

THE NIMZO INDIAN BIBLE
FOR WHITE

MILOS PAVLOVIC

VOLUME 2



The Nimzo-Indian Bible for White

Volume 2

A Complete Opening Repertoire for White 4.e3

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

Foreword

I have worked with the best, or perhaps it's better to say that I have learned from the best; that's how I can best describe this book, because I spent some time with Svetozar Gligoric in the early 2000s and the Nimzo-Indian was also present. I can't really say that we went into great detail, but we certainly did discuss various systems. This book in particular is about the Rubinstein 4.e3 systems. Some of the material has been analyzed in my earlier book on the QGD and Nimzo, while some other material is presented in Volume 1 in this short series, which covers the Nimzo with 4.♘d2 and 4.♗c2. From other published books I used Gligoric's book on the Nimzo-Indian and Ivan Sokolov's book on the Nimzo with 4.e3. I found both books useful.

I need to give one explanation here and it's about the Tal Variation because that system is treated also in my Volume 1, where I analyze the 4.♘d2 line. In this Volume 2 I have omitted all positions where White places a bishop on d2 early in the game, while Volume 1 deals exclusively with an early bishop to d2 move by White.

I hope readers will enjoy both of those books.

Milos Pavlovic, December 2022

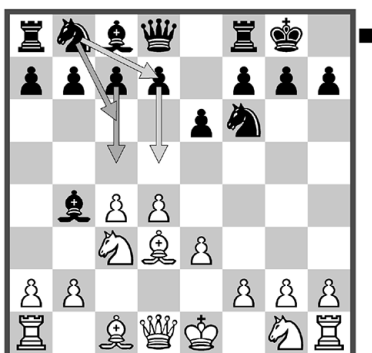
Part I

4...0-0 – Early Sidelines

Chapter 1

Various Early Deviations

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♕d3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Various Early Deviations

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♕d3

a) 5...--

b) 5...d5 6.♗f3 ♗c6 – Taimanov’s Line

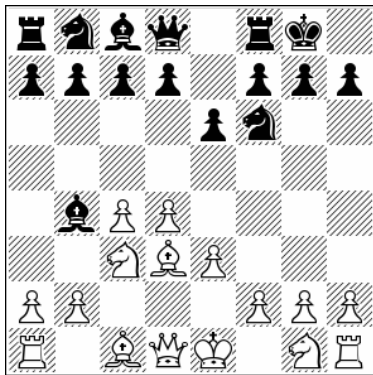
c) 5...c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗bd7

d) 5...c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 b6

e) 5...c5 6.♗f3 ♗c6

a) 5...--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♕d3



Position after: 5...♕d3

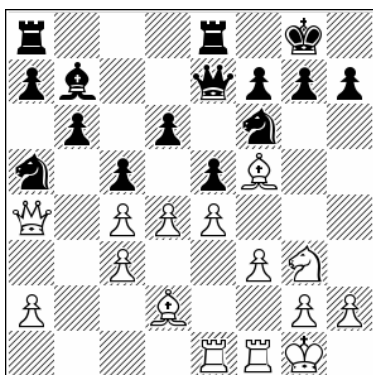
Here we will investigate rare lines and variations, such as the Taimanov, that are not so critical.

5...d6

We will check some unusual or lesser-known lines in which Black is going either for the ...e5 plan, or for the ...d5 plan but in a less orthodox way.

5...♞e8 A bit rare but actually a reasonable idea.
6.♘ge2 It is clear that the knight belongs on this square now; it's more flexible there.

A) 6...d6 7.0-0 e5 8.♗g3 ♕xc3 9.bxc3 ♘c6 10.f3 b6 11.♖a4 ♕b7 12.♕d2 ♗d7 13.♕f5 ♗e7 14.♞ae1 ♘a5 15.e4 c5

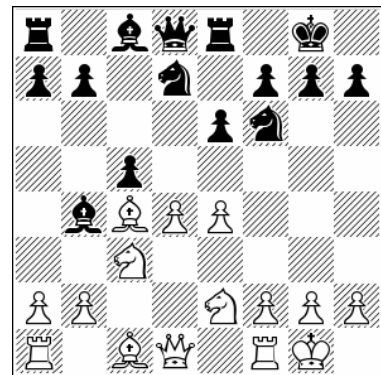


Position after: 15...c5

16.f4! White has attacking chances, 1-0 (57) Gligoric, S – Taimanov, M Budva 1967.

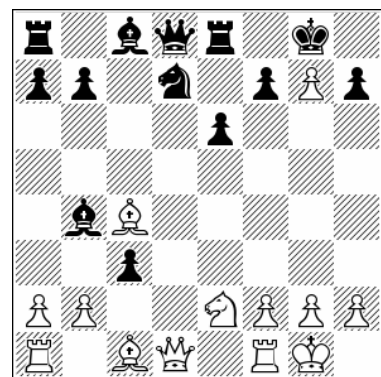
B) 6...♗c6 7.0-0 e5 8.d5 ♘b8 9.a3 ♕f8 10.e4 d6 11.b4 ♘bd7 12.f3 c5 13.♕e3 b6 14.♗c1 g6 15.♘b3 We have reached a passive version of the King's Indian, 1-0 (39) Boleslavsky, I – Kasparian, G Moscow 1952.

C) 6...d5!? 7.0-0 ♘bd7 A rather unusual combination of lines, but it's not something that can be neglected. 8.e4 dxc4 9.♕xc4 c5



Position after: 9...c5

10.e5 [also simple chess like 10.a3 ♕xc3 11.♘xc3 cxd4 12.♖xd4 ♘b6 13.♖xd8 ♞xd8 14.♕b3 e5 15.♕e3 ♕e6 16.♕xe6 fxe6 17.♕xb6 axb6 18.♞fd1 ♘e8 19.♞ac1 ♘d6 20.h4 ♔f7 21.♔f1 ♔e7 22.♞c2 gives White some edge here because the pawns on e5 and b6 are vulnerable] 10...cxd4 11.exf6 dxc3 12.fxc7!



Position after: 12.fxc7!

12...♖e5 13.♗b5 ♘d7 14.♗xd7 ♔xd7 15.♚b3
 ♗e7 16.♘xc3 With some edge.

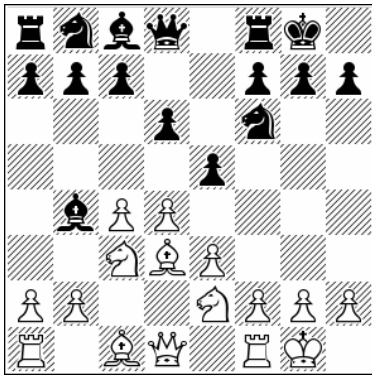
6.♘ge2

Here too we see that the knight is effective on e2 when Black is going for ...e5 plans.

6...e5

Black is trying a combination of ideas. We will see that choosing the ...e5 plan is possible, but a bit passive.

7.0-0

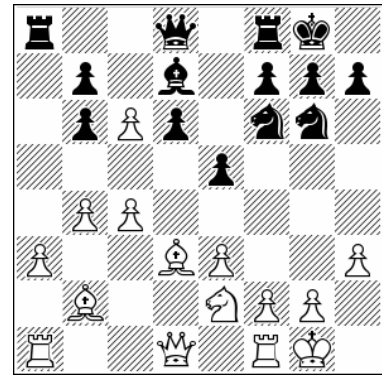


Position after: 7.0-0

7...c6

Black's point is to preserve his bishop by clearing the c7-square for it.

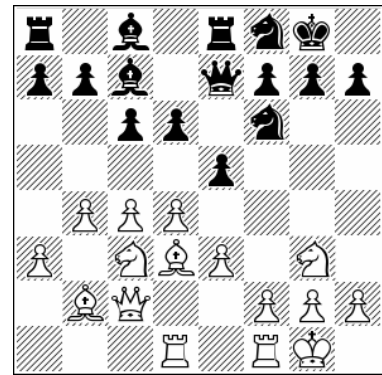
7...♗c6 8.d5 ♘e7 [8...♗b8 9.a3 ♗xc3 10.♘xc3 a5 11.e4 ♘e8 12.♗e3 f6 13.♚d2 ♖f7 14.b4 ♘d7 15.c5 simple and strong, 1-0 (30) Botvinnik, M – Kholmov, R Moscow 1947] 9.a3 ♗a5 10.b4 ♗b6 11.♘a4 ♗d7 12.♘xb6 axb6 13.♗b2 ♘g6 14.h3 c6 15.dxc6!



Position after: 15.dxc6!

15...♗xc6 16.♘c3 ♚e7 17.♖e1 This looks very good for White.

8.♚c2 ♖e8 9.a3 ♗a5 10.b4 ♗c7 11.♗b2 ♘bd7 12.♖ad1 ♚e7 13.♘g3 ♘f8



Position after: 13...♘f8

14.♘ce4!

It is essential to carry out this maneuver, especially when the other black knight leaves the d7-square.

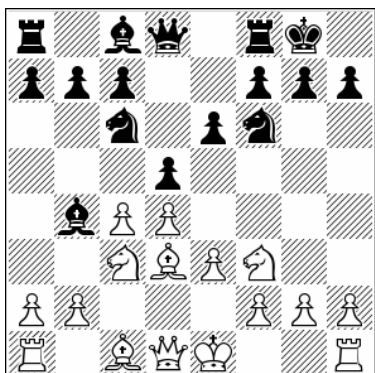
14.d5 ♗d7 15.♘f5 ♗xf5 16.♗xf5 cxd5 17.cxd5 ♘6d7 18.♖c1 g6 19.♗h3 a6 20.♚b3 White also has some edge here, 1-0 (54) Taimanov, M – Golombek, H Moscow 1956.

14...♘xe4 15.♗xe4 g6 16.d5 f5 17.♗f3

White's position looks very strong.

b) 5...d5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 – Taimanov's Line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 ♘c6



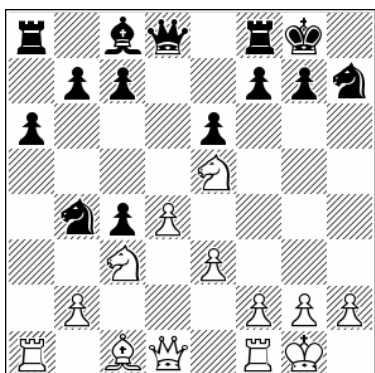
Position after: 6...♘c6

This is the correct move order if Black wants to play the Taimanov system. Sometimes Black plays ...♘c6 on move 4 or 5, but by playing ...d5 first Black is forcing the white knight to go to f3 rather than e2, which enables Black to enter the best version of this system.

7.0-0 dxc4

Black can also wait a bit before making this typical move.

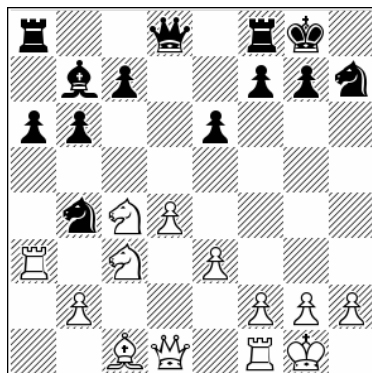
7...a6 8.a3 dxc4 9.♙xh7+!? ♘xh7 10.axb4 ♘xb4
11.♘e5



Position after: 11.♘e5

11...b6 [11...♙e7 12.♘xc4 ♜d8 13.b3 b5 14.♘a5
♙e8 15.♙a3 ♘c6 16.♙c5 ♘xa5 17.♞xa5 White has slightly preferable chances, ½-½ (28) Peralta,

F (2563) – Vila Gazquez, J (2075) Andorra 2007]
12.♘xc4 ♙b7 13.♞a3!?



Position after: 13.♞a3!?

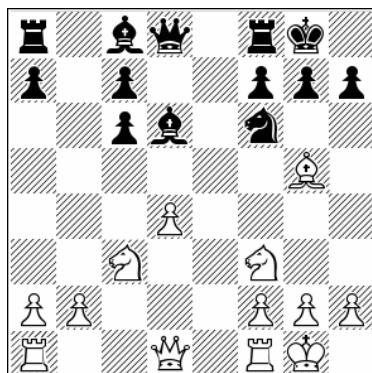
That's an interesting idea -- White is ready to open up the third rank. 13...♘d5 [13...♘f6 14.e4! ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♙xe4 16.♘e5 that's the idea behind rook to a3: now White is launching an attack] 14.♘e5 ♘hf6 15.e4! [15.♘e2 this is less clear, 1-0 (35) Del Rio de Angelis, S (2505) – Berkovich, M (2387) Andorra 2007] 15...♘xc3 16.♞xc3 ♘xe4 17.♞h3 White has developed strong attacking chances.

8.♙xc4 ♙d6

The main point of the whole Taimanov system. Black is playing for the ...e5 break.

9.♙b5 e5 10.♙xc6 exd4 11.exd4 bxc6 12.♙g5

Black has the bishop pair, but weak pawns on the queenside.



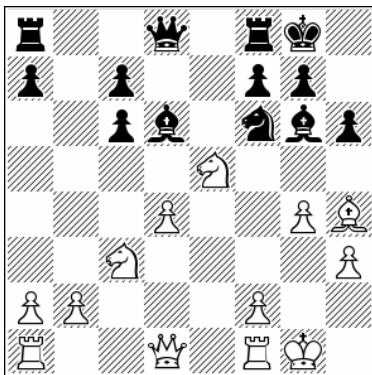
Position after: 12.♙g5

12...h6

12...♙f5 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♗xe8+ ♚xe8 15.♙xf6
 gx6 16.♘h4 ♙g6 17.♚d2 ♚d7 18.♖e1 ♖e8
 19.♗xe8+ ♚xe8 20.g3 ♚e6 21.♘g2 ♙b4 22.a3
 ♙d6 23.♘e3 ♖g7 24.♚d1 Two knights versus
 two bishop, but it seems that the shattered
 black pawns give White the better chances, 1-0
 (51) Babula, V (2545) – Zemerov, V (2400) Berlin
 1996.

13.♙h4 ♖e8

13...♙g4 14.h3 ♙h5 15.g4 ♙g6 16.♘e5



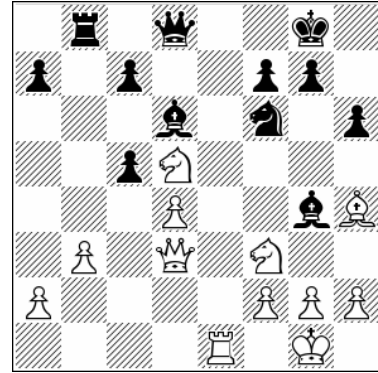
Position after: 16.♘e5

16...c5 [16...♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♚xd1 18.♖axd1 ♘d5
 19.♘xd5 cxd5 20.♖xd5 ♙e4 21.♖d4 ♙f3 22.♖c1
 c6 23.♙e7 ♖fb8 24.b3 White is better, not only
 because he is a pawn up but also because he
 simply has better pieces, 1-0 (51) Portisch, L –
 Andersson, U Prague 1970] 17.f4 cxd4 18.♚xd4
 ♙xe5 19.♚xd8 ♖fxd8 20.fxe5 ♖d3 21.exf6 ♖xh3
 22.♖g2 ♖xh4 23.♖g3 White wins, 1-0 (34)
 Babula, V (2540) – Blatny, P (2515) Lazne
 Bohdanec 1996.

14.♚d3

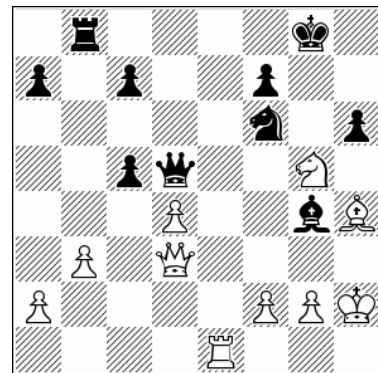
14.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 15.♚xe1 g5 16.♙g3 ♙f5 17.♘e5
 ♚e8 18.♖c1 ♘h5 19.♘a4 ♚e6 20.b3 ♖e8 21.♚c3
 Again here we see that Black has not fully
 equalized, 1-0 (53) Navara, D (2739) – Ivanisevic,
 I (2638) Minsk 2017.

14...♙e6 15.♖ad1 ♖b8 16.b3 ♙g4 17.♖de1 ♖xe1 18.♖xe1 c5 19.♘d5!



Position after: 19.♘d5!

19...g5 20.♘xg5! ♙xh2+ 21.♚xh2 ♚xd5



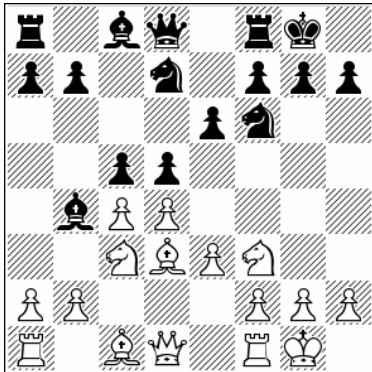
Position after: 21...♚xd5

22.♘e4

White has much better chances, 1-0 (43)
 Lilienthal, A – Estrin, Y Moscow 1953.

c) 5...c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘bd7

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘bd7**

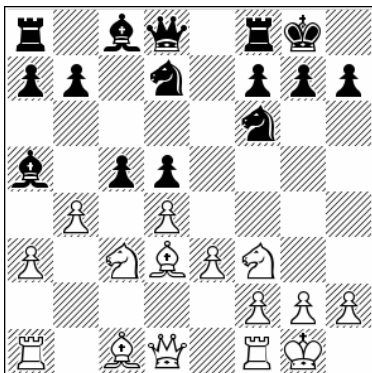


Position after: 7...♘bd7

Here we see an old line that actually has not been popular for a long time, and there is a good reason for that.

8.a3 ♙xc3

8...♙a5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.b4!

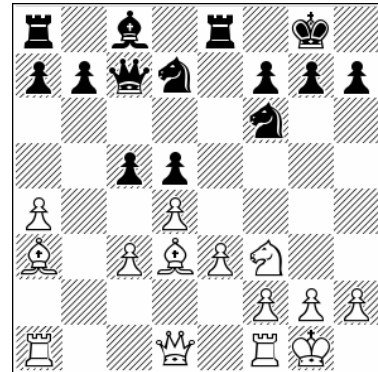


Position after: 10.b4!

This is a key idea that Gligoric found during his match with Tal in Belgrade. But Tal, who used this system with Black, deviated at a critical moment and only later in some other games was

Gligoric able to reveal this great idea, which brought him some nice wins. 10...cxb4 11.♘b5 a6 12.♙b3 bxa3 13.♘d6 ♙c7 14.♙xa3 ♙xd6 15.♙xd6 ♖e8 16.♖fc1 ♖e6 17.♙f4 h6 18.h3 White enjoys nice play for the sacrificed pawn, 1-0 (50) Gligoric, S – Andersson, U Berlin 1971.

9.bxc3 ♙c7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 ♖e8 12.♙a3



Position after: 12.♙a3

12...♘e4

12...c4 13.♙c2 ♘f8 14.♘d2 ♙g4 15.f3 ♙h5 16.♖e1 ♙g6 17.♙xf8 ♖xf8 18.♙xg6 hxg6 19.e4 White has easy play.

13.c4! cxd4 14.cxd5

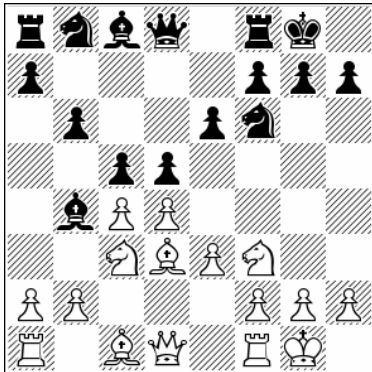
Even simpler is 14.♘xd4! dxc4 15.♖c1 ♘d6 16.♘b5 ♘xb5 17.♖xc4 ♙d8 18.axb5 when White is better.

14...dxe3 15.fxe3 ♙b6 16.♘d4 ♘df6 17.♖b1 ♙d8 18.♙c2

With less clear consequences, 1-0 (30) Sandipan, C (2618) – Tvarijonas, P (2324) Pardubice 2012.

d) 5...c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 b6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 b6



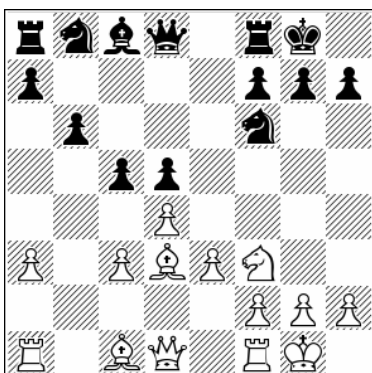
Position after: 7...b6

This is another old line but it has recently become popular again, and it's not without point. Black actually wants to play the Karpov line but is waiting in the center, maintaining the tension.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.a3

In my opinion this is a good choice, although in his book on the Nimzo Gligoric stated that 9.dxc5 bxc5 10.♘e2 is also OK, as he played in one of his games versus Keres.

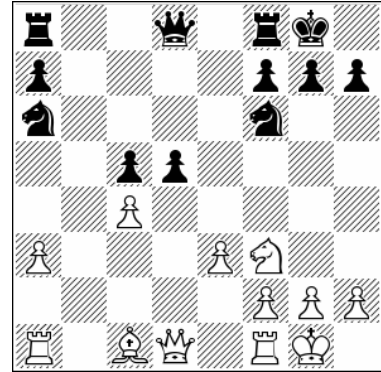
9...♙xc3 10.bxc3



Position after: 10.bxc3

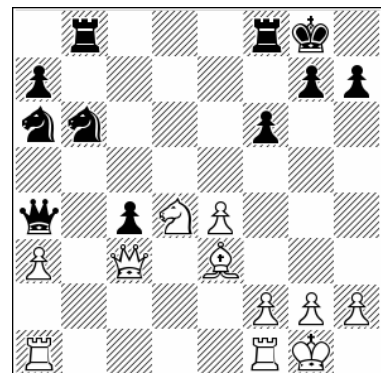
10...c4

A) 10...♙a6 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♙xa6 ♘xa6 13.c4!



Position after: 13.c4!

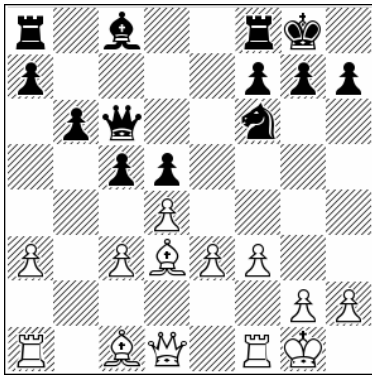
That is an important motif. Now Black has a few choices but none gives him equal play. 13...♖b8 [13...dxc4 14.♙a4 ♘c7 15.♙b2 ♘e6 16.♖fd1 ♙e7 17.♙xc4 ♖fd8 18.h3 White has some edge here] 14.♙a4 ♙b6 15.cxd5 ♙b5 16.♙c2 ♘xd5 17.e4 ♘b6 18.♙e3 c4 19.♘d4 ♙a4 20.♙c3 f6



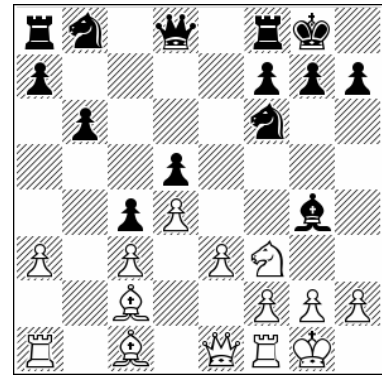
Position after: 20...f6

21.♘f5 This position is favorable for White, 1-0 (48) Parligras, M (2622) – Atalik, E (2474) Golden Sands 2012.

B) 10...♘c6 This position can arise also from the main move order, if instead of going 9...♙c7 Black plays 9...b6 and here we are. Gligoric mentions in his book that this line originates from Nimzowitsch himself. 11.♘e5 ♙c7 12.♘xc6 ♙xc6 13.f3



Position after: 13.f3



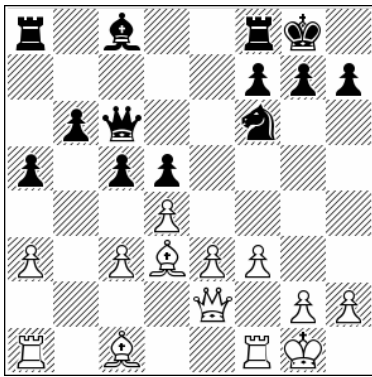
Position after: 12.♖e1

Now Black will try to stand still while controlling e4, or else try to exchange the light-squared bishops with ...♗a6. 13...a5 [13...♗e6 14.♖e1 ♘d7 15.e4 c4 16.♗c2 f5 17.e5 ♜f7 18.a4 a5 19.f4 White has better chances, 1-0 (40) Taimanov, M – Petrosian, T Zurich 1953] 14.♖e2

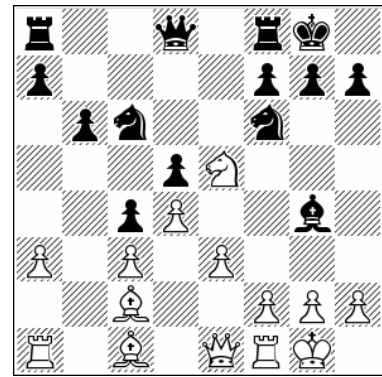
12...♗xf3

Probably best. It's not forced, but White was preparing knight to e5 ideas.

12...♘c6 13.♘e5



Position after: 14.♖e2



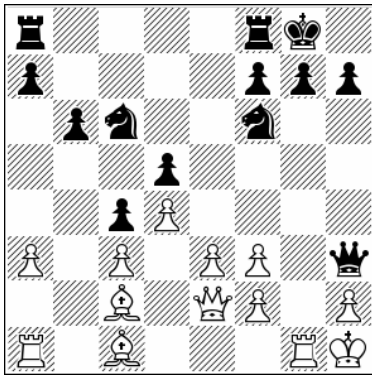
Position after: 13.♘e5

14...♗b7 [14...c4 15.♗c2 b5 16.e4 ♗e6 17.♖e1 ♘d7 18.♖g3 f6 19.♗f4 ♜f7 20.♜fe1 ♘f8 21.♗d6 ♜d8 22.♗c5 White is better, ½-½ (22) Rabar, B – Petrosian, T Belgrade 1954] 15.a4 c4 16.♗c2 ♜fe8 17.♖f2 ♖e6 18.♖h4 g6 19.♗d2 ♘h5 20.♜ab1 White is better here as well, since Black somehow finds himself without a clear plan, 1-0 (41) Gligoric, S – Persitz, R Hastings 1968.

11.♗c2 ♗g4 12.♖e1

13...♘e5 [13...♖c7 14.f3 ♗h5 15.g4 ♗g6 16.♘xg6 hxg6 17.e4 dxe4 18.g5 ♘h5 19.fxe4 ♜ae8 20.a4 f5 21.♗a3 White has built up a tremendous position, 1-0 (35) Gajewski, G (2629) – Markowski, T (2566) Warsaw 2014] 14.dxe5 ♘d7 15.f4 f5 16.a4 ♘c5 17.♗a3 ♜f7 18.♖d2 ♘e4 19.♖d4 ♖d7 20.a5 Such positions are clearly better for White, 1-0 (28) Wang, Y (2718) – Tomashevsky, E (2728) Huaian 2016.

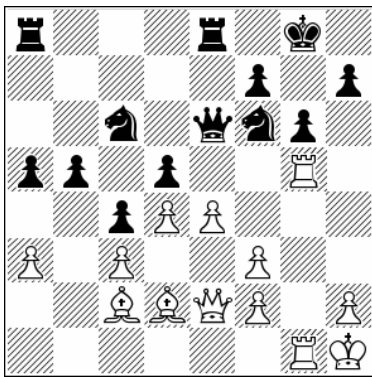
13.gxf3 ♖d7 14.♘h1 ♖h3 15.♖e2 ♘c6 16.♜g1



Position after: 16. Rg1

16... ♖h5!?

16... ♜fe8 17. ♜g3 ♛e6 18. ♙d2! White first develops before undertaking any action, and now both rooks are active. 18... g6 [18... ♔h8 19. e4 dxe4 20. fxe4 ♘xe4 21. ♞e3 f5 22. f3 ♘xc3 23. ♛e1 White should win] 19. e4 b5 20. ♞ag1 a5 21. ♞g5



Position after: 21. Rg5

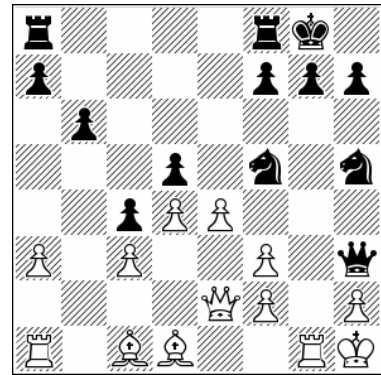
21... ♘e7 [21... b4 22. e5 b3 23. ♙f5 ♛e7 24. f4 White looks strong here too] 22. ♛e3 ♔h8 23. ♛f4 White wields a strong initiative.

17. ♙a4!?

Preventing the black rook from moving to e8.

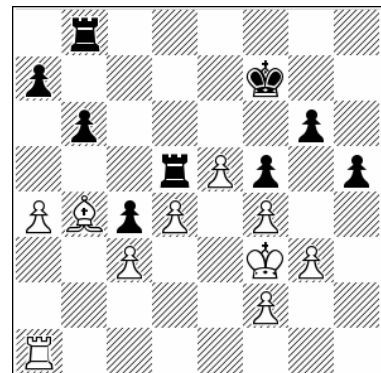
17. ♙d1 ♜ae8 18. e4 ♘e7 19. ♛f1 ♛xf1 20. ♜xf1 ♘g6 This is less clear, ½-½ (66) Aberg, L – Hameister, R corr. 2016.

17... ♘e7 18. ♙d1 ♘f5 19. e4



Position after: 19. e4

19... ♘h4 20. f4 ♘f6 21. ♞g3 ♛e6 22. e5 ♘e4 23. ♙c2 ♘f5 24. ♙xe4 ♘g3+ 25. hxg3 dxe4 26. ♛xe4 f5 27. ♛f3 ♜fd8 28. a4 ♛d5 29. ♔g2 h5 30. ♙a3 ♛xf3+ 31. ♔xf3 ♜d5! 32. ♙b4 ♜b8 33. ♜h1 g6 34. ♜a1 ♔f7



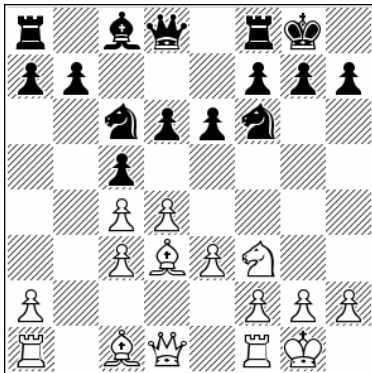
Position after: 34... ♔f7

35. ♔g2!!

The king is heading for g5! A great plan; actually it's probably equal but Black is just forced to stay in a passive mode.

e) 5...c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6

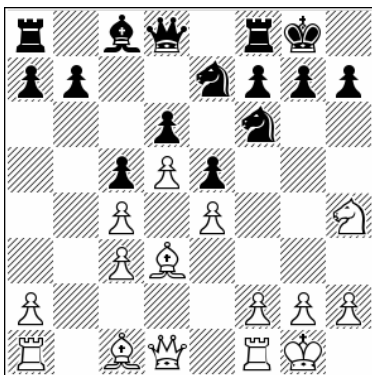
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♙xc3 8.bxc3 d6



Position after: 8...d6

Black is playing as if he wants to get into the Huebner line, but he is not using the most precise move order. In the proper Huebner line Black at this point has his e-pawn on e5, which is much more flexible than this position where Black has already castled.

9.e4 e5 10.d5 ♘e7 11.♘h4!



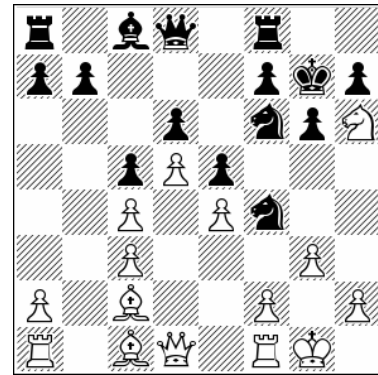
Position after: 11.♘h4!

Typical aggressive play for this line.

11...h6

Another typical reaction, as in the real Huebner line. The idea is not only to prevent bishop to g5 by White, but also to prepare ...g5!.

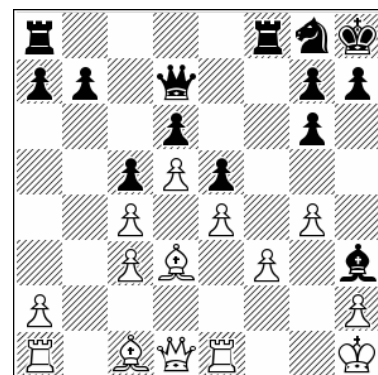
A) 11...♘g6 12.♘f5 ♘f4 13.♙c2 Now White threatens g3. 13...g6 14.♘h6+ ♔g7 15.g3



Position after: 15.g3

15...♘h3+ [15...♔xh6 16.gxf4 exf4 17.♙xf4+ ♔g7 18.♙d2 ♖e8 19.♙g5 ♙d7 20.♙xf6+ ♔xf6 21.f4 this all looks simple and strong for White] 16.♔g2 ♙e7 17.f3 ♘g8 [17...♙d7 18.♘g4 ♘xg4 19.fxg4 h5 20.gxh5 ♘g5 21.h6+ ♔h8 22.g4 his aggressive play has gained White a big advantage, ½-½ (41) Gligoric, S – Castillo, M Mar del Plata 1950] 18.♙d2 f6 19.♘g4 ♘g5 20.♘f2 ♘f7 21.♙e2 ♙d7 22.a4 ♖ae8 23.♙d2 ♙c8 24.♖ae1 ♔h8 The position is complicated but probably easier to play with White.

B) 11...♔h8 12.g3 ♙h3 13.♖e1 ♙d7 14.f3 ♘fg8 15.g4 ♘g6 16.♘xg6+ fxg6 17.♔h1!



Position after: 17.♔h1!

White has cut off the roaming black bishop and now has the strong threat of maneuvering his rook to g3. It looks like White has an edge. 17...h5 18.gxh5 ♙f7 19.♙e2 gxh5 20.♖g1 ♘f6 21.♙e1 ♘h7 22.♙h4 White is clearly better, 1-0

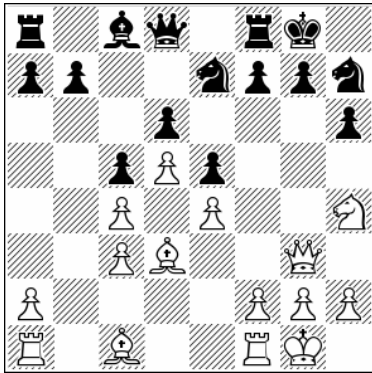
(51) Edouard, R (2652) – Tkachiev, V (2644) Pau 2012.

12. ♖f3

Preventing ...g5 and planning further pressure on the kingside.

12... ♗g6

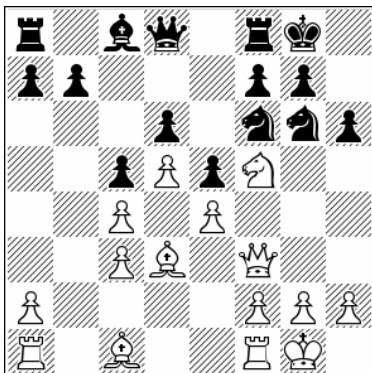
12... ♗h7 13. ♖g3



Position after: 13. ♖g3

13... ♗h8 [13...g5 14.f4 f6 15.f5 ♗g7 16. ♗f3 ♗h8 17.h4 ♖g8 18.hxg5 hxg5 19. ♗f2 ♗g7 20. ♖h1 ♖h8 21. ♖h2 ♗g8 22. ♖h5 forceful and instructive play by White, 1-0 (22) Tomashevsky, E (2706) – Ghimpu, S (2302) chess.com INT 2020] 14.f4 ♖c7 15.f5 ♗g8 16. ♗f3 ♗d7 Black has a slightly passive but solid position, after some practical chess avoiding heavily analyzed lines, ½-½ (51) Fier, A (2544) – Sokolov, I (2567) Amsterdam 2018.

13. ♗f5



Position after: 13. ♗f5

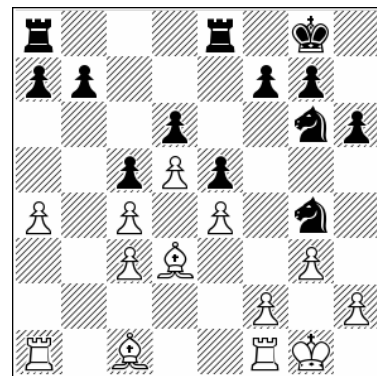
13... ♖e8

13... ♗xf5 14. ♖xf5 ♖c8 15.a4 ♖c7 16. ♗d2 ♗e7 17. ♖f3 ♗h7 18. ♖e2 Giving up a bishop for a knight on f5 has created an interesting, unbalanced position. Having two knights versus two bishops and doubled white pawns helps Black here. His plan is solid, but a bit passive, 1-0 (37) Gajewski, G (2650) – Berkes, F (2665) Budapest 2014.

14.a4

14.g3 ♗h7 15.h4 ♖f6 16. ♖g2 ♗h8 17. ♗d2 ♖b8 18. ♖ae1 ♗d7 19. ♗e3 White is ready to meet ...b5 with exchanges followed by placing his knight on c4. 19... ♖d8 20.h5 ♗e7 21.f4 f6 22. ♗e2 ♖a5 23. ♗g4 ♗xg4 24. ♗xg4 The players have created a highly complex position, 1-0 (54) Ragger, M (2700) – Bayer, B (2430) Austria 2017.

14... ♗xf5 15. ♖xf5 ♖c8 16. ♖f3 ♖g4 17. ♖xg4 ♗xg4 18.g3



Position after: 18.g3

18... ♗f6 19. ♗d2 ♖ac8 20.a5 ♖c7 21.f3 ♗f8 22. ♗f2 ♗e7 23. ♗c2

Here we have another example in which Black has managed to exchange queens and reach an endgame. But with his slightly passive position Black has no realistic chances to play for a win, 1-0 (53) Wang, H (2736) – Ponomarev, R (2723) Beijing 2011.

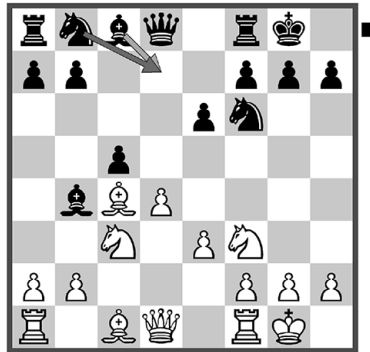
Part II

4...0-0 – 7...dxc4

Chapter 2

Side Systems

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 2 – Side Systems

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4

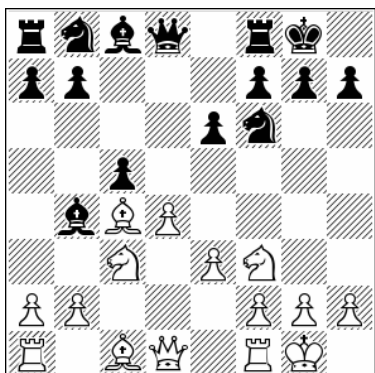
a) 8...♙d7 – Bronstein’s Variation

b) 8...♗bd7 9.a3 cxd4 (Parma Line) 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♖c7 12.♙e2 --

c) 8...♗bd7 9.a3 cxd4 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♖c7 12.♙e2 ♗d5

a) 8...♙d7 – Bronstein's Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4



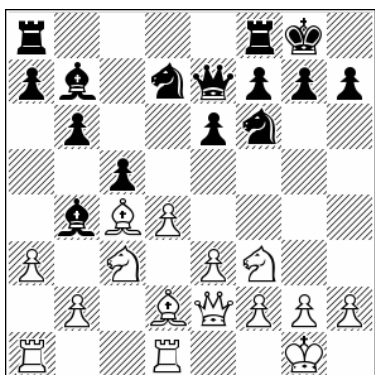
Position after: 8.♙xc4

In this subchapter we will deal with lesser-known and less-played lines that are nevertheless far from simple and require good knowledge in order to deal with them. So I decided to give games of famous players who with White knew the main aspects of the Nimzo perfectly, such as Gligoric, Knaak and Portisch.

8...♙d7

Black is trying to improve on the Karpov plan while avoiding many of the ideas that White has there.

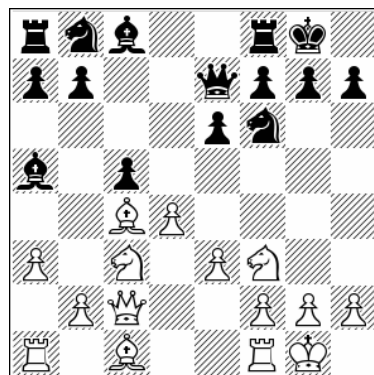
A) 8...b6 9.♖e2 ♙b7 10.♞d1 This transposes into the Karpov line if Black now decides to go 10...cxd4. Here I will present a game where Black elected to try something else. 10...♖e7 11.♙d2 ♗bd7 12.a3!



Position after: 12.a3!

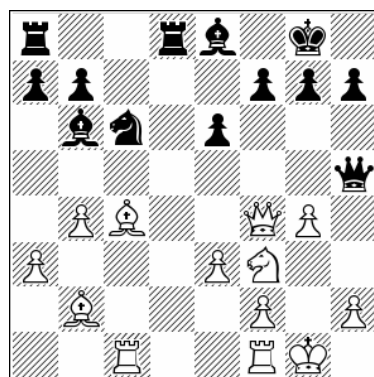
Good idea, White wins the bishop pair. 12...♙xc3 13.♙xc3 ♗e4 14.♙e1! ♞fd8 15.♞ac1 The bishop pair gives White some edge here, 1-0 (42) Cvitan, O (2493) – Helmer, C (2146) Vienna 2019.

B) 8...♖e7 9.a3 ♙a5 10.♖c2



Position after: 10.♖c2

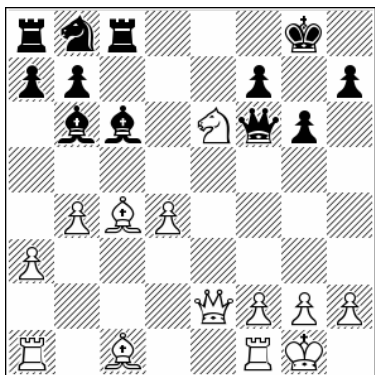
Not the only idea here, but it was played by Gligoric and Portisch so it must be good. 10...♙d7 [10...♞d8 11.dxc5! This is strong now. 11...♖xc5 12.♗e4 ♗xe4 13.♖xe4 ♖h5 14.♖f4 ♗c6 15.b4 ♙b6 16.♙b2 ♙d7 17.♞ac1 ♙e8 18.g4



Position after: 18.g4

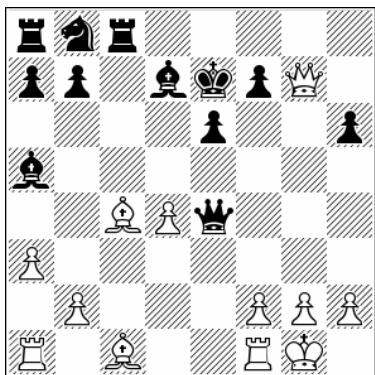
18...♖h3 19.♖g5 ♖h6 20.♖xh6 gxh6 21.g5 hxg5 22.♗xg5 White has the better endgame, ½-½ (40) Gligoric, S – Ivkov, B Yugoslavia 1968.] 11.♗e4 That's one of the points behind placing the queen on c2. 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♞c8 [12...♙c6 13.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 14.♗e5 ♞c8 15.♙d3 g6 16.♖e2 ♙b6 17.♗g4! Such positions are not so

pleasant to defend. Back has weakened his kingside and his dark-squared bishop is a long way away from that zone.] 13. ♖fg5! h6 [13...g6 14. ♕e2 ♗c6 15. ♖xf6+ ♕xf6 16. b4 ♗b6 17. ♖xe6!



Position after: 17. ♖xe6!

17... ♖e8 18. d5 another great tactical idea, giving White a tremendous attack] 14. ♖xf6+ ♕xf6 15. ♕h7+ ♔f8 16. ♖e4 ♕f5 17. ♕h8+ ♔e7 18. ♕xg7! ♕xe4

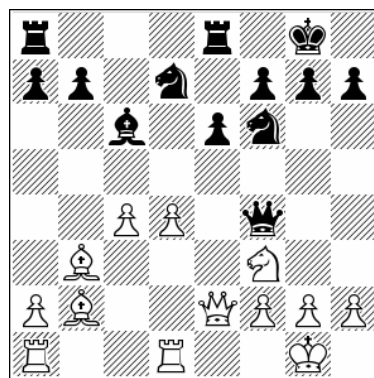


Position after: 18... ♕xe4

19. ♗xh6!! White's attack will crash through the black defenses.

9. ♕e2 ♗c6

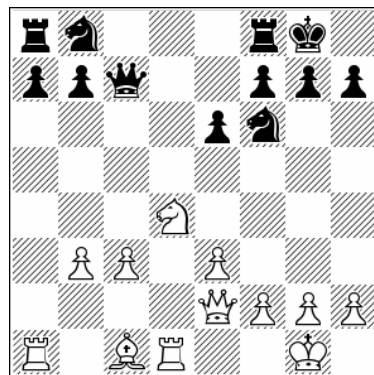
A) 9...cxd4 10. exd4 ♗c6 11. ♖d1 ♗xc3 12. bxc3 ♖bd7 13. ♗b3 ♕c7 14. c4 ♖fe8 15. ♗b2 ♕f4



Position after: 15... ♕f4

16. ♕e3 If Black had played ...b6 and ...♗b7 he could at least put some pressure on the c4-pawn, but here the placement of his pieces on the queenside leaves him in a passive position, 1-0 (50) Korobov, A (2670) – Caruana, F (2822) Bucharest 2019.

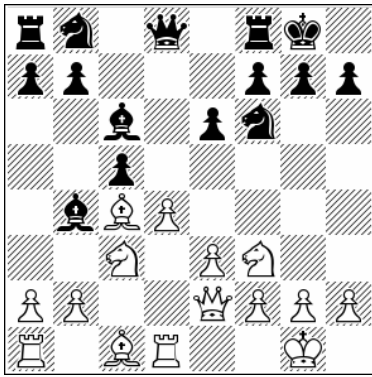
B) 9... ♕c7 10. ♖d1 ♗xc3 11. bxc3 ♗a4 12. ♗b3 ♗xb3 13. axb3 cxd4 14. ♖xd4!



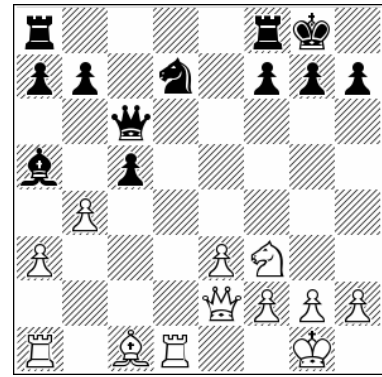
Position after: 14. ♖xd4!

14... ♖c6 15. ♖xc6 ♕xc6 16. c4 a6 17. ♗b2 ♖fd8 18. ♗xf6 gxf6 19. ♕g4+ ♔h8 20. ♕h4 e5 21. ♖d5 White has easy play and the advantage, 1-0 (35) Peralta, F (2563) – Villanueva, M (2481) Villa Martelli 2018.

10. ♖d1



Position after: 10.♞d1

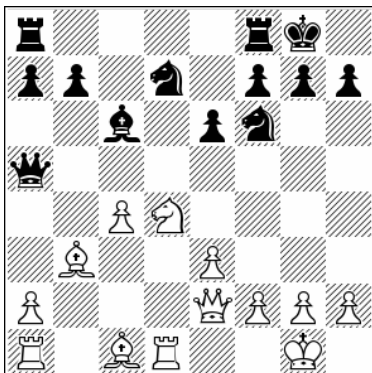


Position after: 16.b4

10.♗e5 cxd4 11.exd4 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♙d5 13.♙d3 h6 14.c4 ♙c6 15.♙b2 ♗bd7 16.♞ad1 ♗xe5 17.♞xe5 ♞b8 18.♞e3 Already we have improved play for White compared with many positions in the Karpov line, 1-0 (41) Salem, A (2660) – Sakaev, K (2584) St Petersburg 2018.

10...♞e7

A) 10...♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♗bd7 12.♙b3 ♞a5 13.c4 cxd4 14.♗xd4!?



Position after: 14.♗xd4!?

14...♞ac8 15.f3 ♞fd8 16.♙d2 ♞c7 17.♙e1! This is a simple and good solution. White's dark-squared bishop is very strong.

B) 10...♗bd7 11.d5 exd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♙xd5 ♞c7 14.♙xc6 ♞xc6 15.a3 ♙a5 16.b4

16...cxb4 [16...♙c7 17.♙b2 ♞ad8 18.♞ac1 b6 19.♞c4 White is ahead here too, 0-1 (39) Beliavsky, A (2667) – Kortschnoj, V (2579) Paks 2004] 17.♗d4 ♞b6 18.♗f5 ♞e6 19.axb4 ♙d8 20.g4! ♗e5 21.♙b2 ♙f6 22.h3 b5 23.♞d6 ♞c4 24.♞xc4 ♗xc4 25.♙xf6 ♗xd6 26.♙xg7 White is better.

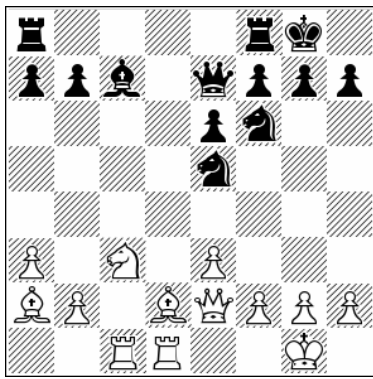
11.a3 ♙xc3

11...♙a5 12.♙d2



Position after: 12.♙d2

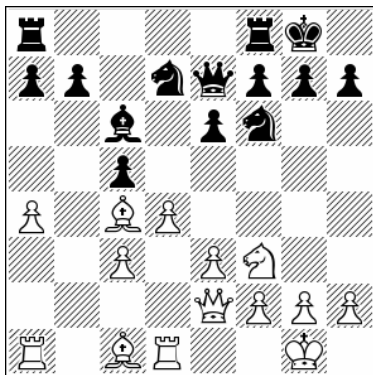
12...♗bd7 [12...cxd4 13.exd4 This is a problem with the queen on e7: there is always a threat of d4-d5. 13...♞c7 14.♗e5 ♗bd7 15.b4 ♙b6 16.♙f4 ♙d5 17.♙xd5 exd5 18.♞ac1 ♞d8 19.♞f3 White is better, 1-0 (30) Knaak, R – Liebert, H Potsdam 1974] 13.dxc5! ♙xf3 14.♞xf3 ♞xc5 15.♙a2 ♙c7 16.♞ac1 ♗e5 17.♞e2 ♞e7



Position after: 17...Kee7

18.♞b5! White is winning because he threatens ♙b4, 1-0 (25) Knaak, R (2520) – Mysliwicz, J Meissen 1975.

12.bxc3 ♞bd7 13.a4

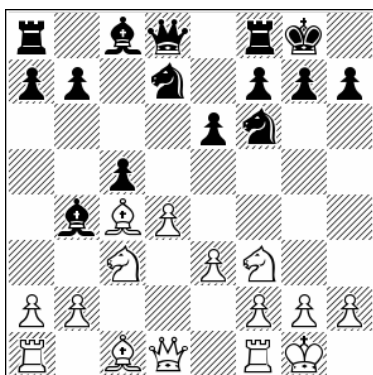


Position after: 13.a4

13...♞ac8

b) 8...♞bd7 9.a3 cxd4 (Parma Line) 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♞c7 12.♙e2 --

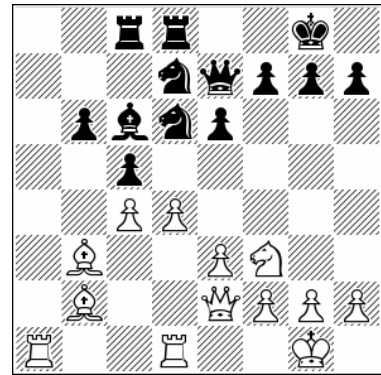
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♞f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♞bd7



Position after: 8...♞bd7

13...♞fc8 14.♙b3 ♞e8 15.c4 cxd4 16.exd4 ♞b6 17.a5 ♙a4 18.♙xa4 ♞xa4 19.♙d2 b6 20.♞db1 We can see that the black knight on a4 is bad, so White is better, 1-0 (50) Gligoric, S (2565) – Taimanov, M (2530) Montilla 1977.

14.♙b3 ♞e4 15.♙b2 b6 16.c4 ♞fd8 17.a5 ♞d6 18.axb6 axb6



Position after: 18...axb6

19.♞a7

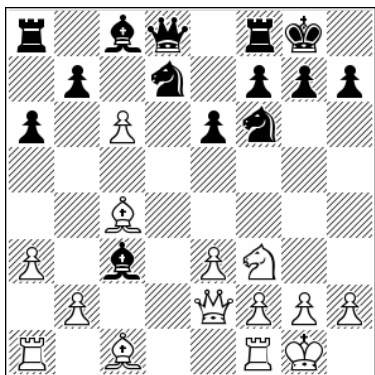
White has an edge that is typical in such lines, but we should make it clear that Anand's play is very good. He did not open the position with ...cxd4; instead he keeps it closed for a time, 0-1 (73) Korobov, A (2670) – Anand, V (2757) Bucharest 2019.

This used to be a very important line, as many players used it in the 1980s, but in recent years it has not been one of the most popular variations for Black. White has found some important ideas for dealing with it, and the Karpov line seems to give Black more precise play.

9.a3 cxd4

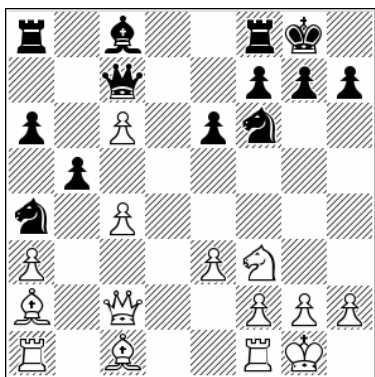
That was a main point of Black's play. Most of the time when White goes a3 Black takes first on d4 before retreating the bishop.

9...♙a5 The idea of this move is to sidestep White's pawn sac in the main line here and reach a normal position but with a tempo less.
 10.♚e2 a6 11.dxc5!? ♙xc3 12.c6!



Position after: 12.c6!

The main point of White's play. 12...♘c5 [12...♙a5 13.cxd7 ♘xd7 14.b4 ♙c7 15.♙b2 e5 16.♚c2 ♜e8 17.♞fd1 White has gained a huge advantage, ½-½ (46) Tomashevsky, E (2709) – Zhigalko, S (2661) Kiev 2013] 13.♚c2 [13.bxc3 ♚c7! Black will have compensation for the offered pawn] 13...b5 14.♙a2 ♘a4 15.bxc3 ♚c7 16.c4



Position after: 16.c4

16...♚xc6 17.♙b3 ♙b7 18.cxb5 axb5 19.♚xc6 ♙xc6 20.♘d4 ♙d7 21.♙d2 ♞fc8 22.♙b4 It's about equal but still White's bishop pair and active knight on d4 can create some problems for Black in this rather dry endgame.

10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3

White has the bishop pair but Black has harmonious development and pressure on the

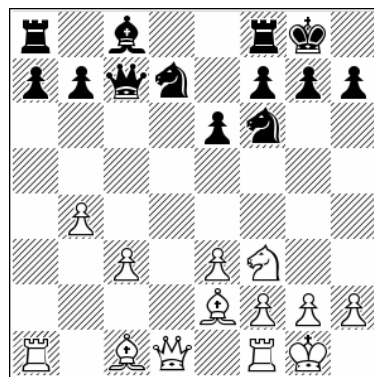
c3-pawn. White would like to get in e3-e4 so that his pawn structure restricts the black bishop on b7.

11...♚c7

Attacking the c4-bishop and, indirectly, the pawn behind it.

11...b6 12.♙e2 ♙b7 13.c4 ♚c7 14.♘d4 We transpose to the note 12...b6.

12.♙e2

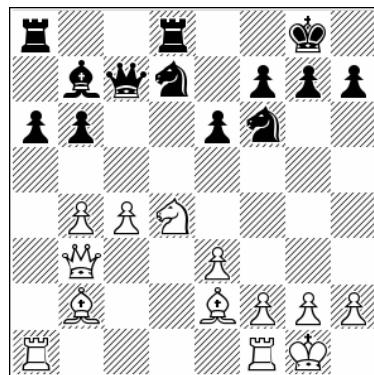


Position after: 12.♙e2

Now Black has a couple of ideas but it seems that neither offers full equality.

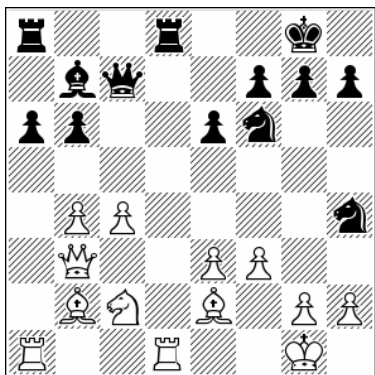
12...♚xc3

12...b6 13.c4 ♙b7 14.♘d4 Placing a knight on the strong d4-square is a typical idea. 14...♞fd8 15.♙b2 a6 16.♚b3



Position after: 16.♚b3

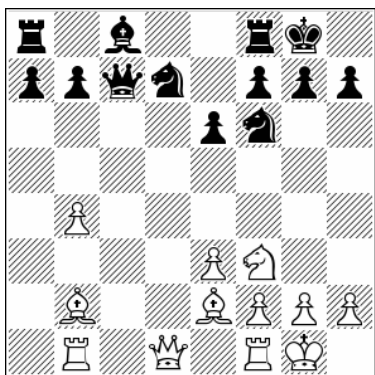
16...♖f8 [16...e5 17.♗f5 ♕e4 18.♗g3 a5 19.♗xe4 ♗xe4 20.♖c2 ♗ef6 21.bxa5 bxa5 22.♖fd1 The two white bishops are doing a good job here] 17.♖fd1 ♗g6 18.f3! ♗h4 19.♗c2!



Position after: 19.♗c2!

19...♖e7 20.♖c3 ♗e8 21.♖e5 ♗g6 22.♖g3 A good queen maneuver, ½-½ (68) Yeliseiev, Y (2317) – Carlsson, P (2453) Pardubice 2017.

13.♖b1 ♖c7 14.♗b2

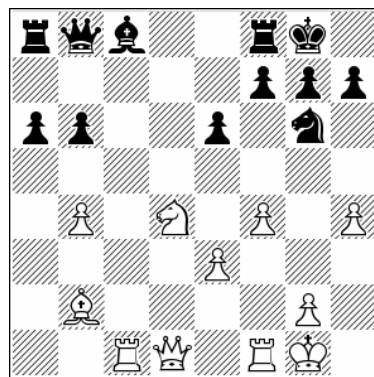


Position after: 14.♗b2

14...♖e8

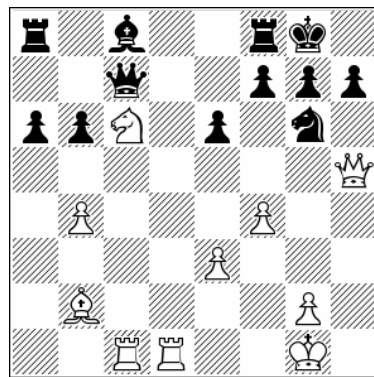
A) 14...♖d8 15.♖c1 ♖b6 16.b5 a5 17.♖a4 ♖d6 18.♗a3 ♗b6 19.♖b3 ♖b8 20.♗e7 ♖d7 21.♗c5 ♗bd5 22.♗d4 White has a strong initiative, and it's not easy for Black to defend such a position.

B) 14...b6 15.♖c1 ♖b8 16.♗b5 a6 17.♗xd7 ♗xd7 18.♗d4 ♗e5 19.f4 ♗g6 20.h4!?



Position after: 20.h4!?

20...♗xh4 [20...♗b7 21.h5 ♗e7 22.♖g4 White gets a winning attack] 21.♖h5 ♗g6 22.♗c6 ♖d6 23.♖fd1 ♖c7



Position after: 23...♖c7

24.♗f2! Black is in danger here and will need to rely on finding engine-type defensive moves.

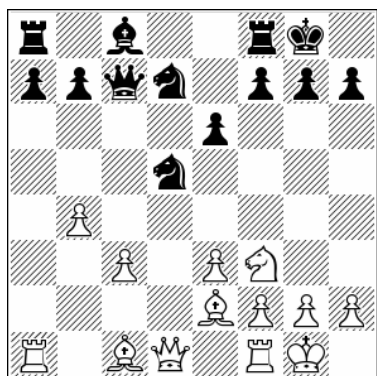
15.♖b3 ♗b6 16.♖fd1 ♖e7 17.♗e5 ♗fd5 18.e4 ♗xb4 19.♗b5 ♖f8 20.♗a3 a5 21.♗d3 ♖g5 22.♗xb4 ♖xb5 23.♖g3 axb4 24.♗xb4

White is clearly better, 0-1 (31) Stocck, J (2567) – Ponizil, C (2494) Czech Republic 2018.

c) 8...♞bd7 9.a3 cxd4 10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♔c7 12.♙e2 ♞d5

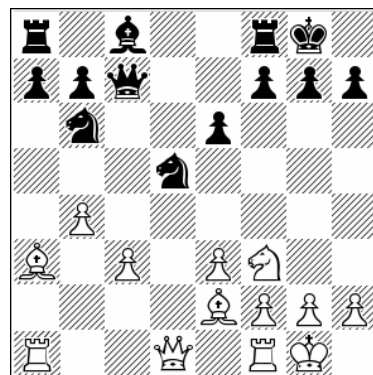
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♞f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♞bd7 9.a3 cxd4
10.axb4 dxc3 11.bxc3 ♔c7 12.♙e2 ♞d5!

better, ½-½ (68) Bosiocic, M (2559) – Testor, S (2295) Austria 2016.



Position after: 12...♞d5!

13...♞7b6!?



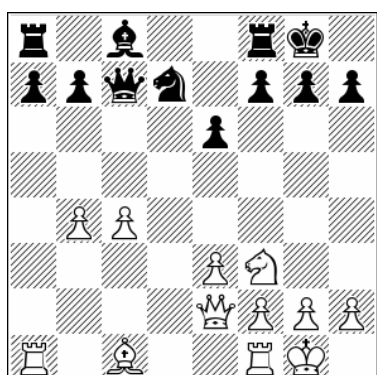
Position after: 13...♞7b6!?

13.♙a3

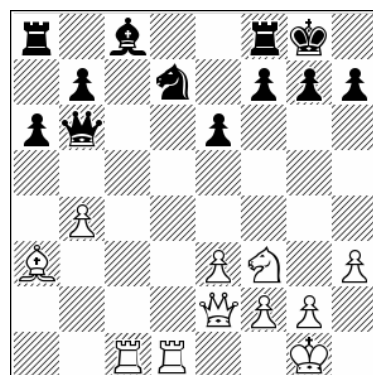
Other moves are also important and interesting.

A) 13...♞xc3 14.♖c1 ♞xe2+ 15.♙xe2 ♙b6
16.♖fd1 a6 17.h3

13.c4 ♞c3 14.♙c2 ♞xe2+ 15.♙xe2



Position after: 15.♙xe2



Position after: 17.h3

White has relinquished the bishop pair in order to keep the c3-pawn. 15...b6 [15...♞b6 16.c5! ♞d5 17.♙d2 ♙d7 18.e4 ♞f4 19.♙e3 ♞g6 20.h4 h6 21.♖fd1 ♖fd8 22.♙c3 ♙e8 23.h5 ♞f8 24.♖xd8 ♙xd8 25.♞e5 White has an initiative] 16.♞d4 ♙b7 17.♙b2 a6 [17...a5 18.♖fd1 axb4 19.♞b5 ♙c6 20.♙g4 e5 21.♞a7 ♞f6 22.♞xc6 ♞xg4 23.♖xa8 ♙xa8 24.♞xb4 f6 25.♞d5 ♙xd5 26.cxd5 this endgame favors White] 18.♖fc1 ♖fc8 19.f3 ♞e5 20.c5 ♞c6 21.♙e1 bxc5 22.♖xc5 ♙d6 23.♞xc6 ♖xc6 24.♖g5 Due to his strong initiative on the a1-h8 diagonal we can say that White is

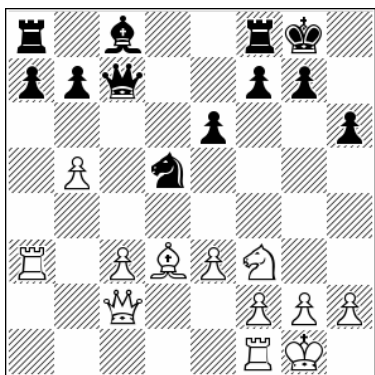
17...♙b5 [17...♖e8 18.♖d2 ♞f6 19.♙d1 White has a big initiative] 18.♖d3 ♞f6 19.♙b2 b6 20.e4 ♙b7 21.♙xf6 gxf6 22.♖c7 This is a big advantage for White.

B) 13...♙xc3 14.♙b1 ♙f6 15.♙d3 h6 16.b5 ♖d8 17.♙b2 White has compensation and the initiative, 1-0 (42) Aronian, L (2782) – Karjakin, S (2725) Nice 2010.

14.b5!?

An important move, opening the diagonal for the bishop on a3.

A) 14.♔d3 ♖c4 15.♚c2 h6 16.b5 ♗xa3 17.♞xa3

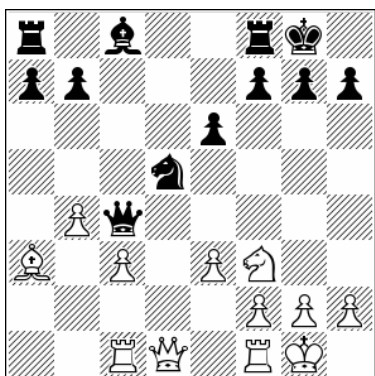


Position after: 17.♞xa3

17...a5! Black is OK here.

B) 14.♚d4 ♚xc3 15.♚e4!? [15.♚g4 ♔d7 16.b5 ♞fc8 Black is OK, 0-1 (64) Potkin, V (2665) – Aleksandrov, A (2604) Nakhchivan 2013] 15...♚f6 16.♔d3 ♚f5 17.♚xf5 exf5 18.b5 ♞e8 19.♔c5 ♔e6 20.♗d4 g6 21.h3 White has compensation, but not more than that.

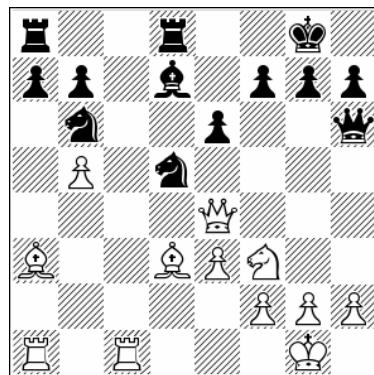
C) 14.♞c1 ♖c4 15.♔xc4 ♚xc4



Position after: 15...♚xc4

16.♚c2! [16.♗d2 ♚d3! this is OK for Black, ½-½ (45) Sargissian, G (2677) – Gyimesi, Z (2595) Plovdiv 2010] 16...b5 17.♗d2 ♚c7 18.c4 bxc4 19.♗xc4 ♖b6 20.♚b3 ♗xc4 21.♞xc4 ♚b6 22.♞fc1 ♔b7 The position is equal.

14...♞d8 15.♚c2 ♚xc3 16.♚e4 ♚f6 17.♔d3 ♚h6 18.♞fc1 ♔d7



Position after: 18...♔d7

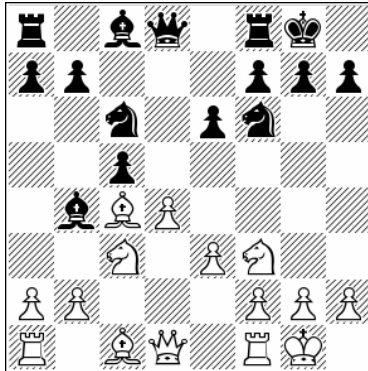
19.♔c5

Now, with queens still on the board, White is better and the pawn down is not significant here.

Chapter 3

8...♞c6 – The Larsen Line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♘c6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 3 – 8...♞c6 – The Larsen Line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♘c6 9.a3

a) 9...cxd4

b) 9...♙a5 10.♙d3

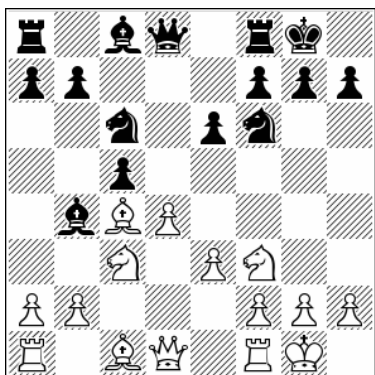
c) 9...♙a5 10.h3

d) 9...♙a5 10.♚d3

e) 9...♙a5 10.♙a2

a) 9...cxd4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♘c6



Position after: 8...♘c6

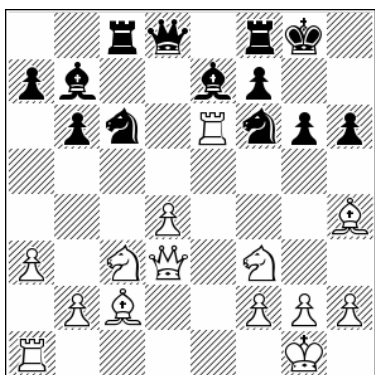
9.a3 cxd4

This is a different way of handling things.

10.exd4 ♙xc3

Black is heading towards a line in which he tries to achieve a fast ...e5 advance. Retreating the bishop now is not to be recommended, because Black would transpose into an unfavorable position from the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann.

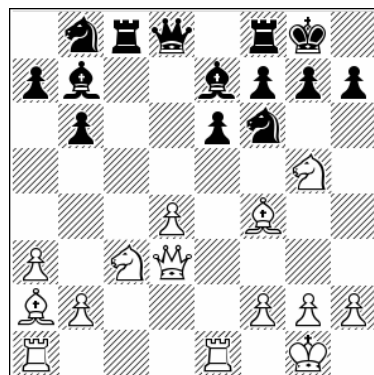
A) 10...♙d6 11.♙g5 h6 12.♙h4 ♙e7 13.♙d3 b6
14.♞e1 ♙b7 15.♙c2 ♞c8 16.♞d3 g6 17.♞xe6!



Position after: 17.♞xe6!

17...fxe6 18.♞xg6+ ♔h8 19.♙xf6+ 1-0 (19)
Peralta, E (2218) – Ptacnikova, L (2107)
chess.com INT 2021.

B) 10...♙e7 11.♞e1 b6 12.♙a2 ♙b7 13.♙f4 ♞c8
14.♞d3 ♘b8 15.♘g5!



Position after: 15.♘g5!

15...♙a6 16.♞h3 ♞xd4 17.♞e4 ♞d3 18.♞e3 ♞d4
19.♙xb8 ♞xb8 20.♘xf7! White has quickly
secured a winning position. Of course that's just
one of many examples, but it can serve as a
model game, 1-0 (64) Petrosian, T – Ilivitzki, G
Sverdlovsk 1951.

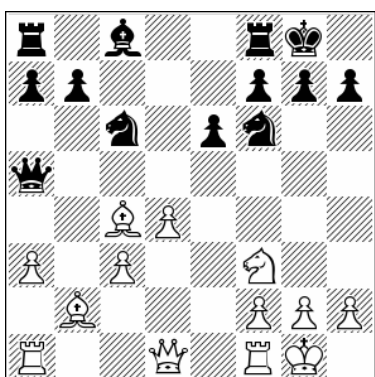
11.bxc3 ♞a5

In this specific line Black is combining two ideas:
taking on c3 and a possible ...e5.

A) 11...♘a5 12.♙d3 ♞c7 13.♙d2 ♙d7 14.♘e5
♞ac8 15.♞b1 White is better, 1-0 (36) Peralta, E
(2218) – Ptacnikova, L (2130) chess.com INT
2021.

B) 11...♞c7 12.♙d3 b6 [Black can't really go ...e5
here: 12...e5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♙f4! ♘fd7
15.dxe5 and White is better] 13.♞e1 ♙b7 14.c4
♞fd8 15.♙b2 There is a similar type of play in the
Karpov line, covered later in this book. White is
OK, with d4-d5 in the air.

12.♙b2



Position after: 12.♙b2

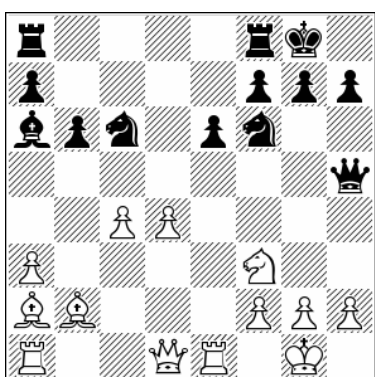


Position after: 13.♞e1

12...e5

The other plan is to develop in a traditional way.

12...b6 13.♞e1 ♙a6 14.♙a2 ♚h5 15.c4



Position after: 15.c4

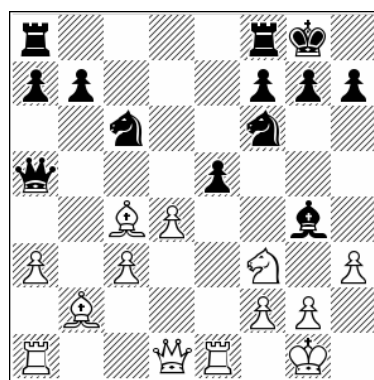
White is ready now to launch an attack with d4-d5. 15...♞fd8 [15...♘d7 16.d5 exd5 17.cxd5 ♘a5 18.♚d4 f6 19.♞e7 ♘c5 20.d6+ ♚h8 21.♞ae1 White has a winning position, 1-0 (30) Barwinski, D (2190) – Murdzia, P (2405) Poland 1998] 16.♚a4 [White can also push the d-pawn immediately. 16.d5! exd5 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.cxd5 ♘e5 19.♘xe5 ♚xd1 20.♞axd1 fxe5 21.d6 White has a big advantage in this endgame.] 16...♙b7 17.d5 exd5 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.cxd5 ♘a5 20.♞e4! That's a winning attack, 1-0 (26) Curtin, E – Borm, F (2320) Teesside 1978.

13.♞e1

13...♙g4

13...e4 14.♘d2 The white knight is heading with gain of tempo towards the e3-square. 14...♙g4 [14...♙f5 15.♙a2 ♞ad8 16.♘c4 ♚b5 17.a4 ♚a6 18.♙a3 White is clearly better, 1-0 (34) Stocek, J (2559) – Palek, M (2263) Rakovnik 2008] 15.♙e2 ♙f5 16.♘c4 ♚c7 17.♘e3 ♙g6 18.c4 ♞ad8 19.♚d2 ♘e5 20.d5 ♞fe8 21.♞ed1 White has the initiative, ½-½ (57) Timman, J (2600) – Ligterink, G (2455) Wijk aan Zee 1980.

14.h3



Position after: 14.h3

14...♙xf3

14...♚b6 15.hxg4 ♚xb2 16.♘xe5 ♚xc3 17.♙xf7+ ♚h8 18.♙a2 White is winning, 1-0 (59) Tornado 6.0 – Rodent 1.6 Internet (blitz) 2014.

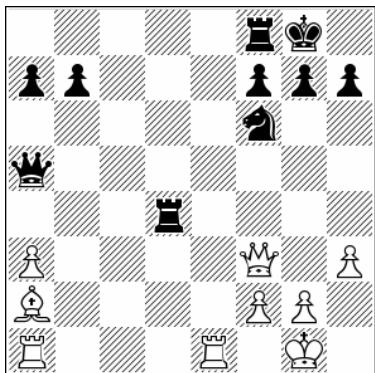
15.♚xf3 ♞ad8

15...♞fd8 16.♞ab1 ♞ac8 17.♙a2 ♞d7 18.♞e3 h6 19.♚g3 exd4 20.cxd4 ♘d5 21.♚g4 ♘f6 22.♚e2

White has the initiative, 1-0 (41) Cheng 4 v0.38
– ExChess 7.51b Internet (blitz) 2015.

16. ♖ab1!?

16. ♕a2 exd4! 17. cxd4 ♘xd4 18. ♕xd4 ♖xd4

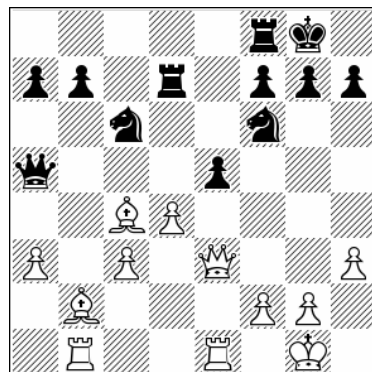


Position after: 18... ♖xd4

19. ♖xb7 [the evaluation does not change after
19. ♖e7 ♖d7 20. ♖xd7 ♘xd7 21. ♖xb7 ♖c3]

19... ♖d7 Black is not worse here, ½-½ (36)
Edouard, R (2662) – Bauer, C (2633) Nancy 2013.

16... ♖d7 17. ♖e3



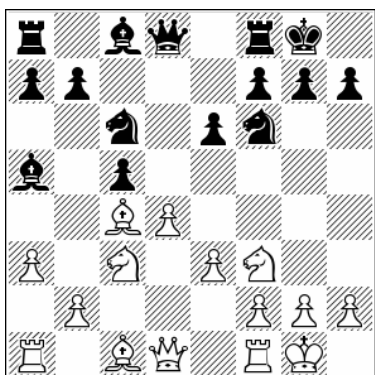
Position after: 17. ♖e3

17... ♖e7 18. ♖g3 ♖c7 19. a4 ♖a8 20. d5 ♘a5
21. ♕a2 ♘c4 22. ♕c1

White is better.

b) 9... ♕a5 10. ♕d3

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♕b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♕d3 d5
6. ♘f3 c5 7. 0-0 dxc4 8. ♕xc4 ♘c6 9. a3 ♕a5



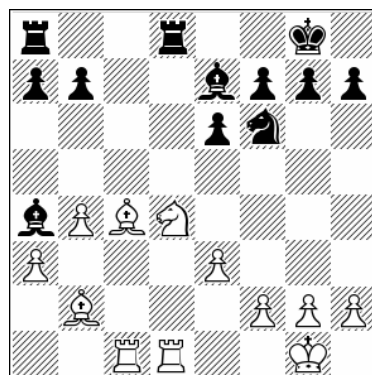
Position after: 9... ♕a5

This variation is very popular today. It seems that the engines like this line, and many ideas have been found in recent times that have completely revived this old system. I will focus on the main aspects of White's usual ideas.

10. ♕d3

We will start with this idea, an important line in which White wants to place his knight on e4. We see some of the same ideas as in the 10. ♖d3 line in subchapter d), but here the bishop is executing the plan. I will briefly mention some other ideas that are not among the main lines, but are still possible.

A) 10. ♘e2 ♕b6 11. dxc5 ♖xd1 12. ♖xd1 ♕xc5
13. b4 ♕e7 14. ♕b2 ♕d7 15. ♖ac1 ♖fd8 16. ♘ed4
♘xd4 17. ♘xd4 ♕a4



Position after: 17... ♕a4

18.♙b3 ♖xb3 19.♗xb3 ♜xd1+ 20.♞xd1 ♜c8 This is a famous game, in which Fischer later took the h2-pawn and lost, 1-0 (56) Spassky, B (2660) – Fischer, R (2785) Reykjavik 1972.

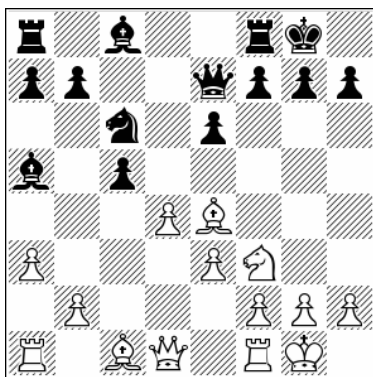
B) 10.dxc5 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♜xd1 12.♞xd1 ♗a5 13.♙a2 ♖e4 14.c4 ♗xc5 15.♙d2 b6 16.♙b4 ♙b7 17.♗d4 ♜fd8 This endgame is OK for Black. His knights are doing a fine job, while we can see that the white bishop on a2 is misplaced.

C) 10.♗a4 cxd4 11.exd4 h6 12.♙d3 ♜e8 13.b4 ♙c7 14.♙b2 ♗e7 15.♗e5 b6 16.♞f3 ♜d5 17.♞h3 ♙b7 18.♜fe1 ♜ac8 19.♜ad1 This position is in balance, as both sides have developed well. However, we can see that White has not given up the idea of building an attack, 1-0 (39) Podgaets, M – Yuferov, S Minsk 1972.

10...h6

Black's dark-squared bishop is far away on a5, so protecting the dark squares on the kingside is imperative for Black. There are also many other ideas for Black here:

A) 10...♞e7 11.♗e4 ♗xe4 [11...cxd4 12.b4 ♙b6 13.b5 ♗b8 14.♗xf6+ ♞xf6 15.exd4 h6 16.♙b2 ♗d7 17.♙b1 ♜d8 18.♞c2 ♗f8 19.♜e1 ♙a5 20.♜e3 White has generated strong attacking chances, 1-0 (24) Portisch, L – Langeweg, K Amsterdam 1969] 12.♙xe4

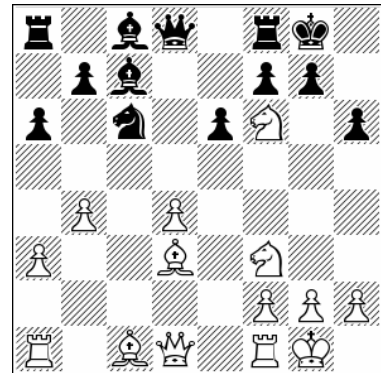


Position after: 12.♙xe4

12...♙b6 [12...♜d8 13.♞c2 cxd4 14.♙xh7+ ♗h8 15.b4 ♙c7 16.exd4 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♜xd4 18.g3

b6 19.♙e4 ♜b8 20.♙b2 White is better, 1-0 (32) Sarwinski, M (2395) – Luczak, A (2350) Jachranka 1987] 13.dxc5 ♞xc5 14.b4 ♞c4 15.♗d2 ♞c3 16.♜a2 ♜d8 17.♞c2 ♞e5 18.♙b2 ♞g5 19.♞e2 ♗e7 20.f4! White has a big advantage, 1-0 (26) Reshevsky, S – Burger, K New York 1969.

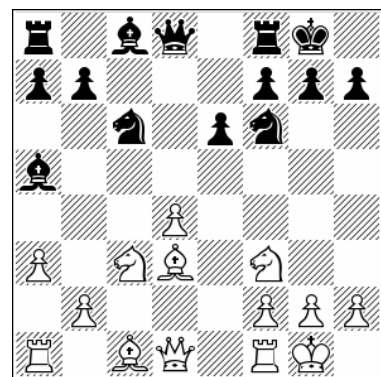
B) 10...a6 11.♗e4 cxd4 12.exd4 h6 13.b4 ♙c7 14.♗xf6+!



Position after: 14.♗xf6+!

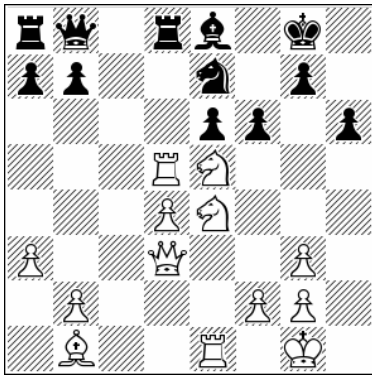
It is important for White to send the black queen to f6, where it can come under pressure. It is not easy for Black to develop. 14...♞xf6 15.♙b2 ♗e7 16.♞c1 ♗d5 17.♗e5 ♜d8 18.♙e4 ♙d6 19.♞b3 ♙d7 20.f4 White is developing attacking chances.

C) 10...cxd4 11.exd4

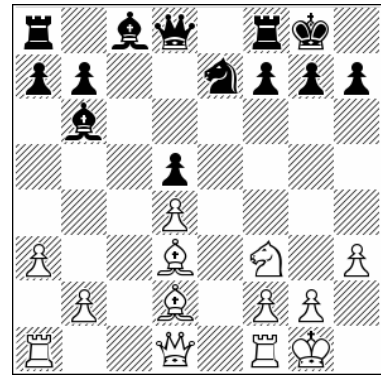


Position after: 11.exd4

C1) 11...♞d6 12.♙g5! ♗d5 13.♗e4 ♞b8 14.♞c1 h6 15.♙h4 ♙c7 16.♙b1 ♙f4 17.♙g3 ♙xg3 18.hxg3 ♙d7 19.♞d3 ♜d8 20.♜fe1 ♙e8 21.♞c5 ♗ce7 22.♗e5 f6 23.♜xd5!!



Position after: 23. Rxd5!!

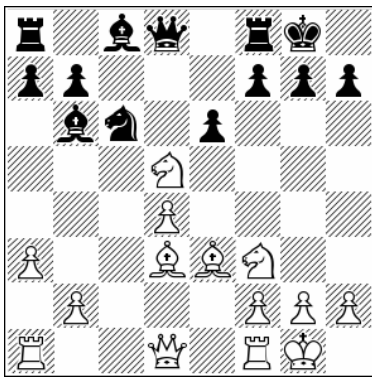


Position after: 15. Bf2!?

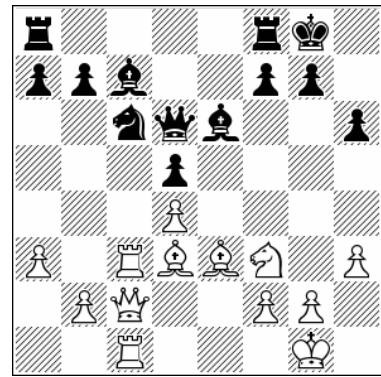
[In the game White missed that cool strike and played less accurately. 23. Bf3 Things are not so clear now, ½-½ (28) Toran Albero, R (2420) – Bouwmeester, H Lugano 1968] 23... Bxd5 24. Bc5 f5 25. Bxe6 White wins.

A Gligoric recommendation from his book on the Nimzo-Indian. After 15... Bf5 16. Bb4 Bxd3 17. Bxd3 Re8 18. Rfe1 Nc6 19. Bc5! Bc7 20. Bb5 Bb8 21. Rxe8+ Rxe8 22. Re1 Qd8 23. Bxe5 it seems that Black still has problems to solve.] 15. Bc1 Bc7 16. Bc3! Bf6 17. Bc2 h6 18. Bc1

C2) 11... Bb6 12. Be3 Nd5 13. Bxd5!?



Position after: 13. Bxd5!?



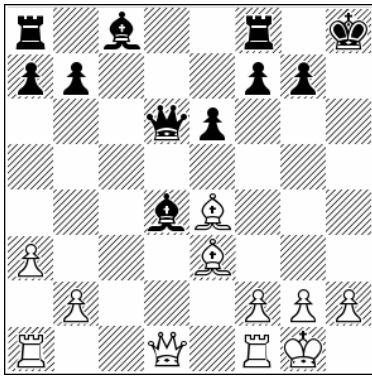
Position after: 18. Bc1

White eliminates the knight that is the only defender of the kingside. Obviously the bishop on b6 is not much help on the other side of the board.

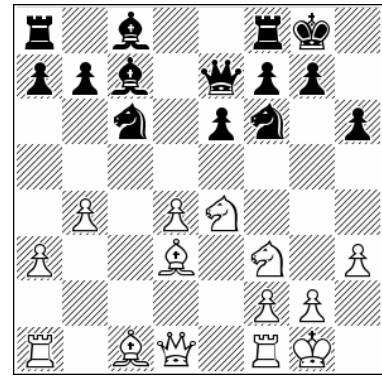
C2.1) 13... exd5 14. h3 White keeps the black bishop out of g4, limiting Black's options for developing his pieces. 14... Qd6 [14... Ne7 15. Bf2!?

Tripling on the c file is a good plan. 18... Bb6 19. Qd2 Now White can sacrifice on h6 when the time is right. 19... Rfc8 20. Bb1 Qf8 21. Qd3 g6 22. Qd2 Qh7 23. h4 Bg4 24. Bh2 Be6 25. h5 White has whipped up strong attacking chances and this is a great example, 1-0 (41) Gligoric, S – Milicevic, M Yugoslavia 1973. Bronstein once said that Gligoric was one of the best players (if not the very best player) when it came to conducting play with closed or fixed structures.

C2.2) 13... Bxd5 14. Bc2 h6 [14... Bxd4 15. Bxd4 Bxd4 16. Bxh7+ Qh8 17. Be4 Qd6 18. Qd1!



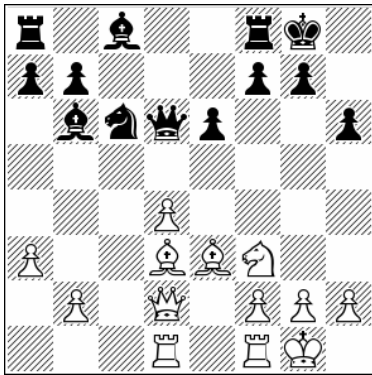
Position after: 18. ♖d1!



Position after: 14. exd4

18... ♖d8 19. ♖h5+ ♔g8 20. ♖ad1 ♖b6 21. ♖h7+ ♔f8 22. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 23. ♖h8+ ♔e7 24. ♖xg7 a nice quick win. 1-0 (24) Gligoric, S – Wade, R Hastings 1970] 15. ♖ad1 ♖d6 16. ♖d2!

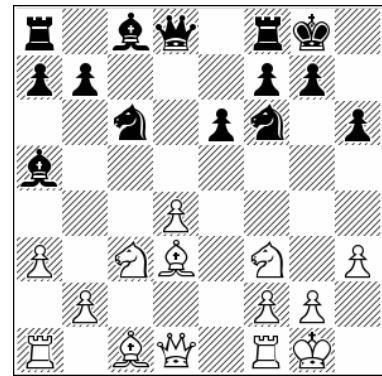
14... ♖d8 [14... ♗d5 15. b5 ♗a5 16. a4 ♖d8 17. ♗a3 ♖e8 18. ♖c1 b6 19. ♖xc7!? ♗xc7 20. ♗e5 White has come up with a very unusual and extremely interesting idea; I don't remember seeing anything like it before. 20... ♗d5 21. ♖f3 ♗b7 22. ♖g3 White has serious attacking chances for the sacrificed exchange.] 15. ♗b2 ♗xe4 16. ♗xe4 e5 17. d5 f5 18. ♗c2 e4 19. ♗b3 ♗e6 20. ♖c1 ♗f7 21. b5 It seems that the early ...e5 plan doesn't bring Black the desired counterplay.



Position after: 16. ♖d2!

[16. ♖c1 no need for such passive play, ½-½ (27) Bisguier, A (2430) – Medina Garcia, A (2380) Skopje 1972] 16... f5 17. ♗b1 ♗d7 18. ♗f4 ♖e7 19. ♖fe1 White has the advantage.

12. exd4



Position after: 12. exd4

11. h3!?

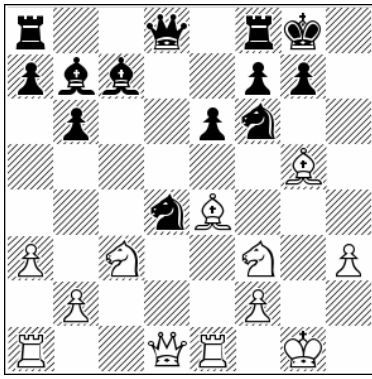
Again this little move, which is more effective than it might at first appear.

12... ♗b6

11... cxd4

11... ♖e7 12. ♗e4 cxd4 13. b4 ♗c7 14. exd4

12... ♗c7 13. ♖e1!? b6 14. g4!? ♗b7 15. g5 hxg5 [15... ♗h5 16. gxh6 this looks very good for White] 16. ♗xg5 ♖d7 [16... ♗xd4 17. ♗e4!



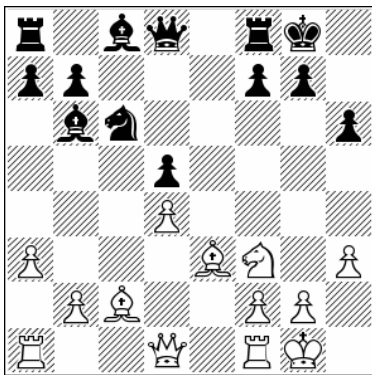
Position after: 17.♙e4!

17...♙xe4 18.♘xe4 ♘xf3+ 19.♚xf3 ♙e5 20.♞ad1 ♚e7 21.♚g2 ♞fd8 22.f4 ♞xd1 23.♞xd1 ♞d8 24.♞xd8+ ♚xd8 25.fxe5 ♚d4+ 26.♘f2 White is better, although as the position is simplified Black perhaps has some practical chances to survive] 17.♞c1 ♞ad8 18.♙b5 ♘xd4 19.♘xd4 ♚xd4 20.♚xd4 ♞xd4 21.♙xf6 gxf6 22.♘e2 ♙e5 23.♘xd4 ♙xd4 24.b4 White's position is better.

13.♙e3 ♘e7

The alternative doesn't solve Black's problems.

13...♘d5 14.♘xd5 exd5 We have already seen this type of position. 15.♙c2



Position after: 15.♙c2

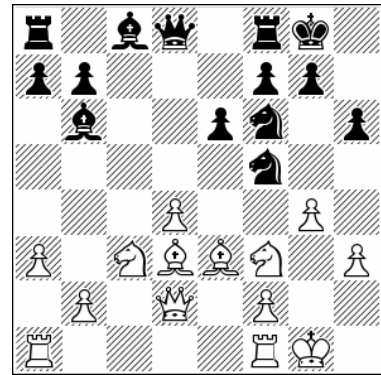
White is preparing to launch a direct attack.

A) 15...♘e7 16.♘h4! White must play in the real spirit of attack, otherwise his chances are gone. [16.♘e5 ♙f5 this is fine for Black, ½-½ (19)

Furman, S – Gipslis, A Moscow 1970] 16...♚d6 17.♚d3 f5 18.♙d2 ♘c6 19.♙c3 ♚f6 20.♘f3 Again we can say that White has better chances.

B) 15...♚d6 16.♞e1 ♙c7 17.♞c1 ♙e6 18.♚d3 f5 19.♙d2 ♞fe8 20.♙a4 Such positions favor White, 1-0 (30) Reshevsky, S – Szabo, L Buenos Aires 1970.

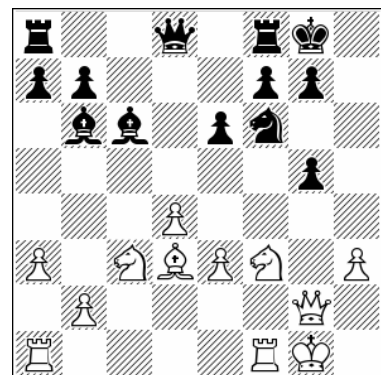
14.♚d2 ♘f5 15.g4!?



Position after: 15.g4!?

This thrust is important when Black has committed himself to ...h6. And that little move h3 is proving its worth.

15...♘xe3 16.fxe3 ♙d7 17.♚g2 ♙c6 18.g5 hxg5



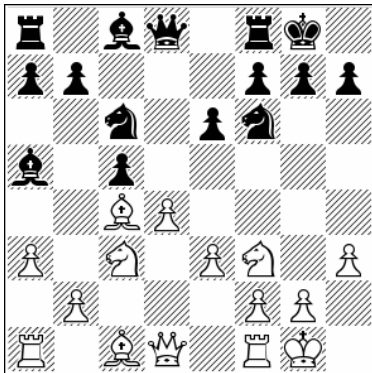
Position after: 18...hxg5

19.♚xg5

White has attacking chances, but still the position is complex.

c) 9...♙a5 10.h3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♘c6 9.a3 ♙a5 10.h3



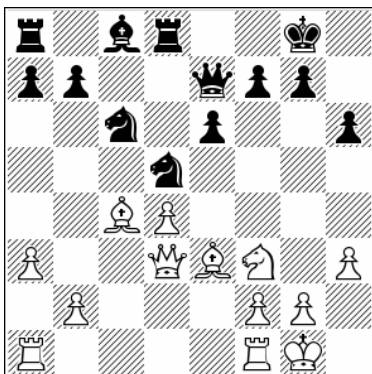
Position after: 10.h3

That's not one of the most popular ideas, but it does deserve attention.

10...h6

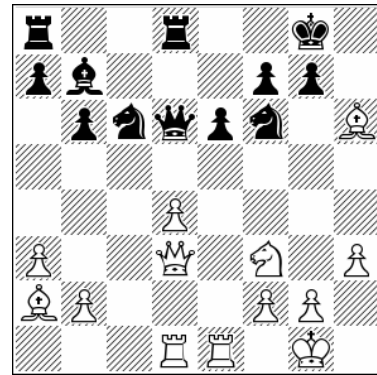
Black wants to keep the white dark-squared bishop out of g5, since his own bishop can't come back to e7 to bolster the defense.

10...♙e7 11.♙c2 cxd4 [11...a6 12.♙a2 ♙c7
13.♖d1 ♙d7 14.dxc5 ♙xc5 15.b4 ♙e7 16.♘e4
♘xe4 17.♙xe4 ♖ad8 18.♙b2 ♙c8 19.h4 ♖xd1+
20.♖xd1 ♖d8 21.♖c1 White holds the advantage
here, 1-0 (30) Peralta, F (2564) – Akash Pc, I
(2300) Barcelona 2017] 12.exd4 ♖d8 13.♙e3
♙xc3 14.♙xc3 ♘d5 15.♙d3 h6



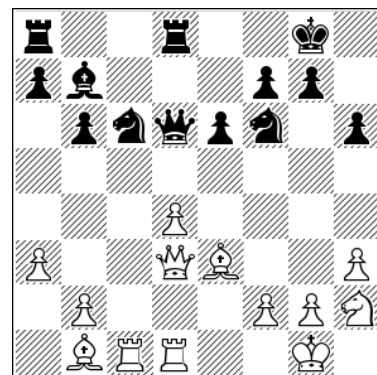
Position after: 15...h6

16.♖ac1! [In the game White missed that strong tactical idea. 16.♙d2 b6 17.♖fe1 ♙b7 18.♙a2 ♙d6 19.♖ad1 ♘f6 20.♙xh6!!



Position after: 20.♙xh6!!

20...gxh6 21.♖xe6 ♙f4 22.♙g6+!! fxg6 23.♖xf6+
♙g7 24.♖xf4 White has the better position and is a clear pawn up] 16...♙d6 17.♙a2 b6 18.♙b1
♘f6 19.♖fd1 ♙b7 20.♘h2!



Position after: 20.♘h2!

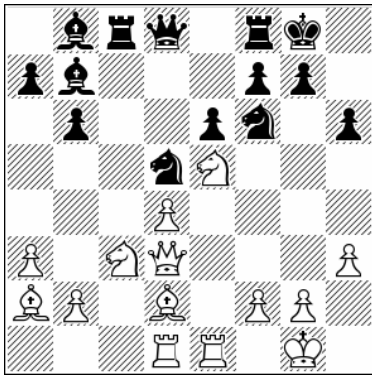
Another interesting benefit of the early h3. 20...♘e7 21.♘g4 White has built up attacking chances.

11.♙d3

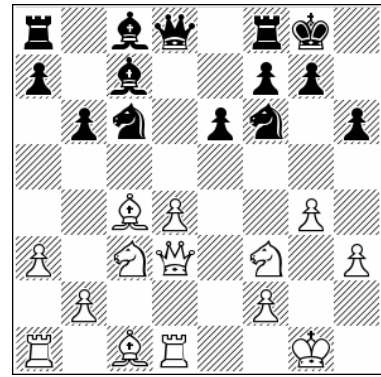
The main move, and probably the best.

A) 11.d5 exd5 12.♘xd5 ♙e6 13.♘xf6+ This is just good for Black, ½-½ (13) Aleksandrov, A (2571) – Zubov, A (2607) Abu Dhabi 2019.

B) 11.♙a2 cxd4 12.exd4 ♙c7 13.♖e1 ♘e7 14.♘e5 b6 15.♙f3 ♖b8 16.♙f4 ♙b7 17.♙d3
♘ed5 18.♙d2 ♖c8 19.♖ad1 ♙b8



Position after: 19...♙b8



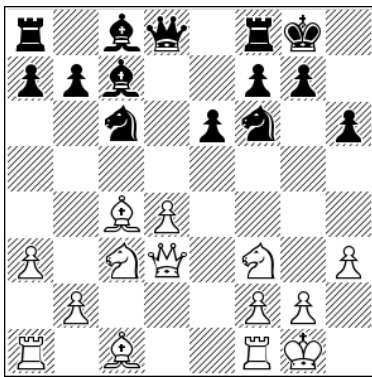
Position after: 14.g4!?

20.♘xd5! [20.♙b1 ♘xc3 21.bxc3 ♚d5! 22.f3 ♙xe5 Black has counterplay here, ½-½ (22) Peralta, F (2570) – Arjun, K (2503) Barcelona 2021] 20...♙xd5 21.♙b1 ♖e8 22.♗e3! White's rook will go to g3, setting up a formidable attacking formation.

In the Panov Attack this pawn thrust is not often seen, but here the h3 move makes it a viable idea, especially after Black's ...h6 which practically provokes such a reaction. Of course this flank action is possible because White is well prepared for the d4-d5 break.

11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♙c7

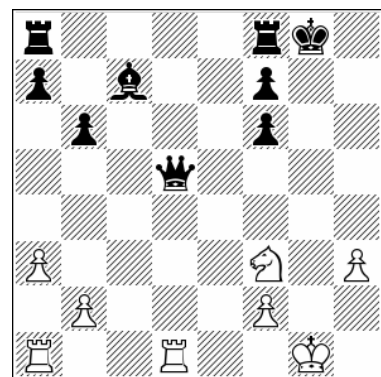
14.d5 exd5 15.♘xd5 ♙e6 16.♘xc7 ♙xc4 17.♚c2 ♚xc7 18.♚xc4 ♖ac8 19.♙f4 ♗b7 20.♗b5 a6 21.♗f5 ♘e7 22.♗d3 ♘g6 23.♙e3 ♖fe8 24.a4 White aims at the queenside. It's not much, but White is safe and is trying to build some pressure, ½-½ (43) Potkin, V (2642) – Quesada Perez, Y (2625) Havana 2012.



Position after: 12...♙c7

14...♙b7 15.g5 hxg5 16.♙xg5 ♘e7 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.d5 exd5 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♙xd5 ♙xd5 21.♚xd5 ♚xd5

13.♖d1



Position after: 21...♚xd5

The best, and we will see why.

13.♖e1 b6 14.d5 exd5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♚xd5 ♙b7 This is OK for Black. We can see that the pawn on h6 is doing a good job now, ½-½ (54) Peralta, F (2602) – Gonzalez Garcia, J (2518) Barbera del Valles 2012.

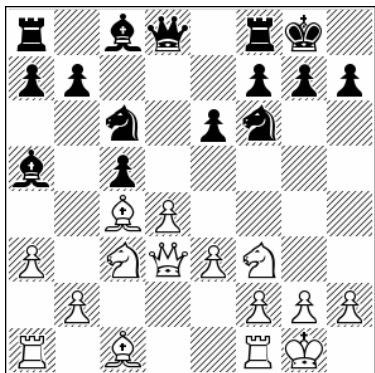
22.♖xd5

13...b6 14.g4!?

White has some edge.

d) 9...♙a5 10.♚d3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♗c6 9.a3 ♙a5
10.♚d3



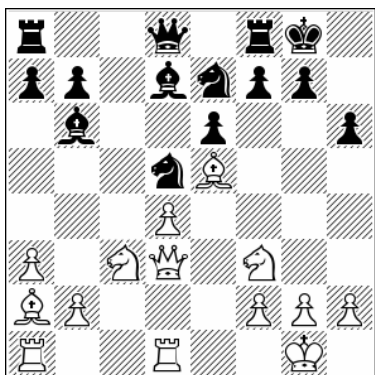
Position after: 10.♚d3

The idea is to shift the c3-knight quickly to e4, clearing a path for attack.

10...a6!?

This is a real test here.

10...cxd4 11.exd4 h6 12.♖d1 ♙b6 13.♙f4 ♗e7
14.♙e5 ♗fd5 15.♙a2 ♙d7



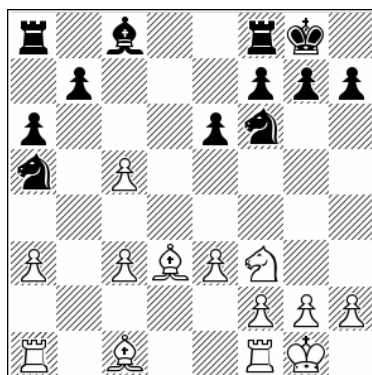
Position after: 15...♙d7

16.♗xd5!? [16.♙b1 ♗g6 17.h4 ♖e8 18.h5 ♗f8
It's complicated but White has more active play,
1-0 (52) Korobov, A (2683) – Vidit, S (2726)
chess.com INT 2021] 16...exd5 17.♗h4! ♗c6
18.♙b1 f5 19.♗g6 ♖e8 20.♙a2 White has the
initiative.

11.♗e4

Not the only idea. White could also opt for an
endgame or continue with play in the center.

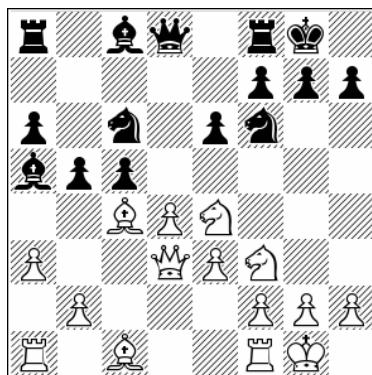
11.dxc5 ♗xd3 12.♙xd3 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♗a5



Position after: 13...♗a5

14.♙c2 [14.♖b1 ♖d8 15.♗e5 ♗d7 16.♗xd7 ♙xd7
17.♖b4 ♙c6 18.♙e2 ♖d5 19.c4 ♖xc5 20.♙b2 b5
21.cxb5 ♙xb5 22.♙d4 ♖c2 23.♙xb5 axb5
24.♖xb5 f6! 25.h3 ♗c4 26.♙c5 ♗xa3 27.♙xa3
♖xa3 28.♖b7 ♖ac3! Black has equalized]
14...♙d7 15.a4 ♖fc8 16.♙a3 ♗c4 17.♖fb1 ♗xa3
18.♖xa3 ♖ab8 19.♙d3 a5 20.♗d4 ♖xc5 Black is
fine in this endgame, ½-½ (67) Georgiev, V (2550)
– Bruzon Batista, L (2684) Chicago 2015.

11...b5

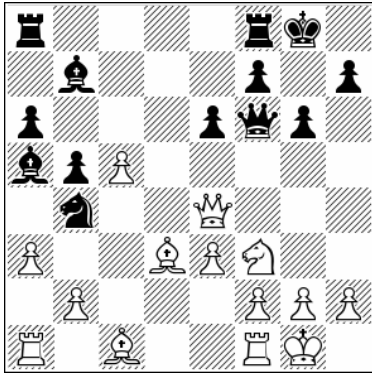


Position after: 11...b5

12.♗xf6+

12. ♖a2 c4 13. ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 14. ♖e2 ♗b7 15. b3 cxb3 16. ♗xb3 e5 17. ♗b2 exd4 18. ♗xd4 ♖g6 19. f3 ♗xd4 20. ♗xd4 ♗b6 Black is OK here, 1-0 (86) Van Foreest, J (2673) – Le Quang Liem (2709) chess.com INT 2020.

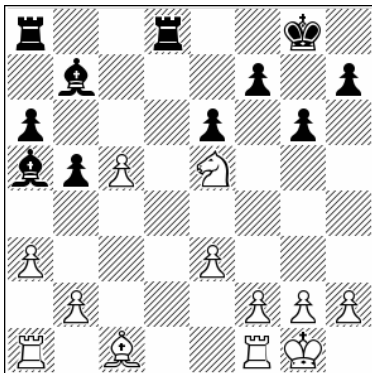
12... ♖xf6 13. ♖e4 ♗b7 14. ♗d3 g6 15. dxc5 ♗b4



Position after: 15... ♗b4

Black is counting on this little tactic, which secures the bishop pair and faster development at the cost of a pawn.

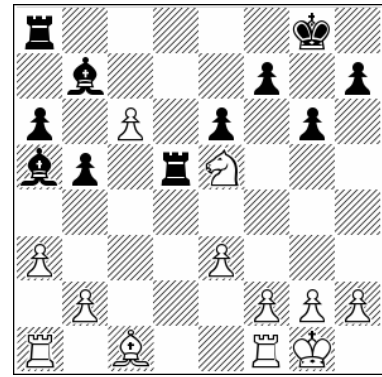
16. ♖e5 ♖xe5 17. ♗xe5 ♗xd3 18. ♗xd3 ♖fd8 19. ♗e5



Position after: 19... ♗e5

19... ♗c7

19... ♖d5 20. c6!



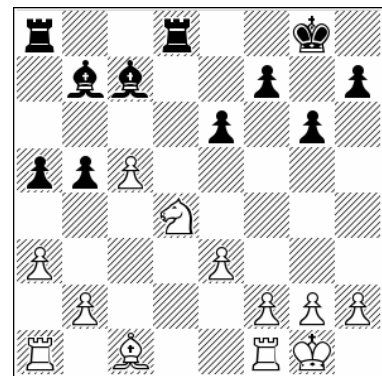
Position after: 20. c6!

20... ♖xe5 21. cxb7 ♖b8 22. b4 ♗c7 23. ♗b2 ♖d5 24. ♖fc1 ♖xb7 25. ♖c6 a5 26. g3 a4 27. ♗f6 White has some initiative.

20. ♗f3 a5

20... e5 21. b4 f6 22. ♗b2 ♖d3 23. ♖fc1 ♖ad8 24. ♗c3 ♗c6 25. ♗e1 ♖3d7 26. ♖a2 g5 27. f3 f5 28. ♗f2 e4 Black has compensation for the pawn he sacrificed.

21. ♗d4

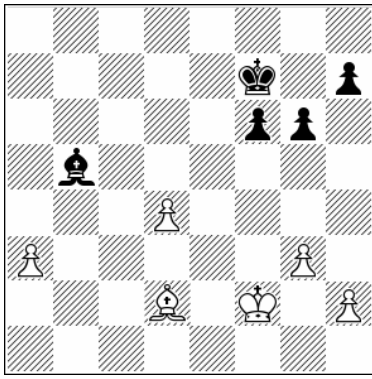


Position after: 21. ♗d4

21... b4

21... ♖d5 22. c6 ♗c8 23. ♗d2 e5 24. ♗f3 ♗g4 This is also OK for Black, ½-½ (26) Gligoric, S – Unzicker, W Ljubljana 1969.

22. f4 e5 23. fxe5 ♗xe5 24. c6 ♗a6 25. ♖d1 bxa3 26. ♖xa3 ♗b5 27. ♗d2 ♗xd4 28. c7 ♖dc8 29. exd4 ♖xc7 30. ♗xa5 ♖c2 31. ♖d2 ♖xd2 32. ♗xd2 ♖xa3 33. bxa3 f6 34. ♗f2 ♗f7 35. g3



Position after: 35.g3

35...♔e6

The game is on its way to a draw.

e) 9...♘a5 10.♘a2

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♞f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♟c6 9.a3 ♘a5
10.♘a2

An invention of Polugaevsky, known from my childhood, this variation actually has a rather simple idea: to put pressure on h7 with the bishop on b1 and queen on c2 (or d3). Sokolov in his book on the Nimzo also promotes this idea, but I am not really sure that it has withstood the test of time. We will see why I have my doubts.

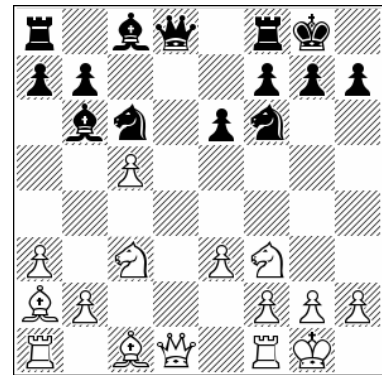


Position after: 10.♘a2

10...h6!?

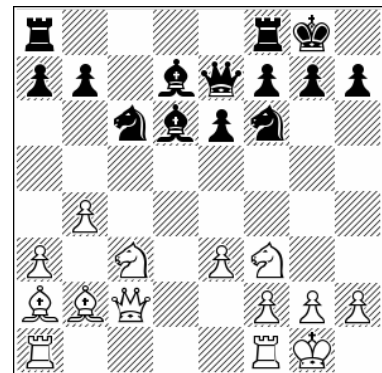
The modern treatment that we have already seen in many positions. Now I can't really find a way to make good use of that retreat to a2.

A) 10...♘b6 11.dxc5



Position after: 11.dxc5

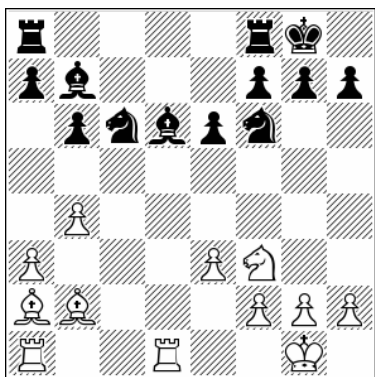
A1) 11...♙xc5 12.b4 ♘d6 13.♙b2 ♚e7 14.♚c2
♙d7



Position after: 14...♙d7

15.♞e4! After this move White gets better chances. [15.♜fd1 ♞e5 this is not too clear, ½-½ (41) Polugaevsky, L (2630) – Karpov, A (2700) Moscow 1974] 15...♞xe4 16.♚xe4 ♜ad8 17.b5 ♞a5 18.a4 White is nicely centralized, and the black knight on a5 is misplaced.

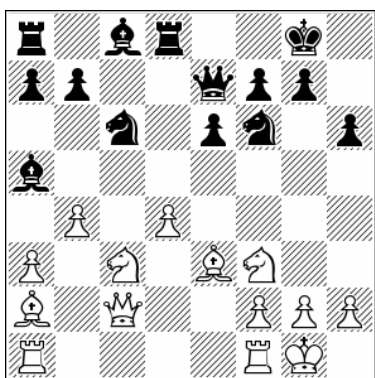
A2) 11...♖xd1 12.♞xd1 ♘xc5 13.b4 ♘e7 14.♘b2 b6 15.♘b5 ♘b7 16.♘d6 ♘xd6



Position after: 16...♘xd6

17.♞xd6 White has some chances for advantage, ½-½ (25) Lombard, A (2420) – Pomar Salamanca, A (2430) Buenos Aires 1978.

B) 10...♖e7 11.♖c2 cxd4 12.exd4 ♞d8 13.♘e3 ♘d7 ½-½ (13) Gual Pascual, A (2420) – Garcia Ilundain, D (2500) Terrassa 1997. Here the players agreed a premature draw, so we don't learn anything from this position. Therefore I will continue with some analysis from here. [13...h6 14.b4!

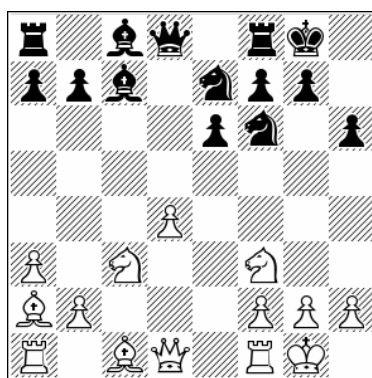


Position after: 14.b4!

14...♘b6 15.♞ad1 ♖f8 16.d5 ♘xe3 17.fxe3 ♘e7 18.dxe6 ♘xe6 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.♘d4 White has an advantage] 14.b4 ♘b6 15.♞ad1 ♞ac8 16.♞fe1 ♖f8 17.d5 exd5 18.♘g5! ♘e7 19.♘xf6 gxf6 20.♖b2 That's just one idea, but it does seem that Black has a tough time finding a good plan.

11.h3

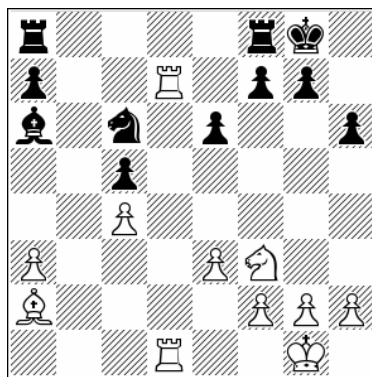
A) 11.♘a4 cxd4 12.exd4 ♘c7 13.♘c3 ♘e7!



Position after: 13...♘e7!

14.♞e1 b6 Next comes bishop to b7 etc. Black has good play.

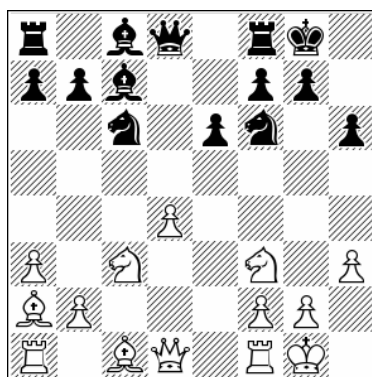
B) 11.dxc5!? ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♖xd1 13.♞xd1 ♘e4 14.c4 ♘xc5 15.♘d2 b6 16.♘b4 ♘b7 17.♘xc5 bxc5 18.♞d7 ♘a6 19.♞ad1



Position after: 19.♞ad1

19...♞ab8 This is a good endgame for Black. The white pawn on c4 is a target and the bishop on a2 is passive.

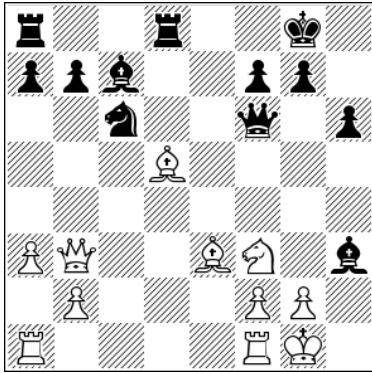
11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♘c7



Position after: 12...♘c7

13.♞e1

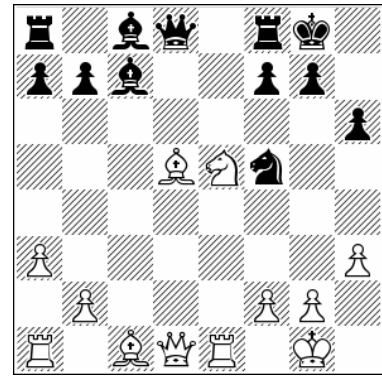
13.d5 exd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♚f6 16.♗b3
[16.♙xc6? ♗xc6 Black is better, ½-½ (44)
Aleksandrov, A (2608) – Quesada Perez, Y (2598)
lichess.org INT 2020] 16...♞d8 17.♙e3 ♙xh3!



Position after: 17...♙xh3!

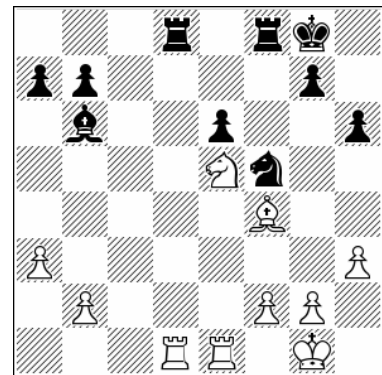
18.gxh3 ♗g6+ 19.♔h1 ♗h5 20.♞fd1 ♗xh3+
21.♔g1 ♗g4+ Now if White wants to play for
more with 22.♔f1 ♞xd5! 23.♗xd5 ♞d8 24.♗b3
♗xf3 25.♞xd8+ ♙xd8 26.♞d1 ♙f6 Black is fine.

13...♘e7 14.♘e5 ♘f5 15.d5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5
exd5 17.♙xd5



Position after: 17.♙xd5

17...♙e6 18.♙xe6 fx6 19.♙f4 ♙b6 20.♗xd8
♞xd8 21.♞ad1



Position after: 21.♞ad1

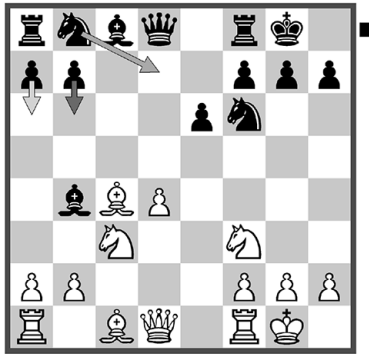
21...♘d4

Black has counterplay, ½-½ (42) Manninen, A –
Ottesen, S corr. 2016.

Chapter 4

8...cxd4 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 4 – 8...cxd4 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4

a) 9...♗bd7

b) 9...a6 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 b5

c) 9...a6 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♖c7 12.♗e2

d) 9...a6 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♖c7 12.♙d3

e) 9...b6 10.♗b3

f) 9...b6 10.♖e1 ♙b7 11.♙d3 ♗bd7

g) 9...b6 10.♖e1 ♙b7 11.♙d3 ♗c6

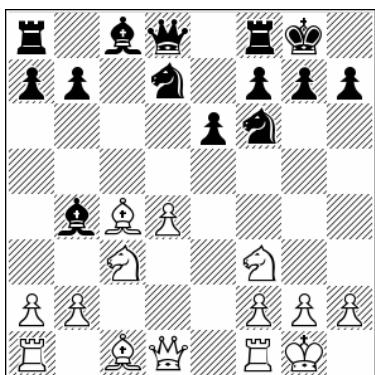
a) 9...♞bd7

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♟d3 c5
6.♞f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4

Let's now make it clear, once and for all, that starting with 7...cxd4 or 7...dxc4 makes no difference when the two moves are played consecutively.

This chapter covers sidelines connected with the Karpov line. The main Karpov line will be analyzed in the following two chapters.

8.exd4 dxc4 9.♟xc4 ♞bd7



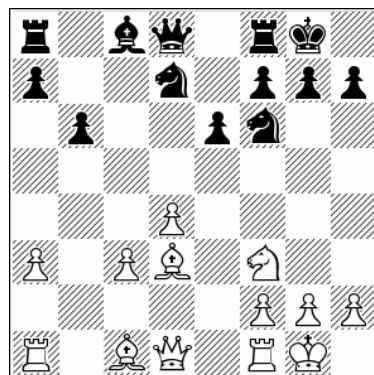
Position after: 9...♞bd7

This is yet another hybrid line, a combination of systems. It will more or less transpose to the Karpov lines of the following chapters but here I will give some extra information.

10.♟d3 b6 11.a3

11.♞e1 ♟b7 12.a3 ♟xc3 13.bxc3 This is another move order, and probably the best one. It is analyzed in the subchapter f)

11...♟xc3 12.bxc3

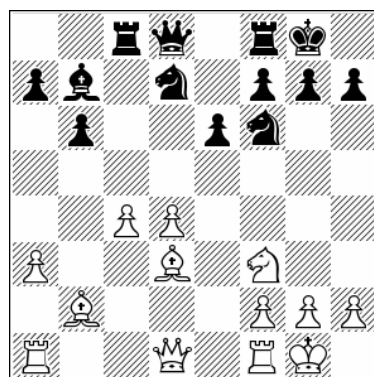


Position after: 12.bxc3

12...♞c7

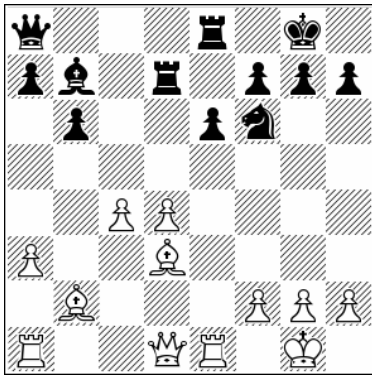
Black immediately attacks the pawn on c3. The bishop fianchetto line (below) is more common at this point, with possible transpositions to the Karpov line under 10.♞e1 ♟b7 11.♟d3.

12...♟b7 13.c4 [13.♞e1 ♞c8 14.c4 ♟a6 15.♞e2 ♞c7 16.♞e5! See the analysis in the subchapter on the Karpov line with the 10.♞e1 ♟b7 11.♟d3 plan. White also goes for a3 in that line and these two lines often transpose into each other.] 13...♞c8 14.♟b2! White is in time for rook to c1. This is the most aggressive setup for White, when Black allows it. And yes, this is all about attacking positions.

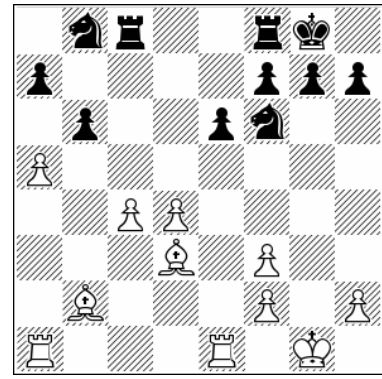


Position after: 14.♟b2!

14...♞c7 This time the idea is to invade White's territory with ...♞f4. [14...♞e8 15.♞e1 ♞c7? A poor plan. 16.♞e5 ♞a8 17.♞xd7 ♞xd7



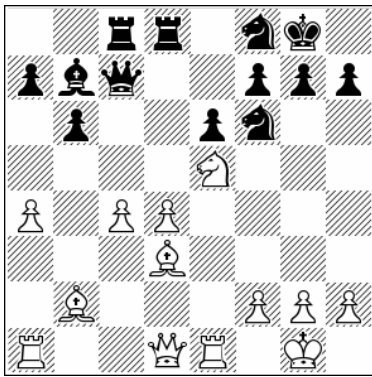
Position after: 17...Rxd7



Position after: 19.a5!

18.d5! White is better. This is a typical good example what White is aiming for, 1-0 (44) Illescas Cordoba, M (2591) – Gyimesi, Z (2594) Novi Sad 2009.] 15.Re1

A) 15...Rfd8 16.Ne5 Nf8 17.a4



Position after: 17.a4

17...Ng6 18.a5 Simple strategy now. Black defends against the kingside attack, but White now has minority-attack pressure on the other side of the board. It's worth noting that Black can do nothing to disturb the strong white center, and that is precisely because of the bishop is on b2.

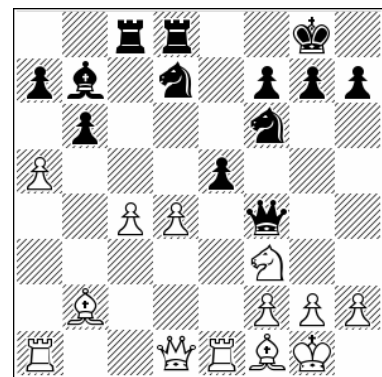
B) 15...Qf4! These ideas are critical here. Black must apply pressure on the knight on f3. 16.a4 This move is important and indeed this minority-attack play is essential. 16...Rfd8 [16...Qxf3 17.Qxf3 Qxf3 18.gxf3 Nb8 19.a5!

Just in time, before Black gets a chance to block that idea with knight to c6. 19...Nc6 20.axb6 axb6 21.Qf1 Rfd8 22.Red1 White exerts some pressure in this endgame because of the weak pawn on b6.] 17.a5 This is standard play for this line. The minority attack is an important asset for White, creating a potential target on b6.

B1) Black can't exploit tactics here. 17...Ng4? 18.d5 exd5 19.g3 Qh6 20.Qf5 White has a big advantage.

B2) Perhaps it's best for Black to just give up on the idea of keeping his bishop pair. 17...Qxf3!? 18.Qxf3 Qxf3 19.gxf3 Nb8 20.axb6 axb6 21.Ra7 Ng6 22.Rb7 Nh4 23.Re3 With yet another complex position.

B3) 17...e5 18.Qf1!



Position after: 18.Qf1!

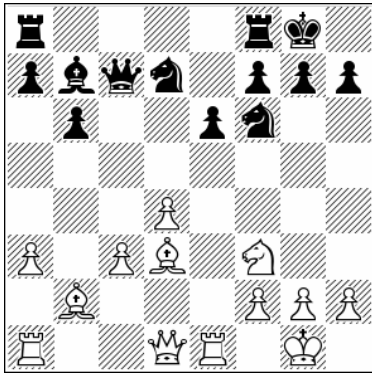
A good idea. Now Black must decide what to do here. 18...exd4 [18...e4 19.Qd2! Qf5 20.Qg5 White is better] 19.Qxd4! White has some edge in this possible endgame.

13. ♖b2!?

That's the most interesting idea in this move order.

13.c4 ♕a6 14.♞e2 ♜ac8 15.♘d2 e5 16.d5 ♘c5!
[16...e4 17.♘xe4 this is less clear, ½-½ (42)
Zsinka, L – Gross, D corr. 1995] 17.♕f5 ♘xd5!
18.♙xc8 ♘f4 19.♞e3 ♕xc8 Black is better

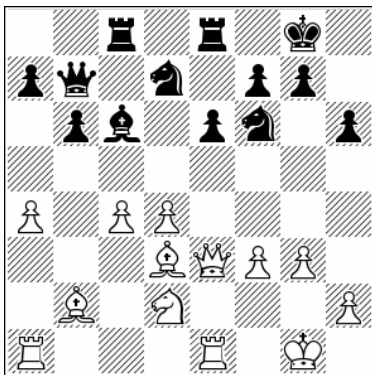
13... ♕b7 14. ♜e1



Position after: 14. ♜e1

14... ♜fd8

A) 14... ♕d5 15.♞e2 ♘h5 16.g3 ♘hf6 17.c4 ♕c6
18.♘d2 ♜ac8 19.a4 ♜fe8 20.f3 h6 21.♞e3 ♞b7



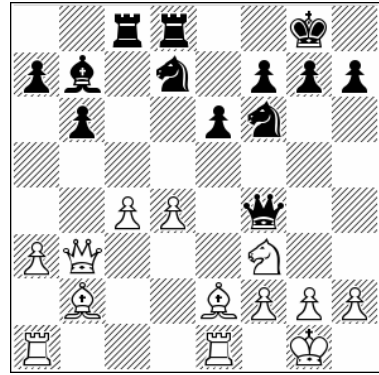
Position after: 21... ♞b7

22.g4!?! A highly interesting position!

B) 14... ♜ad8 15.h3 ♘d5 16.c4 ♘f4 17.♕f1 ♜fe8
18.a4 White has achieved his typical play.

15.a4!?

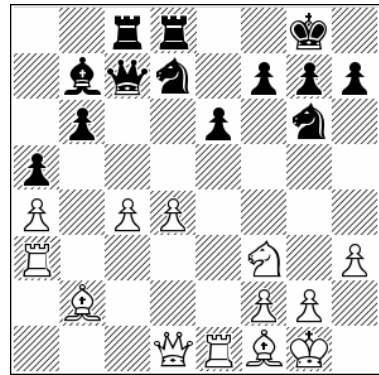
A) 15.c4 ♞f4 16.♕e2!?! An interesting concept.
16... ♜ac8 17.♞b3!



Position after: 17. ♞b3!

The queen heads across to the e3-square, which is typical play for White. 17...h6 18.a4 ♘e4 19.a5 White has better chances, 1-0 (23) Sertic, R (2374) – Tancik, K (2287) Subotica 2012.

B) 15.h3 ♘d5 [15... ♘f8 16.a4 ♘g6 17.c4 a5
18.♘e5 ♜ac8 19.♘g6 hxg6 20.♞b3 ♞c6 21.♕f1
On account of the weak pawn on b6, we can say that White keeps chances of an advantage] 16.c4 ♘f4 17.♕f1 ♜ac8 18.a4 ♘g6 19.♜a3 a5



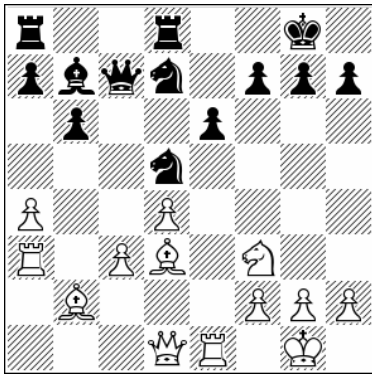
Position after: 19... a5

20.♜ae3! This is a good plan. White has stopped ...e5 and now he is looking for attacking possibilities.

15... ♘d5

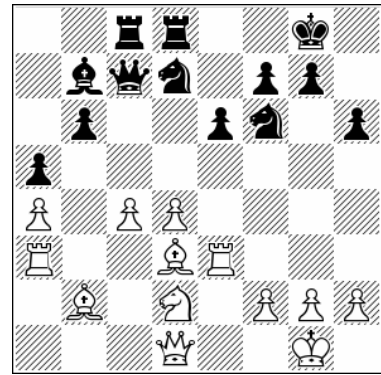
15... ♞f4 16.♞d2 ♘h5 17.♕e2 ♜ac8 18.♞e3
Another interesting setup. The a4-a5 push is coming soon.

16. ♖a3!



Position after: 16. ♖a3!

17. c4 ♘f6 18. ♘d2 ♖ac8 19. ♖e3 a5



Position after: 19...a5

16...h6

16... ♘f8 17. c4 ♘f4 18. ♙f1 ♖ac8 19. a5 White looks good here as well.

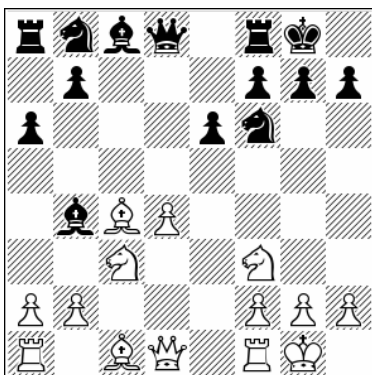
20. ♖e2

Placing the rook in front of the queen is the right plan.

b) 9...a6 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 b5

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♙d3 c5 6. ♘f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♙xc4 a6

The black bishop can go back, but that is a poor version of a Semi-Tarrasch line. 10... ♙e7 11. ♙a2 b5 12. d5 ♘xd5 13. ♘xd5 exd5 14. ♙xd5 ♖a7 15. ♘e5 ♙f6 16. ♙f4 White has some edge.



Position after: 9...a6

11. bxc3 b5

For 11... ♖c7 see the next two subchapters.

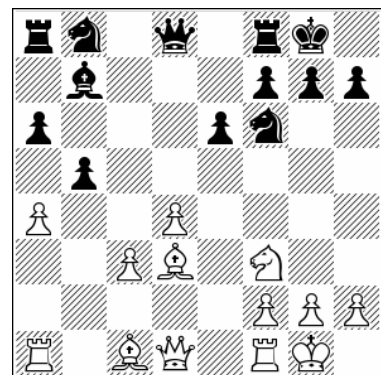
12. ♙d3 ♙b7 13. a4

A slightly offbeat line in this move order. The idea is logical, to push ...b5 at once, but the drawback, as we will see, is that such structures can be compromised.

10.a3

Probably best.

10... ♙xc3



Position after: 13.a4

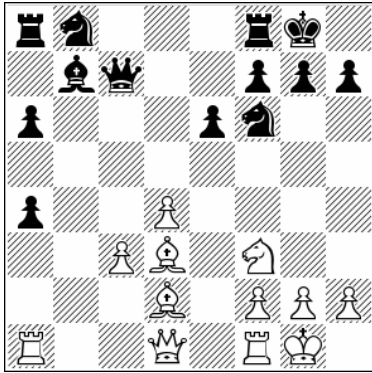
The pawn on b5 really invites this sort of attack.

13. ♖e1 ♘bd7 14. ♖b1 ♖c7 15. ♙d2 ♖ac8 16. h3 ♘d5 17. ♖c1 ♖d6 18. ♖b3 ♘5b6 This is OK for

Black, ½-½ (72) Peralta, E (2218) – Shkapenko, P (2424) chess.com INT 2021.

13...♙d5

13...♙c7 14.♘d2 bxa4!?

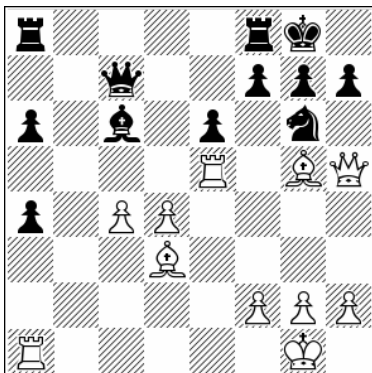


Position after: 14...bxa4!?

Black adopts a double edged strategy. White must be on the alert now, as the passed a6-pawn may become dangerous if he mishandles the position. [14...♘bd7 15.axb5 axb5 16.♙e2 ♘d5 17.♙xa8 ♙xa8 18.♘xb5 ♘g4 19.♙d1 ♙a2 20.h3 ♘gf6 21.♘d3 White is clearly better, 1-0 (36) Rogozenco, D (2552) – Von Herman, U (2419) Germany 2011]

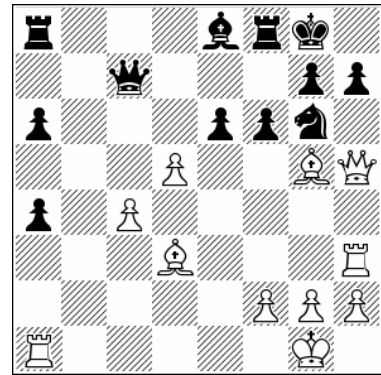
A) 15.♙xa4 ♘e4 16.♘e2! ♘g4 [16...a5 17.♙e1 ♘bd7 18.c4 this is also part of White's plan] 17.♙e1!? ♘c6 18.h3 ♘f6 19.♘e5 a5 20.♘f1 Looking good for White.

B) 15.♘e5!? ♘bd7 16.♙e1 ♘xe5 17.♙xe5 ♘c6 18.♘g5 Going for attack. 18...♘d5 19.c4 ♘e7 20.♙h5 ♘g6!



Position after: 20...♘g6!

[20...♘f5 21.♘f6!! White is winning, 1-0 (28) lordachescu, V (2646) – Filip, L (2483) Brasov 2011] 21.♙e3 ♘e8! 22.d5!? [22.♙h3 h6 23.♘xh6 gxh6 24.♙xh6 f5! Black puts up a good defense] 22...f6 23.♙h3!

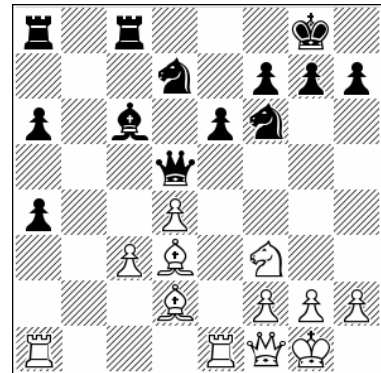


Position after: 23.♙h3!

23...h6 24.♘xh6 Now it's good for White.

14.axb5

14.♙e1 ♘bd7 15.♙e2 ♙fc8 16.♘d2 ♘c6 17.♙f1 Now White's idea is to advance his knight to e5. 17...bxa4

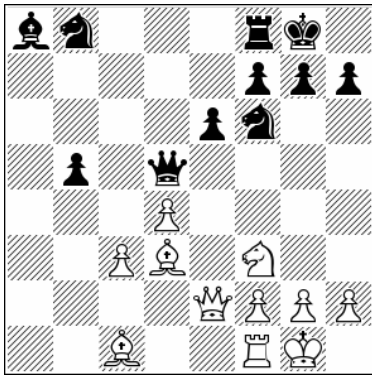


Position after: 17...bxa4

18.c4 [18.♘e5 ♘xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙d6 20.♙d1 ♘b5! That looks very nice for Black] 18...♙d6 19.c5 ♙c7 20.♙e2 ♘b5 21.h3 ♙ab8 22.♙eb1 The position is balanced.

14...axb5 15.♙b1

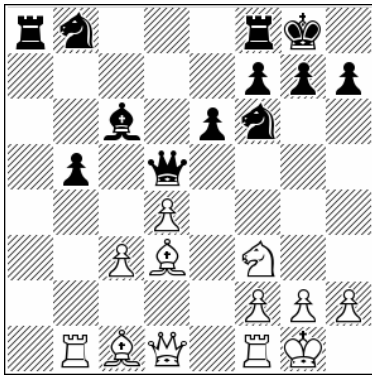
15.♙xa8 ♘xa8 16.♙e2



Position after: 16. ♖e2

16... ♟c6 [16... ♜c8 17. ♟d2 ♞e4 18. ♟xe4 ♞xe4 19. ♞xb5 ♟d5 20. ♞b1 ♞g4 21. h3 ♞h5 22. ♞e5 ♞e2 23. ♟e3 White is better, 1-0 (63) Bannik, A – Poliak, E Kiev 1959] 17. ♟a3 ♜c8 18. ♞b1 ♞bd7 19. ♟xb5 ♞e4 This is OK for Black.

15... ♟c6



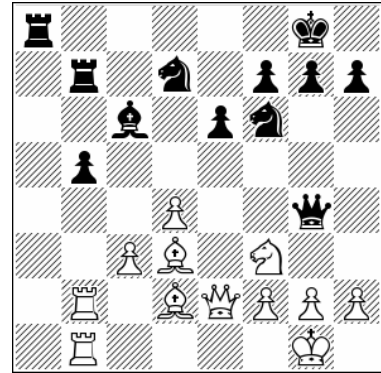
Position after: 15... ♟c6

16. ♞e1

16. ♞b3 ♞bd7 17. ♟xb5 ♟xb5 18. ♞xb5 ♜fc8 19. ♟d2 ♞xb5 20. ♞xb5 ♞e4 21. ♞b7 ♞df6 22. ♜c1 ♞d5! [22... h6 23. c4 ♞a4 24. ♞b4 ♞a2 25. ♟e1 White has managed to safeguard his pawns, 1-0 (46) Grigoriants, S (2413) – Langheinrich, F (2325) Oropesa del Mar 1999] 23. ♞b3 ♞dxc3 24. ♟xc3 ♞xc3 25. ♞bxc3 ♞xc3 It's just an equal endgame.

16... ♞bd7 17. ♞e2 ♞a2

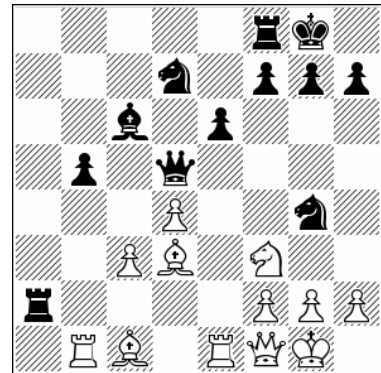
It is not easy for Black to defend his pawn on b5. Instead he does best is to play actively. 17... ♞fb8 18. ♟f4 ♞b7 19. ♞b2 ♞h5 20. ♞eb1 ♞g4 21. ♟d2



Position after: 21. ♟d2

21... ♞ab8 22. h3 ♞h5 23. ♟f4 White has an edge here, 1-0 (29) Simonsen, H (2243) – Harmon, C (2184) Budapest 2004.

18. ♞f1 ♞g4



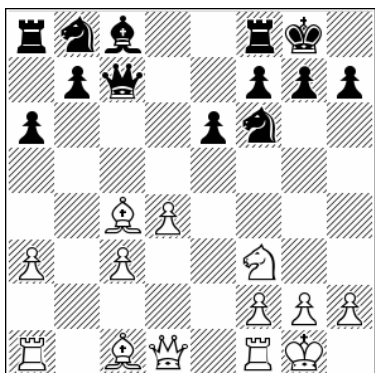
Position after: 18... ♞g4

19. ♞d2! ♞c8 20. f3 ♞g6 21. ♞e4

This looks good for White.

c) 9...a6 10.a3 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♚c7 12.♞e2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♘xc4 a6
10.a3 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♚c7



Position after: 11...♚c7

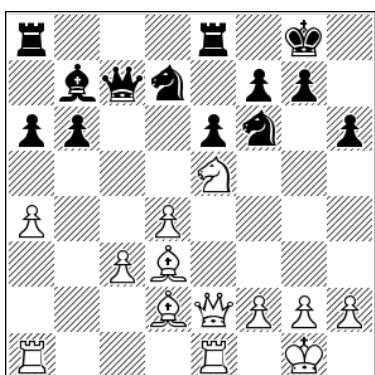
Here we will see a risky attempt to grab the pawn on c3.

12.♞e2

We will analyze this reply and also, in the next subchapter, 12.♘d3 which is another logical follow-up.

12...b5

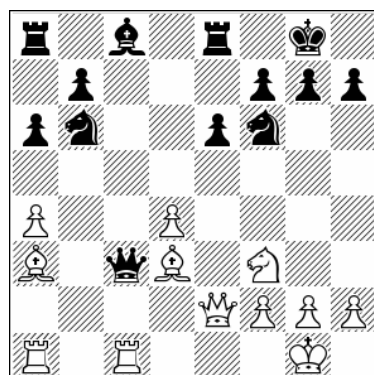
12...♗bd7 13.a4!? ♗b6 [13...b6 14.♘d2 ♘b7
15.♘d3 ♞fe8 16.♞fe1 h6 17.♗e5



Position after: 17.♗e5

17...♗xe5 18.♞xe5 ♞xe5 19.♞xe5 ♞ec8 20.c4
♞c7 21.a5 White is clearly benefiting from
Black's combination of ...a6 and ...b6 ideas, 1-0

(66) Sokolov, I (2653) – Riazantsev, A (2710)
Plovdiv 2012] 14.♘d3 ♞xc3 15.♘a3 ♞e8 This
pawn sac looks quite dangerous 16.♞fc1!?N

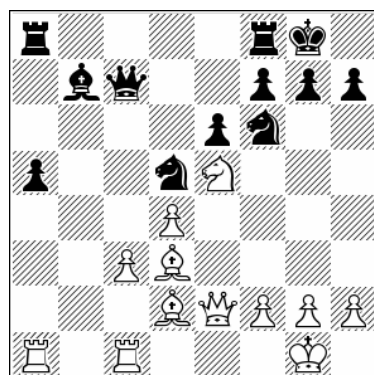


Position after: 16.♞fc1!?

16...♞a5 17.♞c5 ♞xa4 18.♘c2 ♞d7 19.♞g5
♗bd5 20.♗e5 ♞d8 21.♞f3 White has a strong
attack.

13.♘d3 ♞xc3

If 13...♘b7 then 14.♘d2 followed by a4 is
White's best plan. 14...♗bd7 15.a4 bxa4
16.♞xa4 ♗b6 17.♞aa1 a5 18.♞fc1 ♗bd5 19.♗e5



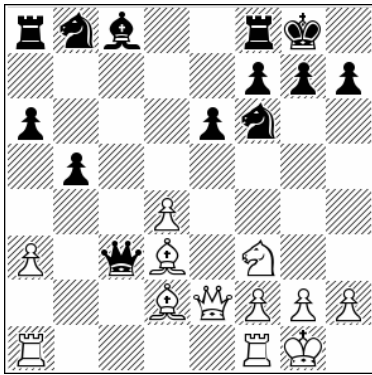
Position after: 19.♗e5

19...♞fd8 20.h3 ♞ab8 21.♞a3 ♘a8 22.♞ca1
White is clearly better, 1-0 (35) Timofeev, A
(2569) – Volovikov, A (2271) Serpukhov 2018.

14.♘b2!?N

This move is very important and new: the idea is
to prepare the d4-d5 break.

14. ♖d2

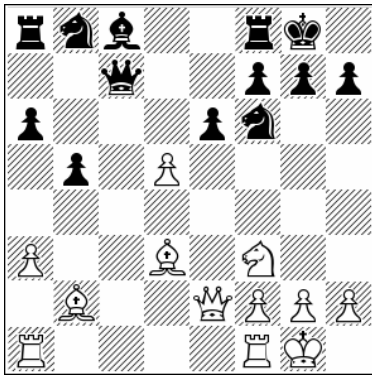


Position after: 14. ♖d2

14... ♖c6 [14... ♖c7 15. ♖fc1 ♖d8 16. a4 ♖b7 17. axb5 axb5 18. ♖xa8 ♖xa8 19. ♖b4 ♖e8 20. ♖xb5 ♖xf3 21. ♖xf3 ½-½ (21) Debashis, D (2478) – Schlosser, P (2602) Pardubice 2013] 15. ♖ac1 ♖d5 16. ♖b4± ♖e8 17. ♖c5 ♖d8 18. ♖e5 White has good compensation, Gmuer, A – Kordts, W Chessfriend.com 2003.

14... ♖c6

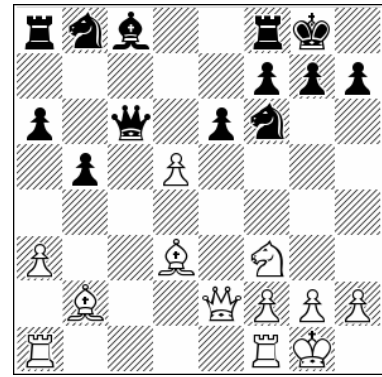
14... ♖c7 15. d5!



Position after: 15. d5!

15... ♖xd5 16. ♖ac1 ♖d8 17. ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 18. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 19. ♖e4+ ♖g8 20. ♖g5 ♖e8 21. ♖h7+ ♖f8 22. ♖xg7+ ♖e7 23. ♖xf7 White has secured a big advantage.

15. d5!



Position after: 15. d5!

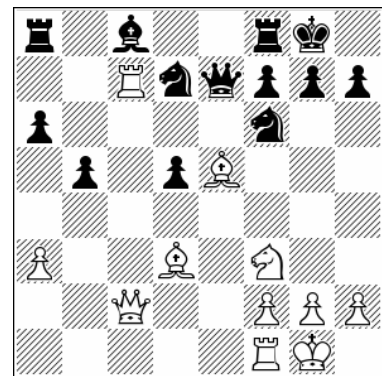
15... exd5 16. ♖ac1 ♖d6

16... ♖e6 17. ♖c2 ♖e4 18. ♖d4 ♖d7 19. f3 ♖f6 20. ♖f5 White wins.

17. ♖e5 ♖e7

17... ♖b6 18. ♖d4 ♖e6 19. ♖b2 ♖bd7 20. ♖c7 White has more than enough compensation for his two sacrificed pawns.

18. ♖c7 ♖bd7 19. ♖c2



Position after: 19. ♖c2

19... h6

19... ♖xa3 20. ♖a1 ♖e7 21. ♖d4 ♖e8 22. ♖c6 ♖b8 23. ♖a7 White's sacrifices are paying off nicely.

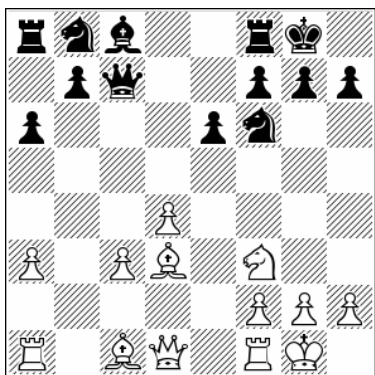
20. ♖d4

White has a strong initiative.

d) 9...a6 10.a3 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♚c7 12.♙d3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 a6
10.a3 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♚c7 12.♙d3

Retreating at once is also logical. Black is again going after the c3-pawn.



Position after: 12.♙d3

12...♚xc3?!

Very risky.

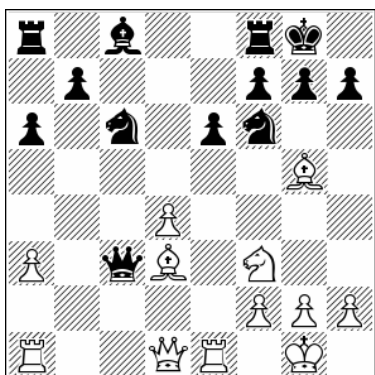
If 12...b5 White again has the basic plan of 13.♙d2 followed by a4 with a slight advantage, so grabbing that c3-pawn must be critical.

13.♙g5!?

This is a must.

13...♘bd7

13...♘c6 14.♞e1



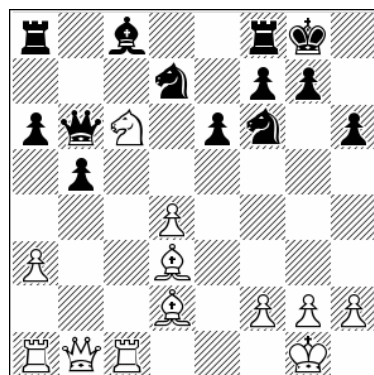
Position after: 14.♞e1

White is much better in all cases. 14...♚a5 [14...♘e7 15.♞e3 ♚c7 16.♘e5! White has an attack; 14...♘d5 15.♚b1 h6 16.♙d2 Black's queen is trapped] 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♘e5! Again White is building up an attack.

14.♞e1!?

There is a similar position with the black bishop already on b7. Now, with White a tempo ahead, this is more than dangerous for Black.

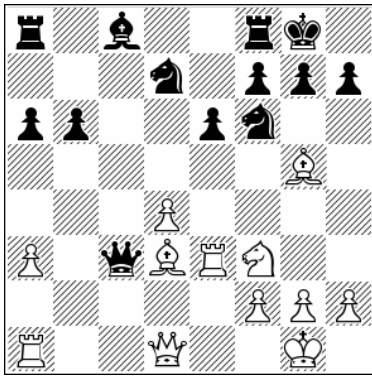
14.♚b1 b5 15.♞c1 ♚a5 16.♘e5 h6 17.♘c6 ♚b6
18.♙d2!



Position after: 18.♙d2!

18...♘d5!?! [18...♙b7!?! 19.♙a5 ♚xc6 20.♞xc6 ♙xc6 Black has some compensation but still it's only two pieces for a queen, ½-½ (35) Zilberman, Y (2468) – Ovetchkin, R (2498) Moscow 2011] 19.♙h7+ ♔h8 20.♙e4 ♘7f6 21.♙f3 ♙d7 22.♙a5 ♚b7 23.♘e5 ♞ac8 24.♙b4 ♞xc1+ 25.♚xc1 ♞c8 26.♘xf7+ ♔g8 27.♘xh6+ gxh6 28.♚xh6 ♚c7 29.♙xd5 ♘xd5 30.♚g6+ The draw is imminent.

14...b6 15.♞e3!



Position after: 15.♖e3!

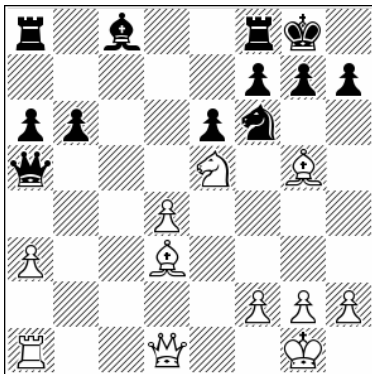
15.♖e5 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♖d5 17.♗e4 ♗b7 18.♙g4
Black faces a strong attack.

15...♙a5

15...♙c6 16.♖e5 ♙d6 17.♖xd7 ♖xd7 18.♙h5
Again here we see a white advantage with strong attacking chances.

16.♖e5

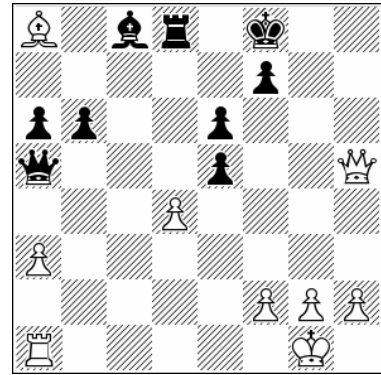
16.♖e5!? ♖xe5 17.♖xe5



Position after: 17.♖xe5

17...♖e8 [17...♗b7 18.♗xf6 ♙d5 19.♙g4 ♙xg2+
20.♙xg2 ♗xg2 21.♖d7 ♖fc8 22.♖xg2 ♖a7

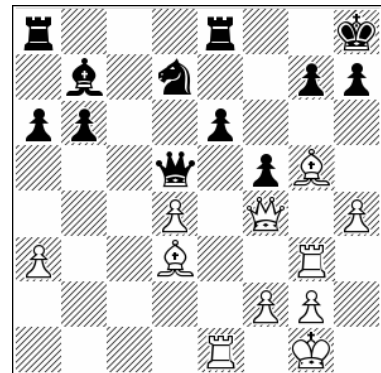
23.♖xb6 ♖c3 24.♗xg7 ♖xg7 25.♗f1 ♖ac7 26.a4
White clearly has the upper hand] 18.♗xf6 gxf6
19.♗xh7+ ♖f8 20.♗e4 fxe5 21.♗xa8 ♖d8 22.♙h5



Position after: 22.♙h5

22...exd4 23.♙h4 ♖e8 24.♙h8+ ♖e7 25.♙h4+
The two sides have to settle for a draw.

16...♗b7 17.♖xd7 ♖xd7 18.♖g3 ♖fc8 19.h4!
♙d5 20.♙g4 f5 21.♙f4 ♖h8 22.♖e1 ♖e8



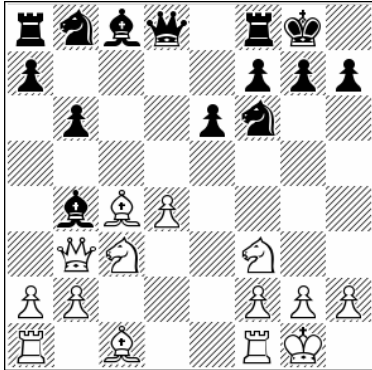
Position after: 22...♖e8

23.h5

White's kingside initiative is strong.

e) 9...b6 10.♔b3

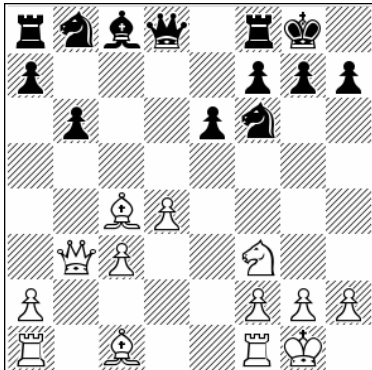
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♔b3!?



Position after: 10.♔b3!?

White speeds up his play. If Black takes on c3, the a3-f8 diagonal will become an asset for White.

10...♙xc3 11.bxc3



Position after: 11.bxc3

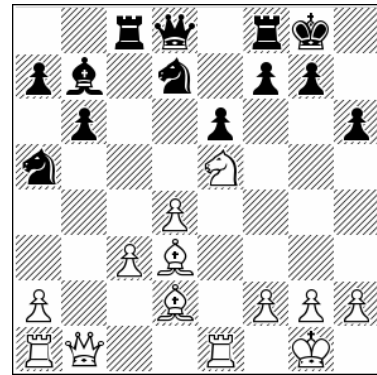
White has gained the bishop pair and now he wants to get in c3-c4 quickly.

11...♙b7

Already Black has choices here.

A) 11...♘c6

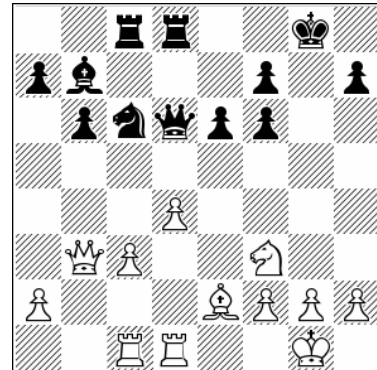
A1) 12.♙d3 ♙b7 13.♔b1 h6 14.♖e1 ♖c8 15.♙d2
♘a5 16.♘e5 ♘d7



Position after: 16...♘d7

17.♘xd7 [17.♘g4 ♔h4 18.f3 ♘c4 19.♙f4 ♙d5
this is not at all clear, ½-½ (36) Korobov, A (2656)
– Wojtaszek, R (2733) Poikovsky 2016]
17...♔xd7 18.♔c1 ♔d5 19.f3 f6 Black is doing OK:
he has stopped the attack and his knight will
land on c4.

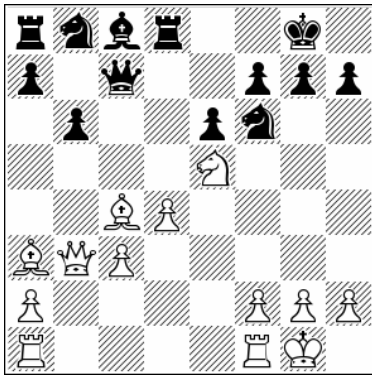
A2) 12.♙e2 ♙b7 13.♙g5 ♖c8 14.♖ac1 ♔d6
15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♖fd1 ♖fd8



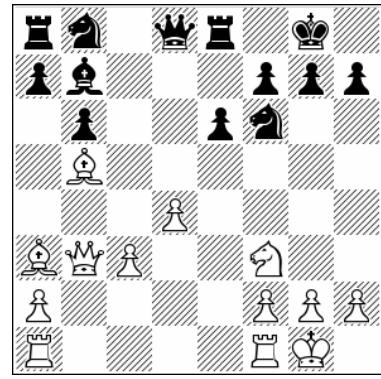
Position after: 16...♖fd8

17.♔a4 ♔f4 18.♙a6 ♙xa6 19.♔xa6 ♖c7 Black is
alright here, as he has stopped the white pawns,
½-½ (26) Heberla, B (2542) – Hracek, Z (2556)
Czech Republic 2018.

B) 11...♔c7!? Black clears the d8-square for the
rook. 12.♙a3!? ♖d8 13.♘e5!?



Position after: 13. ♖e5!?

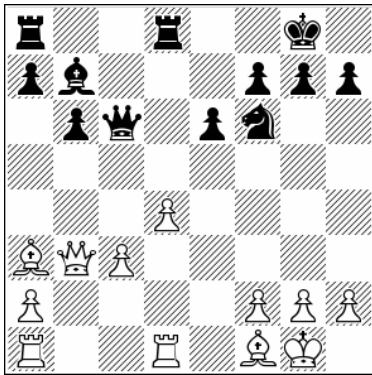


Position after: 13. ♗b5!

13... ♖c6 [13... ♗b7 14. ♗xe6 that's much better for White] 14. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 15. ♖fd1 ♗b7 16. ♗f1

13... ♖c6

Probably best.



Position after: 16. ♗f1

16... ♖d5! Black wants to get going with direct play, since otherwise White plays c3-c4 and gets a favorable version of this line. [16... ♖ac8 17. c4 ♖e4 18. ♖ac1 a bit better for White; 16... ♗c7 17. c4 ♖ac8 18. ♖ac1 h6 19. ♗b2 ♗f4 20. f3 White has reached a favorable type of position that we have already seen many times with two bishops plus a4-a5 ideas, ½-½ (86) Agdestein, S (2590) – Hansen, S (2545) Germany 2001] 17. f3 ♖g5 18. ♗c1 ♖g6 19. ♗e2 ♗c7 20. c4± e5 21. d5 e4 22. ♖h1 ♖e8 23. ♗e3 We see a double-edged position.

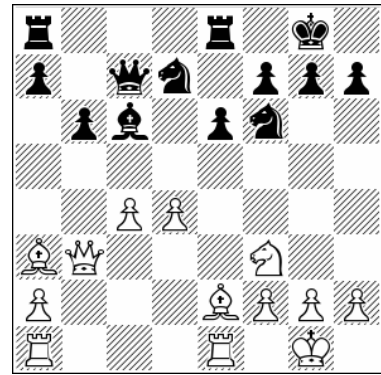
12. ♗a3!

This is the basic idea of the line.

12... ♖e8 13. ♗b5!

A) 13... ♖bd7 14. ♗e2 ♖c8 15. c4 ♗c7 16. h3 e5 17. d5 ♖c5 18. ♗e3 ♖fe4 19. ♖fe1 f5 20. ♖ad1 White has pressure in the center, even though Black is at the moment quite active. The d5-pawn is a big asset.

B) 13... ♗c6 14. ♗e2 Driving the bishop to c6 has blocked Black's play on the c-file for the moment. If Black manages to get in ...e5 White will push d5 with gain of tempo, which has been seen in some games. 14... ♖bd7 15. c4 ♗c7 16. ♖fe1!



Position after: 16. ♖fe1!

16... ♖ad8 17. ♗b2 ♖f8 [17... h6 18. ♖ad1 White has some edge] 18. ♖e5 ♗a8 19. ♗f1 ♖g6 20. f3 ♖h4 [20... ♖xe5 21. ♖xe5 h6 22. ♖ae1 Also here we have a typical bishop-pair position that favors White] 21. ♖ad1 ♖d7 22. ♖g4 ♗b7 23. ♗c3 f6 24. ♖f2 ♖c8 25. ♖e4 White is just ahead but of course Black is still solid here.

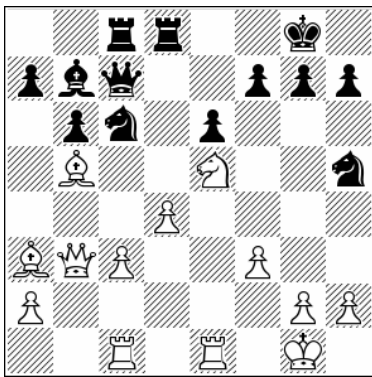
14. ♖e5

Direct play. Other lines offer nothing.

A) 14. c4 a6 15. ♕xc6 ♕xc6 16. ♖e5 ♜c8 17. ♞fd1 b5 Black has equalized.

B) 14. ♚b2 ♚c7 15. ♞fe1 a6 16. ♕f1 b5 17. ♞ac1 ♘a5 18. ♖e5 ♕d5 19. ♚c2 ♖c4 20. ♕b4 a5 21. ♕xc4 ♕xc4 22. ♕c5 ♗d7 It's hard to assess this position, but Black is definitely right in the game.

14... ♚c7 15. ♞fe1 ♞ac8 16. ♞ac1 ♞ed8 17. f3 ♗h5



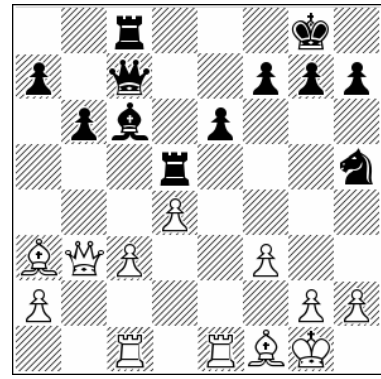
Position after: 17... ♗h5

18. ♖xc6

18. ♕xc6 ♕xc6 19. ♕b2 ♕e8 ½-½ (32) Wiacek, K (2518) – Butnoriu, A (2605) ICCF 2007. It is possible to play like this, but really giving up the bishop pair is not to be recommended.

18... ♕xc6 19. ♕a6

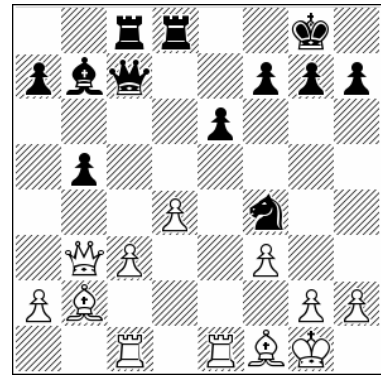
19. ♕f1 ♜d5!



Position after: 19... ♜d5!

In this line we see this idea often. 20. ♕b2 ♗f6 21. c4 ♞h5 22. g3 ♞d8 23. ♞e3 ♞f5 ½-½ (27) Schiller, W (2249) – Jensen, E (2265) ICCF 2008. This unclear position is probably more or less equal.

19... ♕b7 20. ♕f1 ♗f4 21. ♕b2 b5!



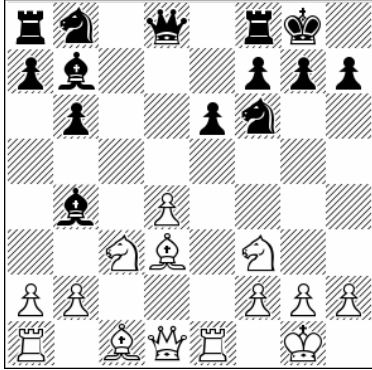
Position after: 21... b5!

22. c4 bxc4 23. ♞xc4 ♚d7

This is good for Black, ½-½ (25) Limanskis, N (2238) – Graudins, I (2464) ICCF 2010.

f) 9...b6 10.♖e1 ♘b7 11.♙d3 ♗bd7

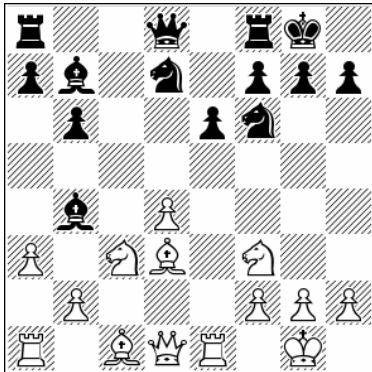
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♖e1 ♘b7 11.♙d3



Position after: 11.♙d3

Here we are dealing with positions in which White doesn't play rook to c1, at least not in the early stages of the game.

11...♗bd7 12.a3



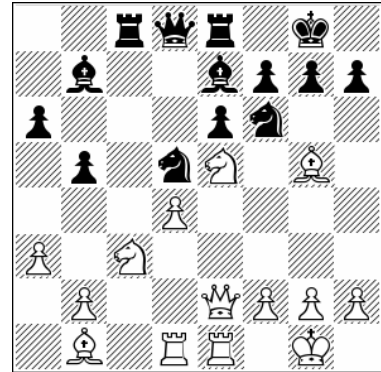
Position after: 12.a3

12...♙xc3

This time retreating the bishop is actually not a bad idea.

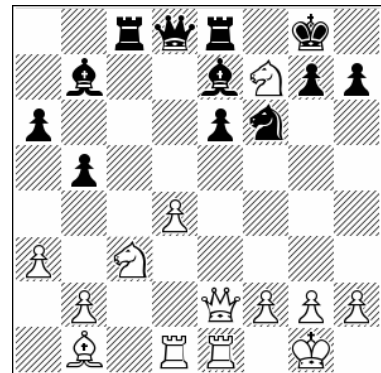
A) 12...♙d6 13.♖e2 a6 14.♙g5 b5 15.♗e5 ♖b6 16.♖ad1 ♖ac8 17.♙b1 This is much sharper, but definitely in the spirit of the position. Now White can lift the d1-rook to the third rank.

B) 12...♙e7 13.♖e2 [13.♗e5 ♗d5 14.♖f3? ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗xc3 16.♖xb7 ♖xd3 17.♖xe7 ♗d5 Black is better, 0-1 (41) Aleksandrov, A (2583) – Khismatullin, D (2681) St Petersburg 2014] 13...♖e8 14.♗e5 ♖c8 15.♙d2 a6 16.♖ad1 b5 17.♙b1 ♗b6 18.♙g5 ♗bd5



Position after: 18...♗bd5

19.♙xf6 [19.♖d3 ♗d7! 20.♙d2 ♗xc3 21.♙xc3 ♗xe5 22.dxe5 ♖b6 23.♖h3 g6 24.♖d2 ♙f8 25.♙a5 ♖a7 Black can defend here] 19...♗xf6 20.♗xf7!



Position after: 20.♗xf7!

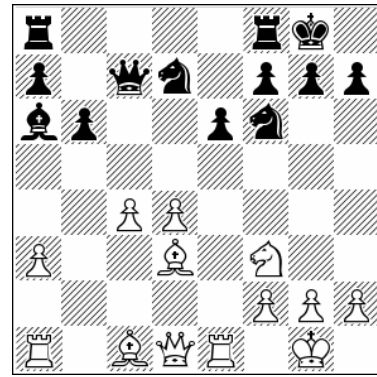
20...♗xf7 21.♖xe6+ ♗f8 22.♙a2 ♖c4 23.♙xc4 bxc4 24.♖xc4 White has collected a lot of pawns and this position should favor him, ½-½ (29) Peralta, F (2626) – Seyb, A (2340) Wunsiedel 2013.

13.bxc3

A classical position, seen many times.

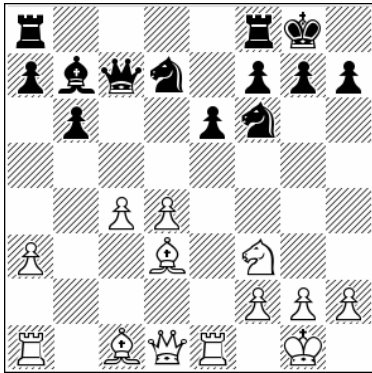
13...♖c7

13...♖c8 14.c4 h6 15.♙f4 ♘b8 16.♘e5 ♘c6 17.♘xc6 ♙xc6 18.♚d2 ♖e8 19.♞ad1 This is good strategy. Now White is taking aim at the h6-pawn and his central pawns are constantly threatening to advance and assault the black defenses, 1-0 (44) Baenziger, F (2409) – Vidic, T (2182) Bassano del Grappa 2021.



Position after: 14...♙a6

14.c4



Position after: 14.c4

Best, and the only chance for advantage.

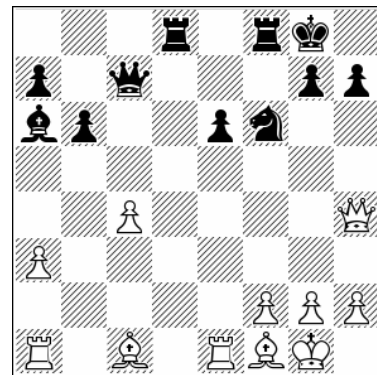
14.♙d2 is actually the usual move, but I think there is a small problem here. 14...♙d5!?! I like this move although it is not a theoretical recommendation. Many years ago at some blitz event in Spain Garcia Palermo played this on me, practically refuting the line because White can't move his pawns anymore. 15.♖c1 ♙c4! Black has produced decent counterplay.

14...♞fe8

A) 14...♞ac8 15.♙b2 ♚f4 For this line see comments under 9...♘bd7 and 16.♙c1.

B) 14...♙a6

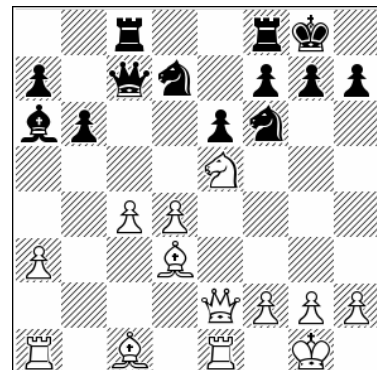
B1) 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♘d7 17.♚h5 f5 18.exf6 ♘xf6 19.♚h4 ♞ad8 20.♙f1



Position after: 20.♙f1

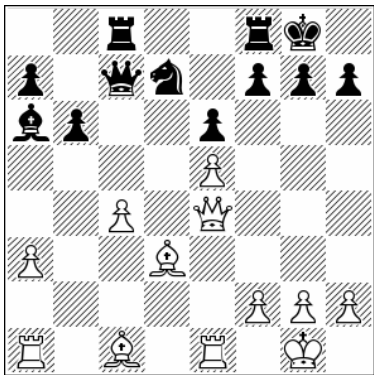
20...♖c8 [20...♚c5 21.♙e3 ♚f5 22.h3 ♞d7 23.a4! White enjoys easy play] 21.♙f4 ♚f7 22.♙d6 Gligoric reckoned that White is better here, ½-½ (86) Gligoric, S (2510) – Farago, I (2505) Sarajevo 1983.

B2) 15.♚e2 This position could also arise from other move orders. 15...♞ac8 [White gets a small plus after 15...♞fc8 16.♘d2 ♘f8 17.♙b2 ♘g6 18.♚e3 ♘g4 19.♚h3] 16.♘e5



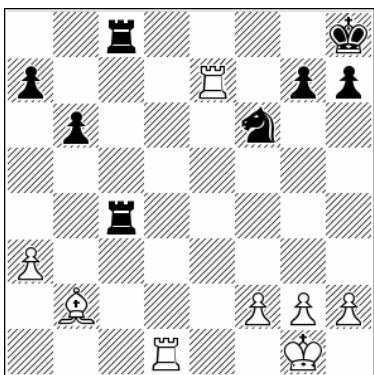
Position after: 16.♘e5

16...♖xe5 [16...♖fe8 17.♙f4 ♘xe5 18.♙xe5 ♚d8 19.♖ac1 ♘d7 20.♙g3 ♘b8 21.♚d2 ♘c6 22.d5! exd5 23.cxd5 ♙xd3 24.♖xe8+ ♚xe8 25.dxc6! White will have a very strong passer on c7] 17.dxe5 ♘d7 18.♚e4



Position after: 18.♚e4

18...g6 [18...f5 19.exf6 ♘xf6 20.♚xe6+ ♔h8 21.♙b2 ♙xc4 22.♙xc4 ♚xc4 23.♚xc4 ♖xc4 24.♖e7 ♖fc8 25.♖d1!



Position after: 25.♖d1!

25...♖4c7 26.♖xc7 ♖xc7 27.♖d8+ ♘g8 28.g4! h6 29.♙e5 ♖e7 30.f4 ♔h7 31.♔g2 White has pressure in this endgame, as his bishop is very strong] 19.♙h6 f5 20.exf6 ♘c5 21.♚e3 ♖xf6 [21...♘xd3 22.♙xf8 ♘xe1 23.♙e7 winning for White] 22.♙e2 This position favors White.

15.♙b2 ♚f4

A) 15...♖ac8 16.♘e5 We can compare this with a line given above, 15.♘e5, with similar play.

B) 15...♖ad8 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.♖xe5 h6 18.♚e2 ♚c6 19.f4 ♖c8 It appears to me that White has the initiative here. 20.♖c1 ♔f8 21.h3 ½-½ (27) Gligoric, S (2565) – Ribli, Z (2610) Skara 1980.

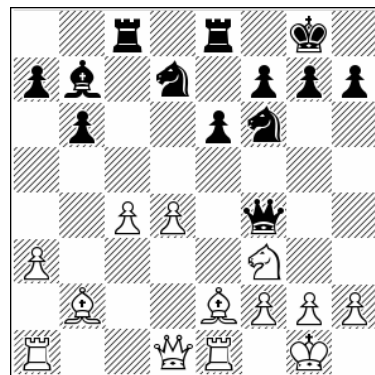
16.♙e2!?

This move is possible because no black rook is targeting the pawn on c4.

A) 16.♚d2 ♘h5! 17.♙c1 ♚xd2 18.♙xd2 ♙xf3 19.gxf3 e5 20.d5 ♘c5 21.♙c2 ♘f4 Black is doing fine.

B) 16.a4!? We deal with this in subchapter a) of this chapter, the 9...♘bd7 line.

16...♖ac8

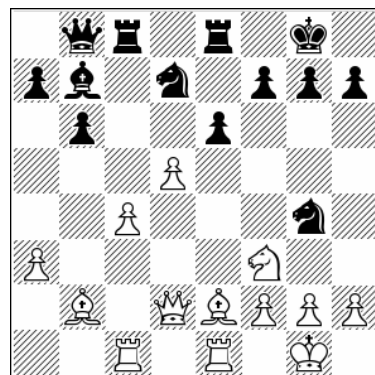


Position after: 16...♖ac8

17.♚d2

A) 17.♚b3 ♘g4 18.h3 ♙xf3 19.♙xf3 ♚h2+ 20.♔f1 ♘h6 Just unclear.

B) 17.♖c1!? ♘g4 18.♚d2! ♚b8 19.d5!



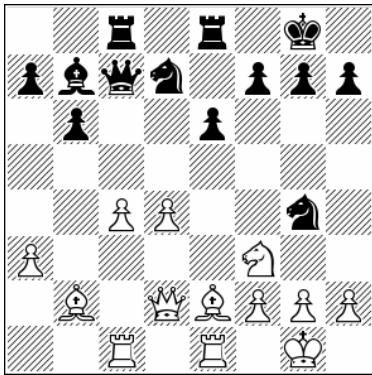
Position after: 19.d5!

19...♘gf6 20.♘d4! White has the initiative and 20...exd5 21.♘f5 already gives him a strong attack.

17...♙xd2N

Interesting endgames lie before us.

A) 17...♙c7 18.♖ac1 ♘g4



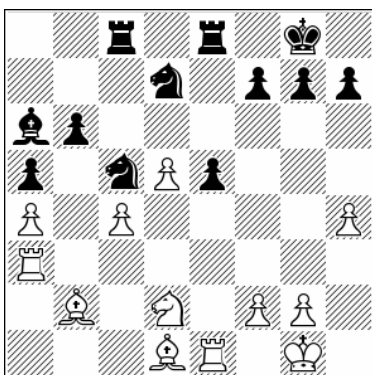
Position after: 18...♘g4

19.d5! We know by now that this is going to be good for White.

B) 17...♙d6 18.♖ac1 ♖ed8 19.h3 ♘f8 20.♙e3! This is a good square for the queen in these lines, especially if h3 has already been played. [20.♙g5 the queen has nothing to do on that square and it's unclear, 1-0 (59) Graf, A (2610) – Mastrovasilis, A (2441) Korinthos 2001]

18.♘xd2 ♘b8

18...e5 19.d5 ♘c5 20.a4 a5 21.♖a3 ♙a6 22.♙d1 ♘fd7 23.h4!?



Position after: 23.h4!?

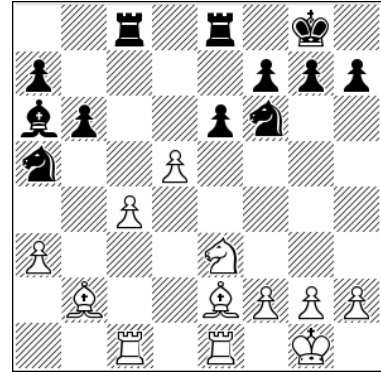
Gaining space on the kingside. 23...f5 [23...e4 24.♖g3 g6 25.h5 ♖f8 26.♖ee3 another good version of the endgame] 24.♙c2 e4 25.♖g3 ♘e5

26.♖b1 ♘cd7 27.f4 White is clearly winning this endgame.

19.♘f1 ♘c6 20.♘e3

I like this maneuver here.

20...♙a6 21.♖ac1 ♘a5 22.d5!



Position after: 22.d5!

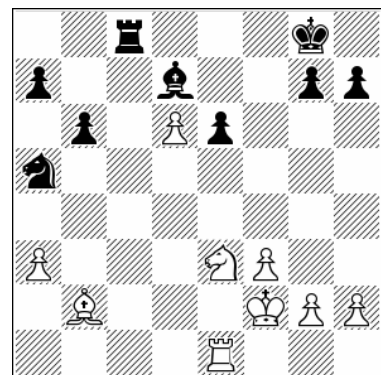
Now in all cases Black has to accept that his position is inferior and play accordingly.

22...♘e4

A) 22...♖ed8 23.f4!?

B) 22...exd5 23.♙xf6 gxf6 24.♙g4 ♖cd8 25.cxd5 Both these lines give White a small plus.

23.dxe6 fxe6 24.♖cd1 ♖ed8 25.f3 ♘d6 26.c5 ♙xe2 27.♖xd6 ♖xd6 28.cxd6 ♙b5 29.♖f2 ♙d7



Position after: 29...♙d7

30.♖d1

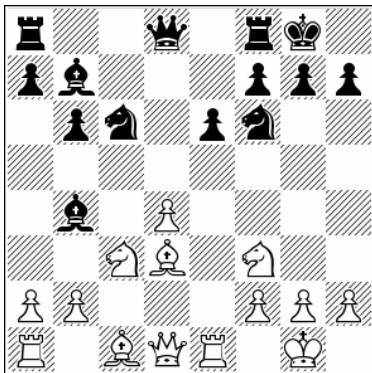
White has earned a small advantage.

g) 9...b6 10.♖e1 ♘b7 11.♙d3 ♘c6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♖e1

it is important to compare this line with the above-mentioned 9...♘bd7 line in subchapter a).

10...♘b7 11.♙d3 ♘c6



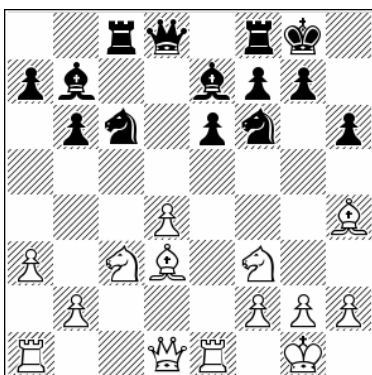
Position after: 11...♘c6

Here we have another structure, where Black places his knight on c6 instead of d7. As I said earlier, that is possible to do, especially when there is no direct threat of d4-d5.

12.a3

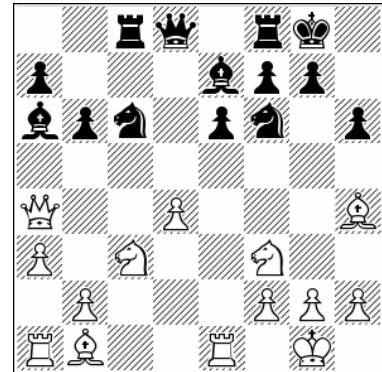
White reveals his main idea.

12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 ♙e7 14.a3 ♖c8



Position after: 14...♖c8

15.♙b1!?N [15.♙c2 ♙a6!? 16.♙b1 ♖d7 17.♘e5
♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♖xd1 19.♖xd1 ♘d5 20.♙e7
♘xe7 The endgame is balanced, ½-½ (60) Moen,
S (2165) – Hansen, V (2119) Alta 2003] 15...♘h5
[15...♖e8 16.♖d3 ♘f8 17.♙a2 ♘h5 18.♙g3 ♘xg3
19.hxg3 ♙f6 20.d5 much better for White;
15...♙a6 16.♖a4!

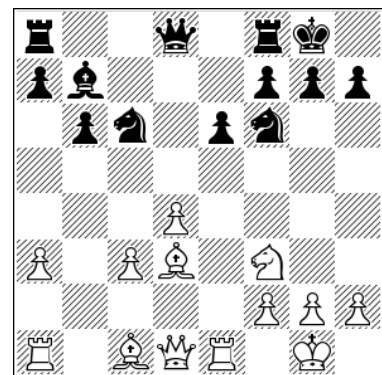


Position after: 16.♖a4!

16...♙b7 17.♖c2 White has attacking play
16.♖c2! Now Black has no knight to f4 tactics.
16...g6 17.♖xe6 Big plus for White.

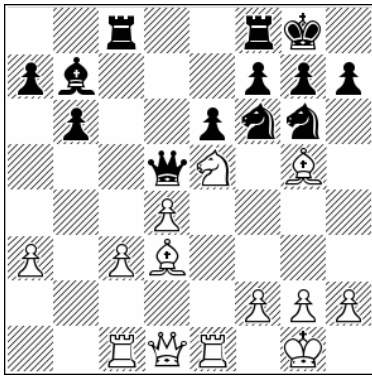
12...♙e7

12...♙xc3 13.bxc3



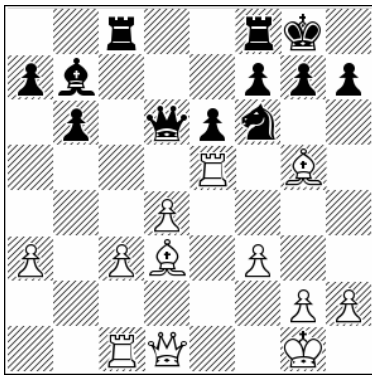
Position after: 13.bxc3

13...♖c8 [13...♘e7 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♙b2 ♘g6 16.c4
♖d6 17.a4 ♖f4 18.♖e3 a5 19.♖b3 ♖c7 20.♖b1
White has his usual setup and with the black
weakness on b6 this gives him easy play, 1-0 (45)
Salem, A (2675) – Yuffa, D (2566) Moscow 2019]
14.♙g5 ♘e7 15.♖c1 ♘g6 16.♘e5 ♖d5



Position after: 16...Qd5

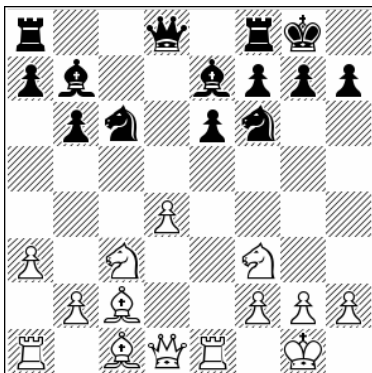
17.f3 [17.gf1! White can't attack anymore when Black has two knights on the kingside, so now he should focus on positional play. 17...Ne4 18.c4 Qd6 19.dxc6 hxc6 20.g3 Rfd8 21.f3 Nh6 22.a4 This is fine for White.] 17...Nh5 18.Rxe5 Qd6



Position after: 18...Qd6

19.Qe1! This is also a typical idea -- when the queen is blocked by the f3-pawn, it can use another diagonal. 19...Nd5 20.Qh4 g6 21.Ree1 f6 22.g6 Rf7 23.Qg4 f5 24.Qg3 Qxg3 25.hxg3 White has pressure.

13.gxc2

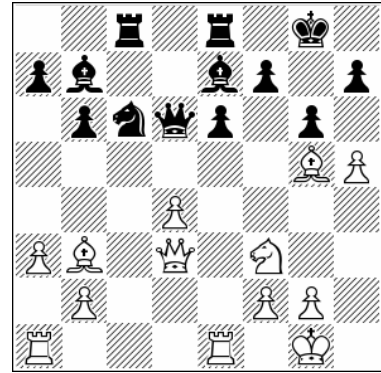


Position after: 13.gxc2

Going directly for attack.

13...Rc8

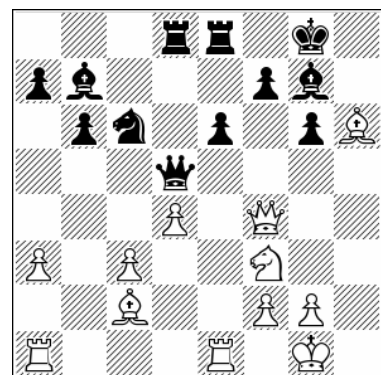
A) 13...Re8 14.h4!? Rc8 15.Qd3 g6 16.g5 Nd5 17.Nxd5 Qxd5 18.g3 Qd6 19.h5



Position after: 19.h5

19...Nxd4? [19...g5 20.hxc6 hxc6 21.Nxg5 Nxd4 22.Rad1 Rc8 23.Qh3 Qf4 24.Qh7+ Qf8 25.Rxd4 Rxd4 26.g6 Re4! tough defense found by engines, but not easy to find in a human tournament game] 20.Nxd4 g5 21.hxc6 hxc6 22.Rxe6! fxe6 23.Qxg6+ Qh8 24.Qh5+ Qg7 25.Qxg5+ White is winning, 1-0 (34) Bruzon Batista, L (2664) – Ostrovskiy, A (2439) Burlingame 2019.

B) 13...Nd5 14.Qd3 g6 15.g6 Re8 16.h4 g6 17.h5 Nxc3 18.bxc3 Qd5 19.hxc6 hxc6 20.Qd2 Rad8 21.Qf4 g7

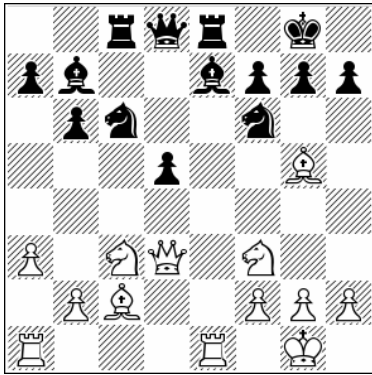


Position after: 21...g7

22.Ng5! Rd7 23.g4 Qd6 24.Qh4 White has a very strong attack.

14. ♖d3 g6

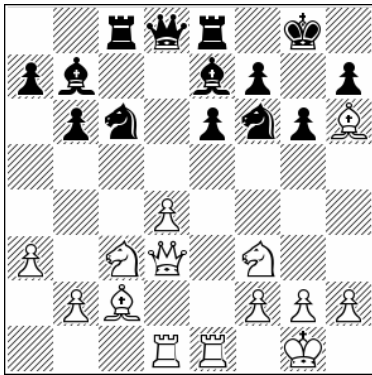
14... ♖e8 15. d5! This idea should not be missed.
15... exd5 16. ♗g5



Position after: 16. ♗g5

16... ♗e4 [16... g6 17. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 18. ♗xd5 White wins straight away] 17. ♗xe4 dxe4 18. ♗xe4 g6 19. ♗h4 ♗xg5 20. ♗xg5 h5 21. ♗f4 ♖e7 22. ♗b3 White is winning, 1-0 (31) Del Rio de Angelis, S (2525) – Perez Candelario, M (2611) Linares 2018.

15. ♗h6 ♖e8 16. ♖ad1

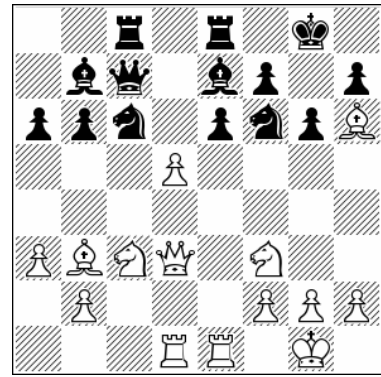


Position after: 16. ♖ad1

16... ♗d5

A) 16... ♗c7 17. h3 ♖ed8 18. ♗e2 ♗a5 19. ♗e5 ♗f8 20. ♗g5 ♗g7 21. ♗b1 ♖e8 22. ♗b5 ♗d8 23. ♗xa7 White is a clear pawn up, ½-½ (38) Nikcevic, N (2446) – Pavlovic, D (2363) Budva 2003.

B) 16... a6 17. ♗b3 ♗c7 18. d5



Position after: 18. d5

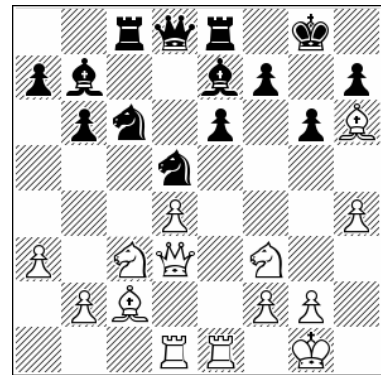
18... exd5 19. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 20. ♗xd5 ♗f8 21. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 22. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 23. ♗d2 ♗g8 24. ♗h6 ♗e7 25. h4 White is clearly better, 1-0 (57) Gligoric, S – Panno, O Palma de Mallorca 1970.

C) 16... ♗f8 17. ♗g5 ♗e7 18. ♗a4 a6 19. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20. d5 exd5 21. ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 22. ♗xd5 ♗d8 23. h4 ♗f8 24. ♗g5 b5 25. ♗b3 White wields the initiative, 1-0 (50) Tarjan, J (2495) – Browne, W (2545) Mentor 1977.

17. ♗a4!?

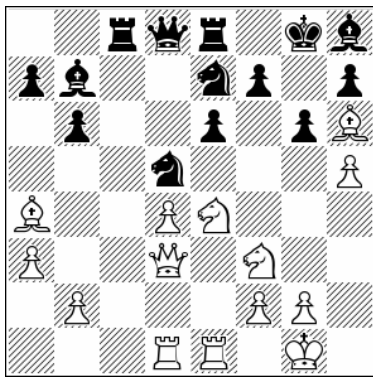
One of a few ideas for White, and together with 17. h4 probably the most dangerous.

17. h4!?



Position after: 17. h4!?

17... ♗f6 [17... ♗xc3 18. bxc3 ♗xh4 19. d5! this is strong] 18. h5 ♗ce7 19. ♗e4 ♗h8 20. ♗a4!

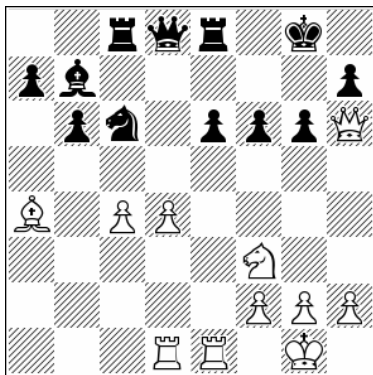


Position after: 20.♙a4!

White's idea is to force the bishop to c6, thus blocking play on the c-file. 20...♙c6 21.♙b3 ♘f5 22.♙g5 ♜f6 23.hxg6 hxg6 24.♙d2 White has created targets that can be attacked in the black camp, such as the pawns on e6 and g6, and consequently he has the advantage, ½-½ (45) Demidov, M (2523) – Bocharov, D (2533) Barnaul 2021.

17...a6

A) 17...♘xc3 18.bxc3 ♙xa3 19.♚e3 ♙f8 20.c4 ♙xh6 21.♚xh6 ♜f6

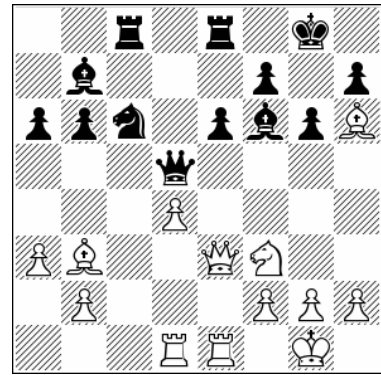


Position after: 21...f6

22.d5! Again this thrust gives White a clear advantage, 1-0 (31) Cherniaev, A (2426) – Perez Garcia, R (2299) Sault Ste Marie 2017.

B) 17...♙f8 18.♙g5 ♙e7 19.♘e4 ♙xg5 20.♘fxg5 ♜f5 21.♚h3 ♜c7 22.♘c3 ♘xc3 23.♚xc3 ♚xg5 24.d5 ♜ec8 Black is not worse, ½-½ (30) Predojevic, B (2509) – Krstic, U (2360) Bosnjaci 2005.

18.♘xd5!? ♚xd5 19.♚e3 ♙f6 20.♙b3

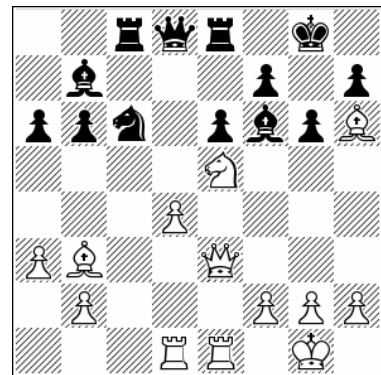


Position after: 20.♙b3

It seems that this position has proved too tough for Black to handle.

20...♚d7

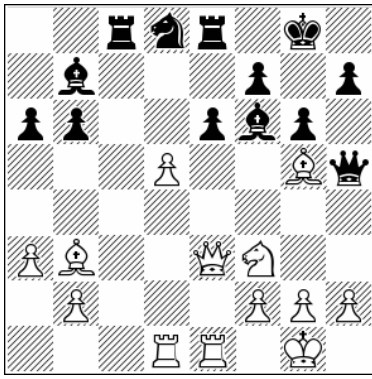
A) 20...♚d8 21.♘e5



Position after: 21.♘e5

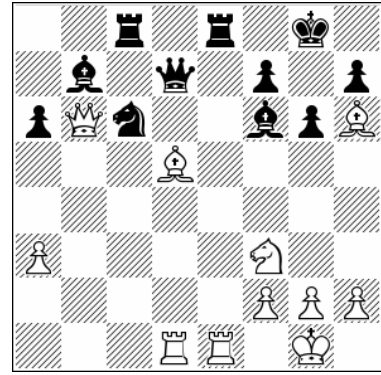
21...♚e7 [21...♙xe5 22.dxe5 ♚c7 23.♜c1 ♚b8 24.♚xb6 ♘e7 25.♙xe6 ♜c6 26.♜xc6 ♙xc6 27.♚xb8 ♜xb8 28.♙c4 1-0 (28) Adams, M (2742) – Doettling, F (2540) France 2002] 22.♘g4! ♘a5 23.♙a2 ♘c4 24.♚f4 ♙g7 25.♙xg7 ♘xg7 26.d5 White's attack will carry the day, 1-0 (40) Kobalia, M (2666) – Jobava, B (2706) Plovdiv 2012.

B) 20...♚h5 21.d5! ♘d8 22.♙g5!



Position after: 22.♔g5!

21.d5 exd5 22.♙xb6 ♖xb2 23.♗xd5 ♗f6



Position after: 23...♗f6

This is even stronger than White's successful play in a famous game. [22.d6 ♖c5 23.d7 ♖e7 24.♙f4 ♗g7 25.♙b8 White is winning, 1-0 (29) Smyslov, V (2620) – Karpov, A (2540) Leningrad 1971] 22...♗xg5 23.♘xg5 ♙h6 24.dxe6 ♘xe6 25.♗xe6 fxe6 26.♖d7 White clinches victory.

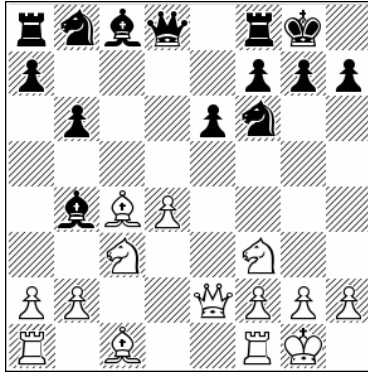
24.♗e6

1-0 (24) Kovacevic, A (2510) – Ratkovic, M (2365) Vrbas 2015.

Chapter 5

The Karpov Line with 10.♔e2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10.♔e2



Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – The Karpov Line with 10.♔e2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10.♔e2
♙b7

a) 11.♙g5 ♘bd7 12.♖ac1 ♖c8 13.♗fd1

b) 11.♙g5 ♘bd7 12.♖ac1 ♖c8 13.♘e5

c) 11.♙g5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♖c8

d) 11.♙g5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♔c7 14.♘d7 ♘xd7 15.♖ac1 h6

e) 11.♙g5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♘e5 ♔c7 14.♘d7 ♘xd7 15.♖ac1 ♔c6

f) 11.♙g5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♙h4

g) 11.♖d1 ♘bd7 12.♙d3

h) 11.♖d1 ♘bd7 12.d5

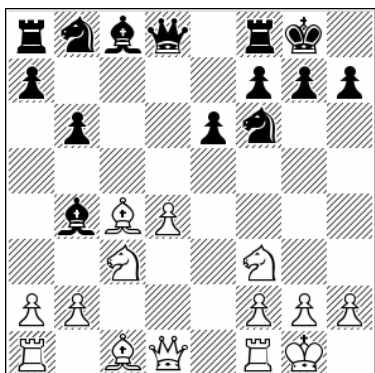
i) 11.♖d1 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♔c7

j) 11.♖d1 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♙b3

k) 11.♖d1 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♘bd7 13.♙d3

a) 11.♘g5 ♖bd7 12.♖ac1 ♜c8 13.♖fd1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♘xc4 b6



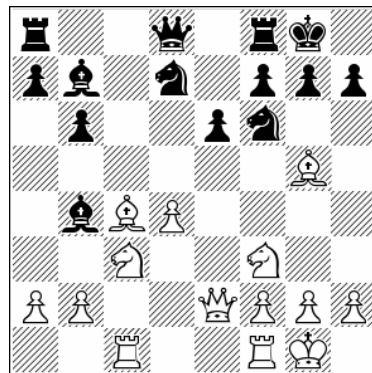
Position after: 9...b6

That introduces the famous Karpov line which is very popular, especially in today's chess -- we can say that it is even a new main line. Black is developing in a very natural way. The only drawback is that usually Black's queenside knight is developed on d7, where it is a bit passive for the time being. That is exactly the element that White is trying to exploit, for example by posting a knight on the active e5-square or quickly playing the d4-d5 break. We have complex play that is important to understand, because behind it are deep positional concepts for both sides. In general, a basic rule when we get a position with the bishop pair is what Kortschnoj said about the Benoni: one step back, two steps forward strategy. Black has developed and has mostly active pieces, so it is important for White to be ready sometimes to pull back with moves like ♘f1 or ♘e2 or ♗e3, h3 and ♘d2. On the other hand, White goes a4 a5 as soon as possible. Because a great number of transpositions are possible in this line, in order to simplify matters for readers I decided to start this survey with the move order 10.♗e2 followed by 11.♘g5, and then 10.♗e2 followed by 11.♖d1. After that we have lines that start with 10.♘g5 followed by 11.♖c1 or 11.♖e1, and finally lines that start with 10.♖e1 and 10.♗b3.

10.♗e2 ♘b7 11.♘g5 ♖bd7

Black can also take at once on c3 and that we will discuss in a different subchapter.

12.♖ac1



Position after: 12.♖ac1

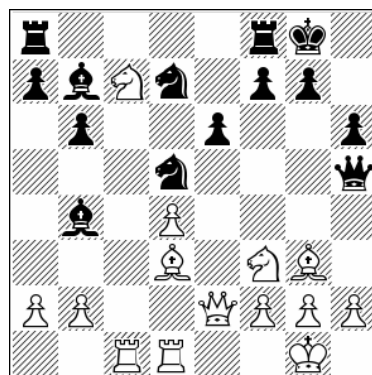
One idea of this setup is actually in many cases to take back on c3 with the

rook!

12...♖c8

That's the main move, but there are others that Black can try.

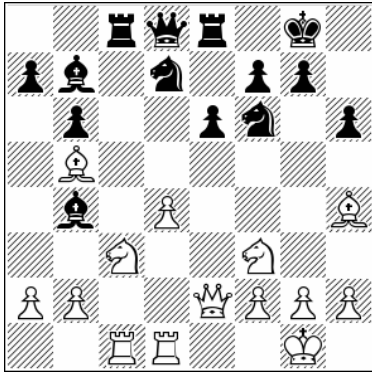
**A) 12...♗b8 13.♖fd1 h6 14.♘h4 ♗f4 15.♘g3 ♗f5
16.♘d3 ♗h5 17.♘b5 ♘d5 18.♘c7!**



Position after: 18.♘c7!

18...♖ad8 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.a3 ♘e7 21.♖c7
White is better.

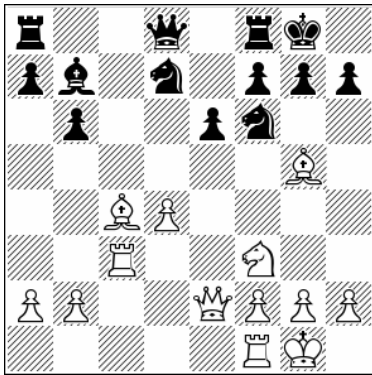
B) 12...♖e8 13.♟fd1 h6 14.♘h4 ♜c8 15.♙b5!



Position after: 15. ♙b5!

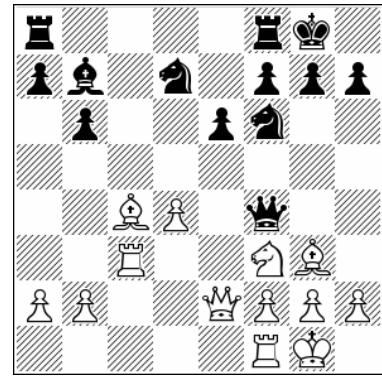
15...♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♜c7 17.♞e5 g5 18.♙g3 ♜c8 19.h4! White has achieved the full potential of the position, 1-0 (26) Ivanchuk, V (2764) – Ponomarev, R (2744) Warsaw 2010.

C) 12...♙xc3 13.♞xc3!



Position after: 13. ♞xc3!

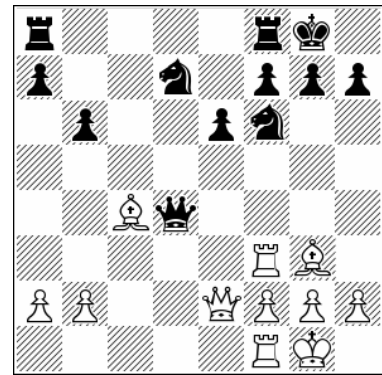
13...♞b8 Gligoric thought this was the main defense here, but things are not easy for Black. [13...♞e8 14.♞d2! ♞d5 15.♞g3 f6 16.♙h6 ♞f7 17.♞e4 ♞e7 18.♞c3 ♞h8↑ 19.♙d2 White has good attacking play, typical of the Nimzo, 0-1 (36) Rantanen, Y (2356) – Solozhenkin, E (2513) Finland 2004] 14.♙h4! ♞f4 [14...♞d5 15.♞cc1 ♞f4 16.♞e3 ♞f6 17.♙g3 ♞6h5 18.♞e5! ♞xg2 19.♞g5 ♞xg3 20.fxg3 ♞d6 21.♞d2 White is better] 15.♙g3



Position after: 15. ♙g3

C1) 15...♞e4 16.♞e3 ♞c6 17.♞e1 The game has become highly complicated, 1-0 (33) Vaissier, A (2559) – Borne, N (2305) France 1999.

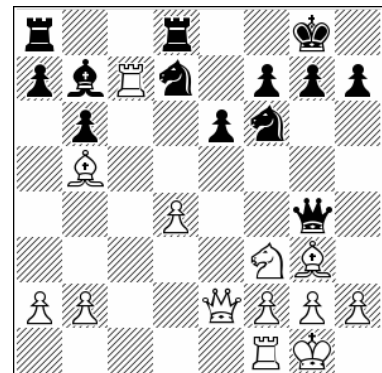
C2) 15...♙xf3 16.♞xf3 ♞xd4



Position after: 16... ♞xd4

17.♞d1 [17.♙b5 ♞c5 18.♙e5 ♞e4 19.♞e3 ♞f5 20.b4 ♞cd7 21.♙d6 ♞fc8 22.♙d3 ♞d5 23.♞d1 ♞c6 24.♞h3 White has compensation] 17...♞g4 18.h3 ♞h5 19.♙d6 ♞fd8 20.g4 ♞g6 21.♙c7 ♞dc8 22.♙d3 ♞h6 23.♙f4 White has strong play.

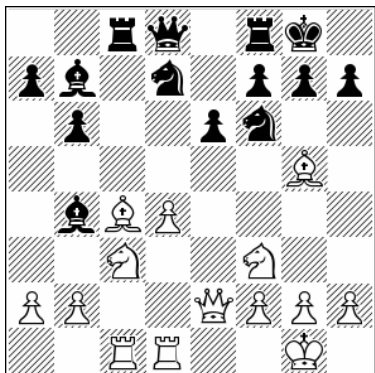
C3) 15...♞g4 16.♙b5 ♞fd8 17.♞c7



Position after: 17. ♞c7

17...♙d5 18.a3 ♘f8 19.♗e5 ♚xe2 20.♙xe2
 ♘8d7 21.♙h4 ♘xe5 22.dxe5 ♜d7 23.♞fc1 ♞xc7
 24.♞xc7 ♗e8 25.♞c3 White has the initiative, ½-
 ½ (33) Eingorn, V (2595) – Tischbierek, R (2490)
 Bad Woerishofen 1997.

13.♞fd1



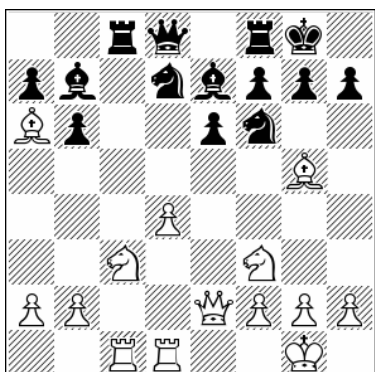
Position after: 13.♞fd1

A very rare move, but maybe a critical one. White is not afraid of getting doubled pawns if Black takes on f3. White has another valid option, starting with 13.♗e5, and that is in a separate subchapter.

13...h6

Very interesting positions can arise from other moves as well.

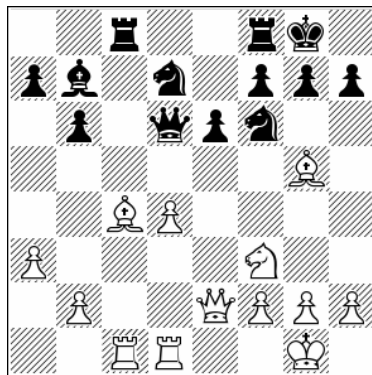
A) 13...♙e7? 14.♙a6!



Position after: 14.♙a6!

Black was not prepared for this strike. 14...♙xa6
 15.♞xa6 ♞c7 16.♙f4 ♞c8 17.♞e2 ♞c4 18.♗d2
 ♞xd4 19.♗b5 White is better.

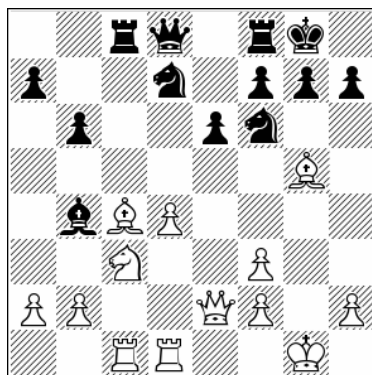
B) 13...♞c7 Maybe the most solid move. 14.♗b5
 ♞b8 15.a3 ♙d6 16.♗xd6 ♞xd6



Position after: 16...♞xd6

17.♗e5! Black's position is solid but White has chances to press for more than equality.

C) 13...♙xf3!? To me that has always looked like the critical test. 14.gxf3



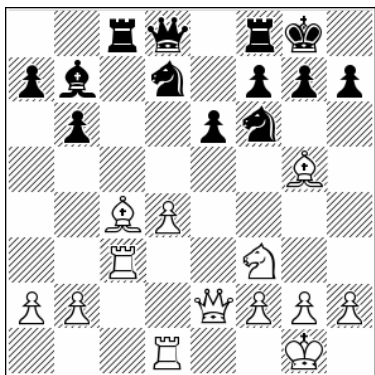
Position after: 14.gxf3

Now White has the two bishops, the strong e4 outpost for his knight, and the potential of the central break d4-d5.

C1) 14...♙xc3 Giving up entirely on bishops is an interesting strategy, but now the white bishop on a6 can exert serious pressure on the black queenside. 15.♞xc3 ♞e8 16.♞a3 ♞c7 17.♙a6 ♞c2 18.♙f1 ♞xe2+ 19.♙xe2 ♞c7 20.♙f4 ♞c2+ 21.♞d2 ♞xd2+ 22.♙xd2 There is some advantage for White because his bishop pair is stronger than the knights, 1-0 (47) Jobava, B (2696) – Kravtsiv, M (2607) Tromsøe 2013.

C2) $\triangleleft 14... \text{♙e7!?$ is logical and solid, perhaps the most practical. $15. \text{♙a6!}$ Now White shifts his play to the queenside, where there are weak squares with no light-squared bishop to protect them. $15... \text{♖c6}$ $16. \text{♙f4}$ White makes another shift toward the queenside. $16... \text{♜h5}$ $17. \text{♙g3}$ ♞xg3 $18. \text{hxg3}$ ♞f6 $19. \text{♚g2}$ White has more prospects here, helped by the opposite-colored bishops.

D) $13... \text{♙xc3!?$ $14. \text{♖xc3}$



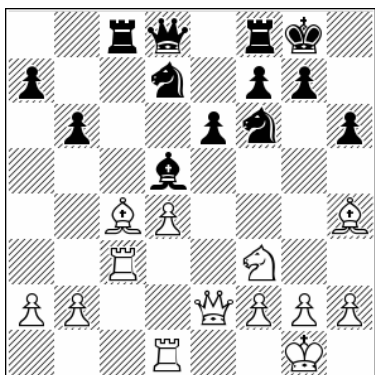
Position after: $14. \text{♖xc3}$

As I said, one of the points of White's play is to recapture with the rook. $14... \text{♙d5}$ [$14... \text{h6!}$ $15. \text{♙h4}$ ♙d5 transposing to the main line] $15. \text{♙xd5}$ ♖xc3 $16. \text{♙xe6}$ ♖c7 $17. \text{♙b3}$ ♖e8 $18. \text{♚b5}$ ♞f8 $19. \text{♞e5}$ White has nice compensation.

14. ♙h4 ♙xc3

This may be a bad move order since now White can take back with the rook.

15. ♖xc3 ♙d5!?

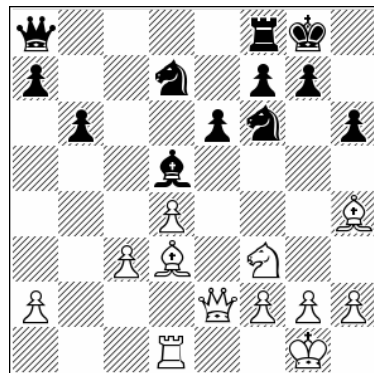


Position after: $15... \text{♙d5!?$

$15... \text{g5}$ $16. \text{♞xg5!}$ hxg5 $17. \text{♙xg5}$ ♙e4 $18. \text{♖g3}$ ♙g6 $19. \text{♙a6}$ White has attacking chances.

16. ♙b3!?N

$16. \text{♙d3!?$ ♖xc3 $17. \text{bxc3}$ ♚a8!



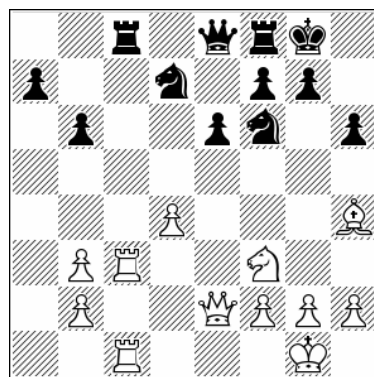
Position after: $17... \text{♚a8!}$

$18. \text{c4}$ ♙e4 Black has equalized here. [$18... \text{♙xf3}$ $19. \text{gxf3}$ ♖c8 $20. \text{♙g3}$ ♚c6 $21. \text{♚g2}$ ♖d8 $22. \text{h3}$ ♞f8 this too is playable for Black, ½-½ (29) Bennett, C – Pheby, I corr. 2015]

16... ♙xb3 17. axb3

White wants to dominate the c-file and force Black to take on c3.

17... ♚e8 18. ♖dc1



Position after: $18. \text{♖dc1}$

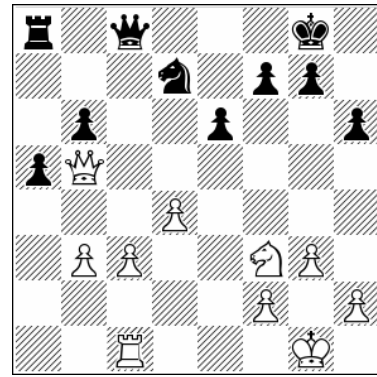
18... ♖a8

$18... \text{♖xc3}$ $19. \text{bxc3}$ ♚a8 $20. \text{c4}$ This gives White some incentive to play on.

19. ♖g3 ♜d5

19... ♜e7 20. ♖c6 ♜fe8 21. ♖d6 ♜d8 22. ♜e5 ♜d5
23. g3 With some pressure.

20. ♖d6 ♜xc3 21. bxc3 a5 22. g3 ♜c8 23. ♖xf8
♜xf8 24. ♜b5 ♜c8



Position after: 24... ♜c8

25. c4

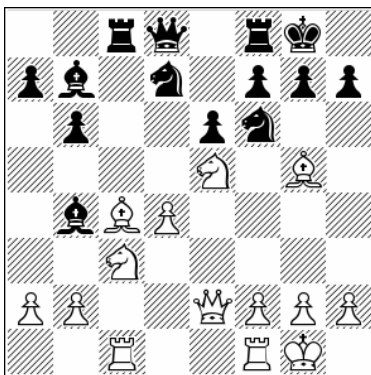
White has some chances for an advantage.

b) 11. ♖g5 ♜bd7 12. ♖ac1 ♜c8 13. ♜e5

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♜c3 ♖b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♖d3 d5
6. ♜f3 c5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♖xc4 b6
10. ♜e2 ♖b7 11. ♖g5 ♜bd7 12. ♖ac1

As I said earlier, the idea is to take back on c3 with a rook.

12... ♖c8 13. ♜e5

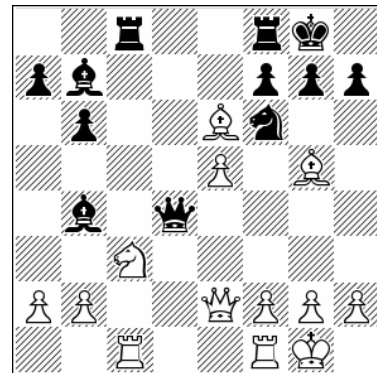


Position after: 13. ♜e5

13. ♖fd1 is another line we have already looked at. Black has not taken early on c3 and of course if he does that now White can and will recapture with the rook.

13... ♖e7

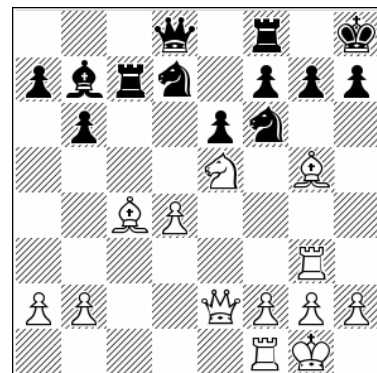
A) 13... ♜xe5 14. dxe5 ♜d4 An interesting idea but probably not a correct one. 15. ♖xe6!



Position after: 15. ♖xe6!

15... fxe6 16. exf6 It looks good for White.

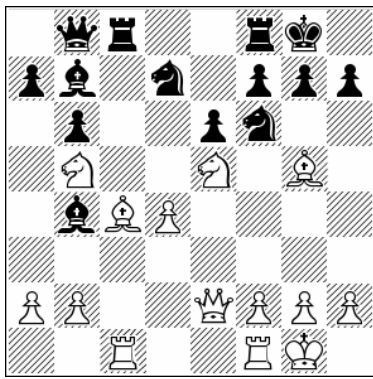
B) 13... ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3! ♜c7 15. ♖g3 ♜h8



Position after: 15... ♜h8

16. ♖d3! White aims more firepower at the black king and develops a winning attack.

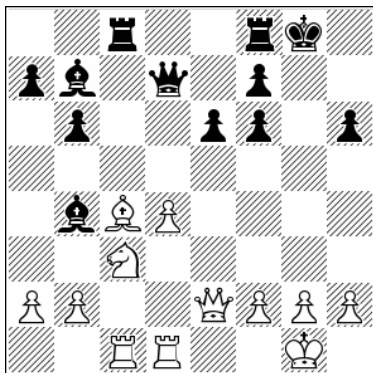
C) 13... ♜c7 14. ♜b5!? ♜b8



Position after: 14... ♖b8

White has forced the queen away from the c-file. 15. ♖xd7 [15. ♖xf7!? ♖xf7 16. ♗xe6 ♖cf8 17. ♖c7 a6 18. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19. ♖e5 axb5 20. ♖xf7 ♖xe5 21. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 22. dxe5 ♖e4 23. ♖d1 White is better] 15... ♖xd7 16. ♖g4 a6 17. ♗f4 ♖f6 18. ♖g3 ♖e4 19. ♗xb8 ♖xg3 20. ♗xg3 axb5 21. ♗xb5 White is a clear pawn up, but that does not guarantee victory.

D) 13... h6 14. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 15. ♗xf6 gxf6 16. ♖fd1



Position after: 16. ♖fd1

D1) 16... ♖c6 17. ♖g4+ ♖h7 18. ♖d5! This was a famous game at the time. 18... f5 19. ♖f6+ ♖h8 20. ♖h3 ♖g7 21. ♖h5+ ♖h8 22. ♖g3 ♖g8 23. ♖e5+ f6 24. ♖xf6+ ♖h7 25. d5! I will show the whole game. 25... ♖e8 26. ♖f4 ♗d6 27. dxe6 ♖f8 28. ♖h4 ♖c6 29. ♗f1 ♖xc1 30. ♖xd6 1-0 (30) Taimanov, M (2500) – Browne, W (2555) Wijk aan Zee 1981.

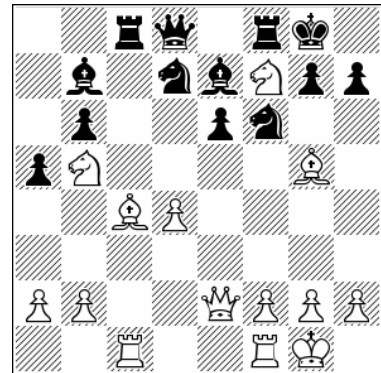
D2) 16... ♖fd8 17. ♗b3 ♗f8 [17... ♗xc3 18. bxc3 b5 19. ♖d3 ♖h7 20. d5 ♗xd5 21. ♖h5 ♖e8 22. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 23. ♖xd5 exd5 24. ♖f5+ ♖g7 also here White has not managed to create an initiative,

½-½ (31) Onischuk, A (2666) – Hracek, Z (2619) Istanbul 2012] 18. ♖d3 ♗g7 19. ♖h5 f5 20. ♖cd1 ♗a6 21. ♖g3 ♖h7 22. d5 ♗c4 23. h3 ♗xb3 24. axb3 ♖e7 25. ♖gd3 ♖f6 The position looks balanced.

14. ♖b5!? a6!

This is probably a must.

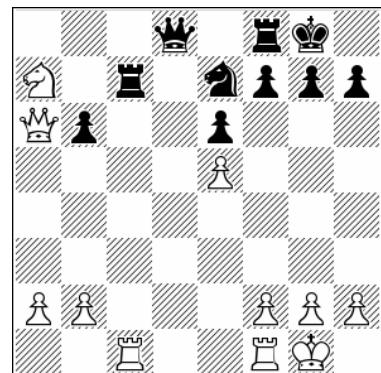
14... a5 15. ♖xf7!



Position after: 15. ♖xf7!

15... ♖xf7 16. ♗xe6 ♖f8 [16... ♖xc1 17. ♖xc1 ♖f8 18. ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 19. ♖c7 ♗a6 20. ♗xf6 gxf6 21. ♖h5+ ♖g7 22. ♖a7 ♗b5 23. ♖xb5 big plus for White; 16... ♗d5 17. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 18. ♖d6 ♖xc1 19. ♖xc1 ♗xg5 20. ♖c8 ♖xc8 21. ♖xc8 White has a significant advantage; 16... ♖e8 17. ♖xc8 ♗xc8 18. ♖c7 ♖f8 19. ♖f3+–] 17. ♖xc8 ♗xc8 18. ♗b3 White is just a bit better.

15. ♖a7 ♖c7 16. ♗xa6 ♗xa6 17. ♖xa6 ♖xe5 18. dxe5 ♖d5 19. ♗xe7 ♖xe7



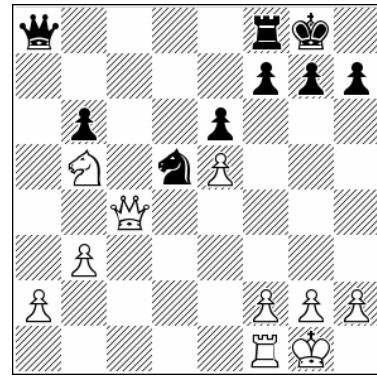
Position after: 19... ♖xe7

This is critical. It seems that Black has enough for the sacrificed pawn.

20.b3

20.♖b5 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♔d2 22.♖b1 ♔d3 23.♖e1 ♔d2 Black has achieved a draw.

20...♗d5 21.♖c4 ♖xc4 22.♔xc4 ♔a8 23.♗b5



Position after: 23.♗b5

23...♔xa2

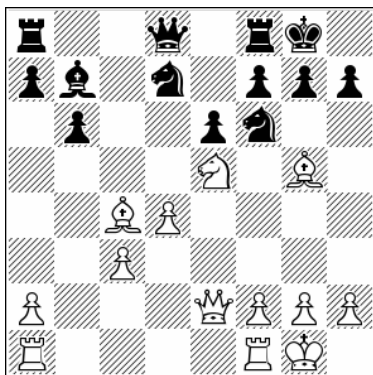
Black is OK.

c) 11.♗g5 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♗bd7 13.♗e5 ♖c8

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 d5 6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♗xc4 b6 10.♔e2 ♗b7 11.♗g5 ♗xc3

In the Karpov line we have multiple versions of black captures on c3, and various move orders. The differences can be significant.

12.bxc3 ♗bd7 13.♗e5



Position after: 13.♗e5

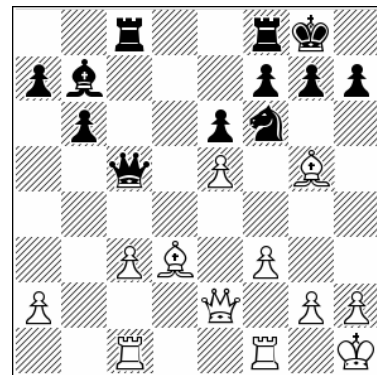
13...♖c8 14.♖ac1!

Defending the pawn is by far the best.

14.♗xf7? ♖xf7 15.♔xe6 ♔e8 16.♔xe8+ ♖xe8 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.f3 ♗d5 19.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 20.♖xe1 b5 21.♔f2 ♗b6 22.a3 This is a bit different because without a rook Black can't create pressure, 1-0 (68) Grabner, H – Verat, L corr. ICCF 1993.

14...♗xe5

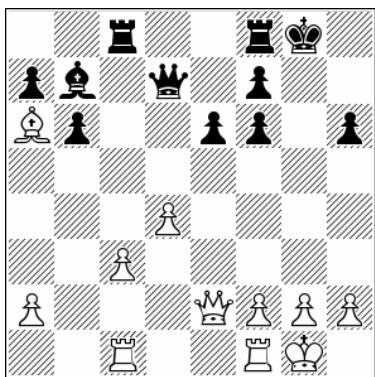
A) 14...♔c7 A solid approach. 15.♗d3 ♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♔c6 [16...♗d7 17.♗e7 ♗xe5 18.♗xf8 ♗xd3 19.♔xd3 ♖xf8 20.♖fd1 This is advantage for White, 1-0 (34) Babula, V (2565) – Speelman, J (2601) Germany 1999] 17.f3 ♔c5+ 18.♔h1



Position after: 18.♔h1

18...h6!? [18...♗d7 19.f4 h6 20.♗h4 ♔a3 21.c4 ♖c7 22.♖cd1 ♗c5 23.♗b1 g6 24.♖d6 ♗a4 25.f5! White's attack is becoming strong, 1-0 (39) Lehnhoff, H (2163) – Pecotic, K (2047) IECG 2006] 19.♗h4 ♗d5 20.♔e4 g6 21.♗f2 ♔e7 22.♗d4 ♗b4 23.♔e3 ♗xd3 24.♔xd3 ♖fd8 25.♔e3 ♔g7 26.a4 ♖c4 27.♖a1 ♖d5 28.♖a2 ♖a5 29.♖fa1 ♗c6 This is good for Black, ½-½ (65) Nisipeanu, L (2655) – Yilmaz, M (2630) PlayChess INT 2020.

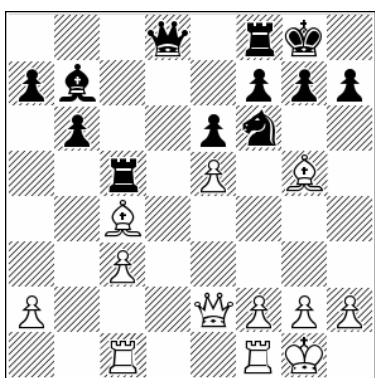
B) 14...h6!? 15.♙h4 ♖c7 16.♘xd7 ♗xd7 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.♙a6!?



Position after: 18.♙a6!?

18...♙xa6 19.♗xa6 b5 20.a4 bxa4 21.♖fd1 An interesting pawn sacrifice, similar to the Benko in a way. The black king is a bit compromised, 1-0 (33) Vaisser, A (2540) – Verat, L (2290) Clichy 1991.

15.dxe5 ♖c5!

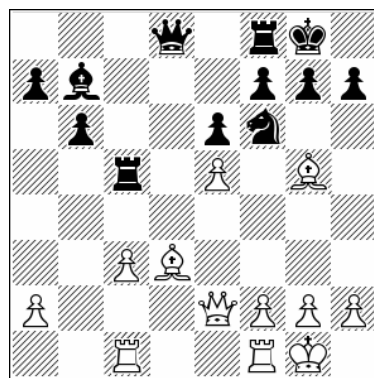


Position after: 15...♖c5!

A critical idea for Black.

16.♙d3

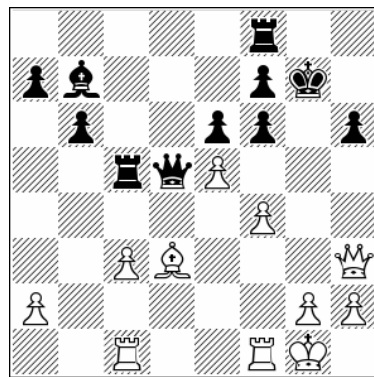
16.f4 ♖xc4! 17.exf6 g6 18.♖fd1 ♗c7 19.♖d3 ♗c5+ 20.♔h1 h5 Black is clearly better, 0-1 (43) Hawkins, J (2546) – Kramnik, V (2760) London 2014.



Position after: 16.♙d3

16...h6

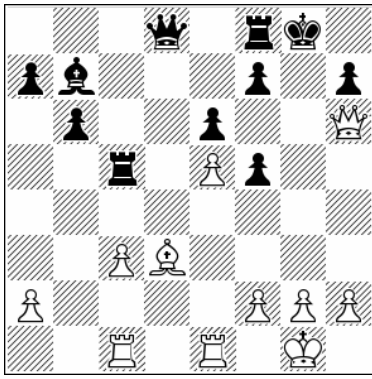
A) 16...♗d5 17.f4 h6 [17...♗e4 18.♙xe4 ♗xe4 19.♗xe4 ♙xe4 20.♙e7 another better position for White] 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♗g4+ ♔h8 20.♗h3 ♔g7



Position after: 20...♔g7

21.exf6+! [21.♗g4+ ♔h8 22.♗h3 ♔g7 23.♗g4+ Black escapes with a draw, ½-½ (23) D'Alessio, M (1609) – Lim, Z (2165) Paisley 2018] 21...♔xf6 22.♗h4+ ♔g7 23.♖f3 White chalks up another win.

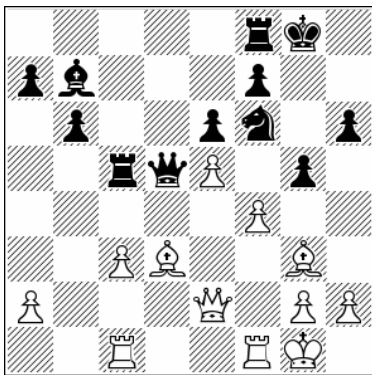
B) 16...♗c7 17.♙xf6 Best. 17...gxf6 18.♗h5 f5 19.♗g5+ ♔h8 20.♗f6+ ♔g8 21.♖fe1 ♗d8 22.♗h6



Position after: 22. ♖h6

22... ♗e7! [22... ♔h8 23. ♖cd1! ♖g8 24. ♗xf5 ♗xg2+ 25. ♔f1 White wins, 1-0 (39) Donchenko, A (2595) – Nihal, S (2598) Brest 2019] 23. ♗f1 ♔h8 24. c4 f6 25. exf6 ♖xf6 26. ♗h4 ♖f7 27. ♗h3 We still have a game, probably with balanced chances,

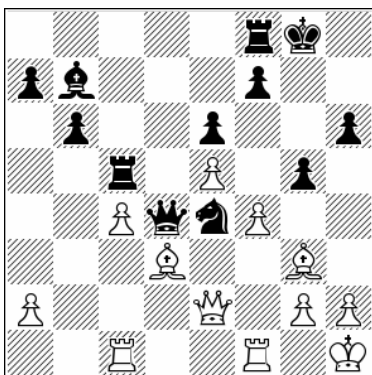
17. ♗h4!? g5 18. ♗g3 ♗d5 19. f4!



Position after: 19. f4!

Here I prefer White. Black can come up with defensive ideas but it's just easier to handle such positions with the white pieces.

19... ♗e4 20. c4 ♗d4+ 21. ♔h1

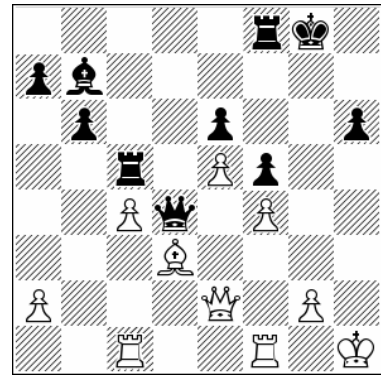


Position after: 21. ♔h1

21... f5

Probably best, or should I say safest.

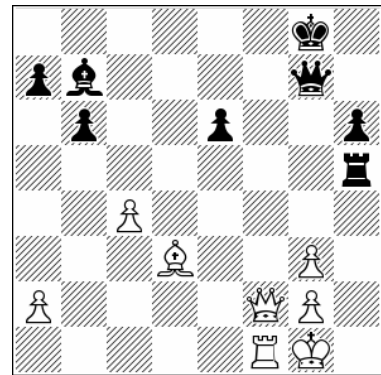
21... ♗xg3+ 22. hxg3 gx4 23. gxf4 f5!



Position after: 23... f5!

24. exf6 [24. ♖cd1 ♗d8! 25. ♗h5 ♗e8 26. ♗h4 ♖c7 27. ♖f2 ♖g7 28. ♗e2 ♗e4 29. ♔h2 ♔h7 the position has become unclear] 24... ♗xf6 25. ♖ce1 e5 26. fxe5 ♗h4+ 27. ♔g1 ♖xf1+ 28. ♗xf1 ♖xe5 29. ♖xe5 ♗d4+ 30. ♔h1 ♗xe5 31. ♗g6 Black has gained equality here, but it's not an easy line for him to play.

22. exf6 ♖xf6 23. f4g5 ♗xg3+ 24. hxg3 ♖xg5 25. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 26. ♖f1 ♗e5 27. ♗f2 ♗g7 28. ♔h2 ♖h5+ 29. ♔g1



Position after: 29. ♔g1

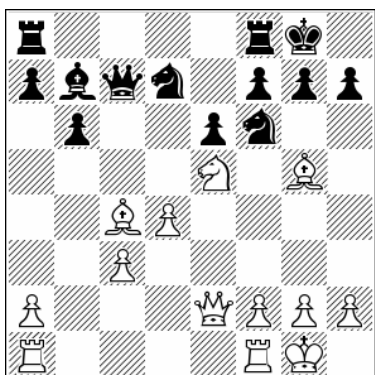
29... ♖g5

Black can be happy with a draw by repetition.

d) 11.♔g5 ♕xc3 12.bxc3 ♖bd7 13.♗e5 ♔c7 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.♖ac1

h6

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♕d3 d5
6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♕xc4 b6
10.♖e2 ♕b7 11.♕g5 ♕xc3 12.bxc3 ♗bd7
13.♗e5 ♔c7



Position after: 13...♔c7

This is the more traditional way, and this position too can arise from different move orders.

14.♗xd7 ♗xd7

14...♖xd7 15.♕xf6 gxf6 16.d5! ♕xd5 17.♖ad1 ♖fd8 18.♖g4+ ♔f8 19.♕xd5 exd5 20.♖h5 Due to the exposed black king we can say that White has a very strong initiative, 1-0 (27) Hillarp Persson, T (2491) – Portisch, L (2523) Malmo 2008.

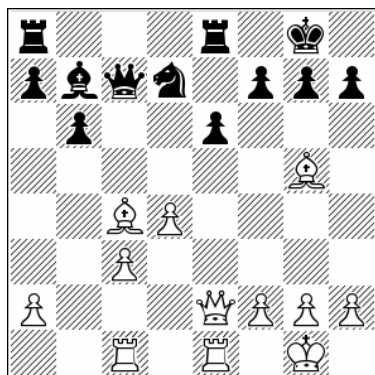
15.♖ac1

Here we have the starting position of an important and popular line. White has the bishop pair but Black's position is solid.

15...h6

That's one of the main ideas. We will separately look at the popular 15...♖c6.

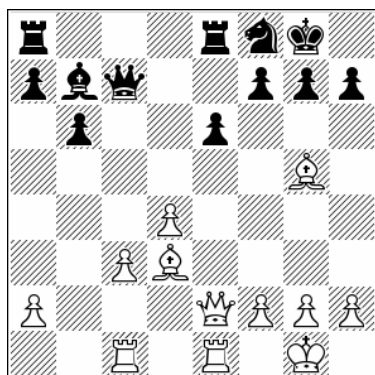
15...♖fe8 That's a logical idea in these positions, sometimes having in mind ...e5 but also preparing the important maneuver knight to f8, which is often a useful strengthening of the kingside defenses. 16.♖fe1



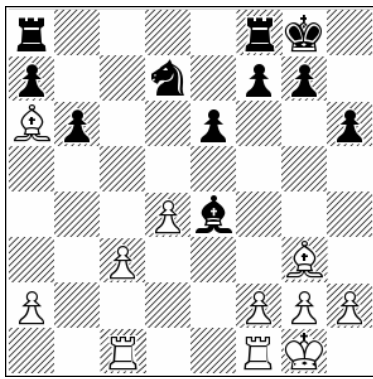
Position after: 16.♖fe1

A) Opening up the position with ...e5 doesn't solve Black's problems; it may be too early to do that. 16...e5 17.♕b3! e4 [17...h6 18.♖h5! White is winning already. 18...♗f8 19.♖e3 Curtains for Black; 17...♖ac8 18.f4 e4 19.♖h5! There's the difference: White has no need to protect the pawn on c4.] 18.♖g4 ♗f8 19.c4 White is looking very good here.

B) Black also has a slightly more solid plan, which involves regrouping his pieces. 16...♗f8 17.♕d3



Position after: 17.♕d3



Position after: 19. ♖a6!

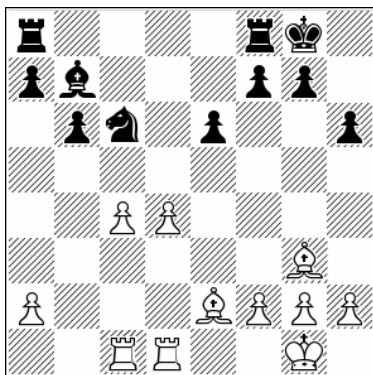
It is very important for White to prevent ... ♗a6 after c3-c4.

19... ♖b8 20. ♗e2 ♗b7

Black really needs to have the ... ♗a6 resource available.

20... ♖d8 21. ♖fd1 ♖d7 22. c4 ♖a6 23. a3 ♗b7 24. c5 bxc5 25. dxc5 ♖xd1+ 26. ♗xd1 White has an edge, 1-0 (51) Ulko, J (2345) – Demianjuk, A Moscow 1997.

21. ♖fd1 ♖c6 22. c4



Position after: 22. c4

22... ♖ac8!

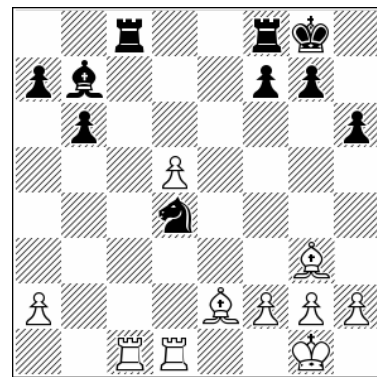
The most solid setup.

A) 22... ♖fd8 23. d5 Better for White.

B) 22... ♗a6 23. ♗f3 ♖ac8 24. c5 This is also clear and easy play for White.

23. c5

23. d5 exd5 24. cxd5 ♖d4!



Position after: 24... ♖d4!

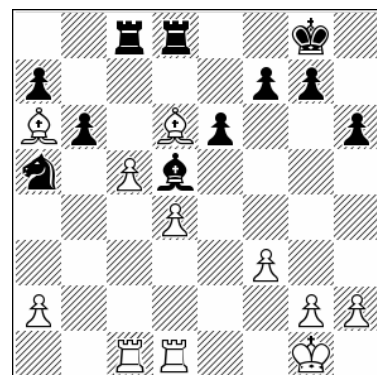
With this nice trick black equalizes. 25. ♗c4 b5 26. ♖xd4 ♖xc4 27. ♖xc4 bxc4 28. ♖xc4 ♗xd5 It's a draw.

23... ♖fd8 24. ♗d6 ♖a5

The knight is heading for b7.

24... ♖b4 25. a3 ♖d5 26. h3 ♖f6 27. f3 ♖d5 28. ♖f2 Such endgames are clearly in White's favor.

25. f3 ♗d5 26. ♗a6

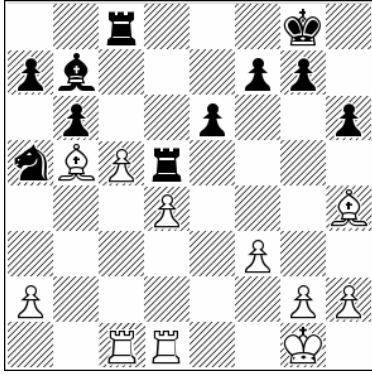


Position after: 26. ♗a6

26... ♗b7

26... ♖b7 27. ♗f4 White wants to play ♖b1 next. 27... bxc5 28. dxc5! White is better.

27. ♖d3 ♘d5 28. ♙e7 ♜d7 29. ♙h4 ♙b7 30. ♙b5 ♜d5



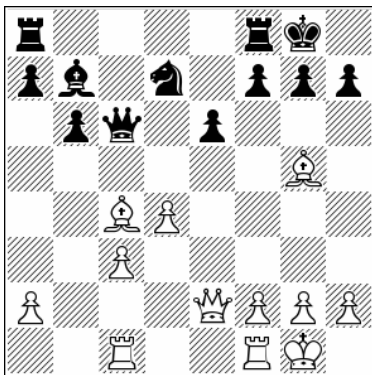
Position after: 30...♜d5

Typical strategy: slowly White increases his initiative.

e) 11. ♙g5 ♙xc3 12. bxc3 ♞bd7 13. ♞e5 ♚c7 14. ♞xd7 ♞xd7 15. ♜ac1 ♚c6

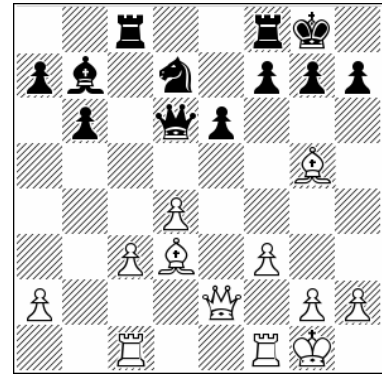
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
 6.♟f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
 10.♚e2 ♙b7 11.♙g5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♞bd7
 13.♞e5 ♚c7 14.♞xd7 ♞xd7 15.♜ac1 ♚c6

Black has an interesting alternative. 16...♚d6
 17.♙h4! ♜ac8 18.♞fd1 ♚a3 19.♙b3 a5 20.♚d3!?
 a4 21.♙c2 g6 22.♙b1 Advantage to White.



Position after: 15...♚c6

17. ♙d3 ♚d6



Position after: 17...♚d6

This is quite a popular variation, but after f3 Black is struggling.

16.f3

This is the traditional way of playing it, and it appears to me that f4 is also good.

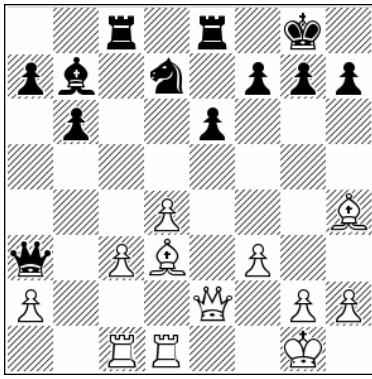
16...♜ac8

17...e5 18.♚d2 ♜fe8 19.♞fe1 exd4 20.cxd4
 ♜xe1+ 21.♜xe1 ♟f8 22.♞e7 ♟e6 23.♙f5 ♚d5
 24.♙xe6 fxe6 25.♚e3 It's much better for White.

18.♞fe1!

The best square for the rook.

A) 18.♞fd1 ♜fe8 19.♙h4!? ♚a3

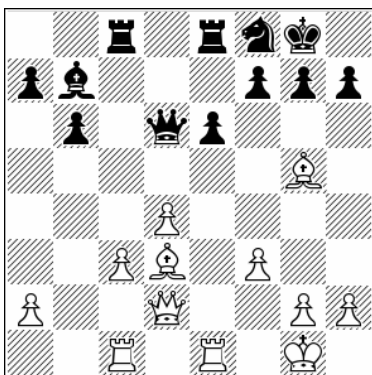


Position after: 19...Qa3

This queen raid is a typical idea for Black, trying to attack those pawns or force them to go forward and become targets. 20.Qc2 Nf8 21.Qb3 Qa5 22.Qb5!? Qxb5 23.Qxb5 Qc6 24.Qa6 Rc7 25.c4 Ng6 26.Qg3 Rd7 27.d5 exd5 28.c5 White gets strong play on the queenside. Often the d4-d5 pawn sac succeeds in seriously disrupting the black position.

B) 18.Qh4!? Rfe8 19.Rfe1 Nf8 20.Qg3 Qa3 21.c4 Rcd8 22.Qf2 Ng6 23.Qe3 Qh8 24.Rcd1 We can consider this as the best setup that White can get in such lines, but that doesn't mean his advantage is big; it simply means that now Black has to be careful and White has chances to increase the pressure, 1-0 (38) Title, R (2368) – Barbre, S (2464) corr. USA 1999.

18...Rfe8 19.Qd2! Nf8



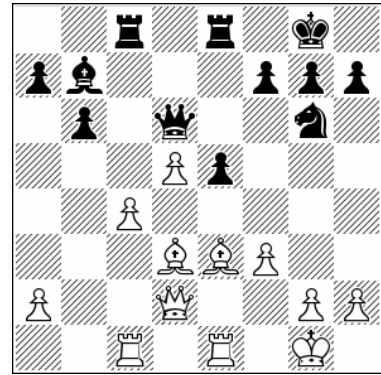
Position after: 19...Nf8

20.Qe3

Going for the main plan with c4.

20.h4 This is not needed with the pawn on f3, because actually White is looking for queenside play. 20...f5 21.Qb5 Qc6 22.Qa6 Ra8 23.Qf1 Probably White still has some edge in this interesting position, ½-½ (48) Hillarp Persson, T (2549) – Borne, N (2331) Banyoles 2006.

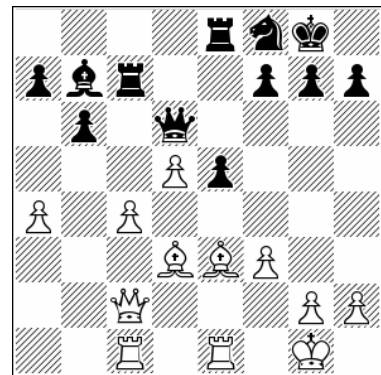
20...Ng6 21.c4 e5 22.d5!



Position after: 22.d5!

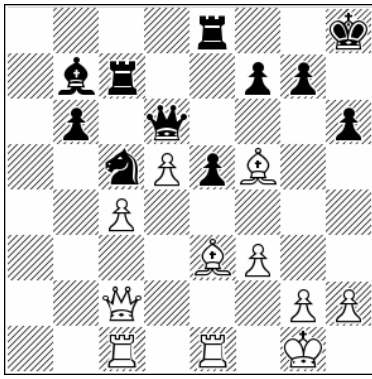
This structure is better for White. Next comes the usual minority play a4!.

22...Nf8 23.Qc2 Rc7 24.a4!



Position after: 24.a4!

24...h6 25.a5 Nd7 26.axb6 axb6 27.Qh7+ Qh8 28.Qf5 Nc5



Position after: 28...♖c5

29. ♙b2

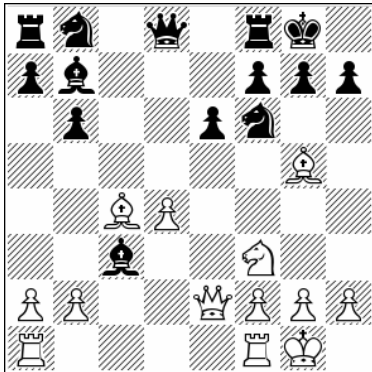
White has a big advantage, 1-0 (52) Johansson, K (2517) – Eger, A (2413) ICCF Email 2004.

f) 11.♙g5 ♜xc3 12.bxc3 ♞bd7 13.♙h4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♜b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♞f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♙e2 ♜b7 11.♙g5

This is an important line in this system. Rather than shift the rook to d1 straight away, White first sends his bishop out because he is planning an early rook to c1 move.

11...♙xc3

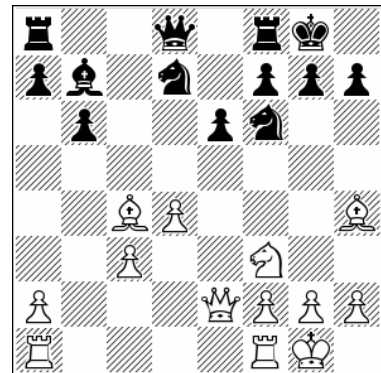


Position after: 11...♙xc3

12.bxc3

We are dealing here with a position in which Black voluntarily decides to take on c3 and play standard positions before White gets a chance to retake on c3 with the bishop or the rook.

12...♞bd7 13.♙h4!



Position after: 13.♙h4!

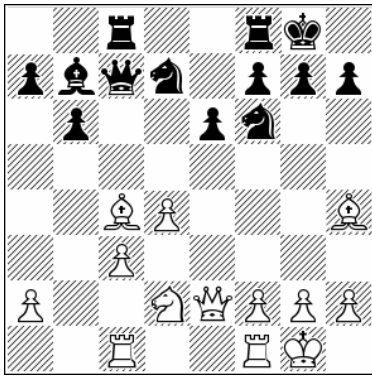
This might be a detail that makes this line a bit different. White has no rooks on c1 or d1 -- first he is trying to deter the black queen from coming to c7.

13.♞e5 transposes to another subchapter.

13...♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♙c7

14...♙xf3 15.gxf3 This is fine for White; such positions appear in some other lines as well. 15...♞e8 16.♙a6 ♞c7 17.♙b5 e5 18.♙d3 The bishop pair is very unpleasant for Black, especially bearing in mind that his knights are on fairly passive squares.

15.♞d2!



Position after: 15. d2!

The only way to play on.

15... ♖c6

15... ♗f4 16. ♕g3 ♗g5 17. ♖e3 ♗xe3 18. fxe3 We have another interesting endgame, which actually can be seen as a middlegame without queens; think of it as a Berlin.

16. f3 ♗d5

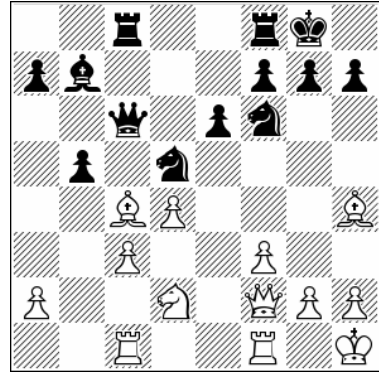
In this rather tense position, Black is trying to create pressure on the c3-pawn while White is trying to use the e4-square to mobilize his forces.

17. ♔h1

White must play accurate moves and watch out for ...b5 ideas.

17. ♖fe1 b5! 18. ♕xb5 ♗xc3 19. ♕xc6 ♗xe2+ 20. ♖xe2 ♖xc6 This is fine for Black.

17... ♗7f6 18. ♗f2 b5



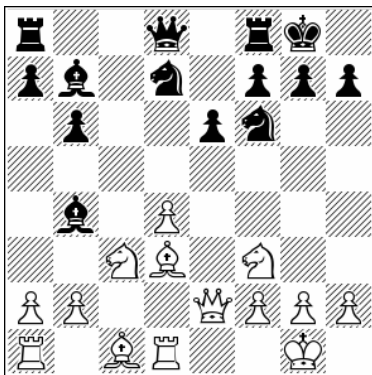
Position after: 18... b5

19. ♕d3

White keeps some pressure, thanks to his control of the e4-square and Black's weak c5-square.

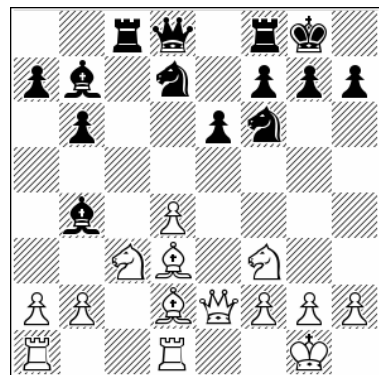
g) 11. ♖d1 ♗bd7 12. ♕d3

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♕b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♕d3 c5 6. ♗f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♕xc4 b6 10. ♗e2 ♕b7 11. ♖d1 ♗bd7 12. ♕d3



Position after: 12. d3

12... ♖c8 13. ♕d2



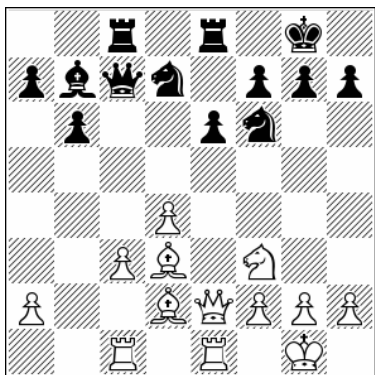
Position after: 13. d2

White's idea with this move is to take back on c3 with the bishop in certain lines. Now Black has a few options here.

13... ♕e7

It might be a real problem for White to come up with something convincing here. I have found some ideas, but I'm not sure whether there's enough for a real advantage.

A) 13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♚c7 15.♖ac1 Best. White must be ready to meet Black's bishop to d5 ideas with c3-c4. 15...♗fe8 16.♞e1

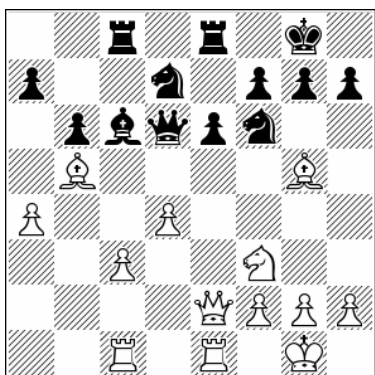


Position after: 16.♞e1

We have come to an interesting position.

A1) 16...♗d5!? 17.♚d1! [17.♗g5 h6 18.♗h3 e5 Black has enough play here] 17...♗f4 18.♙f1 ♗g6 19.c4 ♗f6 20.h3 ♞ed8 21.♙c3 ♗e4 22.♙b2 ♚f4 23.♚e2 The position is full of possibilities for both sides.

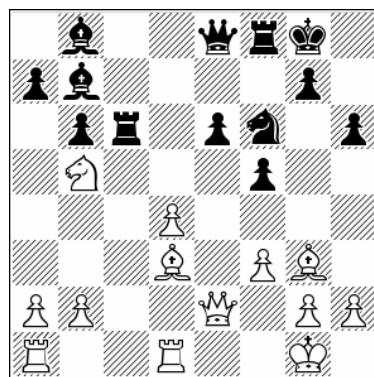
A2) 16...♚c6 17.♙g5!? ♚d6 [17...♗d5 18.♙b5 ♚d6 19.c4 White has the initiative] 18.♙b5 ♙c6 19.a4!



Position after: 19.a4!

19...h6 20.♙h4 ♚a3 21.c4 ♗h5 22.♚d2 ♙xb5 23.axb5 White has pressure, even though his bishop pair is no more.

B) 13...♙d6 14.♗b5 ♙b8 15.♙g5 ♚e8 16.♗e5! h6 17.♗xd7 ♗xd7 18.♙h4 f5 19.f3 ♗f6 20.♙g3 ♞c6



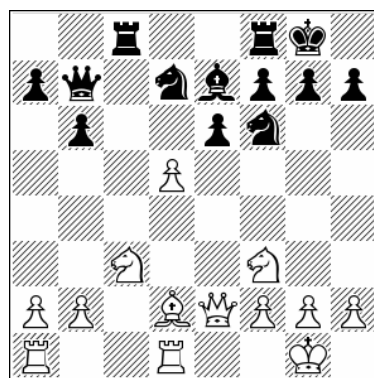
Position after: 20...♞c6

21.♖ac1 Such positions are usually in White's favor because Black has more targets that White can attack, 1-0 (47) Knaak, R (2565) – Farago, I (2510) Polanica Zdroj 1979.

14.♖ac1

14.♙a6!?

A) 14...♚c7 15.♙xb7 ♚xb7 16.d5!



Position after: 16.d5!

Once again this break gives White the advantage. 16...♗c5 [16...♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♚xd5 18.♙g5 White wins] 17.b4 ♗a6 18.dxe6 ♙xb4 19.♗b5 White has some initiative.

B) 14...♙xa6 15.♚xa6 ♞a8 [15...♙b4 16.♚xa7 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♗d5 18.♚a3 White has won a pawn but Black has a little compensation with his strong knight on d5] 16.♖ac1 ♚b8 17.a3 ♞e8

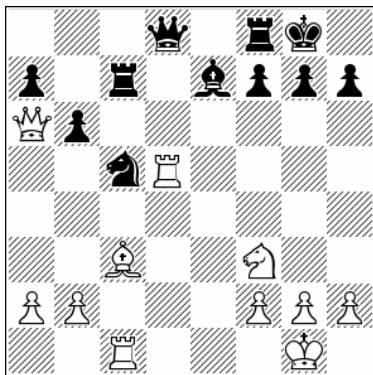
18. ♖b5 ♗d5 19. b4 h6 20. g3 ♜d8 21. ♞e1 Quite a strange sort of position, in which White has an unusual type of pressure. Black cannot easily untangle his pieces.

14... ♗d5 15. ♙b1

Going for direct attack.

A) 15. ♗e4!? h6 16. ♗g3 ♗7f6 17. a3 ♜d6 18. ♗e5 ♜xc1 19. ♙xc1 We see an unclear position, similar to the main line that we are following.

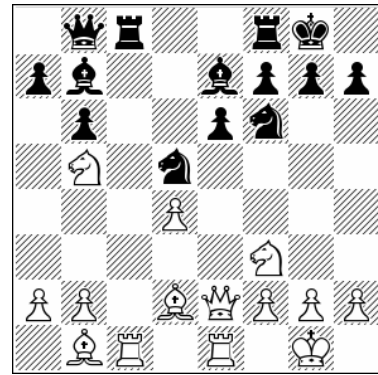
B) 15. ♙a6 ♗xc3 16. ♙xc3 ♙xa6 17. ♜xa6 ♜c7 18. d5 exd5 19. ♜xd5 ♗c5!



Position after: 19... ♗c5!

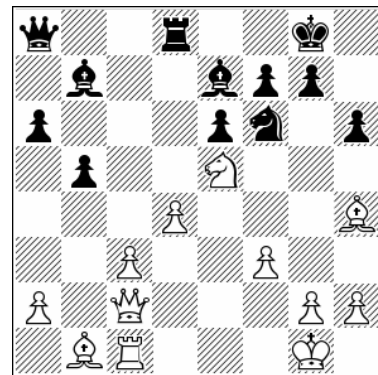
20. ♜c4 ♗a4 21. ♜d4 ♗xc3 22. ♜xd8 ♗e2+ 23. ♗f1 ♜xc1+ 24. ♗xe2 ♜xd8 25. ♜e4 ♙f6 Black is better, ½-½ (39) Neves, B – Razumichin, A corr. 2001.

15... ♗7f6 16. ♜e1 ♜d6 17. ♗b5 ♜b8



Position after: 17... ♜b8

18. ♗e5 ♜xc1 19. ♜xc1 a6 20. ♗c3 ♜a8 21. f3 ♗xc3 22. bxc3 ♜d8 23. ♙g5 h6 24. ♙h4 b5 25. ♜c2



Position after: 25. ♜c2

25... ♗f8

We can say that this position is balanced, ½-½ (37) Gligoric, S (2480) – Bacrot, E (2565) Cannes 1998.

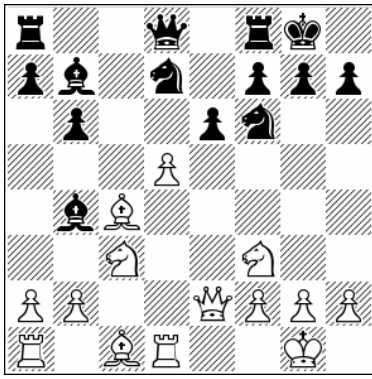
h) 11. ♜d1 ♗bd7 12. d5

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♙b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♙d3 c5 6. ♗f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♙xc4 b6 10. ♜e2 ♙b7 11. ♜d1 ♗bd7

An important line. Black simply ignores the d4-d5 threat -- and if that turns out to be possible, it might be that White has little or nothing at all.

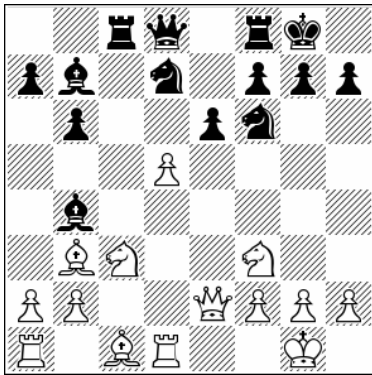
12. d5!?

This should be the move here. Perhaps it doesn't offer much, perhaps it's even a bit dry, but it puts the pressure on Black.



Position after: 12.d5!?

12.♘b3 ♖c8!? Black is not afraid of d4-d5 so he can wait. 13.d5



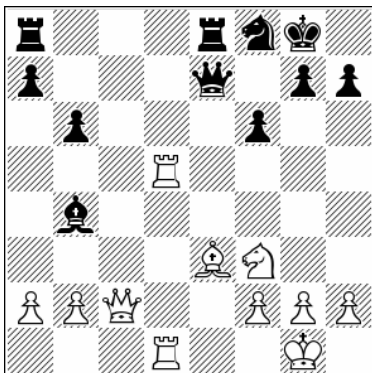
Position after: 13.d5

13...exd5 14.♗xd5 ♖e8 15.♙b5 ♘xd5 16.♙xd5 ♗xd5 17.♙xd5 ♗f6 18.♙b3 ♙e7 19.♙g5 ♘c5
Balanced play.

12...♙xc3

12...exd5 13.♗xd5

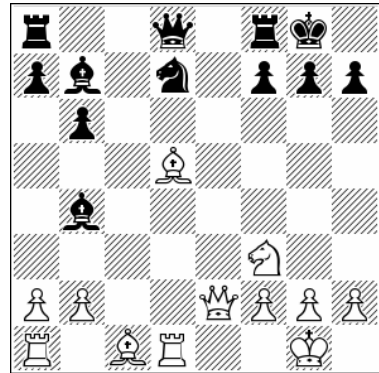
A) 13...♖e8 14.♙c2 ♗xd5 15.♙xd5 ♙xd5 16.♖xd5 ♙e7 17.♙g5 f6 18.♖ad1 ♗f8 19.♙e3



Position after: 19.♙e3

19...♙h8 [19...♙f7 ½-½ (19) Cornette, M (2562) – Van Wely, L (2675) Mulhouse 2011. Now White could have tried 20.♙a4 ♘e7 21.g3 and it looks to me that Black has certain problems here.] 20.a3 ♖ac8 21.♙a4 ♘c5 22.♙xc5 bxc5 23.h4 ♙f7 24.h5 White has the better game, 1-0 (37) Sedlak, N (2550) – Sax, G (2529) Zalaegerszeg 2010.

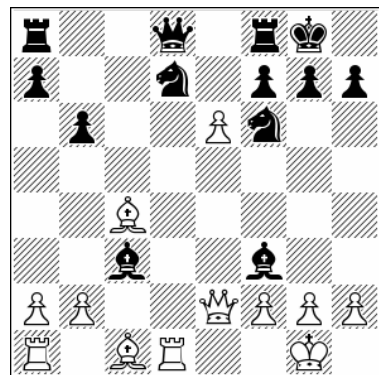
B) 13...♗xd5 14.♙xd5



Position after: 14.♙xd5

14...♙xd5 [14...♙c7 15.♙xb7 ♙xb7 16.♙b5 Black drops a piece, 1-0 (16) Meshkovs, N (2550) – Bogner, S (2574) chess.com INT 2021] 15.♖xd5 ♙c7 16.♙g5 ♙c6 17.♖ad1 ♗f6 18.♗e5 ♙e6 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♙g4+ ♙xg4 21.♗xg4 The endgame is better for White, 0-1 (31) Jacobson, B (2491) – Yan, R (2093) lichess.org INT 2021.

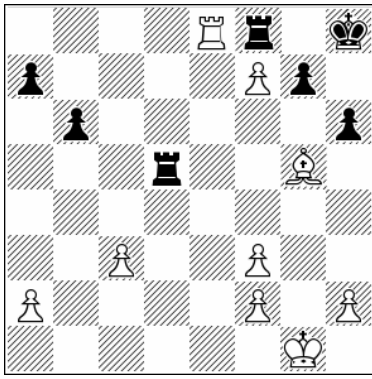
13.dxe6 ♙xf3



Position after: 13...♙xf3

14.gxf3

14.♙xf3 ♗e5 15.exf7+ ♙h8 16.♖xd8 ♗xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♖axd8 18.bxc3 ♗d5 19.♙g5 ♖d7 20.♖e1 h6 21.♙xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖e8



Position after: 22...Re8

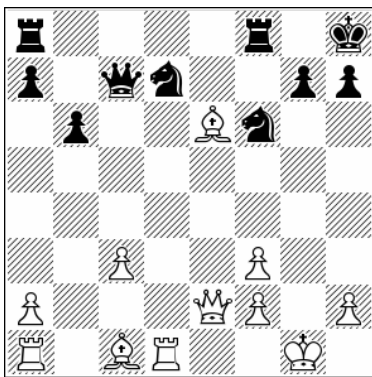
22...Rxf8+ 23.Kf1 Rf5 24.Rxf8+ Kh7 25.Kf2

This interesting forced line leads to a draw, ½-½ (25) Nakhbayeva, G (2360) – Tan Zhongyi (2509) Ashgabat 2017.

14...fxe6 15.bxc3 Rc7

15...Kh8 16.g3 Re8 17.g5 a6 18.g6 Rc8 19.Rd6 Qe7 20.g4 Qf7 21.Rad1 Rc7 22.c4 White is applying some pressure here, ½-½ (37) Sasikiran, K (2669) – Aleksandrov, A (2616) Warsaw 2009.

16.gxe6+ Kh8



Position after: 16...Kh8

White is a pawn up but his pawns are shattered and also Black can count on strong outposts for his knight, such as c5 and f4. White on the other hand will be looking for favorable simplifications.

17.g3

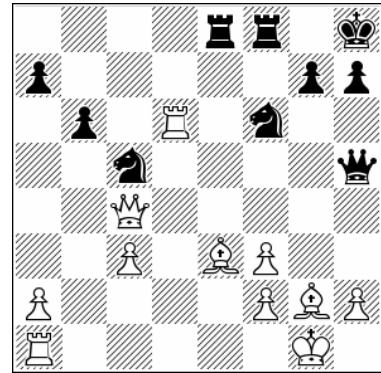
17.Qc4 Kc5! 18.g4 Qc6 19.g3 Nfe4 20.g3 Rxf3 21.g2 Qg6 22.Rd4 Actually Black has a

good position, ½-½ (22) Nisipeanu, L (2686) – Ly, M (2440) Sydney 2014. After 22...Raf8 23.Rf1 h5 Black would be doing fine.

17...Rae8

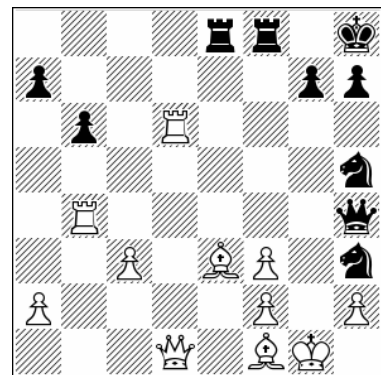
Black has a viable alternative and it's an important one.

17...Kc5 18.g3 Qf7 [18...Rae8 19.Qc4 Qe5 20.g2 Qh5 21.Rd6



Position after: 21...Rd6

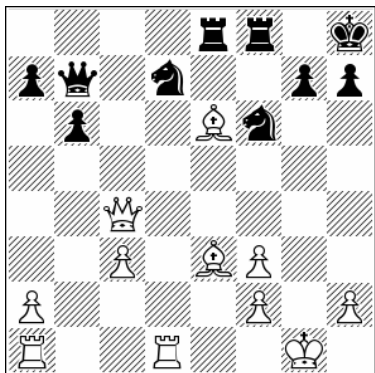
White prevents the knight from reaching the e6-square. 21...Kcd7 22.f4 Kc5 23.h3 Kc4 24.Re6 Rxe6 25.Qxe6 Kxc3 26.Qe5 Rc8 27.g2 Ka4 28.Qxh5 Kxh5 29.Re1 White has some edge.] 19.Rd4 Qh5 [19...Rae8 20.Qc4 Qh5 21.g2 Ke6 22.Rh4 Qg6 23.a4 Kh5 24.Qg4 Qxg4 25.fxg4 Khf4 26.g5 it seems that White is better because he will be exerting pressure on the queenside after a5 at some point] 20.g2 Ke6 21.Rd6 Rae8 22.Qd1 Qh4 23.Rb1 Kh5 24.Rb4 Ke4 25.gf1 Kh3+



Position after: 25...Kh3+

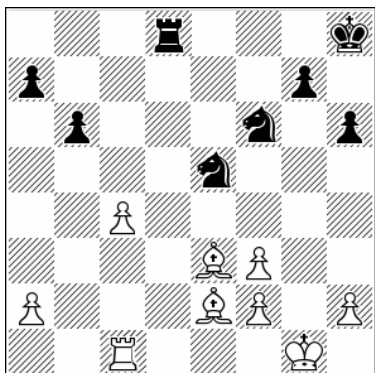
26. ♖xh3 ♜xh3 27. ♖e4 ♘f6 28. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 29. ♖f4 ♜f5 30. ♖g3 h6 31. ♖g2 ♖h7 32. c4 White has some edge, though it's not at all easy to make further progress from here.

18. ♜c4 ♜b7



Position after: 18... ♜b7

18... ♜xc4 19. ♖xc4 ♘e5 20. ♖e2 h6 21. ♖d4 ♖c8 22. ♖c1 ♖fd8 23. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24. c4



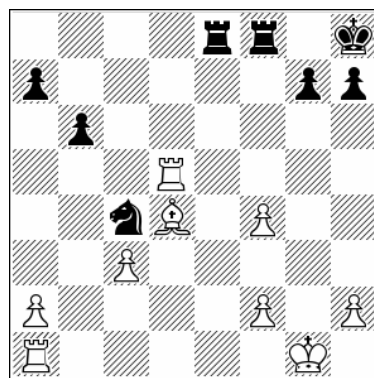
Position after: 24. c4

24... ♘ed7 25. ♖c3 ♘c5 26. ♖a3 ♖d7 27. ♖f1 ♖g8 28. ♖h3 ♖e7 29. ♖f1 This is advantage for White, 1-0 (41) Timofeev, A (2641) – Vokarev, S (2437) Samara 2012.

19. ♖xd7 ♘xd7 20. ♜d5 ♜xd5 21. ♖xd5 ♘e5 22. f4 ♘c4 23. ♖d4

i) 11. ♖d1 ♖xc3 12. bxc3 ♜c7

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♖b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♖d3 c5 6. ♘f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♖xc4 b6 10. ♜e2 ♖b7 11. ♖d1



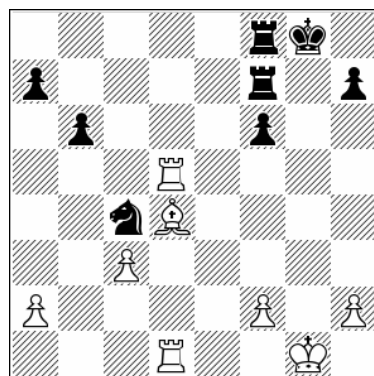
Position after: 23. ♖d4

White has some chances here.

23... ♖g8 24. f5 ♖f7

24... ♖d8 25. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26. f6 g6 27. ♖e1 ♘d6 28. ♖g2 ♖d7 29. ♖e5 ♘e8 30. ♖e4 ♖f7 31. c4 ♖d8 32. c5 White is creating some pressure but Black has every chance of a successful defense, ½-½ (52) Wang, H (2742) – Leko, P (2737) London 2012.

25. ♖d1 ♖ef8 26. f6 gxf6



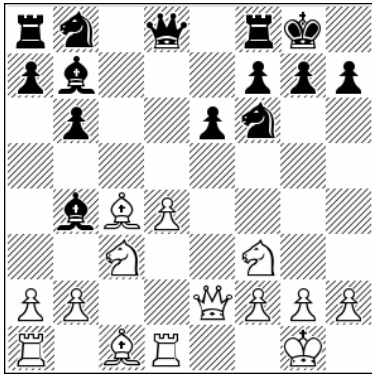
Position after: 26... gxf6

27. ♖d3

White holds some advantage; perhaps it's just a small one, but it's clear that only White can look for more than a draw.

Here we deal with positions where White plays a quick rook to d1, Black can choose to take at once on c3, or develop first. This line can be

reached from the 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♖bd7 9.♙e2 b6 10.♖d1 cxd4 11.exd4 variation and it used to be a main line for the system.

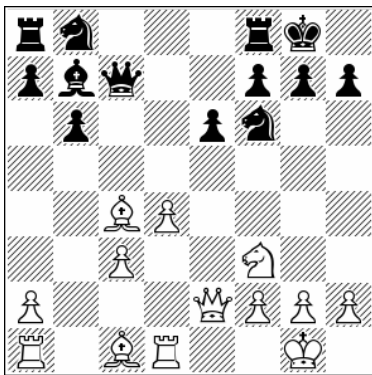


Position after: 11.♖d1

11...♙xc3

We deal here with positions where Black decides to stop d4-d5 ideas and transfer the game into the typical c3 and d4 pawn structure that often occurs in the Nimzo, and especially in the Karpov line.

12.bxc3 ♖c7!?



Position after: 12...♖c7!?

Kasparov and Beliavsky have both used this move order, aiming to induce White to shift his bishop back to d3.

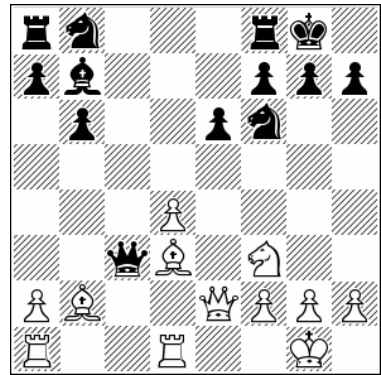
13.♙d3 ♖xc3

A risky pawn grab.

13...♖bd7 14.c4 ♖fe8 15.♙b2 This transposes to the main line, but Black has effectively stopped White from playing the ♙b3 line.

14.♙b2

That move is critical for the assessment of this whole line. We will see that d4-d5 is in the air all the time.



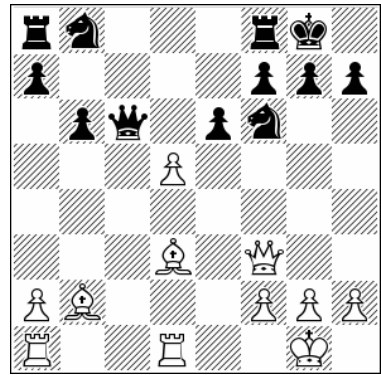
Position after: 14.♙b2

14.♙g5 ♖bd7 15.♖a1 ♙a5 16.♖e5 ♖d5 17.♖f3 ♖a8 Black is better, ½-½ (79) Knoll, H (2336) – Ruck, R (2530) Austria 2019.

14...♖b4

Black has other choices.

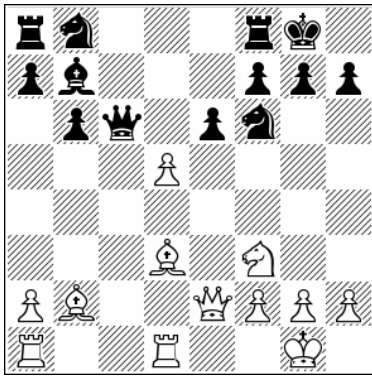
A) 14...♙xf3 15.♖xf3 ♖c6 16.d5!



Position after: 16.d5!

16...♖xd5 17.♙xh7+ ♖xh7 18.♖h5+ ♖g8 19.♙xg7 ♖xg7 20.♖g5+ ♖h8 21.♖d4 ♖c2 22.♖h6+ ♖g8 23.♖g4+ ♖g6 24.♖xg6+ fxg6 25.♖xg6+ ♖h8 26.♖h6+ ♖g8 27.♖xe6+ 1-0 (27) Nakhbayeva, G (2365) – Kostyuchenko, V (2169) St Petersburg 2014.

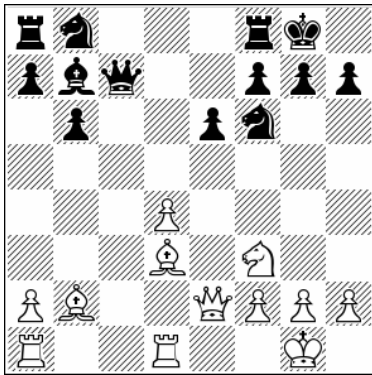
B) 14...♖c6 15.d5!



Position after: 15.d5!

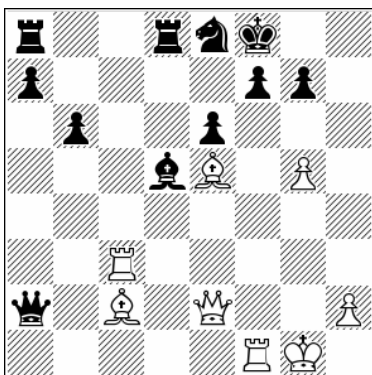
The key move. 15...exd5 [15...♞xd5 16.♞ac1 ♞d6 17.♙xh7+! ♜xh7 18.♞e4+ ♜g8 19.♞g5 f5 20.♞h4 1-0 (20) Marin, M (2584) – Pop, A (2286) Olanesti 2016] 16.♞d4 ♞e8 17.♞f3 ♞e5 18.♞e1 ♞e4 19.♞ab1 White has developed a strong attack.

C) 14...♞c7



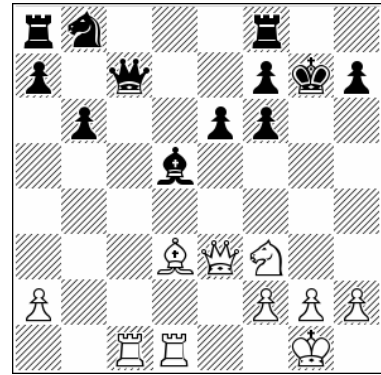
Position after: 14...♞c7

15.d5 [15.♞ac1 ♞d6 16.d5 ♙xd5 17.♞e5 ♞d8 18.g4!? An unusual attacking plan in this line, but we will see that it can be very effective. 18...h6 19.f4 ♞bd7 20.g5 hxg5 21.fxg5 ♞e8 22.♙h7+ ♜f8 23.♞f1 ♞xe5 24.♙xe5 ♞a3 25.♞c3! ♞xa2 26.♙c2!!



Position after: 26.♙c2!!

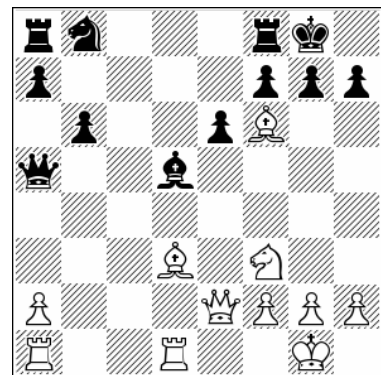
26...♞d7 27.♞h5 White's attack is now unstoppable.] 15...♙xd5 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♞e3 ♜g7 18.♞ac1



Position after: 18.♞ac1

18...♞c6 [18...♞d6!? This introduces a complicated line that is Black's best chance. 19.♞d4!? ♞d7 20.♞h3 ♞h8 21.♞e2!? The game is highly unbalanced. Black has to be careful with each move, otherwise White will get a winning attack.] 19.♙b5! The winning blow. [19.♙e4 ♞d6 20.♙xd5 exd5 21.♞c4 ♞d7 22.♞h4 ♞f5 23.♞xd5 ♞e5 24.h3 White has a small plus, 1-0 (38) Beliavsky, A (2570) – Kasparov, G (2690) Moscow 1983]

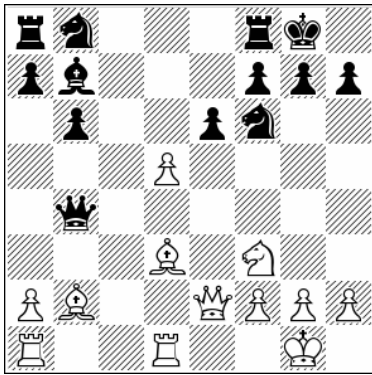
D) 14...♞a5 15.d5 ♙xd5 16.♙xf6!



Position after: 16.♙xf6!

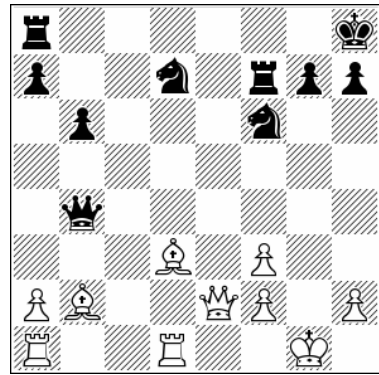
16...gxf6 17.♞e5! ♞c8 [17...fxe5 18.♙xh7+! ♜xh7 19.♞h5+ ♜g7 20.♞g5+ ♜h7 21.♞d3 the fifth rank is blocked and White will checkmate] 18.♙xh7+ ♜f8 19.♞g4 ♜e7 20.♞xf7! ♜xf7 21.♙e4 ♞c5 22.♞g6+ ♜e7 23.♞g7+ ♜d8 24.♙xd5 1-0 (24) Blackburn, J (2235) – Turner, M (2509) London 2021.

15.d5



Position after: 15.d5

16.dxe6 ♟xf3 17.exf7+ ♔h8 18.gxf3 ♝xf7

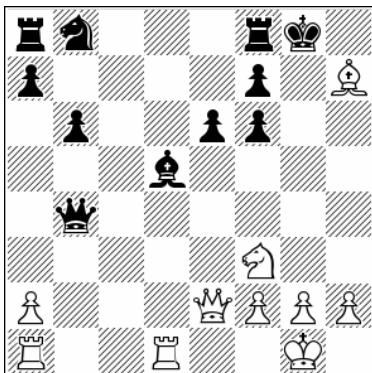


Position after: 18...♝xf7

15...♞bd7

Black develops quickly and that is his best move. The arising positions are a bit dried out but Black can logically expect that the game is trending towards a draw. White has to show some ideas to strive for more.

15...♟xd5 16.♟xf6 gxf6 17.♟xh7+!



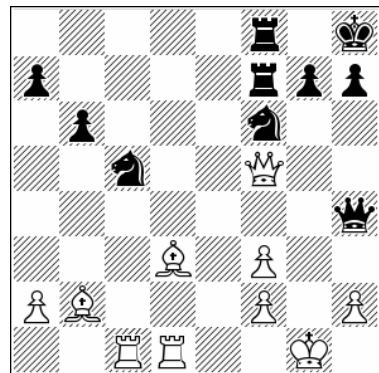
Position after: 17.♟xh7+!

17...♔xh7 18.♞d4 ♝c8 19.♞h5+ ♔g8 20.♞g4+ ♔h7 21.♞d3! ♝c3 22.♞h3+ ♔g7 23.♞f5+ exf5 24.♞xc3 White has a winning attack, 1-0 (35) Nisipeanu, L (2679) – Gordon, S (2527) Legnica 2013.

19.♝ac1!

19.♞d2 ♞h4 20.♝ac1 ♞h5 21.♟f1 ♞c5 22.♞d5 ♝af8 23.♝e1 ♞f6 24.♞f5 It's just unclear, 1-0 (40) Vedmediuc, S (2459) – Ciorgovean, I (2158) Arad 2017.

19...♞h4 20.♞e6 ♝af8 21.♞f5 ♞c5



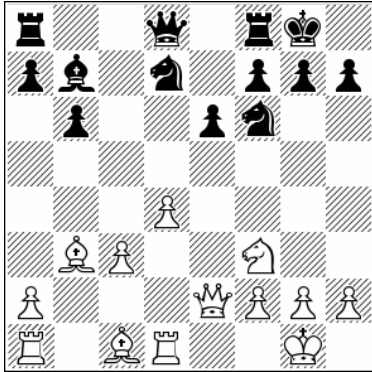
Position after: 21...♞c5

22.♟c4

Black is solid but lacks an active plan. White has a strong bishop pair but, as I said earlier, his kingside pawns are bad so the verdict is just some pressure for White.

j) 11.♖d1 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♞bd7 13.♙b3

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
 10.♚e2 ♙b7 11.♖d1 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♞bd7
 13.♙b3

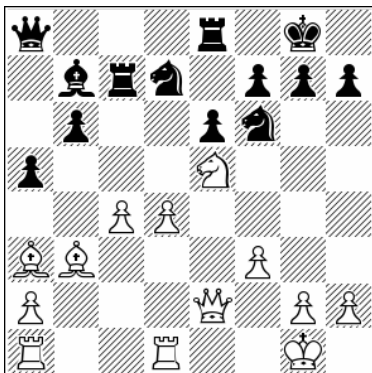


Position after: 13.♙b3

The idea of this move, instead of ♙d3, is to reduce the impact of possible ...♞f4 play by Black.

13...♚c7

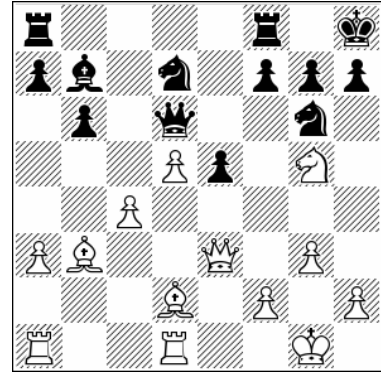
**A) 13...♖c8 14.c4 ♖e8 15.♙b2 ♖c7 16.♞e5 ♚a8
 17.f3 a5 18.♙a3**



Position after: 18.♙a3

18...a4 19.♙c2 ♙a6 20.♙d3 ♞xe5 21.dxe5 ♞d7
 22.♙d6 ♖cc8 23.♖ac1 White has the better game,
 1-0 (66) Sedlak, N (2556) – Krejci, J (2178) Lienz
 2011.

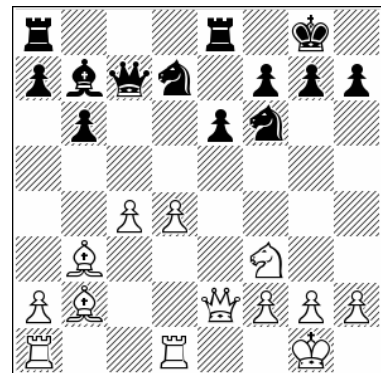
**B) 13...♞d5 14.♙d2 ♚c7 15.c4 ♟f4 16.♚e3 e5
 17.d5 ♚d6 18.g3 ♟g6 19.♞g5 ♟h8 20.a3!**



Position after: 20.a3!

20...a5 By provoking ...a5 White has created an important weakness on b6. 21.♞e4 ♚e7 22.♚g5 ♚xg5 23.♙xg5 Such positions favor White, 1-0 (41) Korobov, A (2698) – Morchiasvili, B (2317) Yerevan 2015.

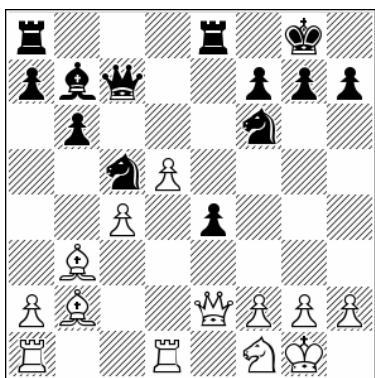
14.c4 ♖fe8 15.♙b2



Position after: 15.♙b2

Standard play. Now White is ready for central action with knight to e5 and the a4-a5 plan creating targets on the queenside.

15.♞d2 e5 16.d5 e4 17.♞f1 ♞c5 18.♙b2



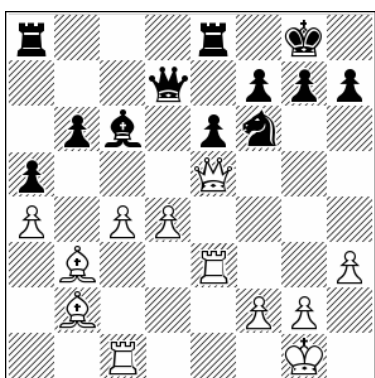
Position after: 18...Bb2

An interesting type of play. The knight on f1 is a good piece that controls the vital e3-square. With a passer on d5 and his strong dark-squared bishop White is hoping to ramp up the pressure. 18...Wf4 19.Bc2 Ng4 20.Bd4 Wg5 21.f3 exf3 22.Wxf3 White does have pressure here, 1-0 (66) Melkumyan, H (2600) – Pashikian, A (2616) Martuni 2011.

15...Wf4

This is typical, sending the queen to f4 as soon as White places the bishop on b2.

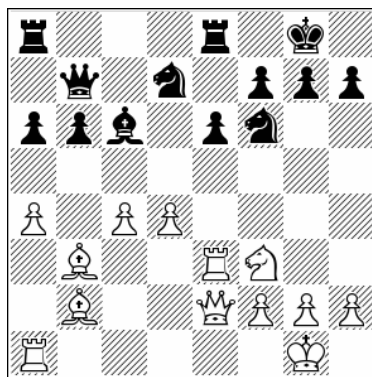
A) 15...Nh5 16.We3 Nf4 17.a4 Nf6 18.h3 a5 19.Re1 Ng6 20.Bac1 Bc6 21.Ne5 Nxe5 22.Wxe5 Wd7 23.Re3! White has built up a tremendous attack, and we can say that this is model play for White.



Position after: 23...Re3!

23...Wd8 24.Bce1 Bc8 25.Bg3 It is very difficult for Black to defend against the bishop on b2 after the d4-d5 break.

B) 15...Bc6 16.a4! Wb7 17.Bd3 Lifting a rook to the third rank is typical play here. 17...a6 18.Be3



Position after: 18...Be3

18...b5 [18...Ng4 19.d5! a quick win for White] 19.d5!? exd5 20.cxb5 axb5 21.a5 White needs to play energetically in the Nimzo.

16...We3

This has been the usual move, but White could consider two alternatives.

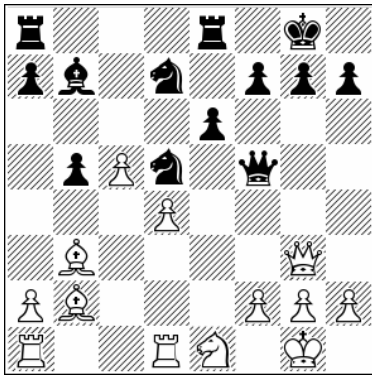
A) 16.Bd3!? N 16...Nh5 17.Be3 Wh6 18.g3 Nhf6 19.Ne5 Nxe5 20.Bxe5 Wg6 21.f3 Bc8 22.a4 Things are not clear. Usually Black's next moves are something like ...Nd7-f8-g6 or ...Nd7-b8-c6. Such positions are very important and may arise from various move orders.

B) 16.Nd2!? e5 17.d5 How to evaluate such positions? This should be OK for White but Black does have reasonable play. In any case, it is possible to play on. We saw a similar type of position in the Melkumyan – Pashikian game given above.

16...Wf5 17.Ne1 b5

17...e5 18.d5 Ba6 The e1-knight is flexible enough to go to e3 or d3, depending on circumstances.

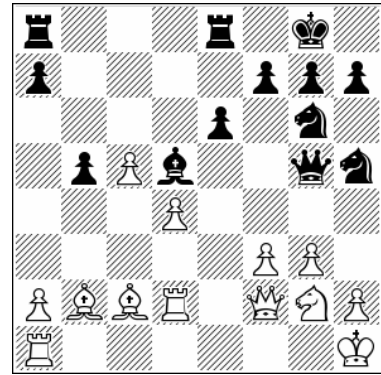
18.c5 Nd5 19.Wg3



Position after: 19. ♖g3

It's good strategy to keep the bishop pair.

23... ♔g5 24. ♕h1 ♖c4 25. g3 ♘g6 26. ♗g2 ♙d5



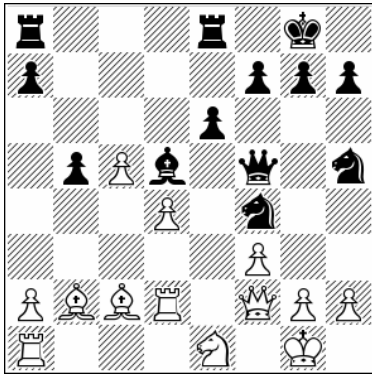
Position after: 26... ♙d5

This game is a perfect example of the strategy I was talking about. Slowly over the next 10 moves White turns up the pressure

19... ♗f4 20. ♖d2 ♗f6 21. f3 ♗6h5 22. ♗f2 ♙d5
23. ♙c2!

27. ♗e3

Model play by both sides results in a small plus for White. It is important to realize how to handle such positions, 1-0 (54) Aronian, L (2754) – Leko, P (2751) Nalchik 2009.



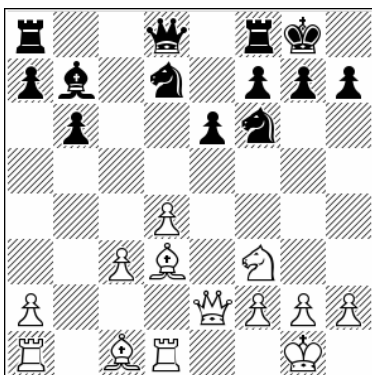
Position after: 23. ♙c2!

k) 11. ♖d1 ♙xc3 12. bxc3 ♗bd7 13. ♙d3

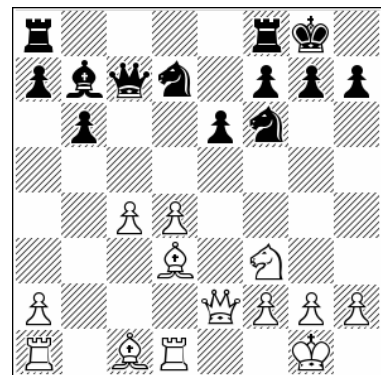
1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♙b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♙d3 c5
6. ♗f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♙xc4 b6
10. ♗e2 ♙b7 11. ♖d1 ♙xc3 12. bxc3 ♗bd7
13. ♙d3

This is a common and logical move in the Nimzo. The bishop is well placed here, controlling the e4 square and ready for possible kingside action.

13... ♗c7 14. c4



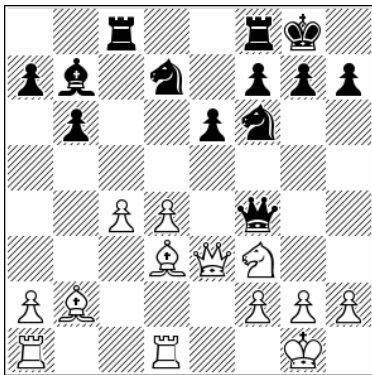
Position after: 13. ♙d3



Position after: 14. c4

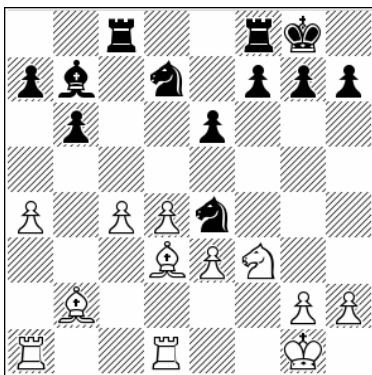
14...♖fe8

A) 14...♖ac8 15.♙b2 ♗f4 16.♖e3



Position after: 16.♖e3

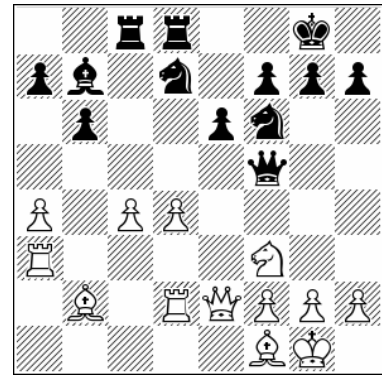
A1) 16...♖xe3 17.fxe3 ♘e4 18.a4!



Position after: 18.a4!

18...♖fd8 19.a5 Again this plan, creating a target on b6. 19...♘d6 20.♘d2 ♘f6 21.axb6 axb6 22.♖a4 ♘fe4 23.♖b4 ♘xd2 24.♖xd2 ♙e4 25.♙e2 f5 26.♙a3 ♖a8 27.♖b3 White has pressure in this kind of endgame, 1-0 (44) Parligras, M (2602) – Khademalsharieh, S (2267) Dubai 2013.

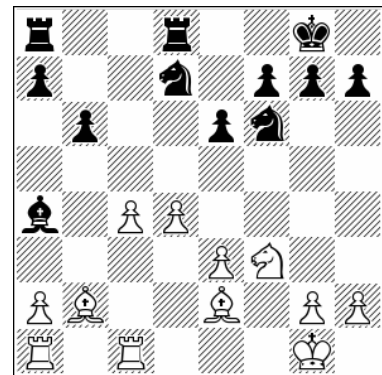
A2) 16...♘h5 17.♙e2 ♖fd8! If Black wants to head for an endgame this looks logical to me, but whether it's OK I'm not sure. 18.a4 This is normal white play when confronted with ...♗f4 intrusions. 18...♖e4 [18...a5 19.♙c1 ♖xe3 20.♙xe3 ♘hf6 21.♖dc1 big plus for White] 19.♖a3 ♖c2 20.♖d2 ♖b1+ 21.♙f1 ♘hf6 22.♖e2 ♗f5



Position after: 22...♗f5

23.d5?! An impatient move. [23.♖d1 gives White pressure] 23...♘e4 24.♘d4 ♖g5 25.♘f3 ♗f5 26.dxe6?! Black is better, 0-1 (70) Bu Xiangzhi (2677) – Xiu, D (2508) Xinghua Jiangsu 2011.

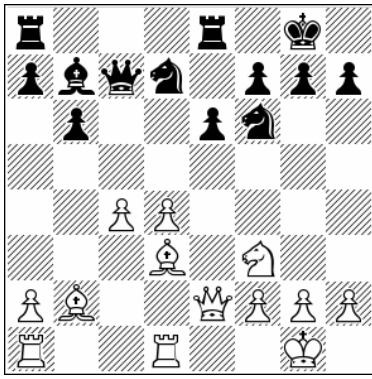
B) 14...♖fd8 15.♙b2 ♗f4 16.♖e3 ♖xe3 17.fxe3 ♙e4 18.♙e2 ♙c2 19.♖dc1 ♙a4



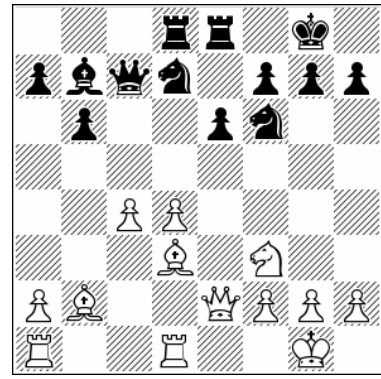
Position after: 19...♙a4

It is important to be aware of this plan. Black prevents a2-a4 and prepares to shift the d7-knight to c6, a key idea here for Black. 20.♘d2! ♖ac8 21.♘b1 ♘e4 22.♘c3 ♙c6 23.♘xe4 ♙xe4 24.a4! ♖c7 25.a5 ♖dc8 26.♙a3 h6 With some pressure for White, ½-½ (31) Grachev, B (2676) – Georgiev, K (2637) Kragujevac 2013.

15.♙b2



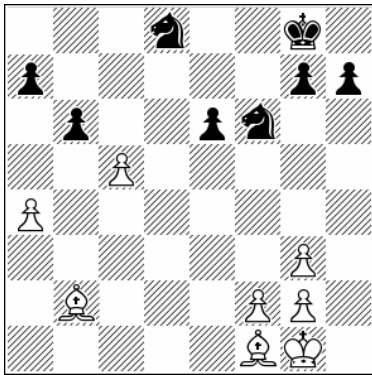
Position after: 15.♔b2



Position after: 15...♖ad8

15...♜f4

A) 15...♖ac8 16.a4 White is rushing with the a4-a5 idea. 16...♙xf3 17.♜xf3 e5 18.♙f1 exd4 19.♞xd4 ♘e5 20.♜g3 ♘c6 21.♞d6 ♞e6 22.♞xe6 ♜xg3 23.hxg3 fxe6 24.♞d1 ♞d8 25.♞xd8+ ♘xd8 26.c5

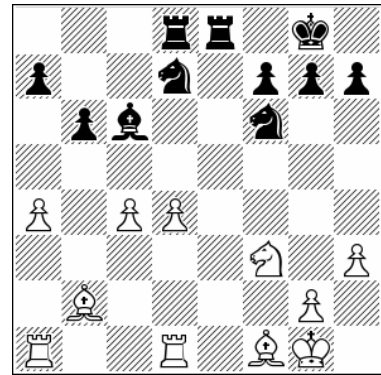


Position after: 26.c5

26...bxc5 27.♙a3 ♘e4 28.♙d3 ♘c3 29.a5 White has not found enough for a big advantage, but the game is one-sided in the sense that only White can hope to exert pressure, ½-½ (64) Vitiugov, N (2604) – Shomoev, A (2556) Moscow 2007.

B) 15...♖ad8

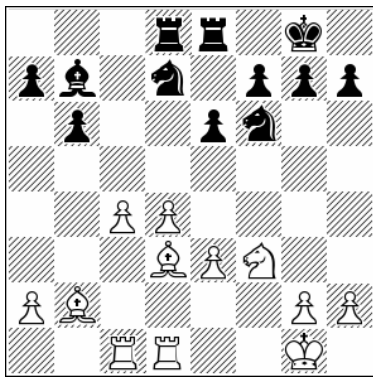
B1) 16.h3 More logical than 16.♖ac1, because the rook is needed on the a-file to support a4-a5. 16...♜f4 [16...♙xf3 17.♜xf3 e5 18.♜g3 ♘h5 19.♜h4 ♘hf6; 16...♘h5 17.♜e3 ♘f4 18.♙f1 typical play with the bishop pair] 17.♜e3 ♜xe3 18.fxe3 e5 [18...♘e4 19.a4 a5 such play would be normal here as well] 19.♙f1 exd4 20.exd4 ♙c6 21.a4!



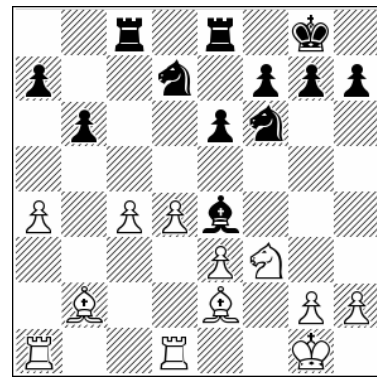
Position after: 21.a4!

21...♞e3 22.d5 ♙b7 23.a5 White is winning already, 1-0 (30) Gligoric, S (2445) – Pachman, L (2340) Amsterdam 1994.

B2) 16.♖ac1 ♜f4 [16...♙xf3 17.♜xf3 e5 18.♜g3 this is good for White] 17.♜e3 ♜xe3 18.fxe3



Position after: 18.fxe3



Position after: 19.a4!

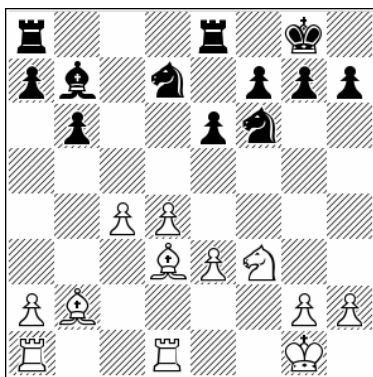
B2.1) 18...g6 19.c5 [19.a4! this is the way to play for a win] 19...♖c8 20.cxb6 ♗xb6 21.♖xc8 Black has equalized, ½-½ (21) Levin, E (2511) – Kaasen, T (2405) Anogia 2019.

B2.2) 18...♗e4 19.a4 ♔c6 20.♖a1 ♖c8 21.a5 White's typical play gives him chances for an advantage, ½-½ (25) Morchiasvili, B (2415) – Parligras, M (2542) Kavala 2007.

16.♖e3 ♗h5

This is a fairly recent development, but White can still claim some edge in different ways.

16...♖xe3 17.fxe3



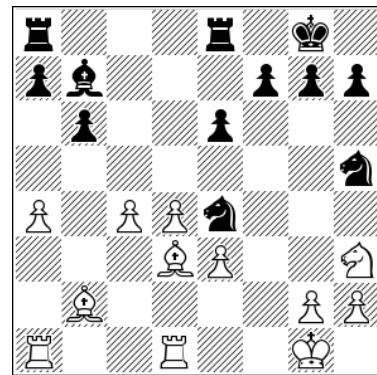
Position after: 17.fxe3

A) 17...♔e4 18.♔e2 ♖ac8 19.a4!

19...♔c2 [19...a5 it seems that Black in this type of endgame must prevent a4-a5, although that doesn't mean that he has solved his problems] 20.♖dc1 ♔g6 21.a5 ♖c7 22.axb6 axb6 23.♖a6 1-0 (46) White is clearly better here, Keres, P – Barcza, G Budapest 1972.

B) 17...♖ac8 18.♖dc1 ♗e4 19.a4 a5 Already Black is forced to do this, but it's not clear how White can increase his advantage here. 20.♔a3 ♖c7 21.♖ab1 f5 22.♖b2 ♖ec8 White has some edge, ½-½ (22) Hort, V (2615) – Plachetka, J (2440) Sumperk 1984.

17.♗g5 ♗df6 18.♗h3 ♖xe3 19.fxe3 ♗e4 20.a4



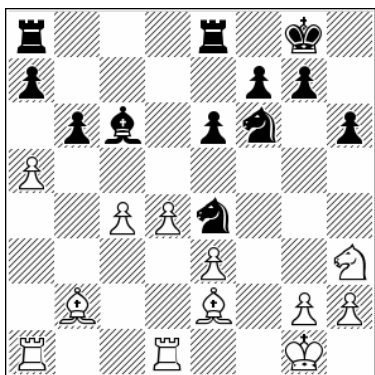
Position after: 20.a4

20.♔e2 ♗hf6 21.a4 a5 22.♗f4 ♖ac8 23.♖dc1 ♔a6! That's a main point of Black's strategy, creating pressure on the c4-pawn.

20...a5

Such a move is always possible for Black, but it holds certain risks.

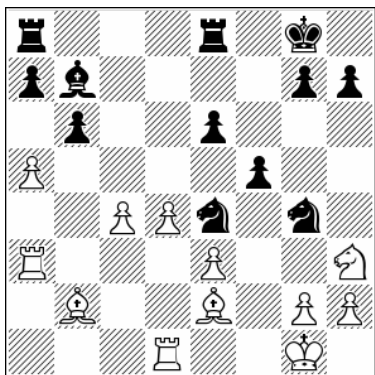
A) 20...♖hf6 21.a5 h6 22.♙e2 ♘c6



Position after: 22...♙c6

23.♗f4! The white knight is heading for e5 via d3.

B) 20...f5 21.a5 ♗hf6 An aggressive setup. Black eyes the weak pawn on e3. 22.♖a3 ♗g4 23.♙e2



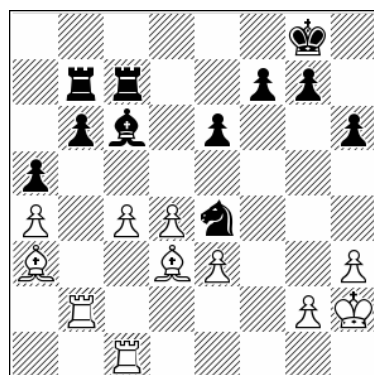
Position after: 23...♙e2

B1) 23...bxa5 24.♗f4! ♖ab8 25.♙a1 a4 26.h3 e5 27.♗d5 ♗h6 28.♖xa4! White's advantage is big

now. [28.dxe5 ♙c6 this is just slightly in White's favor, 1-0 (73) Melkumyan, H (2620) – Akopian, V (2685) Moscow 2012] 28...♗g3 29.dxe5! ♗xe2+ 30.♗f2 White has a winning position.

B2) 23...g5!? Risky but possible. 24.♖da1 ♖eb8 25.♙xg4 fxg4 26.♗f2 ♗xf2 27.♗xf2 h5 28.♙c3 ♙e4 Black is generating counterplay.

21.♙a3 ♖ab8 22.♖db1 ♙c6 23.♗f2 ♗hf6 24.♖b2 ♖b7 25.♖c1 h6 26.h3 ♖c8 27.♗xe4 ♗xe4 28.♗h2 ♖cc7



Position after: 28...♖cc7

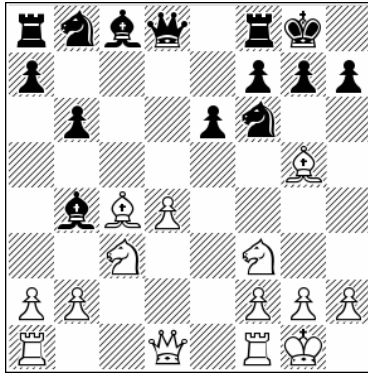
29.g4

Black's position is still solid. I am not sure that humans can easily play like this, but for the cold-blooded computers, on the other hand, of course that is not a problem.

Chapter 6

The Karpov Line with 10.♙g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10.♙g5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 6 – The Karpov Line with 10.♙g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10.♙g5

a) 10...♙xc3

b) 10...♙b7 11.♘e5

c) 10...♙b7 11.♞c1 ♘c6 12.a3

d) 10...♙b7 11.♞c1 ♘c6 12.♞e1

e) 10...♙b7 11.♞e1 h6

f) 10...♙b7 11.♞e1 ♘c6

g) 10...♙b7 11.♞e1 ♘bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♙d3

h) 10...♙b7 11.♞e1 ♘bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♙b3 ♙xc3

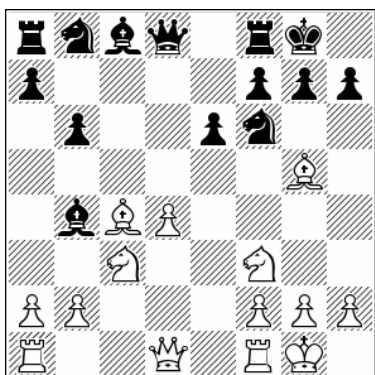
i) 10...♙b7 11.♞e1 ♘bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♙b3 ♙e7

a) 10...♙xc3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6

We will start now examining the lines in which White first moves his bishop to g5, and only later will decide where to place his rooks. This is, we can say, the third important setup.

10.♙g5



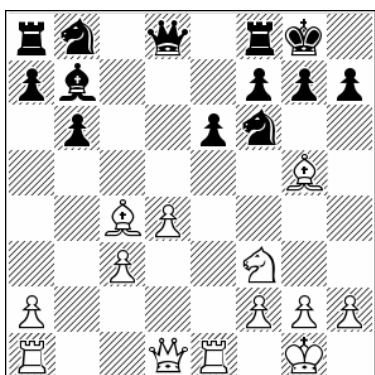
Position after: 10.♙g5

10...♙xc3

Taking early on c3 has some disadvantages. White has not yet placed his queen on e2, so now there are now other plans that he can adopt.

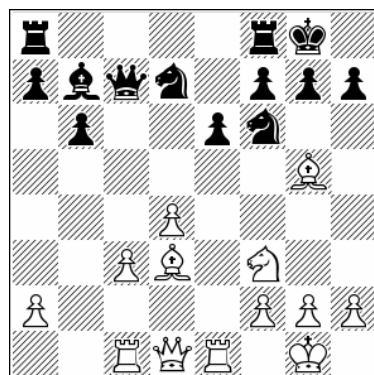
11.bxc3 ♙b7 12.♖e1!

That one of the key ideas here. The rook is well placed on e1.



Position after: 12.♖e1!

12...♘bd7 13.♙d3 ♖c7 14.♖c1

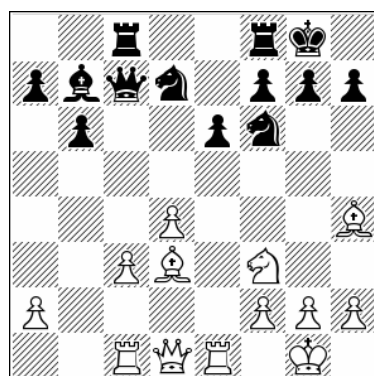


Position after: 14.♖c1

This position, which can arise from different move orders, offers White some chances for an advantage.

14...♖fe8

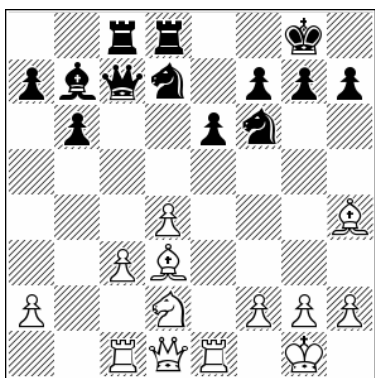
14...♖ac8 15.♙h4! That's a key maneuver here.



Position after: 15.♙h4!

A) 15...♖b8 16.♘d2 ♖a8 17.f3 ♖fe8 18.♘c4
That is one of the points of White's play. Now the knight and the g3-bishop are both aiming at the d6-square. 18...♖c6 19.♘e3 ♖ec8 20.♖d2 a6 21.a4 ♖a7 22.♙f2 ♖d8 23.c4 White has much stronger control of the center plus better pieces. This game clearly illustrates the sort of play that White is looking for, 1-0 (34) Nikolov, S (2353) – Nikolov, J (2067) Sunny Beach 2015.

B) 15...♖fd8 16.♘d2!



Position after: 16. d2!

An important positional idea, connected with the bishop on h4. 16... e8 17. g3 c6 18. f3 d8 19. c4 ed8 20. e5 e8 21. h4 g6 22. xf6 gxf6 23. g4 e7 24. d2 h8 25. h6 g8 26. h4 This is interesting play, Portisch, L – Pinter, J Hungary 1981.

C) 15... d6 16. d2 d5 17. a6 cd8 18. f1 c8 19. g3 a3 20. c4 a8 21. e3 e7 22. a4 c6 23. a3 xa3 24. xa3 a8 25. f3 We have entered an endgame, or perhaps more accurately a middlegame without queens, in which White has slightly better chances, 1-0 (89) Belov, V (2571) – Shanava, K (2519) Plovdiv 2008.

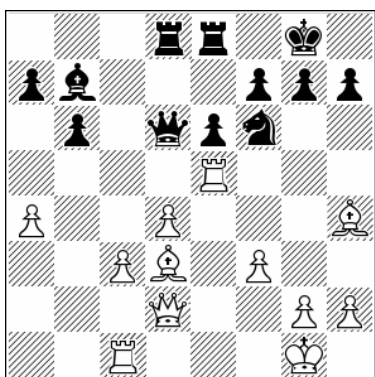
15. h4!

This is a key idea.

15... eac8

It's natural to place the black rooks on e8 and c8.

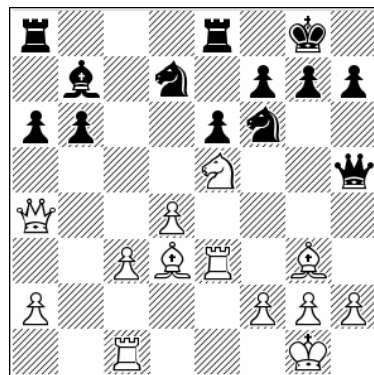
A) 15... ad8 16. a4 c8 17. e5 xe5 18. xe5 c6 19. f3 d6 20. d2



Position after: 20. d2

20... f8 21. ce1 c8 22. xf6 gxf6 23. h6+ e7 24. f5 White is much better, 1-0 (33) Yermolinsky, A (2506) – Martinez Alcantara, J (2531) Arica 2018.

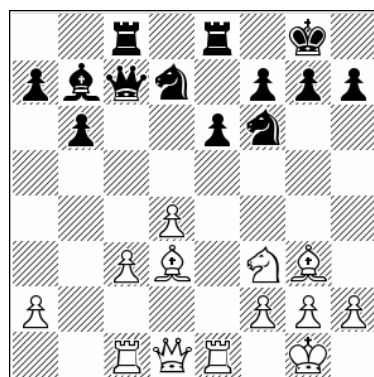
B) 15... f4 16. g3 g4 17. e3 h5 18. a4 The idea behind this move is to avoid a queen exchange. 18... a6 19. e5!



Position after: 19. e5!

19... b5 20. c2 ac8 21. b2 b6 22. c4 White is better, 1-0 (35) Flear, G (2445) – Fayard, A (2240) Paris 1983.

16. g3



Position after: 16. g3

In this particular line of the Karpov system White quickly moves his bishop to g3, which upsets the black queen on c7.

16... d8

16... c6 17. c4 cd8 18. f1 c8 19. h4 a8 20. e5 xe5 21. xe5 e4 22. xf6 gxf6 23. g4+ g6 24. ee1 This is a solid approach from White and we can say that his advantage is

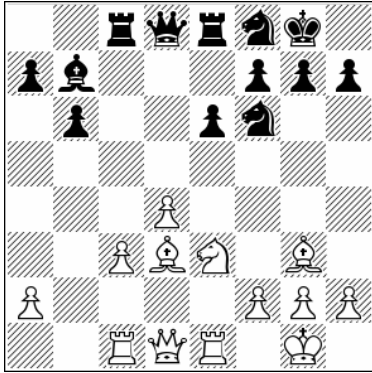
likewise solid, 1-0 (46) Speelman, J (2595) – Kumaran, D (2385) Dublin 1993.

Black is not worse, ½-½ (46) Jussupow, A (2589) – Hracek, Z (2578) Bremen 2003.

17. ♖d2 ♜f8 18. ♜c4

En route to the d6-square.

18... ♖d5 19. ♜e3 ♖d8

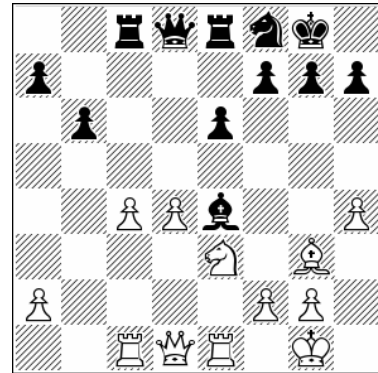


Position after: 19... ♖d8

20.c4!

Instead after 20. ♜c4 ♖d5 21. ♜e3 ♖d8 22. ♜g4 ♜xg4 23. ♖xg4 ♖d5 24. ♜e4 ♖d7 25. ♜xb7 ♖xb7

20... ♜e4 21. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 22.h4



Position after: 22.h4

22... ♜b7

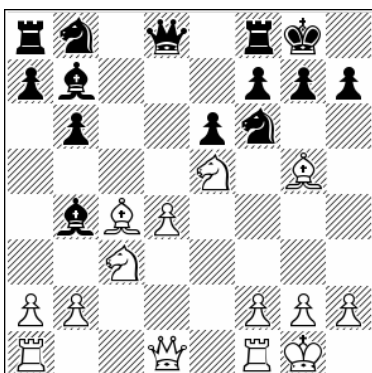
22...h6 23.c5 Again the same idea, the knight is going to d6 if Black does not prevent it.

23.c5

White has easy play and pressure on the queenside.

b) 10... ♜b7 11. ♜e5

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♜c3 ♜b4 4.e3 0-0 5. ♜d3 d5 6. ♜f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8. ♜xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10. ♜g5 ♜b7 11. ♜e5!?



Position after: 11. ♜e5!?

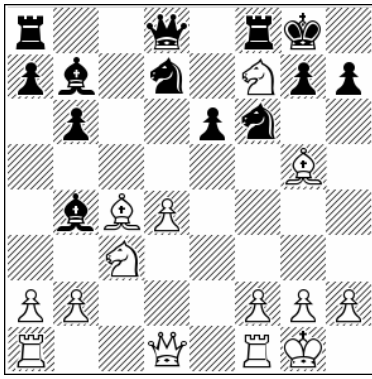
This line has been known for a long time. Its intention is to disrupt Black's normal development.

11... ♜e7

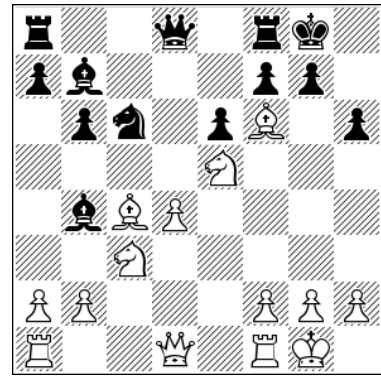
We will deal with 11... ♜xc3 in the next subchapter.

A) 11... ♖c7? 12. ♖c1 White can now recapture on c3 with a rook. It's very unpleasant for Black now.

B) 11... ♜bd7 12. ♜xf7!?



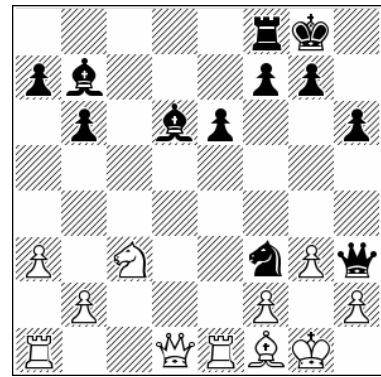
Position after: 12. Nxf7!?



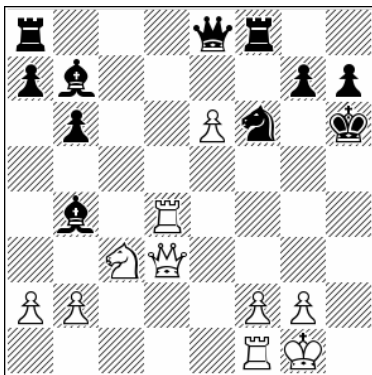
Position after: 13. Qxf6

An independent try. It may appear a bit suspicious but actually it's not so simple. [12. Qe2 and we transpose to another subchapter after 12... Qxc3 13. bxc3 Rxc8 14. Rac1] 12... Qxf7 [12... Rxf7 13. Qxe6 Wf8 14. Wb3 Qxc3 15. bxc3 Re8 16. Qxf7+ Wxf7 17. Wxf7+ Qxf7 18. c4 Rxc8 19. Rfc1 Qa6 20. c5 This is very much playable for White, although the position is still balanced, ½-½ (48) Van Foreest, J (2701) – Wojtaszek, R (2687) Prague 2021] 13. d5 Qe5 [13... e5 14. d6+ Qg6 15. f4 that might be dangerous for Black] 14. dxe6+ Qg6 [14... Qe7 15. Nd5+ Qxd5 16. Qxd5 Rxc8 17. Wb3 Qd6 this looks OK for Black] 15. Qc2+ Qxg5 16. Rad1 We8 17. h4+ Qxh4 18. Rd4+ Qg5 19. Wd2+ Qg6 20. Qd3+ Qxd3 21. Wxd3+ Qh6

13... Wxf6! [13... gxf6? 14. Nxc6 Qxc6 15. Wg4+ Qh7 16. d5! Qxc3 17. dxc6 White is winning, 0-1 (47) Kozakov, M (2516) – Shmelkov, V (2159) chess.com INT 2021] 14. Nd7 Wh4 15. Nxf8 Rxf8 16. a3! Qd6 17. g3 Wh3 18. Re1 Qxd4 19. Qf1 Qf3+



Position after: 19... Qf3+



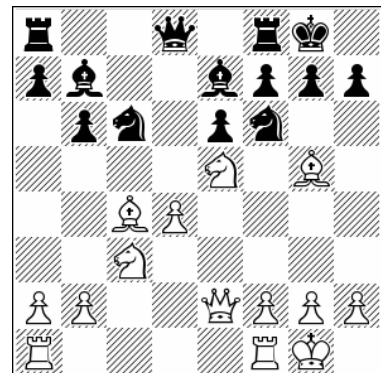
Position after: 21... Qh6

22. Wh3+ Qh5 23. Rxb4 g6 24. Rd4 Wc6 25. We3+ Qf4 26. Nd5 Wxe6 27. Nxf4 Wxe3 28. fxe3 Rad8 Black is fine.

20. Wxf3 Wxf1+ 21. Qxf1 Qxf3 22. Qe4 Qb8 23. Re3 Qh5 24. Qc3 Rd8 25. Rc1 g5 26. Qe1 Qf8 It's not entirely clear, but it's obvious that White is the one playing for a win.

12. Qe2! Qc6??

C) 11... h6 12. Qh4 Qc6 13. Qxf6



Position after: 12... Qc6??

12...♘d5 13.♗xf7! It's combination time!
 13...♖xf7 14.♚xe6 ♚d7 15.♚xd7 ♘xd7 16.♙xd5
 ♙xd5 17.♙xe7 ♙xg2 18.♙xg2 ♖xe7 19.♖fe1
 White has gained a clear advantage, 1-0 (49)
 Meleghegyi, C – Kostadinov, K corr. ICCF 1977.

13.♙xe6!

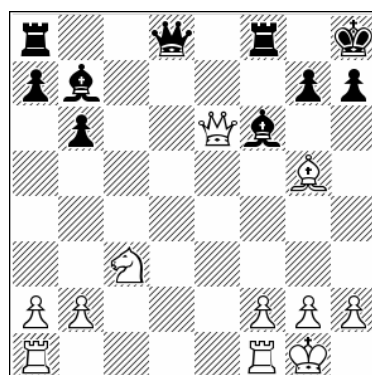
Not to be missed.

13...♗xe5

A) 13...♚xd4? 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♗xc6 ♙xc6
 16.♙f5 White is winning, ½-½ (28) Chuprikov, D
 (2324) – Kretov, E (2275) Voronezh 2014.

B) 13...♚e8 14.♗xc6 ♚xc6 15.♙h3 ♖fe8 16.♚b5
 Still White is a healthy pawn up.

14.dxe5 fxe6 15.exf6 ♙xf6 16.♚xe6+ ♙h8



Position after: 16...♙h8

17.♖ad1

White is much better, 1-0 (30) Zhang Pengxiang
 (2562) – Li Wenliang (2444) Budapest 2000.

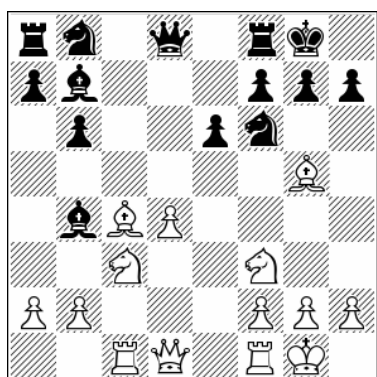
c) 10...♙b7 11.♖c1 ♘c6 12.a3

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
 6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 b6
 10.♙g5 ♙b7

It is important to understand the difference
 between this move and 10...♙xc3.

11.♖c1

The plan, of course, is to recapture on c3 with
 the rook and that is another important setup
 that we have already discussed in other systems.



Position after: 11.♖c1

11...♗c6

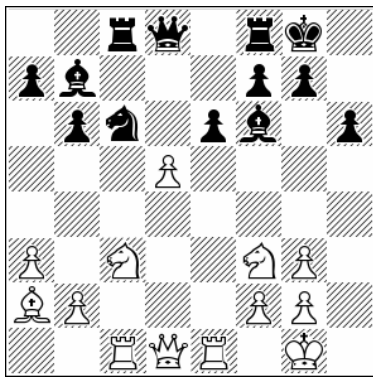
This is one of Black's possible plans. He wants to
 place the b8-knight on a more active square
 than d7, and does not fear an early d4-d5 push
 by White.

12.a3

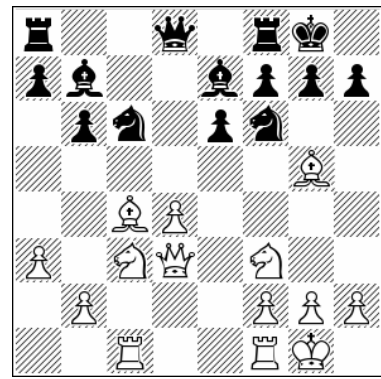
Here we have two main plans. One is presented
 here and the other one is in the next subchapter.
 It is also worth noting that in both lines, 11.♖c1
 and 11.♖e1, White can play a3 as a reply to black
 setups with the knight on c6.

12...♙e7 13.♚d3

13.♙a2 ♖c8 14.♖e1 h6 15.♙h4 ♗h5 16.♙g3
 ♗xg3 17.hxg3 ♙f6 18.d5



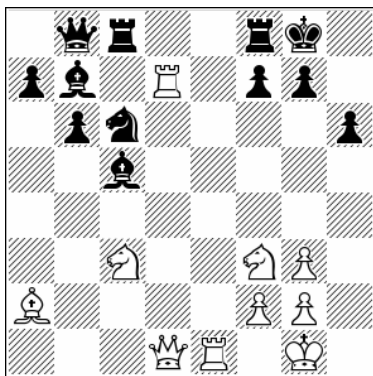
Position after: 18.d5



Position after: 13.♖d3

A) 18...♙xc3 That's the safer choice, but Black is only fighting for equality. 19.♖xc3 exd5 20.♙xd5 ♖c7 21.♗ee3 ♖e7 White has some pressure but it seems that Black can handle it. 22.♖ed3 ♗e8 23.b4 ♘e5 24.♙xb7 ♖xb7 25.♗e3 ♗d8 26.♗xd8 ♘xf3+ 27.gxf3 ♖xd8 28.f4 Black has achieved equal chances, ½-½ (30) Wang Yue (2684) – Wei Yi (2728) China 2019.

B) Snatching a pawn is dangerous. 18...exd5 19.♘xd5 ♙xb2 20.♖c2 ♙xa3 21.♖d2 ♙c5 22.♘c3 ♗c7 23.♖d7 ♗b8



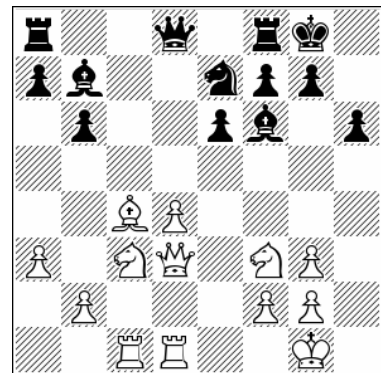
Position after: 23...♗b8

24.♘d5!? [24.♘g5? ♘e5! 25.♖xb7 ♗xb7 26.♖xe5 hxg5 Black is winning] 24...♘b4 25.♘xb4 ♙xb4 26.♖xf7 ♖xf7 27.♘e5 ♗d6 28.♙xf7+ ♘f8 29.♗b3 White has the initiative.

13...♘d5

A) 13...♖c8 14.♖fd1 ♘d5 15.♙xd5 ♙xg5 16.♘xg5 ♗xg5 17.♙e4 h6 18.♗e3 ♘a5 19.♙xb7 ♘xb7 20.f4 ♗f5 21.d5 ♖fe8 Black is OK here, ½-½ (27) Vaisser, A (2555) – Van der Sterren, P (2490) Brussels 1993.

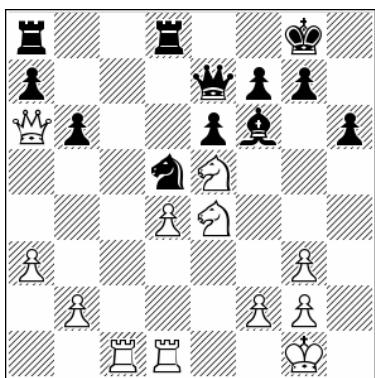
B) 13...h6 14.♙h4 ♘h5 15.♙g3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♙f6 17.♖fd1 ♘e7



Position after: 17...♘e7

B1) 18.♙a2 ♘d5 19.♘e4 ♗e7 20.♘e5 ♖fd8 21.♘g4 h5 22.♙xd5 That's a typical idea, aiming to create weaknesses around the black king. 22...hxg4 23.♘xf6+ gxf6 24.♙xb7 ♗xb7 25.♗e2 f5 26.♗e3 On account of Black's slightly exposed king we can say that White has some initiative, 1-0 (69) Kveinys, A (2550) – Vestby-Ellingsen, M (2160) Kragero 2018.

B2) 18.♘e4 ♘d5 19.♙a6 ♗e7 20.♘e5 ♖fd8 21.♗e2 ♙xa6 22.♗xa6

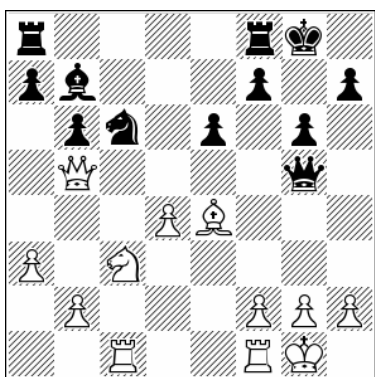


Position after: 22. ♖xa6

22... ♗xe5 23. dxe5 ♜d7 24. ♜d2 ♜ad8 25. ♖e2 ♜c7 26. ♜cd1 White's control of the d6-square secures him some pressure, 0-1 (38) Wang Hao (2725) – Ganguly, S (2638) Changsha 2019.

14. ♗xd5 exd5

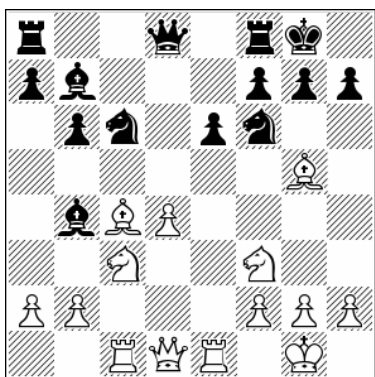
14... ♗xg5 15. ♖xg5 ♖xg5 16. ♗e4 g6 17. ♖b5!



Position after: 17. ♖b5!

d) 10... ♗b7 11. ♜c1 ♖c6 12. ♜e1

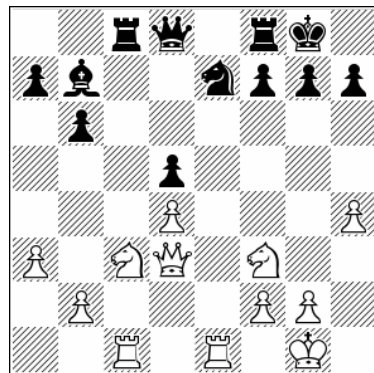
1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♖c3 ♗b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♗d3 d5 6. ♖f3 c5 7. 0-0 dxc4 8. ♗xc4 cxd4 9. exd4 b6 10. ♗g5 ♗b7 11. ♜c1 ♖c6 12. ♜e1



Position after: 12. ♜e1

17... ♖xb5 18. ♖xb5 ♖a5 19. ♗xb7 ♖xb7 20. ♜c7 ♜fb8 21. ♜e1 a6 22. ♖c3 ♖d6 23. d5 Alekhine knew how to gain and exploit the initiative, 1-0 (38) Alekhine, A – Baratz, A Paris 1933.

15. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 16. ♜fe1 ♜c8 17. h4!



Position after: 17. h4!

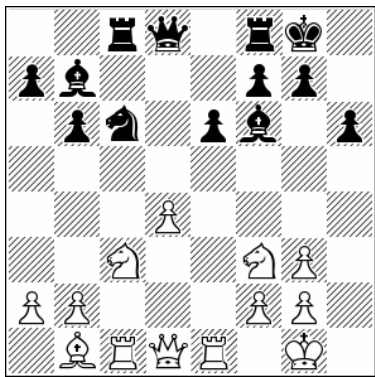
17...h6 18.h5

Such positions tend to be unpleasant for Black. His bishop on b7 is a bit passive, while the white knights on c3 and f3 are strong, 1-0 (35) Ivanchuk, V (2695) – Karpov, A (2725) Linares 1991.

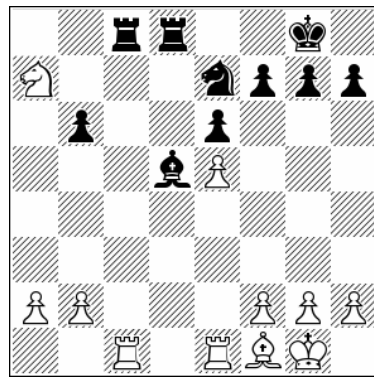
This is another important setup because, as happens so many times in the Karpov line, different move orders can lead here. This position can arise from either 11. ♜c1 and a later rook to e1, or the reverse. In any case, here it is!

12... ♜c8 13. ♗d3 ♗e7

This alternative might be a safer option. 13...h6 14. ♗h4 ♗e7 15. ♗b1 ♖h5 [15... ♖b4 16. a3 ♖bd5 17. ♖e5 ♖xc3 18. ♜xc3 ♜xc3 19. bxc3 ♖d5 20. f3 ♖d6 21. ♖d3 White has attacking chances] 16. ♗g3 ♖xg3 17. hxg3 ♗f6



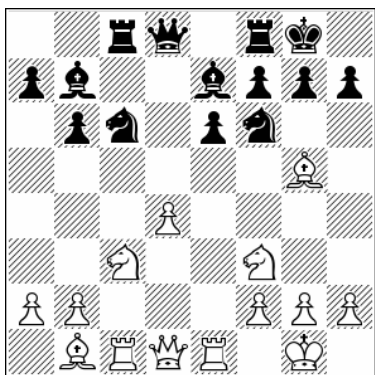
Position after: 17...♙f6



Position after: 22.♘xa7

18.♙e4 [18.♘e4 ♙xd4! 19.♖xc6 ♙xf2+ 20.♘xf2 ♜xd1 21.♘xd1 ♙xc6 Black is better in such endgames, 0-1 (35) Jepson, C (2413) – Werle, J (2527) Porto Carras 2018] 18...♙a8 19.d5 exd5 20.♘xd5 ♙xb2 21.♖c2 ♙a3 22.♞d2 ♞e8 23.♘f4 ♜f6 24.♞e3 ♘e5 25.♘h5 ♘xf3+ 26.♙xf3 ♜g5 27.♞xa3 ♙xf3 28.gxf3 ♜xh5 29.♞xa7 The position is equal.

14.♙b1



Position after: 14.♙b1

14...♞e8

A) 14...♘b4 15.♘e5 ♘c6 [15...♘bd5 16.♜d3 g6 17.♙h6 ♞e8 18.♜h3 White employs an attacking plan that is typical in isolated queen's pawn positions. Now he threatens to take on f7, 1-0 (42) Akesson, R (2465) – Lyrberg, P (2420) Stockholm 1993] 16.♜d3 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♜xd3 18.♙xd3 ♞fd8 19.♙f1 ♘d5 20.♙xe7 ♘xe7 21.♘b5 ♙d5 22.♘xa7

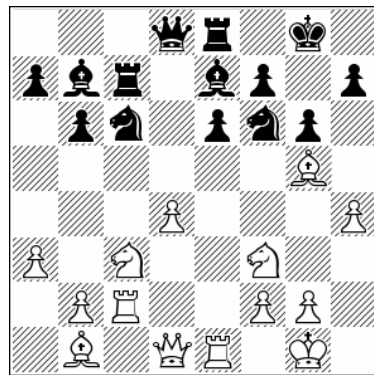
22...♞xc1 23.♞xc1 ♙xa2 This is OK for Black, ½-½ (45) Sokolov, I (2663) – Hari Krishna, P (2698) Wijk aan Zee 2013.

B) 14...♘d5 15.♜d3 g6 16.♙h6 ♞e8 17.♜d2 ♘a5 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.♞xc8 ♜xc8 20.♜f4 ♙xf3 21.♜xf3 ♘c6 Black's pressure on the d4-pawn has enabled him to equalize, ½-½ (25) Gligoric, S (2575) – Sosonko, G (2470) Wijk aan Zee 1975.

15.h4

The typical aggressive approach here.

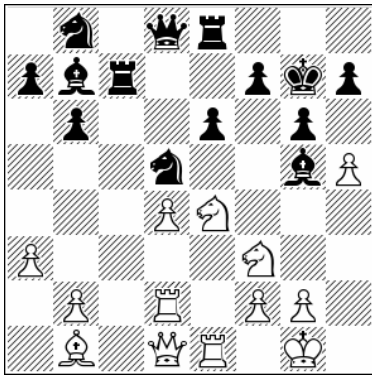
15...g6 16.a3 ♞c7 17.♞c2



Position after: 17.♞c2

Now if Black plays ...♞d7 White can reply with ♞d2.

17...♘d5 18.♘e4 ♘b8 19.♞d2 ♘g7 20.h5 ♙xg5



Position after: 20...♙xg5

21. ♘exg5

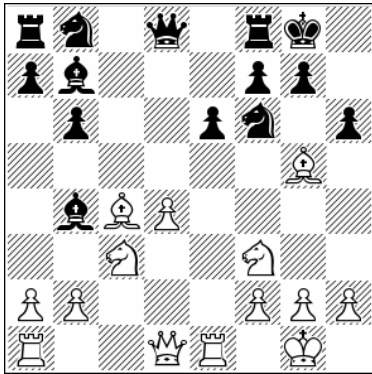
A very interesting and complicated position, 1-0 (34) Naiditsch, A (2712) – Leko, P (2737) Istanbul 2012.

e) 10...♙b7 11.♖e1 h6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♙g5 ♙b7 11.♖e1

This is another setup that doesn't have to be connected with rook to c1, but the similarities are obvious and of course transpositions are possible.

11...h6



Position after: 11...h6

This is one of a few ideas that we will check here. Other options are in different subchapters.

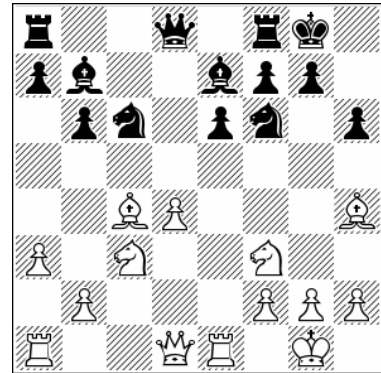
12.♙h4 ♗c6

12...♗bd7 13.♖c1 ♖c8 14.♙d3 ♙e7 15.♙b1 ♗h5
This is analyzed in the 11.♖c1 line.

13.a3

13.♖c1 This will transpose to the 11.♖c1 subchapter.

13...♙e7

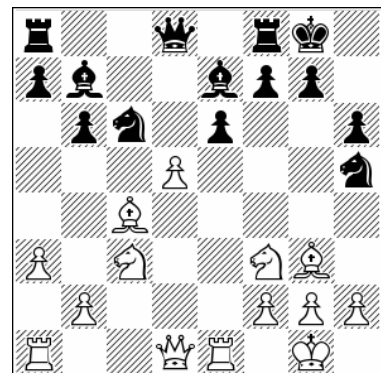


Position after: 13...♙e7

14.♖d3

White's plan this time is to place a rook on d1, and that's a crucial difference with the 11.♖c1 line.

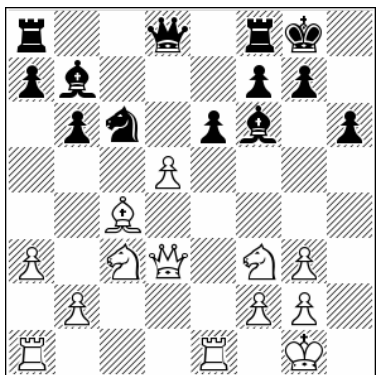
14.♙g3!? ♖c8 [14...♗h5 15.d5!



Position after: 15.d5!

15...exd5 16.♖xd5 ♖xg3 17.hxg3 Black's position looks unpleasant] 15.♙a2 ♙d6 16.♙h4 g5 17.♙g3 ♙xg3 18.hxg3 ♔g7 19.d5 exd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xd5 21.♙xd5 ♚f6 The position is balanced, ½-½ (43) Korobov, A (2710) – Inarkiev, E (2676) Moscow 2016.

14...♖h5 15.♙g3 ♖xg3 16.hxg3 ♙f6 17.d5!



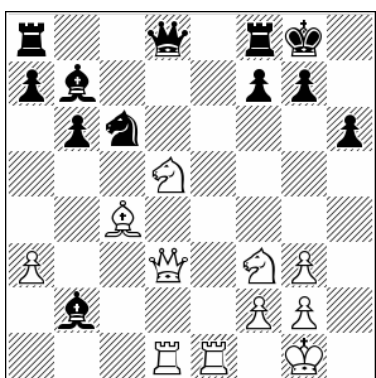
Position after: 17.d5!

17...exd5

17...♖a5 18.dxe6 ♖xc4 19.♚xc4 ♚e7 Black has lost a pawn but hopes to find compensation. 20.♞ad1 ♞ad8 21.♖d4 This is better for White too.

18.♖xd5 ♖a5

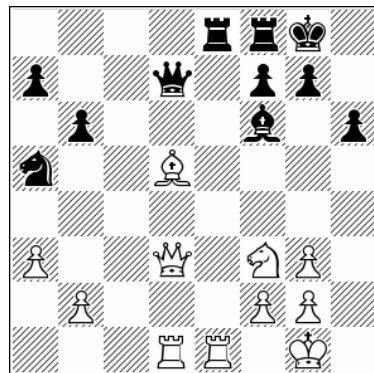
18...♙xb2 19.♞ad1!



Position after: 19.♞ad1!

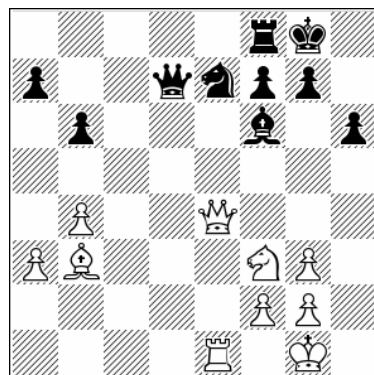
This is just too strong for Black to handle. 19...♖a5 20.♖e7+ ♔h8 21.♚f5 ♚xd1 22.♞xd1 ♙xf3 23.♙d3 1-0 (23) Gulko, B (2533) – Krush, I (2489) Rockville 2013.

19.♙a2 ♙xd5 20.♙xd5 ♚d7 21.♞ad1 ♞ae8



Position after: 21...♞ae8

22.b4 ♞xe1+ 23.♞xe1 ♖c6 24.♚e4 ♖e7 25.♙b3



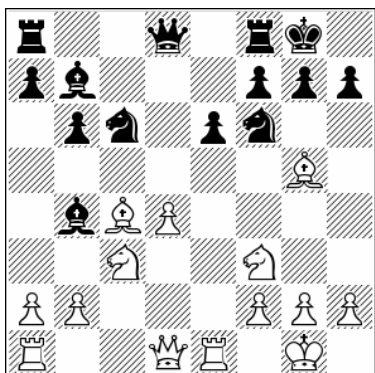
Position after: 25.♙b3

25...♚c7

White has some initiative due to his pressure on f7 and better bishop, but it's far from being decisive.

f) 10...♙b7 11.♖e1 ♘c6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6
10.♙g5 ♙b7 11.♖e1 ♘c6



Position after: 11...♘c6

This is another way of handling this line.

12.a3 ♙e7 13.♙d3

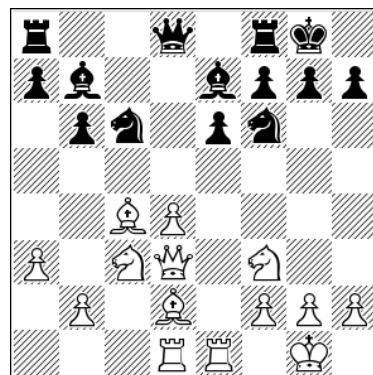
After 13.♖c1 the game will transpose to the 11.♖c1 line. White is ready to centralize his rooks on d1 and e1.

13...h6

An important precaution for Black when his knight is on c6 rather than d7.

A) 13...♖c8 14.♖ad1 g6 15.♙h6 ♖e8 16.♗g5! ♙f8
17.♙xf8! ♖xf8 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.♙xe6+ ♔g7
20.d5 ♗e7 21.d6 ♗eg8 22.♙xc8 ♙xc8 23.♙d4
White has a tremendous initiative.

B) Black should not move his f6-knight too early.
13...♗h5 14.♙d2! ♗f6 15.♖ad1!

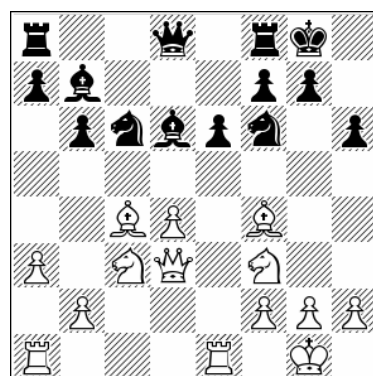


Position after: 15.♖ad1!

15...♗a5 16.♙a2 ♗d5 17.b4 ♗xc3 18.♙xc3 ♗c6
19.d5 exd5 20.♙xd5 Black is defenseless.
20...♙c7 21.b5 ♗a5 22.♙e5 ♙c5 23.♙xb7 ♗xb7
24.♙d7 ♗a5 25.♙d4 1-0 (25) Portisch, L (2625)
– Sosonko, G (2505) Biel 1976.

14.♙h4

14.♙f4 ♙d6



Position after: 14...♙d6

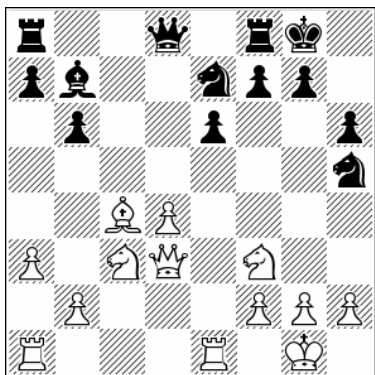
A) 15.♗e5 ♗h5! 16.♙c1 ♖c8 17.♗xc6 ♙xc6
18.d5 exd5 19.♙xd5 ♗f6 20.♖d1 ♗xd5 21.♗xd5
♖e8 Black is better, ½-½ (54) Lauber, A (2431) –
David, A (2561) Porto Carras 2018.

B) 15.♙xd6 ♙xd6 16.d5 exd5 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5
18.♙xd5 ♗d8 19.♖ad1 ♙xd5 20.♙xd5 ♙xd5
21.♖xd5 The players enter an equal endgame,
½-½ (21) Balashov, Y (2600) – Makarichev, S
(2500) Minsk 1979.

C) 15.♔e5 ♕xe5 16.dxe5 ♖xd3 17.♕xd3 ♜fd8
 18.♞ad1 ♜d7 19.♕e4 ♜a5 20.♕xb7 ♜xb7 Black
 is OK here, 0-1 (62) Pelletier, Y (2581) – Howell,
 D (2658) Tornelo INT 2021.

14...♜h5 15.♕g3

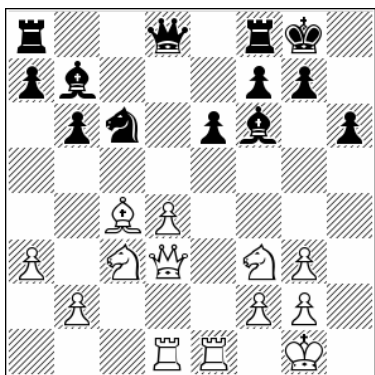
15.♕xe7 ♜xe7!



Position after: 15...♜xe7!

A typical maneuver. 16.♞ad1 ♜c8 17.♕a6 ♜f4
 18.♞f1 ♕xa6 19.♞xa6 ♞c7 This is fine for Black,
 0-1 (49) Hernandez, G (2253) – Caspi, I (2489)
 chess.com INT 2020.

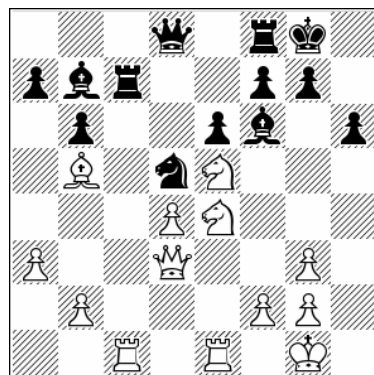
15...♜xg3 16.hxg3 ♕f6 17.♞ad1



Position after: 17.♞ad1

We have seen Gulko – Krush where 17.d5 was
 good; this is another idea.

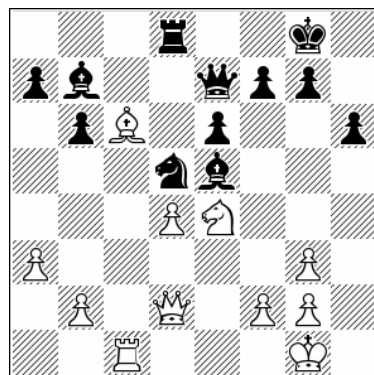
17...♜e7 18.♜e4 ♜d5 19.♜e5 ♞c8 20.♞c1 ♞c7
 21.♕b5



Position after: 21.♕b5

Ivanchuk intends to put pressure on the c6-
 square.

21...♞c8 22.♞d2 ♞d8 23.♞xc7 ♞xc7 24.♞c1 ♞e7
 25.♕c6 ♕xe5



Position after: 25...♕xe5

26.dxe5

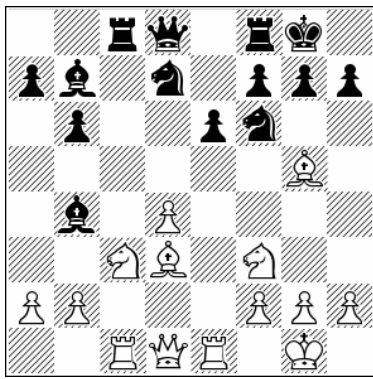
This is good for White, 1-0 (49) Ivanchuk, V
 (2717) – Van Wely, L (2697) Monte Carlo 2002.

g) 10...♕b7 11.♞e1 ♜bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♕d3

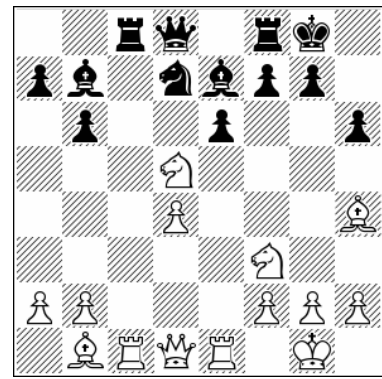
1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♜c3 ♕b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♕d3 c5
 6.♜f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♕xc4 b6
 10.♕g5 ♕b7 11.♞e1 ♜bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8

The whole point of Black's play is to defer taking
 on c3, hoping to catch White in some weaker
 setup.

13.♕d3



Position after: 13.♔d3



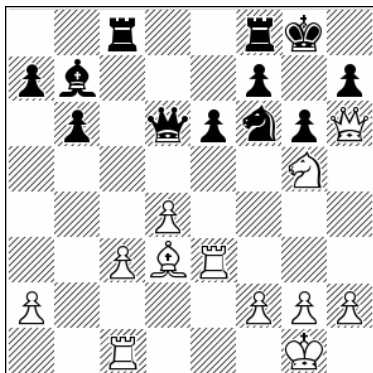
Position after: 16.♞d5!

White is ready for standard attacking play on the kingside.

13...♞e8

A) 13...♔xc3 14.bxc3 ♖c7 15.♔h4! This transposes to another subchapter.

B) 13...♔e7 14.♖e2 ♞d5 15.♖e4 g6 16.♖h4 ♔xg5 17.♞xg5 ♞7f6 18.♖h6 ♞xc3 19.bxc3 ♖d6 20.♞e3!

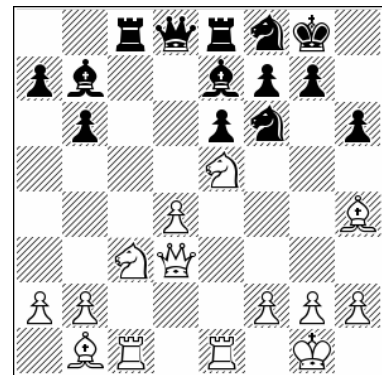


Position after: 20.♞e3!

20...♖f4 21.♔e2 ♖xd4 22.cxd4 ♞xc1+ 23.♔f1 ♔a6 24.h3 ♞xf1+ 25.♔h2 ♞xf2 26.d5! exd5 27.♞e7 ♞e2 28.♞xa7 ♔d3 It is complex, but it seems that Black can hold here.

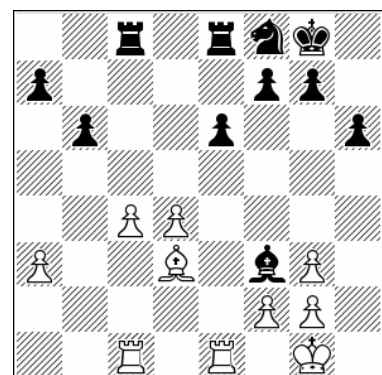
C) 13...h6 14.♔h4 ♔e7 15.♔b1 That's the attacking formation that White is looking for. 15...♞e8 [15...♞d5 16.♞xd5!

16...♔xh4 17.♞xc8 ♖xc8 18.♖d3 f5 19.♞f4 White is winning already] 16.♖d3 ♞f8 Black defends in a classical way. 17.♞e5



Position after: 17.♞e5

17...♞h5 [17...♞d6 18.♔g3 ♞xe5 19.♔xe5 ♞g6 20.♔g3 ♔h4 21.♞cd1 ♖f6 22.♞e4 ♔xe4 23.♖xe4 ♔xg3 24.hxg3 ♞cd8 This is good strategy for Black, ½-½ (70) Agdestein, S (2604) – Lie, K (2539) Stavanger 2017] 18.♔g3 ♞xg3 19.hxg3 ♔b4 20.a3 ♔xc3 21.bxc3 ♖d5 22.♞f3 ♖b3 23.c4 ♖xd3 24.♔xd3 ♔xf3!



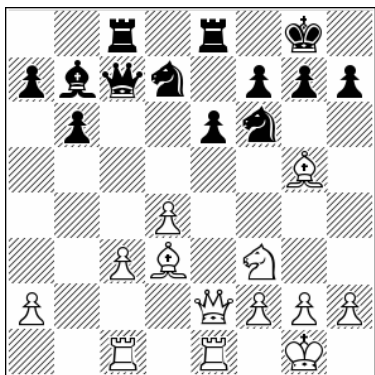
Position after: 24...♔xf3!

25.gxf3 ♞ed8 This is an endgame that White should avoid, 0-1 (48) Korobov, A (2683) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2792) Zagreb 2021.

14. ♖e2

14.a3 ♕e7 15. ♘e5 h6 16. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 17. ♖c4 ♕d6
18. ♖e2 ♘d5 19. ♘e4 ♗f4 20. ♖f3 ♕xe5 21. dxe5
♗g6 Draw agreed, but actually Black is better,
½-½ (21) Edouard, R (2621) – Dorfman, I (2547)
Brest 2018.

14... ♕xc3 15. bxc3 ♖c7

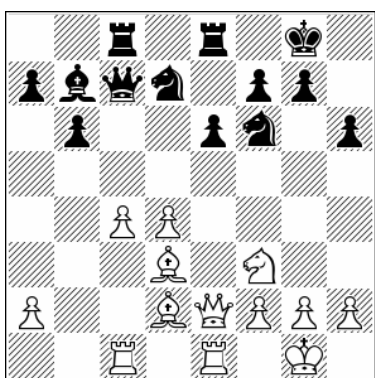


Position after: 15... ♖c7

With the white queen on e2 Black gets some tactical possibilities connected with ... ♗h5.

16. ♕h4

16.c4 h6 17. ♕d2



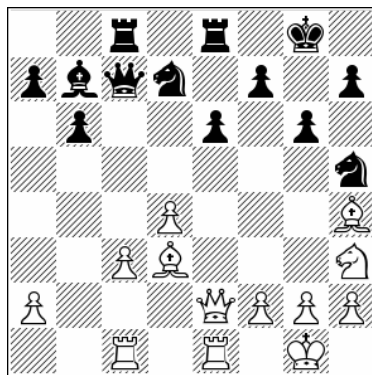
Position after: 17. ♕d2

A) 17... ♕xf3 18. ♖xf3 e5 So far we have been following the famous game Portisch – Karpov Bugojno 1978. 19.d5 Portisch went wrong here by moving his queen to g3. 19... ♗c5 20. ♕c2 e4 21. ♖h3 In such unbalanced positions the bishop pair is always an asset. 21... ♗fd7 22. ♖e3 ♖f4 23. ♖d1 ♖d6 24. ♖g3 ♗f8 25. ♕c3 White is better,

½-½ (41) Kozak, A (2341) – Warakomska, A (2260)
Zalakaros 2015.

B) 17... ♖d6 18. ♕c3 ♗g4!? 19.h3 ♕xf3 20. ♖xf3 ♖h2+ 21. ♖f1 ♗gf6 22. ♖g3 [22.g4 e5! Black gets counterplay] 22... ♖xg3 23.fxg3 ♖ed8 White doesn't have any pawn play and in such cases it's difficult to make progress, ½-½ (36) Ganguly, S (2625) – Harikrishna, P (2733) Edmonton 2015.

16... ♗h5! 17. ♗g5 g6 18. ♗h3

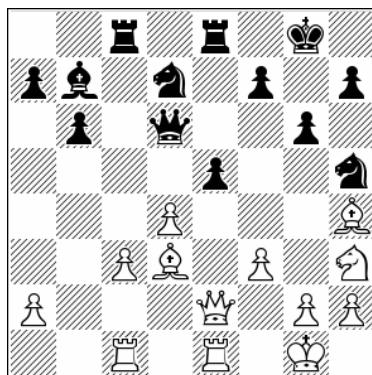


Position after: 18. ♗h3

18... e5

18... ♖d6 19. ♕g5 e5 20.f3 ♗g7 21. ♖f2 exd4 22. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23.cxd4 ♗e6 24. ♕e3 ♗f6 25. ♕c4 ♗d5 This position is OK for Black, ½-½ (66) Potkin, V (2684) – Harikrishna, P (2665) Wijk aan Zee 2012.

19.f3 ♖d6

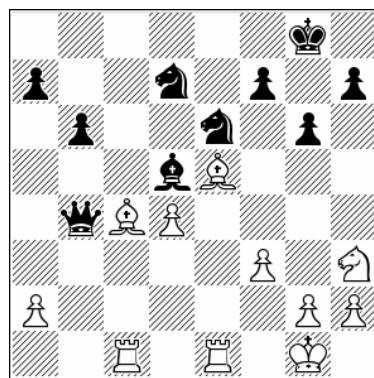


Position after: 19... ♖d6

20. ♕f2

Things didn't change much in a later example.
 20. ♖b2 exd4 21. cxd4 ♜xc1 22. ♜xc1 ♗df6 23. ♕f2
 ♗d5 24. ♞e1 ♞xe1+ 25. ♕xe1 ♗hf4 26. ♗xf4 ♗xf4
 27. ♕f1 ♗e6 28. ♕f2 ♕d5 Chances are equal, ½-½
 (50) Korobov, A (2700) – Wojtaszek, R (2734)
 Berlin 2015.

20...exd4 21. ♖xe8+ ♞xe8 22. ♞xe8+ ♗f8
 23. cxd4 ♗f6 24. ♞ee1 ♗e6 25. ♕c4 ♕d5 26. ♕g3
 ♖b4 27. ♕e5 ♗d7



Position after: 27...♗d7

28.a3

The position remains in equilibrium for most of the time. Obviously both players knew what they were doing, Anand – Topalov WCH Sofia 2010.

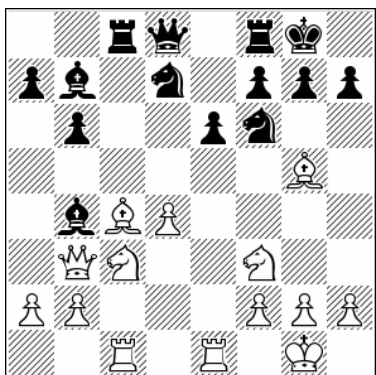
h) 10...♕b7 11. ♞e1 ♗bd7 12. ♞c1 ♞c8 13. ♖b3 ♕xc3

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♕b4 4. e3 0-0 5. ♕d3 c5
 6. ♗f3 d5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. ♕xc4 b6
 10. ♕g5 ♕b7 11. ♞e1 ♗bd7

This is a classical approach and here again we have a split of the main ideas.

12. ♞c1 ♞c8 13. ♖b3

This is an interesting approach. White plays direct chess and Black has to decide straight away whether or not to take on c3. We can also see some pressure on the e6- and f7-pawns, so we have here actually quite an aggressive formation.



Position after: 13. ♖b3

13...♕xc3

The bishop can also go back to e7, and we will see that in the next subchapter.

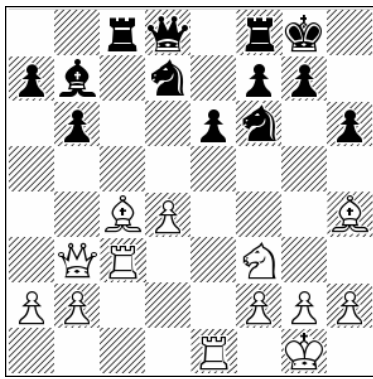
14. ♞xc3 h6

That's a useful move, but Black can try other ideas as well:

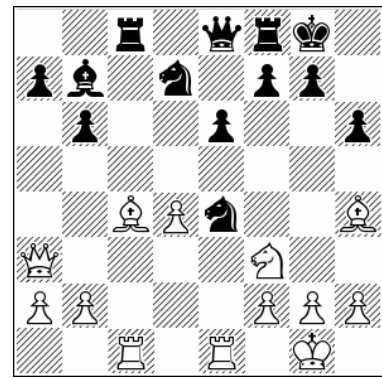
A) 14... ♖e8 15. ♗d2 ♕d5 16. ♞g3 ♗h8 17. ♖d3
 ♕xc4 18. ♗xc4 ♖e7 19. b3 b5 20. ♗e5 ♖b4
 21. ♕d2 ♖d6 22. ♖e3 White's attacking prospects are unpleasant for Black. This is another good example illustrating why Black should play ...h6 on move 14.

B) 14... ♕d5 15. ♗d2 ♞e8 16. ♖a3 ♗f8 17. ♕b5
 ♞xc3 18. bxc3 ♞e7 19. c4 ♕a8 20. d5 White is better.

15. ♕h4



Position after: 15.♔h4



Position after: 17.♖cc1!

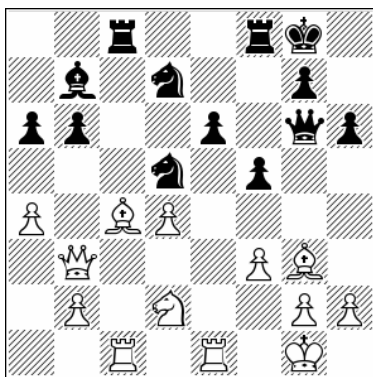
15...♗d5

Again here Black has other choices.

15...♞e8

A) 16.♗e5 ♖xe5 17.dxe5 ♗e4 18.♗b5 ♖xc3 19.bxc3 ♞a8 20.f3 g5 This is good for Black, ½-½ (20) Rukhaia, K (2404) – Mirzoev, A (2557) Rustavi 2014.

B) 16.♗d2 ♗d5 17.♖cc1 f5 18.f3! a6 19.a4 ♞g6 20.♗g3!

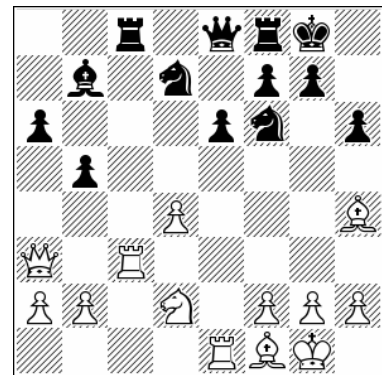


Position after: 20.♗g3!

White covers the f4-square and is also provoking Black to play ...f4, which would be good for White in general because he would get the e4-square. 20...♞f6 21.♞d3 f4 22.♗f2 ♞e7 23.♞e2 ♗c7 24.♗e4 White has a strong outpost in the center and a big advantage, ½-½ (69) Timofeev, A (2663) – Grigoriants, S (2592) Moscow 2007.

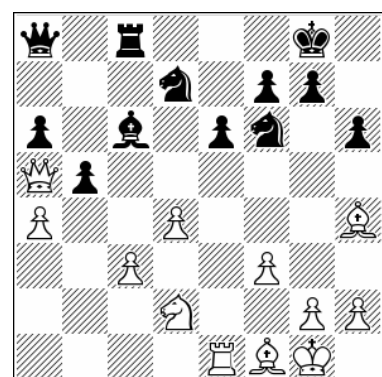
C) 16.♞a3 a6 [16...♗xf3 17.gxf3 White's two bishops are strong here; 16...♗e4 17.♖cc1!

17...g5 18.♗g3 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 a5 20.♞d3 ♗f6 21.♗e5 ♗g7 22.f4 White looks good here because of the exposed black king] 17.♗d2 b5 18.♗f1



Position after: 18.♗f1

18...♗d5 [18...♖xc3 19.bxc3 ♞a8 20.f3 ♗c6 21.♞a5 ♖c8 22.a4!



Position after: 22.a4!

22...♗d5 23.c4 bxc4 24.♗xc4 the weak black pawn on a6 still offers White some chances] 19.♗e4! The key move here. 19...♖xc3 [19...♗xc3 20.♗d6 White wins the queen]

20.bxc3 White has better play, 1-0 (35) Korobov, A (2543) – Oleksienko, M (2515) Alushta 2006.

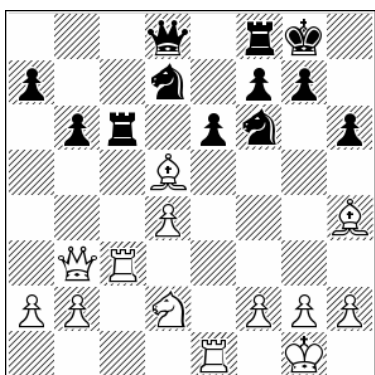
16. ♖d2

it seems that this idea is good and surely best here.

16... ♕xc4!?

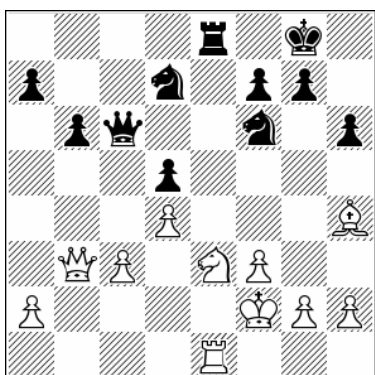
After this new move it's not easy for White to get an advantage.

16... ♖c6 17. ♕xd5!?N



Position after: 17. ♕xd5!?N

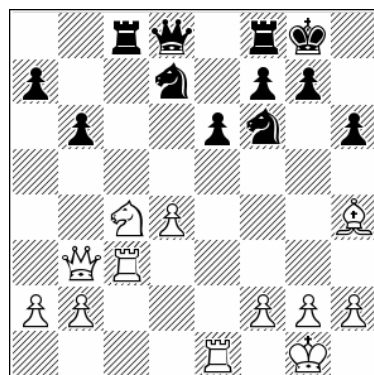
An important finesse. 17... ♖xc3 18.bxc3 exd5 19. ♖f1! White gained an important tempo to transfer his knight to e3 and thus he gets easy play. 19... ♖a8 20.f3 ♖c6 21. ♖e3 ♖e8 [21... ♖c8 22. ♖f5!] 22. ♖f2!



Position after: 22. ♖f2!

White threatens ♖xd5, a neat little tactic. [22.g4 this is also possible, with similar play] 22... ♖h8 23.g4 b5 24. ♕g3 a5 25.h4 Basically this is what White wants in this line.

17. ♖xc4



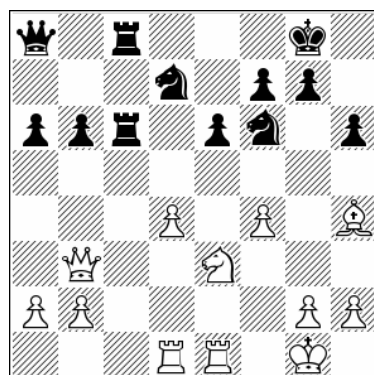
Position after: 17. ♖xc4

17... ♖c6!

17... ♖c7 18. ♕g3 ♖b7 19. ♖d6 ♖xc3 20.bxc3 ♖c6 21.c4 ♖d8 22. ♖d1 ♖f8 23.d5 ♖d7 24.h3 exd5 25.cxd5 ♖g6 26. ♖f3 White has an edge, 1-0 (37) Atalik, S (2608) – Swapnil, S (2445) Golden Sands 2012.

18. ♖e3 ♖c8!

A) 18... ♖a8 19. ♖d3 ♖fc8 20. ♖dd1 White avoids a rook exchange. 20... a6 21.f4!?



Position after: 21.f4!?

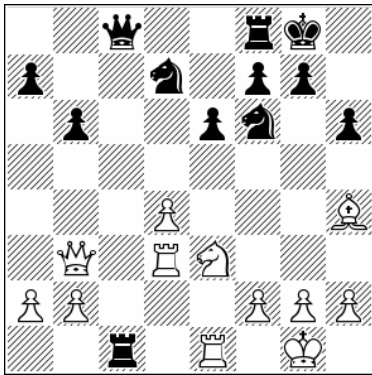
21...b5 22.f5 ♖e8 23.h3 ♖a7 24.fxe6 ♖xe6 25. ♖f5 ♖xe1+ 26. ♕xe1 ♖e4 Black is holding here.

B) 18... ♖xc3 19.bxc3 ♖c7 20. ♕g3 ♖c6 21.c4 ♖c8 22.h3 [perhaps 22.f3 gives some chances here] 22... ♖e4 23. ♕h2 ♖f8 24. ♖d3 White has small chances of achieving a significant advantage, mostly connected with the d4-d5 break, but at this stage it's only a minimal plus.

19.♞d3

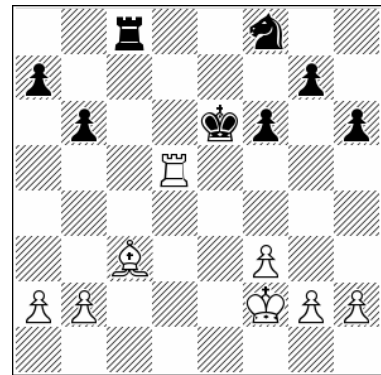
19.♞ec1 ♞xc3 20.♞xc3 ♞a6 21.a3 ♞b5 22.f3 ♞d5 23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.♞e3 It's equal; White controls a file but it's all a bit dry.

19...♞c1!



Position after: 19...♞c1!

20.♞xc1 ♞xc1+ 21.♞d1 ♞c6 22.d5 exd5 23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.♞xd5 ♞c8 25.f3 ♞xd5 26.♞xd5 ♞f8 27.♞e1 f6 28.♞c3 ♞f7 29.♞f2 ♞e6



Position after: 29...♞e6

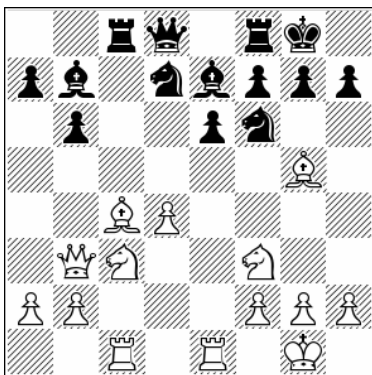
30.♞d2

Objectively it's a draw.

i) 10...♞b7 11.♞e1 ♞bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♞b3 ♞e7

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♞d3 c5 6.♞f3 d5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♞xc4 b6 10.♞g5 ♞b7 11.♞e1 ♞bd7 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♞b3 ♞e7!?

14.♞xf6 ♞xf6! [The other way is probably bad. 14...♞xf6 15.♞b5 ♞xf3 16.♞xf3 a6 17.♞d6!]

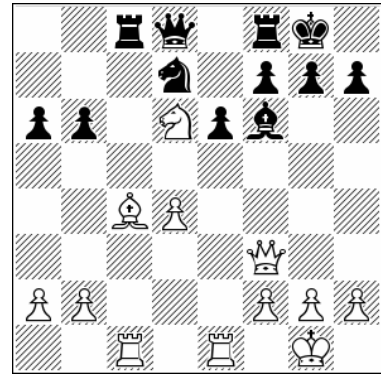


Position after: 13...♞e7!?

At first it appeared that this was a bad move, but that may not be the case.

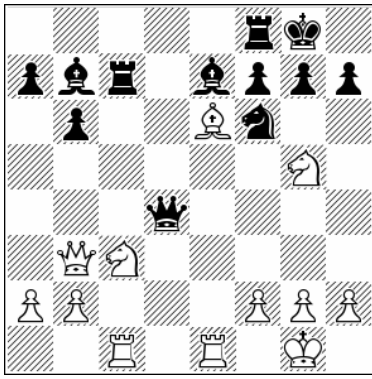
14.♞e5

It seems that in practice White has shifted from the usual 14.♞xf6 due to some new tactical ideas, instead going for endgame which may offer some chances albeit minimal ones.

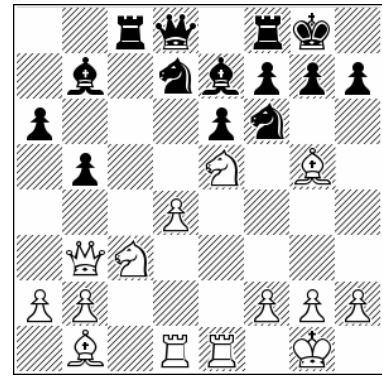


Position after: 17.♞d6!

17...♞c7 18.♞xf7! ♞xf7 19.♞xe6 ♞f8 20.♞xc7 ♞xc7 21.♞b3 ♞xd4 22.g3! This is strong, and now I prefer White.] 15.♞xe6! ♞c7! The key moment here: it seems that Black can simply play this calm move. 16.♞g5 ♞xd4!



Position after: 16...♖xd4!

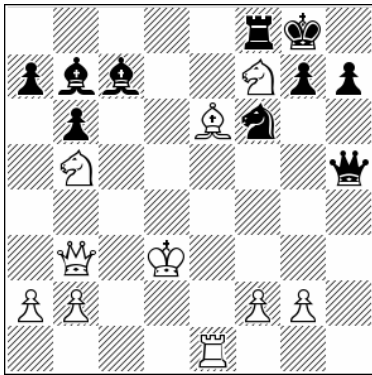


Position after: 17...♔g8!

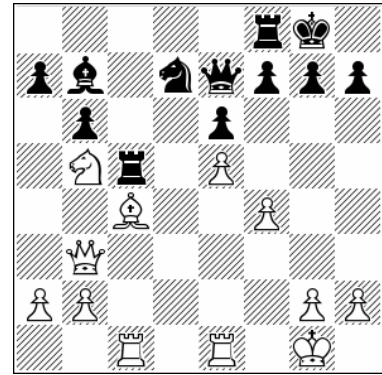
17.♞c2 [17.♙xf7+? ♔h8 18.♚d1 ♖h4 19.♚d2 ♜g4 Black is winning, 1-0 (34) Cornelisse, J (2132) – Romkes, A (2018) Amsterdam 2018; 17.♜xf7 ♙c5 18.♞d6+ ♔h8 19.♜xb7 ♚xf2+ 20.♔h1 ♞xb7 21.♚c4 Black is surely not worse] 17...♙d6!
 18.♞b5 ♙xh2+ 19.♔f1 ♚h4 20.♞xc7 ♙xc7 21.♜xf7 ♚h1+ 22.♔e2 ♚h5+ 23.♔d3!!

18.a4 b4 19.♞e2 ♞d5 20.♚h3 g6 21.♙h6 ♞e8 22.♞g3 ♜xe5 23.dxe5 ♚c7 24.♚g4 The game is unbalanced, ½-½ (43) Milto, G – Morozov, N corr. 2016.

15.dxe5 ♞d7 16.♙xe7 ♚xe7 17.♞b5 ♞c5 18.f4



Position after: 23.♔d3!!



Position after: 18.f4

A fantastic move but it's a draw anyway after 23...♙a6 24.♔c2 ♚c5+ 25.♔b1 ♙xb5 26.♞c1 ♚e7 27.♜g5+ ♔h8 28.♚xb5 ♙f4 29.♞e1 ♙d2 30.♞e2 ♙xg5 31.♚xg5 ♚d6.

14...♜xe5

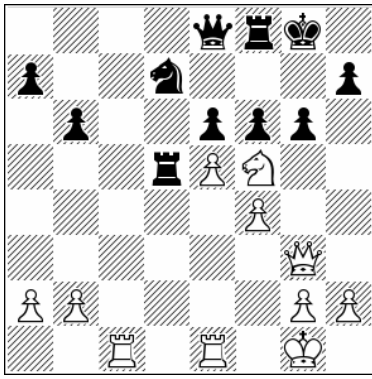
14...♔h8!? Trying to counter any ideas White might have about a sacrifice on f7. 15.♞cd1 a6 16.♙d3 b5 17.♙b1 ♔g8!

18...♙d5

18...♙a6 19.♞d6 ♙xc4 20.♞xc4 f6 21.♞xc5 ♜xc5 22.♚g3 fxe5 23.fxe5 White has some pressure – his knight on d6 is very strong.

19.♞d6 ♚h4

19...f6? 20.♙xd5 ♞xd5 21.♜f5 ♚e8 22.♚g3 g6

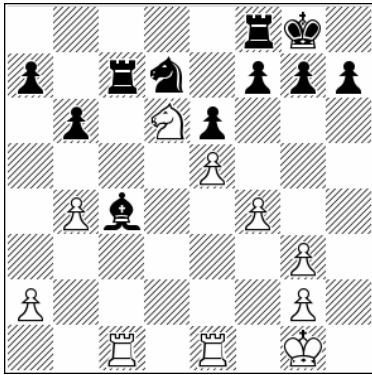


Position after: 22...g6

23.♖c8! White is winning, ½-½ (110) Grigoriant, S (2543) – Yilmaz, M (2636) Skopje 2019.

20.g3!?

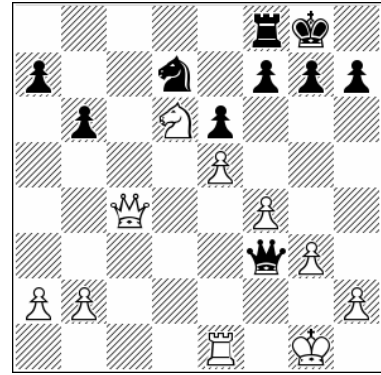
20.♙g3 ♜xg3 21.hxg3 ♔xc4 22.b4 ♖c7!?



Position after: 22...♖c7!?

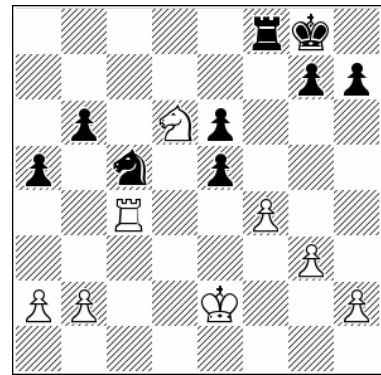
23.♖xc4 ♖xc4 24.♘xc4 ♖c8 25.♘d6 ♖c2 26.a4 h5 27.♖d1 ♘f8 28.a5 An interesting endgame that is probably balanced.

20...♔xc4 21.♖xc4 ♙g4 22.♙c2 ♖xc4 23.♙xc4 ♙f3



Position after: 23...♙f3

24.♙e4 ♙xe4 25.♖xe4 ♘c5 26.♖c4 a5 27.♔f2 f6 28.♔e2 fxe5



Position after: 28...fxe5

29.fxe5

White again has some edge, but things are far from simple.

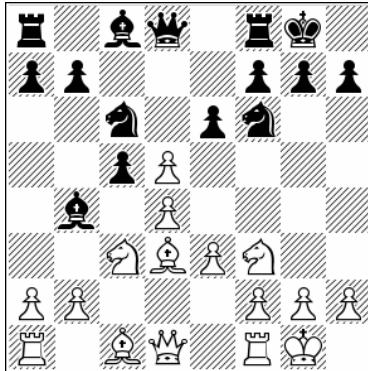
Part III

4...0-0 – 7...♞c6

Chapter 7

8.cxd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.cxd5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 7 – 8.cxd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.dxc5 ♙xc5 10.h3

a) 10...♙e7

b) 10...♖e8

c) 10...a6

a) 10...♔e7

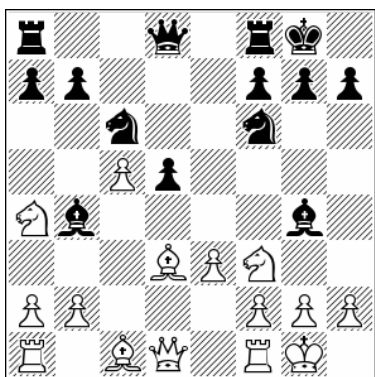
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘d3 c5
6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.cxd5

We will soon see the strategy that White is planning. This is a recent development that has become more popular, and it serves well in cutting out many options that Black has.

8...exd5 9.dxc5 ♘xc5

Black can try to sidestep the plan that White has in mind.

9...♘g4 10.♘a4

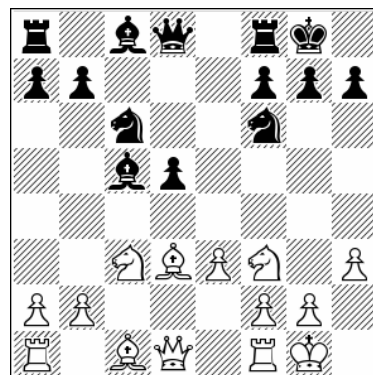


Position after: 10.♘a4

A) 10...♔e7 11.b3 ♘e4 12.♘e2 ♘c3 13.♘xc3 ♘xc3 14.♖b1 ♔xc5 15.♘b2 ♘xb2 16.♖xb2 ♖fd8 17.♖d2 a5 18.h3 ♘e6 19.♘d4 We see typical good play against an isolated queen's pawn, 1-0 (57) Shankland, S (2662) – Negi, P (2656) San Francisco 2017.

B) 10...♘e4 11.♘e2! ♔f6 12.a3 ♘a5 13.♖a2 ♘c7 14.b4 ♔h6 15.g3 Black has sacrificed a pawn to reach an attacking position, but it's questionable whether he has adequate compensation.

10.h3



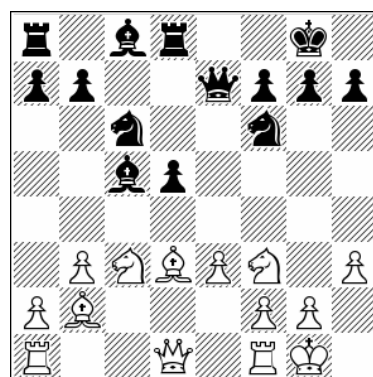
Position after: 10.h3

A modern strategy that has been very popular over the last decade. White prevents the black bishop from reaching g4 and plans to regroup by placing a bishop on b2 and transferring the knight from c3 via e2 to g3, f4 or d4.

10...♔e7

This is one of three main ideas here and we will see them all in separate subchapters. They are similar of course but there are some differences, especially in terms of tactics.

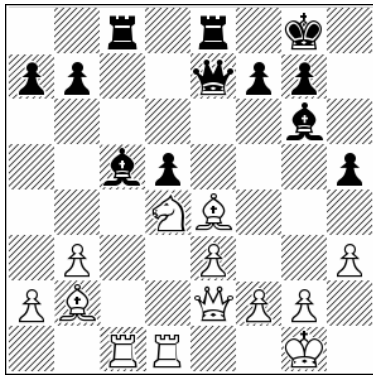
11.b3 ♖d8 12.♘b2



Position after: 12.♘b2

12...♘e4

A) 12...♘e6 13.♘e2 ♘e4 14.♖c1 h6 15.♘b1 ♘f5 16.♘fd4 ♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♘g6 18.♔g4 h5 19.♔e2 ♖ac8 20.♖fd1 ♖e8 21.♘xe4!



Position after: 21. ♖xe4!

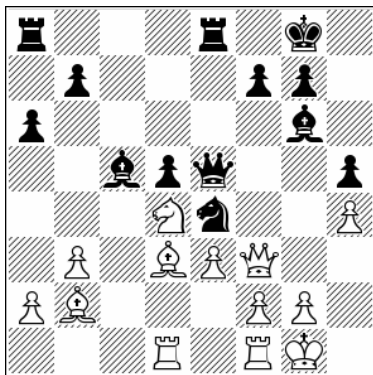
21...dxe4 22. ♖b5 ♜ed8 23. ♕d4 a6 24. ♕xc5 ♜xd1+ 25. ♛xd1 ♜xc5 26. ♖d4 This knight is dominating the board so we can say that there is an advantage for White.

B) 12...d4 13.exd4 ♖xd4 14. ♖a4 ♖xf3+ 15. ♛xf3 ♕d4 16. ♕xd4 ♜xd4 17. ♜ad1 g6 18. ♜fe1 ♕e6 19. ♕c4 ♜xd1 20. ♛xd1 ♜d8 21. ♛f3 b6 22. ♕xe6 fxe6 23. ♖b2 e5 24. ♖c4 White has an edge, ½-½ (79) Salem, A (2546) – Wei, Y (2418) Athens 2012.

13. ♜c1

White could also start his knight pirouette at once.

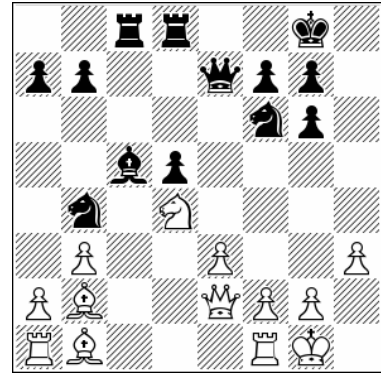
13. ♖e2 ♖b4!? Black is going for active play before White completes his development. [13...♕f5 14. ♖ed4 ♖xd4 15. ♖xd4 ♕g6 16. ♛g4 h5 17. ♛e2 a6 18. ♜ad1 ♜e8 19. ♛f3 ♛e5 20.h4



Position after: 20.h4

20...♕e7 21.g3 ♕f6 22. ♕a1 ♛c7 with unclear play, 0-1 (48) Mastrovasilis, A (2535) – Korobov,

A (2698) Dubai 2014] 14. ♕b1 ♕f5 15. ♖fd4 ♕g6 16. ♖f4 ♜ac8 17. ♛g4 ♖f6 18. ♖xg6 hxg6 19. ♛e2

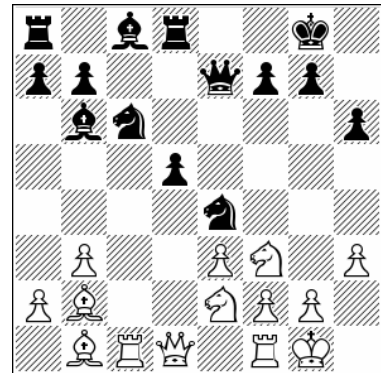


Position after: 19. ♛e2

19...♖c6 [19...♕xd4! 20. ♕xd4 ♖c6 21. ♛b2 ♖xd4 22. ♛xd4 ♛c5 23. ♛xc5 ♜xc5 24. ♕d3 d4 21. ♕d3 ♜e6 This is not bad for Black either, 1-0 (37) Kveinys, A (2509) – Osmanodja, B (1976) Bad Wiessee 2016.

13... ♕f5

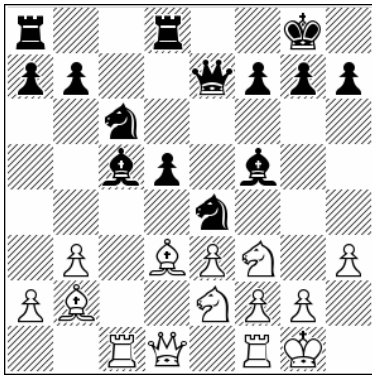
13...♕b6 14. ♖e2 h6 15. ♕b1!



Position after: 15. ♕b1!

White wants to increase the pressure on the d5-pawn while retaining the option of placing his knight on d4 or f4. 15...♕f5 16. ♖fd4 This comes with gain of tempo, always a good thing.

14. ♖e2

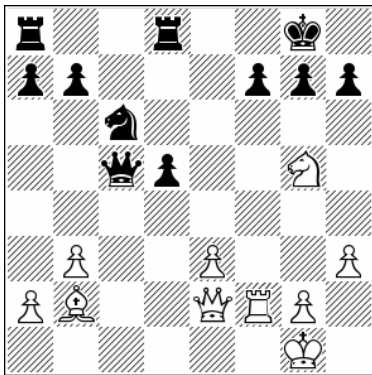


Position after: 14. dxe2

14... Bxc8

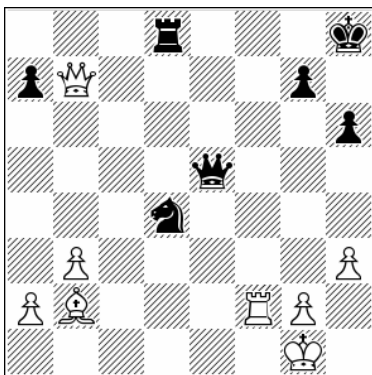
A) 14... g6 15. f4 fxf2 16. Bxf2 xe3 17. fxg6 hxg6 18. We1 Bxc8 19. Rd1 Wc5 20. b1 Rd7 21. f1 xf2 22. Wxf2 Wxf2+ 23. fxf2 This is also good for White.

B) 14... fxf2 15. Bxf2 xd3 16. Bxc5 xe2 17. We2 Wxc5 18. dg5!



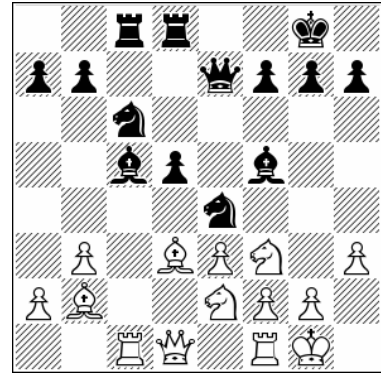
Position after: 18. dg5!

18...d4 19. Wh5 h6 20. Wxf7+ ch8 21. de6 We5 22. exd4 fxd4 23. dxd8 Bxd8 24. Wxb7!



Position after: 24. Wxb7!

24... We1+ 25. Bf1 We3+ 26. ch2 We5+ 27. g3 f3+ 28. Wxf3 Wxb2+ 29. Bf2 Bd2 30. Bxd2 Wxd2+ 31. Wg2 Wd1 32. h4 That's a more or less forced line in which Black is forced to play a queen endgame a pawn down.

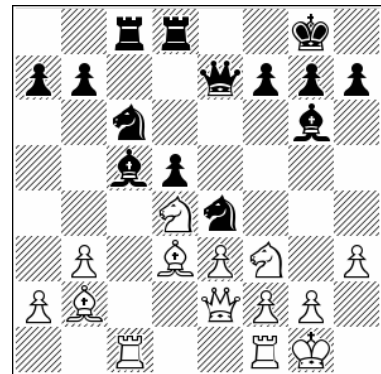


Position after: 14... Bxc8

15. f4

Other moves are not bad either, and they carry some interesting ideas.

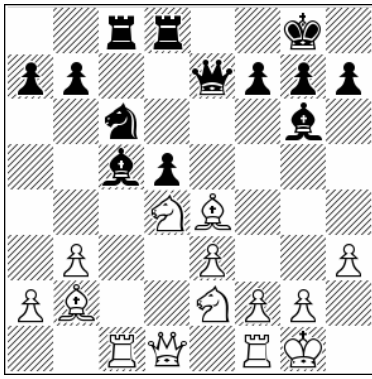
A) 15. f4 ed4 g6 16. We2



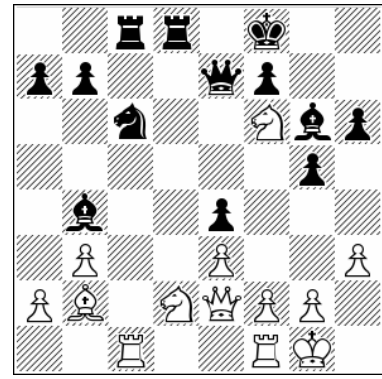
Position after: 16. We2

16... fxd4 [16... h5 17. f5! this is strong] 17. fxd4 a3 18. Bxc8 Bxc8 19. Wg4 Bd8 20. f5 We6 21. Wh4 f6 22. fh6+ gxh6 23. Bxf6 White is better, 1-0 (55) Prusikin, M (2525) – Sokolov, A (2516) Switzerland 2017.

B) 15. fd4 g6 16. xe4!?



Position after: 16.♖xe4!?

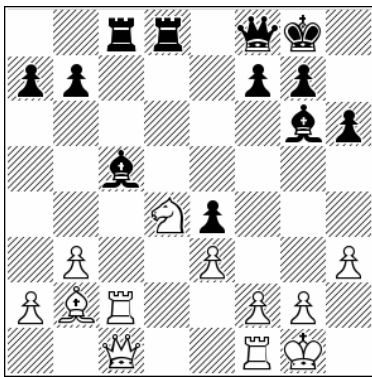


Position after: 20...♖b4

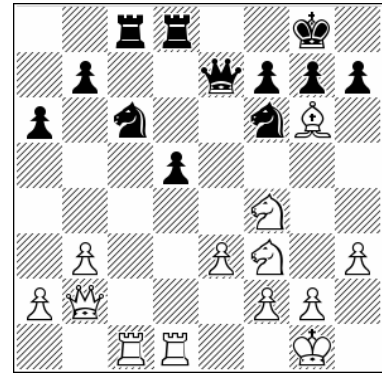
This is an interesting strategy, so let's dig deeper.
 16...♖xe4 [16...dxe4 17.♖xc6 ♜xc6 18.♖d4 ♜cc8
 19.♜c2 h6 20.♜c1 ♜f8

21.♖dx4! ♖xe4 22.♜h5 White's tactical strike gives him a winning position.

16.♜e2 ♖g6 17.♜fd1 a6 18.♖b1 ♖xb2 19.♜xb2
 ♖f6 20.♖xg6!



Position after: 20...♜f8



Position after: 20.♖xg6!

21.♖e2! This is the right plan for White. The position is balanced but it's easier to handle with White.] 17.♖g3! ♖xd4 18.♖xd4 ♖xd4
 19.♜xd4 b6 20.♖h5 f6 21.♖f4 ♜e5 22.f3 ♜xd4
 23.exd4 ♖f5 24.♜xc8 ♜xc8 25.♖xd5 White is clearly better, 1-0 (36) Salem, A (2528) – Khouri, I (2222) Abu Dhabi 2012.

White keeps his strong knights.

20...hxg6 21.♜c2 ♜c7 22.♜cd2

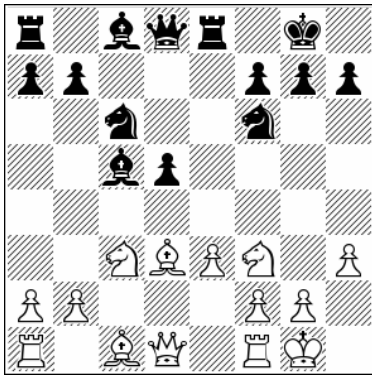
White has easier play, and reasons to hope for more in the future, 1-0 (79) Naiditsch, A (2716) – Adams, M (2725) Baden-Baden 2013.

15...♖a3

15...h6 16.♜e2 g5 17.♖h5 ♖g6 18.♖xe4 dxe4
 19.♖f6+ ♖f8 20.♖d2 ♖b4

b) 10...♜e8

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♖d3 c5
 6.♖f3 d5 7.0-0 ♖c6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.dxc5 ♖xc5
 10.h3 ♜e8

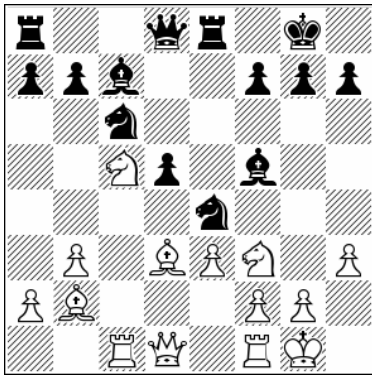


Position after: 10...Rxe8

This is another important line. Setting the rook on the half-open file is logical and indeed the natural thing to do.

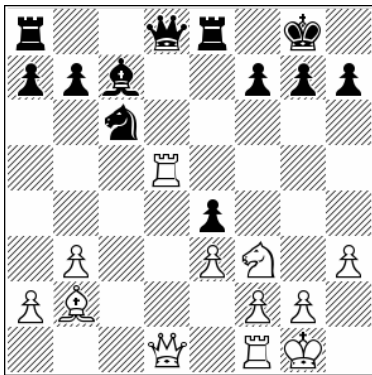
11.b3 a6

11...Nxe4 12.Bb2 Bf5 13.Rc1 Bb6 14.Na4 Bc7 15.Nc5



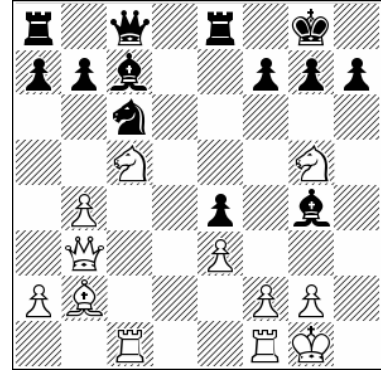
Position after: 15.Nc5

15...Wc8!? The possibility of a sacrifice on h3 is hanging in the air now. [15...Nxc5 16.Rxc5 Bxe4 17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Rd5!



Position after: 18.Rd5!

18...Wc8 19.Ng5 f6 20.Rd7 Ne7 21.Wh5 Wxd7 22.Wf7+ Kh8 23.Bxf6 An instructive win, 1-0 (23) Krush, I (2489) – Baginskaite, C (2267) Saint Louis 2014] 16.b4!? Bxh3 [16...Nxb4 17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Wd4 f6 19.Ng5 White wins] 17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Ng5 Bg4 19.Wb3

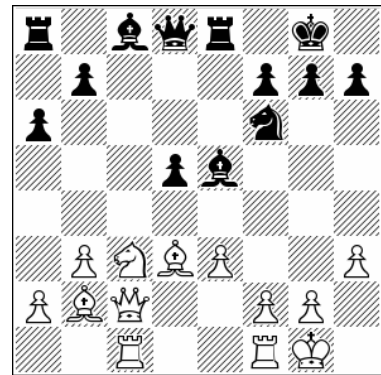


Position after: 19.Wb3

19...Bh5 [19...Wf5 20.Nxe4 Wg6 21.b5 White has the better chances] 20.b5 Na5 21.Wd5 Wd8 22.Rfd1 We7 23.Nd7 Bd8 It's about equal.

12.Bb2 Wd6

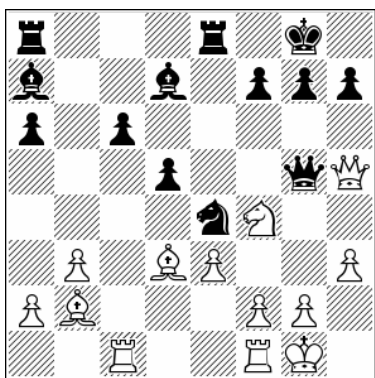
A) 12...Bd6 13.Rc1 Ne5 14.Nxe5! Bxe5 15.Wc2



Position after: 15.Wc2

15...Bd7 [15...d4 16.exd4 Wxd4 17.Na4 Wd8 18.Rfd1 this is much better for White] 16.Ne2! Rc8 17.Wd2 Rxc1 18.Rxc1 Bxb2 19.Wxb2 Wb6 White has achieved the typical edge in such lines.

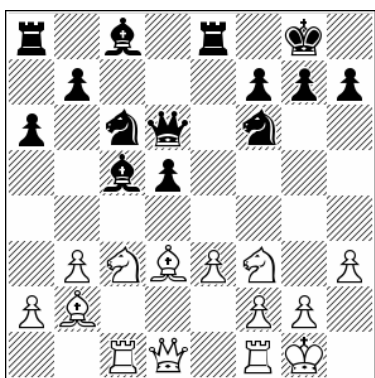
B) 12...Ba7 13.Ne2 Ne4 14.Rc1 Bf5 15.Nfd4! Bd7 16.Nxc6 bxc6 17.Nf4 Wg5 18.Wh5!



Position after: 18. ♖h5!

18...h6 19. ♖xg5 hxg5 20. ♗e2 a5 21. ♖fd1 White has better chances in this interesting endgame.

13. ♖c1

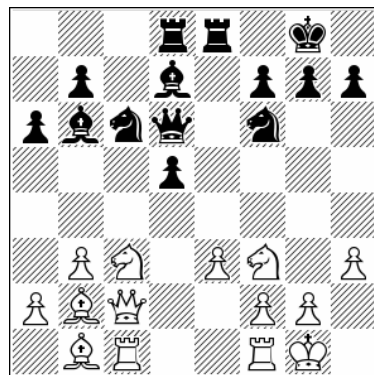


Position after: 13. ♖c1

13... ♗b6

13... ♗d7 14. ♗b1 ♖ad8 15. ♗xd5! ♗e4 [15... ♗xd5 16. ♖c2 White is better] 16. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 17. ♗g5 White already has a winning position, 1-0 (25) Levin, E (2523) – Karasev, V (2334) St Petersburg 2018.

14. ♗b1!? ♗d7 15. ♖c2 ♖ad8



Position after: 15... ♖ad8

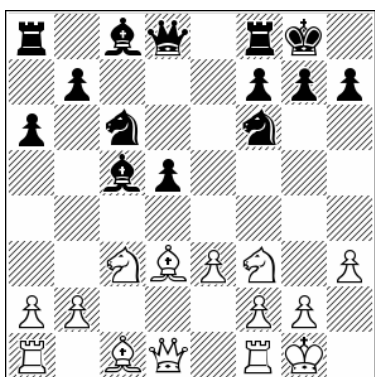
16. ♖fd1

By keeping his knight on c3 White maintains the pressure on the d5-pawn and also keeps the black knight away from the e4-square.

c) 10...a6

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5. ♗d3 c5 6. ♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.h3 a6

One of the ideas is that Black secures the a7-square for his bishop, so now ...d5-d4 is on the minds of both players.

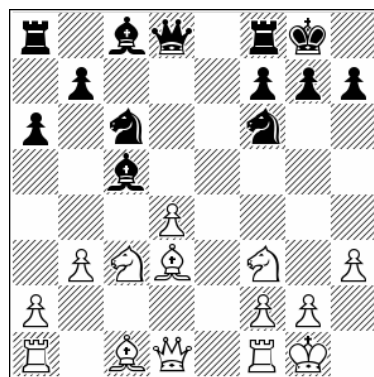


Position after: 10...a6

11. ♗e2

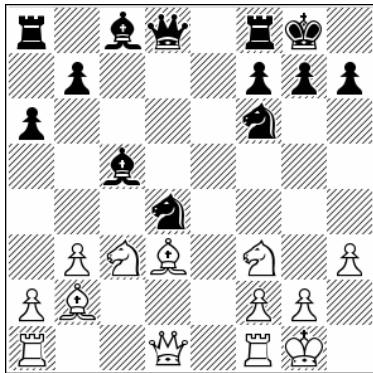
White takes measures against the possible ...d4, which could significantly simplify the position.

11.b3 Let's check whether Black can equalize with the ...d4 idea. 11...d4 Otherwise the game could transpose to other lines. 12.exd4



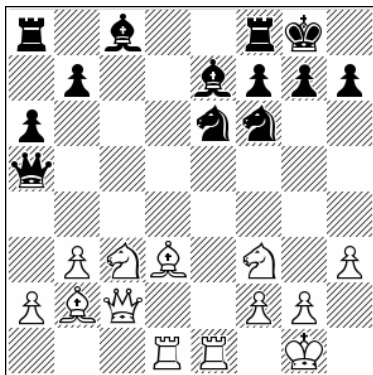
Position after: 12.exd4

12...♖xd4 [12...♙xd4 13.♙b2 ♙a7 14.♗e4 ♗xe4 15.♙xe4 ♙e6 16.♚c2 h6 17.♚c3 f6 18.♞ad1 ♚c7 19.♞fe1 White looks strong here] 13.♙b2 It may appear that Black has dried out this position but that's not exactly true, because White keeps better development.



Position after: 13.♙b2

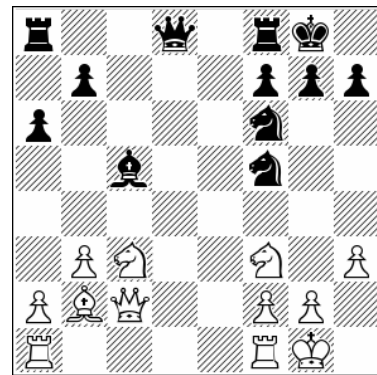
A) 13...♗e6 That's a safe return, but we will see that the whole problem for Black is precisely the bad position of that knight! 14.♗e4 ♙e7 15.♚c2 Black is cramped and his pieces have no real activity. 15...♗d5 16.♗c3 ♗f6 17.♞ad1 ♚a5 18.♞fe1



Position after: 18.♞fe1

18...♗h8 [18...♞d8 19.♞e5 b5 20.♗d5! ♗xd5 21.♙xh7+ ♗f8 22.♞exd5 ♞xd5 23.♞xd5 ♙b7 24.♞f5 White's attack is ready to crash through. 24...♞c8 25.♞xf7+ ♗xf7 26.♚g6+ ♗f8 27.♚xe6 ♙f6 28.♙g6 1-0 (28) Riazantsev, A (2651) – Bocharov, D (2611) Novosibirsk 2016.] 19.♚b1 b5 20.♗e4 ♗d5 21.♗g3 ♗c3 22.♙xc3 ♚xc3 23.♙xh7 White is on course for a win, 1-0 (39) Yeletsy, I (2369) – Paramzina, A (2220) Moscow 2017.

B) 13...♙f5 14.♙xf5 ♗xf5 15.♚c2

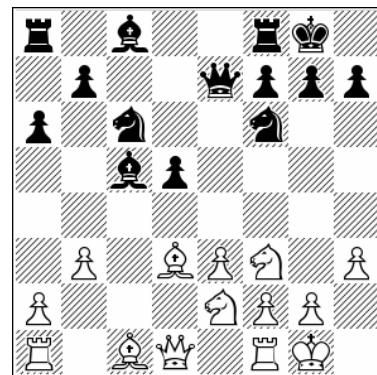


Position after: 15.♚c2

15...♚a5 [15...♗d6 16.♞ad1 ♞c8 17.♚d3 b5 18.♗d5 ♗fe4 19.♙d4 ♙xd4 20.♚xd4 ♞e8 21.♞fe1 this position may appear equal, but White is more active] 16.♗a4! ♙e7 [16...♙a7 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.b4 ♚b5 19.♗c3 ♞fc8 20.♞ad1 more good play by White] 17.♞fe1 ♞ac8 18.♙c3! The threat of rook to e5 wins the exchange for White.

11...♗e4

11...♚e7 12.b3



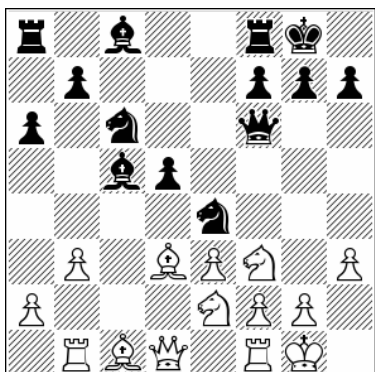
Position after: 12.b3

12...♗e4 [12...♙e6 13.♙b2 ♙a3 14.♙xa3! ♚xa3 15.♚c1 ♚e7 16.♚b2 this is good for White] 13.♙b2 ♙f5 14.♗ed4 ♗xd4 15.♙xd4 ♙xd4 16.♗xd4 ♙d7 17.♚h5 ♗f6 18.♚e2 ♞ac8 19.♞fd1 ♞c7 20.♚b2 ♞fc8 21.♗e2 ♚b4 22.♞d2 ♙b5 23.♙xb5 ♚xb5 24.♗f4 h6 25.♞ad1 Good strategy. Now the game is all about the d5-pawn, 1-0 (49) Kveinys, A (2535) – Johannesson, O (2273) Antalya 2017.

12. ♖f4

There is an inferior alternative for White.

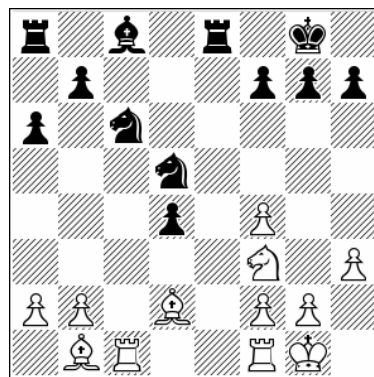
12. b3 ♖f6 13. ♖b1



Position after: 13. ♖b1

13... ♗d6!? [13... ♗f5 14. ♗b2 ♖h6 15. ♖fd4 ♗d7 16. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 17. ♖d4 ♗d7 there's not much clarity here, 1-0 (39) Navara, D (2697) – Shahaliyev, I (2413) Tornelo INT 2021] 14. ♗b2 ♖g6 15. ♔h1 ♖h6 With easy play for Black.

12... ♖f6 13. ♗d2 ♖e8 14. ♖c1 ♗d6 15. ♗b1 ♗xf4 16. exf4 d4 17. ♖b3 ♖d5 18. ♖xd5 ♖xd5



Position after: 18... ♖xd5

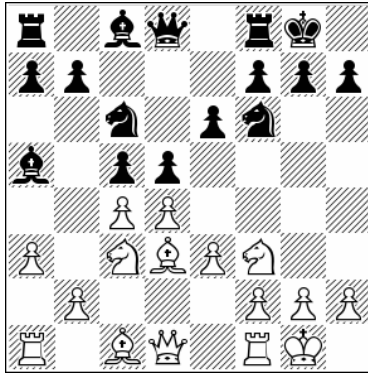
19. ♖fd1

Such positions are often in White's favor, thanks to his bishop pair and Black's weak pawn on d4 or d5. The doubled pawn on f4 is sometimes an asset, 1-0 (36) Naiditsch, A (2706) – Poetsch, H (2482) Deizisau 2014.

Chapter 8

8.a3 ♖a5 – The Reykjavik Line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘a5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 8 – 8.a3 ♖a5 – The Reykjavik Line

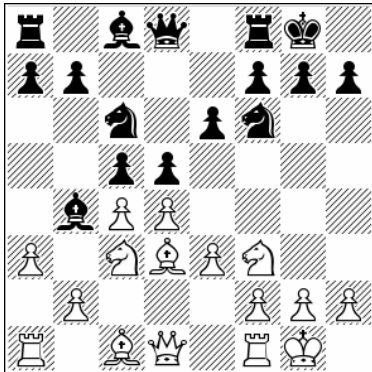
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘a5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♘g4 12.♙e2

a) 12...--

b) 12...♗e4

a) 12...--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3



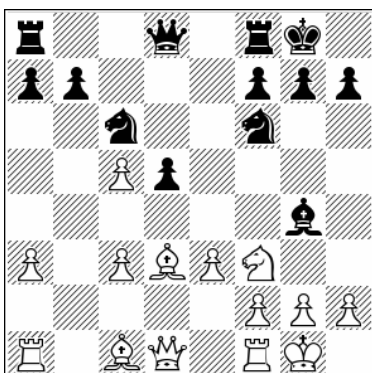
Position after: 8.a3

8...♙a5

An old line but not a forgotten one. Actually with engine analysis it started to reappear and it seems that the positions are not as easy for White as previously thought. The idea of retreating the bishop to a5 after White's a3 is a known one and we will see what's behind it.

9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♙g4

That's a key point, Black is hoping he will be able to recapture on c5 with good play, while developing all his pieces.



Position after: 11...♙g4

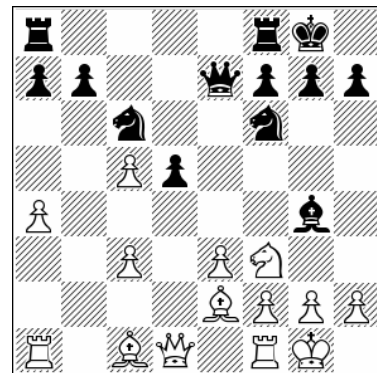
12.♙e2!?

A less played and less forced line that was used long time ago in a Stein – Tal game. In his book on the Nimzo-Indian, Sokolov praises the 12.♙b1 move, which is also interesting, but I decided to analyze this one for this book. White wants to untangle; now the queen can go to c2 and c3-c4 is coming but without allowing Black to double the pawns on f3, or at least not at a time when that would favor Black.

The main line in this system has been known for decades, but in my opinion it doesn't offer White any advantage. Engine analysis indicates that Black can create equal chances. 12.c4 ♗e5 13.cxd5 [13.♙b2 ♗xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♙h3 15.♖e1 ♗e4 16.♙e5 ♖e8 this is another way in this line but again it has not proven any real advantage for White] 13...♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♗xd5 This seems to offer Black enough play.

12...♖a5

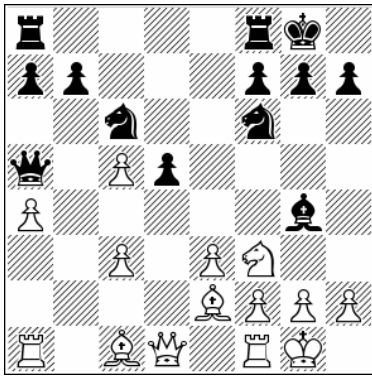
12...♖e7 13.a4!?



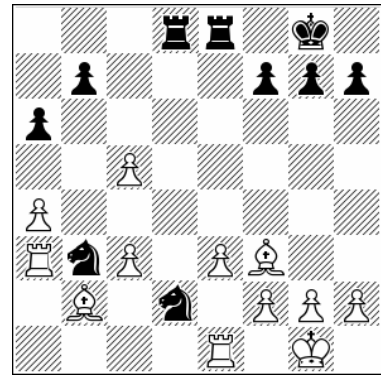
Position after: 13.a4!?

Not giving up easily on the c5-pawn. 13...♖fd8 14.♖c2 ♗e4 15.♙a3 ♗xc5 16.♗d4 ♙xe2 17.♖xe2 ♖ac8 18.♗f5 ♖d7 19.♖g4 This did earn White an advantage, 1-0 (32) Ramos Isasi, J – Hernaez Fernandez, C corr. 1984.

13.a4!?



Position after: 13.a4!?



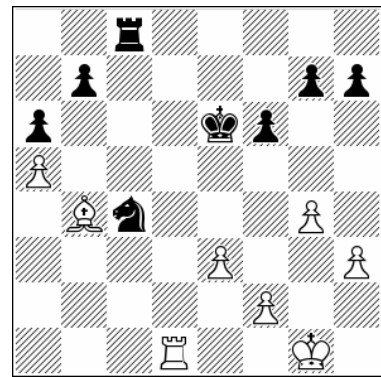
Position after: 21.Ra3

13...dxe4 14.Ob2 Rfe8

14...Rfd8 15.Wc2 Wxc5 16.c4 Db4 17.Wb3 Of3
18.gxf3 dxc4 19.Oxc4 Od2 20.Wc3 Wg5+
21.Oh1 Dxc4 22.Rg1 We5 23.Wxe5 Dxe5
24.Oxe5 g6 25.Of6 Rd7 26.Rgd1 White has some
advantage.

**15.Wxd5 Rad8 16.Wc4 Of3 17.Oxf3 Od2
18.Wb5 a6 19.Wxa5 Dxa5 20.Rfe1 Db3
21.Ra3**

**21...Dxc5 22.Oe2 Od3 23.Oxd3 Rxd3 24.c4
Rxa3 25.Oxa3 Dxc4 26.Ob4 f6 27.a5 Of7
28.Rd1 Rc8 29.h3 Oe6 30.g4**



Position after: 30.g4

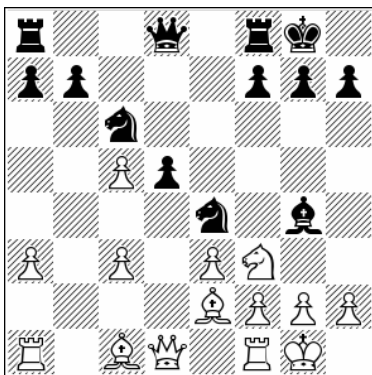
An Interesting endgame. This cannot be dismissed as a quest for advantage.

b) 12...De4

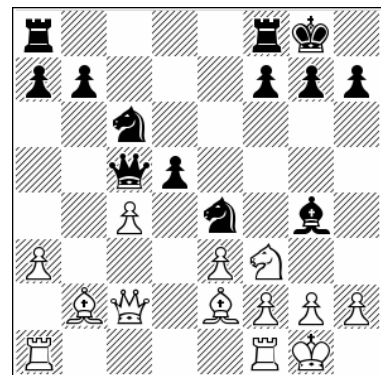
**1.d4 Df6 2.c4 e6 3.Dc3 Ob4 4.e3 0-0 5.Od3 d5
6.Df3 c5 7.0-0 Dc6 8.a3 Oa5 9.cxd5 exd5
10.dxc5 Oxc3 11.bxc3 Og4 12.Oe2!? De4**

13.Wc2 Da5

13...Wa5 14.c4 Wxc5 15.Ob2!

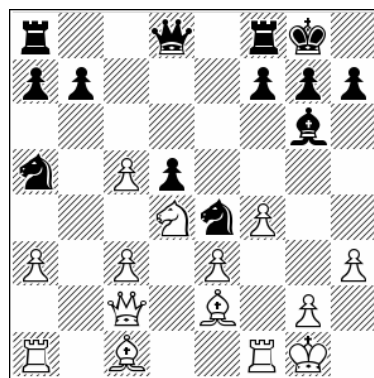


Position after: 12...De4



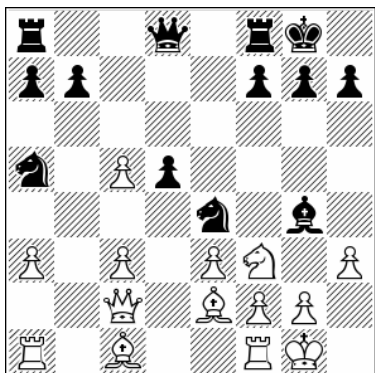
Position after: 15.Ob2!

Active play is necessary. 15...♖a5 16.♗d4! An important idea: White is setting up pressure on the long diagonal pressure a1-h8. [16.♗d3 ♜xc4 17.♗xe4 dxe4 18.♞e5 ♗e6 19.♞fc1 ♞ac8 this looks more or less equal, ½-½ (27) Gasparian, N (2099) – Andriasian, S (2235) Yerevan 2013] 16...♞c7 17.♞ac1 ♞xc4 18.♗xc4 ♞xc4 19.♞b2 ♞a6 20.♞h4 ♞h6 21.f3 ♞xh4 22.♗xg7 White has gained an edge.



Position after: 16.f4

14.h3



Position after: 14.h3

14...♗f5

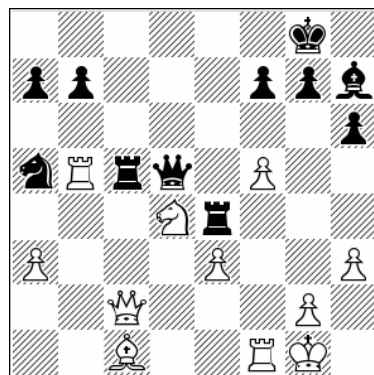
14...♗h5 15.c4 ♞c8 16.cxd5 ♞xd5 17.♗b2 ♞xc5 18.♞d1 ♞xd1 19.♞axd1 A typical example in which we can see the effect of White's bishop-pair advantage.

15.♞d4 ♗g6 16.f4

16...h6

16...♞g3 17.f5 ♞xf1 18.♞xf1 ♞c8 19.♞g1 ♞xc5 20.fxg6 hxg6 21.♞b3 The bishop pair is strong here.

17.f5 ♗h7 18.c4 ♞c8 19.cxd5 ♞xd5 20.♗f3 ♞fe8 21.♞b1 ♞xc5 22.♗xe4 ♞xe4 23.♞b5!!



Position after: 23.♞b5!!

Great engine-style tactical finesse.

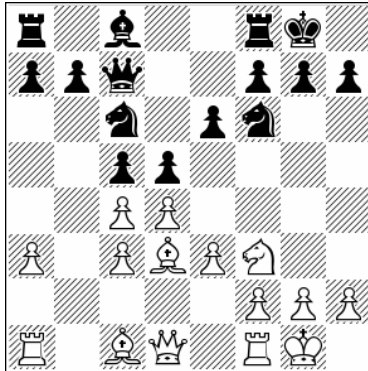
23...b6 24.♞xc5 bxc5 25.♞e2

It seems that White keeps the initiative.

Chapter 9

8.a3 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 ♔c7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♔c7



Chapter Guide

Chapter 9 – 8.a3 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 ♔c7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♔c7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 ♖e8 12.♙a3 c4 13.♙c2

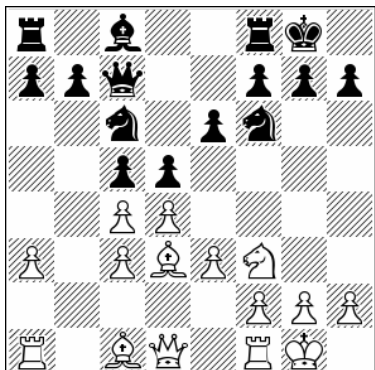
a) 13...♗e4

b) 13...♙g4

c) 13...♔a5

a) 13...♘e4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 ♖c7

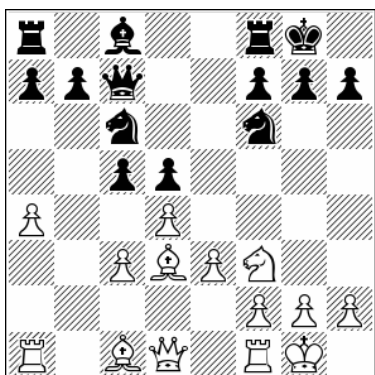


Position after: 9...♖c7

This is a very old line. Together with the related 9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♖c7 variation, it represents what was called the main line of the Nimzo for many decades. In this case Black doesn't give up on the center; instead he wants to keep his options open and even to fight while keeping a pawn on d5 rather than exchanging that pawn with the white c-pawn.

10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4

Probably best, opening up a good diagonal for the bishop when it goes to a3. On top of that, White plans to put pressure on the c5-pawn to force Black to decide whether to open the position with ...cxd4 or to close it (which is best, by the way) with ...c4. In the latter case we will have a very interesting position that is closed but full of possibilities.



Position after: 11.a4

11...♞e8

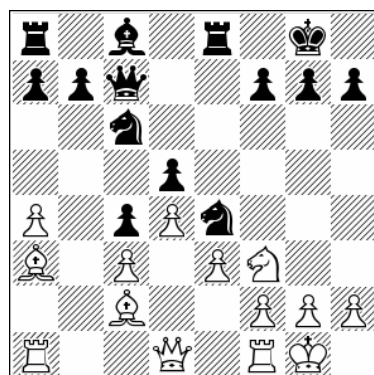
11...c4 12.♙c2 This will eventually transpose after 12...♞e8.

12.♙a3 c4

Black should avoid the following line. 12...b6 13.dxc5 ♙g4 14.♙e2 ♗e4 15.cxb6 axb6 16.♖c1 ♗e5 17.c4 dxc4 18.♗xe5 ♙xe2 19.♖xe2 ♖xe5 20.♖xc4 b5 21.♙b2 White is a pawn up but the game was drawn later on, Potkin, V – Bu Xiangzhi Ningbo 2010.

13.♙c2 ♗e4

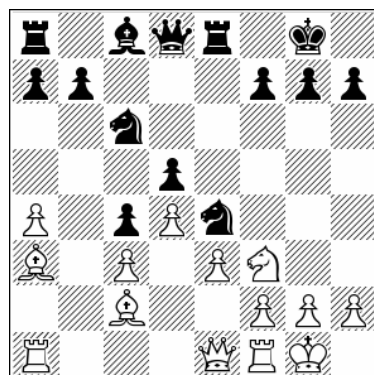
This is one of three important ideas that Black uses here. We will deal with them separately.



Position after: 13...♗e4

14.♙xe4

14.♖e1 ♖d8!

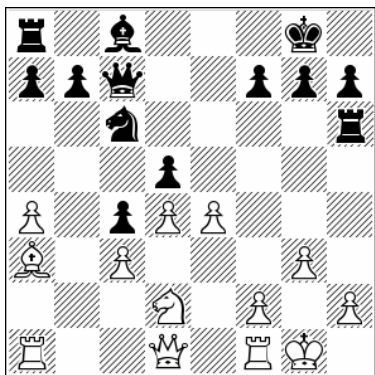


Position after: 14...♖d8!

According to Gligoric that is the best move for Black, preventing h4 . 15. xe4 xe4 16. d2 e8 17. f3 a5 [17... f5 18. e4 g6 this position is unclear] 18. b2 b5 19. axb5 xb5 20. a3 This is good for White, who is ready for the e3-e4 break, Bannik, A – Averbakh, Y Riga 1958.

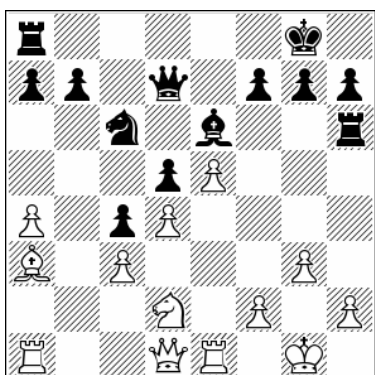
14... xe4 15. d2 e8

15... h4 !? That's a bit surprising, but it does have its merits. 16. g3 h6 17. e4 !



Position after: 17.e4!

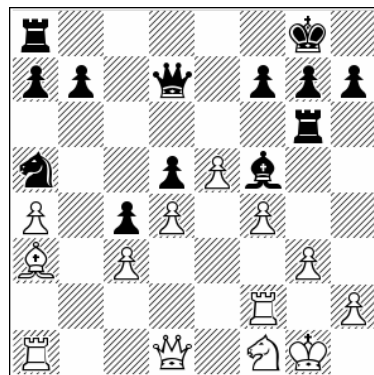
The best. 17... e6 [17... a5 18. e1 e6 19. e3 dx4 20. xe4 h5 21. h4 d5 22. hx5 hx5 23. b1 h6 24. d6 White is better, 1-0 (51) Kamsky, G (2735) – Almasi, Z (2630) Groningen 1995] 18. e5 ! We have a very complex middlegame. Obviously White wants to push f4-f5 , but Black also has his ideas here. 18... f5 [Black can further sidestep White's g4 plans with 18... d7 !? 19. e1 !



Position after: 19.e1!

Probably that's the best. In this structure the knight has to come to e3 . 19... e8 !? 20. f1 ! f6 21. f4 fxe5 22. fxe5 d8 23. h4 !? g6 24. h2 f7

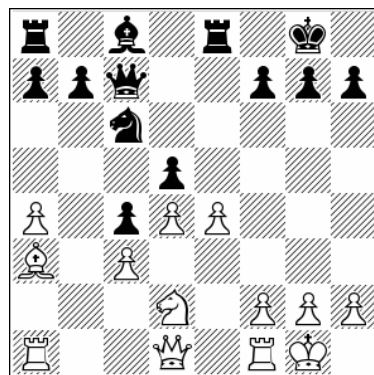
25. e3 h6 26. f1 g4+ 27. gx4 gx4 28. c2 White seems to be better.] 19. f4 A logical plan but the position is complicated and it's not easy for White to go for f4-f5 . 19... d7 20. f2 g6 21. f1 a5



Position after: 21...a5

22. e3 ! [22. b4 White has no need at all to move the bishop. 22... b3 23. aa2 e4 This is also complex, 0-1 (36) Norri, J (2362) – Veingold, A (2443) Finland 2006] 22... b3 23. aa2 e8 24. h5 b1 25. ab2 d3 26. f5 h6 27. f3 The initiative is with White.

16.e4!



Position after: 16.e4!

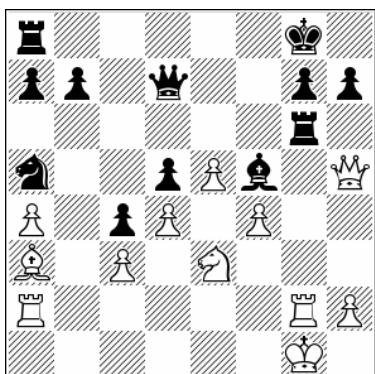
Gligoric also thought this was best.

16... dx4

Black can decide to keep the pawn on d5 , in which case we will get similar positions to the ... h4 line given above.

16... e6 17. e5 Again we see similar play but this time the rook stays on e8 instead of voyaging to h6 .

A) 17...♔f5 18.f4 ♕d3 19.♖f2 f5 20.♘f1 ♞a5
 21.♘e3 ♕e4 22.♞aa2 ♞e6 23.g4 ♞g6 24.♞g2 ♚d7
 25.gxf5 ♕xf5 26.♞h5!



Position after: 26.♞h5!

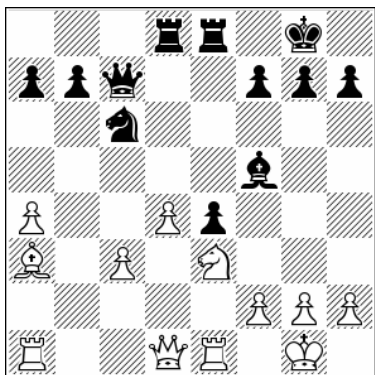
[26.♞g3 ♕e4 White is still OK but the situation is less clear now, 0-1 (55) Peralta, F (2596) – Ruiz C, J (2387) Montcada 2014] 26...♕e4 27.f5 ♞xg2+ 28.♞xg2! ♕xg2 29.♔xg2 ♚xa4 30.e6 Fantastic attacking ideas. White is winning.

B) 17...♚d7 18.f4 g6 19.h3 h5 This looks better for White. 20.♞a2 ♖g7 21.♘f3 ♞e7 22.♕xe7 ♞xe7 23.♚e1 ♞ee8 24.♞h4 White has strong attacking chances, 1-0 (43) Peralta, F (2601) – Nikolaidis, K (2274) Vrachati 2011.

17.♞e1 ♕f5

17...♕e6 This can transpose to Salem – Pelletier below after the logical 18.♘xe4.

18.♘xc4 ♞ad8 19.♘e3



Position after: 19.♘e3

19...♕e6

Black has a valid alternative.

19...♕c8 20.♚h5 ♚a5 [20...♞a5 21.♘d5+–] 21.♚xa5 ♞xa5 22.d5 b6 23.♕b4 ♞b7 24.a5 White has gained slightly better chances, ½-½ (42) Lautier, J (2645) – Kramnik, V (2790) Monte Carlo 1998.

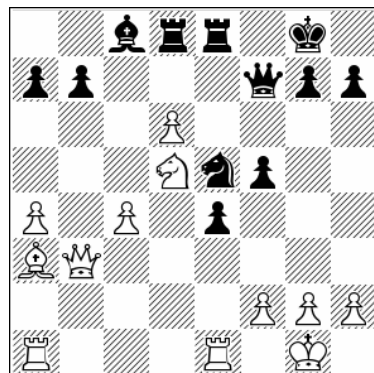
20.d5 f5

20...♞e5 21.♚b3 ♕c8 22.d6 Now knight to d5 would be a good move.

21.c4 ♞e5

21...f4 22.d6 ♚f7 23.♘d5 ♚f5 24.♞b1 b6 25.h3 ♕xd5 26.♞b5 White holds the initiative, 1-0 (37) Ermolaev, M – Paetzold, O corr. 2013.

22.♚b3 ♕c8 23.d6 ♚f7 24.♘d5



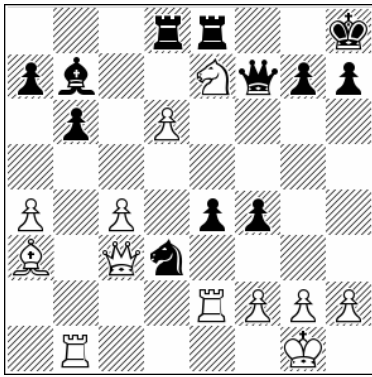
Position after: 24.♘d5

Another complex position, which has been tested in correspondence chess.

24...♘d3

24...♕e6 25.♘c7 ♘d3 26.♘xe8 ♞xe1 27.♞xe1 ♞xe8 28.♚b4 b6 29.a5 ♕xc4 30.axb6 axb6 31.♚xb6 White's pawn on d6 is a strong asset, ½-½ (59) Coyne, D – Cannon, A corr. 2009.

25.♞e2 b6 26.♚c3 ♕b7 27.♘e7+ ♔h8 28.♞b1 f4



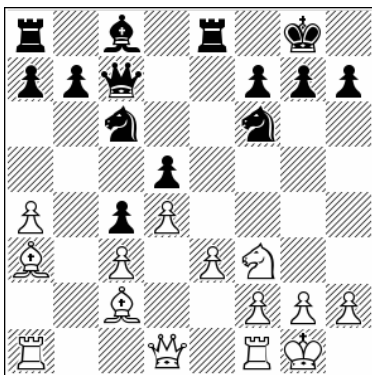
Position after: 28...f4

29. ♖b5

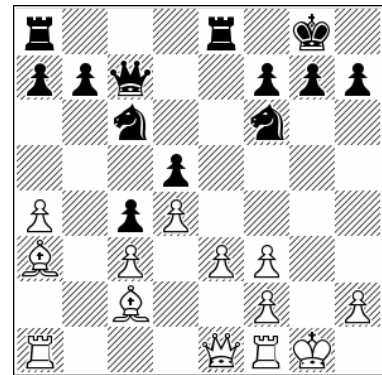
It's still complex, ½-½ (36) Melo Filho, A – Farias, S corr. 2016.

b) 13... ♖g4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0 5. ♖d3 d5
6. ♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 ♖c7
10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4!? ♖e8 12. ♖a3 c4 13. ♖c2



Position after: 13. ♖c2



Position after: 15.gxf3

A) 15...b6 16. ♖h1 ♘a5 17. ♖g1 ♖d7 18. ♖f1 ♘b3
19. ♖g2 g6 20. ♖ae1 ♖xa4 21. ♖d6 ♖c6 22. ♖e5 a5
23.f4!

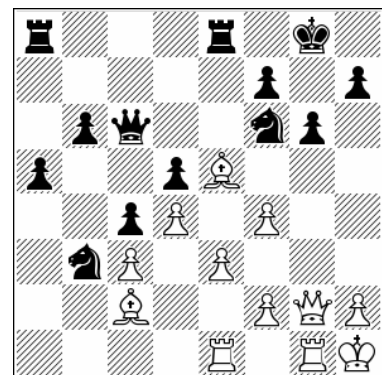
This is an important position.

13... ♖g4

This makes sense -- the bishop might travel to g6 or simply take on f3, doubling the white f-pawns. 13... ♖a5 is examined in the next subchapter.

14. ♖e1 ♖h5

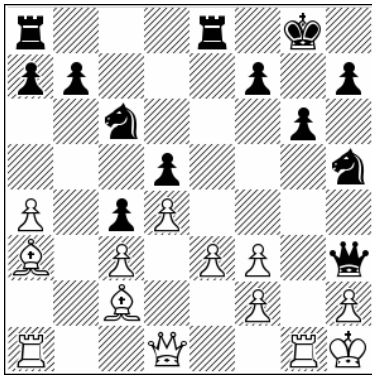
14... ♖xf3 An interesting option but somehow I think the bishop is too strong to exchange for the knight. 15.gxf3



Position after: 23.f4!

White starts a direct attack on the g6-pawn. [23.e4 is less clear, ½-½ (45) Muir, A (2311) – Palac, M (2580) Porto Carras 2011] 23... ♘e4 24.f5 a4 25. ♖xe4 dxe4 26. ♖h3 White has a winning attack.

B) 15... ♖d7 16. ♖h1 ♖h3 17. ♖d1 ♘h5 18. ♖g1 g6



Position after: 18...g6

Two knights versus two bishops again: that can always happen in the Nimzo. 19.♖b1 b6 20.♖b5 ♗ad8 21.♗g5 ♘f6 22.♙f5 ♚h4 23.♛g1 ♔h8 24.♙c2 ♜e6 25.♙c1 ♘e7 26.♛g3 ♛xg3 27.♗xg3 An interesting endgame, 1-0 (59) Kasimdzhanov, R (2668) – Ivanchuk, V (2710) Skanderborg 2003.

15.♘h4

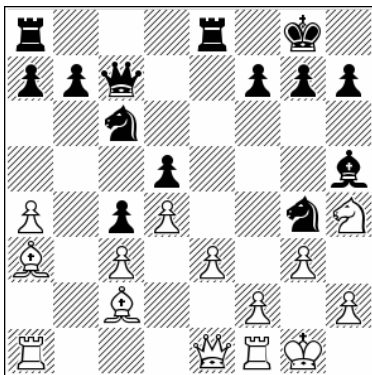
Clearing the f3-square for the pawn to advance.

15...♘g4

This is the main move here.

15...♙g6 16.♘xg6 hxg6 17.f3 Black hasn't done enough to restrain the white center. 17...♘h5 18.♛f2 ♛a5 19.♛d2 ♗ad8 20.♖ab1 ♗d7 21.♖b5 ♛d8 22.e4 White easily builds up his center.

16.g3

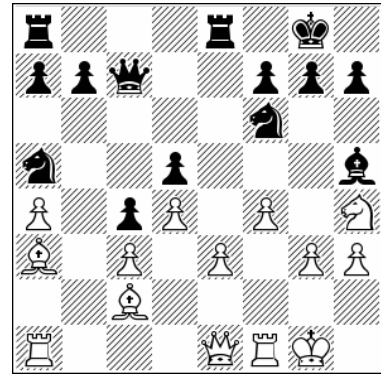


Position after: 16.g3

16...♙g6

A) 16...♘d8 17.f3! ♘xe3 18.♘g2 White is winning.

B) 16...♘a5 17.h3 ♘f6 18.f4!



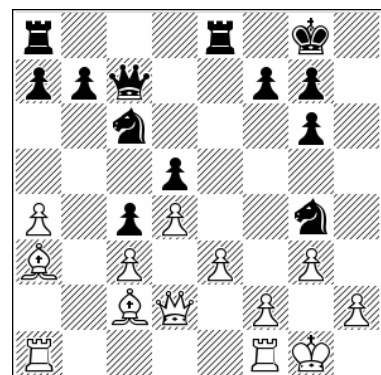
Position after: 18.f4!

18...♘b3 19.♖a2 ♛d7 20.g4 ♙xg4 21.hxg4 ♛xg4+ 22.♔h2 ♛e6 23.♘f5 ♘g4+ 24.♔g3 ♘xe3 25.♛xe3 ♛xe3+ 26.♘xe3 ♗xe3+ 27.♗f3 White is better.

17.♘xg6 hxg6

Here Black stops the f3 and e4 expansion for the time being, and is looking towards ...a6 and ...b5 or ...♗e6 and ...f5 ideas. We have a kind of King's Indian, as White has to find a way to combine kingside attack with a good setup on the queenside.

18.♛d2



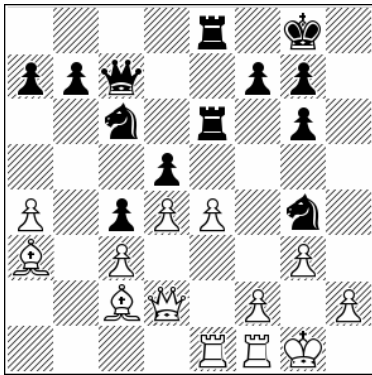
Position after: 18.♛d2

This is my preference here. I analyzed it on a board before seeing the games, and this move was the first to cross my mind.

18...♘a5

This is critical here.

A) 18...♞e6 19.♞ae1 ♞ae8 20.e4!

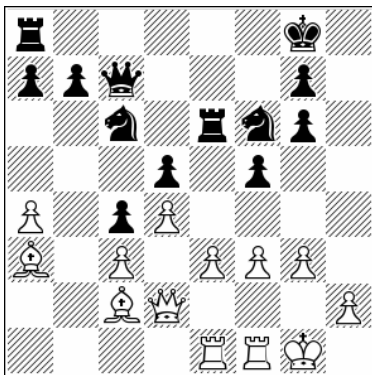


Position after: 20.e4!

20...dxe4 21.d5 ♞d8 22.♞e2 White has an edge.

B) 18...f5 19.♞ae1

B1) 19...♞e6 20.f3 ♘f6



Position after: 20...♘f6

21.g4! This move begs to be made in such positions. [21.e4 fxe4 22.fxe4 dxe4 23.d5 ♞d8 24.d6 ♞b6+ 25.♙h1 e3 it's just unclear, 1-0 (43) Zsinka, L – Loginov, V Oberwart 1997] 21...fxg4 22.e4 White is much better.

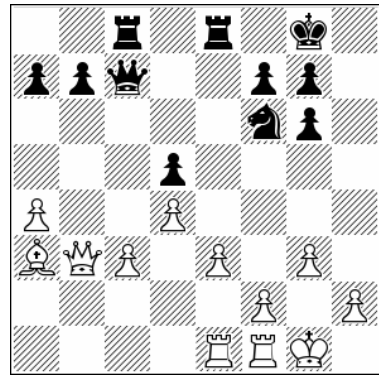
B2) 19...♘f6 20.f3

B2.1) 20...♞ad8 21.g4! White launches the attack. [21.♞e2 this was unclear in 0-1 (27) Kolesnikov, E – Bocharov, D Sochi 2004]

B2.2) 20...♞d7 21.g4! White's advantage is growing, 1-0 (25) Jussupow, A – Lobron, E Munich 1994.

19.♞ae1!? ♘f6

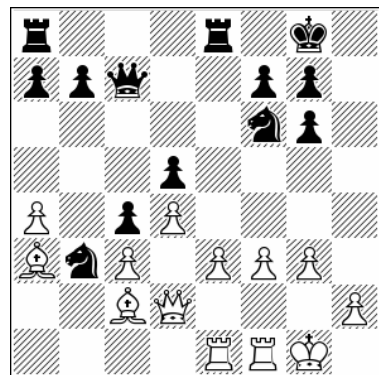
19...♘b3!? This is computer chess but it's not so clear that Black should play for a draw by simplifying the position. 20.♞d1 ♘f6!? See the previous note. 21.♙xb3 cxb3 22.♞xb3 ♞ac8



Position after: 22...♞ac8

White is a pawn up but it's not totally clear how he could play for a win. 23.a5 ♞xa5 24.♙c5 ♞c7 25.♙xa7 ♞d7 26.♙c5 ♘e4 27.♞b2 g5! 28.♞a1 Black has compensation for the pawn.

20.f3 ♘b3

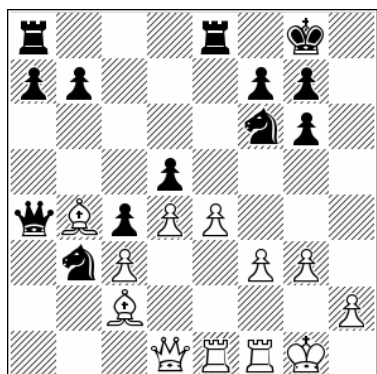


Position after: 20...♘b3

21.♞g2!N

In my opinion this is a critical improvement here. Other moves for White are not that strong.

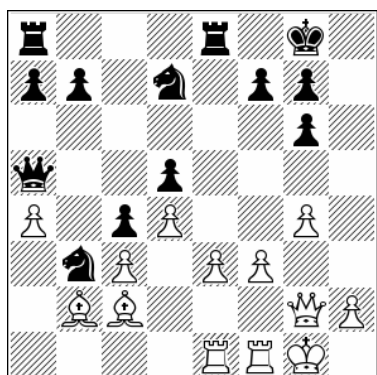
21.♔d1 An interesting and very important position. 21...♔a5!? This came as an improvement. 22.♙b4 ♖xa4 23.e4



Position after: 23.e4

23...a5 [23...♖e6 24.e5 a5 suddenly Black is much better] 24.♙d6 ♖e6 25.♙e5 ♔d7 26.♙xf6 ♖xf6 27.e5 ♖b6 28.f4 f5 29.exf6 ♖xf6 30.♙xb3 cxb3 31.♔xb3 a4 32.♔b4 b6 33.♖e5 ♖e6 34.♖a1 ♔h7 35.f5 gxf5 36.♖xf5 ♖ae8 37.♖e5 ♖xe5 38.dxe5 ♖xe5 39.♔xa4 ♔xa4 40.♖xa4 ♖e3 ½-½ (40) Gelfand, B (2741) – Eljanov, P (2751) Astrakhan 2010.

21...♔a5 22.♙b2 ♘d7 23.g4!



Position after: 23.g4!

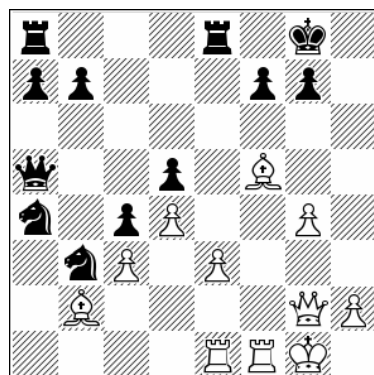
23...♘b6 24.f4

White has an attack here.

24...♘xa4 25.f5! gxf5

25...g5 26.f6 White wins.

26.♙xf5!?

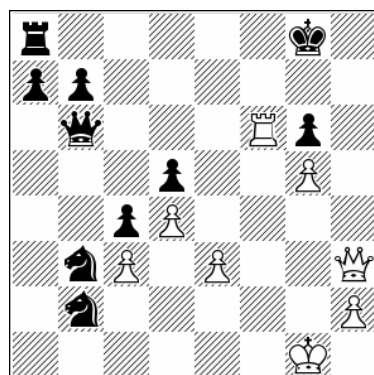


Position after: 26.♙xf5!?

White's initiative looks dangerous.

26...♘xc3

A) 26...♘xb2 27.♔h3 g6 28.♙xg6 f6 29.♖f6 ♔b6 30.♖ef1 ♖f8 31.g5 ♖xf6 32.♖xf6



Position after: 32.♖xf6

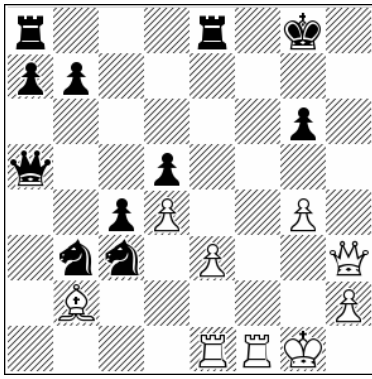
32...♘d3 [32...♔xf6 33.gxf6 ♔f7 34.♔g2 ♔xf6 35.♔xb2 this is much better for White] 33.♔h6 White is winning.

B) 26...g6 27.♙xg6 f6 28.♖f6 Black has worthwhile compensation.

C) 26...♔a6 27.g5 White's attack is in full swing.

D) 26...♖e7 27.♙a3 This position and the next one both favor White.

27.♔h3 g6 28.♙xg6 f6



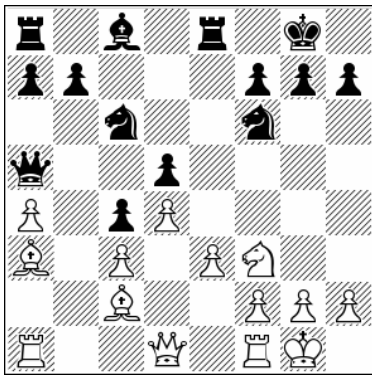
Position after: 28...fxg6

29.♖f6

The white attack is now a winning one.

c) 13...♙a5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 ♖c7
10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 ♖e8 12.♙a3 c4 13.♙c2 ♙a5



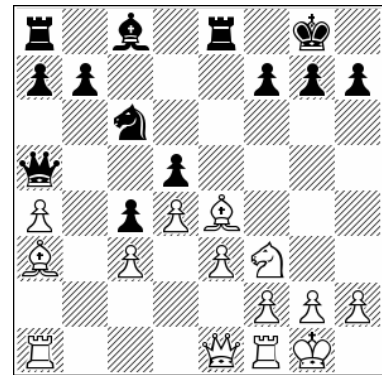
Position after: 13...♙a5

This is another important setup for Black.

14.♙c1

That's the main option but there is an alternative.

14.♙e1 ♘e4 [14...♙g4 15.♘h4! that is an important idea for White] 15.♙xe4



Position after: 15.♙xe4

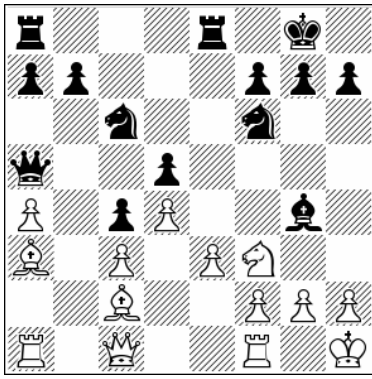
15...♖xe4! [15...dxe4 16.♘d2 ♙xc3 17.♙c1 ♙xc1 18.♖axc1!? ♘a5 19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.♖xc4 White has a passed d-pawn but whether he can profit from that is another matter. Still, we can't neglect that variation] 16.♘g5 ♖e8 17.♙b1 g6 18.♙b2 ♖d8 19.♘f3 ♙f5 20.♘d2 ♙d3 21.♖fe1 b6 22.f3 f5 Black is OK.

14...♙g4

Now White has several ideas and all of them are OK. The question is, which one gives White the most? I will stick to a main line that has been tested in practice.

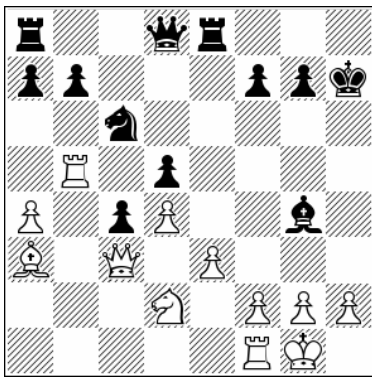
14...♘e4 15.♙xe4 ♖xe4 16.♘d2 ♖e8 17.e4 ♙e6 18.♖e1 ♙xa4 19.e5 ♘d8 20.♘f1 ♙d7 21.♙g5 White has strong compensation because he is ready to advance his f-pawn.

15.♘h1!?N



Position after: 15. ♖h1!?N

15. ♖b1 ♗e4 16. ♖b5 ♖d8 17. ♗d2 [17. ♗xe4 dxe4
18. ♗d2 ♗a5 19. ♖e1 another unclear position]
17... ♗xc3 18. ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 19. ♖xc3



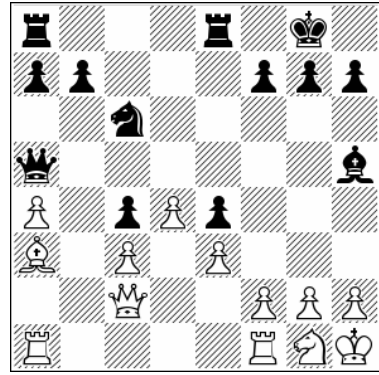
Position after: 19. ♖xc3

19... b6 [19... ♗e2 20. ♖e1 ♗d3 21. ♖xb7 this is less
clear, ½-½ (30) Korotylev, A (2615) – Almasi, Z
(2669) Moscow 2007] 20. ♖e1 a6 21. ♖b2 ♗f5
This is fine for Black.

15... ♗e4 16. ♗g1! ♗h5

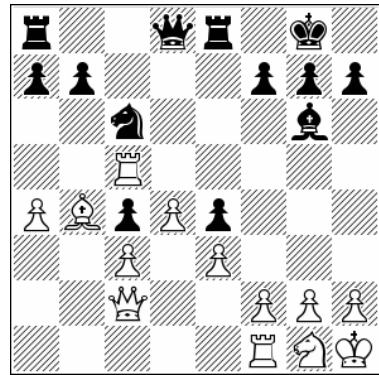
16... ♗xc3 17. f3 ♗d7 18. ♗b2 g6 19. ♖a3 White
has a big plus.

17. ♗xe4 dxe4 18. ♖c2



Position after: 18. ♖c2

**18... ♖c7 19. ♖ab1 ♗a5 20. ♖b5 ♗g6 21. ♖c5 ♖d8
22. ♗b4 ♗c6**



Position after: 22... ♗c6

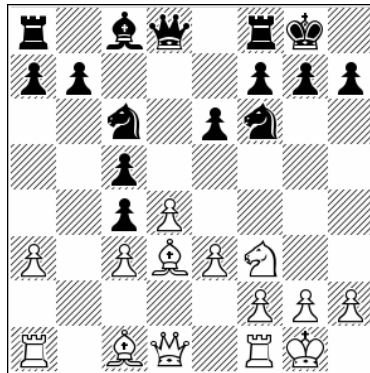
23. a5

White has the strong f4-square for his knight,
enough to give him a small advantage.

Chapter 10

8.a3 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4



Chapter Guide

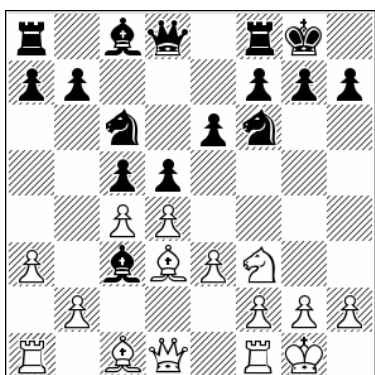
Chapter 10 – 8.a3 ♖xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 c5 6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♔c7

- a) 11.♙d3
- b) 11.h3 e5 12.♙a2
- c) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 e4
- d) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♙b5
- e) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♔e2 ♖ad8 14.♖ad1
- f) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♔e2 ♖ad8 14.♙a2
- g) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♔e2 ♖ad8 14.♖fd1

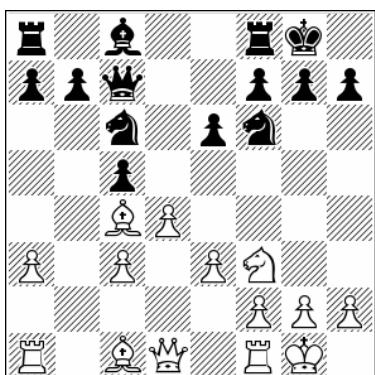
a) 11.♔d3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♔d3 c5
6.♗f3 d5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♘xc3



Position after: 8...♘xc3

9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♘xc4 ♖c7



Position after: 10...♖c7

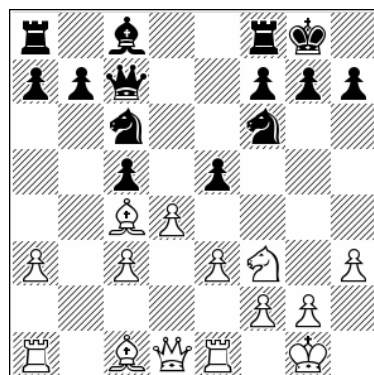
This is considered the real main line of the Nimzo now.

11.♔d3

This has been a famous main line for many decades and still is important for understanding the strategy here. I will mention a few other lines that are less played, but still worthy of investigation:

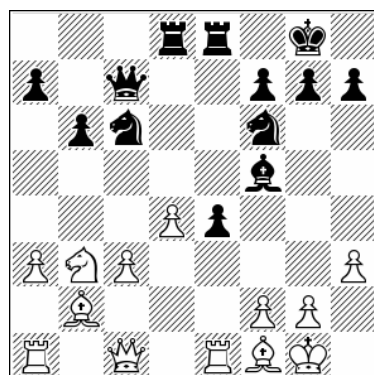
A) 11.a4 ♖d8 12.♘a3 b6 13.♘b5 ♘b7 14.♞e2
♗a5 15.♗e5 ♖ac8 16.♔d3 ♘e4 17.♘a6 ♘b7
18.♔d3 ♘e4 19.♘a6 ♘b7 Black keeps the
position balanced, ½-½ (19) Lombard, A (2340) –
Sokolov, A (2569) Switzerland 2010.

B) 11.h3 e5 12.♞e1!?



Position after: 12.♞e1!?

A rarely seen move that actually might be very interesting. 12...e4 [12...♔f5 13.e4! A surprising tactical stroke. 13...♔xe4 14.♗g5 ♘g6 15.dxe5 ♗xe5 16.♔f4 ♖fe8 17.♘b5 ♖ad8 18.♞a4 ♗fd7 19.♖ad1 White has the initiative.] 13.♗d2 ♔f5 14.♘b2 ♖ad8 15.♔f1 White gives his bishop a safe retreat, where it protects his kingside. 15...♖fe8 16.♞c1 b6 17.♗b3 It's not just about winning a pawn, it's more about going getting in c3-c4 to activate the bishop on b2. 17...cxd4 18.exd4!



Position after: 18.exd4!

White wants to have a mobile center which will be supported by the strong bishop on b2. 18...♗d5 19.c4 ♗f4 20.♞c3 ♖d6 21.♞e3 ♖g6 22.♞ae1 White has secured a better position, 1-0 (45) Nisipeanu, L (2644) – Vavric, P (2384) Mamaia 2021.

11...e5 12.♖c2

This is an important main line, known for many decades. It is crucial for Black to understand how to create counterplay in this particular line.

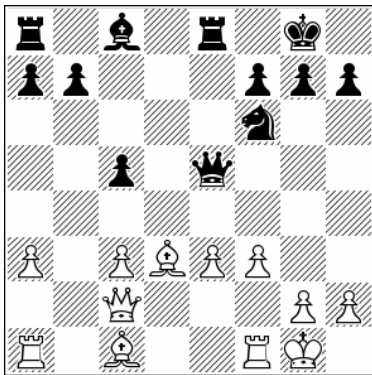
12...♞e8

The best move order.

12...♙g4 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♚xe5 15.f3 The same position with a tempo less.

13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♚xe5 15.f3

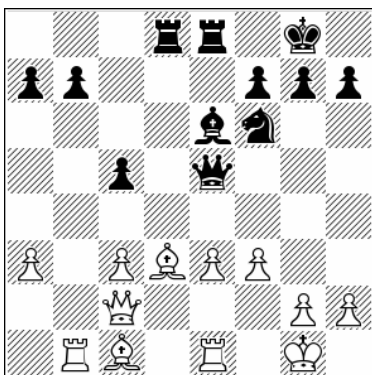
The two bishops and the potential building of a center still attract players to choose this system today and it can't be taken lightly. Black, on the other hand, is counting on fast development and harmonious organization of his pieces.



Position after: 15.f3

15...♙d7

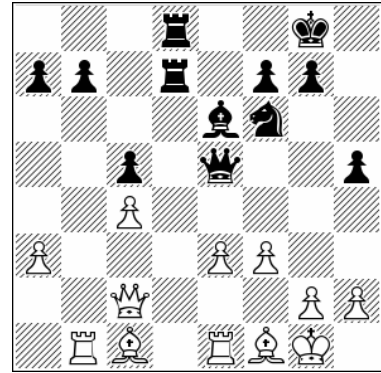
15...♙e6 Fighting for ...c4 ideas. 16.♞e1 ♞ad8 17.♞b1



Position after: 17.♞b1

A) 17...c4 18.♙f1 b6 19.e4 ♘d7 20.♙e3 ♘c5 21.♞bd1 f6 22.♞d4 White has some chances to create an advantage, ½-½ (42) Hort, V (2620) – Spassky, B (2610) Reykjavik 1977.

B) 17...♞e7 18.c4! ♞ed7 19.♙f1! h5

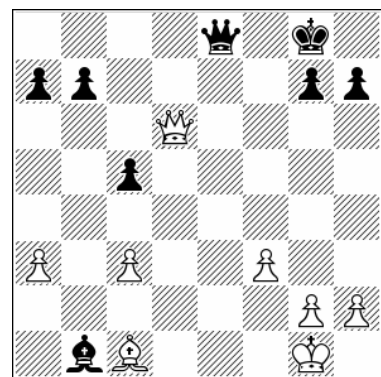


Position after: 19...h5

20.♞f2! This is the plan for White now. The bishop can go c3, or White could play the simple e4 followed by bishop to e3. We see here that the bishop on e6 is somehow in the way of the other black pieces.

C) 17...♞d5 18.♙b5

C1) 18...♙f5 19.e4 ♘xe4 20.♙xe8 ♘d6 21.♞e2 ♙xb1 22.♞e7 ♞a8 23.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 24.♞xd6 ♞e8 25.♞xe8+ ♞xe8



Position after: 25...♞xe8

After a more or less forced sequence of moves White is a pawn up but opposite-colored bishops are on the board. 26.♙f2 White can generate some play but to be honest Black has great chances to equalize here. [26.♞d5+ ♙f8

27. ♖xc5+ ♗e7 28. ♗f2 ♖d6 29. ♗e3 ♗b6 30. ♔f2 ♗xe3+ 31. ♔xe3 ♕f5 this is just a draw, ½-½ (31) Gligoric, S (2565) – Olafsson, F (2560) Bad Lauterberg 1977] 26...b6 27. ♕f4 There's still plenty of play left in this game.

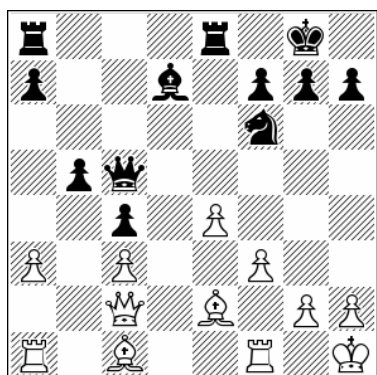
C2) 18...♕d7! 19.c4 ♗e6 20.♕xd7 ♖xd7 21.e4 b6 22.♕e3 h5 23.a4 ♖ed8 We can say that this is a balanced game.

White can choose between two moves, both aiming for the same thing but tactically bit different.

16.a4

16.e4

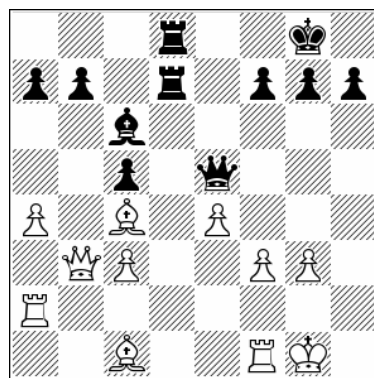
A) 16...c4 17.♕e2 ♗c5+ 18.♔h1 b5



Position after: 18...b5

19.♖d1! The rook is heading to the excellent d4-square. [19.♕f4 ♖h5 this is hardly critical, ½-½ (19) Peralta, F (2612) – Nikolov, M (2542) Navalmoral 2012] 19...♕c6 20.♖d4 ♖d7 21.♕f4 ♖f8 22.♕d6 ♗g5 23.♗d2 White might have some chances here.

B) 16...♖ad8 17.a4 ♕c6 And now with 18.♖e1 the game would most likely transpose to other lines. 18.♕c4!? ♖d7 19.♗b3 [19.♖a2 An interesting setup. The early draw agreement doesn't tell us much about the position. One of the possible drawbacks here for White is that he has no heavy pieces on the d-file, ½-½ (19) Spassky, B (2615) – Sosonko, G (2545) Tilburg 1980] 19...♖ed8 20.♖a2 ♖h5 21.g3 ♖xg3 22.hxg3



Position after: 22.hxg3

22...♖d2! A famous draw, ½-½ (26) Portisch, L (2625) – Spassky, B (2610) Geneva 1977.

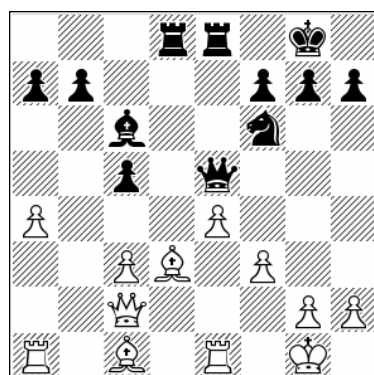
16...♖ad8 17.♖e1

17.e4 ♕c6 18.♕c4 ♖d7 This could transpose to the note 16.e4.

17...♕c6

This is a vital defensive idea for Black. The bishop is not only defending the b7-pawn, but also hitting the white e4-pawn and applying pressure on the long light-squared diagonal, which Black could later try to open with ...g5 or ...h5-h4-h3 ideas.

18.e4



Position after: 18.e4

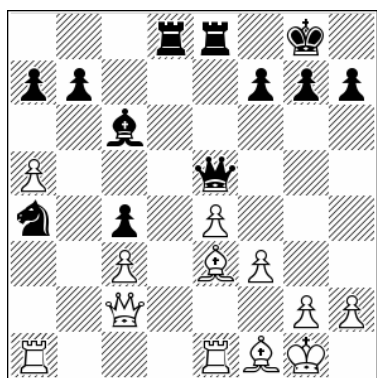
18.♕f1 h5 19.e4 h4 20.♕e3 ♗h5 21.♗f2 ♖d7 22.h3 b6 23.a5 It's not a lot but that is definitely the right idea here, 1-0 (40) Marin, M (2549) – Pantaleoni, C (2156) Porto Mannu 2013.

18...♖d5

18...h5 19.♙e3 h4 20.h3 ♘h5 21.♖ad1 ♗f4
 22.♙f1 b6 23.♞xd8 ♞xd8 24.♞d1 ♞xd1 25.♞xd1
 ♗e6 Same situation here, ½-½ (25) Gligoric, S –
 Averbakh, Y Portoroz 1958.

19.♙d2 ♗f4

19...♗b6 20.a5 c4 21.♙f1 ♗a4 22.♙e3!



Position after: 22.♙e3!

22...♞xa5 23.♙xc4 ♞xc3 24.♞xc3 ♗xc3 25.♞xa7
 White has an advantage on account of his
 bishop pair, ½-½ (59) Hawkins, J (2511) –
 Dorrington, C (2315) England 2013.

20.♙c4!?

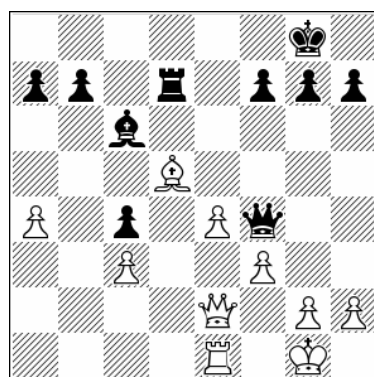
This is logical; the bishop is active here.

20.♙f1 g5 21.♙e3 h5 22.a5 ♞e6 23.g3 ♗g6
 24.♙g2 h4 25.♞f2 hxg3 26.hxg3 ♞ed6 27.♞ac1
 b6 Black has good control of the center, 0-1 (39)
 Jussupow, A (2665) – Beliavsky, A (2650) Munich
 1994.

20...♞d6

A) 20...♞g5 21.♙e3 ♞d7 22.g3 ♗h3+ 23.♔g2
 ♞h5 24.♞ad1 ♗g5 25.♙xg5 ♞xg5 26.♞xd7 ♙xd7
 27.♞d1 Just a small edge for White.

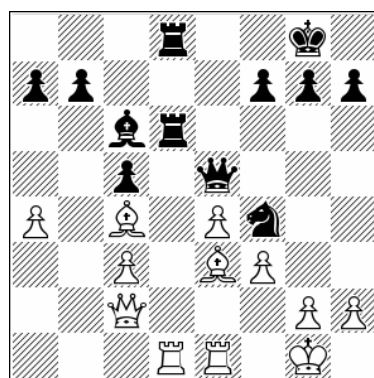
B) 20...♞d7 21.♞ad1 ♞ed8 22.♙xf4 ♞xf4 23.♞xd7
 ♞xd7 24.♙d5 c4 25.♞e2



Position after: 25.♞e2

25...h6! [25...♞e5 26.♙xc6 ♞c5+ 27.♞f2 ♞xc6
 28.♞xa7 h6 Black can handle such positions
 despite being a pawn down, 0-1 (56) Gallardo
 Retortillo, E (2183) – Hernandez Carmenates, H
 (2541) Merida 2010] 26.♙xc6 bxc6 27.♞xc4 ♞d2
 This is just good, active play by Black.

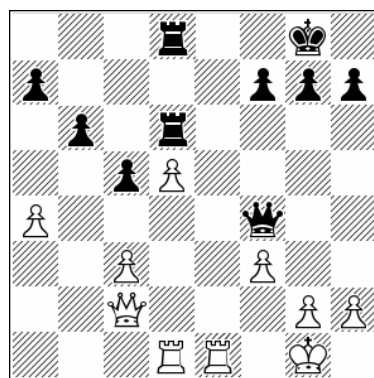
21.♞ad1 ♞ed8 22.♙e3



Position after: 22.♙e3

22...h5!

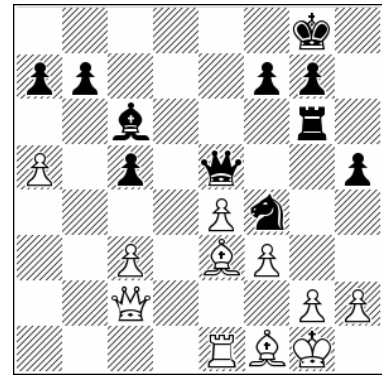
22...b6 23.♙xf4!? ♞xf4 24.♙d5 ♙xd5 25.exd5



Position after: 25.exd5

If White manages to get in c3-c4 then his advantage will be clear. 25...c4 26.♖e4 ♔g5 27.♚e2 g6 28.♖e8+ ♖xe8 29.♚xe8+ ♔g7 30.♚e4 White will get his pawn to c4.

23.♖xd6 ♖xd6 24.a5 ♖g6 25.♙f1



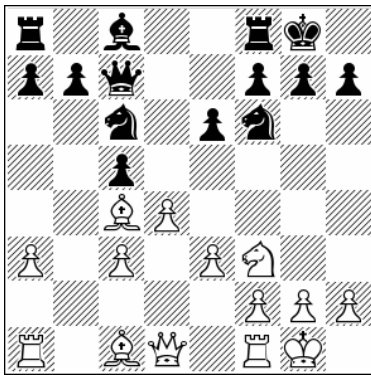
Position after: 25.♙f1

25...h4

Black is doing OK.

b) 11.h3 e5 12.♙a2

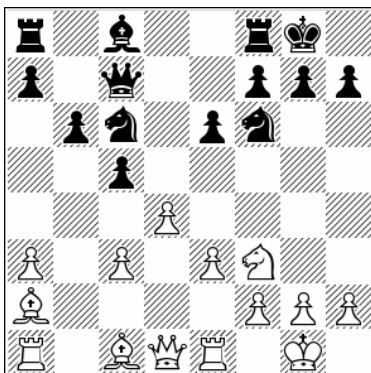
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♚c7



Position after: 10...♚c7

11.h3

It might be that playing 11.♙a2 first is better; I'm not sure. 11...b6 [11...e5 12.h3 this is simply a transposition] 12.♖e1!?



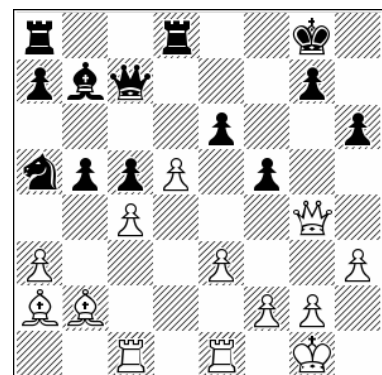
Position after: 12.♖e1!?

That's different from the Aronian – Naiditsch game below. 12...e5 [12...♙b7 13.e4 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♘a5 15.e5 ♘e4 16.♘g5 ♘xg5 17.♙xg5 this looks strong for White] 13.e4 ♙g4 14.dxc5!? bxc5 15.h3 ♖ad8 16.♚e2 ♙xf3 17.♚xf3 Two bishops versus two knights, but the knights don't have good squares, 1-0 (57) Kasparov, G (2795) – Kramnik, V (2740) Linares 1997.

11...e5

Best by far, but Black can try something slightly different.

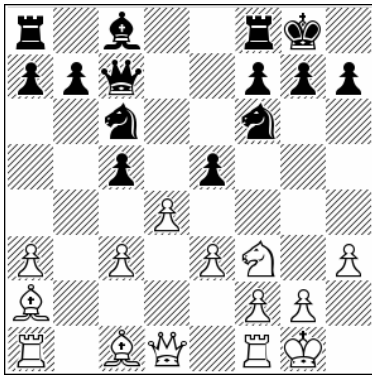
11...b6 12.♙a2 ♖d8 13.♙b2 ♙b7 14.♖e1 ♘a5 15.♖c1 h6 16.♘d2 ♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♙xe4 18.c4 ♙b7 19.d5 b5 20.♚g4 f5



Position after: 20...f5

21. ♖g6 White is looking very good here, 1-0 (49) Aronian, L (2768) – Naiditsch, A (2697) Mainz 2009.

12. ♖a2

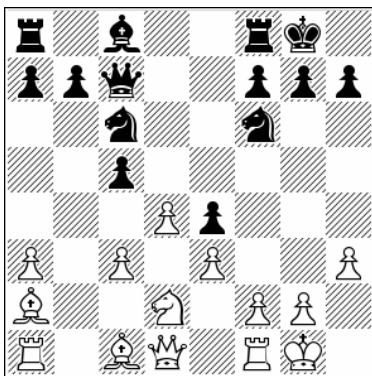


Position after: 12. ♖a2

The idea behind this move order is to play d4-d5 quickly.

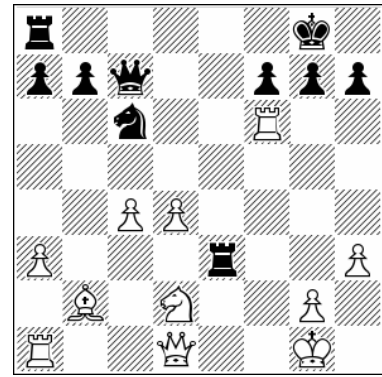
12... ♗f5

12... e4 13. ♖d2



Position after: 13. ♖d2

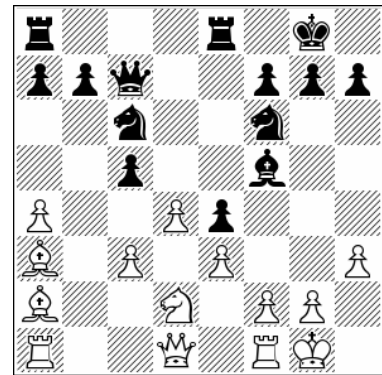
A) 13... ♖e8!? 14. ♗b2 ♗e6!? That's the plan, but it's not that strong. 15. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 16. c4! cxd4 17. exd4 e3 [17... ♖e8 18. d5 ♖e5 19. ♖e1 ♖d3 20. ♗xf6 White wins] 18. fxe3 ♖xe3 19. ♖xf6!



Position after: 19. ♖xf6!

19... gxf6 20. ♖g4+ ♖h8 [20... ♗f8 21. ♖f1 ♖e6 22. ♖h1 White has strong compensation for the sacrificed exchange, ½-½ (112) Stockfish 8 64 POPC – Kuhne, B Internet (blitz) 2016] 21. ♖f5 ♖ae8 22. ♖xf6+ ♖g8 23. ♖g5+ ♖f8 24. d5 ♖g3 25. ♖h6+ ♖g8 26. ♖f6 ♖e5 27. ♖h1 ♖g6 28. ♖f4 That's one possible example of how to handle this line.

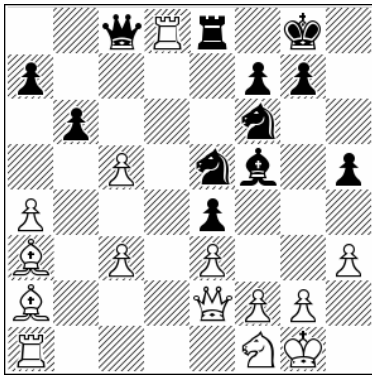
B) 13... ♗f5 14. a4!? [14. ♗b2 ♖ad8 15. ♖e2 this transposes to the 11. ♗b2 line, where White was able to provoke ...e4 and could generate play when the position was semi-blocked.] 14... ♖fe8 15. ♗a3!



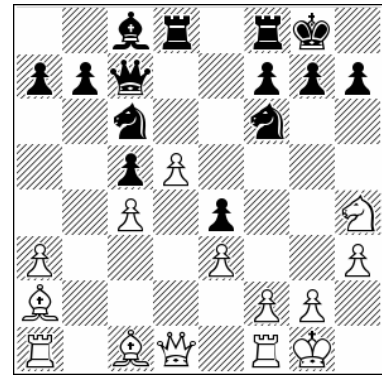
Position after: 15. ♗a3!

This might be a significant difference between the 11. ♗b2 and 11. ♗a2 lines. Here White can profit from not losing time with ♗b2 and then ♗a3. 15... b6 16. ♖e2 ♖ad8 17. ♖fd1

B1) 17... ♖c8 18. ♖f1 h5 19. dxc5 ♖e5 20. ♖xd8



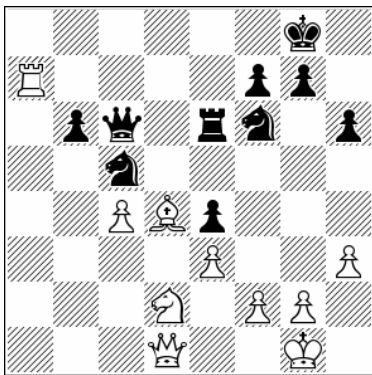
Position after: 20...Rxd8



Position after: 15...Bc8

20...Wxd8 [20...Rxd8 21.cxb6 axb6 22.Bxe7! Rd3 23.Bxf6 gxf6 24.Wxh5 White is better] 21.cxb6 axb6 22.Ng3 Bg6 23.Wb5! Now the knight can reach the important e2-square if Black plays ...h4.

B2) 17...Be6 18.Bxe6!?N 18...Rxe6 19.dxc5 Ne5 20.cxb6 axb6 21.c4 Ra8 22.Bb2 Wc6 23.Bd4 Rxa4 24.Rxa4 Wxa4 25.Ra1 Wc6 26.Ra6 Ne7 27.Wd1 h6 28.Ra7 Nc5



Position after: 28...Nc5

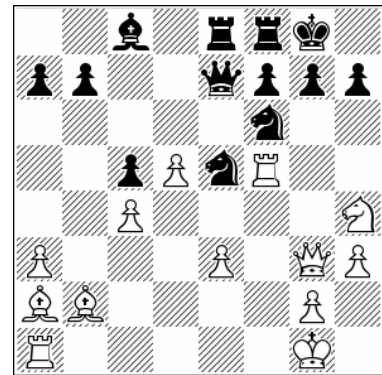
29.Nb1! White is dictating the rhythm in this game.

13.d5 Rxd8 14.Nh4!?N

14.c4 e4 15.Nh4 Best. 15...Bc8

A) 16.f4 b5! 17.Bb2 bxc4 18.Bxf6 gxf6 19.Wh5 Ne7 20.Bxc4 Rh8 21.d6 Rxd6 22.Bxf7 f5 23.Rfd1 [23.g4?! c4! Black gets the upper hand, 0-1 (40) Wojtaszek, R (2721) – Sasikiran, K (2676) Lublin 2011] 23...Rf6 24.Bc4 Ba6 25.Bxa6 Rxa6 26.Rac1 There are some dangers here for Black.

B) 16.Bb2!?N 16...We7 17.f4 exf3 18.Wxf3 Ne5 19.Wg3 Rde8 20.Rf5!?

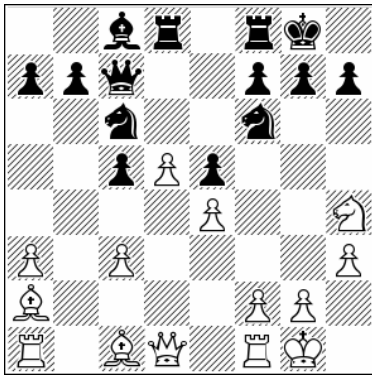


Position after: 20...Rf5!?

An unusual tactical idea. 20...Ng6 21.Rxf6! gxf6 22.Re1 White has strong play here.

14...Ne7

A) 14...Bc8 15.e4!

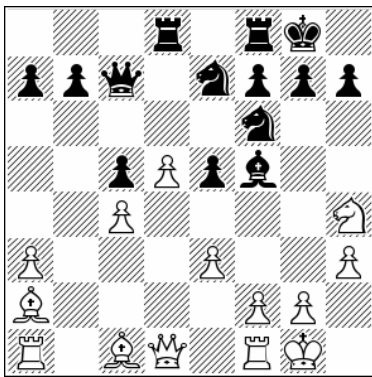


Position after: 15.e4!

A strong idea. 15...♖a5 16.♞e1 b6 17.♙g5 ♗d6 18.f4 It's looking good for White.

B) 14...♙e4 15.c4 ♘e7 16.♙b2 ♘g6 17.♘xg6 ♙xg6 18.f4 exf4 19.exf4 ♙e4 20.♙e5 ♗c8 21.♗e1 ♞fe8 22.♗g3 White is better.

15.c4

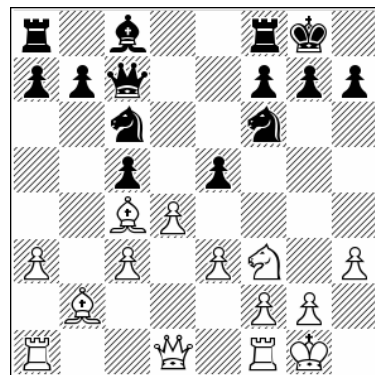


Position after: 15.c4

15...e4

c) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 e4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♗c7 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2



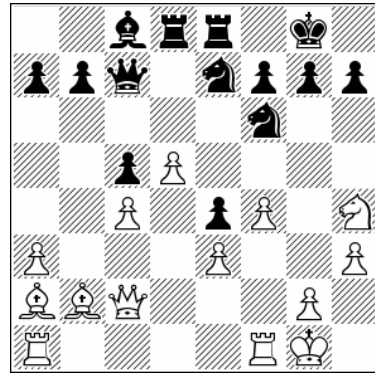
Position after: 12.♙b2

15...♘e4 16.♙b2 f6 17.♘xf5 ♘xf5 18.♙b1 ♘ed6 19.♙xf5 ♘xf5 20.♗c2 ♘d6 21.e4 b6 22.a4 White has a favorable position.

16.♗c2

Compared with the Wojtaszek – Sasikiran game given under note 14.c4, it looks to me that this is an improved version for White.

16...♙c8 17.♙b2 ♞fe8 18.f4



Position after: 18.f4

18...♘g6

18...exf3 19.♞xf3 ♘g6 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♗f2 White's attack is gathering steam.

19.♘xg6 hxg6 20.a4

White is better.

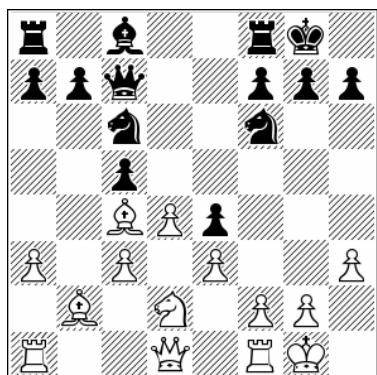
This is one of the main formations for White. It includes several plans: one is to play bishop to b5, another is to play queen to e2 followed by moving the bishop to either b5 or a2, and finally we have a separate plan to move 12.♔a2 at once.

12...e4

First we deal with this idea. Black closes the center at once instead of keeping it flexible for a while. We will analyze in depth the main option here and that is 12...♙f5, covered in the next two subchapters.

12...b6 13.♙a2 ♙a6 14.♖e1 e4 15.♘d2 ♖ad8 16.f3 exf3 17.♗xf3 ♘e5 18.dxe5 ♗xd2 19.exf6 ♖xb2 20.♗g4 White has an attack, 1-0 (30) Pelletier, Y (2583) – Volokitin, A (2662) Biel 2006.

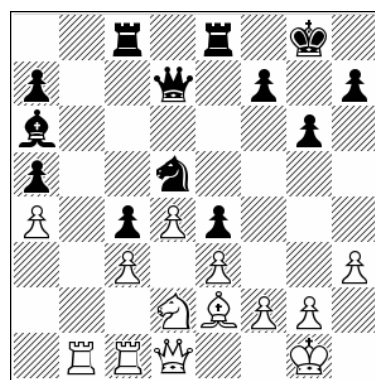
13.♘d2



Position after: 13.♘d2

13...♙f5

A) 13...♘a5 14.♙e2!? Best in my opinion. 14...c4 15.♗c2 ♖e8 16.a4 b6 17.♙a3 ♙a6 18.♖ab1 ♖ac8 19.♙b4 Black has certain problems in defending his e4- and c4-pawns. 19...g6 20.♙xa5 bxa5 21.♖fc1 ♗d7 22.♗d1 ♘d5

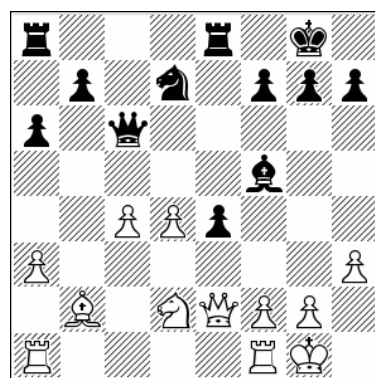


Position after: 22...♘d5

23.♘b3! This small tactic gives White the advantage. It is important to understand how to handle such positions with both colors; bad plans lead to bad positions.

B) 13...♖e8 14.♗e2 In this system the queen belongs on e2, rarely anywhere else.

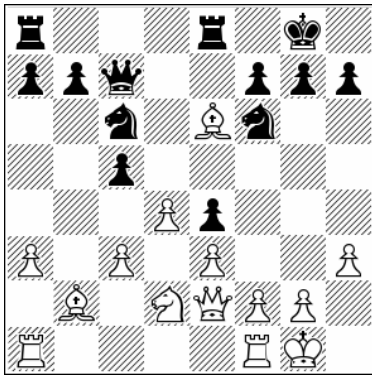
B1) 14...♙f5 15.♙b5 a6 16.♙xc6 ♗xc6 17.c4 cxd4 18.exd4 ♘d7



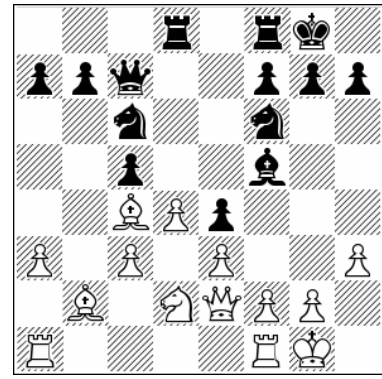
Position after: 18...♘d7

19.a4! [19.♗e3 b5 not so clear, ½-½ (44) Agrest, E (2601) – Beliavsky, A (2667) Konin 2004] 19...♗g6 20.♖a3 That's the point. White is doing fine.

B2) 14...♙e6 15.♙xe6!



Position after: 15. ♗xe6!



Position after: 14... ♖ad8

15... ♖xe6 16. c4 cxd4 17. exd4 ♖e7 18. d5 ♗e5 19. ♖ac1! ♗ed7 20. ♗e3 ♖ee8 21. ♗b3 This looks good for White, as there is constant pressure on the knight on f6.

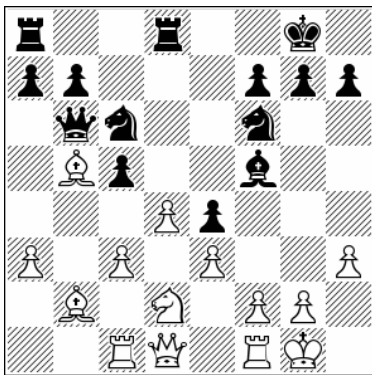
15. ♗b3!?

Trying to profit from this move order, where White has not yet placed any rook on d1 or c1.

14. ♗e2

White has other ideas here.

A) 14. ♖c1 ♖fd8 15. ♗b5 ♗b6?!



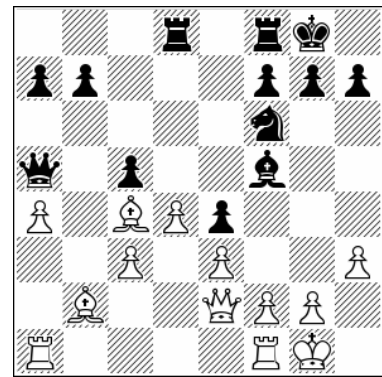
Position after: 15... ♗b6?!

16. ♗xc6 bxc6 17. ♖b1 ♗c7 18. ♖c1 ♗b6 19. ♖b1 cxd4 20. cxd4 ♖d5 21. ♗c2 ♖c8 22. ♖fc1 h6 23. ♗f1 ♗e6 24. a4 ♗a6 25. ♗a3 White has extracted some advantage, ½-½ (41) Wang Rui (2432) – Wei Yi (2299) Qinhuangdao 2011.

B) 14. ♖e1 Then we transpose to the Nisipeanu game in the sideline given as 11. h3 e5 12. ♖e1!?.

14... ♖ad8

15... ♗a5 16. ♗xa5 ♗xa5 17. a4

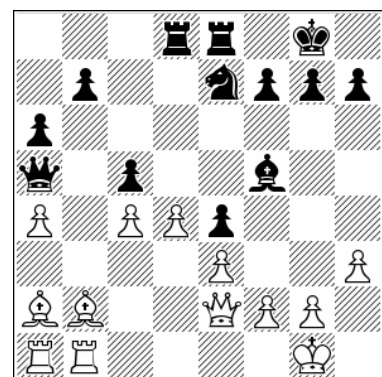


Position after: 17. a4

17... ♗d5

17... cxd4 18. cxd4 ♗e6 19. ♗xe6 fxe6 20. ♖fc1 ♖c8 21. ♗a3 ♖fe8 22. ♖c5 ♖xc5 23. dxc5 White is going well here.

18. ♗a2 a6 19. ♖fb1 ♖fe8 20. c4 ♗e7



Position after: 20... ♗e7

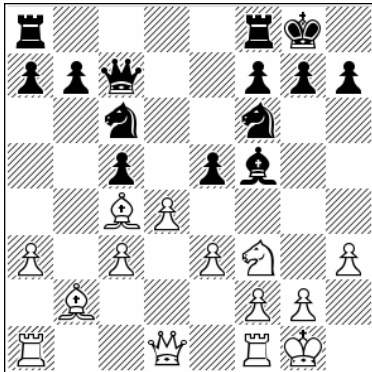
21.d5

Now, when White has created a target on b7 (due to the ...a6 move, which was played to keep

the white queen out of b5) we can say that White has better chances.

d) 11.h3 e5 12.♖b2 ♗f5 13.♖b5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 d5
 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4
 10.♗xc4 ♚c7 11.h3 e5 12.♖b2 ♗f5



Position after: 12...♗f5

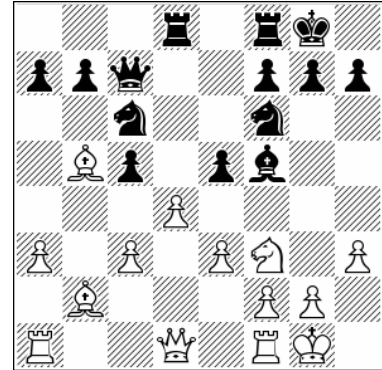
This is a main line and it's very sharp, with many ideas for both sides. Black doesn't need to close the center but instead can get on with developing his rooks. His main plan is to place a bishop on g6, threatening to catch the white queen in a pin with bishop to h5! That's the main worry for White, who on the other hand must find a way to open lines for the bishop on b2 and generate play on the queenside.

13.♖b5

We deal here exclusively with this idea, which can arise from various move orders.

13...e4

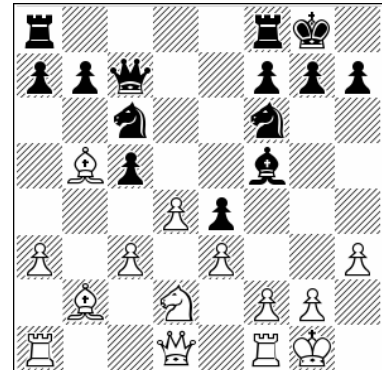
13...♞ad8!?



Position after: 13...♞ad8!?

14.♚e2 [14.♗xc6 exd4! 15.cxd4 ♚xc6 16.♚e2 ♘e4 17.a4 with balanced play] 14...e4 15.♘d2
 This simply transposes to the main line.

14.♘d2

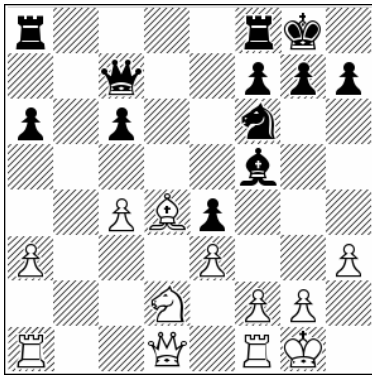


Position after: 14.♘d2

14...♞ad8

That is Black's main point. Another important aspect is that this position can arise after 13.♚e2 ♞ad8 14.♖b5 as well.

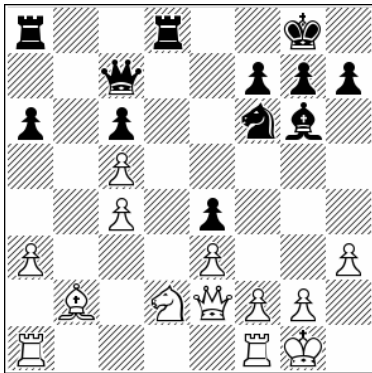
A) 14...a6 15.♗xc6 ♚xc6 [15...bxc6 16.c4 cxd4 17.♗xd4!



Position after: 17. ♖xd4!

17... ♗d7 18.c5! ♜fd8 19. ♖c2 ♗e5 20. ♗xe4 White can safely take the pawn on e4, with better play] 16.c4 cxd4 17. ♖xd4 White has a small pull here, as has been shown in a few games. 17... ♗d7 [17...b5 18. ♖c1 ♜ac8 19.cxb5 ♖xb5 20. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 21. ♖xf6 gxf6 22. ♗xe4 White is a pawn up, ½-½ (75) Spraggett, K (2571) – Dias, P (2394) Figueira da Foz 2010] 18.a4 ♖g6 19. ♖b1 ♗c5 20. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖xb7 ♜ad8 22. ♜fd1 ♜d3 23. ♗xe4 ♖xc4 24. ♗d6 White has an edge, ½-½ (50) Potkin, V (2634) – Hernandez Carmenates, H (2543) Havana 2010.

B) 14... ♜fd8 15. ♖e2 a6 16. ♖xc6 bxc6 17.c4 ♖g6 18.dxc5!



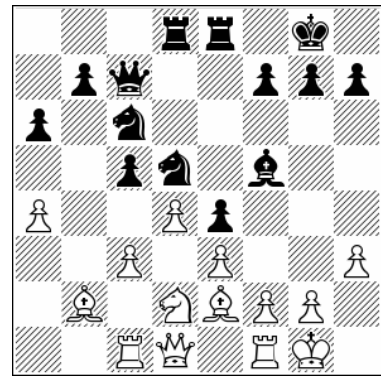
Position after: 18.dxc5!

Opening the diagonal for the bishop is important. 18... ♗d7 19. ♖d4 White is slightly better, 1-0 (35) Potkin, V (2609) – Kiselev, V (2504) Moscow 2008.

15. ♖e2

There are always alternatives.

A) 15.a4 a6 16. ♖e2 ♜fe8 17. ♖c1 ♗d5!



Position after: 17... ♗d5!

Black needs to be careful with this idea when a4 has been played. 18. ♖a3 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♖xh3 20.gxh3 ♗xe3 Black is fine.

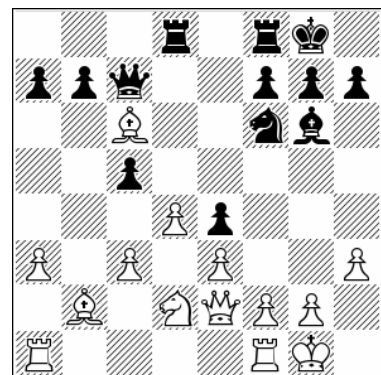
B) 15. ♖c1 ♖g6 16. ♜e1 ♜d5 17. ♖e2 ♜e8 18.c4 ♜dd8 19.d5 ♗e5 20.a4 ♜e7 21. ♗f1 A draw was agreed here in Ponomariov, R – L'Ami, E 2011. The final position is unclear, though White might have a few chances.

15... ♖g6

A) 15...a6 16. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 17.c4 ♜fe8 18.a4 ♗d7 19. ♜fe1 a5 20. ♖c3 b6 21. ♖h5 ♖g6 22. ♖h4 Another solid though small edge for White, 1-0 (39) Lautier, J (2670) – Timoshenko, G (2539) Moscow 2003.

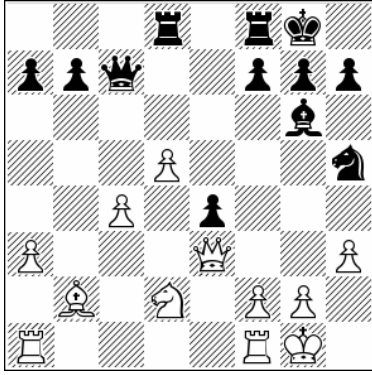
B) 15... ♗a5 16.c4 cxd4 17.exd4 ♗d7 18. ♖e3 a6 19. ♖xd7 ♜xd7 20. ♖ac1 White is much better, 1-0 (39) Kaidanov, G (2629) – Lerner, K (2507) Moscow 2003.

16. ♖xc6!?



Position after: 16. ♖xc6!?

16...♖xc6 17.c4 cxd4 18.exd4!? ♘h5 19.d5 ♖c7
20.♗e3



Position after: 20.♗e3

20...f5

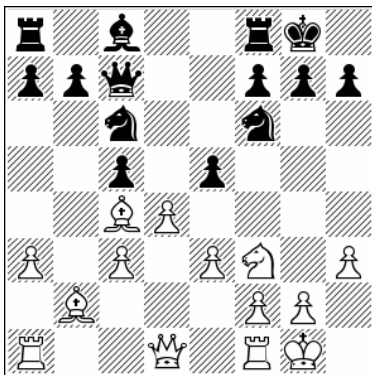
20...♗f4 21.a4! ♗d3 22.♙d4 f5 23.f4 It's a razor-sharp position, but the good position of the queen on e3 enables White can count on his f2-f4 move to stop the advance of the black pawns on the kingside.

21.f4 exf3 22.♙e5 ♖d7 23.♗xf3

White is better.

e) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♖e2 ♖ad8 14.♖ad1

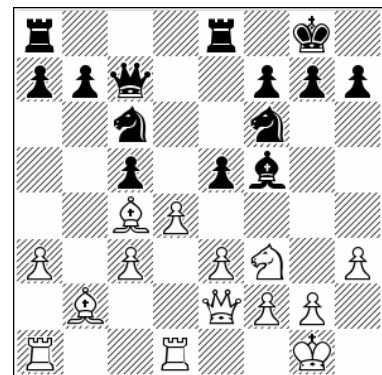
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♗f3 c5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4
10.♙xc4 ♖c7 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2



Position after: 12.♙b2

A) 13...e4 14.♗d2 The game will transpose to various positions analyzed here.

B) 13...♖fe8 14.♖fd1



Position after: 14.♖fd1

12...♙f5 13.♖e2

This is another setup, in which White does not play a quick 13.♙b5. Instead he first develops, keeping all his options open as to where the rooks will go and also where the light-squared bishop will go from c4.

13...♖ad8

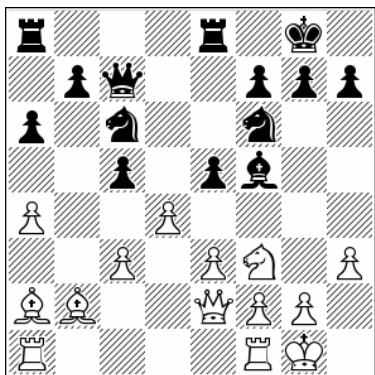
This seems to be critical for the 11.♙b2 line. Some options we have already analyzed under different move orders, but there are also some others.

B1) 14...e4 15.♗d2 ♙g6 16.♗b3 cxd4 [16...b6 17.♙b5 ♙h5 18.g4 ♙g6 19.c4 cxd4 20.♗xd4 ♗xd4 21.♙xd4 ♖ed8 22.♖ac1 here g4 is not seen as bad structurally, because it gives White active play] 17.cxd4 ♙h5 18.g4 ♙g6 19.♖ac1 ♖d6 20.♗c5 ♖ab8 21.♙b5 Although Black provoked g4, weakening the white kingside position to some extent, the game gets an open character, which helps White to step up the pressure.

B2) 14...♖ad8 15.♙b5 This, of course, could not be played in the ♙a2 line. 15...e4 16.♙xc6 bxc6 17.♗e5 ♖b8 18.a4 ♗d5 19.♖dc1 f6 20.♗c4 ♙c8 21.♙a3 ♙a6 22.♖a2 This favors White, 1-0 (31)

Swiercz, D (2488) – Arutinian, D (2576) Rijeka 2010.

C) 13...a6 14.a4 ♖fe8 15.♗a2

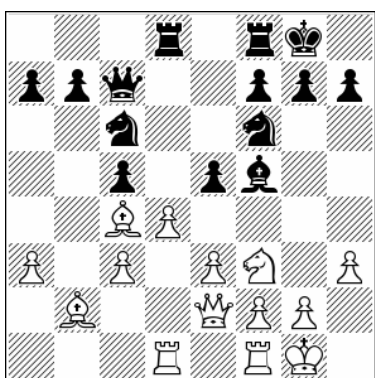


Position after: 15.♗a2

15...♗e6 [15...cxd4 16.cxd4 e4 17.♘e5 ♗e6 18.♖fc1 ♗b6 19.♘c4 ♗a7 20.♗a3 ♖ad8 21.♖ab1 ♗b8 22.♗b2 ♗d5 23.♗c5 ♘e7 24.♘a5 ♖d7 25.♗xe7 1-0 (25) Kovalenko, I (2578) – Voronov, Y (2294) Yuzhny 2011] 16.♗xe6 ♖xe6 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♗xe5 19.c4 ♗e4 ½-½ Potkin, V – Tiviakov, S Warsaw 2005, but White could have played on after 20.♖fd1.

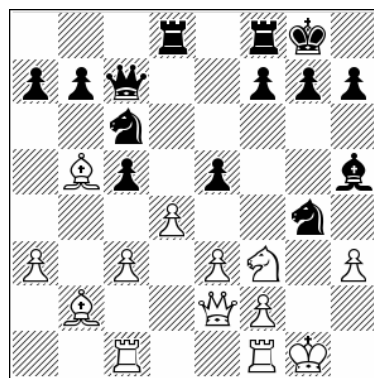
Now we deal with two moves that are less common but can nevertheless probably give White chances to play for an advantage.

14.♖ad1



Position after: 14.♖ad1

14.♖ac1 ♗g6!?N In my opinion this is a key idea for Black, a useful waiting move that also improves his position. 15.♗b5 ♗h5 16.g4 ♘xg4



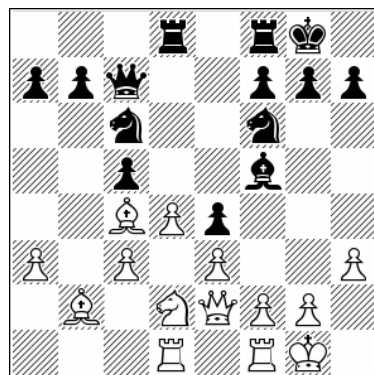
Position after: 16...♘xg4

17.hxg4 ♗xg4 Black has compensation, and this type of play must be taken very seriously.

14...e4

14...♗e4 15.♗a1 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 e4 17.♗e2 ♘a5 18.dxc5 ♗xc5 19.♗a2 ♗xa3 20.c4 ♗e7 21.♖b1 Just unclear, ½-½ (64) Vescovi, G (2631) – Ivanov, A (2527) Sao Paulo 2009.

15.♘d2



Position after: 15.♘d2

15...♗g6!

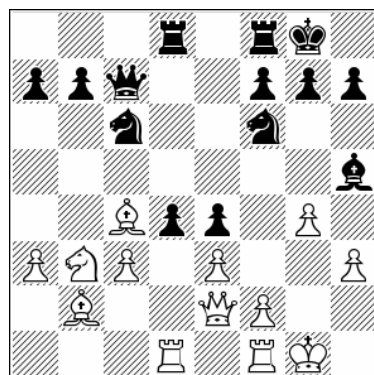
15...♖fe8 16.♗a2 With similar ideas as seen in other games. Making the b5-square available for the queen is logical and best. [16.f3 This is not a good plan. 16...exf3 17.♖xf3 ♗g6 18.♗f2 ♘a5 19.♗a2 c4 Black is better, all the squares in the center are taken now, ½-½ (46) Flores, D (2569) – Quiroga, F (2335) Villa Martelli 2008]

16.♘b3 ♗h5!

This idea of just ignoring the pressure on the c5 pawn is a very important one, and I mention it also in similar positions.

16...♘a5 17.♘xa5 ♖xa5 This is far less clear, ½-½ (31) Sadler, C – Morrell, G corr. 2015.

17.g4 cxd4!!



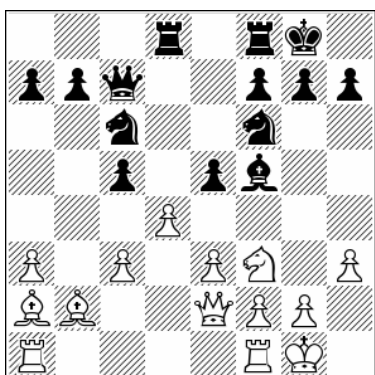
Position after: 17...cxd4!!

18.cxd4 b5! 19.♙xb5 ♜d5 20.♙xc6 ♖xc6

Black has a strong attack.

f) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♖e2 ♜ad8 14.♙a2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4
10.♙xc4 ♖c7 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♖e2 ♜ad8
14.♙a2!?



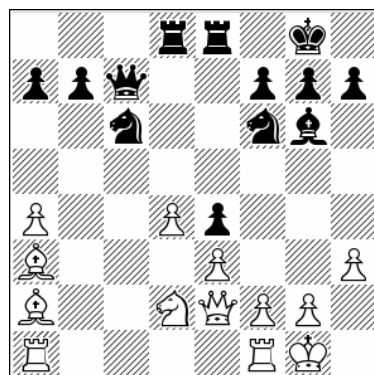
Position after: 14.♙a2!?

A useful waiting move. White does not yet have to decide whether the f1-rook will go to c1 or d1.

14...♞fe8!?

In my opinion this is also a challenging line for White. In this move order Black can still maintain pressure with this or 14...♙g6.

A) 14...e4 15.♘d2 ♙g6 16.a4 ♞fe8 17.♙a3 cxd4 18.cxd4



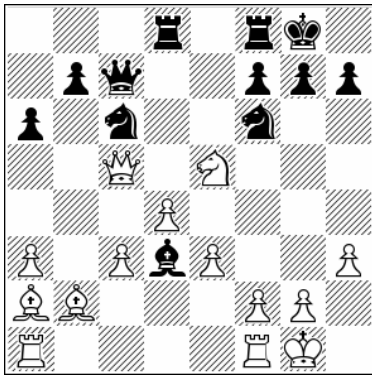
Position after: 18.cxd4±

White has got exactly what he wants, as Black gave him a free hand. 18...♖a5 19.♞fc1 ♘e7 20.♘c4 ♖g5 21.♘d6 ♞f8 22.♘xf7 1-0 (22) Zhao Zong Yuan (2461) – Van Riemsdijk, H (2353) Queenstown 2006.

B) 14...♙g6!? This is yet another challenging line here. 15.♖b5

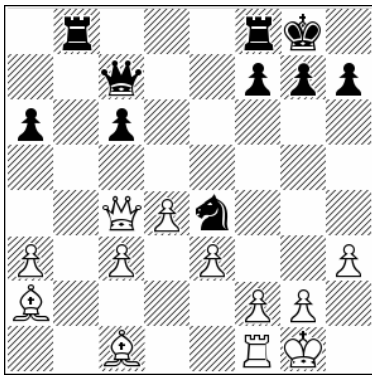
B1) 15...♙h5!? Again Black provokes g4, which actually is not something that White really wants to do in the early stages of the game. 16.g4 ♙g6 17.♞ad1 ♙c2 18.♖xc5 ♙xd1 19.♞xd1 ♞fe8 This is also good for Black, ½-½ (33) Balta, M – Sokolov, E corr. 2013.

B2) 15...a6!? 16.♖xc5 ♙d3 17.♘xe5



Position after: 17. ♖xe5

17... ♗xf1 [17... ♖e4 18. ♖xf8+ ♗f8 19. ♖xd3 ♖a5 20. c4! ♖xc4 21. ♖fc1 b5 22. ♗c3 ♖d7 23. ♗e1 White has compensation but probably not more] 18. ♖xc6 bxc6 19. ♖xf1 ♖b8 20. ♗c1! ♖e4 21. ♖c4

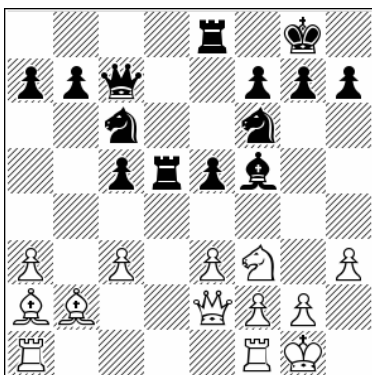


Position after: 21. ♖c4

21... c5 [21... ♖a5 22. ♖d3 ♖fe8 23. f3 ♖d6 24. e4 White has very good compensation] 22. ♖d3 ♖fe8 23. ♗d5 ♖f6 24. ♗c4 ♖e4 With balanced play.

15. ♖ad1!?

15. d5 ♖xd5!

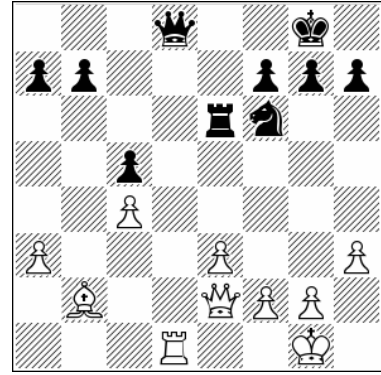


Position after: 15... ♖xd5!

16. ♗xd5 ♖xd5 17. ♖fd1 ♖b6 18. ♖d2 a6 19. e4 ♗e6 20. ♖f1 ♖a5 Black has good compensation, but White does not need to get too worried yet.

15... e4

A) 15... ♗e6 16. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 17. dxe5 ♖xe5 18. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19. c4 ♖e6 20. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21. ♖d1



Position after: 21. ♖d1

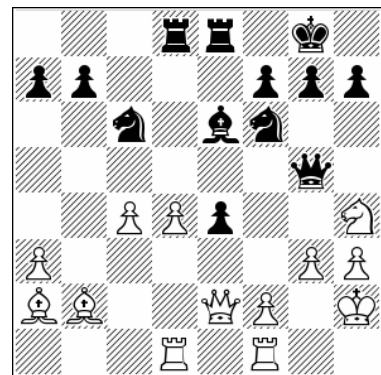
21... ♖d6 22. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23. ♖f3 White is slightly ahead here.

B) 15... ♗e4 16. dxc5 ♖a5 17. c4 ♗xf3 18. ♖xf3 ♖xc5 19. ♖e2 Black has equalized, 1-0 (52) Fedoseev, V (2525) – Agopov, M (2448) Tallinn 2012.

16. ♖d2

White has a slightly strange alternative.

16. ♖h4 ♗e6 17. c4 cxd4 18. exd4 ♖f4 19. g3 ♖g5 20. ♖h2



Position after: 20. ♖h2

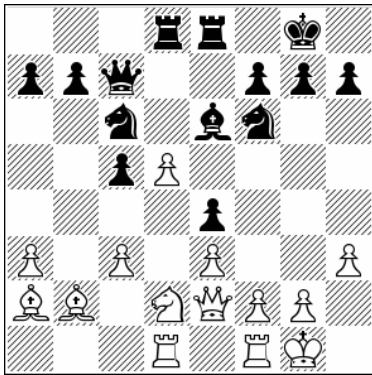
20...♙c8 21.d5 ♘e5 22.♙c1 ♚h5 23.♚xh5 ♘xh5
 24.♚fe1 ♘d3 25.♚e2 It's worthwhile for White
 to play on in this endgame.

16...♙e6

The bishop can go the other way as well.

16...♙g6 17.♚b5 ♙h5 18.♚xc5 ♙xd1 19.♚xd1 b6
 20.♚b5 ♘a5 21.c4 ♘b7 22.a4 White has
 compensation for sacrificed exchange.

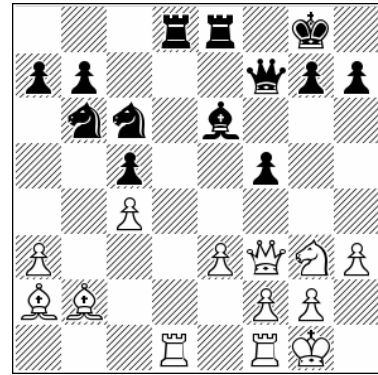
17.d5!



Position after: 17.d5!

This idea should always be taken into account.

17...♘xd5 18.c4 ♘b6 19.♘xe4 ♚e7 20.♚f3! f5
 21.♘g3 ♚f7



Position after: 21...♚f7

21...g6 22.e4 White starts an attack.

22.♘h5

This is also unpleasant for Black.

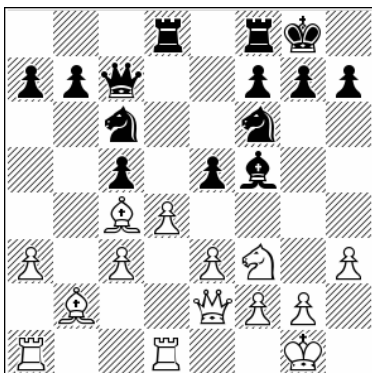
g) 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♚e2 ♚ad8 14.♚fd1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5
 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4
 10.♙xc4 ♚c7 11.h3 e5 12.♙b2 ♙f5 13.♚e2 ♚ad8
 14.♚fd1

14.♙b5!? e4 15.♘d2 It's a transposition to the
 13.♙b5 line.

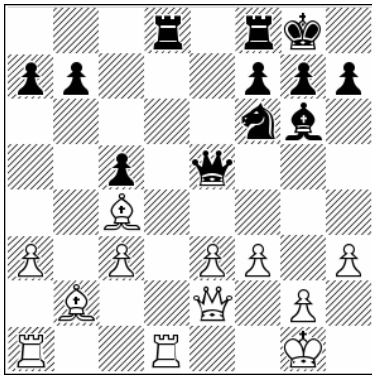
14...e4

As we have seen, Black can also try to drum up an initiative through the h5-square. 14...♙g6 15.♘xe5 Best. 15...♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♚xe5 17.f3 This makes sense for White. It's the same structure as in the old main line, but here the black bishop has gone to the less logical g6-square. White is planning c3-c4 as soon as possible.

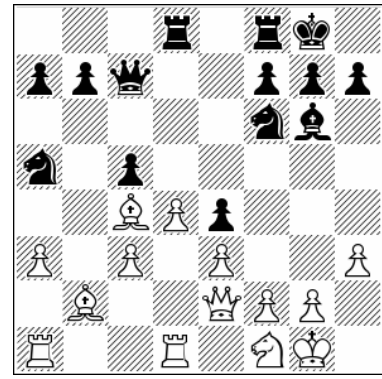


Position after: 14.♚fd1

White turns his attention to the d-file line and also secures a safe retreat for the queen on f1 if necessary. The knight might also like to use the f1-square at some stage.



Position after: 17.f3



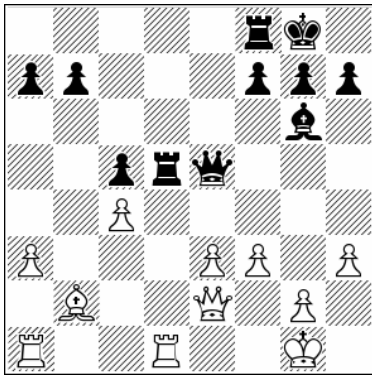
Position after: 16...Ra5!

17...Nd5 [17...Rf5 18.Qf2 Re6 19.Rf1 White must keep the two bishops. 19...Nd7 20.c4 Qc7 21.a4! f6 22.a5 Ne5 23.Qg3! Rxd1 24.Rxd1 Rf7 25.Rxe5 Qxe5 26.Qxe5 fxe5 27.Rd6 Re7 28.f4 White has pulled out some miracle to get an advantage. It's very instructive.] 18.Rxd5 Rxd5 19.c4!

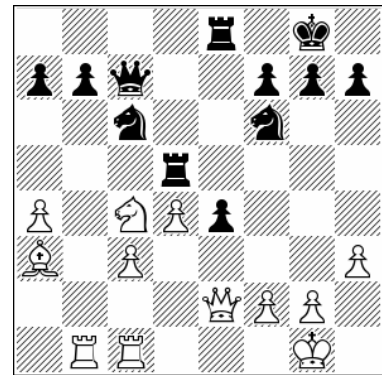
17.Ra2 [In the following game White went wrong now. 17.Nd2? Rh5 18.g4 Rg6 19.Ra2 h5 Black is better, as in Babula, V -Werle, J Novi Sad 2009.] 17...c4 Black is OK here.

16...Rh5

16...Rfe8 17.a4 Rf5 18.Ra3 cxd4 19.exd4 Re6 20.Rab1 Rd5 21.Rxd5 Rxd5 22.Nc4



Position after: 19.c4!



Position after: 22.Nc4

This is the right way. 19...Rxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Qe7 21.Rd5! Rd8 [21...f6 22.Qd2 Re8 23.e4 Rc6 24.Rd6 this favors White] 22.Qd2 Rxd5 23.cxd5 White has an edge here.

22...Qd7 23.Rb5 Re6 24.Qb2 b6 25.Qc2 Ne8 ½-½ (25) Chuprikov, D (2414) – Jumabayev, R (2557) Voronezh 2010.

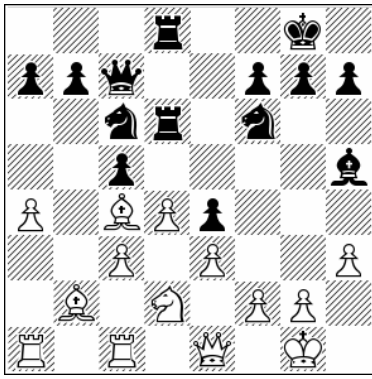
15.Nd2 Rg6

Now White cannot play Qb5, which has been a useful move in some other lines that we've analyzed.

17.Qe1 Rd6 18.a4 Rfd8

16.Rdc1

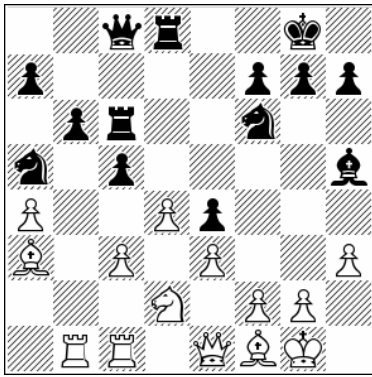
16.Nf1 Na5!



Position after: 18...Rf8

19. Qa3

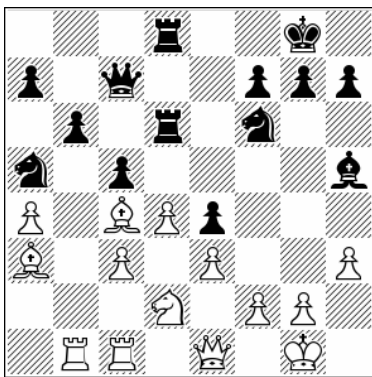
There is a similar alternative. 19. Rb1 b6 20. Qb5
 Rc8 21. Qa3 Na5 22. Qf1 Rc6



Position after: 22...Rc6

White missed a very strong idea now. 23.c4!
 [23. Qb5 ½-½ (23) Bendanya Guerrero, D – Bos,
 H corr. 2011] 23...cxd4 24.exd4 Rxd4 25.c5!
 White has fantastic play on the queenside.

19...b6 20. Rb1 Na5



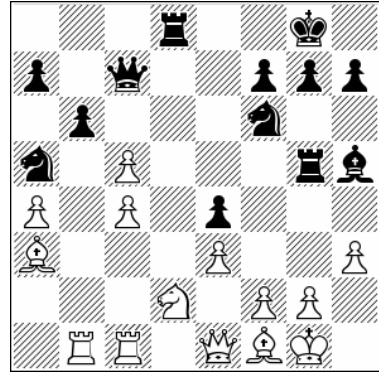
Position after: 20...Na5

21. Qf1!

21. Qa2 Rc6 22. Qf1 c4 This is OK for Black, ½-½
 (38) Dudyev, V – Pasko, P corr. 2013.

21...Rc6

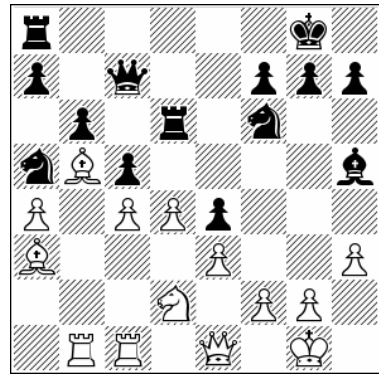
21...Rd5 22.c4 Rg5 23.dxc5!



Position after: 23.dxc5!

23...bxc5 [23...Na6 24.cxb6 axb6 25.c5 Black
 does not have time to regroup his pieces and
 place a knight on the e5-square] 24. Qb2 Now
 White is again very active.

22. Qb5 Rcd6 23.c4 Ra8



Position after: 23...Ra8

24. Qa6

A very interesting position. The bishop to a6
 move is either very good or very bad.

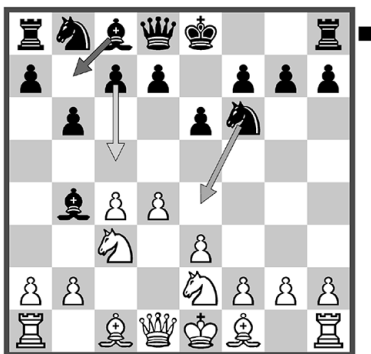
Part IV

4...b6

Chapter 11

5.♞ge2 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.e3 b6 5.♞ge2



Chapter Guide

Chapter 11 – 5.♞ge2 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.e3 b6 5.♞ge2

a) 5...♞e4 6.♞c2

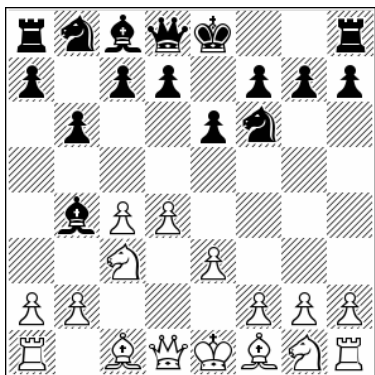
b) 5...♞e4 6.♟d2

c) 5...c5

d) 5...♟b7

a) 5...♞e4 6.♚c2

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.e3 b6



Position after: 4...b6

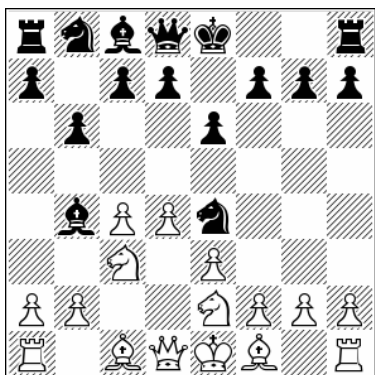
This is a highly popular system for Black against the Nimzo with 4.e3 and we will see various types of positions, from sharp to positional. Both sides have a variety of choices and I will present the most popular ideas.

5.♞ge2

That's a main topic. After that Black has four main choices and within those plans there are additional ideas.

5...♞e4

I used to play this line a long time ago and it was considered an important line.

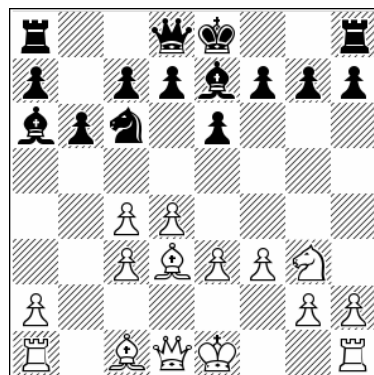


Position after: 5...♞e4

6.♚c2

First we deal with this line, which resembles the Classical system (4.♚c2) because the queen will most likely end up on c3.

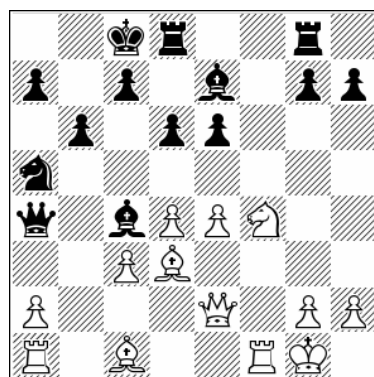
For a while it was popular to allow a capture on c3, doubling the pawns. 6.f3 ♞xc3 7.bxc3 ♟e7 8.♞g3 ♞c6 9.♟d3 ♟a6



Position after: 9...♟a6

White has a few ideas here:

A) 10.e4 ♞a5 11.♚e2 d6 12.0-0 ♚d7 13.f4 ♚a4 14.♞h5 ♜g8 15.f5 ♟xc4 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♞f4 0-0-0



Position after: 17...0-0-0

Overall this position may appear unpleasant for Black but actually it's OK. 18.♞xe6 Arriving here from a slightly different move order, Ivan Sokolov in his book is very enthusiastic about White's chances here. [18.♟xc4 ♚xc4 19.♚xc4 ♞xc4 20.♞xe6 ♚d7 21.g4 h6 Black is OK here, his knight on c4 is a strong piece, ½-½ (40) Bekker

Jensen, S (2403) – Brynell, S (2494) Gothenburg 2000] 18...♖d7 19.d5 ♗f6 20.♗e3 ♗xd3 21.♙xd3 ♗c4 22.♞ad1 ♙xd3 23.♞xd3 c5 Again Black gets counterplay. His knight is coming to c4, which in this position is a really strong asset. The white knight on e6 is also good though not quite as good as its counterpart on c4.

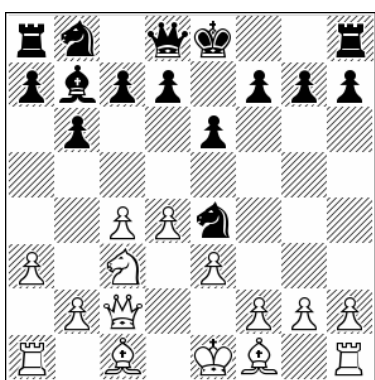
B) 10.0-0 ♞a5 11.♙e2 d5! 12.cxd5 ♗xd3 13.♙xd3 ♙xd5 14.e4 ♗c4 This is also fine for Black.

6...♗b7 7.a3

A) 7.f3 ♞xc3 8.bxc3 ♗f8 9.e4 d6 10.♞g3 ♞d7 11.♗e2 g6 12.0-0 ♗g7 13.f4 0-0 14.♗e3 ♙e7 15.♙d2 ♞ae8 16.♞ae1 f5 This is a complex game, 1-0 (40) Gurevich, M (2633) – Grant, A (2223) Port Erin 2007.

B) 7.♞f4!? Actually this move is stronger than I initially thought. Sokolov analyzes this position in his book but of course there are always other possibilities. 7...f5 8.♗d3 ♙h4 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 g5 11.♞e2 ♞f6 This is a double-edged position, 1-0 (39) Lautier, J (2625) – Wedberg, T (2475) Harplinge 1998.

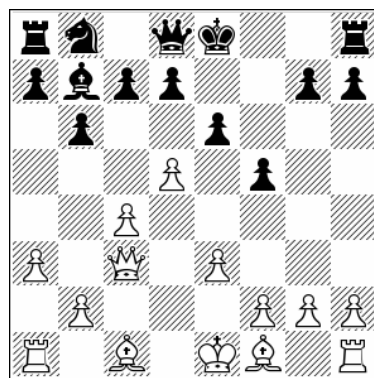
7...♗xc3+ 8.♞xc3



Position after: 8.♞xc3

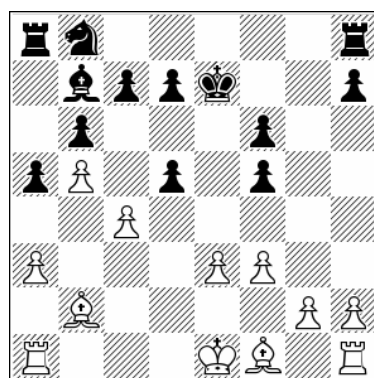
8...♞xc3

8...f5 9.d5 ♞xc3 10.♙xc3



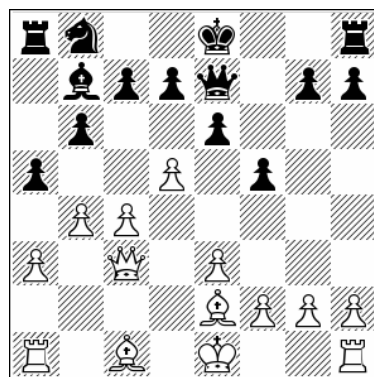
Position after: 10.♙xc3

10...♙e7 [10...♙f6 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.b4 a5 13.b5 ♞e7 14.♗b2 exd5 15.f3!



Position after: 15.f3!

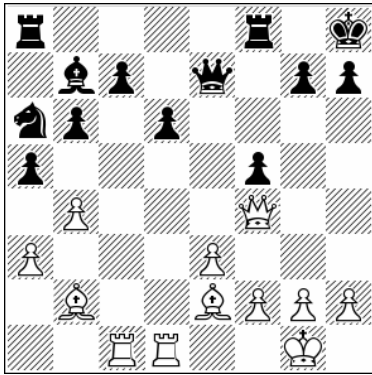
15...d6 16.♞c1 ♞d7 17.♗d3 ♞e6 18.♞f2 ♞c5 19.♗b1 the rook is heading to d4 and f4 to attack the f5-pawn] 11.b4 a5 12.♗e2!



Position after: 12.♗e2!

Not only developing, but also posing the threat of an unpleasant check on h5. 12...0-0 It is clear that now Black can't take easily on b4 because then the white queen could invade on the a7-square. [12...axb4 13.axb4 ♞xa1 14.♙xa1 ♞a6 15.♗h5+ ♞d8 16.0-0 exd5 17.cxd5 White has a

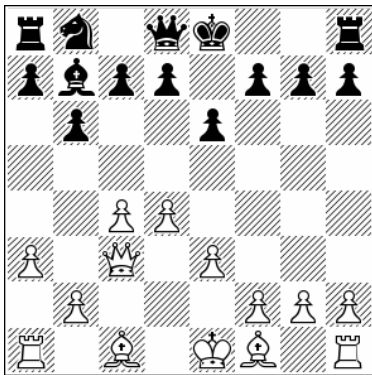
strong initiative] 13.0-0 exd5 [13...axb4 14.axb4
 ♖xa1 15.♚xa1 ♘a6 16.♙f3 d6 17.♙d2 e5 18.e4
 White is better] 14.♙b2 d6 15.♞fd1 dxc4
 16.♚xc4+ ♔h8 17.♞ac1 ♘a6 18.♚f4



Position after: 18.♚f4

18...♞ad8 19.h4 White has fantastic play for the sacrificed pawn.

9.♚xc3

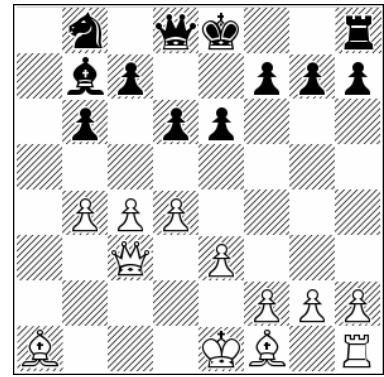


Position after: 9.♚xc3

This has been played many times and it's certainly an interesting position. Black has an easy plan of bringing the knight into play via d7, and creating problems for White on the long diagonal a8-h1.

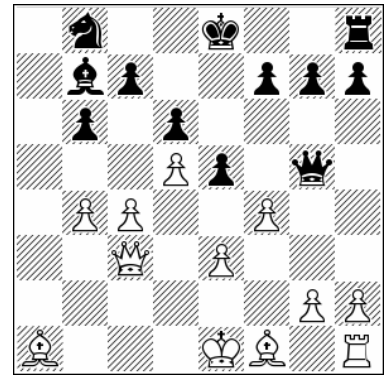
9...♚h4

A) 9...d6 10.b4 a5 [10...♘d7 11.♙b2 ♚g5 12.d5
 exd5 13.cxd5 ♚xd5 14.♞d1 ♚c6 15.♚xc6 ♙xc6
 16.♞c1 ♙a4 17.♞xc7 White is better, ½-½ (73)
 Gligoric, S – Tarjan, J Lone Pine 1971] 11.♙b2
 axb4 12.axb4 ♞xa1+ 13.♙xa1



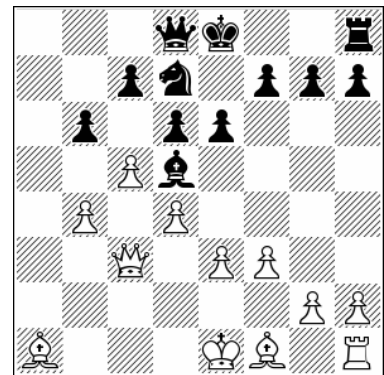
Position after: 13.♙xa1

13...♘d7 [13...♚g5 14.d5 e5 15.f4!



Position after: 15.f4!

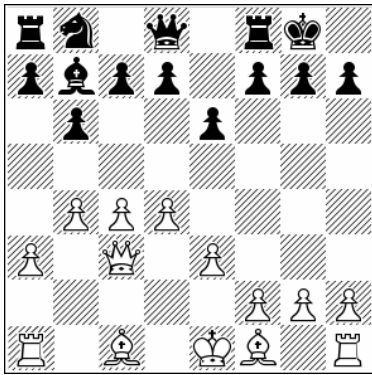
This is strong. 15...♚g6 16.fxe5 ♚b1+ 17.♔f2
 ♘d7 18.exd6 ♘f6 19.♚e5+ 1-0 (19) Aleksandrov,
 A (2592) – Morgunov, M (2311) Tallinn 2019]
 14.c5 ♙d5 [14...bxc5 15.dxc5 ♘f6 16.♙b5+ c6
 17.♙e2 again this is clearly in White's favor, 1-0
 (78) Prasanna Raghuram, R (2460) – Bergstrom,
 R (2297) Gibraltar 2016] 15.f3!



Position after: 15.f3!

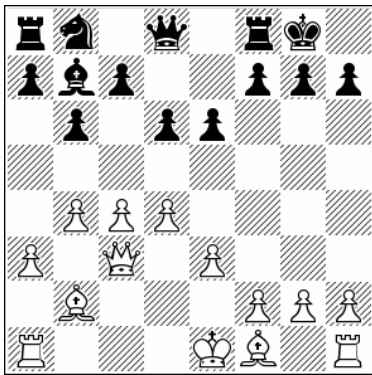
15...f5 16.♙e2 ♚h4+ 17.g3 ♚e7 18.♙b2 0-0
 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♚c7 ♞a8 21.0-0 ♞a2 22.♞b1
 This is definitely a critical position. It seems that
 White may have more chances.

B) 9...0-0 10.b4



Position after: 10.b4

10...d6 [10...a5 11.b5 ♖h4 12.♗b2 ♗e4 13.d5 f6
14.dxe6 dxe6 15.♞d1 that's good for White]
11.♗b2



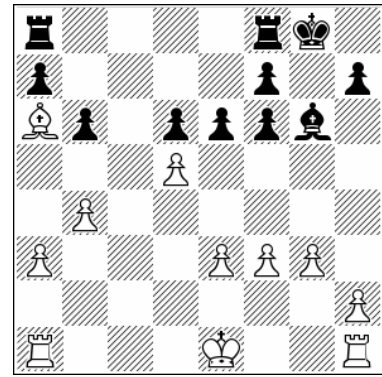
Position after: 11.♗b2

B1) 11...♘d7 12.c5!

B1.1) 12...dxc5 13.dxc5 ♖f6 14.♗xf6 gxf6
15.♗b5 c6 16.♗e2 bxc5 17.0-0-0 ♞fd8 18.♞d6
♔f8 19.♞hd1 ♔e7 20.bxc5 This endgame is
better for White, 1-0 (34) Romanov, E (2616) –
Aleksandrov, A (2607) Khanty-Mansiysk 2012.

B1.2) 12...bxc5 13.dxc5 ♘f6 14.c6 ♗c8 15.♗e2
e5 16.0-0 ♖e7 17.b5 ♗e6 18.f4 White is better
in the center and on the queenside, 1-0 (41)
Aleksandrov, A (2642) – Quparadze, G (2345)
Baku 2010.

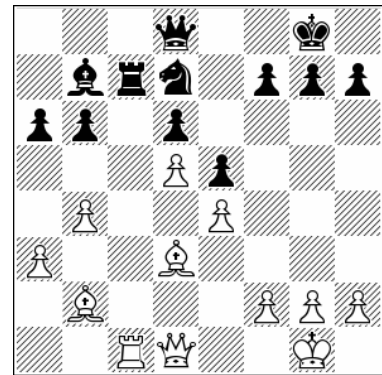
B1.3) 12...♗e4 13.f3 ♗g6 14.d5 ♖h4+ 15.g3 ♖f6
16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.cxd6 cxd6 19.♗a6!



Position after: 19.♗a6!

19...exd5 20.♞c1 ♞fe8 21.♔f2 White dominates
the board, 1-0 (53) L'Ami, A (2322) – Carreto
Nieto, G (2222) Mexico City 2016.

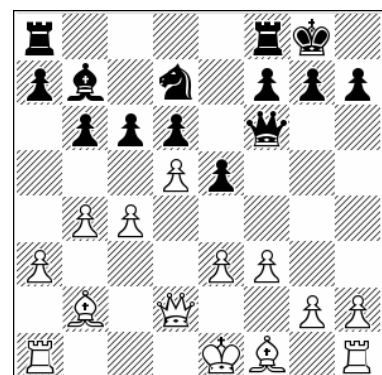
B2) 11...♖e7 12.d5 e5 13.♗d3 ♘d7 14.0-0 c6
15.e4 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♞fc8 17.♖b3 a6 18.♞fc1 ♖d8
19.♞xc8 ♞xc8 20.♞c1 ♞c7 21.♖d1



Position after: 21.♖d1

21...♖c8 22.g3 ♞xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 24.♗xc1
♔f8 25.a4 It's more pleasant to be White here,
1-0 (43) Nguyen, P (2360) – Obers, F (2103) Bad
Wiessee 2009.

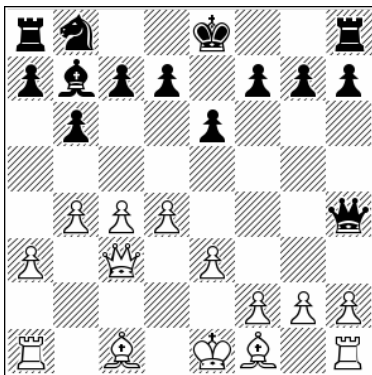
B3) 11...♖f6 12.f3 ♘d7 13.♖d2 e5 14.d5 c6



Position after: 14...c6

15.e4 This is good for White now. The pawn on b4 controls the important c5-square, which made it possible for White to play ♔d2.

10.b4

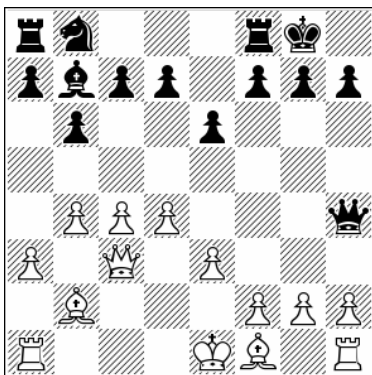


Position after: 10.b4

10...d6

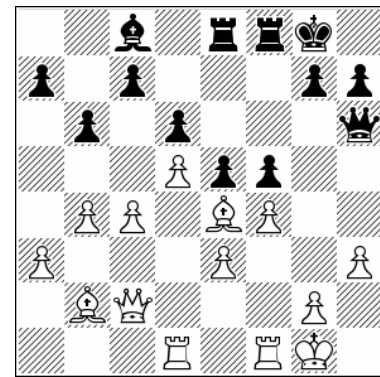
A) 10...♘c6!? 11.♙b2 ♘e7 12.d5 exd5 13.c5 f6 14.cxb6 d4 15.♚xd4 ♚xd4 16.♙xd4 axb6 17.♙d3
This interesting position probably slightly favors White.

B) 10...0-0 11.♙b2



Position after: 11.♙b2

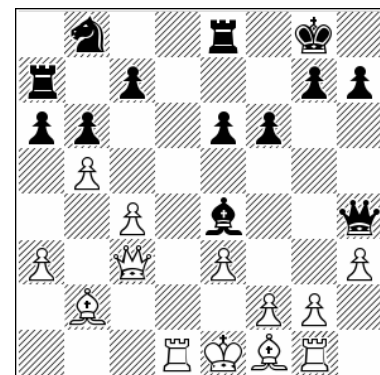
B1) 11...d6 12.d5 ♚h6 13.♞d1 ♘d7 14.♙e2 e5 15.0-0 f5 16.f4 ♞ae8 17.♙d3 ♙c8 18.♚c2 ♘f6 19.h3 ♘e4 20.♙xe4!



Position after: 20.♙xe4!

[20.♞f3 This is less clear, ½-½ (43) Lenderman, A (2614) – Khusenkhojaev, M (2377) St Petersburg 2012] 20...fxe4 21.fxe5 ♚xe3+ 22.♔h2 White has a big advantage thanks to the treat of bishop to c1, winning the queen.

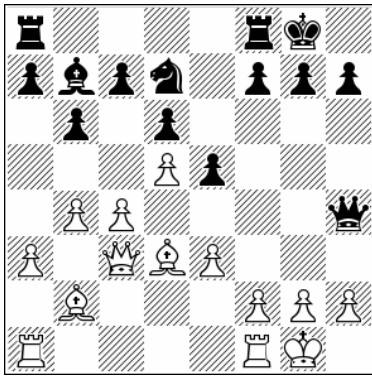
B2) 11...f6 12.♞d1 ♙e4 13.d5 ♞e8 14.dxe6 dxe6 15.b5 a6 16.h3 ♞a7 17.♞g1



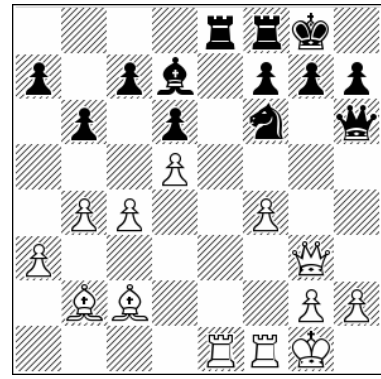
Position after: 17.♞g1

17...c5 An unusual position. It seems that White's undeveloped kingside is exactly what Black wanted with his early queen sortie to h4, ½-½ (38) Jussupow, A (2630) – Short, N (2660) Germany 1998.

11.♙b2 ♘d7 12.d5 e5 13.♙d3 0-0 14.0-0



Position after: 14...0-0



Position after: 19...♙d7

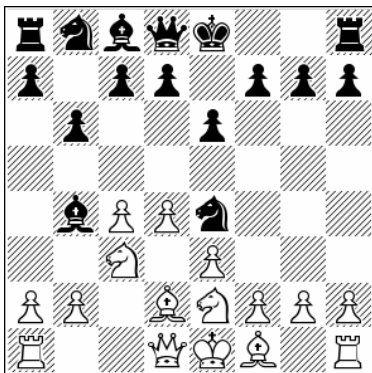
14...♖ae8 15.f4 ♗h6 16.♖ae1 ♘c8 17.♙c2 exf4
18.exf4 ♗f6 19.♗g3 ♙d7

20.♗g5

White has the better game, and we can consider this as model play for White, 1-0 (52) Korobov, A (2688) – Postny, E (2600) chess.com INT 2020.

b) 5...♞e4 6.♙d2

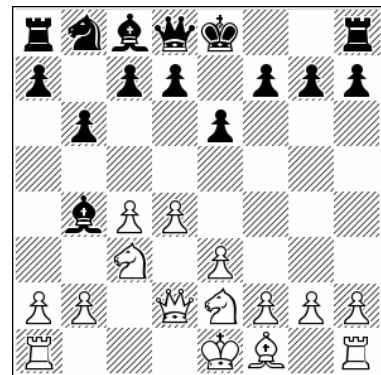
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♗ge2
♗e4 6.♙d2



Position after: 6.♙d2

A very solid plan. White gives up his bishop pair but in this early stage will have very good control of the center because Black is underdeveloped and has little space.

6...♗xd2 7.♗xd2

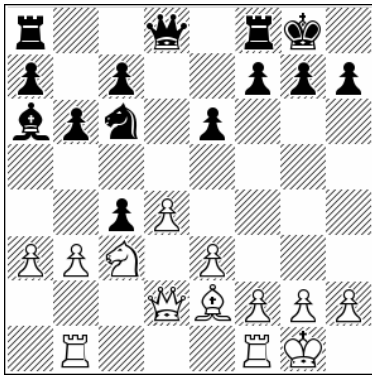


Position after: 7.♗xd2

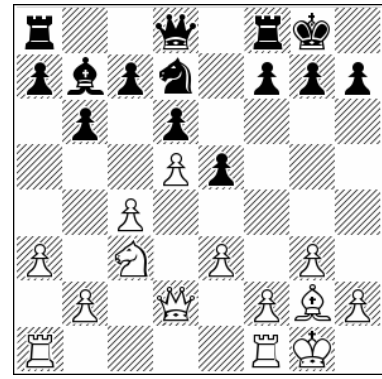
7...0-0

This is probably the most efficient move order, because Black has not yet decided what kind of pawn formation he will adopt.

A) 7...♙a6 This is a typical move in many Nimzo or Queen's Indian positions. 8.a3 ♘xc3 9.♗xc3 d5 10.b3 ♗c6 11.♙e2 dxc4 12.♖b1 0-0 13.0-0



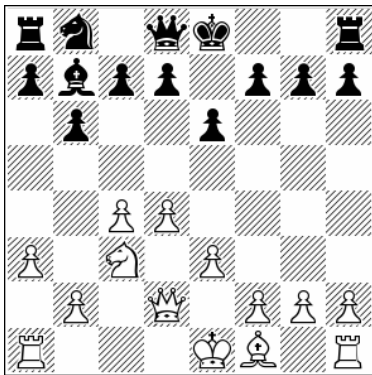
Position after: 13.0-0



Position after: 13.0-0

13...e5!? [13...♖e7 14.♖fd1 ♕d7 15.bxc4 ♖fd8 16.♗c2 this is definitely in White's favor, as Black runs out of pawn breaks in the center, ½-½ (45) Epishin, V (2643) – De Firmian, N (2551) Copenhagen 2002] 14.d5 ♘b8 15.b4 ♘d7 16.♗a2 ♘f6 17.e4 ♘e8 18.♙xc4 ♙xc4 19.♗xc4 ♘d6 Black is doing OK.

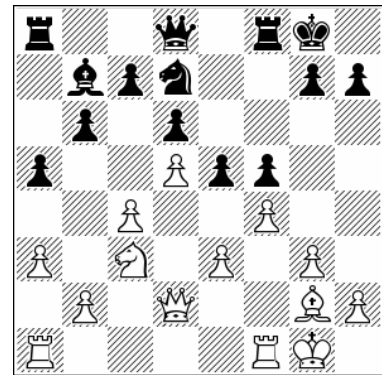
B) 7...♙b7 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.♘xc3



Position after: 9.♘xc3

9...0-0 [9...d6 10.d5 ♘d7 11.♙e2 a5 12.b3 0-0 13.0-0 e5 14.f4 exf4 15.exf4 ♖e8 16.♙d3 ♘f6 17.♙f5 ♙c8 18.♙c2 ♙d7 19.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 20.♖xe1 ♗f8 21.h3 ♖e8 Black is doing OK, having achieved equality, ½-½ (31) Shagbazyan, T (2423) – Van Foreest, L (2384) Novi Sad 2016] 10.d5 d6 11.g3 ♘d7 12.♙g2 e5 13.0-0

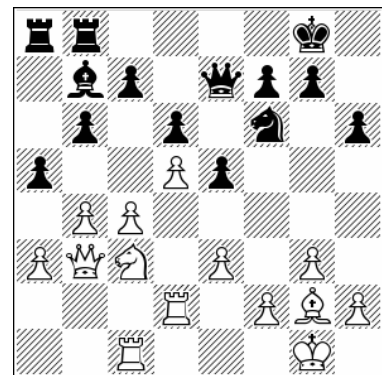
B1) 13...f5 14.f4 a5!



Position after: 14...a5!

It is important to take space and try to secure the c5-square, or simply put pressure on the c4-pawn with the bishop on a6. [14...e4 15.b4 ♗f6 16.♘b5! ♖fc8 17.♘d4 h5 18.♖fd1 White has a clear advantage] 15.e4 exf4 16.♗xf4 fxe4 17.♗xe4 ♘e5 This is fine for Black.

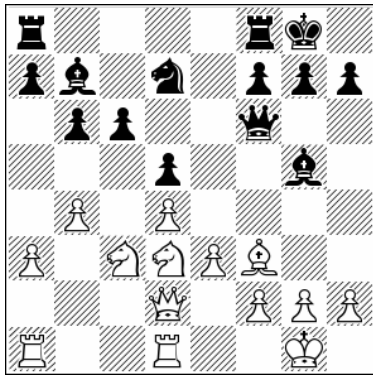
B2) 13...♗e7 14.♗c2 ♘f6 15.b4 a5 16.♖ac1 ♖fe8 17.♖fd1 h6 18.♗b3 ♖eb8 19.♖d2



Position after: 19.♖d2

19...♗c8! A solid plan. The bishop has fulfilled its role on b7 and is now looking for a better diagonal. It's roughly equal, 0-1 (53) Georgiev, V (2518) – Wintzer, J (2349) Izmir 2006.

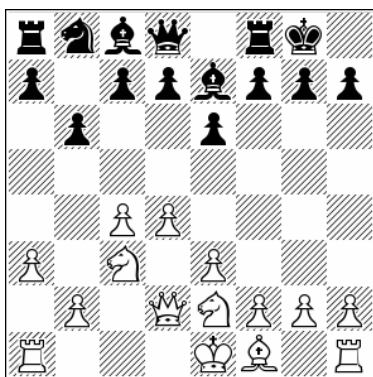
C) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 Black has chosen a solid line. We reach some kind of QGD position that closely resembles the Tartakower line, 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♘f4 c6 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♗f3 ♗g5 14.♘d3 ♖f6 15.♖fd1 ♗b7 16.b4



Position after: 16.b4

16...a6 17.♗g4 ♖d6 18.♗xd7 ♖xd7 19.a4 a5 20.b5 cxb5 21.♘xb5 ♖fc8 22.♘e5 ♖e6 23.♖dc1 ♗d8 The two bishops are not worse than the two knights here, ½-½ (36) Stanec, N (2560) – Kortschnoj, V (2628) Vienna 2003.

8.a3 ♗e7

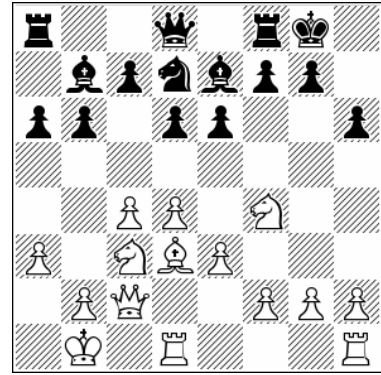


Position after: 8...♗e7

Black wants to keep his bishop on c8 as long as possible, because his main idea is establishing the ...d6 and ...e5 structure.

9.d5

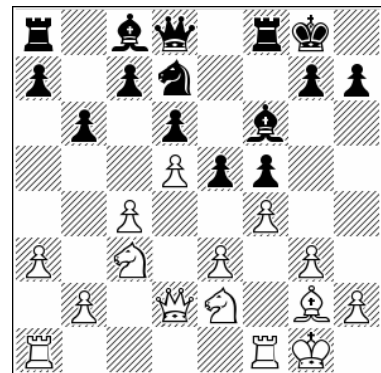
9.♘f4 ♗b7 10.♗d3 d6 11.♖c2 h6 12.0-0-0 ♘d7 13.♗b1 a6!



Position after: 13...a6!

14.d5 [14.h4 b5! 15.cxb5 axb5 16.♗xb5 c6 17.♗e2 ♖b6 18.♗a1 d5 Black gets a strong attack] 14...exd5 15.cxd5 ♘e5 With unclear consequences, 0-1 (45) Lercel, M (2222) – Moiseenko, A (2692) Wroclaw 2014.

9...d6 10.g3 e5 11.♗g2 f5 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.f4 ♗f6



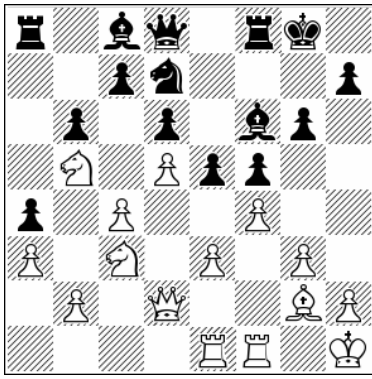
Position after: 13...♗f6

Black keeps the bishop on c8 and that's the whole point. If Black had played ...♗b7 early, let's say on move seven, then we could have a similar position but with the bishop on the passive b7-square.

14.♗h1

14.♖ae1 a5 15.♖c2 e4 16.♖b1 ♗a6 Black has counterplay, ½-½ (23) Sjudahl, P (2422) – Akesson, J (2204) Sweden 2013.

14...g6 15.♖ae1 a5 16.♘b5 a4 17.♘ec3



Position after: 17...dxc3

17...dxc3

With unclear play, 0-1 (41) Hoi, C (2341) – Brynell, S (2406) Ballerup 2019.

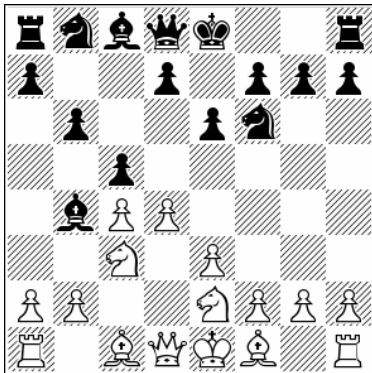
c) 5...c5

1.d4 e6 2.c4 e6 3.dxc3 e6b4 4.e3 c5 5.dge2 b6

This is an important line because it can also arise via the 4...b6 5.dge2 c5 move order, which is equally important in the Nimzo.

have such early knight moves to the edge of the board.

7...we7 The drawback with this line is that Black may come under b2-b4 threats. 8.ed2 0-0 9.d5 exd5 10.b4!



Position after: 5...b6

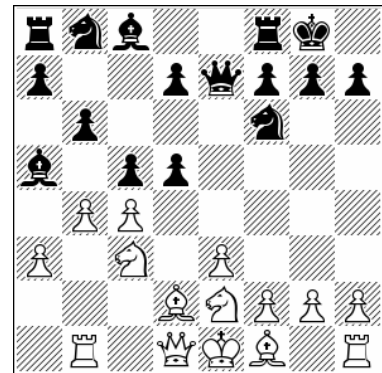
6.a3 e6a5 7.fxb1



Position after: 7.fxb1

7...d6

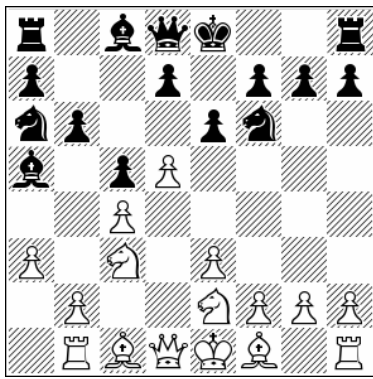
Best, but now we have to see whether this knight is good or bad, the usual puzzle when we



Position after: 10.b4!

10...cxb4 11.axb4 e6xb4 12.fxb4 we7xb4 13.dxd5 dxd5 [13...wc5 14.e6b4 we7xc4 15.ddef4 winning at once] 14.e6xb4 dxb4 15.dxc3 e6b7 16.e2 e6c6 17.0-0 a5 18.wd4 White has a winning position, ½-½ (34) Kayonde, A (2399) – Amin, B (2684) Abidjan 2018.

8.d5!?



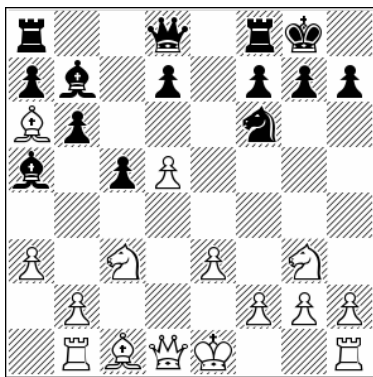
Position after: 8.d5!?

An interesting move order. It is possible to play 8.g3 immediately, which will transpose after 8...♙b7 9.d5. Other moves have some potential in connection with a possible pawn sac, which might be interesting but risky. There's also 8.f3, which has been less investigated.

8...♙b7

The main line of play.

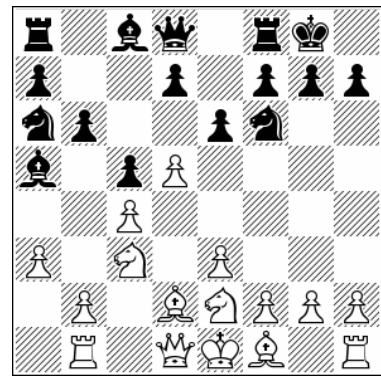
A) 8...exd5 9.cxd5 0-0 10.♘g3 ♙b7 11.♙xa6! This was the point of Onischuk's play in this game with Amin below.



Position after: 11.♙xa6!

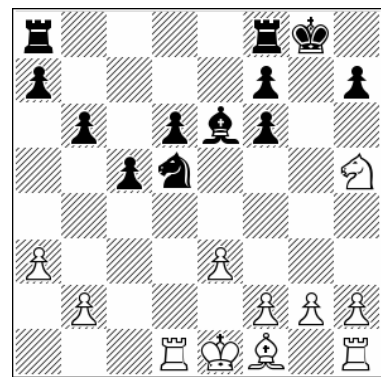
11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♙xa6 13.f3 d6 14.e4 ♘d7 15.♙f4! Preventing ...♘e5 -- White would take the knight, of course. 15...♙f6! This is to be preferred here, but White has pressure anyway. [15...♘e5? 16.♙xe5 dxe5 17.♙f2 Now it's a one-way street, 1-0 (34) Onischuk – Amin World Teams 2011] 16.♘f5 ♖ae8 17.♙f2 ♘e5 18.♙g3 It looks like White keeps good play, although things are far from clear.

B) 8...0-0 9.♙d2



Position after: 9.♙d2

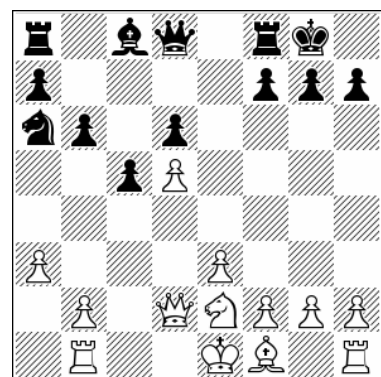
B1) 9...d6 10.♘g3 ♙xc3 11.♙xc3 exd5 12.♙f3!? ♘c7 [12...♘g4 13.cxd5 ♘c7 14.h3 ♘e5 15.♙xe5 dxe5 16.♖d1 ♘e8 17.d6 White is better, 1-0 (30) Gupta, A (2617) – Nitin, S (2408) Budapest 2018] 13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♖d1 ♙e6 17.♘h5



Position after: 17.♘h5

17...♙h8 18.g3 ♖ad8 19.♙g2 ♘e7 20.♘xf6 ♙b3 21.♖d2 d5 22.0-0 With less clear consequences.

B2) 9...exd5 10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♙xd2+ 12.♙xd2 d6

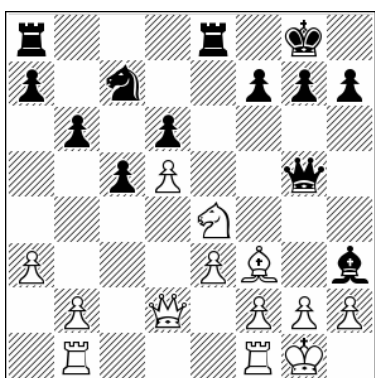


Position after: 12...d6

White has now two interesting paths for his knight.

B2.1) 13.♖g3 ♘c7 14.♙e2 f5 15.0-0 ♙b7 16.♙f3 g6 17.♜fd1 ♚f6 18.♞bc1 a5 19.♞c4 ♚e5 20.h4 b5 21.♞f4 With e3-e4 coming, we can see from this example that the knight on c7 and the bishop on b7 don't coordinate well. Black is missing real Benoni counterplay, 1-0 (29) Christiansen, L (2575) – Rey, G (2350) San Francisco 1987.

B2.2) 13.♖c3 ♘c7 14.♙e2 ♚g5 15.0-0 ♙h3 16.♙f3 ♜fe8 17.♘e4!



Position after: 17.♘e4!

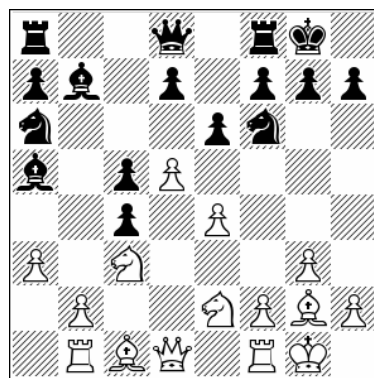
17...♚g6 18.♘g3 ♙d7 19.♙h5 ♚f6 20.f4 ♙f5 21.♞be1 ♙e4 22.♙f3 ♙xf3 23.♞xf3 ♜ad8 24.e4 White is now fast with his play, compared, for example, with the Timofeev – Ovod game given elsewhere in this book, 1-0 (65) Cramling, D (2354) – Blomqvist, E (2515) Stockholm 2016.

9.g3 b5

9...♘e4 10.♙g2 ♙xc3+ 11.♘xc3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 d6 13.♚a4+ ♙e7 14.0-0 White is better.

10.♙g2 bxc4 11.0-0 0-0 12.e4

This is a standard position that has been most popular in recent times with White players.



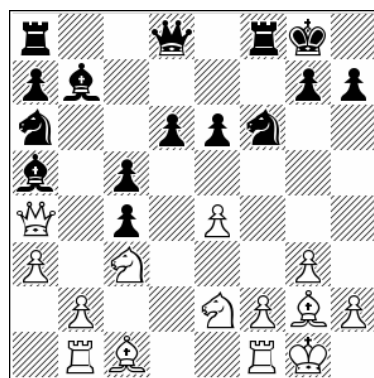
Position after: 12.e4

12...exd5!?

I couldn't find anything wrong with this interesting option.

A) Before going to the main line, we should check some options for Black. 12...♞e8 13.dxe6 ♞xe6 [13...dxe6 14.♚a4 As pointed out by Sokolov, this is also good for White] 14.♙g5 h6 15.♙xf6 ♞xf6 16.♚a4 White has achieved a plus.

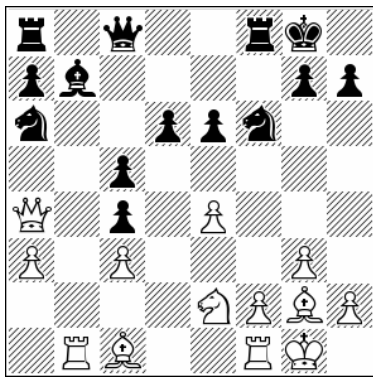
B) 12...d6 White has a few ideas here, some more developed and some less. 13.dxe6!? fxe6 14.♚a4



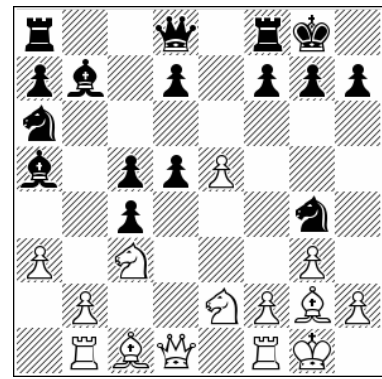
Position after: 14.♚a4

B1) 14...d5 15.♘f4 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♙c8 17.exd5 exd5 18.♚c6 ♘c7 19.♞e1 ♞f7 20.h4 White is much better.

B2) 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3! ♚c8



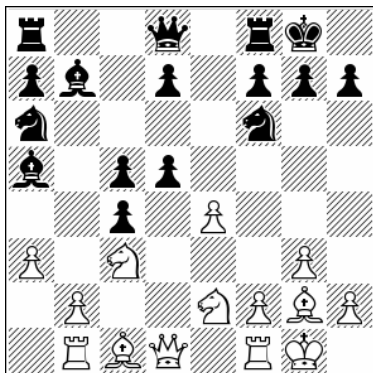
Position after: 15...♖c8



Position after: 13...♟g4

16.♖xb7! [16.♖xc4 d5 unclear, 0-1 (23) Gersinska, J (2271) – Gloor, R (2312) Germany 2013] 16...♖xb7 17.e5 ♟d5 18.♟f4 ♖ae8 19.exd6 This position looks fantastic for White.

B3) 14...♟d7 15.♖xc4 ♟c7 16.♖a2 ♔h8 17.b4 cxb4 18.axb4 ♙b6 19.♟a4 ♟e5 20.♙f4 ♟g6 21.♙d2 Since Black has slightly exposed pawns on d6 and e6, and his pieces are not well coordinated, it seems that White has the edge here.



Position after: 12...exd5!?

White does have a few choices here.

13.exd5

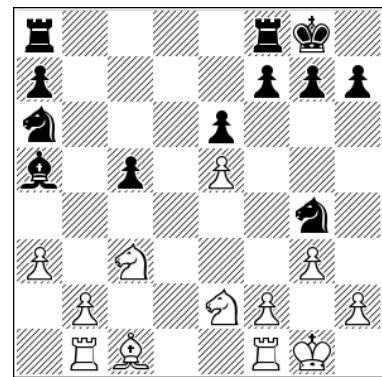
Alternatives have been tested.

A) 13.♟xd5 ♟c7 14.♟xf6+ ♖xf6 15.♖xd7 ♖fe8 16.♖a4 ♖a6 17.♖c2 ♟e6 Black is OK, Martinovic, S – Zelcic, R Marija Bistrica 2011.

B) 13.e5 ♟g4

14.♙xd5 [14.♟xd5 ♟xe5! 15.♙f4 ♖e8 16.♟e7+ ♖xe7 17.♙xb7 ♖ad8 18.♙xe5 ♖xe5 19.♖a4 ♙b6 20.♟c3 ♟c7 this is fine for Black]

B1) 14...♙xd5 15.♖xd5 ♖e7 16.♖xc4 ♖e6 17.♖xe6 dxe6

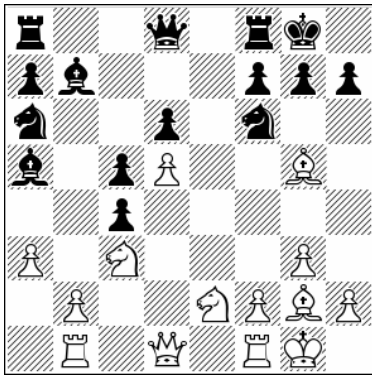


Position after: 17...dxe6

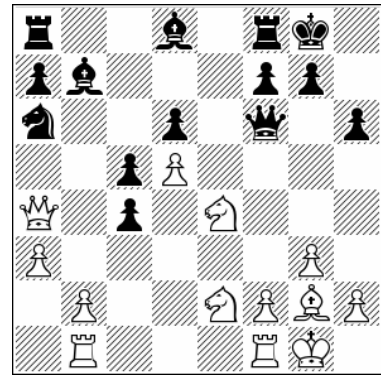
18.f4 [18.♙f4 ♙c7 19.♖fd1 ♖fd8 Black is fine, ½-½ (28) Panczyk, K (2344) – Jurek, J (2244) Olomouc 2019] 18...h5 19.h3 ♟h6 20.♙e3 ♟f5 21.♙f2 ♖fd8 22.♖fd1 ♖ab8 23.♟a4 With some edge for White.

B2) 14...♙c6 15.♙f4 ♖e8 16.♙xc6 dxc6 17.♖a4 ♟xe5 18.♙xe5 ♖xe5 19.♖fd1 ♖b6 20.♖xc4 ♖ae8 21.♖d7 ♖5e7 22.♖bd1 ♟c7 23.♟f4 ♙xc3 24.♖xc3 This is an equal position, ½-½ (40) Shulman, Y (2542) – Krush, I (2480) Arlington 2013.

13...d6 14.♙g5



Position after: 14. ♖g5

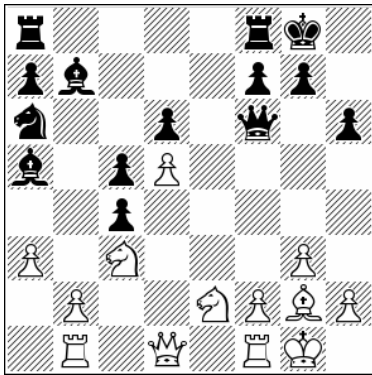


Position after: 17. ♖e4!

14...h6

14... ♖c7 15. ♖e4! ♖ce8 16. ♗a4 ♘b6 17. ♖2c3 h6 18. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 19. ♘f4 ♗e8 20. ♗xc4 ♗d7 21. h3 It's more pleasant to be White here.

15. ♘xf6 ♗xf6



Position after: 15... ♗xf6

16. ♗a4

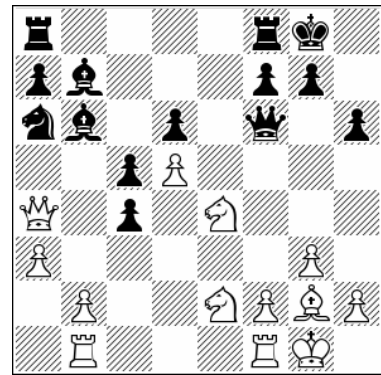
Black has choices here, but in general the position is not equal in my opinion. White has slightly better chances whatever Black does, perhaps not much but his game is easier to handle for sure.

16... ♘xc3

A) 16... ♘d8 17. ♖e4!

17... ♗e7 18. ♗fe1 ♗c7 19. ♖2c3 ♘e7 20. ♖d2! Capturing with the knight on c4 is the key, and it gives White a clear advantage.

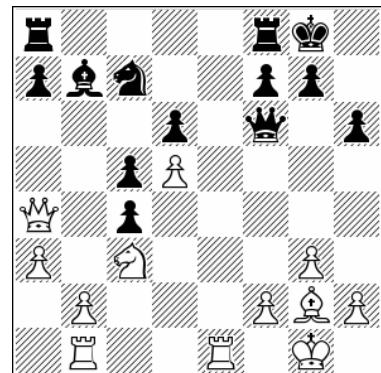
B) 16... ♘b6 17. ♖e4!



Position after: 17. ♖e4!

It is important for White to recapture on c4 with a knight. 17... ♗e7 18. ♖2c3 ♖c7 19. ♗fe1 ♗ae8 20. h4 ♗d8 21. ♖d2 ♘a6 22. ♖xc4 ♘xc4 23. ♗xc4 White has slightly better chances because the knight on c3 can be redeployed to c4!

17. ♖xc3 ♖c7 18. ♗fe1



Position after: 18. ♗fe1

This might not look like much but actually this type of Benoni structure is more pleasant to play with White. It's not only about the pawn on d6, it's also about Black's passive pieces on b7 and c7. And White has the idea of sending his queen to d7.

18...♖d8

18...a5 19.♖d7! ♖ac8 20.♙h3 ♙a8 21.♖bd1 ♖fd8 22.♖a4 ♖b8 23.♖xa5 White is clearly better.

19.♖xc4 a5!

19...♖e8 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.b4 ♙a6 22.b5 ♙b7 23.♖f4 ♖d7 24.a4 This is also advantageous for White, 1-0 (49) Muha, M (2310) – Levacic, M (2040) Cakovec 2020.

20.b4

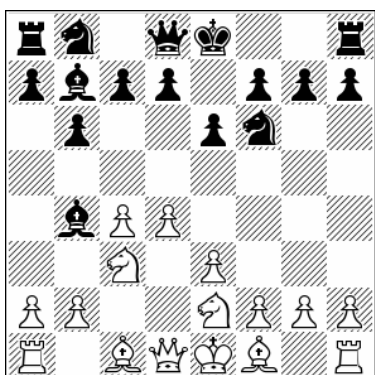
Black has the inferior position. There is perhaps not a great deal in it, but he is passive.

20.♖f4 ♙a6 21.b4 axb4 22.axb4 cxb4 23.♖xb4 ♘e8 24.♖a1 ♘f6 25.♘e4 ♘xd5 26.♘f6+ ♖xf6 27.♖xf6 gxf6 28.♙xd5 ♙b7 Black is still struggling.

20...axb4 21.axb4 cxb4 22.♖xb4

d) 5...♙b7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♘ge2 ♙b7



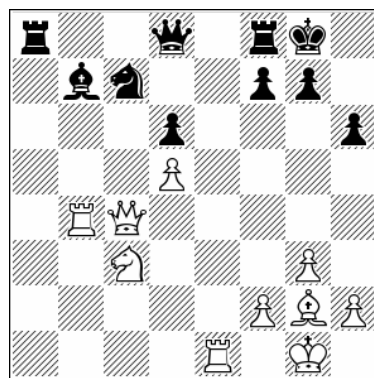
Position after: 5...♙b7

Theoretically not the best, but sometimes players use it to play for a win.

6.a3 ♙d6

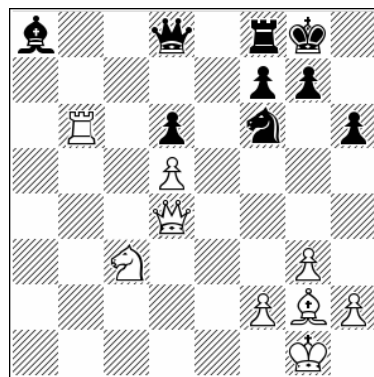
Obviously Black is playing for a win but the line itself cannot even give equal chances.

A) 6...♙e7 7.d5 0-0 8.♘g3



Position after: 22.♖xb4

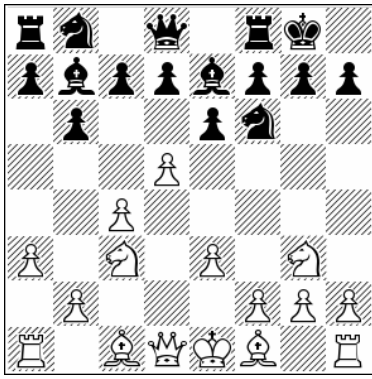
22...♙a6 23.♖d4 ♘e8 24.♖b6 ♘f6 25.♖a1 ♙b7 26.♖xa8 ♙xa8



Position after: 26...♙xa8

27.♙f3

With some chances for White.

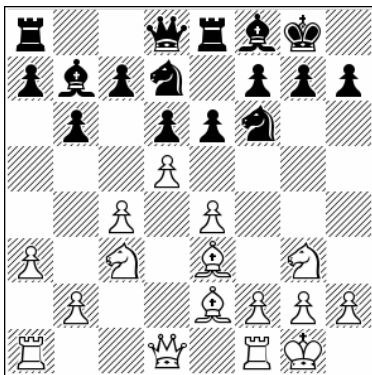


Position after: 8. d3

Logical play.

A1) 8...d6 9. e2 c6 10.e4 exd5 11.exd5 cxd5 12.cxd5 e8 [12...a6 13.0-0 c7 14. f3 d7 15.b3 fe8 16. b2 f8 17. d2 h6 18. ffd1 White has a much easier game, 1-0 (35) Lutz, C (2380) – Marciano, D (2340) Pau 1988] 13.0-0 b7 14. f5 f8 15. f4 e4 16. b5! White is better, 1-0 (46) Gurevich, M (2540) – Khalifman, A (2515) Minsk 1987.

A2) 8...e8 9. e2 f8 10.e4 d6 11.0-0 b7 12. e3



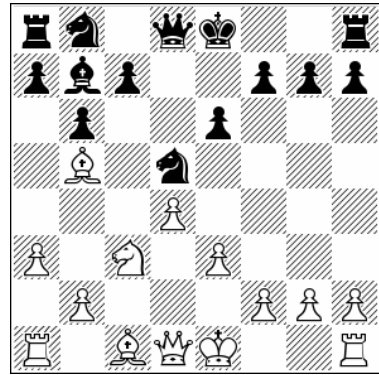
Position after: 12. e3

A2.1) 12...a6 13. c1 exd5 14.cxd5 b5 15.f3 c6 16.dxc6 xc6 17. f2 c8 18. f5 e5 19. e3 White has gained some advantage. [19. d2 d5 This is OK for Black, 1-0 (43) Korobov, A (2668) – Predke, A (2676) Moscow 2019]

A2.2) 12...c6 13.dxe6! This is a good reaction as soon as Black played ...c6. 13...fxe6 14. c2 a6 15. ad1 h8 16.f4 Such positions favor White because Black can't move either ...d5 or ...e5

without serious consequences, 1-0 (46) Pomes Marcet, J (2364) – Suba, M (2535) Granada 2006.

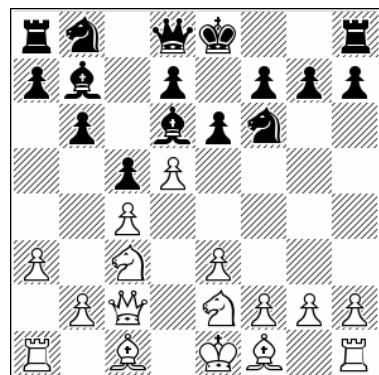
B) 6...xc3+ 7. xc3 d5 8.cxd5 xd5!? 9. b5+



Position after: 9. b5+

9...c6 [9...d7 10. xd5 xd5 11.0-0 0-0 12. a4 f6 13.f3 White follows up with e4 and gets better play] 10. d3 0-0 11.0-0 d7 12. e2 e5 13.e4 c7 14.f3 exd4 15. xd4 ff6 16. f5 ffd8 17. c2 e6 18. e3 An interesting game, in which White obtained a preferable position on account of his strong knight on f5, 1-0 (52) Trigo Urquijo, S (2403) – Gonzalez Gonzalez, A (2154) Sanxenxo 2017.

7. c2 c5 8.d5



Position after: 8.d5

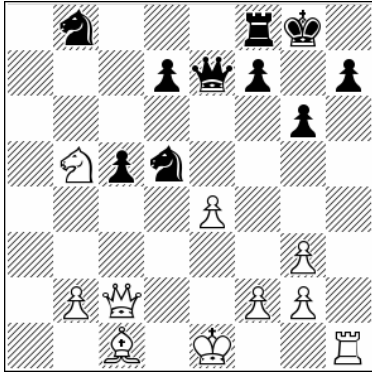
8...exd5

8...0-0 9.g3! e8 [9...exd5 10. g2 e5 11.0-0 d6 12.cxd5 b7 13.h3 this is a good version of the Benoni for White] 10. g2 f8 11.0-0 e5 12.h3 h5 13.e4 White has constructed a strong position right from the opening phase, 1-0 (70)

Di Berardino, D (2523) – Delgado Ramirez, N (2611) Foz do Iguacu 2018.

9.cxd5 ♗e5

A) 9... ♖e7 10. ♖g3 g6 11. ♗c4 0-0 12.e4 a6 13.a4 b5 14.axb5 axb5 15. ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16. ♖xb5 ♗xg3 17.hxg3 ♗xd5 18. ♗xd5 ♖xd5

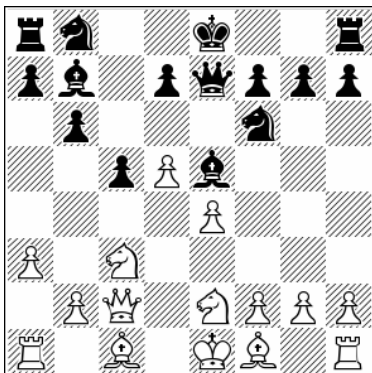


Position after: 18... ♖xd5

19.0-0 ♖b4 20. ♖c4 ♖8c6 21. ♗f4 White has an edge, 1-0 (44) Arizmendi Martinez, J (2559) – Iturrizaga Bonelli, E (2628) La Massana 2012.

B) 9...0-0 10. ♖g3 ♖e8 11. ♗e2 ♗e5 12.e4 d6 13.0-0 a6 14.f4 ♗d4+ 15. ♖h1 b5 16. ♗f3 These Benoni-type structures tend to favor White unless Black can find something special to get his game going, 1-0 Peralta, F (2564) – Kovalyov, A (2601) Sabadell 2010.

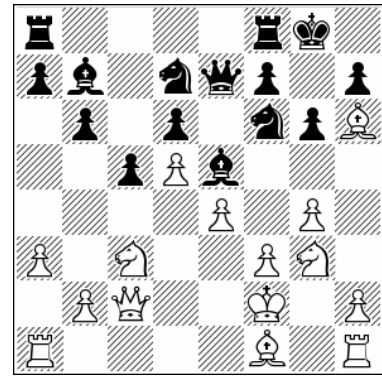
10.e4 ♖e7



Position after: 10... ♖e7

11. ♗g5!

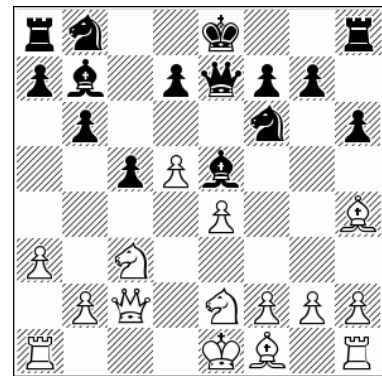
11.f3 0-0 12.g4 d6 13. ♖f2 ♖bd7 14. ♖g3 g6 15. ♗h6!



Position after: 15. ♗h6!

15... ♖fe8 16. ♖g2 a6 17.a4 White plans ♖d2 and the h4-h5 advance.

11...h6 12. ♗h4

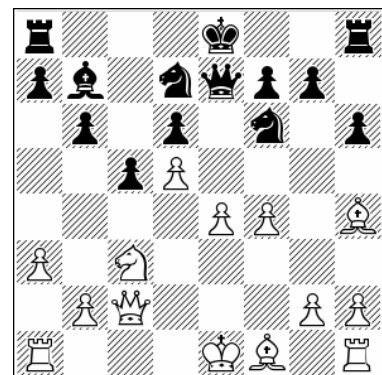


Position after: 12. ♗h4

12...d6

12...g5 13. ♗g3 d6 14.h4 ♖g8 15. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 16.0-0-0 ♖bd7 17. ♖g3 This really looks like a very strong position for White.

13.f4 ♗xc3+ 14. ♖xc3 ♖bd7



Position after: 14... ♖bd7

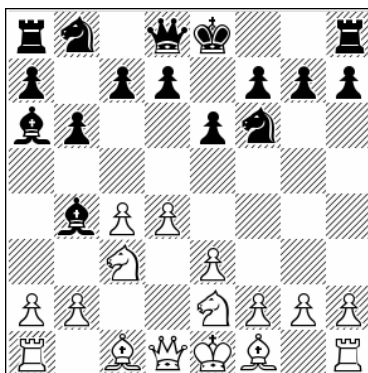
15. ♗e2

This is very good for White.

Chapter 12

5. ♘ge2 ♖a6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 b6 5.♘ge2 ♖a6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 12 – 5. ♘ge2 ♖a6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 b6 5.♘ge2 ♖a6

a) 6.♘g3

b) 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.♘xc3 d5 8.b3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.0-0

c) 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.♘xc3 d5 8.b3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.a4

d) 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.♘xc3 d5 8.♖f3

e) 6.a3 ♗e7 7.♘f4 d5 8.cxd5 ♗xf1 9.♔xf1

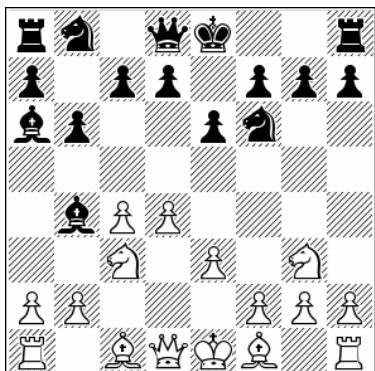
f) 6.a3 ♗e7 7.♘f4 d5 8.cxd5 ♗xf1 9.dxe6

a) 6. ♘g3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♘ge2 ♙a6

This is a very traditional and big line. First our focus will be on 6. ♘g3, and later we will deal with 6.a3.

6. ♘g3



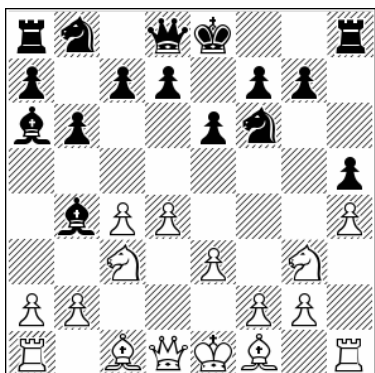
Position after: 6. ♘g3

A very popular choice. White doesn't worry about getting doubled pawns after a possible ... ♙xc3 but instead focuses on pushing e3-e4 quickly.

6... ♙xc3+

Black seizes his chance to double the c-pawns. That's the obvious move, but there other plans here that we need to check.

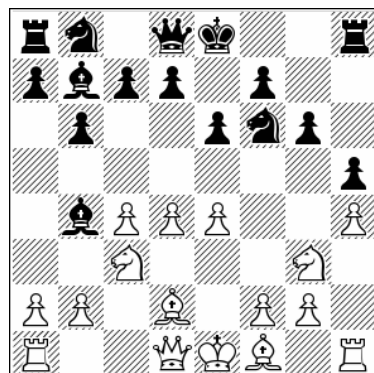
A) 6...h5 7.h4



Position after: 7.h4

A1) 7... ♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 d5 9.♙f3! With the moves ...h5 and h4 included, this line should be good for White. 9... ♙b7 10.♙d3 c5 11.cxd5 ♙xd5 12.e4 ♙d8 13.♙g5 cxd4 14.♙b5+ ♙c6 15.e5 ♙xb5 16.exf6 It did not take White long to get a winning position, 1-0 (25) Gligoric, S – Rubinetti, J Palma de Mallorca 1970.

A2) 7... ♙b7 8.♙d2 The most popular move here. 8... ♙d6 [8...g6 9.e4!



Position after: 9.e4!

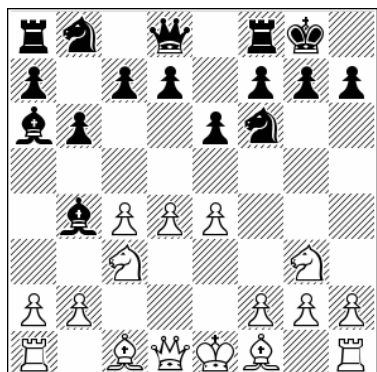
9... ♙xc3 10.♙xc3 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4 ♙xe4 12.d5 ♙h7 13.f3 ♙f5 14.♙e2 White has a very strong initiative] 9.♙h3 A somewhat unusual position in which Black tries to sail the game into original waters, but will pay the price for neglecting central play. 9... ♘c6 [9...g6 10.e4! ♙xg3 11.♙xg3 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♙xe4 13.d5 ♙f5 14.♙c3 ♙f8 15.♙f3 ♘a6 16.b4 this looks unpleasant for Black] 10.f4!



Position after: 10.f4!

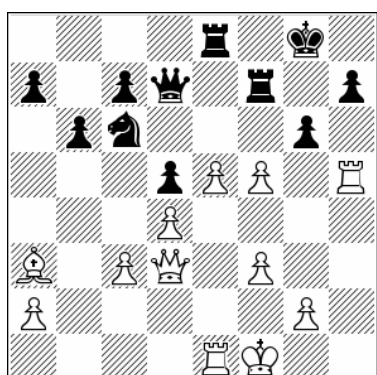
Energetic play is needed. 10...g6 11.d5 exd5 12.♖xd5 ♗g4 13.♙c3 ♜f8 14.♗e4 f5 15.♗xd6+ cxd6 16.♙e2 ♗e7 17.e4 White is clearly better.

B) 6...0-0 7.e4 The starting point of an old line that actually is not popular anymore but needs to be analyzed because it is not at all easy to play.



Position after: 7.e4

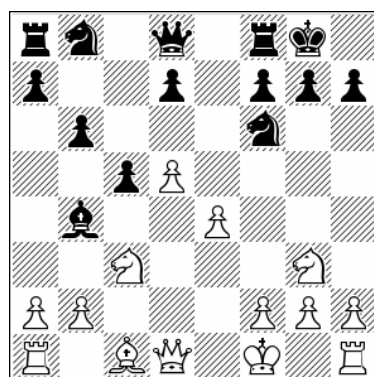
B1) 7...d5 8.cxd5 ♙xf1 9.♖xf1 ♙xc3 10.bxc3 exd5 11.e5 ♗e4 12.f3 ♗xg3+ 13.hxg3 f5 14.♙d3 ♙d7 15.g4 ♗c6 16.♙a3 ♜f7 17.♜e1 ♜e8 18.♜h5 g6 19.gxf5!



Position after: 19.gxf5!

19...♜xf5 20.♜xf5 ♙xf5 21.♙xf5 gxf5 22.♖f2 White has gained the advantage because Black's pawns on h7 and f5 are weak, 1-0 (59) Guliev, S (2416) – Fendereski, N (2238) Baku 2016.

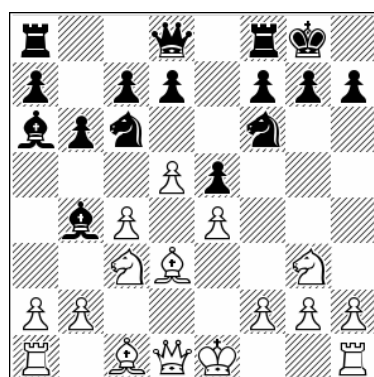
B2) 7...c5 8.d5 exd5 9.cxd5 ♙xf1 10.♖xf1



Position after: 10.♖xf1

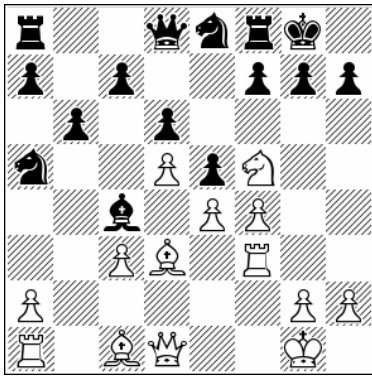
10...d6 [10...♜e8 11.f3 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 d6 13.♙f4 g6 14.♙d2 ♙e7 15.♙h6 ♗h8 16.h4 ♗bd7 17.h5 White has a dangerous initiative, 1-0 (26) Fier, A (2628) – Proudian, A (2377) Curitiba 2015] 11.♙f4 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 b5 13.f3 ♗e8 14.♜b1 ♙a5 15.♙b3 ♗d7 16.♗f5 This is yet another good version of White's play, 1-0 (36) Leitao, R (2619) – Rodriguez Vila, A (2477) Foz do Iguaçu 2018.

B3) 7...♗c6 8.♙d3 This is generally considered good for White. 8...e5 [8...♗xd4 is interesting, but after 9.♙a4 ♙a5 10.b4 d5! 11.0-0! dxc4 12.♙b1, White wins a piece and should remain slightly better.] 9.d5



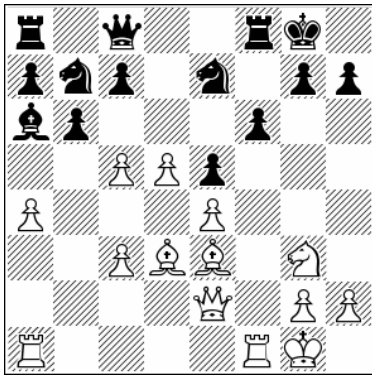
Position after: 9.d5

9...♙xc3+ [9...♗a5 10.0-0 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♙xc4 12.♗f5 ♗e8 13.f4! d6 14.♜f3!



Position after: 14.♖f3!

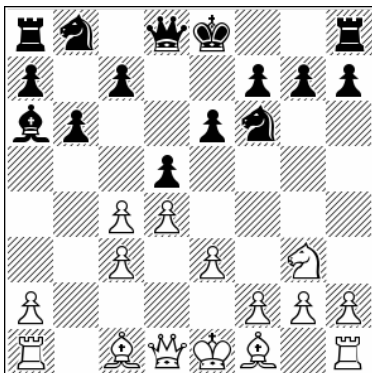
14...♙xd3 15.♚xd3 f6 16.♙a3!? White's idea is to take on e5. 16...exf4 17.♖af1 ♘b7 18.♖xf4 ♘c5 19.♙xc5 bxc5 20.♖h4! Black comes under a strong attack.] 10.bxc3 ♘e7 That's a more natural retreat. 11.♙g5 ♘e8 12.a4 f6 13.♙e3 ♚c8 14.0-0 ♘d6 15.♚e2 ♘b7 16.f4 d6 17.fxg5 dxe5 18.c5!



Position after: 18.c5!

18...♙xd3 19.♚xd3 bxc5 20.a5! White has the upper hand, ½-½ (60) Sadler, M (2626) – Wahls, M (2582) Germany 1999.

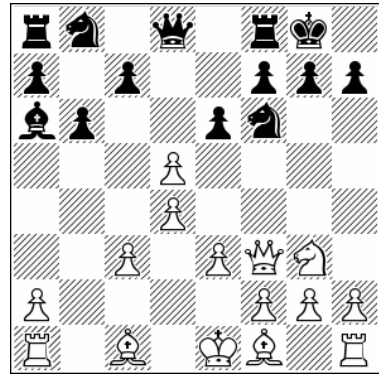
7.bxc3 d5



Position after: 7...d5

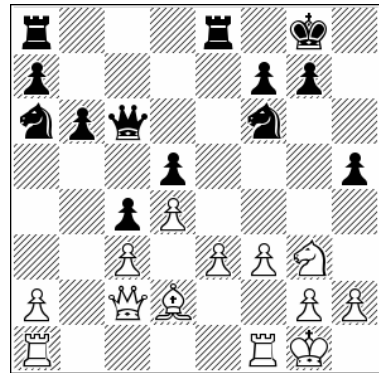
8.♙a3

Actually White is spoilt for choice here because he also has a good alternative. 8.♚f3 0-0 9.cxd5



Position after: 9.cxd5

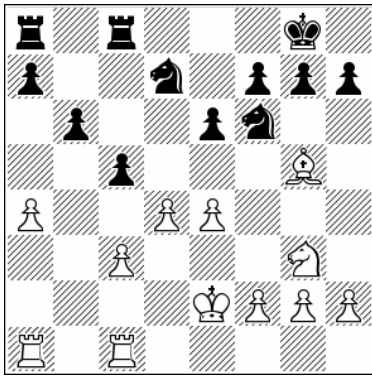
A) 9...exd5 10.♙xa6 ♘xa6 11.♚e2!? This apparently modest retreat is an idea worth remembering. 11...♚c8 12.f3 c5 13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♙d2 White plans e3-e4. 14...h5 15.♚d3 c4 16.♚c2 ♚c6



Position after: 16...♚c6

17.♖ae1! [17.♚f5 h4 18.♘h5 ♘xh5 19.♚xh5 ♘c7 20.♚xh4 White has won a pawn with a simple but effective strategy, 1-0 (40) Laznicka, V (2654) – Ostrovskiy, A (2444) Hamburg 2018] 17...♘c7 18.e4 h4 19.♘f5 dxe4 20.fxe4 ♘xe4 21.♙f4! White's initiative is now strong.

B) 9...♚xd5 10.e4 ♚a5 11.♙xa6 ♚xa6 12.♙g5 ♘bd7 13.♚e2 ♚xe2+ 14.♙xe2 c5 15.a4 ♖fc8 16.♖hc1



Position after: 16...Rhc1

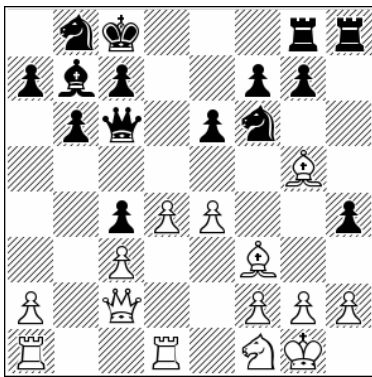
16...♖e8 [16...♔f8 17.f3 ♘e8 18.♙f4 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♕e7 20.♗f1! with some chances in this endgame, 1-0 (56) Knaak, R (2525) – Wahls, M (2540) Baden-Baden 1992] 17.♙f4 ♘f8 18.♙e3 ♗d6 19.e5 ♗c4 20.♗e4 ♗d7 21.g4 f6 22.f4 ♖c6 23.♖d1 White has easier play in this endgame.

8...♙xc4

This bishop capture looks natural, as it eliminates White's potentially dangerous light-squared bishop, but actually Black can seriously consider the alternative of taking the c4-pawn with his pawn.

8...dxc4 In my opinion this line is underrated without good reason. 9.e4 ♕d7 10.♙e2 ♗c6 11.0-0 0-0-0 12.♕c2 h5 13.♖fd1 This position as clear as a first glance might indicate.

A) 13...♗b8 14.♙c1 h4 15.♗f1 ♕c6 16.♙f3 ♙b7 17.♙g5 ♖dg8



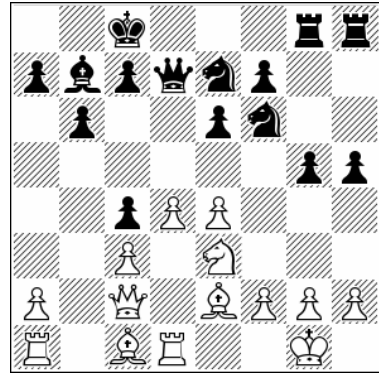
Position after: 17...Rdg8

18.♗e3! [18.d5 ♕d6 This is not clear, 1-0 (61) Gligoric, S (2600) – Cosulich, R (2380) Venice

1971] 18...♕b5 19.d5 h3 20.a4 ♕c5 21.♖d4 ♗bd7 22.♙f4 e5 23.♖xc4 ♕f8 24.♙g5 White is better, but it's not a risk-free position.

B) 13...♗e7 14.♙c1

B1) 14...♖dg8 15.♗f1 g5 16.♗e3 ♙b7

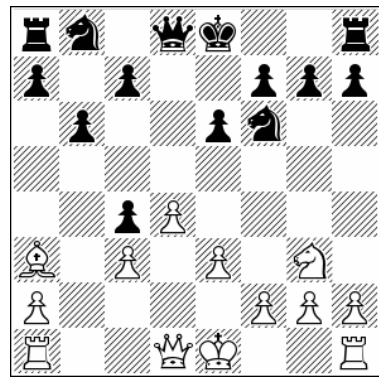


Position after: 16...♙b7

17.♗xc4! [17.f3 g4 Black has serious counterplay, 1-0 (39) Graf, A (2623) – Cvek, R (2430) Leipzig 2002] 17...♗xe4 18.♗e5 ♕e8 19.a4 f6 20.♙b5 ♕f8 21.♗c4 ♕d8 22.f3 ♗d6 23.♗xd6+ ♕xd6 24.♙a3 ♕d8 25.a5 g4 26.axb6 axb6 27.f4 This is good for White.

B2) 14...♙b7! 15.f3 ♖dg8 This is probably a stronger move order for Black. He has provoked f3 and now ...g5 will be a worthwhile push. 16.♙g5 ♗h7 17.♙e3 g5 Completely unclear.

9.♙xc4 dxc4



Position after: 9...dxc4

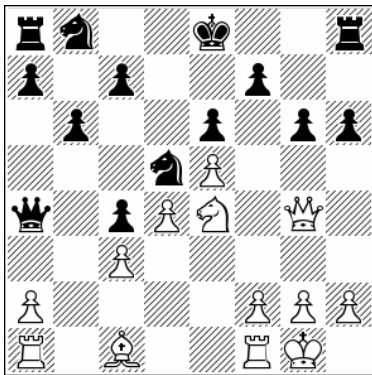
This is an important position for this line. When I analyzed this with Gligoric he thought that

10. ♖a4+ was best, going to an endgame that is favorable for White. On the other hand, some new games with a pawn sac are also interesting.

10. ♖a4+

Best by far. A gambit alternative has been tried, but it seems that Black has enough strength to defend.

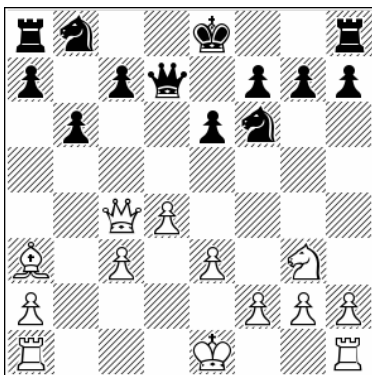
10.0-0 ♖d7 11.e4 ♖b5 12.e5!? ♘d5 13. ♖g4 g6
14. ♗e4 ♖a4 15. ♕c1 h6!



Position after: 15...h6!

16. ♖f3 ♗d7 17. ♖e1 ♖c6 18.a4 a5 19. ♕d2 ♗e7
Black is doing OK.

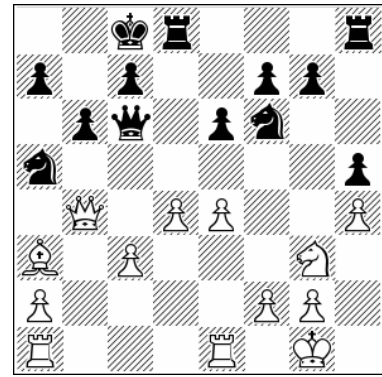
10... ♖d7 11. ♖xc4



Position after: 11. ♖xc4

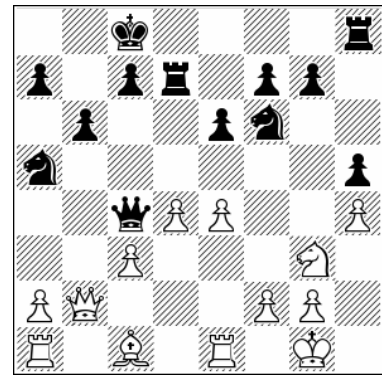
11... ♖c6

11... ♗c6 12.e4 ♗a5 13. ♖b4 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♖c6
15. ♖fe1 h5 16.h4



Position after: 16.h4

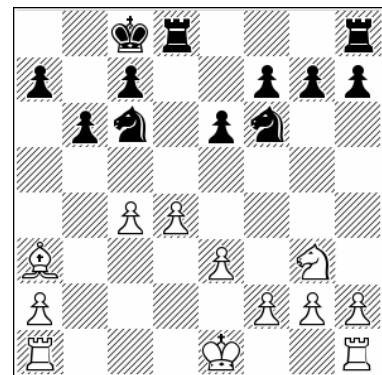
16... ♖d7 [16... ♗c4 17. ♕c1 ♖d7 18.a4 ♗e8
19. ♖b5 ♖xb5 20.axb5 ♗b7 21. ♖a4 White has
developed the sort of play he was aiming for, ½-
½ (54) Balashov, Y (2418) – Milanovic, S (2375)
Moscow 2015] 17. ♕c1 ♖c4 18. ♖b2!



Position after: 18. ♖b2!

18... ♗b7 19. ♖b1 ♖c6 20. ♕f4 ♗c4 21. ♖e2 Such
positions are in White's favor, but it's a long
game ahead of us.

12. ♖xc6+ ♗xc6 13.c4 0-0-0



Position after: 13...0-0-0

We have here an endgame that both Gligoric and I think gives White chances for an advantage.

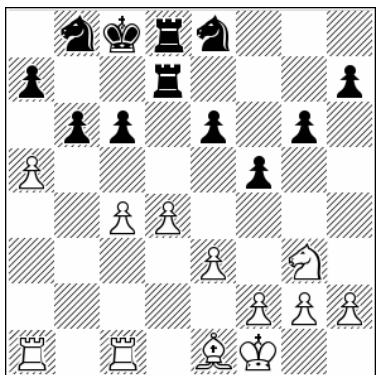
14. ♖e2

I think that the position of white rooks here is very important. In my opinion the key is to put the rooks on b1 and c1, although it has been more common to station them on c1 and d1.

14. ♖c1 ♖b7 15. ♖e2 ♖d7 16. ♖hd1 ♖hd8 17. ♗f1 ♗e8 18. ♗d2 ♗f6 19. ♗b3 a5 20. ♙b2 a4 21. ♗d2 ♖a8 22. ♙c3 ♖dd8 23. ♖b1 ♖a6 24. ♖dc1 A very complicated struggle, 1-0 (68) Gligoric, S – Mednis, E Los Angeles 1974.

14... ♖b7

14... ♖d7 15. ♙b2 ♖hd8 16. ♙c3 ♗e8 17. ♖hc1 g6 18. ♙e1 f5 19. a4 ♗b8 20. a5 c6 21. ♖f1!



Position after: 21. ♖f1!

21... ♖b7 22. axb6 axb6 23. ♖ab1 ♖a7 24. ♗e2! ♗d6 25. ♖c2 ♗a6 26. ♗f4 White is winning this endgame, 1-0 (39) Nisipeanu, L (2667) – Moreno Ruiz, J (2486) Montcada 2013.

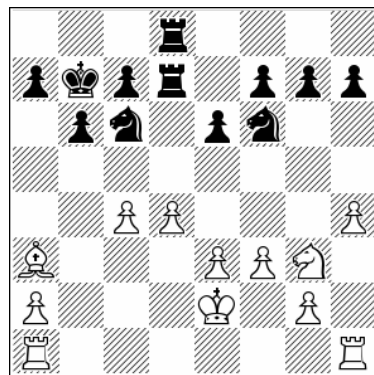
15. f3

Between moves 15 and 20 it is important to follow my recommendation to put the rooks on b1 and c1, and at the same time prevent any black intrusion via the d2-square.

A) For example: 15. ♖ab1!? ♖d7 16. ♖hc1 ♖hd8 17. h4 h5 18. f3 Such positions tend to give White some edge.

B) 15. ♙b2 ♖d7 16. ♙c3 ♖c8 17. a4 a5 18. ♖ab1 ♖a6 19. ♖hc1 h6 20. f3 ♖dd8 21. ♗f1 ♗e7 22. ♗d2 Here we can talk about a better endgame for White, 1-0 (65) Atalik, E (2430) – Rakic, M (2294) Belgrade 2013.

15... ♖d7 16. h4 ♖hd8



Position after: 16... ♖hd8

Black prevents the e3-e4 plan so it's clear now that the position has lost its aggressive edge. Instead it's now all about maneuvers, in which White has more space and easier play.

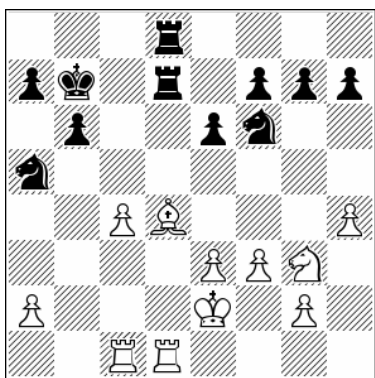
17. ♖hd1

17. ♖ab1 ♗a5 18. ♖hc1 c5!? 19. ♙xc5 ♖c8 20. ♗f1 ♖a6 21. ♙b4 ♖xc4 22. ♖xc4 ♗xc4 This is less clear.

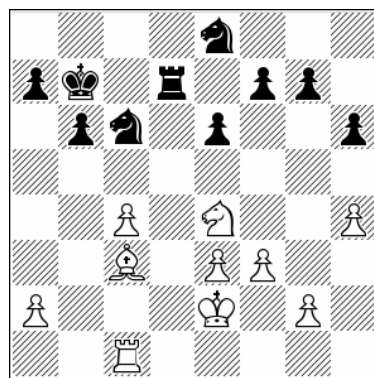
17... ♗a5 18. ♖ac1 c5 19. ♙b2 cxd4

19... ♗e8 20. ♗e4 cxd4 21. ♖xd4 ♖c6 22. g4 f6 23. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24. h5 h6 25. f4 Again with pressure.

20. ♙xd4!



Position after: 20.♙xd4!



Position after: 23...♞xd7

20...♗e8 21.♗e4 ♗c6 22.♙c3 h6 23.♞xd7+ ♞xd7

24.g4

White has a better endgame, 1-0 (55) Gulko, B (2644) – Rechlis, G (2507) ICC INT 2000.

b) 6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.♗xc3 d5 8.b3 0-0 9.♙e2 ♗c6 10.0-0

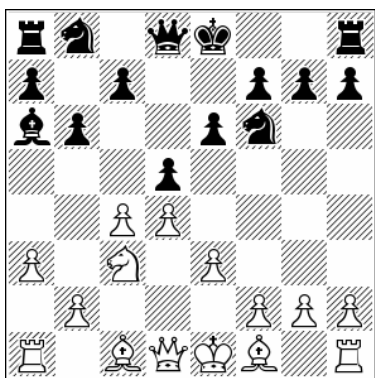
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♗ge2 ♙a6 6.a3

This is another way of handling the line. White simply challenges Black to decide what exactly he will do with the bishop on b4.

6...♙xc3+

This is one of two main ideas. Black can also retreat the bishop to e7, which is very sharp and, in my opinion, less investigated.

7.♗xc3 d5



Position after: 7...d5

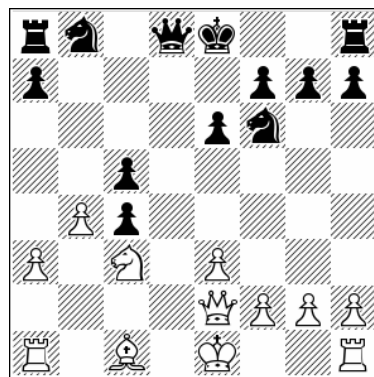
This is a more positional line.

8.b3

The idea is avoid taking on d5, at least until a suitable moment arrives. White is hoping to build up a strong center without allowing an exchange of the light-squared bishops. I will briefly mention a few other choices that are less important but still interesting.

A) 8.cxd5 ♙xf1 9.♙xf1 exd5 10.f3 ♗c6 11.♙f2 0-0 12.♞e1 ♞e8 13.♙g1 ♙d7 14.b3 ♞ad8 15.♞a2 ♗a5 16.♞d2 c6 17.♙b2 ♙e6 18.♗a2 ♗d7 19.♗c1 f6 20.♙c3 ♗b7 21.♗d3 White carried out a very good plan, but still the position is balanced, ½-½ (41) Mecking, H – Najdorf, M Buenos Aires 1970.

B) 8.b4 ♙xc4 9.♙xc4 dxc4 10.♙e2 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5!



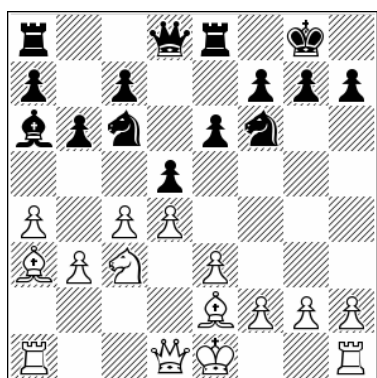
Position after: 11...bxc5!

12. ♖xc4 ♜bd7 13. 0-0 0-0 14. ♕b2 [14. ♖d1 ♚e7
 15. ♕d2 ♜fc8 16. b5 ♜e5 17. ♗h4 ♚b7 it's a
 balanced position, 0-1 (34) Kudischewitsch, D
 (2348) – Manor, I (2476) Israel 2013] 14... ♞e5
 15. ♗e2 cxb4 16. axb4 ♚d3 17. ♜fd1 ♜c4 18. b5
 ♜ab8 We have equality.

8...0-0

Black can try to develop his other knight straight
 away.

8... ♞c6 9. a4 An interesting move order. [9. ♕e2
 0-0 White can transpose to the main line] 9...0-0
 10. ♕a3 ♜e8 11. ♕e2



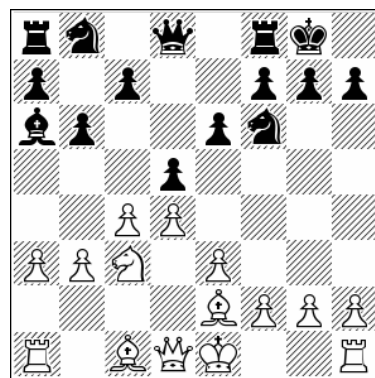
Position after: 11. ♕e2

Compared to 10.a4 line here Black has placed a
 rook on e8, rather than adopting a formation
 with the queen on d7 and the king's rook on d8.

A) 11... dxc4 12. bxc4 ♞a5 [12... e5 13. d5 ♞a5
 14. ♞b5 ♞e4 15. ♗c2 ♞c5 16. ♜d1 ♕xb5 17. cxb5
 ♞ab7 18. 0-0 e4 19. a5 ♞xa5 20. ♕xc5 bxc5
 21. ♗xc5 White is better, 1-0 (36) Yu Yangyi
 (2738) – Bao, Q (2412) Daqing 2019] 13. ♞b5
 Another way of handling the line, which we will
 analyze later in the text.

B) 11... ♞a5 12. ♜b1 c6 13. 0-0 ♞b7 14. ♗c2 dxc4
 15. bxc4 e5 16. dxe5 ♜xe5 17. e4 White has a clear
 advantage, 1-0 (31) Korobov, A (2678) – Pak, Y
 (2390) Nakhchivan 2018.

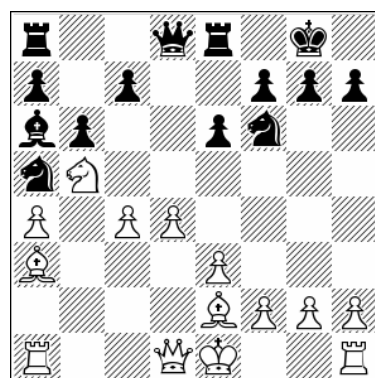
9. ♕e2



Position after: 9. ♕e2

9... ♞c6

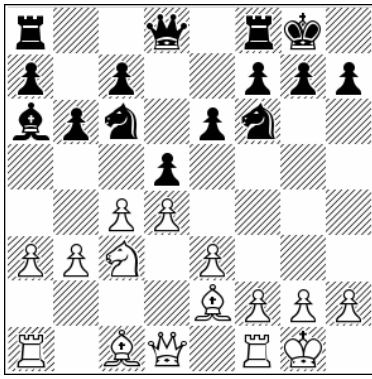
9... dxc4 10. bxc4 ♞c6 11. a4 ♞a5 12. ♕a3 ♜e8
 13. ♞b5



Position after: 13. ♞b5

This is a well-known way of playing for White
 when Black adopts the early ...dxc4 plan.
 13... ♗d7 [13... c6 14. ♞d6 ♜e7 15. e4 ♜d7 16. e5
 ♞e8 17. ♗c2 ♞b7 18. ♞e4! This is a famous
 game. 18... ♜xd4 19. ♕b2 ♜d7 20. ♜a3 ♞c5
 21. ♜h3 ♞xe4 22. ♗xe4 g6 23. ♗f4! White has a
 dangerous initiative, 1-0 (31) Kuzmin, G (2535) –
 Ree, H (2500) Kiev 1978] 14. 0-0 ♜ed8 15. ♗c2
 ♕b7 [15... ♞e8 16. ♕b2 c6 17. ♞a3 ♗e7 18. ♕d3
 White has better chances, and now f4-f5 is a
 possible plan, 1-0 (33) Kuzmin, G (2565) – Toth,
 B (2405) Reggio Emilia 1976] 16. f3 ♞e8 17. ♜fd1
 White is simply better, 1-0 (48) Korobov, A (2688)
 – Swayams, M (2489) chess.com INT 2020.

10.0-0

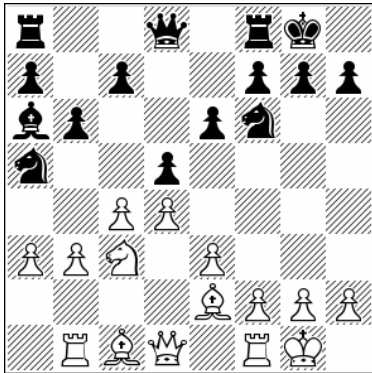


Position after: 10.0-0

White can also play a4 first, although it does have some drawbacks. We will examine that separately.

10...dxc4

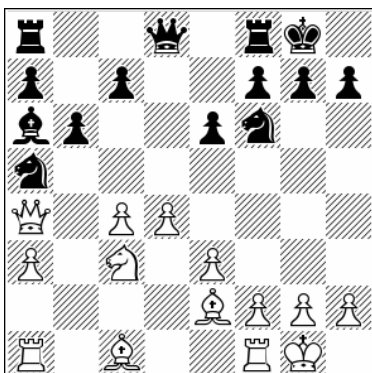
10...♞a5 11.♞b1!



Position after: 11.♞b1!

To answer ...dxc4 with b4. 11...♞b7 12.a4 c5 13.♙a3 ♞e8 14.♞b5 This is good for White, 1-0 (50) Gormally, D (2467) – Horton, A (2269) Wakefield 2015.

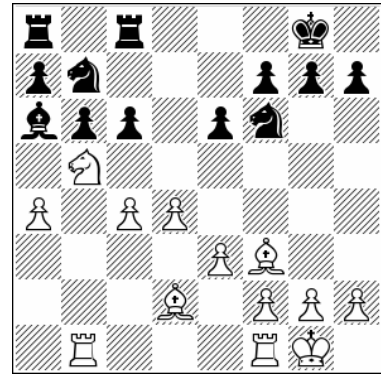
11.bxc4 ♞a5 12.♞a4



Position after: 12.♞a4

12...♞e8

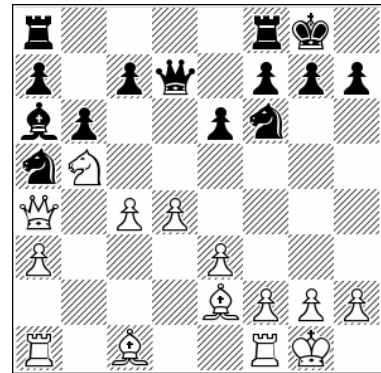
12...♞d7 13.♞xd7 ♞xd7 14.♞b5 ♞fc8 15.♞b1 ♞f6 16.♙d2 ♞b7 17.♙f3 c6 18.a4!



Position after: 18.a4!

18...♞e8 19.♙b4 A good game with advantage to White, 1-0 (32) Kashlinskaya, A (2432) – Ustich, E (2009) Kaliningrad 2015.

13.♞b5 ♞d7

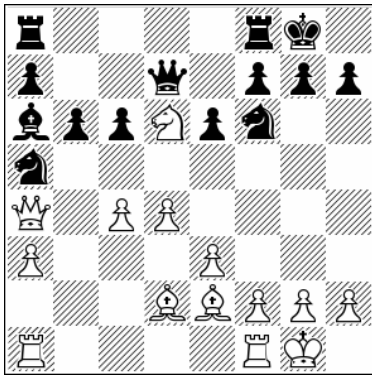


Position after: 13...♞d7

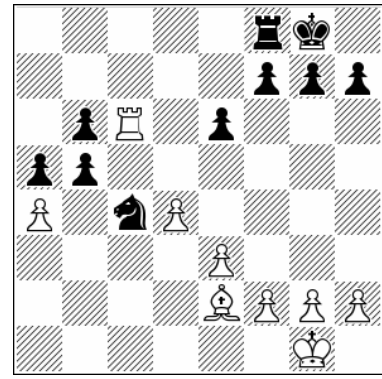
14.♙d2!?

14.♞b1 ♞ac8 15.♙d2 c6 16.♞c3 c5 17.♞xd7 ♞xd7 18.♞b5 ♙xb5 19.♞xb5 a6 20.♞bb1 cxd4 21.♙xa5 d3 22.♙xd3 bxa5 Black is OK, ½-½ (22) Jussupow, A (2598) – Istratescu, A (2625) Switzerland 2008.

14...c6 15.♞d6!



Position after: 15. d6!



Position after: 25. a4

This is an important tactic to bear in mind.

25... ♖b8 26. axb5

15... ♖xd6 16. ♕xa5 bxa5 17. c5 ♕b5 18. ♖xb5
 cxb5 19. cxd6 ♖ab8 20. ♖fc1 ♗e4 21. ♖c6 ♖b6
 22. ♖xb6 axb6 23. ♖c1 ♗xd6 24. ♖c6 ♗c4 25. a4

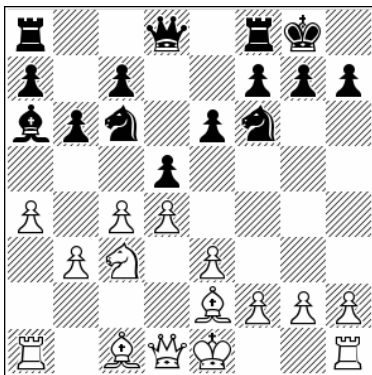
White has a better endgame.

c) 6. a3 ♕xc3+ 7. ♗xc3 d5 8. b3 0-0 9. ♕e2 ♗c6 10. a4

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♕b4 4. e3 b6 5. ♗ge2
 ♕a6 6. a3 ♕xc3+ 7. ♗xc3 d5 8. b3 0-0 9. ♕e2 ♗c6

So far we have been following the line in the previous subchapter, where White played 10. 0-0.

10. a4

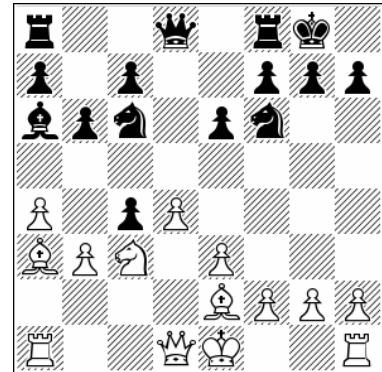


Position after: 10. a4

This is another setup here.

10... ♖d7

10... dxc4 11. ♕a3

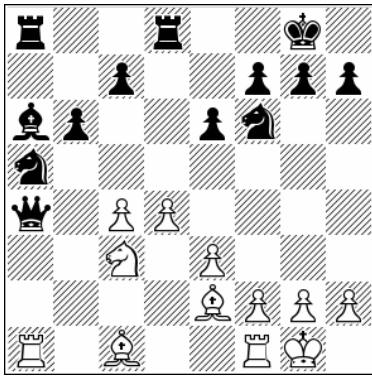


Position after: 11. ♕a3

11... ♖e8 [11... ♗a5?! Speculative play. 12. ♕xf8 ♖xf8 13. bxc4 ♖b4 14. ♖c1 ♗b3 15. ♖c2 ♗e4 16. ♖d3 ♗d6 17. 0-0 ♕xc4 18. ♖d1 It's better for White.] 12. bxc4 The game transposes to notes in the previous subchapter.

11. 0-0 ♖fd8 12. ♕b2

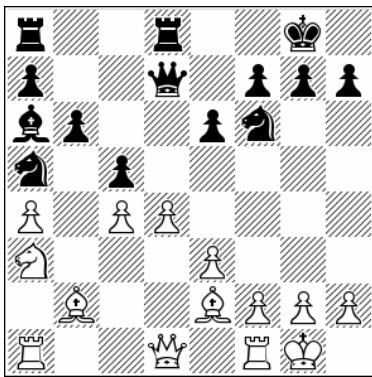
Sokolov's recommendation is very solid. 12. a5!?
 dxc4 13. axb6 axb6 14. bxc4 ♗a5 15. ♖c2 ♖c6
 16. ♖a4 ♖xa4!?



Position after: 16...Wxa4!?

17. Bxa4 Qe8 18. Bd1 Qd6 19. Qb5 Bdc8 20. Qa3
With a complex endgame.

12...dxc4 13.bxc4 Qa5 14.Qb5 c6 15.Qa3 c5



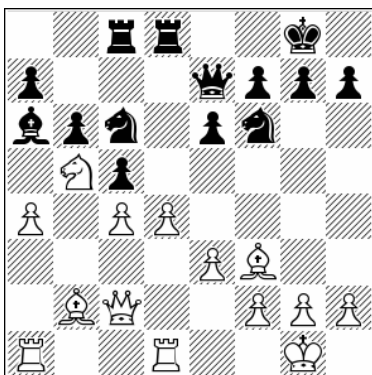
Position after: 15...c5

16. Wc2

16. Qb5 Qb7!? 17.f3 [17.Bc1 a6 18.Qa3 Qc6
That's a possible difference in Blacks favor]
17...a6 18.Qa3 cxd4 19.Qxd4 Wc7 20.Bb1 Qd7
Black is doing OK.

16...cxd4

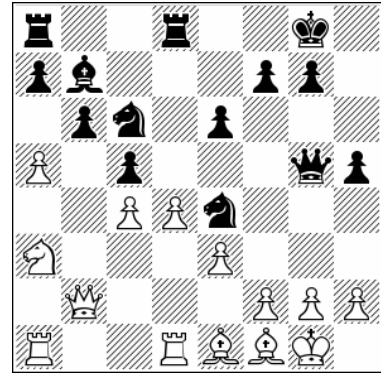
A) 16...Bac8 17.Bfd1 We7 18.Qb5 Qc6 19.Qf3!?



Position after: 19.Qf3!?

19...Qb7 20.d5 Qb4 21.Wc3 a6 22.d6 Wd7
23.Qxb7 Wxb7 24.Qc7 Bd7 25.Bd2 Wc6 26.Bad1
Bcd8 27.We5 Wxa4 28.h3 It's balanced, but
Black has to find only moves here.

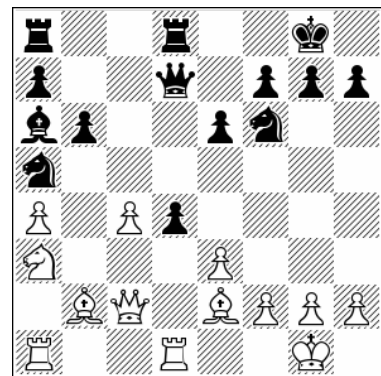
B) 16...We7 17.Bfd1 Qb7 18.Qc3 Qc6 19.Wb2
Qe4 20.Qe1 Wg5 21.Qf1 h5 22.a5!



Position after: 22.a5!

22...h4 23.h3 Bab8 24.axb6 axb6 25.Qb5 This is
a good setup for White.

17.Bfd1!

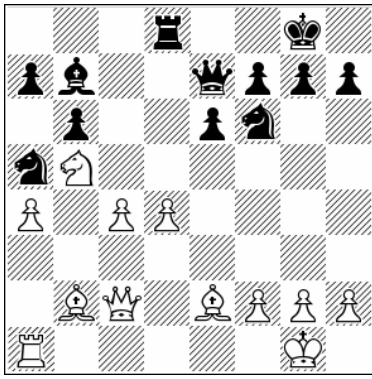


Position after: 17.Bfd1!

This is a key.

17.exd4 Bac8 Logical and best. 18.Bac1 Qb7!
White has problems with his queen and also the
a4-pawn now. 19.Qc3 Qe4 20.Wb2 Wxa4
21.Qxa5 bxa5 This is fine for Black, 1-0 (71)
Hillarp Persson, T (2539) – Shengelia, D (2579)
Reykjavik 2015.

17...Qb7 18.Bxd4 We7 19.Qb5 Bxd4 20.exd4
Bd8



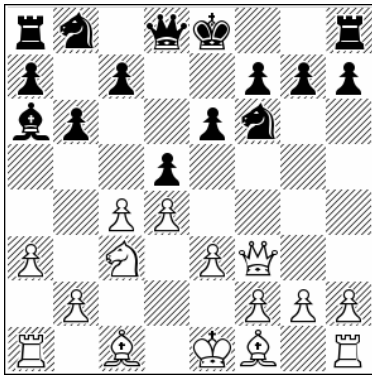
Position after: 20...Rd8

21.f3

This is now playable for White.

d) 6.a3 Qxc3+ 7.Nxc3 d5 8.Qf3

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Qb4 4.e3 b6 5.Nge2 Qa6 6.a3 Qxc3+ 7.Nxc3 d5 8.Qf3



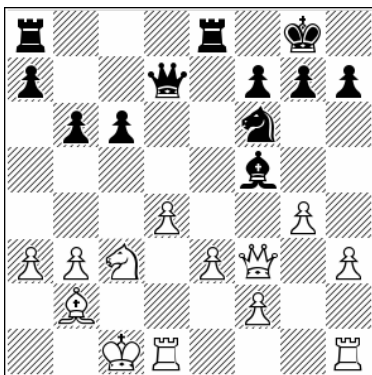
Position after: 8.Qf3

Another important system. White is aiming to push e3-e4.

8...0-0

Black can opt for solid play with a different move.

8...c6 9.b3 0-0 10.Qb2 Nbd7 11.cxd5 Qxf1 12.dxe6 Qd3 13.exd7 Qxd7 14.0-0-0 Qf5 15.h3 Rfe8 16.g4

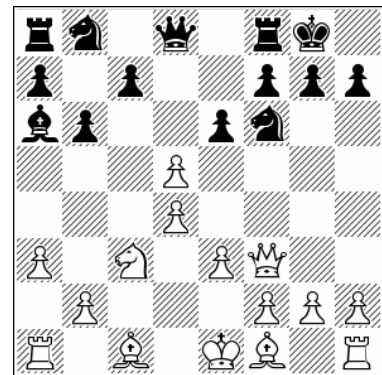


Position after: 16.g4

16...Qg6! [16...Qe6? 17.g5 Nd5 18.e4 Nxc3 19.Qxc3 a5 20.d5 A quick win, but the game was not clear before Black's mistake, 1-0 (20) Navara, D (2740) – Olkhovskiy, A (2145) Katowice 2017] 17.Qe2 Qe6 Black has strong counterplay.

9.g4!?

9.cxd5

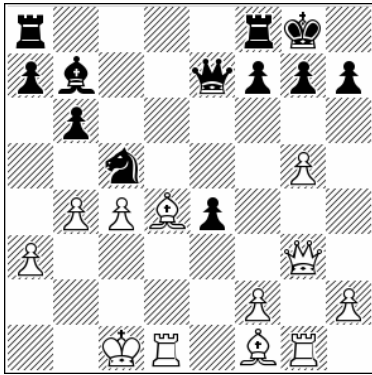


Position after: 9.cxd5

9...exd5 [9...Qxf1 10.dxe6! Qa6 11.Qxa8 c6 12.exf7+ Rxf7 13.e4 Ne8 14.Qg5 Qc8 15.0-0-0 Nc7 16.Qxa7 Ne6 17.Qxb6 Nxc5 18.d5 it seems that such ambitious play is justified, 1-0 (36) Khismatullin, D (2646) – Hakobyan, A (2283) Yerevan 2015] 10.Qxa6 Nxa6 11.0-0 c6 12.Qd2 Nc7 13.Rad1 Qd7 14.Qe2 Rfe8 15.f3 Qe7 16.Qf2 We have reached a balanced game, ½-½ (21) Hellsten, J (2554) – Leita, R (2580) Santiago de Chile 2005.

9...c6

9...♙b7 10.g5 ♘e4 11.♗xe4 dxe4 12.♚g3 ♗d7
 13.♙d2! c5 14.♞g1 cxd4 15.exd4 e5 16.♙c3 exd4
 17.♙xd4 ♗c5 18.0-0 ♚e7 19.b4!!



Position after: 19.b4!!

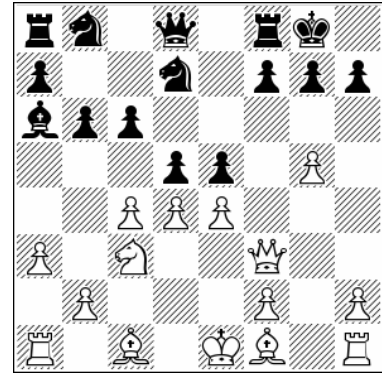
Not an easy move. 19...♗e6 20.♙f6 ♚e8 21.♙b2
 ♞c8 22.♚e5 It seems that White is much better.

10.g5 ♗fd7 11.e4

11.cxd5 ♙xf1 12.♚xf1 cxd5 13.h4 ♗c6 14.♚g2
 ♞c8 15.♙d2 This is unclear.

11...e5!

Black's strong point.

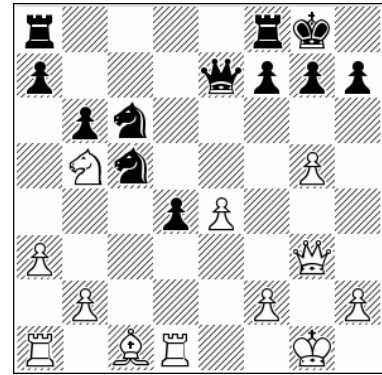


Position after: 11...e5!

12.cxd5 exd4 13.♙xa6 ♗xa6 14.dxc6 ♗e5
 15.♚g3 ♗c5 16.0-0 ♗xc6

Black is winning.

17.♞d1 ♚e7 18.♗b5



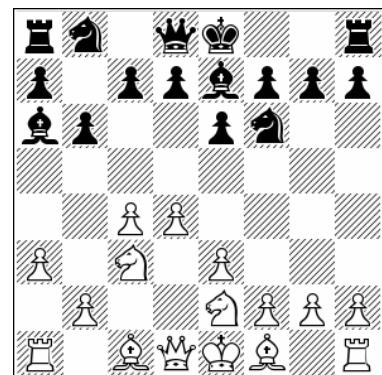
Position after: 18.♗b5

18...♚xe4

½-½ (18) Pomes Marcet, J (2340) – Vanheirzeele, D (2115) Sabadell 2017.

e) 6.a3 ♙e7 7.♗f4 d5 8.cxd5 ♙xf1 9.♚xf1

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♗ge2
 ♙a6 6.a3 ♙e7

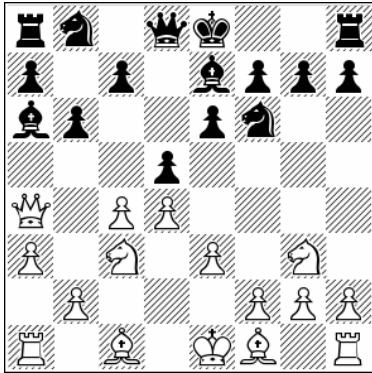


Position after: 6...♙e7

Now it can become highly complex from the tactical point of view.

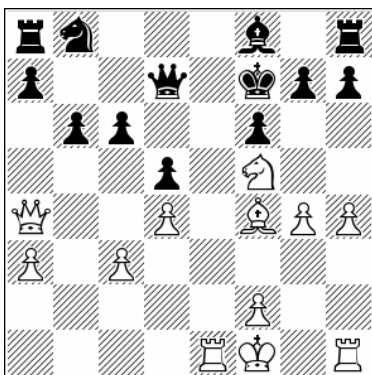
7.♘f4

Rare but interesting play occurred in the following game: 7.♘g3 d5 8.♚a4+!?



Position after: 8.♚a4+!?

8...c6 [8...♚d7 9.♚xd7+ ♘bxd7 10.♘b5 ♙xb5 11.cxb5 ♜c8 12.♙d2 c5 13.bxc6 ♜xc6 14.♙b5 ♜c7 15.♙e2 this is very much playable for White, 1-0 (47) Bodnar, N (2411) – Yanichkin, A (2188) Vinnitsa 2016] 9.cxd5!? ♙xf1 10.♙xf1 exd5 11.♘f5 ♙f8 [11...0-0 12.f3 ♜e8 13.g4 ♙f8 14.♙g2 A highly interesting position, with mutual chances] 12.e4 ♘xe4 13.♙f4 ♚d7 14.g4 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 f6 [15...h5 16.♜e1+ ♙d8 17.♘e3 ♙c8 the king will go to b7 and everything is rather unclear] 16.♜e1+ ♙f7 17.h4!

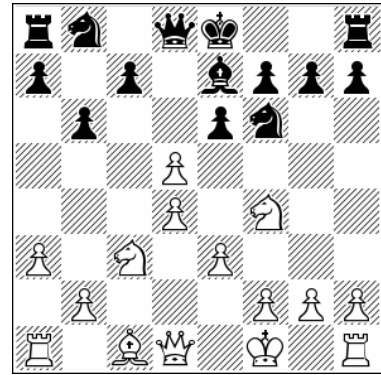


Position after: 17.h4!

Intending to push that pawn one step further. 17...g6 [17...h5 18.♚c2! g6 19.♘e3 ♘a6 20.gxh5 ♜xh5 21.♜g1 f5 22.♚d3 ♘c7 23.♘c4!! dxc4 24.♚g3 g5 25.♙xg5 a fantastic attack for White]

18.♘e3 ♙g7 19.h5 ♜e8 20.♙g2 White has play for the sacrificed pawn.

7...d5 8.cxd5 ♙xf1 9.♙xf1

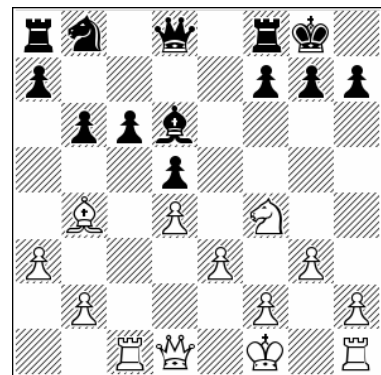


Position after: 9.♙xf1

First we deal with this line. It has been somewhat abandoned line but I really don't see any reason for that, because actually it is a demanding system.

9...exd5

9...♘xd5 10.♘cxd5 exd5 11.♙d2 0-0 12.g3 c6 13.♜c1 ♙d6 14.♙b4!



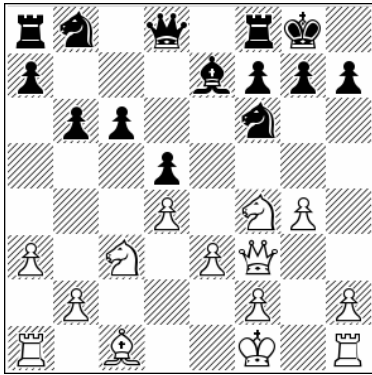
Position after: 14.♙b4!

That's a key idea in this position. Now the pawn on c6 is a direct target and advancing ...c5 makes the pawn on d5 weak. 14...a5 15.♙xd6 ♚xd6 16.♚a4 ♜c8 17.♙g2 ♘d7 18.♜c3 b5 19.♚c2 ♘b6 20.♜c1 ♘c4 21.a4 bxa4 22.♚xa4 White has got some edge, 1-0 (39) Vidit, S (2717) – Liu Guanclu (2466) China 2019.

10.g4

The most aggressive move, but there is another move which is also sharp.

10. ♖f3 c6 11.g4 0-0



Position after: 11...0-0

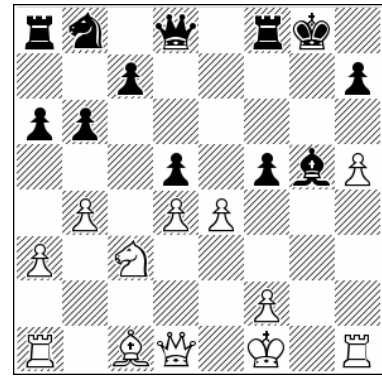
Probably best and safest. 12. ♕d2 [12.h4 ♖e8 13.g5 ♜e4 14. ♜ce2 ♜d7 15. ♖g4 ♜f8 16.f3 ♜d6 17. ♜g3 ♖c8 18. ♖xc8 ♖axc8 19. ♔e2 ♜e6 20. ♜gh5 ♜xf4+ 21. ♜xf4 ♜f5 Black is fine in this type of endgame, 1-0 (23) Djurhuus, R (2446) – Salomon, J (2346) Trondheim 2014] 12... ♖a6 13. ♖d1 ♜c7 14.h4 ♜e6 15.g5 ♜e8 16. ♜ce2 ♜8c7 17. ♔g2 ♖d7 18. ♖h3 ♕d6 19. ♜d3 With a complex game ahead of us, ½-½ (40) Kharitonov, A (2556) – Korotylev, A (2589) Moscow 2011.

10...g5

That's a known antidote but actually this position has not been investigated as much as it deserves.

11. ♜d3

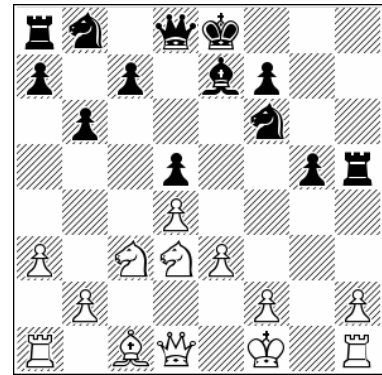
11. ♜h5!? ♜xh5 12.gxh5 0-0 13.h4 f5 14.hxg5 ♕xg5 15.b4! [15.h6 ♔h8 16.f4 ♕e7 completely unclear, 1-0 (30) Brunello, S (2603) – Slavin, A (2363) London 2013] 15...a6 [15... ♔h8 16. ♖f3 c6 17.b5 that is the idea] 16.e4!!



Position after: 16.e4!!

16... ♕xc1 17. ♖xc1 fxe4 18. ♖g4+ ♔h8 19.h6 ♖g8 20. ♖f4 ♜d7 21. ♜xd5 White is better.

11...h5 12.gxh5 ♖xh5



Position after: 12...♖xh5

13. ♖g1!?

This is very interesting and new, it seems, because there is a different plan involved.

13. ♜e5 c6 14. ♖f3 ♖c8 15.h3 ♜bd7 This was OK for Black, ½-½ (24) Filip, M – Pachman, L Prague 1954.

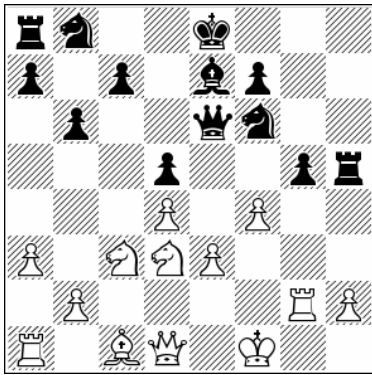
13... ♖c8

13... ♖xh2 14. ♜e5 ♖c8 15. ♖f3 ♜bd7 16. ♖xg5 c6 17. ♕d2 This is looking unpleasant for Black.

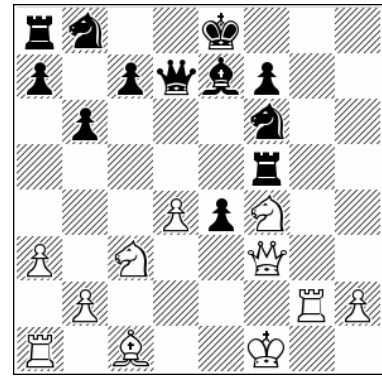
14. ♖g2 ♖e6

14... ♖f5 15. ♜e5 c6 16. ♔g1 ♖h8 17. ♕d2 The position is full of possibilities. I have the impression that it is Black who risks more.

15.f4!



Position after: 15.f4!



Position after: 18...dxe4

15...gxf4 16.♘xf4 ♜f5 17.♚f3 ♚d7 18.e4! dxe4

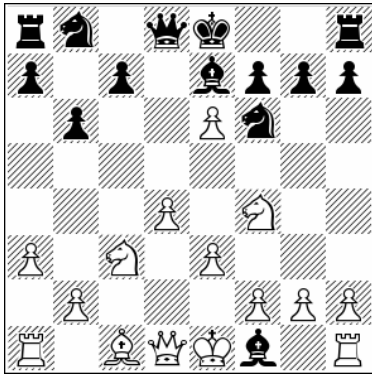
19.♘xe4

It seems that White will be better in the forthcoming complications.

f) 6.a3 ♘e7 7.♘f4 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xf1 9.dxe6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♘ge2 ♘a6 6.a3 ♘e7 7.♘f4 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xf1 9.dxe6!?

A famous old sacrifice garnished with some new ideas. Black probably is doing OK.



Position after: 9.dxe6!?



Position after: 16.e4

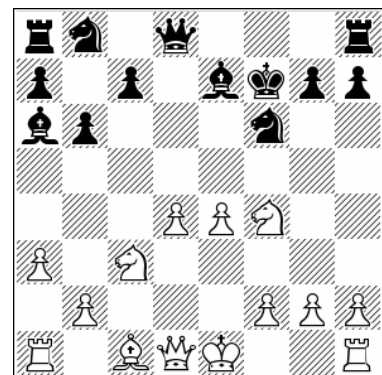
16...♘xe4 17.0-0 ♘a6 18.♜e1 ♘f6 19.♙g5 ♘c7 20.♘xg7+ White has a winning attack, which Black somehow survived, 0-1 (53) Kazhgaleyev, M (2587) – Piorun, K (2634) St Petersburg 2018.

9...♘a6

Best, and in fact forced.

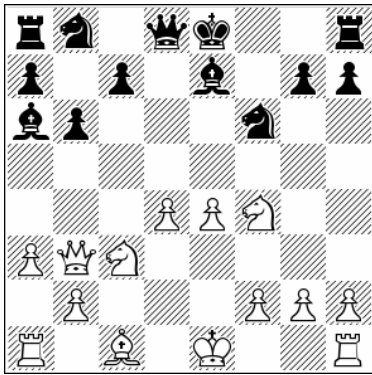
9...♘c4 10.♚a4+ b5 11.♘xb5 ♘xb5 12.♚xb5+ c6 13.exf7+ ♔xf7 14.♚b3+ ♔e8 15.♘e6 ♚d7 16.e4

10.exf7+ ♔xf7 11.e4



Position after: 11.e4

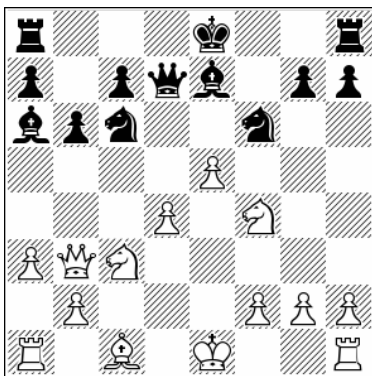
11. ♖b3+ ♔e8 12. e4!?



Position after: 12.e4!?

A) 12... ♖xd4 13. ♘e6 ♖c4 14. ♖xc4 ♙xc4 15. ♘xc7+ ♔f7 16. ♘xa8 ♘a6 17. ♘xb6 ♘b6 18. b4 ♘c7 [18... b5 19. ♙b2 ♖c8 20. f3 ♘d7 21. ♘d1 this interesting endgame might favor White, 1-0 (44) Dambacher, M (2476) – Morawietz, D (2420) Germany 2018] 19. ♙b2 ♘e6 20. 0-0-0 ♘g4 21. ♘d5 With a highly complex game.

B) 12... ♖d7 13. e5 ♘c6!



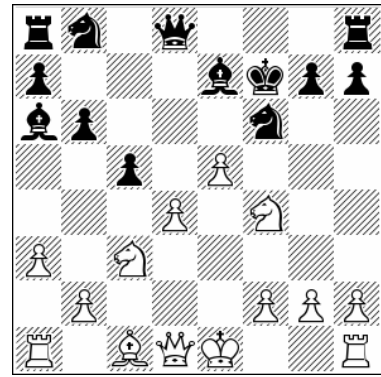
Position after: 13... ♘c6!

14. exf6 ♙xf6 15. ♖a4 ♘a5 16. ♖c2 ♘c6 17. ♖a4 With a possible repetition of moves. Black usually gives back material in order to get fast development.

11... ♙c4!?

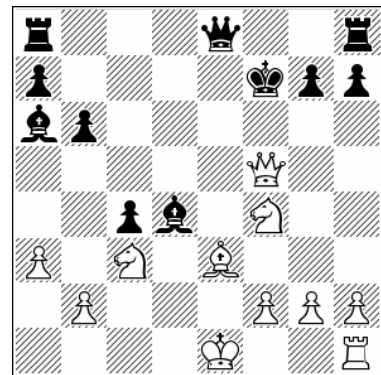
Probably the main defense.

11...c5 12.e5!



Position after: 12.e5!

After this it seems that White is better. 12... ♘c6 [12... ♖xd4 13. e6+! ♔f8 14. ♖f3 ♖e5+ 15. ♙e3 g5 16. ♘fe2 ♘c6 17. ♖xc6 White is better, 1-0 (37) Van der Stricht, G (2368) – Miezis, N (2498) Charleroi 2016] 13. exf6 ♙xf6 14. ♖b3+ c4 15. ♖a4 ♖e8+ 16. ♙e3 ♘a5 17. ♖c2 ♘b3 18. ♖d1 ♘xd4 19. ♖xd4 ♙xd4 20. ♖f5+



Position after: 20. ♖f5+

20... ♙f6 21. ♖d5+ ♔f8 22. 0-0 White has a winning position. 1-0 (55) Kacheishvili, G (2606) – Friedel, J (2547) ICC INT 2009.

12. ♙e3!?

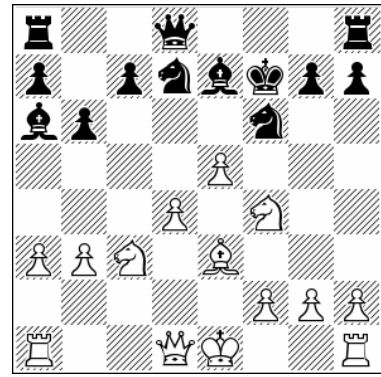
This move order, where White refrains from a quick e4-e5, is an interesting one.

12. e5 ♘c6 13. ♙e3



Position after: 13.♙e3

13.b3 ♘a6 14.e5



Position after: 14.e5

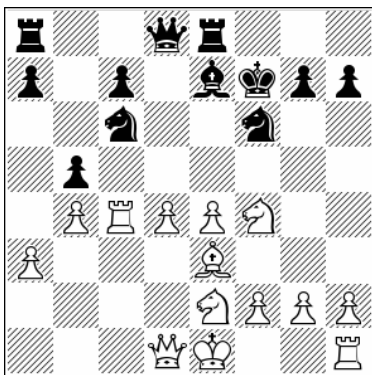
13...♘xe5!? Now, with the bishop on controlling e6, this is fine. [13...♖e8 14.♖c1 g5 15.exf6 ♙xf6 16.♘h5 ♘xd4 17.♘xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘e4 ♖xe4 19.♖xc4 c5 20.0-0 ♖d8 21.♙xd4 ♖dxd4 22.♖xd4 ♖xd4 23.♗c2 this position is equal, ½-½ (23) Hernandez, A – Perez Lopez, A corr. 2016]

12...♘bd7

Black has other options.

A) 12...♖e8 13.♗a4! ♙e6 14.♘xe6 ♗xe6 15.♗c4+ ♗d7 16.e5 White's attack is clearly winning the game.

B) 12...♘c6 13.b3 ♙a6 14.b4 ♙c4 15.♖c1! ♖e8 16.♘ce2!? b5 17.♖xc4!!



Position after: 17.♖xc4!!

That's the idea! 17...bxc4 18.♗c2 ♘xb4 19.axb4 ♙xb4+ 20.♗f1 White is better here.

14...♖e8!

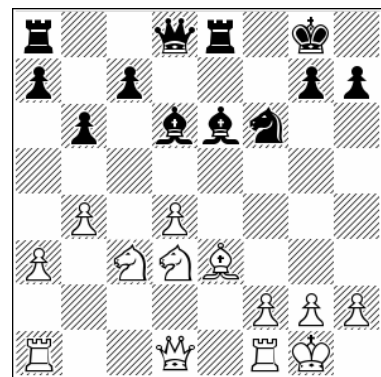
The only way!

14...♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♗xd1+ 16.♖xd1 ♘g4 17.e6+! ♗f8 18.♖d7 This is winning for White, 1-0 (26) Lenic, L (2633) – Subelj, J (2458) Terme Catez 2021.

15.b4 ♙c4 16.exf6

16.♖c1 ♗g8 17.exf6 ♘xf6 18.♘e4 b5 19.♘d2 ♙f7 20.0-0 ♙d6 Black has compensation in the shape of his strong bishop pair.

16...♘xf6 17.♘d3 ♙d6 18.♘b2 ♙e6 19.0-0 ♗g8 20.♘d3



Position after: 20.♘d3

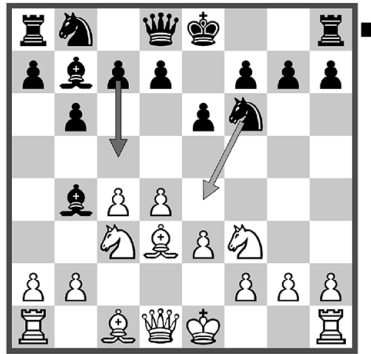
20...a5

Also here we can conclude that Black has enough play for the sacrificed pawn.

Chapter 13

5.♘d3 - Sidelines

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7 6.♘f3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 13 – 5.♙d3 – Sidelines

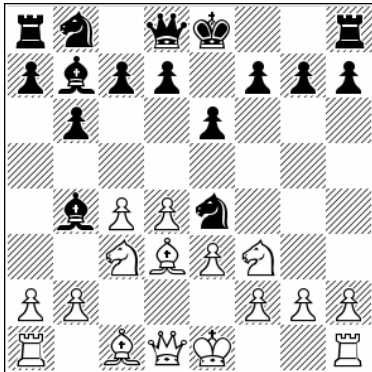
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7 6.♘f3

a) 6...♘e4

b) 6...c5

a) 6...♞e4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♘b7
6.♞f3 ♞e4



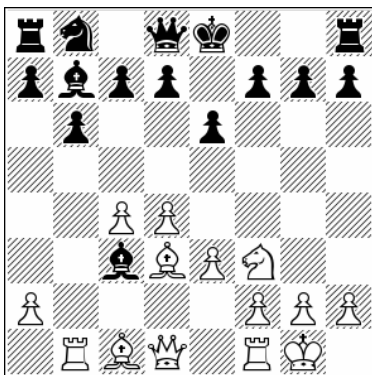
Position after: 6...♞e4

A very important line, and one of the famous traditional lines in the Nimzo.

7.0-0 f5

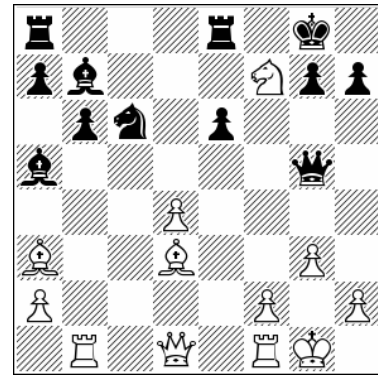
Black can try a few other ideas as well.

A) 7...♞xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xc3 9.♖b1



Position after: 9.♖b1

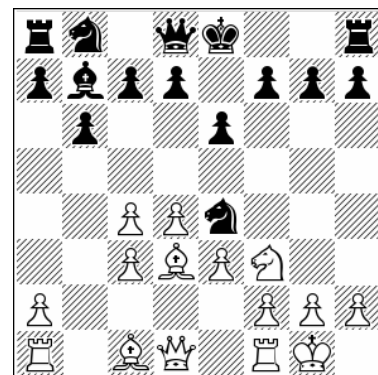
9...♙a5 [9...♞c6 10.♖b3 ♙a5 11.e4 h6 12.d5 ♞e7 13.♙b2 0-0 14.♞e5 White has very good attacking chances, while the bishop on a5 is cut off from play, 1-0 (28) Balashov, Y (2590) – Romanishin, O (2610) Lvov 1978] 10.♙a3 d6 11.c5 0-0 12.cxd6 cxd6 13.e4 ♖e8 14.e5 dxe5 15.♞xe5 This old game, Denker – Fine USA ch 1944, looks really good for White. 15...♙g5 16.g3 ♞c6 17.♞xf7!!



Position after: 17.♞xf7!!

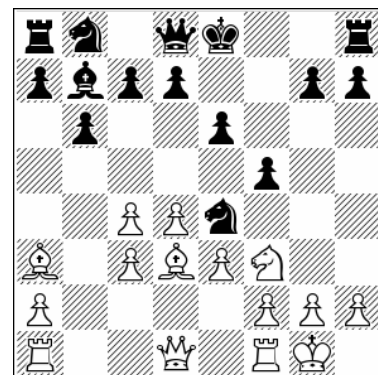
17...♙xf7 18.♖b5 ♙h6 19.♖h5 ♙f6 20.♖h4
White has strong attacking chances.

B) 7...♙xc3 8.bxc3



Position after: 8.bxc3

B1) 8...f5 9.♙a3!?! Not the most popular plan, but to me it looks perfectly logical.

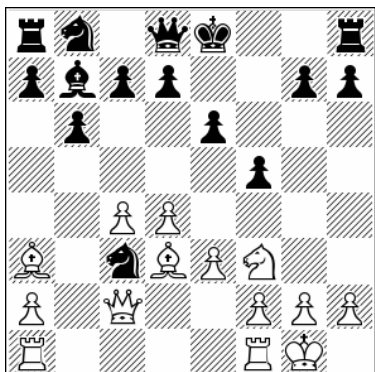


Position after: 9.♙a3!?!

B1.1) 9...d6 10.d5! exd5 In both cases here White secured a very strong initiative. [10...e5

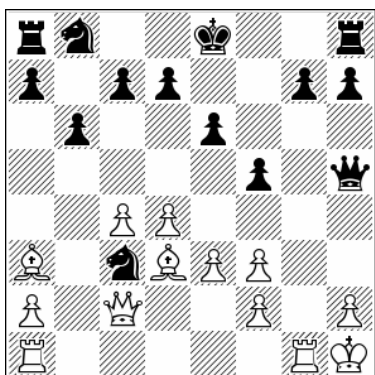
11.♖xe5 dxe5 12.♙xe4 fxe4 13.♚h5+ g6
 14.♜xe5+ ♔f7 15.♜e6+ ♔g7 16.♙e7 just
 winning for White] 11.♖d4 ♜f6 12.cxd5 ♙xd5
 13.f3 ♖c5 14.e4 ♙f7 15.♙xc5 dxc5 16.e5 ♜d8
 17.♙b5+ ♔f8 18.♖e6+ Another short,
 convincing win, 1-0 (18) Hammer, J (2638) –
 Picart, L (2108) La Massana 2012.

B1.2) 9...♖xc3 10.♜c2



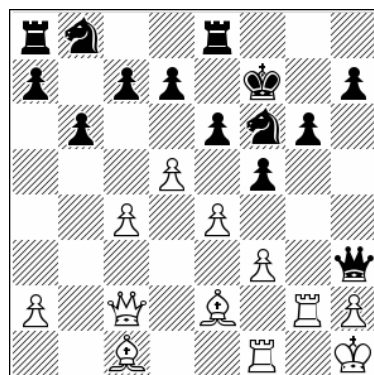
Position after: 10.♜c2

10...♙xf3 [10...♖e4 11.d5 ♜f6 12.♖d4 ♖c5
 13.♙xc5 bxc5 14.♖b5 ♖a6 15.♜ab1 0-0 16.♖xc7
 ♖b4 17.♜xb4 cxb4 18.♖xa8 ♙xa8 19.♜a4 White
 has an edge here in this typical computer play,
 ½-½ (39) Fire 8_beta (3729) – Stoofvlees II a14
 (3730) TCEC chessdom INT 2020] 11.gxf3 ♜g5+
 12.♔h1 ♜h5 13.♜g1!



Position after: 13.♜g1!

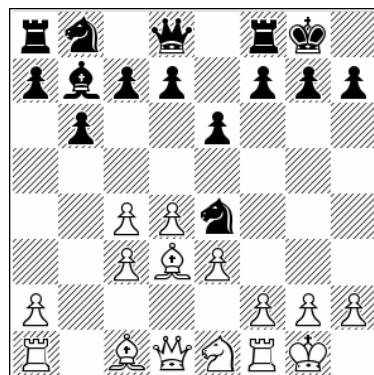
White is playing for a win and his position
 justifies such an ambitious attitude. 13...♜xf3+
 14.♜g2 ♖e4 15.♜f1 g6 16.d5 ♔f7 17.♙e2 ♜h3
 18.f3 ♖f6 19.e4 ♜e8 20.♙c1!



Position after: 20.♙c1!

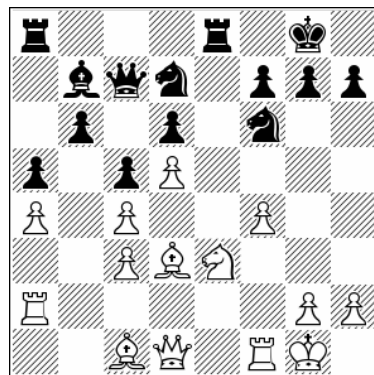
Trying to trap the queen. 20...♖h5 [20...♖a6
 21.♜g3 ♜h5 22.♔g2! White should win]
 21.dxe6+ ♜xe6 22.exf5 gxf5 23.c5 ♖c6 24.♙c4
 White is better.

B2) 8...0-0 Rushing the king to a safe place.
 9.♖e1 White is going to kick the knight back
 from e4.



Position after: 9.♖e1

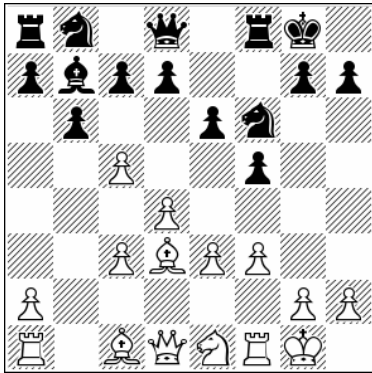
B2.1) 9...c5 10.f3 ♖f6 11.e4 ♖e8 12.d5 d6
 13.♖c2 ♖d7 14.♖e3 ♖ef6 15.a4 a5 16.♜a2 ♜c7
 17.f4 exd5 18.exd5 ♜fe8



Position after: 18...♜fe8

19.g4! Typical Nimzo strategy for White, putting the rook on the second rank and gaining space with g4 while Black's counterplay is limited, 1-0 (33) Carlsen, M (2857) – Hossain, E (2431) Baku 2016.

B2.2) 9...f5 10.f3 ♘f6 [10...♘d6 11.♗c2 ♘c6 12.♙a3 ♗a5 13.♕e2 ♕h4 14.c5 bxc5 15.♙xc5 ♜f6 16.♞ab1 ♙c6 17.♙b4 ♗ab7 18.c4 White is better, 1-0 (38) Hjartarson, J (2582) – Thorhallsson, G (2179) Reykjavik 2011] 11.c5!?

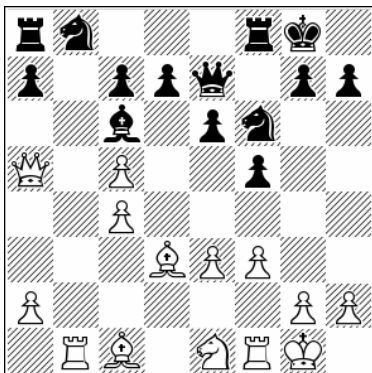


Position after: 11.c5!?

11...bxc5 12.♞b1

B2.2a) 12...♕c8 13.dxc5!?. White wrecks his pawn structure, but in a good way. Now the d4-square is vacant and the white knight will be happy to occupy it. Also, Black won't want to play ...d6, which limits his options. 13...♘c6 14.c4 ♞b8 15.♞b3! ♕d8 16.♗c2 ♕e7 17.♗d4 Again White has a favorable game.

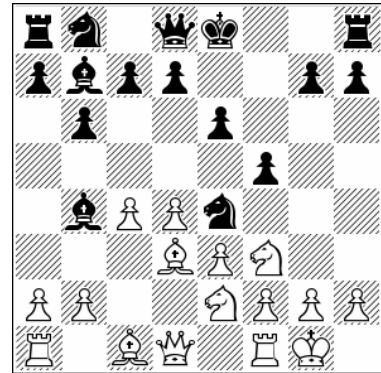
B2.2b) 12...♙c6 13.dxc5 ♗d5 14.♕d2! ♕e7 15.c4 ♗f6 16.♕a5!



Position after: 16.♕a5!

16...d5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♙a3 ♜d8 19.♗c2 White has a clear advantage.

8.♗e2

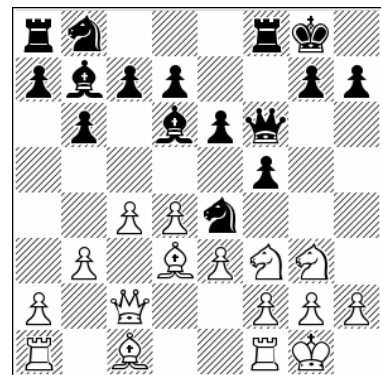


Position after: 8.♗e2

There is logic at work here. Black didn't take the knight on c3 with either of his pieces, so White moves it out of range and simply wants to develop his pieces in a natural way by placing the dark-squared bishop on b2.

8...♙d6

8...0-0 9.b3!?. ♕f6 10.♕c2 ♙d6 11.♗g3

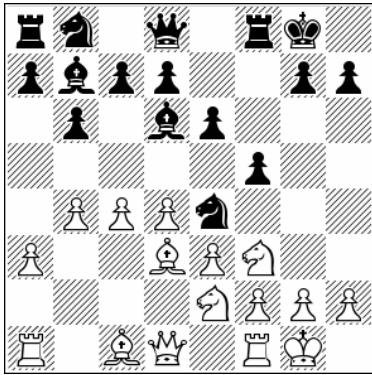


Position after: 11.♗g3

White is fighting hard against the knight on e4. 11...♗xg3 [11...♙xg3 12.fxg3 d6 13.♗d2 ♗xd2 14.♙xd2 ♗d7 15.b4 ♕g6 16.♞f4 ♗f6 17.d5 again Black has some problems to solve] 12.fxg3!?. That's why the bishop stays on c1 for the time being, to protect the pawn on e3. 12...c5 13.d5 ♗a6 14.a3 ♕xa1 15.♙b2 ♕xf1+ 16.♗xf1 ♞ae8 17.e4 White has a big advantage; in this position the rooks can't really match the queen, 1-0 (21)

Fedoseev, V (2597) – Smirnov, A (2429) Khanty-Mansiysk 2013.

9.a3 0-0 10.b4



Position after: 10.b4

10...♖f6

10...c5 11.bxc5 bxc5 12.♖b1 ♖c7 13.♗b3 ♘a6
 14.♘c3 ♘xc3 15.♗xc3 ♘c6 16.♙b2 ♗a5 17.♗c2
 White has better coordination of his pieces, 1-0
 (45) Bronstein, D (2540) – Gaprindashvili, N
 (2425) Sandomierz 1976.

11.♗c2

Not an automatic move -- we see that the bishop is still on c1 and there is a good reason for that.

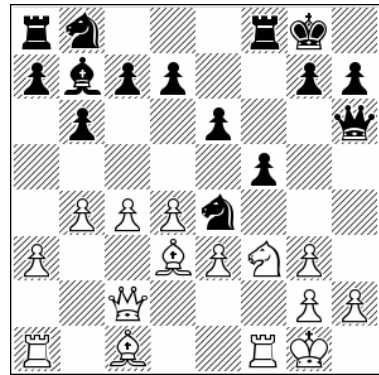
11...♗h6 12.♘g3!

This is a key moment.

12...♙xg3

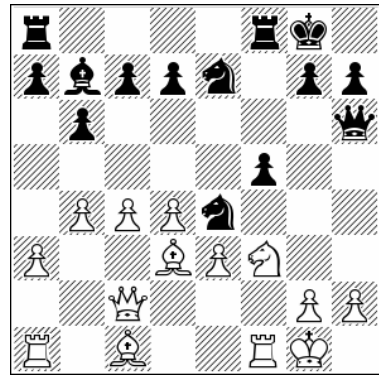
12...♘g3 13.fxg3! This is clearly in White's favor.

13.fxg3!



Position after: 13.fxg3!

13...♘c6 14.g4 ♘e7 15.gxf5 exf5



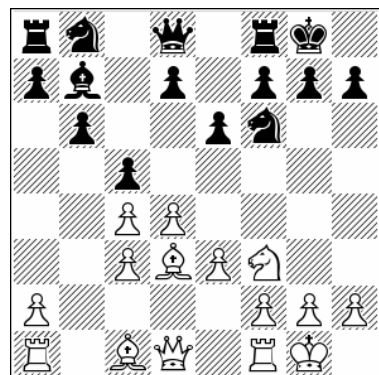
Position after: 15...exf5

16.a4

White has the preferable position.

b) 6...c5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7
 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♙xc3 8.bxc3 0-0



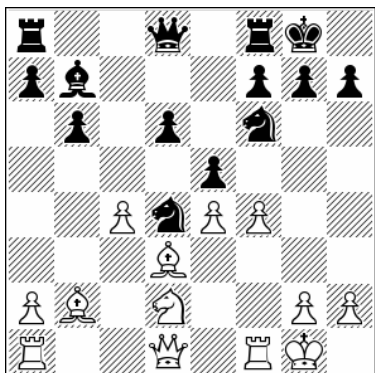
Position after: 8...0-0

This is another way, in which Black first plays ...c5 and later on will decide whether to go ...d6 and ...e5, or try to find play against the c4-pawn with pressure along the c-file.

9. ♖d2 ♜c6

9...d6 10.e4 ♜c6

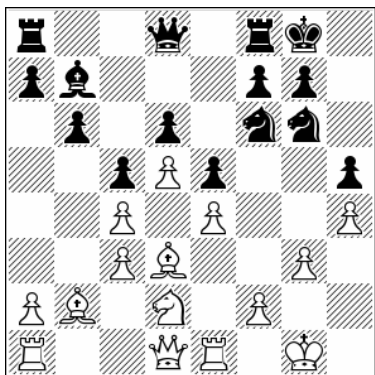
A) 11.f4 This is optimistic here; it's a bit early.
11...cxd4 12.cxd4 ♜xd4 13. ♖b2 e5



Position after: 13...e5

The pawn on e4 is weak and therefore White's pawn sac is not OK. If the rook were on e1 or the pawn on f3 then it's a different story: White then captures on d4, eventually shifts his queen to d4 and maneuvers the knight to e3. 14. ♖f3 ♖xe4 15. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 16. ♜xd4 exd4 17. ♖xd4 ♖f6 Black is fine, 1-0 (44) Tal, M (2630) – Nogueiras Santiago, J (2560) Saint John 1988.

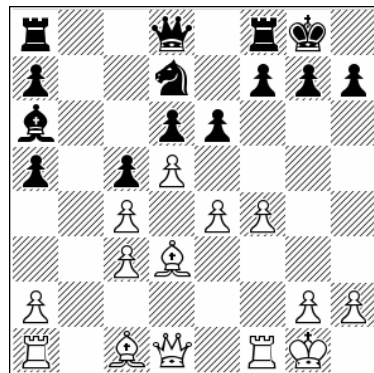
B) 11. ♖b2 e5 12.d5 ♜e7 13. ♖e1 ♜g6 14.g3 h5 15.h4



Position after: 15.h4

15... ♖d7 16. ♖f1 ♖fe8 17.a4 ♖c8 18. ♖c1 White has reached typical play, as we have already seen in similar lines with and without ...c5.

C) 11.d5 ♜a5 12. ♖b3 ♜d7 13.f4 ♖a6 14. ♖xa5 bxa5

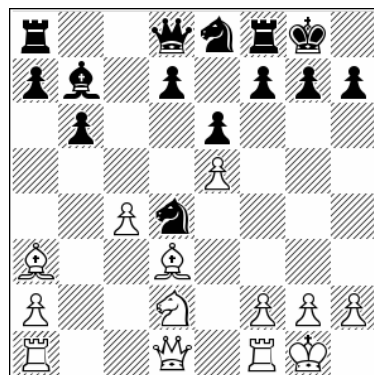


Position after: 14...bxa5

15.dxe6! This is a strong idea because Black doesn't have a good solution in the center and White can build up an attack. [15. ♖f3 ♜b6 16.e5 g6 17.dxe6 fxe6 18. ♖c2 with the initiative, 1-0 (28) Kogan, A (2468) – Serrano Aspa, X (2133) Barcelona 2001] 15...fxe6 16. ♖f3 ♖b8 17. ♖g3 It's good for White.

10. ♖e1

10.e4!?! I would seriously consider this pawn sac here. 10...cxd4 [10...d6 the game transposes to the note 9...d6 above] 11.cxd4 ♜xd4 12.e5 ♜e8 13. ♖a3

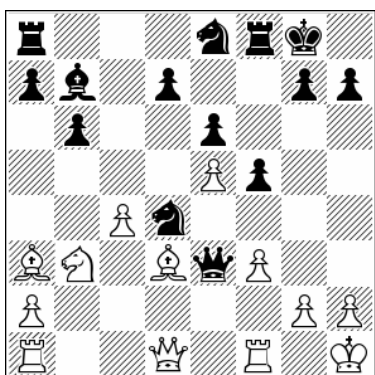


Position after: 13. ♖a3

A) 13...d6 14. ♖e1 f5 15. ♖f1 ♖g5 [15... ♖f7!?] 16.exd6 ♜xd6 17. ♖b3 ♜xb3 18.axb3 ♜e4 19.f3

♖d2 20.♙b4 ♗xf1 21.♞xa7 ♗xh2 22.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 23.♗xh2 a tiny edge for White] 16.exd6 ♞d8 17.c5 ♞f6 18.♗e4 ♗f3+ 19.♞xf3 fxe4 20.♞e3 White can offer a queen exchange because the endgame is in his favor, 1-0 (55) Lesiege, A (2525) – Sequera Paolini, J (2340) San Felipe 1998.

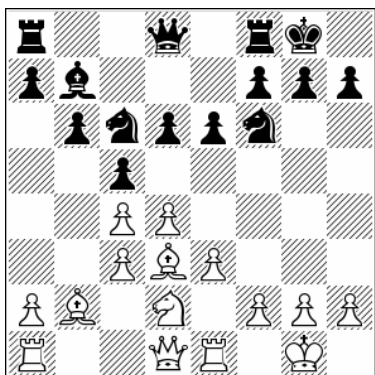
B) 13...f5!? Probably best. 14.♗b3 [14.♙xf8 ♞g5 15.f3 ♞e3+ 16.♞f2 ♗xf8 17.♗b3 ♞xe5 18.♙f1 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♗f6 20.b4 a6 21.♞a3 an unbalanced game, ½-½ (21) Cvitan, O (2538) – Arsovic, Z (2443) Paracin 2012] 14...♞g5 15.f3 ♞e3+ 16.♗h1



Position after: 16.♗h1

16...♗xb3 17.axb3 ♞xe5 18.♙xf8 ♗xf8 19.b4 ♗f6 This is also unclear. Black is planning ...g5-g4.

10...d6 11.♙b2



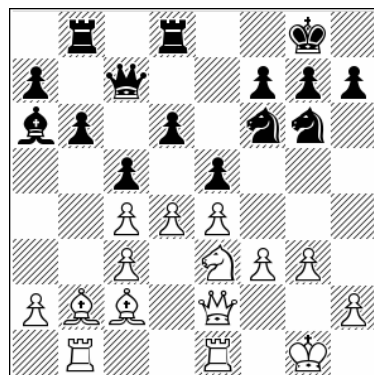
Position after: 11.♙b2

11...♗e7

A) 11...e5 12.d5 ♗e7 13.e4 We have already seen such positions elsewhere in similar systems. The knight is going to e3.

B) 11...♞c7 12.f4 ♗e7 13.e4 ♗g6 14.g3 ♞fe8 15.♞e2 ♞ac8 16.♞f1 ♞cd8 17.a4 a6 18.♗f3 White has more space and easier play, but Black has a flexible position, not something to be taken lightly, ½-½ (39) Kolanek, R – Michos, D corr. 2014.

12.f3 ♞c7 13.e4 e5 14.♞b1 ♗g6 15.♗f1 ♗f4 16.♙c2 ♙a6 17.g3 ♗g6 18.♗e3 ♞ab8 19.♞e2 ♞fd8



Position after: 19...♞fd8

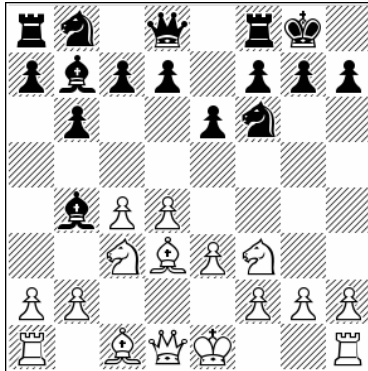
20.♞ed1

We have arrived at a typical position for these lines. It's perfectly playable for White -- but also for Black, 1-0 (55) Hlavacek, L – Dogan, A corr. 2014.

Chapter 14

5.♘d3 – With 6...0-0

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♘b7 6.♗f3 0-0



Chapter Guide

Chapter 14 – 5.♘d3 – With 6...0-0

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♘b7 6.♗f3 0-0 7.0-0

a) 7...♙xc3

b) 7...c5

c) 7...d6

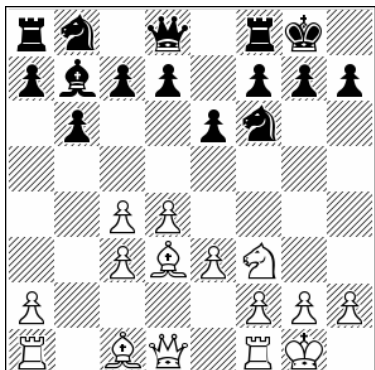
d) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗e5 c5

e) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗e5 ♗bd7

f) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗e5 ♙d6

a) 7...♙xc3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7
6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 ♙xc3 8.bxc3



Position after: 8.bxc3

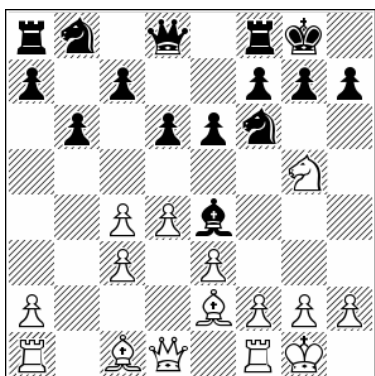
8...d6

In terms of structure this variation is similar to the Huebner line, in which Black plays ...c5, ...d5 and ...e5. White here adopts methods similar to those he uses in the Huebner line.

A) 8...♘e4 is just a transposition.

B) 8...c5 also transposes to another line in this book.

C) 8...♙e4 9.♙e2 White should not give up his bishop pair too easily, at least not before some gains have been made. 9...d6 10.♘g5!?

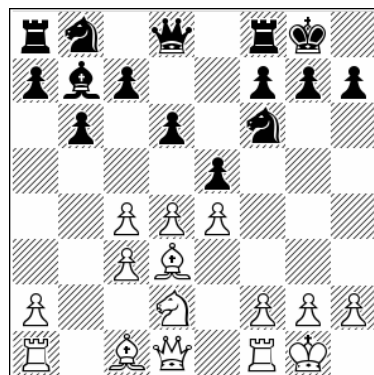


Position after: 10.♘g5!?

10...♙b7 11.f3 c5 12.e4 ♘bd7 13.♙e3 ♗e7
14.♗d2 h6 15.♘h3 That's a very interesting idea. Posting the knight on h3 allows White to build

up his center with f3 and e4. There are obvious similarities with the Saemisch Nimzo 4.f3 where the knight in many cases goes to h3. 15...♗ad8 16.a4! cxd4 17.cxd4 e5 18.a5 White has created pressure, 1-0 (25) Caruana, F (2802) – Hou Yifan (2652) chess.com INT 2017.

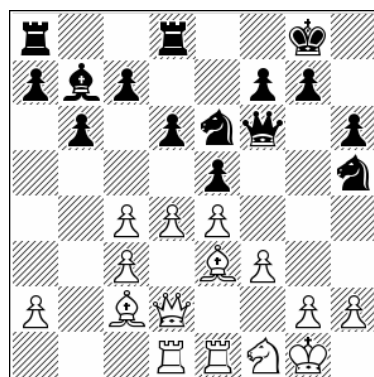
9.♘d2 e5 10.e4



Position after: 10.e4

10...♘c6

10...♘bd7 11.♗e1 ♗e8 12.f3 ♘f8 13.♘f1 ♘e6
14.♙e3 ♘h5 15.♗d2 ♗f6 16.♙c2 h6 17.♗ad1
♗ed8



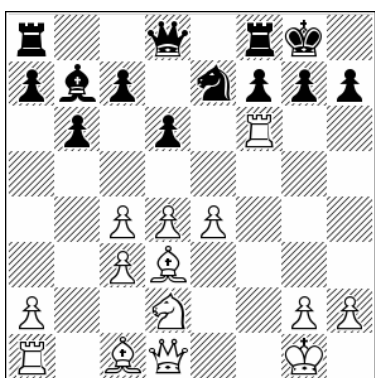
Position after: 17...♗ed8

18.♙f2 [18.♗f2 ♙a6 this is less clear, 1-0 (32) Ibragimov, I (2540) – Lavrov, A (2350) Budapest 1993] 18...♘hf4 19.♘e3 White gets his usual type of play, which we can consider as slightly better.

11.♙b2

Simply defending the pawn. Because the position is closed the loss of time doesn't really matter, and the bishop will return to c1 later on.

Here is an idea that should be really seriously considered. 11.f4!? exf4 [Taking the pawn is possible but it's not without risks. 11...exd4 12.♙b2 dxc3 13.♙xc3 ♖d7 14.♚h5 ♜c5 15.♙c2 ♚d7 16.♞f3 f6 17.e5 f5 18.exd6 ♞xd6 19.♞d1 White has the initiative. This reveals just a few of the possible ideas here.] 12.♞xf4!? This is a serious challenge because the black knights are not connected, which could give White some opportunities. 12...♜e7 13.♞xf6!

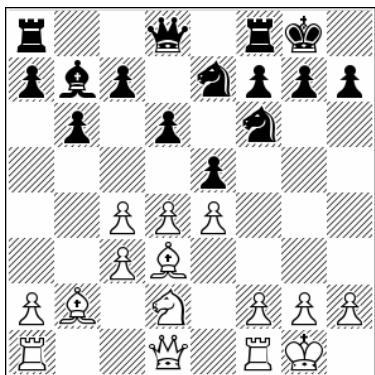


Position after: 13.♞xf6!

13...gxf6 14.♜f1! ♜h8 15.♜g3 ♞g8 16.♞f3 ♞g6 17.♜h5 f5 18.d5 fxe4 19.♞xe4 White has a strong initiative.

11...♞e8

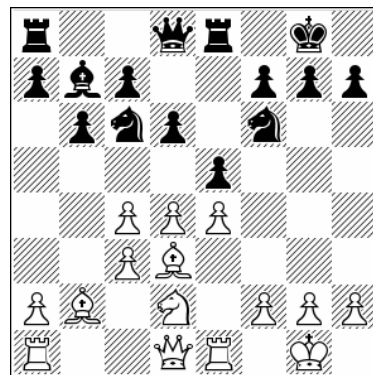
11...♜e7



Position after: 11...♜e7

12.g3 This is premature. [12.♞e1 ♜g6 13.♜f1 ♜f4 14.♙c2 ♞e8 15.♙c1 ♜g6 16.f3 The standard play that we have already seen in many games. The knight is coming to e3.] 12...♜d7 13.♞c2 ♜g6 14.f3 ♞g5 15.♜h1 h5 16.♞f2 h4 17.♞g1 What a complex position, ½-½ (17) Hammer, J (2647) – Rozentalis, E (2624) Fagernes 2014.

12.♞e1

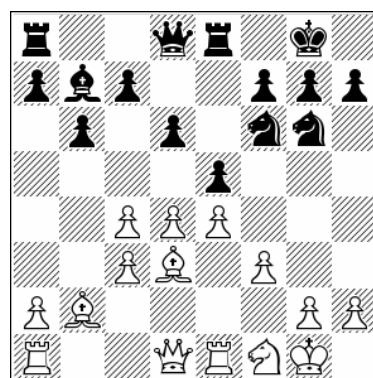


Position after: 12.♞e1

12...♜e7

12...♞d7 13.f3 ♜a5 14.♜f1 ♙a6 15.♜e3 ♞ab8 16.♞b1 ♞c6 17.♞e2 White has some edge. His pawn on c4 is well covered so now the plan is to take the game to the kingside, ½-½ (77) Brunner, N (2432) – Velten, P (2457) Montpellier 2015.

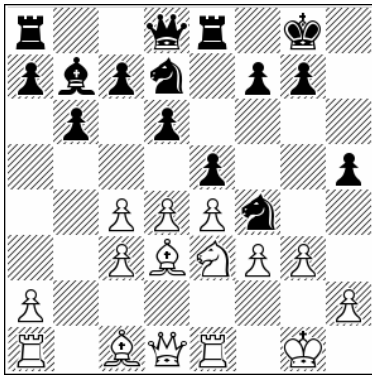
13.♜f1 ♜g6 14.f3



Position after: 14.f3

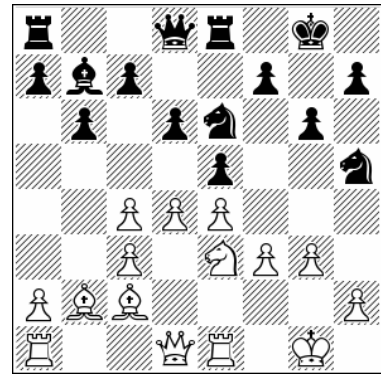
14...♜h5

14...h5 15.♙c1 ♜d7 16.♜e3 ♜f4 17.g3



Position after: 17.g3

15...♖f8 16.♗e3 ♗e6 17.♙c2 g6



Position after: 17...g6

It was better to drop the bishop back to c2. 17...♗e6 [17...♗xd3! 18.♖xd3 ♖f6 19.♗f1 ♖g6 taking the bishop on d3 is a good option for Black most of the time] 18.d5 ♗ec5 19.♙c2 ♙c8 20.♖d2 ♗f8 21.♖g2 ♗g6 22.♗f5 A typical playable position for White, 1-0 (51) Arun Prasad, S (2472) – Venkatesh, M (2498) Pardubice 2014.

15.g3

It's not really necessary to make that move.

15.♗e3 ♗hf4 16.♙f1 ♙c8 17.a4 a5 18.♗f5 ♗e6 19.♙c1 The rook will come into the game from a2 and we will have typical play in this line.

18.♗g4!

18.♖d2?! f5! Black is fine, even better, 1-0 (45) Parligras, M (2587) – Klekowski, M (2475) Konya 2015.

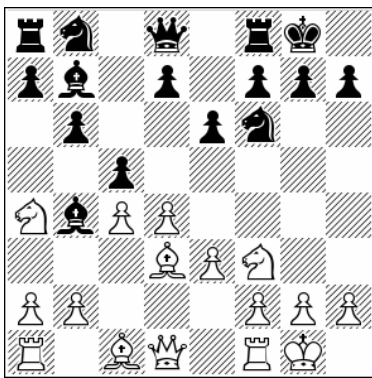
18...♗f6 19.♗f2

With a complicated game ahead of us. We already saw the ♗f2 idea in the Caruana game.

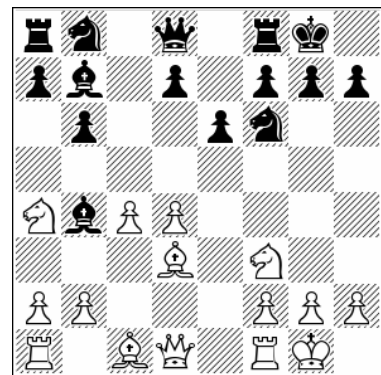
b) 7...c5

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7 6.♗f3 0-0 7.0-0 c5 8.♗a4

8...cxd4 9.exd4



Position after: 8.♗a4



Position after: 9.exd4

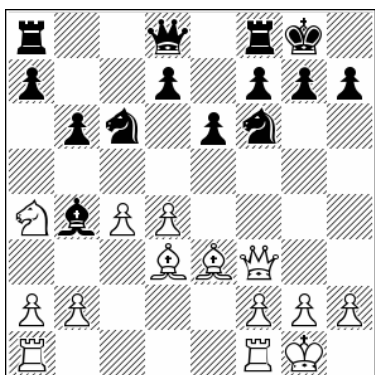
The main idea, and certainly the critical one. White more or less forces Black to exchange on d4.

White has is no real need to chase the bishop away with a3 in this particular move order. Basically Black has two ideas in this line: one is

to use the ...d6 plan, which we can call a Hedgehog type of play, and the other is more tactical as Black takes on f3, develops his knight to c6 and follows up with ...d5 or ...e5. White's knight on a4 is a bit misplaced for such action in the center.

9...♞e8

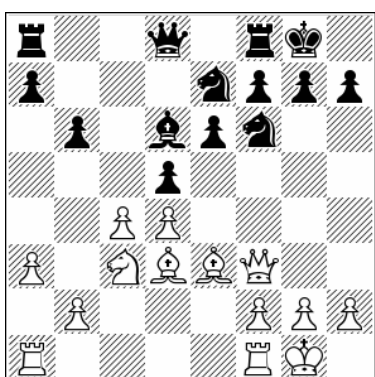
A) 9...♙xf3 10.♚xf3 ♘c6 This idea comes from Keres. 11.♙e3



Position after: 11...♙e3

A1) 11...e5 12.d5 e4 [12...♘e7 13.a3 ♙d6 14.♘c3 ♘e8 15.b4 ♖c8 16.♚h3 f5 17.f3 much better for White] 13.♙xe4 ♘e5 14.♚f5 White is better.

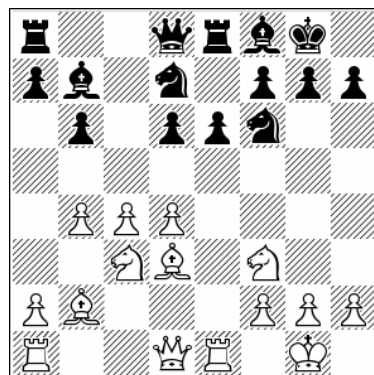
A2) 11...d5 12.a3 ♙d6 13.♘c3 ♘e7



Position after: 13...♘e7

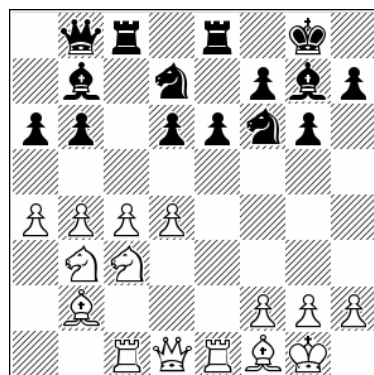
It makes sense for Black to cover the d5-square. 14.♙g5 dxc4 15.♙xc4 ♚c7 16.♙a2 ♘fd5 17.♖ac1 ♘xc3 18.♖xc3 ♚d7 19.♚g4 White has the initiative here.

B) 9...♙e7 10.♚e1 d6 11.b4 ♘bd7 12.♙b2 ♞e8 13.♘c3 ♙f8



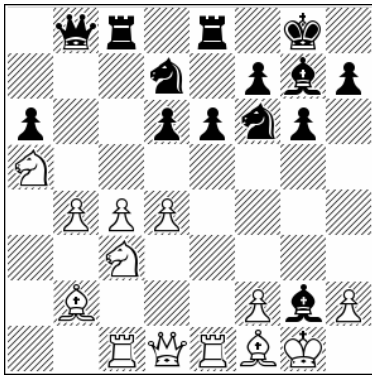
Position after: 13...♙f8

We see the same type of position as in the main line. Black wants to avoid certain bishop to g5 ideas, which often are played when the bishop retreats to f8 at once. That is something that I learned when I was young and playing the Nimzo with both colors. 14.♙f1 Logical enough. [14.♖b1!? g6 15.♙a1 e5 16.d5 ♖c8 17.♘d2 h5 18.a4 ♘g4 19.h3 ♘h6 20.♘b5 ♞a8 21.♘b3 ♘f6 22.a5 White seized the initiative on the queenside faster than I managed to get one on the kingside, 1-0 (37) Conquest, S (2465) – Pavlovic, M (2420) Vrnjacka Banja 1990] 14...a6 15.a3 ♖c8 16.♖c1 g6 17.♘d2 ♙g7 18.♘b3 ♚c7 19.a4! ♚b8

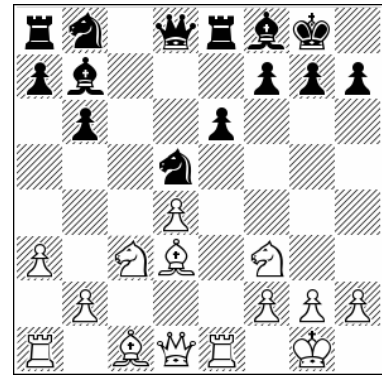


Position after: 19...♚b8

20.♙a1! [20.a5 bxa5 21.♘xa5 ♙xg2!?



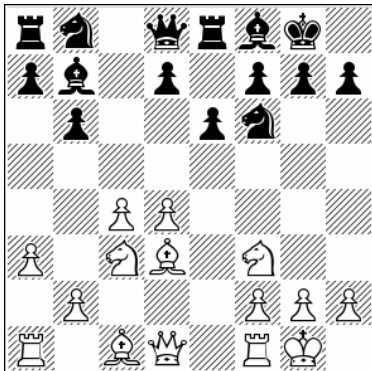
Position after: 21...♙xg2!?



Position after: 13...♖e1

An interesting tactical idea, worth noting. 22.♙xg2 ♜xb4 23.♘c6 ♞xc6 24.♙xc6 ♜xb2 25.d5 ♞e7 26.dxe6 ♞xe6 27.♞xe6 fxe6 28.♙xd7 ♘xd7 29.♘e4 ♜e5 It's not so clear.] 20...d5 21.c5 e5 22.cxb6! exd4 23.♞xe8+ ♘xe8 24.♘a2! ♞xc1 25.♘axc1 ♘xb6 26.♘c5 White is better. The bishop on a1 is more effective than the one on a3 in the actual game.

10.a3 ♙f8 11.♘c3!



Position after: 11...♘c3!

Best in my opinion, because it stops ...d5 ideas and also discourages bishop takes on f3 ideas -- see variation A).

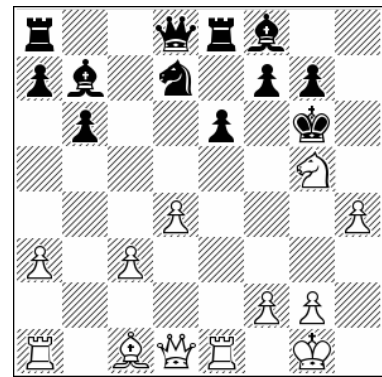
11...d6

Black is going for a Hedgehog type of play.

A) 11...♙f3 12.♜xf3 ♘c6 13.♙e3 e5 14.d5 This clearly favors White.

B) 11...d5 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♖e1

B1) 13...♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♘d7 [14...♜c7 15.♙xh7+! ♔xh7 16.♘g5+ ♔g8 17.♜h5 ♙d6 18.c4! ♘a6 19.d5! ♘c5 20.♙b2 f6 21.♜h7+ ♔f8 22.♜h8+ ♔e7 23.♜xg7+ ♔d8 24.♙xf6+ ♔c8 25.♜g6 White has a winning attack] 15.♙xh7+! ♔xh7 16.♘g5+ ♔g6 17.h4!

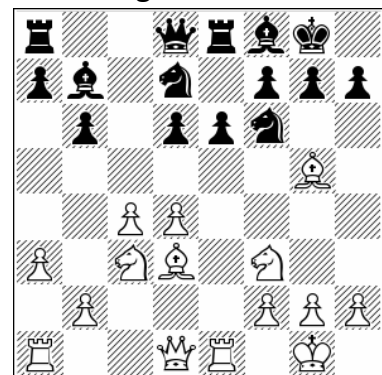


Position after: 17.h4!

17...♜c7 18.h5+ ♔f6 19.d5 ♙xd5 20.♜d4+ ♔e7 21.♜xd5 Here too White gets a winning position.

B2) 13...g6 14.♘e4 ♘c6 15.♙g5 ♙e7 16.h4! ♞c8 17.♞c1 f6 18.♙h6 White has the usual sort of play in Panov-type positions.

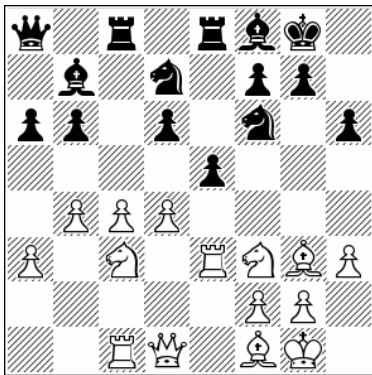
12.♖e1 ♘bd7 13.♙g5



Position after: 13...♙g5

13...♖c8

13...♖c7 14.♖c1 h6 15.♙h4 ♖ac8 16.h3 a6
17.♙g3 ♗b8 18.b4 ♗a8 19.♖e3 e5 20.♙f1!

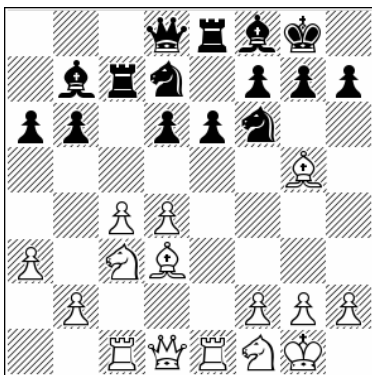


Position after: 20.♙f1!

20...exd4 21.♖xe8 ♖xe8 22.♘xd4 ♘e4 23.♘xe4
♙xe4 24.f3 ♙g6 25.♙f2 The white pieces are well
placed and the black pawns on the queenside
are weak, so White is better, 1-0 (40) Lukacs, P
(2488) – Balogh, C (2359)

Budapest 2000.

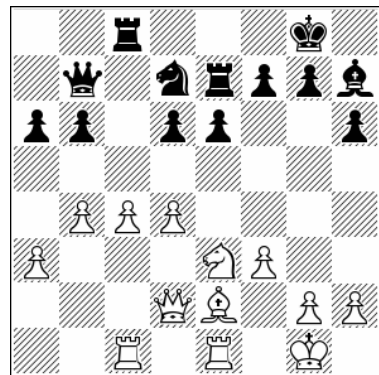
14.♘d2 a6 15.♖c1 ♖c7 16.♘f1!?



Position after: 16.♘f1!?

Fairly unusual, but an interesting plan.

16...♗a8 17.♘e3 ♖cc8 18.♙e2 h6 19.♙h4 ♘e4
20.♘xe4 ♙xe4 21.♗d2 ♙h7 22.b4 ♗b7 23.f3
♙e7 24.♙xe7 ♖xe7



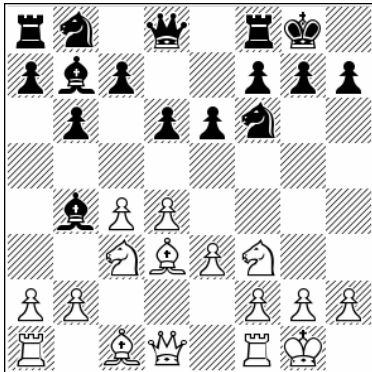
Position after: 24...♖xe7

25.c5

White's interesting concept has earned him
some advantage, 1-0 (37) Hanio, J – Bratholm, P
corr. 2015.

c) 7...d6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♘b7
6.♗f3 0-0 7.0-0 d6

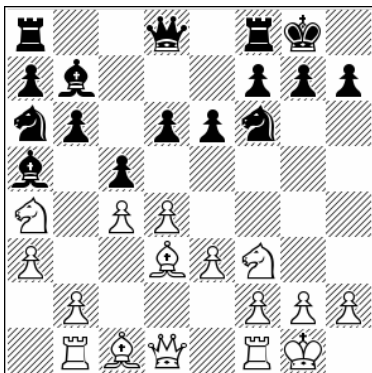


Position after: 7...d6

A rare guest and a provocative one. Black doesn't take on c3 and wants to wait a bit, but that doesn't come without consequences.

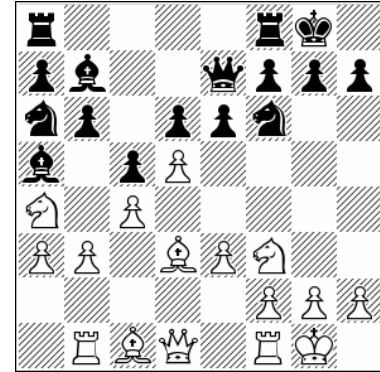
8.♗a4 d5

8...c5 9.a3 ♘a5 10.♖b1 ♗a6



Position after: 10...♗a6

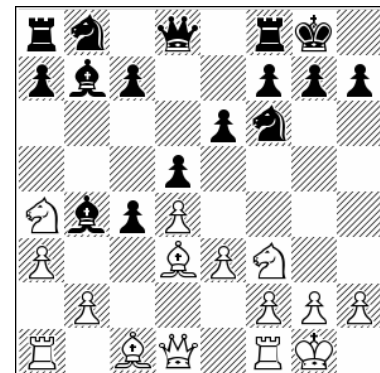
11.b3!? [A more direct strategy is not so good.
11.b4 cxb4 12.♙d2 ♘xf3 13.♗xf3 bxa3 14.♙xa5
bxa5 15.♖a1 ♗b4 16.♗e2 ♖b8 Black is better
here, ½-½ (56) Zubov, A (2598) – Katz, A (2396)
chess.com INT 2021.] 11...♗e7 12.d5!



Position after: 12.d5!

12...exd5 13.cxd5 b5 14.♙xb5 ♗c7 15.♙c6
♗cxd5 16.♙xb7 ♖xb7 17.♙b2 White's chances
are preferable.

9.c5 bxc5 10.a3 c4

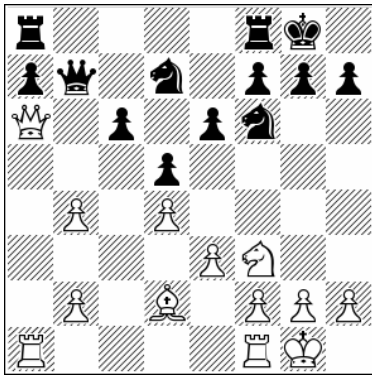


Position after: 10...c4

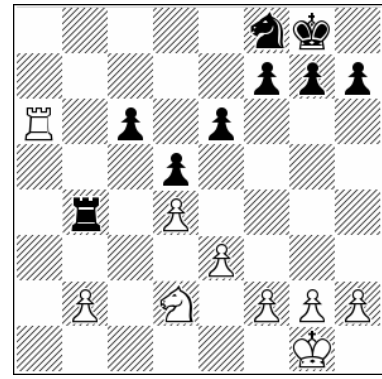
11.axb4

11.♙xh7+ ♗xh7 12.axb4 ♗d7 13.b3 cxb3
14.♗xb3 ♙c6 15.♗c3 a6 16.♖a5 ♗hf6 17.♙a3
♖e8 18.♖c1 White has an edge; obviously the
opposite-colored bishops don't help Black in his
quest for equality, 1-0 (49) Huzman, A (2580) –
Drygalov, S (2446) St Petersburg 2018.

11...cxd3 12.♗xd3 c6 13.♗c5 ♖b6 14.♙d2
♗bd7 15.♗xb7 ♖xb7 16.♗a6



Position after: 16. ♖a6



Position after: 22... ♖xb4

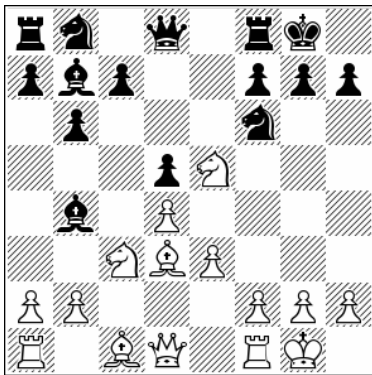
16... ♖xa6 17. ♖xa6 ♗e4 18. ♖fa1 ♗xd2 19. ♗xd2 ♖fb8 20. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 21. ♖xa7 ♗f8 22. ♖a6 ♖xb4

23.b3

White is clearly better, 1-0 (61) Demuth, A (2541) – Stephan, V (2325) Saint-Quentin 2015.

d) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9. ♗e5 c5

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♖b4 4.e3 b6 5. ♖d3 ♖b7 6. ♗f3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9. ♗e5



Position after: 9. ♗e5

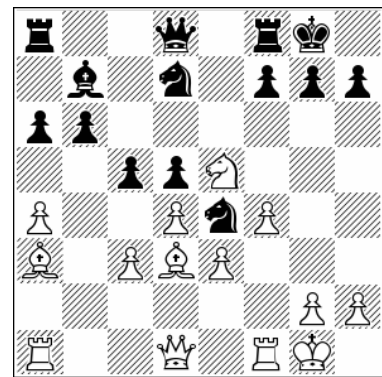
In this book I am avoiding any bishop to d2 ideas because they are covered in Volume 1. Another plan widely accepted as good is 9.a3 ♖d6 10.b4 but I prefer this older type of play, so connected with traditional ways of handling such position that we have learned from Pillsbury, Zukertort, Colle and others.

9...c5

This position actually can arise from another variation, which I call in this book the rare ...b6 line. It's the same position, but there I did not mention knight to e5 as a main idea. We need to make it clear that here Black has three equally

important ideas. This is the first one and the others are treated in the next subchapters.

9...a6 10.f4 c5 11.a3 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 ♗bd7 13.a4 ♗e4 14. ♖a3!



Position after: 14. ♖a3!

This is a serious test, which is not easy to meet now.

A) 14... ♖c8 15. ♖xe4 dxe4 16. ♖b3 On account of his weak queenside structure we can say that Black is far from being able to equalize.

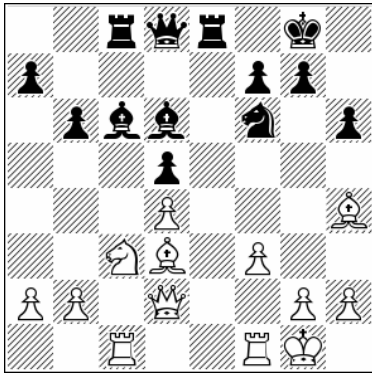
B) 14... ♗df6 15.a5 b5 16.dxc5 ♖c8 17.c6 ♖xc6 18. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 19. ♖c1 Things are not so simple, but after all the exchange up should mean something.

C) 14...♖xc3 15.♚b3 ♘e4 16.♙xe4 dxe4 17.dxc5 ♘xe5 18.fxe5 This is already a big advantage for White.

10.f4

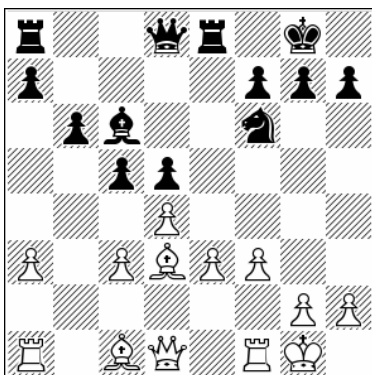
White can also take a slightly different turn.

10.f3!? Quite an interesting idea actually. 10...♗c6 [10...cxd4 11.exd4 ♘c6 12.♗xc6 ♙xc6 13.♙g5 ♜c8 14.♞c1 ♙d6 15.♚d2 h6 16.♙h4 ♞e8



Position after: 16...♞e8

17.g4 this position favors White, as both his bishops are strong] 11.♗xc6 ♙xc6 12.a3 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 Now the game transposes to the usual line which starts with 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♗c6, but in that particular line Black can try the interesting 11...♙a6 which seems to be OK for Black. 13...♞e8



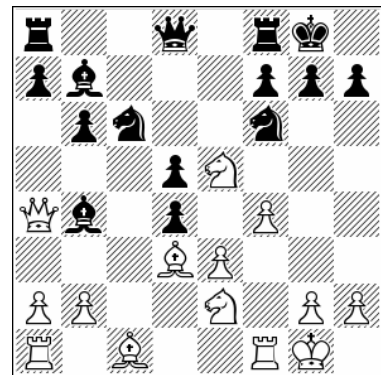
Position after: 13...♞e8

14.a4 [14.♞a2 ♚d7 15.a4 a5 16.♞e1 cxd4 17.cxd4 b5 18.axb5 ♙xb5 19.♙b1 ♙c4 20.♞a3 ♚c6 21.♞c3 ♚b7 22.♙a3 White clearly intends e3-e4 and he also benefits from his strong

bishop pair, another important asset, 1-0 (38) Bronstein, D – Sliwa, B Gothenburg 1955] 14...♚c7 15.♞e1 c4 16.♙c2 g6 17.♚e2 ♞e6 18.♚f2 h5 19.♙a3 ♞ae8 20.♙b4 a5 21.♙a3 ♖g7 22.♙c1 ♗d7 23.♙d2 f5 24.♞ab1 ♗f6 Black has managed to stop e3-e4 but the white bishop can go to g3 and also g2-g4 may become strong, so we can say that White has some edge here, ½-½ (60) Dorosiev, B – Peterc, C corr. 2014.

10...♗c6 11.♗e2 c4

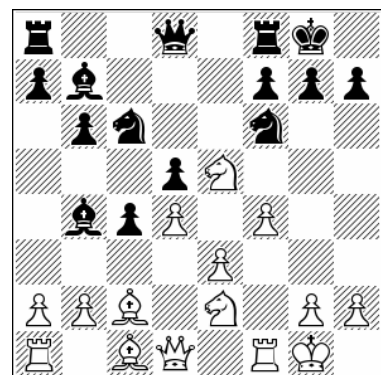
11...cxd4 12.♚a4!?



Position after: 12.♚a4!?

12...♙c5 13.exd4 ♙d6 14.♙e3 ♗b4 15.♙f5 ♚e8 16.♚d1 ♙c8 17.♗g3 White has developed attacking chances, 1-0 (37) Urazayev, A (2437) – Makhnev, D (2499) Nur-Sultan 2021.

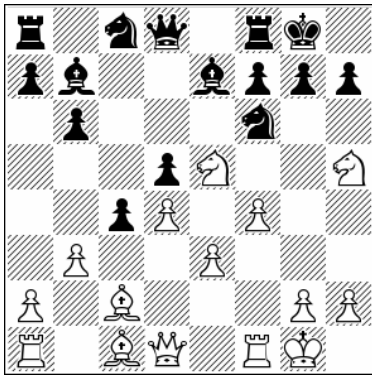
12.♙c2



Position after: 12.♙c2

12...b5

12...♗e7 13.♗g3 ♗c8 14.♗h5 ♙e7 15.b3!

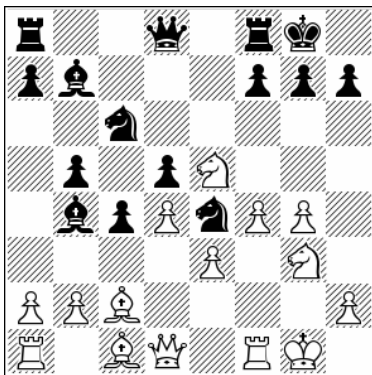


Position after: 15.b3!

Good timing. 15...cxb3 [15...b5 16.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 17.♗a3 ♘d6 18.♞b1 ♞b8 19.bxc4 bxc4 20.♞h5 g6 21.♞h3 Black has a seriously difficult position to defend] 16.axb3 ♘d6 17.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 18.♗a3 ♗c8 19.♞f3 ♗b7 20.♗d3 White has better chances, because the knight on e5 is strong and so is the bishop on a3, 1-0 (32) Caruana, F (2807) – Karjakin, S (2773) Saint Louis 2017.

13.♘g3

13.g4 ♘e4 14.♘g3



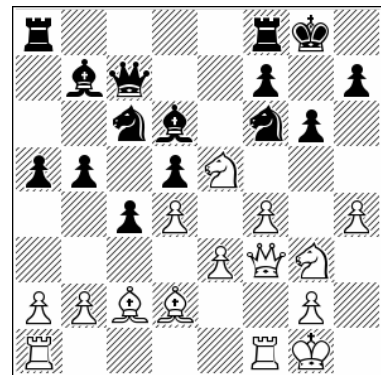
Position after: 14.♘g3

14...♘g3 [14...f6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♗d2 ♗d6 18.h4 ♞e8 19.g5 complicated stuff, 1-0 (37) Niemann, H (2484) – Tregubov, P (2560) chess.com INT 2021] 15.hxg3 ♘xe5 16.fxe5 ♗e7 Such a position is not at all unfavorable for Black.

13...g6

13...♘e7 14.a4!? a6 15.♘h5 ♘xh5 16.♞xh5 g6 17.♞h6! f6 18.♘g6 hxg6 19.♗xg6 ♞f7 20.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 21.axb5 The inclusion of a4 and ...a6 helps White.

14.♞f3 ♗d6 15.♗d2 a5 16.h4 ♞c7



Position after: 16...♞c7

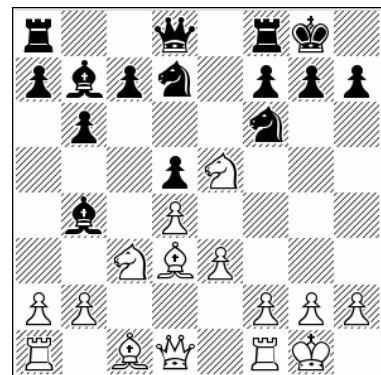
17.h5

A highly complex position in which the knight on e5 is a really important asset and I guess playing with White does indeed look easier, ½-½ (36) Petersons, I – Peschke, I corr. 2014.

e) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 ♘bd7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 b6 5.♗d3 ♗b7 6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 ♘bd7

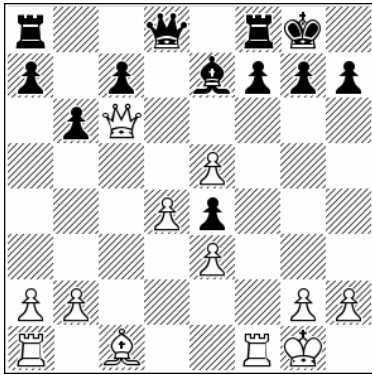
There are pros and cons with posting the knight on d7. Sometimes it is only a passive observer; sometimes it is a good piece that in time comes right into the game. Mainly it depends on how strong White's game is.



Position after: 9...♘bd7

10.f4 c5

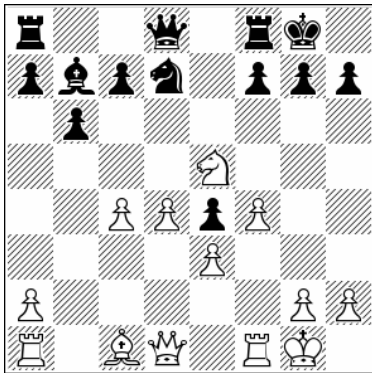
A) 10...♞e4 11.♞xe4 dxe4 12.♟c4 ♞xe5 13.fxe5
♟d5 14.♞b3 ♟xc4 15.♞xc4 ♟e7 16.♞c6



Position after: 16.♞c6

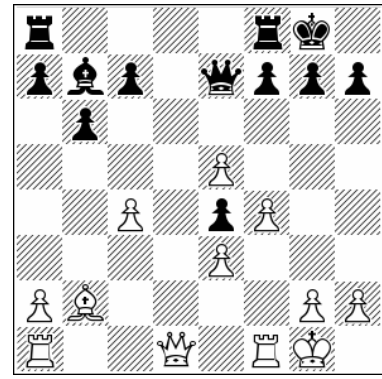
16...f5 17.♟d2 ♔h8 18.♞ac1 ♞c8 19.b4 White has a clear advantage, 0-1 (54) Moiseenko, A (2620) – Gokerkan, C (2470) Torneo INT 2021.

B) 10...♟xc3 11.bxc3 ♞e4 12.♟xe4 dxe4 13.c4



Position after: 13.c4

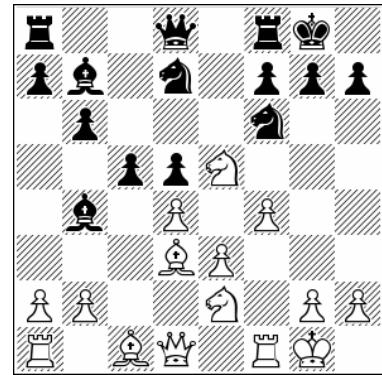
13...♞e7 [13...♞xe5 14.fxe5 ♞g5 15.♞f4 f6 16.h4 ♞g6 17.♟a3 c5 18.e6 White has easy play] 14.♟b2 ♞xe5 15.dxe5! In order to activate the bishop on b2, which is essential, it's advisable to take with the d-pawn. In my book on the Colle Zukertort systems it's clear in many cases.



Position after: 15.dxe5!

15...♟c8 16.f5 ♞g5 17.h4! ♞xh4 18.♞d5 ♞b8 19.e6 ♞g5 20.♞f2 This is a good strategy.

11.♞e2

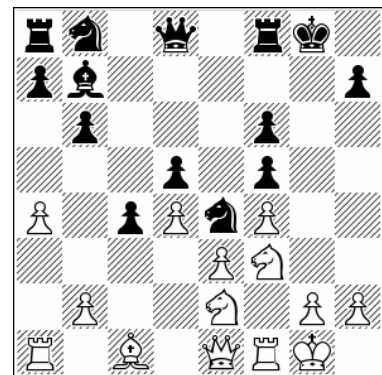


Position after: 11.♞e2

11...cxd4

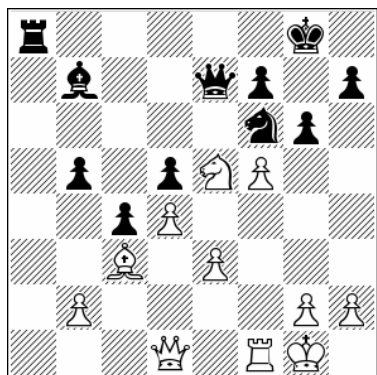
Another plan is to block the position and create a majority on the queenside.

11...c4 12.♟f5 b5 [12...g6 13.♞a4 gxf5 14.♞xb4 ♞e4 15.a4 f6 16.♞f3 ♞b8 17.♞e1



Position after: 17.♞e1

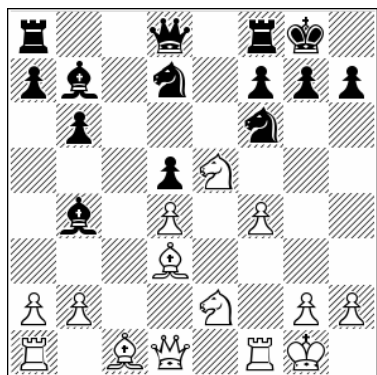
17...♖c6 18.♙d2 ♘h8 19.♗h4 ♚d7 20.♗c3 ♜ae8
 21.♗xe4 ♞xe4 22.♚d1 ♞g8 23.♞h5 ♙c8 things
 have got really complicated, 1-0 (64) Caruana, F
 (2787) – Adams, M (2744) Wijk aan Zee 2016]
 13.a4!? a6 14.♗c3 g6 15.♙h3 ♚e7 16.♙xd7
 ♗xd7 17.♙d2 ♗f6 18.axb5 ♙xc3 19.♙xc3 axb5
 20.♞xa8 ♞xa8 21.f5



Position after: 21.f5

21...g5 [21...♗e4 22.fxg6 fxg6 23.♞f7 ♚g5
 24.♞e1 ♙c8 25.h4 ♚g3 26.♞xg3 ♗xg3 27.♘h2
 ♗f5 28.♙d2 still it's not equal, as White
 maintains some pressure] 22.♞e1 It's more
 pleasant for White to deal with such a position.

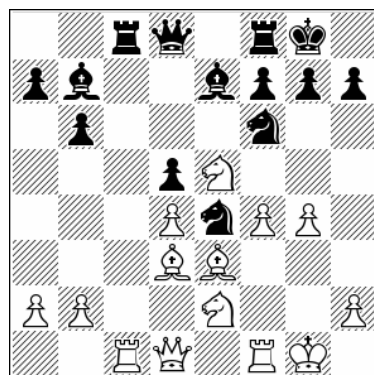
12.exd4



Position after: 12.exd4

12...♗e4

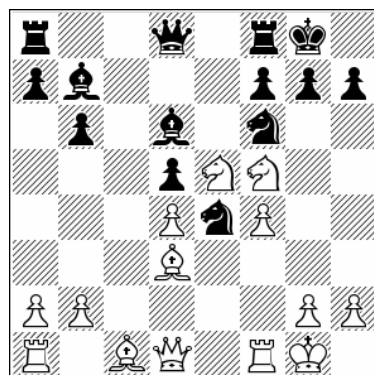
A) 12...♙e7 13.♙e3 ♗e4 14.♞c1 ♗df6 15.g4!?
 ♞c8!



Position after: 15...♞c8!

16.♞a4 [16.♞xc8 ♚xc8 17.♗g3 ♗xg3 18.hxg3
 ♗e4 19.♞a4 ♙d6 20.♞c1 ♚e6 21.f5 ♚e7
 22.♙xe4 dxe4 23.♞b5 h6 Black has equalized]
 16...♙d6 17.g5 ♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♗g4 19.♙d4 ♗xg5
 20.fxg5 ♚xg5 21.♞xc8 ♙xc8 22.♞f3 White is a
 piece up. Black is not without chances, but still I
 prefer White.

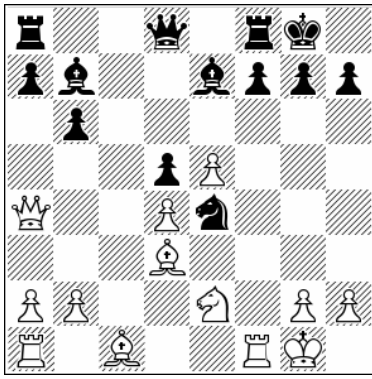
B) 12...♙d6 13.♗g3 ♗e4 14.♗f5 ♗df6



Position after: 14...♗df6

15.♞f3 [15.g4 ♙c8 16.♗e3 ♙xe5 17.fxe5 ♗e8
 18.♞f3 this is better play for White, 1-0 (24)
 Vaissier, A (2540) – Hohler, P (2218) Kamena
 Vourla 2012] 15...♙c7? 16.♙xe4! Sometimes it is
 crucial to spot the opponent's mistakes. Now
 the path opens up for a quick attack. [16.♙e3
 ♗d6! this is unclear, ½-½ (51) Navara, D (2741)
 – Georgiadis, N (2526) Biel 2018] 16...dxe4
 [16...♗xe4 17.♞g4 g6 18.♗h6+ ♘g7 19.f5 also
 here we see how easily Black can come under
 attack] 17.♞g3 g6 18.♙e3 ♘h8 19.♗h6 ♚e7
 20.f5 White's attack will win the day.

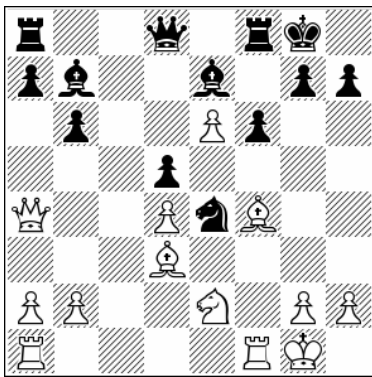
13.♞a4 ♗xe5 14.fxe5 ♙e7



Position after: 14...♙e7

15.♘f4

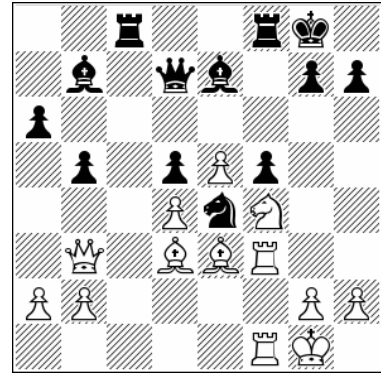
15.♙f4 f6 16.e6



Position after: 16.e6

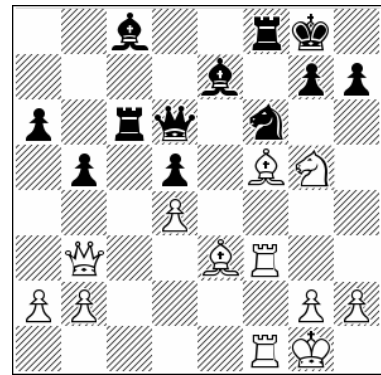
16...♙c8 [16...f5 17.♖ac1 a6 18.♖c7 b5 19.♙c2 ♖c8 20.♖c1 White is better, 1-0 (27) Niemann, H (2484) – Vetokhin, S (2309) Paracin 2021] 17.♖ac1 ♙xe6 18.♖c7 ♙c8 19.♘c3 ♘xc3 20.bxc3 ♙d8 21.♖xa7 ♖xa7 22.♙xa7 White has some pressure but things are not so simple.

15...♖c8 16.♙e3 a6 17.♖f3 b5 18.♙b3 ♙d7 19.♖af1 f5



Position after: 19...f5

20.exf6 ♘xf6 21.♘h3 ♖c6 22.♙f5 ♙d6 23.♘g5 ♙c8



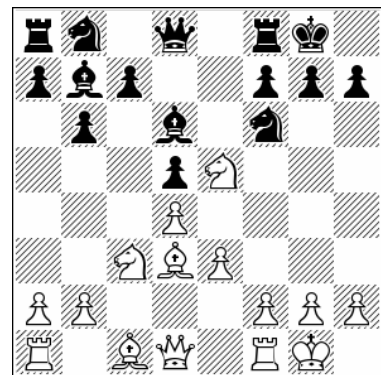
Position after: 23...♙c8

24.♙f4

White has the initiative, ½-½ (41) Rozum, I (2601) – Zakhartsov, V (2453) Moscow 2017.

f) 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 ♙d6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6 5.♙d3 ♙b7 6.♘f3 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 ♙d6

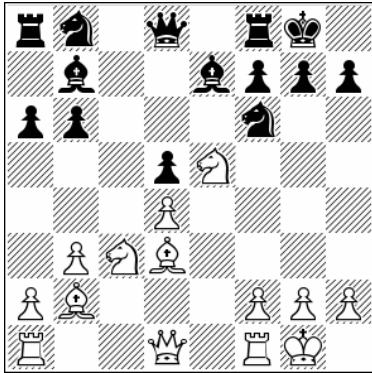


Position after: 9...♙d6

10.f4

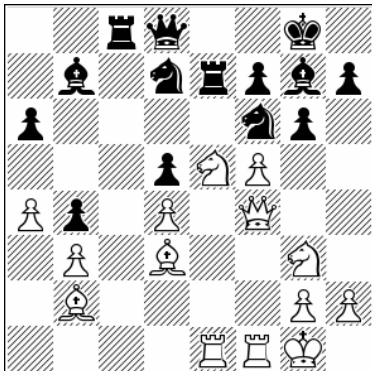
That's the most aggressive move. Some other lines borrow ideas from the Zukertort.

10.♘b5 ♕e7 11.b3 c5 12.♙b2 a6 13.♘c3 cxd4
14.exd4



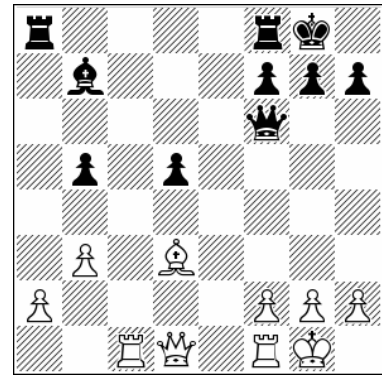
Position after: 14.exd4

14...b5 [14...♙d6 15.♖c1 b5 16.a4 b4 17.♘e2
♞e8 18.♘g3 g6 19.f4 ♘bd7 20.♙d2 ♞c8 21.♞ce1
♙f8 22.f5 ♞e7 23.♙f4 ♙g7



Position after: 23...♙g7

24.h4 this is indeed strong play for White] 15.♞c1!? White wants to deter the black queen's knight from going to c6. 15...♘c6 Anyway! [15...♘bd7 16.a4 b4 17.♘e2 Now when the black knight is on d7, I think it's easier to play with White] 16.♘xb5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 axb5 18.exf6 ♙xf6 19.♙xf6 ♙xf6



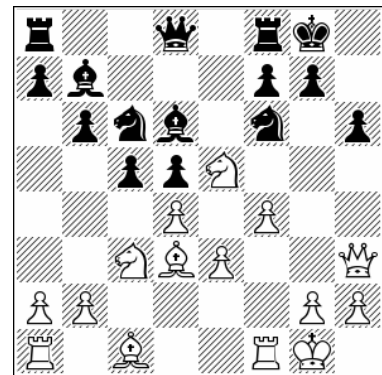
Position after: 19...♙xf6

20.♙d2 White has some edge.

10...c5 11.g4!?

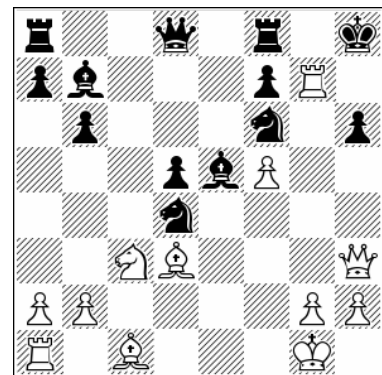
A modern treatment, and a very interesting one.

11.♙f3 A well-known old idea. 11...♘c6 12.♙h3
h6



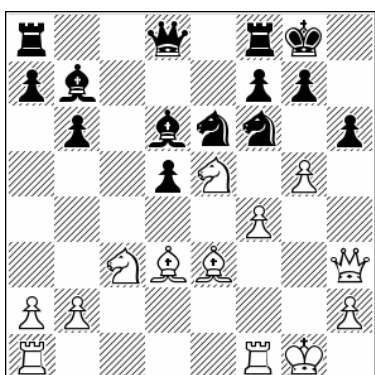
Position after: 12...h6

This is probably safest. 13.g4 [13.♞f3 cxd4
14.exd4 ♘xd4 15.♞g3 ♙h8 16.f5 ♙xe5 17.♞xg7



Position after: 17.♞xg7

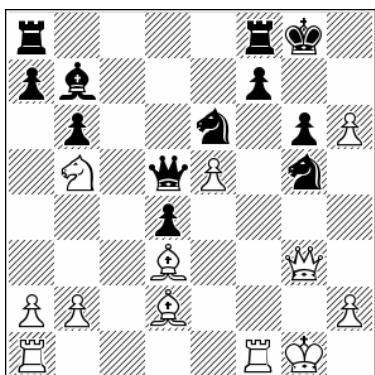
17...♔xg7 18.♖xh6+ ♔g8 19.♖g5+ ♔h8
 20.♖h6+ ♔g8 the game heads towards a draw,
 ½-½ (20) Brunner, N (2442) – Palac, M (2577)
 Drancy 2016] 13...cxd4 14.exd4 ♖xd4 15.♙e3
 ♗e6 16.g5



Position after: 16.g5

A) 16...d4 17.gxf6 ♖xf6 [17...♙xe5 18.fxe5 dxe3
 19.♖ad1 ♗g5 20.♖xe3 ♖c8 21.♙f5 ♖c5 22.♖xc5
 bxc5 23.♗d5 with some initiative in this
 endgame] 18.♗g4 ♖e7 19.f5 ♗g5 20.♙xg5 ♖xg5
 21.♗e4 ♙xe4 22.♙xe4 ♖ae8 23.♖g2 ♖xe4
 24.♖xe4 h5 25.♔h1 hxg4 26.♖ad1 g3 Black
 managed to get compensation and equalize, ½-
 ½ (29) Ziegler, P – Potrata, J corr. 2015.

B) 16...♙xe5 17.fxe5 ♗h7 18.gxh6 g6 19.♙d2 d4
 20.♗b5 ♖d5 21.♖g3 ♗hg5!



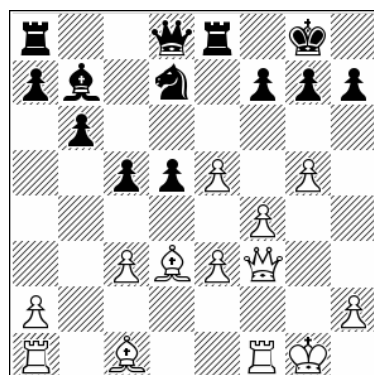
Position after: 21...♗hg5!

22.♙xg5 ♗xg5 23.♖xg5 ♖h1+ 24.♔f2 ♖f3+
 25.♔e1 ♖xd3 26.♗d6 ♙a6 27.h7+ ♔xh7 28.♖f2
 ♖ae8 29.♗xe8 ♖e4+ 30.♔d1 ♖xe8 Again it
 seems that the game ends in a draw.

11...cxd4

Black has an alternative.

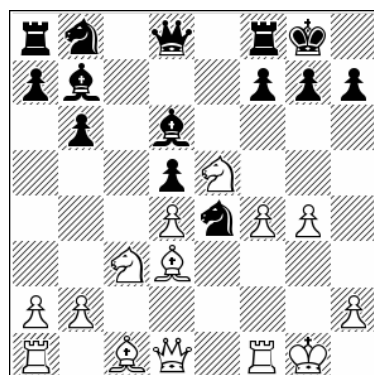
11...♗e4 12.♖f3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♗d7 14.g5 ♙xe5
 15.dxe5 ♖e8



Position after: 15...♖e8

16.♖g3!? [16.c4 ♗f8 17.cxd5 ♙xd5 18.♖e2 ♖xe5
 19.fxe5 ♖xg5+ 20.♔f2 ♖h4+ 21.♔g1 ♖g5+
 22.♔f2 ♖h4+ 23.♔g1 Black managed to get a
 perpetual check, ½-½ (23) Moiseenko, A (2642)
 – Efimenko, Z (2632) Chornomorsk 2019]
 16...♖c7 17.h4 ♗f8 18.h5 Black is under serious
 pressure.

12.exd4 ♗e4

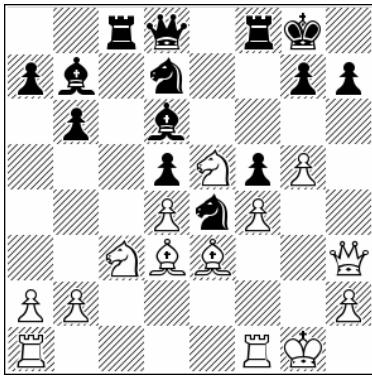


Position after: 12...♗e4

13.g5!?

White tries to discourage ...f6 ideas.

13.♙e3 ♗d7 14.g5! It is important to gain space
 with this move. 14...♖c8 15.♖g4 f5 16.♖h3



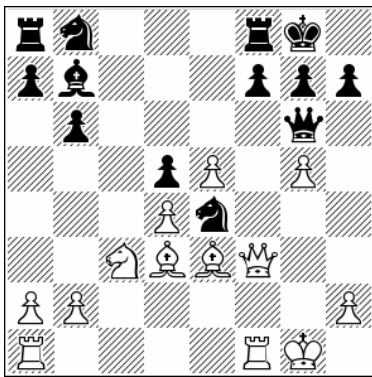
Position after: 16. ♖h3

The pawn stays on g5, taking the best square away from the knight on d7. 16... ♖xe5 [16... ♗b4 17. ♖xe4 dxe4 18. ♗c4+ ♖xc4 19. ♖xc4 b5 20. a3 ♗e7 21. ♖e5 ♖b6 Black has some compensation, but not that much] 17. ♗xe5 ♗b4 18. ♖e2 g6 19. ♗h1 The e2-knight is coming to f4, which looks good although the position of course is still far from clear.

13... ♖d7

A) 13... f6 14. ♖xe4! White plays the winning tactic.

B) 13... ♗xe5 14. ♗xe5 ♖c8 15. ♖f3 ♖c6 16. ♗e3 ♖g6



Position after: 16... ♖g6

17. h4 White is clearly better, 1-0 (28) Moroni, L (2541) – Heinemann, T (2501) Berlin 2021.

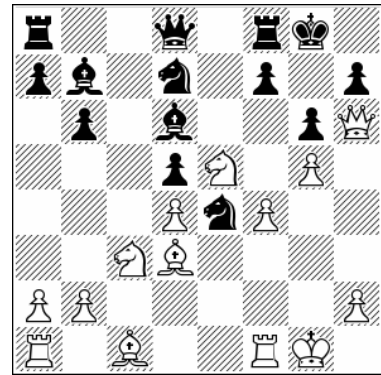
Now White has a few ideas on how to proceed.

14. ♖h5!?

A) 14. ♖g4 f5 15. ♖h3 ♖c8 16. ♖e2 ♖e7 17. ♗e3 g6 18. ♖ac1 This is good play. White keeps some pressure but really the position is still balanced.

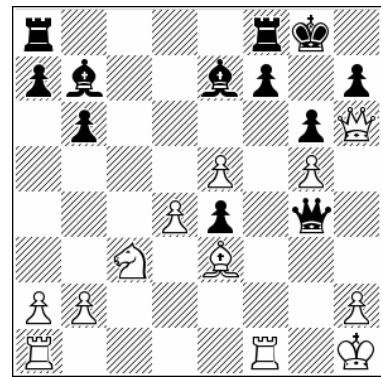
B) 14. ♖f3! ♖c8 15. ♖h3 g6 16. ♗xe4 dxe4 17. ♖g4 f6 18. f5 With yet another interesting attacking idea.

14... g6 15. ♖h6



Position after: 15. ♖h6

15... ♖c8 16. ♗xe4 dxe4 17. ♗e3 ♖xe5 18. ♗xe5 ♖g4+ 19. ♗h1 ♗e7



Position after: 19... ♗e7

20. ♖f6!!

White has attacking chances.

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