♞c2 ♗f6 Black is fine. 1-0 (75) Burg, T (2526) – Seo, J (2409) Lund 2019.

22...0-0 23.♞d1 ♞fd8 24.♞g2 cxd4 25.cxd4 ♞ac8 26.♙b3



Position after: 26.♙b3

26...♖c6

This is also OK for Black. ½ – ½ (80) Carlsen, M (2835) – Caruana, F (2832) London 2018.

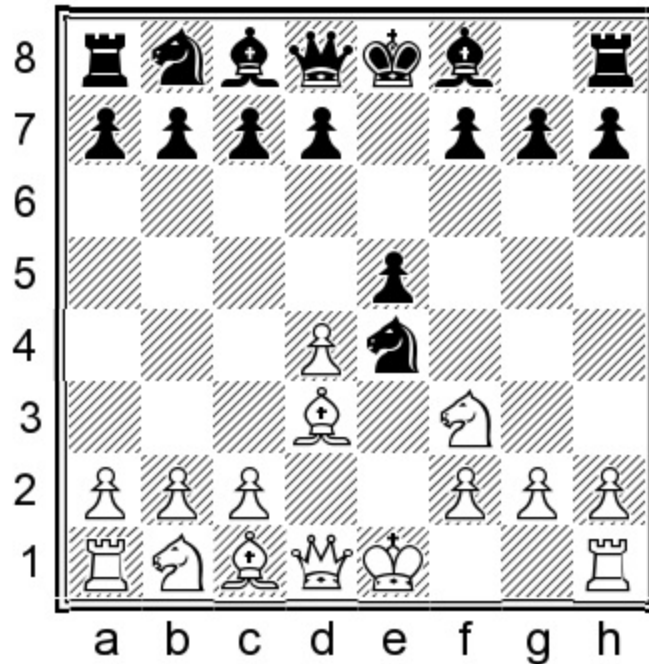
Part II

3.d4 – Steinitz System

Chapter 7

4.♙d3 – Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♙d3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 7 – 4.♙d3 – Sidelines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♙d3 d5

a) 5.dxe5

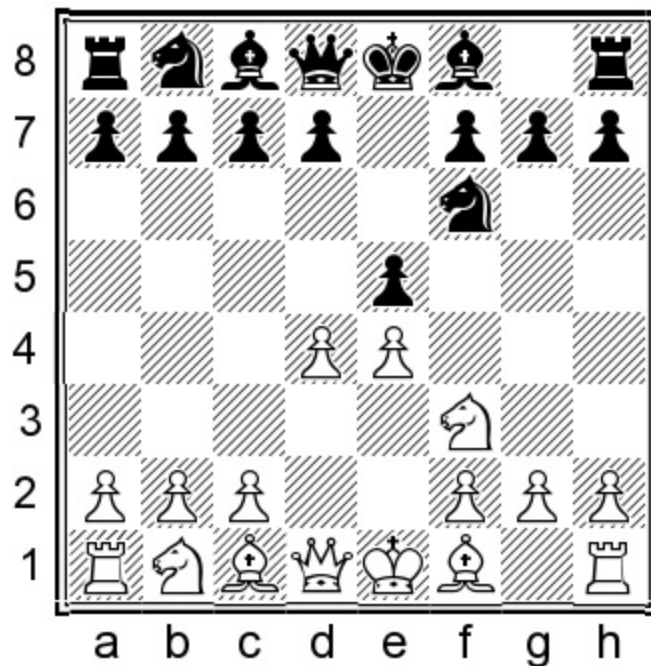
b) 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.0-0

c) 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♗c3 ♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♙c5 9.0-0

d) 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♗c3 ♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♙c5 9.♖h5

a) 5.dxe5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4



Position after: 3.d4

This is another big system and it is not clear which is more popular: 3.d4 and 3.♘xe5 both have their important tactical and positional points.

3...♘xe4

The best response.

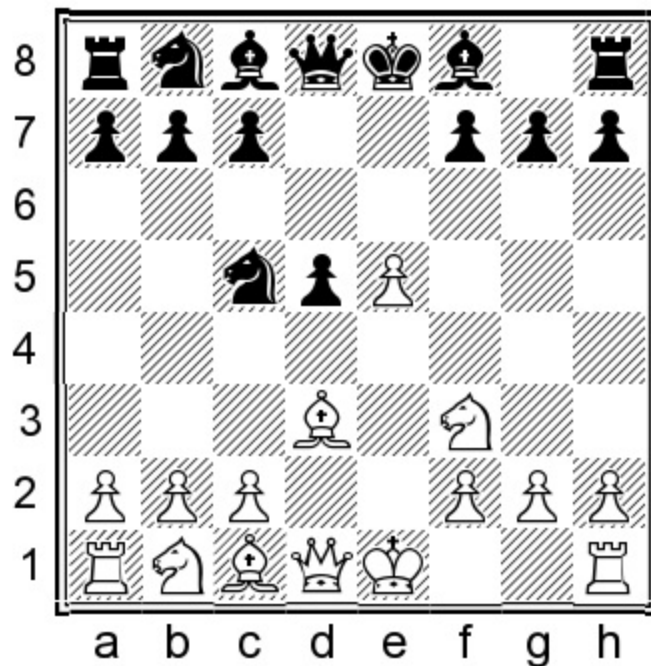
4.♙d3

In a later file we will investigate another important line, 4.dxe5. In the next few subchapters, we will focus exclusively on 4.♙d3.

4...d5 5.dxe5

First, we investigate this line, which is similar in terms of method of play to the Open Spanish. We will see this type of play in some other lines in Steinitz's system. Although this is a common motif in this system there are differences in terms of specific move orders. We will see the much more popular 5.♘xe5 later.

5...♘c5



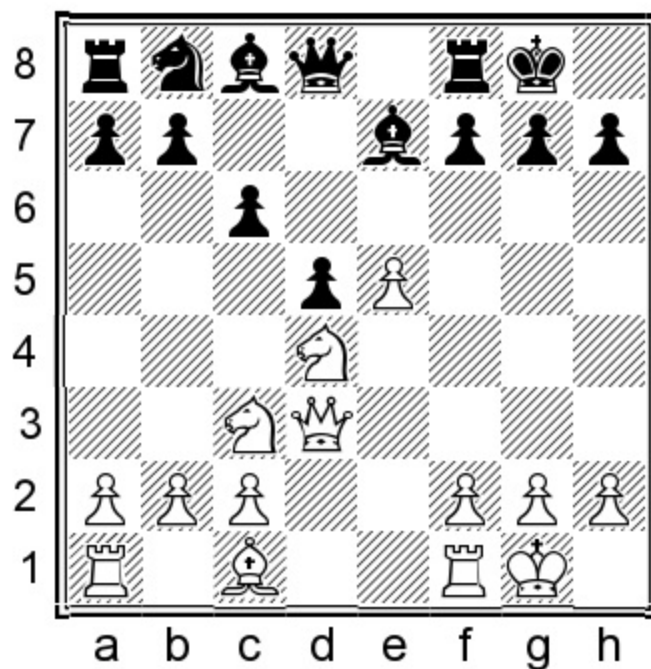
Position after: 5... Nc5

6. e2

The main choice. White can also ignore the pressure on the bishop and continue with development.

A) 6. Nc3 c6 7. Nd4 e7 8. e5 e5 9. Nxf5 Nc6 10. 0-0 Nd7 11. f4 g6 12. Nxe7 Qxe7 13. f5 gxf5 14. Rxf5 Rg8 15. Qh1 0-0-0 Black is quick with counterplay.

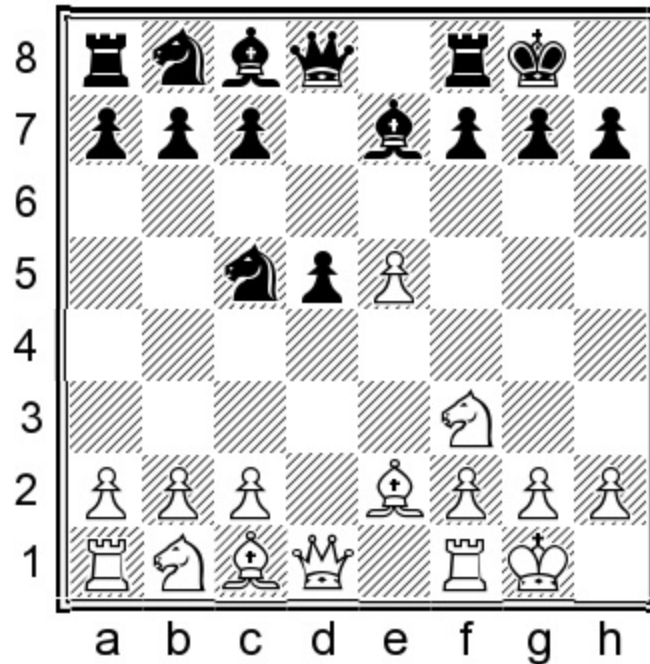
B) 6. 0-0 e7 7. Nc3 c6 8. Nd4 Nxd3 9. Qxd3 0-0



Position after: 9...0-0

Now White has two logical continuations: 10.f4 [10.♖g3 ♘h4 11.♗f4 ♖a6 12.♙d2 ♗c5 13.♞ae1 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 ♙xe6 15.♗e2 c5 16.♗f3 d4 Black has counterplay. 1-0 (37) Amonatov, F (2610) – Sychev, K (2338) Moscow 2012] 10...f5 11.♗b3 ♖a6 12.♙e3 ♗c7 13.♗e2 b6 14.♗bd4 ♙a6 15.♗d2 ♗e8 16.c3 c5 17.♗f3 ♞d8 A nice regrouping of the pieces. This is a model game for Black on how to conduct such positions. 0-1 (62) Navara, D (2672) – Kramnik, V (2788) Prague 2008.

6...♙e7 7.0-0 0-0

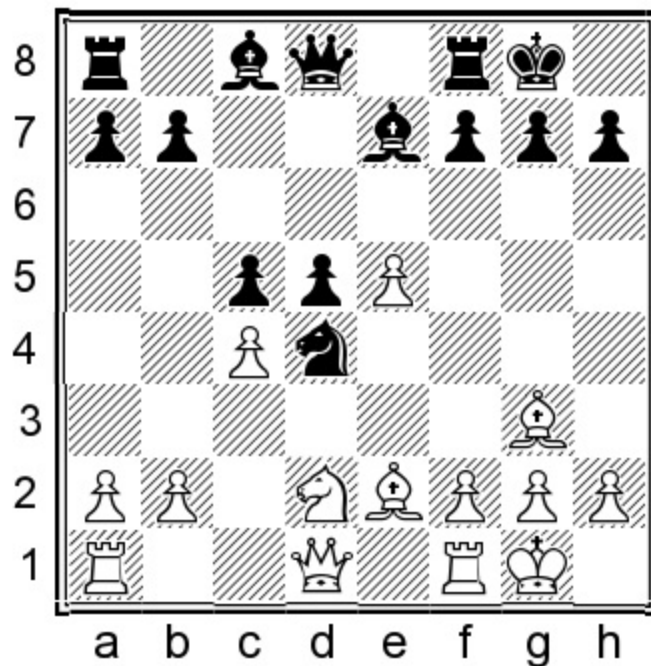


Position after: 7...0-0

8.♙e3

White has a couple of ways to conduct this position:

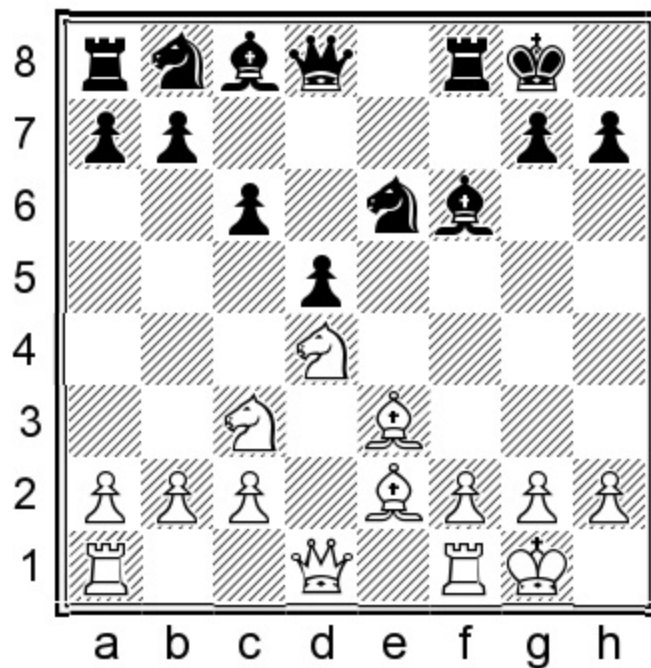
A) 8.♙f4 ♗e6 9.♙g3 c5 10.♗bd2 ♗c6 11.c4 ♗ed4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4



Position after: 12... Nxd4

13. Qd3 Qe6 14. f4 g6

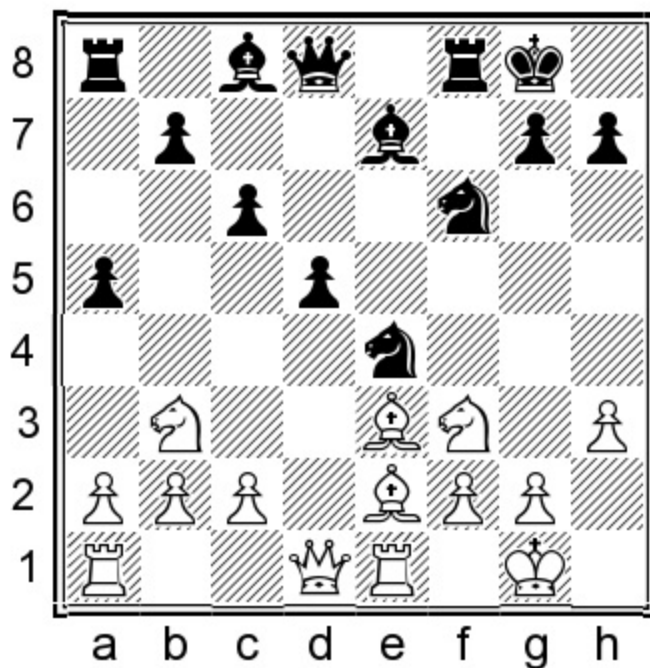
B) 8. Nc3 c6 9. Nd4 f6 10. exf6 Qxf6 11. Qe3 Ne6



Position after: 11... Ne6

12. Nxe6 Qxe6 13. Qg4 Qxg4 14. Qxg4 Qd7 Black has achieved fine play very early in the game. ½ – ½ (47) Dembo, Y (2452) – Mamedjarova, Z (2234) Khanty – Mansiysk 2010.

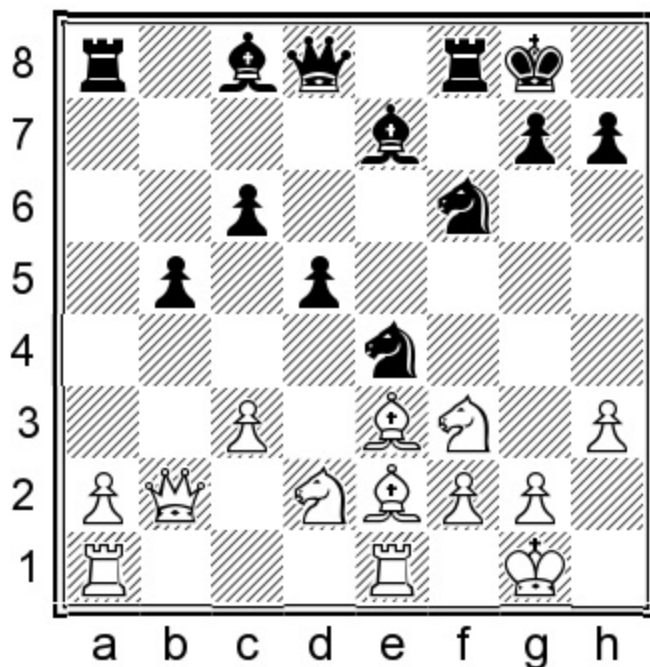
C) In a few recent games White opted for: 8.♖e1 c6 9.♘bd2 ♘bd7 10.♘b3 f6 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♙e3 ♘ce4 13.h3 a5



Position after: 13...a5

C1) 14.♘bd2 a4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.a3 ♙f6!? It seems that keeping the bishop on f6 rather than exchanging it gives Black balanced play: [16...♙c5 17.♙d3 ♙xe3 18.♖xe3 ♖f6 19.c3 ♙f5 20.♗e2 ♘d6 21.♙xf5 ♘xf5 22.♖e6↑ 1-0 (87) Gukesh, D (2743) – Abasov, N (2632) Toronto 2024] 17.c3 ♙f5 18.♙d3 ♖d6 Black has counterplay.

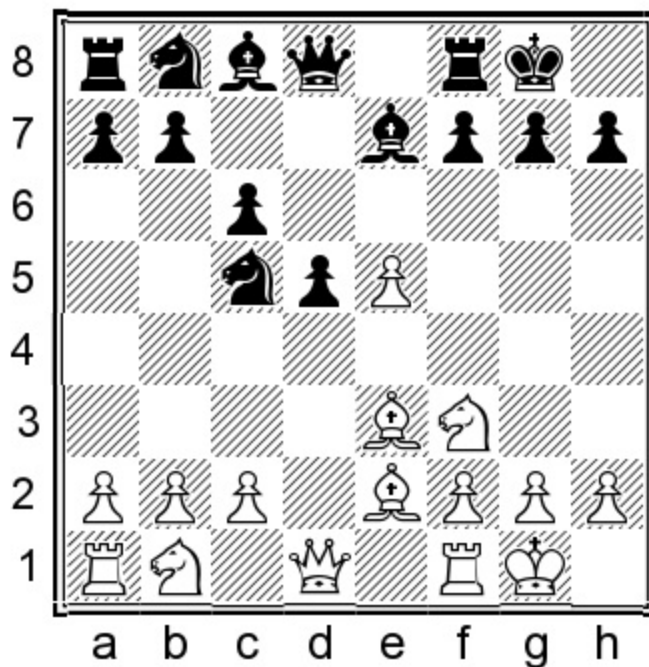
C2) 14.c3 a4 15.♘bd2 a3 16.♗c1 axb2 17.♗xb2 b5



Position after: 17...b5

18. ♖d4 ♜d6 This is OK for Black, with good piece play and a fine structure. ½ – ½ (85) Firouzja, A (2738) – Duda, J (2734) chess.com 2024.

8...c6

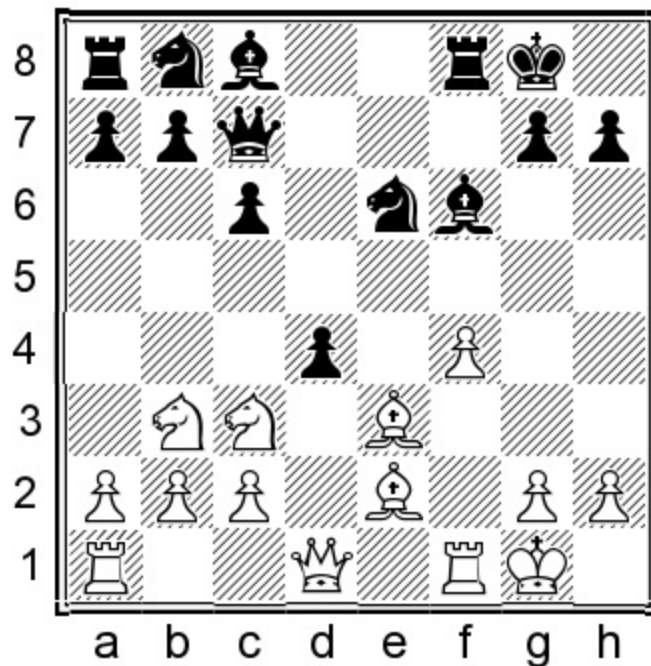


Position after: 8...c6

9.c4

The main motif here, although some other methods have been used as well:

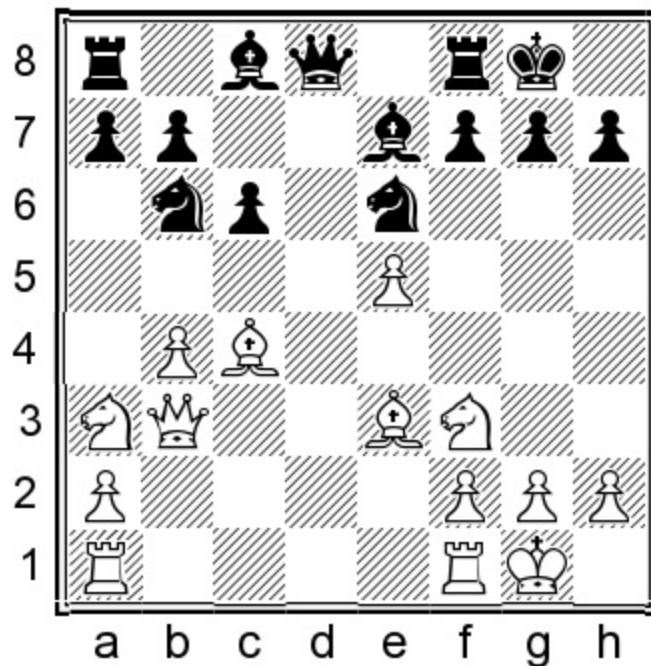
A) 9. ♖d4 ♜c7 10. f4 f6 11. exf6 ♙xf6 12. ♖c3 ♜e6 13. ♖b3 d4!



Position after: 13...d4!

[13...♞d7 14.♚d2 ♞b6 ∞ ½ – ½ (43) Shirov, A (2713) – Alekseev, E (2662) Saratov 2011] 14.♙c4 dxc3 15.f5 cxb2 16.♞b1 ♔h8 17.♙xc6 ♙xc6 18.fxe6 ♞a6

B) 9.♞a3!? An unusual idea but the motive is clear: c4! 9...b5!? [9...♞bd7 10.c4 ♞b6 11.b4 ♞e6 12.♞b3 dxc4 13.♙xc4

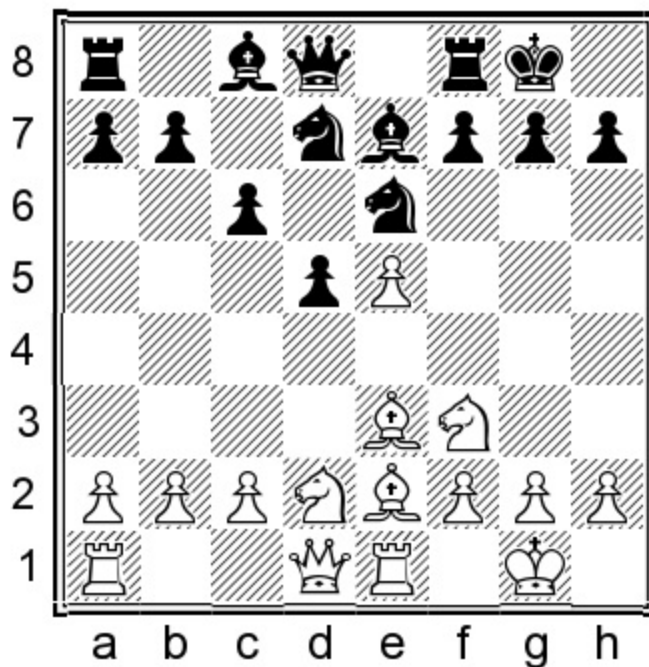


Position after: 13. ♙xc4

13...♞xc4 14.♞xc4 ♞c7 15.♞ad1 ♞d5 16.♙c5 ± ½ – ½ (41) Gledura, B (2633) – Hera, I (2547)

Hungary 2024] 10.c3 ♖bd7 11.♗c2 ♖b6 Black is developing quickly using the fact that the knight loses too much time to come back into the game... 12.♗cd4 ♗d7 13.♙c2 ♖c4 14.♗c1 ♙c7 leads to a complex game.

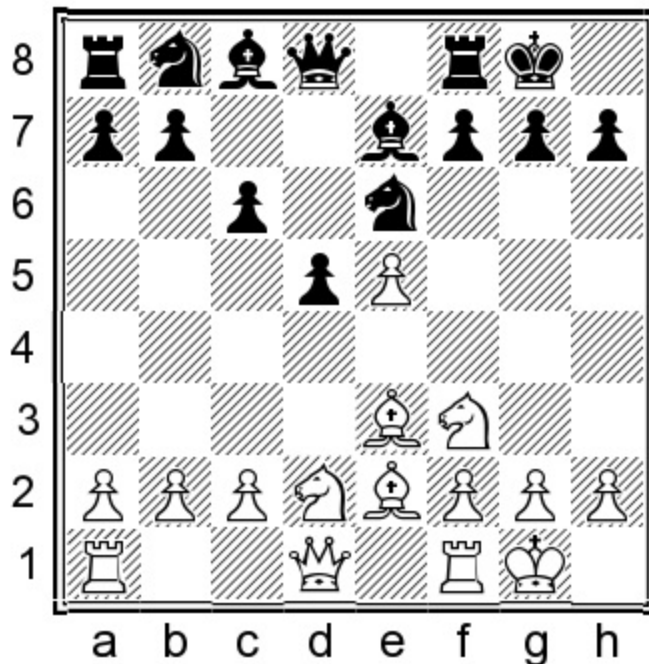
C) 9.♗e1 ♖bd7 10.♗bd2 ♖e6!



Position after: 10... ♖e6!

[10...f6 11.exf6 ♖xf6 12.h3 ♗h8 13.c4 ½ – ½ (42) Kryvoruchko, Y (2683) – Dardha, D (2540) Bremen 2022] 11.c4 ♖b6 Black is fine here.

D) 9.♗bd2 ♖e6!



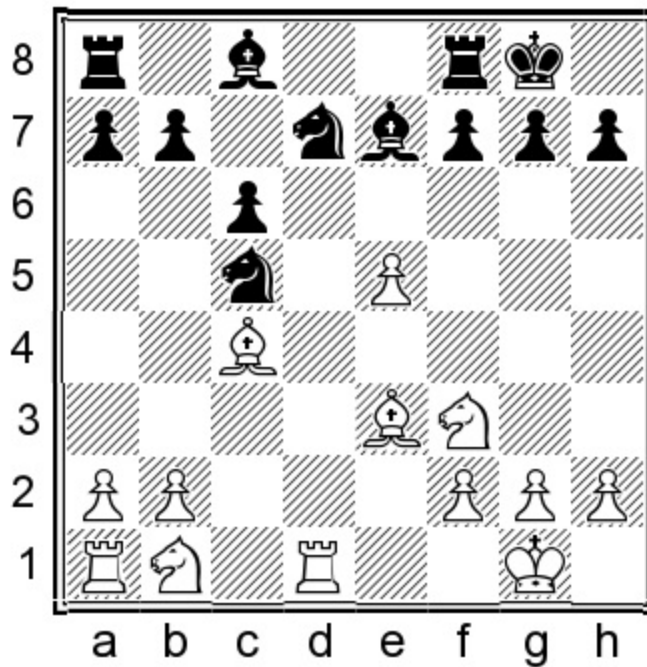
Position after: 9... ♖e6!

10. ♗b3 c5 11. c3 ♗c6 12. ♕d2 b6 13. ♖ad1 ♘b7 14. ♗fe1 ♕c7 15. ♙f1 ♖ad8 Black has achieved his best potential here. 0-1 (42) Gurel, E (2500) – Ivic, V (2590) Baku 2023.

9...dxc4 10. ♙xc4

Sacrificing the pawn has been played a few times but it is probably unsound: 10. ♕c2 b5 11. ♗c3 ♗ba6 12. a3 ♕c7 13. ♗d4 ♙d7 [13... ♙b7 14. ♗f5 ∞ 1-0 (27) Sosa, T (2547) – Fluvia Poyatos, J (2465) Barcelona 2022] 14. f4 f6

10... ♕xd1 11. ♖xd1 ♗bd7



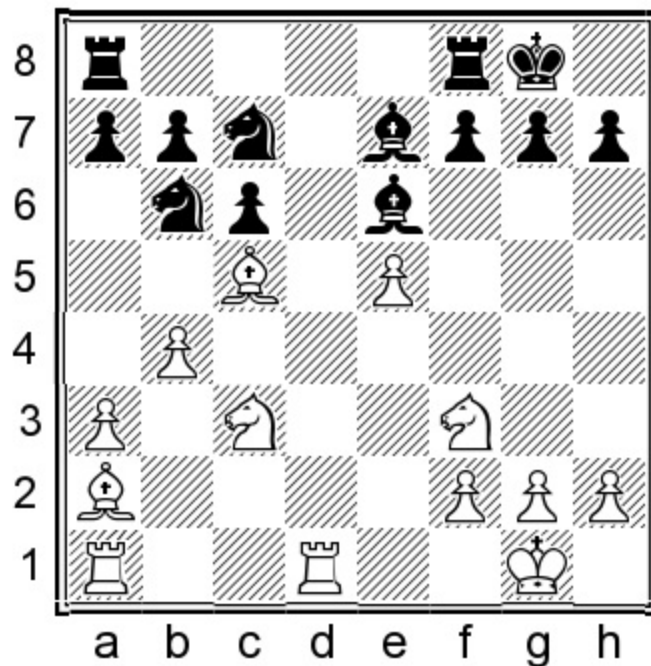
Position after: 11... ♗bd7

White has a couple of choices but it seems that this endgame is balanced:

12. ♗bd2

Other possible moves are:

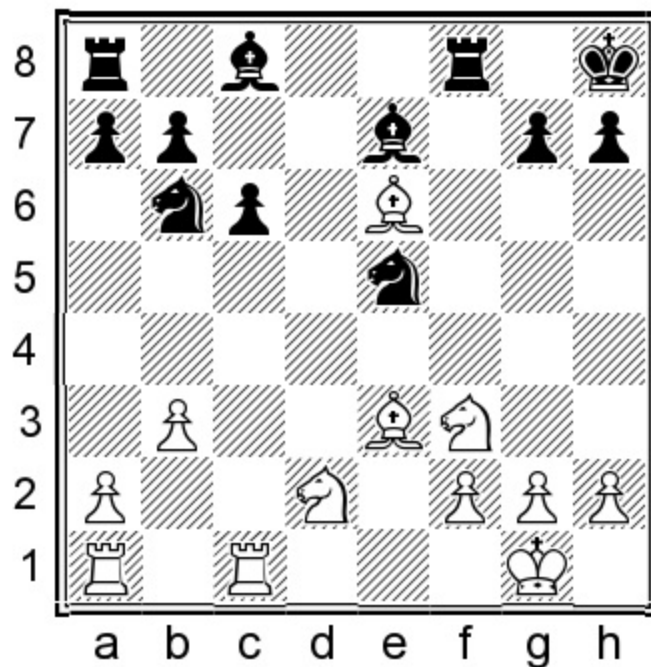
A) 12. b4 ♗e6 13. a3 ♗b6 14. ♙a2 ♗c7 15. ♗c3 ♙e6 16. ♙c5



Position after: 16. ♖c5

16... ♙xc5 17. bxc5 ♜bd5 18. ♞xd5 ♙xd5 19. ♙xd5 ♞xd5 20. ♞d3 ♞fe8 21. g3 The endgame is equal.
 ½ – ½ (21) Movsesian, S (2696) – Fridman, D (2602) Germany 2013.

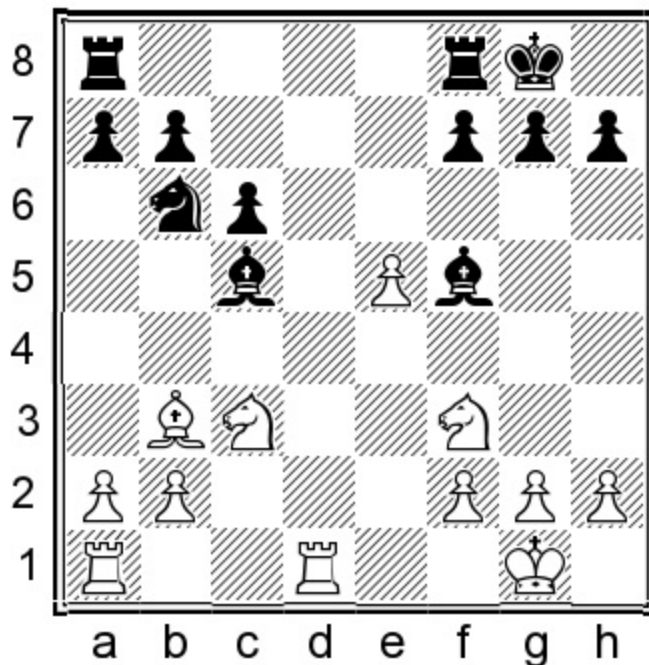
B) 12. ♞c1 ♞a4 13. b3 ♞ab6 14. e6 fxe6 15. ♙xe6+ ♔h8 16. ♞bd2 ♞e5!



Position after: 16... ♞e5!

17. ♙xc8 ♞xf3+ 18. ♞xf3 ♞xc8 19. ♙c5 ♞e8 20. ♙xe7 ♞xe7 21. ♞e1 ♞ae8 = ½ – ½ (30) Gashimov, V (2759) – Gelfand, B (2761) Bursa 2010.

C) 12.♖c3 ♜b6 13.♙xc5 ♙xc5 14.♙b3 ♙f5!



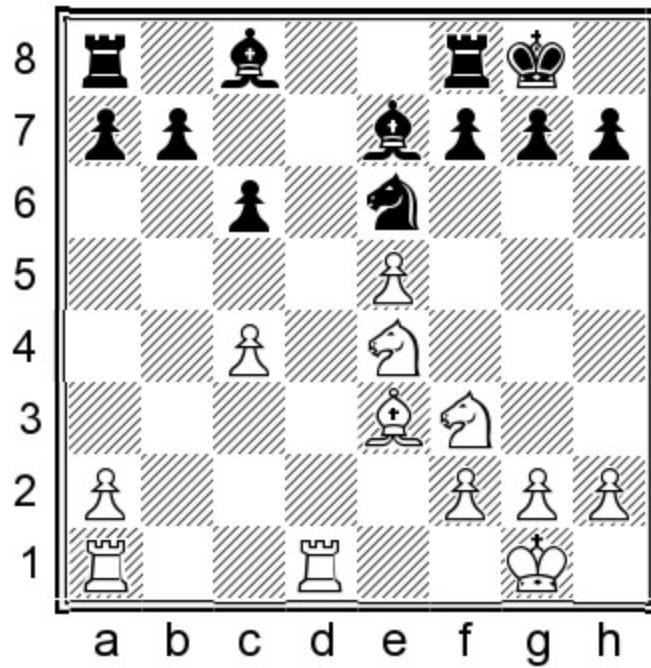
Position after: 14...♙f5!

It is important to prevent the knight from coming to e4. [14...♙g4 15.♜e4 ♙e7 16.♞d2 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♞fd8 18.♞ad1 ♞xd2 19.♞xd2 ♜f8 20.f4± 1-0 (37) Safarli, E (2628) – Kamarunsalehin, A (1985) Sharjah 2014] 15.h3 h6 16.♜d4 ♙g6 17.♞ac1 ♞ad8=

12...♜b6 13.b3

13.♙e2 ♜ca4!± This is an important move – now ...c5 can be played, if needed.

13...♜e6 14.♜e4 ♜xc4 15.bxc4



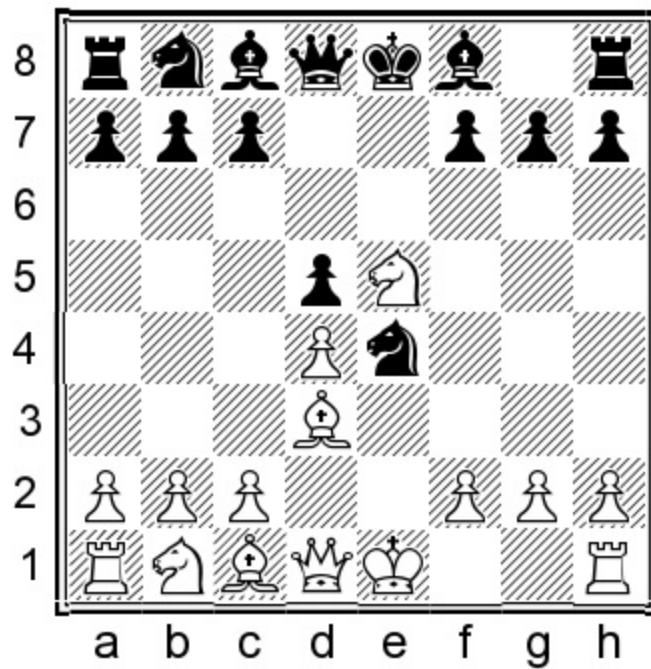
Position after: 15.bxc4

15...b6

The position is balanced: White has the d6-square but Black is very solid and holds the bishop pair.

b) 5.♘xe5 ♞d7 6.0-0

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♞f6 3.d4 ♞xe4 4.♙d3 d5 5.♘xe5



Position after: 5. ♖xe5

5... ♗d7

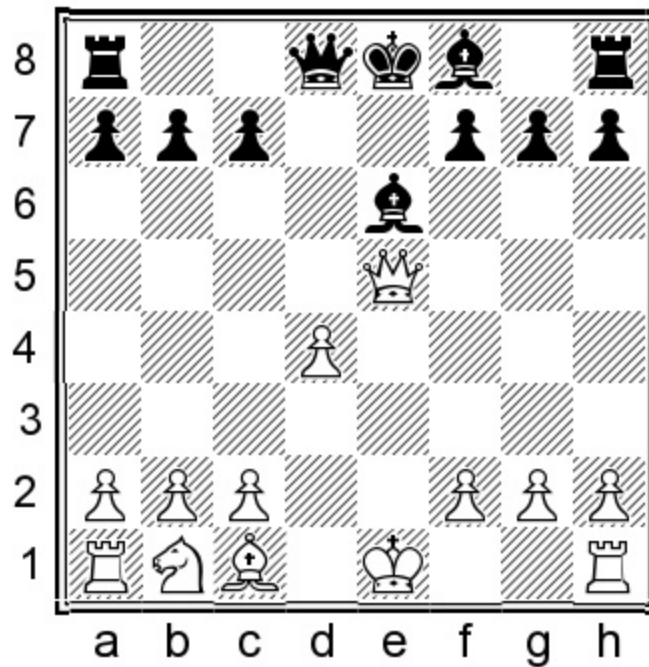
Best and the most critical approach.

6.0-0

In later files, we will see the main idea 6. ♗xd7 and also the important modern line 6. ♗c3. We also have a few other options here, less popular, but important from a theoretical perspective:

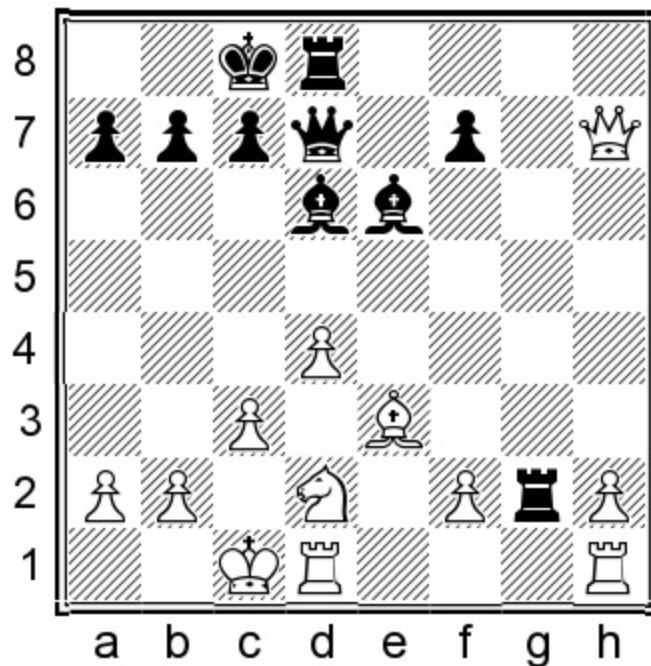
A) 6. ♗xf7 ♔xf7 7. ♖h5+ ♔e7 8. ♖e2 ♔f7=

B) 6. ♖e2 ♗xe5 7. ♕xe4 dxe4 8. ♖xe4 ♕e6 9. ♖xe5



Position after: 9. ♖xe5

[9. dxe5 ♕d5] 9... ♖d7 10. ♕e3 ♕b4+ [10...0-0-0 11. ♖a5 ♔b8 12. ♗c3 b6 13. ♖a6 ♕b4 14.0-0 ♕xc3 15.bxc3 ♖c6 Black is fine.] 11.c3 [11. ♗d2 0-0 12.0-0 f5! Black has the initiative.] 11... ♕d6 12. ♖xg7 0-0-0 13. ♗d2 ♖hg8 14. ♖xh7 ♖xg2 15.0-0-0



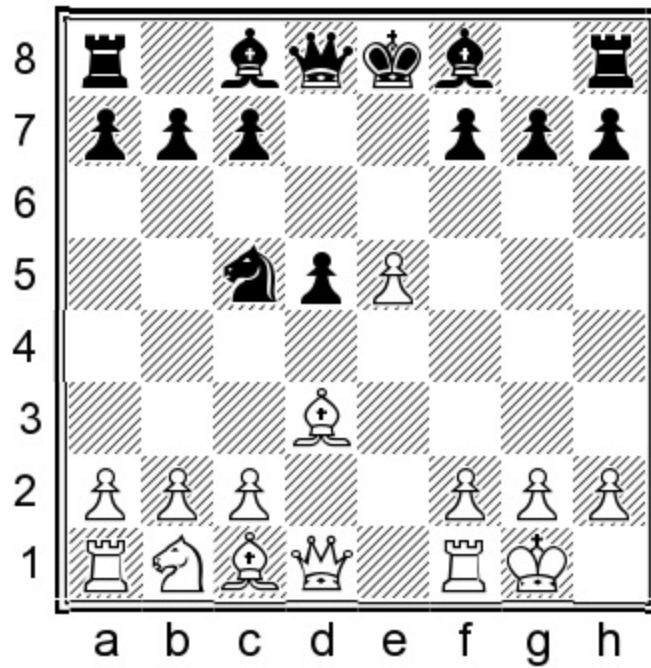
Position after: 15.0-0-0

15...♖g6! Here too White is confronted with unpleasant pressure.

6...♘xe5 7.dxe5

Again, we have a similar type of position to others we have already seen, only here White unblocks his f2-pawn allowing a quick launch. Such structures are similar from the positional point of view to the Open Spanish.

7...♘c5



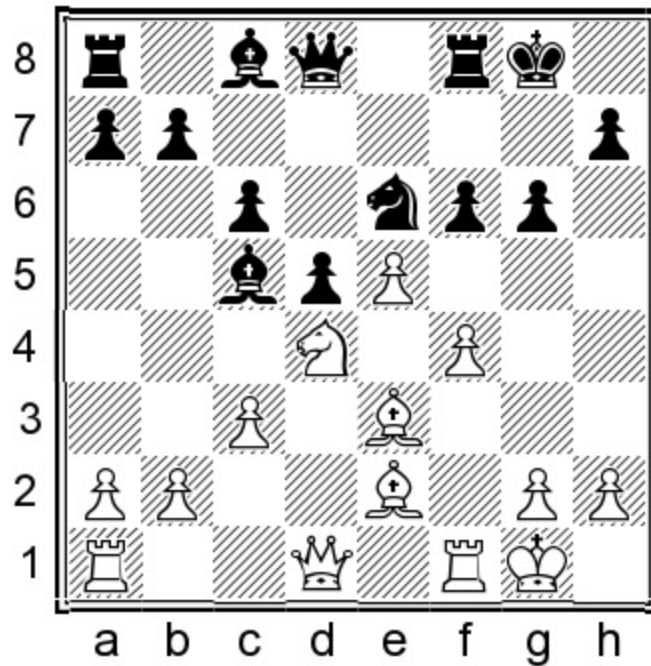
Position after: 7... Nc5

The same motif; White again has to decide how to deal with it.

8. Qe3

The main approach.

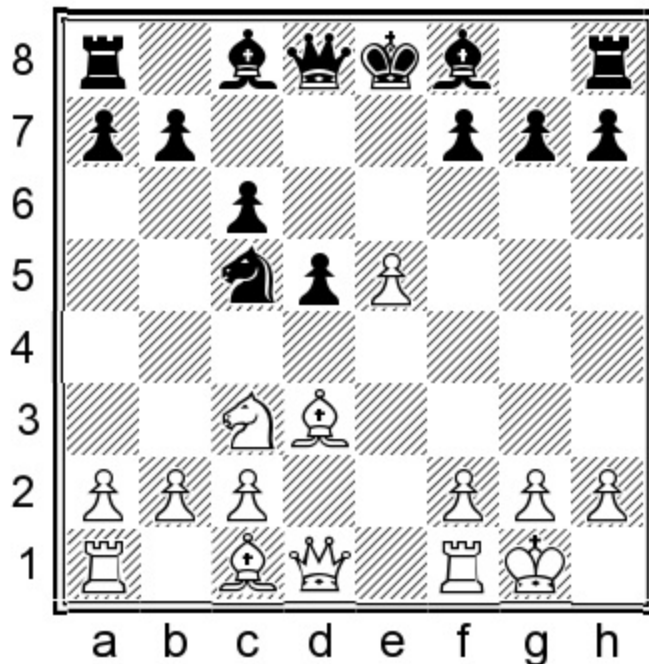
A) 8.f4 g6 9. Qe2 c6 10. Nd2 Qe7 11. Nf3 0-0 12. Qe3 Ne6 13. c3 Qc5 14. Nd4 f6



Position after: 14... f6

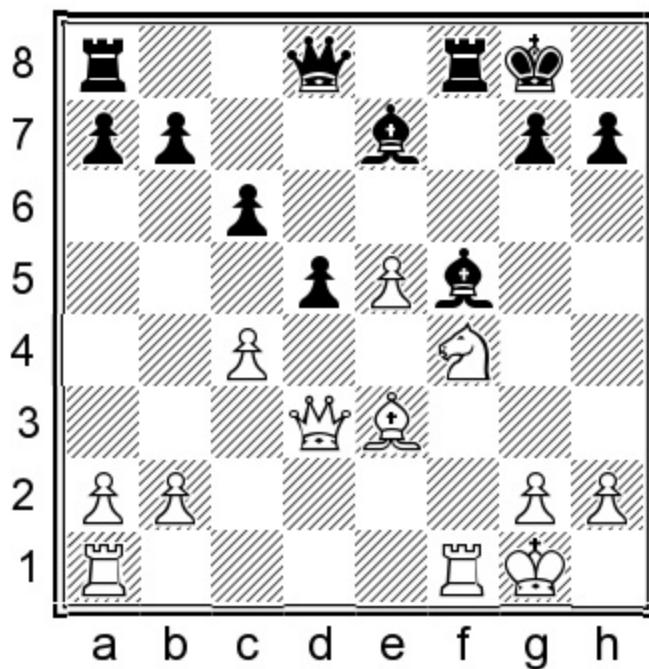
15.♖h1 ♔b6 16.♙d3 fxe5 17.fxe5 ♜xf1+ 18.♚xf1 ♙d7 19.♚f3 ♚h4 with an equal game. 1-0 (34)
 Duda, J (2750) – Anand, V (2751) Warsaw 2022.

B) 8.♘c3 c6 White has a few ideas but none seem dramatic:



Position after: 8...c6

B1) 9.♘e2 ♙e7 10.f4 f6 11.♙e3 ♘xd3 12.♚xd3 0-0 13.c4 fxe5 14.fxe5 ♙e6 15.♘f4 ♙f5

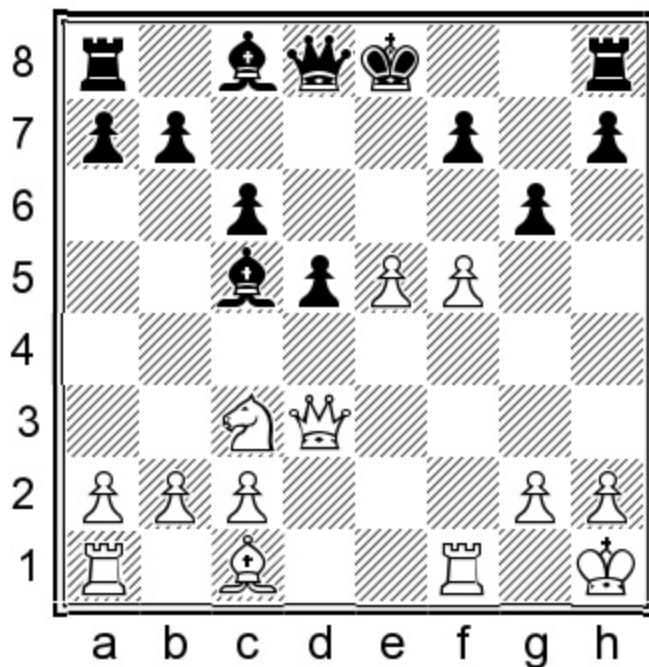


Position after: 15...♙f5

16. ♖d4 ♕g5 17. cxd5 ♕xf4 18. ♖xf4 ♖xd5 19. ♖xd5+ cxd5 20. ♖af1 g6 21. g4 ♕e6 22. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 23. ♖xf8+ This is level. ½ – ½ (23) Mamedyarov, S (2760) – Kramnik, V (2799) Wijk aan Zee 2008.

B2) 9. ♖f3 ♖h4 10. h3 ♕e7 11. ♘e2 f6 12. exf6 Recapturing with the queen on f6 will give Black a favourable endgame. ½ – ½ (12) Glek, I (2543) – Luther, T (2534) Germany 2007.

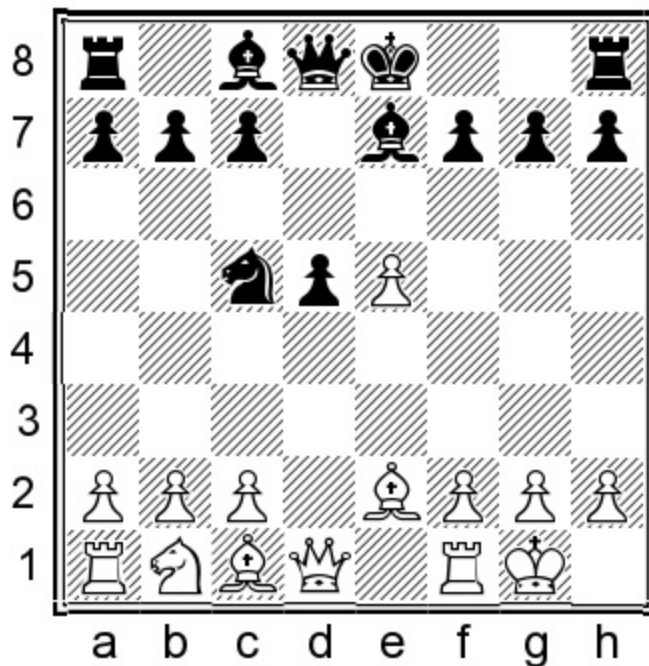
B3) 9. f4 ♘xd3 10. ♖xd3 ♕c5+ 11. ♔h1 g6 12. f5



Position after: 12.f5

12... ♕xf5 13. ♖g3 ♖d7 14. ♕g5 ♕e7 1-0 (36) Daneshvar, B (2411) – Rosen, E (2359) chess.com 2022.

C) 8. ♕e2 ♕e7



Position after: 8...♙e7

C1) 9.♘d2 0-0 10.♘b3 c6 11.♙e3 ♘xb3 12.axb3 ♚c7 13.f4 f6 This is good for Black.

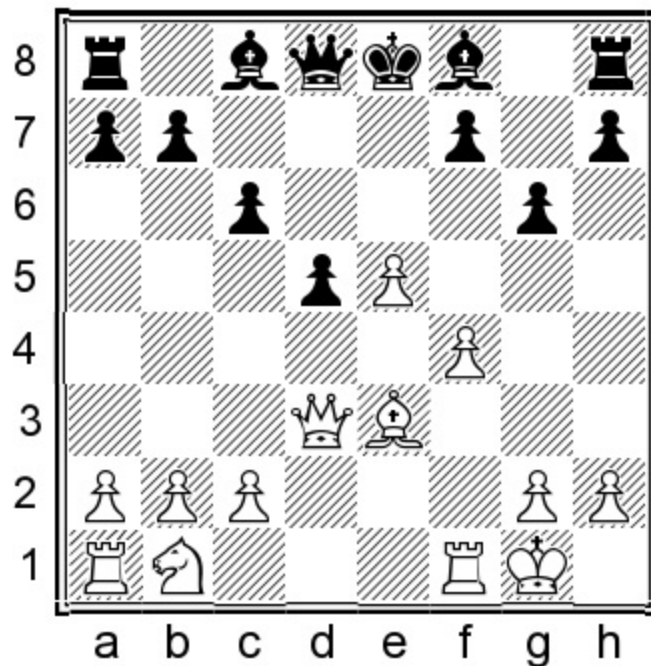
C2) 9.♙e3 0-0 10.f4 [10.c4 dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♚xd1 12.♞xd1 ♙e6 13.♙xe6 fxe6 Such endgames are fine for Black.] 10...c6 11.♘d2 f6 12.♘f3 fxe5 13.♘xe5 ♙e6=

C3) 9.c3 A few other moves have been tried but it seems that this is not a very ambitious position for White in general: 9...0-0 10.♙e3 b6 11.c4 ♙a6 12.cxd5 ♙xe2 13.♚xe2 ♚xd5 14.f4 ♚d3 15.♘c3 ♚xe2 16.♘xe2 f6 17.♘d4 fxe5 18.fxe5 ♞xf1+ 19.♞xf1 ♙f8 20.♘f3 ♘d3 Black has good counterplay in this endgame; the pawn on e5 is more of a weakness than an asset. 0-1 (85) Sindarov, J (2659) – Fedoseev, V (2676) Abu Dhabi 2023.

8...c6 9.f4

A direct attempt and the most critical.

9...♘xd3 10.♚xd3 g6

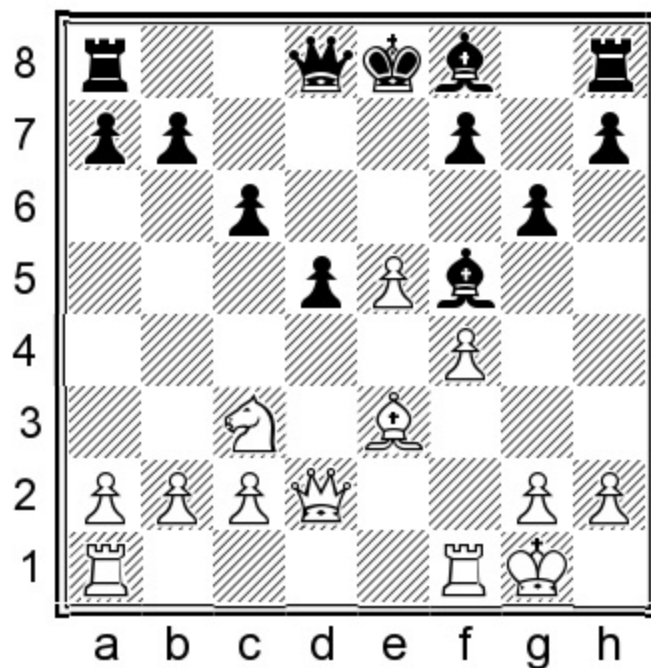


Position after: 10...g6

11. ♘d2

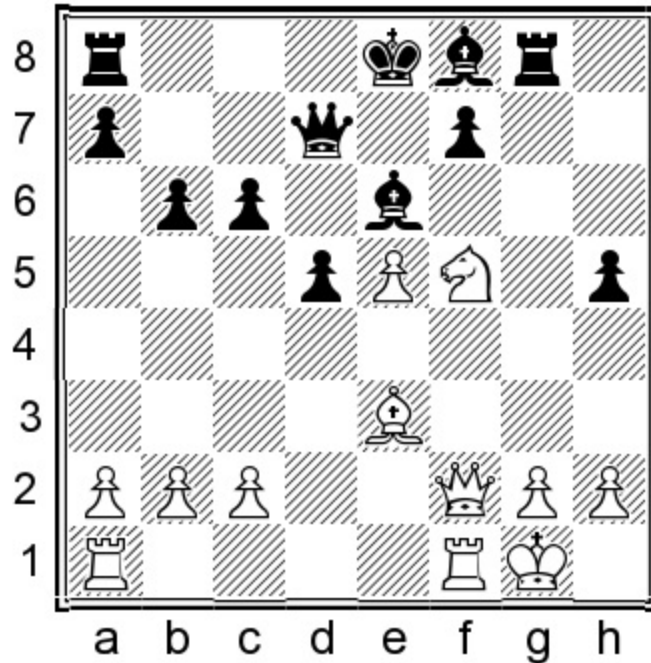
White's main choice.

11. ♘c3 ♕f5 [An interesting sideline is: 11...b6 12. ♖ad1 ♕f5 13. ♗e2 h5 14. h3 ♗c7 15. b4 ♕e7 16. a3 0-0 17. ♖d2 ♖b8 18. ♗f2 ♖hf8 19. ♖e1 ♖a8 20. b5 ♕e6 21. bxc6 ♗xc6 22. ♕d4 ♖c8 with an unclear game. ½ – ½ (31) Tiemann, H (2353) – Bester, B (2423) ICCF 2020] 12. ♗d2



Position after: 12. ♗d2

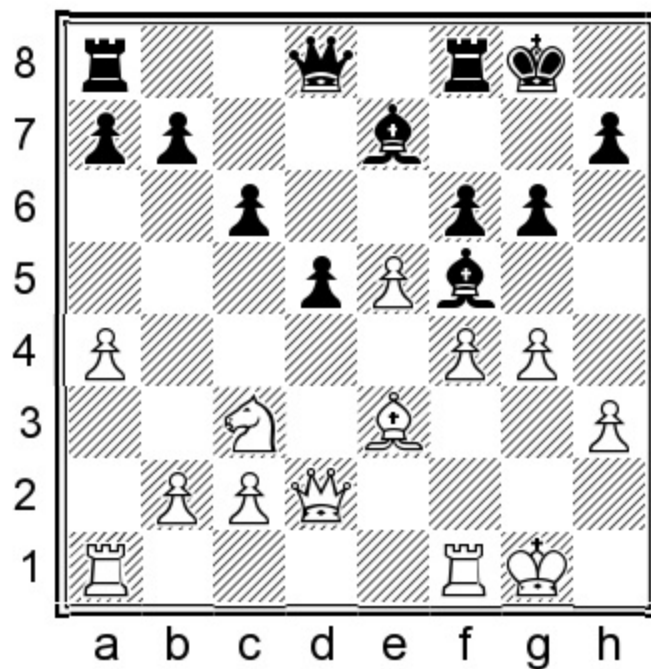
A) 12...h5!? 13.♖f2 b6 14.♗e2 ♖d7 15.♗g3 ♕e6 16.f5 gxf5 17.♗xf5 ♜g8



Position after: 17...♜g8

18.c3 ♜g4 19.a4 ♕xf5 20.♖xf5 ♜e4 21.♕d4 ♖xf5 22.♜xf5 c5 23.♕f2 d4 24.cxd4 cxd4 25.♜xh5 d3
 Black has strong counterplay.

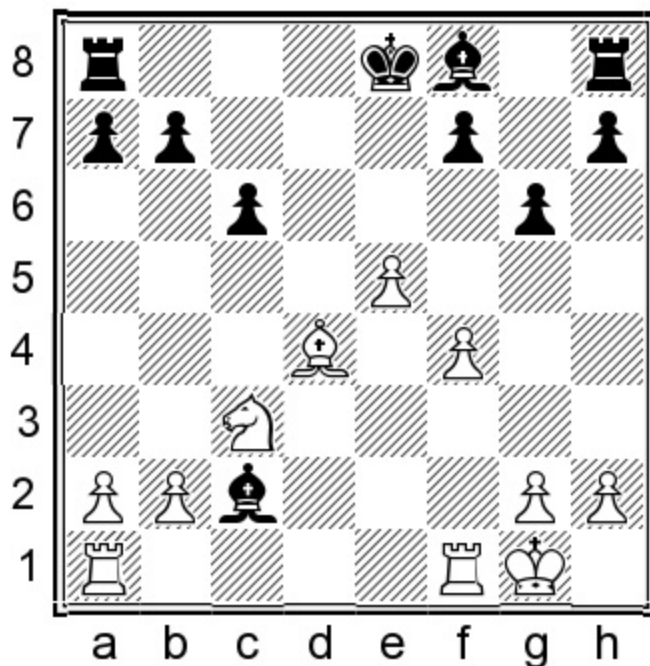
B) 12...♕e7 13.a4 0-0 14.h3 f6 15.g4



Position after: 15.g4

15...♔d7 16.♞ad1 fxe5 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♙xd5+ ♜f7 19.♙xd7 ♙xd7 20.♞xd7 ♔c5 21.♞d3 ♔xe3+ 22.♞xe3 exf4= ½ – ½ (49) Chigaev, M (2617) – Yu Yangyi (2729) chess.com 2023.

C) 12...d4 A direct attempt to play for equality. 13.♙xd4 ♙xd4 14.♔xd4 ♔xc2

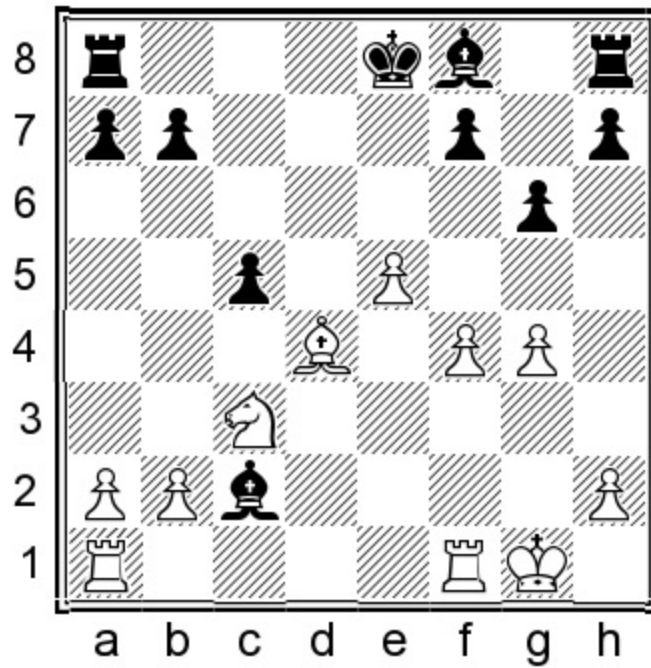


Position after: 14...♔xc2

15.g4 [15.e6 ♞g8 16.♞ae1 ♔f5 17.exf7+ ♜xf7 18.♘e4 h6 19.♞e3 ♞e8 The position is equal. ½ – ½ (46) Jasinski, M (2453) – Duszynski, J (2400) ICCF 2022]

C1) 15...0-0-0 16.♔xa7 h5 17.♞f2 ♔d3 Now with: 18.♔b6! [18.♞d1 hxg4∞ ½ – ½ (39) Preotu, R (2475) – Lenderman, A (2566) Montreal 2023] 18...♞d7 19.g5 White keeps a healthy pawn.

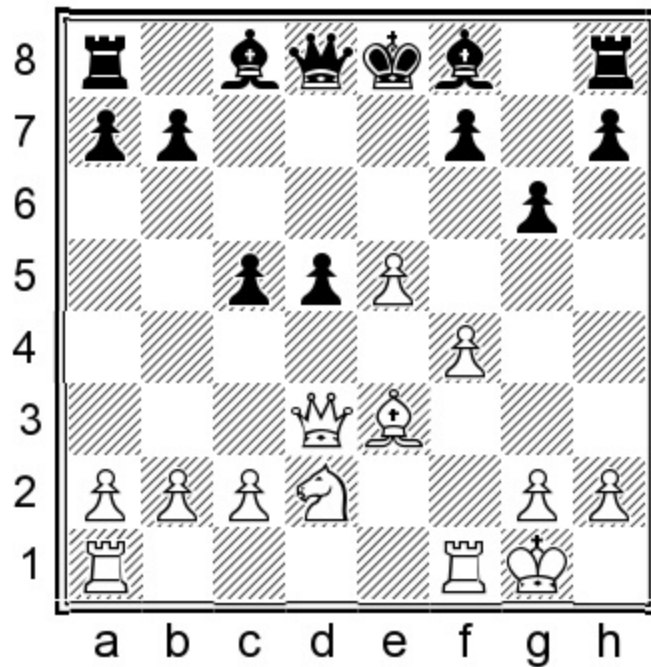
C2) 15...c5!



Position after: 15...c5!

16.♙e3 ♘d3 17.♜f2 0-0-0 18.♞d2 ♙e7 19.♞ad1 ♙c4 20.f5 ♜xd2 21.♞xd2 gxf5 22.gxf5 ♞d8 23.♞xd8+ ♜xd8 24.♞e4 ♙d5 with an equal endgame.

11...c5



Position after: 11...c5

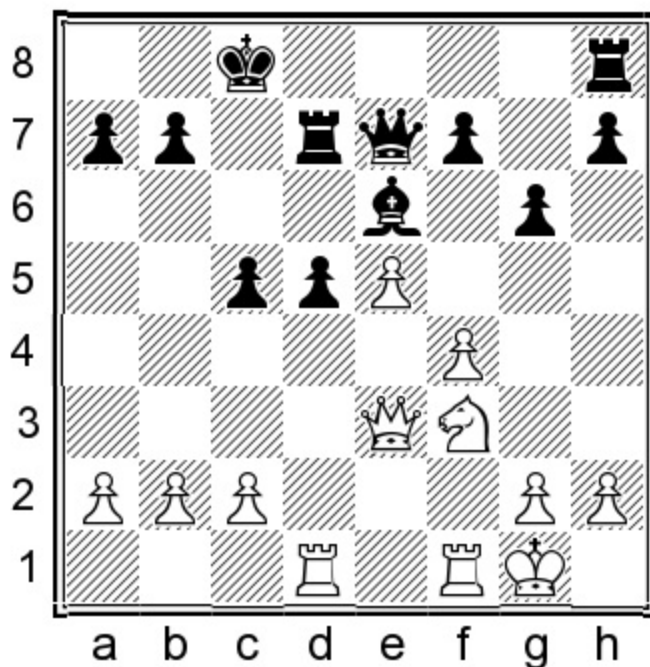
A critical position.

12.c4

There are options here:

A) 12.♖e2 ♘e7 13.c3 ♘f5 14.♗f3 ♚c7 15.♙f2 0-0 16.♞ad1 ♘e4 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (23) Willmann, B (2342) – Enev, Z (2302) LSS 2020.

B) 12.♞ad1 ♘f5 13.♚b3 ♚d7 14.♗f3 ♘e6 15.♙f2 ♘e7 16.♘h4 0-0-0 17.♙xe7 ♚xe7 18.♚e3 ♞d7



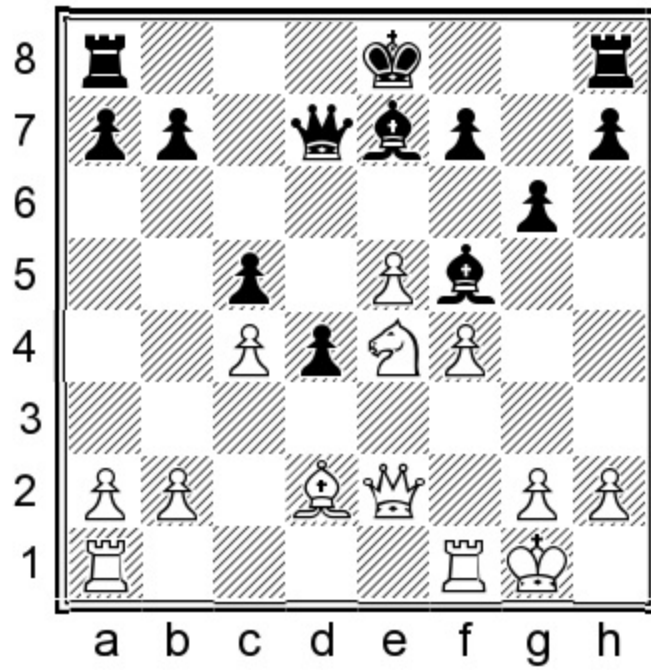
Position after: 18...♞d7

19.c3 ♗b8 20.♞f2 ♞g8 21.a4 h6 22.h3 g5 ♚ with a very sharp game in which Black is able to find counterplay. ½ – ½ (29) Herriot, B (2228) – Mackintosh, I (2366) ICCF 2017.

C) 12.c3 ♘f5 13.♚b5+ ♚d7 14.♚xd7+ ♗xd7 15.♗f3 ♘e7 Such endgames are not critical at all. 0-1 (63) Jung, J (1746) – Smaga, A (1845) Lechenicher SchachServer 2016.

12...d4 13.♗e4 ♘f5 14.♙d2 ♘e7 15.♚e2 ♚d7

Preventing possible expansion with g4 and preparing queenside castling...

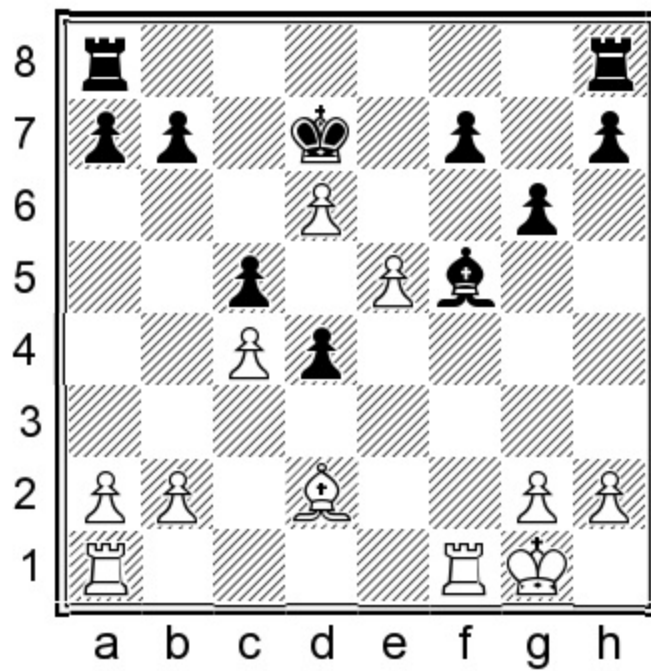


Position after: 15... ♕d7

16. ♖d6+

16... h3 0-0-0!∞

16... ♗xd6 17. exd6+ ♔e6 18. ♕e5 ♕xe5 19. fxe5 ♔d7

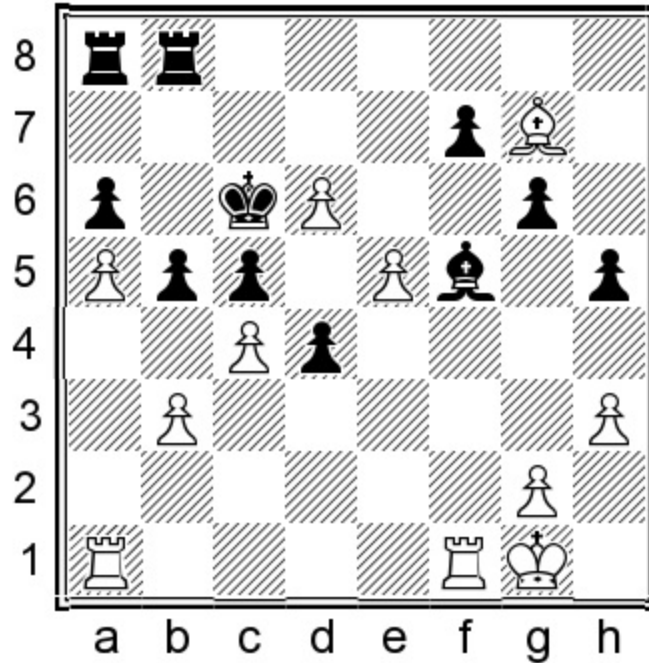


Position after: 19... ♔d7

Both sides have strong pawn assets. It appears we have a balanced game...

20.♔g5

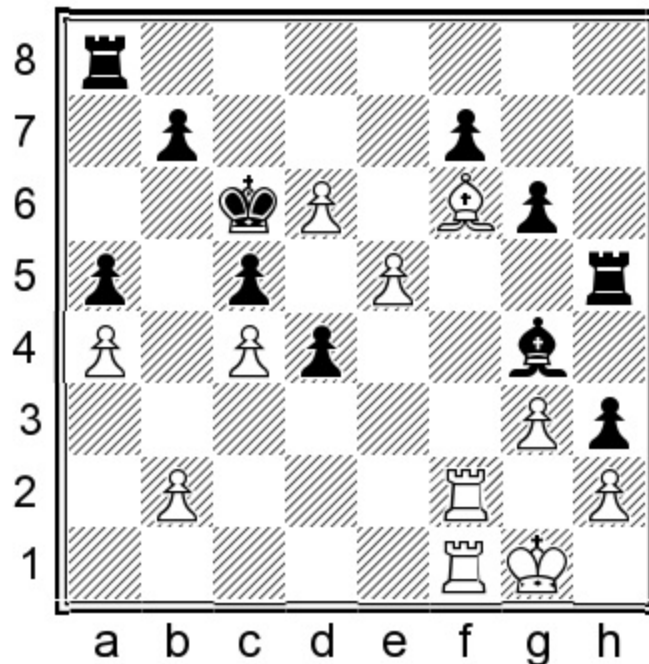
20.♔h6 a6 21.a4 ♖he8 22.♔g7 h5 23.h3 ♕c6 24.a5 ♗eb8 25.b3 b5



Position after: 25...b5

26.axb6 ♖xb6 27.♖a3 a5 28.♖fa1 a4 29.♖xa4 ♖xa4 30.♖xa4 ♖xb3 This also gives counterplay.

20...a5 21.a4 h5 22.♖a3 h4 23.♖b3 ♕c6 24.♖bf3 ♗h5 25.♔f6 ♔g4 26.♖3f2 h3 27.g3



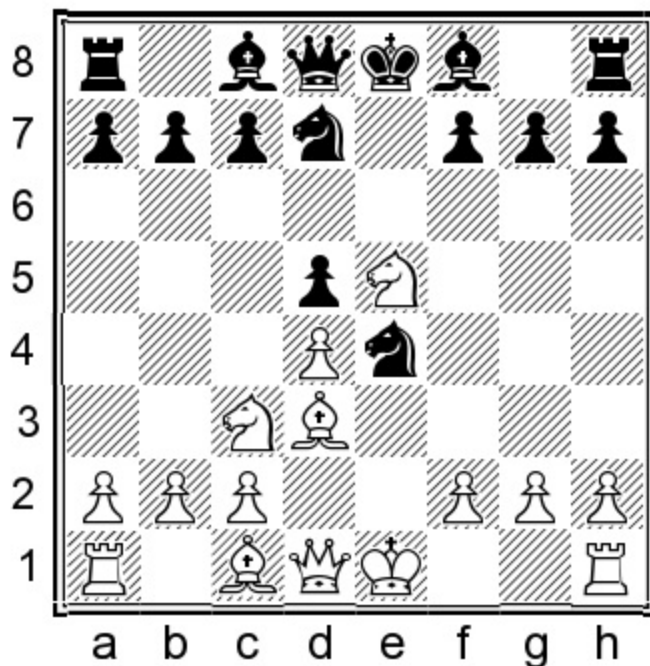
Position after: 27.g3

27...♖a6

There is no progress to be made here for either side. A good game and it seems that Black is doing OK. ½ – ½ (39) Kolcak, M (2546) – Copar, A (2476) ICCF 2008.

c) 5.♗xe5 ♖d7 6.♗c3 ♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♕c5 9.0-0

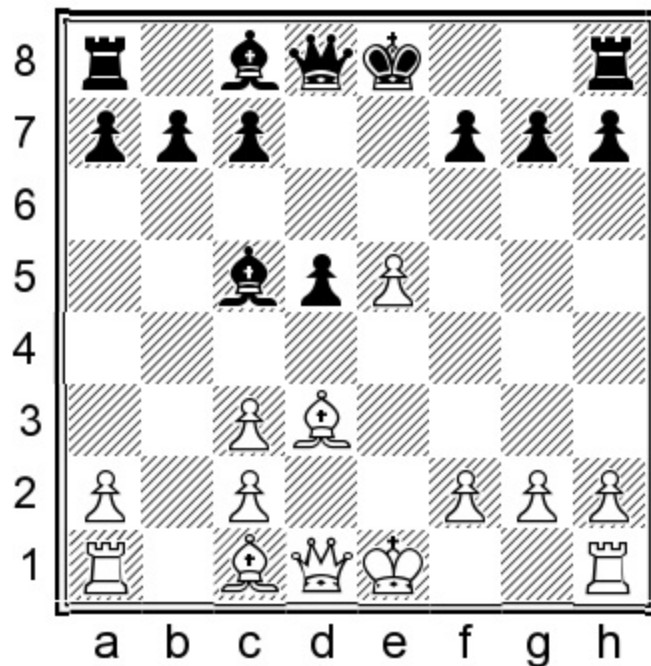
1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♕d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♖d7 6.♗c3



Position after: 6.♗c3

A very popular line in the last few years. White goes for an unbalanced pawn structure.

6...♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♕c5



Position after: 8...♙c5

This is a starting position here and we can see that both sides have positional gains: White is counting on his kingside majority and possible attacking play while Black has a healthy pawn structure and can look forward to better endgames. White has a choice:

9.0-0

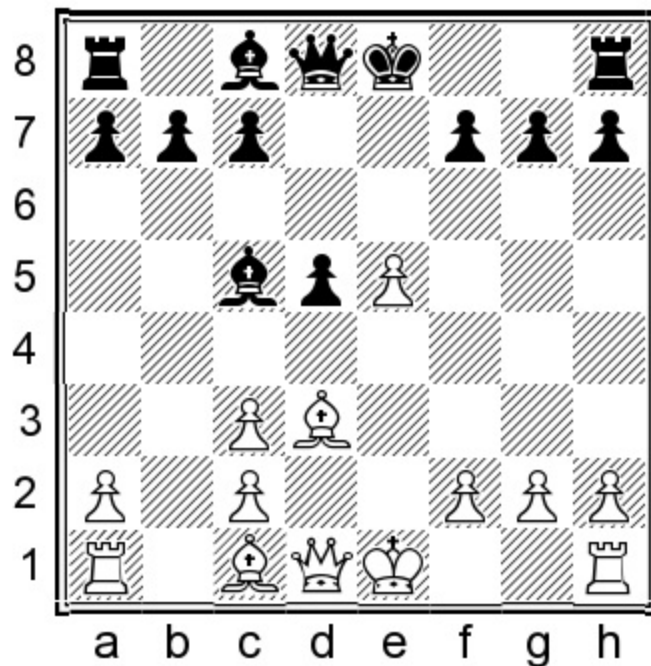
White has two main ideas: either to stop castling or to castle himself first. In the next file we will deal with 9.♙h5.

An interesting idea that in my opinion deserves to be the main line is:

9...♙e6!?

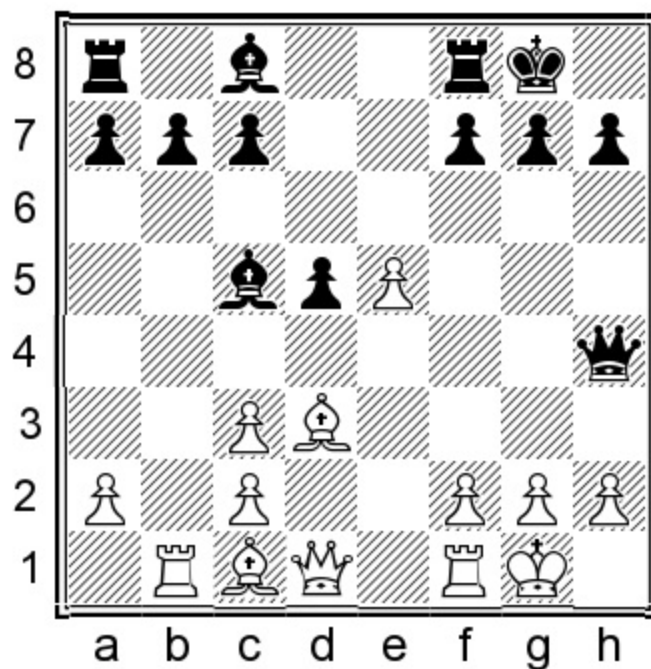
Still playing flexibly.

The alternative is solid and tested: 9...0-0



Position after: 9...0-0

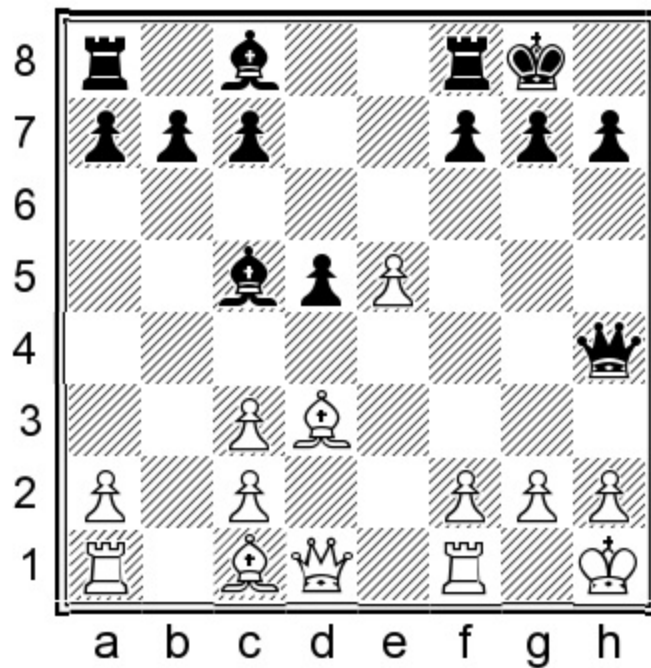
A) 10.♖b1 ♕h4! If allowed Black should play this.



Position after: 10...♕h4!

11.♕f3 b6 [11...c6 12.g3 ♕h3 13.♗e3 b6 14.♗xc5 bxc5 15.♕e3 c4 16.♗e2 ♕f5 with yet another good position for Black. 0-1 (32) Naiditsch, A (2669) – Tregubov, P (2553) Chartres 2023] 12.♗e3 ♗g4 13.♕f4 ♗e7 14.♕a4 c5∞ 0-1 (46) Ponkratov, P (2571) – Nesterov, A (2592) Barnaul 2024.

B) 10.♔h1 ♕h4!

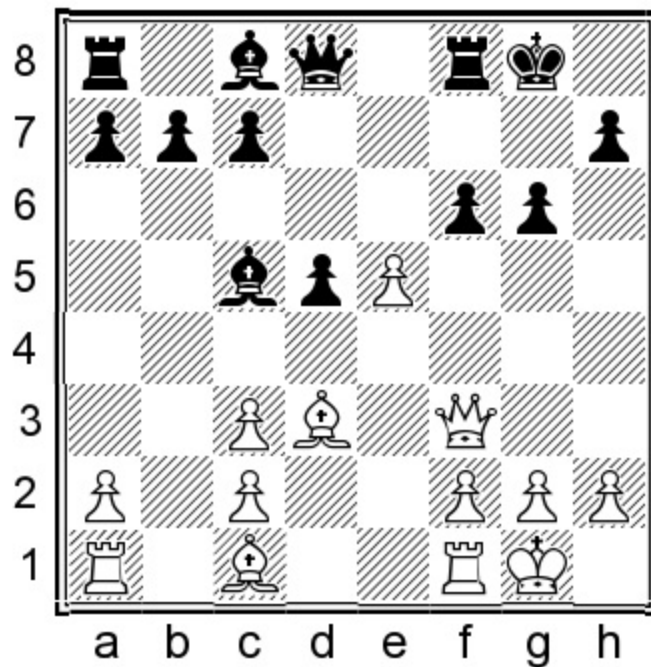


Position after: 10... ♕h4!

11.f4 ♘g4 12.♙e2 ♙xe2 13.♚xe2 ♜ae8=

C) 10. ♚h5 Critical. 10...g6

C1) 11. ♚f3 f6!

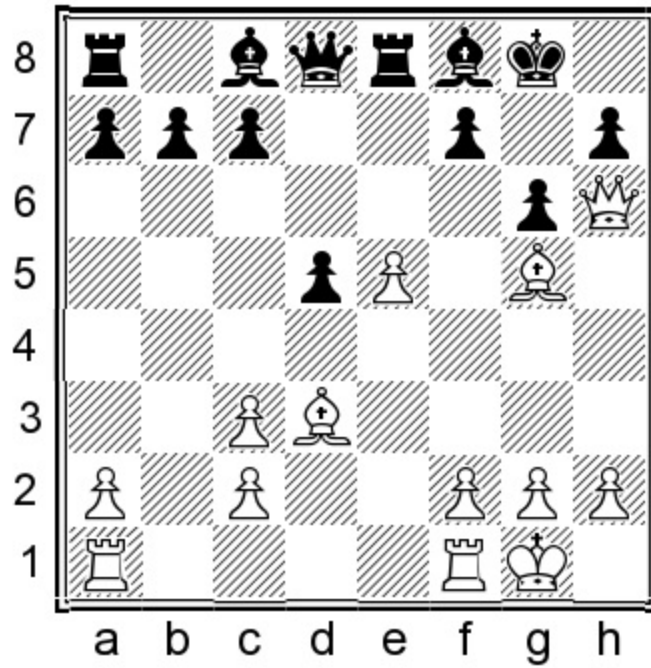


Position after: 11...f6!

[11... ♜e8 12. ♚g3 ♙e6 13.a4 ♚d7 14. ♙h6∞ 0-1 (69) Kazakouski, V (2596) – Laurusas, T (2587)

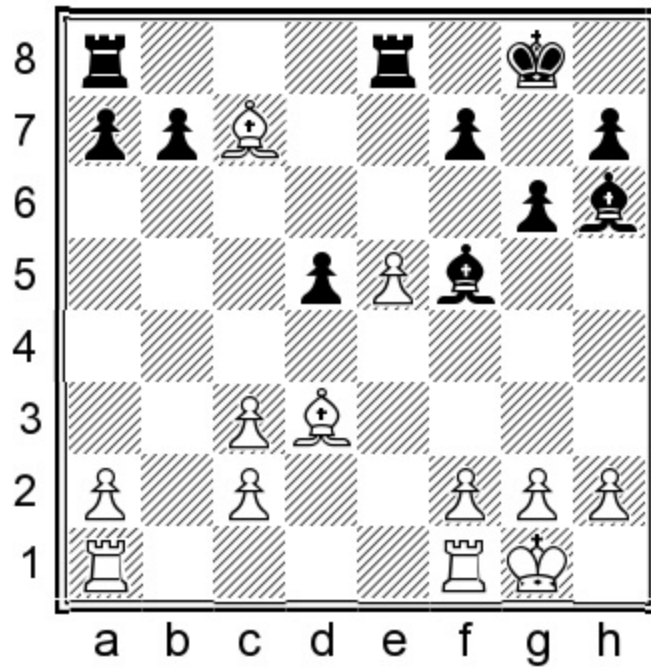
Lithuania 2024] 12. ♖g3 fxe5 13. ♗xg6 leads to another draw.

C2) 11. ♖h6 ♞e8 12. ♗g5 ♗f8



Position after: 12... ♗f8

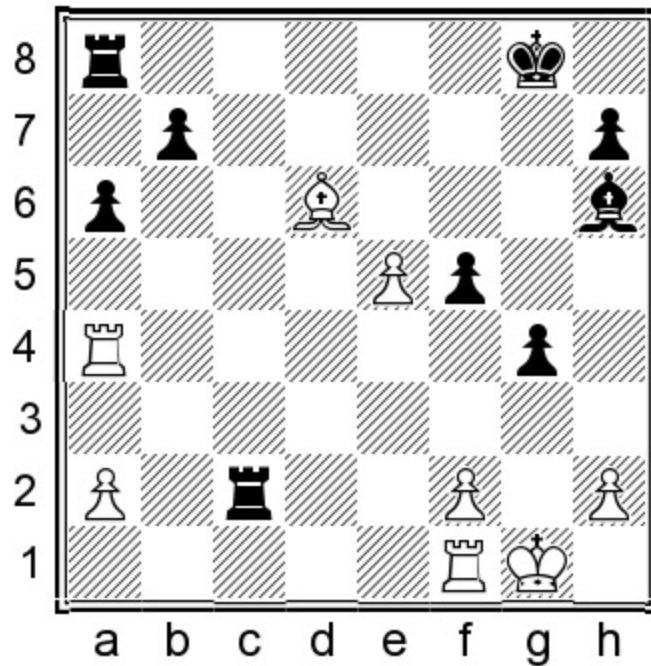
13. ♗xd8 [13. ♖h4 ♗e7 14. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 15. ♖xe7 ♞xe7=] 13... ♗xh6 14. ♗xc7 ♗f5



Position after: 14... ♗f5

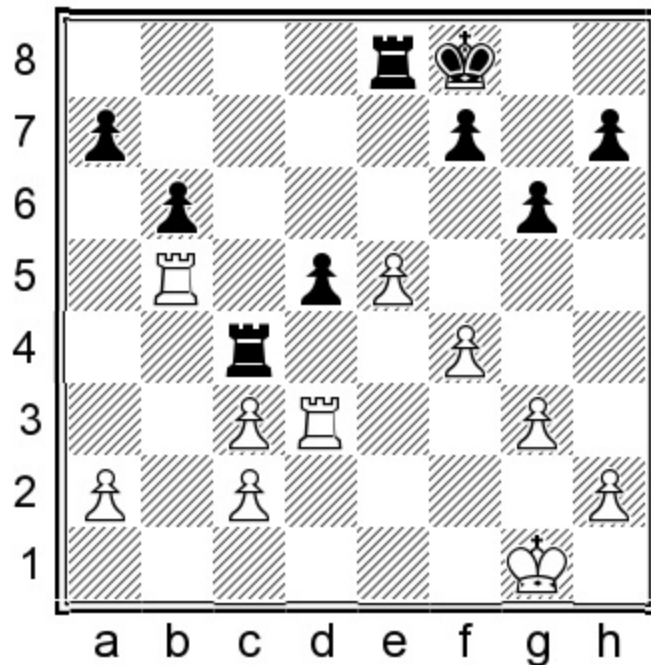
It seems that Black will equalize here. 15. ♞ad1 [15. ♗xf5 gxf5 16. ♗d6 ♞ac8 17. ♞fd1 ♞xc3 18. ♞xd5

♖xc2 19.a4 b6 20.a5 bxa5 21.♞dx5 ♕d2 22.♞xa7 ♕c3 23.♞c7 ♕xa1 24.♞xc2 ♕xe5=] 15...♕xd3
 [Or: 15...♞ec8 16.♕d6 ♞xc3 17.♕xf5 gxf5 18.♞xd5 ♞xc2 19.♞a5 a6 20.g4 fxg4 21.♞a4 f5!



Position after: 21...f5!

22.exf6 ♖f7 23.♞b1 ♞c1+ 24.♞xc1 ♕xc1 25.♞c4 ♕g5 26.♞c7+ ♖e6 27.♕g3 b5 with an equal
 endgame. ½ – ½ (33) Duboue, P (2458) – Tregubov, P (2557) L’Alpe d’Huez 2024] 16.♞xd3 ♞ac8
 17.♕d6 ♕f8 18.f4 ♞c6 19.♕xf8 ♖xf8 20.♞b1 b6 21.♞b5 ♞c4 22.g3



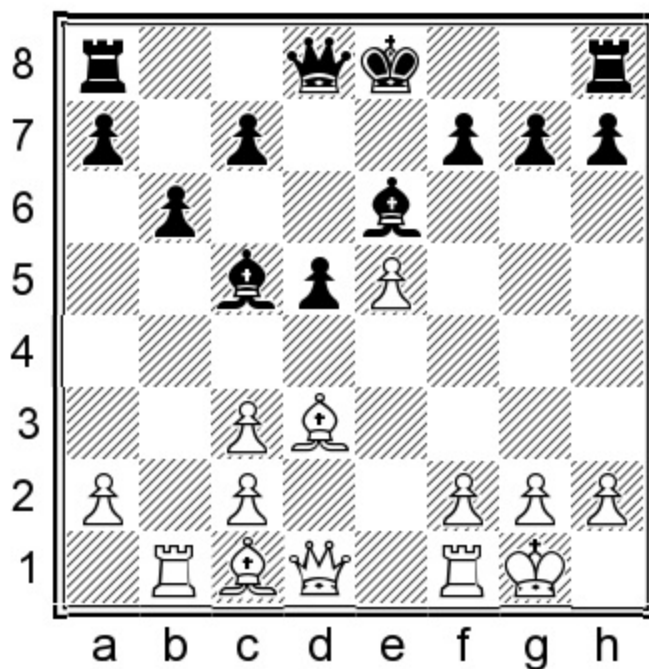
Position after: 22.g3

22...g5! Black has enough play here and the rook endgame is equal. ½ – ½ (32) Suleymanli, A (2626) – Abasov, N (2621) Baku 2024.

10.♖b1

10.♚h5 transpose to 9.♚h5

10...b6!?



Position after: 10...b6!?

Black is keeping options open for castling on either side.

11.♚h5

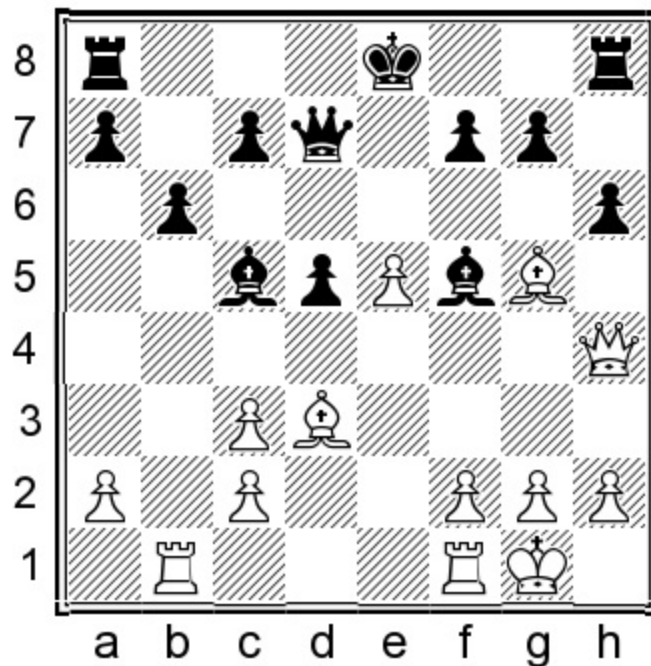
A) 11.♙b5+ ♘d7 12.♚xd5 ♙xb5 13.♚xd8+ ♖xd8 14.♖xb5 ♗d5 Black is better.

B) 11.♔h1 ♚d7 12.f4 ♙f5=

11...♚d7 12.♔h1

A) 12.h3 h6 13.♚h4 0-0 14.♙xh6 gxh6 15.♚g3+=

B) 12.♙g5 h6 13.♚h4 ♙f5!



Position after: 13...♙f5!

Similar motives as in 9.♙h5 line 14.♙be1 0-0 15.♙f6 [15.♙xh6 gxh6 16.♙xh6 ♙e6!±] 15...♙e6 16.♙g3 ♙g6 17.♙xg6 fxg6 18.♙xg6 ♙f7 19.h3 ♙af8 20.♙h2 ♙e7 21.f4 ♙xf6 22.exf6 ♙xf6 Black is fine.

12...h6!?

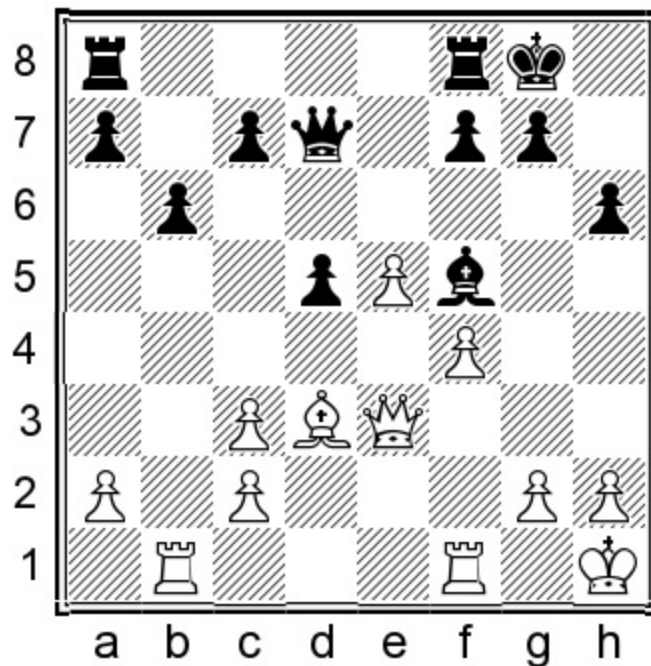
Keeping the option to castle kingside.

12...0-0-0 13.a4 ♙xa4 14.♙g5 g6 15.♙e2 ♙g4 16.♙xg4 ♙xg4 17.♙xd8 ♙xd8 0-1 (41) Hilwerda, J (2273) – Korley, K (2432) Copenhagen 2022.

13.f4

13.♙g5 ♙f8! 14.♙d2 0-0-0

13...♙g4 14.♙h4 ♙f5 15.♙g3 0-0 16.♙e3 ♙xe3 17.♙xe3



Position after: 17. ♖xe3

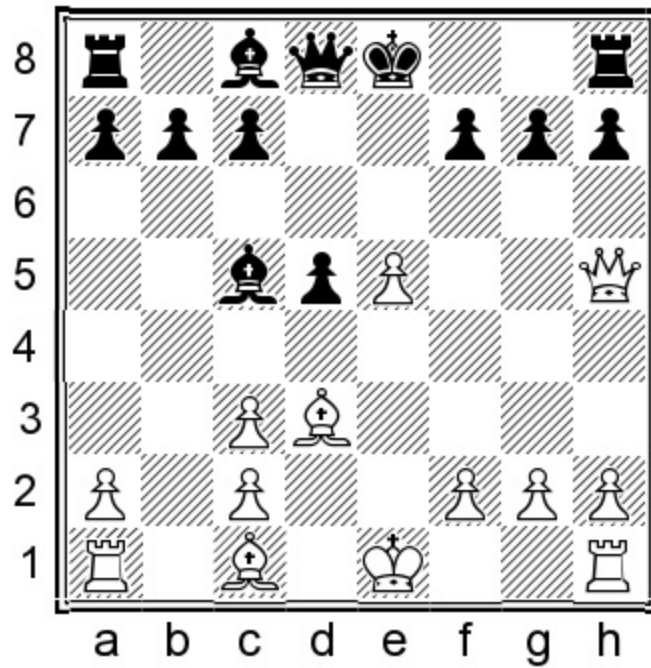
17...c5

Black has achieved his counterplay.

d) 5. ♖xe5 ♖d7 6. ♖c3 ♖xe5 7. dxe5 ♖xc3 8. bxc3 ♗c5 9. ♔h5

1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖f6 3. d4 ♖xe4 4. ♗d3 d5 5. ♖xe5 ♖d7 6. ♖c3 ♖xe5 7. dxe5 ♖xc3 8. bxc3 ♗c5 9. ♔h5

White prevents castling. Black has many choices here: some plans are connected with castling queenside while the others are connected to castling kingside.

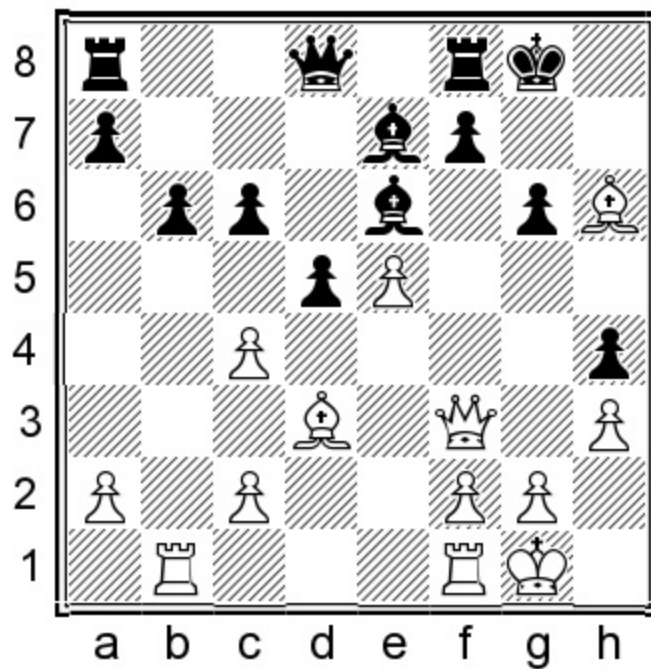


Position after: 9. ♔h5

9... ♘e6

There are choices here:

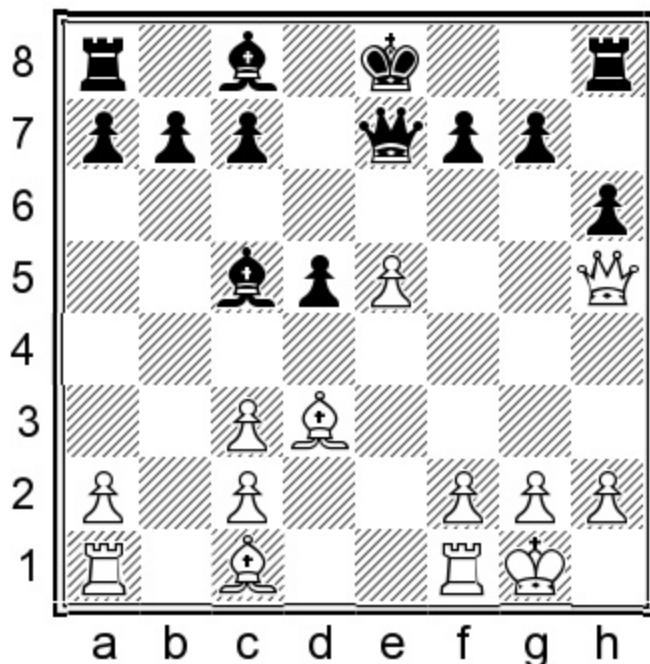
A) 9...g6 10. ♖h6 ♘f8 11. ♗e3 ♘e7 12. ♖b1 c6 13. ♗g3 h5 14. h3 b6 15. 0-0 h4 16. ♗f3 ♘e6 17. c4 0-0 18. ♘h6



Position after: 18. ♘h6

18...♖e8 19.♝bd1 ♘g5 20.♙xg5 ♜xg5 Such positions are fine for Black who has stopped aggressive play on the kingside and is ready to generate play in the centre. ½ – ½ (68) Sanal, V (2585) – Ivanchuk, V (2667) Baku 2023.

B) 9...♞e7 This was my personal preference. 10.0-0 h6

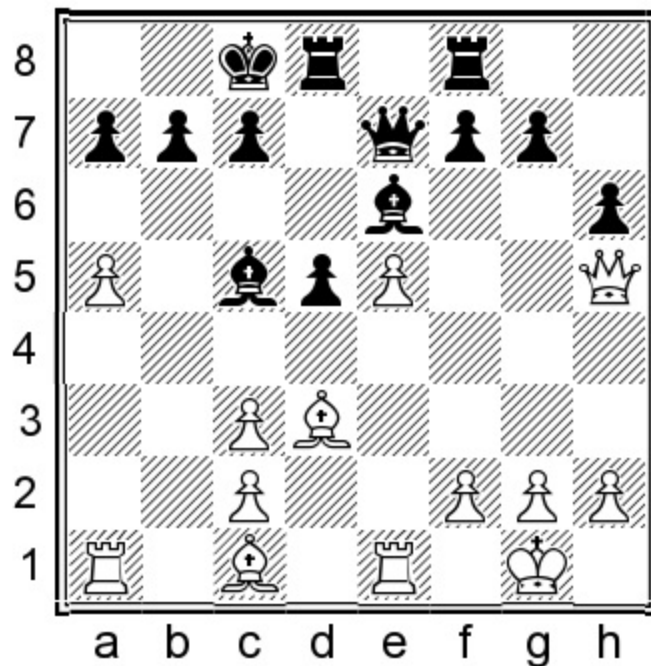


Position after: 10...h6

B1) 11.♔h1 ♘d7 12.c4 ♘e6 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.c4 ♘c6 15.♞h3 ♘d7 16.♞f3 ♘c6 17.♞h3 White doesn't allow queenside castling so we have a draw. ½ – ½ (19) Antipov, M (2606) – Lee, A (2381) Rockville 2024.

B2) 11.a4 a5 12.♔h1 ♘d7 13.f4 g6 14.♞f3 0-0-0 15.♙e3 ♘xe3 16.♞xe3 b6 This is a balanced game and a good example because we can see that there is no progress to be made for White due to their lack of pawn play on the queenside. ½ – ½ (45) Kulaots, K (2525) – Carlsson, L (2375) Kvisla 2023.

B3) 11.♖e1 ♘e6 12.a4 0-0-0 13.a5 ♜hf8!

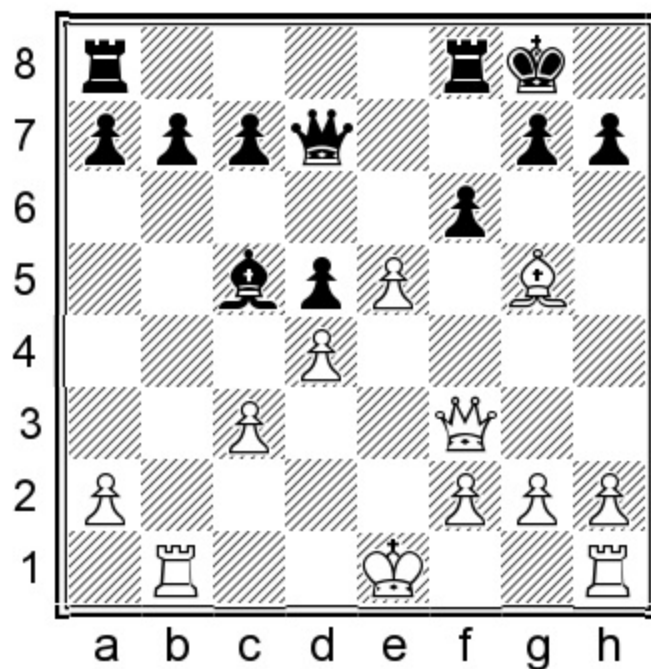


Position after: 13... ♖hf8!

This is key to creating counterplay. 14. ♔e2 f6 15. exf6 ♜xf6 16. ♙e3 ♞df8 17. ♙d4 ♙xd4 18. cxd4 ♚d6 Black is OK. 0-1 (37) Baidetskyi, V (2485) – Pavlovic, M (2402) Bratislava 2023.

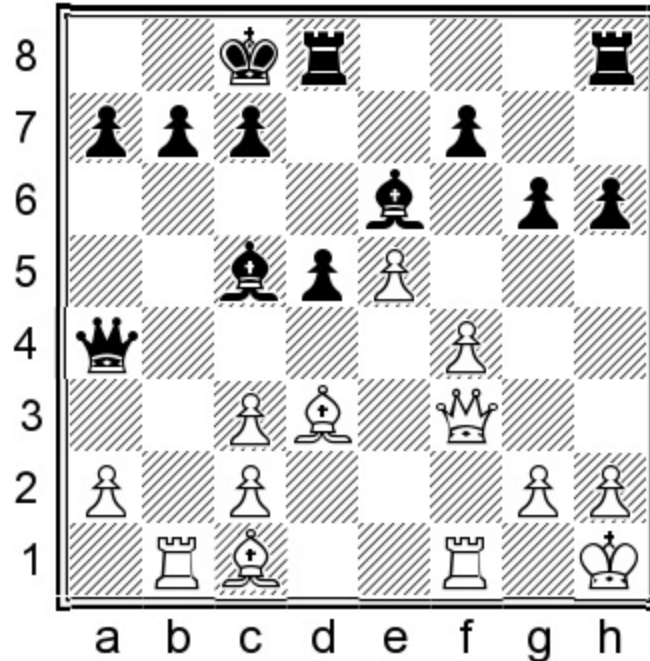
10.0-0

Placing a rook on b1 is not critical: 10. ♜b1 ♚d7! 11. 0-0 [11. ♙g5 ♙f5 12. ♚f3 ♙xd3 13. cxd3 0-0 14. d4 f6!



Position after: 14...f6!

Black is fine. After eliminating the white-squared bishops Black is not in danger. ½ – ½ (34) Sadhwani, R (2628) – Chirila, I (2536) Saint Louis 2022] 11...h6 12.♞f3 [12.♔h1 0-0-0 13.f4 g6 14.♞f3 ♞a4!

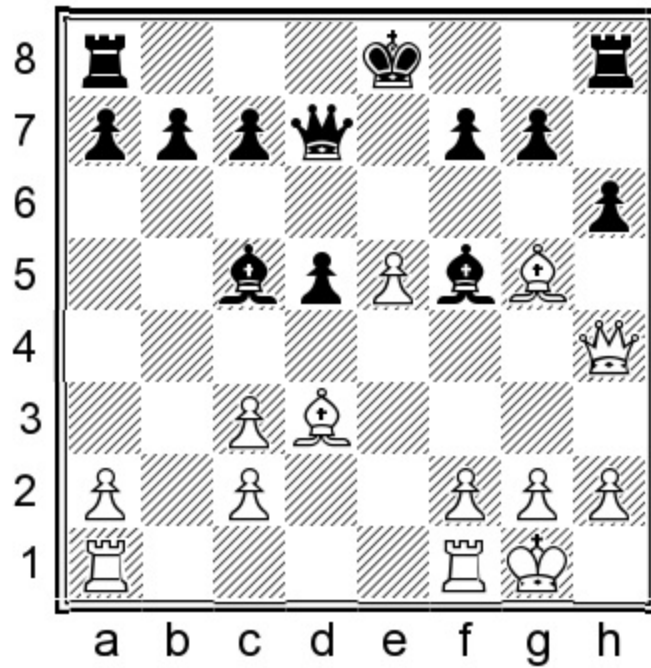


Position after: 14...♞a4!

This is the point of Black's play – a model position.] 12...0-0 13.♙e3 b6 14.h3 f6 15.♙xc5 bxc5 16.♞e3 c4 17.♙e2 fxe5 18.♞xe5 ♞ae8 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (36) Duboue, P (2458) – Tregubov, P (2557) L'Alpe d'Huez 2024.

10...♞d7 11.♙g5 h6 12.♞ab1

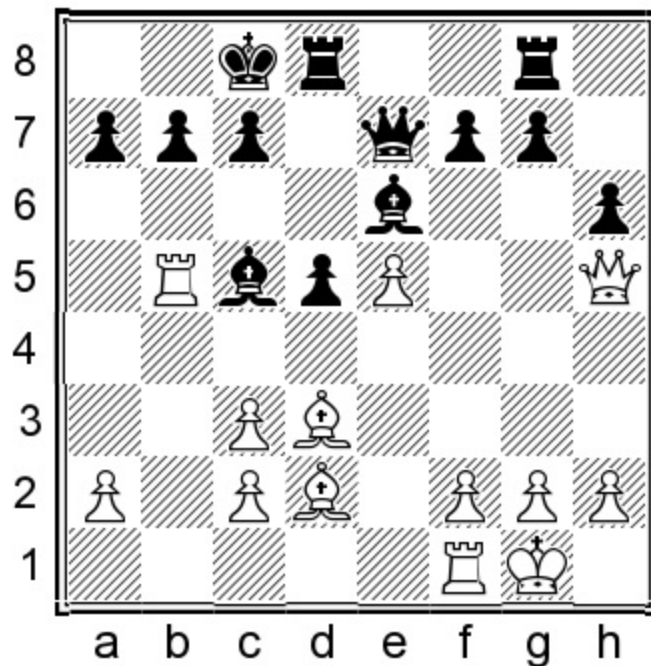
12.♞h4 ♙f5! Whenever it is possible this should be played.



Position after: 12...♙f5!

[12...♜g8 13.♙d2 ♚e7 14.♙a4+ c6 15.♜ab1± It is not advisable to leave the king in the centre. ½ – ½ (32) Dai, C (2510) – Zeng, C (2590) Xinghua CHN 2024] 13.♜ae1 0-0 14.♙e3 b6 15.♙g3 ♙xe3 16.♜xe3 c5 Black has counterplay.

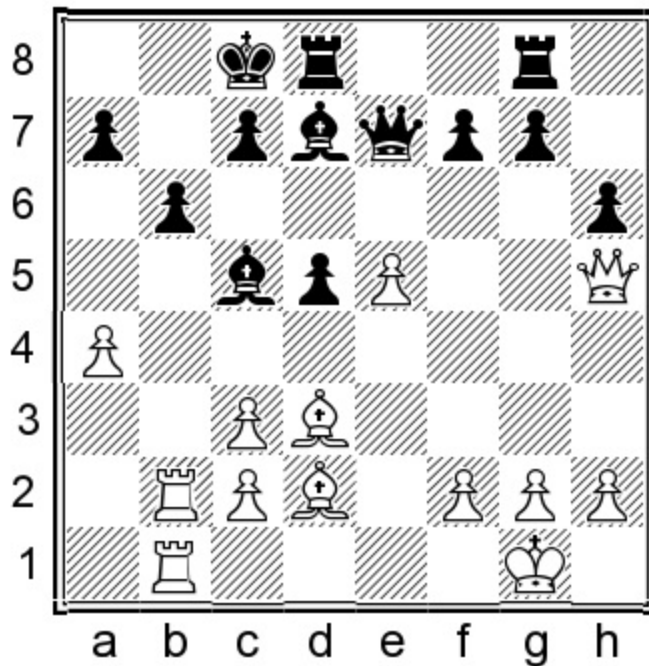
12...♜g8 13.♙d2 0-0-0 14.♜b5 ♚e7!



Position after: 14...♚e7!

14...♙b6 15.♞fb1 ♠ 1-0 (31) Nepomniachtchi, I (2779) – Asadli, V (2567) Baku 2023.

15.♞fb1 b6 16.a4 ♙d7 17.♞5b2



Position after: 17.♞5b2

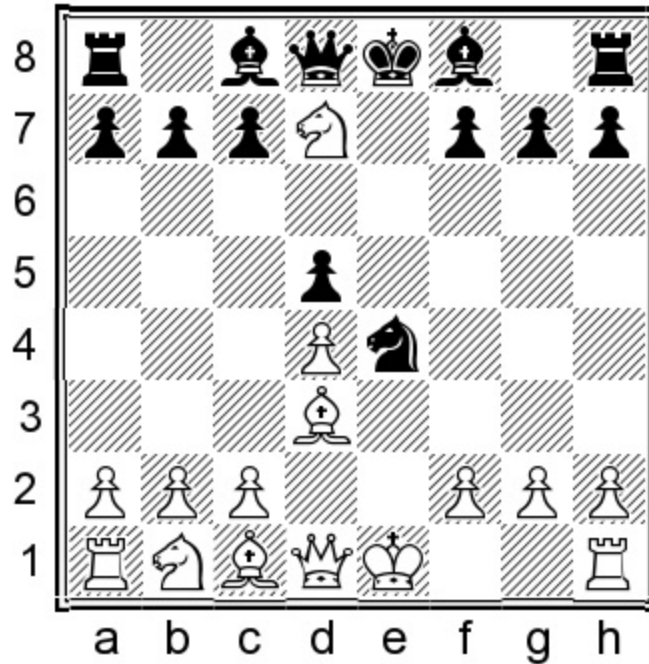
17...♞ge8

Black is better. This is just an example but it is clear that with precise play Black can obtain counterplay.

Chapter 8

4.♔d3 with 6.♖xd7

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♔d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♖xd7



Chapter Guide

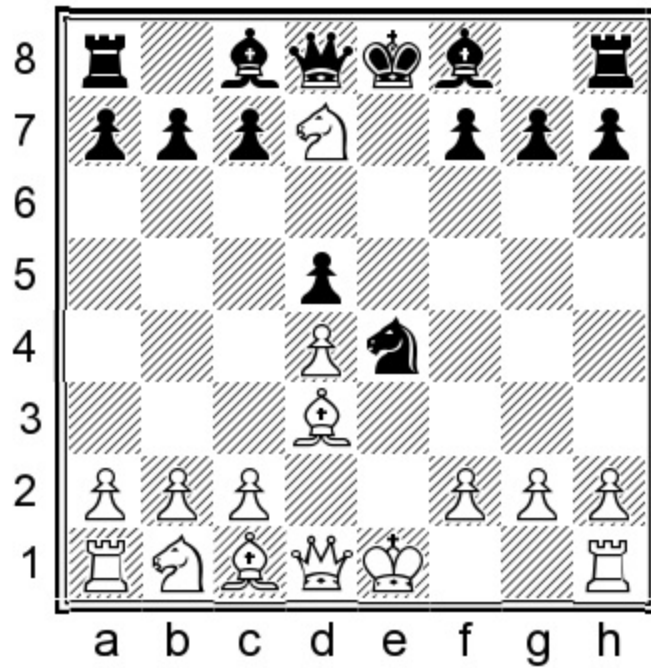
Chapter 8 – 4.♔d3 with 6.♖xd7

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♔d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♖xd7 ♔xd7 7.0-0

- a) 7...♔e7
- b) 7...♔d6 8.c4 0-0 9.cxd5
- c) 7...♔d6 8.c4 0-0 9.c5
- d) 7...♔d6 8.♕h5
- e) 7...♔d6 8.♖c3

a) 7...♔e7

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♔d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♖xd7

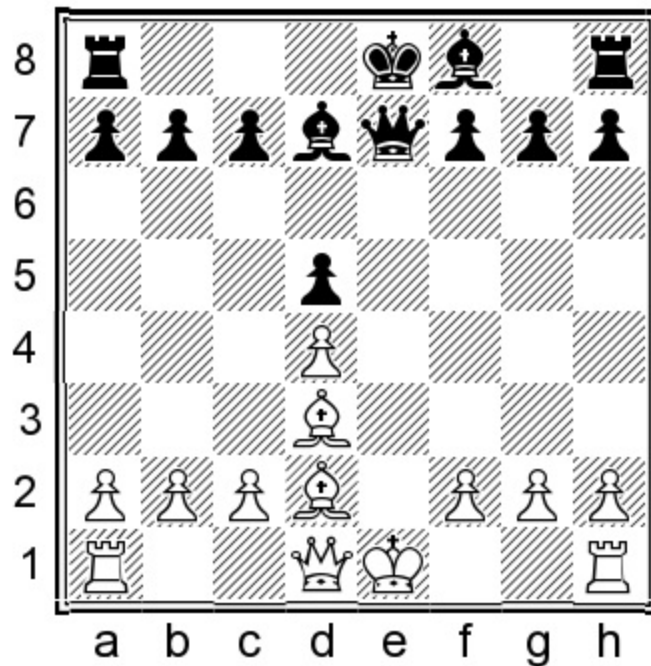


Position after: 6. ♘xd7

The main choice here and the most popular one. Although it may appear to be a simplified position it is actually much more dynamic.

6... ♙xd7 7. 0-0

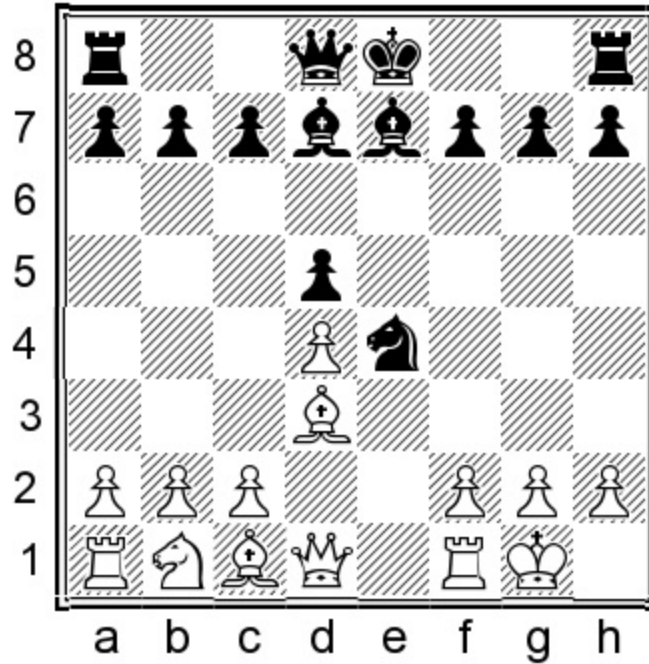
7. ♘d2 ♘xd2 8. ♙xd2 ♚e7+!



Position after: 8... ♚e7+!

9. ♖e2 ♜xe2+ 10. ♕xe2 ♟d6 11. ♞he1 f6 12. f3 ♗f7 13. ♕f2 h5=

7... ♟e7!?



Position after: 7... ♟e7!?

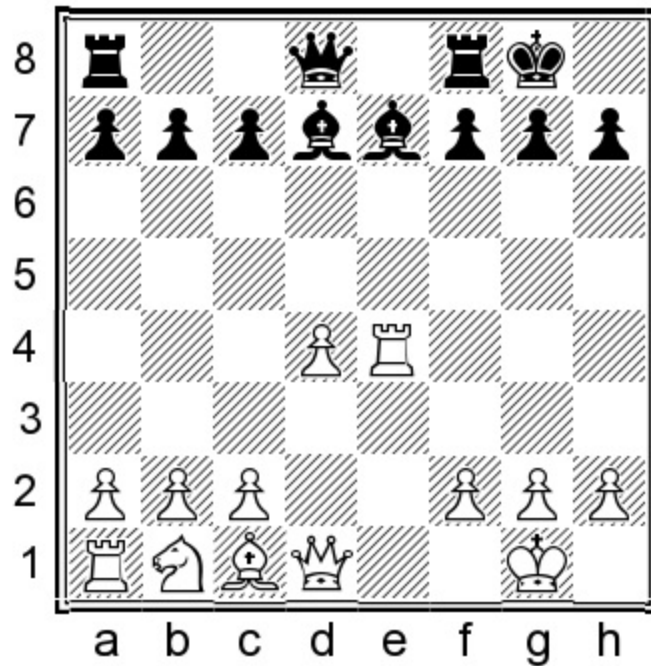
This is not the most popular line, but it is an interesting one in which Black keeps an option to play a game not only to equalize. In the next file, I will focus on the more traditional idea 7... ♟d6.

8.c4

The critical continuation but there are some other, regular approaches here:

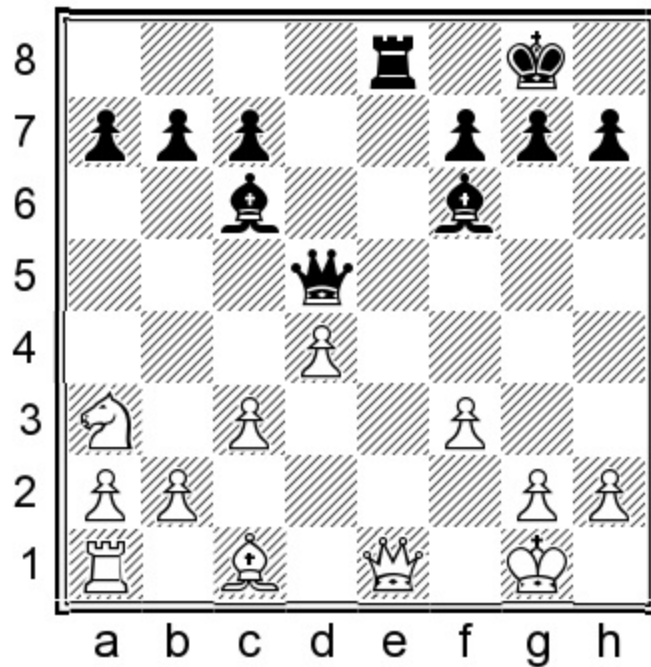
A) 8. ♘d2 ♗f6 9. ♘f3 ♟g4=

B) 8. ♞e1 0-0 9. ♟xe4 dxe4 10. ♞xe4



Position after: 10. ♖xe4

10...♔f6!? This was my original intention. [10...♔d6 11.♔f4 ♕c6 12.♔xd6 ♖xd6 13.♖e3 ♗ad8 14.c3 ♗d5 15.♗f1 ♔b5 16.♗c1 ♕c6 17.f3 ♖fe8 18.♘a3 ♔a4 19.b3± ½ – ½ (54) Vokhidov, S (2643) – Paravyan, D (2600) Abu Dhabi 2024] 11.♖e1 ♕c6 12.c3 ♗d5 13.f3 ♖fe8 14.♘a3 ♖xe1+ 15.♗xe1 ♖e8

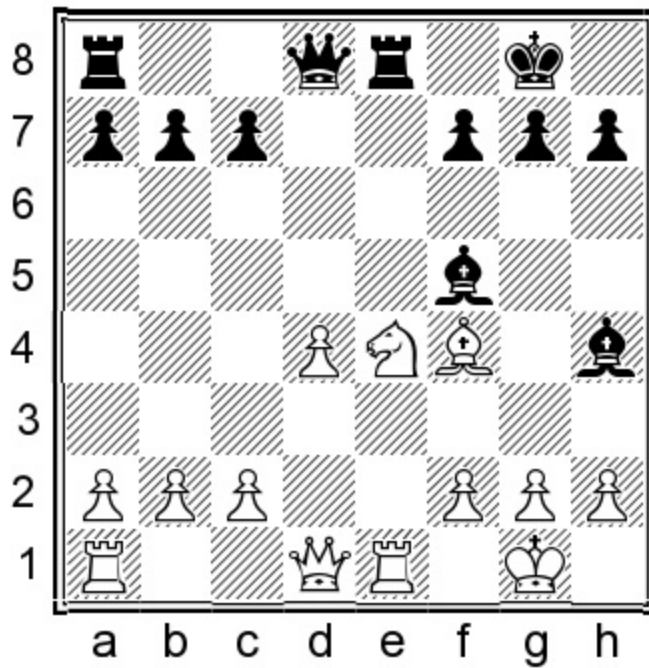


Position after: 15... ♖e8

16.♗f2 ♔e7 17.♘c2 ♔d6 18.♘e3 ♖h5 19.♘f1 ♗g6 20.♔d2 a5 21.♖e1 ♖xe1 22.♔xe1 ♗b1 23.a3

♙b5=

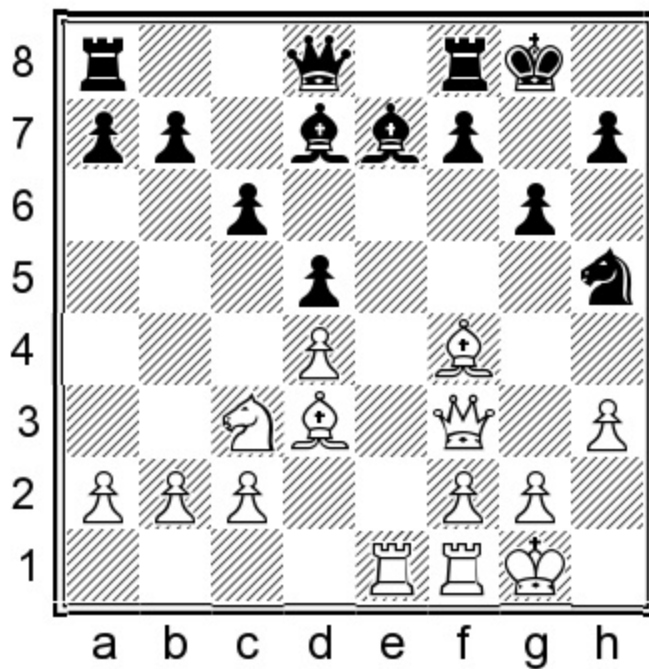
C) 8.♙f4 0-0 9.♘d2 ♙f5 10.♖e1 ♜e8 11.♙xe4 dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♙h4



Position after: 12... ♙h4

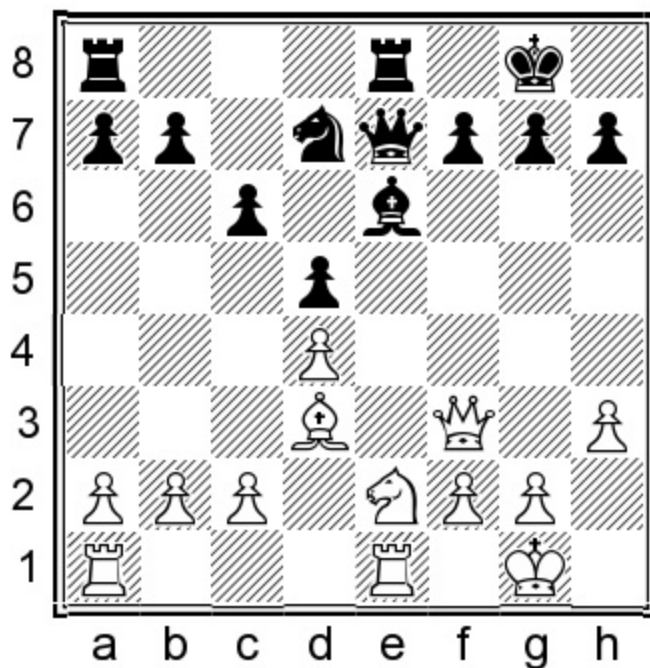
13.♘g3 ♜xe1+ 14.♚xe1 ♙xg3 15.♙xg3 ♚xd4 16.c3 ♚d7=

D) 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.♙g5 [9.♙f4 0-0 10.♚f3 c6 11.h3 g6 12.♖ae1 ♘h5!



Position after: 12... ♘h5!

13.♔h6 ♖g7 14.♗e2 ♕g5 15.♕xg5 ♜xg5 Black is fine.] 9...c6 10.♞d2 [10.♞e1 0-0 11.h3 ♞e8
12.♞f3 ♕e6 13.♗e2 ♖d7 14.♕xe7 ♞xe7



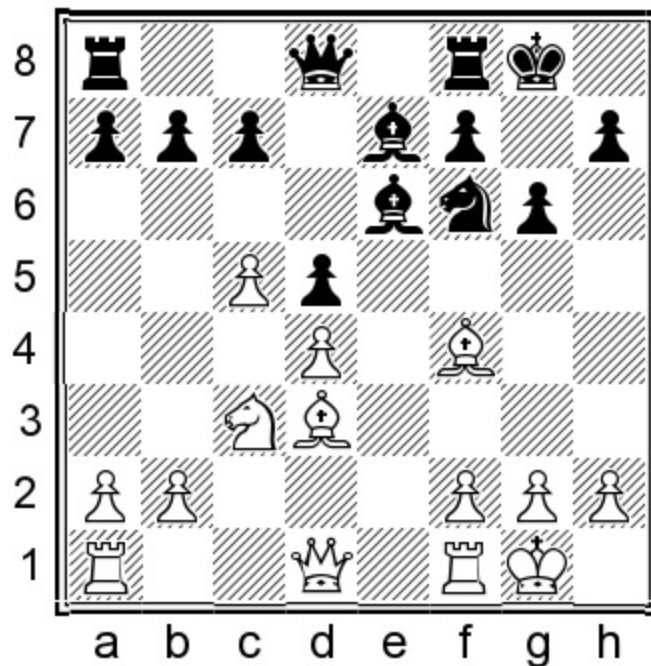
Position after: 14...♞xe7

15.♗f4 ♞f6 16.♞e3 ♗f8= 0-1 (58) Estrada Nieto, J (2267) – Tregubov, P (2539) chess.com 2022]
10...0-0 11.♞ae1 ♞e8 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♕xe7 ♞xe7 14.♕e2 ♗f6 15.♕d3 ♗h5 16.♕e2 ♗f6 17.♕d3 ♗h5
½ – ½ (17) Socko, M (2422) – Ushenina, A (2417) Budapest 2024.

8...♗f6 9.♗c3

9.♞b3 ♕c6 10.♗c3 0-0 11.♞e1 dxc4 12.♕xc4 ♕d6!? gives Black reasonable play.

9...♕e6! 10.c5 0-0 11.♕f4 g6!?N



Position after: 11...g6!?N

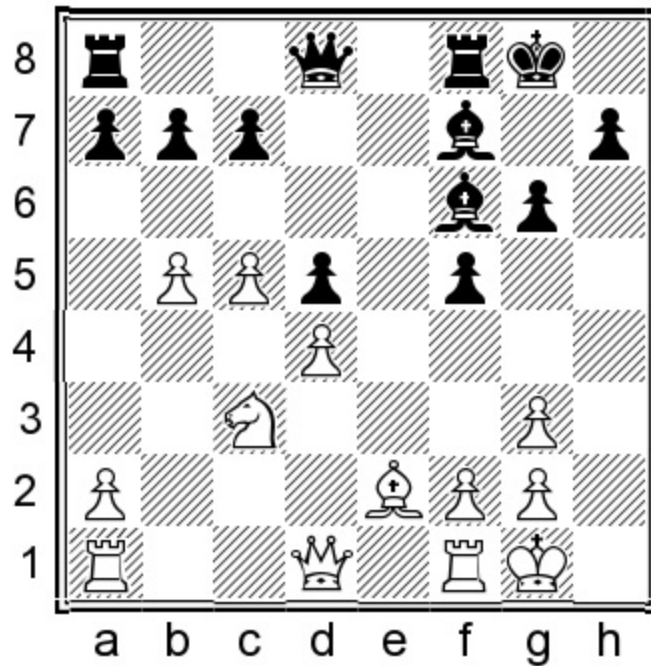
This was my invention. The plan is to speed up the idea of bringing the knight to e6 and to generate play on the kingside.

12.♖e1

This is untested so I analysed it, to be ready for tournament play. White has alternatives:

A) 12.♘b5 ♜e8 Easily defending.

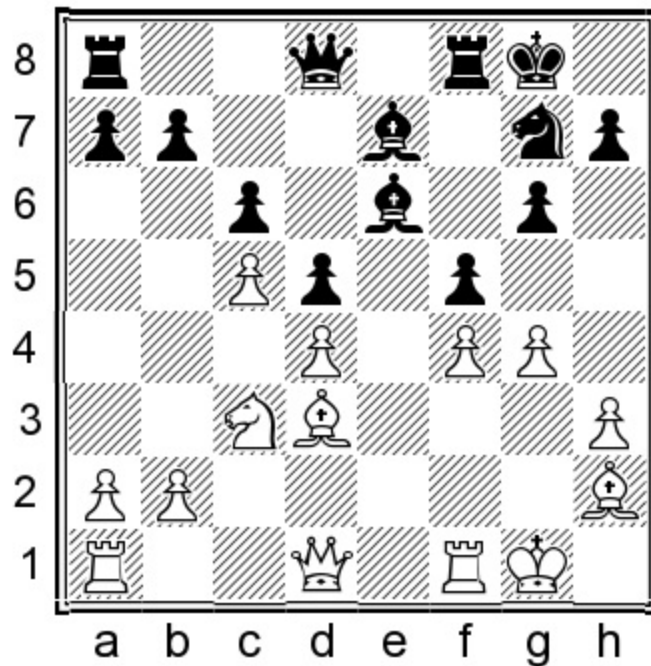
B) 12.b4 ♘h5 13.♙e5 f6 14.♙g3 ♘xg3 15.hxg3 f5 16.b5 ♙f6 17.♙e2 ♙f7



Position after: 17...♙f7

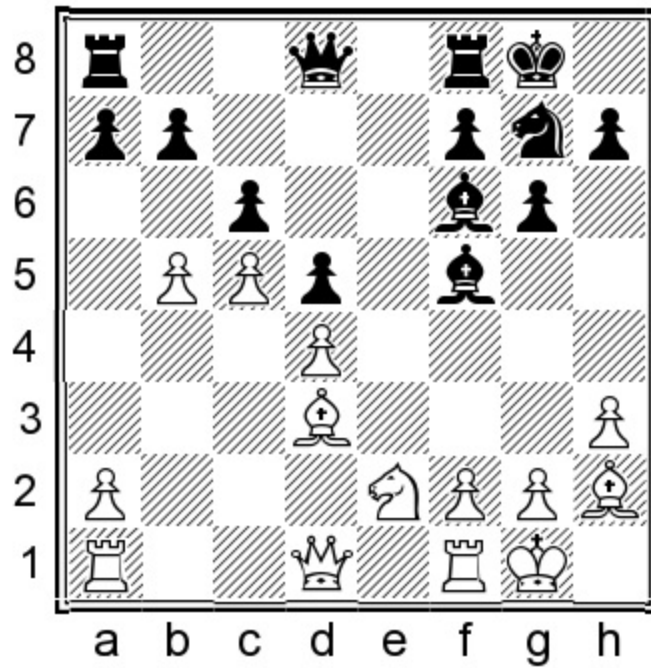
18.♙f3 ♜e8 19.♞c1 a6 20.a4 c6 This is fine for Black.

C) 12.h3 ♘h5 13.♙h2 Securing a retreat. 13...c6 14.b4 [14.g4 ♘g7 15.f4 f5!



Position after: 15...f5!

Black will generate play while the bishop on h2 is locked in now. 14.♞d2 ♜e8 15.b4 ♙f6 16.♙c2 ♙d7 17.g4 ♘g7 18.f4 ♘e6 19.♘e2 a5 20.a3 axb4 21.axb4 ♞xa1 22.♞xa1 ♘xc5! 23.bxc5 ♞xe2+ So, some tricks here to count on.] 14...♙f6 15.♘e2 ♘g7 16.b5 ♙f5!



Position after: 16...♙f5!

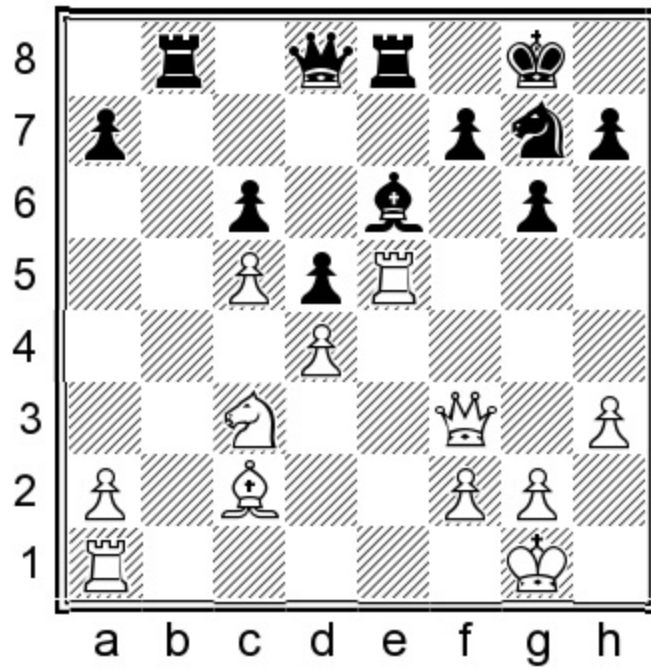
17.bxc6 bxc6 18.g4 ♕xd3 19.♖xd3 ♜e8 20.♞ab1 h5 21.f3 ♗e7 Here also we can say that Black has the initiative.

12...♘h5 13.♙e5 c6

With a couple of choices:

14.b4

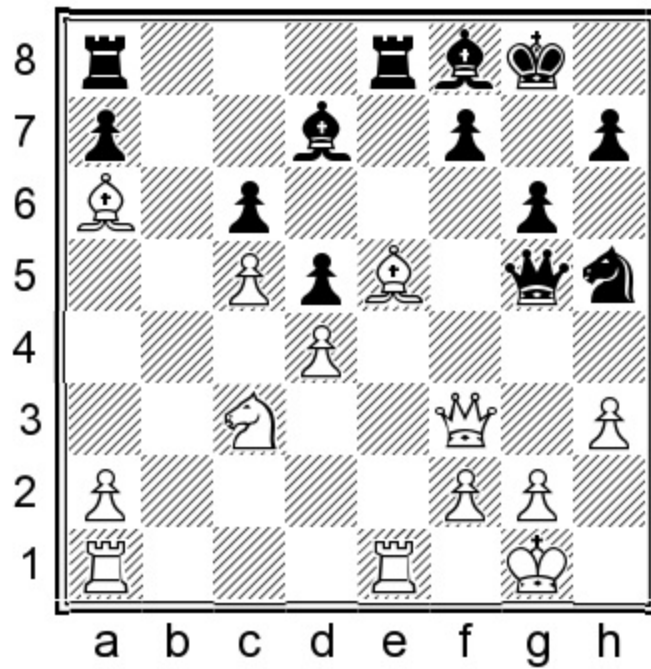
14.♖f3 ♙f6 15.h3 ♜e8 16.♞e3 ♕xe5 17.♞xe5 b6 18.b4 bxc5 19.bxc5 ♞b8 20.♙c2 ♘g7



Position after: 20... ♖g7

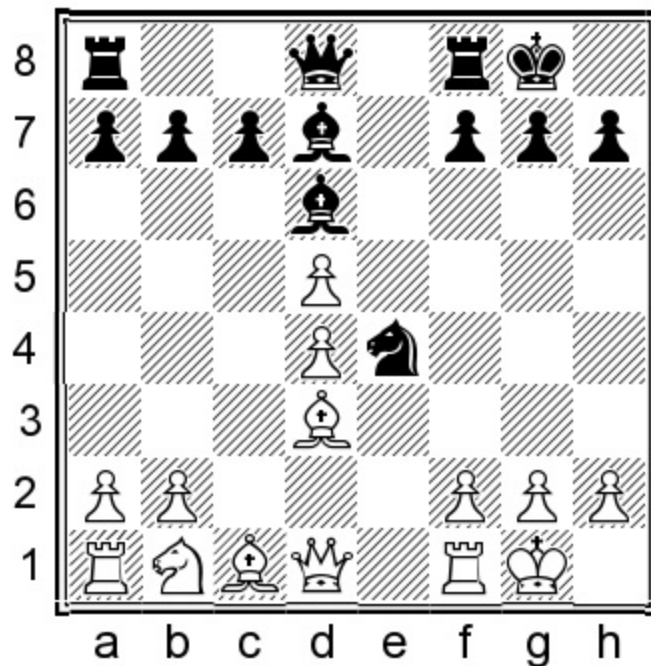
21. ♙a4 ♚c8 22. a3 ♜d7 23. ♞xe8+ ♝xe8 24. ♞e1 ♚d8 25. ♞g3 ♜e6 Black is OK.

14... ♙d7 15. h3 ♞e8 16. ♞f3 ♜f8 17. b5 ♞g5 18. bxc6 bxc6 19. ♙a6



Position after: 19. ♙a6

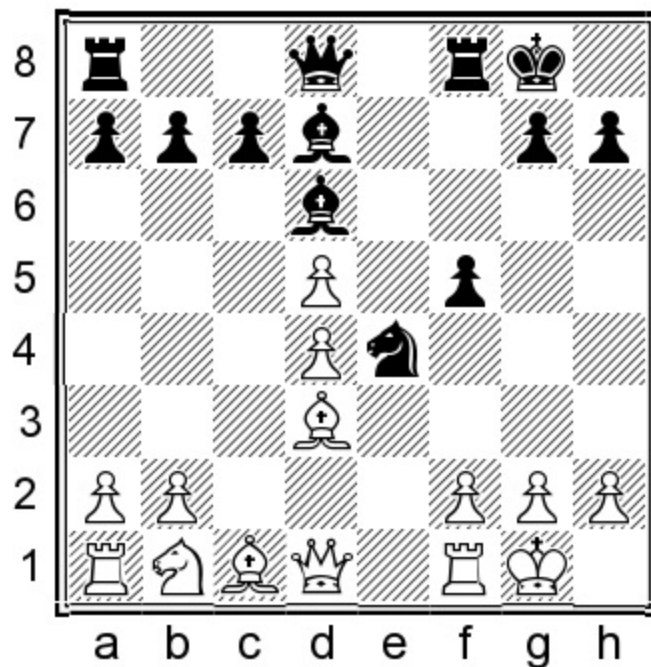
19... ♙g7



Position after: 9.cxd5

In the next file we will analyse another important option here, 9.c5, with the obvious idea of pushing the bishop back from its strong position.

9...f5



Position after: 9...f5

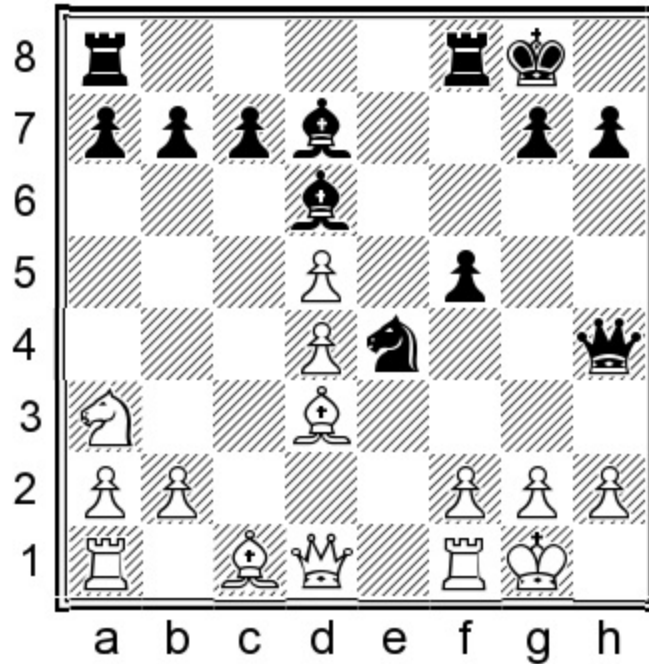
A starting point: Black is counting on the exceptionally-strong bishop on d6 and in term of plans the

position resembles the Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez.

10. ♘c3

A couple of other ideas are:

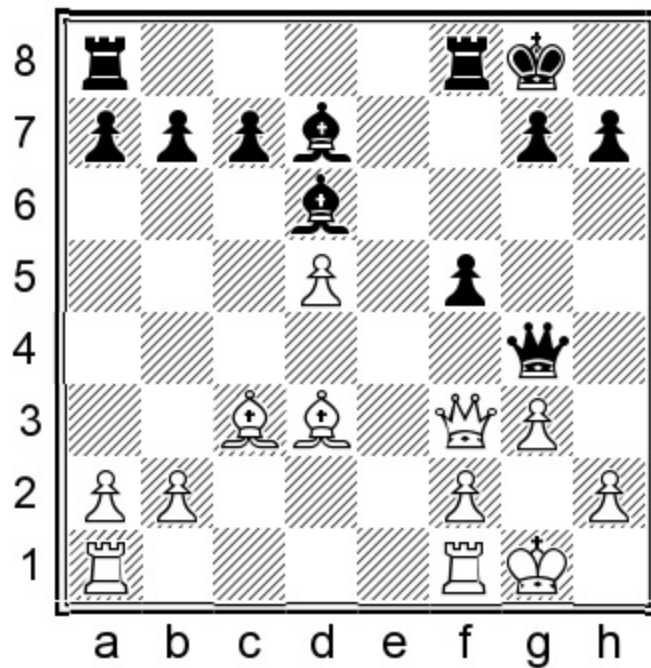
A) 10. ♘a3 ♔h4



Position after: 10... ♔h4

11. f4 [11. g3 ♘xg3 12. hxg3 ♙xg3 leads to a draw.] 11... ♖f6 12. ♘c4 ♜h6 13. h3 ♙b5 14. b3 ♝e8 15. a4 ♙a6 16. ♘e5 ♙xd3 17. ♗xd3 ♗g3 18. ♗xg3 ♘xg3 19. ♖f2 ♘e4 20. ♖c2 ♘f6=

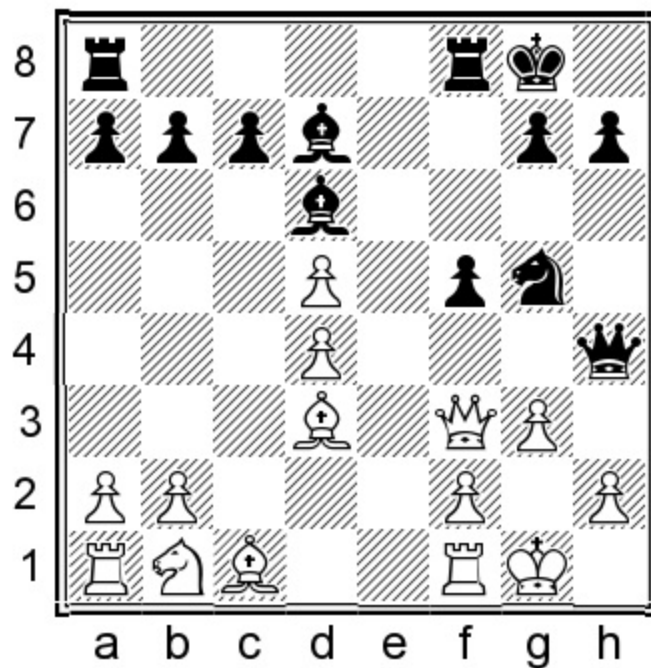
B) 10. ♘d2 ♘xd2 11. ♙xd2 ♗f6 12. ♗f3 ♗h4 13. g3 ♗xd4 14. ♙c3 ♗g4



Position after: 14... ♔g4

15. ♖xg4 fxg4= ½ – ½ (70) Vallejo Pons, F (2703) – Gelfand, B (2741) Leon 2010.

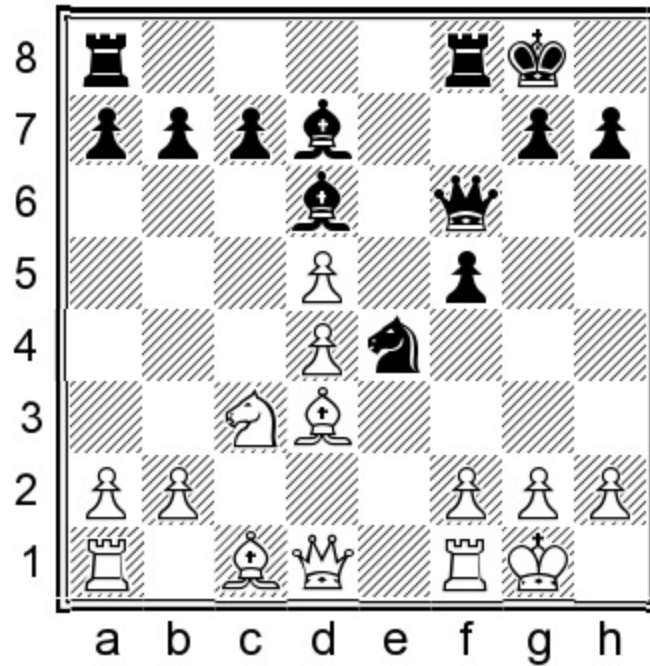
C) 10. ♖f3 ♖h4 11. g3 ♘g5



Position after: 11... ♘g5

12. ♘xg5 ♖xg5 13. ♘c3 a6 14. ♖fe1 ♖f6 15. ♖ad1 ♖ae8= ½ – ½ (23) Landa, K (2655) – Kasimdzhanov, R (2702) Lugo 2009.

10... ♖f6



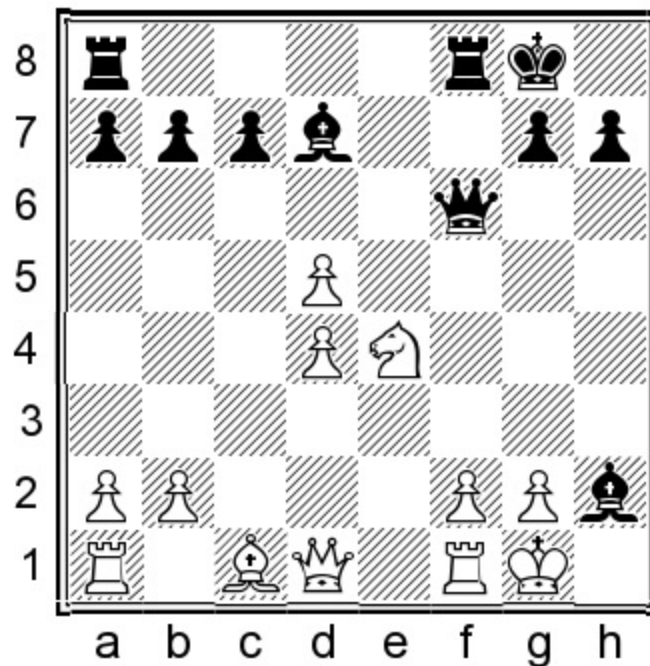
Position after: 10... ♖f6

Now we have a plethora of responses:

11. ♘e2

White also has some other ideas of how to confront Black's attacking plan:

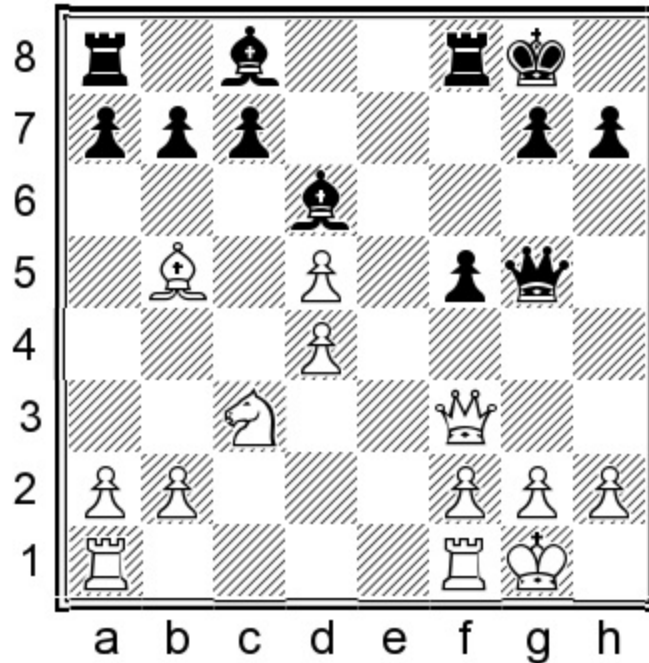
A) 11. ♕xe4 fxe4 12. ♘xe4 ♕xh2+



Position after: 12... ♖xh2+

13. ♔xh2 ♖h4+ 14. ♔g1 ♖xe4 Played a few times but Black is doing fine as can be seen from games: 15. ♖b3 [15. ♖e1 ♖xd5 16. ♖e5 ♖f7 17. ♖e2 ♖ae8 18. ♖e3 ♖c6= ½ – ½ (30) Montella, S (2376) – MacKintosh, I (2385) ICCF email 2016] 15... ♖f5 16. ♖xb7 ♖af8 17. ♖e3 ♖h5 18. ♖xc7 ♖b5 19. ♖d6 ♖xd5 20. ♖g3 ♖xf1 21. ♖xf1 ♖c8= ½ – ½ (47) Velde, M (2016) – Aravena, D (1875) ICCF 2020.

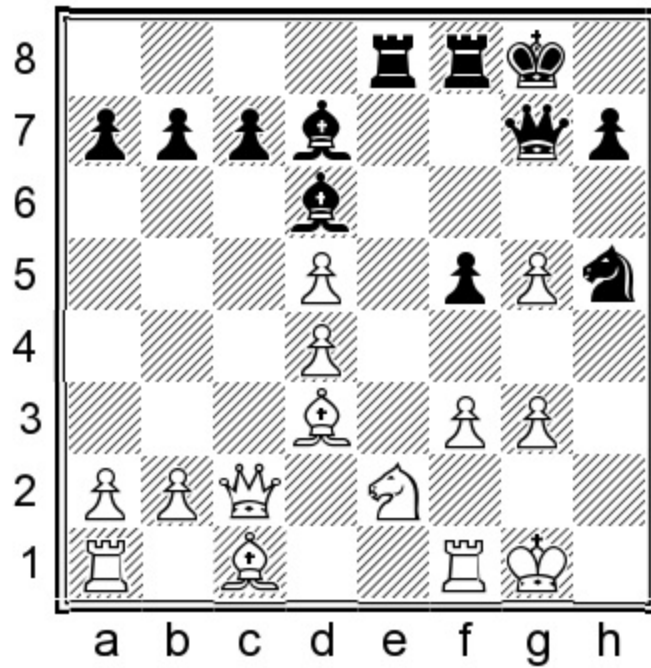
B) 11. ♖f3 ♖g5 12. ♖xg5 ♖xg5 13. ♖b5 ♖c8!



Position after: 13... ♖c8!

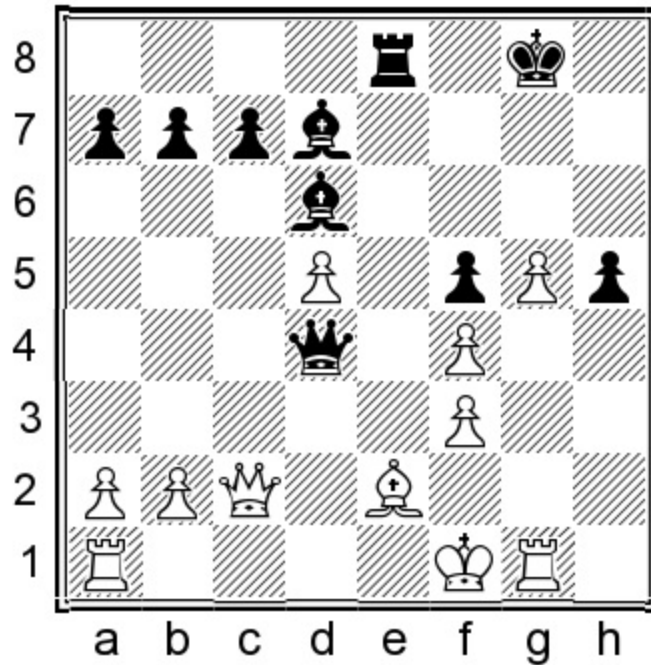
Black must keep his bishops, especially the position of the bishop on d6. 14. ♖ad1 a6 15. ♖a4 ♖h6 16. ♖h3 ♖xh3 17. g3 h3 18. ♖b3 ♖d7 19. ♖fe1 ♖fe8 20. ♔g2 ♖xe1 21. ♖xe1 ♖e8 22. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8= 0-1 (38) Guseinov, G (2665) – Gledura, B (2635) Terme Catez 2021.

C) 11. ♖c2 ♖ae8 12. ♖e2 g5 13. f3 ♖h6 14. g3 ♖f6 15. h4 ♖g7 16. hxg5 ♖h5



Position after: 16... ♖h5

Black has an attack here.... 17. ♘f4 ♗xf4 18. gxf4 h6 The initiative is strong: 19. ♕g2 ♜e3 20. ♞g1 ♞fe8 21. ♔f2 ♞xe2+ 22. ♘xe2 ♞xd4+ 23. ♔f1 h5!



Position after: 23...h5!

Playing for a win. 24. ♞g2 ♞xf4 25. ♔g1 ♞e3+ 26. ♔h1 h4↑ 0-1 (42) Dubuc, S (2220) – Sharpe, S (2388) ICCF 2019.

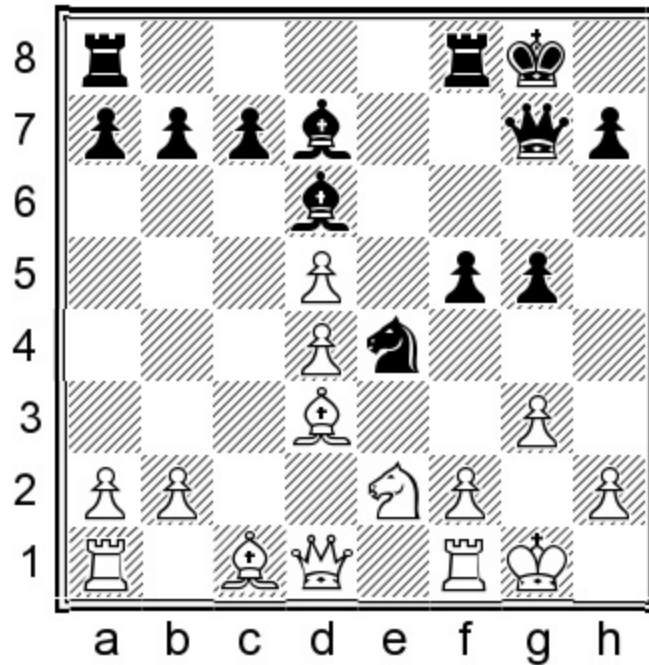
11...g5

Now White must decide how to defend and what pawn structure to establish on the kingside.

12.f4

A tough decision, but clearly White wants to stop further advance of pawns.

12.g3 ♖g7

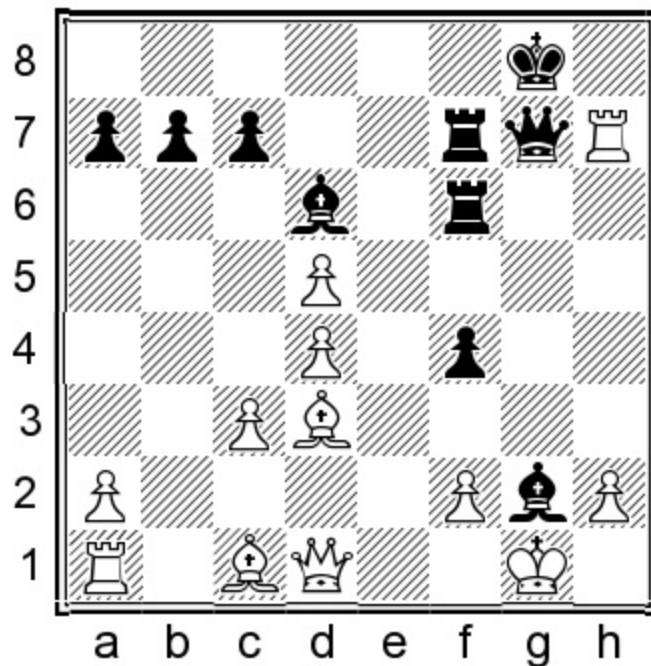


Position after: 12... ♖g7

13.♘c3 [13.♙b3 ♖ae8 14.f3 ♘f6 15.f4 h6 16.♙xb7 ♘g4 17.♙b3 h5 18.♖f3 h4 Black has serious attacking chances. 0-1 (33) Moskalenko, E (2246) – Oliynyk, V (2345) ICCF 2017] 13...♘xc3 14.bxc3 f4 Typical for this type of attack, Black launches his kingside pawns.

A) 15.♖b1 ♙h6 16.♖xb7 ♙h3 17.♙e4 ♙g4 18.♙g2 ♙h5 19.♙d2 ♙e2 20.g4 [20.♖e1 ♖ae8 21.♖xa7 f3 22.♙h1 ♙f4! wins for Black.] 20...♙xg4 21.f3 ♙c8 22.♖b2 ♙a6 Black is better. 0-1 (41) Carlsson, I (2528) – Kribben, M (2660) ICCF 2016.

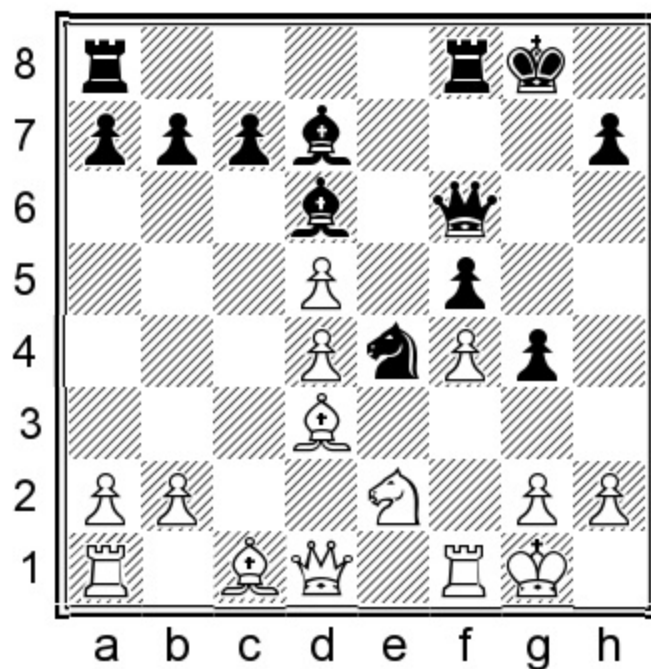
B) 15.♖e1 Probably best. 15...♙h6 16.♖e4 ♖f6 17.♖e5 ♖af8 18.gxf4 gxf4 19.♙h1 ♙h3 20.♖h5 ♙g2+ 21.♙g1 ♙g7 22.♖xh7 ♖8f7!!



Position after: 22...♖f7!!

A fantastic motif! Personally, I have never seen such a tactical idea. It only leads to a draw but it is very instructive. 23.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 24.♚a4 ♔h3+ Perpetual ½-½ (24) Stöckert, M (2459) – Bondars, G (2423) ICCF 2017.

12...g4



Position after: 12...g4

13.♙xe4

The decision to take on e4 is logical. Now there is no more pressure along the e-file...

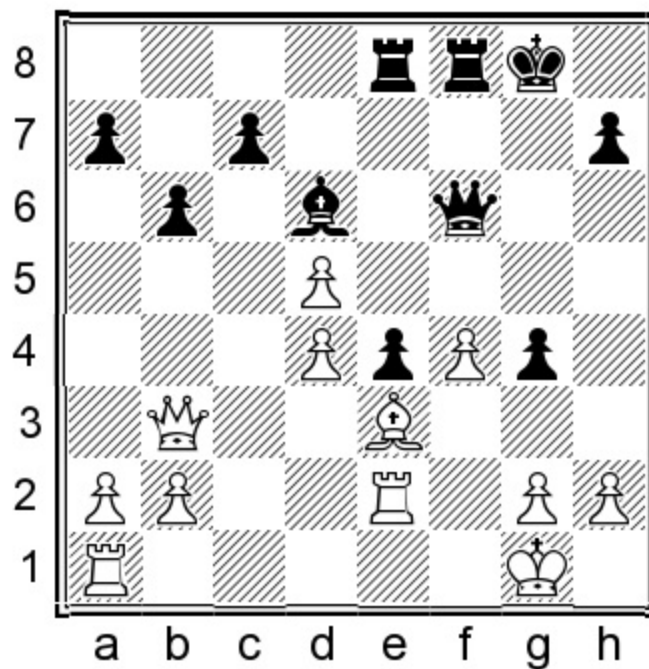
13.♙e3 ♖ae8 14.♚c2 ♜g3 15.♞xg3 ♞xe3 16.♞ad1 ♚xd4 17.♙xf5 ♞d3+ 18.♔h1 ♙xf5 19.♞xf5 ♞xd1 20.♞xd1 ♚xf4 Black has good play. ½-½ (29) de la Rosa Solórzano, J (2426) – Novák, V (2434) ICCF 2021.

13...fxe4 14.♙e3

The bishop pair and more space gives Black an edge here. It is not easy to make progress because White has blocked the position but it is only Black who can play on. We will see this from a couple of examples:

14...♞ae8

A) 14...♙b5 15.♞f2 ♙xe2 16.♞xe2 ♞ae8 17.♚b3 b6

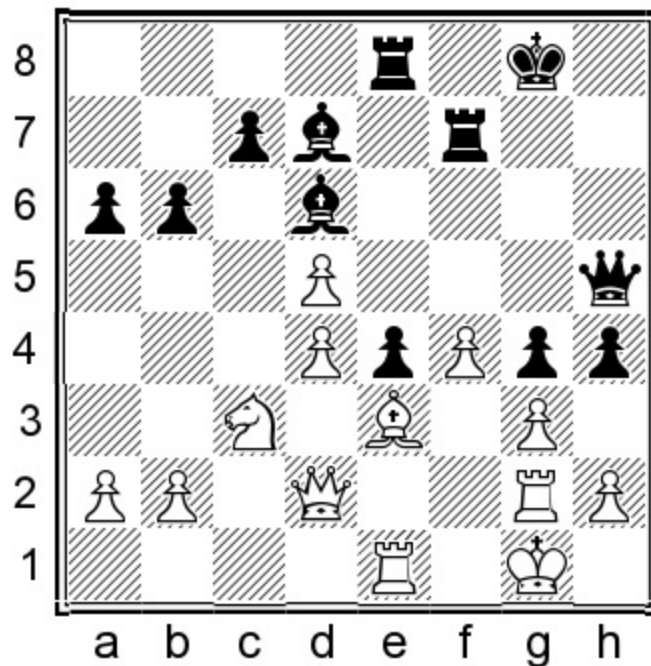


Position after: 17...b6

18.g3 ♚f5 19.♔f2 a5 20.a3 ♔g7 21.♔e1 h5 22.♚b5 The position is equal again. ½-½ (22) Kuzmin, V (2401) – Novák, V (2424) ICCF 2018.

B) 14...♙f5 15.♚b3 h5 16.♞g3 h4 17.♞xf5 ♚xf5 18.g3 hxg3 19.hxg3 ♔g7 20.♔g2 a6 21.♞h1 ♞h8 22.♞ae1 ♔f7 with equality. ½ – ½ (30) Vugt, W (2328) – Urban, M (2399) ICCF 2021.

15.♚b3 a6 16.g3 h5 17.♞f2 b6 18.♞e1 ♞f7 19.♞c3 h4 20.♚c2 ♚h8 21.♞g2 ♚h5 22.♚d2



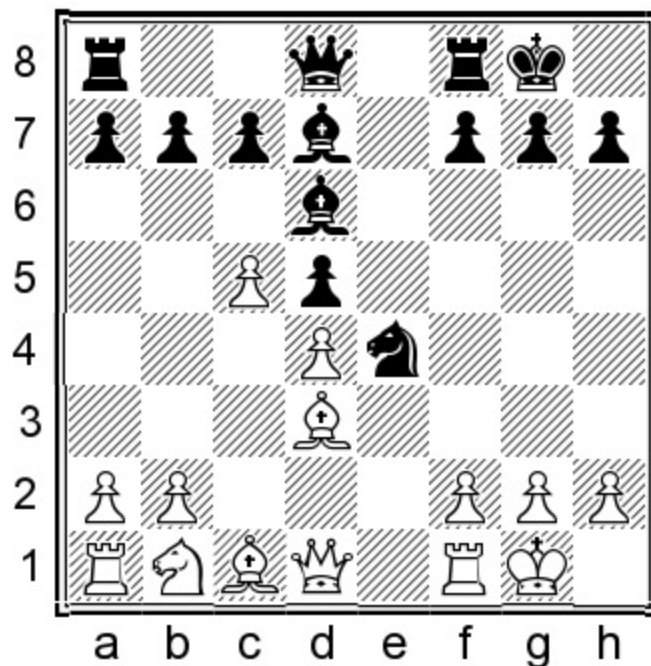
Position after: 22. ♔d2

22...b5

White has managed to stop the immediate attack but Black still has pressure. ½ – ½ (22) Rogos, J (2513) – Straka, Z (2577) ICCF 2016.

c) 7...♙d6 8.c4 0-0 9.c5

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♙d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♗xd7 ♙xd7 7.0-0 ♙d6 8.c4 0-0!? 9.c5



Position after: 9.c5

In this subchapter we will examine this more positional approach from White.

9...♞e7

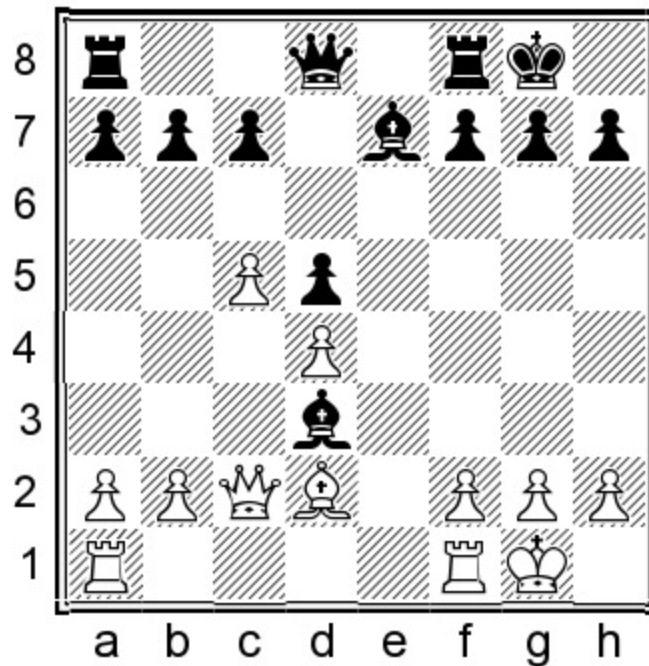
We clearly see similarities with the line 7...♞e7 that I analysed but here the knight is still on e4, which makes things even easier for Black to handle. One of the reasons for that is the flexibility of the knight on e4.

10.♞c2

The most popular choice but there are other moves as well:

A) 10.♞c3 ♜xc3 11.bxc3 c6 12.♞f4 b6 13.cxb6 axb6 This is a fine structure for Black. ½ – ½ (39) Schleef, H (2193) – Lipsits, S (2184) ICCF 2022.

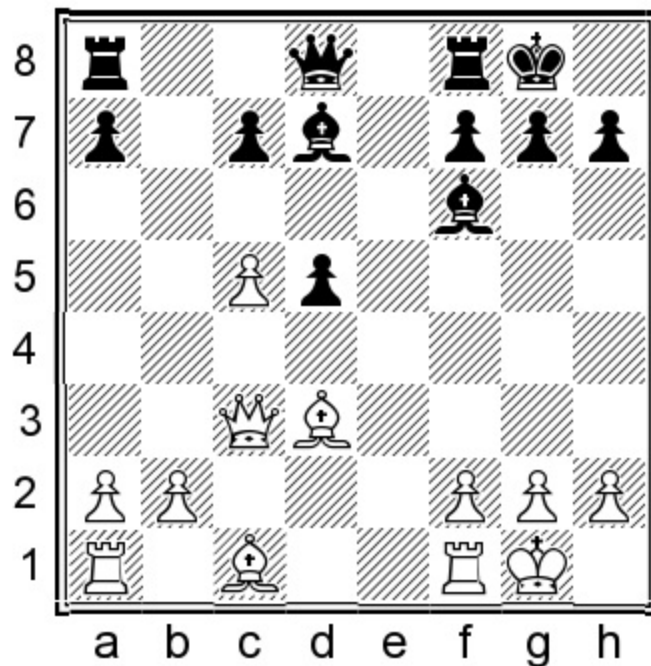
B) 10.♞d2 ♞f5 11.♞c2 ♞xd2 12.♞xd2 ♞xd3



Position after: 12...♞xd3

13.♞xd3 ♞f6 Black is fine. ½ – ½ (26) Ploscaru, S (2368) – Ilzig, G (2327) ICCF 2021.

C) 10.♞b3 b6 11.♞c3 [11.♞xd5 ♞f6 12.♞f3 bxc5 13.dxc5 ♞xc5 14.♞c3 ♜b8=] 11...♞xc3 12.♞xc3 bxc5 13.dxc5 ♞f6



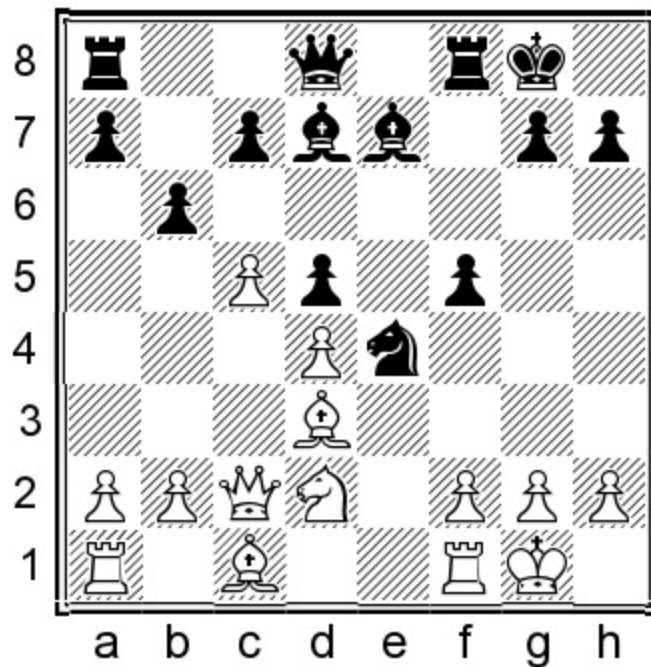
Position after: 13...♙f6

14.♙c2 g6 15.c6 ♙e6 16.♙f4 ♗e7 17.♞ae1 a5 The position is balanced. ½-½ (28) Engelhard, C (2295) – Wójcik, W (2285) ICCF 2018.

10...f5

A principled reaction.

11.♞d2 b6



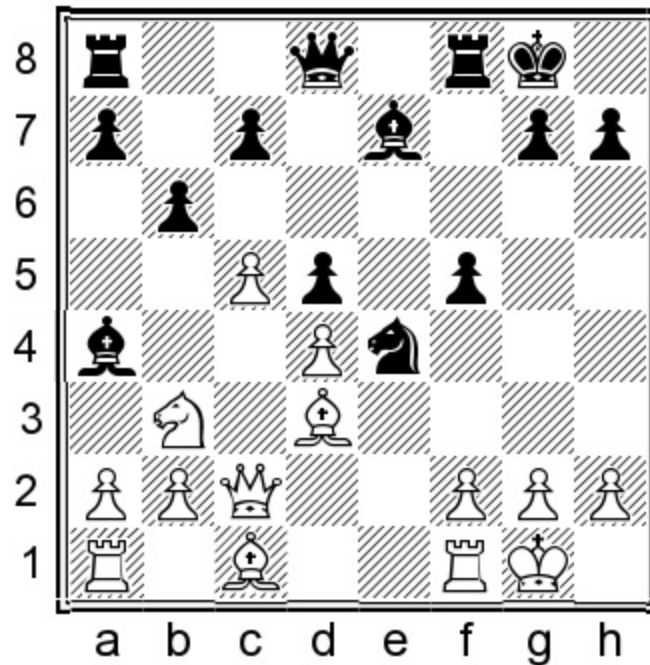
Position after: 11...b6

Trying to break down the structure as soon as possible.

12. ♖b3

12.f3 ♘g5 13. ♖b3 c6 14. ♕f4 g6 15. ♖ae1 ♕f6 16. ♔f2 ♘e6 17. ♕e5 f4! This secures Black counterplay.
0-1 (43) Hernandez, A (2452) – Guimera Manjon, A (2399) ICCF 2021.

12... ♕a4!?



Position after: 12... ♕a4!?

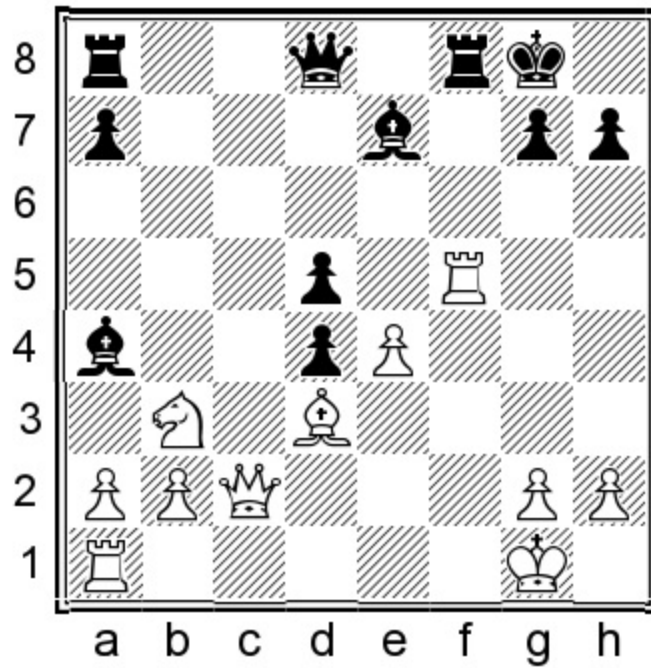
Direct play; probably the correct continuation but the alternative is safe:

12...c6 13.f3 ♘g5 14. ♕f4 g6 transposes to the game given in 12.f3.

13.f3 bxc5 14.dxc5

Other possible options are:

A) 14. ♕e3 cxd4 15. ♕xd4 c5 16.fxe4 cxd4 17. ♖xf5

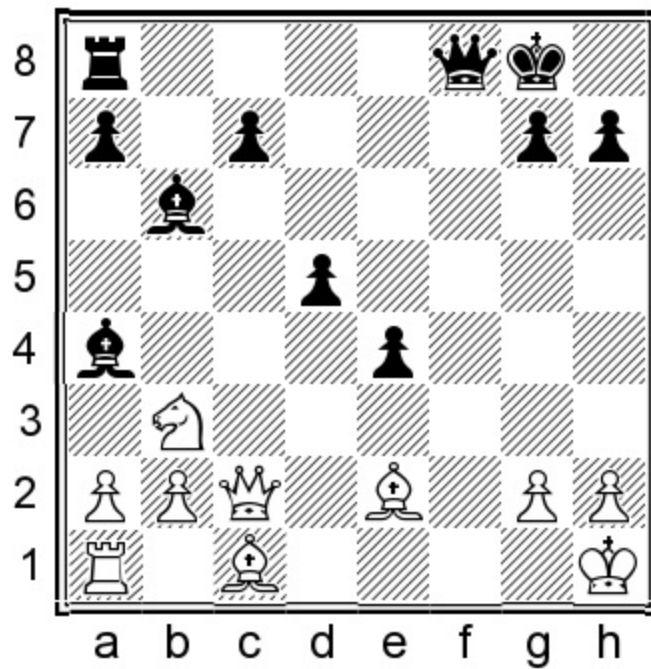


Position after: 17. ♖xf5

17... ♜xf5 18. exf5 ♕g5 The position is equal.

B) 14. fxe4 fxe4 15. ♖xf8+ ♜xf8 16. ♕xe4 dxe4 17. ♛c4+ ♜f7 18. ♛xa4 ♖f8 and Black wins!

14... ♕xc5+ 15. ♔h1 ♕b6 16. fxe4 fxe4 17. ♖xf8+ ♜xf8 18. ♕e2



Position after: 18. ♕e2

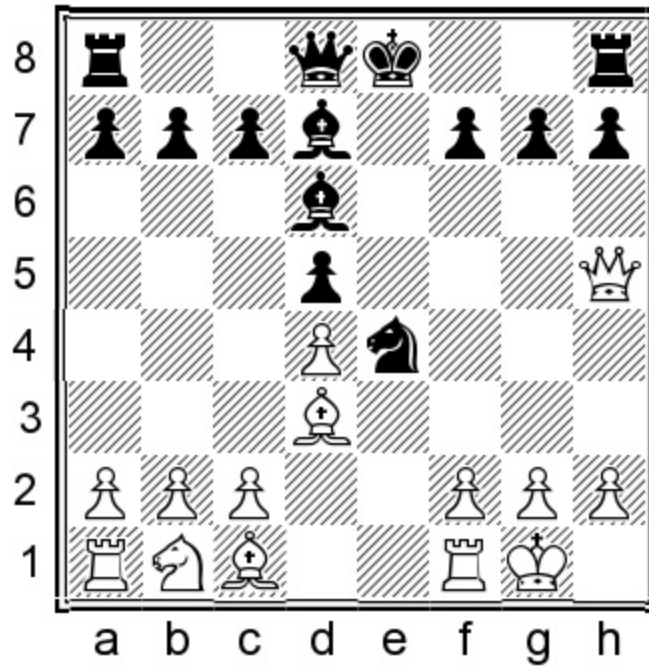
18...e3!

This gives Black fine compensation. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (45) Dunlop, G (2572) – Straka, Z (2577) ICCF 2016.

d) 7...♙d6 8.♚h5

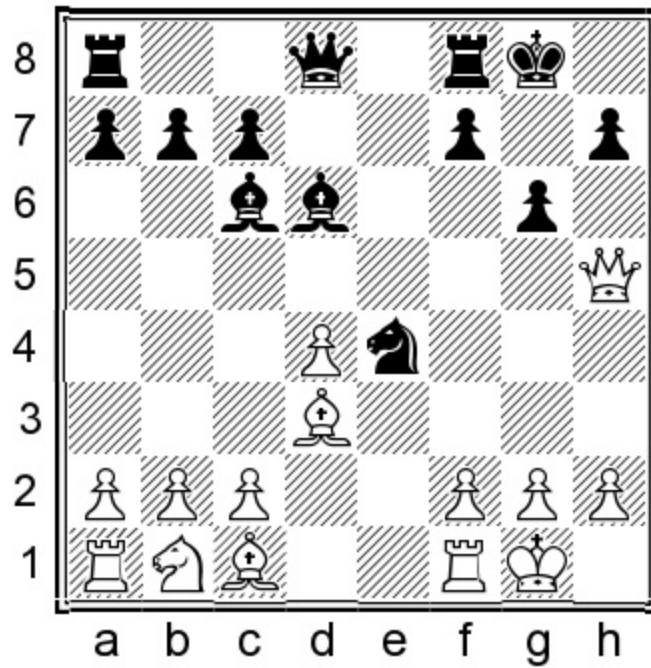
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♙d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♗xd7 ♙xd7 7.0-0 ♙d6 8.♚h5

Another interesting possibility for White, and now it is best for Black to continue in an active manner with:



Position after: 8.♚h5

8...0-0 9.♚xd5 ♙c6 10.♚h5 g6

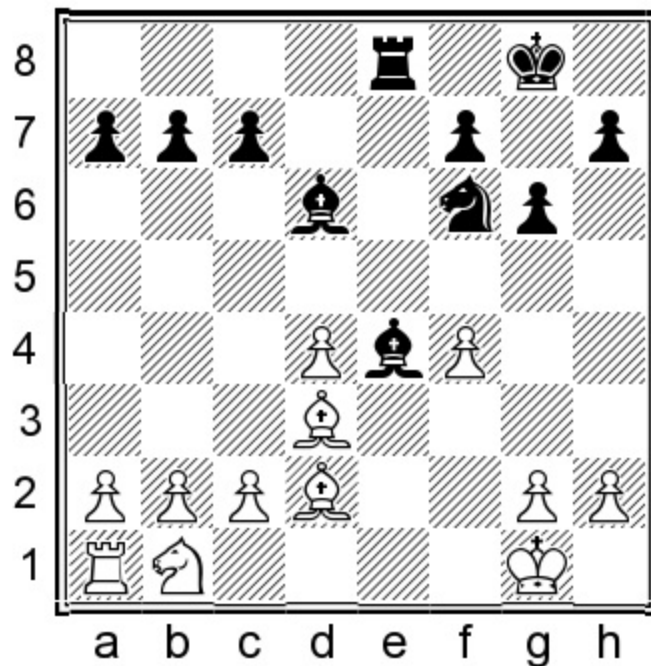


Position after: 10...g6

White has options but it seems that Black has active play for the sacrificed pawn:

11. ♖h3

Or: 11. ♔d1 ♖h4 12. f4 ♘f6 13. ♗e1 ♔xe1 14. ♖xe1 ♜fe8 15. ♖xe8+ ♜xe8 16. ♙d2 ♙e4!?



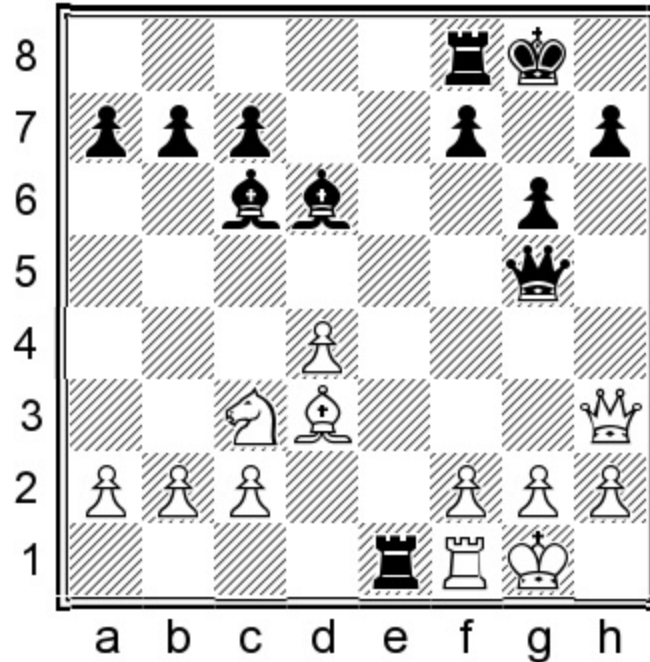
Position after: 16... ♙e4!?

17. ♘c3 ♙xd3 18. cxd3 ♙f8 19. ♔f2 ♙g7 20. ♖c1 ♜d8 21. d5 ♘e8 22. ♔e3 ♙xc3 23. bxc3 ♜xd5 with an

equal endgame. ½ – ½ (53) Daurelle, H (2120) – Sanner, Z (2098) Lechenicher SchachServer 2011

11...♘g5 12.♙g4

Taking on g5 is possible but Black will have strong bishops: 12.♙xg5 ♖xg5 13.♘c3 ♜ae8 14.♞ae1 [14.d5 ♙xd5 15.f4 ♚f6 16.♘xd5 ♚d4+ 17.♙h1 ♚xd5=] 14...♞xe1!

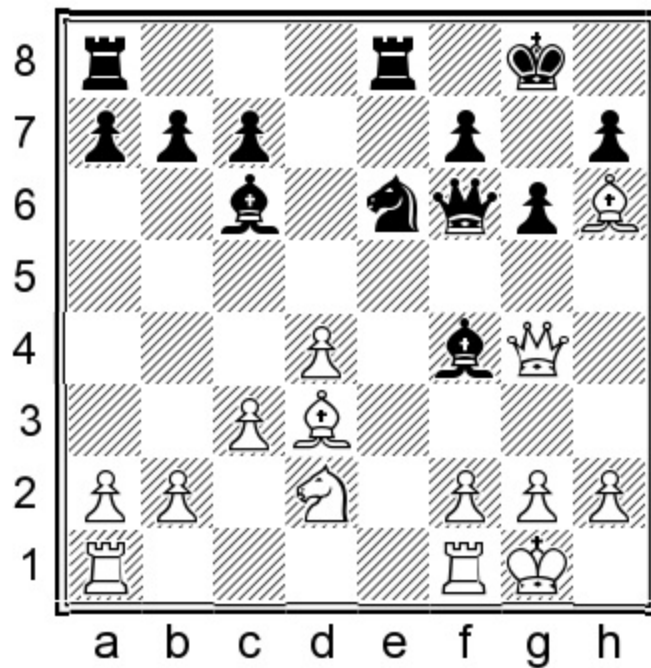


Position after: 14...♞xe1!

It is important to start eliminating the rooks, now there are entry points for the queen. 15.♞xe1 ♔g7 16.♙f1 ♚d2 17.♚e3 ♚xc2 18.♞e2 ♚f5 19.d5 ♙d7 20.♚xa7 b6 Black has compensation. 0-1 (65) Hofer, R (2445) – Cipka, I (2472) ICCF email 2007.

12...♘e6 13.♙h6 ♜e8 14.♘d2

14.c3 ♚f6 15.♘d2 ♙f4!



Position after: 15...♔f4!

Black is actually close to winning and this idea represents Black's main point here.

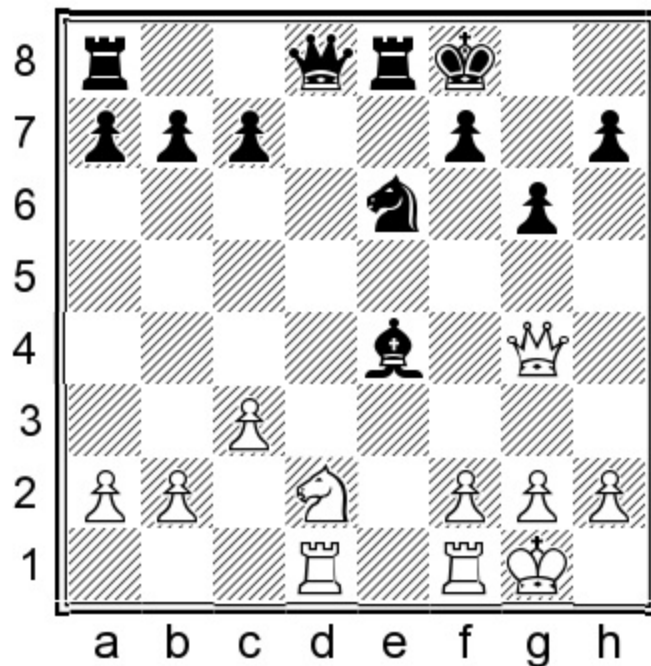
14...♘xd4

Black has regained the pawn, so can White now profit from their slightly faster development?

15.♖fe1

A few other ideas:

A) 15.♞ad1 ♕f8 16.♕xf8 ♖xf8 17.c3 ♘e6 18.♔e4 ♕xe4

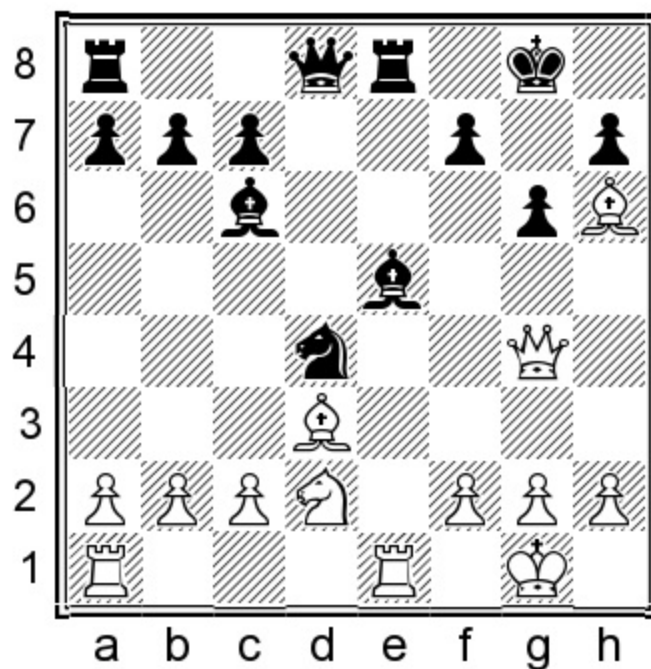


Position after: 18...♙xe4

19.♙xe4 b6 20.♙e5 ♘g7 21.♙f4 The game is equal. ½ – ½ (21) Fernandez, J (2407) – Mackintosh, I (2394) ICCF 2018.

B) 15.♘c4 ♙f8 16.♙xf8 ♖xf8 17.♙ae1 ♙d7 18.♙g3 ♙xe1 19.♙e1 ♙e8 20.♙xe8+ ♙xe8 21.♘e3 ♙e7 22.h4 with equality. ½ – ½ (22) Ilyasov, A (2376) – Endsley, B (2221) ICCF email 2017.

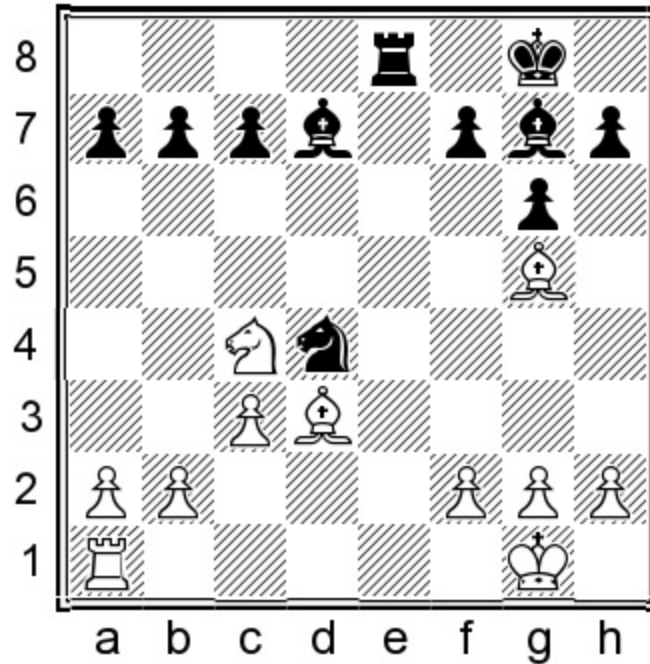
15...♙e5!



Position after: 15...♔e5!

Or: 15...♗e6 16.♗c4 [16.♔c4 ♕f8=] 16...♔c5 17.♖g3 ♖f6 18.♗e5 ♜ad8 19.♔c4 ♕d6 Here, too, Black is not in danger. ½ – ½ (30) Guizar, D (2125) – Molzahn, N (2325) ICCF 2012.

16.♗c4 ♕d7 17.♖g5 ♖xg5 18.♔xg5 ♕g7 19.♜xe8+ ♜xe8 20.c3



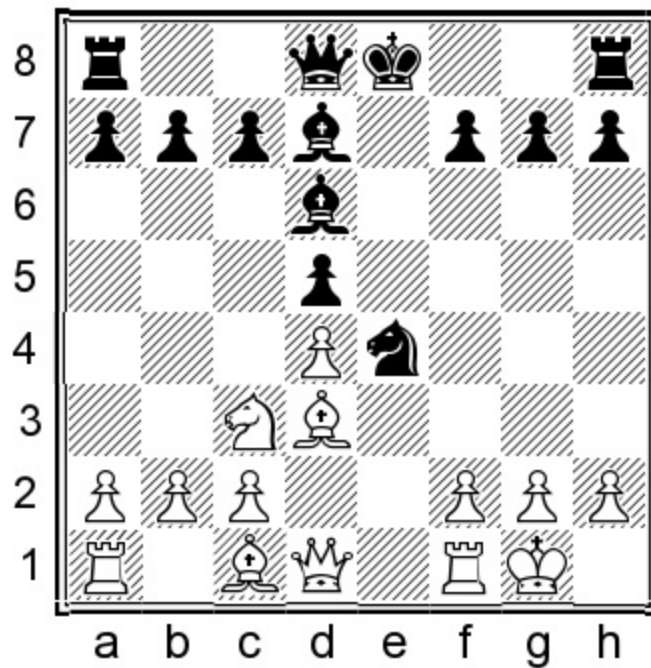
Position after: 20.c3

20...♗e6

Black is fine. ½ – ½ (30) Xu, X (2564) – Bai, J (2593) Hangzhou 2022. The answer to that previously-asked question is that overall Black is fine.

e) 7...♔d6 8.♗c3

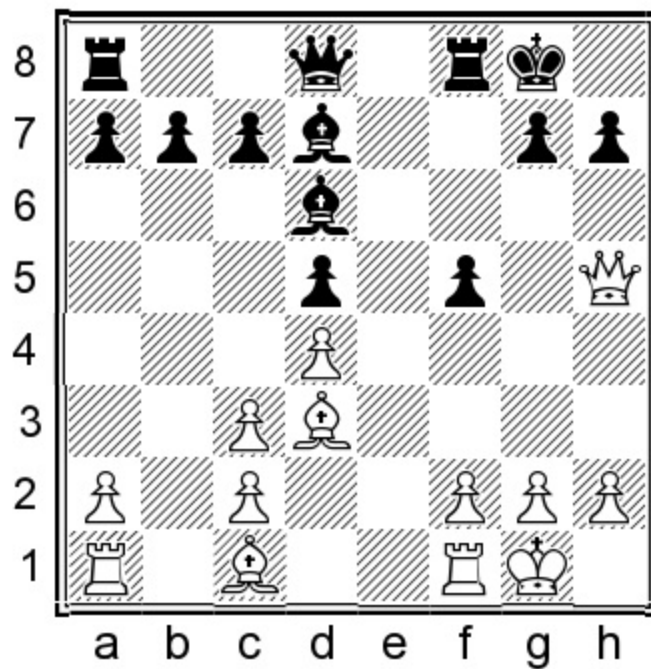
1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.♔d3 d5 5.♗xe5 ♗d7 6.♗xd7 ♔xd7 7.0-0 ♔d6 8.♗c3



Position after: 8. Nc3

This is yet another important idea, one that I also used to play with White.

8... Nxc3 9. bxc3 0-0 10. Wh5 f5



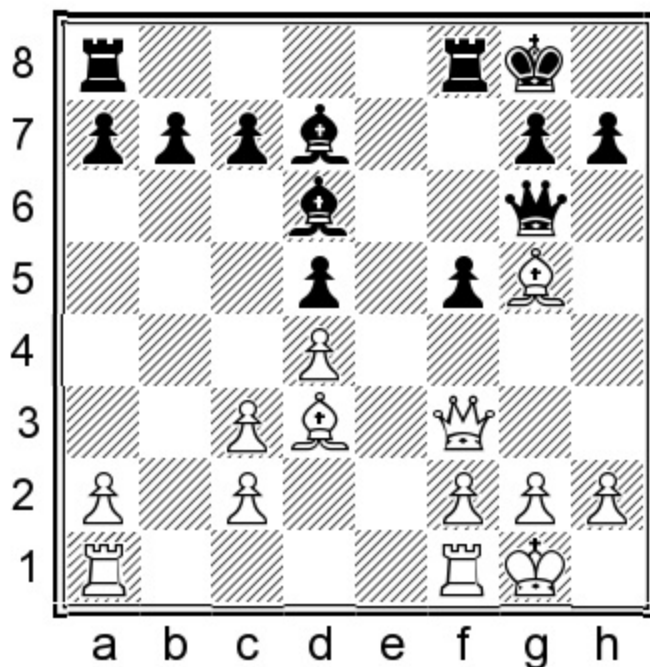
Position after: 10...f5

We have reached the main set-up of this position.

11.♖e1

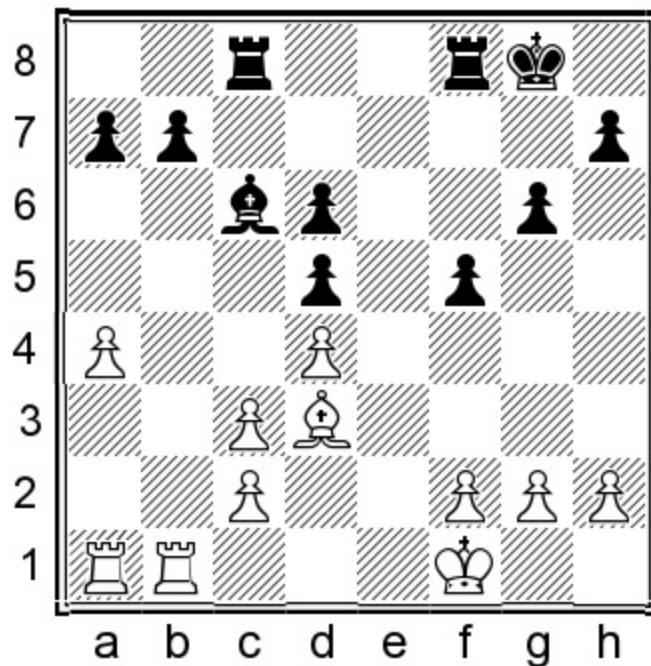
Whatever White's choice might be right now, the positions are similar or almost identical. White will play the bishop to f4 and try to create pressure along the e-file, with c4 in the air to activate the other bishop. If Black can get ...b5 in, blocking that c4 activity would suddenly stop White's active plans. Black will then be able, long-term, to play for an endgame due to White's weak queenside pawns. White has a couple of ideas:

A) 11.♗g5 ♔e8 12.♕f3 ♔g6



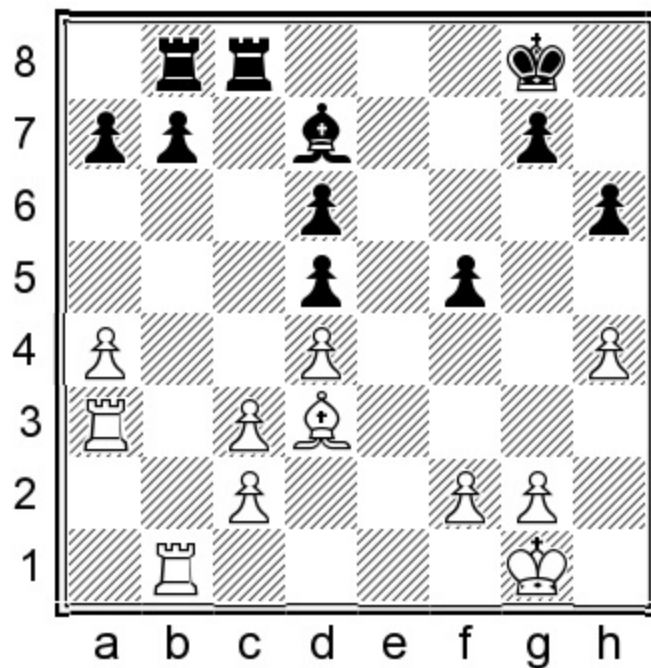
Position after: 12...♔g6

13.h4 [Or similarly: 13.♗f4 ♗xf4 14.♕xf4 ♔d6 15.♕xd6 cxd6 16.♖fb1 ♗c6 17.a4 ♖ac8 18.♔f1 g6



Position after: 18...g6

19.♔e2 ♖c7 20.♔d2 ♔f7 21.♞b4 ♔e6 22.♞e1+ ♔f6 23.a5 ♞e8 Black equalized in this endgame. ½ – ½ (28) Hedlund, T (2559) – Bokar, J (2580) ICCF email 2012] 13...h6 14.♙f4 ♙xf4 15.♚xf4 ♚d6 16.♚xd6 cxd6 17.♞fb1 ♞ab8 18.a4 ♞fc8 19.♞a3

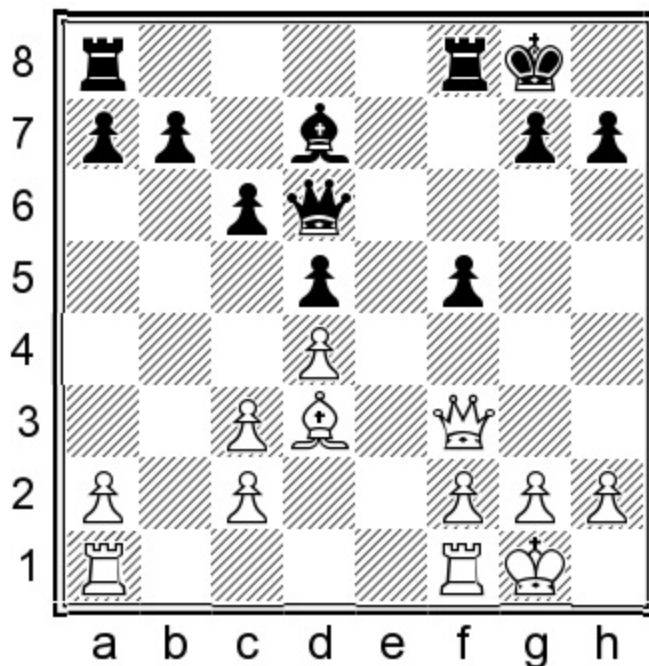


Position after: 19.♞a3

19...♔f7 20.a5 ♔f6 21.f4 g5 22.♞ab3 ♞c7 23.hxg5+ hxg5 24.♔f2 gxh4 25.♞h1 ♔g5 26.♞h7 ♞bc8
Again we can see that this type of endgame is OK for Black. Pressure along the c-file is enough to

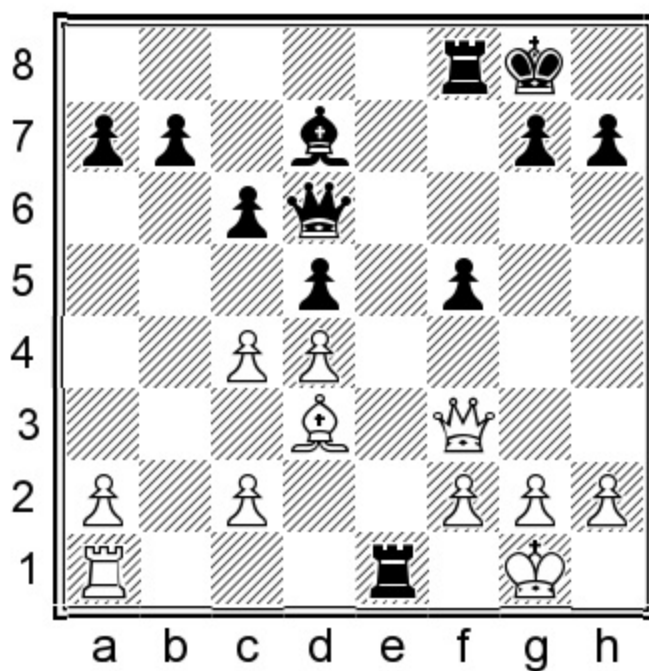
create counterplay. ½ – ½ (33) Vachier Lagrave, M (2757) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2792) Saint Louis 2022.

B) 11. ♖f3 c6 12. ♗f4 The main motif for White. 12... ♙c7 13. ♗xd6 ♙xd6



Position after: 13... ♙xd6

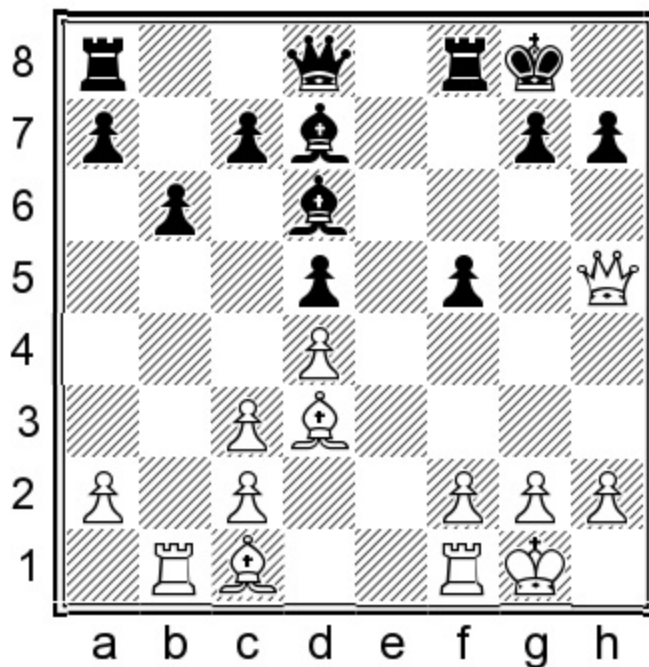
14. c4 [14. ♖fe1 ♗ae8 15. c4?! ♗xe1+!



Position after: 15... ♗xe1+!

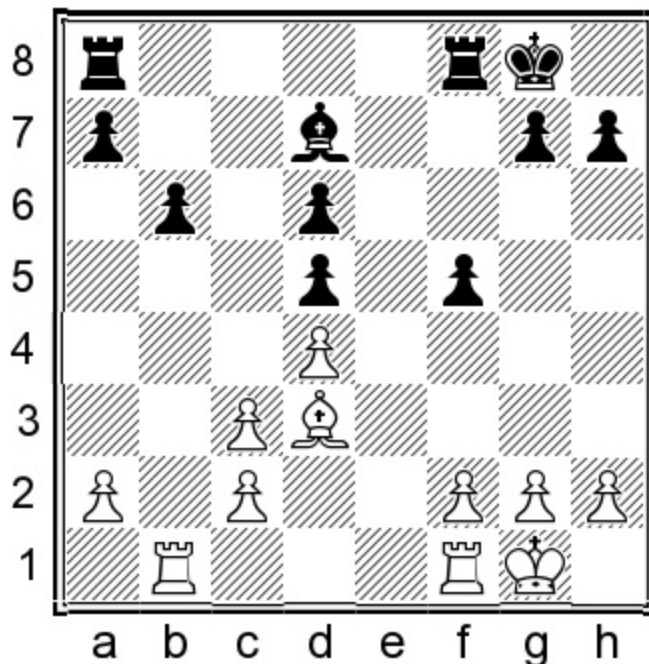
16.♞xe1 ♚b4 17.♞e5 dxc4 Black is better. ½ – ½ (31) Kamsky, G (2662) – Deac, B (2639) Europe – Echecs 2021] 14...dxc4 15.♙xc4+ ♔h8 16.c3 b5 17.♙b3 a5 18.a4 b4 19.♞fd1 ♙e6 with equal chances. 0-1 (35) Zhigalko, S (2572) – Ter Sahakyan, S (2640) lichess.org 2021.

C) 11.♞b1 b6



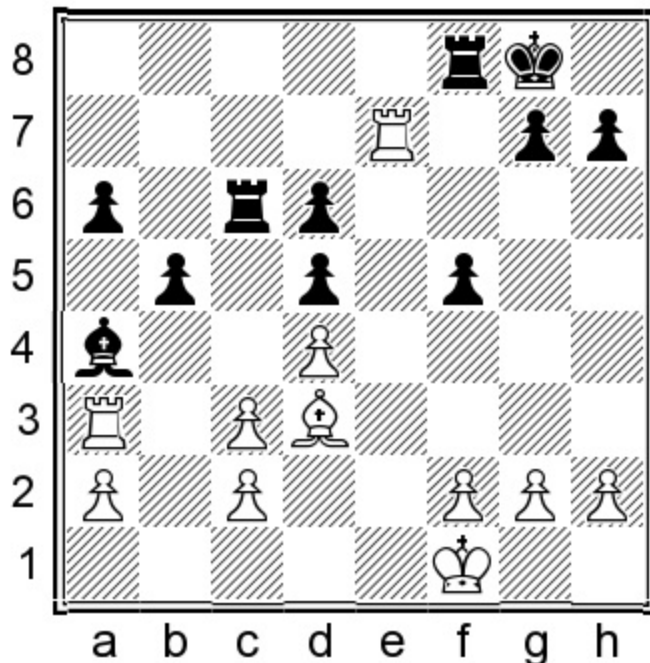
Position after: 11...b6

C1) 12.♙g5 ♚e8 13.♞f3 ♞g6 14.♙f4 ♙xf4 15.♞xf4 ♚d6 16.♞xd6 cxd6 A similar endgame as in the note to 11.♙g5 but here the rook is on b1 and the pawn is on b6, so it deserves attention... White has two main ideas:



Position after: 16...cxd6

17.♖b3 [17.♙a6 ♜ae8 18.♙b7 ♙e6 19.a4 ♞e7 20.♙a6 ♙d7 21.a5 bxa5 22.♖b7 ♞fe8 23.♖xa7 ♙c6 It is Black who has an edge here due to the strong pawn on a5.] 17...♞ac8 18.♞a1 ♙a4 19.♞a3 b5 20.♞e1 a6 21.♙f1 ♞c6 22.♞e7

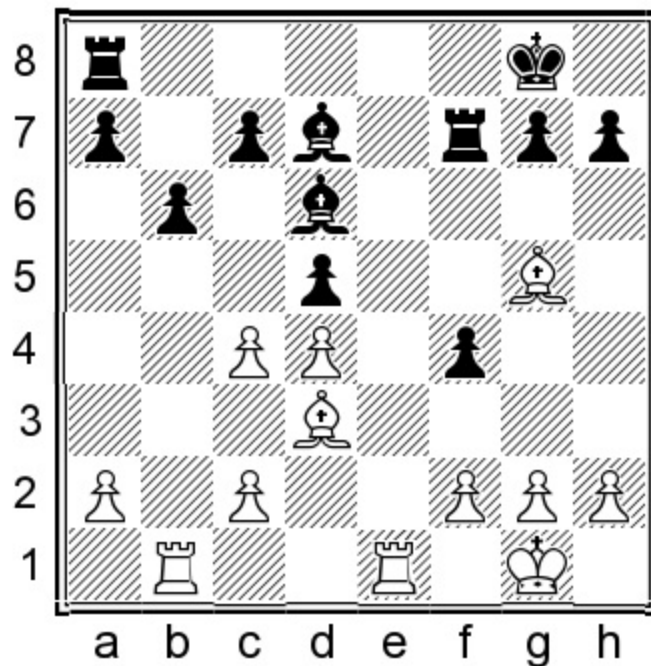


Position after: 22.♞e7

22...g6 23.♙e2 ♞fc8 24.♙f3 ♞xc3 25.♙xd5+ ♙h8 26.♙b3 f4 27.h3 d5 Neither side can make progress. ½ – ½ (28) Carapinha, F (2065) – Baufays, H (2388) ICCF email 2011.

C2) 12.♞e1 ♞f6

C2.1) 13.♙g5 ♞f7 14.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 15.c4 f4!

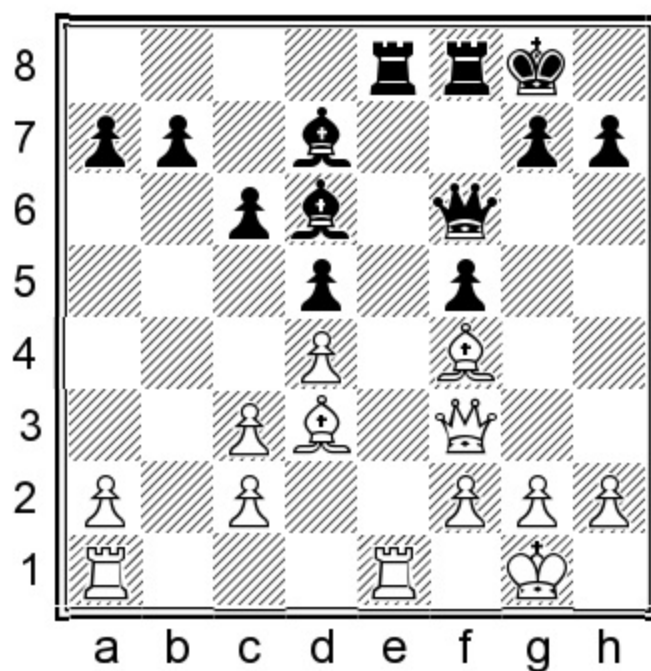


Position after: 15...f4!

[15...h6?! 16.♔d2± 1-0 (47) Marshall, I (2081) – MacMillen, A (1842) ICCF email 2011] 16.♔h4 ♕f5! 17.f3 ♖f8 18.♕f2 ♕xd3 19.cxd3 ♜e8 gives Black more than adequate play.

C2.2) 13.♞f3 c6 14.♕f4 This position should be closely compared to the main line: the inclusion of a rook on b1 and pawn on b6 doesn't change much.

11...♞f6 12.♞f3 c6 13.♕f4 ♜ae8



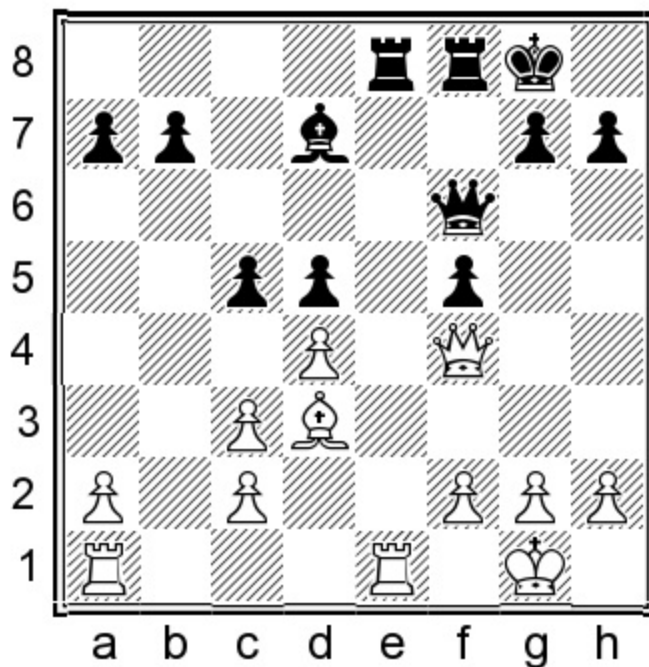
Position after: 13...♖ae8

White has a couple of ideas, mainly waiting a bit or going for c4 at once:

14.h4

A useful waiting move.

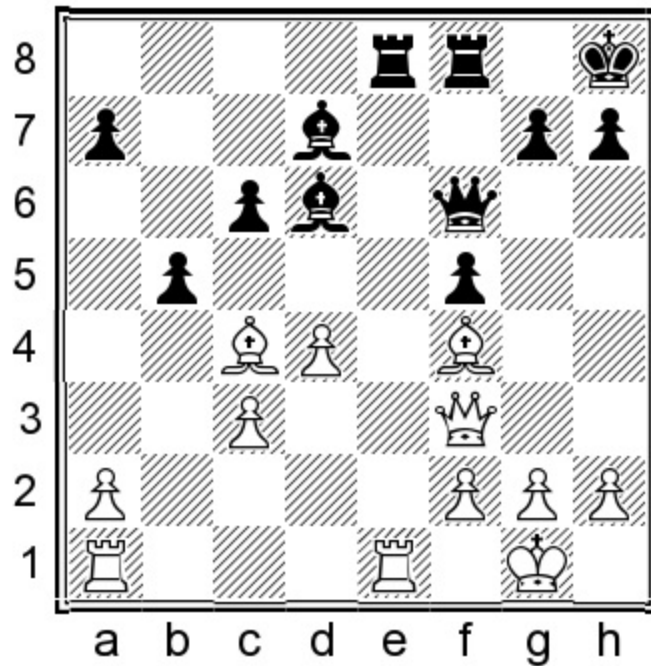
A) 14.♙g3 ♗xf4 15.♙xf4 c5!



Position after: 15...c5!

16.c4 ♙xd4 17.♙xd4 cxd4 18.cxd5 ♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 ♔f7 20.♖b1 b5 21.♖b4 ♔e7 22.♖xd4 ♔d6 Black has a good endgame. ½ – ½ (37) Yeletsky, I (2502) – Paravyan, D (2612) Novokuznetsk 2023.

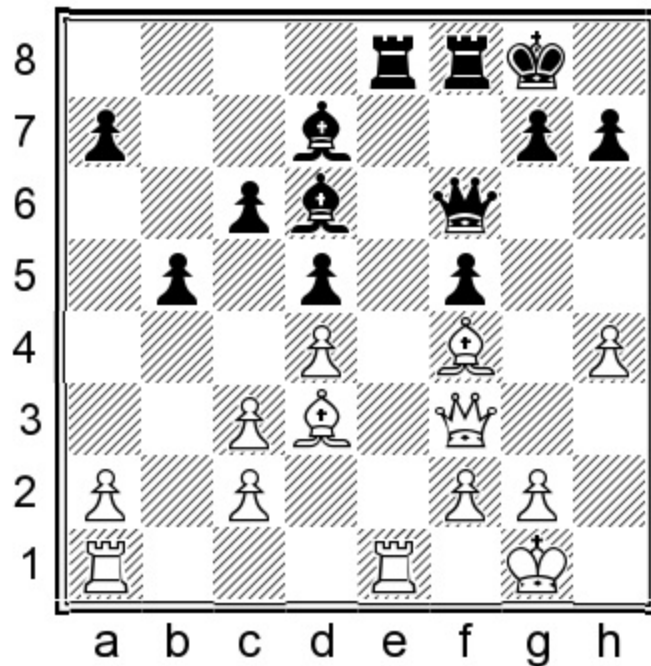
B) 14.c4 dxc4 15.♗xc4+ ♔h8 16.c3 b5



Position after: 16...b5

17.♙f1 [17.♙b3 a5 18.a4 ♖e4 19.♙xd6 ♜xe1+ 20.♜xe1 ♛xd6 With good counterplay on the queenside, Black stands OK here.] 17...♜e4 18.♙xd6 ♜xe1 19.♜xe1 ♛xd6 20.c4 bxc4 21.♛e3 ♛d5 22.♛c3 c5 23.dxc5 ♛xc5 24.♛xc4 ½ – ½ (24) Krivic, D (2522) – Berlinger, G (2498) ICCF email 2009.

14...b5



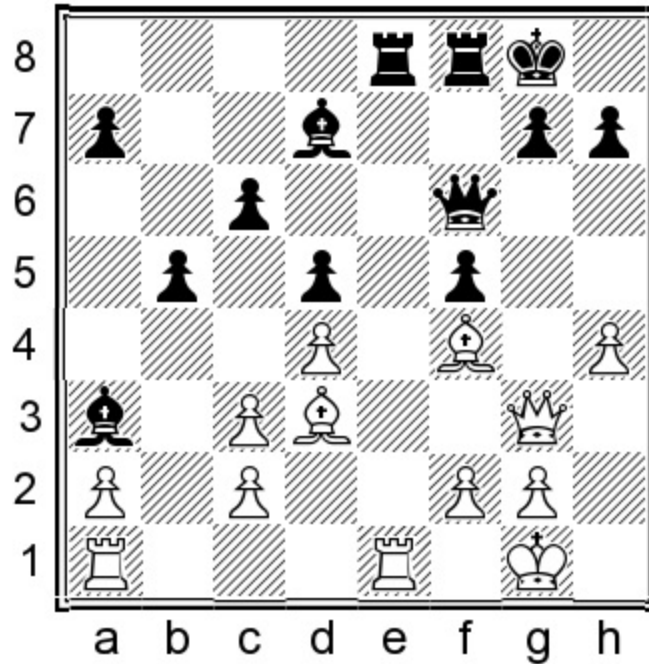
Position after: 14...b5

Preventing c4 and fixing the structure on the queenside, Black's main area of play.

15. ♖xe8

A) 15. ♔g3

A1) An interesting idea is: 15... ♕a3!?

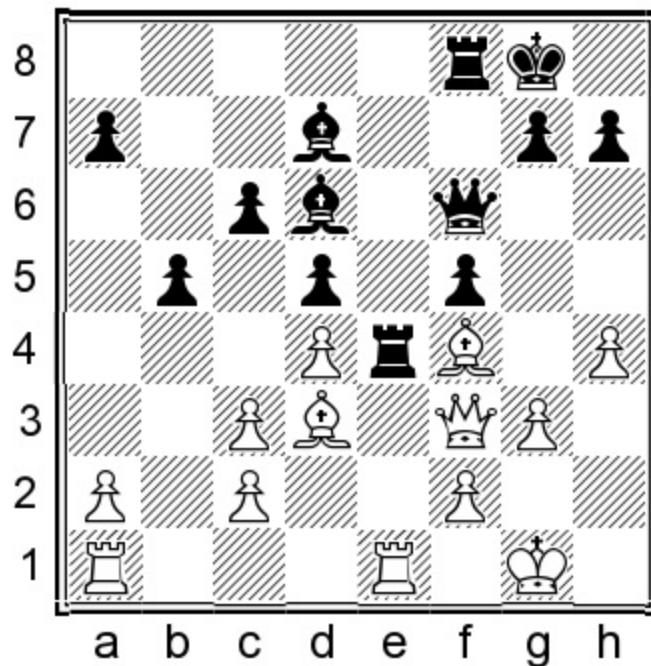


Position after: 15... ♕a3!?

16. ♖ab1 [16. ♕e5 f4!±] 16... a5 17. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 18. ♕e5 ♔f8 19. ♔f1 ♔f7 Here, too, we can see that Black has achieved his main goals.

A2) 15... ♕xf4 16. ♔xf4 ♖xe1+ 17. ♖xe1 a5 18. g3 g6 19. ♔g2 a4 20. ♖e2 ♖e8 Another equal position in which neither side is really able to improve.

B) 15. g3 ♖e4!



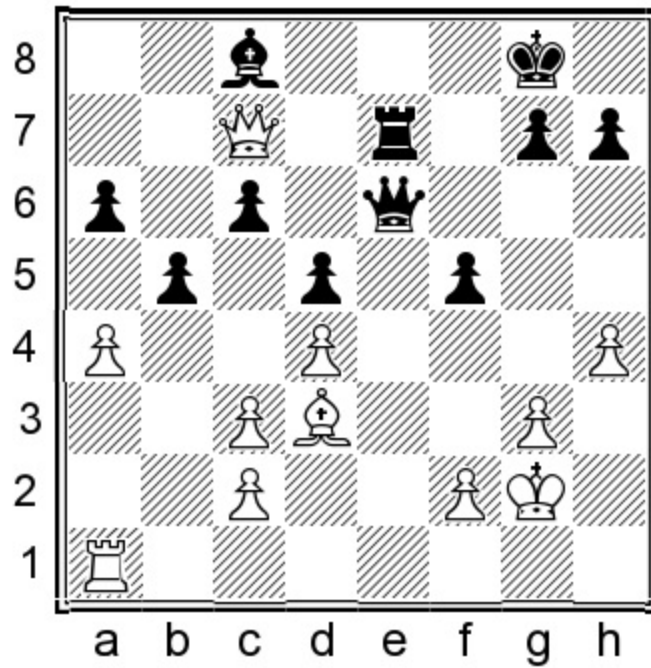
Position after: 15...♖e4!

A strong tactical and positional motif that must not be overlooked, especially when g3 has been played... [15...a6 16.♔g2 ♙xf4 17.♙xf4 ♙f7 18.f3 ♖e6 is still unclear. 1-0 (58) Silkin, A (2203) – Iacobitz, L (1908) Lechenicher SchachServer 2010] 16.♙xd6 ♙xd6 17.♙xe4 fxe4 18.♙e2 h6 19.a4 a6 20.♙d2 ♖f6 21.♖e3 ♙g4 22.axb5 cxb5 23.c4 bxc4 24.♖ea3 ♙c8 Black has positional compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

15...♖xe8 16.♙g3

A) 16.♙f1 ♙xf4 17.♙xf4 a6 18.a4 h6 The position is equal. ½ – ½ (19) Preussner, M (2155) – Deforel, J (2239) ICCF 2021.

B) 16.a4 ♙xf4 17.♙xf4 a6 18.g3 ♙e6 19.♔g2 ♙c8 20.♙c7 ♖e7



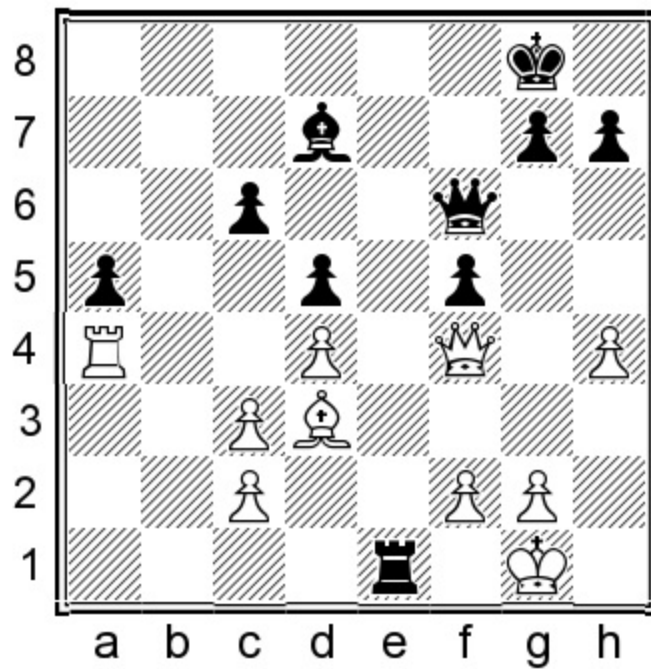
Position after: 20...♞e7

21.♞d8+ ♞e8 White is unable to create any pressure so this is level.

16...♙xf4

16...♙a3!? 17.♙e5 ♞f8 18.♞b1 a5 The same plan as in the note to move 15.♞g3.

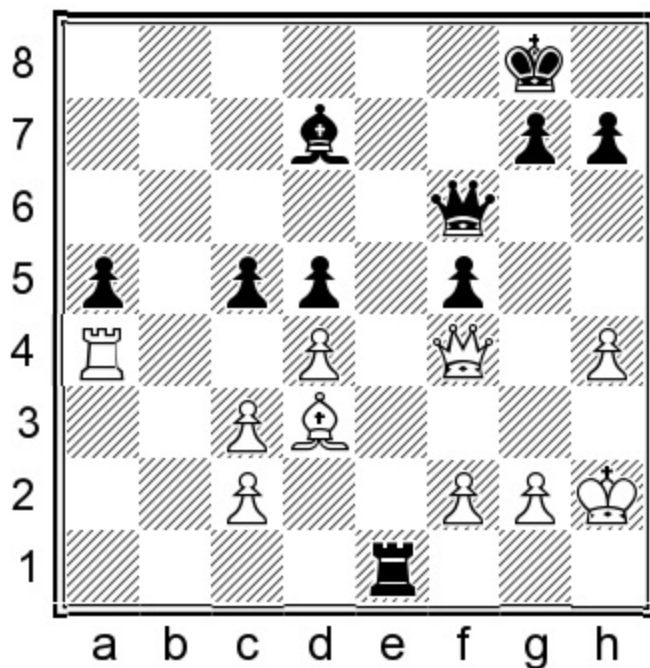
17.♞xf4 a5 18.a4 bxa4 19.♞xa4 ♞e1+



Position after: 19...♖e1+

20.♙f1

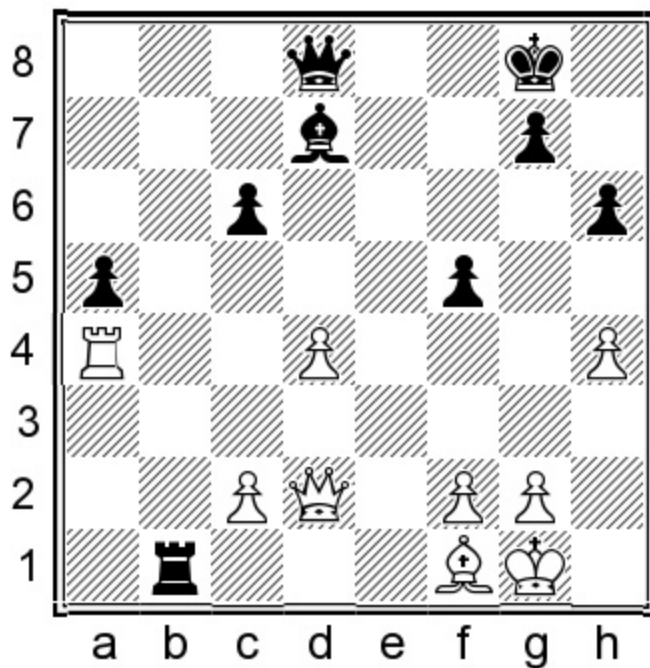
20.♚h2 c5!



Position after: 20...c5!

21.♖xa5 c4 22.♖a8+ ♚f7 23.♖a7 cxd3 24.♖xd7+ ♚e8 25.♖a7 d2 26.♖a8+ ♚f7 leads to a draw.

20...♙d8 21.♙d2 ♖b1 22.c4 dxc4 23.♖xc4 h6 24.♖a4



Position after: 24. ♖a4

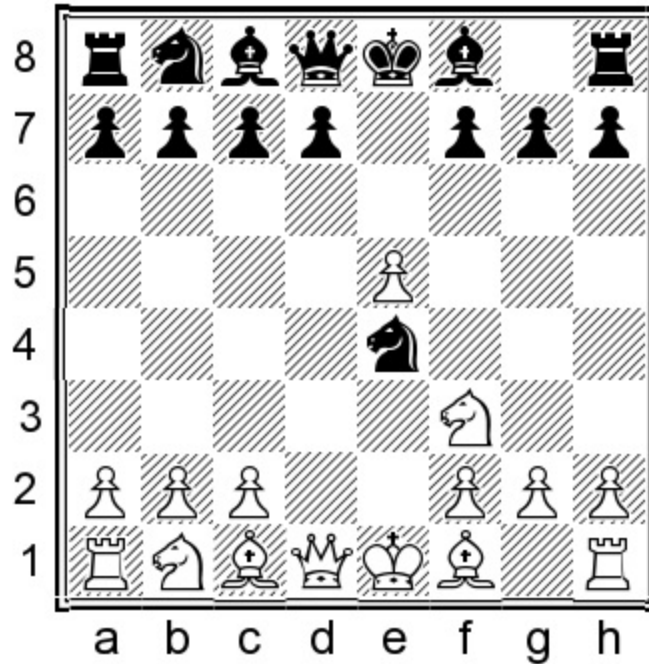
24...♗e6

Black is fine; the active counterplay is obvious. $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$ (31) González Sánchez, F (2313) – Ilzig, G (2327) ICCF 2021.

Chapter 9

4.dxe5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.dxe5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 9 – 4.dxe5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.dxe5 d5

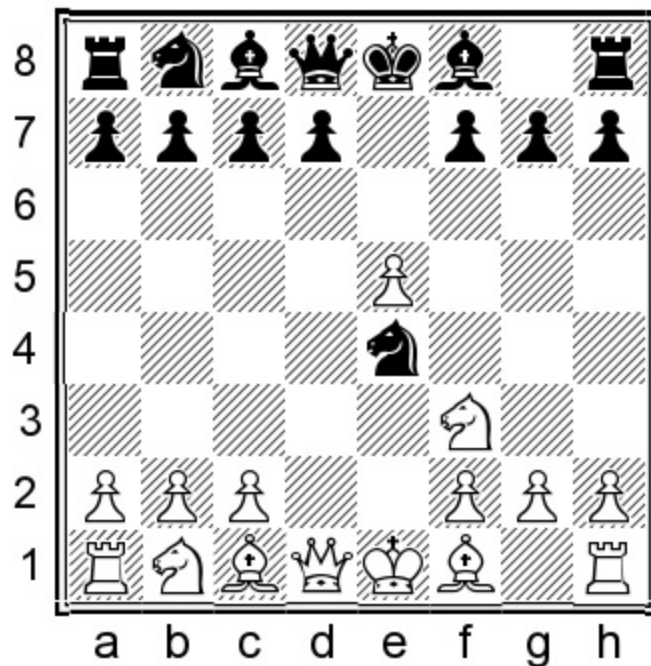
a) 5.-- & 5.♘bd2 ♗xd2

b) 5.♘bd2 ♖d7 6.--

c) 5.♘bd2 ♖d7 6.♙d3

a) 5.-- & 5.♘bd2 ♗xd2

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.dxe5



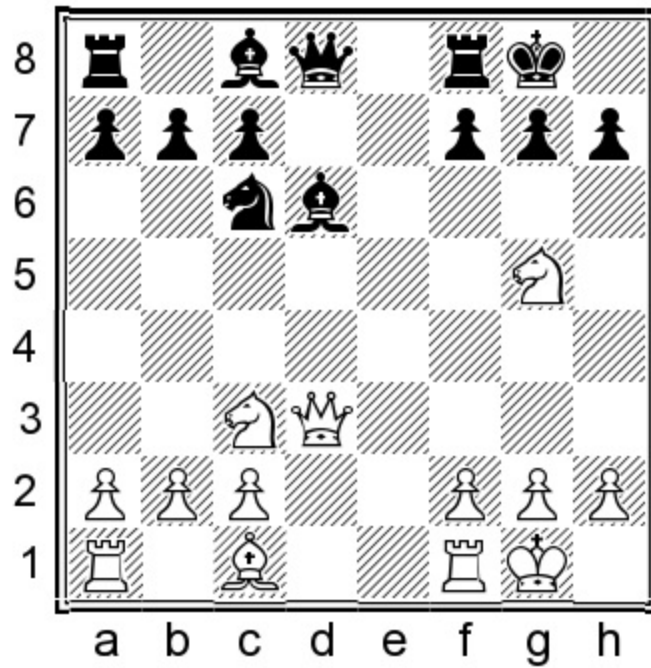
Position after: 4.dxe5

An important reaction that has recently become popular again. We have a pawn structure typical of the Open Spanish.

4...d5 5.♘bd2

The critical line, challenging the knight at once. The idea is to take on e4 and to go for an endgame. Other options here are not critical:

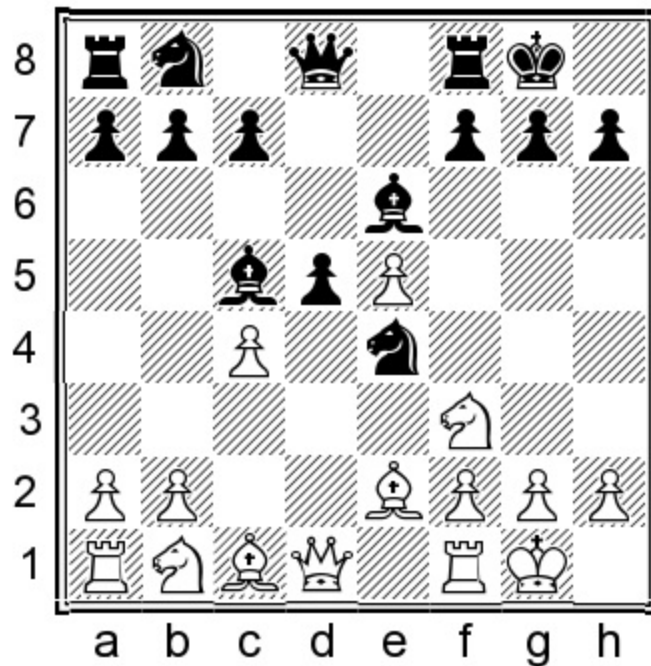
A) Taking en passant is just pointless: 5.exd6 ♙xd6 6.♙d3 ♘c5 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘c3 ♘xd3 9.♙xd3 ♘c6 10.♘g5



Position after: 10. Ng5

10...g6 11. Nge4 Bf5 12. Bh6 Re8 Black has very quick development.

B) 5. Be2 Bc5 6. 0-0 0-0 7. c4 Be6



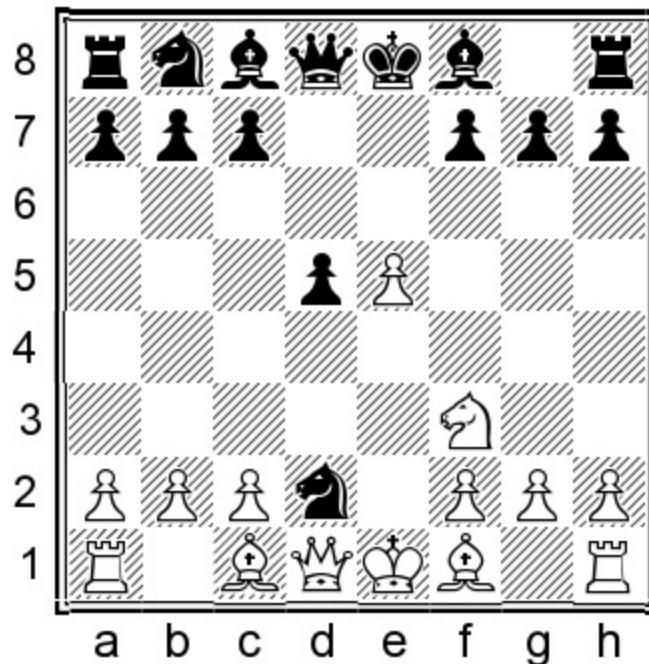
Position after: 7... Be6

Black manages to develop all his pieces on active squares.

C) 5. Be3 Be7 6. Bbd2 0-0 7. c3 Bxd2 8. Bxd2 c5 9. Bd1 Be6 10. Bd3 Bc6 11. 0-0 Bb7 12. h3 Bb8

13.♖fe1 ♕f5! The position is balanced.

5...♘xd2



Position after: 5...♘xd2

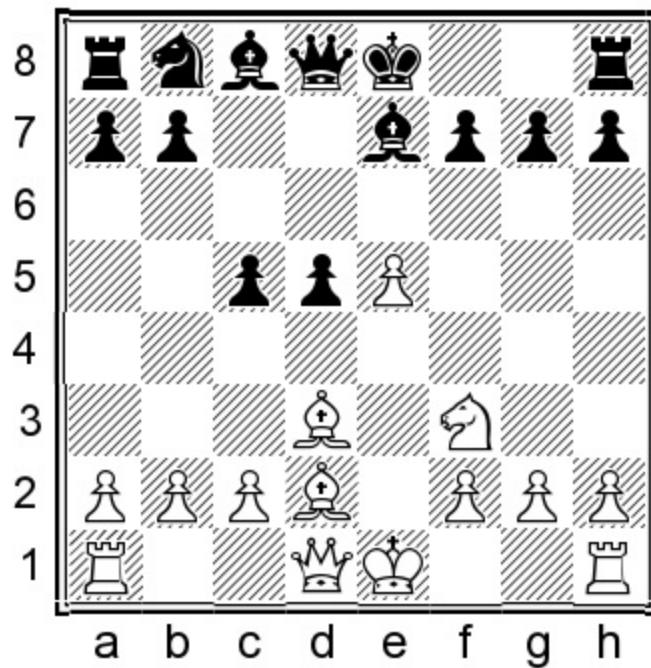
This is a logical response. In the next file we will analyse another important continuation, 5...♔d7. Due to the importance of this system, I have decided to cover two lines here for Black.

6.♕xd2

Logical and best, but White can opt for a slightly unusual (though not bad) idea:

6.♔xd2 The idea is to place the queen on the aggressive f4-square, showing a preference for attack...
6...c5 7.c3 [7.c4 d4 8.♕d3 ♘c6 9.0-0 h6 10.a3 ♕e6 This is also a complicated game.] 7...♘c6 8.♕d3
h6 9.0-0 ♕e6 10.♖b1 g5 11.h3 ♔c7 12.b4 0-0-0 13.♖e1 ♖g8 with very complex and sharp play ahead
of us. ½ – ½ (34) Gudzovaty, Y (2426) – Schulz, K (2391) ICCF 2018.

6...♕e7 7.♕d3 c5

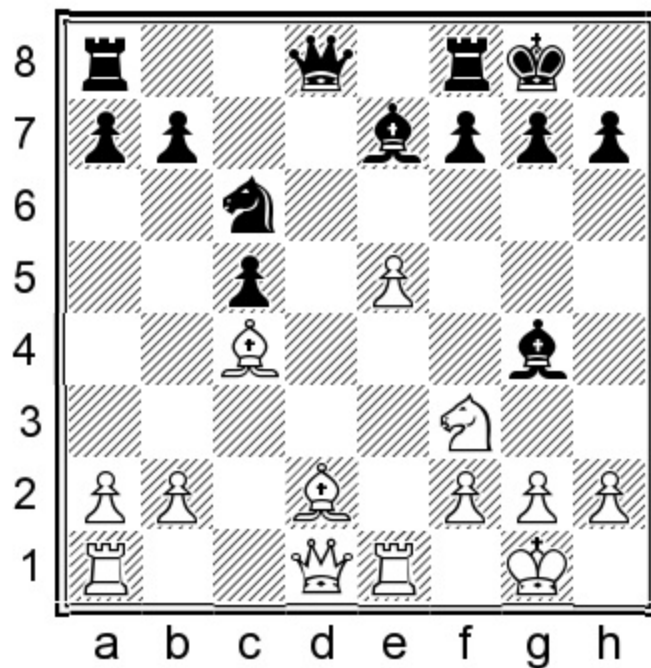


Position after: 7...c5

8.c3

The main choice. White can try to combine different plans as well:

A) 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.c4 ♗g4 10.♞e1 dxc4 11.♙xc4 0-0



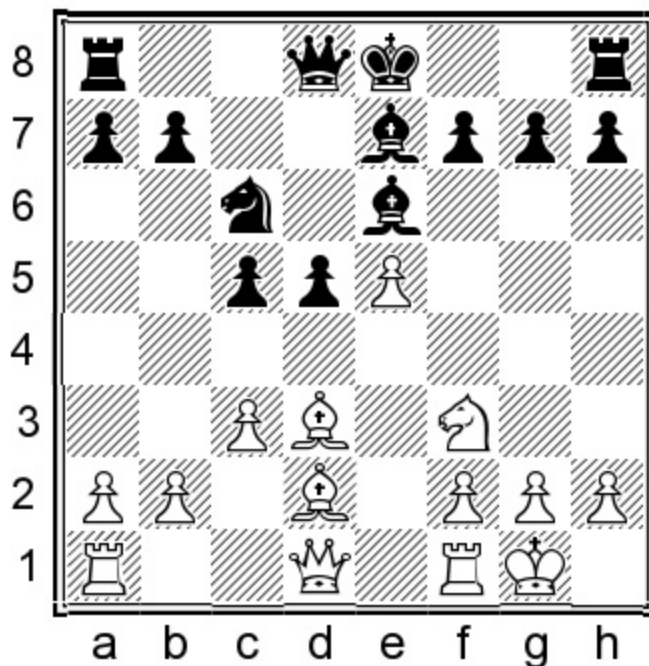
Position after: 11...0-0

12.e6 [12.♙c3 ♚xd1 13.♞axd1 ♞fd8=] 12...fxe6 13.♙xe6+ ♙xe6 14.♞xe6 ♚d5 15.♚e2 ♞xf3 16.♞xc6

♙xc6 17.gxf3 ♘f6 Black is fine.

B) 8.c4 ♘c6 9.h3 ♘e6 10.♙c2 dxc4 11.♘xc4 ♘xc4 12.♙xc4 ♙c8! 13.0-0 ♙e6 14.♙e4 h6 15.b3 0-0
Black has established good play and coordinated pieces.

8...♘c6 9.0-0 ♘e6



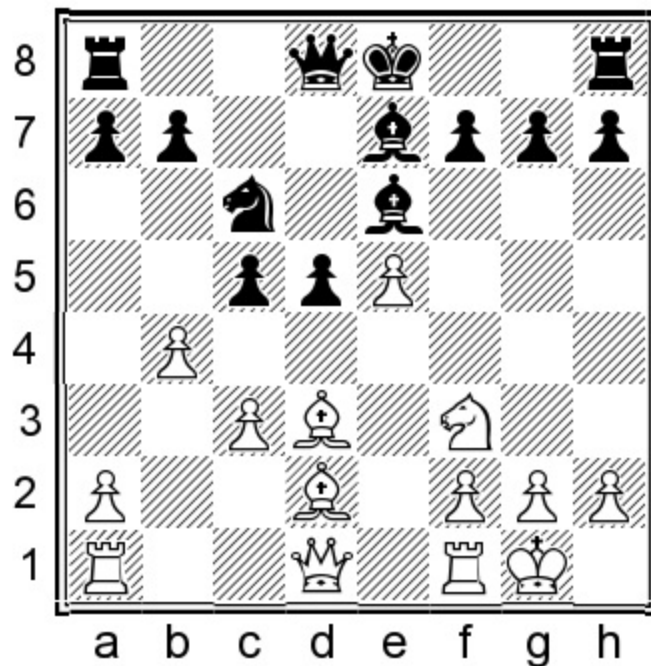
Position after: 9...♘e6

We are in relatively unknown territory. There are not so many games here, so basically, we are developing theory.

10.♙e1

A sharp position. White has options here:

A) 10.b4

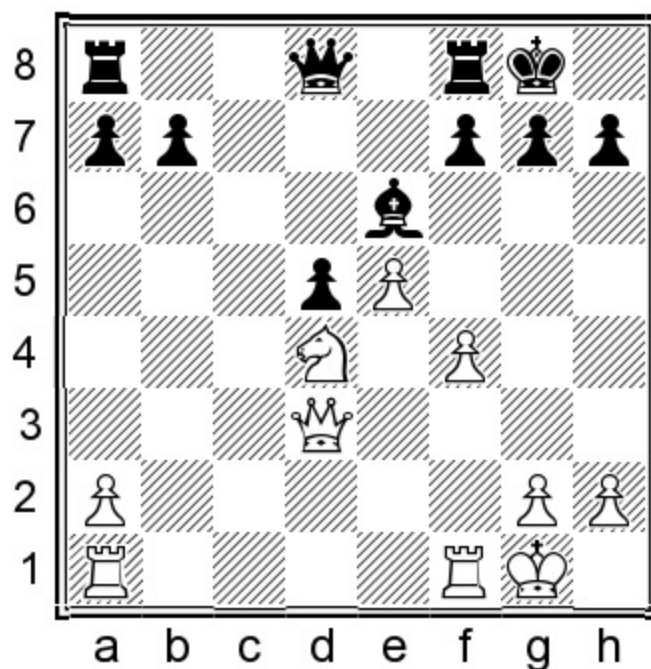


Position after: 10.b4

And Black also has options:

A1) 10...0-0 11.bxc5 h6± 1-0 (61) Anton Guijarro, D (2670) – Suyarov, M (2359) Samarkand 2023.

A2) 10...cxb4 11.cxb4 ♕xb4 12.♕xb4 ♖xb4 13.♞d4 ♗xd3 14.♙xd3 0-0 15.f4

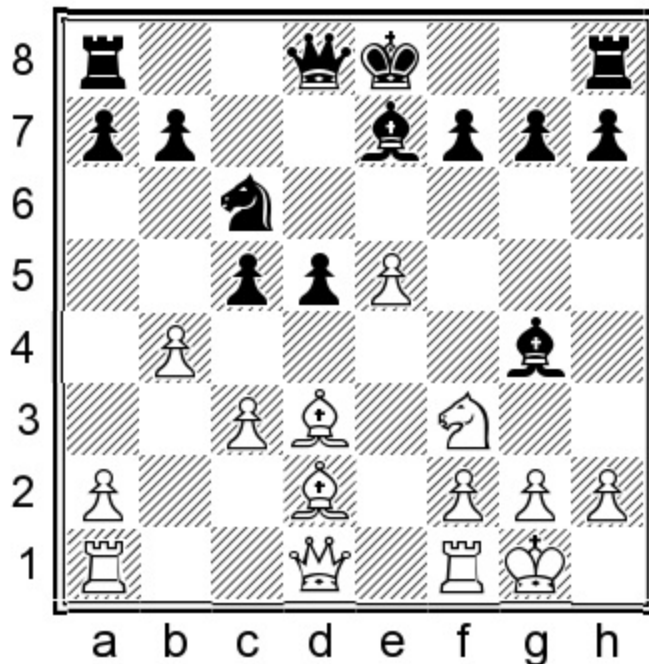


Position after: 15.f4

15...g6 16.h3 ♖c8 17.♙ab1 b6 18.♙g3 ♔h8 Black is a pawn up, but the knight on d4 is strong. Still,

we can say that the position is balanced. ½ – ½ (42) Fleury, M (2255) – Smith, A (2188) ICCF 2022.

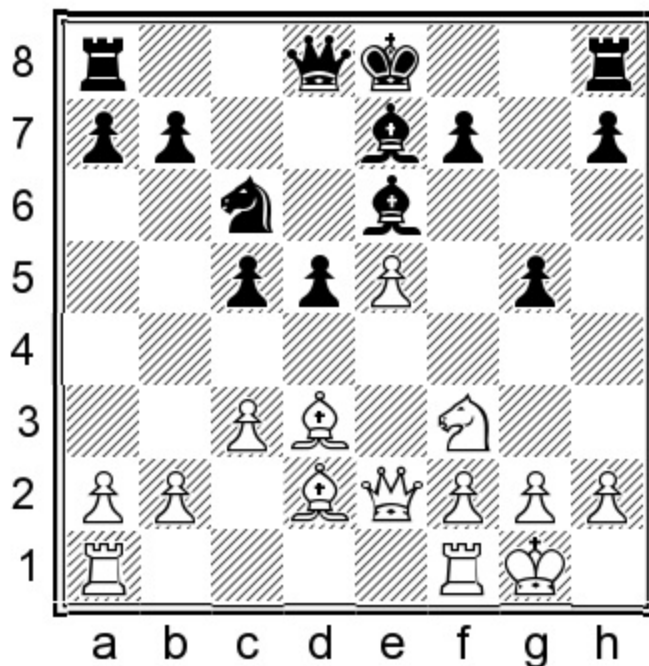
A3) 10...♙g4!?N



Position after: 10...♙g4!?N

11.bxc5 [11.♖e1 cxb4 12.cxb4 0-0 13.a3 ♘d4 14.♙e2 ♗xe2+ 15.♚xe2 ♚b6 Black has reasonable counterplay.] 11...♗xe5 12.♙b5+ ♙d7 13.♗xe5 ♙xb5 14.♖e1 0-0 15.♖b1 ♙c6 16.♙e3 ♚c7 17.♙d4 ♖fe8 The position is equal.

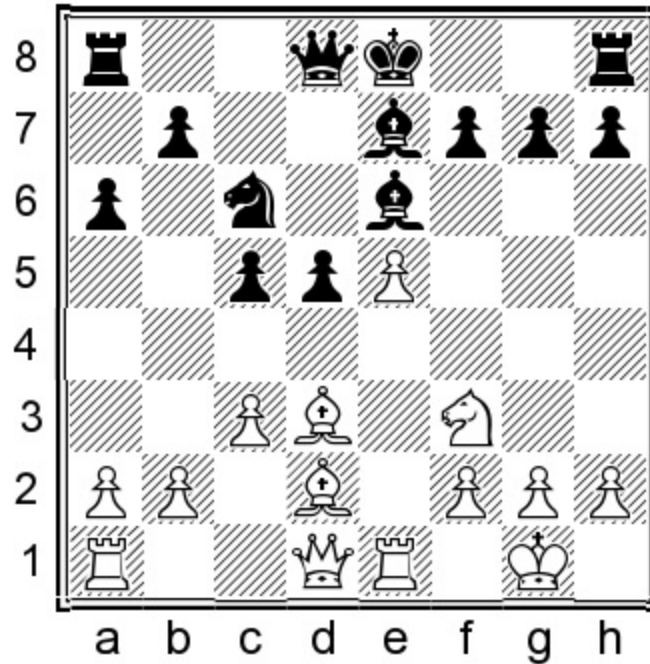
B) 10.♚e2 g5



Position after: 10...g5

11.♔e3 h5 12.♖ad1 h4 13.h3 g4 14.hxg4 ½ – ½ (14) Volodarsky, Y (2357) – Orekhov, V (2258) ICCF 2022.

10...a6!?N



Position after: 10...a6!?N

An important and useful move which I found some time ago. Black waits before taking action. The asymmetrical pawn structure provides various complex approaches for both sides.

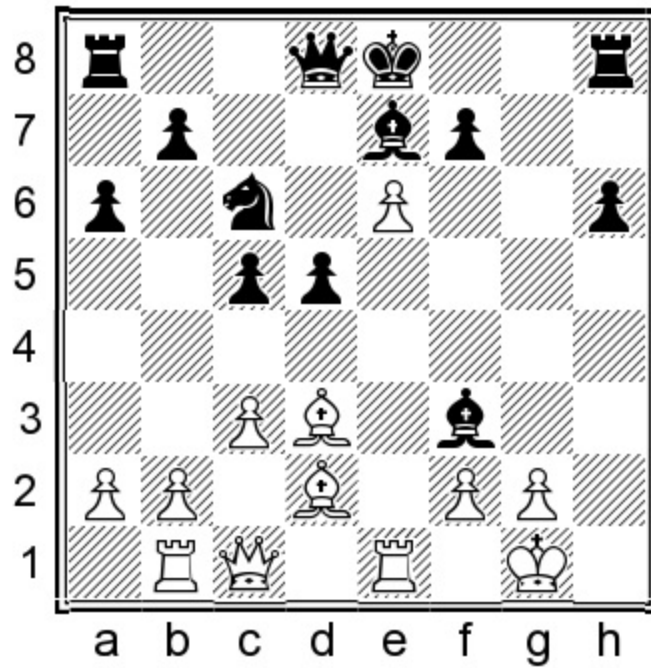
In one game Black went for direct play with: 10...g5 11.♔e3 a6 12.b4 g4 13.♞d2 cxb4 14.cxb4 ♔xb4 15.♖b1 ♚e7∞ 0-1 (34) Chigaev, M (2615) – Esipenko, A (2683) chess.com 2023.

11.h3

White has many ideas but mostly it involves the positional b4-break:

A) 11.b4 c4 12.♔c2 d4 13.♔e4 d3⊕ This is the main point behind 10...a6. Now b5 can't be played.

B) 11.♖b1 g5 12.♚c1 h6 [12...♖g8 13.♔xh7 ♖g7 14.♔c2 g4 15.♔h6 ♖g8 16.♞d2 ♔g5 17.♔xg5 ♚xg5 18.b4 cxb4 19.cxb4 ♖c8 20.♚d1 ♞xe5 21.♞f1 ♚f4 Again we have unclear complications.] 13.h3 g4 14.hxg4 ♔xg4 15.e6 ♔xf3



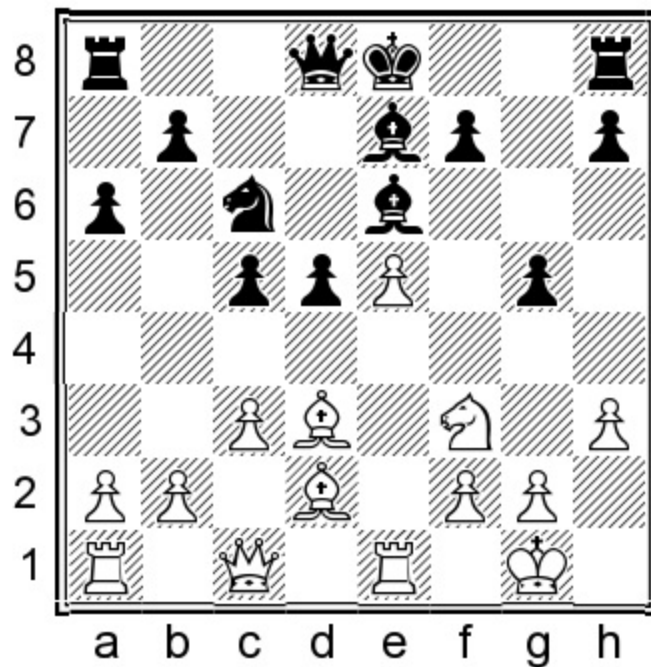
Position after: 15...♙xf3

16.gxf3 [16.exf7+ ♔xf7 17.gxf3 ♚d7 18.♙f4 ♙g5+] 16...♙h4 17.♙f5 ♚f6 18.♚c2 0-0 19.exf7+ ♜xf7
 20.♙e6 ♙xf2+ 21.♔xf2 ♚xf3+ 22.♔g1 ♚g3+ The game will end with perpetual check.

11...h6

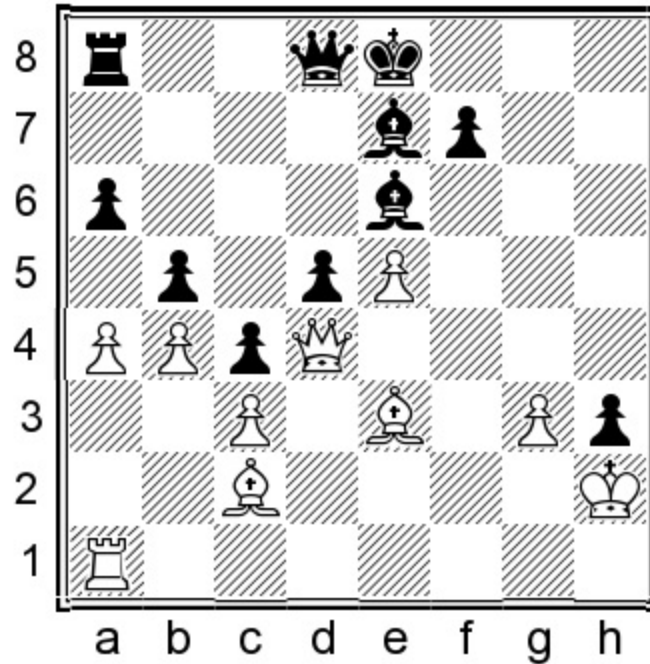
Preparing ...g5.

Black can play sharply at once with: 11...g5!? 12.♚c1!!



Position after: 12. ♖c1!!

A very important resource for White... [12.b4 c4 13. ♕c2 h5 14. ♕e3 g4 15. ♗d4 gxh3 16.g3 h4 17. ♖h2 ♗xd4 18. ♖xd4 ♜g8 19. ♜g1 hxg3+ 20. ♜xg3 ♜xg3 21.fxg3 b5 22.a4



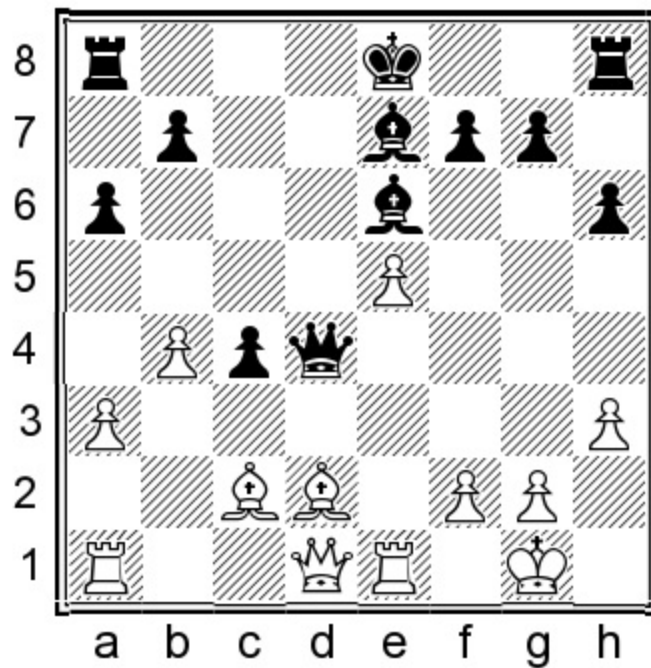
Position after: 22.a4

22...a5!! Black establishes counterplay. This is just an example of how the game might continue.]
 12... ♜g8 13. ♕xh7 ♜g7 14. ♕d3 g4 15. ♕h6 ♜g8 16.hxg4 ♜xg4 17.g3 ♖d7 18. ♕f1 ♜c8 19. ♕f4 ♖c7
 20. ♕g2 ♖b8 21. ♖d2 ♖a8 A highly complex game that offers chances for both sides.

12.a3

White can try to play directly: 12.b4 c4 13. ♕c2 d4 14.cxd4 ♗xd4 15. ♗xd4 ♖xd4 16. ♕e3 ♖xd1
 17. ♜exd1 f5! 18.exf6 ♕xf6∞

12... ♖d7 13.b4 c4 14. ♕c2 d4 15.cxd4 ♗xd4 16. ♗xd4 ♖xd4

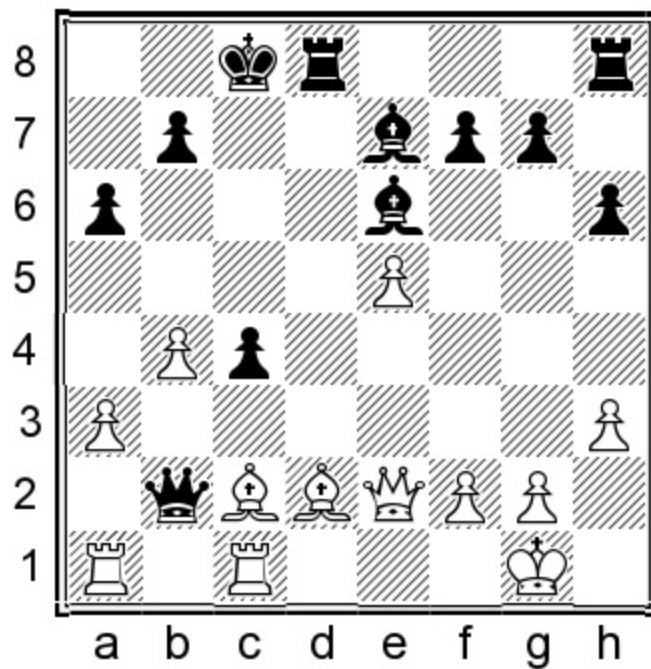


Position after: 16... ♖xd4

17. ♘e3

The alternative is to keep queens on the board with:

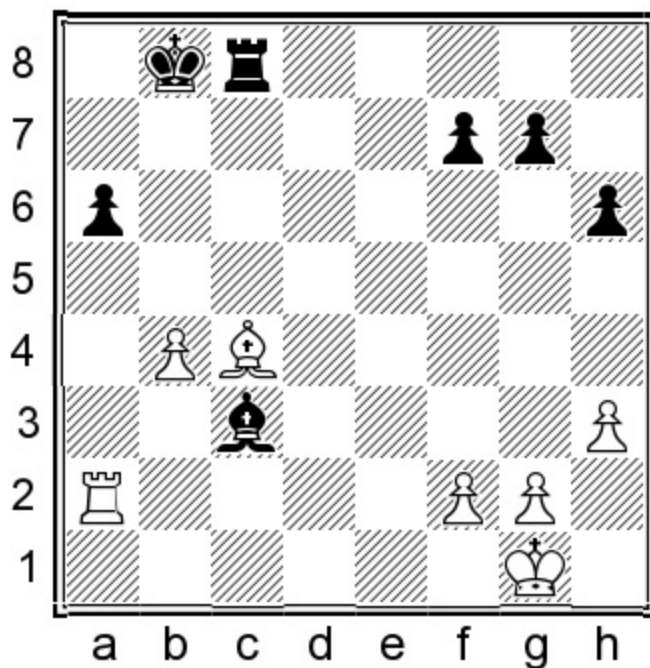
17. ♖e2 0-0-0 18. ♖ed1 ♗b2 19. ♖dc1



Position after: 19. ♖dc1

19... ♖xd2!? [Black can try: 19... ♔b8 20. ♘e3 ♖d5 21. ♖ab1 ♗xe5 22. f4 ♗h5 23. ♖f1 ♘f6 also leading

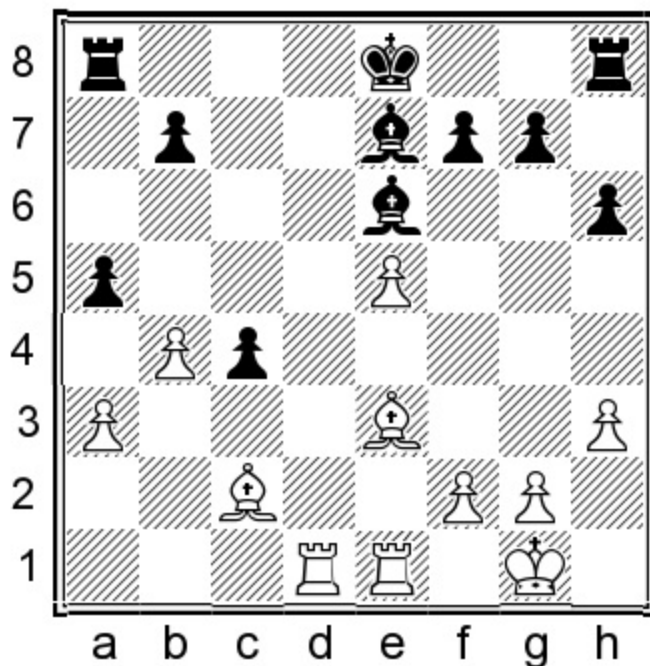
to complex play.] 20. ♖xd2 ♜xe5 21. ♜e1 ♘g5 22. ♜xe5 ♘xd2 23. ♘f5 ♘c3 24. ♜c5+ ♔b8 25. ♜a2 b6
 26. ♘xe6 bxc5 27. ♘xc4 cxb4 28. axb4 ♜c8



Position after: 28... ♜c8

29. ♘xa6 ♜c7 30. b5 ♔a7 This is drawn.

17... ♖xd1 18. ♜axd1 a5



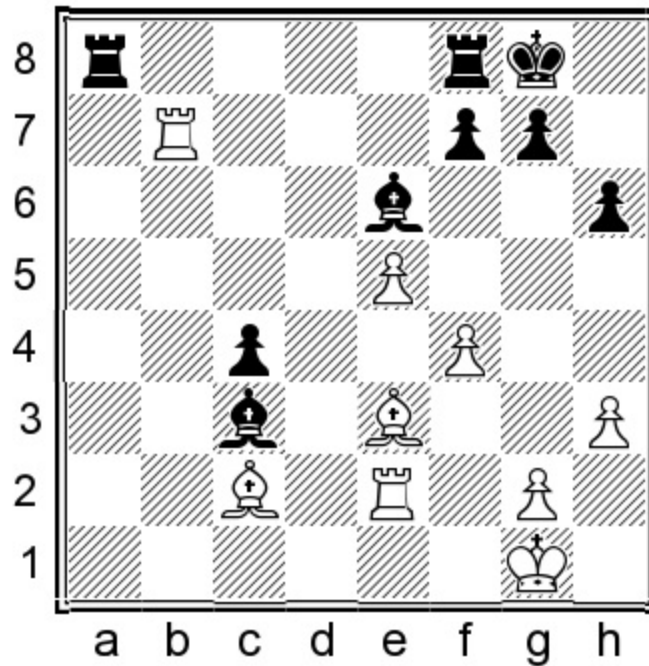
Position after: 18... a5

Reaching an important endgame.

19.f4

19.♙a4+ ♚f8 20.bxa5 ♜xa5 21.♙d7 ♜xe5 22.♙xe6 fxe6 23.♞d4 b5 24.a4 ♙f6 25.♞f4 ♚e7 26.axb5 ♞c8 Black is OK.

19...axb4 20.axb4 ♙xb4 21.♞e2 0-0 22.♞b1 ♙c3 23.♞xb7



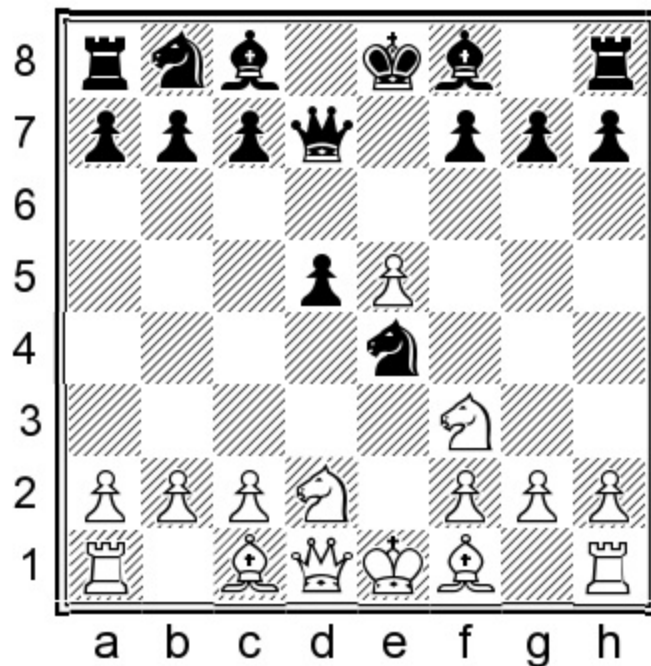
Position after: 23. ♞xb7

23...♙d5

Black has reasonable counterplay in this endgame.

b) 5. ♘bd2 ♚d7 6.--

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♘xe4 4.dxe5 d5 5.♘bd2 ♚d7



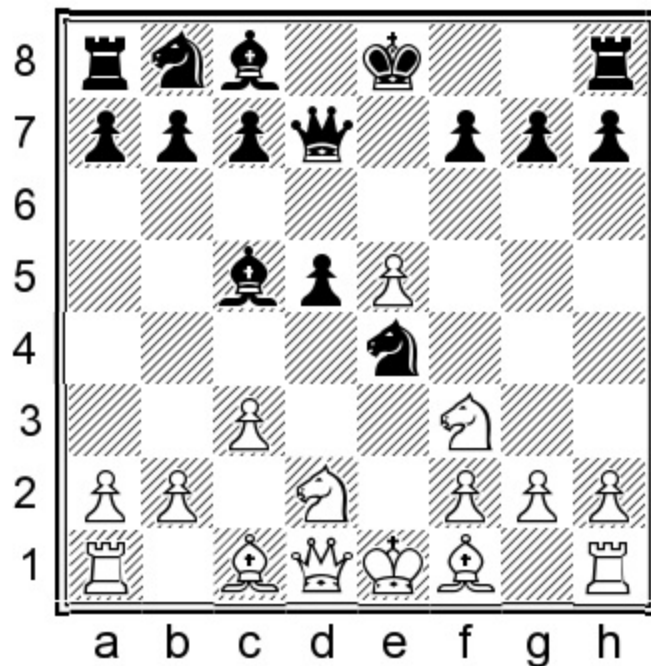
Position after: 5... ♔d7

The main choice of grandmasters, and the most popular choice in the last few years. It may appear to be an unusual reaction but Black anticipates a possible exchange of knights on e4. The bishop from c8 can also often come to b7. This is a complex line because all the pieces are on the board.

6. ♖e2

A) 6. ♔e2 ♘c5 7. h4 b6!? 8. h5 ♘e6 9. ♘b3 ♙a6 10. ♔d1 ♙xf1 11. ♕xf1 c5 12. c3 ♘c6 ½ – ½ (58)
Vachier-Lagrave, M (2763) – Giri, A (2777) chess24.com 2021.

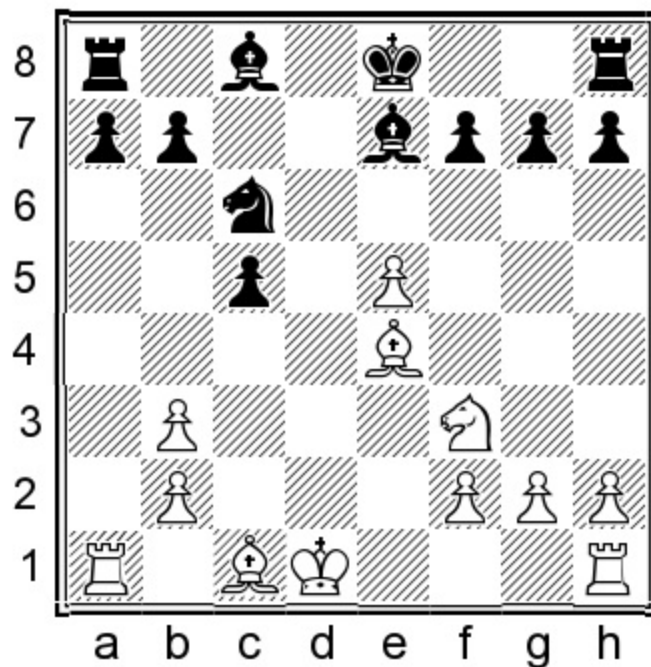
B) 6. c3 ♙c5!



Position after: 6...♙c5!

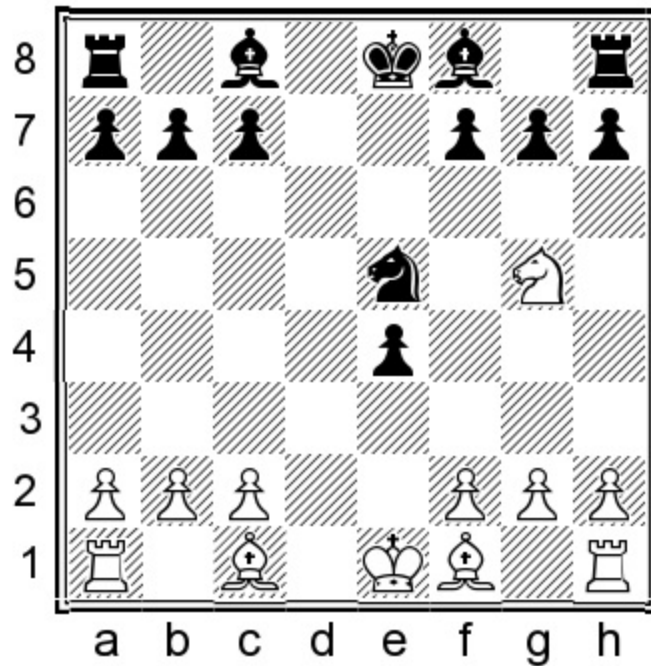
7.♘xe4 dxe4 8.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 9.♘g5 ♘xe5 10.♘xe4 ♙b6 11.♙b5+ ♙d7 12.♙xd7+ ½ – ½ (12)
 Simacek, P (2500) – Pacher, M (2453) Vienna 2018.

C) 6.♘b3 ♙e7 7.♙d3 c5 8.c4 dxc4 9.♙xe4 ♙xd1+ 10.♙xd1 cxb3 11.axb3 ♘c6



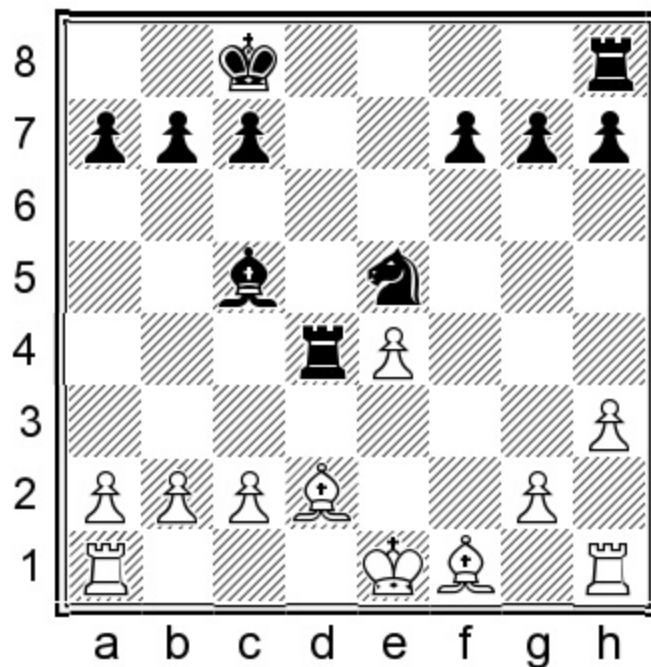
Position after: 11...♘c6

12.♙xc6+ [12.♙e2 0-0 13.♙e3 ♙e6 14.♙hc1 ♙fc8 15.♘d2 ♙c7 16.f4 g6 17.♘c4 ♙d8 18.♙xc6 bxc6
 19.♙a6 h5 20.♙ca1 ♙dd7 Black has active play in this endgame. ½ – ½ (27) Dunlop, G (2518) –



Position after: 8... Nxe5

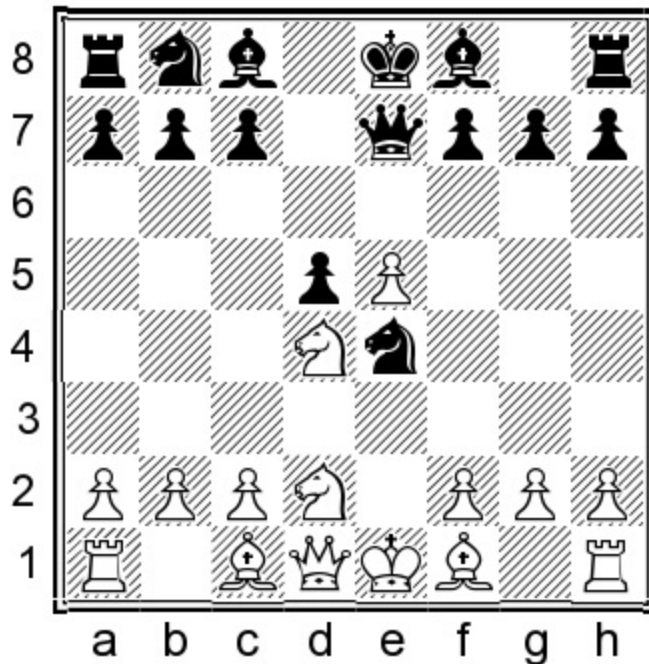
9. Nxe4 [9. Qf4 Qd6 10. Nxe4 Nf3+ 11. gxf3 Qxf4 Black has the better endgame. 0-1 (25) Zierk, S (2488) – Deac, B (2698) chess.com 2023] 9... Qf5 10. f3 Qxe4 11. fxe4 0-0-0 This is also a very good endgame for Black: 12. Qd2 [12. Qe3 Ng4 13. Qg1 Qd6 14. Qd3 R8e8 15. 0-0-0 a6 16. h3 Nf6 17. Re1 Nxe4! Black is better. ½ – ½ (55) Jumabayev, R (2628) – Deac, B (2683) chess.com 2022] 12... Qc5 13. h3 R8d4!



Position after: 13... R8d4!

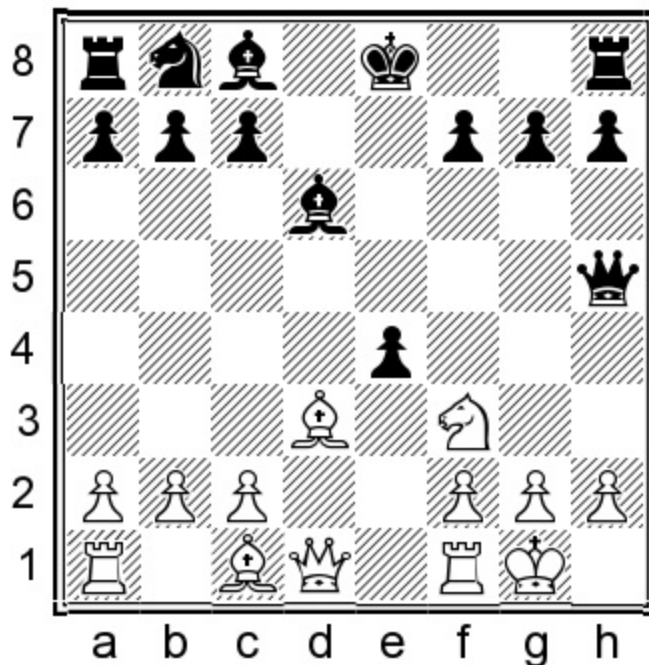
[13...♖he8 14.0-0-0 ♜d7 15.♙e2 ♙d4 16.♙f4 ♜d6= 0-1 (50) Kruglyakov, P (2363) – Gordievsky, D (2559) chess.com 2020] 14.0-0-0 ♜hd8 15.♙e2 ♜xd2 16.♜xd2 ♙e3 17.♜hd1 ♜d4 18.c3 ♙xd2+ 19.♜xd2 ♜xe4

E) 6.♘d4 ♚e7!



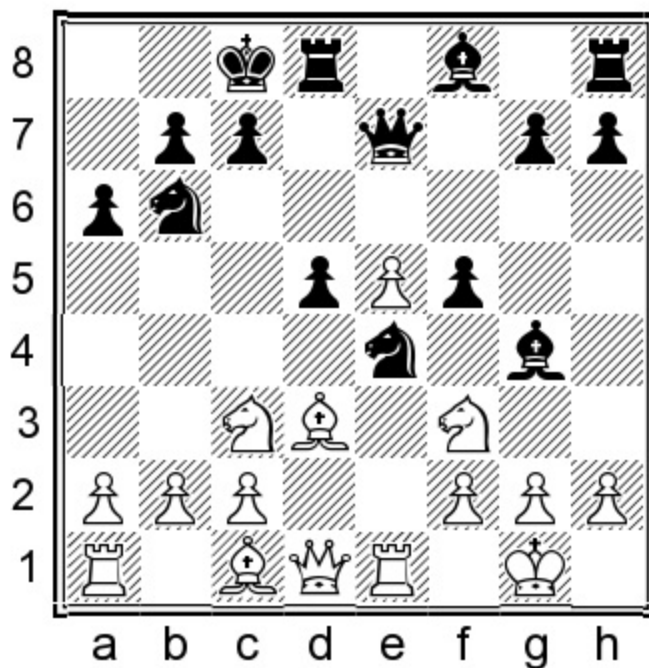
Position after: 6...♚e7!

An important motif to keep in mind. 7.♘2f3 [7.♘xe4 ♚xe5 8.♙d3 dxe4 9.0-0 ♙d6 10.♘f3 ♚h5



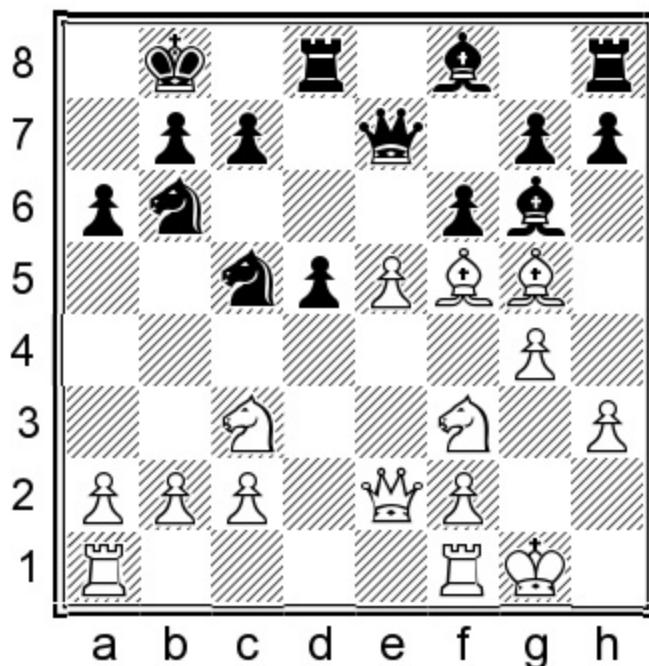
Position after: 10...♚h5

11.♙xe4 ♘d7 12.♞e1 0-0=] 7...♘d7 8.♘b5 ♘b6 9.♙d3 a6 10.♘c3 ♙g4 11.0-0 0-0-0 The position is complex: 12.h3 [12.♞e1 f5!

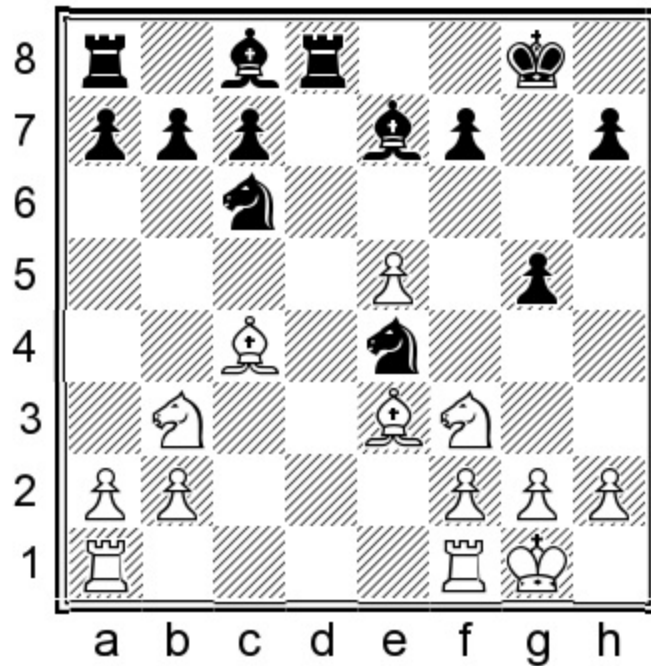


Position after: 12...f5!

13.exf6 gxf6 14.♙e3 f5 15.h3 ♙h5 16.♙g5 ♞xg5 17.♘g5 ♙xd1 18.♙xe4 fxe4 19.♞axd1 ♞d7 Black is better. 0-1 (59) Erigaisi, A (2712) – Vachier-Lagrave, M (2727) Kolkata 2023] 12...♙h5 13.♞e2 ♘c5 14.♙f5+ ♘b8 15.g4 ♙g6 16.♙g5 f6



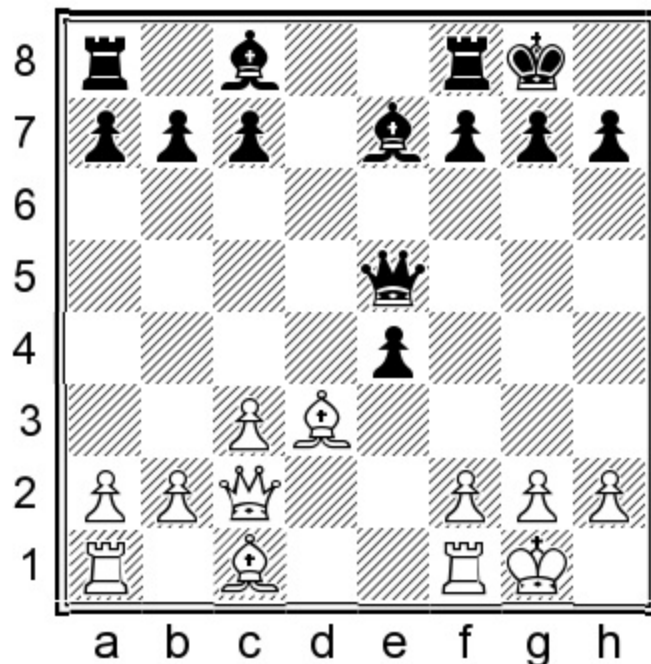
Position after: 16...f6



Position after: 13...g5

14.h3 h5 15.♖fd1 ♜xd1+ 16.♖xd1 g4 17.hxg4 hxg4 18.♙d5 gxf3 19.♙xe4 ♘xe5 20.♙f4 f6 21.gxf3 ♔f7 Black is OK.] 9...♞e6 10.♙f4 ♞f5 11.♞c1 g5 12.♙e3 ♘xe5 13.♘bd4 ♞f6 14.♘xe5 ♞xe5 15.f4 ♞g7 16.fxg5 ♙xg5 With complications that are not unfavourable for Black. ½-½ (28) Corujedo Hernández, R (2307) – Engelhard, C (2377) ICCF 2022.

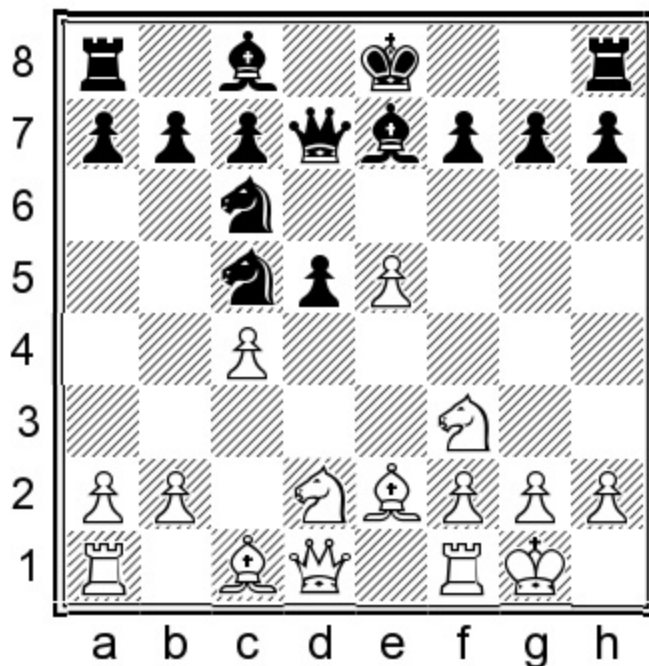
B) 8.c3 0-0 9.♞c2 ♞f5 10.♙d3 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♞xe5 12.♘xe4 dxe4



Position after: 12...dxe4

13.♙xe4 ♘d6 14.g3 ♚h5 15.♞e1= 1-0 (31) Vokhidov, S (2592) – Frolyanov, D (2499) chess.com 2024.

8...♘c5!



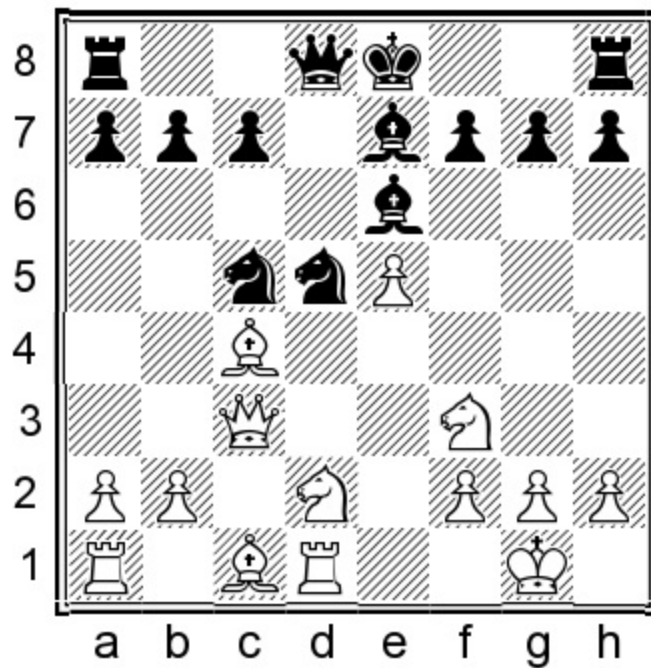
Position after: 8...♘c5!

This is the point.

9.cxd5

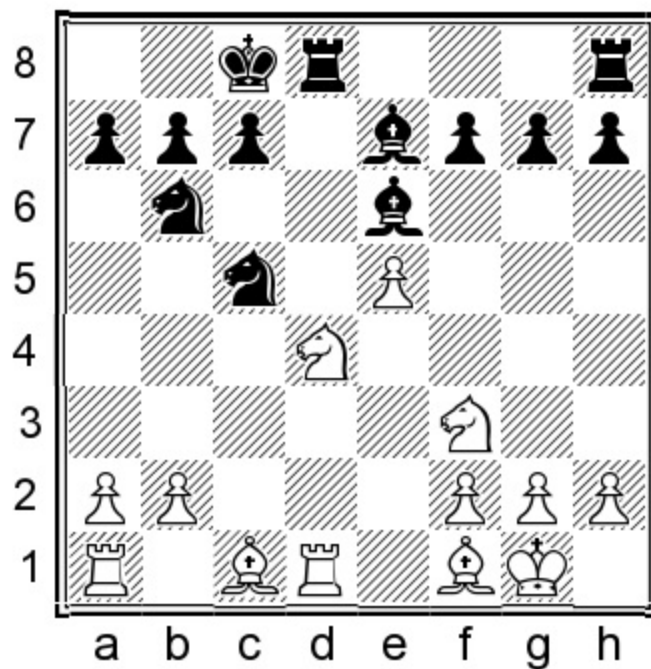
9.♘b3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♚xd1 11.♞xd1 ♙e6 12.♙b5 ♘xb3 13.axb3 ♙d7=

9...♚xd5 10.♙c4 ♚d8 11.♚c2 ♙e6 12.♞d1 ♘b4 13.♚c3 ♘d5



Position after: 13... Nxd5

14. Qd4 Nxb6 15. Bf1 Qxd4 16. Nxd4 O-O-O 17. N2f3



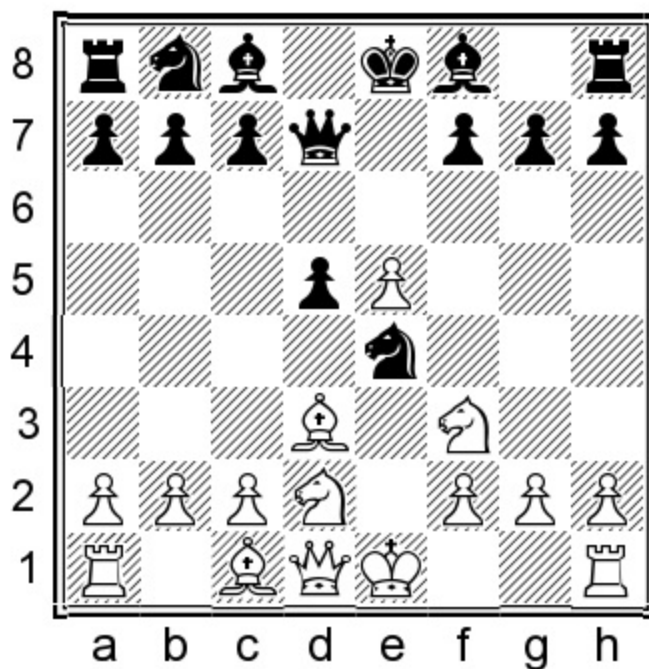
Position after: 17. N2f3

17... Kg4

Black has achieved counterplay.

c) 5. ♖bd2 ♔d7 6. ♙d3

1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♗f6 3.d4 ♗xe4 4.dxe5 d5 5. ♖bd2 ♔d7 6. ♙d3



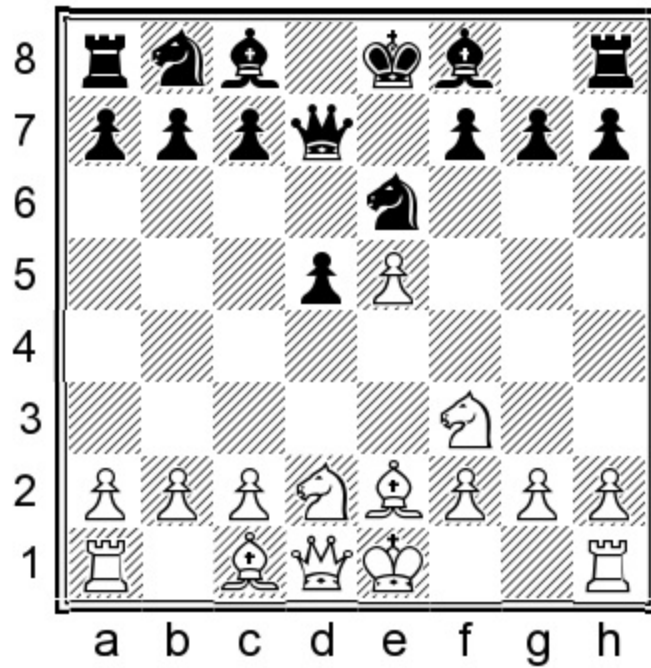
Position after: 6. ♙d3

This is one of the best moves but there are some other options which include slightly different plans:

6... ♗c5 7. ♙e2

Giving up the bishop is not so critical: 7.0-0 ♗xd3 8.cxd3 ♙e7 9. ♖e1 0-0 10.d4 ♔g4 11. ♗f1 ♔g6 12. ♗b3 ♙g4 Black has counterplay. 0-1 (84) Yoo, C (2573) – Lenderman, A (2550) Saint Louis 2022.

7... ♗e6



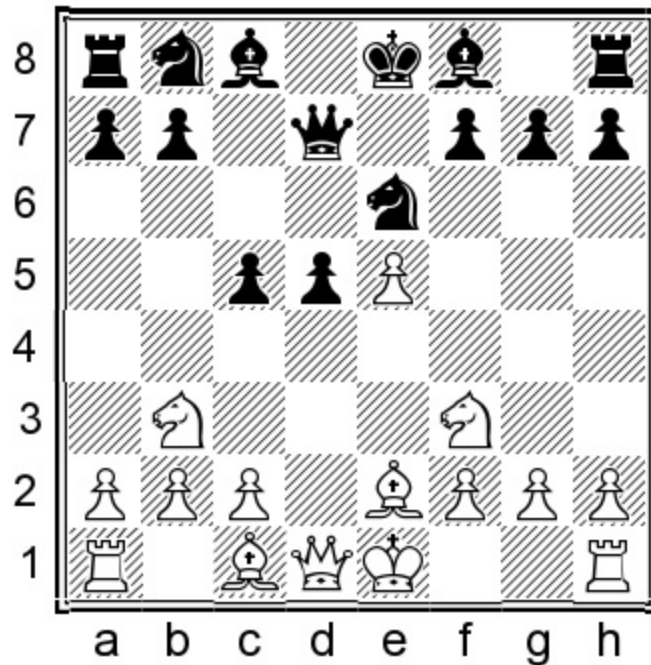
Position after: 7... Nxe6

Securing control over the d4-square and liberating the c-pawn to advance.

8.0-0

White has some other ideas here, also leading to complex play:

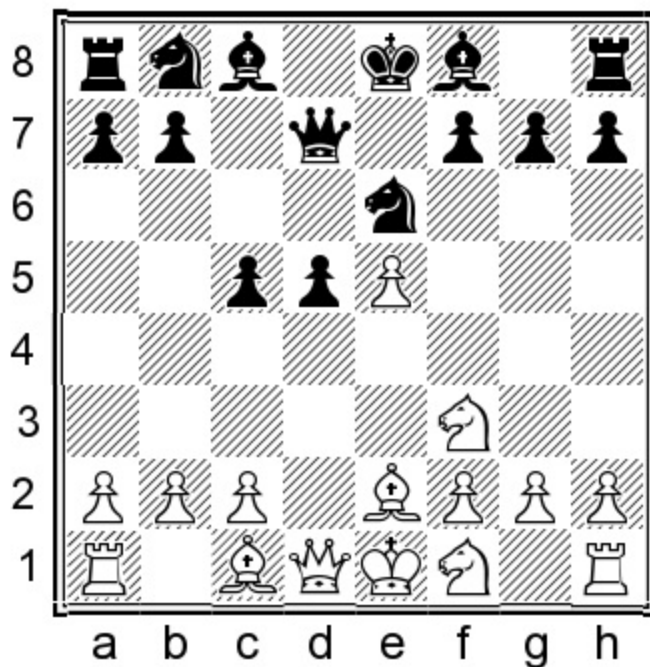
A) 8. Qb3 c5!



Position after: 8... c5!

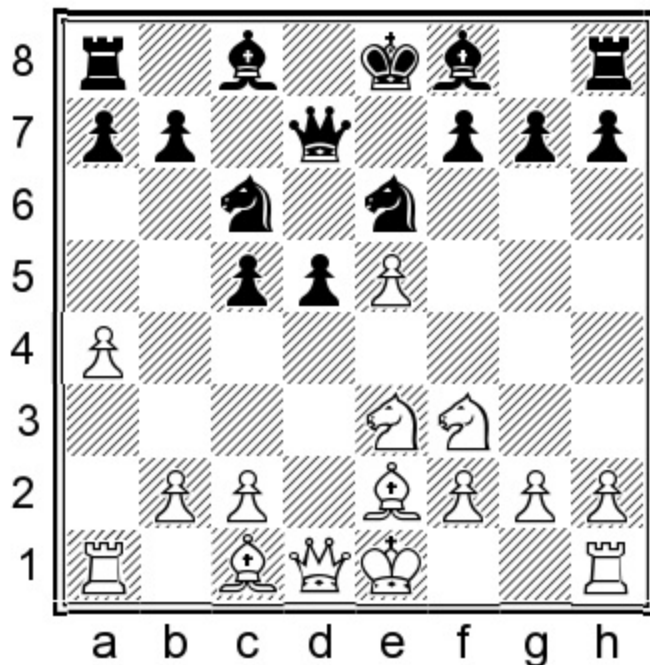
9.0-0 ♖c6 10.c3 ♕e7 11.♕e3 0-0 12.♞e1 ♞d8 This is a good position for Black because the knight on b3 is out of play: 13.♝c2 ♞c7 [13...d4? 14.♞ad1± ½ – ½ (24) Zhakshylykov, E (2279) – Paravyan, D (2586) Chelyabinsk 2023] 14.♞ad1 b6 15.♕d3 ♜f8 Black has counterplay.

B) White can try a pirouette with the knight, so typical of the Ruy Lopez, at once: 8.♘f1 c5



Position after: 8...c5

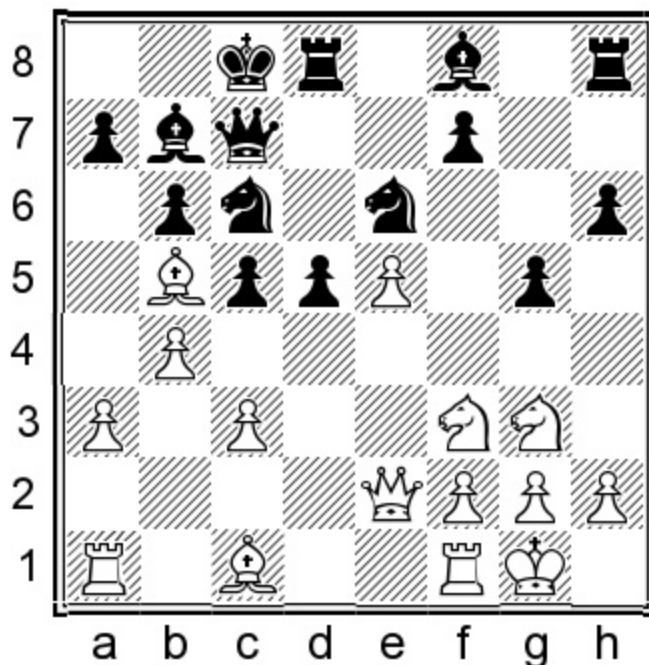
B1) An interesting idea is: 9.a4 ♖c6 10.♘e3



Position after: 10.♘e3

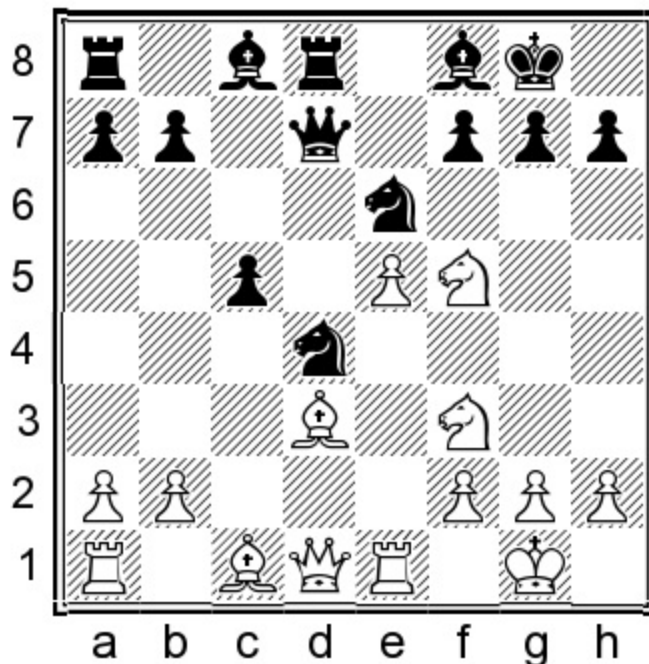
10...♘f4 [10...d4 11.♘c4 ♕e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘e1 b6 14.♘d3 ♕b7 15.b3 ♖ae8 1-0 (67) Moussard, J (2630) – Dragnev, V (2548) Corte 2022] 11.♕f1 d4 12.♘c4 ♘g6 13.♕d3 ♚d5 14.♚e2 ♕g4 15.0-0 ♕e7 16.♖e1 0-0 with complications.

B2) 9.♘g3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♕e7 [10...h6 11.c3 b6 12.a3 ♕b7 13.b4 0-0-0 14.♕b5 ♚c7 15.♚e2 g5



Position after: 15...g5

Again, we have very sharp play. ½ – ½ (31) Hamdouchi, H (2527) – Yankelevich, L (2416) Porticcio 2024] 11.♘f5 0-0 12.c3 ♖d8 13.♕d3 ♕f8 The position is similar to the main line except that Black didn't fianchetto the bishop on b7... 14.♖e1 d4 [14...b6 15.♘g5!↑] 15.cxd4 ♘cxd4



Position after: 15... ♖cxd4

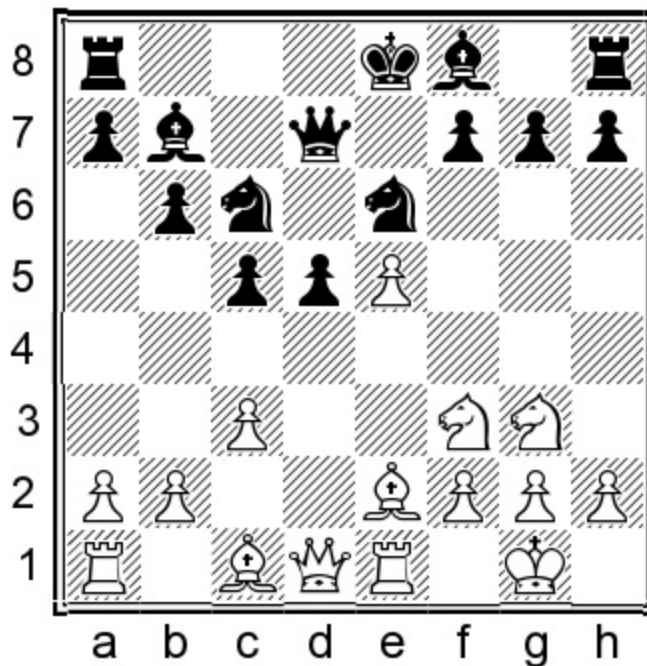
B2.1) 16. ♗3xd4 ♗xd4 17. ♗xd4 [17. ♗d6?! ♕xd6 18. exd6 ♖xd6 ½ – ½ (35) Can, E (2566) – Gurel, E (2554) Ankara 2023] 17... ♖xd4 18. ♕g5 ♕g4! 19. ♕e2 ♕xe2 20. ♖xe2 ♜e8 Black is OK.

B2.2) 16. ♗5xd4 ♗xd4 17. ♕e4 ♕e7 18. ♗xd4 ♖xd4 19. ♖c2 g6 20. g3 ♕e6 21. ♕e3 ♖b4 Black is not worse here.

8... ♕e7

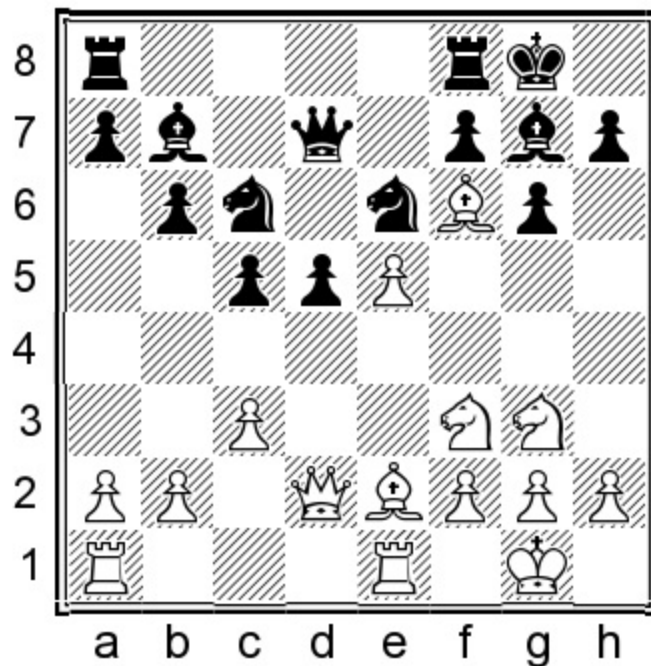
The alternative is also interesting, especially because an ex-World Champion used it:

Black can also go for quick queenside development: 8...b6 9. ♜e1 ♕b7 10. ♗f1 c5 11. c3 ♗c6 12. ♗g3



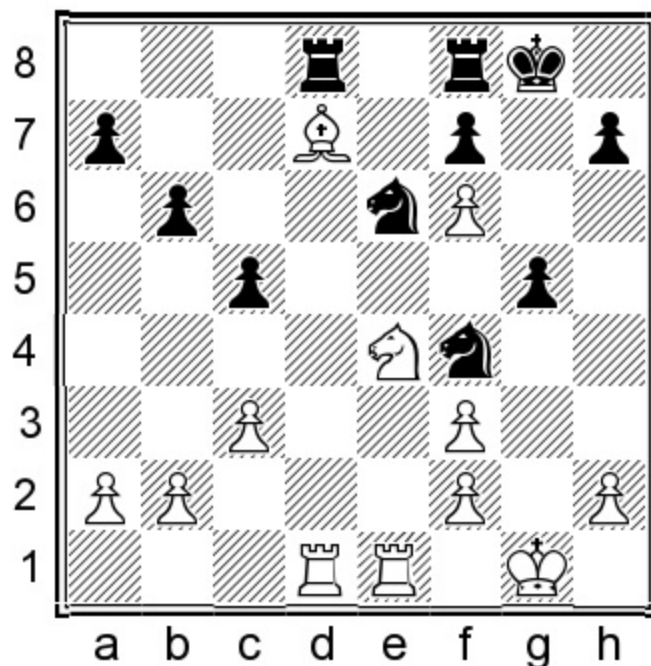
Position after: 12. ♗g3

12...g6 [Another approach here is: 12...h6!? with a similar motive as in the game Hamdouchi – Yankelevich above. 13. a3 g6 14. b4 ♕g7∞] 13. ♕g5 ♕g7 14. ♕f6 0-0 15. ♖d2



Position after: 15. ♖d2

15... ♛c7 Probably stronger than the following high-level game. [15... ♜xf6 16. exf6 ♛c7 17. ♜b5 ♛f4 18. ♛xd5 ♞cd8 19. ♛e5 ♜xf3 20. ♛xf4 ♞xf4 21. gxh3 ♞de6 22. ♜ad1 ♜ad8 23. ♞e4 g5 24. ♜d7



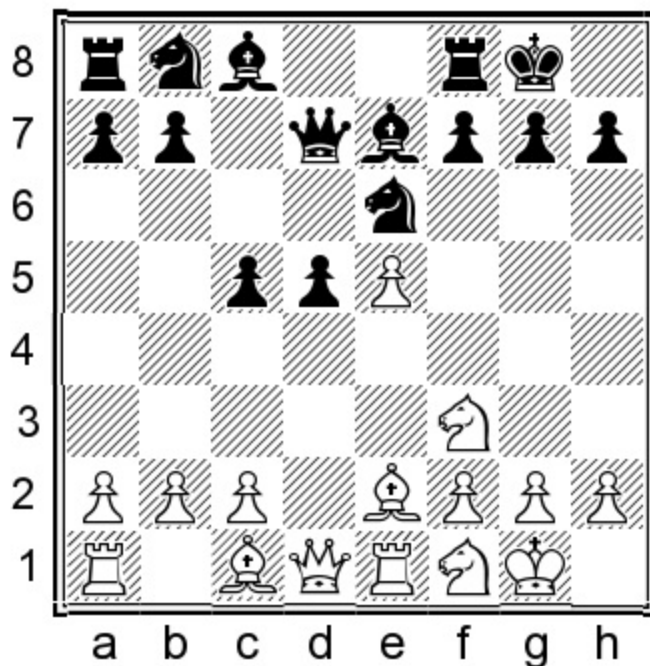
Position after: 24. ♜d7

24... h6 25. ♜d6 ↑ ½ – ½ (30) Firouzja, A (2738) – Carlsen, M (2830) chess.com 2024] 16. ♜xg7 ♞xg7 17. ♜ad1 ♜ad8 18. ♜d3 ♛e7 19. h4 d4 20. c4 f5 21. exf6+ ♛xf6 22. h5 ♞e7 with counterplay.

9.♖e1 0-0 10.♘f1

This is one of the main positions in this line and similarities with the Open Ruy Lopez are obvious.

10...c5

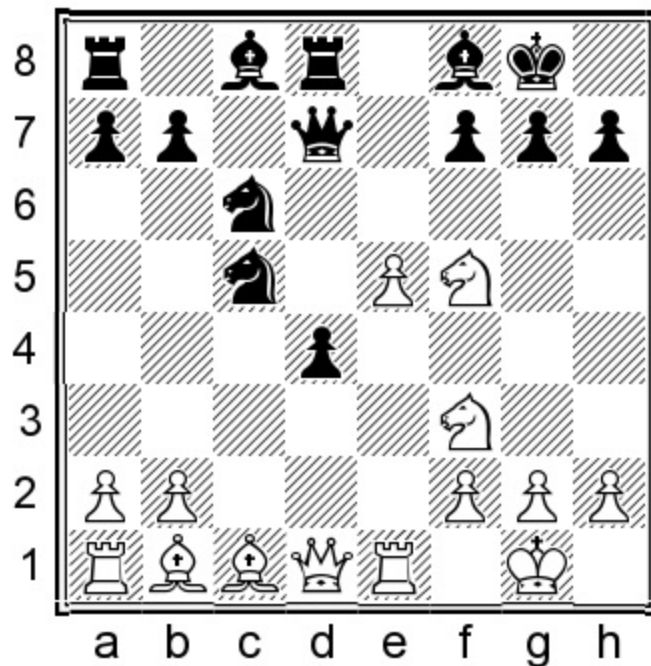


Position after: 10...c5

11.♘g3

White can try slightly different ideas:

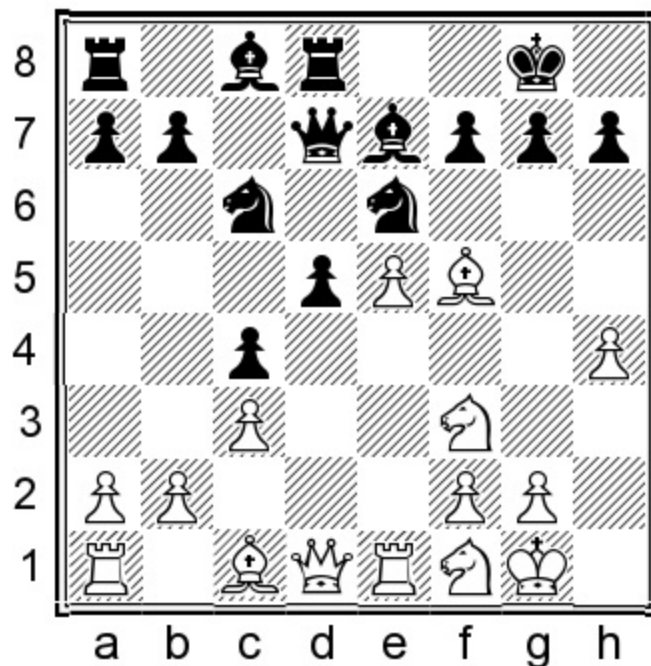
A) 11.c3 ♖d8 12.♘e3 ♘c6 13.♘f5 d4 14.♙b5 ♙f8 15.cxd4 cxd4 16.♙d3 ♘c5 17.♙b1



Position after: 17. ♖b1

17...d3 0-1 (32) Samsonkin, A (2363) – Madaminov, M (2517) chess.com 2024.

B) 11. ♕d3 ♜c6 12. c3 ♞d8 13. h4 c4 14. ♕f5

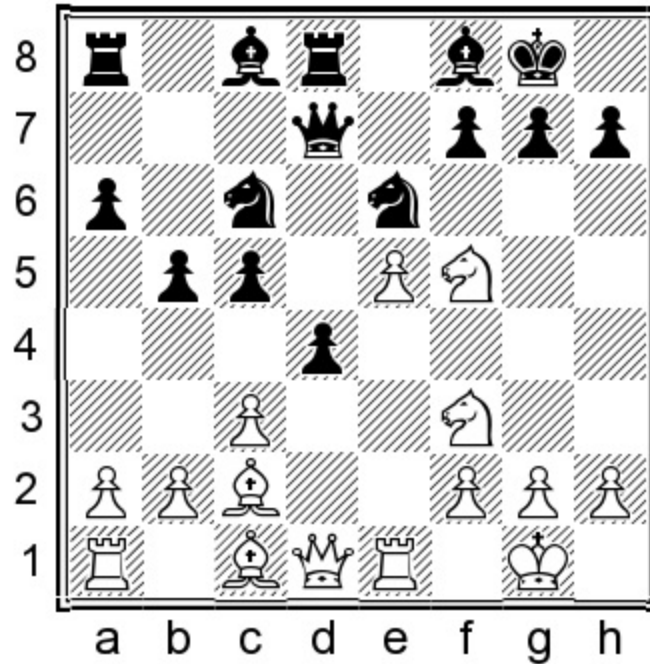


Position after: 14. ♕f5

14... ♞c7! [14...d4 15. ♜g5 g6 16. ♕xe6± ½ – ½ (53) Sindarov, J (2668) – Gurel, E (2625) Vrnjacka Banja 2024] 15. ♞c2 ♜f8 16. ♕e3 ♕xf5 17. ♞xf5 ♞d7 18. ♜g3 g6 19. ♞c2 ♞g4 20. h5 ♜e6 with unclear play.

11...♖c6

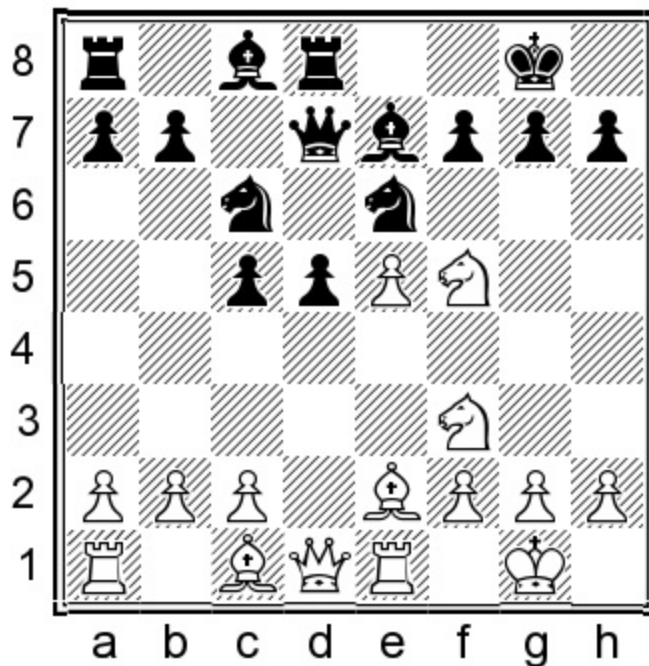
Black can secure the bishop's retreat at once: 11...♞d8 12.♗f5 ♕f8 13.c3 ♖c6 14.♕b5 a6 15.♕a4 b5 16.♕c2 d4



Position after: 16...d4

17.cxd4 ♖cxd4 18.♗5xd4 ♖xd4 19.♕e4 ♕b7 20.♗xd4 ♕xe4 21.♞xe4 cxd4 22.♞d3 ♞f5 again Black has adequate play. ½ – ½ (32) Sevian, S (2696) – Xiong, J (2681) Saint Louis 2023.

12.♗f5 ♞d8

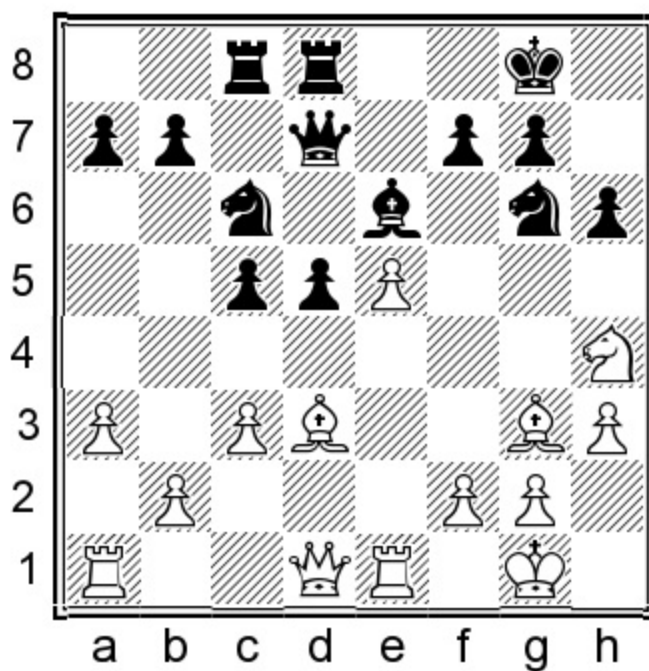


Position after: 12...♖d8

Black is not afraid of trading bishop for knight.

13.♙f1

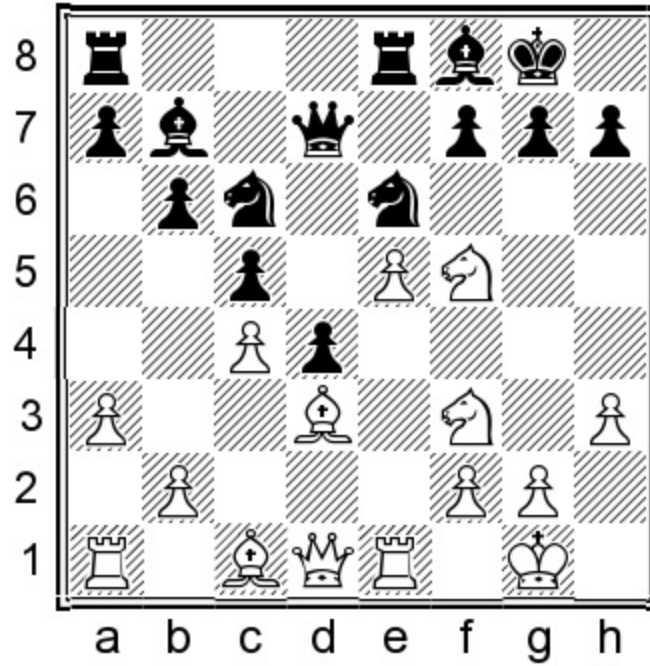
13.♘xe7+ ♚xe7 14.♙d3 h6 15.c3 ♘f8 16.h3 ♙e6 17.a3 ♜ac8 18.♙f4 ♘g6 19.♙g3 ♚d7 20.♘h4



Position after: 20.♘h4

20...♘ce7 21.♚h5 d4 Black has counterplay. 0-1 (36) Erigaisi, A (2701) – Fedoseev, V (2680)

13...♙f8 14.c3 d4 15.c4 b6 16.a3 ♘b7 17.♙d3 ♜e8 18.h3



Position after: 18.h3

18...♙c7

A sharp game lies ahead with chances for both sides. 0-1 (42) Durarbayli, V (2631) – Moussard, J (2654) Baku 2023.

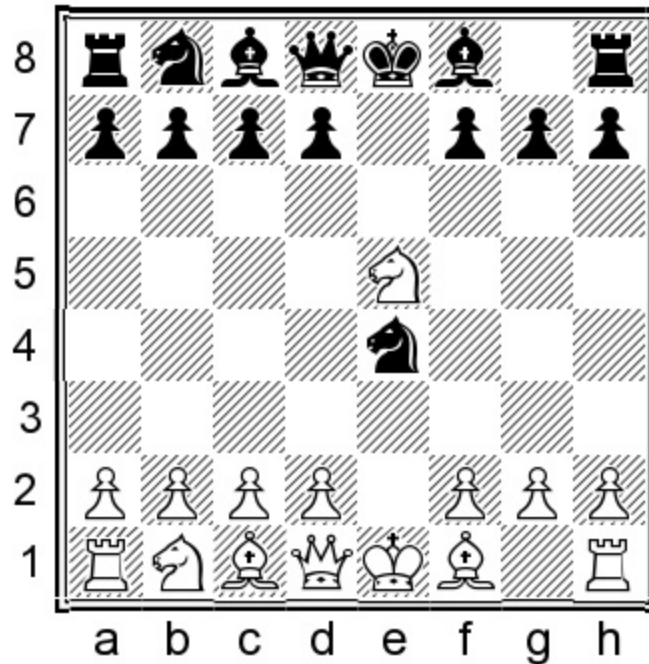
Part III

3.♘xe5 ♘xe4 – Bonus Option

Chapter 10

3...♘xe4 – Damiano Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 10 – 3...♘xe4 – Damiano Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4!? 4.♔e2 ♖e7 5.♗xe4 d6 6.d4 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘c6 8.♘c3

a) Early Alternatives

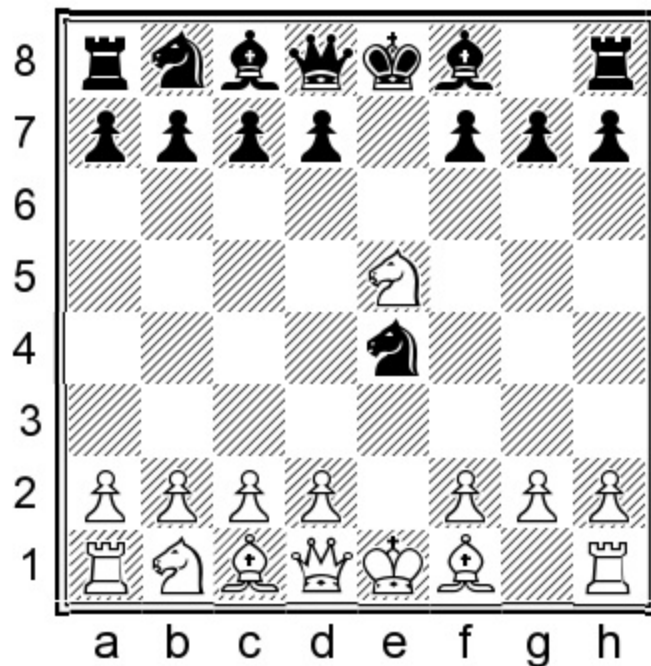
b) 8.♘c3 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5+ ♘xe5 10.♘b5

c) 8.♘c3 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5+ ♘xe5 10.♙f4

d) 8.♙b5

a) Early Alternatives

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4



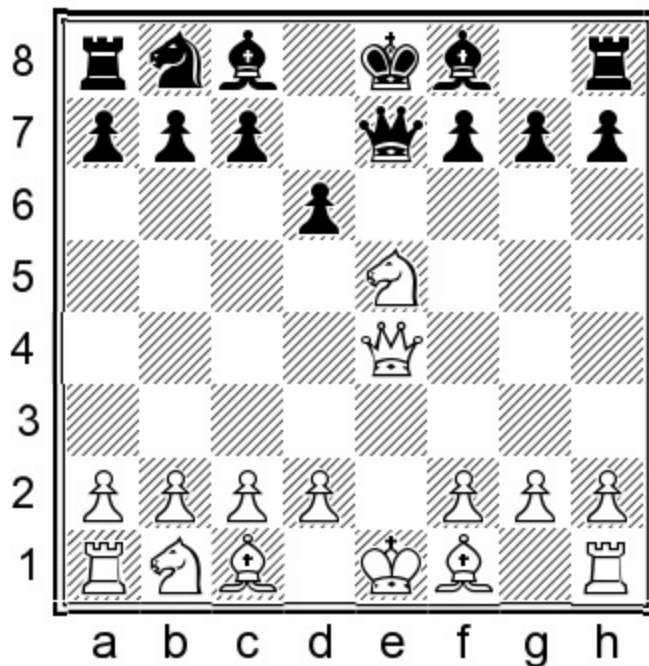
Position after: 3... Nxe4

I always thought that this line was unplayable and never even considered it as White, but the situation has changed. Not long ago, in 2024 and even a bit earlier, good grandmasters started to pay attention to this. It is too early to draw conclusions but it is fair to say at the moment that Black has managed to improve the line.

4. ♖e2

Critical for the line's evaluation but if White doesn't want this then the game may transpose to usual paths after 4.d4 d5 transposes to the Steinitz line, while 4...d6 transpose to other lines.

4... ♖e7 5. ♖xe4 d6

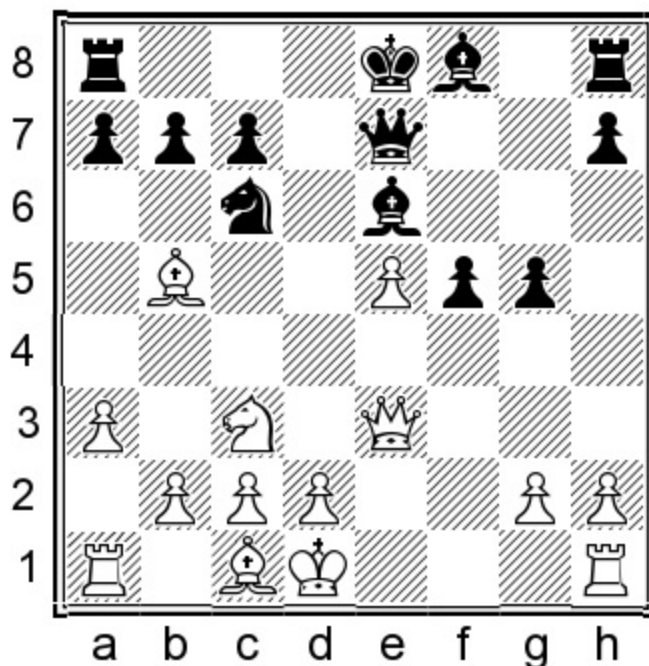


Position after: 5...d6

6.d4

The most logical but recently White tried another way to defend a knight:

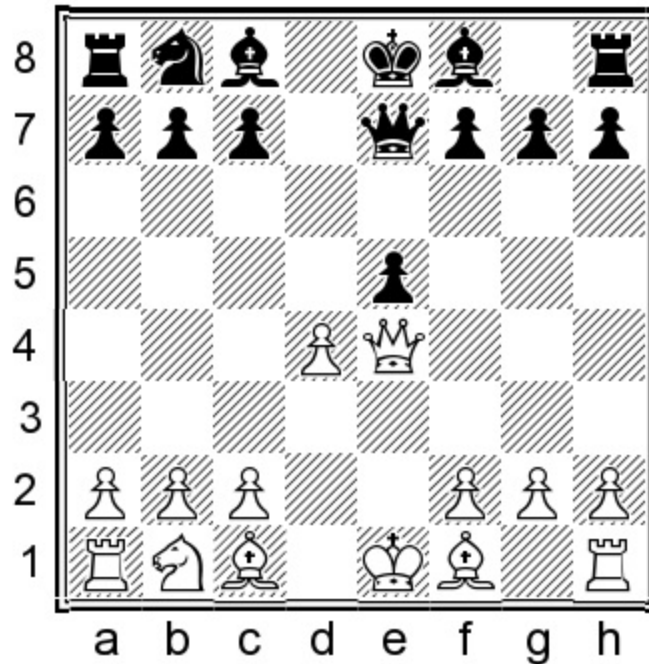
6.f4 dxe5 Perhaps it is more precise to first go 6...f5 and only after 7.♞e3 play 7...dxe5, leading to the same position but avoiding other possibilities for White. 7.fxg5 f5 8.♞e3 ♘c6 9.♗c3 ♘b4 10.♔d1 ♙e6 11.a3 ♘c6 12.♙b5 g5



Position after: 12...g5

13.d3 [13.d4 f4 14.♞e4 0-0-0 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♙d2 ♞d7 gives Black a very strong attack. 1-0 (35) Dyachuk, A (2233) – Silva Lucena, C (2323) chess.com 2023] 13...f4 14.♞e4 0-0-0 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♞xc6 ♙g4+ 17.♚d2 ♞xe5 18.♞e1 ♞c5 19.♞a6+ ♚b8 20.♜e4 ♞d5 In this game Black also achieved good attacking chances. ½ – ½ (59) Vachier-Lagrave, M (2731) – Nakamura, H (2788) Toronto 2023.

6...dxe5

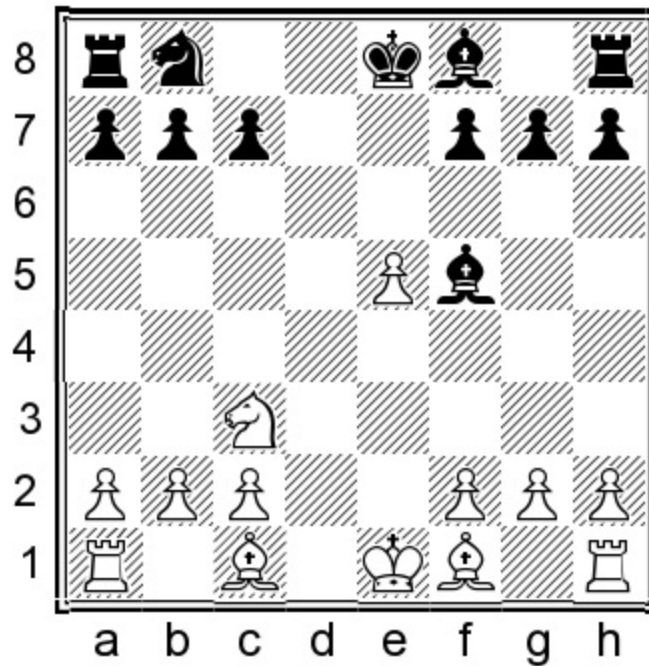


Position after: 6...dxe5

7.dxe5

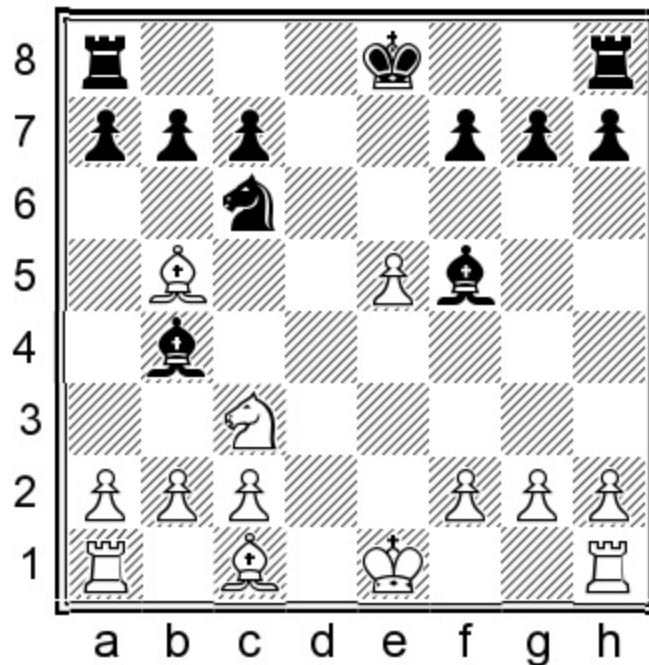
Taking with the queen is possible when we get another interesting endgame: 7.♞xe5 ♞xe5+ 8.dxe5 ♙f5

- A) 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.cxd3 ♜c6 11.♜c3 ♜xe5 gives Black better chances.
- B) 9.c3 ♜d7 10.♙f4 [10.f4 f6 11.exf6 ♜xf6 12.♜d2 0-0-0 13.♜f3 ♙c5 Black is better.] 10...0-0-0 11.♙e2 ♞e8 12.0-0 ♜xe5 Black has fine play.
- C) 9.♜c3 Best. Other moves are passive and allow Black to easily establish good play:



Position after: 9. Nc3

C1) Another possible approach is: 9... Nc6 10. Bb5 Bb4



Position after: 10... Bb4

11. Bb5 [11.0-0 Bxc3 12. bxc3 Bxc2 13. Bxc6+ bxc6 14. Be3 a5 15. Rfe1 Bf5=] 11... Bxc2 12. Rxc1 Bf5 13. a3 Ba5 14. b4 Bb6 15. Nd5 Rd8 16. Nxb6 cxb6 17. Bxc6+ bxc6 18. Rxc6 Rb5 19. f4 Rb3 20. Rxc3 Rxc3 21. Bxc3 Qe7 22. Qf2 Rb8 Although a pawn down it is clear that Black is out of danger.

C2) 9...♘d7 10.♙f4 ♘c5 11.0-0-0 ♙xf2 12.♘d5 ♙b6 13.♙c4 ♙e6 14.♖hf1 ♘f8 15.a3 ♘g6 16.♙g3 0-0-0 This position is OK for Black. ½ – ½ (37) Livshits, G (2408) – Cohen, O (2221) Israel 2007.

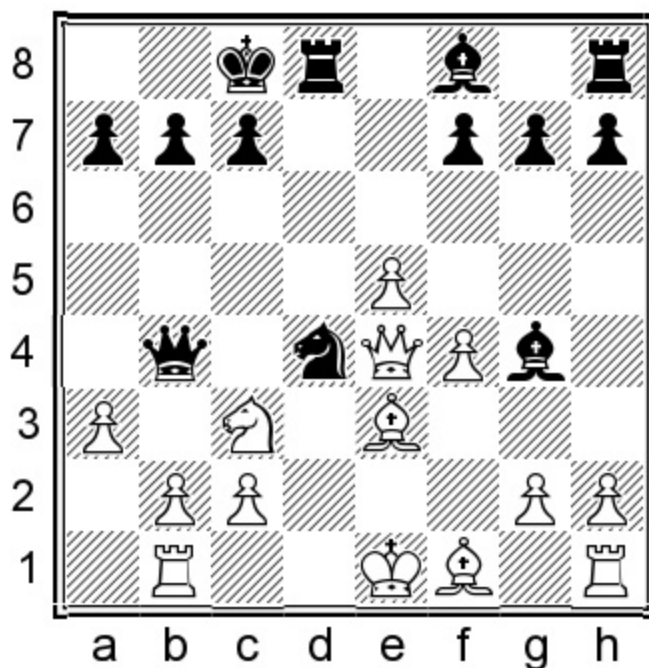
7...♘c6

White has two main options: either to give up the pawn and go for a good endgame, or to try to defend it.

A less-played line compared to the other two (which we will see shortly), but still interesting is:

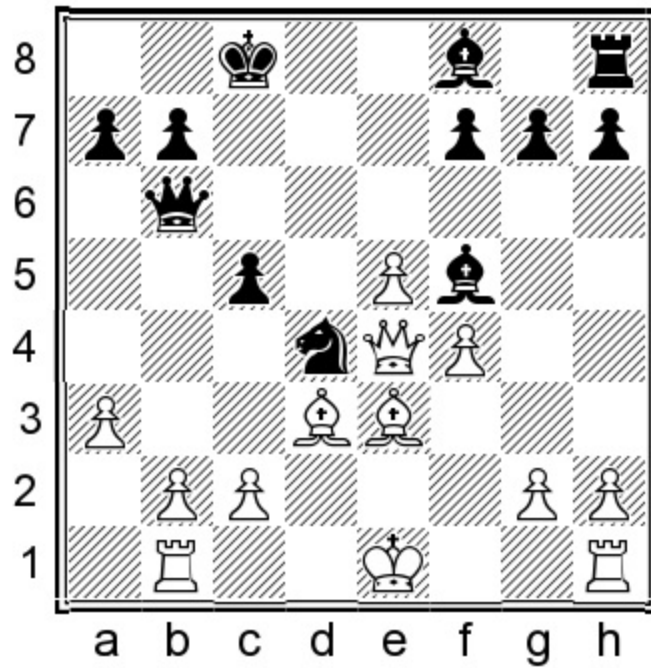
8.♙f4

Another interesting approach here is: 8.f4 ♙g4 9.♘c3 0-0-0 10.♙e3 ♖b4 11.♖b1 ♘d4 12.a3



Position after: 12.a3

12...♖b6! [12...♖c5 13.♙d3 g6 14.♙xd4 ♖xd4 15.♖e3 ♙h6 16.♘b5!± 1-0 (30) Meneses Gonzalez, K (2248) – Rodriguez Lorenzo, Y (2042) Las Palmas 2012] 13.♙d3 c5 14.♘d5 ♖xd5 15.♖xd5 ♙e6 16.♖e4 ♙f5 White can repeat or try for more with:



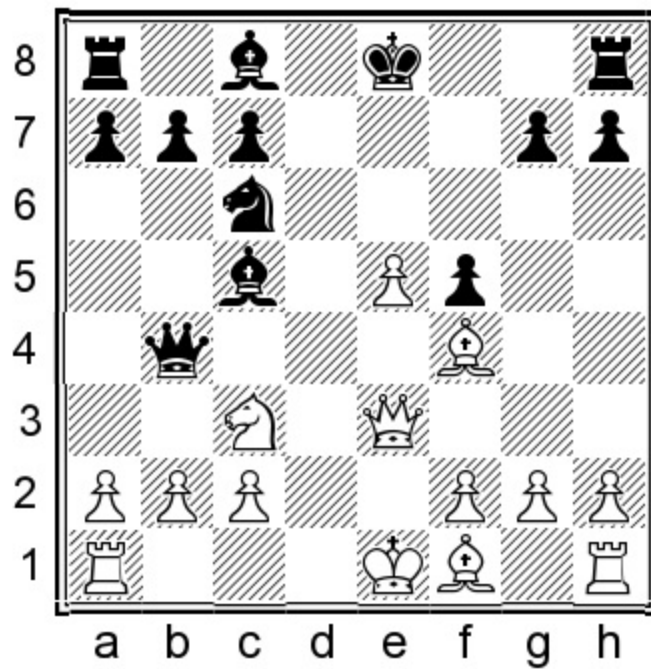
Position after: 16...♙f5

17.♚xf5+ ♘xf5 18.♙xf5+ ♖c7 19.0-0 ♙e7 with balanced play.

8...f5!?

This is a little-explored idea...

9.♚e3 ♚b4+ 10.♘c3 ♙c5



Position after: 10...♔c5

11.♚d2

Or: 11.♚g3 ♔d4! [11...♔e6 12.0-0-0± 0-1 (44) Liu, C (2241) – Orujov, F (2225) chess.com 2023]
12.0-0-0 ♔xc3 13.bxc3 ♚a3+ 14.♗b1 ♔e6 15.c4 ♚c5 16.♚xg7 ♚b4+ 17.♗c1 ♚a3+ 18.♗b1 ♚b4+
with a draw.

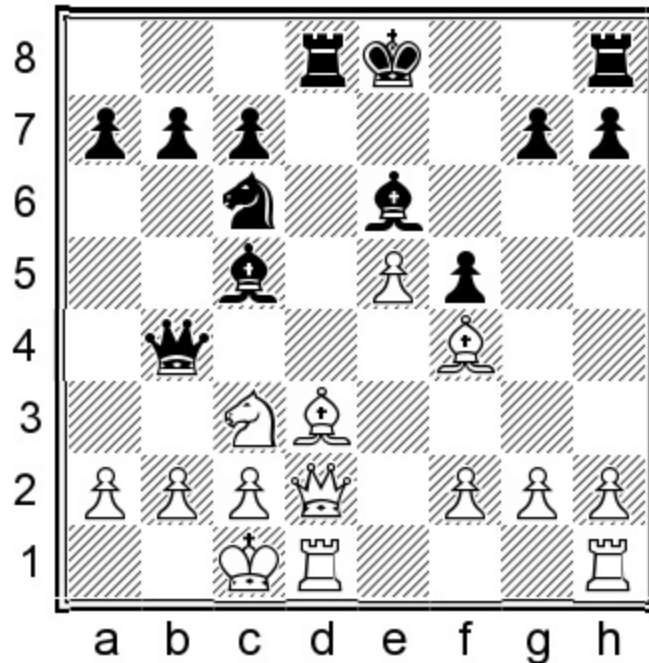
11...♔e6

Now, in both cases, Black has counterplay:

12.0-0-0

12.♔d3 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♚xb2 14.♘a4 ♚a3 15.♘xc5 ♚xc5 and the position is unclear.

12...♚d8 13.♔d3

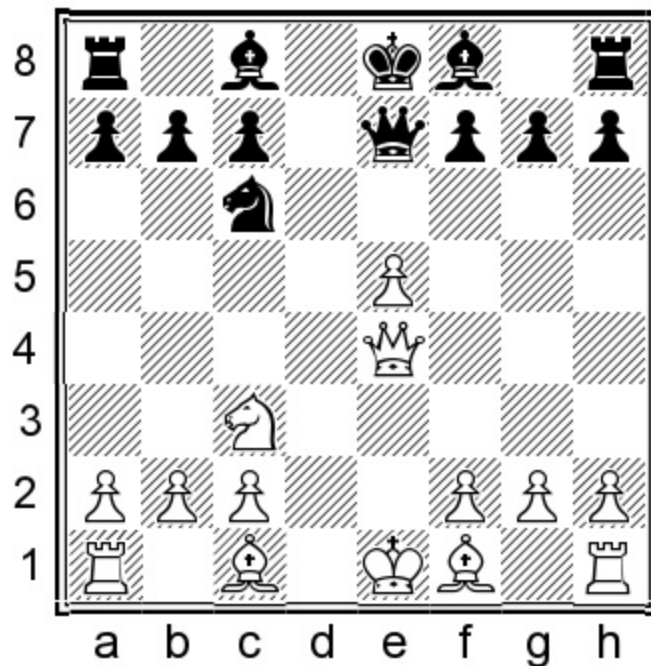


Position after: 13.♔d3

13...0-0=

b) 8.♘c3 ♚xe5 9.♚xe5+ ♘xe5 10.♘b5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4 4.♚e2 ♚e7 5.♚xe4 d6 6.d4 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘c6 8.♘c3



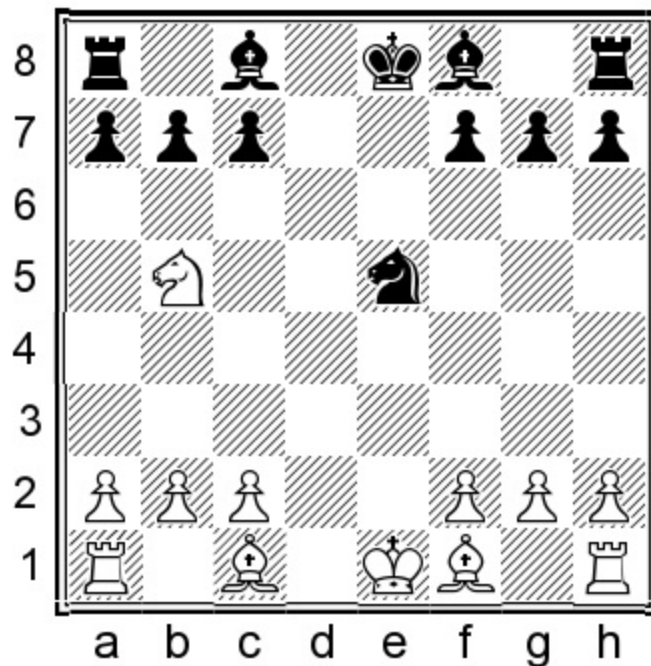
Position after: 8. ♘c3

This is a less forced, more positional approach. In the next file we will deal with the very sharp 8. ♙b5.

8... ♜xe5 9. ♞xe5+

9. ♙f4 ♜xe4+ 10. ♘xe4 ♙f5 11. ♙d3 0-0-0 12. 0-0-0 ♙g6 13. ♘g5 ♙d6 14. ♙g3 ♙xg3 15. hxg3 h6 16. ♙xg6 ♜xd1+ 17. ♜xd1 fxg6 18. ♘e4 b6 with an equal endgame. ½ – ½ (35) Roganovic, M (2434) – Bryakin, M (2438) Bajina Basta 2024.

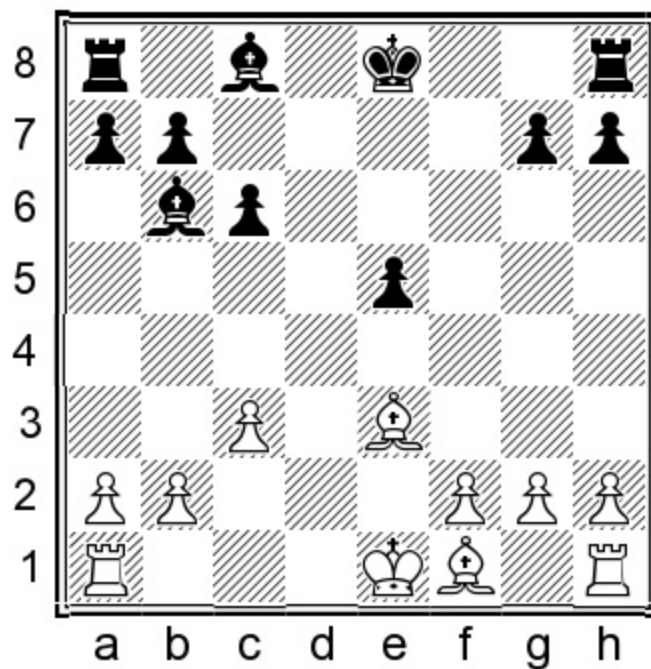
9... ♘xe5 10. ♘b5



Position after: 10. ♖b5

10... ♘b4+ 11. ♙d2

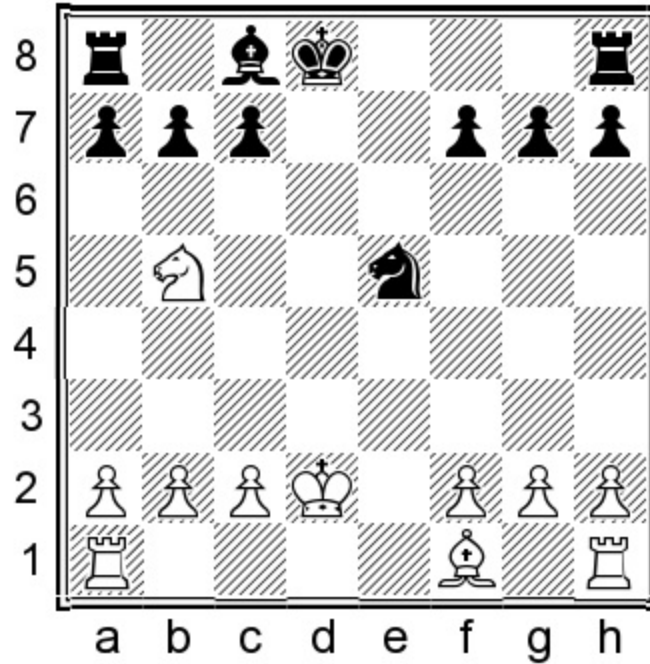
11. c3 ♙a5 12. ♙f4 f6 13. ♗a3 c6 14. ♗c4 ♙c7 15. ♗xe5 fxe5 16. ♙e3 ♙b6



Position after: 16... ♙b6

17. ♙c4 ♙xe3 18. fxe3 ♜f8 19. ♜f1 ♜f6 20. ♜d1 ♙g4 21. ♜d2 ♔e7 Black has no problems whatsoever. 0-1 (55) Ljepic, A (2326) – Bryakin, M (2438) Bajina Basta 2024.

11...♙xd2+ 12.♔xd2 ♕d8



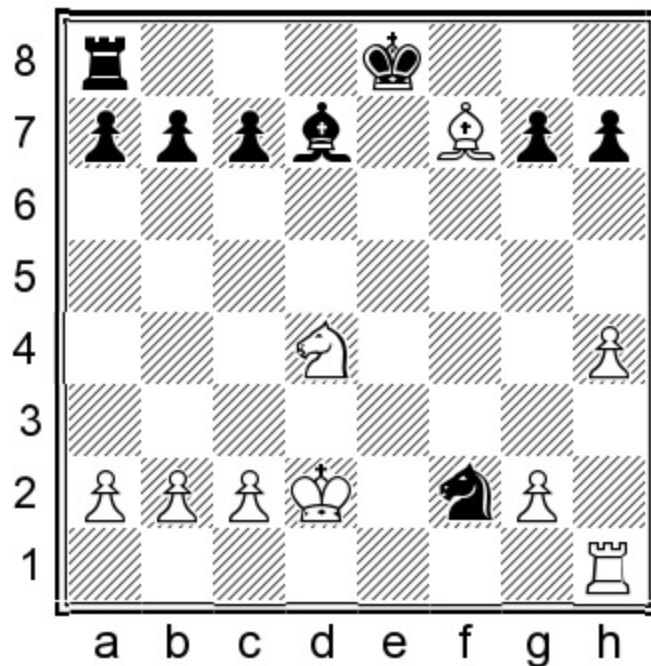
Position after: 12... ♕d8

An interesting endgame: White has some momentum but is it enough to create an initiative? Let's see what is happening...

13.♖e1

The most challenging response.

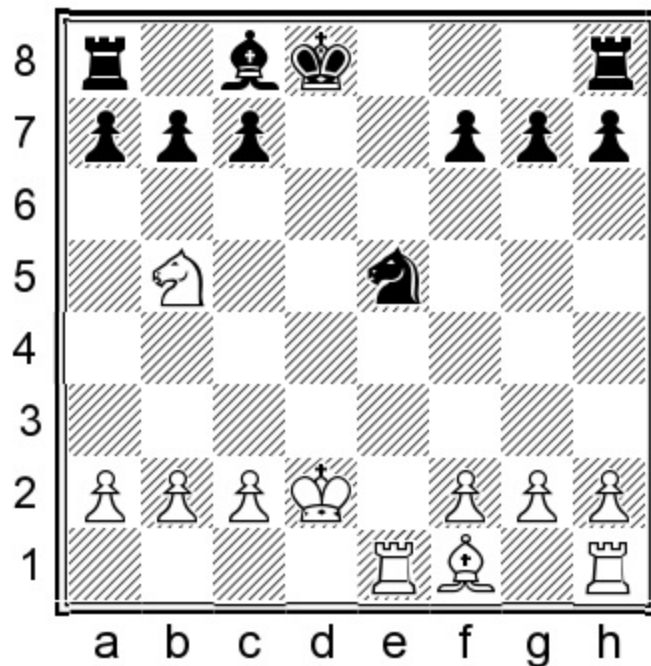
A) 13.♘d4 ♙d7 14.♖e1 ♖e8 15.h4 ♘g4 16.♙c4 ♘xf2 17.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 18.♙xf7+!!



Position after: 18. ♕xf7+!!

18...♔xf7 19.♖f1 c5 20.♗xf2+ ♕e7 21.♘f3 ♖f8 Black is fine. 0-1 (62) Durarbayli, V (2626) – Aronian, L (2729) chess.com 2024.

B) 13.f4 ♘g4 14.♙c4 ♙d7 15.♘c3 f5 16.♙d5 c6 17.♙f3 ♘f6= ½ – ½ (17) Vachier-Lagrave, M (2731) – Nakamura, H (2788) Toronto 2023.



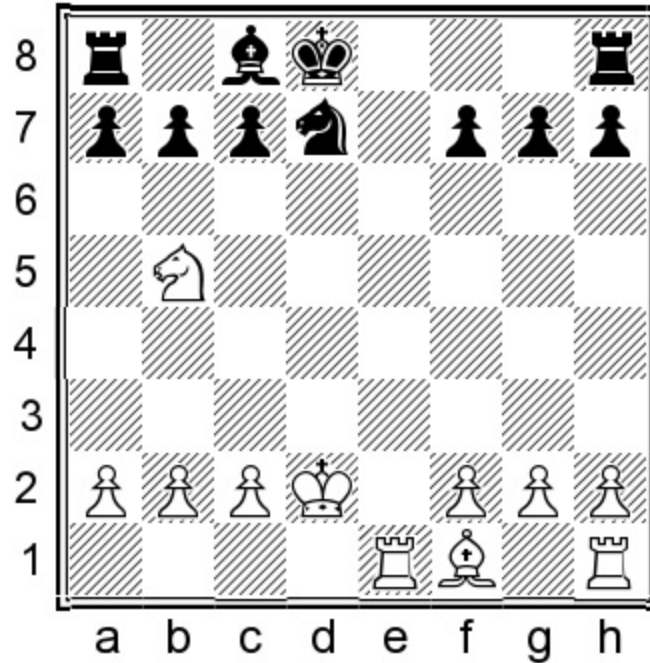
Position after: 13. ♖e1

13...f6

Probably best.

A) 13...♖g4 14.f3 ♘f6 15.♙c4 a6 16.♘c3 ♜f8 17.a4 ♙d7 18.a5 ♙c6 19.♚c1 gives White some edge. 1-0 (36) Kovalev, V (2539) – Chassard, C (2292) chess.com 2024.

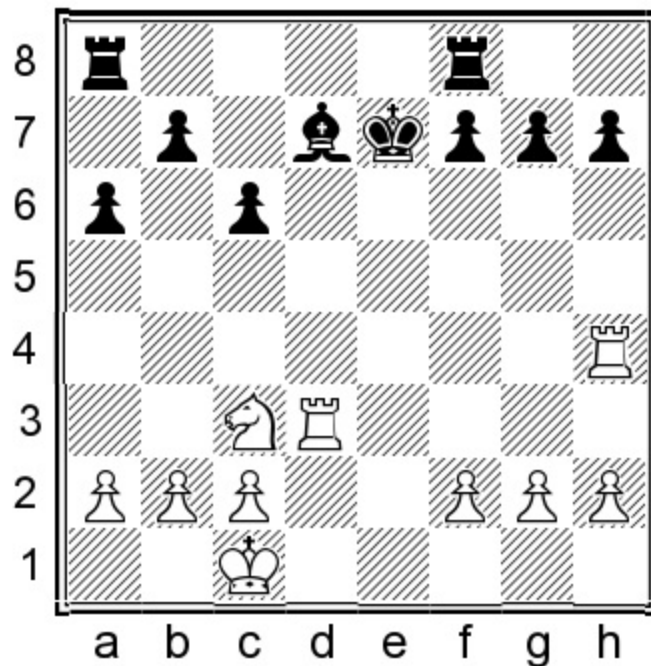
B) 13...♘d7



Position after: 13...♘d7

14.♙c4! [14.♘d4 ♘b6 15.h4 ♙d7 16.h5 h6 17.♞h4 ♞e8 18.♞he4 ♞xe4 19.♞xe4 ♘c8 20.♞e5 ♘d6 21.b4 f6 22.♞e3 a5 23.b5 c5 24.bxc6 bxc6 A good game in which Black has equalized. 1-0 (51) Durarbayli, V (2618) – Safarli, E (2618) Baku 2023]

B1) 14...♜f8 15.♚c1 ♘b6 16.♞e4 a6 [16...♙d7!? 17.♞d1↑] 17.♞d1+ ♙d7 18.♘c3 c6 19.♞d3 ♘xc4 20.♞xc4 ♚e7 21.♞h4



Position after: 21. Rf4

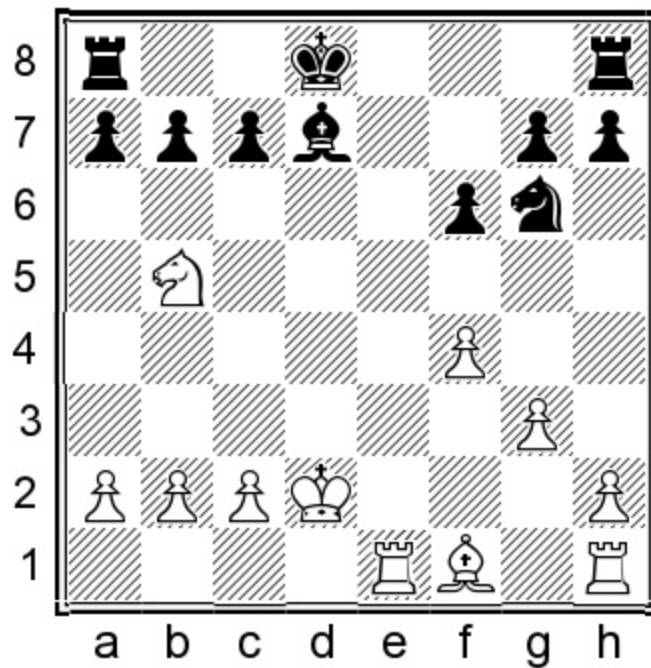
21...h6 22. Rg3 Rg8 23. Na4 Re6 24. Nc5 b6 25. Nxe6 fxe6 26. Qd1 c5 27. Qe2 Rf8 This is a defensible, albeit somewhat passive, endgame. ½ – ½ (49) Marez, S (2391) – Martin Martin, O (2368) ICCF email 2014.

B2) 14... Nb6 15. Qxf7 Rf8 16. Qh5 c6 17. Nd6 Rxf2+ 18. Qc1 Rxc2 19. Rhf1 Qc7 20. Ne8+ Qb8 21. Rf7↑ ½ – ½ (34) Huzita, S (2366) – Vossenkuhl, J (2361) ICCF 2022.

14.f4 Ng6

The point is to gain a tempo so that Black can quickly consolidate.

15.g3 Qd7

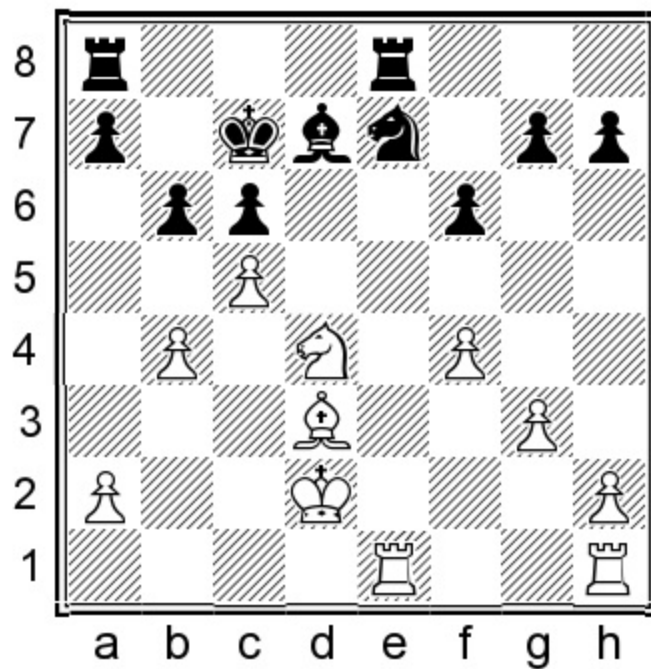


Position after: 15...♙d7

16.h4

The most aggressive plan.

16.♘d4 ♜e8 17.♙d3 c6 18.c4 ♚c7 19.c5 b6 20.b4 ♞e7

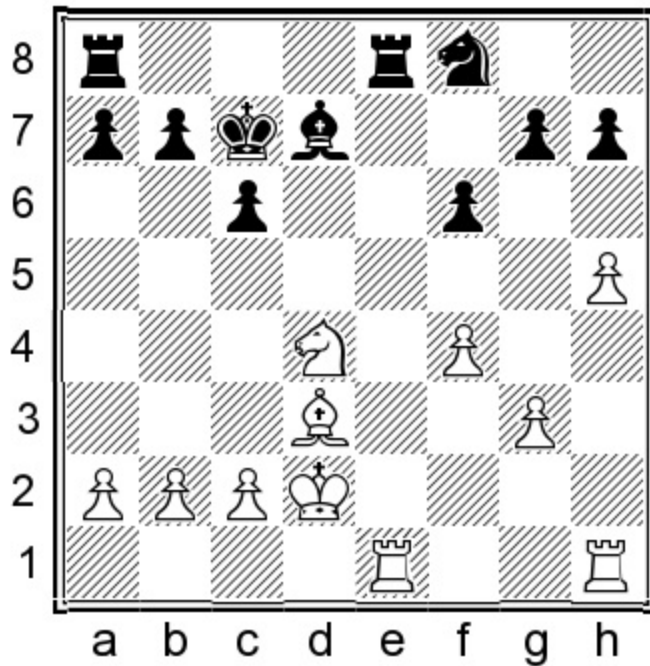


Position after: 20...♞e7

21.♜e4 [21.♙xh7 a5 22.a3 g6] 21...♞d5 22.a3 bxc5 23.bxc5 g6 24.♜he1 ♜ab8 25.♜xe8 ♜xe8

26.♖xe8 ♜xe8 27.f5 ♔d7 28.♞e4 ♚e7 29.fxg6 ♜xg6 30.♗e3 ♜xe4 31.♗xe4 ♗e8 32.h3 It seems that Black holds this endgame more or less without many difficulties. ½-½ (32) Ljubicic, I (2606) – Cruzado Dueñas, C (2599) ICCF 2013.

16...c6 17.♘d4 ♜e8 18.♞d3 ♗c7 19.h5 ♚f8

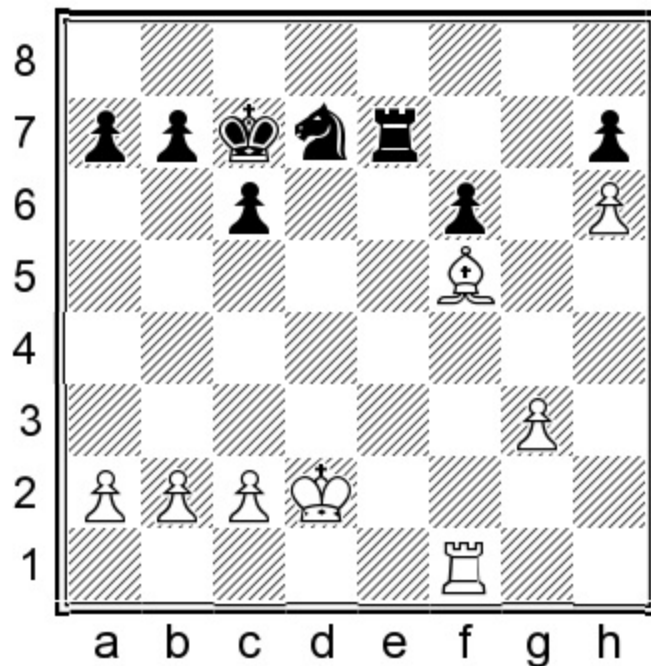


Position after: 19...♚f8

White has options here:

20.c4

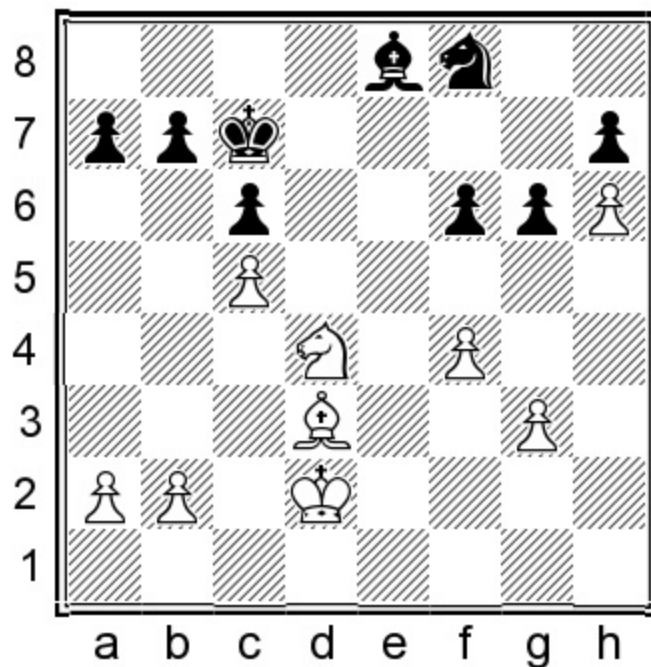
20.h6 g6 21.f5 gxh5 22.♖xe8 ♜xe8 23.♘xf5 ♞xf5 24.♞xf5 ♜e7 25.♖f1 ♚d7!



Position after: 25...♞d7!

26.♞f4 ♞e5 Despite having pressure against h7, with a strong knight on e5 Black can defend. ½ – ½ (33) Cvek, R (2451) – Mrkvicka, J (2488) ICCF 2019.

20...♞xe1 21.♞xe1 ♞e8 22.h6 g6 23.♞xe8 ♞xe8 24.c5



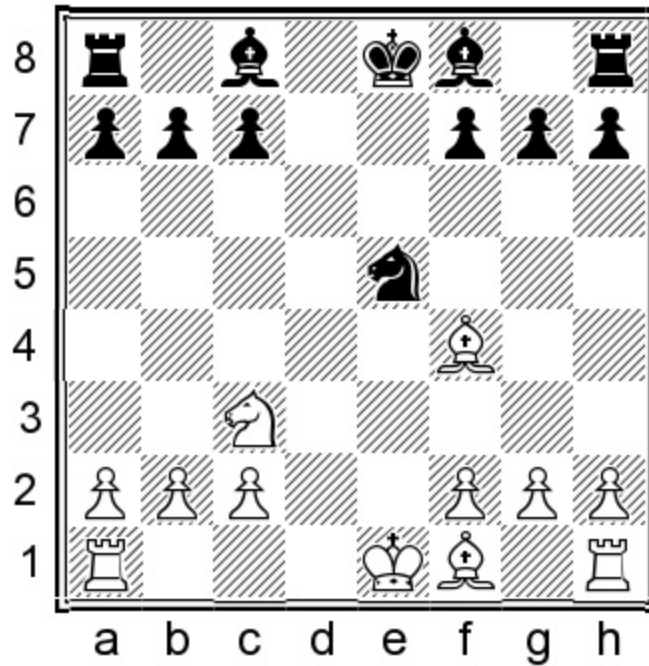
Position after: 24.c5

24...♞f7 25.♞c3 f5 26.♞f3 ♞d7 27.♞g5 ♞g8 28.♞c4 ♞xc4 29.♞xc4 ♞f6 30.♞d4 ♞d7

Again, Black is in time to cover all potential problems. ½-½ (35) Zhak, B (2614) – Cruzado Dueñas, C (2599) ICCF 2013.

c) 8.♘c3 ♚xe5 9.♚xe5+ ♜xe5 10.♞f4

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 ♘xe4 4.♚e2 ♚e7 5.♚xe4 d6 6.d4 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♚xe5 9.♚xe5+ ♜xe5 10.♞f4

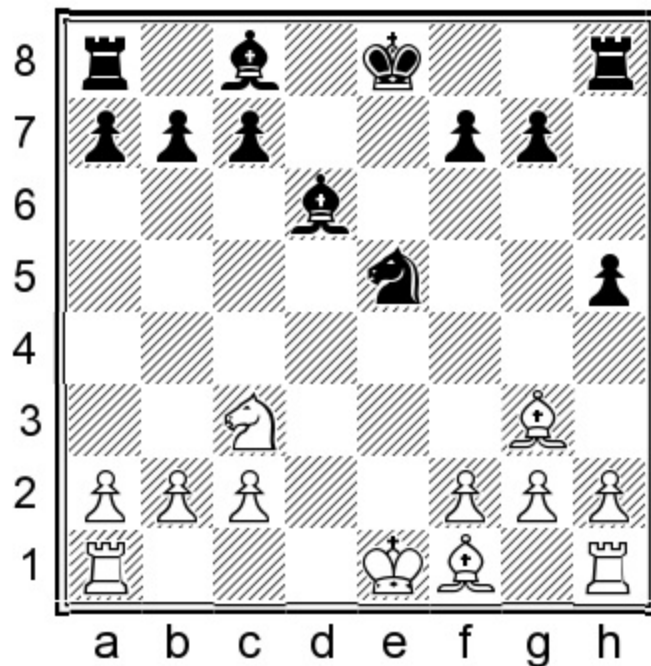


Position after: 10.♞f4

10...f6

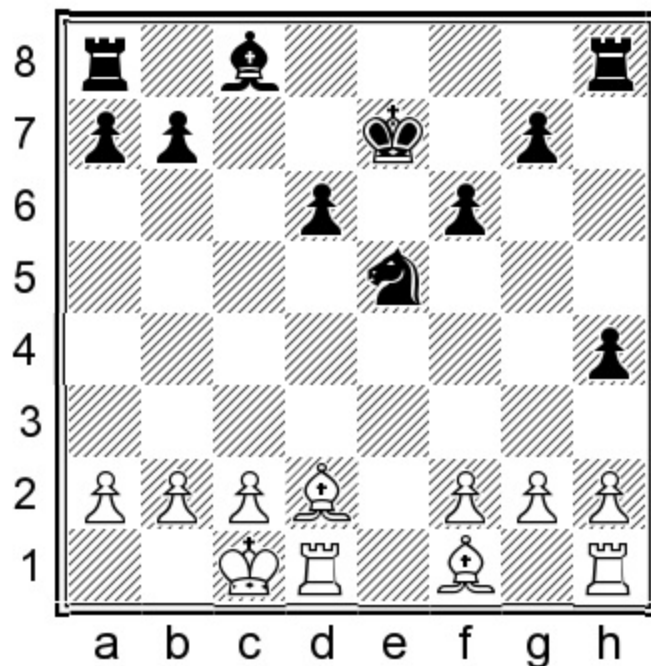
The latest twist here.

Another line is: 10...♞d6 11.♞g3 h5



Position after: 11...h5

12.0-0-0 [White can go for the bishop pair at once with: 12.♘b5 h4 13.♘xd6+ cxd6 14.♙f4 h3 15.0-0-0 ♖e7 16.♞e1 f6 17.♙d2 g5 This is not so clear. ½ – ½ (58) Karjakin, S (2750) – Inarkiev, E (2650) Moscow 2024] 12...f6 13.♘b5 h4 14.♙f4 ♖e7 15.♘xd6 cxd6 16.♙d2!



Position after: 16.♙d2!

Transferring the bishop to b4. White creates pressure and now: 16...♙f5! [16...h3 17.♙b4±; 16...♙g4 17.f3 ♙f5 18.♙b4 ♞hd8 19.♙e2 ♞ac8 20.c3 ♖f7 21.♙xd6± 1-0 (54) Shevchenko, K (2656) – Vallejo

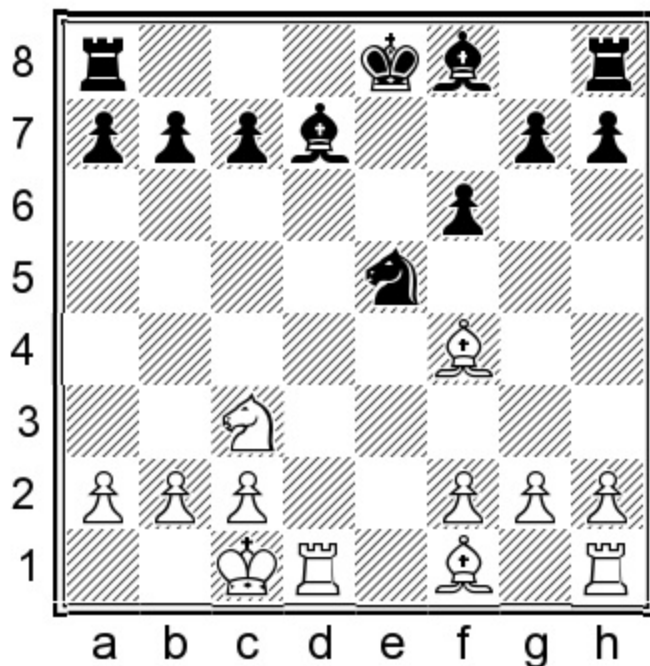
Pons, F (2653) Melilla 2024] 17.♙b4 ♖ac8 18.c3 ♜hd8 19.♙e2 g5 20.♜he1 ♔e6



Position after: 20...♔e6

This seems to be the best defence for Black. The position is solid, for instance, after... 21.f3 d5 22.g3 hxg3 23.hxg3 ♔f7 we can comfortably say that the game is equal.

11.0-0-0 ♙d7

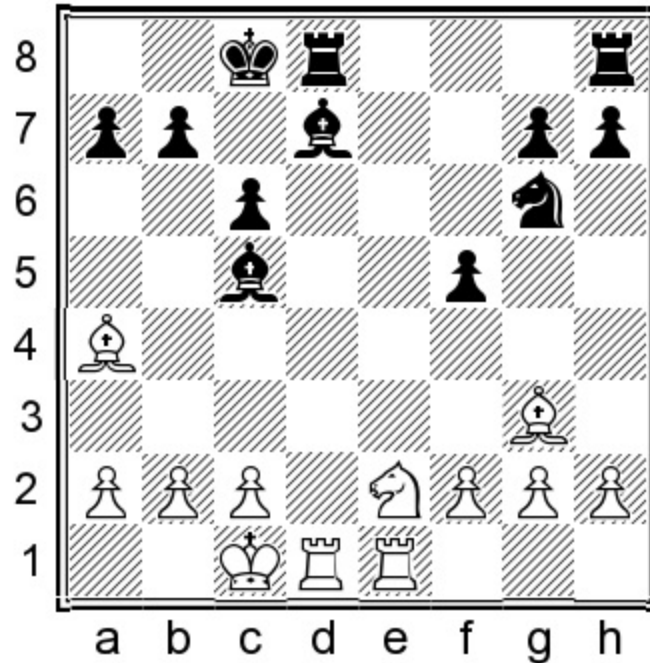


Position after: 11...♙d7

12. ♖b5

A critical position but two important games (from the recent Olympiad and USA championships) saw both players refrain from it and go for the less tactical:

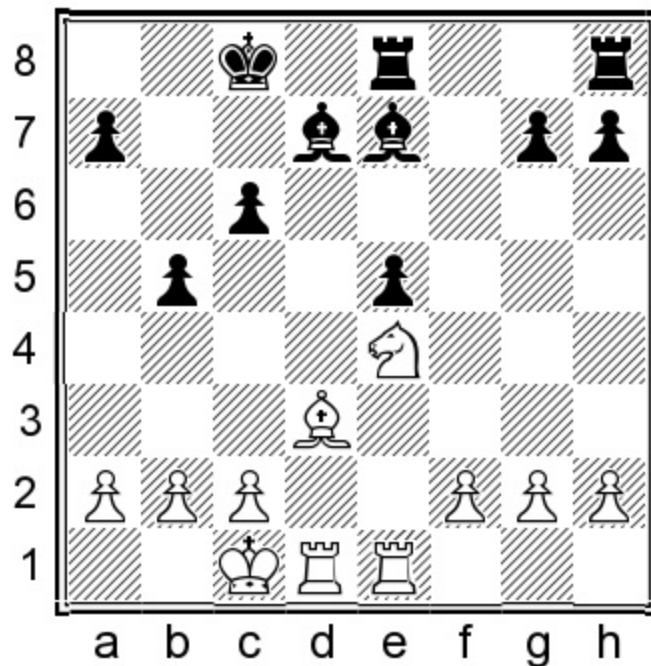
A) 12. ♖b5 c6 13. ♖a4 0-0-0 14. ♖he1 ♗g6 15. ♖g3 f5! 16. ♗e2 ♖c5



Position after: 16... ♖c5

17. ♖b3 ♜de8 18. ♖f7 ♜e7 19. ♖xg6 hxg6 20. ♗f4 ♜xe1 21. ♜xe1 g5 Black has a fine endgame. ½ – ½
(30) Aronian, L (2729) – Bu Xiangzhi (2693) Budapest 2024.

B) 12. ♖xe5 fxe5 13. ♖b5 c6 14. ♖he1 0-0-0 15. ♖c4 b5 16. ♖d3 ♜e8 17. ♗e4 ♖e7

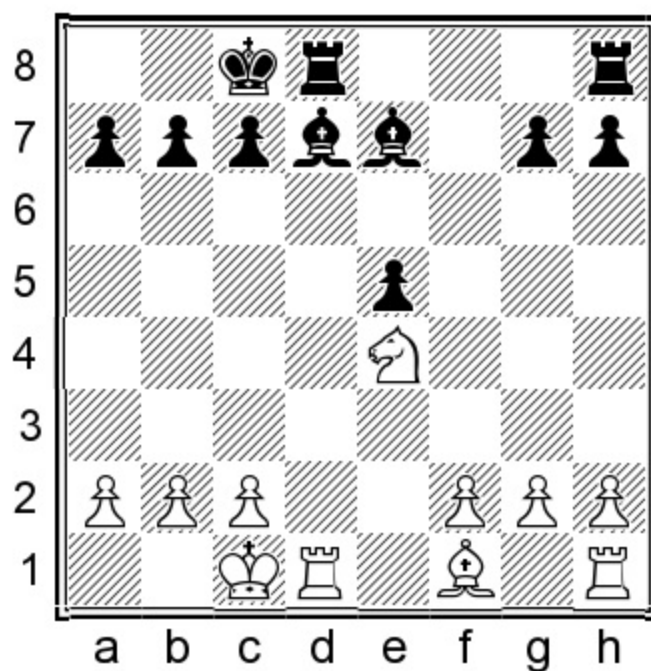


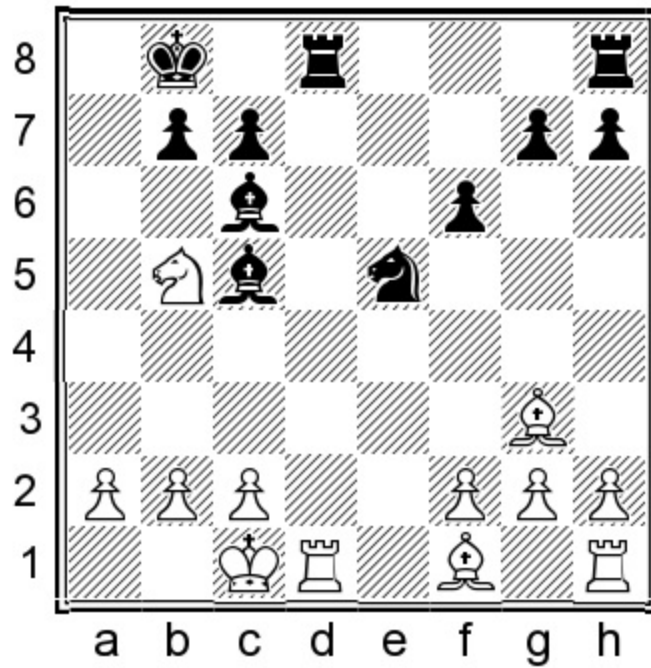
Position after: 17...♙e7

The two bishops are OK here, probably offering enough to hold the balance... 18.♘d2 ♕f6 19.h3 ♖c7 20.♗b1 h5 21.♞e2 g5 22.♙e4 ♞hf8 23.c4 bxc4 24.♙xc4 ♙e7 The game is equal. ½ – ½ (42) Niemann, H (2733) – So, W (2751) Saint Louis 2024.

12...0-0-0 13.♘xa7+

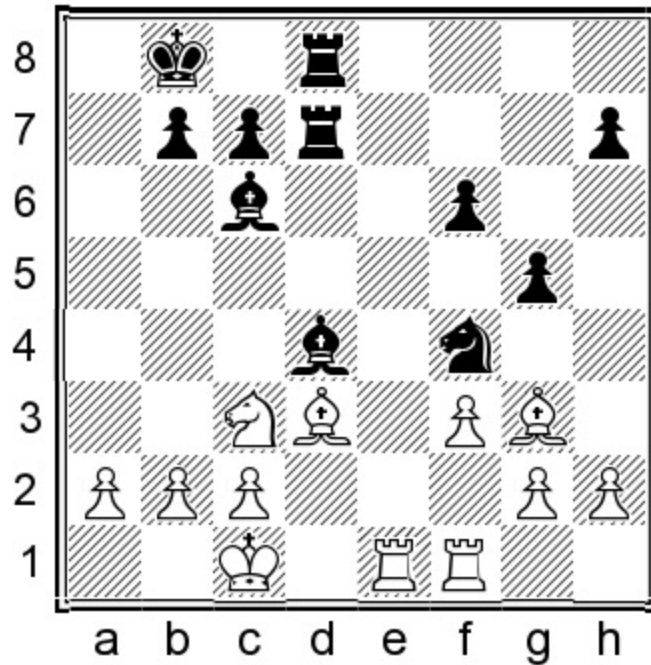
13.♙xe5 fxe5 14.♘c3 ♙c5 15.♙e4 ♙e7!





Position after: 15...Kc6

16.Ke1 [16.Kxd8+ Kxd8 17.Nc3 Qd4 18.Nd1 h5] 16...Kd7 17.Nc3 Khd8 18.f3 Qd4 19.Qe2 g5
20.Khf1 Ng6 21.Qd3 Nf4



Position after: 21...Nf4

22.Qxf4 gxf4 23.Qb1 Kg8 24.Ke2 Kg5 Black has compensation.

15...g5 16.Qg3

24.♔b1 c6 25.a4 ♕c7 This is just a tiny edge for White. 0-1 (89) Dominguez Perez, L (2739) – Riehle, M (2368) chess.com 2023.

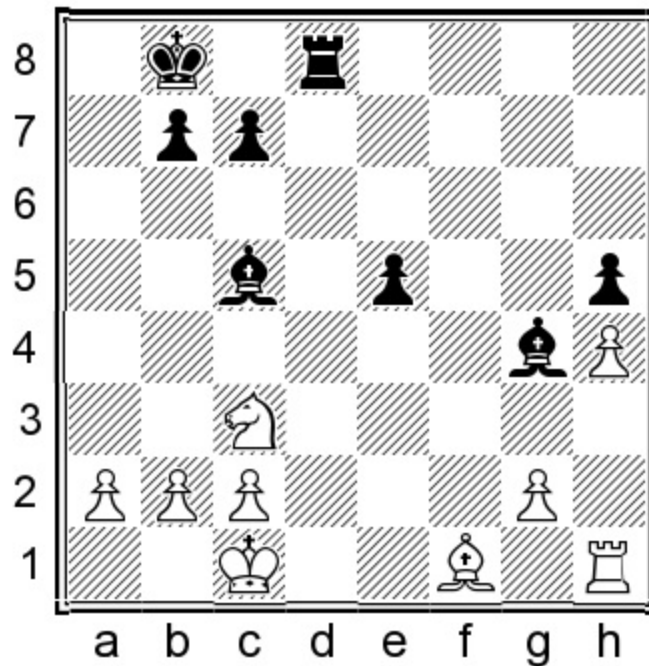
17.♖c3

17.h4 g4 18.f4 ♙e3+ 19.♔b1 ♙c6! 20.♖c3 ♖g6

17...♗he8 18.h4

18.♙e2 h4 19.♙xe5 ♗xe5

18...g4 19.fxg4 ♙xg4 20.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 21.♙xe5 fxe5



Position after: 21...fxe5

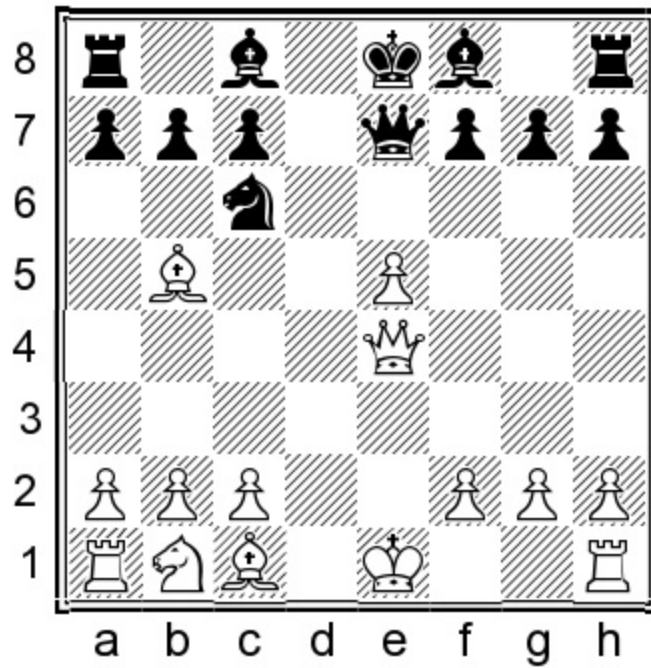
22.♙d3 ♗g8 23.♖e4 ♙e7 24.g3 ♙f5 25.♗e1 ♙xe4 26.♗xe4 ♗xg3 27.♗xe5 ♙xh4 28.♗xh5 ♙g5+ 29.♔d1 c6

This is drawn.

d) 8.♙b5

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖f6 3.♖xe5 ♖xe4 4.♗e2 ♗e7 5.♗xe4 d6 6.d4 dxе5 7.dxe5 ♖c6 8.♙b5

The idea is to keep the pawn for as long as possible.

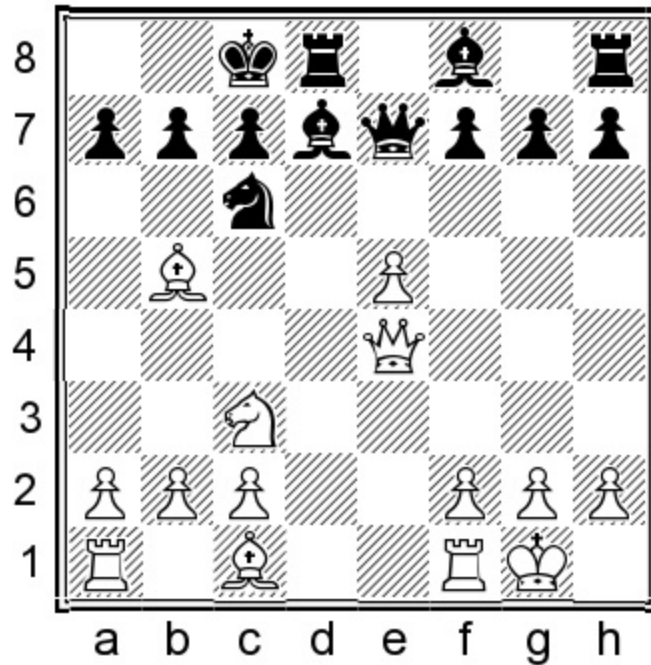


Position after: 8. ♙b5

8...♙d7 9. ♘c3

Another way is to castle as soon as possible:

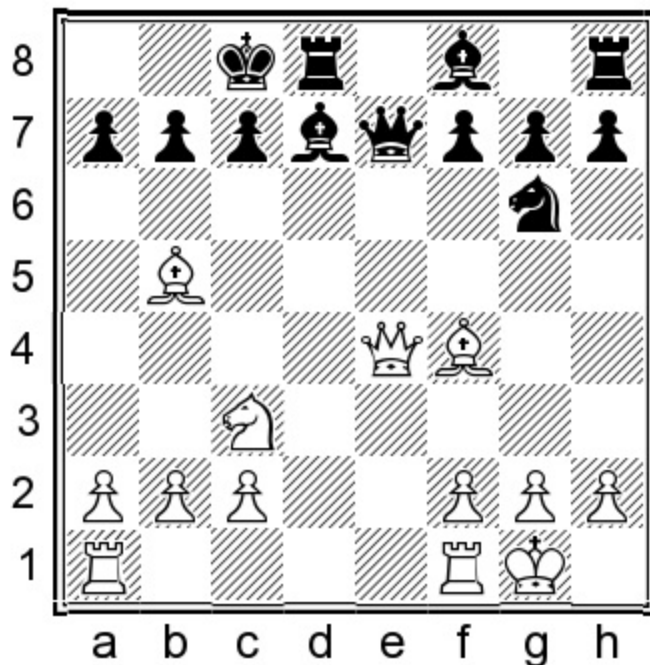
9.0-0 0-0-0 10. ♘c3



Position after: 10. ♘c3

A) 10...a6!? 11. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 12. ♚e3 ♚b4 13. ♚g3 h5 14. a3 ♚c4 15. ♙g5 f6 16. exf6 gxf6 17. ♚f4 ♚xf4

B) 10...♖xe5 11.♙e3 [11.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 12.♚g4 h5 13.♚h3 ♚b4 14.♚f5 ♙c5 15.♜e4 ♞de8 16.♜xc5 ♚xc5 17.♚xc5 ♜xc5 18.♙e3 ♜e6 We have reached an equal endgame. ½ – ½ (35) Akopian, V (2583) – Khachiyan, M (2414) Saint Louis 2024; 11.♙f4 ♜g6!



Position after: 11...♜g6!

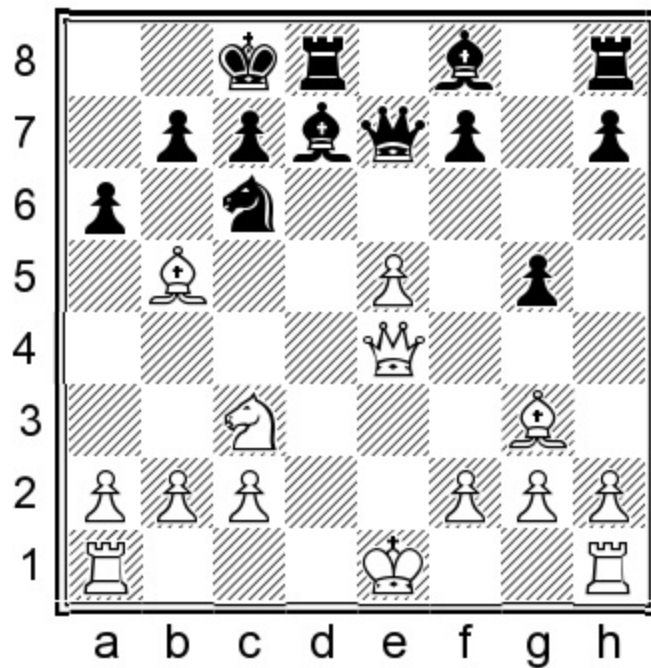
12.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 13.♚a4 ♜xf4 14.♚xf4 ♚b4 Black is fine.] 11...♜c6 [11...a6 12.♜d5 ♚e8 13.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 14.♚c4 ♙d6 15.♙a7 ♚f8 16.♞fe1 ♞e8 17.♙d4 f6 18.a4 ♜b8 19.a5 ♚f7 20.♜b6 ♚xc4 21.♜xc4 ♙b4 22.c3 ♙c5 23.♙e3 ½ – ½ (23) Engelhardt, G (2380) – Viksna, T (2480) ICCF corr 2002] 12.♚f3 a6 13.♙a4 ♜e5 14.♚g3 ♙xa4 15.♜xa4 ♚e6 Black is fine.

9...0-0-0 10.♙f4

Defending the pawn. This is yet another important moment here.

10.f4 f5 11.♚e3 g5 12.♚f2 a6 gives Black good play.

10...g5 11.♙g3 a6



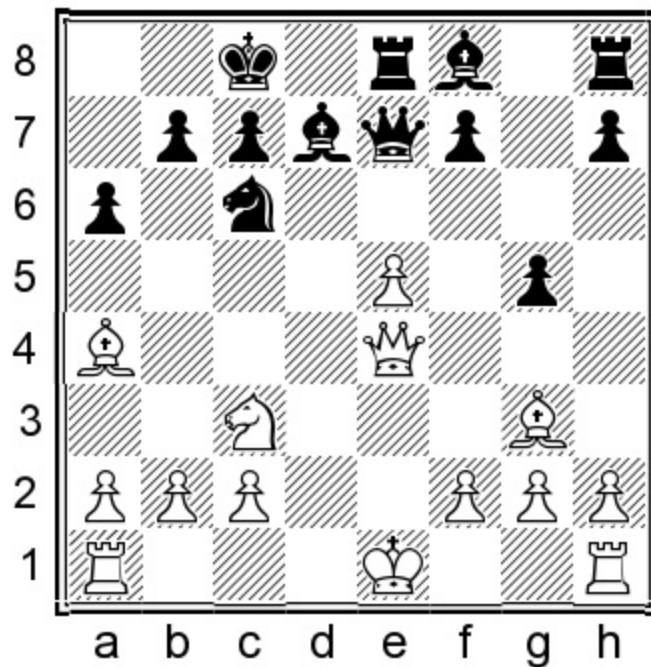
Position after: 11...a6

We are entering very sharp positions. White can place his bishop on two squares:

12.♘c4

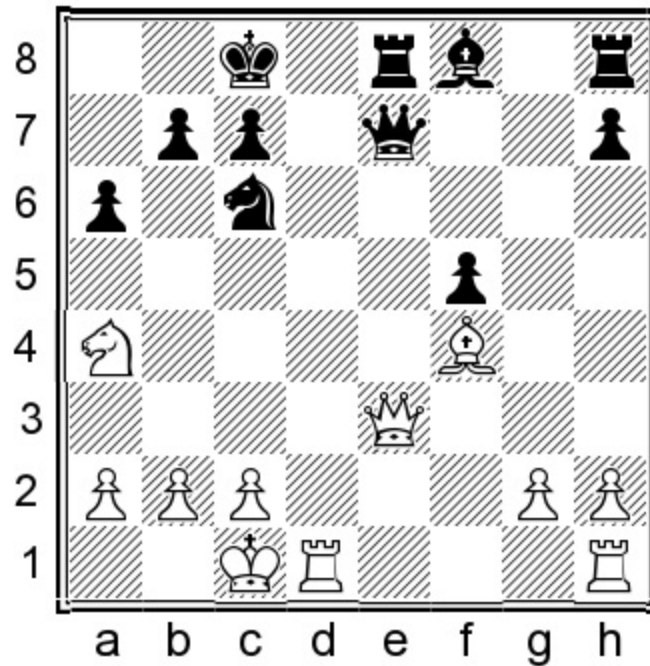
The sharper of the two options. Alternatively:

12.♘a4 ♜e8



Position after: 12...♜e8

13.♙e3 [13.0-0-0 f5 14.♙c4 f4 15.♘d5 ♜xe5 Black is winning. 0-1 (34) Wojtaszek, R (2686) – Riehle, M (2358) chess.com 2022] 13...f5 14.f4 gxf4 15.♙xf4 ♘xe5 16.0-0-0 ♙xa4 17.♘xa4 ♘c6

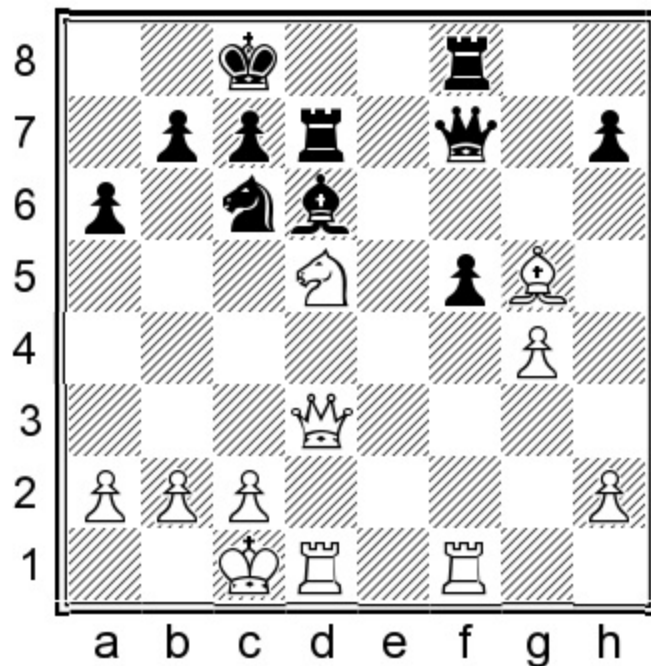


Position after: 17...♘c6

Now White has another two ideas but it seems that Black is ready for both:

A) 18.♙xe7 ♘xe7 19.♞de1 ♙g7 20.♘c5 ♘g6 21.♙d2 h5 22.h3 ♙d4 23.♘d3 ♞e4 24.♞hf1 ♘h4 25.♞f4 ♞xf4 26.♘xf4 ♞g8 27.♞e2 ♙c5 28.♙d1 b6 29.♙e1 ♙d6 30.♙xh4 ♙xf4 Another good game in which Black holds the balance. ½ – ½ (33) Begliy, M (2394) – Remis Fernandez, J (2421) ICCF email 2012.

B) 18.♙d3 ♙f7 19.♘c3 ♞d8 20.♘d5 ♙d6 21.♙g5 ♞d7 22.♞hf1 ♞f8 23.g4



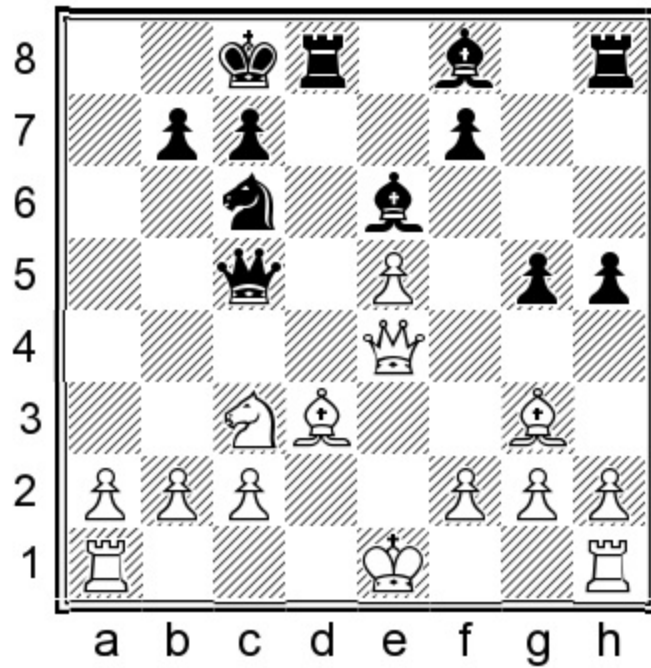
Position after: 23.g4

23...♖g6 24.h4 ♘e5 25.♗d4 ♔b8 26.gxf5 ♜xf5 27.♞f6 ♝f7 28.♞xf5 ♗xf5 29.♞e8 ♞c6 30.♞xd6 ♞xd4 31.♞xf5 Another fantastic game in which Black seriously challenges White's attempts to get any advantage in this line. ½-½ (31) Neto, H (2615) – Cruzado Dueñas, C (2602) ICCF 2012.

12...♙e6 13.♙xa6

13.0-0 h5

13...♗c5 14.♙d3 h5

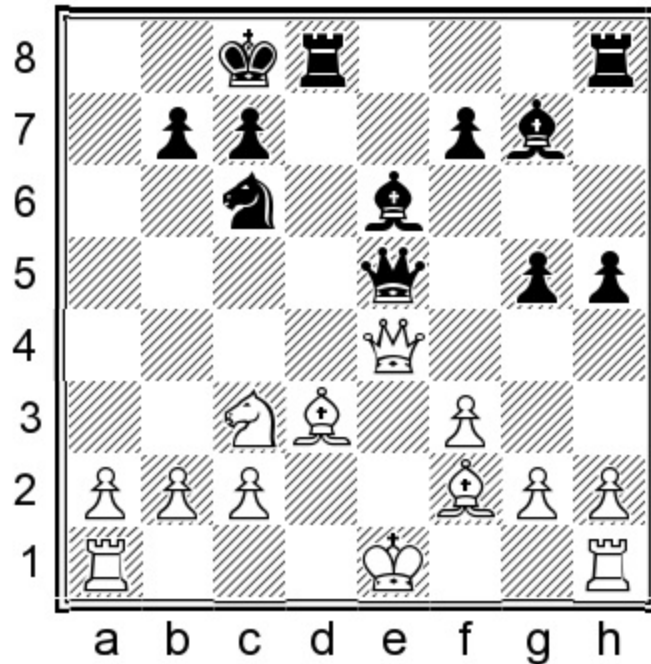


Position after: 14...h5

15.h3

White can play it safe with:

15.f3 ♘g7 16.♘f2 ♚xe5



Position after: 16...♚xe5

It seems that Black again has enough play here: 17.♚xe5 [17.0-0 ♚xe4 18.♘xe4 ♘e5] 17...♘xe5

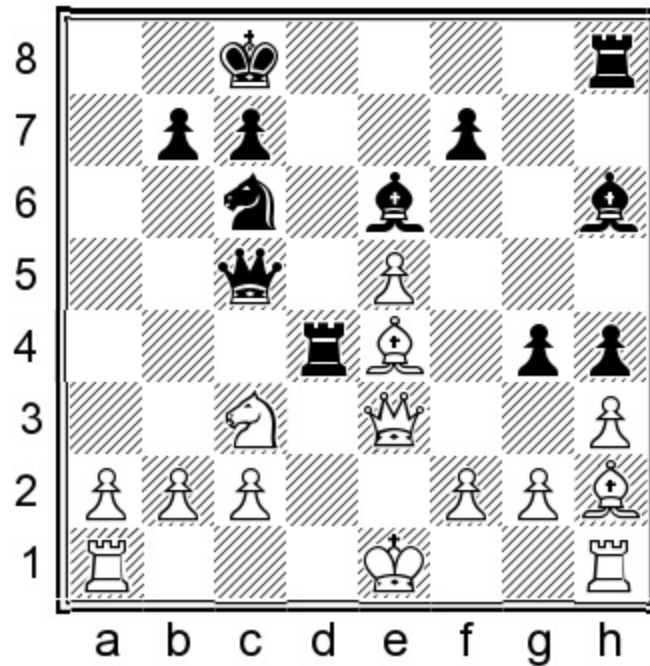
18.0-0-0 ♖xd3+ 19.♗xd3 ♗xd3 20.cxd3 The bishop pair and active play compensates for the pawn. ½ – ½ (20) Mezera, L (2367) – Remis Fernandez, J (2421) ICCF 2012.

15...♗d4

We have entered a very sharp position in which Black has sacrificed two pawns, but it is clear that the momentum is on Black's side:

16.♖e2

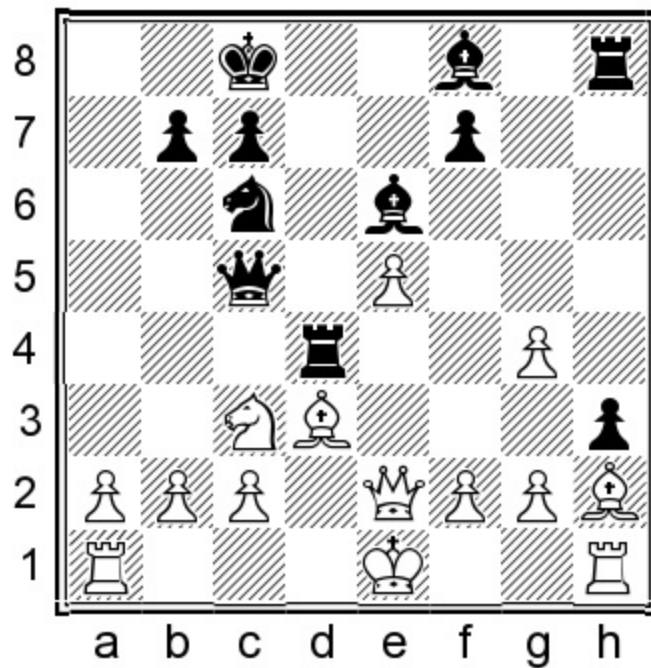
16.♖e3 h4 17.♗h2 ♗h6 18.♗e4 g4!



Position after: 18...g4!

Black is winning. 0-1 (35) Lelenko, A (2467) – Cruzado Duenas, C (2599) ICCF 2013.

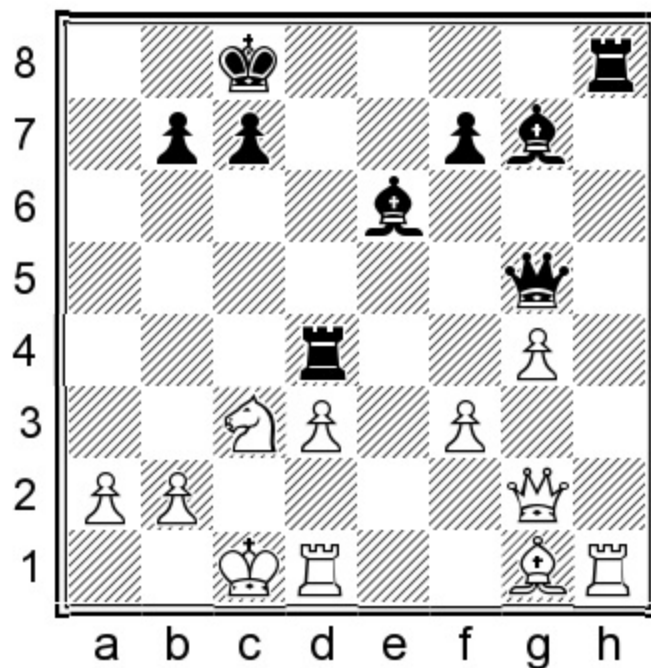
16...h4 17.♗h2 g4 18.hxg4 h3



Position after: 18...h3

19.f4

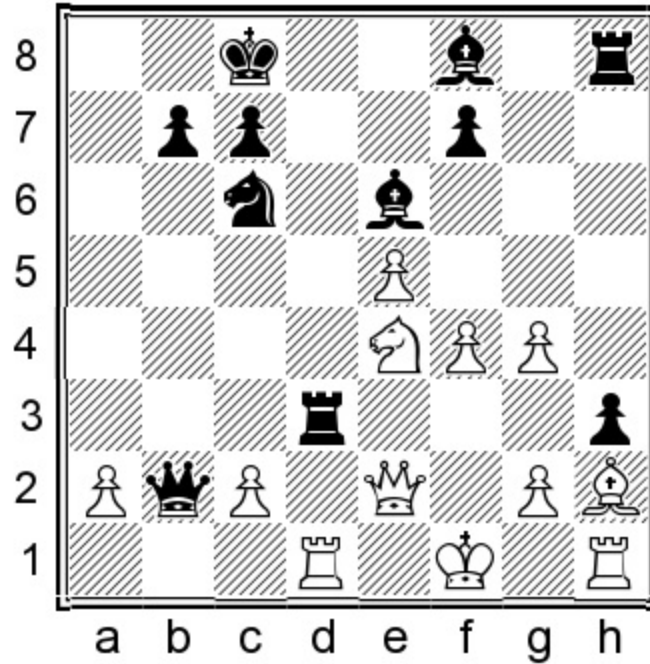
19.f3 hxg2 20.♖xg2 ♜xe5 21.0-0-0 ♜xd3+ 22.cxd3 ♙g7 23.♙g1 ♖g5+



Position after: 23...♖g5+

24.♞b1 ♜xh1 25.♖xh1 ♜b4 26.d4 ♖g6+ 27.♞e4 ♙xa2+ 28.♞xa2 ♖a6+ 29.♞b1 ♖e2 30.♞d2 ♖f1+ 31.♞c2 ♖b5 32.♞b1 ♖f1+ and the game will end in a draw.

19...♙a5 20.♔f1 ♚b6 21.♘e4 ♜xb2 22.♞d1 ♞xd3!



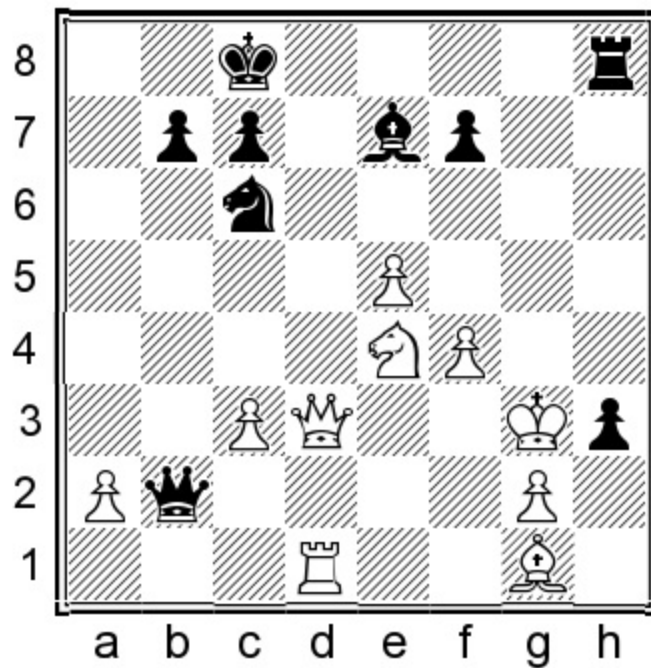
Position after: 22...♞xd3!

Now both recaptures lead to balanced play:

23.♙xd3

23.♞xd3 ♘d4 24.♞d2 ♙b4 25.c3 ♜b1+ 26.♞d1 ♜xa2 27.♞d2 ♜b1+ 28.♞d1 with a repetition of moves. ½ – ½ (28) Eiben, P (2473) – Remis Fernandez, J (2420) ICCF email 2014.

23...♙xg4 24.♔f2 ♚b6+ 25.♔g3 ♙xd1 26.♞xd1 ♙e7 27.♙g1 ♜b4 28.c3 ♜b2 29.♞d2 ♜b5 30.♞d3 ♜b2



Position after: 30... ♔b2

31. ♔d2

With another repetition of moves as neither sides can profitably vary. ½-½ (31) Pasko, P (2504) – Cruzado Dueñas, C (2599) ICCF 2013.