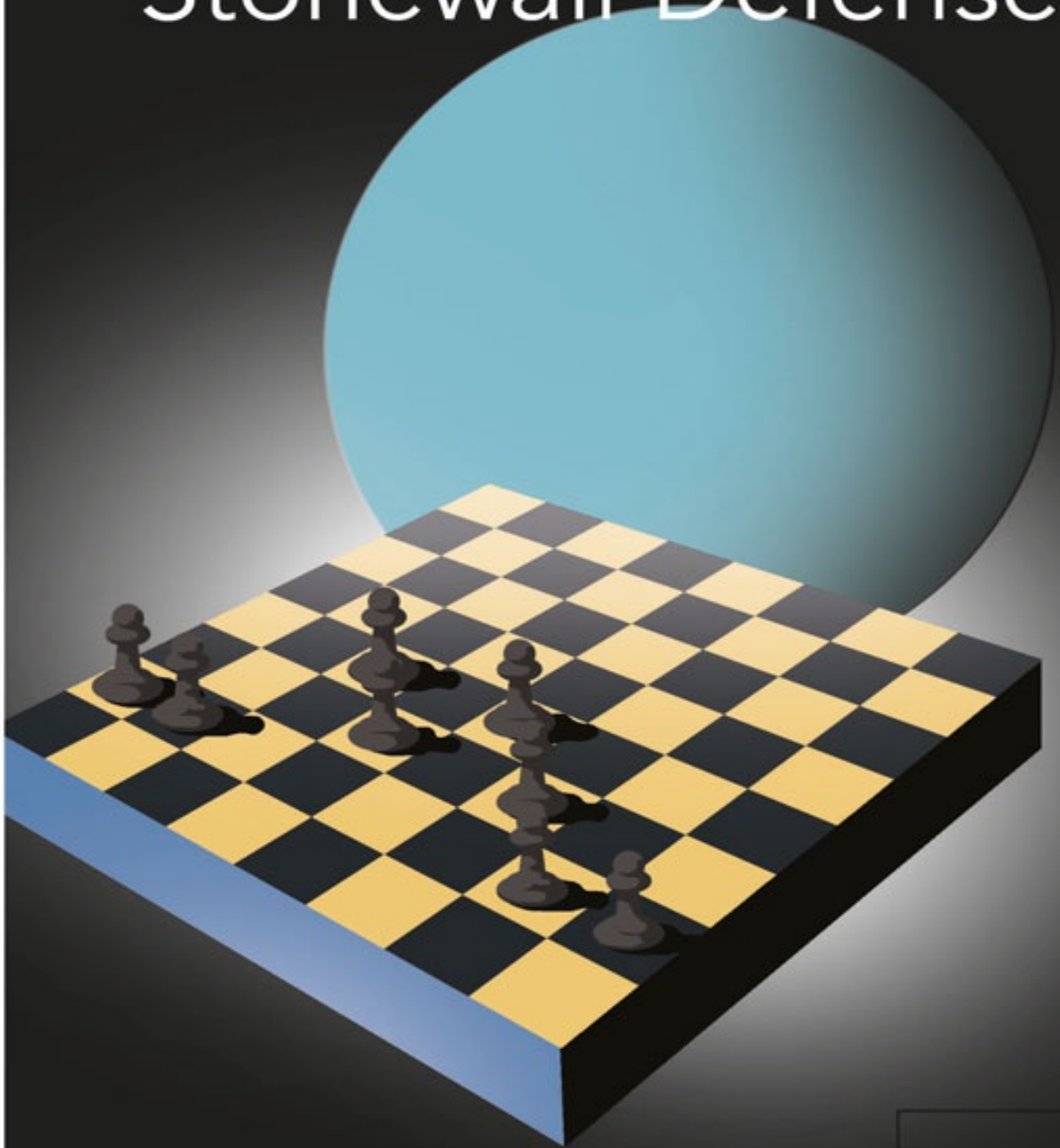


The Modernized Stonewall Defense



Milos Pavlovic



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The Modernized Stonewall Defense

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 Dutch Defense is an old opening. A seriously old opening. So old, in fact, that in large part it currently has the reputation of not really causing a well-prepared White player to fear losing. That is especially the case with the variant of it I am analysing in this book: the Stonewall (in which Black continues with ...e6 and ...d5). I intend to show that that impression is mistaken.

First things first: it's a **very** positional opening. In contrast to the King's Indian (which shares the feature of having few early piece or pawn exchanges) play moves slowly and despite there obviously being some sharp lines, the absolute prerequisite for playing the Stonewall Dutch is that you understand positional chess. The first person to really understand the strategic themes at play here, and develop decent plans for Black was sixth world champion, Mikhail Botvinnik. From which it should be clear that *positional* doesn't necessarily mean *easy*.

After Botvinnik, the next few top players to develop the system were Jussupov (previously transliterated 'Yusupov'), Dolmatov, Predrag Nikolic and Nigel Short. Then came another break, and only now the Stonewall is emerging from the shadows, championed by Teimour Radjabov and the World Champion at time of printing, Magnus Carlsen.

There have been many revolutions in how chess players view tactical play or opening strategy. However, for me it is fitting that the resurgence of the Stonewall is coming at the exact time that *strategic* chess is being redefined by Carlsen. It is an echo of when the opening was first introduced: Botvinnik, the 'Patriarch' of the Soviet chess school, with its discipline and its principles, produced a similarly seismic shift in how people viewed positional play at the time.

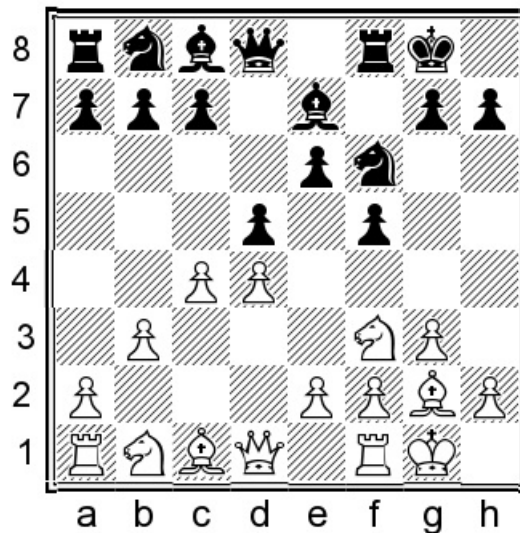
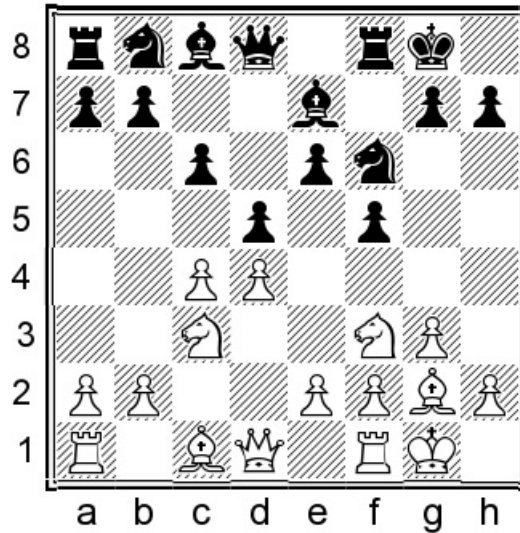
The positional themes in this opening are incredibly complex. We'll get into it more later (obviously) but let me just explain some of the confounding factors. From Black's perspective, playing with a hole on e5 is very much an 'acquired taste', in spite of the ideas that have already been found to counterbalance it, such as a queen (or bishop) transfer to h5, or launching the f-pawn against the enemy king.

From White's perspective, the seemingly amazing g2-bishop, which is so well placed in other Dutch lines, can often find itself biting on granite (hence 'stonewall') and therefore he's best off trying to leverage his extra space and the time it takes Black to develop the c8-bishop. Interestingly, both sides often trade their 'good bishops' for the knights that entrench themselves just over the half-way line on e4 and e5 respectively. Since this is a book for Black, I'll occupy myself more with his plans and ideas, but

both sides would benefit from thinking flexibly and pragmatically.

One thing that (in my opinion) hadn't really been done before is a really thorough look at the Stonewall using modern computer engines (and over a thousand hours of analysis.) While the opening is definitely all about understanding, wouldn't you prefer to benefit from some fresh ideas and knowledge of which the best move-orders might be, as well as which plans have hidden holes in them? Thus, the idea for this book was formed. I'll be looking at both the 'classical' approach where Black plays ...♗e7, and the 'modern' approach with ...♗d6. In openings that are based on understanding, it's always helpful to look at older approaches to the same problem, and compare our thoughts with those of our predecessors.

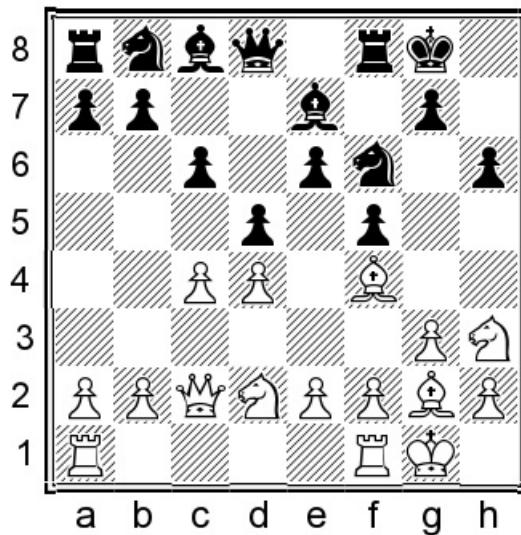
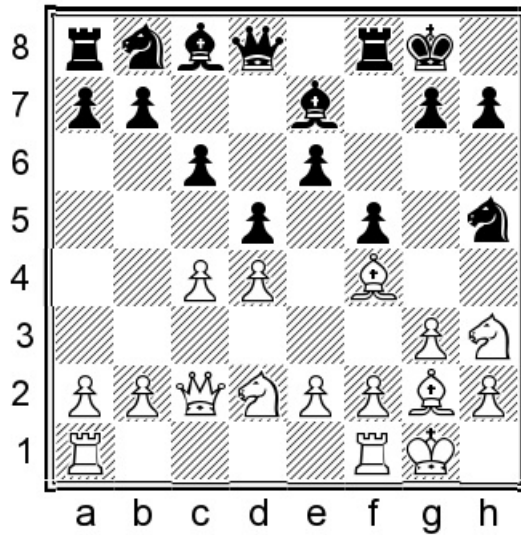
The Classical approach (Chapters 2 & 3)



It's not easy to find your way through the different move-orders in the Stonewall and even if you intend to develop the bishop to d6 every time, it can quite often happen that it ends up on e7, for instance because you avoided a trade of bishops on f4 or because White's knight was on c3, causing worries about ♖b5. Still, it's also possible (and fully playable) to place the bishop on e7 by choice. The right diagram shows such a scenario, where White has not developed either minor piece on the queenside and therefore retains ideas of ♕a3.

Now let's look at the possible White plans against the modern approach with ...♗d6.

Typical plan I: ♖h3 (Chapter 1)

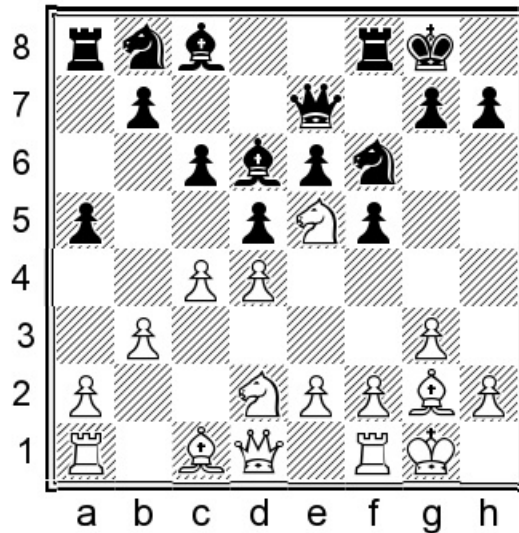
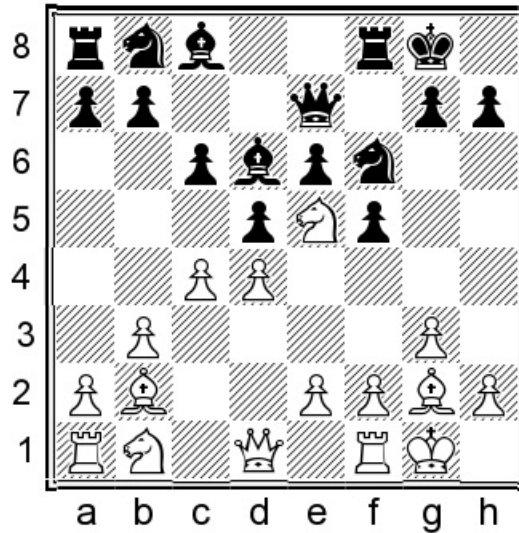


This is the standard setup White is aiming for with ♖h3. He avoids blocking the f-pawn, so as to allow a knight manoeuvre to d3 or else the pushes f3 and e4 in the center. The

two diagrams illustrate two different counter-plans Black can choose.

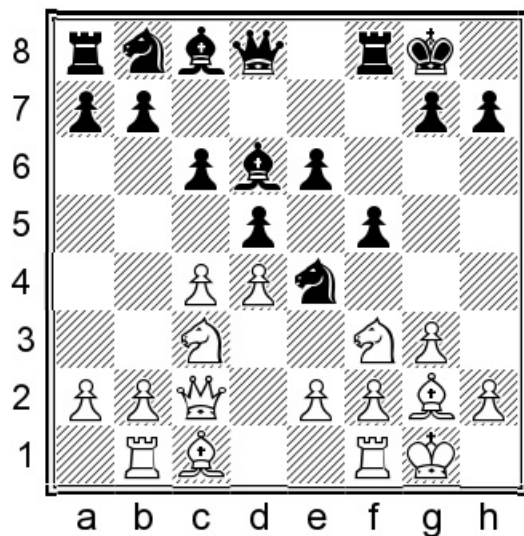
Plans II, III and IV below don't belong to any individual chapter but occur throughout chapters 5, 6, and 7; and despite being different can overlap to a certain extent.

Typical plan II: ♖f3-e5 with play on the c-file



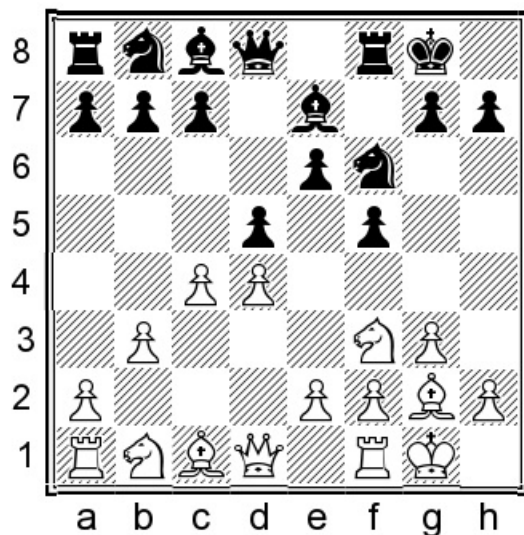
White aims to lock down the b8-knight by pressuring Black's c6- and f5-pawns, take on d5 (timed to force ...cxd5), and play along the c-file with queen, rook or both.

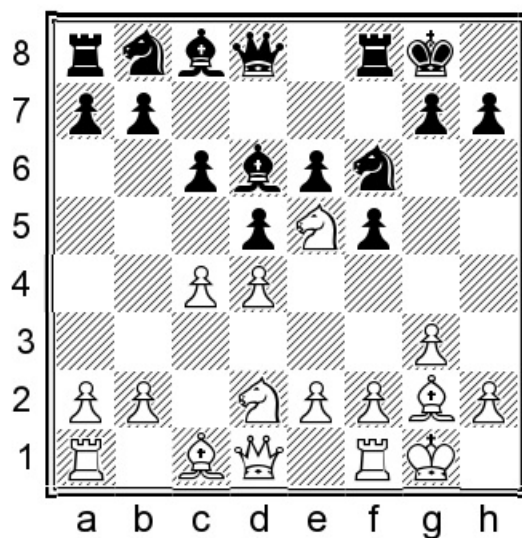
Typical plan III: ♖a1-b1 followed by b4-b5



This is one of the most dangerous plans for White, and can be stated with disarming simplicity: push b4-b5 and use the e5-square to target a weak c-pawn in the future. Many Black players were understandably worried by this plan but I have found ideas that will satisfy them and keep the balance!

Typical plan IV: ♖f3-e5 followed by ♖b1-d2-f3





The knights will head to e5 (or d3) and f3 as fast as possible, and White plans to propose a bishop trade on f4 at some stage. This is a very interesting plan worth knowing about, and Black has to be ready to respond sharply, e.g. with ...g5.

In the remainder of the book I will tie up some loose ends (chapters 8-11) without which it would simply not be a complete work. I would like to thank everyone who made this book possible, and hope that the reader has as much fun with it (and the opening) as I have done!

Milos Pavlovic
December 2019

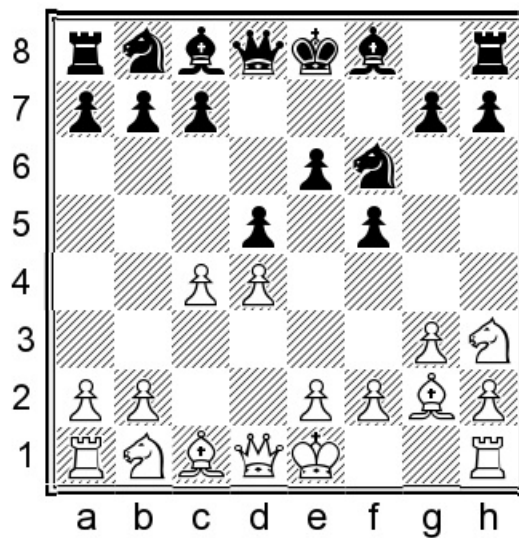
Part I

Systems with g3 and ♘h3

Chapter 1

5.♘h3

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – 5.♘h3

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3 c6

a) 6.♘d2

b) 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.--

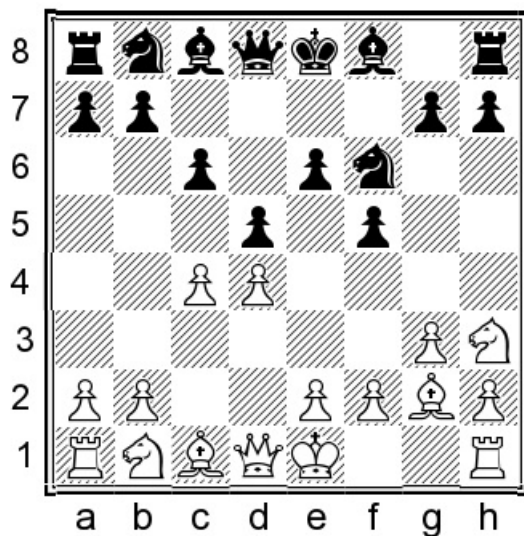
c) 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.♚c2

d) 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.♙f4 ♙e7 8.♘d2 0-0 9.♚c2 ♘h5

e) 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.♙f4 ♙e7 8.♘d2 0-0 9.♚c2 h6

a) 6.♘d2

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3 c6

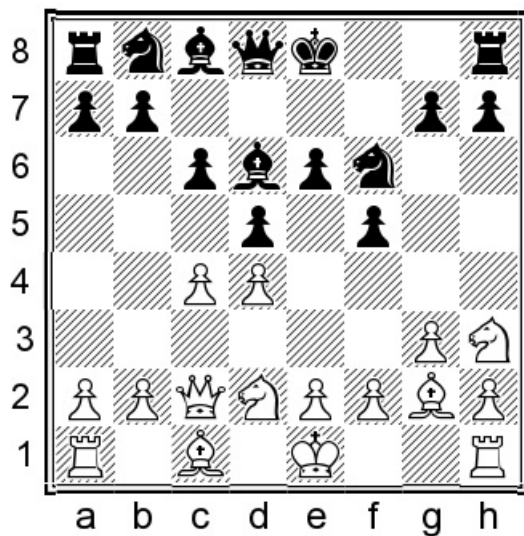


Position after: 5...c6

6.♘d2

6.♞c2 ♘d6 7.♙f4 ♙e7 8.♘d2 0-0 transposes to subchapter d).

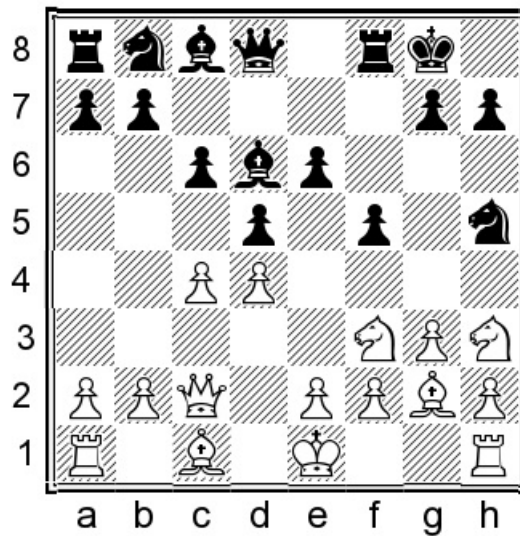
6...♙d6 7.♞c2



Position after: 7.♞c2

White is planning to postpone castling and perform the standard development of his queen's knight and bishop to f3 and f4 respectively.

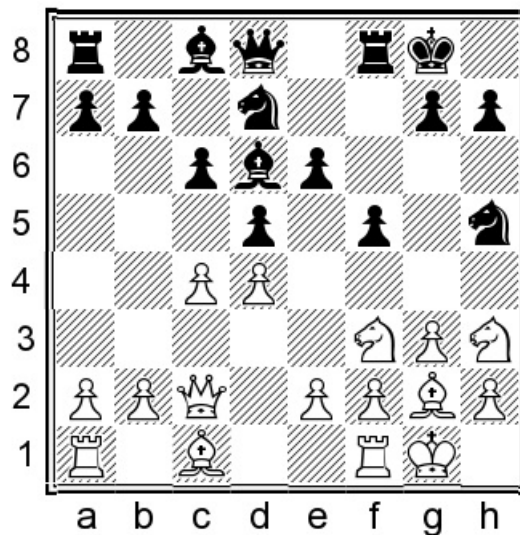
7...0-0 8.♘f3 ♘h5!?



Position after: 8...♘h5!?

This move is not so popular but we will see that the resulting positions are not simple to play for either side. All the pieces (and pawns) remain on the board, often leading to a lot of tension.

9.0-0 ♘d7



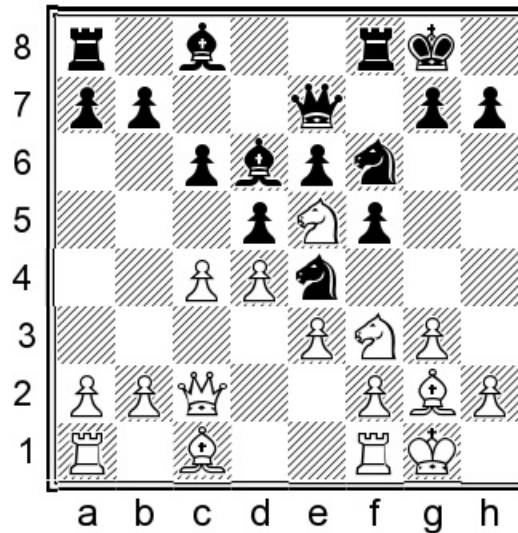
Position after: 9...♘d7

From this position White has a lot of flexibility as to how to continue. Black has prevented ♙f4 but several other ways of developing have been tried.

10. ♞e1

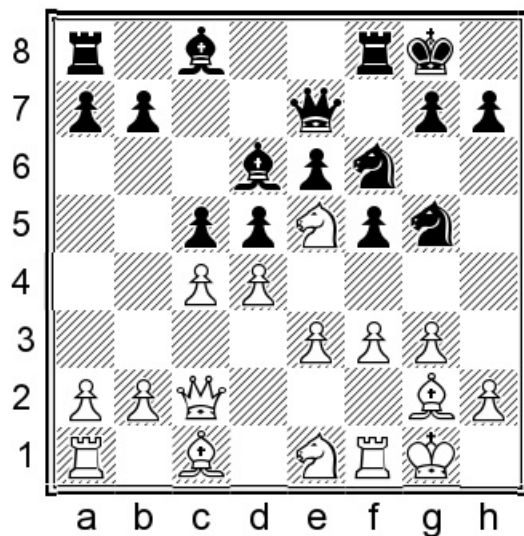
Other possibilities are as follows:

A) 10. ♞hg5 ♜df6 11. ♞e5 ♞e4 12. ♞gf3 ♚e7 13. e3 ♞hf6



Position after: 13... ♞hf6

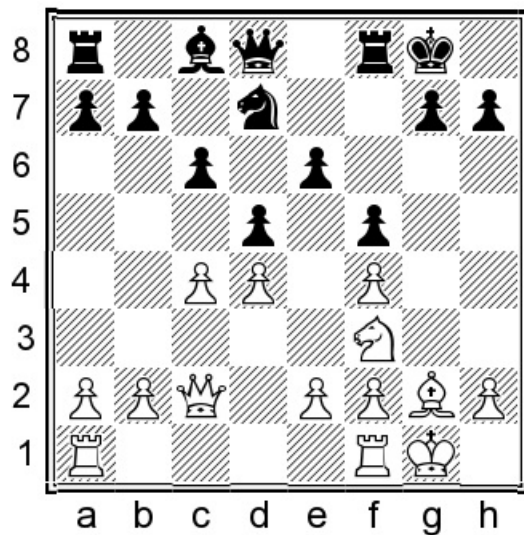
Now that the c1-bishop is definitely not being developed along the c1-h6 diagonal, Black considers that the knight has done its work on h5 and retreats it. 14. ♞e1 c5! Black must not remain in a passive position; activity is key in the Stonewall. [14... ♞d7 15. f3 ♞g5 16. ♞1d3 ♞xe5 17. dxe5 ♞c7 18. ♞d2 White has better chances. 0-1 (70) Grooten, H (2384) – Bogaard, M (2073) Amsterdam 2018] 15. f3 ♞g5



Position after: 15...Ng5

16. Qd1d3 [16.e4? Ngxe4 17.fxe4 dxe4 Black wins as the e5-knight is lost.] 16...b6
17.b3 Bb7 With typical unclear play.

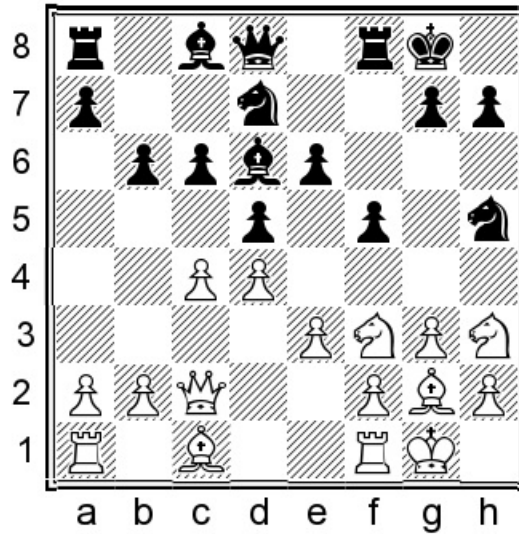
B) 10. Qf4 Nxf4 11. Bxf4 Bxf4 12.gxf4



Position after: 12.gxf4

This exchange should give Black reasonable play. Notice how he develops now:
12...Nf6 13.e3 Bd7 14.Qh1 Be8 15.Ne5 Ng4 16.Bf3 Nxe5 17.dxe5 Wh4 18.We2
Black has good counter play. White offered a draw which was accepted in
Brenninkmeijer, J (2475) – Winants, L (2455) Lyon 1990.

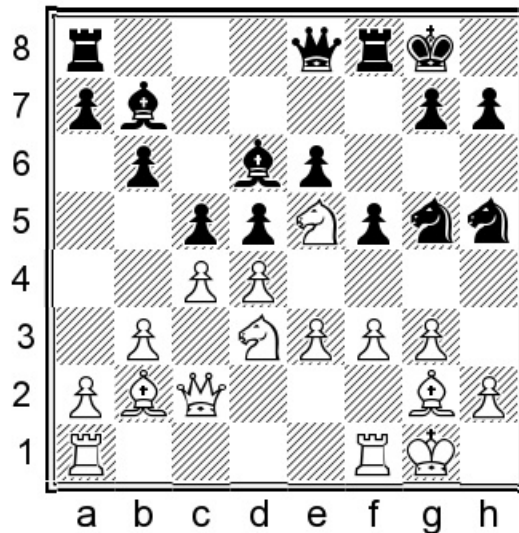
C) 10.e3 b6!



Position after: 10...b6!

C1) Direct play doesn't help: 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♙c6 ♚c7 13.♙xc7 [Taking the rook is wrong: 13.♙xa8 ♕a6] 13...♕xc7 14.♘f4 ♘xf4 15.exf4 ♕a6 16.♞e1 ♞fe8 17.♕d2 ♘f6 18.♞ac1 ♕d6 19.♕f1 ♕xf1 20.♙xf1 ♘e4= Black is fine in this endgame.

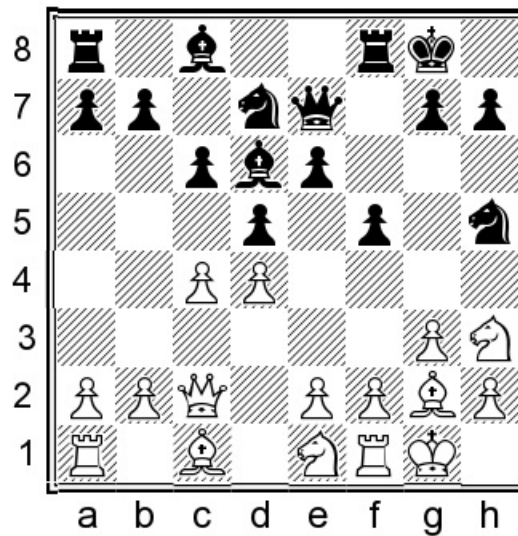
C2) 11.♘f4 ♘df6 In this case Black should avoid the trade on f4 because White gains pressure along the e-file. 12.♘e5 ♙e8 13.b3 ♕b7 14.♕b2 ♘e4 15.♘fd3 c5 16.f3 ♘g5



Position after: 16...♘g5

With yet another complicated struggle in front of us.

10...♔e7!?



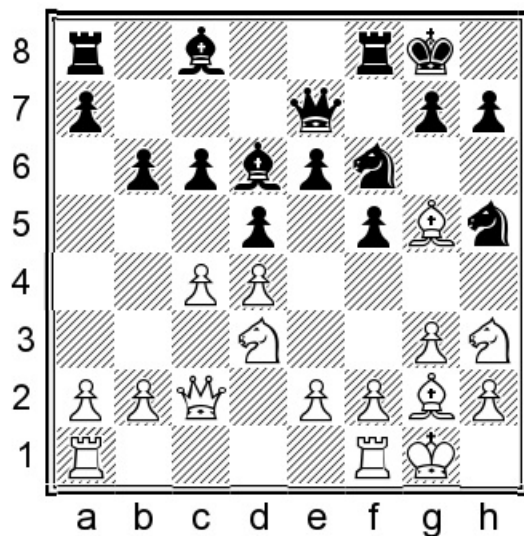
Position after: 10...♔e7!?

In the following game, Russian GM Alexey Dreev demonstrated a good plan for White. 10...h6 11.♘d3 g5 12.♙d2 ♘hf6 13.f3 ♔e7 14.♖ae1 c5 15.e3 b6 White has the centre under control and can now build the pressure on Black's pawn weaknesses. 16.♗hf2 ♙a6 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♔a4 ♙b7 19.♙h3 and White was better in Dreev, A (2645) – Borges Mateos, J (2470) Linares 1999.

11.♘d3 b6

This move is usually necessary.

12.♙g5 ♘df6



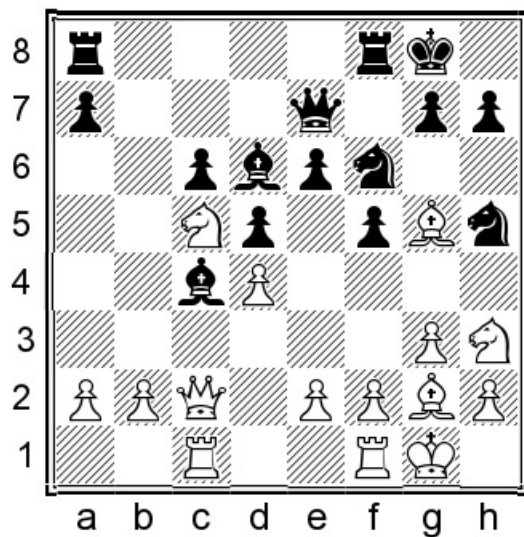
Position after: 12... Ndf6

13. Qf3

A) 13. c5 bxc5 14. Nxc5 Qxc5 15. Wxc5 Wxc5 16. dxc5 e5 Black is fine.

B) 13. f3 h6 14. Qf4 Nxf4 15. Nxf4 Bd8 16. Ng6 We8 17. Nge5 c5 18. dxc5 bxc5 19. f4 Qb7 With complicated play again.

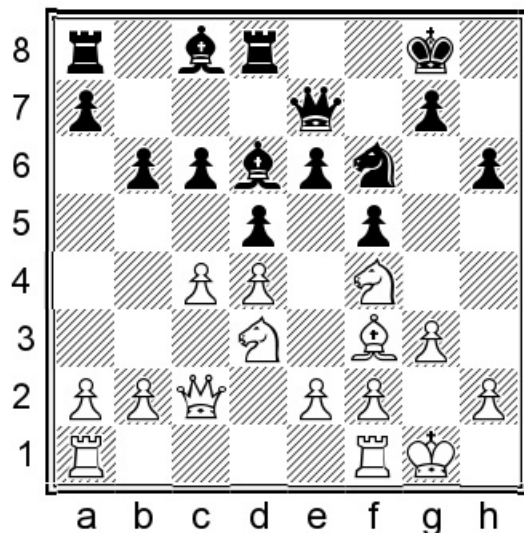
C) 13. Rac1 Qa6 14. c5 bxc5 15. Nxc5 Now we see a useful motif to remember. There comes: 15... Qc4!



Position after: 15... Qc4!

Forcing exchanges. Now in the sample line 16.♘d3 ♕xd3 17.♚xd3 ♜ac8 18.♞c2 h6 19.♕d2 c5 20.dxc5 ♞xc5 21.♞fc1 ♞fc8 we can see Black's plan working a lot better than White's.

13...h6 14.♕xf6 ♜xf6 15.♘hf4 ♞d8

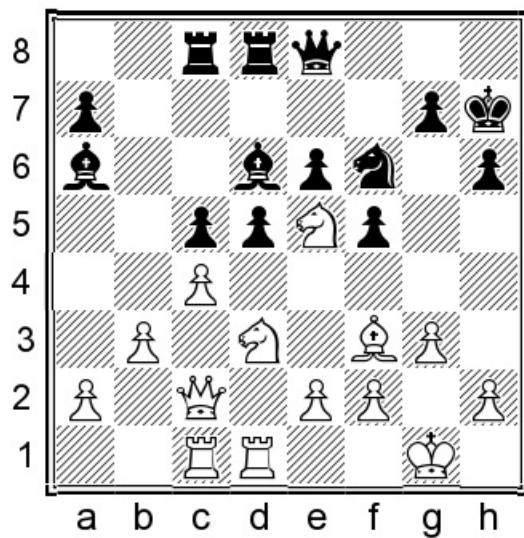


Position after: 15...♞d8

16.♘g6

White can also continue as follows: 16.♘e5 ♕b7 17.♘fg6 ♚e8 18.h4 [18.♞ac1 ♘d7 with equal chances.] 18...c5 19.e3 ♞ac8 20.♚e2 ♘d7 21.♕h5 ♕xe5 22.♘xe5 ♚e7 23.♕f7+ ♜h7 24.♕g6+ ♜g8 Now the game could end in repetition but Black was doing OK anyway.

16...♚e8 17.♘ge5 c5 18.♞fd1 ♕a6 19.dxc5 bxc5 20.♞ac1 ♞ac8 21.b3 ♜h7

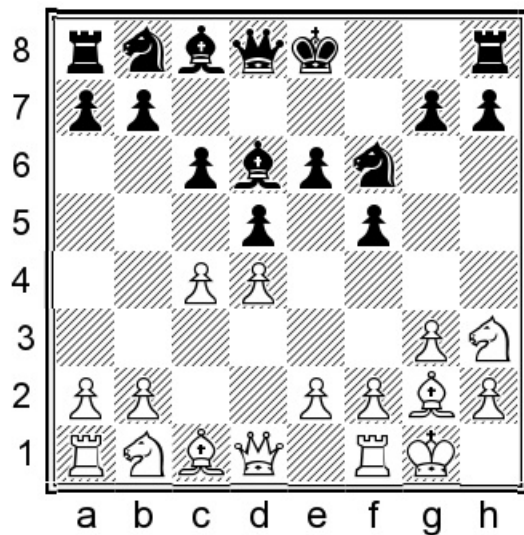


Position after: 21...♔h7

With another balanced position.

b) 6.0-0 ♘d6 7.--

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3 c6 6.0-0 ♘d6

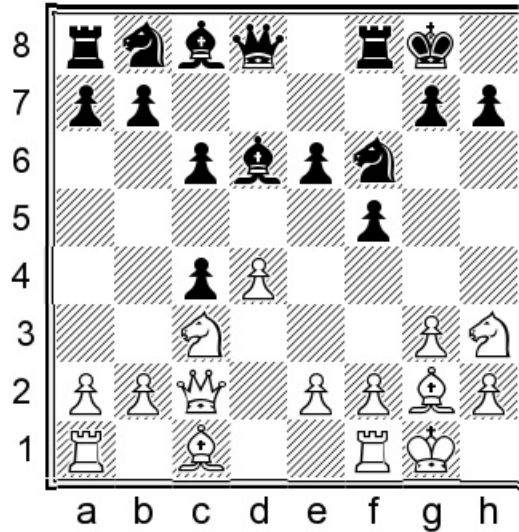


Position after: 6...♘d6

7.b3

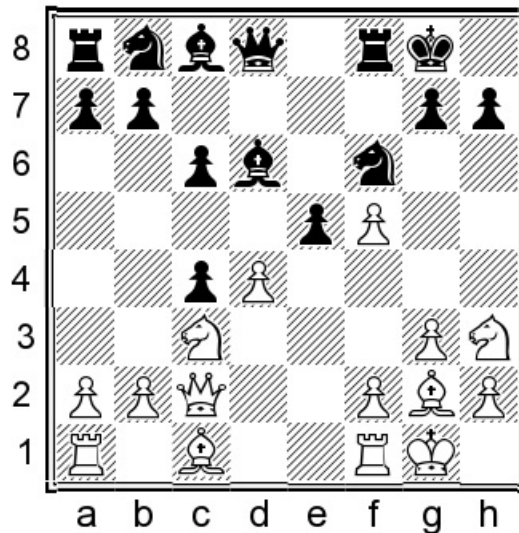
One idea is to try to exchange dark-squared bishops on a3 and then get a knight to f4.

7. ♖c3 0-0 8. ♔c2 dxc4!?



Position after: 8...dxc4!?

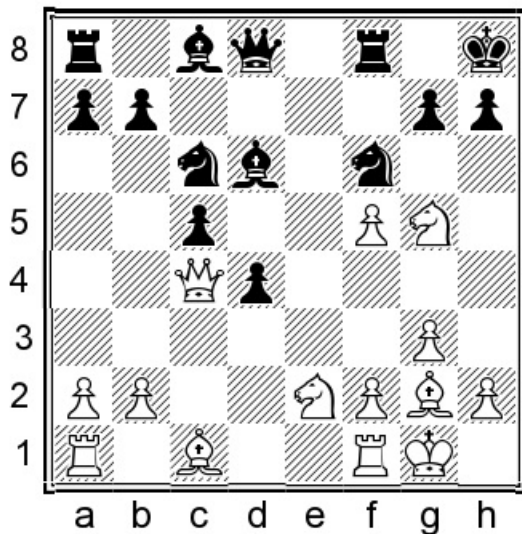
When White isn't controlling the e5-square, such antipositional-looking moves can sometimes be worth considering. 9.e4 [9. ♖g5 ♖a6 10.e4 e5 11. ♔e2 exd4 12. ♔xc4+ ♘h8 13. ♖e2 fxe4 14. ♖f7+ ♔xf7 15. ♔xf7 ♖c5 Black was simply better. 0-1 (54) Pavlovic, M (2531) – Ulybin, M (2544) Hoogeveen 2010] 9...e5!?



Position after: 10.exf5

[10.dxe5 ♗xe5 11.exf5 ♔d3⇒]

A) 10...exd4?! 11.♘e2 c5 should not be repeated. 12.♙xc4+?! [12.♘ef4! gives White a plus, e.g. 12...♖h8 13.♘e6 ♗xe6 14.fxe6 ♘c6 15.♘g5 ♙c7 16.♙xc4 with a clear edge.] 12...♖h8 13.♘g5 ♘c6



Position after: 13...♘c6

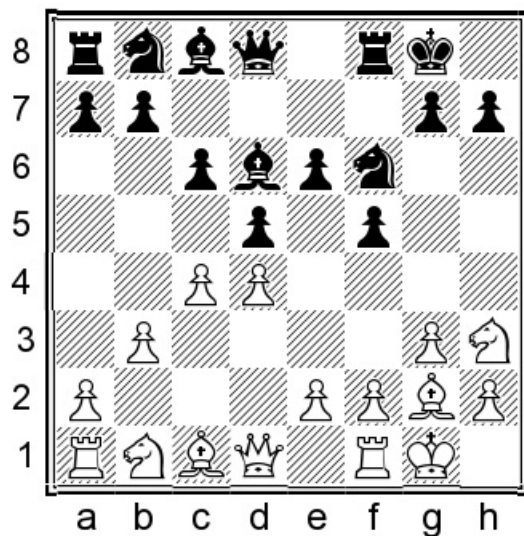
14.♗f4 [14.♘f4 ♗xf5 15.♘f7+ ♖xf7 16.♙xf7 ♙c8! 17.♗d2 ♘e5 18.♙b3 ♗e4 19.♖ae1 ♗xg2 20.♖xg2 c4 and Black has a strong initiative in exchange for the material.]

14...♗xf5 15.♘f7+ ♖xf7 16.♙xf7 ♖b8 17.♗xc6 bxc6 ♣ Black is better. 0-1 (25)

Onischuk, A (2672) – Akobian, V (2647) Saint Louis 2018

B) 10...♘a6!? 11.dxe5 ♗xe5 12.♙e2 ♙c7 13.♙xc4+ ♖h8 14.g4 ♗xh2+ 15.♖h1 ♗e5
With unclear consequences.

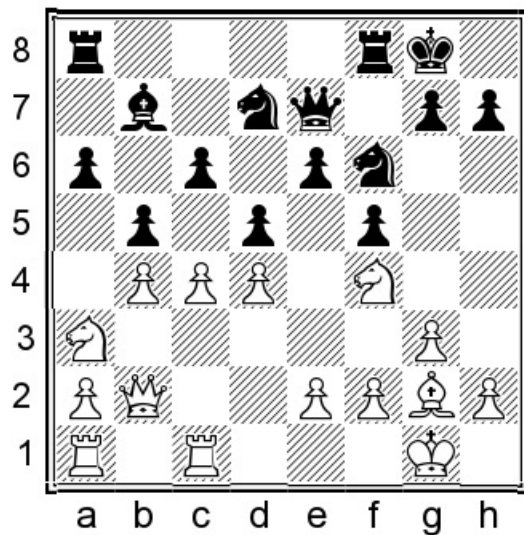
7...0-0!



Position after: 7...0-0!

When the knight is on h3 Black need not play ...♖e7 just yet.

8.♙a3 ♜xa3 9.♞xa3 ♚e7 10.♚c1 b6! 11.♞f4 ♙b7 12.b4 ♞bd7 13.♚b2 a6 14.♞fc1 b5!



Position after: 14...b5!

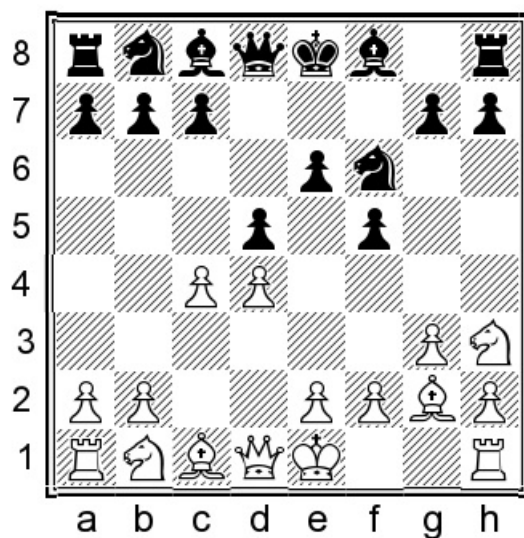
Black is trying to force White to close (or at least commit somehow regarding) the queenside, which then enables him to push ...e5 much more easily at a later juncture.

15.c5 ♞e4 16.♞c2 g5 17.♞d3 f4↑

Black has obtained counterplay. ½-½ (49) Hansen, C (2550) – Yrjola, J (2460) Espoo 1989.

c) 6.0-0 ♘d6 7.♙c2

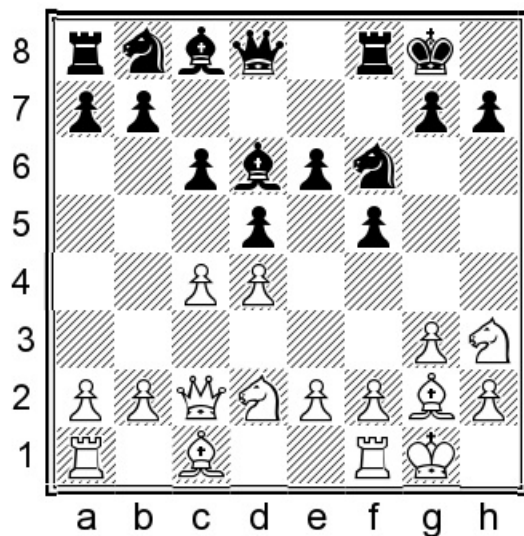
1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3



Position after: 5...♘h3

Remember that the main idea of this move is to support the f4-square so that White has the option to challenge Black's dark-squared bishop (typically developed to d6) from there. Furthermore, White avoids blocking his central pawns, so pushing f3, e4 is a serious plan for White. Black must be cautious.

5...c6 6.0-0 ♘d6 7.♙c2 0-0 8.♘d2



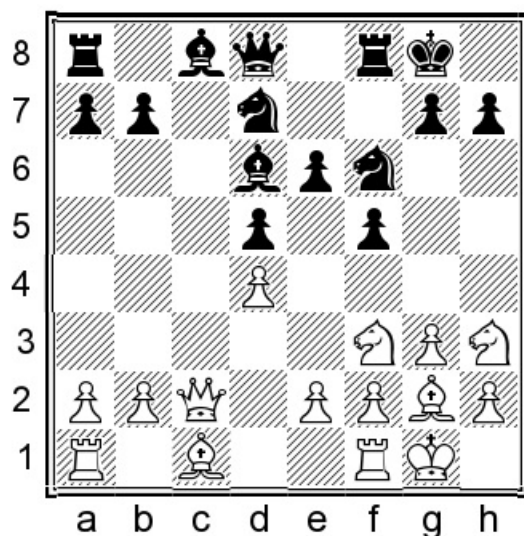
Position after: 8. d2

8...h6

Black wants to play ...g5 quickly, a perfectly decent idea in the spirit of the Stonewall. With the knight already having gone to h3 it is especially logical.

8...bd7!? This is also logical but Black tends to avoid playing it for a simple reason.

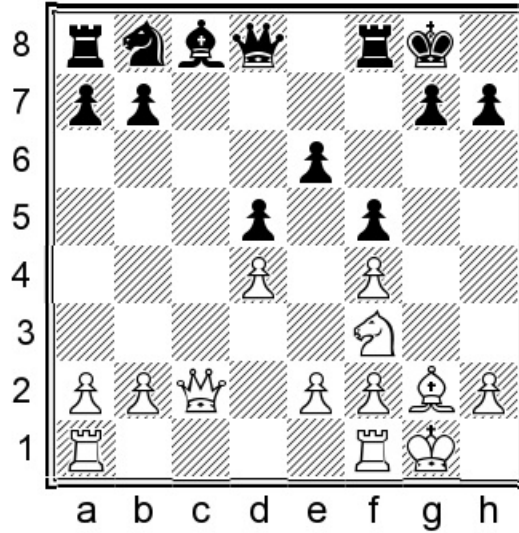
9.cxd5! [9.f3 h5 transposes to subchapter a).] 9...cxd5 10.f3



Position after: 10. f3

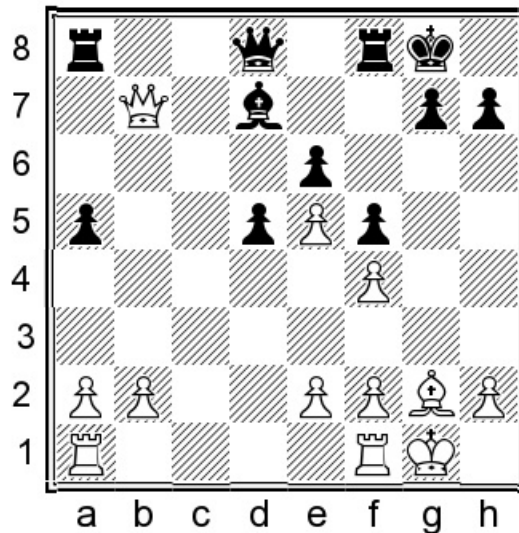
White plays simply but in my opinion this is not so easy for him as commonly thought.

10...♖h5 [Another option is possible too: 10...♖b8!? 11.♙f4 ♜c6 12.♙xd6 ♚xd6 13.♜f4 ♙d7 14.♜fc1 ♜fc8 with equal play.] 11.♜f4 [11.♜e1 ♜b8 12.♜d3 ♜c6 13.♙e3 h6 14.♚d2 ♜f6 15.f3 ♙d7 16.♙f2 g5 is also playable for Black.] 11...♜xf4 12.♙xf4 ♙xf4 13.gxf4 ♜b8!?



Position after: 13...♜b8!?

14.♜e5 [14.♜fc1 ♜c6 15.♚d2 a5 16.♜c3 ♙d7 17.♜ac1 ♙e8 Leads to counterplay for Black; 14.b4 ♙d7 15.a4 a6 16.♜fc1 ♜c6 17.♚b2 ♙e8 18.b5 axb5 19.axb5 ♜xa1 20.♜xa1 ♜e7 21.♜e5 ♜g6 is just equal.] 14...♙d7 15.♚b3 ♜c6!? 16.♚xb7 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 a5

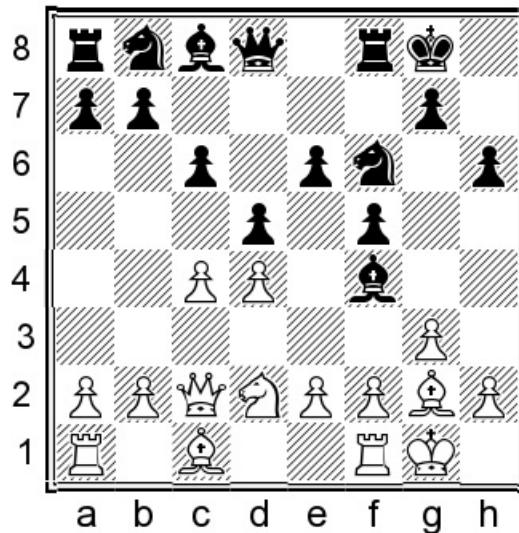


Position after: 17...a5

18. ♖b3 [18. ♖fc1 ♜b8 19. ♚a7 ♜xb2 20. ♖c7 ♜f7 21. ♖ac1 h6 22. ♙f3 g5 23. ♚xa5 ♜g7
 With yet another complicated position.] 18... ♜b8 19. ♚c3 ♜b4 20. ♚d2 ♜h4 21. e3 g5

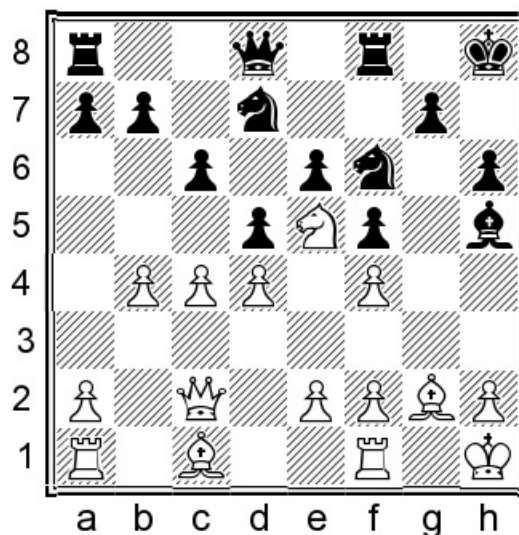
9. ♘f3

The other move lets Black illustrate his positional idea. 9. ♘f4 ♙xf4!



Position after: 9... ♙xf4!

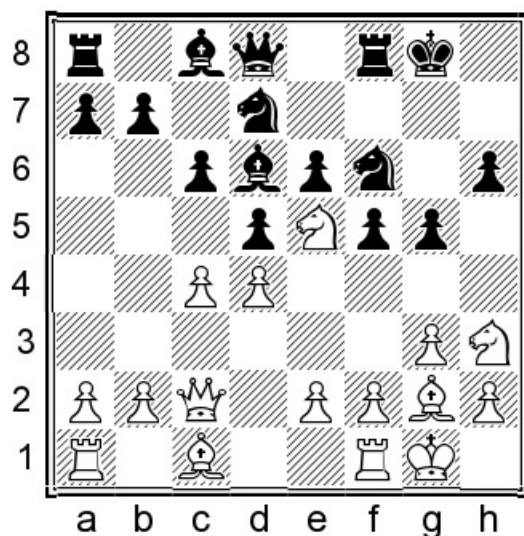
Trading a bishop for a knight but at the same time doubling White's f-pawns. 10. gxf4
 ♙d7 11. b3 ♜h8! 12. ♘f3 ♙e8 13. ♘e5 ♘bd7 14. ♜h1 ♙h5 15. b4



Position after: 15. b4

15...dxc4! To put pressure on the f4-pawn Black must free the d5-square for his knight. We also see this in the Carlsen game in the 8th move note of subchapter d). Black was better and later won a nice game: 16. ♔xc4 ♞d5 17. ♜b1 ♞xe5 18. dxe5 ♚h4 19. ♜b3 b5! ♠ Babula, V (2566) – Nikolic, P (2652) Panormo 2001.

9...g5 10. ♞e5 ♞bd7

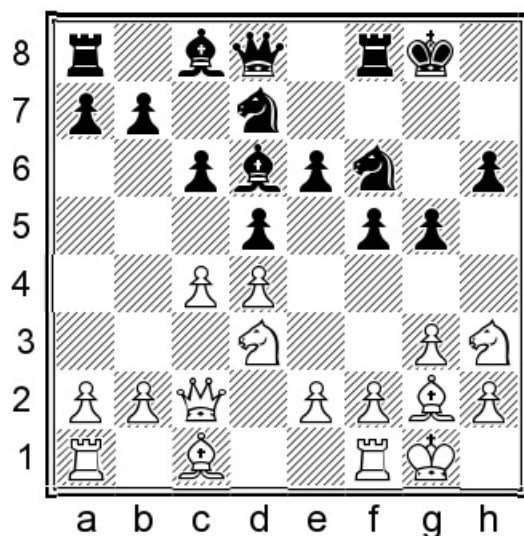


Position after: 10...♞bd7

An interesting position. The h3-knight is restricted but on the other hand Black is not fully developed and his mobility suffers because of the e5-knight. White now has to decide between retreating the knight and reinforcing it.

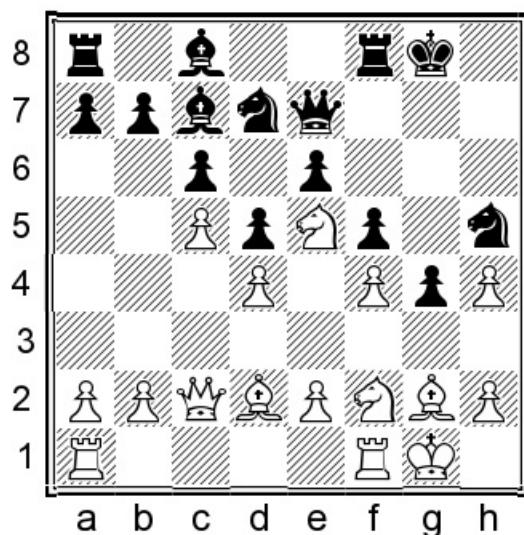
11.f4

Another choice might be: 11. ♞d3



Position after: 11. ♖d3

A) 11... ♜e7 Preparing ...b6. 12.c5 [12. ♜h1 b6 13.cxd5 cxd5 14. ♜a4 a5 15.b4 ♘b7 16.b5 ♜fc8 17.e3 ♘e4 18. ♜d1 ♘c3= 0-1 (37) Miron, L (2375) – Gleizerov, E (2570) Galatzi 2007] 12... ♙c7 Now highly consistent from both sides would be 13.f4 g4 14. ♘hf2 h5 15. ♙d2 h4 16.gxh4!? ♘h5 17. ♘e5 and now:



Position after: 17. ♘e5

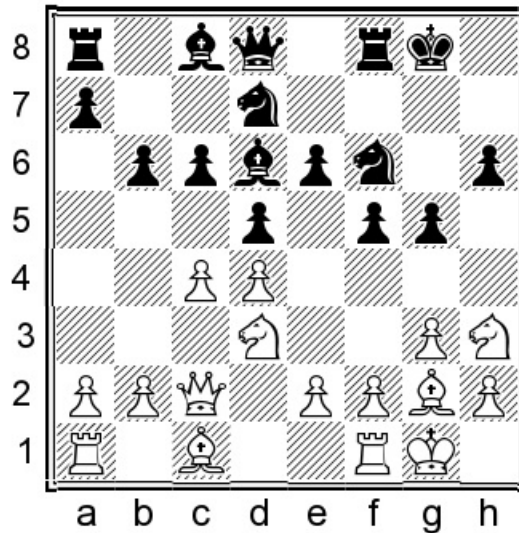
A1) 17... ♜f6 18.h3 g3 19. ♘fg4!? [19. ♘fd3 ♜h6 20. ♘f3 ♘df6 21.e3 ♘e4 22. ♙e1 with continuing mess, as in Kozul, Z (2541) – Gleizerov, E (2590) Obertraun 2011.] 19...fxg4 20.hxg4 ♘g7 21. ♜f3 ♘xe5 22.fxe5 ♜xf3 23. ♙g5 ♜f8 24. ♙xf3 White has

strong pressure for the sacrificed piece.

A2) 17...♞xe5! This is much better; Black gets to continue the fight on his terms.

18.fxe5 ♞xh4 19.♞d3 ♜d8 20.♞f4 ♞xf4 21.♞xf4 ♞b8 22.♞ac1 b5! with a good game.

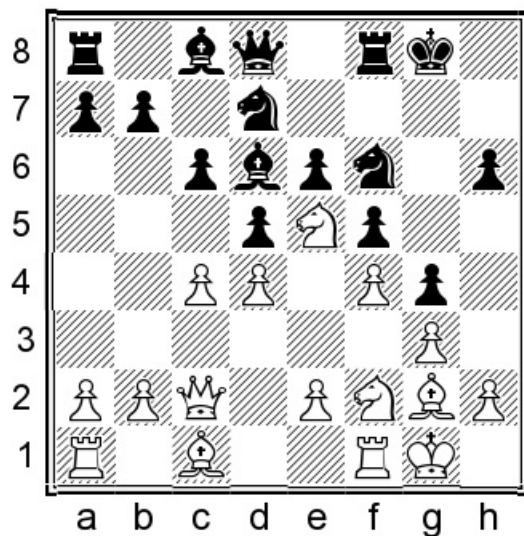
B) 11...b6!?



Position after: 11...b6!?

Black can also play this without preparation. 12.f4 [12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♞c6 ♞c7!
14.♞xc7 ♜xc7 Black is fine.; 12.b4 ♜a6 13.c5 ♜c7 14.a4 bxc5 15.dxc5 ♜c4 with
counterplay.] 12...g4 13.♞hf2 ♜b7 14.b3 h5 15.♞d2 ♞e4 with unclear play.

11...g4 12.♞f2

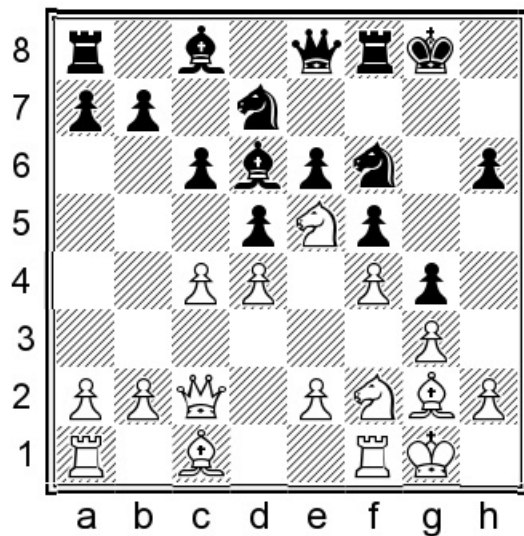


Position after: 12. ♘f2

Here we have an interesting position in which the contours of battle have become clear. White is playing on his central outpost and queenside space.

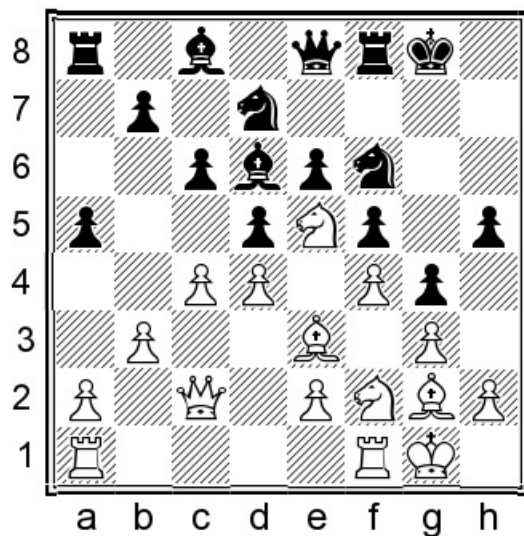
12...h5

Black can also temporarily delay the blocking of the position: 12... ♔e8!?



Position after: 12... ♔e8!?

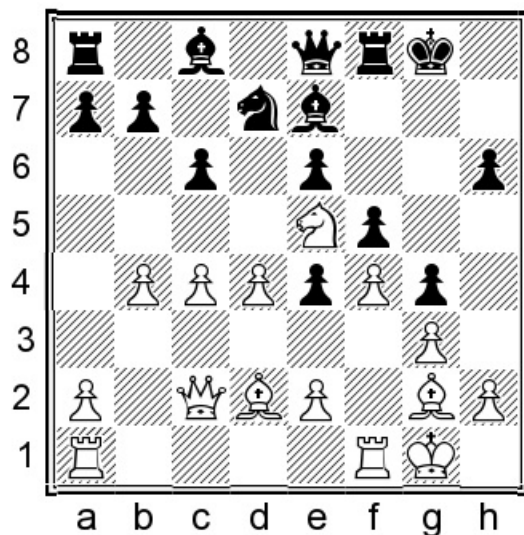
A) 13. ♙e3 a5 14. b3 h5



Position after: 14...h5

15.a3 [15.h4 gxh3 16.♖xh3 ♜g4 17.♙d2 ♙e7 is unclear.] 15...♙e7 16.♙d2 ♜e4
 17.♜xe4 dxe4 18.e3 ♜xe5 19.dxe5 b6=

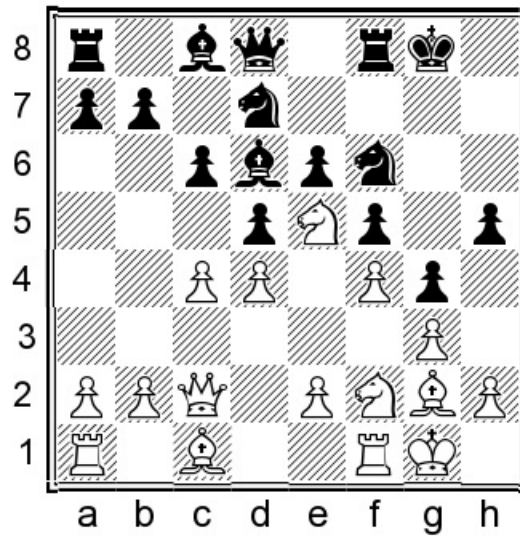
B) 13.♙d2 ♜e4 14.♜xe4 [Taking with the bishop is possible but that doesn't necessarily yield better outcomes: 14.♙xe4 dxe4 15.b4 ♙e7 16.♜xd7 ♙xd7 17.e3 ♜h7 18.c5 h5 with counterplay.] 14...dxe4 15.b4 ♙e7



Position after: 15...♙e7

16.♜xd7 [16.a4 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 c5 18.b5 h5 with counterplay.] 16...♙xd7 17.e3 h5
 18.h4 gxh3 19.♙xh3 ♜f7 20.♜h2 ♜g7 21.♜g1 ♙f6 22.♜g2 ♜h7 Black need not worry

here.

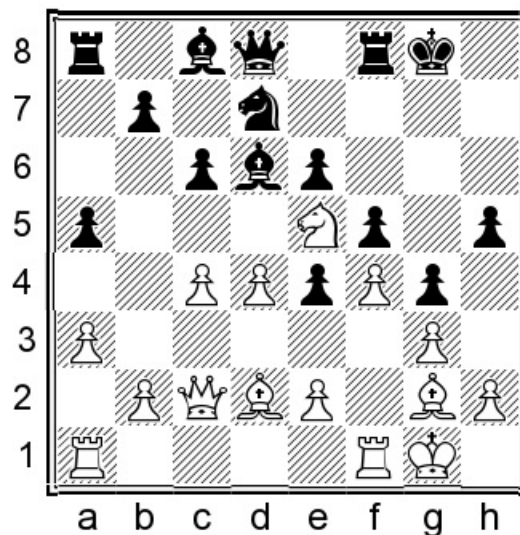


Position after: 12...h5

13.h4!?

Black, for his part, was relying on kingside play starting with ...h5-h4 as well as having blunted White's g2-bishop quite firmly; therefore trying to block the kingside is perfectly logical.

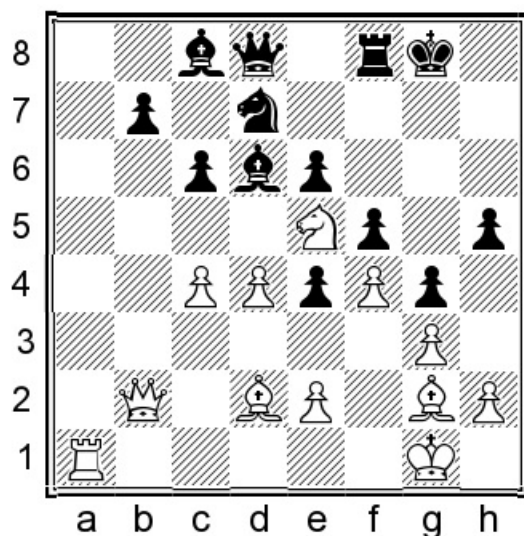
A) Other attempts didn't bring White anything: 13.♔d2 a5 14.a3 ♘e4 15.♘xe4 dxe4



Position after: 15...dxe4

16.♔e3 [16.b4?! axb4 17.axb4 ♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♗xe5 19.dxe5 ♕xe5! gives Black an edge; 16.e3 ♗xe5 17.dxe5 ♕e7 18.♕c3 c5 19.♖fd1 ♕d7 20.♕f1 ♖f7 leads to a faceoff between the bishops where Black is surely also alright.]

A1) 16...♗f6 17.b4!?! axb4 18.axb4 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♕xb4 20.♖b2 ♕d6 21.♕d2 Now it is important for Black to release the tension in the centre. Play could continue 21...♗d7!

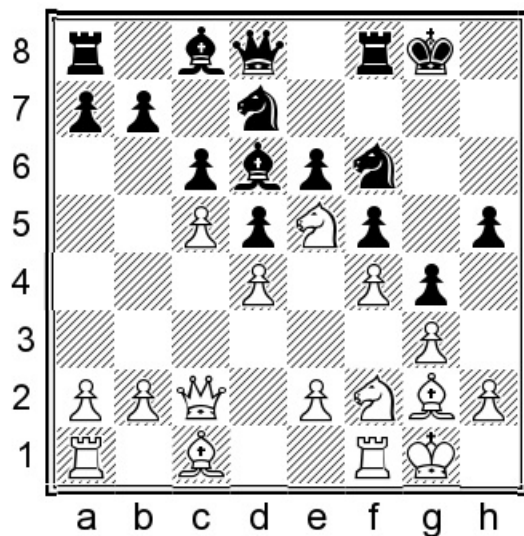


Position after: 21...♗d7!

22.♕a5 ♖e8 23.♗xd7 ♖xd7 24.e3 c5! 25.♕b6 ♖c6 26.♕f1 cxd4 27.♕xd4 ♕c5 with equality and an eventual draw in Gurevich, M (2633) – Agdestein, S (2582) Tromsø 2007.

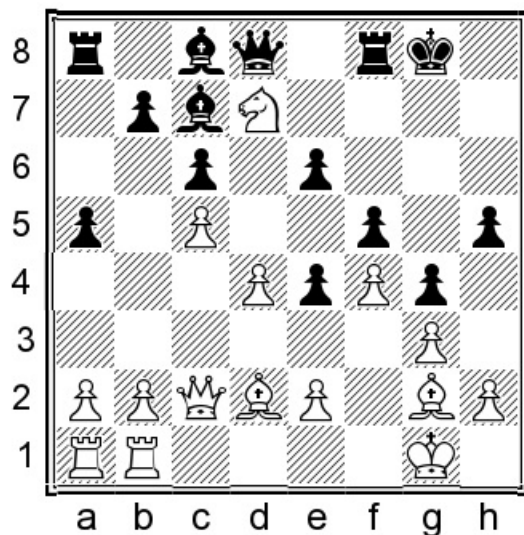
A2) 16...♖f6!?! 17.b4 h4 18.♖fb1 ♖h6 19.♖d2 ♕e7 20.b5 c5! With unclear consequences.

B) 13.c5



Position after: 13.c5

B1) 13...♙c7 14.♙d2 a5 15.♞fb1 ♘e4 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♗xd7

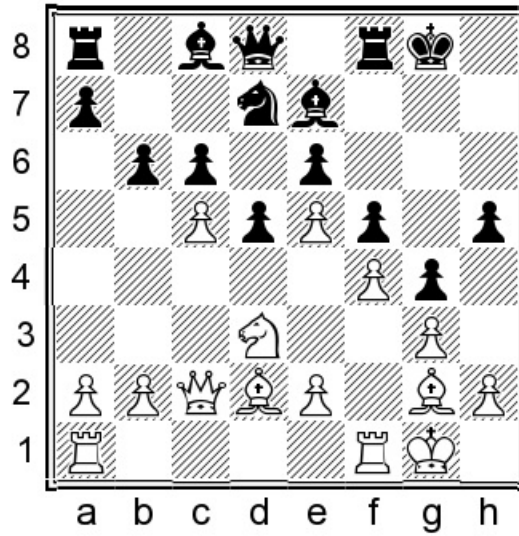


Position after: 17.♗xd7

17...♙xd7 [17...♞xd7 18.e3 ♖e7 19.b4 axb4 20.♞xb4 ♙a5 21.♞b3 was a bit better for White in Miron, L (2351) – Dobre, C (2256) Ploiesti 2007.] 18.♙e1 h4 19.e3 ♖e7 20.a4 ♙d8 21.b4 axb4 22.♞xb4 ♞a7 23.♞b2 ♖h7 24.a5 ♙c8 Many of these lines illustrate the theme that the bishop on g2 is for practical purposes a bad piece, and Black gets decent play as long as that's true.

B2) 13...♙e7!? 14.♙d2 [14.♙e3 h4 15.♞fb1 ♖g7 16.♗fd3 ♞h8 Unclear play.]

14...♞xe5 15.dxe5 ♞d7 16.♞d3 b6! Black shows his idea.

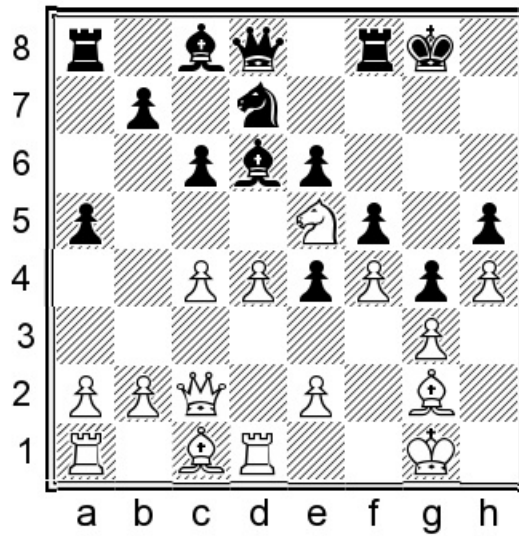


Position after: 16...b6

Now for instance 17.♙e3 ♜b8 18.♞fc1 bxc5 19.♞xc5 ♙xc5 20.♙xc5 ♞xc5 21.♞xc5 ♞xb2 with equality.

13...gxh3

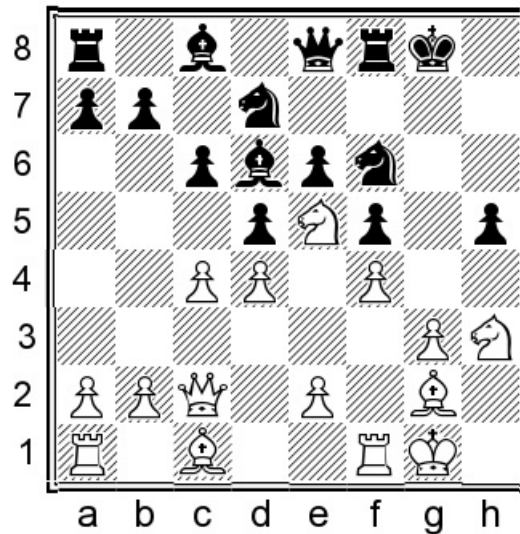
13...a5 14.♞d1 ♞e4 15.♞xe4 dxe4



Position after: 15...dxe4

16.c5 [16.e3 c5! 17.b3 cxd4 18.exd4 ♖f6 19.♙b2 ♘d7 is not so clear] 16...♙c7 17.♘xd7 ♚xd7 18.e3 b6 19.cxb6 ♙xb6 20.♙f1 ♙a6 21.b3 Now the difference in structures benefits White and he can play for a while looking for a tangible edge.

14.♘xh3 ♚e8

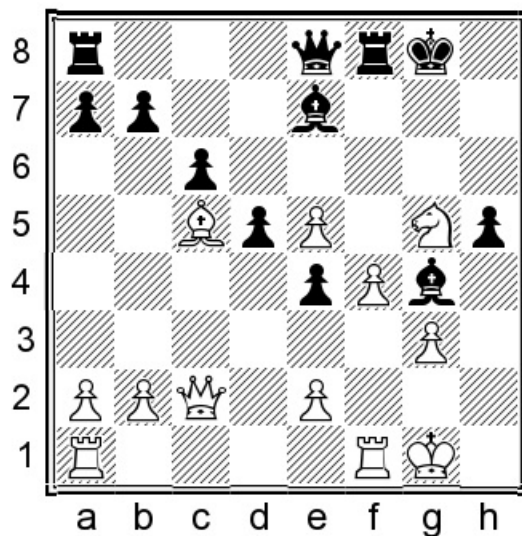


Position after: 14...♚e8

15.♘g5

15.♙d2 ♘e4 16.♙e3 ♘df6 leads to complex play as well.

15...♘e4 16.♙xe4 fxe4 17.♙e3 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♙e7 19.cxd5 exd5 20.♙c5 ♙g4



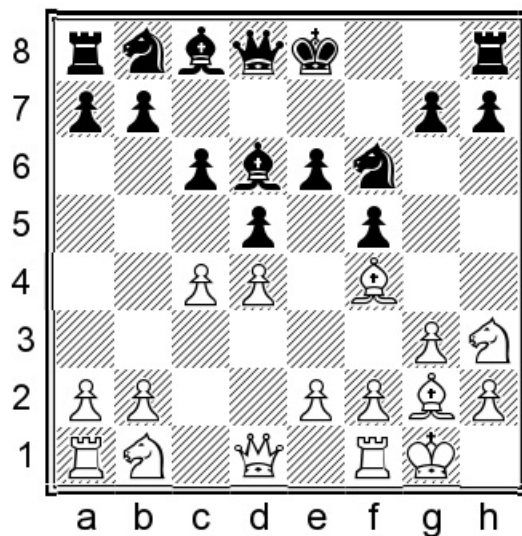
Position after: 20...♔g4

It is time to take stock. Regardless of the official engine evaluation we can be sure that the game to come will be very complicated.

Black wants to sacrifice an exchange on g5 (making use of the manoeuvre ...♖f5 followed by ...♗xg5) and then claim that his bishop on g4 is not only good but worth a whole rook. Meanwhile it is impossible for his own structure to be broken up by simple means so it remains to be seen what creative plan White can set in motion.

d) 6.0-0 ♕d6 7.♕f4 ♕e7 8.♘d2 0-0 9.♙c2 ♘h5

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♕g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♘h3 c6 6.0-0 ♕d6 7.♕f4



Position after: 7. ♕f4

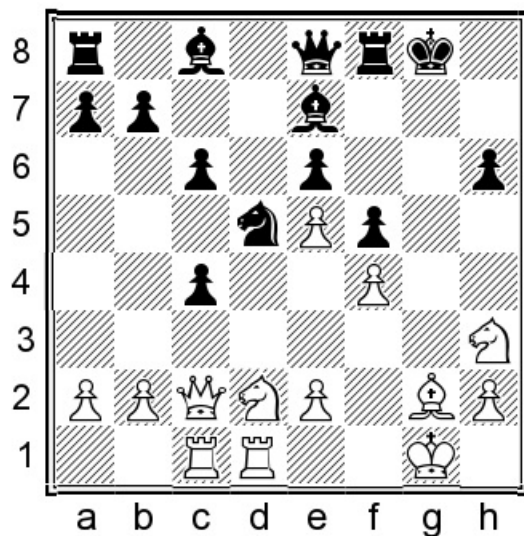
Challenging the dark-squared bishop. Interestingly, the f4-bishop will sometimes be used to take on b8, especially if Black weakens his kingside with ...h6.

7... ♗e7

It makes no sense for Black to exchange.

8. ♘d2

8. ♕c2 0-0 9. ♖d1!? With this cunning move White holds off on specifying details of his plan. [9. ♘d2 transposes to the main line.] 9...h6 10. ♘c3 ♕e8 11. ♖ac1 g5 12. ♕e5 ♘bd7 13. f3 ♘xe5 14. dxe5 ♘d7 15. f4 dxc4! 16. ♘b1 gxf4 17. gxf4 ♘b6 18. ♘d2 ♘d5

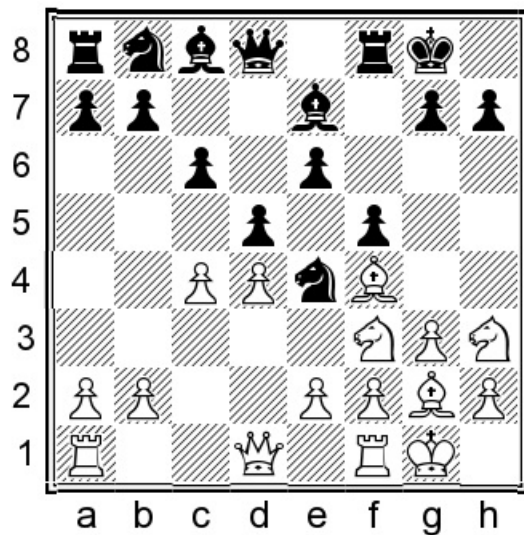


Position after: 18... Nxd5

We've seen this idea in subchapter c) already, and it's very typical of Black's play, especially if White has doubled f-pawns. 19. Nxc4 Qh8 20. Qf3 Qd7 ∞ With a highly complex game; the World Champion has managed to effectively sideline the knight on h3. ½-½ (55) Aronian, L (2792) – Carlsen, M (2855) Leuven (blitz) 2016.

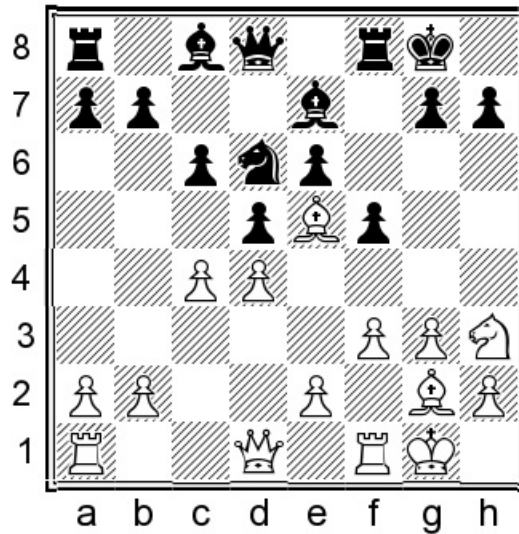
8...0-0 9. Qc2

9. Qf3 Qe4!



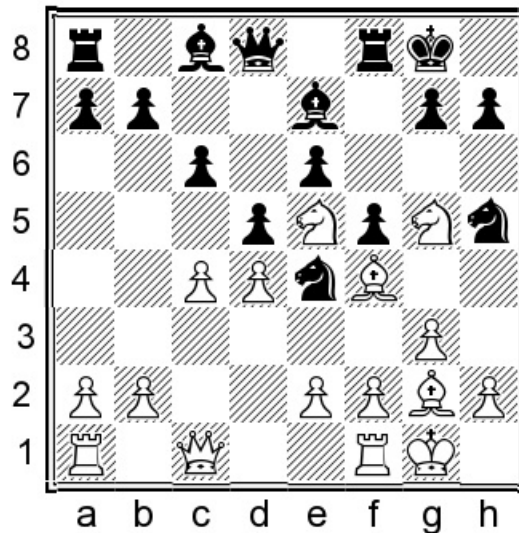
Position after: 9... Qe4!

Standard by Black; now ...g5 is in the air. 10.♞c1 Defending against ...g5 and thinking about ♜g5 in some cases. [10.♞e5 ♞d7 11.f3 ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 ♞d6!



Position after: 12...♞d6!

Another important and recurring motif. It may seem like White's pawn-chain takes over the game but after something like 13.♞xd6 ♞xd6 14.c5 ♞c7 15.f4 b6 16.b4 a5 17.a3 ♞a6 18.♞d2 ♞c4 19.cxb6 ♞xb6 20.♞fc1 axb4 ♞ there is, in fact, adequate counterplay.] 10...♞d7 11.♞hg5 ♞df6 12.♞e5 [12.♞xe4 dx4e4] 12...♞h5!?

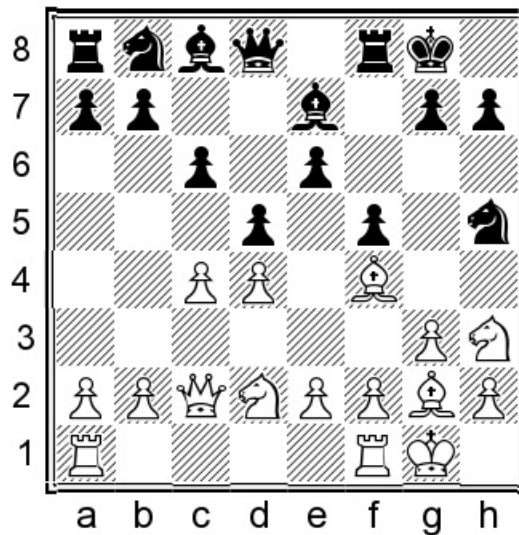


Position after: 12...♞h5!?

13.♞xe4 ♞xf4 14.gxf4 fxe4 15.♞e3 ♞d6 16.f3 ♞xe5 17.fxe5 exf3 18.♞xf3 ♞xf3

19. ♖xf3 ♕d7 20. ♜f1 ♜e7 21. ♗b3 ♕e8 The bishop got to g6 and Black was OK in Navara, D (2707) – Shabalov, A (2606) World Cup 2009.

9... ♖h5!?



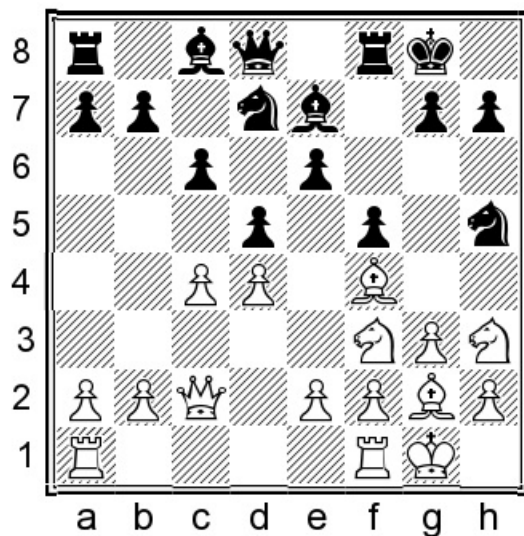
Position after: 9... ♖h5!?

We already saw this knight move a few times. Here Black wants to eliminate the f4-bishop without the complications involved in playing ...h6-g5.

9...h6!?! – see the next subchapter.

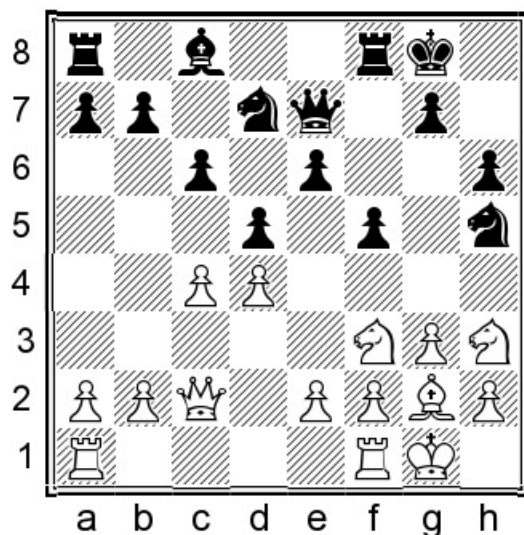
10. ♖f3 ♖xf4

Black can delay taking: 10... ♖d7!?



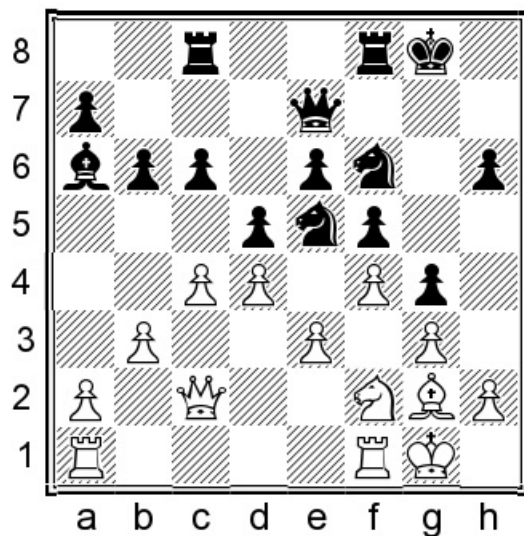
Position after: 10...♞d7!?

A) Of course, now the bishop might fly the nest and what more logical than to try and exchange it for its opposite number. 11.♙g5 h6 12.♙xe7 ♚xe7



Position after: 12...♚xe7

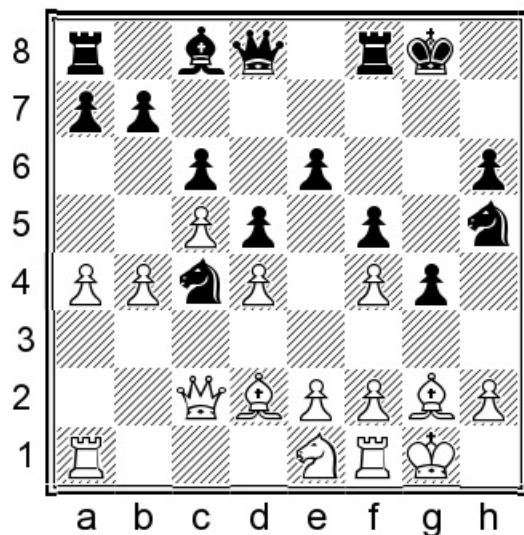
13.e3 [13.♞e1 g5 14.♞d3 b6! 15.e3 ♙a6 16.b3 ♞hf6 17.f3 ♜ac8 18.♞hf2 c5 gives Black counterplay.] 13...g5 14.♞e1 b6 15.f4 g4 16.♞f2 ♙a6 17.b3 ♞hf6 18.♞ed3 ♜ac8 19.♞e5 ♞xe5



Position after: 19... Nxe5

20.dxe5 [or, similarly, 20.fxe5 Nh7 21.Nd3 c5 22.Nf4 cxd4! 23.exd4 Bfd8 24.Bf2 Ng5] 20... Nd7 21.Bfd1 h5 22.Bac1 h4 23.Qf1 Kg7 when the tension in the pawn-structure leaves Black with good chances.

B) 11.Qd2!? Qd6 12.e3 [12.b4 h6 13.a4 g5! 14.Ne1 g4 15.Nf4 Qxf4 16.gxf4 Nb6 17.c5 Nc4

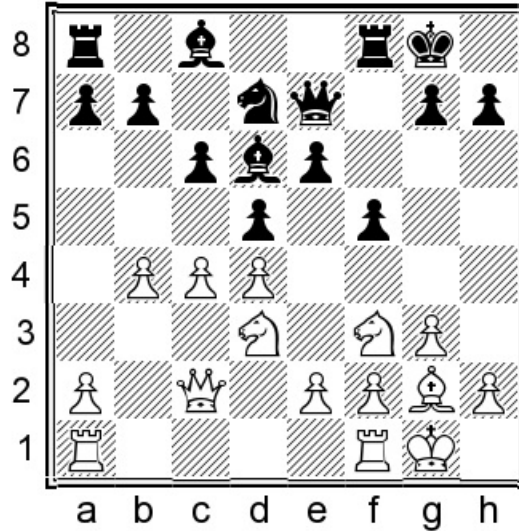


Position after: 17... Nc4

His dark-squared bishop is gone but Black is not positionally worse here, because he has squares for his knights and the bishop can come out via d7.] 12... Nhf6 13.Nf4 Be8

14. ♖d3 a5 15. ♜fc1 ♗e4 16. ♕e1 b6

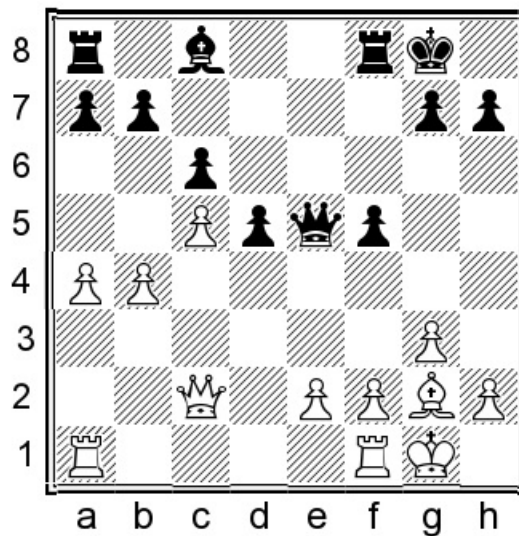
11. ♗xf4 ♕d6 12. ♗d3 ♗d7 13. b4 ♖e7



Position after: 13... ♖e7

14. ♜ab1

A) 14.c5 White shouldn't do this without compulsion; closing the position like this usually only gives Black free rein in the centre. 14... ♕c7 15. a4 e5 16. dxex5 ♗xe5 17. ♗fxe5 ♕xe5 18. ♗xe5 ♖xe5

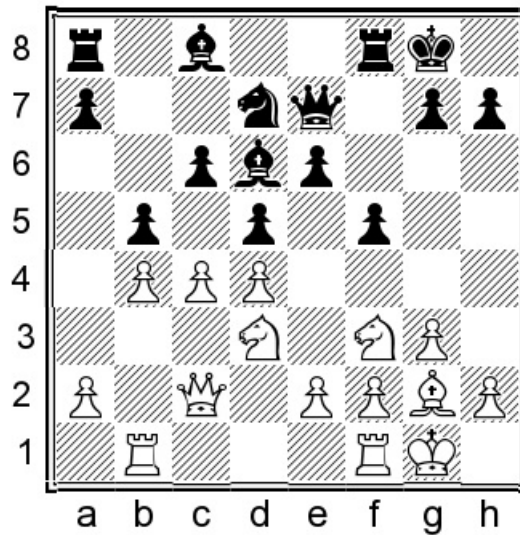


Position after: 18... ♖xe5

Now, for instance, there could follow 19.e3 a6 20.♖ab1 ♔d7 21.♞fd1 g5 22.b5 axb5 23.axb5 f4↗ and Black has totally solved his opening issues.

B) 14.♙c3 b5 15.c5 ♕c7 16.a4 ♕a6! White has to close the queenside on pain of ...bxa4, so Black is free to push pawns on the other side. 17.a5 ♞ae8 18.♗fe5 ♗xe5 19.dxe5 g5 20.f4 ♕c8=

14...b5!

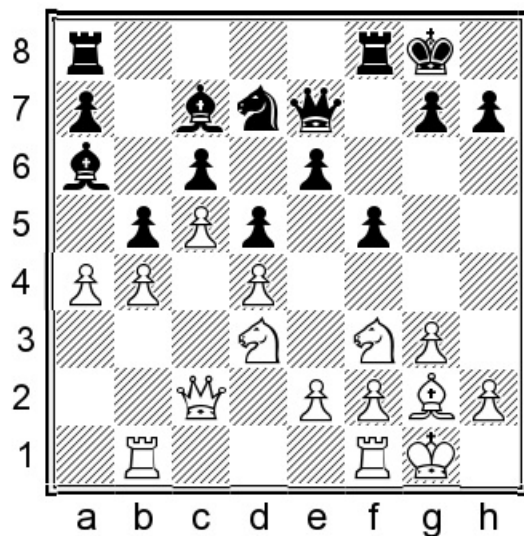


Position after: 14...b5!

A very standard reaction.

15.cxd5

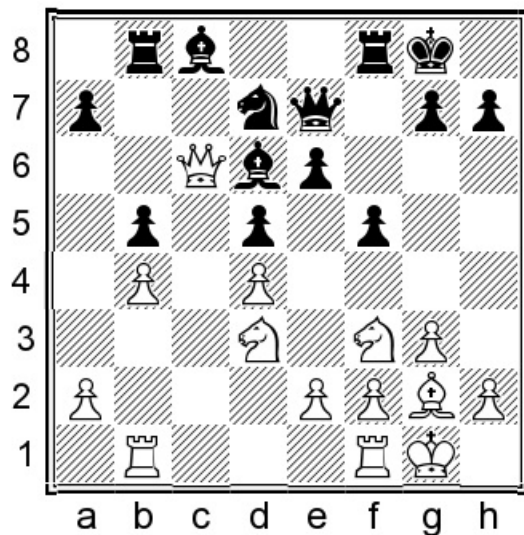
15.c5 ♕c7 16.a4 ♕a6!



Position after: 16...♔a6!

Black intends ...bxa4 again. In all these lines Black just wants the queenside to be closed. 17.a5 ♖ae8 18.♘fe5 ♗xe5 19.♘xe5 ♔xe5 20.dxe5 f4∞

15...cxd5 16.♚c6 ♖b8

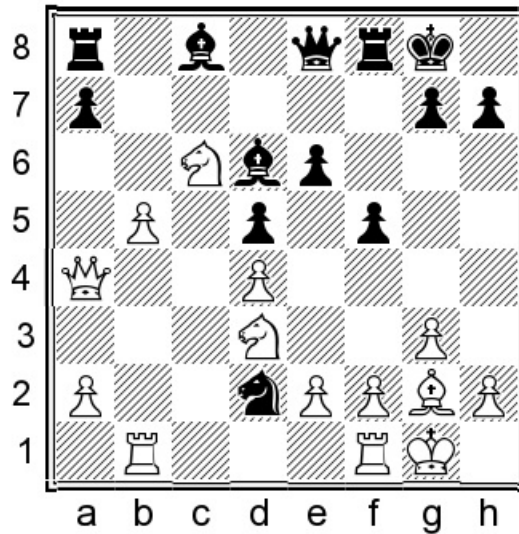


Position after: 16...♖b8

Black wants to put his knight on b6.

17.♘fe5 a6

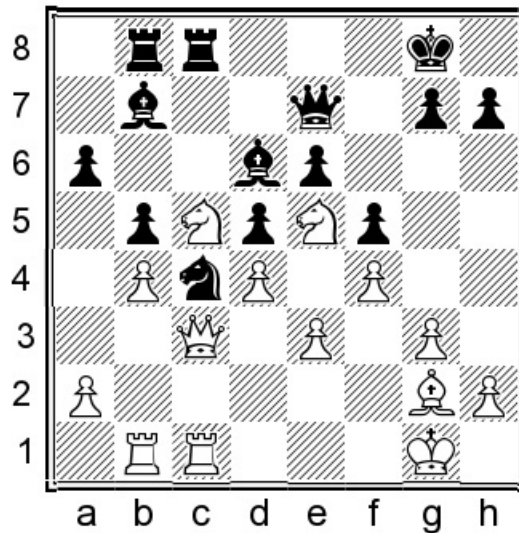
Black can also choose to sacrifice his b-pawn with 17...♖b6!? 18.♙xb5 ♘c4 19.♚a4 ♘d2 20.♘c6 ♜e8 21.b5 ♜a8



Position after: 21...♜a8

22.♘ce5 [Specifically this knight: 22.♘de5? a6! 23.b6 ♜b7 and Black wins. The knight on c6 is in trouble, as well as the White rooks.] 22...♜b7 23.♚c2 ♘xb1 24.♜xb1 ♜e7 25.e3 ♜fc8 White has compensation but not more than that.

18.♚c3 ♘b6 19.♘c5 ♜b7 20.f4 ♜fc8 21.♜fc1 ♘c4 22.e3

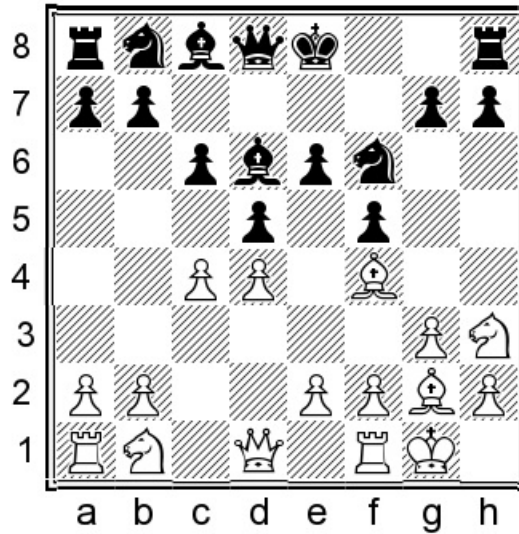


Position after: 22.e3

Both sides are moving slowly but the situation is no less tense for that.

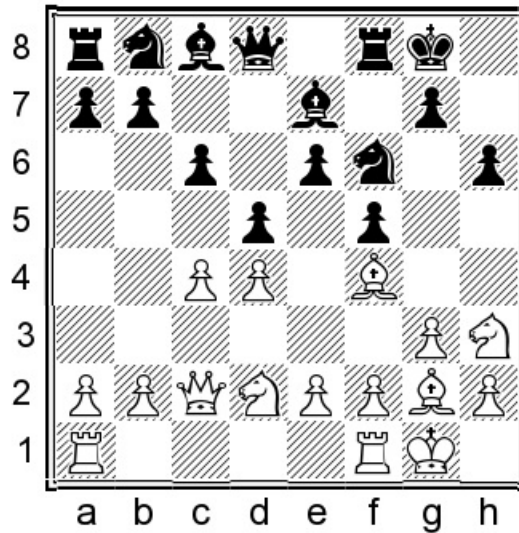
e) 6.0-0 ♖d6 7.♙f4 ♜e7 8.♞d2 0-0 9.♚c2 h6

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♞f6 3.♙g2 e6 4.c4 d5 5.♞h3 c6 6.0-0 ♖d6 7.♙f4



Position after: 7. ♙f4

7...♜e7 8.♞d2 0-0 9.♚c2 h6!?



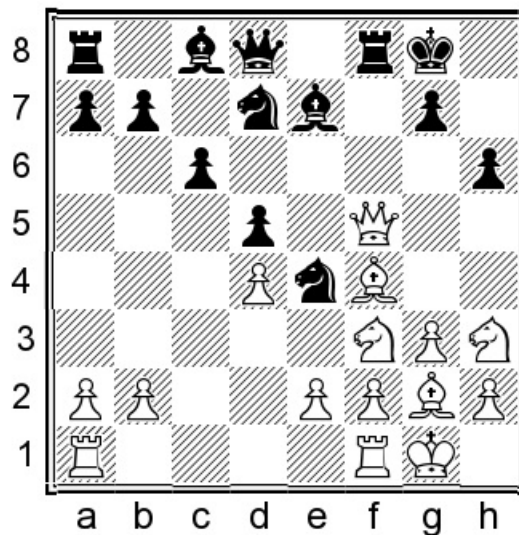
Position after: 9...h6!?

This move is both sharp and logical: Black makes the h3-knight relocate (avoiding h3-g5) and thus narrows down his own plans.

10. Qxb8

Black has weakened the g6-square and White is trying to extract maximum capital from that fact.

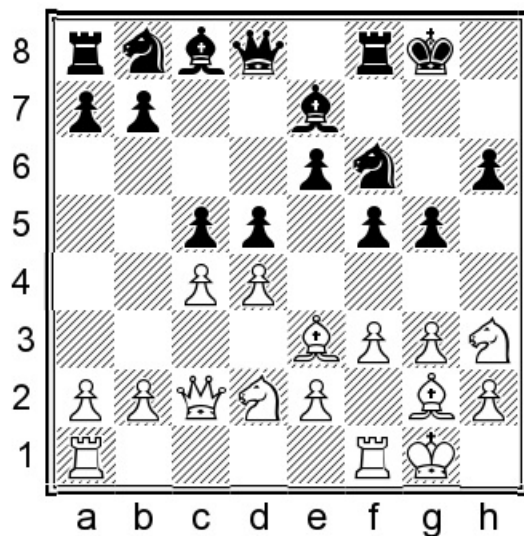
A) Another interesting line goes $10. \text{Nf3} \text{Nbd7}!$? It's important to understand that sometimes (as here) the f5-pawn can be protected tactically. [$10...g5$ $11. \text{Qxb8} \text{Rxb8}$ $12. \text{Ne5} \text{Qe8}$] $11. \text{cxd5} \text{exd5}!$ White has queen problems if he takes: $12. \text{Qxf5} \text{Ne4}!$



Position after: $12... \text{Ne4}!$

$13. \text{Qg6}$ [Or $13. \text{Qh5} \text{Ndf6}$ $14. \text{Qg6} \text{Ne8}$] $13... \text{Rf7}!$

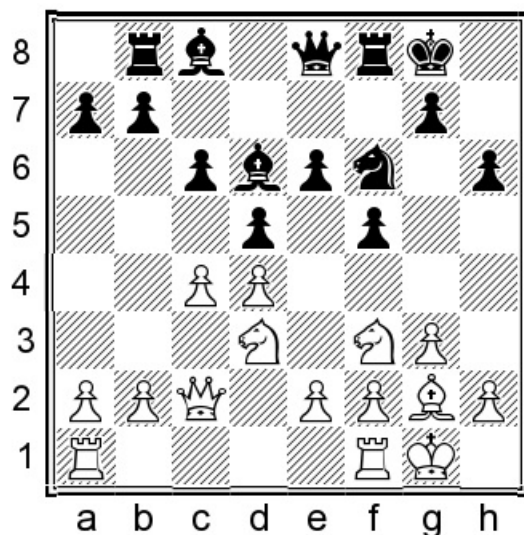
B) $10. \text{f3}!$? A highly sensible move, preparing the f2-square for the king's knight.
 $10...g5$ $11. \text{Qe3} \text{c5}!$?N



Position after: 11...c5!?N

It is important to have conviction when playing chess! 12.♘b3 [12.dxc5 d4 13.♙f2 ♘c6 14.a3 a5 15.e4 dxe3 16.♙xe3 e5 with compensation, but the situation is evolving.] 12...cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.f4 g4 17.♘f2 ♙a6 Black has enough play in this open position.

10...♖xb8 11.♘f4 ♔e8 12.♘f3 ♙d6 13.♘d3



Position after: 13.♘d3

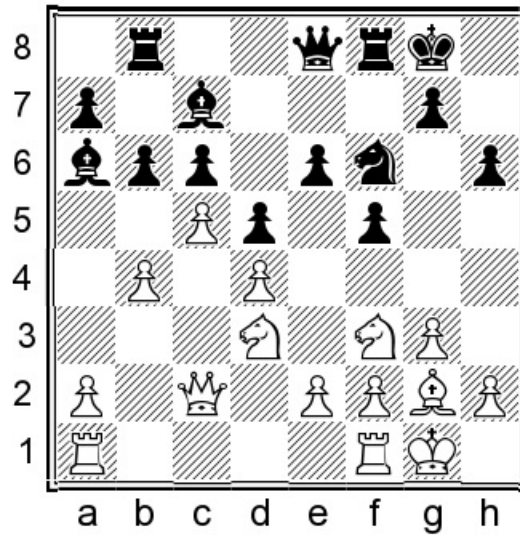
This is the logical direction in which White's play was headed. The next few moves are

also not rocket science: b4, a4 and active plans on the queenside.

13...b6! 14.b4

14.♘fe5 c5!⇒

14...♙a6 15.c5 ♙c7!?N



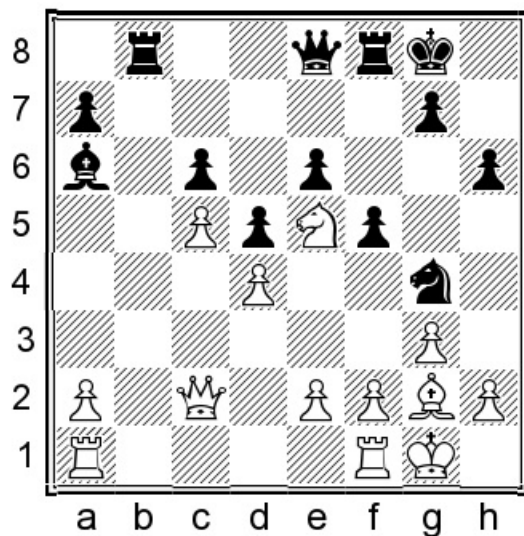
Position after: 15...♙c7!?N

A new idea as far as I can tell. Note the tactical point on move 17.

16.cxb6

There are other possible reactions:

A) 16.♘fe5 ♙xe5 17.♘xe5 bxc5 18.bxc5 ♘g4

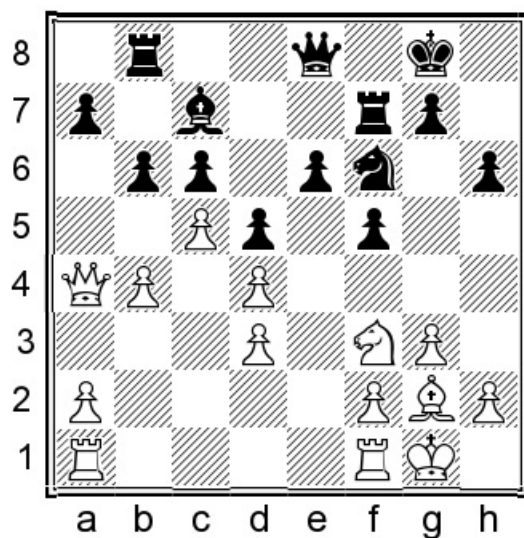


Position after: 18... Nf4

19. Nf3 [19. Nf4 fxg4 fxg4 20. Rfe1 Qf7 21. e3 Qc4=] 19...e5! Black starts to develop an initiative, e.g. 20. h3 e4 21. hxg4 exf3 22. Qxf3 f4 23. Qd2 Qg6 and the attack is gathering force.

B) 16. Rfc1 Qxd3! An important motif we have already seen in these pages. 17. Qxd3 bxc5 18. bxc5 e5= Black has obtained a good game.

C) 16. Qa4 Qxd3! 17. exd3 Rf7

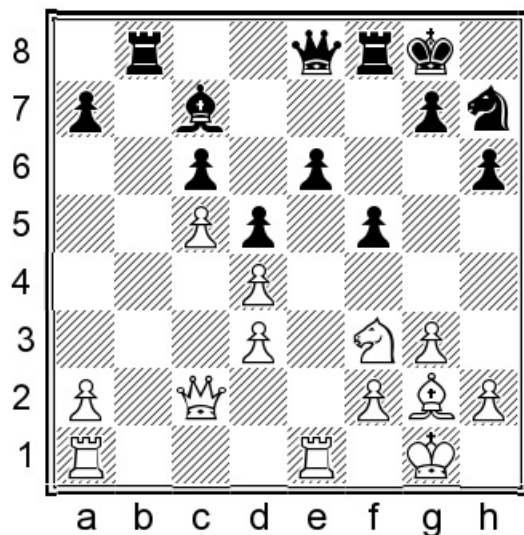


Position after: 17... Rf7

The e6-pawn is not a weakness here, but actually the g2-bishop is! The Stonewall

structure gives it no diagonals to work with. 18.cxb6 [18.♖fe1 b5 19.♚c2 a5 20.a3 ♘d7!?] 18...axb6 19.♖ac1 b5 20.♚c2 ♖b6=

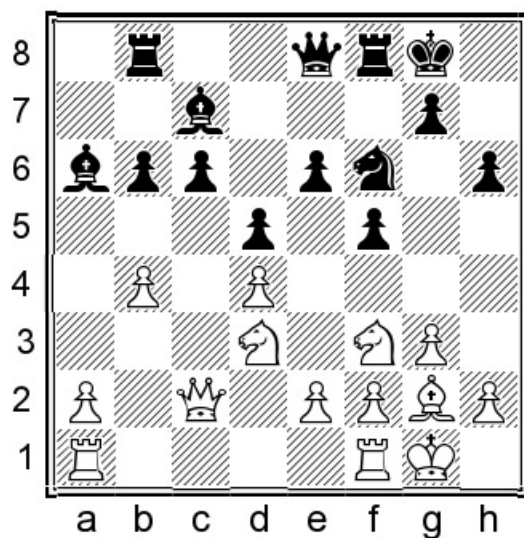
D) 16.♖fe1 ♙xd3 17.exd3 Here too the e6-pawn is not weak at all. [17.♚xd3 bxc5 18.bxc5 e5 19.dxe5 ♘e4 20.♖ab1 ♙xe5 21.e3 ♙f6=] 17...bxc5 18.bxc5 ♘h7!



Position after: 18...♘h7!

19.♖e2 ♘g5 20.♖ae1 ♖f6 21.h4 ♘xf3+ 22.♙xf3 g5 Here the opposite-colored bishops simply favor Black a lot.

16...axb6



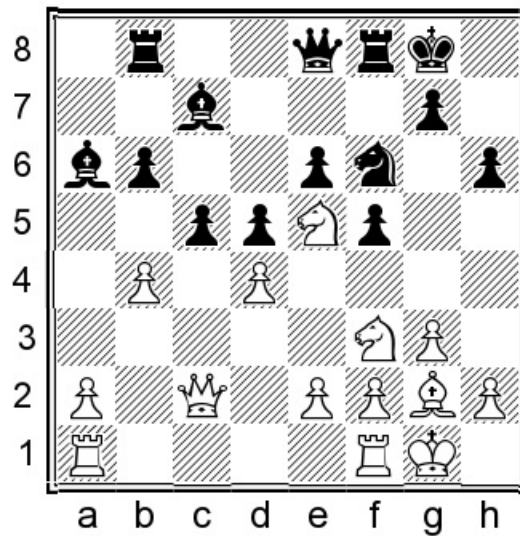
Position after: 16...axb6

17. ♖de5

A) 17. ♖fe5 ♗g4! 18. ♚xc6 ♜xe5 19. ♚xe8 ♜fxe8 20. ♖xe5 ♜xe2 21. ♜fc1 ♗xe5
22. dxe5 b5 23. ♜f1 ♜xf1 24. ♜xf1 f4 Black is doing OK.

B) 17. ♜fc1 ♜c4 18. ♖fe5 b5∞

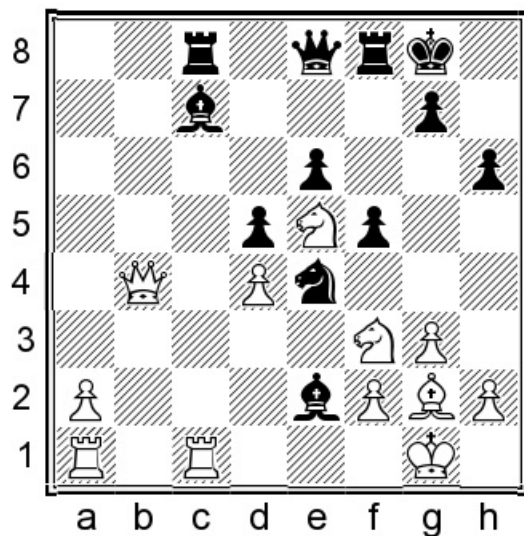
17...c5!!



Position after: 17...c5!!

18. bxc5 bxc5 19. dxc5

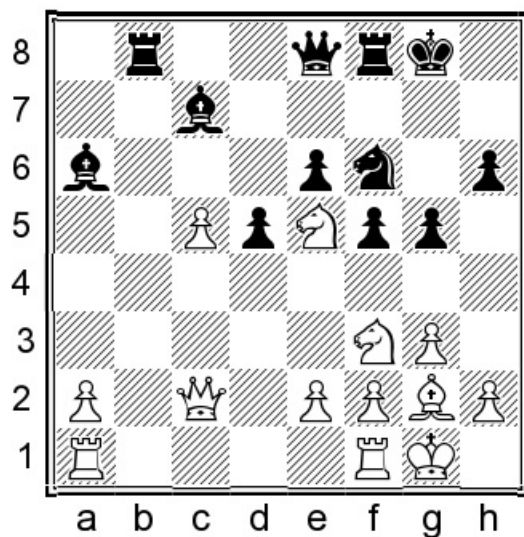
19. ♚xc5 ♜c8 20. ♚b4 ♜xe2 21. ♜fc1 ♗e4



Position after: 21...♞e4

22.a4 ♔d6 23.♞xc8 ♜xc8 24.♞b2 ♔a6 With unclear play. Black intends ...g5 next to challenge the knights.

19...g5



Position after: 19...g5

Black has compensation. His bishops are strong now and White's knights have few outposts.

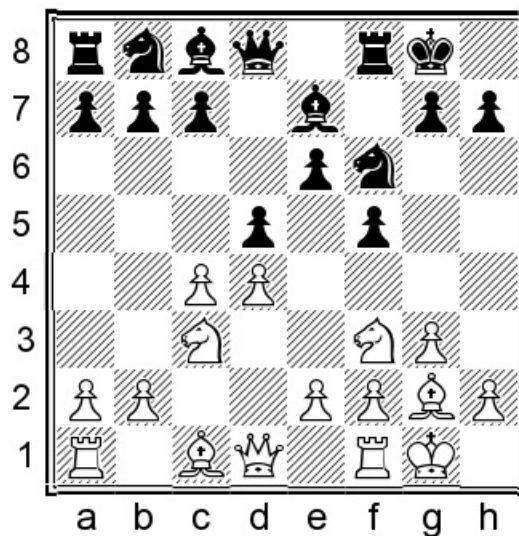
20.♘d3 e5 21.♖fb1 e4 22.♗b4 ♕c4 23.♘d4 ♗d7 24.c6 ♗e5

The position is still a mess but with his central control and the push ...f4 coming, Black is not worse.

Part II
Systems with g3 and ♘f3 (Classical approach with ...♙e7)

Chapter 2
7.♘c3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.♘c3



Chapter Guide

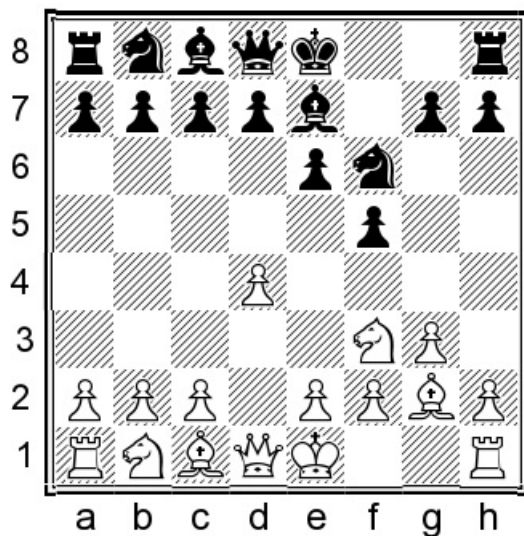
Chapter 2 – 7.♘c3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.♘c3 c6

- a) 8.b3
- b) 8.♙f4
- c) 8.♚c2 ♚e8
- d) 8.♚c2 ♘e4

a) 8.b3

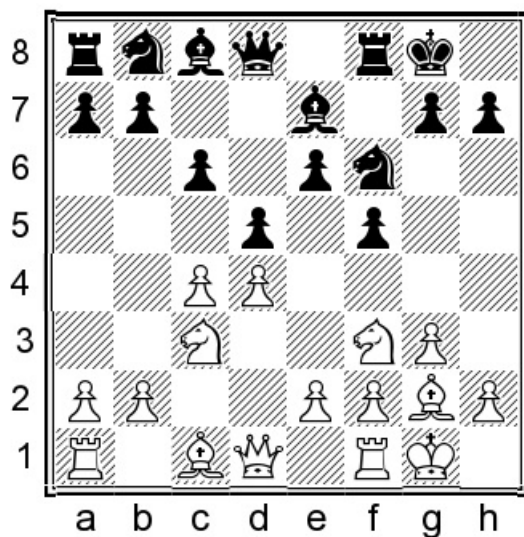
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7!?



Position after: 4...♔e7!?

Other move-orders are possible wherein Black only commits to this after White has gone ♘c3, but let's assume White follows the most flexible path.

5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.♘c3 c6



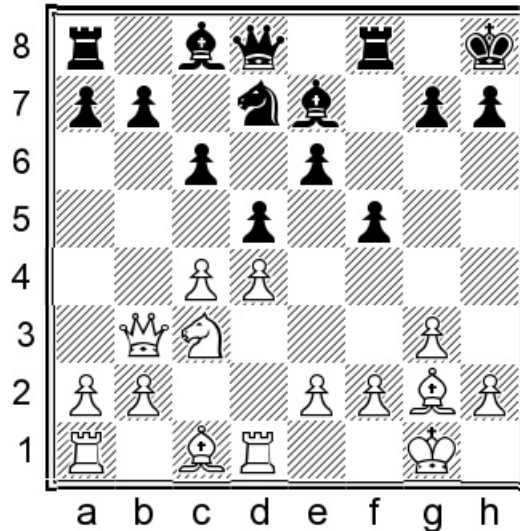
Position after: 7...c6

Both sides can consider this to be the canonical main position of the lines with ♘c3. We sometimes call this the Old Stonewall; as will be seen, placing the knight on c3 is not necessarily most critical. Black can get counterplay if he continues accurately.

We will also see a noteworthy plan that involves playing ...♖e8-h5 and was originally developed by Botvinnik.

8.b3

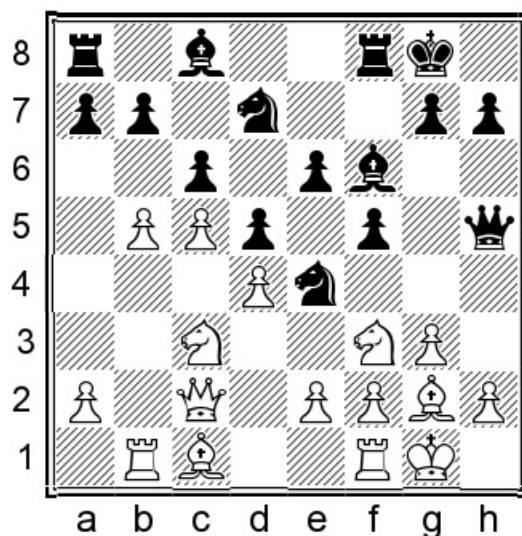
A) An classic game from the old masters continued 8.♖b3 ♔h8 9.♘e5 ♘bd7 10.♘xd7 ♘xd7 11.♞d1



Position after: 11.♞d1

11...♘b6! A good reaction. 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♘a4 ♘xa4 [13...♘c4?! But this was a bit too ambitious: 14.♘c5 b6 15.♘d3 ♕f6 16.♖c2 ♕d7 17.e3 ♘d6 18.a4! a5 19.b3 ♞e8 20.♕a3 with an edge for White, Capablanca, J – Botvinnik, M Moscow 1936.]
14.♖xa4 ♕d6 15.e3 g5 Black has an easy game.

B) 8.♞b1 Another old game, this time with Reshevsky as White, continued as follows:
8...♖e8 9.c5 ♖h5 10.b4 ♘e4 11.♖c2 ♘d7 12.b5 ♕f6



Position after: 12...♔f6

We can now see a difference between Black having his bishop on d6 (the modern approach) versus e7 (the ‘Classical Stonewall’.) White’s pawn pushes on the queenside come without tempo and the bishop can quickly get onto the long diagonal, where it supports ...e5. 13.♔f4 ♕e8 14.♔c7 ♖f7 15.♔a5 e5 16.e3 ♗xc3 17.♔xc3 e4 18.♗d2 ♗f8 Black had equalised in Reshevsky, S – Botvinnik, M Nottingham 1936.

8...♕e8

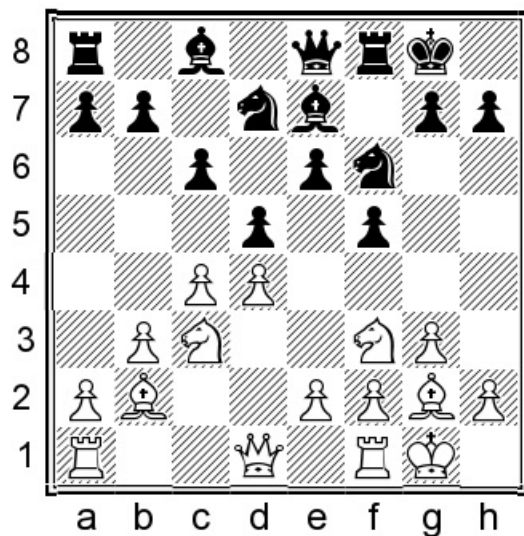
Botvinnik’s idea when playing this move was to bring the queen to h5, but on e8 she also fulfils other duties such as defending the e6-pawn.

9.♔b2

A) 9.a4 a5 10.♔a3 ♔xa3 Black’s light-squared bishop will not be bad forever, so there is no special reason to fear this exchange. A sample line could go 11.♖xa3 b6 12.♖a2 ♗bd7 13.♖c2 ♔a6 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♗a2 ♖c8 16.b4 ♔c4 with approximate equality.

B) Something like 9.♗e5 ♗bd7 10.♗d3 ♗e4 11.♔b2 ♔d6 12.c5 ♔c7 13.f4 b6 14.♖c1 ♔b7 15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♗e5 ♗f6 is likewise fine for Black.

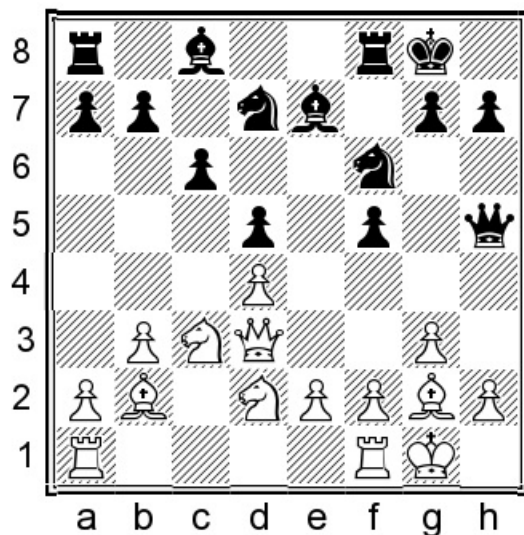
9...♗bd7



Position after: 9... Nbd7

10.e3

The main move intends a knight transfer to f4. The following is an older idea: 10. Qd3 Qh5 11. cxd5 exd5 12. Nd2

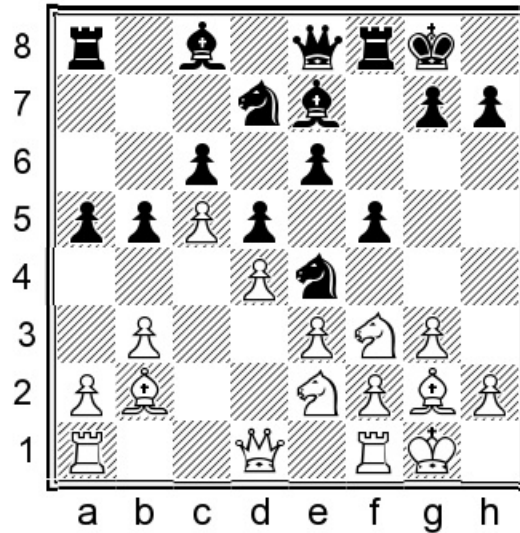


Position after: 12. Nd2

With the queen on d3, White is able to hold the whole centre together and now stands ready for the thrusts f3 and e4. 12... Ne4 13. f3 Nxc3 14. Qxc3 f4 ! Again we refer to a Botvinnik game! 15. Rfe1 Qd6 16. Nf1 Rf7 17. e3 fxg3 18. Nxc3 Qh4 . Black has decent

attacking chances. 0-1 (30) Flohr, S – Botvinnik, M Leningrad 1933.

10...♘e4 11.♘e2 b5!? 12.c5 a5

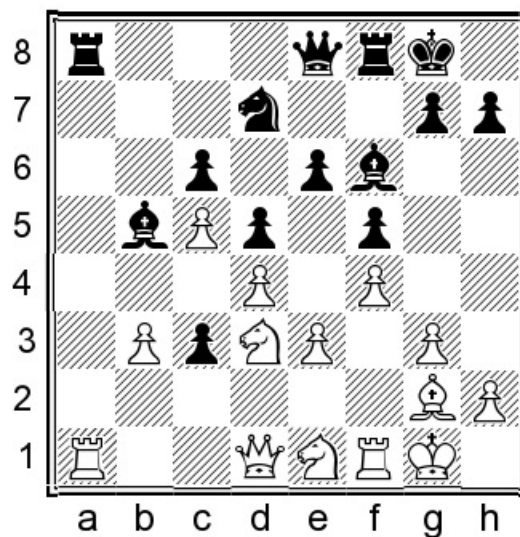


Position after: 12...a5

This plan is from the ‘Closed Catalan’ but is applicable to this Dutch position.

13.♘f4 ♕f6 14.♖c2

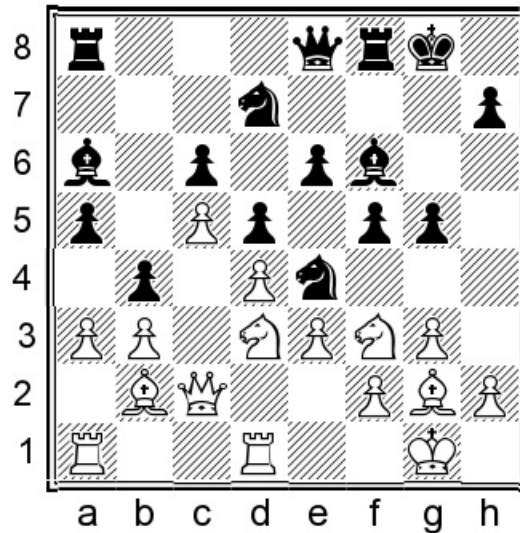
14.♘d3 b4 15.a3 ♕a6 16.axb4 axb4 17.♘fe1 ♕b5 18.f3 ♘c3 19.♕xc3 bxc3 20.f4



Position after: 20.f4

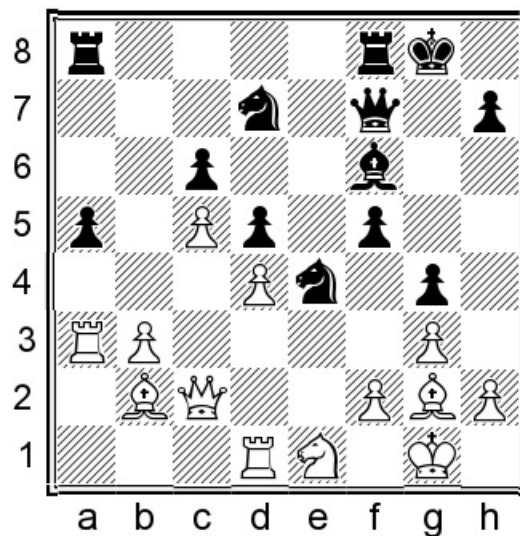
20...g5! A thematic push; Black gets air on the kingside and ensures an interesting fight.
 21.♖f2 ♜xa1 22.♚xa1 gxf4 23.gxf4 ♔h4 24.♖a2 ♕h8∞

14...♙a6 15.♖fd1 b4 16.a3 g5 17.♘d3



Position after: 17.♘d3

17...♙xd3! 18.♖xd3 g4 19.♘e1 bxa3 20.♖xa3 e5 21.♖d1 exd4 22.exd4 ♚f7

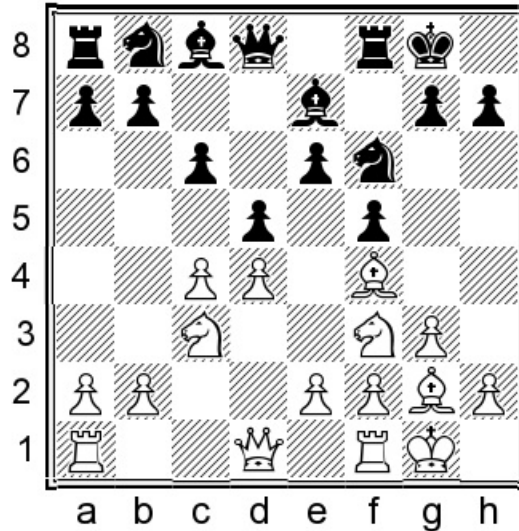


Position after: 22...♚f7

Black has good counterplay. A draw was agreed here in Boni, R – Posada, C corr. 2011.

b) 8. ♖f4

1.d4 f5 2. ♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4. ♖g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7. ♘c3 c6 8. ♖f4

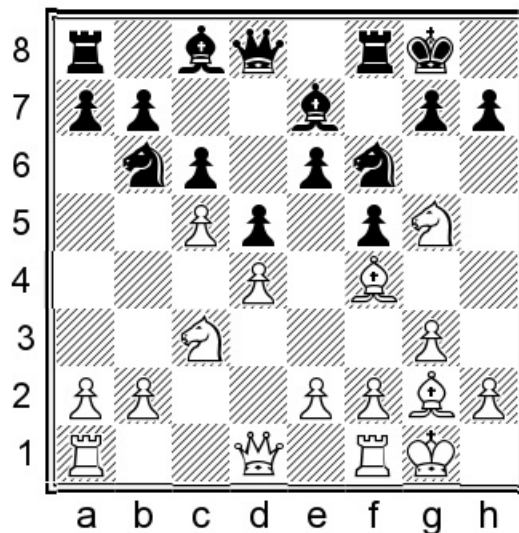


Position after: 8. ♖f4

This is just a developing move with no structural implications to consider, given that Black's bishop is not on d6.

8... ♘bd7 9. ♙c2

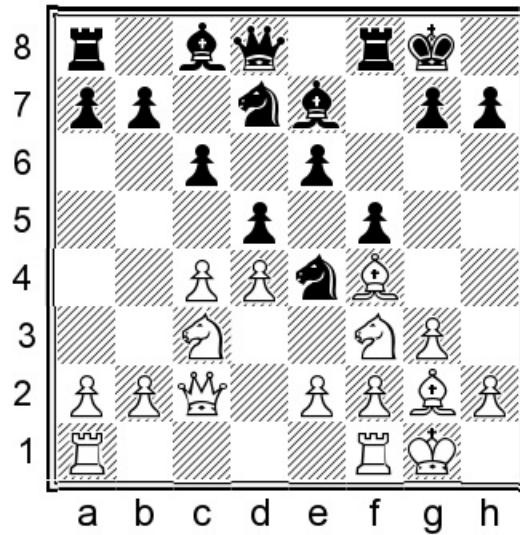
The direct attempt 9. ♘g5 ♘b6 10.c5



Position after: 10.c5

leads only to unclear play after 10...h6! 11.cxb6 hxg5 12.♙xg5 axb6∞.

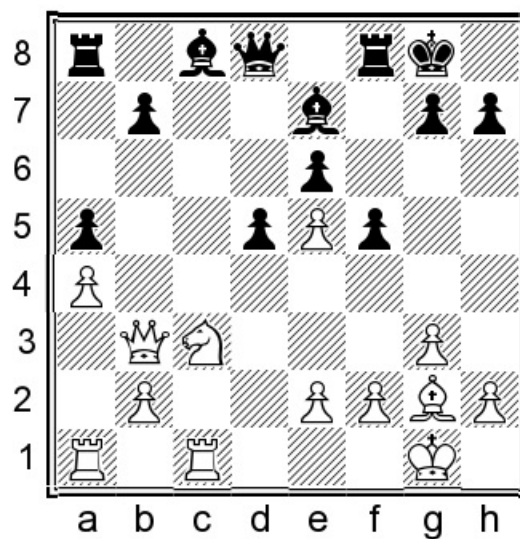
9...♘e4



Position after: 9...♘e4

10.♞ad1

10.♘e5 ♘xe5 11.♙xe5 ♘d6 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♚b3 ♘c4 14.♞fc1 a5 15.a4 ♘xe5 16.dxe5



Position after: 16.dxe5

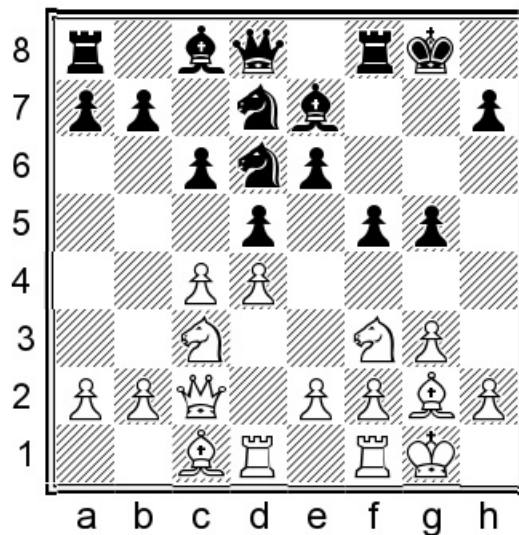
In this relatively simplified position Black is best off activating his rook via an unusual but noteworthy route: 16...♖a6 17.♘b5 ♜b6 18.e3 ♙d7 19.♙f1 ♙b4 20.♔g2 ♚e8 21.f4 ♜c6 22.♚d1 ♜xc1 23.♜xc1 g5=

10...g5

Why would you not play this move?

11.♙e3

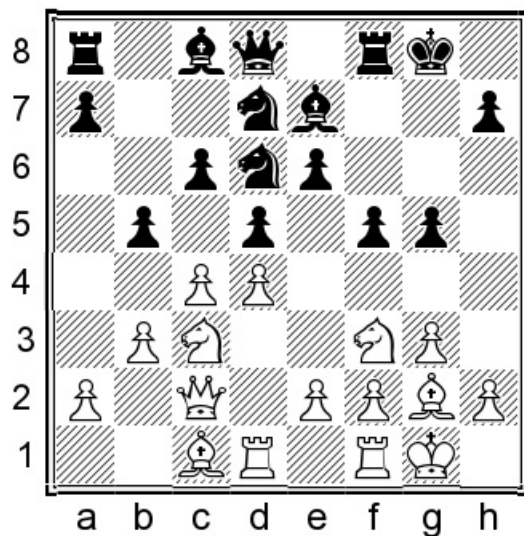
11.♙c1 ♘d6!



Position after: 11...♘d6!

One of the key themes here and an important difference when compared to the Modern brand of Stonewall where the bishop occupies this square.

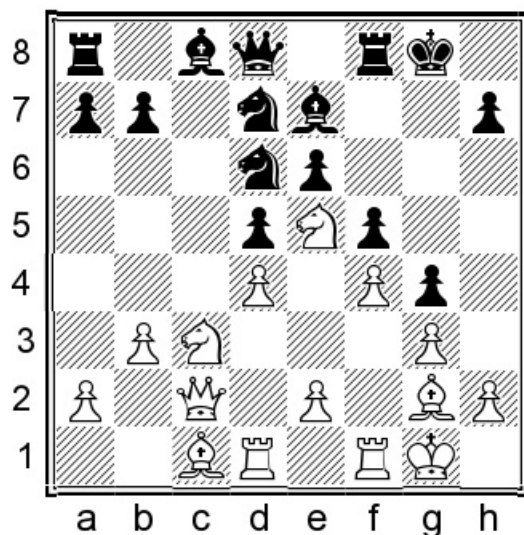
A) White can wait a bit: 12.b3 b5!?



Position after: 12...b5!?

Black strengthens his pressure on the c4-pawn. 13.cxb5 [13.♘e5 ♖b7 14.c5 ♘f7 15.♘d3 ♗f6 16.e3 ♗g7 17.f3 ♘f6 with the idea of ...g4, e.g. 18.♘e2 g4 is unclear.] 13...cxb5 14.♗a3 ♘e4 15.♗xe7 ♔xe7 16.♘xb5 ♗a6 17.a4 ♖fc8 18.♔b2 ♗xb5 19.axb5 ♔b4= Black is OK here.

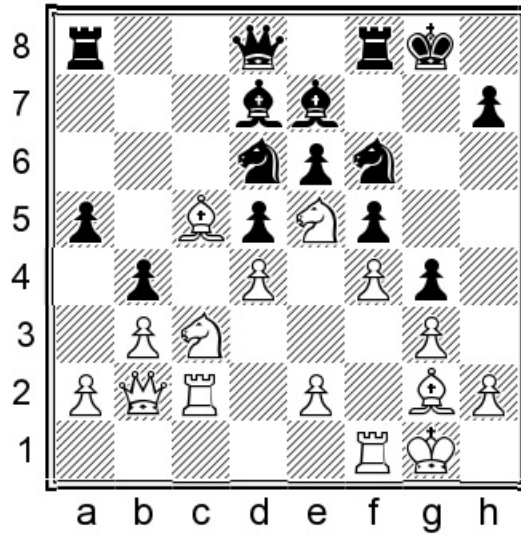
B) 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♘e5 ♗f6!? [13...♘b6? 14.g4± White was much better in Li Chao (2751) – Bellin, R (2350) Gibraltar 2016.] 14.f4 g4 15.b3 ♗e7!



Position after: 15...♗e7!

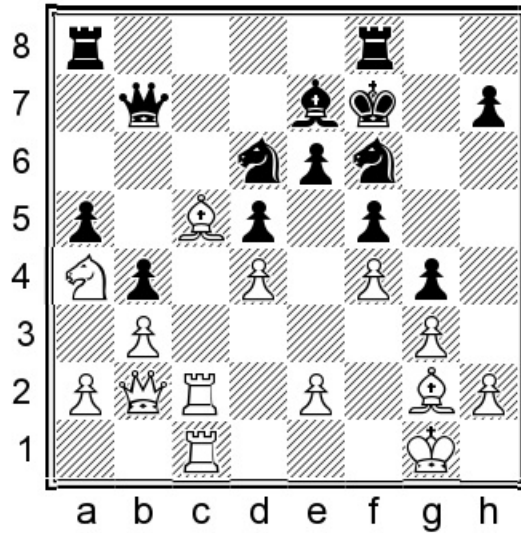
Now White can no longer undermine the centre and the f6-square will be ideal for the

d7-knight. 16.♙a3 ♘f6 17.♚b2 ♙d7 18.♖c1 a5 19.♖c2 b5 20.♙c5 b4



Position after: 20...b4

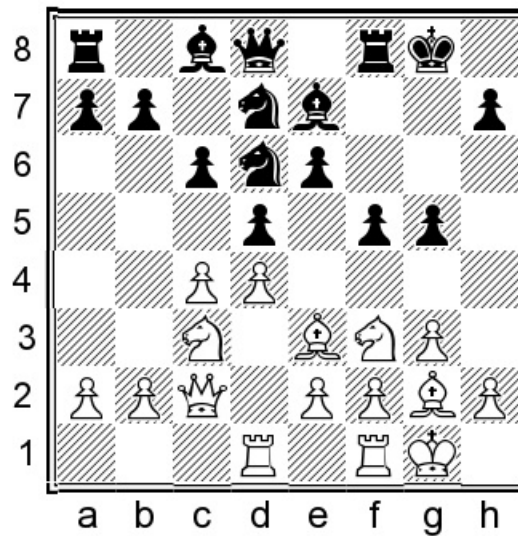
21.♘xd7 [21.♘a4 ♙xa4 22.bxa4 ♚e8 23.♚b3 ♘de4 24.♖fc1 ♘xc5 25.dxc5 ♖c8 26.e3 ♖c7= Black is fine here.] 21...♚xd7 22.♘a4 ♚b7 23.♖fc1 ♙f7!



Position after: 23...♙f7!!

A clever move, consolidating the base of the pawn chain and preparing ...♖fc8. Black is not worse here and exchanges of all pieces bar the g2-bishop are likely, e.g. 24.♙b6 ♖fc8 25.♖c7 ♖xc7 26.♖xc7 ♚b8 27.♚c2 ♖a6 28.♚c6 ♘fe8 29.♖d7 ♘f6 30.♖c7 ♘fe8 31.♖xe7+ ♙xe7 32.♙d8+ ♚xd8 33.♚xa6 ♘f6= with a decent ending for Black.

11...♖d6!?



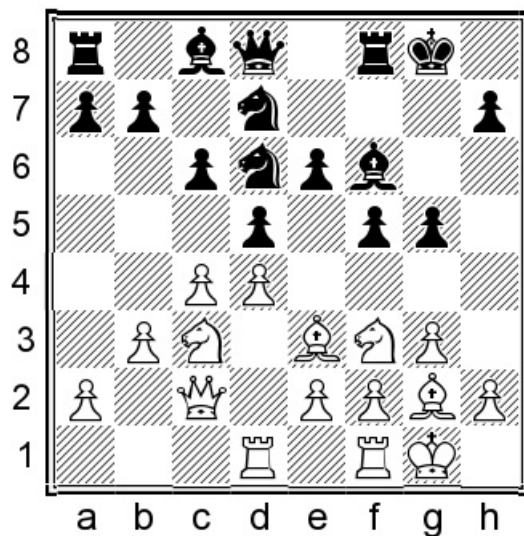
Position after: 11...♖d6!?

12.b3!?

12.c5 ♗f7 13.b4 a6 14.a3 ♙f6 15.a4 ♙g7 16.♖d2 e5 17.dxe5 ♗dxe5 0-1 (35) Bernard, C (2335) – Spassky, B (2570) Angers 1990

12...b6!?

This seems best. Meanwhile 12...♙f6?! doesn't equalise as long as White is patient in how he completes mobilisation, especially that of his dark-squared bishop.

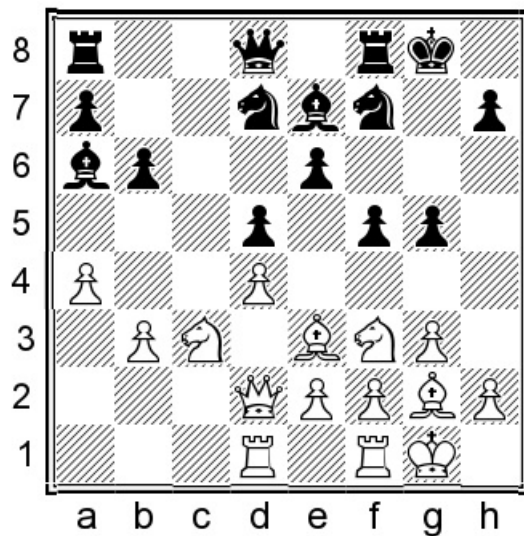


Position after: 12... ♖f6?!

13. ♘c1! ♜f7 14. ♘a3 ♘e4 15. ♘xe4! ♜xe4 16. ♘e5 ♘xe5 17. dxe5 White is better. ½ – ½
 (44) Eljanov, P (2723) – Rapport, R (2671) Biel 2015

13. ♘e5

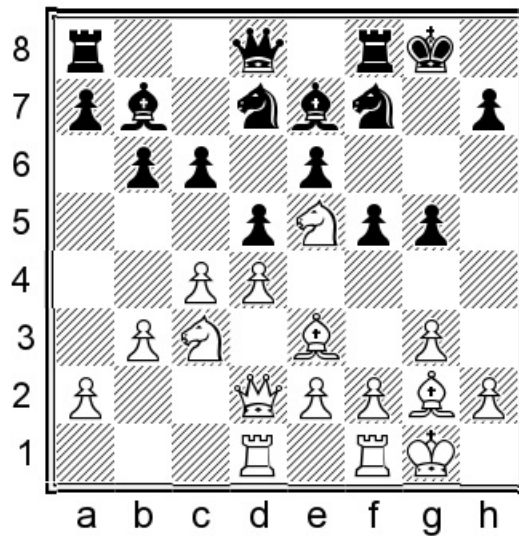
13. ♙d2 ♘f7 14. a4 ♘a6 15. cxd5 cxd5



Position after: 15...cxd5

Now something like 16. ♘b5 g4 17. ♘e1 ♘f6 18. ♘d3 ♘xb5 19. axb5 ♙d7 is fully satisfactory for Black.

13...♖b7 14.♙d2 ♘f7



Position after: 14...♘f7

15.♘xd7

15.♘d3 ♘d6 16.cxd5 exd5=

15...♙xd7 16.f3

Setting up the idea of ♕f2 and e4, but the position is unclear rather than better for either side after a normal reply.

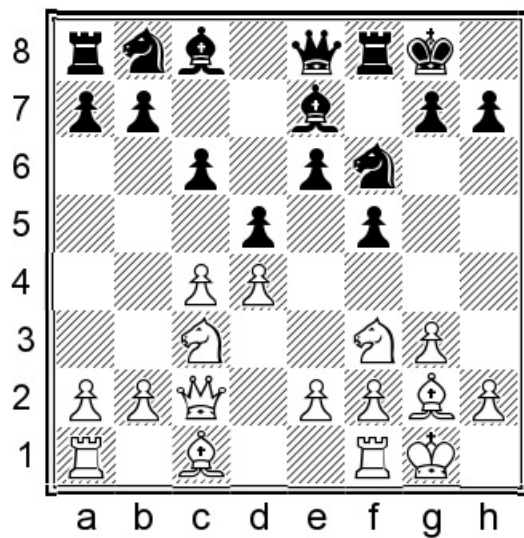
16...♖a6∞

c) 8.♙c2 ♙e8

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♖g2 ♖e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.♘c3 c6 8.♙c2

As in many Stonewall positions this is a good home for the queen. White may as well place it here immediately.

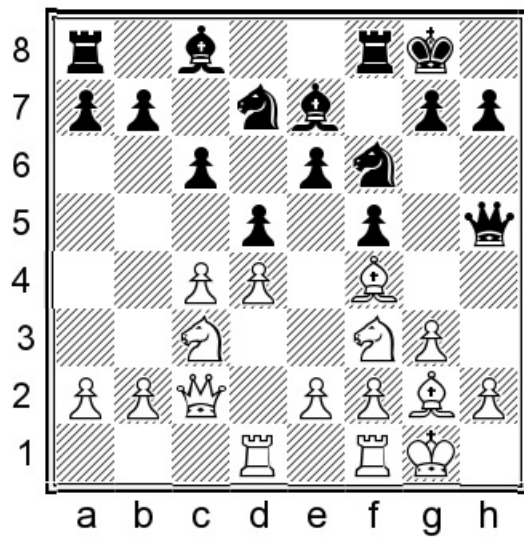
8...♙e8



Position after: 8... ♔e8

Once more the Botvinnik plan.

9. ♘f4 ♚h5 10. ♖ad1 ♜bd7

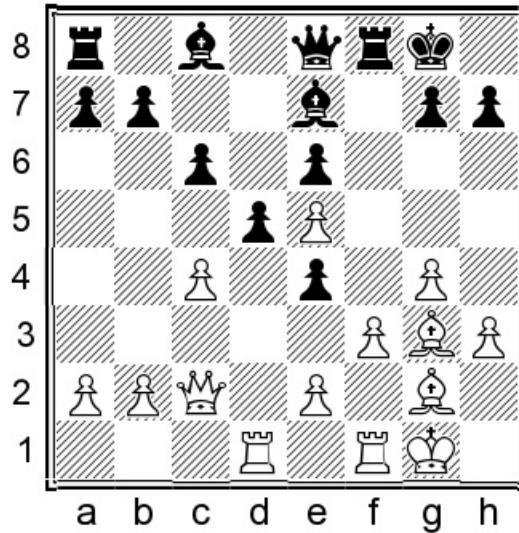


Position after: 10... ♜bd7

11.b3

A) 11.h3!? Deep preparation from Ragozin, who understood the essence of this position.

A1) 11...♖e4 Following the plan, but also following White's preparation! 12.♗xe4 fxe4 13.♗e5 ♕f6 14.g4! ♖e8 15.♗g3 White gets to keep his bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal, which is quite important here. Another key idea of his was 15...♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♗e7 and now 17.f3!



Position after: 17.f3!

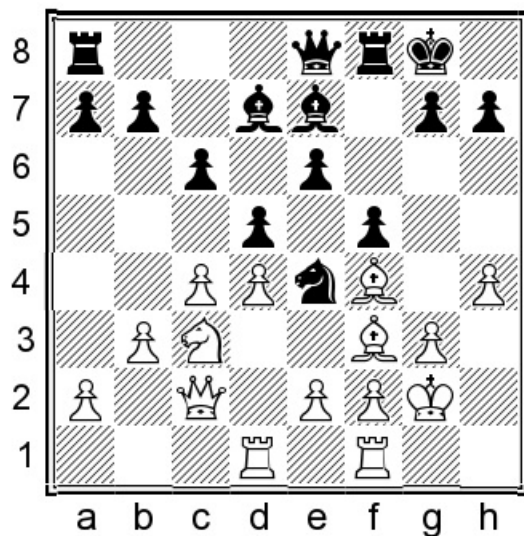
White gained a large advantage after 17...exf3 18.exf3 b6 19.f4 ♗a6 20.b3 ♖d8 21.♖h2 ♗c5 22.f5± but ultimately could not convert, Ragozin, V – Botvinnik, M Moscow 1936.

A2) A better idea is 11...h6!?, waiting and planning to play ...g5 soon.

B) Once more the direct 11.♗g5 ♗b6 12.c5 is answered with 12...h6=.

11...♖h8

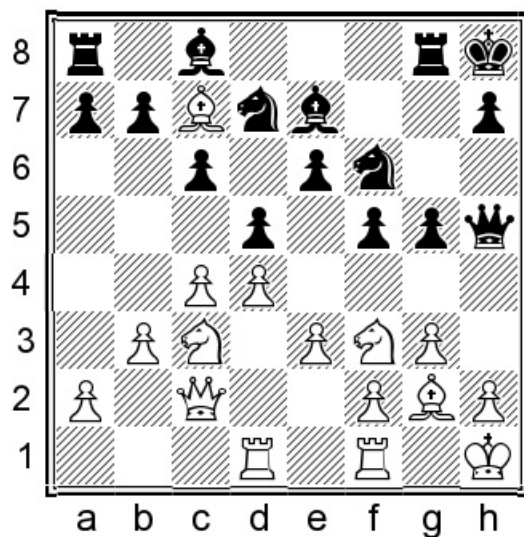
Yet another Botvinnik game continued 11...♗e4 12.♗e5 [12.♗xe4 fxe4 13.♗e5 might have been less risky] 12...♗g5 13.h4 ♗e4 14.♗f3 ♖e8 15.♗xd7 ♗xd7 16.♖g2



Position after: 16. ♔g2

16... ♙b4! 17. ♙xe4 fxe4 18. ♖h1 ♗h5 Black was better. 0-1 (42) Rabinovich, I – Botvinnik, M Moscow 1927.

12. ♕h1 ♝g8 13. e3 g5 14. ♙c7



Position after: 14. ♙c7!?

14...b6!?

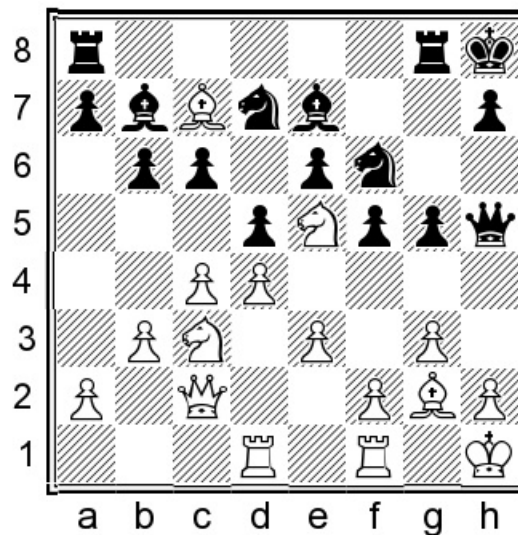
After the alternative 14... ♘e8 15. ♙e5+ ♘xe5 16. ♘xe5 ♗f6 17. f3 ♙d6 18. e4 ♘d7 19. g4!

♖e8 20. ♘xd7 ♙xd7 21. e5 ♜b4 22. gxf5 White got some advantage in Yudovich, M – Botvinnik, M Leningrad 1934.

15. ♘e5

15. cxd5 cxd5!= brings White nothing.

15... ♙b7

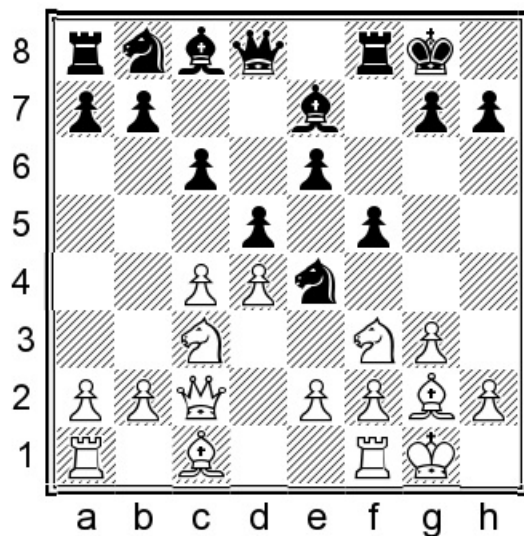


Position after: 15... ♙b7

This position is perfectly fine for Black. One could conduct further investigations but it is clear that both sides have completed development and have reasonably clear lines of attack on their respective flanks.

d) 8. ♖c2 ♘e4

1. d4 f5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♙g2 ♙e7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. c4 d5 7. ♘c3 c6 8. ♖c2 ♘e4

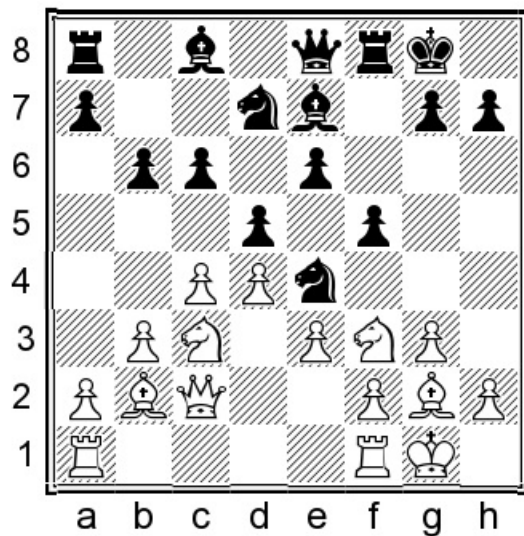


Position after: 8... Nxe4

The usual Stonewall knight foray.

9. Rb1

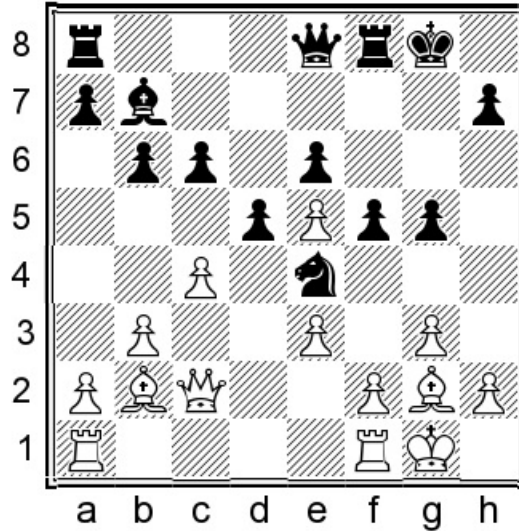
9. b3 Nxd7 10. Bb2 Qe8 Having the queen on e8 here avoids any trouble relating to the c6- or e6-pawns. 11. e3 b6!



Position after: 11... b6!

12. Ne2 Bb7 13. Nf4 Bd6 14. Ne5 g5

A) 15. ♖fd3 ♜xe5 16. ♖xe5 [16.dxe5 ♙e7 leads to unclear play.] 16... ♙xe5 Black is fine after this exchange of his 'good' bishop; in the Stonewall you have to avoid thinking in such fixed categories. For instance 17.dxe5

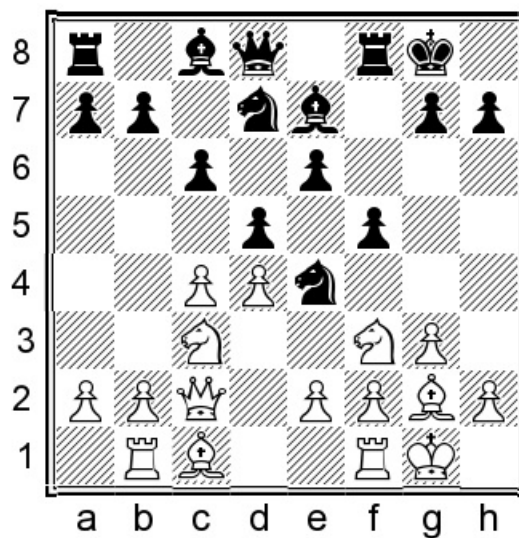


Position after: 17.dxe5

17...g4! 18.f3 gxf3 19. ♙xf3 c5 20. ♙xe4 dxe4 21. ♖ad1 ♙c6 22. ♖d6 ♖c8 with equality.

B) 15. ♖e2 ♖c8 16.f3 ♖ef6∞

9... ♖d7



Position after: 9... ♖d7

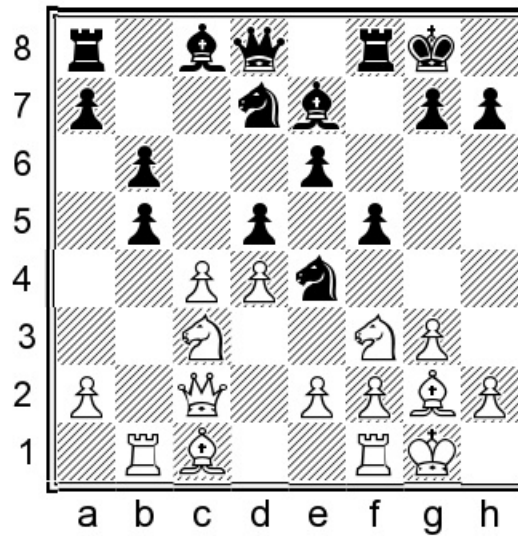
10.b4 b6

With the bishop on e7 there are no possible tactics based on a ♔c6 fork.

11.b5

11.cxd5 cxd5=

11...cxb5!?N

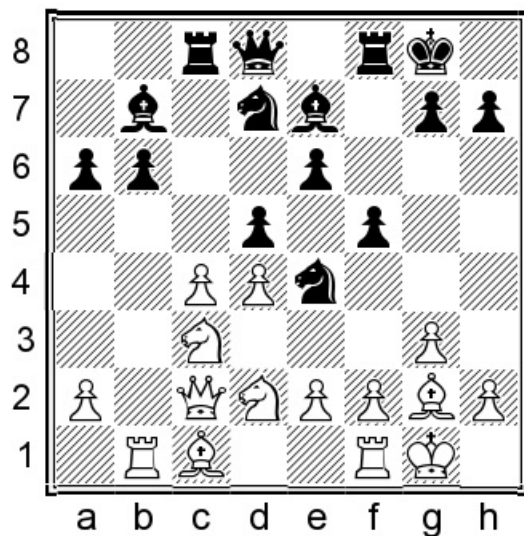


Position after: 11...cxb5!?N

This is an original idea of mine.

12.cxd5

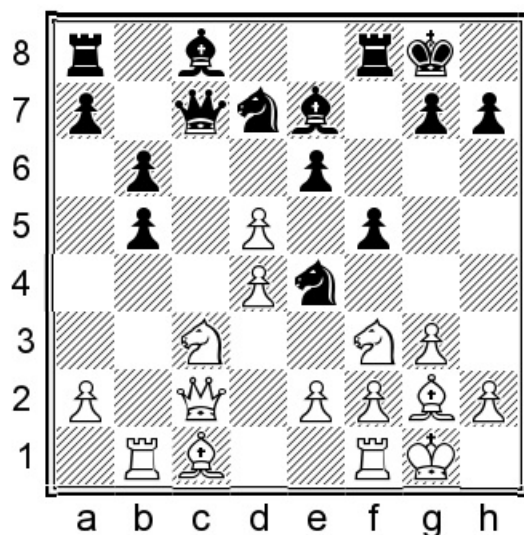
12.♘xb5 ♙b7 13.♘d2 [13.cxd5? ♙xd5+] 13...a6 14.♘c3 ♜c8



Position after: 14...♖c8

15.♘cxe4 [15.c5 bxc5! 16.♘cxe4 cxd4! 17.♚d1 ♔a8 Black is clearly better; 15.♘dxe4 fxe4 16.♙h3 ♜xc4 17.♙xe6+ ♜h8 18.♙xd7 ♚xd7 19.♞xb6 ♔a8 20.♚b3 ♜fc8 21.♙b2 ♚c7 with strong play along the c-file.] 15...fxe4 16.a4 e3!? At first it is not totally clear what we might get for this pawn, but there is a cute motif based on a queen fork on f8: 17.fxe3 ♜xf1+ 18.♜xf1 ♙b4! 19.♚a2 [19.♞xb4? ♚f8+] 19...♙xd2 20.♙xd2 ♜xc4 with counterplay.

12...♚c7!



Position after: 12...♚c7!

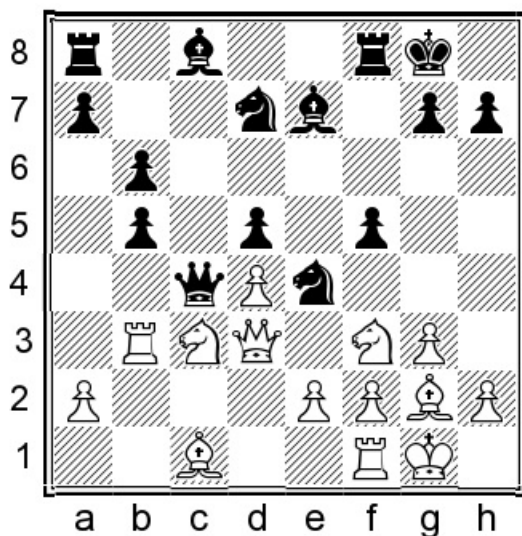
13. ♖b3

White has to be very careful about handling the pin, e.g:

A) 13. dxe6? ♜df6—+ wins for Black.

B) 13. ♘e5 is possible though: 13... ♘xe5 14. ♙xe4 fxe4 15. dxe5 exd5 16. ♚b3 ♚c4!
17. ♘xd5 ♙c5= and Black gets enough counterplay.

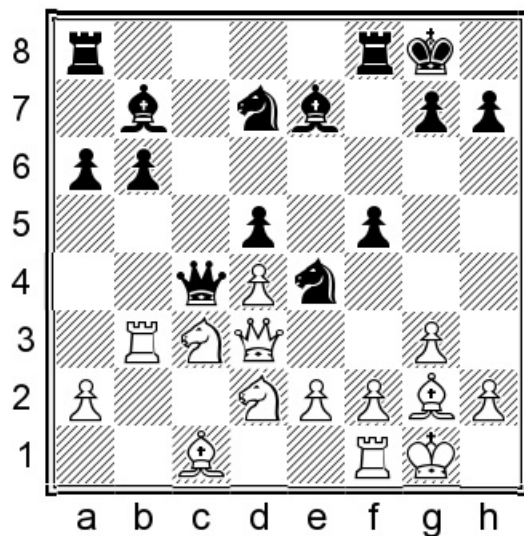
13...exd5 14. ♚d3 ♚c4



Position after: 14... ♚c4

Black has fast play along the c-file and that gives him adequate compensation for a rather unappealing structure.

15. ♘xb5 a6 16. ♘c3 ♙b7 17. ♘d2



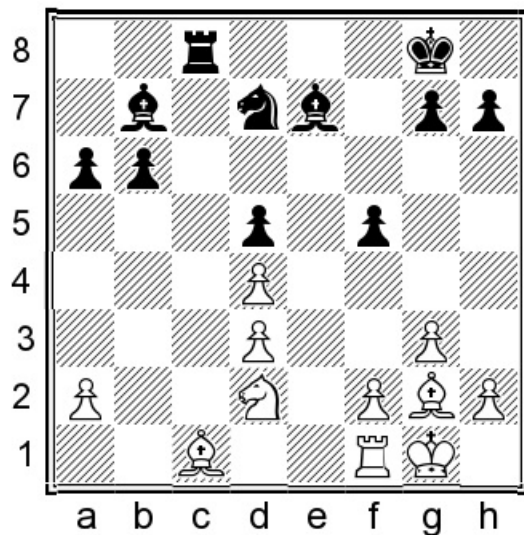
Position after: 17. ♖d2

17... ♚c7

There is no real need for lengthy analysis here so I will just give a sample line after White's most logical continuation.

It is also possible to head for the endgame in spite of the fact that this might ultimately cost a pawn. White's doubled d-pawns will make any advantage very minimal.

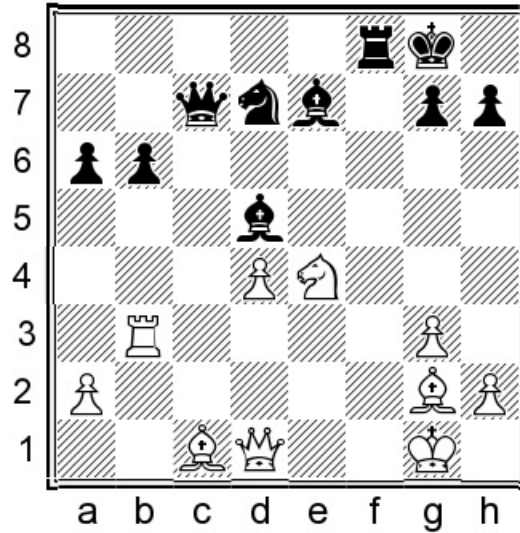
17... ♚xc3 18. exd3 ♘xc3 19. ♖xc3 ♜fc8 20. ♖xc8+ ♜xc8



Position after: 20... ♜xc8

21. ♖c4! b5 22. ♗e3 ♕g5 23. f4 ♕d8 24. ♕b2 g6 25. ♗xd5 ♖f7 26. ♜f2 ♗f6 27. ♗e7 ♜c7
 28. ♕xb7 ♜xb7 29. ♗c6 ♕e7 Black will play his knight to d5 next and there is little risk
 of losing.

18. f3 ♗d6 19. e4 fxe4 20. fxe4 ♜xf1+ 21. ♖xf1 ♜f8 22. ♖d1 dxe4 23. ♗dxe4 ♗xe4
 24. ♗xe4 ♕d5=



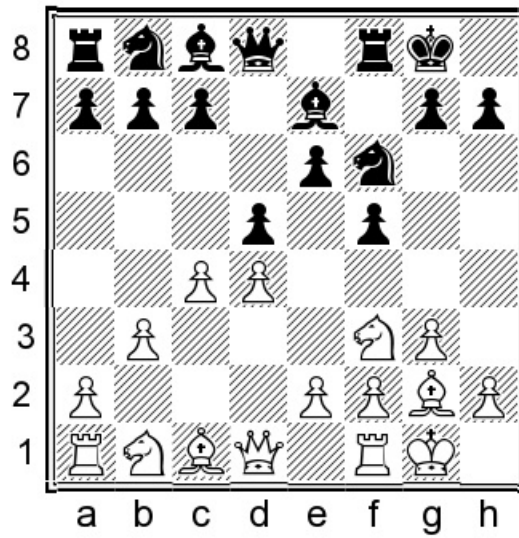
Position after: 24... ♕d5=

Black has nothing to worry about.

Chapter 3

7.b3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.b3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 3 – 7.b3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.b3

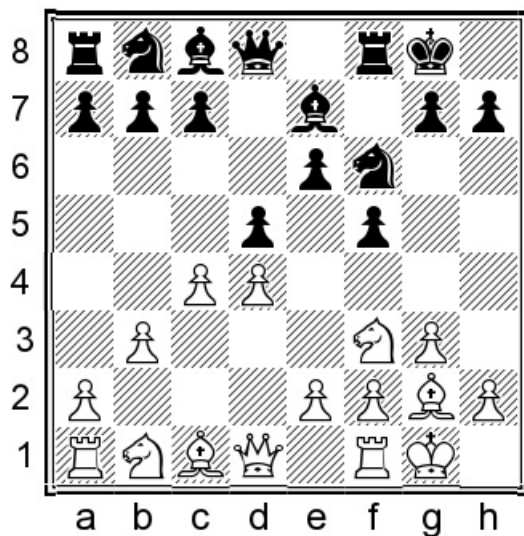
a) 7...♙d7!?

b) 7...c6 8.♙a3

c) 7...c6 8.♚c2

a) 7...♙d7!?

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.b3



Position after: 7.b3

Let's take a look at the old main line of the Stonewall using a contemporary lens. I think it is less innocuous than its reputation suggests. White wants to play ♖a3 soon, which Black can't stop by means of ...♙e7. Sometimes White plays moves like ♙c2 first to keep the option of ♖b2 alive as well.

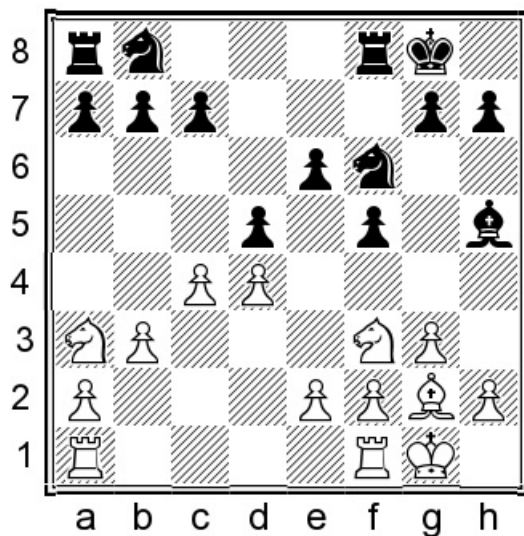
7...♞d7!?

An interesting idea; Black is going full speed ahead on development without spending time on ...c6 just yet. We will investigate the main move 7...c6 next.

8.♙c2!?

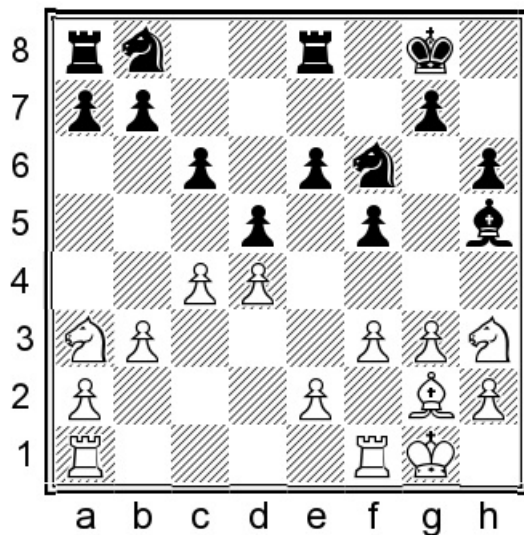
White wants to prevent ...♞e8 using the overloading of Black's e-pawn.

8.♞a3 ♞e8 9.♙c1 ♞h5 10.♞xe7 ♙xe7 11.♙a3 ♙xa3 12.♞xa3



Position after: 12. ♖xa3

Black has a choice and both options seem OK to me: 12...c6 [12...♙xf3!? 13.♙xf3 c6 14.♗c2 ♗bd7 15.♞fc1 a5 16.♗e1 g5 17.♗d3 ♖f7 18.e3 ♗e7= With the position closed, Black need not worry about facing a bishop.] 13.♗g5 ♞e8 14.f3!? h6 15.♗h3

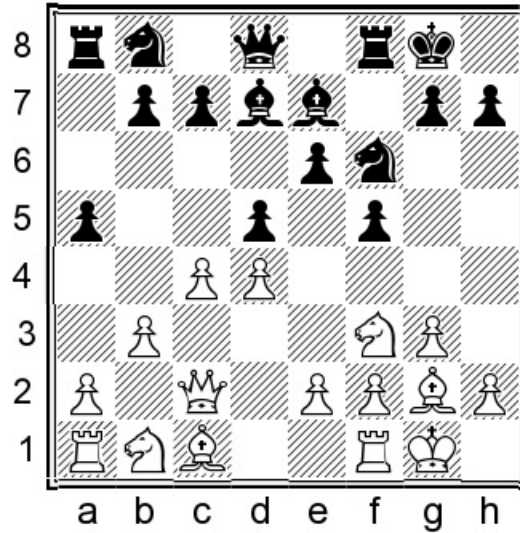


Position after: 15. ♗h3

15...e5 [Black can also wait, e.g. 15...♗bd7 16.♞fc1 a5=] 16.dxe5 ♞xe5 17.♗f4 ♙f7 18.♖f2 dxc4 19.♗xc4 ♙xc4! Black is fine, as in Cvitan, O (2550) – Pfeiffer, G Oberwart 1992.

8...c6

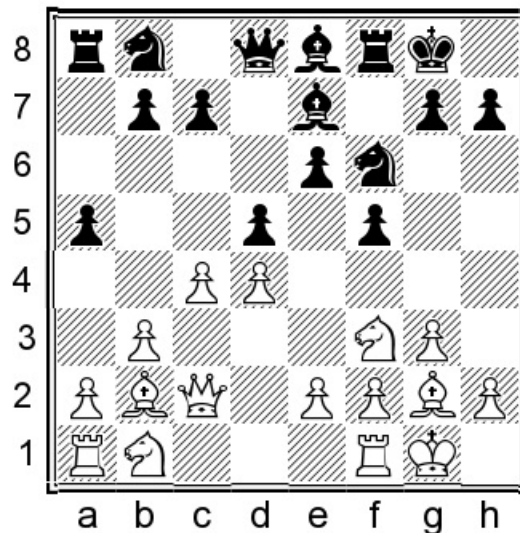
One subtle approach, which is rare but not entirely without merit, is: 8...a5!?



Position after: 8...a5!?

A) 9.♘e5 ♘c6!? 10.e3 ♕e8 This is one of Black's main ideas here.

B) Also logical is: 9.♕b2 ♕e8

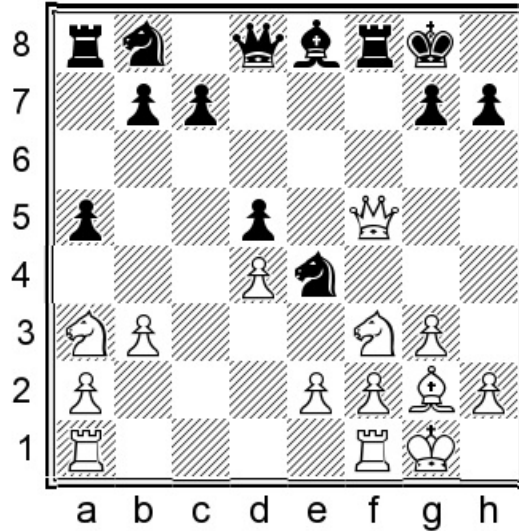


Position after: 9...♕e8

10.♘e5 [10.cxd5 exd5 11.♙xf5 ♘e4 12.♙e6+ ♔h8 13.♘c3 ♖a6 14.♙e5 ♕g6 Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.] 10...♘c6 11.♘d2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘xe5

13. ♖xe5 a3 14. ♙c3 ♜e4 15. ♜ad1 ♜xc3 16. ♚xc3 c6 with ongoing complications.

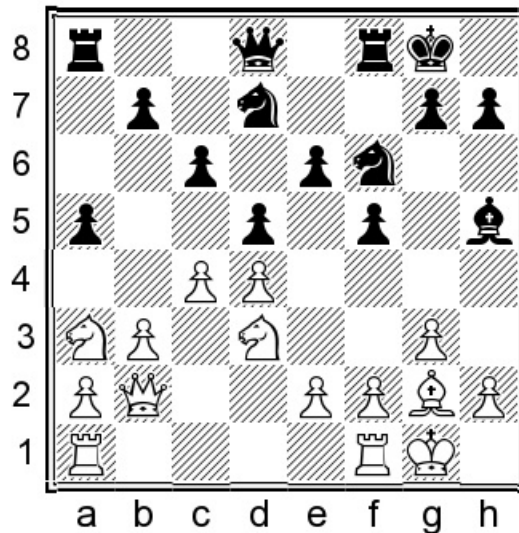
C) 9. ♙a3 ♙xa3 10. ♜xa3 ♙e8 11. ♚b2 [11.cxd5 exd5 12. ♚xf5 ♜e4! The rook swings in from a6 and Black gets very unpleasant pressure.



Position after: 12... ♜e4!

For instance: 13. ♚e6+ ♜h8 14. ♜e5 ♜a6 15. ♚g4 ♜h6 16. e3 ♙h5 17. ♚h4 ♜f6 18. ♚g5 ♚e7.]

C1) 11... ♙h5?! Now White can press. 12. ♜e5 ♜bd7 13. ♜d3 c6

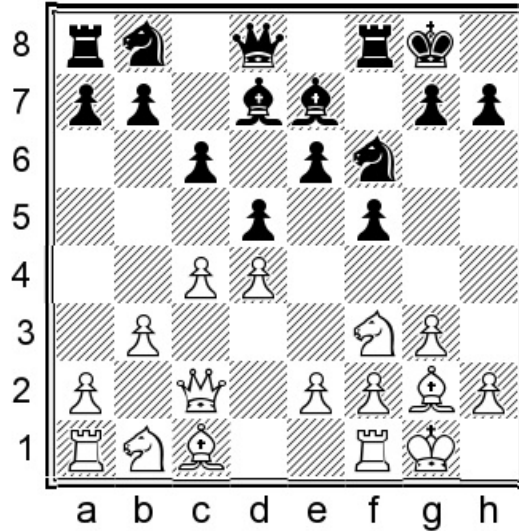


Position after: 13...c6

14.♖fe1 [14.f3 ♕e7 15.♞ae1 b6 16.♜c2 ♞ac8 17.♞e3 would also favour White due to his flexible setup.] 14...♗e7 15.♞b1 ♞ae8 16.♞d2 e5 17.cxd5 ♞xd5 18.dxe5 ♞xe5 19.♙xd5+! cxd5 20.♞f4 ♙f7 21.♞f3 with pressure.

C2) 11...♞bd7! 12.♞e1 ♙h5 13.♞d3 ♕e7 14.♖fe1 c6 15.f3 g5 would give Black more dynamism.

Now we return to 8...c6 and the game Kasparov-Petrosian.

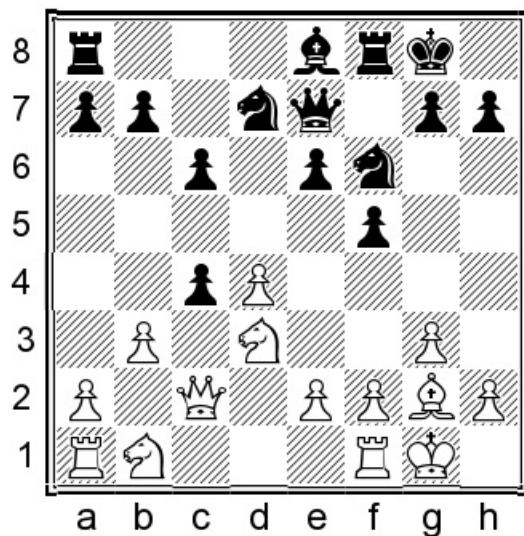


Position after: 8...c6

9.♙b2!

Playing ♙a3 is not always best! White should always consider other options.

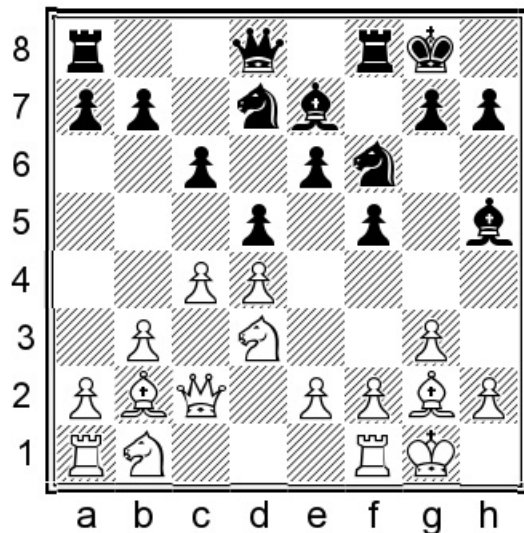
9.♙a3 ♙e8 10.♙xe7 ♕xe7 11.♞e5 ♞bd7 12.♞d3 dxc4!?



Position after: 12...dxc4!?

13.bxc4 [13.♖xc4 ♔f7 14.♖c3 ♜ae8 15.f4 ♘d5 16.♖d2 c5 should also give Black decent counterplay.] 13...e5! Just on time! 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘d2 ♔f7 16.♜ab1 ♜ad8 17.♞fe1 b6 18.a4 ♘fd7 with equality.

9...♔e8 10.♘e5 ♘bd7 11.♘d3 ♔h5



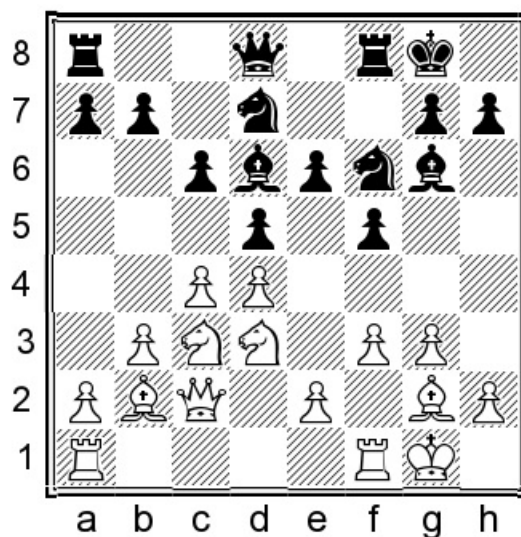
Position after: 11...♔h5

12.♘c3

12. ♖f4 ♙f7 13. ♘d2 g5 14. ♘d3 g4 15. f3 h5 is less clear.

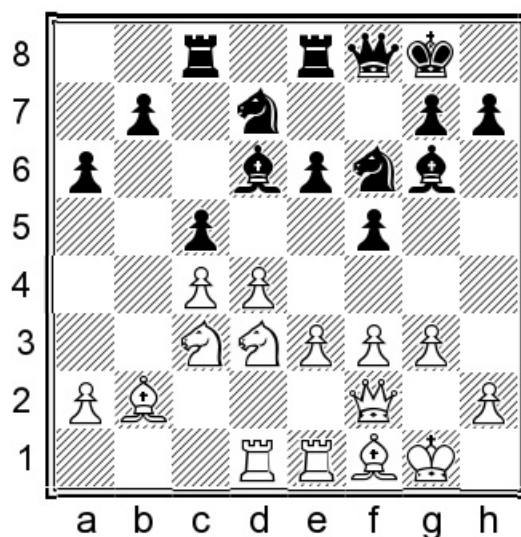
12... ♙d6 13. f3 dxc4!?

13... ♙g6



Position after: 13... ♙g6

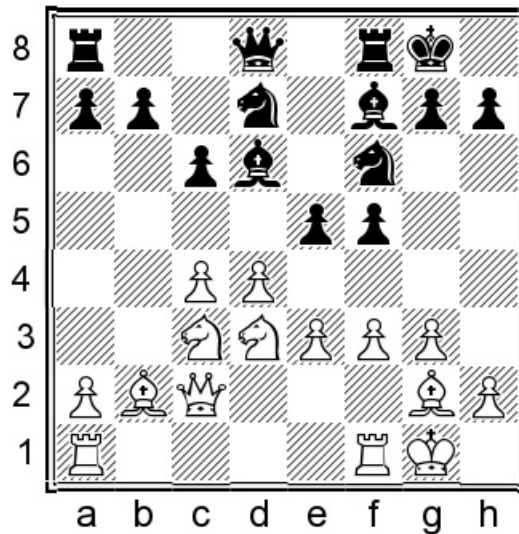
14. e3 ♜c8 15. ♚e2 ♜e8 16. ♚f2 a6 17. ♜ac1 ♚e7 18. ♜fe1 ♚f8 19. ♜cd1 dxc4 20. bxc4 c5 21. ♙f1 Now, in one classic game involving a future world champion against a past one, Black should have grabbed a pawn.



Position after: 21. ♙f1

21...♔f7 [21...cxd4 22.exd4 ♖xc4 23.♘f4 ♗cc8 24.♙xe6 ♚f7 25.d5 ♕h5=] 22.♙a4 cxd4
 23.exd4 b5 24.cxb5 axb5 25.♙ac5 with strong pressure; White eventually won in
 Kasparov, G (2690) – Petrosian, T (2580) Nisic 1983.

14.bxc4 e5 15.e3 ♔f7



Position after: 15...♔f7

16.c5

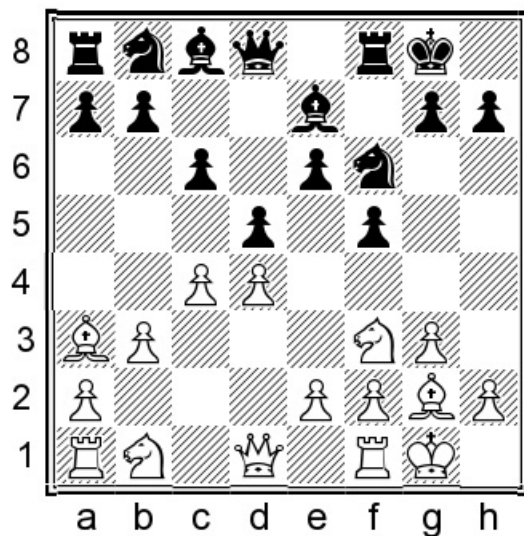
16.♙d1 exd4 17.exd4 f4! A pattern in this kind of position, which equalises.

16...♔c7 17.f4 e4 18.♙e5 ♔a5

White has somewhat easier play.

b) 7...c6 8.♔a3

1.d4 f5 2.♙f3 e6 3.g3 ♙f6 4.♔g2 ♔e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.b3 c6 8.♔a3



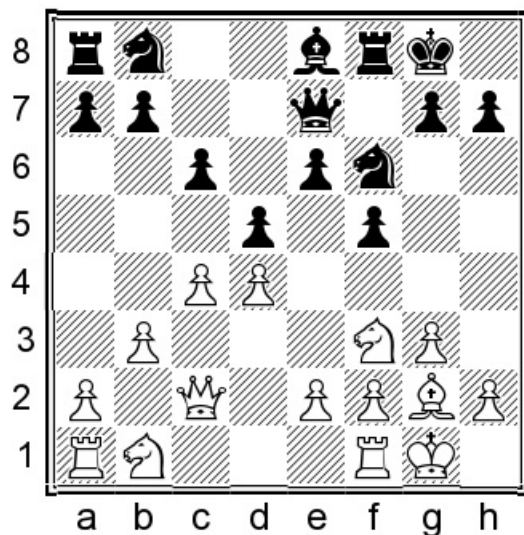
Position after: 8. ♖a3

8... ♗bd7

With this move Black controls the e5-square and indicates that his light-squared bishop will be fianchettoed.

The old motif of transferring the light-squared bishop to h5 is possible of course, and can transpose to the previous subchapter. 8... ♗d7 and now:

A) 9. ♘c2 ♙e8 10. ♗xe7 ♘xe7

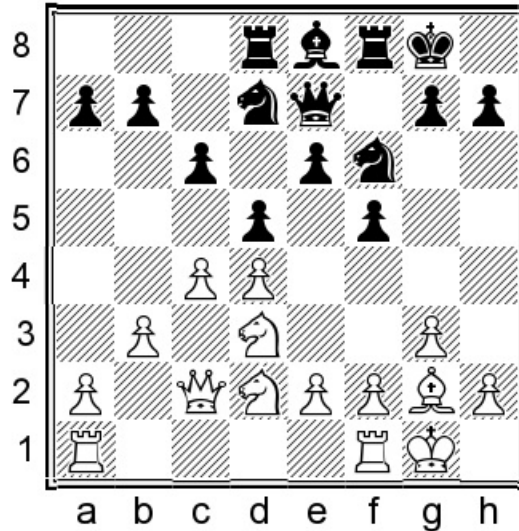


Position after: 10... ♘xe7

A1) 11. ♖bd2 ♕h5 12. ♜fe1 [12.cxd5 cxd5 gives Black the c6-square for his ♖.]
 12... ♗bd7 13.cxd5 exd5 14. ♜xf5 ♜ae8 15. ♜c2 ♗e4 16. ♜ac1 g5 with compensation.

A2) 11. ♗e5 ♗bd7 12. ♗d3 dxc4: see subchapter a), 9. ♕a3 note.

B) 9. ♕xe7 ♜xe7 10. ♗bd2 ♕e8 11. ♗e5 ♗bd7 12. ♗d3 ♜d8 13. ♜c2



Position after: 13. ♜c2

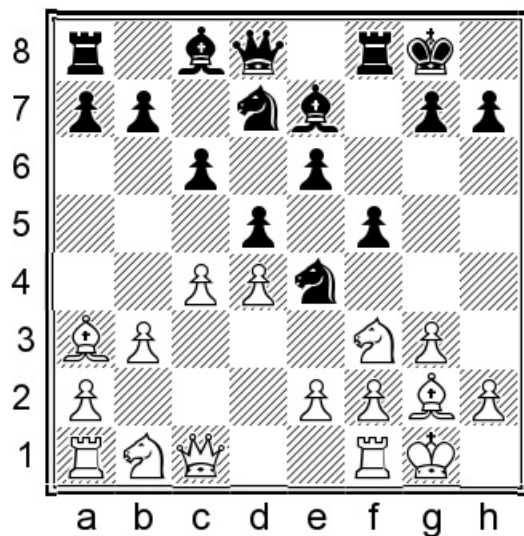
13...e5! [13... ♗e4 14. ♗f3 ♕h5 15. ♜ad1 ♖h8 16. ♜fe1 gave White an edge in Flear, G (2505) – Bellin, R (2395) Walsall 1992.] 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15. ♗xe5 ♜xe5 16.e3 ♜e7 17.cxd5 ♗xd5 18. ♗f3 g6 19. ♜fd1 ♕f7 20.h4 This is balanced, though unclear.

C) 9. ♜c1 ♕e8 10. ♕xe7 ♜xe7 11. ♜a3 ♜xa3 12. ♗xa3 ♕h5 transposes to subchapter a) as well, this time the 8. ♕a3 note.

9. ♜c1

9. ♕xe7 ♜xe7 10. ♗bd2 b6 11. ♜c2 ♕b7 12. ♜b2 a5 13. ♜ac1 ♗e4 14. ♗xe4 dxe4 15. ♗d2 c5 is equal.

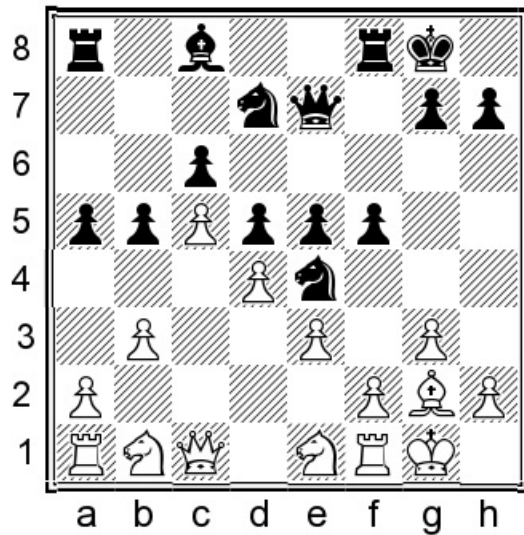
9... ♗e4



Position after: 9...d4

10.♙xe7

10.e3 a5 11.♘e1 b5!? 12.♙xe7 ♚xe7 13.c5 e5!



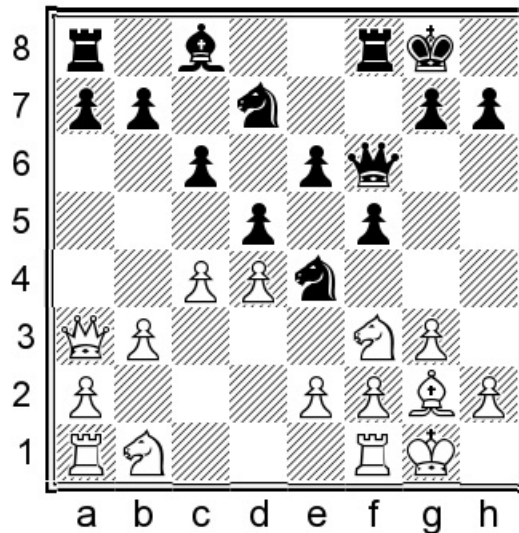
Position after: 13...e5

If Black gets this structure he rarely experiences problems. In Mikhalevski, V (2542) – Sadler, M (2625) Oslo 2011 he went on to win: 14.f3 ♘ef6 15.f4 e4 16.b4 a4 17.♘c3 h6 18.a3 ♖h7 19.♙a2 ♗f7 etc.

10...♚xe7 11.♚a3

11. ♖a3 b6 12. ♖c2 ♗b7 13. ♕a3 c5= is a different typical equalising break!

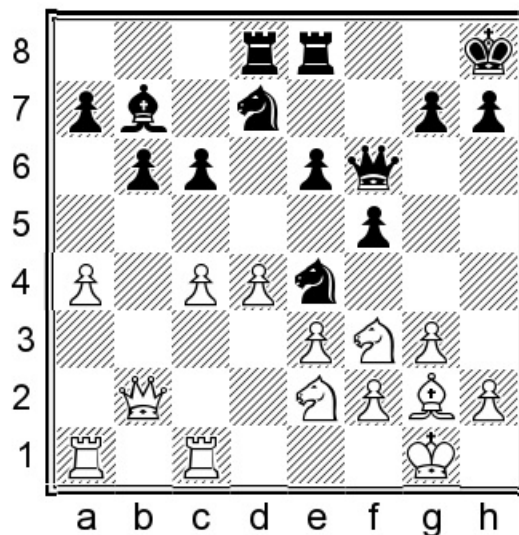
11... ♗f6



Position after: 11... ♗f6

12.e3

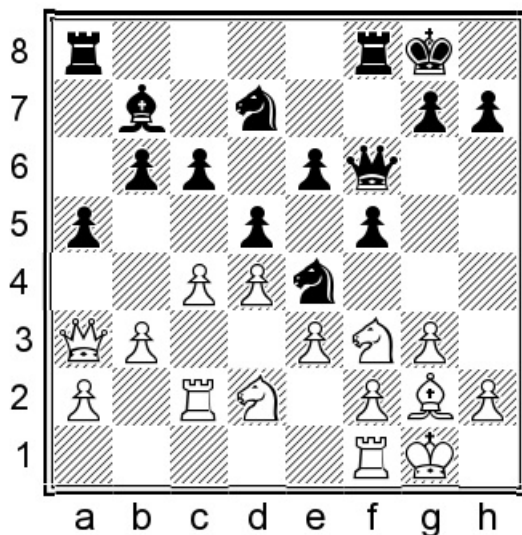
White can try a slight modification and post the knight on c3. 12. ♖b2 b6 13.e3 ♗b7 14. ♖c3 ♖h8 15. ♖e2 ♗ad8 16. ♗fc1 dxc4 17. bxc4 ♗fe8 18.a4



Position after: 18.a4

Obviously this is not forced but Black is now in a position to equalise: 18...e5 19.a5 exd4 20.exd4 c5 21.axb6 axb6 22.♖a7 ♘d6 with good chances.

12...b6 13.♘bd2 ♙b7 14.♖ac1 a5 15.♖c2

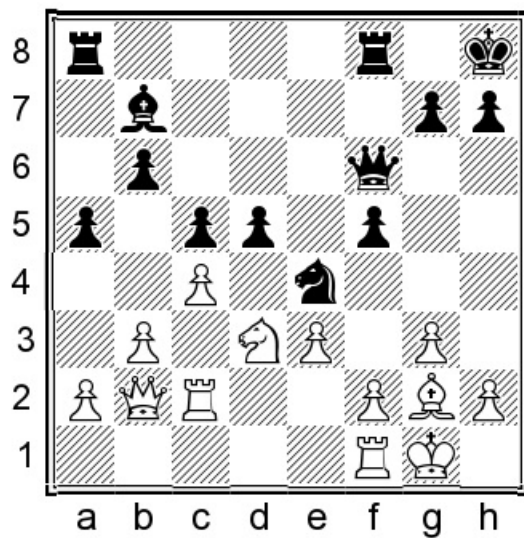


Position after: 15.♖c2

A normal post-opening position has arisen wherein Black has enough play.

15...c5!?

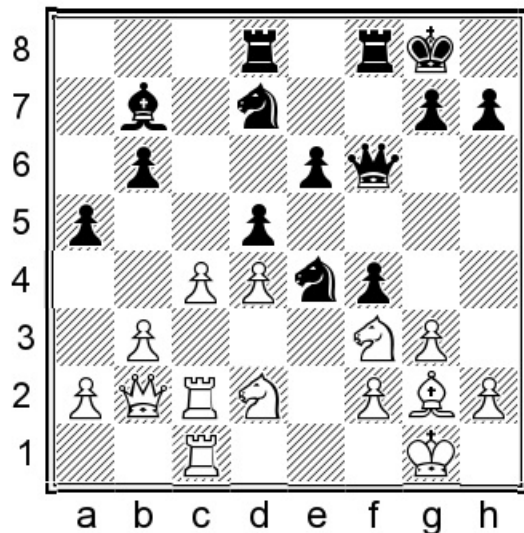
15...♔h8 may not be needed, but is playable for sure. 16.♘e1 [16.♙b2 c5 17.dxc5 ♖xb2 18.♖xb2 bxc5 19.♖c1 ♖a6 20.cxd5 exd5 21.♘xe4 fxe4 22.♙h3 exf3 23.♙xd7 ♖d6 24.♙h3 d4! Black got counterplay in Kund, W – Manduch, M corr. 2004] 16...c5 17.♘df3 e5! 18.dxe5 ♘xe5 19.♘xe5 ♙xe5 20.♘d3 ♖f6 21.♙b2



Position after: 21. ♖b2

21...♜ad8!? [21...d4 22.exd4 cxd4 23.♞e1 ♜ad8 was reasonable too in the game Van Wely, L (2445) – Kristiansen, J (2445) Lyngby 1990.] 22. ♝xf6 ♞xf6 23.cxd5 ♞xd5 24. ♘b2 ♙a6=

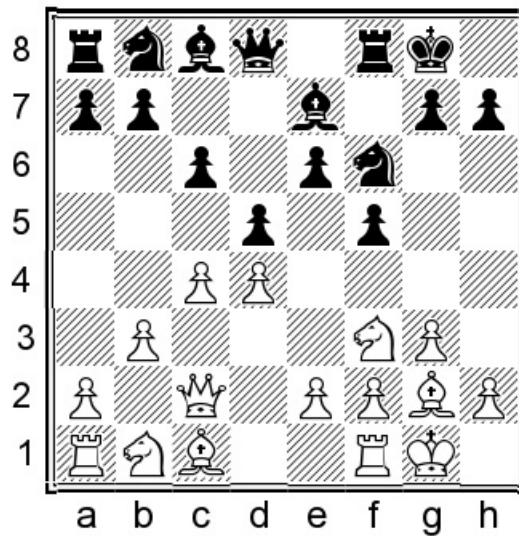
16. ♞fc1 ♜ad8 17. ♝b2 cxd4 18.exd4 f4=



Position after: 18...f4

c) 7...c6 8. ♙c2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d5 7.b3 c6 8.♚c2

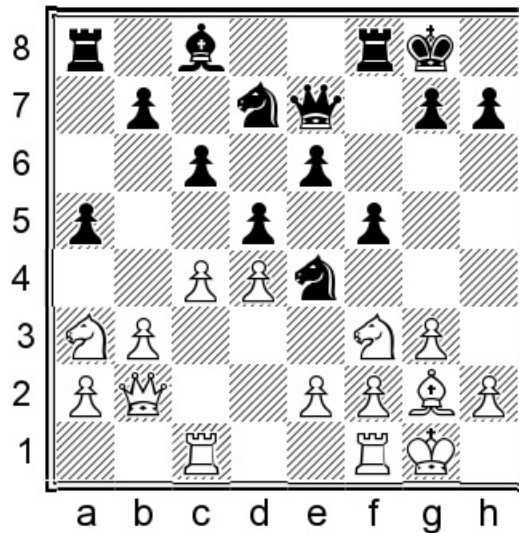


Position after: 8. ♚c2

This is another important set up for White here. His queen is as usual nicely placed on c2, from whence it hits both the c-file and the f-pawn as well as helping clear the back rank.

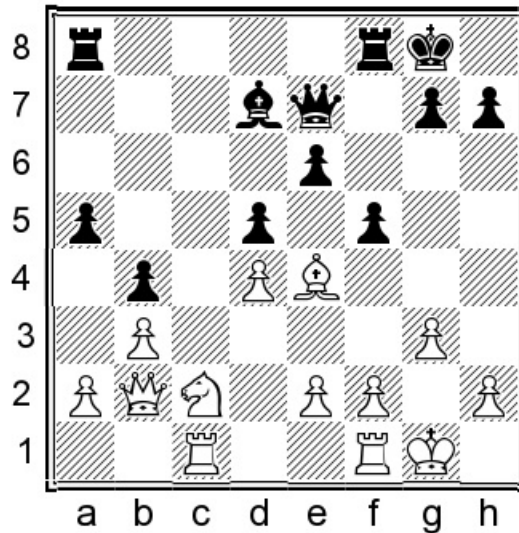
8...♘e4 9.♙b2

White wants to control the center with all his pieces. Meanwhile, exchanging bishops on a3 is still possible: 9.♙a3 ♙xa3 10.♘xa3 ♚e7 11.♚b2 ♘d7 12.♖ac1 a5



Position after: 12...a5

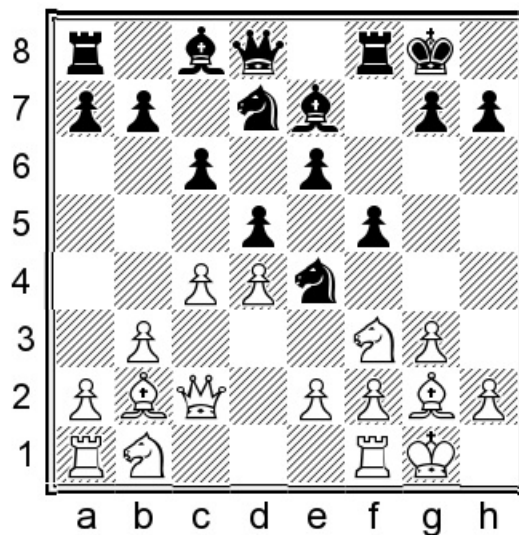
13.♖c2 [13.♖e5 ♜xe5 14.dxe5 ♙d7 15.♖c2 f4 leads to counterplay for Black] 13...b5!?
 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♖e5 b4 16.♖xd7 ♙xd7 17.♙xe4!?



Position after: 17.♙xe4!?

17...dxe4! The correct recapture, after which Black is doing fine, e.g. 18.♖e3 f4 19.♖g2 f3 20.exf3 exf3 21.♖e3 ♙b5 22.♞fe1 ♞ac8 23.d5 ♞d7.

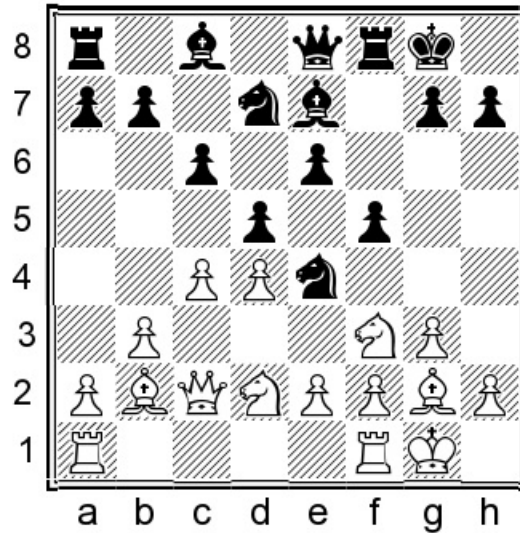
9...♖d7



Position after: 9...♖d7

10.♞e1

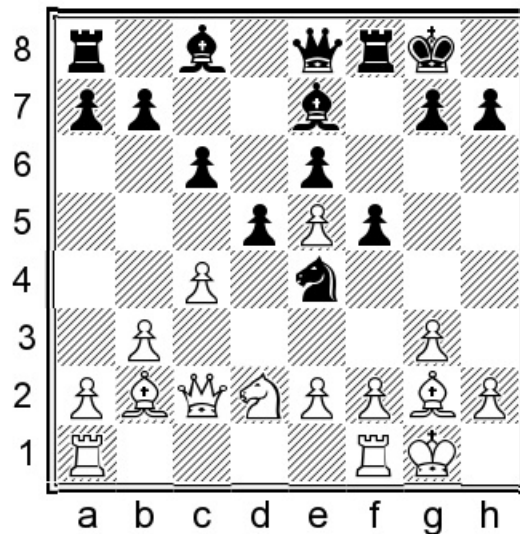
The knight usually heads for d3, but another sensible plan starts with 10.♞bd2. Black should react 10...♚e8 in the best traditions of Botvinnik:



Position after: 10...♚e8

[10...a5!? can also be considered. 11.♞e1 b5 12.c5 ♞xd2 13.♚xd2 ♜f6 14.♞d3 ♚e7 15.f3 e5 16.e4!? Normal chess isn't enough; White has to react thus or admit opening failure, but the details work fine for Black, starting with 16...dxe4 17.fxe4 exd4 18.♞ae1 ♞xc5 19.exf5 ♚d6.]

A) 11.♞e5 ♞xe5 12.dxe5

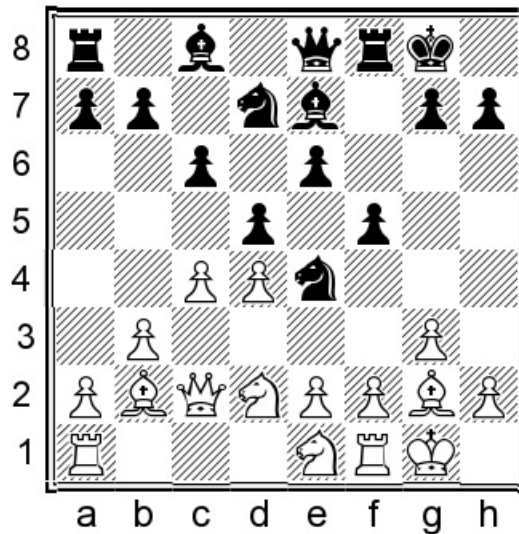


Position after: 12.dxe5

12...♖h5 [12...b6 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.f3 exf3 15.exf3 ♕b7 16.f4 ♖c8 17.♖ad1 ♗c7 18.♖d3 ♖ad8 19.♖fd1 ♖xd3 20.♖xd3 ♖d8 21.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 was agreed drawn here in Lukacs, P – Pogats, J Hungary 1972] 13.♗xe4 fxe4 14.f3 exf3 15.♕xf3 ♗h6 16.♕c1 ♕g5 17.♗c3 ♕d7 18.♕xg5 ♗xg5 19.e4 dxc4! Black's bishop reaches e8 next and he stood well in Riabov, A (2105) – Anisimov, V (2207) Kemerovo 2009.

B) 11.♖ac1 ♗h5 12.e3 a5 13.h4 h6 14.♗b1 g5 15.♕a3 ♕xa3 16.♗xa3 ♗df6 17.♗b1 b5! gives Black good play.

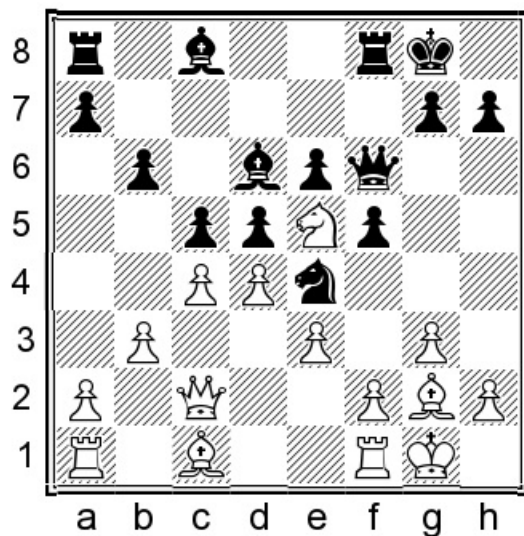
C) Probably best is 11.♗e1!



Position after: 11.♗e1!

C1) An old game of Tartakower continued 11...♗xd2 12.♗xd2 ♗f6 13.♗d3 ♗h5 14.f3 ♕d7 15.♗f2 ♕d6 16.e4 fxe4 17.fxe4 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 dxe4 19.♕xe4 ♖xf1+ 20.♖xf1 ♖f8 21.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 when despite White's optically more active position, it's just equal. 0-1 (44) Takacs, S – Tartakower, S Hamburg 1930.

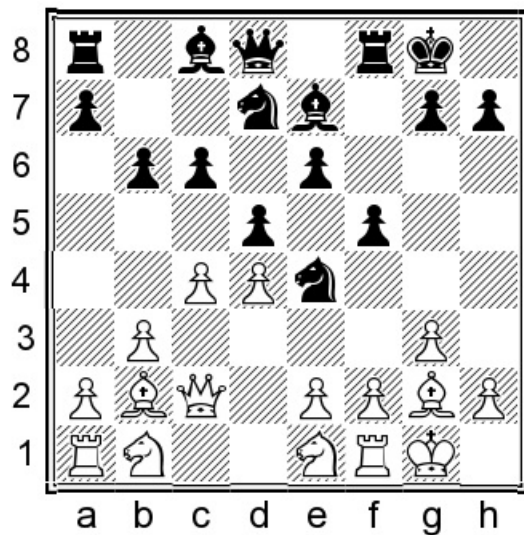
C2) 11...♗h5 12.♗df3 ♗h6 13.♗d3 b6 14.♕c1 ♗f6 15.♗fe5 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 c5 Now the position enters very balanced territory, for instance: 17.e3 ♕d6



Position after: 17...♙d6

18.f3 ♘g5 19.h4 ♘f7 20.f4 cxd4 21.exd4 ♙b7 with equality.

10...b6!?



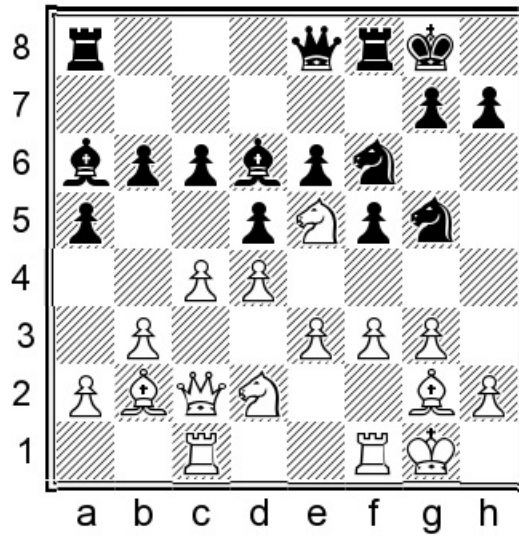
Position after: 10...b6!?

11.f3

11.♘d3 ♙d6 12.f3 [12.e3 ♙b7 13.f3 ♘g5 14.♘c3 ♚e7 15.♞ae1 ♞ac8 16.e4 The following sequence is instructive: 16...fxe4 17.fxe4 dxc4! 18.bxc4 e5 with a decent

position for Black.] 12...♘xg3!? 13.hxg3 ♕xg3 14.e3 ♖h4 gives Black a dangerous attack.

11...♘g5 12.♘d3 ♘f6 13.♘d2 ♕d6 14.♖ac1 a5 15.e3 ♕a6 16.♘e5 ♖e8=

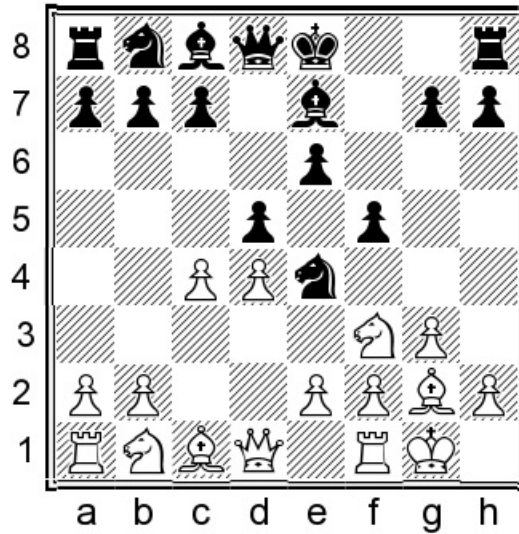


Position after: 16...♖e8

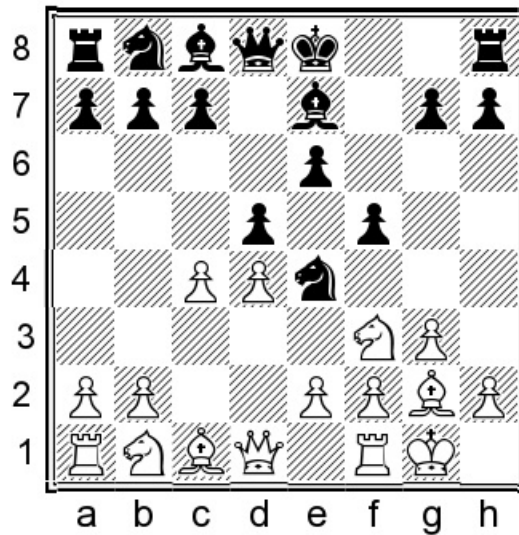
Chapter 4

The Surprising 6...♞e4!?

1.d4 f5 2.♞f3 e6 3.g3 ♞f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 d5 6.c4 ♞e4



1.d4 f5 2.♞f3 e6 3.g3 ♞f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 d5 6.c4 ♞e4!?

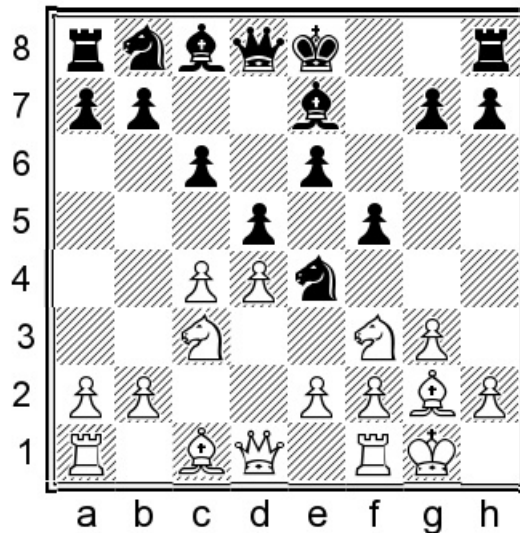


Position after: 6...♞e4!?

Right now, given what we've already seen, the move doesn't look unusual. The unusual part is that Black intends to forgo castling for a long time; this was an interesting plan first introduced by Rapport who has a special sense for such unorthodox positions. Later on it found other followers such as the respected GMs Berkes and Sedlak.

7.b3

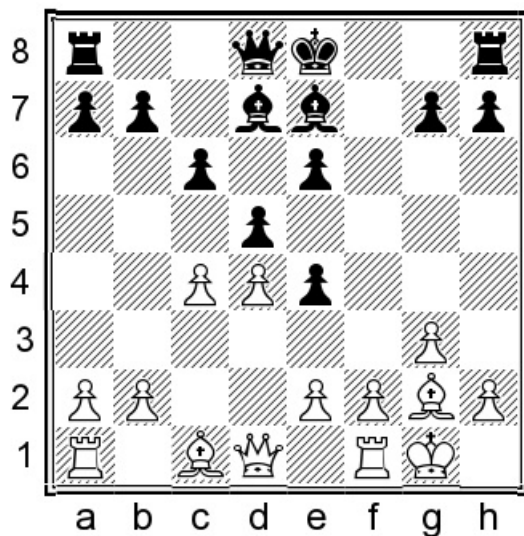
7.♘c3 c6!



Position after: 7...c6!

Now we transpose to a classical line in which White has played an early ♘c3. I will show a few games here connected to this specific move order:

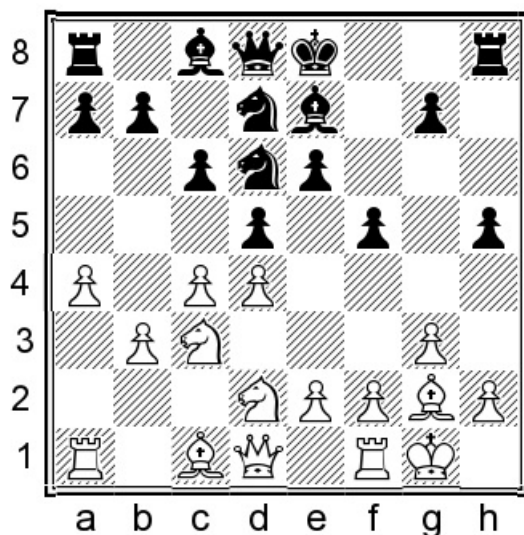
A) 8.♘e5 ♘d7! 9.♘xd7 ♙xd7 10.♘xe4 fxe4



Position after: 10...fxe4

11.♔f4 [11.f3 exf3 12.♔xf3 0-0 13.e4 dxc4 Black can take this pawn without any worries.] 11...0-0 12.e3 b5 13.c5 a5 14.f3 exf3 15.♔xf3 ♔e8 16.e4 ♔g6! Black got his usual bishop transfer and his position is OK. ½-½ (46) Ipatov, A (2625) – Rapport, R (2649) Germany 2015

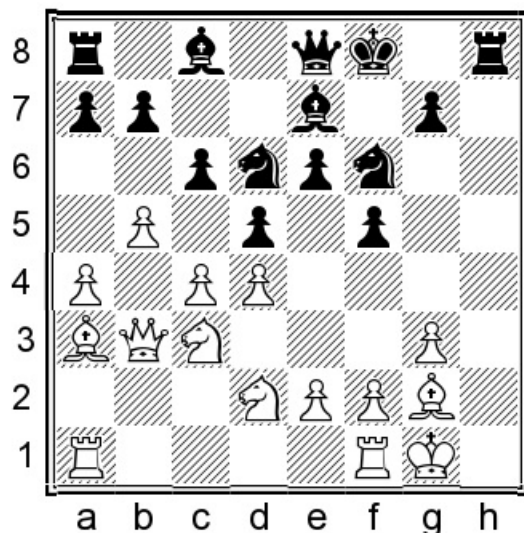
B) 8.♘d2 ♘d6 9.b3 ♘d7 Black is simply going to use the rook on the h-file, an amazing concept. 10.a4 h5!?



Position after: 10...h5!?

11.b4 h4 12.b5 hxg3 13.hxg3 ♘f6 14.♙b3 As played in Riazantsev, A (2651) –

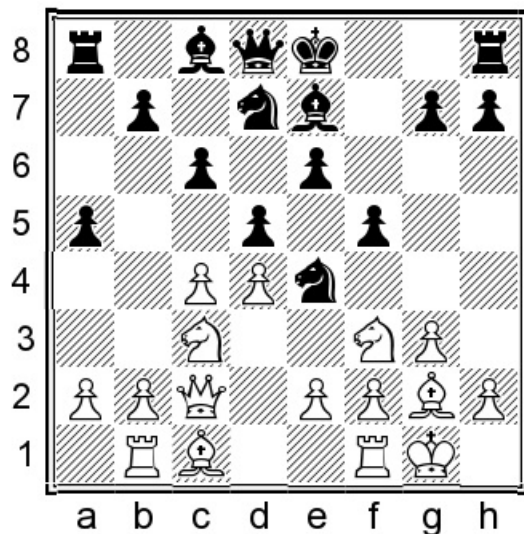
Rapport, R (2692) Palma de Mallorca 2017. Now best would have been: 14...♔f8N
15.♙a3 ♚e8!



Position after: 15...♚e8!

16.bxc6 [16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♖fc1 ♚h5 18.♘f1 ♙d7 is unclear.] 16...bxc6 17.cxd5 exd5
18.♞ac1 ♚h5 19.♘f3 f4 Suddenly Black has a strong attack.

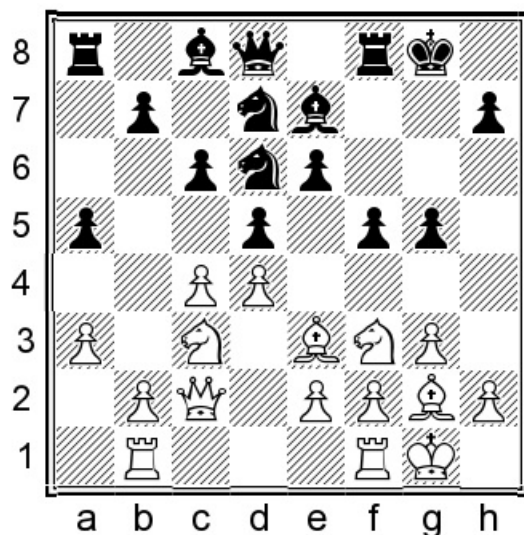
C) 8.♚c2 ♘d7 9.♞b1 a5



Position after: 9...a5

10.a3 [10.♘e1 ♘d6!? A typical reaction for this line; after 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘d3 0-0
13.b3 ♘f7 14.♙b2 ♞e8 15.f3 ♙f6 Black had a full quota of counterplay in Lodici, L

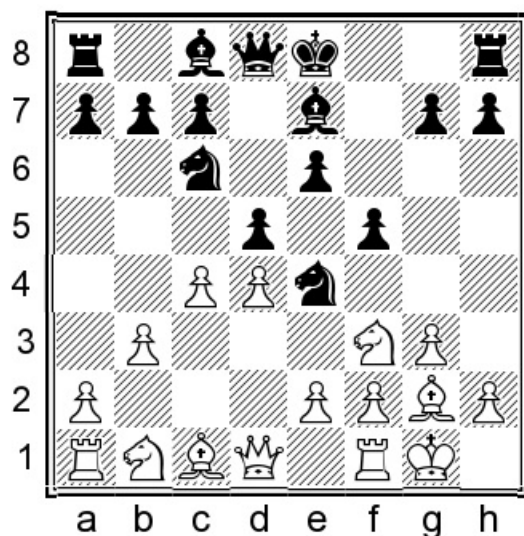
(2456) – David, A (2555) Salerno 2018.] 10...0-0 11.♙f4 g5 12.♙e3 ♘d6!



Position after: 12...♘d6!

Again we see this motif employed. 13.b3 ♙f6 [13...dxc4?! could be premature but still brought Black a win in Gasanov, E (2500) – Sedlak, N (2605) Prague 2019.] 14.♞fd1 ♚e7 with a tense game ahead.

7...♘c6



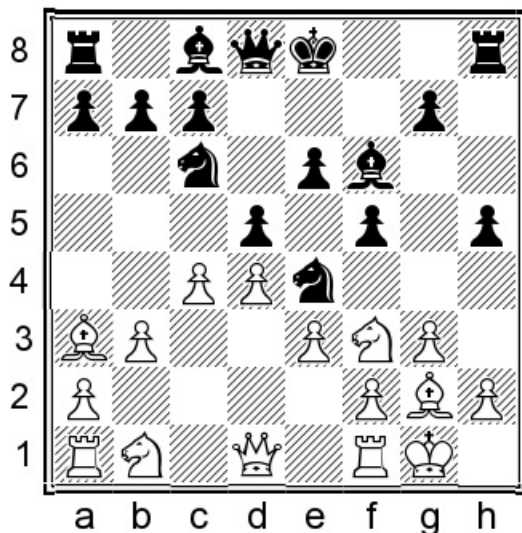
Position after: 7...♘c6

In this Rapport system Black wants to develop quickly on the queenside, place pressure

on the d4-pawn and perhaps even ultimately castle long, which last is truly unusual for the Stonewall Dutch.

8.♙b2

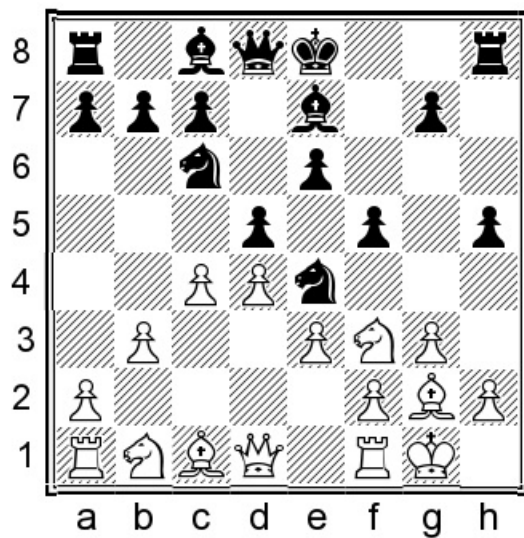
A) Another plausible reaction is 8.♙a3!? ♜f6 Of course, Black doesn't want to trade. 9.e3 h5!?



Position after: 9...h5!?

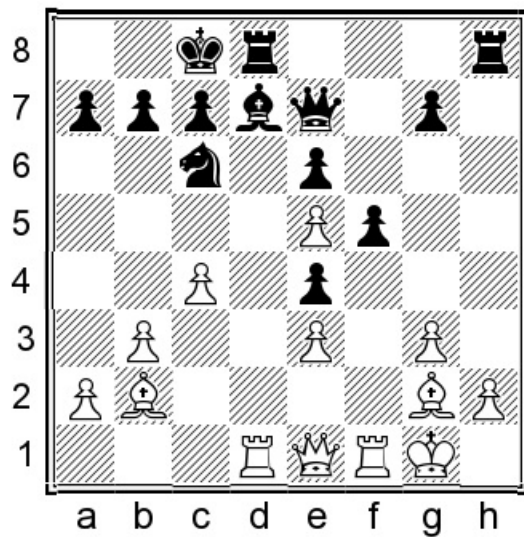
10.b4 h4 11.b5 ♖a5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♙b4 [13.♘bd2 a6∞] 13...♗c4 14.♘bd2 ♗cxd2 15.♗xd2 hxg3 Now Black has opened lines all over the board and play takes on an 'end-to-end' character. For instance 16.hxg3 ♙e6 17.♙c2 ♙d7 18.♙fc1 ♙c8 19.a4 g5 and chaos is about to be unleashed.

B) 8.e3 h5!?



Position after: 8...h5!?

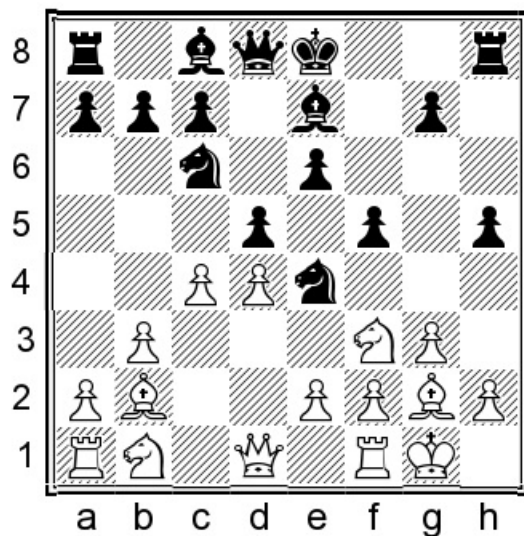
Now we follow the game Danner, G – Berkes, F, Schwarzach 2018. 9.♔b2 h4 10.♘c3 h×g3 11.f×g3 ♔f6 12.♘xe4 d×e4 13.♘e5 ♔xe5 14.d×e5 ♔d7 15.♚e1 ♚e7 16.♞d1 0-0-0!



Position after: 16...0-0-0!

Black has the initiative and has been able to demonstrate many of his standard plans.

8...h5!?



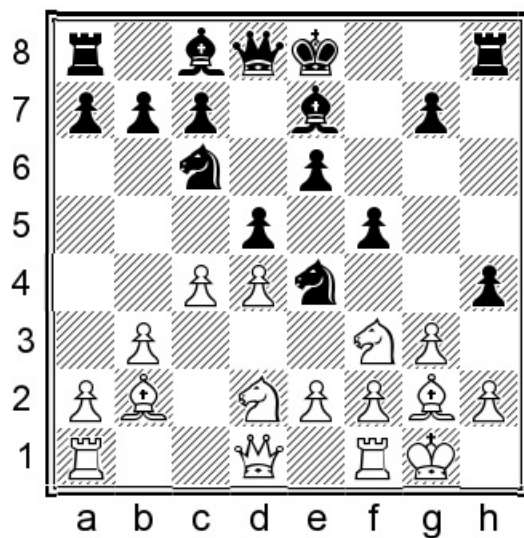
Position after: 8...h5!?

We already saw this in the notes, so the shock impact is lessened, but this is still a fantastic conception. With the center closed, the idea makes perfect sense!

9. ♔c1!?

In my opinion this move is White's best answer. When I analysed this line I was rather puzzled by how Black managed to achieve such good positions so often!

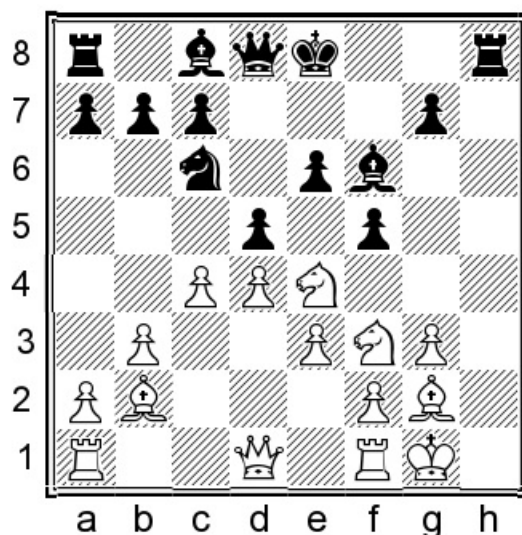
A) 9. ♘bd2 h4



Position after: 9...h4

A few games have reached this position.

A1) 10.e3 hxg3 11.hxg3 ♕f6 12.♖xe4

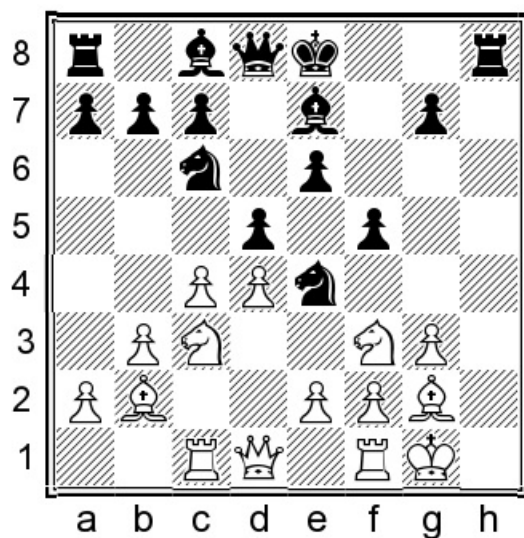


Position after: 12.♖xe4

12...dxe4! 13.♖e5 ♕xe5 14.dxe5 ♖g5 15.♗e1 ♕d7 16.b4 ♗h5 17.f4 ♗h2+ 18.♔f2 ♖h3 This specific game stands out to me as the best advertisement for the system and was what caused me to analyse it deeply. 0-1 (29) Blagojevic, D (2500) – Sedlak, N (2557) Batumi 2019

A2) Similarly, after 10.♖c1 hxg3 11.hxg3 ♕f6 12.e3 ♗e7 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♖xc6?! bxc6 15.♗c1 ♗e6 16.♗c2 ♕a6 17.♖e1 g5 White resigned three moves later in Ehlvest, J (2547) – Rapport, R (2709) Jurmala 2015.

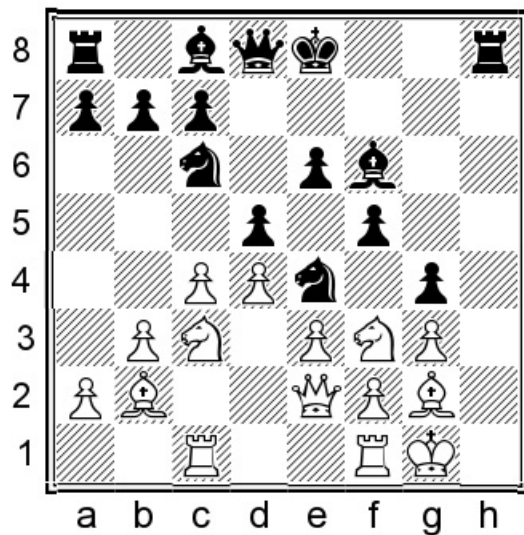
B) 9.♖c3 h4 10.♖c1 hxg3 11.hxg3



Position after: 11.hxg3

A critical position for the Rapport line.

B1) In the actual game Black chose 11...♔f6 12.e3 [12.♘xe4 dxe4! 13.♘e5 ♕xe5 14.dxe5 ♖g5 is Black's main point.] 12...g5 13.♗e2 g4

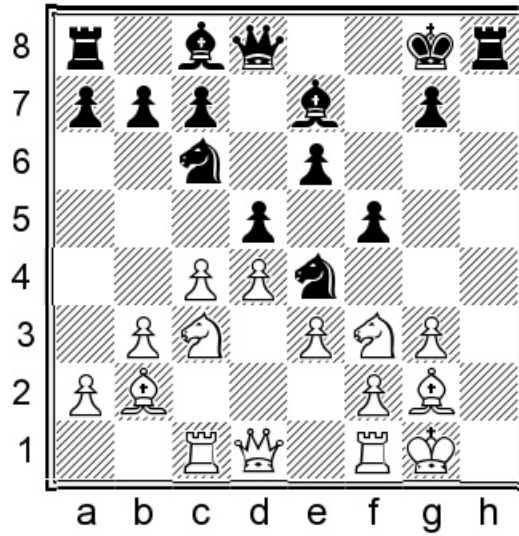


Position after: 13...g4

14.♘e5!N [14.♘d2 ♘e7 is suitably messy. ½-½ (40) Spraggett, K (2538) – Rapport, R (2716) Gibraltar 2015] 14...♕xe5 15.dxe5 ♖g5 16.♟fd1 ♗h5 17.cxd5 ♘g5 18.♔f1 ♘f3 19.♗b5 with a large plus for White.

B2) 11...♔f7!?N I think this is an important improvement for Black, whose king

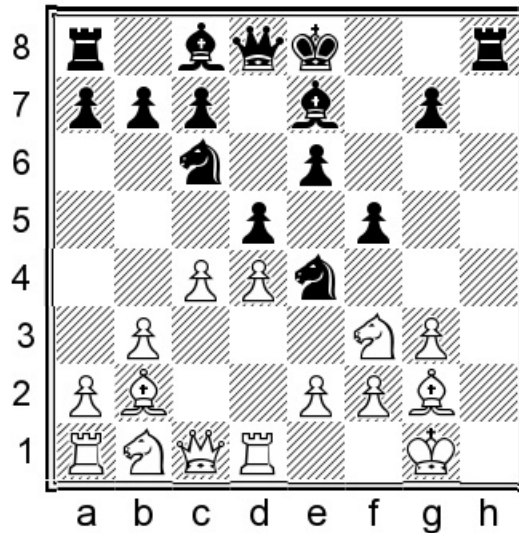
simply has to find greater safety. This move also clears the 8th rank. 12.e3 ♔g8



Position after: 12... ♔g8

13. ♖xe4!? [13. ♖e5 ♖xe5 14.dxe5 c6 is more straightforwardly fine for Black.]
 13...dxe4 14. ♖e1 ♜h6 15.f3 ♙d6 16.fxg3 ♙xg3 with a confusing tactical position.

9...h4 10. ♝d1 hxg3 11.hxg3

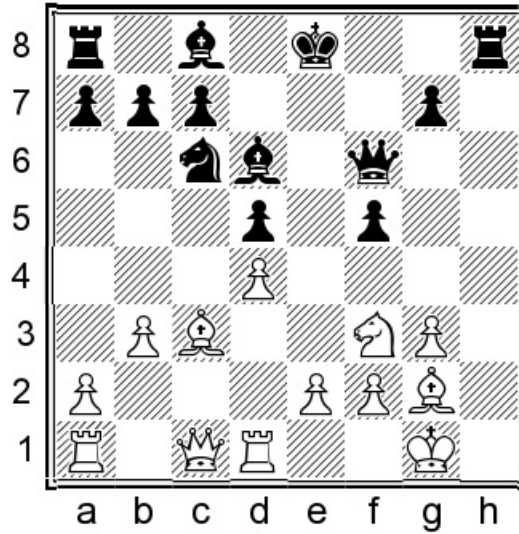


Position after: 11.hxg3

11... ♙f7!?

As in note b2) to White's 9th, Black must put a king in a safer place before deciding what exactly to do. After all this is not the Dragon Sicilian, and Black's own attack may not result in quick mates!

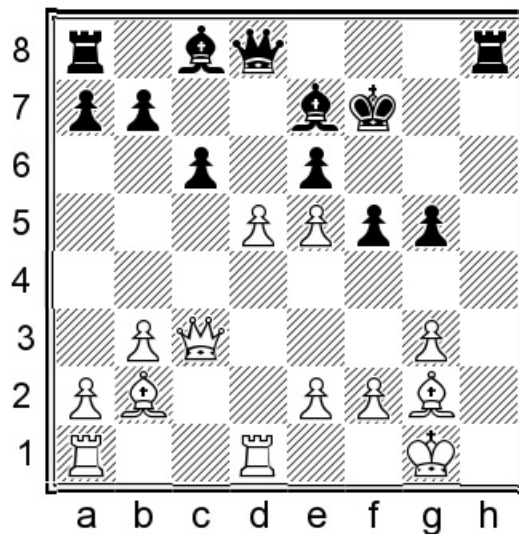
A) 11...♔d6 12.♘c3 ♚f6 13.cxd5 ♘xc3 14.♙xc3 exd5



Position after: 14...exd5

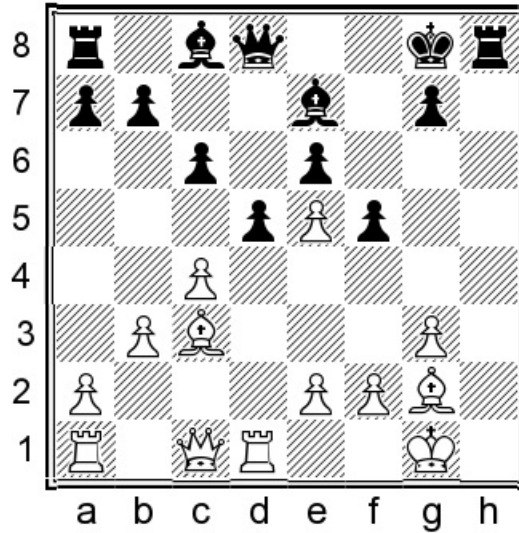
15.♙d2! ♙d7 16.♙g5 ♚e6 17.♖d3 ♔f8 18.♗e3 ♚g6 19.♙f4 ♙xf4 20.gxf4 gives White a large advantage.

B) 11...g5?! 12.♘c3 ♔f7 13.♘e5+ ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘xc3 15.♚xc3 c6 16.cxd5 is actually winning for White, because Black can't take back on d5.



Position after: 16.cxd5

12.♖c3 ♔g8! 13.♗e5 ♜xe5 14.dxe5 ♜xc3 15.♙xc3 c6



Position after: 15...c6

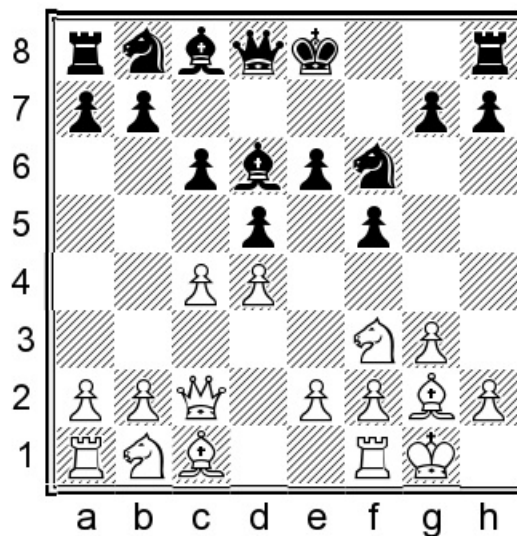
16.e4 fxe4 17.♙xe4 ♚f8 18.♙g2 ♜d7

The position is balanced. Black has a ‘castled’ type of king position while also being able to use the h-file and even the f8-square for major pieces. Overall, it’s too early to evaluate the entire system with ...h5 but it certainly deserves serious attention.

Part III
Systems with g3 and ♘f3 (Modern approach with ...♙d6)

Chapter 5
7.♙c2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♙c2



Chapter Guide

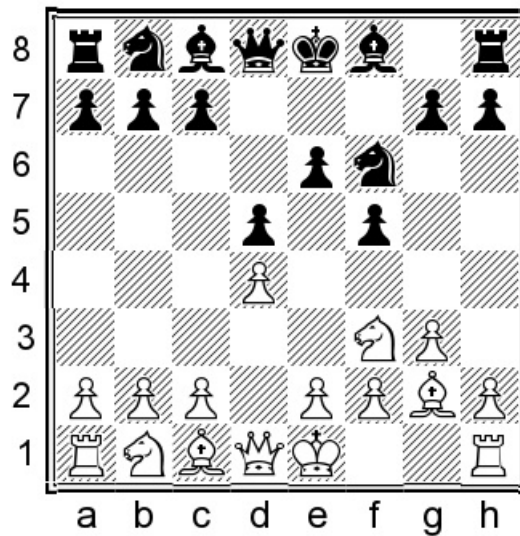
Chapter 5 – 7.♙c2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♙c2 0-0

- a) 8.♙f4
- b) 8.♘c3 ♙d7
- c) 8.♘c3 ♙e7
- d) 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♙b1 ♘d7
- e) 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♙b1 a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 b6
- f) 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♙b1 a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 b5

a) 8.♙f4

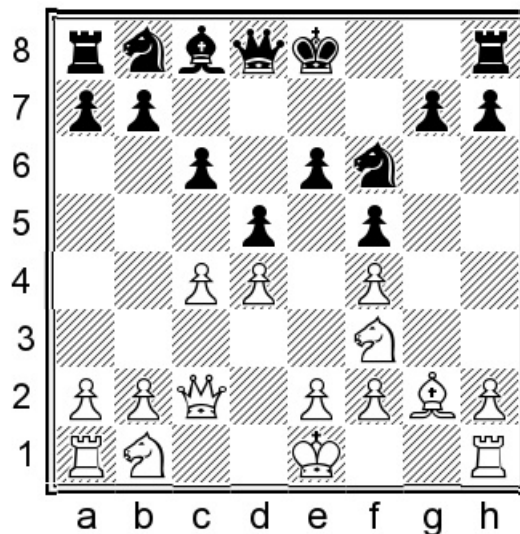
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5



Position after: 4...d5

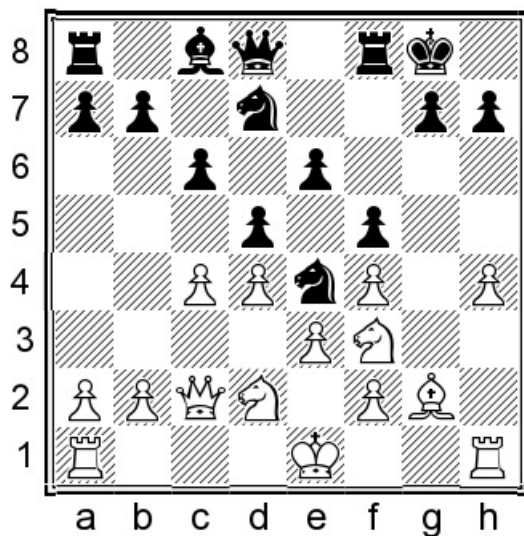
5.0-0

Sometimes White forgoes castling in favour of trying to create play along the g-file, like this: 5.c4 c6 6.♙c2 ♙d6 7.♙f4!? ♙xf4 8.gxf4.



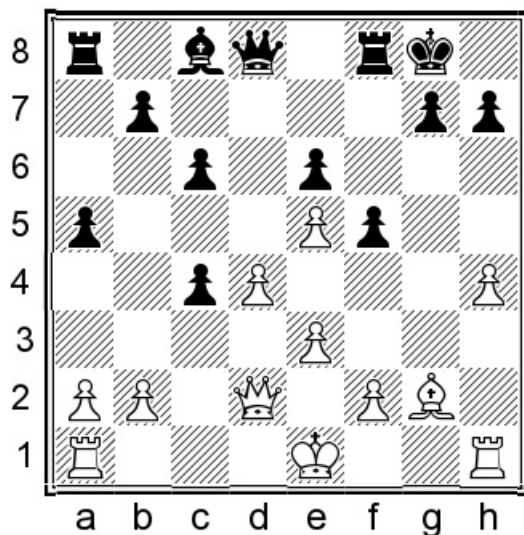
Position after: 8.gxf4

Black now has to show awareness that his opponent might castle queenside, or not at all. 8...0-0 9.♘bd2 ♘e4 10.e3 ♘d7 11.h4!?



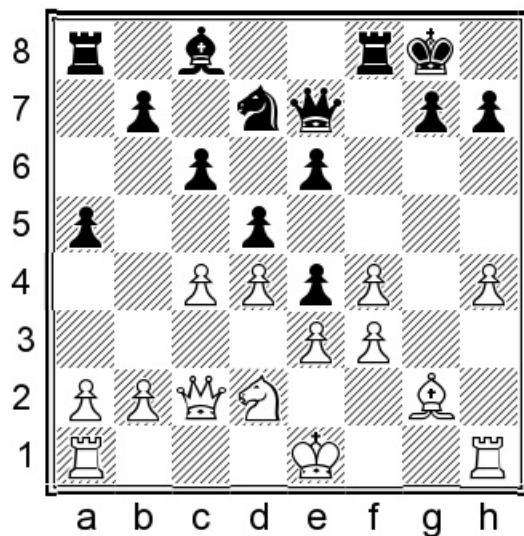
Position after: 11.h4!?

A) 11...a5!? 12.♘g5!? [12.♘e5 ♖xe5 13.fxe5 ♘xd2 14.♙xd2 dxc4!



Position after: 14...dxc4

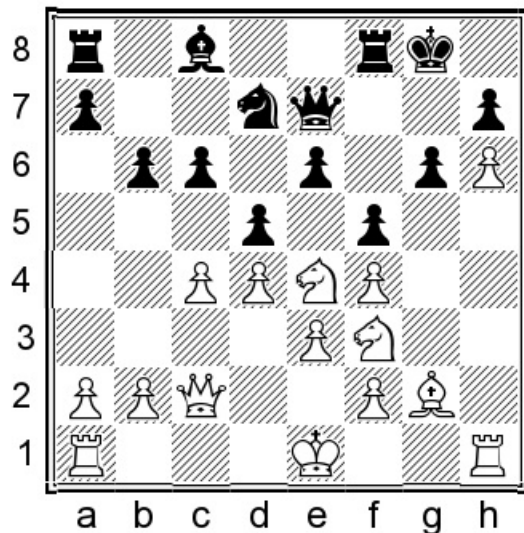
This is just an exchange of pawns, but an instructive one! 15.♖c1 b5 16.♙xc6 ♖b8 17.d5 ♙c7= 0-1 (31) Gheorghiu, F (2500) – Vaganian, R (2590) Debrecen 1992; 12.h5 b5 13.c5 ♙e7 14.h6 g6 15.♙f1 ♙a6 16.a3 a4 17.♙e2 ♖fb8 18.♘xe4 fxe4 19.♘g5 b4= with enough counterplay.] 12...♙e7 13.♘gxe4 fxe4 14.f3



Position after: 14.f3

14...c5!? As long as this move doesn't lose material, it should be considered as a good way to create counterplay. Here, 15.fxe4 cxd4 16.exd4 ♖xf4 17.0-0-0 ♜f6 18.♞df1 ♞xf1+ 19.♞xf1 ♔d7∞ is pleasant for Black.

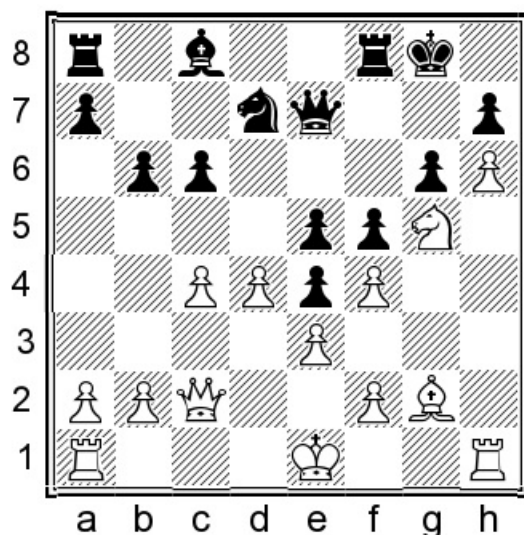
B) 11...♞e7 This is a more delicate move, but it's worth understanding what happens. White should continue 12.h5 b6 13.h6 g6 14.♞xe4



Position after: 14.♞xe4

in order to 'carve out' the g5-outpost and then occupy it. However, with 14...dxe4! [rather than 14...fxe4 15.♞g5, when the knight on g5 is a permanent presence and

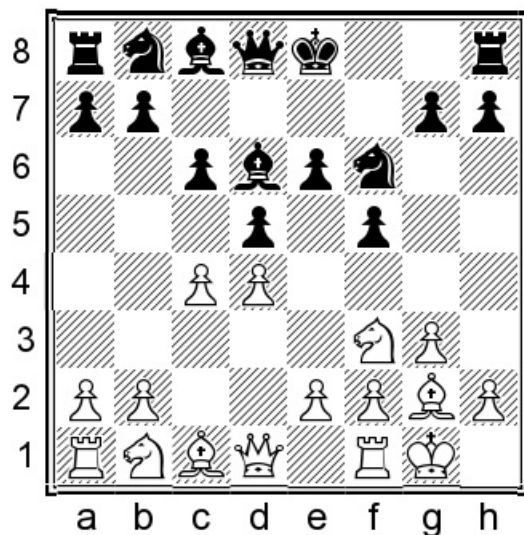
Black might lose fast, e.g. 15...♙a6 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♙h3 ♜f6 18.♞c1+-] 15.♘g5 e5!
 Black can undermine the knight.



Position after: 15...e5

16.dxe5 This way White can force some precision, and he retains the integrity of his central pawn-island. [16.0-0-0 exf4 17.exf4 ♘f6 18.♙b1 ♚d6 19.♞d2 ♜e8 20.♞he1 ♙e6 21.♙f1 ♜ad8 leads to White running risks as well.] 16...♘xe5 17.0-0-0 ♘f7 18.♘xf7 ♜xf7 19.♞d2 Now best is 19...c5! [19...♙e6 20.f3 exf3 21.♙xf3± gives White pressure.] 20.♞hd1 ♙b7= with equality.

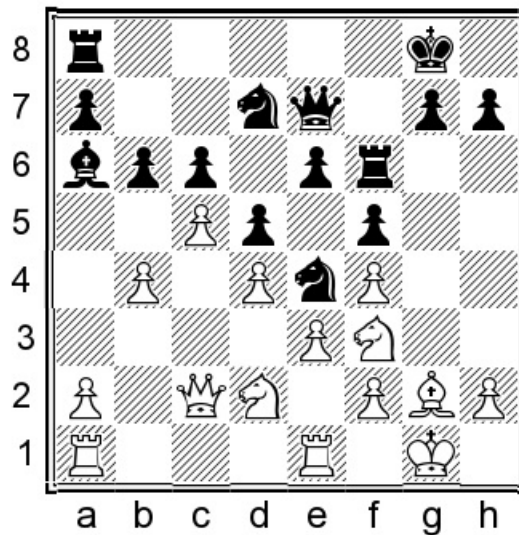
5...♙d6 6.c4 c6



Position after: 6...c6

7.♞c2

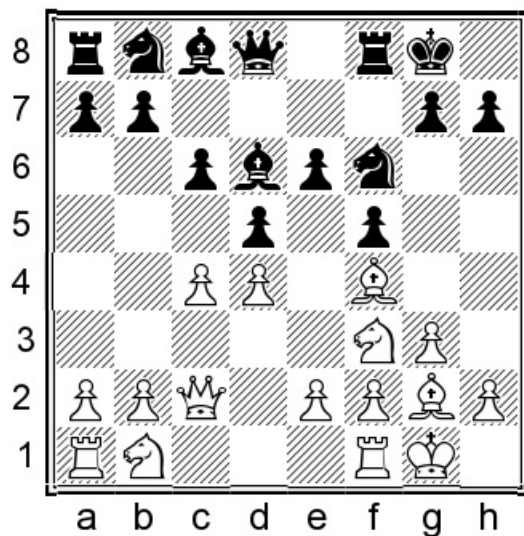
A) White can also go for the structure with doubled f-pawns and c5 included. 7.b3 ♞e7 8.c5!? ♟c7 9.♟f4 ♟xf4 10.gxf4 looks like the way you would go about doing that. Black can continue 10...b6!? in order to create counterplay. This looks sufficient after, for example, 11.♞c2 0-0 12.♘bd2 ♟a6 13.♞fe1 ♘bd7 14.b4 ♘e4 15.e3 ♞f6∞.



Position after: 15...♞f6∞

B) I haven't identified any real attempts to progress White's development that completely exclude playing ♞c2 at any stage. 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♞b1 is therefore OK but likely to transpose.

7...0-0 8.♟f4



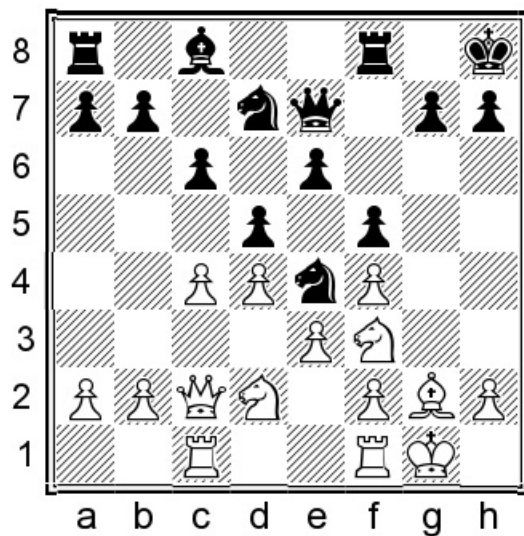
Position after: 8. Qxf4

8... Qxf4 9. gxf4

This is a key structure to know about in this opening. White has exchanged off his opponent's good bishop at the cost of his own central play and the possible risk of giving Black a 'handle' to attack with a future ...g5 thrust.

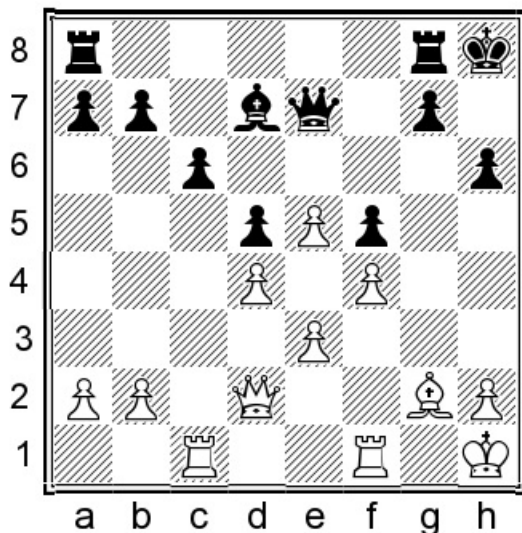
9... Qd7

An attempt to execute ...g5 more directly might be: 9... Qe4 10. Qbd2 Qd7 11. e3 Qe7 12. Rac1 Qh8.



Position after: 12...♔h8

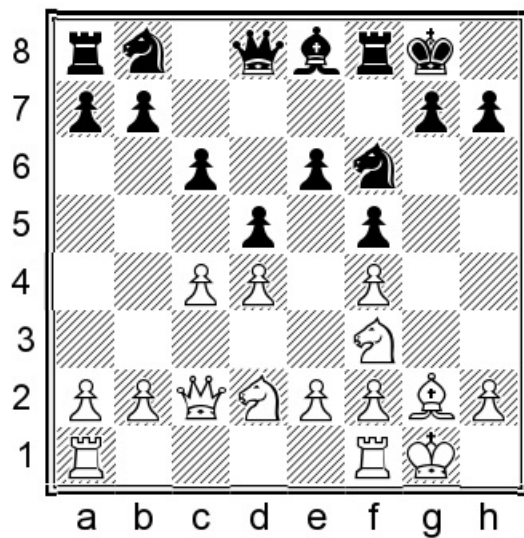
13.♘e5 [13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♘d2 g5 gives Black exactly what he wants, and 15.fxg5 ♖xg5 16.f4 ♕h4 17.♖fe1 ♘f6 18.♘f1 ♗g8 19.♔h1 ♙d7 is simply good for him, because Black's plans work more quickly. The Russian grandmaster won soon in Hakki, I (2431) – Ulibin, M (2576) Dubai 2002.] 13...♘xe5 14.fxe5 ♙d7 15.f4 ♘xd2 16.♖xd2 ♗g8 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♔h1 h6



Position after: 18...h6

19.♖f3 g5 20.fxg5 ♗xg5 21.♕f2 ♗ag8 22.♖g3 ♕g7 23.♖xg5 hxg5 24.♖f1 ♕h6 This is another good example of the kind of play Black wants. ½-½ (42) Alexandrova, O (2265) – Moiseenko, A (2419) Ukraine 1999.

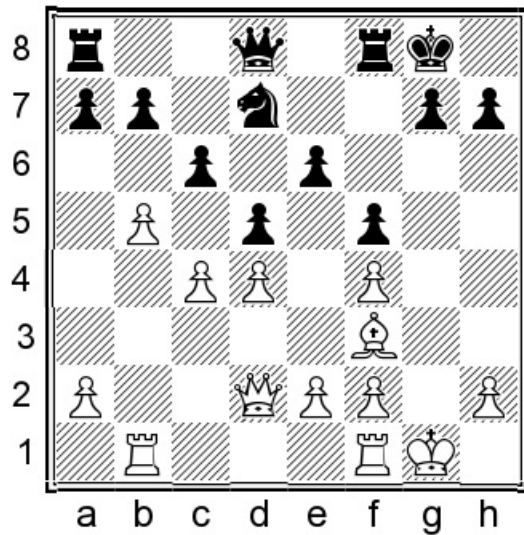
10.♘bd2 ♙e8



Position after: 10...Ke8

11.b4

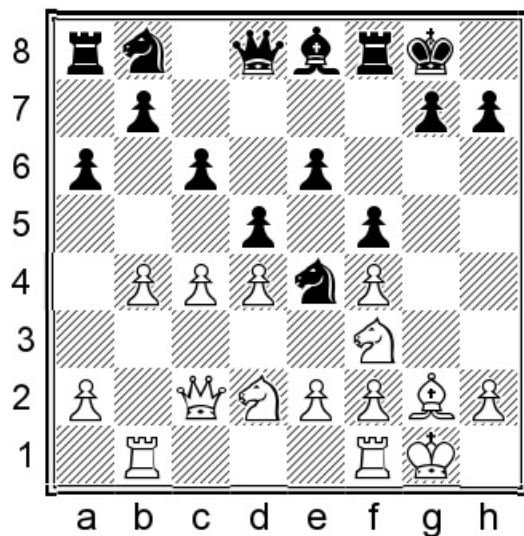
11.♖ab1 ♔h5 12.b4 ♞e4 13.b5 ♞xd2! 14.♚xd2 ♕xf3! 15.♕xf3 ♞d7



Position after: 15...Nd7

The knight is not weaker than the bishop, especially with the doubled f-pawns. 16.bxc6 bxc6 17.c5 ♖b8=

11...♞e4 12.♖ab1 a6!?

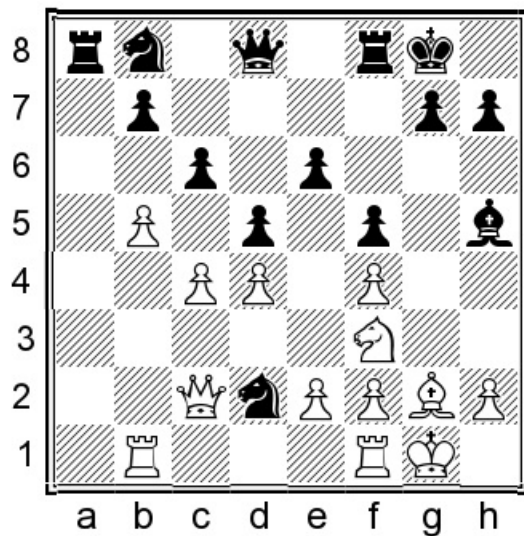


Position after: 12...a6!?

Black is not totally against opening lines on the queenside; after all, he will be able to use the a-file for his a8-rook.

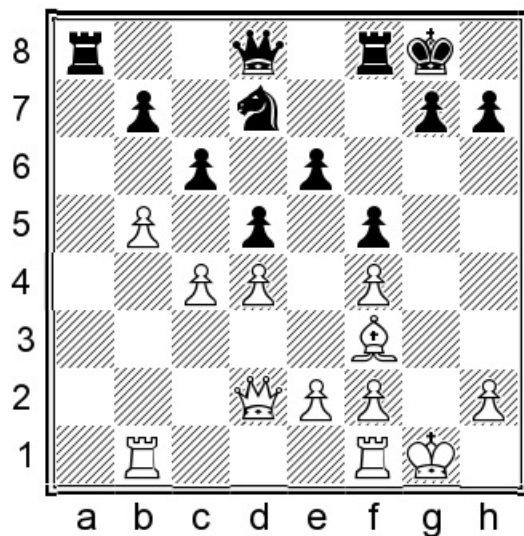
13. ♖e5

13.a4 ♕h5! 14.b5 axb5 15.axb5 ♘xd2!?



Position after: 15...♘xd2!?

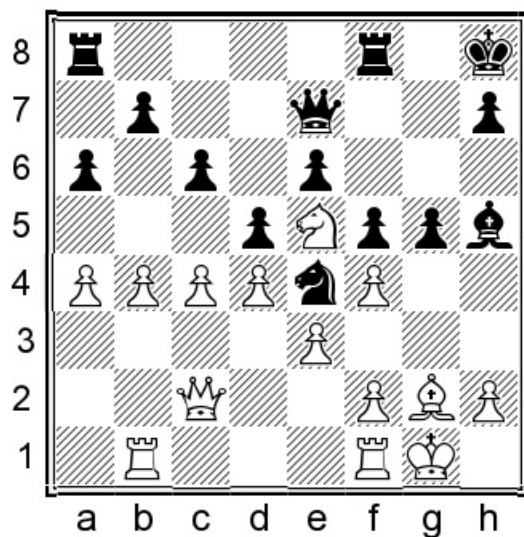
With these swaps Black intends to ease his defense and make the point that the g2-bishop is actually not great at all. 16. ♙xd2 ♕xf3! 17. ♕xf3 ♘d7



Position after: 17... Nxd7

Once more the imbalance of knight versus bishop has been reached and Black has nothing to complain about, especially in view of the doubled f-pawns.

13... Nxd7 14. Nxd7 ♖xd7 15. Bf3 ♕e7 16. a4 ♖h8 17. e3 ♗h5 18. Nxe5 g5↑

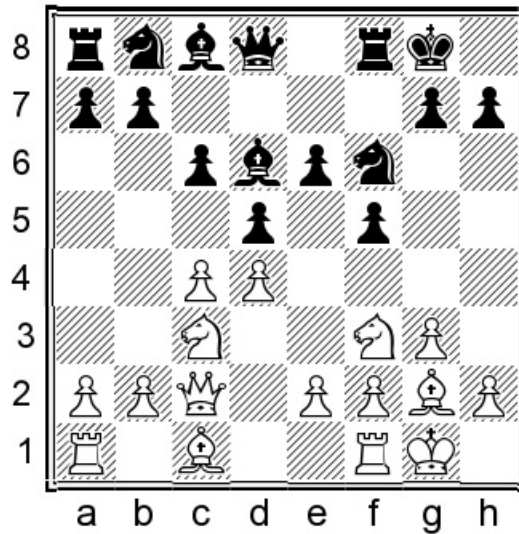


Position after: 18... g5↑

Black has the usual strong counterplay on the kingside.

b) 8. Nc3 ♗d7

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♚c2 0-0 8.♘c3

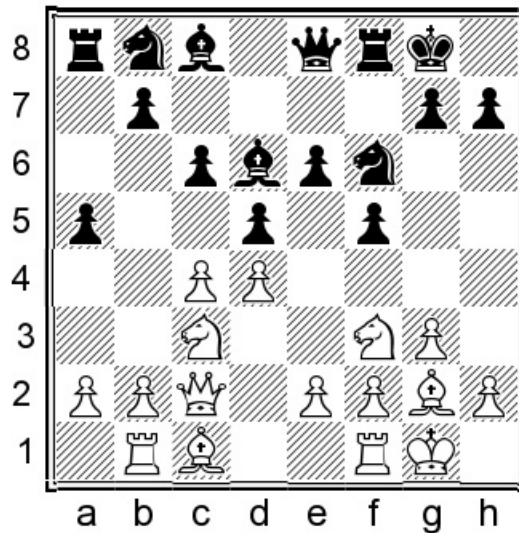


Position after: 8.♘c3

This plan is considered to be the most dangerous for Black; White is looking for a very straightforward plan of ♖b1, b4 and so on. Black has to know exactly how to prepare his pieces in order to get counterplay. In this file we deal with somewhat offbeat ways to do so.

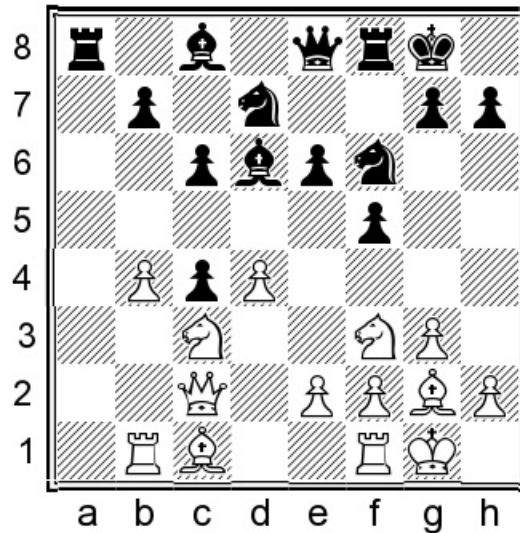
8...♙d7

A) 8...♚e8 This is another offbeat idea. 9.♖b1 a5!?



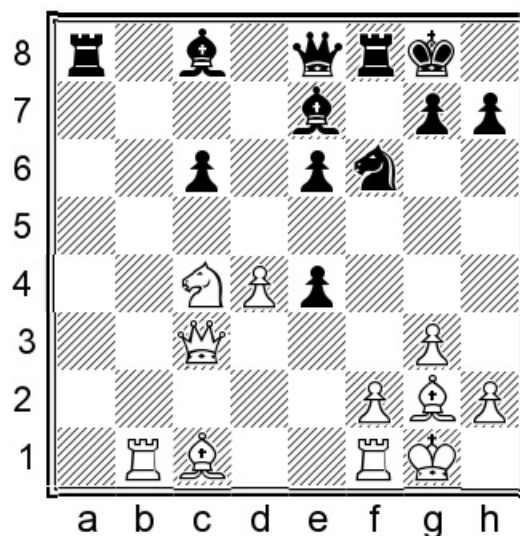
Position after: 9...a5!?

10.a3 [10.♘a4 ♘bd7 11.c5 ♙c7 12.♙f4 ♙xf4 13.gxf4 h6⇒ Black gets good counterplay, as usual for such positions.] 10...♘bd7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 dxc4!?



Position after: 12...dxc4!?

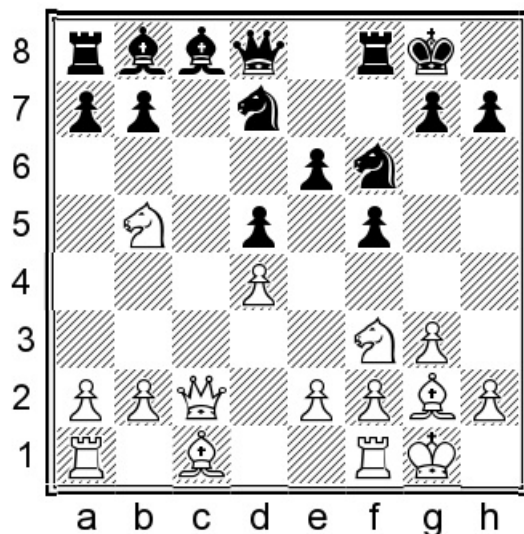
An unusual reaction, but Black is probably in time to liquidate the queenside pawns before White can attack them. 13.b5 [13.e4 fxe4 14.♘g5 b5! 15.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♙c7 may not give White enough compensation.] 13...♘d5 14.bxc6 bxc6 15.e4 ♘xc3 16.♙xc3 fxe4 17.♘d2 ♘f6 18.♘xc4 ♙e7



Position after: 18...♙e7

19. ♖b6 [19. ♖e5 ♗a6 20. ♖e1 ♗d6 is also nothing special for White.] 19... ♗d5 20. ♖c2 ♗xb6 21. ♖xb6 ♗a6 22. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 23. ♗xe4 g6 24. ♗h6 White has compensation but will be hard pressed to prove any advantage.

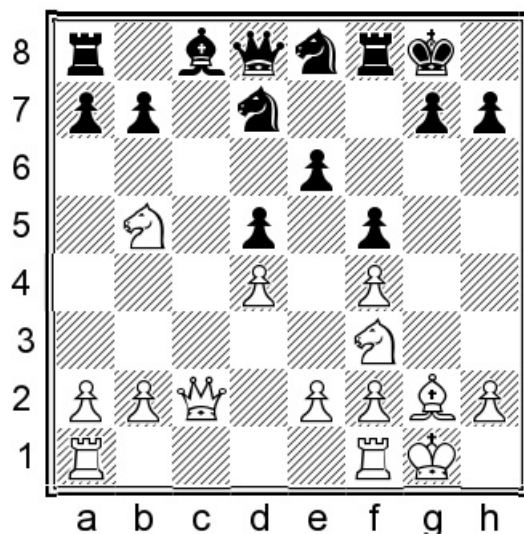
B) An idea which is generally passed over, but for reasons that aren't clear to me, is 8... ♗bd7!? 9.cxd5 As usual, White makes this trade as soon as Black has committed to not using the option of ... ♗c6. [9. ♖b1 ♖e7!] 9...cxd5 10. ♗b5 ♗b8



Position after: 10... ♗b8

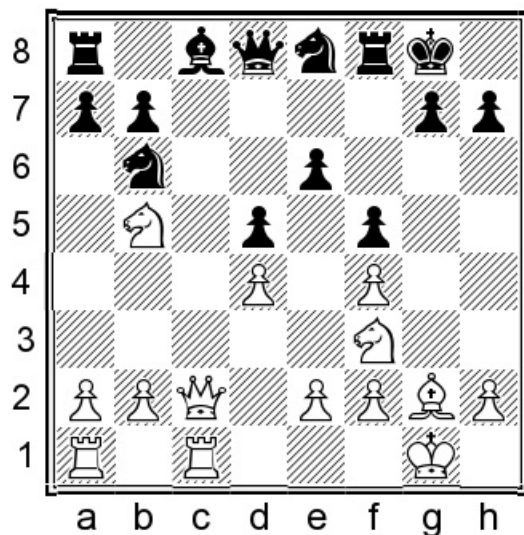
B1) 11. ♗g5 ♗b6 12. ♗h3 ♗d7 13. ♗c3 ♗d6 14. ♗f4 [14. ♗f4 ♖c8 15. ♖d1 ♗e4 Black gets counterplay.] 14... ♗e7 With unclear play.

B2) 11. ♗f4 ♗xf4 12.gxf4 ♗e8!



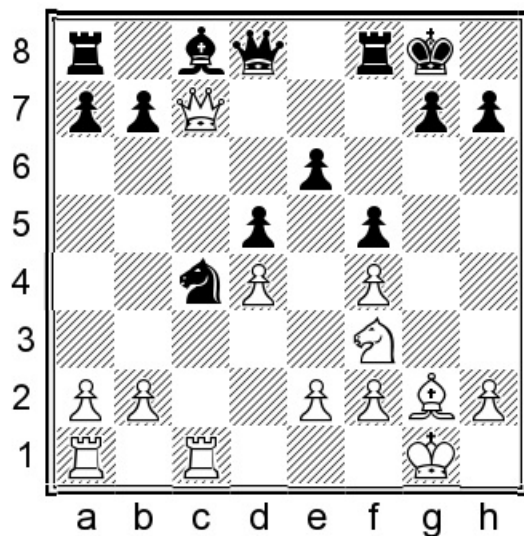
Position after: 12...♘e8!

In my opinion this is the best defensive arrangement for Black. It looks rather visually unappealing but it takes some effort to find even a reasonable try for White to get an actual advantage. 13.♖fc1 [13.♘g5 ♘df6 leads nowhere.] 13...♘b6!?



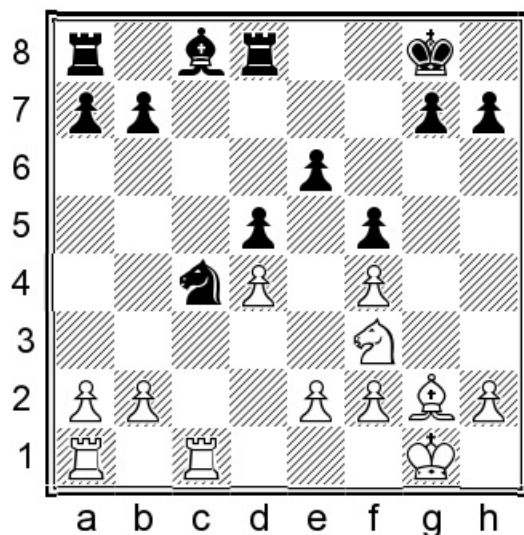
Position after: 13...♘b6!?

Black needs to occupy the c4-square at least for a moment in order to gain time. This might be a new idea here. 14.♘c7 Not the only move, but the others are easier to deal with. [14.♖c5 ♕d7 15.♘e5 ♖c8 16.♖b4 ♕xb5! 17.♖xc8 ♖xc8 18.♖xb5 ♘d6 19.♖b4 ♖c7 20.♘d3 ♖c8 Black is fine.; 14.e3 ♕d7 15.♕f1 ♕xb5! 16.♕xb5 ♘d6 17.♕d3 ♖c8= is a similarly easy way for Black to exchange his problem piece.] 14...♘xc7 15.♖xc7 ♘c4!



Position after: 15... Nc4!

An important defensive idea. 16. ♖xd8 [16. ♖xc4 dxc4 17. ♖xc4 ♖b8 18. ♗e5 b5! doesn't yield enough compensation.] 16... ♖xd8



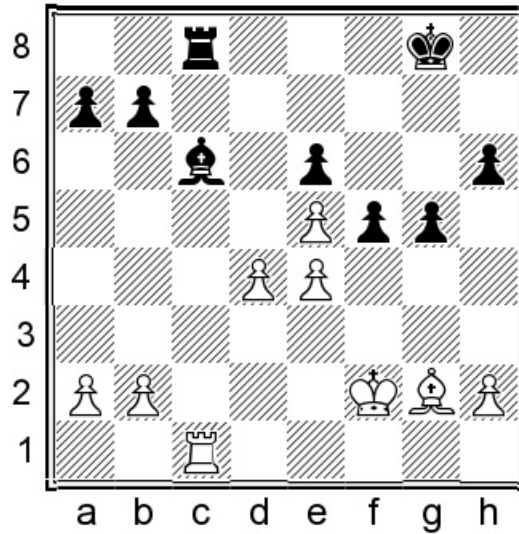
Position after: 16... ♖xd8

B2.1) 17. e3 ♗d7 18. ♗f1 ♗d6! 19. ♗d3 [19. ♖c5 ♖dc8 20. ♖ac1 ♔f8=] 19... ♔f8 20. ♗e5 ♗e8=

B2.2) 17. b3 ♗d6! Getting the knight to d6 is a key defensive strategy. 18. ♗e5 ♗d7 19. ♖c7 ♗b5 20. e3 ♔f8 21. ♖ac1 ♖ac8=

B2.3) 17. ♗e5 ♗xe5! 18. fx5 ♗d7 19. ♖c7 ♖ab8 20. f3 ♗c6 21. ♖c1 g5 22. ♔f2 h6

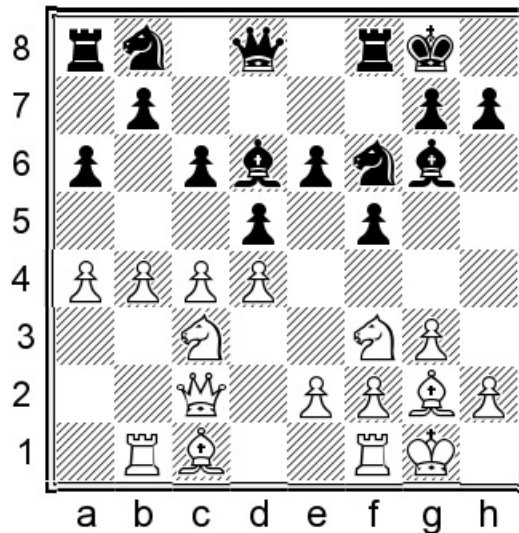
23.e3 ♖dc8 24.♗xc8+ ♖xc8 25.e4 dxe4 26.fxe4



Position after: 26.fxe4

26...♗f8! Black gets an equal endgame, e.g. 27.♖e3 fxe4 28.♙xe4 ♙xe4 29.♖xe4 ♗f4+ 30.♖e3 ♗h4 31.♖c8+ ♖f7 32.♖c7+ ♖f8 33.♖xb7 a5 34.♖a7 ♖xh2 35.♖xa5 ♖xb2=.

9.♖b1 ♙e8 10.b4 a6 11.a4 ♙g6!?

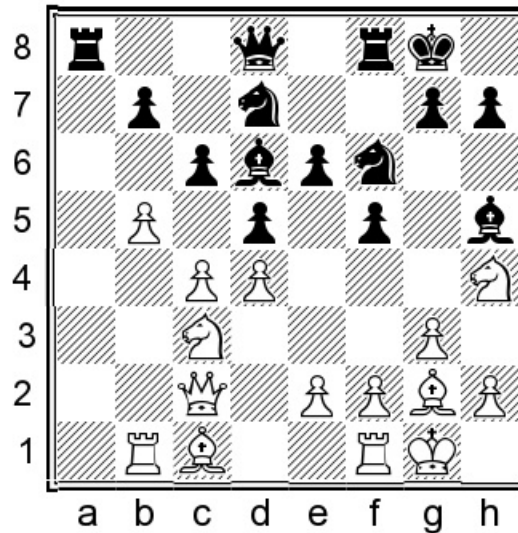


Position after: 11...♙g6!?

More commonly, we see this after ...g5 has been played. Black develops and plans ...f4

in the future, which provokes White to react with $\text{N}h4$ and perhaps thereby lose time a few moves later.

12. $\text{N}h4$ $\text{Q}h5$ 13. $b5$ $axb5$ 14. $axb5$ $\text{N}bd7$

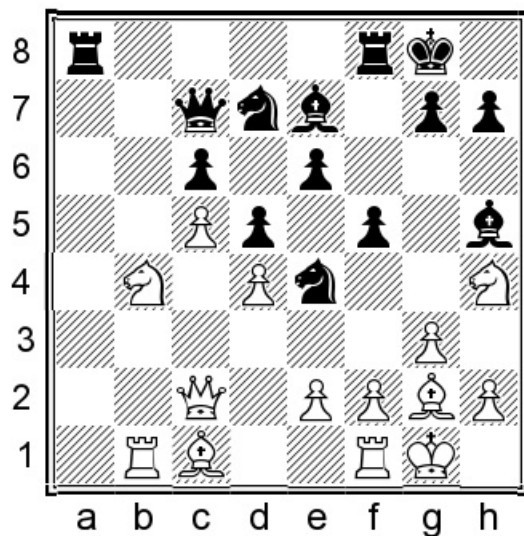


Position after: 14... $\text{N}bd7$

This is a critical position: both sides have completed their opening plans, the a-file is open for Black's rook, and White must commit to a new course of action.

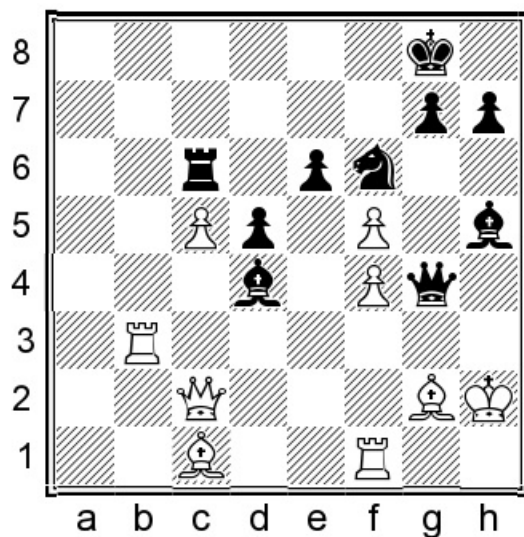
15. $\text{N}f3$

The alternative is forcing play on the queenside without delay. 15. $c5$ $\text{Q}e7!$ 16. $bxc6$ $bxc6$ 17. $\text{N}a2$ $\text{N}e4$ 18. $\text{N}b4$ $\text{Q}c7!?$



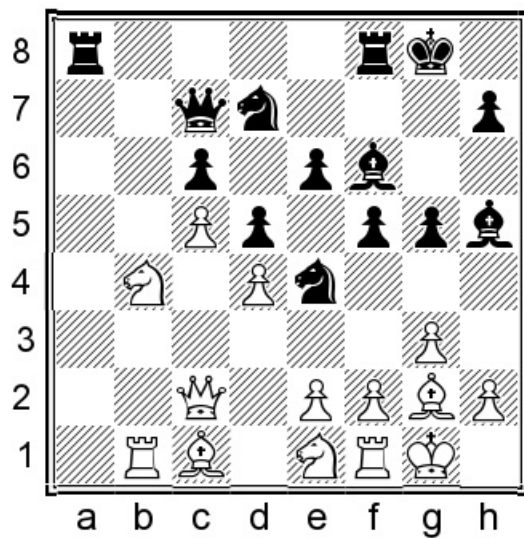
Position after: 18... ♖c7!?

[18... ♖c8 is likely to be similar, but controlling the g3-square can be useful.] 19. ♘f3
 [19.f3 ♘xg3!? As I was saying...! 20.hxg3 ♖xg3 21. ♘xf5 ♗xf5 22. ♘xc6 ♙f6 23.f4 ♜c8
 24. ♞b3 ♚g4 25.e4 ♞xc6 26.exf5 ♙xd4+ 27. ♔h2 ♘f6!



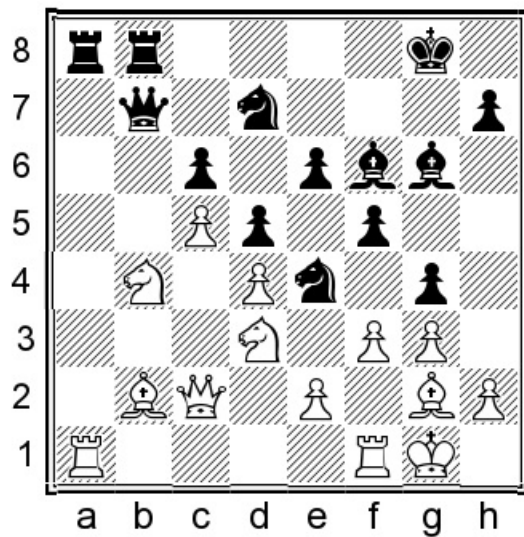
Position after: 27... ♘f6!

with complications that work out well for Black; 19. ♙f4 e5 20. ♙xe5 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 f4
 22. ♙xe4 dxe4 23. ♚xe4 ♙xh4 24.gxh4 ♙g6 25. ♚c4+ ♔h8 26. ♞bd1 ♚xe5 27. ♘xc6 ♚f6
 28. ♘b4 ♙f7 29. ♚d4 ♚g6+ 30. ♔h1 f3 gives Black counterplay.] 19...g5! Preventing
 White's bishop from getting to f4 and also intending ... f4. 20. ♘e1 ♙f6



Position after: 20...♔f6

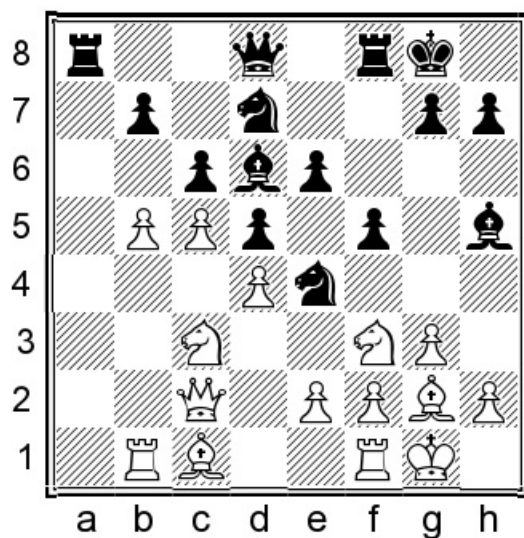
21.♕b2 [21.e3 g4 22.♖ed3 ♕f7 23.♕b2 h5 24.♖a1 h4 25.♖a4 ♗b7 26.♖fa1 ♖fb8 looks level.] 21...♕g6 22.♖ed3 ♖fb8 23.♖a1 ♗b7 24.f3 g4!



Position after: 24...g4!

Now concrete calculation must take over, but Black is doing fine.

15...♖e4 16.c5

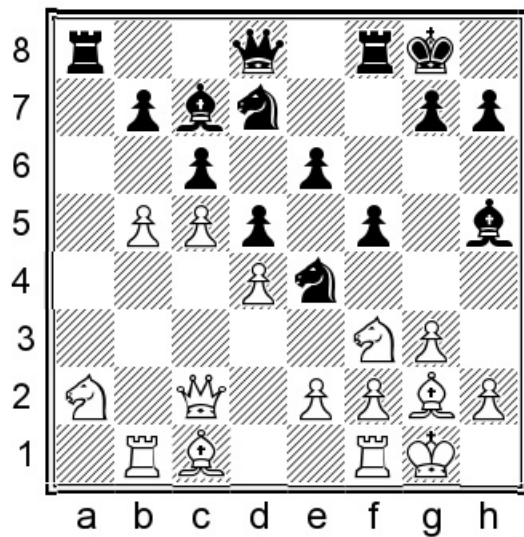


Position after: 16.c5

16...♙c7

16...♙e7 17.bxc6! [17.♙f4 g5 is one of the cases where Black can simply push the bishop back from f4.] 17...bxc6 18.♘a2 ♚c8 19.♘b4 ♙f6 20.♞d1 g5 21.♘e1 Black has been forced into passivity and White stands better.

17.♘a2



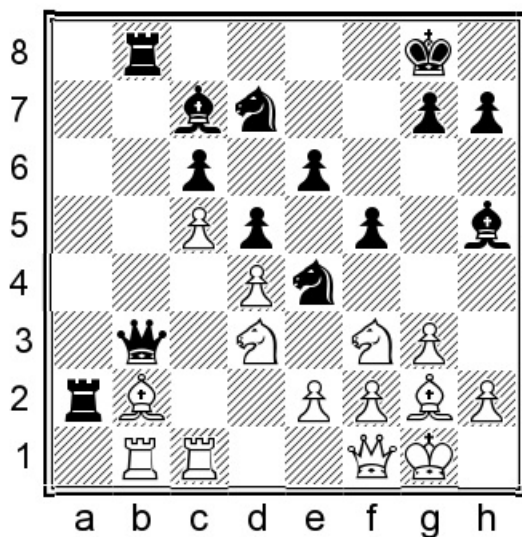
Position after: 17.♘a2

This is a normal plan, bringing the knight to d3 and hitting the c6-pawn en route.

17.♘b2 ♚e7 18.♖a1 ♙a5 19.b6 ♙xf3 20.♙xf3 ♙xc3 21.♙xc3 ♜xc3 22.♚xc3 e5 23.e3 ♜xa1 24.♜xa1 f4 Black is fine.

17...♜a5 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.♞b4 ♚a8 20.♙b2 ♜b8 21.♞d3 ♚a6 22.♜fc1 ♚c4! 23.♚d1 ♚b3 24.♚f1 ♜a2

Black has activated all his pieces and stands well.



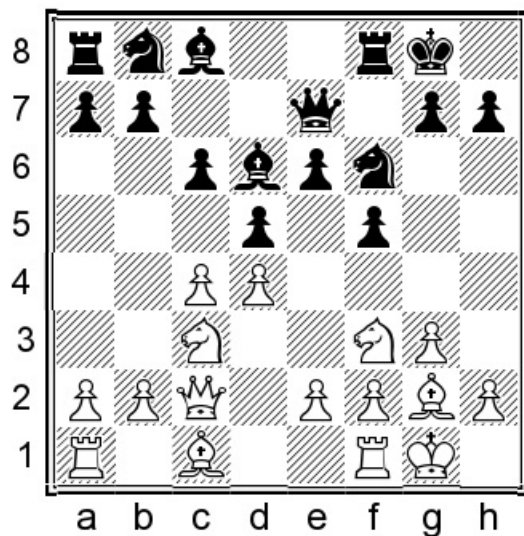
Position after: 24...♜a2

c) 8.♞c3 ♚e7

1.d4 f5 2.♞f3 e6 3.g3 ♞f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♚c2 0-0 8.♞c3

This plan is both dangerous and solid for White, and we need a robust reaction.

8...♚e7!?



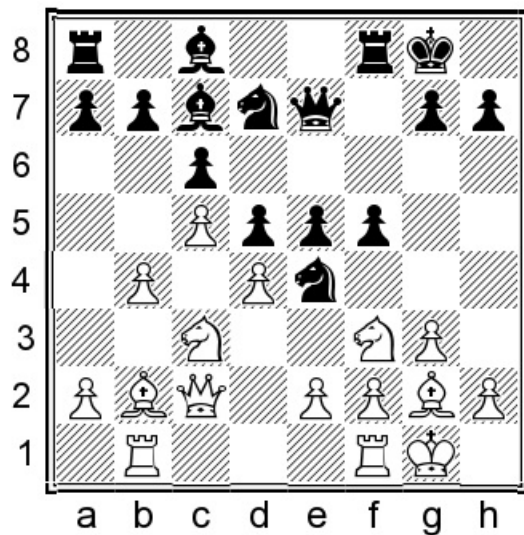
Position after: 8...♔e7!?

Black prepares to develop his queen's knight without allowing the tactical motif of cxd5. See note B) below for details of what has changed.

9.♔g5!?

9.♖b1 ♘bd7

A) After 10.c5 ♕c7 11.b4 ♘e4 12.♕b2 Black can push in the center: 12...e5!

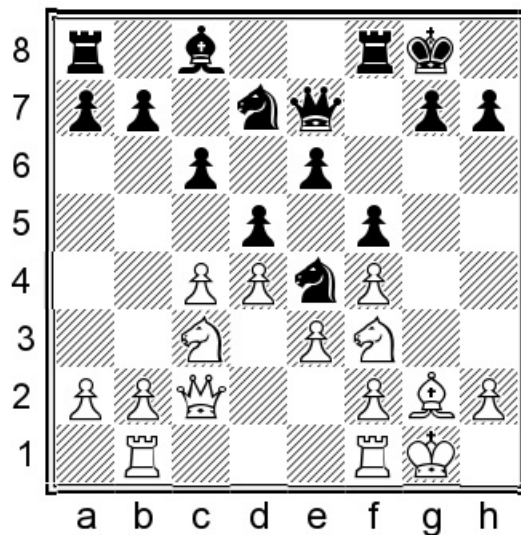


Position after: 12...e5!

13.dxe5 ♖xe5 14.♗xe5 ♙xe5 15.e3 ♙d7 16.♗e2 ♜ae8 17.♙d4 ♙xd4 18.♗xd4 h5↗
 Black's plan has worked a treat and he went on to win, Gaehwiler, G (2419) –
 Pelletier, Y (2551) Lenzerheide 2018.

B) 10.cxd5 exd5! 11.♙xf5 ♗e4 Now White lacks the resource of ♙e6+ and thus after
 12.♙h5 ♗df6 13.♙h4 ♙f5 Black gets good compensation.

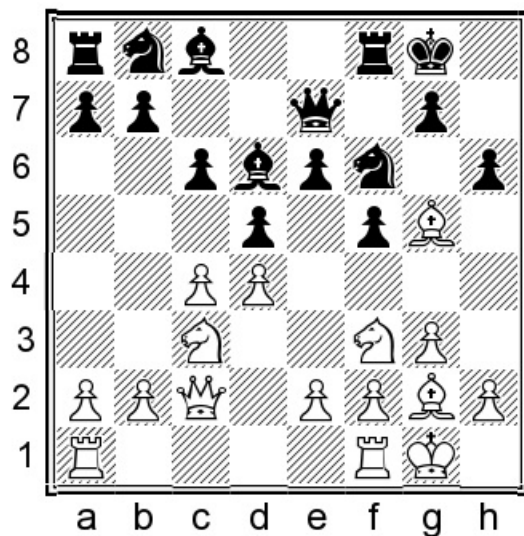
C) 10.♙f4 ♙xf4 11.gxf4 ♗e4 12.e3



Position after: 12.e3

12...b6! 13.b4 ♙b7 14.♜fc1 ♜ac8 15.c5 ♙a6∞ with unclear play.

9...h6

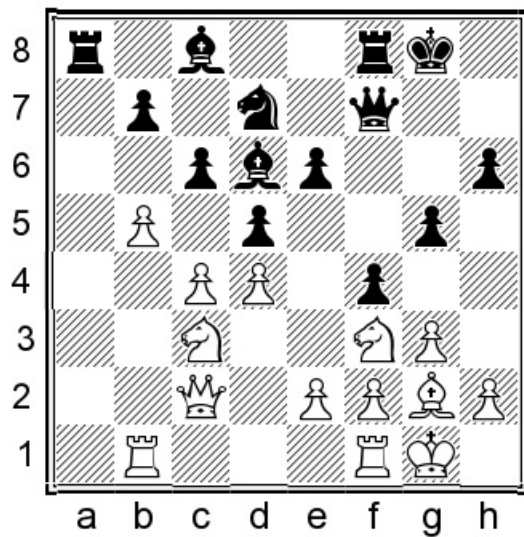


Position after: 9...h6

10.♙f4!?

This idea was advocated by Avrukh in his book, and it is widely accepted as best because now Black has weakened the g6-square (thus, a future ♘e5 will likely come with gain of tempo.)

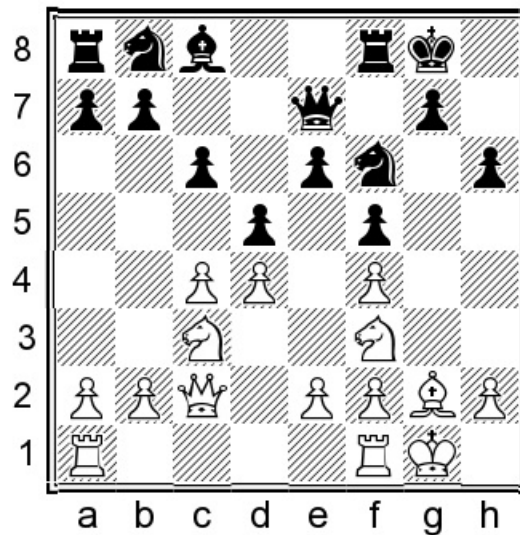
Taking on f6 is usually not dangerous. 10.♙xf6 ♖xf6 11.♞ab1 a5 12.a3 ♗e7 13.♘h4 ♗f7 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 g5 16.♘f3 ♘d7 17.b5 f4



Position after: 17...f4

This is quite a sharp position. 18.♘e1 [18.bxc6 bxc6 19.cxd5 exd5 20.e4 g4! 21.♘h4 f3 22.♙h1 White has made progress in the centre, but his bishop is so bad that he can't be better; 18.♖fe1 ♘f6 19.e4 fxe3 20.♗xe3 ♘g4 21.♖e2 e5! sees Black get counterplay and the possibility of ...♙c5 soon.] 18...♘f6 19.♘d3 ♚h5→ Black has an attack.

10...♙xf4 11.gxf4

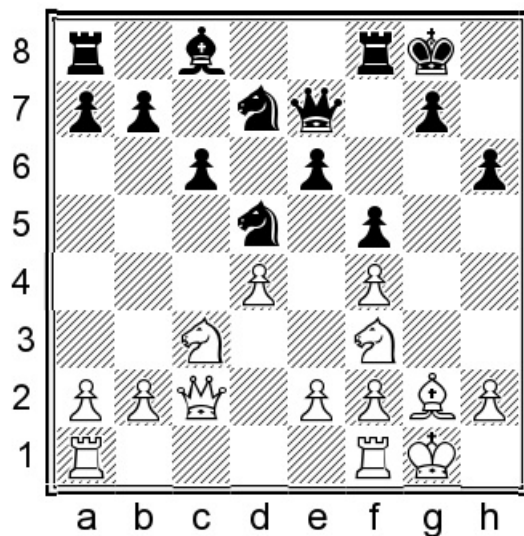


Position after: 11.gxf4

11...♙d7

The main move is most typical, but another possible idea is 11...♘bd7!? Now:

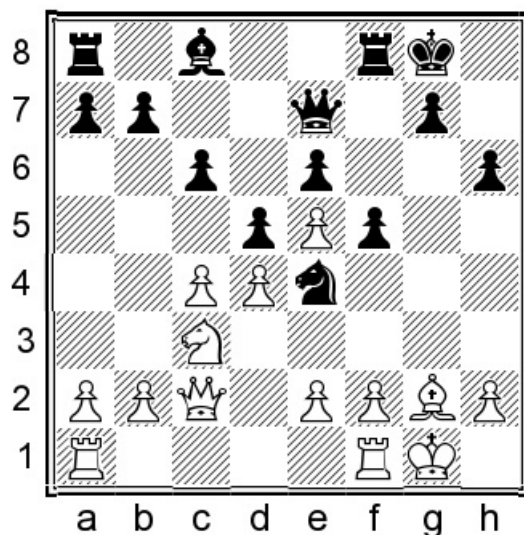
A) 12.cxd5 ♘xd5!



Position after: 12...dxd5!

This is (in general) the best reaction whenever White has doubled f-pawns. [12...exd5 13.dh4± is best avoided.] 13.e3 [13.♔d2 b6!? 14.dxd5 cxd5 15.♖fc1 ♔a6 White has the c-file for now, but mass exchanges are very likely, e.g. 16.♖c7 ♖fc8 17.♖ac1 ♖xc7 18.♖xc7 ♔d6 19.♖c2 ♖c8 20.♖xc8+ ♔xc8 21.♔f1 ♔a6 22.e3 ♔xf1 23.♕xf1 ♔c6 and Black is fine.] 13...g5 14.dxe2 ♖f7 15.♕h1 ♖g7 16.♖g1 ♕h8±.

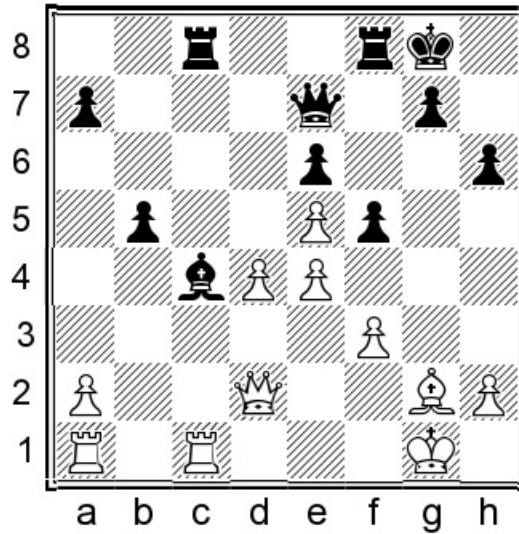
B) 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.fxe5 dxe4



Position after: 13...dxe4

B1) 14.f3 dxc3 15.bxc3 [15.♔xc3 f4! 16.cxd5 exd5! Black is fine.] 15...b6 16.cxd5

cx d5 17.c4 ♖b7 18.cxd5 ♗xd5 19.e4 ♜ac8 20.♞d2 ♗c4 21.♝fc1 b5

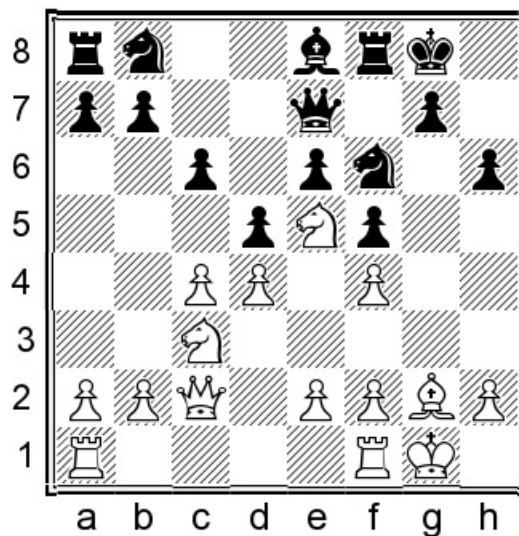


Position after: 21...b5

By now it should be clear that one of Black's main aims is making the g2-bishop bad, as has happened here.

B2) 14.♗xe4 fxe4 15.f3 exf3 16.♝xf3 ♝xf3 17.♗xf3 ♗d7 18.♖h1 ♜f8 19.♝g1 ♗e8 The problem piece had escaped and a draw was agreed soon in Linden, L (2127) – Vihinen, T (2170) Finland 2017.

12.♗e5 ♗e8

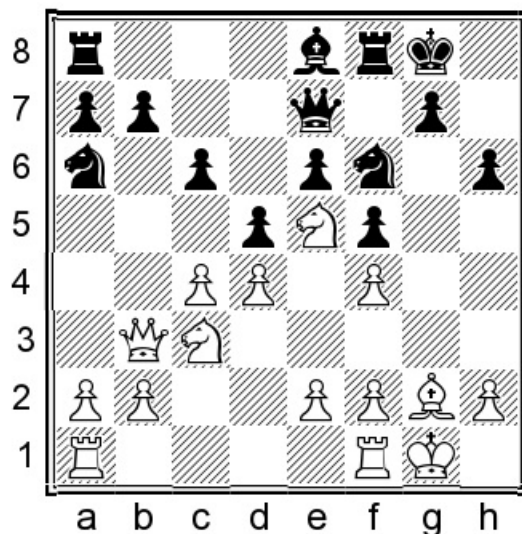


Position after: 12...♔e8

Black is ready to take back on d5 with the c-pawn and White gets basically nothing in that case. So his best approach is to keep more tension.

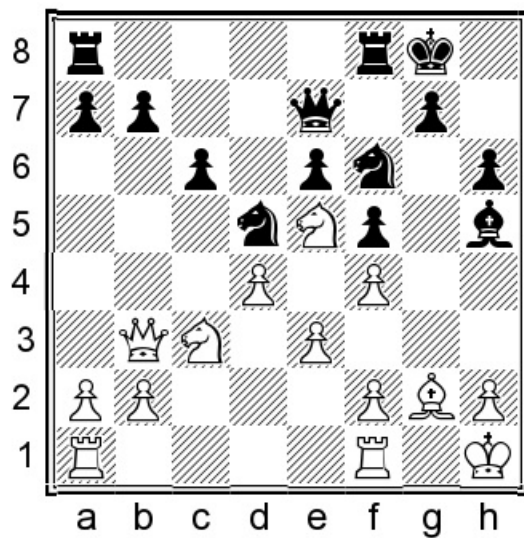
13.e3

13.♕b3 ♘a6!?



Position after: 13...♘a6!?

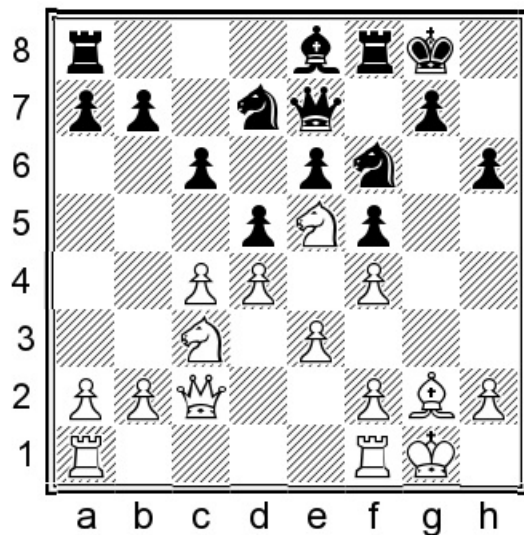
Black wants to combine the necessary freeing move ...dxc4 with a knight transfer from b8 to d5 (via a6 and b4/c7.) The dual route means there's little point White playing a3 here. 14.e3 dxc4 15.♘xc4 ♘b4 16.♘e5 ♘bd5 17.♔h1 [17.♘e2 ♔h8 18.♔h1 g5 19.♖g1 ♘g4! is unclear.] 17...♔h5!



Position after: 17... ♔h5!

Now a sample line could be 18. ♖g1 ♕h8 19. ♘d5 cxd5 20. ♖ac1 ♖ac8 21. ♖c3 ♘g4 22. ♘xg4 ♕xg4 23. ♖gc1 ♖xc3 24. ♖xc3 ♗h4 25. ♗c2 ♖f6 with sufficient counterplay.

13... ♘bd7



Position after: 13... ♘bd7

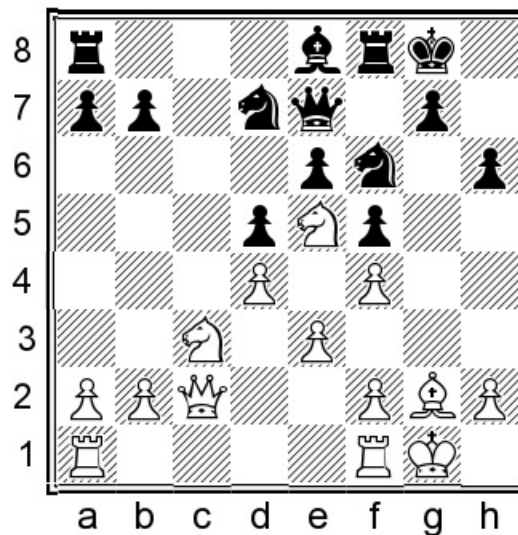
14.cxd5

Forcing a tricky decision.

A) 14.c5 ♖xe5 15.fxe5 ♗h5 16.f4 g5 17.♚f2 ♔h7 18.♘e2 ♞g8 Black gets his usual counterplay on the kingside.

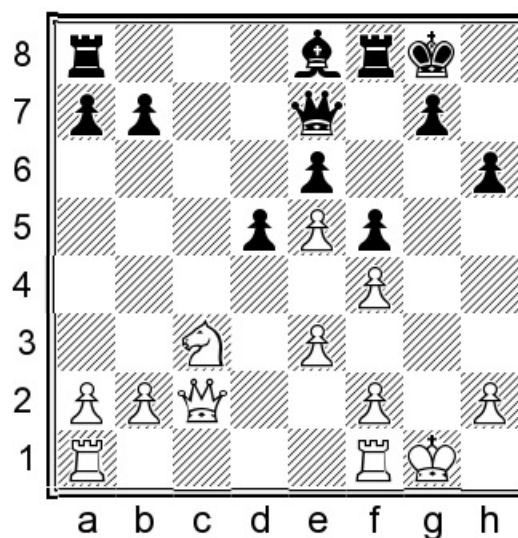
B) 14.♘e2 g5 15.cxd5 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♗xd5 17.♙xd5 exd5 18.♞ac1 gxf4 19.exf4 b6 20.♕h1 ♔h8 21.f3 c5 22.b4 ♞c8 23.bxc5 bxc5 24.♘d4 ♙d7 The position still remains very unclear.

14...cxd5



Position after: 14...cxd5

Taking back with the other pawn simply loses a pawn here, but another possibility is present: 14...♗xe5!? 15.dxe5 ♗xd5 16.♙xd5 cxd5

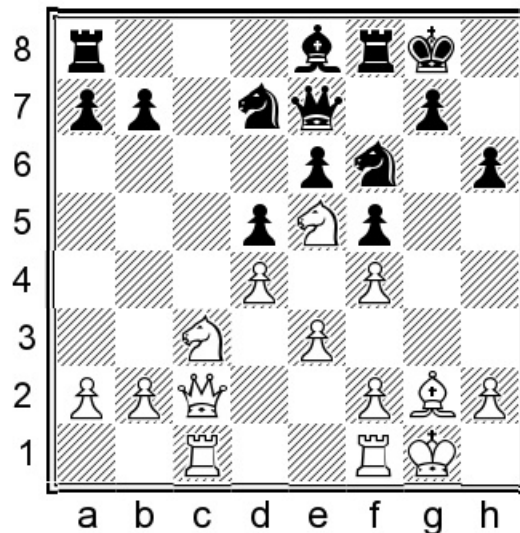


Position after: 16...cxd5

If White can establish a knight on d4, that would be some achievement, although with a weakened kingside it's still nothing to write home about. But this won't happen.

17.♖fc1 [17.♚d2 g5! Black continues his plan and stands fine.] 17...d4! 18.exd4 ♚h4
19.♚d2 ♜d8 20.f3 ♝c6 with the initiative.

15.♖ac1

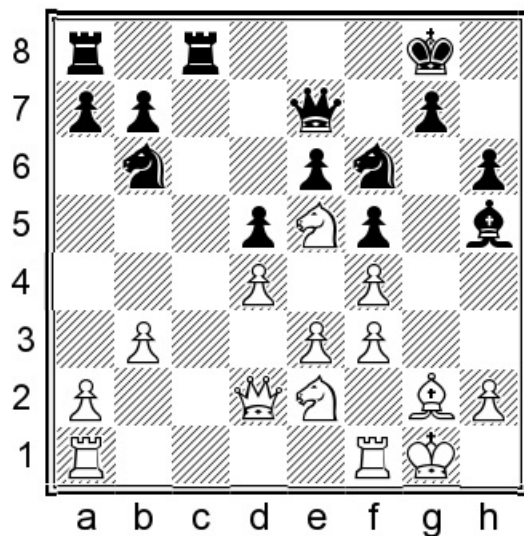


Position after: 15.♖ac1

White has (almost) forced the recapture with the c-pawn, and avoided possibilities associated with ...♘c6. Now he would like to control the c-file.

A) 15.♖fc1 ♘e4! Black is ready to go ...g5.

B) 15.♘e2 ♝h5 16.f3 [16.♘g3 ♖fc8 17.♚b3 ♜c7⇌ with counterplay.] 16...♖fc8 17.♚d2 ♘b6 18.b3

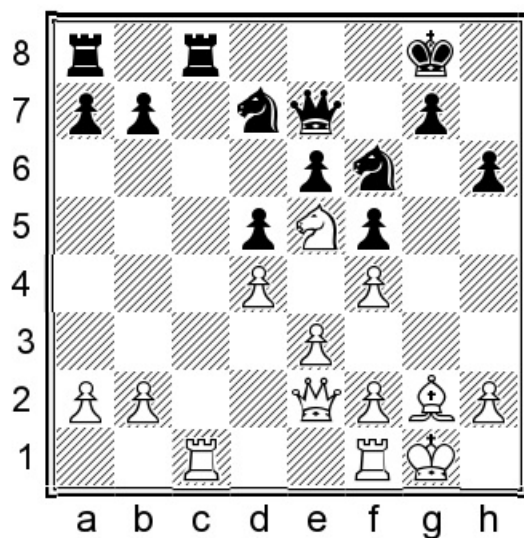


Position after: 18.b3

18...♙a3 19.♖fc1 ♔e8 20.♗xc8 ♗xc8 21.♖c1 ♔b5 22.♗xc8+ ♘xc8 23.♙c1 ♙xc1+ The position is equal. ½-½ Michiels, B (2536) – Dambacher, M (2468) Belgium 2018

15...♘xe5

Black can avoid taking: 15...♔h5!? 16.♘e2 [The direct intrusion 16.♘b5 a6 17.♘c7 ♗ac8± is counterproductive.] 16...♔xe2! 17.♙xe2 ♖fc8=

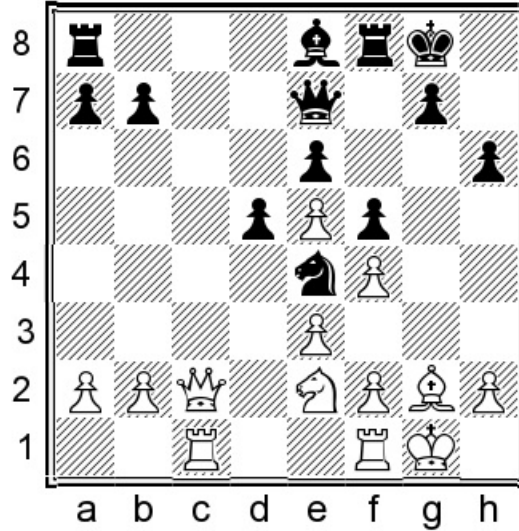


Position after: 17...♖fc8=

The knight-pair is no worse here, as we have already seen in analogous cases.

16.fxe5

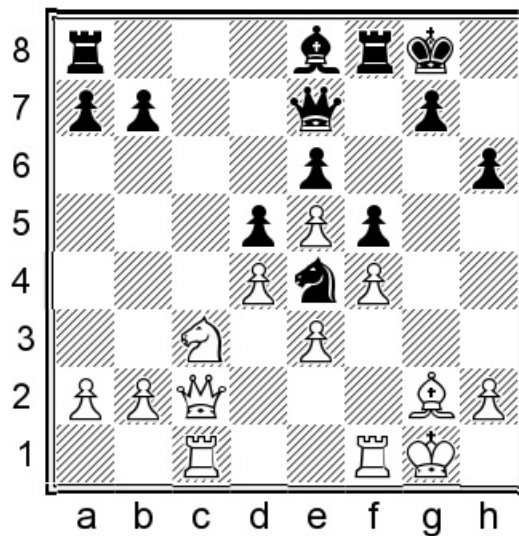
16.dxe5 ♖e4 17.♗e2



Position after: 17.♗e2

17...♙b5! Forcing trades and making possible an imbalance which is not worse for Black, i.e. 18.♞fe1 ♙xe2 19.♞xe2 ♞fc8!? 20.♞xc8+ ♞xc8 21.♞xc8+ ♔h7 22.♙xe4 fxe4=.

16...♗e4 17.f4



Position after: 17.f4

17...g5!?

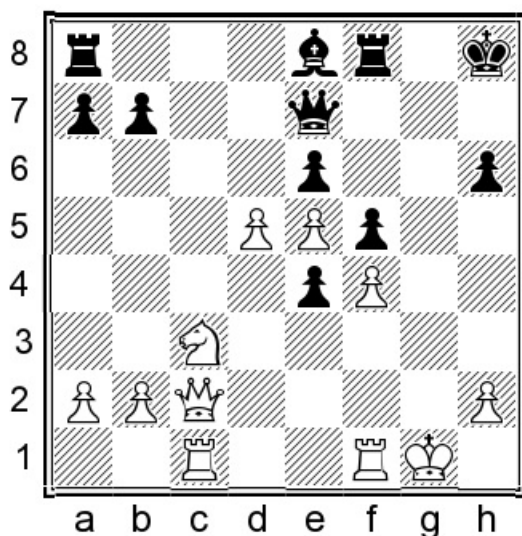
This dramatic yet principled move is clearly the way to play for a win, but Black can also consolidate the center before continuing as it's not clear where White's active play lies.

Black was also OK in the following game: 17...♙c6 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♖f2 g5 20.♚c5 ♜d7 21.♙f1 ♔h8 22.♚d6 ♜xd6 23.exd6 ♖ad8 24.h4 gxf4 25.♖xf4 ♖xd6 Prohaszka, P (2607) – Sedlak, N (2557) Hungary 2016.

18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.d5 gxf4 20.exf4

Now the logical thing to do is get the king out of harm's way.

20...♔h8!

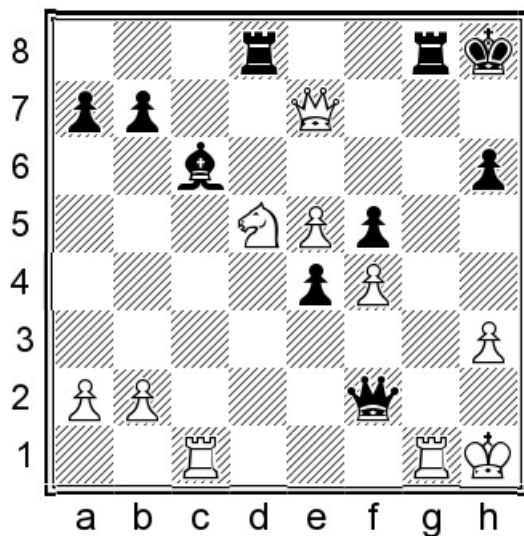


Position after: 20...♔h8!

21.h3

21.d6? ♖g8+ 22.♔h1 ♜h4+ is very good for Black; his bishop can't be stopped from coming to either h5 or c6.

21...♜h4 22.♔h2 exd5 23.♘xd5 ♖d8 24.♚c5 ♖g8 25.♖g1 ♙c6 26.♚e7 ♜f2+ 27.♔h1

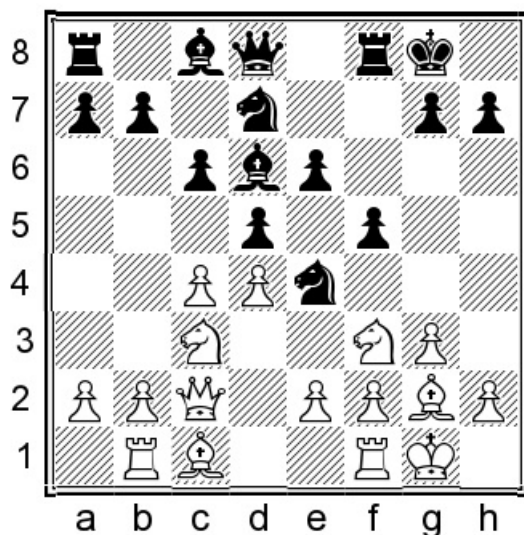


Position after: 27.♔h1

The game ends with perpetual check.

d) 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♖b1 ♘d7

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♗c2 0-0 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♖b1 ♘d7



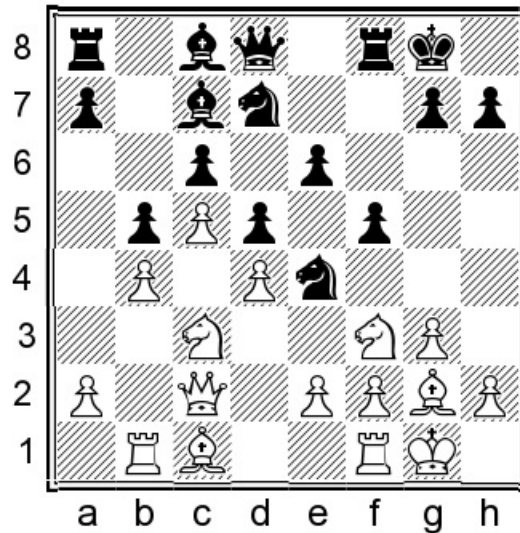
Position after: 9...♘d7

Now we see another, more mainstream idea for Black based on playing ...b5 next. This

isn't my main recommendation but I do have some new ideas here.

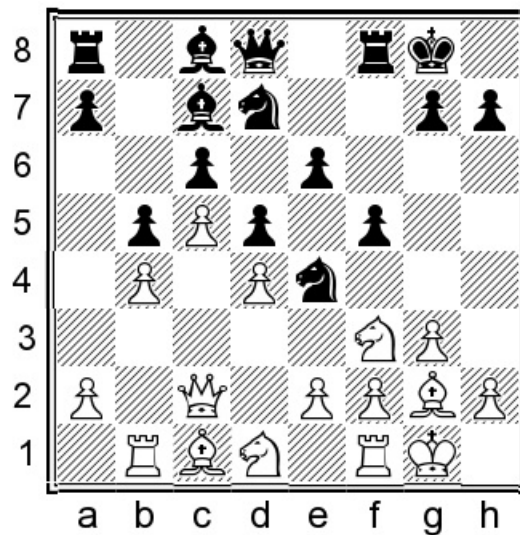
10.b4 b5 11.cxb5

White can also opt for a pure positional approach as well: 11.c5 ♔c7



Position after: 11...♔c7

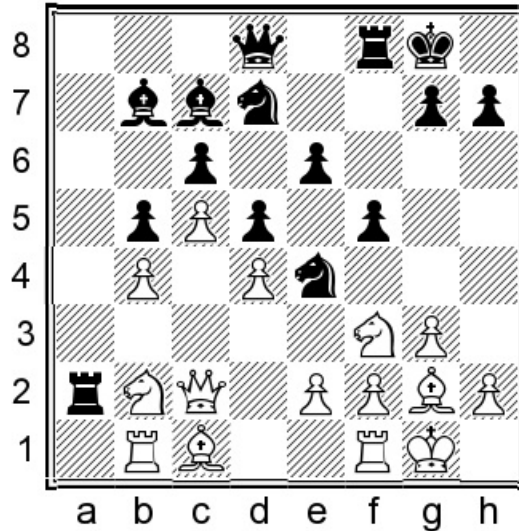
We can see that White has more space, so it's critical we find the right reactions. The main move, intending to route the knight to d3, is: 12.♞d1!?



Position after: 12...♞d1!?

[Also interesting is 12.♙f4 ♘xf4 13.gxf4 a5 14.a4 ♗xc3 15.♚xc3 ♙a6 16.axb5 ♘xb5 17.bxa5 ♖f6 18.♗fc1 ♗xa5 19.e3 ♗e4 20.♚b4 ♗f7.] Now:

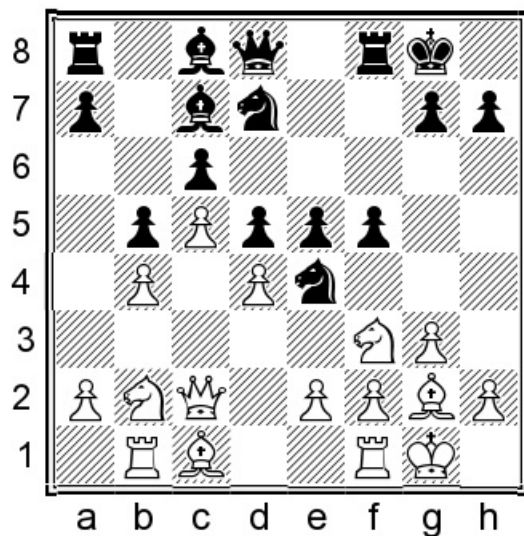
A) The following kind of original play is possible but not to my taste: 12...a5 13.a3 [13.♗b2!? axb4 14.♗d3 g5 15.♗xb4 ♚e7 is OK, e.g. 16.a4 bxa4 17.♗xa4 ♙a6 18.♗fe1 ♚g7 19.f3 ♗ef6 20.♚a2 ♙c4 21.♚a1 ♗xa4 22.♚xa4 ♙b5 23.♚a7 ♗e8=.] 13...♙b7 14.♗b2 axb4 15.axb4 ♗a2



Position after: 15...♗a2

16.♗e1!? Now White is picking up a pawn in many lines. [16.♚b3 ♚a8 17.♗d3 ♚a4 18.♙f4 ♘xf4 19.♗xf4 ♚xb3 20.♗xb3 ♗f7 21.h4 g6 Firm control of the a-file forms reasonable compensation for the weak e5-square here.] 16...♚a8 [16...e5 17.f3 ♗ef6 18.♚xf5 exd4 19.♗c2 definitely doesn't give Black enough.] 17.f3 ♗ef6 18.♗ed3 e5 19.dxe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♙xe5 21.♚xf5 ♗e8 22.♚d3 ♙c8 Black has some compensation.

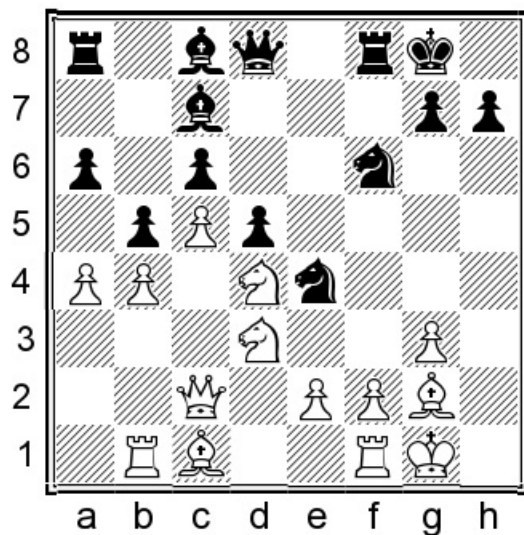
B) A thematic idea and apparently the best one here is: 12...e5 13.♗b2!



Position after: 13. ♖b2!

13...f4! A key point of Black's play here. [13...♙e7 14.♘d3 exd4 15.♙xd4 ♖b7 16.a4 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♙b2 ♜ae8 19.♞a1 ♙b8 20.e3 This position is better for White.]

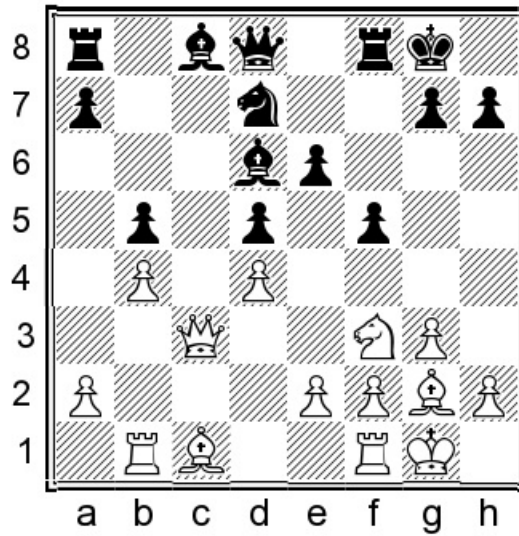
14.♘d3 fxg3 15.hxg3 exd4 16.a4 a6 17.♙xd4 ♘df6! It is handy for Black that he can afford to sacrifice the c6-pawn here.



Position after: 17... ♘df6!

Now after 18.axb5 axb5 19.♙xc6 ♙e8 20.♘d4 ♙h5 the reinforcements arrive on the kingside and the resulting attack is a strong one.

11...♞xc3 12.♞xc3 cxb5

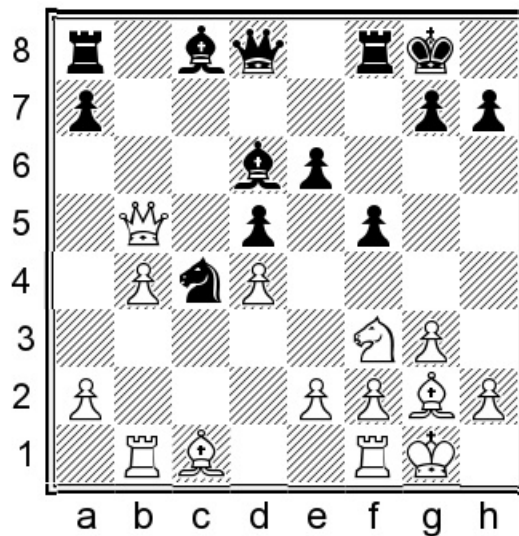


Position after: 12...cxb5

White has a couple of ideas now whereas Black has only one, viz. putting a knight on c4. But it's a good one!

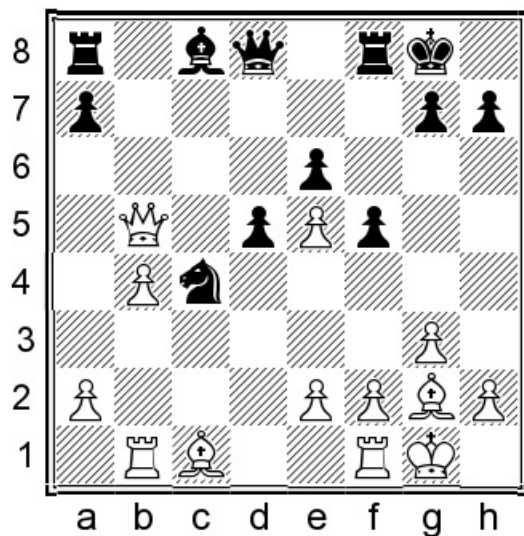
13.♞g5

13.♞c6 Avrukh's main line, but it doesn't get an edge as Black has compensation.
13...♞b6!? 14.♞xb5 ♞c4



Position after: 14...♞c4

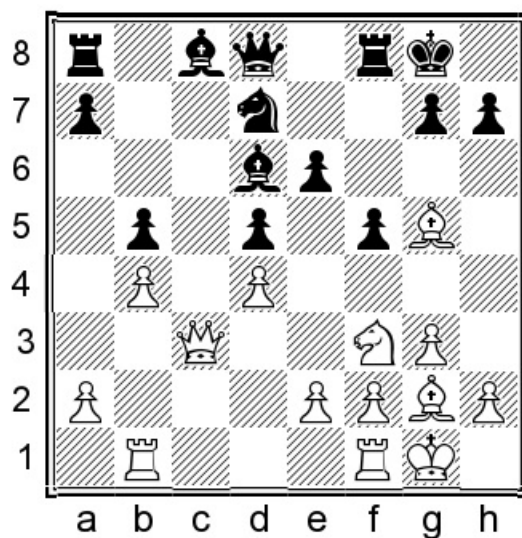
15.♘e5 [15.♚a4 ♕d7 16.♚b3 ♚c7 17.a3 a5 Black is fine; 15.♘d2 ♚b8 16.♚a4 ♕d7 17.♚c2 ♚f6 18.a3 ♚fc8 also gives Black enough play for the sacrificed pawn.]
 15...♕xe5 16.dxe5



Position after: 16.dxe5

A) The first interesting option is 16...♚f7!? 17.♚c5 ♚b6! 18.f4 [18.♕e3 ♚xc5 19.bxc5 ♘xe3 20.fxe3 ♕a6 21.♚f4 ♚c8= The pawn count will be equalised and White has nothing in the resulting ending.] 18...♚c7 19.♚xb6 axb6 This is a good position for Black despite being a pawn down.

B) 16...♕d7 17.♚c5 ♚b6 18.♕e3 ♘xe3 19.♚xe3 ♚xe3 20.fxe3 ♚fc8 21.♚fc1 ♚ab8 22.♔f2 ♔f7 Due to his better bishop (White's is entombed!) Black may well be the one playing for a win in some cases.



Position after: 13. ♖g5

13... ♗b6

13... ♗c7 14. ♗xc7 ♕xc7 15. ♖fc1 ♕b8 16. ♖f4 ♕xf4 17. gxf4 ♖b6 18. ♘e5 gives White some edge.

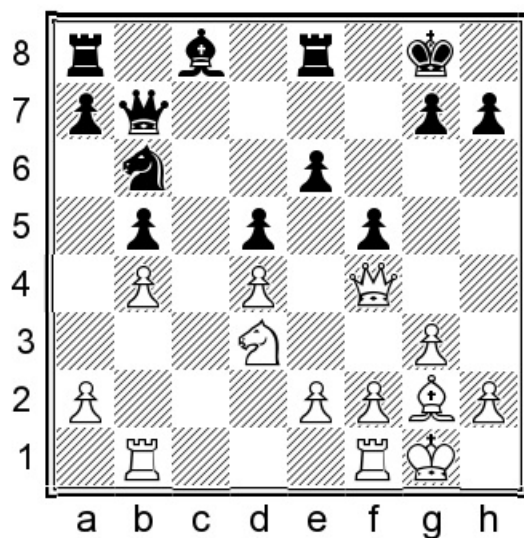
14. ♗e3 ♖e8 15. ♘e1 ♗b7!

Preparing a knight transfer to b6 and c4.

16. ♖f4

16. ♘d3 ♖b6 17. ♘c5 ♗f7 is rather unclear.

16... ♕xf4 17. ♗xf4 ♖b6 18. ♘d3



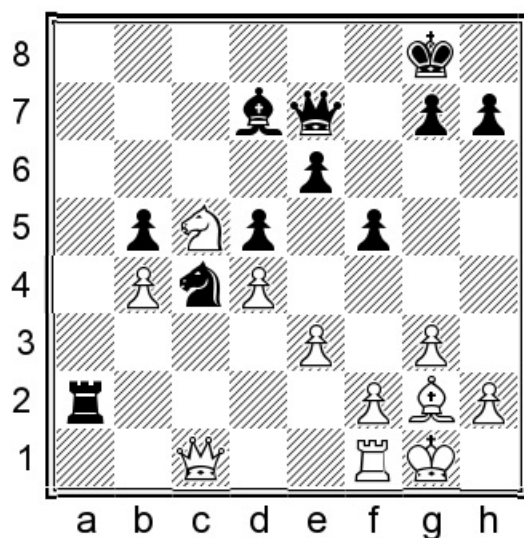
Position after: 18. ♘d3

Now White has completely undisputed control over the the dark squares c5 and e5, but the closed nature of position and knight on c4 give Black a decent game.

18... ♙e7 19. ♘c5

Black has a very solid position here. Another correspondence game followed similar lines: 19. h4 ♘c4 20. ♘c5 h6 21. a4 bxa4 22. ♘xa4 ♙d7 23. ♘c5 ♙b5 24. ♖b3 ½-½
Yloenen, O – Walczak, P corr. 2014

19... a5 20. a3 ♘c4 21. ♙c1 ♙d7 22. e3 axb4 23. axb4 ♖a2 24. ♖a1 ♖ea8 25. ♖xa2 ♖xa2

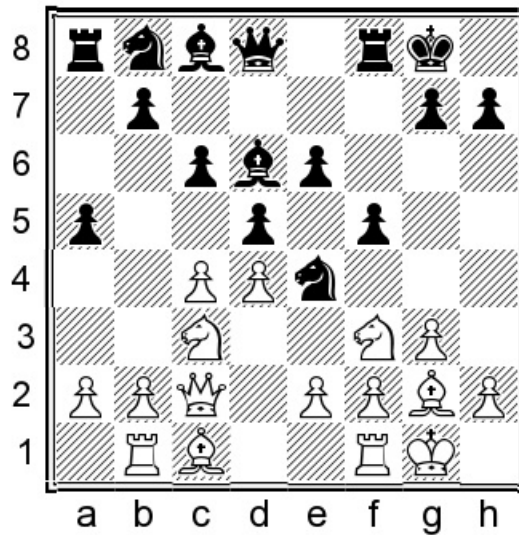


Position after: 25... ♖xa2

Black is once more not in any special trouble. The c4-knight is doing tremendous work.
½-½ (31) Oppermann, P – Andersen, J corr. 2015

e) 8. ♘c3 ♘e4 9. ♖b1 a5 10. a3 ♘d7 11. b4 axb4 12. axb4 b6

1. d4 f5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♙g2 d5 5. 0-0 ♙d6 6. c4 c6 7. ♚c2 0-0 8. ♘c3 ♘e4 9. ♖b1 a5!

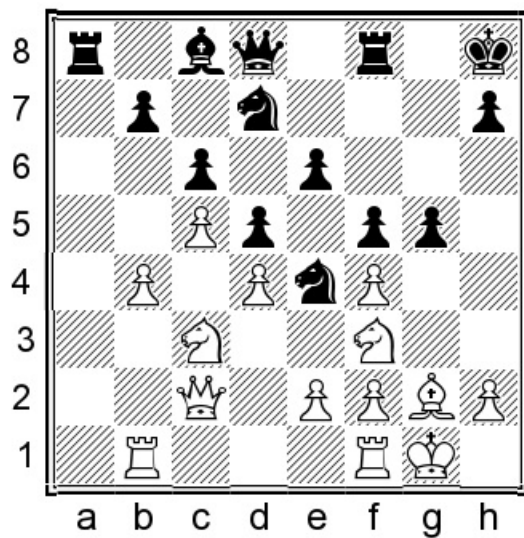


Position after: 9...a5!

Not the most common line but I firmly believe that Black must get more space with this move, so as to have an active rook on a8.

10. a3 ♘d7 11. b4

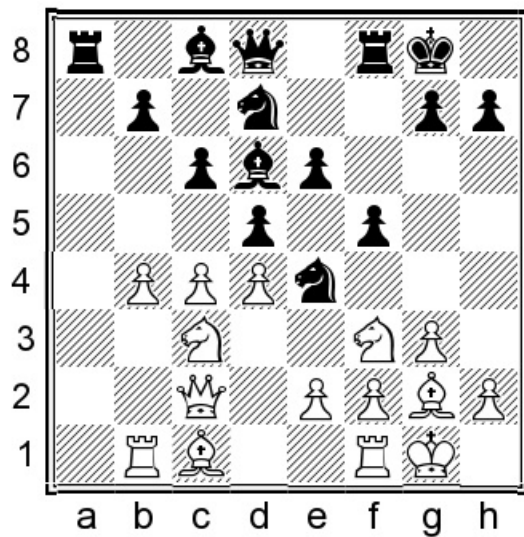
11. c5 ♙c7 12. ♙f4 ♙xf4 13. gxf4 ♙h8 14. b4 axb4 15. axb4 g5!



Position after: 15...g5!

Black has fast play. It can evolve like this: 16. ♖xe4 dxe4 17. ♗xg5 ♖f6 18. e3 h6 19. ♗h3 ♜g8 20. ♕h1 ♗d5.

11...axb4 12.axb4



Position after: 12.axb4

Now I will give two answers. For 12...b5 see the next subchapter. For now:

12...b6!?

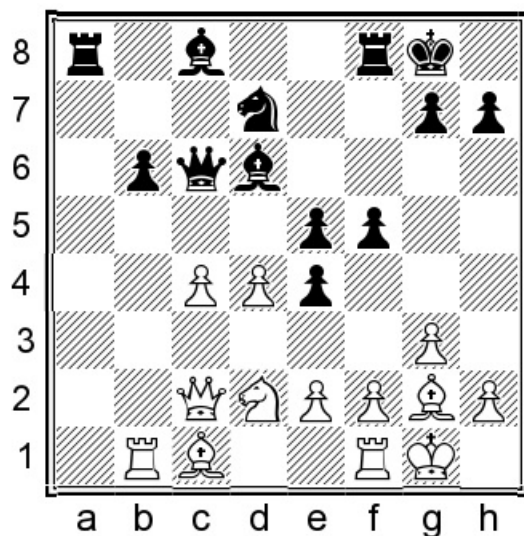
A less common move, but with the logical idea of fianchettoing the light-squared bishop.

13.b5 ♖c7!?

We have reached a rather complicated position with several possibilities.

14.♗g5

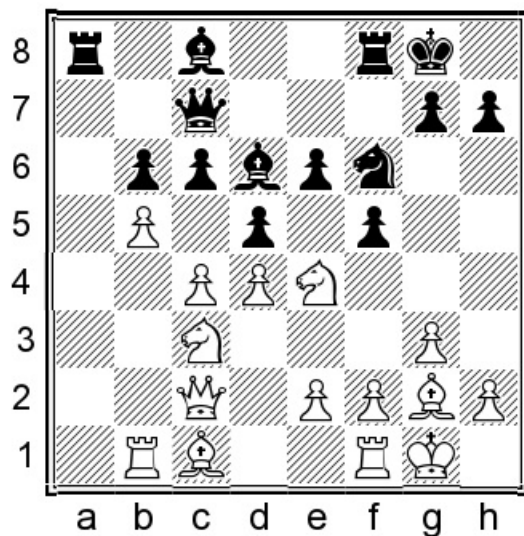
The other very logical move is 14.bxc6 ♜xc6 15.♘xe4 dxe4! 16.♘d2 e5



Position after: 16...e5

Black needs to avoid letting the center be White's exclusive zone of operations! After something like 17.e3 exd4 18.exd4 ♜c7 19.♜b3 ♖h8 20.f3 exf3 21.♜xf3 ♜a2 22.♙b2 ♗f6 23.♜b3 ♜a6 24.♜be1 ♙d7 he is doing OK.

14...♗df6 15.♗gxe4

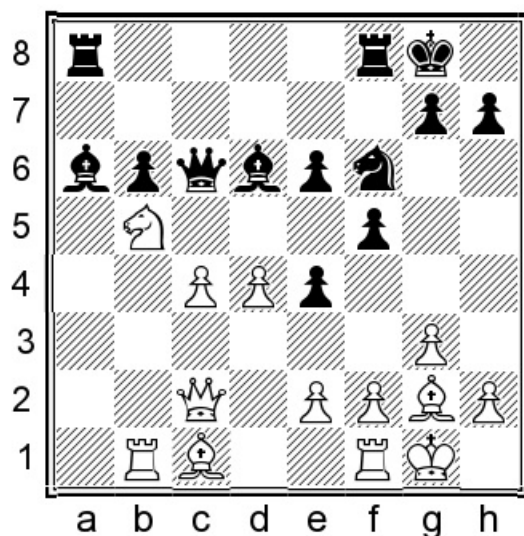


Position after: 15. ♖gxe4

15...dxe4!

It is noteworthy that we should take away from the center in this case. Instead 15...fxe4?! 16.bxc6 ♖xc6 17.♗b3! would be unpleasant for Black.

16.bxc6 ♖xc6 17.♖b5 ♔a6!



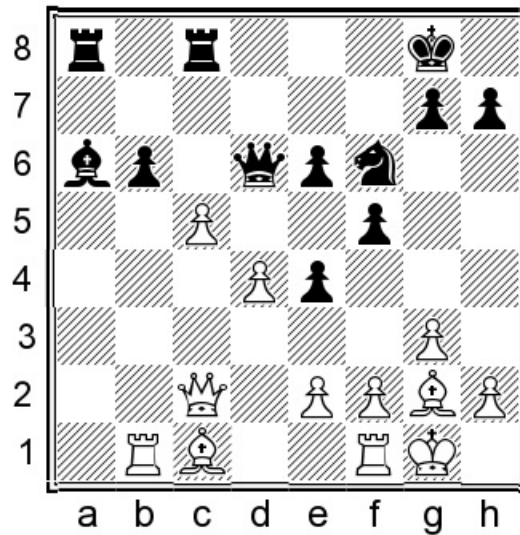
Position after: 17... ♔a6!

Black must eliminate the strong knight on b5 and use his faster development to put

pressure on the pivotal c4-pawn.

18. ♖b3

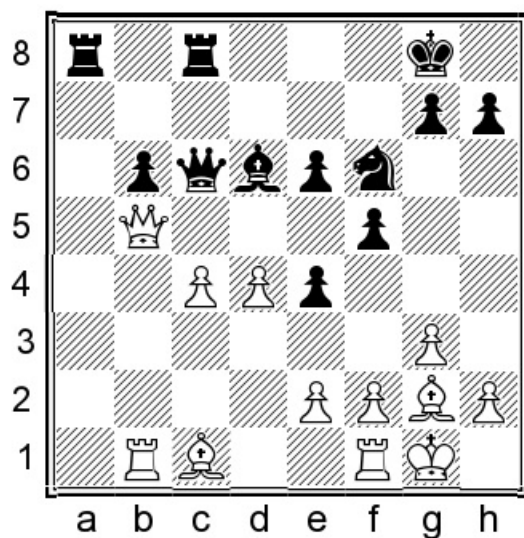
White can resolve that situation by exchanging on d6 and pushing c5, to which Black responds in instructive fashion. 18. ♘xd6 ♙xd6 19. c5 ♜fc8



Position after: 19... ♜fc8

20. ♙e3 [20. cxd6? ♜xc2 21. ♜xb6 ♙xe2 22. ♜e1 ♜a1-+.] 20... ♘d5! 21. ♙d2 ♙c7 22. ♜fc1 bxc5 23. dxc5 ♘xe3 24. ♙xe3 ♙b7! This bishop dominates the board from d5: 25. f3 ♙d5↑.

18... ♙xb5! 19. ♙xb5 ♜fc8

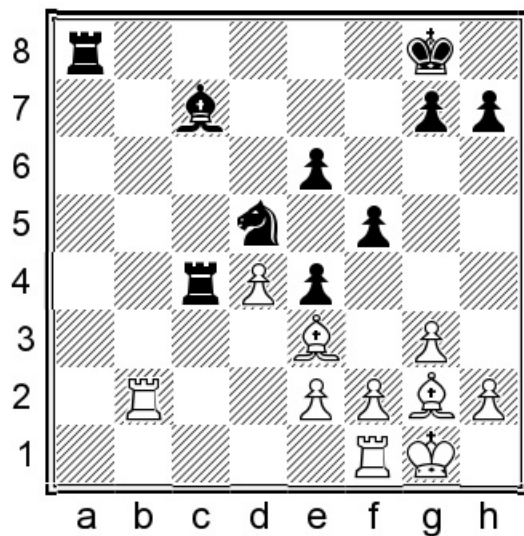


Position after: 19... ♖fc8

20. ♜xc6

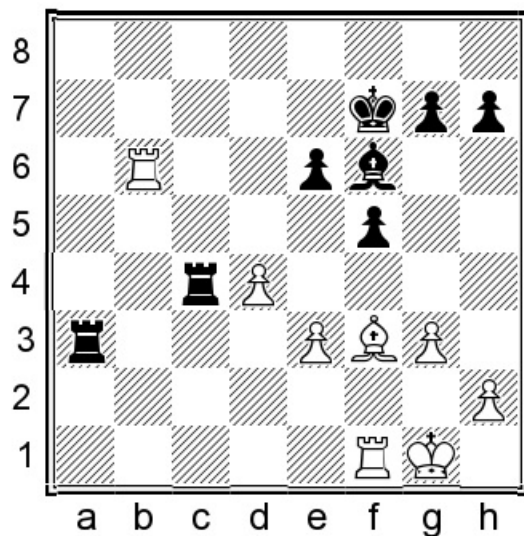
A) 20. ♜xb6 ♜d7! 21. ♜b5 ♜c7 22. ♜b6 ♜d7 With a likely repetition of moves.

B) 20. ♙e3 ♜xb5 21. ♞xb5 ♞xc4 22. ♞xb6 Now Black gets his ideal formation, and with it an advantage: 22... ♙c7 23. ♞b2 ♘d5.



Position after: 23... ♘d5

20... ♞xc6 21. ♙g5 ♙e7 22. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 23. e3 ♞xc4 24. ♞xb6 ♙f7 25. f3 exf3 26. ♙xf3 ♞a3=

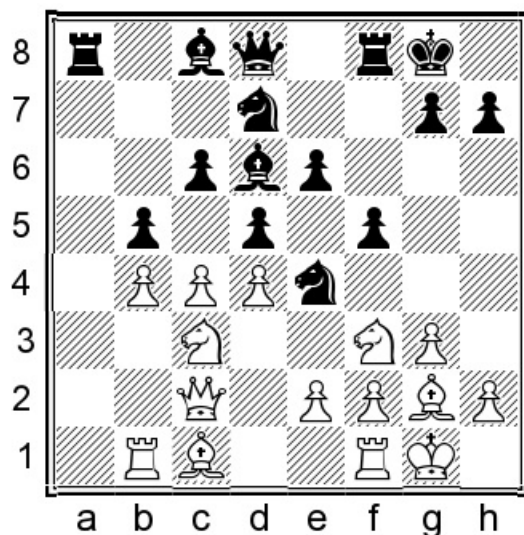


Position after: 26...Ra3

This endgame is no problem for Black.

f) 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♖b1 a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 b5

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♚c2 0-0 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♖b1 a5!? 10.a3 ♘d7 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 b5!?



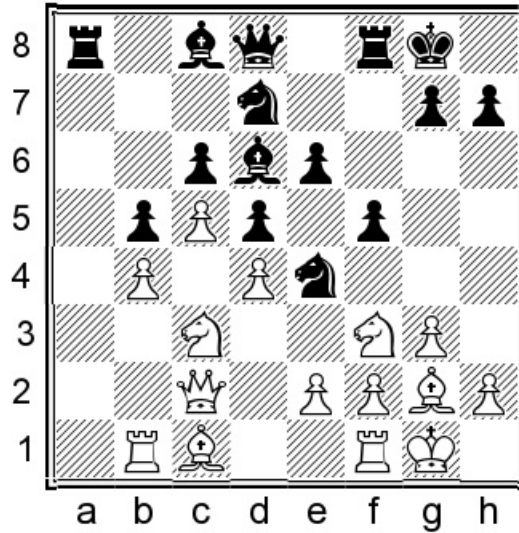
Position after: 12...b5!?

This typical Black reaction on the queenside is the other 12th move I chose to analyse,

and leads to positions that differ a bit in the concrete details.

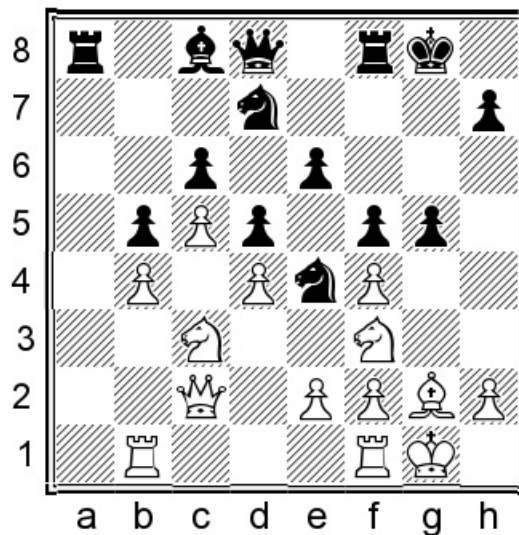
13.cxb5

The obvious alternative is 13.c5 followed by trying to contest the a-file.



Position after: 13.c5

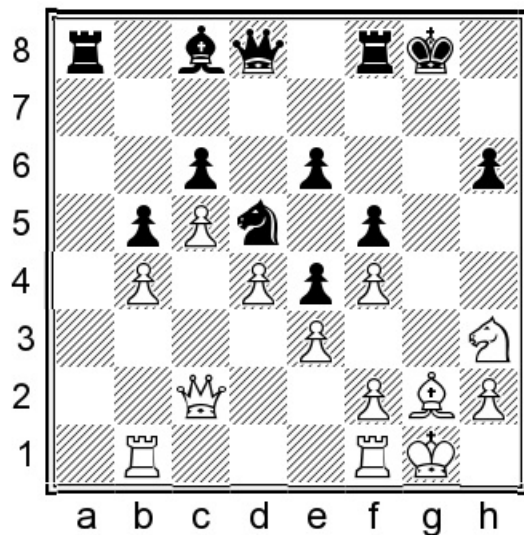
This needs to be met in vigorous fashion: 13...♗c7 14.♕f4 ♗xf4 15.gxf4 g5!!



Position after: 15...g5!!

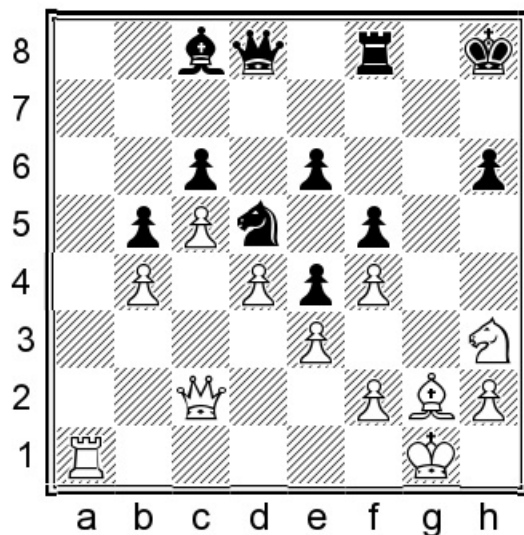
16.♘xe4 dxe4! Freeing up the d5-square for a knight. 17.♘xg5 ♘f6 18.e3 [18.♖a1 ♖xa1

19. ♖xa1 h6 20. ♘h3 ♜xd4↑.] 18...h6 19. ♘h3 ♘d5!



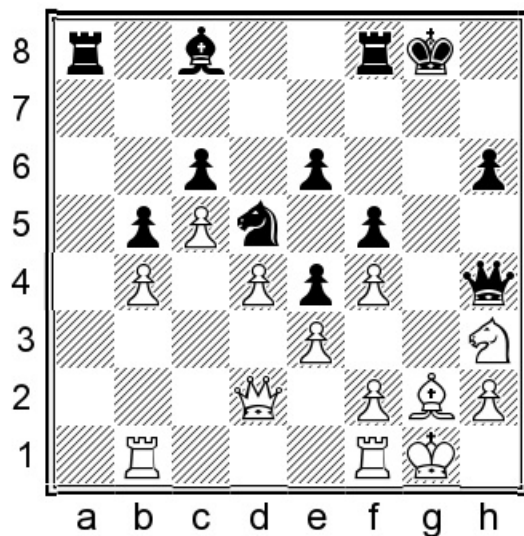
Position after: 19... ♘d5!

This diagram illustrates Black's plan: isolate White's king's knight and use the d5-square and g-file for his own pressure. 20. ♜d2 [20. ♖a1 ♖xa1 Black quite happily gives up the a-file; against a future ♖a8 he just wants ...♖g8 and ...♜h4. For instance, 21. ♖xa1 ♘h8



Position after: 21... ♘h8

22. ♘h1 ♜h4 23. ♘g1 e5! 24. dxe5 ♘xb4 25. ♜d2 ♘d3 26. ♖f1 ♘e6 with an advantage.] 20... ♜h4

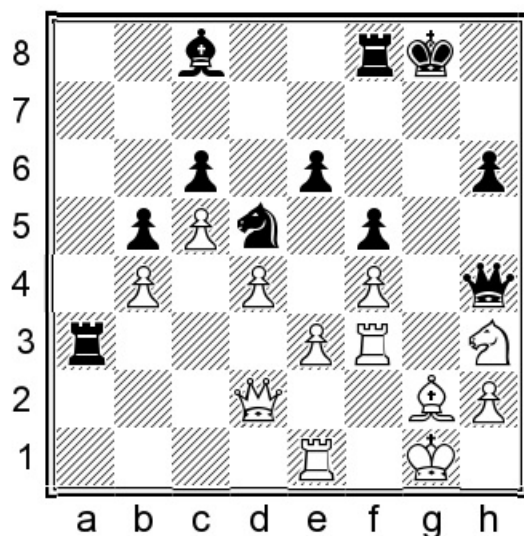


Position after: 20... ♖h4

A) 21. ♖a1 ♖a4!? 22. ♖xa4 bxa4 23. ♖a1 ♘a6 24. ♖xa4 ♘c4 This is already a very tough position to defend! 25. ♖a7 [25. ♖a1 ♔h8 26. ♔h1 ♖g8 27. ♖g1 ♗h5!-+] 25... ♔h8-+ with a crushing attack.

B) 21. ♔h1 ♔h8 22. ♘g1 ♖g8 23. ♘e2 ♖a7! 24. ♘g3 ♘f6 25. ♖a1 ♖ag7 is hard for White to defend too.

C) 21. f3 ♖a3 22. ♖be1 exf3 23. ♖xf3



Position after: 23. ♖xf3

23... ♖a2! 24. ♗c1 ♖f7 25. ♖f2 ♖a4 26. ♔h1 ♘f6 27. ♖b2 ♘g4 Black has enough pressure

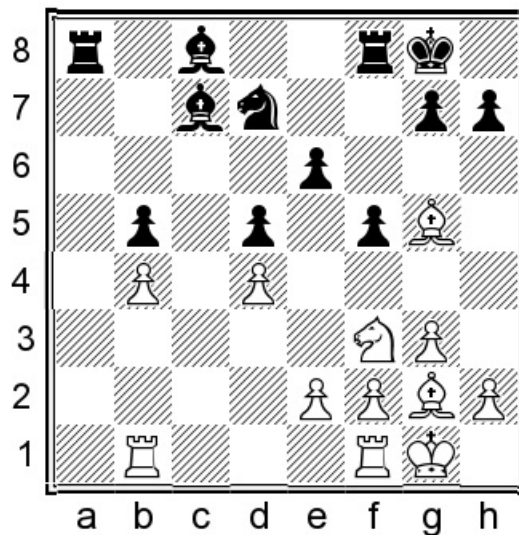
Position after: 16... ♔c7!

Pieces are about to be exchanged and Black has enough space to manoeuvre the remaining ones as needed. 17. ♖fc1 [17. ♔xc7 ♕xc7 18. ♖e7 ♜e8 19. ♖c5 ♘c4↑]
17... ♔xc7 18. ♜xc6 ♘c4 19. ♖f4 ♖xf4 20. gxf4 ♜a7 21. ♘e5 ♘xe5 22. fxe5 ♖d7 23. ♜c2 g5=

15... ♔c7!

The same remedy as above is simplest.

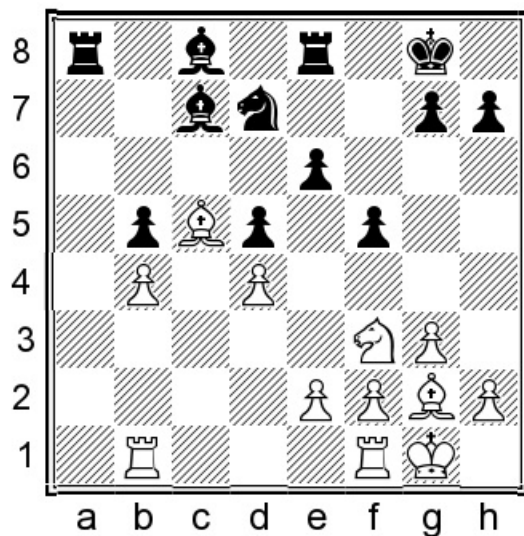
16. ♔xc7 ♕xc7



Position after: 16... ♕xc7

17. ♖fc1

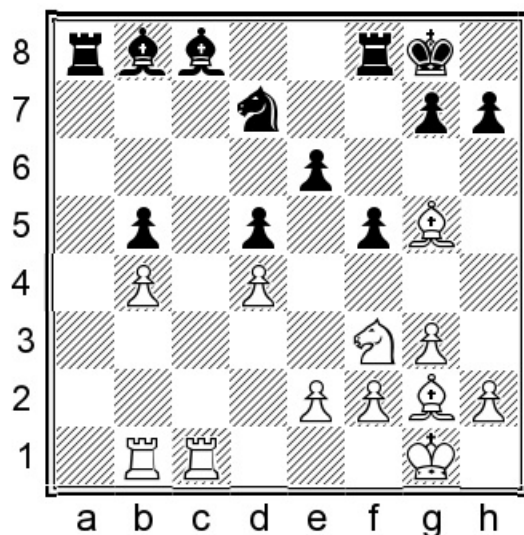
17. ♖e7 ♜e8 18. ♖c5



Position after: 18. ♖c5

This inane-looking manoeuvre actually has the point of blocking Black's standard knight route (d7-b6-c4), hence: 18... ♘f6! [18... ♘b6 19. ♕xb6! ♕xb6 20. ♖fc1 gives White some pressure, especially against the weak b5-pawn.] 19. ♘e5 ♘e4 In spite of the knight having had to find a different path this time, Black has successfully equalised.

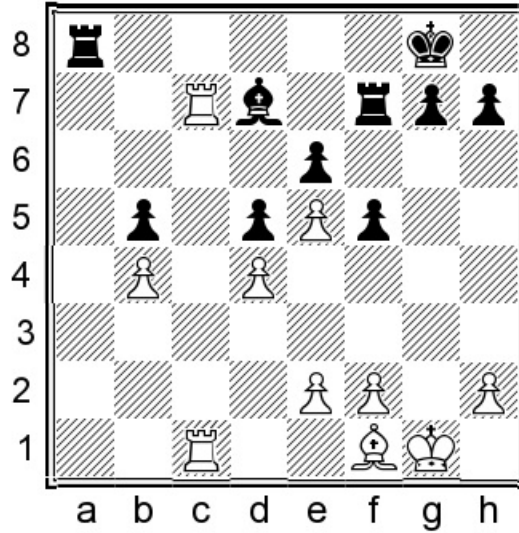
17... ♗b8



Position after: 17... ♗b8

18. ♖c6

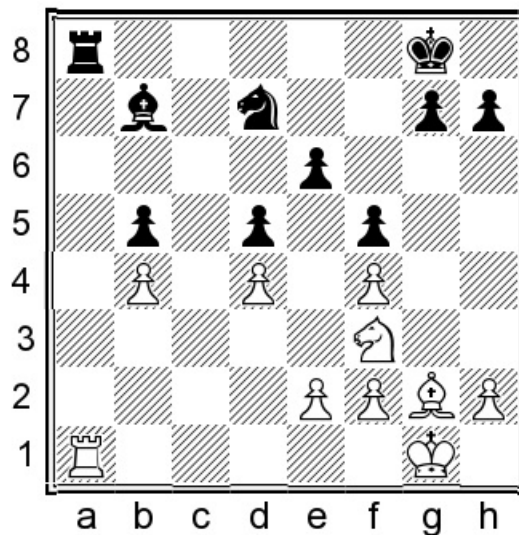
Equal endgames are the rule rather than the exception in this line, e.g. 18.♙f4 ♘xf4 19.gxf4 ♖b6 20.♞c7 ♗c4 21.♜e5 ♜xe5 22.fxe5 ♞f7 23.♞bc1 ♙d7 24.♙f1 gives us another one that is likely to end in a draw:



Position after: 24.♙f1

24...♙e8 25.♞c8 ♞fa7 26.e3 ♜f7 27.♜g2 ♞xc8 28.♞xc8 ♞b7 29.♜g3 h6 30.h4 g5=.

18...♞e8 19.♙f4 ♘b7 20.♞c2 ♙xf4 21.gxf4 ♞ec8 22.♞xc8+ ♞xc8 23.♞a1 ♞a8



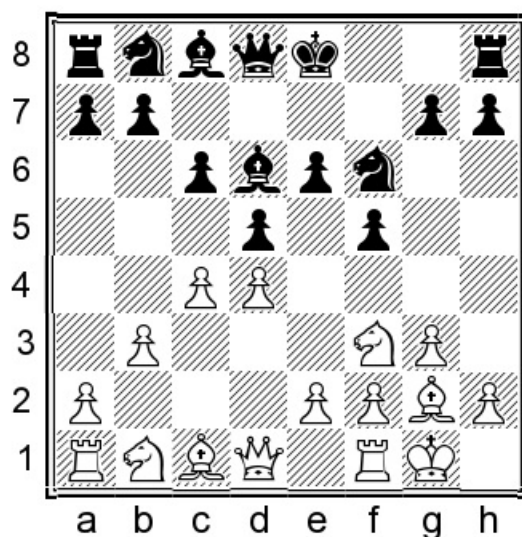
Position after: 23...♞a8

With yet another equal endgame.

Chapter 6

7.b3

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



Chapter Guide

Chapter 6 – 7.b3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♜e7 8.♘e5 0-0

a) 8th move alternatives

b) 9.♙b2 b6 10.♘d2

c) 9.♙b2 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♘d2

d) 9.♙b2 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♜c2

e) 9.♘d2 b6

f) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.a3, 11.a4

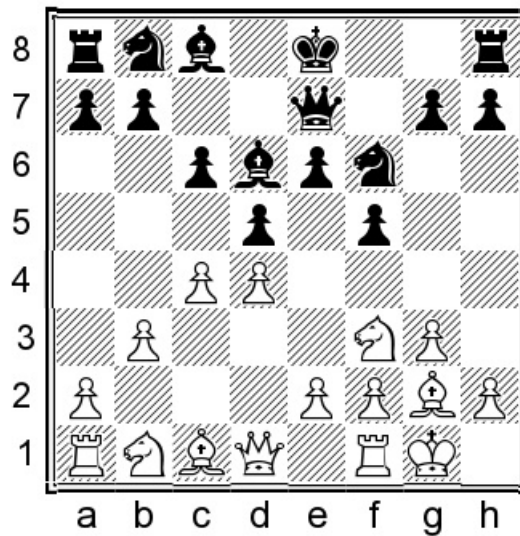
g) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♜c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4 13.--

h) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♜c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4 13.bxa4, 13.♘d3

i) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♜c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4 13.♟ac1, 13.♟ad1

a) 8th move alternatives

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7

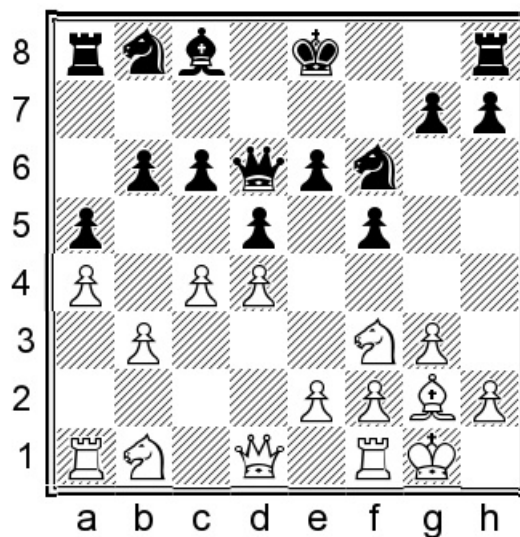


Position after: 7...♚e7

8.♚c2

We will examine also some other plans here:

A) 8.a4 a5! 9.♙a3 b6 10.♙xd6 ♚xd6

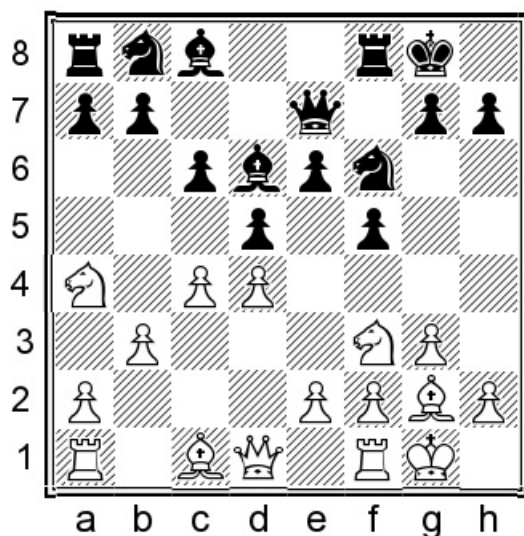


Position after: 10...♚xd6

This type of position should be OK for Black; after all the b4-square is now covered

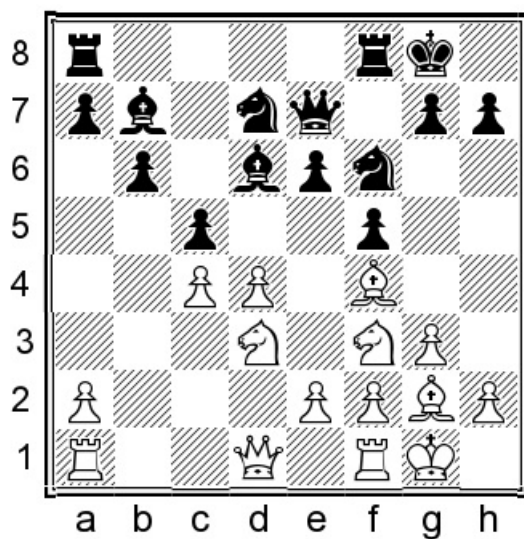
well and Black is ready to complete development smoothly, with the next move being ...♖a6. 11. ♖c1 ♗a6 12. ♗a3 0-0 13. ♖d1 ♘b7 14. ♗c2 ♗e4 15. ♗ce1 f4! 16. ♗d3 fxg3 17. hxg3 c5 18. ♖e3 ♖ad8 19. cxd5 exd5 Black has very good play and won later, although unfortunately we can't find the rest of the game in the database. 0-1 Nakamura, H (2741) – Agdestein, S (2570) Oslo 2010

B) 8. ♗c3 0-0 9. ♗a4!?



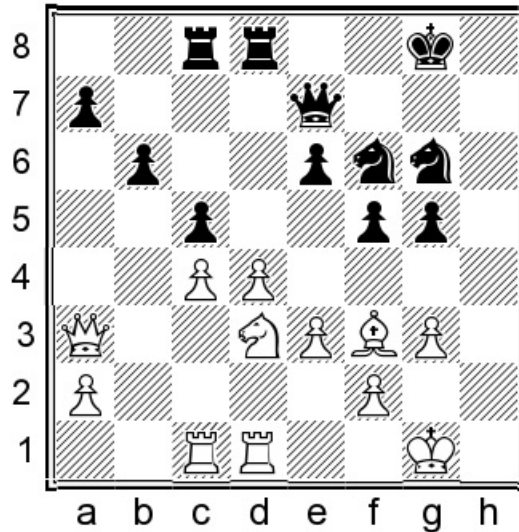
Position after: 9. ♗a4!?

This is a sped-up version of the Karpov idea that forms our main line. 9... ♗bd7 10. ♗b2 b6 11. ♗d3 ♘b7 12. ♘f4 dxc4 13. bxc4 c5



Position after: 13...c5

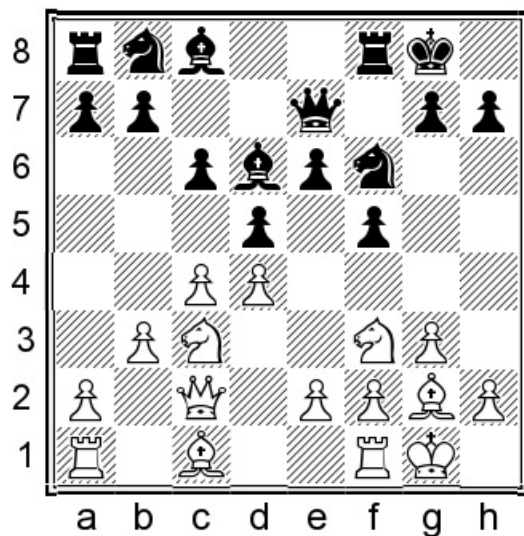
The situation in the centre is about to be clarified. 14.e3!? [14.♘fe5 ♙xg2 15.♔xg2 ♜fc8 16.e3 cxd4 17.exd4 Black is doing fine in this structure and can choose for instance 17...♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♞e4=; 14.♙xd6 ♜xd6 is also equal.] 14...♞ac8 15.♞c1 ♙xf4 16.♞xf4 ♜fd8 17.♞a4 ♙e4 18.♞fd1 ♞f8 19.h4 h6 20.♞a3 ♙xf3!? 21.♙xf3 g5 22.hxg5 hxg5 23.♞d3 ♞g6



Position after: 23...♞g6

The situation remains a bit tense but it generally looks pleasant for Black.

8...0-0 9.♞c3!?

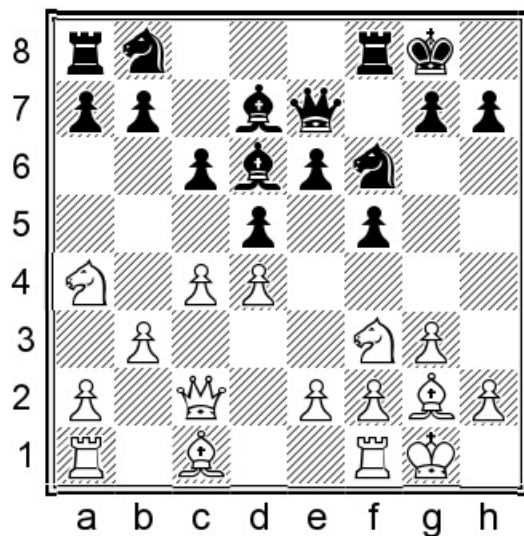


Position after: 9. ♖c3!?

This move conceals a dangerous idea introduced by Karpov.

9... ♗bd7

9... ♙d7?! Jussupow didn't react well: 10. ♖a4!!

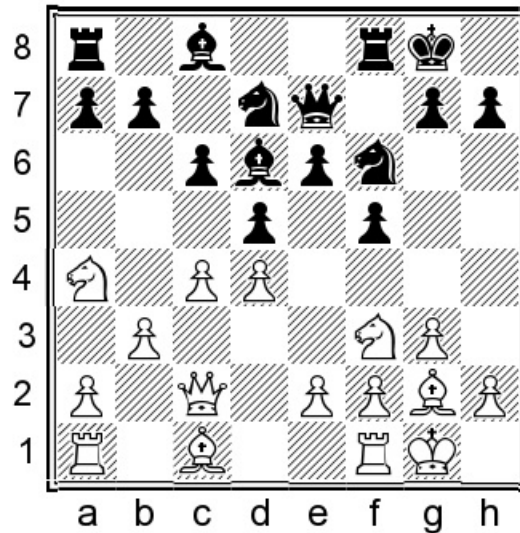


Position after: 10. ♖a4!!

Karpov is a real master of such positional play. 10... ♙e8 11. ♖b2 ♗bd7 12. ♖d3 ♗e4 13. ♙f4! It transpires that Black's plan is simply not on time. 13... ♙a3 14. ♗fe5 g5 15. ♗xd7 ♙xd7 16. ♙e5 b6 17. f3 ♗f6 18. c5! Superb play! White is much better and later

converted his huge plus into a win. Karpov, A (2670) – Jussupow, A (2583) Ajaccio 2007

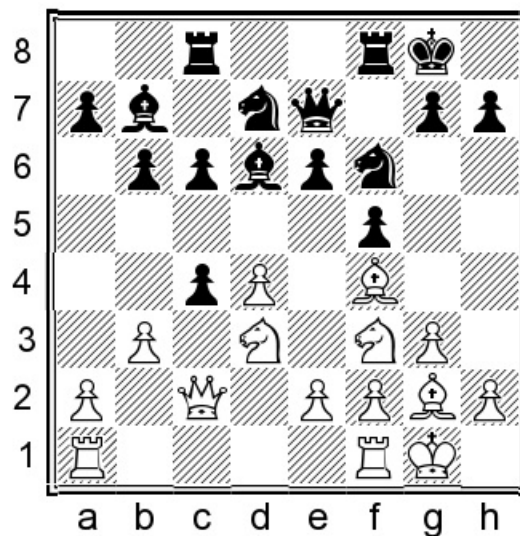
10. ♖a4



Position after: 10. ♖a4

The point is that White ultimately wants to transfer his knight via b2 to d3, which is a very good square for it.

10...b6! 11. ♖b2 ♗b7 12. ♖d3 ♜ac8 13. ♕f4 dxc4!?

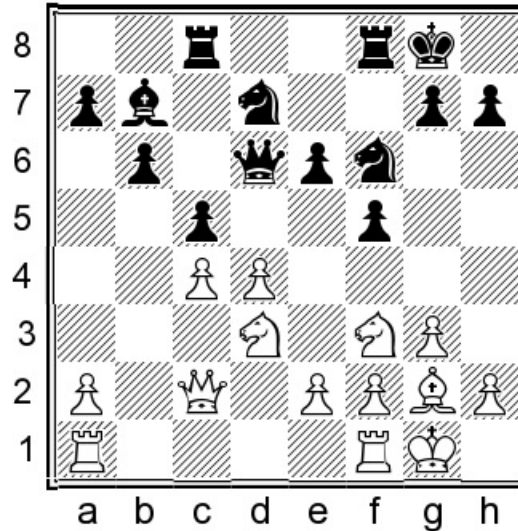


Position after: 13...dxc4!?

This seems to be new.

14.♙xd6 ♖xd6 15.♚xc4

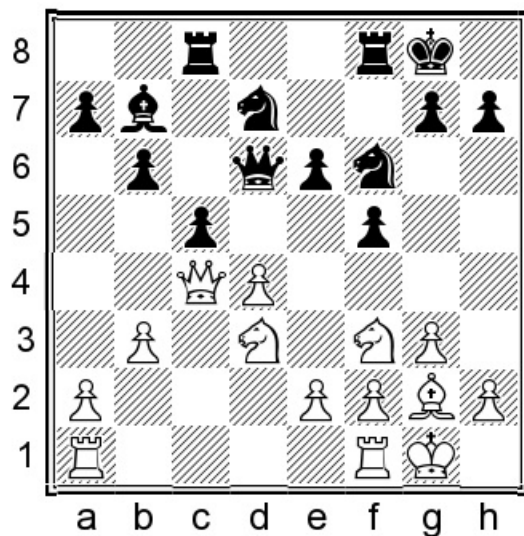
Taking with the pawn doesn't bring White anything: 15.bxc4 c5.



Position after: 15...c5

We have already seen this push a few times. The idea is to leave White with the 'hanging pawns' structure or else an isolated c-pawn. 16.dxc5 [After 16.e3? ♙xf3 17.♙xf3 cxd4 Black is better.] 16...♘xc5 17.♞fd1 ♙e4 18.♚b2 ♞fd8 19.♘fe5 ♙xd3 20.exd3 ♘a4 21.♚b3 ♚xe5 22.♚xa4 ♚d4=

15...c5



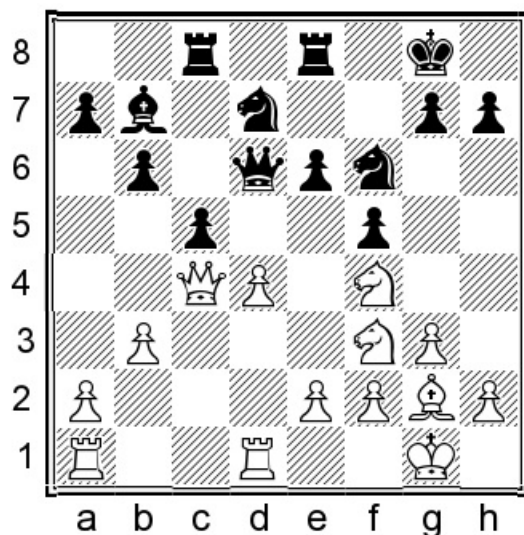
Position after: 15...c5

Black completes the smooth mobilisation of his forces and threatens ...♙xf3.

16.dxc5

A) 16.♖fd1? ♙xf3! 17.dxc5 ♙xg2 18.cxd6 ♖xc4 Black wins.

B) 16.♘f4 ♖fe8 17.♖fd1

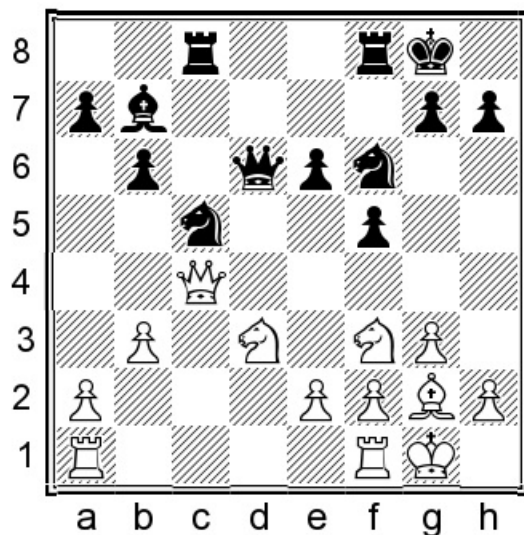


Position after: 17.♖fd1

17...♙xf3! 18.dxc5 ♖xc5 19.♗xc5 ♘xc5 20.♙xf3 [20.exf3 g5 21.♘d3 ♘xd3 22.♖xd3

♔f7 Black is fine in this endgame.] 20...g5 Once again Black has obtained an endgame which is quite easy to play.

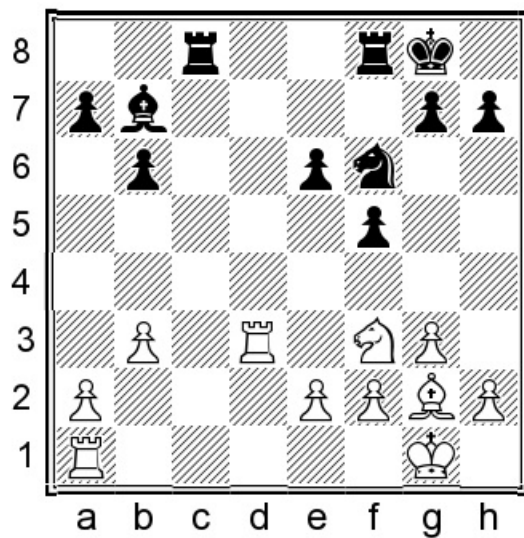
16...♘xc5



Position after: 16...♘xc5

17.♘xc5

A) 17.♖fd1 ♘xd3 18.♙xd3 ♚xd3 19.♖xd3

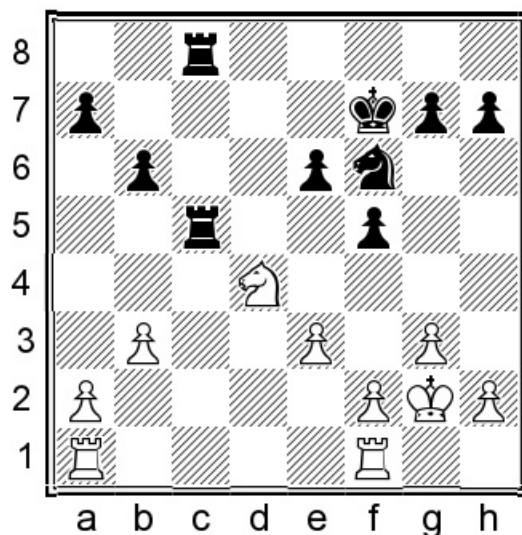


Position after: 19.♖xd3

19...♙xf3! As so often in these lines, this trade is favourable for Black. It will be hard to attack the e6-pawn and following 20.♙xf3 g5 Black has good prospects in the endgame.

B) 17.♙f4 ♖xf4 18.♘xf4 ♙xf3! 19.♙xf3 g5 is another similar variation in which Black gives up the bishop for the knight.

17...♖xc5 18.♙d4 ♗xd4 19.♘xd4 ♙xg2 20.♙xg2 ♖f7 21.e3 ♖fc8

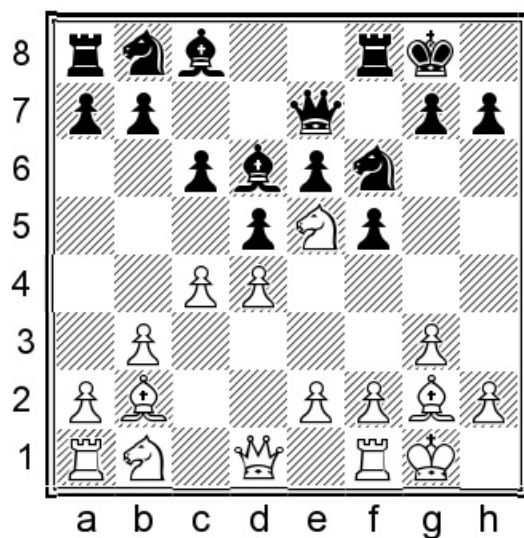


Position after: 21...♖fc8

Black is OK here.

b) 9.♙b2 b6 10.♘d2

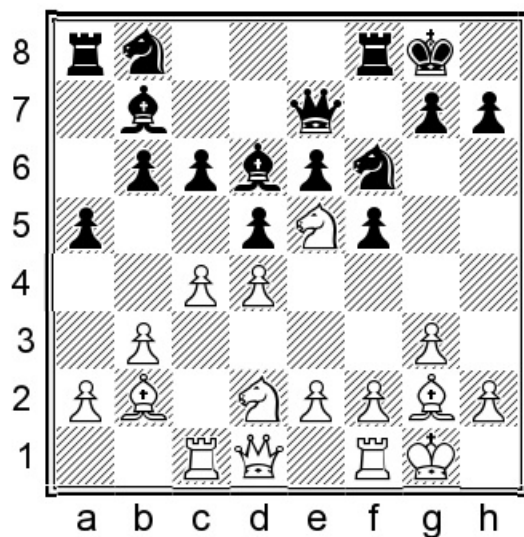
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♗e7 8.♘e5 0-0 9.♙b2



Position after: 9. ♕b2

This is one of the main ideas for White. He continues developing in logical and solid fashion, but there are also some hidden tactical aspects, as we will see.

9...b6 10. ♘d2 ♙b7 11. ♖c1 a5!



Position after: 11...a5!

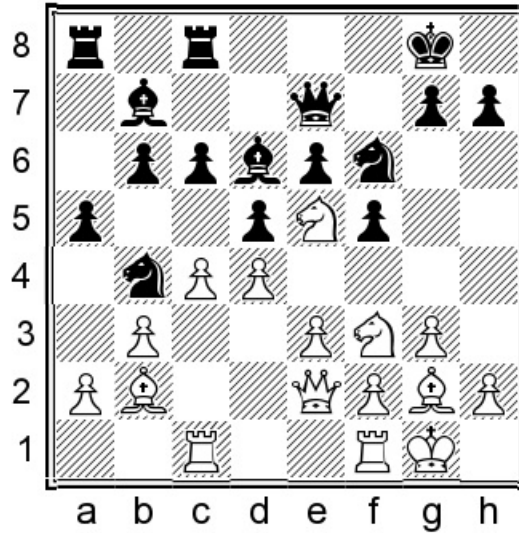
Due to the pressure along the c-file Black has to react with ingenuity and a higher degree of sophistication.

Definitely to be avoided is 11... ♘bd7 12. cxd5 cxd5 13. ♘dc4!, which is a nice idea that

gives White an advantage.

12.e3

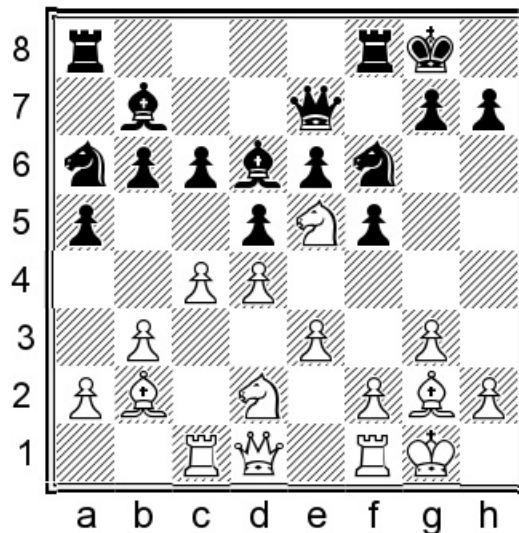
Another plan might be: 12.♘df3 ♖a6 13.e3 ♜fc8 14.♚e2 ♜b4!



Position after: 14...♜b4!

Provoking White to push a3 immediately, e.g. 15.a3 ♖a6 16.♜a1 ♜e4 17.♜fc1 ♜c7 18.♘d3 ♜e8 19.♜fe5 c5 20.a4 ♜8f6 with complicated play.

12...♜a6!



Position after: 12... ♖a6!

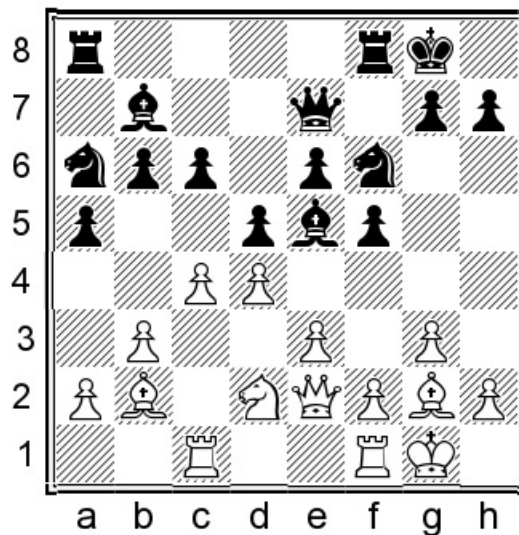
As in the last note, the knight comes out this way rather than via d7.

13. ♖e2

Opening the c-file isn't promising: 13.cxd5 cxd5 14. ♘b1 ♘b4 15.a3 ♘a6 16.f3 ♖fc8 17. ♖f2 ♖xc1 18. ♖xc1 ♖c8 19. ♖c2 ♖xc2 20. ♖xc2 b5=

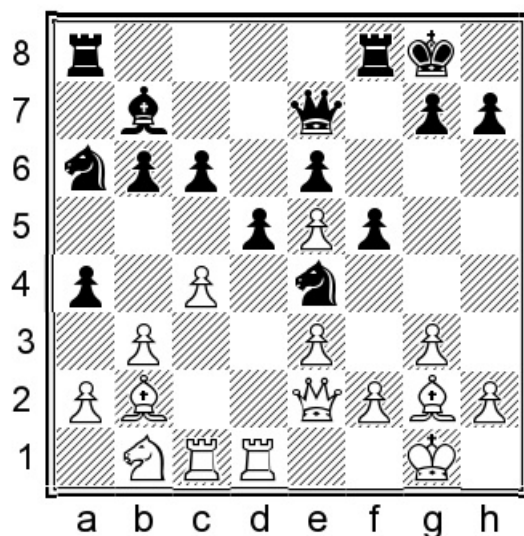
13... ♘e4

13... ♙xe5!?



Position after: 13... ♙xe5!?

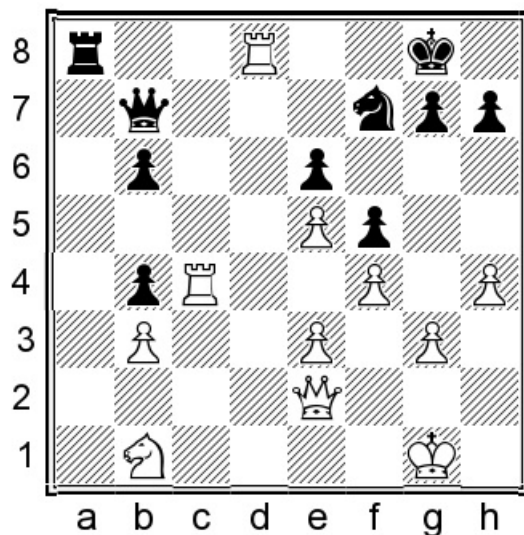
The idea of eliminating this knight in exchange for the dark-squared bishop is important in such positions. 14.dxe5 ♘e4 15. ♖fd1 a4 16. ♘b1



Position after: 16. ♖b1

[16.f3 ♘xd2 17.♙xd2 axb3 18.axb3 ♜fc8 would be a different kind of scenario, where Black needs to reinforce the d-pawn as best he can. For instance 19.♙d4 c5 20.♙b2 ♜d8 21.♜cd1 ♘c7 22.f4 ♙c6 with dynamic equality.]

A) 16...♗b4 17.♙a3 axb3 18.axb3 c5 19.f3 ♗g5 20.h4 ♗f7 21.♙xb4 cxb4 22.f4 dxc4 23.♙xb7 ♜xb7 24.♜xc4 ♜fd8 25.♜xd8+

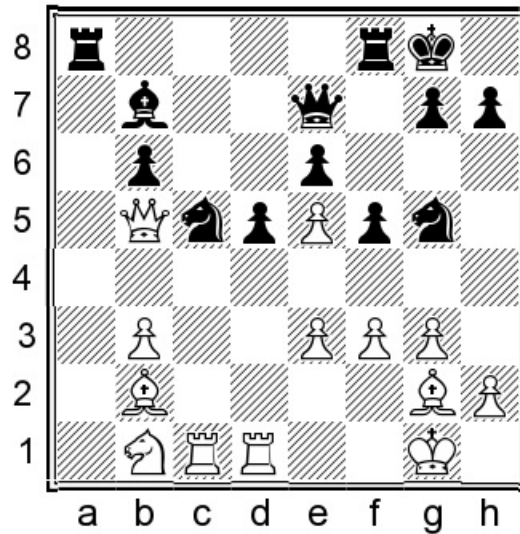


Position after: 25. ♜xd8+

25...♜xd8! [25...♗xd8 26.♗d2 ♗c6 27.♜g2± ½ – ½ (60) Alekseev, E (2640) – Moiseenko, A (2662) Sochi 2006] 26.♜xb4 ♗h6 27.♗d2 ♗g4 28.♗f1 h5! 29.♗h2 ♜a8

Black has compensation.

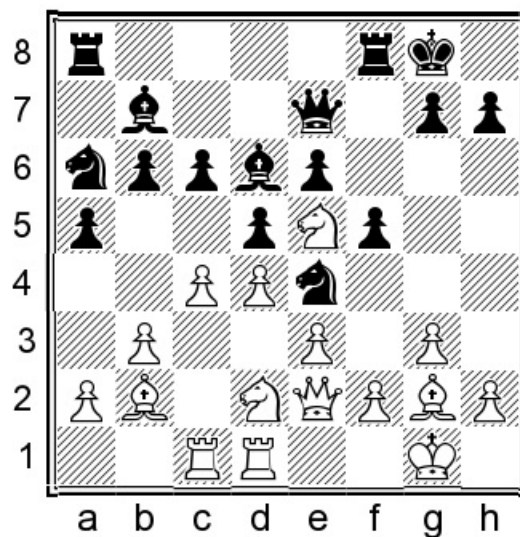
B) More solid would be 16...axb3!? 17.axb3 ♖ac5 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.f3 ♗g5 20.♙b5



Position after: 20. ♙b5

20...♙c7! 21.♙e2 ♙e7 with a possible repetition.

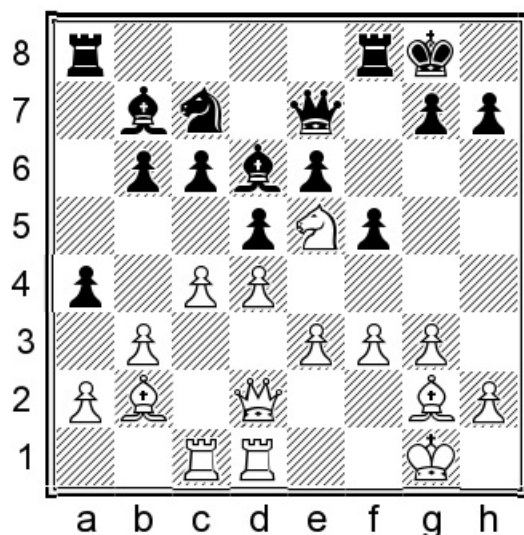
14. ♖fd1



Position after: 14. ♖fd1

14...a4

A) Note that having opened the a-file Black is not obliged to use it! 14...♘c7 is another possible idea and after 15.f3 ♘xd2 16.♚xd2 a4 the options are:

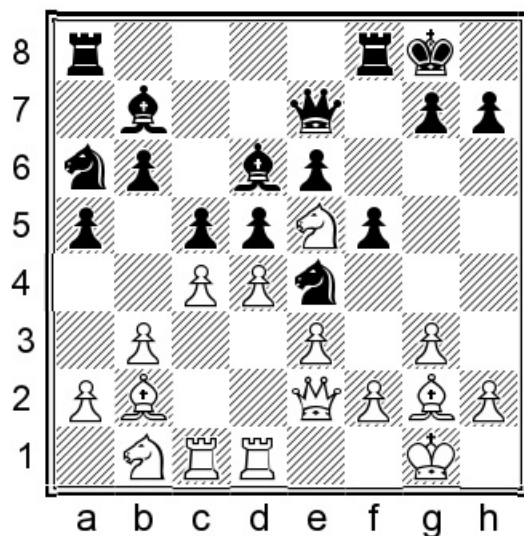


Position after: 16...a4

A1) 17.e4 fxe4 [17...a3 18.♙c3 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 c5 20.exd5 exd5 21.f4 ♖ad8∞] 18.fxe4 axb3 19.axb3 ♙xe5 20.dxe5 ♖ad8 21.exd5 exd5 22.♚e3 c5 23.♚e2 ♙a6 24.♖a1 d4 25.♙c1 b5 Petursson, M (2535) – Short, N (2615) Reykjavik 1987.

A2) 17.♘d3! This is somewhat better, not provoking Black to take on e5. Now after 17...c5 18.f4 axb3 19.axb3 ♖a2 20.♖c2 ♖d8 21.h3 White's position is more pleasant to play.

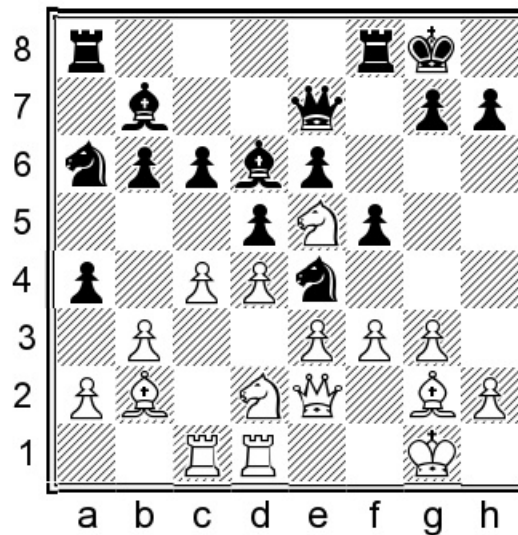
B) I'd also prefer to avoid the immediate 14...c5 in view of 15.♘b1!



Position after: 15. ♖b1!

15... ♗b4 16. a3!± [16. f3 ♗xa2!? 17. fxe4 ♗xc1 18. ♕xc1 fxe4 19. ♗c3 ♜ad8 20. ♗b5 cxd4 21. exd4 ♕xe5 22. dxe5 dxc4 gave Black enough play in Van Wely, L (2668) – Ulibin, M (2581) Moscow 2003.] 16... ♗a6 17. f3 ♗f6 18. f4 with a slight plus for White.

15.f3

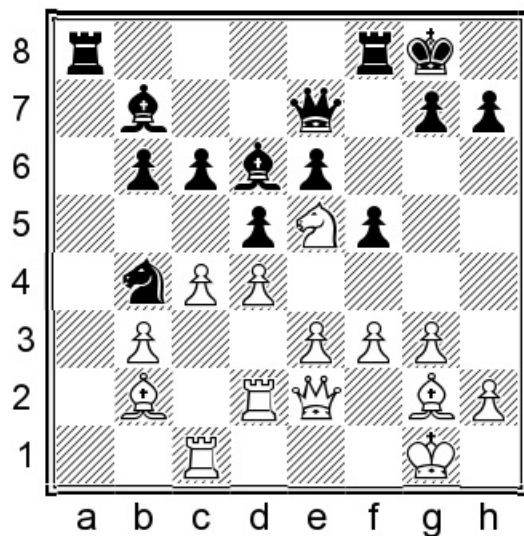


Position after: 15.f3

15. bxa4 ♕xe5 16. dxe5 ♗ac5 Black is fine.

15... ♗xd2 16. ♜xd2 axb3 17. axb3 ♗b4∞

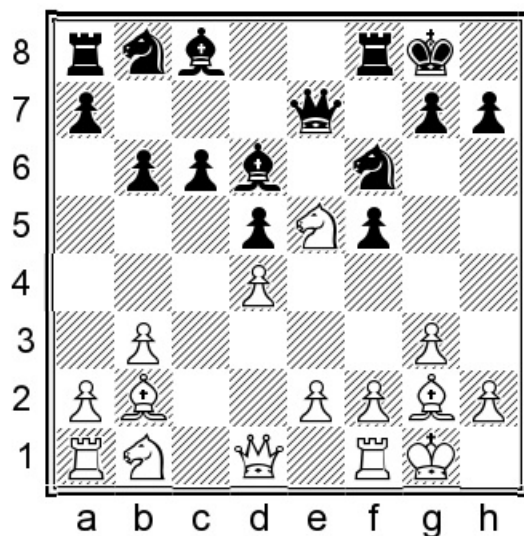
The knight has reached the most comfortable outpost, where it stands well. Black has very adequate counterplay.



Position after: 17... Nxb4

c) 9. Qb2 b6 10. cxd5 exd5 11. Nd2

1. d4 f5 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 Nf6 4. Qg2 d5 5. 0-0 Qd6 6. c4 c6 7. b3 W e7 8. Nde5 0-0 9. Qb2 b6 10. cxd5 exd5

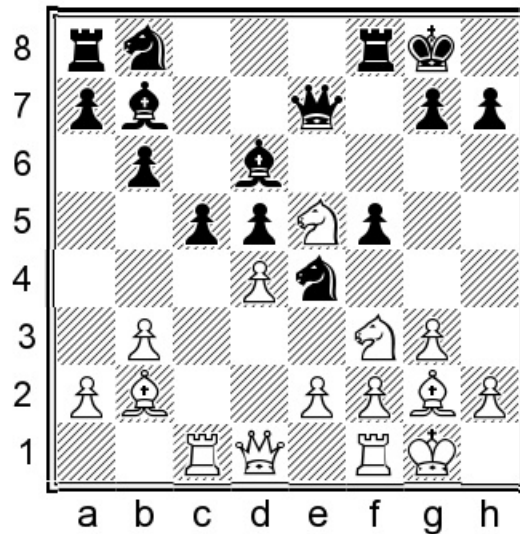


Position after: 10... exd5

The early trade on d5 in this case helps White to target the c6-pawn. In many other lines Black has recaptures other than with the e-pawn, so performing the trade now has

restricted his choice. However, the lessened tension also makes the next few decisions easier for him. Instead 10...cxd5 11.♘c4! illustrates a point of White's play; the bishop on d6 has nowhere to go and after taking it, White gets permanent pressure.

11.♘d2 ♗b7 12.♞c1 c5 13.♘df3 ♘e4

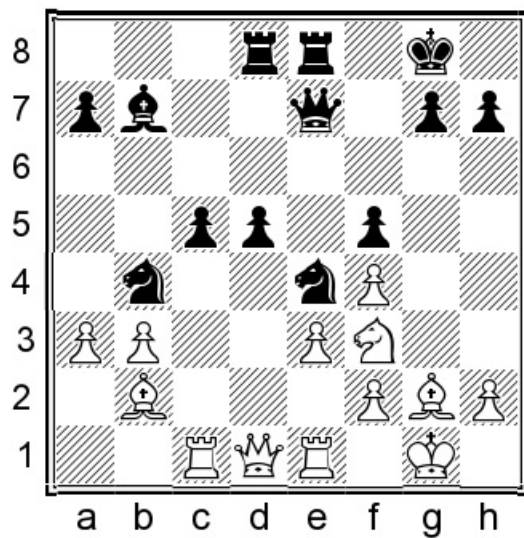


Position after: 13...♘e4

Yet another important theoretical position. We now see how ‘hanging pawns’ can arise in this opening, as well as how to play with them.

14.e3

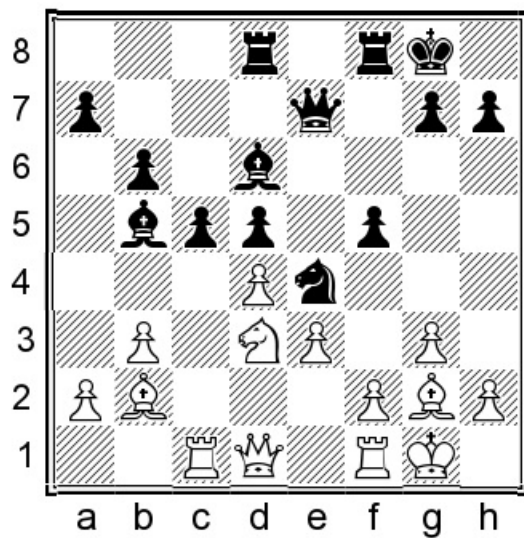
A) 14.♘d3 ♘c6 15.♘f4 ♗xf4! 16.gxf4 ♞ad8 17.♞e1 ♞fe8 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.e3 ♘b4 20.a3



Position after: 20.a3

20...d4! 21.exd4 ♞d5 Black is better.

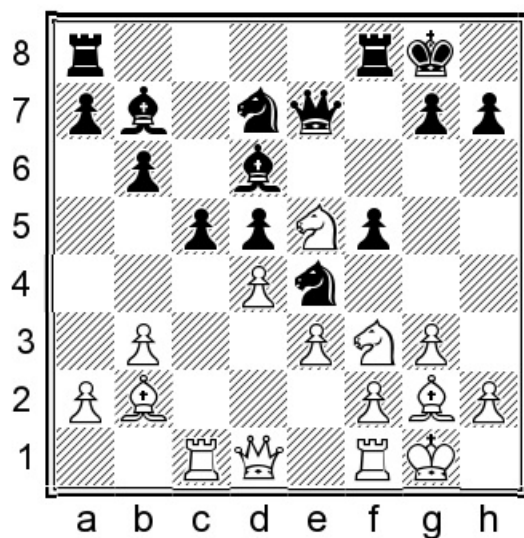
B) 14.♞e1 ♞c6 15.♞xc6 ♜xc6 16.♞d3 ♞ad8 17.e3 ♜b5



Position after: 17...♜b5

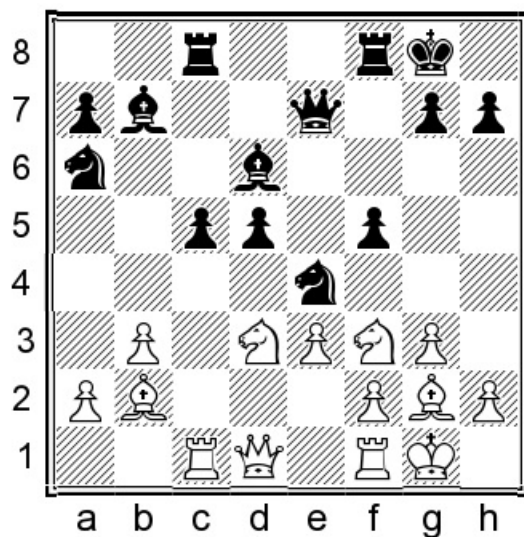
18.dxc5 [18.♞e1 c4 also leads to unclear play.] 18...bxc5 19.♞c2 ♞c8 20.♞fd1 ♜a6 with a decent position for Black, though it is tense.

14...♞d7



Position after: 14...♘d7

14...♘a6 15.♘d3 ♞ac8 16.dxc5 [16.♘fe5 cxd4 17.exd4 ♘b4 leads to more or less equal play.] 16...bxc5

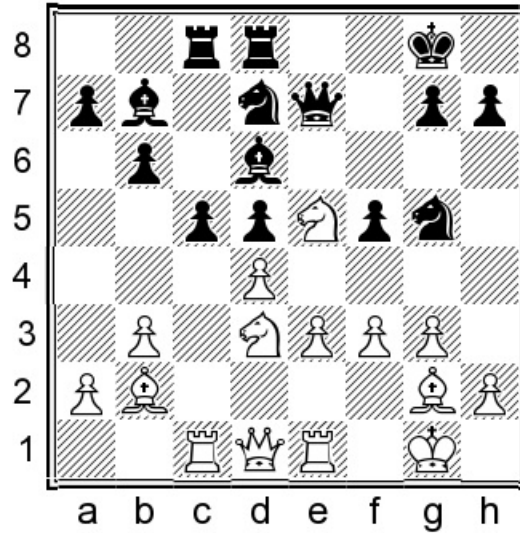


Position after: 16...bxc5

This is a typical position for this line, where Black is doing OK as long as he stays alert. 17.♘fe5 [Or: 17.♘f4 ♘c7! 18.h4 d4!? 19.exd4 ♙xf4 20.gxf4 ♘e6 and Black is better; the doubled isolated f-pawns are worth the price.] 17...♞fd8 18.♞e2 ♘b4 19.♘xb4 ♙xe5 20.♙xe5 ♞xe5 21.♘d3 ♞d6=

15. ♖xd7

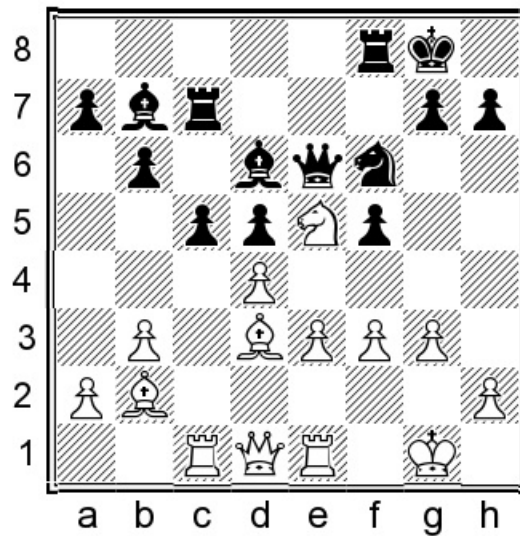
15. ♖d3 ♜ac8 16. ♗fe5 ♞fd8 17. f3 ♘g5 18. ♞e1



Position after: 18. ♞e1

18... ♙xe5! Often this is a key stage in Black's counterplay. 19. dxe5 ♘f8 20. h4 ♗ge6 21. f4 b5 with good play.

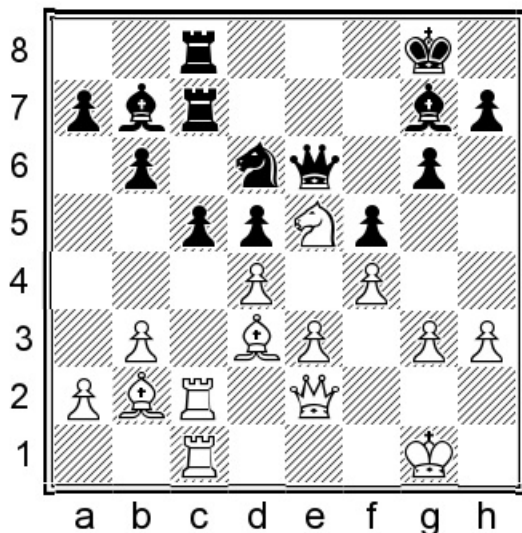
15... ♜xd7 16. ♗e5 ♞e6 17. f3 ♘f6 18. ♞e1 ♜ac8 19. ♙f1!? ♞c7 20. ♙d3



Position after: 20. ♙d3

Due to the exposed f5-pawn this manoeuvre makes some sense here. Black for his part wants to do the reverse: bishop from d6 to g7 (and knight to d6.) Now the game continues along Nimzo-type lines for a few moves.

20...♖fc8 21.♔e2 ♘f8 22.♖c2 g6 23.♖ec1 ♙g7 24.h3 ♗e8! 25.f4 ♘d6

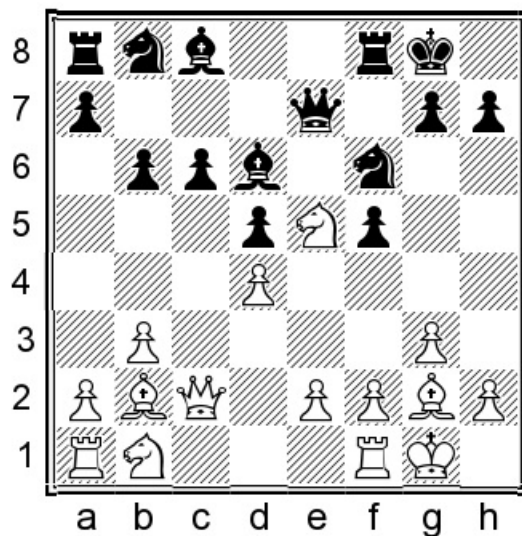


Position after: 25...♘d6

The hanging pawns (created 10 moves ago) are still there! Both sides have now arranged their pieces optimally and the fight, while balanced, is just beginning.

d) 9.♙b2 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♔c2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♗f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♘d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♔e7 8.♗e5 0-0 9.♙b2 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♔c2

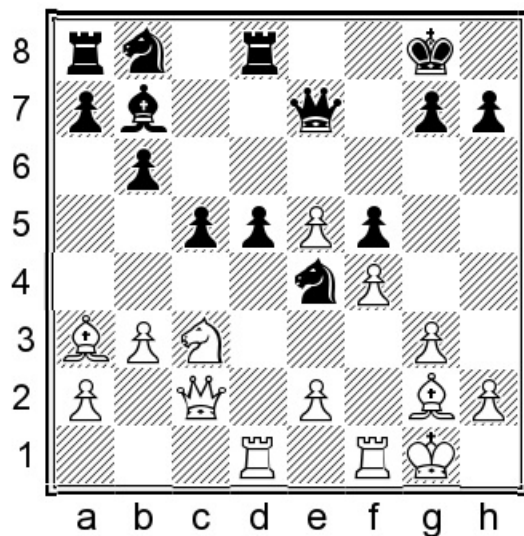


Position after: 11. ♔c2

Another important component of White's play in this line is that he can eliminate the time needed for ♘d2 and simply pressure the c6- and f5-pawns without delay. Black has to be highly alert in this position and there is no simple solution, so I came up with:

11... ♕e6!?

A tough move and quite a deep one. Black sacrifices a pawn in order to speed up his play. The f5- and d5-pawns are reinforced and the queen is improved. The main previous attempt was unconvincing from my perspective: 11... ♗xe5 12.dxe5 ♘e4 13. ♗a3 c5 14.f3 ♘g5 15. ♘c3 ♗b7 16.f4 White has an initiative, e.g. 16... ♘e4 17. ♖ad1 ♗d8

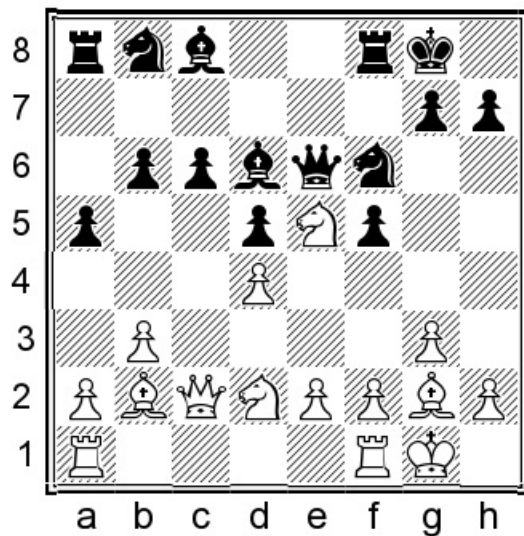


Position after: 17...♖d8

18.g4! This lands before Black can consolidate. After 18...♗xc3 19.♕xc3 fxg4 20.f5 Black is being squeezed.

12.♗xc6

12.♗d2 a5!?

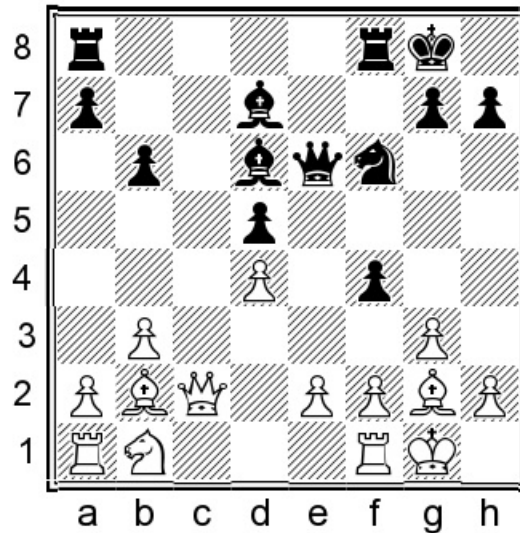


Position after: 12...a5!?

13.♗df3 [13.♗xc6 ♗xc6 14.♕xc6 ♗d7 15.♕c2 ♕xe2 16.♖fe1 ♖ac8! Black is fine.]
 13...♖a7 Developing in this way is really unusual, but not bad at all in this case. The

idea is worth remembering and gives a complicated game where Black isn't worse, after for instance 14.♖ac1 ♜c7 15.♘d3 ♞a6 16.♙b1 ♞e4 17.e3 g5.

12...♞xc6 13.♙xc6 ♚d7 14.♙c2 f4!?

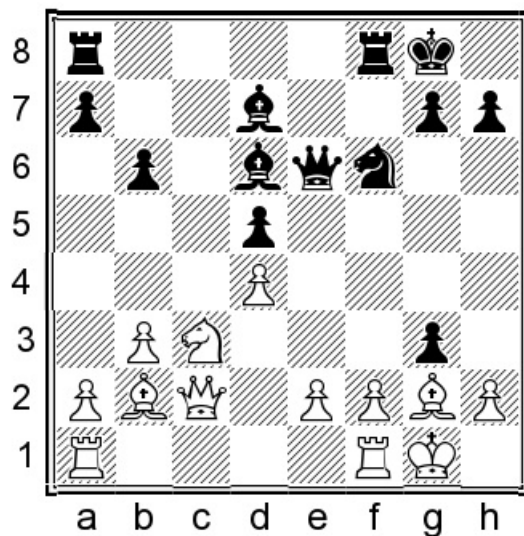


Position after: 14...f4!?

The position has become clearer and we can see that in return for the pawn Black has an attack on the kingside, which White underestimates at his peril.

15.♙d3

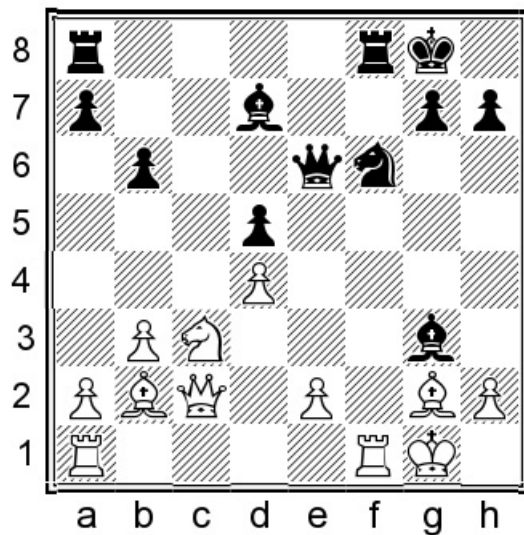
Probably the only move; others either lose outright or are at least fraught with danger. Let's look at 15.♞c3 fxg3 and:



Position after: 15...fxg3

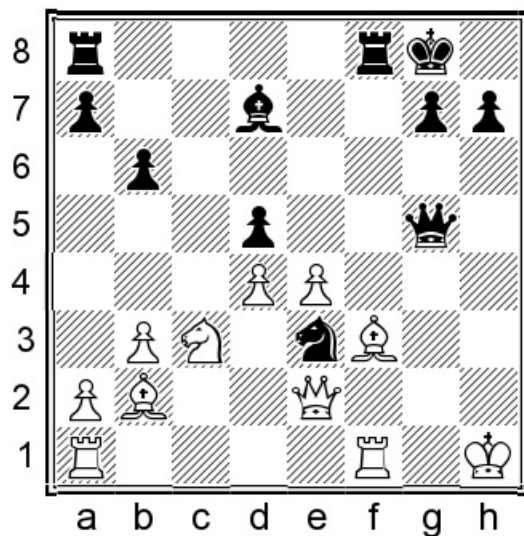
A) 16.hxg3 ♔xg3! 17.♖xd5 [Taking loses at once: 17.fxg3 ♚e3+ 18.♗h1 ♜g4+.]
17...♞ac8 18.♚d2 ♔h2+! 19.♗xh2 ♜xd5 20.e3 ♚h6+ 21.♗g1 ♚g6 and Black wins!

B) 16.fxg3 ♔xg3!



Position after: 16...♔xg3!

17.e4?! [17.♚d3 ♔d6 18.e4 ♜xe4 19.♖xe4 dxe4 20.♚xe4 ♚h6 21.h3 ♗h8 is the lesser
evil, but the attack continues.] 17...♔xh2+! 18.♗xh2 ♜g4+ 19.♗g1 ♚h6 20.♔f3 ♚e3+
21.♗g2 ♚g5 22.♗h1 ♜e3 23.♚e2

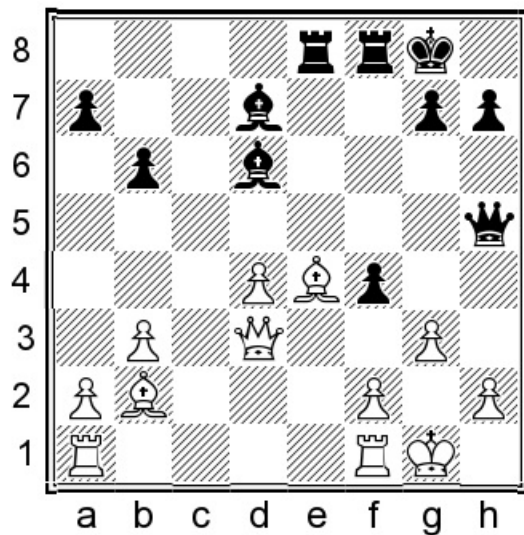


Position after: 23. ♔e2

23... ♖f4! A sequence of nice attacking moves will end in victory now: 24. ♖f2 ♜af8 25. ♖g1 ♜h4+ 26. ♖h2 ♜f4 27. ♖xh4 ♜xh4+ 28. ♜h2 ♔h3! 29. ♖g3 ♖xf3! and Black wins again.

15... ♘e4

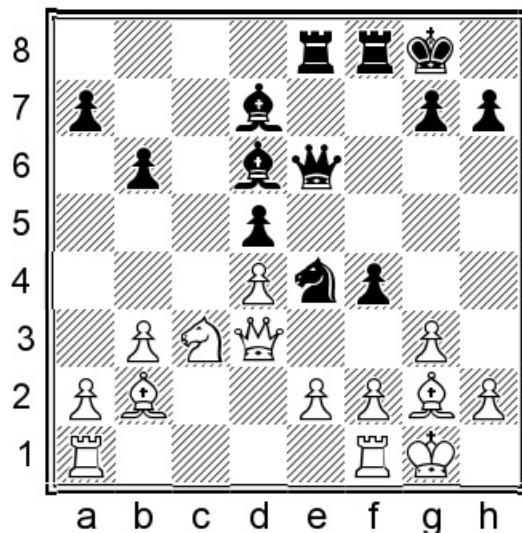
Another option is also interesting: 15... ♜e8!? 16. ♘c3 ♜h5. Black plays a typical attacking manoeuvre. 17. e4 dxe4 18. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 19. ♙xe4 ♜ae8



Position after: 19... ♜ae8

This almost looks like the Marshall Gambit in the Ruy Lopez! 20.♙f3 ♖g5 21.♚c4+ ♙e6 22.♚c6 fxg3 23.hxg3 ♙xg3 24.fxg3 ♚xg3+ 25.♙g2 ♚e3+ 26.♔h1 ♚h6+ with perpetual check.

16.♘c3 ♜ae8



Position after: 16...♜ae8

17.a4

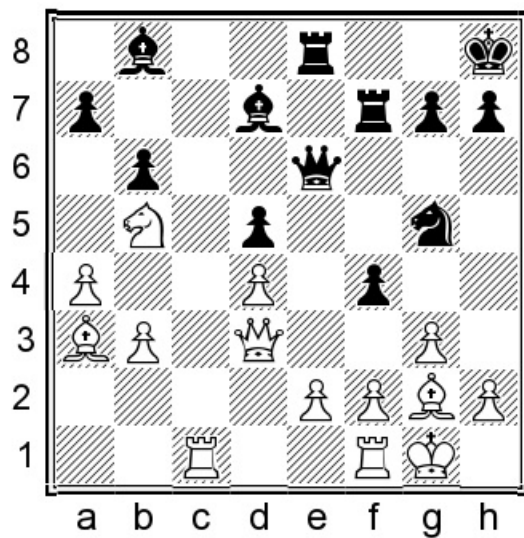
A) 17.♜ac1 ♔h8! 18.a4 ♘g5! 19.♙xd5 ♚h6 20.♔h1 ♙f5 21.e4 fxe3 22.♚b5 exf2 Black is winning.

B) 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♚c4 f3 19.exf3 ♚xc4 20.bxc4 exf3 21.♙h1 g5! White will not enjoy life when he has the bishop permanently trapped on h1.

17...♔h8!

It is important to move the king away from the a2-g8 diagonal before doing anything else.

18.♘b5 ♙b8 19.♙a3 ♜f7 20.♜ac1 ♘g5!

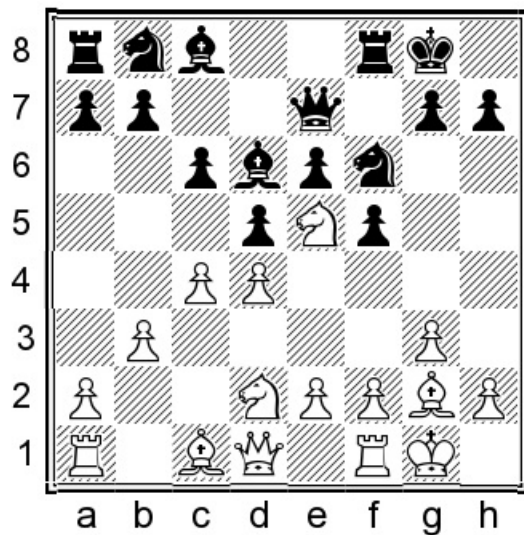


Position after: 20... Nf5!

Black has nothing to worry about.

e) 9. Nf2 b6

1. d4 f5 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 d5 5. 0-0 Bd6 6. c4 c6 7. b3 Qe7 8. Ne5 0-0 9. Nf2!?



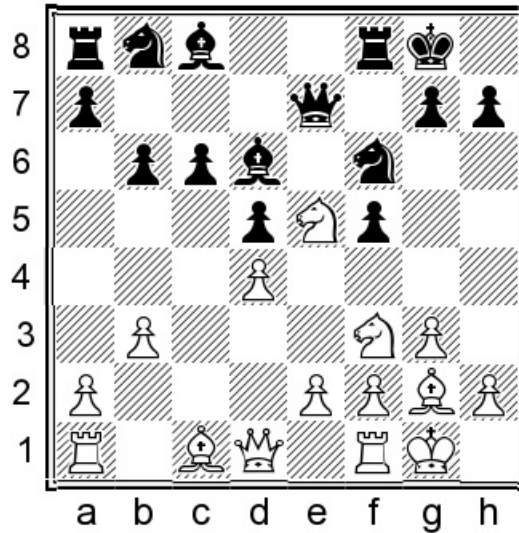
Position after: 9. Nf2!?

This is less committal than Bb2.

9...b6 10.cxd5 exd5

10...cxd5 11.♘dc4! Needless to say, this is once again better for White.

11.♘df3

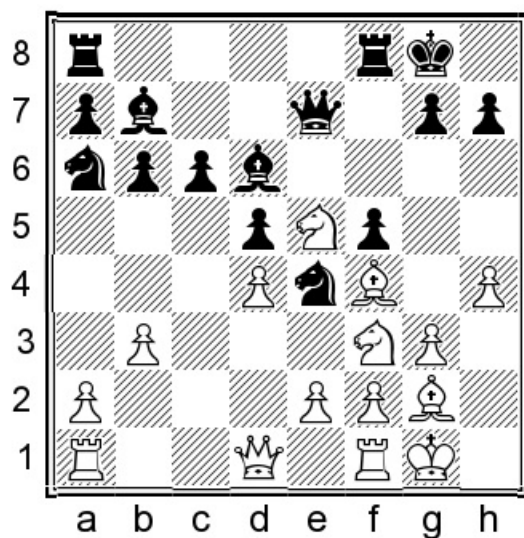


Position after: 11.♘df3

With his choice of 9th move White kept alive the possibility of bringing his bishop to f4 instead of b2.

11...♘e4 12.♙c2

A) In the line 12.h4 ♘b7 Black should also not be afraid to play with isolated or hanging pawns. 13.♙f4 ♘a6



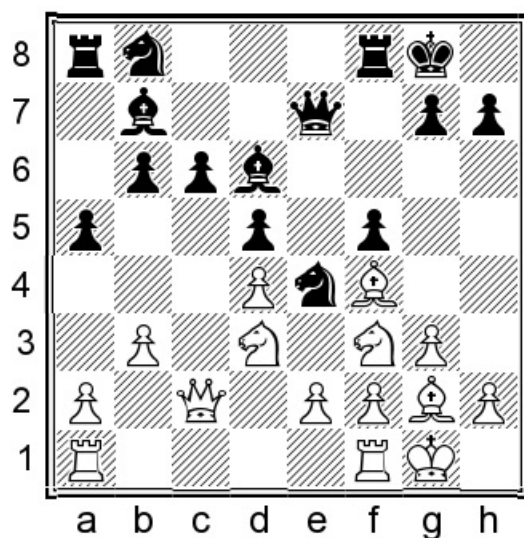
Position after: 13...♖a6

14.♙c1 [14.♘d3 ♕a3!?] 14...♞ac8 15.a3 c5 16.dxc5 ♘axc5 17.♚b2 ♘e6 18.e3 ♞c7 19.b4 ♞fc8∞ was complex in Van Wely, L (2648) – Moiseenko, A (2663) Khanty – Mansiysk 2005.

B) 12.♘d3 ♘a6!? 13.♕f4 ♘c7 14.♞c1 c5 15.♕xd6 ♚xd6 16.e3 ♕b7 17.♚c2 ♘e6 18.♚b2 ♞ac8∞ could be another sample line highlighting typical plans for both White and Black.

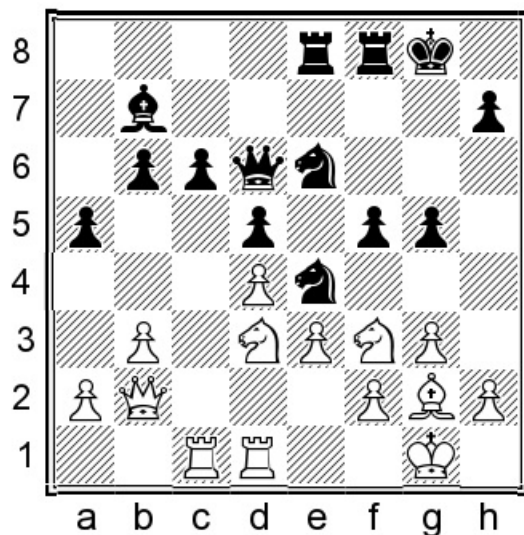
12...♕b7 13.♘d3 ♘d7

Hinting that you would like an open a-file is also possible: 13...a5 14.♕f4



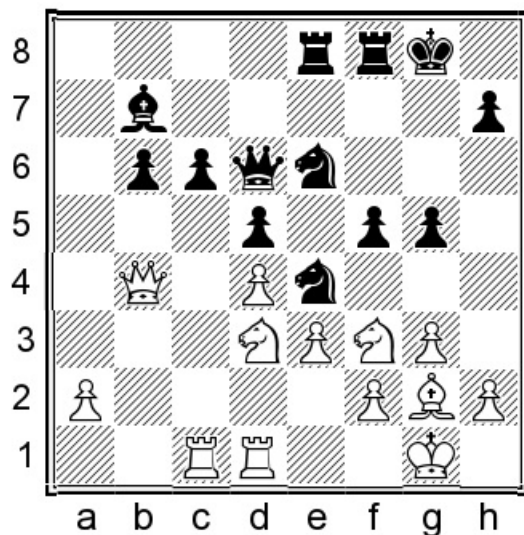
Position after: 14. ♔f4

A) 14... ♖a6 15. ♕xd6 ♜xd6 16. ♚b2 ♞ae8 [16... ♗c7!?N 17. ♞ac1 ♗e6, with the idea of ...c5 and... ♕a6, might be better.] 17. ♞ac1 ♗c7 18. e3 ♗e6 19. ♞fd1 g5



Position after: 19...g5

20. b4?! [20. ♗fe5!N 20... ♞e7 21. f3 ♗f6 22. f4 might also improve.] 20...axb4 21. ♚xb4

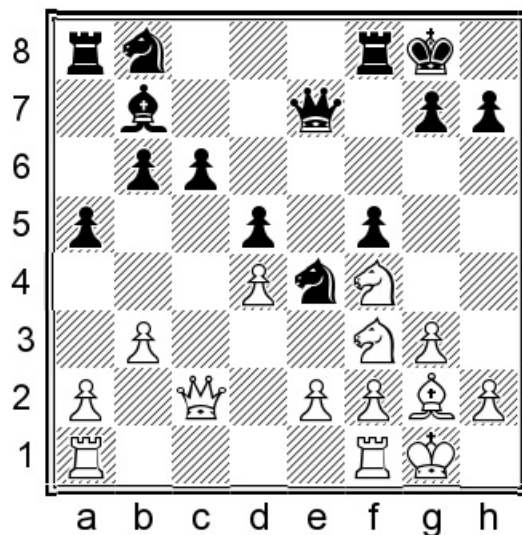


Position after: 21. ♚xb4

21...c5!N [21... ♚xb4 22. ♗xb4± was unpleasant for Black in Piven, I (2360) – Thielen, D Schwaebisch Gmuend 1995.] 22. ♗xc5 [22. dxc5?! bxc5 23. ♚xb7? ♞b8–+] 22...g4!

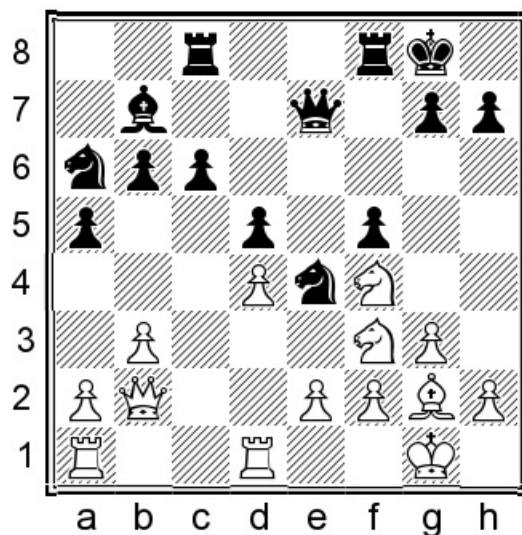
23. ♖h4 bxc5 24. ♜xb7 c4 with compensation.

B) 14... ♙xf4 15. ♘xf4



Position after: 15. ♘xf4

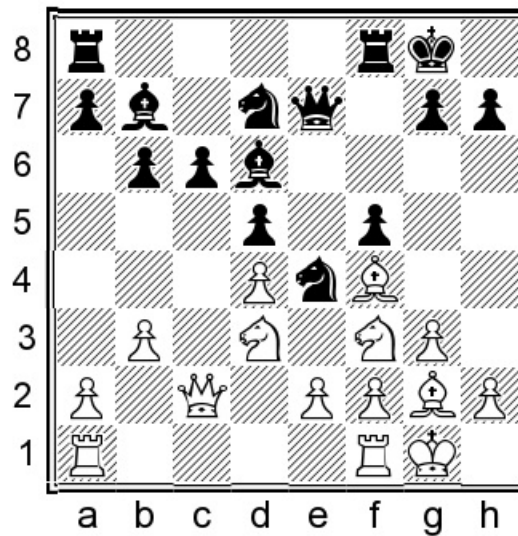
15... ♖a6 [Also possible was 15...g5!? 16. ♘d3 ♘d7 17. ♘fe5 ♘xe5 18. ♘xe5 c5 19. e3 f4∞] 16. ♜fd1 ♜ac8 17. ♜b2



Position after: 17. ♜b2

17... ♘c7 [17... ♜fd8?! 18. ♜ac1± 1-0 (42) Videki, S (2315) – Bany, J (2450) Bytom 1988] 18. ♘e5 g5 19. ♘fd3 ♘e6∞

14.♙f4

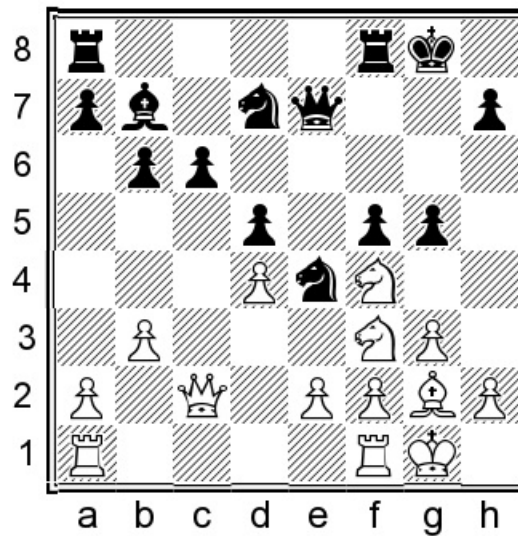


Position after: 14.♙f4

White carries out the positionally well-motivated trade of dark-squared bishops, securing the f4- and e5-squares for his knights.

14...c5

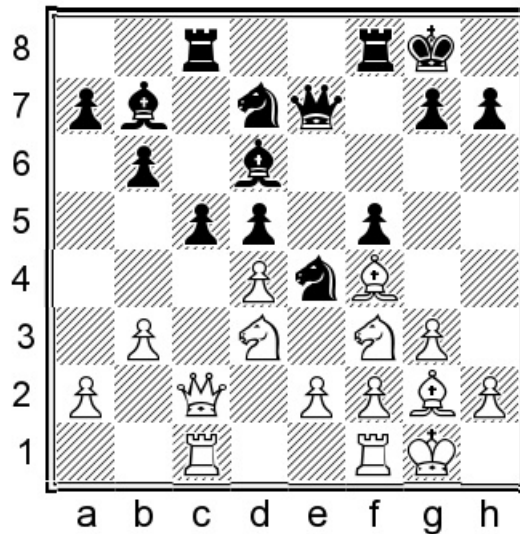
Like in note b) above, Black can also play 14...♙xf4 15.♘xf4 g5!?



Position after: 15...g5!?

Black must have this push in mind, else it is illogical to bring White's knight to f4 free of charge. 16.♘d3 c5 17.♚b2 c4 18.bxc4 dxc4 19.♘de5 g4 20.♘xd7 gxf3 21.exf3 ♘xg3 22.hxg3 ♚xd7∞

15.♖ac1 ♜ac8

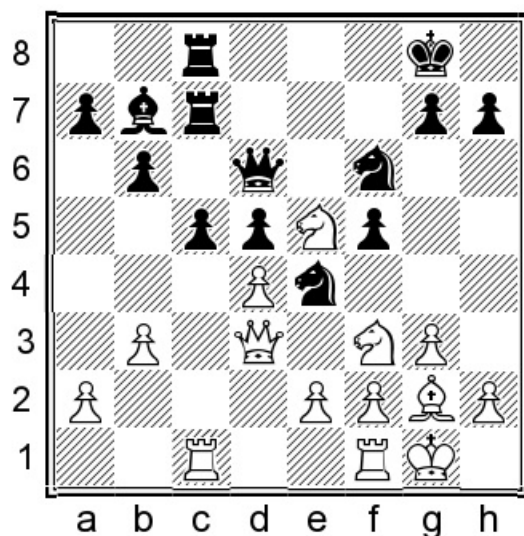


Position after: 15...♜ac8

Black is fast here, so ...c4 is often an option for him.

16.♙xd6

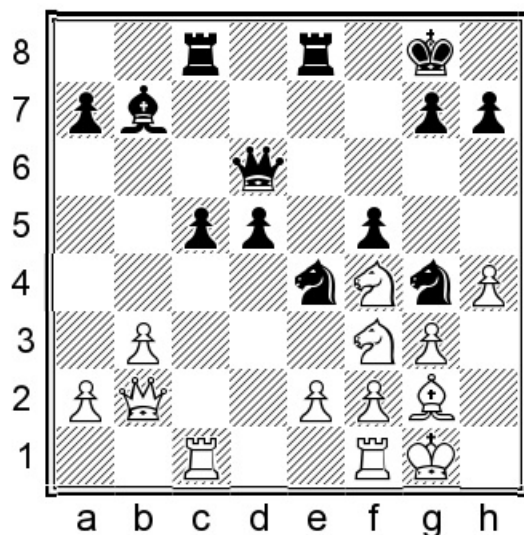
16.♚d1 A move that makes little sense to me. 16...♜c7 17.♙xd6 ♚xd6 18.♘de5 ♘df6 19.♚d3 ♜fc8



Position after: 19... Rfc8

Black has equalised so successfully that he might even be better. After something like 20. d2 g6 21. b1 cxd4 22. Rxc7 Qxc7 23. Qxd4 Qc5 ⇒ he has possession of the the c-file and indeed ultimately won in Gupta, A (2380) – Gleizerov, E (2572) Abu Dhabi 2005.

16... Qxd6 17. dxc5 bxc5 18. h4 Nd6 19. Nf4 Ng4 20. Qb2 Rfe8

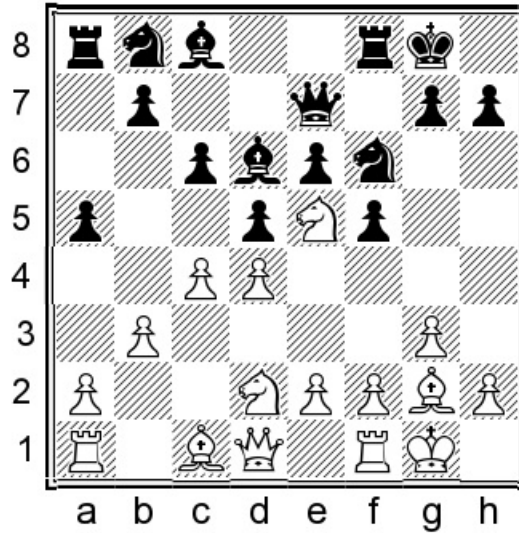


Position after: 20... Rfe8

We have reached another interesting position with chances for both sides.

f) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♞bd7 11.a3, 11.a4

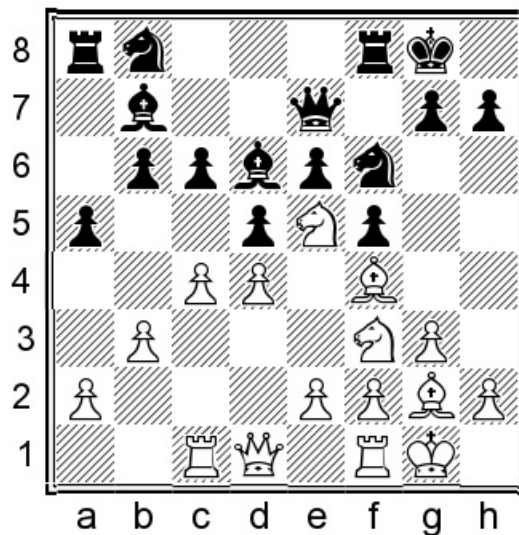
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♞f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7 8.♘e5 0-0 9.♘d2 a5



Position after: 9...a5

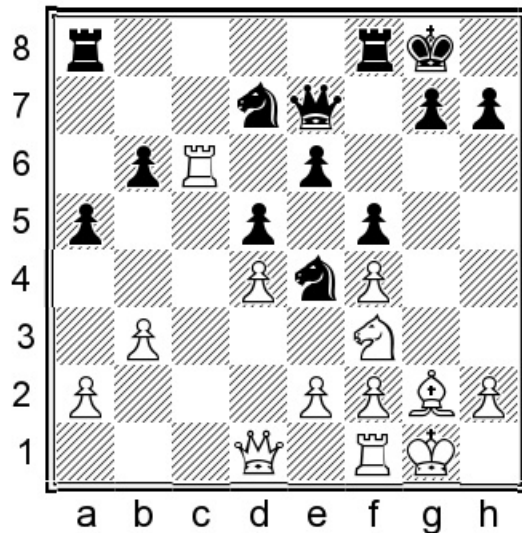
10.♙b2

10.♘df3!?! Due to the fact that Black has played ...a5 already, it makes sense to alter the plan and avoid fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop. Black has to find good moves in order to maintain equality. 10...b6 11.♙f4 ♙b7 12.♖c1



Position after: 12.♖c1

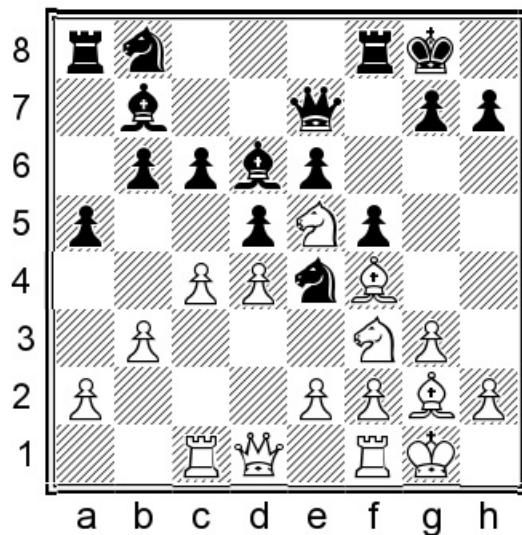
A) 12...♗bd7!? 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♗c6 ♕xc6 15.♖xc6 ♗xf4 16.gxf4 ♘e4



Position after: 16...♘e4

17.♗c1! Useful prophylaxis. [17.♗c2 ♗d6! is what Black wants; now 18.♖c1 ♖ac8 19.♗d1 ♖xc6 20.♖xc6 ♖c8 is equal.] 17...a4 18.♖c7 axb3 19.axb3 White has pressure here, so note b) or c) is a better choice.

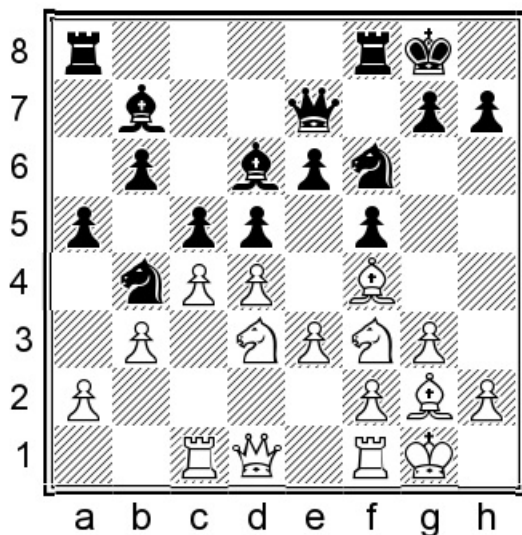
B) 12...♗e4!?



Position after: 12...♗e4!?

Intending the usual ...g5. Play could continue 13.h4 ♖d7 14.♗xd7 ♜xd7 15.♗e5 ♜e7 16.e3 c5 17.a4 ♝ac8 with a dynamically balanced game.

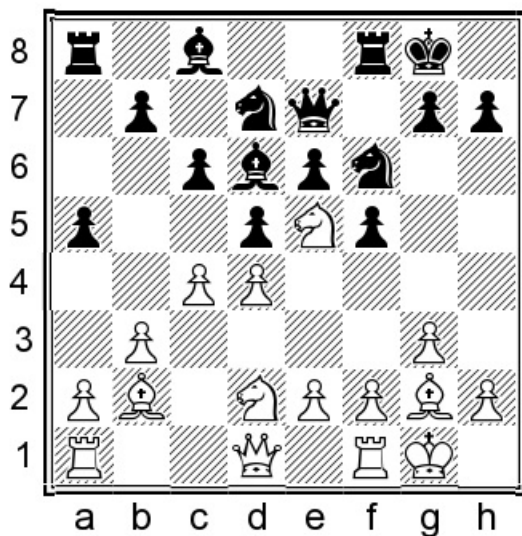
C) 12...♗a6 Often, after Black plays ...a5, this is the place for the knight. Now we're in virtually unmapped territory. 13.♗d3 c5 14.e3 ♗b4



Position after: 14...♗b4

15.♙xd6 ♜xd6 16.♜e2 ♗e4 17.♝fd1 a4 18.dxc5 bxc5 Black obtained a good game. 0-1 (54) Cvitan, O (2504) – Bosiocic, M (2607) Slovenia 2016.

10...♗bd7

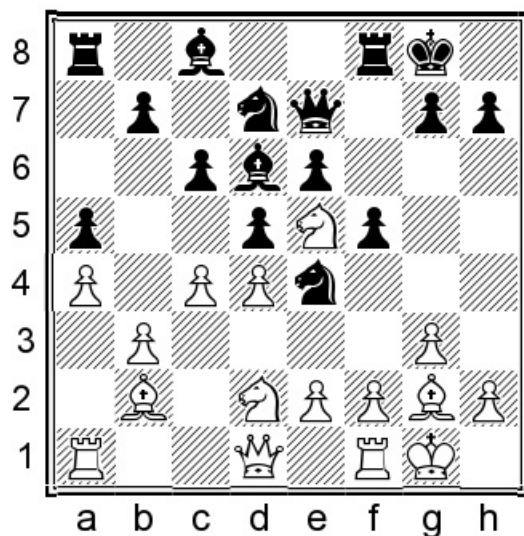


Position after: 10... ♖bd7

11.a3

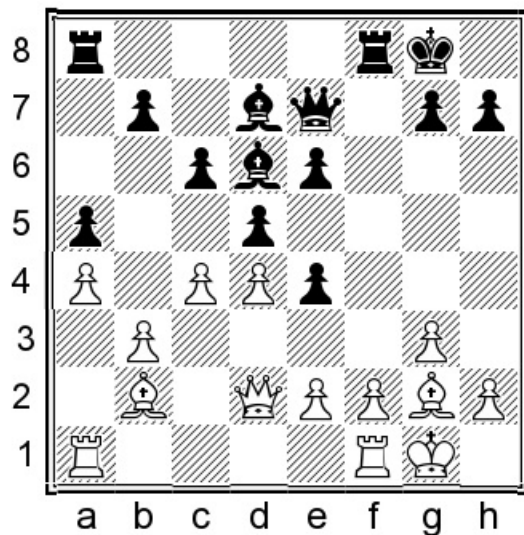
White wants to be able to meet ...a4 with b4, and maybe ultimately he might want to play that thrust regardless.

With 11.a4 White would prevent ...a4 for good but the move also limits his own options.
11... ♖e4



Position after: 11... ♖e4

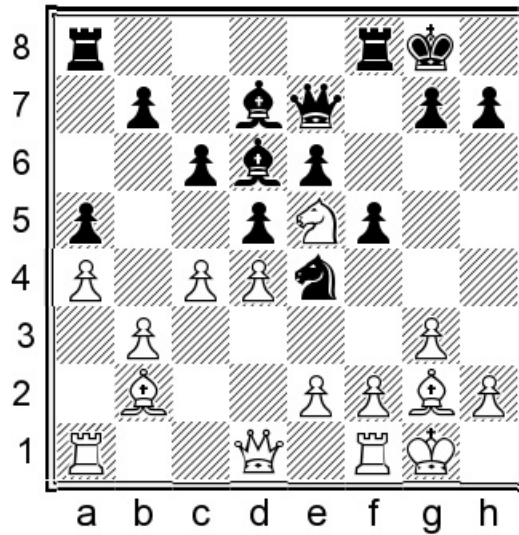
A) 12. ♖xe4 fxe4 [12... dxe4 also leads to an equal game.] 13. ♖xd7 ♕xd7 14. ♔d2



Position after: 14. ♖d2

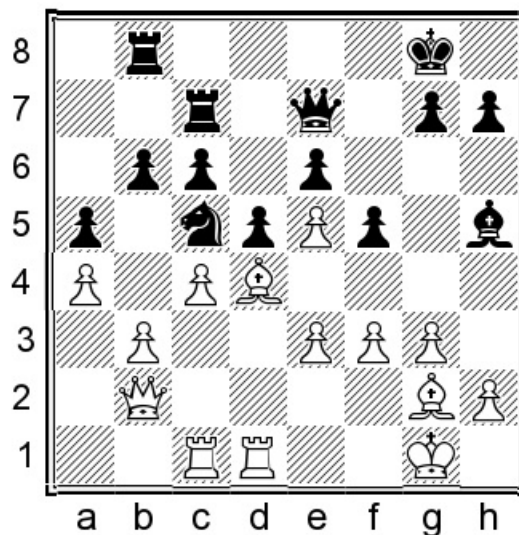
14...h5!? This is analogous to the Moskalenko idea (main line). 15.h4 b6 16. ♖ac1 ♗f6
17. ♖c2 ♗f5=

B) 12. ♗df3 ♗xe5 13. ♗xe5 ♕d7



Position after: 13... ♕d7

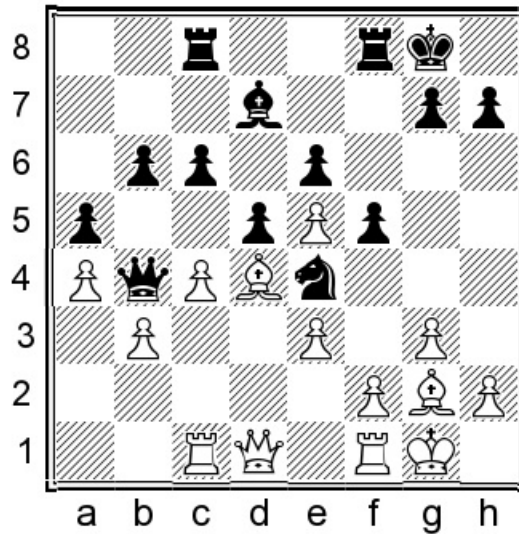
B1) 14. ♗c2 ♖ac8 15. ♖fd1 b6 16. ♖ac1 ♗xe5 This idea is especially sensible given that
White closed the queenside on move 11! 17.dxe5 ♗c5 18.e3 ♗e8 19. ♗d4 ♗h5 20.f3
♖c7 21. ♗b2 ♖b8=



Position after: 21... ♖b8

The knight on c5 is very stable!

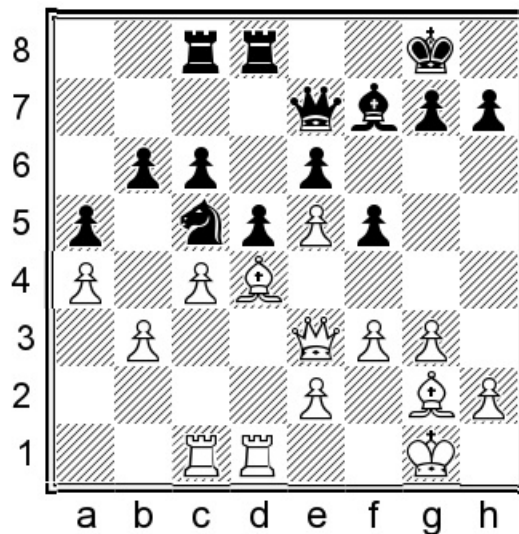
B2) 14.♖c1 ♕xe5 15.dxe5 ♜ac8 16.e3 ♞b4 17.♗d4 b6



Position after: 17...b6

Again we see the combination of ...♕xe5 with ...b6 and establishing a knight on c5. Both sides will now focus on piece play, e.g. 18.f3 ♘c5 19.♞b1 ♕e8 20.♞f2 ♗g6 21.f4 ♞fd8 with balanced play.

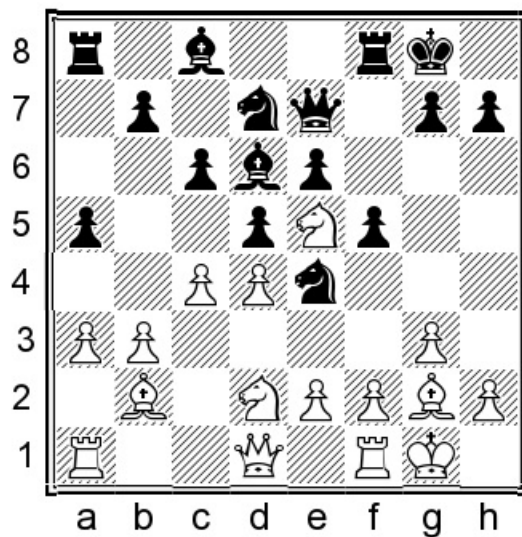
B3) 14.f3 Yet again, Black wants the same strategy and the differences in details are not important, e.g. 14...♕xe5 15.dxe5 ♘c5 16.♗a3 b6 17.♞d4 ♕e8 18.♞e3 ♞a7 19.♞fd1 ♕f7 20.♞ac1 ♞ac8 21.♗b2 ♞fd8 22.♗d4 ♞e7



Position after: 22... ♔e7

with another balanced position.

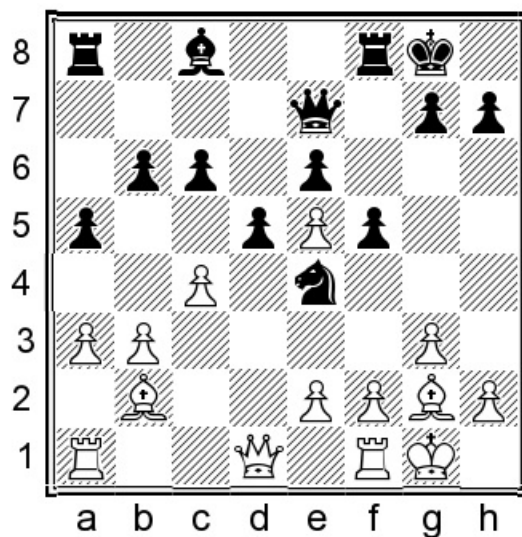
11... ♞e4



Position after: 11... ♞e4

12. ♞xe4

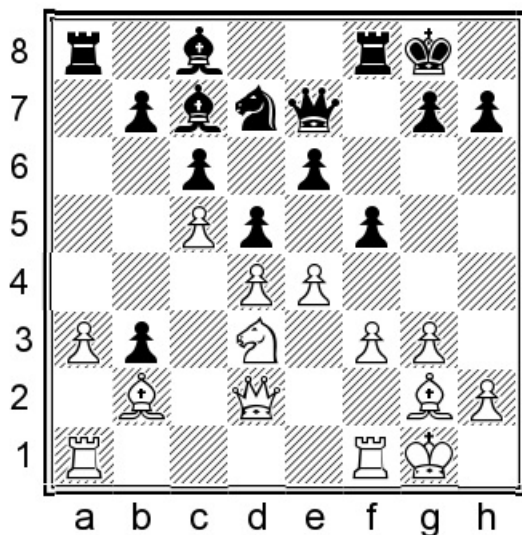
A) As usual, White can choose to play 'around' the e4-knight, but Black's response to that will come as no surprise whatsoever. 12. ♞df3 ♞xe5 13. ♞xe5 ♞xe5 14. dxex5 b6



Position after: 14...b6

Now Adorjan, A (2520) – Moskalenko, V (2525) Balassagyarmat 1990 was agreed drawn here; after for instance 15.f3 ♘c5 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 ♖xa1 18.♙xa1 ♘a6 19.b5 ♘c7 20.bxc6 ♚c5+ 21.♚d4 ♚xc6 22.♞b1 b5 Black is indeed doing OK.

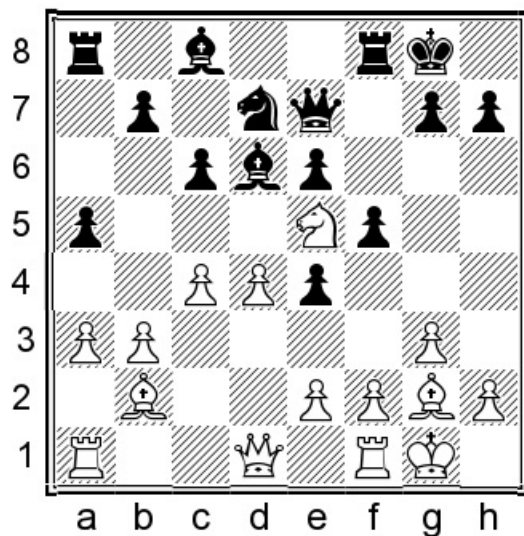
B) 12.f3 ♘xd2 13.♚xd2 a4 14.♘d3 [14.b4 ♘b6 15.c5 ♙xe5 Sometimes this bishop can be given up even if we don't get the c5-square, for instance 16.dxe5 ♘c4 17.♚d4 ♘xb2 18.♚xb2 f4 19.e3 g5 followed by ...♙d7-e8 with a fine game for Black.]
14...axb3 15.c5 ♙c7 16.e4



Position after: 16.e4

16...b6! [There is no need to open up the game: after 16...fxe4 17.fxe4 ♘f6 18.e5 ♘d7 19.♚c3 ♖xf1+ 20.♞xf1 b6 21.cxb6 ♘xb6 22.♚xc6 White obtained some pressure. ½ – ½ (65) Skutta, B (1973) – Lyell, M (2228) London 2015] 17.exd5 exd5 18.♞fe1 ♚f7 19.f4 bxc5 20.dxc5 ♙a6 Black is more than OK.

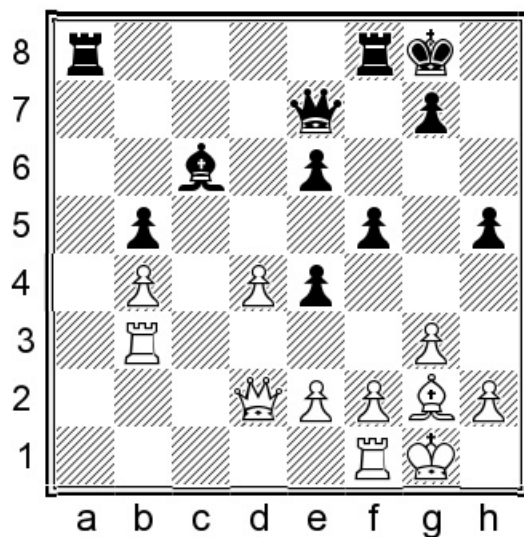
12...dxe4



Position after: 12...dxe4

The automatic recapture should usually be this one.

13. ♖xd7 ♗xd7 14. ♕d2 h5 15. ♘c3 a4 16. ♖ab1 axb3 17. ♗xb3 b5 18. cxb5 cxb5 19. ♘b4 ♘xb4 20. axb4 ♘c6!



Position after: 20...♘c6!

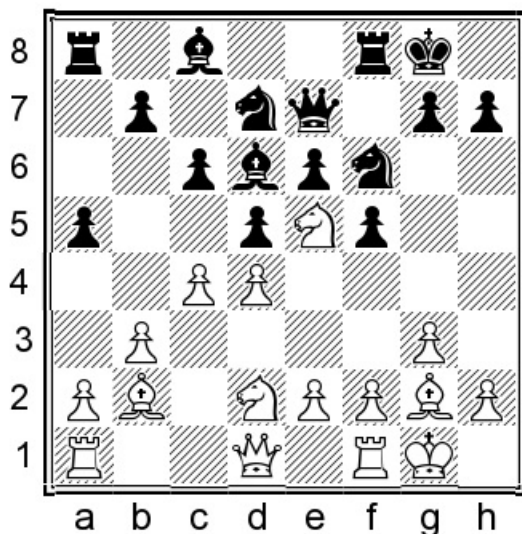
Again, contrary to the usual definitions, it is Black who has the better bishop.

21. ♖c1 ♘d5 22. ♖b2 ♗fc8

Black is more than fine here and went on to win in Gomez Ledo, R (2445) – Moskalenko, V (2565) Torredembarra 2010.

g) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♚c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4 13.--

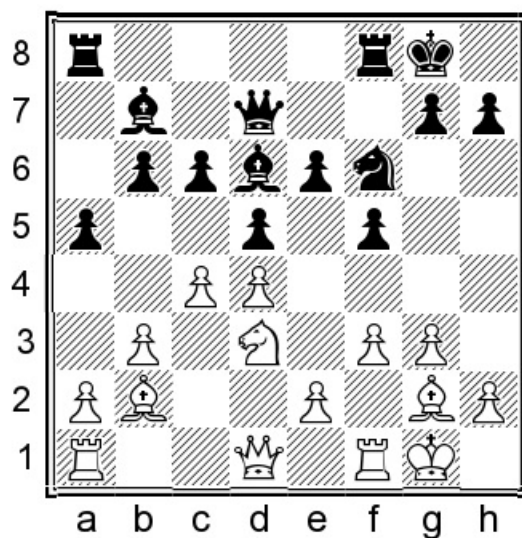
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7 8.♘e5 0-0 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7



Position after: 10...♘bd7

11.♚c2

There is nowhere else to really put the queen while White connects rooks, and this is a good square after all. But other moves are possible. The most logical of them is 11.♘df3 ♘e4 12.♘d3!? [12.♚c2 transposes to the main line] 12...b6 13.♘fe5 ♙b7 14.♘xd7 ♚xd7 15.f3 ♘f6



Position after: 15... Nf6

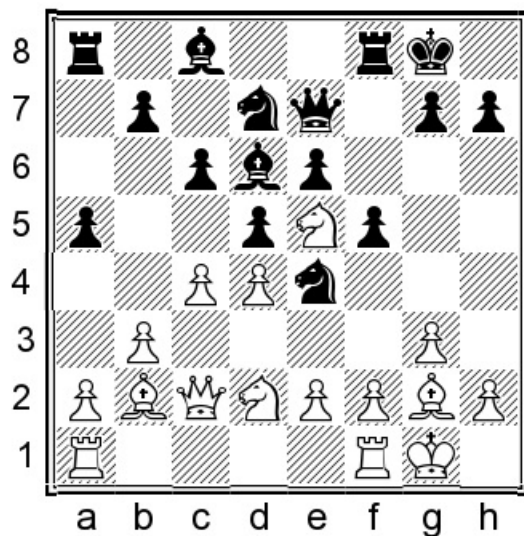
when White has achieved fluid co-ordination between his pieces in spite of the rooks not being connected.

A) 16.c5 is a bit premature. After 16...bxc5 17.dxc5 Qc7 18.Ne5 Qe7 19.Qc2 Nd7 Black has the initiative since White surrendered the center prematurely. 0-1 (45) Estremera Panos, S (2430) – Arizmendi Martinez, J (2470) Torrevieja 1997.

B) 16.Rc1 Qe7 17.c5 bxc5 18.Nxc5 Qxc5 19.Rxc5 e5 20.Qc1 Nd7 21.Rc2 exd4 22.Qxd4 a4 23.Rd1 axb3 24.axb3 c5 25.Qxc5 Nxc5 26.Rxc5 Qxe2 Black is OK.

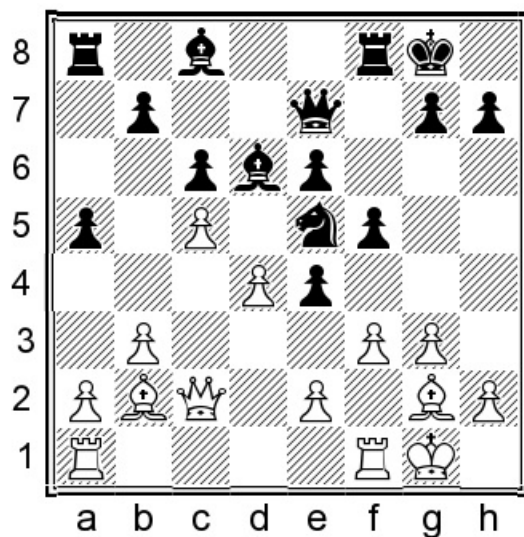
11...a4

Black can also go 11...Ne4 right now:



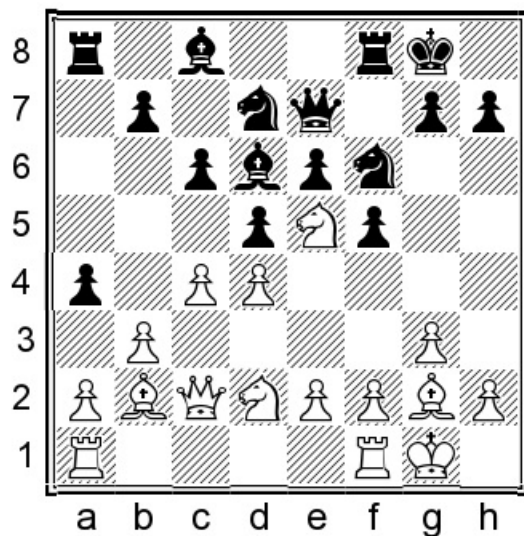
Position after: 11... Nxe4

12. Nxe4 [12. Ndf3 a4 again transposes to the main line.] 12... dxe4 13. f3!? [13. Nxd7 Qxd7 is equal.] 13... Nxe5 [13... exf3?! 14. Nxf3 would give White something to work with.] 14. c5!?



Position after: 14. c5!?

This is an interesting pawn sacrifice. [Meanwhile 14. dxe5 Qc5+ 15. Kh1 exf3 16. exf3 Qd7 should not worry Black.] 14... Nf7 15. cxd6 Nxd6 16. Qa3 exf3 17. Qxf3 Rd8 18. e4 with compensation for the missing pawn.

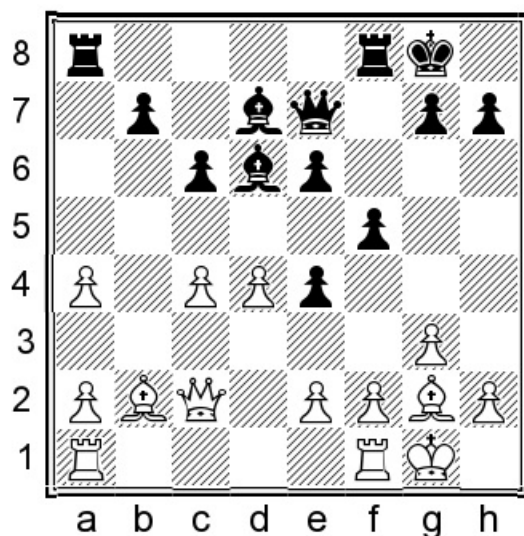


Position after: 11...a4

12. ♖df3

This is the main approach, White simply ignores the demonstrations on the queenside in the hope that such early activity will turn out to be misguided.

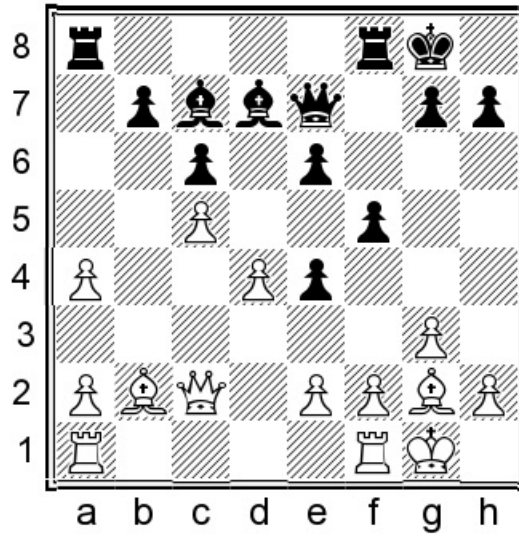
A) White can also take a pawn. 12.bxa4!? ♜e4 13. ♞xe4 [13. ♞df3 is considered in the next subchapter.] 13...dxe4 14. ♞xd7 ♚xd7



Position after: 14...♚xd7

White has an extra pawn but it is doubled and located on a half-open file. Black can

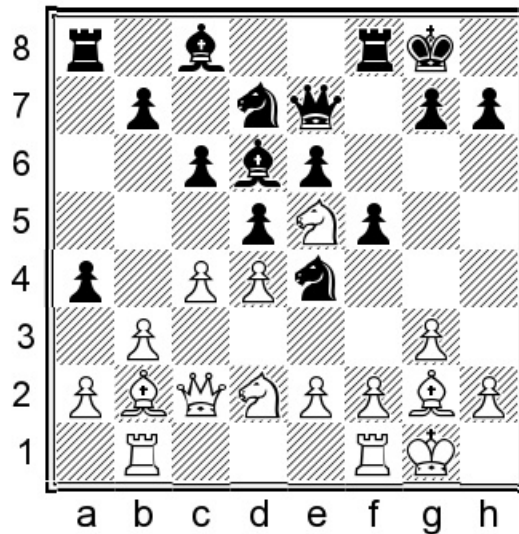
target it in some lines, e.g. 15.c5 [15.f3 exf3 16.exf3 c5=] 15...♔c7



Position after: 15...♔c7

16.e3 [16.f3 f4! 17.fxg3 f3 18.e5 g3h2+ 19.♔h1 ♖xf1+ 20.♖xf1 ♗f8 21.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 gives Black good counterplay.] 16...h5! 17.♔c3 h4 18.♖ab1 ♖a7 19.♖b2 ♕g5 20.♖fb1 ♔c8 Both sides have played logically and the position is objectively around equal.

B) 12.♖ab1 ♘e4

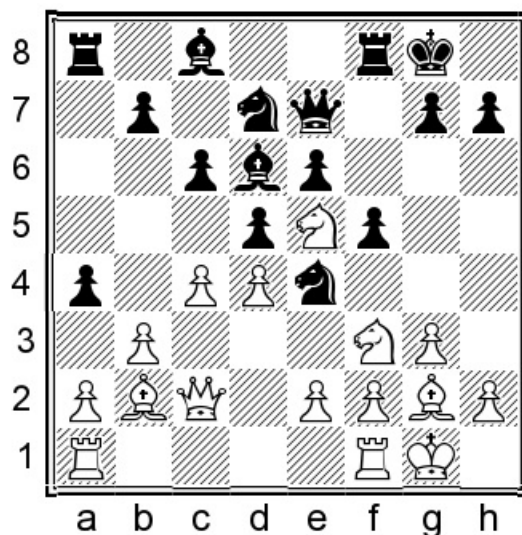


Position after: 12...♘e4

This is another way in which White can choose to ignore Black's early aggressive strategy. 13.♘d3!? [13.♘df3 This simply transposes to the note about 13.♖ab1.]

13...♞xd2 14.♚xd2 b6 15.♞fc1 ♘b7 16.♞c2 ♞f6 17.♚c1 axb3 18.axb3 1-0 (54)
 Sveshnikov, E (2490) – Shabalov, A (2375) Norilsk 1987. This is a playable position
 for both sides.

12...♞e4



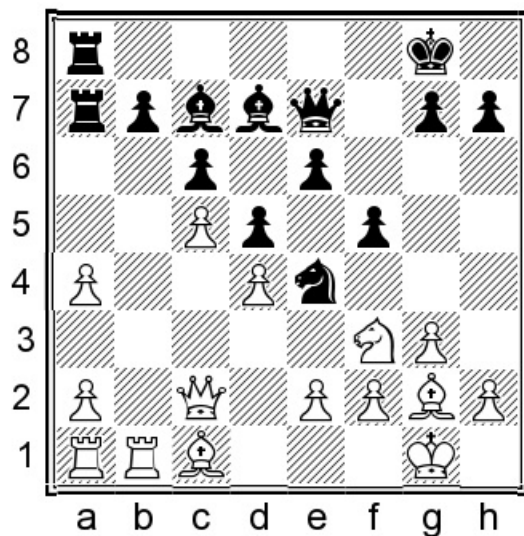
Position after: 12...♞e4

13.e3!?

Anand chooses a waiting move that is useful, especially against the ...f4 ideas Black definitely had in mind. However, now a future ...a3 can pose an awkward question to White's dark-squared bishop.

Obviously other moves are possible (below), but for our main line we will choose the game Anand-Carlsen so as to get a feeling for how two world champions handle the Stonewall.

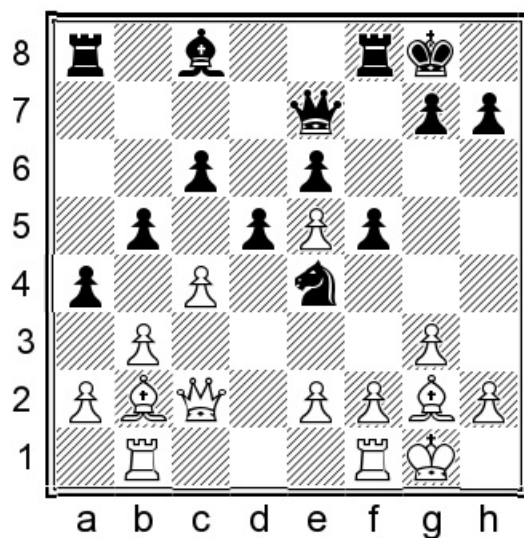
A) 13.♞xd7 ♘xd7 14.c5 ♘c7 15.bxa4 ♞a7 16.♞fb1 ♞fa8 17.♘c1



Position after: 17. ♖c1

17...e5 18.e3 exd4 19.exd4 ♖c8 Black is fine.

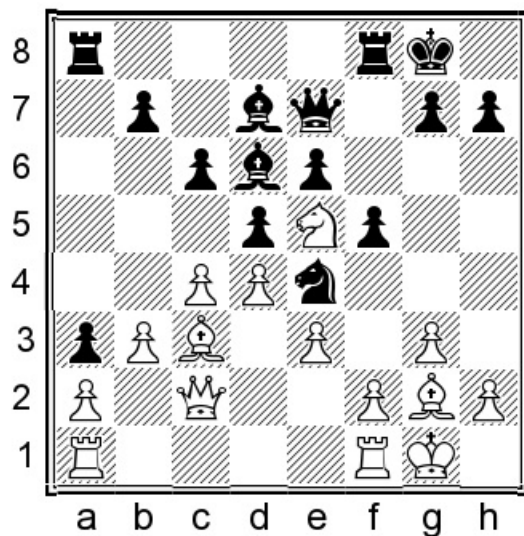
B) 13. ♖ab1!? ♗xe5 14. ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15.dxe5 b5!?



Position after: 15...b5!?

Black wants to activate his bishop: the idea is ...bxc4 and ...♖a6. 16. ♖xe4 fxe4 17.cxd5 cxd5 18. ♖d4 ♖d7 19. ♗d2 ♖fc8 20. ♗g2 ♖e8 21. ♖fc1 h6 was equal and soon drawn in Staniszewski, J – Kozłowski, W corr. 2014.

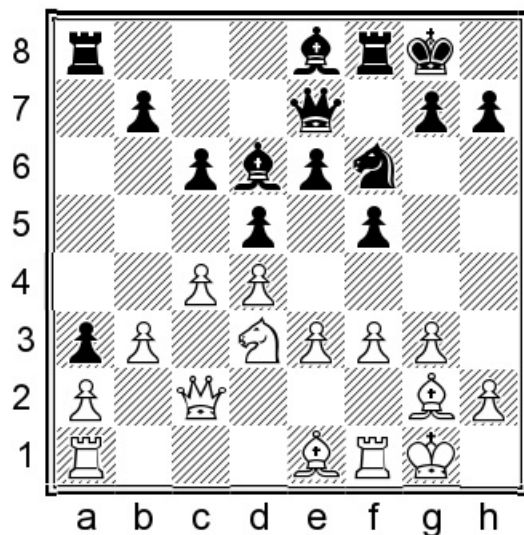
13...a3 14. ♖c3 ♗xe5 15. ♘xe5 ♖d7



Position after: 15... ♕d7

16. ♖xd7

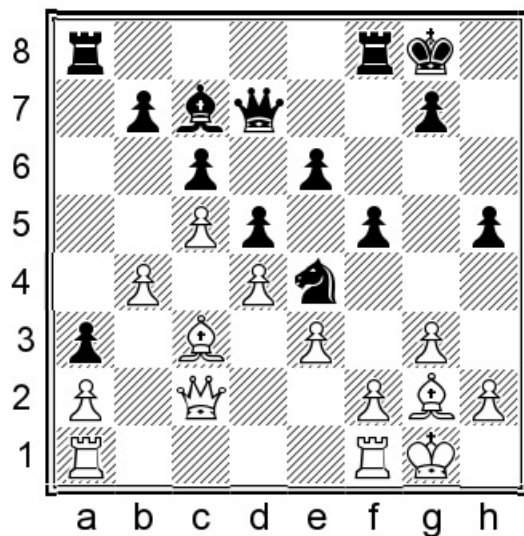
In the annotations to this game it was suggested by GM Roiz that White should have tried to keep the knight: 16. ♕e1 ♕e8 17. f3 ♖f6 18. ♖d3.



Position after: 18. ♖d3

Now probably Black should go with his usual Stonewall plan: 18...g5!? and after say 19.f4 ♖e4 20. ♖b1 b5 I don't think that he stands worse.

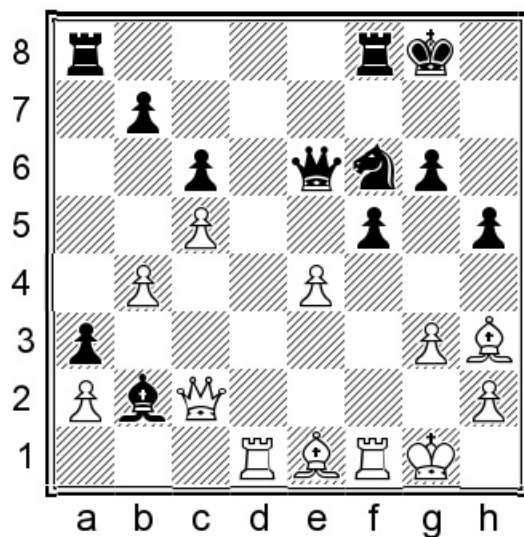
16... ♙xd7 17.c5 ♕c7 18.b4 h5!



Position after: 18...h5!

Black gains space on the kingside, prevents g4 and can begin thinking about playing ...h4 himself in the future.

19.♔e1 e5 20.dxe5 ♔xe5 21.♖d1 ♕e6 22.f3 ♞f6 23.♙h3 g6 24.e4 dxe4 25.fxe4 ♙b2!

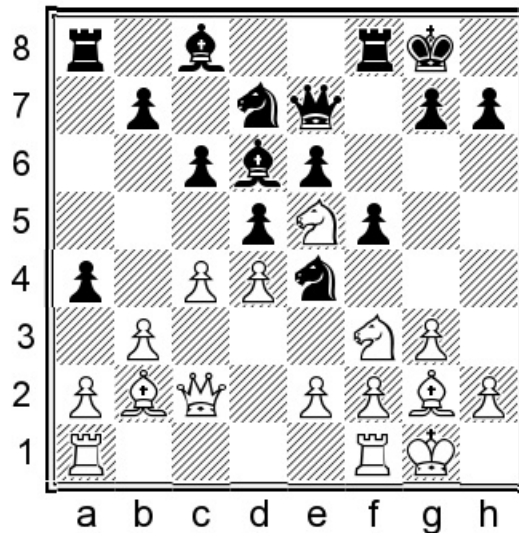


Position after: 25...♙b2!

This is quite surprising; we're not in a position where pawn-grabbing would normally be considered rewarding but the a2-pawn is a bit of an exception. Black was ultimately vindicated: 0-1 (36) Anand, V (2797) – Carlsen, M (2865) Baden-Baden 2015.

**h) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♚c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4 13.bxa4,
13.♘d3**

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7 8.♘e5 0-0 9.♘d2 a5
10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♚c2 a4 12.♘df3 ♘e4

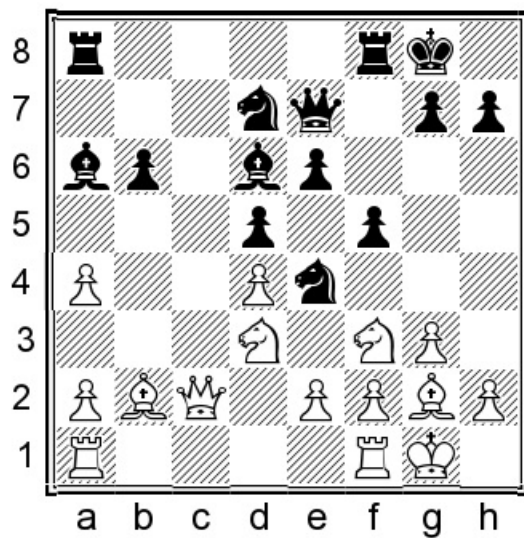


Position after: 12...♘e4

13.bxa4

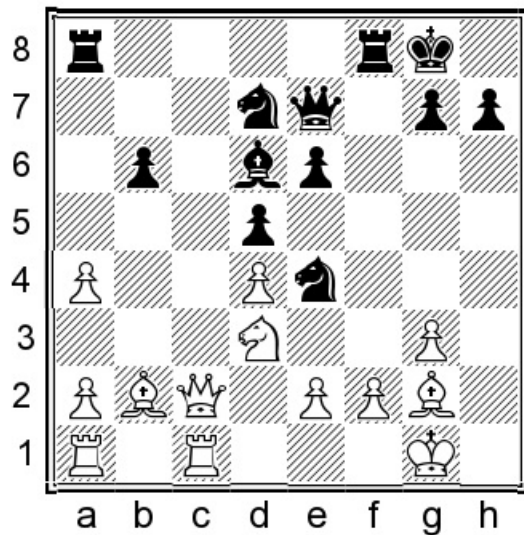
This is surely one of the critical continuations, taking a pawn (while leaving all the other units on the board.)

13.♘d3 We saw already that this is a typical manoeuvre at White's disposal. White generally doesn't want to trade pieces (on principle) and Black needs to prove his concept here too. A good reaction is 13...b6 which should be considered automatically when White relaxes vigilance on the c6-square. 14.cxd5 [14.♘fe5 c5 15.f3 a3! would be fine for Black, e.g. 16.♙c1 ♘ef6 17.e3 ♙a6 18.♚e1 ♚ac8! 19.♙xa3 cxd4 20.♙xd6 ♚xd6 21.exd4 dxc4 22.bxc4 b5=.] 14...cxd5 15.bxa4 ♙a6



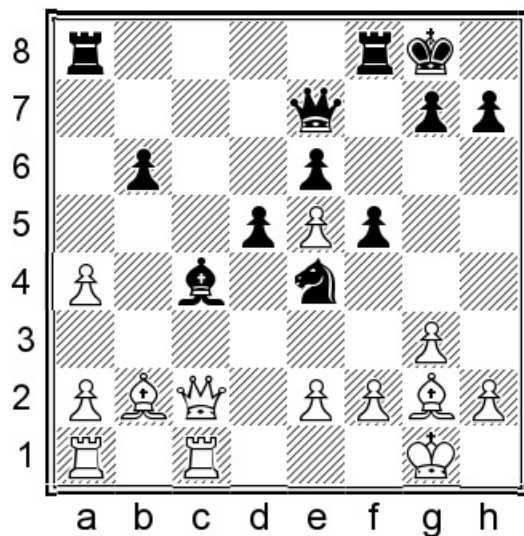
Position after: 15... ♕a6

A) 16. ♖fc1 ♘c4 [16...f4 17. ♗fe5 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♕xd3 19. ♗xd3



Position after: 19. ♗xd3

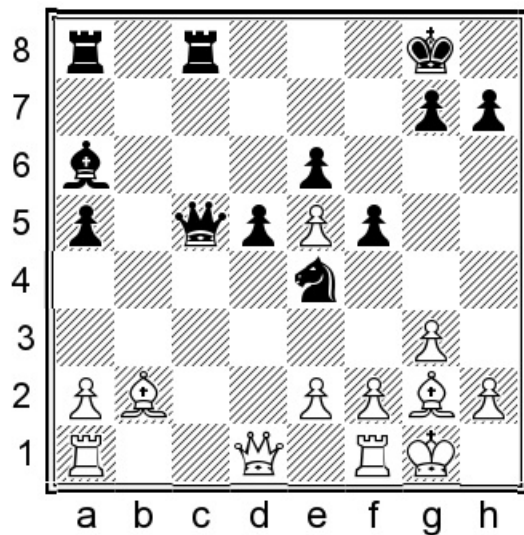
19... ♗xg3! 20.fxg3 ♔g5! Black is suddenly winning! 0-1 (35) Peschardt, S – Manduch, M corr. 2007] 17. ♗fe5 ♗xe5 18. ♗xe5 ♕xe5 19.dxe5



Position after: 19.dxe5

Now Black regains the pawn with 19...♖c5 20.♗d4 ♘xa4 21.♞ab1 b5 22.♚d2 ♜fc8 and stands well. ½-½ (44) Pogorelov, R (2448) – Moskalenko, V (2533) Salou 2005.

B) 16.♘fe5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♗c5 18.a5 ♜fc8 19.♚d1 bxa5 20.♘xc5 ♚xc5



Position after: 20...♚xc5

Black has very good position. 1-0 (74) Kiriakov, P (2571) – Moskalenko, V (2534) playchess.com 2005

13...♘xe5!?

With good reason I prefer this active try.

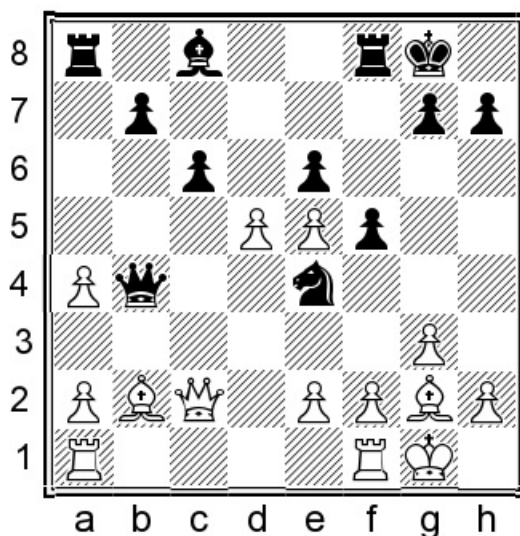
14. ♖xe5

14. dxe5 ♙a3 gives Black a good game.

14... ♙xe5 15. dxe5 ♚b4

Black is attacking some pawns and is threatening to recoup his material investment, perhaps with interest. White's initial reaction to solve the issue of the c-pawn is a no-brainer.

16. cxd5



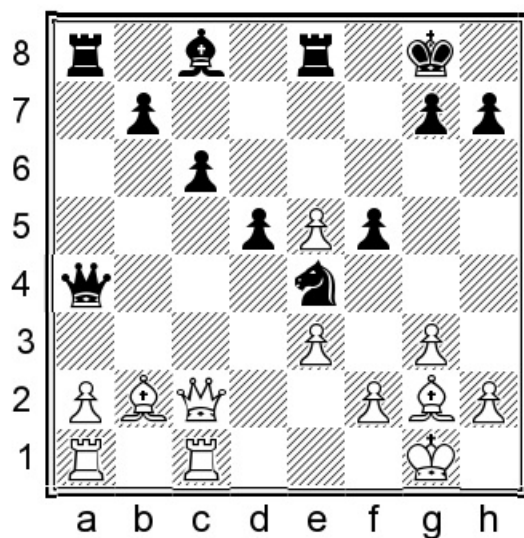
Position after: 16.cxd5

Now either recapture is possible:

16... cxd5

The main line because it's a bit more to the point. What we are going to see is a variety of examples in which Black simply obtains a good solid position. A common theme is (as quite often in the Stonewall) the g2-bishop being shown up as quite a bad piece.

16... exd5 Leaving a passer on e5 is possible but less solid: 17. e3 ♚xa4 18. ♖fc1 ♜e8



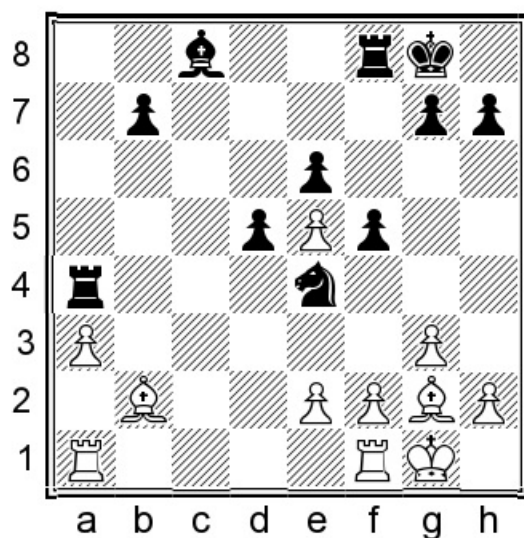
Position after: 18...Rxe8

Black wants to attack the e5-pawn with rook and knight (possibly from f7) thus forcing f4, which will in turn prevent White ever getting in e4. The position after 19.f3 Ng5 20.h4 Nf7 21.f4 Nd7 22.Qd3 Nh6 23.g4 b5 looks easier for White in practice, but that's all and the closed position allows Black to develop counterplay at his pace. ½-½ (40) Cottagnie, F – Manduch, I corr. 2008.

17. Qb3

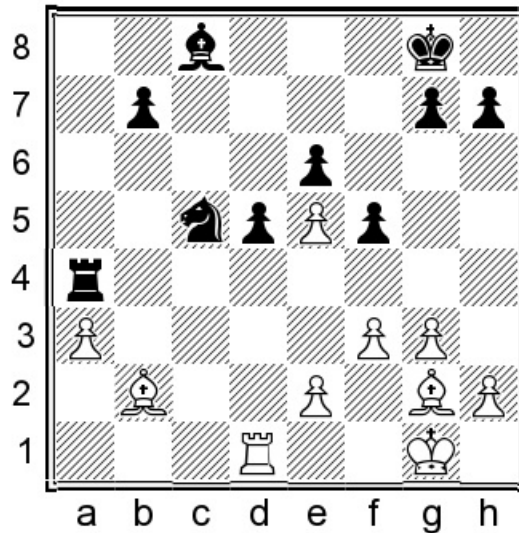
Alternatives are equally important:

A) 17.a3 Qxa4 18.Qxa4 Rxa4



Position after: 18... ♖xa4

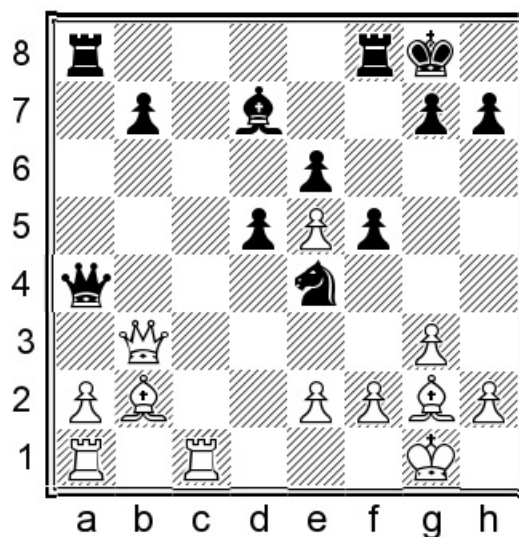
19. ♖fd1 [19. ♖fc1 ♕d7 20. ♖c2 ♖c4! gives Black fine play.] 19... ♕d7 20. ♖ac1 ♖c8
21. ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 22. f3 ♜c5



Position after: 22... ♜c5

23. ♕c3 [23. ♖d4 ½-½ Hanssen, F – Cvak, R corr. 2013. The position is level after a move like 23... ♕d7.] 23... ♖c4 24. ♕b4 ♜f7 25. ♕f1 ♖c2 26. ♖d2 ♖c1 27. ♜f2 b6 28. ♖a2 ♕a6 Black has obtained full equality.

B) 17. ♖fc1 ♕d7 18. ♗b3 ♖xa4

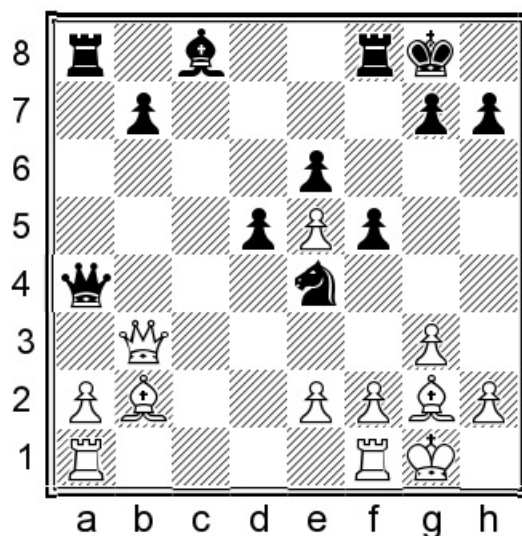


Position after: 18... ♖xa4

19. ♖e3 [After 19.f3 ♘d2 20. ♖xa4 ♜xa4 21. ♖c7 ♙c6 22. ♗f2 ♘c4 23. ♙d4 ♜e8 White additionally has to worry about being worse due to problems with the c7-rook.]

19... ♜b4 20. ♙d4 ♜a4 [20... ♜a3] 21. ♖d1 ♜a3 22. ♖db1 ♖xb1+ 23. ♖xb1 ♜xe3 24. ♙xe3 b5 Black is fine again.

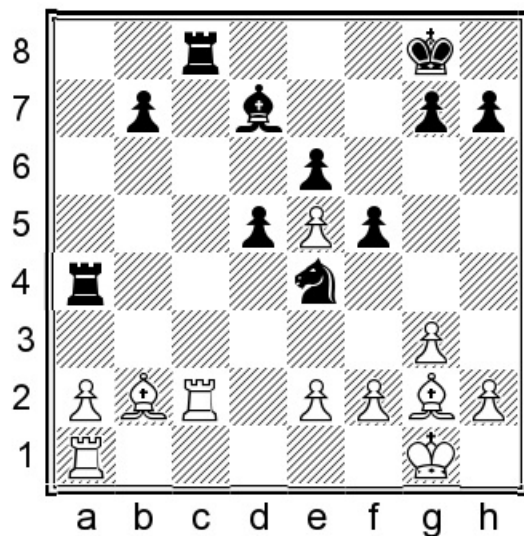
17... ♖xa4



Position after: 17... ♖xa4

18. ♖e3

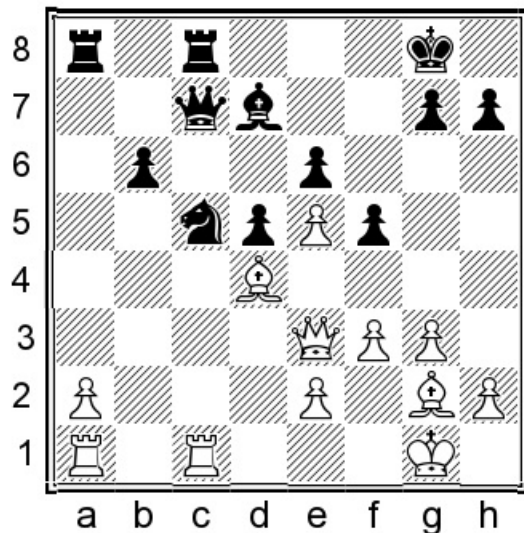
Since ♖fc1 would be met by ... ♙d7 transposing to the previous note, the main real alternative is to swap queens. Thus: 18. ♖xa4 ♜xa4 19. ♖fc1 ♙d7 20. ♖c2 ♜c8



Position after: 20...Rc8

Black is not just mindlessly trading pieces but might actually end up with pressure!
 21. Rxc8+ Qxc8 22. Rc1 Qd7 23. a3 Qc6 24. Rc2 Ra5 25. Qf1 Qf7 Black proceeded to win
 in Fourie, M – Kozlowski, W corr. 2012.

18...Qa5 19. Rfd1 Qd7 20. f3 Qc5 21. Qc3 Qc7 22. Qd4 Rfc8 23. Rdc1 b6

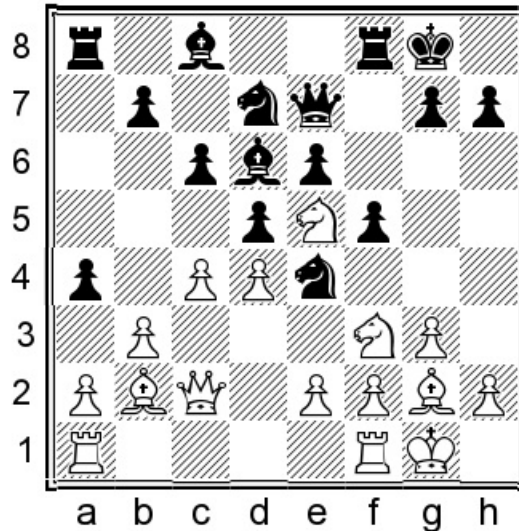


Position after: 23...b6

Black has created counterplay.

i) 9.♘d2 a5 10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♚c2 a4 12.♗df3 ♘e4 13.♞ac1,
13.♞ad1

1.d4 f5 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 ♗f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7 8.♗e5 0-0 9.♘d2 a5
10.♙b2 ♘bd7 11.♚c2 a4 12.♗df3 ♘e4

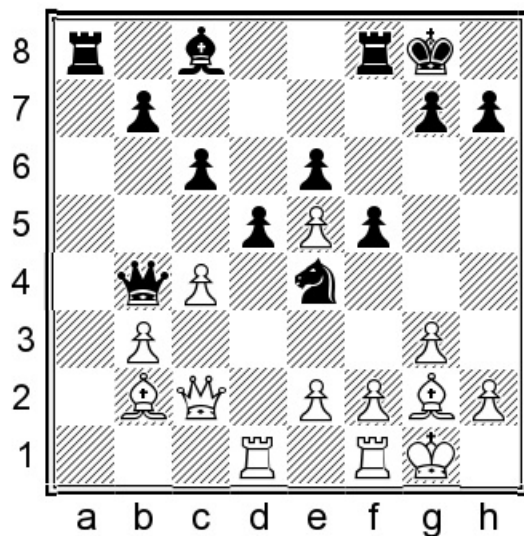


Position after: 12...♘e4

13.♞ac1

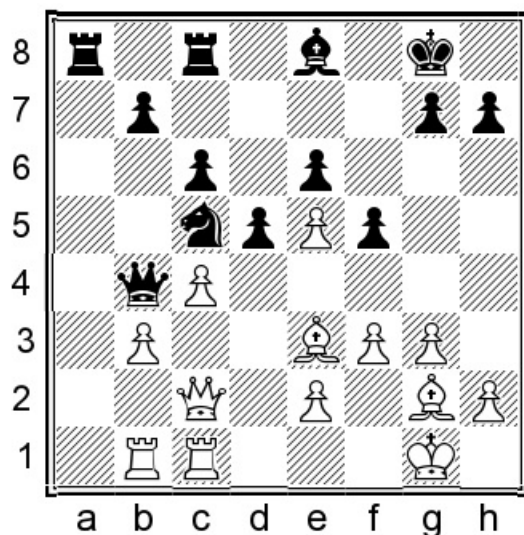
White can choose to move this rook in preparation for ...a3, and here it has the idea of controlling the c5-square. We saw earlier in this chapter (and elsewhere) how Black can often use the c5-square for his knight.

The other move 13.♞ad1 also makes sense as prophylaxis but does nothing for the c5-square. 13...♗xe5 14.♗xe5 axb3 15.axb3 ♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♚b4 Black simply occupies the squares that he fought for.



Position after: 16... ♖b4

17. ♔d4 [17. ♖a1 ♔d7 18. ♖fc1 ♖fd8 19. ♔xe4 fxe4 20. h3 ♔e8=.] 17... ♔d7 18. f3 [18. ♔e3 ♖fc8 19. f3 ♘c5 20. ♖b1 ♔e8 21. ♖fc1

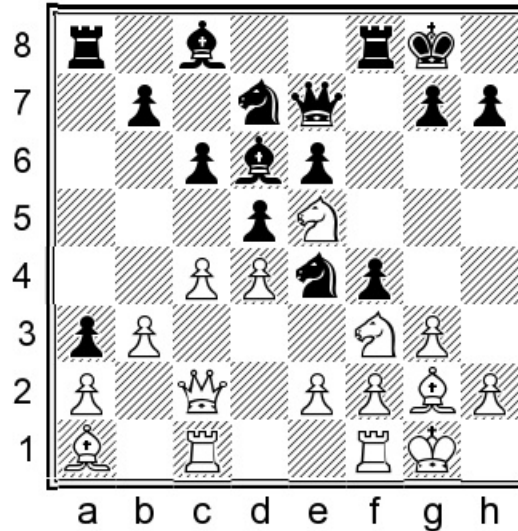


Position after: 21. ♖fc1

Now Black can make use of a typical secondary theme in the Stonewall. 21...f4!
 22. ♔xf4 ♔g6 23. e4 dxe4 24. fxe4 ♖d8 with good play for the sacrificed pawn.] 18... ♘c5
 19. ♖b1 [19. cxd5 ♘xb3 gives Black an edge.] 19... ♖a3 20. ♔c3 ♗b6 21. ♔h1 ♖fa8 Play is
 sharp; both sides have chances.

13...♞xe5

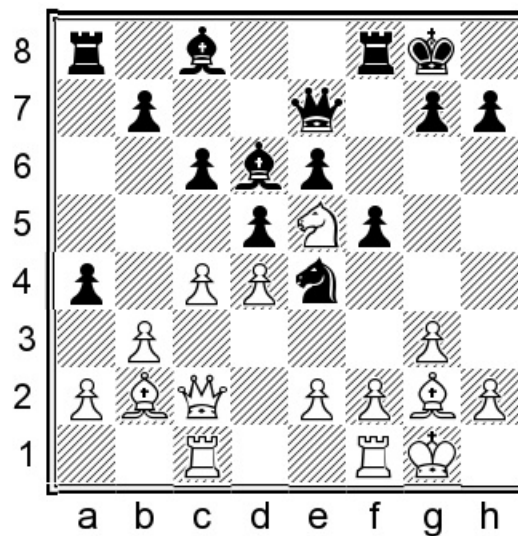
A more committal alternative is possible: 13...a3 14.♞a1 f4!?



Position after: 14...f4!?

Black can afford to break up his structure, given how passive the a1-bishop is. 15.e3 [15.♞d3 fxg3 16.hxg3 ♞df6 17.♞d2 ♞d7 18.♞e5 ♞xd2 19.♞xd2 ♞e8 is similar: the bishop comes to g6 next.] 15...fxe3 16.fxe3 ♞df6 17.♞d2 ♞xd2 18.♞xd2 ♞d7 19.♞c3 ♞e8 Black has solved his opening problems.

14.♞xe5

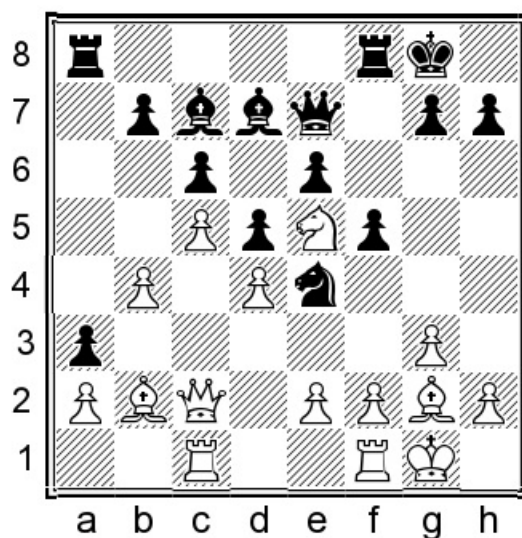


Position after: 14. ♖xe5

14... ♗d7

The point of White's 13th move is that after 14... ♗xe5 15.dxe5 it's not possible for Black's knight to jump into c5.

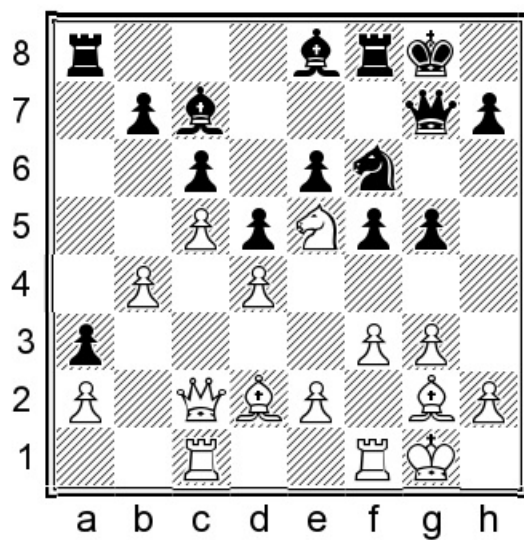
15.c5 ♗c7 16.b4 a3!?



Position after: 16... a3!?

In some lines taking early on b3 made sense for Black; however, that's no longer possible and so this is the logical follow-up of ...a5-a4. White's bishop will be passive on a1 and Black gains time for play on the other flank.

17. ♗a1 ♗e8 18.f3 ♖f6 19. ♗c3 g5 20. ♗d2 ♔g7



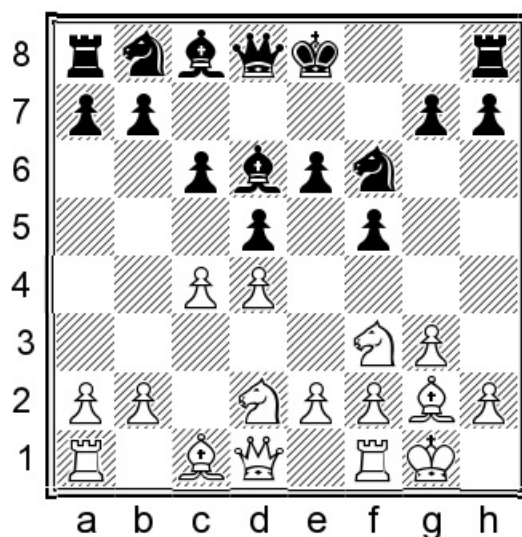
Position after: 20... ♔g7

With complex play, but we've reached the limit of the scope of an opening text.

Chapter 7

7.♘bd2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘bd2



Chapter Guide

Chapter 7 – 7.♘bd2

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘e5

a) 8...c5, 8...♘bd7

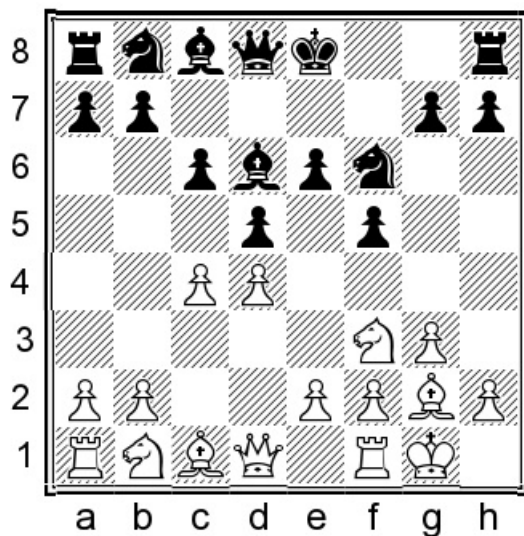
b) 8...b6 9.cxd5, 9.♘df3 ♙b7

c) 8...b6 9.♘df3 ♘e4

d) 7...♘bd7 alternative

a) 8...c5, 8...♘bd7

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



Position after: 6...c6

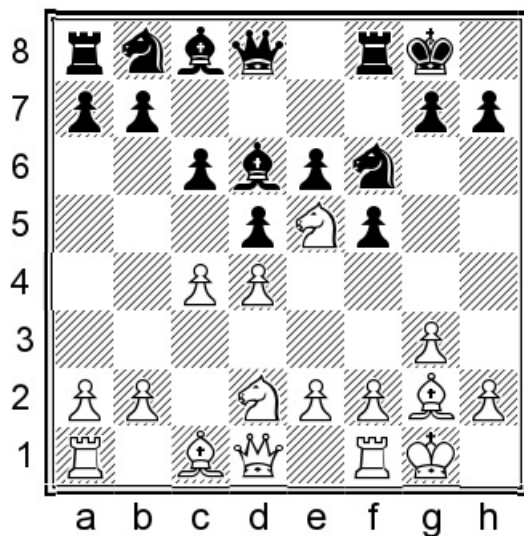
7.♘bd2

White's plan is rather simple and logical: ♗e5, ♗d2-f3, ♕f4, bring a rook to c1 and suddenly Black will face problems.

Trying to start with 7.♗e5 is not precise. After a plausible continuation such as 7...♗bd7 8.♕f4 ♕xe5 9.dxe5 ♗g4 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♖d4 ♖e7 12.f3 ♗gxe5 13.e4 dxe4 14.fxe4 g5 15.♕d2 f4 16.gxf4 gxf4 17.♖xf4 ♖g8 (in which White made no more obvious mistakes) Black simply stands better.

7...0-0 8.♗e5

This is another important set up that White can chose.



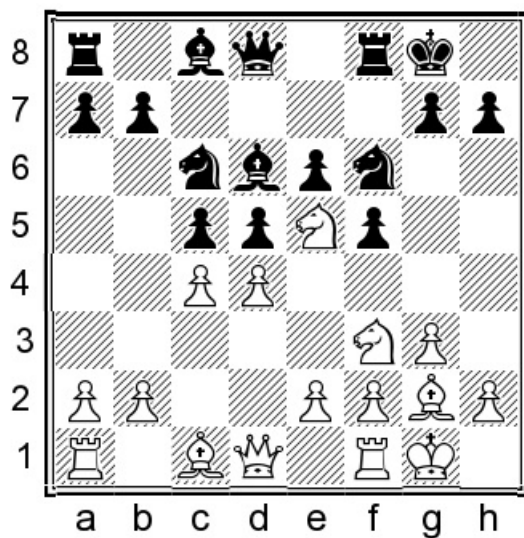
Position after: 8. Nxe5

As we can see White is ready to execute the mentioned plan of knight to f3 and bishop to f4, perhaps followed later by Nxe5-d3, setting up a trade of dark-squared bishops and cementing his central control.

8... Nbd7!?

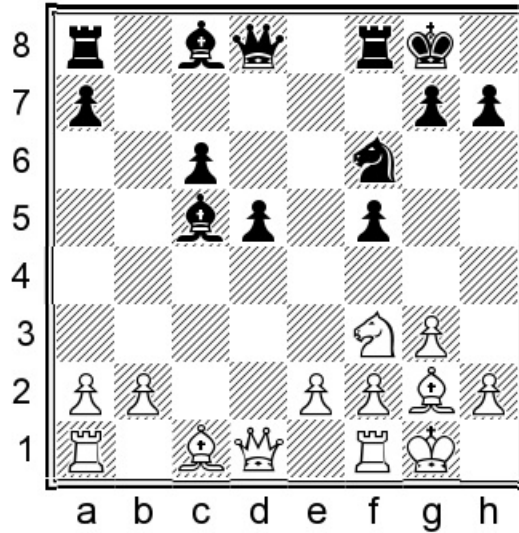
The main move 8... b6 will be covered in the next few subchapters.

Black has another option available in 8... c5!? 9. Ndf3 Nc6:



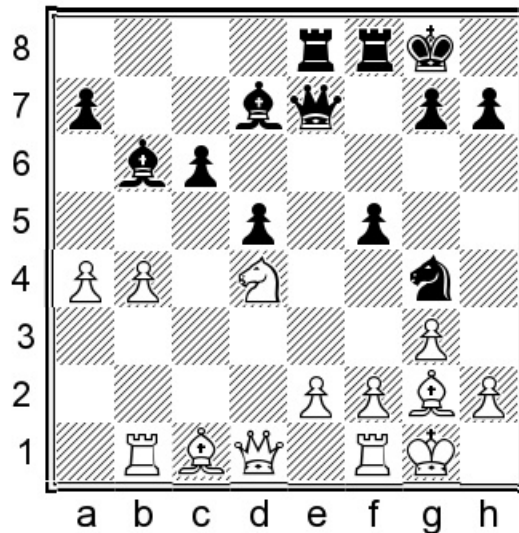
Position after: 9... Nc6

This is an unusual crossover between the Dutch and the Tarrasch. All the usual Tarrasch structures can arise but with Black's f-pawn already at f5. 10.cxd5 [10.♙f4 cxd4 11.♖c1 ♘e4 12.cxd5 ♘xe5 13.♙xe5 ♙xe5 14.♘e5 ♚xd5 15.f4 ♙d7 16.♖c4 ♙b5 17.♗xd4 ♚c5 18.♗e1 ♗fd8 19.e3 ♗xd4 20.exd4 ♚d5 is fine for Black.] 10...exd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.dxc5 ♙xc5



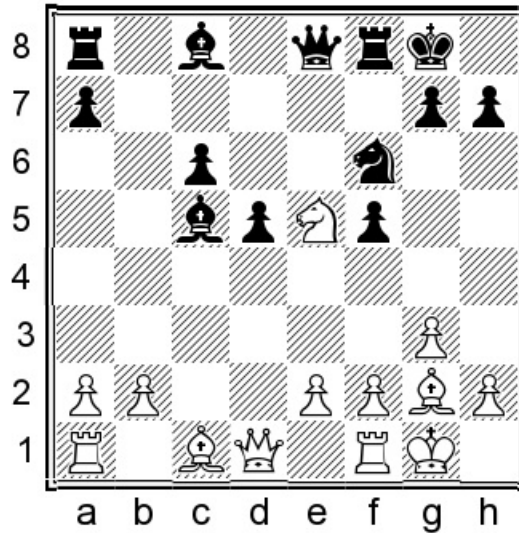
Position after: 12...♙xc5

Let's investigate some possible continuations from this strange position. 13.♘e5 [13.♘d4 ♙d7 14.♙e3 ♙b6 15.b4 ♚e7 16.♗b1 ♗ae8 17.a4 ♘g4 18.♙c1



Position after: 18.♙c1

18...f4! 19.gxf4 g5 20.c1 Rxf2 21.Rxf2 Nxf2 22.Qxf2 Wf6+ and Black has the initiative; 13.f4 Ne4 14.Nd4 Wf6 15.e3 b6 16.a4 d7 17.a5 c7 Black intends ...f4 next and White is in some danger.] 13...W e8!



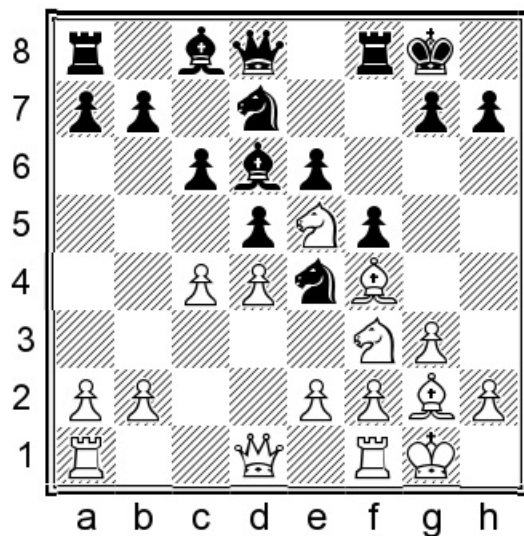
Position after: 13...W e8!

Now after 14.W c2 [or 14.Nd3 b6 15.b3 a6 16.a3 Rf7 17.Rc1 Ne4 with active play] 14...fxf2+ 15.Rxf2 Wxe5 16.Wxc6 d7 Black is OK.

9.Ndf3

9.Nd3 b6 transposes to the next file.

9...Ne4 10.f4

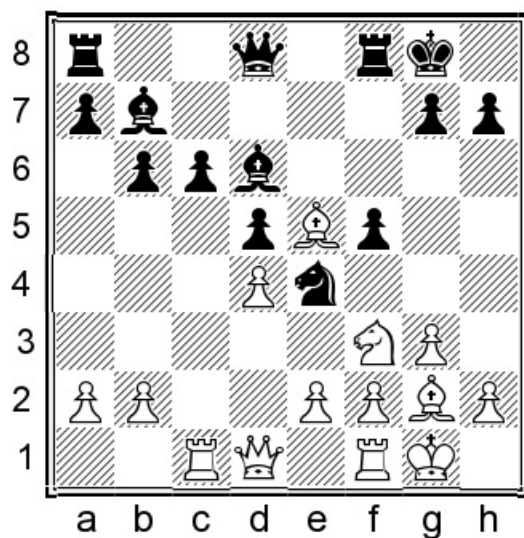


Position after: 10. ♖f4

This is White's main concept. After 10. b3 ♜e7 11. ♙b2 a5 we would transpose to a previous chapter.

10... ♞xe5 11. ♞xe5

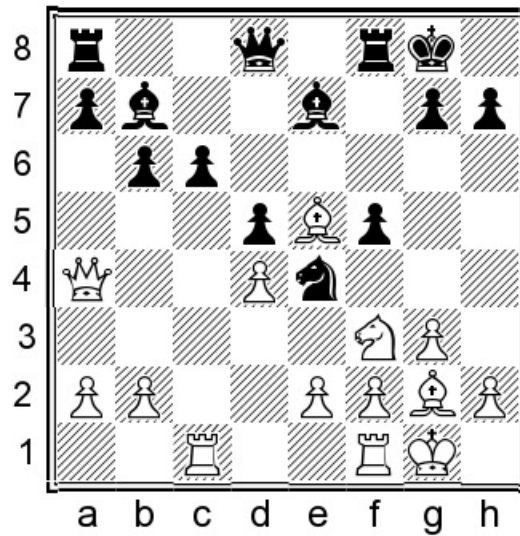
Taking the other way is also possible and seems solid for White: 11. ♙xe5 b6 12. cxd5 exd5 13. ♖c1 ♙b7



Position after: 13... ♙b7

14. ♜a4 [14. ♙xd6 ♜xd6 15. e3 c5 16. ♜a4 ♞ac8 17. ♞e5 ♞c7 18. ♜a3 ♞fc8 with equal

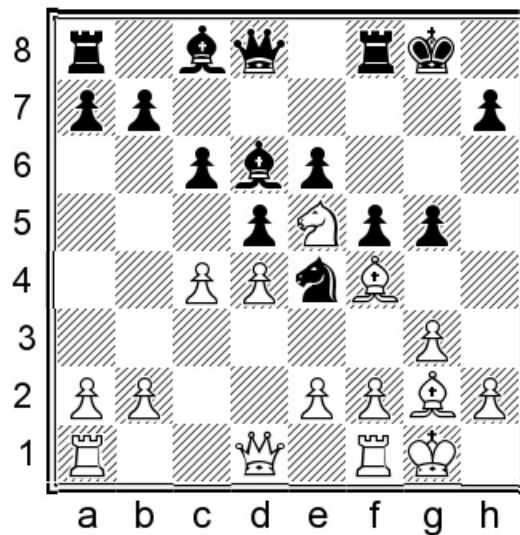
chances.] 14...♔e7!



Position after: 14...♔e7!

This is a relatively sophisticated move: there's no reason to allow White even better versions of the trade of dark-squared bishops (say with ...♖e7) especially when there's an option of continuing actively, e.g. 15.♖fd1 ♖e8, followed by ...g5 with good counterplay.

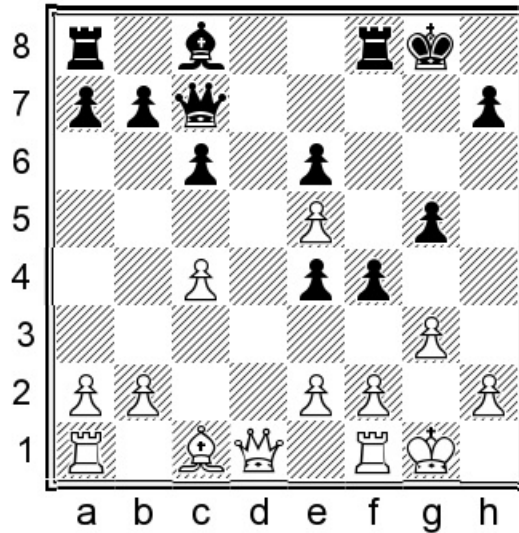
11...g5



Position after: 11...g5

12.♙c1

The alternative is possible but probably doesn't give White an advantage either. 12.♙e3 f4 13.♙c1 ♙xe5 14.dxe5 ♖c7 15.♙xe4 dxe4

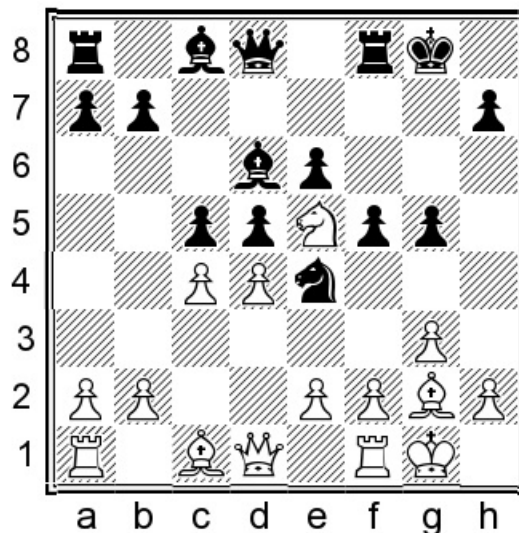


Position after: 15...dxe4

16.gxf4 [16.♖d4 c5 17.♖xe4 ♙d7 Black has compensation as suddenly it is he who has a better bishop.] 16...gxf4 17.♙h1 ♖xe5 18.♗g1+ ♔f7 19.♗g4 e3 This is OK for Black.

12...c5!

Black undermines the e5-knight with everything he's got.



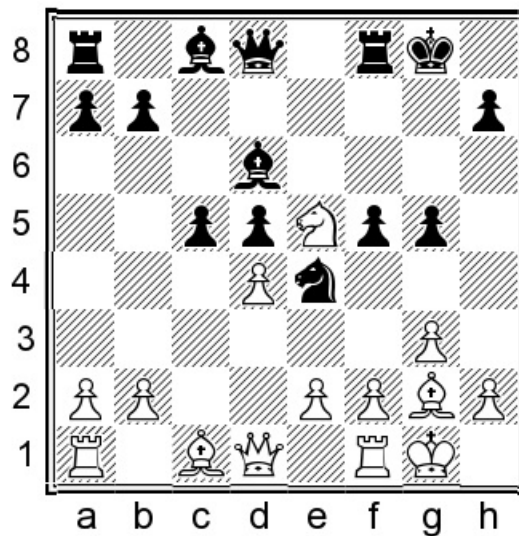
Position after: 12...c5!

There are basically two reactions now.

13.cxd5

13.f3 cxd4 14.fxe4 ♘xe5 15.exd5 f4 16.♖b3 exd5 17.♙xd5+ ♔h8 18.♙d2 ♙g4 19.♞ae1 ♞f6 Black's position is not worse. ½-½ (34) O'Hare, C – Manduch, M corr. 2009

13...exd5

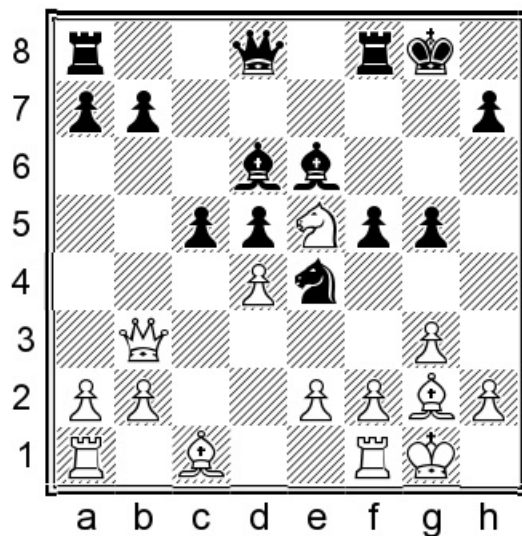


Position after: 13...exd5

14.♖b3

14.f3 cxd4 15.♘d3 [15.fxe4 ♘xe5 16.exd5 f4 17.gxf4 gxf4 18.♔h1 ♙g4 is totally fine for Black.] 15...♘c5 16.f4 g4 17.♘xc5 ♘xc5 18.b4 ♙b6 19.♙b2 ♞e8 20.♙xd4 ♞d6 21.e3 ♞xe3 22.♙xe3 ♙xe3+ 23.♔h1 d4 Black has good play for the sacrificed material.

14...♙e6



Position after: 14...♙e6

15.f3

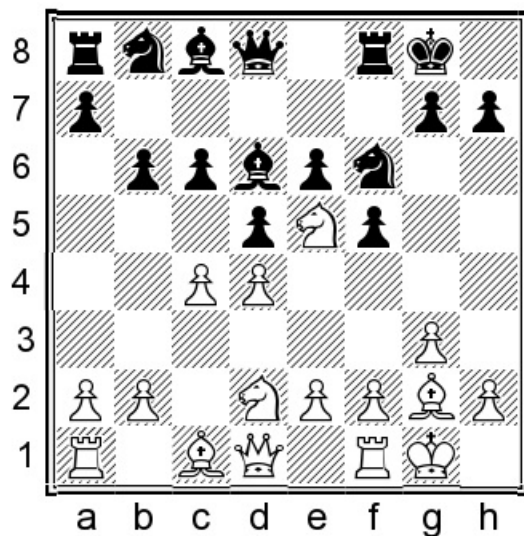
The text is most critical and forces Black to see a long line. 15.♙xb7 cxd4 16.♘f3 ♖f6 is also fine for Black.

15...c4 16.♙xb7 ♘c5 17.dxc5 ♙xe5 18.f4 ♙d4+ 19.♔h1 g4 20.♞d1 ♖f6 21.♙xd5 ♞ad8 22.♞xd4 ♙xd5+ 23.♞xd5 ♞f7

The position fizzles out to a draw. ½-½ Aguiar Garcia, J – Evtushenko, S corr. 2012

b) 8...b6 9.cxd5, 9.♘df3 ♙b7

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 d5 5.0-0 ♙d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘e5 b6



Position after: 8...b6

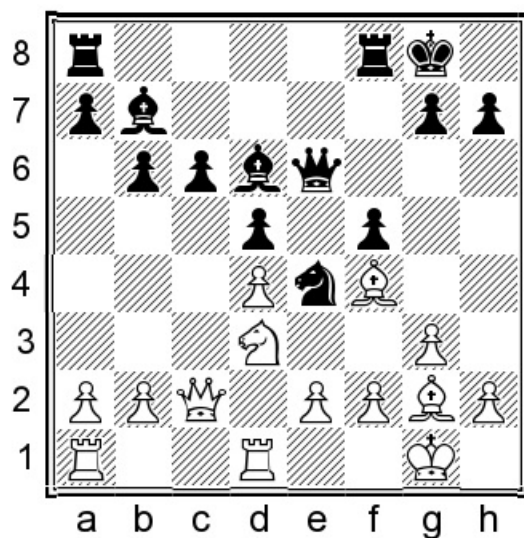
The most natural move, but not the only one. A good reaction from White here will make the position quite difficult to handle and the options covered in the previous subchapter are reliable.

9. ♘df3

If White chooses to go for the b3, ♕b2, ♖c1 plan then the game will transpose to a line we already saw and in which Black plays ...♕b7, ...♗e7, ...a5 and ...♞a6.

9.cxd5!?

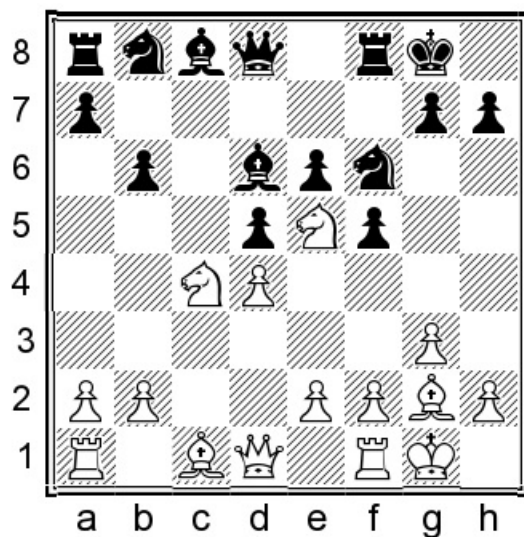
A) 9...exd5 10. ♖c2 ♗e8 11. ♘df3 ♞e4 12. ♕f4 ♕b7 13. ♖fd1 ♞d7 14. ♘xd7 ♗xd7
15. ♘e5 ♗e6 16. ♘d3



Position after: 16. d3

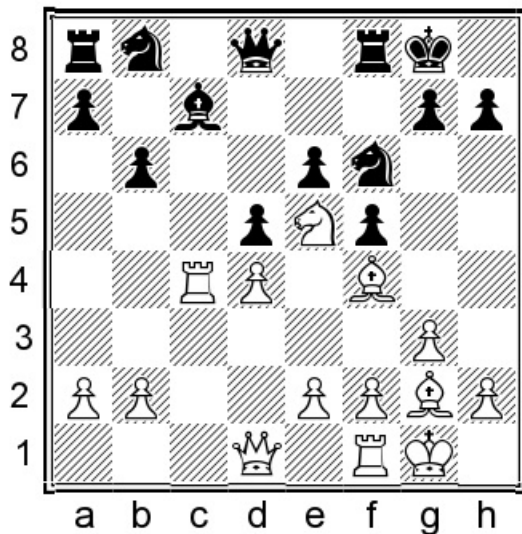
16...e7! As in the 11.e5 note in the previous subchapter, Black is under no obligation to trade bishops. [16...xf4 17.xf4 e7 18.e3 f6 19.ac1 a6 20.f3 g5 This is all fine for Black, but a bit lacking in immediate activity: 21.e1 e8 22.d2 d6 23.c3 e6 24.xe6 xe6 25.f4 h8 26.h4 b7= and after some more manoeuvring a draw was agreed. ½-½ (46) Nikolic, P (2671) – Tregubov, P (2628) Amsterdam 2004.]

B) 9...cxd5!? 10. d4



Position after: 10. d4

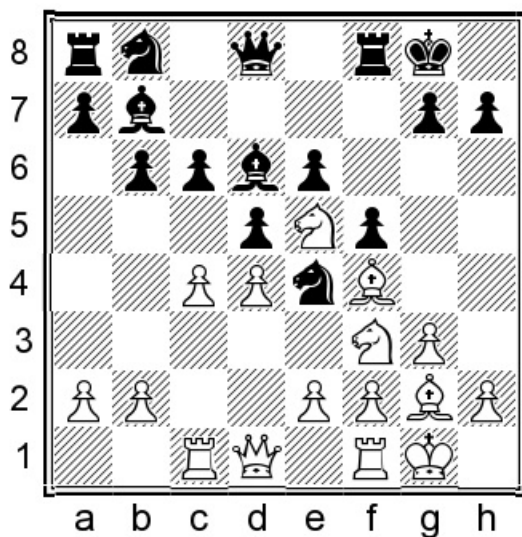
Without b3 and ...♖e7 inserted, this move is relatively harmless. Black can keep the dark-squared bishop alive and trade its colleague. 10...♙c7 11.♙f4 ♙a6 12.♖c1 ♙xc4! 13.♖xc4!?



Position after: 13. ♖xc4!?

[13. ♗xc4 ♙xf4 14.gxf4 ♗bd7 15.♗e5 ♗e4 Black is fine.] 13...dxc4! 14.♙xa8 ♗d5 15.♖a4 [15.♗xc4 ♙xf4 16.gxf4 ♗xf4 Black is OK here as well.] 15...♗xf4 16.gxf4 ♖xd4 17.e3 ♖c5 18.♖xc4 ♖xc4 19.♗xc4 ♖d8 We've reached an equal endgame.

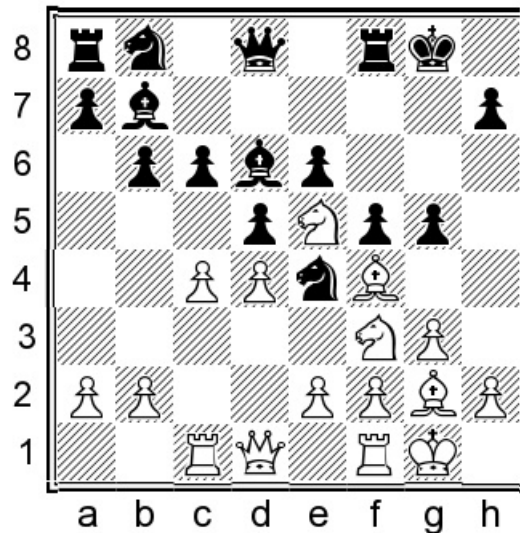
9...♙b7 10.♙f4 ♗e4 11.♖c1



Position after: 11.♖c1

This move unleashes the usual x-ray pressure along the c-file and completes development in harmonious fashion.

11...g5!?N



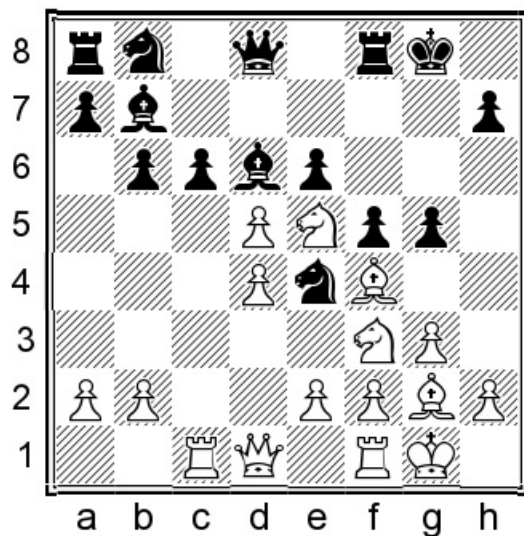
Position after: 11...g5!?N

It's of the utmost importance that Black reacts quickly and starts his active plan.

12.♙d2

A) 12.♙e3 f4 13.♙d2 ♘d7 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♘d3 ♚e7 16.♙e1 ♚g7 17.♙b4 ♙xb4 18.♘xb4 g4 19.♘h4 ♜ac8= Black has enough counterplay here.

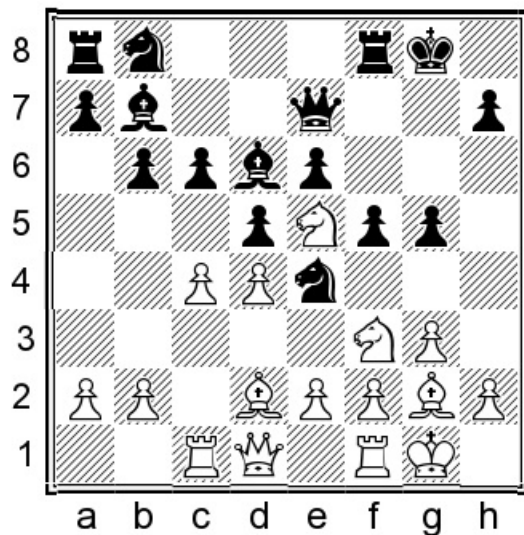
B) 12.cxd5!?



Position after: 12.cxd5!?

12...cxd5 [12...gxf4 13.dxc6 ♔c8 14.gxf4 I'd prefer not to have this position as Black, as White has full compensation for the sacrificed piece and his position is easier to play.] 13.♔d2 ♚e7 14.h4 g4 15.♞e1 ♞xd2 16.♚xd2 ♞d7 17.♞1d3 ♜ac8 White has found some very good posts for his pieces, but the issues relating to the g2-bishop still remain, and that factor helps Black to keep the play balanced.

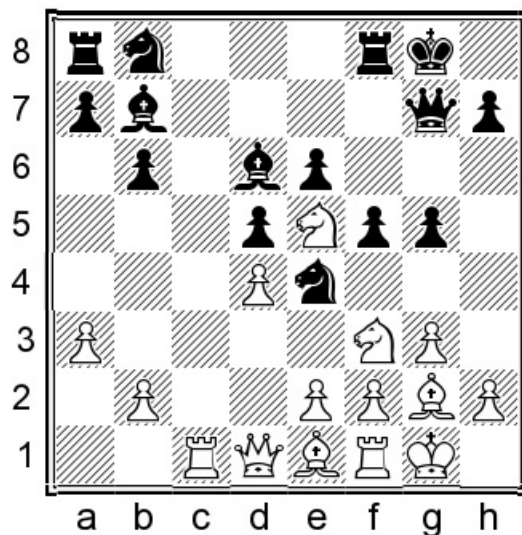
12...♚e7



Position after: 12...♚e7

13.a3

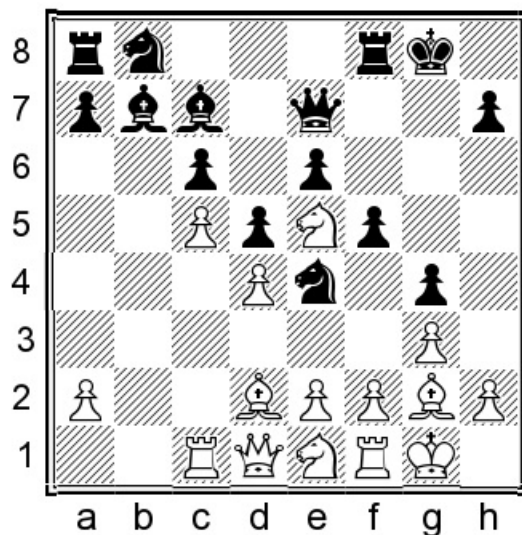
A) 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♙e1 ♚g7 15.a3



Position after: 15.a3

15...♖d8!? [15...♘d7 16.♙b4! is better for White; likewise 15...g4 16.♘h4 ♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♘c6 18.f3 ♘g5 19.f4 ♘h3+ 20.♙xh3 gxh3 21.b4 ♖fc8 22.b5 ♘d8 23.♙b4.]
 16.♙b4 ♙c7 17.♚c2 ♘a6 18.♙e1 g4 19.♘h4 ♖ac8 Black has counterplay.

B) 13.b4 g4 14.c5 bxc5 15.bxc5 ♙c7 16.♘e1

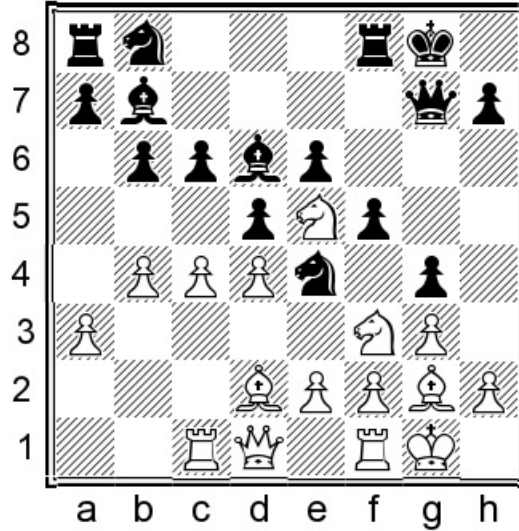


Position after: 16.♘e1

16...♙xe5! 17.dxe5 ♖xd2! 18.♚xd2 ♗d7 19.♗d3 a5 20.h4 ♘a6 Black has counterplay.

13...♚g7 14.cxd5!

Less accurate is 14.b4 g4



Position after: 14...g4

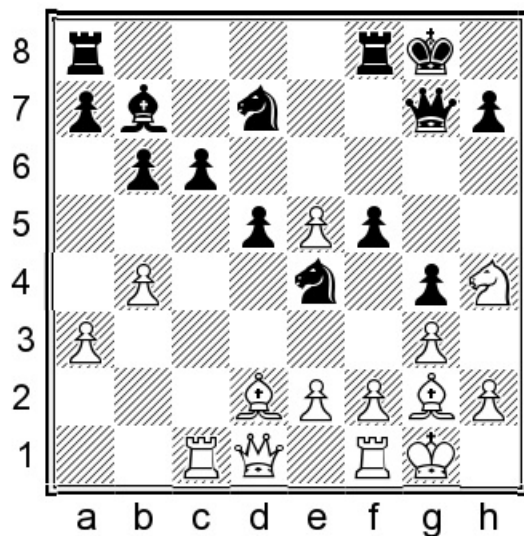
15.♗e1 [15.♗h4 ♖xd2 16.♚xd2 ♗d7 17.♗xd7 ♚xd7 18.f3 ♚g7! 19.fxg4 ♚xg4 and Black is fine] 15...♙xe5 16.dxe5 ♗d7 17.cxd5 exd5 18.e6 ♗e5 19.♗d3 ♗g6 20.♗f4 ♚e5 21.♙e3 ♗xf4 22.♙xf4 ♚xe6 with ongoing complications.

14...exd5

14...cxd5 15.♙b4 ♙xb4 16.axb4 ♗a6 17.♚a4 ♚e7 18.♗d3 ♗c7 19.h4 also leads to a White advantage.

15.b4 ♗h8!?

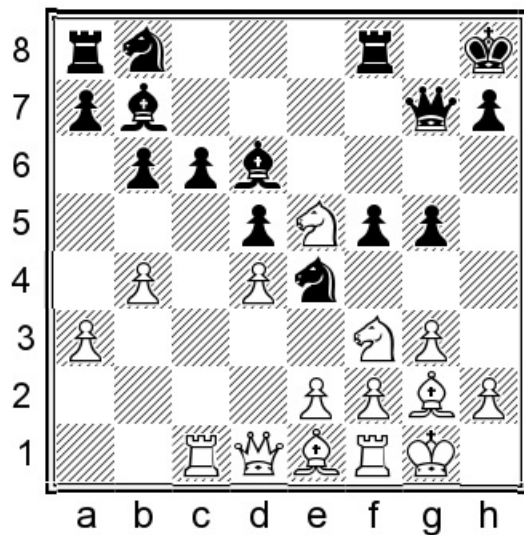
15...g4 16.♗h4 ♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♗d7



Position after: 17... Nxd7

18.f4 gxf3 19.Rxf3 Qxe5 20.Qe3 gives White more than adequate compensation.

16.Qe1



Position after: 16.Qe1

In my opinion this position is very advantageous for White: the pressure on c6 is unpleasant and at the same time Black has no real recourse against the powerful e5-knight.

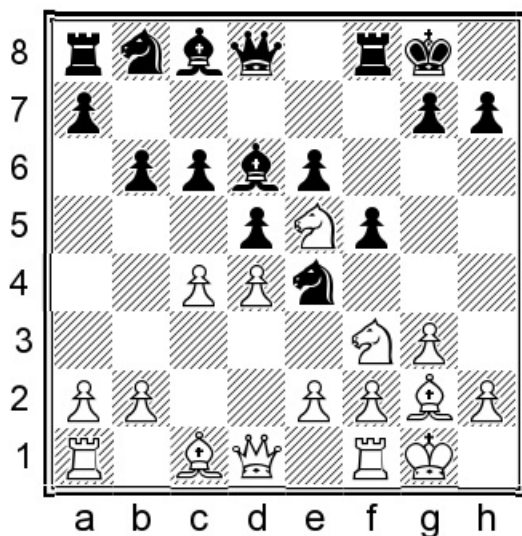
16...♖c8

Black is in trouble: after 16...g4 17.♗h4 ♕xe5 18.dxe5 ♖d7 19.e6 ♗e5 20.f3 White's also almost won already.

17.♗d3 ♖d7 18.♗fe5±

c) 8...b6 9.♗df3 ♗e4

1.d4 f5 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 ♗f6 4.♕g2 d5 5.0-0 ♕d6 6.c4 c6 7.♗bd2 0-0 8.♗e5 b6 9.♗df3 ♗e4!?

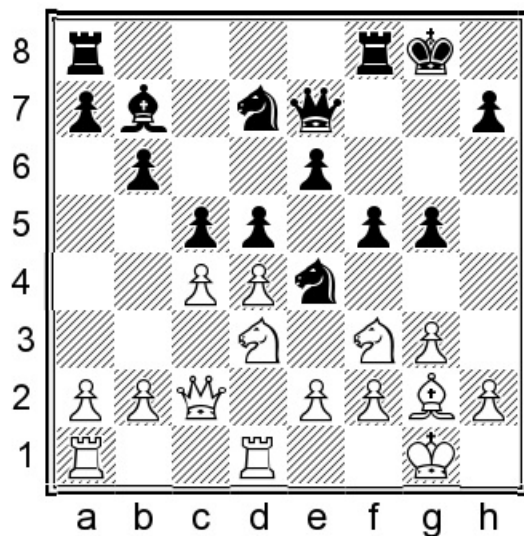


Position after: 9...♗e4!?

Given the horrors we just saw it is sensible to seek a more flexible move. This move fits the bill as it is far from clear right now whether the c8-bishop will do better work on b7 or a6. Or perhaps, Black might prefer to play for ...g5 before doing either.

10.h4!?

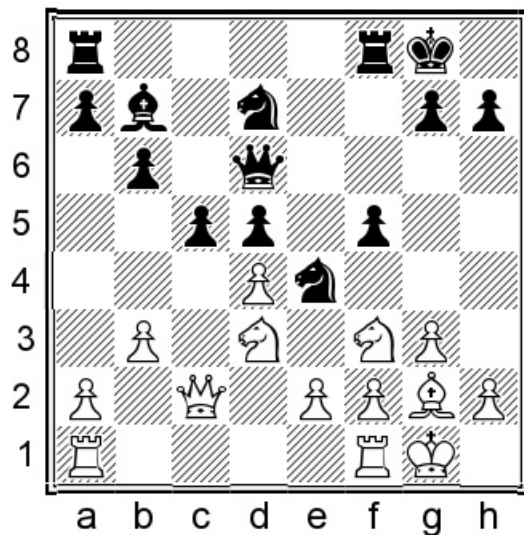
A) 10.♕f4 g5!? 11.♕e3 f4 12.♕d2 a5 13.♖c1 ♖a7!!



Position after: 15...c5!?

This freeing break is played under quite pleasant circumstances here. In general it is more auspicious if White's queen is on c2 instead of, say, on d1 (especially if he has a rook on the c-file instead.) Now an old game continued 16.♘de5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 cxd4 18.cxd5 ♙xd5 19.♞ac1 ♚b7 20.♞c7 ♞fc8 21.♞xb7 ♙xb7 22.f3 ♘f6 23.♕f2 ♞c5 24.♞xc5 bxc5+ and Black was well on the way to winning. A good game to illustrate his ideas in this line. Razuvaev, Y (2580) – Pavasovic, D (2425) Maribor 1996.]

B1) 11.b3 ♙b7 12.♘d3 ♘d7 13.♙f4 c5 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♙xd6 ♞xd6

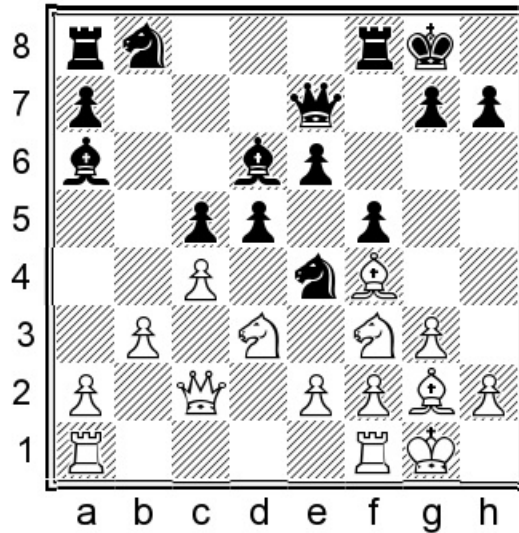


Position after: 15...♞xd6

16.dxc5 bxc5 17.e3 ♖ac8 18.♟fd1 ♜f6 19.♟ac1 ♟fd8 Black has nice central play. 0-1 (37) Tosic, M (2421) – Gleizerov, E (2553) Paracin 2013

B2) 11.♘d3 ♙a6!? 12.♘fe5 ♞c8 13.♙e3 c5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♟ad1 ♜c7 16.f3 ♘f6 17.f4 ♙b7 18.b3 ♘a6 19.♞c1 d4½-½ (66) Suba, M (2507) – Gleizerov, E (2549) Bucharest 2008.

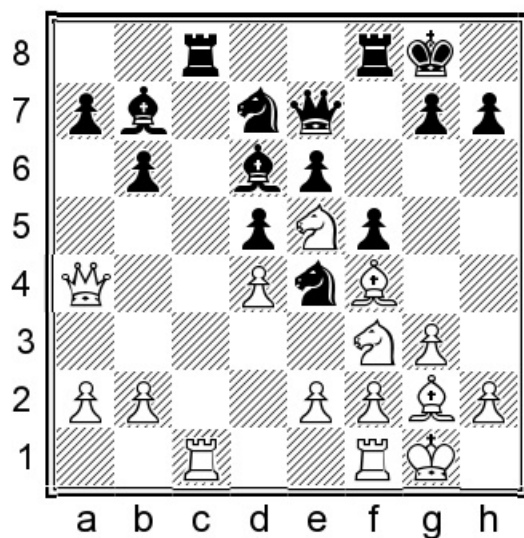
B3) 11.♙f4 ♙a6!? 12.b3 c5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.♘d3



Position after: 14.♘d3

14...♘c6! 15.♙xd6 ♜xd6 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♟fc1 ♖ac8 18.♜d1 ♟fd8 19.♘d2 ♘d4 20.e3 ♘e6 Another nicely played opening. ½-½ (34) Temirbayev, S (2484) – Gleizerov, E (2552) Khanty-Mansiysk 2007

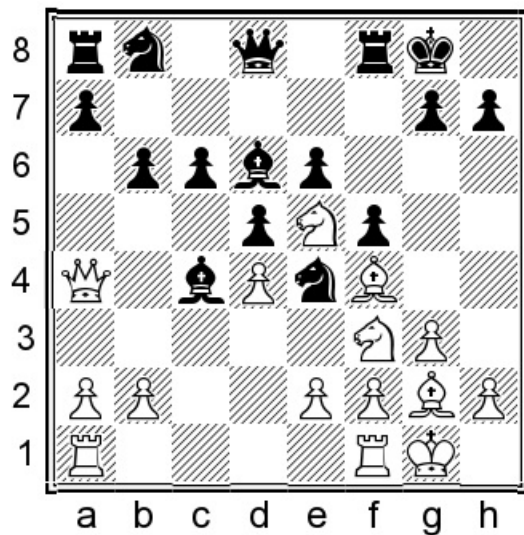
B4) 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♙e3 ♙b7 13.♟ac1 ♘d7 14.♙f4 ♖ac8 15.♜a4



Position after: 15. ♖a4

15... ♘xe5 16. ♙xe5 ♜xc1 17. ♜xc1 ♜c8 18. ♜xc8+ ♙xc8 19. e3 ♚d7! Black is fine. ½-½
 (23) Vladimirov, Y (2628) – Gleizerov, E (2539) Abu Dhabi 2004

C) 10. ♚a4 ♙a6 11. cxd5 [After 11. ♙f4 Black has the trick 11... ♙xc4!

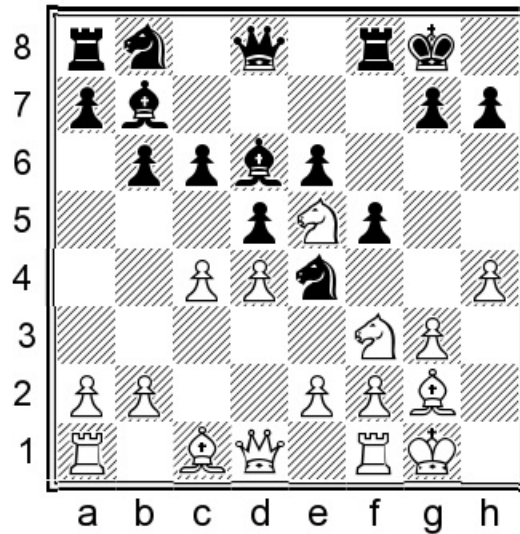


Position after: 11... ♙xc4!

which gives an advantage: 12. ♘xc4 b5̄.] 11... exd5!? 12. ♜e1 ♚e7 13. a3 c5 14. ♙f4 c4
 15. h4 ♙b7 16. ♚c2 ♘a6 17. b3 b5∞ Black got the desired counterplay. 0-1 (59)
 Solomon, K (2429) – Ulybin, M (2519) Ortisei 2012

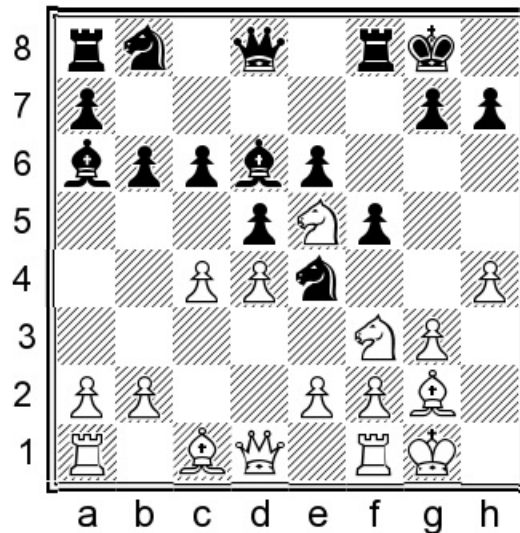
10...♙a6!?

After the text, if White plays h4 instead of strictly developing his pieces as fast as possible, Black can organise play quickly. Another option is the more modest approach 10...♙b7:



Position after: 10...♙b7

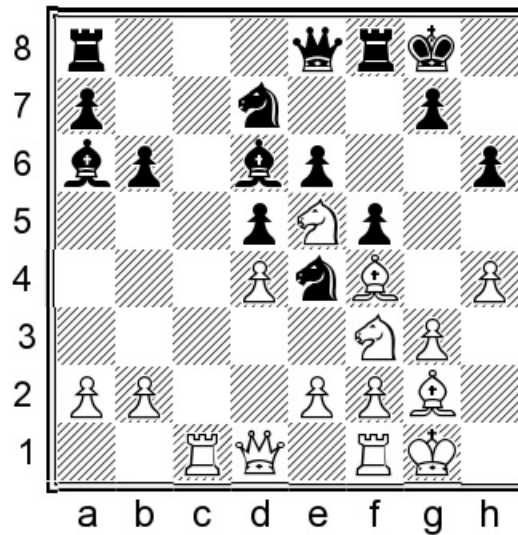
11.cxd5 [11.♙f4 ♘d7! 12.♖c1 ♖c8!? 13.♙a4 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 a5 15.cxd5 exd5∞ with typical complex play.] 11...exd5 12.♙f4 ♘d7 13.♖c1 c5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♘d3 ♙e7 16.♘g5 h6 17.♘xe4 fxe4 18.♙xd6 ♙xd6 19.♘f4 g5 20.hxg5 hxg5 21.♘h3 ♙e7 Black is fine again. 0-1 (37) Rombaldoni, D (2495) – Gleizerov, E (2590) Alghero 2011



Position after: 10...♙a6!?

11.♙f4

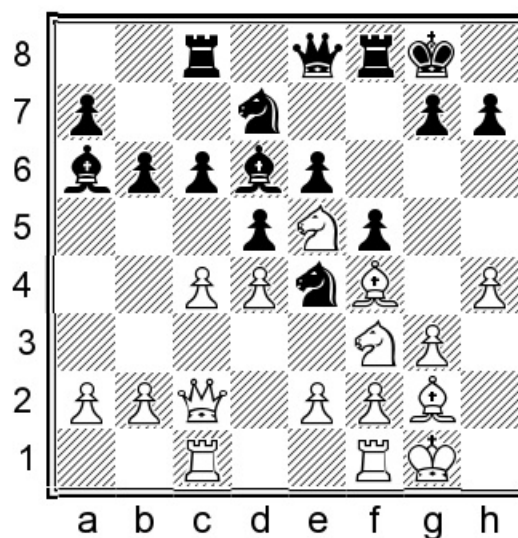
A) 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♙g5 ♖e8 13.♖c1 h6 14.♙f4 ♘d7∞



Position after: 14...♘d7∞

15.♘d3 ♙xd3! This motif is always worth looking for when Black has developed the bishop to a6. 16.♖xd3 ♙xf4 17.gxf4 ♘df6↗ with nice counterplay.

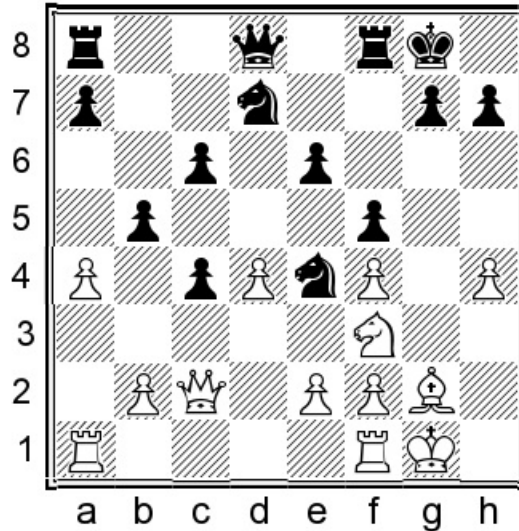
B) 11.♖c2 ♖e8 12.♙f4 ♘d7 13.♖ac1 ♖c8=



Position after: 13...♖c8=

Similar to what happens in note c) to White's 10th, after 14. ♖a4? there is 14... ♗xc4!
 15. ♘xc4 ♕xf4 16. gxf4 b5 ♣ with a significant advantage.

11... ♗xc4 12. ♘xc4 ♕xf4 13. gxf4 dxc4 14. ♖c2 b5 15. a4 ♘d7∞



Position after: 15... ♘d7∞

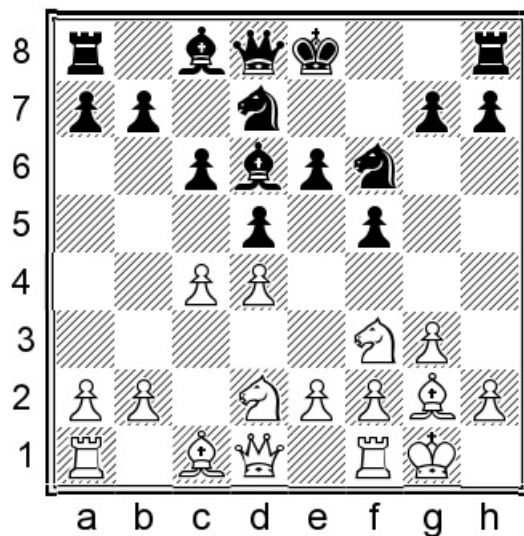
The bishop on g2 is quite a good piece right here and White has compensation, but I don't think he has more than that and there are also fair chances to retain the pawn and consolidate.

d) 7... ♘bd7 alternative

1. d4 f5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♕g2 d5 5. 0-0 ♕d6 6. c4 c6 7. ♘bd2

Black can now avoid lines with ♘e5; it has to be done before castling though. To do this the e5-square should be protected again using the knight.

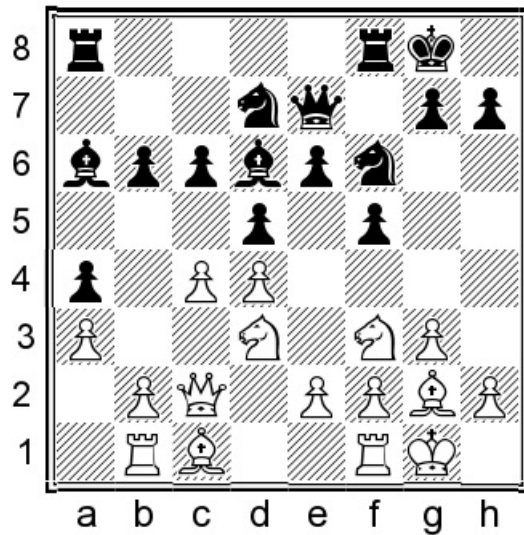
7... ♘bd7!?



Position after: 7...♘bd7!?

8.♘e1!?

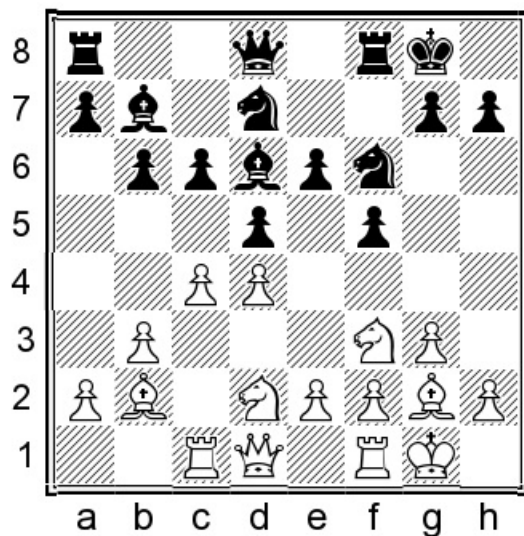
A) 8.♖c2 0-0 9.a3 a5 10.♞b1 ♔e7 11.♘e1 b6 12.♘d3 a4 13.♘f3 ♕a6



Position after: 13...♕a6

Black has good co-ordination here, e.g. 14.♘de5 ♕xe5 15.dxe5 ♘e4 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♕d2 ♞fc8 18.♞d1 ♞e8 19.♕f4 ♕c4 with a perfectly fine position.

B) 8.b3 0-0 9.♕b2 b6 [9...♞e7 10.♘e5 a5 transposes to a line we already analysed.] 10.♞c1 ♕b7



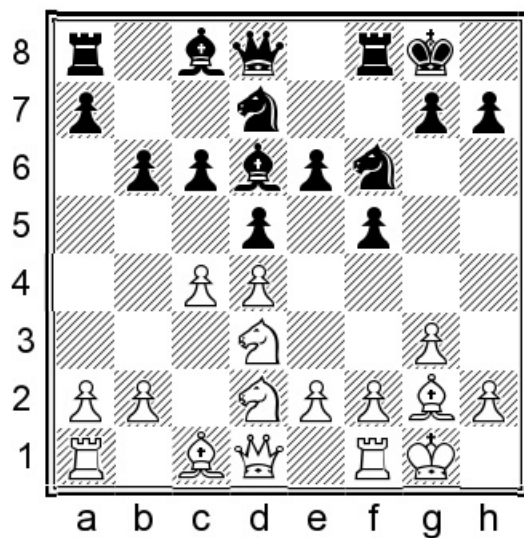
Position after: 10...♙b7

White hasn't been able to prevent the knight coming to d7 since it already went there on move 7. Now 11.♘e5 ♖c8 is just OK for Black.

8...0-0 9.♘d3

This is now a new line for us, though it could also come from a ♘e5 order.

9...b6

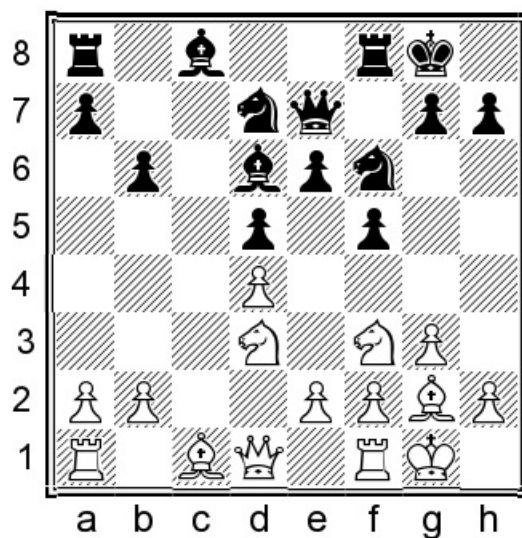


Position after: 9...b6

10.b4!?

A) In less impatient vein White could try 10.b3 ♖b7 11.♗b2 ♜e7 12.♞c1 c5 13.e3 ♘e4 14.♝e2 ♗df6 15.♘f3 with a complicated position, but it seems that Black has more ideas. 0-1 (41) Vidit, S (2689) – Bosiocic, M (2591) Doha (blitz) 2016

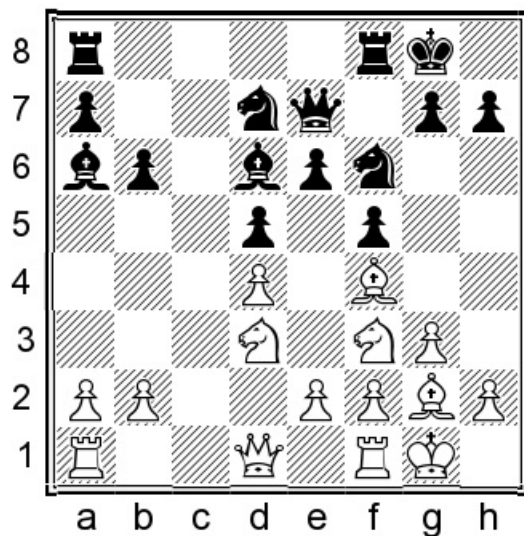
B) 10.cxd5 cxd5 This recapture is more solid than the other one. [Saying that, there is nothing wrong with 10...exd5 either, e.g. 11.♘f3 ♜e7 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.♘xf4 ♘e4 14.♞c1 ♗b7 15.♘d3 c5 16.♘fe5 c4 17.♘xd7 ♜xd7 18.♘e5 ♜d6=. Both sides have their trumps here.] 11.♘f3 ♜e7



Position after: 11...♜e7

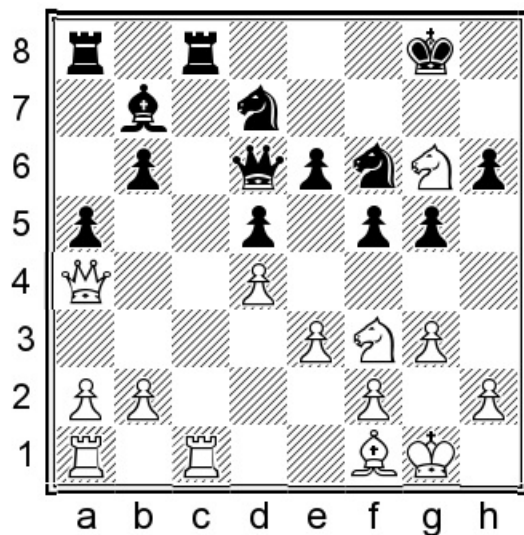
B1) 12.♘fe5 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♘e4 14.♗e3 ♗a6 15.♞c1 ♞fc8 16.♝a4 ♗c4 17.f3 ♘ec5 18.♝a3 a5 19.♞fd1 ♞c7 20.♘xc5 ♘xc5 21.♞d2 ♞ac8 22.b3 ♗a6 There are clear similarities with the lines where b3, ...a5 is included early in the opening. The same trumps exist for Black here too: an outpost for the knight on c5 and good scope for the bishop on a6.

B2) 12.♗f4! This move and the reply give both sides optimal setups and the further course of the late opening will surely be tense. 12...♗a6



Position after: 12... ♖a6

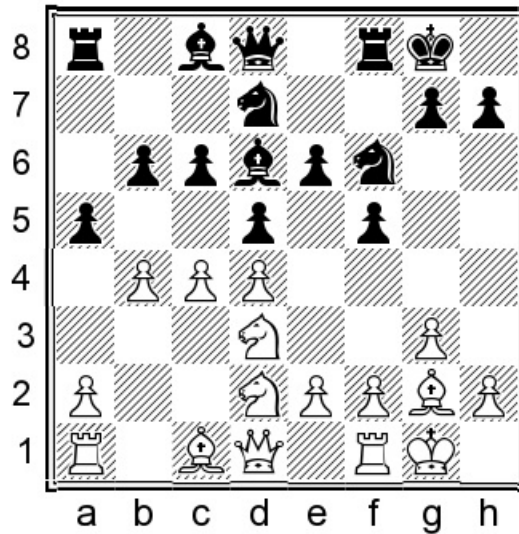
13. ♙xd6 [13. ♖a4 ♙xd3! 14. ♙xd6 ♖xd6 15. exd3 b5 16. ♖b3 a6 This type of play is OK for Black; the two knights are doing a good job and the g2-bishop is (relatively) not pulling its weight.] 13... ♖xd6 14. ♘f4 ♗fc8 15. ♖a4 ♙b7 16. ♗fc1 a5 17. e3 h6 18. ♙f1 g5 19. ♘g6



Position after: 19. ♘g6

White is trying to play critically and manages to support a knight landing on e5 after great efforts, but even so it will be traded in short order: 19... ♔g7 20. ♘ge5 g4 21. ♘xd7 ♘xd7 22. ♘e1 ♙c6 23. ♖b3 a4 24. ♖d1 ♘f8 25. ♘d3 ♘g6 with equality.

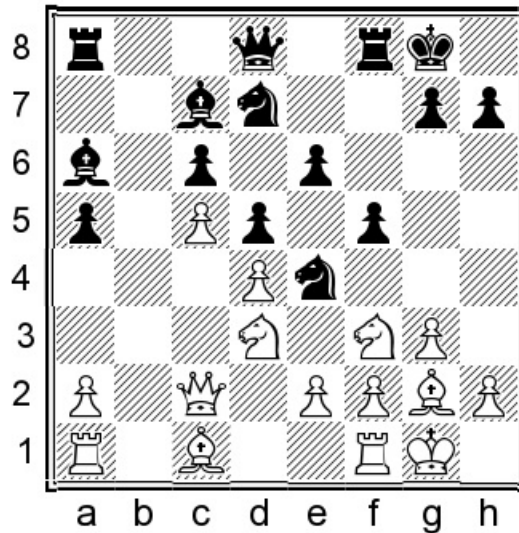
10...a5



Position after: 10...a5

11.b5

A) 11.♚c2!? ♔a6!? [11...axb4 12.cxd5! cxd5 13.♚c6 White wins.] 12.c5 [12.bxa5 bxa5 13.c5 transposes.] 12...bxc5 13.bxc5 ♔c7 14.♘f3 ♘e4

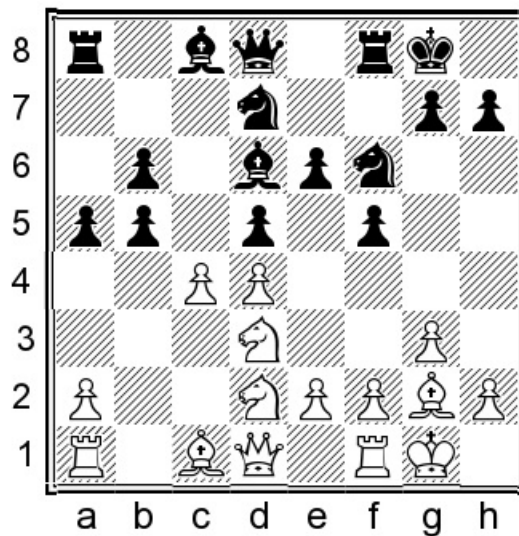


Position after: 14...♘e4

Black gets a playable position in all lines, e.g. 15.♚b1 [15.♘de5 ♔xe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♚e7 18.♔e3 ♔c4 is also fine] 15...♚b8 16.♚b3 ♚xb3 17.axb3 ♚e7 18.h4 h6=.

B) 11.bxa5 ♖xa5 12.♗b3 ♕e7 13.♙b2 ♜e4 14.♞f3 ♙a6 Black had already gained an initiative and it swiftly became clear that I had misplayed the opening. 0-1 (31)
 Pavlovic, M (2472) – Saptarshi, R (2449) Djenovici 2017

11...cxb5

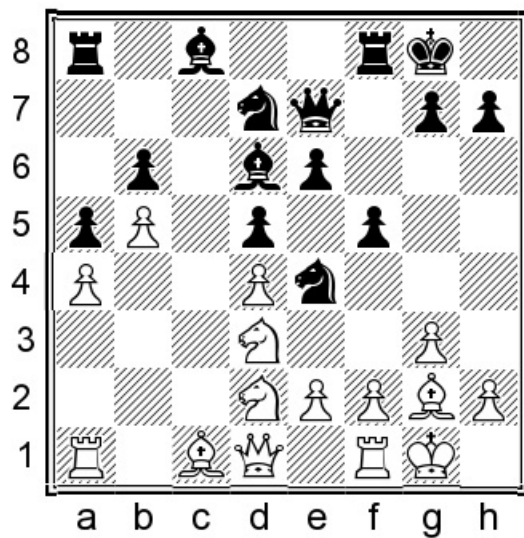


Position after: 11...cxb5

12.cxb5!

12.cxd5 exd5 13.♗b3 ♔h8 14.♞f3 b4∞ White doesn't have enough for the sacrificed pawn.

12...♞e4 13.a4 ♕e7

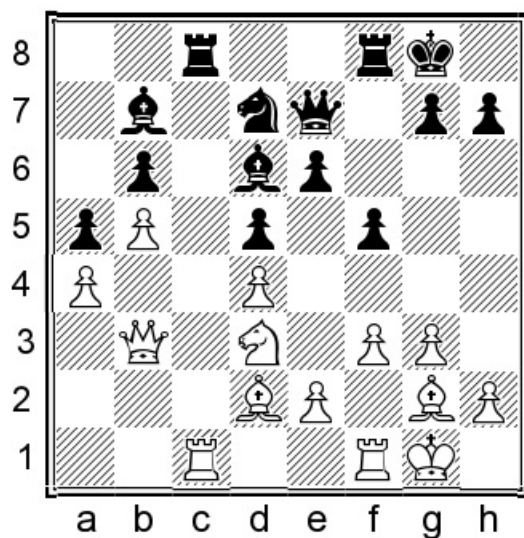


Position after: 13... ♖e7

14.f3

Due to control of the c-file Black has equality in the line 14. ♘f3 ♙b7 15.h4 ♜ac8 16. ♙f4 ♜c3 17. ♙xd6 ♜xd6 18. ♘f4 ♜fc8=.

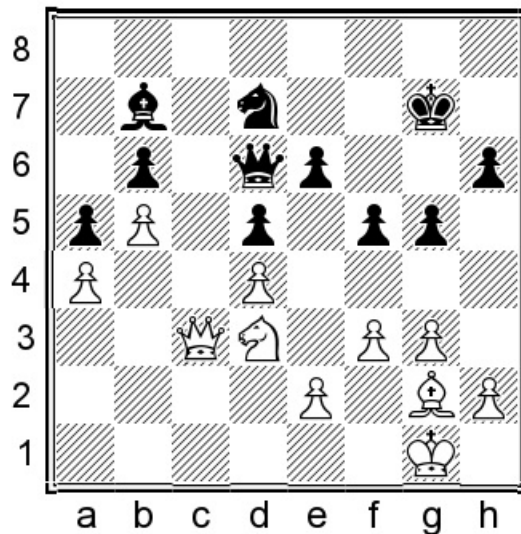
14... ♘xd2 15. ♙xd2 ♙b7 16. ♜c1 ♜ac8 17. ♜b3



Position after: 17. ♜b3

17... ♜f6!?

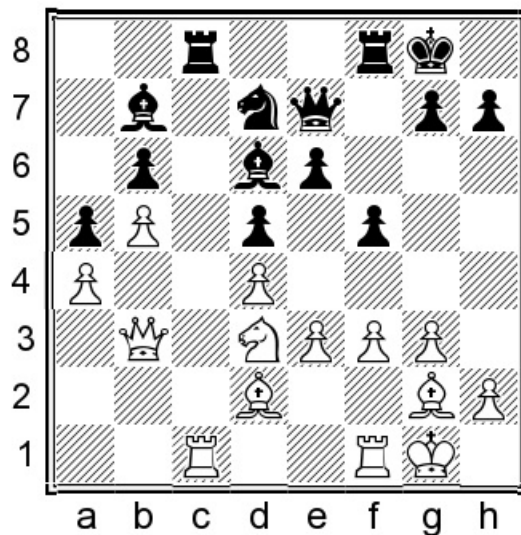
If Black plays imprecisely he can end up in a worse position, for example: 17...♔h8
 18.♖xc8 ♖xc8 19.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 20.♗xc1 h6 21.♗f4! g5 22.♗xd6 ♜xd6 23.♝c3 ♔g7.



Position after: 23...♔g7

Such positions are actually far from trivial to hold with Black: after some space-gaining move like g4 or f4 the problems can become very real.

18.e3 ♜e7! =



Position after: 18...♜e7! =

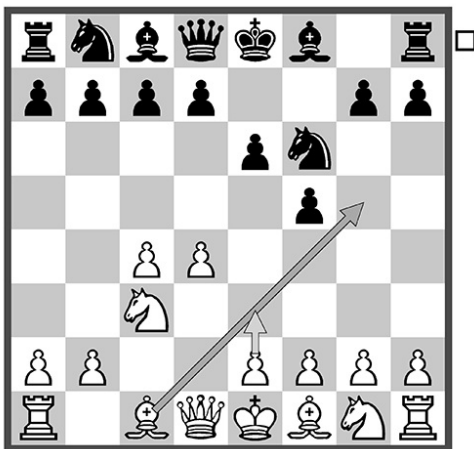
Black has made his opponent block the bishop's path from e3 to f4, so dark-squared

bishops will remain on the board for the time being. Black therefore has the idea of ...♗a3 at some point and White should avoid being complacent. Chances are balanced.

Part IV
Other White setups

Chapter 8
White plays d4, c4 and ♘c3

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 8 – White plays d4, c4 and ♘c3

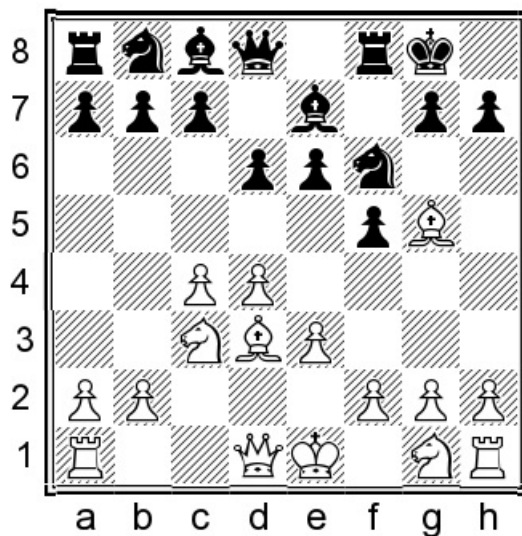
1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6

a) 4.♙g5

b) 4.e3

a) 4.♙g5

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e3 0-0 6.♙d3 d6



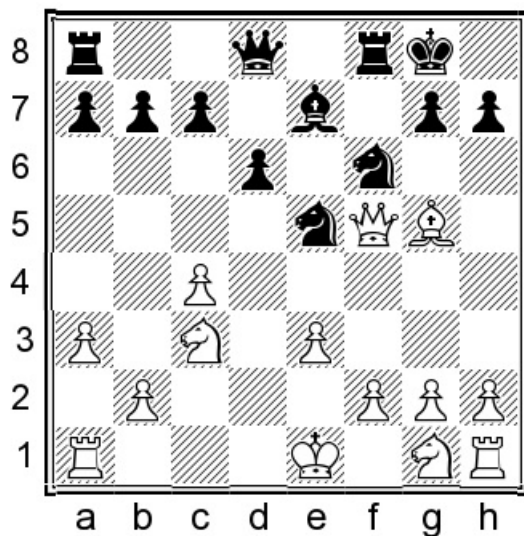
Position after: 6...d6

White uses a different strategy compared to the g3 lines. Here and elsewhere, we will see the play developing along Nimzo-Indian lines, meaning that White plays directly through the center while Black tries to remain flexible.

7.f3

This move will come sooner or later and forms a major part of White's plan. At this moment there are some other moves that can be played:

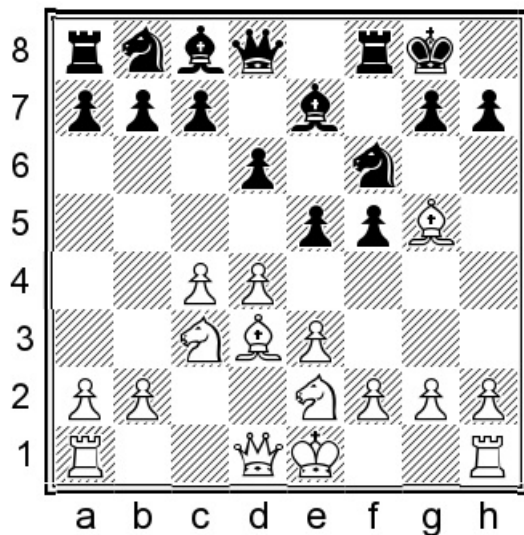
A) White can put pressure on f5 with 7.♖c2 ♘c6 8.a3 and now Black's best might be the temporary pawn sacrifice 8...e5! 9.dxe5 [After 9.d5 e4! 10.dxc6 exd3 11.♙xd3 bxc6 12.♘ge2 ♘g4 13.♙xe7 ♙xe7 14.b3 ♙h4 Black has a fairly strong initiative.] 9...♘xe5 10.♙xf5 ♙xf5 11.♙xf5



Position after: 11. ♖xf5

11... ♗fd7! 12. ♕e6+ ♜f7 13. ♙xe7 ♘d3+ 14. ♚e2 ♕xe7 There is no obligation to do so, but Black can sacrifice a queen before forcing the draw. 15. ♕xe7 ♜xf2+ 16. ♚d1 ♗xb2+=

B) 7. ♗ge2 e5!?

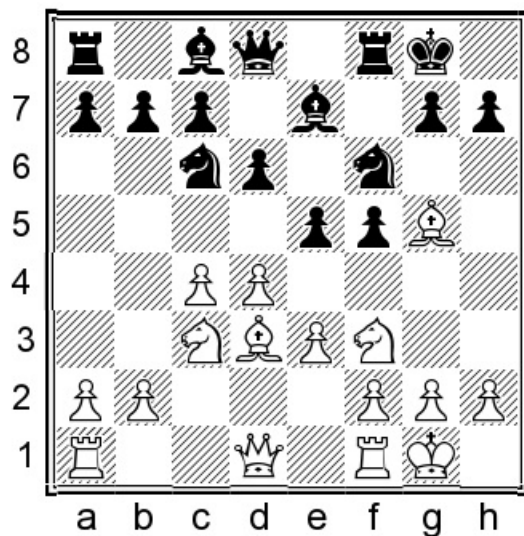


Position after: 7...e5!?

It might be possible to go for this idea immediately: 8.0-0 ♗c6 9. ♙c2 ♗g4 10. ♙xe7 ♗xe7 11. h3 ♗f6 12. b4 ♚h8 13. c5 e4 14. f3 exf3 15. ♜xf3 b6∞ with unclear play.

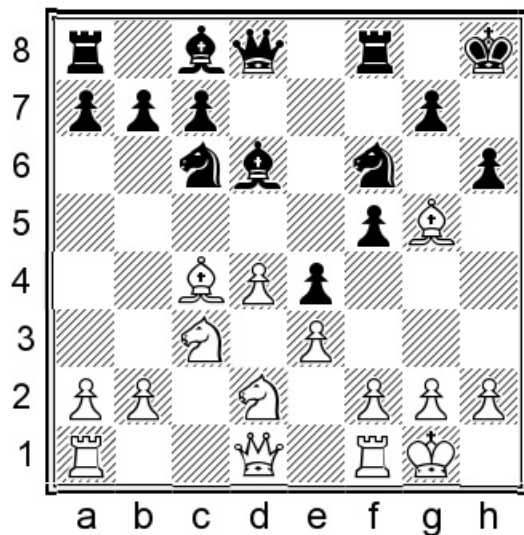
C) 7. ♗f3 ♗c6 8.0-0 [8.a3 e5 9.d5 ♗b8 10. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 11.e4 f4∞ Now the structure

strongly resembles that from the King's Indian. ½ – ½ (34) Epishin, V (2642) – Gleizerov, E (2565) Krasnoyarsk 2003] 8...e5



Position after: 8...e5

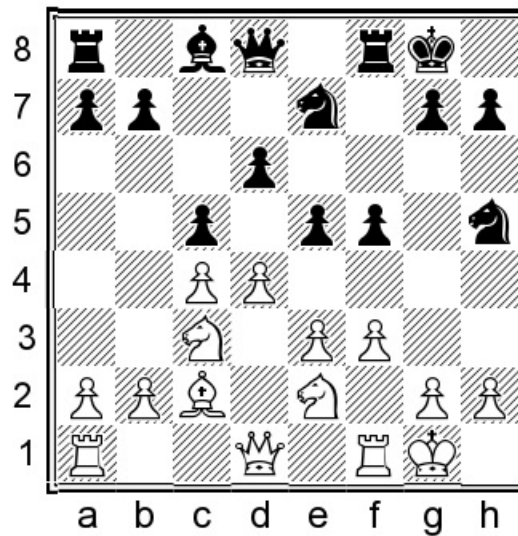
9.c5!? [9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♙e2 e4 and Black is OK.] 9...e4 10.♙c4+ ♔h8 11.cxd6 ♙xd6 12.♘d2 h6



Position after: 12...h6

13.♙xf6 [13.♙h4 a6 14.♙g3 ♘e7 15.♙xd6 cxd6! Again Black is doing OK.] 13...♙xf6 14.♘b5 ♙d7 Black has no reason to fear the structures with ...cxd6, for instance 15.♖c1 ♘e7 16.♘xd6 cxd6 17.♙b3 ♖ab8 18.♙e2 ♙e6 19.♙a3 ♙d5 with unclear play.

7...c5 8.♖ge2 ♘c6 9.0-0 e5!? 10.♙c2 ♘h5 11.♙xe7 ♘xe7

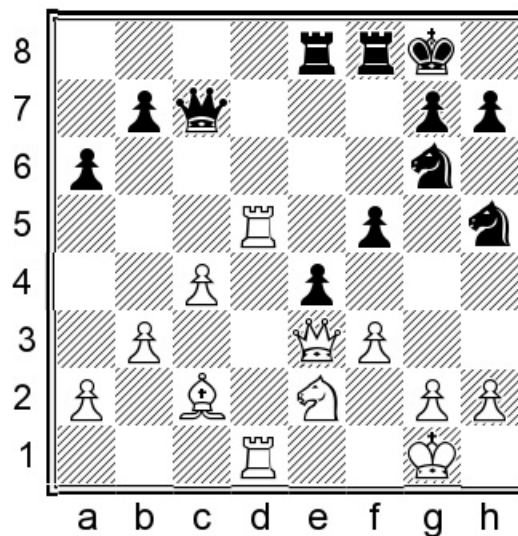


Position after: 11...♘xe7

12.♙d2

12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘d5 ♙e6 14.♘ec3 ♘f6 15.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16.♙e2 ♙c7 17.♗ad1 ♗af8 We have a balanced position.

12...♙e6 13.b3 a6 14.♗ad1 cxd4 15.exd4 ♘g6 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♙e3 ♙c7 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.♗xd5 ♗ae8 20.♗fd1 e4

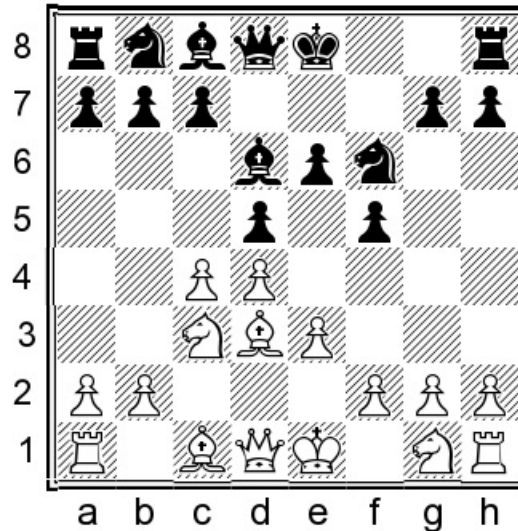


Position after: 20...e4

With another position that is likely to produce an interesting game.

b) 4.e3

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♞f6 3.♞c3 e6 4.e3 d5 5.♙d3 ♙d6

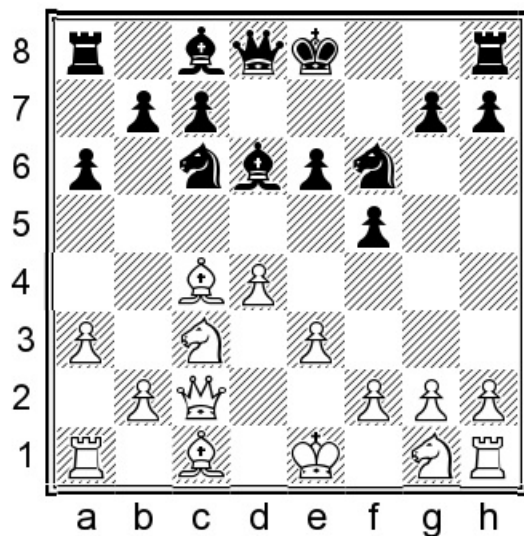


Position after: 5...♙d6

6.♞ge2

The analogy with the Nimzo-Indian is obvious: White plans simply f3 followed by e4. Also, right now Black faces potential problems with the f5-pawn due to the possibility of White playing cxd5.

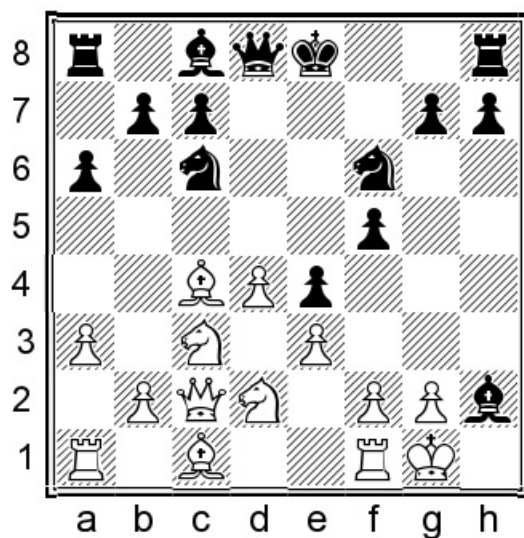
White can postpone developing his king's knight for a handful of moves: 6.♙c2 ♞c6
7.a3 dxc4!? 8.♙xc4 a6



Position after: 8...a6

Black wants to secure the bishop on d6 and then play ...e5 without delay.

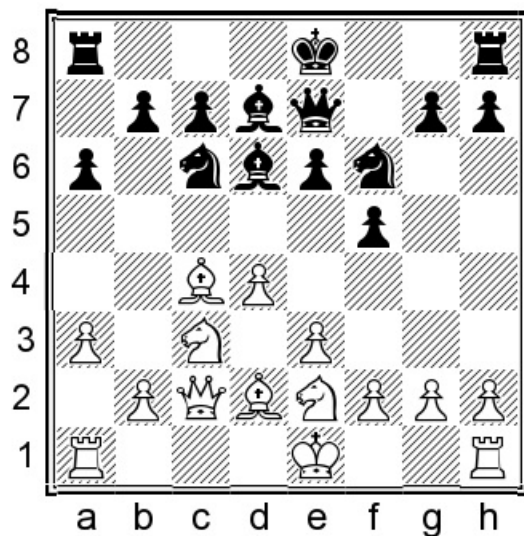
A) 9.♘f3 e5 10.h3 [10.0-0 e4 11.♘d2 ♙xh2+!



Position after: 11...♙xh2+!

We will see that in this type of position, such tactical ideas can't be ignored. 12.♔xh2 ♖g4+ 13.♔g3 ♚d6+ 14.f4 ♜xe3 is winning for Black.] 10...♙d7 11.0-0 ♚e7 12.b4 e4 13.♘d2 g5 With unclear consequences.

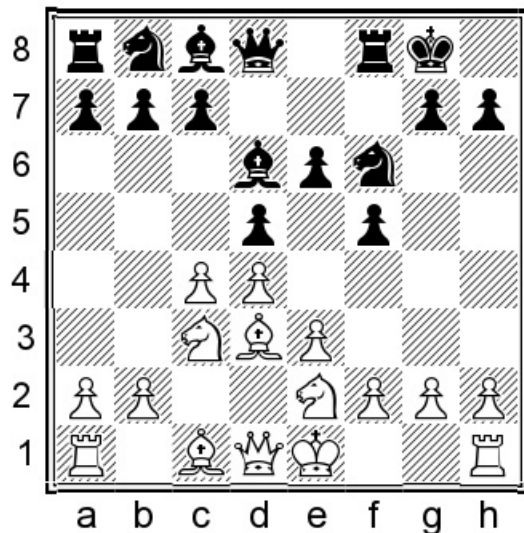
B) 9.♜ge2 ♙d7 10.♙d2 ♚e7



Position after: 10...♔e7

11.h3 [11.0-0 ♕xh2+! 12.♖xh2 ♜g4+ 13.♗g3 g5!! It turns out White probably has nothing better than 14.♗f3 ♜h2+ 15.♗g3 ♜g4 with a possible repetition of moves.]
 11...e5 12.0-0 g5!? 13.b4 g4 Black has strong counterplay.

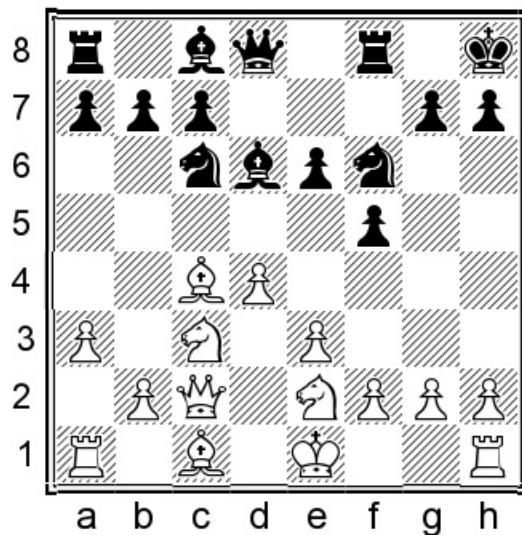
6...0-0



Position after: 6...0-0

7.cxd5!?

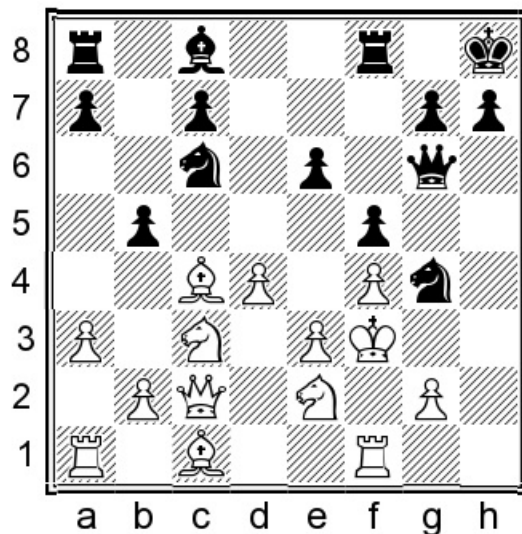
A) 7. ♖c2 ♜c6 8. a3 dxc4 9. ♙xc4 ♔h8



Position after: 9... ♔h8

All the comments from the 6. ♖c2 line apply here as well: Black is intending ...e5, and if White castles then taking on h2 may be on the cards.

A1) 10. 0-0 ♙xh2+! 11. ♔xh2 ♜g4+ 12. ♔g3 ♖g5 13. f4 ♖g6 White is under a strong attack. 14. ♔f3 b5!

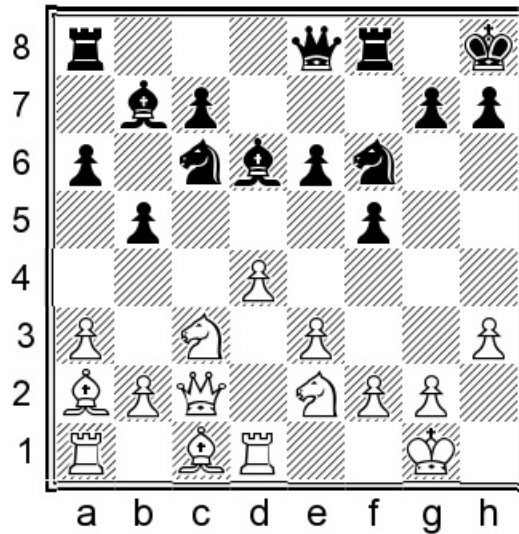


Position after: 14... b5!

15. ♙xb5 e5!! 16. ♙xc6 ♖xc6+ 17. d5 e4+ 18. ♔g3 ♖h6 Black wins! A vivid illustration of the power of these ... ♙xh2+ ideas.

A2) 10.f3 a6 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♗d2 ♗d7 13.♗e1 e5 14.♗f2 leads to unclear play.

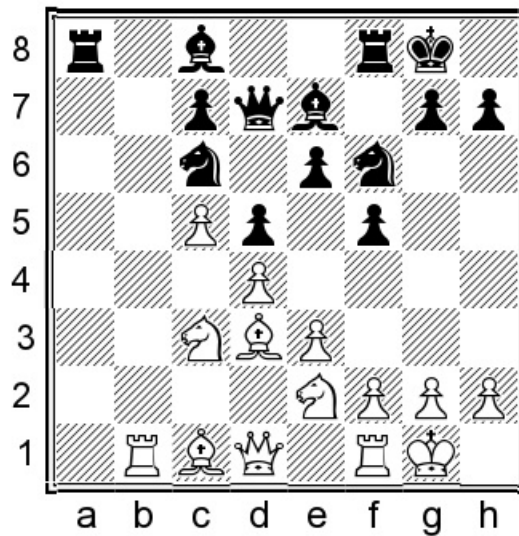
A3) 10.h3 a6 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♖d1 b5 13.♗a2 ♗b7



Position after: 13... ♗b7

The play here is unorthodox, a sort of mixture between the Dutch and certain lines of the Nimzo-Indian. After say 14.♗f4 ♗xf4 15.exf4 ♖g6 16.f3 ♜ad8 17.♗e3 ♗e7∞ Black is fine.

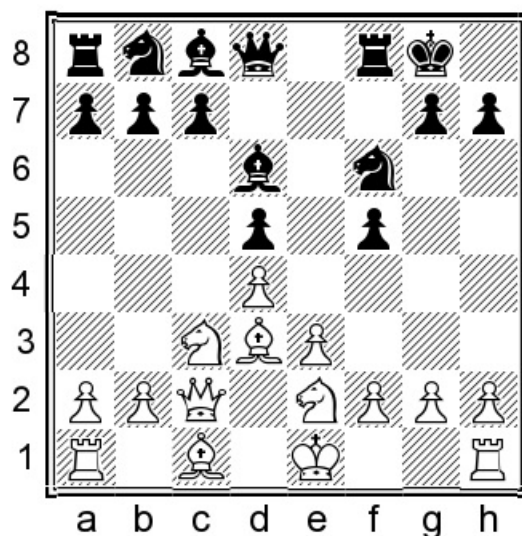
B) 7.c5!? A more solid approach. 7...♗e7 8.b4 b6 9.a3 a5 10.♖b1 axb4 11.axb4 bxc5 12.bxc5 ♗c6 13.0-0 ♖d7!?



Position after: 13... ♖d7!?

Black wants to exchange bishops on a6. While White can avoid this, for instance, by 14.♔b5 ♕a6 15.♕a4 ♖e4 16.♗e1 ♗xc3 17.♘xc3 ♕c4, the light-squared bishop is no longer bad and Black is simply alright. 18.♗e2 ♜a6 19.♗f4 ♜fa8 20.♞b4 ♕g5 21.♕d2 ♕xf4 22.exf4 ♞d8=

7...exd5 8.♞c2



Position after: 8.♞c2

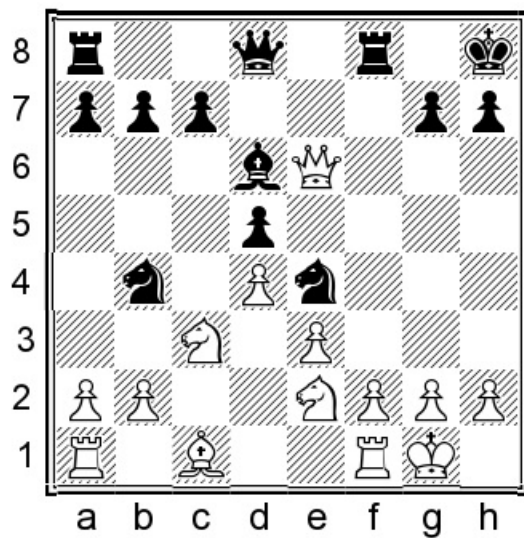
This is the direct attempt. White develops the queen with gain of tempo and if Black plays along with ...g6, then f3 can come and White has a better version of the lines with an eventual e4 thrust.

8...♗a6!?

Reacting like this is highly unusual, but in my opinion necessary.

9.a3

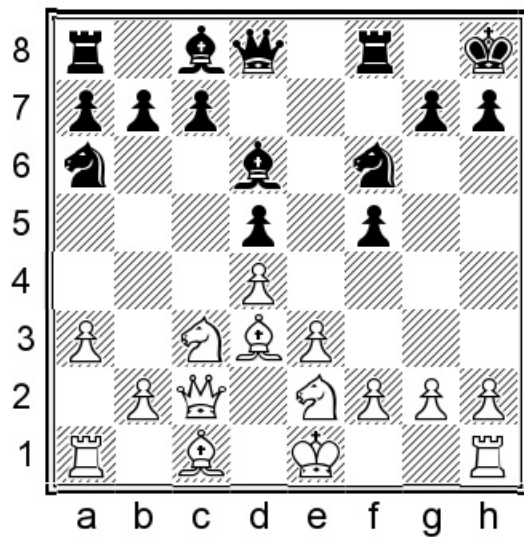
White would be ill-advised to take. After 9.♕xf5 ♗b4 10.♞b1 ♕xf5 11.♞xf5 ♗e4 12.♞e6+ ♔h8 13.0-0



Position after: 13.0-0

13...♘xf2! 14.♙xf2 ♖xf2 15.♕xf2 ♘c2 16.♙b1 ♔h4+ ♚ Black is down a full piece, but the attack is worth more than that.

9...♕h8!?



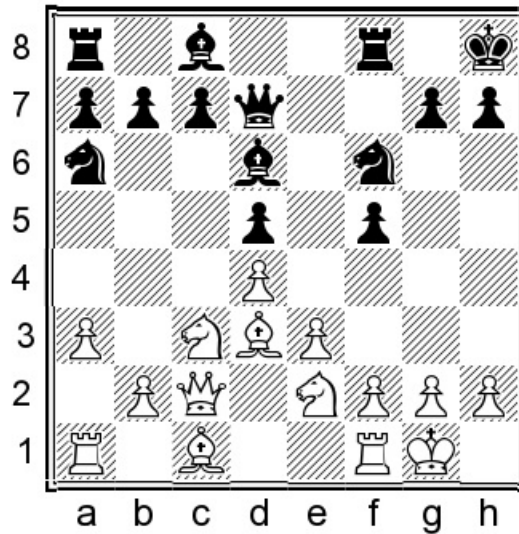
Position after: 9...♕h8!?

Black is ready to sacrifice a pawn.

10.♘f4!?

A) 10. ♖xf5 ♗xf5 11. ♜xf5 ♘e4 Black is better.

B) 10. 0-0 ♜d7!?

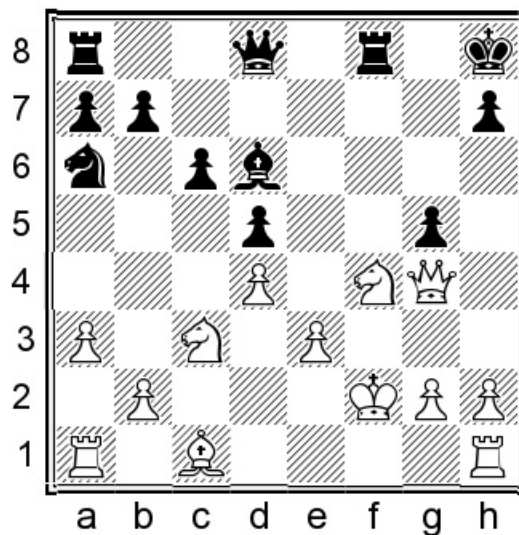


Position after: 10... ♜d7!?

Right here sacrificing on h2 isn't possible, so Black develops. 11. b4 c6 12. b5 ♘c7 13. bxc6 bxc6 14. ♖b1 ♜e8 15. f3 g6 16. ♘a4 ♘e6 with another complex position.

10...c6 11. ♖xf5 ♗xf5 12. ♜xf5 ♘e4 13. ♜g4 ♘xf2 14. ♔xf2 g5

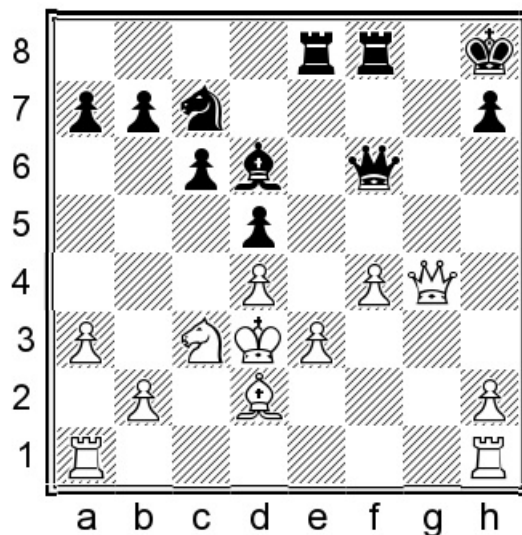
I think Black has good play here. The following lines bear out my conclusion.



Position after: 14...g5

15.♖f1

15.g3 ♘c7! 16.♗d2 ♚f6 17.♙e2 gxf4 18.gxf4 ♜ae8 19.♙d3



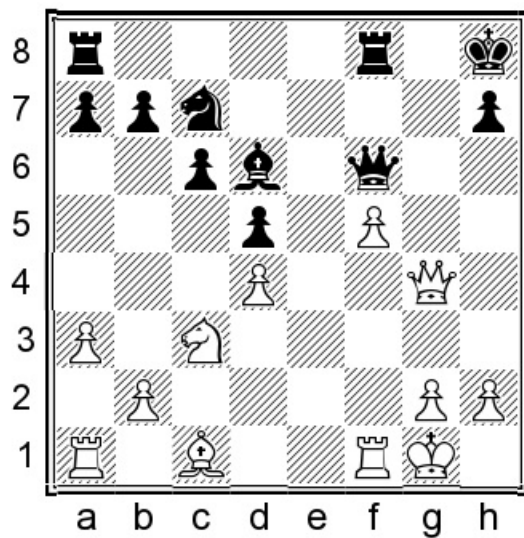
Position after: 19.♙d3

White has taken a highly proactive approach to his king safety. Nevertheless, due to the bad bishop on d2, something like 19...a5 20.♞hg1 b5 21.♙c2 ♘e6 22.♘e2 ♘g7 23.♘g3 c5 gives Black decent compensation.

15...♘c7!

The knight re-routes to a menacing position on the kingside. Black's minor pieces are doing better work than their counterparts and this difference is worth a pawn.

16.♙g1 gxf4 17.exf4 ♚f6 18.f5



Position after: 18.f5

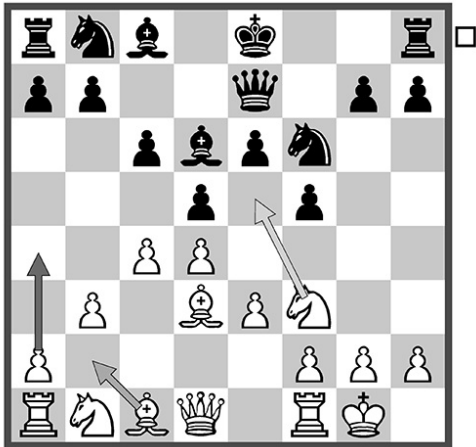
18...♞e6! 19.♙e3 ♜g8 20.♚h3 ♞g5 21.♙xg5 ♜xg5 22.♞e2 ♜f8=

Black will win back the f-pawn, after which the position is balanced.

Chapter 9

White plays d4, ♘f3 and e3

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗d3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7



Chapter Guide

Chapter 9 – White plays d4, ♘f3 and e3

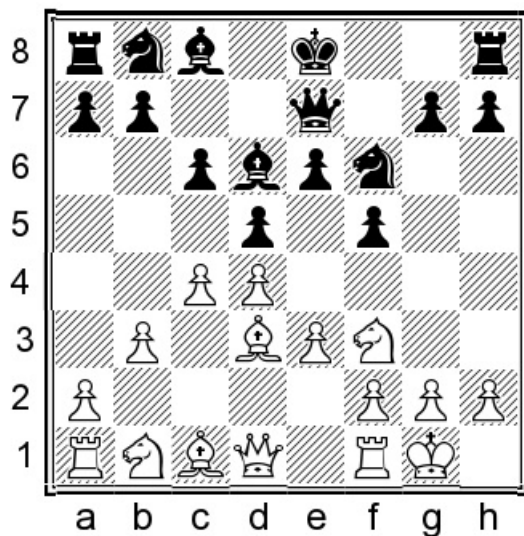
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗d3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7

a) 8.♗b2

b) 8.♘e5, 8.a4

a) 8.♗b2

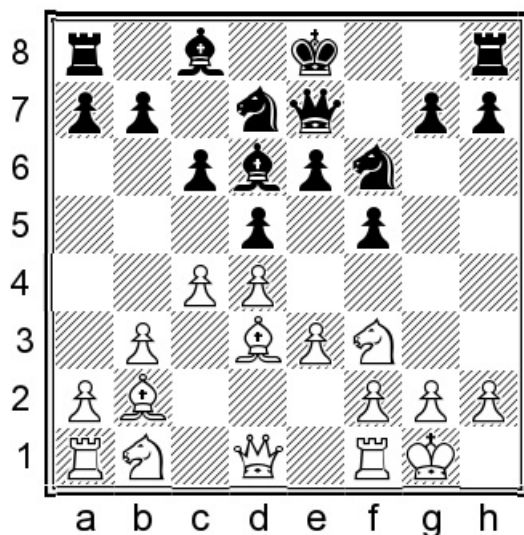
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗d3 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 ♚e7



Position after: 7...♙e7

This is a very important line as it can arise from various move orders, for instance 1.d4 1...d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 e6 4.e3 f5; this is indeed used by many players who also have the Semi-Slav in their repertoires. As in the rest of the Stonewall White is often looking to trade dark-squared bishops via a3.

8.♙b2 ♘bd7!?



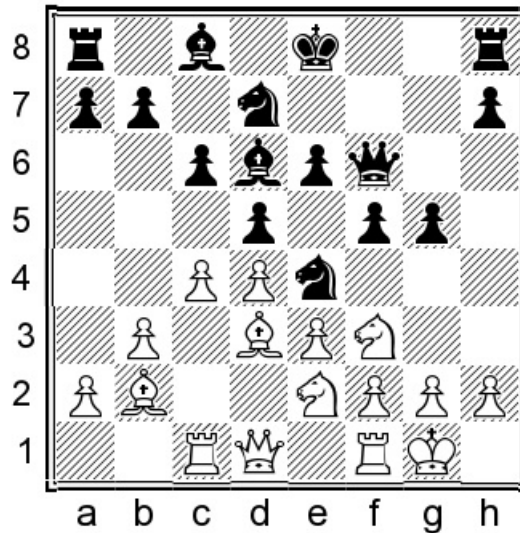
Position after: 8...♘bd7!?

Not the most common move in this line, but I have an idea in mind.

9. ♖c1

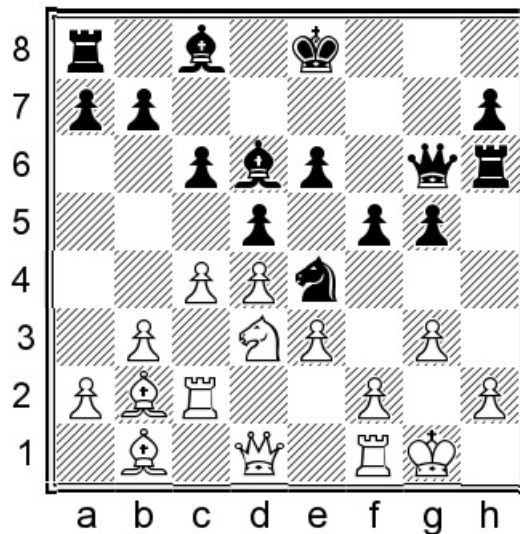
White is making no bones about what he wants; Black has to find his own way to generate counterplay.

A) 9. ♘c3 ♘e4 10. ♘e2 ♚f6! White aims for slower play, but Black won't wait for the ♘ to get to d3. 11. ♖c1 g5!



Position after: 11...g5!

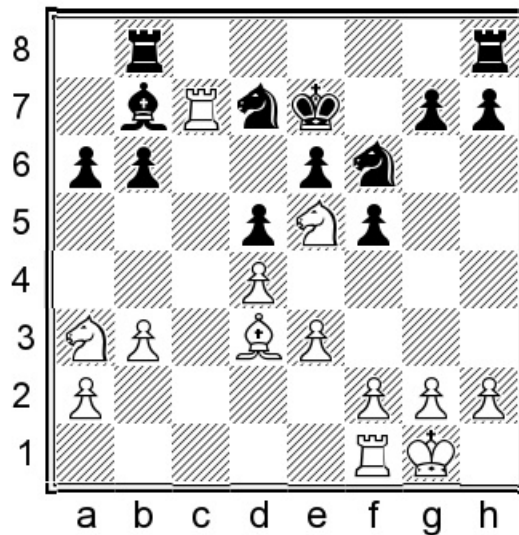
12. ♙b1 [12. ♖c2 g4 13. ♘d2 ♚h6 14. ♘f4 ♘df6 15. ♖c1 ♙d7 16. ♙a3 ♙c7 is complicated.] 12... ♖g8 13. ♖c2 ♖g6 14. ♘e1 ♖h6 15. g3 ♚g6 16. ♘c3 ♘df6 17. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18. ♘d3



Position after: 18. ♖d3

18...g4! It is important to stop f3. Now for instance 19. ♗f4 ♕xf4 20. exf4 ♕d7 21. f3 gxf3 22. ♖xf3 ♜h3 23. ♝g2 ♗f6 24. ♕d3 ♖f7 25. cxd5 exd5 26. ♜e1 ♗e4 and Black has good counterplay.

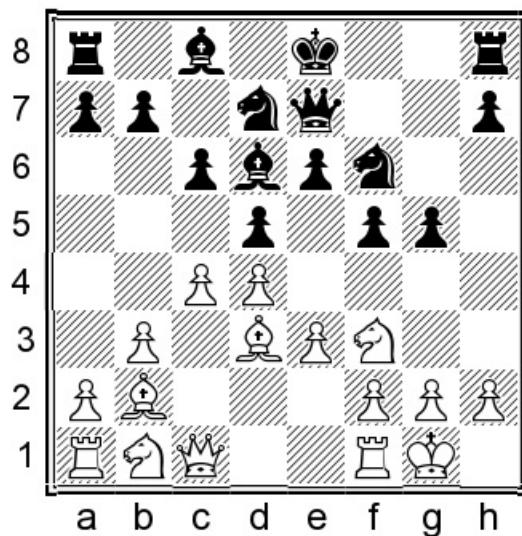
B) An early exchange on d5 is possible, but it may be premature. 9. cxd5 cxd5 10. ♖c1 a6!? 11. ♕a3 ♕xa3 12. ♖xa3 ♜xa3 13. ♗xa3 ♖e7 14. ♝ac1 b6 15. ♝c2 ♕b7 16. ♝c7 ♜ab8 17. ♗e5



Position after: 17. ♗e5

17...♜hc8! Black liquidates the intruder and after 18. ♝xb7 ♜xb7 19. ♕xa6 ♝bc7 20. ♕xc8 ♝xc8 21. ♗d3 ♜a8 22. ♗c2 ♝xa2 23. ♝c1 ♜a7 he will regain the pawn, with equality.

9...g5!?N



Position after: 9...g5!?N

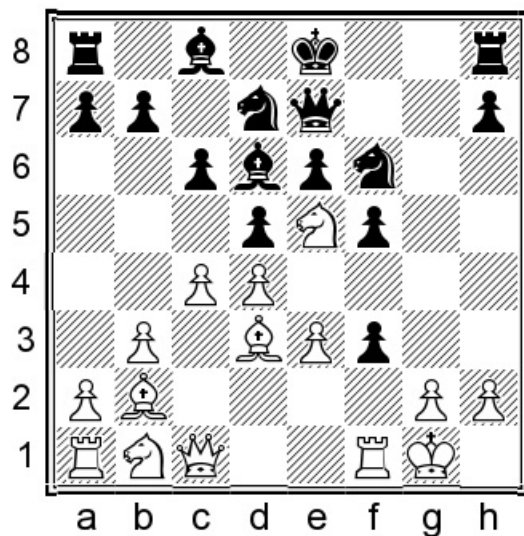
I think that this is a new idea here.

10.cxd5

This is played with the idea of opening up the c-file and preventing ...exd5 from ever being an option.

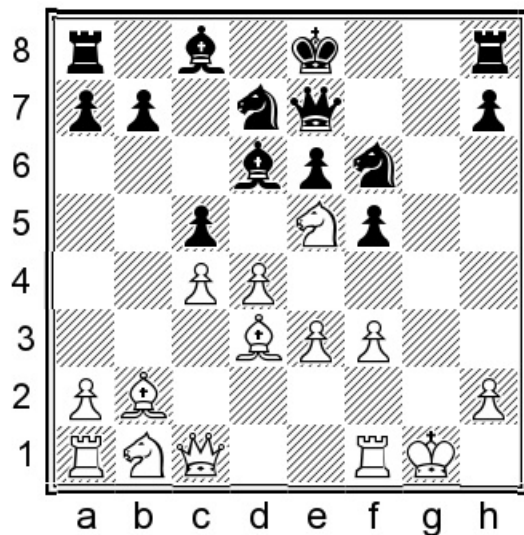
A) 10.♘xg5 ♕xh2+ 11.♖xh2 ♘g4+ 12.♔g1 ♚xg5 13.♞d2 ♜g8 14.♞f3 ♚h5 Black is better.

B) 10.♞e5 g4! Black does not allow f3 and e4 to be played without hindrance. He intends ...exf3, keeping the Stonewall structure. 11.f4 [11.♙a3 ♙xa3 12.♚xa3 ♚xa3 13.♞xa3 ♞xe5 14.dxe5 ♞d7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♙xf5 ♞xe5 Black is fine in this endgame.] 11...gxf3



Position after: 11...gxf3

12.gxf3?! Consistent but probably wrong. [12.♖xf3 ♘g4 gives Black counterplay; 12.♘xf3 ♜g8 13.♙a3 ♙xa3 14.♚xa3 ♚g7 15.♚b2 ♘e4 16.♚e2 ♘df6 followed by ...♙d7 will be unclear.] 12...dxc4!? 13.bxc4 c5!



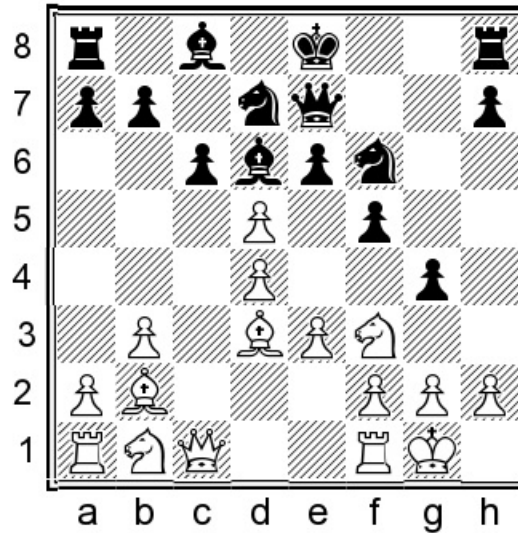
Position after: 13...c5!

Black chooses the right moment to take structural decisions. Next can come ...b6 and ...♙b7, completing development and exerting some pressure on White's kingside. 14.♖h1 ♜g8 15.♘d2 b6 Black has harmonious development.

C) After 10.♙a3 ♙xa3 11.♚xa3 g4 12.♘fd2 ♘e4 13.♚xe7+ ♖xe7 the endgame is no

worse for Black.

10...g4!

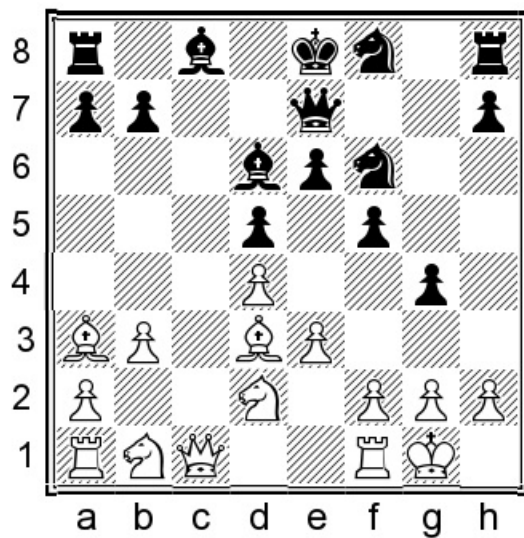


Position after: 10...g4!

11.♘fd2

11.♘e5 exd5! Good reaction, now the pressure on e5 is strong. Exchanges follow:
12.♙xf5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♙xe5 14.♙d3 ♙d7 15.♙xe5 ♚xe5 16.♚c3 ♚xc3 17.♘xc3 0-0-0
Black is OK.

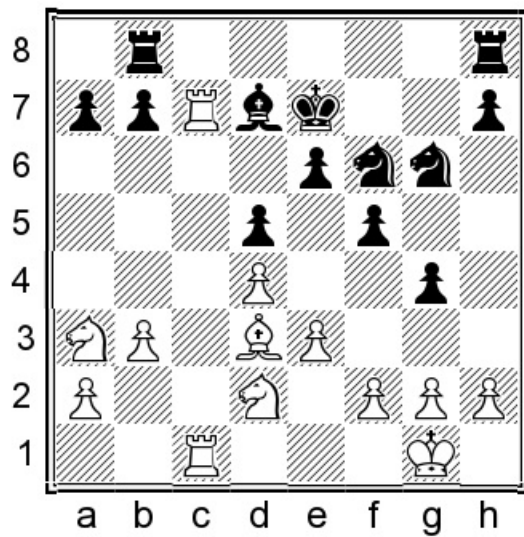
11...cxd5 12.♙a3 ♘f8!?



Position after: 12... Nf8!?

After clever tempo play Black can route his knights to active kingside posts.

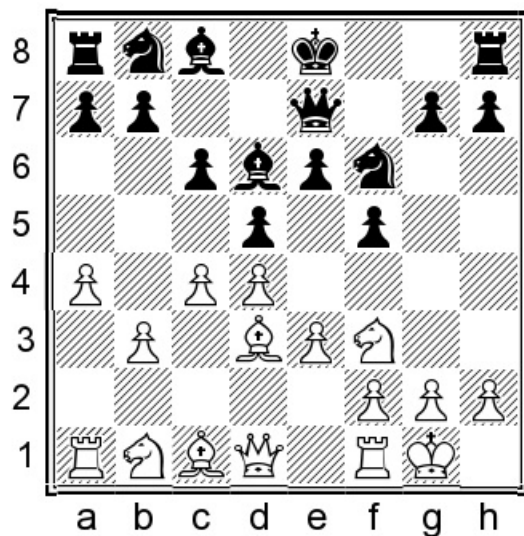
13. Qxd6 Rxd6 14. Qa3 Rxa3 15. Nxa3 Qe7 16. Rfc1 Qd7 17. Rc7 Rb8 18. Rac1 Ng6=



Position after: 18... Ng6=

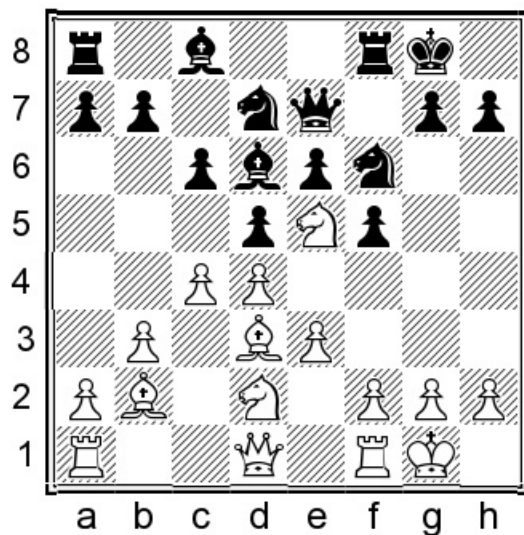
b) 8. Ne5, 8.a4

1.d4 f5 2.Nf3 e6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Qd3 d5 5.0-0 Qd6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 Qe7 8.a4



Position after: 8.a4

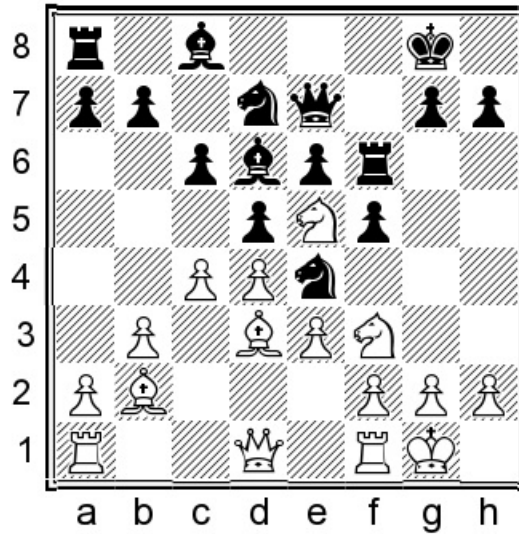
White insists on exchanging bishops on the a3-square regardless of cost; this exchange makes positional sense but we will see that there are drawbacks that help Black get organised. White can also try and occupy the e5-square directly: 8.♖e5 0-0 9.♗b2 ♘bd7 10.♗d2



Position after: 10.♗d2

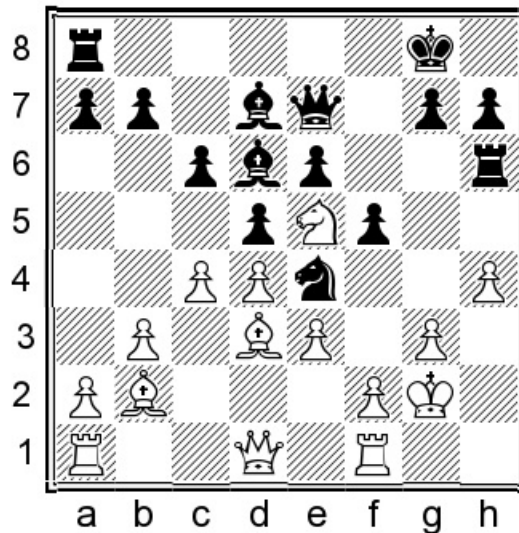
This is a standard reaction in many games, but does not necessarily lead to White exerting any pressure. 10...♘e4 11.♗df3 The usual trade of squares in the center has happened and carries with it the prospect of unclear play. [11.f3 ♘xd2 12.♗xd2 ♘xe5

13.dxe5 ♖c5 14.♔h1 b6 15.f4 a5 16.♟f3 a4 gives Black enough counterplay.] 11...♟f6!?



Position after: 11...♟f6!?

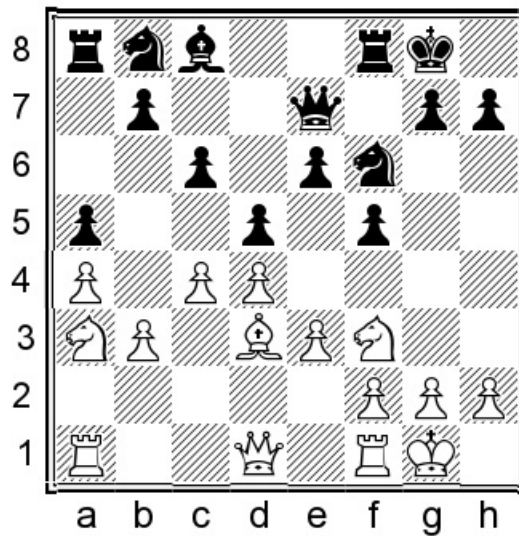
12.g3 [12.♘xd7 ♕xd7 13.♘e5 ♟h6 14.f3 ♖h4 15.h3 ♘g5! Black has an attack.] 12...♟h6
 13.h4 [13.♘xd7 ♕xd7 14.♘e5 ♘g5 15.f3 ♕xe5 16.dxe5 dxc4 17.bxc4 c5! Black brings
 the bishop to c6 next and stands fine.] 13...♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♕d7 15.♔g2



Position after: 15.♔g2

15...♕xe5! 16.dxe5 ♕e8 A typical Stonewall trade and a favorable one for Black. 0-1
 (70) Gaviota 0.86 – Crafty 23.8 Internet 2014.

8...a5 9.♖a3 ♕xa3 10.♘xa3 0-0

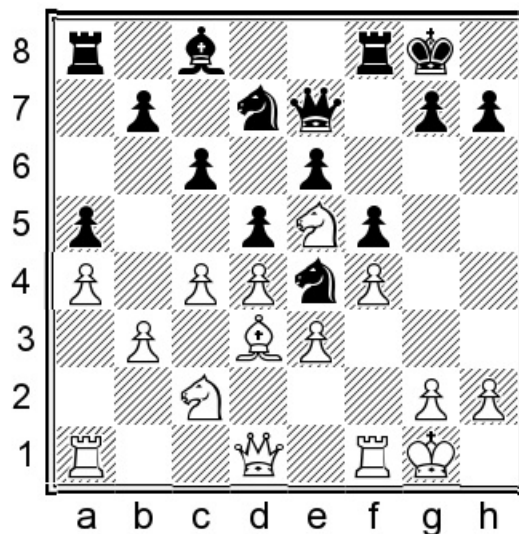


Position after: 10...0-0

We can call this the starting position of the line with a bishop trade on a3. That trade was definitely a positive for White but the structure which is now fixed on the queenside isn't so great for him. Two remedies suggest themselves: playing b4, or trying to exchange on d5 such that ...cxd5 is forced and White can use the b5-square.

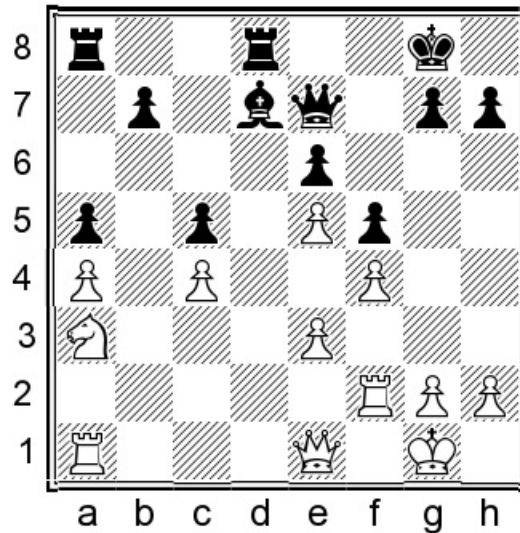
11.♙b1

A) An example of the first idea would be: 11.♘c2 ♖e4 12.♘e5 ♘d7 13.f4



Position after: 13.f4

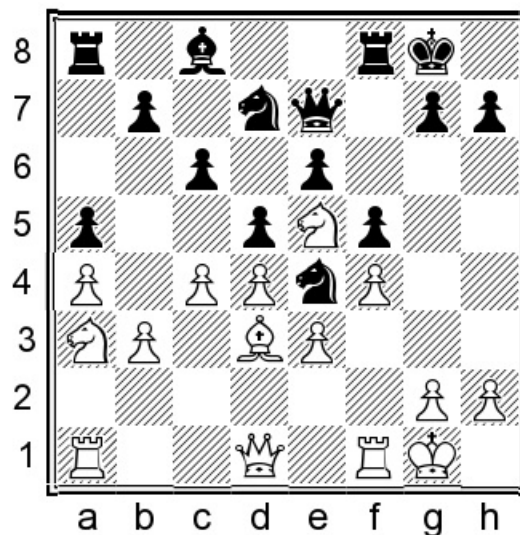
13...♖d8! 14.♔e1 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♘d2 17.♗f2 ♘xc4 18.bxc4 c5 19.♘a3
 ♙d7



Position after: 19...♙d7

20.♘b1 [20.♘b5 ♙xb5! Black is better as he will have a passer.] 20...♙c6 21.♘c3 ♗d3
 Black is fine.

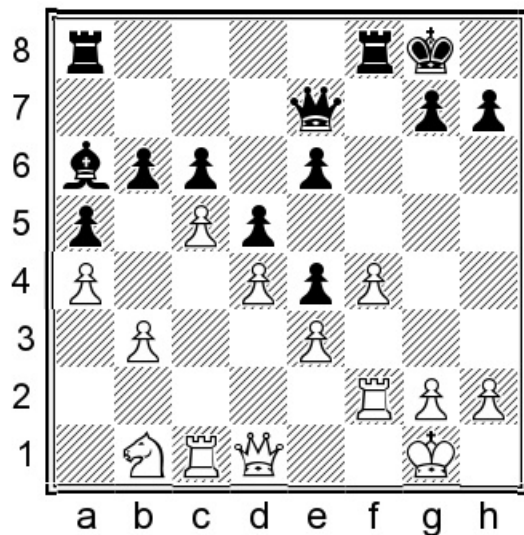
B) Along less committal lines White can play 11.♘e5 ♘bd7 12.f4, anticipating the capture on e5. 12...♘e4



Position after: 12...♘e4

Again we have an interesting position in which both sides have to be careful how they react in the center.

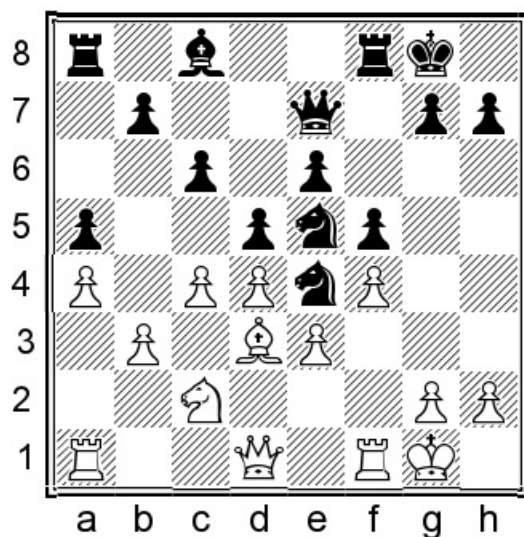
B1) 13. ♖xd7 ♕xd7 14. ♕xe4 fxe4 15. c5 b6 16. ♖c1 ♕c8 17. ♗b1 ♕a6 18. ♖f2



Position after: 18. ♖f2

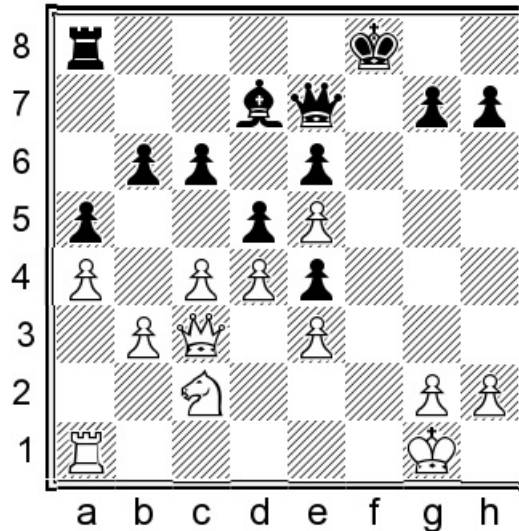
18...bxc5! [18...e5 leads to unclear play. 1-0 (39) Bobrowska, M (2417) – Poluljahov, A (2526) Bydgoszcz 2000] 19. ♖xc5 e5! 20. ♖xc6 exf4 21. ♖xf4 ♖xf4 22. exf4 e3 Black is close to winning.

B2) 13. ♗c2 ♗xe5



Position after: 13... ♗xe5

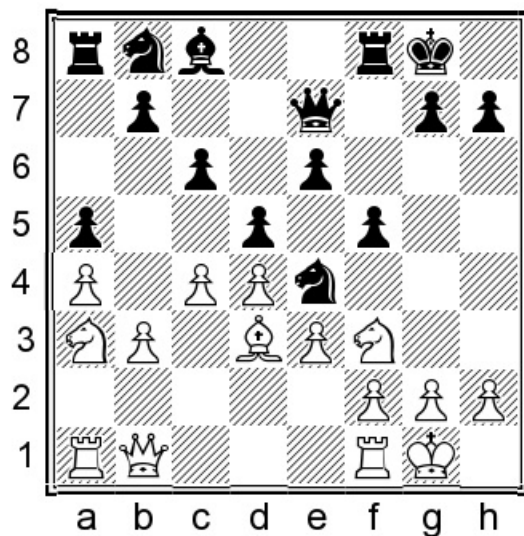
Black could obviously also play ...♖d8 and transpose to line A) above. 14.fxe5 [14.dxe5 The idea is to create an outpost on d4, but with a4 and ...a5 already having been played White is not able to prevent ...c5 at some moment, destroying its value. Now 14...♙d7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♖c1 ♜fd8 17.♘d4 c5 18.♘b5 ♙xb5 19.♙xb5 ♚e6 is unclear.] 14...♙d7 [14...b6!? 15.♙xe4 dxe4!? 16.♚e1 ♙a6 17.♚c3 h5! can be considered; Black is playing in quite edgy style and the position is scrappy, but not at all bad for him.] 15.♚e1 b6 16.♙xe4 fxe4 17.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 18.♚c3



Position after: 18.♚c3

18...dxc4!? [18...c5 is also OK, e.g. 19.dxc5 ♚xc5 20.♖f1+ ♔g8 21.♚d2 ♙c6 22.♚f2 ♚e7 23.♘d4 ♖c8.] 19.bxc4 c5 20.♚b3 ♖b8 21.♘a3 cxd4 22.exd4 ♚b4 23.♚c2 ♔g8 24.♚xe4 ♚b2+ Black was winning, and converted in Seres, L (2408) – Richter, M (2493) Germany 2015.

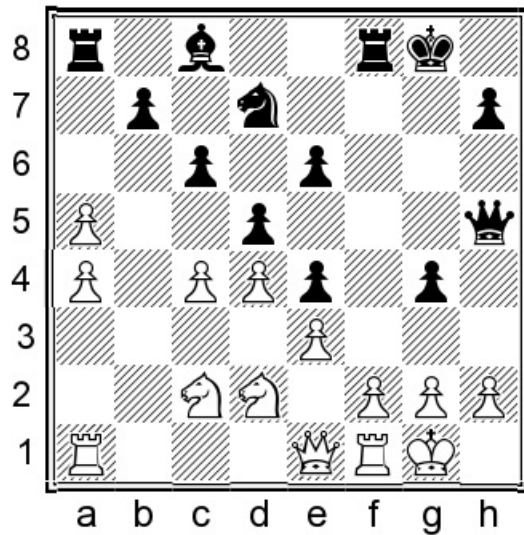
11...♘e4



Position after: 11...♞e4

12.♞b2

12.♞c2 ♞d7 13.b4 g5! 14.bxa5 g4 15.♙xe4 fxe4 16.♞d2 ♞h4 17.♞e1 ♞h5

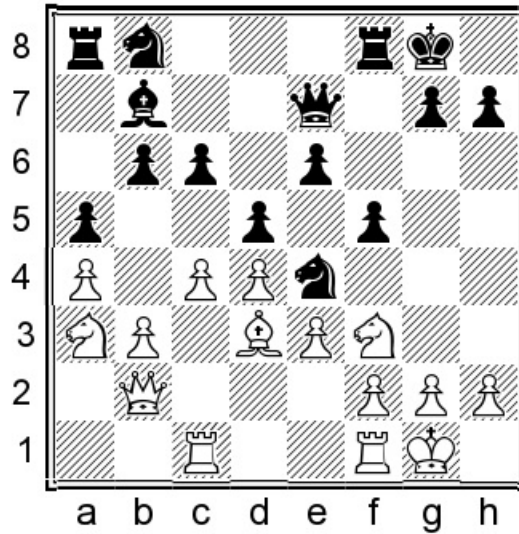


Position after: 17...♞h5

18.♞h1 ♞xa5 19.f3 exf3 20.gxf3 dxc4 21.♞g3 ♞af5 22.♞g1 ♞g5 23.♞xc4 b6 With a highly complex game in which Black is no worse. 0-1 (33) Kozul, Z (2605) – Apicella, M (2500) Eupen 1997.

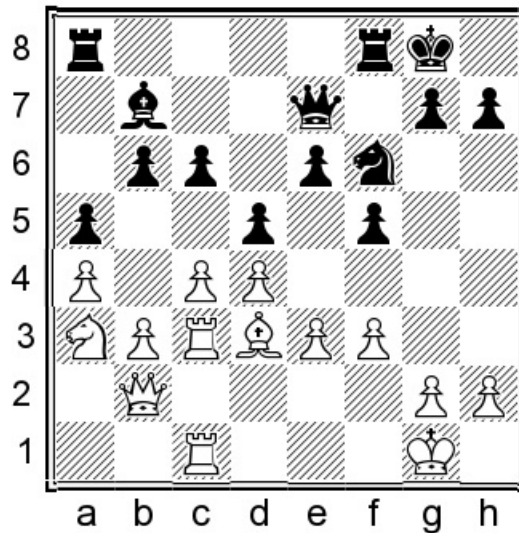
12...♞d7

Black can also develop the bishop first instead: 12...b6 13.♖ac1 ♔b7



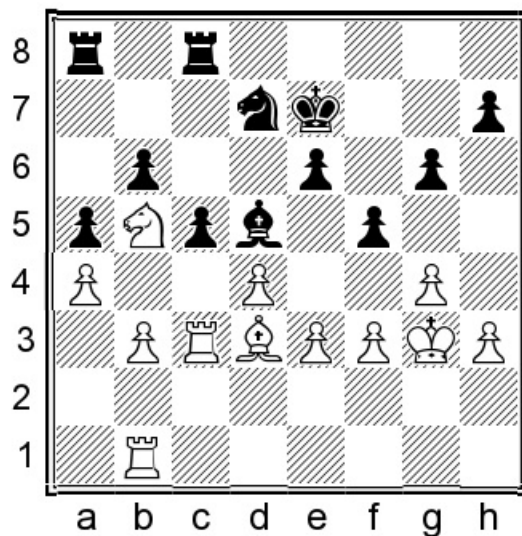
Position after: 13...♔b7

A) 14.♗e5 ♘d7 15.♗xd7 ♙xd7 16.♖c2 ♚e7 17.♖fc1 ♘a6 18.f3 ♘f6 19.♖c3 ♔b7 A manoeuvring game now ensues.



Position after: 19...♔b7

The most likely plans by both sides play out as follows: 20.♗c2 ♖fe8 21.♙a3 ♙xa3 22.♗xa3 g6 23.♗f2 ♗f8 24.♖b1 ♘d7 25.h3 ♗e7 26.g4 ♖ec8 27.♗g3 c5 28.♗b5 ♔c6 29.cxd5 ♔xd5.



Position after: 29...♙xd5

Following the unsound pawn sacrifice 30.e4 fxe4 31.fxe4 ♖b7 32.d5 exd5 33.exd5 ♙xd5 34.♞d1 ♜f6 35.♙c2 ♞d8 36.♜h2 ♙c6 37.♞e3+ ♜f7 38.♜d6+ ♜g7 39.♞e7+ ♜g8 White resigned in Ilincic, Z (2542) – Tregubov, P (2628) Herceg Novi 2001.

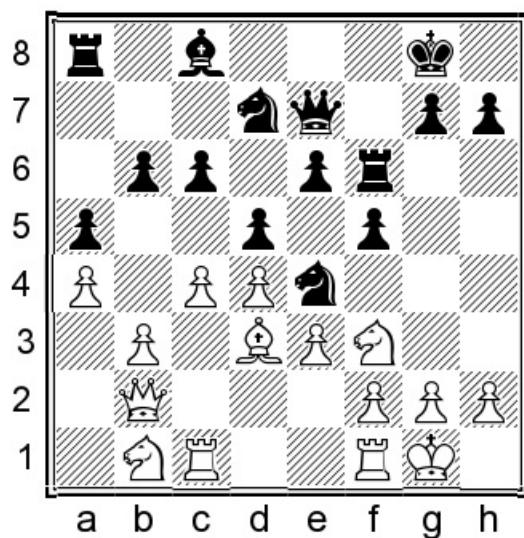
B) 14.cxd5! exd5 [14...cxd5 15.♜e5 is also unpleasant for Black] 15.♜e5 ♞f6 16.f3 ♜g5 17.♜c2 ♜d7 18.b4! leads to some pressure for White.

13.♞ac1

White anticipates the ...b6 plan.

13.♜c2 b6 14.♞fc1 ♙b7 15.♙f1 f4! A strong plan. 16.♞e1 c5 17.cxd5 exd5 18.exf4 ♞xf4 19.♜d2 ♞f6 Black was better and later won, Maric, A (2400) – Polgar, Z (2550) Tilburg 1994.

13...♞f6 14.♜b1 b6

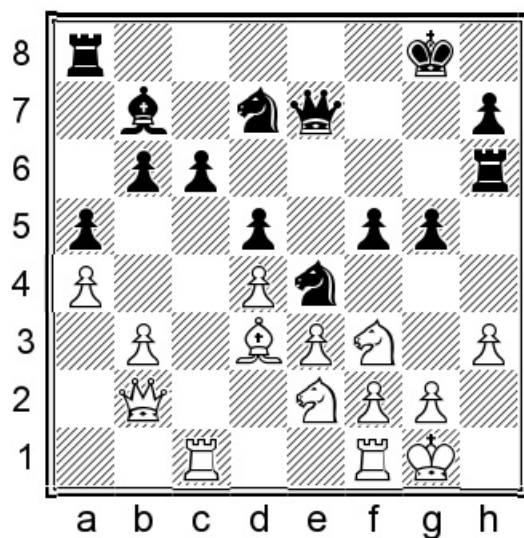


Position after: 14...b6

15.♘c3

Black's point is that after 15.cxd5 exd5 the c6-pawn is defended, and after the further 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♖h6 18.g3 ♖g6 he has no problems.

15...♖h6 16.h3 ♘b7 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♘e2 g5



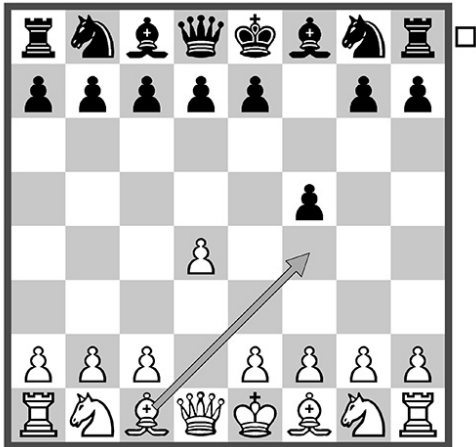
Position after: 18...g5

Black has strong counterplay.

Chapter 10

London System

1.d4 f5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 10 – London System

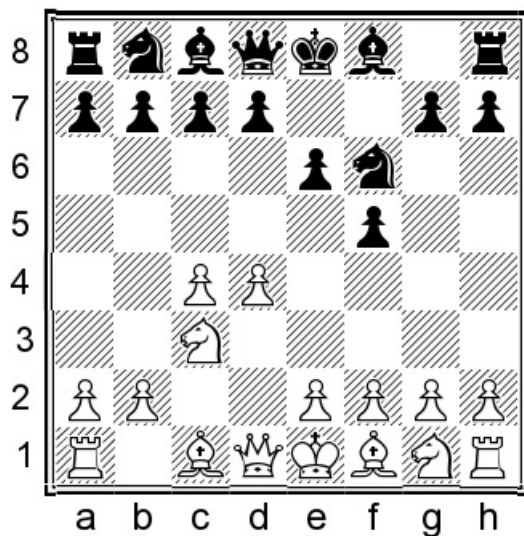
1.d4 f5

a) 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 e6 4.♕f4

b) 2.♗f3 e6 3.♕f4

a) 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 e6 4.♕f4

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 e6

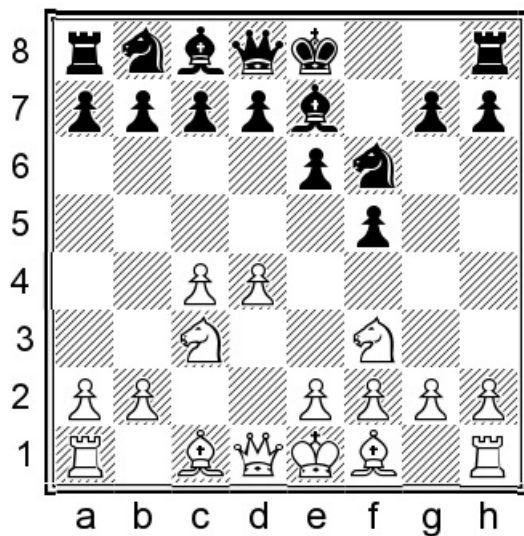


Position after: 3...e6

4.♘f4

Right now we're looking at 'London' setups (i.e. with a bishop on f4) that are played in conjunction with c4. They involve both positional and tactical ideas.

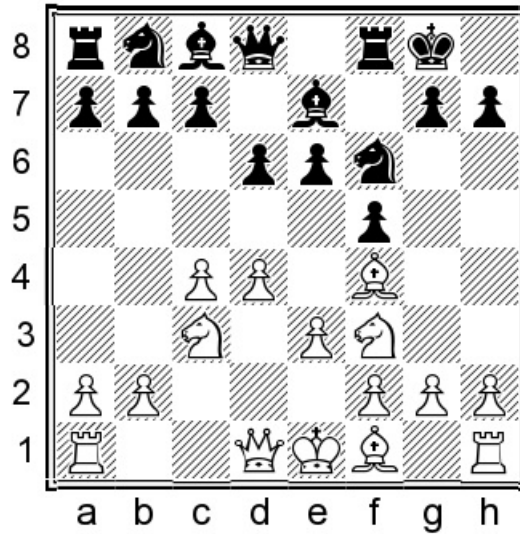
4.♘f3 ♕e7!?



Position after: 4...♕e7!?

Going to b4 is also possible, but deviates somewhat from the Stonewall emphasis of this book, as the resulting positions would have more in common with the Nimzo-Indian.

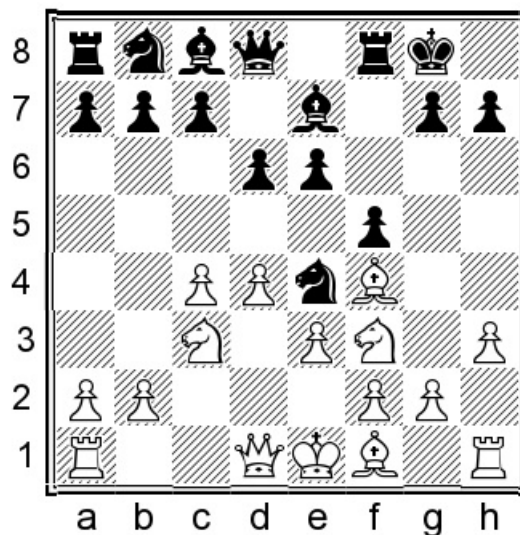
5.♙f4 [5.g3 d5 would lead to transpositions to the other Stonewall lines.] 5...0-0 6.e3 d6



Position after: 6...d6

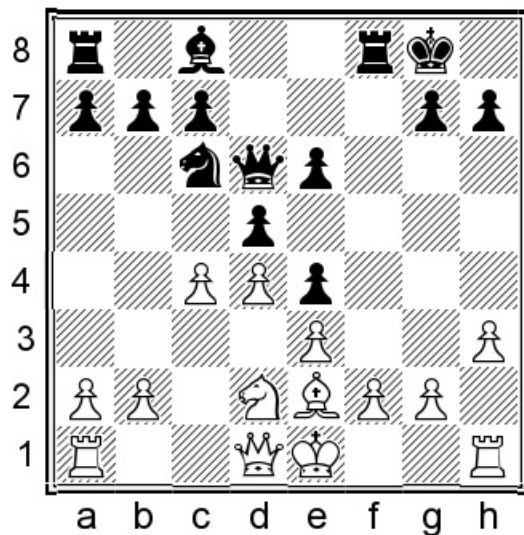
7.h3 White can't, in general, avoid playing this move in the London system. [Following 7.♙e2 ♘h5! 8.h3 ♘xf4 9.exf4 ♙f6 10.♖b3 c5 11.♞d1 ♚e7 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.♞fe1 b6 15.♘b5 ♙b7 16.♘d6 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 ♚xd6 18.♙f3 ♙xd4 19.♙xb7 ♞ae8 20.♚f3 ♞e7 Black was more than fine in Bredl, H (2341) – Kindermann, S (2515) Germany 2016.]

A) At first I thought that in the following game Black played a plan of reasonable quality but this isn't actually so. 7...♘e4?!



Position after: 7... ♖e4?!

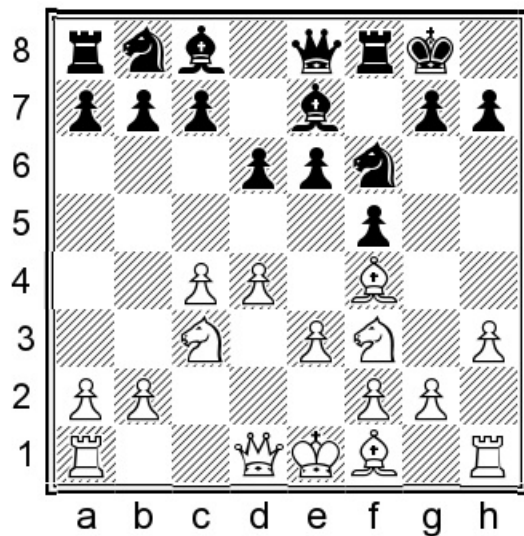
8. ♗xe4 fxe4 9. ♗d2 d5 10. ♕e2 ♖c6 11. ♕h2 ♕d6 12. ♕xd6 ♔xd6



Position after: 12... ♔xd6

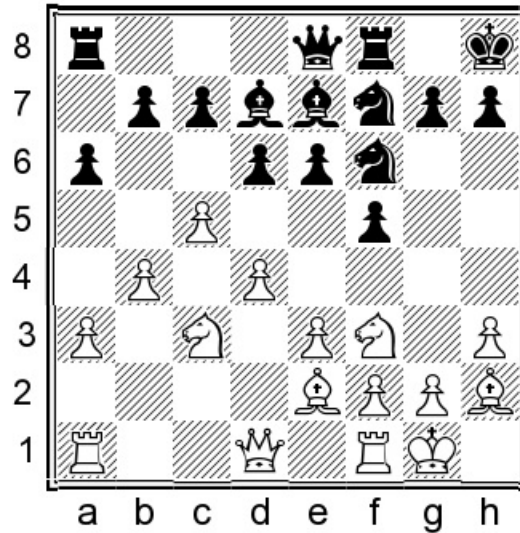
13. 0-0! [In the game White played less constructively: 13. ♖c1?! ♗e7 14. ♗b3 c6 15. 0-0 ♗f5 16. cxd5 cxd5 17. ♖c3 ♕d7 18. ♖fc1 ♕c6 19. ♕b5 ♕xb5 20. ♗xb5 ♗e7 21. ♖c7 ♗g5! with counterplay. ½ – ½ (30) Piket, J (2615) – Nikolic, P (2635) Wijk aan Zee 1992] 13... ♗e7 14. ♗b3 c6 [14... ♗b6 15. ♖ac1 ♗xb3 16. axb3 c6 17. f3 exf3 18. ♗xf3± also gives White an edge.] 15. f3! exf3 16. ♗xf3 White is clearly better.

B) 7... ♗e8!?



Position after: 7... ♔e8!?

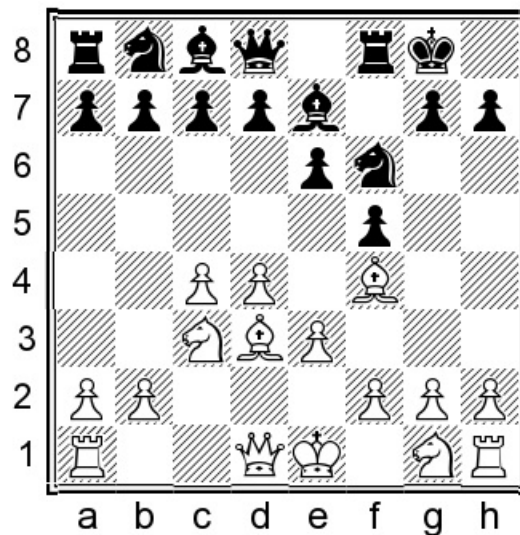
8. ♖e2 ♜c6 9. 0-0 a6!? 10. ♗h2 ♕h8 11. a3 ♞d8 12. b4 ♞f7 13. c5 ♘d7



Position after: 13... ♘d7

We have reached a complex position where both sides must play concretely. Black can go ...g5 next (or instead of ♘d7) with complications.

4... ♗e7 5. e3 0-0 6. ♘d3!?



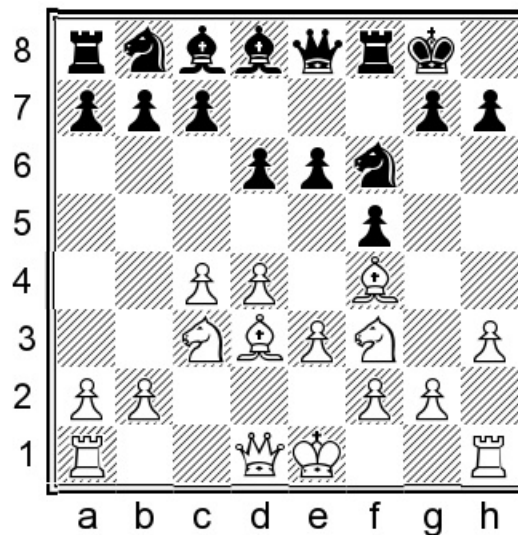
Position after: 6. ♘d3!?

This is yet another interesting plan for White here.

6...d6 7.h3!?

There are no other reasonable moves that don't cede the bishop-pair. Also, White wants to retain ideas of g4.

7...♚e8 8.♘f3 ♙d8

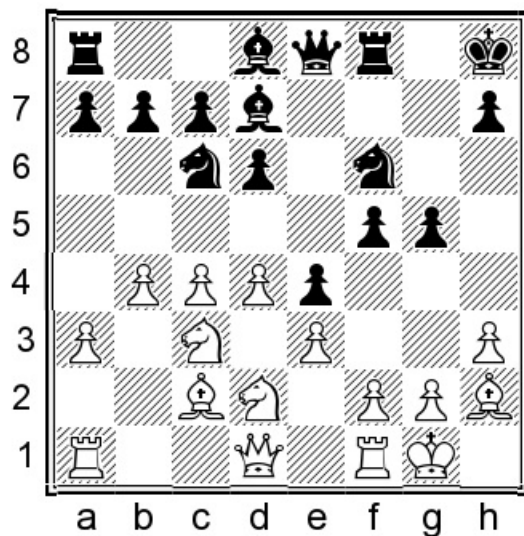


Position after: 8...♙d8

Now White has a sharp option that we should investigate carefully.

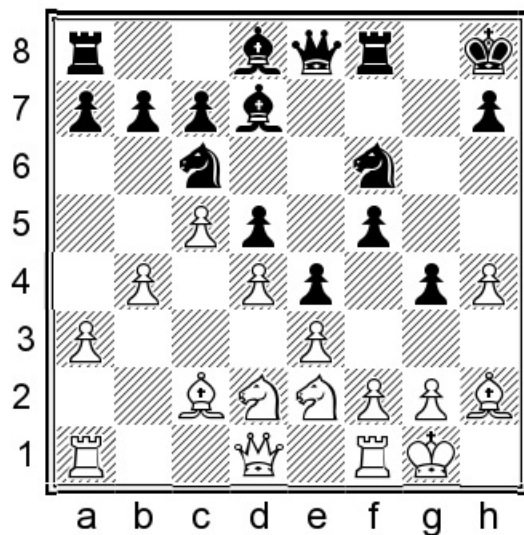
9.g4!?

The calmer option here would be: 9.0-0 ♖c6 10.♙h2 e5 11.♙c2 ♔h8! Placing the king on h8 is generally quite healthy. 12.a3 ♙d7!? 13.b4 e4 14.♘d2 g5



Position after: 14...g5

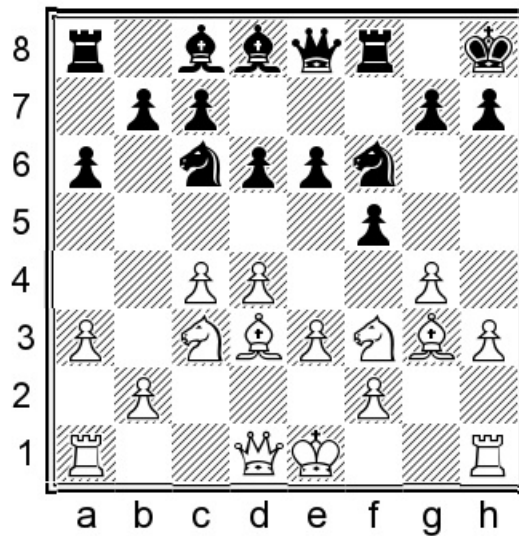
In this sharp position, Black is of course playing for a kingside attack. 15.c5 [15.b5 ♖e7 with counterplay; another principled alternative is 15.f3 exf3 16.♙xf3 g4! 17.hxg4 ♘xg4 18.♙f4 ♗e7! 19.c5 ♗g6 but Black gets enough play here.] 15...g4 16.h4 [After 16.cxd6 gxh3 17.dxc7 ♙g6 18.g3 ♙xc7 Black is better.] 16...d5 17.♗e2!?



Position after: 17.♗e2!?

White is trying to block up the kingside so Black can't attack but this isn't so trivial to accomplish. 17...♗e7 [17...♗h5 18.♗f4! might give White what he wanted.] 18.♗f4 ♗g6 19.♗xg6+ hxg6 20.♙e5 ♖h7 Black has an attack here.

9...♖c6 10.♗g3 a6 11.a3 ♔h8

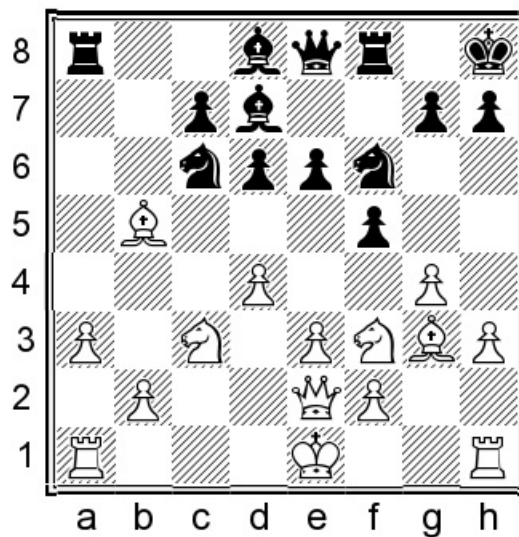


Position after: 11...♔h8

White has a choice in this sharp position but Black has decent replies to everything.

12.♜c2

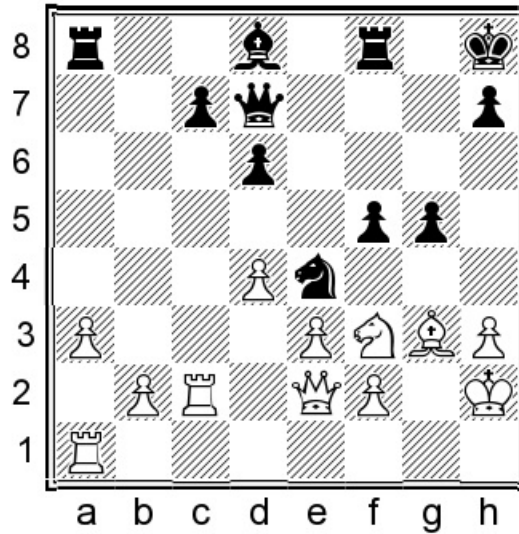
12.♜e2 b5! 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♗xb5 ♗d7



Position after: 14...♗d7

15.gxf5 exf5 16.0-0 ♗e7 17.♗xd7 ♜xd7 18.♔h2 ♗ed5 19.♞fc1 ♗xc3 20.♞xc3 ♗e4

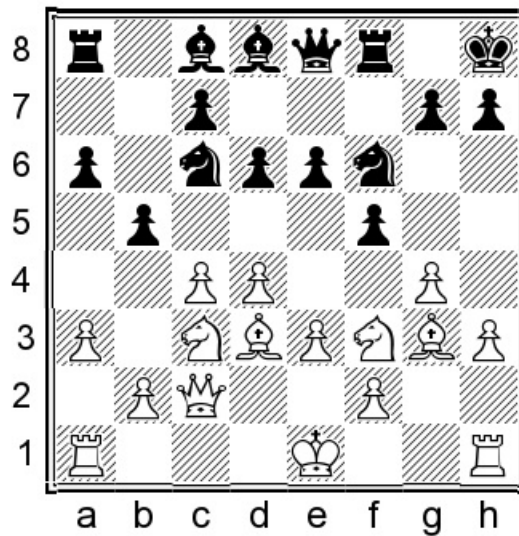
21.♖c2 g5↑



Position after: 21...g5↑

White's exposed king position gives Black enough play for the missing pawn.

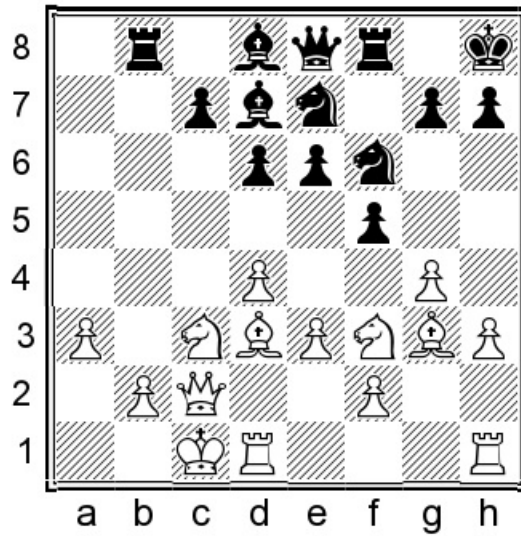
12...b5!



Position after: 12...b5!

An important idea to keep in mind, since after all White's king has still not left the center.

13.cxb5 axb5 14.♙xb5 ♖d7 15.0-0-0 ♜b8 16.♙d3 ♗e7

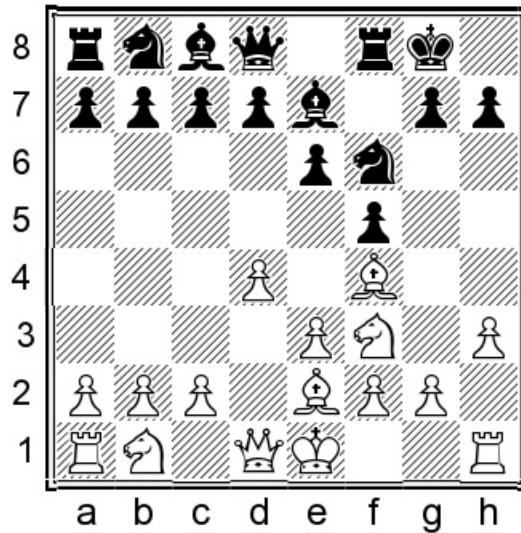


Position after: 16... ♗e7

Here Black has fully sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

b) 2. ♗f3 e6 3. ♙f4

1.d4 f5 2. ♗f3 e6 3. ♙f4 ♗f6 4.e3 ♙e7 5.h3 0-0 6. ♙e2!?



Position after: 6. ♙e2!?

White first develops before thinking about playing c4.

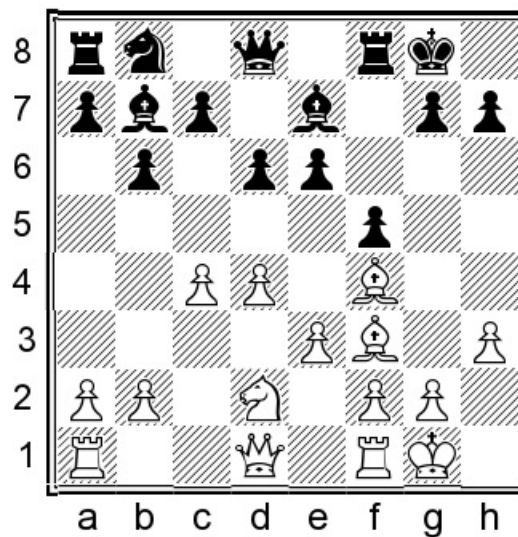
6...b6

Now Black has time for this type of development.

7.0-0 ♘b7 8.c4 ♗e4

Black is playing a Queen's Indian against the London!

9.♗fd2 ♗xd2 10.♗xd2 d6 11.♘f3

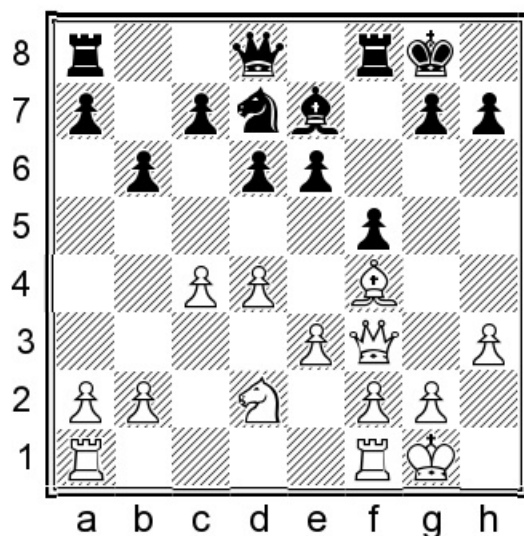


Position after: 11.♘f3

This exchange is OK for White but Black also should not complain as he now has enough space for the remaining pieces.

11...♘xf3 12.♗xf3

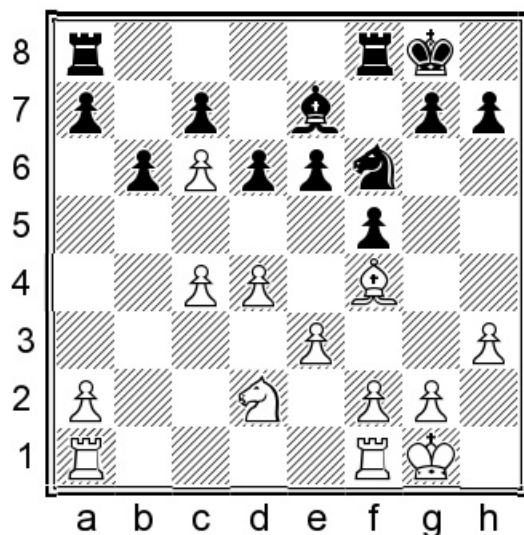
Another option is: 12.♙xf3 ♗d7



Position after: 12...♞d7

A) 13.b4 a5 14.b5 [14.a3 ♞f6 15.c5 axb4 16.axb4 ♞d5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.b5 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♚d7 Black is fine.] 14...♚e8 15.♙h2 ♞c8 16.♖ac1 g5!? It is easy to imagine Black having an attack on the kingside in the future.

B) 13.♚c6 ♞f6 14.b4 ♚d7 15.b5 ♚xc6 16.bxc6

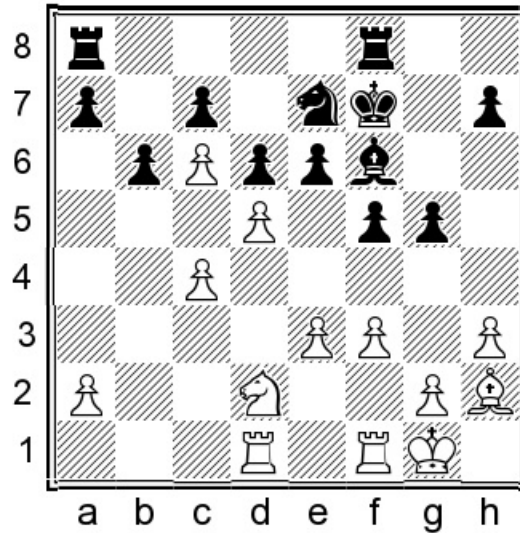


Position after: 16.bxc6

B1) In the stem game Black didn't react in a good way and ended up in a worse position: 16...♞fe8?! 17.a4 a5 18.♙h2 ♙f8 19.f3 g6 20.g4 ♚f7 21.♖ae1 ♞g8 22.e4 ♙g7 23.♞b3 ♖ac8 24.♚g2 ♞e7 25.d5 exd5 26.cxd5± 1-0 (54) Sedlak, N (2583) –

Hoang Thanh Trang (2436) Budapest 2018.

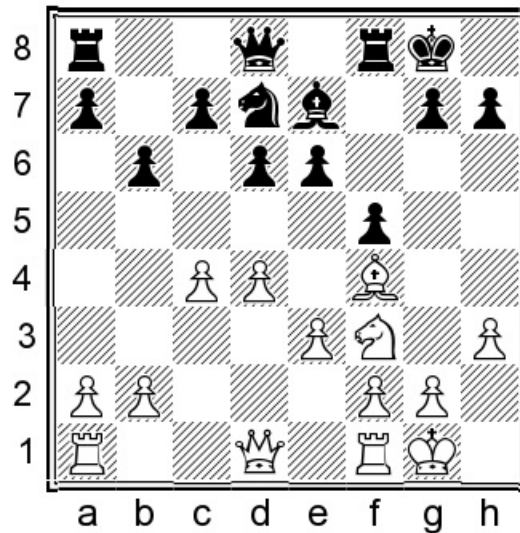
B2) 16...♔f7! A nice manoeuvre. The knight uses the g8 square to jump to e7, while the bishop moves to f6. 17.f3 ♖g8! 18.d5 ♕f6 19.♞ad1 g5 20.♗h2 ♘e7



Position after: 20...♘e7

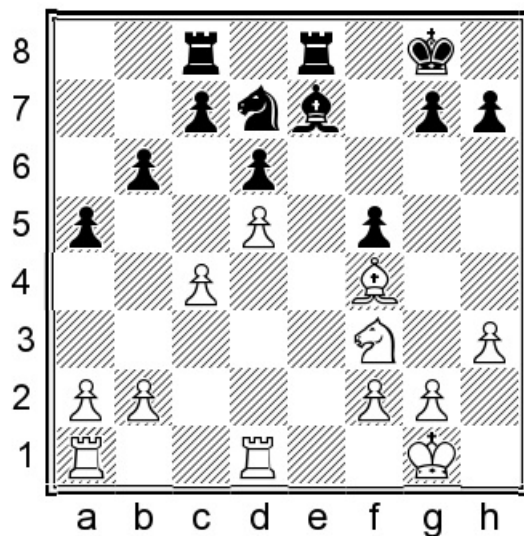
21.♗b3 [21.e4 f4] 21...♞ae8! 22.e4 h5 23.♞fe1 ♘g6 ⇒ Black is doing fine here.

12...♗d7



Position after: 12...♗d7

13. ♖a4 a5 14. ♜fd1 ♚e8 15. ♜c6 ♜c8 16. e4 ♘f6 17. ♜xe8 ♜fxe8 18. exf5 exf5 19. d5 ♘d7!



Position after: 19... ♘d7!

20.b3

20. ♘d4 ♜f6 21. ♘xf5 ♜xb2 22. ♜ab1 ♜f6∞

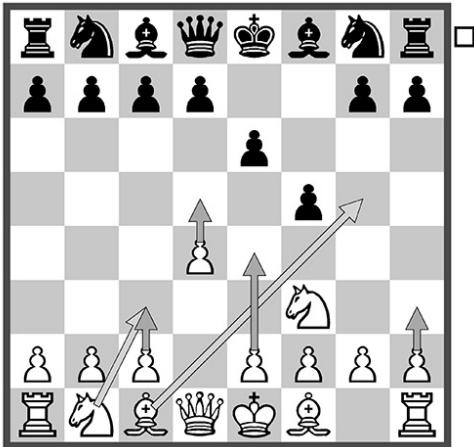
20... ♜f6 21. ♜ac1 ♜e2 22. ♜d2 ♜xd2 23. ♜xd2 ♘e5 24. ♘xe5 ♜xe5 25. ♜f1 ♜e8 26. ♜e1 ♜f7=

Black doesn't have any more problems. In Shankland, S (2656) – Ivanchuk, V (2733) Edmonton 2015 a draw was agreed very soon.

Chapter 11

Irregular 3rd moves

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 11 – Irregular 3rd moves

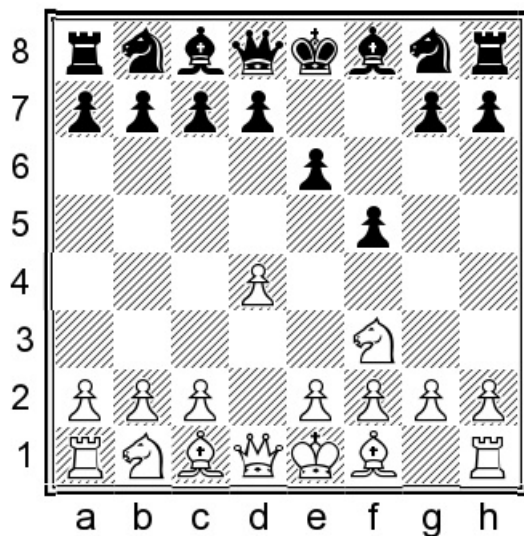
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6

a) 3.c3, 3.h3, 3.e4, 3.d5

b) 3.♙g5, 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5

a) 3.c3, 3.h3, 3.e4, 3.d5

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6

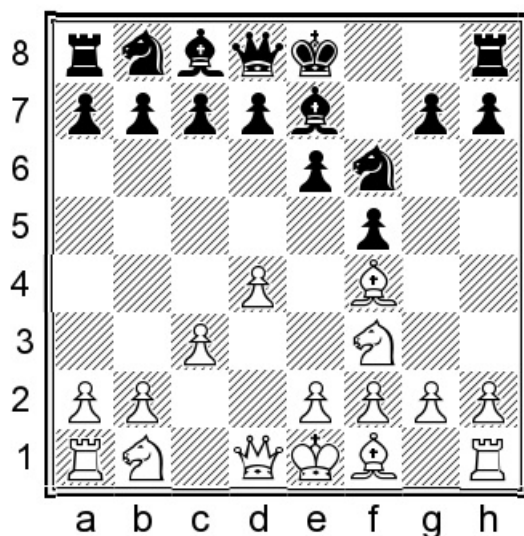


Position after: 2...e6

3.d5!?

This is an interesting move that was popular for a while. White wants to prevent Black constructing his Stonewall in the most direct manner possible! I think Black has enough play after this and also after the other rare options that follow.

A) 3.c3 ♕e7!? 4.♕f4 ♜f6

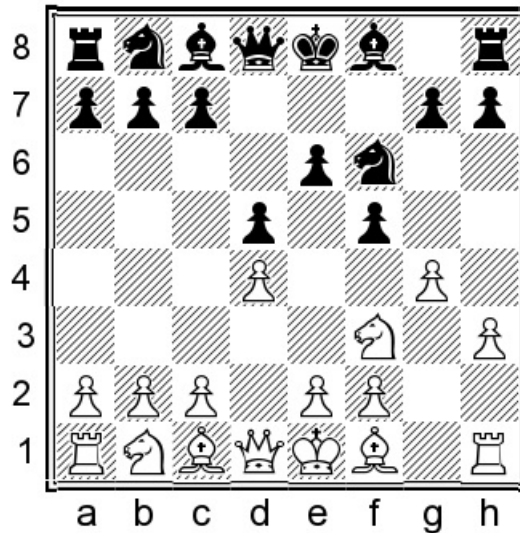


Position after: 4...♜f6

This is a transposition to a sharp line in the London System, which can be found in my

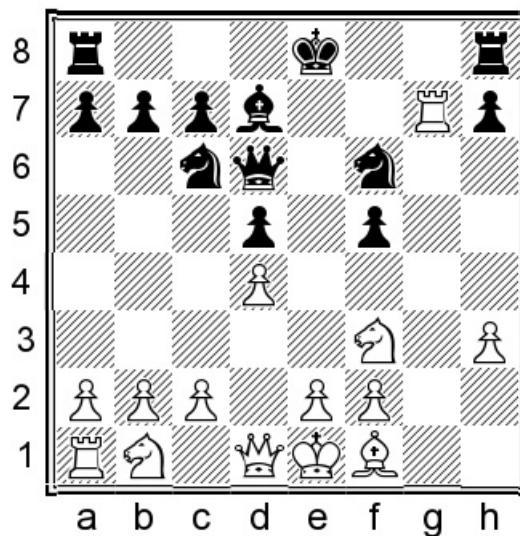
book on the Colle – Zukertort.

B) 3.h3 The idea of this move is to sow confusion more than anything else. Black should follow the principle that flank thrusts should be met by central action, as follows: 3...♘f6 4.g4 d5!



Position after: 4...d5!

5.gxf5 exf5 6.♖g1 ♘c6 7.♙f4 [After 7.♗d3 ♙e6 8.♙f4 the same sacrifice is playable: 8...♙d6! with easy play.] 7...♙d6! 8.♙xd6 ♗xd6 9.♖xg7 ♙d7

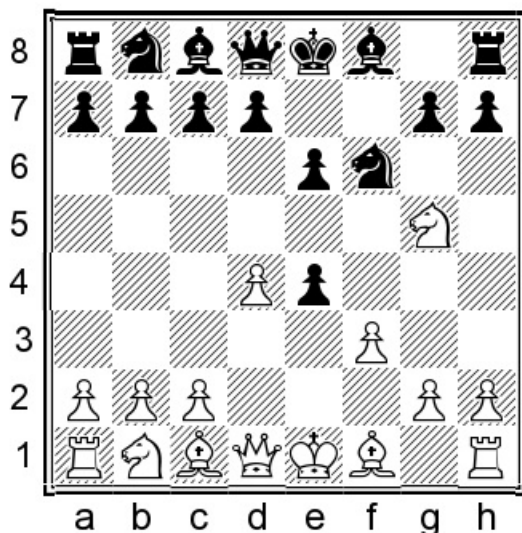


Position after: 9...♙d7

White suffers a lot with his development, while Black is about to connect rooks with

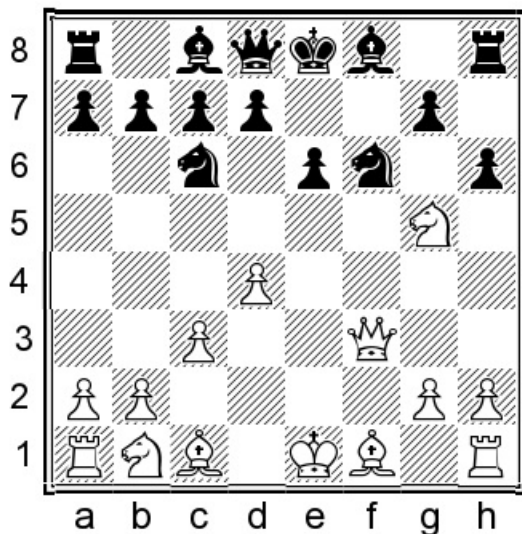
long castling and then go on the attack to cash in on his extra tempi.

C) 3.e4 fxe4 4.♘g5 ♘f6 5.f3



Position after: 5.f3

This idea is a lot less ridiculous than it looks. In fact, even a World Champion (Vassily Smyslov) failed to find a real antidote when faced with this idea. 5...exf3!? 6.♙xf3 ♘c6 7.c3 h6

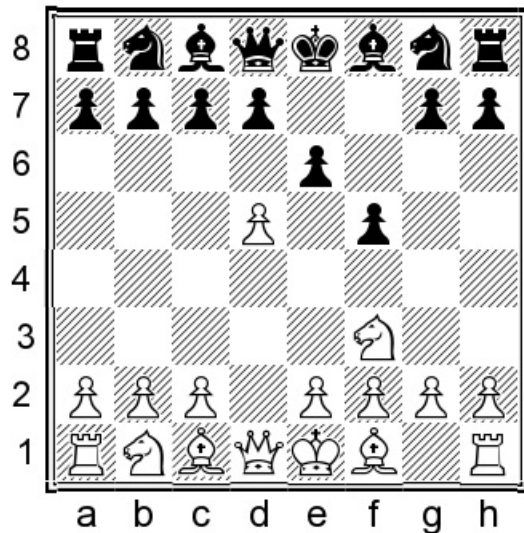


Position after: 7...h6

Black might be reluctant to make this move due the the weakness it creates on g6, but in reality there is nothing to worry about. 8.♘h3 [Or 8.♘e4 d5♣ which doesn't give

White much compensation at all.] 8...♔d6! Black just has to castle quickly: 9.♔d3 0-0
 10.0-0 e5 with a balanced position.

Back to 3.d5.



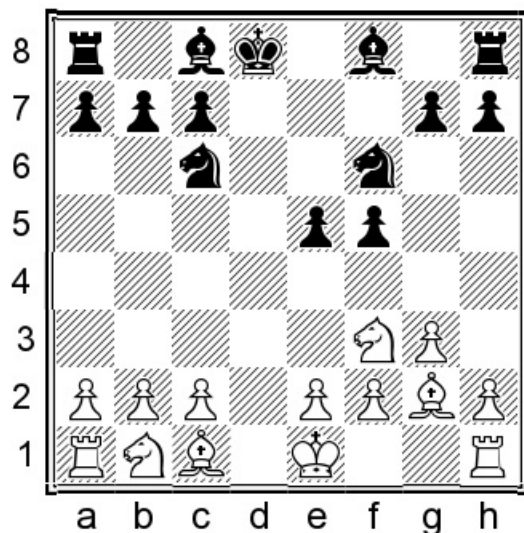
Position after: 3.d5!?

3...♗f6!?

The acid test of White's idea is to allow (or even force) the endgame.

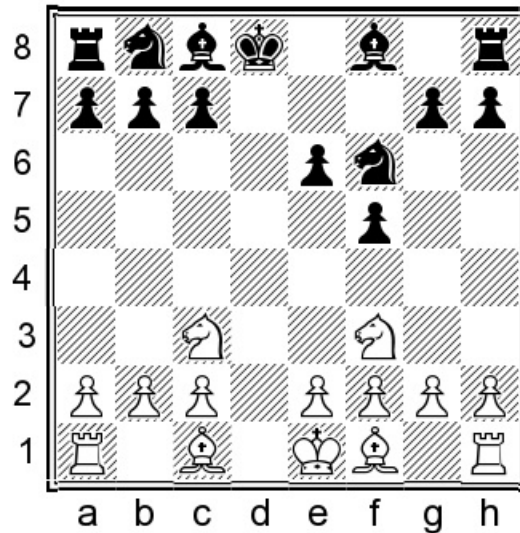
4.dxe6 dxe6 5.♙xd8+ ♔xd8 6.♗c3

6.g3!? ♗c6 7.♔g2 e5!



Position after: 7...e5!

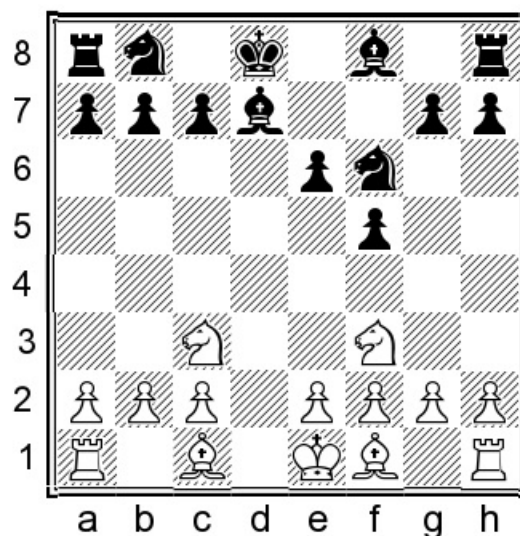
8.0-0 e4 9.♘g5 ♔e7!? The king seeks its cubbyhole. After 10.f3 h6 11.♘h3 exf3
12.exf3 ♕f7 13.♙e3 ♘d6 14.♘c3 ♖e8 Black has nice counterplay.



Position after: 6.♘c3

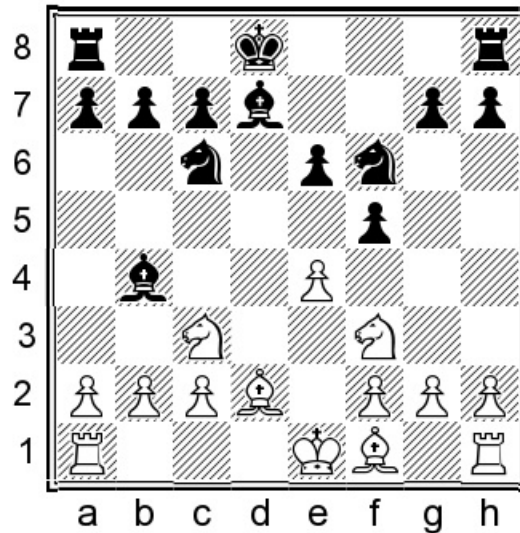
6...♘c6

The text is a logical approach in keeping with the ‘knights before bishops’ rule. Now Black is ready for ...e5 ideas and in some cases can also develop his bishop to b4. Meanwhile White should try and castle queenside quickly and push e4. But also quite reasonable is 6...♙d7!?



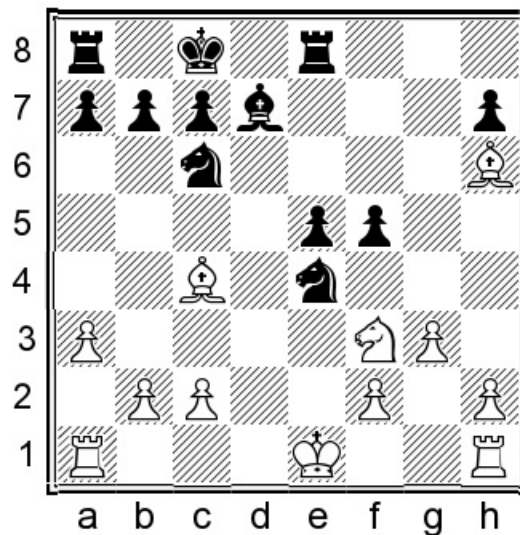
Position after: 6...♔d7!?

7.e4!? [7.♘e5 ♕e8 8.♖g5 is just pseudo-activity: after 8...♔d6 9.0-0-0 ♖e7 10.♘c4 ♖b4 11.e4 ♕xc3 12.bxc3 fxe4 13.♖f4 ♘d5 14.♖g5+ ♗f6 Black is doing fine; 7.♖f4 ♔d6!? 8.e3 ♖e7=] 7...♖b4 8.♔d2 ♗c6



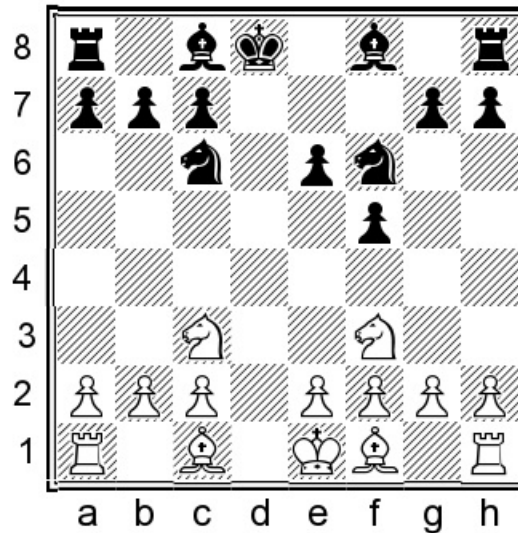
Position after: 8...♗c6

9.exf5 [After 9.0-0-0 ♕xc3 10.♕xc3 ♗xe4 11.♕xg7 ♖g8 White is simply overextended; the more restrained 9.a3 ♕xc3 10.♕xc3 ♗xe4 11.♕xg7 ♖g8 12.♖h6 e5 13.g3 ♖c8 14.♕c4 ♖e8 is probably also not an advantage.]



Position after: 14...♖e8

Now for instance 15.0-0 a5 16.♞fe1 ♜d6 17.♙d5 ♞a6 18.♞ad1 e4 19.♜h4 ♜e5 20.♙f4 ♞b6. By means of clever manoeuvring Black has attained counterplay.] 9...exf5 10.0-0-0 ♜c8 11.♙c4 ♙c5 12.♞hf1 ♞e8 13.♜d5 ♜e4 14.♙e3 ♙xe3+ 15.♜xe3 ♜d6 16.♙b3 a5 17.a3 a4 18.♙a2 b5 19.♜d5 ♜b7 20.♜f4 The point is that this is a long path to equality but Black's position is defensible throughout.



Position after: 6...♜c6

7.e4

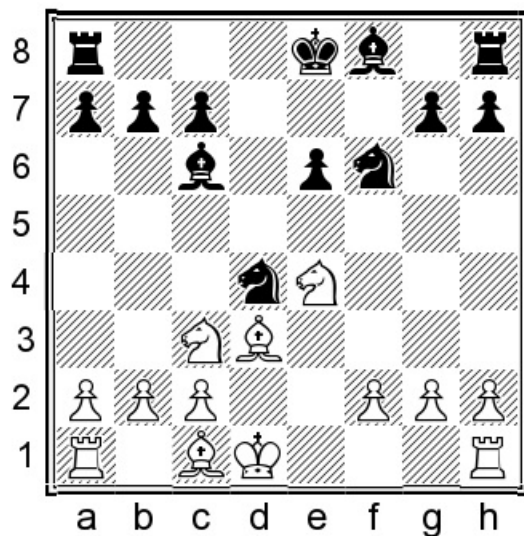
A) 7.♙f4 ♙d6! 8.0-0-0 ♜e7 9.♙xd6+ cxd6= Black is fine.

B) As before, early tactics like 7.♙g5 ♙b4 8.0-0-0+ ♜e7 9.♜b5 a6! 10.♜xc7 ♞a7 are really not helpful for White.

C) And 7.g3 ♜b4 8.♜d1 ♜g4 is simply advantageous for Black.

7...♜b4!

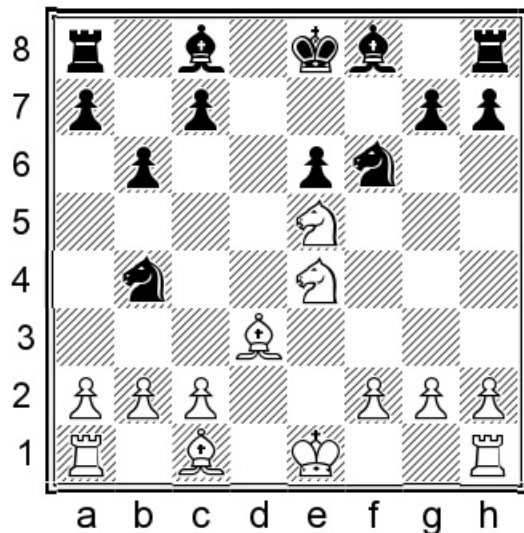
Black also has less convincing ways to get equality, for instance: 7...fxe4 8.♜g5 ♜d4 9.♜d1 ♜e8 10.♜gxe4 ♙d7 11.♙d3 ♙c6



Position after: 11...♘c6

12.♘f4 [12.f3 ♜d8 13.♞e1 ♘b4 14.♙d2 h6 15.♔c1 ♔f7 is also equal.] 12...♞d8 13.♞e1 ♘b4 14.♔c1 ♙xe4 15.♙xe4 ♖b5 16.♙e5 ♗xe4 17.♞xe4 ♗xc3 18.♙xc3 ♙xc3 19.bxc3 ♔e7 Black is fine here.

8.♙d3 fxe4 9.♗xe4 b6 10.♗e5 ♔e8=

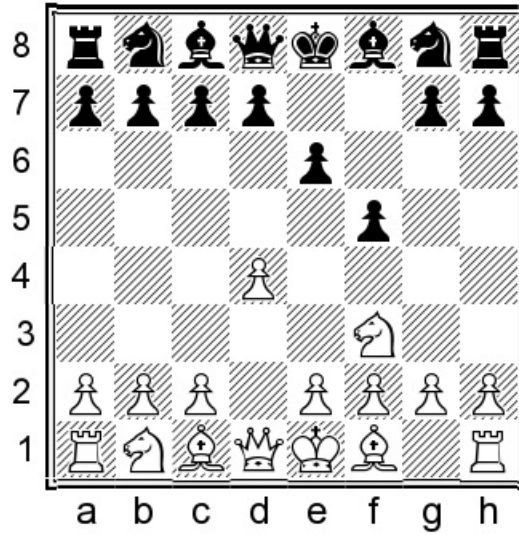


Position after: 10...♔e8=

Black is about to pick up the bishop-pair or else send White down a long road lined with unrewarding tactics.

b) 3.♔g5, 3.♘c3 ♚f6 4.♔g5

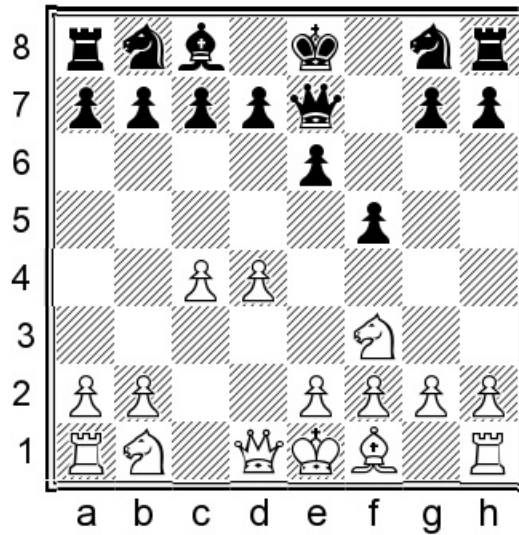
1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 e6



Position after: 2...e6

3.♘c3

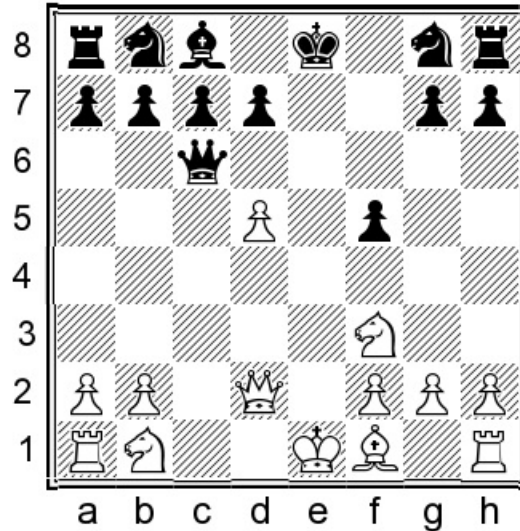
3.♔g5!? ♔e7 4.♔xe7 ♚xe7 5.c4!?



Position after: 5.c4!?

A rare and interesting choice.

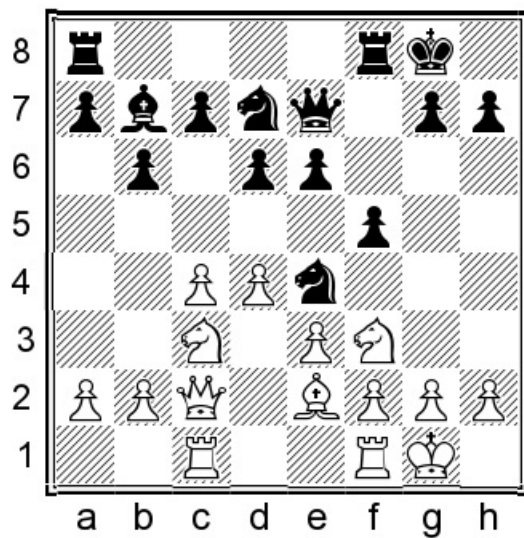
A) Taking the pawn is possible but likely dubious. 5...♙b4+?! 6.♙d2 [6.♘bd2!? ♚xb2 7.c5!? ♘f6 8.e3 b6 9.♖b1 ♚c3 10.♖b3 ♚a5= leads to a possible repetition where the rook attacks the queen nonstop!] 6...♙xc4 [If Black bails out with 6...♙xd2+ 7.♘bxd2 White probably has something due to his better development and slight space advantage.] 7.e4 ♚c6 8.d5 exd5 9.exd5



Position after: 9.exd5

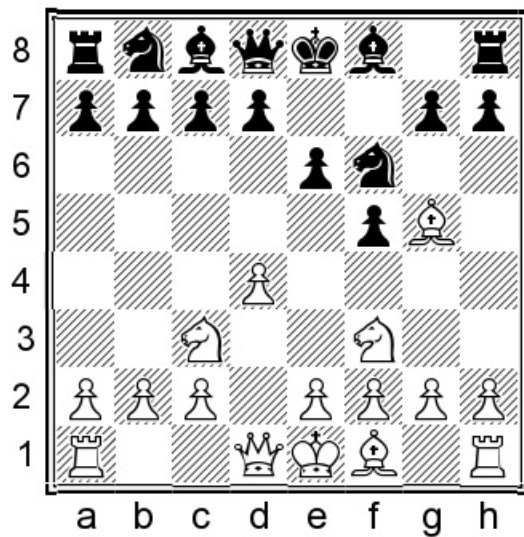
9...♙h6 [9...♙f6 10.♘c3 ♘e7 11.♘b5 ♘a6 12.d6+–] 10.♘g5 ♘e7 11.♙c4↑ White has the initiative.

B) More solid and stronger is 5...♘f6 6.♘c3 0-0 7.e3 d6 8.♙e2 b6 9.0-0 ♙b7 10.♙c2 ♘e4 11.♖ac1 ♘d7∞.



Position after: 11... Nxd7

3... Nf6 4. Kg5



Position after: 4. Kg5

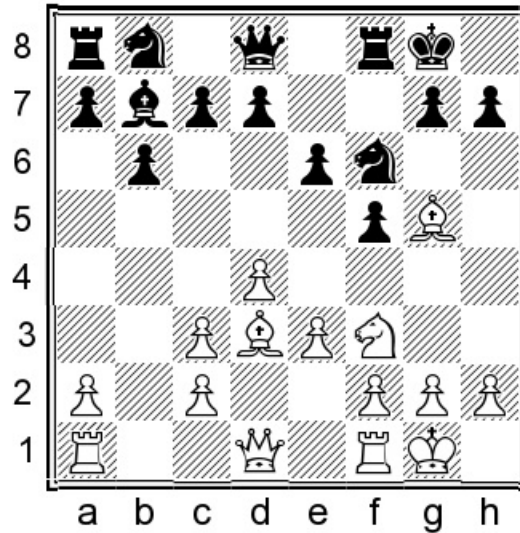
White wants to play e4 quickly.

4... Bb4!

For me it is quite clear that this is the best move, threatening to cause doubled c-pawns and avoiding the e4-push.

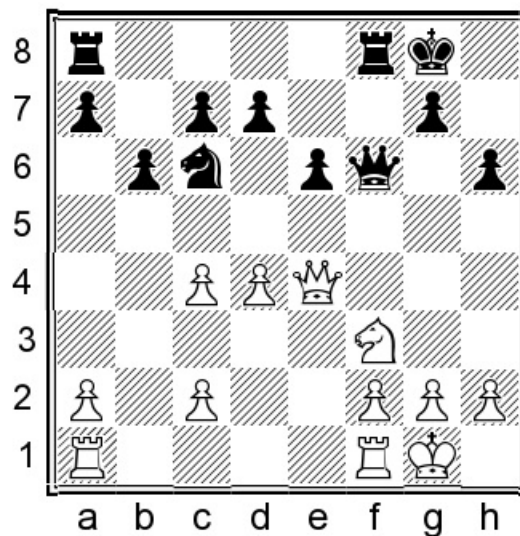
5. ♖d3!?

White does not abandon his idea of e4. He can also allow them and take play into more Nimzo-like channels. 5.e3 b6 6. ♖d3 ♖b7 7. 0-0 ♗xc3 8. bxc3 0-0



Position after: 8...0-0

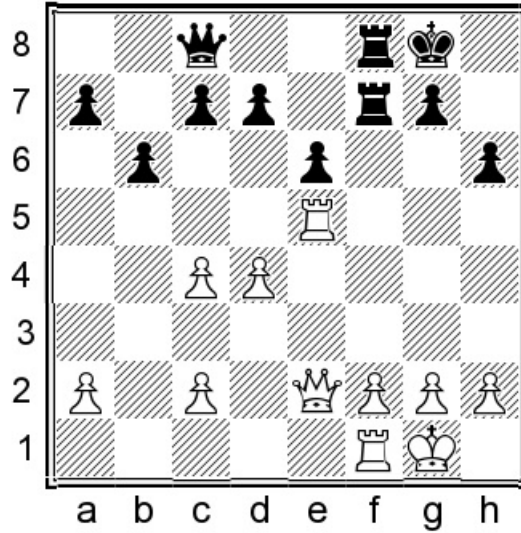
This position has been tested a few times but Black is doing OK. 9. ♖e1 [9. ♖e2 h6 10. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 11. e4 fxe4 12. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 13. ♖xe4 ♖c6 14. c4



Position after: 14.c4

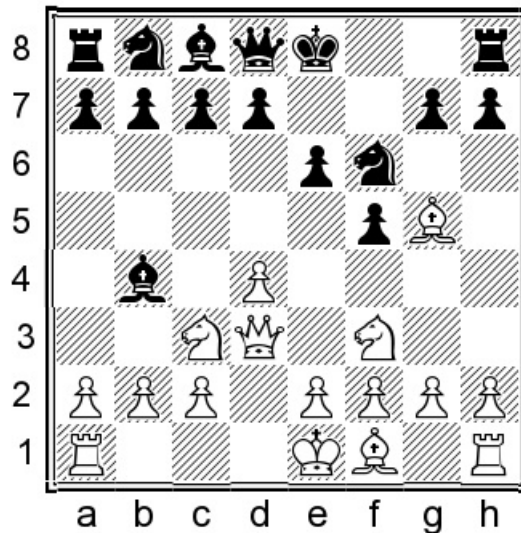
14... ♖f5! 15. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 16. c3 ♖af8 17. ♖d2 g5 18. f3 ♖a5 Black is slightly better here.

0-1 (26) Hamdouchi, A (2314) – Williams, S (2550) France 2009] 9...h6 10.♘xf6 ♖xf6
 11.e4 fxe4 12.♙xe4 ♙xe4 13.♞xe4 ♜c6 14.♚e2 ♜f7 15.♞e5 ♞xe5 16.♞xe5 ♞af8 17.♞f1
 ♚d8 18.c4 ♚c8



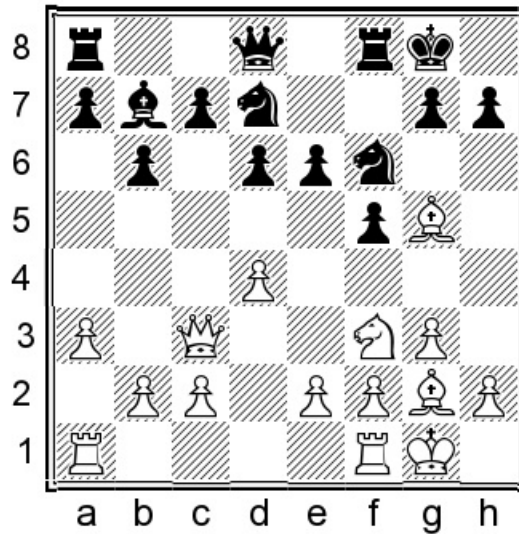
Position after: 18...♚c8

This wasn't forced but it is logical, albeit a bit simplistic, from White. 19.d5! [19.c5?!
 ♚b7 20.f3 ♜f5 21.♞xf5 ♞xf5 Black has pressure against White's bad queenside pawns.
 0-1 (48) Zschaebitz, K (2113) – Kalinitschew, S (2488) Berlin 2007] 19...exd5 20.cxd5
 c6=



Position after: 5.♚d3!?

5...0-0 6.a3 ♕xc3+ 7.♖xc3 b6! 8.g3 ♗b7 9.♗g2 d6 10.0-0 ♘bd7



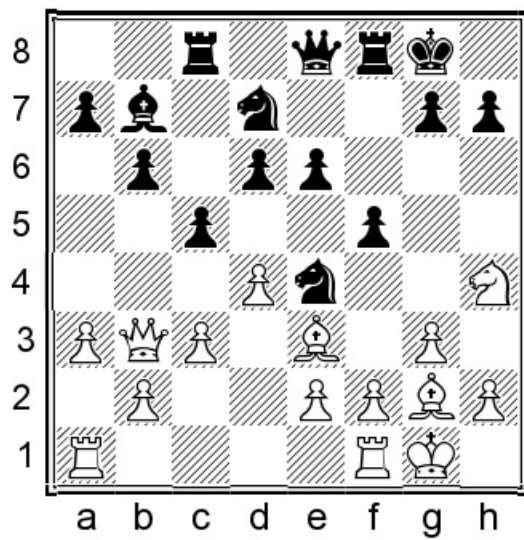
Position after: 10...♘bd7

We have reached a good version of Queen's Indian/Nimzo-Indian positions where Black has somehow already managed to play ...f5.

11.♖b3 ♖e8!?

After the inferior 11...♖e7 12.♗h4 ♗xg2 13.♗xg2 ♖f7 14.♖ad1 ♖ae8 15.♖a4 a5 16.♖c6 ♖e7 17.c4± White managed to get a little nibble, which later turned into a win in Tomashevsky, E (2714) – Vogel, R (2434) Berlin (blitz) 2018.

12.♗h4 ♗e4! 13.♗e3 c5 14.c3 ♖c8



Position after: 14...Rc8

Black is fine.

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