

Matthieu Cornette

The Complete Ragozin



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Cover designer

Piotr Pielach

Typesetting

i-Press <www.i-press.pl>

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First edition 2017 by Chess Evolution

ISBN 978-615-80713-0-7

The complete Ragozin

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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution

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Magyarország

e-mail: info@chess-evolution.com

website: www.chess-evolution.com

Printed in Hungary

Key to symbols

= Equality or equal chances

± White has a slight advantage

∓ Black has a slight advantage

± White is better

∓ Black is better

+ - White has a decisive advantage

- + Black has a decisive advantage

∞ unclear

∞ with compensation

↔ with counterplay

↑ with initiative

→ with an attack

Δ with the idea

□ only move

N novelty

! a good move

!! an excellent move

? a weak move

?? a blunder

! ? an interesting move

? ! a dubious move

+ check

mate

Preface

The Ragozin opening is named after one of its first contributors, Viacheslav Vasilyevich Ragozin (1908–1962). He was a Soviet grandmaster and became the World Correspondence Chess Champion in 1959.

I started to play this opening back in 2007 and I have used it ever since. It's a perfect complement to my main opening against 1.d4, the Nimzo-Indian. Over the last decade this line has become highly fashionable at the top level, with Magnus Carlsen, Vishy Anand, Anish Giri, and Levon Aronian, to mention only a few of the elite grandmasters, playing it regularly.

The theory surrounding the Ragozin has developed very fast, but I have never stopped updating my files, and I am still amazed by how good this opening is.

I thought it was time for me to share with you all the secrets of my favourite and most-solid line; relatively easy to play, with a good positional background, but somehow almost always forgotten by the chess literature.

I apologize in advance if sometimes I push certain lines a bit too far, but I

always have a desire to find the truth even if it's not really possible. In any case, everybody can decide by themselves where to stop.

Do not worry, I am myself far from remembering everything from this book, and I doubt anyone can learn all the lines.

Have a good read and I hope you will enjoy this book.

Cornette Matthieu
Bordeaux, January 17th, 2017.

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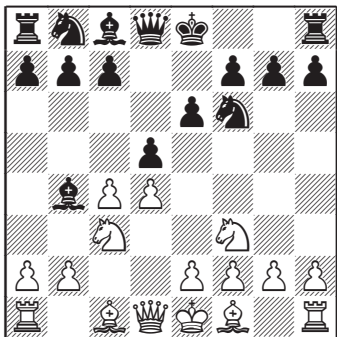
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Introduction

When I started to write this book, one of the first problems I encountered was to find the right way to order it or to divide it. As you will notice, there is often more than one way to get to a certain position and I have tried to make it as clear as possible via which move-orders the line can be reached.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4



This is the basic position of the Ragozin opening. White now has a wide choice of moves. I decided to divide this book into seven parts.

The first part is about the ♙a4+ system. It can start with 5.♙a4+ directly or with 5.♙g5 first, then 5...h6 6.♙xf6 ♗xf6 7.♙a4+. White's idea behind this check is to drive the black knight from b8 to c6, blocking the c-pawn which otherwise often counterattacks White's centre with a ...c7-c5 push. Instead, Black often reacts

with ...dxc4 and ...e6-e5 at the right moment.

Part 2 introduces the ♗b3 system. As in the first case, it can start either with 5.♗b3 directly or after 5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♗xf6 7.♗b3. Black reacts with ...c7-c5 in both cases.

Part 3 is about the 5.cxd5 exd5 line, where I analyse not only 6.♙g5, the main line, but also other 6th moves.

In Part 4 I cover the 5.♙g5 h6 line. If the bishop retreats to h4, Black can take on c4 and play a good version of the Vienna variation, and if 6.♙xf6, it brings us to a fashionable line.

In Part 5 I analyze all the different White 5th moves which transpose to the Nimzo-Indian. 5.e3 is of course the main move, but for example 5.g3 is also a decent possibility.

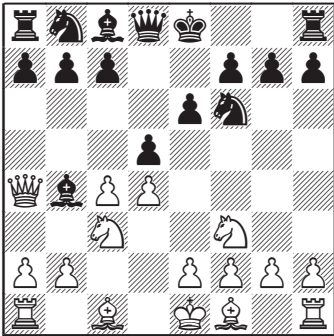
And finally, the last part of this book is about what I call the 'Accelerated Ragozin': 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4. It's a move-order I have used quite often myself and most of the time it reaches the 'normal' Ragozin, even if White has different options. Black's main idea behind this move-order can be to avoid the Nimzo-Indian with 4.♗c2 or the line with 4.e3 followed by 5.♘ge2. If White tries to play these continuations in the accelerated Ragozin, Black has a strong ...dxc4 response.

PART 1.

System with ♖a4+

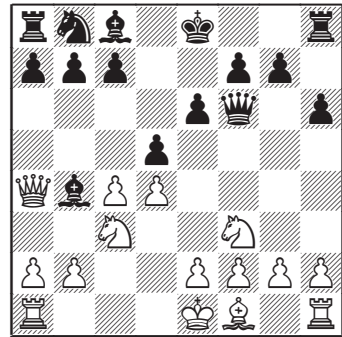
In this first section we will study every system where White plays ♖a4.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♙g5
5...♖a4+



5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙xf6 ♖xf6
8.♖a4+ ♘c6 is another path to reach Chapter 3.

5...h6 6.♙xf6 ♖xf6 7.♖a4+



This is a fashionable move-order.

This move is the start of one of the main branches of Ragozin. The idea is to drive the ♘b8 to c6. It's not the most natural square for the knight because it's in front of the c7-pawn. On the other hand, the ♖a4 is also not ideally placed and Black will have an advantage in development. 5...♘c6 6.e3 (6.♘e5 will be studied in Chapter 4. 6.a3 will be studied in Chapter 4. 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙xf6 ♖xf6 is another move-order to reach Chapters 1 and 2, but also Chapter 3 if White delays taking on d5. 6.cxd5 exd5 is the starting position of Chapter 3.) 6...0-0 will be studied in Chapter 5.

7...♘c6 8.e3

8.♘e5 will be studied in Chapter 1.

8.a3 will be studied in Chapter 1.

8...0-0 9.♙e2

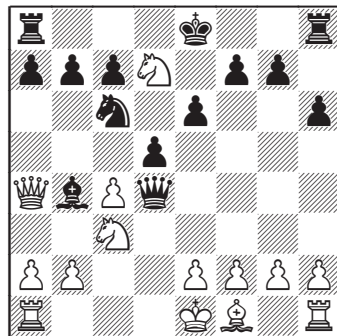
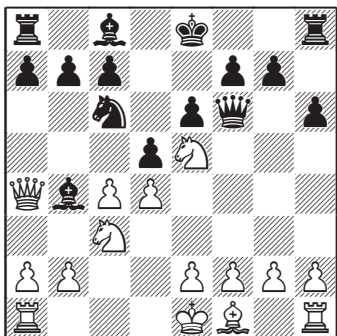
The most fashionable line nowadays, which will be carefully analyzed in Chapter 2. 9.♙c1 will be studied in Chapter 1.

9.a3 will be studied in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1.

5.♔g5 h6 6.♙xf6 — 7.♚a4+ 8.XXX 9.XXX

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♔g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♚xf6 7.♚a4+ ♘c6 8.e3
8.♘e5?



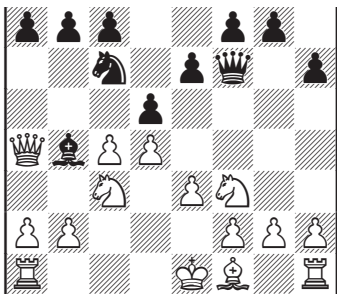
This move looks tempting, but it's just a mistake giving Black a good advantage.

8...♔d7! 9.♘xd7 (9.♘xc6 ♔xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♔xc6 11.♚b4 dxc4 Opening up lines for the bishop. 12.♚xc4 (12.e3 0-0-0 and Black was simply better, as White could not develop easily due to the pressure on the g2-pawn: Van der Stricht,G (2468)-Atalik,S (2570) Plovdiv 2003) 12...0-0-0 Black had a very big advantage in development: Rmus,A (2398)-Delchev,A (2669) Bijelo Polje 2005) 9...♚xd4! The kind of move which is easy to miss!

10.♚c2 (10.♖c1 ♚xc4! Threatening ...♔xc3 winning the queen. 11.♚c2 ♘xd7+ and Black simply had two pawns up for nothing in the game Teixeira,R (2353)-Mirkov,N (2547) Rio de Janeiro 2000) 10...♚xc4! as the white knight is trapped on d7 Black continues to collect the pawns 11.e3 ♚g4 and Black won quite easily in the game: Abhishek,A (2123)-Vishnu,P (2467) Dharamshala 2014. White is not even able to grab a pawn with his knight!

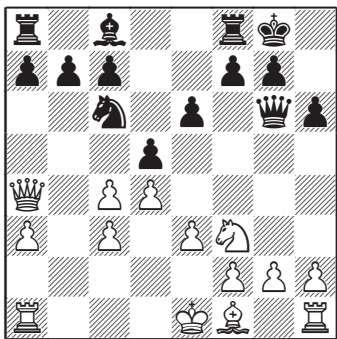
8.a3 ♔xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.e3 transposes to 8.e3 then 9.a3

8...0-0



9.♖c1!?

Quite a fashionable move. Kramnik used it against Aronian in 2015, and in 2016 Wang Hao and Krasenkov played it. The idea behind this move is to be able to take on c3 with a rook and also delay the bishop development, which might be able to recapture the pawn on c4 in one move without losing an important tempo. 9.a3 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♚g6!?



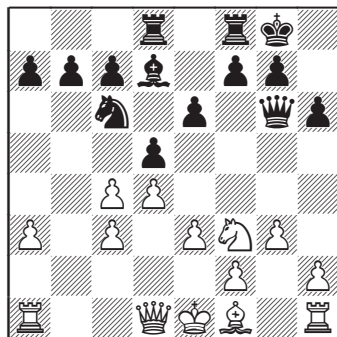
Black paralyzes White's kingside as the f1-bishop cannot move (10...♙d7 is also a decent alternative. Black wants to play ...♖e8 next followed by ...dxc4 and ...e5.) 11.♖c1

a) 11.♙e2 I was surprised to see that this move had been already played several

times. 11...♙xg2 12.♖g1 ♚h3 13.♖g3 ♙f5 14.0-0-0!N 14...dxc4 15.♙xc4 ♚a5∞ Obviously, White has some compensation here, but pawn is a pawn and I believe that Black is fine.

b) 11.h4 with the obvious idea of h4-h5, getting rid of the annoying black queen. 11...♙d7 12.h5 (12.♙d1 dxc4 13.♙xc4 e5!∞ Black had good play in: Miladinovic,I (2603)-Mitkov,N (2528) Heraklio 2007) 12...♙f6 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♙d3 White has finally succeeded in developing his bishop, but his kingside is weakened now, and Black was totally fine after 14...♙g4∞ in the game Van Wely,L (2695)-Pokorna,R (2348) Vlissingen 2001;

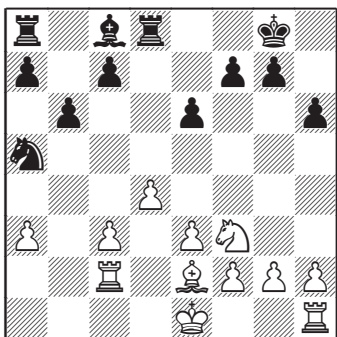
c) 11.g3 ♙d7 12.♙d1 ♖ad8!N



With the idea of taking on c4 and playing ...e5. (12...dxc4!N is a good alternative 13.♙xc4 e5! Exploiting the weakened light-squares on the kingside. 14.0-0 ♖ad8= with a decent position) 13.♙d3 (13.cxd5 exd5 14.♙g2 ♖fe8 15.0-0 b6=) 13...♙f6 14.0-0 (14.♙d2 ♙a5=) 14...dxc4 15.♙xc4 e5∞ and I like Black's position;

d) 11.♖h4N can lead to a move repetition 11...♔e4 12.♗f3 ♕g6=;

11...♗d8 12.♔c2 has been played twice with a score of 2/2 for White which is quite surprising, as Black has a good position here: 12...♔xc2 13.♖xc2 dxc4 14.♗xc4 b6 15.♗e2 was played in the game Popov, V (2545)-Taimanov, M (2454) St Petersburg 2001, but here I suggest an improvement over the game: 15...♗a5!N

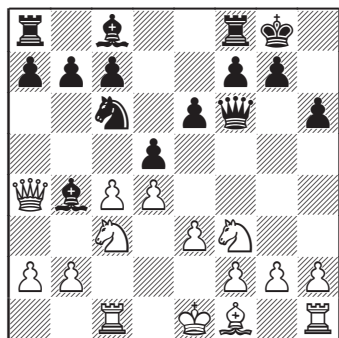


Black's plan is simple: ...♗b7 and ...c7-c5 16.♗e5 (After 16.c4?! c5= is even stronger than with a pawn still on c3; 16.♗d2 ♗b7 17.♗f3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♖ac8∞ followed by ...c7-c5) 16...♗b7 17.f3 (17.0-0 c5= and ...♖ac8 is coming next, with a pleasant position for Black) 17...♖ac8 18.♗c4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 c5= with at least equality.

9.♗d3 will transpose to Chapter 2, but it's actually less precise than 9.♗e2 because after 9...dxc4 the bishop is attacked and White has no choice but to take back the pawn directly;

9.♗e2 is the main move. It will be deeply analyzed in Chapter 2.

9.cxd5 exd5 See Chapter 3.



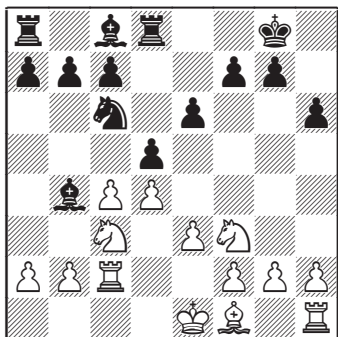
9...♔g6!?

Putting pressure on the g2-pawn leaves White with a lack of coordination. 9...♗d8 I played this move back in 2011 against the Spanish grandmaster Rivas Pastor. It's an interesting alternative but I prefer the text move.

10.♔c2

10.h4 has been played three times but it looks superficial to me. 10...a6!N is a good move. Black is threatening to take on c4. 11.h5 (11.♔c2 ♔xc2 12.♖xc2 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗d6= followed by ...e6-e5) 11...♔f5 12.cxd5 (12.♗e2? is a mistake due to 12...dxc4!+ simply winning the pawn, followed by ... b7-b5; 12.♔b3 dxc4 13.♗xc4 b5 14.♗e2 ♗b7∞ with complex play) 12...exd5 13.♔d1 (13.♗e2 ♗d6!+ with the idea being to play ...♗e7 14.♗b5 leads to a forced draw: 14...axb5!? 15.♔xa8 ♗d7 16.♔xb7 ♖b8 17.♔a6 ♖b6 18.♔a8+ ♖b8=) 13...♗e7 14.♗d3 ♔e6 15.♗f1 ♗d6= with a balanced position

10...♖xc2 11.♞xc2 ♜d8



This is the move chosen by the elite players. Aronian has already played this position three times and recently Hammer and Movsesian have both tried it. 11...♞d6!?N has never been played but I believe it is a good alternative to the main move.

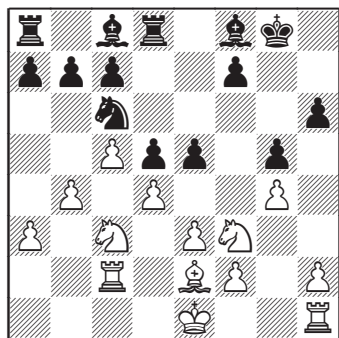
12.a3

12.c5 doesn't promise anything after the thematic 12...e5 13.a3 ♙f5!?N (13...♞xc3+ has been played in one existing game in the database but it looks rather strange to me not to insert ...♙f5 first 14.♞xc3 exd4 15.♜xd4 ♜xd4 16.exd4 ♞e8+ 17.♞e3 ♞d7= Shen,Y (2459)-Zhao,X (2527) China 2015) 14.♞c1 ♞xc3+ 15.♞xc3 (15.bxc3 f6∞) 15...exd4 16.♜xd4 ♜xd4 17.exd4 ♞e8+=

12...♙f8 13.♜b5

With the idea of forcing the ♞d8 to an awkward square. 13.♙e2 ♜a5 has been played in the most recent game by Hammer (13...♜e7!? was Aronian's choice 14.0-0 c6 might look passive but is okay for Black 15.b4 (15.♜e5 f6 16.♜f3 b6= followed by ...♙b7) 15...dxc4 16.♙xc4

♜d5= and Black had a good position in the game Radjabov,T (2713)-Aronian,L (2803) Beijing 2013) 14.c5 (14.cxd5 exd5=) 14...♜c6 If such a theoretician as Hammer chose to play this way, I can be assured that my idea with 11...♞d6!?N 12.c5 ♙e7 is correct. 15.b4 g5 I am not entirely sure that it's the best way to play for Black but nevertheless I want to keep this game in the book because Black played a real masterpiece. (15...a6= looks quite logical) 16.g4 e5!

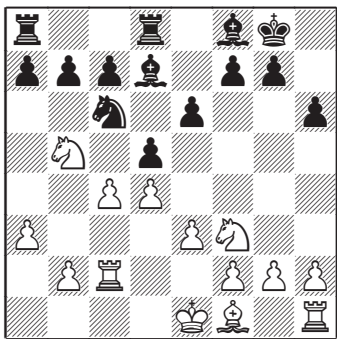


When holding the two bishops it's always important to open the position 17.♜xe5 (17.♜b5 exd4 18.♜fxd4 (18.♜xc7 d3! 19.♙xd3 ♙xg4 20.♜d4 ♜xd4 21.exd4 ♞ac8 22.♜b5 a6 23.♞g1 f5 24.♜c3 ♙g7∞ with a sharp and very unclear position. However, Black's play looks easier.) 18...♜xd4 19.♜xd4 c6= with equality.) 17...♜xe5 18.dxe5 a5! Black has sacrificed a pawn for the initiative and now has to continue playing actively to keep up the pressure. 19.0-0 (19.b5 ♙e6+ followed by ...d5-d4 gives Black an edge) 19...axb4 20.axb4 c6 21.♞d1 ♙g7 22.f4 ♞e8 23.♜f2 gxf4 24.exf4 f6! Once again Black tries to open as many lines as

possible. 25.exf6 ♖xf6 26.h3 ♖a3 27.♞d3 ♔g7 28.♙f3 ♙e6 29.♘d1 ♖a4 30.♞b3 d4 31.♙c4 ♖a2! A very nice tactical blow. 32.♖xa2 (32.♖c1 ♙xc4 33.♖xc4 ♞h2+) 32...♙xc4 33.g5 ♙xb3 34.gxf6+ ♙xf6 35.♞d2 ♙xd1+ 36.♖xd1 ♖e3+— and Black easily won the rook endgame in Krasenkow,M (2610)-Hammer,J (2695) Stockholm 2016.

13...♞d7

13...♙d7!?N



I'm quite surprised to see that even this move is possible.

a) 14.♙xc7 this tempting move turns out to be not so good: 14...♖ac8 15.♙b5 dxc4! 16.♙e2 (16.♙xc4? ♙a5!—+ and White cannot protect all the pieces; 16.♖xc4? a6 17.♙c3 b5—+ trapping the rook) 16...a6 17.♙c3 b5+ and Black is better.

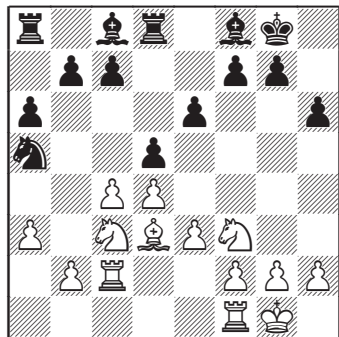
b) 14.♙e2 is harmless 14...a6 15.♙c3 dxc4 16.♙xc4 b5 17.♙e2 b4 18.axb4 ♙xb4 19.♖c1 c5∞ Black is fine.

c) 14.cxd5! is a bit smarter 14...exd5 15.♙d3! (15.♙xc7 is still not dangerous

for Black: 15...♖ac8 16.♙b5 (16.♙xd5? ♙f5—+) 16...♙a5! 17.♖xc8 (17.♞d2 a6 18.♙c3 ♙xa3 19.♙xd5 ♙f8 20.♙c3 ♙b3 21.♞d1 ♙b4+ and Black will at least win back the pawn; 17.♙d2 ♙f5! and here White's best chance is to give up an exchange: 18.♙c3 ♙xc2 19.♙xc2 a6+ 17...♖xc8 18.♙d1 a6 19.♙c3 ♙xa3 20.♙c2 ♙b4 21.♙d3= with a balanced position) 15...♖ac8 16.0-0 a6 17.♙c3 ♙e7= and I don't believe White has anything here.

14.cxd5

14.♙d3 a6 15.♙c3 ♞d8 (15...♙e7 even if Aronian played this move against Kramnik, I am not sure it is necessary: Kramnik,V (2783)-Aronian,L (2777) Zürich 2015) 16.0-0 was played in Meissner, R (2065)-Klim,A (2009) LSS email 2012, and here I suggest 16...♙a5!? N

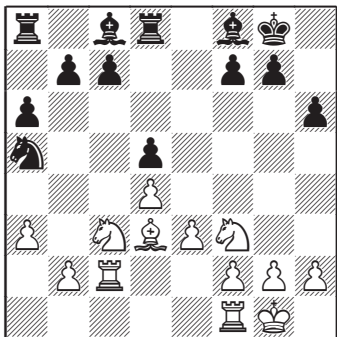


17.c5 (17.cxd5 exd5 see 14.exd5) 17...♙c6 18.b4 (18.♞d1 g5 19.♙e2 ♙d7 20.b4 f6 21.g4 ♙e7= with an equal position) 18...g5 19.h3 ♙g7= followed by ...e6-e5 with equality.

14...exd5 15.♙d3 a6 16.♙c3 ♞d8

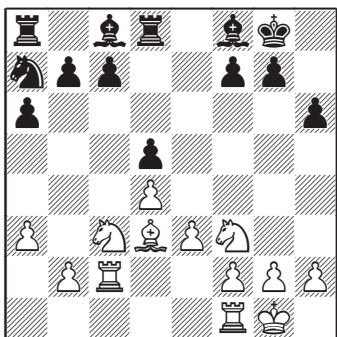
16...♖a7 is also fine 17.♙f5 (17.0-0 ♜d8 see 16...♜d8 then 17...♖a7) 17...♜d8 18.♙xc8 ♖xc8 19.♗e5 c6 20.♖a4 ♜e8= with equality in Wang, H (2717)-Movsesian,S (2653) Huaian 2016.

17.0-0 ♖a5!?!N



I like this move. Black can stop the advance of White's queenside by playing ...b7-b5 or ...♗b3. The move ...♗c4 is also a good option. See 14.exd5

17...♖a7N



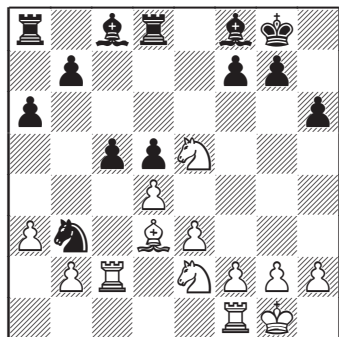
is a safe option (see 16...♜d8 then 17...♖a7) 18.♜fc1 c6 19.♖a4 (19.♗e5 ♖b5 20.♖a4 ♙d6 21.♗b6 ♜b8=) 19...♙d6 20.♗b6 ♜b8 21.h3 (21.♖xc8

♖xc8 with an equal position) 21...♜e8 22.b4 g6 23.♜b2 ♗g7 24.a4 ♙e6= and I don't see any plan for White;

17...♗b8 has been played twice in this position. It is of course possible, but I prefer another square for the knight.

18.♜b1!?

Quite a smart move. White wants to play b3 to take away the squares from the knight on a5. The a3-pawn will not be hanging due to b4 threats trapping the bishop. 18.♗e5 ♖b3 19.♗e2 (19.♖a4 b5 20.♖c6 ♜d6 21.♗c5 ♜xc6 22.♖xb3 ♜xc2 23.♙xc2 a5=) 19...c5!?



This gives Black good play for the isolated pawn. (19...c6 is also fine 20.♜d1 Taking control of the d2-square with the idea of playing ♜c3 (20.♜c3 ♗d2 21.♜d1 ♗e4∞) 20...♜e8! with the idea of ...♗c5 21.♗f3 (21.♜c3 ♗c5!∞) 21...♖a5=) 20.dxc5 (20.♜c3 c4 21.♙c2 ♖a5=) 20...♖xc5 21.♜d2 (21.♜c3 ♖a4=) 21...♙d6 22.♗f3 ♖xd3 (22...♖b3 23.♜c2 ♗c5=) 23.♜xd3 ♙f5=;

18.h3 b5 19.♜b1 ♗c4 This is more logical, although 19...♖b3 is also possible

20.♖e2 c5 21.dxc5 ♜xc5 22.♗e1 g6
 23.♞d1 ♚b7 24.♗d4 ♞dc8= even if Black
 has an isolated pawn, I believe his good
 pieces compensate for it. 20.a4 c6=;

18.b4?! is not a good idea because after
 18...♗c4! Black has the initiative. 19.♙xc4
 (19.♞a2 b5⌘) 19...dxc4 20.♗e5 ♙e6⌘;

18.e4?! is premature: 18...dxe4 19.♙xe4
 (19.♗xe4? ♗c6⌘ followed by ...♙g4 and
 the d4-pawn will fall.) 19...c6∞ and only
 Black can be better here.

18...b5

18...♗b3 19.♞d1 ♙e6 20.♗e2 c6
 21.♞c3 ♗a5 22.♗f4 ♙g4 23.h3 (23.b4
 ♗c4 24.♙xc4 dxc4 25.♞xc4 a5!↑ and
 Black has a good initiative for the pawn)
 23...♙xf3 24.gxf3 ♙d6 25.♗e2 b5∞ with
 an unclear position.

19.b3

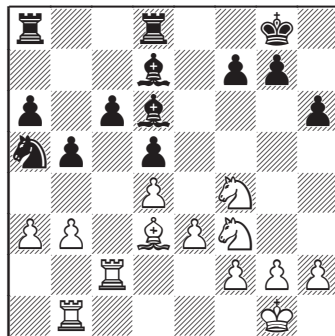
19.a4 ♗b3!∞

19...c6

19...♙xa3?! 20.b4±

20.a4

20.♗e2 ♙d6 21.♗f4 ♙d7



This position looks totally fine to me.
 22.g3 ♗b7 23.a4

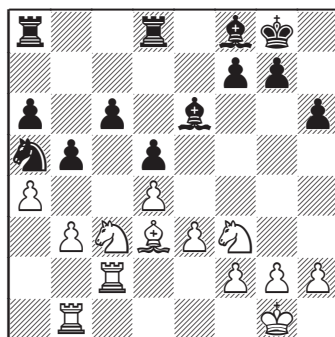
a) 23.b4 is always met by 23...a5∞;

b) 23.♞a2 g5 24.♗e2 (24.♗h5 ♗f8
 25.♗g2 c5!?)= 24...f6=;

c) 23.♗e5?! ♙xe5 24.dxe5 ♞e8⌘;

23...♞db8 24.♗g2 f6 25.♗h4 bxa4
 26.bxa4 ♗a5= with an equal position

20...♙e6



This position is quite complicated. I
 tried to play logical human moves aiming
 to guess how the game might continue,
 and I found no problems for Black. I
 provide the following lines just to illustrate

how play might develop, but there is no need to try to remember them!

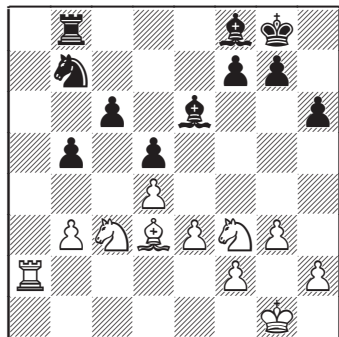
21.g3

21.♖cb2 ♘d6 22.♖a1 ♜b7 It's not easy to see how White can play for an advantage here. 23.axb5 (23.b4 leads to simplifications after: 23...a5! Thematic 24.axb5 ♙xb4 25.♜a2 cxb5 26.♜xb4 axb4 27.♖xa8 ♖xa8 28.♜e1 ♜d6= and Black has no problems; 23.h3 b4 24.♜e2 c5∞ and I like Black) 23...axb5 24.♖ba2 ♖xa2 25.♖xa2 b4 26.♜e2 (26.♜a4 ♖a8∞) 26...c5!? 27.♖a7 (27.dxc5 ♜xc5 28.♙c2 ♖c8 29.♜fd4 g6 with a balanced position) 27...♖b8 28.♜d2 ♜d8 29.dxc5 (29.♖a6 ♙f8=) 29...♙xc5 30.♖a1 ♙c8 transferring the bishop to b7 31.♜f3 ♙b7 32.♜ed4 ♜e6= with equality.

21...♖db8 22.axb5

22.♔g2 bxa4 We can delay this move, but the simplification is also fine. 23.♜xa4 (23.bxa4 ♖xb1 24.♜xb1 ♖b8∞) 23...♜xb3 24.♜e5! ♖b4! 25.♖a2 c5! 26.dxc5 (26.♜xc5 ♜xc5! It is important to have this move. 27.♖xb4 ♜xd3 28.♜xd3 ♙xb4 29.♜xb4 a5 30.♜c6 a4=) 26...a5 27.♜b6 ♖e8 28.♜c6 ♜xc5 29.♜xb4 axb4 30.♙e2 b3∞ with enough compensation.

22...axb5 23.♖a2 ♜b7 24.♖ba1 ♖xa2 25.♖xa2



25...♜d8!? 26.♖a7 ♙b4 27.♜e2 ♙d6 28.♜f4 ♙c8=

Black's position is solid.

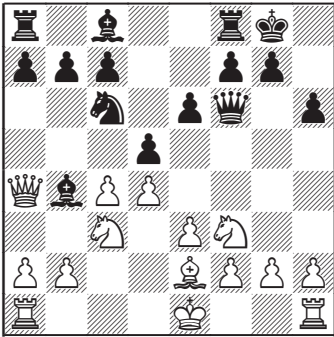
CONCLUSION

In this chapter we studied the lines where White delays the development of the light-squared bishop. In general, Black benefits from it by playing ...♖g6. In the 11.♖c1 line, I like my novelty 11...♙d6!?N, but the regular 11...♖d8 is also totally fine. I suggest two ways to improve on the most recent games, with 15...♜a5 or 15...♜a7.

Chapter 2.

5.♔g5 h6 6.♔xf6 — 7.♔a4+ 9.♔e2!?

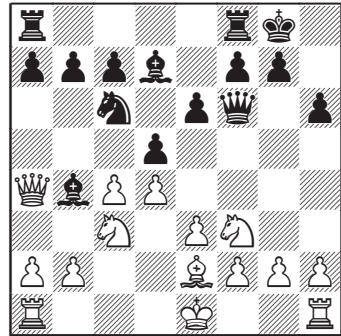
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♔g5 h6 6.♔xf6 ♔xf6 7.♔a4+ ♘c6 8.e3
0-0 9.♔e2!?



This set-up became very fashionable in 2010 after Ding Liren played it with success against Hou Yifan, and has been widely used since. I started to work on this line back then and have constantly kept my file up-to-date. I played this position myself twice with Black, against Markus Ragger and Laurent Fressinet, with varying success. In this line White is aiming for a slight edge due to the passive black bishop on c8. After some considerations I decided to suggest two different ways of playing for Black. The first one is more solid and has been recently played by the elite players, whereas the second line I offer is the one I personally prefer.

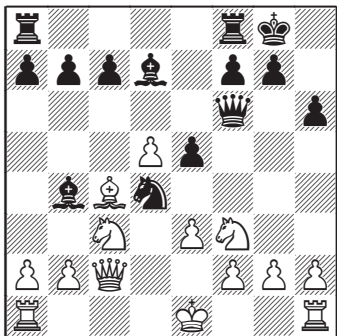
9...dxc4

The fashionable reply and quite a logical continuation considering the fact that White has already spent time on developing the bishop, and now will have to lose one tempo more recapturing the c4-pawn. 9...♙d7

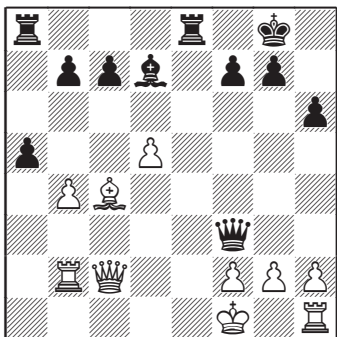


This is my personal preference. Black is threatening to move the knight with a discovery so White has to do something about his queen. 10.♔b3 gives the opportunity to take back on c4 with the queen after ...dxc4 (10.♔c2 dxc4 11.0-0 is the best and transposes to 9...dxc4 10.0-0 ♙d7 11.♔c2. (11.♔xc4 makes Black's life easier, as after 11...e5! 12.a3 (recently played by Sargissian but not very impressive):

a) 12.d5?! is not that good due to:
12...♘d4!



13...exd4 14.a3 Bfe8+ 15.c1 dxc3 16.axb4 cxb2 17.Bb1 was played in Marchand,F (2259)-Inkiyov,V (2440) Paris 2002, and here Black's play can be improved with: 17...a5! Black is a piece down, but White's weak king and undeveloped rook on h1 offer us more than enough compensation: 18.Qxb2 (18.Bxb2? fails due to a very nice trap: 18...Qxf3!



19.gxf3 Qh3+ 20.Kg1 Re1+ 21.Qf1 Qxf1# 18...Qxb2 19.Bxb2 axb4 20.Bb1 Ba3 preventing g2-g3 and making it difficult for White to finish the development 21.Qd4 Re4 22.Qb5 Bxd4 23.Qxd7 Bxd5 Black now has three

pawns for the bishop, and active rooks, while White still needs time to finish his development;

b) 12.0-0 creates no problems for Black, e.g. 12...exd4 13.Qd5 Qd6 14.exd4 (14.Bad1 Qg4!) 14...Qa5 15.Bfd1 Qg4 16.Qe4 Qh5+ Miller,J (2074)-Sadorra,J (2595) Lubbock 2013, and Black had a small edge thanks to his two bishops and better pawn structure;

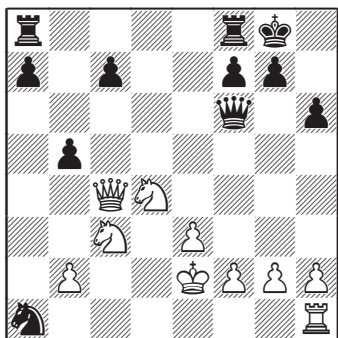
12...Qf5! 13.Qd3N (13.Qc1 was played in Sargissian,G (2687)-Georgiadis,N (2460) Doha 2014, and now I can suggest two different ways to improve Black's play: 13...Qd6! is even stronger (or 13...Qxc3+ 14.bxc3 e4 15.Qd2 Qg6 16.g3 Qa5 and is not clear what White should do here, as trying to save the bishop with 17.Qa2?! (17.Qe2 is a better choice, but still after 17...Qh3+ White is unable to castle, and will have to play Qf1 at some point anyway, leaving Black with a pleasant position, and ...c7-c5 push coming soon. 17.Qf1 is another unpleasant option for White, and after 17...c5+ Black has a very nice position) 17...Qh3+ leaves the light-squares too vulnerable on the kingside) 14.Qd5

a) 14.0-0 exd4 15.exd4 Qxd4+ winning a pawn and leaving no compensation for White;

b) 14.d5 e4! Thematic. 15.dxc6 exf3 16.cxb7 Bb8 17.Qd5 (17.g3 Bxb7 18.Qd5 is a way to win the pawn, but White does not feel very happy after: 18...Bbb8 19.Qxf3 Qh3 Preventing castling. 20.Qc2 Bfd8+ and Black has more than enough compensation for the

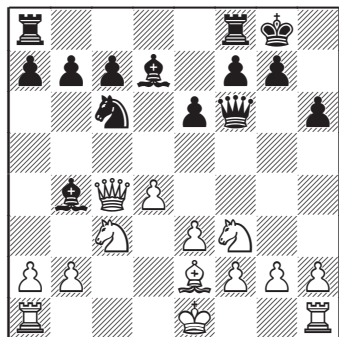
pawn) 17...fxg2 18.♙xg2 ♖g6⌞ Once again White is struggling to finish his development and find a safe place for the king. Black's active pieces and two bishops give him excellent play;

14...♖d8 15.0-0 (15.dxe5 ♜xe5⌞) 15...exd4 16.♞xd4 ♞xd4 17.exd4 ♙e6⌞ Black's two bishops and better pawn structure leaves him with an advantage) 13...♙xd3 14.♖xd3 exd4!? (14...♙a5 is also fine: 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♞xe5 ♖xe5 17.b4 ♙b6=) 15.axb4 (15.♞xd4 ♞e5 16.♖f5 ♙xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♖e7⌞ and Black is slightly better thanks to his better pawn structure) 15...♞xb4 16.♖c4 ♞c2+ 17.♙e2 ♞xa1 18.♞xd4 b5!

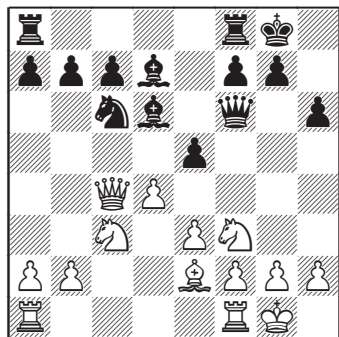
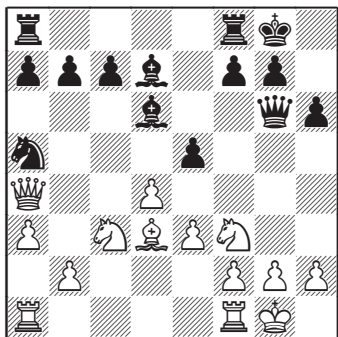


Not an easy move to find! 19.♞cxb5 c5! Opening the files for the rooks. 20.♖xc5 ♖ac8 21.♙d6 ♞c2 22.♖xf6 gxf6 23.♞f5 ♖b8 24.♞xa7 ♖xb2 25.♙f3 ♞b4∞ The position remains balanced: Black is an exchange up for one pawn, but his kingside pawn structure is damaged, thus White has full compensation here)) 10...dxc4 11.♖xc4! (11.♙xc4 is not dangerous because after 11...♙d6 Black is winning a tempo threatening ♞a5 and will

continue with the usual plan: ...♖g6 and ...e6-e5. 12.♙e2 ♖g6 13.0-0 e5= with an equal position).



This is a critical position. Black now has a choice: 11...♙d6!? is one of the typical ideas of the Ragozin, coming back to d6 with the bishop and preparing ...e6-e5 (11...♖g6 is the pet line of Yu. He has played it 5 times without a loss; 11...♖e7 is a specialty of Wojtaszek and is also playable. I made a draw against Fressinet with it during the French championship.) 12.0-0 (12.a3 is a loss of time. 12...♖g6 13.0-0 e5 14.♙d3 (14.d5 ♞e7= 15.♞h4 Holt,C (2533)-Naroditsky,D (2622) Chicago 2015 15...♖g5!N 16.♞f3 (16.♞e4 b5! 17.♞xg5 bxc4 18.♞e4 ♖ab8∞ and Black has some initiative. 16.g3 f5∞ with a sharp play.) 16...♖g6=) 14...♞a5! 15.♖a4



This is a funny move played by Parligras (15.♔xg6 gives White no advantage, e.g. 15...♖xc4 16.dxe5 (16.♙e4 exd4 17.♖xd4 c6) 16...♖xe5 17.♙e4 ♖xf3+ 18.♔xf3 ♜fd8= and Black can't be worse here.) 15...♔xa4 (15...♜xd3!?N was also good enough to equalize. 16.♜xd7 exd4 17.♖xd4 (17.♜ad1 ♜ad8 18.♜xd8 ♜xf1+ 19.♔xf1 ♜xd8 20.♜xd4 ♖c6=) 17...♖b3 18.♜ad1 (18.♖xb3? is not possible of course due to: 18...♔xh2+ 19.♔xh2 ♜xd7-+) 18...♜c4= with a balanced position) 16.♔xg6 exd4 everything seems to be hanging here, but the position remains balanced after all the simplifications: 17.♖xa4 (17.♖xd4 ♙b3 18.♙e4 ♜fd8=) 17...fxg6 18.♖xd4 ♙e5 19.♜ac1 (19.♖c5 ♔xd4 20.exd4 c6 21.b4 b6!)= 19...♔xd4 20.exd4 Parligras,M (2594) -Ni,H (2677) Bazna 2014, and here the simplest is 20...c6 21.♜c3 With the idea of b2-b4 21...b5 22.♖c5 ♜fe8= and Black has no problems at all here)

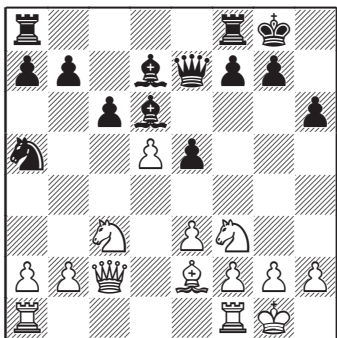
12...e5!?

Not the most popular move, but it's the one I recommend. 13.♖e4

a) 13.d5 was played twice by two strong grandmasters but I think Black has a perfect antidote. 13...♖a5! (13...♖e7?N would have been a terrible idea. 14.♖e4! ♜g6 15.♖h4 ♜h7 16.♙d3 f5 17.♖xd6 cxd6 18.♜c7± and White is winning material.) 14.♜d3 (14.♜e4N 14...♜e7 15.♜ab1 Planning b2-b4 15...c5!? is another way to play this kind of position. It's totally fine for Black. 16.dxc6 (16.♜h4 ♜xh4 17.♖xh4 c4=; 16.♙b5 ♙c8!?) 16...♔xc6= with equal chances) 14...♜e7 15.e4 (15.♜c2N is the engine's suggestion and an interesting novelty. However, I think that Black has a way to equalize here: 15...♜ac8 seems to be the most precise way. The idea is that after:

a1) 15...f5!? 16.e4 b6 17.♙a6 Preventing ...♖b7. 17...♜ab8 18.♙d3 f4 19.a3 ♖b7∞ is also playable. Even if the engine slightly prefers White, I believe that Black can play this line — trying to create an attack on the kingside — whereas White will have to act on the queenside;

a2) 15...c6 was my first idea, which I believed was equalizing easily, but I finally found a way for White to create some pressure:



16.♖ad1! (16.dxc6 ♜xc6=) 16...♞fd8 bringing the rook into play and vacating the f8-square for the queen 17.a3! Threatening to trap our knight with b2-b4. From here on, everything looks forced: (17.♞d2 ♖ac8 18.♞de4 cxd5 19.♞xd5 ♙c7= followed by ...c6 is fine for Black) 17...cxd5 (17...c5 now does not work so well as White has 18.♞d2 and Black is unable to push ...c4 here, as in the line with 15...♖ac8) 18.♞xd5 (18.♞xd5 ♞c6=) 18...♞f8 19.b4! ♞c6 (19...♖ac8 20.♞e4 ♞c6 21.♙c4 ♜h8 22.♞h4 ♙e8 23.♙a2± looks quite unpleasant for Black. This position is not lost, but it's just that there is never much fun to be had when precise moves need to be found in order to hold) 20.b5 ♞e7 21.♞c7 (21.♞f6+ is tempting, but Black is fine after: 21...gxf6 22.♞xd6 ♙f5 23.♞xd8 ♙xc2 24.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 25.♞c1 ♖c8=) 21...♙f5! 22.e4 ♖ac8 23.exf5 ♞xc7 24.♞e4 f6 Unfortunately, we have to play this move to prevent f5-f6 ideas. Now our light-squares become weak (24...♙xa3 is

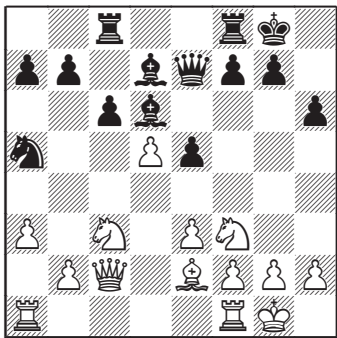
dangerous because of: 25.♞xe5 ♙d6 26.♞g4±) 25.a4± and here White generates some pressure with the possible plan of g2-g4, h2-h4, ♙c4-e6. Maybe Black can hold this position, but it just looks unpleasant to play it, as the black pieces are poorly coordinated and precise play is required.

a1) 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8 and now if White tries the same plan with 17.a3 Black has 17...c5! 18.♞e4 and (18.♞d2 c4=) 18...c4= with equal chances 19.♞c3?! does not work here in comparison to 16.♞ad1, as now the black knight jumps to b3 with a tempo: 19...♞b3! 20.♞a2 ♙g4±;

a2) 16.♞ac1 c6 17.♞d2 ♙b4 18.d6 ♞e6 19.♞fd1 ♞cd8= with equal chances. The idea of ...f7-f5 should be considered;

a3) 16.♞ad1 might seem the same as 16.♞fd1, but is in fact more tricky, as there is a little subtlety here: 16...♞fd8 17.a3 c5 18.♞e4 b6 (18...c4?! would be a mistake now: 19.♞c3! and after 19...♞b3 the rook is not under attack as in the 16.♞fd1 line 19...b6 (19...♞b3 20.♞xd6 ♞xd6 21.♞xe5±) 20.♞xd6 ♞xd6 21.♞xe5±) 19.♙a6 ♖c7 20.♞fd2 f5 21.♞xd6 ♞xd6= with equal chances. Black can consider pushing ...e5-e4 or ...c5-c4, then bringing the knight via b3 or b7-d6 into play.

a4) 16.a3 Planning b2-b4 but we have 16...c6!



and now 17.b4 doesn't work as Black has (17...Bxd1 cxd5 18.Bxd5 Qc7= and the knight returns safely to c6; 17.Bfd1 does not change anything 17...cxd5 18.Bxd5 Qc7 19.b4 Qxc6=) 17...cxd5 18.bxa5 d4 19.exd4 exd4 20.Qxd4 Qe5 with a double attack on h2 and d4 winning back the piece. 21.Qf3 Qxc3 22.Qxc3 Bxc3 23.Bfd1 Qc6 is equal because after the logical 24.Qb5 Black has (24.Bab1 Bd8 25.Qxb7 Qc7!=) 24...Qc7= and everything is under control.) 15...a6 preparing ...b7-b5 16.Bac1 (16.Qd2 c6=) 16...b5 17.a3 So far we have been following the game Ding,L (2547)-Hou,Y (2589) Xinghua 2010, and here Black's play can be easily improved with: 17...Qb3 18.Bce1 Bxb8∞ with a good game for Black;

b) 13.Bad1N has never been played but it makes sense to keep the tension in the centre. 13...exd4 is probably the simplest (13...Qe7 is also possible 14.Qe4

b1) 14.Qb5 Bfc8!? Black is getting ready to open the c-file 15.Qb3 a6 16.Qxd6 cxd6 17.d5 (17.dxe5 Qe6! (17...dxe5? 18.Qxb7± just loses a pawn) 18.Qc3 (18.Qa3 leads to simplifications:

18...dxe5 19.Qxe7 Qxc7 20.Qxe5 Bc2 21.Qf3 Qxb2=) 18...dxe5 19.Qxe5 Qxa2= with an equal position) 17...Qa7!?∞ The knight might look passive here, but Black's idea is to push ...b7-b5 and ...a6-a5 getting interesting play on the queenside. Moreover, the knight can be transferred via c8 to b6 at some point. Play might continue: 18.Qd2 Trying to avoid ... Qg4 ideas and save the knight

b11) 18.Qxb7 is not dangerous for Black at all: 18...Qcb8 19.Qc7 (19.Qxa6? is too greedy: 19...Qb5+!) 19...Qxb2 20.Bd2 Bbb8=;

b12) 18.Bc1 Qg4!? 19.h3 Qxf3 20.Qxf3 Bxc1 21.Bxc1 Bc8= with an equal position;

18...b5 19.Bc1 a5 20.Bxc8+ Qxc8 21.e4 (21.Qxb5 Bb8 22.a4 Qa7 23.Qc3 Qxb5 24.axb5 Qxb5 25.Ba1 Qc5 26.Qb3 Bb5=) 21...Qe8 protecting the b5-pawn 22.Bc1 Qe7=;

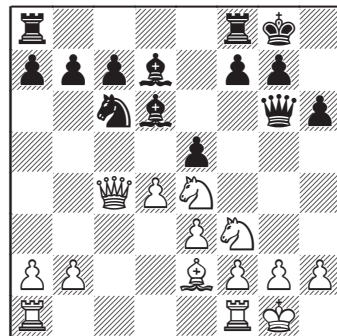
b2) 14.d5 Qa5 15.Qd3 b5!?∞ with an unclear position. (15...b6!?= also makes sense, with the idea of ...Qb7);

14...Qf5!? The idea of this move is to leave the d7-square for the black knight after d4-d5. 15.d5 (15.Qxd6 cxd6 16.d5 (16.Qb3 Bxc8=) 16...Qb8 17.Qd2 Qa6= heading to c5) 15...Qxe4! is a strong intermediate move. (15...Qb8 allows White to operate the plan with e3-e4 closing Black's bishop 16.Qfd2 Qd7 (16...Qxe4 is less good now, as White brings another knight to the centre: 17.Qxe4±) 17.Qxd6 cxd6 18.e4± and the black bishop becomes too passive) 16.Qxe4 Qb8= then ...f7-f5, ...e5-e4 and

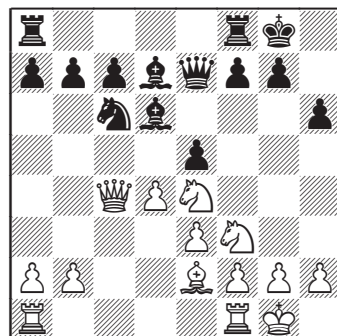
...♘b8-d7) 14.♙e4 ♖g6 15.♘xd6 ♗xd6
 (15...cxd6?! favours White 16.♘xd4 ♖fc8
 17.♖f1± and Black remains with a weak
 pawn on d6) 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4
 ♙e6! An important intermediate move.
 18.♗a4 White is trying to create a little
 pressure but with some accurate moves
 Black should hold easily. (18.♗c3 ♗e7
 19.f4 (19.♖fd1 ♖fd8 20.♙f3 c6= with a
 balanced position) 19...♗ad8 20.♗a4!?)
 with the idea of taking on a7 and playing
 f4-f5-f6. (20.f5 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♙xa2 22.f6
 ♗e6 23.fxg7 ♖e8 24.♖f3 ♗e4= thanks to
 his active pieces, Black is in no danger
 here; 20.♖e4 ♗d7=) 20...♙d5! 21.♗xa7
 ♖fe8 22.♗a3 ♗d6= White's e3-pawn is a
 target and Black's pieces are very well
 coordinated, thus Black has enough
 compensation for the pawn.) 18...♗e7
 (18...♗c5 is also good 19.♖fd1 (19.♙c4
 ♗ad8 20.♙xe6 fxe6=) 19...a5 20.a3 c6=
 19.♙f3 (19.♙c4 ♙xc4 20.♗xc4 ♗ad8=
 19...c5 20.♗d2 ♖fd8 21.♖fd1 (21.♗xd8+
 ♗xd8 22.♗d1 ♗b6=) 21...♗xd2 22.♗xd2
 ♗d8 giving up, but only temporary a
 pawn. 23.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 24.♗xa7 ♗d3
 Threatening mate along the first rank.
 25.h3 ♗b1+ 26.♙h2 ♗xb2=;

c) 13.♖fd1N is similar to 13.♗ad1N
 13...exd4 14.♙e4 ♗e7 (or 14...♗g6)
 15.♘xd6 ♗xd6 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4
 ♙e6! 18.♗a4 ♗e7= (or 18...♗c5= is
 exactly as in the line 13.♗ad1N);

13...♗g6



Placing the queen in a more active
 position and leaving the e7-square for the
 knight retreat. (13...♗e7?!



This is less-precise because White can
 delay the capture on d6. Moreover, the
 queen is taking the e7-square which might
 be useful for the knight to retreat to after
 d4-d5. 14.d5! ♘d8 is definitely not great,
 but as you will notice I didn't succeed in
 equalizing with other moves either.

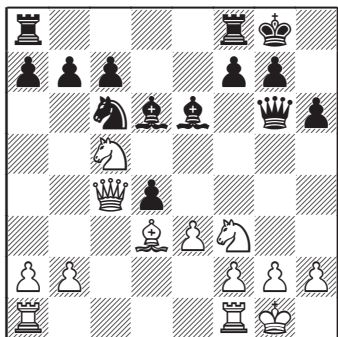
a) 14...♘a5N 15.♗c3 b6 16.♙a6!?
 (16.♖ac1 ♘b7 17.b4± and Black's knight
 is very awkwardly-placed on b7) 16...♙f5
 17.♘xd6 (17.♘g3 ♙c8 18.♙xc8 ♖axc8
 19.♖ac1±) 17...cxd6 18.b4 ♘b7 19.♖fc1
 ♖ac8 20.♗b3± when once again the

knight on b7 does not have a bright future;

b) 14...♖b8N 15.♞ac1 ♘a6 16.♞c3 f5 17.♘xd6 cxd6 18.♙xa6 bxa6 19.♞a5± with a better position for White due to our destroyed pawn structure on the queenside;

15.♞ac1 ♞c8 16.♘xd6 cxd6 17.♞b4± Black's knight is terribly placed on d8, and is an obstacle to connecting the rooks. White succeeded in converting his advantage into a full point in Fressinet,L (2712)-Tari,A (2520) Oslo 2015) 14.♘xd6

a) 14.♙d3!?N is an interesting move trying to exploit the queen's position. 14...exd4! The easiest way to equalize. (14...b5!? is also possible but after accurate play I think White is still slightly better.) 15.♘c5 (15.exd4 ♙g4 16.♘ed2 ♞h5± Black's active pieces and two bishops give him excellent play; 15.♘xd6 ♞xd6±) 15...♙e6!



Once again ...♙e6 is an important intermediate move. 16.♘xe6

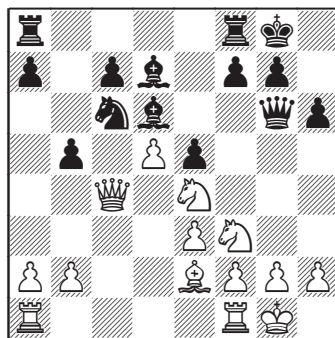
a1) 16.♞b5?! gives White nothing: 16...♙f5 17.exd4 a6 18.♙xf5 ♞xf5

19.♞xb7 ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♞e5 21.♘f3 ♞xc5= with equal but slightly more pleasant play for Black;

a2) 16.♞a4 ♞h5 17.♘xb7 (17.♘xe6?! is a mistake, as after: 17...fxe6 White is forced to play 18.♞b5 which is the only move because ...♞xf3 was already a threat. 18...♞xb5 19.♙xb5 dxe3 20.fxe3 ♘b4!?± and Black remains a pawn up (20...♙c5 is also possible 21.♙xc6 ♙xe3+ 22.♘h1 bxc6±) 17...♘e5! A strong reply. 18.♘xe5 ♞xe5 19.♘xd6 ♞xd6 20.exd4 (20.♞xd4 ♞xd4 21.exd4 ♞fd8 22.♞fd1 ♞ab8 23.b3 ♞b4=; 20.♞fd1 c5=) 20...♞fd8 21.♞fd1 ♞ab8= leads to simplifications and an equal position;

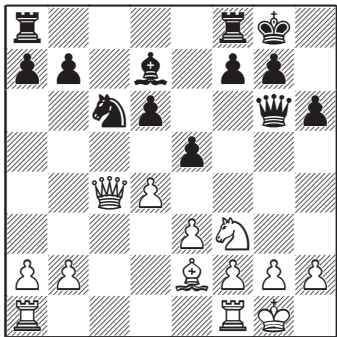
16...♞xe6 17.♞xe6 (17.exd4 ♞xc4 18.♙xc4 ♘e7=) 17...fxe6 18.exd4 (18.♘xd4 ♘xd4 19.exd4 e5=) 18...e5 (18...♞xf3!? 19.gxf3 ♘xd4 20.♙e4 ♞f8 21.♘g2 c6 22.♞ad1 e5 is probably also fine for Black, but there is no real need to enter the complications) 19.d5 ♘d4= and a draw looks like the logical outcome here;

b) 14.d5?N would be a mistake now because after: 14...b5!↑



Black seizes the initiative. In comparison to the 13...♖e7?! line, now the black queen is attacking the knight on e4, thus making some tactical tricks possible;

14...cxd6



Four games have been played in this position and the score is positive for Black. 15.♖fd1!? with the idea of taking on e5 and also to have g2-g3 after ...♔h3.

a) 15.d5 is quite a logical move. 15...♞e7! The right square for the knight. The pawn on d5 is hanging and Black is ready to occupy the c-file. 16.♖fd1

a1) 16.♖c7? seems logical but is a mistake: 16...♔h3! threatening mate. 17.♞e1 (17.♞h4? ♖g5+) 17...♞xd5 18.♖xb7 ♔e6+ with a better position for Black.

a2) 16.♖fc1 ♖fc8 17.♖b3 b5!= with equality.

16...♖fc8 is a human approach: (16...b5!?N Is the engine's suggestion: 17.♖c7 (17.♖h4 ♞f5 18.♖b4 a5∞; 17.♖b4 a5∞) 17...♖fd8 18.♖ac1 a6 19.♞e1 ♖f6= and as usual he says 0.00.)

17.♖b4 ♖c7= and Black had no problems in the game Tregubov,P (2620)-Efimenko,Z (2657) Loo 2014;

b) 15.♖fc1N 15...♖ac8= It is difficult to find an idea for White here. (15...♔h3!?∞) ;

c) 15.dxe5 can't be an attempt for an advantage: 15...dxe5 16.♔d3 ♔f5 (16...♖e6= is also good) 17.♔xf5 ♖xf5 18.♖fd1 ♖fd8 19.♖b5 ♖e6 20.♖xb7 ♖xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖b8= 22.♖c7 Molner,M (2509)-Aleksandrov,A (2595) Riga 2014 22...♖c8 23.♖b7 ♖b8=;

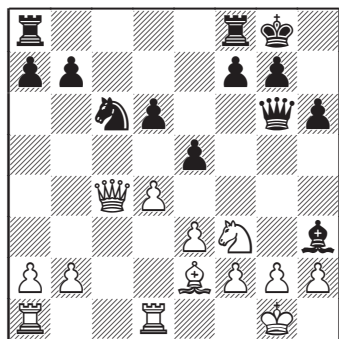
d) 15.♖b3N 15...exd4 equalizes on the spot: 16.exd4

d1) 16.♞xd4 ♞xd4 17.exd4 b6=;

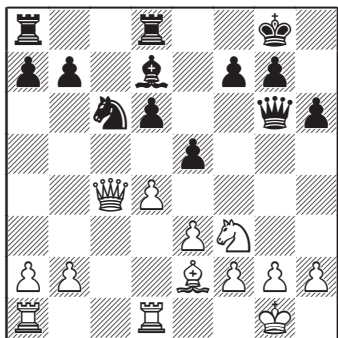
d2) 16.♖xb7 ♖e6! Protecting the bishop on d7 and also pinning the e3-pawn. 17.♞xd4 (17.♖b3 d5 18.♖d3 dxe3 19.♖xe3 ♖xe3 20.fxe3 ♖fb8 21.b3 a5=) 17...♞xd4 18.exd4 ♖xe2 19.♖xd7 ♖xb2=;

16...♔g4=;

15...♔h3!?N



I believe this novelty is the easiest way to equalize if we are happy to repeat moves. (15...♖fd8



Moiseenko's move. Black's idea is to push ...e5-e4 and ...d6-d5 and transfer the rook to d6. Once the rook gets to d6, it can be further moved to the kingside and attack White's king, or go to the other side of the board to defend the queenside if necessary. I analyzed this line quite deeply and came to the conclusion that it is playable, but is not so simple.) 16.g3

a) 16.♙f1 ♘g4 Here White has nothing better than 17.♙e2□ and now Black has a pleasant choice; either repeating the moves or trying to exert pressure. 17...e4!? (17...♙h3= if we are OK to repeat moves.) 18.♘h4 (18.♘e1 d5 19.♖c2 f5) 18...♗g5 19.♙xg4 ♗xg4 20.g3 g5 21.♘g2 ♖ac8∞ with a slightly more pleasant position for Black. It is not clear what White is going to do with the passive knight on g2.

b) 16.♘h4 ♗g5 17.g3 (17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♗e4 (18.♙f3 ♖ad8=) 18...♖ac8=) 17...♖ac8 I believe Black is totally fine

here. 18.♗b3 (18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♗a4 ♖fd8=) 18...♗f6 19.dxe5

b1) 19.d5 ♘e7 20.♖ac1 (20.♗xb7?? ♖c2+) 20...e4∞;

b2) 19.♗xb7?! exd4; 19...dxe5=;

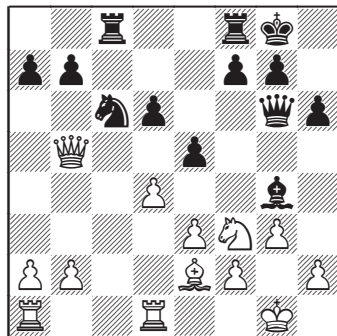
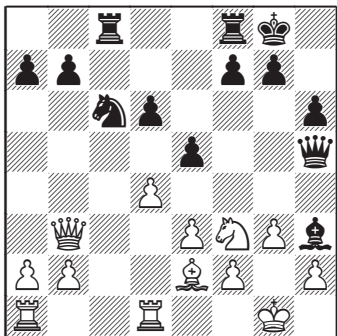
c) 16.♘e1 exd4! Since the knight has left the f3-square and is unable to recapture on d4, it's a good moment for Black to release the tension in the centre. If White plays exd4, Black is always happy, thus the best for White is to sacrifice a pawn and try to get some activity for his pieces. 17.♙d3 (17.exd4 ♖fe8) 17...♙f5 18.♙xf5 ♗xf5 19.♘c2! (19.exd4 ♖fe8) 19...dxe3 20.♘xe3 ♗d7 21.♖d2 and it looks like White equalizes here despite the pawn deficit;

16...♖ac8 17.♗b5

a) 17.dxe5 dxe5=;

b) 17.♗d5 is rather strange but seems playable. 17...♖fe8 (17...♖fd8!? is also good.) 18.♖ac1 ♙e6 (18...a6!?= is an engine move. It shows that Black has nothing to be worried about.) 19.♗xd6 (19.♗b5 exd4 20.♘xd4 ♘xd4 21.exd4 b6=) 19...♖ed8 20.♗a3 exd4 21.♘xd4 (21.b4 is an interesting attempt to get some activity, but Black is fine after: 21...dxe3 22.b5 ♖xd1+ 23.♖xd1 exf2+ 24.♙xf2 ♘d8 25.♗e7 ♗f6=) 21...♘xd4 22.exd4 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖xd4 24.♗xa7 ♗e4! and White has to be careful, as now 25.♗b8+ ♙h7 26.♗f4 is the only way not to lose: 26...♗xf4 27.gxf4 ♙xa2=;

c) 17.♗b3 ♗h5!



A very powerful move; the knight on f3 is now pinned and ...♙g4 is a threat. 18.d5 (18.♖d2 is too passive: 18...♙g4 19.♗d5 (19.♗d1 e4! 20.♜e1 ♙xe2 21.♖xe2 ♜b4) 19...e4 20.♗xh5 (20.♗xe4? ♜fe8 21.♗f4 g5 22.♜xg5 ♙xe2 23.♜e4 ♖xe4 24.♗xe4 ♙f3 25.♗f4 ♖e8+ 20...♙h5 21.♜e5 ♙xe2 22.♜xc6 ♖xc6 23.♖xe2 ♖fc8) and Black is better due to his powerful rooks) 18...♜a5 (18...♜e7!?∞) 19.♗a4 (19.♗b5 ♜c4!) 19...♙g4 20.♗xa5 ♙xf3 21.♙xf3 ♗xf3 22.♗xa7 (22.♖dc1 h5∞ In a practical game I would take Black without any doubt.) 22...♖c2 23.♖f1 h5 (23...♗xd5 24.♗b6! =) 24.h4 g5!? does not give an advantage either, but White has to find an only move here (24...♖xb2 leads to draw: 25.♖ab1 ♖xb1 26.♖xb1 ♗xd5 27.♖xb7 ♗d1+ 28.♜g2 ♗d5+=) 25.♗a4! ♖xb2 26.♖ab1=;

d) 17.♜h4 ♗f6 18.dxe5 dxe5=;

17...♙g4!?

I prefer this move. Now White has to take a decision (17...♗e4 also makes sense, because now White has to take on e5. However, it is doubtful that this idea favours Black, as forcing 18.dxe5 makes the black queen a bit awkwardly placed, and some precise play is needed after 18.dxe5!

a) 18.♜e1 is too passive: 18...exd4 19.♙f3 ♗e7 20.exd4 ♗f6 21.♗h5 ♙f5+;

b) 18.d5 a6! 19.♗d3 (19.♗xb7? is not working here as 19...♜d4!+ becomes possible) 19...♗xd3 20.♙xd3 ♜b4+;

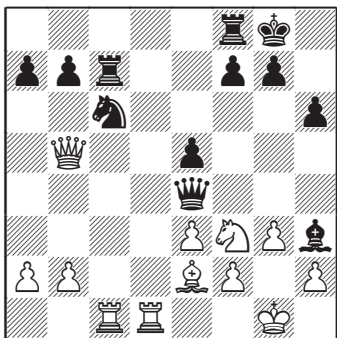
18...dxe5 (18...♜xe5 is tempting, but in fact might be a bit dangerous in the long-term perspective, as it leaves the d6-pawn vulnerable. 19.♜e1 (19.♗d5 ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖c2) and Black is happy here.) 19...♖c5 20.♗b3 ♖c6 (20...♖d8 21.♖d4 ♖c6 22.♗d1 a5= Preventing b2-b4. The position looks balanced as the activity of the black pieces compensates for the weak d6-pawn) 21.♖d4 ♖c8 22.♗d1 (22.♖ad1 ♙e6 23.♗a3 ♙c4 24.♙xc4 ♜xc4 25.♗c3 ♜e5=) 22...♖c1 23.♖xc1 ♗xc1 24.♗xc1 ♖xc1 25.♖d1 ♖d1 26.♙xd1 ♜f8∞ Probably Black will hold this position

without too much suffering, but White can try to play on.) 19.♖ac1

a) 19.a3!? Preventing ...♗b4 or ...♘b4 jumps 19...♙g4 20.♘d2 ♙xe2 21.♗xe2 ♗g6 22.♗b5 ♖fd8 23.♘c4 (23.♗xb7 ♖b8 24.♗a6 ♖xb2 25.♘c4 ♖a2!=) 23...♗e6 24.♖ac1 ♗e7= with an equal position;

b) 19.♘h4 ♗b4=;

19...♖c7!



The simplest. Black protects the b7-pawn and will double on the c-file with ...♖fc8. The difference from the previous line of 19...♙g4 is that now White does not have the h2-h3, g3-g4 and ♙d3 plan. (19...♙g4 20.♙g2 (20.♘d2 ♙xe2 21.♗xe2 ♗b4=) 20...♖b8! Not an easy move to play. Moving the rook from the open file to defend a pawn is never a pleasant choice. However, it seems to be the best here, as after the 'obvious' 20...♖c7 our knight remains unpleasantly pinned on c6.

a) 20...♘b4 doesn't work well here: 21.♗a4! and Black's pieces are not well coordinated. (21.♖xc8 ♖xc8 22.h3 a6! 23.♗a5 ♖c2!=) 21...♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♖d8 23.♖d1 ♖xd1 24.♙xd1 f5 25.h3 ♙h5

26.♗xa7 ♘d3 27.♙g1 ♙f7 28.♗a3 ♙d5 29.♗c3 ♘b4 30.♙h2 ♘c6 31.a3± Black has succeeded in activating the pieces but has paid a price for it. There is some compensation for the lost pawn, but White will create pressure by advancing the queenside pawns;

b) 20...♖c7 21.h3 ♙e6 22.g4

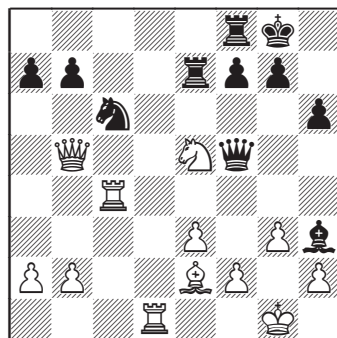
Threatening ♙d3 (22.♙d3? does not work here due to: 22...♙xh3+! 23.♙xh3 ♗xf3±) 22...♖fc8 23.♖c3 h5 24.♙d3 ♗b4 25.♗xb4 ♘xb4 26.♖xc7 ♖xc7 27.♙e4 f6 28.gxh5 ♘xa2 29.♖d8+ ♙f7 30.♖a8± with an unpleasant position for Black;

21.a3 (21.♖d6 ♙e6=) 21...♙e6 22.b4 a6 23.♗d3 ♗xd3 24.♙xd3 ♖fd8 25.♙e4 f6=) 20.♖c4

a) 20.a3 ♖fc8 21.♖c5 a6=;

b) 20.♗d3 ♗xd3 21.♙xd3 ♖fc8=;

c) 20.♖c5 a6 21.♗c4 (21.♗b3 ♖fc8 22.a3 ♙e6=) 21...♗xc4 22.♖xc4 ♖fc8=; 20...♗f5 21.♘xe5 ♖e7!

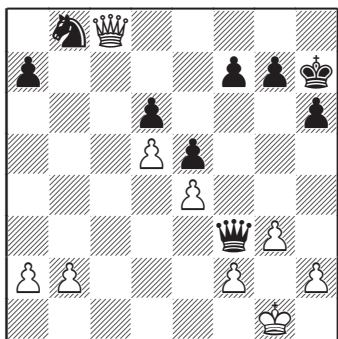


An important tactical resource. 22.♖xc6! (22.♘xc6 ♗xb5 23.♘xe7+ ♙h8±; 22.f4 ♘xe5 23.fxe5 ♖xe5±) 22...bxc6 23.♘xc6

♞c7 24.♞xf5 ♙xf5 25.♜d4 ♙d7= The engine gives 0.00 but this position is not so easy to evaluate from the human perspective) 18.♜h4

a) 18.dxe5 dxe5= I don't see any reason why Black is not fine here. The b7-pawn is still untouchable due to ...♞h5;

b) 18.d5 ♜b8! 19.♞ac1 (19.♞xb7? is still not possible due to: 19...♞h5+; 19.♜h4 ♙xe2 20.♞xe2 ♞e4=) 19...♞xc1 20.♞xc1 ♞h5= 21.♞xb7 (21.♔g2 ♞h3+ 22.♔g1 ♞h5=) 21...♙xf3 (21...e4 22.♜d4 ♙xe2 23.♞c8 ♞xc8 24.♞xc8+ ♔h7 25.♜xe2 ♞xe2 26.♞xb8 ♞d1+=) 22.♙xf3 ♞xf3 23.♞c8 ♞xc8 24.♞xc8+ ♔h7 25.e4!



A very nice defensive move. (25.♞xb8? ♞d1+ 26.♔g2 ♞xd5+ 27.♔g1 ♞xa2+) 25...♞xe4 26.♞xb8 and now Black can't take the d5-pawn with a check and then the one on a2, e.g. 26...♞xd5 27.♞xa7=;

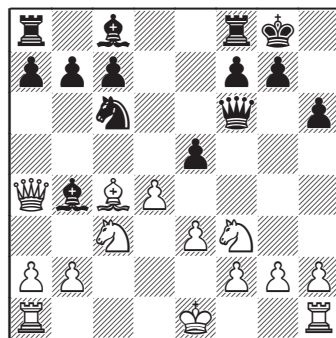
c) 18.♞xb7? is a big mistake because after 18...♞h5 Black wins material.

18...♙xe2 19.♞xe2 ♞e4 20.f3 (20.dxe5 dxe5 21.f3 ♞b4=) 20...♞h7 (20...♞d5!? is also good even if it might look a bit suspicious. 21.♜f5 (21.e4? is just a

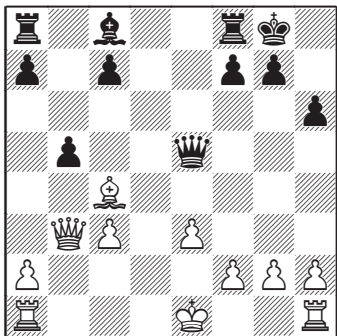
blunder: 21...♜xd4+; 21.dxe5 ♞xe5 22.e4 ♞fe8 23.♞f2 ♜b4!= with ...♞c2 and ...d6-d5 coming.) 21...♞e6 22.e4 ♜e7= with a total equality.) 21.dxe5 (21.♞b5 exd4 22.exd4 ♞b8= followed by ...♞fe8.) 21...g5!? 22.♜g2 dxe5 23.♞d7 (23.♞b5 ♞f5=) 23...b6= followed by ...♞fd8 with an equal position.

10.0-0

10.♙xc4 taking back the pawn directly is less precise due to 10...e5!



A typical idea in this opening which will be seen many more times in other lines as well. The idea is simple — to open the passive bishop on c8 and attack White's centre. 11.0-0 (11.dxe5?! here is not good because of the intermediate 11...♙xc3+! with a check 12.bxc3 ♜xe5 13.♜xe5 ♞xe5 14.♞b3 Gagunashvili,M (2547) - Sanikidze,T (2541) Tbilisi 2014, and here Black's play could be improved by the means of: 14...b5!N



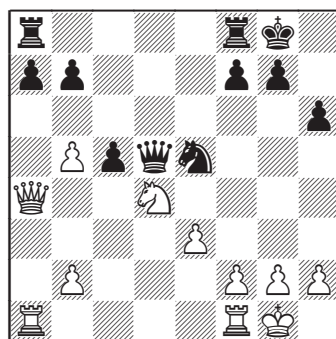
15.♙e2 (15.♙xb5? ♚b8 16.a4 a6—)
15...♙b7 and Black is better thanks to his better development and more active pieces) 11...exd4 (11...♙xc3 makes no sense here, as after 12.bxc3± White keeps a nice pawn structure and a better position, in contrast to the line seen above with 11.dxe5!) 12.♘d5 ♖d6 and here White has a choice but Black is fine everywhere: 13.a3 I was surprised to see that the Ukrainian grandmaster Anton Korobov had played this position twice already with White. However, what does not surprise me is that he made two draws.

a) 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗xb4 Lanchava, T (2341)-Vasilevich, T (2415) Bled 2002, and now (14.exd4 ♙d2 then ...♙g5 and ...c7-c6) 14...c5!N followed by 15.♗d2 b5! equalizes directly 16.exd4 bxc4 17.dxc5 ♗xc5=;

b) 13.♘xb4 ♘xb4 14.♘xd4 (14.♗fd1N 14...♙d7 15.♗b3 ♘c6 16.♘xd4 ♘a5 17.♗c3 ♘xc4 18.♗xc4 ♗fd8=) 14...c5!= and Black has nothing to worry about;

13...♙e6!? (13...♙c5 is another possible continuation which has been played by Moskalenko: 14.b4 ♙b6 15.♘xb6 cxb6

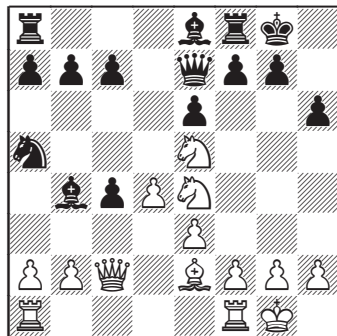
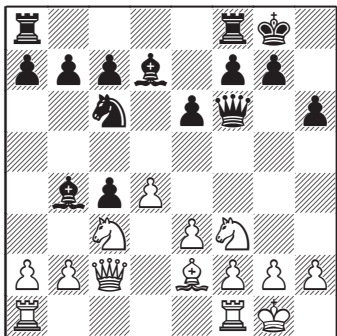
16.b5 ♘e5 17.♘xd4 ♘xc4 18.♗xc4 ♙d7 19.♗e2 ♗fc8 20.♗f3 ♚c7= with a solid position in: Korobov, A (2710)-Moskalenko, A (2442) Moscow 2016) 14.axb4 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 ♗xd5 16.b5 ♘e5 (16...♘d8!N is playable too: 17.♘xd4 ♘e6 18.♘xe6 (18.♗ad1 a6=) 18...♗xe6 19.g3 (19.♗fc1 ♗e5=) 19...a6 20.♗c2 axb5 21.♗xc7 ♗xa1 22.♗xa1 ♗d5= I don't believe that White has real winning chances here.) 17.♘xd4 c5!?



This is a more human approach and has been played by Yu (17...a6N is also fine. 18.♗a5 axb5 19.♗xc7 ♘c4 20.h3 ♘b2 21.♗xa8 (21.♗b6 ♗fd8 22.♗xa8 ♗xa8 23.♗xb5 ♗xb5 24.♘xb5 ♘c4=) 21...♗xa8 22.♗b1 ♗a2 23.♗c2 ♘c4=) 18.bxc6 ♘xc6 19.♘xc6 ♗xc6 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.♗fc1 ♗fb8 22.♗xc6 ♗xb2 23.♗ca6 ♗ab8 24.g4 ♗b1+ 25.♗xb1 ♗xb1+ 26.♙g2 ♗b7 27.h4 and a draw was agreed in Korobov, A (2700)-Yu, Y (2721) Skopje 2015.

10...♙d7 11.♙xc4

Compared to the 9...♙d7 line, here Black has no good discovery with the knight. 11.♗c2



This has also been played quite often. This position can be reached via the 9...♙d7 10.♙c2 dxc4 11.0-0 move-order as well. 11...♙a5 12.♙e5 (12.♙e4 ♙e7 13.♙e5 gives the same position.) 12...♙e7 13.♙e4

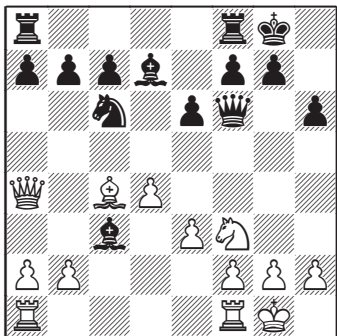
a) 13.♙xc4 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 Black now has a pleasant choice: 14...♙d6 (14...c5 is a typical approach in such kind of positions 15.d5 ♙xc3! 16.♙xc3 exd5 17.♙xd5 ♙ad8= with equal position in: Ortiz Suarez, I (2588) -Gonzalez Vidal, Y (2561) Havana 2014) 15.♙e4 ♙c6= 16.♙d3 e5= Once again a thematic ...e6-e5 attacking White's centre, as in Tunik, G (2491) -Sargissian, G (2618)/Moscow 2004;

b) 13.♙fd1 ♙d6 forcing White to do something with the knight, as ...♙xe5 is Black's idea. 14.♙xd7 ♙xd7 15.♙e4 ♙e7 (15...♙fd8!?)= 16.♙xc4 (16.♙c3 b6 17.♙d2 c5= with equal chances) 16...♙xc4 17.♙xc4 a5 18.♙ac1 c6= with a balanced position in Guo, Q (2452)-Tan, Z (2488) China 2014;

13...♙d6 (13...♙e8!?N

This is the move I have had in my file for several years. It's still a novelty and I believe Black is fine. Play might continue: 14.♙xc4 (14.♙xc4 ♙xc4 15.♙xc4 ♙c6=; 14.a3 ♙d6 15.♙xc4 ♙xc4 16.♙xc4 ♙c6=) 14...♙xc4 15.♙xc4 ♙b5 16.♙fc1 ♙xc4 17.♙xc4 c6=) 14.♙xd7 (14.♙xc4N 14...♙xc4 15.♙xc4 ♙c6=) 14...♙xd7 15.♙xc4 ♙xc4 16.♙xc4 I don't really believe White has any chances to be better here; Black's position is very solid. 16...♙e7 (16...c6 17.♙fd1 ♙fd8 18.♙ac1 ♙ac8 19.h3 ♙e7 20.♙a4 ♙c7= with a balanced position in Lalith, B (2561)-Karavade, E (2399) Pune 2014) 17.♙ac1 c6 18.♙b3 ♙fd8 19.♙c5 ♙xc5 20.♙xc5 ♙e7 21.♙c3 ♙d5= Zoler, D (2504)-Hammer, J (2647) Yerevan 2014.

11...♙c3!?



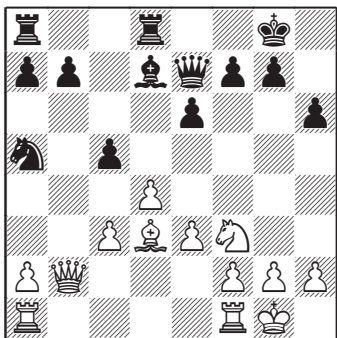
This move, introduced by the Belorussian grandmaster Aleksandrov in 2013, was played in 2015 by Hammer, Fressinet, Aronian twice, and then So in 2016. 11...♙d6 is the move I played against Markus Ragger. I can't really recommend it, since in my database Black has 4 losses from 4 games!

12.bxc3 ♜fd8

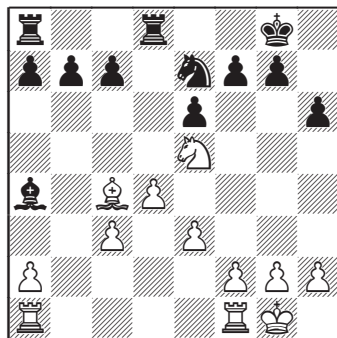
Defending the bishop on d7 and threatening ...♘xd4.

13.♙e2

13.♙a3 ♚e7 14.♙xe7 (14.♙b2 ♘a5 15.♙d3 c5

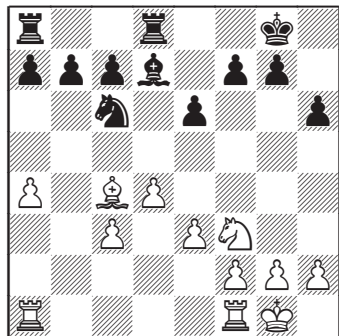


Black is totally fine. 16.♘e5 ♙e8 17.♙ac1 ♙ac8= 16...♙e8 17.♙ad1 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♙ac8= Shankland,S (2661) - Aronian,L (2770) Tsaghkadzor 2015) 14...♘xe7 15.a4 (15.♘e5 has been recently played by Navara. 15...♙a4!?N



I like this novelty. Black prevents a2-a4 for the moment, and White needs to invest some time to make this pawn push possible. (15...♙e8 is equally good 16.♙fb1 ♙ab8 17.a4 b6 18.a5 Navara,D (2730) — So,W (2773) Wijk aan Zee 2016, (18.e4!?N 18...♘c6 19.♘xc6 (19.♘d3 ♘a5= Black manages to block the a-pawn and now it is not easy for White to find another idea of how to put pressure) 19...♙xc6 20.f3 a5 21.♙f2 ♙f8 22.g4 ♙e7 White has more space but it is not easy to find a plan for him here.) and now 18...bxa5 seems to be the strongest reply, even if it's not that easy to play it from the human perspective, as it might appear that Black's a-pawn will be a target. 19.♙xb8 (19.♘d3 ♙xb1+ 20.♙xb1 ♘d5 and unexpectedly it turns out that there is no good way for White to defend the c-pawn. 21.♙xd5 exd5 22.♘c5 a4 23.♙f1 ♙h7 24.♙b7 a6 25.♘xa6 ♙a8 26.♘xc7

(26.♖c5?! is not a good idea due to:
 26...a3 27.♖b1 a2 28.♖a1 ♕b5+ 29.♖e1
 ♕c4+ and White is in serious trouble.)
 26...♕c6 27.♖b1! ♖a5 threatening ...a3
 now and the white knight cannot get out
 via the b5-square. 28.e4! Creating
 counterplay in the centre is the only way
 for White not to lose. 28...dxe4 29.c4 a3
 30.♖b5 a2 31.♖a1 ♕xb5 32.cxb5 ♖xb5
 33.♖xa2 f5=) 19...♖xb8 20.♖xa5 and it
 seems that Black has some problems
 saving the a-pawn, but in fact Black
 manages to activate his pieces fast, as now
 the first rank is weakened. The following
 line looks forced: 20...♖b1+ 21.♕f1 ♖d5
 22.c4 ♖c3 23.f4 ♖e4 24.♖f3 f5! Opening
 the way for the bishop to h5. 25.♖xa7
 ♕h5! 26.♖xc7 (26.♖a2?! trying to save the
 piece would be a mistake: 26...♖d1!+ with
 ...♕xf3 and ...♖d2 next winning material)
 26...♕xf3 27.gxf3 ♖d2 28.d5! White
 needs to be fast and create problems.
 28...exd5 29.cxd5 ♖xf1+ 30.♔g2 ♖d1
 31.♔f2 ♖b3 32.e4 ♖d4∞ and White
 surprisingly saves the game, as the black
 knight has no good square, whereas
 White's two central pawns compensate for
 the material deficit.) 16.♖fb1 (16.♖ab1 b6
 17.♖b4 (17.♖fc1 ♖c6=) 17...♕e8= and
 now a2-a4 is no longer possible: 18.a4? a5!
 + and White loses the pawn on a4.)
 16...b6 17.♖b4 (17.♖b2 ♖c6 18.♖d3
 ♖a5= as usual) 17...♕e8 18.a4 White
 finally succeeds in pushing a2-a4, but it no
 longer causes Black any problems: 18...c5=
 (18...a5= is also possible)) 15...♖c6N



This move is a good improvement.
 Black wants to play ...b7-b6 next.
 Moreover, ♖e5 is no longer an option for
 White. (15...c5 has been played by
 Fressinet, but it's not the move I prefer.
 16.♖fb1 ♖ab8?! (16...♕c6 17.♖e5 cxd4
 18.cxd4 ♕e4 19.♖c1± and White exerts
 some pressure, as a4-a5 will arrive next.)
 17.dxc5!N would have been the best try
 (17.♖e5 ♕e8 18.a5 ♖dc8 19.♕b5 ♖c7=
 Black was in time to put the pieces on the
 right squares in Sargissian, G (2679)-
 Fressinet, L (2702) Douglas 2015)
 17...♕c6 18.♖d4± and Black is under
 some pressure.) 16.a5

a) 16.♖fb1 b6 17.♖d2 (17.♕e2 f6 18.e4
 ♖a5=) 17...♖a5 18.♕e2 c5=;

b) 16.♕b5 ♖a5=;

16...b6! and I don't see any problems for
 Black, e.g. 17.axb6 (17.a6 ♖ac8∞
 Followed by the usual ...♖a5 and ...c7-c5
 plan) 17...axb6=;

13.♖c2 ♖a5 Once again this thematic
 idea, which has been already seen quite
 many times in this line. 14.♕d3 c5
 15.♖e5 (15.dxc5?!N 15...♖e7∞ is already

more pleasant for Black.) 15...♙e8 I really believe Black is fine here. The plan is simple: ...♙e7, ...♞ac8, and then the white knight on e5 will be removed by means of ...f7-f6 ...or ♜a5-c6. 16.f4 ♙e7 17.♙e2

a) 17.♙h7+ ♔h8 18.♙e4 ♞ac8∞;

b) 17.♙f2 ♞ac8 18.f5 f6 19.♙h4 (19.♜g6 ♙xg6 20.fxg6 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♞c3∞ with a balanced position.) 19...cxd4 20.cxd4 and we have transposed to the recent game Sanikidze,T (2537)-Libiszewski,F (2533) Drancy 2016. 20...♞c7!N is the improvement I suggest. I believe Black is better. 21.♜g6 (21.fxe6 fxe5 22.♙e4 g6 23.♙xe5 ♜c6±; 21.♜g4 e5!±) 21...♙xg6 22.fxg6 ♞c3±;

17...♞ac8 18.f5 (18.♞ac1 f6 19.♜g6 ♙d6=) 18...f6! A good reaction, as it is important to prevent White from playing f5-f6. 19.♜g6N

a) 19.♜f3N 19...cxd4 (19...♙h5=) 20.cxd4 ♙f7=;

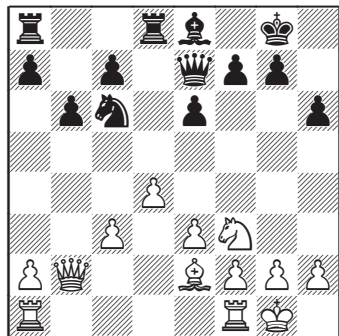
b) 19.♜g4?! has been tried once, in Hansen,C (2621)-Hammer,J (2665) Oslo 2015, but is dubious due to: 19...h5!N 20.♜f2 (20.♜xf6+ ♙xf6 21.fxe6 ♙xe6 22.♙f5 ♙c6 23.♙xc8 ♙xc8±) 20...e5!± and White is already in trouble;

19...♙xg6 20.fxg6 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♙a3∞ planning ...♞c3 next when Black is okay.

13...♙e8 14.♙a3

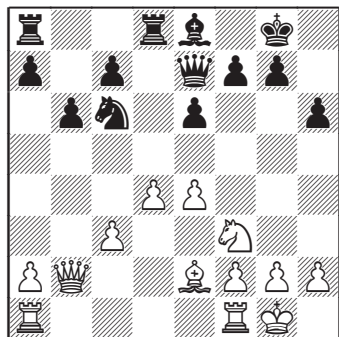
14.♙c2N doesn't promise much for White. 14...♜a5 15.♜e5 c5 16.♙e4 (16.♞ab1 ♞ac8 17.♙e4 b6=) 16...♜c6=

14...♙e7 15.♙b2 b6!



Aronian improved his own play a couple of months later when playing against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. 15...♜a5 was Aronian's initial choice, but after: 16.♙b4! ♙xb4 17.cxb4 ♜c6 18.♞ab1± he had to defend a slightly inferior position: Topalov,V (2798)-Aronian,L (2780) Stavanger 2015

16.e4N



A logical way to improve White's play. 16.♜d2 ♜a5 17.♜b3 ♜xb3 18.axb3 a5= and Black made an easy draw: Vachier Lagrave, M (2731)-Aronian,L (2765) Saint Louis 2015;

16.c4 ♜a5 17.c5 (17.e4 See 16.e4.) 17...bxc5 18.♙a3 ♜c6 19.dxc5 e5=

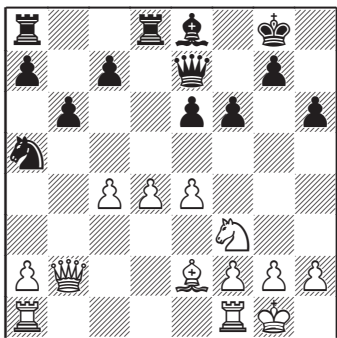
16...♟a5

16...e5!? is not the usual plan in this position but also seems OK. 17.d5 ♞a5 18.♙a6 (18.♚b4 ♚d6!=; 18.c4 f6 19.♞h4 ♞b7 20.♞f5 White has a nice knight on f5, but unfortunately for him, not for long: 20...♚c5 21.♙g4 ♞d6= and Black is doing fine.) 18...c6 19.c4 ♙d7! transferring the bishop to c8 20.♚ac1 ♙c8!=

17.c4!?

The idea behind this move is simple — to be able to push d4-d5 on ...c7-c5. See 16.e4.

17...f6!



A very good move. Black wants to play ...♙g6 and put pressure on the e4-pawn. 17...c5 18.d5! is quite unpleasant for Black. 18...f5 (18...b5 this well-known approach does not work very smoothly here: 19.cxb5 exd5 20.exd5 ♚xd5 21.♚ad1± White has a slight edge and Black needs to be careful here.) 19.♚c2±

18.♚fe1

18.♚ac1 ♙g6 19.e5 ♙e4=;

18.♚ad1 ♙g6 19.e5 ♞c6=;

18.♚fd1 ♙g6 19.e5 ♙e4 20.♚c3 ♚ac8=

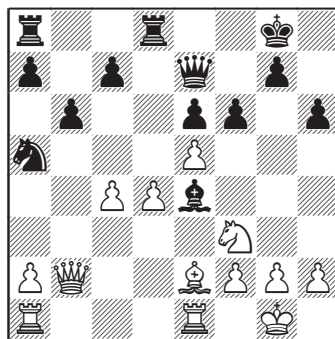
18...♙g6

As planned.

19.e5

19.♙f1 ♙h5 20.♚e3 c6= followed by ...♚d7 or ...♚d7, ...♚a8-d8, and White will have some worries over the d4-pawn.

19...♙e4!



...and I don't see why Black should be worse here.

20.exf6

20.♚c3 f5 White is unable to prevent ...c7-c5 now. 21.♞d2 (21.♚ad1 c5 22.dxc5 ♚xc5∞) 21...♙b7 22.♞b3 c5! 23.dxc5 (23.♞xa5?! would be a mistake due to the intermediate: 23...cxd4! 24.♚d2 bxa5 25.♚xa5 d3+ and White is already in trouble.) 23...♞xb3 24.axb3 ♚xc5 25.b4 (25.♚ed1 a5= and b3-b4 is no longer possible.) 25...♚c7= followed by ...a7-a5 with equal chances;

20.♚ad1 ♚f8 leaving the d8-square for the other rook (20...f5 is also fine. 21.♞d2 ♙b7 22.♞b3 ♚b4! 23.♚d2! ♚xd2

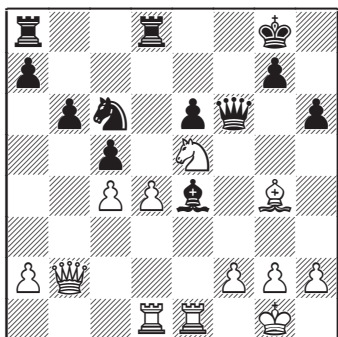
24.♖xd2 ♜xb3 25.axb3 a5=) 21.♜d2
(21.♚c3 ♜ad8=) 21...♙b7=

20...♚xf6 21.♜e5

21.♜ad1 ♜c6=

21...c5 22.♜ad1 ♜c6 23.♙f1

23.♙g4



This move leads to a complicated, forced line: 23...♖xd4 24.♖xd4 cxd4 25.♜d7 ♚g6 26.♚e2 h5! (26...♙f5 is not such a good idea in view of: 27.♙f3 ♜c8 28.♙xc6 ♜xc6 29.♜e5 ♚e8 30.g4! d3 31.♚e3 ♙xg4 32.♜xc6 ♚xc6 33.♚xd3±) 27.♜e5! ♜xe5 28.♚xe4 ♜d8 29.♚xg6 ♜xg6 30.♙xc6+ ♜f8=

23...♜xe5

23...♜xd4 is also good 24.♖xe4 ♜f3+ 25.gxf3 ♜xd1 26.♚e2 ♜ad8 27.♜g4 ♚a1 threatening ...♖xf1 28.♜g2! h5 29.♖xe6 hxg4 30.♖e8+= and the game ends with a perpetual check.

24.dxe5

24.♖xe4? just loses a pawn: 24...♜c6+ and ...♜xd4 next.

24...♚f5=

CONCLUSION

9.♙e2 is a fashionable line and an interesting try. I even suggested it to one of the players of the French national team, to play it in a very important match between France and Russia in the European Women's Team Championship. I offer two different ways to play. Aronian's line with 9...dxc4 is quite solid and totally fine for Black, and 9...♙d7, with the novelty of 15...♙h3 is in my opinion a reliable alternative.

Chapter 3.

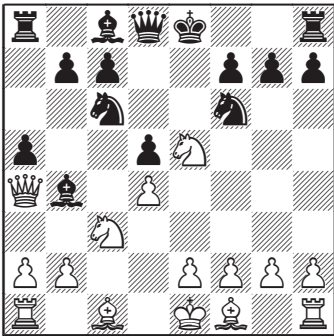
5.♔a4+ ♘c6 — 6.cxd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♚a4+

5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♚xf6 7.♚a4+ ♘c6
8.cxd5 exd5 is another move-order to reach this line.

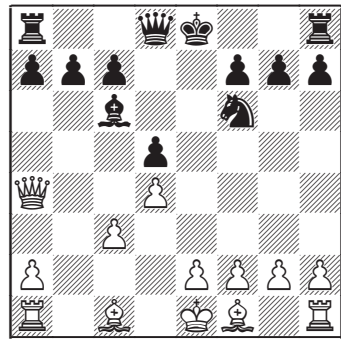
5...♘c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♙g5

7.♘e5 ♙d7 is the common move.
(7...a5!?)



The move played by Hou Yifan seems very interesting. 8.♙g5 (8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♙g5 was played in the game Zhu,C (2477)-Hou,Y (2591) Guangzhou 2010, but here I prefer (9.♚xc6+? is too greedy: 9...♙d7 10.♚b7 ♙b8 11.♚a6 ♙b5 12.♚a7 ♙c8+ and the queen is trapped. 9.e3N 9...0-0 10.♙e2 c5∞) 9...♙d6!N 10.♙xf6 ♙xf6 11.e3 ♙f5∞ and Black is totally fine.) 8...♙d6!N Black wants to play ...♘e4. 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.e3 0-0 11.♘xc6

bxc6 12.♙e2 ♙f5 13.0-0 ♙fb8 14.♙ad1 ♙g6 15.♙d2 ♙e4 16.g3 ♙xc3 17.bxc3 h5! ∞ with a balanced position.) 8.♘xd7 (8.♘xc6 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♙xc6

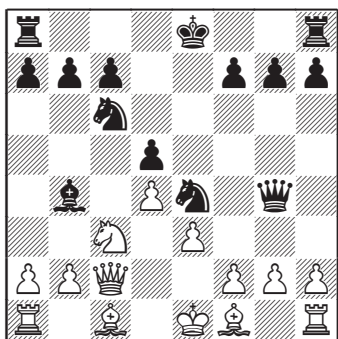


White has a choice now. Anyway, I don't believe it's anything special. On the contrary, Black's plan is very easy. He wants ...♘e4 and then to bring the queen into action. 10.♚a3

a) 10.♚c2 ♘e4 11.♙f4 (11.g3 0-0 12.♙g2 ♙e8 13.0-0 Severino,S (2367)-Sadorra,J (2575) Quezon City 2014 13...♘d6!N followed by ...♘c4 when the position is about equal.) 11...g5 12.♙e5?! (12.♙c1!N was better, but it's not an easy move to play. 12...h5!∞) 12...f6 13.♙g3 h5 14.f3 ♘g3 15.hxg3 ♙d6+ and Black was better in the game Sygulski,B (2345)-Landa,K (2455) Polanica Zdroj 1993.

b) 10. ♖b3 ♘e4! 11. e3 (11. ♗f4 g5±; 11. g3 ♖e7!N 12. ♗g2 0-0-0!?∞ with a good position.) 11... ♖g5!? 12. ♗a3 0-0-0± and Black was already better in the game Dimitrov,R (2365)-Palac,M (2576) Bastia 2009.

10... ♘e4 11. ♗f4 (11. g3 ♖f6 12. f3 ♘d6 13. ♗f4 0-0∞ with an unclear position in Pert,N (2195)-Campos Moreno,J (2475) Mondariz 1996.) 11... ♖f6 12. e3 g5 13. ♗g3 h5 14. ♖b2 ♘g3 15. hxg3 0-0-0∞ Only Black can be better now as seen in Lodhi,M (2420) -Serper,G (2585) Dhaka 1995.) 8... ♖xd7 9. e3 (9. a3 ♗xc3+ 10. bxc3 ♘e4 11. ♖c2 0-0 12. e3 Hando,V (2314)-Tanacs, A (2031) Hungary 2008 12... ♖g4! ∞ with good play.) 9... ♘e4 10. ♖c2 ♖g4!? N



A funny move. Black takes benefit of the fact that f2-f3 is not possible. After this move the bishop on f1 is stuck. The queen will probably go to g6 if needed. (10... ♖e6 was played in the game Vojinovic,G (2443) -Kasimdzhanov,R (2702) France 2010, but after 11. ♗d3!± it's not easy to see how Black should proceed.) 11. ♗d2 (11. f3?! ♖h4+! 12. ♔e2! (12. g3 ♘g3 13. ♖f2 ♘f5±) 12... ♘g3+

13. hxg3 ♖xh1 14. ♘d5 White has some compensation for the exchange, but with precise play Black should be better.

14... ♗d6 15. ♖e4+ ♔f8 16. ♔f2 h5 17. ♖h4! ♖xh4 18. gxh4 ♘e7±) 11... ♗xc3 12. ♗xc3 0-0 13. h3 ♖g6 14. g3 ♘e7 15. ♗g2 c6= with equality.

7...h6 8. ♗xf6

8. ♗h4?! is very rare and for good reason. 8... g5! 9. ♗g3 ♘e4 10. ♖c1 h5 11. ♘e5

a) 11. e3? just loses the bishop without compensation: 11... h4 12. ♗e5 f6 13. ♗b5 ♗d7-+;

b) 11. h4 g4!?N 12. ♘e5 ♗d7 White's position is terrible. 13. ♘d7 (13. ♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 14. bxc3 ♗xc6 15. ♖c2 ♘g3 16. fxg3 ♖d6±) 13... ♘g3 14. fxg3 ♖xd7±;

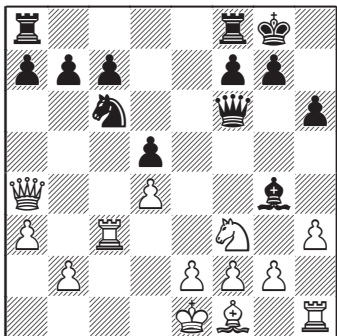
11... ♗d7 12. ♘d7 (12. ♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 13. bxc3 ♗xc6± followed by ...h5-h4. 12. ♖b3 h4 13. ♖xd5 ♘d6 14. ♘d7 hxg3 15. ♘e5 gxf2+ 16. ♔xf2 ♖f6+± Lanchava,T (2261)-Lalic,B (2549) Benasque 1999) 12... ♖xd7 13. f3 ♘g3 14. hxg3 0-0-0 15. ♔f2 ♖e7 16. e3 Ubilava,E (2430) -Bagirov,V (2560) Krasnodar 1980 16... h4±

8... ♖xf6 9. e3

9. ♘e5? looks tempting but as often it's a bad move. 9... 0-0 10. ♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 11. bxc3 bxc6! White is now in big trouble. 12. g3 Probably the best. (12. ♖b1 ♗f5 13. ♖b7 Zart,R (2198) -Nedic,D (2315) Germany 2015 13... c5!±; 12. e3 ♖g6!± Koch,W (2320) -Zemerov, V (2430) Budapest 1995) 12... ♖e8 13. ♗g2 ♗f5 14. ♖a6 ♖ab8 15. 0-0 So far we have been following one of my games, Hernando Rodrigo, J

(2302)-Cornette,M (2562) Montcada 2011, but here I missed the right continuation: 15...♖b6!N 16.♔xa7 ♜xe2 and Black is better in every variation. 17.♔xc7 (17.♜ae1 ♞d2+; 17.♞fe1?? ♞xf2!- + Nice tactics!) 17...♞bb2+;

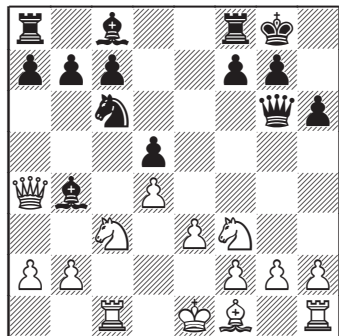
9.♞c1 0-0 10.a3?! This can't be a good idea being already behind in development. (10.e3 See 9.e3 then 10.♞c1.) 10...♙xc3+ 11.♞xc3 ♙g4 12.h3N



The only way to stay in the game. (12.♞e5 ♞xe5 13.dxe5 ♞e6+; 12.♞d3 ♞fe8 13.♞d1 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 Cervený, M (2346)-Harika, D (2499) Pardubice 2012 14...♞a5+ 12...♙h5!? (12...♙xf3 13.♞xf3 ♞xd4 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4 15.♞d3 ♞e6 16.♞d5 ♞ad8 17.♞d2=) 13.♞d1 ♞ae8 14.g4 ♙g6 15.♙g2 ♙e4 16.0-0 ♞d8∞ followed by ...f7-f5. Black has the initiative.

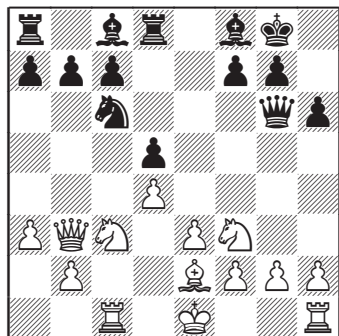
9...0-0 10.♙e2

Clearly the most played move. 10.♞c1 ♞g6!?



As in Chapter 1, we play this move to annoy White's development plans. 11.♞d1

a) 11.♞b3 is also often played. 11...♞d8 is the start of a thematic plan: Black will play ...♙f8, then ...♞e7 and ...c7-c6. The ♙f8 can come back into the game on d6 after ...♞f5 or ...♞f6, ...♞g6. 12.a3 ♙f8 13.♙e2!?

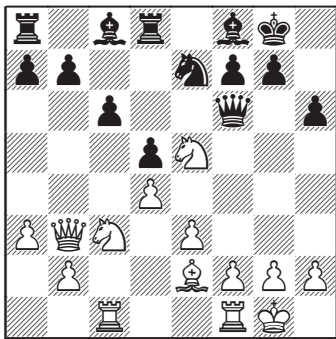


Probably the best move although it has been played only once. Here I suggest two improvements:

a1) 13.g3 ♞e7 14.♙g2 (14.♞e5 ♞f6 15.♙g2 c6 16.0-0 ♞f5∞) 14...♞b6+;

a2) 13.♞xd5??N is simply losing a piece after 13...♙e6!-+;

13...♖e7!?N is the safest alternative.
 13...♖g2N this obvious move is not so simple. 14.♖g1 ♖h3 15.♗xd5 ♕d6 16.♗f6+ (16.e4 ♕e6 17.♗f6+ ♖f8 18.♗h7+ (18.d5 gxf6 19.dxe6 ♖xe6 20.♖e3 f5∞) 18...♗g8 19.♗f6+=) 16...♗f8 17.♗e4 ♕xh2 18.♖h1 (18.♗eg5 hxg5 19.♖h1 ♖e6 20.♖xe6 ♕xe6 21.♖xh2 f6=) 18...♖f5! 19.♖xh2 (19.♗c5 ♕d6 20.♗xb7 ♖b8 21.♗xd6 cxd6 22.♖c2 ♖f6!?) 19...♖xe4 20.♖h4 ♖e8! A difficult move to find. (20...♖e7 21.♖c5 ♗g8 22.♖c2±) 21.♕c4! (21.♗g5 ♕f5∞) 21...♖d6 22.♖d3 f5! (22...♗g8? unfortunately fails to 23.♗g5! hxg5 24.♖h7+ ♗f8 25.♖e4 ♕e6 26.d5±) 23.♕b3 a5 24.d5 ♕d7∞) 14.0-0 c6 15.♗e5 (15.♗a4 ♖f6 16.♗c5 ♗g6∞ followed by ...♕d6.) 15...♖f6



This position is critical but I believe Black is fine. 16.♕d3

a1) 16.e4 dxe4 17.♗xe4 ♖f4 18.♖cd1!? ♕e6! (18...♖xe4 would be a mistake because of the nice tactics after: 19.♖xf7+ ♗h8 20.♕d3 ♖d5 21.♖xe7! ♕xe7 22.♗g6+ ♗g8 23.♗xe7+ ♗f8 24.♗xd5 ♖xd5 25.♕e4±) 19.♖d3 ♕d5=;

a2) 16.f4 ♗f5 17.♖f3 h5∞;

16...♗f5 17.♗e2 c5!?∞ followed by ...c5-c4 with an unclear position. (17...♕d6 18.♗g3!±)

b) 11.a3 ♕xc3+ 12.bxc3 (12.♖xc3?!N just loses a pawn. 12...♖b1+ 13.♖d1 ♖xb2) 12...♕e6 13.♖c2 ♖xc2 14.♖xc2 ♗a5= and Black had no problems in the game Akesson,J (2345)-Lundin,J (2262) Gothenburg 2005.

11...♖d8 12.a3

a) 12.g3 ♗e7 13.a3 ♕d6 14.♗b5 c6 15.♗xd6 and a draw was agreed here in the game Martin, A (2377)-Berry,N (2256) England 2015. (15.♕d3N 15...♖f6 16.♗xd6 ♕g4! 17.♕e2 ♖xd6=) 15...♖xd6 16.♗e5 ♕f5=;

b) 12.h3 was recently played in the game Bologan,V (2654)-Gelashvili, T (2557) Philadelphia 2016, but now I suggest 12...♗e7!?N as for me it's the most logical continuation. 13.♕d3 (13.a3 ♕d6 14.♗b5 c6 15.♗xd6 ♖xd6= followed by ...♕f5 with equality. 13.♗e5 ♖f6 14.♕e2 ♕d6!?) 13...♖f6 14.0-0 c6 15.♗e5 (15.a3 ♕a5 16.b4 ♕c7 17.b5 ♕f5= with equality. 15.e4 dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♖f4∞) 15...♕d6 16.f4 ♕f5∞ with a balanced position.

12...♕f8 13.h3 (13.♗h4 ♖f6 14.♗f3 ♗e7 (14...♖g6= again, if we are OK to repeat moves.) 15.♕e2 c6 16.0-0 ♗f5 Black's position is totally fine. In a practical game, Black seizes the imitative quite easily. 17.b4?! a5! 18.♖b3 Khojayan,V (2261)-Aleksandrov, A (2624) Dubai 2009. 18...axb4 19.axb4 b5!?

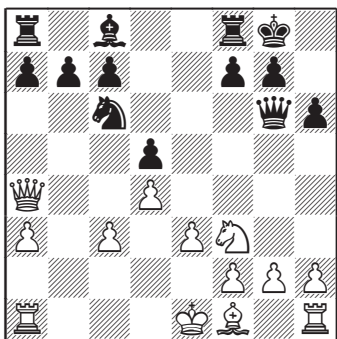
a) 11. d2 xc3!N (11...xd4?! has been played three times, but with accurate

Black has a very good score in the database here, but with accurate play White should hold. 14...c5!? N An interesting idea to play on. (14...Bf8 15.Bab1 Bf5 Hulak,K (2532) -Sulava, N (2521) Sibenik 2009 16.Bxb8+N 16...Bxb8 17.Bd1!= as with 14...Bf8. 17...Bb2+ 18.Bd2 Bxd2+ 19.Qxd2 Bxf3 20.Qe1! Bb1+ 21.Qe2 Bb2 22.Bxc6= because even if a pawn up, White's activity is enough to make a draw.

14...♖ab8 15.♖ab1!N 15...♔g6 16.♖hg1!
 ♔f5 17.♖xb8 ♖xb8 18.♖d1!= as with
 14...♖fb8.) 15.dxc5! (15.♖ab1?! c4 16.♔c2
 (16.♖b7 ♔g6) 16...♖ae8) 15...♔xc3
 (15...♖fb8 16.♔a3!=) 16.♖ac1 ♔e5
 (16...♔f6 17.♖hd1 c6 18.♖b1=) 17.♖hd1
 ♖ab8 18.♖c2=;

11...a6 12.0-0 ♖e6 We are back to
 10.♖e2 ♖e6 11.0-0 a6. I tried to find
 another move but it's not easy. The ♖b4
 has to come back to d6, thus we need the
 light-squared bishop to defend the d5-
 pawn.

10.a3 ♖xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♔g6!



Here White has tried different moves
 but none of them are dangerous for Black:
 12.♔d1 Here Black has a choice:

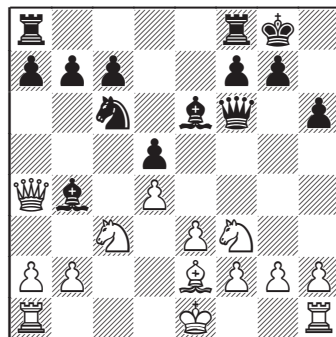
a) 12.♖h4 ♔g4 (12...♔e4 13.♖f3
 ♔g6=) 13.g3?! has been recently played
 with success, but it's only because Black
 later misplayed. (13.♖f3 ♖f5∞) 13...g5
 14.♖g2 ♔e4 15.♔d1 Kunin,V (2584)-
 Fedoseev,V (2664) Karlsruhe 2016
 15...♖h3 16.f3 ♔e7 17.♖f2 ♖a5+;

b) 12.c4?! ♖e6 Drazkowski, K-Michta,Z
 Poland corr 1986 13.c5N 13...♖ae8+;

c) 12.♖e2? ♔xg2 13.♖g1 ♔h3 14.0-0-0
 ♔f5+ Krudde,F (2320)-Willemze,T
 (2391) Netherlands 2009;

12...b6!?N (12...♖e8 13.h3!?N The idea
 is to play ♖d3 because the g2-pawn would
 be untouchable then due to ♖h2 trapping
 the queen on g2. (13.♖b1 Aseev,K (2519)
 -Greenfeld,A (2521) St Petersburg 1999
 13...b6 14.h3 ♔d6 15.a4 ♖f5=) 13...♔f6
 14.♖d3 (14.♖e2 b6 15.0-0 ♖a5 16.♖e5
 ♖f5=) 14...♖f5=) 13.h3 as on 12...♖e8,
 White wants to play ♖d3. (13.c4 dxc4
 14.♖xc4 ♖a5) 13...♔f6 (13...♖e8
 14.♖d3! ♔xg2?? would be a terrible
 blunder. (14...♔f6=) 15.♖h2+–) 14.♖d3
 (14.♖e2 ♖f5 15.0-0 ♖a5 16.♖e5 c5∞
 with a good position.) 14...♖f5= with
 equality.

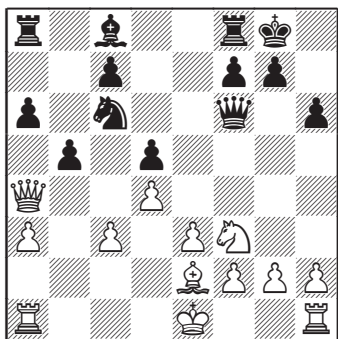
10...♖e6



The most common move; Black protects
 the d5-pawn. The plan is quite simple:
 Black wants to play ...a7-a6, to avoid ♖b5
 jumps after the ...♖d6-retreat, followed by
 ...♖e7. Black has to try to create some
 play on the kingside, keeping an eye on

the other wing as well, where White should develop his play. 10...♖d8 is a move that Aronian and even Carlsen have played. I have also used it myself. It feels a bit artificial to me so I won't recommend it.

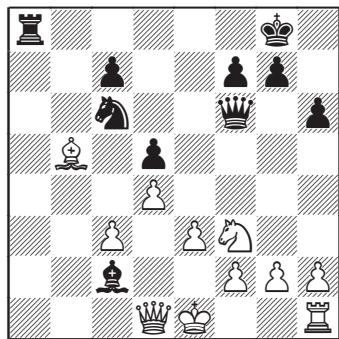
10...a6!? has recently been used by Anand and Fressinet. Compared to the main line, the idea is to react differently on 11.a3. 11.a3 (11.0-0 ♕e6 transposes to the main line.) 11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 b5



I believe this move is more precise. (12...♙f5 Black wants to play ...b7-b5. 13.c4! (13.0-0 b5 14.♖b3 ♖d6 transposes to the game Leko — Harikrishna with the 12...b5 move order.) 13...b5!? An interesting pawn sacrifice played by Fressinet, but with accurate play I think White should have an edge. (13...dxc4 14.♖xc4 I believe these positions are slightly better for White. 14...♙e6 15.♖c5 ♖ad8 16.0-0 ♙d5 17.♙d2± Brunsteins,D (2476)-Schuster,P (2539) FICGS email 2008) 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♖xb5!N It was important to accept the challenge and take the pawn. (The game continued: 15.♖b3?! ♖d6! gave Black the initiative: 16.♖xb5

(16.0-0 ♖fb8?) 16...♖fb8 17.♖c5 ♖xc5 18.dxc5 ♖b2? Narciso Dublan,M (2532)-Fressinet, L (2710) Linares 2015) 15...♖fb8 16.♖c5 ♙a5 (16...♙e4 17.0-0 ♖b2 (17...♖g6 18.♖a2±) 18.♙d1±) 17.♖xd5! ♙b3 (17...c6 18.♖a2 ♙b3 19.♖d1 ♖d6 20.0-0 ♖xa3 21.♖b2± and there is no good discovery.) 18.♖d1 ♙c2 19.0-0 c6 (19...♙xd1 20.♖xd1 ♖e6 21.♖h5 ♖xa3 22.♙e5 ♙a5 23.h4!±) 20.♖c4 ♙xd1 21.♖xd1 ♖xa3 22.♙e5 ♙a5 23.♖c2± I believe White is slightly better.) 13.♖b3

a) 13.♖d1 ♙f5N (13...♙g4 has recently been played, but after 14.a4!N I'm not sure what is the best way to continue?! (14.0-0 ♙a5= Ward,C (2437)-Pert,N (2570) Bournemouth 2016) 14...♙a5 (14...♖fb8 15.h3 ♙h5 16.♖b3±) 15.axb5 axb5 16.♙xb5 c6 17.♙e2 ♙c4 18.h3±) 14.a4 ♖fb8 15.axb5 (15.0-0 ♙a5=) 15...axb5 16.♖xa8 ♖xa8 17.♙xb5 (17.0-0 b4 equalizes on the spot. 18.♖b3 (18.cxb4 ♙xb4=) 18...♖a3 19.♖xd5 ♖xc3 20.♖b5 ♙h7=) 17...♙c2! A nice move. This was the point of 13...♙f5.

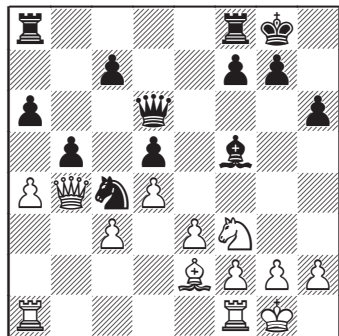


18. ♖c1 (18. ♖xc2?! ♜a1+ 19. ♔e2 ♜xh1?) 18... ♙e4 19. 0-0 (19. ♙xc6 ♖xc6= with equality.) 19... ♙xf3 20. gxf3 ♖xf3=;

b) 13. ♙xb5?N is bad for White:

13... axb5 14. ♖xa8 ♙h3 15. ♖a6 ♙xg2 16. ♔e5! ♙xh1 17. ♖xc6 ♖h4+;

13... ♖d6 (13... ♙e6 14. a4 ♔a5 15. ♖b4 ♔c4 16. axb5 axb5 17. 0-0± Eingorn, V (2569) -Sanikidze, T (2549) Metz 2012) 14. 0-0 (14. a4N 14... ♙d7! Black defends the b5-pawn and wants to play ... ♔a5. (14... ♙f5 15. axb5 axb5 16. 0-0±) 15. ♖a2!?) Quite a smart try. Now on ... ♔a5 White wants to play ♔e5. (15. 0-0 ♔a5 16. ♖b4 ♖xb4 17. cxb4 ♔b3 18. ♔e5 ♙e8 19. ♜a3 bxa4∞; 15. ♖a3 ♖xa3 16. ♜xa3 bxa4 17. ♜xa4 ♜b8 18. 0-0 a5=; 15. axb5 axb5 16. 0-0 ♔a5=) 15... ♔a5 anyway. 16. ♔e5 b4! leads to some simplifications. 17. cxb4 (17. ♔xd7 b3 18. ♖a3 ♖xd7 19. ♖b4 ♖f5! 20. 0-0 ♔c4!∞) 17... ♖xb4+ 18. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 19. ♔xd2 ♙f5= with an equal position.) 14... ♙f5 transposes to the game Leko — Harikrishna with the 12... b5 move order. (14... ♙d7!? is also decent. 15. ♖c2 Kasparov, S (2487) -Sobolevsky, L (2238) Erfurt 2013 (15. ♖a2N 15... ♜fb8 16. ♔e1 ♔a5 17. ♔d3 ♔c4 18. ♔c5 ♙f5 19. a4 ♔b6=) 15... ♔a5N 16. ♔e5 ♔c4=) 15. a4 ♔a5 16. ♖b4 (16. ♖a2 ♜fb8 17. ♔e5 c6=) 16... ♔c4!N

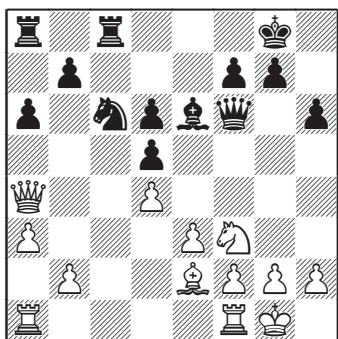


A strong novelty. (16... ♖xb4 has been played in practice but Black didn't fully equalize. 17. cxb4 ♔c4 (17... ♔c6 18. axb5 axb5 19. ♙xb5 ♔xb4 20. ♔e5±) 18. a5 ♜fe8 19. ♜a2± Leko, P (2723) -Harikrishna, P (2727) Beijing 2014) 17. ♖c5! (17. ♖xd6 cxd6! 18. ♜fc1 ♜fc8=; 17. axb5 ♖xb4 18. cxb4 axb5=; 17. ♜fe1 ♜fb8=) 17... ♙d7 (17... c6!? is also totally fine. 18. axb5 ♖xc5 19. dxc5 axb5 20. ♙xc4 dxc4 21. ♔d4 ♙d7 22. ♜fd1 ♜fb8 23. ♔c2 ♙e8=) and Black is solid enough, for example: 18. ♙xc4 (18. axb5 axb5=) 18... dxc4 19. ♔e5 (19. ♖xd6 cxd6=) 19... ♙f5 20. ♜fe1 (20. ♖c6 f6=; 20. ♔c6 ♙e4 21. ♖xd6 cxd6 22. axb5 axb5 23. ♔b4 ♙b7=) 20... ♜fe8= with equality.

11.0-0

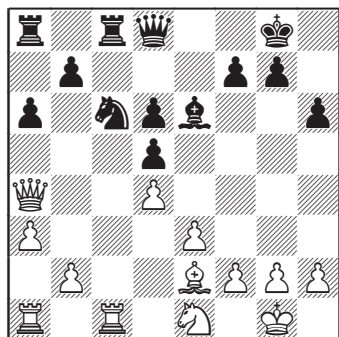
11. a3! Asking Black what he wants to do with his bishop? 11... ♙xc3+! (11... ♙d6 12. ♔b5! a6!? was played by Cheparinov and I also suggested this line to one of my students. (12... ♙g4 the most popular move. It's also playable but with precise play White should be a bit better. 13. ♖c1 (13. 0-0 ♔e7 14. ♔xd6 ♖xd6 15. b4!? (15. ♜fc1 c6 16. b4 a6 17. ♖c2 ♔c8= Georgiev, K (2660) -Serper, G (2575)

Groningen 1993) 15...a6 (15...c6 16.b5 cxb5 17.♖xb5± El Gindy, E (2507) - Aleksandrov, A (2668) Tripoli 2004; 15...f5 16.♖b3 ♘h8 17.g3 ♜g6 18.♙d1 ♙h3 19.♞e1± Karpov, A (2619) - Kravtsov, M (2609) Germany 2014) 16.♞c2 c6∞ with an unclear position. Maybe White has some chances to put a little pressure on Black, but anyway, it can't be much.) 13...♜e7 14.♜xd6 ♞xd6 15.♖b4 ♖xb4+ 16.axb4 c6 17.b5 ♞fc8 18.♜d2 (18.bxc6 ♜xc6 19.♞c3 ♜a5 20.♜d2N 20...♞xc3 21.bxc3∞ The engine prefers White, but honestly, I don't really understand what is going on.) 18...cxb5 19.♙xb5 f6 20.♞xc8+ A draw was agreed here in the game Bacrot, E (2700) - Ponomarev, R (2739) Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, but I think White has a tiny initiative... yes, it's not much, but still worth trying. 20...♞xc8 21.♞a1 ♙xf3 (21...a6 22.♙e2 ♜c6 23.h3±) 22.gxf3 a6 23.♙d3 ♞c6 24.b4±) 13.♜xd6 cxd6 14.0-0 ♞fc8

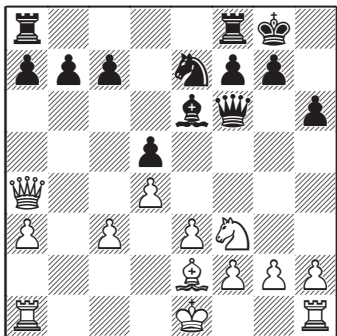


I believe this position is rather solid for Black but I find it a bit unpleasant in the practical sense. 15.♞fc1 (15.b4 ♞d8 16.♞fc1 Chatalbashev, B (2546)-Inkiöv, V

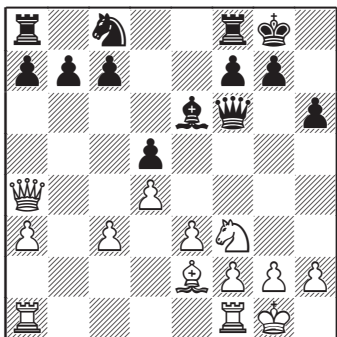
(2461) La Roda 2004 16...♞c7!?N It's better to continue with solid play. 17.♞d1 ♞ac8 18.♜e1 ♙f5 19.♜d3 g5 20.♞d2 ♜e7 21.♞xc7 ♞xc7 22.♞c1 ♜g7 23.♜b2 b5=) 15...♞d8 (15...b5 Gustafsson, J (2640) - Fier, A (2581)/ Sarajevo 2010/ CBM 136 Extra (30) 16.♞d1N 16...♞d8 17.♜e1± as in the main line.) 16.♜e1!



Bringing the knight to d3 will give White a pleasant position, one where they can play on and on. (16.♞c3 Gustafsson, J (2643) - Cheparinov, I (2661)/ Sestao 2010 16...♜a5! 17.♞ac1 (17.♞xc8 ♞xc8=) 17...♜c4 18.♞c2 b5 19.♜d2 ♞ab8=) 16...♜e7 (16...♜a5N 17.♜d3 g5 18.♞d1 ♞xc1 19.♞xc1 ♞c8 20.♞xc8 ♞xc8 21.♜b4 ♜c4 22.♞c2±) 17.♜d3 ♞xc1+ 18.♞xc1 ♞c8 19.♞d1 ♞xc1 20.♞xc1 ♞c8 21.♞xc8+ ♙xc8 22.♙f3± and White managed to win the endgame in the encounter Arkell, K (2499)-Milliet, S (2362) London 2015, but I believe if Black just waits, bringing his king to the centre (not to the queenside like in the game), they should hold.) 12.bxc3 ♜e7!



I really like this idea. Black wants to transfer the knight to d6 from where it will control important squares, both c4 and e4. 13.0-0 (13.c4N makes sense, but after: 13...c5! Black has no problems. The c5-pawn is untouchable because of the pin. 14.0-0 Here it's time for Black to simplify the position: (14.cxd5 ♖xd5 15.♖c1 (15.0-0 ♜c3 16.♞c2 ♜xe2+ 17.♞xe2 b6∞) 15...c4!?∞ and the pawn is taboo!) 14...dxc4 15.♙xc4 ♙xc4 16.♞xc4 cxd4 17.♜xd4 (17.exd4 ♜fd8=; 17.♞xd4 ♞xd4 18.♜xd4 ♜ac8=) 17...♜c6 18.♜xc6 ♜fc8= and a draw is the normal outcome.) 13...♜c8!



14.♜fc1

a) 14.♜e5N it's logical to take this central square. 14...♜d6 Now the question for White is what his plan is? In the perfect world, c3-c4 would be a good idea, but right now I just don't see how it can work. 15.♞ac1 (15.♞b3 ♜fc8 followed by ...c7-c5. 16.♞b2 c5=; 15.♜d7 ♙xd7 16.♞xd7 c6 17.♞g4 ♜e4∞) 15...♜fc8 is not the only way to continue but it's quite logical to play for ...c7-c5. (15...♜fe8 16.♜fd1 ♞g5=) 16.♞b4 (16.♜fe1 c5 17.♙f3 a5!? 18.♜d3 b5 19.♞d1 cxd4= followed by ... ♜c4.) 16...b6 17.♞b2 c5 18.a4 (18.♙f3 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♞d8=) 18...♙f5=;

b) 14.c4?!N 14...dxc4 ♜ Black is simply better because White can't recapture the pawn.

c) 14.♞a5 ♞d8 (14...♞e7N is also fine with the same ideas. 15.c4 dxc4 16.♜e5 ♜d6 17.♜fc1 b6 18.♞d2 ♙d5 19.♜xc4 ♜ad8=) 15.c4 If White doesn't play this move now, he never will. 15...dxc4 16.♜e5 ♜d6 17.♜fc1 b6 18.♞e1 ♜c8 19.♜xc4N (19.♜c6 ♞e8 20.♙f3 a5∞ and Black was probably better in the game Komarov,D (2390) -Janjgava,L (2470) Borjomi 1988.) 19...c5=;

14...♜d6 15.♜d2 ♜fc8 16.♞b4 (16.♞d1 c5 17.♙f3 b6=) 16...b6 17.a4 c5 18.♞a3 ♞d8 19.a5 cxd4!? 20.exd4 (20.cxd4 b5= with an equal position. White has the c5-square, but Black controls the c4-one.) 20...b5= Riazantsev,A (2646)-Aleksiev, E (2642) Khanty-Mansiysk 2015

11...a6 12.♜fc1

12.♖ac1 is also possible, even if it's less logical because White wants to play on the queenside and bringing the other rook across looks smarter to me. 12...♙d6 13.♗b3

a) 13.♗fe1 ♖e7 14.♗c2 (14.e4N 14...dxe4 15.♜xe4 ♗f4 16.♜xd6 ♗xd6∞ with a good position.) 14...♙f5 (14...♗fe8!?N 15.e4 dxe4 16.♜xe4 ♗f4 17.♜xd6 (17.g3 ♗f5∞) 17...cxd6∞) 15.♙d3 (15.e4N 15...dxe4 16.♜xe4 ♙xe4 17.♗xe4 c6= with equality.) 15...♙g4 16.♜d2 Timman,J (2578) -Swiercz,D (2609) Potsdam 2012 16...c6= with an interesting position to play.

b) 13.♗d1 ♖e7 14.♜a4 (14.♜e1 ♖ae8!? N 15.♜a4 ♜f5 16.♜c5 ♙c8 17.b4 (17.♗b3? ♜xd4+) 17...♗e7 18.a4 ♗fe8∞) 14...b6 15.b4 (15.♗d2 g5 16.b4 ♜g6 17.♜b2 g4 18.♜e1 h5∞ Acs,P (2601)- Balogh,C (2608) Hungary 2010; 15.h3 g5 16.♜e1 ♗g7 17.♜d3 f5 18.f4 ♖h8 19.♜e5 ♜g8 20.♖c6 ♗fd8=) 15...g5 16.♜c5!? g4 17.♜e1 bxc5 18.bxc5 ♙xh2+ 19.♖xh2 h5∞ Lorscheid,G (2251)- Brkic,A (2597) Bad Gleichenberg 2014;

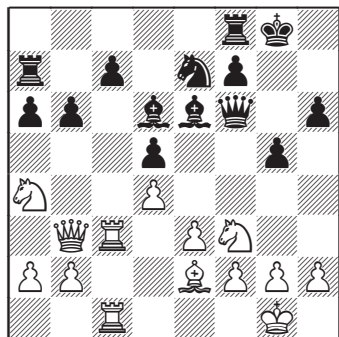
13...♜e7 14.♜a4 (14.♗xb7??N 14...♗fb8+) 14...b6 Here White has tried different ideas: 15.♖c3

a) 15.♗c3 ♙d7!?N 16.♗c2 ♗fe8 (16...♙f5 see 15.♗c2.) 17.♜c3 ♙f5∞;

b) 15.♗c2 ♙f5 see 15.♗c2. 16.♙d3 ♙xd3 17.♗xd3 ♗fe8 18.♜c3 (18.a3 a5=) 18...c6=;

c) 15.♜c3 g5∞;

15...g5 16.♗fc1 Anastasian,A (2548) - Kacheishvili,G (2556) Ubeda 2001 16...♖a7!∞



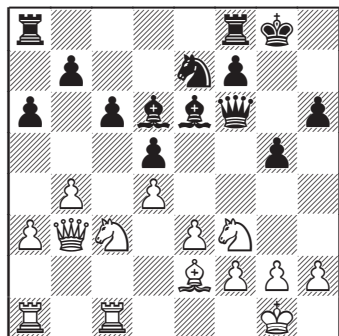
I like this idea. Everything is under control on the queenside, so now Black is ready for action on the kingside.

12...♙d6

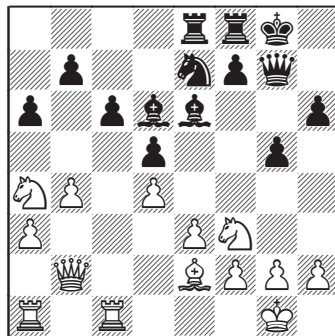
In such types of position White has in general two plans: either to launch the minority attack with a3-b4-b5, or to reposition the queen and continue with the ♜a4-c5 manoeuvre.

13.♗d1

13.a3 ♖e7 14.b4 c6 15.♗b3 g5!



As always. Black takes space on the kingside. He wants to play ...g4-h5 and ...♖g7 then ...f5-f4. (15...♙g4 is also a decent alternative. Black wants to play ...♜f5-h4. 16.♜a4 ♜f5 17.♜c5 (17.h3 ♙xf3 18.♙xf3 ♜h4 is good for Black as the obvious 19.♙e2? fails to 19...♙h2+! 20.♙xh2 ♖xf2 21.♖g1 ♗xe2+ with a big advantage. 17.♖d1 ♜fe8! and now Black is in time to protect the b7-pawn with the rook on e7. 18.♜c5 ♖e7+ and I prefer Black. The rooks can be doubled on the e-file, and the ...♜h4 idea is always in the air.) 17...♙xc5 leads to some simplifications. (17...♖e7!?∞) 18.bxc5 ♜h4 19.♖d1 ♙xf3 20.♙xf3 ♜xf3+ 21.♖xf3 ♖xf3 22.gxf3 f5 23.♖ab1 ♜f7 I believe the position is solid enough for Black. 24.♙f1 (24.f4 g5∞; 24.♖b4 a5 25.♖a4?! g5+ 24...♖e8 25.♙e2 f4 26.h4 a5!? 27.♖b3 g6 28.♖cb1 ♖ee7=) 16.♖b2 Aronian's move, but I have some doubts about it. (16.g3 g4 17.♜e1 (17.♜h4 ♜g6 18.♜g2 h5+ followed by ... h5-h4.) 17...h5 18.♖d1 was played in the game: Mirzoev,A (2510)-Peralta,F (2590) Navalmoral 2011, and here I believe Black can improve his play with: (18.♜a4 h4) 18...♖h6N 19.♜g2 ♜g6→ Followed by ...♖ae8, ...♙g7 and ...h5-h4 at the right moment.) 16...♖g7!? 17.♜a4 ♖ae8!?



I like the idea of centralizing the rook and bringing back the bishop to c8 to defend the queenside. 18.♜c5 ♙c8 I tried to discover how best to play here with White, but it's really difficult. 19.g3?! We are still following the game Aronian,L (2777) -Anand,V (2797) Baden-Baden 2015, but now it was time to play more aggressively with:

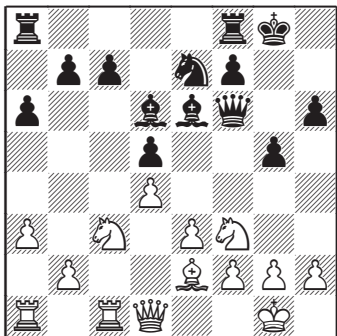
a) 19.a4N 19...f5 20.b5 axb5 21.axb5 f4 22.e4 (22.exf4 ♙xf4+) 22...g4 23.♜e5 ♙xe5 24.dxe5 ♜g6 25.bxc6 bxc6 26.exd5 cxd5+;

b) 19.♜e1N 19...f5 20.♜ed3 f4+;

19...f5!N 20.♖f1 (20.♜e5 ♙xe5 21.dxe5 ♜g6+ wins the e5-pawn.) 20...♜g6→ followed by ...f5-f4, or ... g5-g4, ...h6-h5-h4, etc.

13...♜e7 14.♜a4

14.a3 was the move-order used by Magnus Carlsen against Aronian. 14...g5!?



I don't see any problem in playing the move we always do. 15.g3

a) 15.♖d2 ♗g7N To clear the path for the f7-pawn. 16.♜b3 f5 17.♜c5 ♕xc5!? 18.dxc5 f4↑ with a good initiative.

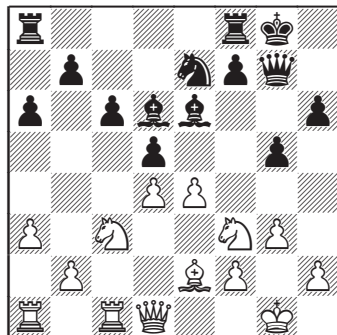
b) 15.♜a4 b6 see 14.♜a4.

c) 15.e4N Here Black has a choice, but 15...dxe4 looks clearly easier. 15...dxe4 (15...♕f4 16.♖c2 (16.e5 ♗g7 17.♖c2 f6! 18.g3?! fxe5! 19.gxf4 e4 20.♜e5 gxf4+ 21.♞h1 f3↑) 16...dxe4 17.♜xe4 ♗g6 18.♕d3!?) A very interesting exchange sacrifice. (18.♜c5 ♕d5 19.g3 ♕d6 20.♜e5 ♗g7=) 18...♕b3 19.g3 (19.♜exg5 ♕xc2 20.♕xc2 ♗g7 21.♜e4 ♖ad8∞) 19...♕d6 20.♜c5 ♕xc2 21.♗xc2 ♗g7 22.♜xb7 ♖ab8 23.♕xa6 ♗f6 24.♗d3 ♜f5∞ with compensation for the exchange but Black is still in the game.) 16.♜xe4 ♗f4 17.♕d3 (17.♜xd6 ♗xd6 18.h4 f6 19.♗c2 c6=) 17...♕g4 18.♜xd6 ♗xd6=;

d) 15.♜e1N 15...♗g7 to play ...f7-f5. 16.♜d3 (16.♗b3 f5 17.♜d3 ♕f7!∞ followed by ...f5-f4. (17...f4? would be premature due to 18.♜e4!±)) 16...f5 17.♜a4 (17.f4 ♜g6 18.♗d2 gxf4 19.♜xf4

♜xf4 20.exf4 ♖ae8∞ with an unclear position. 17.♗d2 f4↑) 17...f4!? 18.♜ac5 ♕c8 19.♕g4 (19.e4 ♗xd4↑) 19...fxe3 20.fxe3 ♜f5 21.♕xf5 ♖xf5 22.♗b3 ♞h8 23.♖f1 ♗e7=;

15...♗g7 16.e4 Black would have played ...f7-f5 after other White's moves. (16.♗b3 f5 17.♞h1 b5∞) 16...c6!?N



This move is even stronger. (16...dxe4 Black had no problems with this move in practice: 17.♜xe4 ♕d5 18.♜xd6 (18.♜c3 ♖fe8=) 18...cxd6 19.♕c4 Kunin,V (2579)-Gonzalez Vidal,Y (2550) Havana 2015 19...f5!?!N 20.♜d2 ♗f7=) 17.e5 (17.exd5 cxd5!?) (17...♜xd5 is maybe more human. 18.♜xd5 ♕xd5 19.♕c4 ♕e4 20.♕d3 ♖ae8 21.♕xe4 ♖xe4 22.♗b3 ♗f6↑) 18.♜a4 ♖ad8 19.♜c5 ♕c8↑ followed by ...g5-g4, ...f7-f5, etc.) 17...♕c7 18.♜a4 b6!↑ and Black is ready to play on the kingside with ...f7-f6.

14.♖ab1 has recently been played by Jobava. 14...♕f5 (14...h5!?!N is the kind of move I like. 15.b4 (15.♜e1 g6 16.♜d3 ♜f5∞) 15...g5 16.♜e1 g4 17.g3 c6∞ with a very complicated position.) 15.♕d3 ♕g4 16.b4 c6 17.♕e2 Arencibia Rodriguez,W

(2527)-Bronstein,L (2342) Buenos Aires 2005, and here I suggest two ways of playing: (17.h3N 17...♙xf3 18.♖xf3 ♖xf3 19.gxf3 b5= with equality.) 17...♙f5N (or 17...♙f5N 18.♙a4 ♖ae8∞ with an interesting game.) 18.♙d3 ♙g4 with the draw by repetition.

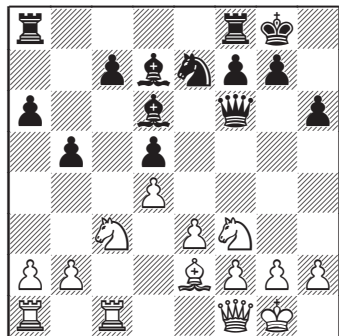
14...b6 15.a3

The move I faced. 15.♖f1 Quite logical. White attacks the a6-pawn, trying to provoke ...b6-b5 which would allow the knight to jump to c5. Black has several good options here: 15...♙d7!? is the move I was planning to play in my game.

a) 15...g5!?N I also considered this pawn sacrifice, but even if the engine is quite optimistic about it, I'm not one hundred percent convinced. 16.♙xa6 g4 17.♙e1 h5 18.♙c3 c6 19.♙d3 h4 would be an interesting practical choice. 20.♖e2 (20.g3 ♗g7 21.♙g2 ♖h8∞) 20...♖h6!? 21.a3 (21.g3 ♗g7 22.♙g2 ♙g6∞) 21...g3 22.f4 ♙f5∞;

b) 15...a5 16.♙c3 (16.a3 g5 17.♙c3 c6∞) 16...c6 Preventing ♙b5. It's difficult to find a good plan for White. 17.♙a4 ♖ab8 18.a3 ♖fc8 19.♖e1 c5 20.♙c3 ♙c6= Wirig,A (2489) -Gharamian,T (2650) Belgium 2010;

16.♙c3 (16.b3 ♖fb8!?∞ (16...♙xa4 17.bxa4 a5=)) 16...b5!?N



I am quite confident about this set-up: White hasn't much to do on the queenside. (16...c6 is also fine. 17.e4 (17.♖d1 Szilagyi,G-Padevsky,N Sofia 1958 17...g5 18.♖b3 ♙g6∞) 17...dxe4 18.♙xe4 ♖f4 19.♙xd6 ♖xd6=) 17.a4

a) 17.e4 dxe4 18.♙xe4 ♖f4∞ is probably already better for Black.

b) 17.♖d1 ♙f5 18.a3 (18.♙e1 c6 19.♙d3 h5∞) 18...c6 19.♙d3 ♙g4=;

17...c6 18.e4 (18.h3 ♖fe8 19.♙b1 g5 20.♙bd2 h5∞) 18...dxe4 19.♙xe4 ♖f4 20.♙xd6 ♖xd6= with a balanced position.

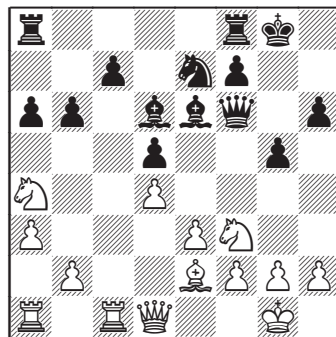
15.b4!? looks slightly more logical than a2-a3, because the pawn on b4 is not really hanging at the moment. Besides, White can have some ♙c5 tricks as the bishop on d6 would be trapped after ...bxc5 bxc5. Nevertheless, sooner or later White will probably need to play a2-a3 anyway. 15...g5 16.♙b2 (16.g3 a5!?N The idea is to prevent ♙c5 jumps. (16...h5N 17.♙c5! bxc5 18.bxc5 ♙xg3 19.fxg3 (19.hxg3 h4∞) 19...♙c6=) 17.b5 h5∞ followed by ...h5-h4. A very unclear position, but in general I prefer Black.)

16...♖g6 17.♘d3 a5!? I like this idea to determine the structure on the queenside. 18.b5 h5!? N looks slightly more logical to me. (18...♞fe8 19.♞c3 h5= Roiz,M (2668)-Tomashevsky,E (2710) Saratov 2011) 19.♘fe5 (19.♞c3 g4 20.♘fe1 ♔d7 21.a4 ♞g5∞) 19...g4!? 20.♞c3 (20.♞c6 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♙xe5 22.♘xe5 ♞xe5 23.♞d4 ♞xd4 24.exd4 a4=) 20...♘xe5 (20...♞ac8 is also good to keep the tension. 21.♞ac1 ♙f5∞) 21.♘xe5 ♙xe5 22.dxe5 ♞xe5 23.♞ac1 ♞ac8 24.f3!? (24.♞d4 ♞xd4 25.exd4 ♞fe8 26.♞xc7 ♞xc7 27.♞xc7 ♙f5 28.♙f1 h4=) 24...♞fd8 25.fxg4 (25.♞d4 ♞xd4 26.exd4 ♞d7=) 25...d4 26.♞d3 ♞g5!;

15.♘c3 ♞fd8!? is interesting. One of the ideas behind it is to be ready for White's e3-e4, the second one is to play in the centre with ...c7-c5. (15...g5 our thematic move is also possible here. 16.e4 (16.g3?! ♞g7 17.♞f1 f5! 18.♙xa6?! A bit greedy. 18...f4! 19.exf4 Khairullin,I (2604) - Khismatullin,D (2614) Ulan Ude 2009 19...gxf4 20.♙e2 c6⌚ with a terrific initiative. 16.♞c2 ♞g7 17.♞f1 b5 18.♔d3 f5 19.♘e2 ♔d7∞) 16...♙f4 17.♞c2 dxe4 18.♘xe4 ♞g7 19.♘g3 (19.g3 f5! 20.♘c5! bxc5 21.gxf4 gxf4+ 22.♙h1 ♙h8 23.♘e5 ♞g8 24.♙f3 ♔d5 25.♙xd5 ♘xd5 26.♞f3 ♞ad8 27.♞xc5 ♘f6=) 19...♙xg3 20.hxg3 c6 21.♞d2 a5 22.♞c2 ♞f6 23.♞e1 ♞ad8= with an equal position.) 16.♞f1 (16.a3 c5∞; 16.e4 dxe4 17.♘xe4 ♞f4 18.♘xd6 ♞xd6 19.♞xc7 ♘c6 20.♞d3 ♘xd4 21.♘xd4 ♞xd4 22.♞f3 ♞ad8 23.♞xf4 ♞xf4∞ Cavalcanti, J (2253)-Fernandes,E (2406) ICCF email 2006) 16...c6 17.♘a4 ♞db8 18.♞c3 a5 19.♞ac1 Taimanov,M-Kotov,A Zürich 1953 19...♙f5∞ with a

good position. I don't see any ideas for White on the queenside.

15...g5!



A critical position. White has tried several different moves here, but in general I believe Black's chances are better.

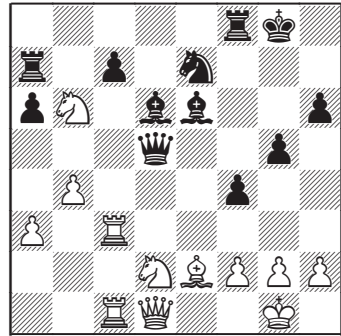
16.b4

16.♞f1 g4 17.♘e1 (17.♘e5 ♙xe5 18.dxe5 ♞xe5 19.♙xa6 Docx,S (2455)-Kaufeld, J (2288) Netherlands 2015 19...h5∞ with sharp play.) 17...h5!? followed by ...h5-h4 with a very sharp position in Gonzalez Zamora,J (2532) - Gonzalez Vidal,Y (2553) Cuernavaca 2015. (17...a5N 18.♘c3 c6 was of course also possible.) 18.♙xa6N 18...h4 19.♘c3 c6 20.♔d3 ♞h6⌚;

16.♘d2 ♞g7! I was happy to find this move over the board. Black seizes the initiative and will continue with ...f7-f5-f4. 17.♞c3 (17.♘f1 f5↑ Hansen,L (2545)-Hansen,C (2580) Odense 1994) 17...f5 18.♞ac1 ♞a7!? A kind of multi-purpose move. First of all, I protect the c7-pawn but I also noticed that after my future ...♘g6 White has ♞c6 and ♘xb6 ideas, as my bishop on d6 would be hanging. After

...♖a7 my rook is no longer under attack after ♜xb6. (18...f4 was also fine. 19.e4! Of course, White has to react actively in the centre. (19.♞xc7?! I was also concerned about this thematic exchange sacrifice, but after 19...fxe3 20.fxe3 ♙xc7 21.♞xc7 ♜f6! ♢ Black is better.) 19...♞xd4 20.exd5 (20.♞d3?! ♜e5♢ 20...♙f5 21.♜c4 ♞xd1+ 22.♞xd1 b5 23.♜xd6 cxd6 24.♜b6 Here I somehow thought I could be slightly worse but in fact Black was fine. 24...♖a7 25.♞dc1 ♞b8 26.♞c7 ♖ab7!? 27.♜a8!? ♞xc7 28.♜xc7 ♞c8 29.♞c3 ♜f7 30.♜f1=) 19.b4 f4 (19...♜g6!? was my first idea, but I was concerned about 20.♞c6 with the idea of ♜xb6 or even sometimes ♞xd6. (20.♜b2!? is probably safer for White. 20...a5 21.b5 f4 22.e4 ♞xd4 23.exd5 ♙f5 24.♜f3 ♞xd1+ 25.♞xd1 ♜e5∞ and even if Black has a plus, I believe White should hold.) 20...f4 21.e4 (21.♜xb6 fxe3 22.fxe3 ♜f7↑) 21...♞xd4 22.♜xb6! ♜e5 23.♜xd5 g4!↑ and we reach a very sharp position. I really believe Black has the initiative here and it should be very difficult to defend in practice for White.) 20.e4 (20.♙g4 ♙xg4 21.♞xg4 ♜f5♢) 20...♞xd4 21.exd5 ♙f5!N was the best.

a) 21...♞xd5? Miton, K (2605)-Cornette, M (2591) Germany 2016 22.♜xb6!



The blow we both missed. (22.♙c4? ♜f5 23.♞b3 ♙f7 24.♞d3 b5 and we agreed on a draw here: Miton, K (2605)-Cornette, M (2591) Germany 2016.) 22...cxb6 (22...♜f5 23.♜bc4±) 23.♞d3! and Black is losing material. 23...♜f5 (23...♜e5 24.♜f3+–) 24.♞xd6 ♞d7 25.♞xd7 ♙xd7 26.♙xa6±;

b) 21...♙d7!? was the other move I considered but as I didn't see the ♜xb6 idea, I chose instead ...♞d5. 22.♜c4 ♞xd1+ 23.♙xd1 ♙xa4 24.♙xa4 b5 25.♜xd6 cxd6 26.♙c2 ♜g7= with equality.

c) 21...♙d5?! 22.♞d3 ♜f6 23.♜c3! (23.♞xd5 is tempting but not that strong. 23...♜xd5 24.♞b3 ♜f7 25.♙c4 c6 26.♜xb6 ♜h8∞ with an unclear position.) 23...♙f7 24.♜ce4± with good compensation for the pawn.

d) 21...♜xd5?! 22.♙c4!±;

22.♙d3!? My opponent was planning this interesting move. (22.♜c4 ♞xd1+ 23.♙xd1 b5 24.♜xd6 cxd6 25.♜b6 ♞b8 26.♞c7 ♖ab7♢) 22...♜g7 (22...♙xd3 23.♜f3 ♞g7 24.♞xd3 ♜f5 25.♜c3 g4

26.♖d4 ♖xd4 27.♞xd4 f3 28.g3 h5∞
with an unclear position.) 23.♙xf5 ♞xf5∞
and White has to be precise to stay in the
game.

16.♖e1N 16...h5! followed by ...g5-g4
anyway. 17.♖d3 (17.♙xh5?! ♞h6 18.h3
f5↑) 17...g4 18.b4 ♖g7∞;

16.g3 ♞g7 17.♙f1 f5 18.♞e1 We have
been following the recent game between
Wang,H (2734)-Leko,P (2712) Danzhou
2016. Here it was time for Black to punish
White's passive structure. 18...f4!N
19.exf4 ♙g4! 20.♙g2 ♞ae8 21.♖e5 gxf4↑
with a very strong initiative.

16...g4

16...♞g7!? is also a decent alternative.
17.♖b2N

a) 17.♖c5 Tunik,G (2450)-Guo,Q
(2310) Moscow 2011 17...bxc5!N 18.bxc5
g4 19.♖d2 ♙xh2+ 20.♖xh2 f5 with a
strong attack: 21.g3 (21.f4 gxf3 22.♙xf3
f4↑) 21...h5↑;

b) 17.g3N 17...f5 18.♖c5 bxc5 19.bxc5
♙xg3 20.hxg3 f4↑;

17...f5 18.♖d3 ♖g6∞ followed by ...f5-
f4. Probably White has to play quickly
with ♖fe5, sacrificing a pawn but getting
enough compensation for it.

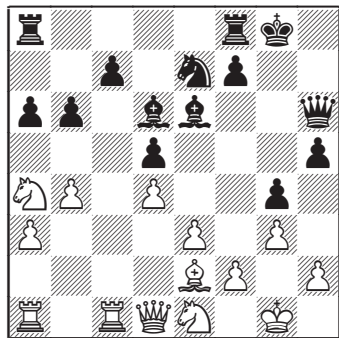
17.♖e1!N

17.♖d2 h5 18.♖f1 ♞g5∞ with a very
interesting position to play. Sargissian,G
(2702) -Fressinet,L (2700) Huaian 2016

17...h5 18.g3

18.♖d3 ♖g7 19.♞a2 ♙f5∞ Black wants
to play ...♞g5 and ... h5-h4 with a very
sharp position.

18...♞h6!?



This position is very interesting. I will
show you an illustrative line just to give an
idea how the game might continue:

19.♖d3!?

19.♖g2 ♖g6 20.♞c6 ♖g7! Nice idea.
Black is ready to give up a pawn for the
initiative. 21.♖xb6 (21.e4 dxe4 22.♖xb6
♞ad8 23.♖c4 ♙xc4 24.♞xc4 f5↑)
21...♞ad8 22.♖a4 ♞h8 Black is preparing
...h5-h4. 23.h4 (23.♖h4 ♖xh4 24.gxh4
♞f6 25.♞f1 ♙f5! 26.♞xa6 ♞xh4 27.♞g2
♙e4 28.f3 ♙f5↑) 23...gxh3 24.♖f4 ♖xf4
25.exf4 ♙xf4! 26.♖c5 (26.gxf4? ♞g6+!-+
and Black is winning.) 26...♙d6 27.♖b7
h4↑ with a very strong attack.

19...♖g7

19...♖g6 20.♖c3 f5 21.♞f1 h4
22.♞g2∞;

19...f5 20.♖f4 h4 21.♖b2 ♞f7 22.♞f1
♞h7 23.♞g2 ♖f7∞

20.♖f4 ♖g6 21.h4! ♖xf4 22.exf4 ♞f6=
with a good position.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we studied one of the most fashionable set-ups against the Ragozin. White wants to play a simple position with a minority attack. Carlsen and Aronian's victories with White attracted some followers to this variation. The positions are often very interesting but I believe that Black has decent counterplay

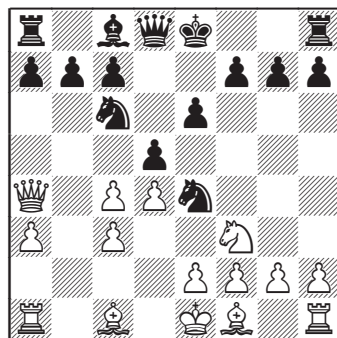
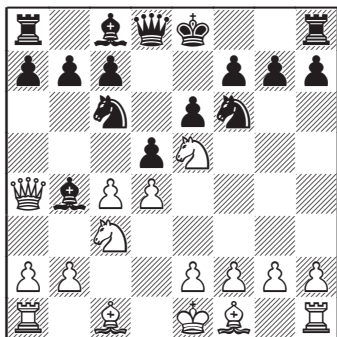
on the kingside. It's important to remember to play ...♖g6 when White doesn't develop quickly and also to know how to react against a3. Finally, Black needs to be ready to play...g7-g5 to find counterplay on the king-flank.

Chapter 4.

5. ♔a4+ ♖c6 — 6. XXX

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 d5 4. ♘c3 ♙b4
5. ♔a4+ ♖c6 6. ♘e5!?

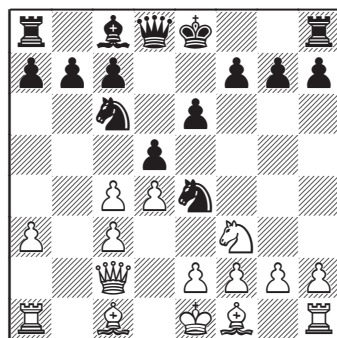
This was used by Jakovenko with success against Giri in 2015.



Attacking the c3-pawn directly and not giving White time to play ♙g5 pinning the knight. 8. ♔c2

6. ♙g5 h6 the move I recommend as it's coherent with our repertoire. It will transpose now after both of White's moves to something we can meet starting with the 5. ♙g5 h6 move order. (6...dxc4!? Taking benefit of White's move-order is very interesting and has recently been played by Aronian. It's quite similar to the lines of Chapter 11, except that 7.e4 is possible now.) 7. ♙xf6 See chapters 1 and 2. (7. ♙h4 See Chapter 11.);

6.a3 was used in 2016 by Topalov against Aronian. 6...♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♘e4!?

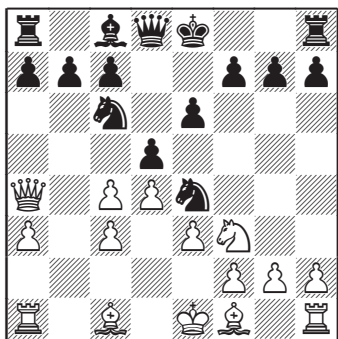


The most common move.

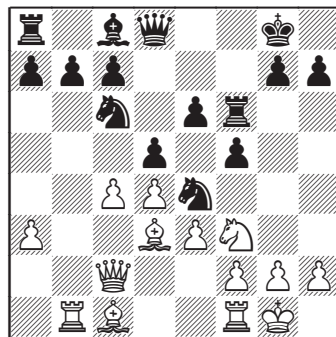
a) 8. ♙b2 was played in 2008 by Magnus Carlsen, but here I suggest a different path compared to the one Koneru played against him. 8...♙d7!? Driving the queen

away. 9.♖c2 (9.cxd5 exd5 10.♖b3 ♕f5!∞ followed by ...0-0 and ...♗a5.) 9...♘d6!? I like this move. Black is asking White what he will do with his c4-pawn. 10.c5 (10.cxd5N 10...exd5 11.e3 ♕f5= with a good position.) 10...♗c4 11.♕c1 ♗6a5 Black wants to play ...b7-b6 now. 12.e4 (12.♕f4N 12...b6∞) 12...dxe4!? Black is playing only on the light-squares. It's quite instructive. 13.♖xe4 ♕c6 14.♖g4 ♖d5 15.♕e2 0-0-0 (15...h5!? was also a good option.) 16.0-0 h5∞ and Black had a very good position in Semcesen,D (2416) - Zdebskaja,N (2357) Borup 2010.

b) 8.e3 A new move, played recently by Topalov.



8...♘xc3 Anand accepted the challenge. 9.♖c2 ♗e4 10.♗d3 f5!?N I believe this to be the most logical continuation. (10...♘d6 11.c5 ♗f5 12.0-0 h6 13.♖b1 0-0 14.♖c3 ♗fe7 15.♕d2 b6 16.♖fc1 ♗a5 17.♖c2 ♗c4!? with the idea of giving back the pawn and bringing the light-squared bishop into the game. 18.♕xc4 dxc4 19.♖xc4 ♕b7= and the game was balanced in Topalov,V (2760)-Anand,V (2779) Saint Louis 2016) 11.♖b1 0-0 12.0-0 ♖f6!



Not an easy move to make. The idea can be to play on the kingside with ...♖h6, but mainly to play ...b7-b6 and — after White's cxd5 — to recapture ...exd5 and the knight on c6 will be protected by the rook. 13.a4 b6 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♕a3 ♕b7 16.♖fc1 ♖c8∞ White has some compensation but I don't believe they can fight for more than equality.

c) 8.♕f4 0-0 9.♖c2 see 8.♖c2.

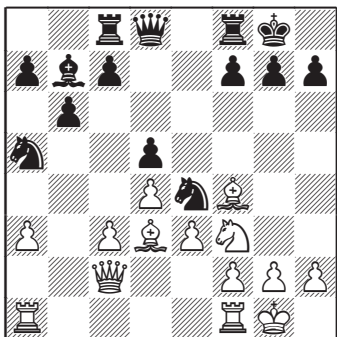
8...0-0 9.e3 (9.♕f4 was played 3 times by some good Dutch players in 2015. 9...b6 Black wants ...♕a6. 10.cxd5 (10.e3?! it looks rather suspicious to allow ...♕a6. 10...♕a6! 11.♗d3 ♗a5 12.♗e5N Probably the best. (12.cxd5?! was played once, but after 12...♕xd3 13.♖xd3 ♖xd5 14.0-0 f6= Black was slightly better in Tran,T (2455) -Gundavaa,B (2505) Moscow 2015.) 12...f5 (12...f6 is also possible. 13.cxd5 ♕xd3 14.♗xd3 exd5 15.0-0 ♖e8 16.♖fe1 c6 17.f3 ♗d6 18.a4 ♗ac4= with a balanced position.) 13.cxd5 ♕xd3 14.♗xd3 exd5∞ with an interesting position to play. I believe Black's chances are slightly better.) 10...exd5 11.e3 ♗a5 is the simple way to play. (11...g5 was played once and it's also quite interesting. 12.♕g3

♔f5 13.♔d3 ♖e8 14.0-0 I also tried other moves:

a) 14.♘d2N 14...♘a5 15.♙e5 (15.♘xe4 ♙xe4=) 15...f6! 16.♙xe4 ♙xe4 17.♘xe4 fxe5 18.♘d2 ♖f6 19.0-0 exd4 20.cxd4 ♖c7= with a balanced position.

b) 14.♘e5N leads to simplifications. 14...♘xe5 15.♙xe5 f6 16.f3 fxe5 17.fxe4 ♙xe4 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.0-0 ♖d7= and the position is equal.

14...♘a5 15.♘d2 ♘c4!? 16.♘xc4 dxc4 17.♙xe4 ♙xe4= and Black was fine in the game L'Ami,E (2619)-Vishnu, P (2503) Hoogeveen 2015.) 12.♔d3 ♙b7 (12...c5?! was played in the game Werle,J (2542)-Gundavaa,B (2506) Nicolosi 2015, but I believe it's a bit premature. 13.dxc5!N 13...bxc5 14.c4± and White is better.) 13.0-0 ♖c8



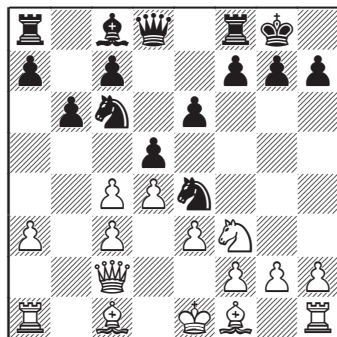
Preparing ...c7-c5. 14.♖fd1 (14.♘e1 h6 15.f3 ♘g5 16.♖f2 c5∞ with an interesting position in Sapis,W (2445) - Milovanovic,R (2415) Warsaw 1988. The knight on g5 can seem awkwardly placed, but it can be transferred to e6.) 14...♖e7 15.♘d2 c5 (15...g5!?N is the engine's suggestion, with interesting play after:

16.♙e5 f6 17.♙g3 f5∞) 16.f3 Hoang,T (2487) -Zhao,X (2423) Turin 2006.

a) 16.dxc5N 16...♖xc5 17.♙xe4 dxe4 18.♘b3 ♘xb3 19.♖xb3 ♖c6= with equality.

b) 16.♘xe4N 16...dxe4 17.♙e2 c4!? 18.d5 (18.♖ab1 ♙d5= with a good position.) 18...♖c5 19.d6 ♖d7∞ with an unclear position. The d6-pawn looks quite strong but I don't see how White can push it. Black can play around it and start to advance his pawns on the kingside.

16...cxd4!?N 17.fxe4 ♖xc3 18.♖b1 dxe3 19.exd5! leads to simplifications. (19.♘f1 d4!± with a very strong initiative.) 19...exd2 20.♙xd2 ♖b3 21.♙xh7+ ♘h8 22.♖e4 ♖c5+ 23.♘h1 ♖xd5 24.♖xd5 ♙xd5 25.♙xa5 ♘xh7 26.♖xd5 bxa5 27.♖xa5 ♖fb8= with full equality.) 9...b6



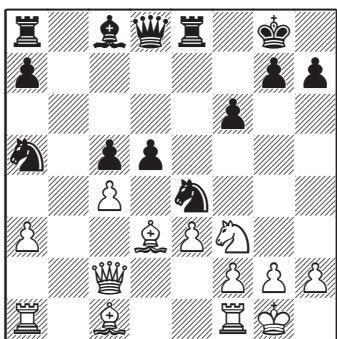
I believe this is the most logical set-up. Black wants to play ...♙a6. It makes sense to play on the light squares, and exchanging light-squared bishops is a good positional idea. 10.♔d3 (10.cxd5 exd5 since White has taken on d5, the ♙c8 can be developed to f5. 11.♔d3 ♘a5!?

(11...♖e8 followed by ...♟a5 will likely transpose to the same.) 12.0-0

a) 12.♙xe4?! N 12...dxe4 13.♞xe4 ♟a6↑ looks terrible for White. He won't be able to castle for a very long time.

b) 12.♞e5N 12...♖e8 13.c4 (13.♙xe4? dxe4 14.♞xe4 ♟a6↑) 13...♟a6!∞ with a good position.

12...♖e8 13.a4 (13.♞e5 f6 14.♞f3 (14.f3N 14...♞g5!♣ Black is better.) 14...c5!? 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.c4 (16.♞d1N 16...♞e7♣)



16...♞xc4! and Black is better due to his passed c-pawn. 17.♙xc4 dxc4 18.♞d1 (18.♞xc4+N 18...♟h8 19.♟b2 ♞b6♣) 18...♞b6♣ Moser,E (2437) -Kosintseva,T (2524)/ Rijeka CRO 2010) 13...c5!? (13...♙f5!?= is also totally decent.) 14.♞d2 ♟f5 15.♞xe4 ♟xe4 16.♟xe4N was probably better (16.dxc5 ♟xd3 17.♞xd3 ♞b3 18.♞a3 ♞xc5♣ and Black managed to win having little edge: Zhao,X (2542) - Hou,Y (2585) Jinzhou 2009.) but after 16...♖xe4 17.dxc5 bxc5∞ I also prefer Black's position.) 10...♟a6 11.0-0 ♞a5 12.♙xe4 (12.♞e5N 12...♖e8! Quite a standard and useful move. 13.f3 ♞f6∞

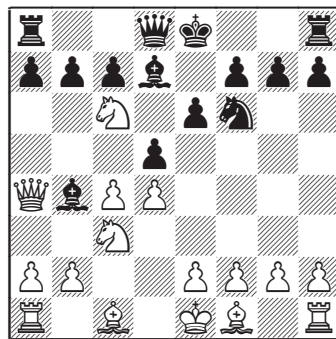
with an unclear position. Black wants to play ...c7-c5. 12.cxd5?! was played by Van Wely, but after 12...♟xd3 13.♞xd3 exd5 14.♞d2 f5♣ I believe he was worse in Van Wely,L (2681) -Ehlvest,J (2600)/ Panormo 2002) 12...dxe4 13.♞xe4 ♟xc4 14.♖e1 c5∞ and Black was fine in the game Siebrecht,S (2397)-Milov, V (2632) France 2004.

6.♟d2 0-0 7.e3 See Chapter 5.

6.e3 is the main move and it will be covered in the next chapter.

6.cxd5 exd5 See Chapter 3.

6...♟d7 7.♞xd7
7.♞xc6?!



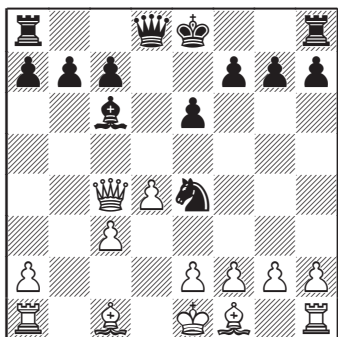
This move is just dubious because after 7...♟xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♟xc6 only Black can be better: 9.♞b3

a) 9.♞b4 a5 10.♞b3 dxc4 11.♞xc4 ♞e4♣ Slak, M-Kovacevic,V (2500) Pula 1979;

b) 9.♞c2 dxc4 10.f3 (10.♟a3 ♞e4♣) 10...0-0 11.e4 b5 12.♟g5 h6 13.♟h4 ♞d7

14.♙xf6 gxf6 Hernandez Onna,R
(2395) -Kozma,J (2380) Leipzig 1975;

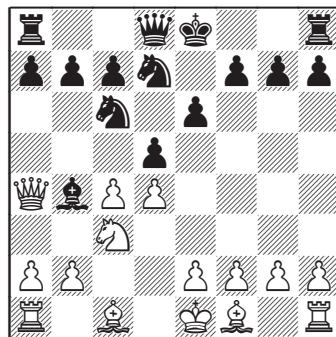
9...dxc4 10.♖xc4 ♘e4



Black scores very well from this position in the database. 11.h4! The best move! The idea is to prevent ...♖h4 and to play ♖h3. (11.♙f4?! ♖f6+ Dumpor, A (2325) - Palac,M (2572) Rijeka 2001; 11.♖d3 0-0 12.♙e3 ♖h4 13.♖c2 ♘d6+ Limontaite,S (2200)-David,A (2568) Liverpool 2008) 11...♖d6!?N 12.♖h3! 0-0 13.f3 ♘g3 14.e4 ♘xf1 15.♙xf1 f5 16.e5 ♖d7∞ with a balanced position where Black is definitely not worse.

7...♖xd7

7...♘d7!?



This is an alternative move. It's the suggestion of Pert in his recent book "Playing the Ragozin". 8.cxd5 ♘b6 9.♖b5 ♖xd5 (9...a6!? looks also playable. 10.♖d3 ♖xd5 11.a3 Granero Roca,A (2393)- Halkias,S (2566) Benidorm 2009 (11.e3!? N I tried this improvement, but even here Black is fine. 11...0-0-0 12.♙d2 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 (13.♙xc3 f5!∞) 13...♘e5!?) 14.♖c2 ♘ec4 15.e4 ♖c6 16.♙c1 f5 17.♙d3 ♘d6 18.f3 e5!?∞ with a complex position.) 11...♙xc3+!N 12.bxc3 f5! Black has good control over the light squares. 13.e3 (13.f3 0-0 14.e4 fxe4 15.fxe4 ♖d6∞) 13...♘a5∞ with an interesting position to play.) 10.e3 (10.♖xb4 ♘xb4 11.♘xd5 ♘6xd5 12.♙d2 (12.♙d1 0-0-0! ∞) 12...0-0-0 13.e3 e5 14.a3 ♘c6 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♙c2 ♘g4!? 17.♙e2 h5∞) 10...0-0-0!?N The novelty suggested in Pert's book. 11.a3

a) 11.♖xb4 ♘xb4 12.♘xd5 ♖xd5!? to play for a win. (12...♙6xd5 13.♙e2 ♘c2 14.♖b1 e5 15.dxe5 ♘a3 16.♖a1 ♘c2= with a draw.) 13.♖b1! ♘xa2 14.♙d2 a5∞;

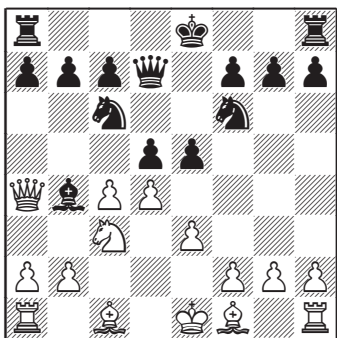
b) 11.♖xd5 ♘xd5 12.♙d2 e5! 13.a3 ♙a5 14.♙c4 ♘f6 15.0-0-0 exd4 16.exd4

♖xd4 17.♙xf7 ♜hf8= with equality.

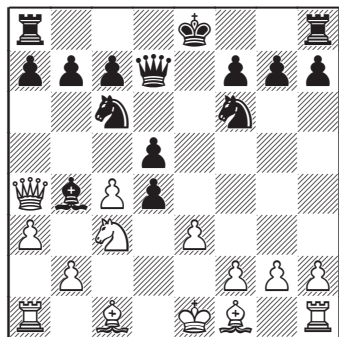
11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♖a5= with a balanced position.

8.a3!?

8.e3 is also possible and most of the time it transposes to our main line, but Black can take advantage of the move order. 8...e5!?



I believe this move gives Black a good and healthy position. (8...0-0 9.a3 will transpose. (9.♙d2 is a possibility, but after 9...a6?!∞ Black has scored quite well.)) 9.a3 (9.dxe5?! is dubious because of the 9...♖e4!N novelty 10.♞c2 (10.a3 ♖xc3 11.♞c2 ♖a2+! A nice move to play. 12.♙d2 (12.axb4 ♖axb4 13.♞c3 ♜d8+) 12...♙xd2+ 13.♞xd2 d4 14.♞xa2 0-0-0+ leaves White behind in development.) 10...d4! 11.a3 ♖c5! Not an easy move to see when playing 9...♖e4, but it's the point of the line. 12.exd4 (12.axb4 ♖xb4 13.♞d1 dxc3 14.bxc3 ♖cd3+!) 12...♖xd4 13.♞d1 ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖db3 15.♞xd7+ ♖xd7 16.♞b1 ♖xc1 17.♞xc1 ♖xe5+ and Black will have a better endgame due to his better pawn structure.) 9...exd4!



10.axb4 (10.exd4? ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 0-0 12.♙e2 Zielinski,M-Mele France 1949 12...♞ae8! 13.♙e3 (13.♞a2 ♞e6 with the simple idea of doubling on the e-file and if 14.0-0?! then 14...♞xe2! 15.♞xe2 ♖xd4+ winning material.) 13...dxc4 14.♙xc4 (14.♞xc4 ♖d5+) 14...♖g4 15.0-0 ♖xe3 16.fxe3 ♞xe3+ and now we understand why it was more precise to bring the a-rook to e8; the rook on f8 defends the f7-pawn.) 10...dxc3 11.b5!?N has never been played but it makes sense.

a) 11.bxc3 the move played in practice. 11...0-0 12.cxd5

a1) 12.♙e2?! dxc4! 13.0-0 (13.♙xc4?! is not good due to 13...♞g4 forcing the bishop to retreat. 14.♙f1□ 14...♖e4 15.b5 ♖e5 16.♞c2 ♖h8+) 13...a6 14.♞c2 ♞e6+ and Black was much better in the game Colle, E-Alekhine,A Hastings 1926.

a2) 12.♞c2N is a engine suggestion: 12...♞fd8 13.cxd5 ♞xd5 14.f3 a5 15.b5 ♖e7 16.c4 ♞c5 17.♙d3 c6 18.0-0 cxb5 19.cxb5 ♞e5∞ followed by ...♖ed5 with a good position.

a3) 12.c5?! is dubious because after 12...♖e4!+ White has problems defending

the c3-pawn and developing his pieces after, let's say, ...♖e5 or ...♗g4: Skatchkov, P (2415) -Kosyrev,V (2405) Sochi 1998.

12...♗xd5 13.♗b5 ♗b3!? 14.♗c4 ♗xc4 15.♙xc4 a5!∞ with a balanced position in Acevedo Millan,A (2345)-Jaluvka, J (2200) ICCF email 1997.

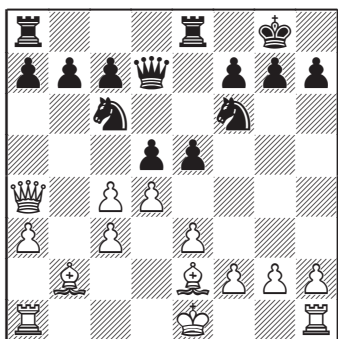
b) 11.cxd5 ♗xd5 12.b5 ♖e5 transposes to 11.b5.

11...♖e5 12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.b6+!? ♖c6 14.bxc7 0-0 15.bxc3 ♜fc8 and Black will recapture the pawn with a decent position. 16.♙b2 (16.c4 ♗e4 17.f3 ♗g6 18.g3 ♜xc7 19.♙e2 ♖d8 20.0-0 ♜cd7=) 16...♜xc7 17.♖d1 ♗e4 18.♗xe4 ♖xe4 19.c4 a5= and the knight will be nicely placed on c5.

8.cxd5? was played once, but after 8...♖xd5 9.♙d2 ♖b6+ White was simply losing his d4-pawn: Samur,A (2215)-Nogues,A (2214) Buenos Aires 2002.

8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0

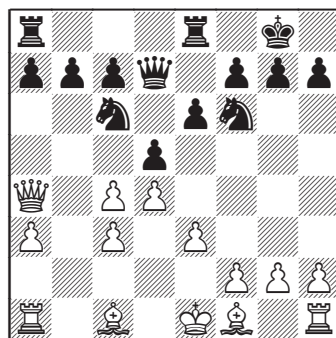
9...e5 looks logical, but after 10.e3 0-0 11.♙e2! ♜fe8 12.♙b2!



I don't see how Black is to proceed? I believe White will manage to stabilize the position and be slightly better thanks to

the two bishops, e.g. 12...dxc4 (12...♜ad8N 13.♖d1 exd4 14.cxd4 ♖e5 15.♗xd7 ♖exd7 16.cxd5±) 13.♗xc4 ♖a5 14.♗b4 b6 15.dxe5 ♖c6 16.♗f4 ♖xe5 17.♖d1 ♗c6 18.0-0± and White even managed to win in the game Jakovenko,D (2738)-Giri,A (2776) Khanty-Mansiysk 2015.

10.e3 ♜fe8!?



A rare move — there is only one game in my database with it — but I believe it's a good way to continue. Black keeps all the options available and wants to play ...♖e4, then ...♖a5. If White takes on d5, the rook will be ideally placed.

11.♙e2N

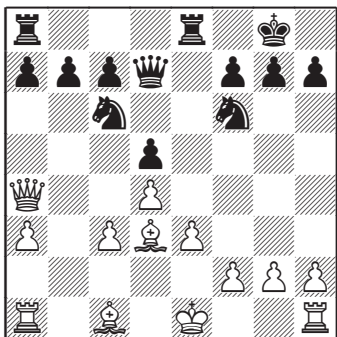
This is a logical alternative. White simply develops his kingside. 11.♗c2N 11...♖a5 12.cxd5 (12.c5?! b6+ ♖) 12...exd5 transposes to 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗c2.

11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗c2N

a) 12.♙e2N 12...♖e4 as in our main line. 13.♗c2 (13.♙b2 ♗f5!? 14.f3 (14.0-0 ♜e6!∞ with the idea being to seek some play on the kingside.) 14...♖d6 15.♙c1 ♗e6 (15...♖b8!?∞ is also interesting with

the idea of ...♖d7-♖b6.) 16.0-0 f5
 17.♔d3 a6∞ with an unclear position.)
 13...♖a5 Black wants to play ...c7-c5.
 14.a4 c5 15.♙b5 (15.dxc5 ♖c7=)
 15...♖c6 16.dxc5 a6 17.♔d3 (17.♙e2
 ♖xc5=) 17...♖e5!∞ and Black is fine.

b) 12.♔d3 was played in the game
 Pedersen,C (2357)-Ovetchkin,R (2475)
 Alushta 2004, but here Black could have
 played:

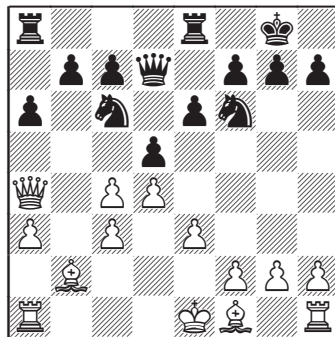


12...♖e5!N 13.♙b5 (13.♖xd7 ♖xd3+
 14.♔d2 ♖xd7 15.♙xd3 ♖b6= with an
 equal position.) 13...c6 14.♔e2 b5 15.♖c2
 ♖c4∞ with an unclear position.

12...♖a5 13.a4 (13.♔d3 c5! 14.dxc5
 ♖e7 15.a4 ♖xc5 16.♔a3 ♖c7∞ followed
 by ...♖a8 and ...♖c4.) 13...b6 14.♖b1
 (14.♔d3 c5 15.♙b5 ♖c6=) 14...♖c8∞
 followed by ...c7-c5.

11.♔d3?!N is dubious because of the
 nice move 11...♖e5! and now, after
 12.♖xd7 ♖xd3+ 13.♔d2 ♖xd7 14.♙xd3,
 Black has a choice, with a good position in
 both cases. 14...♖b6 (14...dxc4+ 15.♙xc4
 e5∞) 15.cxd5 (15.c5 ♖c4 16.e4 c6∞)
 15...exd5∞;

11.♙b2N 11...a6!



A very good move. Black wants to play
 ...b7-b5 because the ♙b2 can sometimes
 be hanging on the b-file after exchanges.
 12.cxd5 (12.♔e2?! b5!∞ is already better
 for Black, because the pawn is
 untouchable. 12.♖c2 ♖a5 13.cxd5 exd5
 14.♔d3 c5 15.dxc5 ♖c6∞ with an unclear
 position.) 12...exd5 13.♔e2 b6 (13...b5 is
 also totally correct. 14.♖c2 ♖a5 15.0-0
 ♖c4 16.a4 c6 17.♔d3 g6=) 14.c4! (14.0-0
 ♖a5 15.♖xd7 (15.♖c2 ♖c6 16.a4 ♖e6=
 followed by ...♖a8 and ...♖c4.)
 15...♖xd7 16.a4 f5= followed by ...♖f6.
 The position is balanced.) 14...b5! The
 only way not to be worse. 15.cxb5 axb5
 16.♖c2 Once again the pawn the b-pawn
 was poisoned. 16...♖a5 17.♔c3 ♖c4
 18.♙b4 ♖e4 19.0-0 ♖a6= with a double-
 edged position.

11.♖b1N 11...♖ab8! (11...b6 is not the
 best, because after 12.cxd5! exd5 13.♙b5
 ♖e6 14.0-0 ♖e4 15.♖c2 ♖d6 16.♔d3 g6
 17.♖b3± Black suffers from a lack of
 coordination.) 12.♔e2 ♖e4 13.♖c2 ♖a5
 14.a4 c5 and Black has a good position,
 for example: 15.♔d3 (15.cxd5 exd5

16.♔b5 ♖c6=; 15.0-0 ♖c7= with an unclear position.) 15...♖c7! protecting the c5-pawn. 16.cxd5

a) 16.f3 ♖f6=;

b) 16.♙xe4?! dxe4±;

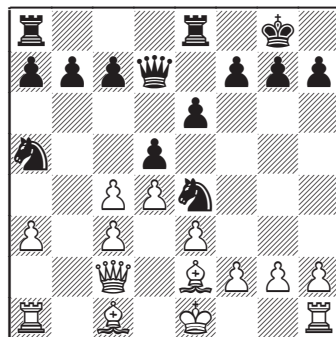
c) 16.dxc5 ♖xc5! 17.♙xh7+! ♖h8 18.cxd5! (18.0-0?! ♖xc4±) 18...g6! 19.♙xg6 fxg6 20.♙a3! (20.♖xg6 ♖h7± White has some compensation but I'm not sure it's enough.) 20...exd5 21.♙xc5 ♖xc5 22.♖b5 ♖c7 23.♖xg6 ♖xc3+ 24.♖e2 ♖c4+= with a draw by repetition.

16...exd5 17.dxc5 g6!?= and Black will win back his pawn.

11...♖e4 12.♖c2

12.♙d3 ♖xc3 13.♖c2 (13.♖b3?! ♖e4± and Black will stay a pawn up because 14.♖xb7?! is not good due to 14...♖d6± and the c4-pawn is falling.) Here Black has two solid options: 13...dxc4 14.♙xh7+ (14.♙xc4 ♖d5 15.0-0 ♖d6∞ the two bishops are giving compensation for White but a pawn is a pawn. Black can't be worse.) 14...♖h8 15.♖xc3 ♖xh7 16.♖xc4 e5∞ and I believe the position to be very interesting, and probably preferable for Black, or 13...♖e4 (14.♙xe4 (14.0-0 f5∞ once again White has compensation for the pawn but it is still a pawn.) 14...dxe4 15.♖xe4 ♖a5 16.0-0 ♖a4∞ and I start to prefer Black's position. 12.♙b2 a6! As in the 11.♙b2 line. Black wants to play ...b7-b5 or take on c4 first. 13.cxd5 (13.0-0?! dxc4±; 13.♖c2 ♖a5 14.0-0 ♖c6∞; 13.c5 b6∞) 13...exd5 14.0-0 ♖d6= with a solid position. Black controls all the light squares.

12...♖a5



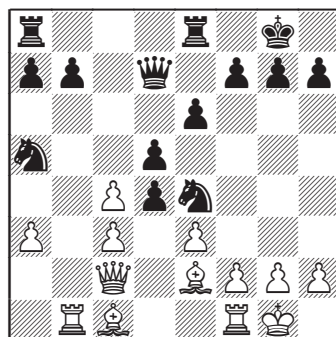
With the idea of playing...c7-c5.

13.a4

13.c5?! b6 14.f3 ♖f6± followed by ...e6-e5 giving Black an edge.

13.cxd5 exd5 14.0-0 (14.a4 ♖e6!? 15.0-0 c5= with equality.) 14...c5 15.f3 ♖f6 16.♖b1 a6 17.a4 ♖ac8= with a good position.

13.0-0 c5 14.♖b1 cxd4

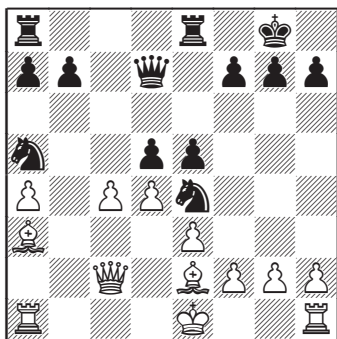


Not a typical approach, but it's quite interesting to know all the plans we have at our disposal. (14...♖c7!? is also totally fine with an equal position.) 15.exd4

(15.cxd4? just loses material after:
 15...♖xc4! 16.♙xc4 ♖ac8 17.♗b4 ♜d6+)
 15...♜d6 16.c5 (16.♙d3 g6 17.cxd5
 exd5=; 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♙f4 ♜ac4=)
 16...♜dc4 17.♙d3 g6 and Black will play
 ...e6-e5 or ...b7-b6 to open lines for his
 rooks. 18.h4 e5∞

13...c5 14.0-0

14.♙a3 cxd4 15.cxd4 e5!



Black is in time to play dynamically in
 the centre. 16.dxe5 (16.♖d1 ♖ac8 17.c5
 exd4 18.♗xd4 ♜c6 19.♖d1 ♗e6∞
 followed by ...♜e5.) 16...♖ac8 17.c5! ♖xe5
 18.0-0 b6= with a good position.

14...♖ac8 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♙b5

16.dxc5 a6 17.♙a3 ♜xc5 18.♙b4 ♜c4=
 followed by ...♜e4.

16...♜c6 17.dxc5

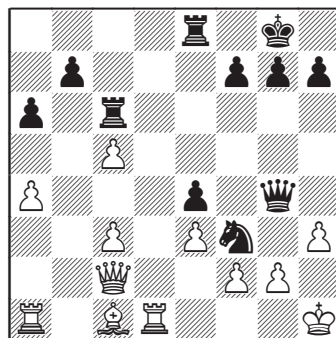
17.f3 ♜d6 18.♖d1 (18.dxc5 ♜xb5
 19.axb5 ♜e5 20.♖xa7 ♖xc5= and Black
 will win back the b5-pawn.) 18...♜xb5!?
 leads to some simplifications. 19.axb5 ♜e7
 20.dxc5 (20.♖xa7 cxd4 21.exd4 ♗xb5=)
 20...♗xb5 21.♖xa7 ♗xc5 22.♖xb7 ♗xc3=
 with full equality.

17...a6 18.♙d3 ♜e5 19.♙xe4

19.♙a3 ♜xd3 20.♗xd3 ♜xc5=

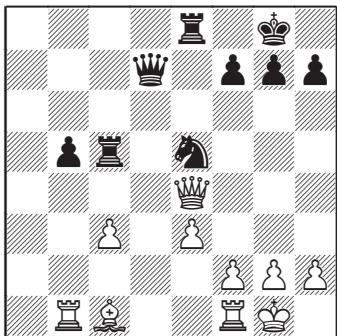
19...dxe4 20.♗xe4

20.♖d1 ♗g4 (20...♜d3!? is also totally
 fine: 21.♙a3 ♖c6∞ with ...♗g6 to follow.)
 21.h3! ♜f3+! 22.♜h1 ♖c6!



A very nice tactical motif. 23.♖d6
 (23.hxg4?? ♖h6#; 23.♗e2 ♗f5 24.♙b2
 ♖xc5∞) 23...♖xd6 24.cxd6 ♖e6! The same
 idea. 25.♗d1! The only move! (25.d7??
 would fail spectacularly after the beautiful
 25...♗xg2+! 26.♜xg2 ♖g6+ 27.♜f1 ♖g1+
 28.♜e2 ♖e1#) 25...♖h6 26.♗f1 ♗d7
 27.♙a3 ♜d2 28.♗g1! ♜f3 29.♗f1 ♜d2=
 and a draw by repetition is a normal
 outcome.

20...♖xc5 21.♖b1 b5 22.axb5 axb5



This position is very interesting. True, Black is a pawn down, but has full control over the d-file and his knight is much stronger than the ♖c1.

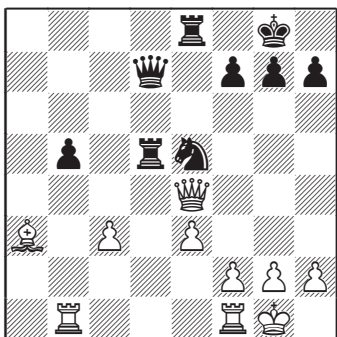
23. ♕a3

23. ♖h4 ♕c6=;

23. ♕b2 ♖d5= with good compensation. The engine gives 24. ♕c1 as the best move... it's a good sign.

23... ♖xc3

23... ♖d5!?



Playing only for compensation is also totally correct. 24. ♖f4 ♕c4 25. ♖a1 ♕d2 26. ♖fd1 ♖d8 with good compensation, for example: 27. ♖e1 (27. ♕h1 g5! 28. ♖b4 ♕e4! wins the f2-pawn. 29. ♖d4 (29. ♖f1 This move is not sufficient to protect the pawn: 29... ♕xf2+! and the knight is a taboo because of 30. ♖xf2? (30. ♕g1 ♕d1+ 30... ♖d1+ 31. ♖f1 ♖xa1 32. ♖xa1 ♖d1+ 33. ♖xd1 ♖xd1#) 29... ♕xf2+ 30. ♕g1 ♖xd4 31. exd4 ♕e4∞) 27... ♕b3 28. ♖ab1 ♕d2=

24. ♖b4 ♖d3 25. ♕b2 ♖d5= with equality.

CONCLUSION

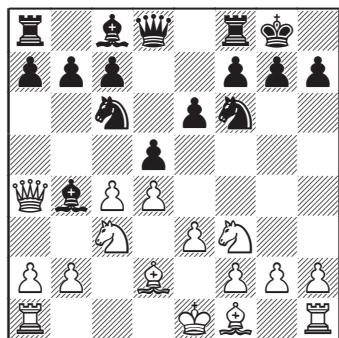
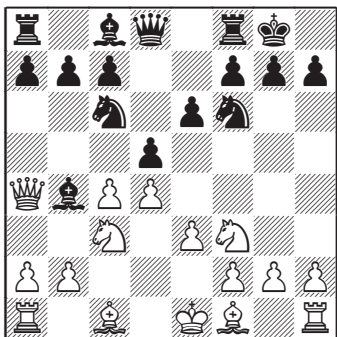
In this chapter we studied moves other than the classical 6.e3. 6.a3 is interesting, but Black is fine with the thematic ... ♕e4 followed by ... ♕a5 and ... b6. On 6. ♕e5 and 8.e3, after 8...e5!? Black is fine. On the most challenging 8.a3 I quite like the rare move 10... ♖fe8.

Chapter 5.

5. ♔a4+ ♖c6 — 6.e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♚a4+ ♖c6 6.e3 0-0

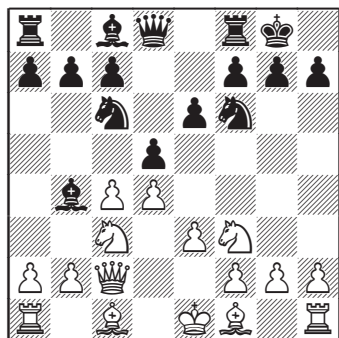
This is one of the most important positions in the Ragozin.



This is clearly the main move by the number of games played. White wants to play a3 and on ...♙xc3 to recapture with the bishop. 7.♚c2!?

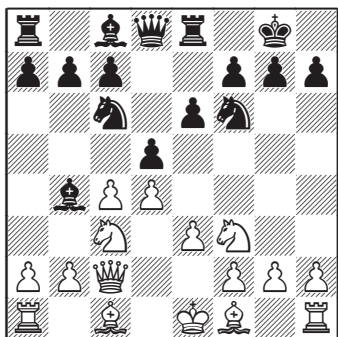
Here White has tried many moves, but I believe only 7.♚c2 and 7.♙d2 are critical. Black's idea is often to take on c4 and play for ...e6-e5. White in general tries to delay the development of the ♙f1 in order not to lose a tempo after Black's ...dxc4.

7.♙d2



The fashionable move. It's quite smart and logical to delay the ♙f1 development to win a tempo after ...dxc4. The queen has done her job on a4 by forcing the knight to move to c6 and now comes back

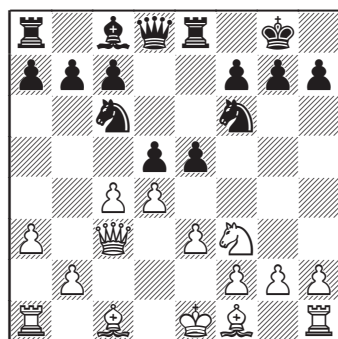
to a better square on c2. Black has tried several moves here and I will suggest the one which I believe is the simplest.
7...♖e8!?



This is my choice. It's a useful move and Black is waiting for the ♕f1 to move to take on c4. With this move Black can also think about pushing ...e5 and in addition it frees the square f8 for the ♖b4. (7...dxc4 is often played, but if we compare it to 7.♕d2 I believe White has better prospects here because they will castle faster and probably develop the ♖c1 to a better square than d2. 7...♕d6!? is the other move I could recommend. It has been played by Levon Aronian against Etienne Bacrot for example.) 8.♕d2

a) 8.a3 ♕xc3+! An important move connected to the one that follows next. (8...♕d6 9.c5! ♕f8 10.♖b5!± and I believe White is better because Black has problems liberating themselves with ...e6-e5: Shirov,A (2696)-Aleksandrov,A (2626) St Petersburg 2013.) 9.♖xc3 (9.bxc3?! has also been played but it's not very serious. 9...♖a5 (9...b6!?!N is a totally valid option. 10.cxd5 (10.♕e2 ♕a6 11.cxd5 ♕xe2

12.♖xc2 exd5) 10...exd5 11.♕d3 ♖a5∞ followed by ...c7-c5. I have a tendency to prefer Black in these positions.) 10.♖e5 (10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 was played in the game Ivanisevic,I (2658)-Gyimesi,Z (2592) Murska Sobota 2008, but here I prefer to prepare ...c7-c5 with 11...b6N 12.♕a3 ♖e4 13.♕d3 c5∞ with a good position.) 10...c5!N is more logical to me. Black is challenging the centre. (10...♖d7 11.♖xd7 ♕xd7 12.♕d3 h6 13.cxd5 exd5 14.0-0= and the position was equal in the game Kazimova,N (2262) -Khurtsidze,N (2457) Nakhchivan 2015.) 11.♕e2 (11.dxc5?! is just very bad for White after 11...♖c7!±) 11...b6 to play ...♕a6. 12.cxd5 exd5 13.0-0 ♖e4± and Black is better.) 9...e5!



The point! I like the idea of playing quickly in the centre to take advantage of our lead in development. 10.♖e5 (10.dxe5N has never been played but it's worth checking. 10...♖e4 11.♖c2! (11.♖d3?! ♕f5±) 11...♕f5 12.cxd5 requires some nerves. (12.♕d3 ♖xe5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5 14.0-0 dxc4 15.♕xc4 ♖g3 16.e4! ♖xe4± and Black is better.) 12...♖xd5 (12...♖xe5 looks super-strong

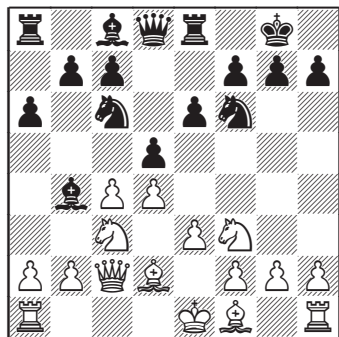
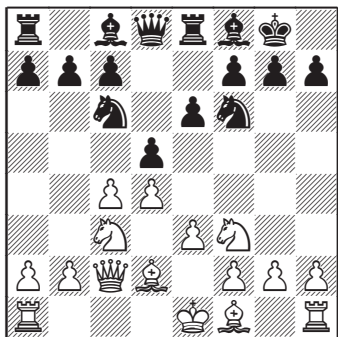
but the engine finds some inhuman defence: 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5 14.f3! Not an easy move to find. (14.♙c4 ♖f6 15.0-0 ♗g3 14...♗f6 (14...♖h4+ 15.g3 ♖f6 16.♙d3 ♗g5 17.f4 ♗f3+ 18.♗f2 ♙xd3 19.♖xd3 ♗g5 20.♗g2 ♗e4 21.fxex ♖f2+ 22.♗h3 ♖f5+= with a draw by perpetual.) 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♖xd3 ♖xd5 17.♖c2 ♖d6= with a balanced position.) 13.♙c4 (13.♖c4 ♖d7! ♖; 13.♗h4 ♖a5+ 14.♙d2 ♗xd2 15.♖xd2 ♖xd2+ 16.♗xd2 ♖xe5) 13...♖d7 14.e6 (14.0-0 ♗g5! ♖) 14...♖xe6! 15.0-0 (15.♙xe6?! ♖xe6+ and worst case scenario is that Black will win back the exchange with ...♗g3.) 15...♖h6∞ with a sharp position, but I like Black's prospects on the kingside.) 10...♗xe5 (10...♗e4!? has also been tried once. The difference is that now the white queen doesn't have the d4-square like she does in the main line. On the other hand, White can take on c6 intermediately, which is perhaps a more dynamic choice. 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♖c2 ♙f5 13.♖d1N is, I believe, the safest option. (13.♙d3 was played in the game Mirzoev,A (2535)-Petkov,V (2456) La Roda 2007, but here Black missed 13...dxc4!N 14.♖xc4 ♖g5!↑ with a strong initiative for the pawn.) 13...♖f6 14.♖f3! ♗g5 15.♖g3 ♖ad8 and Black definitely has enough compensation.) 11.dxe5 ♗e4 12.♖d4! ♖h4 13.g3 ♖h5 14.♙e2 (14.♙g2N is the other logical move. 14...♙h3 15.0-0 ♙xg2 16.♗xg2 ♖xe5 The simplest. (16...♖xe5 17.f3 c5! 18.♖d1 ♗d6 19.f4! ♖xd1 20.♖xd1 ♖e4 21.cxd5 ♖c4 and Black has good compensation for the pawn because of his overwhelming control over the light squares.) 17.♖xd5 ♖xd5 18.cxd5 f5!= followed by ...♖ad8

and ...♖e5 if needed. Black will take back the pawn with a good position.) 14...♙g4 15.♙xg4 ♖xg4 16.0-0 ♖f3 17.♖d1 (17.cxd5 ♗g5! Threatening mate in one. 18.h4! ♗e4 Now Black comes back to threaten ...♗xg3. 19.♖d1 (19.b4 ♗xg3! 20.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 21.♗h1 ♖h3+= with a draw by perpetual check.) 19...♖f5 20.♗g2 ♖xe5 Black wants to play ...♖ad8. 21.♖d4! ♖xd4 22.exd4 ♗f6 23.d6 cxd6 24.♙f4 ♖e6= followed by ...♗d5.) 17...♖xd1 18.♖xd1 dxc4 19.♖d4 ♖xe5 20.♖xc4 ♖d8= and the position is balanced, but Black even managed to win in the game Socko,M (2451)-Zawadzka,J (2376) Chorzow 2013.

b) 8.cxd5 exd5= can't be bad for Black as now the rook on e8 is perfectly placed.

c) 8.♙e2 dxc4N (8...e5!? is even possible. 9.cxd5 (9.dxe5N 9...♗xe5 10.♗xe5 ♖xe5∞ with a balanced position.) was played in the game: Kavinda,A (1986)-Thilakarathne,G (1974) Colombo 2016, but here I suggest the logical 9...♗xd5N as an improvement. For example: 10.dxe5 ♗xe5 11.♙d2 ♗xc3 12.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 13.♖xc3 ♖e7= with full equality.) 9.♙xc4 e5 10.♗g5!? The only critical move, attacking f7. 10...exd4! 11.♗xf7 ♖e7 12.♗g5+ ♗h8 13.♗f7+ ♗g8= and White has nothing better than to take a draw by repetition.

8...♙f8!?

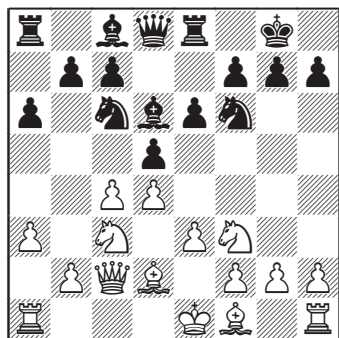


A very smart move played back in 2009 by Vladimir Kramnik and most recently by the very strong and very well-prepared Chinese Grandmaster Yu Yangyi. Black wants to play ...♖b4 followed by ...c7-c5.

a) 8...e5?! has been played by Magnus in a rapid game, but it's not very precise: 9.dxe5 ♗xe5 10.cxd5 ♗xf3+ 11.gxf3 ♔xc3 (11...♗xd5?? was a terrible blunder from the World Champion. 12.♗xd5 ♖xd5 13.♔xb4 ♖xf3 14.♖g1 ♔f5 15.♖e2+- and White was totally winning; Nakamura,H (2787) -Carlsen,M (2855) Leuven 2016.) 12.♔xc3 ♖xd5 We have been following the game Smirnov,A (2456) -Del Rio de Angelis,S (2519) Palma de Mallorca 2015, but here I prefer the simple 13.♖d1± and I believe White has better prospects.

b) 8...a6

This is the move I had been planning to play for a long time. I actually reached this position with another move-order in one of my games. It is a good alternative to the text move, and it's just a matter of taste which one to choose. 9.a3 (9.♔e2 is, once again, not in the spirit of the position. 9...dxc4 10.♔xc4 b5 11.♔e2 was played in the game Juhasz,A (2267) -Torma,R (2412) Budapest 2014, but now I prefer the strong 11...e5!= with at least equality.) 9...♔d6



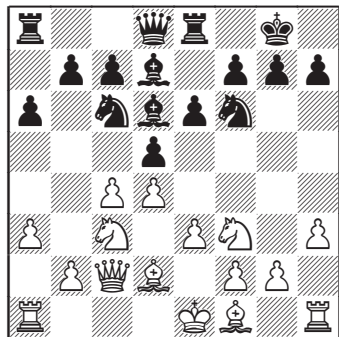
This position is critical. Let's try to understand what is going on. White doesn't want to play ♔e2 or ♔d3 which would lose a tempo after ...dxc4, so will instead try to play some other useful

moves. Meanwhile Black doesn't want to play ...dxc4 while the bishop on f1 hasn't moved yet, so the question is who will give up first and release the tension in the centre? 10.h3 White continues the waiting policy.

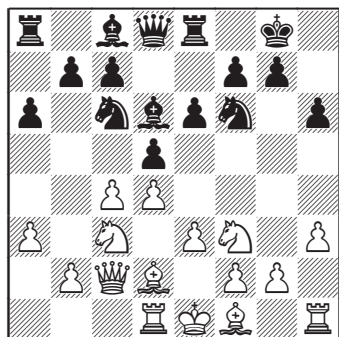
b1) 10.c5N has never been played but it's important to understand why. 10...♗f8! and now if we compare it to all the lines where I said ...♗d6 was not precise, we can see that here ♗b5 is no longer an option and ...e6-e5 is coming next. 11.♗d3 (11.b4 e5 12.dxe5 ♖xe5 13.♖xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗e2 ♗f5) 11...e5 Black is in time to open the position. 12.dxe5 ♖xe5 13.♖xe5 ♗xe5 14.b4 (14.f4?! ♗e8; 14.♖e2 ♖e4=) 14...♗g5!? Trying to create some weaknesses. 15.g3 a5∞ and the position is very complicated, but I like Black.

b2) 10.0-0-0?! A rare idea. White wants to play with e4 in the centre and maybe to organise some attack on the kingside. 10...♗d7 11.e4 (11.c5N 11...♗f8 12.e4 On other moves ...e6-e5 was possible. 12...dxe4 13.♖xe4 ♖xe4 14.♗xe4 ♖e7! 15.♗d3 g6 and I start to prefer Black who has a simple plan: ...♗g7, ...♗a4, and/or ...♗c6, etc.) 11...dxe4 12.♖xe4 was played in the game Donchenko,A (2410) - Luther,T (2580) Bad Zwesten 2004, but here it was more precise to start with 12...♖xe4N 13.♗xe4 e5! 14.d5 (14.♖g5 g6 15.♗d5 ♗f8 16.dxe5 ♗xe5 I believe Black is better. For example: 17.♖f3 ♗f6 18.♗h6 ♗e6 19.♗xd8 ♗fxd8 with a better endgame.) 14...♖d4! 15.♖xd4 exd4 16.♗xd4 ♗e5 Followed by ...♗f6. The f2- and b2-pawns will be hanging.

10...♗d7!?

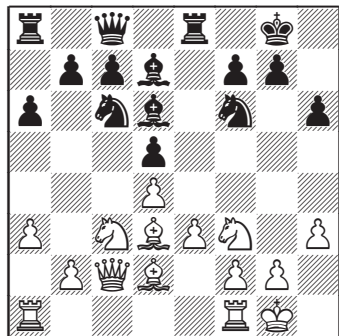
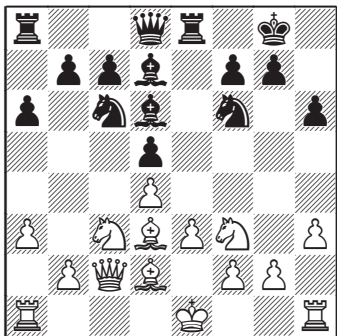


A move that was recently played by Magnus Carlsen against Sergei Karjakin. It's in the same spirit. (10...h6 is the move I played myself. 11.♖d1



I believe this is the best for White. It's another useful waiting move.

b1) 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗d3 ♗d7!?



A critical position. I don't see how White should continue. (12...♔e6 was the move played by my friend Fabien Libiszewski, but after 13.g4!? he already faced an unpleasant position, even if it should be fine with a precise play. 13...♞d7 (13...♔d7!N is again the move I prefer even if it was better to play it one move earlier.) 14.♞g1 ♞f6 15.♞d1 b5 16.h4± Gupta,A (2634)-Libiszewski,F (2547) London 2016) 13.b4

b11) 13.g4?!N I also tried this move, but if we compare it with the 12...♔e6 line, here Black is a tempo up. 13...b5! 14.♔f1 b4! 15.♞e2 ♞e4+ and Black is better.

b12) 13.0-0?N is just very bad after 13...b5+;

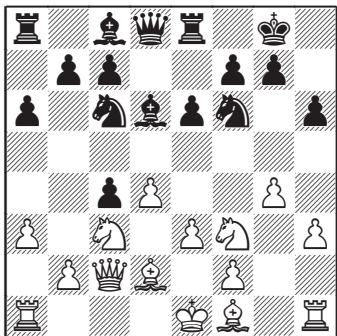
b13) 13.0-0?!N 13...♞c8! A very strong move with the idea of sacrificing on h3!

14.♞h2! A very good defensive move. 14...♞e7 Probably safer. Black will continue with ...♔f5. (14...♔xh3!? is a very interesting try. 15.gxh3 ♞xh3 16.f4□ 16...♞xe3! 17.♔xe3 ♞xe3+ 18.♔h1 ♞xd4 19.♞f2! ♞xd3 20.♞ad1 ♞g6 21.♞xd4 c6= and Black has good compensation for the rook!);

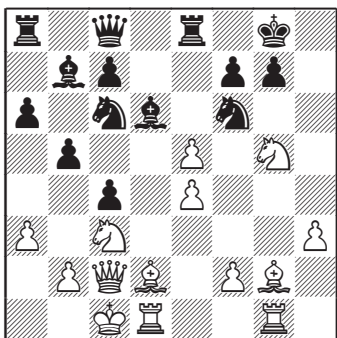
b14) 13.♞a4N 13...♞e4∞ can't be bad for Black. The engine suggests White retreat with ♞c3.

13...♞a7!? As in the Magnus' game. 14.♞a4 b6 15.♞c3 ♞b5 16.♞e2 ♞e4= and Black was fine in the game Laznicka,V (2637)-Mamedyarov,S (2719) Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.

b2) 11.g4!? was played once by Igor Kovalenko. 11...dxc4!

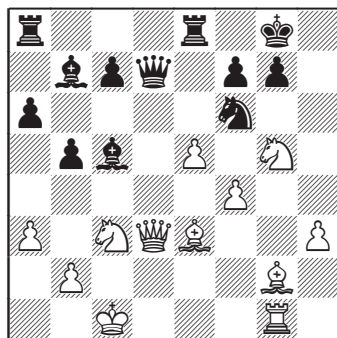


It's important to react quickly in the centre when your opponent is trying to attack you on the flank! 12.g5 (12.♙xc4N 12...b5 13.♙e2 ♖b7 14.♖g1 b4∞ and I believe Black's position is good.) 12...hxg5 13.♜xg5 b5 14.♖g1 threatening ♜xf7. 14...♜e7 15.0-0-0 was played in the game Kovalenko,I (2596) -Aleksandrov, A (2625) Voronezh 2013. Here I prefer 15...♙b7N With this move Black threatens the unexpected ...♙h2. 16.♙g2! ♜c8 17.e4 e5! A very nice tactical idea. 18.dxe5! ♜c6!



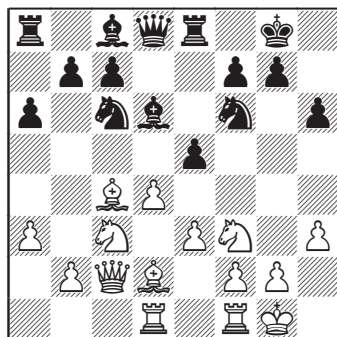
Threatening ...♜d4! 19.exf6 (19.♙e3 is another move if White wants to play on, but Black again has a good continuation:

19...♜xe5 20.f4 ♜d3+ 21.♞xd3! cxd3 22.♞xd3 ♜d7! 23.♞c2 (23.e5? ♙c5!



Just winning material on the spot.) 23...♞ad8 24.e5 ♙xg2 25.♞xg2 ♙f8 26.♞d1! (26.exf6? ♞xe3-+) 26...♞e7 27.♖g1! and here Black can try to play on, but in the worst case there is 27...♞d7= with a repetition.) 19...♜d4 20.♞b1 ♜b3+ 21.♙c2 ♜d4+= with a draw by repetition.

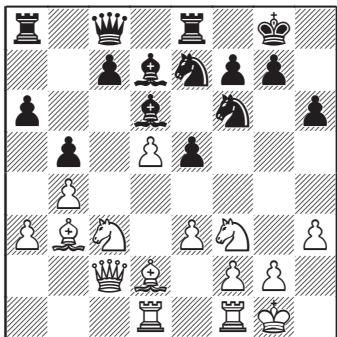
11...dxc4 12.♙xc4 e5 13.0-0!?



A very interesting move played by Hikaru Nakamura.

b1) 13.dxe5 ♖xe5 14.♗xe5 ♞xe5!?: with a very complicated position. Let's see how things can turn bad if White is not careful: 15.♞b3?! (15.♗e2N 15...♙f5∞) 15...♞e8! 16.♗d5 ♗e4 17.♙b4 b5 18.♙d3 ♙xb4+ 19.axb4 ♙e6 20.♙xe4 ♞xe4+ and Black was much better in the game Danielian, E (2454) -David,A (2580) Cento 2011.

b2) 13.d5 The move I faced. 13...♗e7 14.0-0 (14.e4 ♗g6 15.♙e3 b5 16.♙e2 ♙d7 17.0-0 ♗h5∞ followed by ...♗f4: Damljanovic,B (2569)-Mitkov,N (2514) Leon 2001.) 14...♙d7!? I like this quiet move I played. 15.b4?! This is dubious even if it looks logical. (15.♞fe1 b5 16.♙a2 ♞c8∞ with a complicated position. 15.e4 was probably the best, but after 15...♗g6∞ I again like Black's position, who will continue with ...♗h5.) 15...b5! 16.♙b3 ♞c8!



Very strong. Now ...♙xh3 can be an idea. 17.e4 (17.♗h2! Neutralizing ...♙xh3 threats. 17...a5∞) 17...♗g6 (17...♙xh3!↑ was already strong but I missed it.) 18.♙c1? Now Black has a combination: 18...a5! 19.bxa5 ♙xh3! 20.♞d3 Here I spent a lot of time trying to find a win, and I actually did, but the funny thing is

that at the end of the winning line I miscalculated the material balance, and because of this hallucination in my mind I chose another continuation here!

(20.gxh3? ♞xh3 is just winning, for example: 21.♙d3 (21.♗h2 ♗h4 22.f3 ♙c5+! was the reason I played ...a6-a5. After bxa5 the c5-square is free for my bishop! 23.♗h1 ♗h5+→) 21...♗g4 22.♞fd1 ♞xa5! 23.a4 f5+→ with a terrific attack.) 20...♙d7? Even after this I was still much better but I was unable to win. Moreover, I almost succeeded in losing! Sumets,A (2585) -Cornette, M (2594) Cap d'Agde 2015. (20...♞g4! of course was my first intention and the winning move! 21.♗e1 (21.♗h4 ♙xg2 22.♗xg2 ♗h4 it's the same.) 21...♙xg2 22.♗xg2 ♗h4 23.♞g3 ♗f3+ 24.♗h1 ♞h5+ 25.♗h4 ♗xh4 In my calculations I thought that here I would only be a pawn up (like in the game), but in fact I am going to grab the second pawn next move! 26.♞h3 (26.♗xb5 ♗xe4+→) 26...♞xa5+→;

13...♞e7!N This I believe is Black's best.

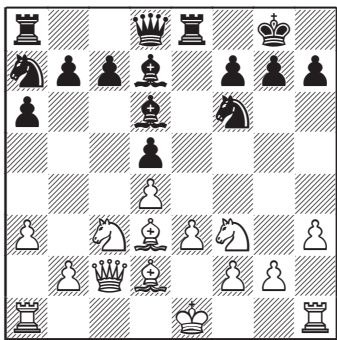
b1) 13...♙d7 The move played by Aronian, but it is not equalizing after 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♞xe5 16.e4!N (16.f4 ♙f5 17.♞b3 ♞e7= and the position was balanced in: Nakamura,H (2790) -Aronian,L (2786) Moscow 2016.) 16...♙c6 17.f3± and I believe White is slightly better.

b2) 13...e4 14.♗e1 b5N is my attempt to improve on the one existing game in my database in this position. (14...♞e7?! 15.f3!± Markelova,L (2133)-Kovanova,B (2382) Novi Sad 2016) 15.♙a2! (15.♙e2

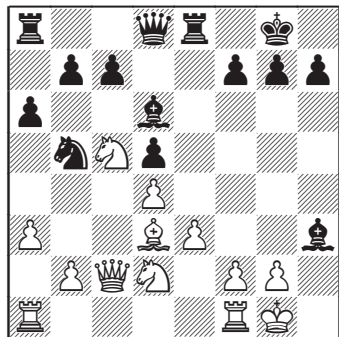
♙b7∞) 15...♚b8∞ with a complicated position.

b3) 13...exd4?!N 14.exd4± is very unpleasant for Black.

14.dxe5 (14.d5? is bad for White because after 14...e4!± Black is much better. 14.♟d5 ♜xd5 15.♙xd5 exd4 16.♚f6 1 ♚f6= followed by ...♙f5.) 14...♜xe5 15.♜xe5 ♚xe5 16.f4 ♚h5 17.♙d3 ♙e6∞ With a balanced position, probably around equal.) 11.cxd5 (11.♙d1N is the other logical move. 11...e5! I guess this was Magnus' idea. 12.cxd5 (12.dxe5 ♜xe5 13.♜xe5 ♚xe5!? 14.cxd5 ♜xd5 (14...c6!? is an interesting engine suggestion. 15.♙d3 is safer. (15.dxc6 ♙xc6∞ looks very dangerous for White who is far from finishing his development.) 15...cxd5 16.0-0 ♚c8∞ with an unclear position.) 15.♙d3 ♚h4 16.g3 ♚h5 17.♙e2 ♚h6 with a balanced position.) 12...exd4! leads to some simplifications. 13.dxc6 dxc3 14.cxd7 cxd2+ 15.♜xd2 ♚xd7 16.♙e2 ♚e6= and the position is around equal.) 11...exd5 12.♙d3 ♜a7!?



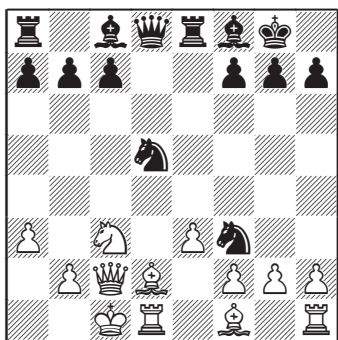
An interesting positional idea. Black wants to play ...♜b5. 13.♚b3 (13.0-0N I also analyzed this natural move. 13...♜b5 (13...h6!?= is of course totally fine.) 14.♜a4 ♜e4 15.♜c5 ♜xd2!? 16.♜xd2 ♙xh3!



A cute tactical idea. 17.♜f3! (17.gxh3? Taking the bishop is a mistake: 17...♚g5+ 18.♜h1 ♜xd4! The point! 19.♙xh7+! (19.exd4 ♚f4+ and there is no defence against ...♚h2 mate.) 19...♜h8 20.♚d3 ♚e5 21.f4 ♚xe3 22.♜xb7 g6± and Black is better.) 17...♙xc5 18.♙xh7+ ♜h8 19.dxc5 ♙g4 20.♜h2 ♙d7 21.♙f5 c6= with an equal position.) 13...c6 14.♚xb7? (14.0-0N 14...♜b5∞ is quite good for Black.) 14...♜b5 15.♜xb5 Karjakin,S (2773)-Carlsen,M (2855) Bilbao 2016. Here it was possible to improve Black's play with 15...cxb5!N 16.0-0 ♙c7! A nice way to trap the queen. 17.♜e5 ♚b8 18.♚a7 ♙b6 19.♚xa6 ♚a8 20.♚xa8 ♚xa8 21.♜xd7 ♜xd7 22.♙xb5 ♙d8± and Black could have been a bit better.

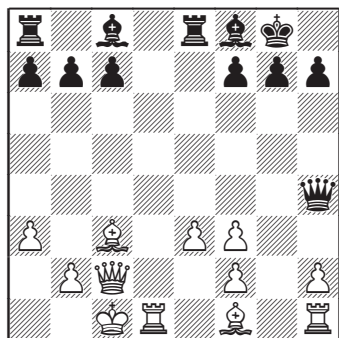
9.a3 to prevent ...♜b4. (9.♙e2 ♜b4!? 10.♚b1 c5 This was Black's idea. 11.dxc5 ♙xc5 12.a3 (12.0-0N is the other logical

move, but after 12...dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖d7 14.a3 ♜bd5= I believe Black is totally fine.) 12...♜c6 13.0-0 dxc4 (13...d4!?N looks like a totally playable alternative too. 14.♜e4 ♜xe4 15.♚xe4 a5= To prevent b4. Black wants to play ...e6-e5 next. Probably White has to make some trades on d4, but it shouldn't give them anything.) 14.♙xc4 was played in the game Postny,E (2652)-Gajewski,G (2643) Germany 2014, but here I like the sophisticated 14...♙d6!N The idea can be to play ...♜e5 to exchange some pieces. For example: 15.♚c2 (15.♜e4 ♜e5!=) 15...a6 16.♟fd1 ♜e5 17.♜xe5 ♙xe5 18.♙d3 h6= with equality.) 9...e5! 10.dxe5 (10.cxd5?N has never been played and for good reason. 10...♜xd4! A very strong move. Black is already much better. 11.exd4 exd4+ 12.♜e2?! (12.♙e2 dxc3 13.♙xc3 ♜e4+) 12...♚xd5--+ with a terrific attack.) 10...♜xe5 11.cxd5 ♜xd5 12.0-0-0 (12.♙e2N 12...c6 13.0-0 ♜xf3+ 14.♙xf3 ♙e6 15.♟fd1 ♜xc3 16.♙xc3 ♚g5= with an equal position.) 12...♜xf3!



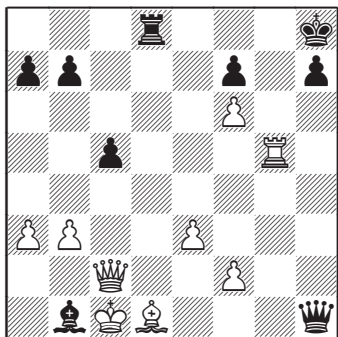
A new move introduced by Yu Yangyi. 12...♜b6 was the move played previously. The text move looks a bit scary, opening the g-file, but you can be sure it was part

of very deep preparation. 13.gxf3 ♜xc3 14.♙xc3 ♚h4!



This is the critical position. The queen is important on h4, preventing the plan of h4-h5, etc. The next moves of the game are the most logical ones: 15.♙d3 ♙e6 16.♟hg1 ♟ad8 17.f4 ♟d6! Black wants to double on the d-file. 18.♙e4

a) 18.f5N 18...♙a2!?! is a funny top choice of the engine. (18...♙d5 19.♟g3 ♙e4!?! is not the first line of the engine, but it is of course the human move. 20.♙e4 ♟xd1+ 21.♜xd1 ♚xe4 22.♚xe4 ♟xe4 23.♙xg7 (23.f4 g6 24.♜e2 ♙d6= with a solid position.) 23...♙xg7 24.f6 ♟h4!= and Black will win back the pawn on h2 or on f6.) 19.b3 It looks like this move is winning a piece but it is not. (19.♟g3 ♟ed8 20.♙e2! looks like a strong attempt but once again Black has enough resources: 20...♟xd1+ 21.♙xd1 ♚xh2! 22.♙xg7 ♙xg7 23.f6 ♚h1! 24.♟xg7+ ♜h8 25.b3! c5! 26.♟g5 ♙b1!



A very nice move! 27. ♖xb1 (27. ♖e2 ♕g6∞) 27... ♖xd1+= with an equal endgame.) 19... ♖ed8! 20. ♕c4 ♖xd1+ 21. ♖xd1 ♕xa3+ 22. ♕b2 ♖xd1+ 23. ♖xd1 ♕f8 24. ♖d7 ♖e7 25. ♖a4 ♖c5= and there is ...b7-b5 if White takes on a2.

b) 18. ♖b1N I also checked this natural move. 18... ♖ed8 19. ♕e5 (19. f3 g6!? I like this cold-blooded move. 20. f5 ♕c4!= will lead to massive simplifications. The position is equal.) 19... ♖xd3! 20. ♖xd3 ♕f5 21. ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 22. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23. ♖xf5 ♖d1+ 24. ♖a2 ♖d5+= with a draw by repetition.

18... ♖xd1+ 19. ♖xd1 c6= I believe that objectively this position is equal, but in the game White was not cautious enough: 20. ♖g1?! Bu,X (2715)-Yu,Y (2725) Shenzhen 2016, and here Black missed a nice chance: 20... f5!N the point is that after 21. ♕xf5 (21. ♕f3 ♖d8) 21... ♕xf5 22. ♖xf5 ♖xf2 Black is just much better because the e3-pawn will fall.

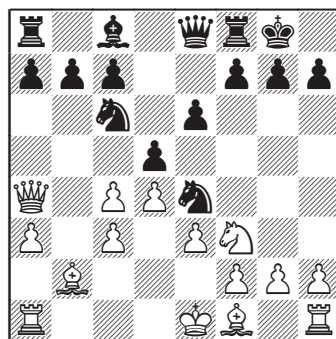
7.a3 ♕xc3+ (7... ♕d6?! It's important to understand why this move does not work well here: 8. c5! ♕e7 9. b4 and White is better because the classical break with

9...e5 is not enough to equalize here: 10. dxe5 ♖g4 11. ♕b2 ♖cxe5 12. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 13. ♖d1 ♕e6 14. ♖xd5! ♕xd5 15. ♕xe5± and White is already a pawn up: Carlsen,M (2775) -Eljanov,P (2716) Moscow 2008) 8. bxc3 ♖e4 Not the only way to play but it's quite logical. 9. ♕b2

a) 9. ♖c2 b6 See Chapter 4 after 6.a3 and 8. ♖c2.

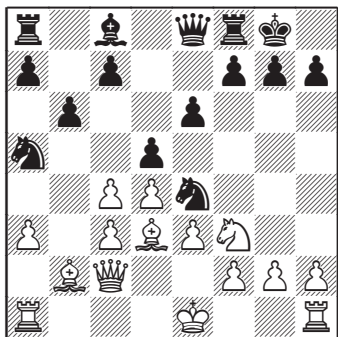
b) 9. ♕d3 has recently been played by Mamedyarov. 9... ♖xc3 10. ♖c2 ♖e4 11. ♕xe4 dxe4 12. ♖xe4 ♖a5! 13. ♖c2 c5 (13...b6!?N is also an interesting possibility. 14. ♕d2 ♕b7 15. ♕xa5 bxa5∞ with a complicated position. Black wants to play ...♕xf3 then ...c7-c5 for example.) 14. dxc5 ♖e7 15. ♕d2 ♖c6 16. 0-0 was played in the game Mamedyarov,S (2747)-Fressinet,L (2700) Huaian 2016, but here I prefer 16...e5= Black will continue with ...♕g4 and ...♖d8 capturing the c5-pawn at a convenient moment.

9... ♖e8!?



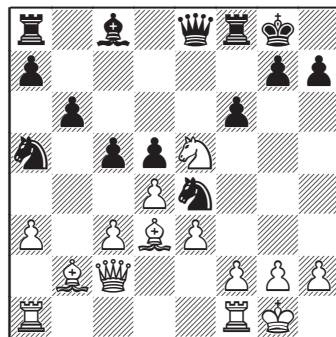
A very interesting move played twice by Tatiana Kosintseva back in 2009 and 2010. Black's idea is to play on the light squares, with ...b7-b6 and ...♖a5 coming

next. Besides ... dxd4 might be a threat if White is not careful. 10. c2 (10. e2N 10... d7 11. c2 a5 with the same ideas as in the games. 10. d3?N would have been a bad idea because of 10... e5!f) 10... a5 11. d3 b6! ?



I like the improvement Kosintseva played in her second game in this position. Black wants to control all the light squares. 12.cxd5 (12.a4N makes sense, because a3 can be a threat due to the lack of squares for the rook on f8. 12... a6! ? 13. a3 c5 14. d5 e7 and I like Black's position.) 12...exd5 13.0-0 c5!? N was my idea of an improvement: (13... b7 14.a4 c4 was played in the game. (14... e6 was also totally fine.) 15. e5! ? xe5 16.dxe5 xe5 17.c4 e6 18.cxd5 xd5 19. xc7= with a balanced position in: Van Wely,L (2641)-Kosintseva,T (2515) Moscow 2010.) 14.dxc5

a) 14. e5? does not work well: 14...f6!



15. f3 (15.c4 is tempting, but after 15...fxe5 16.cxd5 d5! 17.dxe5 c4! 18. xc4 f5! → Black is winning.) 15...c4 16. xe4 dxe4 17. d2 b7 with a good advantage.

b) 14.c4 xc4 15. xc4 dxc4 16. xc4 b7 with a balanced position.

c) 14.a4 c4 15. xe4 xe4 16. xc4 dxe4 17. d2 e8 Black is totally fine.

14...bxc5 15.c4 (15.a4 e6) 15... xc4 16. xc4 dxc4 17. e5 f5= with equality.

7. d3 has been played several times but it can't be a serious attempt for an advantage. When compared to, for example, the 7. d2 line, after 7...dxc4 it will be the same position but a tempo down for White. 7...dxc4 8. xc4 a6 9.0-0 d6 and Black is fine, planning ...e6-e6 or ...b7-b5.

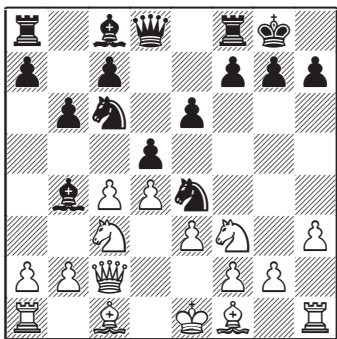
7. e2 dxc4 8.a3 (8. xc4 see 7. d3 .) 8... d6 followed by ...e6-e5. It seems clear that White has no way to get an advantage after his e2 . 9. xc4

a) 9.e4 e5! 10.♖xc4 (10.dxe5?!N 10...♜xe5♞; 10.d5? ♜d4♞) 10...exd4 11.♜xd4 ♜e5 12.♞a4 was played in the game Spata,G (2255)-Tristan,L (2438) Mar del Plata 2012, and here I like 12...a6♞ with the idea of pushing the pawns on the queenside: ...c7-c5, then ...b7-b5, etc.

b) 9.♙xc4 a6 10.♞c2 e5∞ and Black was obviously fine in the game Hilverda,A (2384)-Bluebaum,M (2588) Berlin 2015.

9...e5 10.d5 ♜e7 11.e4 We have been following the game Kotanjian,T (2313) - Meister,J (2473) Tula 2001. Here Black could have equalized directly with: 11...c6! =;

7.h3 is quite a strange waiting move. It was played by Mamedyarov and twice by Kovalenko. I have no doubt that Black has several good alternatives here, but I will suggest what I believe is the simplest: 7...♜e4 8.♞c2 b6!?



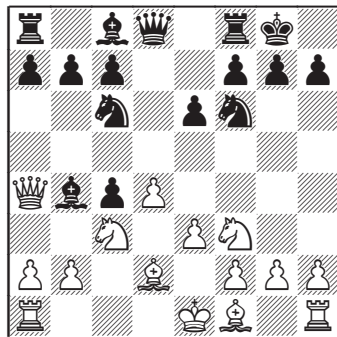
As played by Kosintseva. Just as in the line with 7.a3, Black wants to play on the light squares. 9.cxd5 White releases the tension to avoid ...♙a6.

a) 9.♙d3N 9...♙xc3+!? 10.bxc3 ♙a6 11.0-0 (11.♙xe4?! dxe4 12.♞xe4 ♜a5♞ and I prefer Black, because the bishop on c1 is far from being in the game.) 11...♜a5 12.♜e5 f6 (12...♞e8!? is also very interesting. 13.f3 ♜f6 14.cxd5 ♙xd3 15.♞xd3 exd5∞ followed by ...c7-c5.) 13.cxd5 ♙xd3 14.♜xd3 exd5 15.f3 ♜g5= with an equal position.

b) 9.♙d2N 9...♜xd2 10.♜xd2 (10.♞xd2 dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♙b7 12.0-0 ♜a5 13.♙e2 c5= and the position is equal.) 10...e5= and Black is fine.

9...exd5 10.♙d3 ♙f5 11.♙d2 (11.0-0N 11...♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♞e8= followed by ...♜a5, ... ♞c8 and probably ...c7-c5.) 11...♜xd2 (11...♙xc3!?N was also a decent alternative. 12.♙xc3 ♞f6∞) 12.♜xd2 ♙xd3 13.♞xd3 ♜e7 14.a3 ♙d6 15.♜b5 c6 16.♜xd6 ♞xd6= and Black was totally fine in the game Chiburdanidze,M (2514)-Kosintseva,T (2562) Ulaanbaatar 2010.

7...dxc4

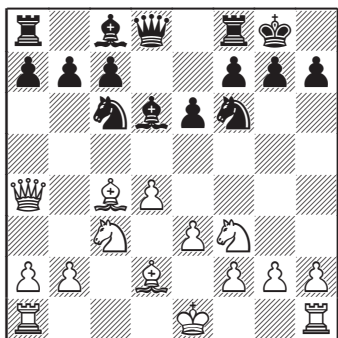


The best way to proceed. If we compare this position with the 7.♞c2 line, here Black can't keep the tension in the centre (as explained in the notes to 7...♞e8).

Besides, the white queen is not very comfortably placed on a4 now, and will have to retreat at some point anyway. 7...♖e8 is a move I have played recently, but I don't recommend it and it's for a concrete reason: 8.a3! ♗d6 (8...♗f8!? is maybe better but not in the spirit of the position.) 9.c5! My opponent didn't play this move. 9...♗f8 10.♗b5 ♗d7 11.♞c2± and Black has difficulties with playing ...e6-e5, as White has managed to develop his bishop to b5, always threatening ♗xc6 after ...e6-e5.

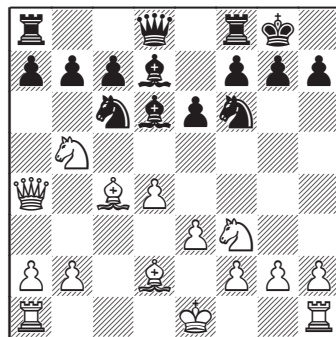
8.♗xc4 ♗d6

This is the critical position. White has tried different moves.

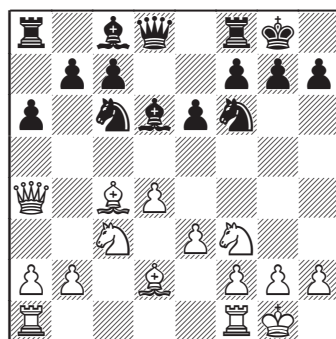


9.♞c2!?

The fashionable move. 9.♗b5 is often played to disturb Black's position. 9...♗d7!?



A move introduced by Vladimir Kramnik. It's the solid option. (9...♗e7 is of course possible, with the idea to play ...a7-a6 and then come back to d6 with the bishop. 10.0-0 (10.♞c2 a6 11.♗c3 here I like 11...♗b4!? 12.♞b1 b5 13.♗e2 ♗b7∞ and Black will continue with ...c7-c5. The knight on b4 has the d5-square after a3: Sosa Patino,C (2525)-Beaumont, D (2522) LIPEAP corr 2002.) 10...a6 11.♗c3 ♗d6



Here White has tried many moves: 12.♞c2

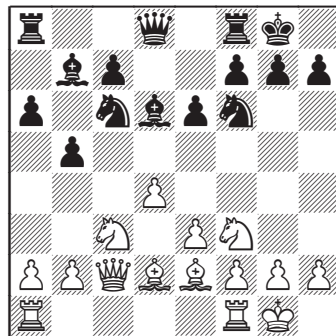
a) 12.♞ad1 e5 Black should not worry, there is no discovery along the d-file. 13.dxe5 (13.d5 ♗e7 14.e4 h6 15.♗e2

♖g6∞ with an interesting position. In general I like Black's chances: they can continue with ...♙d7 and ...♖c8, followed by ...c7-c6, or play on the kingside with ...♜f4 or ♜h5-f4: Gagunashvili,M (2625)-Serper,G (2507) Las Vegas 2007.)

13...♜xe5 14.♙e2 (14.♜xe5 ♙xe5 15.f4 ♙d6 16.h3 b5!N was a good move order. (16...♙xh3?! was played once. 17.gxh3 b5 18.♜xb5! axb5 19.♖xb5 ♖b8 20.♗f5± White is better, even if Black succeeded in winning the game: Pujari, R (2136) -Bakre,T (2452) Pune 2014.) 17.♙xb5 (17.♜xb5?? ♙d7!-+ is just winning a piece.) 17...♙xh3! 18.♙c6 (18.gxh3 axb5 19.♖xb5 ♖c8∞ and Black has very strong initiative for the pawn.) 18...♙g4! 19.♙xa8 ♙xd1 20.♜xd1 ♖xa8∞ with a very unclear position where Black's chances are not worse than White's.) 14...♖e7 15.♖c2 (15.♜xe5N 15...♙xe5= with a balanced position. 15.♜g5?! was played by Nakamura, but after 15...♙f5± Black was already a bit better: Nakamura,H (2784)-Mamedyarov,S (2753) Moscow 2013.) 15...♜xf3+ 16.♙xf3 ♙g4= with full equality.

b) 12.♙e2 e5 13.d5 ♜e7 14.e4 c6!N is a simple and efficient novelty. 15.dxc6 (15.♙g5 cxd5 16.exd5 (16.♙xf6?! is a mistake because after 16...gxf6 17.exd5± Black has the initiative.) 16...♜e8∞ with a good position.) 15...♜xc6 16.♙e3 (16.♖fd1 ♜d4!?= with equality.) 16...♙e6= followed by ...♖e7.

12...b5! (12...e5 is also totally fine but I want to show you another way to play this kind of position.) 13.♙e2 ♙b7



A critical position. White has tried several moves: 14.♜e4

a) 14.a3 to prevent ...♜b4. 14...e5 15.♙d3 (15.d5 ♜e7 16.e4 h6= and Black continued with ...c7-c6: Sachdev,T (2425) -Zdebskaja,N (2419) Beijing 2008.) 15...exd4 16.exd4 ♜e7 17.♜e4 (17.♜g5N was probably the most challenging. 17...♜g6 18.♖ad1 h6 19.♙xg6 hxg5= followed by ...♙f4.) 17...♜xe4 18.♙xe4 ♙xe4 19.♖xe4 ♖d7= and Black was totally fine in the game Krasenkow,M (2604) -Arutinian,D (2561) Wrocław 2012.

b) 14.a4 b4 15.♜a2 (15.♜e4? ♜xe4 16.♖xe4 ♜a5 17.♖g4 f5± Georgiev,V (2563)-Milov,V (2632) Geneva 2004) 15...a5 16.♜c1 Eliet,N (2435)-Lazarev,V (2479) Belgium 2008 16...♜b8!∞ followed by ...♜bd7 and ...c7-c5 with a good position.

c) 14.♜g5 ♜b4 15.♖b1 h6 16.♙f3 was played in the game Martić,Z (2356)-Kovacevic,V (2478) Sibenik 2011, but here Black missed 16...♜bd5! with an advantage. 17.♜ge4 ♜xc3 18.♙xc3 ♜xe4 19.♙xe4 ♙xh2+! 20.♜xh2 ♖h4+ 21.♜g1 ♙xe4±;

14...♖xe4 15.♗xe4 ♫a5!? 16.♗g4
 (16.♗c2N 16...♫c4!= this is the point.
 Black is fine, and if 17.♙xc4?! ♙xf3!
 18.gxf3 ♗g5+ 19.♖h1 ♗h5 20.f4 here
 Black can take a draw, but they can also
 try to play for more. 20...bxc4 21.♗xc4
 ♖ab8 22.♙c3 ♗f3+ 23.♖g1 g5⌘) 16...♫c4
 17.♙c3 f5 18.♗g5 (18.♗h4 ♗xh4
 19.♫xh4 ♫b6=) 18...♙e7 19.♗h5
 (19.♗g3N 19...♫d6∞ followed by ...♙f6
 after d5, and ...♫e4 otherwise.)

19...♫d6∞ and Black was totally fine in
 the game: Oleksiyenko,M (2622)-
 Vitiugov,N (2721) Gjakova KOS 2016.
 Black can continue with ...♖f6.) 10.♗b3

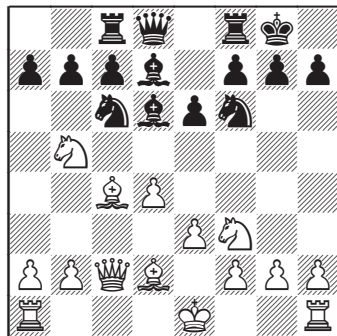
a) 10.♗d1 the move played by Laurent
 Fressinet. 10...e5!?N is the engine's
 suggestion.

a1) 10...a6N 11.♫xd6 cxd6 12.0-0 ♖c8
 13.♖c1 ♗b6= also looks totally fine for
 me.

a2) 10...♫e4 11.0-0 e5 12.♫xd6 ♫xd6
 13.♙d5 exd4 14.♙xc6 (14.exd4N
 14...♙g4= is also fine for Black.) 14...♙xc6
 15.♫xd4 ♙e4= and the position was
 roughly equal in the game Fressinet,L
 (2700) -Grandelius,N (2543) Porto Carras
 2011.

11.dxe5 (11.♫xd6 cxd6 12.dxe5 dxe5∞
 and I don't believe that the bishop pair
 promises White any advantage. Black can
 continue with ...e5-e4 or ...♫e4.)
 11...♙xe5!∞ and Black is fine.

b) 10.♗c2 ♖c8!?



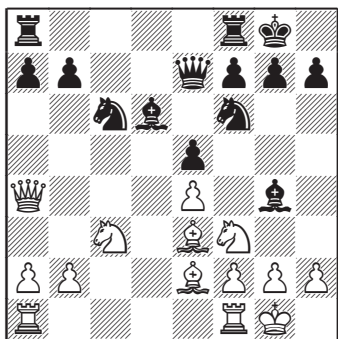
I like this prophylactic move. (10...a6
 11.♫xd6 cxd6 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♗b1 ♫e7=
 followed by ...♙c6 and Black was fine in
 the game Mirzoev,A (2567)-Cruz, C
 (2534) Elgoibar 2008.) 11.0-0 was played
 in the game: Candela Perez,J (2402)-
 Ramirez Garcia,J (2234) Madrid 2012,
 but here Black should have played:
 11...a6!N 12.♫c3 (12.♫xd6 cxd6∞ with
 the idea ...♫a5 or/and ...e6-e5.) 12...♫b4
 13.♗b3 c5= with a balanced position.

c) 10.♫xd6 cxd6 11.♗a3 ♫e4 12.♙d3
 (12.0-0N 12...e5= followed by ...♙g4.)
 12...♫xd2 13.♫xd2 d5 14.0-0N (14.♖c1
 was played in the game De Oliveira,D
 (2113) -Leenders, C (1996) IECC 2011.
 14...e5N to take advantage of White's king
 in the centre. 15.dxe5 ♗g5 16.g3 ♗xe5
 17.0-0 ♖fd8= and Black is fine.) 14...♗e7
 15.♗xe7 (15.♗b3 ♖ac8!? 16.♖fc1
 (16.♗xb7 ♖b8 17.♗a6 e5!= and Black will
 win back the pawn sooner and later.)
 16...♫a5 17.♗d1 ♗b4= the position is
 equal.) 15...♫xe7 16.♖fc1 ♖fc8= and I
 don't believe White has any serious
 chances in this position.

10...♫e4 11.♫xd6 cxd6 Black will take
 back the bishop pair. 12.♙d3 ♫xd2

13. ♖xd2 ♖a5 14. a3 (14. ♖c3 N 14... ♖xc3 15. bxc3 b6= is also totally fine.) 14... ♖ab8 15. ♖b5 ♖xb5 16. ♖xb5 ♖fc8 17. ♖e4 d5 18. ♖c5 ♖e8 19. ♖xc6 ♖xc6= and draw was agreed in the game Ponomarev, R (2744)-Kramnik, V (2784) Wijk aan Zee 2011.

9.0-0 is the most often played move, but it's not so complicated to play with Black here. 9...e5 10. d5 (10. h3 ♖f5!? to control the diagonal. 11. dxe5 ♖xe5 12. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 13. ♖ad1 c6 14. e4 ♖g6 15. ♖f4 ♖c7 16. ♖xe5 ♖xe5= and the position was equal in Martinovic, S (2403)-Palac, M (2559) Zagreb 2008.) 10... ♖e7 11. e4 (11. ♖c2 ♖g4!? looks the simplest to me. 12. ♖g5 ♖f5 13. e4 (13. ♖d3 ♖xd3 14. ♖xd3 h6 15. ♖ge4 ♖xe4 16. ♖xe4 f5∞ and Black was fine in the game Baranowski, T (2315) - Gretencord, U (2057) LSS email 2011.) 13... ♖g6= followed by ...c7-c6: Danashevsky, V-Panov, O (2202) ICCF email 2011.) 11... ♖g4 asking White the question of what he wants to do with his knight on f3? 12. ♖e2 c6! The classical break in the centre. 13. dxc6 ♖xc6 14. ♖e3 ♖e7!? N



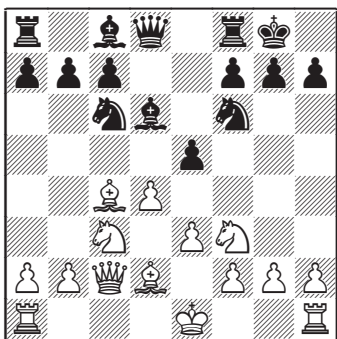
This move was my idea of an improvement. (14... ♖xf3 15. ♖xf3 ♖d4 16. ♖fd1 was played in the game Mamedyarov, S (2756)-Hammer, J (2630) Bilbao 2014, but here I prefer 16... ♖xf3+N 17. gxf3 ♖e7 It looks a bit awkward, but if White doesn't find something concrete there is no reason for Black to be worse. 18. ♖b5 (18. ♖ac1 a6 is ok for Black. Let's see one of the possible continuations: 19. ♖g5 ♖e6 20. ♖b3! ♖xb3 21. axb3 ♖e7 22. ♖a4 ♖fd8 23. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24. ♖c7 h6! 25. ♖h4 ♖h5!= with equality. 18. ♖g5 ♖e6!= to unpin the knight.) 18... ♖fd8 19. ♖ac1 (19. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 20. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 21. ♖d1 ♖e6 22. ♖g2 h6= and I don't see any problems for Black.) 19... a6 20. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 21. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 22. ♖b3 ♖e7 23. ♖g2 ♖e8= and the position is balanced.) 15. ♖fd1 (15. ♖b5?! ♖c5!∞; 15. h3 ♖xf3 16. ♖xf3 ♖c5 17. ♖g5 ♖d6 followed by ... ♖d4. The position is equal. 15. ♖ac1 ♖fd8 16. ♖b5 ♖b4! 17. a3 a6= with some simplifications.) 15... ♖fd8 16. ♖ac1 (16. ♖g5 ♖e6 to prevent ♖d5. Black wants to continue with ...h7-h6. 17. ♖d5 ♖xd5 18. ♖xd5 h6 19. ♖xf6 ♖xf6= with equality. 16. h3 ♖xf3 17. ♖xf3 ♖c5=) 16... ♖xf3 17. ♖xf3 ♖d4! 18. ♖xd4 exd4 19. ♖d5 (19. ♖b5 ♖f4∞ followed by d4-d3. 19. ♖xd4 ♖xh2+!∞ and the bishop is untouchable due to ... ♖e5+.) 19... ♖xd5 20. exd5 ♖c5= and the position is equal.

9. h3 was played by Svidler, but it's not critical. 9...a6 (9...e5!? directly was also possible.) 10.0-0 (10. ♖e2 e5 11. d5 ♖e7 12. e4 ♖d7 13. ♖c2 c6! The thematic break in the centre. 14. dxc6 ♖xc6∞ and Black had a good position in the game Dobrov, V

(2499) -Yemelin,V (2564) Serpukhov 2007. 10.e4 e5 11.dxe5 ♖xe5 12.♗xe5 ♙xe5 13.0-0-0 has been played twice, and here I prefer 13...♞e7!♞ Black can play ...♞c5 next or even ...♙xh3 followed by ...b7-b5.) 10...e5 11.♞c2 b5 12.♙e2 ♙b7 13.a3 ♞e8 14.d5?! (14.♙d3N was probably better. 14...♗xd4!? 15.exd4 e4 16.♗xe4 ♗xe4= and Black is totally fine.) 14...♗e7 15.e4 c6!♞ and Black was already better in the game: Svidler,P (2739) -Giri, A (2797) Tbilisi 2015.

9...e5

This is of course the move we want to play.

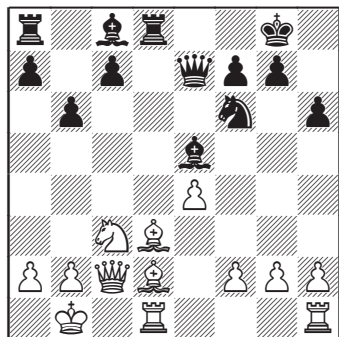


10.dxe5

10.d5 has been played twice by Kiril Georgiev, but it's not impressive. 10...♗b4 11.♞b1 (11.♞b3 a5!∞ followed by ...e5-e4 and/or ...c7-c6.) 11...c6 (11...e4!?N is the engine's suggestion. 12.♗d4 (12.♗xe4? ♙f5 13.♗xf6+ ♞xf6-+ and Black is winning.) 12...♙e5 13.♗xe4 ♗bxd5∞ and Black has a good game.) 12.dxc6 ♗xc6 13.0-0 ♙g6= and Black was fine in the game Georgiev,K (2613)-Hracek,Z (2594) Sibenik 2016.

10...♗xe5 11.♗xe5 ♙xe5 12.f4

12.♙d3 ♞e7 13.0-0-0 ♙d8 14.♗b1 h6 15.e4 b6

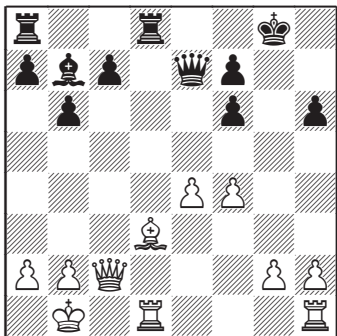


To develop the bishop to b7 and put pressure on e4. 16.f4 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♙b7 18.♙xf6

a) 18.e5N 18...♗d5 19.♙d2 ♗b4! 20.♙xb4 ♞xb4 21.♞hf1 ♙d4 22.a3 ♞c5!= and the position is equal.

b) 18.♞he1N 18...♗xe4!? looks a bit scary but it's possible. (18...c5 19.e5 ♗d5 20.f5 ♗xc3+ 21.♞xc3 (21.bxc3 ♙d5∞ with a complicated position.) 21...♙d4!= with a balanced position.) 19.♙e5! (19.♗a1 f5∞) 19...f6 20.♙xe4 ♙xe4 21.♞xe4 fxe5 22.♙d5 ♙ac8 23.♙xe5 ♞d7= with equality.

18...gxf6!?



An interesting move to prevent White from pushing his pawns in the centre.
 (18...♖xf6 was also fine. 19.♖xc7
 (19.♖hf1 ♖c6= with equality.) 19...♖xd3!
 20.♖xb7 (20.♖xd3? ♙xe4+!) 20...♖xd1+
 21.♖xd1 ♖d8! and Black is not losing a
 pawn because after 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8=
 Black is threatening mate on the back
 rank.) 19.e5 (19.♖he1N 19...♖d4∞ with a
 complicated position.) 19...fxe5 20.fxe5?!
 (20.♖de1N was probably safer. 20...♖d4=)
 20...♖xe5 21.♖he1 ♖xh2∞ and Black was
 able to win in the game Holm,K (2417)-
 Vidit,S (2642) Gibraltar 2016.

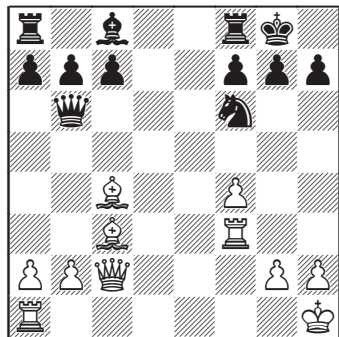
12.0-0 c6= the position is just equal.

12.0-0-0 ♖e7 13.♙b1 ♖d8 14.f4
 (14.f3N 14...b6 15.e4 ♙b7∞ with an
 unclear and interesting position to play.)
 14...♙xc3 15.♙xc3 ♙g4 16.♖xd8+ ♖xd8
 17.h3 ♙d7 18.♖d1 ♙c6= and a draw was
 achieved without problems in the game
 Korobov,A (2692) -Moiseenko,A (2657)
 Rivne 2016.

12...♙xc3! 13.♙xc3 ♘g4!

13...♖e7 has also been played with
 varying success. I believe it's playable but

I'm not a fan of it. 14.0-0! (14.♙d4N
 14...b6 15.0-0 ♙b7=) 14...♖xe3+ 15.♙h1
 ♖b6 16.♖f3=

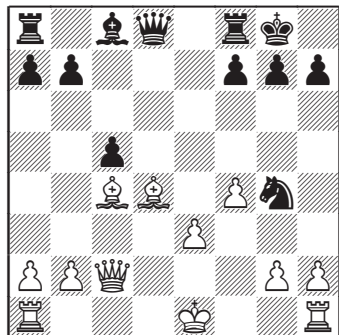


and this position is dangerous to play
 with Black: Svane, R (2555)-Cheparinov,I
 (2689) Doha 2016.

14.♙d4

14.e4N I also checked this natural
 move. 14...♙e3 15.♖e2 ♘xc4 16.♖xc4
 ♙e6 17.♖e2 ♖h4+ 18.♖f2 (18.g3?!
 ♖h3∞) 18...♖xf2+ 19.♙xf2 f5= with full
 equality.

14...c5!



You can be sure this was the preparation
 of Wesley So!

15.♙xc5 ♖e8 16.0-0 b6!?

A smart move. 16...♜xe3 has also been played but it's a bit more precise to insert ...b7-b6 and ♙d4: Przewdziecka,M (2276)-Tan,Z (2456) Guimaraes 2012.

17.♙d4

17.♞fd1N is the other move we need to check. 17...♞h4! 18.g3 ♞h3 19.♙d5 (19.♙d4 ♙b7 20.♙f1 ♞h5 Black is a pawn down but the e3-pawn is hanging and Black will have some strong play along the h1-a8 diagonal. 21.♞d2 ♞d5 22.♙g2 ♞xg2+ 23.♞xg2 ♙xg2 24.♙xg2 ♜xe3+ 25.♙xe3 ♖xe3= with full equality.) 19...♙f5! An important move. 20.e4 ♞ac8! and this one too! 21.exf5 ♖xc5 22.♞g2 ♞xg2+ 23.♙xg2 ♖c2 24.♞e1 ♞d8= with equality. We should note that 25.♞ad1? is not possible due to 25...♞xd1 26.♞xd1 ♞xg2+!-+ and Black is winning.

17.h3N is also possible. 17...bxc5 18.hxg4 ♙xg4 19.f5 ♞g5 20.♞f4 h5∞ with a balanced position.

17...♜xe3 18.♙xe3 ♖xe3 19.♞f2

19.f5N 19...♙b7 20.f6 ♞d4 21.♞f2 ♙d5 22.♙xd5 ♞xd5 23.fxg7 ♖ae8= and the position is equal.

19...♖e8 20.♞ad1 ♞f6 21.♞d4 ♞xd4+ 22.♞xd4 ♙f5=

and a draw was agreed a few moves later in the game: Giri,A (2782) -So,W (2770) Paris 2016.

CONCLUSION

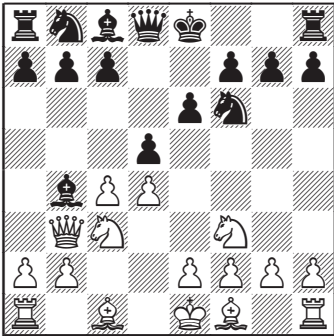
This chapter is important for the theory, especially of the 7.♞c2 and 7.♙d2 lines. In the first one, I like 7...♖e8 after which I suggest two different ways to proceed, either with 8...♙f8 or 8...a6. On the main line 7.♙d2 I like the direct 7...dxc4, followed by ...♙d6 and ...e6-e5. In both cases Black has decent play after showing some knowledge.

PART 2.

System with ♔b3

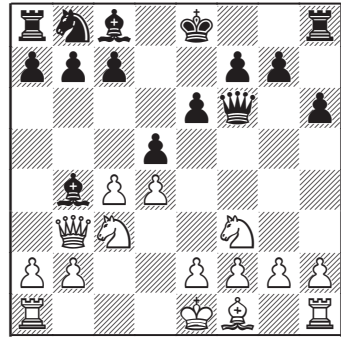
In this second part we will study White's set-up with ♔b3. With this move White wants to put pressure on the d5-pawn and obviously on the ♘b4. White can play it on either the 5th or 7th moves. Both are quite fashionable.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♘b4
5.♙g5
5.♔b3



will be studied in Chapter 6. 5...c5 I suggest the most logical move, challenging the centre and protecting the ♘b4.

5...h6 6.♙xf6 ♗xf6 7.♔b3



will be studied in Chapter 7.

7...c5

Even after the exchanges on f6 Black sticks to the same idea.

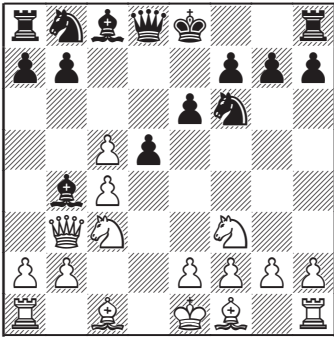
Chapter 6.

5. ♖b3

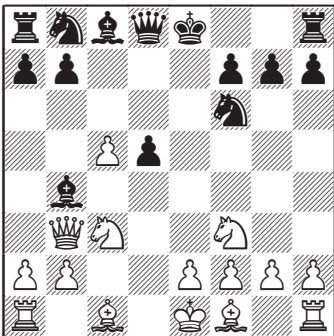
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♖b3 c5

The logical answer. Black protects the bishop on b4 and is ready to fight the centre.

6.dxc5!?

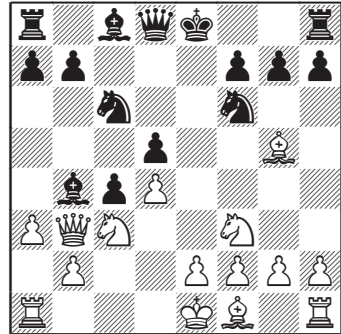


This move gained its popularity in 2013. White has a decent score in the database, and Black needs to know how to react because otherwise he can easily end up in trouble. 6.cxd5 exd5 7.dxc5!?



In 2009 Kramnik won an impressive game against Short with this move. I decided to work on this line back then and even played it myself with White against GM Alberto David. (7.♙g5 ♘c6 (7...h6 is also totally fine because after 8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 we transpose to Chapter 7.) 8.dxc5 transposes to 7.dxc5.

a) 8.a3 c4!



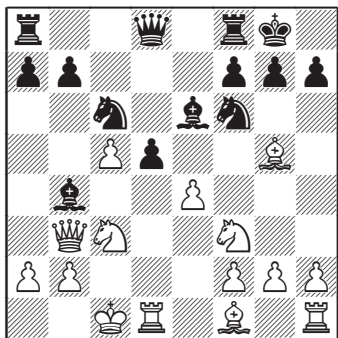
A thematic move which works perfectly here as we push the pawn with tempo. 9.♖c2 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 (10.♖xc3?! 0-0 11.e3N (11.♘e5?! ♗d6 Tsekouras, T (2248)-Simeonidis, I (2307) Kallithea 2006) 11...♙f5 12.♙e2 h6 10...h6 11.♙xf6 ♖xf6 12.g3 Krush, I (2431)-Ehlvest, J (2587) New York 2003 12...♙f5N 13.♖b2 0-0 (13...0-0!?) is also very interesting. 14.♙g2 ♗he8 15.0-0 ♖e6 14.♙g2 ♘a5 15.0-0 ♘b3 16.♗ad1 ♗fe8 17.♗fe1 ♙e4 with an unclear position.

b) 8.e3 c4 9.♖c2 h6 10.♗h4 (10.♗xf6 ♖xf6 followed by ...♗f5. Actually this line exists with a tempo less for Black.) 10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘e4 12.♘d2 ♗f5 13.♘dx4 ♗xe4 14.♖d2 Garibaldi, O-Letelier Martner, R Buenos Aires 1946 14...♖e7 15.♖c1 h5∞ with good play.) 7...♘c6 8.♗g5

a) 8.e3 0-0 9.♗e2 (9.♗d2 ♗xc5 We can also have this position via the 6.dxc5 move order.) 9...♗e6 threatening ...d5-d4. 10.♘d4 ♗xc5 11.♘xe6 (11.♘xc6 bxc6 Corovic, S (2108)-Terzic, I (2225) Tuzla 2010) 11...fxe6 12.0-0 ♖e7 13.♗d2 ♖h8 14.♖ad1 a6 15.a3 ♖ad8 16.♗c1 ♗a7 17.♖a2 ♘e5∞ with a very pleasant position to play for Black: Karpov, A (2760) -Kramnik, V (2740) Monte Carlo 1997.

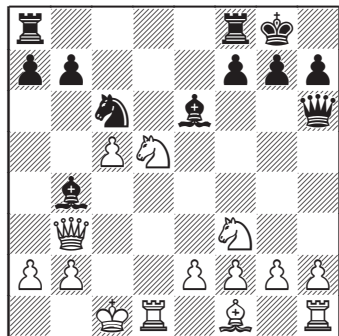
b) 8.a3 ♗xc5 9.♗g5 d4!? 10.♘e4 ♗e7∞ and Black was totally fine in the game Tsvetkov, I (2363)-Spassov, L (2384) Albena 2011.

8...♗e6! 9.0-0-0 0-0! is the best way to play. Now White is at the first crossroads: 10.e4!?



The move I played myself. This position is a mess but I believe Black is fine.

a) 10.♗xf6 looks tempting because the d5-pawn is hanging, but in fact it's more dangerous for White than any other move. 10...♗xf6 11.♘d5 ♖h6+!



12.♖b1!?N (12.e3 ♗xc5 13.♖b5 ♖ac8! An important point! 14.♖xc5N (14.♖b1 b6 and I'm not surprised that Black eventually won in the game Shimanov, A (2586)-Vidit, S (2492) Chennai 2011) 14...b6! The most precise. (14...♗xd5 15.♖b1! it looks good but probably not enough to claim an advantage. 15...♖g6+ 16.♗d3 (16.♖a1 ♖fd8 17.♖xd5 ♖xd5 18.♖xd5 ♘b4 19.♖d1 ♘c2+ 20.♖b1=) 16...♗e4 17.♗xe4 ♖xe4+ 18.♖c2 ♖g4 19.♘d2 (19.♖hg1 ♘b4) 19...♖xg2 20.♖f5 ♖g6 21.♖xg6 fxg6 22.f4= with an equal endgame.) 15.♖a3 (15.♖c3 ♗xd5 16.♖b1 a5!) 15...♗xd5 16.♖b1 ♖g6+ 17.♗d3 ♖xg2 18.♗xh7+! ♖xh7 19.♗d3+ ♖g8 20.♖xd5 ♖xf2 and White will have to show some precision to stay in the game.) 12...♖g6+!? (12...♗xc5 13.e4! with an unclear position.) 13.e4 (13.♖c2 ♖xc2+ 14.♖xc2 ♗xc5) 13...♖xe4+

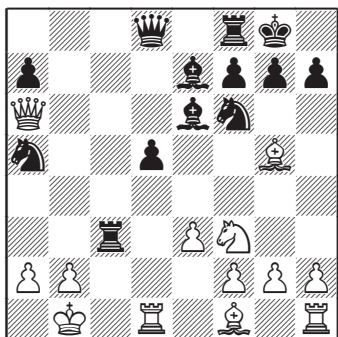
(13...♙xc5 14.♙d3 ♞) 14.♙d3 ♞xd5
15.♙xe4 ♞xb3 16.axb3 ♙xc5= and a draw
is the normal outcome even if it's White
who has to be careful.

b) 10.e3 ♙xc5! 11.♞b5?! The move
played in practice.

b1) 11.♞xb7? ♞c8+ Black's initiative
will be too strong for White to handle.

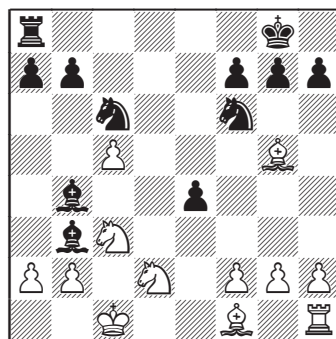
b2) 11.♞b1N maybe the best, but even
here I would take Black if I had a choice.
11...♞c8 12.♙xf6 (12.♞a1 h6+; 12.♞d4
♞e7) 12...♞xf6 13.♞xd5 ♙xd5
(13...♞h6!?) 14.♞xd5 ♞b4 in both of the
following lines it is White who is fighting
to equalize. 15.♞d1 (15.♞xc5 ♞g6+!
16.♙d3 ♞xd3 17.♙g5 ♞a6 18.♞b5 ♞xf2
19.♞f1 ♞fd8 20.♞xa6 bxa6) 15...♞g6+
16.♙d3 ♞xd3 17.♞xd3 ♞xg2 18.♞e5
♞xf2 19.♞hf1 ♞h4 20.♞xf7 ♞xf7 21.♞xf7
♞c8=;

11...♙e7! 12.♞xb7 (12.♙xf6 ♙xf6
13.♞xd5 ♞c8 14.♞b1 a6!) 12...♞c8
13.♞b1 ♞a5 14.♞a6 (14.♞xa7 ♞a8
15.♞d4 ♞c6 16.♞f4 ♞a5+ Hernandez,
Fernandez, C (2210) -Junge, W (2327)
ICCF email 2006.) 14...♞xc3!



A typical approach to open the white
king. 15.bxc3 ♞c7 16.♙f4 ♙f5+ 17.♙d3
♞xc3 18.♙xf5 (18.♙e5 ♞b4+ 19.♞a1
♞g4+) 18...♞c4 and White resigned in
the game Zielinski, W (2096) -Noeth, D
(2122) GER email 2010.

10...d4!? The most entertaining.
(10...dxe4 I believe is more 'solid'. Even if
I'm not sure that 'solid' is the right word
for this position. 11.♞xd8! (11.♙c4? ♞e7
12.♙xc6N (12.♞d2? ♞xc5+ Sulava, N
(2565) -Palac, M (2578) Marija Bistrica
2011) 12...exf3+ 11...♙xb3 12.♞xa8 ♞xa8
13.♞d2

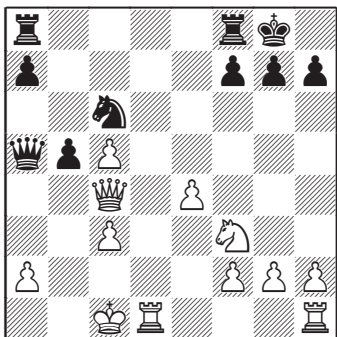


After some simplifications this strange
position should be roughly equal.

(13.♙xf6 exf3N 14.♙xg7 ♞xg7 15.axb3
♙xc5 16.♞e4 fxe2 17.♙xg2 ♙d4+;
13.axb3N 13...exf3 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♞d5
♙xc5 16.♞xf6+ ♞g7 17.♞e4 ♙e7 18.gxf3
♞d4+) 13...♙e6 (13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♙xa2
15.♙xf6 e3! (15...gxf6 16.♞xe4±) 16.fxe3
gxf6= Platzgummer, F (2021) -Patocka, F
(2271) ICCF email 2006.) 14.♙xf6 e3!?
(or 14...gxf6 15.♞dxe4 f5 16.a3 fxe4
17.axb4 ♞xb4 18.♞xe4 ♞c8=) 15.fxe3
gxf6 16.♞de4 f5 17.a3 fxe4 18.axb4 ♞xb4

19. ♖xe4 ♖c8= Karthikeyan,P (2402)-Aleksandrov,A (2612) New Delhi 2012.) 11. ♖c4 (11. ♖d5N 11... ♖xc5 12. ♖xf6 gxf6∞ and I believe Black has good chances to seize the initiative.) 11... ♖xc4! (11... ♖a5? was the moved Alberto played against me. 12. ♖xe6! dxc3 13. ♖xf6 gxf6 we are still following the game Cornette (2552)-David,A (2616) Malakoff 2010, but here I missed a good chance to win: 14. ♖d7! cxb2+ (14... ♖xc5 15. ♖xf7+ ♖h8 16. ♖e6!+−) 15. ♖b1 ♖d8 16. ♖f5±) 12. ♖xc4 ♖a5! This position is very tricky. According to the engine, White is holding — but in practice I don't think it would be an easy task. 13. ♖d5

a) 13. ♖xf6 dxc3 14. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 15. ♖xc3 (15.bxc3N 15...b5!



To open lines. Once again, this position is difficult to play for White. 16. ♖e2!? looks non-human to me

a1) 16.cxb6? ♖xb6!± and the white king is too weak.

a2) 16. ♖b3 b4! 17.c4!? (17. ♖d4 ♖xc5 18. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 19. ♖xb4 ♖ab8 20. ♖d6

♖c8 21. ♖d4 ♖g4±) 17... ♖xc5∞ with a good position.

16...b4 (16... ♖xc3+ 17. ♖c2 ♖b4=) 17.c4 ♖ab8 18. ♖c2 ♖fc8 19. ♖he1 b3 20.axb3 ♖b4 21. ♖b2 ♖d8 22. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23. ♖d1 ♖a2+ 24. ♖c2 ♖b4+ 25. ♖c1 ♖a2+=) 15... ♖xa2 16. ♖he1

a1) 16. ♖d4 ♖xd4 (16... ♖ac8 17. ♖f5) 17. ♖xd4 ♖ac8 18. ♖d5 ♖a1+ 19. ♖c2 ♖a5 20. ♖b1 ♖xc5∞;

a2) 16. ♖h4 g6±;

16... ♖ad8 17. ♖d2!±N

a1) 17. ♖xd8?! ♖xd8 18. ♖d2 (18. ♖a3?! ♖c4+) 18... ♖a4±;

a2) 17. ♖d6 b6! 18. ♖ed1 ♖c8 (18... ♖a1+ 19. ♖d2 ♖a4 20. ♖e2∞) 19. ♖d2 ♖a5± Schmidt, D-Kruschinski,D GER email 2009.

17... ♖fe8 (17... ♖xd2 18. ♖xd2 ♖d8+ 19. ♖e2 ♖a6+ 20. ♖e3=) 18. ♖a3=;

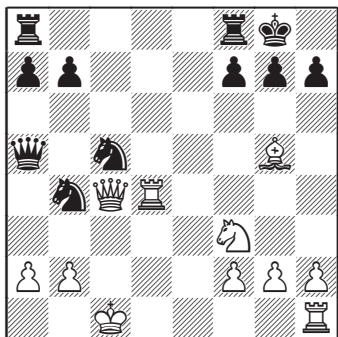
b) 13. ♖xd4N 13... ♖e5! 14. ♖e2! Not human, but it's the only move not to stand worse.

b1) 14. ♖b5 ♖xc3 15. ♖xf6 gxf6 16.bxc3 (16.f4 ♖g4 (16... ♖xa2!? 17.bxc3 ♖g4 18. ♖f5 ♖f2±) 17.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 18. ♖b1 ♖f2 19. ♖f5 ♖xh1 20. ♖xh1 ♖ad8±) 16... ♖xc3+ 17. ♖c2 ♖ac8 18. ♖b1 ♖xc5 19. ♖b3 ♖a5±;

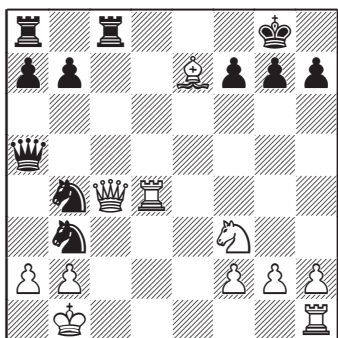
b2) 14. ♖b3 ♖xc3 (14... ♖xc5 15. ♖xf6 gxf6 16. ♖b1±) 15. ♖xc3 (15.bxc3?! ♖xe4±) 15... ♖xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♖xe4! leading to a nice forced line: 17. ♖he1 (17. ♖f4 ♖c4±; 17. ♖e3 ♖c4±) 17... ♖xf2! 18. ♖xe5 ♖xd1 19. ♖xd1 (19. ♖e7 ♖f2!±) 19...f6 20. ♖e7 fxg5 21. ♖xb7 ♖ab8±;

14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 16.♗b1 ♜c4
17.♙c1! ♚b4+ 18.♗a1 ♖xc5 19.♜f5 ♜fe8
20.f3 ♜ac8=;

13...♜xe4! 14.♜xd4! is maybe the safest
for White. (14.♜xb4 ♜xb4! 15.♜xd4
♜xc5



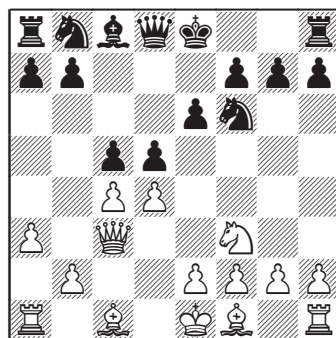
Black is better. I provide some
illustrative lines: 16.♗b1 (16.♙e7? ♜fc8
17.♗b1 ♜b3!-+



and White can resign. 16.♙d2 ♜cd3+
17.♗b1 ♖f5 18.♙xb4 ♜xb4+ 19.♙e4 a5
20.♜h4! ♖xf2 21.♜f1 ♖d2 22.♙d4 ♜ac8=)
16...♜ca6! 17.♜f4 ♜ac8 18.♖b3 h6!
19.♙e7 (19.a3 ♜c6+) 19...♖c7! 20.♙xb4
(20.♙xb4 ♖xf4 21.♙xf8 ♖e4+ 22.♗a1

♜xf8 23.♙d1 ♜g8=) 20...♖xe7 21.♙d4
♖f6=) 14...♙xc5!?N (14...♖xc5 15.♖xc5
♙xc5 16.♙e3 ♜fe8 17.♜hf1 ♜e7 18.♜b5
♜ac8 19.♙xc5 ♜xc5+ 20.♜dc3= and a
draw was agreed in the game Nenciulescu,
S (2125) -Singeisen,H (2153) ICCF email
2011. 14...♜xg5N 15.♜xc6 ♖xc5
16.♖xc5 ♙xc5 17.♜ce7+ ♜h8 18.b4 ♙xf2
19.♙d2 ♜e4 20.♙e2 f5 21.♜f1=) 15.♜xc6
bxc6 16.♖xe4 cxd5 17.♙xd5! (17.♖xd5?!
♜ab8 18.♙d2 ♖c7 19.♗b1 ♜xb2+!
20.♜xb2 ♜b8+ 21.♜c2 ♙b4+ 22.♜d3
♙d8=) 17...♜ae8 18.♖f5 g6 19.♙d3 ♜e1+
20.♜xe1 ♖xe1+ 21.♜c2 ♙b6 22.♙e3 ♜c8+
23.♜b3 ♙xe3 24.fxe3 ♜b8+ 25.♜c2
♜c8+= with a draw by perpetual.

6.a3?! is a bit too slow. 6...♙xc3+ 7.bxc3
(7.♖xc3



It's interesting to notice that this
position can be reached via the 4.♖c2
Nimzo-Indian. 7...cxd4! 8.♖xd4
(8.♜xd4?! It can't be good to give up the
centre like this. 8...e5! Of course. 9.♜b5N
(9.♜f3 d4 10.♖c2 ♜c6= Kocchetkov,G
(2386) -Maiorov,N (2524) Minsk 2008)
9...0-0 10.cxd5 ♜xd5=) 8...♜c6 9.♖h4
e5!?N is also worth trying. (9...dxc4!?N is

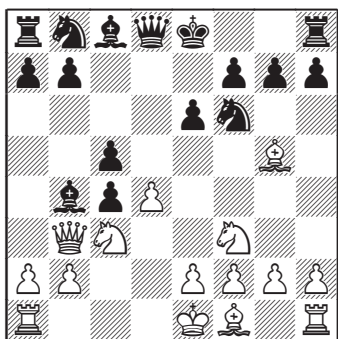
an interesting novelty. 10.♔d2! (10.♖xc4 e5 I already prefer Black.) 10...♔d7 11.♗xc4 0-0 12.e3 ♖c8 13.♗h4 ♘e7∞ With a balanced position, but Black is still ahead in development.) 10.e3

a) 10.cxd5 ♖xd5 11.♔h6?! looks tempting, but it's not working. (11.♔g5 ♔e6 12.♔xf6 gxf6 followed by the long castle.) 11...♔g4! 12.♔xg7? ♖a5+!-+;

b) 10.♔g5 dxc4 11.♖xc4 ♖b6+;

10...♔e6 11.cxd5 (11.♔e2 dxc4) 11...♖xd5 12.♔e2 0-0 13.♔d2 ♖e4! and Black is slightly better.) 7...♘c6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♔g5 (9.dxc5 ♘e4 10.e3 Milchev,N (2388) -Alvarez Pedraza,A (2551) Torredembarra 2011 10...0-0!N was better. Black will continue with ...♘xc5 and ...♖b6, or ...♔g4.) 9...c4 10.♖b5 a6 11.♖b2 h6= and Black was totally fine in the game Farago,S (2410)-Marciano,D (2310) Karlsruhe 1991.

6.♔g5 dxc4!?



It seems logical to force the queen to take on c4 before White plays e3. (6...h6 is of course totally decent, and after 7.♔xf6 ♖xf6 it transposes to Chapter 7.)

7.♖xc4 cxd4!?N It's interesting to note that Pert reached the same conclusion in his book. 8.♖xb4

a) 8.♘d4 doesn't promise White anything: 8...♘a6 9.♖b5+ (9.e3 ♔d7 10.♖b3 ♖a5 11.♔xa6 ♔xc3+ 12.♖xc3 ♖xa6∞) 9...♖d7=;

b) 8.♔xf6 ♔xc3+!? 9.bxc3 gxf6 10.cxd4 (10.♘d4 ♔d7 11.e3 ♘a6=) 10...♖a5+ 11.♘d2 ♔d7= with a balanced position.

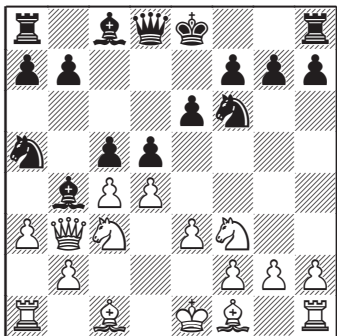
c) 8.♖d1 ♔xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.cxd4 (10.♖xd4 ♘bd7∞ followed by ...♖a5.) 10...♔d7 11.♖b3 (11.e3?? is losing after 11...♖a5+!-+; 11.e4 ♖a5+ 12.♔d2 ♖a4) 11...♖b6 12.♔d2 ♔c6 13.e3 ♖c8∞ with an unclear position.

8...♘c6! 9.♖c4 dxc3 10.♖xc3 ♔d7 11.e3 ♖c8 12.♔e2 h6 13.♔xf6 ♖xf6 14.♖xf6 gxf6∞ with a balanced position.

6.e3 We get a position like in the classical Nimzo-Indian Defence with 4.e3, where Black played 'normal' moves, but White answered with the strange-looking ♖b3. 6...♘c6 7.a3

a) 7.dxc5 See 6.dxc5.

b) 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♔b5 (8.dxc5 0-0 will transpose to 6.dxc5.) 8...0-0 9.0-0 c4! 7...♘a5!?

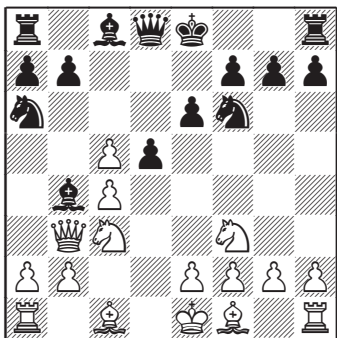


A nice way to take advantage of the hazardous placement of White's queen.

8. ♖c2 ♙xc3+ 9. ♗xc3 (9. bxc3 N 9... ♘xc4 10. ♙xc4 dxc4 11. ♗a4+ ♙d7 12. ♗xc4 ♗a5) 9... cxd4 10. ♘xd4 (10. exd4 ♘xc4 11. ♙xc4 dxc4 12. ♗xc4 0-0) 10... ♘xc4 11. ♙xc4 dxc4 12. ♗xc4 0-0 13. 0-0 we have been following the game Phillips,R-Bluvshtein,M (2303) Montreal 2001, but now I suggest 13...e5! N 14. ♘f3 ♖e8 15.e4 ♙g4

6... ♘c6

The move I've always intended to play. 6... ♘a6!?



Is the other playable variation. Movsesian, Hammer and Hou Yifan have

played it recently. When I first studied this position I was not a big fan of this line, because I had thought that White could keep long-term pressure with the bishop pair and precise play. However, after analyzing this line deeper, I reached the conclusion that Black can equalize quite easily, even if some precision is needed.

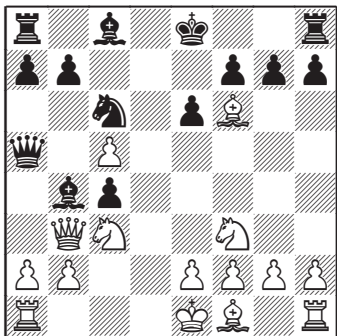
7. ♙g5

7.e3 is definitely not dangerous. 7...0-0 8. ♙e2 (8. ♙d2?! ♙xc5 9. cxd5 exd5 10. ♙e2 (10. ♘a4 ♙d6 11. ♙c3 Chernyshov,K (2549)-Horvath,P (2482) Budapest 2002. 11... ♙e6! N 12. ♙d4 ♘e4↑) 10...d4!? 11. exd4 ♘xd4 12. ♘xd4 ♙xd4 Machate,G-Spielmann,R Magdeburg 1927.) 8... ♙xc5 (8... dxc4!? is a solid alternative. 9. ♗xc4 ♗e7 10. ♘d4 Engqvist,T (2405)-Lalic,B (2590) Isle of Man 1995 (10.0-0 ♗xc5 11. ♗xc5 ♙xc5= Pittelkow,E (2019) -Drexel,M (2224) Bayern 2011) 10...a5!? N 11.0-0 ♙d7=) 9.0-0 (9. cxd5 exd5 10.0-0 a6 11. ♗d1 ♙c6∞ Black has a good score in the database. It's quite a typical isolated pawn position where Black has developed usually, but White reacted in a very particular way.) 9...a6!? 10. ♗d1 dxc4 11. ♗xc4 ♗e7= with equality, like in the game: Altea,E-Deidun,J IECG email 2005.

7... ♗a5

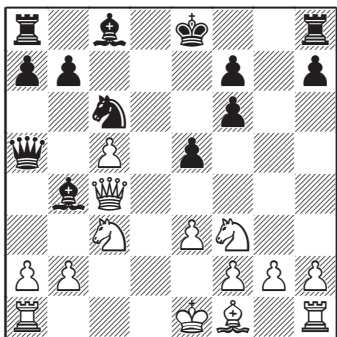
I believe this is the best.

8. ♙xf6 dxc4!



An important intermediate move.

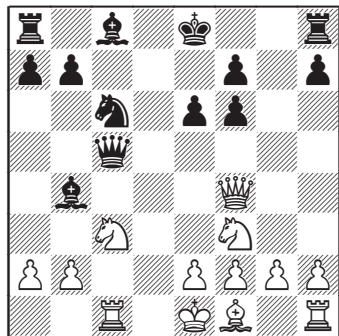
9. ♖xc4 gxf6 10. ♖c1
10.e3 e5!N



This looks like a good novelty to me. Black will have time to recapture the c5-pawn and wants to finish his development first. 11. ♖b3 (11. ♖c1 ♖e6 12. ♖e4 (12. ♖b5?! ♖xa2! 13. ♖xb4 ♖xb4 14. ♖xa2 ♖xa2+) 12... ♖xc3+ 13. bxc3 ♖xa2 14. ♖b5 ♖d5∞) 11... ♖xc5 12. ♖d2 ♖xc3 13. bxc3 ♖f5∞

10... ♖xc5 11. ♖h4!?

The move introduced by Radjabov against Leko in 2013. 11. ♖f4



Quite rare, but interesting. 11... ♖e7 12.g3!? When I first analyzed this position, I was planning to try this move when playing with White. At that time it was a novelty, but Bruzon Batista has played it since.

a) 12.a3 ♖xc3+ 13. ♖xc3 ♖b6 14. ♖c1N (14. ♖d2 ♖d7 15.e3 ♖ac8 16. ♖e2 ♖a5= Schandorff,L (2531) -Bekker Jensen,S (2445) Skorpning 2014) 14... ♖d7 15.e3 (15.g3 ♖ac8 16. ♖g2 ♖a5 17.0-0 ♖xc3 18.bxc3 (18. ♖xc3 ♖c8∞) 18... ♖c4∞) 15... ♖ac8 16. ♖d3 ♖a5! 17.0-0 ♖e5=;

b) 12.e3 ♖d8 (12... ♖xc3+!? is of course also possible.) 13. ♖e2 (13.a3 ♖xc3+ 14. ♖xc3 ♖d6 15. ♖xd6+ (15. ♖a4 ♖d7=) 15... ♖xd6 16. ♖d2 ♖a5 17. ♖e2 ♖d7=) 13... ♖xc3+ 14. ♖xc3 (14.bxc3 b6 15.0-0 ♖b7=) 14... ♖b4 15. ♖xb4+ ♖xb4= 0-1 L'Ami,A (2353)-Guo,Q (2435)/ Astana 2013/ CB10_2013 (56);

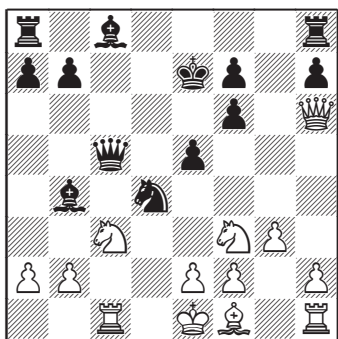
12...e5! The best reaction. (12... ♖xc3+ 13.bxc3∞ This move-order is probably a slight improvement for White over the main line.) 13. ♖h6 we are still following the game Bruzon Batista,L (2691) - Lenderman,A (2617) Tsaghkadzor 2015,

but now I have a very nice improvement for Black:

a) 13.♖c4N 13...♙e6 14.♙g2 ♖c4!
15.♖e3 (15.♗xc4 ♙xc4=) 15...♜d4
16.♜d2 ♖a6 17.♜de4 (17.f4 ♖b6 18.♙f2
♙ad8∞; 17.♙e4 h5∞) 17...♙ac8 18.f4
♙xc3+ 19.♜xc3 ♙hd8=;

b) 13.♖h4N 13...♙d8! With the idea of
playing ...♜d4 next. 14.♙g2 ♜d4! 15.0-0
(15.♜xd4!? an interesting piece sacrifice.
15...exd4 16.0-0 dxc3 17.a3 ♙d4 (17...a5
Giving back the piece is always a safe
option. 18.axb4 ♖xb4 19.♙xc3 ♖xh4
20.gxh4 ♙e6=) 18.♖xh7 ♙f5 19.♖h6 c2
20.♖e3+ ♖e5 21.axb4 ♙c8∞ with an
unclear position.) 15...♙xc3 16.♙fe1!
(16.♜xd4 ♖xd4 17.♙xc3 ♖xh4 18.gxh4
♙e6 19.♙c7+ ♙d7 20.♙xd7+ ♙xd7
21.♙d1+ ♙c7=) 16...♜xf3+ 17.♙xf3 ♖b4
18.♙xc3 ♖xh4 19.gxh4 ♙e6 20.♙c7+ ♙d7
21.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 22.♙d1+ ♙e7 23.♙c1=;

13...♜d4!N

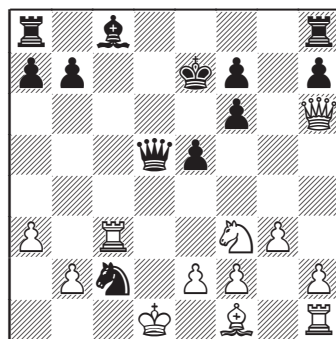


A very concrete approach. (13...♙d8!?∞
is also decent but the other line is more
direct.) 14.a3

a) 14.♙g2 ♜f5 asking White's queen
about her further intentions. 15.♖h5
(15.♖d2 ♙d8 16.♖c2 ♙e6 17.0-0 ♙ac8=)
15...♜g7 16.♖h4 (16.♖h6 ♜f5=)
16...♜f5 17.♖e4 The only move if White
wants to continue the game. 17...♜d6
18.♖b1 ♙f5 19.♖a1 I don't know many
people who would be happy to accomplish
this manoeuvre! 19...♙ac8 20.0-0 ♙xc3!?
21.♙xc3 ♖b6= with equal position.

b) 14.♜d2? gives Black a terrific
initiative. 14...♖c6! 15.♙g1 (15.e4 ♙e6
16.♙d3 (16.f4 ♙ac8+) 16...♙ac8 17.0-0
♙hd8+) 15...♙g4! 16.h3 (16.♖e3 ♙ac8+)
16...♜f5! 17.♙g2 ♖c8! 18.♜d5+ ♙d7! A
crazy line! 19.♜xf6+ (19.♙xc8 ♙axc8!
20.♙d1 ♜xh6 21.hxg4 ♙xd2 22.♙xd2
♜xg4+) 19...♙d8 20.♙xc8+ ♙xc8 21.♙d1
♙xe2+! 22.♙xe2 ♜xh6+;

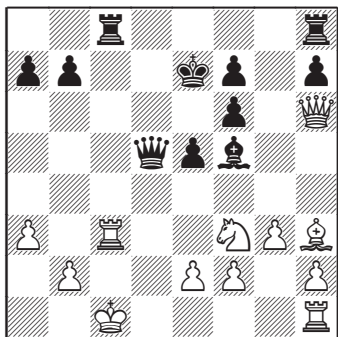
14...♙xc3+! The beginning of a very
pretty combination. (14...♜f5 15.axb4
♖xc3+ 16.bxc3 (16.♙xc3 ♜xh6 17.♙g2
♙d8=) 16...♜xh6 17.♜d2±) 15.♙xc3
♜c2+! 16.♙d1 ♖d5+!



17.♙xc2

a) 17.♔d2 ♖d4 18.♞g1 (18.♜xd4 exd4 19.♞g1 ♙e6=) 18...♙e6 19.♜xd4 (19.♞c7+ ♜d6! and White has nothing better than to retreat. 20.♞c3 ♜xf3 (20...♜e7=) 21.exf3 ♞xd2+ 22.♜xd2 ♞hc8=) 19...exd4 20.♞d3 (20.♞c7+ ♜d6 21.♙g2 (21.♞c2 ♞ac8=) 21...♞b3+ 22.♞c2 ♞ac8 23.♙e4 f5=) 20...♞hd8= Black's bad pawn structure is compensated by the activity of his pieces.

b) 17.♞d3? ♞a2+ with a decisive attack.
17...♙f5+ 18.♜c1 ♞ac8 19.♙h3!



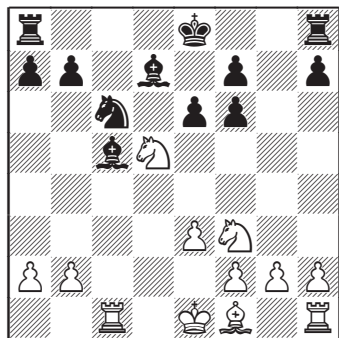
The only move! (19.♞h4? ♙e4!—+ and there is no hope for the white king.)
19...♙xh3 (19...♞xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♞c8 21.♙xf5 ♞xc3+ 22.♙c2 ♞xc2+! 23.♜xc2 ♞a2+= is also enough to make draw.)
20.♞xh3 ♞xc3+ 21.bxc3 ♞b3 22.♞g4! ♞xc3+ 23.♜b1 ♞b3+= with a draw by repetition.

11.e3 ♞xc4 12.♙xc4 ♙d7= Black has nothing to fear in this endgame, as shown in the game L'Ami,E (2622)-Tan,Z (2466) / Reykjavik 2013.

11.♞xc5 A solid option. I don't believe White has any chance to be better after

this move. 11...♙xc5 12.g3

a) 12.e3 ♙e7 (12...♙d7?! was played in the game: Cox,J (2360) -Aleksandrov,A (2619) Vilnius 2015, but in general it is better to avoid 13.♜d5!



13...♙b4+ has to be played 14.♜xb4 ♜xb4 15.a3 ♜c6∞ with a solid position but I prefer to keep two bishops.) 13.♙e2 ♙d7 14.0-0 0-0 15.♞fd1 ♞fd8 16.♜e4 ♙e8= with equality. (16...e5 to play ...♙e6 is also totally fine.) ;

b) 12.♜d5?!N just loses a pawn.
12...♙xf2+! 13.♜xf2 exd5+;

12...♙e7 13.♙g2 ♙d7 14.0-0 0-0-0 why not? (14...0-0=) 15.♜e4 ♜b8 16.♜c5 ♙e8= with an equal position in Ernst,S (2581) -Hammer,J (2601) Oslo 2011.

11...♜e7 12.g3

12.e3 Svane,R (2477) -Mikkelsen,N (2423) Copenhagen 2014 12...♙xc3+! Just like in the main line, now it's the right moment to make this exchange. 13.♞xc3 (13.bxc3 b6=) 13...♞b6 (13...♞b4 is also possible but careful calculation is needed. 14.♞xb4+ ♜xb4 15.♞c7+ (15.♙c4 ♙d7

16.a3 ♖c6 17.0-0 ♖ac8 18.♟fc1 ♖hd8
 19.♙d3 f5=) 15...♙d7! 16.a3 (16.♙b5
 ♖hd8 17.♙e2 (17.0-0 a6=) 17...♙d5!?
 18.♙xd7+ (18.♖xb7 ♖ab8!?) 18...♙xd7
 19.♙xd7 ♙xd7=) 16...♙d5! Black is ready
 to give up a pawn temporarily. 17.♖xb7
 ♖ab8 18.♙a6 (18.♖xa7 ♖hc8! 19.b4! ♖a8!
 20.♖xa8 ♖xa8 21.e4 (21.♙c4 ♙xb4=;
 21.♙d2 ♖xa3 22.♙c4 ♙xb4=) 21...♙f4
 22.♙d2 ♖xa3 23.b5 e5=) 18...♖xb7
 19.♙xb7 ♙c7 20.♙e4 ♖b8 21.b4 ♙b5
 22.♙d2 ♙xa3 23.♖a1 ♖xb4 24.♖xa3 ♖xe4
 25.♖xa7 ♙d6=) 14.♙d2

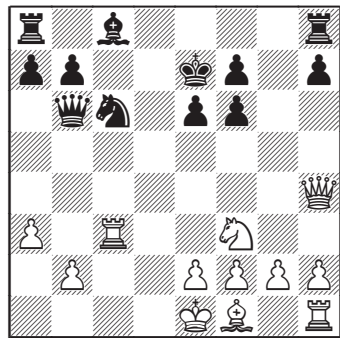
a) 14.♖h5 ♖d8 15.♖b3 ♖a5+=;

b) 14.♖c2 e5!? is also totally fine.
 (14...♙b4? is a big mistake because after
 15.♖d2± White will manage to finish his
 development and play on the kingside.
 14...♖b4+= is also decent, transposing to
 13...♖b4.) 15.♙d3 (15.♙e2 ♙f5=)
 15...♖d8 16.♙xh7 ♖a5+ 17.♖c3 ♖b5!=
 with equality.

14...♖xb2 15.♙e4 ♖b1+ We have
 nothing better than to start giving checks
 and repeat moves. 16.♙e2 ♖b2+ 17.♙e1
 (17.♙f3?? ♙e5+ 18.♙g3 ♖g8+ 19.♙h3
 ♖g6+→) 17...♖b1+=;

12.♙d2N has never been played,
 probably because Black equalizes directly
 with 12...♖g5! 13.♖c4 ♖c5=;

12.a3N has never been tried either, but
 it makes sense. 12...♙xc3+ 13.♖xc3 Here
 Black has two options, but I definitely
 prefer the second one. 13...♖b6!



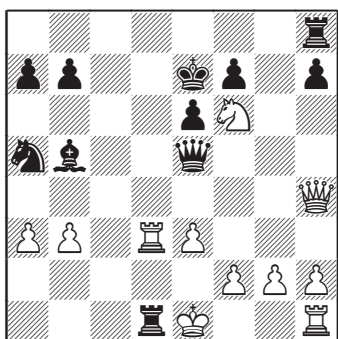
probably easier to remember. (13...♖d5
 14.e3 ♖a2 15.♙e2!? White wants to castle
 at all costs, to be able to attack black king.
 (15.♖c4 ♖xc4 16.♙xc4 ♙d7=)
 15...♖a1+!? (15...♖xb2 is playable but
 quite dangerous. 16.♖c4 ♖a1+! 17.♙d1
 ♖d8 18.♖c5+ ♙e8 19.♖c1 ♖b2 20.0-0
 ♖d5! 21.♖c4 ♙d7 22.♖c2 ♖xa3 23.♖h4=)
 16.♙d1 ♖d8 17.♙d2 (17.♖a4 ♖xb2
 18.♖c2 ♖a1?) 17...♖xb2 18.♙e4 (18.♖c2
 ♖xa3 19.0-0 ♙d3 20.♙e4 ♖xd1!
 21.♖xf6+ ♙e8 22.♖h8+ ♙e7 23.♖f6+=)
 18...♖b1! and this position is a draw... but
 the variations are insane. I will provide my
 analyses without explaining much. There
 is no need to remember these lines, but I
 believe it's good to have an idea how the
 game might continue: 19.♖xf6+ (19.♙e2
 ♖b5+ 20.♙e1 (20.♙f3 ♖f5+ 21.♙e2
 ♖b5+=) 20...♖b1=) 19...♙e8 20.♙d2
 ♖b2 21.0-0!? (21.♙e4 ♖b1=; 21.♙c4
 ♖a1! 22.♙e2 b5! 23.♙e5! ♙xe5 24.♖h8+
 ♙e7 25.♖xe5 ♙d7 26.♖e1 ♖ac8 27.♖g5+!
 ♙e8 28.♖d3 h6=) 21...♖xd2 22.♙h5 ♖d7
 23.♖h8+ ♙e7 24.♖g7 ♖f8 25.♖d1 ♖c7
 26.♖g5+ ♙e8 27.♖cd3 e5 28.♖d6 ♖e7
 29.♖h6 ♖b8 30.♙f3 e4 31.♙h5 ♙f5
 32.♖f4 ♖e5 33.♖xe5+ ♙xe5 34.♖d6d5

♖f3+ 35.gxf3 ♜g8+ 36.♗h1 ♕h3=) 14.b3 (14.♖c2 ♕d7 15.e3 ♜ac8 16.♕d3 ♖a5) 14...♕d7! 15.e3 ♜ac8 Black is threatening ...♗a5. 16.♖d2!

a) 16.♕c4 ♖e5! 17.♖xe5 ♗a5! Now White has to be careful to stay in the game. 18.♖d2! (18.♗d4 ♗xe5 19.♗xe5 fxe5 20.♖c2 ♜hg8) 18...♗xe5 19.♜hc1 ♗d6+! Black will probably end up a pawn ahead. 20.♗d4 (20.♕d3 ♗xa3) 20...♗xh2 21.♕b5! ♜hd8 22.♗b4+ ♗d6+ 23.♗xd6+ ♖xd6 24.♕xd7 ♜xc3 25.♖xc3 ♖xd7 26.♜h1 ♜h8) Even if we have an extra pawn, White should be able to hold this rook endgame.

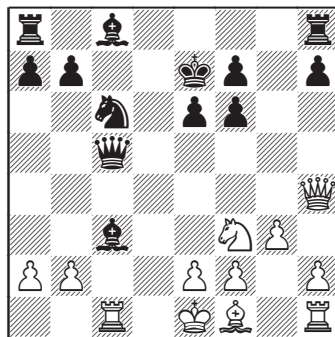
b) 16.♕e2? ♗a5+;

16...♗a5 17.♖e4! (17.b4? ♗e5) 17...♗e5 18.♕e2 ♖a5 19.♖d3 (19.♜xc8 ♜xc8 20.0-0 ♖xb3 21.♗xh7 a5) 19...♖c1+ 20.♕d1 ♕b5! To force matters. (20...♖d8 was also possible. 21.0-0 ♖xb3 22.♕e2 ♜xf1+ 23.♖xf1 ♖c5 24.♖xc5 ♗xc5 25.♗xh7 ♜b8) 21.♖xf6! ♜xd1+!



22.♜xd1 ♗c3+ 23.♖d2 ♗c1+ 24.♖d1 ♗c3+= with perpetual.

12...♕xc3+!



It's very important to remember that now is a good moment to take on c3. If we delay this move, White will be able to take back with the rook without facing coordination problems.

13.bxc3

13.♜xc3N 13...♗b4! is the right way to continue. We are happy enough to exchange the queens, but we are also threatening the b2-pawn. 14.♗xb4+ (14.♕g2 ♗xb2! (14...♗xh4 15.♖xh4 ♕d7 16.f4 ♜ac8 17.♖f2± with a pleasant position for White.) 15.♗c4! ♗b1+ 16.♖c1 ♗b4+ 17.♗xb4+ ♖xb4 18.♖c7+ ♕d7 19.0-0 ♜ab8 20.♖d1 ♜hd8 21.♖d4 ♖a6 22.♜xb7 ♜xb7 23.♕xb7 ♖c5 with full equality.) 14...♖xb4 I don't believe White can be better in this endgame. 15.a3

a) 15.♖c7+ ♕d7 16.a3 (16.♜xb7?! ♜hb8 17.♜xb8 ♜xb8 18.a3 ♖a2! 19.b4 ♜c8) 16...♖c6 17.♜xb7 ♜hb8 18.♜xb8 ♜xb8 19.b4 a5∞;

b) 15.♕g2 ♕d7 16.♖d4 (16.a3 ♖d5= followed by ...♜hc8.) 16...♖xa2! 17.♜a3 ♖b4 18.♕xb7 e5! The point. 19.♕xa8

♞xa8 20.♞e3 ♘d6 21.♜b3 ♜c2+ 22.♘d2 ♜xe3 23.♘xe3 a5=;

15...♜d5!? I believe this is simpler than 15...♜c6. 16.♞c1 ♘d7 17.♙g2 ♞ac8 18.0-0 ♞xc1 19.♞xc1 ♞c8 20.♞xc8 ♙xc8 21.♜d2 ♘d6= Black is solid enough.

13...b6 14.♙g2 ♙b7

14...♙a6 is also possible, but it looks more risky to me. 15.♜d2!? (15.0-0N 15...♞ac8 (15...♙xe2? 16.♜d4±) 16.♞fe1 h5 17.♜d2 ♞hd8 18.♜b3 ♞b5∞) 15...♞ac8 16.♜e4 ♞e5! Yilmaz,M (2570)-Vishnu,P (2477) Moscow 2015 (16...♞f5?! 17.g4! ♞g6 we are still following the game Rapport,R (2701) - Gajewski,G (2650) Budapest 2014, but here White could have played 18.♞g3! with a good advantage. 18...♜e5 19.g5 f5 20.♞xe5 fxe4 21.♞d1±) 17.♞d1!?N is a good try to play for an edge for White.

a) 17.0-0 h5! 18.♞fe1 ♞hd8 19.f4 (19.c4 ♜b4!=) 19...♞f5 20.♙f3?! ♜a5 Yilmaz,M (2570) -Vishnu,P (2477) Moscow 2015;

b) 17.f4!?N 17...♞f5 18.♞d1 (18.0-0 h5∞) 18...♞hd8 19.g4 ♞xd1+ 20.♘xd1 ♞g6 21.♞f1 ♜a5 22.f5 exf5 23.♞xf5 ♜c4 24.♞f2 ♞c6∞ with a strange position where the engine says 0.00...

17...♞hd8 18.♞xd8 ♜xd8 (18...♞xd8 19.f4 ♞f5 20.g4 ♞g6 21.♞f1±) 19.0-0!? (19.f4 ♞f5 20.0-0 (20.g4 ♞xf4 21.♞f1 ♞e3 22.♞xf6+ ♘e8∞) 20...h5∞) 19...♙xe2 (19...h5 20.♞d1 ♞c7 21.e3 ♙c4! ∞) 20.♞e1 ♙d3 21.f4 ♞f5 22.♙h3 ♞xe4! 23.♞xe4 ♙xe4 24.♙g2 ♙d3 25.g4 ♞xc3 26.♞e1 ♞c5∞ and I believe Black should

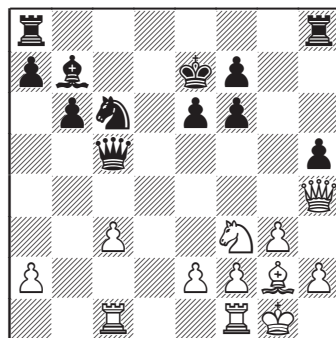
be able to defend this position without many difficulties.

15.0-0

15.♜d2 ♜a5 equalizes directly. 16.♙xb7 (16.0-0 ♞ac8=) 16...♜xb7 17.0-0 ♞g5 18.♞b4+ ♞c5 19.♞h4 ♞g5 20.♞b4+ ♞c5 and draw was the conclusion of the game Klekowski, M (2432)-Gajewski,G (2633) Poznan POL 2016.

15...h5!

A critical position. I have spent a lot of time analyzing this position and I am confident in saying that Black is fine.



Black will continue with ...♞ac8 then ...♞hd8. Also ...♞g5 can be an idea, as well as ...♜a5.

16.♜d4

The only move tried in practice so far. 16.♞fd1 ♞hd8 17.♜d4 ♞ac8=;

16.♞cd1N 16...♞ac8! (16...♞xc3? 17.♞f4! e5 18.♞e4 ♜a5 19.♞b1±; 16...♞ad8 17.♜d4 ♙a8 18.♜b3±) 17.♜d2 (17.♞f4 ♞hd8 18.♜d4 ♞e5=) 17...♞hd8=;

16. ♖d2N It makes sense to open the long diagonal for the bishop and transfer the knight to b3. 16... ♖ac8 (16... ♖g5 looks tempting because d2 is hanging but it's not that simple. 17. ♖c4! ♖xd2 18. ♙xc6 (18. ♖fd1 ♖b2 (18... ♖g5 19. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 20. ♖xc6 ♖hd8 21. e3± and even if it's not much, I believe that White is exerting slight pressure.) 19. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 20. ♖xc6 ♖hd8 21. ♖b7+ (21. e3 ♖e2=) 21... ♙e8 22. ♖f3 ♙e7 23. ♖xh5 ♖ac8 24. ♖f3 ♖xd1+ 25. ♖xd1 ♖xc3∞) 18... ♙xc6 19. ♖cd1 ♖b2 20. ♖xc6 and this position is a bit unpleasant for Black. 20... ♖hd8 21. ♖b7+ ♙e8 22. ♖f3 ♙e7! 23. ♖xh5 ♖xa2∞) 17. ♖b3

a) 17. ♖fd1 ♖hd8! 18. e3 (18. ♖b3 ♖xd1+ 19. ♖xd1 ♖xc3∞; 18. ♖a4 ♖a5=) 18... ♖a5=;

b) 17. ♖e4 ♖f5! The engine now starts to prefer Black. 18. ♙h3 (18. ♖fd1 ♖hd8±) 18... ♖e5∞;

17... ♖b5 and I don't see any problems for Black. We have actually transposed to the 16. ♖d4 line. 18. ♖b1 (18. ♖fd1 ♖hd8=; 18. c4 ♖g5=; 18. ♖fe1 ♖a5=) 18... ♖hd8 19. ♙f3 ♖a6! 20. ♖fc1 ♖e5=;

16. ♖e1?!N 16... ♖g5! and because the rook on c1 is hanging, White is constrained to exchange queens. 17. ♖xg5 fxg5 18. f4 ♖ag8±

16... ♖ac8 17. ♖b1

17. ♖b3 ♖b5! is a critical position, but once again, I don't see any unpleasant ideas for Black. (17... ♖g5 18. ♖a4 h4 (18... ♙f8 19. h4±) 19. ♖a3+ ♙e8 20. ♖fd1 ♖e5 (20... hxg3 21. hxg3 ♙a8 22. ♖d2!±

Ernst,S (2554) -Goudriaan,E (2401) Dieren 2014) 21. c4±) 18. ♖fd1

a) 18. ♖b1 ♖hd8 19. ♙f3 ♖d7!? 20. ♖fd1 (20. ♖f4 ♖d8=) 20... ♖xd1+ 21. ♖xd1 ♖a5=;

b) 18. c4 ♖g5 19. ♖xg5 fxg5 20. f4 h4∞;

c) 18. ♖c2 ♖hd8 19. ♖fc1 (19. ♖f4 ♖d7=) 19... ♖a5 20. c4 ♖e5 21. ♙xb7 ♖xb7 22. c5 ♖xc5 23. ♖b4 ♙e8! =;

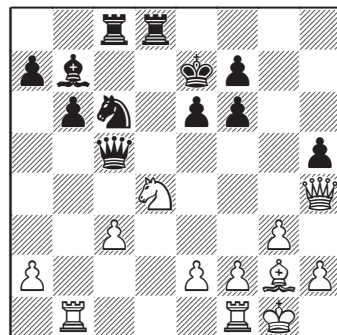
d) 18. ♙f3 ♖a5! 19. ♙xb7 ♖xb7 20. ♖fd1 ♖hd8=;

18... ♖hd8 19. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20. ♖b4+ ♖xb4 21. cxb4 ♖xc1+ 22. ♖xc1 ♙xg2 23. ♙xg2 ♖c6= and Black easily drew this endgame in Jacobs,R (2378)-Droessler,U (2335) ICCF email 2014.

17. ♖cd1 ♖g5 (17... ♖a5!?= is also good.) 18. ♖xc6+ (18. ♖e4 ♖a5∞) 18... ♙xc6 19. ♖b4+ ♖c5= with equality.

17. ♖fd1 ♖xd4=

17... ♖hd8!N



A very important novelty for the state of Ragozin theory. I haven't found any further problems for Black. 17... ♖c7?! was

tried in practice by Leko but it's not that good: 18.♖fd1 (18.♖b5! was even stronger. 18...♙xc3 19.♙xc6 ♙xc6 20.♞e5!↑ with the idea of ♖f5+, then ♙xf6. It's very difficult to find this idea over the board.) 18...♜xd4 19.cxd4 ♙g5 20.d5 ♙xh4 21.d6+ ♜e8 22.dxc7 ♙c4 23.♞bc1 ♙xc1 24.♞xc1 ♙c8 25.♞d1 ♜e7± and Black managed to hold this unpleasant position in Radjabov, T (2793)-Leko, P (2744)/Zug SUI 2013.

17...♙g5?N 18.♜xc6+! ♙xc6 19.♙b4+ ♜e8 (19...♙c5? 20.♙xc5+ bxc5 21.♙xc6 ♞xc6 22.♙b7+-) 20.♙xc6+ ♞xc6 21.♖fd1± and Black suffers from a lack of coordination.

18.♜b3

18.♜b5 a6 19.♜a7 ♞c7∞ and only Black can be better after the exchanges on c6.

18.♖fd1 ♜a5! leads to some simplifications. 19.♜b3 (19.♙xb7 ♜xb7∞) 19...♜xb3 20.♙xb7 ♜d2! 21.♞xd2 ♞xd2 22.♙xc8 ♙xc8 23.♙b4+ ♜e8=;

18.♖b5?? is obviously a big blunder due to 18...♞xd4!-+ winning a piece.

18.e3 ♙g5!? 19.♜xc6+ ♙xc6 20.♙b4+ ♙c5 21.♙xc5+ bxc5= with an equal endgame.

18...♙a3!?

Compared to 18...♙g5 and 18...♙f5, we don't allow ♙a4. 18...♙g5?! 19.♙a4 ♜f8 20.♞bd1±;

18...♙f5?! 19.♙a4±;

18...♙xc3 to grab a pawn is also a decent option. 19.♙xh5

a) 19.♖fc1 ♙e5 20.e3 ♞d7∞;

b) 19.♙a4 ♙e5 20.♞bc1 (20.♙f3 ♞c7?) 20...♙d6∞;

19...♙b4 (19...♙e5 20.♙g4 (20.♙xe5 fxe5∞; 20.♙h4 ♙xe2 21.♞fe1 ♙a6 22.♞xe6+! fxe6 23.♙h7+=) 20...♙d6=) 20.♖fc1 (20.e3 ♙a4=) 20...♜e5 21.♙xb7 ♞h8! 22.♞c7+! ♞xc7 23.♙xh8 ♞xb7=;

18...♙b5!? is also possible. 19.♙f3 (19.♖fc1 ♞d7 20.♙f3 ♜a5=) 19...♙a6!?= followed by ...♜e5.

19.♙f3

19.♙xh5?! ♜e5!± and the queen is a bit stuck on h5.

19...♜a5 20.♜xa5

20.♙xh5 ♞xc3 21.♜xa5 ♙xf3 22.exf3 ♞d5 23.♙h8 ♙xa5=

20...♙xf3 21.♜c4 ♙xa2 22.♜xb6 axb6 23.exf3 ♙d5=

With an equal position.

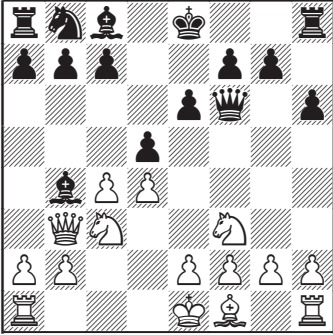
CONCLUSION

In this chapter the two challenging lines start with 5.♙b3, then 6.dxc5, or 7.dxc5. In the first, White's idea is to play with 0-0-0, and it can be a one-shot try, as Black needs to know how to react, but in general I really believe that if Black is familiar with the right path, this line can only be dangerous for White. The second idea is quite fashionable and interesting for White. I believe Black is fine in the main line, especially with the 17...♞hd8! improvement.

Chapter 7.

5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 — 7.♚b3

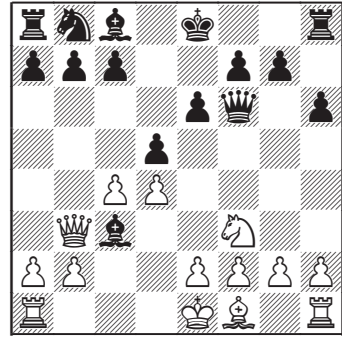
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 ♚xf6 7.♚b3



This is a solid line, where White is aiming for a little edge. It's important to know how to react.

7...c5

This is of course the most-played reply. Black protects the ♙b4 and is ready to fight against the centre. 7...♙xc3+

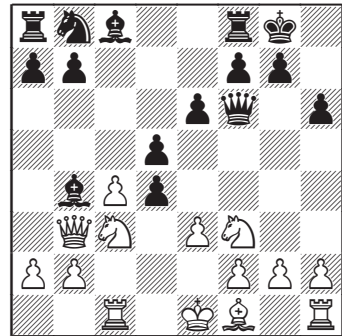


has recently been played by Magnus Carlsen but it's rather strange to simplify the position so quickly.

8.cxd5

The most common reply. 8.e3 0-0 9.a3

a) 9.♖c1 cxd4!?



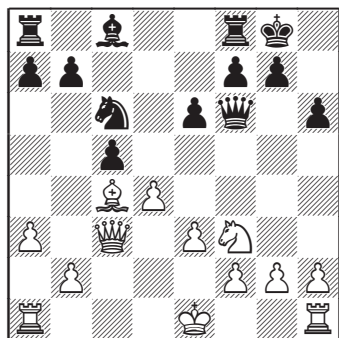
An interesting way to simplify the position. 10. ♖xb4 (10. ♖xd4 ♙xc3+ 11. ♜xc3 e5!∞ followed by ...d5-d4 as in the game Beliaevsky,A (2635)-Cabrilo,G (2505) Belgrade 1993. 10. exd4 ♜c6∞) 10... ♜c6 11. ♜a3 dxc3 12. ♜xc3 and a draw was agreed in the game Miralles,G (2480) -Inkirov, V (2505) France 1996. 12... ♜xc3+ 13. ♝xc3 ♜d8= with full equality.

b) 9. dxc5 ♙xc3+! to spoil White's pawn structure. 10. ♜xc3 (10. bxc3 ♜a6∞ followed by ...♜xc5 then ...b7-b6 as in Stefansson,H (2584)-Hernando Rodrigo,J (2357) Las Palmas 1999.) 10... ♜xc3+ 11. bxc3 dxc4 12. ♙xc4 ♜d7 13. c6 (13. 0-0 ♜xc5∞ can only be good for Black: Dos Santos,A (1604)-De Carvalho,I (1840) Batatais 2011.) 13... bxc6 14. 0-0-0 (14. 0-0 ♜b6 15. ♙e2 c5= Gonzalez Arribas,V (2111)-Munoz Agullo, J (2294) Palma de Mallorca 2003) 14... ♜b6 15. ♙b3 c5 16. ♜e5 ♙b7 17. f3 Rodshtein,M (2494)-Khenkin,I (2586) Andorra 2006, and here Black could have improved his play with 17... c4!?∞ with a good position.

c) 9. cxd5 is the most common move, and we will see it with the 8. cxd5 move order.

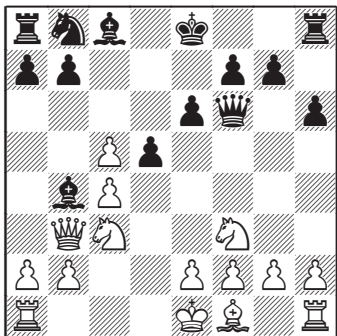
9... ♙xc3+ 10. ♜xc3 (10. bxc3 dxc4 (10... ♜d8 is also possible but it looks less logical to me.) 11. ♙xc4 b6 12. 0-0 (12. dxc5?!N 12... ♙b7!∞ gives Black a good position. ...♙xf3 is already a threat and Black is clearly leading in development.) 12... ♙b7 13. ♙e2 (13. ♜e5 ♝c8=) 13... ♜d7= with an equal position: Diedam,N (2255)-Barsov,A (2425) Germany 1995.) 10... dxc4!? (10... ♜d7!? is

rather strange, but totally playable. Black will continue with ...b7-b6, and White will probably have to take on d5 sooner or later, transposing to the main line.) 11. ♙xc4 (11. ♜xc4N 11... b6=) 11... ♜c6!?

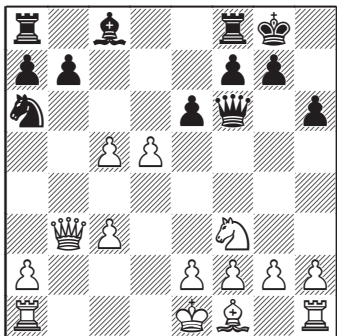


This move has been my novelty since it was played in practice in 2014. 12. dxc5N (12. ♜d1 cxd4 13. ♜xd4 ♙d7 14. 0-0 ♝fc8= with an equal position in the game: Xiao, Y (2177)-Guo, Q (2462) Xinghua 2014. 12. 0-0N 12... cxd4 13. exd4 ♜d8 14. ♝fd1 ♙d7∞ with a good position. 12. d5N 12... ♜xc3+ 13. bxc3 ♜a5 14. ♙a2 exd5 15. ♙xd5 ♝e8= and Black has no problems.) 12... ♜xc3+ 13. bxc3 ♜a5 14. ♙a2 (14. ♙b5 ♜b3∞ followed by ... ♜xc5. 14. ♜d2 ♙d7 15. ♝b1 ♝fd8 16. ♙e2 ♝ac8 17. ♜e4 ♙a4=) 14... ♙d7 15. ♜e5 ♙a4 16. ♝b1 ♝fc8 17. ♜b4 ♙e8!? to play for a win. (17... ♜c6 18. ♜xc6 (18. ♝xa4 ♜xe5∞) 18... ♙xc6 19. 0-0 b6!= with full equality.) 18. ♜d3 b6∞ with a balanced position, but Black has some chances to push for more.

8. dxc5



Quite strange without taking on d5 first, but it has been played from time to time. 8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0!? (9...dxc4 is also possible. 10.♖xc4 0-0 11.e3 ♘d7 12.♗d4 (12.♙d3 ♙c6∞ and Black was fine in the game Kortschnoj, V (2650)- Sosonko, G (2595) Lone Pine 1981. He will continue with ...♘d7.) 12...♗e7N 13.♙e5 (13.♖d1 ♖c8=) 13...♖c8= with equality.) 10.cxd5 ♘a6!



A very interesting idea to seize the initiative. 11.♗a3 (11.d6?!N 11...♙xc5 12.♗c4 b6̄; 11.c6N 11...exd5 12.cxb7 ♙xb7! The bishop is a taboo due to ...♗xc3. 13.e3 ♘c5 14.♗c2 ♖fc8̄ followed by ...♙e4 or ...d5-d4.) 11...b6!

Black has a lead in development and needs to continue playing actively. 12.c6

a) 12.cxb6?! axb6!↑ and Black had a strong initiative in the game Tunik, G (2465) -Baginskaite, C (2330) Katowice 1993.

b) 12.dxe6?!N is not an improvement: 12...♙xc5 13.e3 (13.exf7+ ♗xf7 14.e3 ♙b7 15.♙e2 ♗g6̄) 13...♙b7 14.♙e2 fxe6 15.0-0 ♗g6̄ and Black is slightly better.

12...exd5 13.♙d4 ♙c5 14.e3 ♗g6 to prevent the ♙f1 from developing. 15.f3 ♙f5 16.♖d1 ♖fe8 17.♙f2 ♙c2 18.♖d2 ♙d3∞ and Black had good compensation in the game Bolbochan, J-Rabar, B/Rio de Janeiro 1952.

8...exd5 9.e3

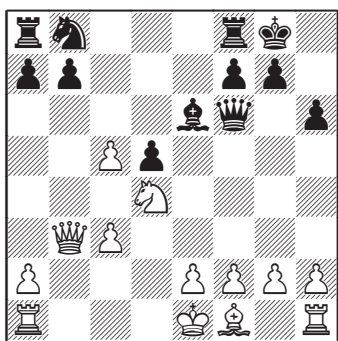
9.dxc5 was played quite often in the past but in general I believe it's smarter for White to insert 9.e3 0-0. 9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 (10.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♘a6= and Black will win back the pawn as in the game Kempinski, R (2600) -Kryvoruchko, Y (2652) Eretria 2011.) 10...0-0 11.♙d4 This might look tempting for White, but Black has a good reply: (11.e3 ♙e6 12.♖c1

a) 12.♙d4 transposes to 11.♙d4.

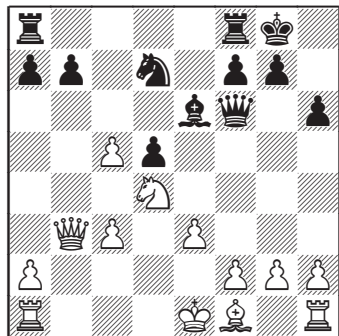
b) 12.♙b5 Zawadka, Z (2329)- Chodorowski, R (2068) ICCF email 2006, and here I suggest a new move: 12...d4!N 13.♗b4 dxe3 14.0-0 (14.fxe3 ♙d7!?∞) 14...♙d7!?∞ with the idea of playing ...♙c6. Black is fine, probably even slightly better.

12...♙d7 13.♗xb7 ♙xc5 (13...♖ab8?!N is the engine's suggestion and is probably even simpler. 14.♗xa7 (14.♗c7 ♖fc8

15. ♖a5 ♜xc5 16. ♖a3 ♜d8 17. ♖c7 ♜fc8 16. ♖d6 (16. ♖f4 ♖xf4 17. exf4 ♜xc5 18. ♙b5 ♜xa2 19. ♜d4 ♙d7 20. 0-0 ♙xb5 21. ♜xb5 ♜d3=) 16... ♜xc5 17. ♙b5 ♜xa2 18. 0-0 ♜e4 19. ♖e5 ♖xe5 20. ♜xe5 ♜xc3= with an equal position.) 14. ♖b4 ♜fc8 15. ♙e2!?N (15. ♖d4 ♖f5!?N I prefer to keep queens on the board. (15... ♖xd4 16. ♜xd4 ♜ab8 17. ♙b5 a6 18. ♙e2 ♜b2 19. 0-0 ♜xa2 20. ♜a1 ♜xa1 21. ♜xa1 ♜c7 22. ♜f1 ♜f8 and Black managed to hold the endgame in this correspondence game, but it's not very pleasant to play it: Van Tricht, M (2384) - Cranbourne, C (2455) ICCF.) 16. ♙e2 ♜ab8 17. 0-0 ♜b2 18. ♖d1 ♜e4 19. ♜d4 ♖f6= with a good position.) 15... ♜e4 16. 0-0 (16. ♖d4 ♖xd4 17. ♜xd4 ♜ab8 18. 0-0 ♜b2= with equality.) 16... a5 17. ♖b2 ♜ab8 18. ♖a1 ♙g4 19. ♜d4 ♙e2 20. ♜xe2 ♖e5= even if Black is a pawn down, he has enough activity to compensate it.) 11... ♙e6!



12. ♖xb7 is of course the move we need to check. I truly believe Black has enough compensation. (12. e3 ♜d7



and Black will take back the pawn. 13. ♖a3 (13. ♙e2 ♜xc5 14. ♖b4 b6 15. 0-0 ♜fc8= Bercys, S (2279)-Hoekstra, M (2358) Lindsborg 2004. 13. c6?!N 13... bxc6 14. ♜xc6?! d4! 13... ♜fc8 14. c6 (14. ♙e2 ♜xc5 15. 0-0 ♜e4 16. ♜ac1 b6= Yermolinsky, A (2588)-Serper, G (2540) Salt Lake City 1999.) 14... bxc6 15. ♙a6 ♜cb8 16. 0-0 ♜b6 17. ♙e2 ♖g6= and Black had equality in the game Ivanchuk, V (2731)-Mitkov, N (2514) Yerevan 2001.) 12... ♜d7 Here White has different possibilities: 13. g3 probably the best for White.

a) 13. c6 ♜ab8!? (13... ♜fb8N was also possible. 14. ♖c7 (14. ♖a6 ♜b6 15. ♖a3 ♜e5 14... ♜e5 15. g3 ♜c8 16. ♖d6 ♜xc6 17. ♖f4 ♜xd4 18. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 (18... ♜xc3!? also equalizes. 19. ♖xf6 gxf6 20. ♙g2 ♜b8=) 19. cxd4 ♜ab8 20. e3 ♜b2 21. ♙g2 ♜cc2 22. 0-0 ♜xa2= with equality.) 14. ♖xa7! Looks super risky but it's the best.

a1) 14. ♖a6?N 14... ♜c5! 15. ♖a3 (15. ♖xa7?! ♜e4 16. f3 ♜a8! 17. ♖b7 (17. ♖c7 ♜fc8 18. ♖b7 ♜cb8 see 17. ♖b7.) 17... ♜fb8 18. fxe4 (18. ♜b1 ♜xb7 19. cxb7

♖b8 20.fxe4 dxe4 21.e3 ♙xa2-+)
 18...♙xb7 19.cxb7 ♖b8 20.g3 (20.♖b1
 dxe4-+) 20...dxe4 21.♙g2 ♙d5-+)
 15...♙e4 16.f3 ♖h4+ 17.g3 ♙xg3
 18.hxg3 ♖xh1 19.0-0-0 ♖fc8f;

a2) 14.♖c7?! ♙e5! 15.g3 ♖fc8 16.♗d6
 ♖b2f;

14...♙a8 15.♖c7 (15.♖b7 ♖fb8 16.♖c7
 ♙e5 doesn't help White.) 15...♙e5! 16.e3
 (16.g3!N is also playable even if not easy
 at all. 16...♖fc8 17.♖b6! This time the
 queen has to go to this side. (17.♗d6? fails
 to the strong 17...♙xc6! 18.♖b4 ♙g4!-+
 Gives Black a terrific attack, for example:
 19.♙g2 (19.♗d1 ♙f3!-+; 19.♖b2 ♖e8!-+)
 19...♖b6 20.♖c5 ♙xe2!-+) 17...♙g4!?
 (17...♙xc6 18.♙g2 ♖ab8 19.♖a6 ♙xd4
 20.cxd4 ♖xd4 21.0-0 ♙a8=) 18.♙g2 ♖cb8
 19.♖c7 (19.♖c5? fails to 19...♙xe2!-+)
 19...♖c8 (19...♙xe2 is less strong here.
 20.f4! An important defensive resource.
 20...♙c4 21.♖xe5 ♖e8 22.♖xe8+ ♖xe8+
 23.♙f2 g5 24.f5∞) 20.♖b6 ♖cb8=)
 16...♖fc8 17.♗d6!N was better. (17.♖b6?
 ♖cb8 18.♖c5 (18.♖c7 ♖b2-+) 18...♖b2
 (18...♖g6!-+ was also winning on the
 spot.) 19.f4 ♙xg2 20.0-0-0 (20.♙e2 ♖h4+
 21.♙d1 ♙c4-+) 20...♙gxa2-+ and Black
 won very easily in the game Zhou Weiqi
 (2585)-Hou Yifan (2589)/ Xinghua CHN
 2010.) 17...♙xc6! 18.♖b4! (18.♙xc6? is
 bad because of 18...♙g4 threatening both
 ...♖xf2 and ...♙xc3. 19.♙e7+ ♙h8 20.0-0
 ♖xc3+ 21.♙b1 ♙xf2f) 18...♙g4
 19.♖b2 ♖xc3 20.♙b5! ♖b3! A beautiful
 move! 21.axb3! The best. (21.♖xb3 gives
 Black an edge after a long and forced
 variation: 21...♖xf2+ 22.♙d1 ♙xe3+
 23.♙c1 ♖xg2 24.♖xe3 ♖c8+ 25.♙b1

♙f5+ 26.♙d3 ♖xh1+ 27.♙b2 ♖xh2+
 28.♙b3 ♖b8+ 29.♙b5 ♙c2+! 30.♙xc2
 ♖xb5+ 31.♙b4 ♖xb4+ 32.♙xb4 ♖b2+
 33.♙c5 ♖xa1 34.♖e8+ ♙h7 35.♖xf7f)
 21...♖xf2+! 22.♖xf2 ♖xa1+ 23.♙e2 ♙a2+
 24.♙f3 ♙xf2 25.♖e1 ♙g4+ 26.♙g3 ♙h5=
 with an equal position.

b) 13.♖b5?!N 13...♖ab8 14.♖a5 ♖fc8
 15.e3 (15.♙b3? allows Black a very nice
 combination: 15...♙xc5! 16.♙xc5 ♖b5!-+)
 15...♙e5!f followed by ...♖g6. White is in
 danger. (15...♖g6 16.♙b3 ♙xc5 17.♙xc5
 ♖b1+ (17...♙xc5 18.♖xc5 ♖b1+ 19.♖xb1
 ♖xb1+=) 18.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 19.♙d2 ♖b8
 20.♙b3 ♖b2+= and a draw by perpetual.)
 ;

c) 13.♖b4 ♖ab8 14.♖a3 ♖g6!N A nice
 improvement. Black intends ...♖b1.
 (14...♖fc8 15.g3!N (15.e3 ♖g6 16.♙b3N
 (16.f3? ♙xc5f Akopian,V (2601)-
 Mitkov,N (2528) Chicago 2008.) 16...a5!?
 ↑ and Black has the initiative. (16...♙xc5
 was enough to make a draw. 17.♙xc5
 ♖xc5 18.♖xc5 ♖b1+ 19.♖xb1 ♖xb1+
 20.♙e2 ♖c2+ 21.♙f3 ♖e4+ 22.♙e2
 ♖c2+ 23.♙e1 ♖c1+=)) 15...♙xc5 16.♙g2
 ♙e4 17.♙xe4 dxe4 18.0-0 ♖c7± Black has
 some compensation for the pawn but I'm
 not sure it's enough.) 15.f3 (15.e3??
 ♖b1-+; 15.♙b3 ♖fc8 16.e3 a5!↑ with the
 idea of ...a5-a4, or ...♙e5.) 15...♖fc8
 16.g3 (16.c6 ♙e5∞) 16...♙xc5 17.♙g2
 h5!∞ followed by ...h5-h4. Black has
 enough compensation for the pawn here.

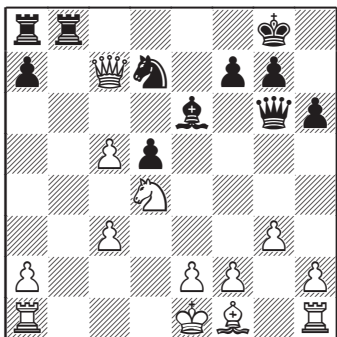
13...♖fb8

a) 13...♙xc5N was my idea back in
 2009, but it's maybe not so simple.
 14.♖b4 ♖fc8 15.♙g2 ♖ab8 16.♖a3 ♖b6

17.0-0 ♖a6 18.♗b2 (18.♖c1 ♠a4= followed by ...♜xc3.) 18...♠a4 19.♗b7 ♜c5 20.♗b1 ♠a4 21.♖d3 ♖a5 22.♠b3 ♖xc3 23.♖d2 ♖b5 24.♖fc1± with a little plus.

b) 13...♖ab8?!N 14.♗xa7±;

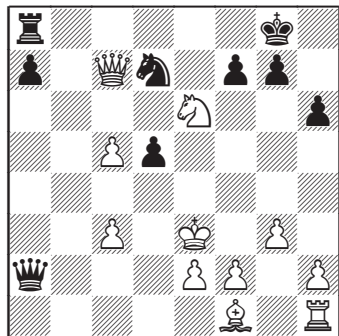
14.♗c7 ♖g6!N



The best way to play! ...♖b1 is in the air. (14...♖c8 15.♗f4 ♖xc5 16.♙g2 ♖xc3 17.0-0 was played in the game: Moroni,L (2460)-Agmanov,Z (2167) Porto Carras 2015. Black should be fine, but I think it's more pleasant to play for White.) 15.f3

a) 15.♙g2 ♖b1+ 16.♠d2 ♖b2+ 17.♠e1 (17.♠c1 ♖ab8 18.♖d1 ♠h7!?= with the idea being to play ...♖xa2, avoiding a check after ♗xb8.) 17...♖b1+=;

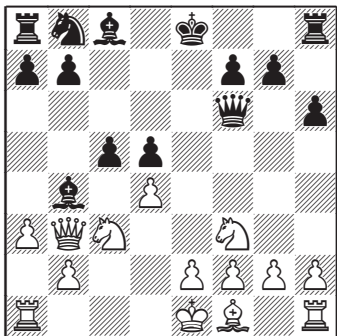
b) 15.♠xe6?! gives Black an edge after a straightforward line: 15...♖b1+! 16.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 17.♠d2 ♖xa2+ 18.♠d3 (18.♠e3



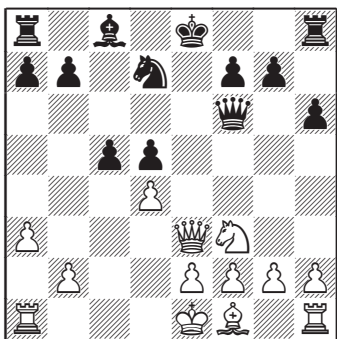
This move leads to some crazy variations: 18...d4+! The only move, but it's a logical one. 19.♠xd4? (19.cxd4 ♗xc6+ 20.♠f3 ♖d5+ 21.e4 ♗xd4± Black is better.) 19...♖e8+ 20.♠d3 ♠e5+ 21.♠e3 ♖b2! A very strong move! 22.♠f4! ♖d2+! 23.e3 (23.♠e4 ♠d3+! 24.♠d5 ♖a2+ 25.♠c6 ♠e5+ 26.♠b7 ♖d5+ 27.♠a6 ♖xh1+→) 23...♗xf2+ 24.♠e4 ♠f3+! 25.♠d5 ♖xe3 26.♠c4 ♖e4!± and Black is winning, as White will lose back some material.) 18...♖b1+ 19.♠d2 ♖b2+ 20.♠d3 ♖b5+ 21.♠e3 fxe6±;

15...♖c8 16.♗f4 ♠xc5 17.♙g2 ♠d7 18.0-0 ♠a4= with equality. Compared to 13...♠c5N line, the bishop on g2 is less good here because of the f3-pawn.

9.a3

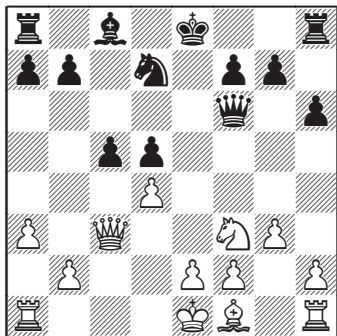


Often played. 9...Bxc3+ 10.Qxc3 Nc7 defending the c5-pawn. (10...b6 is another possibility. It's also totally fine, but I believe that 10...Nc7 is good enough.) 11.Qe3+

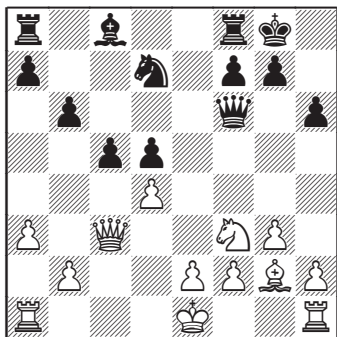


A very solid approach. True, Black will have an isolated pawn, but the position will become too simplified for White to claim any edge.

a) 11.g3!?

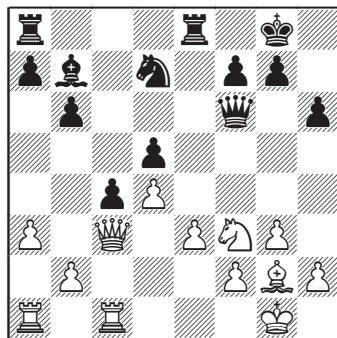


The idea of developing the bishop to g2 is interesting, and offers a playable position for both sides. It has recently been played by some strong players, such as Anish Giri and Wang Yu. 11...0-0 12.Bg2 Re8 The main move, even if the 12...b6 alternative is equally good. It's just a question of taste. (12...b6!?)



Supporting the c5-pawn and planning ...Bb6. 13.0-0 Bb6 14.Bf1 Bb8 15.h3! (15.e3N 15...Bc7 16.Bb1 Bb8= with a balanced position. 15.Bb1N 15...cxd4! 16.Qxd4 Bc1 17.Bxc1 Bxc2 18.Qxf6 Nxf6 19.Nd4 Re8= with equality. The knight on d4 compensates for the pawn deficit. 15.Bb1 has been played recently,

game Ulko,J (2325)-Gorelov,S (2485)
Moscow 1996, but here I suggest Black
should continue with 15...♖e4!N 16.♖xe4
(16.♘d2 ♖e7!∞ and White still needs to
prove they have enough compensation for
the pawn.) 16...dxe4 17.♖e1! Exploiting
Black's weak last rank. 17...♗e5!? A nice
reply in exchange. 18.dxe5 (18.♘xe5 cxd4
19.♖xd4 ♕xh3 20.♖xe4 ♖d8≠ White's
weakened king gives Black an edge.)
18...♖xf3 19.♕xc8 ♖xc3 20.bxc3 ♖xc8
21.♖xe4 ♕f8∞ can be little unpleasant for
White.) 15...fxe6 16.♖e1 b6 17.♕h3 ♗f8
18.♗e5 ♖e7∞ I believe White has enough
compensation for the pawn, but only for
equality.) 13...b6 14.0-0 ♕b7 15.♖fc1
(15.dxc5N 15...♖xc3 16.bxc3 ♗xc5!)=
followed by ...♗e4, ...♕a6, ...♖ac8, etc.
The position is equal.) 15...c4!?



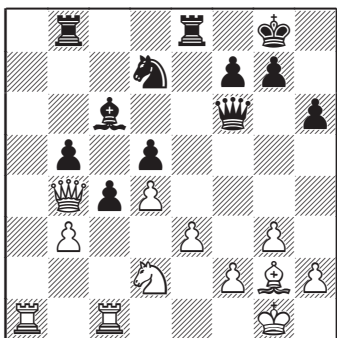
I think this is the right timing to play this move. (15...a5?! was tried by Hou Yifan, but White was better after 16.dxc5!
 ♖xc3 17.♞xc3 ♜xc5 18.♞ac1 ♔f8
 19.♜d4± Giri,A (2790)-Hou,Y (2663) Shamkir 2016.) 16.♜d2 So far we have been following the game Sakaev,K (2619)-Lastin,A (2643) Moscow 2009, but here

Black can continue with a thematic plan on the queenside:

a1) 16.b3 b5 17.a4 (17.♖d2 was played once but it transposes to 16.♖d2.) 17...a6 18.♖ab1 ♖c6=;

a2) 16.a4N 16...a6 followed by ...♖ab8 and ...b6-b5.

16...b5 17.b3 (17.a4 a6 and White has nothing better than b3, transposing to 16.b3.) 17...♖ab8 18.a4 a6 19.axb5 axb5 20.♖b4 ♖c6!N ...and the position is about equal.



(20...♖b6?! was played once, but after 21.♖a5 ♖c6 Renman,N (2405) - Wiedenkiller,M (2385) Karlskrona 1983, White missed: 22.bxc4! bxc4 23.♖xb6 ♖xb6 24.♖b1± With a good edge.) 21.♖b1 (21.♖a6 ♖e6 22.♖ca1 (22.e4 dxe4 23.bxc4 bxc4 24.♖xc4 ♖xc4 25.♖xc4 ♖b5 26.♖aa1 ♖xc4 27.♖xc4 ♖f6= with full equality.) 22...♖ec8= and once again, I don't see how White can improve his position.) 21...♖e6 22.♖c3 ♖f6 23.♖cb1 ♖c8= White has done everything he can, but what's next? I don't see any way for him to improve his position.

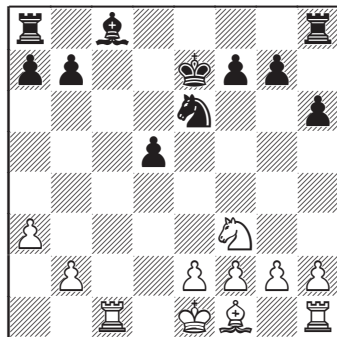
b) 11.e3 0-0 transposes to 9.e3, then 10.a3.

11...♖e7 12.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 13.dxc5 ♖xc5 14.♖c1

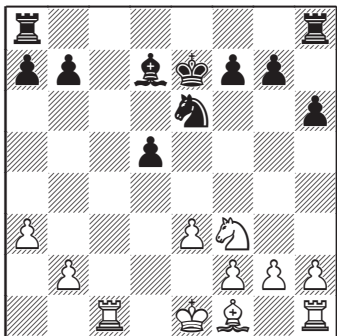
a) 14.♖d1 ♖d8 15.g3 ♖f5 16.♖d4 ♖e4!? To provoke a move White doesn't really want to play. (16...♖d7 17.♖g2 ♖ac8 18.♖d2 g6=) 17.f3 ♖g6 18.♖h3 ♖e6 19.0-0 ♖ac8= Chatalbashev,B (2596)-Venkatesh, M (2480) Pamplona 2011.

b) 14.♖d4 ♖d7 15.e3 ♖hc8 16.♖c2 ♖e6= and draw was agreed in the game Akobian,V (2621) -Hammer,J (2606) Philadelphia 2012.

14...♖e6



I'm not surprised that all five games I have in my database in this position ended in a draw. (14...♖e4 is also totally fine, but I think it's simpler to put the knight on e6.) 15.e3 (15.g3 ♖d7 16.♖g2 (16.♖h3N 16...♖ac8 17.♖xc8 (17.♖d2? ♖c5+) 17...♖xc8 18.♖d2 ♖c5 19.♖xd7 ♖b3+ 20.♖d3 ♖xd7=) 16...♖ac8 (16...♖hc8 17.♖d2 ♖d6=) 17.♖d2 ♖d6 18.♖xc8 ♖xc8 19.♖c1 ♖xc1 20.♖xc1 a5= Votava,J (2534)-Hracek,Z (2615) Czechia 2012) 15...♖d7!?



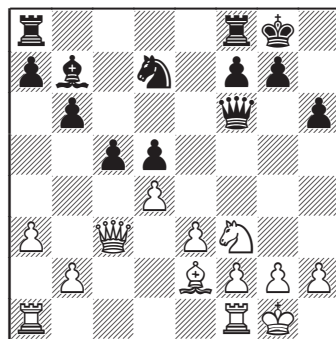
I believe this is best. The following lines are only illustrative, giving an idea how the game could proceed. I have to admit that they are rather boring, but it's White who decided to exchange everything.

(15...d8 was played twice, but I'm not sure it's the best. 16.d2 (16.d3 d4=) 16...d4?!N This move is dubious, but it illustrates well what we should try to avoid with Black: (16...d7 is the best. 17.d3 Bxc8 18.b4 d6 19.h4 Bxc1 20.Bxc1 Ba8 21.e4 f6= Bacrot, E (2700)-Ponomarev, R (2739) Khanty-Mansiysk 2009) 17.e4! can be quite unpleasant for Black. 17...b6 (17...d3 18.e3±) 18.e5 b6 19.f3 f6 (19...Bac8 20.d4 f6 21.d3 a5 22.Bhe1±) 20.dg4+ e7 21.d4 Bxc8 22.e5 f6 23.d3± White succeeds in getting his dream position.) 16.d3 (16.d2N has never been tried, but it doesn't change the evaluation of the position: 16...Bac8 17.Bxc8 Bxc8 18.d3 g6 19.d4 (19.d1 c5 20.d4 a4 21.e1 d6 22.g4 b3+ 23.dxb3 bxb3=; 19.h4 d6 20.d2 c5 21.d4 de6=; 19.d2 b5 20.d1 d6; 19.b4 d6 20.h4 h5 21.Bb1 a6=) 19...dxd4 20.exd4 d6= with full equality.) 16...Bac8 (16...g6 17.d2 Bxc8 18.Bxc8

Bxc8 19.Bc1=) 17.d2 (17.e2N I also checked this move, but it doesn't change much. 17...c5 18.d4 g6 19.b4 de6 20.d3 Bxc1 21.Bxc1 Ba8= followed by ...a7-a5.) 17...g6 18.e5 c5 19.e2 b3 To exchange some pieces. (19...a4= was also good for equality.) 20.Bxc8 Bxc8 21.dxd7 exd7 22.b5+ e6 23.a4 a5 24.d1 c7= Javakhishvili, L (2423)-Gvetadze, S (2324) Tbilisi 2004

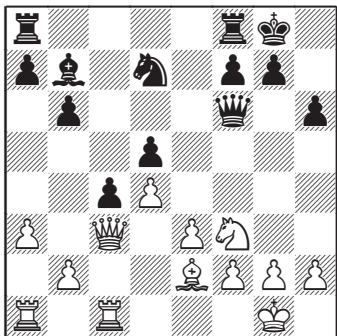
9...0-0 10.dxc5

Quite a common move. White is aiming for a little edge in the endgame. 10.a3 bxc3+ 11.Wxc3 d7 12.e2 b6 13.0-0 b7

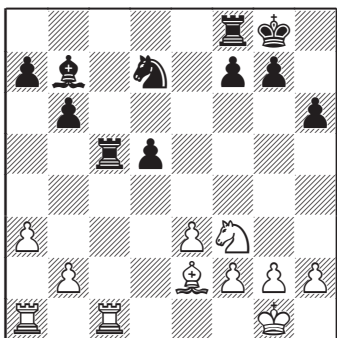


This line was quite fashionable for White some years ago, and I faced it several times myself. However, it's harmless for Black. We want to play...c5-c4, then ...b6-b5, but we should always keep an eye on White's ideas of e5, and also try to avoid certain transpositions into endgames after dxc5. 14.b3!? is an interesting try, stopping ...c5-c4 for a while.

a) 14.Bfc1 c4!



I believe this is the right way to play, followed by ...b6-b5, and ...a7-a6. (14...Rac8 I will allow myself to make a little digression here to show you a game which impressed me a lot! 15.dxc5 ♖xc3 16.♗xc3 ♗xc5 this position is critical. If Black succeeds in exchanging all the rooks, he will have no problems holding the endgame. 17.♖cc1!



A very good move! Ivanchuk has an impressive understanding... 17...Rxc8?! Of course, Black is not losing after this move, but it was better to exchange at least one pair of rooks. (17...Rxc1+ 18.Rxc1 Rxc8 19.b1! and this position is much closer to equality than to an advantage for

White, but they can of course keep playing.) 18.♖d1! I really like this move! Keeping both pairs of rooks on the board favours White. 18...Rc2 19.♗b5 ♜f8 20.♖ab1! ♜c2 21.♗a4 ♜e6 22.♗b3 Now I believe White is slightly better. Ivanchuk will continue to play a very good technical game. 22...♜f8 23.h3 ♗c5 24.♜h2 ♜e7 25.♖d2 ♗b5 26.♗a2 ♗bc5 27.♜e1 a5 28.♖bd1 ♖d8 29.♜g3 ♗b5 30.f3 and Black made a blunder in a slightly worse position. 30...Rc8? 31.♜d3 and now the ♗b5 is trapped and a4 is coming. 31...d4 32.♗xe6 ♜xe6 33.♜f4+ ♜e7 34.♖xd4 and White won quite easily being a pawn up in Ivanchuk,V (2750)-Aronian, L (2744) Morelia/Linares 2007.) 15.a4

a1) 15.b3 b5 16.♖ab1 (16.a4 a6 17.♜d2 Zakhartsov,V (2608)-Shimanov,A (2519) Irkutsk 2010 17...Rfe8=) 16...♗c6 17.bxc4 bxc4 18.e4 (18.♗d1 ♗fb8 19.♗c2 ♗b6! and Black seized the initiative in the game Iotov,V (2569) -David,A (2631)/Marrakesh MAR 2010.) 18...Rac8!?!∞;

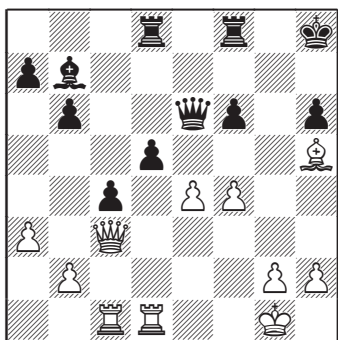
a2) 15.♜d2 b5 16.a4 a6 17.♗g4 ♖e7 18.♖a5 ♜f6∞ Salem,A (2476) -Palac,M (2583) Dresden 2008;

15...a6 16.♖b4 ♗c6 17.♜d2 (17.♜e1 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.b3 ♖g6 20.h3 ♗fe8= Postny,E (2640)-Moiseenko,A (2715) Porto Carras 2011) 17...b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.b3 ♖g6∞ and Black was fine in the game Pelletier,Y (2569) -Alekseev,E (2708) Biel 2008.

b) 14.♖ac1 c4! Black needs to stick to the same plan as after 14.♖fc1. 15.♜e5!?!N When I was thinking during my game, I

thought this was the most critical move.
(15.a4 and here I made a draw in the game
Iturrizaga (2522)-Cornette (2573)/ Salou
2009. 15...a6 was the move I was
planning. ...b6-b5 will follow next.

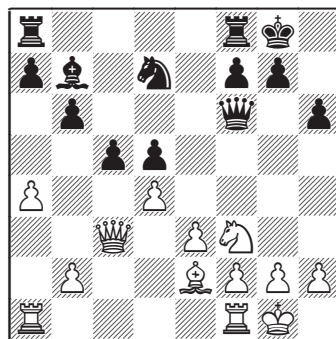
15.♖d2 b5 16.♙f3 ♖e7 17.♖a5 ♙c6
18.b3 ♖d6= with an equal position:
Shirov,A (2691)-Giri,A (2768) Hoogeveen
2014.) 15...♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♖e6 17.♖fd1
(17.f4 is met by 17...f6! 18.exf6 ♖xf6
19.♖d4 ♖e8= with an equal position.)
17...♖ae8 18.f4 (18.b3 cxb3 19.♖xb3
♖xe5 20.♖a4 ♖b8 21.♙f3 ♖c8=) 18...f6
19.e4! is an interesting try. (19.♙h5 ♖e7
20.exf6 ♖xf6 21.♖e1 ♖f8=) 19...b5
(19...♙h8!? is the move I analyzed in
2009, and after re-checking it after 8
years, I can confirm that it is still ok!
20.♙h5 (20.♖d2 b5 21.exd5 ♖b6+
22.♖d4 ♖xd4+ 23.♖xd4 fxe5 24.fxe5
♖xe5=; 20.exd5 ♙xd5 21.♙xc4 ♙xc4
22.♖xc4 fxe5=) 20...♖d8 21.exf6 (21.♖d4
♖e7 22.exf6 gxf6 23.f5 (23.e5 fxe5
24.fxe5 ♙c8!=) 23...dxe4 24.♖xc4 ♙c8=)
21...gxf6!?



looks strange but it's the best. 22.♖d4
(22.exd5 ♖xd5=) 22...dxe4 23.♙g4
(23.♖xc4 ♙d5=) 23...♖e7 24.♖xc4 ♖d3=)

20.♖a5 (20.exd5 ♖b6+ 21.♖d4 ♖xd4+
22.♖xd4 fxe5 23.fxe5 ♖xe5=; 20.♖d4 fxe5
21.♖xa7 ♙c6∞) 20...a6 21.exd5 ♖f5
22.♖b6 ♙a8 and Black is fine in this
rather complicated position. 23.♖xa6
(23.♖c3 fxe5 24.♖xa6 ♖xf4 25.♖b6 e4=)
23...♖xf4 24.♙f1 ♖xe5 25.♖xb5 ♖h5
26.h3 ♖e3+ 27.♙h2 ♙xd5 28.♖xd5 ♖f4+
29.♙g1 ♖e3+= with equality.

c) 14.a4!?



It makes sense to prevent Black's play
with ...b6-b5 after ...c5-c4. 14...♖fc8
15.♖fc1 ♖e7 16.♖a3 ♙f8 (16...a5!?
17.♖c2 ♙a6 18.♙xa6 ♖xa6 19.♖d3 ♖aa8
20.♖ac1 ♖e6=) 17.dxc5 (17.♖c3 a5
18.♖ac1 cxd4= with full equality.)
17...bxc5 18.♖c2 ♖ab8 and draw was
agreed in the game Avrukh,B (2668)-
Khenkin,I (2613)/ Novi Sad 2009.

14...♖ac8 15.♖ac1 a6!? with the idea of
pushing ...c5-c4. 16.dxc5 (16.♖b2 b5=
then ...c5-c4 next. 16.♖fd1 c4= followed
by ...b6-b5.) 16...♖xc3 17.♖xc3 ♖xc5
18.♖cc1 (18.♖fc1 ♖fc8 19.♖xc5 ♖xc5= as I
have already mentioned in the previous
notes, exchanging all the rooks helps Black

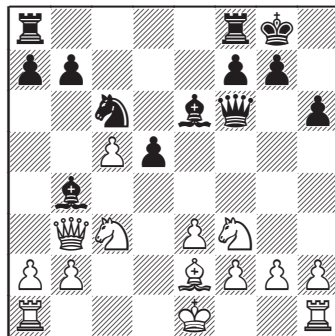
to achieve an easy draw. 18.♖d3 ♖fc8
 19.b4 ♖c3=) 18...♖fc8 19.♖cd1 ♖c3
 20.♘d4 ♘c5 21.b4 ♘e4 22.a4 g6= with
 equality.

10.♙e2?! is quite often played. It looks
 like a natural developing move, but I
 believe only Black can be better. 10...♘c6
 Here it's difficult to understand how
 White is to continue. Black defends the
 b4-bishop and simply wants to push ...c5-
 c4. 11.dxc5 maybe the best, but it can't be
 bad for Black after:

a) 11.0-0 c4! 12.♖a4 (12.♖d1 ♖d8+
 Meister,P (2417)-Krush, I (2432) York
 1999) 12...♖d8+ and I do believe Black is
 better. He can even keep his ♙b4 with the
 ...♙a5-c7 manoeuvre. Other ideas include
 ...♖b8 and ...b7-b5. Black eventually won
 in the game Belunek,V (2252)-Babula,V
 (2553) Ostrava 2014.

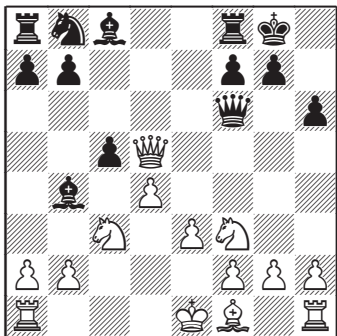
b) 11.a3 c4! 12.♖a4 (12.♖d1 ♙xc3+
 13.bxc3 Jasnikowski,Z (2330)-Cvetkovic,S
 (2390) Wrocław 1978 13...♙f5 14.0-0
 ♘a5+) 12...♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 a6 14.♘d2 b5+
 Bogner,S (2522) -Khenkin, I (2597)/ Bad
 Liebenzell GER 2010;

11...♙e6!



The most ambitious. (11...d4 is a good
 way to make an easy draw. 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4
 13.exd4 ♖xd4 14.0-0 ♙e6 15.♖fd1! ♙xb3
 16.♖xd4 ♙xc5 17.♖d7 ♙e6 18.♖xb7 ♖ab8
 19.♖b5 ♖xb5 20.♙xb5 ♖d8= Black has
 enough compensation for the pawn due to
 the bishop pair: Gupta,A (2634)-
 Cheparinov,I (2684) Reykjavik 2016.)
 12.♖c2 (12.0-0 d4 13.♘e4N is maybe a
 better try, but even here Black has chances
 for a little edge. (13.♘d5 ♙xd5 14.♖xd5
 Teglas,B (2173) -Cox,T (2133) Budapest
 2008 14...dxe3!N 15.fxe3 ♖xb2+) 13...
 ♖e7 (13...♙xb3 14.♘xf6+ gxf6
 15.axb3 dxe3 16.fxe3 ♙xc5 17.♙h1
 ♙xe3+) 14.♖c2 ♙f5 15.♙d3 dxe3 16.fxe3
 ♙xe4 17.♙xe4 ♙xc5 18.♙xc6 bxc6
 19.♙h1 ♙xe3 20.♖xc6 ♖ac8+) 12...d4
 13.exd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♖xd4 15.0-0
 ♖xc5+ Of course, this position is closer to
 a draw than to a win for Black, but I still
 believe there are some small chances due
 to the bishop pair: Glavinac,G (2179) -
 Mitkov,M (2363) Struga 2011.

10.♖xd5?!

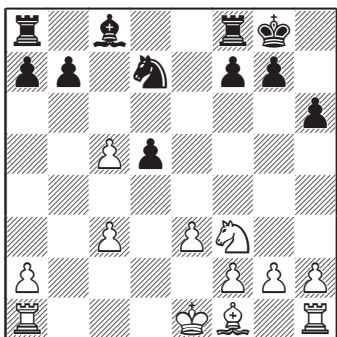


This is too greedy. Now Black seizes the initiative: 10...♖c6! 11.♔d3 ♜d8 12.♜e4 g6 13.0-0 ♕f5 14.♜f4 cxd4 15.♘e4 (15.exd4 ♘xd4?) 15...♜e7 16.♜xh6 ♔xe4 17.♘g5 ♜xg5! 18.♜xg5 ♔xd3? Kholmov, R-Kondratiev, P Dzintari 1950.

10...♔xc3+ 11.♜xc3

11.bxc3 transposes to 9.dxc5 then 11.e3.

11...♜xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘d7!?



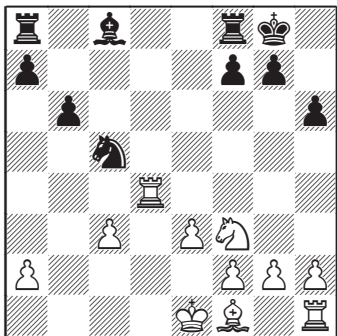
The move I played twice in 2009. The idea is to give a pawn but to have good compensation thanks to the advantage in development. 12...♔e6 is also possible, with a good score in the database, but I believe the text move is at least as good.

13.♞d1

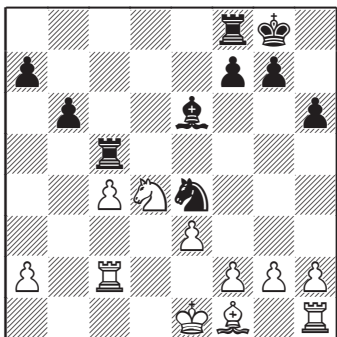
13.c6 was used by some good players, but honestly, I don't believe White has anything here. 13...bxc6 14.♔e2 (14.♘d4?! c5 15.♘f5 ♘f6 Nass,E (2073)-Ninov, N (2501)/ Selestat 2008) 16.♘e7+ ♖h8 17.♘xc8 ♜fxc8∞ and only Black can be better. 14.c4 ♜b8! 15.♘d4 ♜b6 16.cxd5 cxd5= and Black was fine in the game Andreikin, D (2603)-Lebedev, S (2325) Saratov 2008.) 14...♜b8 15.♘d4 ♜b6 16.0-0 ♔a6!? A solid idea. 17.♔xa6 ♜xa6 18.♜fb1 ♜b8 19.♜xb8+ ♘xb8= Even though he lost, Black was totally fine in the game: Beliavsky, A (2646)-Neubauer, M (2417)/Austria 2009.

13.c4 gives nothing after 13...dxc4 14.♔xc4 (14.c6 ♘b6!? 15.a4 a5!? 16.♜b1 ♘xa4! 17.cxb7 ♜b8 18.♜a1N is of course the logical move to check. (18.♔xc4 ♜xb7 (18...♔xb7!?N 19.0-0 ♔xf3 20.gxf3 ♜fc8∞) 19.0-0 ♜c7= Heinbuch, D (2355) - Piskov, Y (2540) Bonn 1995) 18...♔xb7! 19.♜xa4 ♔xf3 20.gxf3 ♜b1+ 21.♔e2 ♜d8! 22.♜xc4 (22.f4 c3 23.♜c4 ♜d2+ 24.♔f3 c2 25.♜c8+ ♔h7 26.♜xc2! ♜xf1! 27.♜xd2 ♜xh1= with an equal rook endgame.) 22...♜b2+ 23.♔e1 ♜b1+= with perpetual.) 14...♘xc5 15.♔e2 ♔e6= and Black equalized easily in the game Brynell, S (2484) -Grandelius, N (2573) Orebro 2013.

13...♘xc5 14.♜xd5 b6 15.♞d4

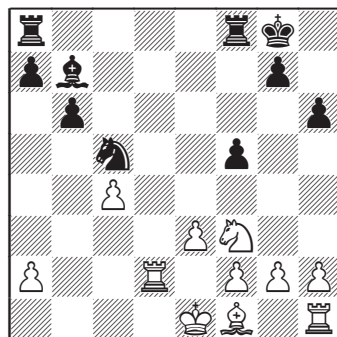


The move used by Kramnik in 2009. In this position I have tried both moves which I suggest, and I think they are both OK. 15.c4! This move has also been used several times. As in the main line, here Black has a choice, even if I believe that this time 15...♙b7 is simpler. 15...♙b7 (15...♙e6 is also possible, but maybe less precise due to 16.♞d2!?N (16.♞d4 was previously always played and it transposes to the main line.) 16...♞ac8 17.♜d4 ♜e4 18.♞c2 ♞c5



Black should be able to hold here without much suffering. 19.♙d3 (19.♙e2 ♞fc8 (19...♜d6 is the same. 20.♜xe6 fxe6 21.0-0 ♞fc8 22.♙g4 ♙f7 23.♞d2 ♙e7

24.♞fd1 ♞d8 25.♞d4 ♜f7= with equality.) 20.♜xe6 fxe6 21.0-0 ♜d6 22.♙g4 (22.♞d1 ♜xc4=; 22.♞fc1 ♙f8=) 22...♙f7 23.♞d2 ♙e7 24.♞fd1 ♞d8 25.♙e2 ♜f7= with enough compensation for the pawn.) 19...♜d6 20.♜xe6 fxe6 21.0-0 ♞fc8 22.♞fc1 ♙f8 23.f3 ♙e7 24.♙f2 ♞a5= and I think White can't improve his position.) 16.♞d2!?N (16.♞d4 transposes to 15.♞d4 ♙b7 16.c4. 16.♞d1 ♞ac8? 17.♙e2 f5∞ followed by ...f5-f4. Black was fine in the game: Korzans,V (2332)-Graudins,I (2432) ICCF email 2005.) 16...f5!



Black simply wants to push ...f5-f4. 17.♙e2 (17.♙d3 f4 18.0-0 (18.♙e2 ♞f6!?= with very good compensation.) 18...♙xf3 19.gxf3 fxe3 20.fxe3 ♞ad8 21.♞fd1 ♞xd3 22.♞xd3 ♜xd3 23.♞xd3 ♞xf3= with equality.) 17...f4 18.exf4 (18.0-0 fxe3 19.fxe3 ♞fe8∞) 18...♜e6! If Black grabs on f4 with the knight, it will be quite annoying for White. 19.g3

a) 19.0-0 ♜xf4 20.♙d1 ♞fd8= and Black is fine.

b) 19.♞d7 ♙c8 20.♞e7 ♜xf4 21.0-0 (21.♜e5 ♜xg2+ 22.♙d2 ♙f5=)

21...♖xc2+ 22.♞xc2 ♙g4= then ...♙xf3 with equality.

c) 19.f5 Here both moves are good:

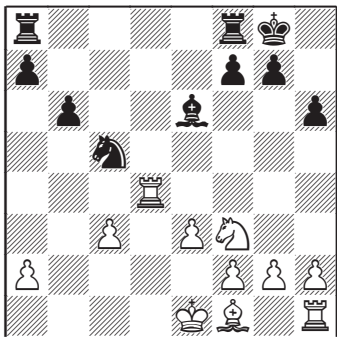
19...♖f4 (19...♞xf5 20.0-0 ♖f4=) 20.♖h4 ♙xg2 21.♞g1 ♙h3=;

19...♖xf4! anyway! 20.gxf4 ♞xf4

21.♞d5 (21.♞d3 ♞af8 and only Black can be better after taking back the piece due to his preferable pawn structure.) 21...♙xd5 22.cxd5 ♞d8 23.♙d2 ♞xd5+ 24.♙e3 g5= with an equal endgame.

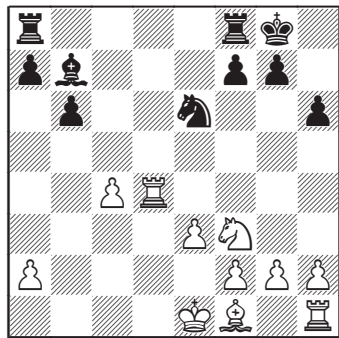
15.♞d1 ♙e6 is the simplest. 16.c4 ♞ac8 17.♖d4 ♖e4 18.♞c1 (18.♖xe6 fxe6 19.f4 ♞fd8=) 18...♞c5 19.♙d3 ♖d6 20.♖xe6 fxe6 21.♙e2 ♞fc8 22.♞c3 ♖xc4 23.♞hc1 ♖d6 24.♞xc5 ♞xc5 25.♞xc5 bxc5= with an equal endgame.

15...♙e6



This looks easier, even if there is nothing wrong with the other path either. 15...♙b7 16.♙c4 The move I faced.

a) 16.c4 ♖e6!?



I believe this to be the best.

a1) 16...♙xf3?! was played twice but I don't like it much. 17.gxf3 ♞ad8 (17...♞fd8 18.♞d5 ♖e6 19.♙d3± Kosyrev,V (2531)-BelozeroV,A (2549)/chessassistantclub.com INT 2004.) 18.♙d2± Malakhov, V (2672)-Delchev,A (2577)/ Istanbul 2003.

a2) 16...f5∞ is the engine's suggestion. I analyzed it quite deeply but it's rather suspicious even if with a machine it's probably fine.

17.♞d2

a1) 17.♞d7N 17...♖c5 18.♞d2 (18.♞d4 ♖e6=; 18.♞c7 ♞ac8 19.♞xc8 ♞xc8 20.♖d4 ♙a6=) 18...f5!?

a2) 17.♞d1N 17...♞fd8 18.♖d4 (18.♙e2 ♞xd1+ 19.♙xd1 ♞c8 20.♙b3 ♙a6=) 18...♖xd4! 19.♞xd4 (19.exd4 ♞ac8 20.d5 (20.♙e2?! ♙a6⌘) 20...b5=) 19...♞xd4 20.exd4 ♞c8 21.♙d2 ♙a6 22.♙c3 ♙xc4 23.♙xc4 b5=;

17...♞fd8 18.♞xd8+

a1) 18.♙e2!?N 18...♞ac8! 19.♞g1 The kind of move suggested by the engine of

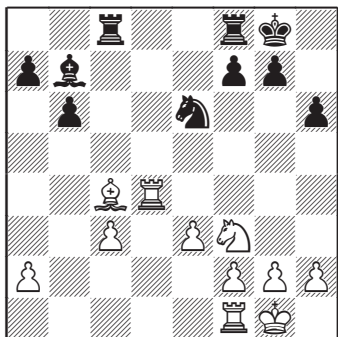
course... (19.0-0 ♖xf3 20.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 21.♙xf3 ♞d2 22.♞a1 ♜c5=) 19...♙a6! 20.♞xd8+ (20.♞c2 b5=) 20...♞xd8= followed by ...♞c8.

a2) 18.♜d4N 18...♜xd4 19.♞xd4 ♞xd4 20.exd4 ♞d8 21.d5 b5! 22.cxb5 ♙xd5 23.a3 ♙b3 24.♙e2 ♙a4= with full equality.

18...♞xd8 19.♙e2 ♜c5 20.0-0 ♙xf3! 21.♙xf3 ♞d2 22.♞a1 ♜f8 23.h3 ♜e7∞ and even though Black lost, he was totally fine here in the game Collas,S (2333)-Guichard,P (2320)/Belfort FRA 2010.

b) 16.♙e2 is not an improvement. 16...♞ac8 17.c4 ♜e6 18.♞d7 ♜c5 19.♞d1 ♜a4 20.♞d4 ♜c3= Van Rooijen,M (2038)-Garcia Rodriguez, I (2038) ICCF email 2011.

16...♞ac8 17.0-0 L'Ami,E (2606)-Cornette,M (2577) Novi Sad 2009 (17.♜e2N 17...♜e4!= with full equality. 17.♜e5?! ♙xg2 18.♞g1 ♙h3∞ San Segundo Carrillo,P (2520)-Van der Sterren,P (2545) Linares 1995.) 17...♜e6!N



was the best move, but unfortunately I rejected it for a bad reason. 18.♙xe6 (18.♞g4 ♞c5!=) 18...fxe6 19.♜e5 ♞c5! The

move I missed. It's very precise. (19...♞xc3 20.♞d7±) 20.♜d7 (20.f4 ♞xc3! 21.♞d7 ♙e4= with no problems whatsoever.) 20...♞g5! An important intermediate move! 21.♜xf8 (21.e4 ♞c8 22.♞c1 ♞a5= with equality.) 21...♞xg2+ 22.♜h1 ♞xf2+ 23.♜g1 ♞g2+= and draw by perpetual check.

16.c4

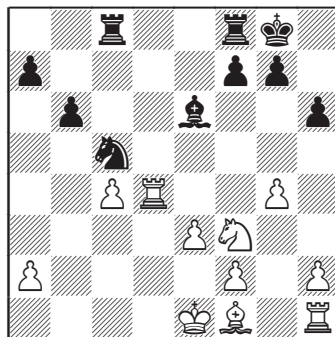
16.♙c4 has also been tried in practice, but without much success. 16...♞ac8 17.0-0

a) 17.♜d2 ♙xc4 18.♞xc4 b5 19.♞d4 Jia,H (2373)-Xiu,D (2521) Kuala Lumpur 2010 19...♜e6 20.♞d3 ♜c5 21.♞d4 (21.♞d5 ♜a4=) 21...♜e6=;

b) 17.♜d2 ♙xc4 18.♞xc4 ♞fe8! 19.♜e2N (19.♜c2?! ♜e4± and Black was even better in the game Mista,A (2561)-Najer,E (2637) Czechia 2011.) 19...♜e4=;

17...♙xc4 18.♞xc4 b5 19.♞b4 a6 20.♜d4 ♜a4 21.c4 ♞xc4 22.♞xc4 bxc4 23.♞b1 ♞c8= Ambartsoumian,A (2345)-Tomba,J (2445) Cappelle-la-Grande 1991.

16...♞ac8 17.g4!?



This was an attempt of Kramnik's. The idea is to play ♖g1, then g4-g5. Since that game, Black has discovered the best way to react. 17.♙e2 ♜c7 I think this is simpler. Black wants to double on the c-file, then play ...♜b7-a5. (17...♜a4 was the move I used, and after playing 18.♙d2 my opponent offered me a draw in Fressinet,L (2667) -Cornette,M (2578) Nimes 2009. 18...♜c7 19.♜b1 ♜fc8 20.♜b4 ♜c5 21.♜e5 g5 and I believe White has no way to improve his position.) 18.♙d2 (18.0-0N 18...♜a4 19.♜c1 ♜fc8 20.♜d2 b5=) 18...♜fc8 19.♜b1 (19.♜c1 ♜b7 20.♜e5 ♜a5= with full equality.) 19...♜b7! 20.♙c3 ♜a5 21.♜d2 ♜c6 22.♜d6 ♜a5= with a draw by repetition: Foisor,S (2350)-Baginskaite,C (2342) Saint Louis 2011.

17...♜fd8! 18.♜g1

18.♙e2 ♜b7= and Black will take back the pawn.

18...♜b7!

Acting as if nothing is happening on the kingside.

19.g5 ♜xd4 20.♜xd4

20.exd4 ♙xc4 21.gxh6 g6= with equality.

20...♙xc4 21.gxh6 g6

and Black was fine in the game L'Ami,E (2592) -Grandelius,N (2536) Germany 2012.

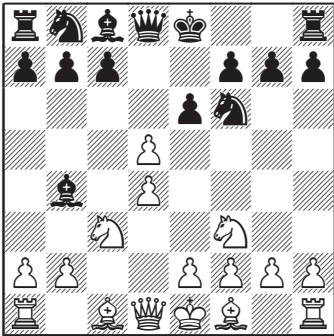
CONCLUSION

In this chapter, there are two quite important lines to remember: the first one is with cxd5 then a3. Black has to understand how to play, i.e. with ...♜bd7, ...0-0 then ...b6 and ...♙b7, followed by ...c5-c4 at the right moment. And finally, in the main line, with dxc5, I believe the pawn sacrifice with 12...♜d7 is a good idea and then both 15...♙b7 and 15...♙e6 are fine.

PART 3.

5.cxd5 Main line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♕b4
5.cxd5



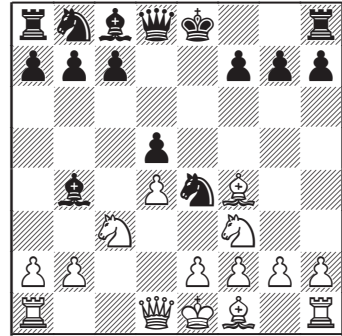
In part 3 we will study the systems where White exchanges pawns on d5.

5...exd5 6.♕g5

This is the main move. All other moves will be covered in Chapter 8. 6.a3 see Chapter 8.

6.♖c2 is like the Nimzo-Indian Defence with 4.♖c2. As usual, I suggest reacting directly in the centre with 6...c5: see Chapter 8.

6.♕f4!? is an interesting and quite fashionable system nowadays. 6...♘e4!?



This is my suggestion, with the idea being to continue with ...♘c6 then ...g7-g5. See Chapter 8.

6.♕d2 see Chapter 8.

6...h6 7.♕h4

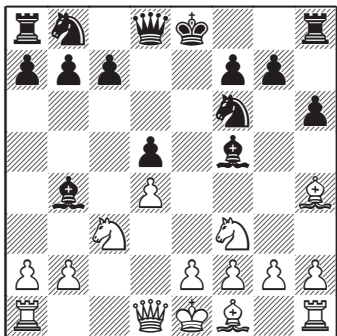
This is a critical position in the Ragozin. I even consider it to be the main line. Here I will suggest 2 different systems which are quite similar in a way, but have some nuances: 7.♕xf6 ♖xf6 is not an independent line and will likely transpose to one of the lines I analyze after: 8.♖a4+

a) 8.e3 0-0 see Chapter 12.

b) 8.♖b3 c5 see Chapter 7.(8...♖b6!? followed by ...♕a5 and ...c7-c6 is worth mentioning.) ;

8...♘c6 9.e3 0-0 see Chapter 3.

7...♕f5!?

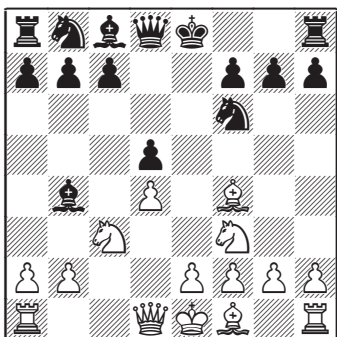


The move introduced by Anand and his team. It has become fashionable since and I believe it's a good way for Black to play.

Chapter 8.

5.cxd5 exd5 — 6.XXX

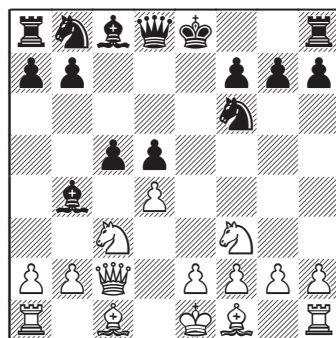
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Bf3 d5 4.Bc3 Bb4
5.cxd5 exd5 6.Qf4!?



This move became fashionable in 2016. It was played by strong GMs, such as Svidler, Ragger and Eljanov. Before the French Championship in August 2016 I seriously studied this line. Somehow 6.Qf4

See Chapter 10. 7...0-0 with the idea of playing ...Qf5 next. I believe there are two critical lines here: 8.e3 (8.Qc2 transposing into one of the lines of Nimzo-Indian with 4.Qc2. It will be analyzed in Chapter 9.) 8...Qf5 9.Qb3!? The most challenging. Black has to be ready to let the b7-pawn hanging for a while after: 9...Qxc3+ 10.bxc3 Bbd7! followed by ...c7-c5. This will be analyzed in Chapter 9.

had never crossed my radar before. It was time to resolve this matter. 6.Qc2 c5!?



The most principled reply. 7.Qg5

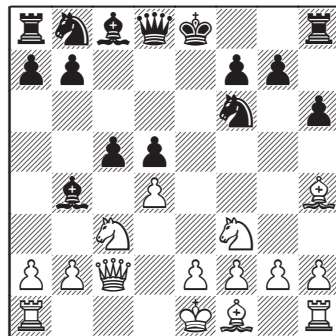
a) 7.e3 c4 is not the only move, but it's a logical one, taking space. 8.Qe2 0-0 9.0-

0 ♖c6∞ and Black had a good position in Balazs,G (2313) -Pap,G (2437) Budapest 2008.

b) 7.dxc5 d4! 8.a3 ♕a5 9.b4 dxc3 10.bxa5 ♖xa5 11.e4 ♖c6 12.♖b1 was played in the game: Danielian,E (2460)-Muzychuk,A (2561) Lopota 2014, but here I like the interesting 12...♗g4!?N 13.♖b5 (13.♖xb7? ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♖d4 15.♖d3 c2+ 16.♖b4 ♖d8-- and Black is winning.) 13...♖c7 14.♕e3 0-0 15.♕e2 ♖fe8∞ followed by ...♗xe4.

c) 7.a3 ♕xc3+ 8.bxc3 (8.♖xc3?! is super-suspicious. 8...♗e4! 9.♖e3 (9.♖c2 c4!♞ and Black was already better in the game Malmstroem,J-Hassim,U IECC email 1997.) 9...0-0♞ followed by ...♖e8. White is in trouble: Hollan,M (2218) -Rydl,J (2414) Kouty nad Desnou 2016.) 8...0-0 9.g3 (9.e3 c4 and Black is fine. He will continue with ...♖c6, ...♖e8 and probably ...g7-g6 to prepare ...♕f5. 9.dxc5 ♗bd7 and Black will have easy play after taking back the c5-pawn, followed by ...♕g4, and ...♖c8 putting pressure on the c3-pawn.) 9...cxd4!? 10.♗xd4 ♖c6 11.♕g2 ♕g4!? and Black was fine in the game: Wister,F (2238)-Krakovsky,P (2274) ICCF email 2009.

7...h6 Like almost all the time, I like to play this move directly after ♕g5. 8.♕h4



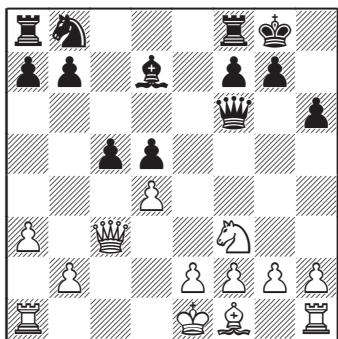
Here we have a choice: (8.♕xf6 is often played, but we can't consider it as very challenging. 8...♖xf6 9.a3 and here both moves are good: (9.e3 0-0 (9...c4!?∞ has been played only once, but it looks very logical to me.) 10.♕e2

a) 10.a3 ♕f5 11.♕d3 ♕xd3 12.♖xd3 c4 13.♖c2 ♕xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖c6= The position is equal. Black will control the e4-square and try to take space on the queenside with ...b7-b5: Rahman,M (2324)-Laxman,R (2474) Nagpur 2012.

b) 10.dxc5 ♕e6 (10...♕xc3+ is possible, but since the ♕b4 is not hanging, it's not necessary. 11.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 12.bxc3 will be a transposition to Chapter 7.) 11.♖c1 ♗d7 12.a3 (12.♕b5 ♖e5!? 13.♗d4 ♕xc5 14.0-0 a6!∞ and Black was already slightly better in the game Seirawan,Y (2595) -Kortschnoj,V (2605) Buenos Aires 1993.) 12...♕xc5 13.♕e2 ♖ac8 14.0-0 ♖fd8 15.♖fd1 ♖e5= and Black was fine in Varga,P (2428)-Horvath,P (2503) Hungary 2004.

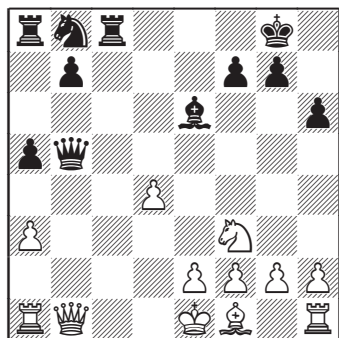
10...c4!? (10...cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♖c6= is also good as in Flear,G (2525)-Emms,J (2525) Oakham 1994.) 11.0-0 ♕f5∞ and

I like Black's position.) 9...♔f5!? (9...♔a5 10.e3 (10.0-0-0?! ♙xc3 11.♖xc3 c4! Black was already better and eventually won: Veresov,G-Botvinnik,M Moscow 1944. 10.dxc5 ♔f5 11.♗d2 ♙xc3 12.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 0-0 14.♘d4 ♙g6= followed by ...♞c8 and ...♘d7 winning back the pawn with equality: Cech,P (2404) -Berzins,R (2455) Czechia 2005.) 10...c4!? 11.b4N is probably the best try. (11.♙e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♔f5 13.♗c1 ♞d8 Black was already better in the game: Matras,O (2247) -Rzayev,B (2400) Prague 2016. 11.♘d2N 11...♙e6 12.b3 cxb3 13.♘xb3 ♙g6!? 14.♗d2 ♙xc3 15.♗xc3 0-0∞ with a balanced position.) 11...cxb3 12.♗xb3 0-0= with equality.) 10.♗a4+! (10.♗b3N has never been played. 10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♗b6!∞ Black is fine. 10.♗d2 ♙xc3 11.♗xc3 c4!?∞ and I like Black's position: Huang,Q (2437)-Xu,J (2508) Hefei 2010.) 10...♙d7 11.♗b3 ♙xc3+ 12.♗xc3 (12.bxc3N 12...♗b6!?∞ with a balanced position.) 12...0-0?



This is an interesting try. Black is sacrificing the c5-pawn for better development and the initiative. (12...cxd4 a solid approach. 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4

14.♘xd4 ♘c6 with equality. 15.♞d1 (15.♘b5 ♘b4= and Black drew without suffering: Dreev,A (2670)-Landa,K (2613) Reggio Emilia 2009. 15.e3 ♘xd4 16.exd4 ♔f5= Dao,T (2514)-So, W (2653) Ho Chi Minh City 2012) 15...♘xd4 16.♞xd4 ♞c8 17.♘d2 ♔f5 18.♞xd5 ♞c2+ 19.♙e3 ♙g6 20.♞d2 ♞xd2 21.♙xd2 ♙e7 22.g3 ♞c8= followed by ...♞c2 like in the game Bu,X (2692) -Nguyen,A (2537) Macau 2007.) 13.♗xc5 (13.dxc5N 13...♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♘a6= with a balanced position. 13.e3 ♞c8 14.♙e2 ♙g4 15.h3 ♙h5 16.0-0 ♘d7= with a fine position for Black: Dreev,A (2697)-Riazantsev, A (2679) Olginka 2011.) 13...♞c8 14.♗xd5 (14.♗a5N 14...♞c2 15.e3 ♞xb2 16.♙d3 ♗b6!= with an equal position.) 14...♗b6! 15.b4 (15.♞b1?N is bad because of 15...♙e6 16.♗h5 (16.♗e4 ♗a5+--+) 16...♙a2+ 15...a5 (15...♞c2!?N is also good. 16.e3 ♗c7 17.♗b3 ♙e6! 18.d5 (18.♗d3 ♘d7 19.♞d1 ♘f6 20.♙e2! ♞c3 21.♗b1 ♙b3+ and Black will win an exchange.) 18...♙xd5! 19.♞d3! ♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♘d7 21.f4!= with an equal position.) 16.b5 (16.♞b1?N 16...axb4 17.axb4 ♞c2--+) 16...♙e6 17.♗e4 ♗xb5 18.♗b1!



This position has appeared twice in practice, both times in the games of Moiseenko with Black. (18.♔d1?! N 18...♖b3±; 18.♖b1 N 18...♗a4±) 18...♖c6! (18...♖xb1+ Even if he managed to win with this move, I think he was worse in the game: 19.♖xb1 ♖c3 20.e4 ♖xa3 21.d5 ♔d7 22.♗d2± Ponomarev,R (2718) -Moiseenko,A (2632) Cala Mayor 2008) 19.♖b2 ♔d5 20.e3 it's time to give back the material and finish development. (20.♗e5 N 20...♖d6 21.e3 ♗d7 22.♗xd7 (22.♗d3 ♗b6 with the idea of ...♗c4. 23.♗c5 ♗d7!= and White has nothing better than to trade the knights or to come back.) 22...♖xd7 23.f3! ♖f5!± and Black has enough compensation for the pawn, threatening ...♖c2.) 20...♔xf3 21.gxf3 ♖xf3 22.♔g1 ♗d7 23.♖g3 Akobian,V (2606) -Moiseenko,A (2678) Merida 2008 (23.♔g2 N 23...♖f6!±∞ and it looks dangerous for White to take on b7.) 23...♖d5= with an equal position.) 8...cxd4 (8...0-0 transposing to Chapter 9.) 9.♗xd4 ♗c6! it's the simplest. You will see similar ideas in the next chapter. 10.♗xc6

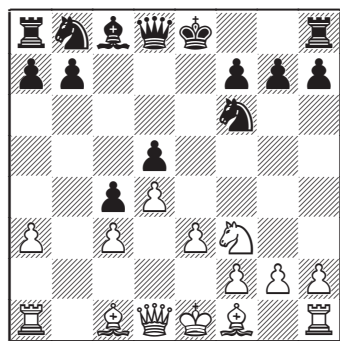
a) 10.♖a4 N 10...♖d6 11.♗xc6 (11.♔xf6 ♖xf6!∞) 11...♔xc3+ 12.bxc3 bxc6 with an equal position.

b) 10.e3 ♗xd4 11.exd4 ♖e7+!? (11...0-0 is of course possible and it will transpose to the next chapter.) 12.♔e2 ♔xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖e4= with an equal position. Borsuk, K (2319)-Kovalenko,I (2503) Alushta 2010;

c) 10.♔d1 0-0 11.e3 ♔g4! we have this position in Chapter 9. Black is fine.

10...bxc6 11.a3 (11.e3 0-0 12.♔d1 was played in the game Anastasian,A (2530)-Balashov,Y (2505) Moscow 1995 (12.♔e2 and we are once again transposing to Chapter 9.), but here I suggest 12...♔g4!? N I like the idea of disturbing White's coordination. 13.♔d4! ♔xc3+ 14.bxc3 g5 15.♔g3 ♖e8∞ with a balanced position.) 11...♔a5!? The move played by Hou Yifan. (11...♔e7 12.e3 0-0 13.♔e2 a5 14.0-0 ♖b8∞ with a balanced middle game: Eljanov, P (2716) -Carlsen,M (2775)/Moscow 2008.) 12.e3 (12.b4 ♔c7 13.e3 0-0 14.♔e2 ♔e5∞ followed by ...a7-a5.) 12...0-0 13.♔e2 ♔xc3+!? 14.♖xc3 (14.bxc3 N 14...g5 15.♔g3 ♗e4= followed by ...♔f5.) 14...♗e4 leads to massive exchanges: 15.♔xd8 ♗xc3= with equality: Danielian,E (2480)-Hou, Y (2617) Jermuk 2012.

6.a3 ♔xc3+ 7.bxc3 c5 as usual, challenging White's centre: 8.g3 (8.e3 c4!



It's good to close the centre and take space on the queenside when e3-e4 is not really possible for White. 9.♗d2 0-0 10.♔e2 ♔f5 11.0-0 ♗c6 12.a4 ♖e8± and Black was already better in the game:

Florendo, P (2278)-Sadorra, J (2575)
 Quezon City 2014. 8.♔g5 h6 9.♔h4
 ♖bd7 10.e3 ♖a5= with a balanced
 position.) 8...0-0 9.♔g2 ♖e8 10.0-0 was
 played in the game Strating, S (2310)-
 Wagenmakers, E (2270) Leeuwarden 1995,
 but now I suggest a slight improvement:
 10...♖e4!? N 11.♖c2 (11.♖e1 c4 12.♖c2
 ♖c6 13.♖d2 ♔f5= with a balanced
 position.) 11...cxd4!? I like the idea of
 stabilizing the centre before developing the
 knight to c6. 12.♖xd4 (12.cxd4 ♖c6∞
 followed by ...♔f5.) 12...♖c6 13.♖d1
 (13.♖xc6?! bxc6?) 13...♖a5 with an
 unclear position, for example: 14.♖b1 ♔d7
 15.♔f4 ♖c8! 16.♖b5! ♔xb5 17.♔xe4! dxe4
 18.♖xb5 ♖c4= with equality.

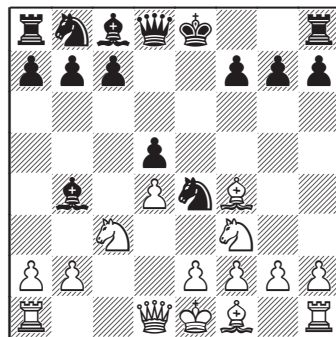
6.♔d2 This can't be a serious deal. 6...0-0
 0 7.e3 (7.g3 ♖e8 8.♔g2 c6 9.0-0 ♖bd7
 10.♖c1 h6∞ with a good game.) 7...♖e8
 8.♔d3 ♔d6 9.0-0 (9.♖b5 ♔f8∞ followed
 by ...c7-c6.) 9...c6 10.♖c2!? To prevent
 ...♖e4. 10...♖e7!∞ and I like Black's
 position, with ...♖e4 coming next:
 Maisuradze, N (2143)-Tqeshelashvili, S
 (2321) Tbilisi 1999.

6.♖a4+ ♖c6 See Chapter 3.

6.♔g5 is of course the main move and it
 will be covered in chapters 9 and 10.

6.♖b3 c5 See Chapter 6.

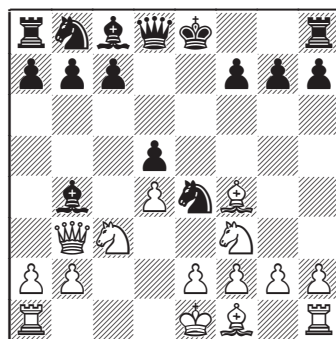
6...♖e4!?



Not the most-often-played move, but I
 believe it is the best. It looks like Pert in
 his book, 'Playing the Ragozin', reached
 the same conclusion.

7.♖c1

Is the natural and good move. 7.♖b3!?



This move has been played several times,
 but Black will be better quite easily.

7...♖c6! (7...c5 Pert's suggestion is also
 fine: 8.♖d2!? N (8.a3 ♔xc3+! N 9.bxc3 c4+;
 8.dxc5 ♖c6 9.e3 ♖xc5 10.♖c2 ♖f6
 Sladek, V (2000)-Bourgoin, C (2031)
 IECG email 2001 11.♔b5 ♔f5 12.♖d2
 ♔e4!?∞ with a good game.) 8...♖xd2
 9.♔xd2 ♖c6 10.♖xd5 cxd4 11.♖xd8+

♙xd8 12.♜d5 ♕xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♕f5
14.♜f4= with a balanced position.) 8.e3

a) 8.a3N 8...♕xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.e3
♜a5∞ Followed by ...♕f5, ...b7-b6, and of
course ...c7-c5.

b) 8.h4N Quite a drastic decision to
prevent ...g7-g5. 8...a5! 9.a3 (9.a4 0-0
10.e3 ♕f5♞ when it looks obvious to me
that Black is better.) 9...a4 10.♞c2 ♕xc3+
11.bxc3 ♕f5 12.♞b2 ♜a5 13.e3 0-0♞ with
a better position.

8...g5! 9.♕g3 h5 A thematic advance on
the kingside. Now ...h5-h4 is a threat.
10.♜e5

a) 10.♕b5? just loses material.
10...♕xc3+! 11.bxc3 h4 12.♕e5N is a
lesser evil. (12.♕xc7 ♞xc7 13.♞xd5 ♜xc3
14.♕xc6+ (14.♞xg5 h3→) 14...bxc6
15.♞xg5 Kuempers,U-Link,U (2235)
Germany 1989 15...♕a6!-+) 12...f6
13.c4!? a6! 14.♕a4 h3!♞;

b) 10.h3 ♕xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♜xg3 12.fxg3
♞d6♞ and Black had the upper hand in
the game Mann, D (1805)-Cashon,J
(1878) IECC email 2000.

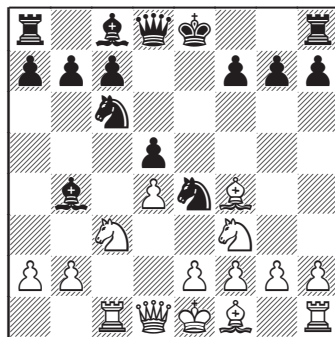
c) 10.h4 g4N 11.♜e5 ♕xc3+ 12.bxc3
♜xg3 13.fxg3 ♜xe5 14.dxe5 c6♞ White's
pawn structure is a real disaster.

10...♕xc3+ 11.bxc3 h4 12.♜xc6 bxc6
13.♕e5 we have been following the game
Trepát Herranz,J (2269)-Berkovich,M
(2419) Arinsal 2009, but now Black could
have tried 13...f6!?N 14.f3! fxe5 15.fxe4 0-
0∞ with a crazy position, but Black has
the better prospects.

7.♞c2?! This move has 3 out of 3 in the
database for White, but it's nevertheless
dubious. 7...♕f5 8.♞b3 ♜c6 9.a3! (9.e3 In
the game Morilla,C-Perez Villar,F Infiesto
1997, Black missed the thematic: 9...g5!
10.♕g3 h5♞ with a good advantage.)
9...♕xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♜a5♞ and Black is
already better.

7.♜d2?!N This pawn sacrifice has never
been played, and I don't really believe
there is enough compensation. 7...♜xc3
8.bxc3 ♕xc3 9.♞c1 ♕a5 10.e3 c6 11.♕d3
♜d7 12.0-0 0-0♞ and Black will slowly
and surely finish his development and end
up a pawn ahead.

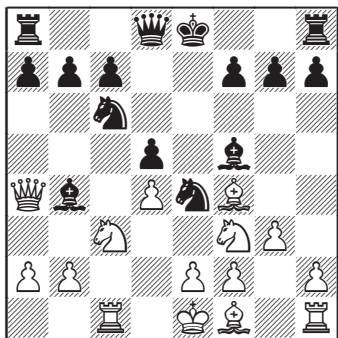
7...♜c6!?



A thematic move in the Ragozin, even if
we normally don't play it voluntarily, but
only when forced after ♞b3, or mostly
♞a4+. However, here it's a good move,
because the d4-pawn can be a target in
some lines. Black wants to push ...g7-g5,
and ...h7-h5-h4, and the ♜c6 will be
ideally placed, preventing ♕e5.

8.♜d2

8.g3 has been played twice, but not with great success: two losses in two games. 8...♙f5 9.♖a4!?N



My try to improve White's play in this line.

a) 9.♘h4N 9...♙e6∞ and there is nothing better than to return with the knight.

b) 9.♙g2 loses an exchange. There is some compensation, but with good play Black should be better: 9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♙a3 The ♖c1 is trapped. 11.♖b1! the best way to give up material, as the light-squared bishop is more annoying than its dark-squared colleague. 11...♙xb1 12.♗xb1 ♘a5 13.0-0 c6 (13...0-0!?∞ was also good.) 14.e4 0-0 15.exd5 cxd5∞ Black was better and eventually won the game in Korley,K (2397) -Naroditsky,D (2634) Atlanta 2016.

c) 9.♗b3?! a5 10.a3 a4! It's not the first time that we have seen this idea. 11.♗a2 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘a5∞ Black was much better in the game: Glud,J (2531)-Hammer,J (2677) Helsingor 2015.

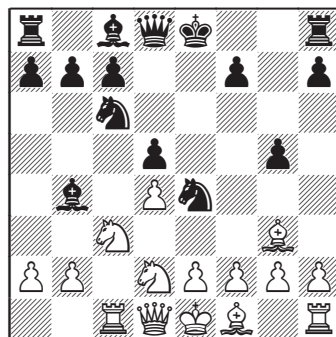
9...a6 preparing ...b7-b5. 10.♘e5 (10.♙g2 b5 11.♗b3 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 0-0 13.0-0 ♖e8∞ with an interesting position to play.) 10...b5! 11.♗b3 (11.♘xc6?! bxa4 12.♘xd8 a3!∞ with a good advantage.) 11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘xe5 13.♙xe5 ♘d6= with a balanced position. By the way, the g7-pawn is taboo: 14.♙xg7? ♗g5! with a double-attack. 15.♙xh8 ♗xc1+ 16.♗d1 ♗xc3+ 17.♗d2 ♗a1+ 18.♗d1 ♗xa2+ with a winning position.

8.e3?! g5! 9.♙g3 h5 10.h3N is a lesser evil. (10.h4N 10...♘g3 11.fxg3 g4 12.♘g1 ♙d6 13.♘ge2 ♘e7∞; 10.♙e5? f6+ Bester,K (726)-Markovic,D (1164) LSS email 2009) 10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♘xg3 12.fxg3 ♗d6∞ and Black is undoubtedly better.

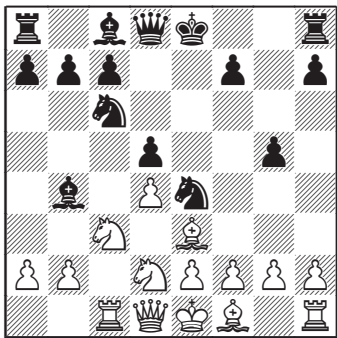
8...g5!

Now White has a choice, and both lines are very interesting:

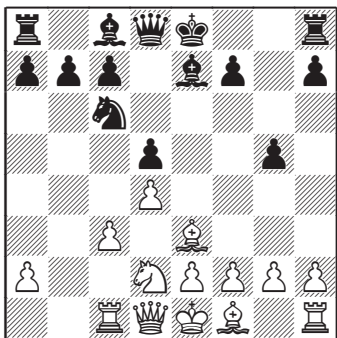
9.♙g3



The move introduced by Aleksandr Moiseenko. White is ready to sacrifice the d4-pawn. 9.♙e3!?



This is the other possibility, protecting the d4-pawn, but the ♔f1 will have some problems trying to enter the game. 9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♕d6 The move played in practice. (10...♕e7!?N

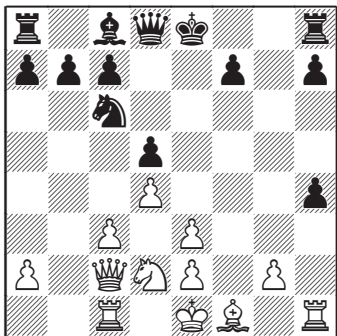


is my idea to improve Black's play. 11.h4

a) 11.g3 ♕e6 12.♕g2 ♖d7 13.0-0 (13.♖a4 a6 14.♘f3 g4 15.♘d2 b5 16.♖d1 h5∞) 13...h5 14.c4 h4 15.♖a4 f5∞ with a complicated position.

b) 11.♖b1 f5 12.♘f3 (12.g3 ♖d6 followed by ...f5-f4.) 12...0-0∞ and I quite like Black's position.

11...gxh4 12.♖b1!? (12.♕f4 ♕f5 13.e4! A good idea for White. (13.♘f3 h3!?∞; 13.e3 ♖d7∞) 13...dxe4 14.♖b3 ♖d7 15.♖xb7 (15.♘c4 ♕e6 16.♖b5 0-0 17.♘e3 ♕f6 18.♕e2 ♘e7=) 15...0-0 16.♕b5 ♖ab8 leads to some simplifications. 17.♖xc6 ♖xb5 18.♖xd7 ♕xd7 19.♘xe4 ♕c6 20.f3 f5 21.♘f2 ♕a3 22.♖d1 ♖b2= with an equal position.) 12...♕f5!? I like this pawn sacrifice. (12...♖b8 is also possible, but less fun.) 13.♖xb7 0-0 A very interesting position. Black is a pawn down, and has a spoiled structure, but has a clear lead in development. 14.♖a4 (14.♕h6 ♖e8 15.e4 (15.e3 ♘a5 The rook is trapped, but as we have already seen, sometimes it's not bad for White to give up this exchange. 16.♖b1!? (16.♖b5 c6 17.♖b2 ♕a3∞) 16...c5! I like this idea to open the position. 17.dxc5 (17.♕b5 ♕xb1 18.♖xb1 ♖b6 19.♕xe8 ♖xb1+ 20.♘xb1 ♖xe8= with an equal position.) 17...♕f6 18.♖c1 ♖c8 with good compensation.) 15...♖d6!? 16.exf5 (16.♕e3 dxe4 17.♘c4 ♖d5∞ with a balanced position. 16.♖h5 ♕g6 17.♖g4 ♘a5∞ With very sharp play!) 16...♖xb6 17.♕e2 ♖f4 with good compensation.) 14...♖d6 15.♕f4!? (15.g3 hxg3 16.♖g1 ♘h8 17.♖xg3 (17.fxg3 ♖e6∞) 17...♕h4∞ A very unclear position.) 15...♖xf4 16.♖xc6 ♖ab8 17.e3 ♖d6 18.♖xd6 ♕xd6 19.♕a6 ♖xb7 20.♕xb7 ♕e6 21.♖e2 ♖b8= with a balanced position.) 11.h4! gxh4 (11...♕f4 has also been played but it's not that simple. 12.♖c2!? (12.♕xf4N 12...gxf4 13.e4!? fxe3 14.♖e2 ♕e6 15.♖xe3 ♖d6= followed by ...0-0-0.) 12...♕xe3 13.fxe3 gxh4!N



I believe this is a good improvement, even if the position is a total mess. (13...f5 Costachi,M (2428)-Lupulescu,C (2609) Calimanesti Caciulata 2016 14.c4!N is a strong improvement. It's not easy to continue as Black. 14...c6 (14...g4 15.g3! ♖d6 16.♟f2 ♙e6 17.♙g2±; 14...gxh4 15.cxd5 ♖xd5 16.♖b2!±) 15.cxd5 ♖xd5 16.hxg5 0-0-0 17.♗f3±) 14.e4 (14.c4 dxc4 15.♖xc4 h5 16.♖c5 ♖h6! 17.g3 ♙g4∞ with a balanced position.) 14...♖g5! 15.exd5 ♗e7 16.c4 (16.♗e4 ♖f4 17.♗f2 ♗xd5= with equality.) 16...♗f5 17.♗f3 ♖g3+ 18.♗d2 ♗f2= ...♗g3 is coming. Once again, the engine gives 0.00. It took me a while to realize that the material is equal in this position!) 12.♗f3 (12.♖b3!N 12...♙e7 13.♙f4 ♗a5 14.♖b1 ♙e6 15.e3 c6∞ with an unclear position.) 12...♙e7 13.♙f4 ♙f5 14.e3 h3! 15.♖b1! It's not the first time that we see this idea either. White wants to get the light-squared bishop in exchange for the rook. 15...♙d6 (15...♙xb1N was also possible. 16.♖xb1 hxg2 17.♙xg2 ♙d6 18.♙g5 ♙e7 19.♙xe7 ♟xe7∞ with an unclear position.) 16.g3 (16.♖xb7!N is of course the move to check. 16...♙xf4 17.exf4 0-0 18.♗e5 ♖f6∞ with a very

sharp position.) 16...♙xf4 17.gxf4 ♙xb1 18.♖xb1 ♖d6 19.♙xh3 Svane,R (2542) - Socko,B (2617) Germany 2016 19...h5!?∞ White has some compensation, but Black has the upper hand I think.

9.♙e5?!N 9...♗xe5 10.dxe5 c6∞

9...♗xg3 10.hxg3 ♗xd4

We need to accept the challenge.

11.e3

11.♖a4+N I also checked this move, but it doesn't work super-well either. 11...♗c6 12.e4! (12.e3 d4! gives Black the advantage. 13.exd4 ♖xd4 14.♙b5 0-0! 15.♗f3! ♙xc3+ 16.♖xc3 ♖e8+ 17.♟f1 ♖xa4 18.♙xa4 g4 19.♗d2 ♖d8∞ and Black stays a pawn up. 12.a3?! ♙xc3 13.♖xc3 0-0∞) 12...♙xc3!? (12...♖e7 13.♙b5 ♙d7 14.0-0! ♙xc3! 15.♖xc3 d4 16.♖cc1 0-0 17.♙xc6 ♙xc6 18.♖xd4 ♖ad8 19.♖c3 ♖fe8= with a roughly equal position.) 13.♖xc3 0-0! 14.♙b5 ♗e7 15.♖d1 g4!∞ and Black is better.

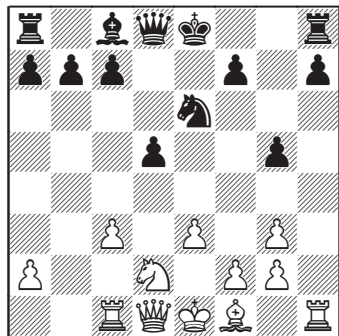
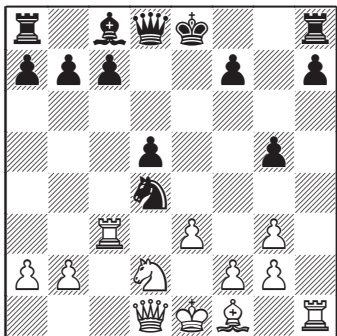
11.a3?!N 11...♙xc3 12.♖xc3 ♗b5∞ White doesn't have enough for the pawn.

11...♙xc3!

A good intermediate move. The ♗d4 will be better placed on e6 than c6, because we want to consolidate the centre with ...c7-c6, but to do so, we need this exchange first because ...♗e6 directly is not possible due to ♖a4+ winning the bishop.

12.bxc3

12.♖xc3N



This move is also very interesting.
 12...♘e6 13.♞h6! To prevent Black from playing ...h7-h6. (13.♙d3 h6! and I believe Black will succeed in consolidating his position. 14.♘b3 (14.♞f3 c6 15.♙f1 ♞e7) 14...♞f6) 13...c6 14.e4! (14.♙d3 doesn't look very scary. 14...♞e7 15.♘b3 ♙d7∞ and White still needs to prove whether there is some compensation or not.) 14...♘c7! I like this solid move. The ♙c8 will be able to go to e6 now. (14...dxe4 15.♙c4∞ The position remains unclear, but White definitely has some compensation. 14...d4?! 15.♞f3!→ followed by e5, ♘e4, and ♙c4 if needed.) 15.♞h5 ♞e7! 16.♞xh7 (16.♞e3 d4 17.♞b3 ♘e6) 16...♞xh7 17.♞xh7 ♙e6 18.♞h8+ ♞f8 (18...♙d7!? if we really want to play on. 19.♞d4! ♙f5 (19...f6= with an equal position.) 20.f3 ♙g6 21.♘c4!= and it's also an equal position.) 19.♞f6 ♞e7 20.♞h8+= and I think it's normal for both sides to accept the draw by repetition.

12...♘e6!?N

The novelty I prepared this summer. I will repeat myself by saying that Black wants to consolidate the centre with ...c7-c6. 12...♘c6 13.♙b5 ♙f5!N (13...♞f6?! is dubious, because after 14.c4!± White was already better in Moiseenko,A (2649)-Sadzikowski,D (2551) Izmir TUR 2016.) 14.♞f3 ♙g6 15.c4 0-0 16.♙xc6 bxc6 17.0-0 ♞b8 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♘b3± Even though this position is playable for Black, I believe White has some chances to be better.

13.♞f3!

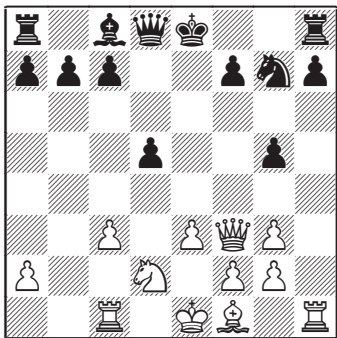
In my opinion, this is the most challenging option. 13.♙e2 ♞d6!? 14.♘b3 (14.c4 d4; 14.♙f3 ♙d7 15.♞b3?! ♘c5) 14...♙d7 15.♙f3 0-0-0!? 16.♞xd5 ♞xd5 17.♙xd5 h5= with an equal position.

13.♘b3 c6 14.♙e2 h6 15.♞c2 ♞f6 16.c4 dxc4 17.♞xc4 0-0;

13.♞h6 c6 14.♙d3 (14.♘b3 ♞e7 15.c4 ♞b4+! 16.♞d2 ♞xd2+ 17.♙xd2 dxc4 18.♙xc4 ♙d7) 14...♞e7 15.c4 ♘c5! 16.♙c2 ♙e6 17.cxd5 ♙xd5 18.♙f5! ♘d7!;

13.c4? Now this idea does not work due to 13...d4!

13...♘g7!



Not an easy move to play, but Black wants to finish his development with ...♙e6 and the ♘g7 is also protecting the kingside. 13...c6 14.c4! d4 15.c5!↑ is a bit scary.

14.c4!

White needs to play energetically. 14.g4 c6 15.♙d3 ♖e7↑;

14.e4?! 0-0!⚡ threatening to take on e4 and push ...f7-f5. 15.exd5? ♖e8+ 16.♙e2 h5!—+ with a winning position.

14.♙d3 ♙e6 15.♖b1 (15.c4 c6↑; 15.♖h6 ♖e7↑) 15...b6 16.♖h6 ♖e7 17.a4 ♖d8↑ with the idea of consolidating with ...♖d6 for example.

14.♖h6? ♙f5↑ and the bishop will go to g6.

14...♙e6 15.cxd5

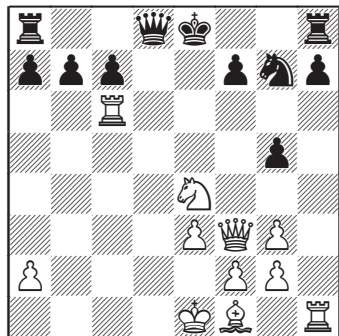
15.♙e2 is a bit too slow. 15...c6 16.cxd5 ♙xd5 17.e4 ♙xa2! Why not? 18.♖a3 (18.♖c3 0-0↑; 18.♖h6 ♖e7↑) 18...♙e6↑

15...♙xd5 16.♙e4!

16.e4 ♙c6↑

16...f5!?

This is safer. 16...♙c6 17.♖xc6!



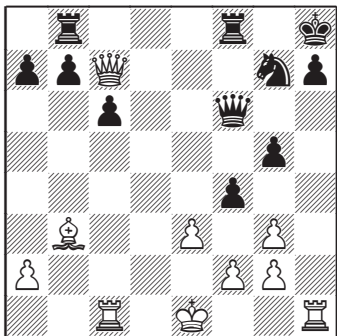
This looks a bit scary for Black.

17...bxc6 18.♙c4 ♖e7 19.♙d6+!? The human move. (19.a3 is an engine suggestion! No comment. 19...f5! 20.♙xg5! ♖c5! 21.♖h4! ♖b8 22.♖d1 ♖xa3 23.♙e2= and engine gives 0.00. Nothing else to add.) 19...♙d7! 20.♙xf7 ♖b4+! 21.♙d1! ♖b1+ 22.♙e2 ♖c2+ 23.♙e1= and Black has at least a draw.

17.♙f6+! ♖xf6 18.♖xd5 c6 19.♖a5! 0-0 20.♖c7 ♖ab8

Not the only move, but it's quite human. I will show you the end of my preparation. Sometimes I like to push till the end...

21.♙c4+ ♙h8 22.♙b3 f4!?



Although not forced, it's the move I would like to play in practice.

23.gxf4

23.0-0 fxe3 24.fxe3 ♖f5 25.g4 ♕e7
26.♕xe7 ♗xe7∞

23...gxf4 24.♙c2! fxe3! 25.♞xh7+ ♔g8
26.♞xg7+!

The only move, but it's enough to make a draw.

26...♞xg7 27.♙b3+ ♔h8 28.♞h2+ ♞h7
29.♞e5+ ♞g7=

With a nice draw by repetition.

CONCLUSION

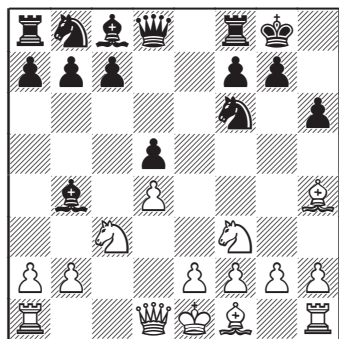
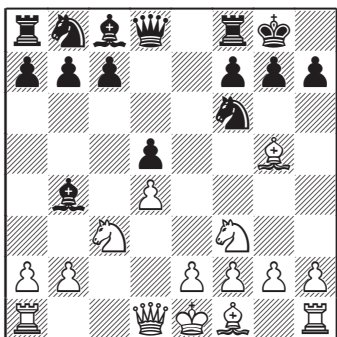
In this chapter we studied different sublines on the 6th move. 6.♙f4 is the most challenging. I like the idea with 6...♗e4 and 7...♗c6. Both, 9.♙e3 and 9.♙g3 are very interesting, but in any case Black has enough resources.

Chapter 9.

5.cxd5 exd5 — 6.♔g5 h6 7.♔h4 0-0

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♗c3 ♙b4
5.cxd5 exd5 6.♔g5 h6
6...0-0!?

very good theoreticians such as Leko and Hammer.



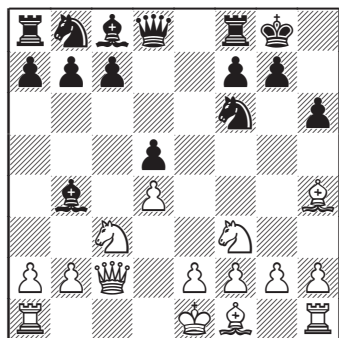
A decent alternative, but in general I always prefer to play ...h6 directly after ♔g5 to ask White about his intentions. One of the advantages of this move-order is that we avoid the lines with ♖a4+. However, it does not drastically change the main ideas of the line, and ...h6 will be played next — likely transposing to our line.

7.♔h4 0-0!?

This move is less popular than 9...g5 and 9...c5 but I believe it's a very good alternative to these lines. Black wants to play ... ♔f5, as in the line from the next chapter, but with this move-order we avoid some lines with ♖a4 check or with ♖b3. It has recently been played by some

8.e3

The most common move. It is of course the main move and it transposes to our main line. 8.♖c2



This is not the main move played in practice but it's a very important

alternative. It transposes to some major line of the Nimzo-Indian which can be reached via the following move order: 1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♖c3 ♙b4 4. ♗c2 (probably the main line against the Nimzo-Indian nowadays) 0-0 5. ♗f3!? (the fashionable move) d5 6. cxd5 (6. ♗g5 and 6. a3 are other possibilities) exd5 7. ♗g5 h6 8. ♙h4, and here we are! It will transpose to 6...h6 then 8. ♗c2.

8...c5 The thematic centre-attacking move in such structures.

a) 9. dxc5 gave White very poor results according to my database (+0 =7 -7)! 9...g5 (9...♗bd7!? is probably even more precise as it limits White's choices: 10. e3 g5 11. ♗g3 ♖xc5 and here it will likely transpose to the 9...g5 line as ...♗fe4 is coming next) 10. ♗g3 ♖e4 11. e3

a1) 11. a3?! only helps Black 11...♗xc3+ (11...♗f5!? is also very strong 12. ♗e5 (12. axb4 ♖xg3 13. e4 ♖xh1 14. exf5 g4 15. ♖d4 ♗e8+ followed by ...♗h4 attacking the f2-pawn and preparing the way out for the h1-knight. Black has a huge advantage) 12...♗xc3+ 13. ♗xc3 ♖c6 14. ♗d1! Removing the queen from the unpleasant threats of discovered attack. 14...♗e7 15. e3 (15. ♗xd5 only helps Black to increase the advantage 15...♗g6+ ...♗ad8 is coming next with an overwhelming initiative for Black.) 15...♖xc3 16. bxc3 ♗xc5+ with a better position for Black. The lead in development and piece activity compensate for the slightly weakened pawn structure on the kingside.) 12. bxc3 ♗f5 threatening the discovered attack with

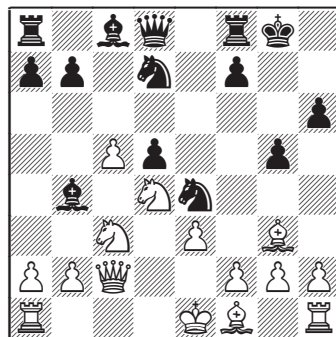
...♖xg3 13. ♗b2 ♖d7 14. ♖d4 (14. ♗xb7 is too greedy 14...♖dxc5+ with a terrific initiative.) 14...♗g6+ and Black was already better in the game Sethuraman, S (2624)-Jakovenko, D (2733) Caleta 2015. White still needs at least three tempi to develop, whereas Black will soon take back the pawn on c5 and enjoy a very comfortable position.

a2) 11. 0-0-0? has been played once but is not good at all 11...♗xc3 12. bxc3 ♗f5 As usual 13. ♗b2 (13. ♗b3?! was played in the game Basso, P (2443) -Klekowski, M (2490) Polanica Zdroj 2015, but after 13...♖d7! White's position would have been totally hopeless. Either capture on d5 will cause the loss of material 14. ♗xd5 (14. ♗xd5 ♗a5! 15. ♗xf5 ♖dxc5+ and White cannot avoid a huge loss of material) 14...♗e6+ 13...♖a6+ with a clear advantage.

11...♖d7 12. ♗e2

a1) 12. ♗b5?! N 12...♖dxc5+ and it's not clear what the bishop is doing on b5;

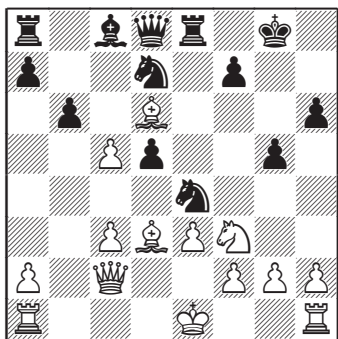
a2) 12. ♖d4?! N



With the idea of playing f2-f3 next 12...♖dxc5 13. f3 ♖xc3 (13...♗xc3+ I am

not a big fan of this move because after 14.bxc3 ♖xg3 15.hxg3 ♜f6 16.♔d3 ♜e8 17.♔f2± the white king is safer than the black one) 14.bxc3 ♔a5 15.h4 Trying to exploit the weakened structure of Black's king. (15.♔d3 ♜e8=) 15...♜e7 16.♔f2 (16.0-0-0 g4∞ leads to a very sharp play with mutual chances.) 16...♜e8 17.♜e1 g4 18.♔b5 ♜f6!? A surprising move leaving the rook on e8 en prise 19.♔xe8 (19.♔g1 ♜e7 20.h5! ♜b6∞ with a sharp position.) 19...♔e4+ 20.♔g1 ♔xg3 21.♜h2 ♔c7 22.♔a4 ♔e4 (22...♔f5!?:∞ is an interesting alternative to the text move if Black wishes to play for more than a draw.) 23.♜h1 ♔g3= with at least a draw by repetition.

a3) 12.♔d6N is an engine suggestion but it doesn't offer anything special to White. 12...♜e8 13.♔d3 (13.♜d1 ♜f6∞) 13...♔xc3+ (13...♔dxc5 is playable too but more risky, e.g. 14.♔xc5 ♔xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♔xc5 16.♜d1 ♜f6 17.0-0 ♔e6 (17...♔e4 18.♔d4 ♔d7 19.♜b3± exerting pressure on the d5- and b7-pawns. The position is unpleasant for Black.) 18.♔d4 ♜ac8∞ is quite solid but maybe White has some edge.) 14.bxc3 b6!



A very important move exploiting the hanging bishop on d6. Black wants to take on c5 with a pawn, not with a piece, and have a nice centre with connected pawns. 15.0-0

a31) 15.c6 ♔xd6 16.cxd7 ♔xd7 17.♔d4 ♜c8 18.0-0 (18.♜c1 ♔e4 continuing to put pressure on the weak c3-pawn. 19.♜b2 ♜c5 Protecting the d5-pawn and getting ready to double on the c-file. 20.0-0 ♜c8= with a balanced position.) 18...♜c5∞ White's knight on d4 is quite strong, but on the other hand the c3-pawn is really weak, and Black will continue to build pressure on it by means of ...♔e4 and doubling on the c-file;

a32) 15.cxb6? of course loses a piece after 15...♔xd6+;

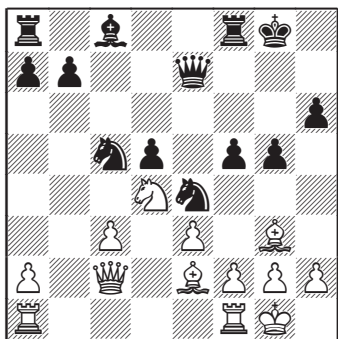
a33) 15.♔xe4 getting rid of the unpleasant knight, but it doesn't give White anything. 15...dxe4 16.♔d2 ♔xc5 17.♔xc5 is forced. Otherwise Black's attack is killing after ...♔a6 and ...♔d3. 17...bxc5 18.0-0 (18.♔xe4 is too dangerous 18...♔f5 19.f3 ♔xe4 20.fxe4 ♜e7± and Black has better chances in the resulting endgame after ...♜xe4, ♜xe4 ♜xe4 with pressure on the e3-pawn.) 18...♜d3= with equality in the endgame.

a34) 15.♜d1 ♜f6 16.♔xe4 (16.0-0?! simply allows 16...bxc5±) 16...dxe4 17.♔d2 Here several moves are good, but the simplest seems to be 17...♔xc5 18.♔xc5 bxc5 19.0-0 ♜e7= with an equal position.

15...bxc5 16.♔xe4 (If 16.♔g3 ♔df6= Black has no problems at all.) 16...dxe4

17.♖d2 ♜f6 18.♙g3 ♜b6= with an equal but interesting position to play;

12...♜dxc5 13.♜d4 (13.0-0 has been tried by Gelfand, but Black is fine here. 13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♙f5 15.♜b2 Gelfand,B (2720)-Karjakin,S (2727) Sochi 2008, and here the logical 15...♞e8!?= would have led to equality.) 13...♜e7N (13...♜a5 has been played once with the idea to win a pawn on c3. However, things are not that simple and White was better after precise play: 14.0-0 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♜xc3 16.♜xc3 ♜xc3 17.♙d6! ♜e6! The only move to stay in the game 18.♙xf8 ♜xd4 19.♙d3 ♜de2+ 20.♜h1 ♜xf8 21.♞fe1± Ivanisevic,I (2655) -Molner,M (2489) Las Vegas 2012. White will win the knight on e2 and it's not clear whether Black has enough compensation for the exchange.) 14.0-0 ♙xc3 As usual after White castles. 15.bxc3 f5!

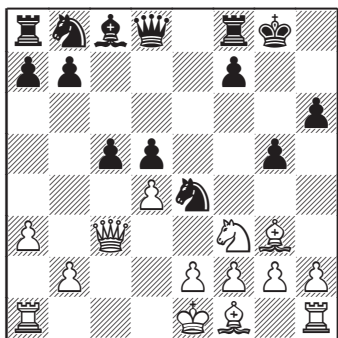


I believe that this aggressive approach is the best way to play here. 16.c4!? Trying to open the centre and exploit the weakened position of the black king (16.♞ae1 leads to a sharp forced line 16...f4 17.exf4 gxf4 18.f3 fxf3 19.fxe4 ♞xf1+ 20.♞xf1 gxf4 21.♜xh2 ♜xe4= as

ever, the engine gives 0.00 in this position, but from the human perspective things look much more complicated. The position remains double-edged. 16.♜c1 Preventing ...f5-f4 16...♙d7∞ with a complex game.) 16...f4 Black needs to act fast 17.f3! fxf3 (17...♜xg3 leads to a forced draw 18.♜g6+ ♜h8 19.♜xh6+ ♜g8 20.♜g6+=) 18.fxe4 gxf4 19.♜xh2 dxe4 20.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 21.♞f1 ♜d6+ 22.♜g1 ♙d7 23.♜b3 ♞f8 with equality after the long forced line, as Black cannot save the e4-pawn after all the exchanges: 24.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 25.♜xc5 ♜xc5 26.♜xe4 b6=;

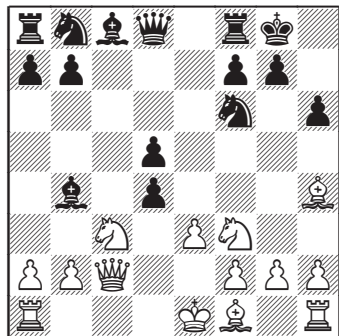
b) 9.a3 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 (10.♜xc3 looks suspicious and offers Black several good continuations. 10...g5 (10...c4!?N is also good 11.♜d2 preventing the ...g7-g5 and ...♜e4 idea 11...♜c6 12.e3 ♙f5 (12...b5 is also playable 13.♙d3 White is exploiting the fact that after ...b7-b5 our knight on c6 is no longer defended, but Black is still better after 13...a5 14.♙b1 ♞e8) 13.♙e2 (13.a4 prevents ...b7-b5 but weakens the b4-square 13...a5± and ...♜b4 will be coming soon) 13...b5± and Black is already better) 11.♙g3 (11.♜xg5?! has been played once recently but does not really work here: 11...hxg5 12.♙xg5 c4!? threatening ...♜e4 now and the pawn is no longer hanging on c5 (12...♜e4 Forcing events 13.♙xd8 ♜xc3 14.♙e7 ♞e8 15.♙xc5 ♜a4± gave Black an edge in the game Le,H (2106)-Vo Dai Hoai,D (2248) Ho Chi Minh City 2016, but the endgame is perhaps not so simple to win.) 13.f3 Preventing ...♜e4 jumps, but it turns out that it is not very effective. (13.♜f3 allows 13...♜a5+ 14.♙d2 ♜b6

15. ♖g3+ ♜h8⌘ and the black king is safe.) 13... ♜e4! Anyway! Leading to simplifications. If compared to the game above, the black pawn has advanced to c4 and is now not hanging after ♜xd8-♜e7. 14. ♜xd8 ♜xc3 15. bxc3 ♜xd8⌘) 11... ♜e4



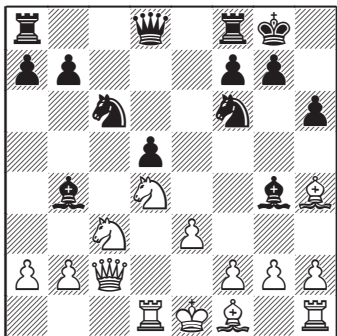
One of the typical ideas which occurs very often in different lines of the Ragozin. 12. ♖c1 The only move not losing on the spot: Nodirjanova,N (2136)-Franciskovic,B (2282) Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, and here 12... ♜c6!?N 13. dxc5 f5!⌘ gives Black a strong initiative) 10... cxd4 11. ♜xd4 (11. cxd4 lets Black develop comfortably: 11... g5 12. ♜g3 ♜c6 13. e3 ♜e4 14. ♜d2 ♜f5 15. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 16. ♖d2 ♜c8∞ with a dynamic position offering mutual chances.) 11... ♜c6 12. ♜xc6 bxc6 13. e3 We have been following the game Pachman,L-Matanovic,A Titovo Uzice 1966, and here I suggest a novelty: 13... ♜e8N 14. ♜d3 c5∞ with an interesting position to play;

c) 9. e3 the main move and the most logical one. 9... cxd4!?



This move is the simplest for Black. Now we no longer need to worry about the dxc5 ideas and will continue to play in the centre, with ... ♜c6 coming next 10. ♜xd4 (10. exd4?! ♜c6⌘ is simply better for Black as ... g5-g4 is already a threat, attacking the h4-bishop and then the f3-knight which is defending the d4-pawn) 10... ♜c6 A critical position. I believe Black's chances are not inferior to his opponent's.

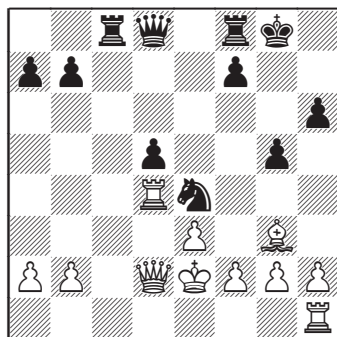
a) 11. ♜d1 is a logical move to play. The idea behind it is obvious- to recapture on d4 with a rook after the exchanges and play with a long-term advantage due to Black's isolated d5-pawn. But Black has some good resources here: 11... ♜g4! I really like this move.



It disorganizes White's pieces (11...g5 has also been played, but I prefer the text move: 12.♘g3 ♖e4 13.♜xc6 bxc6 14.♙d3 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♙f5 L'Ami,E (2606)-Maciej,B (2618) Novi Sad 2009, and here White could have obtained an advantage with 16.0-0 ♗f6 17.c4±)

a1) 12.♙e2 ♜xd4! an important intermediate move. 13.♞xd4 (13.exd4?N loses by force 13...♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 (15.♗xe2 ♞e8+) 15...♗e7+ 16.♞f1 ♗e4! 17.♗xe4 ♜xe4+ and the endgame is hopeless for White.) 13...♙xc3+! 14.bxc3 (14.♗xc3?! is dubious as it allows Black to bring the rook into play with a tempo 14...♞c8 15.♗d2 (15.♗b4!N is probably better but looks scary from the human perspective. 15...♙xe2 (15...♞c1+ 16.♙d1 ♞xd1+ 17.♙xd1 ♙xd1 18.♞xd1 ♞e8 19.♞e2∞ and it turns out that White's king in the centre is pretty safe) 16.♞xe2 g5 17.♙g3 h5 18.♞hd1 ♞e8 19.♙d6! The best practical chance, as other moves make White's life even more difficult. Now White enters a line where they lose a piece but in return get decent compensation. 19...♗xd6 20.♙xd6 ♞c2+ 21.♞4d2 ♞xd2+

22.♞xd2 ♜e4 23.♞xd5 ♞d8 24.♞f3! ♜xd6 25.♞xg5+ ♞f8 26.♞xh5∞ with three pawns for a knight; White has enough compensation.) 15...♙xe2 16.♞xe2 (16.♗xe2? loses on the spot 16...♗a5+ 17.♞f1 (17.♗d2 ♞c1+!) 17...g5 18.♙g3 ♞c1+ 19.♙d1 ♞fc8+ White's position is hopeless.) 16...g5! 17.♙g3 Shen,Y (2459)-Kashlinskaya,A (2436) Sochi 2015, and here Black missed a chance to obtain an advantage with 17...♜e4!N



18.♗d3 ♗b6 19.♞b1 ♞c5! protecting the d5-pawn and preparing ...♞fc8. 20.f3 (20.♞xd5? does not work due to 20...♞xd5 21.♗xd5 ♜c3+ 22.bxc3 ♗xb1+) 20...♜xg3+ 21.hxg3 ♞fc8 entering the second rank next. White needs to find precise moves not to lose directly.) 14...♙xe2 15.♗xe2 g5 16.♙g3 ♞c8 (16...♜e4= is also fine) 17.♙e5 ♜e4 18.♙d3 ♗d7 19.0-0 ♞fe8= with equality in Shishkin,V (1879)-Szabo Hanjecz,J (1567) LSS email 2009;

a2) 12.f3N is an alternative but now the e3-pawn will always be a weakness. 12...♙d7 13.a3 (13.♜xc6 bxc6; 13.♙e2 ♞c8 14.♗d2 ♞e8∞ with an unclear but

slightly more pleasant position for Black.) 13...♙xc3+ (13...♘xd4!? An interesting intermediate move if Black wishes to keep the dark-squared bishop 14.♞xd4 ♙e7=) 14.♞xc3 (14.bxc3 ♞e8 15.♞d2 ♞e7= Taking advantage of a number of White's weaknesses.) 14...♘e4! A thematic simplification. 15.♙xd8 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♞fxd8 17.♔f2 ♘a5= followed by ...♞ac8 with an equal but slightly more pleasant game for Black;

a3) 12.♙xf6? simply loses a piece.
12...♙xd1-+;

b) 11.♙e2 is a logical developing move, but after the exchanges on d4 there is no reason for Black to be worse 11...♘xd4 12.exd4 and here Black has a choice:
12...g5

b1) 12...♞b6 is a good alternative 13.0-0 ♞e8 (13...♞xd4?! is not really good due to 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6 15.♘xd5 ♞d6 16.♞ad1±) 14.♞ad1 a draw was agreed in the game Sherbakov,R (2520)-Kuzmin,G (2545) St Petersburg 1995 (14.♙xf6 ♙xc3! important intermediate move 15.bxc3 ♞xf6= with a balanced position) 14...♙xc3!? 15.bxc3 ♙d7= with equal chances. Black's play should continue with ...♘e4, ...♞ac8, and ...♞e6 if necessary;

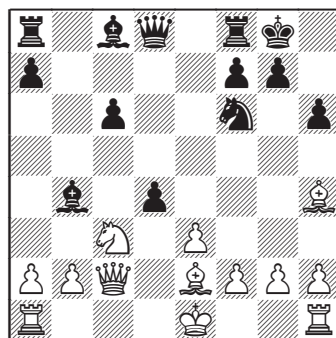
b2) 12...♙e7 is a bit too passive. 13.0-0 ♙e6 14.♞b3± Oliva Castaneda, K (2320)-Sumets,A (2618) Montreal 2012;

13.♙g3 ♘e4 14.0-0 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙f5 16.♙d3!N (16.♞b2?! allows 16...♞b6= Edouard,R (2611) -Peralta,F (2574) Sitges 2016. Black is not afraid to have doubled pawns on the b-file, as after exchanging the queens White's pawns on c3 and a2

will be even weaker.) 16...♞c8 17.♙xe4 White would prefer to keep the bishop pair and avoid this exchange, but there is simply no choice, as the pressure on the c3-pawn is too heavy. 17...♙xe4 18.♞b3 ♞b6= with full equality.

c) 11.0-0-0?! looks a bit dangerous 11...♙e6 (11...♘xd4!?N is also good 12.♞xd4 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 is forced (13.♞xc3? ♙f5-+) 13...♙e6 14.♙d3 ♞c8 15.♔b2 ♞c5∞ with a sharp position. Black is ready to launch an attack whereas it's not easy to find a way for White to reach his opponent's king and create some threats.) 12.♔b1 ♞c8 13.♞b3 ♙xc3 14.♞xc3 ♘e4 15.♙xd8 ♘xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♞fxd8= followed by ...♘e5 with a pleasant position for Black;

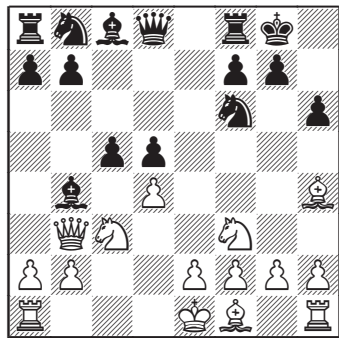
d) 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙e2 g5 (12...d4!?



leads to an interesting queen sacrifice which has been tried a couple of times in practice. However, with precise play, White should be able to neutralize Black's initiative. 13.♞d1 dxc3!? 14.♞xd8 cxb2+ 15.♞d2! is the best, but maybe not so easy to find over the board. (15.♔f1 ♞xd8 16.♞xb2 occurred in Tunik,G (2480) -Sokolov,A (2565) St Petersburg 1998, and

here the best would have been 16...♖b8!N threatening ...♖d2 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.g4 (18.♗xf6? is not possible due to 18...♙e7! 19.♗a1 (19.♗xe7 ♖b1+ 20.♙d1 ♙a6+ 21.♙e1 ♖bxd1#) 19...♙f5+ and ...♖b1 next winning material) 18...♙g7 with good compensation.) 15...♖d8 16.♗xb2 ♙xd2+ 17.♙f1!N Once again, not an easy move to make in practice (17.♗xd2 ♖xd2 18.♙xd2 ♙e4+ 19.♙c1 g5 20.♙g3 ♙e6= Maiorov,N (2525)-Vaibhav,S (2222) San Sebastian 2009, with an equal endgame) 17...♙e6 (17...♙f5 18.g4! ♖ab8 19.♗a3± with ♗xa7 and ♙xf6 coming next, it looks like Black does not have enough compensation here.) 18.♙xf6 ♖ab8 19.♗c2 gxf6 20.♙d3± Of course Black has some compensation but it looks like White has successfully coped with all the problems and will start creating his own pressure now.) 13.♙g3 ♙e4 14.0-0 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙f5 16.♙d3 I believe that Black does not have any problems in this position, and has several good moves to continue here (16.♗c1 ♖e8∞) 16...♖e8 is another good option (16...♗f6 17.♖ac1 ♖fd8 18.c4 ♙xg3 19.hxg3 ♙xd3 20.♗xd3 d4= with equality in the game Ogloblin,N (2346)-Lysyj,I (2668) Cheliabinsk 2016) 17.f3 (17.c4? doesn't work here and loses material, as after ...♖e8 Black has protected his knight on e4. 17...dxc4!± Now either recapture on c4 would lead to a loss of material for White) 17...♙xg3 18.hxg3 ♙xd3 19.♗xd3 ♖e6= and Black was fine in the game: Wojtaszek,R (2744)-Leko,P (2723) Beijing 2014;

8.♗b3 I have only one game in my database with this move-order but it makes sense 8...c5!±N



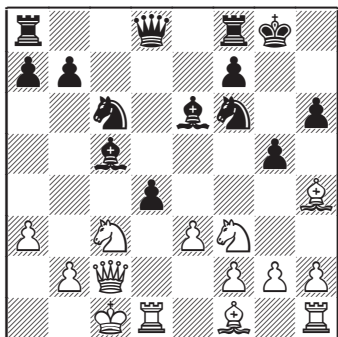
The logical move. 9.dxc5 (9.e3 ♙c6 defending the bishop on b4 and planning ...c5-c4 10.dxc5 is the best move. See 9.dxc5.

a) 10.a3?! would be imprecise due to 10...c4±;

b) 10.♙e2?! c4 (10...cxd4!? is also interesting. White has to be precise in order to stay in the game. 11.♙xd4! (11.exd4? is not possible due to 11...g5 12.♙g3 g4 13.♙e5 ♙xd4+ and White's position is collapsing.) 11...♙xd4 12.exd4 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 (13.♗xc3?! would be a mistake due to 13...♖e8!± and White has problems to castle.) 13...♖e8 14.♗c2 ♗e7 15.♙xf6 ♗xf6 16.0-0 ♙f5 17.♗d2 ♖ac8∞ The black pieces are more active but it is unfortunately not enough to claim an advantage.) 11.♗c2 g5 12.♙g3 ♙e4 13.♙d2 Trying to get rid of the unpleasant knight on e4 13...♙f5 14.♗c1 ♙xg3 15.hxg3 ♗d6± with a better position for Black;) 9...♙c6 10.e3 is the best move. See 9.dxc5. (10.a3 ♙xc5 11.♙xf6

a) 11.e3 allows 11...d4 with a very sharp and complicated game where Black has an

advantage with precise play. The lines may continue: 12.0-0-0 ♖e6 13.♖c2 g5!



This looks risky, but it's the only way to play for an advantage. 14.♔g3 (14.exd4 ♔xa3! 15.♔xg5 (15.bxa3 ♖c8 16.♔g3 ♘a5+ Black's attack is crushing; 15.♔g3 ♖c8 16.bxa3 ♘a5+ transposes to 15.bxa3; 15.d5 ♘d5+!) 15...hxg5 16.♘xg5 (16.bxa3 ♖c8 17.♘xg5 ♘d4 18.♘xe6 ♖a5!+ and the knight on c3 is falling) 16...♘b4 17.♘xe6 ♖c8 18.♖b3 White needs to protect the c3-knight (18.♖f5 ♖xc3+ 19.♔b1 ♖xb2#) 18...♖xc3+! Anyway! 19.♖xc3 ♘a2+ 20.♔c2 ♘xc3 21.♔xc3 fxe6 22.bxa3 ♘e4+ 23.♔b3 ♘xf2 24.♔c4 ♖ae8+ winning material) 14...♖c8 15.♔b1 ♘d5+ and Black's attack is too strong;

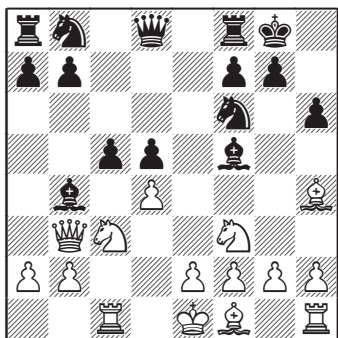
b) 11.♖d1?! is not good here: 11...g5 12.♔g3 d4+ and now 13.e3 is not dangerous as Black has a simple but effective response in 13...♖e7+ winning material;

11...♖xf6 12.♘xd5 We have this position with the pawn on h7 after 6...0-0. Of course including ...h7-h6 favours Black 12...♖g6!? with very good compensation.

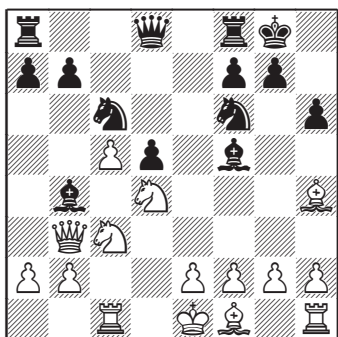
Black is ready to finish development with ...♔e6 and centralize the rooks, whereas White still needs a few tempos to develop the bishop and bring his king to safety) 10...♔e6 Threatening d4. 11.♘d4 Here Black has a choice (11.0-0-0 ♔xc5+ and ... ♖c8 next) 11...♔xc5 (11...♘xd4 12.exd4 ♔xc5!? A nice way to simplify the position 13.♖d1 (13.dxc5 d4 14.♔c4 dxc3 when 15.0-0 is the only move to maintain equality (15.♔xe6?! allows 15...♖d2+ 16.♔f1 fxe6 17.♖xc3 ♖xc3 18.bxc3 ♖ac8+ and Black will collect the c5-pawn next with pressure on c3) 15...♖d4 16.♔xe6 cxb2 17.♖ab1 ♖xh4 18.♔h3 ♖fe8 19.♖xb2 ♖e7= with equality) 13...♔e7= with an equal position) 12.♖d1 (12.♘xe6 fxe6 with an unclear position. We see a similar line with the 6...0-0 move order) 12...♔g4!? Not for the first time we see this idea 13.♔e2 ♘xd4 14.exd4 ♔xe2 15.♘xe2 ♖a5+ 16.♘c3 ♖ae8+ 17.♔f1 ♖a6+ 18.♖b5 ♖xb5+ 19.♘xb5 ♔e7 with a balanced position.

8.♖c1 does not look promising: 8...♔f5!? As usual 9.♖b3 (9.e3 ♘bd7 10.a3 (10.♔d3 ♔xd3 11.♖xd3 c6 12.0-0 ♖e7 (12...♖e8= is probably more logical, with equality) 13.♔xf6 ♖xf6?! This dubious move has been played recently by my wife. She missed a nice tactical blow: (13...♘xf6! is necessary with no problems for Black, planning ...♖fe8 and ...♖ad8 next) 14.♘xd5! cxd5 15.♖b5 ♖d6 16.a3! ♔xa3! 17.bxa3 ♖fb8 Aradhya,G (2231)-Daulyte,D (2429) London 2016, and here 18.♖a5± threatening ♖c7 would have given White an advantage) 10...♔xc3+ (10...♔e7!+= is also totally fine. We have a good Queen's Gambit because

our light-squared bishop is placed on f5 instead of c8!) 11. ♖xc3 g5 12. ♕g3 ♖e4 13. ♖c1 c5! Attacking the centre and opening the way for our queen 14. dxc5 ♗a5+ 15. ♖d2 d4!?∞ with a sharp position. Zhou,J (2612)-Zhang,Z (2634) China 2016 (15... ♖ac8∞ is a good alternative)) 9...c5!



As often when White delays his development, they have to be careful. 10.dxc5 ♖c6 11. ♖d4!N



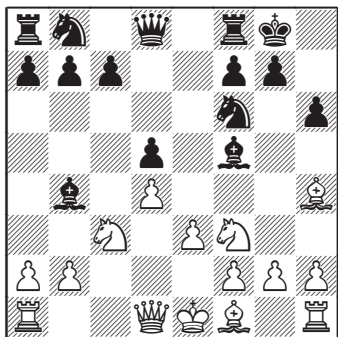
A nice idea of the engine. White is ready to give up an exchange to stay in the game. (11.a3 ♖a5! Nice play by correspondence. (11... ♖xc3+!N is possible, and more human. 12.bxc3

(12. ♗xc3? d4! gives Black a very strong attack. 13. ♗d2 ♖e8 14. b4 g5! 15. ♖xg5 (15. ♕g3 ♖e4 16. ♗b2 g4 17. ♖h4 d3+) 15...hxg5 16. ♗xg5+ ♕g6 17. ♗xf6 ♗d5+) 12...g5 13. ♕g3 ♗a5 14. e3 ♖e4 15. ♕d6 ♖xd6 16. cxd6 ♖ad8 17. ♕b5 ♖xd6 18. 0-0 ♕e4= with equality.) 12. ♕xf6 (12. ♗xb7? ♖b8! 13. ♗xc6 ♖xb2 14. ♕xf6 gxf6+ White's position is hopeless.) 12... ♗xf6 13. ♗xd5 ♖ad8 14. ♗c4 ♖d4! gives Black a good edge. 15. ♖xd4 (15. e3 ♖xf3+ 16. gxf3 ♕e6 17. ♖f4 ♗xf4 18. exf4 ♕c7+) 15... ♖xd4 16. ♗b5 ♕xc3+! 17. bxc3 (17. ♖xc3 ♖fd8+) 17... ♖d7 (17... ♖d5!?+ was also interesting.) 18. e3 ♖fd8 19. ♕e2 ♖d2 20. ♗b4 a5! 21. ♖f4 g5 22. ♗f3 ♗e6 23. e4! White defends very well. 23... ♕xe4 24. ♗e3 ♗c6 25. 0-0 ♕xg2 26. ♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 27. ♖xd1 ♖e8 28. ♗d3 ♗e4+ A very good game played between Pototschnig,M (1763)-Johnson,B (2187) ICCF email 2010. Black is much better but White managed to hold.) 11... ♖xd4 12. ♗xb4 ♖c2+ 13. ♖xc2 ♕xc2 14. e3 ♖c8 15. ♗d4 (15. ♕e2 ♗e7 16. ♕xf6 (16. ♗d4 ♗xc5 17. ♕xf6 gxf6 18. ♗d2 (18. ♗xf6?! ♗b4! 19. 0-0 ♗xb2! 20. ♖xd5 ♗xf6 21. ♖xf6+ with a big advantage.) 18... ♕e4 19. 0-0 ♖fd8+ Black is better.) 16... ♗xf6 17. 0-0 ♗e7 18. ♖xd5 ♗xc5 19. ♗xb7 ♖h8+ threatening ♕e4.) 15...g5 16. ♕g3 ♖e4 17. f3! (17. b4 b6!+) 17... ♖xc5 18. ♖xd5 ♖e6 19. ♗d2 ♕b1 20. ♕e5 ♕xa2 21. ♖f6+ ♖g7 22. ♖e8+ ♖g8= with a draw by repetition.

8... ♕f5!

We develop our bishop to the most natural square. Of course White has a large choice now but I believe only 9. ♗b3

is challenging. It makes sense to put pressure on the bishop on b4, as well as the b7- and d5-pawns.

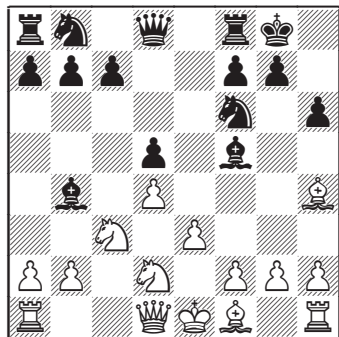


9. ♖b3!

The critical move. Now Black doesn't have a big choice. 9. ♕d3 ♕xd3 10. ♖xd3 ♖bd7 11. ♗e5 was recently played in a game between two strong grandmasters (11.0-0 c6 transposes to Chapter 10. This position is totally fine for Black.) 11... ♖e8 (11... ♕e7N is a good alternative 12. f4 (12. ♖b5 ♗xe5 13. dxe5 ♗g4= Black will trade the d5-pawn for the white pawn on e5; 12. ♗xd7 ♖xd7= with equality.) 12...c6 13.0-0 ♗e8 14. ♕xe7 ♖xe7= with a balanced position.) 12.0-0 c6 (12... ♗xe5?! does not work 13. dxe5 ♖xe5 14. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 15. ♗xd5 ♖d6 16. ♖e4±) 13. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 14. a3 ♕d6 15. e4! If not for this, Black could start thinking about getting some initiative on the kingside with ...f7-f5 15...dxe4 16. ♗xe4 ♕e7 17. ♕g3 ♗b6= and Black was fine in the game Ragger,M (2694)-Inarkiev,E (2714) Novi Sad 2016. The game finished in White's favour, but it was Black who was better most of the way.

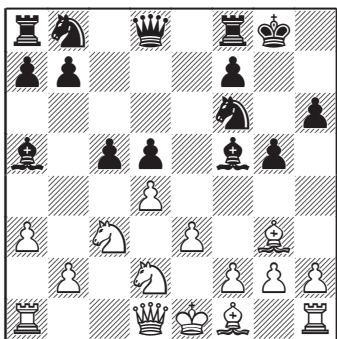
9. ♕e2 ♗bd7 10.0-0 (10. ♖b3 ♕xc3+ and either recapture transposes to the 9. ♖b3 line) 10...c6= with equality;

9. ♗d2N



This has not yet been played in practice, but the move makes some sense. White wants to play ♖f3 next. 9...g5 the concrete approach (9...c6 is the other option 10. ♖f3 ♕g6 11. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 12. ♖xf6 gxf6∞ if we compare this position to the classical Queen's Gambit, it should be OK for Black, but in general I don't like to have a spoiled pawn-structure giving White the opportunity to exert long-term pressure in the endgame.) 10. ♕g3 c5!? 11. a3 (11. dxc5 is not advisable for White as it allows 11...d4! 12. exd4 ♗c6 13. ♗b3 (13. ♕e2 loses directly 13... ♗xd4 14.0-0 ♕c2 15. ♖e1 ♖e8+) 13...a5! Obviously threatening ...a5-a4 winning back the pawn on d4. 14. ♕d3 (14. a4 preventing Black's created threat leads to another disaster: 14... ♖e8+ 15. ♕e2 ♗e4 with a hopeless position for White 16. ♖c1 ♕e6!-) 14... ♖e8+ 15. ♗f1 ♕xd3+ 16. ♖xd3 a4 17. ♗d2 a3! Weakening the position of the c3-knight. 18. b3 ♖xd4 19. ♖xd4 ♗xd4

20.♖c1 ♕xc3 21.♖xc3 ♜ad8—+ and with some ...♜b3 ideas in the air, Black should finish the game in his favour soon.)
11...♕a5!?



A critical position. In the Ragozin we rarely see this bishop retreat to a5, as most of the time ...♕xc3 is played. 11...♕xc3 is perfectly playable here too, but I prefer the text move as it gives some interesting play. White has choices here but I believe it's Black who has the initiative 12.♜b3!

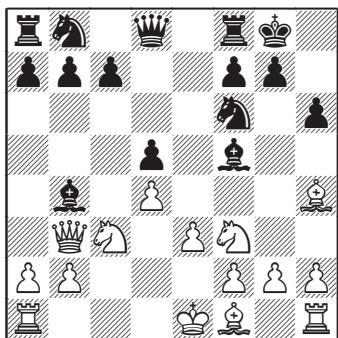
a) After 12.dxc5 we react the same as after 11.dxc5 12...d4! 13.exd4 (13.♜b5 is also possible but looks too risky 13...dxe3 14.fxe3 ♜g4! 15.e4! ♕xe4! 16.♜d6 ♜e8! A nice exchange sacrifice to continue the attack 17.♜xe8 ♜xe8 18.♜e2 ♕xd2+ 19.♜xd2 (19.♜xd2 ♜a6! and the rook on a8 is ready to enter the fight. White's position looks terrible to play in practice.) 19...♜d7 20.♕e2 White needs to finish his development but now we can capture a pawn and have great compensation for the exchange. 20...♕xg2 21.♖g1 ♕f3 with a very annoying pin along the e-file.) 13...♜xd4 (13...♜c6 is unfortunately not as good here as in the previous line, as

after the inclusion of 11.a3 ♕a5, we don't have the ...a7-a5 idea anymore after 14.♜b3∞) 14.♕e2 ♜d8 15.♕d6 Covering the d-file in order to be able to castle (15.♖c1 ♜c6 with an edge) 15...♜bd7 16.0-0 (16.b4 ♜xc5! the point of the 15...♜bd7 move 17.♕xc5 ♜xc3 and White is still unable to castle.) 16...♜xc5 17.♜c4 ♕xc3 18.bxc3 ♜xd1 19.♜fxd1 ♜fe4 and Black is slightly better due to having a better structure. White will probably have to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the knight sooner or later;

b) 12.♕e2 gives Black easy play:
12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♜c6 14.♜b3 ♕xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♜e4 16.♖c1 (16.♖c1 ♜a5! and the c3-pawn will fall) 16...♜e7 After putting the rook on c1, the a3-pawn is now a problem for White;

12...♕xc3+ 13.bxc3 c4! 14.♜d2 (14.♜c5 is a bit risky as the knight does not have many squares 14...b6 15.♜b7 ♜e7 16.♜d6 ♕g6 17.♜f3 ♜c6 Black takes control over the e5-square, preventing ♕e5 ideas and now threatens to trap the white knight with ...♜d8 and ...♜e6 (To understand the point of 17...♜c6 better, let's see why 17...♜d8 and 18...♜e6 does not work here: 17...♜d8 18.♜f5 ♜e6?! 19.♜xh6+ ♜g7 20.♕e5!∞ and with ♜g4 next the position remains very unclear.) 18.h4 ♜e6! 19.hxg5 hxg5 Despite the open h-file black king is not in danger. 20.♕xc4 ♜ad8 21.♕b5 ♜xd6 22.♕xd6 ♜xd6 23.♜h3 ♜h7 and Black is clearly better: ...♜e7 or ...♜a5 can be considered next) 14...♜a5 15.♖c1 ♜bd7∞ with a

balanced position. One of the ideas can be to play ... Re8 and ... Qd3 !



9... Qxc3+ !

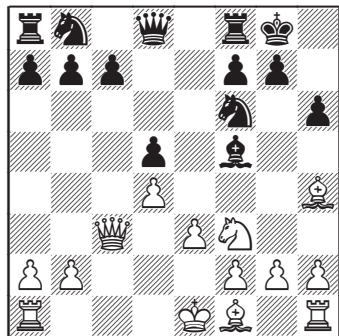
The only move. 9... Qc6 ?! simply loses a pawn to 10. Qxf6 Wxf6 11. $\text{Wxd5}\pm$ and Black does not have enough compensation;

9... a5 ?! leads to the same problem as after 9... Qc6 10. Qxf6 Wxf6 11. $\text{Wxd5}\pm$;

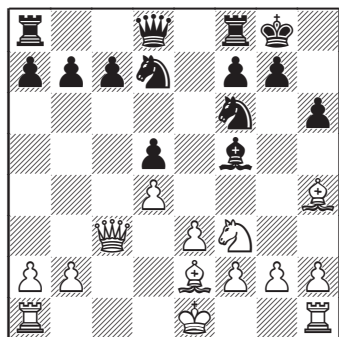
9... c5 looks logical but after 10. dxc5 ! Qc6 11. $\text{Qb5}\pm$ and White is better, threatening Qxf6 winning the d5-pawn

10. bxc3

10. Wxc3 !?



This move has been played once by Wojtaszek, a well-known grandmaster and theoretician: 10... Qbd7 (10... g5 N is also possible, leading to a position a pawn down but with good compensation 11. Qg3 Qe4 12. Wxc7 Qc6 13. Wxd8 Rfxd8 14. Qb5 Rac8 with the ... h6-h5 and ... Qb4 , ... Rc2 ideas in the air, Black has good play) 11. Qe2 ?N



When I studied this position for the first time, I was a bit concerned about this novelty. If we compare it to the 11. Qd2 line, Black can't really play for ... c7-c5 here. (11. Qd2 Preventing the typical ... Qe4 jumps. 11... Rc8 ? with the idea of playing ... c7-c5 12. Qe2 (Now 12. b4 N

reverting the ...c7-c5 idea, but leaving the queen unprotected, allows 12...♖e4= with equality) 12...c5 13.0-0 (13.dxc5 N leads to very dynamic play, e.g. 13...g5! 14.♙g3 ♖xc5 Threatening ...♗d3 winning the queen 15.0-0 (15.♙d4 ♖e6 16.♙xa7 Grabbing at least some material for Black's initiative (16.♙e5 ♙g6 17.h4!? d4! As a rule, when the opponent tries to attack us on the side, we need to answer with active play in the centre. 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.♗b3 d3! This pawn will be a real headache for White 20.♗d1 ♙e8 21.♙f3 b6 with a very pleasant position for Black. White's queen can be in danger, so they will probably try to trade it soon by playing ♙d6, which will not change the evaluation of the position. The d3-pawn is very strong and all the black pieces are active. 16.♙b4?! allows 16...d4! seizing the initiative 17.0-0 ♙c2↑) 16...♙c2 17.♗d1 defending the knight and preparing the castle (17.♗b3 ♖e4∞ with interesting play.) 17...d4 As usual 18.0-0 (18.exd4? is not a good idea 18...♖xd4+!) 18...♙a8 This might come as a surprise, as Black is a pawn down. However, exchanging the queens will allow Black to attack the a2- and b2-pawns even more effectively. (18...d3 is playable but less effective here: 19.♙f3 ♙xb2 20.♙e5 ♙c2 21.♙xb7 ♖c5 (21...♙xa2?! 22.♙b2!± and the rook is suddenly cut off.) 22.♙b5±) 19.♙xa8 (19.♙b6 ♙xa2 20.♙xb7 ♙xb2= with full equality.) 19...♙xa8 20.♙c4 ♙xb2 21.♙e5 ♖d7= and the future exchanges will lead to an equal position.) 15...♖ce4 16.♙d4 ♖xd2 17.♙xd2 ♙c2 18.♙d1 ♙e7= followed by ...♙fc8. The position is balanced.) 13...♙b6 14.♙fc1 cxd4 15.♙xd4

(15.♙xc8? taking two rooks for the queen would be a mistake here: 15...♙xc8 16.♙xc8+ ♖f8!-+ and White will soon suffer big material losses.) 15...♙xd4 16.exd4 ♙fe8= and Black was totally fine in the game Wojtaszek,R (2733)-Matlakov,M (2684) Poikovsky 2016) 11...c6!? Now Black wants to play ...g7-g5, then ...♖e4 and the pawn is no longer hanging on c7, as it was in the previous lines.

a) 11...♙c8?! would be the start of a dubious plan 12.0-0 c5 13.dxc5± and this time, comparing to the 11.♖d2 line, Black has a problem, as the knight from f3 can go to d4 which is much better than the d2-square;

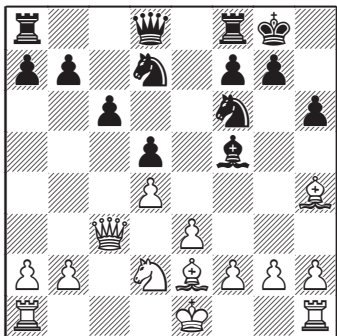
b) 11...♖e4 is also interesting but not so easy 12.♙a5!

b1) 12.♙xd8 is OK for Black 12...♖xc3 13.♙xc7 ♙fc8! (13...♖xe2?! would be imprecise due to 14.♖xe2 ♙fc8 15.♙hc1! ±) 14.bxc3 (14.♙a5 ♖xe2 15.♖xe2 ♙c2+ 16.♖d2 ♙xb2= with equality.) 14...♙xc7 15.♖d2 ♖f6!= and Black will soon win back the pawn on c3;

b2) 12.♙b3 ♖df6 (12...g5?! 13.♙xd5!± and the bishop on f5 is hanging) 13.0-0 ♙c8 14.♙ac1 c6∞ with a solid position;

12...♖df6 13.♖e5 g5 14.♙g3 c5 15.♙xd8 ♙fxd8 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♖f3± White has the advantage due to his better pawn-structure. The knight can head to d4 next.

12.♖d2!



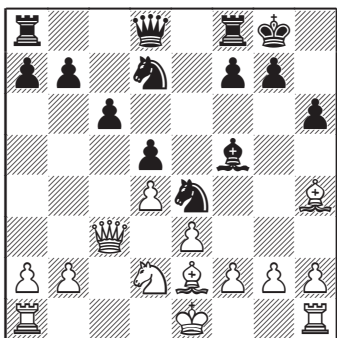
the logical move. White tries to control the e4-square.

a) 12.0-0 g5 13.♔g3 ♖e4 14.♞b3 ♞b6= with full equality.

b) 12.♞b3?! allows the unpleasant 12...♞a5+ and the best is to come back to c3 with the queen;

c) 12.♞a3 g5 13.♔g3 ♖e4 14.♗d2 (14.0-0 ♞e8= and Black has no problems) 14...♗xg3 15.hxg3 ♔g7= with a balanced position.

12...♗e4!



Anyway! 13.♗xe4 (13.♔xd8 ♗xc3= is just equal) 13...♞xh4 14.♗d6 (14.♗g3 ♔g6=) 14...♔g4 (14...♞f6 is a decent

alternative 15.♗xf5 (15.♗xb7 allows Black to activate his pieces quickly, e.g. 15...♞ab8 16.♗a5 ♞fc8 17.♗b3 c5! 18.dxc5 ♞xc3+ 19.bxc3 ♗xc5= and Black's initiative will allow him to win back the pawn soon.) 15...♞xf5= Despite the fact that White has a bishop against a knight, I don't believe it promises them much. However, I prefer the main line with 14...♔g4.) 15.g3

a) 15.♔xg4?! gives Black good play after 15...♞xg4 16.0-0 ♞ab8 Protecting the pawn and simply threatening to trap the knight on d6. 17.e4 Only move 17...dxe4 18.f3 ♞g6!? is an interesting attempt to play for an edge (18...exf3 19.♞xf3= Opening the f-file gives White some initiative for the pawn even though Black is still absolutely fine.) 19.♗xe4 ♗b6+ and Black is slightly better due to White's weakness on d4;

b) 15.♗xb7 ♔xe2 16.♗xe2 ♞ab8 17.♗a5! (17.♗c5?! gives Black good play after: 17...♗xc5 18.dxc5 ♞fe8 Threatening ...d5-d4 19.♗f1 ♞b4!? with good compensation for the pawn 20.b3 a5+; 17.♞xc6? loses on the spot to 17...♞fc8 18.♞xd7 ♞c2+ 19.♗d1 ♞xf2+ 17...c5! 18.♗b3! (18.dxc5? doesn't win a pawn, as Black has 18...♗xc5!+ and White's position collapses) 18...c4 19.♗d2 ♞g4+ 20.♗f1 ♞f5 21.f3 White is trying to find a good square for the king and to connect the rooks 21...♗b6 22.a4 Preventing ...♗a4. 22...♗c8! followed by ...♗d6. Black has very good compensation: I really believe White will be in some trouble soon.

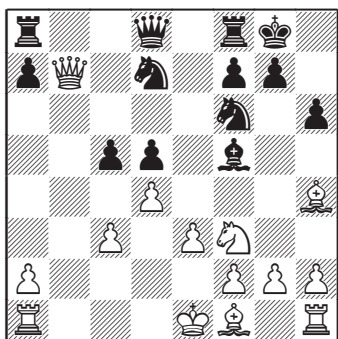
15...♟f6 16.♙xg4 ♟xd6= with a balanced position. The pawn advance to g3 is only good for Black as it weakens some light-squares on the kingside.

10...♘bd7

As usual, Black wants to play ...c7-c5. Both now and later, we don't really have to care about the b7-pawn. In the database there a very nice correspondence game.

11.♙e2

The most-often played move. 11.♟xb7 is of course the critical move 11...♞b8!? Black is OK to give a second pawn in order to activate his rook (11...c5!?



This is also interesting and has been tried in practice 12.dxc5N (12.♙xf6N 12...♘xf6 13.dxc5 ♘e4 14.♟b4 a5 15.♟d4 White has succeeded in protecting all the weaknesses — but not for long! 15...♞c8 16.♙d3 ♟e7∞ Black will win back the pawn on c5 next and create pressure on the c3-weakness; 12.♙e2 has been played once but it transposes to 11.♙e2) 12...♘xc5 13.♟b4 ♞c8 14.♟f4 (14.♙e2?! this natural developing move is just dubious. 14...g5 15.♙g3 ♙d3!♣ and White has some problems finishing

development.) 14...♟a5 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♟b4 ♟c7♣ with good compensation for the pawn, followed by ...♞b8) 12.♟xa7 (12.♟a6N 12...♟e7 13.♙e2 ♞b2 14.♙xf6! Clearly the best, as after (14.a4 g5! 15.♙g3 ♘g4♣ looks very dangerous for White as ...♘e3 ideas are in the air, as well as ...♘b8 if the bishop on e2 is left unprotected; 14.♙g3 only helps Black to activate 14...♘e4♣; 14.0-0? ♘b8!♣ This is the main problem for White; he can't castle as it simply loses a piece.) 14...♘xf6 White can finally castle, and there are no ...♘b8 tricks anymore. 15.0-0 ♙c8 16.♟d3 ♘e4 and Black has enough compensation, for example: 17.♞fe1 (17.♞fb1 ♟a3 18.♞xb2 ♟xb2 19.♞e1 ♘xc3= with equality) 17...♙f5 18.c4 ♘xf2!? leads to a forced draw: (18...♞fb8 is also enough for equality 19.cxd5 ♘g3 20.♟c4 ♘xe2+ 21.♞xe2 ♞b4= and White cannot avoid the repetition 22.♟a6 ♞b6 23.♟c4 ♙b4= and White cannot avoid the repetition.) 19.♟xf5 ♟xe3 20.♙d1 ♘h3+= 21.♘h1 ♘f2+ 22.♘g1 ♘h3+=) 12...♟e7 13.♙e2

a) 13.♟xc7? is just too greedy and loses on the spot after 13...♟a3—+ when there is no defence against ...♞fc8;

b) 13.♙xf6 ♘xf6 14.♘e5! Black now has two valid options: (14.♙e2 ♞b2! see 13.♙e2) 14...♘g4 (14...♞b2!?N of course it makes sense to activate the rook 15.♙d3 (15.♟c5 ♟xc5 16.dxc5 the queen exchange does not make White's life easier as after 16...♞a8 the a2-pawn will fall 17.♙d3 ♞bxa2 18.♞xa2 ♞xa2 19.0-0 ♙xd3 20.♘xd3 ♘e4 21.♘b4 ♙d2= and recapturing the pawn on c3 or c5 next)

15...♙xd3 16.♜xd3 ♜xf2! A very nice tactical idea 17.♜xf2?! (17.♜xf2?! is just too dangerous for White 17...♜g4+ 18.♜f1 ♜e4! Not only attacking the knight on d3 but also threatening ...♜xe3 at an opportune moment 19.♜a6! ♜e8! Now it's time to bring the rook into the attack 20.♜e1 ♜e6 21.♜b5 ♜xe3+ 22.♜xe3 No choice 22...♜xe3 23.♜b8+! ♜e8! (The natural looking 23...♜h7? allows the unexpected 24.♜b1!∞ complicating matters.) 24.♜b1 ♜e2+ 25.♜g1 ♜e3 and Black will win the knight on d3 and retain a good advantage 26.h3 ♜xd3⚡ 17...♜xe3+ 18.♜f1 ♜e8 Simply threatening mate. 19.♜a6 ♜e4! 20.♜xe4 ♜xe4 White is a whole rook up but cannot have anything more than a draw 21.♜c8+!= ♜h7 22.♜f5+ ♜g8 23.♜c8+=) 15.♜xg4 ♜e4! A nice intermediate move playing for the initiative 16.f3 (16.♜e5? loses after 16...♜c2+ and White cannot handle all the threats simultaneously.) 16...♜c2 17.♜e2 ♜xg4 18.0-0

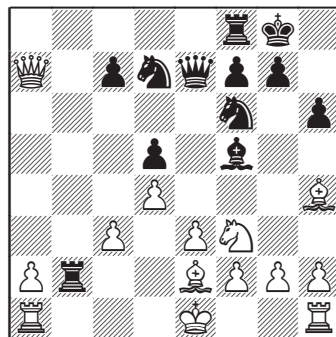
b1) 18.fxg4?N loses on the spot to 18...♜b2 19.♜a6 ♜xc3+ 20.♜f2 ♜e8+;

b2) 18.♜f2N is also possible but requires very precise play from White 18...♜fe8! 19.fxg4 (19.♜he1 ♜f5 20.♜a3 ♜b2 21.♜g3! Not an easy move to play 21...♜xe3 22.♜ac1! ♜xa2 23.♜xc2 ♜xa3 24.♜f4! ♜xc2 25.♜xe3= and White succeeds in equalizing by some miracle!) 19...♜b2 20.♜he1 ♜xc3 21.♜g1! White needs to find some safe shelter for his king 21...♜xe3+ 22.♜h1 ♜xe2 23.♜xe2 ♜xe2 24.h3 ♜b2= with an equal position.

18...♜xe2 19.♜fe1 ♜d2 20.♜ad1 ♜xc3= and a draw was the logical outcome of the

correspondence game Voigt,D (2000) - Limanskis,N (2271) ICCF email 2011;

13...♜b2 Activating the rook and preventing White from castling:



14.♜e5! White's best chance to neutralize Black's initiative is to give back the pawn

a) 14.♜d1?!N allows 14...g5! 15.♜g3 ♜d3!+ with ...♜g4 or ...♜e4 coming next, and Black is simply winning;

b) 14.♜a6N 14...g5 15.♜g3 ♜e4⚡ Black will win the c3-pawn and keep the initiative;

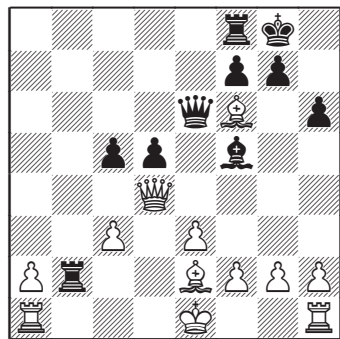
c) 14.♜xf6N 14...♜xf6! (see 13.♜e2) 15.♜a6 (15.♜e5? ♜e4+ with a decisive advantage) 15...c5! 16.0-0 (16.dxc5 ♜e4⚡) 16...♜c8 As the white king is no longer defending the bishop on e2, it's time to chase the white queen 17.♜d3 c4 18.♜d1 ♜e4 19.♜e1 ♜a3⚡ with a better position despite the two-pawn deficit;

14...♜xe5 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♜d4 ♜e6 (16...♜e4!?N is a decent alternative and probably even easier than the text move 17.♜f3! (17.♜xf6? fails due to the intermediate 17...♜xg2! 18.♜f1 ♜fb8+)

with a terrific attack.) 17...♖b1+ 18.♖xb1 ♗xb1+ 19.♗d1 ♗xd1+ 20.♙xd1 ♘e4 21.♙b3 (21.f3 ♘xc3 22.♙b3 ♖b8 23.♙g3 ♘xa2! A nice tactical idea, taking advantage of the weak first rank 24.♙xa2 ♖b2 and we will win back the ♙a2 because the bishop can't move due to ♖b1+ winning the ♖h1. 25.♙xc7 ♖xa2= with equality) 21...♖b8 22.♙g3 (22.f3 ♘c5∞) 22...♘c5!? 23.♙xc7 ♖c8 24.♙b6 ♘xb3 25.axb3 ♖xc3= with an equal position.) 17.♙xf6

a) 17.c4N looks logical as the rook on b2 is hanging 17...♖xe2+! 18.♙xe2 c5! 19.♗b2! Preventing ...♖b8 (19.♗xc5?! allows Black to seize the initiative: 19...♖c8 20.♗a3 dxc4+ and despite being an exchange down Black is better. ...♙d3 is coming and the knight from f6 will also join the attack soon) 19...d4 (19...dxc4!? 20.♙xf6! ♙d3+! 21.♙e1 gxf6∞ also gives good compensation) 20.♖hc1 ♗e5 Threatening ...d3 winning the queen (20...♙d3+!? is another possible continuation if Black wants to get half a point 21.♙xd3 ♗e4+ 22.♙e2 ♗xh4 23.h3! Of course White cannot let Black to grab the h2-pawn as his king would become too vulnerable 23...♘e4! 24.♙f1! dxe3 25.fxe3 ♗g3 threatening ...♗h2 26.♙g1! ♗xe3+= and White cannot avoid the perpetual check 27.♙h2 ♗g3+ 28.♙g1 ♗e3+=) 21.♙xf6 gxf6 22.♗a3 ♙h7↑ The position is very unpleasant for White to play, as his king is too vulnerable in the centre and it doesn't look like it can find a safe shelter on the kingside either. Black is better.

b) 17.♙f3?N would be a mistake because after 17...g5 18.♙g3 ♗a6—+ when the white king is stuck in the centre; 17...c5!



This is an important intermediate move: 18.♗e5 is safer than grabbing the c5-pawn (18.♗xc5 ♗xf6 this is the idea behind the ...c7-c5 sacrifice; now we can take back on f6 with the queen 19.♗d4! (19.♗d1? is not good due to 19...♙e4! An important subtlety before moving the bishop to c2; firstly Black weakens White's kingside 20.f3 ♙c2 21.♖c1 (21.♖xd5 ♖b1+ 22.♙d1 ♖xd1+ 23.♖xd1 ♙xd1 24.♙xd1 ♖b8—+ and the white king is just too weak so the game should be over soon in Black's favour.) 21...♗h4+ Now we see why it was important to provoke f2-f3 22.g3 (22.♙f1 ♙d3!—+) 22...♗h3—+ White's position is hopeless.) 19...♗g6 and now 20.g4! is White's only move if they want to stay in the game (20.♙f3? allows 20...♙d3! and once again White is unable to castle 21.♗xd5 (21.c4 ♖c2 22.cxd5 ♗a6—+) 21...♗a6 22.♗d4 ♙e2—+ with a very strong attack.) 20...♖xe2+! Of course! 21.♙xe2 ♙xg4+ 22.♙d2 (22.f3 is a risky

decision 22...♖c2+ 23.♗d2 ♕xf3+ 24.♔e1 ♗g6 25.♟f1 ♕e4+ looks super-dangerous for White) 22...♟b8 23.♔c1 ♕f3 24.♞e1 ♕e4 with very good compensation for the exchange.) 18...gxf6 19.♗xe6 fxe6= with equality: Kopasov,E (2205)-Woelfelschneider, P (2201) LSS email 2012;

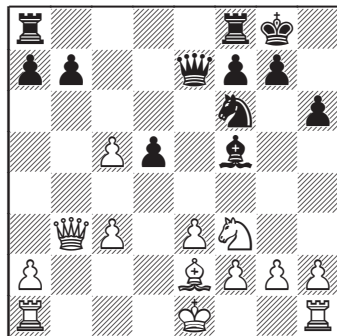
11.♕e5N has never been played but it's always good to know how to react to such a move 11...♕xe5! 12.dxe5 g5! 13.♕g3 (13.exf6 gxh4+ followed by ...♗xf6, with a better position for Black; 13.♕xg5 hxg5 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.♞d1 c5∞ The position is equal but not drawish, promising both sides an interesting game ahead.) 13...♕e4 14.f3 ♕xg3 15.hxg3 ♗e7 16.f4 (Black is not afraid of 16.♞xh6 as after 16...♗xe5 17.♔f2 ♔g7 the black king is perfectly safe 18.♞h1 ♞ae8 19.♞e1 c6= and the position is equal but it looks easier to play it as Black) 16...♗c5 17.♔f2 f6∞ with an unclear but very interesting position.

11...c5!

It is important to strike at the centre directly without wasting a tempo protecting the b7-pawn.

12.0-0

12.♕xf6 was played once in 2016 by the French grandmaster Istratescu 12...♕xf6 13.dxc5 (13.♗xb7 ♗a5+ followed by ...♕e4 and ...♟ab8) 13...♗e7!N



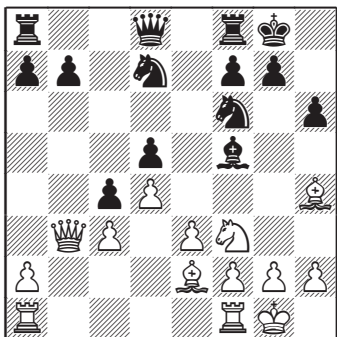
Even if the move played in the game was correct I believe that this move is even simpler I believe that this move is even simpler (13...♕e4 was tried in practice 14.♕d4 ♕g6 15.♗xb7 ♕xc5 16.♗b2! (16.♗b5?! allows Black to seize the initiative with the unexpected 16...♕d3+! A move which is easy to miss! 17.♕xd3 ♟b8 18.♗a6 ♟b6+ and White's best chance is probably to give up the queen for the rook, but in this case Black will have a material advantage.) 16...♕d3+ 17.♕xd3 ♕xd3 with the game Istratescu,A (2582)-Palac,M (2623) Schwarzach 2016 ended in a draw. Black has good compensation on the light-squares for the pawn.) 14.♕d4 (14.♗b4 a5 15.♗b2 ♞fc8= followed by ...♞xc5 with equality; 14.0-0 ♞fc8 15.♕d4 ♕g6= once again followed by ...♞xc5) 14...♕e4 15.0-0 ♞fc8= and Black will win back the pawn with an equal position;

12.dxc5N is a decent try: 12...♕xc5 13.♗b4 ♞c8 (13...♕d3+?! is tempting but it's not so good 14.♕xd3 ♕xd3 15.♗d4! ♕a6 16.♕xf6 gxf6 and this position looks too dangerous for me 17.♗g4+ ♔h7 18.♗f5+ ♔g8 19.♕d4! ♗a5 20.♔d2!± and Black is in trouble.) 14.0-0 g5 15.♕g3

♖c8 16.♘d4 ♕d7∞ with an unclear position. White has two bishops, meanwhile Black controls the e4-square and has a target on the c-file.

12.♙xb7?! Not the best moment to take this pawn. It has been played once but it transposes to 11.♙e2. 12...♙a5! 13.0-0 was seen in Rios,C (2431) -Otero Martinez,D (1960) Quibdo 2015, and here 13...♖ab8!N is a good improvement over the game 14.♙a6 (14.♙c6 c4⚡ with a very nice position for Black.) 14...♙xa6 15.♙xa6 c4 simply threatening to catch the bishop with ...♖b6 16.a4 ♖b3⚡ with a difficult position for White.

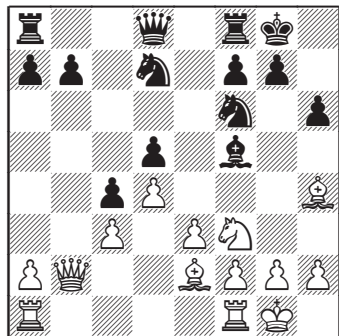
12...c4!



Black continues to play as if the b7-pawn was not hanging.

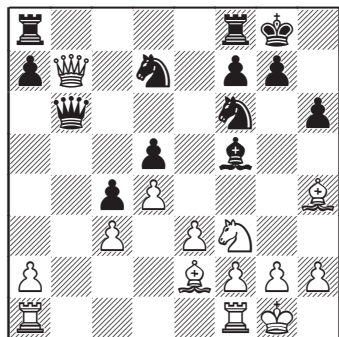
13.♙xb7

13.♙b2



This has been played recently by the strong Chinese grandmaster Ding Liren, but it doesn't offer White anything: 13...♙b6! 14.♙c1 Ding,L (2778)-Leko,P (2712) Danzhou 2016, and here I suggest 14...g5N which I believe is the most logical 15.♙g3 ♘e4∞ with a good game for Black.

13...♙b6!



I like the idea of playing a quiet endgame despite the fact that Black is a pawn down. 13...♖b8!? has also been played recently and is totally fine, but I prefer the main line: 14.♙a6 ♖b2 15.♙d1 ♙b6= and Black had good compensation

in the game Cori, J (2609)-Hammer, J (2651) Baku 2016.

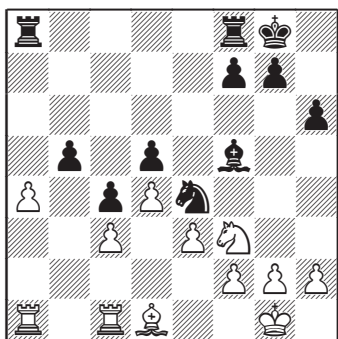
14. ♖xb6 axb6

Black is a pawn down but has a clear plan: to play ...♖a3 and double on the a-file, as well as ...g7-g5 and ...♗e4 to put pressure on the c3-pawn.

15. a4

This is probably safer than other moves.

15. ♖xf6 I understand the desire to exchange this bishop which is out of play on the kingside. 15... ♗xf6 16. a4 (16. a3 preventing any ...♖a3 invasion, but Black has good play after: 16... ♗e4 17. ♖fc1 b5 18. ♗e5 ♗xc3! 19. ♖xc3 b4+ with a strong initiative, simply intending to advance the strong queenside pawns.) 16... ♗e4 17. ♖fc1 b5! posing White some problems. 18. ♗d1!N

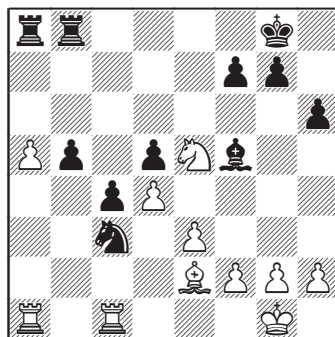


Not an easy move to play, but it looks like it's White's best chance. Black has several good options here, and I will just provide a couple of possible continuations:

a) 18. axb5N doesn't promise anything good for White: 18... ♖xa1 19. ♖xa1 ♗xc3

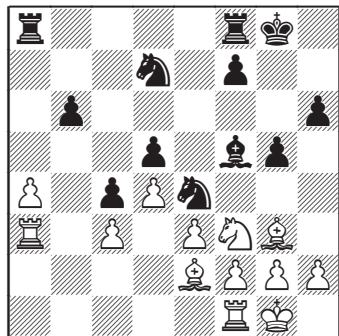
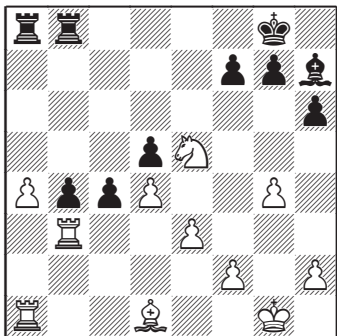
20. ♗f1 ♖b8+ Black will take back the b5-pawn and continue to exert pressure;

b) 18. a5 looks tempting but Black has some tricks in mind: 18... ♖fb8 19. ♗e5 (19. a6? fails due to 19... ♗xc3!-+ and White cannot stop the b-pawn) 19... ♗xc3!



Once again, this nice tactical blow works. In exchange for the sacrificed piece Black gets very strong passed pawns. 20. ♖xc3 b4 21. ♖cc1 b3+ We have been following the game Skowronek, J (2275) - Woelfelschneider, P (2329) Remote email 2013, where Black succeeded in getting the full point from this crazy position.

18... ♖a6 Intending to double on the a-file (18... ♖fb8 is an alternative 19. ♗e5 ♗xc3 (19... bxa4 20. ♗c6 ♖e8 Preventing ♗e7 21. ♖xa4 ♖xa4 22. ♗xa4 ♗d7 23. f3 ♗f6 24. ♗f2 ♖e6 25. ♗d8 ♗xa4 26. ♗xe6 fxe6 27. ♖a1= and it looks like neither side can make any progress.) 20. g4! ♗h7 21. ♖xc3 b4 22. ♖b3!



Not an easy move to spot but it's the only way to stop Black's pawns. 22...cxb3 23.♙xb3 White has enough compensation for the exchange. 23...♖d8 (or 23...♗c8 24.♙xd5 ♖a5 25.♙xf7+ ♔f8 26.♙e6 ♖c3 27.♙f5!♞ White has managed to grab a few pawns and should be able to stop the b-pawn after exchanging the bishops.) 24.♙c6 ♖d6 25.♗c1♞ and it looks like White has enough compensation for the exchange. Most importantly, they have managed to block the b-pawn and it's not easy to find a way for Black to break through.) 19.♙h4 ♙h7 (19...♙e6 20.axb5 ♗xa1 21.♗xa1 g5 22.♙f3 ♙xc3 23.♙c2 ♙xb5 24.♙f1= with equality) 20.axb5 ♗xa1 21.♗xa1 ♖b8 22.b6 g5 23.♙f3 ♗xb6 24.♙e5 ♙xc3 25.♙h5 ♖b7 26.♙xf7+! ♗xf7 27.♙xf7 ♔xf7 28.♖a7+ ♔g8 with equality, as White can simply continue giving checks ♖a8-♖a7;

15.♗fc1N 15...g5 16.♙g3 ♙e4 17.♙e5 ♙xe5 18.♙xe5 ♖a3♞ with good play for Black

15...g5 16.♙g3 ♙e4 17.♗fc1
17.♖a3N

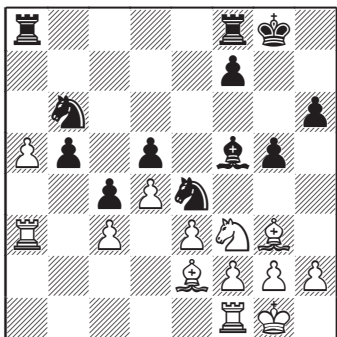
This is another way to defend the c3-pawn. Black has a pleasant choice here, and I will leave it to the reader to pick their own preference from the lines, all of them equally interesting: 17...b5!?

a) 17...♖a5!? is also interesting, with the idea of doubling on the a-file 18.♗fa1 (18.♙e5 ♙xe5 19.♙xe5 b5♞ with a pleasant position.) 18...♗fa8 19.♙d1 b5 20.♙e5 ♙xe5 21.♙xe5 ♙xc3 Once again this sacrifice! 22.♗xc3 b4 23.e4! White needs to make some space for his rook 23...♙xe4 24.♗e3 ♖5a6 25.f3 ♙g6♞ with good compensation. As usual, the engine gives 0.00...

b) 17...♖a7 Obviously, Black wants to double along the a-file. 18.♗fa1 (18.♙e5 ♙xe5 19.♙xe5 f6 20.♙g3 ♖fa8♞) 18...♗fa8 19.♙d1 b5 20.♖1a2 (20.a5? is a mistake due to the thematic 20...♙xc3! 21.♗xc3 b4+ and White will suffer a loss of material trying to stop the pawns.) 20...♙b6 21.♙d2 (21.a5? ♙a4! A nice move, winning directly: 22.♙xa4 ♖xa5+ and White's position is collapsing) 21...♙xd2 (21...♙xg3 22.hxg3 ♙xa4 23.f3 ♖a6 24.e4 ♙c8!?) Indirectly

protecting the ...d5 pawn 25.♙xa4
 (25.exd5? is bad due to 25...♘xc3+)
 25...♙e6 26.exd5 ♙xd5 27.♖b2 ♖xa4
 28.♖xa4 bxa4= with an equal position.)
 22.♖xd2 ♘xa4 23.♗da2 ♘xc3! 24.♖xa7
 ♖xa7 25.♖xa7 ♘xd1 26.♖b7 c3 27.♖xb5
 c2 28.♖c5 ♘b2 29.♖c3= and
 unfortunately Black has nothing more
 than a draw;

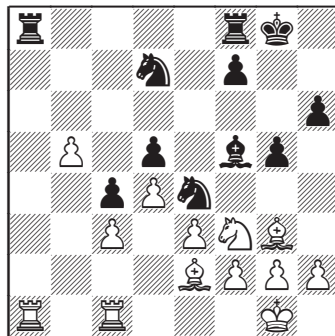
18.a5 ♘b6



Taking advantage of the pinned a-pawn
 and redirecting the knight to a4 19.♘e5
 ♘a4 20.♘c6 ♘exc3 21.♙h5 ♖fe8
 22.♖fa1∞ It is always difficult to assess
 such kinds of position, but one thing I am
 sure about is that only Black can play for a
 win here, as his connected passed pawns
 are really dangerous! ...♘b1 and ...c3 ideas
 should be considered.

17...b5! 18.axb5!?!N

This is probably the simplest.



18.♙d1 has been used in practice
 18...♖fc8 (18...♖a7!?!N is also good for
 equality 19.axb5 ♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♘xc3=)
 19.♘e1 (19.axb5N 19...♖xa1 (19...♘xc3
 is less precise due to the strong 20.♖a6!
 with a nice idea of sacrificing a piece, e.g.
 20...♘xb5 21.♖xh6 ♙g7 22.♖h5 f6
 23.♘xg5! fxg5 24.♖xg5+ ♙f6 25.h4∞ with
 good compensation.) 20.♖xa1 ♘xc3∞
 with an unclear position but Black is
 surely fine.) 19...♘d2 20.axb5 ♘b3!
 21.♙c2! A nice defensive move which
 must be really hard to find over the board.
 21...♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♙xc2 23.♖a7! ♙f5
 24.f3 ♖e8 25.♘c2! allowed White to make
 some miraculous escape 25...♙xc2
 26.♖xd7 ♘c1 27.♙f2 ♘d3+ 28.♙e2 f5
 29.♙c7 f4 30.b6 ♙a4 31.♖xd5 ♘c1+
 32.♙d2 ♘b3+ 33.♙e2 ♖xe3+ 34.♙f1 ♙c6
 35.♖d8+ ♙f7 36.d5 ♙b7 37.♙d6= and
 with good play, White managed to draw in
 the game Podvoysky,E (2227) -Tsenkov,L
 (2343) LSS email 2014

18...♘xc3 19.♙f1 ♘xb5 20.h4 f6=
 with a balanced position.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we studied a very important line for theory because in my opinion 5.cxd5 followed by 6.♖g5 is the main line of the Ragozin. 7...0-0 followed by 8...♗f5 is quite a new way of playing for Black but I believe it's very interesting and worth trying. First of all, it is important to know what to do after 8.♞c2, preventing ...♗f5. The best

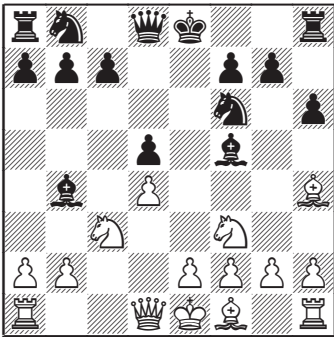
reaction is to play 8...c5 followed by 9...cxd4, which gives Black good play. After the main move, 8.e3, we play 8...♗f5!? and I believe the only challenging line is 9.♞b3 where Black has to be ready to leave the b7-pawn 'en prise' for a while. It's quite likely that Black will be a pawn down but with enough compensation.

Chapter 10.

5.cxd5 exd5 — 6.♔g5 h6 7.♔h4 ♕f5

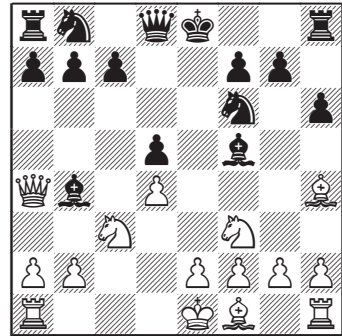
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4
5.cxd5 exd5 6.♔g5 h6 7.♔h4 ♕f5!?

This is a relatively new approach. It was played by Gajewski, then Anand and Wojtaszek. It's not exactly news that the Polish grandmasters were working for the ex-World Champion. The idea is quite simple; Black wants to finish his development with c6 and ♘bd7. The bishop is ideally placed on f5. I believe White has to play dynamically to create any problems.

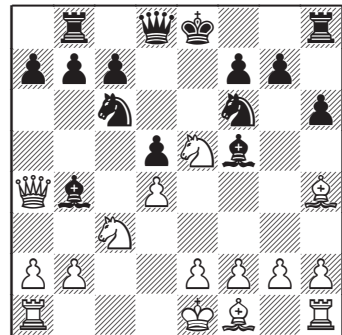


8.♖b3!?

This move was played several times in 2016. It's a bit like 8.♖a4+, in that it forces Black to play a move they are not sure to want to. 8.♖a4+!?



I believe this is one of the most challenging tries. Black has no choice other than to put his knight on c6. 8...♘c6 9.e3 (9.♘e5!?) An interesting attempt to gain an advantage. 9...♗b8!? This very strange move seems to be the simplest.



The idea is to defend the ♗b4 after ♘xc6 bxc6. (9...♖d6 is the other logical

reply. 10.♖xc6 (10.♗g3 leads to some simplifications. 10...♗e4 11.♖xc6 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♖xc6 13.♖xc6+ bxc6 14.♗xc7 ♔d7 15.♗a5 (15.♗f4 g5 16.♗e3 (16.♗d2?! ♖xd2 17.♗xd2 ♖hb8) 16...♖xc3= with an equal position.) 15...♖hb8 and it looks like Black has enough compensation: 16.c4!? (16.e3 ♖b2 17.♗d3 ♖g3 18.♗xf5+ ♖xf5 19.0-0 ♗d6= The ♗a5 is really badly-placed and it is probable that White will have to give up a pawn to save it. 16.f3 ♗d6 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♗b4 ♖b5!∞ Followed by a5.) 16...♖b2 17.f3 ♗d6 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.g4 ♗h7 20.♗d2 ♖e8 and Black is threatening ...♗d3. The compensation is enough for equality.) 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖xc6 12.♖xc6+ bxc6 13.f3 (13.♗xf6 gxf6 and Black's bad structure will be compensated for easily because he will enter the b-file very fast.) 13...♖b8 14.g4 ♗e6 15.e3 ♔d7 16.♗d3 ♖e8!= A very important move and I believe Black is fine here. He will play ...♗d6 next and ...h5 will always be in the air.) 10.e3 The most logical.

a) 10.♖xc6?! is, strangely, an inaccuracy: 10...bxc6 11.♖xc6+ ♖d7 12.♖xd7+ ♔xd7! and Black has very decent compensation. For example: 13.♗xf6

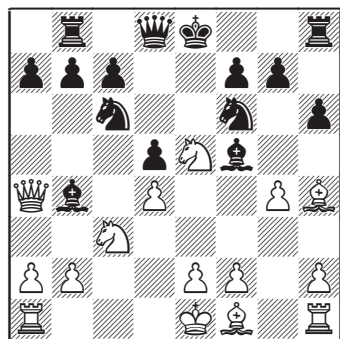
a1) 13.e3? ♗a5!-+;

a2) 13.a3 ♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖e4 Black will win back the pawn very quickly.

a3) 13.f3 ♗a5! Threatening ♖xb2. 14.0-0 (14.♔f2 ♖xb2) 14...♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♖b1+ 16.♔d2 ♖b2+ 17.♔e1 ♖xa2;

13...gxf6 14.a3 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖b2 16.♖g1 h5;

b) 10.g4!?



A very interesting move. The ♗f5 has to find a good spot and White wants to develop the ♗f1 to g2 10...♗d7! 11.♖xd7 ♖xd7 12.♗xf6 gxf6 A critical position. 13.♖g1

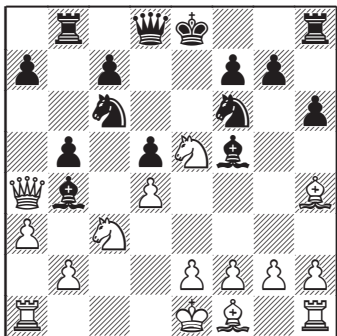
b1) 13.♗g2 ♖xg4 14.♗xd5 ♖xd4 15.♗xc6+ ♔f8! 16.♔f1 bxc6 17.♖d1 ♖c5 18.♖g1 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 ♖g8= with an equal position.

b2) 13.h3 f5! To get rid of the doubled pawns. 14.♖c1 fxg4 15.a3 (15.hxg4 ♖xg4 16.e3 h5 17.♖b5 ♖g5 18.♗c4! ♖d8 19.♗b3 ♔f8∞) 15...♗xc3+ 16.♖xc3 ♖f5=;

b3) 13.e3?! this just gives up a pawn. 13...♖xg4+;

13...♖xd4 (13...♔f8!∞) 14.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 15.0-0-0 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♖b5 17.♖xd5+ ♗d6 18.♖g3 ♖be8= with a balanced position.

c) 10.a3 b5!?



This was the other idea behind ♖b8. (10...xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖d6∞ is also a decent option.) 11.♟xc6

c1) 11.♞d1 ♟xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♟xe5 13.dxe5 g5 14.♟g3 ♟e4 15.f3 ♟xg3 16.hxg3 ♞e7! 17.g4 (17.♞d4 ♟f8!?∞ with the idea of ...♟g7. Again a very interesting position to play.) 17...♟g6 18.♞xd5 0-0! 19.♞d4 ♜fd8 20.♞e3 ♞d5 21.♞xh6 ♜b6=;

c2) 11.♞a6? is simply a mistake. 11...♟xd4! 12.axb4 (12.♟c6 ♜b6 13.♞xb6 axb6 14.♟xd8 ♟xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♟c2+ 16.♟d2 ♟xa1→) 12...♜b6! 13.♞xa7 ♟c2+ 14.♟d1 ♟xa1 15.♞xa1 d4→;

11...bxa4 12.♟xd8 ♟xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♟xd8 14.c4! (14.♟xf6+ gx6 15.e3 ♜g8!♞ even if he has a very bad structure, Black is better due to the big lead in development. 14.e3 ♟e7♞ followed by ...♜b2, ...g5-and ♟e4 is also an idea.) 14...dxc4 15.f3 c6 16.e4 ♟e6 17.d5! White has to play dynamically not to stand worse. 17...cxd5 18.exd5 ♟f5 19.♟xc4 ♜e8+ 20.♟d2 ♜b2+ 21.♟c3 ♜c2+ 22.♟d4 ♞d2+ 23.♟c3 ♜xg2 24.♟d4= with a strange position where

Black can't be worse because he can take a perpetual..

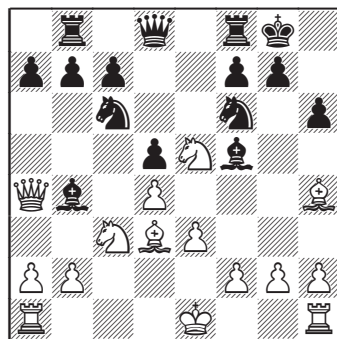
d) 10.♜c1 0-0 11.e3 (11.a3?! ♟xc3+ 12.♜xc3 (12.bxc3 ♜e8♞ 12...g5 13.♟g3 ♟e4♞) 11...♜e8!? with the simple idea of taking on e5. 12.♟e2

d1) 12.♟b5 ♟xe5 13.♞xb4 (13.♟xe8?? ♟d3+ 14.♟e2 g5 15.♟g3 ♞xe8→) 13...♟d3+ 14.♟xd3 ♟xd3 and Black is fine due to his very annoying white-square bishop. White has to be precise to equalize. 15.♟a4! b6 16.♞a3! ♟c4 17.b3 ♟d3 18.♞d1 ♟f5 19.♟c3 a5 20.0-0 g5 21.♟g3 ♟h5=;

d2) 12.♟xc6 bxc6♞ will give Black a better position.

12...♟xc3+ 13.♜xc3 ♟xe5 14.dxe5 ♜xe5 15.♞xa7 g5 16.♟g3 ♜e7= followed by ♟e4 when the position is balanced.

10...g5 (10...0-0 11.♟d3! I believe White will have an edge here.



For example. 11...♟xd3 (11...♟xe5 12.♟xf5±) 12.♟xd3 ♟xc3+ 13.bxc3 g5 (13...♞d6 14.0-0 ♟e4 15.f3!±) 14.♟g3 ♟e4 15.f3 ♟xg3 16.hxg3 ♞d6 17.♟f2±

with a more pleasant position for White.)

11.♔g3 ♖e4 12.♖c1

a) 12.♙b5 Quite a logical move. 12...0-0! 13.♖xc6 (13.♙xc6?! bxc6 14.♖xc6?! ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖e8+ and the ♖c6 is pinned and will be lost.) 13...♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 bxc6 15.♙xc6 ♖f6! Things are not so easy for White now. 16.♖c1! (16.♙e5 ♖g6 17.♖c1 ♖xf2! The knight is taboo and Black has just won a very important pawn. 18.0-0 (18.♖xf2 ♖b2+ 19.♖g1 ♙e4+ It's over.) 18...♖d3+ 16...♖xc3 (16...♖xc3!? is also possible. 17.♙e5 (17.♖a3 ♖xc6 18.♖xc3 ♖b1+ 19.♖d2 ♖xc3+ 20.♖xc3 ♖xh1 21.♙xc7 ♖b1=) 17...♖xe5 18.dxe5 ♖xa4 19.♙xa4 ♖b2 20.h4=) 17.hxg3 ♙d3! 18.♖d1 ♙c4 19.♙a4! The only move but it exists. 19...♖b2 20.♖c2 ♖fb8 21.♙b3! ♙xb3 22.axb3 (22.♖xb2? ♙xd1 23.♖xb8+ ♖g7 24.♖xd1 ♖xf2+ 22...♖2xb3 23.0-0= with a balanced position.

b) 12.♖xc6?! bxc6 13.a3?! ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 0-0! gives Black a big advantage. 15.♙e2

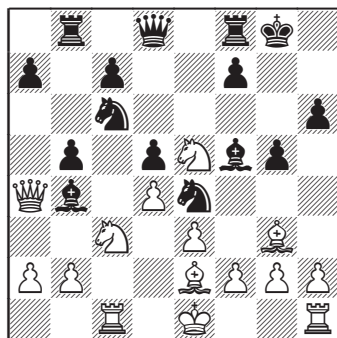
b1) 15.♖xa7 ♖b2+;

b2) 15.♖xc6 ♖b6! 16.♖a4 (16.♖xc7 ♖a8!+) 16...♖b2+;

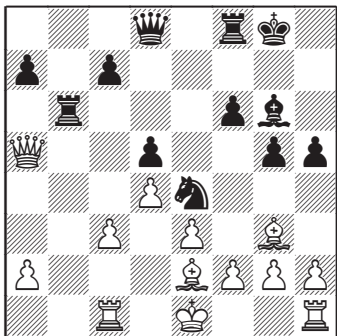
15...♖f6+;

c) 12.a3 ♙xc3+ (12...♖xc3 is not that easy after 13.♖b3! ♖a2+! 14.axb4 ♖axb4 15.♖d3!±) 13.bxc3 ♖xc3 14.♖xc6 (14.♖b3 ♖e4+ 14...♖xa4 15.♖xd8 ♖xd8 16.♙xc7 ♖c8 17.♙d6 ♖b2= with at least equality.

12...0-0 13.♙e2 (13.a3 ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖xc3 15.hxg3 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♖g7∞ with an unclear position.) 13...b5!



I like this move: it's the hidden idea behind ♖b8! (13...♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖xc3 15.hxg3 ♖d6 is also possible but after (15...♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♖g7 17.g4 ♙g6 18.f4! ±) 16.♖f3± I have the feeling that Black can be worse.) 14.♙xb5 (14.♖b3 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖xe5 (15...♖xc3 is also playable. 16.hxg3 (16.♖xc6 ♖d6 17.♖e7+ ♖xe7 18.hxg3 ♖d6=) 16...♖xe5 17.dxe5 ♖g7 18.g4 ♙e4 19.f3 ♙h7 20.f4 c6= with a balanced position.) 16.♙xe5 ♖e8 17.h3 (17.g4 ♙h7∞) 17...♖e6= with a very decent position.) 14...♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖xe5 16.♙xe5 f6 17.♙g3 h5 18.♖a5! (18.f3 ♖xc3 19.hxg3 ♖d6 20.0-0 (20.♖f2?! c6!+) 20...♖xc3 21.♖f2 ♖b6∞) 18...♖b6! No choice, the c7-pawn was hanging. 19.♙e2 (19.♙a4?! c6 20.♖xa7 ♖f7 21.♖a5 h4+) 19...♙g6!



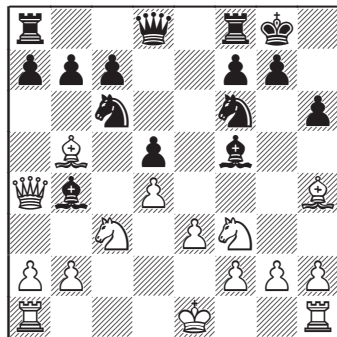
This is a critical position. After analysing it I think it's just unclear. With good play the normal result is a draw, as so often. 20.f3

a) 20.c4 h4 21.f3 hxg3 22.fxe4 ♖xe4 23.hxg3 ♖xg2 24.♖h2 ♖e4 25.cxd5 ♖d6 26.♔f2 ♖f7 with a balanced position.

b) 20.♖xa7 ♖f7 21.♖a3 ♖e7!? followed by h4. Here the engine finds a very straightforward variation with equality at the end. 22.c4 h4 23.f3 ♘xg3 24.hxg3 ♖e8! 25.e4! ♖xe4! looks super-strong for Black. 26.♔f2! ♖g6 27.♔d3! ♖b2+!? (27...♖xd3 28.♖xd3 ♖e3 29.♖c2 ♖be6 30.♖f5 ♖e2+ 31.♔g1 hxg3 32.♖h7+ ♔f8 33.♖f1! ♖e1 34.♖h8+ ♔e7 35.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 36.cxd5= with an equal endgame.) 28.♖xb2 ♖xd3 29.♖c2! The only move. 29...♖e1! A very nice idea. 30.♖xe1 hxg3+ 31.♔xg3 ♖xe1+ 32.♔h2 ♖xc2 33.♖xc2 ♖h4+ 34.♔g1 ♖xd4+ 35.♔f1! dxc4 36.♖e4!= and the pawn endgame is drawn. If Black wants to play on, he will have problems avoiding the perpetual.

20...♘xg3 21.hxg3 ♖d6 22.c4 (22.0-0) 22...♖xg3+ 23.♔f1 ♖fb8 24.♖xd5+ ♔g7 25.♖d7+ ♔f8 26.♖h3! ♖d6 27.♖xd6+

cxd6= followed by ...♖b2. Black has enough initiative for the pawn.) 9...g5 (9...0-0N I tried this simple approach but it looks White seizes the initiative after 10.♖b5!



10...♖xc3+

a) 10...a5 11.♖xc6 bxc6 12.0-0 ♖a6 (12...♖xc3 13.bxc3 ♖d6 14.♖xf6 ♖xf6 15.c4±) 13.♖fc1±;

b) 10...♖d6 11.0-0 and here we have nothing better than 11...♖xc3 12.bxc3 (see 10...♖xc3.)

c) 10...g5 11.♖xc6 ♖xc3+ 12.bxc3 bxc6 13.♖g3±;

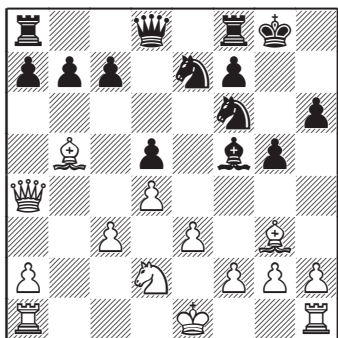
11.bxc3 ♖d6 12.0-0 ♔e4 (12...♔e7 13.♖b3±) 13.♖fc1 ♔e7 14.♔d3± and even if it's still playable for Black, I believe White's chances are slightly better.) 10.♖g3 0-0 11.♖b5

a) 11.a3N 11...♖xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♔e4 13.♔d2 (13.c4 ♔e7∞) 13...♖e7= 14.♔xe4 ♖xe4 15.h4 g4= with a good position.

b) 11.♖a6N is a funny move but it's not very effective. 11...♖d7 12.♖b5 ♔e4

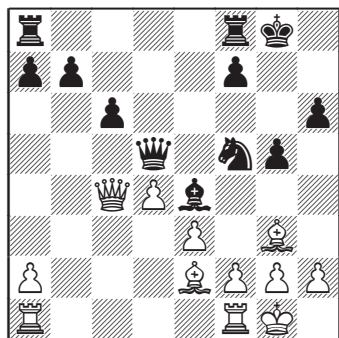
13. ♖b3 ♖e7∞ followed by ♜a5.

11... ♟xc3+ (11...a5N I checked this move a bit but it's rather suspicious.
 12. ♟xc6! (12.0-0 ♜e7=) 12...bxc6 13.0-0!
 (13. ♖xc6?! ♟d7 14. ♖b7 (14. ♖xc7?! ♖xc7
 15. ♟xc7 ♜fc8 16. ♟e5 ♜xc3!?) 14... ♖b8=)
 13... ♖a6 but in this position I have little reason to doubt that White is better.
 14. ♖ac1 ♖b6 15. ♜e5±) 12.bxc3 ♜e7
 13. ♜d2!



This is, I believe, the best way to play for White. (13. ♟e2?!N 13... ♜e4? followed by ...h5. 13.0-0 1-0 (46) Vovk,Y (2588)-Gajewski,G (2646) Jerusalem 2015
 13... ♜e4!∞ followed once again by ...h5. I really believe Black has good prospects.)
 13... ♜e4 14. ♜xe4 ♟xe4 15.0-0! (15.f3N is possible with the idea of keeping the ♟g3, but Black is fine after 15... ♟g6
 16. ♟f2 c6 17. ♟e2 ♜f5 18. ♟d3 (18.0-0 ♜xe3! 19. ♟xe3 ♜e8?; 18.e4 dxe4 19.fxe4 ♜h4!? 20. ♟xh4 gxh4 21. ♟f3 ♟xe4!?)
 18... ♜d6∞) 15... ♜f5 (15...h5 16. ♖d1 h4 17.f3! ♟g6 18. ♟f2 c6 19. ♟d3±; 15...c6 16. ♟e2 ♜f5 was the move-order used in the two games played in this line.) 16. ♟e2!
 A good plan. White wants to play c4.

16...c6 17.c4! (17. ♖b3 ♖e7 18.c4 dxc4 19. ♖xc4 ♜g7=) 17...dxc4 18. ♖xc4 ♖d5!



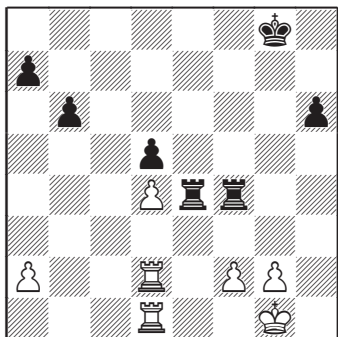
I believe that the endgame is the best way to equalize. 19. ♖xd5 ♟xd5 20. ♖ab1

a) 20. ♟c7 looks tempting to keep the bishop, but now Black has the important move 20... ♜h4! when g2 is hanging: 21.f3 (21. ♖fb1 ♟xg2 22. ♟g3 ♟e4 23. ♖xb7 ♜f3+ 24. ♟xf3 ♟xf3=) 21... ♜f5! 22. ♖fb1! (22.e4?! ♜xd4?) 22...b6 (22... ♜xe3 is also good. 23. ♖xb7 c5 24. ♖b2 cxd4 25. ♟e5 ♖ac8 26. ♟xd4 ♜c2 27. ♖d1 ♜xd4 28. ♖xd4 ♟e6 with complete equality.)
 23.e4 (23. ♜f2 ♖fe8 24.e4 ♜xd4?) 23... ♜xd4 24. ♟a6 ♟e6 25. ♖d1 ♟c8!
 26. ♖xd4 ♟xa6 27. ♖d6 ♖ac8 28. ♖xc6 ♜g7 29. ♖ac1 f6 30. ♟d6 ♖fd8= with full equality.

b) 20. ♖fc1 ♜xg3 21.hxg3 f5 22. ♟f3 (22. ♖ab1 ♖f7 23.a4 ♖d8 24.a5 a6 25. ♖b6 ♜g7 26. ♖cb1 ♖dd7 27.f3 ♖fe7 28. ♟d3 ♜f6 29. ♜f2 h5 and I believe Black's position is solid enough for assuring an equal game.) 22... ♖ad8 23. ♖c5 ♟xf3 24.gxf3 f4 25. ♜g2 ♖f6= with equality.

c) 20.a4 ♖ae8 21.♟fe1 ♜e7 22.♙g4
 ♜xg3 23.hxg3 f5= and Black had no
 problems in the game Leko,P (2712)-Yu,Y
 (2734) Danzhou 2016;

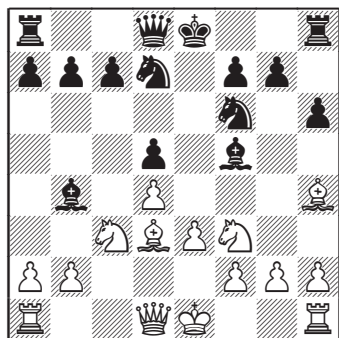
20...b6 21.♞b2 ♖ae8 22.♞c1 ♜xg3
 23.hxg3 f5 24.♙c4 f4 25.♙xd5+ cxd5
 26.gxf4 gxf4 27.exf4 ♟xf4 28.♞d2 ♞ee4
 29.♞cd1



So far we have been following the game
 Fressinet,L (2664)-Bluebaum, M (2626)
 Baku 2016. After this game I talked with
 Laurent, who told me he was happy to
 play such an endgame directly out of the
 opening! I was impressed by how easily he
 won, and it shows how great his
 understanding is. In my preparation I had
 such types of endgames and of course I
 didn't pay attention and put "=" like the
 engine suggested to me. 29...h5!N I finally
 decided to seriously analyse this endgame
 and I believe we need to put this pawn on
 h4, a rook on f7 and the other one
 switching between the e- and the c-files.
 30.f3 ♖e8 31.♞c1 h4 32.♞c7 ♟f7 33.♞dc2
 (33.♞xf7 ♜xf7 34.♜f2 (34.♞c2 ♞e1+
 35.♜f2 ♞d1=) 34...♞c8=) 33...♞e1+
 34.♜f2 ♞d1= with full equality. I'm not
 surprised that the normal outcome of this

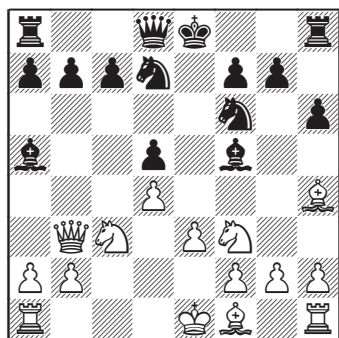
line is a draw, but it was rewarding to
 delve into it.

8.e3 ♜bd7 9.♙d3



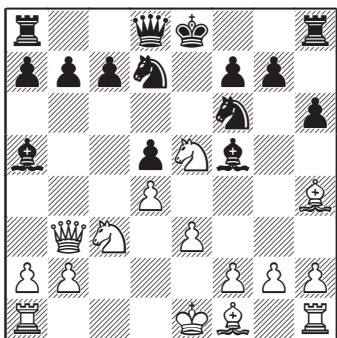
The move played by Maxime Vachier-
 Lagrave. I don't believe that with such a
 passive approach White can claim any
 edge.

a) 9.♞b3!? I believe this is the only
 critical move. 9...♙a5!?



The novelty played by Wojtaszek which
 I believe was home preparation. Now I
 think the only two critical replies are
 10.♜e5 or 10.♞c1. (9...a5 was played in
 another game. Even if I didn't find any
 concrete problem with it, it makes less

sense because Black will have to take on c3, after a3 for example.) 10.♖e5!?N



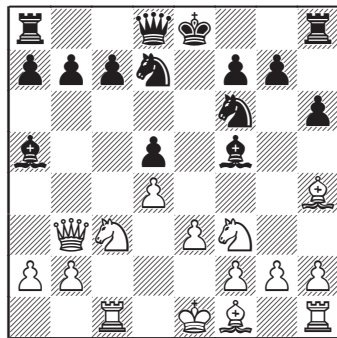
This is, as often, an important idea for White.

a1) 10.♖xb7?N would have been a mistake because after 10...♜b8 11.♖a6 (11.♖xa7 c5! White's queen is totally out of play and ...♜xb2 is coming. (11...c6!?+ 12.♙xf6 gxf6! 13.♙e2 ♜xb2 14.♖c1 c4+ 11...c6! Protecting the ♙a5. Now White faces big problems. 12.♙d3 (12.♙xf6 ♜xf6 13.♙d3 ♜xb2+ 12...♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♜b6 14.♖xb6 (14.♙xf6 ♖xf6! 15.♖c8+ ♔e7 16.♖xh8 ♙xd3+)+ 14...♖xb6 15.♙xf5 ♖a6+;

a2) 10.♙e2 The move played in practice is definitely not the most challenging. 10...c6 11.0-0 (11.♖xb7? ♜b8 12.♖xc6 ♜xb2+ with a strong initiative.) 11...♜b6 It's funny to see that Wojtaszek has already faced this position twice. 12.♜d2 0-0 13.♜fc1 (13.a3 ♖xb3 14.♜xb3 ♙c7 15.f3 ♜fe8 16.♙f2 a5 17.a4 ♜e7 18.♜fc1 g5 19.♜d2 ♙d6 20.♜f1 ♙g6 21.♜d1 ♜h5+ and Black was better in the game: Kovalenko,I (2644)-Wojtaszek,R (2722) Gjakova KOS 2016) 13...♜fe8 14.a3

♖xb3 15.♜xb3 ♙c7 16.♜a4 ♙d6 17.♜ac5 ♜xc5 18.♜xc5 ♙xc5 19.♜xc5 ♜e4 20.♜cc1 a5= with equality. Wang,Y (2718)-Wojtaszek,R (2727) Huaian 2016;

a3) 10.♜c1!?N



This is an interesting try. The idea is to be able to take on c3 with the rook. 10...0-0! We don't lose time protecting the b7-pawn. 11.♖xb7 (11.♙e2 c6 12.0-0 (12.♖xb7?! is always a move to check. 12...♜b8 and White has no good answer. 13.♙xf6 (13.♖xc6 ♜b6+; 13.♖a6 ♜xb2 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♜f1 ♜b6+ 13...♙xf6 14.♖a6 ♙c8 15.♙d3 ♜xb2 16.0-0 ♜e4 17.♜a4 ♜xa2 18.♜a1 ♜xa1 19.♜xa1 ♜d6+ 12...♜b6= with a totally fine position.) 11...c5! I quite like this move: Black is playing dynamically. 12.♙g3! is best, when White controls the b8-square.

a31) 12.♙b5 definitely makes sense because now the b2-pawn is not en prise, but Black has the strong reply: 12...cxd4! and now White has no good path to follow. 13.♙xf6! The lesser evil. (13.♜xd4 ♜c5! wins material. 14.♖c6 ♜c8 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.0-0 ♙xc3 17.♜xf5 ♜xc6 18.♙xc6 ♙b4+; 13.exd4 ♜b8+)+ 13...gxf6 14.♙xd7

(14.exd4 ♖b8 15.♗xd5 ♘e5! A nice tactical blow. 16.♗xd8 ♘xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♖fxd8+ and even though Black is two pawns down, he will take back everything with benefits.) 14...dxc3 15.♙xf5 cxb2+ 16.♚e2 bxc1=♗ 17.♖xc1 ♗d6+ with an unclear position. White has some compensation but the material balance is on Black's side.

a32) 12.♗a6 c4!+ followed by ♖b8, when White won't have any good way to protect the b2-pawn.

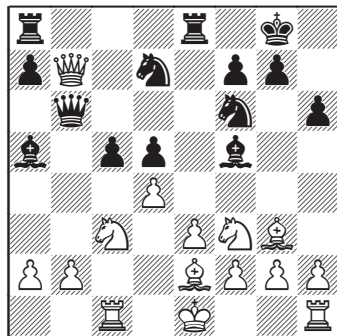
a33) 12.dxc5 ♖b8! 13.♗xa7 ♖xb2+ g5 is now a terrible threat.

12...♞e8!? Black wants to play ...cxd4 then ...♘c5. 13.♙e2

a31) 13.♙a6 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘c5 15.♗c6 ♙d3+;

a32) 13.♙b5 cxd4! 14.♘xd4 ♘c5 15.♗c6 ♘d3+ 16.♙xd3 ♙xd3 17.♗d6 ♘e4 (17...♗c8 is also possible and for a human it looks very scary for White — but there is a defence. 18.♗a3! ♗c4 19.♚d1! It's not easy to find all this. (19.♗xa5 ♗xd4 20.♘d1 ♗e4 21.f3 ♗f5+) 19...♙b4 20.♗b3 ♖ac8 21.♘ce2! ♗xb3+ 22.axb3∞) 18.♗xd8 ♖axd8 19.♘c6 d4! 20.♘xa5 dxc3 21.bxc3 ♖d5 22.♘b3 ♙c4 Black has good compensation for the two pawns. Probably White will have to give back the material if he wants to put his king in a safe place. For example: 23.♖c2 ♖b5 24.f3 ♙xb3 25.axb3 ♖xb3 26.0-0 ♘g3 27.hxg3 ♖xe3 28.♖a1=;

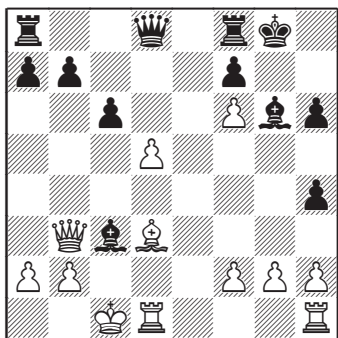
13...♗b6!



I like this idea. Black accepts a queen exchange but will open the a-file. 14.♗xb6 axb6 15.♙b5 (15.a3 trying to keep this pawn will be a mistake because after 15...♘e4+ the a-pawn is still a weakness. 15.a4 ♙xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♖xa4=) 15...♙xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♖xa2 17.0-0 ♖ea8= with a decent position.

10...♘e5! Black needs to accept the challenge. (10...c6 is probably also possible but after 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.♘d3± I would be afraid the structure would prove bad in the long term.) 11.dxe5 g5 12.exf6 (12.♙g3 ♘e4+) 12...gxh4 is a critical position to assess this line. 13.0-0-0! Of course. (13.♖d1?! c6! 14.♗xb7 (14.♙d3 ♙xd3 15.♖xd3 ♗xf6 16.♗xb7 0-0+) 14...♙d7+) 13...c6 (13...♙xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗d6 15.♙d3 (15.♖d4 0-0-0 16.♖xh4 ♘b8 17.♙e2)) 14.e4 is the obvious move for White. (14.♙d3 ♙xd3 15.♖xd3 ♗xf6 16.♗xb7 0-0 17.♗a6 ♙b6 18.♖d2 d4!? 19.exd4 ♙xd4∞; 14.♗xb7 0-0 15.♗e7 ♙xc3 16.♗xd8 ♙xb2+ 17.♚xb2 ♖axd8+) 14...♙g6!? (14...♙xc3 is also ok for Black. 15.♗xc3 ♙xe4 16.♙d3 (16.♗e5+ ♚f8 17.f3 ♙g6 18.g3 ♗d7 19.♙d3 ♙xd3 20.♖xd3 ♖g8∞ with an unclear position:

...Bg6 follows.) 16...Qxd3 17.Rhe1+ Qf8 18.Qxd3 Qd6 19.Qd4 Bg8! An important move. Black will play ...Bg6 to attack the f6-pawn. 20.Qxh4 Bg6 I believe Black is absolutely fine here. 21.Bf3 (21.Bc7 Qxf6 22.Qxf6 Bxf6 23.Bxb7 Bxf2 24.Bd2=) 21...Be8 22.Bxe8+ Qxe8 23.g3=) 15.exd5 (15.Qa3 Qc7! 16.exd5 0-0-0 17.d6 Qb6 18.Qd3 Qb4+ and Black has the initiative.) 15...0-0! I like the idea of putting the king in a safe place. 16.Qd3! (16.dxc6?! Qxf6 17.Qd3 (17.cxb7? Qg5+ 18.Bd2 Rad8 19.Qd1 Bd7+ and White can resign.) 17...Qxc6?) 16...Qxc3!

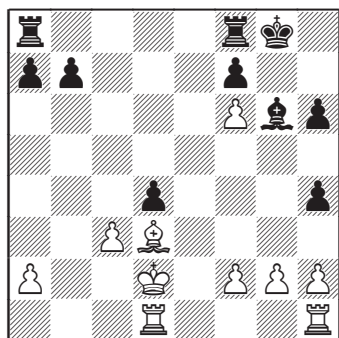


Here White has a choice, but in any case Black has a good way to continue. (16...Qxf6 17.Qxg6 Qg5+ 18.Bd2 Qxg6 19.d6∞ is definitely less clear.) 17.bxc3

a1) 17.Qxc3 Qxd5 and a2 is hanging. Black wants to take back on g6 with the f7-pawn, to be able to then take the f6-pawn with ...Qg5. 18.Qb1 (18.Qxg6 Qg5+ 19.Qb1 fxg6∞ 20.Bd6 Qf5+ 21.Qa1 Qxf2 22.a3 Bf7 23.Bc1 Qh7∞; 18.g3 Qxa2∞) 18...Qg5 19.g3 Rad8 20.Qxg6 Qxg6+ 21.Qa1 h3∞ with an unclear game.

a2) 17.Qxg6 Qxb2+! 18.Qxb2! fxg6 19.dxc6! Qc7 (19...Qxf6 is also enough to equality. 20.Qxf6 Bxf6 21.cxb7 Bb8 22.Bd7 Bf7=) 20.Qxb7 Qf4+ 21.Bd2 Qxf6 the c6-pawn can be scary but due to the weakness of the White-king, Black has no problem. 22.c7 Rac8 23.Bc2 Qa1+ 24.Qb1 Qc5 25.Qb7 Qa1+=;

17...Qxd5 18.Qxd5 cxd5 19.Qd2!? d4!?

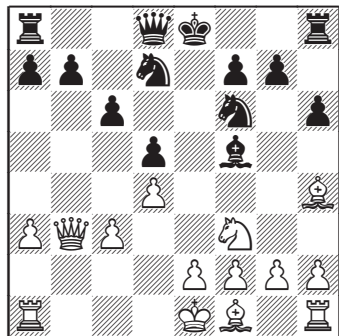
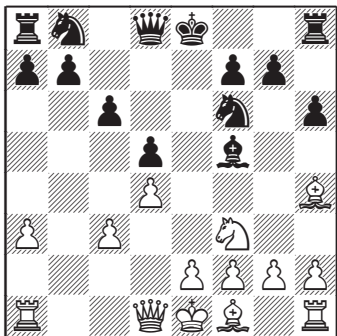


I like this idea of giving up the pawn to open lines. 20.cxd4 (20.c4 Rac8 21.Rhe1 Bc6= followed by ...Qxf6, and ...Ba6 is also coming.) 20...Rad8 21.Qc3 Bc8+ 22.Qb3 (22.Qd2 Bfd8=) 22...Bc6= and the endgame is about equal.

b) 9.a3N 9...Qe7=;

c) 9.Qa4 a5 10.a3 Qxc3+ 11.bxc3 0-0 12.Qd2

13.b4 White starts the thematic minority attack. (13.♖ae1 with the idea of pushing e4 doesn't offer any advantage. 13...♞e8 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.e4 dxe4 16.♜xe4 ♜f8=) 13...a6 14.♞fb1 b5!?= A good way to stabilize the queenside and Black had no problems in the game



I quite like this move. Black wants to play ...♖a5 on e3. (9...♘bd7 10.e3 (10.♖b3 0-0 11.e3 c5∞) 10...0-0 11.♙d3 ♙xd3 12.♖xd3 c5! 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.♗fb1 ♖c7= with an equal position in Raehse,H-Moenster, M (1585) Lueneburg 2015) 10.♖b3 attacking the b7-pawn. Here Black has several good options:

a) 10.e3 ♖a5!= Followed by ...♘e4.

b) 10.♙xf6 can't be a problem.
10...♖xf6=;

c) 10.♘d2 ♘bd7 11.e3 0-0 12.♙e2 ♖a5 13.♖b3 c5! and I believe Black is fine here. 14.dxc5 (14.0-0?! is a bad idea because after 14...cxd4! White has to recapture with the e-pawn. 15.exd4 ♖fe8; 14.♖a2 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘e4! White has to be careful now. 16.♖b4 ♖xb4 17.axb4 ♘c3∞) 14...♖ac8 15.0-0 ♘xc5 16.♖b4 ♖d8! 17.♖f4 (17.♖d4 ♖d6= followed by ♖fd8.) 17...♙h7 18.♙xf6 ♖xf6 19.♖xf6 gxf6= True, Black has a terrible structure, but he has good pieces. The c3-pawn will be an easy target.

10...♘bd7?!

As so often seen, we can try to sacrifice the b7-pawn.

a) 10...g5 is also a good option. 11.♙g3 (11.♖xb7?! ♖a5! gives Black a very good initiative. 12.♘d2 (12.♖c1 ♖xa3+) 12...gxh4 13.♖xa8 ♖b6+ 11...♖b6 12.♘d2 (12.♖b4 ♘e4=; 12.♖xb6 axb6∞ followed by b5. I believe Black has the better prospects now.) 12...♘bd7 13.e3 (13.♖b4 ♘h5 14.♙d6 0-0-0=) 13...0-0 (13...♖xb3 14.♘xb3 ♘e4 15.f3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3± might be slightly better for White.) 14.♙e2 ♘e4=;

b) 10...♖b6!? is an engine suggestion. Not a very human one, but why not? 11.♖xb6 (11.♘d2 ♖xb3 12.♘b3 ♘e4=) 11...axb6 12.♙xf6 gxf6 This position can look scary for Black but actually he has a very simple plan, to play ...b5 then ...♘b8-d7-b6 with good play on the queenside. 13.♘h4 (13.e3 b5∞) 13...♙h7 14.e3 b5 15.♙d2 ♘d7 16.♙d3 ♙xd3 17.♙xd3 ♘b6 18.f3 ♙d7 19.e4 ♖a4 20.♖a2 h5 21.♘f5 h4= with an equal position.

11.♖xb7 (11.e3 0-0 12.♙e2 ♖b6=; 11.♖b4 b6!? 12.e3 c5 13.♖b2 0-0 14.♙a6

♖c7= with an equal position.) 11...0-0

12.♙g3

a) 12.e3 ♜b8 13.♞xa7 g5 14.♙g3 ♜b2!

A critical position. I believe Black has enough compensation. Let's see some illustrative lines: 15.♞d1 (15.c4 ♜e4

16.♞c1 ♞a8±; 15.♙e2 ♜e4!±) 15...♞a8!

16.♞xa8 ♜xa8 17.♜e5 ♜xe5 18.dxe5 ♜e4

19.♙d3 ♜xa3 20.♙xe4 ♙xe4 21.0-0 ♜c2∞;

b) 12.♞xc6? ♞a5-+;

12...♜e4 13.e3 (13.♞c7 ♞f6±)

13...♜xg3 (13...♞b6!? is also enough to

equalize. 14.♞xb6 axb6 15.c4 ♜a7

16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♜d2 ♜xg3 18.hxg3

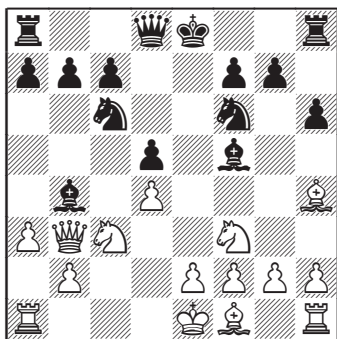
♞fa8=) 14.hxg3 ♜b8 15.♞xa7 ♜a8 16.♞b7

♜b8 17.♞a7= (17.♞a6 ♞c7 18.♞a4 c5 It's

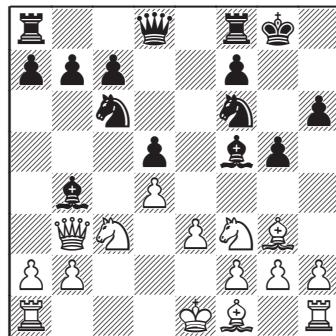
true that White is two pawns up, but in practice his task is not easy. For example:

19.♙e2 ♜b2 20.♞d1 ♜fb8 21.0-0 c4∞)

8...♜c6 9.a3!±N



This move hasn't been played yet but I believe it is the most logical. Black is forced to trade the bishop and then will to deal with the weakness on b7. Black needs to be precise. 9.e3 with the idea of ♙xf6 then ♞xd5 on ...♞xf6. 9...g5 10.♙g3 0-0



It's funny to realise than we can have exactly the same position with the ♞b3 on a4. (10...♜e4 looks logical but after 11.♜d2! ♜xd2 12.♙xd2!± the position is very complicated, and White wants to play h4. It's not easy to tell who is better, but in the game Lalith,B (2579)-Karavade,E (2409) Pune 2016 White succeeded in gaining the upper hand.) 11.♙e2

a) 11.♙b5N also makes sense. 11...♜e4! 12.0-0

a1) 12.♙xc6 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 bxc6 14.♞a4 (14.♞b7 ♜b8 (14...♞e8!?∞ is an engine suggestion. Black wants to play ...f6 then ...h5. It looks very interesting and also promising.) 15.♞xa7 (15.♞xc6 ♜b6 16.♞xc7 (16.♞a4 a6± followed by ...h5.) 16...♞a8!? followed by ...♜c8 and Black has very good compensation for the pawn. 17.0-0 ♜c8 18.♞e7 ♞b7 19.♞xb7 ♜xb7∞ The c3-pawn will fall and ...♜b2 is coming.) 15...f6!? with the idea of ...♞f7 to protect c7. 16.0-0 (16.♞xc7 ♞xc7 17.♙xc7 ♜b7 18.♙g3 ♜a8±) 16...♞f7 17.♞a3 h5 h4 is a threat. 18.h4 (18.h3 ♞c8!± with the idea of ♙xh3 gives a big advantage to Black.) 18...g4 19.♜h2 ♞g7!?

with good compensation for the pawn.)
 14...h5 15.♖xc6 ♖c8 16.h4 g4 17.♙f4! A very interesting idea. White is giving up his knight to open the g-file against Black's king. (17.♘d2 ♘xc3 18.fxg3 ♖d6! 19.♖xd6 cxd6 20.♖c1 ♙d3+ and Black is better even though he is a pawn down.)
 17...gxf3 18.gxf3 ♘f6 19.♙e5 ♙e6 20.0-0 ♗h7 21.♗dg1 ♖e7 22.♖a6! To prevent ♖a3+. 22...♖b8 This position is really crazy. Let's see how the game might continue: 23.♖d3+ (23.♖g5 ♖g8 24.♗hg1 ♖g6 25.♖l g3 ♖xg5 26.♖xg5 ♖g8 27.♙xf6 ♖xf6 28.♖xh5+ ♗g6 29.♖g5+ ♗h7 30.♖h5+=) 23...♘e4! The only move, but it's enough. 24.fxex4 ♖a3+ 25.♘d1 ♖xa2 26.exd5+ f5 27.dxe6 ♖b1+ 28.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 29.♘e2 ♖c2+= with a draw by perpetual.

a2) 12.♘d2 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♘xd2 14.♗xd2 ♘a5 15.♖b4 b6 16.h4 g4∞ with a very balanced position.

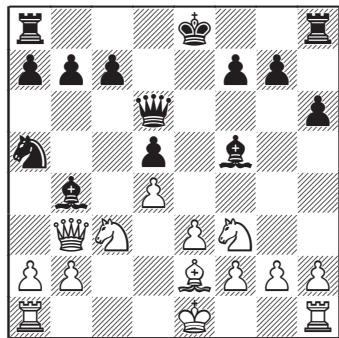
12...♙xc3! 13.bxc3 (13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.bxc3 f6 15.c4 h5 and White will have problem meeting the threat of ...h4. 16.cxd5! ♖b8!∞ then g4. Probably White has to give up a piece but with some compensation.) 13...♘a5 14.♖b2 c6 15.♙e2 b5= with a balanced position.

b) 11.♘d2?!N doesn't work this time. 11...♖e7! Threatening ...♘d4. 12.♙e2 ♖fe8 13.0-0 ♘d4!+ and Black wins a pawn.

11...♘e4 12.0-0 (12.a3?! was played in the game Saduakassova,D (2409) - Gaboyan,S (2107) Khanty-Mansiysk 2015, but it's dubious because after 12...♙xc3+!N 13.bxc3 ♘a5+ Black is better and will continue with ...b6 and

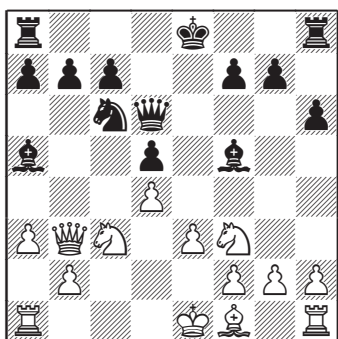
...c5.) 12...♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♘a5 14.♖b4 (14.♖b2N 14...c6 with the idea of playing ...b5. 15.♘d2 (15.a4 f6∞ followed by ...h5 and now ♘d2 doesn't work.) 15...♘xd2 16.♖xd2 b5= with a decent position. Black will play ...♘c4 next and can also continue with ...♖e8, ...♖d7 etc.) 14...b6 15.♖ad1N with the idea of trading the ♘e4 with ♘d2 was better. (15.♖ac1 h5∞; 15.c4?! c5! 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.♖a3 ♘xc4 18.♙xc4 dxc4 and Black was better in the game Santiago,Y (2456)- Villanueva,M (2423) Villa Martelli 2016) 15...♖c8 Black wants to play ...c5. 16.♘d2 (16.♙a6 c5= with equality.) 16...c5!? 17.dxc5 ♘xc3 (17...bxc5 18.♖a3 ♘xc3 19.fxg3!? ♙c2 20.♖de1 c4= is also perfectly decent for Black, who wants to bring the knight into play via c6.) 18.hxc3 ♖xc5= with an unclear position.

9.♙xf6 The move played by Khalifman. 9...♖xf6 10.e3 (10.♖xd5? ♖d8+ with a big advantage for Black as d4 is hanging.) 10...♖d6 Protecting the d5 pawn. 11.a3 (11.♙e2N 11...♘a5!



Quite an interesting approach. Black wants to take on c3 but then avoid c4.

They can also play after for c5. 12.♖a4+ (12.♖d1 ♕xc3+ 13.bxc3 0-0 14.0-0 b6∞) 12...c6 13.0-0 ♕xc3 (13...0-0 would allow a nice tactic for White. 14.♗d5!? cxd5 15.a3 and the bishop is trapped on b4. 15...♗c6 16.axb4 ♗xb4 17.♖fc1± with a little edge.) 14.bxc3 b6 15.♗d2 (15.♗e5 0-0 16.♖ac1 c5= with equality. 15.♖b4 ♖d8 16.♗d2 0-0 17.♖xd6 ♖xd6 18.♗b3 ♗c4= with a good game.) 15...0-0 16.c4 ♗xc4 17.♗xc4 dxc4 18.♖xc4 ♖fc8= followed by ...c5. The position is equal.) 11...♕a5!±N



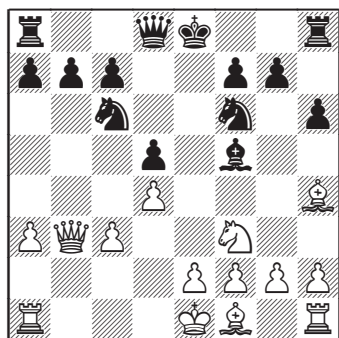
My improvement. The b7-pawn is taboo and Black wants to castle, play ...♗e7 then ...c6. (11...♕xc3+ 12.♖xc3 (12.bxc3 0-0 13.♕e2 b6∞ with good prospects for Black, who wants to play ...♗a5, ...♖fc8 and finally ...c5.) 12...♗e7 13.♕e2 0-0 14.0-0 c6 15.b4 So far we have been following the game Khalifman,A (2624)-Bluebaum,M (2605) Moscow 2016, but here slightly more logical was 15...a6N 16.a4 ♗g6 17.♖fc1 ♕g4∞ with a solid position. I still believe Black should be able to hold but it is more pleasant for White to play.) 12.♕e2

a) 12.♖xb7? simply loses after 12...♖b8 13.♖a6 ♖xb2-+;

b) 12.♕b5 0-0 13.0-0 (13.♕xc6?! bxc6!? 14.0-0 ♖fb8±) 13...♗e7! followed by ...c6 and ...♕c7. 14.♗a4 c6 15.♕d3 ♕c7=;

12...0-0 13.0-0 ♗e7! This position is critical but I believe Black is fine. 14.♖fc1 (14.♖xb7 leads only to equality. 14...♖fb8 15.♖a6 ♖xa6 16.♕xa6 ♖b6 17.b4 ♖xa6 18.bxa5 ♖xa5=; 14.♖ac1 a6 15.♗a4 c6= with an equal position. 14.♗e5 c5!∞) 14...a6! followed by ...c6. I think the position is balanced. (14...c6? would have been a mistake because now 15.♖xb7!± is possible.)

9...♕xc3+ 10.bxc3



This is the critical position. It took me time to more-or-less understand what is going on here. White wants to take on f6 to force ...gxf6 and then to play for a long-term advantage. 10.♖xc3?! leaves Black with the initiative. 10...g5 11.♕g3 ♗e4 12.♖b3 ♗a5! 13.♖b4 (13.♖a4+ c6 14.e3 0-0 15.♕e2 h5±; 13.♖d1?! h5±) 13...b6 14.e3 ♕d7!? threatening ...c5. 15.♕b5! c6 16.♕a4 ♗c4± and Black is better.

10...g5!

I believe this move and the next one are very important. 10...♖d6 is one of the many moves I tried. 11.♙xf6! of course. (11.c4 dxc4 12.♗xc4 0-0∞; 11.e3 ♘e4∞) 11...gxf6 12.e3 0-0-0 13.♙e2 h5 14.♘h4!? ♙e4 15.f3 ♙h7 16.♙f2± and I believe White is better.

10...♘a5 11.♗b4 b6 12.♘d2! ♖d7 13.e3± and I don't see how to continue.

10...♖d7 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.e3 0-0-0 13.♘d2 h5 14.h4± with a more pleasant position for White.

10...0-0!? This is the move I wanted to play at first but it's not so simple. 11.♙xf6! (11.e3 ♘a5 12.♗a4 b6 13.♘d2 ♖d6∞ with a complicated game.) 11...♗xf6! 12.♖xd5 ♖ad8 13.♗b5 ♙e4 This is a critical position. Even the engine is not sure if there is enough compensation. It looks very interesting to play, but I'm not 100% sure it's enough if I keep an objective point of view. 14.♘d2 (14.e3 ♙xf3 (14...♗g6!?∞) 15.gxf3 ♖xf3 16.♖g1 ♘e7∞) 14...♙d5 15.f3!

a) 15.e4 ♘xd4! A nice simplification. 16.cxd4 ♙xe4 17.♘xe4 (17.♗e5 ♖g6 18.♗g3 ♖f6 19.♗e5=) 17...♗xd4 18.♗b1! ♖fe8! 19.♙e2 ♖xe4 20.♖a2 ♖de8 21.♖c2 ♖d5= and White is totally stuck. As so often, the engine gives 0.00.

b) 15.e3 ♖fe8 16.♙c4 ♙xg2 (16...♘xd4 17.cxd4 ♖xd4 18.0-0 ♖xd2 19.♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♙xc4 21.♗b1∞) 17.♖g1 ♙h3 18.♖g3 ♙e6∞ with an unclear position.

15...♗g5 (15...♖fe8 16.e4±) 16.♖d3 f5 17.e3± and It looks like White's position is solid enough.

11.♙g3 0-0!

11...b6 12.♗a4 ♙d7 (12...♖d7 13.e3±) 13.e3 ♘a5 14.♖d1 ♘e4 15.♙d3 ♖e7 16.♘e5±;

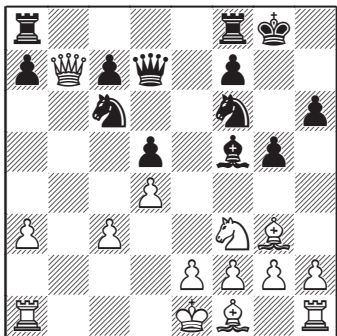
11...♖b8 12.e3 0-0 13.♘d2 ♖e8 14.♙e2 ♘a5 15.♗a4 b6 16.h4 g4 17.♖d1±;

11...♘a5 is a bit unpleasant for Black after 12.♗b4! b6 13.♘d2 because it isn't easy to find a way to castle. 13...♘h5 14.e3 ♘xg3 15.hxg3 ♖f6 16.♙e2 ♖c8 17.♘b3 ♘xb3 18.♗xb3 c6 19.g4 ♙g6 20.♖b4 ♖c7 21.a4±

12.♗xb7

This is of course the critical move, but now Black has two decent alternatives: 12.e3 let's Black do what he wants: 12...♘a5 13.♗b4 (13.♖d1 ♘e4 14.♙d3 f6∞ with a good game.) 13...b6 14.♘d2 ♖e8 (14...♘h5 is also possible, to take the black-squared bishop. 15.♙e2 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♖f6 17.0-0 ♖fc8=) 15.♙e2 ♖c8 16.0-0 c5= with a balanced position.

12...♖d7!?



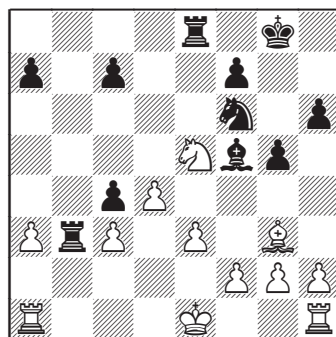
This is the other idea; Black protects the c6 and is ready to play ...d4 and to enter the b-file. $12...\text{a5}!$? is one of the two options. Black's knight is aiming to go to c4. $13.\text{b4}$ ($13.\text{xc7 xc7 14.dxc7 b3 15.a2 fxc8 16.b2! d1! \mp$ A nice move and Black will play ...d4 next. $13.\text{a6 b3 14.d1 e8 \mp}$ with a terrific initiative.) $13...\text{d4 14.e3 b8 15.a4 e8!}$ Not an easy move to find. ($15...\text{d6}$ is also suggested by the engine but I have my doubts that it can be enough. $16.a6 b2 17.0-0 dfe4 18.a5 c5 19.xd8 xd8 20.dxc5 dxc5 21.d4 g6 22.dxd6 xd6 23.e2$ Slowly but surely White should be able to stabilize with an extra pawn. $23...\text{b3 24.dxb3 fxb3 25.fxc1 \pm 16.xe8 fxe8 17.dxc4}$

a) $17.\text{d5}?$ This logical move is a mistake after the strong $17...\text{dxa3! \mp 18.fxa3!}$. Taking the knight is also a mistake. $18...\text{b1+ 19.d2 ecb8 20.a2 d4 21.f3 h5!-+}$;

b) $17.\text{xc7 b2 18.dxc4 (18.d5 dxa3 19.fxa3 (19.d3? fxe5! 20.dxe5 d3 21.exf6 e2+! 22.d1 d4-+ and the White king is in a mating net.) 19...b1+}$

$20.d2 b2+ 21.c1 b1+ 22.d2 b2+=)$ $18...\text{dxc4}$ Black wants to play ...d3 . $19.0-0 (19.d5 d3! \text{ Still. } 20.dxd3 cxd3 \text{ This pawn will prove to be a problem for White. } 21.0-0 c8 (21...\text{d4 is also totally fine. } 22.fad1 d2 23.c4 d3 24.a5 dxd1 25.fxd1 c2 26.f1 fxc4 27.fxd2 f5=) 22.a5 (22.e5 d5 23.e4 dxc3 24.d5 c2 \mp) 22...\text{d4 23.fad1 d2 24.b4 c2 25.g4 f6\infty) 19...d3 20.fad1 c8 21.g3 d5=}$ followed by b3 . Even though he is a pawn down, Black's position is fine.

$17...\text{dxc4 18.d5 (18.0-0 d5 \mp)}$
 $18...\text{b3}$ This is a critical position but I believe Black is fine in every variation.



$19.\text{c1}$

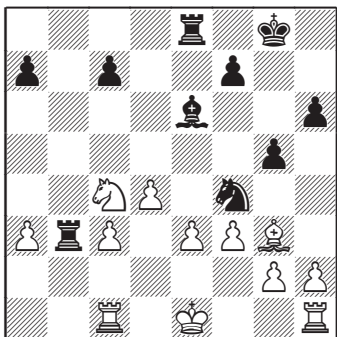
a) $19.0-0 d3 20.dxd3 (20.fxc1 d4 \mp; 20.fad1 fxc3 21.fac1 d5 22.dxd3 xd3 23.fxd3 cxd3 24.f1 b8 25.f1 b2=)$ $20...\text{cxd3 21.dxc7 c8 22.a5 d4 23.a4 b2 \mp}$;

b) $19.f3 d3 20.e4 fxc3 21.dxd3 (21.fad1 c2 22.fad2 (22.dxd3 d4! \text{ A nice tactical move. } 23.fxe4 fxe4+ 24.f1 cxd3 25.h4! g4 26.f1 fxd4 27.fh2 c5 \infty)$

can be super-dangerous for White.)

22...♖c1+ 23.♗d1 ♖xc2=) 21...♖xd3 22.0-0
♖xd4 23.♖ac1 (23.♖fd1 c5 24.♗f2 ♖xd1+
25.♖xd1 ♖h5 26.♗xc5 ♖f4=) 23...♖h5
The knight will have a good spot on f4.
24.♗f2 ♖d3 25.♖xc4 ♖xa3 26.♖xc7 a5=;

19...♗e6 20.f3 ♖d5 21.♖xc4 ♖f4!?

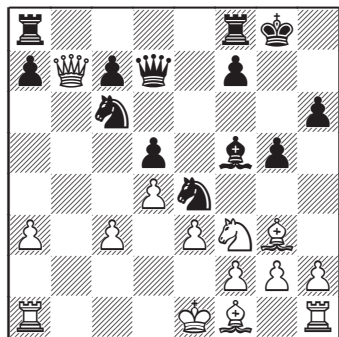


This is a nice idea. (21...♖xc3 22.♖d2
♗xc4 23.♖xc3 ♖b2+ 24.♖c1 (24.♖c2
♖xc2+ 25.♖xc2 ♖xe3=) 24...♖eb8! 25.♖e1
♗f1!= A fine move and the position is
equal.) 22.♖d2 (22.♖e5 ♖xg2+ 23.♖d2
♖b2+ 24.♖c2 ♖xc2+ 25.♖xc2 ♖xe3+
26.♖d3 ♖f5∞) 22...♖d3+ 23.♖e2 ♖xc1+
24.♖xc1 ♖xa3 25.♗xc7 ♖c8 26.♗e5 ♖axc3
27.♖xc3 ♖xc3 28.d5 ♖c5 29.♖e4 ♖xd5!
30.♖f6+ ♖f8 31.♖xd5 ♗xd5= and the
resulting endgame is a draw.

13.♞xc7

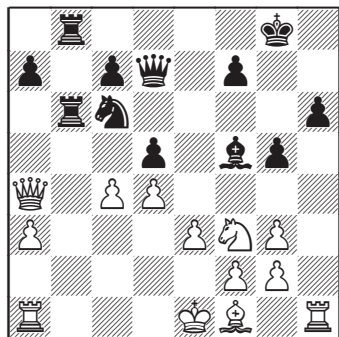
Taking the second pawn is of course
critical. 13.e3 is the natural move.

13...♖e4!



Attacking the c3 pawn. This move is not
easy to play because we allow 14.♗b5

a) 14.c4 ♖xg3 15.hxg3 ♖fb8 16.♞a6
♖b6 17.♞a4 ♖ab8



with a very interesting position to play.
Let's see some possible continuations:
18.♖xh6

a1) 18.♗e2 dxc4 19.♖c1 (19.♞xc4?
♖a5!± followed by ♖b1.) 19...♖xd4!?
20.♞xd7 ♖xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♗xd7 22.♗xc4
♖d6= with an equal position.

a2) 18.♖d1?! ♖b2±;

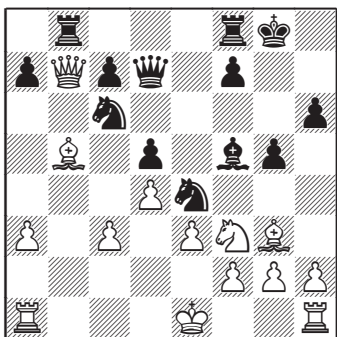
a3) 18.cxd5 ♖b1+ 19.♖xb1 ♖xb1+
20.♖d2 ♖b2+ 21.♖e1 ♞xd5 22.♗c4

♖a5+ 23.♖xa5 ♜xa5+;

18...♞b1+ 19.♞xb1 ♞xb1+ 20.♔d2
♞b2+ 21.♔c1 ♞b1+= with perpetual.

b) 14.♞xc7 ♞xc7 15.♙xc7 ♞fc8 16.♙e5
(16.♙g3 is probably the best but it
transposes into 13.♞xc7.) 16...f6 17.♙a6
fxe5 18.♙xc8 ♞xc8 19.♜xe5 ♜xe5
20.dxe5 ♜c5!? 21.0-0 ♔f7∞;

14...♞ab8!



This move leads to some simplifications
and Black will be able to win back the
pawn on c3. 15.♞xc6 (15.♙xc6 ♞xb7
16.♙xd7 ♙xd7 17.♜e5 ♙a4= and Black
will again get back the c3-pawn.)

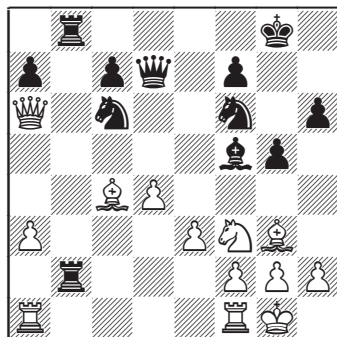
15...♞xb5 16.♞xd7 (16.♜e5 doesn't
change much. 16...♞xc6 17.♜xc6 ♞e8
18.♙xc7 ♞e6 19.♜e5 ♜xc3∞) 16...♙xd7
17.♜e5 ♙e6 18.♜c6 (18.♞c1 ♜xc3
19.♜d3 ♞b3 20.♜c5 ♞xa3=; 18.0-0 ♜xc3
19.♔h1 c5= with equality.) 18...♞b2 19.0-0
♜xc3 20.♙xc7 ♞c2! Threatening
...♜e2+. 21.♔h1 ♜e4 22.♞ac1 ♜xf2+
23.♔g1 ♞xc1 24.♞xc1 ♜e4 25.♜xa7 ♞a8
26.♜b5 ♙d7 27.♜c3 ♞xa3 28.♜xd5 ♙e6
29.♜b6 ♞d3= with a balanced position.

13.♜e5? ♜xe5 14.♙xe5 ♜g4!+ with a
very strong initiative.

13.♞b2? The queen can't escape.
13...♞ab8 14.♞c1 ♜a5+ with a decisive
advantage.

13.♞a6? ♞fb8+;

13.c4? dxc4! 14.e3 ♞ab8! 15.♞a6
(15.♞xc7 ♞d5!+ and the ♞c7 is
trapped.) 15...♞b2 16.♙xc4 (16.♞xc4
♞fb8+ when the ♔e1 is in big trouble!)
16...♞fb8+ Threatening ...♞b1 and if 17.0-0?
!?



Black traps the queen with the clever:
17...♞b6! 18.♞a4 ♙c2+—

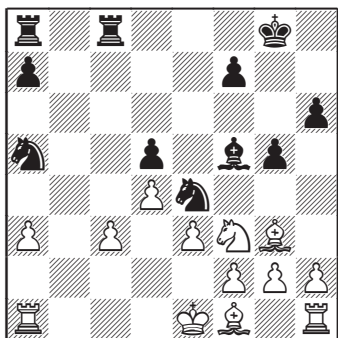
13...♞xc7 14.♙xc7 ♞fc8

In exchange for the pawn Black has a
very big advantage in development.

15.♙d6

15.♙g3 ♜e4 16.e3 (16.♜d2 ♜xc3
(16...♜xd2 17.♔xd2 ♜a5 also offers good
compensation. 18.♔e1! ♞xc3 19.f3! ♜b3
20.♞a2 ♜xd4=) 17.e3 ♜xd4! 18.exd4
♞e8+ 19.♙e5 f6 20.♜f3 ♞ab8!? 21.♙a6

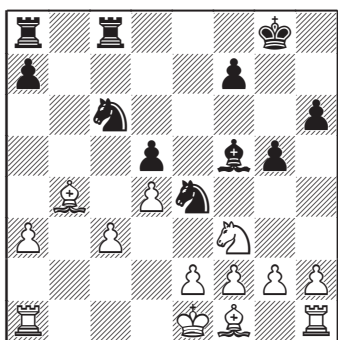
♖b6 22.♖c1! fxe5 23.♗xe5 ♖b1∞
followed by ...♗xa3.) 16...♗a5



I quite like this position: the c3-pawn is already falling. 17.♗a6! ♖c6!? 18.♗b5 ♖xc3 19.0-0 a6 20.♗a4 (20.♗e2 ♖b3 21.♖ad1 ♗g7) 20...f6 with full compensation for the pawn.

15.♗e5 ♖e4∞

15...♖e4 16.♗b4



Even here Black has a choice:

16...a5

16...♗xb4!? is a decent alternative.
17.cxb4 (17.axb4 ♗xc3 18.e3 (18.♗e5 f6 19.♗d3 ♗xd3 20.exd3 ♗b5) 18...♗b1!

19.♗d1 ♖c7) 17...♖c2 18.♗e5 ♖ac8 19.♗d3 ♖8c3 20.f3 ♗d6 21.♗c5 h5. Despite being two pawns down, I believe Black has enough compensation.

17.♗c5 ♗xc3 18.e3 ♖cb8

For only one pawn, Black has a very dynamic position. I believe it's enough to assure equality. Let's see some illustrative lines:

19.♖c1

19.♗d2 ♖b2= and it's difficult to find any move for White.

19.♖g1 ♖b2 20.g4 ♗g6 21.♗e5! ♗xe5 22.dxe5 ♖ab8 23.♗d4 ♖b1+ 24.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 25.♗d2 ♗b5 26.♗c5 ♖b2+ 27.♗e1 ♖c2 28.♗e7 ♖c1+ 29.♗e2 d4 30.exd4 ♗xd4+ 31.♗e3 ♗b5= with equality.

19.♗e5 ♗xe5 20.dxe5 ♖b1+!? 21.♖xb1 ♗xb1 22.f3 ♖c8 23.♗e7 ♖c1+ 24.♗f2 ♗c3= Now ...♗d1 is coming and it will probably end in some perpetual.

19...♗a2 20.♖d1 ♗c3 21.♖c1 ♗a2= and a draw is the normal outcome.

CONCLUSION

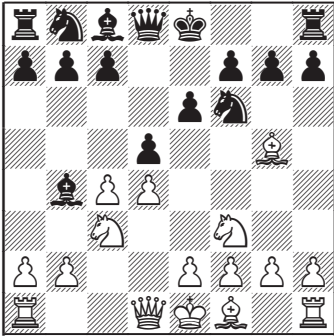
In this chapter we analyzed quite a new line with 7...♗f5. I believe White has to try for some active play with ♖b3 or ♖a4. If not, Black will equalize easily with ...♗bd7 and ...c6, then ...♗e7. Black has to remember these ideas with ...♗a5 and be ready to give up the b7-pawn to complete his development. It leads to unclear positions where I believe Black has sufficient compensation.

PART 4.

5.♘g5 h6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♙g5

7.♙b3 and 7.♙a4 which have already been covered in parts 1 and 2.



In this part we will focus on this move, which is one of the most popular choices for White.

5...h6

As I have already said, I always like the idea of playing ...h7-h6 immediately after ♘g5, and this position is no exception. White now has two choices:

6.♙xf6

6.♙h4 will be analyzed in Chapter 11. I suggest playing 6...dxc4!? which leads to a good version of the Vienna Variation because 7.e4 is no longer an option.

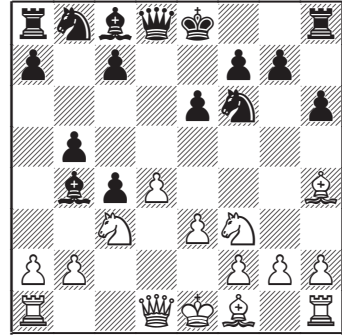
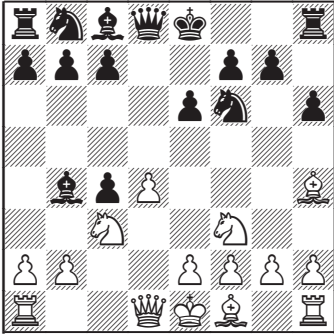
6...♙xf6

This move will be analyzed in Chapter 12. We will see all of White's moves except

Chapter 11.

5.♘g5 h6 — 6.♙h4 dxc4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♘g5 h6 6.♙h4 dxc4!



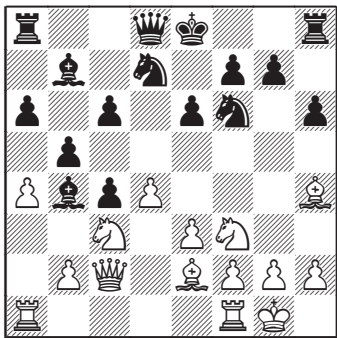
I believe it's best to accept the challenge. It reminds one of the so-called Vienna Variation, which is reached without the inclusion of ...h7-h6 and ♙h4, but here the big difference is that now e4, the normal move in the Vienna line, is not possible because of ...g7-g5, and the e4-pawn will be lost. 6...g5 7.♘g3 ♘e4 is the other way to play. It's playable, and the specialist of the Ragozin, Yu Yangyi, used it in 2016 — but somehow I've never felt secure in this line. I remember I was impressed by White's victory in the game Dubov,D (2644) -Brkic,A (2584) Gjakova 2016.

7.♙a4+

7.e3 is the most common move, but it has lost its popularity in recent years. 7...b5!

Of course Black is ready to hold on to the c4-pawn for as long as he can. White has a choice now, but in general Black's moves are quite easy to find and even if White has some compensation, the arising positions are interesting to play and Black's chances are not worse. 8.a4 is the best because it forces us to play ...c6.

a) 8.♙e2 ♘bd7 9.0-0 a6 10.a4 Kolev,A-Georgiev,V (2518) Sunny Beach 2006, and here I prefer 10...♙b7! Black waits for axb5 before taking on c3. 11.♙c2 (11.axb5 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 axb5 13.♙d2 (13.♙b1 ♗xa1 14.♙xa1 0-0 15.♙b2 ♙c6 16.♗a1 ♙b8) 13...0-0 and Black is better.) 11...c6



This is a critical position. White has tried many moves but Black's score is good. 12.b3

a1) 12.♖fd1 ♕e7! To prevent ♖e5. 13.e4 (13.♘d2 0-0 14.♙f3 ♖c8♞) 13...0-0;

a2) 12.e4 ♖b6 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♗e4 0-0 15.♙g3 c5!♞ and Black was much better in the game of one of my students, Rios,C (2490) -Lemeaux,D (2315) Barcelona 2016.

a3) 12.♗e5 ♕e7! 13.♖fd1 0-0 14.♙f3 ♗xe5! 15.dxe5 ♘d5 16.♙g3 (16.♙xe7N 16...♖xe7♞) 16...♖b6♞ Kolpakov,N (2225) -Prizant, J (2480) Kimry 2010;

12...cxb3 13.♖xb3 ♕e7 14.♖fd1 0-0 15.♗e5 (15.e4 b4♞ Fabian,J (2240)-Pcola,P (2405) Slovakia 1999) 15...♗xe5 16.♙xf6!N (16.dxe5 ♗d7N 17.♙xe7 ♖xe7 18.f4 ♗b6♞) 16...♗d7 17.♙xe7 ♖xe7 18.♗e4 ♖fb8♞ White has some compensation, but it looks like Black will succeed in pushing ...e6-e5 or ...c6-c5 to open the position.

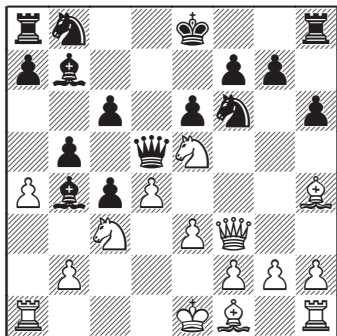
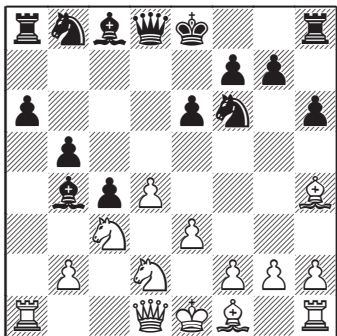
b) 8.♗d2 a6! I prefer to avoid playing ...c7-c6 for as long as I can. 9.♖f3 (9.a4

♙b7 10.axb5 axb5 (10...♙xc3!?! is also good. 11.bxc3 axb5 12.♖xa8 ♕xa8 13.♖b1 ♙c6 14.♙xf6 gxf6♞ also looks better for Black.) 11.♖xa8 ♕xa8 12.♗xb5 0-0 Black gives up a pawn but has a big lead in development and good pieces, planning ...c7-c5 next. 13.♗c3N (13.♙xc4?! ♙xg2 14.♖g1 was played in the game Rios,C (2369)-Gonzalez Vidal,Y (2520) Medellin 2013, but now Black should have played: 14...♙b7N 15.♗c3 ♗bd7 16.♗e2 c5♞ with a good advantage.) 13...c5! 14.dxc5 ♗bd7♞ and I prefer Black's position.) 9...♖a7 10.a4! ♙b7 11.♙xf6N is the best attempt, spoiling Black's structure at least. (11.♖d1 c6♞ Dietze,F (2240)-Dizdar, G (2500) Berlin West 1987 (11...♖a8!?! was also very good and it transposes to the previous line.)) 11...gxf6 12.♖h5 and here I like the dynamic (12.♖g4 c6♞) 12...c5!? 13.dxc5 ♖a5! 14.♖d1! The only move. 14...bxa4! 15.♖xa4+ ♖xa4 16.♖xa4 ♙xc5 17.♖xc4 ♗d7♞ and Black is slightly better due to the bishop pair.

c) 8.a3 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 a6!N I like this move. Black will continue with ...♙b7 and ...♗bd7. Besides, ...g7-g5 and ...♗e4 might also be coming. It's important not to play ...c7-c6 too early, and keep the light-squared bishop alive. 10.a4 ♙b7♞;

8...c6 9.♙e2

a) 9.♗d2 a6! A very rare move, but I believe it's the best. 10.axb5 cxb5!N

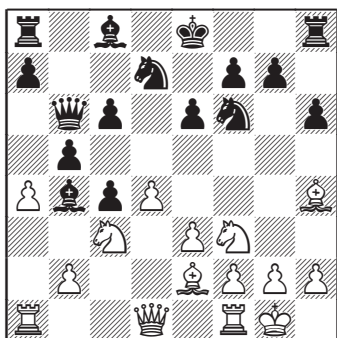


I really like this novelty. It reminds me of the new line in the Queen's Gambit Accepted with 3.e4 b5. It's important to notice that this move also exists without the inclusion of 5...h7-h6 6.♘h4. 11.♟xb5 axb5! 12.♞xa8 ♙b7 13.♙xf6 (13.♞a7 ♙b6 and White has nothing better than to give back the exchange. 13.♞a1? simply loses after 13...g5! 14.♙g3 ♟e4+ and now we can see the difference with the line without ...h7-h6, when the bishop is still on g5.) 13...gxf6 14.♞a1 e5! ♞ and Black has a very strong initiative for the exchange.

b) 9.♟e5 looks a bit premature. 9...♙b7 10.♞f3 (10.♙e2 ♟bd7 11.axb5 (11.f4 a6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♙f3 ♞c7 and 11.♟xd7 ♞xd7 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.0-0 f5 and 11...cxb5 12.♙f3 ♞b6 13.♟xd7 ♟xd7 14.0-0 0-0 and 10...♞d5!

The simplest. 11.♙e2 (11.♙xf6 ♞xf3 12.♟xf3 gxf6 Botthole, K (1767)-Motycakova, M (2135) Kazan 2013; 11.♞f4 ♙e4 and 11...♞xf3 12.♙xf3 ♟d5 13.0-0 (13.♙xd5 exd5 Abdulla, A (2233)-Dreev, A (2607) Benidorm 2007) 13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♟d7 Palomo Salado, C (2045) -Nava Baro, E (2165) Malaga 1998;

9...♟bd7 with the idea of controlling the e5-square. (9...♙b7 10.0-0 a6 is another approach.) 10.0-0 ♞b6!



An important move which brings us to the critical position of the line. In practice White has tried several ideas, but Black has a good score everywhere. 11.♞c2

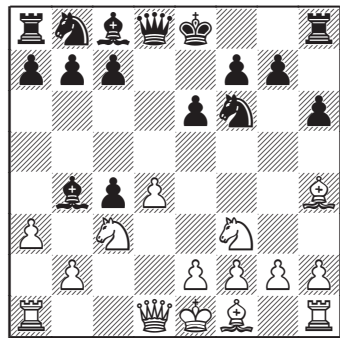
a) 11.♖d2 0-0 12.♞c2 a5!? I like the idea of advancing the pawn to a5 instead of a6, as it appears more ambitious. 13.♙f3 ♖b7 14.♞fb1 ♛ac8 15.♙g3 ♞fe8 ♞Fang,J (2319) -Ibragimov,I (2582)/ Philadelphia 2004/CBM 101 ext;

b) 11.♖a2 ♙d6!? To keep some flexibility for the knight on f6, as after 11...♙e7 it would be more complicated to jump around. 12.b3 (12.♖c3N is probably the best. 12...♙b7 13.axb5 (13.e4 ♙b4!?) 13...cxb5 14.b3 0-0! 15.bxc4 bxc4 16.♞c2 (16.♙xc4 ♞c7 ♞White is in trouble on the c-file, and ...♙xf3 followed by ...♙xh2 is coming.) 16...♞fc8 ♞ with a plus.) 12...cxb3 13.♞xb3 Hanko,P (2178)-Ondrus,M (2176) Slovakia 2009 13...b4! ♞ and I don't see the where White's compensation is?

c) 11.♖e5 0-0 The two knights protect each other perfectly. 12.♙f3 ♖d5! ♞;

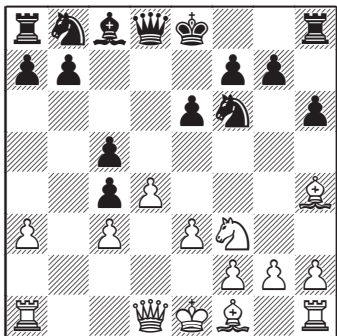
11...0-0 12.♞fd1 (12.b3 cxb3 13.♞xb3 a5 ♞ followed by ...♙a6. 12.e4 a6 13.♞fd1 ♙b7 ♞ and I don't see how White should continue: Nikologorskiy,K (2398)-Aleksandrov,A (2637) Izhevsk 2013.) 12...a5 13.h3 (13.♖e5 ♖xe5! ♞N 14.dxe5 ♖d7 15.♞e4 ♛a7 ♞) 13...♛a7 (13...♖d5! ♞ also looks very good.) 14.♙g3 ♙e7 15.e4 ♙b7 16.♖d2 ♛c8 17.♙f3 ♛aa8 18.♖f1 b4 19.♖e2 c5 20.d5 c3! ♞ and Black won a fine correspondence game in Khudoliy,K (2367)-Koslowski,V (2264) LSS email 2009.

7.a3



This move is not often seen, but it's quite interesting. It has been used by both Ivan Sokolov and Hou Yifan. 7...♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 c5!? Black reacts directly in the centre, planning to continue with ...♞a5. (8...b5 is also possible, but it can be a bit dangerous. 9.a4 (9.e4 g5 10.♖xg5 hxg5 11.♙xg5 was played in the game Quinteros,M (2525)-Pachman,L (2410) Baden-Baden 1985, and here Black missed a nice way to continue: 11...c5!N 12.♞f3 ♖bd7 13.e5 ♞c7! 14.exf6 (14.♞xa8? ♖d5-+ and the ♞a8 is trapped. ...♖7b6 is coming.) 14...♙b7 followed by ...0-0-0. 15.♞e3 (15.♞g3 ♞a5 ♞) 15...0-0-0 ♞ and I prefer Black.) 9...c6 here after both 10.♞b1N 10...a6 11.e3 ♖bd7 12.♙e2 ♛a7! ♞ 13.0-0 ♙b7 14.♖e5 ♞ or 10.♞c2 ♖bd7 11.e4 ♞b6 12.♙e2 a6 13.0-0 ♞ White has decent compensation for the pawn. It's a bit unpleasant to play without the dark-squared bishop.) 9.♙xf6

a) 9.e3N This looks the most challenging to me.

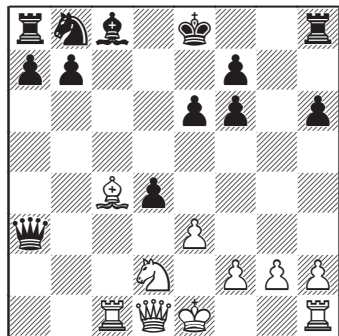


9...♕a5! Now the c3-pawn is hanging and the knight on f6 is unpinned. White has a choice: 10.♙xc6

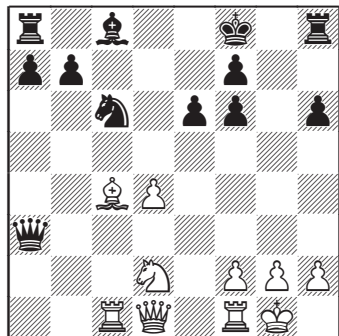
a1) 10.♙xc6 ♖xc3+ 11.♜d2 ♜e4 12.dxc5 (12.♞c1 ♖xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♜xd2 14.♞xd2 cxd4 (14...♙d7 15.dxc5 ♙c6 followed by ...♜d7 with equality.) 15.♙b5+! ♜d7 16.♞c7 dxe3+ 17.fxe3 g5 18.♙g3 a6 19.♙d3 e5= and White has some compensation but no more.) 12...♜d7 13.♞c1 ♖a5 14.f3 (14.c6 ♜e5!?) ∞ I like Black's position, who simply wants to play ...♜xc6 and if 15.cxb7? ♙xb7 Black is close to winning. 16.f3! ♙d5!-+) 14...♜exc5 15.0-0 0-0 16.♜b3 ♜xb3 17.♖xb3 ♜b6 18.♙b5 ♙d7 19.♙xd7 ♜xd7 20.♖xb7 ♜b6= with a balanced position.

a2) 10.♜d2 ♖xc3 and it will transpose to 10.♙xc6 or 10.♙xf6, as there is nothing better for White.

10...♖xc3+ 11.♜d2 gxf6 12.♙xc4 cxd4 13.♞c1! ♖xa3



The queen sweeps away everything on her travels! 14.0-0 (14.♙b5+ ♜c6! 15.0-0 (15.♙xc6? looks strong but in fact it is a mistake. 15...bxc6 16.♙xc6+ ♜e7 17.♙xa8 dxe3 18.fxe3 ♖xe3+ 19.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 20.♜xe2 ♙a6+ followed by ...♙xa8 and Black is winning.) 15...♙d7 followed by ...a7-a6 and ...♖e7. I don't see why White should have enough compensation.) 14...♜c6 15.exd4 ♜f8!

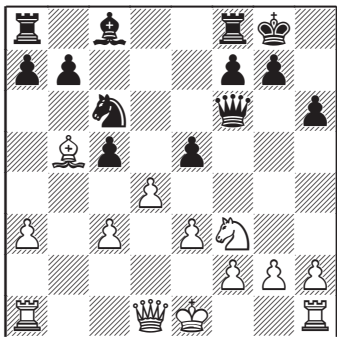


White wanted to play d5 and open the centre, so it's good to find a safe place for the king. 16.d5 (16.♜e4?! f5; 16.♞e1 ♙g8∞ with an unclear position.) 16...♜e5 17.dxe6 (17.♜e4 ♜xc4 18.♞xc4 exd5 19.♜xf6!? (19.♙a4 ♖e7 20.♜g3 I pushed

the analysis a bit more in this position and as usual the engine found a way to make a nice draw. 20...♔d7 One of many possible moves. 21.♖d4 ♖e8 22.♗d2 h5 23.♙xd5 ♕c6 24.♙xh5 ♙xh5 25.♜xh5 ♖e5 26.♗h6+ ♔e7 27.♜xf6! ♗xf6 28.♙e1+ ♔d7 29.♖d1+! (29.♗xf6?? The queen is untouchable due to 29...♙xe1#) 29...♔e7 30.♙e1+ ♔d7= with a draw by repetition.) 19...dxc4 20.♗d8+ ♔g7 21.♜h5+ ♔h7 22.♜f6+= with a draw by perpetual check.) ;

b) 9.♗a4+N has never been played. 9...♔d7 10.♗xc4 cxd4 11.♕xf6 (11.cxd4 ♗a5+! 12.♜d2 g5! 13.♕g3 ♜a6+ with a strong initiative as both ...♙c8 and ...♜e4 are coming.) 11...♗xf6 12.cxd4 0-0 13.e3 ♙c8 14.♗b4 ♕c6= followed by ...♜bd7 with an equal position.

9...♗xf6 10.e3 Here I like more-or-less everything: 10...♜c6 (10...0-0!?N 11.♕xc4 b6= followed by ...♕b7.) 11.♕xc4 0-0 12.♕b5 (12.0-0N was probably safer. 12...♖d8 13.♗c2 e5= with equality.) 12...e5!?N



This was perhaps even stronger. (12...♔d7 13.0-0 ♖fd8 14.a4 ♗e7 15.♗b1

♙ab8= and Black had equalized in the game Sokolov,I (2663) -Hou,Y (2603) Wijk aan Zee 2013. Eventually Black even managed to win this game.) 13.0-0 The lesser evil. (13.♕xc6?! ♗xc6 14.dxe5 ♕f5+ followed by ...♖d8. Black has a strong initiative for the pawn. 13.d5?! e4! 14.♜d2 ♜e7+ 13...exd4! 14.cxd4 ♖d8 15.♗c1 cxd4 16.♕xc6 bxc6 17.exd4 (17.♜xd4 ♕a6 18.♖d1 ♙ac8+ 17...♗d6∞ with a good game for Black.

7.♕xf6 ♗xf6 8.♗a4+ ♜c6 see 7.♗a4+ then 8.♕xf6.

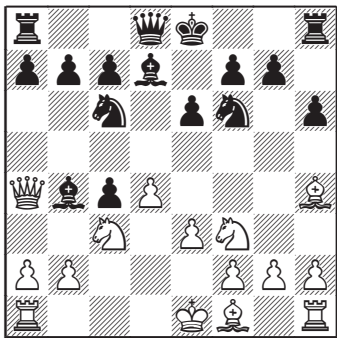
7.e4? is just very bad. 7...g5! 8.♕g3 (8.♜xg5 hxg5 9.♕xg5 ♕e7+ and Black remains a piece up.) 8...♜xe4 9.♗c2 ♜xg3 10.hxg3 g4! 11.♜e5 ♗xd4 12.♜xc4 ♜c6+ Black was already winning in the game Osoblivi,G (2277) -Bocharov,D (2613) Tula 2009.

7...♜c6

I mentioned this position in Chapter 4, where I also suggested studying 6...dxc4. Once again, the only difference now is the inclusion of 5...h7-h6 and 6.♕h4. White now has a wide choice, but only a few moves are really playable.

8.a3

8.e3 this is a reasonable move. 8...♔d7!? This looks the most logical to me, driving away the ♗a4 and readying the push ...b7-b5 to protect the c4-pawn.



9. ♖c2

a) 9.0-0-0 is a bit too optimistic.

9...♙xc3! 10.bxc3 ♜xd4 11.♙xc4 ♜xf3 12.gxf3 ♜e7 13.♙b2 (13.♙xc7N 13...♙c8→ followed by ...0-0 with a terrific attack.) 13...0-0-0 and Black was much better in the game Skembris, S (2545)-Inkiöv, V (2485) Ano Liosia 1993.

b) 9.♙xc4? is just a blunder: 9...♜xd4 10.♙d1 Carter, L-Simmons, K Mallorca 2004 (10.♙xb4?? loses the queen. 10...♜c2+→ 10...♜xf3+!N 11.♙xf3 ♙c6+ Black is winning.

9...b5 10.a3

a) 10.♙e2 a6 11.0-0 ♙e7 to prevent ♜e4. 12.a4 (12.♙ad1 ♜b4 followed by ...♜bd5.) 12...♙b8 13.axb5 axb5 14.♙xf6!N is probably White's best try. (14.♙fd1 0-0 15.e4 ♜h5!? Miladinovic, L (2191)-Cvetkovic, S (2313) Belgrade 2016) 14...♙xf6 15.♜e4 ♙e7 16.b3! ♜b4 17.♙b2 cxb3 18.♙xb3 0-0 19.♙fc1 ♜d5∞ with an unclear position. White has some compensation but not more.

b) 10.a4 a6 11.♜e5?! (11.♙e2 is probably the best, and after 11...♙e7 12.0-

0 ♙b8 it will transpose to 10.♙e2.)

11...♙a5! with a very good position as in Bechvaia, G (1704)-Lomineishvili, M (2360) Poti 2012.

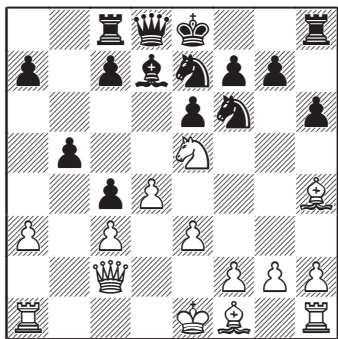
10...♙xc3+! (10...♙a5 11.♙e2 0-0 12.0-0∞ is a bit unpleasant, because ♜e4 is a strong threat. Black needs to play ...g7-g5 or to take on c3, two moves we would prefer to avoid.) 11.bxc3 here there are two valid plans: with ...g7-g5 and either...♜h5, or ...♜e7. 11...♜e7!? was played in a high level game.

a) 11...0-0 is probably the simplest. 12.♙e2 (12.♜e5 ♜e7!? 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♜xd7 ♙xd7∞ with a complicated position.) 12...a6!N 13.a4 (13.0-0 ♜e7 14.♙xf6 gxf6∞ Black's king is safe enough as ...♜g7 and ...♜g6 will be played next. 13.♜e5 ♜e7!?∞ intending ...♜f5 or ...♜fd5.) 13...♜e7 14.♜e5 ♙e8!? followed by ...♜f5, and if 15.e4 ♜g6! 16.♜xg6 fxg6 with an unclear position.

b) 11...g5 is thematic in the Ragozin, but in this particular position I don't like it much. 12.♙g3 ♜h5 13.♙e5 (13.♙e2N 13...♜xg3 14.hxg3 a6 15.a4 ♜f8 followed by ...♜g7 with a balanced position.) 13...f6!? requires some nerves. 14.♙g6+ (14.a4 a6 15.h4 (15.♙g6+ ♜e7 see 14.♙g6+ then 16.a4.) 15...♜xe5 16.dxe5 f5 17.hxg5 hxg5 18.axb5 (18.g4 ♙c6!?) 18...axb5 19.♙xa8 ♙xa8 20.♜xg5 ♙a1+ 21.♜d2 ♜e7=) 14...♜e7 15.♙xh5 fxe5 16.h4 (16.a4 a6 17.♙e2 exd4 18.exd4 ♙e8=) 16...♙g8 17.♙e2 (17.a4 a6=) 17...♙g7 18.♙g4 exd4 19.exd4 So far we have been following the game Laurusas, T (2439)-Pultinevicius, P (2238) Lithuania 2016, but now the best was to play

19...♖f6= with equality in this complex position.

12.♘e5 (12.♙xf6 gxf6 followed by ...♙c6, is good for Black. 12.a4 a6 13.♘e5 ♖c8 see 12.♘e5.) 12...♖c8!?N



My idea of an improvement. Black wants to delay castling and play ...c7-c5 quickly in order to simplify the position in the centre. (12...♘f5 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♘d7 ♖xd7 15.a4 c6 16.g3∞ with a balanced position in the game Eljanov,P (2729)-Khismatullin,D (2656) St Petersburg 2013.) 13.a4

a) 13.♘d7 ♖xd7∞ is totally fine.

b) 13.♙e2 c5! and I have problems seeing how White should continue? For example: 14.0-0 (14.dxc5 ♖xc5 15.♙xf6 (15.♘d7 ♘xd7) 15...gxf6 16.♘d7 ♖xd7 17.0-0 0-0) 14...cxd4 15.exd4 0-0 16.a4 a6 17.♙f3!? (17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.♘d7 (18.♘g4 ♔g7) 18...♖xd7) 17...♘fd5 (17...b4!? is also very interesting.) 18.axb5 axb5 19.♙xd5 (19.♙xe7 ♖xe7 20.♙xd5 exd5 21.♖a7 ♙f5!) 19...exd5 20.♖a7 looks strong, but we have an important 20...♙f5! 21.♖xf5 ♘xf5 22.♙d8 ♖fxd8! Activity is more important than the f7-

pawn. 23.♖xf7 (23.♘xf7 ♖a8!) 23...♘d6;

13...a6 14.♙e2 c5! 15.axb5 (15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.♘d7 ♖xd7 17.0-0 0-0 18.♙xf6 gxf6) 15...cxd4!? 16.exd4 axb5 17.♙f3 ♘f5 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♘d7 ♖xd7 White has some compensation, but a pawn is still a pawn.

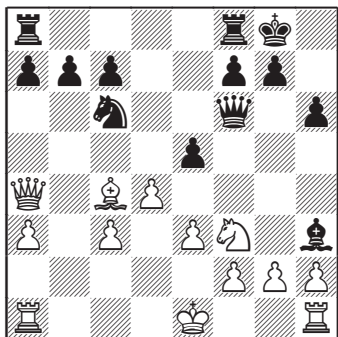
8.♙xf6 may be White's safest option. 8...♖xf6 (8...gxf6!? is actually also possible. 9.a3 (9.e3 ♙d7 10.♖c2 ♘a5!) 11.♙e2 ♖e7∞ looks interesting for Black.) 9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖d5 and we are back to our main line.) 9.a3

a) 9.♘e5? As usual, this idea is not so good in the Ragozin. 9...♙d7 10.♘xc6 (10.♘d7? ♖xd4!→ A thematic trap.) 10...a5!?N 11.♖b5 ♙xc6 12.♖xc4 ♖d8 13.e3 0-0 and thanks to the bishop pair and the lead in development Black is much better.

b) 9.e3 ♙d7!N 10.♖c2 e5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♖e4 (12.♘xe5 ♖xe5 13.♙xc4 0-0 13...♙d6 13.♘xe5 ♖xe5 14.♙xc4 (14.♖xb7 0-0 15.♙xc4 ♖ab8 16.♖d5 ♖xb2) 14...♖xe4 15.♘xe4 ♙b4+∞ with a balanced position, but Black should be able to push a bit with the pair of bishops.

9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 0-0 11.e3 (11.♖xc4 e5 12.e3 ♙e6!?N is a nice novelty. 13.♖b5 (13.d5 e4! This is the point. 14.♘d2! ♘e5 15.♖d4 (15.♖xe4?! fails after a long forced variation: 15...♘g4! 16.f3 ♖xc3! 17.♖d4 ♖xe3+! 18.♖xe3 ♘xe3 19.dxe6! ♘c2+ 20.♔f2 ♘xa1 21.exf7+ ♔h8! 22.♙e2 ♘c2 and Black is better.) 15...♙f5 with a good position.) 13...a6 14.♖b2 (14.♖xb7?! ♙d5! 15.♖b2 ♙xf3 16.gxf3

♖fe8+ with a strong attack.) 14...♗g6∞ with an unclear position where I prefer Black.) 11...e5 12.♙xc4 We are following the game Wickstrom,L (2237) -Brynell,S (2491) Sweden 2012, and here Black could have played: 12...♙h3!?



13.0-0

a) 13.gxh3? ♖xf3+;

b) 13.♜xe5 does not work so well for White. 13...♙xg2 14.♜d7! (14.♖g1 ♜xe5! 15.♖xg2 (15.dxe5? is not possible, because after 15...♖xe5 16.♖xg2 ♖xc3+-+ the ♖a1 is hanging.) 15...♜f3+ 16.♜f1 ♖fe8+ with a better position.) 14...♖f3 15.♖g1 ♖fd8 16.♜f6+! ♖xf6 17.♖xg2 ♜e7∞ with an unclear position, but I would take Black.

13...♖g6 14.♜e1 ♖fd8= with an equal position.

8.♖b5? ♖d5! (8...g5!?N 9.♙g3 ♖d5+ 9.♖xd5 exd5 10.♙xf6 gxf6+ Bilgin, R-Guner,B (2205) Turkey 1993;

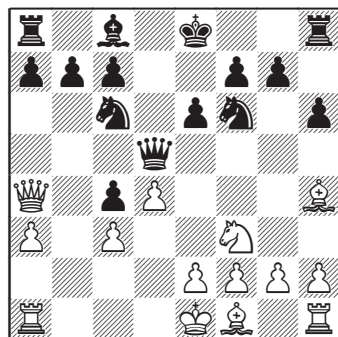
8.♜e5?? ♖xd4!+-+ and it's time to resign.

8.e4? is just bad. 8...g5 9.0-0-0 (9.♙g3 ♜xe4+-+ Barger, L (2066) -Valsecchi, A (2427) Biella 2013) 9...♙xc3 10.bxc3

♜xe4! Safer than taking the bishop.

11.♖c2 ♖d5+-+ Poetzsch, M-Bareiss, W ICCF corr 1990.

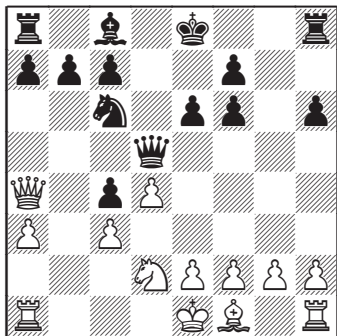
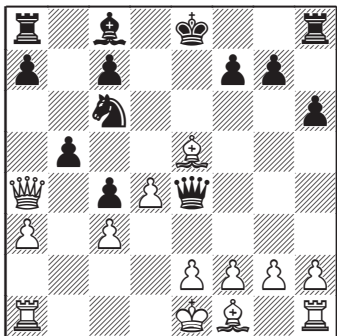
8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♖d5!



This is a good move. It's important to note that there are some games with similar ideas without the inclusion of ...h7-h6 and ♙h4.

10.♙xf6

10.♜d2 In comparison to the line with the pawn on h7 and ♙g5, this move is possible now. 10...♜e4! 11.♜xe4 (11.♖xc4N has never been played. 11...♖xc4 12.♜xc4 ♜xc3 13.♖c1 ♜d5 14.e4 ♜de7 15.♙g3 0-0 16.♙xc7 (16.♖d1?! ♖d8+) 16...♜xd4 17.f3 b6+ and Black is better. White has some compensation, but I'm not sure it's enough.) 11...♖xe4 12.♙g3 e5! A good move: Black seizes the initiative. 13.♙xe5 (13.e3 Otero Acosta, D (2510) -Gonzalez Vidal, Y (2549) Santa Clara 2014 13...♙e6!N 14.♙xc4 ♖xg2 15.0-0-0 ♙xc4 16.♖xc4 ♖e4+ with a decent advantage.) 13...b5!N



The machine's approach. (13...♔d7 is the move played in practice, and it's also sufficient for an advantage. 14.f3! ♖e3 15.♗xc4 ♜xe5 16.dxe5 c5!? 17.♞d1!N (17.e6 ♔xe6 18.♗b5+ ♔d7 19.♗d3 ♖e5+ Rivera,D-Lombardy,W San Juan 1965) 17...♔c6 18.e6! 0-0 19.exf7+ ♞xf7+ and Black has a strong initiative for the pawn.) 14.♗xb5 (14.♗d1 ♜xe5 15.dxe5 ♖xe5+ 14...♞b8 intending ...♞b1+ at some point after the queen moves. 15.♗a4 (15.♗c5 ♞b1+ 16.♞xb1 ♗xb1+ 17.♔d2 ♗b2+ 18.♔d1 ♔d7+ and Black will start to collect White's pawns. 15.f3 ♞xb5 16.fxe4 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 ♞xe5+ with a much better position.) 15...0-0 16.♔xc7 ♞b1+ 17.♞xb1 ♗xb1+ 18.♗d1 ♗b2+ with a strong initiative.

10.♔g3 ♜e4 11.♗c2 b5 12.♔xc7 ♔b7+ The material may be equal, but Black's position is clearly preferable.

10.e3?! b5 11.♗c2 ♜e4+ and Black is better.

10...gxf6 11.♔d2

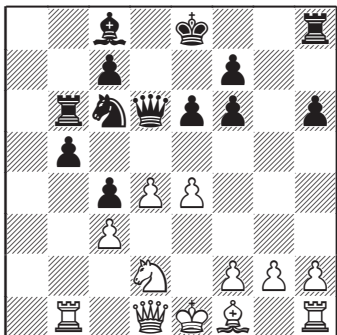
The only critical move. 11.♗c2?! is not very effective. 11...f5 12.g3 (12.a4 ♜a5 13.g3 b6 14.♔g2 ♔b7+ was much better for Black in the game Czina,P (2007) - Korpa,B (2474) Hajduboszormeny 2016.) 12...b6! 13.♔g2 ♔b7 14.0-0 0-0 15.a4 ♜a5+ and Black was better in Guimard,C-Pachman,L Mar del Plata 1962.

11.g3?! ♔d7 12.♗c2 ♜a5 13.a4 (13.e4N 13...♗c6 14.♔g2 ♗a4+ 13...♜b3 14.♞a2 ♔c6 15.♔g2 We are following the game Torres Sanchez,J (2264) -Komljenovic,D (2452) Mislata 2008, and here I suggest 15...0-0 16.0-0 e5+ with a big advantage.

11.e3?! b5 12.♗c2 ♜a5 13.e4 was played between Melnik,G (2083)-Garcia Vicente,N (2213) Mallorca 2004, and now the simplest was (13.♜d2 Szepes,T (1902)-Bogar,A (2198) Hungary 2005 13...♜b3?!N 14.♜xb3 cxb3 15.♗d3 ♔d7 16.♞b1 c5+ with a better position.) 13...♗d6+ when Black will continue with ...a7-a6 and ...c7-c5 at the right moment.

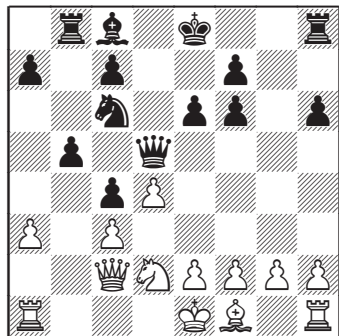
11...b5 12.♗c2

12.♔d1 has also been played once but it's rather strange. 12...♖b8 it makes sense to stick to the same plan as in the main line. 13.e4 ♕d6 14.a4 (14.♖f3 e5 15.d5 ♘e7 16.a4 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♖b1 c6 ♖ Black is better.) 14...a6 15.axb5 (15.♙e2N 15...e5 16.d5 ♘e7 17.0-0 0-0 18.♙e1 f5 ♖) 15...axb5 16.♖b1 ♖b6!



This might look a bit strange at first glance, but the point of this move will be revealed in the 17.♙e2 line. 17.♖h5?! (17.♙e2N 17...0-0 18.0-0 e5 19.d5 ♘e7 ♖ and now ♘xc4 is no longer an option for White, as the rook is protected on b6.) 17...e5! 18.♙e2 f5 ♖ and Black was soon winning in the game: Gurevich,M (2635) -Bareev,E (2675) Elista 1998.

12...♖b8!?



Quite a rare move. There are only two games in my database with it, but I believe it is the best continuation.

13.e4

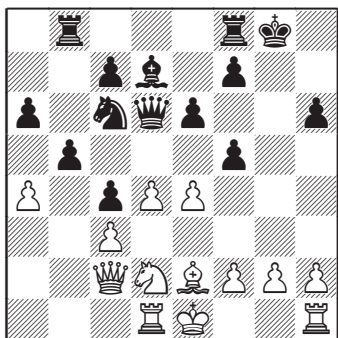
13.♘e4?! was played once but it's a mistake. 13...♙e7! White is in trouble now: 14.♘c5? (14.e3N 14...♘a5 ♖; 14.♘g3N 14...f5 ♖) 14...♘xd4! 15.cxd4 ♕xd4+ Sorroche Martin,J (2170) - Mikkelsen,N (2443) Erts La Massana 2014;

13.a4N I also checked this novelty. 13...b4! (13...a6 is of course possible, and it's quite likely that White will continue with 14.e4 transposing to the main line.) 14.e4! ♕d7 15.♙xc4 bxc3 16.♘f3 ♘xd4 17.♖xc3 c5 18.0-0 ♖g8 ♖ and Black is slightly better.

13...♕d6! 14.♙e2

14.a4!N is perhaps the best White has. 14...a6 15.♖b1 (15.♙e2 e5! 16.axb5 axb5 17.d5 ♘e7 18.0-0 0-0 ♖ and Black will play ...f6-f5 at the right moment.) 15...♙d7 (15...0-0 16.♙e2 ♙d7 is the same.) 16.♙e2 0-0 17.♖d1! ♖ Quite a smart move to prevent ...e6-e5. (17.0-0 e5 18.d5 (18.dxe5 ♘xe5 19.♖fd1 ♕e6 ♖ and once

again Black will continue with ...f6-f5.) 18...♘e7 followed by ...f6-f5.) 17...f5!



A good way to react in the centre in this particular position. (17...e5?! this time doesn't work well due to 18.dxe5 ♖xe5 19.♘xc4! bxc4 20.♗xd7± and White is better.) 18.e5 (18.♘f3 ♗f4+; 18.0-0 ♗fd8 19.♙h5 e5) 18...♗e7 19.0-0 (19.g4 ♘h8+ followed by ...♗g8.) 19...♗fd8 and I believe Black is better.

14...e5! 15.d5

15.dxe5N is possible, but after 15...♘xe5! 16.0-0 ♙e6 Black is again better.

15...♘e7 16.a4

16.h4N 16...0-0 and ...f6-f5 will follow anyway.

16.0-0N doesn't change much. 16...0-0 17.♗fe1 (17.f3 c6; 17.f4?! exf4+) 17...f5

16...a6 17.0-0

We have been following the game Mihajlov,S (2203)-Tari,A (2509) Fagernes 2015, and here the most logical was:

17...0-0!N 18.♙h5

18.♗fb1 ♙d7 followed by ...f6-f5.

18...f5 19.♗fe1 c6

With a good advantage.

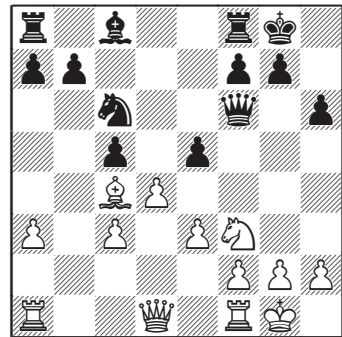
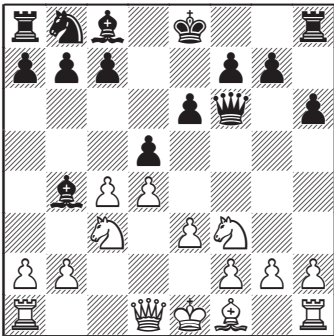
CONCLUSION

In this chapter we analyzed the consequences of 6.♙h4 dxc4. Black is ready to hold on to the pawn with ...b7-b5. Compared to the Vienna variation, White can't play e4, but has some other options at his disposal, like 7.e3. However, the main line is 7.♗a4+. 8...♗d5 is an important move to know, after which I believe Black is fine, and even better in most of the lines.

Chapter 12.

5.♔g5 h6 — 6.♔xf6 7.XXX

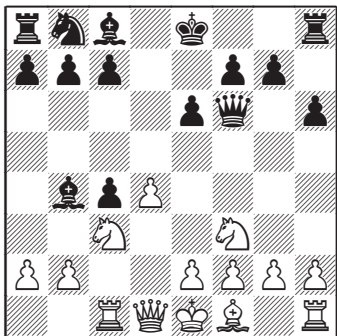
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♔g5 h6 6.♔xf6 ♚xf6 7.e3



The main move. This line is quite solid, but can get very interesting. It's important for Black to know how to deal with it because it's quite fashionable nowadays. 7.a3 is quite rare but it is of course possible. 7...♔xc3+ 8.bxc3 0-0 9.e3 c5 as usual. 10.♔e2 (10.♚b3 See Chapter 7. 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♔e2 ♔f5!? 12.0-0 c4∞ with an unclear position: Kelecevic,N (2435)-Landa,K (2515) Biel 1995. 10.♔d3 dxc4 same as 10.♔e2.) 10...dxc4 11.♔xc4 ♘c6 (11...b6!?∞ is a decent alternative.) 12.0-0 e5

This equalizes on the spot. 13.♘xe5 (13.♔b5N 13...exd4 14.cxd4 ♔g4!=; 13.d5N 13...♘a5 14.♔e2 e4 15.♘d2 ♔f5∞ with an unclear position.) 13...♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♚xe5= with full equality in Czerwonski,A (2391)-Shirov,A (2726) / Warsaw 2008.

7.♚c1?! was played against me by Ivan Sokolov. Without thinking too long I decided to transpose to the regular line, but I missed a better way to continue: 7...dxc4!



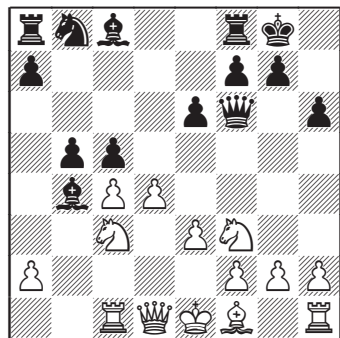
This move is best. Sometimes Black will succeed in keeping this pawn. 8. ♖a4+

a) 8.e4?! b5! It is not easy to work out how to play as White. 9. ♗e2 (9.b3?! Pinter,J (2556) -Dizdar,G (2549) Pula 1999 9...c5!?) 9...♗b7 10.0-0 (10.e5 ♖e7 11.0-0 a6+ and Black was better in the game: Bennett,J (2153)-Ter Sahakyan,S (2575) Dubai 2011.) 10...♗xc3 11.♞xc3 ♗xe4 12.b3 0-0 13.bxc4 bxc4 and only Black can be better now: 14.♘e5 (14.♗xc4 ♘d7?) 14...c5+;

b) 8.g3 b5!? (8...0-0 has never been played in this specific move order, but after 9. ♗g2 ♘c6 10.0-0 it will transpose to something we will see in Chapter 13.) 9. ♗g2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 (11.♞xc3 0-0 12.b3 ♗d8!?N (12...c5 was played in practice, but Black had no problems after: 13.bxc4 b4 14.♗d3 a5= Polak,T (2543)-Swiercz,D (2585) Czechia 2011) 13.bxc4 b4 14.♗d3 (14.♞c1 c5?) 14...♘d7∞ with an unclear position, where Black's prospects are at least not worse.) 11...♘d7 12.a4 a6 13.♞b1 ♗c6 (13...c6!?N 14.♘d2 ♞b8∞) 14.♞c2 ♞b8 15.♞fe1 ♗a8 16.axb5 (16.e4 0-0?) 16...axb5 17.♘e5 We are

following the game Van der Sterren,P (2535)-Sosonko,G (2530) Ter Apel 1992, but here Black could have gained an advantage with: 17...♗xg2N 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.♘xg2 h5!+;

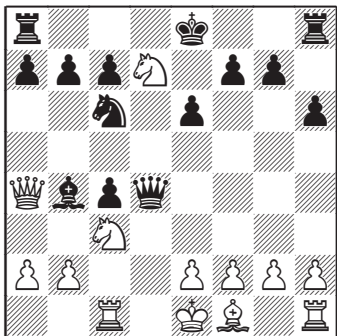
c) 8.e3 b5 9.b3 0-0 10.bxc4 c5!?N



A nice try to seize the initiative. (10...bxc4 is good for equality. 11.♗xc4 c5 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.♗e2 ♘d7= Simic,R (2465)-Inkiöv,V (2475) Athens 1981) 11.cxb5 cxd4 12.exd4 ♗b7 13.♗e2 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♞ac8∞ with an interesting position.

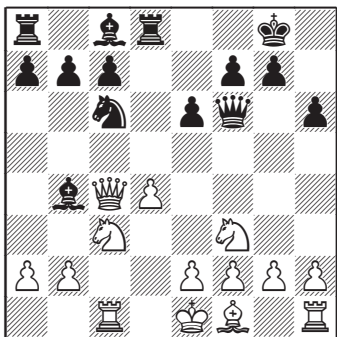
8...♘c6 9.a3

a) 9.♘e5? gives Black a huge advantage. 9...♗d7 10.♘xd7 (10.♘xc6 ♗xc3+ (10...a5!?N may be even stronger. 11.♞b5 ♗xc6 12.♞xc4 ♗d8 13.e3 e5+) 11.bxc3 ♗xc6 12.♞xc4 0-0+ Stepak,Y (2330) -Berkovich,M (2390) Israel 1996) 10...♞xd4! It's not the first time that we have seen this idea!



The ♖d7 can't go anywhere. 11.e3 (11.♖d1? ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♜xc3+ 13.♖d2 0-0-0!-+ and White can resign: Clews, W (1900)-Steele, S (1836) IECG email 1999.) 11...♜xd7 12.♙xc4 ♙xc3+ 13.♞xc3 ♖e5 leaves Black a healthy pawn up: Shabtai, R (2370)-Haimovich, T (2320) Tel Aviv 1993.

b) 9.♜b5 0-0 10.♜xc4 ♖d8!N



Black will soon seize the initiative. 11.e3 (11.a3?! ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 (12.♜xc3 ♖xd4 13.♖xd4 ♖xd4! 14.e3 (14.♜xc7?! Too greedy. 14...♙d7 15.e3 (15.♜xb7 looks too dangerous. 15...♖d8 16.e3 ♖d2! 17.♙e2! (17.♖xd2?? loses the queen after 17...♙c6+--+ 17...♞xb2 18.♜f3! ♜xf3

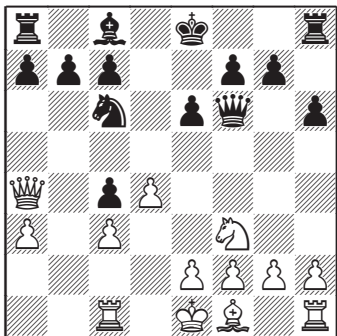
19.gxf3 ♞c8) 15...♞c8 16.♜xc8+ ♙xc8 17.exd4 (17.♞xc8+? ♖d8--+ 17...♙d7 18.♙e2 ♜g5 19.0-0 ♙c6 20.d5! ♙xd5 21.g3 ♜e5+ with a good advantage.) 14...♖d7+ Black remains a pawn up.) 12...e5 13.e3 ♜e7) 11...e5 12.dxe5

b1) 12.♖xe5 ♙e6! 13.♜b5 a6 14.♜xb7 ♙xc3+ 15.♞xc3 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♜xe5 White is a pawn up, but in trouble as ...♞b8-♞xb2 is coming. 17.♙d3 ♞ab8 18.♜e4 ♜xe4 19.♙xe4 ♞xb2 20.♞xc7 ♞xa2+ and White will have to defend an inferior endgame.

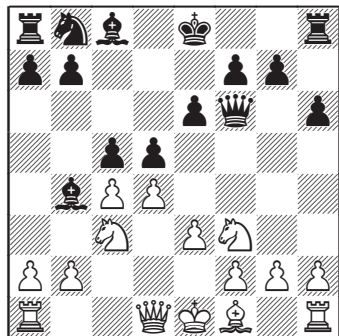
b2) 12.d5 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 (13.♞xc3?! ♖e7) 13...e4! 14.♜xe4 (14.♖d2 ♖e7 15.♖xe4 ♜e5+ Black will take back the pawn and have a better structure.) 14...♙f5 15.♜c4 (15.♜h4 ♜xh4 16.♖xh4 ♖xd5 17.♖xf5 ♞xf5) 15...♖e7 16.♙e2 ♖xd5+;

12...♜g6! followed by ...♙e6. The ♙f1 can't move. 13.a3 (13.♖h4 ♜h7 14.♖f3 (14.♙e2 ♙e6 15.♜f4 g5 16.♜g3 ♜g7 17.♖f3 g4) 14...♙e6) 13...♙e6 14.♜f4 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 (15.♞xc3?? ♜b1+--+ and mate is coming.) 15...♖a5 16.♖d4 ♖b3+ and Black is slightly better.

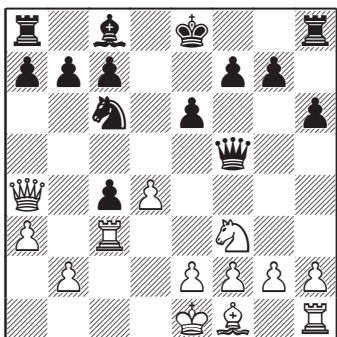
9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3!N



7...c5!?



This move is probably better. (10.♖xc3 ♔f5!



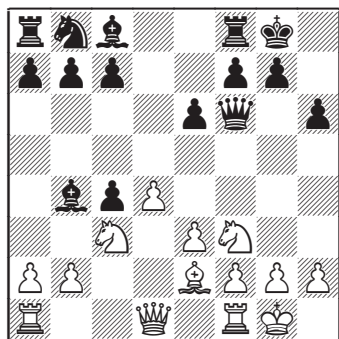
This move has recently been used twice by Yu, and also by Radjabov in 2015. I have never really paid attention to it, but it seems playable. White can play 8.♖c1, and quite often it transposes to our main line, but they also have the possibility of playing 8.cxd5 or 8.♔e2.

8.♖c1

The most logical move. White is ready to play a3 and take on c3 with a rook. 8.♔e2 dxc4 9.0-0!

Threatening ...♗b1+. 11.♗xc4 (11.♗d1 b5 12.g3 ♔b7 13.♔g2 ♖b8 14.0-0 0-0 15.e4 ♗f6 Sofrevski, J (2415)-Mitkov, N (2370) Skopje 1991) 11...♗b1+ 12.♖c1 ♗xb2 13.♖c5N (13.♗c3 ♗xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♔d7 Kustar, S (2351) -Farago, I (2507)/Budapest 2004) 13...♔a5! with a better position.) 10...♔d7 11.♗xc4 0-0 12.e3 ♗e7 13.♗b3 (13.a4 b6 14.♔d3 ♖ac8 15.0-0 ♔a5 16.♗a2 c5= with equality.) 13...b6 14.♔e2 ♔a5 15.♗b2 c5= with equality.

7...0-0



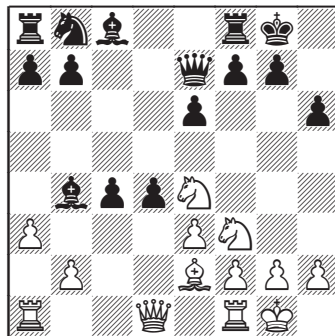
Intending ♔e4. (9.♔xc4 this does not really make sense, because it's like playing the main line a tempo down. 9...c5 10.0-0

cxd4 11.exd4 ♖c6 12.♗e4 (12.a3 ♕xc3
 13.bxc3 b6∞ followed by ...♗b7 as in the
 game Pascua,H (2435)-Xu,Y (2350) Ho
 Chi Minh City 2016.) 12...♞e7 13.♞e2
 ♕a5!? 14.♖ad1 ♗b6= followed by ...♖d8:
 Damaso,R (2449)-Delchev, A (2628)/
 Benidorm 2006.) 9...c5 10.♗e4 ♞e7
 11.a3

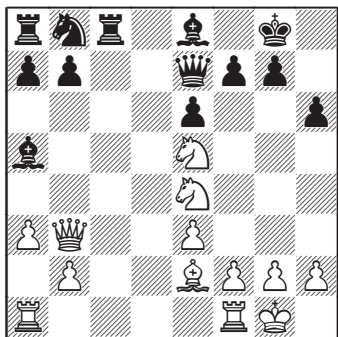
a) 11.dxc5 ♕xc5 12.♗xc5 (12.♞c2N
 doesn't change the character of the
 position. 12...♗b6 13.♕xc4 ♗c6 14.♞fd1
 ♕d7= with equality.) 12...♞xc5 13.♞d4
 ♞xd4 14.♗xd4 Chabanon, J (2426) -
 Landa,K (2609) Paris 2005, and here the
 easiest way to equalize was: 14...♗d7N
 15.♞fd1 ♖d8 16.♕xc4 ♗c6 17.♗b3 ♗e5
 18.♕e2 ♕a4= with full equality.

b) 11.♕xc4 cxd4 once again it's like the
 main line, but a tempo behind for White.
 12.♗xd4 (12.exd4 In this game Black
 played all the logical moves: 12...♖d8
 13.♞e2 ♕d7 14.a3 ♕a5 15.b4 ♗b6 16.b5
 ♕e8 17.♗g3 ♗d7 18.d5 ♗f8=
 Mamedyarov,S (2766)-Giri,A (2727) Zug
 2013) 12...♕d7 13.a3 (13.♞h5 ♗c6∞
 Gschnitzer, O (2444)-Khenkin,I (2620)
 Bonn 2011) 13...♕a5 14.♞h5N 14...♗c6!
 15.♞fd1 (15.♗xc6 ♕xc6 16.♞xa5 ♕xe4=)
 15...♗b6∞ and Black is fine.

11...cxd4!



An important intermediate move.
 12.♞xd4 (12.♕xc4 ♕a5! Black will
 continue development in a classical way:
 ...♖d8, ...♗c6, ...♕d7, ...♗b6, ...♞ac8,
 ...♕e8, etc. 13.exd4 ♖d8 14.♞c2 ♗c6
 15.♞fd1 ♗b6 16.♞c3 ♕d7 17.b4 ♕e8
 18.♞ac1 ♞ac8∞ Pelletier,Y (2583) -Vallejo
 Pons,F (2674)/ Olite 2006; 12.♗xd4 ♕a5
 13.♕xc4 ♕d7 14.♞c1 ♗c6 15.♗b3 ♞fd8
 16.♞d6 ♗b6= Epishin,V (2555)-Ramesh,
 R (2490) /Sitges 2006; 12.axb4N
 12...d3!= is the point. Black will win back
 the piece.) 12...♕a5 13.♞xc4 ♕d7
 14.♞c5!? with the idea being to play an
 endgame with slight pressure. (14.♗e5
 ♞c8 15.♞b3 Khmelniker, I (2458) -
 Lerner, K (2523)/Givataim 2005
 15...♕e8!N



I prefer to keep the bishop if it's possible. 16. Bfd1

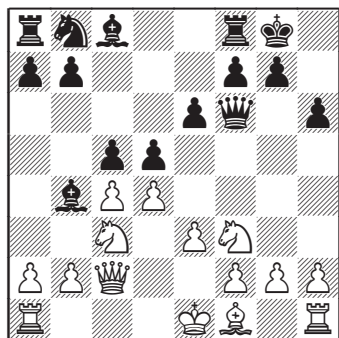
a) 16. Bxa1 Bc6=;

b) 16. Bh1!? Ba6!? followed by ...Bc5 with a good position. (16...Bc6 looks logical, but after: 17. Bc4 Bc7 18. Bxd1 Bxd8 19. Bxb7± we can see the point of 16. Bh1, as now ...Bxh2 is not possible.) ;

16...Bc7! 17. Bxa1 (17. Bxb7? Bc6! is almost losing for White, because the knight cannot be taken: 18. Bxc6 Bxh2+!-+; 17. Bf3 Bc6=) 17...Bc6 18. Bc4 Bxd8= with an equal position.) 14...Bd8 15. Bc5 Bc6 We are OK with giving back the bishop, as it will help us to develop faster. 16. Bxc6 Bxc6 17. Bfd1 (17. Bxa1 Bc8 18. Bfd1 Dutra Neto,A (2371)-Cantelli,A (1881) ICCF email 2007 (18.b4N 18...Bc7 19.g3 Bfd8=) 18...Bc7!?N with the idea of ...Bc7. 19.b4 Bc7 20. Bc4 Bxb8= with equality.) 17...Bc7! 18. Bc3 (18. Bxa1 Bc7 19. Bc3 Bxa8=) 18...Bc7 19.b4 a6 20. Bxa1 Bfd8= and Black held quite easily in the correspondence game Ermolaev, M (2151) -Lombart,P (1850) LSS email 2012.

8. Bb3 c5 See Chapter 7.

8. Bc2 This quite rare move was used once by Mamedyarov. 8...c5



I prefer this standard move instead of the 8...Bd7 used by Aronian. 9.a3

a) 9.dxc5 here both moves are satisfactory: 9...Bxc3+ (9...Ba6!? 10. Bc1 Bxc5 11.a3 Bxc3+ 12. Bxc3 Bxc3+ 13. Bxc3 Khan,V (2155) -Bubnov,V (2133) LSS email 2014, and now I suggest the simple 13...dxc4N 14. Bxc4 b6= with equality.) 10. Bxc3 (10.bxc3N 10...Bd8=) 10...Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 dxc4 12. Bxc4 Bd7 13.c6 (13.0-0?! Bxc5± Dos Santos,A (1604)-De Carvalho,I (1840) Batatais 2011) 13...bxc6= and Black was totally fine in the game Rodshtein,M (2494) -Khenkin,I (2586) Andorra 2006.

b) 9.cxd5 exd5 10.a3 Bf5 Of course. 11. Bd3 Bxd3 12. Bxd3 c4!? 13. Bc2 Bxc3+ 14.bxc3 Bc6 15.0-0 b5= with a good position: Rahman,T (2324)-Laxman,R (2474) Nagpur 2012.

9...Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 (10. Bxc3 transposes to Chapter 7.) 10...b6 (10...Bc6∞ is also totally fine, when the idea can be to take on c4 and then to push ...e6-e5.) 11. Bc2

(11.cxd5 exd5 12.♙e2 ♘c6 13.0-0 ♙f5∞ I like Black's position: Lukacs,D (2031)-Gergacz, A (2134) Balatonlelle 2005.) 11...♙b7 12.cxd5 (12.♘e5?! cxd4 13.cxd4 dxc4) 12...♙xd5 13.0-0 ♘d7= with a good position.

8.a3 See 7.a3.

8.♙d3 dxc4 9.♙xc4 See 8. ♙e2.

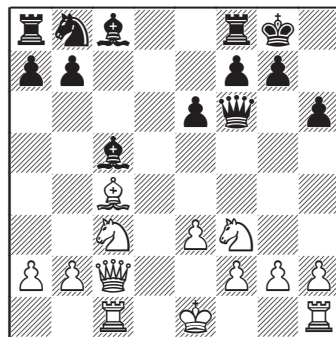
8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙e2 is a harmless continuation. (9.♖b3 is probably the best, and now we can play 9...c5 transposing to Chapter 12. (or 9...♖b6!? to take advantage of White's move order. 10.a3 (10.♙d3 c6= followed by ...♘d7 and ...♙d6: Van Wely,L (2674)-Bluebaum,M (2626) Netherlands 2016. 10.♖xd5N 10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖b2 12.♖d1 ♖xc3+∞ with a balanced position.) 10...♙a5!= Khademalsharieh,S (2429)-Qiu,M (2207) China 2016)) 9...c6 10.0-0 ♙f5= followed by ...♙d6, ...♖e7 if necessary, and ...♘bd7. Jablonski,N (2260) -Rozenalis, E (2582) Paris 2008.

8...dxc4 9.♙xc4 c5

Black wants to simplify the position. White has a little lead in development, so we need to be accurate.

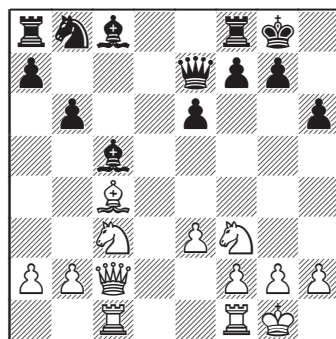
10.0-0

10.dxc5 Ivan Sokolov played this line against me. It was mostly fashionable in 2014, but even in 2016 some strong GMs, such as Boris Gelfand and Wang Yu, played it. 10...♘d7!? has been played by Magnus Carlsen, and more recently by Matlakov. (10...♙xc5 A solid choice which I have always played. 11.♖c2!?



Quite a recent approach. The idea might to play with a3, then ♙a2-b1 to initiate some attack, and/or create a weakness on the Black's kingside. After my terrible loss against Ivan Sokolov, I spent quite some time analyzing this position, trying to work out how to continue here. (11.0-0 ♖e7 (11...♖d8 is also a decent alternative. However, most of the time it will transpose to our main line.) 12.♘e4

a) 12.♖c2 b6!?N



This was my idea for an improvement, developing the bishop to b7. 13.♘e4 (13.a3 ♙b7 14.b4 ♙d6 15.♘b5 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♙xh2+!? 17.♙xh2 ♖h4+= and Black has the perpetual. 13.♖fd1 ♙b7=

...♙f3 is always in the air, and Black is ready to finish his development by playing ...♘d7, or ...♘c6.) 13...♘d7 14.a3 (14.♙e2 ♖b7 15.♘xc5 ♜ac8!? is the start of a nice idea: 16.♞a4 (16.♘xb7 ♜xc2 17.♜xc2 ♘b8! This is the point! The knight is trapped and it can't be protected by ♙a6, as the black knight now controls the a6-square. 18.♜fc1 ♞xb7 19.♜c7 ♞d5 20.♜xa7 ♘c6∞; 16.b4 bxc5 17.b5 c4∞) 16...♘xc5 17.♞xa7 ♞c7 18.♞a3 ♙a8 19.♞b4 ♜xa2= with equality.) 14...♙b7 15.b4 ♙d6 16.♘d6 (16.♜fd1 ♙b8∞ with a balanced position.) 16...♞xd6 17.♜fd1 (17.♞d1 ♞xd1 18.♜fxd1 ♜fd8 19.♙e2 ♘f6= with equality.) 17...♞e7= and I believe Black's position is fine.

b) 12.a3 ♜d8 13.♞c2 ♙d7 14.♙a2!? An interesting manoeuvre, and one which I have already mentioned. 14...♙c6! 15.♙b1 (15.♘e5N 15...♙d6 16.♘xc6 ♘xc6= followed by ...♜ac8.) 15...g6 16.♘e4 Neverov,V (2572)-Gaprindashvili,V (2433) Baku 2005 and here I prefer to play 16...♙b6!N 17.♘e5 ♙c7!= and Black is fine.

c) 12.♞e2 ♙d7 13.a3 (13.♜fd1 ♜d8=; 13.♘e5 ♙d6=) 13...♜d8 14.♜fd1 (14.♙a2 ♙e8 15.♙b1 ♘d7!= followed by ...♘f6, as in the game Miles,A (2565)-Langeweg,K (2450) Amsterdam 1978.) 14...♘c6 15.b4 ♙b6 16.♙b3 ♙e8= Shirov,A (2696)-Wei,Y (2551) Tromso 2013;

12...♜d8 13.♞c2

a) 13.♞e2 ♙b6 14.♜fd1 ♙d7 (14...♘c6!?= is also decent: Bunzmann,D (2469) -Delchev, A (2591) France 2002.) 15.♘e5 ♘c6 16.♘d7 ♜xd7 17.♜xd7

♞xd7 18.♙b5 ♜c8= and I made a draw a few moves later in Bailet,P (2440)-Cornette,M (2567) Cappelle-la-Grande 2013.

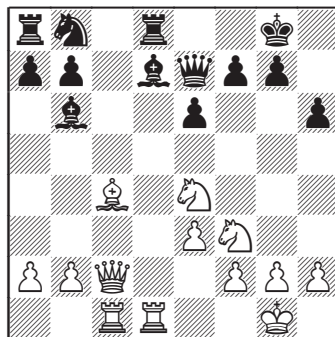
b) 13.♞b3 ♙b6 14.♜fd1 ♘c6 15.♜xd8+ ♙xd8 16.♜d1 ♙c7= Gatto,C (2106) -Yeremenko, A (2456) ICCF email 2009;

13...♙b6 14.♜fd1

a) 14.♘g3 ♙d7!?N (14...♘d7 15.♜fd1 ♘f6 16.♜xd8+ ♞xd8 17.♘e5 Ikonnikov,V (2562)-Dobosz,H (2395) Stuttgart 2010 (17.♘e4 ♙d7=) 17...♙c7 18.♞c3 ♙xe5 19.♞xe5 ♙d7=) 15.♘e5 (15.♜fd1 ♘c6 16.♞e4 (16.a3 ♙e8=) 16...♙e8 17.♙d3 f5 18.♞c4 ♙f7∞ with an unclear position.) 15...♙e8∞ followed by ...♘d7, or ...♘c6.

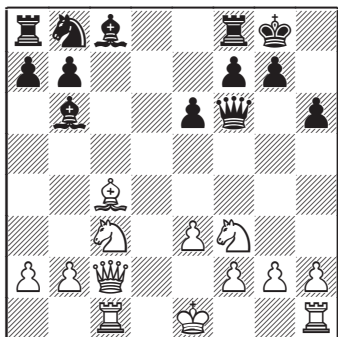
b) 14.a3 ♙d7 15.♙a2 ♙e8 16.♙b1 ♘d7 17.h3 ♘f8= Ribli,Z (2610)-Serper,G (2575) Groningen 1993;

14...♙d7!?N



This was my idea when I first checked this position. It is still a novelty in this move order, but sometimes it transposes to a few existing games. (14...♘c6 is regularly played and looks very natural. 15.♜xd8+

(15.a3 ♖d7 16.b4 (16.♞d6 ♞a5= followed by ...♙b6.) 16...♙e8 a thematic manoeuvre. Black will start to trade the pieces now. 17.♙a2 ♜xd1+ 18.♜xd1 ♞d8 19.♞xd8 ♜xd8 20.♙b1 ♜c7= Sokolov,I (2625)-Bareev, E (2675) Moscow 1994) 15...♞xd8 (15...♙xd8 is also totally fine. 16.♙b5 ♙d7= Hebden,M (2516) -Parker, J (2531) England 2011) 16.♞e5 (16.♞d1 ♙d7 17.b4 ♞c6 18.b5 ♞a5 19.♙e2 ♜c8 20.♜b2 ♞d8= with an equal position: Schulz,H (1613)-Lombart,P (1628) LSS email 2013.) 16...♙d7 17.♞xd7 ♜xd7 18.♞d1 ♜c7 19.g3 ♞c6 20.♙b5 ♜c8 21.♜c1 ♞e7= and Black had no problems making a draw in the game Aronian,L (2816) -Anand,V (2780) Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012.) 15.a3 (15.♞d6 ♙c6∞) 15...♞c6 16.♞d6 ♜ab8 (16...♞a5 is also good, but it's a bit strange to put the knight on the side of the board. 17.♙a2 ♙c6∞) 17.♜e4 ♙c7 18.♙d3 g6 19.♞b5 ♙b6 20.h4?! A bit too optimistic. 20...e5∞ and Black started to be better in the game: Ipatov,A (2608)-Zhukova,N (2470) Doha 2014. ...f7-f5 is coming next.) 11...♙b6!



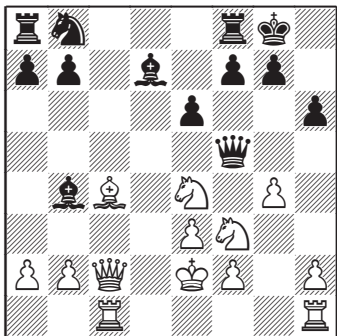
I finally reached the conclusion that this is the best response. It has been tried only

once in practice though.

a) 11...♞c6 was played the same week as my game, but I don't believe it's the best. 12.a3 ♙b6 13.0-0 ♞e5 14.♞xe5 ♜xc5 15.♞fd1 ♞d8 16.♞xd8+ ♙xd8 Kazhgaleyev,M (2570)-Sanikidze,T (2514) Saint Quentin 2014 17.♞d1± and Black has problems developing the light-squared bishop.

b) 11...♙b4 is a solid option, when Black accepts he will suffer a bit. 12.0-0 ♙xc3 13.♜xc3 ♜xc3 14.♜xc3 ♙d7 15.♞d1 (15.♞e5!?N is also interesting. 15...♙e8 16.♙e2 ♞c6 17.♞d3±) 15...♜c8 16.♙e2 ♜xc3 17.bxc3 f6 18.♜b1 b6 19.♞d1 ♞f8 20.♞h4± and even though Black managed to make a draw, I believe the position is quite unpleasant: Fressinet,L (2711)-Gajewski,G (2641) Saint Quentin 2014.

c) 11...♙d7 For a long time I believed this was the best, but finally I'm not so sure. 12.♞e4!N A strong improvement. 12...♙b4+ was my idea, but now I realise that after (12...♜f5 13.0-0 (13.♞xc5 ♜xc5 14.0-0 ♞c6 15.♜e4 ♜e7∞ should be close to equality.) 13...♙e7 14.♙d3 (14.♞fd1 ♙c6 15.♙d3 ♜a5 16.♞d4 ♜c8=) 14...♜a5 15.♜c7 ♜b6 16.♞fd1 (16.♞e5 ♞d8 17.♞fd1 ♞c6=) 16...♞d8 17.♙f1± and White is better.) 13.♞e2 and we might encounter some problems, for example: 13...♜f5? (13...♜g6 14.♙d3 f5 15.♞g3 ♞c6 16.♞hd1 ♞ad8 17.♜b3 a5 18.♞f1±) 14.g4!



and the black king is more in danger than its adversary. (14..♔d3 ♙c6 15.♖hd1 ♜d7 16.♜f1 ♖a5 17.a3 ♙e7 18.♜d4 ♖fc8=) 14...♖a5 15.g5 ♗c8 16.b3! b5 17.gxh6 bxc4 18.♖hg1 g6 19.bxc4± and even though Black is a piece up, the position is too dangerous.

12.a3

a) 12.0-0 ♔d7 13.♜e4

a1) 13.♜a4 ♙xa4 14.♖xa4 ♜c6= and Black was fine in the game Coche,W (2500)-Tauscher,K (2422) Remote email 2013.

a2) 13.♖fd1 ♖d8 14.a3 (14.♜a4 ♙xa4 15.♖xd8+ ♙xd8 16.♖xa4 ♜c6= Bittner,A (2043)-Seelig,J (2128) GER email 2014) 14...♜c6 15.♙a2 ♜e5=;

13...♖e7 14.♖fd1 and actually we have reached the same position as in the 11.0-0 line.

b) 12.♜e4 ♖e7 13.a3 ♔d7 14.0-0 (14.♜e5 ♗c8=; 14.♙a2) 14...♜c6 15.b4 ♖fd8=;

12...♔d7 13.♙a2 So far we are following the game Troff,K (2541)-Guo,Q (2439) Caleta 2015, but here I suggest another

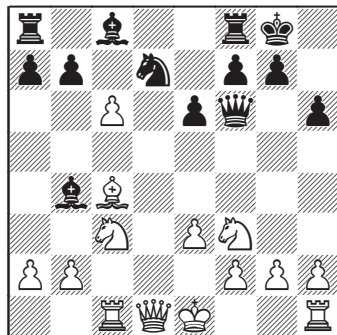
idea: 13...♜c6!?N 14.♙b1 g6 Black wants to play ...♜e5, and after the logical 15.h4 Black can continue with the strong 15...♖fd8 followed by 16.h5 (16.0-0 ♜e5±) 16...g5!∞ and Black's king will be safe on f8. ...g5-g4, followed by ...♜e5 is coming. Probably Black is already better.)

a) 15.0-0 ♜e5! 16.♜xe5 (16.♜d4 ♖fd8= with an unclear position.) 16...♖xe5 17.♖e4 ♙c7= with equality.

b) 15.♖e2 ♖fd8 16.0-0 ♙e8= with a solid position.

c) 15.♜e4 ♖g7!? 16.0-0 ♜e5= with equality.

11.c6!



The most challenging. White wants to spoil Black's structure.

a) 11.♖c2 ♜xc5 12.a3 (12.0-0 ♔d7 13.a3 (13.♖fd1 ♖fd8=) 13...♙xc3 14.♖xc3 ♖xc3 15.♖xc3 Batsiashvili, N (2500)-Saduakassova,D (2402) Skopje 2015 15...♖fc8!?N to be able to play ...♙e8 if needed. 16.♜e5 ♙e8= with equality.) 12...♙xc3+ 13.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 14.♖xc3 Salem,A (2591) -Berescu, A (2458) Abu

Dhabi 2014, and here the simple 14...b6!? = is good for Black.

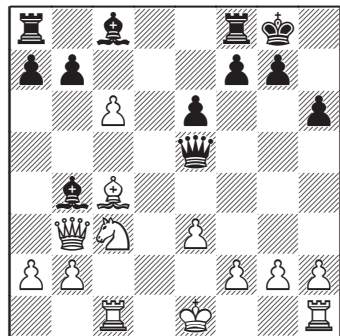
b) 11.0-0 ♖xc5 (11...♙xc3!? is a solid alternative. 12.♖xc3 ♖xc5 13.♗d4!? ♗xd4 14.♖xd4 we are following the game: Vilerte,T (2052)-Berry,S (2327) Bregenz 2015, but here I suggest 14...a5!?N to prevent b4. Black wants to play ...b7-b6 and finish his development. 15.♙e2 b6 16.♙f3 ♙a6!= with equality.) 12.♖b5

b1) 12.a3 ♙xc3 13.♖xc3 ♖d8 14.♗c2!? N (14.♗e2 b6∞ and Black was fine in the game El Gindy,E (2486) -Ni,H (2666) Tromso 2014.) 14...b6!? 15.b4 ♖a4! A nice move. The knight is untouchable because the ♖c3 is hanging. 16.♖d3! ♙b7 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♗xa4 ♙xf3! 19.gxf3 ♗xf3= and even though Black is a piece down, White can't avoid the perpetual.

b2) 12.♙e2 ♖d8 13.♗c2 ♙xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗xc3 15.♖xc3 b6= was equal in the game Voiculescu,C (2525)-Potrata,J (2306) ICCF email 2012.

12...a6 13.♖bd4 Babychuk,V (2055) - Leenders,C (2284) ICCF email 2013 13...♙a5!?N 14.a3 (14.♗c2 ♙d7=) 14...♙b6 15.b4 ♖d7 16.♗c2 ♗e7= and Black is fine. He will continue with ...♖f6, ...♖d8, and finally ...♙d7.

11...bxc6 (11...♖e5 Carlsen's move. It looks interesting, but I don't really believe in it. 12.♖xe5 (12.♙e2 ♖xc6=; 12.cxb7 ♙xb7 13.♖xe5 ♗xe5 14.0-0 ♖ac8∞) 12...♗xe5 13.♗b3!N

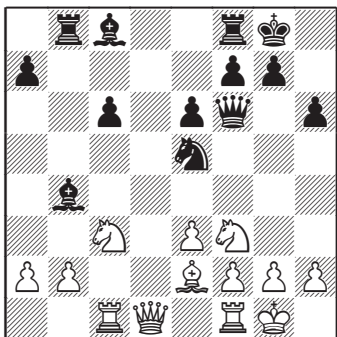


This is a good improvement. 13...a5 (13...♙a5 14.cxb7! ♙xb7 (14...♖b8 15.♙a6! (15.bxc8=♗ ♖fxc8 16.♗a3 ♖xc4 17.0-0 ♖h4! 18.g3 ♗h5! and it will end in a perpetual. 19.gxh4 ♗g4+ 20.♖h1 ♗f3+ 21.♖g1 ♗g4+=) 15...♙xb7 16.♙xb7 ♗c7 17.0-0 ♖xb7 18.♗a3± and White is a pawn up.) 15.♗xb7 ♖ab8 16.♗xa7 ♖xb2 17.0-0! White is ready to give back the knight and remain a pawn ahead. 17...♙xc3 18.♙b3±) 14.a3 ♙xc3+ 15.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 16.♖xc3 bxc6 17.♖e2± and White has a little edge in this endgame due to his better pawn structure and more active pieces.) 12.0-0 (12.a3N 12...♙e7 13.0-0 c5=) 12...♖e5!? 13.♙e2 (13.♖xe5!? A novelty in this position, but it will transpose to the game of Magnus. 13...♗xe5 14.♗e2

a) 14.♗c2!?N I also tried this square for the queen, but it doesn't change the evaluation of the position. 14...♖d8 15.♖fd1 (15.♙d3 ♖b8 16.♙e4 ♙xc3 17.bxc3 c5=) 15...♙b7 and Black is already threatening to take on c3 to clarify the situation. 16.♙d3 ♖ab8 17.♙h7+ ♖f8 18.♙e4 ♙xc3! 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.bxc3 ♗c7= with a nice symmetrical position.

b) 14.a3 ♖d6 I like this idea to weaken White's pawn structure. 15.g3 ♙e7∞;

14...♞d8 15.♞fd1 (15.f4 ♞a5∞; 15.a3 ♙e7∞) 15...♙b7= and Carlsen didn't have any problems in the game Giri,A (2790)-Carlsen,M (2863) Shamkir 2015.) 13...♞b8!

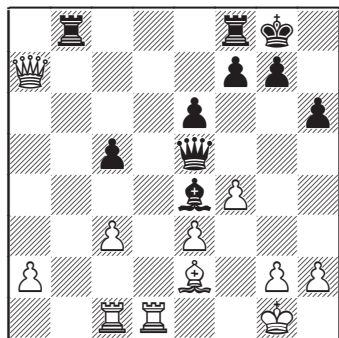


The novelty of Matlakov. I believe it was a part of very deep home preparation. (13...♙f3+ 14.♙xf3 ♙a6 15.♙e1 ♞ab8 16.♞a4 ♞b6 17.♙xc6!N gives White a little plus. (17.♞ed1 ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♞d8= Sasikiran,K (2658)-Sandipan, C (2478) Mumbai 2003) 17...♞e5 (17...♞fb8 18.h3±) 18.♞ed1±) 14.♞a4! I am sure Gelfand was also very well prepared. The other moves are harmless for Black. (14.♙d4N 14...c5 15.♙e4 ♞e7 16.♙f3 ♙xf3+ 17.♙xf3 ♙b7=; 14.a3N 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♞b2= with equality.) 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 (15.♞xc3 ♞xb2∞) 15...c5! Black gives up a pawn, but opens the long diagonal for his light-squared bishop. 16.♞xa7 (16.♙xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞fd1 ♞b2=) 16...♙b7 17.♙xe5

a) 17.♙e1N 17...♞f5∞ gives Black good compensation for the pawn.

b) 17.♞b1N leads to a draw: 17...♙xf3! 18.♞xb8 ♙xe2 19.♞xf8+ ♙xf8 20.f4 (20.♞e1 also ends up in a draw by repetition. 20...♙f3+! 21.♙h1! (21.gxf3?? is of course losing directly. 21...♞g5+ 22.♙h1 ♙xf3#) 21...♙xe1 22.♞b8+ ♙e7 23.♞c7+=) 20...♙xf1 21.♞b8+ ♙e7 22.fxe5 ♞f5 23.♞d6+ ♙e8=;

17...♞xe5 18.♞fd1 (18.♞b1N 18...♙c6! 19.♞xb8 ♞xb8 threatening ...♞a8. 20.♞a6 ♙d5 21.♞a3 ♞g5 22.g3 ♙c6 23.c4 ♞e5= with an equal position.) 18...♙e4 19.f4!N



I believe this to be the most critical. (19.♞d2 and a draw was agreed in the game Gelfand,B (2735)-Matlakov,M (2682) Moscow RUS 2016. 19...♞fd8 20.♞d7 ♞a8 21.♞xd8+ ♞xd8∞ would have been the normal continuation, intending ...♞d2 next. Black's piece activity compensates for the pawn.) 19...♞f6!? (19...♞f5 is also possible, but it seems less logical to me.) 20.♞d2 (20.♞a3 ♞a8 21.♞b2 ♞fb8 22.♞d2 ♞a4∞ Black has very good compensation for the pawn and easier play.) 20...♞bd8! More precise, because ♞cd1 is now not possible due to the hanging pawn on c3. (20...♞fd8

21.♖cd1 ♜dc8 22.♞a3 ♞a8 23.♞c1±
21.♞b2

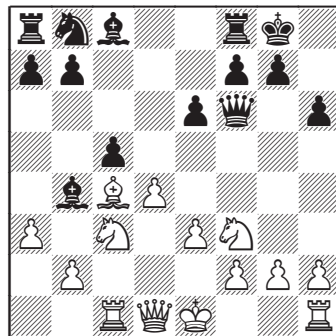
a) 21.♖cd1?? just loses for White.

21...♖xd2 22.♖xd2 ♞xc3-+;

b) 21.♖xd8 ♖xd8 22.♞xc5 ♜d2 23.♞b5
♞xa2 (23...♞g6 24.g3 ♙c6 25.♞xc6 ♖xe2
26.♞b5 ♖xe3= is also enough for equality.)
24.♞c4 ♞g6 25.g3 ♙d5 26.♞d3 ♞xd3
27.♙xd3 ♖g2+ 28.♟f1 ♖xh2 29.♟e1
♟f8= with equality.

21...♜d5!? Black wants to double on the
d-file, and the rook also protects the c5-
pawn. Black will continue playing on the
light squares. 22.♙c4 (22.♞a3 ♖fd8
23.♖f1 ♜d2 24.♖f2 c4!? 25.♞b4 ♖xb2
26.♞xb2 ♙d3= with enough
compensation for the pawn.) 22...♜d6
23.♞xc5 ♖fd8 24.♙f1 ♜d1 25.♖xd1 ♖xd1
26.♖f2 ♙d3 27.♞c6 ♟h7 and once again I
believe Black has enough compensation.
For example: 28.a4 (28.♞a4 ♖e1 29.♞d4
♞g6 30.f5 ♙xf5 31.♞d2 ♖a1 32.♖e2 ♙d3
33.♖e1 ♖xe1 34.♞xe1 ♙xf1 35.♞xf1 ♞c2
36.c4 ♞xa2=) 28...♞g6 29.g3 ♙xf1
30.♖xf1 ♞d3 31.♖xd1 ♞xd1+ 32.♟g2
(32.♟f2 ♞d2+ 33.♟f3 ♞d1+=)
32...♞e2+=;

10.a3

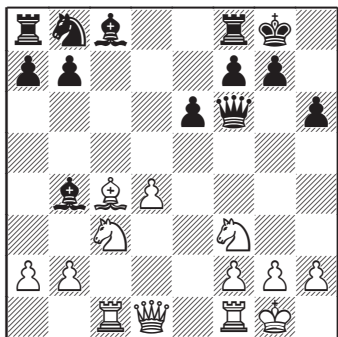


I didn't know this move, but it was
played against my friend Laurent Fressinet
during the London Chess Open this year,
so it was time for me to pay attention to
it. I believe that here both suggested
moves are good, however, I prefer
10...♙xc3+!? (10...cxd4 is the other move,
played in the game Fodor,T (2494)-
Fressinet,L (2672) London 2016.) 11.bxc3
(11.♖xc3 Zhao,X (2552)-Krush,I (2491)
Khanty-Mansiysk 2014 11...♜d8!?N is a
good novelty. 12.♜d3 (12.♞e2 cxd4
13.♟xd4 ♙d7±; 12.♞c2 cxd4 13.♟xd4
♙d7 14.0-0 ♟c6= and Black has no
problems.) 12...cxd4 13.♖xd4 (13.♟xd4
♙d7= followed by ...♟c6.) 13...♖xd4
14.♟xd4 ♟d7!? The idea is ... ♟b6, then
...e6-e5, ...♙e6, or ...♙d7, and ...♖c8.
15.0-0 ♟b6 16.♙b3 (16.♙e2 e5 17.♟b5
♙e6=) 16...♙d7 17.♞d3 ♖c8= with
equality.) 11...b6!? I don't see any reason
not to develop the bishop to b7. 12.0-0N
(12.♟e5 ♙b7 13.♞g4 ♞e7! 14.0-0 we are
following the game between Johansen, P-
Hornung,H (2173) Bad Woerishofen
2002. Now the simplest is 14...♟c6!?N
15.♟xc6 ♙xc6∞ and actually I already
prefer Black.) 12...♙b7 13.♞e2 (13.♙e2

♖d8= followed by ...♗d7.) 13...♗c6= with equality.

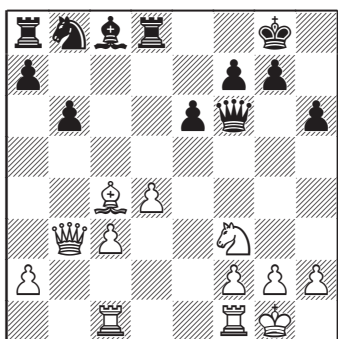
10...cxd4 11.♗xd4

11.exd4



This also deserves attention. It used to be quite fashionable, and Mamedyarov is still using it. 11...♖d8 (11...♗c6 is also a decent alternative, and most of the time it will transpose to the main line.) 12.♗e4

a) 12.♖b3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 (13.♖xc3N 13...♗c6=) 13...b6!?N



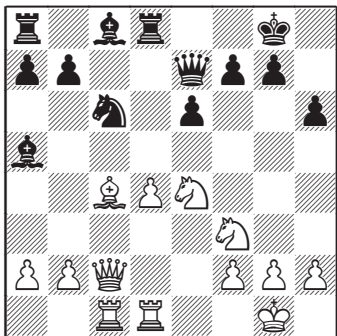
Planning ...♗b7. (13...♗c6 14.♖b5 (14.♗b5 ♗a5 15.♖b2 (15.♖a4 b6 16.♗e5 ♗b7 17.♗e2?! ♖ac8≠ Kanep,M (2445) -

Ehlvest,J (2600) Tallinn 2003) 15...b6 16.♗e5 ♗b7 17.f4 ♖ac8 18.♖ce1 Tasic,V (2629)-Pedro, F (2110) LSS email 2008 18...♗c6!?N Black wants to play ...♗xe5, or ...♗e7 to protect his king. 19.♖e3 (19.♗d3 ♗e7 20.g3 g6=) 19...♗e7= with a balanced position.) 14...♖b8 15.♗b3 (15.♗d3!?N 15...a6 16.♖c5 ♗d7 17.♗e4 ♖e7= with equality.) 15...♗d7 16.♖e2 ♖bc8 17.♖fd1 ♗e7 18.♗e5 ♗c6 19.♗g4 ♖g5= and Black had equalized in the game: Le Quang,L (2705) -Vitiugov, N (2694)/ Caleta 2013.) 14.♗e5 (14.♖fe1 ♗d7= followed by ... ♗b7 and ...♖ac8. 14.d5 ♗a6! Threatening ...♗c5. 15.dxe6 ♗xe6 16.♗xe6 ♖xe6 17.♖xe6 fxe6 18.♖fe1 ♗c5= with a balanced position.) 14...♗d7! 15.♗c6 (15.f4 ♗xe5 16.fxe5 ♖g5= followed as usual by ...♗b7 and ...♖ac8.) 15...♖e8 The ♗c6 looks active, but actually it will be in trouble after ...♗b7. 16.♖a3 (16.f3 ♖f4 17.♗b4 ♗b7 18.♗b5 ♖c7=) 16...♗b7 17.♖d6 ♗b8!? 18.♗e5 ♖d8 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8= with a balanced position.

b) 12.♖c2 ♗c6 13.♗e4 ♖e7 transposes to 12.♗e4.

12...♖e7 13.♖e2

a) 13.♖c2!? ♗c6 14.♖fd1 ♗a5!?N



This was the move I prepared. (14...d7 was played by Kramnik against Aronian. 15.a3 a5 16.b4 (If 16.d5 e8 protecting the b7-pawn.) 16...b6 17.d5 (17.a2N 17...e8 18.d5 a5 19.b1 g6) 17...e8 18.d5!?

a1) 18.Bb1N 18...Wf6 19.d5 (19.We4 d7=) 19...exd5 20.exd5 Bxc8=;

a2) 18.Wc3!? transposes to 14... a5.

18...exd5 19.d5 a5 (19...xc5!?N was also good. 20.bxc5 (20.Wxc5 Wxc5 21.Bxc5 d7=) 20...Bxc8=) 20.Be1!?N (20.Wb3 axb4 21.axb4 xc5 22.bxc5 Wc7=; 20.d4? was played by Aronian, but it was based on a miscalculation. 20...a7 21.b5 d4! and Black won a nice game in Aronian,L (2786)-Kramnik,V (2772)/ Moscow RUS 2009.) 20...Wf6 21.We4 xc5 22.bxc5 d7 23.cxd1 f5 24.Wf4 Bxc8= with equality.) 15.d3!?

a1) 15.d5 dxd4!? To simplify the position. (15...c7 16.b3 d5= is also possible if we want to keep more pieces on the board.) 16.dxd4 Wxc5 17.d3 We5 18.dxa5 Wxa5 19.Exd8+ Wxd8 20.Ed1

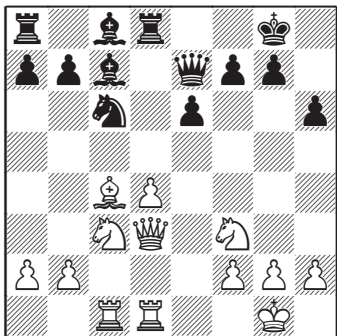
Wc7 and I believe the position to be equal. Black is a pawn up, but is ready to return soon in order to finish his development. 21.We4 (21.Wd3 b5! 22.xb5 (22.Wd8+ Wf8! 23.Wa5 (23.Wxf8+ xf8 24.xb5 b7=) 23...b7 24.Wxb5 e4=) 22...b7=) 21...Wc7 22.Wd4 d7 23.Wxd7 Wxc4 24.Wxb7 Bc8 25.g3 (25.Wxa7 We2 26.Bf1 Wxb2=) 25...Bc7=;

a2) 15.a3 b6 16.Wc3 d7 and if we compare this position to the game of Kramnik, we can see that in our case we reached it by force and didn't give White a choice or chance to deviate. 17.b4 e8 18.d5 a5 19.Be1! axb4 20.axb4 Wf8!= with a balanced position.

15...xc3!? is the simplest. 16.bxc3 (16.Wxc3 d7 (16...b6 17.d5±) 17.d5 (17.Wc3 Bxc8 18.d5 (18.We4 e8 19.d3 (19.a3 Wf6 20.f1 d7=) 19...f5 20.Wc3 h5=) 18...exd5 19.dxd5 Wxc3 20.fxe3 e6= with full equality.) 17...exd5 18.dxd5 e6 19.dxc6 bxc6 White has a better pawn structure, but the position is too simplified to claim any advantage. 20.d4 (20.Bxd8+ Bxd8 21.d4 Wd7=) 20...c5!=) 16...b6 17.We4 (17.d5?! d5=) 17...b7 18.d3 g6 19.Wf4 g7= and Black is fine.

b) 13.a3 is of course possible, but in general I believe Black is happy to transfer the bishop to b6. 13...a5 14.b4 b6 15.Bc3 d7 16.Bd3 e6 and Black was fine in the game Shyam,S (2489) - Lazarev,V (2379) New Delhi 2015.

c) 13.Wd3 was played once in the correspondence game. 13...c6 14.Bf1 a5 as usual. 15.d3 c7!?



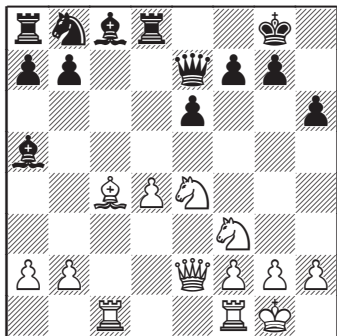
This move looks logical. The bishop has done its job on the queenside, and is now pointed at White's king. Black wants to play ...♟f4 then ...♞e5. 16.d5

c1) 16.♟b3N 16...♟f4 17.♞b1 ♞e5! It's good for Black to exchange some pieces. 18.♞xe5 (18.♞e4 ♞xf3+ 19.♞xf3 ♟d6 20.♞e4 a5=) 18...♟xe5 19.♞e3 ♟d6= with an equal position.

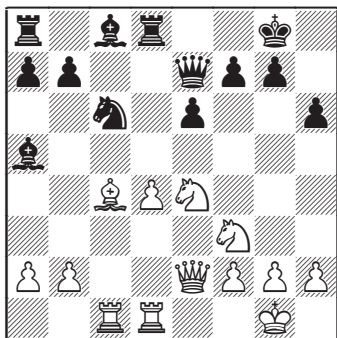
c2) 16.♞e4N 16...♟d7 17.♞e1 ♞e8= with a balanced position.

16...♟f4 17.♞b1 ♞e5 18.♞xe5 ♟xe5 19.♞e4 ♞f6 20.dxe6 ♟xe6 21.♞d5 (21.♟xe6 ♞xe6=) 21...♞g5 22.h4 ♞g4= and Black was fine in the game Voiculescu, C (2473)-Ruggeri Laderchi, G (2429) ICCF email 2014.

13...♞c6 (13...♟a5!? I think this is also fine.



The idea can be to avoid the line with 15.♟b5 after 13...♞c6. 14.♞fd1 ♟b6 15.♟b5 (15.♞c3 ♞c6 transposes to 13...♞c6.) 15...♟d7 16.♞c3 ♟xb5 17.♞xb5 ♞a6 18.d5 ♞c7 19.♞e2 ♞d6= and Black had no problems in the game Erdos, V (2658)-Vallejo Pons, F (2705) Warsaw 2013.) 14.♞fd1 ♟a5!?



The idea is to transfer the bishop to b6. Now White has a choice: (14...♟d7 15.a3 ♟a5 16.b4 ♟b6 17.♞c5 ♟e8 is also playable, but I prefer the modern approach.) 15.♟b5

a) 15.♞c3 here both moves are good. 15...♟d7 (15...♟b6!? 16.♞e4 (16.d5N

leads only to some simplifications.

16...exd5 17.♟xd5 ♖xe2 18.♙xe2 ♙a5!?

19.b4 (19.♟e5 ♟xe5 20.♟e7+ ♜f8

21.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 22.♟xc8 ♙g5=)

19...♙e6=) 16...♙d7 17.a3 ♖ac8 18.♙a2

♙e8= and I believe the position to be

balanced: Saidanov, Y-Bellegotti, G ICCF

email 2012.) 16.♙d3 (16.a3 ♖ac8 17.b4

♙b6 18.d5 exd5 19.♟xd5 ♖xe2 20.♙xe2

♟d4! simplifying the position. 21.♟xd4

(21.♙xc8N 21...♙xc8 22.♙xd4 ♙xd4

23.♟e7+ ♜f8 24.♟xc8 ♙b2 25.♟xa7

♙xa3∞) 21...♙xc1 22.♙xc1 ♙xd4 23.♙d1

♙b2 24.♟e3 ♜f8∞ and Black even

managed to win in the game Daves, D-

Rodriguez, K (2379) ICCF email 2011.)

16...♙e8 17.♖e4?! (17.♙c2N 17...♖ac8

18.♙d3 g6∞ with an unclear position.)

17...f5 18.♖e3 ♙h5 19.♟e2 ♙xf3 20.♖xf3

We are following the game: Vachier

Lagrave, M (2766) -Hou, Y (2629) Biel

2014, but now Black could have improved

her play with 20...♙b6! 21.♙c4 ♜h7♣

with an edge.

b) 15.♟g3 the idea behind this move is

to create some concrete play on the

kingside. It's not bad, but in practice Black

has won two convincing games. 15...♙b6

16.♖e4 ♙d7 17.h4 has recently been

played by Mamedyarov, but with no

success. (17.♟h5 ♙e8! Targeting the d4-

pawn. Black wants to double on the d-file

and play ...g7-g6 to kick out the annoying

♟h5. 18.♖g4 g6 19.♟g3 ♖ac8♣ In the

game Shimanov, A (2589) -Matlakov, M

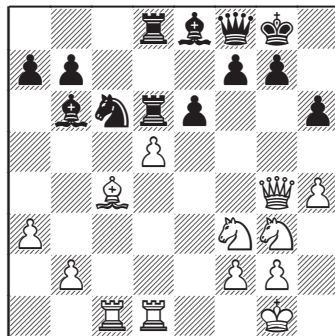
(2685) Khanty-Mansiysk 2014, Black

managed to convert his advantage.)

17...♙e8 18.a3 ♙d6 19.♖g4?! ♖ad8! 20.d5

♖f8!♣ He probably forgot or over-looked

this move.



Now ...♟e7 is coming and the d5-pawn

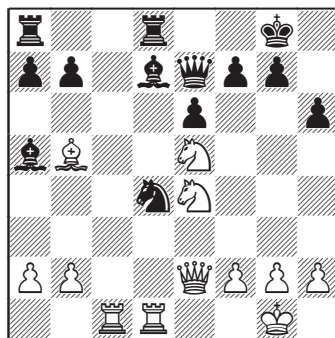
will be lost due to the pin: Mamedyarov, S

(2748)-Carlsen, M (2834) Doha 2015.

15...♙d7 16.♟c5 (16.♟e5?! has been

played twice, and both times Black missed

a nice tactical idea: 16...♟xd4!N



17.♙xd4 ♙xb5 18.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 19.♖xb5

♙d5♣ Black will end up a pawn up.)

16...♙e8 17.d5 (17.♖e4N 17...♖ac8=)

17...♙xd5! 18.♙xd5 exd5 19.♖xe7 ♟xe7

20.♟xb7 (20.♙xe8N 20...♙xe8 21.♟xb7

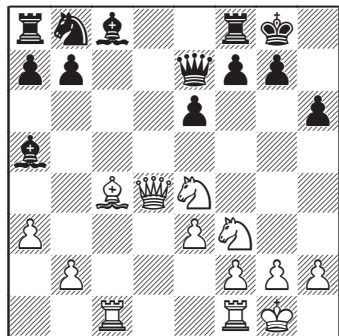
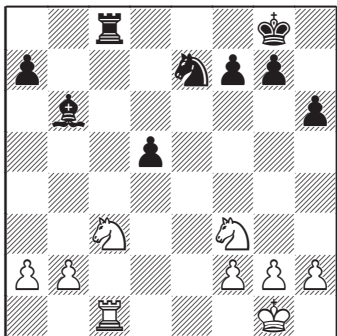
♙b6=) 20...♙b6 21.♟d6 ♙xb5 22.♟xb5

♙b8 23.♟c3 So far we have been following

the game Ruck, R (2558)-Neubauer, M

(2417) Austria 2008, but now Black could

have continued with: 23...♙c8!N



...with the idea of playing ...♙a5.
24.♙d1

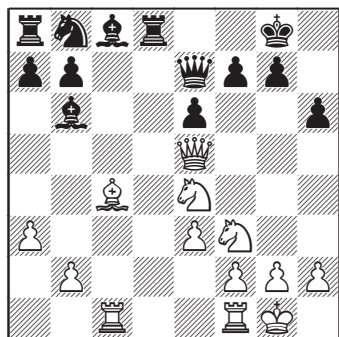
a) 24.g3 ♙a5 25.♘e2 ♖xc1+ 26.♘xc1
♜c6 27.♘e2 f6 28.♙f1 ♙f7 29.♘f4 d4=
and I don't believe White has any chance
to be better in this endgame.

b) 24.♙f1 ♙a5 25.♘d4 ♙xc3 26.♖xc3
♖xc3 27.bxc3 ♙f8 28.♙e2 ♙e8 29.♘b5
a5 30.♙e3 (30.♘d6+ ♙d7!= is strong with
the idea 31.♘xf7?! ♘g6! and White's
knight is in trouble.) 30...♙d7= with
equality.

24...♙a5= with an equal position.

11.♘e4 ♖e7 12.a3 (12.♘xd4 ♙d7
transposes to 11.♘xd4 ♙d7 12.♘e4 ♖e7.
12.exd4 transposes to 11.exd4.) 12...♙a5
13.♖xd4!?

A nice idea introduced by Dubov, who
won a game against Anand in the World
Rapid Championship. (13.♘xd4 ♙d7
transposes to 11.♘xd4, then 13.a3 ♙a5.)
13...♖d8 (13...♘c6 14.♖c5 was rather
unpleasant for Black in the game Li,C
(2750) -Matlakov,M (2689) Skopje 2015.)
14.♖e5 (14.♖c5N 14...♖xc5 15.♘xc5
♘d7=) 14...♙b6!



I believe this is the best move. There are
3 recent games in the database with it. The
idea is to delay the development of the
♘b8, because sometimes it can go to d7
instead. (14...♘c6 15.♖h5 ♙d7 16.g4!±
and White got good play not only on the
queenside, but also on the kingside:

Dubov,D (2661) -Anand,V (2803) Berlin 2015.) 15.g4!? was played by Dubov in his second try in this line.

a) 15.♖h5N 15...♗d7! followed by ...♗f6. 16.♖fd1 ♗f6 17.♗xf6+

a1) 17.♖h4 ♗d7=;

a2) 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♗xf6+ (18.♖h4 ♗d7=) 18...♖xf6 19.♖b5 ♖d8! transposes to 17.♗xf6.

17...♖xf6 18.♖b5 ♖e7! with the idea of developing the bishop to d7. 19.♖xd8+ (19.♗e5 ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♗c7= followed by ... a7-a6.) 19...♖xd8 20.♗e5 a6 21.♖b3 ♗c7= with equality.

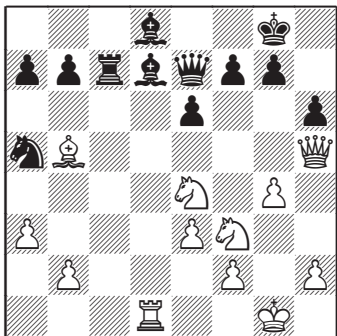
b) 15.♖fd1!? has also been played twice. Here two moves are good for Black, but both require some precision: 15...♗d7 (15...♗c6 16.♖xd8+!N was more critical. (16.♖h5 ♖xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♗d7 18.♗e2 (18.g4N 18...♗e8!∞ A very good defensive move. ...♗d8 is coming and g4-g5 no longer works due to ...f7-f5. 18.♗d6N 18...♗a5!) 18...♗e8 19.♗d6 ♗d4! 20.♗xd4 ♖xd6∞ and Black even managed to win in the game Bogner,S (2550)-Hammer,J (2682) Reykjavik 2015.) 16...♗xd8 (16...♖xd8 17.♖h5 (17.♖c3 ♗d7 18.♗d1 ♖e7 19.♗d6 ♗a5=; 17.♖d6 ♗d7 18.♗d1 ♗e8=) 17...♗d7 18.g4! ♗a5 (18...♗e8 19.g5! (19.b4 ♗e7!? 20.g5 ♗f5=) 19...f5! 20.♖h3! (20.♗f6+?! ♖xf6! 21.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22.gxf6 gxf6) 20...♗f7 21.g6! fxe4 22.gxf7+ ♗f8 23.♗h4 ♖f6 24.♗xe6 ♗d8 25.♗f5±) 19.♗a2!± and I don't like Black's position.) 17.♖h5 (17.♖c3 ♗d7 18.b4 ♗b6= with equality.) 17...♗d7 18.g4! Of course, playing for g4-

g5. 18...♖c8! 19.♗d1!? An interesting continuation. Now Black needs to find some precise moves. (19.g5 the direct approach is also very interesting. 19...♗a5! 20.gxh6 g6 21.♖e5 f6 22.♖g3 ♗xc4 23.♖xg6+ ♗h8 24.♖xc4! ♖xc4 25.♗d6! A crazy position! 25...♗b5!? (25...♖c1+ 26.♗g2 ♗e8! 27.♗xe8 ♖h7! 28.♖g7+ ♖xg7+ 29.hxg7+ ♗g8 30.♗d4 ♗e7 31.♗xe6 f5∞ Unclear. I have no idea who is better...unless it's my engine, which is confident with its evaluation of 0.00!) 26.♗f7+ (26.♗g2!? ♖c7 27.♗xb5 ♖f7∞ again with an unclear position. 26.♗e5 fxe5 27.♗f7+ ♖xf7 28.♖xf7 ♖g4+ 29.♗h1 ♗c6+ 30.f3 ♖g8 31.e4 ♗b6 32.♖f6+ ♗h7 33.♖f7+ ♗h8=) 26...♖xf7 27.♖xf7 ♖g4+ 28.♗h1 ♗c6 29.h4! ♗xf3+ 30.♗h2 f5!= and it's a strange draw. Neither side can do much.) 19...♗a5! The best. Even for an engine it's not easy to understand which move is the most precise here. 20.♗b5

b1) 20.♗d3 ♗c6! with the idea of ...♗c4. 21.♗e5 (21.g5 ♗c4! 22.gxh6 g6∞ followed by ...♗xb2.) 21...♗c4! A really beautiful idea! 22.♗xc4 (22.♗xc6 ♖xc6 23.♗xc4 ♖xc4 24.♗d6 g6! 25.♖h3 ♖c6 26.♗e4 ♗g7=) 22...♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♖xc4∞;

b2) 20.♗a2 ♗c6;̄;

20...♖c7!



Even if Black's position doesn't look very harmonious, he will succeed in simplifying it. 21.g5!?

b1) 21.♖d6 a6 22.♙xd7 ♖xd7 23.♗e5! The only move, but it's enough to make a draw. 23...♞xd6 24.♞xd6 ♙xd6 25.♙xf7+ ♖h7 26.♙g6+ ♖g8 27.♙f7+=;

b2) 21.♙e2 ♙a4! An important move. 22.♙xa5 ♙xd1 23.♙xd1 ♖c4! with a double attack. 24.♙b5 (24.♙e5 ♙c7 25.♙b5 ♞xe4 26.h3∞) 24...♞xe4 25.h3 ♙c7 26.♙e8+ ♖h7 27.♙e2 Crazy enough, White is not worse — because the black rook is stuck in the centre. 27...g6 28.♖g2 ♙f6 29.♙d3 ♖e5 30.♗xe5 ♙xe5= with an equal position.

21...♙xb5 22.gxh6 ♙e2 23.hxg7 ♖xg7 24.♙g4+ There is nothing more than perpetual. 24...♖h6 25.♙h3+ ♖g6 26.♗e5+ ♖g7 27.♙g3+ ♖f8 28.♙f4 (28.♙h3 ♖g8=) 28...♖g7=) 16.♙d6 (16.♙h5N 16...♙e8=) 16...♖f8 17.♙f4! (17.♙xe7+N 17...♖xe7=) 17...♙e8!N

Here I think this move is the best. Black is indirectly preventing g2-g4 ideas, as ...♙c7 is always a threat. (17...♗c6 18.g4!±

Grachev,B (2639)-Predke,A (2508) Moscow 2016) 18.♗e5

b1) 18.g4? ♙c7!±;

b2) 18.♞xd8 ♙xd8 19.♗d4 (19.g4? ♙c7 20.♗e5 ♖g8+ 19...♖g8=;

18...♖g8 19.♗g4 ♞xd1+ 20.♞xd1 ♗d7 This looks a bit dangerous, but in fact there is no more than a draw for White. 21.♗xh6+

b1) 21.♙b5 f5 22.♙d7 ♞d8! and here White has a choice, but it doesn't change the evaluation of the position. 23.♗xh6+ (23.♙xe6+ ♙xe6 24.♗ef6+! gxf6 25.♗xh6+ ♖h8 26.♞xd8 ♙xd8 27.♗xf5 ♙d7 28.g3 ♙g6 29.♙h6+ ♙h7 30.♙f8+ ♙g8∞) 23...gxh6 24.♙xh6 ♞xd7 25.♞xd7 ♙xd7 26.♙g6+ ♖f8 27.♗g5 ♙e8! 28.♙h6+! ♖e7 29.♙g7+ ♖d6 30.♗f7+ ♖e7!= and White has nothing better than to take the perpetual check.

b2) 21.♙g3?! ♖f8+;

21...gxh6 22.♞xd7 (22.♙xh6 ♙d8 23.♞d4 ♙f8 24.♙h3! ♗e5 (24...♙e7?! 25.♗g3 ♗f6 26.♗h5 ♗h7 27.♙g3+ ♖h8 28.♙c7∞) 25.f4 ♗xc4 26.♞xd8! ♞xd8 27.♗f6+ ♖g7 28.♙g3+ once again with perpetual. 28...♖h8 (28...♖xf6?? 29.♙g5#) 29.♙h3+ ♖g7=) 22...♙xd7 23.♗f6+ ♖g7 24.♙g3+ ♖h8 (24...♖xf6?? 25.♙h4+ and Black is losing his queen.) 25.♙h4 ♖g7=;

15...♗d7 16.♙g3

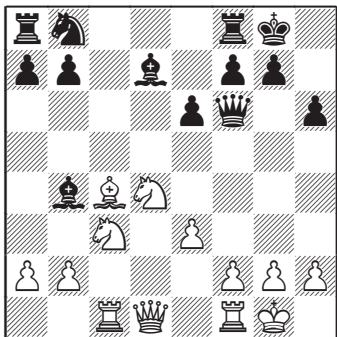
a) 16.♙h5N 16...♗f6 17.♙h4 ♙d7 and I believe Black is fine, for example: 18.♗e5 (18.g5? ♗xe4 19.♙xe4 ♙c6+;

18. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 19. ♜xf6 gxf6∞) 18... ♕e8
19. ♕e2 ♜d5∞;

b) 16. ♜d6N 16... ♜xd6 17. ♜xd6 ♜f6
18. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 19. h3 ♜e4=;

16... ♜f6 17. ♖xf6+ We are following the
game Dubov,D (2634) -Shyam,S (2523)
Moscow 2016, but here I suggest
17... ♜xf6!?N 18. ♜e5 (18.g5 hxg5
19. ♜xg5 ♕d7 20. ♕d3 ♕c6 21. ♕h7+ ♜f8
22. ♕b1 ♜g8=) 18... ♕c7 19.f4 ♕xe5
20.fxe5 ♜e7 21.h4 b5!? I quite like this
idea. 22. ♕e2 (22. ♕xb5 ♜b8 23.a4 a6
24. ♕c6 ♜b4!?!∞) 22... ♕b7 23.g5 hxg5
24.hxg5 g6= with a balanced position.

11... ♕d7!



Black wants to play ... ♜c6, but needs to
prepare it first.

12. ♜e4!?

12. ♜b3 is the most common move, but
it doesn't promise anything for White.
12... ♜c6 13. ♜xc6

a) 13. ♜ce2 I faced this move in 2010.
13... ♜e7 14.a3

a1) 14. ♜xc6 ♕xc6 15. ♜d4 ♜ac8
(15... ♕e4!?!= looks even simpler.) 16. ♜xc6

♜xc6 17. ♕d3 ♜fc8 18. ♜xc6 ♜xc6 19. ♕e4
♜c7 20. ♕d1 g6= Karpov,A (2692)-
Giorgadze,G (2585) Cala Galdana 2001;

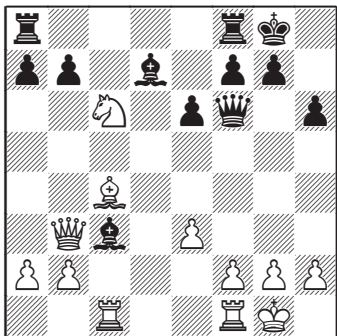
a2) 14. ♕b5 ♜xd4 15. ♜xd4 ♕xb5
16. ♜xb5 ♕c5= with full equality: Wang,Y
(2709) -Eljanov,P (2697) Ningbo 2011.

14... ♕d2!? 15. ♜xc6 (15. ♜c2 ♜a5∞
followed by ... ♜xc4 and ... ♕a5.) 15... ♕xc6
16. ♜cd1 ♕a5 17. ♜d4 ♜ac8= I remember
that I offered a draw here. My opponent
needed a win to make his final GM norm,
so he decided to play on, but after 18.f4?
♕e4! Black was already better, and I
proceeded to win quite easily: Cruz,C
(2485)-Cornette,M (2522) Navalmoral
2010.

b) 13. ♜fd1 ♕xc3 14. ♜xc3N (14. ♜xc3
♜a5 15. ♜b4 ♜xc4 16. ♜xc4 e5∞
Milman,L (2452)-Zilberstein,D (2403)
ICC INT 2011) 14... ♜fd8= with equality.

c) 13. ♜e4 ♜e7 14.a3 ♕a5 15. ♜xb7N
has never been played, but it makes sense.
(15. ♜f3 ♕b6= Mehlhorn,U (2218)-
Koch,H (2233) GER email 2002)
15... ♜xd4 16.exd4 ♜ab8 17. ♜xa7
(17. ♜a6 ♕b6 and Black will manage to
take back the pawn, for example: 18. ♜c5
(18. ♜fd1 ♕c6 19. ♜c5 ♜bd8 20. ♕f1 ♜f6
21. ♜c4 ♜d6 22.b4 ♜fd8=) 18... ♜fd8
19. ♜xd7 ♜xd7=) 17... ♕b6 18. ♜a6 ♕xd4
19.b4 ♜fd8 Black is only temporary a
pawn down. 20. ♜fd1 ♕c8 21. ♜a4 ♕b7
22. ♜c5 ♕xc5 23.bxc5 ♜xd1+ 24. ♜xd1
♜xc5 25. ♕xe6 ♜xa3= with a total
equality.

13... ♕xc3!



A very important intermediate move.
14. Rxc3 is mostly played. It almost always ends up in some quick draw or other, and I will demonstrate some of them for you here:

a) 14. Nxa7 Bxb2 15. Bcd1 (15. Bb1 N15... Rxa7 16. Bxb2=) 15... Bc8! 16. Bxb7 (16. Nb5 Bareev, E (2670)-Aleksandrov, A (2660) Polanica Zdroj 1997 16... Bc5 17. f4 Bb8= followed by ... Bc6. Black is slightly better.) 16... Ba4 17. Bb3 Bfb8 18. Bc7 Bc5 19. Bc5 Bxb3 (19... Bg5!? N is also totally fine. 20. Ch1 (20. g3 Bxg3 21. Bxg5 hxg5 22. Ba4 Rxa7 23. Bc6 Bc5=) 20... Bxb3 21. axb3 Bf6=) 20. axb3 Bxb3= Ivanov, S (2538) -Matros, A (2391) Stockholm 2000.

b) 14. Bxc3 Bxc6! 15. Bxf6 gxf6 16. Bfd1 Bfd8= with equality in Hawkins, J (2457)-Adams, M (2715) Sheffield 2011.

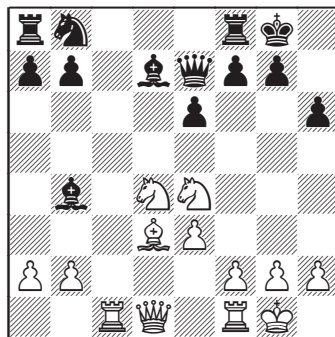
c) 14. Bxb7 Bxc6 15. Bxc6 Bxb2 16. Bc2 Bb8 17. Bb7 a5= Fourie, M (2376)-Pietruske, S (2321) ICCF email 2008.

14... Bxc6 15. Bb5 Bd5 16. Bc4 Bc6 17. Bb5 Bd5 18. Bc4 and draw was agreed in the game: Topalov, V (2798)-Anand, V

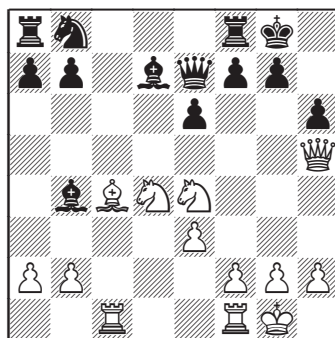
(2804) Stavanger 2015. I could mention some 10 other games which ended in the same fashion.

12. a3 Bxc3 13. Bxc3 Nc6 14. Nf3 Bfd8 15. Bc2 Bb8 16. Bc1 Ne5= with full equality as in the game Dautov, R (2604) - Khalifman, A (2702) Berlin 2003.

12... Bc7 13. Bd3!?

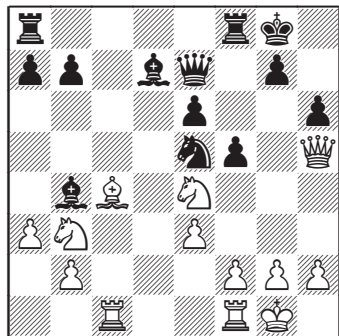


This move has been played three times by Boris Gelfand, and was quite fashionable in 2015. 13. Bh5



Played by Aronian against Anand in 2014. I also faced this move in 2012 against Ramirez. 13... Nc6 14. Nb3 (14. a3 Nxd4 15. exd4 Bd6 16. Nxd6 Bxd6=

Miras Garcia,E (2320) -Pedro,F (2097)
 IECG email 2007) 14...f5! The best. 15.a3
 (15.♖ec5 looks logical. 15...♙e8! Winning
 a tempo on the queen. 16.♖e2 (16.♖f3
 ♖f6 17.a3 (17.♙b5 e5=) 17...♙xc5
 18.♖xc5 ♖e5 19.♖f4 ♖xc4 20.♖xc4
 ♖c8= and the position is equal.) 16...♙f7
 17.♙b5!?! is an interesting try. (17.♖d3
 ♙d6=) 17...♖ac8 (17...♖a5!?! is also good,
 maybe even better, but the lines are a bit
 too crazy for me: 18.♖xa5 (18.a3 ♖xb3
 19.♖xb3 ♙d6∞) 18...♙xa5 19.♖f3
 (19.♖c2 ♖fd8 20.a3 a6 21.♙a4 ♙b6
 22.♖fc1 e5= with equal chances, as in
 Seres,L (2384) -Grigorian,S (2345)
 Germany 2016.) 19...a6 20.♙a4 (20.♙e2
 ♖ab8) 20...b5 21.♙b3 ♖ac8! 22.♖xa6!
 (22.♖b7 ♖xb7 23.♖xb7 ♙b4=) 22...♖a7
 23.♖c6 ♖d7 24.♖cc1 (24.♖fc1 ♙h5!
 25.♖b8 (25.♖xc8 ♙xf3 26.♖xf8+ ♖xf8
 27.gxf3 ♙b6 28.♖c5 ♙xc5 29.♖xc5 f4=)
 25...♖d2! I lack the words to describe
 what is going on in this line... 26.♙xe6+
 (26.♖xc8 ♙xf3 27.gxf3 ♖h7 28.♙xe6 ♖xc8
 29.♖xc8 f4=) 26...♖h7 27.♙xc8
 (27.♖xf5+?! looks strong, but it is not!
 27...♙g6! 28.♖xg6+! ♖xg6 29.♙xc8+ ♖h7
 30.♖f1 (30.♖6c2 ♖d3?) 30...♙b6!
 31.♖xb6 (31.♖c3 ♖d6?) 31...♖xc8
 32.♖c6 ♖d6?) 27...♙xf3 28.gxf3 ♖xb2
 29.♖d7=) 24...♖a7= with a draw by
 repetition.) 18.a3 ♙xc5 19.♖xc5 ♖fd8
 20.b4 ♖e5= Black wants to play ...♖g6,
 then ...e6-e5.) 15...♖e5!

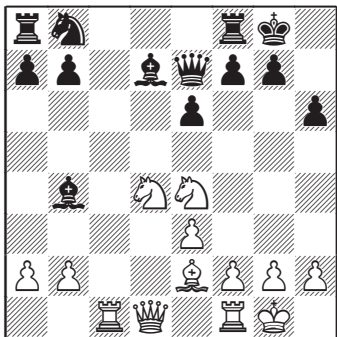


Strangely enough, I believe that my
 move — found over the board — is better
 than the one Anand played in his game.
 16.♙e2 (16.axb4N 16...♖xc4 17.♖ec5
 (17.♖xc4?! ♙b5! 18.♖ed2 ♙xc4 19.♖xc4
 ♖xb4 20.♖cd2 a5+ Black's pawns on the
 queenside are very strong.) 17...♙e8
 18.♖f3 (18.♖e2 ♖d6 19.f4 ♙b5 20.♖d3
 ♙c4∞) 18...♙c6 19.♖e2 ♖d6 20.♖d4
 ♙d5∞ with a balanced position.) 16...♙e8
 17.♖h3 Ramirez,A (2591) -Cornette,M
 (2545) Cappelle-la-Grande 2012
 17...fxe4!N 18.axb4 ♙c6= The bishop will
 be comfortably placed on d5. Black's
 pawns on the e-file look a bit strange, but
 White has no good way to harass them.

13.a3 ♙a5 14.♖h5 (14.b4 ♙b6=)
 14...♙b6 15.♖fd1 and here Black has to be
 precise. 15...♖c6 (15...♖d8 16.♖d6! ♙e8
 17.♖xe8 ♖xe8± and White had an edge in
 the game Grachev,B (2610)-Dizdar,G
 (2548)/ Plovdiv 2008.) 16.♖f3 (16.♖b5
 We are now following the game
 Hegelund,O-Galerie,R (2040) ICCF
 email 2009, but here Black has to play the
 thematic 16...f5!N 17.♖ec3 (17.♖ed6
 ♖e5 18.♙b3 ♖ad8+ followed by ...♖h7,
 and it's White who has to be careful now.)

17...a6 18.♖a4 (18.♜d6 ♘h7?)
 18...♙xe3! 19.fxe3 axb5 20.♙xb5 ♜fd8∞)
 16...♜fd8 17.g4 ♖a5 18.♙b5 ♙xb5
 19.♜xb5 ♜xd1+ 20.♜xd1 ♜d8= with an
 equal position: Velilla Velasco,F (2524)-
 Drake Diez de Rivera,P (2555) ICCF
 email 2007.

13.♙e2



This is a solid alternative. In my database I have 6 games with 3 draws and 3 victories for White. 13...♜c6 14.a3 ♜xd4!? is probably simpler, even if Black needs to be precise in the resulting endgame. (14...♙a5 was played by Yu. It's playable, but it requires more accuracy. 15.♖b3 ♜fd8 (15...♙b6 16.♜bc5± is quite unpleasant for Black. White managed to win in the game Buhmann,R (2586)-Georgiadis,N (2522) Switzerland 2015.) 16.♖xa5 (16.♜d6!?N is a nice improvement. 16...♜h4! The only move to stay in the game. 17.♜bc5 (17.♙f3 ♙e8 18.g3 ♜h3 19.♜f4 e5! 20.♜g4 ♜xg4 21.♙xg4 ♙b6 22.♜ec5 ♜ab8= with a balanced position.) 17...♙c8 18.g3!? (18.♜g3 ♜e7 19.b4 ♙c7 20.f4 f5 21.♜f2 e5∞) 18...♜xd6 19.gxh4 ♜d5 20.b4 ♙d8∞

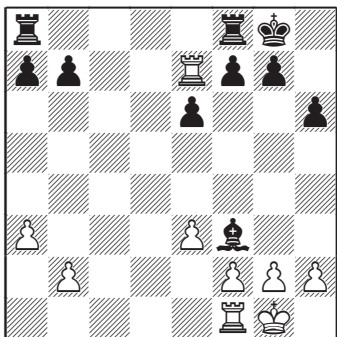
and engine says it's OK for Black, but somehow I'm not a huge fan of this position.) 16...♖xa5 17.♜c7 ♜ac8 18.♜c1 (18.♜xc8N 18...♜xc8 19.♜d4 (19.♜d3 a6=) 19...b6=) 18...f5! 19.b4!?

a) 19.♜d2N 19...♜xc7 (19...♜c6 is also possible, but we need to be ready to give up a pawn. 20.♜xb7 (20.♜xc8 ♜xc8=) 20...♜d4! 21.♜e1 ♜xe2+ 22.♜xe2 ♜d6 23.♜b1 (23.♜f3 ♙c6 24.♜b4 e5∞ with good compensation.) 23...♜c6 24.♜b4 e5∞ and once again there is good compensation for the pawn.) 20.♜xc7 ♜c6! 21.♜xb7 (21.♜c4 ♙e8=) 21...♜b8 22.♜a6 ♜xb2= with full equality.

b) 19.♜c3N 19...♜c6 20.♜xc8 ♜xc8 21.♜g3 g6= with an equal position.

19...♜b3 20.♜c3 ♜xc7 21.♜xc7 fxe4 22.♜d1 This position is rather strange. Black is a piece up, but he is paralyzed. I believe that best here is to give back the piece to stabilize the position. We have been following Wang,H (2710)-Yu,Y (2723) Xinghua 2015, and here I offer 22...♜c8!?N 23.♜xb7 (23.♜xd7 ♜xd7 24.♜xd7 ♜c1+ 25.♙f1 ♜f8! A good move. ... ♜e8 is coming next, and ...♜d2 will be played if White starts taking the pawns on the 7th rank. 26.g4 ♜e8! 27.♜xg7 ♜d2 28.♜g2 ♜xf1 29.♜xb7 a6 30.♜b6 ♜f7 31.♜xa6 ♜b1∞) 23...♜c2! 24.♜xd7! ♜xe2! 25.♜f1! ♜xf2+ (25...♜c2!? is also a nice way to make a draw. 26.♜xe7 ♜c1+ 27.♜e2 ♜c2+=) 26.♜xf2 ♜f6+= with a draw by repetition.) 15.♜xd4 ♙a5 16.♜c5 (16.♜d6N 16...♙d8 17.♜xe7 (17.♜fd1 ♙c6=) 17...♙xe7 is the same.) 16...♙d8! 17.♜xe7 (17.♙f3 ♙c6 18.♜fd1 ♜xe4 the simplest. Black is aiming for the opposite-

coloured bishop's endgame. (18...a5= was also good enough to equalize.) 19.♞xe7 (19.♙xe4N 19...♞xc5 20.♞xc5 ♙f6 21.♙xb7 ♞ad8= followed by ... ♙xb2.) 19...♙xe7 20.♙xe4 ♙f6 21.b4 ♞ad8= and a draw was agreed soon in the game Radjabov,T (2726) -Giri,A (2790) Shamkir 2016.) 17...♙xe7 18.♞c7 ♙c6 19.♞xe7 ♙xe4 20.♙f3 (20.♞c1N doesn't change the evaluation of the endgame. 20...♞fc8 21.♞cc7 ♞xc7 22.♞xc7 ♞d8 23.♙f3 a6! 24.♙f1 ♙xf3 25.gxf3 b5 26.♙e2 ♞d6= with equality.) 20...♙xf3!N



It looks rather dangerous, but I think Black will manage to hold quite easily with 2-3 precise moves. (20...♙c6 21.♙xc6 bxc6 22.♞c1± Milov,V (2592) -Fargo,I (2483) Deizisau 2003) 21.gxf3 b5 22.♞d1 (22.♞c1 a6 doesn't change much.) 22...a6 23.b4

a) 23.♞d6 ♞fd8=;

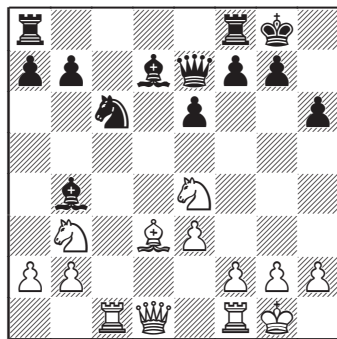
b) 23.♞dd7 ♞ac8 24.f4 (24.♞a7 ♞c2=; 24.♞d6 ♞c2=) 24...♞c2 25.♞a7 ♞xb2 26.♞xa6 b4= trading the last pawns on the queenside.

c) 23.♞b7 ♞fd8=;

23...♞fd8 24.♞dd7 ♞xd7 25.♞xd7 ♙f8 26.f4 ♙e8 27.♞b7 (27.♞c7 ♞d8=) 27...♞c8 threatening ... ♞c3. 28.♞b6 ♞a8 29.♙g2 ♞a7= followed by ...♙d7. The endgame is drawish.

13...♙c6 14.♙b3

The idea is to play a2-a3 to take back the pair of bishops. 14.a3 ♙a5 15.♙b3 ♙b6 16.♙ec5 ♙e8 17.♙e4 ♞c8= with equality in the game Gelfand,B (2743) - Wojtaszek,R (2744) Beijing 2014.



14...♙a5!

An important move. Giri had everything prepared when he faced Boris Gelfand.

15.♞c7

15.a3N 15...♙a4! One of the points. 16.♙c2 (16.axb4?! ♙xb3 17.♞c2 ♞fd8±) 16...♙xb3 17.♙xb3 ♞fd8 18.♞c2 ♙xb3 19.♞xb3 ♙a5= with an equal position.

15.♙d4 has been played once, but now Black simply comes back with the knight: 15...♙c6= (15...f5!?! is also possible if we have a desire to play for a win. 16.♙c3 ♞ad8∞)

15...♞fd8 16.a3

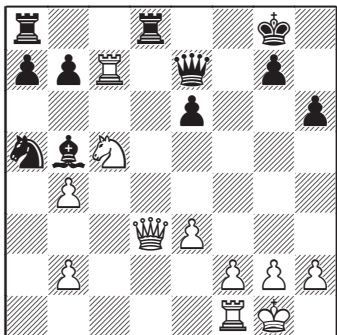
16.♜xa5N 16...♙xa5 17.♞xb7 ♞f8! I remember I watched the press conference after the game, where Giri explained that this was one of the key moves of this line, ensuring that Black is fine everywhere. 18.♞h5

a) 18.♞c2 ♙b6⚡;

b) 18.♜c3 ♙c6! 19.♞b3 ♙c7! threatening ...♞d6. 20.g3 (20.f4 e5!∞) 20...a5! 21.a3 (21.a4 ♙e5=) 21...♞d6 22.♙c2 ♞c5 23.♞e2 ♞ac8 and Black has enough compensation for the pawn thanks to the bishop pair.

18...♙b6 19.♜g5 ♞ac8 20.♙h7+ ♔h8 21.♙e4 ♜g8= White has nothing better than to take the perpetual.

16.♜bc5 looks tempting, but it leads to some forced straightforward line. 16...f5 17.a3 fxe4 18.axb4 (18.♜xe4?!N 18...♙a4!⚡) 18...exd3 19.♞xd3 ♙b5!



A nice move. 20.♞xe7 ♙xd3 21.bxa5 ♙xf1 22.♔xf1 ♞d1+ 23.♔e2 ♞ad8 24.♞xb7 ♞d2+ 25.♔e1 ♞d1+= and a draw was agreed in the game Matlakov,M

(2694) -Wojtaszek,R (2746) Montpellier 2015.

16...♜xb3 17.♞xb3

17.axb4?!N 17...♞xb4 18.♜d6!?

a) 18.♞g4 ♔h8⚡;

b) 18.♙b1 ♙e8 19.♞c2 f5 20.♙a2 (20.♞c4 ♞b6⚡) 20...♙b5⚡;

18...♙e8 19.♜xe8 ♞xe8 20.♞c2 ♞ad8∞;

17.♞xb7N 17...♙a5 (17...♙xa3!?) 18.♞xb3 ♙d6=) 18.♞xb3 transposes to 17.♞xb3.

17...♙a5 18.♞xb7

18.♞cc1?! is dubious because after 18...♙c6 19.♜g3 ♞d7⚡ Black was already better in the game Banikas,H (2609)- Hammer,J (2682) Reykjavik 2015, thanks to his bishop pair.

18...♙a4! 19.♜c5

19.♞xe7 ♙xb3 20.♙e2 ♙b6=;

19.♞xa4 ♞xb7 20.♜c5 (20.♞xa5? ♞xd3⚡) 20...♞c7 21.♙e4 ♞xc5 22.♙xa8 ♞xa8 23.b4 ♙xb4 24.axb4 ♞c3= with full equality.

19...♙xb3 20.♞xe7 ♙b6 21.♜xb3 ♞xd3 22.♜d4

22.♜c1N is an engine suggestion, but it doesn't change the evaluation of the line. 22...♞d2 23.b4 ♞b8 24.♜b3 ♞a2=

22...♙xd4 23.exd4 ♞b8 24.♞xa7 ♞xb2 25.♞a4 ♞a2 26.h4 g6=

and a draw was agreed a few moves later in Gelfand, B (2744) -Giri,A (2776) Khanty-Mansiysk 2015.

CONCLUSION

In this line White gives up the two bishops to have an advantage in development, and has a choice between

several interesting set-ups. In any case, I believe that Black has a good game if he displays some knowledge and precise play.

PART 5.

Transposition to Nimzo-Indian

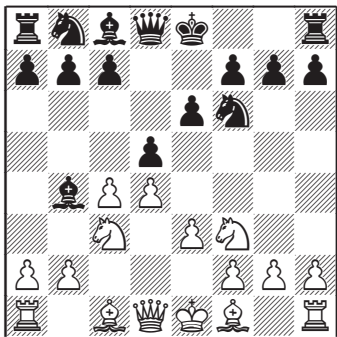
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4

In the 5th part of this book we will study White's different 5th moves. Most of the time things will transpose to some line of the Nimzo-Indian.

effective in the Ragozin, but nevertheless it has some followers. It will be analyzed in Chapter 13.

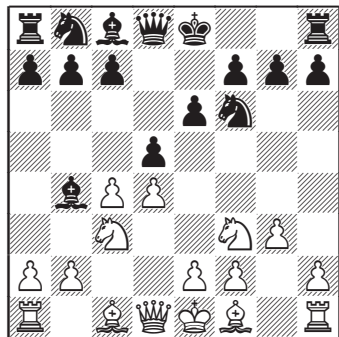
5.g3

5.e3



This is the main move and it transposes to the Nimzo-Indian with 4.e3, which will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 14.

5.♙c2 this thematic move in the Nimzo-Indian Defence is a bit less



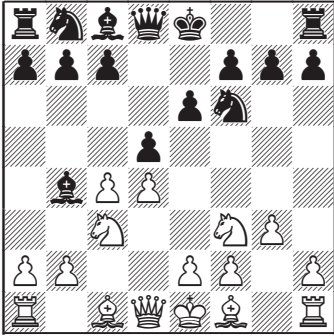
This transposes to a Nimzo-Indian with g3. We will also see this line in Chapter 13.

5.♙d2 0-0 6.a3 will be analyzed in Chapter 13 as well.

Chapter 13.

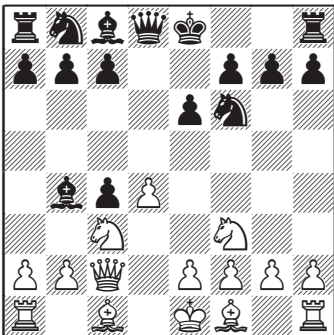
5.XXX

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♗c3 ♖b4
5.g3



Normally we get this position via a Nimzo-Indian move-order with 4.g3, where one of White's ideas can be to avoid the system with ...b7-b6. The best reply for Black is 4...d5, and here after White's natural 5.♘f3 we reach the current position.

5.♞c2 dxc4!?



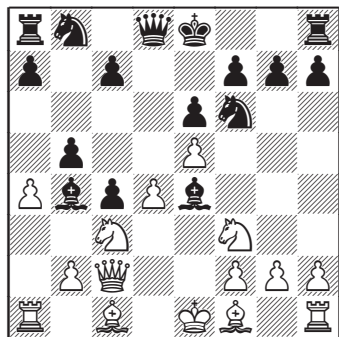
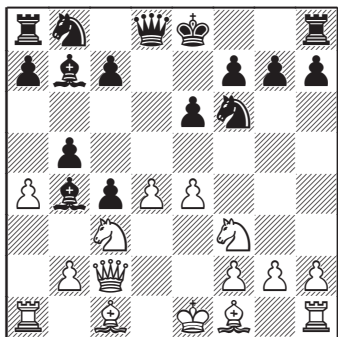
Just as we will see in Chapter 15, I believe this move is the best response after ♞c2. If we compare it to the regular Nimzo-Indian, we can see that there White never gives Black the opportunity to take this pawn without being able to take it back directly. 6.e3

a) 6.e4 b5 7.a4

a1) 7.e5 ♘d5 This reminds me of some Slav, or Botvinnik variation, but it can only favour Black to have the inclusion of ♞c2 and ...♖b4. 8.a4 c6 9.♞e2 (9.♞d2 a5!?N is an interesting move. The main idea is that after 10.axb5?! (10.♞e2 h6 To control the g5-square. 11.0-0 ♞d7 12.♞e4 ♗a6∞ with a sharp, but interesting position.) 10...♞xc3 11.bxc3 cxb5± Black will play ...♗c6 quickly, followed by ...b5-b4.) 9...♖b7 10.0-0 a6 11.♗e4 ♗d7 as often happens in such kinds of positions, White has some compensation, but with a certain precision Black should be able to keep everything under control. In the game Perez Mitjans,O (2462)-Ponomariov,R (2706) Madrid 2016, Black managed to win quite easily.

a2) 7.a3 ♞xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♖b7 9.♗d2 was played in the game Meza Rubio,C (1599)-Navarro Cruz,B Piura 2013, but here Black should have gone for (9.e5 ♗e4!± followed by ... c7-c5.) 9...c5!± with a very good position.

7...♖b7!?



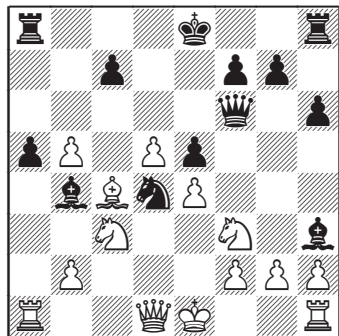
Quite a rare move, but I find it really interesting. I analyzed it some years ago, and I am happy to see that it is still totally playable. If the readers are curious, I can suggest them to check the games with a similar position, where the bishop is on g5 instead of c1, and the queen is still on d1, to have a better idea as to how play might continue. I tried 7...♙b7 in one of my own games. 8.e5 (8.axb5 ♜xe4 9.♞a4 was played in the game Rajlich, I (2432)-Berczes, D (2415) Budapest 2006, but here Black should have continued with: 9...♞e7N without being afraid of 10.b6+?! (10.♜xc4 ♜xf3 11.gxf3 ♜bd7 followed by ...♜b6. 10.♜e2 Probably the best. 10...♜bd7 11.0-0 ♜b6 12.♞d1 ♜b7 with an interesting position to play. I have already played such kinds of position and I believe Black's chances are quite good.) 10...♜bd7 11.bxa7 ♜xf3 12.gxf3 0-0 followed by ...c7-c5 or ...e6-e5. The a7-pawn is not that strong and White's king is stuck in the centre.) 8...♜e4!

The point of this line. 9.♞d2 and here both moves are equally good: (9.♞d1?N 9...♜d5+; 9.♞e2?N 9...♜d3 10.♞d1 ♜xf1 11.♜xf1 ♜d5+ 9...♜xf3 (9...♜d5 is also totally fine. 10.axb5 (10.♜g5?! has also been played, but I don't believe in it much. 10...♜g6 11.axb5 Rychagov, A (2485)-Malinin, Y (2335) St Petersburg 1998, and here I prefer 11...h6!N 12.♜h3 planning ♜f4. (12.♜f3 ♜b6+ followed by ...c7-c6.) 12...c5! followed by ...♜b6.) 10...♜b6 (10...♜xf3!? it was not too late to transpose to 9...♜xf3.) 11.♜e2 c6 12.♞f4 ♜g6 with mutual chances, as in the game Bergez, L (2400)-Duhayon, Y (2268) Charleroi 2003.) 10.exf6 (10.gxf3!?N has never been played, but it's logical. 10...♜d5 11.axb5 ♜b6 12.f4! To open the long diagonal for the bishop. 12...c6! 13.♜g2 (13.f5 cxb5 looks very interesting, for example: 14.♞g1 ♜c6 15.fxex6 0-0! 16.♞h6 g6 17.exf7+ ♞xf7 18.♞xg6+! hxg6 19.♞xg6+ ♞g7 20.♞e6+ ♜h8 21.♞h6+ ♞h7 22.♞xc6 ♞xd4 23.♞f6+= and White has to take the draw by repetition.) 13...cxb5! 14.♜xa8 ♜xa8 followed by ...♜c7. In my opinion, Black has enough compensation for the exchange. For example: 15.0-0 ♜c7 16.♞xa7 0-0 17.♞e3

♖c6 18.♖a1 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 ♜d5 20.♞e4
 ♜a5 21.♙a3 ♞e8 22.♙b4 ♜b3 23.♖a2
 ♞h4∞ with a balanced position.)
 10...♙b7!?N This was my old novelty.
 11.fxg7 ♞g8 12.axb5 ♞xg7 13.f3
 Protecting the g2-pawn and planning
 ♗xc4. 13...♜d7 14.♗xc4 On other moves
 Black would have played ...e6-e5 or
 ...♜b6. 14...♜e5! 15.dxe5 ♞h4+ 16.♚f1
 ♞xc4+ 17.♞e2 ♞xe2+ 18.♜xe2 0-0-0∞
 and Black has very good compensation for
 the pawn.

b) 6.♗g5 was played twice by
 Mamedyarov in 2014, but quite honestly,
 I don't believe much in this line. It's like a
 bad version of the Vienna Variation. 6...b5
 Of course, we want to protect the c4-
 pawn. 7.a4

b1) 7.e4 has also been tried with a very
 poor score. 7...h6 8.♗xf6 (8.♗h4? g5!
 9.♗g3 ♗b7+ is just a very bad position for
 White: Klein,E (2380)-Shliperman,I
 (2350) New York 1995.) 8...♞xf6 9.♗e2
 (9.a4 ♜c6!N is the engine's suggestion,
 taking benefit of White's move order.
 (9...c6 will probably transpose to the main
 line after 10.♗e2.) 10.♞d1 is the best
 reply. White defends the d4-pawn and
 threatens axb5. (10.♞d1 a6+ and now this
 move is possible, because the rook has
 moved from a1. 10.axb5 ♜xd4 11.♜xd4
 ♞xd4 12.♗e2 ♗d7!+ Black will end up a
 pawn ahead. 10.e5 ♞f4+ and the d4-pawn
 is too vulnerable.) 10...e5! 11.d5 ♜d4!
 12.axb5 a5! Not an easy move to see.
 13.♗xc4 (13.bxa6 ♞xa6 14.♞xa6 ♜xf3+
 15.♞xf3 ♞xa6 16.♞d1! ♗xc3+ 17.bxc3
 ♞a3+ 13...♗h3!↑



...with a strong initiative.)

9...♙b7 10.0-0 a6 11.a4 c6 is a critical
 position. White has tried many moves:
 12.b3!? The most played and probably the
 most logical. (12.♜e5 0-0 13.f4?! is
 aggressive, but Black has a perfect
 antidote: 13...♜d7!-+ and Black was
 already much better in the game Petkov,V
 (2480)-Georgiev,K (2685) Sibenik 2006.
 12.e5 ♞e7 13.♜e4 ♜d7 14.b3 cxb3
 15.♞xb3 0-0 with advantage in Rej,T
 (2264) -Xie,G (2376) Canberra 2006.)
 12...c5!?N Fighting for the centre.
 (12...cxb3 13.♞xb3 ♗xc3 14.♞xc3 ♜d7
 15.♜d2 0-0 16.♜b3 This position has
 been reached 3 times in practice according
 to my database. White has some grip on
 the queenside, so I'm not surprised that all
 the games ended in a draw. 16...c5
 (16...♞ab8!? is also interesting if we want
 to keep the tension.) 17.axb5 axb5
 18.♗b5 cxd4 19.♞xd4 and draw was
 agreed in the game Akesson, R (2493)-
 Grandelius,N (2491) Kungsor 2009.)
 13.bxc4 (13.dxc5?? is of course impossible
 due to 13...♞xc3-+; 13.e5? ♞g6!+ and
 White is in trouble. 13.♜a2 ♙a3 14.axb5
 cxd4 15.e5 ♞e7 16.bxa6 ♜xa6 17.♜xd4

0-0 18.bxc4 ♖c5 and despite being a pawn down, Black has very strong initiative due to his two strong bishops.) 13...cxd4 14.♗a2 ♕a3 15.cxb5 0-0∞ with a very sharp position to play, but Black's chances are not inferior.

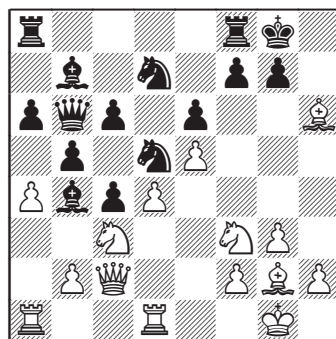
b2) 7.e3 ♖b7 8.♗e2 ♗bd7 9.0-0 a6 and even if White has some compensation, I still believe that Black is better. He is a pawn up, and has good control over the e4-square.

7...c6 8.g3

b1) 8.e4 h6 will likely transpose to 7.e4 h6.

b2) 8.♗xf6 has been played several times, even by Capablanca himself once! 8...♖xf6! It might look at first glance as though this move is not possible due to (8...gxf6 is of course possible, but it's exactly what White is hoping for.) 9.axb5 cxb5 10.♖e4, but here Black has the unexpected 10...♖g6! (or 10...♖f5!) 11.♖xa8 ♖c2! 12.♗d2 (12.♗d1N 12...♖xb2 13.♖xb8 ♗xc3+ 14.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 15.♖xd2 ♖a1+ 16.♗d1 ♖a5+ 17.♗d2 0-0 18.f3! ♗a6 followed by ...♖c8 and ...c4-c3. Black is better even though he is a rook down!) 12...♖xb2 13.♗d1 ♗xc3 14.e4N was a better try but after (14.f3? was played in the only existing game in this position: 14...0-0! 15.♖xb8 ♗xd4!+ and Black eventually won in Lain,L (2253)-Lettieri,G (2251) Bratto 2005.) 14...♗xd2+ 15.♖xd2 ♖a1+ 16.♗e2 0-0 17.♖xb8 ♗a6! followed by ...b5-b4, and/or ...c4-c3 with a terrific attack.

8...♖b7 9.♗g2 ♗bd7 10.0-0 (10.♗e5 is also a decent alternative. 10...♖c8N Moving away from the unpleasant pin. (10...♖b6 is also possible, as in Flores Alvarez, R-Schwartzman, A Mar del Plata 1936.) 11.0-0 0-0 and now everything is under control. White still has to prove that there is enough compensation for the pawn.) 10...♖b6 this was Magnus Carlsen's move. In such types of positions it's often a good choice. 11.e4 (11.♗e5N is the engine's suggestion. 11...♗xe5 12.♗xf6 (12.dxe5 ♗d5 13.♗e4 0-0∞ also looks good for Black.) 12...gxf6 13.dxe5 f5∞ and I still prefer Black.) 11...a6 Consolidating the queenside. 12.♖fd1 h6 13.♗e3 c5!N (13...0-0 was the move played in Mamedyarov,S (2760)-Carlsen,M (2881) Shamkir 2014, but here White could have improved his play with the strong: 14.e5!N 14...♗d5 15.♗xh6!



The point! 15...gxh6 16.♖d2 ♗g7 After other moves White will certainly have good compensation after grabbing the h6-pawn. 17.♗xd5! ♗xd2 18.♗xb6 ♗xb6 19.♗xd2 ♖fd8 20.a5 ♖xd4 21.axb6∞ with a balanced position.) 14.♗e5 (14.a5 ♖d8 15.d5 0-0 16.dxe6 fxe6∞) 14...0-0 15.dxc5

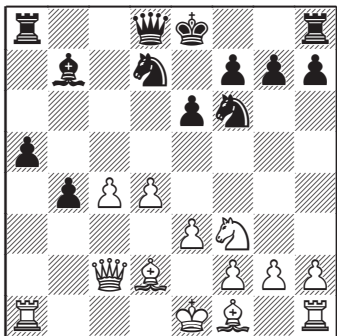
♘xc5 16.♘a2 ♕a5! 17.axb5 axb5
 18.♘xc4!? An interesting try, but it's not
 enough to claim an advantage. 18...bxc4
 19.♖xc4 ♕xe4 20.♕xe4 ♜fxe4 21.b4
 ♕xb4 22.♘xb4 ♖xa1 23.♖xa1 ♖b8♖
 followed by ...♖b5. After this long tactical
 line, Black ends up a healthy pawn ahead.

c) 6.a3 ♕xc3+ (6...♕a5!? is also a decent
 alternative.) 7.♖xc3 (7.bxc3 c5 As usual,
 attacking White's centre. 8.e4 (8.e3 0-0
 9.♕xc4 ♖c7 (9...b6!?N is probably even
 more precise, as developing the queen can
 wait.) 10.0-0 b6 11.♖e2 ♕b7= and Black
 had a good position in the game Sokolov,I
 (2658)-Wells,P (2526) London 2008. It's
 quite a typical structure for the Nimzo-
 Indian Defence.) 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6
 10.♕xc4! (10.♕e3?! b5! 11.a4 ♘b4
 12.♖b1!N (12.♖c3? a5 13.axb5 ♘xe4+-
 and Black was winning in the game
 Hilverda,A (2297) -Borovikov,V (2557)
 Paderborn 2013.) 12...a5! 13.axb5! ♕b7♖
 and White has a big problem with the e4-
 pawn.) 10...♘xd4 11.♖c3 ♘c6 12.0-0 0-0
 13.♕b2 ♖a5 14.♖e3 e5∞ White has some
 compensation, but as I have already
 mentioned a number of times, a pawn is a
 pawn: Vanheiden,G (2193)-Meissen,F
 (2555) Remote email 2013.) 7...b5 8.a4
 c6 9.g3 (9.axb5 cxb5 10.b3 a5 11.e3 ♕b7
 12.bxc4 b4 13.♖c2 ♘bd7∞ with a very
 interesting position to play. Black even
 won in Mamonovas,V (2521)-Gefenas,V
 (2535) ICCF email 2009. It reminds me
 of the Noteboom variation, but it looks
 like a good version for Black.) 9...♕b7
 10.♕g2 ♘bd7 11.0-0 0-0 12.b3 was
 played in the game Eljanov,P (2675)-
 Palac,M (2571) France 2007, but here I
 like 12...a5!N The idea is that if White

takes the c4-pawn he will be in trouble.
 13.bxc4?! (13.axb5 cxb5 14.bxc4 ♖c7♖;
 13.♘g5 ♖c8 14.bxc4 b4 15.♖f3 e5!♖)
 13...b4 14.♖b3 c5♖ and the b4-pawn will
 be a real pain for White.

6...b5 7.a4 c6 8.♕d2! (8.♕e2?! is a bit
 slow because after 8...♕b7 9.0-0 a6♖ Black
 is in time to control everything.) 8...♕b7
 (8...a5 is also good, and will normally
 transpose to the main line.) 9.axb5 (9.♕e2
 0-0 10.0-0 a6♖) 9...♕xc3 10.♖xc3
 (10.♕xc3 cxb5 11.b3 (11.♘d2? has been
 played once, but it can't be good. 11...a5-
 +) 11...a5! It's exactly like in the
 Noteboom Variation. White will win back
 the pawn, but Black will have two
 connected passed pawns. 12.bxc4 b4
 13.♕b2 (13.♕d2 see 10.♖xc3.) 13...♕e4!?
 It's always good to disturb the
 coordination of your opponent's pieces.
 14.♖b3!N (14.♖d1?! 0-0 15.♘e5 ♘bd7
 16.f3 ♕b7 17.♘d3 was played in the game
 Kolanek,R (2216) -Purynychiev,Y (2092)
 ICCF email 2010, but here I like
 17...♖e7!?!♖ with the idea of ...♖fc8, then
 ...♘b6 to put pressure on the c4-pawn.
 14.♕d3?!N 14...♕xd3 15.♖xd3 a4! 16.e4
 0-0 17.0-0 ♘fd7!♖ Black is threatening
 ...e6-e5. ...♘c5 might also be an idea. The
 knight from b8 will be perfectly placed on
 c6.) 14...♘bd7 15.♕e2 0-0 16.0-0 ♕c6!?
 17.♖a2 ♖c7 18.♖fa1 ♘e4∞ with a
 balanced position, where Black's chances
 are not inferior.) 10...cxb5 11.b3 a5
 12.bxc4 (12.♖xa5? loses material after
 12...♘e4! 13.♖a1 ♘xd2 14.♖xa8 ♘xb3!-+
 and Black won a few moves later in
 Hachmann,B-Kuhn,G (2221) Pinneberg
 1999.)

12...b4 13.♖c2 ♘bd7!?



In general, it is more logical to start with this move first, then ...0-0. 14.♔e2

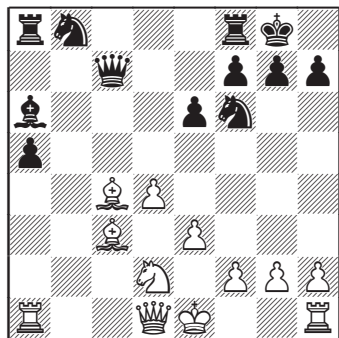
a) 14.c5N 14...♙e4 15.♖b2 0-0 16.♔c4 ♗c7+;

b) 14.♙d3 e5!N I really like this idea. Once again, it's typical of the Noteboom variation. 15.d5 (15.dxe5 ♙xf3 16.exf6 (16.gxf3 ♘xe5+) 16...♖xf6 and the rook on a1 is hanging. 17.♔c3! bxc3 18.gxf3 ♘c5+) 15...♖c7+ followed by ...♘c5.

14...0-0 15.0-0 ♖c7 16.♖fc1 ♗fb8∞ and Black eventually won the game: Blondel,F (1963)-Dunlop,G (2130) ICCF email 2011. The position is quite unclear, but in practice I would take Black without much hesitation. It must be super-difficult to play against Black's passed pawns.

5.♙d2 0-0 6.a3 A rare move, but it makes sense. (6.e3 see 5.e3 in Chapter 14.) 6...♙xc3 7.♙xc3 dxc4 is the most logical. Black will play ...b7-b5 next to protect the c4-pawn. 8.e3 b5 9.a4 (9.b3 has also been played. 9...♘e4 10.♙b4?! (10.♖c2!N is probably wiser. 10...♘xc3 11.♖xc3 cxb3 12.♙xb5 ♙b7 13.♖xb3 ♘d7 14.♙e2 ♖b8= followed by ...c7-c5.) 10...c5!N Black seizes the initiative.

11.♙xc5 (11.dxc5? ♖xd1+ 12.♖xd1 a5-+) 11...♘xc5 12.dxc5 ♖xd1+ 13.♖xd1 cxb3 14.♘d4 a6 15.♘xb3 ♙b7+ followed by ...♙d5. Afterwards Black will put pressure on the c5-pawn.) 9...c6 10.axb5 (10.b3?! is often played, but it's not precise because of 10...♘d5! 11.♖d2 (11.♖c2N 11...b4!+ followed by ...c4-c3.) 11...cxb3 12.axb5 cxb5 and Black was already better in the game Machalova,E (2078)-Kovacs,J (2205) Trencianske Teplice 2005.) 10...cxb5 11.b3 a5!N I quite like this suggestion of Richard Pert. 12.bxc4 bxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖c7 14.♘d2!? (14.♖d3 ♙b7∞ with a balanced position.) 14...♙a6! It's not so easy to find this move.



15.♙xa5 (15.♙xa6 ♖xa6= with a balanced position.) 15...♖c6! 16.♙xa6 ♖xg2 17.♖f3 ♖xf3 18.♘xf3 ♖xa6= followed by ...♘c6. The position is equal.

5.e3 Transposes to the Nimzo-Indian 4.e3. See Chapter 14.

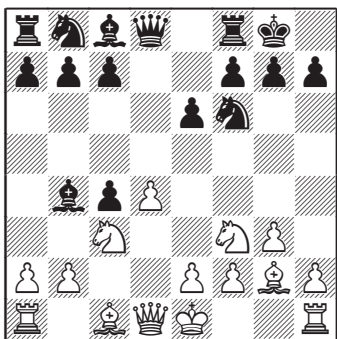
5.a3 I was surprised to see a number of games with this move. Most of the time it will transpose to some Nimzo-Indian line. 5...♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 0-0 7.♙g5 (7.e3 Here I suggest 7...c6 transposing to Chapter 16.)

7...♘bd7 8.e3 c5 9.♙d3 (9.cxd5 exd5 followed by ...♙a5. Practice has shown that Black is totally fine.) 9...♙a5!? To attack the c3-pawn and unpin the ♘f6. 10.0-0! is probably best. (10.♙c2 is often played, but after 10...cxd4 11.exd4 e5!N is a strong novelty. 12.♙xf6 e4!?) 10...dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♙xc3!? Why not? 12.♖c1 ♙a5!? I prefer not to take on a3. 13.dxc5 ♘e4 14.♙e7 ♖e8 15.♙d3 ♗xe7 16.♙xc4 ♘f6∞ with an equal position.

5...0-0 6.♙g2

6.cxd5 is harmless. 6...exd5 7.♙g2 ♖e8 8.0-0 c6 followed by ...♘bd7. The ♙b4 can be retreated to d6, with a good position.

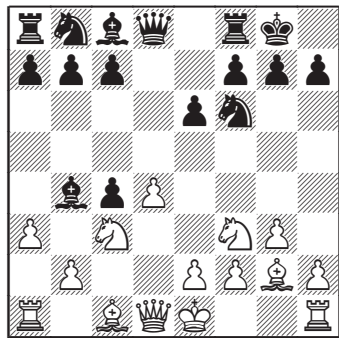
6...dxc4!



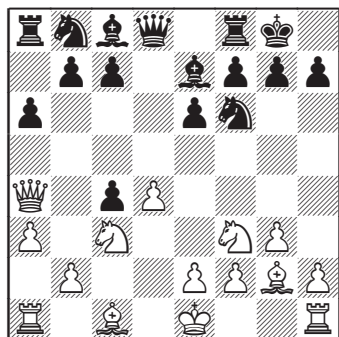
I have always believed that this is the best reply against this particular set-up.

7.0-0

7.a3!?



Normally White castles first, but it makes sense to start with this move. 7...♙e7 (7...♙xc3+ is also often played, but to keep to the spirit of our main line, I prefer to come back to e7.) 8.♘e5 It's curious to notice that this position is a very theoretical one, but with a pawn on a2, instead of a3, reached via the Catalan. This line has been quite popular recently, so I'm sure that people can be tricky and try to play it here with the pawn on a3. (8.♙a4 to recapture on c4 with the queen. 8...a6!



Obviously, Black wants to push ...b7-b5. 9.♙xc4 b5 10.♙d3 Probably a bit more precise. (10.♙b3 ♙b7 11.0-0 c5

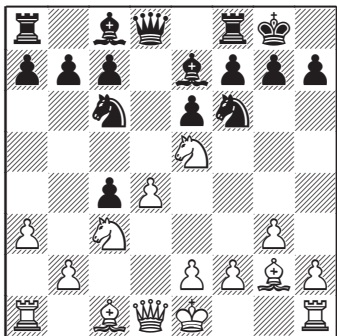
12.♖d1 (12.dxc5 ♘bd7∞ followed by ...♘xc5. I even start to prefer Black's position: Collins,S (2412)-Sokolov,A (2559) Le Touquet 2008.) 12...♘bd7 13.♙e3 (13.♙f4?! ♖b6♞ is already better for Black, as in Granda Zuniga,J (2555)-Milos,G (2485) Santiago de Chile 1987.) 13...c4 14.♖c2 ♘d5∞ and Black was fine in the game Passerotti,P (2310) -Trepp,M (2390) Rome 1986.) 10...♙b7 11.♙g5

a) 11.0-0 c5 12.♖d1 ♘bd7 13.dxc5 (13.♙g5 ♖c8 14.dxc5 was played in the game Ivanisevic,I (2662)-Giri,A (2778) Reykjavik 2015, but here I prefer 14...♘xc5?N 15.♖xd8 ♜fxd8 16.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♘e5 ♙xg2 18.♙xg2 h6 with full equality.) 13...♘xc5 14.♖c2 ♖c8 15.♙f4 ♖d8 is also totally fine. (15...♘a4 16.♖ac1 ♘xc3 17.♖xc3 ♖xc3 18.♖xc3 ♘d5= and Black had a safe equality in the game: Wojtaszek,R (2637) -Maiorov,N (2511) Warsaw 2009.) 16.♖dc1 was played in Kaidanov,G (2515)-Ivanchuk,V (2535) Lvov 1988, but now Black could have continued with the interesting 16...a5!?N 17.♘xb5 ♙e4 18.♖c4 ♙d5 19.♖c2 ♖b7♞ with a very strong initiative for the pawn.

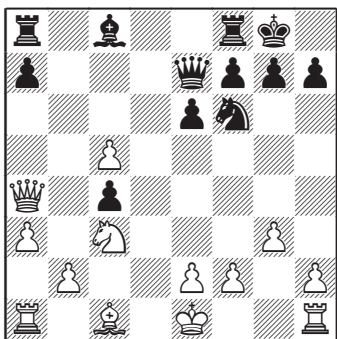
b) 11.♙e3 ♘bd7 12.0-0 (12.b4?! Trying to prevent ...c7-c5, but it's not a great idea, as Black has another break in the centre: 12...e5! 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xd8 ♜fxd8 15.♘xe5 ♙xg2 16.♖g1 ♙b7♞ and Black had a little edge in the game Andriasian,Z (2640)-Polivanov, A (2414) Voronezh 2011.) 12...c5 13.♖fd1 Berkes,F (2589)-Stojanovic,D (2469) Zenica 2006 13...♖c7!?N 14.♙f4 (14.♖ac1 ♖ac8=) 14...♖b6∞ with a perfectly sound position.

c) 11.b4 Again with the idea of preventing ...c7-c5. 11...a5! 12.♖b1 axb4 13.axb4 was played in the game Zoltek,T (2315)-Nikolenko,O (2450) Moscow 1991, but now I suggest continuing with 13...♘a6!?N 14.♖xb5 (14.0-0 ♘xb4 15.♖xb5 ♙a6 16.♖e5 ♙d6 17.♖g5 ♘bd5 18.♘xd5 exd5∞ and Black's position is slightly more pleasant.) 14...♖b8 15.♖c4 ♘xb4 16.0-0 ♘fd5∞ with an unclear position, where Black's prospects are not at all worse.

11...c5!?N is an interesting novelty. (11...♘bd7 is also totally fine. 12.b4 was played in the high-level game Radjabov,T (2751)-Topalov,V (2767) Sofia 2008, but here Black missed a nice idea (12.0-0 c5 with equality.) 12...e5!N taking advantage of the pin on the long diagonal. 13.dxe5 (13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♘g5 ♙xg5 15.♙xb7 ♖b8 16.♙g2 exd4 17.♖xd4 c5!♞ followed by ...♙f6. Black is better.) 13...♘xe5!♞ and Black is better, having the c4-square for his knight.) 12.♙xf6 (12.0-0 is probably safer. 12...♘bd7= with equality. 12.dxc5 ♖xd3 13.exd3 ♙xc5 14.♙xf6 gxf6∞ with a balanced position.) 12...♙xf6 13.dxc5 (13.♘e4 ♙xd4 14.♘xd4 cxd4♞) 13...♖xd3 14.exd3 ♘d7 15.d4 e5!↑ and Black will be better after opening the centre.) 8...♘c6!?

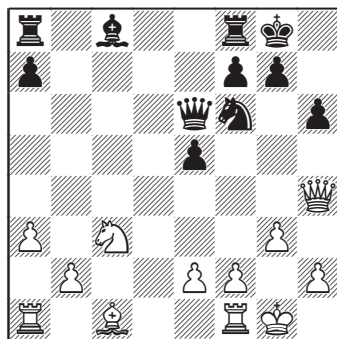


This idea is often applied in the real Catalan. 9.♗xc6 (9.♜xc6 bxc6 10.♗xc6 (10.0-0 ♖b8 and White will probably take on c6 soon, because otherwise Black will push ...c6-c5.) 10...♖b8 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.♗xb7 ♖xb7 13.e4 ♖b3 and Black was fine in the game Ftacnik,L (2580)-Adams,M (2744) Germany 2002. It's possible to continue with ...c7-c5. The bishop on c1 has some problems to develop due to the hanging b2-pawn.) 9...bxc6 10.♜xc6 ♖e8 11.♜xe7+ ♔xe7 12.♗a4 c5 13.♗xc4 (13.dxc5!?N



A move which has never been played in this position, but it's a fashionable move with the pawn on a2. 13...♗xc5 14.♗e3

♗c7 15.f3 ♗d7 Here, in the line with a pawn still on a2, White retreats to a3, but now it's not possible. 16.♗c2 (16.♗a6 ♖fb8 17.0-0-0 ♖b3 18.♗d2 ♜d5 19.♗d4 with an unclear position, where Black has at least draw: 19...♗c8 20.♗a4 ♗d7=) 16...♖ab8= followed by ...♖b3. Another drawback of the a3 move.) 13...cxd4 14.♗xd4 e5 15.♗h4 (15.♗b4 ♗e6 16.♗g5 a5 17.♗h4 ♜d5! 18.♖c1 was played in the top-level game Aronian,L (2737)-Karjakin,S (2727) Sochi 2008, but here the simplest was 18...♜xc3!N 19.♖xc3 ♗a6= and Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.) 15...♗e6 16.0-0 has been played several times, and even recently against Sergei Karjakin (Moiseenko, A (2648) -Karjakin,S (2774) Almaty 2016). Here I will suggest a novelty, even if it's not a new idea. 16...h6!?N

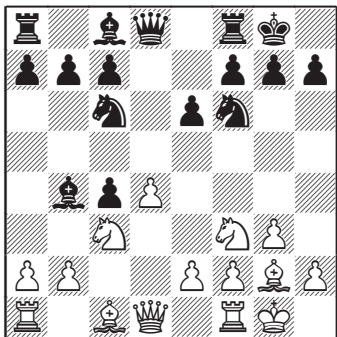


...with the simple idea of preventing ♗g5. Black will continue with ...♗a6, putting pressure on the e2-pawn, and activating his rooks along the b-file. For example: 17.♗e3 (17.e4 ♗a6 18.♖e1 ♖ab8 19.b4 ♗b7= with good compensation.) 17...♗a6 18.♖ac1 ♖ac8 and Black is

threatening ...♖c4. It's probably time for White to simplify the position: 19.f3 ♖c4 20.♟e4 ♜xe4 21.♞xc4 ♜xc4 22.♞xe4 ♞xe4 23.fxe4 ♖b8= with full equality.

7...♟c6!

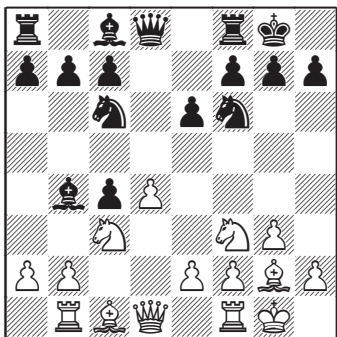
I have always thought this was the right way to play. Now White has tried several different plans.



8.♟g5!?

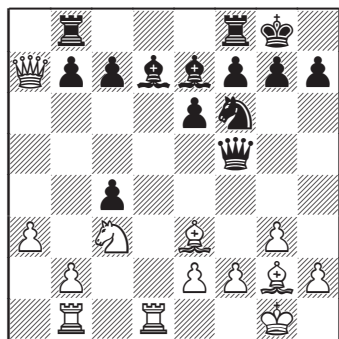
This is the move which has been most-played recently by fans of this g3-line.

8.♞b1



This was tried by two strong Indian grandmasters, Sandipan and Harikrishna. The idea is to be ready for ...♟xc3, but I

have difficulties believing in such kinds of moves. 8...♞b8 The simplest. Black wants to push ...b7-b5. 9.a3 ♟e7 10.♞a4 ♟xd4!? (10...a6 is also totally fine. 11.♞xc4 b5! The point, as the knight on c6 can't be taken. 12.♞d3 (12.♞xc6? White loses material after 12...♟b7! as the queen is trapped. 13.♟e5! ♟xc6 14.♟xc6 ♞d7 15.♟xb8 ♞xb8+) 12...b4 13.axb4 ♟xb4 14.♞c4 ♟b7= with a balanced position: Enkhnar,E (2451) -Biriukov,O (2327) St Petersburg 2016.) 11.♟xd4 ♞xd4 12.♟e3 ♞e5 13.♞xa7 (13.♟xa7N 13...♞a8 14.♟d4! ♞a5 15.♞xc4 c6= with equality. Black wants to play ...e6-e5. 13.♞xc4 gives White nothing because of 13...b5!∞) 13...♟d7 14.♞fd1 So far we have been following the game Sandipan,C (2640) - Gustafsson,J (2640) Sarajevo 2010. Here Black could have continued with: (14.♟f4N 14...♞c5 15.♞xc5 ♟xc5 16.♟xc7 ♞bc8 17.♟f4 ♟c6= with full equality.) 14...♞f5!N



15.♟xb7 c6! 16.♞a6 (16.♞xd7 looks strong, but it only leads to a draw: 16...♟xd7 17.♟xc6 ♟c5! 18.♞xd7 ♞fd8 19.♞c7 ♞dc8 20.♞d7 ♞d8=) 16...♞h3 17.♟xc6 ♟xc6 18.♞xc6 ♟g4 19.♞g2

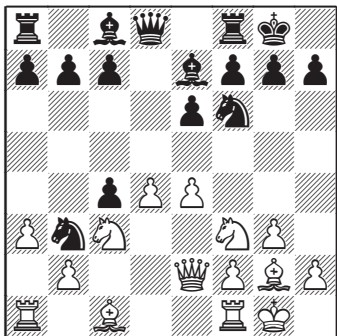
♖xg2+ 20.♙xg2 ♜xe3+ 21.fxe3 ♝b3= with full compensation for the pawn.

8.a3 ♙e7 Black wants to continue with ...♜a5, defending the c4-pawn. Compared to the normal Catalan, the b3-square is now weak. 9.e4 (9.e3?! is quite rare and I don't think it promises White anything. 9...♜a5 10.♖e2 (10.♜e5?! ♜d7! 11.f4 (11.♖e2N 11...♜xe5 12.dxe5 ♖d3+) 11...c5!± As usual! Zierke,O (2250)-Kacheishvili, G (2450) Berlin 1995.) 10...♝b8 is the most logical move, intending ...b7-b5. (Another good alternative is 10...♙d7 11.♜e5 c5 12.dxc5 Perelshteyn, E (2543)-Sargissian, G (2660) Chicago 2009, and here Black could have equalized with 12...♞c8!N 13.♜xc4 (13.c6 ♙xc6 14.♜xc6 ♜xc6 15.♞d1 ♖b6 16.♖xc4 ♜a5= with a good position. 13.♞d1 ♞xc5 14.♜xd7 ♜xd7 15.♝b1 b5=) 13...♜xc4 (13...♜b3 is also good 14.♝b1 ♞xc5 15.♙xb7 ♖c7 16.♙a6 e5↑ with a strong initiative for the pawn.) 14.♖xc4 ♞xc5 15.♖b3 b6= with full equality.) 11.a4 Here I like the new move (11.♞d1?! b5 12.e4 ♜b3 13.♝b1 ♜xc1 14.♞bxc1 c6 15.♜e5 ♖c7± and I don't believe White has enough compensation for the pawn: Perelshteyn, E (2534)-Charbonneau, P (2509) ICC INT 2009.) 11...♜d5!N 12.♙d2 (12.e4 ♜b4± followed by ...b7-b6 and ...♙a6. The ♜b4 can be quite annoying for White.) 12...b6 13.♜e5 ♙b7± with the idea of ...♜b3, and on e3-e4 we want to play ...♜b4.) 9...♜a5 The most logical. Black takes advantage of the b3-weakness. Now White has a choice: (9...a6!? I also studied this move, but it's not that simple, as it leads to some very sharp middlegames.) 10.♖e2

a) 10.♙e3 ♜b3!? The simplest route to equality. (10...a6!? is also possible if we really want to play for a win, but after 11.♖c2! b5 12.♞ad1= Black needs to be careful, as White will try d4-d5, or ♜g5 creating some unpleasant threats.) 11.♝b1 (11.♞a2?!N I also checked this move, with the idea being to push d4-d5 after ...c7-c5, but it fails due to: 11...c5 12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 (13.♜xd5 ♜xd5 14.exd5 ♙g4 15.h3 ♙xf3 16.♖xf3 ♙d6±) 13...♙g4! 14.h3 ♙xf3 15.♖xf3 ♜d4 16.♖d1 ♖b6± and Black is better.) 11...c5 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 The simplest. 13.♖xd8 (13.♙xc5 ♜xc5 14.♖xd8 ♞xd8 15.♜e5 Granda Zuniga, J (2540)-Toth, C (2280) Porto Velho 1988 15...b6! with equality.) 13...♞xd8 14.♜e5 b6 15.♜c6 ♞d7 16.♜e5= and a draw was agreed in the game Kuemin, S (2259)-Ravi, T (2385) Biel 2000.

b) 10.♙f4 ♜b3!? For me this looks to be the easiest way to proceed. Black wants to continue with ...c7-c5. 11.♝b1 c5 12.dxc5 was played in: Li, S (2520)-Hou, Y (2602) Xinghua Jiangsu 2011, and here I suggest the logical (12.♜b5? was played against young Fabiano Caruana, but it's just a mistake. 12...a6 13.♜c7 ♞a7 14.d5 ♜h5 15.♙e5 ♙d6 16.dxe6 (16.♜g5N was probably initial White's idea, but it fails due to: 16...♙xe5 17.♖xh5 h6 18.♜gxe6 ♖d6!→ and White is losing material.) 16...♙xc7 17.♙xc7 ♖xc7→ and Black was a piece up in the game: Vernay, C (2381)-Caruana, F (2549) Budapest 2007.) 12...♜d7?!N intending ...♜dc5. 13.♖e2 ♜dxc5 14.♞fd1 ♖e8 15.♖xc4 b6= followed by ...♙a6. The position is equal.

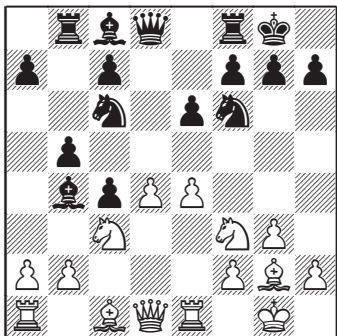
10...♜b3!?



The solid approach. In general, players who play this line with White are aiming for a sharp game, so I think it can be a good idea to annoy them by simplifying the position. (10...c6 intending ...b7-b5 is possible and equally good.) 11.e5! (11.♖b1 ♜xd4 12.♜xd4 ♖xd4 13.♞d1 ♖c5 14.♙e3 ♖a5 15.♙d2 (15.♖xc4N 15...c6 16.b4 ♖h5+ followed by ...e6-e5.) 15...♖a6!? (15...♖c5 16.♙e3=) 16.e5 We are following the game Barle,J (2430)-Sisniga,M (2525) Manila 1992, but now I like 16...♜d5!N Black is ready to give up a pawn in exchange for opening the light-squared bishop. 17.♙xd5 (17.♜xd5 exd5 18.♙xd5 ♙e6+ with a good advantage.) 17...exd5 18.♜xd5 ♙d8+ followed by ...♞e8. Black will have good play on the light squares.) 11...♜d5 (11...♜xa1 has been tried once in practice: 12.exf6 ♙xf6 13.♖xc4∞ with a sharp position in the game Battaglini, G (2423)-Soffer,R (2488) Israel 2012. But honestly, I am not a fan of my knight in the corner.) 12.♞b1 Here Black has tried several moves, but I like the one Gajewski played: 12...♜xc3 13.bxc3 ♜xc1 14.♞fxc1 (14.♞bxc1? is just a big mistake, because it allows Black to play 14...b5+) 14...c5 15.♖xc4 (15.♞d1N

15...♖c7 with a good position.) 15...♞b8 16.♞d1 (16.a4N 16...♙d7 17.♜d2 ♖c7= with a balanced game. 16.dxc5 ♖c7 17.c6 Battaglini,G (2431) -Favarel,A (2362) Nimes 2014, and here Black could have played 17...♙d7!N 18.a4 bxc6∞ followed by ...c6-c5, and thanks to the pair of bishops, he has some chances.) 16...♖c7 17.h4 ♙d7 18.♜g5 h6 19.♜e4 ♙c6∞ and Black was totally fine in the game Sandipan,C (2622)-Gajewski,G (2568) Cappelle-la-Grande 2010.

8.♞e1 is not very consistent. 8...♞b8 as usual, intending ...b7-b5, is a good response. 9.e4 (9.a3 ♙a5!? I like this strange-looking move. Black wants to play ...b7-b5 next. In general, such moves can be dangerous because of 10.e4 b5 11.♙g5 and Black's dark-squared bishop cannot come back to the defence, but here Black has a good antidote: 11...h6 12.♙h4 White is still threatening e4-e5. In the game Bukal,V (2418)-Palac,M (2599) Schwarzach 2012, Black failed to find the best reply. 12...e5!N 13.d5 (13.♜xe5 ♜xe5 14.dxe5 ♖xd1 15.♞exd1 ♜d7 16.f4 ♜xe5! A nice point. 17.fxe5 g5 18.♜d5 gxf4 19.gxf4 ♜g7 and Black is better. 13.dxe5? ♖xd1 14.♞exd1 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♜xe4+ with a winning position.) 13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♜a5+ and Black's position is better.) 9...b5



In practice White's score is awful here.

10.e5 ♖d5 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗ge4 ♙e7
13.♞h5?! This can look a bit scary, but
Black needs to stay cold-blooded.
13...♗xd4 14.♙hxh6 gxh6 15.♞ad1 ♗f5
16.♗xd5N the most challenging.
(16.♙h3?! Gaehwiler, G (2328)-
Zumsande, M (2422) Douglas 2015
16...c6!-+) 16...exd5 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5
18.♗f6+ ♙xf6 19.♙xd5 ♙g7 20.e6! fxe6
21.♞xe6 ♙b7! 22.♙xb7 ♞xb7+ and Black
is much better.

8.e3 ♞b8 9.♞e2 (9.♗d2?! e5!+ Black
was already better in Zhao, X (2478)-Xu, Y
(2420) Beijing 2005.) 9...b5 10.♞d1 Here
Black has several possibilities, but I prefer
to suggest a safe one. 10...♞e7!? 11.e4
(11.♗e1!? ♙d7 12.f4 to prevent ...e6-e5.
(12.♗c2N 12...e5!+) 12...♞fd8 13.a4
Nilssen, J (2353)-Glud, J (2520) Helsingor
2013 13...bxa4!N 14.♗xa4 ♗a5!+
followed by ...c7-c5.) 11...e5 12.dxe5!+ is
safer for White.

a) 12.♙g5?! is logical, but in this
particular position it doesn't work so well.
12...♙xc3 13.bxc3 h6 14.♙c1

a1) 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6+;

a2) 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♙xf6 ♞xf6
16.dxe5 ♞xe5+ with a healthy pawn up.

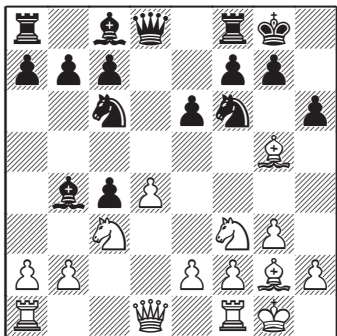
a3) 14.♙h4 exd4!? I'm always a bit
afraid to play ...g7-g5 in such types of
position. 15.cxd4?! (15.♙xf6 d3+)
15...♞xe4+;

14...exd4 15.♗xd4 We are following the
game Wojtaszek, R (2597) -Arutunian, D
(2532) Turin 2006, but here Black's play
could be improved with: 15...♗xd4
16.♞xd4 (16.cxd4 ♞e8+) 16...♙e6+ and
Black is a healthy pawn up.

b) 12.d5?!N 12...♗d4! 13.♗xd4 exd4
14.♞xd4 ♙c5 15.♞d1 ♗g4 16.♞f1 f5+
with a strong initiative.

12...♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♞xe5 14.♙f4 ♞e7
15.a4 a6 16.axb5 axb5 17.h3 (17.e5N I
also tried this logical move, but Black has
a strong reply here: 17...♙xc3! 18.bxc3
♙g4! A good move to disorganize White's
position. 19.f3 ♙f5 20.♞e3 ♗d7 21.e6!
♗f6!+ and Black is probably a bit better.)
17...♙e6 18.g4 was played in the game
Akshayraj, K (2486) -Moradiabadi, E
(2585) New York 2014, and here I like the
simple 18...♞fd8∞ With a sharp and
interesting position.

8...h6!



The safest and the best reply.

9. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 10.e3

10. ♖c1 ♖d8 As in the main line. 11.e3 ♜e7 (11...e5 is also totally playable. 12. ♖xe5 (12.dxe5?! ♜e7!?) 12... ♖xe5 13.dxe5 ♜e7 14. ♜h5 (14. ♖d5N 14... ♜xe5∞) 14... ♖xc3 (14...c6!? I also tried this move, but it's a bit dangerous. 15. ♖e4!N A strong improvement over the existing game. (15. ♖cd1?! Lombart,P (1950)-Negyesy,G (1901) LSS email 2010 15... ♖xc3!N 16. ♖xd8+ (16.bxc3 ♖d3!) 16... ♜xd8 17. ♖d1 ♜a5 18.bxc3 ♖e6) 15... ♖d5!? 16.f4! (16. ♖f6+? gxf6 17. ♖xd5 cxd5 18.a3 ♖a5 19.exf6 ♜e4) 16... ♖d2 17. ♖xd2 ♖xd2 18. ♖cd1 ♜b4 19.f5∞ and even though my engine gives 0.00, I am worried about my king's safety.) 15. ♖xc3 ♖d2∞ and Black was fine in the game Gonzalez Garcia,J (2447) -Tiviakov,S (2617) Mallorca 2004.) 12. ♜e2

a) 12.a3?! ♖xc3 13. ♖xc3 e5 14. ♖xc4 exd4 15.exd4 ♖e6 and Black was a bit better in the game: Yevseev,D (2537) - Zakharevich,I (2499) St Petersburg 2005.

b) 12. ♖d2 ♖a5 13. ♜e2 (13.a3N 13... ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3 e5= with a balanced

position.) 13...c5 14.dxc5 ♖d7 15.a3 ♖xc3 16. ♖xc3 ♖ac8= Taras,I-Popelka,M (2127) ICCF email 2005.

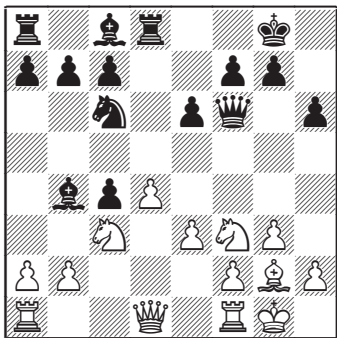
12... ♖a5 13. ♖e5 ♖d7 14. ♖xc4 (14. ♖fd1N 14...c5 The standard reaction. 15.dxc5 ♖xc3 16. ♖xc3 ♖b5= with a balanced position.) 14... ♖xc3 15. ♖xc3 ♖b5 16.b3 c5 17. ♜h5 ♖xc4 18.bxc4 cxd4 19.exd4 ♜b4 20. ♖f3 g6 21. ♜xh6 ♖xd4 was played twice, but here White could have continued with 22. ♖f6!?N 22... ♜e7 23. ♖xg6+! fvg6 24. ♜xg6+ ♜g7 25. ♜xe6+ ♖h8 26. ♖b1! threatening ♖b5. 26...a6! 27. ♖e4! ♖f8 28. ♜h3+ ♖g8 29. ♖d5+ ♖xd5 30.cxd5 ♖d4 31. ♜e6+= and White achieves a draw by perpetual.

10. ♖e4 ♜f5! is a strong reply. It's not easy to see how White should continue now. 11. ♖ed2!N has never been played, but the engine suggests it, so it's worth taking a look at it. (11. ♖h4 ♜a5 12.e3 e5 ♜ Ellers,H (2275)-Kupreichik,V (2545) Muenster 1994; 11. ♖c3 ♖d8 12.a3 ♖e7 13.e3 e5 ♜ Humphrys,D-Lyne,C England 1998; 11. ♜c2 ♖d8 12. ♖fd1 ♖e7! and Black should be better because White can't recapture the c4-pawn: Cori Tello,D (2403)-Epishin,V (2598) Pamplona 2010.) 11... ♖xd2 12. ♜xd2 (12. ♖xd2 ♖xd4 13. ♖xc4 e5 14.e3 ♖c6) 12...e5 13. ♜c3 ♖xd4 14. ♖xd4 exd4 15. ♜xd4 c6 16. ♜xc4∞ with a balanced position.

10.e4?! ♖d8 11.e5 ♜e7 and Black was already better in the game Lainburg,V (2270)-Farago,I (2475) Deizisau 1998.

10. ♜a4?! a6! ♜ Bednar,M (2241)- Michenka,J (2357) Slovakia 2012

10...♖b8



Intending ...e6-e5. Here White has a choice: 10...♖b8 is an interesting alternative suggested by Richard Pert in his book on Ragozin.

11.♘d2

The most common move. 11.♘d2 Ehlvest, J (2622) -Yermolinsky, A (2570) Moscow 2005 11...♗f5!N As often in this line, f5 is the best square for the queen. 12.a3 (12.♘ed2 e5± and I prefer Black.) 12...♙e7 13.♘fd2 ♖a5± with a sharp position, where Black's chances are superior. The play might continue with ...c7-c5, and/or ...e6-e5.

11.♗e2 is also very logical, attacking the c4-pawn. 11...e5 12.♗xc4 (12.♘xe5 promises White nothing. 12...♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♗xc5 14.♗xc4 ♙xc3 (14...♙d6!? ∞ is also interesting, to keep the bishop pair. Black will continue with ...c7-c6 and then develop the light-squared bishop.) 15.♗xc3 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♖b8= and Black even managed to win in the game Savoglou, N (2023) -Sigalas, F (2242) Nikea 2008.) 12...exd4 13.♘d5! ♗d6 14.♘xd4!? is more challenging. (14.♘xb4

♙e6 15.♗b5 ♗xb4 16.♗xb4 ♘xb4 17.♘xd4 ♙d5= with equality: Almasi, Z (2667)-Balogh, C (2575) Heviz 2008) 14...♘xd4 15.♗xd4

a) 15.♘xb4 ♘e2+! 16.♗xe2 ♗xb4= with full equality.

b) 15.♗xb4N 15...♗xb4 16.♘xb4 ♘e6 17.♖fd1 ♙d7 18.♙xb7 (18.♖ac1 c6= and Black can continue with ...♙e8 and ...f7-f6.) 18...♖ab8 19.♘c6 ♙xc6 20.♙xc6 ♖xb2= with an equal endgame.

15...♙c5 16.♗h4 c6 17.b4! ♙b6 18.♘e7+ ♔f8! (18...♔h8N 19.a4± can be unpleasant.) 19.♘xc8 ♖axc8 20.a4 a6= This position has been reached twice in practice, and in both cases ended in a draw, for example in Perelshteyn, E (2534)-Neimer, V (2373) Lubbock 2011.

11.♗a4?! is just a loss of time. 11...♙d7 12.♗c2 Kozul, Z (2600)-Dizdar, G (2564) Split 2008 (12.♘e5 ♘xe5 13.♗xb4 ♘f3+ 14.♔h1 Navarro Lerma, R-Reig Albero, F (2225) Valencia 1996 14...♘d2!±) 12...♖ab8!?± followed by ...b7-b5.

11.a3 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 e5 gives Black an equal position: Gutman, L (2451)-Friedel, J (2531) Dresden 2011.

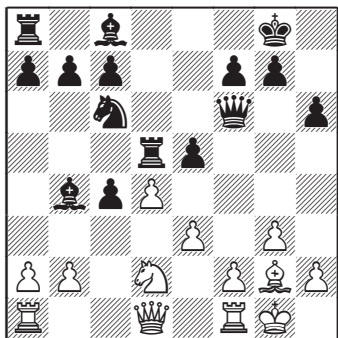
11...e5! 12.♘d5

12.d5?! ♖a5!± and I don't see how White should continue: Moradiabadi, E (2586)-Maletin, P (2588) Dubai 2014.

12.♘xc4 has also been tried, but Black has the strong 12...exd4 13.♘d5 ♗e6!± and the knight on d5 is pinned.

12.a3 David,A (2593)-Bratanov,Z (2465) Mulhouse 2011 12...♙f8!N is a strong improvement. 13.dxe5 (13.♘d5 ♖g6! 14.♗xc7 ♖b8?) 13...♖g6 followed by ...♙f5.

12...♖xd5!



This is the point.

13.♙xd5 ♙h3

Even if the engine finds some other way to play, I prefer this human approach.

14.♗xc4

14.♖e1?N 14...♗d8—+ just loses for White. The d4-pawn will fall and the white king is too weak.

14.♗c4N 14...♖f5!F;

14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xc4 (15.♙xb7?N is losing after 15...♖b8 16.♙g2 ♙g2! 17.♗xg2 ♖c6+! 18.♗f3 (18.f3 ♗d8—+ 18...g5!—+ followed by ...g5-g4.) 15...♗xc4 16.♙xc4 c6= with an equal position. Next move Black will take back the exchange: Polklaeser,G (2008)-Rondio,T (1970) GER email 2008.

14...♙xf1

14...exd4!? 15.♙g2 (15.♖f3 ♖xf3 16.♙xf3 ♙xf1 17.♗xf1 dxe3 18.♙xc6 and a draw was agreed in the game Sturua,Z (2440)-Shneider,A Pavlodar 1982.

18...bxc6 19.♗xe3 ♙d6= White should be able to hold without many difficulties.)

15...♙xg2 16.♗xg2 ♗d8!?! has never been played, but it's worth trying. Black will get good compensation for the exchange.

15.dxe5 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5 17.♗xf1 ♖f8!

A very precise move. White was not only threatening ♙xb7, but also ♙xf7, and ♖b3.

18.♖b3 c6 19.♙f3

19.♙c4 ♙a5 20.♗d1 (20.♖xb7?? seems tempting but it loses a piece after 20...♖e4!—+ threatening both, ...♖xc4 and ...♖h1+.) 20...♖e7= with an equal position.

19...♖e7 20.♗d1

and a draw was agreed in the game Tanti,J (1648)-Johnson,H (1784) LSS email 2011.

20...♙a5=

with equality.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we studied different 5th moves. Most of the time it transposes to some minor lines of the Nimzo-Indian Defence. On 5.♖c2 it's very interesting to accept the challenge and play 5...dxc4. Often Black will be ready to push ...b7-b5 to support this pawn. As the main line I choose 5.g3 which is quite popular in the Nimzo-Indian too. Once again, we will challenge this subline with 8...dxc4. It's

important to know that the ♔b4 can come b3 via c6 and a5.
back to e7 after a3, and the ♖b8 can go to

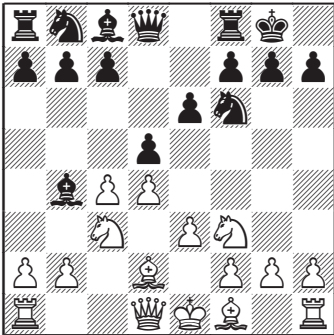
Chapter 14.

5.e3

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

Clearly the most-played move.

6.♙d2!?



This move was quite fashionable at the end of 2016, with Riazantsev using it several times. 6...c5 The most logical move, fighting for the centre. (6...b6!? is also a fine alternative, recommended in the recent book by Pert on the Ragozin.) 7.a3 (7.cxd5 I don't believe this move can give White anything serious. For example: 7...cxd4!? 8.♘xd4 (8.exd4 exd5= and Black can't be worse.) 8...♘xd5 9.♘xd5

a) 9.♙e2 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 (10.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 e5! Moreno Roman,A (1156)-Mudra,O (2123) LSS email 2012) 10...♙c5∞ with an unclear position. Black is planning ...e6-e5.

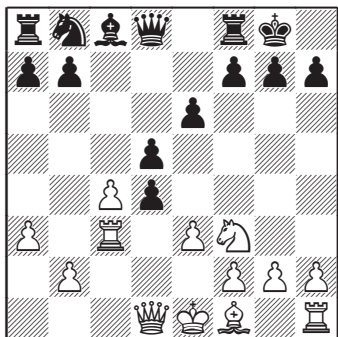
b) 9.♙c1 ♘xc3 10.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 11.♙xc3 e5! gives Black equality. Stean,M (2505)-Murey,J (2475) Beersheba 1982;

9...♙xd2+ 10.♙xd2 ♙xd5 11.♘f3 ♙xd2+ 12.♘xd2 ♘c6 13.♙e2 ♘d8= with an equal position as in the game Kharitonov, A (2470)-Gorelov,S (2420) Sverdlovsk 1984.) 7...♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♘e4 9.♙c1 (9.♙c2 ♘xc3 10.♙xc3 (10.bxc3 was played in the top-level game Aronian,L (2781) -Anand,V (2803) London 2015, but here I suggest 10...h6!?N which is actually a very logical novelty. Black will probably need this move sooner or later, in order to be able to move his queen and avoid annoying ♘g5 jumps. (or even 10...dxc4!?N 11.♙xc4 ♘d7 12.0-0 ♙c7 13.♙fe1 h6 14.♙d3 (14.a4 b6 15.d5!? exd5 16.♙xd5 ♙b7 17.c4 ♙fe8 18.e4 ♙ad8 19.♘h4 ♘f6∞ with a balanced position.) 14...b6= with equality.) 11.cxd5 (11.♙d3 dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙c7 13.0-0 ♘d7∞ and Black has won a tempo compared to 10...dxc4.) 11...exd5 12.♙e2 (12.dxc5 ♘d7= followed by ...♘xc5.) 12...c4!? 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.e4 dxe4 15.♙xe4 ♙e6∞ with a balanced position.) 10...cxd4 11.♙xd4

a) 11.exd4 dxc4 12.♙xc4 b6∞ and Black was fine in the game Kiseleva,A (2059)-Abergel,T (2475) St Petersburg 2016.

b) 11. ♖xd4 dxc4 12. ♙xc4 ♗d7 13. 0-0 (13. ♖d1 ♜e7 14. ♜b3 ♙e8= followed by ... ♗c6.) 13... ♗c6 14. ♗b5 ♜b6 15. ♖fd1 ♖fd8= and Black will continue with ... ♗e7 for example. I don't see why White should be better here.

11... ♗c6 12. ♜c3 ♗e7 13. ♙d3 ♙d7 14. 0-0 ♖c8= with equality, as played in Amadio, G-Jelic, M IECG email 2002.) 9... ♗xc3 10. ♖xc3 cxd4



Here White has tried all the recaptures: 11. ♖xd4 has recently been played by Gajewski, and also by the expert on this line, Riazantsev.

a) 11. ♜xd4 ♗c6 12. ♜d2 (12. ♜c5 ♗e7= followed by ... b7-b6. Andersen, J (2348)-Smith, A (2445) Skanderborg 2010.) 12... ♗e7!? N A good alternative. (12... dxc4 13. ♙xc4 ♜xd2+ 14. ♗xd2 ♖d8+ 15. ♗e2 ♙d7 White is exerting a little pressure, but with some natural moves Black should be able to neutralize White's initiative. 16. ♖hc1 (16. ♙d3 ♖ac8 17. g4 f6=) 16... ♖ac8 17. ♙d3 ♗e7 18. ♖xc8 (18. ♗e5 ♙e8 19. f4 ♖xc3 20. ♖xc3 ♗d5 21. ♖c5 ♗f8= with a drawish endgame.) 18... ♖xc8 19. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8= with full

equality.) 13. ♙d3 (13. ♖d3 ♜b6=) 13... ♙d7 14. 0-0

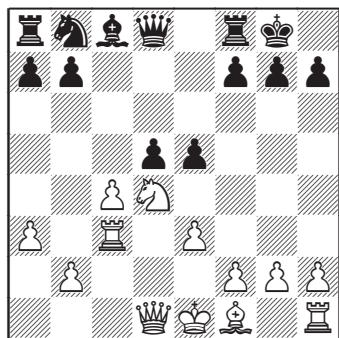
a1) 14. ♗e5 ♙a4! 15. b3 (15. 0-0 ♗c6=) 15... ♙e8!? 16. 0-0 (16. b4 dxc4 17. ♖xc4 a5= with equality.) 16... ♜d6∞ and the a3-pawn is hanging.

a2) 14. ♜c2 h6 15. ♗e5 dxc4 16. ♙xc4 ♖c8 17. 0-0 ♙c6!? 18. ♗xc6 ♖xc6 19. ♙e2 ♖xc3 20. ♜xc3 ♜c8= with full equality.

14... dxc4 15. ♖xc4 (15. ♙xc4 ♙c6=) 15... ♙c6 16. ♖d4 ♜b8 17. ♜c2 h6= with equality.

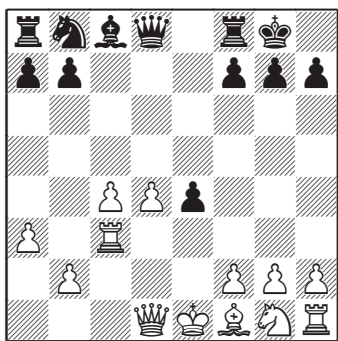
b) 11. exd4 ♗c6 12. ♙e2 dxc4 13. ♙xc4 ♗e7!?∞ followed by ... ♗d5, or ... b7-b6 and ... ♙b7.

11... e5!?



The most tempting move. (11... dxc4 is also solid enough. 12. ♙xc4 ♙d7 13. 0-0 ♗c6 14. ♗b3!? was played in the game Riazantsev, A (2671) -Inarkiev, E (2709) Doha 2016, and here I like (14. ♙e2 ♖xd4 15. ♜xd4 ♙c6= and draw was agreed in the game: Van Scheltinga, T-Unzicker, W Oberhausen 1962.) 14... ♗e5!? N 15. ♙e2 ♙c6 with a fine position.) 12. ♗f3 (12. ♗b3 ♙e6 13. cxd5 (13. ♙e2 N 13... dxc4

(13...♖c6 is also good. 14.cxd5 ♖xd5 15.0-0 ♖xd1 16.♖xd1 b6! with equality.) 14.♖xd8 ♖xd8 15.♙xc4 ♙xc4 16.♖xc4 b6 to restrain the knight on b3. 17.♙e2 ♘d7 18.♖hc1 ♘f8 19.♘d2 ♘e6 20.♘e4 ♙f8= with equality.) 13...♖xd5 14.♘c5 (14.♖xd5 ♙xd5 15.f3 ♘d7 16.♙b5 Fages,J (2196)-Skonieczny,J (2297) LSS email 2010 16...♖ac8! with a nice tactical idea in mind: 17.♖xc8 ♖xc8 18.♙xd7 ♖c2 19.♙f5 ♖c7!= followed by ...♙xb3, as the knight can't move due to ...♖c1+.) 14...♖xd1+ 15.♙xd1 ♙d5 16.e4 ♙c6 17.♙d3 ♖d8= 18.♙e2 b6 19.♘b3 ♙d7 20.♘d2 ♙e6 21.♘f3 f6 22.♖hc1 ♘d7= and Black was fine in the game Grochowski,M (2252)-Krygier,I (2221) ICCF email 2010.) 12...d4!? 13.exd4 e4 14.♘g1!N



Not the move White wants to play, but it's his best try. (14.♘d2 ♖xd4∞ The position remains unclear, but Black managed to win in the game Jakovljevic,V (2386)-Zelcic,R (2539) Zadar 2010.) 14...♘c6 15.d5 (15.♘e2 ♙g4!↑ with a strong initiative.) 15...♘e5 16.♙e2 ♖e8 17.♖d4 ♙f5∞ and I believe Black has good

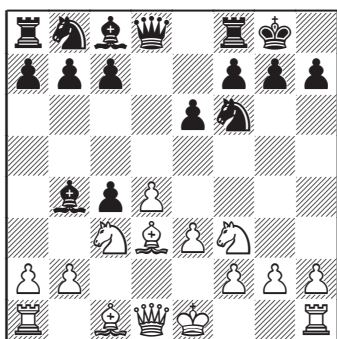
compensation for the pawn due to White's problematic knight on g1.

6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 c6! is the simplest. It will transpose to our Chapter 16, where the lines with ♘f3 are not the most promising for White. (7...b6 is the move I played myself, and it's totally fine. The idea is to continue with ...♙a6 to exchange the light-squared bishops. Or even 7...c5 if we prefer this line.) ;

6.♖c2 A very strange move. White is concocting some mixture of both the Nimzo-Indian 4.e3, and the Nimzo-Indian 4.♖c2. It can't be dangerous for Black. 6...c5 I don't see anything wrong with playing the most logical move. 7.a3 ♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 (8.♖xc3 cxd4 9.exd4 (9.♘xd4 e5 10.♘f3 ♖e8+ is just good for Black, like in Anastasian,A (2587) - Milov,V (2680) Antalya 2004.) 9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 b6∞ Black has good play against the isolated pawn: Kraidman,Y (2267)-David,A (2597) Zuerich 2011.) 8...b6 looks the simplest. Black wants to play ...♙a6. It's difficult for me to understand what the queen is doing on c2. 9.cxd5 (9.♙d3 ♙a6 10.cxd5 ♙xd3 11.♖xd3 exd5 12.0-0 ♘c6∞ and Black is a tempo up compared to the normal theoretical line: Paehtz,E (2472)-Dzagnidze,N (2529) Huaian 2016.) 9...exd5 10.dxc5 (10.♙e2 ♙a6∞ with good play for Black: Minald,A (1848)-Salomon,J (2269) Al Ain 2013.) 10...bxc5 11.c4 is the only logical continuation for White. 11...d4! 12.exd4 cxd4 13.♙e2 ♖e8 14.0-0 ♙g4 15.h3 ♙h5 16.♙b2 ♘c6 17.♖ad1 ♖e4! defending the d4-pawn. 18.♖fe1 (18.g4 could have been played but Black had a decent choice

between: 18...♙xg4! (or 18...♙g6 19.♙d3 ♜b8! 20.♘g5 (20.♙xe4? just loses material after 20...♙xe4 21.♚e2 d3!-+) 20...♚e7 21.♙xg6 hxg6∞ with a balanced position.) 19.hxg4 ♜xg4+ 20.♙h1 ♘e4 21.♙xd4 ♜h4+! 22.♘h4 ♚xh4+ 23.♙g1 ♚g5+ with a draw by repetition.) 18...♚d7= and Black was fine in the game Kolanek,R (2247)-Cholojczyk,Z (2270) ICCF email 2008.

6...dxc4!?



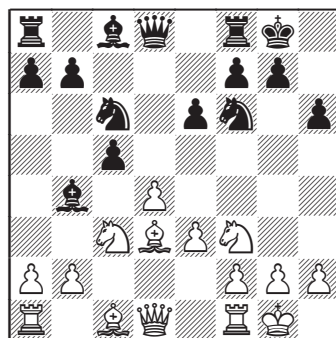
I hesitated quite a while about which line to suggest in this system. I myself have tried 3 or 4 different set-ups here with no particular problems. I finally decided to pick this continuation, because it's lesser-known and from my own practice I had a feeling that it was easier to play in comparison to other lines I tried. 6...c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 I played this move-order several times, with the idea: 8.a3 (8.cxd5!? Quite a fashionable line. 8...exd5 9.dxc5 ♙xc5 10.h3 with a very interesting position to play. I believe it's OK for Black, but not everybody enjoys playing with an isolated pawn.) 8...♙a5 with more-or-less the same ideas, but I prefer to avoid 8.cxd5.

7.♙xc4 c5 8.0-0

8.a3 ♙a5 will transpose to our main line, as there is nothing better for White than 9.0-0.

8...♘c6 9.a3

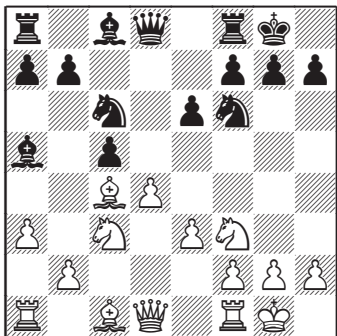
9.♙d3 appears occasionally in practice. 9...h6!?



I like this quiet move played by Dominguez. Black slowly improves his position. White has nothing better than 10.a3 (10.h3N 10...cxd4 11.exd4 b6 With a balanced position. The ♙b4 will be able to go to d6 next. 10.dxc5N 10...♙xc5= with an equal position.) 10...♙a5 and it transposes to 9.a3 ♙a5 10.♙d3 h6.

9.dxc5 ♙xc5= with a completely symmetrical position.

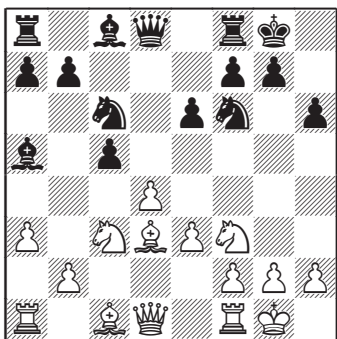
9...♙a5!?



The critical position of this line. White has a wide choice now. I have played this line several times and never encountered any problems with Black. I like the idea of keeping this bishop for a while, as we want to play ...♗xc3 only after dxc5. Besides, this bishop can be transferred to c7 if Black decides to release the tension in the centre first.

10.♖d3

The main move. 10.♗d3!? The second most popular move where White accepts an isolated pawn. The bishop will go to c2 and White will try to find some play along this diagonal. 10...h6!?

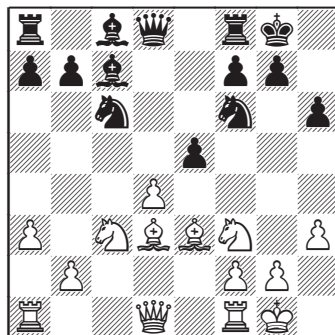


The idea is to delay ...cxd4 by playing a useful move first. Now after a future ...cxd4 Black will be able to proceed with ...♗c7 without being afraid of ♗g5. It has been recently used by the strongest Cuban players, such as Dominguez Perez, Bruzon Batista, and Quesada Perez. 11.♗c2 The most logical.

a) 11.h3 cxd4 12.exd4 ♗c7! as planned. Now Black wants to play ...b7-b6 and ...♗b7 finishing his development and creating harmony between his pieces. 13.♗e3 (13.♖e4N 13...e5= with equality. 13.♖e1 b6 14.♗c2 ♖e7 15.♖e5 ♗b7 16.♗f4 We have been following the game Saiyn,Z (2404)-Sunilduth Lyna,N (2481) Al Ain 2015, but here I prefer the more dynamic 16...♖f5!N 17.♗xf5 exf5 and I believe that Black's control over the light-squares gives him more chances.) 13...♖e7

a1) 13...b6!?N is also good, because d4-d5 is not a threat yet, but in any case the black knight will have to go to e7 sooner or later.

a2) 13...e5!?N



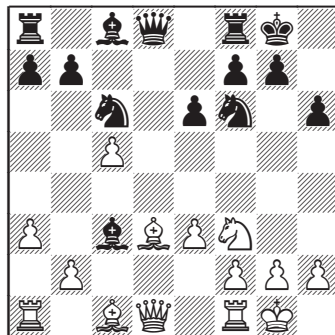
This move is a good choice for those who prefer to simplify the position by

exchanging some pieces. 14.d5 (14.dxe5 dxe5 15. dxe5 exe5 16. c2 (16. c4 xd1 17. axd1 f5 with an equal position.) 16...b6= with full equality.) 14... d7 15. c5 (15. c2 White sacrifices the d5-pawn for some compensation. 15... exd5 16. dxd5 dxd5 17. ad1 e6 18. c5 (18. c4 dxe3 19. fxe3 e7 20. xe6 fxe6 21. e4 ad8 22. dxe5 exe5 23. xe5 = with full equality.) 18... d6 19. c4 c8 20. xd6 xd6 21. e4 ! c3 22. xd6 dxe4 23. exe6 exc4 24. xe5 = and after some tactical twists we have reached an equal position.) 15...b6 16. b4 (16.d6 bxc5 17. dxc7 xc7 18. e2 b8 19. xe5 xe5 20. dxe5 xb2 21. a4 d2 22. dxc5 f5 with equality.) 16...a5 17. xe7 xe7 18. c1 b7 19. e1 dxd5 20. dxd5 xd5 21. h7+ hx7 22. xd5 = and White will take back the e5-pawn with equality.

14. c1 (14. d2 Black always needs to keep this move in mind, because White can have intentions to sacrifice on h6. 14... f5 !? (14...b6 is also possible. The idea is that after: 15. hx6 ! (15. h4 ! is probably the best move. 15... b7 16. hx6 !? gxh6 17. xh6 xd4 18. g5+ h8 19. h6+ g8 20. g5+ = with a draw by repetition.) 15... gxh6 16. xh6 we have the strong 16... f5 ! 17. xf5 exf5 and White has some compensation, but I don't believe it's enough.) 15. xf5 (15. f4 xf4 16. xf4 d7= followed by ... d7- c6 . The position is about equal.) 15... exf5 Now it will make sense to continue with ... e8 and ... e6 finishing development. 16.d5 d4= with equality.) 14...b6 15. e2 (15. d4 fd5 !∞ and it's

not easy to find a plan for White.) 15... b7 16. c2 (16. b5 b8 !∞ The knight is quite useless on b5.) 16...a6 not a bad move, but not a necessity either. (16... c8 !? was also decent. The bishop can go to b8 next move. Black will improve his position slowly, but surely.) 17. fc1 b8 ! This looks quite odd, but it's probably the best. 18. d2 f5 19. d4 d5 20. d1 We have been following the game Le Quang, L (2717) -Dominguez Perez, L (2723) Loo 2013, and here Black could have been more ambitious with 20...a5N Followed by ... a7 and ... f4 for example, with an unclear position.

b) 11.dxc5 exc3 !



As I have already mentioned, it's good for Black to take on c3 after White's dxc5. 12.bxc3 d5 13. c2 (13.e4N 13... xc5 14. e3 (14. c2 e5=) 14... xc3 (14... a5 !∞ Sometimes it's good not to take back the pawn directly. Black wants to finish his development first.) 15. c1 a5 16.h3 d8 17. b3 h5 18. fd1 e5 19. e2 e8= with a balanced position.) 13... d8 14. d1 xc5 15.a4 e5 ! Opening up the light-squared bishop. 16. a3 a5 17. b5 e6 (17... g4 !∞ was also totally

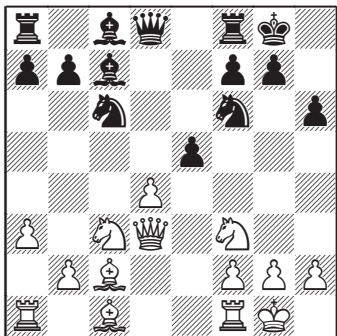
fine.) 18.h3 (18.♙xc6N 18...bxc6=) 18...♙c7 19.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 20.♙d1 ♙xd1+ 21.♙xd1 a6 22.♙xc6 ♙xc6 23.♜xe5 ♙xc3 24.♙d8+ ♜h7 25.♙d3+ ♙xd3 26.♜xd3= and this equal endgame ended in a draw in Tomashevsky,E (2706) -Dominguez Perez,L (2757) Elancourt 2013.

c) 11.♜e4 was recently tried against one of my students. 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♙b6 13.♙e3 ♜xe4 the solid approach. (13...♜g4!?N is my novelty, aiming for more complicated play than in the main line. 14.♙b5 (14.♙c4 e5 15.d5 ♜xe3 16.fxe3 ♜e7 17.♙b3 ♜f5 18.♙ae1 ♜d6 19.♜xe5! ♜xe4 20.d6! Attacking f7. 20...♜xd6 21.♙xf7+ ♜xf7 22.♙xf7 ♙xf7 23.♙xf7+ ♜h8 24.♜g6+ ♜h7 25.♜f8+= and it will end with a repetition. 14.♙b1 e5! 15.d5 ♜xe3 16.fxe3 ♜e7 17.d6 ♜c6 18.♜c3 f5∞ and the d6-pawn can be more of a weakness than a strength.) 14...♙d7 (14...f5 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♜c5 ♙d5 17.b4 ♜xe3 18.fxe3 a5 19.♜e5 ♙c7=) 15.♜c5 ♙e8! 16.♙c1 (16.♜xb7? is tempting, but it's a big mistake. 16...♙c7! 17.♜c5 ♙xc5 18.dxc5 ♜ce5! Threatening ...♜xf3+ and ...♙xh2 mate) 19.♜xe5 ♜xe3 20.fxe3 ♙xb5+ and White is losing material.) 16...♙e7∞ followed by ...♙d8 with a sharp position.) 14.♙xe4 ♙f6! with the idea of putting pressure on the d4-pawn. ...♙d8 is coming next. 15.♙d3 (15.♙c2N 15...♜xd4 16.♙xd4 ♙xd4 17.♜xd4 ♙xd4 18.♙ad1 ♙b6 19.♙c3 e5! Black gives back the pawn to liberate his bishop. 20.♙xe5 ♙g4= with equality.) 15...♙d8 16.♙fd1 ♜xd4! This is working here 17.♙xd4 ♙xd4 18.♜xd4 e5 19.♙f3 exd4 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♙ac1 ♙e6 22.♙xb7N was the best.

(22.♙c7?! looks tempting, but White forgot that his first rank is too weak: 22...♙ac8! 23.♙xb7? (23.♙xc8! was the best attempt. 23...♙xc8 24.♜f1= and White should be able to hold this a pawn down.) 23...d3+ and Black was winning in the game Santos Latasa,J (2541)-Fantinel,T (2382) San Sebastian 2016, as the d3-pawn is untouchable due to the mating threats on the first rank.) 22...♙ab8 23.♙c7 ♙d7 24.♙xd7 ♙xd7 25.♙e4 f5 26.♙xd4 ♙e6 27.♙f3 ♙xb2= with full equality.

d) 11.♙e1?!N 11...♙e7! followed by ...♙d8, and probably ...e6-e5.

11...cxd4 (11...♙e7!? is also possible, once again, preparing ...♙d8 next. 12.♜e4 (12.♙e2N 12...♙d8 13.♙d1 e5! (13...cxd4 14.exd4 ♙c7∞) 14.dxe5 ♙xd1+ 15.♜xd1 ♜xe5 16.♜xe5 ♙xe5 with equality.) 12...♜xe4 13.♙xe4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♙d8 15.♙e3N (15.♙a4 ♙b6 16.♙xc6 bxc6 17.♙e3 c5∞ and Black was close to having an edge in Garriga Cazorla,P (2461) - Satyapragyan,S (2392) Barbera del Valles 2015.) 15...♙b6 16.♙e1 ♙f6=) 12.exd4 ♙c7 13.♙e1 to prevent ...e6-e5. (13.♙d3 was played one time, but Black is in time to simplify the position in the centre with: 13...e5!



14.d5?! The move played by Zoltan Almasi. It's not the best, but White probably wanted to keep pieces on the board to make the game more complicated. (14.♖d1 ♖xd4 15.♜xd4 ♜xd4 16.♞xd4 exd4 17.♝xd4 ♙e6= and Black is totally fine. 14.dxe5 ♞xd3 15.♙xd3 ♜xe5 16.♜xe5 ♙xe5= with equality.) 14...♜e7 15.♖d1 ♙f5 16.♞e2 ♙xc2 17.♞xc2 ♙d6 (17...♝c8!? was also good.) 18.♜d2 ♝c8 19.♜d3 ♞d7 20.♜c4 ♝fd8♣ Black has finished his development and enjoyed a better position in Almasi, Z (2689) - Quesada Perez, Y (2608) Havana 2013.) 13...♝e8!? Playing for ...e6-e5. (13...b6N is the other possibility. I can advise this move for those who wish to play for a win here, for example: 14.♞d3

a) 14.♜e4 ♜xe4 15.♙xe4 ♙b7 16.♜e5

a1) 16.♙d2 ♞d7 17.♙c3 ♝fd8 18.♜e5 (18.♞c2 ♜a5∞) 18...♙xe5 19.dxe5 ♜e7= with full equality.

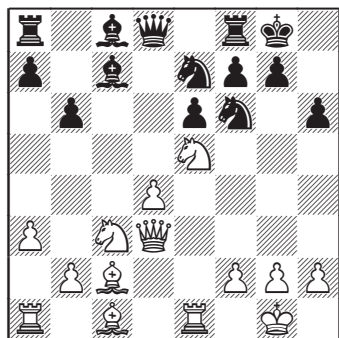
a2) 16.d5?! ♜a5♣;

16...♙xe5!? Black is aiming for a position with a knight against White's dark-squared bishop. 17.dxe5 ♞xd1

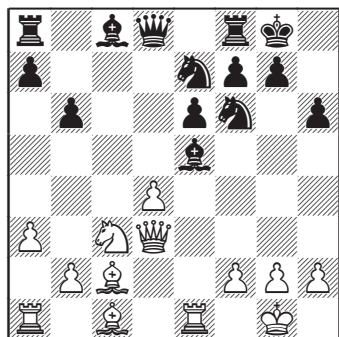
18.♝xd1 ♝ab8 19.♙f4 ♜e7= with a balanced position.

b) 14.♙e3 ♙b7 15.♞d2 ♜e7 16.♜e5 ♜f5∞ with a very interesting middlegame ahead.

14...♜e7! Black needs his knight on f5 to cover the diagonal b1-h7. 15.♜e5



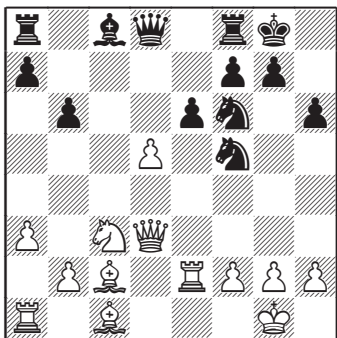
Black needs to be careful now. (15.♜e4 ♜f5 16.♜xf6+ ♞xf6 17.♞c3 ♙d6 18.♙e4 ♝b8 19.♜e5!? can look scary, but Black is able to simplify the position with the nice move: 19...♜xd4! 20.♜g4! ♜e2+! 21.♝xe2 ♞xc3 22.bxc3 f5 winning back the piece. 23.♜xh6+ gxh6= with equality.) 15...♙xe5!?



A very concrete approach. It's not an easy move to find over the board, but it's probably the simplest continuation.

a) 15...♙b7 looks natural, but things are not so clear: 16.♖g3! ♜xd4 (16...♙h8 17.♖h3 ♜eg8! This looks passive, but it's the only move to prevent ♙xh6. 18.♙e3 and White is better, as his pieces are more harmoniously placed than Black's. The knight on g8 is too passive.) 17.♙xh6 ♜g4! (17...♜h5 18.♖h3 ♙xe5 19.♖xh5 gxh6 20.♙xe5 ♖d2 21.♙e2 ♖g5 22.♖xg5+ hxg5 23.♙e5!± and White wins a pawn.) 18.♙xg7! ♙xg7 19.♖xg4+ ♖xg4 20.♜xg4 ♙ad8 21.♜e3 ♙h8 22.h3 ♙d2 23.♙ed1 ♙hd8 24.g3± and I don't think Black has enough compensation for the pawn.

b) 15...♜f5!? is another good option leading to very sharp play: 16.d5! The most principled. 16...♙xe5! (16...exd5 17.♙f4↑ can be very unpleasant for Black.) 17.♙xe5 ♜g4! 18.♙e2! (18.♙e1!? would lose on the spot: 18...♖h4+!) 18...♜f6!



Attacking the d5-pawn. 19.dxe6 (19.♙e5 ♜g4=; 19.g4!? ♜xg4 20.♖f3 h5 21.♙xf5 exf5 22.h3 ♜f6 23.♙g5 ♖d6 24.♙ae1 ♜e4! It's time to give back the

pawn. 25.♜xe4 ♖g6! A very important move. 26.h4 fxe4 27.♖xe4 ♙f5 28.♖g2 ♙ac8= with a balanced position.) 19...♙xe6= with an equal position.

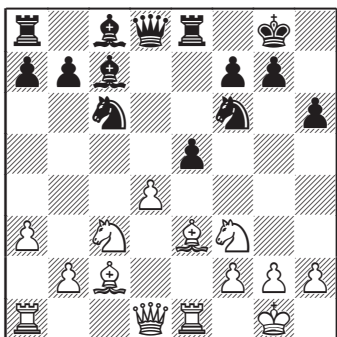
16.dxe5 (16.♙xe5 ♜g6 17.♙e1 (17.♖c4 is the engine's suggestion. 17...♜g4!?) (17...♜xe5? would make White's tricky idea work: 18.dxe5 ♜d5 19.♖e4!± and after eliminating the knight, White is back to the b1–h7 diagonal.) 18.♙e2 ♖d6 19.g3 ♖d7∞ with an unclear position.) 17...♙b7 18.f3 ♙c8 19.♙e3 ♖d7= with interesting play.) 16...♖xd3 17.♙xd3 ♜fd5 White has the bishop pair, but his dark-squared bishop is useless for the moment. Black will finish his development with ...♙b7, and ...♙fd8, ...♙ac8. 18.♜e4 (18.♜xd5 ♜xd5 19.♙d2 a5 20.♙e4 ♙d8 21.♙ed1 ♙a6=; 18.♙e4 ♙d8 19.♙d2 ♙b8 20.♙ad1 ♙a6=) 18...♜f5= preventing ♜d6 with a fine position.) 14.♙e3

a) 14.♖d3N 14...e5! 15.♜e4 (15.dxe5 ♖xd3 16.♙xd3 ♜xe5 17.♜xe5 ♙xe5=) 15...♜xe4 16.♖xe4 f5! 17.♙b3+! (17.♖e2 e4 18.♙b3+ ♙f8! It's important to protect the ♙e8 in order to threaten ...exf3. 19.♜e5 (19.d5 ♜a5 20.♙a2 exf3 21.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22.♙xe8+ ♙xe8 23.b4 b5 24.bxa5 ♙xa5± with a better endgame.) 19...♙e6± and I already prefer Black.) 17...♙h8 (17...♙f8!? This time the move looks a bit scarier, but the engine is happy with it! 18.♖c2! e4 19.♜e5! ♜xe5 20.dxe5 ♙xe5 21.♙d1 ♖c7 22.♖xc7 ♙xc7 23.♙e3 ♙e6 24.♙xe6 ♙xe6 25.♙d7 ♙b6 26.♙xb7=) 18.♖e2 e4 19.♜g5! ♖f6 20.♖h5 ♙d7 and White should take a draw by perpetual, as otherwise ...♜xd4

will follow. 21. ♖f7+ ♜h7 22. ♜g5+= with a draw by repetition.

b) 14.h3N is not critical, but it's always useful to know how to proceed if the opponent just waits. 14...e5! Of course. 15.dxe5 (or 15.♙e3 exd4 16.♜xd4 ♜xd4 17.♚xd4 ♙e5 18.♚xd8 ♞xd8 19.♞ad1 ♞xd1 20.♞xd1 ♙d7= with full equality.) 15...♜xe5 16.♜xe5 ♚xd1 17.♞xd1 ♙xe5 18.♙a4 ♞f8 19.♞e1 ♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♙e6= with equality.

14...e5!N



This critical move has never been played. (14...b6 is the move I myself tried in practice, but it's more logical to play it one move earlier, as after ...♞e8 it makes more sense to continue with ...e6-e5.) 15.♜b5 (15.d5 ♜e7∞; 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♜xe5 ♙xe5 17.♚xd8 ♞xd8 18.♞ad1 ♙d7=) 15...exd4! The simplest. 16.♜fxd4

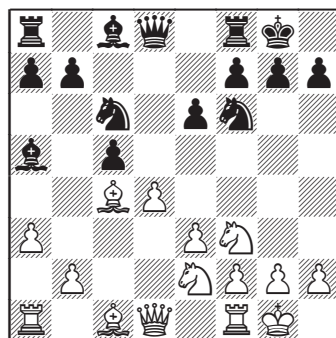
a) 16.♜xc7 ♚xc7 17.♙xd4

Unfortunately for White, he is forced to take with a bishop. (17.♜xd4?? loses a piece. 17...♜xd4 18.♙xd4 ♞xe1+ 19.♚xe1 ♚xc2+) 17...♞xe1+ 18.♚xe1 ♜xd4 19.♜xd4 ♙d7= with equality.

b) 16.♜bxd4 ♜xd4 17.♚xd4 ♙g4=;

16...♙e5! Intending ...a7-a6. 17.♜f3 (17.h3 leads to some crazy lines: 17...a6 18.♜xc6 bxc6 19.♙d4 ♙xd4 20.♞xe8+ ♚xe8 21.♜xd4 ♙xh3! This can come as a surprise to White! 22.gxh3 ♞d8 23.♙d3 c5! 24.♜f5! c4 25.♜d6! ♞xd6 26.♙h7+ ♜xh7 27.♚xd6 ♜g5! 28.♚xa6 ♚e2= and White's weak king will allow Black to make draw even with a material deficit. 17.♜xc6 bxc6 18.♙d4 ♙xd4 19.♞xe8+ ♚xe8 20.♜xd4 ♙g4 21.♚e1 c5= with equality. The c5-pawn is not weaker than the one on b2.) 17...♚xd1 18.♞axd1 (18.♙xd1 ♙b8= followed by ...a7-a6.) 18...♙g4 19.♙b3 a6 20.♜d6 ♙xd6 21.♞xd6 ♙e6! Trying to exchange one of the annoying bishops. 22.♙xe6 ♞xe6 23.♞xe6 fxe6= with equality, as Black will easily defend the e6-weakness with ...♜f7. The rook will probably go to d8, and the f6-knight always has the d5-square.

10.♜e2



Planning dxc5, and Black no longer has the ...♙xc3 option. 10...cxd4 (10...♙b6 was played in 1972, in the first game of the Match of the Century: Spassky,B

(2660)-Fischer,R (2785) Reykjavik 1972.)
 11.exd4 (11.♖exd4 is often played, but
 rarely by strong players. 11...♗xd4
 12.exd4

a) 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♕d7= with
 an equal position as in Lucio,J (2066)-
 Mori,A (2394) ICCF email 2005.

b) 12.♗xd4 ♗e7 13.♕d2 ♕xd2
 14.♗xd2 e5 (14...♕d7= is also good.)
 15.♗b3 b6= was fine for Black in the
 game Cao Armillas,J (2113)-Gallardo
 Garcia, A (2329) Madrid 2015.

12...♕d7 In practice Black has a very
 good score from this position. 13.♗e5

a) 13.♗e2 ♕c6 14.♖d1 ♕d5 15.♕d3
 ♕b6 16.♕g5 h6 17.♕e3 ♗e7 18.♗e5
 ♖fd8= and Black was fine in the game
 Greenfeld,A (2538)-Roiz,M (2617)
 Beersheba 2013.

b) 13.♕g5 ♕c6 14.♗e5 ♕b6 15.♗xc6
 (15.♗e2?! ♗xd4 16.♕xf6 gxf6 17.♗xc6
 bxc6 18.♖fd1 ♗e5 19.♗c2?! ♖ad8+ and
 Black was much better in the online game
 Kasimdzhanov,R (2652) -Landa,K (2550)/
 playchess. com INT 2004.) 15...bxc6
 16.♕e3 ♗d6∞ Berger, G-Evstigneev,S
 (2224) ICCF email 2010.

13...♕b6 14.♕e3 was played in
 Lipnowski,I-Donoso Velasco,P (2395)
 Winnipeg 1974, and here I suggest
 14...♖c8N 15.♗e2 ♕a4!? 16.b3 ♕c6∞
 with a balanced position.) 11...h6
 preventing ♕g5. White has a choice now:
 12.♕e3 looks the most logical to me.

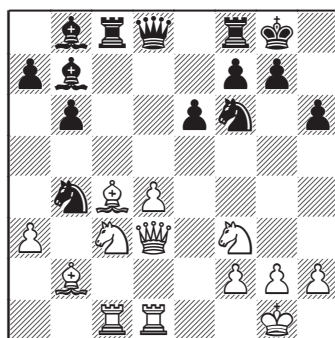
a) 12.♗d3 ♕c7 13.♖d1 (13.♗g3 b6
 Once again, when d4-d5 is not yet a
 threat, I prefer to start with ...b7-b6 before

...♗e7. 14.♕d2 ♕b7 15.♖ac1 ♖c8 16.♖fe1
 ♗e7 17.♗e5 ♕b8∞ with a balanced
 position.) 13...b6 14.♗c3

a1) 14.♕f4 ♕b7 15.♕xc7 ♗xc7 16.♖ac1
 ♗d6= see 12.♕f4 ♕c7 13.♕xc7 ♗xc7
 14.♖c1 ♗d6.

a2) 14.b4 ♕b7 15.♕b2 a5 (15...♗d6
 16.♖ac1 ♖ad8 17.♗g3 ♗e7 18.a4 ♗ed5
 19.b5 ♗e7 20.♖e1 g6 21.♕a3 ♕d6
 22.♕xd6 ♗xd6= 0-1 Miranda Llanes,Y
 (2317) -Leitao,R (2623)/ San Cristobal
 2012/ EXT 2013 (86)) 16.b5 ♗e7 17.♗e5
 ♖c8 18.♖ac1 ♕b8∞;

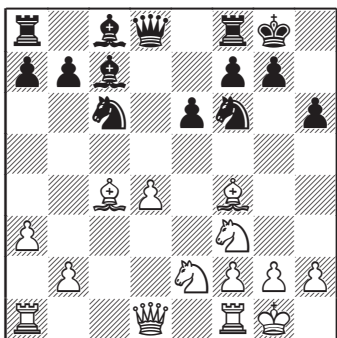
14...♕b7 15.b4 (15.♕a6N 15...♕xa6
 16.♗xa6 ♗c8∞ and I believe that Black
 has the upper hand. 15.d5N This time it's
 not enough to equalize. 15...exd5
 16.♗xd5 ♗a5+; 15.♕e3 ♗e7 16.♗e5
 ♗f5∞ with good play.) 15...♖c8 16.♕b2
 ♕b8 17.♖ac1?! was played in the game
 Portisch,L (2630)-Browne,W (2500)
 Amsterdam 1971, but here Black missed a
 very nice combination: 17...♗xb4!N



18.axb4 ♕xf3 19.gxf3 ♗c7! attacking
 both the h2-pawn and the ♕c4. 20.♗e4!
 ♗xh2+ 21.♖f1 ♗d5! 22.♖e1! ♗h1+

23. ♖f1 ♜xf3 24. ♜d2! ♜g4→ and Black has very good compensation.

b) 12. ♕f4 mostly played. 12... ♖c7!



Trading the dark-squared bishops favours Black. 13. ♖c1

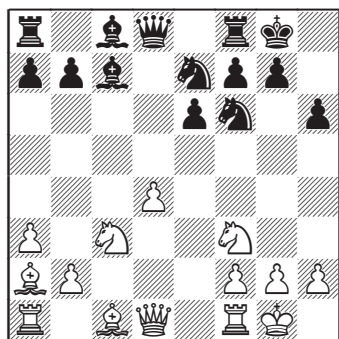
b1) 13. ♕g3 ♕xg3 14. hxg3 ♜d6 15. ♜d3 was played in Spassky,B-Kozma,J Varna 1958, and here I prefer 15... ♜d8!?N 16. ♜fe1 ♕d7 17. ♜ad1 ♜e7 18. ♜e5 ♕e8∞ with a balanced position, but I believe Black's chances are superior due to his better structure and the d4-target.

b2) 13. ♕xc7 ♜xc7 14. ♖c1 ♜d6 15. ♜d3 (15. ♕d3 b6 16. ♜g3 ♕b7 17. ♜e4 ♜xe4 18. ♕xe4 ♜ac8∞ followed by ... ♜fd8.) 15... b6 16. ♜fd1 ♕b7= and Black was fine: Gulbrandsen,A (2335)-Kinnmark,O (2385)/Eksjo 1975.

b3) 13. ♜d2 ♕xf4 14. ♜xf4 was played in Dambacher,M (2388)-Khenkin,I (2610) Amsterdam 2005, but now I prefer (14. ♜xf4N 14... ♕d7!?∞ followed by ... ♜e7 and ... ♕c6.) 14... ♜b6!?N with the idea of putting more pressure on the d4-pawn. 15. ♜fe1 ♜d8 16. ♜ad1 ♕d7∞ followed by ... ♜e7.

13... ♕xf4 14. ♜xf4 ♜d6 15. ♜d2 ♜d8 16. ♜fd1 ♕d7 (16... ♜e7!? was perhaps more precise, preventing White from playing d4-d5, which would help them to equalize.) 17. h3 (17. d5=) 17... ♜ac8 18. ♜e3 (18. d5!?=) 18... ♜e7 (18... ♜a5!? 19. ♜e5 ♕e8∞ was also a good try to seize the initiative.) 19. ♜e5 ♕a4 and I offered draw in this position: Del Rio de Angelis,S (2489)-Cornette,M (2522) Navalmoral 2010. I could have continued for a bit, because only Black can be better here.

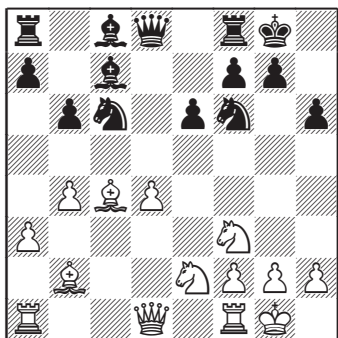
c) 12. ♕a2 ♕c7 13. ♜c3 ♜e7!?



To prevent d4-d5, and planning ...b7-b6. (13... b6!?N is of course possible, but it can lead to some simplifications after: 14. d5! (14. ♜e1 ♕b7 15. d5 exd5 16. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 17. ♕xd5 ♜f6∞ followed by ... ♜ad8.) 14... exd5 15. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16. ♕xd5 ♜f6 17. ♕d2 ♕b7 18. ♕c3 ♜f5= with full equality.) 14. ♜e1 b6 15. ♜e5 ♕b7 16. ♕b1?! ♜f5 17. ♕c3 ♜c8 18. ♕c2 ♜d5+ and Black was much better in the game: Khodos,G-Krogius,N Yerevan 1962.

d) 12. b4 ♕c7 13. ♕b2 was played three times by Alina Kashlinskaya, and now I like (13. b5N has never been played.

13...♖a5!? 14.♙a2 (14.♙d3 ♜b6⌘ 14...a6!? 15.a4 axb5 16.axb5 ♜b6 17.♖e5 ♙b7∞ with an unclear position.) 13...b6!N



As I have already mentioned, when d4-d5 is not a threat, b7-b6 is my preferable move. 14.♞e1 (14.♖e5? is just bad because after 14...♖xe5 15.dxe5 ♖g4!⌘ White will lose the e5-pawn.) 14...♙b7 15.♞c1 ♞c8∞ followed by ...♖e7 is probably the most natural continuation of the game.

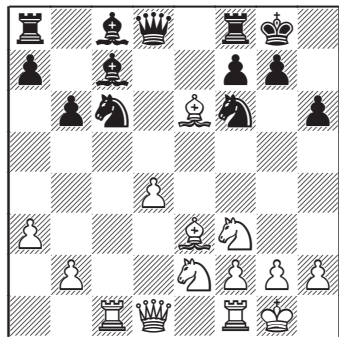
12...♙c7N is a novelty here, but it's a logical continuation. 13.♞c1! It's the most logical move — White wants to prevent b6 — but as we will see it fails. (13.♞e1 ♜b6 14.♖c3 ♙b7 and Black will continue as usual with ...♖e7, ...♞c8, etc.) 13...b6! Unexpectedly, this move works here! 14.♞c2

a) 14.♖f4 ♙xf4!? This might look like a surprising decision, but it's not a bad idea to trade this bishop even for a knight. Black wants to play with a strong bishop on b7, controlling the light squares. (14...♙b7 15.d5 the safest option. (15.♞e1 ♞b8!? 16.g3 ♖e7∞ and I like Black's position.) 15...exd5 16.♖xd5 ♖e5! 17.♖xe5 ♙xe5 18.♙f4= with an equal

position.) 15.♙xf4 ♙b7 16.♞d3 ♞c8 17.♞fd1 ♖a5∞ with good play for Black.

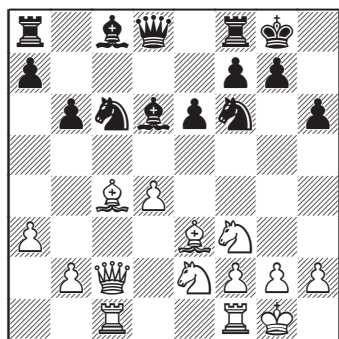
b) 14.♞a4 ♖e7 15.♙a6 ♙xa6 16.♞xa6 ♞c8!?!∞ intending ...♞b7 if White doesn't trade the queens.

c) 14.♙xe6?!



This looks tempting, but it doesn't work well here: 14...♙xe6 15.♞xc6 ♙d5 16.♞c1 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♖d5⌘ and despite being a pawn down Black is better, as White's pawn structure is spoiled, the king is weakened and his bishop is completely restricted.

14...♙d6!?



An interesting idea, inviting White once again to grab the pawn. Black wants to have a powerful light-squared bishop in exchange.

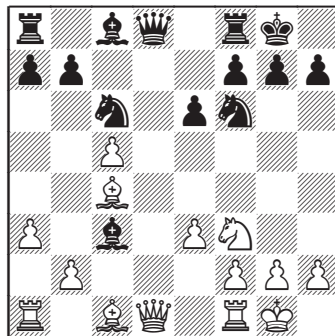
a) 14...♙b7? looks logical, but it's simply not working. 15.♙b5! ♖c8 16.♙xc6 ♙xc6 17.♗xc6 ♙xh2+ 18.♜xh2 ♖xc6 19.♖xc6± and with a rook, knight and bishop for the queen, White has an advantage.

b) 14...♜e7 15.♜e5 ♜f5!? (15...♜fd5 16.♙d2 ♙b7 17.♗d3 ♖c8∞ with a balanced position. 15...♙b7?! is dubious due to 16.♙xe6!∞) 16.♗b3 (16.♙xe6 ♙xe6 17.♗xc7 ♗xc7 18.♖xc7 ♜d5∞ and Black will win back the pawn on e3.) 16...a6∞ with a complicated position.

15.♙xe6 On other moves, Black simply continues with ...♙b7, ...♜e7, etc. 15...♙xe6 16.♗xc6 ♙d5 17.♗b5!? (17.♗c2 ♙e4 18.♗c4 (18.♗d2?! ♙xf3 19.gxf3 ♜d5∞ the position is almost identical to the one arising after 14.♙xe6!)) 18...b5!? (18...♙xf3 19.gxf3 ♜d5 20.♜g3 ♙f4 21.♖fe1 ♗d7∞ again, similar to 14.♙e6?! Black has more than enough compensation for a pawn.) 19.♗b3 (19.♗xb5 ♖b8 20.♗c4 ♖xb2 21.♜g3 ♙d5∞ followed by ...♙xf3 with advantage.) 19...♙xf3 20.gxf3 b4!? 21.♜g3 bxa3 22.bxa3 ♗d7 23.♗d3= and Black has enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that. As usual, the engine's evaluation is 0.00.) 17...a6 18.♗d3 ♙e4 19.♗b3! (19.♗d2 ♙xf3 20.gxf3 ♜d5∞) 19...♙d5 20.♗d3! (20.♗d1 ♙xf3 21.gxf3 ♜d5∞) 20...♙xf3 (20...♙e4= to make a draw.) 21.gxf3 ♜d5 22.♜g3 ♙f4 23.♖fe1

♗h4∞ with enough compensation for the pawn.

10.dxc5 This move looks logical, but actually it favours Black. The score in the database supports this assessment as well. 10...♙xc3!



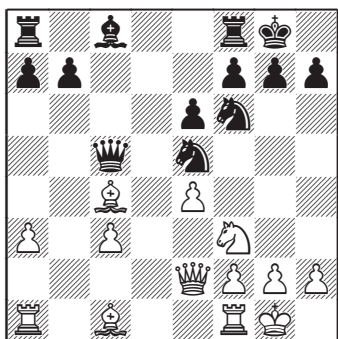
As planned. 11.bxc3 (11.♗xd8 ♖xd8 12.bxc3 ♜e4∞ Black was already better in the game Helwig,F-Kane,J CServe email 1994, due to his better structure.) 11...♗a5 intending ...♗xc5. White's weakened pawn structure can be an important factor in the outcome of the game. 12.♗c2 the most common reply.

a) 12.♗b3 ♗xc5 13.♗b5 has been played once, but after 13...♗xb5 14.♙xb5 ♙d7 15.a4 ♜e4 16.♙a3 ♖fd8 17.♖ac1 ♙c8∞ Black was already slightly better, and finally managed to win: Karthikeyan,P (2401)-Vidit,S (2501)/Kolkata 2012/CBM 150 Extra (42).

b) 12.a4 ♗xc3 (12...♗xc5!?N is also decent, for example: 13.♙b5 (13.♗e2 ♜a5 and we transpose to 12.♗e2.) 13...♖d8= followed by ...♜e5, or ...♜a5.) 13.♗b3 The only move. 13...♗xb3 14.♙xb3 ♙d7

15.♔b2 ♖a5 16.♙c2 ♜fc8 17.♞ac1 ♙c6
 18.♙c3 (18.♜d4 ♙e4=) 18...♙xf3 19.gxf3
 (19.♙xa5 ♙e4=) 19...♞xc5 20.♙xf6 ♞ac8
 21.♙d8!N was best, but not so easy to
 find. (21.♙d4 has been played, but after
 21...♞xc2 22.♞xc2 ♞xc2 23.♙xa7 ♞a2+
 Black was better and even managed to win
 in Kashlinskaya,A (2346)-Ter Sahakyan,S
 (2523), Kirishi 2010.) 21...b6 22.♞fd1 f6
 23.♞d7 ♞xc2 24.♞xc2 ♞xc2 25.♞xa7 ♜c4=
 with total equality.

c) 12.♞e2 has recently been played.
 12...♞xc5 13.a4 threatening ♙a3. (13.e4
 ♜e5!?N



was my idea of an improvement when I
 worked on this line for the first time –and
 I still believe it's the simplest.

c1) 13...b6 is the other move I can
 recommend. 14.e5!?N I believe this to be
 the critical move.

c11) 14.♞d1 ♖a5 15.♙d3 ♙b7 16.♙e3
 ♞h5+ and Black was even a bit better in
 the game Buerger,C (2215)-Traudes,W
 (2220) Werfen 1996.

c12) 14.a4 doesn't promise anything for
 White. 14...♞d8 15.♙a3 (15.♙b5 ♙b7=)

15...♞h5 16.e5 (16.♞ad1 ♙b7=)
 16...♜d5=;

14...♜d7 15.♙f4 (15.♙e3 ♞e7 16.♙g5
 ♞c5 17.♙e3= is already a draw by
 repetition.) 15...♙b7 16.♞ad1 ♞fd8
 (16...♜a5 17.♙b5 ♙xf3 looks tempting,
 but things are not so simple. 18.gxf3 ♜b8
 and even though White's structure is
 terrible, Black still has some lack of
 coordination. 19.♙d3! ♜bc6 20.♞e4 g6
 21.♞fe1!± and White has a good
 initiative.) 17.♙e3 ♞f8 18.♙g5 ♜e7
 19.♜d4 ♜c5 20.♞g4 ♜h8= with a
 balanced position.

c2) 13...e5 14.a4! ♖a5 15.♙a2 ♞c7 was
 played in the game Arnaudov,P (2490)-
 Vidit,S (2554)/Golden Sands 2013, but
 here I like 16.♙g5!± with the better game
 for White who will continue with ♞b5
 and probably ♙d5.

14.♜xe5 ♞xe5 15.f3 (15.♙d3 b6
 16.♙b2 ♙b7 17.c4 ♞c7∞ planning to
 transfer the knight with ...♜d7-♜c5 next.)
 15...♙d7 16.♙e3 (16.♞b1 b6 17.♞d1
 ♞fc8= with a balanced position.) 16...♞c7
 (16...♞xc3 is possible, but White gets
 some compensation after: 17.♞fc1 ♞e5
 18.♞f2=) 17.♞ac1 ♙a4 with an equal
 position.) 13...♜a5!?N My idea for
 improvement. (13...♞d8 was played, but
 after 14.♙a3 ♞a5 15.e4! ♙d7 Kvetny,M
 (2389)-Lalith,B (2554) Cappelle la
 Grande 2016 16.♞fd1!∞ followed by ♙d6
 and e4-e5 looks rather unclear to me.)
 14.♙b5 (14.♙d3 ♞d8 15.♞d1 ♞c7! White
 was threatening ♙xh7+, so we need to
 protect the rook, planning ...e6-e5 next.
 16.♙b2 (16.e4 e5!∞) 16...e5 17.c4 ♞e8

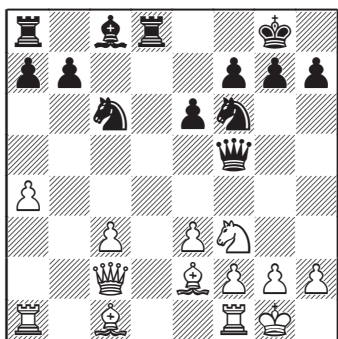
18. ♖g5 h6 19. ♗e4 ♗xe4 20. ♗xe4 ♗e6∞
 with a balanced position.) 14... ♗d8
 15. ♗a3 ♖c7 16. ♗fd1 ♗xd1+ 17. ♗xd1
 (17. ♗xd1 ♗d7 (17... b6!? = is also good.)
 18. ♗d6 ♖b6 19. ♗xd7 (19. ♗d3 ♗c6
 20. ♗e5 ♗d7 21. ♗g5 g6 22. ♗d6 ♗d5∞
 with a balanced position, but it's probably
 White who has to be careful.) 19... ♗xd7
 20. ♗b4 ♗f6 21. ♖b1 ♗c6= with equality.)
 17... ♗d7= and Black has no problems at
 all.

12... ♗xc5 13. ♗d3 the main move.
 (13. ♗e2 ♗d8!?N just like after 13. ♗d3, I
 like this move. Black wants to play ...e6-
 e5, but after a3-a4 there is also another
 idea. 14.a4

a) 14.c4 e5 15. ♗b2 (15.h3 e4∞
 followed by ... ♗g5.) 15... ♗g4 16. ♗fd1
 ♗h5 17.h3 h6= with equality.

b) 14. ♖b1 e5 15.h3 h6 16.c4 b6
 17. ♗b2 (17. ♖b5 ♖e7∞) 17... ♗e6 18. ♗fd1
 ♗ac8= with a good position.

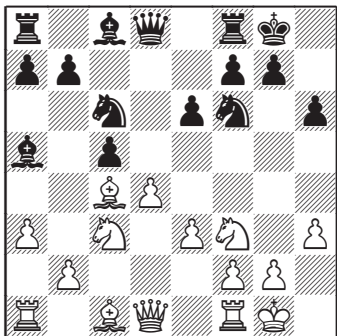
14... ♖f5!?



This idea reminds me of the Nimzo-
 Indian line with 4. ♖c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♖xd5
 6. ♗f3 ♖f5. Trading off the queens allows

Black to get a grip on the centre: the ♗f6
 will go to e4, and the ♗c8, which is quite
 passive for the moment, will have the e6-
 square. 15. ♖xf5 (15. ♖b3 b6=) 15... exf5
 16. ♗d4 (16. ♗b2 ♗e6 17.c4 ♗e4=)
 16... ♗e6 17. ♖b1 (17. ♗xe6 fxe6+ followed
 by ... ♗ac8, and Black will have good
 chances thanks to his better structure.
 17. ♗a3 ♗e4 18. ♗fc1 ♗ac8∞ with a
 balanced position.) 17... ♗a5 (17... ♗d5!?
 is also fine. 18. ♗d2 (18. ♗b2 ♗b6 19. ♗a1
 ♗ab8=) 18... ♗b6 19. ♗fd1 ♗a5=) 18. ♗a3
 (18. ♖b5 b6 19. ♗xf5 a6! and White has to
 give some material. 20. ♗e7+ ♗f8 21. ♖xa5
 bxa5 22. ♗c6 ♗d7! 23. ♗d4 ♗g8 24. ♗a3
 ♗c8+ with an advantage.) 18... ♗e4
 19. ♗fc1 ♗ac8 20. ♗b4 ♗c6 21. ♗xc6 ♗xc6
 22.c4 b6 23.f3 ♗c5= with an equal
 position.) 13... ♗d8!?N 14.a4 (14. ♗d1 h6
 15.a4 e5 and we are back to the game
 between Tomashevsky against Dominguez
 Perez. 14.h3 ♖h5!?∞ followed by ...e6-e5.
 Black can find some play on the kingside,
 as ... ♗xh3 might become a threat.)
 14... ♗e5!? Once again this idea. 15. ♗e2
 (15. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 16.f4 ♖c5 17.c4 b6
 18. ♖e1 ♗b7= with a balanced position.)
 15... b6 16. ♗a3 ♖c7 17. ♗xe5 ♖xe5
 18. ♗f3 ♗a6!= with equality.

10.h3 h6



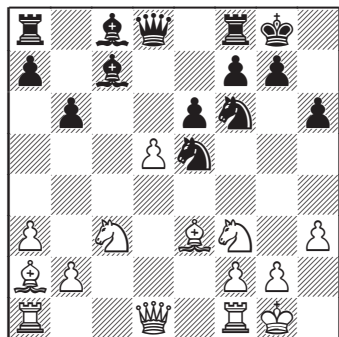
It was Michael Adams who used this set-up for the first time in 2009, then again in 2010. The idea is once again to delay ...cxd4, and to get ready to play against the isolated pawn. 11.♖d3 the most common.

a) 11.dxc5N As so often, this move gives White nothing. 11...♙xc3! 12.bxc3 (12.♖xd8 ♜xd8 13.bxc3 ♜e4=) 12...♜e4= 13.a4 ♜a5= and Black will take back the c5-pawn.

b) 11.♖c2N 11...cxd4 12.♞d1 ♙d7 13.exd4 ♜c8 followed by ...♜e7 and ...♙c6. (13...♜e7!?∞ is always possible, avoid d4-d5.) 14.d5 probably the safest. 14...♜xd5 15.♜xd5 exd5 16.♙xd5 ♜e7 17.♖e2 ♜xd5 18.♞xd5 ♖c7! 19.♙xh6! gxh6 20.♖e3 ♙c6 21.♖xh6 ♙xd5 22.♖g5+= with draw by perpetual.

c) 11.♙a2 cxd4 12.exd4 ♙c7N A novelty in this particular position, but as you already know, it's the natural move to play here. 13.♙e3 (13.d5 exd5 14.♜xd5 ♜xd5 15.♙xd5 ♖f6= with an equal position.) 13...b6!? (13...♜e7∞ is once again possible if we prefer to prevent d4-d5.) 14.d5! (14.♞c1 ♜e7! (14...♙b7 This

time it can be a bit unpleasant for Black after: 15.d5! exd5 16.♜xd5 ♙d6 17.♞e1±) 15.♜e5 (15.♜b5 ♙b8∞ and I don't see what the point of ♜b5 is?) 15...♙b7 16.♙b1 ♜f5∞ with a balanced position.) 14...♜e5!



This line shows another way to deal with the d5-breakthrough. 15.♜xe5 (15.dxe6 ♙xe6 16.♙xe6 ♖xd1 17.♙xf7+ ♜xf7 18.♞axd1 ♜xf3+ 19.gxf3 ♙e5= and Black has enough compensation for the pawn.) 15...♙xe5 16.dxe6 ♙xe6 17.♙xe6 fxe6 It's not the first time that I have suggested a line accepting the isolated e6-pawn, because it seems solid enough to me. 18.♖e2 (18.♖b3 ♜d5 19.♞ad1 ♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♖c7= with equality.) 18...♙xc3 19.bxc3 ♜c8 20.♙d4 (20.♞fd1 ♖e7=) 20...♜c6= followed by ...♜d5. The position is equal.

d) 11.♙d3 cxd4 12.exd4 ♙c7 transposes to 9.♙d3.

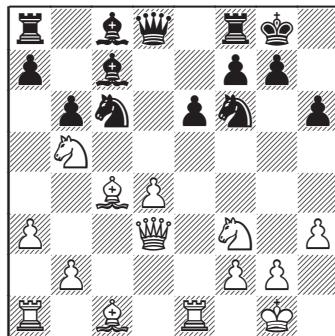
e) 11.♜e2 I faced this move once in one of my games. We can also have the same position without the insertion of h2-h3 and ...h7-h6. 11...cxd4 (11...♖e7!? was played in the game Brink,B (2284)-

Riemersma,L (2432) Amsterdam 2015. It's another decent idea.) 12.♖exd4 ♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♜xd4 ♟d7 15.b4 ♟b6 16.♟b2 ♟a4 17.♞fc1= and I accepted the draw offer: Bujisho,B (2382)-Cornette,M (2563) Sautron 2013.

11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♟c7 13.♞d1 the most common.

a) 13.♞e1 b6!? Once again, this move is a good choice if we are OK with making a quick draw. (13...♜e7 was played by Michael Adams. 14.♟d2 b6 15.♞ad1 (15.♜b5N 15...♟b7 (15...♟b8!?N is also perfectly decent, followed by ...♟b7. It will probably transpose to the main line.) 16.♜e5 (16.♜xc7N 16...♗xc7= and Black has easy play.) 16...♟b8 17.♟b4 (17.♜xf7?! ♞xf7 18.♟xe6 ♟d5! 19.♟xf7+ ♟xf7= and I think Black's chances are preferable in this unbalanced position.) 17...♜fd5 18.♗e4 ♗c8= with mutual chances in this complicated position.) 15...♟b7 16.♜e5 a6 17.♟c1 ♜fd5∞ and Black was fine in Del Rio Angelis,S (2559)-Adams,M (2682)/ Montcada 2009.) 14.♟d2N To play in the spirit of the game between Del Rio Angelis and Adams.

a1) 14.♜b5N



20.gxf3 ♖f6 21.♞e2 ♜ac8 22.♞d1 ♜c4= and a draw was agreed a few moves later in the game Peralta,F (2602)-Gonzalez Garcia,J (2518)/Barbera del Valles 2012.

14...♙b7 15.♞ad1 (15.d5 leads to equality as it does most of the time.
15...exd5 16.♜xd5 ♜xd5 17.♞xd5 ♞xd5 18.♙xd5 ♞ad8=; 15.♜b5 ♙b8∞ followed by the usual ...a7-a6 and ...♜e7.) 15...♞c8 16.♙c1

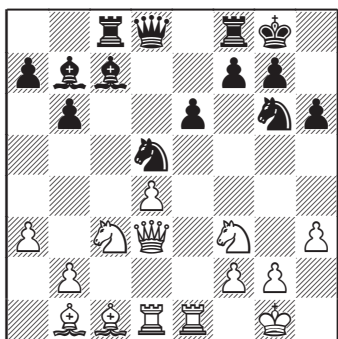
a1) 16.d5 ♜a5!? 17.♙a2 (17.♙a6 ♜xd5 18.♜xd5 ♞xd5 19.♞xd5 exd5 20.♙xb7 ♜xb7 21.♜d4 ♞fe8= with equality.) 17...♜xd5 18.♜xd5 ♙xd5 19.♙xd5 ♞xd5 20.♞xd5 exd5 21.♙xa5 bxa5 22.♞xd5 ♙b6= with full equality.

a2) 16.♜e5?! ♜xd4 17.♙xh6 ♜f3+! 18.♜xf3 ♞xd3 19.♙xd3 gxh6+ and Black is slightly better due to the bishop pair.

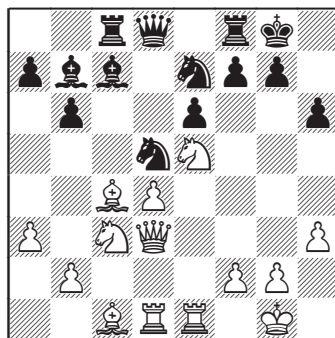
a3) 16.♜b5?! makes no sense when the rook is already on c8. 16...♙b8+;

a4) 16.♙a2 ♜e7 17.♙b1 ♜f5 18.♙c1 ♜d5 followed by ...♙b8. The position is very unclear but interesting to play.

16...♜e7 17.♜e5 (17.♙a2 ♜fd5! 18.♙b1 ♜g6!?)



This is also a good square for the knight.
19.♜d2 The best move according to the engine. A good sign! (19.h4 f5!+ and Black seizes the initiative. 19.g3 ♜xc3 20.bxc3 ♞d5+; 19.♜e5 ♙xe5! 20.dxe5 ♜xc3 21.bxc3 ♞xd3 22.♞xd3 ♞c7+ and Black has the better endgame.) 19...♜xc3 20.bxc3 ♙d5 21.g3 ♙d6∞ I like Black's position. even if it remains unclear.) 17...♜fd5



A critical position. I will give you some illustrative lines: 18.♙a2 is a logical move, but after

a1) 18.♜b5 ♙b8 19.♙a2 a6 20.♜c3 ♙xe5 21.♜xd5! (21.♞xe5? ♜g6 22.♙b1 f5! +) 21...♙h2+!? 22.♜xh2 ♙xd5 23.♙b1 f5∞;

a2) 18.♜e4 ♜f5∞;

a3) 18.♜xd5 ♙xd5 19.♙a6 ♞b8 20.♙d2 b5!∞;

18...♙xe5!? White needs to be careful.
19.♜xd5! The only move not to stand worse! (19.♞xe5 ♜g6 20.♙b1 f5! 21.♞xe6 ♜gf4 22.♙xf4 ♜xf4 23.♙a2 ♜xd3 24.♞d6+ ♜h7 25.♞xd8 ♞fxd8 26.♞xd3 ♙a6 27.♞d2 ♜g6+; 19.dxe5 ♜xc3 20.bxc3

♖xd3 21.♞xd3 ♞fd8=) 19...♙h2+
20.♜xh2 ♙xd5 21.♙b1 f5∞ and in a
practical game I would take Black.

b) 13.♙e3 b6 (13...♜e7!? I have to
repeat myself again by reminding everyone
that this move is possible before ...b7-b6 if
we don't want to allow d4-d5.) 14.d5
(14.♞ad1 ♜e7 15.♜e5 ♙b7 16.♜b5 ♙b8
17.♞fe1 ♙d5∞ and Black is fine.
14.♞ac1N 14...♙b7 15.♞fd1 ♜e7 16.♜e5
♞c8∞ with a balanced position.) 14...exd5
15.♜xd5 ♜xd5! (15...♙b7? is losing a
pawn after 16.♜xc7 ♞xc7 17.♙xh6!± with
the idea that after 17...gxh6? 18.♞g6+!
and White is winning.) 16.♞xd5
(16.♙xd5 ♜e7=) 16...♙b7 and White has
no advantage at all, for example: 17.♞xd8

b1) 17.♞ac1 ♜a5!;

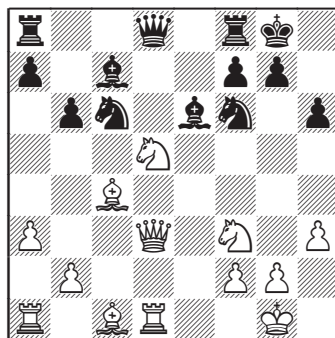
b2) 17.♞fd1 ♞f6!;

b3) 17.♞f5 ♜e7! (17...♞c8 18.♞h5!±)
18.♞g4 (18.♞h5 ♞d6! 19.♞fd1 ♙xf3
20.♞xf3 ♞h2+ 21.♜f1 ♞ae8∞) 18...♞c8!?
= with equality.

17...♞axd8 18.♞ac1 ♜e5 19.♜xe5
♙xe5= and a draw was agreed a few moves
later in the game Mladenov, P (2389)-
Cornette, M (2522) Mont-de-Marsan
2010.

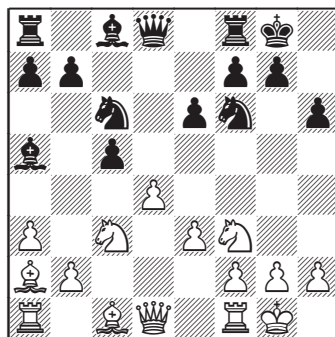
13...b6 (13...♜e7 is also possible
14.♜e5! b6 15.♞f3 ♞b8 16.♜b5 ♙b7
17.♞e2 ♞a8! Protecting the a7-pawn.
18.♜xc7 ♞xc7 19.♙f4 ♜fd5 20.♙h2
♞d8= and the position was equal in the
game Almiron, L (2593)-Santana Penate, G
(2512) ICCF email 2010.) 14.d5
(14.♙a2N 14...♙b7 (14...♜e7!? if we want
to prevent d4-d5.) 15.d5 exd5 16.♜xd5

♜xd5 17.♙xd5 ♞f6= with equality.)
14...exd5 15.♜xd5 ♙e6!



Thanks to this move, Black equalizes
easily. 16.♜xc7 (16.♜xf6+N 16...♞xf6=;
16.♙e3 ♙xd5 17.♙xd5 ♞xd5 18.♞xd5
♜xd5 19.♞xd5 ♞ad8=) 16...♙xc4 17.♞c2
(17.♞xd8N 17...♞axd8∞) 17...♞xc7
18.♞xc4 ♞ac8 19.♙f4 ♞b7= This position
has been reached in several games, and
they all finished in a draw. One of them
was Potkin, V (2642)-Quesada Perez, Y
(2625) Havana 2012.

10.♙a2 h6!?



Once again, when White is not really
threatening to take the c5-pawn, this

useful move is always good. 11.♔b1 a waiting move.

a) 11.dxc5 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 ♜a5∞ is of course good for Black.

b) 11.♜d3?! It's not the best timing for this move, because after: 11...cxd4! 12.exd4 e5! becomes possible, as the queen is unprotected on d3. However, things are not quite so simple: 13.d5 ♖xc3 14.♜xc3 ♖xd5 15.♜c5 ♖e6 16.♞d1 ♞c8! The move Black needed to see before playing ...e6-e5. 17.♖xd5 ♖d4 18.♜xa7 ♖c2! 19.♞b1 ♖xd5 20.♖e3 was played in Fabri, L-Chouraqi, G ICCF email 2008, and here Black could have continued with: 20...♜d6!N 21.♜a5 ♖xe3 22.fxex3 ♞c5+;

c) 11.♞b1N 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♖c7 13.♖e3 b6 (13...♖e7 followed by ...♖f5.) 14.d5 exd5 15.♖xd5 ♖e6! This move is good here, because after ♞b1 the ♖a2 is no longer protected. 16.♖xc7 (16.♖xf6+ ♜xf6 17.♖xe6 ♜xe6= with full equality.) 16...♖xa2 17.♖xa8 ♖xb1 18.♜xb1 ♜xa8 19.♞c1 ♞e8= with an equal position.

11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♖b6 (12...♖c7∞ is also good.) 13.♖e3 ♖e7 14.♜d2 ♖f5= and Black was fine in Stoczek, J (2566)-Pavlidis, A (2522) Hoogeveen 2015.

10.♖a4 is similar to 10.♖e2 in a way, in that White forces Black to react in the centre as dxc5 has become a threat now. 10...cxd4 11.exd4 h6! Of course, as usual! 12.♖e3

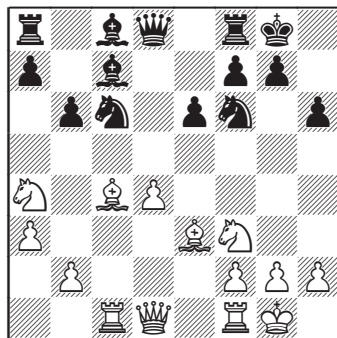
a) 12.♜d3 ♖c7 and the knight will have to come back to c3 at some point.

b) 12.b4 ♖c7 13.♖b2 b6 14.♖c3 ♖e7 15.♜e2 (15.♞e1 ♖b7 16.♖e5 was played

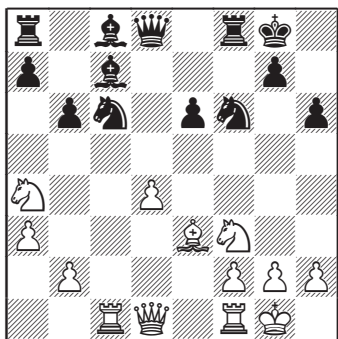
recently in Rajesh, V (2335)-Gagare, S (2486) Noida 2016, but now Black should have continued with: 16...♖f5!+ with a better position.) 15...♖b7 16.♖e5 ♖f5!N The most logical. 17.♞ad1 ♜e7 18.♞fe1 ♞ad8 and here White's best try is an interesting pawn sacrifice: 19.d5! After any other move White would be in trouble. 19...exd5 20.♖d3 ♖d4! (20...♖e4!? 21.♖xe4 dxe4 22.♖xe4 ♖xe5 23.♞xd8 ♞xd8 24.♖xf5 ♜g5 25.g3 ♜xf5 26.♜xe5∞ and White should be able to hold.) 21.♜e3 ♞fe8 22.f4 ♖c6 23.♖xc6 ♜xe3+ 24.♞xe3 ♖xc6 25.♞xe8+ ♖xe8+ White has some compensation but Black is a pawn up.

c) 12.♖f4 ♖c7∞ As we already know, this exchange favours Black: Bruno, F (2422)-Sturua, Z (2523) Katerini 2014.

12...♖c7N as usual 13.♞c1 (13.♜c2 b6! 14.♖xe6? is just bad, because after 14...♖xe6 15.♜xc6 ♖d5 16.♜c2 ♖xf3 17.gxf3 ♖d5+ Black's attack will be too strong. The ♖a4 is out of the game. 13.♖c5?! looks quite ridiculous after 13...b6+ 13...b6!?



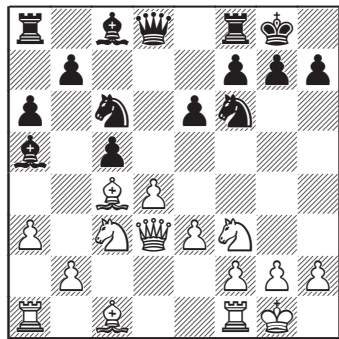
Just as in the 10.♖e2 line, it's a good idea to allow tactics with ♙xe6. 14.♖c2 (14.♙xe6 fxe6!



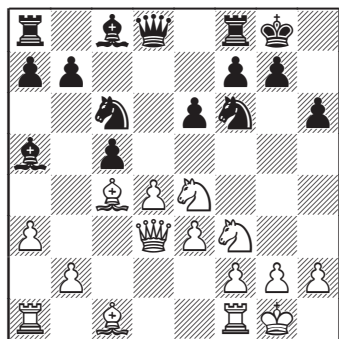
This time this capture is even stronger. 15.♖xc6 ♙b7 16.♖b3! is also the best with the knight on e2, but here Black has: (16.♖c2 ♖g4! 17.♖e5 ♖xe3 18.fxe3 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 ♖g5+; 16.♖xe6? ♖g4!—+ with a winning attack.) 16...♖d5! 17.♖xe6 ♖xf3! 18.gxf3 ♖h4 Threatening mate in one. 19.♖e5! ♙xe5 20.dxe5 ♖h8 21.♖c5! The only move! 21...♖xe3 22.fxe3 ♖d8! Black ignores White's knight on c5! 23.♖e4! (23.♖xb7?? ♖d2!—+ and White can't prevent the mate.) 23...♙xe4 24.fxe4 ♖g4+ 25.♖h1 ♖xe4+ 26.♖g1 ♖xe5+ and Black is much better.) 14...♙d6!? (14...♙b7 is playable this time, but I prefer the other move. 15.♙b5! ♖c8 16.♙xc6 ♙xc6 17.♖xc6 ♙xh2+ 18.♖xh2 ♖xc6 19.♖xc6 ♖e8! 20.♖fc1 b5 21.♖c8! ♖xc8 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖c5 ♖d5∞ with a balanced position.) 15.♖fd1 (15.♙xe6? it's not a good idea here: 15...♙xe6 16.♖xc6 ♙d5 17.♖b5 ♙xf3 18.gxf3 ♖d5!+ with a strong initiative.) 15...♖e7! (15...♙b7?! looks natural, but White has a strong

reply: 16.♖c5!±) 16.♖e5 ♙b7 17.♖c3 ♖c8∞ with an unclear position.

10...a6!?



An important move. It's the only line where I suggest a different set-up. The idea is very concrete; Black wants to push ...b7-b5. 10...h6 has been played recently. I always thought that it was not the best move here, but it looks playable. 11.♖e4!? N

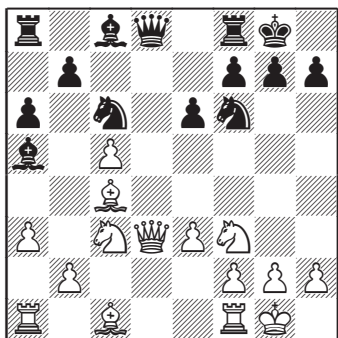


I believe this is the critical move. (11.♖d1 cxd4 12.exd4 ♙c7 13.♙e3 Brunner,N (2438)-Baillet,P (2509) Nancy 2016, and here White should have played (13.h3 has also been played, but it will transpose to 9.h3.) 13...♖e7∞ followed by

...b7-b6.) 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♖c7 13.♞e1!? ♜d5! (13...b6 here doesn't work out well: 14.♜xf6+! ♞xf6 15.♞e4 ♖b7 16.♙d3± and White is better.) 14.♜c3 ♜ce7 15.♙d2∞ and I guess the position is OK, but it doesn't look so simple to play for Black.

11.♞d1

The most common reply, intending dxc5. 11.dxc5



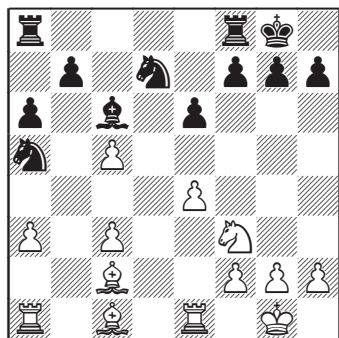
This is the solid option. White can try to prove that his chances are superior because of the b6-square, but honestly, I don't really believe in it. 11...♞xd3 12.♙xd3 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♜a5!? After analyzing this position long enough, I reached the conclusion that this is the best way to proceed. Black is threatening ...♜b3 followed by ...♜xc5. 14.♞b1

a) 14.♙c2 ♙d7 followed by ...♞c8 winning back the pawn. 15.e4 with the idea to play 16.♙e3 after ♞fc8.

a1) 15.♜e5 ♞fc8 16.♞d1N (16.♞b1?! Petzold,J-Stoeckigt,R DDR 1969 16...♙b5!?) 16...♙e8! 17.c6 (17.♜d3 ♜e4! ∞) 17...♙xc6∞ and I start to prefer Black.

a2) 15.a4 ♞fc8 16.♙a3! (16.♜e5 ♞xc5 17.♜xd7 ♜xd7+ Matthai, E-Skorna,U DDR 1977) 16...♜c4 17.♞fb1 ♜xa3 18.♞xa3 ♞ab8 19.♙d3 a5= and Black was fine in the game Georgiev,V (2550)-Bruzon Batista,L (2684) Chicago 2015.

15...♙c6!? 16.♞e1 ♜d7!



This was my novelty, but it has since been used by my friend Sophie Milliet. 17.♜d4

a1) 17.♙g5N 17...♜xc5!? 18.♙e7 ♜ab3! A nice move, after which White is not winning material. 19.♞ab1 (19.♙xf8?! ♜xa1 20.♙xc5 ♜xc2 21.♞e2 ♙a4+ and Black is better.) 19...♞fe8 20.♙d6 ♞ad8 21.e5 (21.♞bd1 ♜a1! A very cute move! 22.♙b1 (22.♞xa1 ♞xd6+ 22...♙a4 23.♞d4 ♜ab3 24.♞dd1 ♜a5 25.♞d4 ♜cb3+ and Black is better.) 21...♙xf3! 22.♙xb3 (22.gxf3 ♞xd6! 23.exd6 ♜d2+ and Black will win back the exchange.) 22...♜xb3 23.♞xb3 ♙c6= with a drawish endgame.

a2) 17.♙f4N 17...♜xc5! As in the 17.♙g5 line, we can take this pawn. 18.♙d6 ♜ab3! 19.♞ab1 ♞fd8 20.e5 ♙xf3 21.♙xb3 (21.gxf3 ♞xd6 22.exd6 ♜d2∞)

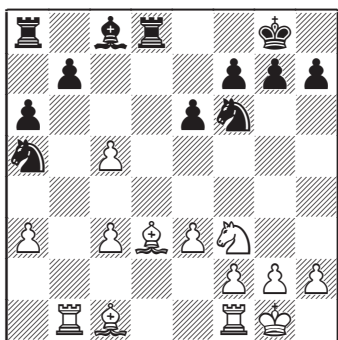
21...♖xb3 22.♝xb3 ♔d5= with full equality.

a3) 17.♙e3 ♘c4∞ Black is totally fine.

17...♞fc8 18.♘xc6 ♞xc6 19.♙a4 ♞c7 20.♙f4 e5 21.♙g3 f6= and Black made a comfortable draw in the game Hawkins,J (2512)-Milliet,S (2387) Hastings 2014.

b) 14.c4N 14...♘b3 15.♞b1 ♘xc5 16.♙c2 ♔d7= and Black has absolutely no problems.

14...♞d8!



The most precise move, asking White what they want to do with their bishop? 15.♙c2

a) 15.♘e5 was also played once. 15...♘d7! To exchange White's only active piece. 16.♘xd7 (16.♞d1?!N 16...♘xe5 17.♙xh7+ ♘xh7 18.♞xd8 ♘d7!♞ and White can take advantage of the pin on the back rank.) 16...♙xd7 17.♙e2 was played in the game Azmaiparashvili,Z (2455) -Andrianov,N (2400) Jurmala 1983, but here I suggest a simple improvement (17.♞b4N 17...♞ac8 18.e4 ♞xc5 19.c4 ♙c8 20.♙e3 ♘c6!= and with this nice little trick Black equalises.)

17...♞dc8!N 18.♞d1 ♙e8= followed by ...♞xc5 with an equal position.

b) 15.♙e2N 15...♘e4 16.♙b2 ♔d7 17.c4 f6∞ and Black will win back the pawn with a good position.

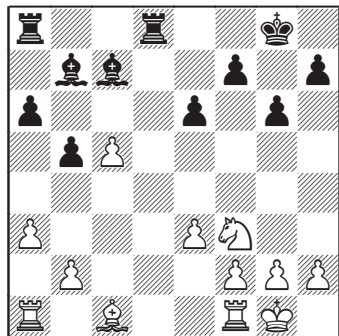
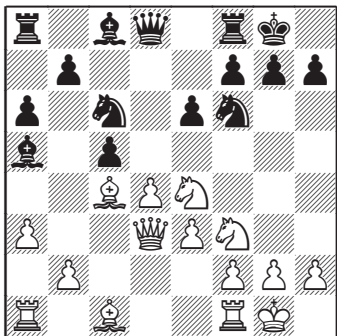
15...♔d7 16.♘e5 has been played twice, and both times Black reacted well: 16...♞ac8 (16...♙b5!? is the other possibility. 17.♞e1

a) 17.c4 ♘xc4 18.♘xc4 ♙xc4 19.♞d1 (19.♞e1 ♔d5=) 19...♞dc8 20.♞xb7 ♞xc5= with full equality.

b) 17.♞d1?!N 17...♘e4!♞;

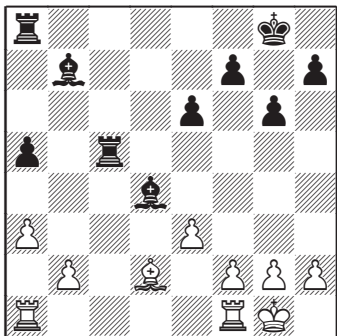
17...♙d5! 18.c4 ♞xc5 19.cxb5 ♞xc2 20.bxa6 bxa6 21.e4 ♞ac8 22.f3 ♘e8= and Black was fine in the game Llagaria Vidal,E (2189) -Hernaez Fernandez,C (2230) ICCF email 2011.) 17.♞d1 ♞xc5 18.f4N was probably the best. (18.♘d7 ♞xd7 19.♞xd7 ♘xd7 20.♙d2N (20.♙e4? is a mistake because after 20...♞xc3♞ White was in big trouble and eventually lost in the game Stolle,E-Stoeckigt,R/ DDR 1969/Corr.) 20...♞c7∞ Followed by ...♘c4. Black has good prospects.) 18...♞c7 planning ...♞dc8 and ...♙e8 with good play. Let's see some illustrative lines: 19.♞d4 (19.♞d6 ♘e8! 20.♞d4 f6= and White has to decide what to do with his knight. 19.e4 ♞dc8 20.♙d2 ♙e8= with equality. Black will continue with ...♘d7, trying to exchange the knights. 19.♙d2 ♙e8 20.♙e1 ♞dc8 21.e4 b5=) 19...♞dc8 20.♙d2 ♙e8 21.♙d3 b5 22.e4 ♘d7! Trying to trade off the most annoying white piece. 23.♘xd7 ♞xd7 24.♙e1 ♙e8= and Black is totally fine.

11.♘e4!?

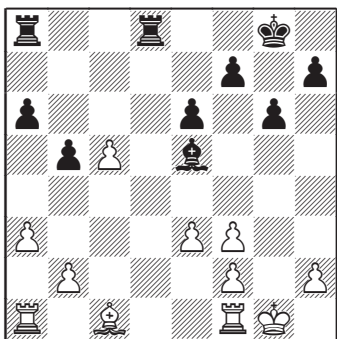


When I first studied this position, I was impressed to see that the most interesting games in this line were played somewhere between 1969–1975. 11...b5 12.♖xf6+ (12.♙a2?! c4! 13.♖xf6+ (13.♙c2 ♖xe4 14.♙xe4 ♙b7 15.♙b1 g6 16.♙f4 Rabar,B-Ivkov,B Belgrade 1954, and here I like 16...♙e7 with good play.) 13...♙xf6 14.♙e4 ♙b7 15.♙b1 g6 16.♖e5 ♙fc8 17.♖d7 ♙e7 18.♖c5 ♙a7 19.♖xb7 ♙xb7 There is still a lot of play ahead, but I prefer Black's chances: Thorsteins,K (2480)-Olafsson,H (2595) Gardabaer 1991.) 12...♙xf6 13.♙e4 ♙b7 14.♙d3 g6 15.dxc5 This was White's idea. He wins a pawn, but in return Black will take the pair of bishops and will have an advantage in development. 15...♖b4! 16.♙e5 (16.♙xb7?! ♖xd3 and Black will take back the pawn: Stolle,E-Herschel,K DDR 1976.) 16...♙xe5 17.♖xe5 ♖xd3 18.♖xd3 ♙fd8 19.♖e5 ♙c7 20.♖f3

I have 8 games in my database from this position, and the most recent one is from 1973! (20.f4N is not an improvement. 20...♙xe5 21.fxe5 ♖d5 22.b4 ♙ad8= and Black has no problems.) 20...♙xf3 (20...a5!? is also possible, threatening ...♖d5, and White has no b2-b4. 21.♖d4 ♖d5 22.♖xb5 (22.c6 ♙c8 23.f4N to prevent ...e6-e5. (23.♙d2?! e5 24.♖f3 ♙g4∞ and Black was fine, even slightly better in Gligoric,S-Unzicker,W Ljubljana 1969.) 23...f6! Black needs to play ...e6-e5 to drive away the ♖d4. 24.♙d2 e5 25.fxe5 fxe5 26.♖f3 ♙g4 27.♙c3 ♙c5 28.♙ac1 ♙xf3 29.gxf3 ♙xc6= with full equality.) 22...♙e5 23.♖d4 ♙xc5 24.♙d2 was played in Kropsu,R-Salonen,S Finland 1973, and here I like 24...♙xd4!?N ...as it looks to be the simplest to me.



25.exd4 Bc4 26.Bc3 a4= followed by ...Bd5 and ...Bac8. I don't see any ideas for White. Even though Black is a pawn down, the opposite-colour bishops guarantees equality.) 21.gxf3 Be5!?!N



My improvement. I think it's a good way to equalize. (21...a5 The move played by Tal, Reshevsky and Polugaevsky (!) is of course playable, but it looks more complicated to me.) 22.Bb1 Bd3 23.b4 Qf8 24.f4 Bg7 25.e4 (25.Qg2 Qe7 26.Qf3 Bxd8 27.Qe2 e5!= and even though White is a pawn up, I don't think he stands better.) 25...Bd4!= and I don't see how White can improve his position.

Black can push ...a6-a5, and sometimes ...e6-e5.

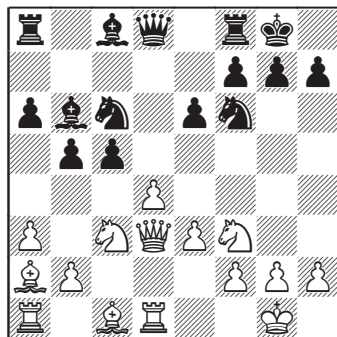
11...b5

Of course. Following our plan.

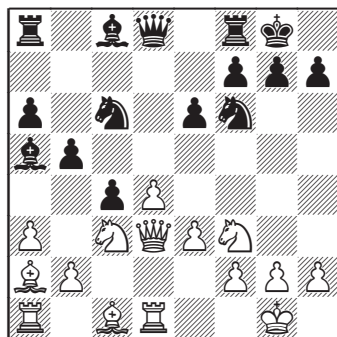
12.Ba2

This is a critical position. I now suggest two ways to proceed: the quite solid 12...Bb6, or 12...c4, which is more complicated.

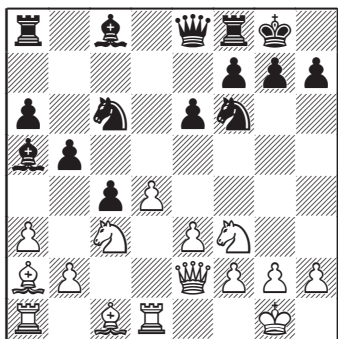
12...Bb6!?



The solid option. Black defends the c5-pawn. White has now tried several different moves, but I believe Black is fine after every one of them. 12...c4!?



To tell you the truth, I discovered this move only during the process of writing this book. One of my students faced it with White, and lost his game quite easily, so I decided to analyze this interesting continuation. 13. ♖e2 (13. ♖c2 ♖b7 14. ♖b1 ♜e7 15. ♖e2 ♙xc3 16. bxc3 was played in the game Panno, O-Bronstein, L Buenos Aires 1968, but here I prefer 16... ♙e4! N to exchange White's most active piece. 17. ♜d2 ♙xb1 18. ♜xb1 ♜fd5 19. a4 ♜b6 20. axb5 axb5 21. ♞xa8 ♞xa8 22. ♙a3 ♞e8= with an equal position, followed by ... ♜a4 and ... ♜c6.) 13... ♞e8!



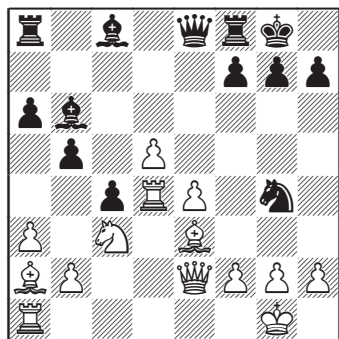
...with the idea of pushing e5. 14. e4 The most logical move.

a) 14. ♙d2 ♖b7 15. b3 cxb3 16. ♙xb3 ♞c8= Black was fine in the game Danner, G (2415) -Lechtynsky, J (2445) Prague 1985.

b) 14. ♖b1 e5 15. d5 ♙xc3! 16. bxc3 e4 17. dxc6 (17. ♜d2?! ♜a5± is just better for Black, as in Ketzscher, R-Zerbe, K corr 1984.) 17... exf3 18. gxf3 (18. ♞xf3? is not possible because of 18... ♙g4!-+) 18... ♙xc6 19. e4 ♜h5= with a balanced position, but in practice it's probably easier for Black:

Villegas, P (2374) -Santos Ruiz, M (2484) Sitges 2016.

14... e5 15. d5 (15. ♙g5? has been played once, but it's not a good idea. 15... ♙xc3! 16. bxc3 exd4 17. ♜xd4 (17. ♙xf6?! fails due to 17... d3!-+ followed by ... gxf6.) 17... ♜xe4± and Black was much better in the game Jimenez Zerquera, E-Johannsson, I Lugano 1968.) 15... ♜d4 (15... ♜d8 has been tried only once, but it looks playable. 16. ♙d2 ♜b7∞ Going to d6, where the knight will be perfectly placed. The position is very complex, as in Luckis, M-Garcia, R Villa Gesell 1969.) 16. ♜xd4 exd4 17. ♞xd4 ♖b6 18. ♙c3! The only move! (18. ♞d1? loses after 18... ♙g4!-+; 18. ♞d2 also loses because of the strong 18... ♜g4!-+ and White can't handle all the threats: ... ♙xf2, ... f7-f5, ... ♞e5, etc.) 18... ♜g4!



I like Black's idea of playing for the initiative, not material. 19. e5

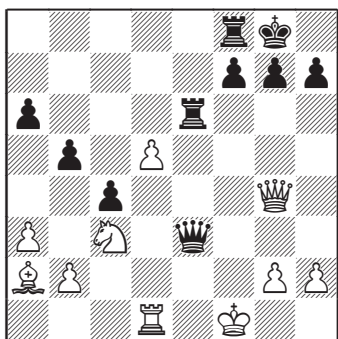
a) 19. f4 was played in the game Sirkia, M-Langeweg, K Siegen 1970, but here Black could have continued with: 19... g5! N 20. ♞ad1! (20. fxe5? is just losing after 20... ♞e5-+) 20... ♜xe3 21. ♞xe3 gxf4

22. ♖xf4 f6+ with a much better position.
... ♗e5 is coming next.

b) 19. ♖dd1? N 19... ♗e5 20. g3 ♜xe3
21. fxe3 ♗g5+ with a winning position.

c) 19. ♖ad1!? N is an interesting way to proceed for White. 19... ♜xe3 20. ♗xe3 ♙g4 21. f3 ♙d7 22. e5 ♙f5∞ with a sharp position. Black will continue with ... ♖d8.

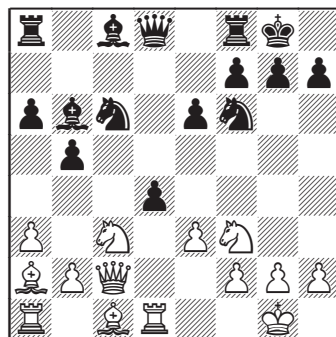
19... ♗xe5!? 20. ♖xg4 ♙xg4 21. ♗xg4 ♙xe3 22. fxe3 ♗xe3+ 23. ♜f1! ♖ae8 24. ♗g3! N was the best defence. (24. ♖d1? was played, but Black found a nice way to be better: 24... ♖e6!



25. dxe6? (25. ♗e2 ♗f4+ 26. ♗f2 ♗xh2 27. dxe6 fxe6+ gives Black a good advantage.) 25... fxe6+ 26. ♗f3 ♖xf3+ 27. gxf3 ♗xf3+ 28. ♜g1 ♗g4+ 29. ♜f2 ♗f4+ 30. ♜g2 and Black made a draw in the game Knaak, R (2495) - Lechtynsky, J (2455) Halle 1981, but could instead have continued with 30... ♗g5+! 31. ♜f2 ♗f6+ 32. ♜g2 ♗g6++ followed by ... ♗c2 with a winning position.) 24... ♗h6 intending ... ♖e3. 25. ♖d1 ♖e3 26. ♗f2 ♖d3 27. ♖xd3 cxd3 28. ♙b3 ♗xh2 29. ♗e3!= and the position is around equal.

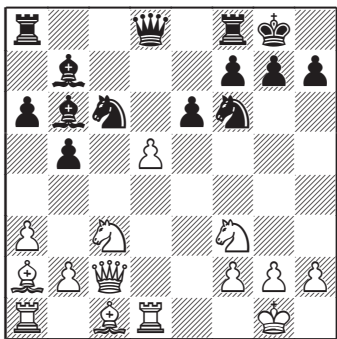
13. dxc5

13. ♗c2 Here Black has a choice between two moves: 13... cxd4!?



(13... c4 also makes sense, especially when White can't push e3-e4 to develop his ♙c1. 14. b3 (14. ♗e2 ♗e8! 15. b3 cxb3 16. ♙xb3 ♙b7 17. e4 (17. ♙b2 ♜a5 18. ♙a2 ♖c8∞) 17... ♖d8! N (17... e5?! has been played in practice, but I don't think it's the best. 18. ♙g5! N The strongest reply. (18. dxe5 ♜xe5 19. ♜xe5 ♗xe5 20. ♙b2 ♙d4∞ and Black was fine in the game Portisch, L-Polugaevsky, L Palma de Mallorca 1970.) 18... ♜xd4 (18... ♙xd4 19. ♖ac1↑) 19. ♜xd4 exd4 20. ♙xf6 gxf6 (20... dxc3 21. ♗g4 g6 22. e5±) 21. ♜d5 ♙xd5 22. ♙xd5∞ with very good compensation for the pawn.) 18. ♙e3 ♜a5 19. ♙c2 ♜d7∞ with a very complicated middlegame.) 14... cxb3 15. ♗xb3! N (15. ♙xb3?! Emma, J-Anelli, A Mar del Plata 1970 15... ♜a5 followed by ... ♙b7, and if 16. d5 ♗c7+ Black is better.) 15... ♙b7 16. ♗b2 ♜e7 17. ♜e5∞ with a balanced position.) 14. ♜xb5 N has never been played but it's the first line of the engine.

a) 14.exd4 ♖b7 15.d5!



It's time for White to play this thematic move: Luodonpaae,M-Nissi,J Finland 1979, and here Black's play can be improved with 15...♖xd5N I prefer this recapture to avoid being pinned with ♗g5. 16.♖xd5 (16.♖g5 g6 17.♖xd5 exd5 18.♗xd5 ♖e7 19.♗e4 ♗ae8∞ looks a bit dangerous for White. 16.♗g5 ♖c7 17.♖xd5 ♗xd5 18.♗xe7 ♗xe7 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♗xd5 ♗ac8∞ and only Black can be better here, even though White's position remains solid.) 16...exd5 17.♗xd5 ♖d4! 18.♗xd4! ♗xd5 19.♗d3 ♖d6 20.♗e3 ♗xe3 21.♗xe3= with an equal position.

b) 14.♖e2?! ♗b7 15.exd4 ♗c8 16.♖d3 ♖e7 17.♗g5 Mujunen,P-Haara, P Finland 1975 17...♖g6♞ and Black has a very good position.

14...axb5 15.♗xc6 ♗a7 16.exd4 (16.♖xd4? loses a piece after 16...e5+!) 16...b4! and Black will have very good compensation for the pawn with a powerful bishop on the long diagonal. For example: 17.♗c2

a) 17.♗b5 bxa3 18.♗c4 ♗a6 (18...♗b7 19.♗xa3 ♗xa3 20.bxa3 ♗xf3 21.gxf3

♖d6 followed by ...♗c7.) 19.♗b4 ♗xc4 20.♗xc4 axb2 21.♗xb2 ♖d5♞ with a little plus due to White's weakness on d4.

b) 17.♖e5 ♗b7 18.♗c2 ♗a8♞ with a very nice position.

17...♗b7 18.♗e2 bxa3 19.bxa3 ♗a8♞ with very good compensation.

13.♗e2 cxd4 14.exd4 ♗b7 Black has a good set-up against the isolated pawn, threatening ...♖xd4. 15.d5 (15.♗e3N has never been played. 15...♖e7 16.♗g5 ♖d6∞ I like Black's position due to his very strong light-squared bishop.) 15...♖xd5! 16.♗xd5 (16.♖xd5 exd5 17.♗g5 ♗e8! gives Black a little edge, for example: 18.♗xe8 (or 18.♖d2 ♖e5 19.♖xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗e1 ♖d4♞) 18...♗axe8 19.♗xd5 ♗e2♞) 16...exd5 17.♖xd5 ♗e8 18.♗e3 ♖d4! 19.♖xd4 ♗xd5 20.♗g4 h5 21.♗g5 ♗xg5 22.♗xg5 ♗ac8∞ and Black has the more pleasant position to play due to the bishop pair, but it's still solid for White: Bilsel,S (2000)-Luebke,K (2096) IECG email 1998.

13.♖e4?! If White really wanted to play with ♖e4, it was better to do it on the 11th move. 13...c4! 14.♖xf6+ (14.♗c2 was played once between Bobotsov,M-Lengyel,L Sarajevo 1971, but here I like 14...♖xe4!N 15.♗xe4 ♖d5! 16.♗b1 f5!♞ and again I prefer Black's position.) 14...♗xf6 15.♗e4 ♗b7 16.♗g4 Lindroos,R-Froeberg,A Finland 1977. Here I suggest: 16...♗e7!♞ planning ...f7-f5, which looks very strong to me.

13.♗b1 ♗b7 14.♖e4?! (14.dxc5 is probably safer for White. 14...♗xd3

15.♔xd3 ♕xc5= and Black was totally fine in the game Panno,O-Parma, B Havana 1969.) 14...♗xe4 15.♖xe4 g6 16.♖f4 White has some vague desires of an attack on the kingside. 16...♗a5 17.♕a2N is probably the best, but even here Black should be better after (17.♕d2? was played once in the game Betancort Curbelo,J (2360)-Pomar Salamanca,A (2435) Lanzarote 1976, but strangely Black didn't play 17...♗b3! 18.♖a2 ♕c7! 19.♖h6 ♕xf3 20.gxf3 ♖f6-+ with a winning position. 17.♕e4N 17...♕xe4 18.♖xe4 cxd4 with a slightly more pleasant position for Black.) 17...♕c7 18.♖g4 h5 19.♖h3 c4!? 20.♕d2 ♕e4 with a better position.

13.h3 This is too slow to be good. 13...♕b7 14.dxc5 ♖xd3 15.♖xd3 ♕xc5 16.b4 ♕e7 17.♖b1 ♖fd8= and draw was agreed in the game Kortschnoj,V (2650)-Polugaevsky,L (2625) Moscow 1973.

13...♖xd3 14.♖xd3 ♕xc5 15.♕d2
15.b4 ♕e7 16.♕b2 ♕b7 17.♖dd1
(17.♖ad1?! a5! and Black was even better

in the game Ungureanu,E-Gheorghiu,F Bucharest 1969.) 17...♖fc8= with a fine position: Gasiorowski,R (2231)-Adamski,J (2415)/ Wroclaw 1972.

15...♕b7 16.♖c1 ♕e7 17.♕e1 ♖fd8=

and a draw was agreed a few moves later in Granda Zuniga,J (2659)-Bruzon Batista,L (2707) Cochabamba 2013.

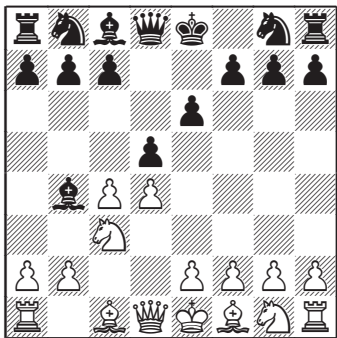
CONCLUSION

In this chapter we analyzed 5.e3, which brings us to the Nimzo-Indian Defence. I checked quite a fashionable line, 6.♕d2, and suggested a solid approach with 6...c5. On the main move, 6.♕d3, I offer an interesting and rather unknown line with 6...dxc4, then 7...c5, with the idea of playing 8... ♕a5 after 8. a3. Black will take on c3 only after White's dxc5. On other moves, Black will continue with ...h7-h6, then exchange on d4 to create an isolated pawn. After that, the play is quite simple — most of the time it's the same set of moves: ...♕c7, ...b7-b6, ...♕b7, ...♗e7, etc.

PART 6.

The accelerated Ragozin

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♘b4!?



I always call this move-order the ‘Accelerated Ragozin’. I don’t really know if there is some more accurate name for it, but I like this one. This move is actually quite popular and I believe it’s a decent alternative to the classical Queen’s Gambit Declined. I often advise my students to play it against people playing 4.♞c2 in the Nimzo-Indian, or 4.e3 then 5.♘ge2, because in this particular move-order these lines are not so good. Here White has the following choices: transposing to a ‘normal’ Ragozin, transposing to the regular Nimzo-Indian e3 as well as trying to take benefit of the move-order by playing e3, then a3 quickly.

4.e3

4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙f4 will be studied in Chapter 15. (5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 see Chapter 15.) ;

4.♞c2 can be played with the idea being to transpose into the Nimzo-Indian 4.♞c2, but here I like 4...dxc4!?. This is a big difference compared to the Nimzo-Indian and will be thoroughly analyzed in Chapter 15.

4.♘f3 ♘f6 transposes into classical Ragozin.

4.♞a4+ ♘c6 will be studied in Chapter 15.

4.♞b3 c5 will be studied in Chapter 15.

4.a3 will also be studied in Chapter 15, but it can also transpose to Chapter 16 if White plays e3 afterwards.

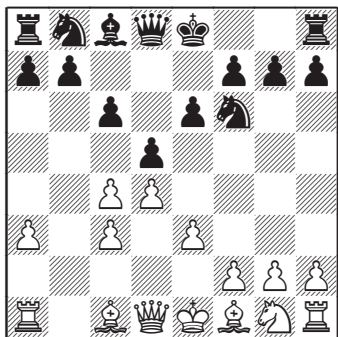
4...♘f6 5.a3

This is the main move. 5.♙d3 0-0 (5...e5!? will also be analyzed in Chapter 15.) 6.♘ge2 will be studied in Chapter 15.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙d3 will be studied in Chapter 15.

5.♘ge2 will be studied in Chapter 15.

5...♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 c6!?



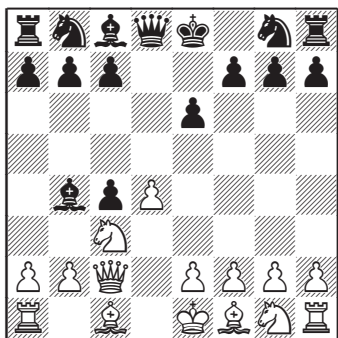
A solid move. The idea is to recapture on d5 with the c-pawn. Black wants to castle but mainly to play ...b7-b6 and ...♙a6. See Chapter 16.

Chapter 15.

3.♙b4 — 4.XXX and 5.XXX

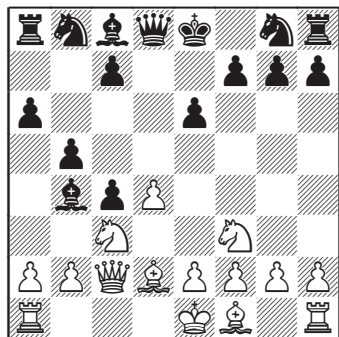
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4!? 4.e3

4.♘f3 In the database this is the most frequent move. Of course it transposes to the real Ragozin. 4.♙c2 is rarely played. Here we can transpose to the Classical Nimzo-Indian 4.♙c2 if we wish, but I believe we can take advantage of this move-order: 4...dxc4!?



It makes sense to grab this unprotected pawn. ...b7-b5 is coming to protect it, and we are also attacking the d4-pawn. 5.e3

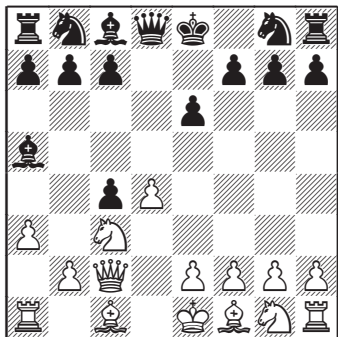
a) 5.♘f3 b5 6.♙d2 a6!?N



Whenever it's possible, we should play ...a7-a6 instead of ...c7-c6 protecting the b5-pawn, because with the pawn still on c7 our bishop will be much stronger on b7. 7.a4! ♙a5! Not a standard move in the

Ragozin, but Black defends the b5-pawn in this strange-looking way. 8.e3 (8.♖e4 ♟xd2+ 9.♗exd2 ♟b7 10.b3 cxb3 11.♞xb3 ♟xf3!? 12.♗xf3 ♗d7 13.e3 ♗gf6 followed by ... 0-0 and ...c7-c6. White can't take on b5 right now, because the opening of the a-file can end badly for them. 8.axb5 axb5 9.b4!? cxb3 10.♞xb3 c6 11.e4 ♗e7 12.♟d3 ♗d7 13.0-0 ♟b7∞ White has some compensation, but Black's position is solid, and he is a pawn up.) 8...♟b7 9.♟e2 ♗f6 10.axb5 axb5 11.0-0 ♟xc3 (11...c6 12.e4 ♗a6∞) 12.♞xc3 (12.bxc3 ♗bd7) 12...♗e4 13.♞b4 ♗d6 14.♞xa8 ♟xa8 15.b3 0-0 Sometimes it's good to give back the material to gain time. 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.♟xc4 (17.♗e5 ♗c6 18.♗xc6 ♟xc6=) 17...♟xf3 18.gxf3 ♗xc4 19.♞xc4 ♞g5+ 20.♟h1 ♞h5= with equality.

b) 5.a3 ♟a5!?N



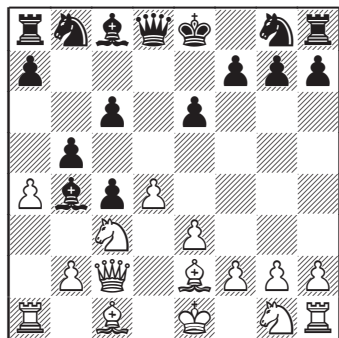
If we can keep the bishop, it's a good move. Intending ...b7-b5. 6.♞a4+ ♗c6 7.e3 e5! A thematic move. 8.d5 is not an option now, because of 8...♞xd5. 8.♟xc4 (8.dxe5 ♟d7!? 9.♞xc4 (9.♟d2 ♗ge7=) 9...♗xe5 10.♞e4 ♞e7 11.♞xb7 (11.♗f3

♗xf3+ 12.gxf3 ♟xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♟c6 14.♞xe7+∞ with a complicated position.) 11...♞d8 12.♗f3 ♗f6∞ looks super-dangerous for White.) 8...exd4 9.exd4 ♗f6 10.♗ge2 0-0 11.0-0 ♟b6 12.♟e3 ♟f5= with an equal position. (12...♟e6!?= is also a good alternative.) ;

5...b5 6.a4 (6.♟d2 a6!?N 7.a4 ♟a5!?

Once again this unorthodox defence of the b5-pawn. 8.axb5 axb5 followed by ...♟b7. The b5-pawn is a taboo because of ...♟xd2 winning the rook on a1. 9.b4! cxb3 10.♞xb3 c6 11.♗f3 ♗f6 12.♟d3 ♗bd7 13.0-0 ♟b7∞ with a complicated position.) 6...c6 This time we don't have a choice. In general, I believe White has enough compensation for the pawn, but I don't think that they can achieve more than equality. 7.axb5

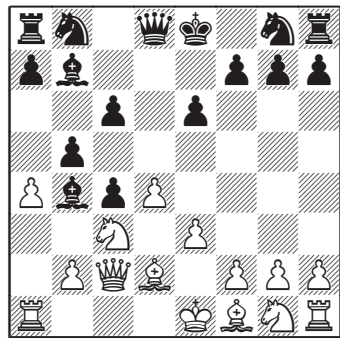
a) 7.♟e2!?N



Intending ♟f3. 7...a6 8.♟f3!? (8.♗f3 ♗f6 9.0-0 (9.♗e5?!N 9...♟b7 10.0-0 ♗bd7 and I don't see how White should proceed. 11.f4 (11.♟f3 ♗xe5 12.dxe5 ♗d7 and Black is much better.) 11...0-0 12.♟f3 ♞c7 I prefer Black.) 9...♟b7 There are quite a few games from this

position, and even if it's playable for White, I believe that Black's chances are greater. 10.b3!? (10.♖d1 ♖bd7 11.e4 0-0 12.e5 ♖d5 13.♗g5 g6 14.♗ce4 Rajic,I (2104)-Linke,S (2121) Bayern 2009, and here Black missed 14...c5!♣ when the position will open and we have a perfect scenario for Black. 10.e4 ♖bd7 11.♗g5 ♜b6♣ followed by ...c6-c5: Donaldson-Akhmilovskaya, E (2393)-Christiansen, L (2571) Seattle 2002.) 10...cxb3 11.♜xb3 ♗e7 12.♖e5 0-0 13.♗f3 Young, A (2390)-Pruess, D (2376) Santa Monica 2004. Here Black missed the strongest continuation: 13...b4!N 14.♖e4 a5♣ with an advantage.) 8...♗b7 9.♖ge2 ♖f6 10.0-0 ♖bd7 11.b3! White has to try to break down Black's wall somehow. 11...cxb3 12.♜xb3 ♗e7 13.♗a3 ♗xa3 14.♜xa3 (14.axb5 axb5 15.♜xa3 ♜b8 (15...0-0 even this is good for Black. 16.♖xb5 cxb5 17.♗xb7 ♜xa3 18.♜xa3 ♜b6 19.♗f3 e5=) 16.♜b4 ♜e7 17.♜xe7+ ♗xe7 18.♜a7 ♖d5∞ White has some activity, but no more than this.) 14...♜e7 15.axb5 ♜xa3 16.♜xa3 axb5 17.♜xa8+ ♗xa8 18.♖xb5 ♗e7 19.♖a7 c5!= with full equality.

b) 7.♗d2 ♗b7!N



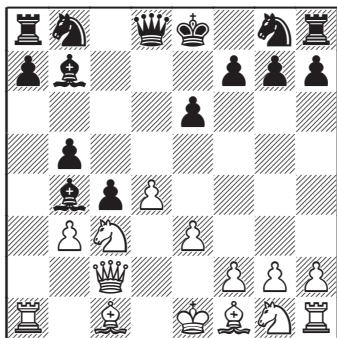
This move is more precise. (7...♖f6 8.axb5! ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 cxb5 10.b3! 0-0 11.bxc4 bxc4 12.♖f3 (12.♗b4 ♜e8 13.♗xc4 a5 (13...♗b7 14.♖f3±) 14.♖f3 ♗a6=) 12...♗b7 13.♗xc4±) 8.axb5 ♗xc3 9.♜xc3!? (9.♗xc3 cxb5 10.d5 (10.b3 cxb3 11.♜xb3 (11.♗xb5+? ♖d7 12.♜xb3 ♗xg2! ♣ Now we can see the difference between 7...♗b7 and 7...♖f6.) 11...a6♣ followed by ...♖f6.) 10...♖f6! 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.♖f3 0-0♣) 9...cxb5 10.b3 a5 11.♜xa5 (11.bxc4 b4 12.♜b2 ♖f6∞ Like a good Noteboom variation for Black.) 11...♜xa5 12.♜xa5 ♜xa5 13.♗xa5 ♖f6 14.bxc4 bxc4 15.♖f3 0-0 16.♗xc4 ♜c8 17.♗b3 ♜c1+ 18.♗d1 ♗a6∞ Black has enough compensation because it's not clear yet how White's pieces will enter the game.

7...cxb5 8.b3

a) 8.♜e4 ♜d5 9.♜g4 ♗f8 10.♗d2 ♗xc3 (10...♜c6!♣ is also totally fine.) 11.♗xc3 was played in the game Markos, J (2565)-Dizdar, G (2564)/Austria 2008, but here I prefer the simple 11...♖f6!N 12.♜f4 ♜d8♣ followed by ...♖d5.

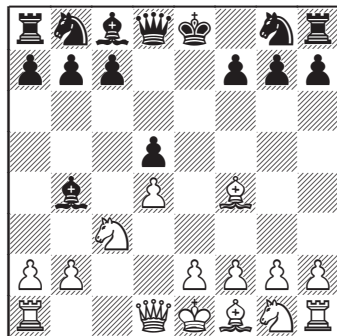
b) 8.♗d2 ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 ♗b7 transposes to 7.♗d2 ♗b7.

8...♙b7!?N



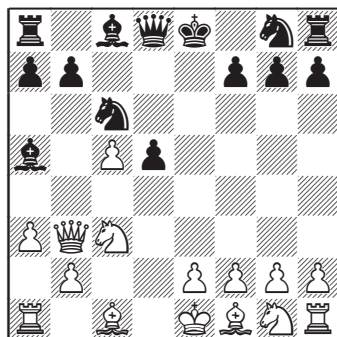
Indirectly defending the c4-pawn, as White is not able to win it due to ...♙xg2 threats. 9.bxc4 (9.♖f3 a5!? 10.bxc4 bxc4 11.♙xc4 ♖d7∞ followed by ...♖f6 and ...♙c8 with a very unclear position.) 9...bxc4 10.♙a3 (10.♖f3 ♖d7∞; 10.♙xc4?? is of course impossible because of 10...♙xg2+; 10.♙a4+ ♖c6 11.♙d2 ♖f6 12.♙xc4 0-0 13.♖ge2 a5∞ with a complicated position.) 10...♙xa3 11.♙xa3 (11.♙a4+ intending ♙xa3. 11...♖d7 12.♙xa3 ♖e7 13.♖f3 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♖b6 15.♙xc4 ♖xc4 16.♙a4+ ♙d7 17.♙xc4 ♙c8∞ and Black is fine.) 11...♖f6 12.♖f3 0-0 13.♙xc4 ♙e7 14.♙b2 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♙c8 16.♙e2 ♖c6 17.0-0 a5= with equality.

4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙f4!?



This move is played quite often, even by strong players.

a) 5.♙b3 c5 6.dxc5 (6.e3 ♖f6!?N is a novelty in this rare move-order, but I guess that White will have to play ♖f3 at some point, and it will transpose to Chapter 6.) 6...♖c6 7.a3 (7.e3 ♖f6 8.♙b5 (8.♖f3 transposes to Chapter 6.) 8...♙xc5 9.♖ge2 0-0 10.0-0 a6 (10...♙d6!?N is also interesting.) 11.♙d3 ♙e8!?∞ with good play for Black.) 7...♙a5!?



An old novelty I had stored up, but it has been tried since. 8.e3N

a1) 8.♙d2 ♖f6 9.♙d1 (9.♙c2? d4+ and Black was better in the game Alarcia

Astiz,C (2337)-Arribas Lopez,A (2537) Madrid 2015.) 9...d4 10.♖b5 ♖e4 11.♖d6+! ♖xd6 12.cxd6 0-0 13.♖f3 ♖e8= is good for Black.

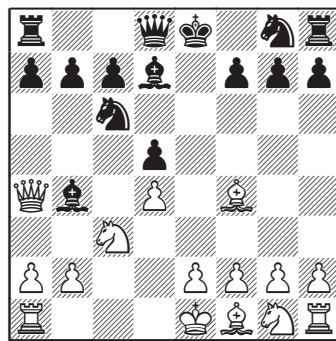
a2) 8.♙f4N 8...♗f6 9.0-0 0-0 10.e3 ♙xc3! 11.♖xc3 ♙f5! with a sharp position. For example: 12.♙g5 (12.♙d3 ♙xd3 13.♖xd3 b6!= with the idea of taking back the c5-pawn, or to open the lines on the queenside.) 12...♗e4! 13.♙xd8 ♖xc3 14.bxc3 ♖fxd8 15.♗e2 ♖a5 16.♗f4 ♖ac8= with equality.

8...♗f6 9.♗f3 (9.♙b5 0-0 10.♗ge2 ♖e7 11.0-0 ♖xc5∞ with a balanced position.) 9...0-0 10.♙e2 (10.♖c2 with the idea of playing b2-b4. 10...d4!? leads to simplifications. (10...♖e8 is of course also playable. 11.♙e2 (11.b4 d4!∞ is also very interesting.) 11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♙g4 13.0-0 ♖c8∞ with a balanced position.) 11.♗xd4 ♖xd4 12.exd4 ♖xd4 13.♙e3 ♖e8 14.♙e2 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 (15.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♗d5= followed by ...♗xe3.) 15...♖e5 16.0-0 ♗d5= with equality.) 10...♗e4 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xc5 13.♖c2 (13.♖b5 ♗e4 14.♙b2 ♙e6= with equality.) 13...♖f6∞ with a balanced position.

b) 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♗f6 transposes to 4.a3 then 6.cxd5.

c) 5.♖a4+ ♗c6 Here, once again, most of the moves will transpose to one of the lines of the 'normal' Ragozin. I tried to find some independent options: 6.♙f4 (6.g3 ♙d7 7.♖d1 ♗f6 8.♙g2 0-0 9.♗f3 ♗e4! 10.♖b3?! was played in the game Bullerkotte,F-Ohnmacht,R DESC email 2001, but here I like 10...♙f5!N 11.0-0

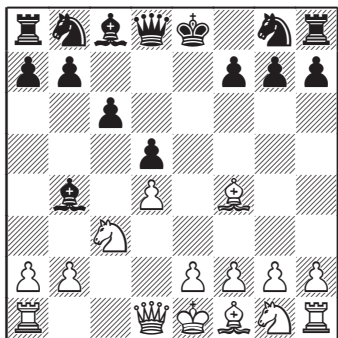
♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♗a5 13.♖b4 b6= intending ...c7-c5 with a pleasant position. 6.e3 ♗f6 7.♙b5 ♙d7 8.♙xc6 has been played several times, but I don't believe in it. 8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♙xc6 10.♖b3 0-0 11.♗f3 ♗d7!? to control the e5-square. 12.0-0 ♖e8 13.♖e1 ♖e6 14.♙a3 ♖f6= Black was better, and eventually won in Timofeev,A (2205) - Popov,V (2542) St Petersburg 2008.) 6...♙d7!?N



Threatening ...♗xd4. 7.♖c1 Indirectly protecting the d4-pawn, as after ...♗xd4 ♖xb4 would be possible, and Black has no fork on c2. (7.♖d1 is the second suggestion of the engine, but it can't promise anything for White. 7...♗f6 8.a3 (8.e3 ♗e4 9.♗ge2 g5 10.♙g3 h5∞ with a sharp position.) 8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♙f5 10.e3 0-0 11.♗f3 ♗e4∞ and Black is fine.) 7...♗f6 8.e3 ♗e4 9.♗ge2 (9.♖b3 ♖h4! 10.g3 ♖e7 with a very complex position. For example: 11.♖xd5 g5 12.♙g2 ♖xc3 13.bxc3 gxf4 14.cxb4 fxe3= and Black is better.) 9...♗e5!? An amusing jump of the knight! 10.♖c2 (10.♖xb4?? is not possible because of 10...♗d3+--+) 10...♗g6 11.♙g3 c6∞ and Black has a good position.

d) 5.♘f3 ♘f6 transposes into the classical Ragozin.

5...c6!?



Not the main move, but I have always thought it was the simplest. Black wants to play ...♘e7, but it's smart to prevent ♖a4+ ideas first. Not for the first time we reach the same conclusions as Richard Pert, the author of the recent book 'Playing the Ragozin'.

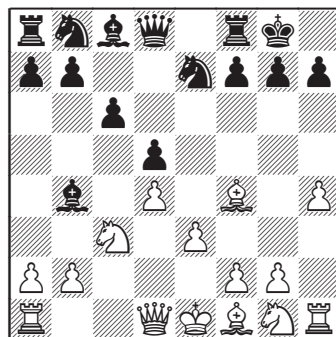
a) 5...♘e7 is often played, with the same idea as in our main line, but here White can play 6.♖a4+! forcing the knight to come to c6. 6.♖a4+ is the recommendation of Alexei Kornev in his book 'A Practical White Repertoire with 1.d4 and 2.c4 Vol. 1'. 6...♘bc6 7.e3 0-0 (7...♙f5 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♙e2 ♙d6 10.♙xd6 ♖xd6 11.♖c1± and White was a bit better: Rasmussen,A (2499)-Antonsen,M (2467) Skorpning 2014.) 8.♙d3 (8.♘f3 ♘g6! 9.♙g3 f5 10.0-0-0 (10.♙b5!?N 10...f4 11.exf4 ♖e7+ 12.♙f1 ♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♘xf4 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.♙xf4 ♖xf4 16.♖xc6 ♖b8 17.♖xd5+ ♙e6 gives Black enough compensation. The safest for White is probably 18.♖e1 ♙xd5 19.♖xe7 ♖b2 20.h4

♙xf3 21.gxf3 ♖xf3 22.♖e2 ♖xe2 23.♙xe2 ♖xc3= with full equality.) 10...♙xc3 11.bxc3 f4 12.exf4 ♙g4∞ gives Black a good game: Toro Solis de Ovando,G-Briz,J corr 1988.) 8...♙f5 9.♙xf5 ♘xf5 10.♘ge2± looks also a bit more pleasant for White, as the knight on c6 is not ideally placed, as in Sadler,M (2560)-Baburin,A (2515) Isle of Man 1994.

b) 5...♘f6 is often played, but after the natural 6.e3 it's not so simple for Black. White will continue with ♙d3 and ♘e2, and it's like a good version of the Ragozin or Queen's Gambit Declined.

6.e3 ♘e7 (6...♙f5 I'm not a fan of this move, because after 7.♘ge2!? the bishop will be driven away, for example: 7...♘f6 8.♘g3 ♙g6 9.h4 h5 10.♙d3! ♙xd3 11.♖xd3 g6 To control the f5-square. 12.♙g5! with the idea of playing e3-e4. White was better in the game Pashikian,A (2626) -Barsov,A (2489) Tashkent 2014.) 7.♙d3

a) 7.h4!? has been played twice with a score of 2/2! 7...0-0!?N



It can look scary to castle when White has started pushing the h-pawn, but I still

prefer this move, as White's attack is far from concrete right now. (7...♔d6 was the move played in practice. 8.♖f3!) 8.h5 (8.♔d3 ♕f5 9.h5 ♔xd3 10.♖xd3 ♖a6 The knight can go to e6 via c7. 11.♗f3 f6!∞ with an interesting position to play for both sides.) 8...h6 we need to stop White's pawn. This position is critical. 9.♔d3

a1) 9.g4 c5! As usual, when our opponent is trying to organize some attack on the flank, we need to react energetically in the centre. 10.♖f3 (10.g5 hxg5 11.♔xg5 cxd4 12.exd4 f6 13.♕f4 ♖bc6) 10...♗d7!? with the idea being to play ...♗f6.

a2) 9.♖f3 ♕f5∞;

a3) 9.♗ge2 ♖e8 10.♗g3 ♗f5!?∞ with a good position.

9...♕f5 10.g4 (10.♗f3 ♔xd3 11.♖xd3 ♖d7!?= with equality.) 10...♔xd3 11.♖xd3 c5!∞ with a very complex position to. I don't believe much in White's attack, so Black should be fine.

b) 7.♖b3 ♔d6 8.♔xd6 ♖xd6 9.♔d3 b6 Intending ...♔a6 to trade off the light-squared bishops. 10.♗f3 (10.♖c1 0-0 11.♖c2 h6 12.♗f3 was recently played in the game Komarov,D (2498)-Doostkam,P (2210) Teheran 2016, but here Black should have continued his plan with: 12...♔a6!N 13.♔xa6 ♗xa6 14.0-0 ♗c7= with an equal position.) 10...♔a6 11.♔xa6 ♗xa6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖ac1 ♗c7 14.♖fe1 ♗e6= and Black equalized in the game Navara,D (2707)-Hou,Y (2595) Prague 2013.

c) 7.♗f3 ♔d6 8.♔xd6 (8.♗e5 ♗g6= with equality.) 8...♖xd6 9.♔d3 0-0 10.0-0

Dimukhametov,A (2320)-Aleksandrov,A (2609) Samara 2011. 10...♕f5!= is the simplest approach, but I guess that in the game Black wanted to play for a win, so tried to avoid simplifications.

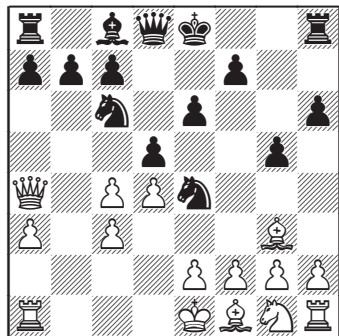
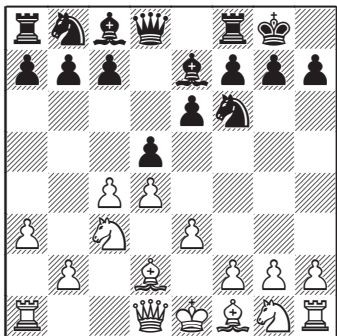
7...♕f5 as usual, trying to exchange the light-squared bishops. 8.♗ge2

a) 8.♔xf5 ♗xf5 9.♖b3 ♖e7 10.♗ge2 0-0 11.0-0 ♔d6= with a balanced position: Grooten,H (2430)-Kuijf,M (2440) Den Bosch 1992.

b) 8.♗f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♔xd3 10.♖xd3 ♗g6 (10...♔d6 11.♔xd6= and a draw was agreed in the game Touzane,O (2350)-Godena,M (2510) Portoroz 1998. (11.♖fe1!?N 11...♔xf4 12.exf4 ♗d7= Black will continue with ...♗f6, then maybe ...♗c8-♗d6.)) 11.♔g3 ♗d7 12.a3 ♕e7= and Black was fine in the game Nabaty,T (2585)-Aleksseev,E (2677) Jerusalem 2015.

8...♔xd3 9.♖xd3 ♗g6 10.♔g3 ♗d7 11.a3 ♕e7 12.0-0 0-0N is the simplest. (12...h5!∞ is an interesting move. It was played in the game Schleining,Z (2326) -Batsiashvili,N (2438) Gaziantep 2012.) 13.b4 b5!?= followed by ...♗b6 with equality.

4.♔d2 there are quite a few games featuring this move, but not by strong players. Anyway, White will continue with e2-e3 and it will transpose to some Nimzo-Indian line. 4...♗f6 5.e3 0-0 6.a3 (6.♗f3 transposes to Chapter 14.) 6...♕e7!?



Black has lost a tempo with the bishop, but if we compare this position to the regular Queen's Gambit, White's dark-squared bishop is on g5 there, not on d2! 7. d3 b7d7 followed by ...c7-c5, and I see no reason why Black should be worse here.

4. ♖a4+ ♜c6 5. e3

a) 5. a3 ♟xc3+ 6. bxc3 ♜f6 7. ♟g5

a1) 7. d3 leads to Chapter 4.

a2) 7. cxd5 exd5 8. ♟f4 0-0 9. e3 ♜e7!?

Transferring the knight to g6. (9... ♟f5!?∞ was also very natural and good.) 10. d3 ♜e4 11. ♖c2 ♜g6 12. ♟g3 ♟f5 13. ♟d3 c5= and Black was fine in the game Morozevich,A (2762)-Fressinet,L (2700) Porto Carras 2011.

7...h6 8. ♟h4 (8. ♟xf6 ♖xf6 9. e3 0-0 and I guess there is nothing better than 10. d3 transposing to Chapter 1.) 8...g5 9. ♟g3 ♜e4

I don't believe Black can have any problems here. 10. f3 (10. ♖b3 was played in the game Indrichan,M-Butchak,R Dnipropetrovsk 2003, but here Black could have continued with the energetic 10...h5!N 11. f3 ♜xg3 12. hxc3 ♜a5 13. ♖a4+ c6 14. cxd5 exd5+ and Black is better.) 10... ♜xg3 11. hxc3 ♖d6 12. ♜f2 Moskvic,D (2324)-Eckersley Waites, T (2267) England 2012 12... ♟d7N 13. c5 ♖e7 14. e3 h5 15. ♖b1 ♜f8∞ with an unclear position.

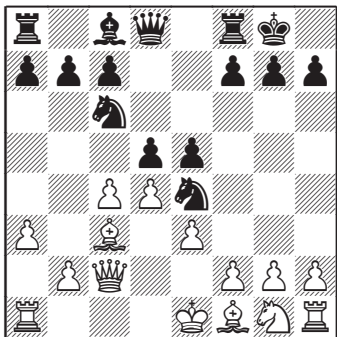
b) 5. d3 ♜f6 transposes to Chapter 4 or 5, and after 6. ♟g5 h6 7. ♟xf6 ♖xf6 we are back to chapters 1 and 2.

c) 5. cxd5 see 4. cxd5.

5... ♜f6 6. ♟d2 (6. a3 ♟xc3+ 7. bxc3 0-0 and here almost everybody has played 8. d3 transposing to Chapter 4. 6. d3 transposes to Chapter 5.) 6...0-0 7. a3!? (7. d3 transposes to Chapter 5.) 7... ♟xc3 8. ♟xc3 ♜e4! (8...e5 was played in the game Mirzoev,A (2547) -Haslinger,S (2535) Seville 2013, but I think after 9. dxe5!N 9... ♜e4 10. ♖d1 ♜xc3 11. bxc3 ♜xe5 12. cxd5± White is a bit better.) 9. ♖c2 (9. d3 ♜xc3 (9...e5!N is also an

interesting try, even if it's more complicated. 10.♖xe5! (10.cxd5 ♖xd5 11.♙c4 ♗d6= with a balanced position. 10.dxe5 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♗e7= followed by ...♗xe5.) 10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♗xe5 12.dxe5 dxc4 13.♙xc4 (13.f4 ♙d7 14.♖xc4 ♙c6 15.♗f2 ♖h8 and Black has good compensation for the pawn. For example: 16.♙e2 ♗h4+ 17.g3 ♗h3 18.♙f3 ♙xf3 19.♗xf3 ♖ad8 20.♗e2 f6) 13...♗g5 14.0-0 ♗xe5 and the position is equal. For example: 15.♗b3 b6 16.♖ad1 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♗xe6 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.♖d7 ♖f7 20.♖fd1 ♖af8=) 10.bxc3 Reddmann,H (2297) -Dranischnikov,E (2327) Osterburg 2012. Here I prefer 10...♙d7!?N to drive the queen away and continue with ...♗a5. 11.♗c2 (11.cxd5 exd5 12.♙b5 a6= with an equal position.) 11...♗a5 12.cxd5 (12.c5 b6∞ and White needs to be careful.) 12...exd5 13.♙d3 g6= followed by ...c7-c5.)

9...e5!N



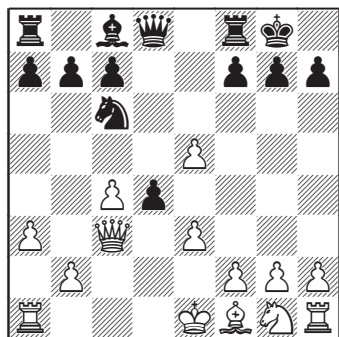
I really like this novelty. We benefit from the fact that White hasn't developed the knight from g1 yet. 10.dxe5

a) 10.♗f3?! exd4! and it's difficult to find a good recapture, for example:

11.cxd5 (11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♙xd4 c5) 11...dxc3 12.dxc6 cxb2 13.♗xb2 ♗d5=;

b) 10.cxd5 ♗xd5 11.♗f3 exd4 12.♙xd4 ♖e8∞ with a good position.

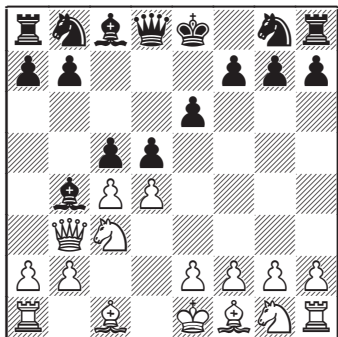
10...♗xc3 11.♗xc3 d4!



The idea behind 9...e5. 12.exd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 I believe this position is equal and have analyzed several possible continuations: 14.♖d1 (14.0-0-0 ♗b3+ 15.♗c2 ♗c5 16.♙e2 ♙f5+ 17.♗d2! Not a move White wants to play, but there is no choice. 17...♖ae8 18.♗f3 f6= with equality, because 19.exf6? is bad due to 19...♗b3+ 20.♗c3 ♖xe2 21.♗xb3? ♙c2+-; 14.♙d3 ♙g4!? Disturbing White's development. 15.f3 ♙f5 16.♙xf5 ♗xf5 Black is a pawn down but there is enough compensation. 17.♗e2 ♖fe8 18.f4 f6=) 14...♗c6 15.f4 f6! To open lines in the centre. 16.exf6 ♖xf6 17.g3 (17.♗e2 ♙g4 18.h3 ♙xc2 19.♙xe2 ♖xf4 20.♙f3 ♗e5 21.♙xb7 ♖b8 22.♙d5+ ♗f8= and Black will take on b2 or c4 next.) 17...♙g4! 18.♖d2 (18.♖d5 ♖e8+ 19.♗f2 ♗e5! 20.h3 ♙h5=) 18...♖e8+ 19.♗f2 (19.♙e2 ♗a5

and the c4-pawn will fall. 20.♔f2 ♕xe2
21.♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 22.♜xe2 ♜xc4=) 19...g5=
with equality.

4.♖b3 is quite rare. 4...c5!?



As always, after ♖b3 I like to play ...c7-c5. 5.dxc5 (5.cxd5 exd5 see 4.cxd5 exd5
5.♖b3 c5.) 5...♜c6 This is a critical
position, but I like Black's chances. White
needs to be wary of ...d5-d4 ideas. 6.a3

a) 6.♗d2?! has been played several
times, but it's not such a good idea.
6...♜f6 7.♜f3 (7.e3 d4! A very strong
move. 8.exd4 ♜xd4 9.♖d1 e5+ and Black
was much better in the game Duchov,A
(2365) -Baburin,A (2515) Kstovo 1994.)
7...d4 8.♜e4 ♜xe4 9.♖xb4 0-0 10.g3 a5
11.♖a3 a4 12.♖b6 was played in the game
Vezzosi,P (2325)-Braga,F (2385) Reggio
Emilia 1992, but now I prefer 12...♖e7+
followed by ...e6-e5.

b) 6.e3 d4!? 7.exd4 ♜xd4 8.♖d1N is
probably safer. (8.♖a4+ was played in
Chernushevich,A (2365)-Bagirov,R
Herculane 1994, and here Black's play
could be improved with 8...♗d7!N 9.♖d1

♖h4!↑ with a strong initiative.) 8...e5
9.♜f3 ♕xc5= with an equal position.

6...♖a5 7.cxd5!?N is probably best.

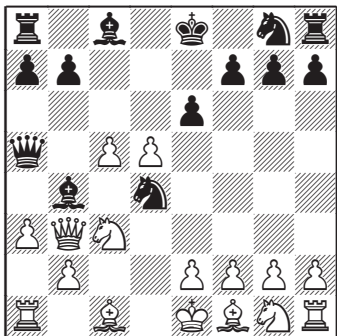
a) 7.♗d2 d4!



Once again, this move is strong. 8.♜e4
(8.axb4N 8...♖xa1+ 9.♜d1 ♜f6 10.b5
♜e7+ looks very good for Black.)
8...♗xd2+ 9.♜xd2 ♜f6 10.♜gf3 0-0+
followed by ...♖xc5 and ...e6-e5:
Steingrímsson,H (2562)-Swiercz,D (2585)
Germany 2011.

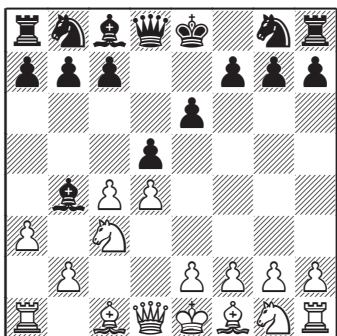
b) 7.♖b1N 7...♗xc5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♜f3
(9.♖xd5?! ♜f6 10.♖d2 ♗b6↑ with very
strong initiative.) 9...♜f6 10.e3 0-0∞ with
a balanced position.

7...exd5 is the safest option. (7...♜d4!?

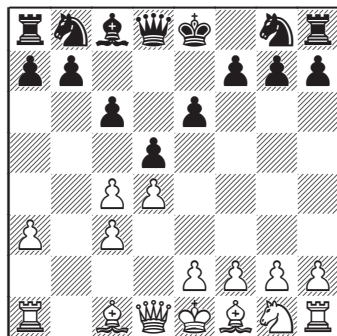


...is also possible, but it leads to some crazy complications: 8.axb4! ♖xa1 9.♗d1 ♖b3! 10.♗xb3 ♗xc1+ 11.♜d1 ♜f6! 12.e3 ♙d7 13.♜f3 a5 14.♙d3! ♜xd5 15.0-0 axb4! 16.♜c3! ♗a3! 17.bxa3 ♗xc3 18.♗xc3 bxc3= with equality as usual after long, forced lines.) 8.♜f3 d4 9.♖b1! threatening axb4. 9...♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♜f6 11.e3 (or 11.♙d2 ♜e4 12.cxd4 ♜xd2 13.♜xd2 ♜xd4 14.♗e3+ ♜e6 15.g3 ♗xc5= with an equal position.) 11...♗xc3+ 12.♗xc3 dxc3 13.♖b3 ♙e6 14.♗xc3 ♜e4 15.♖c2 ♙b3 16.♖b2 ♜xc5= with equality.

4.a3



Often played. Usually White will continue with e2-e3, but it's not his only option. 4...♙xc3+ 5.bxc3 ♜f6 This is the usual move. (5...c6!?



...is a move-order I have tried recently. The idea is to recapture with the c-pawn after cxd5. 6.a4!? is another way to try to refute Black's idea.

a) 6.e4 During my game I was bit afraid of this move. 6...dxe4 7.♗g4 ♜f6 8.♗xg7 ♗g8 9.♗h6 c5! Black needs to play actively in the centre. 10.♜e2 (10.♙g5N is nothing special because of 10...♗g6! 11.♙xf6 ♗xf6 12.♗e3 ♜c6= with an equal position.) 10...♜c6! 11.dxc5 (11.♙e3 ♗g6 12.♗h4 ♗g4 13.♗h6 ♗g6 14.♗h4 ♜a5!?) (14...♗g4= is just a draw by repetition.) 15.dxc5 ♜xc4 16.♜f4 (16.♙d1? was played in the game Dietmayer Kraeutler,M (2213) -Matuszewski,M (2408) Krakow 2013, but here Black could have continued with: 16...♗a5! 17.♙g5 ♜d5 18.♗xe4 ♗xg5 19.♗xc4 ♙d7+ with an advantage.) 16...♗g4 17.♗h6 ♜xe3 18.fxe3 ♙d7 19.♙e2 ♗e7!?∞ with a very complicated position. Black is happy enough to give up an exchange and start

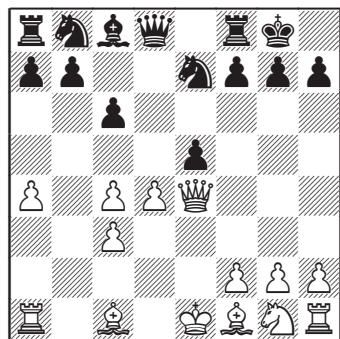
collecting White's pawns.) 11...♖g6 (11...e5!?N is another good alternative: 12.♗g5 (12.♜g3 ♗g4 with the obvious threat of ...♗d1 mate. 13.♙b2 ♖g6 14.♖e3 ♗a5 15.f3 exf3 16.gxf3 ♗e6∞ with a complicated position.) 12...♜g4! 13.♙d8 ♜xh6 14.♗c7 f5∞) 12.♖e3 (12.♖d2N 12...♖xd2+ 13.♙xd2 ♜e5 14.♜d4 ♗d7= This strange-looking position is around equal. Black will continue with ...0-0-0, and probably ...♜d3-♜xc5.) 12...♙d7 (12...e5!?N also looks very interesting. 13.♜g3 ♗g4 14.f3 exf3 15.gxf3 ♗e6∞) 13.♜g3 ♜e5 14.♜xe4 ♜xe4 15.♖xe4 ♖f6! Black is two pawns down, but has good compensation due to his active pieces. 16.f4 (16.♙f4N 16...♜g4 17.♖a2□ 17...e5 18.♖e2 0-0-0 19.♗xe5 ♜xe5 20.♖xe5 ♖a6! 21.f3 ♖xa3 22.♜f2 ♖e6∞ with a messy position.) 16...♜g4 17.♖d4! ♗c6 18.♖xf6 ♜xf6 Black has enough compensation for the material deficit, for example: 19.♖g1 0-0-0 20.g3 ♗f3 21.♜f2 ♗c6 22.♜e2= and draw was agreed in the game Heinke,R (2131) - Andersen,J (2115) GER email 2014.

b) 6.e3 The move White has used most often, and after 6...♜f6 it transposes to Chapter 16.

c) 6.cxd5 cxd5 If White continues with 7.e3, it transposes to Chapter 7. After 7.a4 see 6.a4 of the current chapter.

6...♜e7!? Black needs this move to cover the a3-f8 diagonal, as otherwise White would prevent us from castling by playing ♗a3. (6...♜f6 7.♗a3± can't be good for Black even if the engine supports it.) 7.e3N

a) 7.e4 dxe4 8.♖g4 ♖a5 (8...0-0!?N is a decent alternative. 9.♖xe4 e5!



I like the idea of giving up a pawn for the initiative. 10.♖xe5 ♖e8 11.♗e2 ♗e6∞ and Black has good compensation. ... ♜d7 will be played next finishing development, whereas White will still need a few more tempos to bring his pieces into play.) 9.♗d2 0-0 10.♖xe4 was played in the game Gebhardt,U (2230)-Piskov,Y (2540) Muenster 1995, but here I like 10...e5!?N 11.♜f3!? (11.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 12.dxe5 ♜d7= with equality.) 11...♜g6 12.♜xe5 ♜xe5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 14.dxe5 ♖e8= and Black will take back the pawn with equality.

b) 7.a5N White wants to prevent Black's plan with ...b7-b6. 7...0-0 8.♜f3 c5 So we switch to another thematic plan. 9.e3 ♜bc6 Now the a5-pawn is hanging. 10.cxd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♜xa5∞ with a complicated position. Black's next moves might be ...♖c7, ...♜c4, ...b7-b6.

7...b6 8.cxd5 (8.a5 ♗a6 9.axb6 axb6 10.♜f3 0-0 11.♗d3 h6 is good for Black. The main idea is that after 12.0-0 Black has 12...dxc4! 13.♗xc4 ♗xc4 14.♖xa8 ♗xf1 15.♖xf1 ♖c7= with equality.)

8...cxd5 9.♟f3 0-0 10.♞a3 ♞a6 11.♞b5 (11.♞xa6 ♞xa6 12.♞d3 ♞b8 13.c4 ♞bc6 14.0-0 (14.cxd5 ♞xd5 15.0-0 ♟fd8 16.♟ac1 ♟ac8 17.e4 ♞d7= with a solid position.) 14...dxc4 15.♞xc4 ♞d7= with equality, followed by ...♟c8 next.) 11...♞xb5 12.axb5 a6!? 13.♞b4 (13.bxa6 ♟xa6 14.0-0 ♞c7 15.♞d3 ♟c8 16.♟fc1 ♟f5= with equality.) 13...a5 14.♞a3 ♞d7 15.♞d3 (15.♞e5 ♞b7 16.0-0 ♟c8 17.♟c1 ♟d7!= and Black is fine.) 15...♟c8 16.0-0 ♟a7= with a balanced position.) 6.cxd5!? The idea behind this move can be to avoid the ...c7-c6 line, where Black can recapture with the c-pawn after White's cxd5.

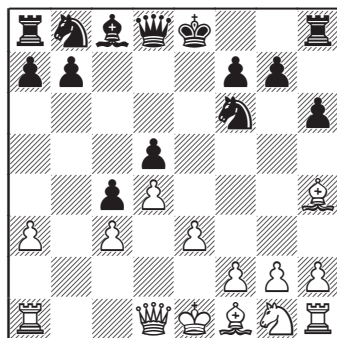
a) 6.♟g5 h6 (6...c5!? is of course a decent alternative.) 7.♞h4 (7.♟xf6 ♞xf6 8.e3 0-0 9.♞f3 has been played once. (9.♟f3 c5 transposes to our usual Ragozin.) 9...♞xf3 10.♟xf3 dxc4 11.♞xc4 b6= followed by ...♟d7, ...♞b7 and ...c7-c5 at the right moment: Certek,P (2245)-Lahner,J (2276) Slovakia 2009.) 7...c5 8.e3 ♞a5! Attacking c3 and planning ...♟e4. 9.♞c2 (9.♞b3 ♟e4!?N 10.♟e2 dxc4 11.♞xc4 ♟d7∞ with a good position.) 9...♟e4 10.♟e2 was played in the game Dignum,E (2055)-Vandevoort,P (2370) Gent 1999. Here I like 10...♞d7!? N 11.cxd5 exd5 12.f3 ♟d6 13.dxc5 ♟c4 14.♟f2 ♞xc5 15.♟d4 ♟c6= with a balanced position.

b) 6.♟f3 transposes to Chapter 13.

c) 6.e3 c6 see Chapter 16.

6...exd5 7.e3

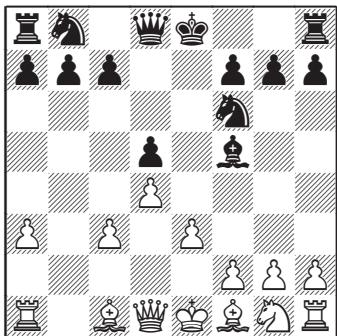
a) 7.♟g5 h6 8.♞h4 (8.♟xf6 ♞xf6 9.e3 0-0 10.♟f3 (10.♞d3 ♟f5= with equality.) 10...c5 11.♞e2 ♟c6 12.0-0 ♟d8= and Black was fine in the game Nikolic,P (2669) -Janssen,R (2524) Germany 2008.) 8...c5!? 9.e3 (9.dxc5N 9...♞e6 10.e3 0-0= followed by ...♟bd7 and ...♟c8 winning back the pawn.) 9...c4!?N



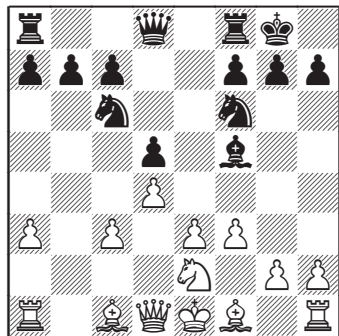
I like to push this pawn before White's ♞d3 appears. 10.♞c2 (10.♟f3 ♟f5=) 10...♟c6 11.♟f3 g5 (11...g6 12.♟d2 ♟f5= with equality.) 12.♟g3 ♟e4 13.♟d2 ♟f5∞ with a good position for Black.

b) 7.f3 It's worth mentioning that this position can arise from the Nimzo-Indian line with 4.f3. 7...0-0 8.e3 ♟f5 See 7.e3.

7...♟f5 After the exchanges on d5, the path for our bishop is open.



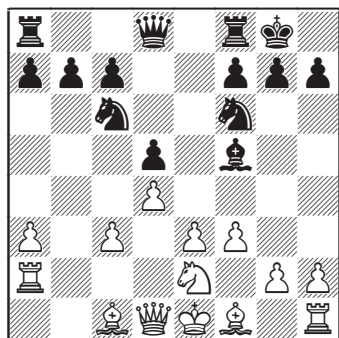
8.f3!? (8.g3 is too simplistic. If we compare this position with the line with ...b7-b6 and ...a6, here Black has spent one tempo less to exchange the light-squared bishops. 8...g3 9.f3 0-0 10.Bb1 Bbd7 11.f3 Bb6 12.d2 Bd6 13.f3N was the best, but Black is fine after (13.c4? is a mistake. 13...dxc4 14.dxc4 Bd5 15.dxb6 Bxg2= Black was much better in the game: Rahman, M (2340)-Murshed, N (2452) Dhaka 2012.) 13...Bfe8 14.0-0 Bc6∞ with a balanced position.) 8...0-0 This position can arise from the Nimzo-Indian line with 4.f3 d5 5.a3 gxc3+ 6.bxc3 0-0!? 7.cxd5 (if 7.e3, we can play 7...c6, and it transposes to Chapter 16) exd5 8.e3 g5 and here we are. 9.d2 White wants to push g2-g4, then to play d4. Now I suggest a rare move: 9...d6!?



The knight can go to a5, or e7, and in the meantime it gives Black a nice idea on 10.g4 This idea is not so strong now.

a) 10.dg3 has also been tried, but normally it's better to have the pawn on g4 already. 10...g6 11.g3 d5 12.0-0 Bfe8!? Intending ...Bc6 to prevent e3-e4. 13.Bc1 Bc6 14.Bb1 a6 15.Bc2 d4 16.e4 dxe4 17.fxe4 Bfe8= and Black was fine in the game Leskiv, M-Popov, V (2060) ICCF email 2010.

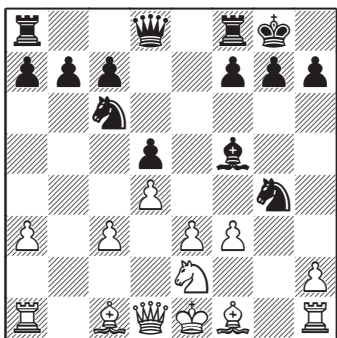
b) 10.Ba2!?



An interesting move. Now the idea with g2-g4 is in the air again. 10...d7!?!N I like this new move. 11.g4 (11.dg3 g6=

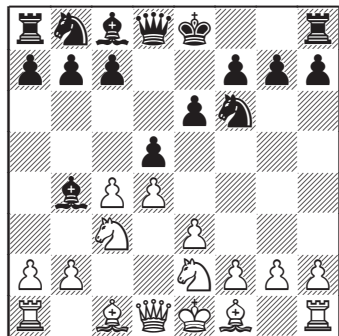
followed by ...c7-c5.) 11...♔d7!? 12.♖f4 (12.g5 ♖e8 13.♙g2 ♖d6 14.e4 ♗e8∞ with a sharp and interesting position to play. 12.h4 c5 13.♖f4 ♖g6∞; 12..♙g2 c5 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.h3 ♙c6∞) 12...♖g6! is another idea behind ...♖e7. It's good for Black to exchange this knight. 13.♖xg6 fxg6!∞ with a very unclear position.

10...♖xg4! The point!



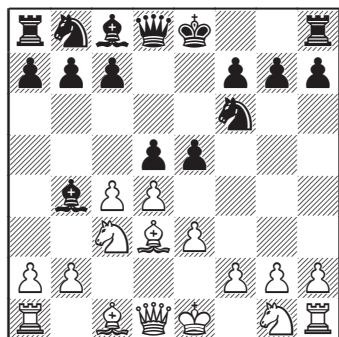
11.fxg4 ♗h4+ 12.♖g3 ♙e4 13.♗g1 ♗xh2 14.♖xe4 ♗xg1 15.♖f2 ♗g3 16.♙d3! (16.♗c2? ♗ae8+ and Black was winning in the game Herzog,K (1775)-Carroll,P (2129) LSS email 2010.) 16...♖e7 17.♙e2! was played in the game Glukhovtsev,S (2330)-Popov,V (2114) ICCF email 2009. Here I like the human approach: (17.♗b1?! ♖g6+ followed by ...♖h4: Alf, H (2338)-Siewert,M (2305) ICCF email 2009.) 17...f5!?N (17...♗ae8 18.♗h1 ♖g6 19.♙f1! ♗e6 20.♗h3=) 18.♗h1! h6 19.gxf5 ♗ad8 Black needs to defend the d5-pawn before recapturing on f5. 20.♗h3 ♗xh3 21.♖xh3 ♖xf5∞

4...♖f6 5.♖ge2



This move is often chosen by those playing 4.e3 and 5.♖ge2 against the Nimzo-Indian Defence. I have faced it several times myself, for example against David Navara. 5.a3 is the main move. 5...♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 c6 transposes to Chapter 16.

5.♙d3 0-0 (5...e5!?)



This is a very rare move. I have only 16 games in my database with it. I thought about it after my game against Edouard Romain, where I applied this ...e6-e5 idea on ♙d3 in the 6...c6!? line from Chapter 16. I was surprised to see this move as a recommendation of Richard Pert's in his book on the Ragozin. 6.cxd5

a) 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 e4! This is the idea behind ...e6-e5; if White allows it, Black takes space in the centre. 8.♗e2 c6 9.a4 0-0 10.♖b3 b6 11.♗a3 ♖e8∞ and Black was fine in the game Rajlich,I (2424)-Fridman,D (2646) Wroclaw 2009.

b) 6.♖ge2 exd4 (6...e4?! is unfortunately not so good here, because of 7.♖a4+!± and White was better in Giroyan,G (2382) -Javidfard,A (2043) Maribor 2012. 6...dxc4! 7.♗xc4 0-0 8.0-0 ♖c6 transposes to the line I suggest after 5...0-0 6.♖ge2 dxc4 7.♗xc4 e5 8.0-0 ♖c6.) 7.exd4 (7.♖xd4N is not so good because of 7...c5!∞ followed by ...dxc4 then ...♖xd1.) 7...dxc4 8.♗xc4 0-0 9.0-0 ♖c6 This surprisingly transposes to the exchange variation of the French Defence (!), a tempo down for Black, but it's not a big deal in this particular position. 10.♗g5 (10.a3 ♗d6 11.h3 h6 12.♖b5 ♗f5 13.♖xd6 cxd6!)= is an interesting idea. Black was fine in the game Giannoulakis, L (2158)-Pantev,V (2423) Plovdiv 2015.) 10...h6 11.♗h4 ♗e7 12.♖c1 ♗f5= and Black was fine in the game Alber,H (2340)-Derichs, R (2276) Germany 2000.

c) 6.♖a4+ ♖c6 7.dxe5? was played in Pieniazek,A (2368)-Sulypa,A (2510) Legnica 2012, but here Black could have continued with the strong (7.a3N was better. 7...♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♗e6!)?∞ with an interesting middlegame ahead. Black will castle next, and all our pieces will be ideally placed.) 7...d4!N 8.exd4 ♖xd4 when the ♗d3 is hanging and ...♗xc3+ is also a threat. 9.♖ge2 ♗xc3+! 10.bxc3 (10.♖xc3 ♖g4+) 10...♖xd3 11.exf6 ♗g4+ and Black is much better.

d) 6.dxe5 is the main move seen in practice, but it's totally harmless. 6...dxc4! 7.♗xc4 (7.♖a4+ ♖c6 8.♗xc4 ♖e4 9.♖b3 was played in the game Alexandrova,O (2423) -Nemcova,K (2276) Porto Carras 2011. Here Black could have improved her play with a nice idea:

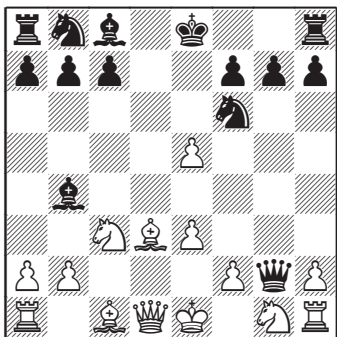
d1) 9.♖ge2 ♖c5! 10.♖c2 ♖xe5+ and Black won an easy game: Darrigues,A (1891)-Etchegaray, P (2397) San Sebastian 2015.

d2) 9.♖f3 ♖xc3 10.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 11.♗e2 0-0! 12.♗a3?! (12.♖b1 ♖xe5+) 12...♗xa1 13.♖xa1 ♗d7+ - Milanovic,D (2513) -Kurajica,B (2548) Sarajevo 2006;

9...♖c5!N 10.♗xf7+ ♗e7 11.♖d5 ♖xe5! It's not easy to spot this idea. 12.♖xe5+ ♗xf7+ and Black has good compensation for the pawn and is probably already better.) 7...♖xd1+ 8.♗xd1 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♖g4 10.e6!N is maybe the best for White, because after (10.♗e2 ♖xe5 11.♗d5 (11.♗b3 was played in the game Byrne,R (1987) -Juergens,P (1938) Radebeul 2016, but here Black should have played 11...b6!N with the idea of playing ...♗a6.) 11...c6 12.♗b3 b6 13.e4 (13.f3N was the lesser evil. 13...♗a6+ 14.♗f2 ♖bd7 15.e4 ♖c5 16.♗e3 ♖cd3+ 17.♗g3 ♖c4+ with a very nice position for Black.) 13...♗a6+ 14.♗e3 ♖bd7 15.f4 ♖c4+ 16.♗f3 0-0-0 17.♗c2 ♖he8 18.♖h3 ♖c5+ and Black was already much better: Hutschenreiter,J (2385) -Lyashenko,S (2089) ICCF email 2006.) 10...♗xe6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♗e2 ♖c6 13.♖f3 0-0=;

6...♖xd5 7.dxe5 We have been following Gavasheli,A (2219)-Georgiev,V

(2518) Izmir 2006, but here the simplest was (7.♘ge2? was played against me in a rapid game by Pavel Tregubov. 7...♙xg2! 8.♞g1 ♙xh2 9.♙a4+?! (9.♙b3!N 9...a5!♞) 9...♘c6 10.♙d2 ♙xc3! (10...♙d7 Is the move I played. It's not a bad move, but it's less precise. I finally managed to win quite easily: Tregubov,P-Cornette, M Paris Rapid 2017.) 11.♙xc3 ♙d7+ 7...♙xg2!N

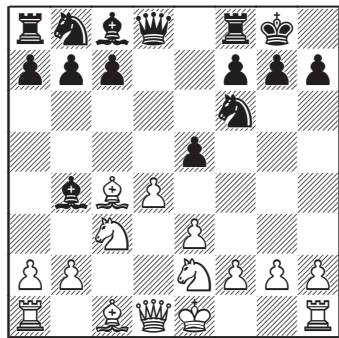


8.♙f3 ♙xf3 9.♘xf3 ♘d5 10.♙d2 ♘xc3 11.♙xc3

a) 11.bxc3 ♙e7∞;

b) 11.a3 ♙g4 12.♘d4 ♘d7!? looks amusing, when two other pieces are hanging. 13.f4 (13.axb4 ♘xe5!∞) 13...♙a5 14.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♘c5 and the position is equal.

11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘d7= with equality.) 6.♘ge2 (6.♘f3 and we are back to Chapter 14. 6.cxd5 see 5.cxd5. 6.a3 ♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 c6 will be analyzed in the next chapter.) 6...dxc4 7.♙xc4 e5!?



I decided to suggest this set-up because it's very typical for the Ragozin. 8.a3 (8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d5 (9.a3 ♙d6 transposes to 8.a3.) 9...♘e7 10.e4 (10.a3 ♙d6 also transposes to 8.a3.) 10...♘g6∞ and Black will continue with ...♘h5. It's quite likely that White will play a2-a3 at some point and after ...♙d6 it will transpose to 8.a3.) 8...♙d6 9.0-0

a) 9.dxe5 ♙xe5 10.♙xd8 ♞xd8∞ Practice shows that Black is fine here, as in the game Alvarez Marquez,J (2317) - Tiviakov,S (2608) Istanbul 2000.

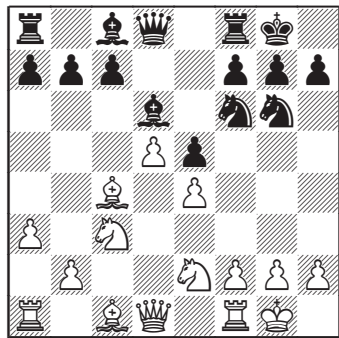
b) 9.♘b5 ♘c6!? 10.0-0 is the best and it transposes to 10.♘b5 after 9.0-0. (10.♘xd6 ♙xd6 11.0-0 ♞d8∞ followed by ...♙g4, and/or ...exd4: Mascarinas,R (2385) -Christiansen,L (2485) Thessaloniki 1988. 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xd6 ♙xd6 12.♙xd6 cxd6 13.♙a2 ♘d3+ 14.♘f1 ♙e6♞ and Black was fine in the game Piot,O (2234)-Kosten, A (2511) Cappelle la Grande 2008.) ;

9...♘c6 This is the critical position. White has several possible ideas: 10.d5

a) 10.♖b5 ♕e7 followed by ...a7-a6.
 11.♔c2 (11.d5 ♖a5! 12.♕a2 c6! Of course. 13.♖bc3 cxd5 14.♖xd5 ♖xd5 15.♕xd5 ♕g4 16.e4 (16.f3 ♕e6!∞) 16...♞c8 17.h3 ♕e6!∞ and Black's chances are greater: De Jong,R (2325) -Dearnley, A (2326) ICCF email 2007.) 11...a6 12.dxe5 ♖xe5 13.♖xc7N is probably the best. The ♖c7 is untouchable, but after (13.♞d1?! ♕d7 14.♖bd4 was played in the game Bahamonde,A-Marini, L Buenos Aires 1946, but here Black could have continued with: 14...c5N 15.♖f3! ♖xc4 16.♞xc4 ♕e6⌞ with a good advantage.) 13...♞a7! and the ♖c7 is trapped. 14.♞d1! ♕f5! 15.♞xd8 ♕xc2 16.♞xf8+ ♖xf8 17.♕a2 b5 18.♖d5 ♖xd5 19.♕xd5 ♞d7 20.♖c3 ♕f6 21.e4 ♖d3⌞ and Black has enough compensation for the pawn. Probably White will have to give it back at some point.

b) 10.b4 exd4 11.♖xd4 (11.exd4 ♕f5=) 11...♖xd4 12.♞xd4 Prieto Aranguren,A (2219) -Franco Alonso,A (2449) Zornotza 2012. Here I suggest the simple 12...♞e7 13.♕b2 c6= with a good position.

10...♖e7 11.♖g3 (11.e4 is the other way to proceed for White. 11...c6!?N has never been played, but I believe it's a good choice. (11...♖g6



This is the move I played in practice, leading to sharp positions. Black wants to bring the pieces to the kingside. Here many moves are possible: 12.f3

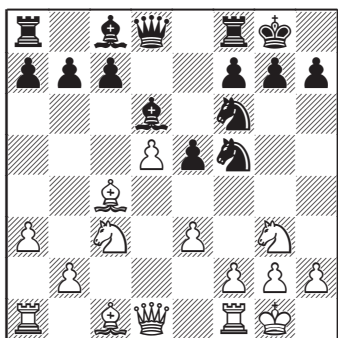
a) 12.♖g3 ♕c5 13.♕e2 ♖e8 intending ...♖d6. 14.♕e3 ♕xe3 15.fxe3 ♞g5 16.♞d2 ♖h4= Black was fine in the game Kiriushin,V (2170) -Romanov,E (2521) Minsk 2007.

b) 12.b4 a6 (12...a5!?∞ I also like this move.) 13.f3 ♖h5 14.♕e3 ♖hf4 15.g3 Rajsikij,E (2420) -Ikonnikov,V (2480) Katowice 1991 (15.♖h1 h5!? Black wants to push the h-pawn to create some weaknesses. 16.g3 ♖h3 17.♕d3 h4 18.♖g2 ♞f6⌞ with a complicated position, but I like Black's chances: Turov,M (2546)-Sakaev,K (2639) Linares 2001.) 15...♖h3+!?N I prefer this move. 16.♖h1 h5!∞ followed by ...h5-h4.

c) 12.h3 ♖h5 13.♖h2 (13.♕e3 ♖h4 14.♖h1N (14.♖h2?! ♖f4⌞ Black was already much better in the game Hamrakulova,Y (2119) -Barsov, A (2533) Tashkent 2013.) 14...f5!∞ with good play.) 13...♖hf4 14.♖g1 Henley,R (2435)-Browne,W (2516) Parsippany 1999

14...♖d7!?N followed by ...c7-c6, or ...f7-f5. 15.♙e3 a6∞ The position is really unclear.

12...♘h5 (12...♙c5+!?N It makes sense to prevent ♙e3. 13.♖h1 a6 14.♗d3 ♘h5∞) 13.♙e3 ♘hf4 14.♗d2 (14.g3 ♘h3+ 15.♖h1 a6 16.♙d3 ♗e7 17.♗d2 h5 18.♘g1 h4 19.♘h3 ♙xh3 20.♟f2 ♙d7= with a balanced game: Groszpeter,A (2500)-Cladouras,P (2385) Berlin West 1989.) 14...a6 15.♖h1 ♗e7 16.♟ac1 ♙d7 17.♘xf4 ♘xf4 18.♘e2 ♘xe2 19.♙xe2 f5= with equality: Monacell,J (2473)-Rost,D (2410) IECG email 2002.) 12.♙g5 (12.dxc6 ♘xc6= and Black will play ...♙c5 next. The position is around equal.) 12...cxd5 13.exd5 ♘e8= is totally fine for Black.) 11...♘f5!?



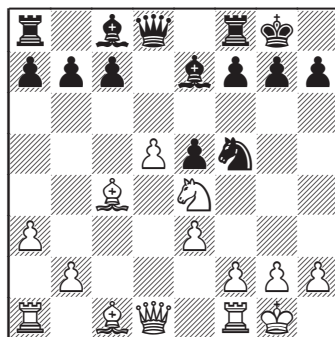
I like this idea of exchanging a pair of knights. 12.♘ge4

a) 12.e4 ♘xg3 13.hxg3 ♙c5= with an equal position: Tregubov,P (2608) - Khenkin,I (2617) Belgium 2014.

b) 12.♘h5 ♘xh5 13.♗xh5 ♙e7!? Leaving the d6-square for the knight. 14.♘e4 (14.♙d3N 14...g6 15.♗f3 ♘d6∞ followed by ...f7-f5.) 14...♘d6 15.♘xd6

cx d6= the position is about equal: Glembeke,B (2204) -Petrobono,A (2277) ICCF email 2009.

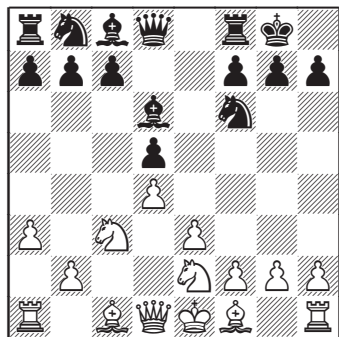
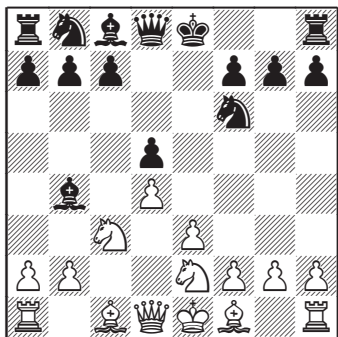
12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♙e7



Black wants to continue with ...♘d6 and ...a7-a5. 14.♙a2 (14.♙d2 ♘d6 15.♘xd6 ♙xd6= and Black was fine in the game Maciol,R (2199)-Adair,J (2247) Buxton 2012.) 14...♘d6!? looks more logical, even if there are also other good moves. (14...a5 15.♙d2 ♘d6 16.♘g3 ♟e8 17.♟c1 b6 18.e4 ♟a7 19.♙b3 ♙g5= with a complicated game: Bluvshstein,M (2558)-Tiviakov, S (2674) Montreal 2009.) 15.♘c5 (15.♘g3N 15...f5∞ with a sharp position. 15.♘xd6N 15...cxd6=) 15...♙f6 (15...e4!?∞ was also interesting.) 16.♗c2 b6 17.♘e4 ♙e7 18.♘xd6 ♙xd6= Gamundi Salamanca, A (2375)-Estremera Panos, S (2320) Cordoba 1995.

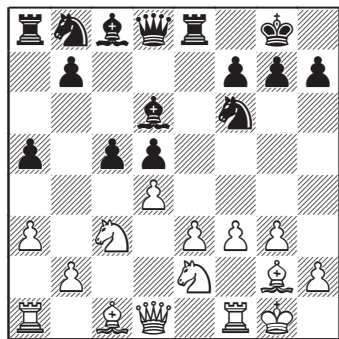
5.♘f3 transposes to the classical Nimzo-Indian. See Chapter 14.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙d3 (6.♘ge2



It's amusing that during the process of writing this chapter, I faced this move in one of my rapid games. 6...0-0 7.a3 (7.g3 ♖e8 8.♗g2 c6 9.0-0 ♗d6 Just like after 7.a3, I believe this is the best square for the bishop. 10.♞c2 (10.a3 a5 transposes to 7. a3.) 10...♖a6 11.a3 followed by ...♘c7, where it will be perfectly placed. 11...♘c7 12.♗d2 (12.f3 ♘e6 (The thematic 12...c5!? is also good. 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.♘d4 ♘e6= with equality.) 13.♙h1 (13.e4? doesn't work due to 13...dxe4 14.♘xe4 (14.fxe4?! ♘xd4!?) 14...♗c7) 13...b6 14.e4 ♗a6 15.♗e3 c5 and Black had a good position in the game Sesko,M (2181) -Korosec,S (2319) ICCF email 2009.) 12...a5 13.♞ad1 h6 14.♙h1?! is a bit slow. (14.f3N 14...b5) 14...♘e6 15.♗c1 b5! 16.e4 b4 17.exd5 ♘c7! 18.dxc6 bxc3 19.♘xc3 ♗g4 20.♞d2 ♞c8 and Black was better: Korobov,A (2723)-Sjugirov,S (2651) Taganrog 2014.) 7...♗d6!

Of course. If we compare this position to the Nimzo-Indian line with 4.e3 0-0 5.♘ge2 d5 6.a3 ♗d6, there White normally plays c4-c5, but here this possibility no longer exists. 8.g3 (8.♘g3 ♖e8 9.♗d3 c6 and we will have this position in the line with 6.♗d3.) 8...c6 9.♗g2 ♖e8 10.0-0 a5!? Black is preventing b2-b4, and planning to play ...♖a6. 11.♞c2 (11.f3 c5!



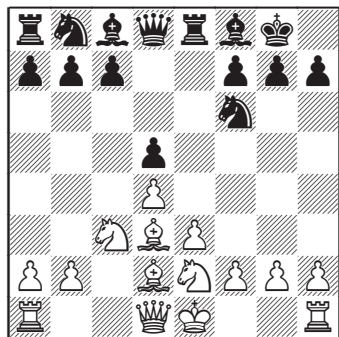
This is a good reply. Now that the e3-pawn is weakened, the move is even stronger than usual. 12.♘b5 (12.f4 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗xe2 14.♘xe2 ♘c6 15.♞b3 ♞d7 I like Black's position: Bekker Jensen,S (2402)-Hracek,Z (2612) Germany 2012.)

12...♙f8 13.♙d2 (13.dxc5 ♖xc5 14.♗bd4 ♗c6 15.b3 ♜b6 and once again I prefer Black: Martinovic,S (2542)-Barbot,P (2463) Zillertal 2015.) 13...♗c6 14.♖c1 ♜b6 15.a4 ♙f5 16.g4 ♙d3 17.g5 ♗h5 and Black was already better in Dubov,D (2614) -Sargissian,G (2686) Dubai 2014.) 11...♗a6 12.e4 (12.f3 c5 13.♗b5 ♙f8 14.dxc5 ♗xc5 15.♙d2 ♙d7 16.♗bd4 ♖c8 17.♜b1 a4 followed by ...♜b6: Milanovic,D (2486)-Berescu,A (2433) Timisoara 2006. 12.♙d2 is probably the best, and after 12...♗c7 it transposes to 11.g3.) 12...dxe4 13.♗xe4 ♙f5 14.♗xf6+?! (14.♗2c3!N was the lesser evil. 14...♗xe4 15.♖xe4 ♖xe4 16.♗xe4 ♙f8) 14...♜xf6 15.♜d2?! (15.♜d1N 15...♙g4) 15...♗c7 16.♖d1 ♖ad8 and I soon won the d4-pawn in Leriche, I (1941) -Cornette, M (2586), Angoulemes 2016.) 6...0-0 7.♗ge2 ♖e8 8.♙d2!? is the fashionable move.

a) 8.0-0 ♙f8!? 9.a3 (9.♙d2 transposes to 8.♙d2. 9.f3 c5! It's important to remember to play ...c7-c5, and ...b7-b6, ...♙a6 after f2-f3. 10.♜e1 b6 11.♜f2 ♙a6 Black was fine in the game Arnaudov,P (2271) -Zelcic,R (2556) Zadar 2006.) 9...a5 10.♜c2 (10.f3 c5 as usual.) 10...♗a6 11.b3 c6 followed by ...♗c7-♗e6.

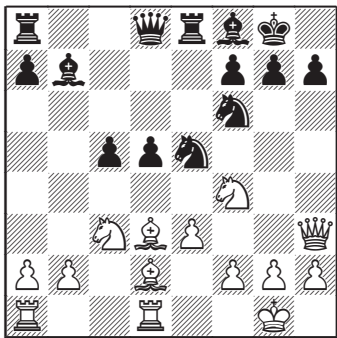
b) 8.a3 ♙d6 9.♗g3 c6 10.0-0 ♗bd7 11.♜c2 (11.♗f5 ♙c7 12.f3 ♗f8 and Black was fine in the game Guichard,P (2320) -Milliet,S (2367) Belfort 2010.) 11...♗f8 12.f3 ♗e6 with a balanced position: Talla,V (2386)-Cvek,R (2516) Czechia 2013.

8...♙f8!?



This time I prefer to place the bishop here. White doesn't have the b2-b4 idea, so Black can play...c7-c5. In this case the d5-pawn can become weak, which is why the bishop is good on f8, not blocking the d-file. 9.♖c1 (9.0-0 b6 intending ...c7-c5. 10.♗f4 (10.♖c1 see 9.♖c1. 10.♗g3 In general, the knight is not so well-placed on g3. 10...♙a6 11.♙xa6 ♗xa6 12.♜a4 ♜c8 13.♖ac1 ♜b7 14.♗ce2 c5= with equality: Rogers,J (2330)-Morrison,G (2342) Hinckley Island 2009.) 10...c5 (10...♙b7 followed by ...c7-c5 which will transpose to 10...c5.) 11.♜f3 (11.♗cxd5N looks tempting but doesn't work: 11...♗xd5 12.♜h5 ♗f6 13.♜f3 ♜c7! There is no way to protect the ♖a8, but now the queen will be trapped if she takes the rook! 14.♜xa8 ♗c6 15.d5 ♗e5 16.♙c3 ♗xd3 17.♗xd3 ♙b7+ and it's over.) 11...♙b7 12.♖fd1N

a) 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♖fd1 ♗bd7 14.♜h3 was played in the game Benjamin,J (2552) -Kacheishvili,G (2589) ICC INT 2011, but now it was possible to continue with 14...♗e5!N



15.♙b5 (15.♜cxd5 is not working.
15...♙xd5 16.♙c3 ♙e6 17.♜xe6 ♖xe6
18.♙xh7+ ♜xh7 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8) 15...♖e7 and I don't see how White should continue.

b) 12.♖ac1 see 9.♖c1.

12...cxd4! is a good way to continue:
(12...♜c6?! is not working well due to
13.♜fxd5! ♜xd5 14.♜xd5 ♜xd4 15.♜f6+!
♖xf6 16.♖xb7± and White is better.)
13.exd4 ♜c6 14.♙e3 (14.♜fxd5 ♜xd5
15.♖xd5 ♖xd5 16.♜xd5 ♖ad8= with full
equality.) 14...♜a5 15.b3 ♖c8 16.♖ac1
g6= with a balanced position.) 9...b6 10.0-0
c5 11.♜f4

a) 11.♙b5 The move recently played by
Jobava. 11...♙d7 12.♙xd7 (12.♙d3?! can't
be a serious attempt: Jobava,B (2669)-
Karjakin,S (2774) Almaty 2016. Here I
like the natural-looking 12...c4!N 13.♙b1
b5) 12...♖xd7 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.b3 d4!
15.♜a4 ♜e4∞ and Black was totally fine
in the game Short,N (2680) -Gajewski,G
(2634) Warsaw 2013.

b) 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♜f4 (12.♖a4 a6;
12.♜a4 ♜bd7 13.b3 ♙b7 14.♙c3 ♙c6∞
Docx,S (2419)-Chilla, J (2224) Germany

2015.) 12...♙b7 13.♜a4N (13.♖f3 ♜bd7
14.♖h3 ♜e5 15.♙b5 ♙c8 16.♖g3 ♙d7
Black was already much better: Laciner, K
(2297) -Atalik,E (2448) Konya 2012.)
13...♜bd7 14.♙c3 ♙c6 15.b3 ♙d6∞ with
a sharp position.

c) 11.b3 ♙a6 (11...♙b7 is of course
possible.) 12.♙xa6 ♜xa6 13.dxc5 (13.♜f4
cxd4 14.exd4 ♜c7= Chiang,S (2098)-
Abrahamyan,T (2280) Saint Louis 2013.)
13...bxc5 14.♜a4 ♖c8 15.♙c3 ♜e4
16.♜f4 (16.♙b2N 16...♖g5!?∞ followed
by ...♖cd8 with an unclear position.)
16...d4! 17.exd4 ♜xc3 18.♖xc3 ♖xd4∞
and Black was fine in the game
Kharitonov,A (2538)-Stavrianakis,I (2298)
Rethymno 2013.

11...♙b7 (11...♙a6 Some good players,
such as Adams and Gelfand, have used
this, but I don't think it's enough for
equality. 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♙xa6 (13.♜a4±)
13...♜xa6 14.♜ce2!± with a little edge:
Raupach,F (2506)-Gramstad,R (2398)
ICCF email 2011.) 12.♖f3 and here
several moves have been tried for Black,
but I will suggest the one used by Anna
Muzychuk.

a) 12.♙b5N 12...cxd4!? (12...♜bd7= is
another decent move. 12...♜c6 13.dxc5!
bxc5 14.♜a4 is a bit annoying. 14...♜e4
15.f3 ♜f6 16.♜xc5 ♖b6 17.♙xc6 ♙xc6
18.b4±) 13.exd4 (13.♙xe8?! doesn't work,
e.g. 13...dxc3 14.♙xf7+ ♜xf7 15.♙xc3
♜bd7) 13...♜c6= followed by ... a7-a6
with equality.

b) 12.dxc5 see 11.dxc5.

12...♜c6 Putting pressure on the d4-
pawn. 13.♜cxd5!N the critical move.

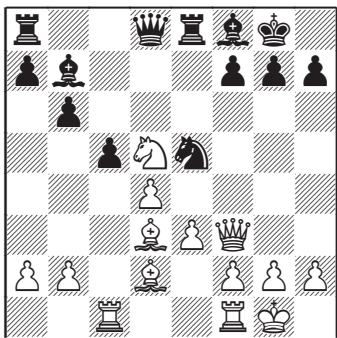
a) 13.♖h5 The move played in practice.
13...♜xh5 14.♞xh5 g6 15.♞xd5 cxd4
16.exd4 ♜b4 17.♞xd8 ♞exd8= with full
equality: Wemmers,X (2348)-Muzychuk,A
(2566) Caleta 2014.

b) 13.♞fd1N 13...cxd4 14.♜cxd5
(14.exd4 ♜xd4 15.♞h3 ♖c8 16.♞h4
♜f5?) 14...♜xd5 15.♞xd5 ♞xd5 16.♜xd5
♜e5∞;

c) 13.dxc5?N 13...♜e5 14.♞e2 d4+
with a big advantage.

d) 13.♜fxd5N 13...♜xd5 14.♞xd5?!
(14.♜xd5 see 13.♜cxd5.) 14...cxd4
15.exd4 ♞xd5 16.♜xd5 ♞ed8+;

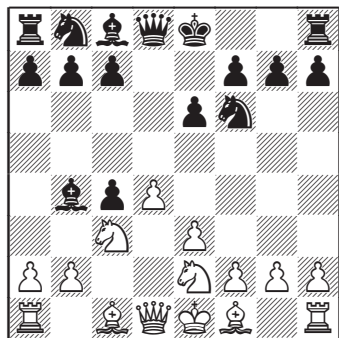
13...♜xd5 14.♜xd5! ♜e5!



An important move. (14...♜xd4 is not
enough for equality: 15.♜f6+! ♞xf6
16.♞xb7 ♞ab8 17.♞a6 ♜e6 18.♞a4± and
White is slightly better due to the bishop
pair.) 15.dxe5 (15.♜f6+?? This time it is
not working at all. 15...gxf6 16.♞xb7
♜xd3+!) 15...♞xd5 16.♞xd5 (16.e4?!
♞xe5∞ with a good position.) 16...♞xd5
17.♖c3 (17.a3 ♞xe5= with equality.)
17...♖xa2 Black re-establishes the material
balance. 18.♖e4 (18.♞a1 ♖d5 19.♖b5

(19.f4 ♖c6=) 19...♞ed8 20.f4 ♖e7 21.g3
g6= with an equal position.) 18...♞ab8
19.♞a1 ♖c4 20.♞fd1 a5=

5...dxc4!?



I really believe this is the best. Black
takes advantage of the move order. 5...0-0
will transpose to the classical Nimzo-
Indian Defence with 4.e3 0-0 5.♜ge2 d5.

6.♞a4+

6.♜f4? is just bad because after 6...e5!+
White is in trouble.

6.♜g3?!N has never been played, and
for good reason: 6...b5!? 7.a4 c6 8.♖d2
(8.axb5 is even worse. 8...cxb5 9.♞f3
♞d5+) 8...♞b6 9.♜ce4 ♜xe4 10.♜xe4
a5+ White is just a pawn down.

6.a3 ♖a5 7.♞a4+ is clearly the main
move, and after

a) 7.♜g3?! b5! (7...c5!? is a good solid
option. A bit less ambitious, but my friend
Anthony Wirig won a good game against
Jussupow with it. 8.♖xc4 ♜c6 9.0-0
(9.dxc5N is also possible. 9...♖xc3+
10.bxc3 ♞xd1+ 11.♜xd1 ♖d7 12.♖e2
♜a5∞ followed by ... ♞c8. I like Black's

position.) 9...cxd4 10.exd4 ♖xd4 11.♟b5 (11.♖xd4N 11...♜xd4 12.♞d1 ♙xc3 (12...♜c6 13.b4 ♙b6 14.♜ce4 ♜xe4 15.♜xe4 0-0 16.♜d6∞ gives White compensation for the pawn.) 13.bxc3 ♜c6 14.a4∞ with some compensation, but I would always take Black in this position.) 11...♖xd1 12.♞xd1 0-0♣ and White has some compensation, but Black is not suffering much: Jussupow,A (2576) - Wirig,A (2500) Germany 2015.) 8.♙d2 a6 9.♙e2 (9.a4N 9...c5! I like this move. 10.dxc5 ♙b7 11.axb5 axb5♣) 9...♙b7♣ and Black was better in the game Praveen Kumar,C (2391) -Sundararajan,K (2520) Mumbai 2010.

b) 7.♜f4 e5! (7...b5!?♣ is also good, and has recently been played by my wife: Wiesner,P (2116)-Daulyte,D (2429) Germany 2017.) 8.♖a4+ c6 9.dxe5 b5 10.♖c2 ♜g4♣ and Black was already better: Yastrebova,T (2004) -Peralta,F (2570) Sitges 2010.

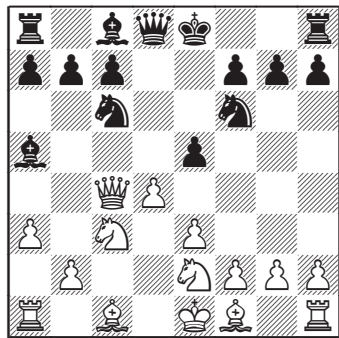
7...♜c6 transposes to our main line. (7...c6!? is interesting, to take advantage once again of White's move order. 8.♖xc4 0-0 9.g3 e5!∞ and Black was fine in the game Maisuradze,N (2302)-Idani,P (2496) Dubai 2015.)

6...♜c6 7.a3 ♙a5!?

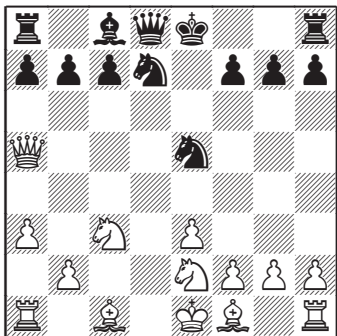
7...♙e7 is also possible, but I prefer to play 7...♙a5 because we can have this position starting with 6.a3.

8.♖xc4 0-0

The main move, which I also played in one of my games. 8...e5!?



This was my novelty when I first worked on this position, but it has been played twice since. 9.dxe5 (9.b4 ♙b6 10.d5N is a novelty but if we compare it with our main line, it's a logical move. (10.dxe5 ♜xe5 11.♖b5+ ♜fd7 12.♜g3N (12.♜f4 c6 13.♖a4 was played in the game Hultin,J (2355)-Wiedenkiller, M (2453) Gothenburg 2015, but here I prefer the simple 13...♜f6N 14.♙b2 0-0 15.♙e2 ♜eg4!?♣ followed by ...♖e7.) 12...0-0 13.♙b2 a5 14.♖e2 axb4 15.axb4 ♞xa1+ 16.♙xa1 c5!?∞ with a good position.) 10...♜e7 11.♙b2 c6!? is tempting. (11...♜exd5 equalizes on the spot: 12.♜xd5 ♖xd5 13.♖xd5 ♜xd5 14.♙xe5 0-0=) 12.dxc6 ♙e6 13.c7! (13.♖b5? bxc6! 14.♖a6 0-0 15.♜g3 ♜g4! with some nasty threats, for example: 16.♙e2?! (16.♞d1 ♜d5!♣) 16...♜xf2! 17.♜xf2 ♙xe3+! 18.♜f1 (18.♜xe3? ♖d4+ 19.♜f3 ♖f4# A lovely final picture!) 18...♖d4+ with a decisive attack.) 13...♖xc7 14.♖xc7 ♙xc7 15.♜b5 ♙b8 16.♞c1 ♜ed5= with equality.) 9...♜xe5 10.♖b5+ ♜fd7 11.♖xa5!N



The main move in my file, and I still believe it's the best. (11.♖d4N 11...c6 12.♖e2 0-0 and Black is better developed. 11.♖d5?! is not that good 11...c6 12.♖d1 0-0 13.b4 Gouloutis,N (2309)-Ninov,N (2458) Nea Moudania 2016 13...♗c7! followed by ...a7-a5. Black is clearly better.) 11...♖d3+ 12.♗d2! ♖xf2 13.♖g3 ♖xh1 14.♖xh1 ♖c5+ 15.♗e1! A good square for White's king. The position is very sharp. Let's see some possible continuations: (15.♗c2?! b6 16.♖b5+ ♗f8 17.♖b4 h5) 15...b6 (15...♖h4+ 16.g3 ♖h5 17.♖xc7 0-0 18.♖f2) 16.♖b5+ ♖d7 17.♖e2 (17.♖c4 doesn't change much. 17...0-0 18.♖f2 ♗e6 19.♖f4 ♖b3 20.♖b1 ♖e7) 17...0-0 18.♗f2 ♖b3 19.♖b1 ♖e7 20.♗g1 ♖ad8 21.♖g3 ♗e6 22.♖f2 f5 with a messy position.

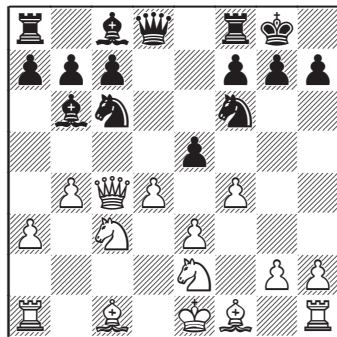
9.b4

9.f4N has never been played, but it makes sense to prevent ...e6-e5. 9...♖d7 10.b4 (10.♖g3 b5!? An amusing idea. 11.♖b3 (11.♖xb5? is bad because of 11...♖xd4!+) 11...♖e7 and Black will continue with ...♗b6 and ...c7-c5 for example.) 10...♗b6 11.♖g3 ♖e7 12.♗e2

a5 13.♖b1 axb4 14.axb4 ♖f5!? followed by ...♗c6 with a good position.

9...♗b6 10.♗b2

10.f4? doesn't really prevent ...e6-e5 here! 10...e5!



11.fxex5 ♗e6 12.♖b5 (12.♖d3N 12...♖xe5+) 12...♖g4! 13.h3 was played in the game Bednar,M (2283) -Plischki,S (2386) Prague 2013, but here Black missed a nice tactical shot: (13.♖e4N 13...a6 14.♖a4 ♖d5!+ is also very bad for White.) 13...♖gxe5!N 14.dxe5 a6! 15.♖a4 ♖xe5+ and White's position is collapsing.

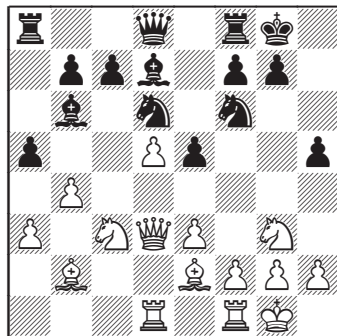
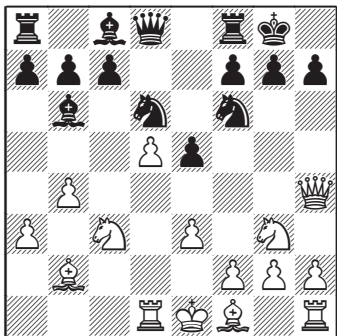
10...e5 11.d5 ♖e7 12.♖d1

If we compare it with the 9...e5 line, this time White is in time to protect the d5-pawn.

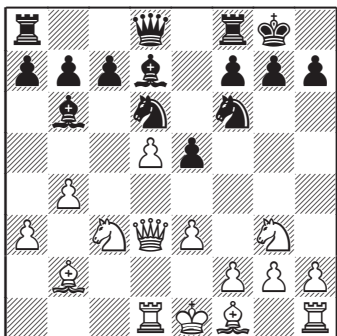
12...♖f5

Intending ...♖d6.

13.♖g3 ♖d6 14.♖h4!



The best move for White. 14.♔d3 ♕d7!?



My novelty, but I have played it myself since. My idea was to wait for White to castle and then push the h-pawn. (14...h5 is also interesting and playable. 15.h4! ♕d7 16.♕e2 g6 17.♔c2 ♔e7 18.♖a4 ♕xa4 19.♔xa4 a5∞ with a very complicated position: Schoene, R (2345) -Plischki, S (2436) Saarbruecken 2013.) 15.♕e2 a5! 16.0-0 h5!

(16...axb4!N 17.axb4 h5! with the same idea is also good. For example: 18.♖a1 ♔e7!? 19.♖xh5 ♖xh5 20.♕xh5 ♔h4 21.♕e2 ♔xb4⌘ and Black is a bit better.) 17.♔c2! My opponent blundered directly.

a) 17.bxa5N is of course critical. 17...♖xa5 18.♖xh5 ♖xh5 19.♕xh5 ♔h4 20.♕e2 (20.♕f3! f5 21.g3 ♔h6↑ followed by ...f5-f4, or ...e5-e4.) 20...f5 21.a4 ♖f6! 22.♖b1! It's a bad sign when this is White's only move! 22...♖f7 23.♖d2 ♕xa4⌘ and I like Black's position.

b) 17.♔b1 I also checked this move during my preparation: 17...axb4 18.axb4 h4! (18...♖g4 is also very interesting. 19.h3 ♖xf2! The point. 20.♖xf2 (20.♖xf2? ♔h4→) 20...♕xe3→ with a very strong attack. Black will continue with ...f7-f5-f4.) 19.♖ge4 h3! To weaken White's kingside. 20.g3 ♕f5 21.♕d3 ♕g4⌘ and Black is better.

c) 17.♖xh5N 17...♖xh5 18.♕xh5 axb4 19.axb4 ♔h4⌘ followed by ...♔xb4.

17...axb4 18.axb4 h4! 19.♖ge4! Sometimes it's better to give up some material than to accept a 'too-passive'

position. (19.♖h1 h3!⚡ it's just awful for White.) 19...♗xe4 20.♗xe4 ♔a4 21.♖b1 ♕xd1 22.♖xd1 ♖e8 (22...♖e7!?) 23.♗c5 (23.h3!? ♗xe4 24.♖xe4 ♖f6⚡ and Black is better.) 23...♖g5? (23...h3! was the move I should have played first. 24.g3 ♖g5⚡ and there is a big difference if we compare it to my game. Now White's king is weakened and the ♔d3-♔b1 manoeuvre, which my opponent made in the game, is not impossible, as the bishop is needed to protect the light-squares around the king.) 24.h3! and I was still better in the game Grishchenko,S (2441)-Cornette,M (2575) Saint Affrique 2016, but I was unable to work out how to continue. I finally made a draw.

14...♔d7 15.♔d3 h6 16.a4 a5 17.b5 ♖e8 18.0-0N

18.♗ge4 ♗dxe4!N was stronger. (18...♗fxe4 19.♖xd8 ♖axd8 20.♗xe4 f5= and the position was equal in the game Renteria Becerra,J (2253)-Moreno Ruiz,J (2470) Madrid 2015.) 19.♗xe4 (19.♔xe4

♖e7⚡) 19...♗xd5 20.♖h5 ♖e7 21.0-0 ♖ad8⚡ and Black is a pawn up.

18...e4 19.♔b1 ♗c4 20.♔c1

20.♔a1? is bad because of 20...♗xe3! A nice blow. 21.fxe3 ♔xe3+ 22.♖h1 ♔g5--+ and White loses his queen.

20...♗d6=

...with equality.

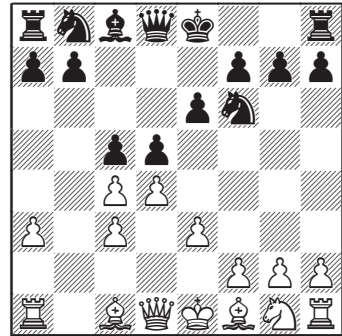
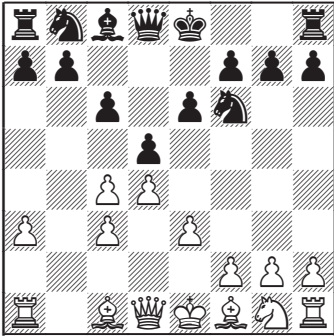
CONCLUSION

In this chapter we analyzed a lot of different alternatives for White. Some of them are harmless, some will transpose to the regular Ragozin and some are quite different, but interesting at the same time. I believe it's important to remember what to play on 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♔f4. It's also important to know how to react to 4.e3, followed by ♗ge2 on the 5th or 6th moves, or even on the 7th. This chapter and the next one offer you a full repertoire for Black in the Nimzo-Indian 4.e3.

Chapter 16.

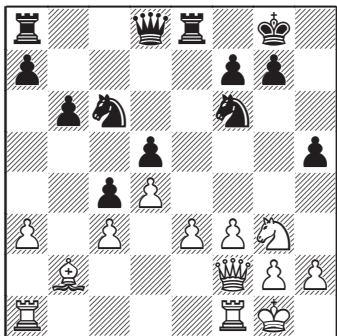
3.♖b4 — 4.e3 5.a3 6...c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♖b4 4.e3 ♘f6
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 c6!?



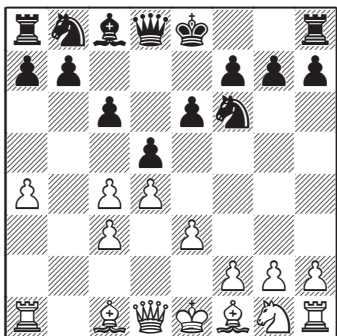
This quiet move is quite rare, but very interesting. The most prominent Chinese players, like Hou Yifan and Yu Yanghi, have used it more than once. The idea is quite simple: Black wants to play ...b7-b6 and ...♙a6, as in the normal line, but they intend to take back on d5 with the c-pawn. It's interesting to note that this move is not mentioned in the book 'A Practical White Repertoire with 1.d4 and 2.c4 Volume 3' by Alexei Kornev. 6...c5

To tell you the truth, I was initially planning to write the 17th Chapter of this book about this continuation. I have used it several times myself with good success, but while I was working on it I discovered a very interesting line for White played by the American grandmaster Sam Shankland during the last Olympiad in Baku. 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♙d3 0-0 9.♘e2 b6 10.0-0 ♙a6 11.f3 ♙xd3 12.♙xd3 ♖e8 13.♘g3 ♘c6 14.♙b2 c4 is not the only approach but it's the one I have always played. 15.♙e2!? intending e3-e4. 15...h5 and in this position White played a move I have never seen before: 16.♙f2!



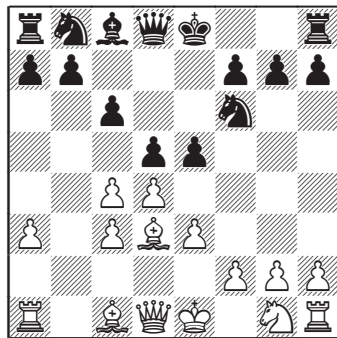
and unfortunately for me, and for the whole line, I failed to discover how Black should continue. I'll give you some short illustrative lines: 16...♔d7 (16...h4 17.♘f5± and the h-pawn is hanging. 16...♞e6 17.e4!±) 17.♞ae1 ♖e7 (17...h4 18.♘h1 h3 19.♘g3 hxg2 20.♞xg2± followed by e3-e4. White can also play ♔c1 to bring it into play.) 18.e4 h4 19.♘h1± and I prefer White. In the game, Sam brought an important point to team USA: Shankland,S (2679) -Sanikidze,T (2497) Baku 2016.

7.a4!?

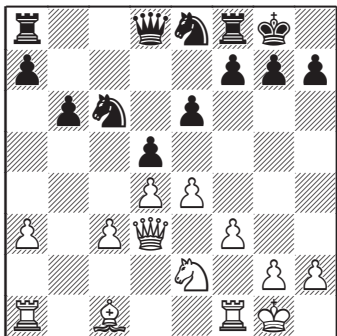


There are only 12 games in my database with this move, but it has been played by

some very strong players. For example, Caruana used it against Hou Yifan in 2015. 7.♔d3 The move Romain Edouard played against me in the first round of the French Championship 2016. 7...e5!?



Taking advantage of White's move-order. The idea is to push ...e5-e4. (7...0-0 is of course possible, but in general it's always good to take advantage of the move-order if we can. 8.♘e2 (8.♘f3 See 7.♘f3.) 8...b6 9.0-0 (9.cxd5 see 7.cxd5.) 9...♔a6 10.cxd5 ♔xd3 (10...cxd5 is also fine and it transposes to 7.cxd5.) 11.♞xd3 cxd5 12.f3 ♘c6!?) (12...♞c8 is a good option. I mentioned this move in the line with 7.cxd5.) 13.e4 we can also reach this position from the 7.f3 move order. (13.c4N 13...♘a5 14.cxd5 ♞xd5 15.e4 ♞c4=) 13...♘e8!?N



Intending ...d6 and avoiding the unpleasant g5 pin at the same time. 14.e5 (14.a4 d6= and the d6 will have the comfortable c4-square.) 14...d5 15.a4 (15.f4 f5!∞ It's thematic to block White's expansion on the kingside.) 15...d7∞ followed by ...c4 with an unclear position. Black will push the f-pawn to defend his kingside if needed.) 8.d2

a) 8.cxd5 e4! The idea behind 7...e5. 9.b1 (9.f1N It must be psychologically difficult to come back to f1. 9...cxd5 10.c4 d6 I believe this position is unclear and it's not easy to find a good plan for White. 11.cxd5 (11.d2 0-0 12.c5 (12.cxd5 dxd5 13.c4 g5∞ followed by ...g4.) 12...b6∞) 11...dxd5 12.c4 e6 13.dxd5 xd5 14.d2 d7 15.f4 d7= and the position is roughly equal.) 9...cxd5 10.c4?! (10.d2N Probably the best. 10...0-0 11.a2 b6 12.c4 dxc4 13.xc4 a6= with equality.) 10...dxc4 11.a4+ d6 12.xc4 e6!N could have been even stronger. (12...d5 has been played in practice. It's good enough to equalize. 13.b5+ d7 14.e5+ e6 15.a2 (15.b5+ d7= with a

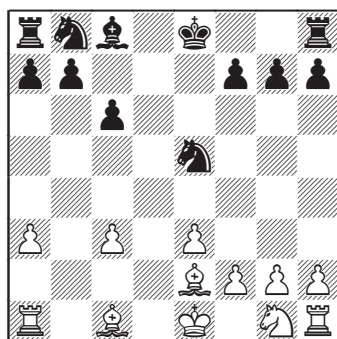
repetition.) 15...d6 16.b5 xa2 17.xa2 d5 18.b2 xb5 19.xb5 0-0= and Black was fine in the game Sertic,R (2380) -Kurajica,B (2525) Sibenik 2010.) 13.b4 (13.c5 c8) 13...0-0 14.d2 b6 15.c2 fc8 and I prefer Black's position.

b) 8.dxe5?! This logical-looking move is a mistake. Only Black can be better now: 8...dxc4! 9.xc4

b1) 9.e2 xd1+ 10.xd1 d4 11.d2 d7 12.c2 de5!N is a good improvement. (12...d5 13.f3!N (13.f4?! f6 14.exf6 dxf6 15.d3 0-0 16.0-0 e8 Black was better in the game Georgiev,V (2532)-Kurajica,B (2555) Solin 2006.) 13...d3+ 14.xd3 cxd3 15.d4 dc5= and the position is close to equality.) 13.f6! Black is better.

b2) 9.exf6?N 9...cxd3! 10.fxg7 g8 followed by ...xg7.

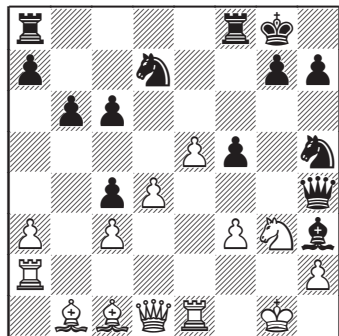
9...xd1+ 10.dxd1 d4 11.e1 de5 12.e2



12...f5! with the idea of playing on the d3-square. 13.f3 (13.d3N 13...d3+ 14.f1 d7 15.d4 g6 followed by ...0-0-0.) 13...d3+ 14.xd3 xd3 15.e4

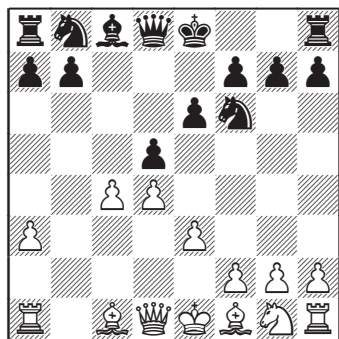
♠d7 16.♙e3 f5! and Black was better in the game Aleksandrov,A (2554)-Yu Yangyi (2675) Dubai UAE 2014.

8...e4 9.♙b1 0-0 10.0-0 (10.♠g3 the move I faced: 10...♙a5 (10...b6!N followed by ...♙a6 was perhaps the simplest.) 11.♙d2 ♙a6 I was quite attracted to this idea. The c4-pawn is hanging, and after the exchanges on d5 White will have problems castling. 12.cxd5 (12.0-0! was the best. 12...♙xc4 13.f3! exf3 14.♙xf3 and White has good compensation for the pawn. He wants to play e3-e4 and open the position. Black's queenside is still undeveloped.) 12...cxd5 13.f3 ♙e8 14.♙f1! The start of a bad plan. 14...♠c6 15.fxe4 ♙g4 16.♙b3? This time it's a big mistake. (16.♙c2 had to be played: 16...♠xe4 17.♙f4 h5 and Black's position is very interesting. I was quite confident about this line during the game.) 16...♠a5 17.♙a2 dxe4! and I was already better. Even if the game was far from perfect, it was an important victory for me: Edouard, R (2647)-Cornette,M (2581) Agen 2016.) 10...b6 leads to a very interesting position. 11.f3 Iljiushenok,I (2479) -Pustovoitova,D (2337) Moscow 2016 (11.cxd5N 11...cxd5 12.f3 ♙a6 13.♙f2 ♠bd7 14.♠g3 ♙c8 15.♙d2 ♙e8∞ with a double-edged position.) 11...exf3!? N I believe it's better to take on f3 directly. 12.gxf3 (12.♙xf3 ♙e8∞ with a sharp position.) 12...dxc4 13.e4 ♙h3 14.♙e1 (14.♙f2 ♠h5! also followed by ...♙h4.) 14...♠h5 15.♠g3 ♙h4 16.♙a2 ♠d7 17.e5 f5!

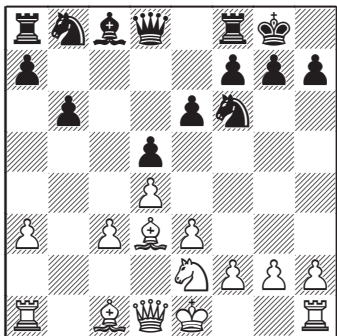


...with a complicated position, but I believe Black is fine. A possible continuation could be: 18.a4 ♙ae8 19.♠xh5 ♙xh5 20.♙a3 c5∞;

7.cxd5 cxd5 8.c4

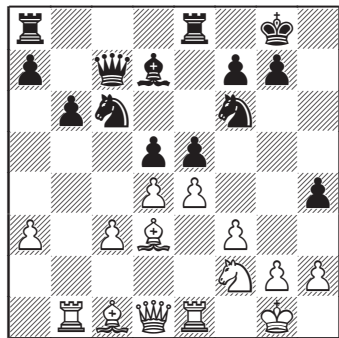


This also makes sense. Brazilian GM Alexandr Fier played it in 2015. (8.♙d3 0-0 9.♠e2 (9.♠f3 see 7.♠f3.) 9...b6



...intending ...♙a6 next. White has a choice, but Black should not be in any trouble. (9...♘c6!? This is also an interesting idea, planning ...e6-e5. 10.0-0 e5 11.f3 (11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♙c2 ♖c7 13.f3 ♙d7 (13...b6!?N followed by ...♙a6 was also a good option.) 14.a4 ♖fe8 15.♖d4 ♘c4∞ with a balanced position: Vaisser,A (2555) -Kurajica,B (2532) Rijeka 2011.) 11...♞e8 12.♘g3 (12.♙h1 e4 13.♙b1 Perez,J (2279)-Leutwyler,M (2157) Germany 2004 (13.fxe4N 13...♘xe4∞) 13...♙a5!N 14.♘g3 b6⚡) 12...♙d7 followed by ...♞c8. Black has several plans at his disposal, for example to push the h-pawn, to push ...e5-e4, or to put pressure on the c3-pawn. (12...h6 has also been played. 13.♖c2N is probably the best response: (13.♙f5N 13...♙xf5 14.♙xf5 ♙a5∞; 13.♞a2?! ♙d7 14.♞e2 ♞c8 15.♙b2 e4!⚡ and Black was better in the game Fier,A (2601) -Laxman,R (2375) Dubai 2015) 13...♖c7 14.♞b1 (14.♖f2 e4∞) 14...♙e6 15.♙b2 ♙a5 with a balanced position.) 13.♞b1 b6 14.♞e1 (14.♖c2 ♞c8 15.♖f2 ♙a5∞) 14...h5!?: Not forced, but an interesting idea to annoy the knight on g3. 15.♙h1 (15.e4N is logical, and after 15...h4 16.exd5 hxg3 17.dxc6 ♙xc6

18.dxe5 ♖d5! 19.♙f4 gxh2+ 20.♙xh2 ♞ad8 21.exf6 ♞xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♖xd3 23.fxg7 ♞e8= I believe the position to be around equal.) 15...h4 16.♙f2 ♖c7 17.e4N



This is more testing. (17.♙b2?! has been played in practice, but Black had an edge after: 17...e4! 18.fxe4 dxe4 19.♙b5?! (19.♙a6N was the lesser evil, but after 19...♙a5⚡ Black remains better.) 19...♙a5⚡ Gaule,P (2104) -Sokolov,A (2543) Bern 1999.) 17...h3! I like to spoil White's structure before doing anything in the centre. 18.g3 dxe4 19.fxe4 (19.♙xe4 ♙xe4 20.♙xe4 ♞ac8∞ with a balanced position.) 19...exd4 20.cxd4 ♙xd4 Black needs to accept the challenge. 21.♙b2 ♙c6 22.♞c1 (22.♙xf6 is also possible, but after 22...gxf6 23.♙g4 ♙xg4 24.♖xg4+ ♙f8 25.♖xh3 ♙e5= the Black king is safe and the knight is very strong on e5.) 22...♖d6! 23.e5! ♖d5! Threatening mate on g2. 24.♙f1! ♖xd1 25.♞cxd1 ♙g4 26.♞xd7 ♙gxe5 winning back the exchange. 27.♞xe5 ♙xe5 28.♙xe5 ♞xe5 29.♙xh3 ♙f8= with a balanced endgame. Black will play ...♞e7 next.) 10.0-0

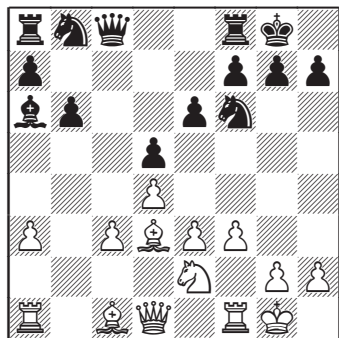
a) 10.f3 ♖a6 11.♗xa6 (11.e4 ♗xd3 12.♞xd3 ♖e8!? I have already mentioned this idea, preventing the unpleasant ♗g5 and intending ...♗d6. 13.e5 on other moves, Black could have played ...♗d6. 13...♗c6 14.a4 f6 15.f4 ♖c8 16.0-0 ♖f7 17.g4 f5∞ Black was fine in the game Van Ketel,R (2286) -Van Wely,L (2689) Spijkenisse 2011.) 11...♗xa6 12.♞d3 ♗c7!? Not the most thematic, but it's a decent move. 13.0-0 (13.c4N 13...dxc4 14.♞xc4 ♖c8 15.e4 e5!∞ with the idea 16.dxe5 ♗e6! 17.♞a2 ♗d7⌘ and Black has a good position.) 13...♗fe8!? followed by ...♗d6. 14.c4 (14.e4 ♗d6∞) 14...♗d6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♗f4 (16.e4N 16...♗c4 17.e5 f6 18.f4 b5∞ with a sharp position to play.) 16...♖e8 17.♖a2 ♗c4 18.e4 ♖c8 19.♖c2 b5 20.a4 a6∞ with a complicated position: Fagerstrom,M (2174)-Morozov,D (2377) ICCF email 2013.

b) 10.c4 ♖a6 11.cxd5 ♗xd3 12.♞xd3 ♞xd5!? is the most solid option. 13.f3 ♖c8 14.♗b2 (14.e4N 14...♞c4 15.♞xc4 ♖xc4 16.♗f2 ♗c6 17.♗e3 ♖e8= I don't believe White has any advantage here. Black will play ...♖c8 and ...♗a5 next.) 14...♗bd7 15.e4 ♖e5! A good intermediate move. The knight is aiming for the c4-square. 16.♞d1 ♞a5+ 17.♗f2 ♗c4 18.♗c3 ♞g5= and Black was fine in the game Peralta,F (2556) -Satyapragyan,S (2392) Barcelona 2015.

c) 10.a4 ♖a6 11.♗a3 ♗xd3 12.♞xd3 ♖e8 13.0-0 ♗c6 14.c4 ♗a5 15.cxd5 exd5= followed by ...♗c4: Ibragimov, I (2575) - Bischoff,K (2520) Linares 1996.

10...♖a6 11.f3 (11.♗xa6 ♗xa6 12.♞d3 ♗c7!?N We have already seen this idea.

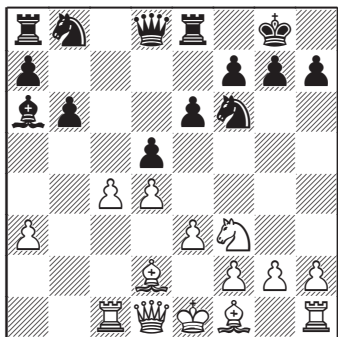
Black will continue with ...♗fe8 and ...♗d6. 13.f3 (13.c4 dxc4 14.♞xc4 ♖c8 15.f3 ♗cd5 16.♞d3 ♞c7 17.e4 ♗c3= with equality.) 13...♗fe8∞ followed by ...♗d6.) 11...♞c8



This is a good idea. Black wants to simplify the position and keep control over the light squares. (11...♗xd3 is also possible. It's a matter of taste. 12.♞xd3 Now Black has tried several moves: 12...♗c6 is the move I prefer. It transposes to 7.♗d3 0-0 8.♗e2 b6 9.0-0 ♖a6 10.cxd5 ♗xd3 11.♞xd3 cxd5 12.f3 ♗c6. (12...♞c7 13.e4 ♖c8 14.♗g5 ♗bd7 Szabo,Z (2303)-Fargo,I (2441) Balatonboglar 2014 15.e5N 15...♗e8 16.f4± can be a bit dangerous for Black. 12...♗bd7 was the most popular choice in practice, but I am not a fan of it because of 13.c4!?N 13...dxc4 14.♞xc4 and the knight on d7 is badly placed now. 14...♖c8 15.♞b5 ♗b8 16.a4 ♞d7± and White is a bit better. Or 12...♞c8!? followed by ...♞a6, and after 13.e4 ♞a6 14.♞xa6 it will transpose to 11...♞c8.)) 12.e4 ♗xd3 13.♞xd3 ♞a6 14.♞e3 (14.♞xa6 ♗xa6 15.♗g5 dxe4 16.♗xf6 exf3 17.♖xf3 gxf6 18.♖xf6 ♗c7 19.♖f3 ♖ac8= with equality as seen in the

game Solymosi,I (2208) -Horvath,S (2313) Hungary 2006.) 14...♖c6 15.e5 ♗d7 16.f4 f5! This position has appeared twice in practice, and both times Black won! 17.exf6 ♜xf6 18.a4 ♗a5 19.♙a3 ♗c4 (19...♗b3 20.♞a2 ♞c4 ♞ Simantsev,M (2457)-Stupak,K (2531) Beirut 2015) 20.♞d3 ♞e8 21.♗g3 ♞c8 ♞ Yu,Y (2656)-Tomashevsky,E (2733) St Petersburg 2012) 8...0-0 9.♗f3 (9.cxd5 ♞xd5 10.♗f3 b6 intending ...♙a6. 11.♙d2 (11.♙d3 ♙a6= Vaisser,A (2522) -Kortschnoj,V (2544) Cannes 2011) 11...♗e4!? It makes sense to wait for the ♙f1 to move before playing ...♙a6. 12.♙b4 ♞d8 13.♗e5 ♙a6 14.f3 was played in the game Aleksandrov, A (2564)-Ly,M (2460) Pavlodar 2015, but now I prefer 14...♗d6!∞) 9...b6 10.♙b2

a) 10.♙d2N 10...♙a6 11.♞c1 ♞e8!?

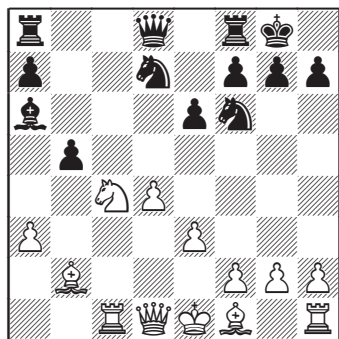


...with the idea being to play ...♗e4, and after White's natural response ♙b4 the rook will not be hanging on f8. 12.♙e2 (12.♙d3 ♗bd7 13.0-0 (13.♞a4 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 dxc4 15.♞xc4 ♞c8 16.♞xc8 ♞axc8 17.♗e2 ♗e4= with equality.) 13...♞c8 14.♞a4 ♗b8= Black is fine.) 12...♗e4 13.0-0 (13.♙b4 ♗c6∞) 13...♗c6

14.cxd5 ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 ♞xd5= with an equal position.

b) 10.a4N has never been played, but it's suggested in Pert's book on the Ragozin. 10...♙a6 11.♙a3 ♞e8 12.♞c1 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♙xc4 14.♞xc4 b5! 15.axb5 ♞a5+ 16.♙b4 ♞xb5 17.♞c2 ♗bd7∞ with a balanced position.

10...♙a6 11.♞c1 ♗bd7 12.♗d2 (12.cxd5N 12...♙xf1 13.♗xf1 exd5∞ and I start to prefer Black.) 12...dxc4 13.♗xc4 (13.♙xc4N 13...♙xc4 14.♞xc4 b5∞) 13...b5!



The most precise reaction. 14.♗d2 (14.♗e5N 14...♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗d5 16.♙d3 b4! 17.♙xa6 ♞a5 18.axb4 (18.0-0 ♞xa6 19.axb4 ♗xb4=) 18...♞xa6 19.♞e2 ♞b6=) 14...♙b7! Black wants to play ...a7-a6 to protect the b5-pawn. 15.f3N was a better choice. (15.♙xb5?! was not a good idea, because after 15...♙xg2 16.♞g1 ♞b8! ♞ Black was better in the game Fier,A (2632)-Wirig,A (2496) Montpellier 2015.) 15...a6 16.♙d3 ♗b6 The knight will go to a4, when after ♙a1 the a3-pawn will be weak. 17.0-0 (17.♞e2 ♗a4 18.♙a1 ♞e7 19.♗b1 ♞ac8∞) 17...♗a4 18.♙a1

♖e7 19.♟b1 ♜fc8 20.e4 ♜xc1 21.♜xc1
 ♜c8 22.♜d2 ♜c7= with a balanced
 position.

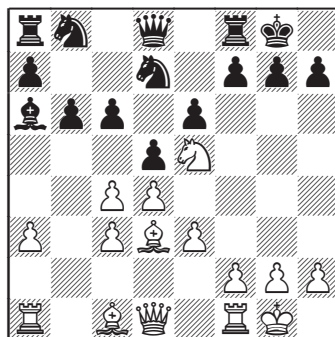
7.♟f3 Intending ♟d3 next. At least this
 time 7...e5 is no longer an option. 7...0-0
 8.♟d3 (8.cxd5 cxd5 and now after 9.c4 or
 9.♟d3 it will transpose to 7.♟d3.) 8...b6
 9.cxd5

a) 9.0-0 ♟a6 10.♟e5!?

a1) 10.♟d2 c5!? (10...♟bd7 has also
 been played, but I believe that 10...c5 is
 more logical, because the ♟b8 can then go
 to c6.) 11.♜e2 (11.e4N it's always worth
 checking such moves. 11...cxd4 12.e5
 dxc4!? is one of the possible ways to
 continue, but it looks logical to me to
 leave the d5-square for the ♟f6. 13.♟xc4
 ♟d5 14.cxd4 ♜d7 If Black succeeds in
 restraining White's attack on the kingside,
 he will be fine thanks to his good knight
 on d5. 15.♜g4 (15.♟d6 ♟xd3 16.♜xd3
 ♟c6= and here I suggest continuing with
 ...f7-f6, then ...♟d8 followed by ...♟b7
 trying to exchange the annoying knight on
 d6.) 15...f5! 16.exf6 ♟xf6 17.♜h3 ♜d5∞
 with a balanced position.) 11...♟c6
 12.♟b2 ♜e8 13.♜ad1 ♜c7 14.♜fe1 ♜ad8
 (14...♟a5N was also totally fine. 15.cxd5
 ♟xd3 16.♜xd3 exd5 17.c4 ♜ad8 18.dxc5
 dxc4 19.cxb6 axb6 20.♜c2 ♟d5 21.♟f3
 h6= with an equal position.) 15.e4 dxe4
 16.♟xe4 ♟xe4 17.♜xe4 f5 18.♜h4 h6
 19.dxc5 ♟a5 20.cxb6 axb6= Black gave up
 a pawn, but it's only temporary, as the c4-
 pawn will fall soon. Black was fine in the
 game Poliakoff,L (2260)-Miettinen,K
 (2274) ICCF email 2005.

a2) 10.cxd5 too simplistic. 10...♟xd3
 11.♜xd3 cxd5 12.c4 ♟c6 13.cxd5 ♜xd5
 14.♟b2 e5= with equality: Smyslov,V
 (2530)- Serper,G (2575) Tilburg 1992.

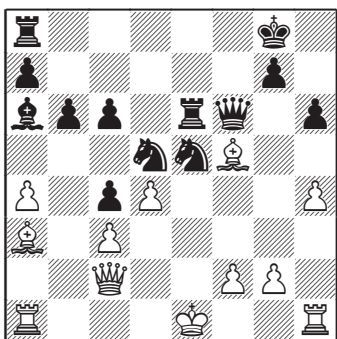
10...♟fd7! Challenging the ♟e5 is a
 good idea.



11.♟xd7 (11.f4 also makes sense.
 11...f5!? The simplest. (11...♟xe5 is also
 fine, but maybe a bit more complicated:
 12.fxe5 ♟xc4 13.♟xc4 dxc4 14.e4!N The
 critical move. White's idea is to play ♜g4,
 then ♟h6 or ♟g5. (14.♜e2?! c5⌘
 Netusil,M (2278) -Kochetkova,J (2327)
 Czechia 2011) 14...f5!? 15.exf5 (15.♟e3
 ♜e8∞; 15.a4 fxe4 16.♟a3 c5 17.dxc5
 ♜xf1+ 18.♜xf1 ♟a6 19.♜xc4 ♟xc5
 20.♟xc5 ♜c8=) 15...♜xf5 16.♜xf5 exf5
 17.g4!? (17.♜f1 ♜d5 18.♜xf5 ♟a6
 19.♟e3 ♜f8 20.♜c2 ♟c7⌘) 17...♜d5!?
 18.gxf5 ♜e4!= with a rather strange
 position, but the white king is too weak to
 avoid a perpetual.) 12.♜e2 and a draw was
 agreed in the game Levitt,J (2440) -
 Bischoff,K (2550) Kolkata 1997. I believe
 Black is fine after: 12...♟xe5 13.fxe5 ♟xc4
 14.♟xc4 dxc4 15.♜xc4 ♜d5 16.♜e2 c5=
 with a balanced position.) 11...♟xd7
 12.cxd5 ♟xd3 13.♜xd3 cxd5 14.c4 (14.f3

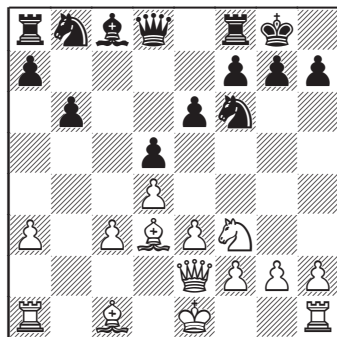
♖c8 15.e4 ♖c7 16.♗d2 was played in the game Czerwonski, A (2380) -Debashis, D (2484) Warsaw 2014, but here Black missed a way to be better: 16...dxe4!N 17.fxex4 e5!f 14...♗f6 15.♗d2 ♖d7 16.a4 ♖fc8= and Black was fine in the game Maisuradze,N (2302)-Bailet,P (2509) Nancy 2016.

b) 9.a4 If White really wants to play with a4, it's strange not to play it earlier. 9...♗a6 10.♗a3 dxc4! (10...♖e8 was also good.) 11.♗c2 ♖e8 12.e4 ♗bd7 13.e5 ♗d5 14.h4 f5! and it's difficult to see how White's attack might develop? In the game the British grandmaster tried to sacrifice a piece: 15.♗g5?! h6! 16.♗xe6 ♖xe6 17.♗xf5 ♖f6!? 18.♖c2 Jones,G (2632) - Yu,Y (2688) Caleta 2013, but here Black could have been more precise with 18...♗xe5!N



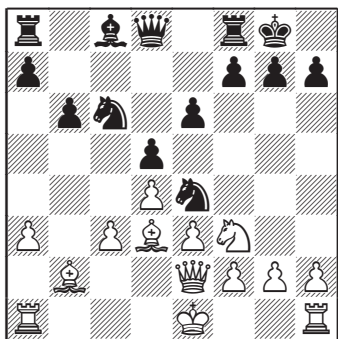
19.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 20.dxe5 ♖xe5+ 21.♔f1 ♖e8!→ and despite the material deficit, Black is winning, as White's king is too weak.

9...cxd5 10.♖e2!



This is of course the best move, preventing Black's ...♗a6. (10.0-0 this move can't be challenging, because Black is happy to exchange the light-squared bishops. 10...♗a6! 11.♗xa6 ♗xa6 12.♖d3 (12.♗e5 ♗b8 (12...♗e4!?N was also totally fine. 13.f3 ♗d6=) 13.♖d3 ♗bd7 14.♗xd7 ♖xd7 15.f3 ♖fc8f Ratkovic,M (2403) -Antic,D (2469) Vrbas 2015) 12...♗b8 Heading to c6. 13.c4 ♗c6 14.♗d2 dxc4 15.♖xc4 ♖c8 16.♖a6 ♖c7 17.♖fc1 ♖d7 18.a4 ♗e4= and Black was fine: Rubio Mejia,L (2373)-Lafuente, P (2489) San Sebastian 2008.) 10...♗e4!? Black is attacking the c3-pawn and taking a grip on the centre. (10...♗b7 is the second alternative. The idea is to play ...♖c8, then ...♗a6. It makes sense, but it's not that simple. 11.♗d2 (11.0-0 ♖c8 12.c4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗a6 14.♗e5 (14.♗xa6 ♖xa6 15.♖xa6 ♗xa6 16.♗b2 ♖ac8 17.♖fc1 ♗e4= and Black equalized in the game Bluvshstein,M (2611) - Rozentalis,E (2571) Toronto 2011.) 14...♗xc4 15.♗xc4 ♖a6 16.♗d2 So far we have been following the game Ibragimov,I (2590)-Rausis,I (2520) Cappelle-la-Grande 1998, but here I suggest the simple 16...♗c6!?N 17.♖fc1 ♖fc8 18.♖f1

♖e7 19.f3 ♖c6= with equality.) 11...♗c8
 (11...♖e4!?N also looks good, like in the
 line with 10...♖e4. 12.0-0 ♖c6 13.c4
 ♖xd2 14.♖xd2 ♖a5∞) 12.♖c1 ♖a6 13.c4
 ♗b7 14.0-0 dxc4 15.♖xc4 ♖xc4 16.♖xc4
 ♖bd7 17.♖fc1 ♖fc8= and Black even
 managed to win: Liu,Z (2132)-Yu,S
 (2497) Zhongshan 2015.) 11.♖b2 (11.0-
 0N 11...♖xc3 12.♗c2 ♖e4 13.♖xe4 dxe4
 14.♗xe4 ♗d5= with equality.) 11...♖c6



The idea is quite simple, Black will
 continue with ...♖b7, ...♖c8, and ...♖a5
 getting perfect control over the central
 light squares. 12.a4 (12.0-0 ♖a5 13.♖d2
 ♖b7 14.a4 ♗c7 15.♖xe4 dxe4 16.♖a3
 (16.c4N is of course the move to check,
 but after 16...♖a6 17.♖fc1 ♖fc8 the c4-
 pawn is more a weakness than a strength.)
 16...♖fc8= and Black was fine in the game
 Jones,G (2637)-Yu,Y (2688) Reykjavik
 2013.) 12...♖b7 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.♖a3 ♖e8
 15.♖fc1 ♖a5 16.♖xe4 (16.♗b2 ♖c4
 17.♖xc4 dxc4!?) 16...dxe4 17.♖d2 f5
 (17...e5!?N was probably even simpler.
 18.♖b4 (18.♗d1 ♖e6∞) 18...♖c6 White
 has nothing better than 19.♖a3 ♖a5=)
 18.c4 ♖a6 19.♖b4 ♖xc4 20.♖xc4 ♗d5
 (20...♗c7!?N was also possible, leading to

massive exchanges: 21.♖a3 ♖xc4 22.♖ac3
 ♖xe2 23.♖xc7 ♖xc7 24.♖xc7 a5 25.♖d6 g6
 26.♖e5 ♖d1= with equality.) 21.♖xb6
 ♖xe2 22.♖xd5 exd5= with an equal
 endgame: Sokolov,I (2650)-L'Ami,E
 (2640) Amsterdam 2013.

7.f3 is a very rare move in this particular
 position, but it can be reached via the
 Nimzo-Indian 4.f3 d5 5.a3 ♖xc3+ 6.bxc3
 c6 7.e3. 7...0-0 8.♖d3

a) 8.cxd5 cxd5 and f2-f3 doesn't look
 like a useful move.

b) 8.♖h3 looks rather strange, but at
 least it makes some sense of the f3-move.
 Ivanchuk played it in 2010. I believe Black
 should continue with the classical plan:
 8...b6 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.a4 (10.♖f2 ♗c7!
 11.♖d2 was played in the game
 Hochstrasser,M (2311)-Renet,O (2546)
 Switzerland 2002, but here I like 11...e5!?
 ∞ taking space in the centre.) 10...♗c7
 11.♖d2 Bareev,E (2590) -Rozentalis,E
 (2565) Leningrad 1990, and just as in the
 line with 10.♖f2, I like the idea of playing
 11...♖c6∞ followed by ...e6-e5, ...♖e8,
 and probably ...♖b7.

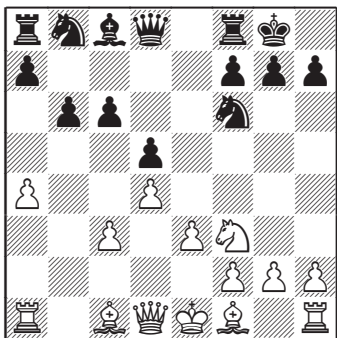
8...b6 9.♖e2 (9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♖e2 will
 transpose to 7.cxd5 then 8.♖d3 and
 10.f3.) 9...♖a6 10.cxd5 ♖xd3 (10...cxd5 is
 of course possible, but as usual I prefer to
 take advantage of White's move-order.)
 11.♗xd3 cxd5 12.c4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗d7
 14.e4 ♖c8 15.♗d3 ♖c6 16.♖g5 ♖e8 17.0-
 0 ♖e5 18.♗b3 ♖c4= and Black had
 equalized in the game Moskalenko,V
 (2558)-Tiviakov,S (2674) Benidorm 2009.

7...0-0

7...b6?!N would be a bad idea, because after 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♔a3± Black can't castle.

8.♔a3

8.♟f3 b6 9.cxd5 cxd5 The move I recommend. (9...exd5!?



This recapture is not very typical, but Hou Yifan played it once. I guess her idea was to play like in the line with 6...c5, but a tempo down. After analyzing this position for quite a while, I drew the conclusion that it's playable, but I prefer the text move anyway. 10.♔a3!?N An interesting option. (10.♔d3 ♔a6 11.0-0 c5 12.♟e5 (12.♔b5!?N was maybe more critical, even if after 12...♔xb5 13.axb5 ♔e8 14.c4 (14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♔b2 c4 16.♔a3 ♟b6 17.♟a4 ♟bd7 18.♔b4 ♟e4∞) 14...dxc4 15.♔b2 cxd4 16.♔xd4 ♟e4= Black's position looks quite solid.) 12...♔xd3! (12...♔e8 13.a5 ♔xd3 14.♟xd3 ♟c6?! (14...c4N Once again this move was better. 15.axb6 ♟xb6 16.♟f4 ♟c6=) 15.axb6 axb6 16.♔xa8 ♟xa8 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♟xc5± and White was better in the game Caruana,F (2805)-Hou,Y (2676) Dortmund 2015.) 13.♟xd3 was played in

Chatalbashev,B (2553)-Cheparinov,I (2675) Pleven 2015, and here I prefer (13.♟xd3 c4∞) 13...c4!N I think it's a good idea to close the centre. (13...♟bd7N is possible, but after 14.♟xd7 ♟xd7 15.dxc5! bxc5 16.c4! White has a little edge. 16...♔ab8 17.♔a3 ♟c6 18.cxd5 ♟xd5 19.♔fc1 ♟b4 20.♟f5 ♔fc8 21.♔c4±) 14.♟f5 ♟c7 15.a5 ♟c6= with equality.) 10...♔e8 11.♔c1! By delaying the development of the ♔f1 and preparing c3-c4 I believe White has a chance to be better. 11...♔g4! Not an easy move, as Black gives up on the idea of playing the usual ...♔a6.

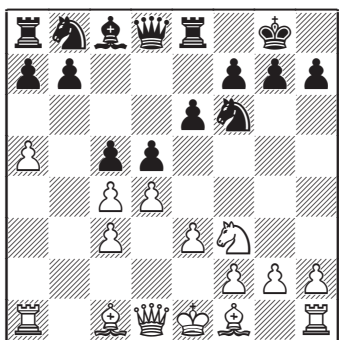
a) 11...♔a6 12.♔xa6 ♟xa6 13.♟d3 ♟c7 14.c4±;

b) 11...♟e4 I also tried this move, but I am not convinced that it's good enough: 12.♔d3 ♔a6 13.0-0 ♔xd3 14.♟xd3 ♟d7 (14...c5?! 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.c4±) 15.c4± and I prefer White's position.

12.♔e2 (12.♔d3 ♟bd7 13.0-0 (13.h3 ♔h5 14.0-0 c5∞) 13...c5 and Black's position is fine, for example: 14.♟h1 (or 14.c4 cxd4 15.exd4 ♔c8 16.h3 ♔h5∞) 14...c4 15.♔b1 ♔h5 16.♟e1 ♔g6∞) 12...a6! The engine's move, planning ...b6-b5. (12...♟bd7 13.0-0 c5 14.c4± and White is better.) 13.h3!? (13.0-0 b5! 14.♔b4 ♟bd7 15.a5 ♔c8∞ followed by ...c6-c5.) 13...♔xf3! (13...♔h5 14.g4 ♔g6 15.♟e5± is unpleasant for Black.) 14.♔xf3 b5 15.♟b3 ♟bd7 16.axb5 axb5 17.0-0 ♔a4∞ and the engine gives 0.00. In general, I prefer to have the bishop pair, but in this position I don't see many ideas for White.) 10.♔a3 (10.♔d3 ♔a6 11.♔xa6 ♟xa6 12.♟d3 ♟c7 13.♔d2 Henrotte, N

(1655)-Laarhoven,M (1716) Maastricht 2010. 13...♖c8=) 10...♞e8 transposes to the main line.

8.a5 White has a good score in the database with this rare move. The idea is to prevent ...b7-b6. 8...c5! I think this is the best reaction. We play as in the regular Nimzo with e3. We have lost a tempo with ...c7-c6, then ...c6-c5, but White has also lost time by playing a3-a4-a5. 9.♟f3 (9.♟a3N 9...♞xa5 10.♞c1 ♞c7 11.♟xc5 ♟d8∞) 9...♞e8!?



It's not the first time that we have seen this prophylactic move. The rook will be ideally placed on e8 after the future exchanges on d5. Moreover, it also prevents White from pinning the c5-pawn with ♟a3. 10.♟e2 (10.♟d2 ♟c6 11.♟b3?! cxd4 12.cxd4 e5! 13.dxe5 ♟xe5 14.cxd5 ♟g4 15.♞d4 We have been following the game Aleksandrov,A (2607)-Smirnov,A (2448) Viljandi 2015, and now Black could have played a very nice move: 15...♟f3!↑ the bishop is untouchable, and ...♟xd5 is coming next. 10.cxd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♟bd7 12.c4 ♟xc5 13.cxd5 ♟xd5∞ even though White has two bishops, I don't believe that Black can be

worse thanks to his lead in development: Mohota,N (2325) -Karavade,E (2387) Bhubaneswar 2013. 10.dxc5N 10...♟bd7 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♟e2 ♟xc5 13.♟b2 ♟e6 14.0-0 ♖c8= with equality.) 10...♟e4 (10...♟c6?!N was also possible: 11.0-0 (11.a6 b6∞; 11.dxc5 ♟xa5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.0-0 ♞c7∞) 11...♟xa5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♞a4 b6 14.dxc5 ♟e4 15.cxb6 axb6∞ followed by ...♟g4 with an unclear position.) 11.♟b2 ♟c6 12.♞a4 ♟d7 13.♞a3 (13.♞a2!?N was perhaps a better try, but Black is still fine after 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 b6! Now White has several alternatives, but Black has nothing to be worried about: 15.axb6 (15.cxd5?! ♟b4! 16.♞b3 bxa5; 15.a6 ♖c8 16.0-0 dxc4 17.♞xc4 ♟e5 18.♞b4 ♟xf3+ 19.♟xf3 ♟c6= followed by ... ♟d5.) 15...axb6 16.♞b1 ♟a5=) 13...b6 14.axb6 axb6 15.♞xa8 ♞xa8 16.♞xa8 ♞xa8 17.0-0 was the game Ernst,S (2581)-Paikidze,N (2412) Oslo 2011, and here I suggest the more solid 17...f6!?N taking control over the e5-square and intending ...♟f7. 18.cxd5 exd5 19.♞a1 ♞xa1+ 20.♟xa1 ♟a5= with equality.

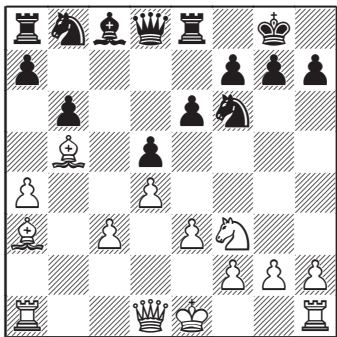
8...♞e8 9.♟f3 b6 10.cxd5

10.♟d3 ♟a6 11.♟e5 (11.♟d2 was played in the game Bocharov,D (2595)-Karavade,E (2395) Moscow 2016, but now I prefer 11...c5!N 12.0-0 (12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♟xc5 ♞c7) 12...♟c6 13.♞e2 (13.♞c2 cxd4 14.cxd4 e5!∞) 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 e5= with a good position.) 11...dxc4 12.♟e2!?N (12.♟xc4?! ♞d5 Szabo,Z (2415)-Lorincz, I (2350) Hungary 1998) 12...♞c7 13.♞c2 c5 14.♟xc4 ♟bd7=

10...cxd5

10...exd5!?N is also possible, in the spirit of Hou Yifan's game. We have this position after 8.♖f3.

11.♖b5!



A very good move to disrupt Black's development. 11.♖c1!?N I also analyzed this move which was suggested by the engine. 11...♗a6 It's not easy to find another useful move. 12.♗xa6 ♖xa6 13.♞d3 (13.c4 ♖c8 14.0-0! dxc4 15.♞e2 ♞d5 16.♖e5 ♖c5! And the knight finally enters the game. 17.♞xc4

a) 17.dxc5 ♞xe5= with equality.

b) 17.♞xc4 ♖b3!? leads to simplifications. 18.♞d3 ♞xc4 19.♖xc4 ♖a5 20.♖e5 (20.♖xa5 ♞xa5 21.♞c4 ♖d5 22.♖d6 h6=) 20...♖c8= with equality.

17...♞xc4 18.♞xc4 ♖b3 19.♖c6 ♖d5 20.♖d1 f5= and the position is balanced.) 13...♖b8! heading to c6. 14.c4 ♖c6 15.cxd5 (15.0-0 ♞d7 16.cxd5 exd5=) 15...♞xd5 16.0-0 ♞ac8 17.♞a6 ♞d7= with an equal position.

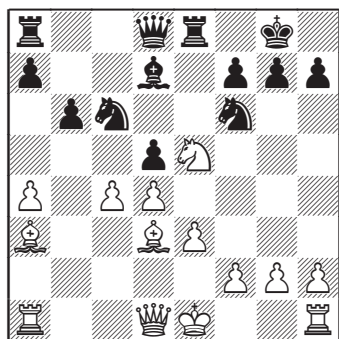
11...♗d7 12.♗e2!?

12.♗d3 ♖c6 intending ...e6-e5 next. (12...♗c8N is less effective here due to 13.♞e2± preventing ...♗a6.) 13.c4

a) 13.♗d6 ♖e4 14.♗xe4 dxe4 15.♖d2 e5 16.d5 (16.0-0N 16...♗c8!?± with the idea of playing ...♗a6 next.) 16...♗f5 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♖c4 ♖e7∞ and Black was fine in this messy position: Zhao,J (2580)-Hou,Y (2602) Xinghua Jiangsu 2011.

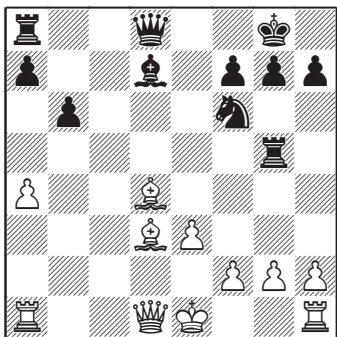
b) 13.0-0N 13...e5 14.dxe5 ♖xe5 15.♖xe5 ♞xe5 16.a5 bxa5 17.♗c5 ♞e6 18.f3 a6∞ followed by ...♗b5.

13...e5! 14.♖xe5!N



This is the critical move: (14.cxd5 ♖xd4! An amusing move, allowing Black to not stand worse: 15.exd4 (15.♖g5?! ♗g4±) 15...e4 16.♖e5 (16.0-0 ♗g4±) 16...exd3 17.d6 was played in the game Macieja,B (2613) -Rozentalis,E (2605) Ermioni Argolidas 2006, and here Black could have continued with 17...♖g4!?N 18.0-0 ♖xe5 19.dxe5 ♞xe5 20.♞xd3 ♞c8= with an equal position.) 14...♖xe5 15.dxe5 ♞xe5 16.♗b2 (16.0-0 dxc4 17.♗xc4 ♞e8!? attacking the a4-pawn. 18.♗b2 ♗g5∞ planning ...♞e4.) 16...♗g5

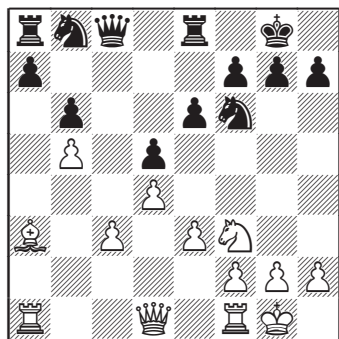
17.cxd5 (17.h4 ♖xg2 18.♗f3 ♖g4 19.♙xf6 ♗xf6 20.♗xf6 gxf6 21.♙e2 ♖e4 22.♙f3 ♖e5= with equality.) 17...♖xd5 18.♙d4 (18.0-0 ♙g4! leads to a draw. 19.♙xf6 ♙xd1 20.♙xd8 ♖xd3 21.♙xb6 ♙e2 22.♖fe1 axb6 23.♖xe2 b5=) 18...♖g5



This position is critical. My analysis has shown that Black is fine everywhere. Let's see how the game might continue: 19.h4 (19.f4 ♖a5 20.0-0 ♖c8=; 19.♗e2 ♖xg2 20.♗f3 ♖g5 21.h4 ♖g4 22.♙xf6 gxf6 23.♙e2 ♖c8 24.♖ag1 h5 25.♙f5 ♙xf5 26.♗xf5 ♖cc4 27.♗xh5 ♗c8= Black is fine after this long but straightforward line.) 19...♖xg2 20.♗f3 ♖g4 21.♙xf6 gxf6 22.♙e2 ♖c8 23.♖ag1 h5 24.♙f5 ♙xf5 25.♗xf5 ♖cc4 26.♗xh5 ♗c8 27.♖xg4+ ♖xg4 28.♖c1 ♗e6 29.♖c6 ♖xh4 30.♖xe6 ♖xh5 31.♖xf6= with an equal endgame.

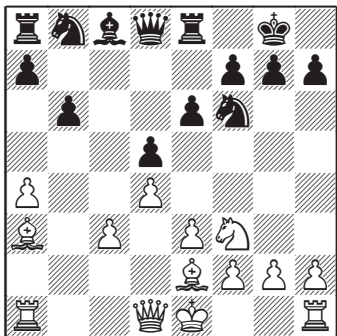
12.0-0!? This interesting continuation has been played only once — very recently — in the online game Villegas,P (2363)-Svane,R (2560) chess.com INT 2017, and here I recommend 12...♙xb5N (12...♘c6N 13.♖c1 ♘a5 14.♙d3 In my opinion this position is playable, but probably slightly better for White.

14...♘c4 (14...♗c7 15.♘e5±) 15.♙xc4 dxc4 16.♘e5 ♗c7 17.♗c2 ♘d5 18.g3± followed by e3-e4.) 13.axb5 ♗c8!



Attacking the c3-pawn and going to b7 next. (13...♘e4 14.♗d3± intending ♖fc1, then c3-c4.) 14.♗d3 (14.♘e5 ♘bd7 15.♘c6 ♗b7 16.♗e2 a6=; 14.♗a4 ♘bd7 15.♖fc1 a6=) 14...♗b7 Preparing ...a7-a6 next. 15.♖fc1 (15.♘d2 a6 16.bxa6 ♖xa6 17.c4 ♘c6 18.cxd5 exd5= with a balanced position. 15.c4 dxc4 16.♗xc4 ♖c8 17.♗a4 ♘bd7= with equality.) 15...a6 16.c4 axb5 17.cxb5 ♘bd7 18.♖c6 ♖a4 19.♖ac1 ♗a8 20.♙b2 ♖a2= and Black has enough counterplay along the a-file.

12...♙c8!?



The move played in practice. The idea is to continue with ...♙a6 as usual.

12...♘c6N is another interesting idea, intending ...♘e4, or ...e6-e5, like after 12.♙d3. It's playable, but not so simple. 13.0-0

a) 13.c4 ♙c8! followed by ...♙a6. 14.♖c1 ♙a6 15.0-0 ♖c8=;

b) 13.♖c1 ♘e4 14.c4 ♘a5 15.♘e5 (15.0-0 f6 16.♙d3 ♖c8 17.♙xe4 dxe4 18.♘d2 e5 19.d5 f5 20.♖c3 ♘b7∞ followed by ...♘c5.) 15...♙xc4 16.♘xc4 dxc4 17.0-0 ♖g5∞ with a complicated position.

13...e5 The logical move. 14.dxe5 (14.♖c1 e4 15.♘d2 ♘a5 16.c4 ♙c6 This position looks fine to me. 17.cxd5 ♘xd5 18.♘c4 ♘xc4 19.♖xc4 (19.♙xc4 ♖d7=) 19...♙b7 20.♖c2 ♖e6∞ with a balanced position.) 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 16.♙b2 (16.c4 dxc4 17.♙xc4 ♖e8! we have this position in the 11.♙e2 line. 18.♙b2 ♖g5 19.h4 ♖g4 20.♙e2 ♖xh4 21.♖d6 ♖xa4 22.♙xf6 gxf6 23.♖xa4 ♙xa4 24.♖xf6 ♙c2= with equality.) 16...♖g5 17.f3 ♖c7 18.♖d4 ♖e8 19.c4! (19.f4 ♖g6 20.♙d3 ♘e4∞) 19...dxc4 20.♖fc1 ♙e6

21.♙xc4 ♖h5 It's always good to weaken our opponent's pawn structure a bit. 22.g3 ♙xc4 23.♖xc4 ♖c5 24.♖ac1 (24.♖xc5 bxc5∞ with an unclear position.) 24...♖xc4 25.♖xc4 ♖e7 26.e4 h6 27.♙f2 ♖d8∞ with a balanced position.

13.0-0

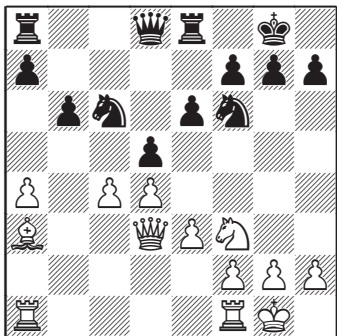
13.♙b5 ♙d7= is just a repetition.

13...♙a6 14.♙xa6N

14.c4N doesn't offer White anything: 14...♘c6 15.cxd5 (15.♖c1 ♖c8 16.♘d2 h6 17.h3 e5=) 15...♙xe2 16.♖xe2 exd5= with equality.

14.♙b5!? The move played by Tomashevsky. 14...♙xb5 15.axb5 ♖c8!N I believe this is the best continuation. Black wants to play ...a7-a6, and the queen will be nicely placed on b7. We have already analyzed this position after 12.0-0!? ♙xb5 13.axb5 ♖c8! (15...♖c7 16.♖a4!?N was maybe a better try for White: (16.♖d3N 16...a6 17.bxa6 ♖xa6 18.♘d2 ♖a4=; 16.♖b3 ♘e4 17.♖fc1 ♖c8= and Black was fine in the game Tomashevsky,E (2758)-Rahman,Z (2500) Baku 2015.) 16...a6 (16...♘e4 17.♖fc1 followed by c3-c4.) 17.♖fc1 ♘bd7 18.bxa6 ♘b8! Not an easy manoeuvre. 19.♘d2 ♖xa6 20.♖b3 ♘bd7 21.c4 ♖b7= with equality.)

14...♘xa6 15.♖d3 ♘b8! 16.c4 ♘c6



This leads to some typical positions.

17.cxd5 exd5 18.♖fc1 ♔d7 19.♗b5

19.♖c2 ♘a5 20.♘e5 ♔xa4 it can look a bit scary to grab this pawn, but White doesn't have any good discovery with his bishop. 21.♖c7 ♘c4 Black is ready to give back the pawn to simplify the position.

22.♘xc4 dxc4 23.♖xc4 ♔a6 24.♖d1 ♘d5 25.♖dc1 ♖e6∞ with an unclear position.

19...♖ac8 20.♘e5

The engine's suggestion, but it only leads to simplifications:

20...♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♖xc1+ 22.♖xc1 ♗xb5 23.axb5 ♖xe5 24.♙b2 ♖e4 25.♖c7 ♖c4 26.♖xa7 h5 27.♙f1 ♖b4 28.♙d4 ♘e4= with an equal endgame.

CONCLUSION

This set-up with 6...c6 is quite solid and interesting. It's strategically sound and very easy to play. I believe White's best chance is to play the rare a4 idea and ♙b5, but even then Black has two good plans: with ...♘c6 and ...e6-e5, or ...♙c8 and ...♙a6.