

THE NIMZO INDIAN BIBLE  
FOR WHITE

MILOS PAVLOVIC

VOLUME 1



# **The Nimzo-Indian Bible for White**

**Volume 1**

**A Complete Opening  
Repertoire for White**

**4.♘d2 & 4.♔c2**

**Milos Pavlovic**

**Thinkers Publishing 2023**



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# Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
○	lead in development
⊖	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
△	with the idea of
⊃	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

# Preface

This book is about the Nimzo-Indian Classical line 4.♞c2 (also known as the Capablanca Variation) and the 4.♙d2-line, for which basically I could not find an established name.

As far as I know, the 4.♙d2 line has never been covered in such a comprehensive way in any book before. In the text I suggest that this line should have the combined name of Tartakower-Duchamp line because Savielly Tartakower played it often, while to my surprise Marcel Duchamp (who was also a famous French artist) played it too in the 1930s and indeed in a very good positional fashion against strong players. Some of those games are in the book.

Now this line enjoys greater popularity than ever before. About the Classical line with 4.♞c2 there is nothing much to add, except for the fact that it has become hugely popular, but unfortunately from my point of view it involves too much engine-style chess.

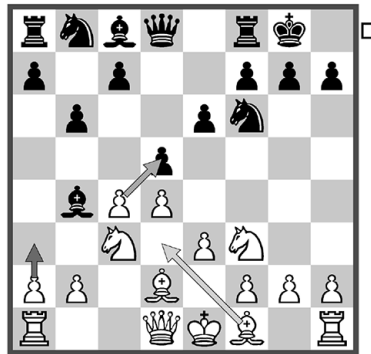
Milos Pavlovic, December 2022

**Part I**  
**4.  d2 b6**

# Chapter 1

## Other Sidelines on Move 7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.♖d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 d5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 1 – Other Sidelines on Move 7

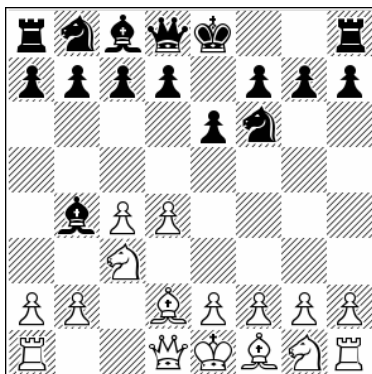
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.♖d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 d5

a) 7.♖d3 & 7.a3

b) 7.cxd5

## a) 7.♘d3 & 7.a3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♘d2

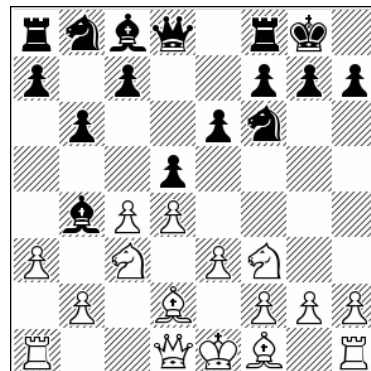


Position after: 4.♘d2

This line has been completely neglected over the last 100 years or so, which is amazing. White is simply ready to take back with a bishop on c3 and that is a clear positional idea. Only in recent years, when players started to seriously investigate all kinds of positions, mostly in less explored variations, in order to avoid forced engine lines, did this line rise to the surface. I could not even find a name for this line, so my suggestion is to call it the Tartakower-Duchamp line. Why? While searching and analyzing many games I discovered that the renowned artist and passionate chess player Marcel Duchamp actually played this line. His games with Znosko-Borovsky from Nice 1930 and 1931 do have a place in modern theory and strategy, and that is quite an accomplishment, As for Tartakower, he was playing it on a regular basis, at least more than other famous players. I want to emphasize that this is probably the first time this line has appeared in a chess book covered in detail, and it is also one of two main systems presented in this book. That is something that I am proud of.

It should be noted here that in practice the ♘d2 lines most often arise after 4.e3, when White moves the bishop to d2 within the next few moves.

4...b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 d5 7.a3



Position after: 7.a3

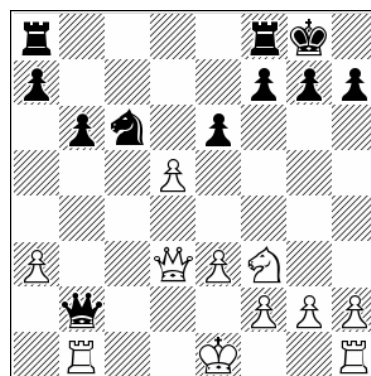
We will deal here with early deviations for White, meaning ideas different from 7.♖c1 or 7.cxd5 followed by ♘d3.

7.♘d3

**A)** 7...♘a6 8.♙e2 c5

**A1)** 9.dxc5 dxc4 10.♘xc4 ♘xc4 11.♙xc4 ♘xc5 12.b4 ♘e7 13.♖c1 ♗bd7 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♙b3 a6 Black is doing OK here, ½-½ (31) Mikhalchishin, A (2467) – Van Haastert, E (2439) Budva 2019.

**A2)** 9.a3 ♘xc3 10.♘xc3 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗c6 12.♘xf6 ♙xf6 13.cxd5 ♘xd3 14.♙xd3 ♙xb2 15.♖b1

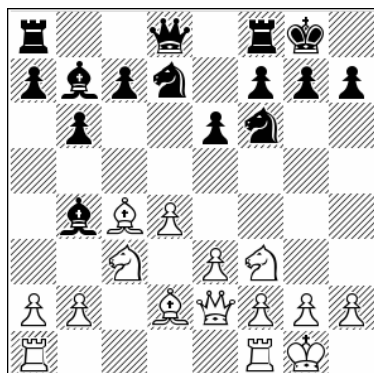


Position after: 15.♖b1

15...♗e5! Black has equalized, ½-½ (20) Radovanovic, N (2398) – Beliavsky, A (2547) Mali Losinj 2017.

**A3)** 9.0-0!? cxd4 10.♘xd4 e5 11.♘db5 ♕xc3 12.♕xc3 ♕xb5 13.cxb5 ♖bd7 14.f4 An unusual position, but it seems that the white bishops are doing a good job.

**B)** 7...dxc4 Gaining a tempo is always a good thing. 8.♕xc4 ♕b7 9.0-0 ♖bd7 10.♞e2



Position after: 10.♞e2

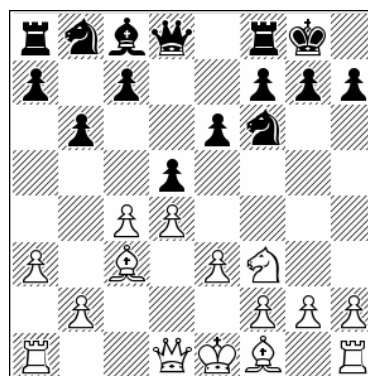
**B1)** 10...a6 11.♞fd1 b5 12.♕d3 c5 13.♞ac1 [13.a4 bxa4 14.♘xa4 ♕xf3 15.♞xf3 ♕xd2 16.♞xd2 cxd4 17.exd4 a5 it's an equal position] 13...cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♞e7 15.♕b1 ♞ac8 16.a3 ♕d6 Black is fine, 0-1 (36) Jakovenko, D (2735) – Giri, A (2783) St Petersburg 2018.

**B2)** 10...c5 This alternative is also sensible. 11.♞fd1 cxd4 12.♘xd4 a6 13.♘e4 ♕xd2 14.♘xf6+ ♞xf6 15.♞xd2 ♖c5 Here too Black is experiencing no problems whatsoever, 0-1 (35) Mikhalchishin, A (2455) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2689) Struga 2021.

### 7...♕d6

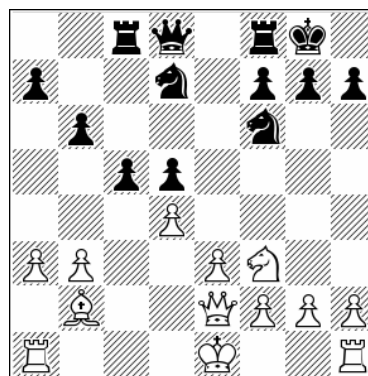
Black also has the options to take on c3 or go all the way back to e7.

**A)** 7...♕xc3 8.♕xc3



Position after: 8.♕xc4

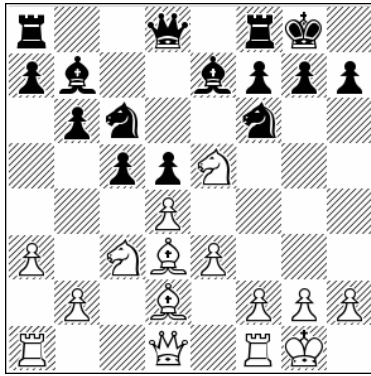
8...♕a6 [8...♘e4 9.♞c1 ♕a6 10.♞c2 ♖d7 11.♕d3 f5 12.cxd5 ♕xd3 13.♞xd3 exd5 14.♞b5 c5 15.0-0 ♞c8 16.dxc5 ♖dxc5 17.♕e5 White has an edge, ½-½ (54) Ghaem Maghami, E (2552) – Asgarizadeh, A (2449) Tehran 2019] 9.b3 That's the idea: White keeps his structure intact and retains both bishops. 9...♖bd7 10.♕b2 c5 11.♕e2 ♞c8 12.cxd5 ♕xe2 13.♞xe2 exd5



Position after: 13...exd5

14.♞c1! [14.0-0 c4 15.a4 a6 16.bxc4 dxc4 17.♕a3 ♞e8 18.♞fb1 ♘e4 Black has gained the advantage, 1-0 (62) Indjic, A (2607) – Yilmaz, M (2630) Tornado INT 2021] 14...♞e7 15.0-0 ♞e6 With the idea of pushing ...c4 at some moment. 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8 17.♞b5 White can perhaps extract a small edge from this position.

**B)** 7...♕e7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 c5 10.♕d3 ♕b7 11.0-0 ♖c6



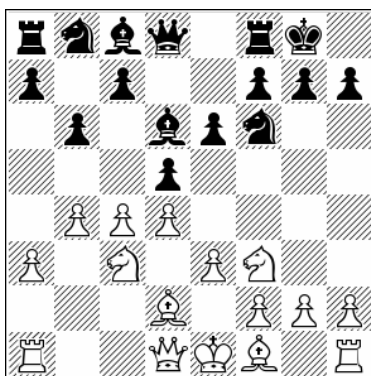
Position after: 11...dxc6

**B1)** 12.♖f3!? A tricky idea. 12...♗d6! It is important to challenge the knight on e5, especially at a moment when White cannot support it by playing f4. [12...♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♗d7 14.♖h3 g6 15.f4 already this is dangerous for Black, ½-½ (30) Votava, J (2529) – Brkic, A (2565) Austria 2018] 13.♗g4 ♗xg4 14.♖xg4 ♗e7 This is OK for Black.

**B2)** 12.♗e1 cxd4 13.♗xc6 ♗xc6 14.exd4 ♗e4 15.♖c1 ♗b7 16.f3 ♗xc3 17.♗xc3 ♗f6 Black is fine here, 1-0 (41) Ivanchuk, V (2678) – Dzagnidze, N (2523) chess.com INT 2021.

8.♖c1

8.b4

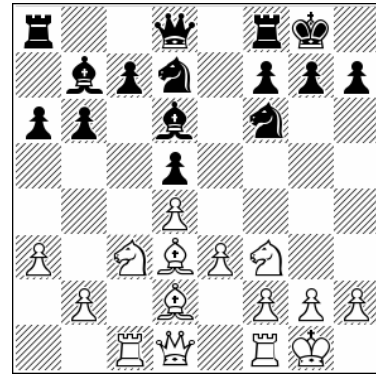


Position after: 8.b4

**A)** 8...dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♗bd7 11.♖c1 c5 12.♗b5 ♗e7 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.bxc5 ♗xc5 15.♗b4 ♖b6 Black is fine. [15...a6 16.♖xd8 ♖fxd8 17.♗c7 suddenly White has gotten the upper hand in this endgame, 1-0 (57) Volkov, S (2557) – Girya, O (2432) Cheboksary 2021]

**B)** 8...c6!? 9.c5 ♗c7 The point, Black has secured a position to retreat his bishop to. 10.♗e2 ♗bd7 11.0-0 e5 12.h3 ♖e8 13.♖c2 e4 14.♗h2 ♗f8 A good plan for Black, 0-1 (36) Besciu, V (2140) – Parligras, M (2601) Calimanesti-Caciulata 2017.

8...a6 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.0-0 ♗bd7



Position after: 11...dxd7

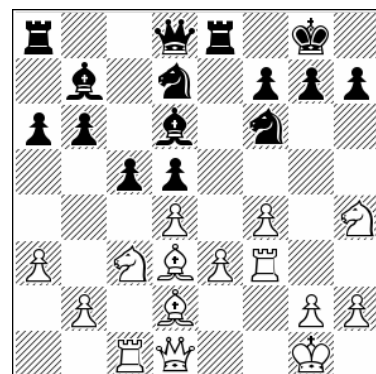
This is not a favorable version of the Nimzo; the bishop on d2 is misplaced now and the e5-square is out of reach for the knight on f3. White must do something, otherwise it's one-way traffic.

12.♗h4!?

White needed to generate some activity.

12.♗e2?! ♖e7 13.♗g3 g6 14.♗b4 c5 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♗c3 ♖fd8 17.♖e1 a5 18.♖a4 c4 19.♗b1 ♗c5 20.♖d1 ♗b3 21.♖c2 ♗e4 Black has better play, 0-1 (36) Georgiev, K (2577) – Gukesh, D (2640) Riga 2021.

12...♖e8 13.f4 c5 14.♖f3



Position after: 14.♖f3

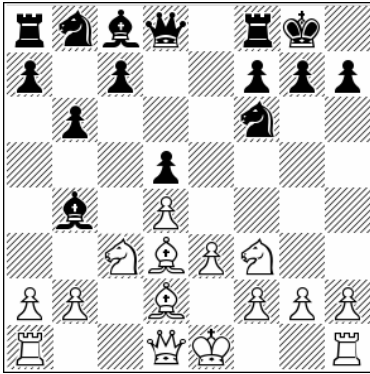
14...g6 15.♖h3

With the black knight on d7 instead of c6, White need not worry about pressure on his d4-pawn.

So now the plan is for the h4-knight to go back to f3 and then to e5, with unclear play.

## b) 7.cxd5

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♗f3 d5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♙d3



Position after: 8.♙d3

White wants to transpose to a main Nimzo line, as we will see later, but Black has alternatives here apart from the standard placement of the bishop on b7.

8...♙a6

The main alternative to the fianchetto. The idea is clear: by exchanging this bishop Black practically eliminates White's usual attacking plan and the game now is more positional; it's more about playing in the center. We will see that often we get a slower type of game with lots of maneuvering.

A) 8...c5 9.0-0

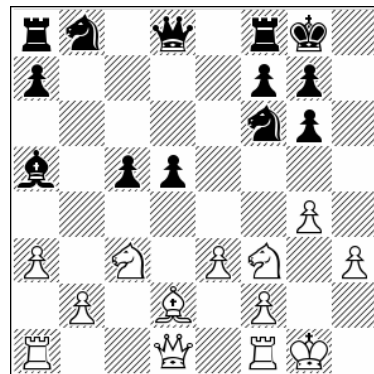


Position after: 9.0-0

A1) 9...♙b7 This transposes to another line, which is discussed under the ...♙b7 system.

A2) 9...♙xc3 10.♙xc3 c4 11.♙c2 b5 12.a4! White is better.

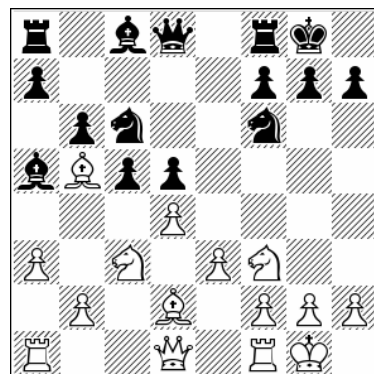
A3) 9...♙g4 10.h3 ♙h5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.a3 ♙a5 13.g4 ♙g6 14.♙xg6 hxg6



Position after: 14...hxg6

15.♗xd5! White has an edge.

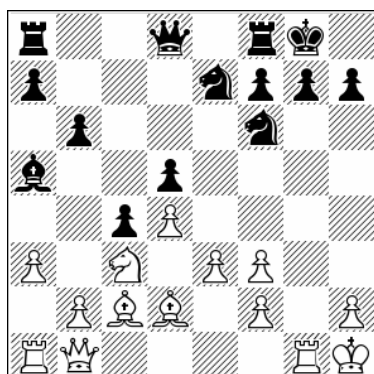
A4) 9...♗c6 10.a3 ♙a5 11.♙b5!?



Position after: 11.♙b5!?

White exploits the moment when the black bishop is on a5. 11...♙b7 12.♙xc6 ♙xc6 13.♗e5 ♙e8 14.f3 ♖c8 15.♙e1! It seems White has potential for an advantage.

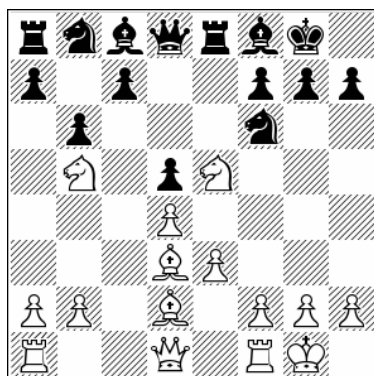
A5) 9...c4 10.♙c2 ♗g4 11.♚b1 ♙xf3 12.gxf3 ♘c6  
13.♖h1 ♘e7 14.a3 ♙a5 15.♞g1!



Position after: 15.♞g1!

15...♖h8 16.♚f1 ♚d7 17.e4 This shows the correct way to go.

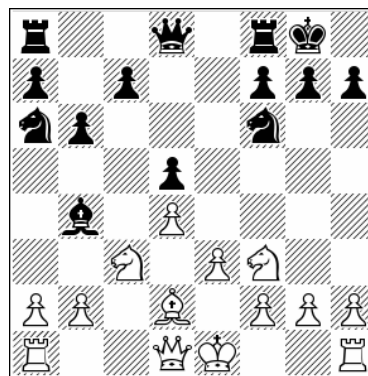
B) 8...♞e8 9.0-0 Black is trying to profit from not having the bishop on b7 at an early stage.  
9...♙d6 [9...♙f8 10.♘e5 c5 11.f4 ♙b7 12.♙e1 cxd4 13.exd4 ♘c6 14.♙f2 ♞c8 15.♚f3 g6 16.♞ad1 ♙g7 17.♙b1 a6 18.a3 ♘a5 19.f5 White has pressure on the kingside, ½-½ (33) Akshat, K (2403) – Pacher, M (2446) Budapest 2018]  
10.♘b5 ♙f8 11.♘e5



Position after: 11.♘e5

11...♙a6!? [11...c5 12.f4 a6 13.♘c3 b5 14.♚f3 c4 15.♙c2 ♙b7 16.a3 ♘bd7 17.g4 g6 18.♙e1! White has better chances, 1-0 (38) Bluebaum, M (2670) – Huschenbeth, N (2604) Magdeburg 2021]  
12.♞c1 c5 13.a4 ♙b7 14.f4 a6 15.♘c3 ♘c6 16.♘e2 ♞c8 17.♙e1 cxd4 18.exd4 ♘b4 19.♙b1 ♞xc1 20.♚xc1 ♚c8 21.♘c3 ♘e4 22.♚d1 With typical balanced play, 1-0 (45) Nakamura, H (2736) – Vidit, S (2726) chess.com INT 2020.

9.♙xa6 ♘xa6

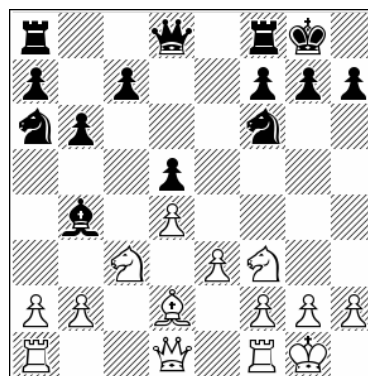


Position after: 9...♘xa6

10.♚a4

This is White's main idea but is not necessarily forced in any way. Let's see.

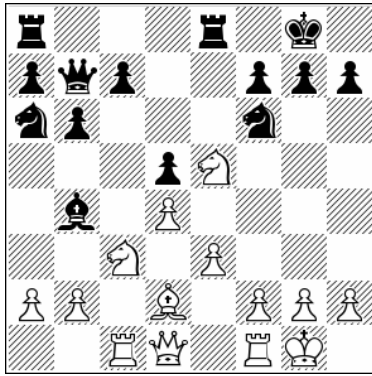
10.0-0



Position after: 10.0-0

A) 10...c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.a3 ♙xc3 [12...♙a5 13.♘xd5! ♙xd2 14.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 15.♚xd2 ♞ab8 16.♞ab1 White is simply better, 1-0 (31) Gukesh, D (2563) – Tomashevsky, E (2706) chess.com INT 2020]  
13.♙xc3 ♘e4 14.♙e5 f6 15.♙f4 ♚d7 16.♞c1 ♞ac8 17.h3 ♞fd8 18.b3 ♚b7 19.♚c2 ♘b8 20.♞fd1 It's a balanced game, ½-½ (94) Suleymenov, A (2440) – Iljin, T (2314) Chelyabinsk 2021.

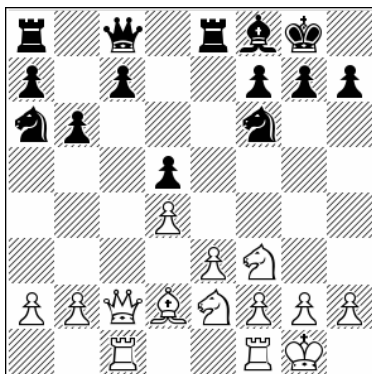
B) 10...♚c8 11.♞c1 ♚b7 12.♘e5 ♞fe8



Position after: 12...Rfe8

13.♙e1!? This is an interesting idea. White is aiming to shift his dark-squared bishop to the typical h4-square, but has still not decided whether to push f4, because f3 could be a good option [at this point it is premature to push the f-pawn two squares: 13.f4 c5 14.♘b5 ♙xd2 15.♙xd2 ♘e4 16.♙d1 f6 17.♘f3 ♖ad8 Black is better here, ½-½ (60) Bouget, A (2247) – Eljanov, P (2672) chess.com INT 2021]. 13...♙d6 [13...c5 14.♘b5! ♖ad8 15.♙a4 ♙xe1 16.♖fxe1 White is somehow more active, the black knight on a6 is not standing well at the edge of a board now] 14.f4! c5 15.♙h4 ♙e7 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♙f3 ♖ad8 18.♘e2 ♘b4 19.a3 ♘c6 20.♘g4 ♙e7 21.f5 ♙f8 22.♘f4 White has achieved a good game, ½-½ (115) Bluebaum, M (2647) – Najer, E (2648) chess.com INT 2020.

C) 10...Rfe8 11.Rc1 ♙f8 12.♘e2 ♖c8 13.♙c2



Position after: 13.♙c2

13...♙b7 [Black doesn't need to hurry with his c-pawn push. 13...c5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♙c3 ♘e4 16.♖fd1 ♙b7 17.♘f4 ♖ad8 18.♙a4 White has easier play and pressure on the central pawns

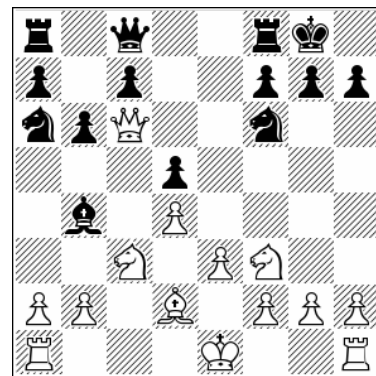
con 5 and d5, ½-½ (51) Anton Guijarro, D (2675) – Carlsen, M (2862) chess24.com INT 2020]. 14.♙c6 ♙xc6 15.♖xc6 ♙d6 16.♖d1 ♘b8 17.♖c2 a5 18.♙e1 c6 19.h3 A complex endgame lies ahead of us.

10...♙c8

Black reveals the main point of his strategy. His queen will be well placed on b7 and after further development he will be ready to go ...c5.

11.0-0

11.♙c6!?



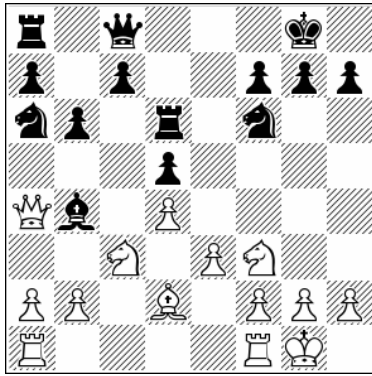
Position after: 11.♙c6!?

This is just a minor disturbance, rather than some deep tactical idea.

A) 11...Rfe8 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♙xd5 ♙xd2+ 14.♘xd2 c5 15.0-0 cxd4 16.exd4 White is better, 1-0 (57) Batsiashvili, N (2480) – Socko, M (2421) lichess.org INT 2021.

B) 11...♙xc3 12.♙xc3 ♖e8 13.0-0 ♖e6 14.♙a4 ♘e4 15.♖ac1 ♙b7 16.♖fd1 ♖c8 17.♙b3 c6 18.a4 ♘b8 19.a5 ♘d7 20.♙e1 White preserves some edge. but it's going to be a long and interesting game in any case, 1-0 (44) Batsiashvili, N (2467) – Janik, I (2489) Figueira da Foz 2020.

C) 11...Rd8 12.0-0 ♖d6 13.♙a4

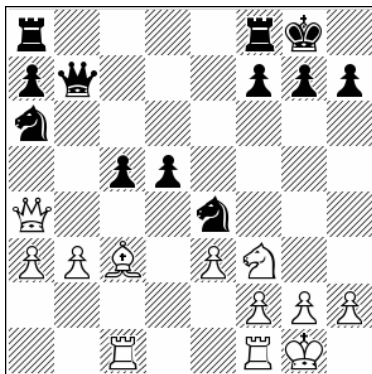


Position after: 13. ♖a4

I guess White's point was to drive the rook to the unusual d6-square, and now the game will proceed in the usual manner. 13... ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3 ♗e4 15. ♖fc1 c5 16. ♖e1 ♖b7 17. ♗e5 f6 18. ♗d3 c4 19. ♗f4 b5 20. ♖c2 ♖e8 21. b3 White has preferable chances here too, theoretically speaking, but it is complex, 0-1 (75) Batsiashvili, N (2466) – Grigoryan, K (2651) Barcelona 2020.

### 11... ♖b7

11...c5 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.a3 ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3 ♗e4 15. ♖ac1 ♖b7 16.b3

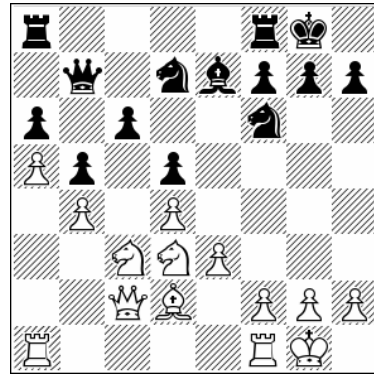


Position after: 16. b3

16... ♖fe8 17. ♖fd1 ♖e6 18. ♖a5 ♖c8 19. b4 h6 20. bxc5 ♗axc5 21. ♖c2 ♖ee8 22. ♖a2 ♖b3 23. ♖xb3 ♗xb3 24. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 25. ♖e1 ♗c3 26. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 27. g4 d4 28. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 ½-½ (28) Plazuelo Pascual, J (2448) – Aloma Vidal, R (2443) Barcelona 2020.

### 12. a3 ♖xc3

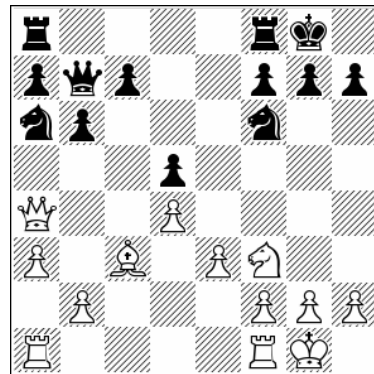
12... ♖e7 13. b4 c6 14. ♗e5 b5 15. ♖c2 ♗b8 16. ♗d3 ♗bd7 17. a4 a6 18. a5!



Position after: 18. a5!

Preventing the knight from reaching the b6-square. 18... ♖ae8 19. ♖ac1 ♖d6 20. ♗e2 ♖c8 21. f3 ♖c7 22. h3 ♖d8 23. ♖e1 White has more dynamic potential, 1-0 (49) Santos Latasa, J (2575) – Margarido, J (2129) Penafiel 2020.

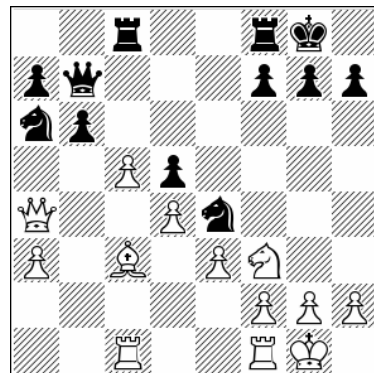
### 13. ♖xc3



Position after: 13. ♖xc3

### 13... ♖ac8

13... ♗e4 14. ♖ac1 ♖ac8 15. b4 c5 16. bxc5!



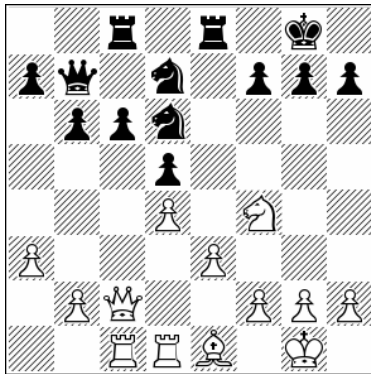
Position after: 16. bxc5!

16...bxc5 17.♘d2! ♘xc3 18.♖xc3 c4 19.♗b1 ♔c6  
 20.♚xc6 ♖xc6 21.e4 dxe4 22.♗bc1 f5 23.♖xc4  
 ♗xc4 24.♖xc4 White has slightly better chances  
 in the endgame.

14.♖ac1 ♖fe8 15.♗fd1 ♘b8 16.♘e5 ♘e4  
 17.♘d3 c6 18.♙e1 ♘d6 19.♚c2 ♘d7 20.♘f4

20...♘f6 21.♚d3 h6 22.♖c2 a5 23.a4

Again we have a long and interesting positional  
 game, static in character, but White's plan is f3  
 and the bishop will get some air on the kingside,  
 ½-½ (85) Santiago, Y (2479) – Mareco, S (2634)  
 Buenos Aires 2019.

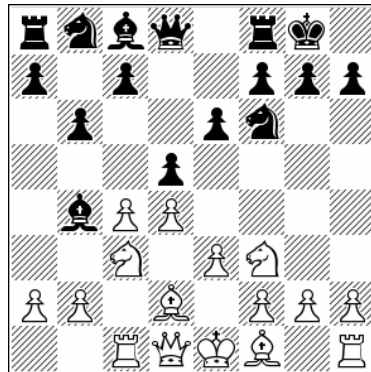


Position after: 20.♘f4

# Chapter 2

## 7.♖c1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♘f3 d5 7.♖c1



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 2 – 7.♖c1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♘f3 d5 7.♖c1

a) 7...♗a6

b) 7...♗b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘b5

c) 7...♗b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 a6

d) 7...♗b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♗e7

e) 7...♗b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 c5

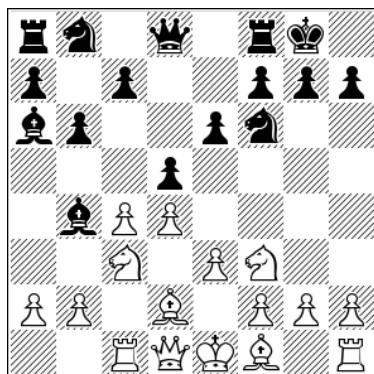
f) 7...♗b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♖e8

## a) 7...♘a6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♘f3 d5 7.♞c1

White is waiting here with this useful move, delaying the typical ♙d3. Black can develop his light-squared bishop on a6 -- and that is exactly what White is hoping for! If White can exchange bishops on a6 without first playing ♙d3, he gains a tempo. We will investigate this plan and also another important plan, 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♙d3, which allows the bishop to be exchanged after ...♙a6.

7...♙a6



Position after: 7...♙a6

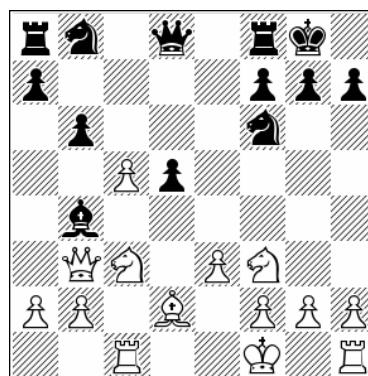
This is a more positional way of handling this line. Black want to minimize White's chances for kingside attack by simply exchanging the light-squared bishops.

Releasing the tension is possible but it makes the situation much more difficult, especially because White takes on c4 in one move instead of two. 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♘b7 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.♞e2 c5 11.a3 ♙xc3 12.♙xc3 ♘e4 13.♞fd1 ♘xc3 14.♞xc3 ♞e7 15.♙a6 ♙xa6 16.♞xa6 cxd4 17.♘xd4 ♘c5 18.♞c4 ♞ad8 19.♞cc1 ♞h4 20.♞c2 ♞e4 21.♞xe4 ♘xe4 22.♘c6 White has had easier play from the early stage of the game and that advantage continues, 1-0 (54) Sandipan, C (2603) – Efimenko, Z (2649) Muelheim 2014.

8.♞a4

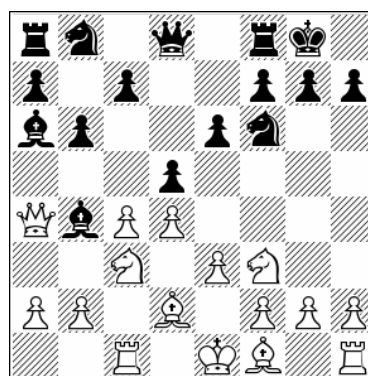
This is the main plan but we will see other ideas as well:

Probably the only decent alternative is a queen move. 8.♞b3!? c5 9.cxd5! ♙xf1 10.♙xf1 exd5 11.dxc5



Position after: 11.dxc5

11...♙xc5 [11...bxc5 12.g3 ♘c6 13.♙g2 ♞d7 14.♞hd1 ♞fd8 15.♞a4 the position is unclear] 12.♞a4 ♘bd7 13.g3 ♞e8 14.♙g2 ♙f8 15.♞hd1 This is a playable position for both sides.



Position after: 8.♞a4

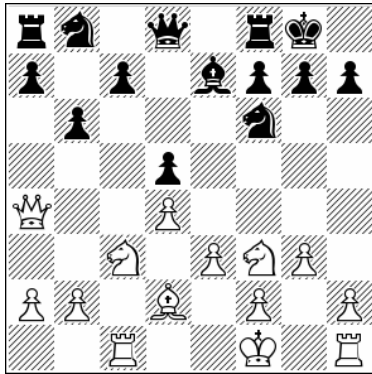
8...c5

This push is the most ambitious try, but there are solid alternatives.

A) 8...♞e7 9.a3 ♙xc3 10.♙xc3 ♘e4 11.♙e2 ♘xc3 12.♞xc3 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♙b7 14.♙e2 ♞c8 15.♞c2

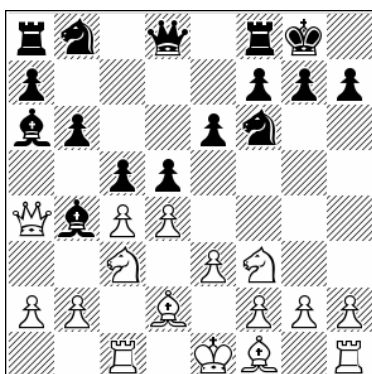
c5 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♗xc5 ♕xc5 18.♜xc5 bxc5 19.♙b5 ♘a6 20.♖e2 ♗c7 21.♙d3 ♘d5 22.♞c1 ♞c8 23.♘d2 White can claim a small edge, 1-0 (61) Koneru, H (2580) – Kosteniuk, A (2504) Saint Louis 2020.

**B)** 8...♙e7 9.cxd5 ♙xf1 10.♖xf1 exd5 11.g3



Position after: 11.g3

11...c5 [unclear consequences follow 11...♜c8!? 12.♖g2 ♜b7 13.♞hd1 ♞c8 14.♗e2 a5] 12.♖g2 ♗bd7 [12...♜d7 13.♜xd7 ♗bxd7 14.♗e5 cxd4 15.♗c6 ♞fe8 16.♗xd4 ♗c5 17.♗cb5 ♞ec8 18.♙b4 White can claim some edge in this endgame, ½-½ (36) Artemiev, V (2704) – Karjakin, S (2757) Krasnaya Polyana 2021] 13.♞hd1 a6 14.dxc5 ♗xc5 15.♜d4 ♜d6 16.♗e2 ♞fe8 17.♙c3 ♞ad8 18.♗f4 White has carried out her best plan and we can say that there is some advantage, 1-0 (50) Krush, I (2422) – Abrahamyan, T (2366) Saint Louis 2018.



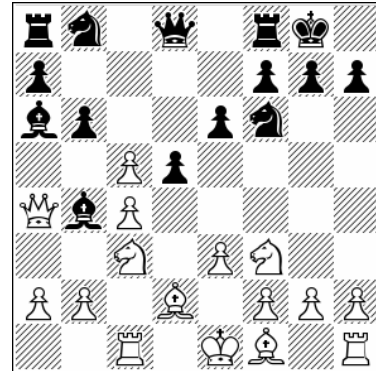
Position after: 8...c5

### 9.cxd5

Alternatives are possible and some of them are interesting.

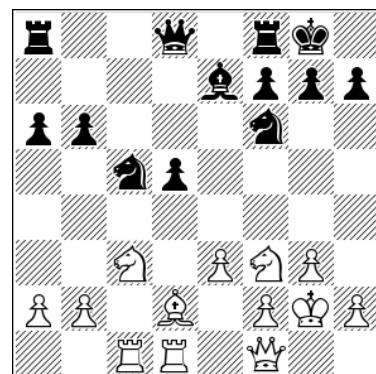
**A)** 9.a3 ♙xc3 10.♙xc3 ♗e4 11.♙e2 dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙xc4 13.♜xc4 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♞c8 Black has achieved equality, ½-½ (16) Garabetyan, A (2141) – Karavade, E (2399) Veliko Gradiste 2018.

**B)** Interesting, though rarely played, is 9.dxc5!?



Position after: 9.dxc5!?

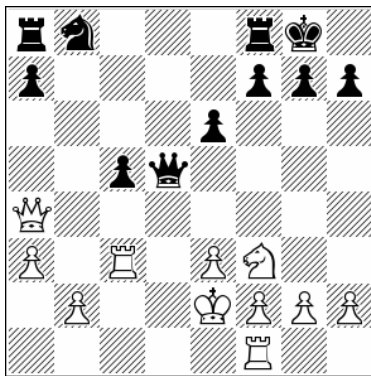
**B1)** 9...♙xc5 10.cxd5! ♙xf1 11.♖xf1 exd5 [11...♗xd5 12.♖e2! We will see that the check on d3 is not dangerous at all. 12...♗b4 13.a3 ♜d3+ 14.♖e1 ♗4c6 15.♜c2 ♜xc2 16.♞xc2 ♗d7 17.♗e4 a5 18.♖e2 a4 19.♞d1 ♞fd8 20.♙c3 White has the advantage in this endgame, 1-0 (59) iCE 3.0 – Vajolet2 2.3 Internet 2017] 12.g3 ♗bd7 13.♖g2 ♙e7 14.♞hd1 ♗c5 15.♜b5 a6 16.♜f1!



Position after: 16.♜f1!

Just in time to secure the e2-square for a knight. 16...♜d7 17.♗e2 ♜a4 18.♗fd4 ♜xa2 19.♗c6 ♞fe8 20.♙b4 ♙f8 21.♗ed4 White is better, as the queen on a2 is seriously misplaced.

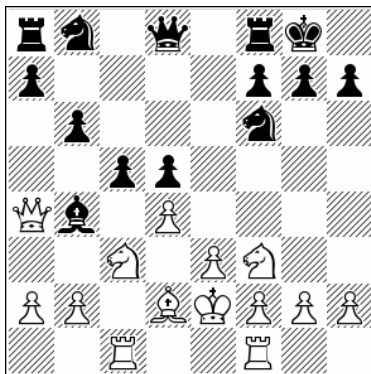
**B2)** 9...bxc5 10.a3 ♙a5 [10...♙xc3 11.♙xc3 ♗e4 12.cxd5 ♗xc3 13.♞xc3 ♙xf1 14.♞xf1 ♜xd5 15.♖e2!



Position after: 15.♔e2!

15...♞d7 16.♞d1 ♞b6 17.♞b5 ♞e4 18.♞xc5 ♞ab8 19.♞d3 ♞xd3+ 20.♞xd3 ♞a4 21.♞c2 ♞xb2 22.♞xb2 ♞xb2 23.♞d7 White is better in this endgame] 11.♙e2 ♙b6 12.cxd5 ♙xe2 13.♞xe2 exd5 14.♙c3 ♞d7 15.♞xd7 ♞bxd7 16.0-0 ♞e4 17.♞fd1 ♞df6 18.♙xf6 ♞xf6 19.b4 It's about equal, but White is risking nothing.

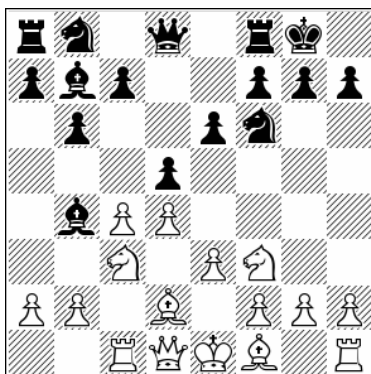
9...♙xf1 10.♞xf1 exd5 11.♔e2



Position after: 11.♔e2

## b) 7...♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♞b5

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♞f3 d5 7.♞c1 ♙b7



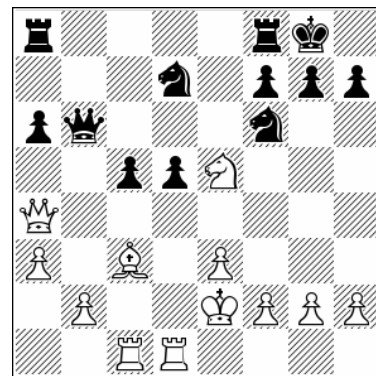
Position after: 7...♙b7

The white king stations itself in the center. Next the f1-rook is coming to d1.

11...a6

11...♞bd7 12.♞fd1 ♞e7 13.♔f1 ♞fc8 14.♞a6 ♞e6 15.♞e2 ♙xd2 16.♞xd2 ♞f5 17.h3 ♞f8 18.♞f3 White has some edge, since in response to ...c4 ideas White is ready with the b3 plan, 1-0 (44) Artemiev, V (2731) – Kovalev, V (2660) Wijk aan Zee 2020.

12.dxc5 bxc5 13.♞fd1 ♞bd7 14.a3 ♙xc3 15.♙xc3 ♞b6 16.♞e5



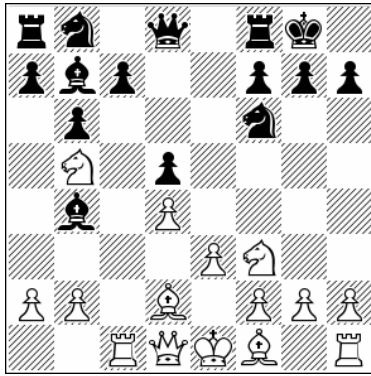
Position after: 16.♞e5

16...♞e6 17.♞xd7 ♞xd7 18.♔f1 f6 19.h3 ♞fc8 20.♞g4 ♞xg4 21.hxg4

White enjoys a preferable endgame, 1-0 (59) Wang Yue (2699) – Bluebaum, M (2642) Dortmund 2017.

This is another setup in which Black is using a standard Nimzo strategy and the position very much resembles the Tal line in Volume 2, about the Nimzo-Indian with 4.e3. We start with a slightly offbeat idea, the positional aim of which is to exchange the dark-squared bishops and try to organize pressure along the c-file.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♞b5



Position after: 9...Nb5

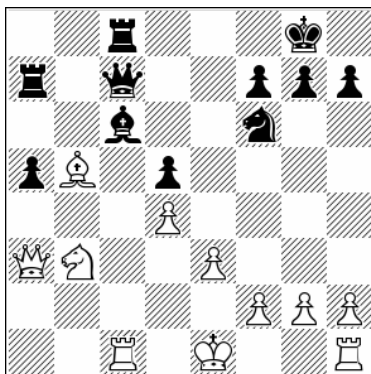
A rare line, but still it's interesting to see what's going on here. White forces the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. Of course the main idea is 9.♙d3, which we will investigate in detail in the next subchapters.

### 9...♙xd2+ 10.♘xd2

10.♚xd2 c5 11.♙e2 a6 12.♘c3 c4 13.♙e5 b5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♙f3 ♘e7 16.0-0 ♘e8 17.♙e2 f6 18.♘g4 ♘d6 Such positions in general are considered fine for Black. White can't make further progress in the center or on the kingside, while Black has the play he needs on the queenside, ½-½ (55) Timofeev, A (2595) – Bocharov, D (2519) Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

### 10...c6

10...a6 11.♘xc7!? ♖a7 12.b4 b5 13.a4 bxa4 14.♚xa4 ♘c6 15.♘b3 ♚xc7 16.b5 ♖c8 17.bxc6 ♙xc6 18.♚a3 a5 19.♙b5



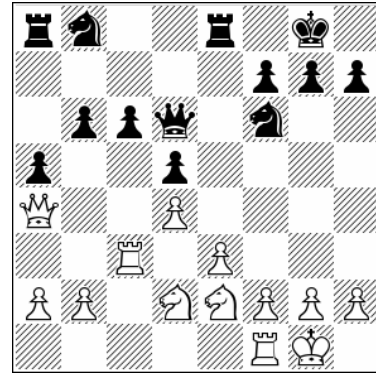
Position after: 19...♙b5

19...♚b6 20.♚a4 ♖ac7 21.♙xc6 ♖xc6 22.♖xc6 ♖xc6 23.0-0 ♖c3 24.♘c5 ♖c4 25.♚a2 g6 26.h3

We have reached an interesting and complicated position that is still in balanced mode.

### 11.♘c3 c5

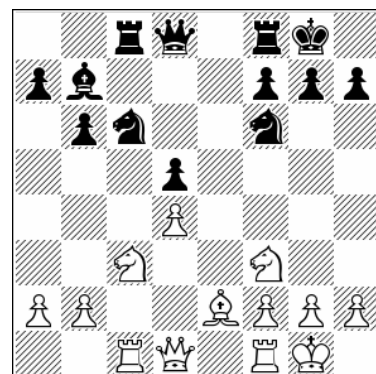
11...♖e8 12.♙e2 ♙a6 13.0-0 ♙xe2 14.♘xe2 ♚d6 15.♚a4 a5 16.♖c3



Position after: 16...♖c3

16...♖a7 17.♖fc1 ♖c7 18.♘g3 ♖ec8 19.♘f3 ♘bd7 20.♘e1 g6 21.♘d3 The game remains balanced, but Black has to be careful because his pawn on c6 is a bit of a target, 1-0 (57) Firouzja, A (2728) – Giri, A (2764) chess24.com INT 2020.

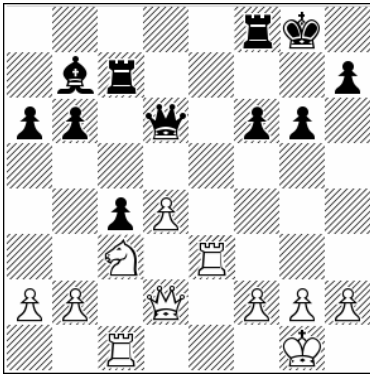
### 12.♙e2 cxd4 13.exd4 ♘c6 14.♘f3 ♖c8 15.0-0



Position after: 15.0-0

It is interesting to see that such a simplified strategy can bring White some advantage. The reason for that is the bishop on b7, not the best place for it after all.

15...♚d6 16.♖e1 g6 17.♙b5 ♘a5 18.♘e5 a6 19.♙f1 ♘e4 20.♖e3 f6 21.♘f3 ♖c7 22.♘d2 ♘xd2 23.♚xd2 ♘c4 24.♙xc4 dxc4



Position after: 24...dxc4

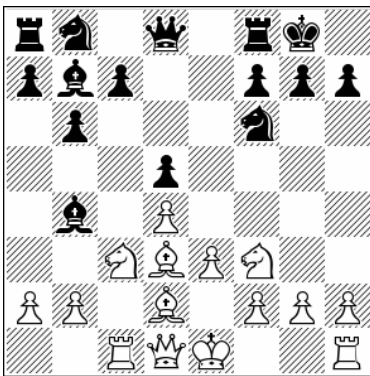
25.d5!

This has brought White some chances to create an unbalanced structure that will work for him, 1-0 (66) Artemiev, V (2716) – Le Quang Liem (2709) chess.com INT 2020.

**c) 7...♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 a6**

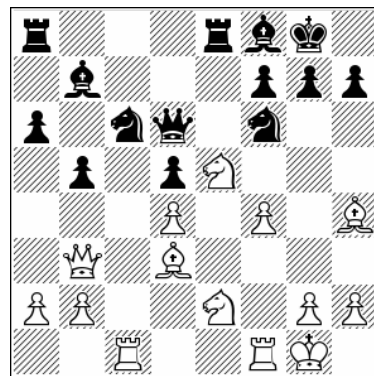
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♘f3 d5 7.♞c1 ♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3

Not the only idea here, but in the spirit of the position for sure.



Position after: 9.♙d3

A) 10...♞e8 11.♘e5 ♙f8 12.♙e1 c5 13.f4 cxd4  
14.exd4 ♘c6 15.♘e2 ♚d6 16.♞b3 b5 17.♙h4



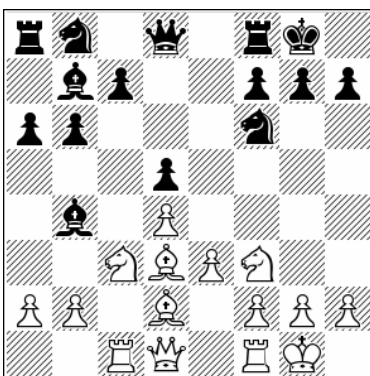
Position after: 17.♙h4

9...a6

Black plans to bring his bishop on back to d6, so first it is essential to prevent ♘b5 ideas by White.

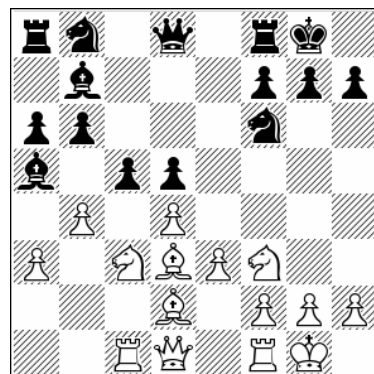
17...♘a5 18.♞c3 ♘c4 19.b3 b4 20.♞e1 ♘b6  
21.♙xf6 ♞xf6 22.g4 White has gained the upper hand, as the knight on e5 is very strong, 0-1 (73) Mesáros, F (2436) – Kantor, G (2519) Le Castella 2018.

10.0-0



Position after: 10.0-0

B) 10...c5 11.a3 ♙a5 12.b4!

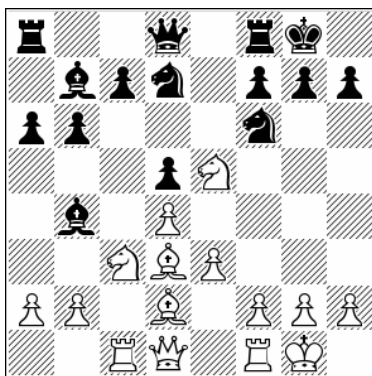


Position after: 12.b4!

10...♙d6

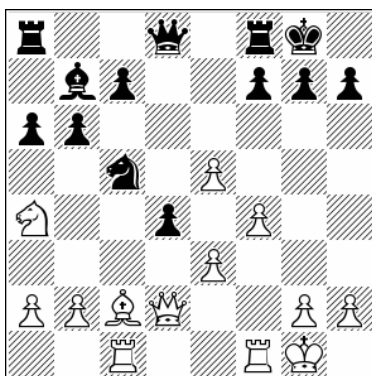
12...cxb4 13.♘e2 bxa3 14.♙xa5 bxa5 15.♚b3 ♗e7 16.♘e5 White has compensation and pressure.

**C)** Black can confront the knight on e5 at once, but the disadvantage is that then the knight on d7 doesn't put pressure on the d4-pawn. 10...♘bd7 11.♘e5



Position after: 11.♘e5

**C1)** 11...♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘d7 [12...♙xc3 13.♙xc3 ♘e4 14.b4 c5 15.♙xe4 dxe4 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.♚d6 ♙d5 18.♙a5! White is developing pressure, 1-0 (42) Sandipan, C (2573) – Laxman, R (2444) Kolkata 2018] 13.f4 ♘c5 14.♙c2 d4 15.♘a4 ♙xd2 16.♚xd2



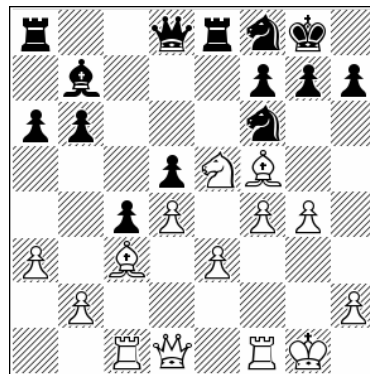
Position after: 16.♚xd2

**C1.1)** 16...d3 17.♘xc5 dxc2 18.♚xd8 ♜fxd8 19.♘xb7 ♜d2 20.h4! ♜b8 21.♙h2! ♜xb7 22.♙g3 Now White is ready to play ♜f2 and win the c2-pawn, gaining the advantage, 1-0 (38) Bluebaum, M (2620) – Stark, L (2359) Solingen 2019.

**C1.2)** 16...♘xa4 17.♙xa4 dxe3 18.♚xe3 ♚d5 19.♜c2 c5 20.♜d2 ♚e4 21.♚xe4 ♙xe4 22.♙d7 g6

23.♜d6 White is clearly better, 1-0 (48) Willmann, B – Salzmann, S corr. 2014.

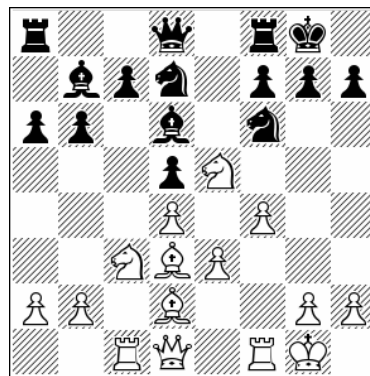
**C2)** 11...♜e8 12.f4 c5 13.a3 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 c4 15.♙f5 ♘f8 16.g4



Position after: 16.g4

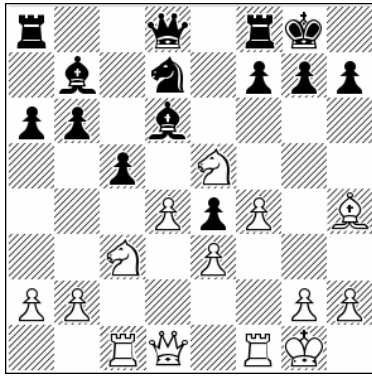
16...b5 17.g5 ♘e4 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♚h5 ♙d5 20.f5 ♚b6 21.♘g4 White has a fantastic attack, 1-0 (28) Xiu Dshun (2554) – Xu, Y (2451) Beijing 2017.

**C3)** 11...♙d6 12.f4



Position after: 12.f4

12...c5 [12...♘e4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♙c4 ♘f6 15.♚b3 ♚e7 16.a4 ♜ab8 17.♙e1 c5 18.dxc5! bxc5 19.♙h4 ♙d5 20.♚c2 ♙xc4 21.♘xc4 ♙c7 22.♜fd1 White has a plus] 13.♙e1 White can go even more aggressive here. 13...♘e4 14.♙xe4! dxe4 15.♙h4!



Position after: 15.♞h4!

An interesting tactical motif. 15...♞e8 16.♘a4! ♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♜c8 18.♞c2 b5 19.♞d2! ♙c6 20.♘c3 White is better.

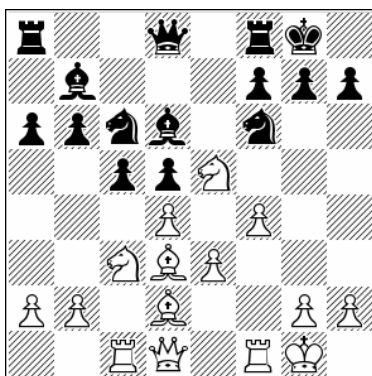
### 11.♘e5

Best and critical; other moves are not so good.

### 11...c5 12.f4

The f-pawn advance is a main aspect of this line, and certainly an important one for assessment of the plan. White is in aggressive mode and is ready to launch a direct attack now, placing a rook or queen on the f3-square.

### 12...♘c6



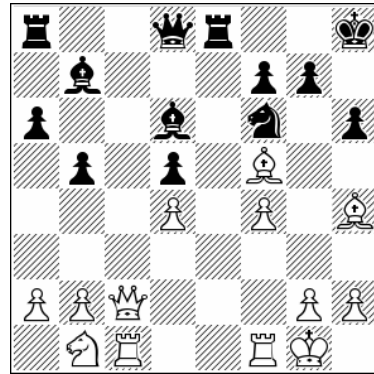
Position after: 12...♘c6

### 13.♘a4

There are other interesting moves as well.

**A)** 13.♙e1 cxd4 14.♘xc6 ♙xc6 15.exd4 ♙b7 16.♙h4 Despite the symmetrical pawns (d4, d5)

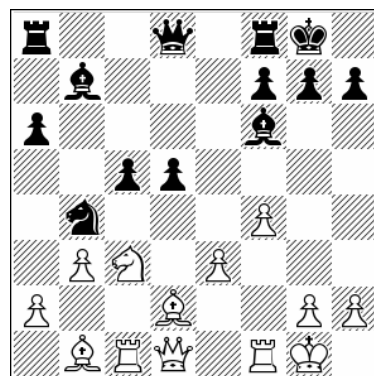
the position is far from clear. 16...♞e8 17.♞c2 h6 18.♙h7+ ♚h8 19.♙f5 b5 20.♘b1!



Position after: 20.♘b1!

A good plan, intending to bring the knight to e5. 20...a5 21.♘d2 a4 22.g3 ♞b6 23.♙xf6 gxf6 24.♘f3 ♞e3 In this particular position White has better chances, ½-½ (24) Ashwin, J (2483) – Dragun, K (2591) Chicago 2018.

**B)** 13.♘g4 ♙e7 [13...♘g4 14.♞xg4 ♘e7 15.f5 f6 16.♞f3 ♞f7 17.♞h3 ♜c8 18.♘e2 White has started to build a serious attacking formation, ½-½ (63) Asm Fish 2017-08 – 25 – Raubfisch X35f Internet 2017] 14.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.b3 This has been played a few times. White is hoping that pressure on the c5-pawn will bring him an advantage. 16...♘b4 17.♙b1



Position after: 17.♙b1

**B1)** 17...d4 18.♘a4 dxe3 19.♙xe3 ♘d5 20.♙xc5 ♞e8 21.♞f3 ♘c3 22.♞xb7 ♘e2+ 23.♚h1 ♘xc1 24.♞xc1 White has developed a winning position. 24...♞d2 25.♞f1 ♞ad8 26.♞b4 ♞e2 27.♞c4 ♞d2 28.♞xe2 ♞exe2 29.♙b4 ♞f2 30.♞c1 ♞d8 31.g3 g5 32.♘c5 gxf4 33.♘e4 ♙b2 34.♞g1 ♞f3 35.♘g5 1-

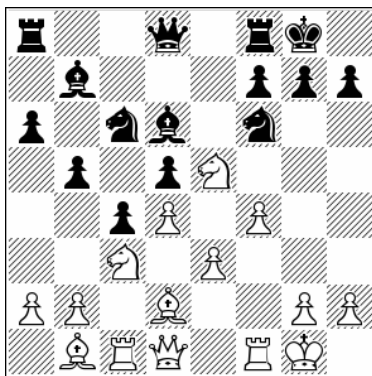
0 (35) Sandipan, C (2566) – Ma, Z (2471) Sanya City 2017.

**B2)** 17...a5 18.♖a4 c4 19.♗c5 ♕c6 20.a3 ♘a6 21.♗xa6 ♖xa6 22.♕c3 ♜e8 This looks balanced.

**13...c4 14.♕b1**

White provoked ...c4 on purpose in order to keep his central play intact. That is an important strategy because now the f3-square can be used to launch an attack, while the knight on e5 blocks all play along the e file.

**14...b5 15.♗c3**

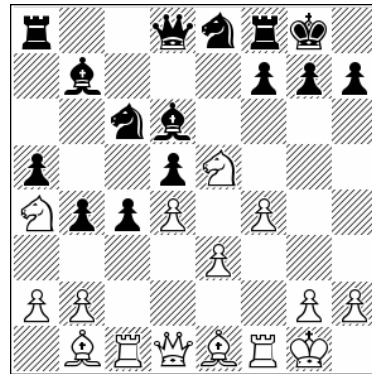


Position after: 15.♗c3

**15...b4**

15...♗e7 16.♞f3 ♘g6 17.a3 ♕c7 18.♕e1 ♞c8 19.h4 White has attacking chances, 1-0 (51) Houdini 3 Pro B – Stockfish Internet (rapid) 2013.

**16.♗a4 a5 17.♕e1! ♗e8**



Position after: 17...♗e8

**18.e4!**

White breaks up the central structure, and now it's difficult for Black to defend the c4-pawn.

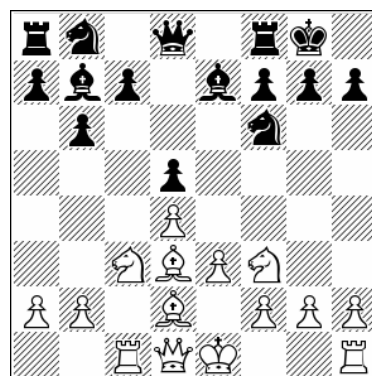
**18...♗e7 19.exd5 ♗f6 20.♗c5 ♕xd5 21.♗xc4**

White is better.

**d) 7...♕b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♕d3 ♕e7**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.♕d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 d5 7.♞c1 ♕b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♕d3 ♕e7

This is yet another setup that Black can use here. The idea is to retreat the bishop at once and only then to look for central play involving ...c5. We will see that in that case Black again has two options: to move his b8-knight to d7 or c6.

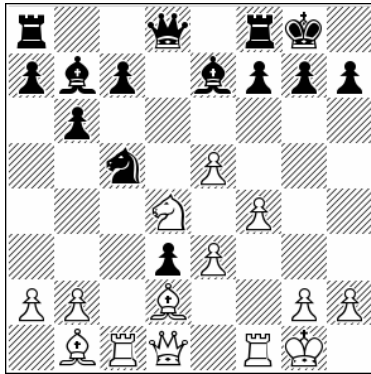


Position after: 9...♕e7

**10.0-0 c5**

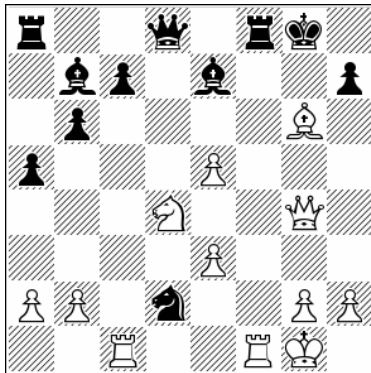
10...♗bd7 11.♗e5 ♗xe5 [11...c5 transposes to the main line note on move 11 for Black]

12.dxe5 ♖d7 13.f4 ♘c5 14.♗b1 d4 15.♘b5 d3  
16.♘d4!



Position after: 16.♘d4!

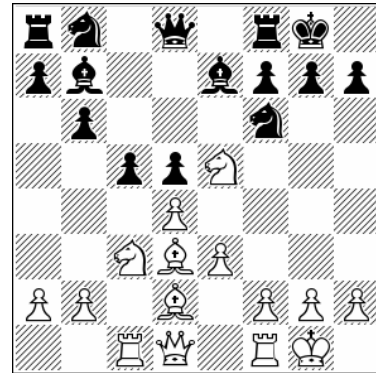
It seems that this idea actually is unpleasant for Black. 16...a5 17.♖g4 g6 18.f5! ♘e4 19.♗xd3! ♘xd2 20.fxg6 fxg6 21.♗xg6



Position after: 21.♗xg6

Black lost two games that reached this position. 21...♔h8 [or 21...♖xf1+ 22.♖xf1 ♘xf1 23.♘e6 ♗f8 24.♘xf8 ♖xf8 25.♗e6+ 1-0 (25) Suvorov, A (2313) – Wachinger, N (2334) Willingen 2020] 22.♗xh7!! ♖xf1+ 23.♖xf1 ♗g5 24.♘f5 ♗d3 25.♖e1 ♗xe3+ 26.♔h1 ♗h6 27.♗g6 ♗xg2+ 28.♔xg2 ♗d5+ 29.♔h3 ♗d3+ 30.♔h4 A great game, one of the best I've seen in recent years, 1-0 (30) Najer, E (2635) – Anand, V (2765) Douglas 2019.

### 11.♘e5



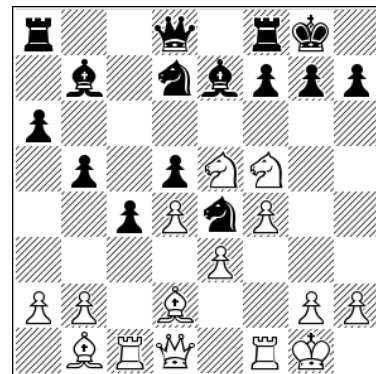
Position after: 11.♘e5

White continues with his usual setup. Next is f4 with the traditional attacking plan.

### 11...♘c6

This is a logical response, but so are the other options for Black.

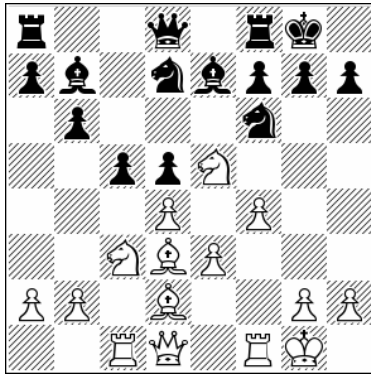
A) 11...c4 12.♗b1 a6 13.♘e2 b5 14.♘g3 ♘bd7 15.f4 ♘e4 16.♘f5



Position after: 16.♘f5

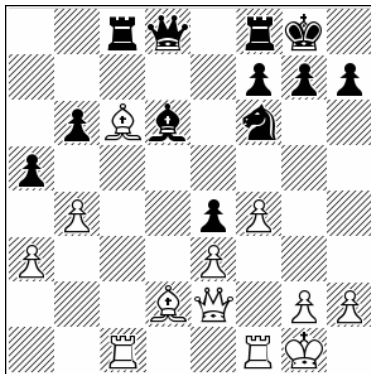
16...♘df6 17.♗e1 g6 18.♘xe7+ ♗xe7 19.♗h4 ♗d6 20.f5 White enjoys typical good play, ½-½ (38) Sundararajan, K (2434) – Prasad, D (2284) Kolkata 2018.

B) 11...♘bd7 12.f4



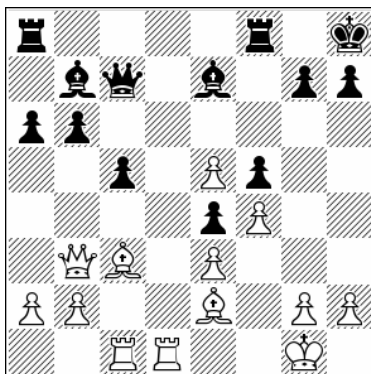
Position after: 12.f4

12...♖e4 [12...♞e8 13.♚f3 a6 14.♔h1 ♘f8  
15.♙e1 b5 16.♙h4 ♚b6 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♘xd5  
White has achieved a winning position, 1-0 (27)  
Bluebaum, M (2647) – Szustakowski, A (2295)  
chess.com INT 2020] 13.♘xe4 Probably best.  
13...dxe4 14.♙b5 ♘xe5 [14...♘f6 15.dxc5 ♙xc5  
16.b4 ♙d6 17.♘c6 ♙xc6 18.♙xc6 ♞c8 19.♚e2 a5  
20.a3



Position after: 20.a3

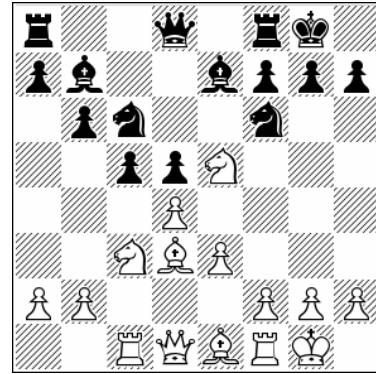
20...♚e7 21.♞c4 axb4 22.axb4 ♚e6 23.♞fc1 with  
some edge for White] 15.dxe5 a6 16.♙e2 f5  
17.♚b3+ ♔h8 18.♞fd1 ♚c7 19.♙c3



Position after: 19.♙c3

19...♞ad8 20.e6 ♙c8 21.♙e5 White has better  
prospects, 1-0 (41) Sandipan, C (2573) – Koustav,  
C (2364) Bhubaneswar 2018.

12.♙e1



Position after: 12.♙e1

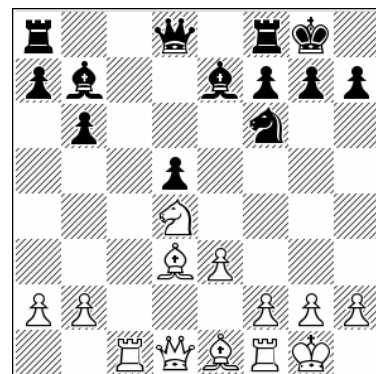
Probably best, and definitely in the spirit of the  
line.

12.f4 cxd4 13.♘xc6 ♙xc6 14.exd4 b5 15.f5 ♚b6  
16.♘e2 b4 17.♙g5 h6 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♔h1  
♞ac8 20.♘f4 ♙b7 This is fine for Black, 0-1 (29)  
Krasenkow, M (2628) – Wojtaszek, R (2750)  
Warsaw 2018.

12...♙d6

Black is putting pressure on e5 at once. Other  
ideas are worth investigating.

A) 12...cxd4 13.♘xc6 ♙xc6 14.♘e2 ♙b7  
15.♘xd4



Position after: 15.♘xd4

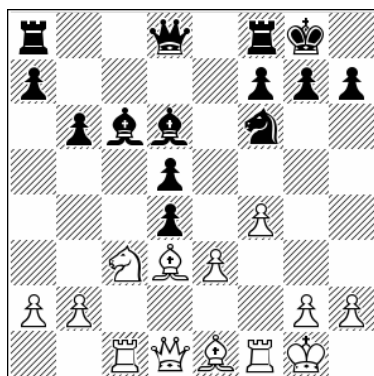
Typical play when Black goes for an early ...cxd4 before White commits to f4. 15...♖e4 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♗c3 ♖d7 18.♙h5 White has easier play, ½-½ (56) Aczel, G (2553) – Kantor, G (2506) Budapest 2017.

**B) 12...a6 13.f3!?** A more flexible attempt, and anyway the bishop is still going to h4. 13...cxd4 14.♖xc6 ♗xc6 15.exd4 ♗b7 16.♗h4 ♖h5 17.♗xe7 ♙xe7 18.♙d2 ♙d6 19.♖e2 ♜fe8 20.g4 ♖f6 21.♖g3 g6 22.a3 ♖d7 23.♙g5 White enjoys better prospects, 1-0 (59) Yu Yangyi (2759) – Wang Hao (2710) Tianjin (blitz) 2018.

### 13.f4

13.♖xc6 ♗xc6 14.b3 ♜e8 15.g3 ♙d7 16.♙f3 ♖e4 Black is fine; the bishop on e1 in this case is blocking White's natural play, ½-½ (22) Shengelia, D (2523) – Peralta, F (2572) Vienna 2019.

### 13...cxd4 14.♖xc6 ♗xc6



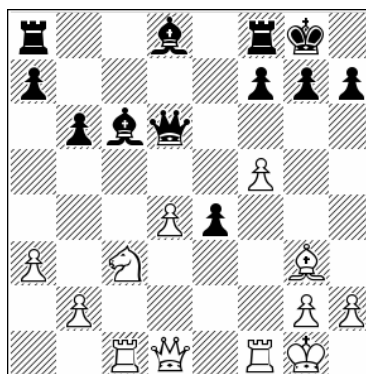
Position after: 14...♗xc6

### 15.exd4

15.♖e2 ♗d7 16.♖xd4 ♜e8 This is OK for Black, ½-½ (16) Plat, V (2525) – Babula, V (2563) Pardubice 2021.

### 15...♙d7

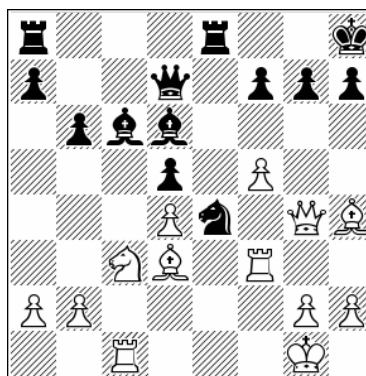
15...♗e7 16.♗h4 ♙d6 17.a3 ♗d8 18.♗g3 Play is nicely balanced at this point, but Black goes astray on the next move. 18...♖e4 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.f5



Position after: 20.f5

20...♙d7 21.f6! White has seized the advantage, 1-0 (31) Bartel, M (2612) – Vaibhav, S (2591) Abu Dhabi 2019.

### 16.♗h4!? ♖e4 17.f5 ♜fe8 18.♙g4 ♖h8 19.♙f3



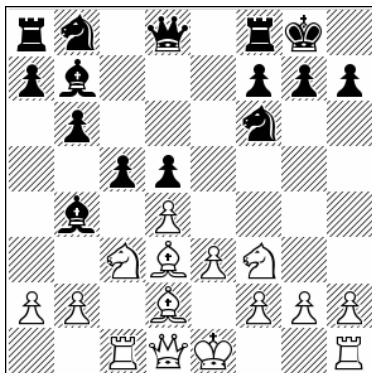
Position after: 19.♙f3

### 19...f6 20.♙h5

The position is complicated.

**e) 7...♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 c5**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♗f3 d5 7.♞c1 ♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 c5



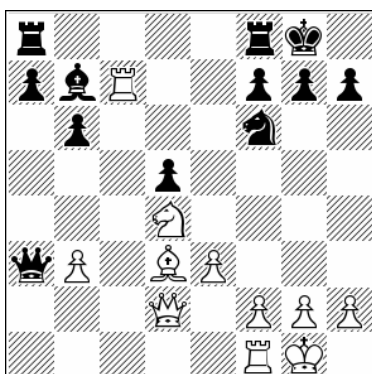
Position after: 9...c5

Black plays directly, but in this case he has to be ready to either retreat his bishop to the unusual a5-square or else take on c3. We can consider this as a slightly anti-positional type of play, at least at such an early stage.

**10.0-0**

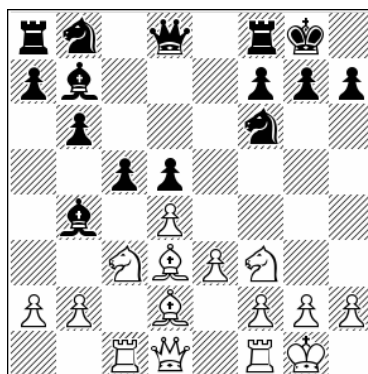
Logical but not the only option. White can also try to profit from this particular move order and challenge the bishop on b4.

10.a3 ♙a5!? [10...♙xc3 11.♙xc3 c4 12.♙c2 ♗e4 13.0-0 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♖d6 15.♞a1 ♗c6 16.♗d2 f6 17.♞e1 ♞ae8 18.♖b1 g6 19.e4 this is typical strategy and we can say that White has the edge, 0-1 (73) Loik, G – Kochan, I corr. 2015] 11.0-0 ♗c6 12.b3 ♖e7 13.♗e2 ♙xd2 14.♖xd2 cxd4 15.♗exd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♖xa3 17.♞c7



Position after: 17.♞c7

17...♞fb8! [17...♙c8 18.♖c3 ♖d6 19.♗b5 ♖d8 20.♞xa7 ♞xa7 21.♗xa7 ♙d7 22.♞c1 this slightly favors White] 18.b4 a5 19.♖b1 axb4 20.♖b3 ♖a1+ 21.♞c1 ♖a5 22.♞xb4 White is a pawn down but it is clear that after doubling on the b-file he will gain some pressure and eventually get that pawn on b6.

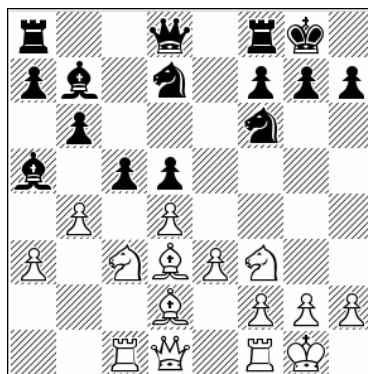


Position after: 10.0-0

**10...c4**

Not the only move, but it's logical to give the b4-bishop an escape from b4 and to start action on the queenside. The drawback is that now Black is no longer applying pressure on the center.

**A) 10...♗bd7 11.a3 ♙a5 12.b4!**

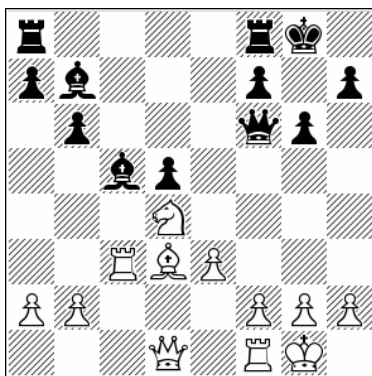


Position after: 12.b4!

It is important to remember this idea in the Nimzo because it is thematic and can be seen in many lines. 12...cxb4 13.♗a4 bxa3 14.♙xa5 bxa5 15.♖b3 ♗b6 16.♗c5 ♖e7 17.♖xa3 a4 18.♖a2

♙c6 19.♘e5 ♙e8 20.♖c3 White has nice play for the sacrificed pawn.

**B) 10...♘c6** This is probably the oldest response here. 11.dxc5 [11.a3! ♙a5 Play will probably transpose to the note 10.a3 ♙a5] 11...♙xc5 12.♘e2 ♘e4 13.♘ed4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♗f6 15.♙c3 ♘xc3 16.♖xc3 g6



Position after: 16...g6

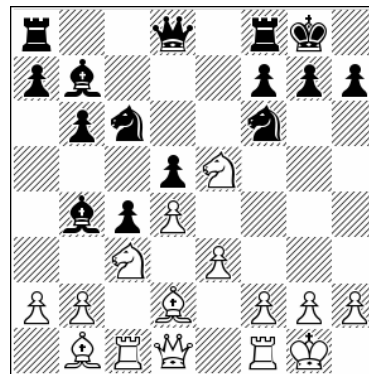
17.♗a4 [17.♙e2 ♖fe8 18.♘b3 ♙d6 19.♖c2 ♖ac8 20.♘d4 ♙c5 21.♖d2 ♙b4 22.♖c2 ♙c5 also in this game we see that Black is doing OK countering White's plan to create pressure on the d5-pawn, ½-½ (45) Geller, E – Matanovic, A Saltsjobaden 1952] 17...a6 18.♘b3 b5 19.♗g4 ♙c8 20.♗f3 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♙b4 22.♖c2 ♙h3 Black is fine in this endgame, 0-1 (36) Starace, R – Markus, R corr. 2007.

11.♙b1 ♘c6 12.♘e5!

**f) 7...♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 ♖e8**

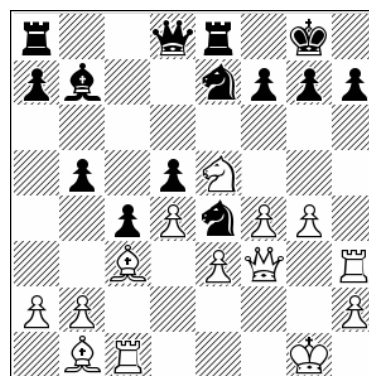
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♘f3 d5 7.♖c1 ♙b7 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♙d3 ♖e8 10.0-0 ♙f8

This is yet another plan, where Black is going for an interesting setup in which the bishop is well placed on f8 as a defender and also the rook on e8 is now active.



Position after: 12.♘e5!

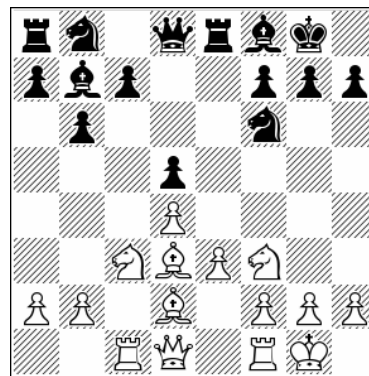
12...♖e8 13.f4 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 b5 15.♖f3! ♘e7 16.♖h3 ♙c8 17.g4 ♘e4 18.♗f3 ♙b7



Position after: 18...♙b7

19.g5!

Now the knight is secure on e5 and White's pressure along h-file is clear to see, 1-0 (30) Riazantsev, A (2662) – Tsydypov, Z (2525) Sochi 2018.

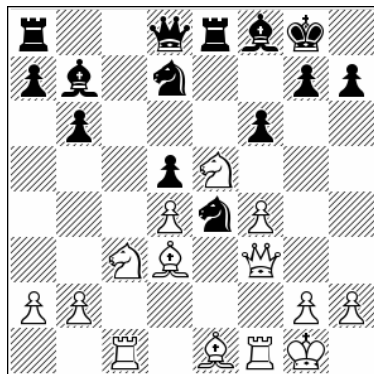


Position after: 10...♙f8

11.♘e5 c5

Best, Black is going to place a knight on the active c6-square.

11...♞bd7 12.f4 c5 13.♞f3 cxd4 14.exd4 ♞e4  
15.♙e1 f6



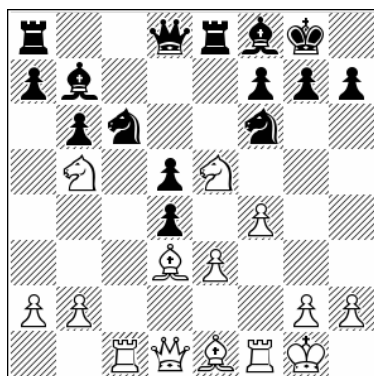
Position after: 15...f6

16.♞xe4! Already White is winning, 1-0 (33) Krasenkow, M (2622) – Gajek, R (2411) Brunswick 2019.

12.f4 ♞c6 13.♞e2

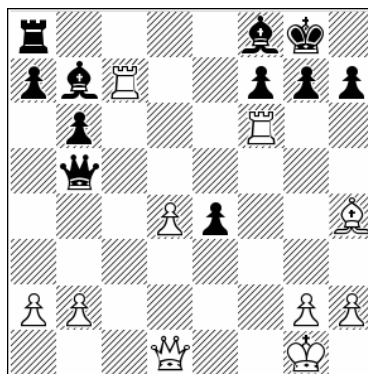
Activating the dark-squared bishop is also interesting, but with precise moves Black can build counterplay.

13.♙e1 cxd4 14.♞b5!?



Position after: 14.♞b5!?

A) 14...♞xe5 15.fxe5 ♞xe5 16.exd4 ♞e4 [16...♞e7 17.♙h4 White is better] 17.♙e4 dxe4 18.♙h4 ♞d7 19.♞c7 ♞xb5 20.♞xf6!



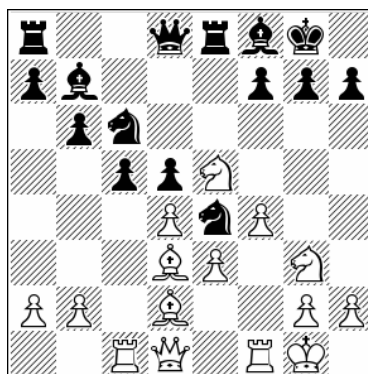
Position after: 20.♞xf6!

20...♙d5 21.♞h5 g6 22.♞g5 ♙g7 23.♞xf7 ♙xd4+ 24.♙h1 a6 25.♞e7 1-0 (25) Sandipan, C (2570) – Torosyan, N (2404) Yerevan 2017.

B) 14...♞c8! 15.♞xc6 ♞xc6 16.♞xc6 ♙xc6 17.♞xa7 ♙d7 18.exd4 ♞a8 19.♞b5 ♞xa2 Black is doing OK here.

13...♞c8

13...♞e4 14.♞g3

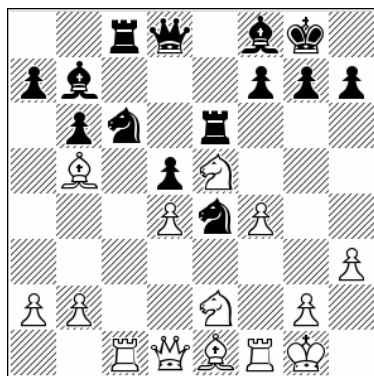


Position after: 14.♞g3

Black must be careful now. 14...f6? [14...♞xd2 15.♙xh7+ ♙xh7 16.♞h5+ ♙g8 17.♞xf7+ ♙h8 18.♞g6+ ♙h7 19.♞h5 ♞e6 20.♞xe6 ♞xf1 21.♞xf1 White is better; 14...♞xe5 15.fxe5 ♞xg3 16.hxg3 g6 17.♞f3 ♞e7 18.♞f4 White has better prospects] 15.♞xe4 fxe5 16.♞g5 g6 17.♞xh7 e4 18.♞xf8 ♞xf8 19.♞g4 White is winning, 1-0 (24) Zakhartsov, V (2514) – Mitrabha, G (2498) Novi Sad 2021.

14.♙e1 ♞e4

A) 14...cxd4 15.exd4 ♖e4 16.♗b5 ♜e6 17.h3!?

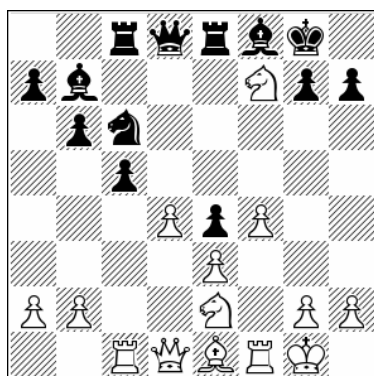


Position after: 17.h3!?

An interesting waiting move. 17...f6 18.♗xc6 ♗xc6 19.♗a6 ♜c7 20.f5! ♜e8 21.♗f4 ♗a4 22.b3 ♜xc1 23.♜xc1 ♗d7 24.♗xd5 This position favors White, 1-0 (47) Vidit, S (2726) – Dominguez Perez, L (2758) chess24.com INT 2021.

B) 14...♜d6 15.♗h4 c4 16.♗b1 ♗e7 17.♗c3 g6 18.♜f3 ♗h5 19.♗xf7! Nice play. White has a winning attack.

15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♗xf7!



Position after: 16.♗xf7!

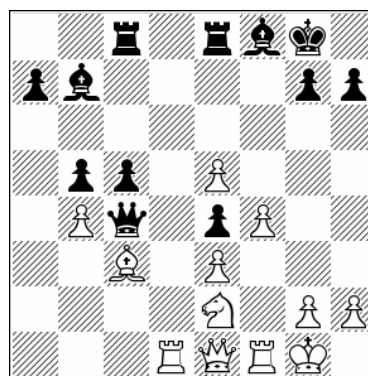
White's strike points out why the rook is often misplaced on e8. We will see that Black has to defend carefully now.

16...♗xf7!

The only way.

16...♜d5 17.♗e5 ♗xe5 18.dxe5 ♜xa2 19.♗c3 [19.♗g3! ♜cd8 20.♜g4 White is getting a

dangerous attack] 19...♜d5 20.♜e1 b5 21.♜d1 ♜c4 22.b4!!



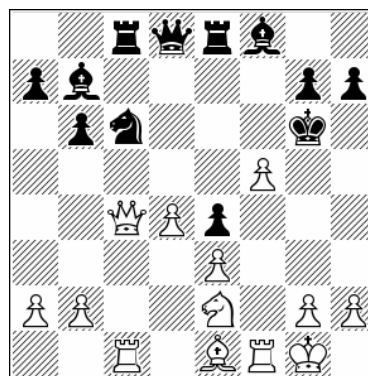
Position after: 22.b4!!

The only way to secure the d4-square for the bishop. 22...cxb4 23.♗d4 ♜c7 24.f5 White has great attacking chances, 1-0 (45) Maghsoodloo, P (2701) – Firouzja, A (2804) Warsaw 2021.

17.♜b3+ c4!

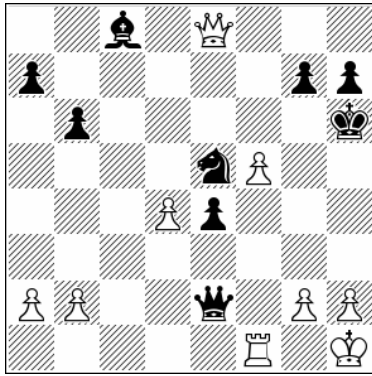
17...♗g6 18.f5+ ♗h6 19.♗f4 Defending this looks highly unpleasant.

18.♜xc4+ ♗g6 19.f5+



Position after: 19.f5+

19...♗h6 20.♗g3 ♗e5 21.♜g8 ♗e7 22.♜xc8 ♗xc8 23.♗f4+ ♗g5 24.♗xg5+ ♜xg5 25.♜xe8 ♜xe3+ 26.♗h1 ♜xe2



Position after: 26...Qxe2

27. Rxa1

27. Rxc1 Nxd3 28. Rxc6+ Kg5 29. h3 [29. Qe7+??  
 Kf4! Winning for Black. 30. h3 Qe1+ 31. Kh2  
 Qg3+ 32. Kh1 Nf2+ 33. Kg1 Nxh3+ 34. Kh1  
 Qe1+ 0-1 (34) Keymer, V (2639) – Bjerre, J (2569)  
 Terme Catez 2021] 29... Qf1+ 30. Kh2 Qf4+  
 Black has perpetual check.

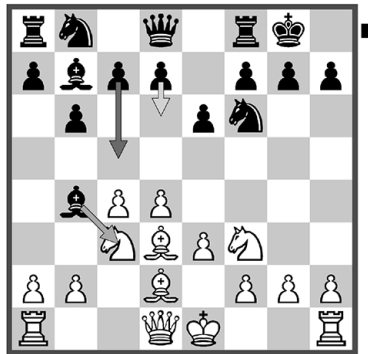
27... Ng4

This highly complicated game will end in a draw.  
 It seems that the sacrifice on f7 is correct, and  
 Black has to find only moves to survive.

# Chapter 3

## Black Plays without ...d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 ♘b7 7.♙d3



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 3 – Black Plays Without ...d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 ♘b7 7.♙d3

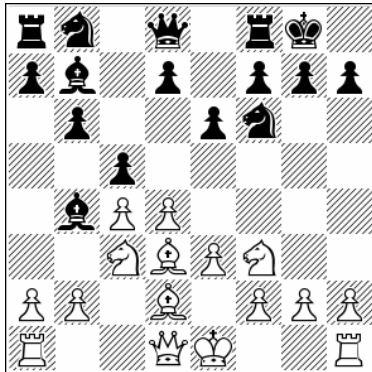
a) 7...c5

b) 7...♙xc3

c) 7...d6

## a) 7...c5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♘f3 ♘b7 7.♙d3 c5



Position after: 7...c5

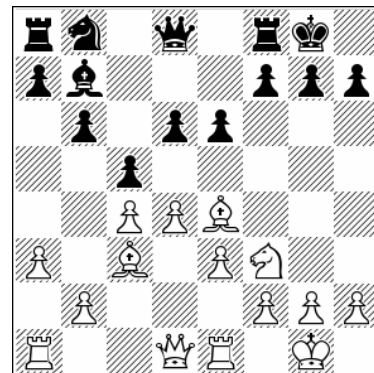
Black wants to take on d4 followed by ...d5, a standard method in the Nimzo.

### 8.a3

One of the points of the whole system with the bishop on d2 is to go a3 as soon as Black moves ...c5, and that's logical because in this way Black is forced to give up the bishop pair.

### 8...♙xc3

8...♙a5 9.0-0 d6 An interesting setup; Black is waiting to take on c3 at the right moment. 10.♖e1! White should play energetically, and here his idea is preparing e4 [10.♖b1 This is in my opinion a waste of time. 10...♙xc3 11.♙xc3 ♗e4 12.♙e1 ♗d7 13.♗d2 ♗xd2 14.♙xd2 cxd4 15.exd4 d5 16.cxd5 ♙xd5 It's not much really for White, 1-0 (46) Vorobiov, E (2578) – Maetzkow, M (2274) Pardubice 2019]. 10...♙xc3 11.♙xc3 ♗e4 12.♙xe4!



Position after: 12...♙xe4!

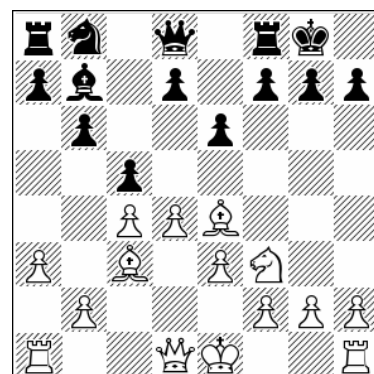
This is the standard method here. 12...♙xe4 13.♗d2 ♙g6 14.d5 White has the preferable position.

### 9.♙xc3 cxd4

This is one of the possible replies here. Black is hoping to simplify matters by exchanging the central pawns and then pushing ...d5.

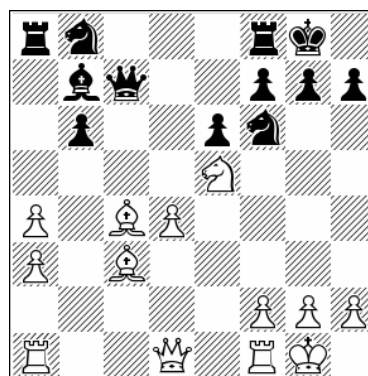
**A)** 9...d6 10.b4 ♗bd7 11.0-0 ♖e7 12.♖e2 ♖ac8 13.♖fd1 ♗e4 14.♙b2 f5 15.♗e1 ♖fd8 16.f3 ♗ef6 17.♖ac1 ♖f7 18.♙b1 ♙a6 19.dxc5 dxc5 20.b5 ♙b7 21.♗d3 This game is a good example of how to deal with this kind of structure. White keeps the bishop pair and after maneuvering the knight to d3 he has balanced play in which the bishop pair has some advantage over the two knights, 1-0 (51) Bluebaum, M (2669) – Bachmann, A (2599) chess.com INT 2021.

### **B)** 9...♗e4 10.♙xe4!



Position after: 10...♙xe4!

The typical and strong reaction, which we will see many times in this line. White keeps his strong bishop on c3 and will try to profit from that. 10...♙xe4 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♖d6 ♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♚b6 14.0-0 f6 15.♞hg1 ♚xd6 16.♞xd6 ♞f7 17.♞gd1 ♜f8 18.b4 White is winning – next comes b5 and the black knight is out of the game, 1-0 (24) Xiong, J (2709) – Lazavik, D (2440) chess.com INT 2021.

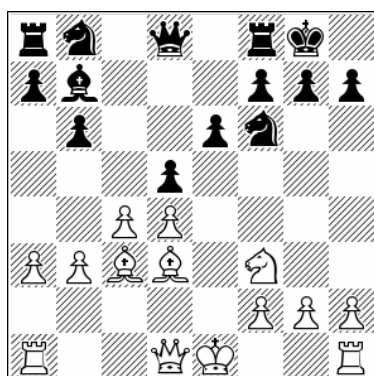


Position after: 15.♞e5

## 10.♞xd4

Probably best. In other lines we will see that a main aspect of the whole 4.♙d2 line is about playing positionally, gaining the bishop pair and trying to profit from that with minimal resources.

10.exd4 d5 11.b3 In this modern treatment White keeps his pawn structure intact, another important positional idea.



Position after: 11.b3

11...a5! Direct play to disturb White's pawn structure, aimed mainly at the c4-pawn.

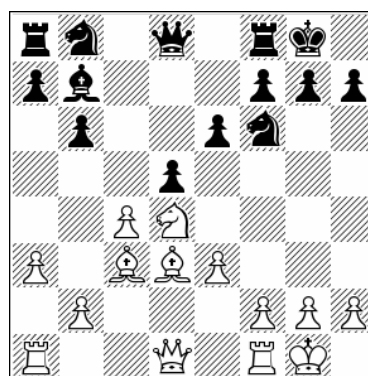
**A)** 12.a4 ♖c6 13.0-0 ♗b4 14.♙e2 ♞c8 15.♙b2 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♗fd5 Black is OK here, as he has managed to break up the pawn center and the position is balanced, 1-0 (41) Vidit, S (2726) – Svane, R (2615) chess.com INT 2021.

**B)** 12.0-0 a4 13.bxa4 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♚c7 15.♞e5

15...♞fd7! [15...♞bd7 16.♞c1 ♞fc8 17.♙b2 White is just better, 1-0 (30) Bluebaum, M (2670) – Svane, R (2613) lichess.org INT 2020] 16.♚b3 ♞xe5 17.dxe5 ♞c8 18.♞fd1 h6 19.♞d4 ♞c6 20.♞d6 ♞a5 21.♙xa5 bxa5 22.♙b5 ♙d5 23.♚b2 ♚c3 Black has equal chances despite being a pawn down.

**C)** 12.♞c1!? This is surprising but quite possible. 12...a4 13.bxa4 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♞d5 15.♙b2 ♞c6 16.0-0 ♞a5 17.♙b5 ♞f4 18.♞e1 ♚d5 19.♞e3 ♞fc8 20.♞ec3 ♞xc3 21.♞xc3 ♞d8 Black has more or less OK play for the sacrificed pawn, but to me in any case this looks like a better idea for White than 12.a4 or 12.0-0.

## 10...d5 11.0-0

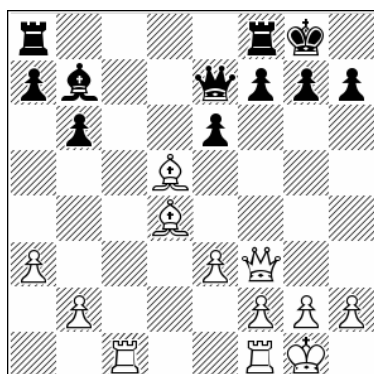


Position after: 11.0-0

## 11...♞bd7

Logical play: before doing anything in the center, Black develops his pieces.

**A)** Black can also go for an early exchange on c4, but still his problems are from over. 11...dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♖d5 13.♚f3 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 ♙xc6 15.♙d4 ♚e7 16.♞ac1 ♙b7 17.♙xd5!



Position after: 17.♙xd5!

17...♙xd5 18.♚g3 With his rook poised to invade on c7, White is gaining a winning advantage, 1-0 (30) Sandipan, C (2599) – Tologontegin, S (2391) Al Ain 2014.

**B)** 11...♘a6 12.♘b3 dxc4 13.♙xc4 ♖d5 14.♙xd5 ½-½ (14) Fridman, D (2539) – Podzielny, K (2506) Essen 2000.

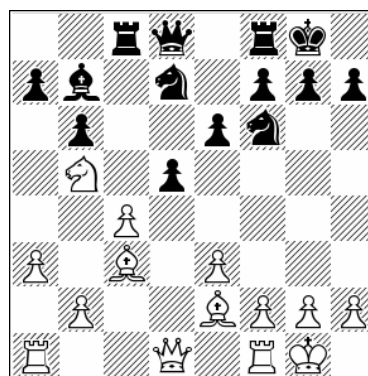
### 12.♙e2

**A)** 12.♙b4 ♞e8 13.♙e2 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♖d5 15.♙d2 ♞c8 16.♞c1 a6 17.♚e2 b5 18.♙a2 ♚f6 19.♞xc8 ♞xc8 20.♞c1 ♞xc1+ 21.♙xc1 White can hope to build a plus with the help of his bishop pair, 1-0 (43) Bluebaum, M (2670) – Kollars, D (2598) chess.com INT 2020.

**B)** 12.♞c1 ♞c8 13.♙e2 dxc4 14.♙b4 ♖c5 15.♙xc4 a5 16.♙xc5 ♞xc5 17.♘b3 The game is equal at this point, 1-0 (64) Sanchez Carol, J – Lecha Gonzalez, J corr. 2010.

### 12...dxc4

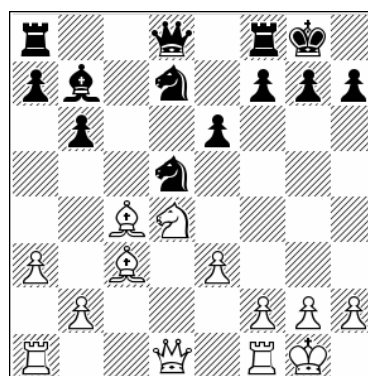
12...♞c8?! 13.♘b5!



Position after: 13.♘b5!

Already this is a real problem for Black. 13...♙a6 14.♘xa7 ♞xc4 15.♙b4 ♚c7 16.♙xf8 White has a winning position here, ½-½ (75) Bluebaum, M (2669) – Svane, R (2615) chess.com INT 2021.

### 13.♙xc4 ♖d5



Position after: 13...♖d5

### 14.♙xd5 ♙xd5 15.♞e1

This may look equal but appearances are deceptive. At the moment White's bishop on c3 and knight on d4 have more potential compared to Black's pieces, so Black has to be careful.

### 15...♖c5

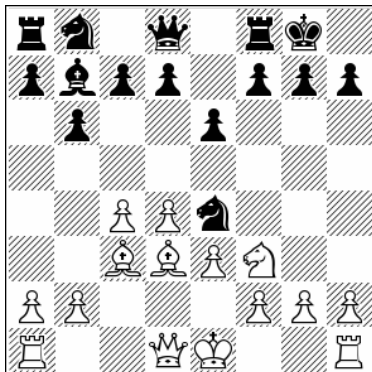
15...♖f6 16.f3 a6 17.e4 ♙b7 18.♚e2 This is another position in which Black's bishop and knight are hemmed in and have no good squares.

### 16.♚g4!

This creates problems because the black knight has moved away from the kingside.

## b) 7...♙xc3

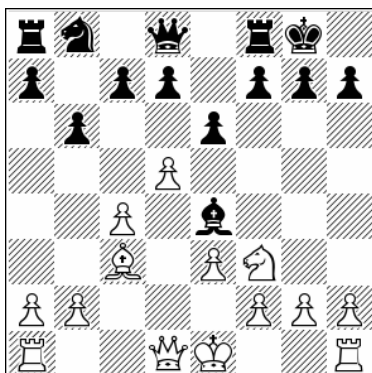
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♗f3 ♙b7 7.♙d3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♗e4



Position after: 8...♗e4

Black aims to quickly exchange the bishop on c3 while it has no retreat square, since White has not yet castled and the e1-square is not available.

9.♙xe4 ♙xe4 10.d5!

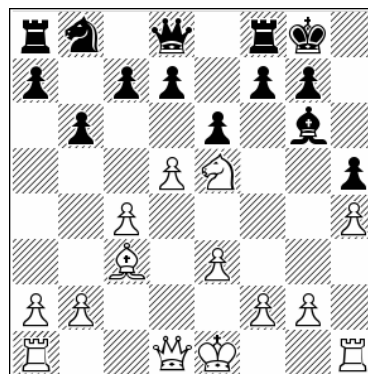


Position after: 10.d5!

This is a well-known old variation and a main point of the 4.♙d2 line. We can see that the imminent threat is now queen to d4 with a double threat of mate and taking the bishop on e4.

10...exd5

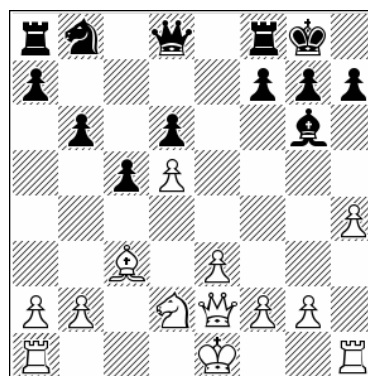
A) After 10...♙g6 11.h4 h5 the simplest solution is 12.♗e5!



Position after: 12.♗e5!

12...♙e8 13.g4 d6 14.gxh5 White already has an almost winning attack.

B) 10...c5 11.♗d2 ♙g6 12.h4 exd5 13.cxd5 d6 14.♙e2!

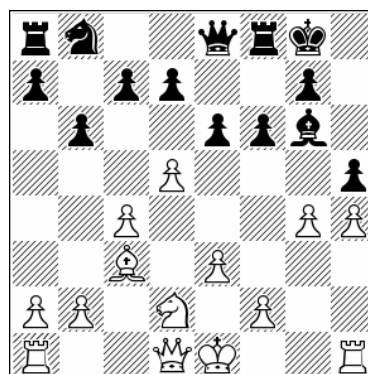


Position after: 14.♙e2!

14...♖e8 15.h5 ♙f5 16.h6 g6 17.e4 ♙c8 18.f4 White's advantage is clear.

C) 10...f6 11.♗d2 ♙g6 12.h4

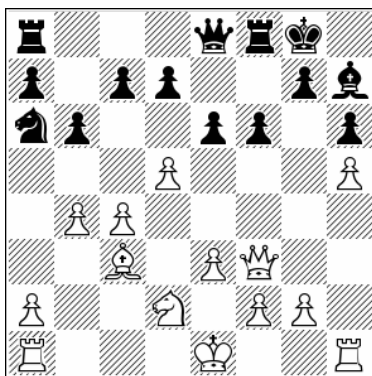
C1) 12...h5 13.g4 ♙e8



Position after: 13...♙e8

14. ♖f1! [14. ♖g1 e5 15. ♗f3 d6 16. ♗g3 ♜f7 17. 0-0 ♘d7 the position looks strange, but Black seems to have defended his weak spots, 1-0 (48) Bluebaum, M (2647) – Sanal, V (2581) chess.com INT 2020] 14...d6 15. ♘g3 White is clearly better.

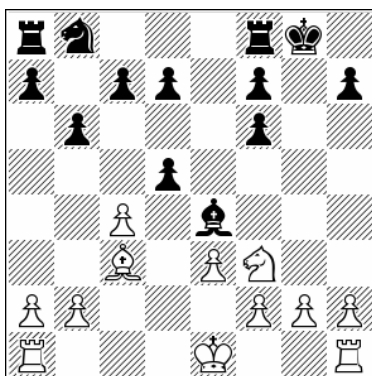
**C2)** 12...h6 13. ♗g4 ♜e8 14. h5 ♙f5 15. ♗f3 ♞a6 16. b4 ♙h7



Position after: 16...♙h7

17. 0-0 It appears that White has the preferable chances, since the knight on a6 is seriously out of play [17. a3 exd5 18. cxd5 c5 19. ♗g3 d6 20. 0-0 ♘c7 now, when White has lost one move (17. a3), the game is different, 1-0 (39) Bluebaum, M (2674) – Batsuren, D (2504) chess.com INT 2021].

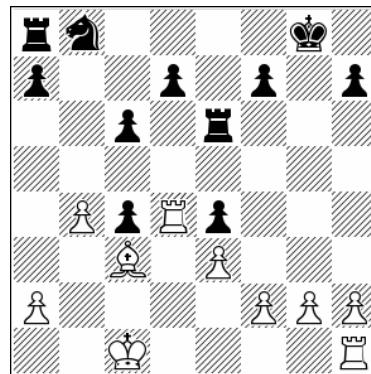
**11. ♗d4 ♗f6 12. ♗xf6 gxf6**



Position after: 12...gxf6

**13. cxd5**

13. ♘d2 ♜e8 14. ♘xe4 dxe4 15. ♙xf6 ♜e6 16. ♙c3 ♜c6 17. b3 b5 18. 0-0-0 bxc4 19. b4 ♜e6 20. ♖d4 c6



Position after: 20...c6

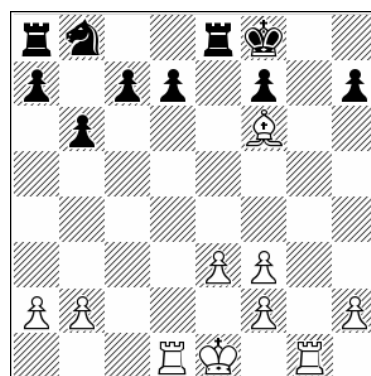
I found two games that reached this position and both worked out well for White.

**A)** 21. f3!? exf3 22. gxf3 ♜xe3! The only chance under the circumstances [22...d5 23. e4! ♘d7 24. exd5 cxd5 25. ♖xd5 ♞b6 26. ♖a5 ♖g6 27. ♖d1 h6 28. ♖xa7 White's victory is not far away, 1-0 (31) Sandipan, C (2555) – Kishan, G (2024) Jammu 2018] 23. ♖xc4 ♘f8 24. b5 ♘e7 25. ♘d2 ♜e6 26. ♖b1 White has strong pressure in this endgame.

**B)** 21. ♖xc4 d5 22. ♖c5 ♞a6 23. ♖a5 ♞c7 24. a4 a6 25. ♘b2 White This endgame is very good for White, 1-0 (40) Aleksandrov, A (2574) – Iniyar, P (2506) ICC INT 2020.

**13...♙xd5 14. ♙xf6 d6**

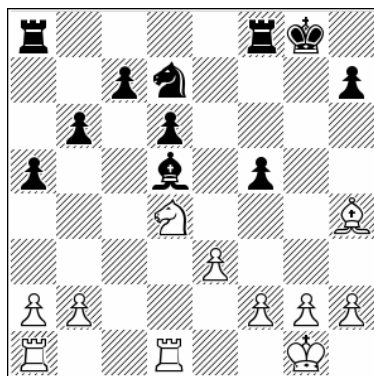
14...♙xf3 15. gxf3 ♜e8 16. ♖g1+ ♘f8 17. ♖d1!



Position after: 17.♖d1!

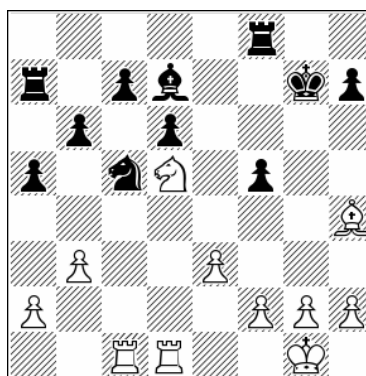
17...♜e6 18. ♙c3 d6 19. ♖d5 ♘d7 20. ♖h5 ♞f6 21. ♙xf6 ♖xf6 22. ♖xh7 ♜e8 23. f4 White is clearly better.

15. ♖d4! ♗d7 16. ♙h4 f5 17. 0-0 a5 18. ♞fd1



Position after: 18. ♞fd1

18... ♞ac8 19. ♗b5 ♙c4 20. ♗a7 ♞a8 21. ♗c6 ♗c5  
22. b3 ♙e6 23. ♞ac1 ♙d7 24. ♗e7+ ♔g7 25. ♗d5  
♞a7



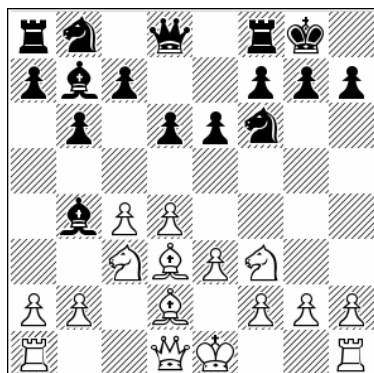
Position after: 25... ♞a7

26. f3

It's a complicated endgame, but it seems that White has more possibilities here, 1-0 (48) Aczel, G (2551) – Chan, K (2228) Leanyfalu 2019.

### c) 7...d6

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♙b4 4. ♙d2 b6 5. e3 0-0  
6. ♗f3 ♙b7 7. ♙d3 d6



Position after: 7...d6

We deal here with some other typical ideas for Black. This time the pawn is not on d5, but rather on d6. As we will see, Black here can also take quickly on c3 in order to take that bishop before White manages to castle.

8. 0-0 ♗bd7

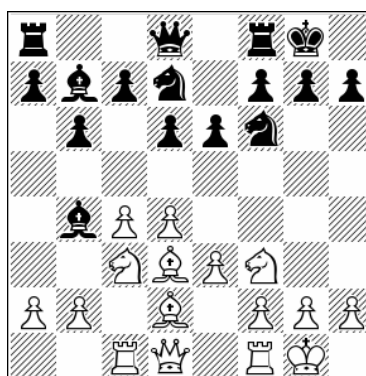
Another important setup. Black is obviously ready to take on c3 at any moment, but with fast development and a flexible pawn structure he is hoping to compensate for the loss of the bishop pair. This is one of the important positions because this setup is known in all Nimzo lines. In

my Volume 2, on the Nimzo with 4.e3, we have many examples of this type of play.

9. a3

The most common move here, but we have a few interesting options that have been tested in recent games.

9. ♞c1

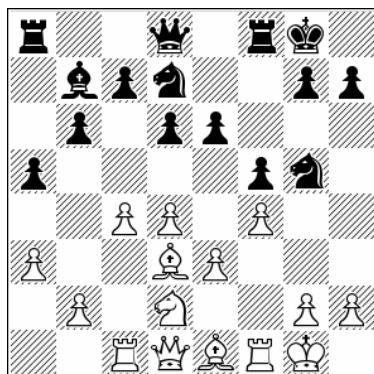


Position after: 9. ♞c1

A) 9...e5 10. ♙b1 This is a clever idea; because the rook has already moved to c1, the bishop can retreat here without blocking it in. 10...a5 11. a3 ♙xc3 12. ♙xc3 ♞e7 13. ♗d2 ♞fe8 14. b3 exd4 15. exd4 d5 16. ♙b2 The complex position in

front of us is so typical for the Nimzo, 0-1 (43) Dreev, A (2655) – Shubin, K (2441) Sochi 2020.

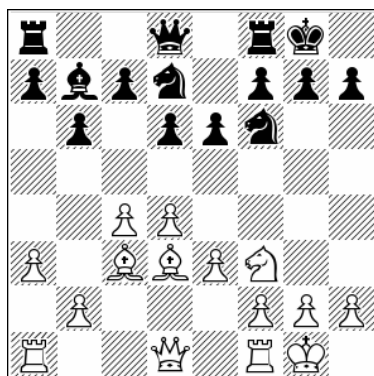
**B)** 9...a5 10.a3 ♖xc3 11.♗xc3 ♞e4 12.♗e1 f5 13.♞d2 ♞g5 14.f4!



Position after: 14.f4!

14...♞f7 15.e4 ♜f6 16.♗f2 ♜g6 17.d5! White has better play. Black must be careful conducting his middlegame strategy because the bishop pair can start taking its toll rather quickly, 1-0 (52) Swiercz, D (2649) – Martinez Alcantara, J (2620) chess.com INT 2020.

**9...♗xc3 10.♗xc3**

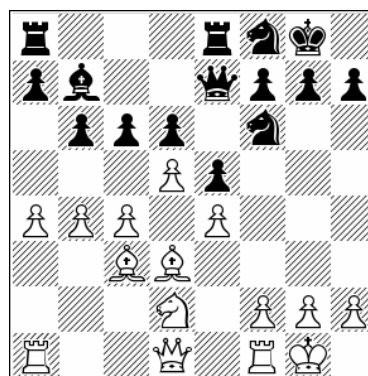


Position after: 10.♗xc3

**10...♞e4**

Now, when Black is developed, this is one of the best moments to place a knight on e4 without needing to fear the capture and d5, which we saw in some earlier examples.

**A)** 10...♜e7 11.♞d2 e5 12.b4 ♜fe8 13.a4 ♞f8 14.d5 c6 15.e4!



Position after: 15.e4!

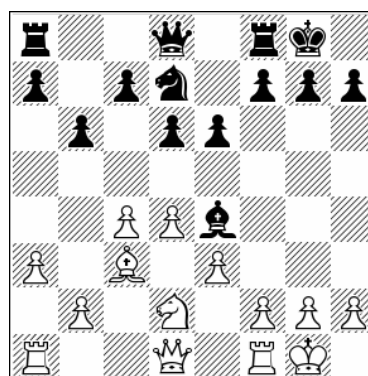
15...♞g6 16.g3 White is better.

**B)** 10...♜e8 11.b4 e5 12.♞d2 exd4 13.exd4 c5 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.d5 b5 16.♜b1 a6 17.♞f3 ♞e4 18.♗a1 ♞d6 19.♜c2 h6 20.♜fd1 bxc4 21.♗xc4 ♜c8 22.♜xb7 White won quickly and overall he had the initiative all the way, 1-0 (22) Plat, V (2536) – Stoczek, J (2584) Zlin 2021.

**11.♗e1**

It is logical to keep the bishop pair and this is a reasonable solution. We will see that this bishop can operate on both sides of the board.

11.♗xe4 ♗xe4 Here we have another example where White employs his main strategy, to eliminate the knight on e4 and gain time to establish a center. 12.♞d2



Position after: 12.♞d2

12...♗b7 [12...♗d3 13.♜e1 ♗g6 14.e4 e5 15.♞f1! ♜e8 16.f3 ♞f8 17.♞e3 White showed good strategy, but Black allowed that too easily, 1-0 (47) Gligoric, S – Calvo Minguez, R Palma de

Mallorca 1967] 13.e4 f5 14.♔e2 ♔g5 This line looks playable for Black, as White is not very fast with his plan.

### 11...f5

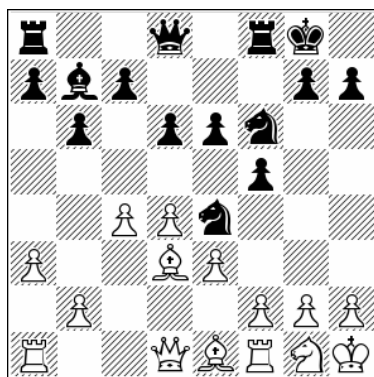
Black's main idea.

11...♔e7 12.♘d2 ♘ef6 13.f3 c5 14.♙h4 An interesting transformation of the position; now we are in some kind of 4.♔c2 line. 14...♞fd8 15.♔e2 White has some edge, with b4 coming soon, ½-½ (44) Badelka, O (2418) – Mendonca, L (2549) chess24.com INT 2021.

### 12.♘d2

White has a very interesting alternative.

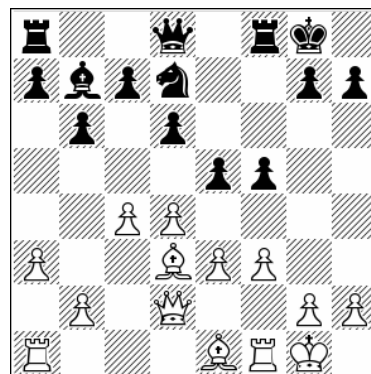
12.♔h1 ♘df6 13.♘g1



Position after: 13.♘g1

The knight retreat might look odd, but White has a plan: the knight will go to h3, and then by playing f3 White will gain back his control over the center. The drawback is that White's play is a bit slow. 13...♘g4! [13...♔e8 14.f3 ♘g5 15.♘e2 ♔h5 16.♘g3 ♔h6 17.d5!? White has managed to carry out his usual strategy when playing with the two bishops, 1-0 (42) Milanovic, D (2496) – Milosevic, M (2312) Belgrade 2019] 14.♔e2 ♔h4 15.h3 ♔h6 Black is fine, just in time to prevent White's plan.

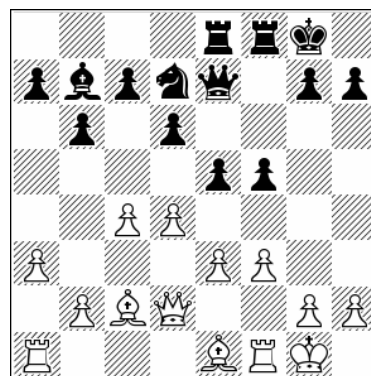
12...♘xd2 13.♔xd2 e5 14.f3!



Position after: 14.f3!

### 14...exd4

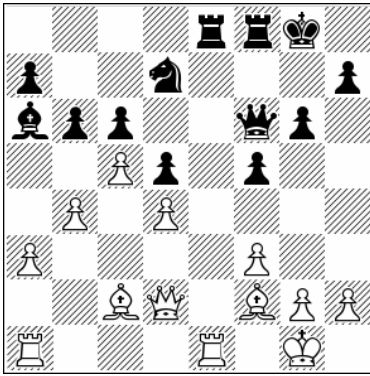
14...♔e7 15.♙c2 ♞ae8



Position after: 15...♞ae8

16.♙f2 Unnecessary. [White should have played 16.b4 exd4 17.exd4 ♔e3+ 18.♔xe3 ♞xe3 19.♙d2 as exchanging queens creates a good endgame for him] 16...♔g5 17.d5 ♔h5 18.b4 ♘f6 19.a4 ♔h8 20.a5 ♙a6 21.♙d3 ♙c8 22.axb6 axb6 23.♞a7 A complicated position, but White has managed to create some disturbance on the queenside, 1-0 (38) Budisavljevic, L (2509) – Babazada, K (2409) Paracin 2021.

15.exd4 ♔f6 16.♙c2 ♞ae8 17.♙f2 d5 18.c5 c6 19.b4 ♙a6 20.♞fe1 g6



Position after: 20...g6

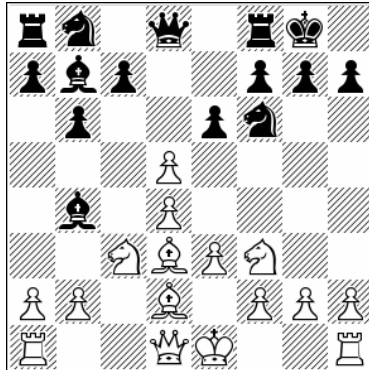
#### 21.a4

Such positions clearly favor White, 1-0 (47) Sonis, F (2529) – Vusatiuk, V (2323) chess.com INT 2021.

# Chapter 4

## 7.♘d3 – Main line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 ♘b7 7.♙d3 d5 8.cxd5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 4 – 7.♘d3 – Main line

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♗f3 ♘b7 7.♙d3 d5 8.cxd5

a) 8...♗xd5

b) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♗bd7

c) 8...exd5 9.0-0 a6

d) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♙d6

e) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♖e8

f) 8...exd5 9.0-0 c5

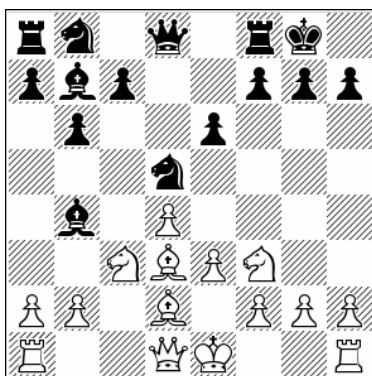
g) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♙e7

## a) 8...♞xd5

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♞f3 ♟b7

Since there are many move orders in the Nimzo when Black fianchettoes his bishop on b7, it is important to cover that system thoroughly. Of course here we are dealing exclusively with positions with a white bishop on d2.

7.♙d3 d5 8.cxd5 ♞xd5



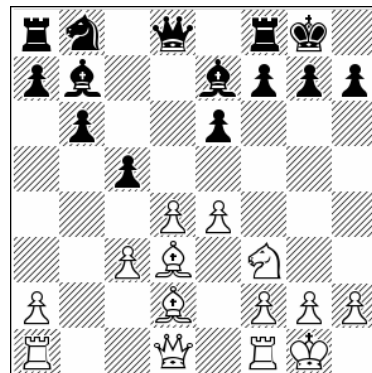
Position after: 8...♞xd5

The recapture by the knight is a hybrid sort of possibility that Black is borrowing from the Petrosian line in the Queen's Indian. It is quite possible to play like this and therefore it has to be analyzed as a legitimate option.

9.♞c2!?

White must be careful here, because pushing e4 at an early stage will actually give Black good versions of the Petrosian Queen's Indian line. White has a couple of options here.

A) 9.e4 ♞xc3 10.bxc3 ♟e7 11.0-0 c5



Position after: 11...c5

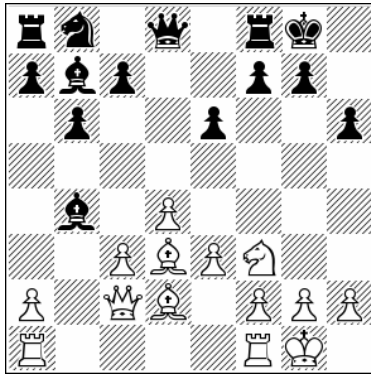
The similarities with the Petrosian Queen's Indian line are obvious, but it seems that having the bishop on d2 is not such a good placement here; it looks more like a wasted move. 12.♞c1 [12.♙e3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♞c6 14.♞c1 ♞d6 15.♞d2 ♞ac8 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8 this seems also playable for Black; 12.♞e2 ♞c6 13.♙e3 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♞b4 already Black has an advantage] 12...♞d7 13.♞e1 ♞e8 14.♙f4 ♞f6 15.♟b1 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♞c8 Black should be happy enough with this.

B) 9.0-0 ♞xc3 [9...c5 10.♞xd5! ♟xd2 11.♞f4 ♟a5 12.♞c2 White has the better game, as the bishop on a5 is out of play] 10.bxc3 ♟e7 11.a4!? c5 12.a5 ♞d7 13.♞e2 Something like this is more to the point, and it's possible for White to create some edge here.

9...h6 10.0-0 ♞xc3

10...♟e7 11.♞xd5 ♟xd5 12.♞ac1 This transposes to the 9.0-0 line given above. 12...♟xf3 13.gxf3 c5 14.dxc5 ♟xc5

11.bxc3



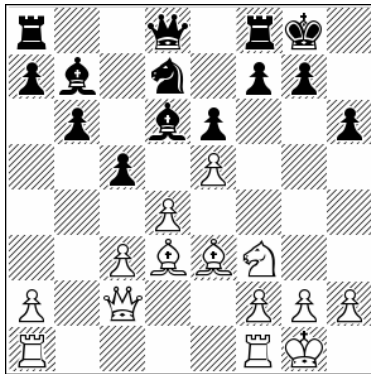
Position after: 11.bxc3

11...♙d6

11...♙e7 12.♙h7+ ♖h8 13.♙e4 ♙xe4 14.♗xe4 ♜d7 15.♗c6 ♜f6 16.c4 White preserves some edge here.

12.e4 c5 13.♙e3 ♜d7 14.e5!

Restricting the knight.



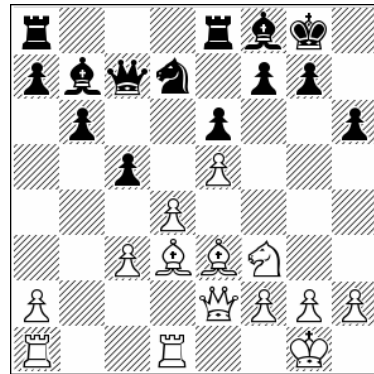
Position after: 14.e5!

## b) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♞bd7

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♜f3 ♙b7 7.♙d3 d5 8.cxd5 exd5

This is of course the main variation. I want to emphasize that this Volume 1 covers all lines with 4.e3 and ♙d2 on move four or later. I am also writing Volume 2 about the Nimzo with 4.e3 and there are positions there which can be reached by transposition from lines in this book, so I decided to exclude all ♙d2 lines from that book. In this way it's very easy to sort out the lines and ideas, including transpositions. So let's get back to this position now.

14...♙e7 15.♗d2 ♖e8 16.♗fd1 ♙f8 17.♗e2 ♗c7

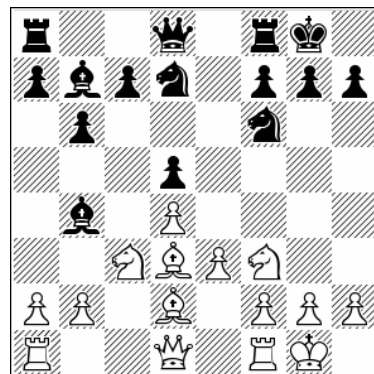


Position after: 17...♗c7

18.♜d2!

A good plan for White – the knight is coming to the strong e4-square and we can say that White is better, 1-0 (39) Holm, K (2456) – Assylov, M (1819) Belgrade 2021.

9.0-0 ♞bd7



Position after: 9...♞bd7

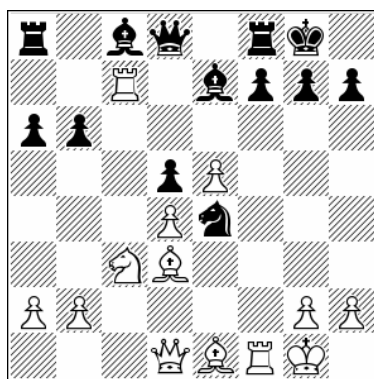
We come to the first of a couple of ideas that Black can use here. It's similar to the section where we have the rook on c1, but here White doesn't need to move the rook but can launch his attacking plan at once.

### 10. ♖e5

Thematic, and indeed the usual plan.

### 10... ♙xc3

**A)** 10... ♙d6 11. f4 c5 12. ♙e1 cxd4 13. exd4 ♘e4 14. ♖b5 ♙e7 15. ♖c1 a6 16. ♖c7!? This game is very interesting on account of the tactical motifs used here. 16... ♖xe5 17. fxe5 ♙c8 18. ♖c3!!

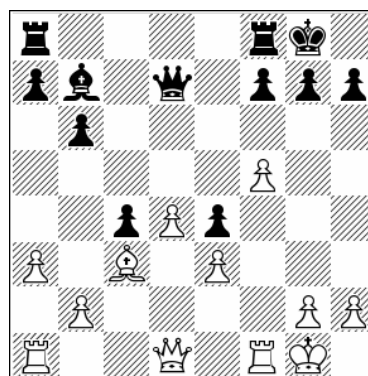


Position after: 18. ♖c3!!

A rare idea, leaving a whole rook en prise. 18... ♙e6 [18... ♖xc7 19. ♖xd5 ♖d8 20. ♙xe4 White is better] 19. ♖b7 ♖xc3 [19... f5 20. ♖b3 White is better, 0-1 (43) Esipenko, A (2564) – Yu Yangyi (2751) Riyadh (blitz) 2017] 20. bxc3 ♙c8 21. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 22. ♖h5 g6 23. ♙h4 gxh5 24. ♙xe7 ♖e8 25. ♙g5 Black is still facing difficulties.

**B)** 10... c5 11. a3 ♙xc3 12. ♙xc3 ♖xe5 13. dxe5 ♖e4 14. ♙e1! Now the game may transpose to analysis that I gave above under 10... ♖xe5 11. dxe5 ♙xc3.

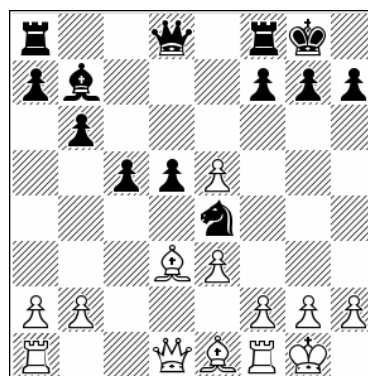
**C)** 10... ♖e7 11. f4 c5 12. ♙e1 ♖e4 13. ♙xe4 dxe4 14. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 15. a3 ♙xc3 16. ♙xc3 c4 17. f5



Position after: 17. f5

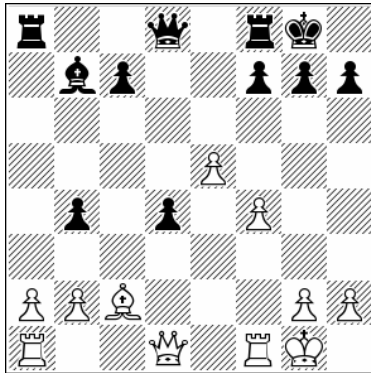
17... f6 18. ♖f4 ♖f7 19. ♖g4 ♙d5 20. ♖af1 a5 21. ♖h3 ♖fd8 22. ♖h4 h6 23. ♖ff4 ♖a7 24. ♖fg4 This is a good game and White has displayed a good plan, but still the position is very much defensible for Black. This game reveals plans for both sides for both attacking and defending, ½-½ (58) Tolush, A – Nikitin, A Leningrad 1957.

**D)** 10... ♖xe5 11. dxe5 ♖d7 [11... ♙xc3 12. ♙xc3 ♖e4 13. ♙b4!? c5 14. ♙e1



Position after: 14. ♙e1

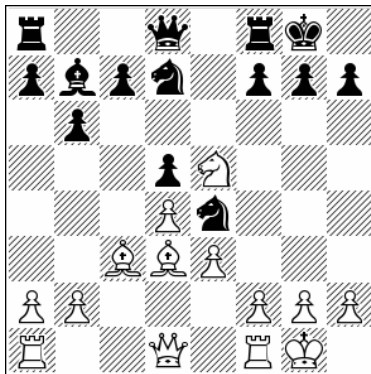
By provoking ...c5 with the ♙b4 move, White has prevented the black knight from moving to the c5-square. Now White is ready for the f3-f4 push. 14... ♖g5 15. f4 ♖f5 16. ♖c2 f6 17. ♙c3 ♖ad8 18. ♖ad1 fxe5 19. ♙xe5 c4 20. ♙xe4 ♖xe4 21. ♖xe4 dxe4 22. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 23. f5 White has the initiative in this endgame.] 12. f4 ♖c5 13. ♙c2 d4 14. ♖a4 a5 15. ♙xb4 axb4 16. ♖xc5 bxc5 17. exd4 cxd4



Position after: 17...cxd4

18.♔d3 Probably best. [18.♖d3 g6 19.♕b3 c5 It appears that here Black has enough counterplay, 0-1 (32) Vetter, U – Meyner, H corr. 2012] 18...g6 [18...h6 19.♖c2 ♖a5 20.a4 bxa3 21.♖xa3 c5 22.♖xa5 ♖xa5 23.♔c4 ♖a8 24.f5 ♔d5 Black is in time to create counterplay, ½-½ (42) Komodo 1.0 – Rybka 3 Internet 2010; 18...♔d5 19.♖c2 h6 20.♖c5 ♖xa2 21.♖xa2 ♔xa2 22.h3 ♔d5 23.♖d1 White has an edge] 19.♖d2 ♖d5 20.♖ae1 ♖fe8 21.♔e4 ♖b5 22.♔xb7 ♖xb7 23.f5 White is clearly better, 1-0 (32) Erigaisi, A (2627) – Le, Q (2709) Kolkata 2021.

11.♔xc3 ♖e4



Position after: 11...♖e4

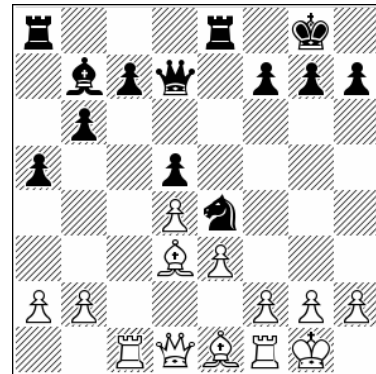
### c) 8...exd5 9.0-0 a6

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♔b4 4.♔d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♖f3 ♔b7 7.♔d3 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 a6

Again we see this little push, to safeguard the bishop when it goes to d6.

12.♔b4!?

12.♖xd7 ♖xd7 13.♔b4 ♖fe8 14.♖c1 a5 15.♔e1



Position after: 15.♔e1

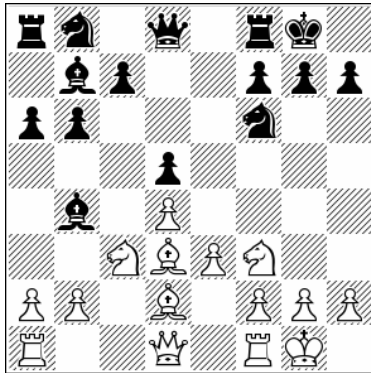
15...♖d6 [15...♔a6 16.♔xa6 ♖xa6 17.♖c2 ♖a7 18.f3 ♖d6 19.♔f2 a4 20.♖fe1 h6 it's bishop versus knight again in a complex position, perhaps a little in White's favor] 16.♖f3 c6 17.♖e2 ♖e6 18.f3 ♖ae8 19.♔f2 h6 20.b3 ♖6e7 21.♖d2 This is a playable game for both sides, perhaps slightly better for White's on account of his bishop pair.

12...♖xe5

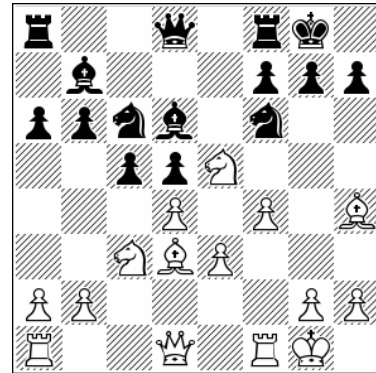
12...c5 13.♖xd7 ♖xd7 14.dxc5 White is better. 14...♖xc5 15.♔c2 ♖ad8 16.♔c3 White has two strong bishops and easy play.

13.dxe5 c5 14.♔e1

We have transposed again! to the note 10...♖xe5 11.dxe5 ♔xc3 in which I analyzed this idea, which is in my opinion worth noting.



Position after: 9...a6

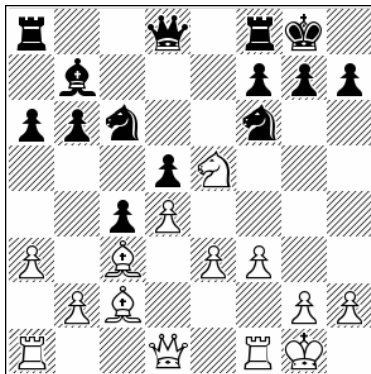


Position after: 13...h4!?

## 10. ♖e5 ♗d6

The main line.

10...c5 11.a3 ♗xc3 12.♗xc3 c4 13.♗c2 ♖c6 14.f3



Position after: 14.f3

14...b5 15.♖d2 ♖d7 16.♖xc6 ♗xc6 17.e4 a5 18.♖ae1 ♖b6 19.♗h1 White's plan is e5, f4 and so on, ½-½ (52) Riazantsev, A (2671) – Anton Guijarro, D (2650) Tallinn (blitz) 2016.

## 11.f4

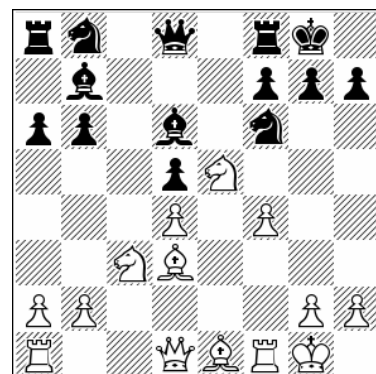
Actually this move order can arise also after 11.f4 c5 12.♗e1 but I decided to use this way to separate out the ideas. As we will see, other options for White here are slightly different in that White goes for direct attack at once and the bishop to e1 move can be implemented later, if needed.

11.♗e1 c5 12.f4

A) 12...♖c6 13.♗h4!?

Now, when Black still has not taken on d4, this is possible to do. 13...♗e7 [13...cxd4 14.♖xd5 ♗xe5 15.fxg6 ♖xd5 16.exf6 g6 17.e4 ♖d7 18.♗g3 this is better for White, ½-½ (46) Zappa Mexico II – Toga II 3.0 Internet 2013] 14.♖f3! (Threat is ♗xf6 and ♗xh7+.) 14...g6 15.f5 cxd4 16.♖xc6 ♗xc6 17.exd4 ♖e4 18.♗xe7 ♖xe7 19.♖c1 With an attack.

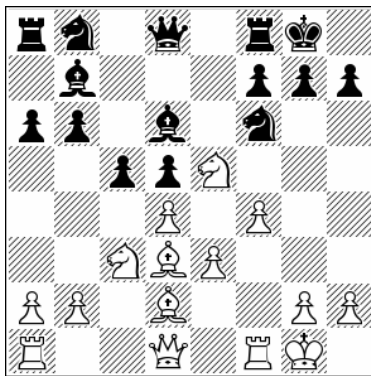
B) 12...cxd4 This move and 12...♖c6 are critical. 13.exd4



Position after: 13.exd4

13...♖c6 [13...♖e4 14.♖xe4 dxe4 15.♗c4 ♖c6 16.♗d5 ♖c8 17.♗xe4 ♖e7 18.♗f2 White is better, as Black doesn't have enough for the sacrificed pawn, 1-0 (41) Hammer, J (2650) – Barsegyan, H (2459) chess.com INT 2019] 14.♗f2 b5 15.♖f3! White must go with his usual plan. If Black pushes his b-pawn to b4, White's c3-knight may become useful on a4 or e2. 15...b4 16.♖a4 ♖e4 17.♖h3 ♖e7 18.♗h4 ♗c8 19.f5 White has the initiative.

11...c5



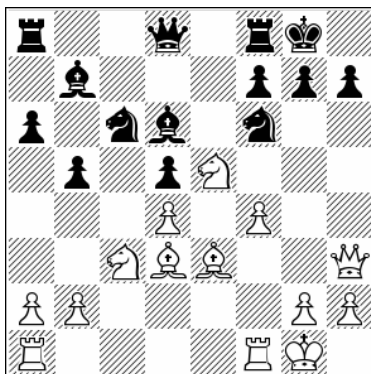
Position after: 11...c5

Best.

### 12. ♖f3

White has other ways to get an attack going.

12. ♖f3 ♗c6 [12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♗c6 14. ♕e3 b5 15. ♖h3!

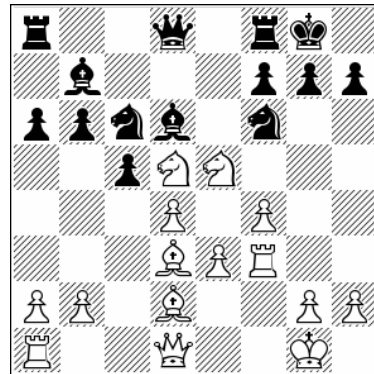


Position after: 15. ♖h3!

White immediately creates a threat and now 15...h6 16.g4 b4 17.g5 ♕c8 18. ♖g2 ♕xe5 19.gxh6! g6 20.fxe5 wins for him] 13. ♖h3 g6 [Black has an interesting alternative. 13...♗b4 14. ♕b1 cxd4 15.exd4 g6 16.f5 ♖e7 17.a3 ♗c6 18. ♗xc6 ♕xc6 19. ♕g5 ♖d8 20. ♕a2 ♕e7 21. ♖ae1 ♕d7 22. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 23. ♖h4 A nice clean win, with everything by the book, 1-0 (23) Cherepkov, A – Pogats, J Leningrad 1962] 14. ♖ad1 cxd4 15. ♗xc6 ♕xc6 16.exd4 ♗e4 17. ♕xe4 dxe4 18.f5 ♖a7 19.d5 ♕c5+ 20. ♗h1 ♕b5 21. ♖f4 f6 22.fxg6 hxg6 23. ♖h4 f5 24. ♖h8+ ♗f7 25. ♖h7+ ♗f6 26. ♕g5+ Yet another good win for White, 1-0 (26) Milos, G (2633) – Kunte, A (2556) New Delhi/Tehran 2000.

### 12... ♗e4

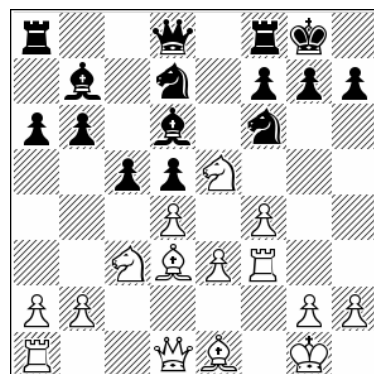
A) 12... ♗c6 13. ♗xd5!



Position after: 13. ♗xd5!

This is a known idea from long ago. 13... ♕xe5 [13... ♗xe5 14. ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 15.dxe5 ♕xf3 16.gxf3 ♕xe5 17.fxe5 ♖xe5 18. ♖c2 White is winning, 1-0 (46) Kummer, G – Pumpa, L corr. 1977; 13... ♖e8 14. ♗xf6+ gx6 15. ♖g3+ ♗f8 16. ♗xf7 White wins on the spot, 1-0 (19) Da Nobrega, A – Pompa, J corr. 1976] 14.fxe5! ♖xd5 15.exf6 g6 16. ♖e1 White is getting a huge attack, probably a winning one.

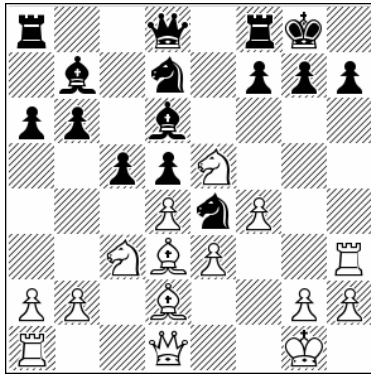
B) 12... ♗bd7 13. ♕e1!



Position after: 13. ♕e1!

This is best and probably new. 13...g6 14. ♕h4 ♕e7 15. ♖e1 b5 [15... ♗e4 16. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 17. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 18.f5 White's attack gets under way] 16.f5 b4 17. ♗a4 White has strong attacking chances.

### 13. ♖h3 ♗d7



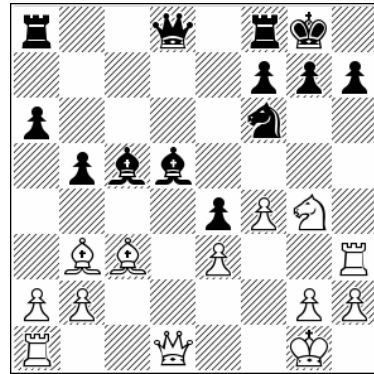
Position after: 13...d7

14. dxe4!

This is best in my opinion.

14. dxd7 ♖xd7 15. ♗h5 h6 16. dxd5 ♙xd5  
 17. ♗xd5 ♗xd2 18. dxc5 ♖fd8 19. cxd6 ♗xd6  
 20. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 This is a long line given by  
 Taimanov some decades ago, but it seems that  
 Black can hold this endgame.

14...dxe4 15. ♙c4 ♗f6 16. dxc5 ♙xc5 17. ♙c3 b5  
 18. ♙b3 ♙d5 19. ♗g4



Position after: 19...g4

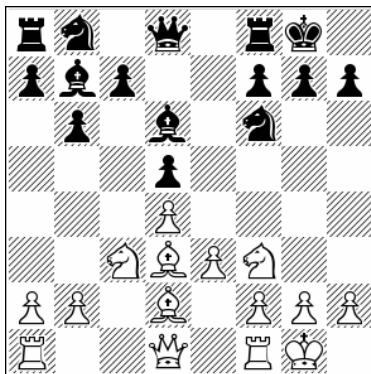
19... ♙xb3 20. ♗xd8 ♖fxd8 21. ♗xf6+ gxf6  
 22. axb3 ♖d6 23. b4 ♙a7 24. ♔f1 ♖ad8 25. g4

White has the edge here.

**d) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♙d6**

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♙b4 4. ♙d2 b6 5. e3 0-0  
 6. ♗f3 ♙b7 7. ♙d3 d5 8. cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 ♙d6!?

A) 10. ♗e5 c5 11. f4 ♗c6 Black is fast now --  
 no ...a6 loss of time, just direct play. 12. ♗g4 ♙e7!

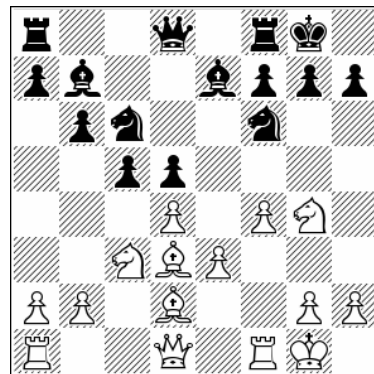


Position after: 9...d6!?

Black is hoping that the prophylactic ...a6 is not  
 really necessary.

10. ♗b5

Best by far. Other moves are not so great, except  
 perhaps for 10. ♗b1!? which is a bit unusual but  
 not bad.

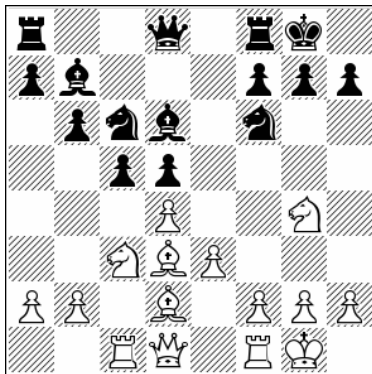


Position after: 12...e7!

It is not easy to find any good response for White,  
 for example 13. ♗f3 ♗xg4 14. ♗xg4 cxd4 15. exd4  
 ♗xd4 16. f5 f6 17. ♔h1 ♗c6 18. ♗xd5 ♗e5  
 19. ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 20. ♙c4+ ♔h8 and Black is  
 better.

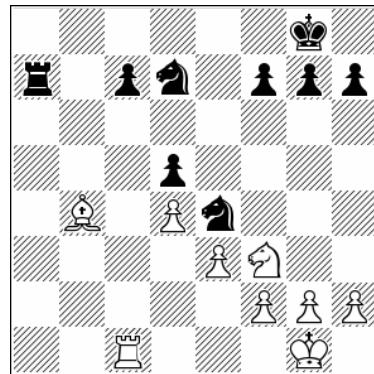
B) 10. ♖c1 c5!? An independent try and it seems  
 to be a good option [10...a6 11. ♗e5 c5 12. f4

transposes to the line that starts with the rook on c1.] 11.♖e5 ♘c6 12.♗g4



Position after: 12.♗g4

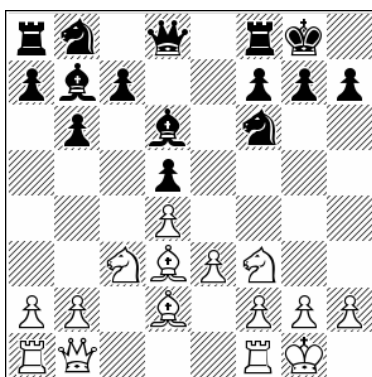
18.♙xd3 ♘xb6 19.♙b5 ♜fb8 20.♗b4 ♚d7  
21.♙xd7 ♘xd7 22.♞xa8 ♞xa8 23.♞c1 ♞a7



Position after: 23...♞a7

12...♗e7 [12...♗xg4 13.♙xg4 c4 14.♗b1 ♖e7  
15.♗b5 f5 16.♙e2 a6 17.♗xd6 ♙xd6 18.f3 b5  
19.♗e1 ♗g6 20.♗a5 ♖e7 21.♗e1 ♗g6 22.♗a5  
♗e7 23.♗e1 ½-½ (23) Nakamura, H (2743) – Giri,  
A (2779) Saint Louis 2019] 13.♗xf6+ ♗xf6  
14.♙h5 [14.dxc5 bxc5 15.e4 ♖e5 16.♗b1 d4  
17.♗a4 c4 18.f4 c3 19.bxc3 ♗c4 this is also OK  
for Black] 14...g6 15.♙xd5 cxd4 16.exd4 Black is  
fine if he now takes on d4 with the bishop, 1-0  
(60) Bluebaum, M (2670) – Navara, D (2697)  
Torneo INT 2020.

C) 10.♙b1!?

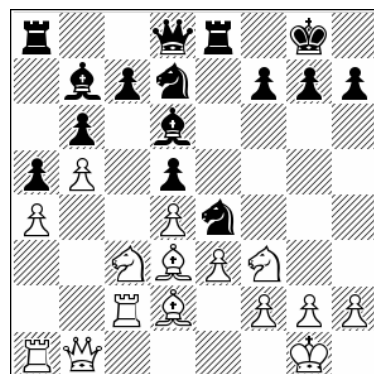


Position after: 10.♙b1!?

C1) 10...♗bd7 11.b4 a6 12.a4 ♚e7 13.b5 axb5  
[13...a5 14.♙a2 ♞ad8 15.♗c1! ♞fe8 16.♗a3 this  
is a good positional plan for White] 14.♗xb5  
♗e4 [14...c5 15.♗xd6 ♙xd6 16.a5 ♞fb8 17.axb6  
c4 18.♗c2 in this interesting position White has  
the bishop pair but Black has a passer on c4] 15.♗xd6  
♙xd6 16.a5 ♗a6 17.axb6 ♗xd3

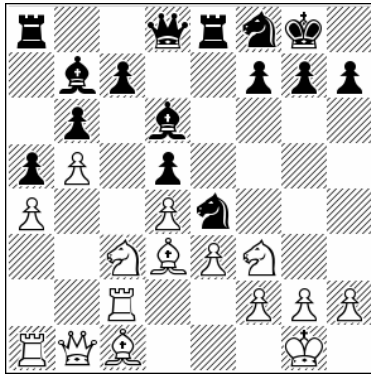
24.♗e1! White has chances to create an  
advantage in this endgame, but the game itself  
has not been forced so there are places where  
Black could play better, ½-½ (57) Zakhartsov, V  
(2506) – Smirnov, P (2544) Anapa 2021.

C2) 10...♞e8 11.b4 a6 [11...♗e4 12.♞c1 a6 13.a4  
♗d7 14.b5 a5 15.♞c2



Position after: 15.♞c2

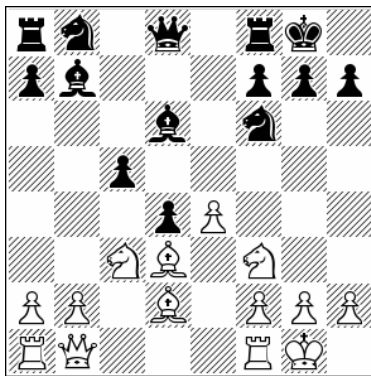
The idea is to reposition the d2-bishop on a3.  
15...♗xd2 16.♗xd2 g6 17.♙b3 ♗f6 18.♞ac1 ♙e7  
19.♗f1 White will try to put pressure on the d5-  
and c7-pawns, but still it's unclear.] 12.♞c1  
[12.a4 ♗c6 13.b5 ♗a5 14.♗a2 ♗c4 15.♗b4 the  
players are in for a complicated game, 1-0 (60)  
Kanyamarala, T (2398) – Tregubov, P (2537)  
chess.com INT 2022] 12...♗bd7 13.a4 ♗f8 14.b5  
a5 15.♞c2 ♗e4 16.♗c1!



Position after: 16.♙c1!

16...g5 17.♙a3 g4 18.♙xd6 cxd6 19.♙xe4 dxe4  
20.♘d2 d5 21.♚d1 h5 22.♞e2 ♞e6 23.♞f1  
White has the edge, 1-0 (44) Sandipan, C (2545)  
– Vaibhav, S (2597) Majitar 2019.

**C3)** 10...c5!? Black's idea here is highly interesting. 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.e4! Critical. 12...d4

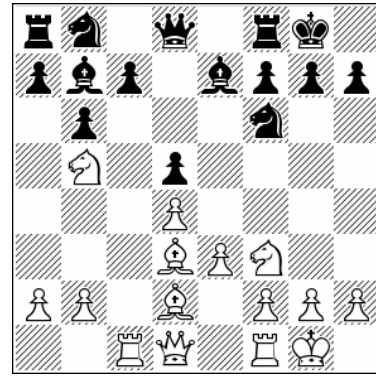


Position after: 12...d4

13.♞b5 [13.e5 dxc3 14.♙xc3 ♙xf3 15.exf6 g6  
16.gxf3 ♞d7 17.♚d1 ♞xf6 Black is not worse  
here] 13...♞c6 14.♞xd6 ♚xd6 15.♚e1 ♚fe8  
16.b4 cxb4 17.a3 a5 18.axb4 axb4 19.♚xa8 ♙xa8  
20.e5 ♞xe5 21.♞xe5 ♚xe5 22.♙xb4 ♚xe1+  
23.♚xe1 ♚b8 24.♙c5 The game is on track for a  
draw, so 10...c5 deserves serious attention here.

### 10...♙e7 11.♚c1

There are transpositions here into the early ♚c1 lines, which doesn't come as surprise because after all Black's options in this line are limited to some extent.

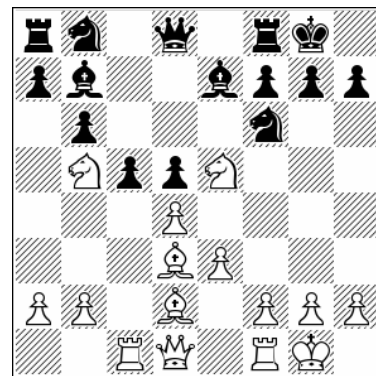


Position after: 11.♚c1

### 11...c6

**A)** Black can't set a trap here: 11...a6 12.♞xc7  
♚a7 13.♚b3 ♚d6 14.♚c2 ♙c6 15.♞xa6 ♚xa6  
16.♙xa6 ♞xa6 17.♚xb6 ♙a4 18.♚xd6 ♙xd6  
19.b3 ♙b5 20.♚a1 and White is better.

### B) 11...c5 12.♞e5



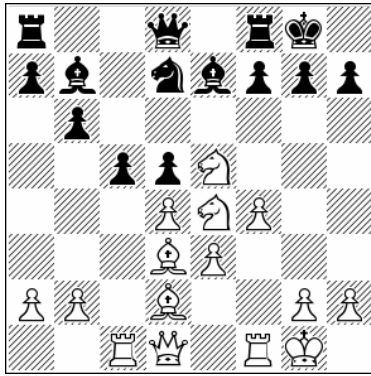
Position after: 12.♞e5

12...♞c6 [12...♞bd7 13.♙e1!? a6 14.♞c3 ♚c8  
15.f4 again we have similar positions, all in the  
spirit of the line] 13.♞c6 ♙xc6 14.dxc5 bxc5  
15.♞d4 cxd4 16.♚xc6 ♚d7 17.♚c2 White has  
the advantage, 1-0 (36) Ikonnikov, V (2497) –  
Elgersma, O (2258) Vlissingen 2019.

### 12.♞c3 ♞bd7

12...c5 13.♞e5 ♞c6 We have already analyzed  
this in the section with the rook on c1 and  
bishop on e7.

### 13.♞e5 c5 14.f4 ♞e4 15.♞xe4!



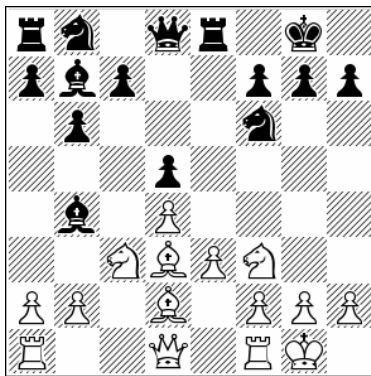
Position after: 15. Nxe4!

15... dxe4 16. Bb5

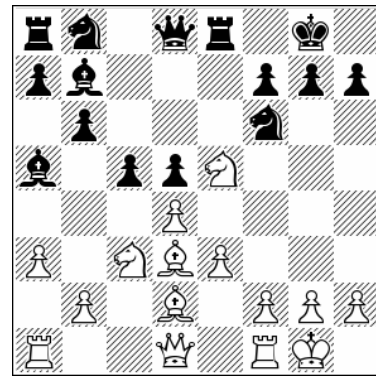
The game transposes to early Bc1 lines where Black retreats his bishop to e7.

**e) 8...exd5 9.0-0 Bc8**

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Bd2 b6 5. e3 0-0  
6. Nf3 Bb7 7. Bd3 d5 8. cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 Bc8



Position after: 9... Bc8



Position after: 11... Ba5

Here we deal in lines without the Bc1 move, since otherwise it would directly transpose.

10. Ne5

The usual plan.

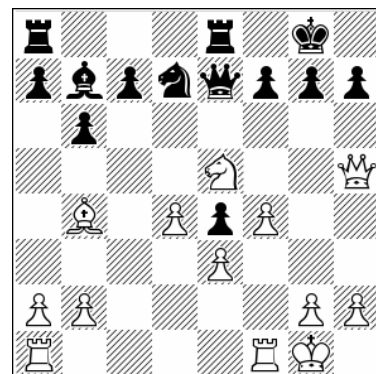
10... Bf8

A logical retreat, but Black does have a few other options.

A) 10... c5 11. a3 Ba5

[11... cxd4 12. axb4! Bxe5 13. exd4 Bc8 14. b5 White has an edge] 12. b4! cxb4 13. Ne2 bxa3 14. Bxa5 bxa5 15. Wc1 Bc6 16. Bxa3 Nc6 17. Wa1 White is better.

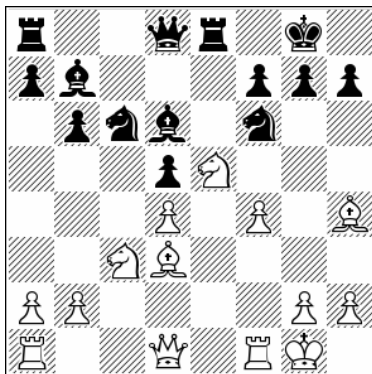
B) 10... Nbd7 11. f4 Bxc3 [11... a6 12. Bc1 Be7 13. Wf3 c5 14. Wh3 c4 15. Bb1 Nf8 16. Be1 b5 17. Bh4 b4 18. Ne2 Bc8 19. Ng3 White has adopted a good attacking plan, 1-0 (28) Harika, D (2515) – Abrahamyan, T (2358) chess.com INT 2020] 12. Bxc3 Ne4 13. Wh5 We7 14. Bxe4 dxe4 15. Bb4!



Position after: 15. Bb4!

15...c5 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♞fd1 ♞ad8 18.♞xd8 ♞xd8 19.♞d1 ♞d5 20.♙xc5 bxc5 21.♞xd5 ♙xd5 22.♞d1 ♞b7 23.b3 White has some chances to play on for an advantage.

C) 10...♙d6 11.f4 c5 12.♙e1 cxd4 13.exd4 ♖c6 14.♙h4!

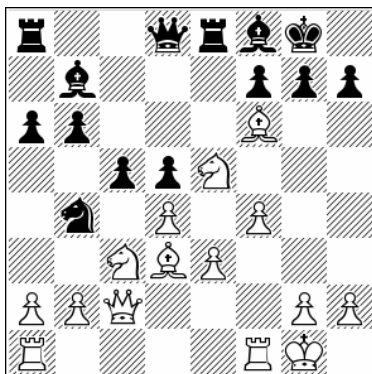


Position after: 14. ♙h4!

An important point. With his rook on e8 Black has to worry about ♙xh7+, which can often be a winning idea. 14...♖xd4 [14...♙e7 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 17.♞h5+ ♔g8 18.♞xf7+ ♔h7 19.♞f3 White wins immediately] 15.♙xh7+ ♔xh7 16.♖xf7 ♞d7 17.♖xd6 ♞xd6 18.♞xd4 White has gained the advantage. 18...♖e4 19.♞ad1 ♖xc3 20.bxc3 ♞h6 21.♞f3 ♞e4 22.♞d2 ♔g8 23.♙f2 Next the bishop comes to the fantastic d4-square with a big advantage.

**11.f4 c5**

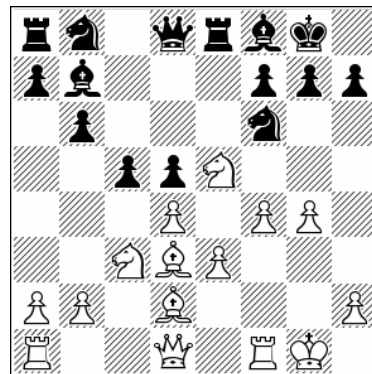
11...a6 12.♞c2 c5 13.♙e1 ♖c6 14.♙h4 ♖b4 15.♙xf6



Position after: 15. ♙xf6

15...gxf6 [15...♖xc2 16.♙xd8 ♖xa1 17.♙xb6 c4 18.♙f5 g6 19.♙b1 f6 20.♖g4 ♔g7 21.f5 White is looking good] 16.♙xh7+ ♔g7 17.♞f5! The winning move, 1-0 (22) Frolyanov, D (2542) – Baches Garcia, G (2329) chess.com INT 2020.

**12.g4!**



Position after: 12.g4!

This is typical in such lines.

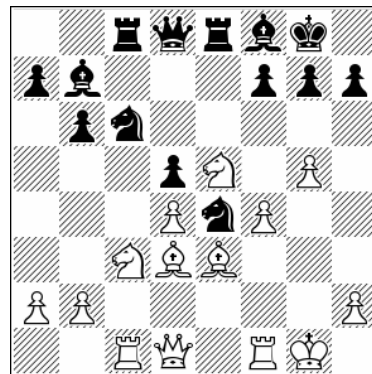
**12...cxd4**

12...♖c6 13.g5 ♖xe5 14.fxe5 ♖e4 15.h4 ♞d7 16.♙e1 ♞h3 17.♞f3 ♞xf3 18.♞xf3 White has better prospects in this endgame.

**13.exd4 ♖e4 14.♙b5!?**

White is going for direct play.

14.g5 ♖c6 15.♙e3 ♞c8 16.♞c1

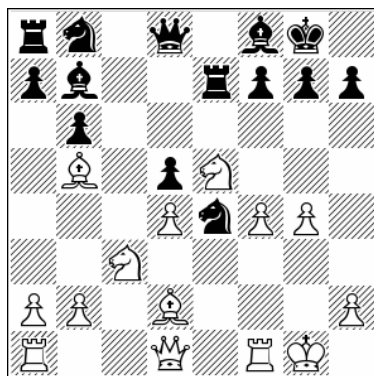


Position after: 16. ♞c1

A tough position to play. 16...♖d6 [16...g6 17.♖g4 ♙g7 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.d5 ♖b4 20.♙d4

♞d3 21.♙xg7 ♔xg7 22.♚a4 again White has developed a dangerous attack; 16...a6? 17.♞xe4 dxe4 18.♞xf7! ♔xf7 19.♙c4+ ♔e7 20.f5 White's attack should bring victory] 17.♚f3 g6 18.♞b5 ♞e4 19.h4 ♙g7 20.a3 What a complex position.

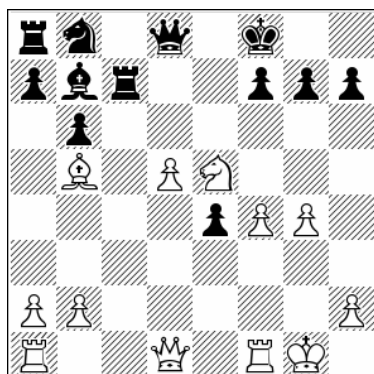
14...♞e7



Position after: 14...♞e7

15.♞c1!?

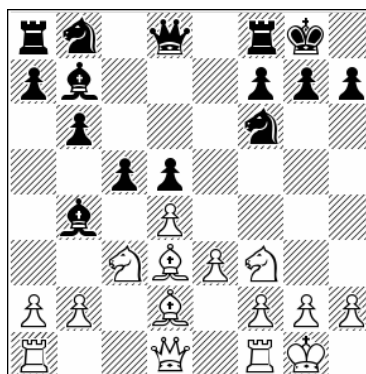
15.♞xe4 dxe4 16.♙b4 ♞c7 17.♙xf8 ♔xf8 18.d5!



Position after: 18.d5!

## f) 8...exd5 9.0-0 c5

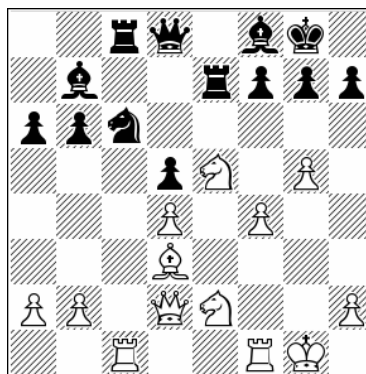
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 b6 5.e3 0-0  
6.♞f3 ♙b7 7.♙d3 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 c5



Position after: 9...c5

18...♞c5 19.♚e2! The point is to keep the black knight on b8 as long as possible. [less clear is 19.♙c4 ♞d7, ½-½ (35) Pogorelov, R (2383) – Barsegyan, H (2463) Barcelona 2020] 19...f6 20.♙c4 b5 21.♙b3 ♚b6 22.♔h1 e3 23.♚xe3 ♞xd5 24.♚xb6 axb6 25.♙xd5 ♙xd5+ 26.♞f3 White is better.

15...a6 16.♙d3 ♞xd2 17.♚xd2 ♞c6 18.♞e2 ♞c8 19.g5



Position after: 19.g5

19...♞ec7 20.♞g4

White has serious attacking chances.

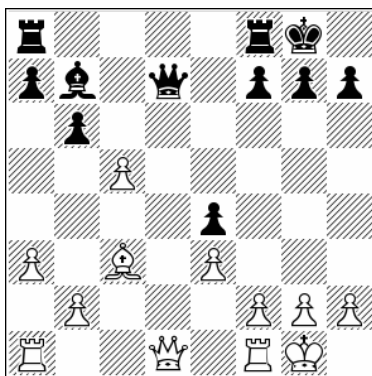
Black plays actively, but he will probably have to give up the bishop pair after a3 at some moment.

**10. ♖e5**

That is also a good way to handle this particular line.

**10... ♖c6**

10... ♖bd7 11.a3 ♘xc3 12.♘xc3 ♖e4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♖xd7 ♜xd7 15.dxc5

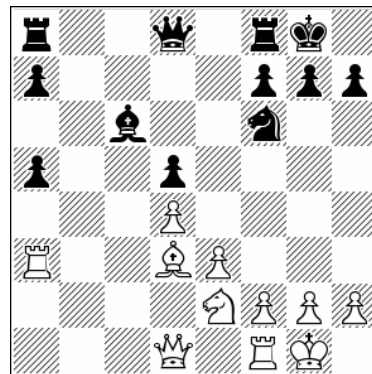


Position after: 15.dxc5

15... ♜xd1 16.♜fxd1 bxc5 17.♜d6! White has the edge, and the opposite-colored bishops can make Black's defense difficult, 1-0 (38) Jussupow, A (2630) – Ikonnikov, V (2485) Clichy 1993.

**11.a3 ♘xc3**

11... ♘a5 12.b4 cxb4 13.♖xc6 ♘xc6 14.♖e2 bxa3 15.♘xa5 bxa5 16.♜xa3



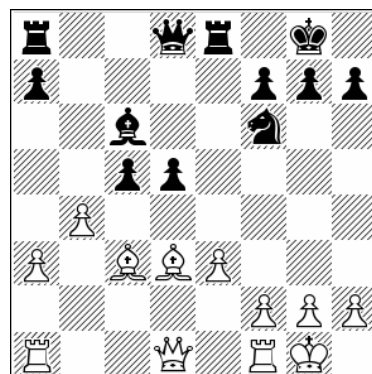
Position after: 16.♜xa3

16...a4 17.♖c3 ♜d6 18.♜a2 a5 19.♖xa4 ♜fb8 20.♜c2 White's position is slightly preferable.

**12. ♘xc3 ♜e8**

12... ♖xe5 13.dxe5 ♖e4 14.♘e1! See my remark from the 9... ♖bd7 lines, where we got to this position through a slightly different move order.

**13. ♖xc6 ♘xc6 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.b4!**



Position after: 15.b4!

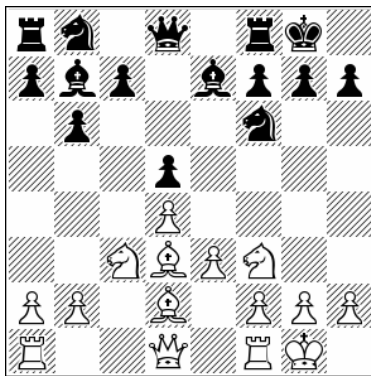
**15...d4 16.exd4 cxd4 17.♘b2**

Gligoric twice played this position with success. We can say that the bishop pair is strong here, 1-0 (50) Gligoric, S (2560) – Bukic, E (2495) Donji Milanovac 1979.

## g) 8...exd5 9.0-0 ♘e7

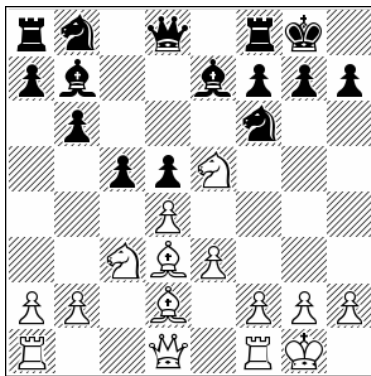
1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♘b4 4.♘d2 b6 5.e3 0-0 6.♖f3 ♘b7 7.♘d3 d5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 ♘e7

Black straight away moves his bishop back, and now his main plan is ...c5 and ...♖c6.



Position after: 9...e7

### 10. d5 c5



Position after: 10...c5

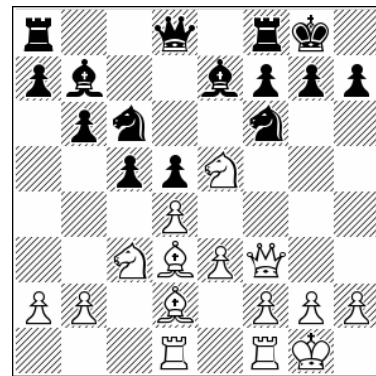
I will focus only on lines where White doesn't play Bc1, because that has already been covered in the section where we deal with the early Bc1 move.

### 11. e1

There are other moves, but it seems that the traditional way of supporting the knight with f4 is a bit slow now.

**A)** 11.f4 c6 12.d2 [12.f3 cxd4 13.dxc6 dxc6 14.exd4 d4 15.e3 e8 16.Bac1 f6 17.f5 c8 18.h1 b7 Black is doing fine here, ½-½ (54) Yu Yangyi (2751) – Wang Hao (2709) Riyadh 2017] 12...d4 13.e4 dxe4 14.dxc6 dxc6 15.e3 b5 16.f2 d3 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.dg3 f6 19.f6 xf6 20.g4 ab8 White didn't manage to create the usual setup, so we can say that Black is fine, ½-½ (32) So, W (2772) – Le Quang Liem (2709) chess24.com INT 2021.

### B) 11. f3 c6 12. ad1

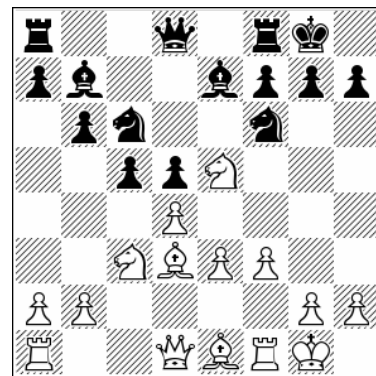


Position after: 12...ad1

12...cxd4 [12...d6 13.dg4! dxg4 14.fxg4 White is well placed now for a battle in the center; 12...d6 13.fg3 e6 14.f4 now we have established the usual setup] 13.dxc6 dxc6 14.exd4 This is an interesting position, known from many other openings. White has some edge and his priority will be to exchange the dark-squared bishops and use the e5-outpost for further pressure. 14...e8 15.fef1 h6 16.h3 d6 17.f4! ex1+ 18.fxe1 xf4 19.fxf4 c8 20.e5 c7 21.f3 f8 22.f5 e8 23.d2 White is ready to take on e5 with the d4-pawn. We can say that there is pressure here, ½-½ (51) Artemiev, V (2704) – Le, Q (2709) chess24.com INT 2021.

### 11... c6 12. f3!?

In this rare position White is ready to deploy his bishop on h4, which is logical play and a transformation to a QGD type of structure.

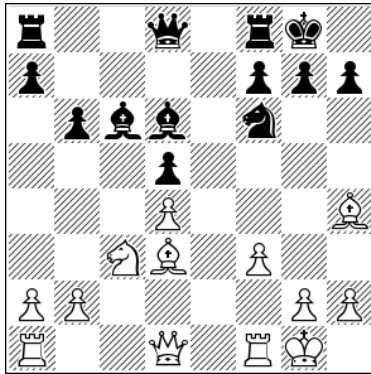


Position after: 12...f3!?

12...cxd4

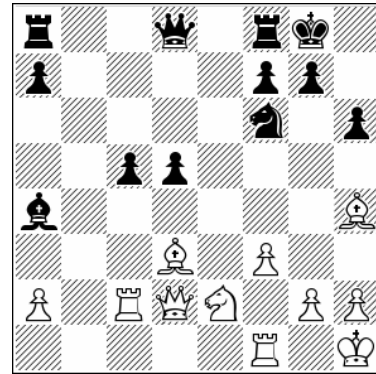
12...♙d6 13.♘xc6 ♜xc6 14.♙h4 ♙e7 15.b3  
Preventing black plans with ...c4 and ...b5.  
15...♞e8 16.♞c1 An interesting game lies ahead  
of us.

13.♘xc6 ♜xc6 14.exd4 ♙d6 15.♙h4



Position after: 15.♙h4

15...h6 16.♞c1 ♙f4 17.♞c2 ♙e3+ 18.♚h1 ♙xd4  
19.♜e2 ♙c5 20.b4 ♙a4 21.bxc5 bxc5 22.♞d2



Position after: 22.♞d2

22...♙xc2 23.♙xc2

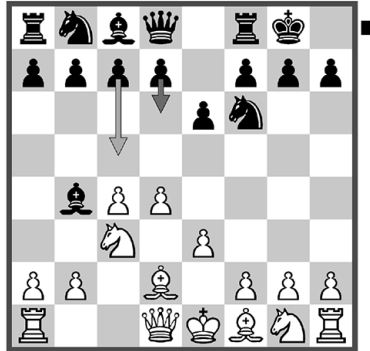
White is better, 1-0 (34) Fedoseev, V (2683) –  
Cheparinov, I (2667) Hengshui 2019.

**Part II**  
**4.  0-0**

# Chapter 5

## 5...c5 & 5...d6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3



### Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – 5...c5 & 5...d6

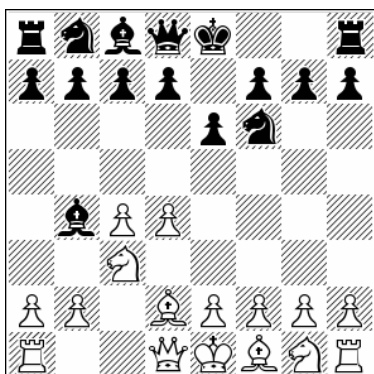
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3

a) 5...c5

b) 5...d6

## a) 5...c5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.♙d2

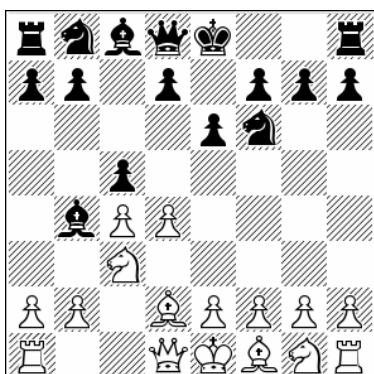


Position after: 4.♙d2

In this subchapter we will closely examine lines where Black immediately goes ...c5.

4...0-0

4...c5

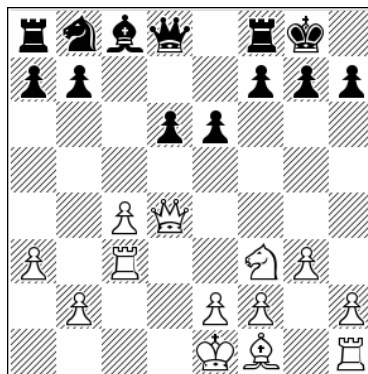


Position after: 4...c5

This is closely connected to main-line systems, so I will analyze them together. 5.a3 This is the thematic reply. In many ♙d2 lines, whenever Black goes ...c5 the usual reaction is a3 because in this way White takes the bishop pair without doubling his pawns, which is his main strategic idea. 5...♙xc3 6.♙xc3 ♗e4 7.♖c1

**A)** 7...♖f6 8.♗f3 ♖b6 9.g3! 0-0 10.♙g2 ♙b7 11.dxc5 ♗xc3 12.♖xc3 bxc5 13.♖d6 This favors White.

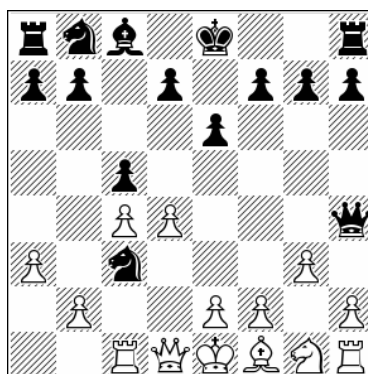
**B)** 7...♗xc3 8.♖xc3 ♖b6 [8...cxd4 9.♖xd4 0-0 10.♗f3 d6 11.g3!



Position after: 11.g3!

11...♗c6 12.♖d2 e5 13.♙g2 ♙g4 14.0-0 ♖e7 15.♖d1 ♖fd8 16.h3 ♙f5 17.♗e1 White has gained an edge] 9.e3! d6 10.♗e2 ♗d7 11.g3! ♗f6 12.♙g2 0-0 13.0-0 e5 14.♖b3 ♖c7 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♗c3 White has earned the better chances, 1-0 (52) Certic, B (2396) – Drazic, S (2463) Belgrade 2003.

**C)** 7...♖h4!? 8.g3 ♗xc3

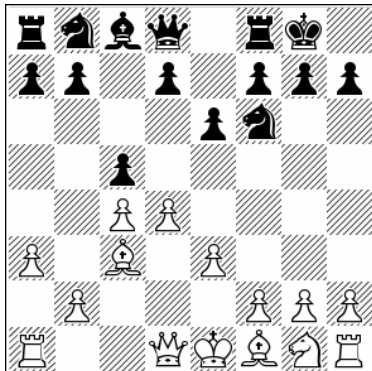


Position after: 8...♗xc3

9.bxc3! The only way to play for an advantage [9.gxh4 ♗xd1 10.♖xd1 cxd4 11.♗f3 ♗c6 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 ♖b6 14.♙g2 ♖b8 15.0-0 ♙b7 Black has equalized, ½-½ (78) Cardon, H (2404) – Bluebaum, M (2626) Netherlands 2017]. 9...♖e7 10.♙g2 0-0 [taking the pawn is possible but White has enough play for that after 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖xa3 12.♗f3 ♖b4+ 13.♗d2

♞c6 14.e3 0-0 15.0-0 ♖e7 16.♞e4] 11.♞f3 d6  
 12.0-0 ♞c6 13.♞e1 e5 14.♞c2 f5 15.♞b1 ♔h8  
 16.dxc5 dxc5 17.♞e3 f4 18.♞d5 ♖f7 19.♞b5  
 Chances for both sides.

5.e3 c5 6.a3 ♟xc3 7.♟xc3

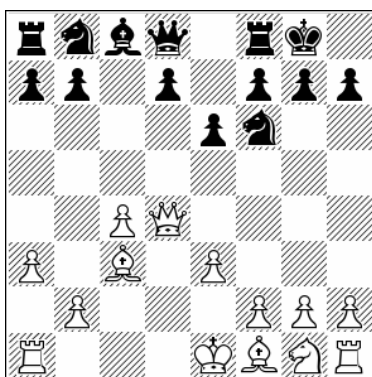


Position after: 7.♟xc3

7...♞e4

This is one of two ideas in which Black tries to exchange two minor pieces in the early stages of the game in order to ease his play. On the other hand, White will try to profit from his extra space and somewhat faster development.

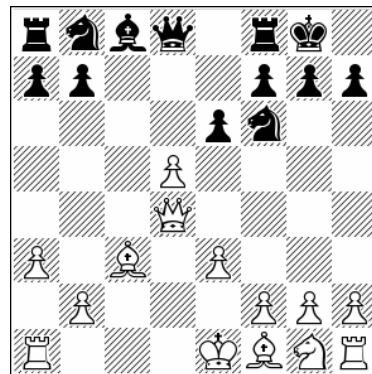
7...cxd4 8.♞xd4



Position after: 8.♞xd4

Black is trying to speed up his development, but his problem here is that the white bishop on c3 is very good.

A) 8...d5 9.cxd5

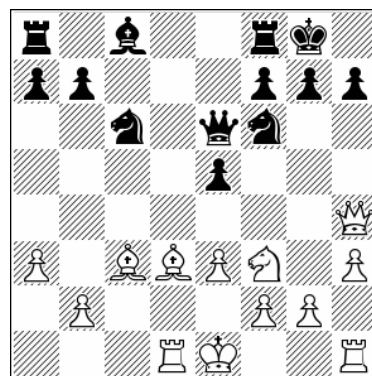


Position after: 9.cxd5

This is the right choice.

**A1)** 9...exd5 10.♟d3 ♞c6 11.♞h4 ♞e4 12.♞xd8 ♞xd8 13.♟xe4! dxe4 14.♞e2 This endgame is not equal; we can say it's unclear, but at this early stage in my opinion it's easier to handle with White, 1-0 (46) Ivanisevic, I (2574) – Pavlovic, M (2482) Valjevo 2018.

**A2)** 9...♞xd5 10.♞h4! This is the key to playing for advantage. 10...e5 11.♞d1 ♖e6 12.♟c4 ♖f5 13.♟d3 ♖e6 14.♞f3 ♞c6 15.h3!

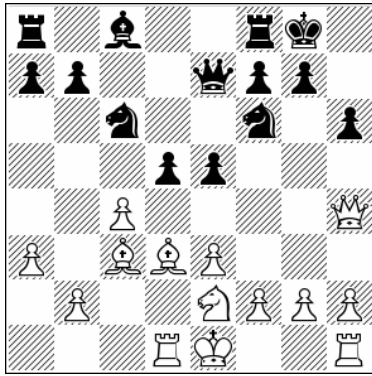


Position after: 15.h3!

15...h6 16.g4 White has a winning position.

**B)** 8...♞c6 9.♞h4 e5 [9...d5 10.♟xf6 ♖xf6 11.♞xf6 gxf6 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♞f3 ♟g4 14.♟e2 ♞fd8 15.h3 ♟xf3 16.♟xf3 d4 17.♟xc6 bxc6 18.0-0 dxe3 19.fxe3 White has the more pleasant endgame, ½-½ (40) Paravyan, D (2647) – Oparin, G (2652) lichess.org INT 2021]

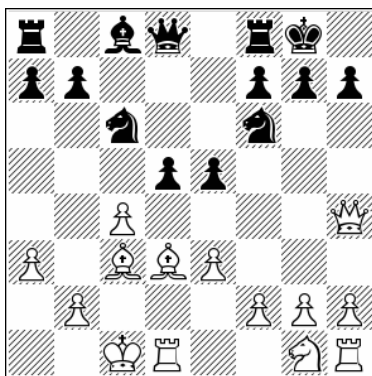
**B1)** 10.♞d1 ♖e7 11.♟d3 h6 12.♞e2 d5



Position after: 12...d5

13.cxd5 [13.0-0 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♙e6! 15.♙b5 ♙b3 16.♖c1 ♘d5 17.♚xe7 ♘dx7 18.f4 both sides have their chances, ½-½ (44) Ivanchuk, V (2678) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2699) Torneo INT 2021] 13...♘xd5 14.♚xe7 ♘dx7 15.♙c4! ♖b8 16.b4 b5 17.♙a2 ♙e6 18.♙e6 fxe6 19.0-0 ♘d5 20.♖c1 ♖bc8 21.♖fd1 White has some advantage, although his pawn structure is seriously compromised.

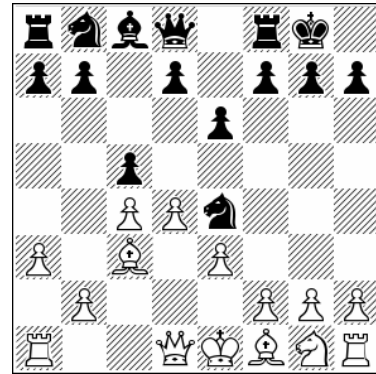
**B2)** 10.♙d3 It seems that White should not worry about preventing ...d5 directly. 10...d5 11.0-0-0!



Position after: 11.0-0-0!

This is the key here. 11...d4 [11...♙e6 12.♘f3! That's the crucial difference: now the knight is also attacking the e5-pawn. 12...h6 13.♙c2 ♚c7 14.♖hg1! ♖ac8 15.g4 White has better chances.] 12.exd4 exd4 13.♙c2 ♚c7 14.♖xd4! Not forced, but I prefer this over recapturing with the bishop. 14.♙xd4 14...♘xd4 15.♙xd4 ♖e8 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♘f3 ♙e6 18.♘d2 f5 19.♚g5+ ♗h8 20.♚f6+ ♗g8 21.g4 fxe4 22.h3 The engines claim 0.00 but

it's more unpleasant to defend this position with Black.



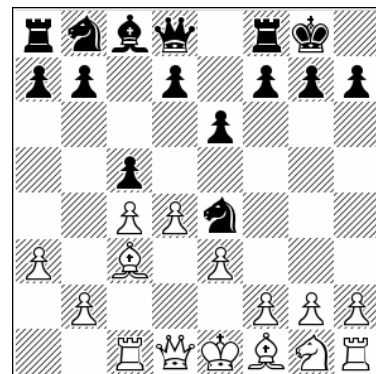
Position after: 7...♗e4

### 8.♘e2!?

A new and interesting idea, which explains why many players prefer 5.e3 instead of, for example, 5.♘f3. White is ready to recapture on c3 with the knight and that's a refreshing positional idea. White has other moves that are more traditional.

**A)** 8.♚c2 ♘xc3 9.♚xc3 cxd4 10.♚xd4 ♘c6 11.♚c3 b6 12.♘f3 ♙b7 13.♙e2 ♖c8 14.b4 d5 This is OK for Black, who has managed to exchange two minor pieces in a good way, ½-½ (38) Rakotomaharo, F (2430) – Fier, A (2539) Cannes 2020.

### B) 8.♖c1

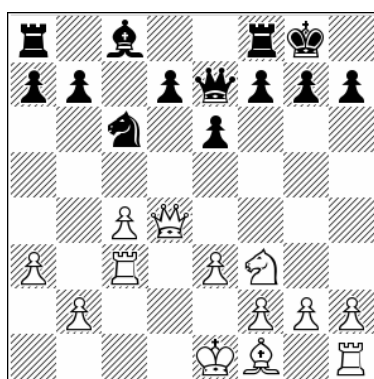


Position after: 8.♖c1

This is the classical move in this line and we will see it often.

**B1)** 8...d6 This is another solid way. Black will eventually eliminate the c3-bishop and will try to advance ...e5 in order to confront White in the center. 9.♘d3 ♗xc3 10.♞xc3 e5! 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗f3 ♕e7 13.♙e4 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♗f6 This is good strategy by Black, 0-1 (39) Khademalsharieh, S (2490) – Naiditsch, A (2663) Sharjah 2021.

**B2)** 8...♗xc3 A solid though not very ambitious line that gives Black safe play. 9.♞xc3 cxd4 10.♕xd4 [10.exd4 d5 11.♗f3 ♗c6 this is always considered to be good for Black] 10...♕e7 11.♗f3 ♗c6



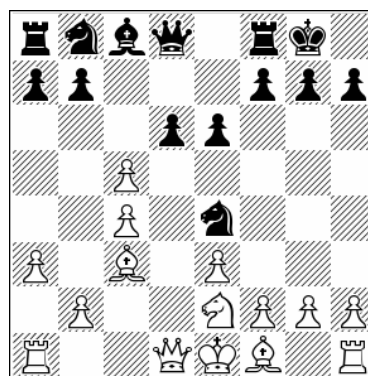
Position after: 11...♗c6

12.♕h4!? [12.♕d2 d6 13.♘d3 f5 14.0-0 e5 15.♙c2 ♙e6 Black is OK here] 12...b6 13.♘d3 h6 14.♕xe7 ♗xe7 15.0-0 ♙b7 16.♗d4 Also this type of endgame we can consider equal.

**8...b6**

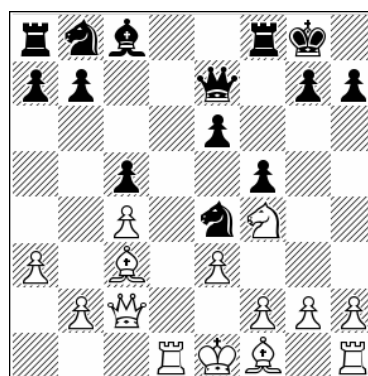
Indeed this is a logical continuation, but Black does have a few other options.

**A)** 8...d6 9.dxc5



Position after: 9.dxc5

9...dxc5 [9...♗xc3 10.♗xc3 dxc5 11.♕c2 ♗c6 12.♘d3 h6 13.0-0 ♕e7 14.f4 b6 15.g4 ♙b7 16.♞hg1 White has attacking chances, 1-0 (20) Bluebaum, M (2647) – Bazeev, G (2380) chess.com INT 2022] 10.♕c2 f5 11.♞d1 ♕e7 12.♗f4!

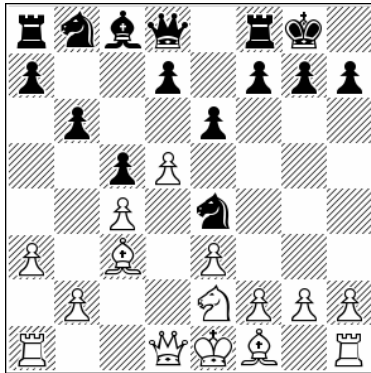


Position after: 12.♗f4!

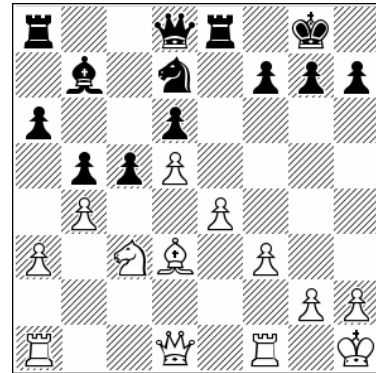
White is ready to prevent the natural ...e5 plan. 12...♘d7 13.♙e2 ♙c6 14.0-0 ♗xc3 15.♕xc3 ♗d7 16.b4 White has some edge.

**B)** The provocative 8...♕h4 9.g3 ♕f6 10.f4 does not seem to offer Black much. 10...♗xc3 11.♗xc3 cxd4 12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.exd4 Black did not manage to find a satisfactory solution to his opening problems, ½-½ (41) Schleining, Z (2344) – Berend, E (2349) Bucharest 2019.

**9.d5**



Position after: 9.d5



Position after: 17.b4

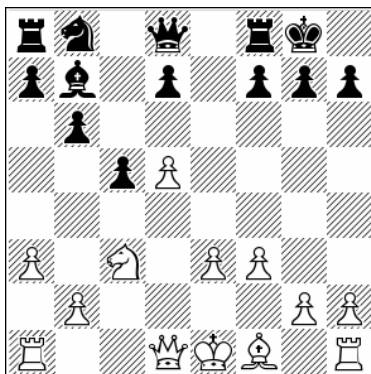
The critical response.

**9...♙a6**

That's direct play, but there are other plans.

**A) 9...exd5 10.♖xd5 ♜xc3 11.♞xc3 ♜c6 12.♞d1 ♜e7 13.♙e2 ♞d8 14.♞b5 ♞b8 15.♞d6** White has already gained a big advantage, 1-0 (53) Vidit, S (2726) – Bulmaga, I (2440) chess.com INT 2021.

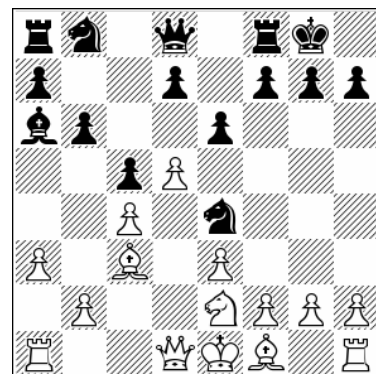
**B) 9...♙b7 10.f3 ♜xc3 11.♞xc3 exd5 12.cxd5**



Position after: 12.cxd5

This is a controversial decision. White could do without it, as we have seen earlier. 17...♞f6 18.♞d2 ♞ac8 19.♞ac1 ♞e5 20.♙e2 ♞g6 The position is just unclear, ½-½ (40) Kryakvin, D (2570) – Khegay, D (2528) Sevastopol 2021.

**C) 9...d6 10.f3** Not the only option. 10...♞xc3 11.♞xc3 e5 12.♙d3 f5 13.♞d2 ♞d7 14.0-0 a6 This is also an unclear position. Black could use some typical King's Indian ideas such as the ...e4 pawn sac in order to get the powerful e5 square for his knight, ½-½ (51) Suleymenov, A (2440) – Azarov, S (2604) Chelyabinsk 2021.



Position after: 9...♙a6

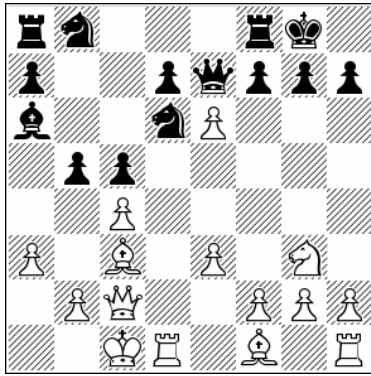
Now we have some hybrid of the Nimzo and the Benoni. In this particular case I think that White has preferable chances; somehow Black's pieces are not ideally placed. 12...♞e8 [12...d6 13.e4 a6 14.♙d3 b5 15.♞d2 ♞d7 16.0-0 ♞f6 17.♞h1 ♞e5 18.♙e2 g5 19.♞d1 ♞g6 20.♞e3 ♙c8 21.g3 ♙h3 22.♞f2 such positions tend to favor White, 0-1 (60) Anton Guijarro, D (2675) – Nakamura, H (2736) chess24.com INT 2020] 13.e4 d6 14.♙d3 a6 15.0-0 b5 16.♞h1 ♞d7 17.b4

**10.b3**

That is one possible idea, probably the strongest, but still there are some other ideas to be checked.

**A) 10.♞c2**

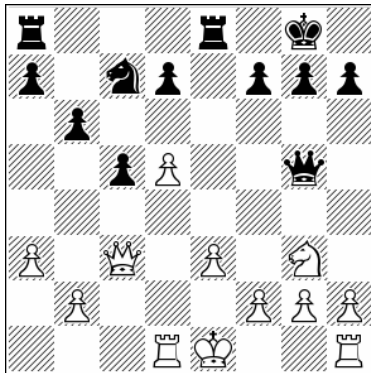
**A1) 10...♞d6 11.0-0-0 ♞e7 12.♞g3! b5 13.dxe6!**



Position after: 13.dxe6!

13...fxe6 [13...dxe6 14.♙e5 ♖e8 15.cxb5 White is already winning] 14.♞xd6! ♚xd6 15.cxb5 ♙b7 16.♙d3 Great attacking play by White.

**A2)** 10...exd5 11.cxd5 ♞e8 12.♘g3 ♘xc3 13.♙xa6 ♘xa6 14.♚xc3 ♘c7 15.♞d1 ♚g5

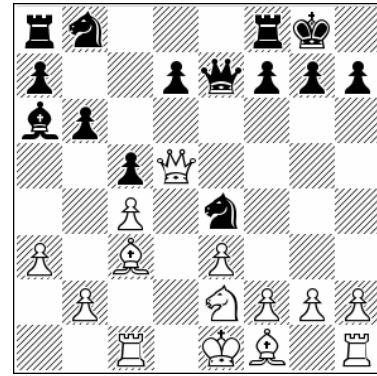


Position after: 15...♚g5

**A2.1)** 16.♚d3 ♚g6 17.♚xg6 hxg6 It seems that Black is doing OK in this endgame. He has better development and the fact that White didn't manage to connect the d5-e4-f3 structure in time gives Black opportunities to create play, 1-0 (44) Praggnanandhaa, R (2608) – Bjerre, J (2542) chess24.com INT 2021.

**A2.2)** 16.♚c4 d6 17.0-0 Another interesting setup, most likely balanced but personally I prefer the knight on g3 to its counterpart on c7.

**B)** 10.♚d3 exd5 11.♚xd5 ♚e7 12.♞c1!?



Position after: 12.♞c1!?

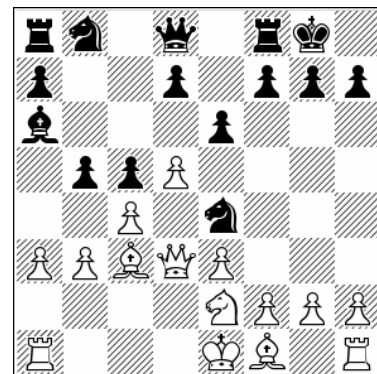
12...♘c6 13.♘g3 ♘xc3 14.♞xc3 ♚e6 15.♙e2 ♚xd5 [15...♘e7 16.♚f3 ♞ad8 17.0-0 d5 18.cxd5 ♙xe2 19.dxe6 ♙xf3 20.exf7+ ♞xf7 21.gxf3 ♞xf3 22.b4 cxb4 23.♞c7 ♘g6 24.axb4 not a forced line, but an interesting one that serves as an example of how the game can continue] 16.cxd5 ♙xe2 17.♚xe2 ♘e7 18.e4 This is a good version of the endgame for White; it's still balanced but at least we have here the structure that White is was looking to accomplish.

**10...b5**

White has two possible ways to handle this interesting position.

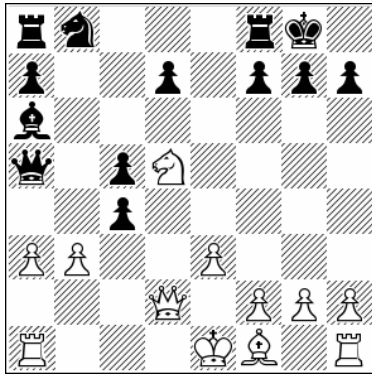
**11.♚c2**

11.♚d3

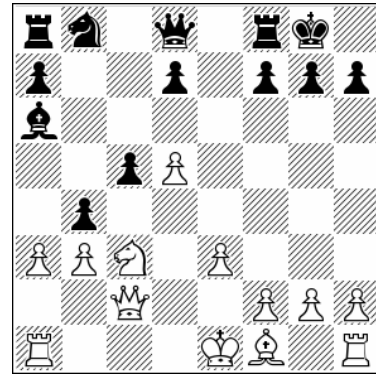


Position after: 11.♚d3

11...♘xc3 [11...exd5 12.♚xd5 ♘xc3 13.♘xc3 ♚a5 14.♚d2 bxc4 15.♘d5!]



Position after: 15. d5!

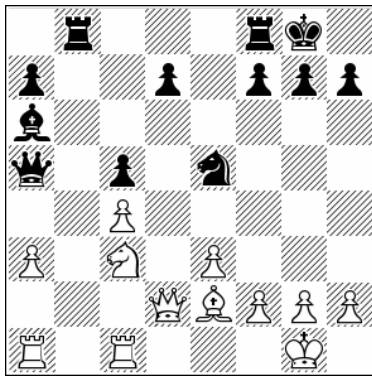


Position after: 13...b4

15...c3 16. ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 17. ♗xc3 ♘b7 18. f3 ♜d8  
 19. ♔f2 d5 20. ♗a4 ♗d7 21. ♞c1 ♞ac8 22. ♙b5  
 White has an edge] 12. ♗xc3 bxc4 13. bxc4 exd5  
 14. ♖xd5 ♖a5 15. ♖d2 ♗c6 16. ♙e2 ♞ab8 17. 0-0  
 ♗e5 Black is probably OK now. 18. ♞fc1

**14. ♙xa6**

14. axb4 ♙xf1 15. ♔xf1 cxb4 16. ♗e2 a5 17. g3  
 ♗a6 18. ♔g2 ♞c8 19. ♖b1 ♗c5 20. ♞a2 ♖b6 This  
 seems fine for Black.



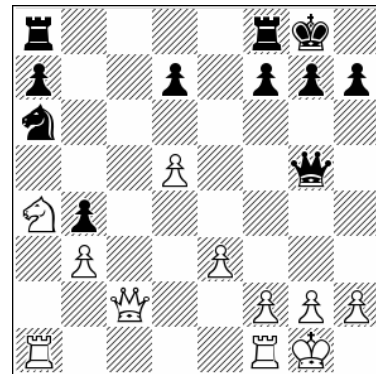
Position after: 18. ♞fc1

**14... ♗xa6 15. axb4 cxb4**

15... ♗xb4 16. ♖d2 d6 17. 0-0 a5 18. h3 ♖c8  
 19. ♞a4 ♖a6 20. ♞fa1 White enjoys easy play, 1-0  
 (31) Aczel, G (2560) – Csonka, B (2498) Budapest  
 2021.

18... ♞fd8 [18... ♞b3 19. f4! ♗c6 20. ♔f2 Now it is  
 White who can claim some edge, 0-1 (61)  
 Tabatabaei, M (2613) – Martirosyan, H (2632)  
 Krasnaya Polyana 2021] 19. ♖d6 ♗xc4 20. ♙xc4  
 ♙xc4 21. ♗e4 ♙e6 22. ♗xc5 h6 23. h3 Equality  
 reigns on the board.

**16. ♗a4 ♖g5 17. 0-0!**



Position after: 17. 0-0!

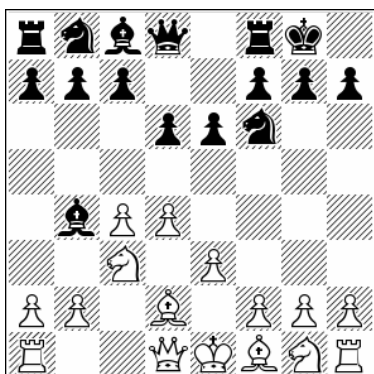
**11... exd5 12. cxd5 ♗xc3 13. ♗xc3 b4**

**17... ♖xd5 18. ♞fd1 ♖e6 19. ♞d4 h6 20. ♖d3 ♞ac8  
 21. h3 ♞c6 22. ♞xd7 ♗c5 23. ♗xc5 ♞xc5 24. ♖d4**

White has played actively and gained an edge, 1-0  
 (54) Aczel, G (2554) – Horvath, A (2506)  
 Budapest 2021.

## b) 5...d6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d6

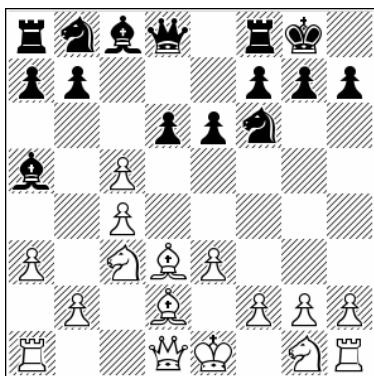


Position after: 5...d6

Here we analyze some less popular lines, but still it's important to understand the strategy that this sort of position calls for.

6.♙d3 e5

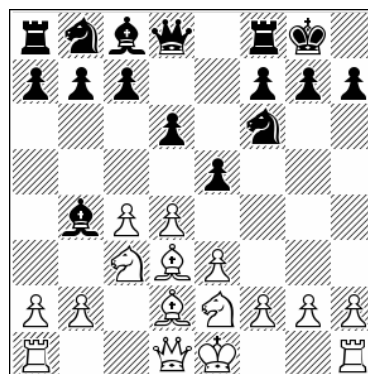
6...c5 7.a3 ♖a5 8.dxc5!



Position after: 8.dxc5!

8...dxc5 9.♖c2 ♗c6 10.♗f3 ♙c7 11.0-0-0 g6 12.♗e4 ♗xe4 13.♙xe4 ♙d7 14.g4 e5 15.♖hg1 ♗e7 16.♙d5 ♖ae8 17.h4 White has a powerful attack, 1-0 (27) Predke, A (2620) – Gajek, R (2481) Chennai 2019.

7.♗ge2

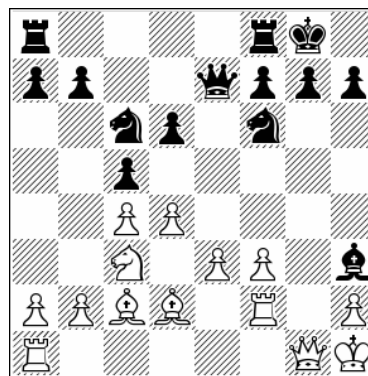


Position after: 7.♗ge2

This is a natural way to handle positions where Black applies early ...e5 plans, which are not common in the Nimzo except in the Classical line 4.♗c2 and positions where Black has managed to double White's c-pawns.

7...♖e8

A) 7...♗e7 8.0-0 ♙xc3 9.♗xc3 e4 10.♙c2 ♙g4 11.f3 exf3 12.gxf3 ♙h3 13.♖f2 c5 14.♗h1 ♗c6 15.♗g1

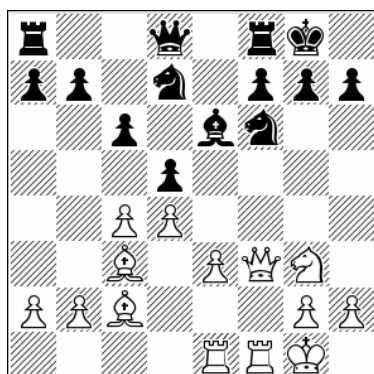


Position after: 15.♗g1

15...♗h5 [snatching a pawn is bad because after 15...cxd4 16.exd4 ♗xd4 17.♙g5 the strong pin gives White a winning position] 16.dxc5 dxc5 17.♗e4 h6 18.♙c3 White has a big advantage, 1-0 (30) Heberla, B (2546) – Malec, S (2132) Warsaw 2018.

B) 7...♙xc3 8.♙xc3 This is more to the point, as the knight can be deployed on g3 later. 8...e4

9.♙c2 c6 10.♘g3 d5 11.0-0 ♕e6 12.f3 exf3  
13.♚xf3 ♖bd7 14.♞ae1

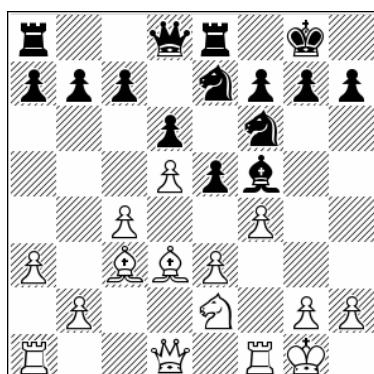


Position after: 14.♞ae1

Black is facing an unpleasant task to defend this position. For instance, grabbing a pawn with 14...dxc4 gives White great central play and the two bishops after 15.e4.

8.0-0 ♖bd7

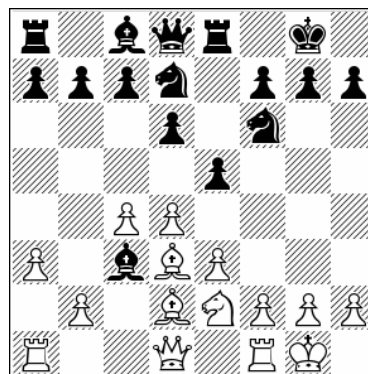
8...♖c6 9.d5 ♖e7 10.a3 ♙xc3 11.♙xc3 ♙f5 12.f4!



Position after: 12.f4!

12...♙xd3 13.♚xd3 e4 14.♚d2 ♖f5 15.♖d4 This position favors White. His bishop on c3 is stronger than the knight on f6, and he will strike at some moment with g4 on the kingside, 1-0 (50) Budisavljevic, L (2457) – Injac, T (2284) Novi Banovci 2020.

9.a3 ♙xc3

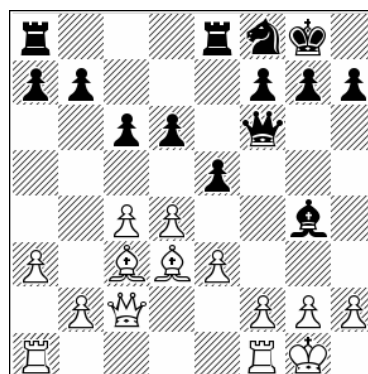


Position after: 9...♙xc3

10.♖xc3

10.♙xc3 It is quite possible to take back with the bishop, after which the plan is to put the queen on d2 and the rook on e1.

10...♖f8 11.♚c2 ♙g4 12.♖e4 c6 13.♖xf6+ ♚xf6  
14.♙c3



Position after: 14.♙c3

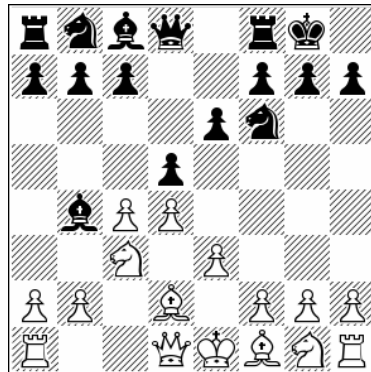
14...♚h6 15.♞ae1 ♙h5 16.f3

White has easier play, ½-½ (36) Adhiban, B (2639) – Iturrizaga, E (2626) Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

# Chapter 6

## 5...d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 6 – 5...d5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5 6.♗f3

a) 6...--

b) 6...♗bd7 7.♖c1

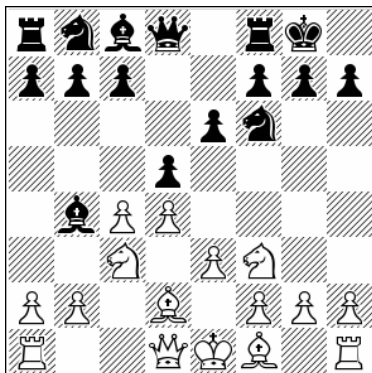
c) 6...♗bd7 7.♙d3 & 7.a3

d) 6...c5 7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♗e4

e) 6...c5 7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 cxd4

## a) 6...--

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5  
6.♘f3



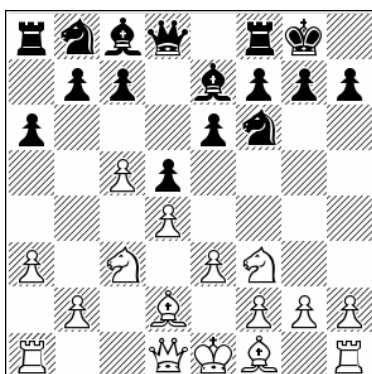
Position after: 6.♘f3

We will deal in this subchapter with positions where Black's flexible approach keeps all options open.

### 6...♞e8

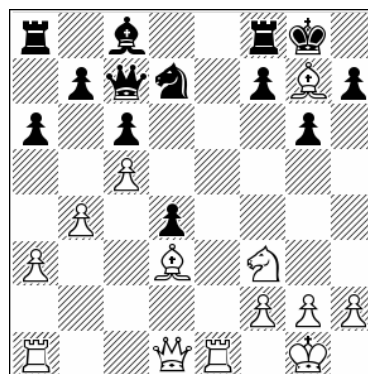
Black has not yet made decisions about his queenside development. Instead he makes space for his bishop to return to f8, in order to go ...c5 without allowing White to get the dark-squared bishop. We have seen many times that when Black plays ...c5 at once, White plays a3 and forces Black to exchange his bishop for the knight. First, let's have a look at a few other ideas.

**A)** 6...a6 Another interesting waiting move, with an obvious plan to take on c4 followed by ...b5, ...♙b7 and so on. 7.a3 ♙e7 8.c5



Position after: 8.c5

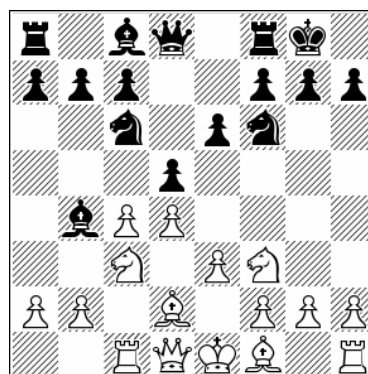
8...♗bd7 [8...b6 9.b4 ♙b7 10.♙e2 b5 11.♗e5 c6 12.0-0 ♗bd7 13.f4 ♗e4 14.♗xe4 dxe4 15.♞b1 White is better, 1-0 (27) Frolov, A (2422) – Pratyusha, B (2267) Budapest 2020] 9.♙d3 c6 10.b4 ♞c7 11.e4 dxe4 12.♗xe4 e5 13.♗xf6+ ♙xf6 14.0-0 exd4 15.♞e1 g6 16.♙h6 ♙g7 17.♙xg7!



Position after: 17.♙xg7!

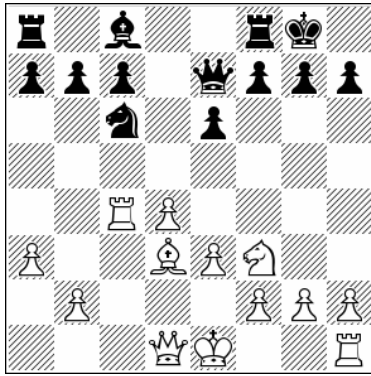
17...♙xg7 18.♙c4 ♗f6 19.♞xd4 ♙f5 20.h3 ♞ad8 21.♞c3 White is better, as the pin on f6 is very strong.

**B)** 6...♗c6 Kind of a mixture with the Nimzo Taimanov line 4.e3 ♗c6, but here with the bishop on d2 it's different. 7.♞c1



Position after: 7.♞c1

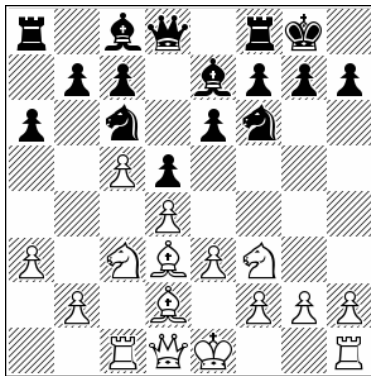
**B1)** 7...♞e7 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.♙xc3 ♗e4 10.♙d3 ♗xc3 11.♞xc3 dxc4 12.♞xc4!



Position after: 12. Rxc4!

12...e5 13.d5! ♖a5 [13...♘d8 14. ♗c2 this is no improvement; White wins a pawn] 14. ♖e4 f6 15.b4 White wins.

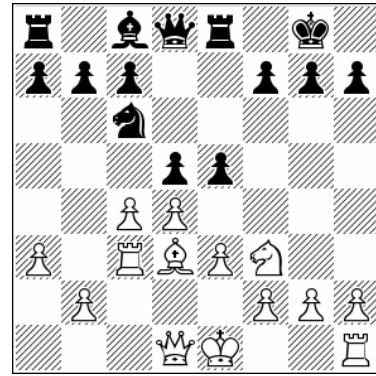
**B2)** 7...a6 8.a3 ♗d6 9.c5 ♗e7 10. ♗d3



Position after: 10. ♗d3

10... ♖e8 [10...e5 11.dxe5 ♘g4 12.h3 ♘gxe5 13. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14. ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15. ♗h5+ ♔g8 16. ♗xe5 ♗e6 17.0-0 White is better] 11.b4 e5 12. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♘g4 14.0-0 d4 15. ♘e4 ♘xe5 16. ♗b1 dxe3 17. ♗xe3 ♗xd1 18. ♖fxd1 ♘g6 19. ♗a2 White has some edge in this endgame, 1-0 (33) Hort, V – Nowak, E Havirov 1970.

**B3)** 7... ♖e8 8.a3 ♗xc3 9. ♗xc3 ♘e4 10. ♗d3 ♘xc3 11. ♖xc3 e5

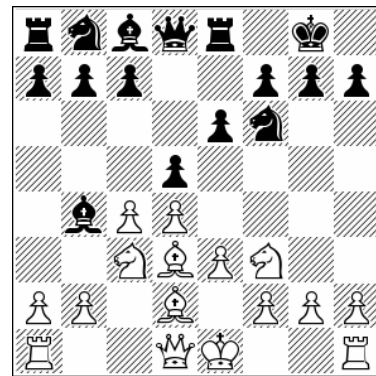


Position after: 11...e5

12.dxe5! dxc4 [12... ♗g4 13.cxd5 ♘xe5 14. ♗e2 this doesn't help Black either] 13. ♖xc4 g6 14. ♗c2 ♘xe5 15. ♘xe5 ♖xe5 16. ♖xc7 ♗d7 17. ♖c3 ♗c6 18.0-0 ♖d5 19. ♗b1 White is better.

### 7. ♗d3

In my opinion this is best, and White shouldn't waste time on any other move.

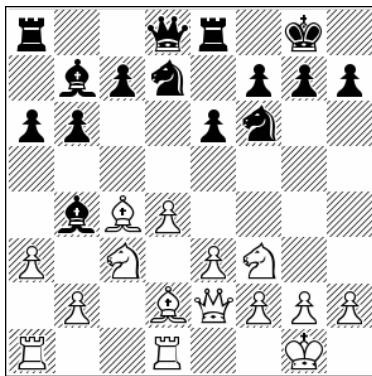


Position after: 7. ♗d3

### 7...c5

**A)** 7... ♗f8 8.0-0 c5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.h3 ♘c6 12. ♖c1 ♗e7 13. ♗b5 ♗d7 14. ♘e2 ♗b6 15. ♗c3 ½-½ (45) Aczel, G (2540) – Vertetics, A (2438) Ajka 2019. This is OK for both sides and I must admit that Black's plan of going back to f8 and only then ...c5 is a logical one.

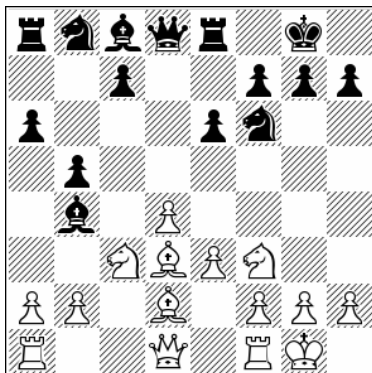
**B)** 7...b6 8.0-0 dxc4 [8... ♗b7 9.cxd5 exd5 10. ♘e5 another transposition to the early...b6 plans already discussed] 9. ♗xc4 ♗b7 10. ♗e2 ♘bd7 11. ♖fd1 a6 12.a3!



Position after: 12.a3!

White must profit from the fact that the rook on e8 actually represents a loss of time in a strategy where Black is going for ...a6 and ...b5 plans. 12...♙d6 13.e4 c5 14.e5 cxd4 15.exd6 dxc3 16.♙xc3 ♖d5 17.♙xd5 ♙xd5 18.♗e5 ♗f6 19.♞d3! ♜xd6 20.♞g3 White has a strong attack.

C) 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 a6 [8...♗bd7 9.0-0 a6 10.a3 ♙d6 11.e4 e5 12.♗g5 ♞f8 13.♙e3 This is better for White, as here too the rook move to e8 looks like a lost tempo] 9.0-0 b5 10.♙d3!



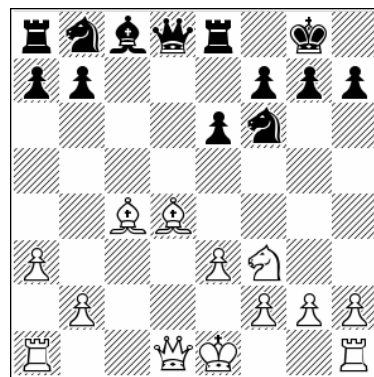
Position after: 10.♙d3!

10...♙b7 11.a4 bxa4 12.♗e4! a5 13.♗xf6+ ♜xf6 14.♜xa4 ♗a6 15.♙xb4 ♗xb4 16.♙e2 White has the advantage.

### 8.a3

8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♙xc4 We have entered a Nimzo 4.e3 hybrid version where the bishop is on d2 and the rook on e8. I think that usually it should be in White's favor. 10...a6!? Black can play this move secure in the knowledge that with the bishop on d2 White is not in a position to play the strong d5 break. 11.a3 ♙e7 12.♞c1 b5 13.♙a2 ♙b7 14.♙g5 ♗bd7 This is unclear, 0-1 (56) Dziuba, M (2585) – Gajewski, G (2618) Warsaw 2020.

8...♙xc3 9.♙xc3 cxd4 10.♙xd4 dxc4 11.♙xc4



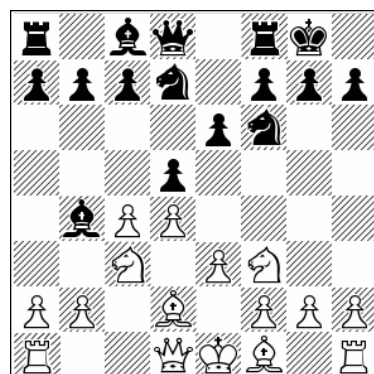
Position after: 11.♙xc4

11...♗c6 12.♞c1 ♗xd4 13.♜xd4 ♜xd4 14.♗xd4 ♙d7 15.♗e2 ♞ac8 16.♙b5!

White has gained a slightly better endgame.

## b) 6...♗bd7 7.♞c1

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5 6.♗f3 ♗bd7



Position after: 6...♗bd7

This is Black's main idea. We will deal with other options in a separate subchapter.

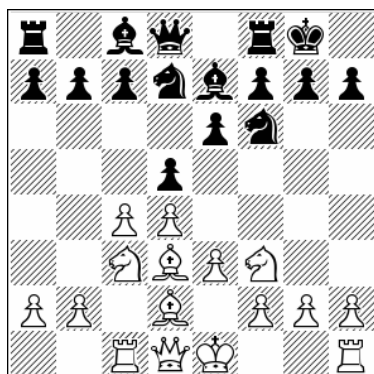
### 7. ♖c1 c6

Black has lot of ideas about how to handle this line and indeed the entire system. In general we can say is that his plan is to advance with ...e5 and it's similar to the Semi Slav, with some differences that we will discuss in more detail.

**A)** 7...b6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.0-0 The game transposes to ...b6 systems where White plays an early ♖c1.

**B)** 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 ♘e4 9.♗d3 f5 10.0-0 c6 11.♗e1 ♖f6 12.♘e5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♖g6 14.f3 ♗g5 15.♗e2 ♘c5 16.♗b1 White has easy play.

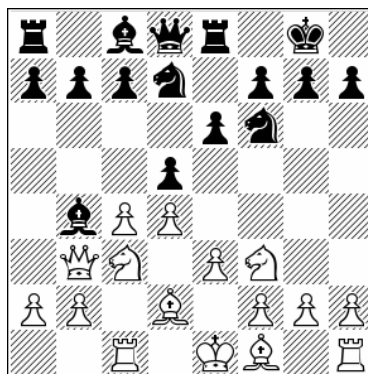
**C)** 7...♗e7 8.♗d3



Position after: 8.♗d3

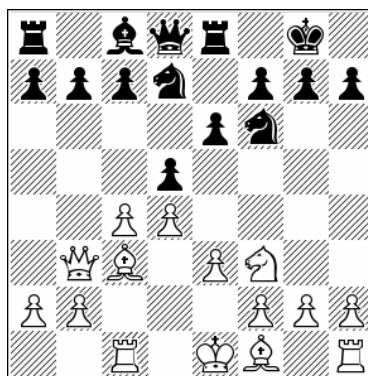
8...c6 [8...c5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.0-0 b6 11.♘e5 ♗b7 12.f4 we have yet another transposition to a setup with early ...b6 plans; 8...b6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.0-0 ♗b7 and another way to transpose to early ...b6 plans] 9.0-0 a5 10.♗e2 dxc4 11.♗xc4 b5 12.♗d3 ♗b6 13.e4 White has much better chances, 1-0 (28) Ganguly, S (2636) – Maghsoodloo, P (2674) chess.com INT 2020.

**D)** 7...♖e8 8.♗b3



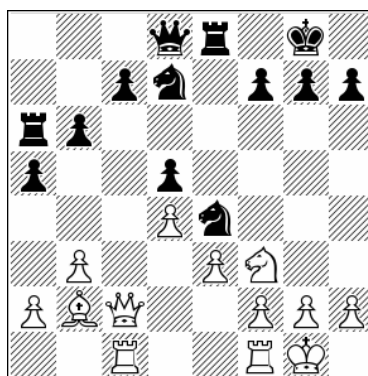
Position after: 8.♗b3

Forcing matters in a good way. 8...♗xc3 [8...c5 9.cxd5! ♗xc3 10.♗xc3 exd5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.♗b4 ♘fe4 13.♗e2 ♗g4 14.0-0 a5 15.♗d4 ♘e6 16.♗d1 this looks OK for White] 9.♗xc3



Position after: 9.♗xc3

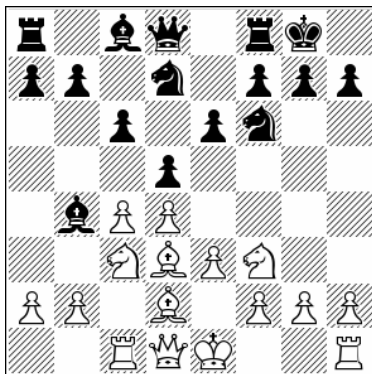
9...b6 [9...c6 10.♗e2 ♘e4 11.0-0 ♗b6 12.♗c2 ♘df6 13.♗e1 this favors White, since Black is not fighting for the center, 1-0 (29) Sandipan, C (2555) – Schoen, R (1982) Tegernsee 2017] 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗b5 ♗b7 12.0-0 a6 13.♗d3 a5 14.♗c2 ♘e4 15.b3 ♗a6 16.♗xa6 ♖xa6 17.♗b2



Position after: 17.♗b2

17...♖a7 18.♞cd1 f6 19.♘e1 ♘f8 20.♘d3 ♚d7  
 21.♞fe1 ♘g6 22.f3 ♘g5 23.a4! Good strategy by  
 White, who enjoys the more pleasant position,  
 ½-½ (36) Mendonca, L (2418) – Idani, P (2577)  
 Moscow 2020.

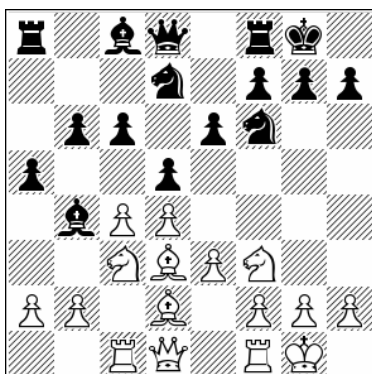
8.♙d3



Position after: 8.♙d3

8...♚e7

A) 8...a5 9.0-0 b6

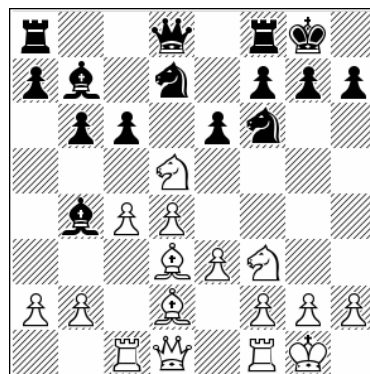


Position after: 9...b6

The point of this move order is not only to prevent the ♘d5 idea but also to have the possibility of moving the bishop to a6 instead of b7. We analyzed that in the section on ...b6 systems, but here Black has included ...a5 as well. 10.cxd5 Not the only idea. 10...exd5 11.a3 ♙xc3 [11...♙e7 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♙b7 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.♞e1 c5 16.♙f4 White has much easier play thanks to his much better development] 12.♙xc3 ♙a6 13.♙xa6 ♞xa6 14.♘e5 ♚a8 15.♘d7 ♘d7 16.f3 Again White has easier play and, as we have already seen in some games,

the bishop is more flexible here than the black knight.

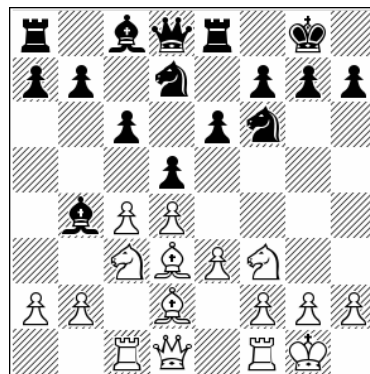
B) 8...b6 9.0-0 ♙b7 10.♘d5!



Position after: 10.♘d5!

10...♘d5 11.cxd5 ♙xd2 12.♚xd2 cxd5 [12...exd5 13.b4 a5 14.b5 c5 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♙f5 White's play looks better] 13.♞c2 ♞c8 14.♞fc1 g6 15.♞xc8 ♙xc8 16.♚c2 White has better chances.

C) 8...♞e8 9.0-0

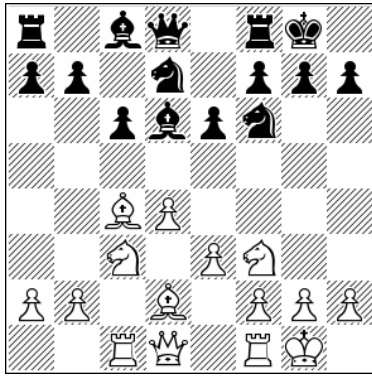


Position after: 9.0-0

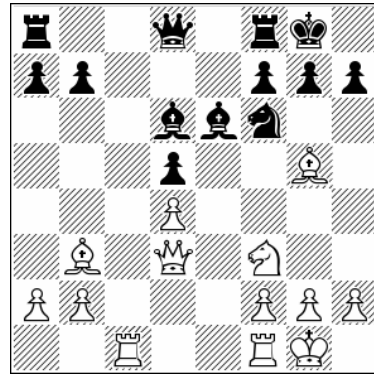
C1) Playing ...e5 straight away does not work. 9...e5 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♞xe5 12.♘d5! Now White is just a healthy pawn up.

C2) 9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 c5 11.a3 cxd4 12.axb4 dxc3 13.♙xc3 This is fine play for White, 1-0 (69) Bluebaum, M (2670) – Patrelakis, E (2281) lichess.org INT 2020.

D) 8...dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♙d6 10.0-0



Position after: 10.0-0

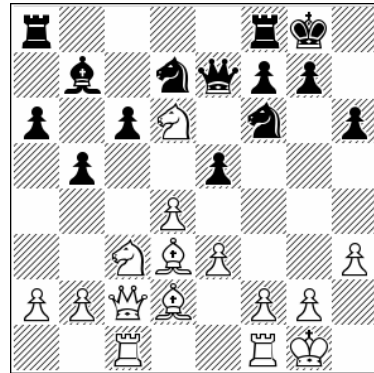


Position after: 16. ♖d3!

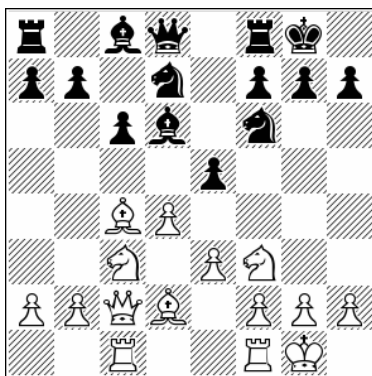
**D1)** 10...b5 11. ♘d3 ♘b7 This is a tempo up for White (the rook on c1 is an extra move) compared to the Semi-Slav. 5.e3 e6 6. ♘d3 dxc4 7. ♘xc4 b5 8. ♘d3 ♘d6 This should be good for White, but the position is a bit closed so perhaps Black can survive with such play. 12.a4 b4 13. ♖e4 ♖xe4 14. ♘xe4 ♖c8 15. ♗e2 ♗a5 16.b3 ♗h5 17.h3 ♖f6 18. ♘d3 c5 19.dxc5 ♖xc5 20. ♖xc5 ♘xc5 21. ♖c1 ♖d8 22.e4 a5 23. ♘e3 ♘xe3 24. ♗xe3 White has managed to eke out an advantage, 0-1 (58) Bluebaum, M (2647) – Andreikin, D (2726) chess.com INT 2020.

White's idea is to avoid exchanging rooks on c1, which would ease Black's play. 16...h6 17. ♘h4 ♘e7 18. ♖e5 ♖e4 19. ♘xe7 ♗xe7 20.f3 ♖f6 21. ♖ce1 White is looking good here.] 12.h3 b5 [12...a5 13.a3 ♘c7 14. ♘a2 Good play by White. 14...g6 15. ♖fe1 ♖g7 16.e4 exd4 17. ♖xd4 ♖e5 18.f4 White has a winning position already, 1-0 (23) Bluebaum, M (2642) – Sjugirov, S (2680) chess.com INT 2022] 13. ♘d3 ♘b7 14. ♖g5 h6 15. ♖ge4 a6 16. ♖xd6!

**D2)** 10...e5 11. ♗c2 Logical play by White. Actually we have here a typical Semi-Slav position, so perhaps Black uses such lines to surprise less experienced opponents who are not familiar with these Semi-Slav ideas.



Position after: 16. ♖xd6!



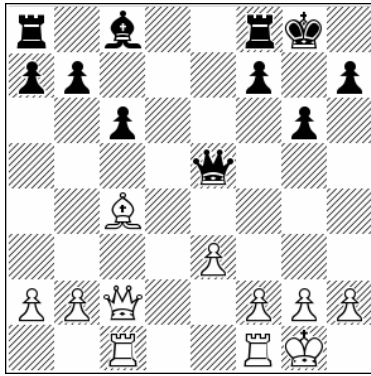
Position after: 11. ♗c2

16... ♗xd6 17. ♖e4 ♖xe4 18.dxe5! ♗xe5 19. ♘xe4 ♖fe8 20. ♘f3 ♖ab8 21. ♘c3 ♗g5 22. ♖fd1 c5 23. ♘xb7 ♖xb7 24. ♖d6 White keeps the advantage.

**9.0-0 dxc4**

11... ♗e7 [11...exd4 12.exd4 ♖b6 13. ♘b3 ♖bd5 14. ♘g5 ♘e6 15. ♖xd5 cxd5 16. ♗d3!

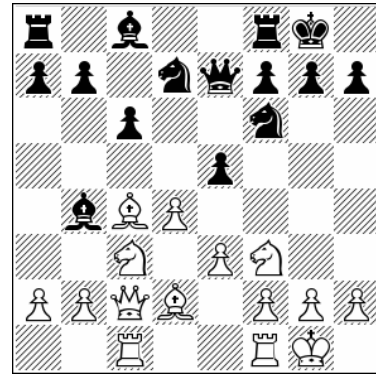
9...e5 10.dxe5 ♖xe5 11. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 12. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13.cxd5 ♘xd2 14. ♗xd2 ♗xd5 15. ♗c2 g6 16. ♘c4 ♗e5



Position after: 16...♖e5

17.♖fd1 ♕e6 18.♗b3 ♘xc4 19.♙xc4 ♜ad8  
20.♞cd4 ♞xd4 21.♞xd4 b6 22.♞d7 ♗f6 23.g3 ♗f3  
24.♗d3 Also here it is clear that White has the edge, 0-1 (54) Artemiev, V (2709) – Carlsen, M (2847) chess24.com INT 2021.

10.♘xc4 e5 11.♗c2



Position after: 11.♗c2

11...♘xc3!?

11...♘d6 12.♘b3 e4 13.♘g5 ♘xh2+ 14.♔xh2  
♘g4+ 15.♔g1 ♗xg5 16.♗xe4 ♗h4 17.♗f4 g5  
18.♗g3 ♗xg3 19.fxg3 White is ahead. As I said,  
this entire play from Black is actually some Semi-  
Slav plan but with a tempo up for White (Black  
went bishop to b4 and then back to d6).

12.♘xc3 e4 13.♘e5 ♘b6 14.♘e2 ♘f5 15.♗d2  
♘fd5 16.♞fe1 f6 17.♘c4 ♘e6 18.b3

We can see this as a balanced game, ½-½ (115)  
Zakharov, V (2506) – Predke, A (2683)  
Cheboksary 2021.

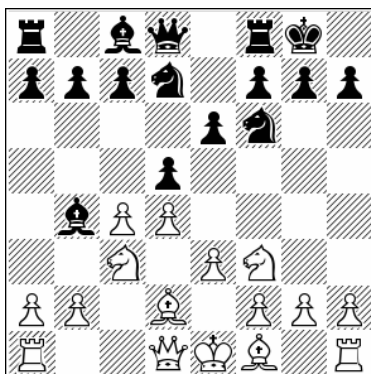
### c) 6...♘bd7 7.♘d3 & 7.a3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.♘d2 0-0 5.e3 d5  
6.♘f3 ♘bd7

7.a3

This is yet another plan in which White demands  
to know where the black bishop is going.

7.♘d3

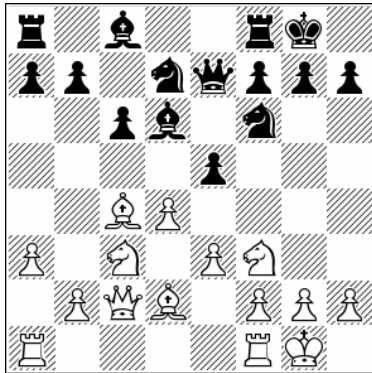


Position after: 6...♘bd7

A) 7...b6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.0-0 ♘b7 Another  
transposition to systems with an early ...b6 for  
Black.

B) 7...c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.a3 ♘d6 10.♗c2 dxc4  
11.♘xc4 e5

In this subchapter we check out some less  
popular and less critical positions.

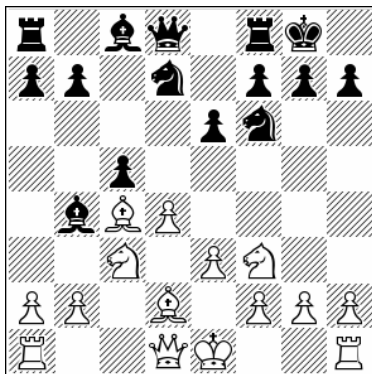


Position after: 11...e5

12.h3 Here we have again a Semi-Slav type of line that we have already seen in the 7.♖c1 line. Here it's an even better version for White because he has no need to play ♖c1 and can therefore save a tempo.

**C)** 7...c5 8.0-0 dxc4 [8...a6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.a3 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3 c4 12.♗c2 b5 13.a4 ♗b7 14.♖e5 White has the advantage] 9.♗xc4 It's just a transposition to the main line.

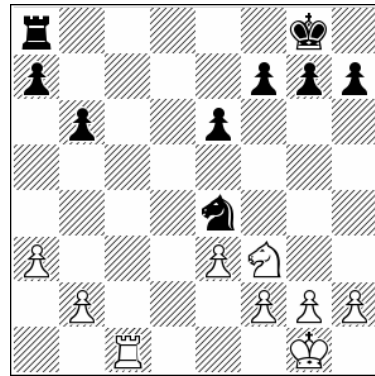
**D)** 7...dxc4 Probably the simplest solution. 8.♗xc4 c5



Position after: 8...c5

Most likely the best move order. 9.a3 This is now White's best chance, but still not much if White is seeking a significant advantage. [9.0-0 cxd4 10.exd4 ♖b6 11.♗d3 ♗d7 12.♖e5 ♗e8 13.a3 ♗e7 Play has become rather unclear, ½-½ (52) Houli, A – Kanee Janar, O Tunis 2001]. 9...♗xc3 10.♗xc3

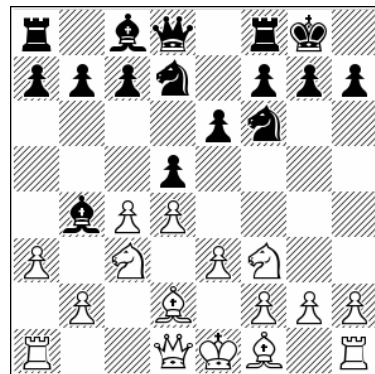
**D1)** 10...b6 11.0-0 ♗b7 12.dxc5 ♖xc5 13.♗xd8 ♗fxd8 14.♗fd1 ♖fe4 15.♗d4 ♗d5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♖ac1 ♗xc1 19.♗xc1



Position after: 19.♗xc1

19...♖d6! [19...♗d8 20.♖f1 ♖c5 21.♖e2 ♖f8 22.b4 ♖a6 23.♖d4 White holds a plus, 1-0 (50) Wang, S (2469) – Dai, C (2511) Shenyang 2019] 20.♖f1 ♗c8 21.♗xc8+ ♖xc8 22.♖e2 f6 23.♖d3 ♖f7 We can say it's equal.

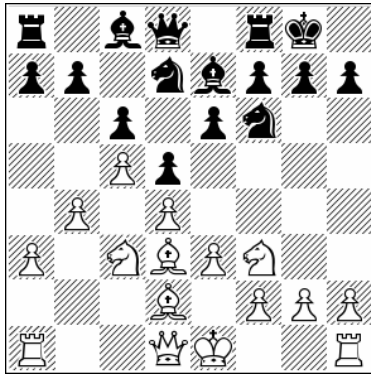
**D2)** 10...♖e4 11.♗c1 [11.0-0 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 b6 Black has equal chances here] 11...b6 12.0-0 ♗b7 Black is OK.



Position after: 7.a3

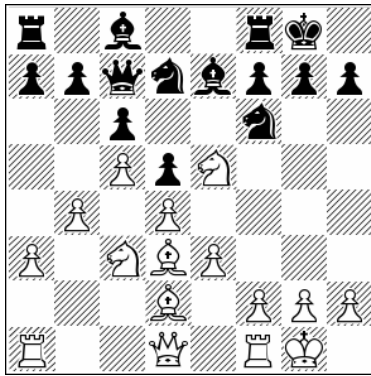
**7...♗e7**

**A)** 7...♗d6 8.c5 ♗e7 9.b4 c6 10.♗d3



Position after: 10.♙d3

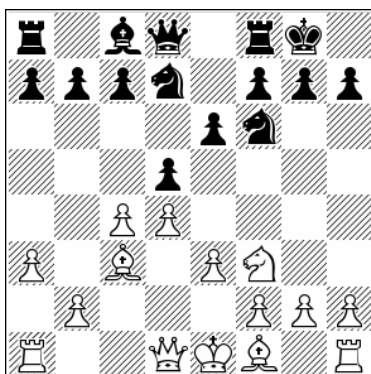
10...♜c7 [10...e5 11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.dxe5 ♞g4 13.f4 d4 14.♞e4! dxe3 15.♙c3 ♙f5 16.♜c2 ♞f2 17.♞xf2 exf2+ 18.♙e2 ♜xd3+ 19.♜xd3 ♙xd3+ 20.♙xd3 White is better] 11.0-0 e5 12.♞xe5!



Position after: 12.♞xe5!

12...♞xe5 13.dxe5 ♜xe5 14.♜c2 a5 15.♞ae1 axb4 16.axb4 ♙d8 17.♞e2 ♙c7 18.♞g3 ♞e4 19.♙c1 ♞e8 20.♙b2 ♜e7 21.f4! The f-pawn push gives White better chances, and this is an important motif in such positions. Black's plan with ...e5 is not fast enough to reach a good game.

B) 7...♙xc3 8.♙xc3



Position after: 8.♙xc3

**B1)** 8...c5 9.dxc5 ♞xc5 10.cxd5 ♞xd5 11.♙d4 ♞e4 12.♙d3 White has the two bishops, which is already an asset, ½-½ (19) Koch, U – Wolf, H Landau 1996.

**B2)** 8...♞e4 9.♞c1 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b4! c6 12.♙d3 ♙b7 13.0-0 We have seen similar positions earlier and we can say that this one is in White's favor, not greatly but certainly he is more active.

**B3)** 8...b6 9.b3! ♙b7 10.♙d3 c5 11.0-0 ♞c8 12.♙b2 This is best. White keeps his pawns intact and after exchanges on d4 and c4 we will have the Nimzo Karpov line, which we analyze in Volume 2.

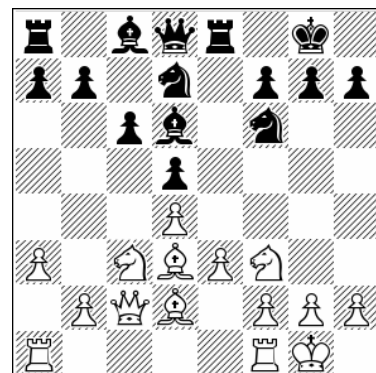
**8.cxd5 exd5**

8...♞xd5 9.♜c2 c5 10.♞d1 cxd4 11.♞xd5 exd5 12.♞xd4 ♞c5 13.♙b4 b6 14.♙e2 White has easy play.

**9.♙d3**

We saw a similar plan in the 7.♞c1 plan and here it's almost the same thing.

**9...c6 10.0-0 ♙d6 11.♜c2 ♞e8**



Position after: 11...♞e8

**12.♞fe1!**

Having in mind to respond e3-e4 in case Black goes queen to e7.

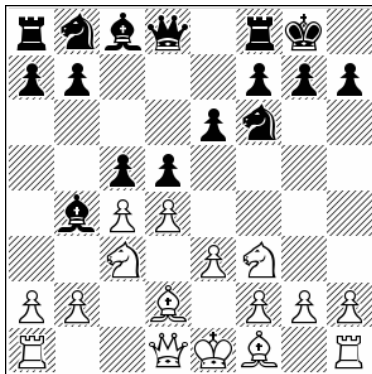
12.h3 ♖f8 13.b4 a6 14.♖ab1 ♔e7 15.a4 ♘e4  
16.b5 Interesting play with chances for both  
sides, 1-0 (38) Bluebaum, M (2642) – Gajewski,  
G (2589) Warsaw 2021.

12...♘f8 13.h3 a5 14.♖ad1

Waiting for the right moment to go e4.

**d) 6...c5 7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♘e4**

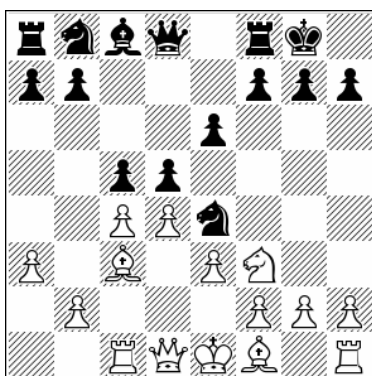
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5  
6.♘f3 c5



Position after: 6...c5

Black plays as in the main-line 4.e3 system,  
attacking the center with two pawns  
simultaneously. Whenever Black goes ...c5 he is  
ready to give up the bishop pair if White plays  
a3.

7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♘e4 9.♖c1

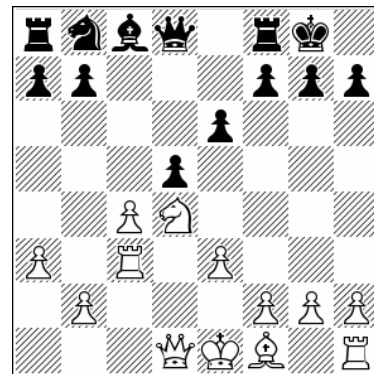


Position after: 9.♖c1

9...cxd4

Black can take first on c3 to force matters.

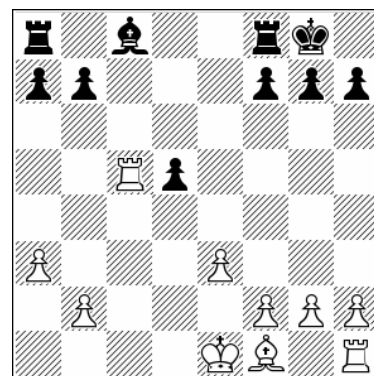
9...♘xc3 10.♖xc3 cxd4 11.♘xd4



Position after: 11.♘xd4

**A)** After 11...e5 12.♘f3 we transpose to the  
main line.

**B)** 11...♘c6 12.cxd5 ♘xd4 [12...♔xd5 13.♘xc6  
bxc6 14.♔c2 ♖b8 15.f3 ♔a5 16.b4 ♔b6 17.♙f2  
♙b7 18.♖c5 ♖fd8 19.♙d3 White has a clear  
advantage, 1-0 (42) Lenderman, A (2624) –  
Prasanna, R (2422) Charlotte 2021] 13.♔xd4  
♔xd5 14.♔xd5 exd5 15.♖c5!



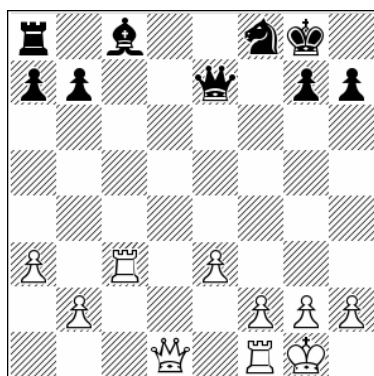
Position after: 15.♖c5!

15...d4 16.e4 ♙e6 17.♙d2 ♖ac8 18.♖xc8 ♖xc8  
19.♙e2 ♙f8 20.♖c1 ♖xc1 21.♙xc1 ♙e7 22.♙c2  
♙d6 23.f4 White is better.

**C)** 11...dxc4 12.♙xc4

**C1)** 12...e5 13.♘b3 ♖xd1+ 14.♙xd1 ♕d7 15.♙e2 ♗c6 16.♗c5 ♕c8 17.♖d1 b6 18.♗e4 ♗a5 19.♕d5 ♕a6+ 20.♙e1 White has a winning position, 1-0 (44) Maghsoodloo, P (2701) – Adly, A (2596) Europe Echecs INT 2021.

**C2)** 12...♗d7 13.♕xe6!? fxe6 14.♗xe6 ♖e7 15.♗xf8 ♗xf8 16.0-0



Position after: 16.0-0

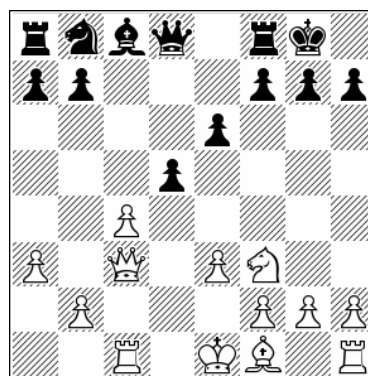
16...♕e6 17.♖d4 b6 18.♖fc1 This favors White, who already has four pawns against two on the kingside and that's a big asset, especially bearing in mind that the black minor pieces have no support points in the center, 1-0 (37) Suvorov, A (2353) – Matthiesen, M (2296) chess.com INT 2021.

**C3)** 12...♕d7 That is one of the reasonable possibilities and probably the most solid one, but let's see more. 13.0-0 ♗c6 14.♗f3 ♖e7 15.♖c2 ♖fd8 16.♕d3 h6 17.♖c1 ♖f6 18.♕h7+ ♙h8 19.♕e4 ♕e8 20.♖c5 ♖d6 21.b4 ♖ad8 22.h3 White enjoys easier play and has indeed created some pressure, 1-0 (47) Rakhmanov, A (2627) – Goganov, A (2576) Ankara 2018.

### 10.♗xd4

Probably best if White is ambitious.

10.♖xd4 ♗xc3 11.♖xc3



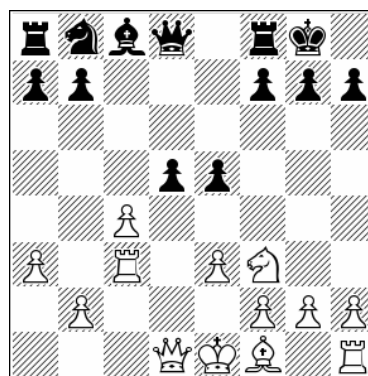
Position after: 11.♖xc3

11...dxc4 Best. [11...♗c6 12.cxd5 ♖xd5 13.♕c4 ♖h5 14.b4 a6 15.0-0 e5 16.♕d5 White is on top, 1-0 (30) Kazimova, N (2323) – Mdivani, M (1958) Novi Sad 2016] 12.♕xc4 ♗c6 13.0-0 ♕d7 14.♖fd1 ♖e7 15.b4 a6 16.♗d2 ♖fd8 17.♗b3 ♕e8 18.♕d3 ♖ac8 19.♖b2 ♗b8 Perhaps White has some edge due to the fact that the pawns on a3 and b4 are on dark squares and the knight has the c5-square as an outpost, but Black is solid, ½-½ (28) Dreev, A (2662) – Arutinian, D (2555) Skopje 2019.

### 10...e5

10...♗c6 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♕e2 ♖g5 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.0-0 ♖e8 15.♕f3 c5 16.♖d3 ♕h3 17.♖fd1 ♖ad8 18.♕a5 ♖d7 19.♖b5 White can play for some advantage, ½-½ (80) Shark 160603 – Bouquet 1.8 Internet 2016.

### 11.♗f3 ♗xc3 12.♖xc3

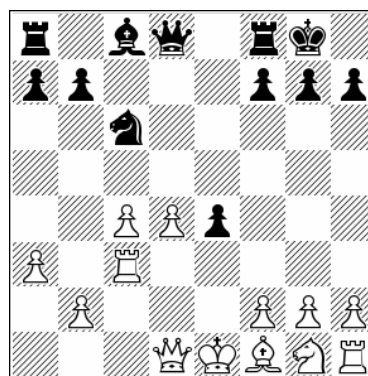


Position after: 12.♖xc3

### 12...d4!?

A popular advance.

12...e4 13.♘d4 ♘c6 [13...dxc4 14.♙c2 ♘c6 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♙xc4 ♖b8 17.0-0 ♙e7 18.♙e2 ♙d7 19.♖d1 White is better, 1-0 (52) Diermair, A (2480) – Sos Andreu, E (2355) Struga 2021] 14.cxd5 ♘e7 15.♙c4 ♘xd5 16.♙xd5! ♙xd5 17.0-0 ♙d7 18.♘b3 ♙e6 19.♙xd5 ♙xd5 20.♘d4 ♖fc8 21.♖fc1 ♖xc3 22.♖xc3 This endgame is good for White since he controls the c-file and his king will come out to f4, 1-0 (36) Shredder 13 – Nemorino 4. 0 Internet 2017.



Position after: 14...♘c6

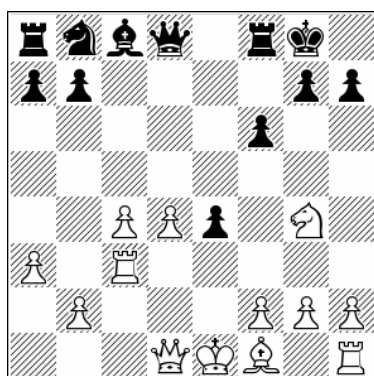
### 13.exd4 e4

Black plays in aggressive mode.

### 14.♘g1!

The only realistic idea.

14.♘e5 f6 15.♘g4



Position after: 15.♘g4

15...♙xg4! [15...♘c6 16.d5 ♙xg4 17.♙xg4 ♘d4 18.♙d1 ♘f5 19.♙e2 White is a clear pawn up, ½-½ (66) Suvorov, A (2353) – Aditya, M (2438) chess.com INT 2021] 16.♙xg4 ♙xd4 17.c5 ♘c6 18.♙c4+ ♔h8 19.♙d1 ♖ad8 Black is more active.

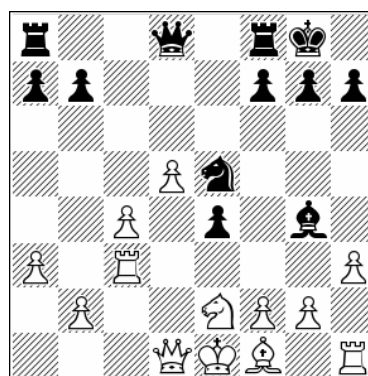
### 14...♘c6

### 15.♘e2

The main alternative is actually very interesting.

15.d5 ♘e5 16.♙e2 ♖e8 17.♙d4 ♙f5 18.h4 ♙d7 [18...♘c6 19.♙d2 ♘e5 20.♔f1 ♖c8 21.♘h3 ♙xh4 22.♙f4 ♙f6 23.g4 ♙xg4 24.♙xf6 ♙xe2+ 25.♔xe2 gxf6 26.b3 ♘g6 27.♔e3 White enjoys a more pleasant endgame] 19.♔f1 ♙a4 20.b4 ♖ad8 21.♘h3 ♘d3 22.g4 ♙d7 23.♔g2 After this it's clear that White has defended well and now has better play, 1-0 (32) Maghsoodloo, P (2676) – Gholami Orimi, M (2428) Tehran 2021.

### 15...♙g4 16.d5 ♘e5 17.h3!?



Position after: 17.h3!?

### 17...♙h5

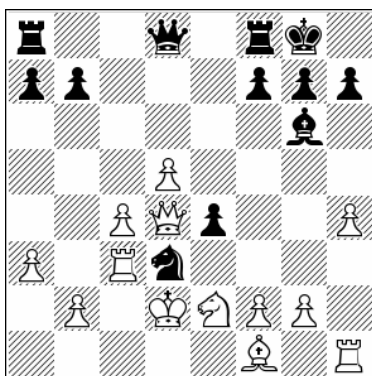
A) 17...♘d3+ 18.♖xd3 exd3 19.hxg4 dxe2 20.♙xe2 ♖e8 21.♙d3 h6 22.0-0 White has good play for the sacrificed exchange.

B) 17...♖h4 18.g3 ♗h6 19.♖c1! ♗xc1+ 20.♘xc1 ♙f3 21.♞g1 ♞fd8 22.a4 f5 23.♘b3 White appears to be doing fine.

18.♖d4 ♘d3+

18...♞e8 19.♔d2! b5 20.♘f4 ♗g5 21.♖e3 bxc4 22.♙xc4 ♞ab8 23.b3 It seems that White has managed to stay a pawn up after all.

19.♔d2 ♙g6 20.h4

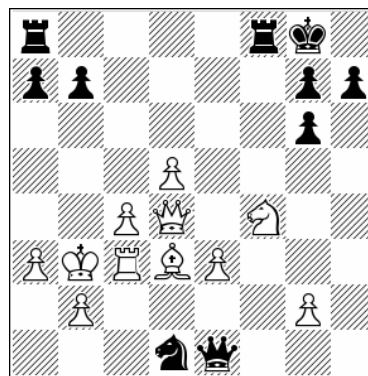


Position after: 20.h4

20...e3+!?

In this game Black was quickly outplayed. 20...h6 21.♞h3 ♞e8 22.♞cx3! exd3 23.♘c3 ♞c8 24.♙xd3 ♙xd3 25.♞xd3. White has nice play, ½-½ (67) Aditya, M (2438) – Raja, R (2408) Torneo INT 2021.

21.fxe3 ♘f2 22.h5 ♘xh1 23.hxg6 fxg6 24.♘f4 ♖h4 25.♙d3 ♗f2+ 26.♔c1 ♖e1+ 27.♔c2 ♘f2 28.♔b3 ♘d1



Position after: 28...♘d1

29.♘e6 ♞f6 30.♞c2 ♗xe3 31.♖xe3 ♘xe3 32.♞e2

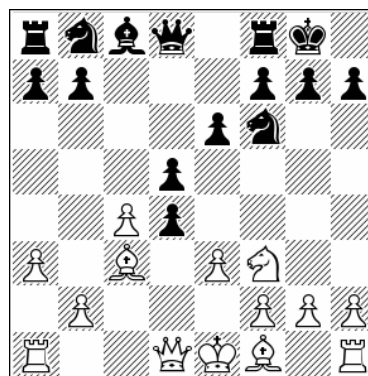
An entertaining line in which White preserves an advantage.

**e) 6...c5 7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 cxd4**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙d2 0-0 5.e3 d5 6.♘f3 c5

Black again plays as in the main-line 4.e3 system, attacking the white center with two pawns. As I said in the previous subchapter, when Black goes ...c5 he is ready to give up his bishop pair if White plays a3.

7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 cxd4



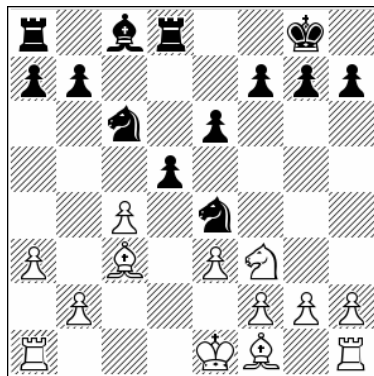
Position after: 8...cxd4

9.♙xd4

That's one of a few equally important options.

A) 9.♖xd4 ♘c6 10.♖h4 [10.♖d3 ♖e7 11.b4 a6 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♙b2 ♞d8 14.♖b3 e5 15.♞d1 ♙e6 16.♙c4 ♘c7 17.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 18.♙xe6 ♘xe6

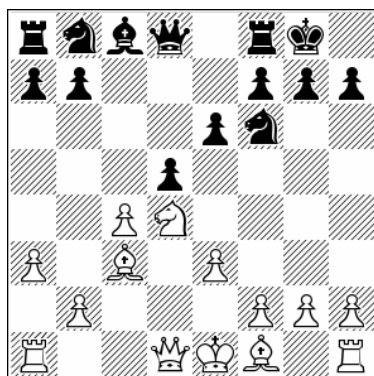
19. ♖xe5 ♜xe5 20. ♙xe5 ♜c5 21. bxc5 ♚xe5 22. 0-0 ♚xc5 23. ♚xb7 ♚xa3 Equality rules across the board] 10... ♖e4 11. ♚xd8 ♜xd8



Position after: 11... ♜xd8

12. ♜c1 [12. cxd5 exd5 13. ♜d4 ♙d7 14. ♙e2 ♜xc3 15. bxc3 ♜ac8 Black has a good endgame, 1-0 (61) Tikhonov, V (2274) – Solomon, K (2364) chess.com INT 2020] 12... ♜xc3 13. ♜xc3 ♜e7 14. ♙d3 ♙d7 15. ♚e2 ♜ac8 16. ♜hc1 dxc4 17. ♙xc4 ♜xc4 18. ♜xc4 ♙b5 19. ♜d4 ♙xc4+ 20. ♜xc4 Some edge for White, as his king is nearer the center and his knight on d4 is active. Such endgames are not to be taken lightly.

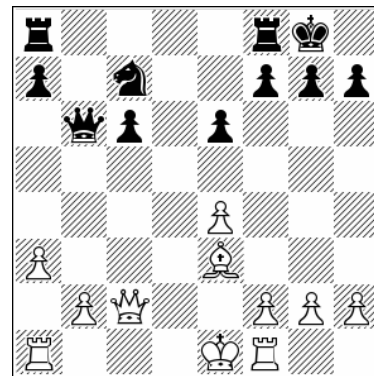
**B)** 9. ♜xd4 Here we deal with possibilities for Black apart from 9... ♖e4 10. ♜c1, which is in the previous subchapter.



Position after: 9. ♜xd4

**B1)** 9... ♖e4 10. ♜c1 Here we transpose to the 9... ♖e4 10. ♜c1 cxd4 11. ♜xd4 line, which is covered in another subchapter.

**B2)** 9... ♜c6 10. cxd5 ♜xd5 11. ♜xc6 bxc6 12. ♙d2 ♚b6 13. ♚c2 ♙a6 14. e4 ♙xf1 15. ♜xf1 ♜c7 16. ♙e3!



Position after: 16. ♙e3!

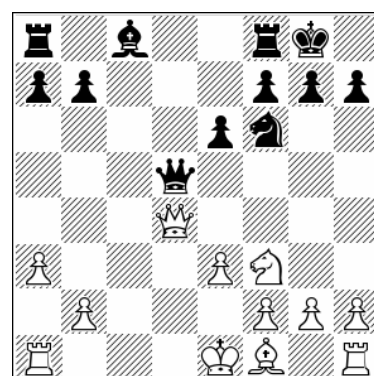
16... ♚a5+ 17. b4 ♚a6 18. f3 e5 19. ♚f2 ♜e6 20. ♜fc1 White is better – his king has found safety and his positional gains are clear.

**B3)** 9... ♜e8 10. ♙e2 ♜e4 11. ♜c1 dxc4 12. 0-0 a6 13. ♙xc4 ♜xc3 14. ♜xc3 ♙d7 15. ♙e2! ♜c6 16. ♙f3 ♚b6 17. ♜xc6 ♙xc6 18. ♙xc6 bxc6 19. ♚c2 White is better, 1-0 (33) Sandipan, C (2555) – Shyam, N (2448) Jammu 2018.

**B4)** 9... ♜bd7 10. ♙b4! ♜e8 11. ♜b5 ♜e4 12. cxd5 exd5 13. ♙e2 ♜e5 14. 0-0 This would help White to develop chances to play for an advantage.

**B5)** 9... b6 10. ♙e2 ♙a6 11. ♙b4 ♜e8 12. cxd5 ♙xe2 13. ♚xe2 ♜xd5 14. 0-0 ♜d7 15. ♜fd1 ♚h4 16. ♙d6 White holds an edge, ½-½ (30) Nagy, G (2535) – Blahynka, M (2399) Czech Republic 2022.

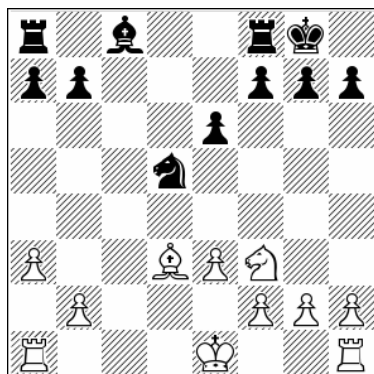
9... ♜c6 10. cxd5 ♜xd4 11. ♚xd4 ♚xd5



Position after: 11... ♚xd5

Theory considers this as clearly an equal game. I don't think that is the case; there are some reasons to play on.

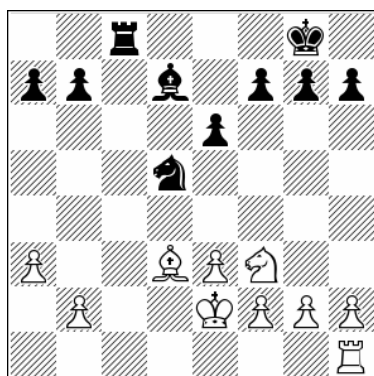
12. ♖xd5 ♜xd5 13. ♕d3



Position after: 13. ♕d3

13...b6

13...♖d8 14. ♔e2 ♕d7 15. ♖ac1 ♜ac8 16. ♖xc8 ♖xc8

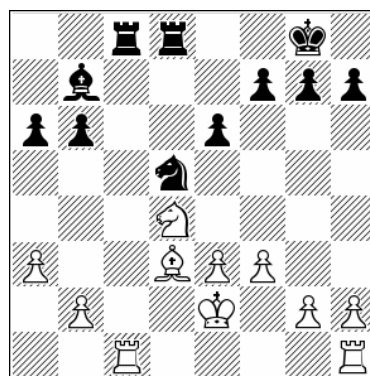


Position after: 16...♖xc8

17.g4! [17. ♔d2 ♔f8 18. ♖c1 ♖xc1 19. ♔xc1 b6 ½-½ (19) Atalik, S (2561) – Izoria, Z (2602) Lake

George 2005] 17...h6 18.h4 ♔f8 19. ♜e5 ♕a4 20.f4 The game can still go on; it's equal but not a dead draw. It was good for White to keep his rook on h1 instead of a1, on account of this active play on the kingside.

14. ♔e2 ♕b7 15. ♖ac1 ♜ac8 16. ♜d4 a6 17.f3 ♖fd8



Position after: 17...♖fd8

18.g3

18.g4! h6 19. ♕e4 ♔f8 20.h4 ♔e7 21.h5 ♕a8 22. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23. ♖d1 There is something here to play on for, so again it's not a simple draw.

18...h6 19. ♖hd1 ♔f8 20.e4 ♜e7 21. ♔e3 e5 22. ♜e2 ♖xc1 23. ♖xc1 ♖c8 24. ♜c3

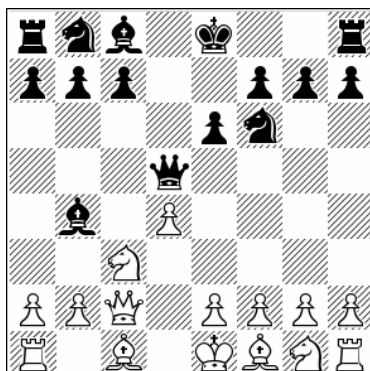
Suddenly this endgame starts to become interesting, as the pawn structure has changed and White now enjoys the more pleasant position, ½-½ (58) Zvjaginsev, V (2642) – Lysyj, I (2670) Vladivostok 2014.

**Part III**  
**4.♔c2 d5**

# Chapter 7

## 5.cxd5 ♔xd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♚xd5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 7 – 5.cxd5 ♚xd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♚xd5

a) 6.e3

b) 6.♘f3 c5

c) 6.♘f3 0-0

d) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚d1

e) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 c5

f) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 ♘c6 8.e3

g) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 ♘c6 8.a3

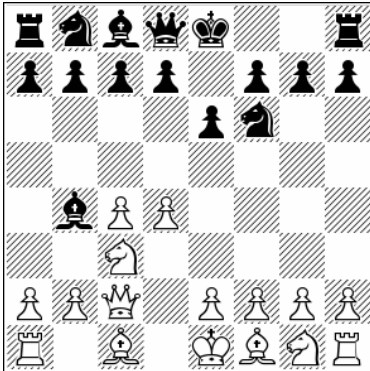
h) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 ♘c6 8.♙d2 0-0 9.a3

i) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 ♘c6 8.♙d2 0-0 9.h3

j) 6.♘f3 ♚f5 7.♚xf5

## a) 6.e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.♙c2



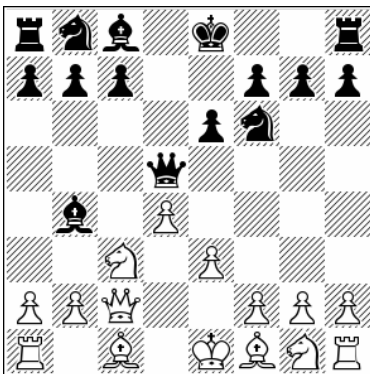
Position after: 4. ♙c2

This is such a comprehensive line, with so many ideas and plans that we can consider it as an opening inside an opening! About the Classical line there is really not much to say apart from what's already been said, so let's go to the lines.

### 4...d5

First we deal with this traditional setup, considered by many to be the best. If White immediately takes on d5 Black can reply with 5...♙xd5, which is covered first, and later on we will also see 5...exd5 plans. In this volume we will also see 5.a3, when after 5...♗xc3 6.♙xc3 we have a whole spectrum of lines and ideas to investigate.

5.cxd5 ♙xd5 6.e3!?

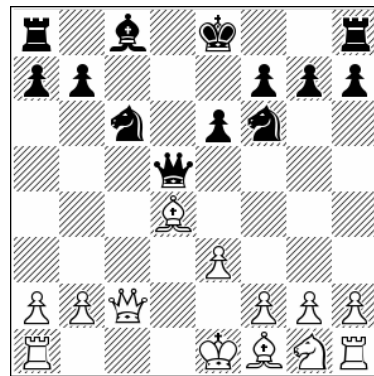


Position after: 6.e3!?

This is a less-played option but it's not bad at all. Perhaps it doesn't give White that much chance to play for an advantage, but there are some hidden points that must be taken into account.

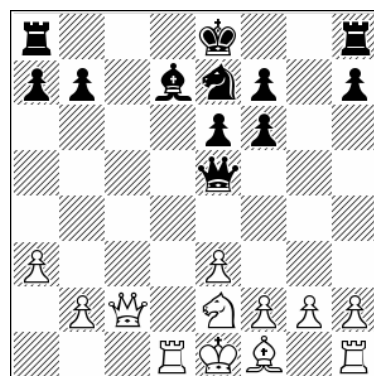
6...c5 7.a3

7.♗d2 A safe approach that has been known for a long time. White takes the bishop pair in a clean way, as in the 4.♗d2 line, with 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♘c6



Position after: 9... ♘c6

A) 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♘e2 ♗d7 12.a3 ♙e5 13.♞d1 ♘e7

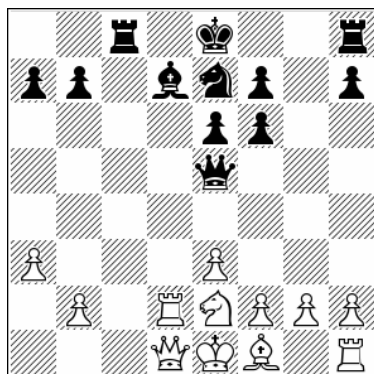


Position after: 13... ♘e7

A1) 14.♘d4 ♗c6 15.♘xc6 ♘xc6 16.♗e2 ♙a5+ 17.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 18.♞xd2 ♖e7 19.♗f3 ♞ac8 20.♖e2 ♞hd8 21.♞hd1 ♞xd2+ 22.♞xd2 ♞c7 This position is equal, although Black has to be careful not to allow the white rook to land on h4,

½-½ (37) Fridman, D (2667) – Adams, M (2725)  
Baden Baden 2013.

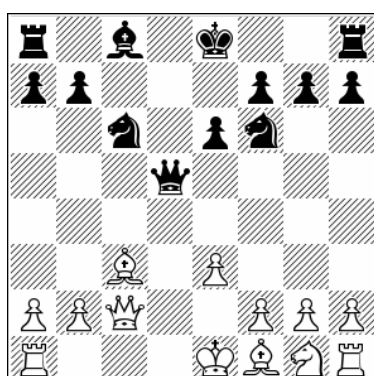
**A2)** 14.♖d2!? This is my new idea. 14...♞c8  
15.♚d1



Position after: 15.♚d1

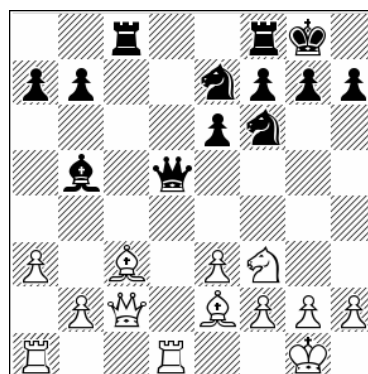
That's the point. 15...♙c6! [15...♙b5 16.♘c3  
♙xf1 17.♗xf1 0-0 18.g3 ♘c6 19.♞d7 ♞b8 20.♔g2  
♞fd8 21.♚g4+ ♚g5 22.♚xg5+ fxg5 23.♞hd1  
White might have some chances if he plays on]  
16.♘d4 0-0 17.♙e2 ♙d5 18.0-0 f5 19.♙f3 ♞fd8  
20.♘b5 ♚b8 21.♙xd5 ♘xd5 22.♚h5 Again it  
appears that the strategy that started with  
doubling pawns by 10.♙xf6 works in White's  
favor.

**B)** 10.♙c3 That's one choice. The other one is to  
take on f6 and that will take us to an unusual  
type of position which by can no means be  
considered as easy or equal play.



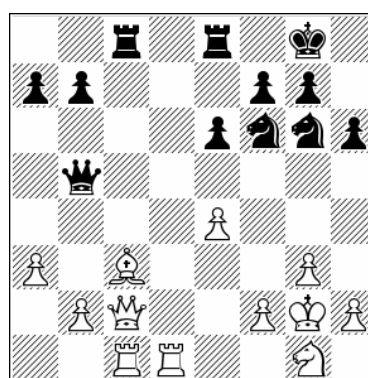
Position after: 10.♙c3

**B1)** 10...♙d7 11.♘f3 ♞c8 12.a3 ♘e7 13.♙e2 0-0  
14.0-0 ♙b5 15.♞fd1



Position after: 15.♞fd1

**B1.1)** 15...♚c5 16.e4 ♘g6 17.g3 ♚c6 18.♙xb5  
♚xb5 19.♞ac1 h6 20.♔g2 ♞fe8 [20...♞fd8  
21.♙xf6 gxf6 22.♚xc8 ♞xc8 23.♞xc8+ ♔g7  
24.♞d2 White's position is preferable] 21.♘g1!

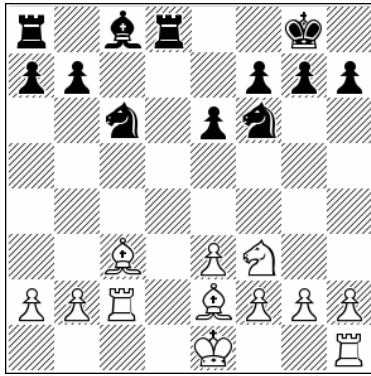


Position after: 21.♘g1!

21...e5 22.f3 ♘f8 23.a4 ♚a6 24.a5 ♚b5 25.♚e2  
♚xe2+ 26.♘xe2 ♘6d7 27.♔f2 ♘b8 28.♔e3  
White has established some pressure in this  
endgame. The moves are not forced, but I tried  
to go with White's interesting plan as far as  
possible to show the correct way of handling this  
position.

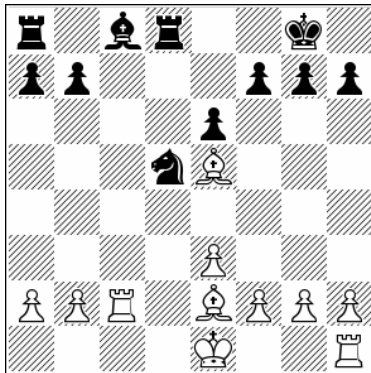
**B1.2)** 15...♚h5 16.♞ac1 ♙xe2 17.♚xe2 ♘c6  
18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♞c4 ♘e5 20.♞f4 ♔g7 21.h3  
White has some edge.

**B2)** 10...0-0 11.♘f3 ♞d8 12.♙e2 ♚e4 13.♞c1  
♚xc2 14.♞xc2



Position after: 14...Bxc2

14...d5 Best by far. [14...d4 15.d5 e5 d7 16.dxc6 e6xc6 17.eb4 f5 18.f3 d6f6 19.f2f7 20.Bhc1 g5 21.e5c5 g4 22.e4d4 another endgame that slightly favors White, ½-½ (59) Nakamura, H (2736) – Le Quang Liem (2709) chess24.com INT 2021] 15.d5 e5 16.e5e5

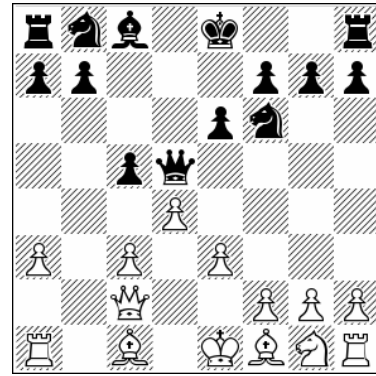


Position after: 16...e5

16...f6 Probably best. [16...b6 17.a3 f6 18.g3 b7 19.0-0 Bc8 20.Bfc1 e5 21.Bxc8 Bxc8 22.Bxc8+ e6xc8 23.f1f1 e6e6 24.f1e1 d7e7 25.e4 d8c8 26.f2d2 d6d6 27.e3d3 f7f7 28.f4 White has reasons to play on, 1-0 (52) Grachev, B (2645) – Karjakin, S (2765) Antalya 2017] 17.g3 e5 18.e4 d4b4 19.Bc7 Bd7 20.Bc3 Bd6 21.a3 c6 22.f4 e6 This is OK for Black.

### 7...Bxc3+ 8.bxc3

We have a mixture of the Classical line and the 4.e3 line. There are differences, but often we will have the same type of positions.



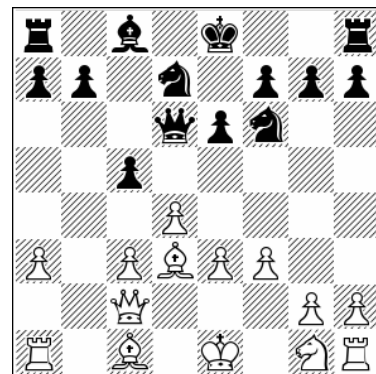
Position after: 8...bxc3

### 8...0-0

A logical choice, although alternatives are playable as well.

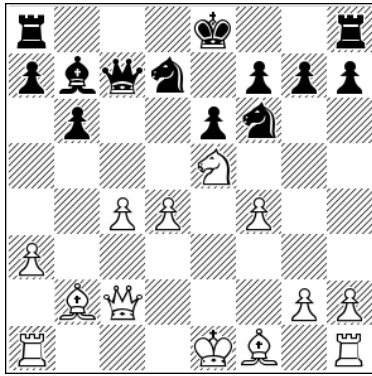
A) 8...d6 9.e2 b2 Qd6 10.d3 f3 0-0 11.c4 B8 12.Bd1 Qe7 13.e3 d3 h6 14.0-0 b6 15.d5 e5 dxe5 16.dxe5 d8e8 17.eh7+ f8 18.Bxd8 Qxd8 19.e4 Bb8 20.e6 White is better, 1-0 (43) Parligras, M (2575) – Horton, A (2366) England 2021.

B) 8...Bd7 9.d3 White can also push his pawn to f3, and if he can finish his development in a good way it might be even the better option [9.f3 Qd6 10.e3d3!



Position after: 10...e3d3!

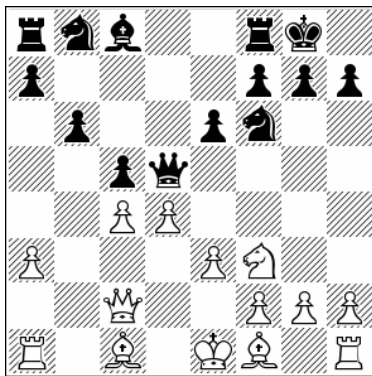
White can develop freely and has no need to move his c1-bishop so soon. 10...0-0 11.d2 e5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 exd4 14.dxd4 d5c5 15.a4 dxd3 16.Qxd3 B8 17.Bd1 e6 18.e4 Bc8 19.e3 White is applying some pressure] 9...b6 10.e2 b7 11.c4 Qd6 12.d5 e5 cxd4 13.exd4 Qc7 14.f4



Position after: 14.f4

14...♖e4! It is important to react well here. [14...♙e4 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♚xd3 0-0 17.0-0 ♘e8 18.♞ac1 ♘d6 19.♞fd1 ♞fd8 20.d5 It's unclear but White has some initiative, 1-0 (68) Drasko, M (2515) – Todorovic, G (2385) Ulcinj 1998] 15.♙d3 f5 16.0-0 0-0 A balanced position has arisen.

9.♘f3 b6 10.c4



Position after: 10.c4

10...♚d6

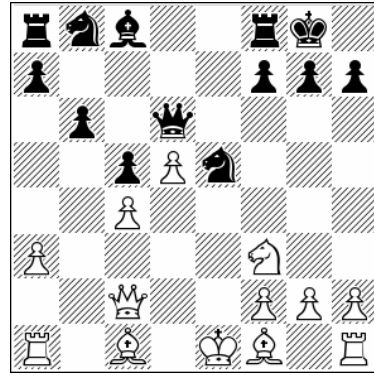
That's one of the possible queen moves in this situation. Let's check some other ideas.

**A)** 10...♚c6 11.♙d3 ♙b7 12.♙b2 cxd4 13.exd4 ♘bd7 14.0-0 ♞ac8 15.♞fe1 h6 16.a4 ♞fd8 17.♚e2 ♚d6 We have actually reached a position typical of the 4.e3 systems, ½ (48) Van Wely, L (2675) – Jakovenko, D (2667) San Sebastian 2006.

**B)** 10...♚h5 11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.0-0 ♘bd7 13.a4 ♚g6 14.♚xg6 hxg6 15.♙b2 a5 16.♞fd1 ♞fd8 17.♘d2

♞ac8 18.f3 cxd4 19.exd4 ♙a6 20.♚f2 ♞c7 21.♞ac1 ♞dc8 22.♙a3 This endgame favors White, since although Black is solid he lacks serious counterplay, 0-1 (44) Van Wely, L (2655) – Short, N (2684) London 2009.

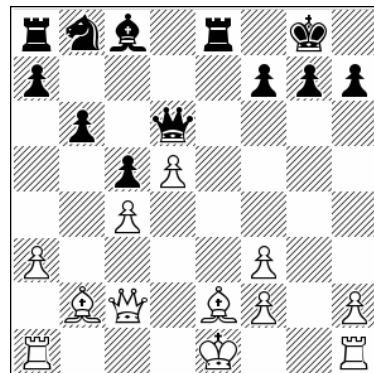
11.e4!? ♘fd7 12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 ♘e5



Position after: 13...♘e5

14.♘g5

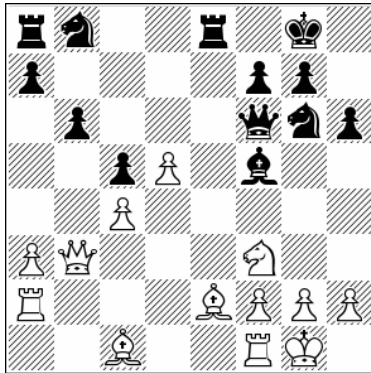
14.♙b2 ♘xf3+ 15.gxf3 ♞e8+ 16.♙e2



Position after: 16.♙e2

16...♚f4! [16...♚g6 17.♚d2 ♚g2 18.0-0-0 ♚xf2 19.♞hg1! White has a strong attack, 1-0 (35) Adhiban, B (2653) – Abasov, N (2556) Wijk aan Zee 2016] 17.♞g1 f6 18.♞g3 ♙f5 19.♚d2 ♚d6 20.♚f1 ♘d7 Black is doing OK.

14...♘g6 15.♙e2 ♚f6 16.0-0 ♙f5 17.♚b3 ♞e8 18.♞a2 h6 19.♘f3



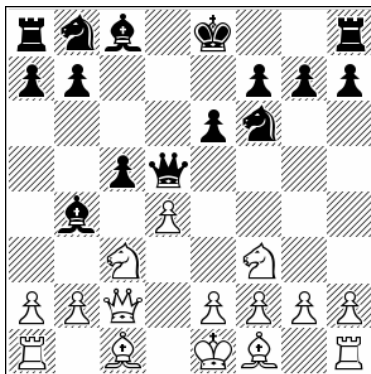
Position after: 19.f3

19...d7

This is alright for Black.

## b) 6.f3 c5

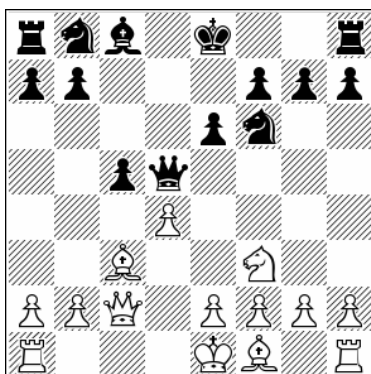
1.d4 f6 2.c4 e6 3.f3 c5 4.c3 b4 5.c2 d5 6.cxd5  
7.cxd5 6.f3 c5



Position after: 6...c5

This line has mostly been replaced with the much more common and good variation 6...f5, but still it's important to analyze some relevant aspects here.

7.d2 xc3 8.xc3

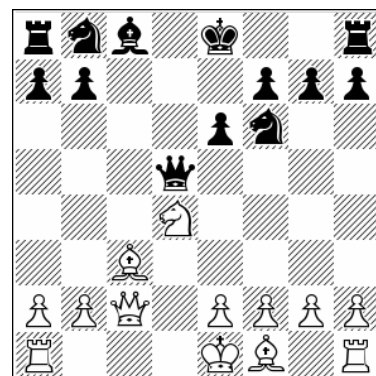


Position after: 8.xc3

8...c6

A) 8...0-0 9.dxc5 xc5 10.c1 bd7 11.e4 h6 12.d3 b6 13.0-0 b7 14.e2 fc8 15.b4 e7 16.a3 We can see from this game that White is going for fast e4 play. This brings White a small but solid advantage, 1-0 (60) Dreev, A (2655) – Andersson, U (2582) Barcelona 2009.

B) 8...cxd4 9.dxd4

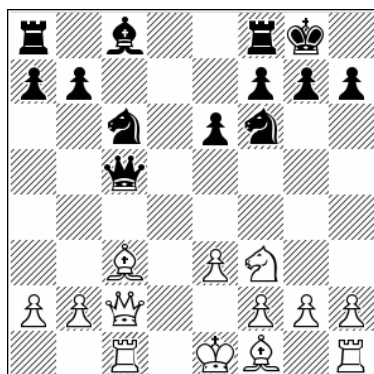


Position after: 9.dxd4

9...e5 [9...d7 10.f3 c6 11.b3 g5 12.e4 0-0 13.d1 fd8 14.d2 xd2+ 15.xd2 e8 16.xd8 xd8 17.e2 Another good example of strategy that gains the advantage for White, ½-½ (34) Sokolov, I (2659) – Xu, J (2655) Shanghai 2001] 10.b3 c6 11.f3! 0-0 12.e4 e6 13.f2 b6 14.b5 a6 15.e2 d7 16.0-0 b7 17.f1

a5 18.♔c4! The bishop pair and good control over the center mean a plus for White, 1-0 (23) Erdos, V (2609) – Csiszar, C (2389) Zalakaros 2011.

9.dxc5 ♖xc5 10.♖c1 0-0 11.e3



Position after: 11.e3

11...♖d8

11...♘d5 12.♗d3 g6 [12...♘xc3 13.♗xh7+! ♔h8 14.♗d3 ♘b4 15.♖d2 ♖d8 16.♖xc3 ♖d5 17.♗b1 White is clearly better, 1-0 (40) Cuenca Jimenez, J (2526) – Matnadze, A (2368) Linares 2015] 13.♗e4 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♗d7 16.0-0 ♖fd8 17.h3 ♔g7 18.♖fc1 ♖ac8 19.a3 White exerts some pressure in this endgame.

12.h4!?

An interesting new try.

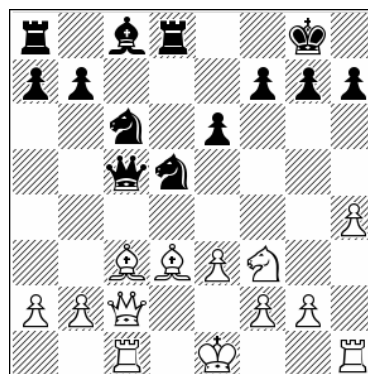
**A)** 12.b4 ♘xb4 13.♖b2 ♘fd5! Black is doing well in the complications, 0-1 (49) Beliavsky, A (2651) – Lenic, L (2637) Slovenia 2013.

**B)** 12.a3 ♘d5 13.♗d2 ♖xc2 14.♖xc2 e5 15.♗b5 ♗f5 16.♖c5 f6 17.0-0 ♘ce7 18.♖e1 ♖ac8 19.♖xc8 ♗xc8 20.♖c1 ♗d7 21.♗e2 ♖c8 22.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 Black has managed to get his position into good

shape, ½-½ (60) Rogers, I (2580) – Solomon, S (2395) Sydney 1996.

12...♖e7

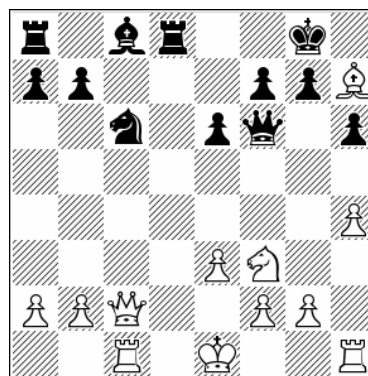
12...♘d5 13.♗d3



Position after: 13.♗d3

13...g6 [13...♘xc3 14.♗xh7+ ♔h8 15.bxc3 g6 16.h5 ♔xh7 17.hxg6+ White has a winning attack] 14.♗e4 ♘xc3 15.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 16.♖xc3 ♗d7 17.g4 f6 18.h5 g5 19.♔e2 ♖ac8 20.♖hc1 White has the edge in this endgame.

13.♗xf6 ♖xf6 14.♗d3 h6 15.♗h7+



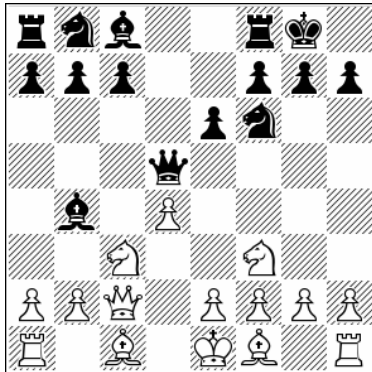
Position after: 15.♗h7+

15...♔h8 16.♗e4 ♗d7 17.0-0 ♖ac8 18.♖b3

White enjoys slightly better chances.

## c) 6. ♘f3 0-0

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5  
♚xd5 6.♘f3 0-0



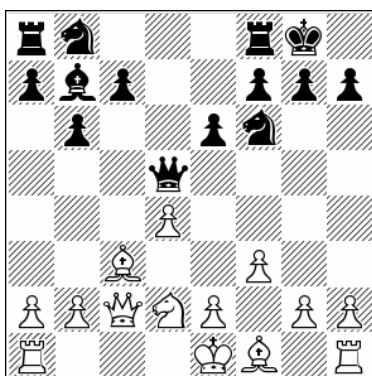
Position after: 6...0-0

A less popular line, but there are certain important points to appreciate.

7.♙d2 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 b6 9.♘d2!

The point of this move is to get full control over the center with f3-e4.

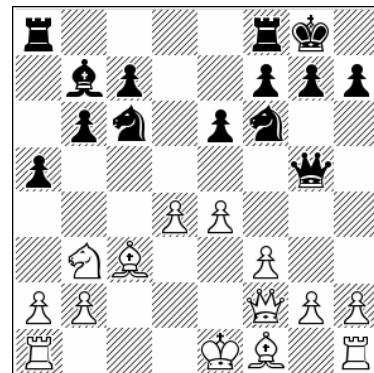
9...♙b7 10.f3



Position after: 10.f3

10...c5

10...♘c6 11.e4 ♚g5 12.♘b3 a5 13.♚f2

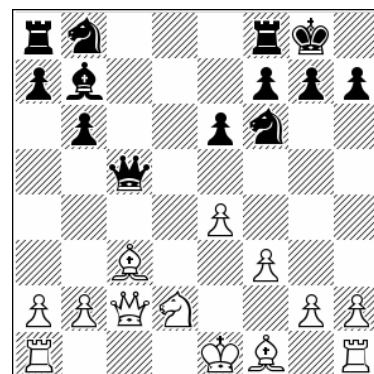


Position after: 13.♚f2

13...a4 [13...♚fd8 14.♚d1 a4 15.♘c1 a3 16.b3 e5 17.h4 ♚g6 18.d5 ♘d4 19.♙xd4 exd4 20.♙d3 White is better, while Black simply has no play, 1-0 (34) Sokolov, I (2630) – Romanishin, O (2595) Barcelona 1992] 14.♘c1 ♘e8 15.♘d3 ♘d6 16.h4 ♚e7 17.♘f4 ♙a6 18.♙xa6 ♚xa6 19.d5 White is better, ½-½ (39) Erdos, V (2661) – Melkumyan, H (2634) Germany 2013.

11.e4 ♚g5 12.dxc5 ♚xc5

Now White has couple of ideas about handling this type of position.



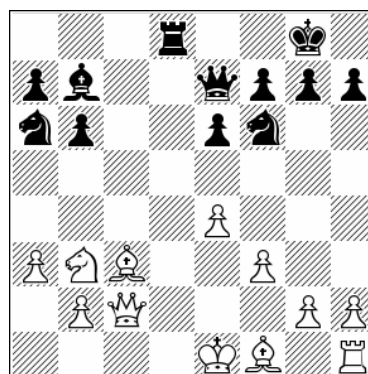
Position after: 12...♚xc5

13.♘b3

13.♙e2 ♚d8 14.♘b3 ♚g5 15.0-0 ♘h5 16.♚fd1 ♘c6 17.♙f1 ♘f4 18.♙h1 e5 19.a4 ♚xd1 20.♚xd1 ♚d8 White still preserves an edge due to his bishop pair and the restricted black bishop on b7,

0-1 (90) Swiercz, D (2608) – Rozentalis, E (2618)  
Saint-Quentin 2014.

13...♖e7 14.♞d1 ♘a6 15.a3 ♞fd8 16.♞xd8+  
♞xd8



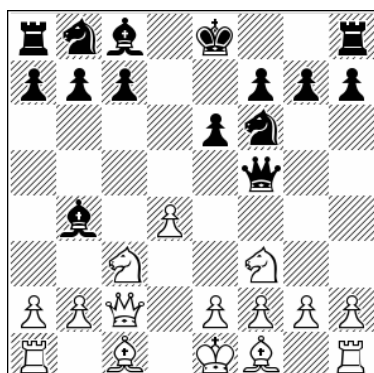
Position after: 16...♞xd8

17.♙e2

White preserves an edge.

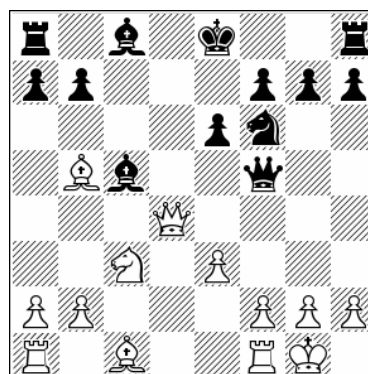
**d) 6.♘f3 ♖f5 7.♖d1**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5  
♖xd5 6.♘f3 ♖f5



Position after: 6...♖f5

7...c5 8.e3 ♘c6 9.♙d3 ♖h5 10.♙e2 ♖f5 11.♙d3  
♖h5 12.♙e2 ♖f5 13.0-0 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4  
15.♖xd4 ♙c5 16.♙b5+



Position after: 16.♙b5+

This is Black's main idea, and the most popular one. Black wants to keep his bishop pair, at least for now, and he also challenges the queen on c2 with gain of tempo. In this subchapter we will start by analyzing some less popular options.

7.♖d1

We will start with this line first.

7...e5

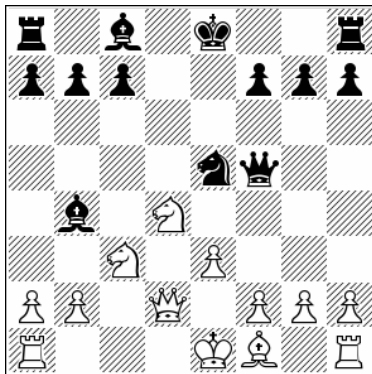
Black also has a good alternative here.

16...♙e7 17.♖h4 h6 18.e4 ♖g4 19.♖xg4 ♘xg4  
20.♙f4 g5 Black is OK, ½-½ (25) Lupulescu, C  
(2657) – Naiditsch, A (2712) Porto Carras 2011.

8.dxe5

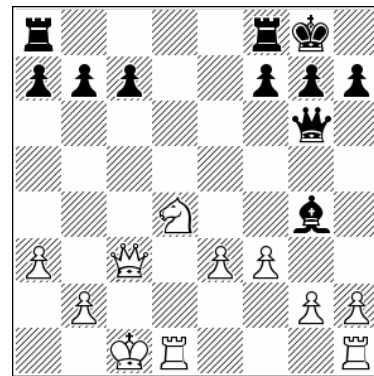
8.♙d2 ♙xc3 9.♙xc3 e4 10.♘e5 e3 11.f3 0-0 12.g3  
♘c6 13.♙g2 ♘d5 14.♖d3 ♘ce7 15.♖xf5 ♙xf5  
Black is doing fine here, since the pawn on e3 seems to be safe enough and at the same time it creates problems for White, 0-1 (98) Ivanov, S (2546) – Khalifman, A (2668) Sochi 2004.

8...♞e4 9.♙d2 ♞c6 10.e3 ♞xd2 11.♚xd2 ♞xe5  
12.♞d4



Position after: 12.♞d4

12...♚f6 13.a3 ♙xc3 14.♚xc3 0-0 15.♙e2 ♚g6  
16.0-0-0 ♞g4 17.♙xg4 ♙xg4 18.f3



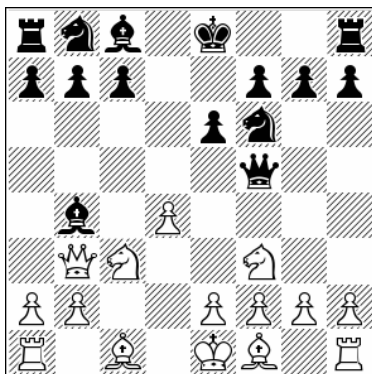
Position after: 18.f3

18...♙d7

The position is double edged, ½-½ (67) Narciso Dublan, M (2542) – Lopez Martinez, J (2535) Barcelona 2013.

### e) 6.♞f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3 c5

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5  
♚xd5 6.♞f3 ♚f5 7.♚b3



Position after: 7.♚b3

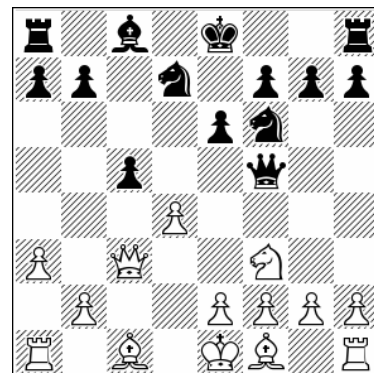
This is the first major line to investigate, the other one being the queen exchange.

7...c5

This is not a main line, but because Carlsen has used it we need to examine it.

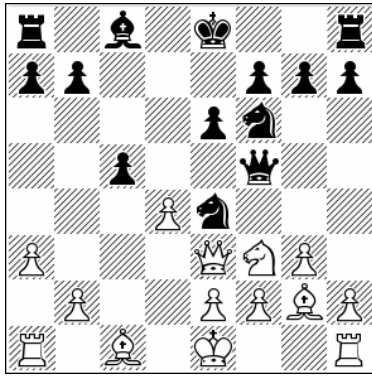
8.a3 ♙a5

8...♙xc3+ 9.♚xc3 A principled reaction.  
9...♞bd7

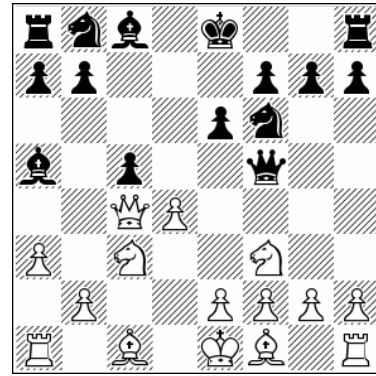


Position after: 9...♞bd7

[9...♞e4 10.♚c2 ♞c6 11.e3 cxd4 12.♙d3! ♚a5+  
13.b4 ♞xb4 14.axb4 ♚xa1 15.0-0 ♞d6 16.exd4  
♙d7 17.♙f4 ♚a4 18.♚xa4 ♙xa4 19.♙xd6 White holds the upper hand, 1-0 (40) Holt, C (2578) – Hambleton, A (2501) chess.com INT 2018] 10.g3 A solid choice, but White can also try a more aggressive set up with: 10.g4. However, I prefer the text move. 10...cxd4 [10...♞e4 11.♚e3 ♞df6 12.♙g2!

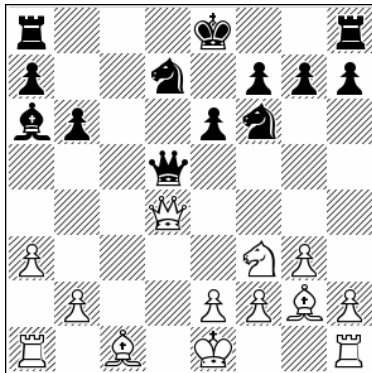


Position after: 12.♙g2!



Position after: 9.♖c4

This is strong. 12...♗g4 13.♖f4 ♗gxf2 14.♖f1 ♖xf4 15.♙xf4 ♗g4 16.♗e5 ♗xe5 17.dxe5 f5 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♙d6 White is better] 11.♗xd4 ♖c5 [If the black queen goes to d5 the game may proceed in as follows. 11...♖d5 12.♗f3 b6 13.♙g2 ♙a6 14.♖d4!



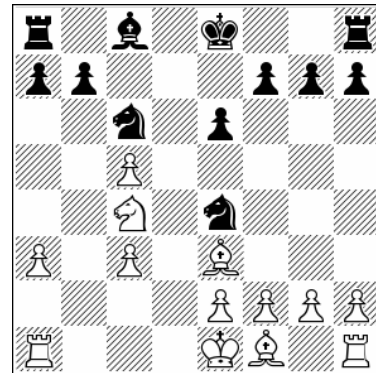
Position after: 14.♖d4!

14...0-0 15.♖xd5 ♗xd5 16.♗d4 ♖ac8 17.0-0 ♗c5 18.b4 ♗a4 19.♙xd5! exd5 20.b5 ♙b7 21.♙e3 In my opinion such play gives White unpleasant pressure in the endgame.] 12.♖xc5 ♗xc5 13.b4 ♗a4 14.♙g2 0-0 15.♙g5 ♗d5 16.♗b5 ♙d7 17.♗d6 f6 18.♙d2 ♖ab8 19.♖c1 ♖fd8 20.b5 ♙e8 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.e4 White keeps the two bishops and that may help him to gain an advantage, 1-0 (52) Nakamura, H (2787) – Brunello, S (2566) Douglas 2016.

### 9.♖c4

### 9...0-0

A) 9...♗c6 10.dxc5 ♖d5 11.♗d2 ♖xc4 12.♗xc4 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♗e4 14.♙e3!



Position after: 14.♙e3!

14...e5 15.g4 ♙e6 16.♙g2 ♙xc4 17.♙xe4 0-0-0 18.f3 h5 19.g5 ♙d5 20.♙c2 g6 21.♖f2 ♗a5 22.♖ab1 White is better.

B) 9...♗bd7 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 ♙d8 12.e3 0-0 13.♙d3 ♗b6 14.♙xf5 ♗xc4 15.♙d3 ♗d5 16.♙xc4 ♗xc3 17.♙b2 ♗d5 18.b5 White has more space and a typical Nimzo type of advantage in the center, ½-½ (44) Dreev, A (2660) – Tiviakov, S (2674) Benidorm 2009.

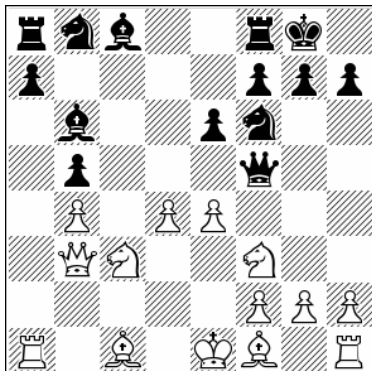
C) 9...♙xc3+ 10.♖xc3 This transposes to the note 8...♙xc3+.

### 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 b5

11...♙b6 12.e3 ♗c6 13.♙d3 ♖h5 14.b5 ♗e7 15.h3 ♗g6 16.♙a3 White is clearly better, ½-½

(56) Sethuraman, S (2447) – Galopoulos, N (2324) Kemer 2009.

12. ♖b3 ♜b6 13.e4!



Position after: 13.e4!

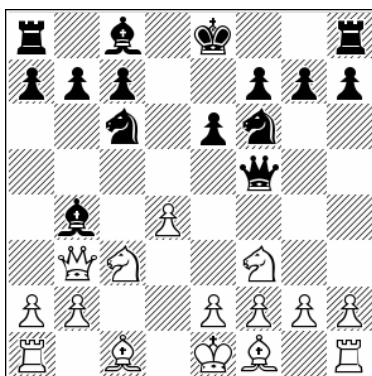
13... ♖h5 14.e5 ♜b7

Black is forced to enter complications -- which are still unfavorable for him.

15.exf6 ♜xf3 16.gxf3

**f) 6. ♘f3 ♖f5 7. ♖b3 ♘c6 8.e3**

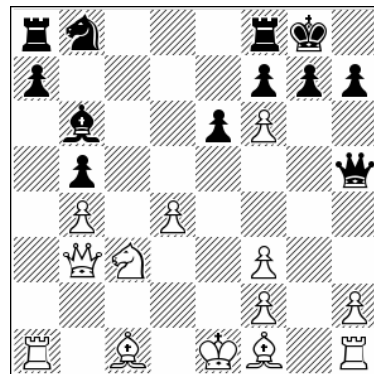
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♜b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♖xd5 6.♘f3 ♖f5 7.♖b3 ♘c6



Position after: 7... ♘c6

This is the main response to the queen move. Now we will look at White's ideas in this position.

8.e3



Position after: 16.gxf3

16... ♖xf3

16... ♜xd4 17. ♜g2 ♖e5+ 18. ♘e2 ♜xa1 19.f4  
White has victory in sight.

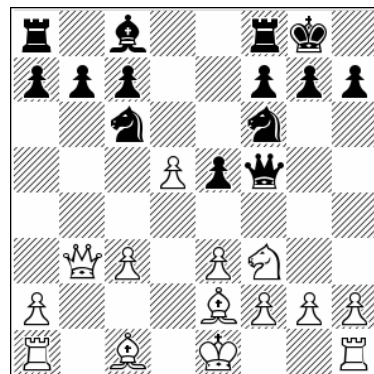
17. ♖g1 ♜xd4 18. ♖xg7+ ♘h8 19. ♜e3 ♜xe3  
20.fxe3 ♖xe3+ 21. ♜e2 ♘d7 22. ♖g3 ♖e5 23. ♖d1

White is better.

We will deal here with some less popular ideas, where White is trying to generate play in a conventional way.

8... 0-0 9. ♜d2

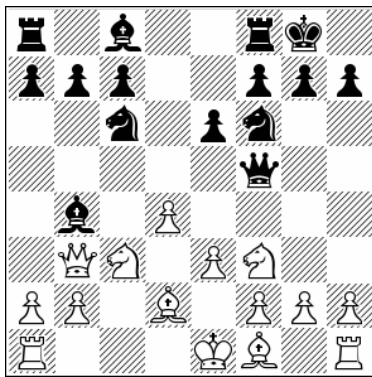
9. ♜e2 A rare move. 9... e5 10.d5 ♜xc3+ 11.bxc3



Position after: 11.bxc3

11... ♘a5 Some consider this position as even better for Black. [11... ♘e7 12.c4 e4 13. ♘d4 ♖g5

14.♔a3 ♖e8 15.♘b5 ♗xg2 16.0-0-0! ♗xf2  
 17.♘xc7 ♗xe2 18.♘xe8 ♘xe8 19.♔xe7 b6  
 20.♖d2 ♗f3 21.♖e1 White is better now] 12.♗a4  
 b6 13.c4 e4 14.♘d4 ♗g6 15.g3 ♔g4 16.h3 ♔xe2  
 17.♘xe2 ♖fc8 18.♔d2 ♘b7 19.♘f4 ♗h6 20.♔c3  
 c6 21.0-0 ♘h5 Black is doing fine, 0-1 (37)  
 Paragua, M (2545) – Adams, M (2715) Khanty-  
 Mansiysk 2011.



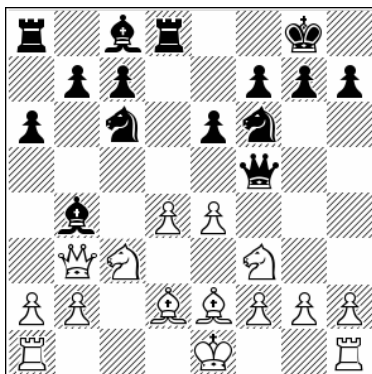
Position after: 9.♔d2

### 9...♔d6

Probably best, going directly for the ...e5 break.

A) The immediate e-pawn push fails. 9...e5  
 10.d5 ♔xc3 11.♔xc3 ♘b8 12.♔xe5 White is  
 better, 1-0 (21) Yang, K (2122) – Schrik, R (2198)  
 chess. com INT 2021.

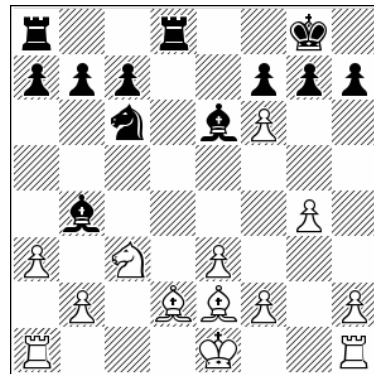
B) 9...a6 10.♔e2 ♖d8 11.e4!



Position after: 11.e4!

11...♗g4 12.e5 ♘d5 13.♖d1 ♔e7 14.0-0 ♘xd4  
 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♔g5 ♗xe5 17.♔xe7 ♖e8  
 18.♗a3 White is better.

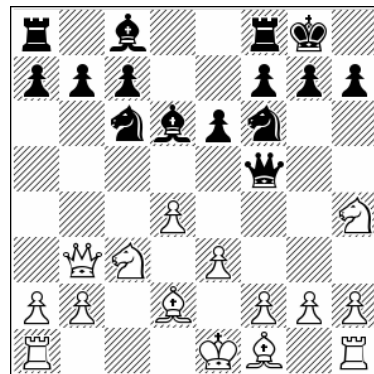
C) 9...♖d8 10.♔e2 a5 [10...e5 11.♘xe5 ♔e6 12.g4  
 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♔xb3 14.exf6 ♔e6 15.a3!



Position after: 15.a3!

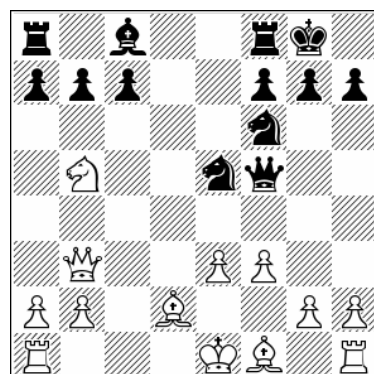
15...♔f8 16.♖g1 gxf6 17.♘e4 ♔e7 18.♔c3 White  
 is clearly better] 11.a3 ♔xc3 12.♔xc3 b6 13.0-0  
 ♔b7 14.♖fc1 ♘e7 15.♔e1 ♖ac8 16.♘e5 White  
 has some edge.

### 10.♘h4!



Position after: 10.♘h4!

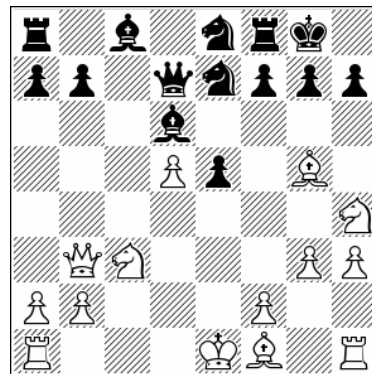
10.♘b5 e5 11.dxe5 ♔xe5! 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5! Black  
 is already doing fine. 13.f3?? But this leads to  
 disaster.



Position after: 13.f3??

13...♖xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♜xf3 15.♖g1 ♗e4 16.♖g2 ♗h3 17.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 0-1 (17) Dreev, A (2710) – Gajewski, G (2616) Warsaw 2011.

10...♖g4 11.g3 e5 12.h3 ♜d7 13.d5 ♗e7 14.e4 c6 15.♗g5 cxd5 16.exd5 ♗e8



Position after: 16...♗e8

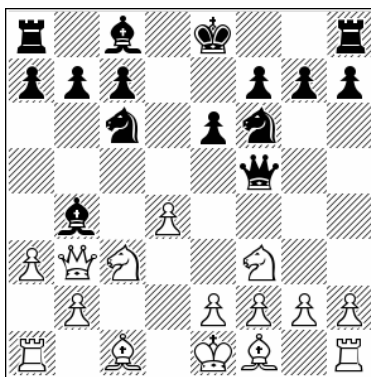
17.g4

A sharp position, probably balanced at the moment.

**g) 6.♗f3 ♜f5 7.♜b3 ♗c6 8.a3**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♜c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♜xd5 6.♗f3 ♜f5 7.♜b3 ♗c6 8.a3

Another less popular idea, but one that's important to note.

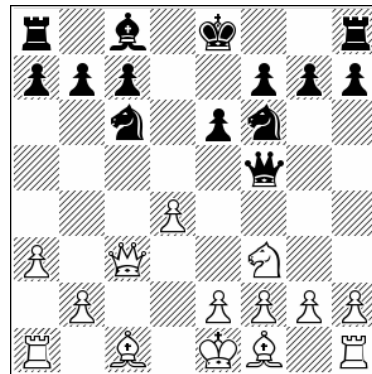


Position after: 8.a3

8...♗a5

A) 8...♗d6? This natural-looking retreat is actually a big mistake. 9.e4! ♗xe4 10.♗d3 ♗d2 11.♔xd2 ♜g4 12.♖g1 0-0 13.♗e4 ♖d8 14.h3 ♜h5 15.♗xd6 ♖xd6 16.♜c3 White has won a piece, 0-1 (74) Brunner, N (2386) – Bacrot, E (2729) Venaco 2005.

B) 8...♗xc3+ 9.♜xc3



Position after: 9.♜xc3

9...♗e4! [9...0-0 10.e3 e5 11.dxe5 ♗e4 12.♜c2 ♗xe5 13.♗d4 ♜g6 14.f3 ♗d6 15.♜xg6 hxg6 16.e4 Such endgames favor White, ½-½ (62) Radjabov, T (2793) – Wang, H (2737) Beijing 2012] 10.♜d3 0-0 11.♗e3 ♜a5+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2 13.♜xd2 ♜xd2+ 14.♔xd2 ♖d8 15.♔c3 b6 This is an equal position.

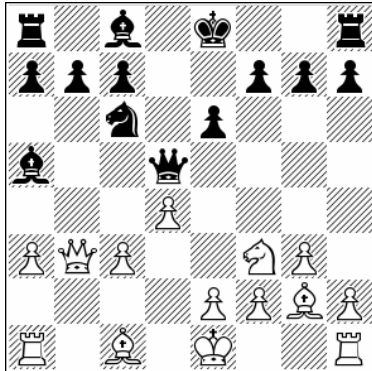


Position after: 8...♗a5

### 9.e3

There are other moves as well, but none offers White chances to gain advantage.

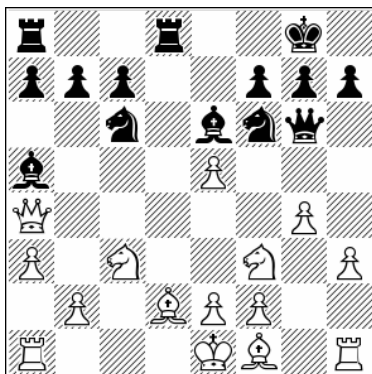
A) 9.g3 ♘e4 10.♙g2 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♚d5!



Position after: 11...♚d5!

12.♞b1 ♗xd4 13.♞a4+ c6 14.♙f1 ♗xf3 15.♙xf3 ♞d8 16.♙g2 0-0 Black is better.

B) 9.♙d2 0-0 10.h3 ♞d8 11.g4 ♞g6 12.♞c4 e5 13.dxe5 ♙e6 14.♞a4



Position after: 14.♞a4

14...♗d7! [14...♗d5 15.♙g2 ♗b6 16.♞f4 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♗d5 18.♞c1 ♞e4 19.♞b1 ♞c4 20.♙d2 ♗d4 21.♗xd4 ♞xd4 22.♞c1 ♞xe5 with more or less equal chances, ½-½ (54) Dreev, A (2668) – Wang, H (2747) Tromsøe 2013] 15.b4 ♗c5! 16.bxc5 ♞xd2 17.♙xd2 ♞d8+ 18.♙e3 ♙xc3 19.♞d1 ♙d5 Again it is Black who leads the game now.

### 9...0-0

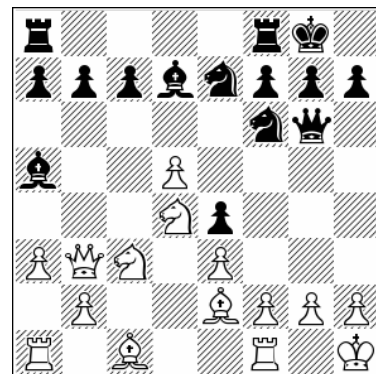


Position after: 9...0-0

### 10.♙b5

10.♞b5 e5! 11.♙d3 ♞g4 12.0-0 a6 13.♞b3 ♙xc3 14.♞xc3 e4 15.♗e5 ♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♗d5 17.♞d4 exd3 18.♞xd5 ♙e6 19.♞xd3 ♙c4 Black is better, 0-1 (77) Beliavsky, A (2618) – Short, N (2675) Las Vegas 1999.

10...♙d7 11.♙e2 e5 12.d5 ♗e7 13.0-0 e4 14.♗d4 ♞g6 15.♙h1



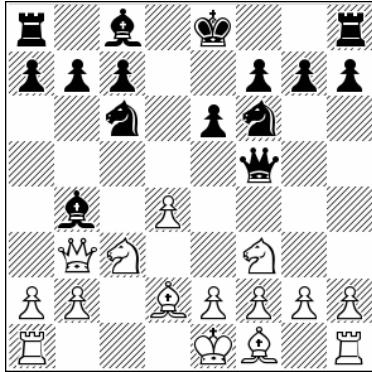
Position after: 15.♙h1

### 15...♙b6

Already we can say that Black has reached his main goals here and has the better chances, ½-½ (67) Hayrapetyan, H (2499) – Sturua, Z (2529) Yerevan 2022.

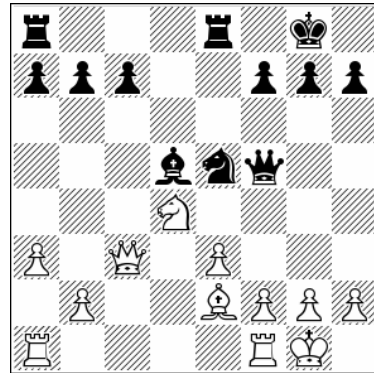
**h) 6.♘f3 ♖f5 7.♗b3 ♞c6 8.♙d2 0-0 9.a3**

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5  
♗xd5 6.♟f3 ♖f5 7.♗b3 ♞c6 8.♙d2



Position after: 8.♙d2

14...♗h5 15.♙e2 ♙g4 16.♞d5 this looks very good for White] 13.♗c2 ♟xc3 14.♗xc3 ♙d5 15.♙e2 ♞fe8 16.0-0 ♟xe5 17.♟d4



Position after: 17.♟d4

**8...0-0**

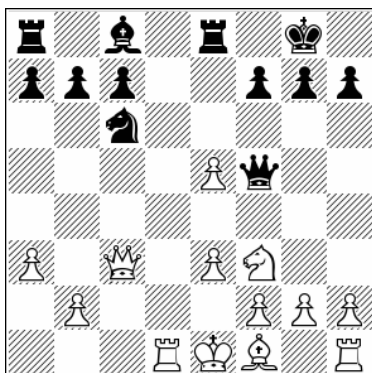
This alternative is actually rare, but there is potential here.

**9.a3 ♙d6!**

Probably best.

A) 9...♙a5 10.h3 ♟e4 11.♟xe4 ♗xe4 12.♙xa5 ♟xa5 13.♗c3 b6 14.b4 ♟c6 15.e3 ♙b7 16.♙d3 ♗d5 17.0-0 White has an edge, 1-0 (37) Martirosyan, H (2617) – Barseghyan, A (2387) Jermuk 2020.

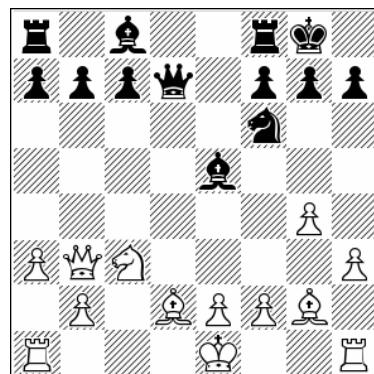
B) 9...♙xc3 10.♙xc3 e5 11.dxe5 ♟e4 12.e3 ♙e6 [12...♟xc3 13.♗xc3 ♞e8 14.♞d1!



Position after: 14.♞d1!

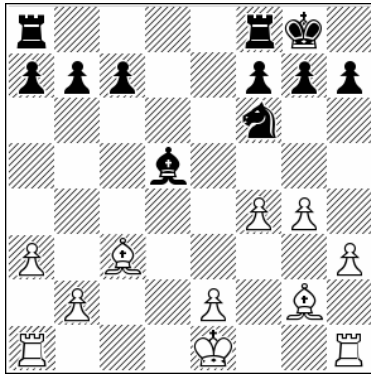
Now in both the following cases White has easier play. 17...♗g6 [17...♗g5 18.g3 ♗f6 19.♞ad1 c6 20.f3 this is also a bit of a worry for Black] 18.f3 It's interesting that even here Black didn't solve all his problems.

10.h3 e5 11.g4 ♗d7 12.dxe5 ♟xe5 13.♟xe5 ♙xe5 14.♙g2



Position after: 14.♙g2

14...♗e6 15.♗xe6 ♙xe6 16.f4 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♙d5!



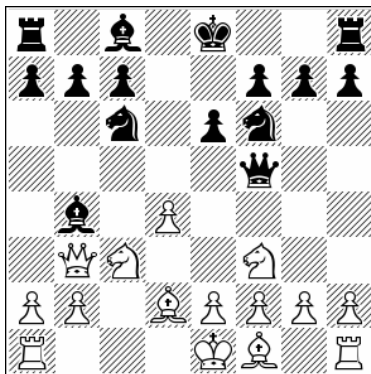
Position after: 17...♙d5!

18.0-0 ♘e4

Black is OK.

**i) 6.♘f3 ♖f5 7.♗b3 ♞c6 8.♙d2 0-0 9.h3**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♘f3 ♖f5 7.♗b3 ♞c6 8.♙d2



Position after: 8.♙d2

Anand introduced this idea in his match with Kramnik, and still today it definitely represents the best attempt for White to get an advantage. Black has tried many ideas here so now we have to see how they stand up today.

9...a5

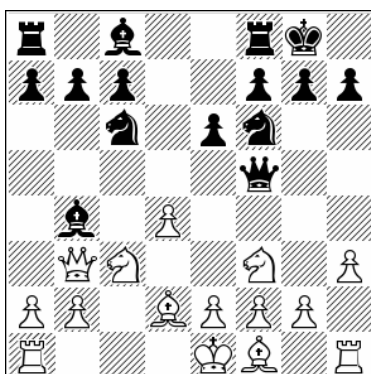
Probably the best, and certainly the most tested.

A) 9...b6 10.g4 ♖a5 11.♖c1 ♙b7 12.a3 ♙xc3 13.♙xc3 ♗d5 14.♗xd5!

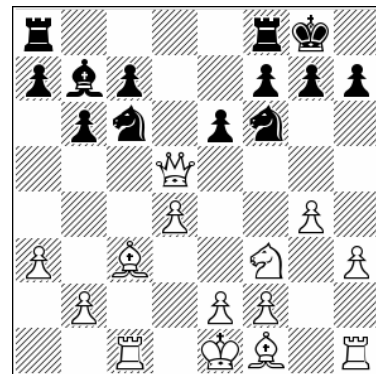
8...0-0

The main plan for Black is to go ...e5, and, as we saw in other lines, White simply can't get time to continue developing in a standard manner (8.e3 or 9.e3). Instead, White has to look for some slightly unusual play.

9.h3



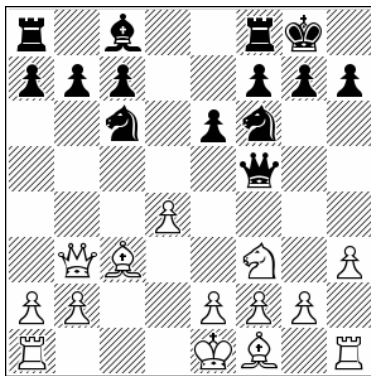
Position after: 9.h3



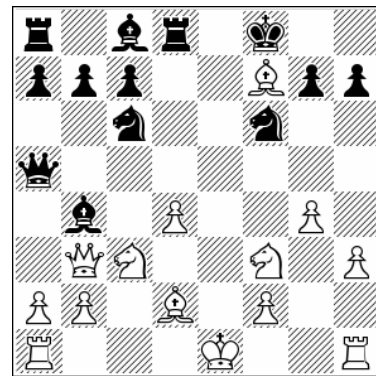
Position after: 14.♗xd5!

Black had to exchange queens. Now White tries to get the advantage with his bishop pair. 14...♘xd5 15.♙d2! ♘f6 16.♖g1 ♖ac8 17.♙g2 ♘e7 18.♙b4 c5 19.dxc5 ♖fd8 20.♘e5 White has the better endgame, 1-0 (47) Anand, V (2783) – Kramnik, V (2772) Bonn 2008.

B) 9...♙xc3 10.♙xc3



Position after: 10...e3



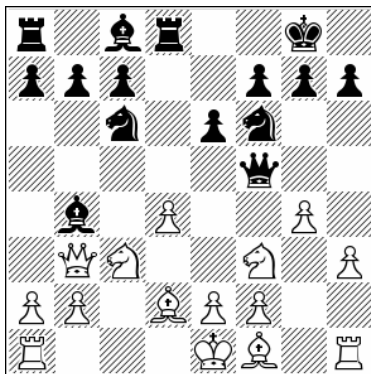
Position after: 14...exd4

10...b6 [10...e4 11.g4 e5 12.g2 e3c3 13.bxc3 e7 14.0-0 d6 15.e5 c6 16.f4 f6 17.d3 d5 18.f3 White is better, 1-0 (30) Bareev, E (2647) – Timman, J (2580) Leon 2008] 11.e3 e7 12.e2 f8 13.0-0 e7 14.f3c1 Such positions are a solid option for Black, but still White preserves his bishop pair.

14...d7 [14...e4 15.e4 d4 d4 16.0-0 d7 17.e3 d6 18.e4 e6 19.f1 White's chances seem preferable] 15.e4 b5 16.e2 e4 17.d4 d4 18.0-0 e7 19.e3 dd8 20.f1 White has a big advantage, 1-0 (41) Laznicka, V (2598) – Azarov, S (2618) Ostrava 2009.

C) 9...d8 10.g4

10.g4 g6



Position after: 10.g4



Position after: 10...g6

10...a5 [10...g6 11.c1 d5 12.g2 e3c3 13.bxc3 d6 14.g5! h6 15.e4 f6 16.f3 f4 17.e3 d6 18.h4 e7 19.g5 White has built up a strong initiative, 1-0 (27) Navara, D (2646) – Azarov, S (2605) Czechia 2008] 11.e3 e5 12.e4 exd4 13.f7+ f8 14.exd4

11.a3

It is important to understand that early tactics don't work here. 11.h4 e4! 12.c4 c2 13.d4 b2 14.c1 d5 15.c4 e3 0-1 (15) Saduakassova, D (2421) – Abdulla, K (2299) Sharjah 2014.

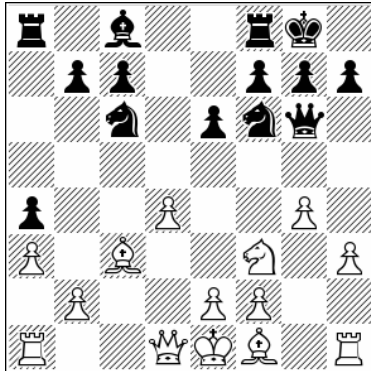
11...a4

11...e3 12.e3 a4 We transpose into the 12.c4 or 12.d1 lines. Should those moves be 12, not 13?

## 12. ♖c4

This is considered the main approach, but White has a playable alternative.

12. ♖d1 ♗xc3 13. ♗xc3



Position after: 13. ♗xc3

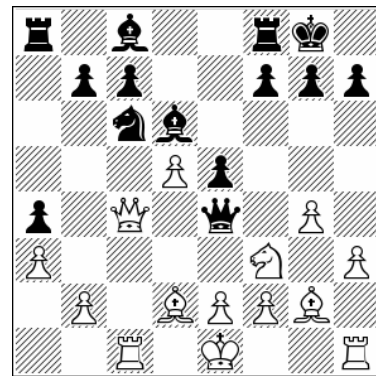
13... ♗d5 [13... ♗e4 14. ♖c1 ♖d8 15. ♖c2 ♗xc3 16. ♖xg6 hxg6 17. bxc3 e5 18. e3 ♗e6 19. ♗e2 White has the edge in this type of endgame, 1-0 (38) Bogner, S (2545) – Horvath, D (2488) Kiel 2022] 14. ♗d2

**A)** 14... h6 15. ♗g2 ♖d8 16. ♖c1 ♗d7 17. ♖c2 ♖xc2 18. ♖xc2 ♗e8 19. 0-0 f6 20. ♖fc1 ♗g6 21. ♖c5 ♗e4 22. e3 ♗ce7 23. ♗e1 ♗xg2 24. ♗xg2 Again we have an interesting endgame in which White has more active chances but Black is very solid, ½-½ (88) Sarana, A (2654) – Nihal, S (2620) chess.com INT 2020.

**B)** 14... ♖e4!? 15. ♖b1 f5 16. ♖g1! ♗h8 17. ♖g3 ♗d7 18. e3 ♗f6 Black is doing OK.

## 12... ♗xc3

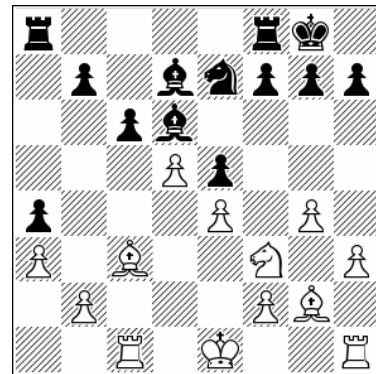
12... ♗d6 13. ♖c1 ♗e4 14. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 15. ♗g2 e5 16. d5



Position after: 16. d5

**A)** 16... ♗d4 17. ♗h4 b5 18. ♗xe4 bxc4 19. ♖xc4 ♖b8 20. ♗c3 ♗b5 [20... f5? 21. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 22. gxf5 ♗xf5 23. ♗xf5 ♖xf5 24. e4 White is winning, ½-½ (62) Tang, A (2538) – Nihal, S (2620) lichess.org INT 2021; 20... ♗d7 21. ♗f3 ♗b5 22. ♖xd4! exd4 23. ♗xd4 White has fine compensation] 21. ♖xa4 ♗xc3 22. bxc3 ♗d7 23. ♖a7 g6 24. ♗d2 ♖a8 25. ♖xa8 ♖xa8 26. ♖a1 ♖xa3 27. ♖xa3 ♗xa3 Black is a pawn down, but with his bishop pair he can probably hold this position to a draw.

**B)** 16... ♖xc4 This is best, and other moves fail to equalize. 17. ♖xc4 ♗e7 18. e4 ♗d7 19. ♖c1 c6 20. ♗c3

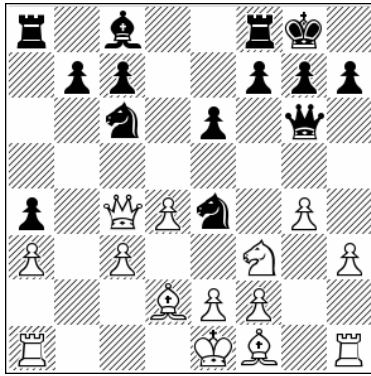


Position after: 20. ♗c3

20... ♗g6! This is simple and strong -- having control over f4 is a very good asset for Black. [20... cxd5 21. ♗xe5 ♗e6 Around equal. 0-1 (59) Tang, A (2538) – Nihal, S (2620) lichess.org INT 2021]

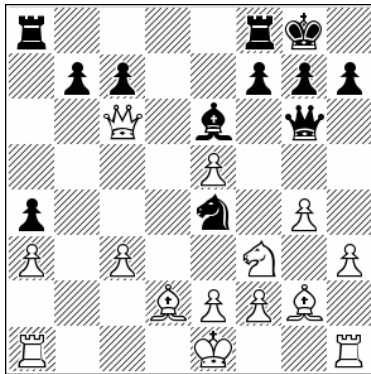
## 13. ♗xc3

13. bxc3 ♗e4! Best.



Position after: 13...♘e4!

A) 14.♙g2 e5 15.dxe5 ♕e6 16.♚xc6!!



Position after: 16.♚xc6!!

Actually this is not super-strong, but it's unusual to see such a motif in the early stages of an opening. 16...bxc6 17.♘h4 ♘xd2 18.♘xg6 fxg6 19.♙xd2 ♖a5 20.♙e1 ♖b8 21.♙xc6 ♖b2 22.f4 g5 23.fxg5 ♖xe5 24.♖h2 ♙c4 25.♙f3 ♙f7 26.♖f2 ♙e7 Black has very active play.

B) 14.♙f4 e5 15.♙xe5 [15.dxe5 ♕e6 16.♚d3 f5 17.♘h4 ♚f7 18.gxf5 ♙xf5 19.♚e3 ♘xc3 20.♚xc3 ♙e4 again Black is doing fine] 15...♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♚f6 17.♘d3 ♙e6 18.♚xc7 ♙d5 19.♙g2 ♘xc3 20.♙xd5 ♘xd5 21.♚e5 ♚d8 Black can be happy with his position.

13...♘d5

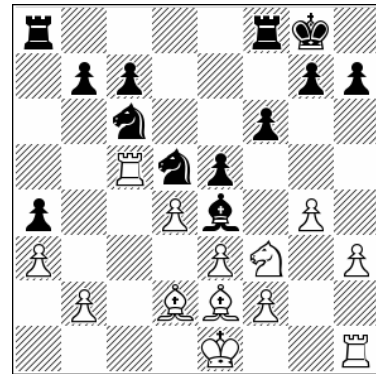
Black's main idea here is opening up squares for his queen, and also preparing possible ...f6 or even ...f5 ideas.

13...♚e4 14.♖g1 ♘d5 15.♖c1 ♖d8 16.♙d2 ♘b6 17.♚c2 ♚xc2 18.♖xc2 ♘xd4 19.♘xd4 ♖xd4 20.♖xc7 ♖c4 21.♖xc4 ♘xc4 22.♙c3 White keeps some edge.

14.♖c1

One alternative is very interesting, because White actually wants to play on the kingside.

14.♙d2 f6 15.♖c1 ♙d7 16.♚c2 ♚xc2 17.♖xc2 ♙e8 18.e3 ♙g6 19.♖c5 ♙e4 20.♙e2 e5



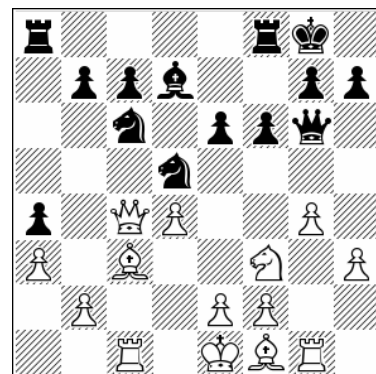
Position after: 20...e5

21.0-0 exd4 22.♘xd4 ♘xd4 23.exd4 c6 24.♖e1 ♙g6 Black is fine here, ½-½ (44) Kasparov, G (2812) – Karjakin, S (2773) Saint Louis 2017.

14...♙d7!

Probably the best move order.

14...f6 15.♖g1 ♙d7



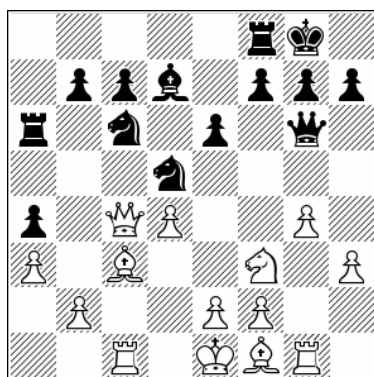
Position after: 15...♙d7

16.h4!? [16.g5 ♖h8 17.♗d2 ♘a5 18.♙c2 ♚h5 19.gxf6 gxf6 20.♗xa5 ♜xa5 21.♞g3 ♜c6 22.♙d2 White's chances are preferable, 0-1 (53) Morozevich, A (2665) – Karjakin, S (2763) Moscow 2018] 16...♖h8 17.h5 ♚e8 18.e4 ♘xc3 19.♙xc3 ♚e7 20.♙e3 ♜e8 The position is still complex.

### 15.♞g1

15.e3 f5 16.♗d3 ♙f6 17.gxf5 ♘a7 18.♗d2 ♜b5 19.♙c2 ♜xd3 20.♙xd3 ♙xf5 21.♙xf5 exf5 22.♘e5 ♘b5 This position is balanced, but surely playable for both sides.

### 15...♞a6!?



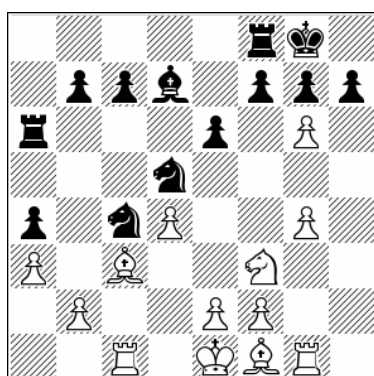
Position after: 15...♞a6!?

Perhaps this is the right way.

### 16.♗d2

The h-pawn march also needs close examination.

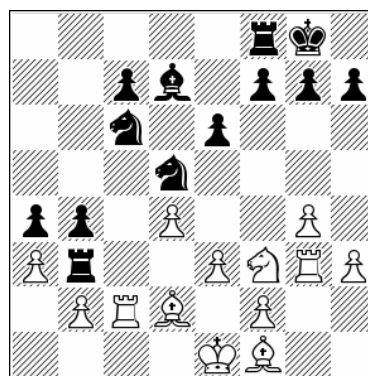
16.h4!? ♘a5 17.h5 ♘xc4 18.hxg6



Position after: 18.hxg6

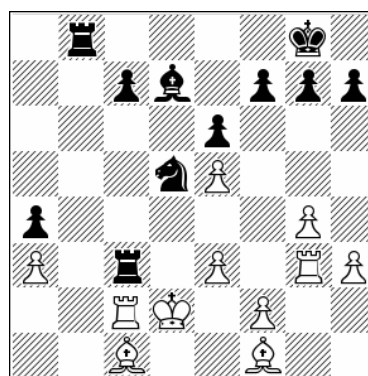
18...fxg6 [18...hxg6 19.e4 ♘xc3 20.♗xc4 ♘b5 21.♘e5 ♜e8 22.♗xb5 ♜xb5 23.♞xc7 White has chances of gaining an advantage] 19.e4 ♘xc3 20.♗xc4 ♜b5! 21.bxc3 ♜xc4 22.♘e5 ♜b3 23.g5 c5 Black has enough counterplay.

16...♞b6 17.♙c2 ♞b3 18.e3 b5 19.♞g3 ♙xc2 20.♞xc2 b4



Position after: 20...b4

21.♗c1 bxa3 22.bxa3 ♞fb8 23.♘e5 ♘xe5 24.dxe5 ♞c3 25.♖d2



Position after: 25.♖d2

### 25...♞bb3

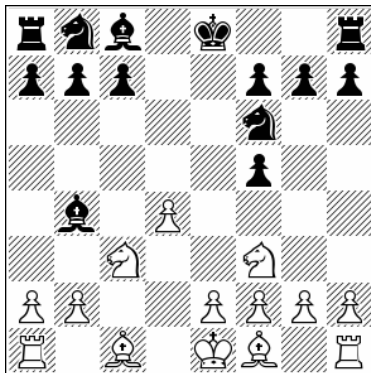
Black is OK in this endgame.

## j) 6. ♘f3 ♙f5 7. ♚xf5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♚xd5 6.♘f3 ♙f5

It is always possible to play an endgame with White in the 5...♚xd5 line, and this is one of the main variations.

7. ♚xf5 exf5



Position after: 7...exf5

We have reached a very interesting endgame in which Black controls the center, holding a grip on the d5-square. On the other hand, White has more space and also some assets which we will explain shortly.

8.a3

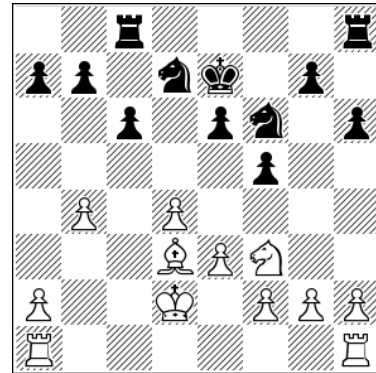
A) 8.♙f4 c6 9.a3 ♙e7 The game will transpose to the note 8.a3 ♙e7.

B) 8.♙d2 c6 9.e3



Position after: 9.e3

B1) 9...h6 10.♙d3 ♙e6 11.♙e2 ♘bd7 12.♘b5 ♙xd2 13.♘c7+ ♙e7 14.♙xd2 ♚ac8 15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.b4



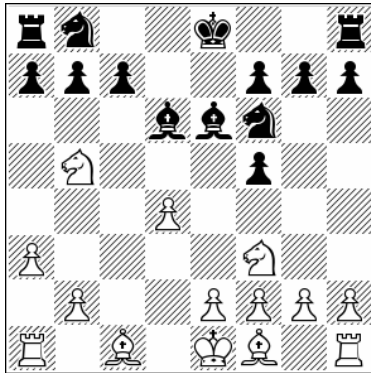
Position after: 16.b4

16...g5 [16...♘e4+ 17.♙e2 ♘c3+ 18.♙d2 ♘e4+ the game could be drawn soon] 17.♚hc1 ♚hf8 18.a4 ♘e4+ 19.♙e2 ♘d6 20.♘e5 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♘f7 22.f4 White has chances to obtain an advantage, 1-0 (32) Holt, C (2549) – Dobrov, V (2478) chess.com INT 2021.

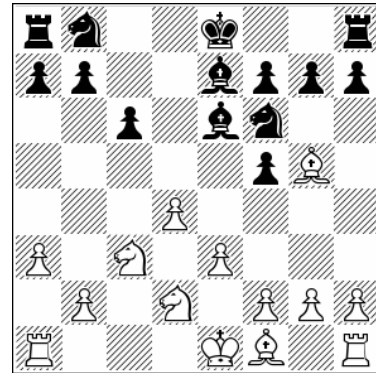
B2) 9...0-0 Now Black can play in a slightly different manner. 10.♙d3 ♚e8 [10...g6 11.♙e2 ♚e8 12.♚hc1 ♘bd7 13.a3 ♙d6 14.b4 ♘b6 15.♙f1 ♙e6 16.♙e1 ♙c4 17.♙xc4 ♘xc4 yet another good endgame for Black, 0-1 (38) Holt, C (2549) – Najer, E (2648) chess.com INT 2021] 11.0-0 ♙e6 12.♘g5 ♙d7 13.a3 ♙d6 14.e4 fxe4 15.♘cxe4 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♙f8 17.♚fe1 ♘a6 18.♚e3 ♘c7 Black is OK here, ½-½ (54) Holt, C (2549) – Ter Sahakyan, S (2645) chess.com INT 2021.

8...♙e7

Black could retreat to the desirable d6-square, but then when the white knight jumps to b5 Black will lose his bishop pair. Black would be hoping that control over the white squares is enough to compensate for that. 8...♙d6 9.♘b5 ♙e6



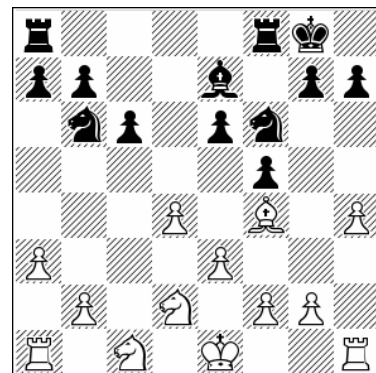
Position after: 9...e6



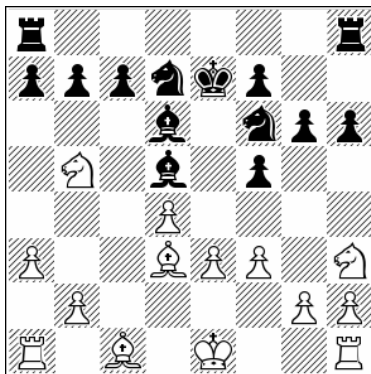
Position after: 11...d2

There are two logical paths now: 10.e3 [10.dxd6+ cxd6 11.f4 e7 12.e3 dbd7 13.d3 Rac8 This particular position is OK for Black, ½-½ (39) Sakaev, K (2594) – Fedoseev, V (2731) Sochi 2017] 10...dbd7 [10...e7 11.d3 dc6 12.e2 Rhc8 13.d2 de4 14.Rhc1 a6 15.dxd6 cxd6 16.e1 White has some edge, ½-½ (34) Ruck, R (2530) – Medvegy, Z (2539) Mali Losinj 2019] 11.dg5 ed5 12.f3 e7 13.d3 h6 14.dh3 g6

11...dbd7 [11...0-0 12.ec4 dbd7 13.h4 db6 14.ex6 fxe6 15.de2 ed6 16.f4 ee7 17.dc1!



Position after: 17...c1!



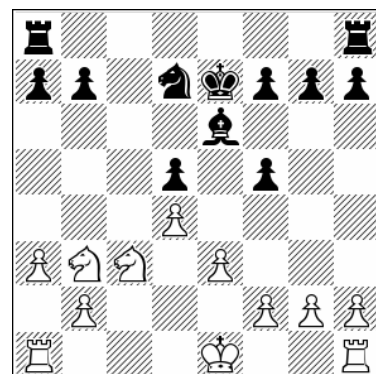
Position after: 14...g6

17...dbd5 18.d3 Rac8 19.Rc1 Rf8 20.e2 here we see some very good plans for conducting play in this endgame, 1-0 (74) Deep Junior 12 -- whomean Internet (blitz) 2016] 12.ec4 db5 13.ex7 ex7 14.xd5 cxd5 15.b3!

15.0-0! [15.d2 a6 16.dxd6 cxd6 17.Rc1 Rac8 18.e2 b5 19.f2 this is also preferable for White, ½-½ (54) Maiorov, N (2514) – Sarana, A (2636) Kazan 2019] 15...a6 16.dc3 eb3 17.e4 fxe4 18.fxe4 dg4 19.df4 White is much better.

### 9.f4

9.g5 c6 10.e3 ee6 11.d2

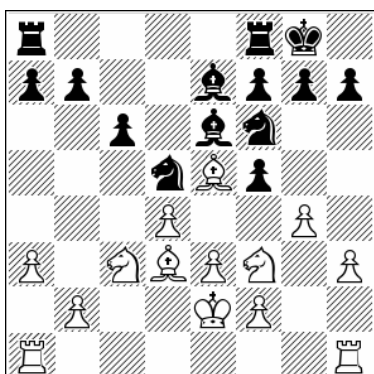


Position after: 15...b3!

15...Rhc8 16.e2 db6 17.dc5 dc4 18.Rhc1 b6 19.d3 White has more chances here, thanks to the superior coordination of his pieces.

9...c6 10.e3 ♘e6

10...♞bd7 11.h3 ♞b6 12.♙d3 ♞bd5 13.♙e5 0-0  
14.♚e2 ♙e6 15.g4!



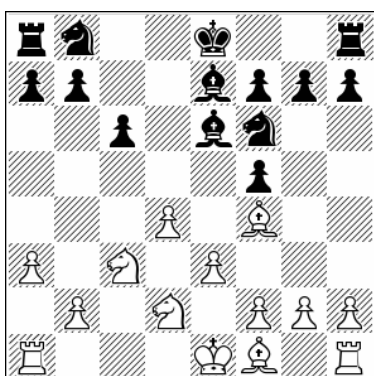
Position after: 15.g4!

15...♞xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♞e4 17.♖hc1 f6 18.gxf5  
♙xf5 19.♙h2 ♙g6 20.h4 White has better  
chances.

11.♙d3

This is solid play, but other options are also solid  
and interesting.

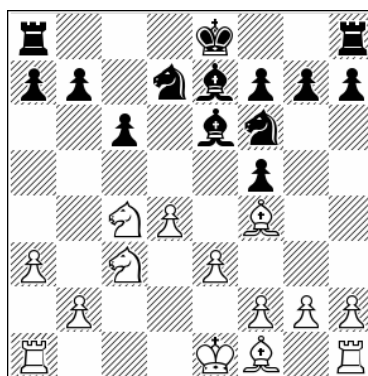
11.♞d2



Position after: 11.♞d2

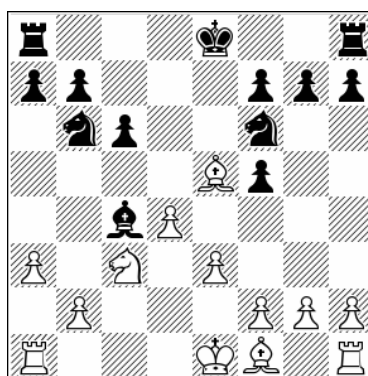
This is the main approach, judging by the  
number of games, but White is losing too much  
time with this knight pirouette. 11...♞bd7  
[11...♞h5 12.♙e5 ♞d7 13.♙c4 ♞b6 14.♙a2 ♞f6  
15.♞b3 a strange type of chess, 1-0 (34) Hillarp  
Persson, T (2533) – Del Rio de Angelis, S (2495)  
Salou 2005] 12.♞c4

This is an ambitious setup: White's plan is to  
land on d6 or a5 with this knight.



Position after: 12.♞c4

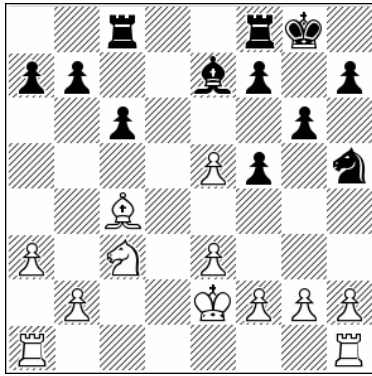
A) 12...♞b6 13.♞d6+ ♙xd6 14.♙xd6 ♙c4 15.♙e5!



Position after: 15.♙e5!

15...♙xf1 16.♚xf1 ♚e7 17.h3 h5 18.♚e2 a5  
19.♖ac1 a4 20.♖hd1 ♖hc8 21.♙xf6+ ♚xf6 22.g4  
hgx4 23.hgx4 fxg4 24.♖g1 ♚f5 25.♚d3 ♞d7  
26.e4+ ♚e6 27.♖xg4 g6 28.♖h1 Nothing is  
forced here; it's just one example of how plans  
work in action, and which directions are the  
correct ones.

B) 12...0-0 Probably the best course of action.  
13.♙e2 a5! Taking the a5-square away from the  
white knight is a critical idea. [Here is another  
idea: 13...♙xc4 14.♙xc4 ♞h5 15.♙c7 ♖ac8  
16.♙e5 ♞xe5 17.dxe5 g6 Black prepares to  
reroute the knight via g7. 18.♚e2



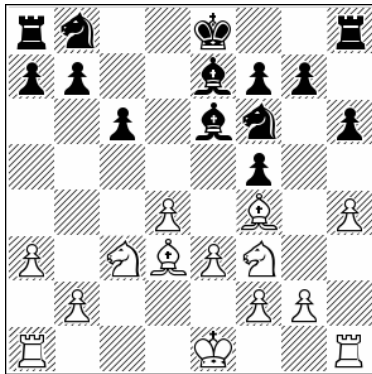
Position after: 18.♔e2

18...♖g7 19.f4 There is some advantage here for White.] 14.h3 ♜fd8 15.♙c7 ♞dc8 16.♙h2 ♞d8 17.0-0 g6 18.♞fc1 a4 With equal chances.

### 11...h6

11...♖bd7 12.♖g5!? ♖h5 13.♖xe6 fxe6 14.♖e2 ♖f7 15.♙c4 ♖b6 16.♙a2 ♖xf4 17.♖xf4 ♖d5 18.♖d3 ♙d6 19.0-0-0 Again White is adopting the e4 plan, which will give him some pressure.

### 12.h4!?



Position after: 12.h4!?

### 12...g6

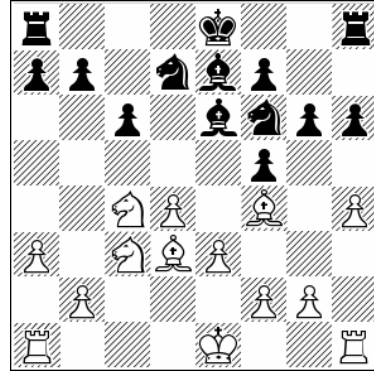
12...♖bd7 13.h5!? That's probably what White had planned with the ambitious 12.h4. 13...0-0 14.♖e2 ♞fe8 15.♖h4 ♖hx5 16.♖xf5 ♙xf5 17.♙xf5 ♖xf4 18.♖xf4 ♖b6 19.♖d3 Perhaps here White has some edge, due to his pawn center.

### 13.♖d2!

Now this maneuver makes more sense.

13.♔e2 ♖bd7 14.♖d2 ♖h5! 15.♙e5 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 f4 Black is better. 0-1 (57) Krush, I (2429) – Khademalsharieh, S (2494) chess.com INT 2020.

### 13...♖bd7 14.♖c4



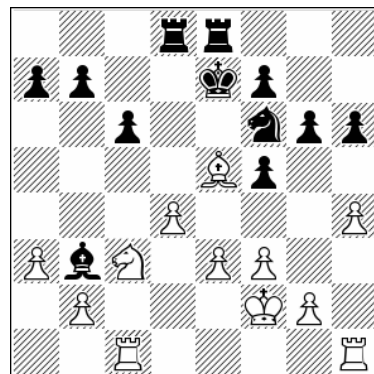
Position after: 14.♖c4

That's more to the point. We can see now that Black can't castle kingside, which is already an achievement for White. Now he threatens ♖a5.

### 14...♖b6

14...b6 15.♞c1 ♖h5 16.♖e2 c5 17.♖d6+ ♖f8 18.♙h2 White has active play now.

15.♖d6+ ♙xd6 16.♙xd6 ♖c4 17.♙xc4 ♙xc4 18.♙e5 ♖e7 19.♞c1 ♙b3 20.f3 ♞he8 21.♖f2 ♞ad8



Position after: 21...♞ad8

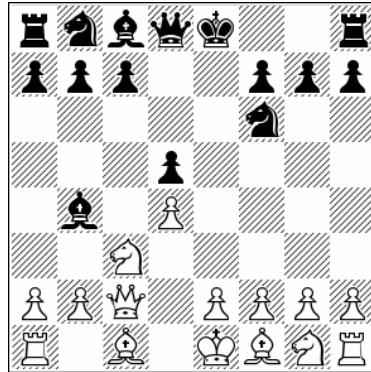
### 22.♞he1

White has easier play, but the position is still solid for Black.

# Chapter 8

## 5.cxd5 exd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♙c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 8 – 5.cxd5 exd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♙c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4

a) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.♗xb8

b) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.♘f3 --

c) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.♘f3 ♗f5

d) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.e3 ♙a5 11.♞c1 --

e) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.e3 ♙a5 11.♞c1 ♙xa2

f) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.e3 ♙a5 11.♘ge2

g) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♗e6 9.e3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.--

h) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♗e6 9.e3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♗d3

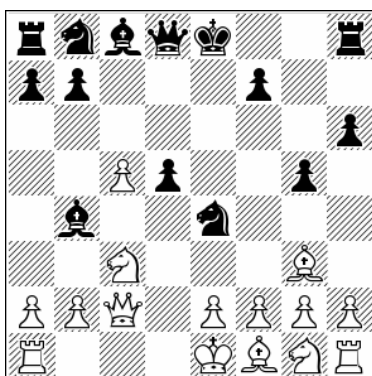
i) 7...g5 8.♗g3 ♘e4

## a) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4 10.♙xb8

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5  
exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4

Theoretically it is irrelevant whether Black goes first 6...c5 7.dxc5 h6 or at once 6...h6. White must confront this very sharp line.

7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4



Position after: 9...♘e4

10.♙xb8

We will deal with this line first. Other lines are in different subchapters.

I will briefly mention one other possible line, not so popular, but still played from time to time.  
10.0-0 ♙xc3 11.f3 ♙d2+ 12.♖xd2 ♘xd2  
13.♚xd2 ♙e6 14.♙d6 ♘d7 15.e4 ♖c8 16.♙b5  
♚b6 17.♚c3 ♚xd6 18.♚xh8+ ♚f8 19.♙xd7+  
♙xd7 20.♚e5+ ♚e7 21.♚h8+ ♚f8 Black has managed to equalize the chances, ½-½ (25) Fedoseev, V (2704) – Esipenko, A (2720) Ufa 2021.

10...♚f6

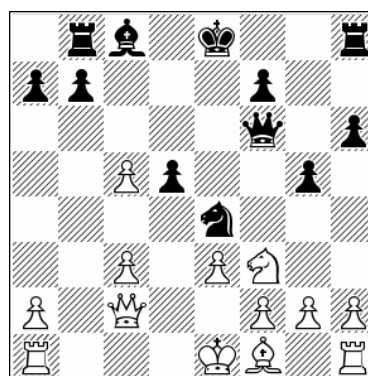
10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖xb8 12.e3 ♚f6 13.♘f3 Just a transposition.

11.♘f3

Best. Other moves more or less lead to forced play that will probably end in a draw.

11.♚a4+ ♙d7 12.♚xb4 ♚xf2+ 13.♙d1 ♚xf1+  
14.♙c2 ♚xa1 15.♘xd5 ♙f5 Black is winning.

11...♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♖xb8 13.e3

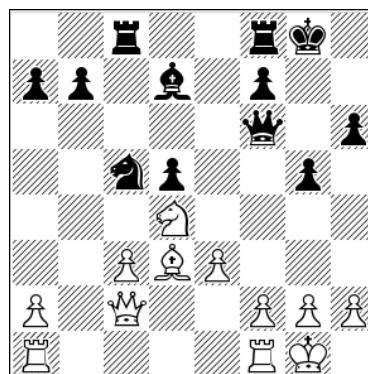


Position after: 13.e3

13...♙d7

13...♚xc3+ 14.♚xc3 ♘xc3 15.♖c1 ♘xa2 16.♖a1  
♘c3 17.♖xa7 ♘e4 18.♖a5 ♙e7 19.♘d4 ♙d7  
20.f3 ♘f6 21.♙d2 ♖a8 22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.♙d3  
♖a2+ 24.♙c2 ♘e8 25.♖b1 ♙c6 26.h4 ♘c7  
27.♙c3 It is possible that this position will lead to a draw, but at this point White still has some chances to obtain an advantage.

14.♘d4 0-0 15.♙d3 ♘xc5 16.0-0 ♖bc8



Position after: 16...♖bc8

17.h3!?

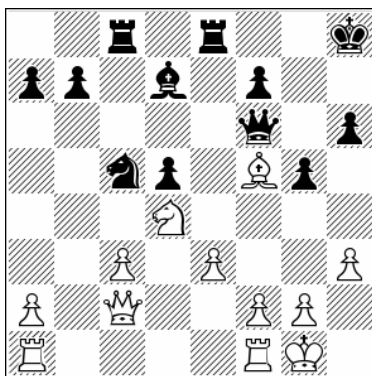
This is a useful move here, and to my knowledge a new plan. The idea is to focus on kingside play.

17. ♖f5 ♜fd8! 18. ♙xd7 ♜xd7 19. c4 ♘e6 20. ♚a4 ♘c5 The game will probably end in a draw.

### 17... ♘a4

Black is ready for action on the queenside.

Black can try to prevent a fast f4 with: 17... ♜fe8 18. ♙h7+ ♖h8 19. ♙f5



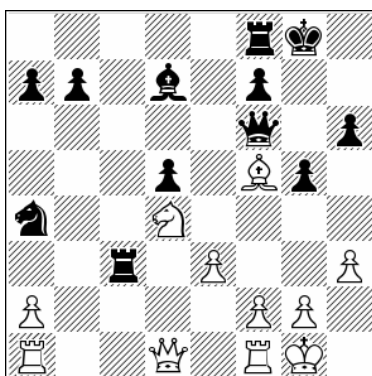
Position after: 19. ♙f5

**A)** 19... ♜e7 20. ♙xd7 ♜xd7 21. c4 ♘e4 22. ♚a4 ♘c5 23. ♚b4 b6 [23... ♘e6 24. ♘xe6 ♚xe6 25. c5 White has the initiative] 24. ♜ad1 It is clear that the extra move h3 helps a lot here.

**B)** 19... ♙xf5 20. ♚xf5 ♚xf5 21. ♘xf5 ♜c6 22. ♜ad1 ♜e5 23. g4 White has pressure in this endgame.

### 18. f4

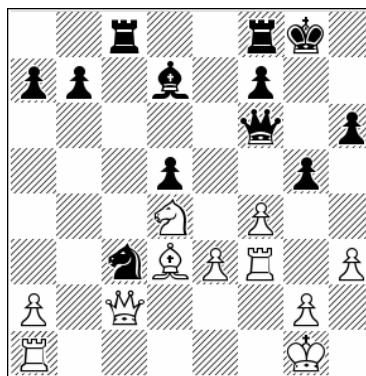
18. ♙f5!? ♜xc3 19. ♚d1



Position after: 19. ♚d1

19... ♙xf5 [19... ♘b2 20. ♚e1 ♜c7 21. f4 ♘c4 22. fxg5 ♚xg5 23. ♙xd7 ♜xd7 24. ♜f4 White has attacking chances] 20. ♚xa4 a6 21. ♜fc1 ♜fc8 22. ♜xc3 ♜xc3 23. ♚a5 ♜c6 24. ♜d1 ♜d6 25. ♚c7 ♜d7 26. ♚c8+ ♖h7 27. ♜c1 White has compensation and it appears that his strong knight will give him a continuing initiative.

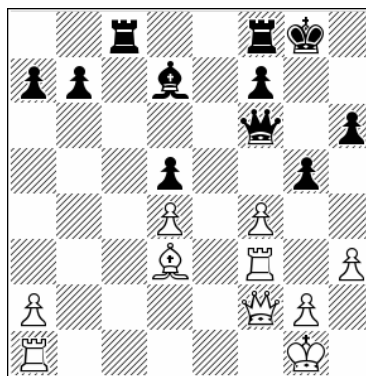
### 18... ♘xc3 19. ♜f3!?



Position after: 19. ♜f3!?

### 19... ♘e4

19... ♘b5 20. ♚f2 ♘xd4 21. exd4



Position after: 21. exd4

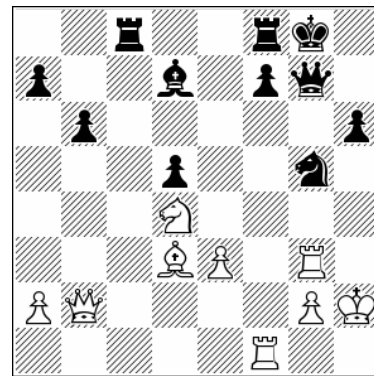
21... g4 [21... ♚g7 22. fxg5 hxg5 23. ♙f5 ♜c7 24. ♜f1 White has strong pressure for the sacrificed pawn] 22. ♜g3 h5 23. f5 ♖h8! [23... ♚g5 24. hxg4 h4 25. ♜h3 ♜c3 26. ♖h2 White is better] 24. hxg4 ♜g8 25. ♚f4 ♚g5 26. ♚d6 f6! Black shows tough engine-style defense and it seems that he can survive.

### 20. ♚b2 ♚g7

A) 20...♖c5 21.♙c2 b6 22.fxg5 ♖xg5 23.♘e2  
White is winning.

B) 20...b6 21.fxg5 ♖xg5 22.♔h1 ♖g7 23.♙xe4  
dxe4 24.♖f4 f5 25.♖af1 ♖g5 26.a4 White has the  
initiative.

21.♖af1 b6 22.fxg5 ♘xg5 23.♖g3 ♘xh3+  
24.♔h2 ♘g5



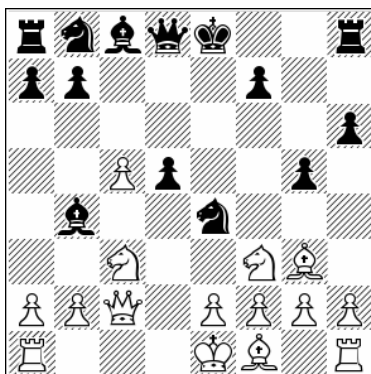
Position after: 24...♘g5

25.♖a3

White is two pawns down but he has a strong  
initiative, since it is clear that the knight on d4  
dominates the entire board.

**b) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4 10.♘f3 --**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5  
exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4  
10.♘f3!?

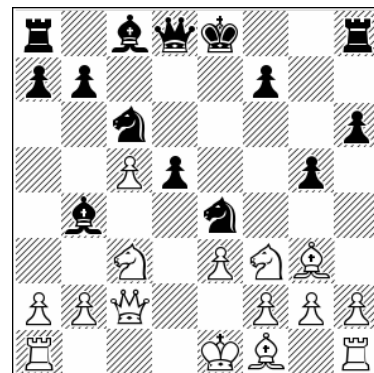


Position after: 10.♘f3!?

10...♘a6

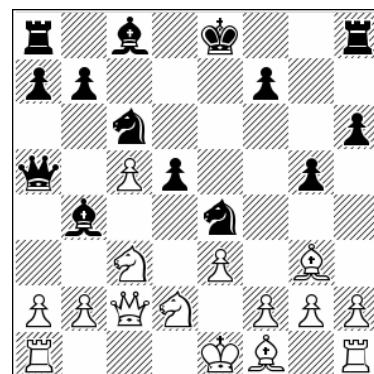
We will deal here with various ideas for Black  
apart from 10...♙f5.

A) 10...♘c6 11.e3



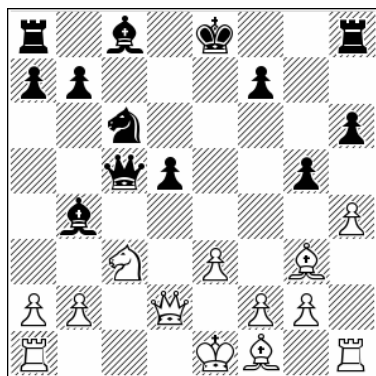
Position after: 11.e3

11...♖a5 [11...♖f6 12.♙b5 ♘xc3 13.♙xc6+ bxc6  
14.a3 g4 15.♙e5 ♘e4+ 16.axb4 ♖f5 17.♙xh8  
gxf3 18.♖g1 ♖g4 19.♖d1 ♘g5 20.♖d4 White is  
winning, 1-0 (29) Kasparov, G (2800) – Spassky,  
B (2560) Linares 1990] 12.♘d2



Position after: 12.♘d2

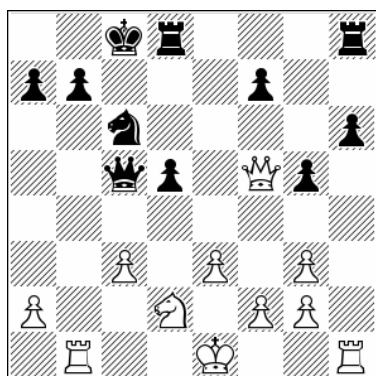
**A1)** 12...♖xd2 13.♔xc2 ♕xc5 14.h4



Position after: 14.h4

14...♖g8 15.hxg5 hxg5 16.♖c1 d4 17.exd4 ♘xd4  
18.♙d3 ♕e7+ 19.♔f1 ♙e6 20.♕d1 ♖d8 21.♗e4  
White has the preferable chances, 1-0 (42)  
Stocek, J (2545) – Simantsev, M (2434)  
Pardubice 2014.

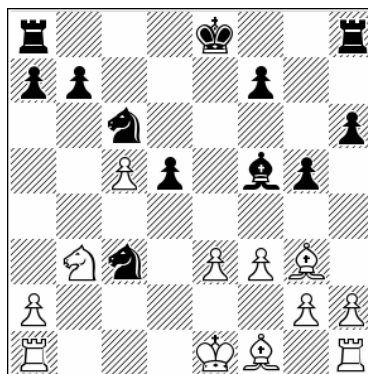
**A2)** 12...♙f5 13.♙d3 ♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♗xg3 15.hxg3  
♙xd3 16.♕xd3 ♕xc5 17.♖b1 0-0-0 18.♕f5+



Position after: 18.♕f5+

18...♔b8 19.♕xf7 ♖b6 20.0-0 White is better, 1-0  
(35) Grigorov, G (2488) – Drenchev, P (2450)  
Sunny Beach 2009.

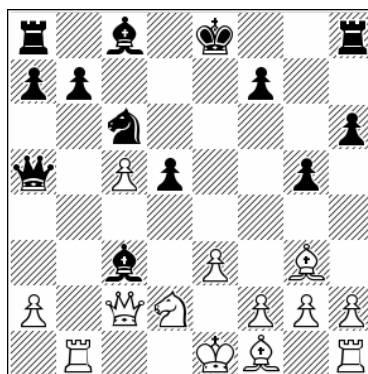
**A3)** 12...♙xc3 13.bxc3 ♕xc3 14.♕xc3 ♗xc3 15.f3  
♙f5 16.♗b3!



Position after: 16.♗b3!

Heading straight to d4 is best here. 16...0-0-0  
17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.exd4 ♖he8+ 19.♔f2 a6 20.h4  
White has some edge.

**A4)** 12...♗xc3 Here Black has a few ideas about  
how to continue. 13.bxc3 ♙xc3 14.♖b1

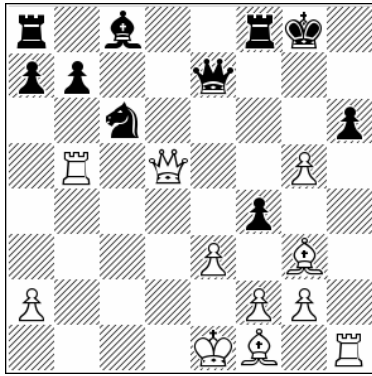


Position after: 14.♖b1

**A4.1)** 14...♙b4 15.♙d6! This looks like a strong  
move. 15...♙e6 16.♔d1 0-0-0 17.♗b3 ♕a4  
18.♙d3 a6 19.♗d4 ♕xc2+ 20.♔xc2 ♗xd4+  
21.exd4 ♙a5 22.♙e5 White has the better  
endgame, 1-0 (29) Michiels, B (2563) – Lopez, J  
(2411) Belgium 2019.

**A4.2)** 14...♕xc5 15.♖b5 ♕a3 16.♖b3 ♙xd2+  
17.♕xd2 ♕a5 18.♕xa5 ♗xa5 19.♖b5 b6 20.h4 g4  
21.♖xd5 ♙e6 22.♙b5+ ♔e7 23.♙d6+ ♔f6 24.♖d4  
White has the initiative, 1-0 (30) Dreev, A (2662)  
– Gyimesi, Z (2594) Sibenik 2009.

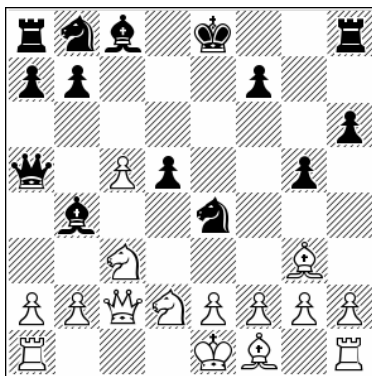
**A4.3)** 14...0-0 15.♖b5 ♕a3 16.♖b3 ♙xd2+  
17.♕xd2 ♕xc5 18.♖b5 ♕e7 19.h4 f5 20.hxg5 f4  
21.♕xd5+!



Position after: 21. ♖xd5+!

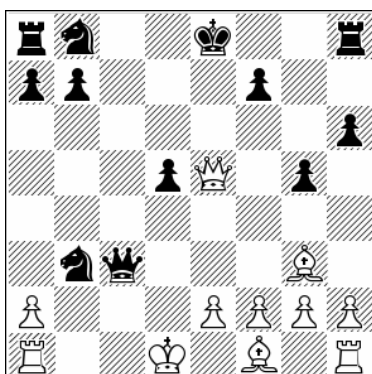
21... ♗e6 22. ♕e4 fxg3 23. ♕g6+ ♖g7 24. ♕xe6+  
White is winning.

B) 10... ♕a5 11. ♖d2



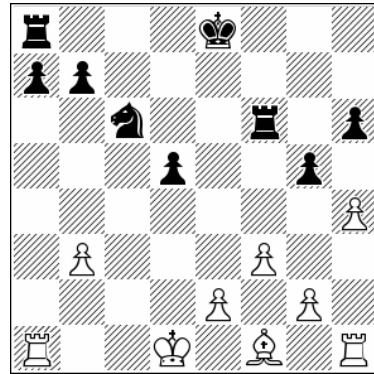
Position after: 11. ♖d2

11... ♗f5 [11... ♖xg3 12. hxg3 ♕xc5 13. e3 ♖c6  
14. ♖b3 ♗xc3+ 15. bxc3 ♕e7 16. ♖d1 ♕e5  
17. ♖d4 ♖f8 18. ♖f3 ♕f6 19. ♖xd5 White is better,  
1-0 (69) Smith, A (2480) – Veinberg, N (2397)  
Budapest 2015] 12. ♖b3 ♖xc5 13. ♕xf5 ♗xc3+  
14. bxc3 ♕xc3+ 15. ♖d1 ♖xb3 16. ♕e5+



Position after: 16. ♕e5+

16... ♕xe5 17. ♗xe5 f6 18. ♗xf6 ♖f8 19. axb3 ♖xf6  
20. f3 ♖c6 21. h4



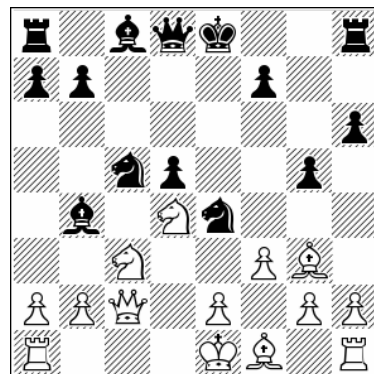
Position after: 21. h4

This endgame is an interesting one. 21... ♖e7  
[21... 0-0-0 22. hxg5 hxg5 23. ♖h5 g4 24. ♖g5 gxf3  
25. exf3 here the engines give 0.00 but from a  
human perspective there is still plenty of play  
here] 22. hxg5 hxg5 23. ♖h5! ♖g8 24. e3 ♖d6  
25. ♖d2 The game is level but White can try for  
more here.

11. ♖d4

The idea of this move is to get f3 in quickly.

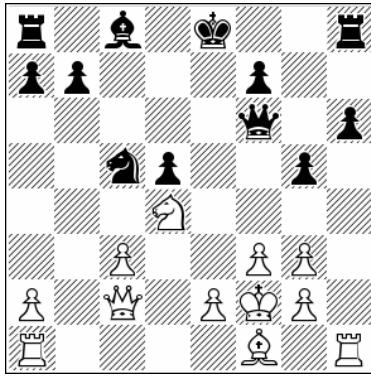
11... ♖axc5 12. f3



Position after: 12. f3

12... ♖xc3

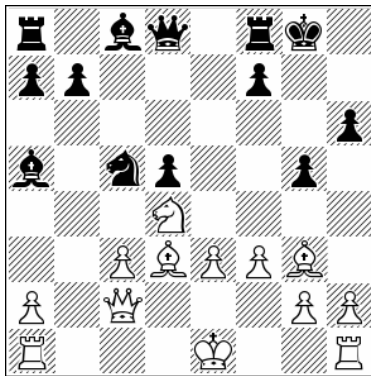
12... ♗xc3+ 13. bxc3 ♖xg3 14. hxg3 ♕d6 15. ♖f2  
♕f6!



Position after: 15...Wf6!

16. Qg1 W e5 17. W d2 Q d7 18. g4 0-0-0 19. e3 Q b8  
20. Q d3 Both sides have chances in this interesting position.

13. bxc3 Q a5 14. e3 0-0 15. Q d3



Position after: 15. Qd3

15... Re8

15... W e7 16. Q h7+ Q h8 17. 0-0! Q d7 18. R ac1  
Q a4 19. W b1 White has strong pressure on the kingside.

16.0-0

16. Q h7+ Q h8 17. 0-0 This is perhaps a better move order.

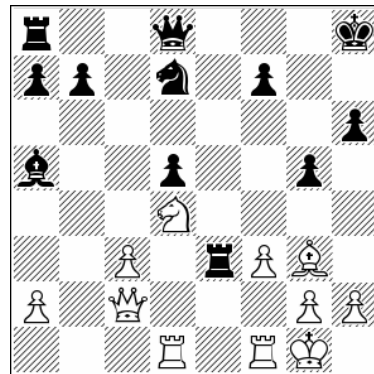
16... Q d7

Black has other options as well.

A) 16... R xe3 17. Q h7+ Q f8 18. Q h1 R xc3 19. W e2  
White has an initiative for the sacrificed pawns.

B) 16... Q xd3!? 17. W xd3 Q d7 18. R ab1 Q b6 19. e4  
dxe4 20. fxe4 Q e6 21. Q e5 With unclear consequences.

17. Q h7+ Q h8 18. Q f5 R xe3 19. Q xd7 Q xd7  
20. R ad1!



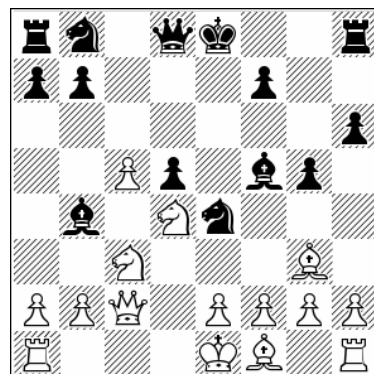
Position after: 20. Rad1!

20... W f6 21. Q f2 R xc3 22. W a4 W d8 23. Q b3

White is winning, 1-0 (30) Dreev, A (2654) – Pashikian, A (2603) Legnica 2013.

**c) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.Qg3 Qe4 10.Qf3 Qf5**

1. d4 Q f6 2. c4 e6 3. Q c3 Q b4 4. W c2 d5 5. cxd5  
exd5 6. Q g5 h6 7. Q h4 c5 8. dxc5 g5 9. Q g3 Q e4  
10. Q f3!? Q f5 11. Q d4!?

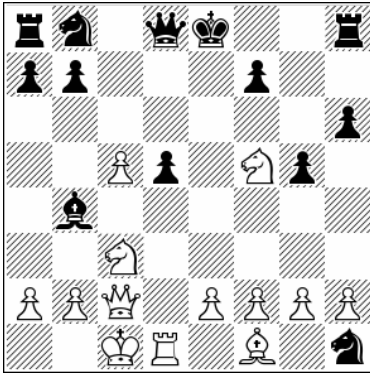


Position after: 11. Qd4!/?

11...♙xc3+

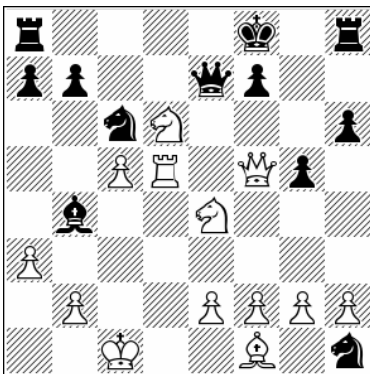
That is probably critical, but the position is full of tactics so we need to look seriously at other ideas as well.

A) 11...♘g3 12.♗xf5 ♘h1 13.0-0-0



Position after: 13.0-0-0

A1) 13...♗c6 14.♖xd5 ♗c7 [14...♗a5 15.♗d6+ ♔f8 16.♗f5 ♗c7 17.♗ce4 ♗e7 18.a3!



Position after: 18.a3!

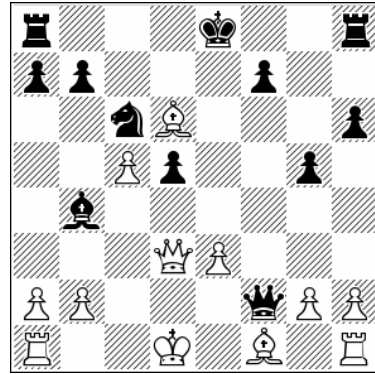
Tough engine-type chess. 18...♙e1 19.♗f3 ♖h7 20.g3 ♖d8 21.♙g2 White is better.] 15.♗b5 ♗xh2 16.♗fd6+ ♔f8 17.♗xf7 ♖g8 18.♗fd6 ♖g7 19.♖f5+ ♔g8 20.♗c4+ ♔h7 21.♗e4 ♔g8 22.♗e8! It seems that White is ahead in these complications.

A2) 13...♗d7 14.♖xd5 ♙xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗f6 16.♗f3 ♖d8 17.♗d6+ ♔f8 18.♖f5 ♗e6 19.e4 f6 20.♙b5 White has a strong initiative.

A3) 13...♗xf2 14.♖xd5 ♗d7 15.♗d6+ ♔f8 16.♗b3 ♗f6 17.♖f5 ♖h7 18.♗xb4 White is

winning, 1-0 (26) Basso, P (2466) – Petkov, V (2492) Spoleto 2016.

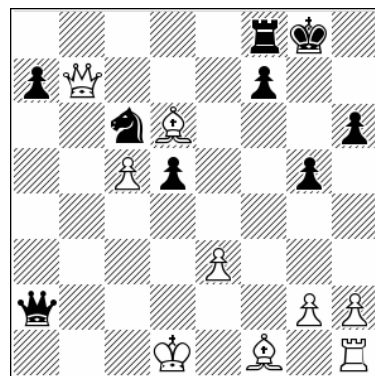
B) 11...♗xc3 12.♗xf5 ♗e4+ 13.♔d1 ♗f6 14.♗d6+ ♗xd6 15.♙xd6 ♗xf2 16.♗d3 ♗c6 17.e3



Position after: 17.e3

B1) 17...♗e1+? That's a mistake. 18.♔c2 ♗xa1 19.♗xd5 ♙a5 [19...♗e1 20.♙c4 ♗d2+ 21.♗xd2 ♙xd2 22.♔xd2 0-0-0 23.♙xf7 b6 24.♖f1 bxc5 25.♖f6 White is better] 20.♙b5! This is winning now for White, 1-0 (109) Dreev, A (2654) – Landa, K (2642) Loo 2013.

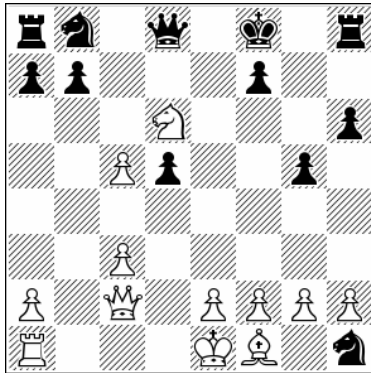
B2) Now it was necessary to go for 17...♗xb2! 18.♖b1 ♗xa2 19.♙e2 [19.♖xb4 ♗xb4 20.♗b5+ ♗c6 21.♗xb7 ♗a4+ 22.♔d2 ♖b8 23.♙xb8 0-0 24.♙d6 ♗a2+ 25.♔d1



Position after: 25.♔d1

25...d4!! Black secures a draw] 19...♖d8 20.♙f3 ♖d7! 21.♖f1 ♔d8 It seems that Black has managed to balance the game.

12.bxc3 ♗xg3 13.♗xf5 ♗xh1 14.♗d6+ ♔f8

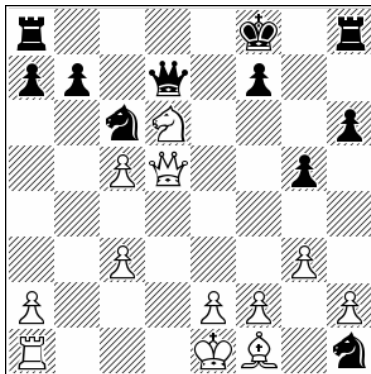


Position after: 14...♔f8

15.♖b1!?

That's a new attempt, at least to my knowledge.

15.♖f5 ♖d7 16.♖xd5 ♘c6 17.g3



Position after: 17.g3

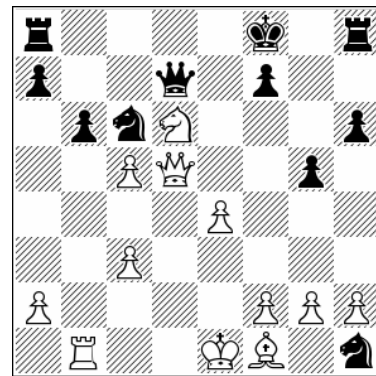
17...♗xf2!? It is important to take the f2-pawn now. Black will secure the e5-square for his other knight. [17...♖e7 18.♖xh1 ♖e5 19.♖f3 ♖h7 20.♖b1 White has an edge, 1-0 (44) Romanko, M (2387) – Kosteniuk, A (2522) Tbilisi 2011] 18.♔xf2 ♖e6 19.e4 ♔g7 20.♔g1 ♞e5 Black is fine.

15...b6

A) 15...♖f6 16.♖xb7 ♖xf2+ 17.♔d2 ♞d7 18.♖xd7 ♖f4+ 19.e3 ♖xf1 20.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 21.♗xf7 ♔xf7 22.♖b1 White has a winning advantage.

B) 15...♞d7 16.♖xb7 ♔g8 17.e3 ♖h7 18.♖f5 White wins.

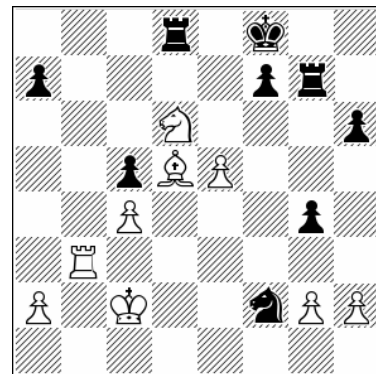
16.♖f5 ♖d7 17.♖xd5 ♘c6 18.e4!?



Position after: 18.e4!?

18...♖d8

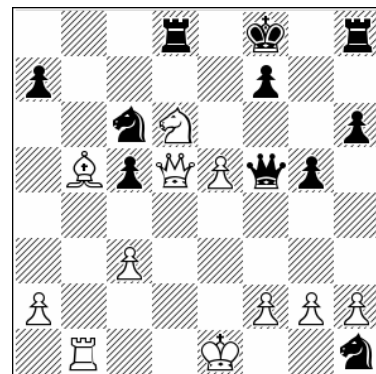
18...♖b8 19.♙b5 bxc5 20.♖b3! ♖d8 21.e5 ♖f5 22.♙xc6 ♖xf2+ 23.♔d1 ♖g1+ 24.♔c2 ♖f2+ 25.♖d2! ♖g8 26.c4 g4 27.♙d5 ♖g7 28.♖xf2 ♗xf2



Position after: 28...♗xf2

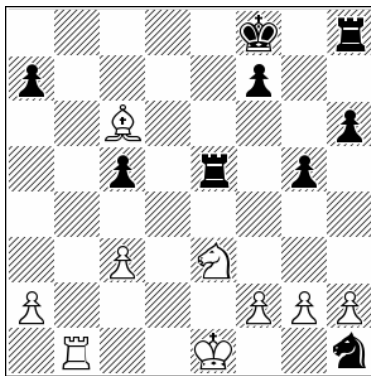
29.h4!! The engines see this move very quickly. White is much better.

19.♙b5 bxc5 20.e5 ♖f5!



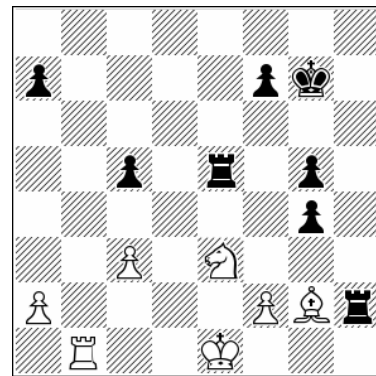
Position after: 20...♖f5!

21. ♖xf5 ♜xd5 22. ♙xc6 ♜xe5+ 23. ♗e3



Position after: 23. ♗e3

24. g4 h5 25. ♙xh1 hxg4 26. ♙g2 ♜xh2



Position after: 26... ♜xh2

23... ♖g7

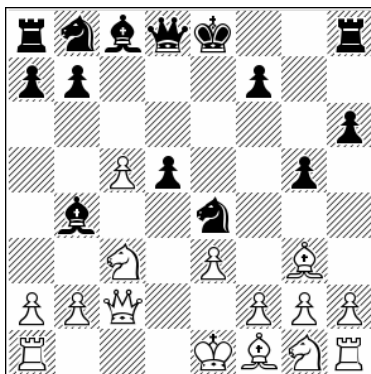
23... f5 24. ♖f1 f4 25. ♗c4 ♜e7 26. f3 h5 27. ♙e4  
White has better chances.

27. ♖f1

White has some pressure in this game with unbalanced material, on account of his active rook on b1 and Black's weak queenside pawns.

**d) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9. ♙g3 ♗e4 10.e3 ♙a5 11. ♜c1 --**

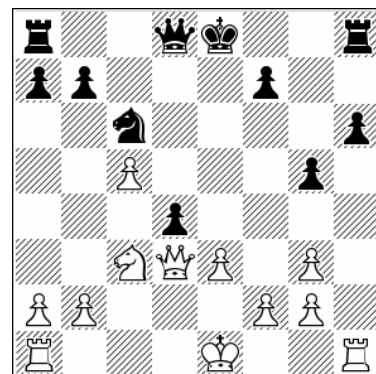
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♙b4 4. ♙c2 d5 5.cxd5  
exd5 6. ♙g5 h6 7. ♙h4 c5 8.dxc5 g5 9. ♙g3 ♗e4  
10.e3



Position after: 10.e3

10... ♙a5

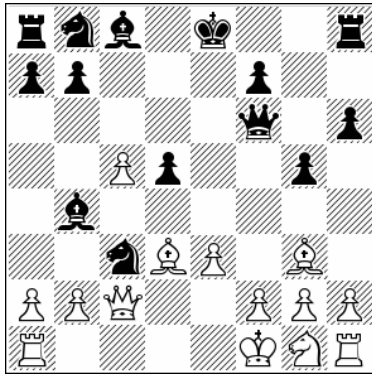
A) 10... ♗c6 11. ♙d3 ♗xg3 [11... ♙f5 12. ♗ge2  
♙xc3+ 13. ♗xc3 ♗xg3 14.hxg3 ♙xd3 15. ♙xd3 d4



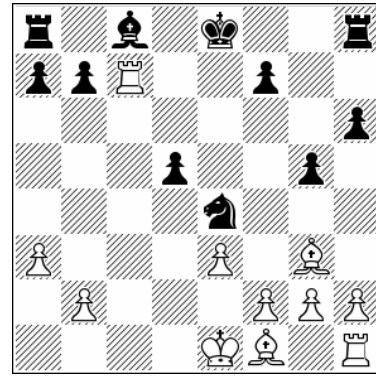
Position after: 15...d4

16.exd4 ♙xd4 17. ♙xd4 ♗xd4 18.0-0-0 White is clearly better, 0-1 (59) Tang, A (2538) – Carlsen, M (2862) lichess.org INT 2021] 12.hxg3 d4 [12... ♙xc5 13. ♗f3 g4 14. ♗h4 d4 15.0-0-0! dxc3 16. ♙xc3 White is already winning] 13.exd4 ♙xd4 14. ♗ge2 ♙xc5 15.0-0-0 ♙e6 16. ♙e4 ♙xc3 17. ♗xc3 ♗b4 18. ♙a4+ ♖f8 19. ♖b1 ♖g7 20.a3 White has the initiative, 1-0 (27) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Siva, M (2349) chess.com INT 2020.

B) 10... ♙f6 11. ♙d3!?! Perhaps this is a worthwhile idea, although I couldn't find any games with it. 11... ♗xc3 12. ♖f1!



Position after: 12.♔f1!



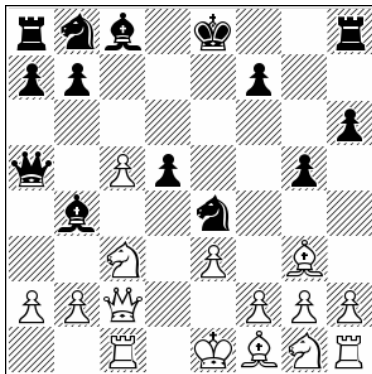
Position after: 17.♖c7

12...♗c6 [12...♗d7 13.♗f3 0-0 14.bxc3 ♖xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗xc3 16.♖c1 ♗g7 17.h4 g4 18.♗d4 ♗e5 19.♗b5 Again White is better in the endgame] 13.bxc3 ♖xc3 14.♖c1 ♗xc2 15.♖xc2 ♗d7 16.h4 ♗e7 17.♗f3 f6 18.♗d6+ ♔f7 19.♗d4 White has good endgame play.

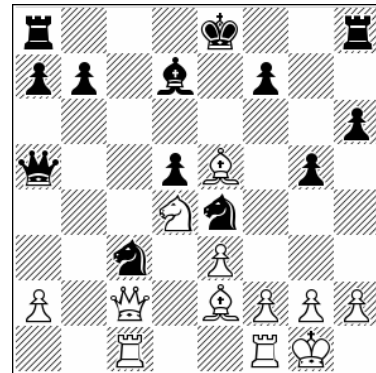
17...♗xg3 18.hxg3 ♖b8 19.♗b5+ ♔f8 20.♗d2 White is much better, Morozevich – Carlsen Tal Memorial 2012.

**B)** 11...♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♗d7 13.♗f3 ♗dxc5 14.♗d4 ♗d7 15.♗e2 ♗a4 16.0-0 ♗axc3 17.♗e5

**11.♖c1!?**



Position after: 11.♖c1!?



Position after: 17.♗e5

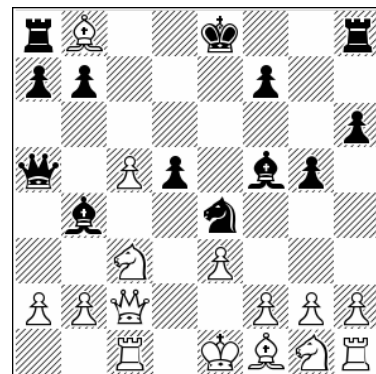
**11...♗c6**

17...♗xe2+ 18.♗xe2 0-0 19.♖c7 White is better, 1-0 (31) Batsuren, D (2454) – Winkelman, A (2143) New Delhi 2019.

We deal now with alternatives which are of equal importance.

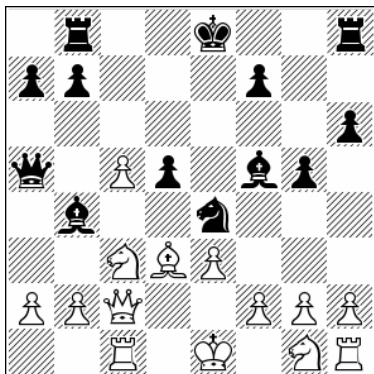
**C)** 11...♗f5 12.♗xb8

**A)** 11...♗d7 12.♗ge2 ♗dxc5 [12...♗xa2 13.♗d1! White is much better here] 13.a3 ♗xc3+ 14.♗xc3 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 16.♖xc3 ♗e4 17.♖c7



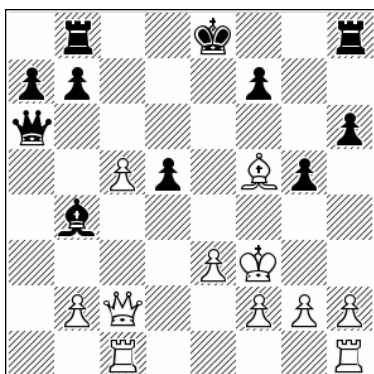
Position after: 12.♗xb8

12...♖xb8 [12...♗xc3 13.♕xf5 ♗e4+ 14.♔d1 0-0 15.♙e5 Black doesn't have enough for the sacrificed piece] 13.♙d3



Position after: 13.♙d3

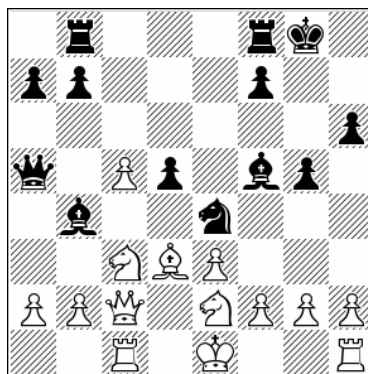
**C1)** 13...♕xa2 14.♗ge2 ♗xc3 [alternatives lead to an early disaster 14...♕a5 15.0-0 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 ♙e6 17.♗b5 a6 18.♗d4 ♖c8 19.c6 0-0 20.♕e2 bxc6 21.♕h5 1-0 (21) Gupta, A (2627) – Molner, M (2479) Philadelphia 2012] 15.♙xf5 ♗xe2+ [15...♗e4+ 16.♔f1 ♗xc5 17.h4! White's position is very strong] 16.♔xe2 ♕a6+ 17.♔f3!



Position after: 17.♔f3!

17...♕f6 18.♖hd1 0-0 19.♖xd5 ♖fd8 20.♖cd1 ♖xd5 21.♖xd5 ♖d8 22.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 23.g3 White holds an edge.

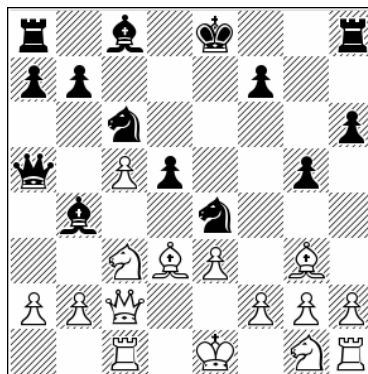
**C2)** 13...0-0 14.♗ge2



Position after: 14.♗ge2

14...♖fc8 [14...♖bc8 15.0-0 ♖xc5 16.a3! ♙xc3 17.♗xc3 ♖c6 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♖cd1 White is better because his knight is stronger than the black bishop] 15.0-0 ♖xc5 [15...♕xc5 16.♗d4 ♙g6 17.♕e2 ♙xc3 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♖xc3 again we have knight versus bishop and again it seems to favor White] 16.f3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♙xd3 18.♕xd3 ♙a3 19.♖b1 ♕a4 20.♗d4 ♖cc8 21.f4 White has the initiative, 1-0 (73) Gupta, A (2644) – Yu Yangyi (2626) Zaozhuang 2012.

**12.♙d3**



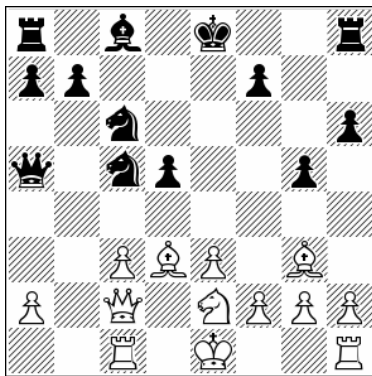
Position after: 12.♙d3

**12...♗xg3**

Black has other choices.

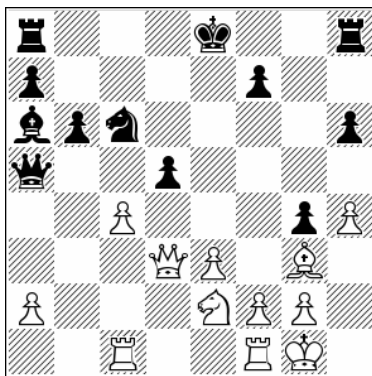
**A)** 12...♗xc5 13.♗ge2 ♕xa2 14.0-0 ♕b3 15.♖fd1 ♕xc2 16.♙xc2 ♙e6 17.♗xd5 0-0 18.e4 ♖fd8 19.f3 White has the edge in this endgame.

**B)** 12...♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♗xc5 14.♗e2!



Position after: 14. ♖e2!

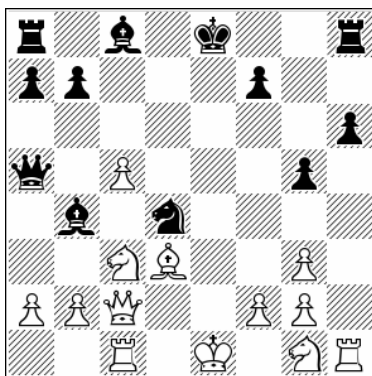
14... ♗e6 [14... b6 15. h4 g4 16. 0-0 ♘xd3 17. ♙xd3 ♗a6 18. c4!



Position after: 18. c4!

18... ♗xc4 19. ♖xc4 dxc4 20. ♙e4+ White wins] 15. h4 ♖g8 16. ♗h7! The point is that now Black cannot take on d3. 16... ♖h8 17. ♘d4 ♘xd4 18. exd4 ♗e4 19. ♗xe4 dxe4 20. hxg5 ♙xg5 21. ♖b1 b6 22. ♙xe4 White is better.

13. hxg3 d4 14. exd4 ♘xd4

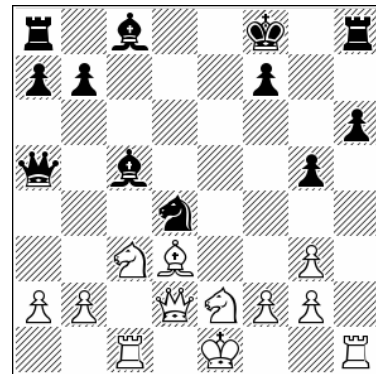


Position after: 14... ♘xd4

15. ♙d1

In my opinion this is better than the other possible queen move.

15. ♙d2 ♗xc5 16. ♘ge2 ♖f8



Position after: 16... ♖f8

17. ♗e4 [17. 0-0 ♖g7 18. ♗b1 ♖d8 19. ♘xd4 ♗xd4 20. ♙e2 ♙e5 21. ♙c2 ♖f8 22. ♖ce1 ♙f6 this is fine for Black since his bishop pair is active now, 0-1 (53) Munkhgal, G (2395) – Veinberg, N (2397) Budapest 2015] 17... ♘e2 18. ♙xe2 ♗e6 19. 0-0 ♖e8 20. ♙f3 ♖g7 21. ♗xb7 ♗d4 Black has compensation, 0-1 (74) O'Donnell, C (2349) – Saduakassova, D (2460) Sitges 2017.

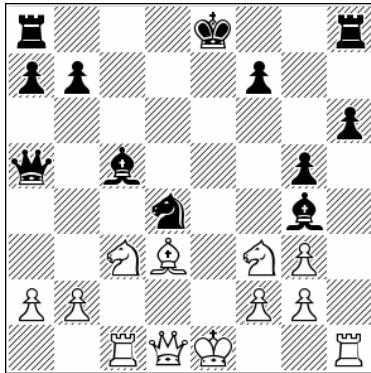
15... ♗xc5

15... ♗e6 16. ♘f3 0-0-0 17. 0-0 ♗g4 18. ♘e4 ♖b8 19. a3 ♘xf3+ 20. gxf3 ♗d2 21. ♘xd2 ♖xd3 22. ♙e2 ♙d8 23. ffg4 ♖xd2 24. ♙e5+ ♖a8 25. c6 White has built up a winning position, 1-0 (33) Kuljasevic, D (2567) – Grandelius, N (2600) Skopje 2014.

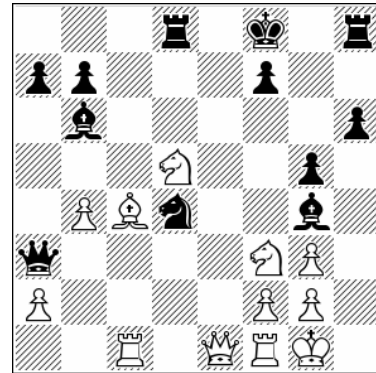
16. ♘f3

16. a3 ♗e7 17. ♘ge2 ♗g4 18. f3 ♘xe2 19. ♙xe2 ♗e6 20. ♗b5+ ♖f8 21. ♙e5 ♖g8 22. ♙e4 ♙b6 Black is better -- provoking f3 was an important detail, 0-1 (28) Shishkov, A (2399) – Kulaots, K (2529) Tallinn 2020.

16... ♗g4



Position after: 16...♙g4



Position after: 21.♚e1

### 17.0-0 ♖f8

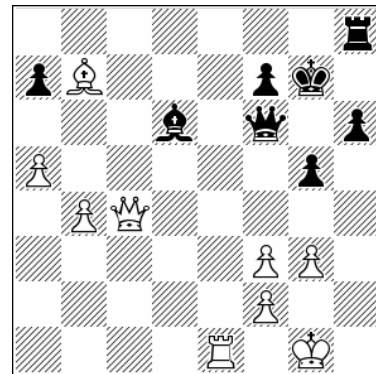
17...0-0 18.♘d5! ♖g7 19.♙e4 ♜ae8 20.♞e1  
White has better chances.

### 18.♘d5!?

After this Black has to find only moves in order to keep the balance:

18...♞d8 19.♙c4 ♙b6 20.b4 ♚a3 21.♚e1

21...♞xd5 22.♙xd5 ♚xc1 23.♚e5 ♘e2+ 24.♚xe2 ♚c3 25.♞e1 ♚f6 26.a4 ♖g7 27.a5 ♙c7 28.♚c4 ♙xf3 29.gxf3 ♙d6 30.♙xb7



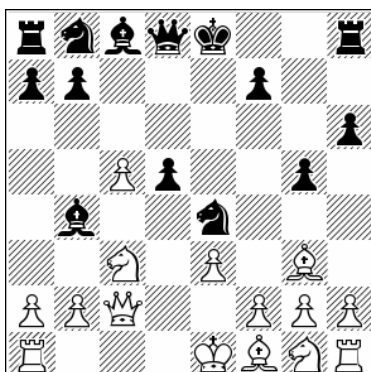
Position after: 30.♙xb7

30...h5

Black has great chances to equalize.

**e) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4 10.e3 ♚a5 11.♞c1 ♚xa2**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♙g3 ♘e4 10.e3

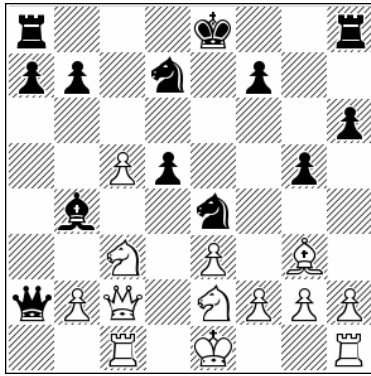


Position after: 10.e3

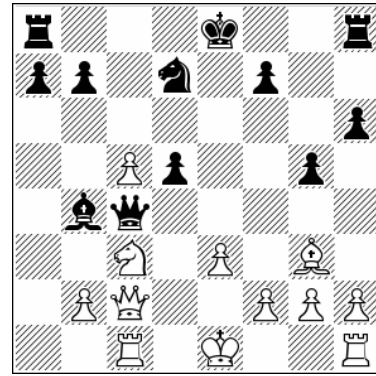
10...♚a5 11.♞c1!? ♚xa2 12.♙b5+ ♙d7

12...♘c6 13.♘ge2 ♚a5 14.0-0 ♙xc3 15.♘xc3 ♘xc3 16.♚xc3 ♚xc3 17.♞xc3 ♙d7 18.♞d1 White is clearly better, 1-0 (31) Guseynov, A (2312) – Haussernot, C (2155) Mentese 2022.

13.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 14.♘ge2



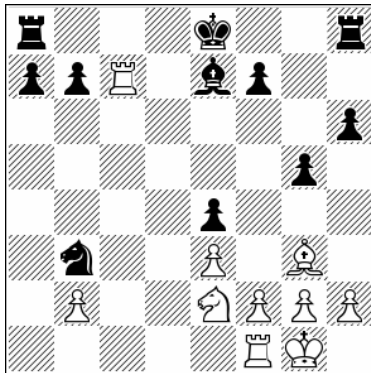
Position after: 14. ♖g2



Position after: 15... ♗c4

### 14... ♗xc3

A) 14... ♗xc3 15.0-0 ♖b3 16. ♗xb3! ♘xb3  
17. ♗xe4 dxe4 18. ♖c4 ♙e7 19. ♖c7



Position after: 19. ♖c7

White gains a tempo to activate his rook and knight. 19... ♙d8 [19...b6 20. ♖d1 ♘c5 21. ♗d4 ♙d8 22. ♖c6 f6 23. h4 White wields an initiative] 20. ♖c3 ♗a5 21. ♙d6 Also here we can say that White preserves better chances.

B) 14... ♗c4 15.0-0 ♙xc3 16. ♗xc3 ♗dxc5 17. ♗d1 ♗d3 18. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 19. ♖c3 ♗e5 20. f3 ♗f5 21. ♗xd5 White is winning, 1-0 (25) Navara, D (2719) – Nguyen, T (2569) Plzen 2020.

### 15. ♗xc3

Probably the critical position after 11. ♖c1.

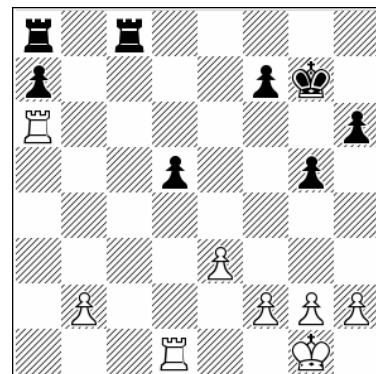
### 15... ♗c4

Now White has several ideas.

### 16. ♖d1

A) 16. h4 ♗xc5 17. ♖d1 ♖g8 18. ♖d4 ♗a6 We transpose to the Mamedyarov – Deac game given below.

B) 16. ♙d6 ♗xc5 [16... ♖c8 17. ♗f5! White must put pressure on d5 as soon as possible; 16... ♙xc5 17. b3 ♗a6 18. ♙xc5 ♗xc5 19. ♖d1 ♖c8 20. ♗xd5 White is winning, 1-0 (29) Rogozenco, D (2516) – Lauber, A (2443) Germany 2013] 17. ♙xc5 ♗xc5 18.0-0 ♙xc3 19. ♗a4 ♗c6 20. ♗a3 ♗a6 21. ♗xa6 bxa6 22. ♖xc3 0-0 23. ♖c6 ♗g7 24. ♖d1 ♖fc8 25. ♖xa6



Position after: 25. ♖xa6

There are a few games played in this endgame and overall it seems that Black can equalize.

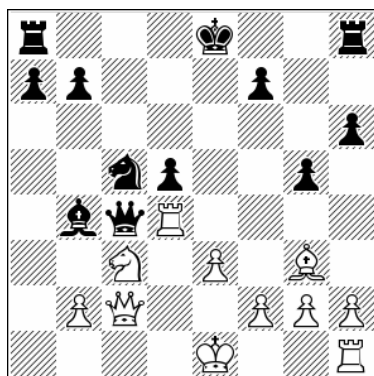
B1) 25... ♖ab8 26. h4 gxh4 27. ♖xd5 ♖c1+ 28. ♗h2 ♖xb2 Again an equal endgame, ½-½ (44) Prohaszka, P (2607) – Papp, G (2608) Austria 2016.

**B2)** 25...♖c2 26.g4 ♖b8 27.♖xd5 ♖bxb2 28.♖f5 ♖a2 29.♖d6 ♖c7 30.♖dd5 a6 31.♔g2 ♖a7 32.♖a5 ♖b2 33.♔g3 ♖b6 ½-½ (33) Guseynov, A (2282) – Maghalashvili, D (2485) Konya 2019.

### 16...♗xc5

16...♖e4 17.♖d2 ♖xg2 18.♔e2 g4 19.♖xd5 ♖f3+ 20.♖xf3 gxf3+ 21.♔xf3 ♖xc3 22.bxc3 ♗xc5 23.♖hg1 ♗e6 24.♖e5 ♖f8 25.♖f6 White has the initiative, ½-½ (40) Kantor, G (2514) – Xu, Y (2528) Leanyfalu 2019.

### 17.♖d4



Position after: 17.♖d4

### 17...♖a6

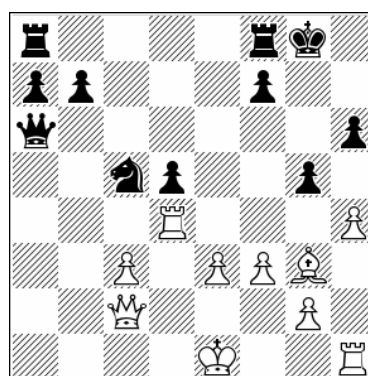
Black has a solid alternative. 17...♖xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♖b3 19.♖xb3 ♗xb3 20.♖xd5 This endgame favors White, though it's not that easy or indeed that clear. 20...a5!? [In the stem game Black played a little passively. 20...b6 21.h4 g4 22.♔e2 0-0 23.♖b1 ♗c5 24.♖b4 f5 25.f3 gxf3+ 26.gxf3 White has a superior endgame, ½-½ (61) Cramling Bellon, A (2025) – Nemcova, K (1888) Porto Carras 2018] 21.♔d1 a4 22.♔c2 0-0 23.h4

♖fd8 24.e4 f6 25.hxg5 hxg5 26.♖hd1 ♖xd5 27.exd5 ♔f7 It's about equal.

### 18.f3

In a recent example White tried a slightly different path. 18.h4 ♖g8 19.♖xd5 ♖d8 20.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 21.hxg5 hxg5 22.♖h7 ♔e8 Black is fine here, as his pressure on the queenside is strong, ½-½ (75) Mamedyarov, S (2741) – Deac, B (2700) chess.com INT 2022.

### 18...0-0 19.h4 ♖xc3+ 20.bxc3



Position after: 20.bxc3

### 20...♗e6

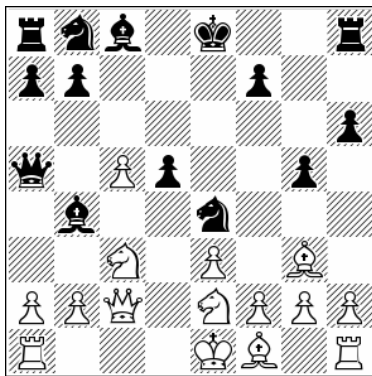
Here's an interesting alternative. 20...♖ae8 21.♔f2 ♖e6 22.♔f1 f5! 23.hxg5 hxg5 24.♖a2 ♔g7 25.♖xd5 ♖xe3 Not an easy solution for Black, but it seems that it's doing the job.

### 21.♖a4 ♖b6 22.♔f2

Although the position is still complicated, it does favor White, 1-0 (49) Nihal, S (2620) – Smirnov, A (2597) chess.com INT 2020.

## f) 7...c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♖g3 ♗e4 10.e3 ♖a5 11.♗ge2

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♖g5 h6 7.♖h4 c5 8.dxc5 g5 9.♖g3 ♗e4 10.e3 ♖a5 11.♗ge2

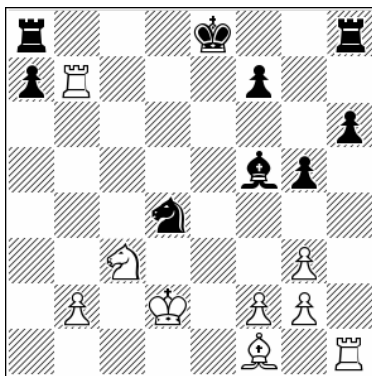


Position after: 11...d4

This is another equally important plan, and a very popular one.

### 11...d4

11...d4 12.a3 d5 13.c1 dxc5 14.axb4 d3+ 15.d2 cxb4 16.a4 dxc1 17.b4 dxe2 18.b7 dxc3 19.hxc3 d4 20.exd4 dxd4



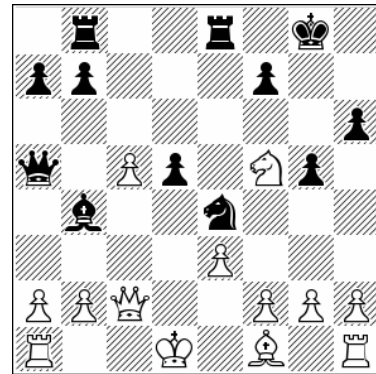
Position after: 20...dxd4

21.d4!? This might be an improvement over earlier games played in this line. [21.d5 d8 22.d4 0-0 23.c3 d2+ 24.b4 d4 25.c3 ½-½ (25) Gagunashvili, M (2562) – Vladimirov, E (2621) Dubai 2004] 21...e6 [21...0-0 22.d5 g7 23.c3 d6 24.d3 e6 25.a1 White has some edge on account of the slightly weak pawn on a7] 22.e6 dxe6 23.c2 d5 24.b5 e6 25.a5 Also here White is applying pressure on the a7-pawn.

### 12.d8

This is a refined way to play for an advantage, developed when players understood that the old main line, given below, was not enough.

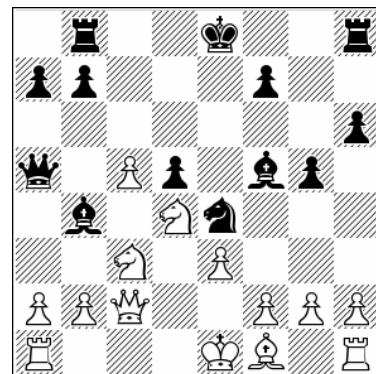
12.d8 0-0 13.d4 e8 14.d8 Entering a long, almost forced, line that lead to a draw. 14...dxc3 15.dxf5 d4+ 16.d1 axb8



Position after: 16...axb8

17.f3 [17.d6+ e8 18.d3 bc8 19.e2 dxc5! 20.d5 d4 Black has a winning attack] 17...bc8 18.fxe4 dxe4 19.d4 cxc5 20.dxf7+ e7f7 21.cxc5 dxc5 22.c1 ed8+ Black has no problems in this endgame, ½-½ (22) Laznicka, V (2703) – Leko, P (2720) Porto Carras 2011.

### 12...axb8 13.d4

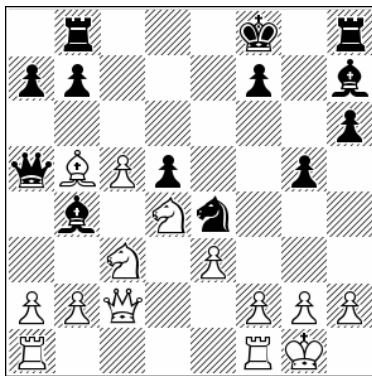


Position after: 13.d4

### 13...d7

Alternatives are not so good.

A) 13...h7 14.b5+ e8 15.0-0!?



Position after: 15.0-0!?

15...♙xc3 [15...♗g3 16.♙d3 ♙xd3 17.♚xd3 ♗xf1 18.♚f5 ♖e8 19.♗xd5 ♚xc5 20.♖xf1 White has very strong attacking play; 15...♗xc3 16.♙d3! ♙xd3 17.♚xd3 ♗e4 18.♗b3 ♚c7 19.♚d4 White has victory in sight] 16.bxc3 ♗xc5 17.♚b2 ♚b6 18.a4 a6 19.a5 ♚f6 20.♙e2 ♗g7 21.f4 We can say that this position is favorable for White.

**B)** 13...♙g6 14.♙b5+ ♗f8 15.♙d3 ♚xc5 16.0-0 ♖e8 17.♗b3 ♚c6 18.♗d4 ♚c5 19.♖fc1 ♗g7 20.♚a4 ♚a5 21.♚xa5 ♙xa5 22.♗xd5 ♖e5 23.♙xe4 ♙xe4 24.♗c3 White has managed to win a pawn. Black has some compensation due to his bishop pair, but the strong white knight on d4 controls the whole board, 1-0 (56) Dreev, A (2690) – Zhang Zhong (2603) Moscow 2004.

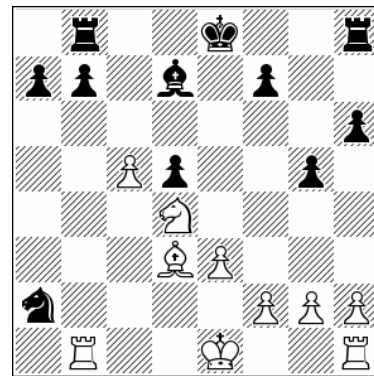
#### 14.♙d3!?

This looks like the only chance to try for an advantage.

#### 14...♙a4

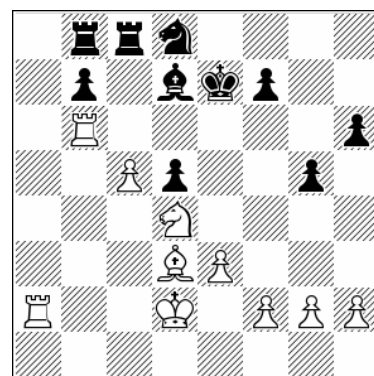
This is a critical move, but it's not so clear that Black can reach a balanced game. Before we come to that, Black has another idea worth examining.

14...♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♚xc3+ 16.♚xc3 ♗xc3 17.♖c1 ♗xa2 18.♖b1



Position after: 18.♖b1

18...♗c3 [18...♗e7 19.♗d2 a5 20.♖a1 ♗b4 21.♖xa5 ♗c6 22.♖a2 ♖hc8 23.♖b1 ♗d8 24.♖b6!



Position after: 24.♖b6!

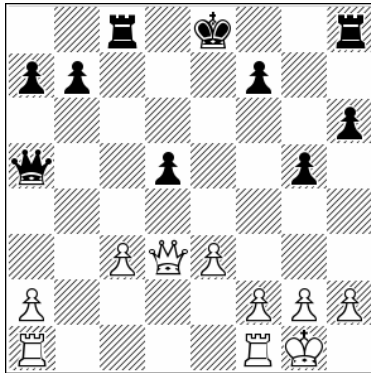
Attacking the h6-pawn is very much to the point. 24...♖xc5 25.♖xh6 White preserves better chances.] 19.c6!? It seems that this move gives White chances for pressure. 19...♗xb1 20.cxd7+ ♗xd7 21.♙xb1 b5 22.♗d2 a6 Two minor pieces against rook in this case favor White slightly.

#### 15.♚c1!?!N

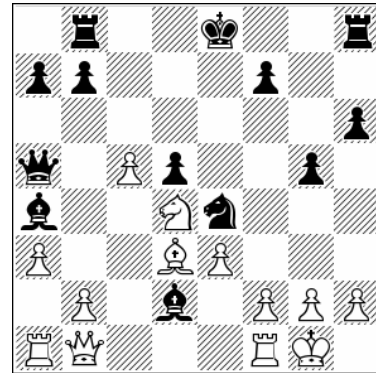
This is the only realistic way to play for an advantage.

**A)** 15.♚xa4+ ♚xa4 16.♙b5+ ♚xb5 17.♗dxb5 ♖c8 18.♗e2 ♙xc3 19.♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♖xc3 Black is fine in this endgame, ½-½ (59) Cmilyte, V (2513) – Hammer, J (2633) Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

**B)** 15.♗b3 ♙xb3 16.♚xb3 ♗xc5 17.♚c2 ♙xc3+ 18.bxc3 ♗xd3+ 19.♚xd3 ♖c8 20.0-0!N



Position after: 20.0-0!N



Position after: 18.♖b1

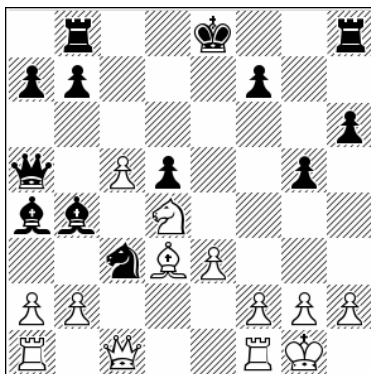
20...0-0 21.h4! White's only chance, but still after the possible 21...♖xc3 22.♗f5 ♖c5 23.♖fc1 ♖fc8 24.♖xc5 ♖xc5 25.hxg5 d4 26.♗d7 hxg5 27.exd4 ♖d5 28.♗xb7 ♖xd4 the position is balanced.

### 15...♗xc3

Best and critical.

15...0-0 16.0-0 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♗xc3 18.♗f5 ♗d7 19.♗xh6+ ♖g7 20.♗f5+ ♗xf5 21.♗xf5 ♗xa1 22.♗xa1+ f6 23.♗d1 White is better, fully justifying his exchange sac.

### 16.0-0



Position after: 16.0-0

### 16...♗e4

16...0-0 17.bxc3 ♗xc5 18.f4 White has easy play and an attack.

### 17.a3 ♗d2 18.♖b1

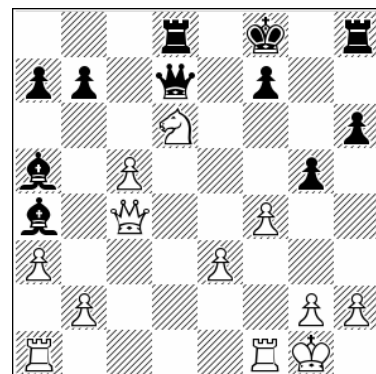
Black is a piece up, but his pieces are not well coordinated. Let's see what could happen.

### 18...♗xc5

Black has alternatives that need to be checked.

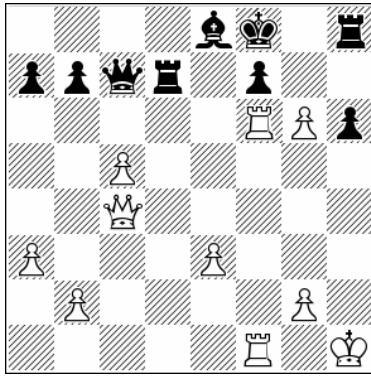
A) 18...♗c7 19.b3 ♗d7 20.♗e4 dxe4 21.♗xe4+ ♖f8 22.♗c2 This wins for White.

B) 18...♗d8 19.♗e4 dxe4 20.♗xe4+ ♗e7 21.♗d3 ♗a5 22.♗f5 ♖d8 23.♗c4 ♗d7 24.♗d6+ ♖f8 25.f4



Position after: 25.f4

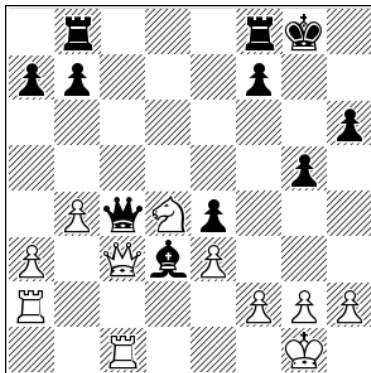
25...♗c7 [25...g4 26.b3 ♗c6 27.b4 ♗c7 28.b5 White is better] 26.fxg5 ♗xd6 27.g6 ♗xh2+ 28.♖xh2 ♗c7+ 29.♖h1 ♗e8 30.♖f6 ♖d7 31.♖af1



Position after: 31. Ra1

It seems that Black can defend, but in general this line is very complicated. 31... Rg8 [31... Re7 32. e4 Qg7 33. Qc3 Qe5 34. gxf7 Qxc3 35. fxe8=Q Rxe8 36. bxc3 White holds some advantage] 32. c6 bxc6 33. Qc5+ Qg7 34. Qc3 Qf8 A draw by repetition is likely to end this game.

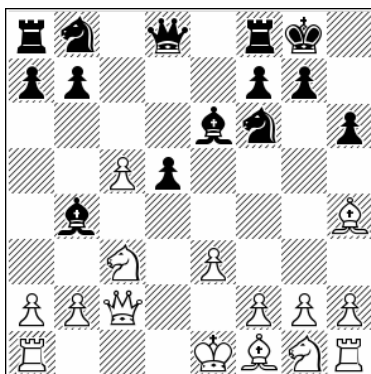
19. Qxe4 dxe4 20. Ra2 0-0 21. b3 Qc3 22. Rc1 Qb5 23. b4 Qd3 24. Qb3 Qc4 25. Qxc3!



Position after: 25. Qxc3!

**g) 7...c5 8.dxc5 Qe6 9.e3 0-0 10. Nf3 Nbd7 11.--**

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Qb4 4. Qc2 d5 5. cxd5 exd5 6. Qg5 h6 7. Qh4 c5 8. dxc5 Qe6 9. e3 0-0

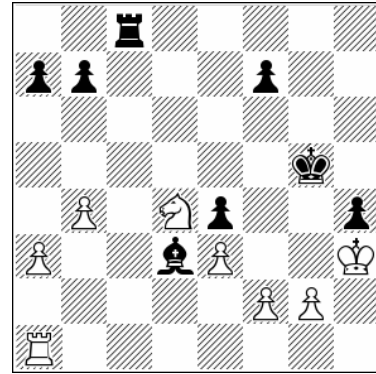


Position after: 9...0-0

25... Qxc3

25... Qxa2 26. Nf5 f6 27. Qc7 White wins.

26. Rxc3 Rbc8 27. Rxc8 Rxc8 28. Ra1 h5 29. h4 Qh7 30. hxg5 Qg6 31. Qh2 Qxg5 32. Qg3 h4+ 33. Qh3



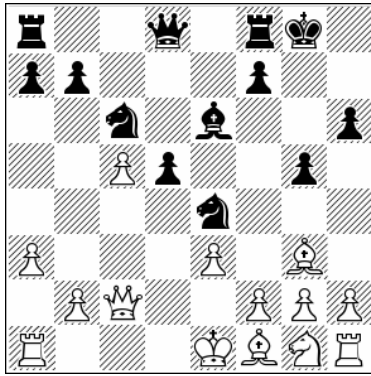
Position after: 33. Qh3

33... Rc4

Equal play. A highly interesting line, which Black can probably survive.

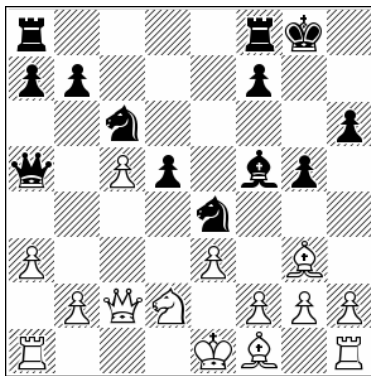
10. Nf3

A) 10. a3 Qxc3+ 11. Qxc3 g5 12. Qg3 Ne4 13. Qc2 Nc6



Position after: 13...♘c6

Black is going for very active play. 14.♘f3 [14.♙d3 ♖a5+ 15.♗e2 f5 Black has powerful play; 14.b4 f5 15.♘e2 ♗f6 16.♞d1 f4 17.exf4 ♙f5 18.♗c1 ♞ae8 Black has gained fine attacking chances, 0-1 (38) Ali Marandi, C (2476) – Moiseenko, A (2663) Gjakova 2016] 14...♗a5+ 15.♘d2 ♙f5

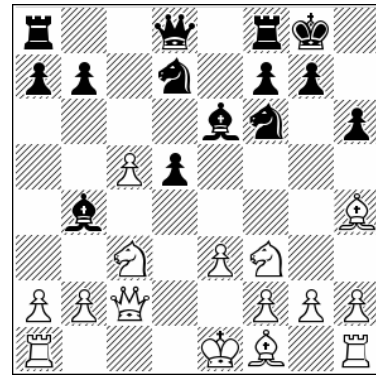


Position after: 15...♙f5

Now White has choices. 16.♗d1 [16.♗c1 ♞ac8 17.b4 ♘xb4 18.axb4 ♗xb4 19.♙e5 ♞xc5 20.♗d1 ♞fc8 21.♙d3 ♘xd2 22.♙xf5 ♘c4+ 23.♗f1 ♘xe5 24.♙xc8 ♞xc8 Black has strong counterplay for the sacrificed exchange] 16...♗xc5 17.♘xe4 ♙xe4 18.♗c1 ♗b6 Black is better, 0-1 (68) Miedema, D (2361) – Raznikov, D (2508) Porto Mannu Palau 2016.

**B)** 10.♙d3 d4 11.exd4 ♘c6 12.♘ge2 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♗xd4 14.♙xf6 ♗xf6 15.0-0 ♙xc3 16.♗xc3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♞fc8 18.♙e4 ♞xc5 19.♙xb7 ♞b8 Black has even better chances here, ½-½ (64) O'Donnell, C (2349) – Can, E (2605) Sitges 2017.

10...♘bd7

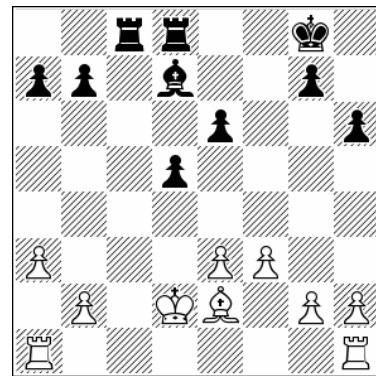


Position after: 10...♘bd7

**11.♙e2**

White has valid alternatives.

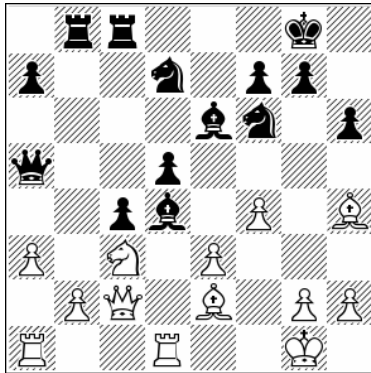
**A)** 11.♘d4 Rarely seen. 11...♙xc5 [11...♘xc5 12.f3 ♙d7 13.a3 ♙xc3+ 14.♗xc3 ♞c8 15.♙e2 ♘e6 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♗d2 ♘e4 18.♙xd8 ♘xd2 19.♗xd2 ♞fxd8



Position after: 19...♞fxd8

20.f4! such endgames offer White some chances] 12.♙d3 ♙xd4 13.exd4 ♗b6 14.♗d2 ♘e4 15.♙xe4 dxe4 16.d5 ♙f5 17.0-0 ♗g6 18.d6 ♘e5 19.♙g3 This is more pleasant for White, 1-0 Nakamura, H (2736) – Carlsen, M (2847) chess24.com INT 2021.

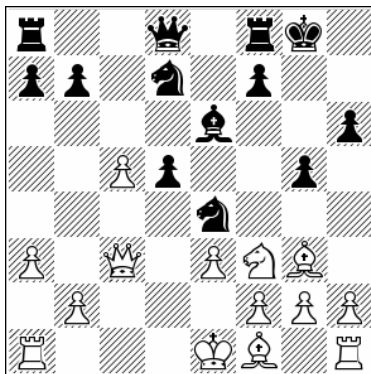
**B)** 11.c6 bxc6 12.♙e2 c5 [12...♞c8 transposes to the 11.♙e2 line] 13.0-0 ♗a5 14.♘a4 c4 15.a3 ♙d6 16.♘c3 ♞ab8 17.♞fd1 ♞fc8 18.♘d4 ♙e5 19.f4 ♙xd4!



Position after: 19...♙xd4!

20.♖xd4 ♕b6 Black has strong play on the b-file, 1-0 (38) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Asis Gargatagli, H (2467) lichess.org INT 2021.

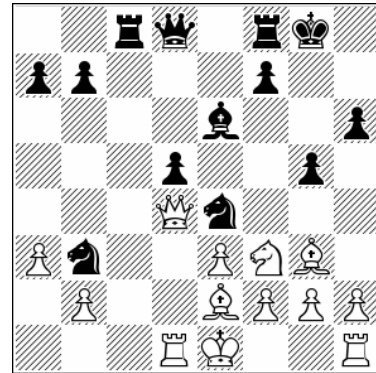
**C)** 11.a3 ♙xc3+ Probably best. Black is going for fast development. [11...♖a5 12.♙xf6 ♘xf6 13.♖c1 ♙xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♘e4 16.♖c1 ♖fc8 17.b4 White is clearly better, 1-0 (24) Fier, A (2581) – Baron, T (2544) Amsterdam 2017] 12.♖xc3 g5 13.♙g3 ♘e4



Position after: 13...♘e4

**C1)** 14.♖b4 ♘dxc5 15.♖d1 a5 16.♖d4 ♘b3 17.♖d3 a4 18.♙e2 ♖a5+ 19.♙f1 ♖ac8 Black is very active here, 1-0 (42) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Kosteniuk, A (2471) chess.com INT 2020.

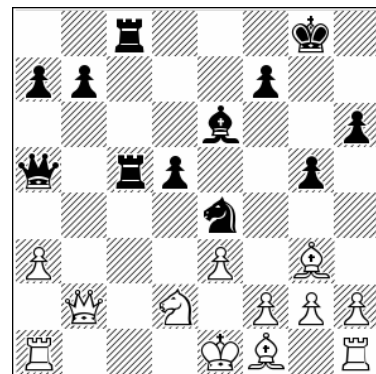
**C2)** 14.♖d4 ♘dxc5 15.♖d1 ♖c8 16.♙e2 ♘b3



Position after: 16...♘b3

17.♖b4 [17.♖xa7? ♘ec5 Ouch! The queen is trapped, 0-1 (44) Ternault, M (2324) – Valenzuela Gomez, F (2378) Barcelona 2021] 17...♘c1 18.♘d4 ♘xe2 19.♙xe2 ♖c4! [19...b6 20.f3! The position is now unclear, ½-½ (69) Hoang, T (2467) – Kosteniuk, A (2538) Baku 2016] 20.♖xb7 ♖a5 Black has strong attacking play.

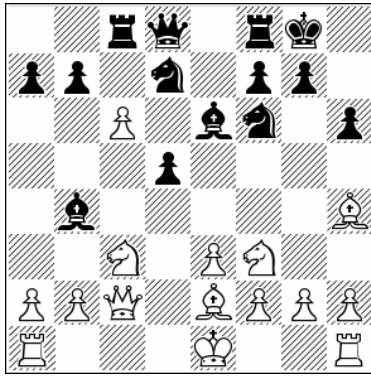
**C3)** 14.♖c2 It seems that here all tactics work nicely for Black. 14...♖c8 15.b4 [15.♙d3 ♘dxc5 16.♘d4 h5 17.f3 ♘xg3 18.hxg3 ♘e4 Black is better, 0-1 (42) Henrichs, T (2475) – Volokitin, A (2677) Austria 2017] 15...♘dxc5! 16.bxc5 ♖a5+ 17.♘d2 ♖xc5 18.♖b2 ♖fc8



Position after: 18...♖fc8

19.♖d1 [19.♙d3 ♖c2! 20.♖b4 ♖c1+ 21.♙e2 ♘c3+ 22.♙f3 g4+ 23.♙f4 ♖c7+ 0-1 (23) Jian, A (2089) – Asis Gargatagli, H (2464) chess.com INT 2021] 19...♘c3 20.♖c1 ♘a4 21.♖xc5 ♖xc5 22.♖b3 ♖c1+ 23.♖d1 ♖xa3 Black is winning, 0-1 (35) Buckels, V (2448) – Petrov, M (2524) Tornelo INT 2021.

**11...♖c8 12.c6**



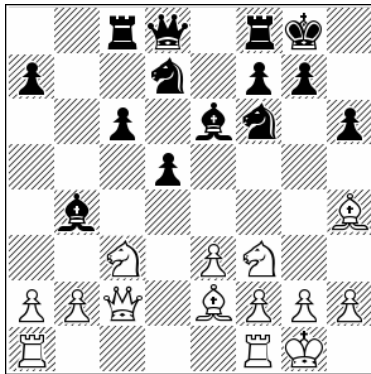
Position after: 12.c6

An interesting zwischenzug. Now if Black takes with the rook then the white knight will jump to d4 with gain of tempo.

### 12...Rxc6

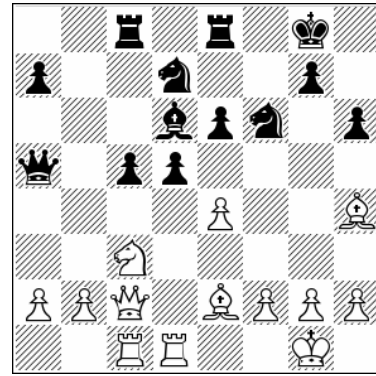
Black can also take back with the pawn.

12...bxc6 13.0-0



Position after: 13.0-0

13...Qa5 [There is a risky alternative. 13...g5 14.Qg3 Qh5 15.Qd4 Qxg3 16.fxg3!? Qe7 It is dangerous to get the king into such a bad position, 1-0 (36) Indjic, A (2607) – Jianu, V (2532) lichess.org INT 2021] 14.Qd4 Qd6 15.Rfd1 Rfe8 16.Rac1 Here it's best for Black is to keep his structure intact. 16...c5 17.Qxe6 fxe6 18.e4!



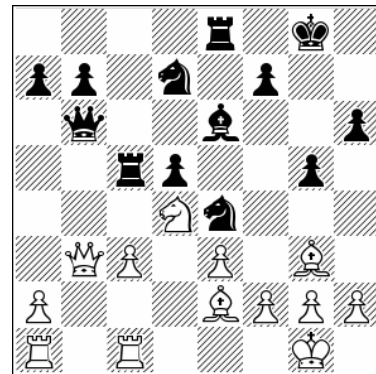
Position after: 18.e4!

18...c4 19.exd5 exd5 20.Qxf6! Qxf6 21.g3 Qh8 22.Qf3 Rxe5 23.Qg2 White has the edge and not only that, but also his play is much easier.

### 13.Qd4 Rxc5

13...Rc8 14.0-0 Qe7 15.Qb3 Qxc3 16.bxc3 Qc5 17.Qxf6 Qxf6 18.Qb4 b6 19.a4 Qg6 20.a5 Qe4 21.Qxe6 Qxe6 This was also good solid play from Black, ½-½ (21) Howell, D (2697) – Adams, M (2690) Torquay 2019.

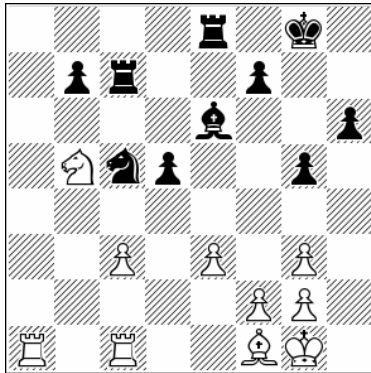
14.0-0 Re8 15.Rfc1 g5 16.Qg3 Qe4 17.Qb3 Qxc3 18.bxc3 Qb6!



Position after: 18...Qb6!

It is important to exchange queens now.

19.Qd3 Qxb3 20.axb3 Qxg3 21.hxg3 a6 22.b4 Rxc7 23.b5 Qc5 24.Qf1 axb5 25.Qxb5



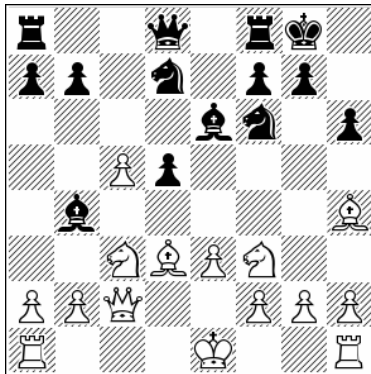
Position after: 25. Nxb5

25... Rxc6

Black's solid play has led to a position that is very much defensible, ½-½ (27) Petrov, N (2586) – Tomashevsky, E (2718) Khanty-Mansiysk 2019.

**h) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♖e6 9.e3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♙d3**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 c5 8.dxc5 ♙e6 9.e3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♙d3



Position after: 11. ♙d3

We can consider this probably the best.

**11...♘xc5 12.0-0 ♚c8 13.♚ac1!?**

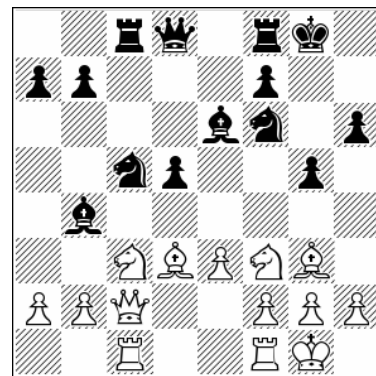
Not very popular, but certainly worth investigating.

13.♘e2 ♘ce4 14.♚b3 ♚b6 15.♙xf6 ♘xf6 16.♘ed4 ♙c5 17.♚xb6 ♙xb6 18.h3 ♚fd8 19.♚fd1 ♘f8 20.a4 a5 Black is fine here, with a typical OK position in isolated pawn play, ½-½ (49) Jobava, B (2588) – Grischuk, A (2764) Warsaw 2021.

**13...♙xc3**

Black can also play more actively.

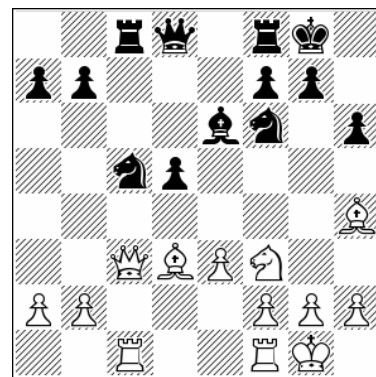
13...g5 14.♙g3



Position after: 14. ♙g3

Now Black has a further choice. 14...♘fe4 [14...♚a5 15.♙f5! ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♘ce4 17.♘d4 ♚xc3 18.♚b2 ♙xf5 19.♘xf5 White looks to be doing fine] 15.♘e2!?. This is critical. 15...♙f5 16.♘fd4 ♙g6 17.♙xe4 ♙xe4 18.♚d1 ♘d3 19.♚xc8 ♚xc8 20.♚a4 ♙c5 21.♚b3 ♙b6 22.♘c3 Complicated play, but to me it's easier to play with White.

**14.♚xc3**



Position after: 14. ♚xc3

**14...d4!?**

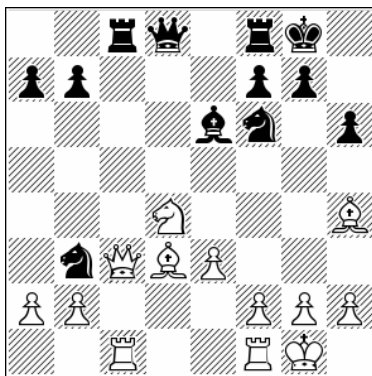
A critical attempt. Black is trying to generate direct play.

14...g5 15.♔g3 ♖fe4 16.♗d4 ♗xd3 17.♞xc8 ♕xc8 18.♗xd3 ♗a5 19.♞a1 ♔d7 20.♗d4 White has some edge here, ½-½ (80) Andscacs 0. 93 – Nemorino 4.00 Internet 2018.

15.♗xd4!

If White wants to play for an advantage, this is necessary.

15...♗b3

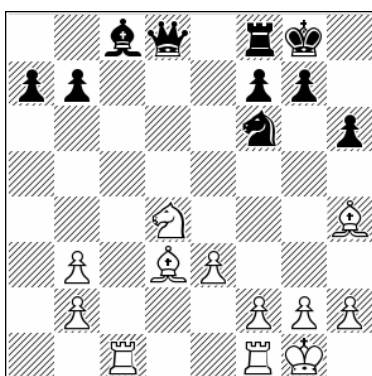


Position after: 15...♗b3

16.axb3

Not the only move.

16.♗xc8 ♕xc8 17.axb3

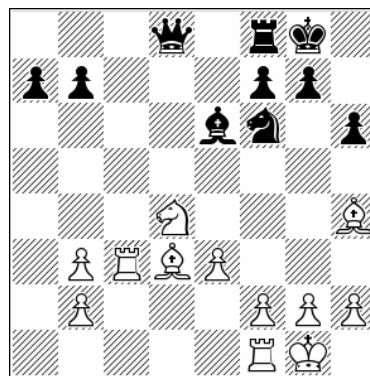


Position after: 17.axb3

17...♗b6 [17...♔d7 18.♔xf6 ♗xf6 19.♞c7 ♗d6 20.♞b7 a6 21.♞c1 this is already difficult to defend with Black] 18.♔xf6! In my opinion it is

essential to eliminate the knight here. 18...♗xf6 [It is possible to take with the pawn, but it's no fun. 18...gxf6 19.♞c3 ♗d8 20.♞fc1 ♔e6 21.g3 a6 White can play many moves without making any mistakes.] 19.♞c7 ♗b6 20.♞fc1 ♔e6 21.♔e4 ♞b8 22.h4 White has managed to centralize in a good way and in my opinion he can even claim some pressure.

16...♞xc3 17.♞xc3

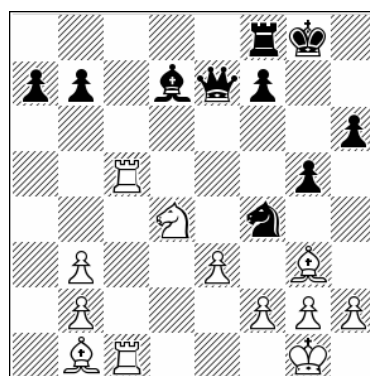


Position after: 17.♞xc3

17...g5

17...♗e7 18.♞fc1 g5 19.♔g3 ♗d8 20.h3 ♗d5 21.♞c5 Another playable line.

18.♔g3 ♗d5 19.♞c5 ♗f4 20.♔e4 ♗e7 21.♞fc1 ♔d7 22.♔b1



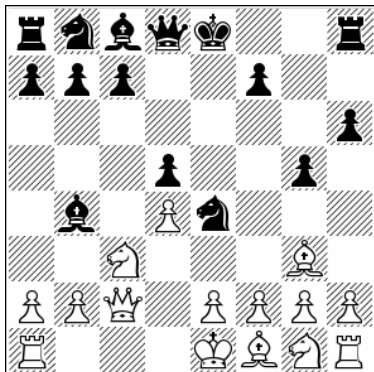
Position after: 22.♔b1

22...♗f6

It is also possible to play like this, but somehow the knight on f4 seems artificial.

## i) 7...g5 8.♙g3 ♘e4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.cxd5  
exd5 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 g5 8.♙g3 ♘e4



Position after: 8...♘e4

In this line Black simply abandons play with ...c5 and instead heads for a different type of position.

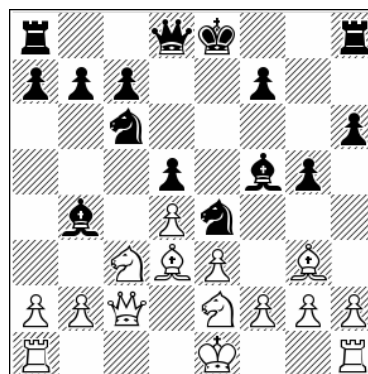
### 9.e3 h5

This is one of a few ideas with which Black can go for different types of play compared to the 8...c5 lines.

**A)** 9...c5 10.♙d3! ♘xg3 11.hxg3 cxd4 12.exd4 ♘c6 13.♘ge2 This looks good for White.

**B)** 9...♙f5 10.♙d3 c5 11.dxc5 This is an unfavorable line that can also come from the 8...c5 move order. 11...♚a5 12.♘ge2 ♚xc5 13.♙e5 0-0 14.♙d4 White is better, 1-0 (33) Kreto, E (2269) – Kjartansson, G (2496) chess.com INT 2021.

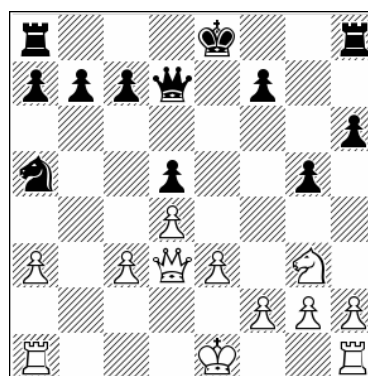
**C)** 9...♘c6 10.♙d3 ♙f5 11.♘ge2



Position after: 11.♘ge2

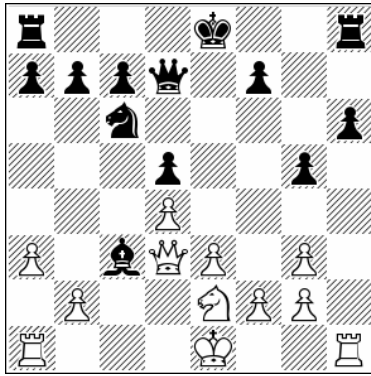
**C1)** 11...h5 12.0-0! ♘xg3 [12...h4 13.♙xc7! An important tactical detail. 13...♚xc7 14.♘xd5 White wins; 12...♙xc3 13.♘xc3 0-0 14.♙xe4 dxe4 15.f3 Another favorable position for White.] 13.fxg3! ♙xd3 14.♚xd3 ♚d7 15.♙f5 This is easy play for White.

**C2)** 11...♘xg3!? This is something to check thoroughly, because it's not at all simple to understand. 12.hxg3!? Perhaps the best way to go. [Recapturing with the knight is logical, but actually it's far from clear. 12.♘xg3 ♙xd3 13.♚xd3 ♚d7 14.a3 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♘a5!]



Position after: 15...♘a5!

16.0-0 0-0-0 Another unbalanced game.] 12...♙xd3 13.♚xd3 ♚d7 14.a3 ♙xc3+



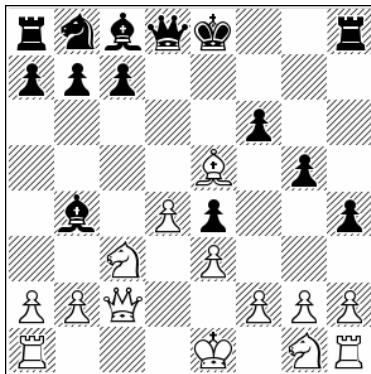
Position after: 14...♙xc3+

15.♚xc3! [15.♜xc3 ♞e7 16.b4 0-0-0 17.a4 h5 18.a5 h4 19.gxh4 gxh4 unclear again] 15...h5 16.♜c1! 0-0-0 17.♜d3 White may count on making some progress here.

### 10.f3

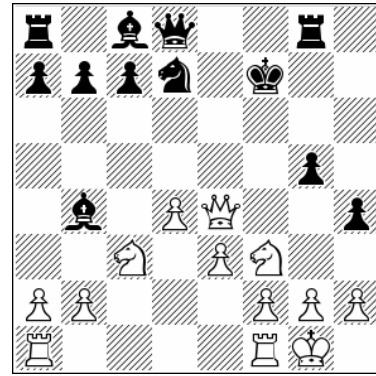
One alternative is a bit controversial, but perhaps playable.

10.♙d3!? h4 That's critical. 11.♙e5 f6 12.♙xe4 dxe4



Position after: 12...dxe4

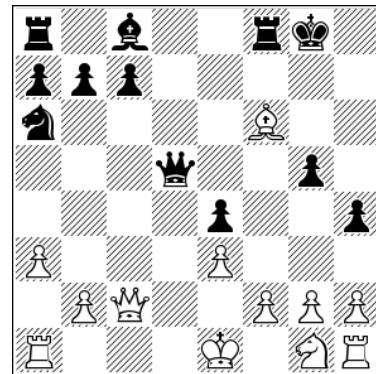
**A)** Sacrificing a piece is not fully correct. 13.♚xe4 fxe5 14.♚xe5+ ♔f7 15.♜f3 ♖g8 16.♚e4 ♜d7 17.0-0



Position after: 17.0-0

17...g4! [17...c6 18.♖ad1 ♜f6 19.♚c2 ♔f8 20.♜e5 ♚e8 21.f4 this is unclear, 1-0 (33) Schmidt, W (2396) – Maiorov, N (2546) Warsaw 2010] 18.♚f5+ ♜f6 19.♜e5+ ♔f8 20.♚f4 ♙xc3 21.bxc3 ♖g7 22.e4 ♔g8 There is some compensation for White, but Black is a piece up for only two pawns.

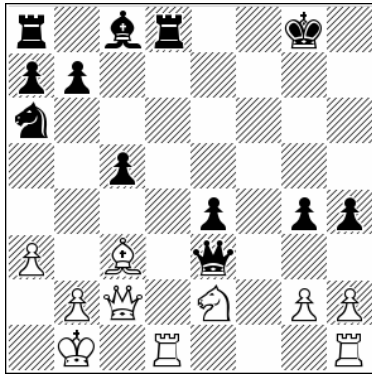
**B)** 13.d5 ♜a6 [13...♚e7 14.a3 ♚xe5 15.axb4 ♜a6 16.0-0-0 ♙f5 17.♖d4 0-0-0 18.♜ge2 ♔b8 19.♖c4 ♚d6 20.♜d4 White is clearly better here, 1-0 (35) Kotanjian, T (2471) – Yegiazarian, A (2531) Yerevan 2006] 14.a3 ♙xc3+ 15.♙xc3 ♚xd5 16.♙xf6 0-0



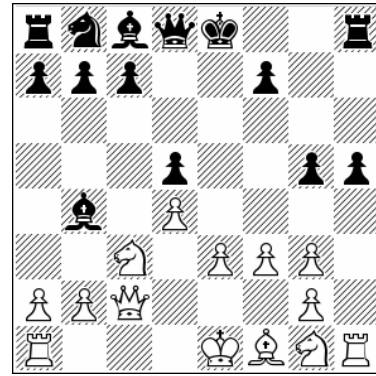
Position after: 16...0-0

In this interesting position White has two possible paths.

**B1)** 17.♖d1 ♚f5 18.♙d4 It is important to stop the knight from coming to c5. 18...c5 19.♙c3 g4 Black prevents the knight from emerging on h3. 20.♜e2! ♚xf2+ 21.♔d2 ♖d8+ 22.♔c1 ♚xe3+ 23.♔b1



Position after: 23.♙b1



Position after: 11.hxg3

What a fantastic line! Now the white king is safe and Black is very much compromised. 23...♙e6 24.g3!? To place his knight on f4. 24...♞xd1+ 25.♞xd1 ♖c7 26.♗f4 ♙f7 This position is balanced, ½-½ (53) Roc 0.7 – SugaR XPrO 1.2 Internet 2017.

**B2)** 17.♙d4 Also here it is essential to stop the knight from reaching the c5-square. 17...c5 18.♙c3 ♖c7 19.♞d1 ♞f7 20.♞d6 ♗d5 21.♗f3! ♞f5 22.♗xg5! ♞xg5 23.♞b3 ♙e6 [23...♞xf2 24.♞xd5+ ♞xd5 25.♞xd5 ♞xg2 26.♞d8+ ♗f7 27.♞f1+ ♗e7 28.♙f6+ ♗e6 29.♙xh4 White is much better] 24.♞xe6 ♞xf2 25.♞g6+ ♞xg6 26.♞xd5+ ♞f7 27.♞f1 ♗f8 28.♞xc5+ ♗g8 29.♞d5 White has strong attacking chances.

### 10...♗xg3

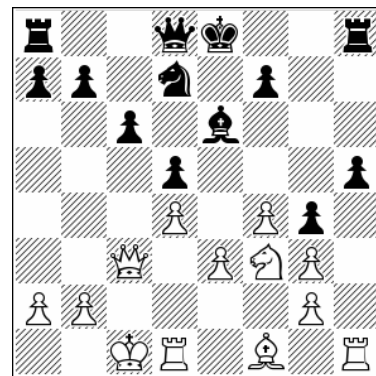
10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♗xg3 12.hxg3 ♞d6 13.♗f2 ♗c6 14.♞b1 b6 15.c4 dxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙d7 17.♗e2 This is a good position for White, ½-½ (46) Svidler, P (2719) – Dubov, D (2676) Hamburg 2019.

### 11.hxg3

### 11...♞e7

Black has various moves here but all of them are heading toward the same thing and that is to castle queenside.

11...c6 12.0-0-0 ♙e6 13.f4 ♙xc3 14.♞xc3 ♗d7 15.♗f3 g4

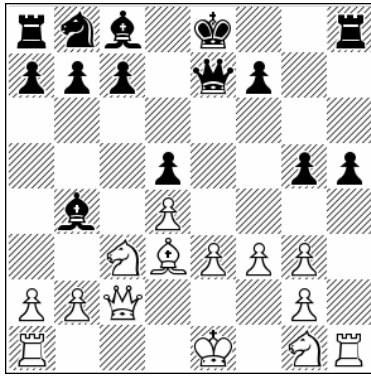


Position after: 15...g4

16.♗g5! [16.♗d2 f5 17.♙d3 ♞c8 this is not bad at all for Black, 1-0 (47) Indjic, A (2607) – Dobrov, V (2478) chess.com INT 2021] 16...♗f6 17.♙d3 ♞e7 18.♞de1 0-0-0 19.♞c5! ♞xc5+ 20.dxc5 White has chances for an advantage.

### 12.♙d3!?

12.♗f2 ♙e6 13.a3 ♙d6 14.♗b5 c6 15.♗xd6+ ♞xd6 16.♙d3 ♗d7 17.♗e2 0-0-0 18.b4 ♗b8 This is not clear, ½-½ (102) Krush, I (2455) – Halkias, S (2566) Caleta 2010.



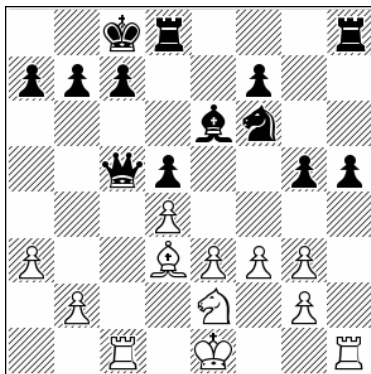
Position after: 12.♙d3!?

12...♘c6

Probably best.

A) 12...♙e6 13.a3 ♘xc3+ 14.♖xc3 c6 15.♗b3 ♗c7 16.f4 g4 17.0-0-0 f5 18.e4 fx4 19.♙e4 ♘a6 20.♙g6+ White has a big advantage.

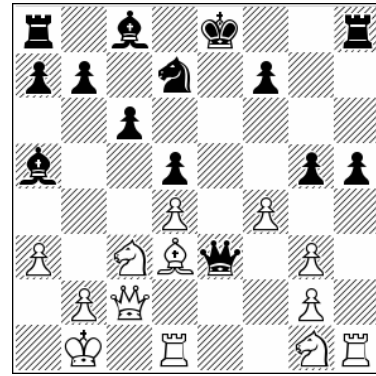
B) 12...♘d7 13.a3 ♘xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♘f6 15.♘e2 ♙e6 16.♞c1 0-0-0 17.♗c5 ♗xc5



Position after: 17...♗xc5

Now 18.dxc5! gives White an advantage.

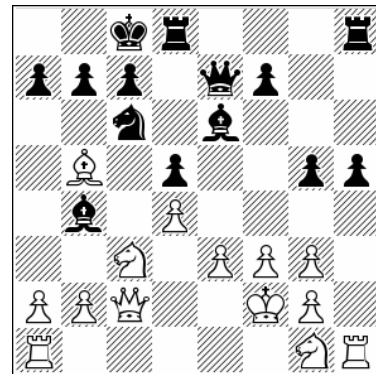
C) 12...c6 13.a3 ♙a5 14.0-0-0! ♗xe3+ 15.♚b1 ♘d7 16.f4



Position after: 16.f4

16...♗xg3 [16...♗xd4 17.♘f3 ♗g7 18.♘xd5!? cxd5 19.fxg5 White has strong attacking chances here] 17.♘ge2 ♗e3 18.♙e4 dxe4 19.♞h3 ♗f2 20.♘xe4 ♗xg2 21.♞g3 ♗h2 22.d5 A very instructive way to handle White's attacking chances.

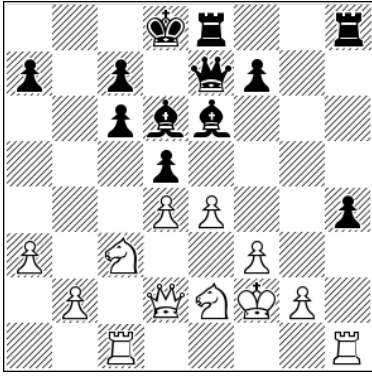
13.♚f2 ♙e6 14.♙b5 0-0-0!?



Position after: 14...0-0-0!?

A tough move to play. The engines recommend it, but for humans such decisions don't come easily.

15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♘ge2 ♞de8 17.a3 ♙d6 18.♞ac1 ♚d8 19.♗d2 h4 20.gxh4 gxh4 21.e4



Position after: 21.e4

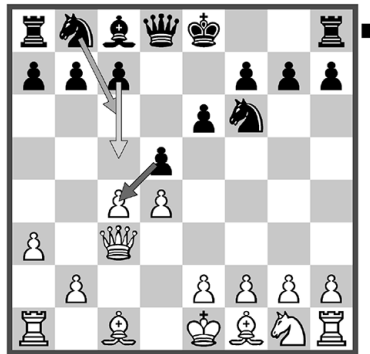
### 21...f6

This position is really interesting and complex, although playing like this with Black is not a common thing to do.

# Chapter 9

## 5.a3 – Various 6th Moves for Black

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙c2 d5 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.♙xc3



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 9 – 5.a3 – Various 6th Moves for Black

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙c2 d5 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.♙xc3

a) 6...♗c6 & 6...b6

b) 6...dxc4 7.♙xc4 b6 8.♗f4

c) 6...dxc4 7.♙xc4 b6 8.♗g5

d) 6...dxc4 7.♙xc4 b6 8.♗f3

e) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.♙xg7

f) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.b4 0-0

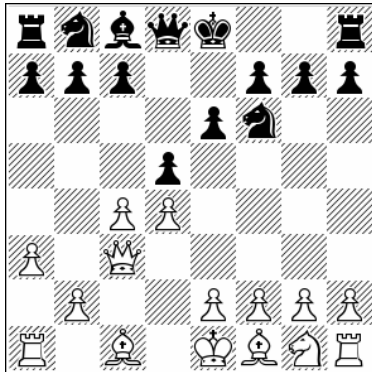
g) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.b4 e5

h) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.♗f3

i) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙c2

## a) 6...♖c6 & 6...b6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♙c2 d5 5.a3  
 ♗xc3+ 6.♙xc3



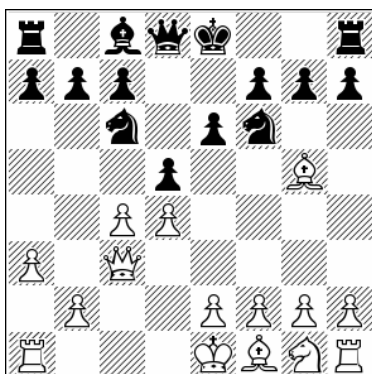
Position after: 6. ♙xc3

This is another plan for White: he claims the bishop pair without making the 5.cxd5 exchange in the center. This gives us a completely different type of play, where Black has many ideas for fighting White's system. White has gained the bishop pair while keeping his pawn structure intact, but Black has faster development and also the queen on c3 is more vulnerable.

### 6...b6

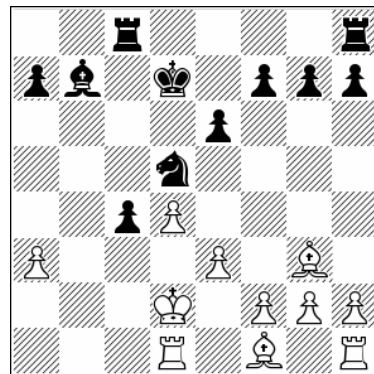
We are dealing here with interesting sidelines that can confuse White, but sometimes will simply transpose into to other systems which we will see in detail.

6...♗c6 7.♗g5!



Position after: 7. ♗g5!

A very solid idea. Of course White can go 7.e3 or 7.♗f3, but in this particular case let's make things simple and good. 7...dxc4 [7...♗e4 8.♗xd8 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♖xd8 10.e3 ♗a5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗d3 ♖e8 13.♗e2 Such endgames tend to favor White, who will go for f3 and further pawn expansion on the kingside.] 8.e3 ♙d5 [8...♗d5 9.♗xd8 ♗xc3 10.♗xc7 ♗d5 11.♗d6 ♗a5 12.♗f3 ♗b3 13.♖d1 b5 14.♗d2 ♗d7 15.♗g3 ♗xd2 16.♗xd2 ♗b7 17.b3 ♖ac8 18.bxc4 bxc4



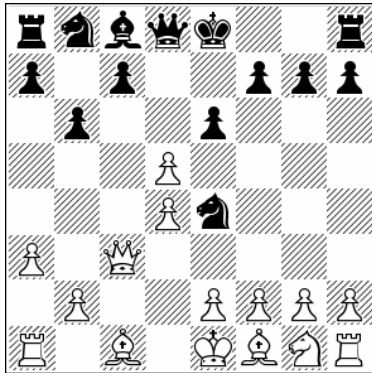
Position after: 18...bxc4

19.♖b1 White has better prospects.] 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.♙xc4 ♙xc4 11.♗xc4 ♗d7 12.♗e2 ♗e7 13.f3 ♖c8 14.b4 ♗f5 15.♗f2 ♗d6 16.♗b3 ♗b5 17.♗f4 Also here we can say that White has better chances in the endgame, ½-½ (52) Beliavsky, A (2641) – Parligras, M (2561) Plovdiv 2008.

### 7.cxd5

7.♗g5 0-0 Black can now go 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 transposing to a line that we will also discuss. 8.cxd5 exd5 9.e3 This is a better version than the 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♙xc3 b6 7.♗g5 system, which we will also analyze in this book.

### 7...♗e4



Position after: 7...dxe4

Now White has two reasonable alternatives.

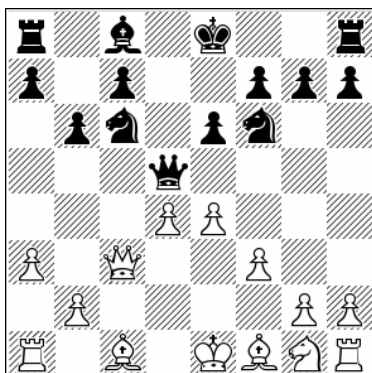
**8. ♖e3!?**

8. ♖c2 exd5 9. ♗f4 c5 Probably forced [9... ♗d6 10. ♖c1 c6 11. e3 ♗b7 12. ♗d3 ♖e7 13. ♗f3 ♗d7 14. 0-0 White has easy play, ½-½ (31) Guthrie, D (2187) – Vajda, S (2359) Gibraltar 2016] 10. e3 0-0 11. ♗d3 ♗a6 12. ♗xa6 ♗xa6 13. ♗e2 ♖c8 14. dxc5 bxc5 15. 0-0 c4 16. ♖ad1 ♗ac5 17. ♗e5 ♗d3 18. ♗d4 ♖c7 19. ♗f4 ♗xf4 20. exf4 ♖fd8 21. g3 h6 Black has good chances.

**8... ♖xd5 9. g3!?**

This looks to me the most logical attempt.

9. f3 ♗d6! [9... ♗f6 10. ♖c3 ♗c6 11. e4!



Position after: 11.e4!

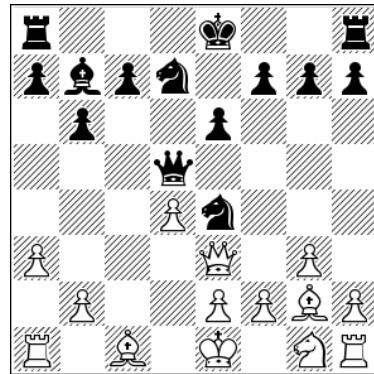
11... ♗xe4 12. fxe4 ♖xe4+ 13. ♗e3 ♗e7 14. ♖d3 White is winning, 0-1 (49) Shipov, S (2541) – Bluebaum, M (2640) chess.com INT 2021] 10. ♖d2 [10. ♖e5!?! ♗c6 11. ♖xd5 exd5 12. e3 ♗a5 13. b4 ♗ac4 14. ♗e2 c6 15. ♗c3 f5 another

unclear endgame] 10... ♗c6 11. e3 0-0 12. ♗e2 ♗b7 13. ♗c3 ♖h5 Black is well developed and has counterplay.

**9... ♗b7**

9... ♗xg3 10. ♖xg3 ♖xh1 11. f3 Winning for White.

**10. ♗g2 ♗d7**



Position after: 10...d7

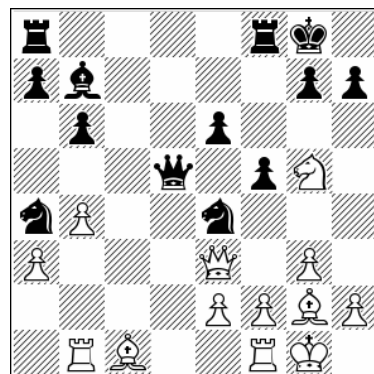
**11. ♗f3**

11. b4!?! 0-0 12. ♗h3 ♗df6 13. 0-0 a5 14. ♗f4 ♖d7 15. ♗b2 ♗d6 Black is doing OK.

**11... 0-0 12. 0-0**

12. ♗g5 f5 13. ♗xe4 fxe4 14. 0-0 ♗f6 15. ♖c3 ♗a6 16. ♖e1 ♖ad8 Black has good counterplay.

12... c5 13. dxc5 ♗dxc5 14. b4 ♗a4 15. ♗g5 f5 16. ♖b1

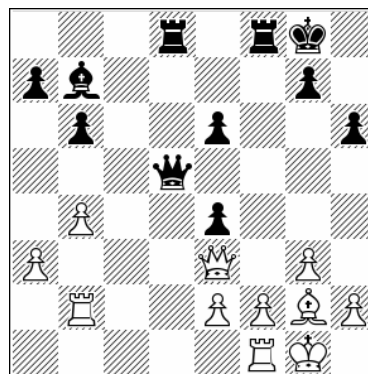


Position after: 16. ♖b1

**16... ♖ad8**

16...♔a2 17.♖b3 ♜ac8 18.♞d3 ♘ac3 19.♘xe4  
 ♘xe4 20.f3 ♘f6 21.♞d2 ♚c4 22.♙b2 Again here  
 White retains some edge thanks to his strong  
 bishop on b2, while the black pawn on e6 is a bit  
 weak.

17.♙b2 ♘xb2 18.♞xb2 h6 19.♘xe4 fxe4



Position after: 19...fxe4

20.♞c2

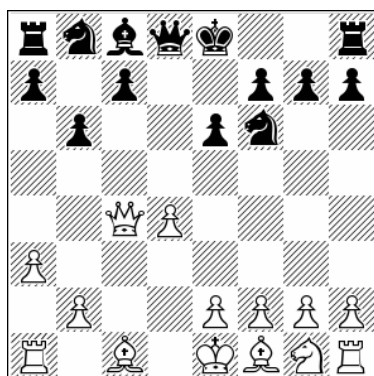
There is some advantage here for White.

**b) 6...dxc4 7.♚xc4 b6 8.♙f4**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.a3  
 ♙xc3+ 6.♚xc3 dxc4 7.♚xc4 b6

8...♙a6

The main option, but not the only one:



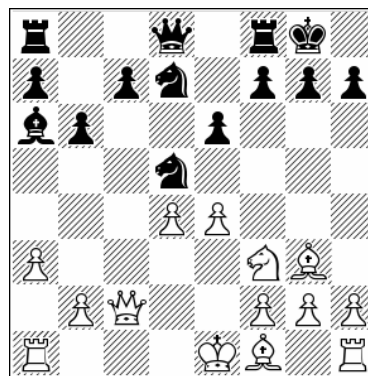
Position after: 7...b6

Here we deal with one of the most popular  
 systems for Black, early taking on c4 followed  
 by ...b6. This variation is an accelerated version  
 of it, because Black has not castled. Later we will  
 discuss the main option, which includes castling,  
 but this move order is also very popular.

8.♙f4

One of three main ideas that I have separated  
 into three subchapters. We will analyze only  
 positions in which Black did not castle, but  
 instead goes a more independent way. This is a  
 direct attempt, but White will want to profit  
 from this move order.

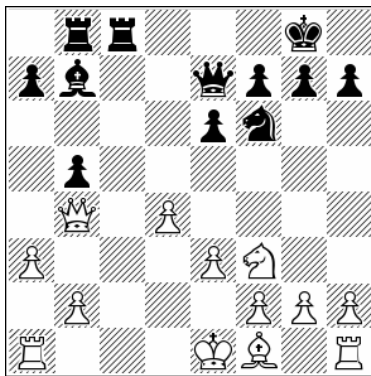
A) 8...♘d5 9.♙g3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♙a6 11.♚c2 ♘d7  
 12.e4



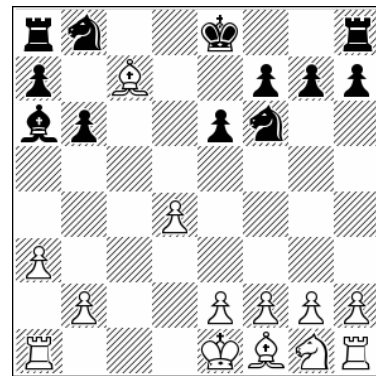
Position after: 12.e4

This game ends in an early draw, ½-½ (12)  
 Wiedenkiller, M (2453) – Rozentalis, E (2528)  
 Gothenburg 2015. A very short game, but  
 actually it would have been more pleasant for  
 White after 12...♙xf1 13.♞xf1 ♘e7 14.0-0-0 ♞c8  
 15.♙b1 when he has nice play.

B) 8...0-0 9.♙xc7 ♚e7 10.♙xb8 ♞xb8 11.♘f3 ♙b7  
 12.e3 ♞fc8 13.♚a4 b5 14.♚b4



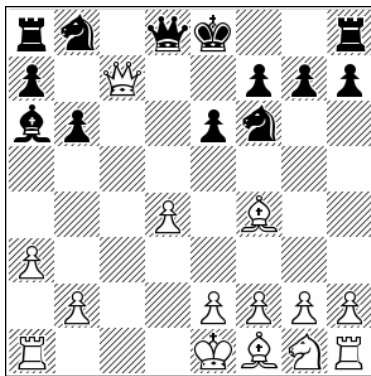
Position after: 14. ♖b4



Position after: 10. ♗xc7

14... ♖xb4+ [14... ♖d8 15. ♗d3 a5 16. ♖d2 this is less clear, 1-0 (49) Vrolijk, L (2480) – Maghsoodloo, P (2676) chess.com INT 2020] 15. axb4 a6 16. ♗d3 ♖d5 17. ♕e2 ♖xb4 18. ♖hc1 f6 Equal chances in this endgame.

9. ♖xc7



Position after: 9. ♖xc7

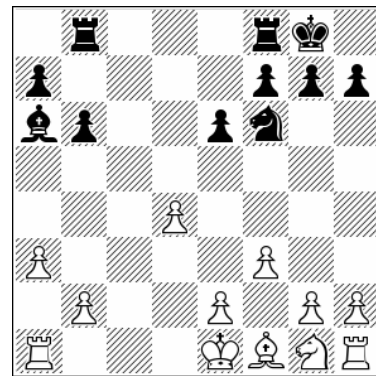
Taking the pawn now was forced.

9... ♖d5

There are other options here.

Black can also exchange queens at once:  
9... ♖xc7 10. ♗xc7

A) 10...0-0 11. ♗xb8 ♖axb8 12. f3

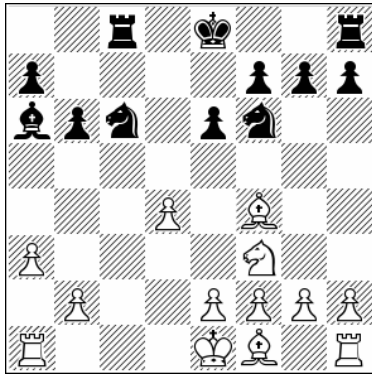


Position after: 12. f3

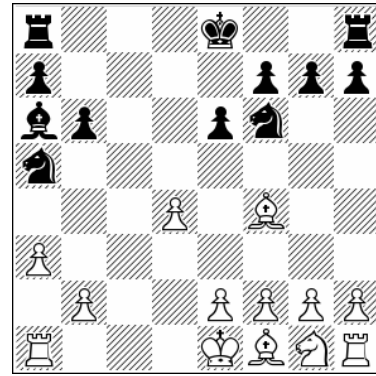
A1) 12... ♖d5 13. ♕d2 f5 14. e3 ♗xf1 15. ♖xf1 e5 16. ♖e2 exd4 17. exd4 ♖f7 18. ♖c3 ♖d8 19. ♖d1 ♖f4 20. g3 ♖e6 21. d5 ♖c7 22. ♕c2 ♖fd7 23. ♖d3 ♖xd5 24. ♖hd1 ♖f6 25. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 26. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 27. ♖b5 That's a long line, but a logical one. It seems that Black cannot equalize in this straightforward manner.

A2) 12... ♖fd8!? 13. ♖d1 ♖d5 14. ♕f2 ♖bc8 15. ♖d2 ♖c1 16. ♖h3 f5 17. g3 ♖dc8 18. ♗g2 ♖8c2 19. ♖xc1 ♖xd2 20. ♖g1 ♖xb2 21. f4 ♖a2 22. ♗xd5 exd5 23. ♖c7 It's an equal game.

B) 10... ♖c6 11. ♖f3 ♖c8 12. ♗f4



Position after: 12...f4



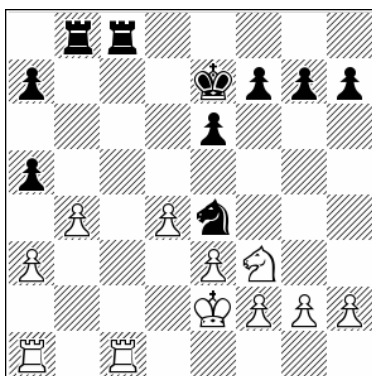
Position after: 12...xa5

This is an interesting idea. White wants to go back to d2 with his bishop. 12...e7 [12...0-0 13.e3 e3xf1 14.fxf1 a5 15.d2 c2 16.b1 ffc8 17.d1 d5 18.g3 f5 19.e1 b5 20.e2 White keeps his material advantage; 12...a5 13.b4 b3 14.b1 c3 15.d5! d4 16.g3 0-0 17.dxe6 fxe6 18.h3 e8 19.e3 c2 20.0-0 e2 21.fxb3 e3f3 22.c1 cxc1+ 23.e3c1 h5 24.f3 f6 25.f2 d5 26.d3 White has some edge] 13.d2! d4 14.e3 e3xf1 15.fxf1 a5 16.e3a5 bxa5 17.e2 b8 18.b4 hc8 19.f1c1!

### 13.h4

**A)** 13.f3 b3 14.b1 c8 15.e3 e3xf1 16.fxf1 d4 17.e2 f5 18.d3 e7 19.g3 h6 20.f1d1 fhd8 Black is fine, ½-½ (26) Vrolijk, L (2462) – Wojtaszek, R (2728) Baden Baden 2019.

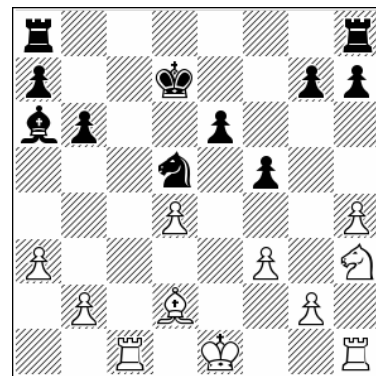
**B)** 13.e3 e3xf1 14.fxf1 b3 15.e1 c8 16.f3 0-0 17.d6 fe8 18.e4 c2 19.e5 d5 This is bad for White, 0-1 (30) Yankelevich, L (2446) – Heimann, A (2582) Bad Ragaz 2018.



Position after: 19...f1c1!

19...c1 20.c1 axb4 21.d5 e8 22.d6 c6 b6 23.dxb4 White is clearly better.

13...d5 14.d2 b3 15.d1 dxd4 16.f3 f5 17.e3 e3xf1 18.exd4 e6 19.c1 d7 20.dh3



Position after: 20...h3

10.d6 a5+ 11.b4 d6 12.e3a5 xa5

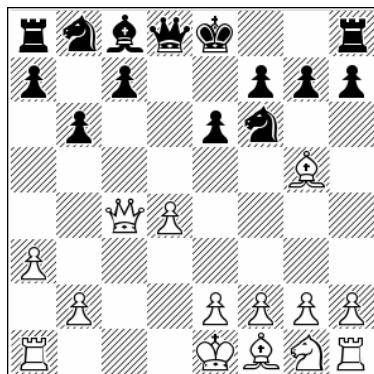
20...c8

This position is considered OK for Black. He is a pawn down but his fast development compensates for that.

It's an equal game, ½-½ (20) Vrolijk, L (2479) – Pruijssers, R (2550) Belgium 2019.

**c) 6...dxc4 7.♖xc4 b6 8.♗g5**

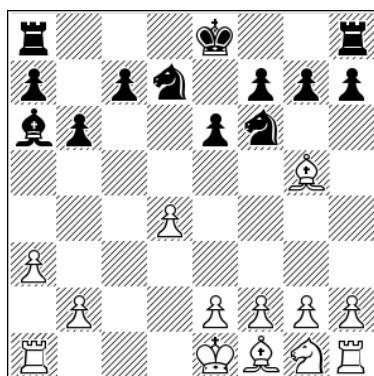
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.a3  
 ♗xc3+ 6.♖xc3 dxc4 7.♖xc4 b6 8.♗g5



Position after: 8...♗g5

8...♗a6 9.♗xf6

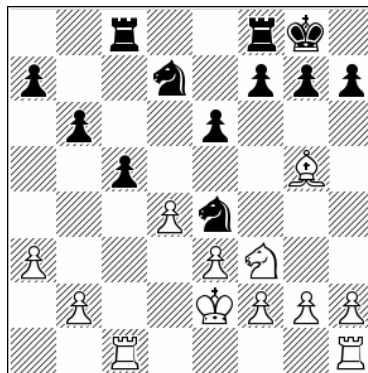
9.♖a4+ ♖d7 10.♖xd7+ ♗bxd7



Position after: 10...♗bxd7

**A)** 11.e3 ♗xf1 12.♖xf1 ♗e4! 13.♗h4 c5 14.♗f3  
 f6 15.♖e2 g5 16.♗g3 h5 This is fine for Black. ½-  
 ½ (39) Steingrimsson, H (2573) – Grandelius, N  
 (2655) Batumi 2018.

**B)** 11.♖c1 ♖c8 12.e3 ♗xf1 13.♖xf1 0-0 14.♗f3 c5  
 15.♖e2 ♗e4!

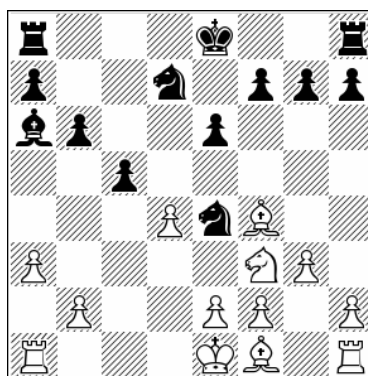


Position after: 15...♗e4!

This is thematic here. 16.♗h4 f6 17.♖d3 ♗d6  
 Black is fine.

**C)** 11.♗f3

**C1)** 11...♗e4 12.♗f4 c5 13.g3!



Position after: 13.g3!

13...♖c8 14.♗g2 This is the only way for White to  
 continue, and it's unclear.

**C2)** 11...c5 12.♗xf6! This is essential. 12...gxf6  
 13.e3 ♗xf1 14.♖xf1 ♖e7 15.♖e2 ♖ac8 16.♖ac1  
 a6 17.♖fd1 c4! [17...cxd4 18.♗xd4 ♗b8 19.b4  
 ♖hd8 20.g4 White has some edge, ½-½ (26)  
 Xiong, J (2709) – Bluebaum, M (2672) chess.com  
 INT 2020] 18.♗d2 b5 19.b3 cxb3 20.♗xb3  
 There's some pressure for White, but it's not  
 clear that he can improve from here.

**C3)** 11...0-0 12.g3 c5 13.♙g2 ♖ac8 14.dxc5 ♗xc5  
15.b4 ♖c4 16.0-0 ♗fc8 17.♗fd1 h6 The position is  
balanced.

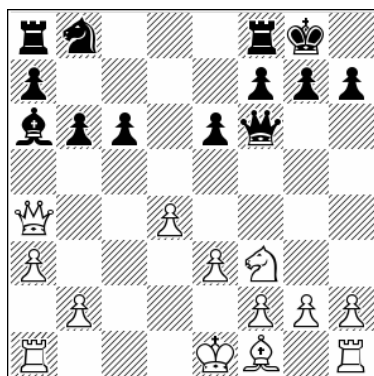
**9...♗xf6**

9...♙xc4 10.♙xd8 ♔xd8 11.♘f3 ♘d7 12.♖c1 ♙a6  
13.♘g5 ♔e7 14.♖xc7 ♖hc8 15.♖xc8 ♖xc8  
16.♔d2 White has better chances.

**10.♗a4+**

Taking the pawn in this version is dangerous.  
10.♗xc7 0-0 11.♘f3 ♖c8 12.♗e5 ♗g6 13.♗g5  
♗e4 14.g3 ♘d7 15.♗f4 ♗xf4 16.gxf4 ♖c2 17.b3  
♖ac8 18.♖d1 ♘f6 Black is better, 0-1 (25) Knopf,  
F (1929) – Luther, T (2577) Germany 2015.

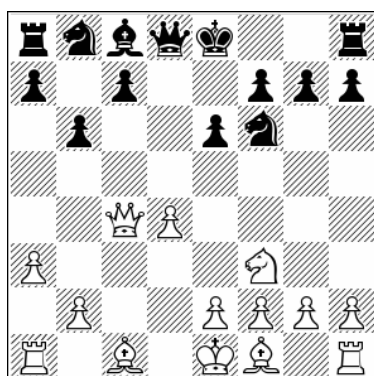
**10...c6 11.♘f3 0-0 12.e3**



Position after: 12.e3

## d) 6...dxc4 7.♗xc4 b6 8.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗c2 d5 5.a3  
♙xc3+ 6.♗xc3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 b6 8.♘f3



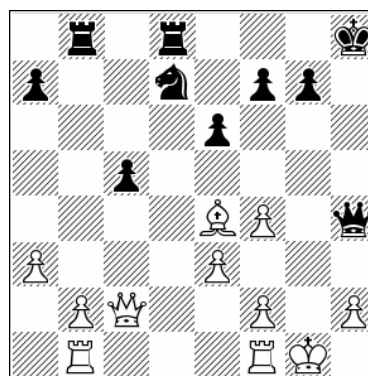
Position after: 8.♘f3

**12...♙b7!**

This is the key here.

12...♙xf1 13.♔xf1 c5 14.♔e2 a6 15.♖hc1 b5  
16.♗d1 c4 17.b3 cxb3 18.♗xb3 White has some  
edge, 1-0 (33) Thybo, J (2473) – Urkedal, F (2560)  
Ballerup 2018.

13.♙d3 c5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.0-0 ♖d8 16.♗c2  
♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♘d7 18.♙xh7+ ♔h8 19.♙e4 ♖ab8  
20.♖ab1 ♗h4 21.f4



Position after: 21.f4

**21...e5**

Black has nice counterplay here, as his knight is  
actually stronger than the bishop.

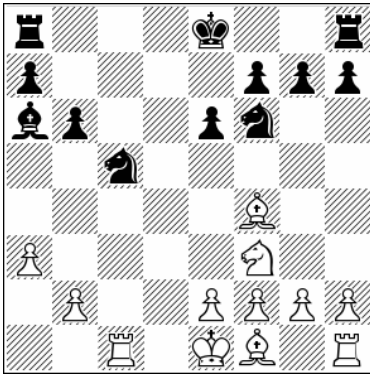
**8...♙a6 9.♗a4+**

9.♗c2 h6 10.♙f4 0-0 11.♖d1 ♘bd7 12.g3 ♖c8  
13.♙g2 ♘d5 14.0-0 c5 15.♙d6 cxd4 16.♗d2 d3!  
Black has fine play, ½-½ (45) Mamedyarov, S  
(2808) – Anand, V (2759) Leuven 2018.

**9...♗d7 10.♗c2**

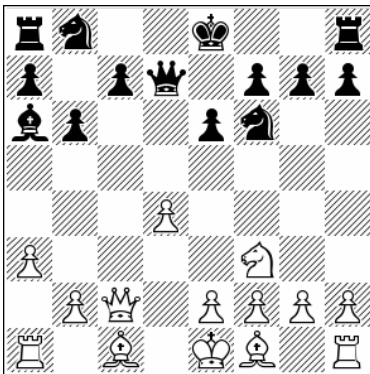
White might think that driving the black queen  
to the unfavorable d7-square would give him  
some advantage.

10. ♖xd7+ ♜bxd7 11. ♙f4 c5 12. dxc5 ♜xc5  
13. ♖c1



Position after: 13. ♖c1

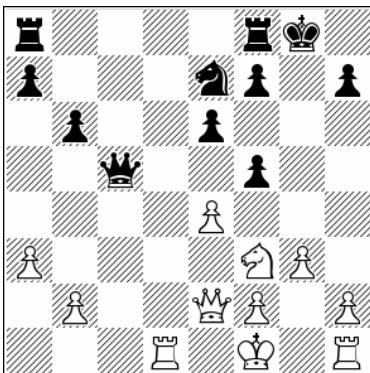
13...0-0! [13... ♖c8 14. b4 ♜d5 15. ♙d2 ♜e4  
16. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8 17. e3 ♜xd2 18. ♚xd2 ♜e7 The  
game is equal, 1-0 (35) Turov, M (2565) –  
Solovyov, V (2290) St Petersburg 2021] 14. b4  
♜ce4 15. ♜d4 ♜d5 Black has the initiative.



Position after: 10. ♖c2

10...h6

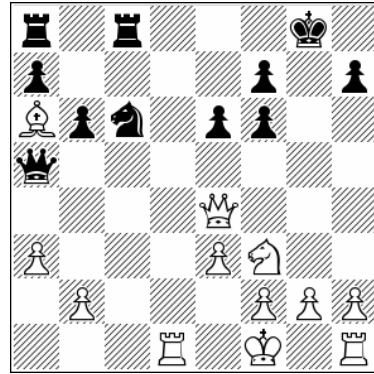
A) 10... ♜c6 11. ♙g5! 0-0 12. ♙xf6 gxf6 13. ♖d1  
♜e7 14. e4 ♙xf1 15. ♚xf1 c5 16. dxc5 ♖b5+  
17. ♖e2 ♖xc5 18. g3 f5



Position after: 18...f5

19. ♚g2 White has an advantage, ½-½ (122)  
Kozak, A (2512) – Tarlev, K (2559) Mamaia 2019.

B) 10...0-0 11. ♙g5! c5 12. dxc5 ♖c8 13. ♙xf6 gxf6  
14. ♖d1 ♖e7 15. ♖e4 ♖xc5 16. e3 ♜c6 17. ♙xa6  
♖a5+ 18. ♚f1!?

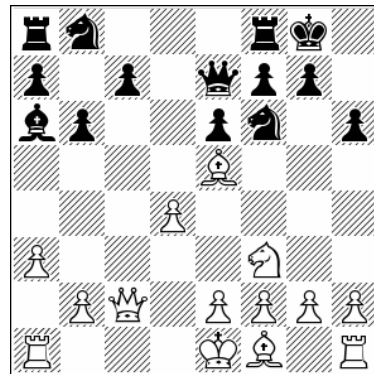


Position after: 18. ♚f1!?

18... ♖xa6+ 19. ♚g1 ♖d8 [19... ♖b5 20. h4! That's  
the point. 20... ♖d8 21. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22. ♖h3 ♜e7  
23. ♜d4 White has some initiative] 20. ♖c1 ♖ac8  
21. h4 ♖b5 22. ♖h3 ♚f8 23. ♖g3 With yet another  
sharp position, perhaps slightly favoring White.

11. ♙f4 0-0 12. ♖d1

12. ♙e5 ♖e7!



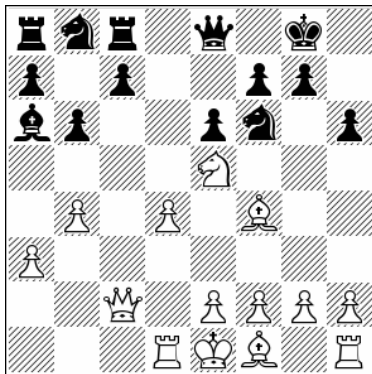
Position after: 12... ♖e7!

This is in my opinion the most important idea.  
13. g3 [13. e4 ♙xf1 14. ♖xf1 c5! Black has seized  
the initiative] 13... ♜bd7 14. ♙g2 c5 15. dxc5  
♜xc5 16. 0-0 ♖ac8 17. b4 ♜cd7 18. ♖b2 ♙b7  
Black is fine.

12... ♖c8 13. ♜e5

13.g3 ♘b7 14.♙g2 ♙e4 15.♚b3 ♜e8 16.0-0  
♞bd7 This is OK for Black.

13...♜e8 14.b4



Position after: 14.b4

14...♙b5

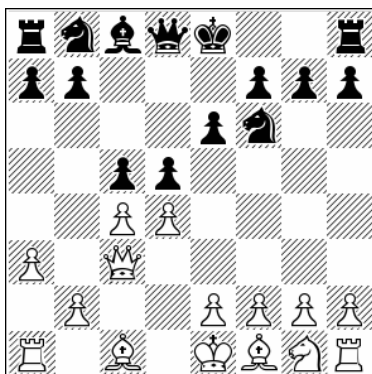
14...c5 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.bxc5 ♜b5 17.g3 ♘b7  
18.f3 ♜a5+ 19.♞f2 The game is just unclear, 1-0  
(38) Gustafsson, J (2640) – Braun, A (2574)  
Berlin 2018.

15.♜b2 ♞bd7

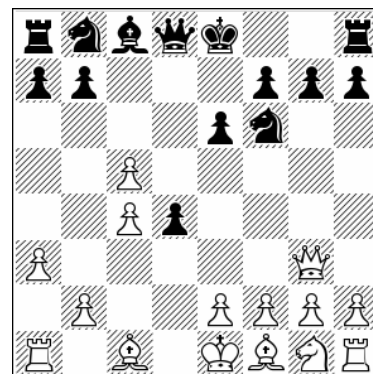
Black is doing fine, as White has simply lost too  
much time.

### e) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♚g3 ♞c6 9.♚xg7

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.a3  
♙xc3+ 6.♚xc3 c5



Position after: 6...c5



Position after: 8.♚g3

8...♞c6

Best, at least in practice.

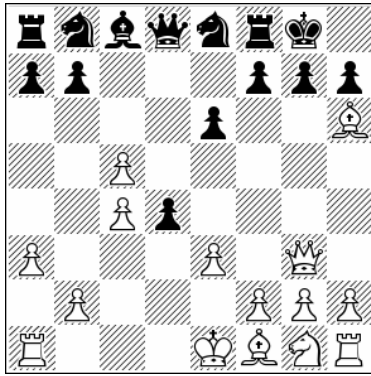
An intriguing gambit that has shone new light on  
this move order. It was reintroduced into  
modern tournament practice by the famous  
Ukrainian GM Oleg Romanishin. We will deal  
with other very important lines separately.

7.dxc5 d4 8.♚g3

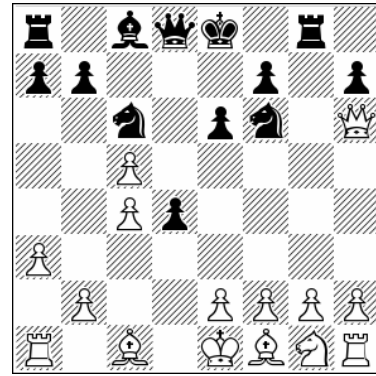
That is one of three main destinations for the  
queen. On g3 the queen aggressively placed, but  
also much more prone to direct attack, by a  
knight on e4 for example.

A) 8...♞bd7 9.e3 e5 10.exd4 0-0 11.♙h6 ♞h5  
12.♚g5 ♚xg5 13.♙xg5 exd4 14.0-0-0 This looks  
better for White.

B) 8...0-0 9.♙h6 ♞e8 10.e3



Position after: 10.e3



Position after: 10.♖h6

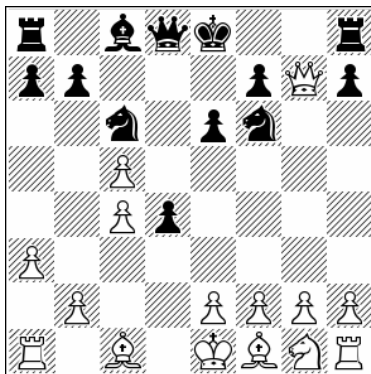
10...♘c6 [10...f6 11.exd4 ♕xd4 12.♖d1 ♖xb2 13.♙c1 ♗c2 14.♙d3 ♗a4 15.♘e2 ♘a6 16.♘c3 ♗b3 17.0-0 ♘xc5 18.♙b1 ♙d7 19.♙a2 ♗b6 20.♙e3 White has the initiative] 11.0-0 ♗c7 12.♗xc7 ♘xc7 13.♙f4 e5 14.♙g3 dxe3 15.fxe3 a5 16.♘e2 ♘e6 17.♖d5 f6 18.♘c3 White seems to have better chances, ½-½ (23) Gelfand, B (2733) – Ponomariov, R (2703) Moscow 2006.

10...♖g6

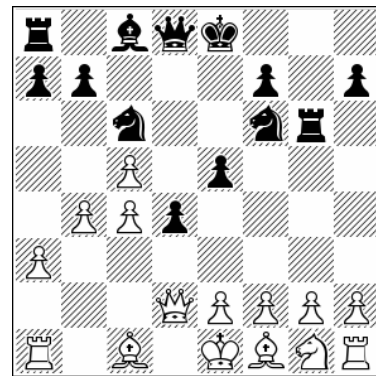
Probably best.

10...e5 11.b4 This position can arise from different move orders and for that reason it is an important one. 11...♖g6 12.♗d2

9.♗xg7



Position after: 9.♗xg7



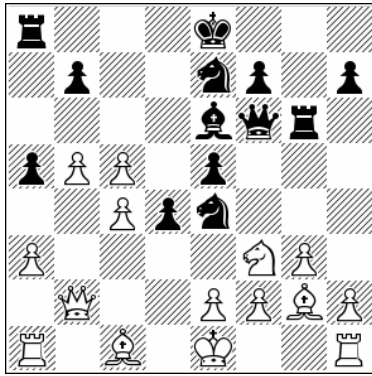
Position after: 12.♗d2

First we deal with this ambitious move, which puts White now two pawns up.

Inferior is 9.e4 ♗a5+ 10.♔d1 0-0 11.♙d3 e5 when Black is better; White simply cannot play in such an optimistic way with his king in the center, 0-1 (33) Prozhanski, G (2240) – Flom, G (2480) Safed 2021.

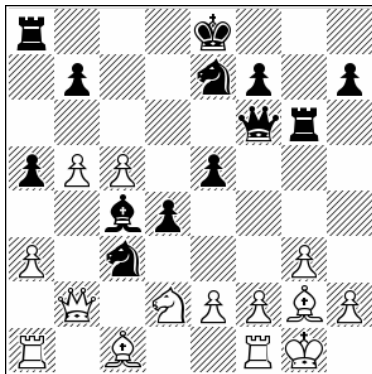
12...♘e4 [12...♙f5 13.e3 ♗c7 14.♗b2 0-0-0 15.♘f3 ♙e6 16.b5 ♘a5 17.b6 ♗xc5 18.bxa7 ♗xa7 19.♘xe5 White is better, 1-0 (50) Nabaty, T (2640) – Shyam, S (2535) Zalakaros 2017] 13.♗b2 a5 [13...♗f6 14.♘f3 a5 15.g3! axb4 16.axb4 ♖xa1 17.♗xa1 ♘c3 18.♙g2 ♘xb4 19.♗b2 White will get a good position after castling] 14.b5 ♗f6 15.♘f3 ♘e7 16.g3! ♙e6 17.♙g2

9...♖g8 10.♗h6



Position after: 17. ♖g2

White has no time to defend his pawns, but with fast development he will try to regain the initiative. 17... ♗xc4 [17... ♘xc5 18.0-0 ♖c8 19. ♗d2 b6 20. ♘h4 ♗g4 21.f4! These complications may favor White, actually] 18.0-0 ♘c3 19. ♘d2!?



Position after: 19. ♘d2!?

19... ♘xe2+ [19... ♗xe2 20. ♖e1 ♗xb5 21. ♘e4 this is bad for Black] 20. ♖h1 ♗d3 21. ♘e4 ♗xe4 22. ♗xe4 ♘c3 23. ♗g2 ♖c8 24.c6 bxc6 25.b6 With yet another highly complicated game.

### 11. ♖d2

11. ♖h4 ♗g4 12. ♖h3 This is risky. 12...e5 13.b4 ♗e6 Black is fine here.

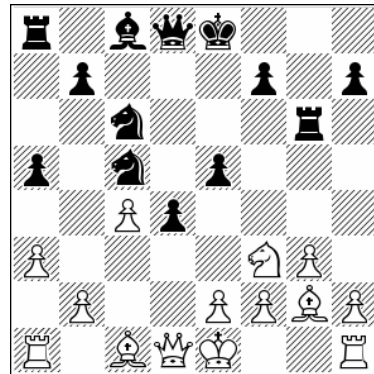
### 11...a5

Best. Black doesn't hurry to take the c5-pawn, but instead creates a defense against a possible b4.

### 12. ♘f3 e5 13.g3

White develops in a good way as well.

13... ♘e4 14. ♖d1 ♘xc5 15. ♗g2



Position after: 15. ♗g2

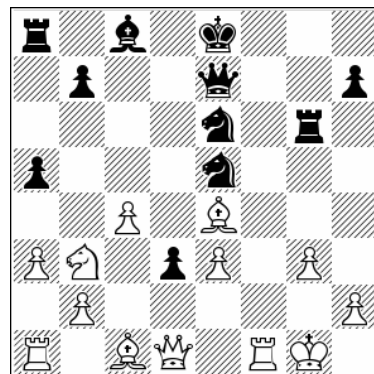
### 15...a4!

No need for Black to rush.

Black can also go active at once. 15...e4 16. ♘d2

**A)** 16... ♗f5 17.0-0 a4 18.b4 axb3 19. ♘xb3 ♘a4 20. ♗d2 ♖d7 21. ♗b4 This kind of position is what White was hoping for. The black king is stuck in the center and White may be able to attack the central pawns or generate play on the queenside, 0-1 (46) Hambleton, A (2445) – Edouard, R (2639) Montreal 2015.

**B)** 16...f5! 17.0-0 [17. ♘b3 ♘e6 18.0-0 a4 19. ♘d2 ♖e7 20. ♖h1 ♗d7 a very sharp position, in which Black's chances are good] 17... ♖e7 18. ♘b3 ♘e6 19.e3 d3 20.f3 ♘e5 21.fxe4 fxe4 22. ♗xe4



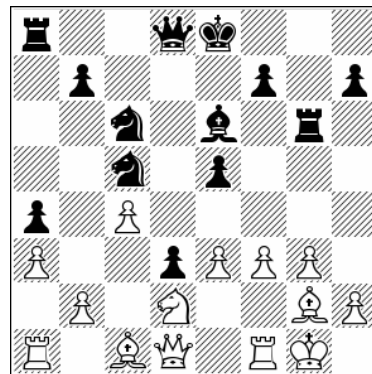
Position after: 22. ♗xe4

22...♖g5!! Fantastic complications whirl around the players. White must not underestimate such bold play, bearing in mind Black's great control over the center.

16.♗d2

16.0-0 ♗b3 It's unpleasant for White.

16...d3 17.e3 ♘g4 18.f3 ♙e6 19.0-0



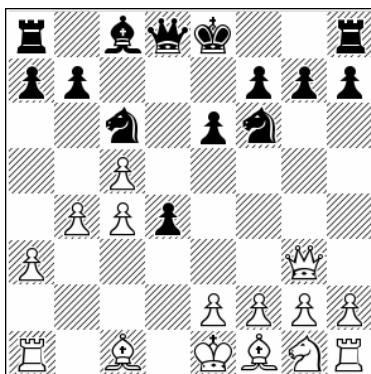
Position after: 19.0-0

19...h5

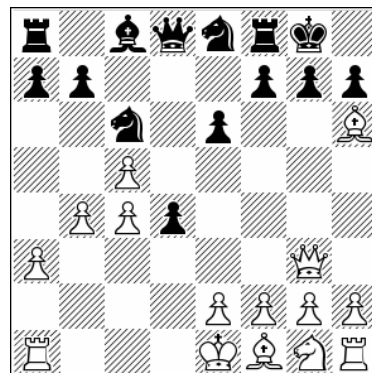
This looks very good for Black.

**f) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.b4 0-0**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♗xc3 c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♙g3 ♗c6 9.b4 10...♗e8



Position after: 9.b4



Position after: 10...♗e8

Perhaps the most critical. Black has two viable ideas now and I will present them separately. First we deal with Black's castling.

9...0-0!?

A rarely played line but underrated in my opinion.

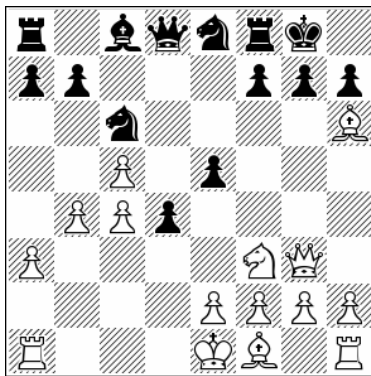
10.♙h6

10.♙g5 e5 11.♗h4 [11.♗f3 the game transposes to the note 10...0-0 11.♙g5 given above] 11...e4 12.♖d1 ♙e6 This is OK for Black.

11.e4

A) 11.♖d1 e5 12.♙c1 f5 13.♗b3 ♗f6 14.♗f3 ♗e4 15.♙b2 a5 16.e3 axb4 17.axb4 ♙d7 Things are not at all clear, 0-1 (32) Nadera, B (2339) – Sadorra, J (2575) Quezon City 2014.

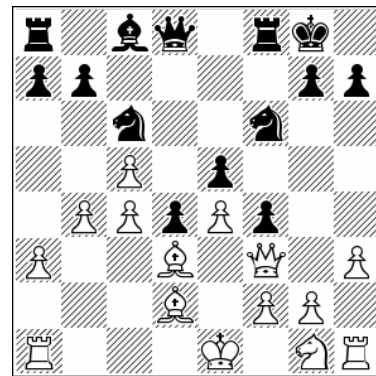
B) 11.♗f3 e5



Position after: 11...e5

12.♖d1 [12.e4 f6! Now Black's pawn structure is solid and well defended. 13.♗d3 a5! 14.b5 ♘b8 Black will get a pawn on c5, with better play] 12...♗c7 13.♗d2 f5 14.b5 f4 15.♗h4 ♘e7 16.b6 ♗d7 17.♘xe5 ♗e6 18.♘d3 ♘f5 19.♗h3 ♗e7 Another great position in which Black throws a strong attacking plan at White, who is seriously underdeveloped.

11...e5 12.♗d3 f5 13.♗d2 f4 14.♗f3 ♘f6 15.h3



Position after: 15.h3

15...♗e8

15...g5 This is not necessary. 16.g4 ♘e7 17.♗e2 ♘g6 18.♘f3 h6 19.♗d1 ♗e6 Still the position is totally unclear, 1-0 (77) Karpov, A (2617) – Romanishin, O (2451) Platja d'Aro 2019.

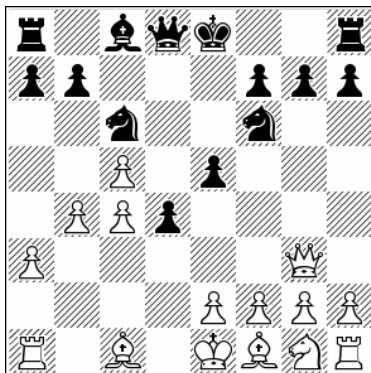
16.♗e2 a5 17.♖b1 ♗g6 18.♔f1 axb4 19.axb4 ♖a3

Black has fantastic play.

**g) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♗g3 ♘c6 9.b4 e5**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗c2 d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♗xc3 c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.♗g3 ♘c6 9.b4 e5

This is an important line because we can get this position from a different move order, namely 9.♘f3 e5 10.b4.

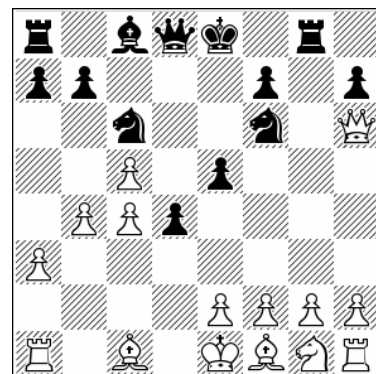


Position after: 9...e5

This is by far the most popular, but not necessarily the best. It is another complex line.

10.♘f3

10.♗xg7!? ♖g8 11.♗h6



Position after: 11.♗h6

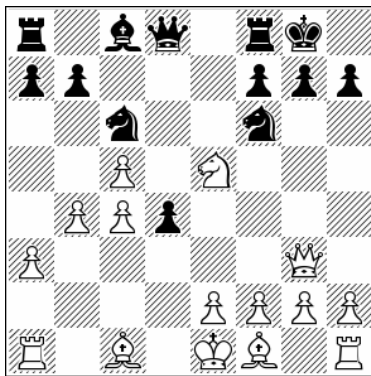
11...♖g6 [11...♗e6 12.♗g5 ♖g6 13.♗h4 a5 14.b5 ♘b4 15.♖c1 ♘a2 16.♖c2 ♘c3 17.♘f3 ♗f5 18.♖c1 ♗e7 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♗g3 ♖e6 21.♗g8+ ♗f8 22.♗xf8+ ♔xf8 not much clarity here, ½-½ (50)]

Michiels, B (2536) – Ipatov, A (2612) Montpellier 2015] 12. ♖d2 This transposes to the line in subchapter e) with 9. ♖xg7 ♜g8 10. ♖h6 e5 11. b4 ♜g6 12. ♖d2. In my opinion that is unclear, despite some good wins that Black has produced.

### 10...e4

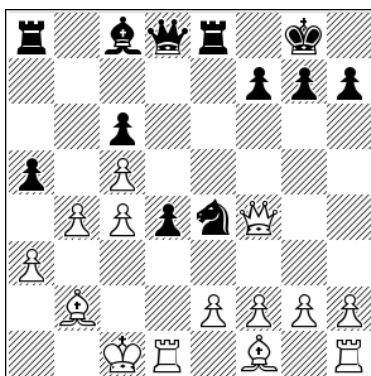
This is best.

10...0-0 11. ♘xe5!



Position after: 11. ♘xe5!

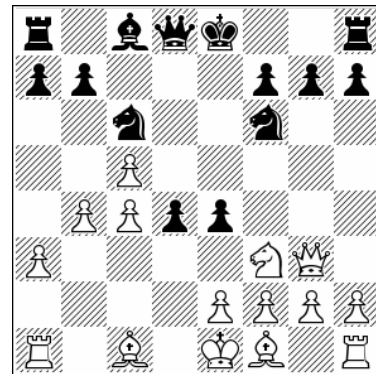
It seems that this works. 11... ♖e4 [11... ♖h5 12. ♖xc6 ♘xg3 13. ♖xd8 ♘xh1 14. g3 ♜xd8 15. ♙g2 d3 16. ♙xh1 dxe2 17. ♙e3 ♙g4 18. ♙d5 ♜d7 19. ♜a2! ♙e6 20. ♜d2 a6 21. a4 White is better, ½-½ (123) Stockfish 6 64 – Stockfish 6 64 Internet (blitz) 2015] 12. ♖xc6 bxc6 13. ♖f4 ♜e8 14. ♙b2 a5 15. 0-0-0!



Position after: 15. 0-0-0!

15...axb4 16. ♜xd4 ♖e7 17. axb4 ♜a4 18. ♖e3 ♜xb4 19. f3 ♖g5 20. ♖xg5 ♘xg5 21. e3 ♖e6 22. ♜d6 ♙a6 23. ♖xc6 ♙xc4 24. ♜b6 ♜a4 25. c6 ♜c8 26. ♘d2 ♖d8 27. ♙d3 ♙xd3 28. ♘xd3 ♖xc6

29. ♖xc6 ♘xc6 30. ♖c1 White is a pawn up and it's not so easy for Black to achieve a draw.

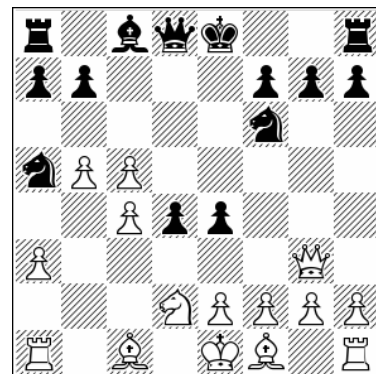


Position after: 10...e4

### 11. ♖d2

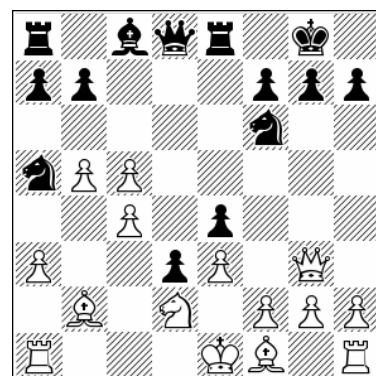
Other moves also lead to a complicated game.

A) 11. b5 ♖a5 12. ♖d2



Position after: 12. ♖d2

A1) 12...0-0 13. ♙b2 ♜e8 14. e3 d3



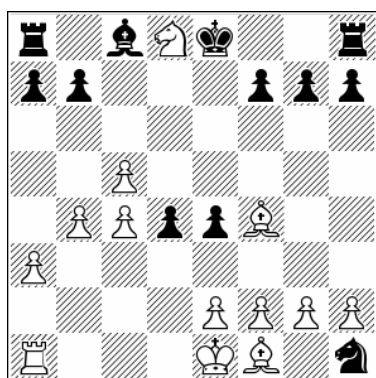
Position after: 14...d3

15. ♖d6! This looks good for White, as the knight on a5 is out of play. [15. f3 ♙f5 16. 0-0-0 ♙g6

17.h4 ♖xc4! 18.♗xc4 ♕d5 Black is winning, 0-1 (22) Bromberger, S (2505) – Cornette, M (2602) Munich 2018]

**A2)** 12...e3! 13.fxe3 ♗g4 14.h3 dxe3 15.♖a2 ♕d4 16.hxg4 ♙xg4 17.♖h4 f5 18.♕d6 ♕c3! It seems that Black is OK here.

**B)** 11.♗e5!? A fascinating line which largely forces matters. 11...♗h5 12.♗xc6 ♗xg3 13.♗xd8 ♗xh1 14.♙f4!

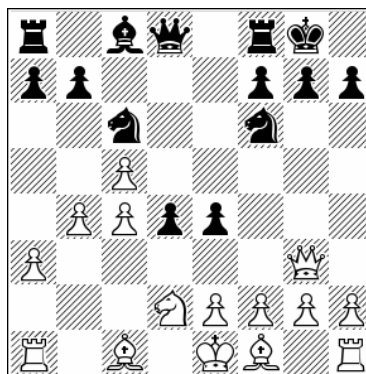


Position after: 14.♙f4!

**B1)** 14...♕xd8 15.♖d1 ♕e7 [15...a5 16.♖xd4+ ♙d7 17.b5 ♖c8 18.♙d6 f5 19.g4 ♕e8 20.♙g2 ♕f7 21.♙xh1 White has a winning position and that is no overstatement, 1-0 (35) Erdos, V (2615) – Bellahcene, B (2512) Abu Dhabi 2021] 16.♖xd4 f5 17.g4 g6 18.♙g2 ♗xf2 19.♕xf2 ♙e6 20.e3 ♕f7 White has strong compensation for the sacrificed exchange, but it's not easy to evaluate the position beyond that.

**B2)** 14...♕e7! Best in my opinion; Black needs to activate his pieces. 15.♙c7 [15.g4!? ♖xd8 16.♙g2 a5 17.b5 ♙xg4 18.♙xe4 ♖ac8 19.c6 bxc6 20.b6 ♗xf2 21.♕xf2 ♖d7 22.♖b1 ♖b7 23.c5 ♙e6 this looks OK for Black] 15...a5 16.b5 ♖xd8 17.♙xd8+ ♕xd8 18.♖d1 ♙e6 19.♖xd4+ ♕e7 20.e3 f5 Next Black plays ...♖c8 and he is doing OK.

**11...0-0**



Position after: 11...0-0

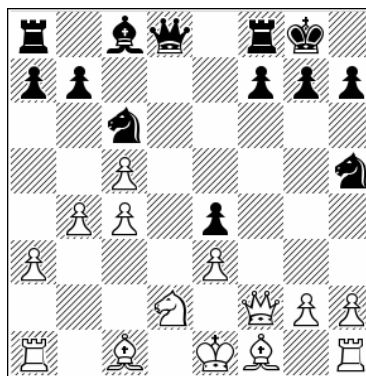
**12.♙b2**

This is one of two ways for White to proceed.

12.e3

**A)** 12...a5 13.b5 ♗e7 14.♙e2 ♙e6 15.♙b2 ♗f5 16.♕f4 ♖c8 17.♖d1 White is better, ½-½ (36) Ivanisevic, I (2643) – Naiditsch, A (2657) Bled 2016.

**B)** 12...dxe3 13.fxe3 ♗h5 14.♕f2



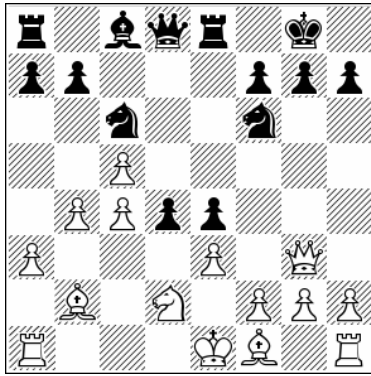
Position after: 14.♕f2

14...a5!? [14...♗e5 15.♗xe4 ♗d3+ 16.♙xd3 ♕xd3 17.♕f3 f5 18.♕xh5 ♕xe4 19.0-0 ♙e6 Black is slightly worse but the position inclines more towards a draw, ½-½ (33) Rattinger, F – Lecroq, M corr. 2008] 15.♙e2 ♗e5 16.b5 ♙g4 17.0-0 f5 It all looks highly unclear.

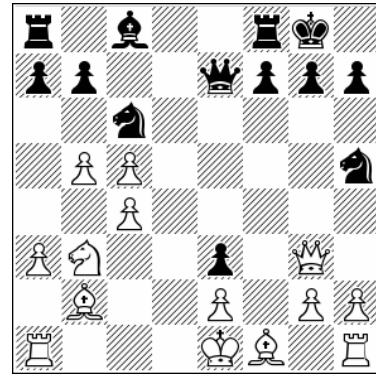
**12...♕e7**

The stronger of two possibilities.

12...♖e8 13.e3



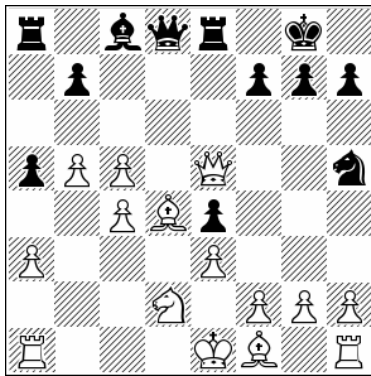
Position after: 13.e3



Position after: 15...d5

13...d5 [13...d5 14.Wd6 dxe3 15.Wxd8 exf2+ 16.fxf2 dxd8 17.Re1 f5 18.g4 White is better; 13...a5 14.b5 d5 15.fxd4 d5 16.Wxe5!

16.Wd6 [16.Wf3 Wh4+ 17.g3 Wxc4 18.bxc6 Wxb3 19.f4 Wa4 20.Wxe3 Wxc6 21.Wf3 f7 Black is OK here, 0-1 (76) Fire 4 – Komodo 10 Internet 2016] 16...Wh4+ 17.g3 We4 18.bxc6 Wxh1 19.0-0 bxc6 20.d5 Wxh2 21.Wxf8+ f8 22.Rd8+ e7 23.dxc6+ e6 24.d4+ e7 25.d6+ The game heads towards a draw.



Position after: 16.Wxe5!

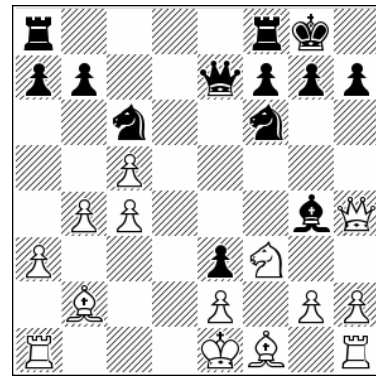
16...Rxe5 17.fxe5 We7 18.f4 d5 19.a4 White has good play for the sacrificed queen] 14.fxd4 d5 15.Wxe5 Rxe5 16.fxe5 White has a good game here whether or not 16...a5 17.b5 follows.

13...f5!?

Another idea for Black might be: 13...e3!? 14.fxe3 dxe3 15.d3 f4

13.Wh4

Other moves are possible as well.



Position after: 15...f4

A) 13.e3 d5 14.Wd6 dxe3 15.fxe3 Wg5 Black wins.

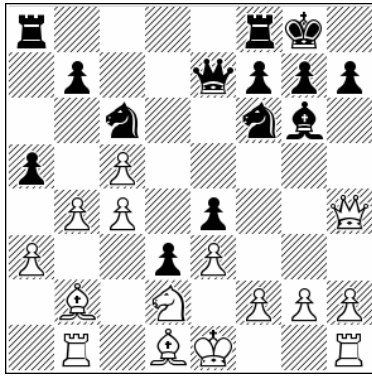
B) 13.Wd6 e3! 14.fxe3 Wxe3 15.Wg3 Rf8 Black is better.

C) 13.b5 e3 14.fxe3 dxe3 15.d3 d5

16.h3 [16.fxf6 Wxf6 17.Wxf6 gxf6 18.g3 a5 19.b5 fxf3 20.exf3 d4 21.f3 Rad8 22.0-0-0 d3+ 23.f2 dxc5 24.f5 e2 Black is OK here as well] 16...f3 17.gxf3 Rfd8 18.Rg1 d5 19.Wf4 d6 20.fxf6 gxf6 21.We4 f8 22.Wxe7+ dxe7 23.Rd1 Rxd1+ 24.fxd1 Rf8+ 25.f2 Rf2+ 26.f3 d5 Black is fine.

14.b5

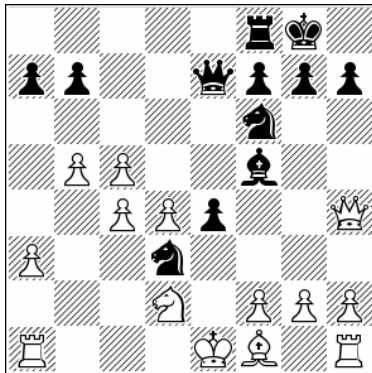
14.e3 f6 15.f2 d3 16.f1 a5 17.Rb1



Position after: 17. ♖b1

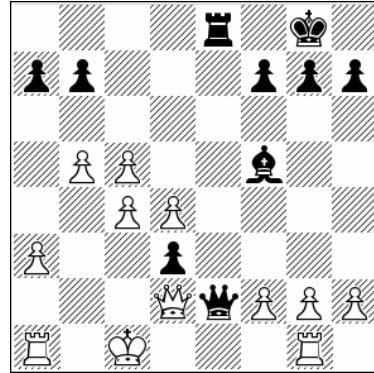
17...axb4 [17... ♖e6 18.0-0 ♗d7 19. ♘c3] 18.axb4

14... ♗e5 15. ♘xd4 ♜ad8 16.e3 ♜xd4 17.exd4 ♗d3+



Position after: 17... ♗d3+

18. ♘xd3 exd3+ 19. ♗d1 ♖e2+ 20. ♗c1 ♗e4  
21. ♖f4 ♜e8 22. ♜g1 ♗xd2 23. ♖xd2 ♖e6 24. ♖c3  
♖e2 25. ♖d2



Position after: 25. ♖d2

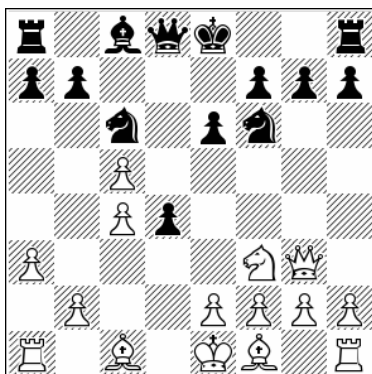
25... ♖e6

The draw is not far off.

## h) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8. ♖g3 ♗c6 9. ♗f3

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♘b4 4. ♖c2 d5 5.a3  
♘xc3+ 6. ♖xc3 c5 7.dxc5 d4 8. ♖g3 ♗c6 9. ♗f3

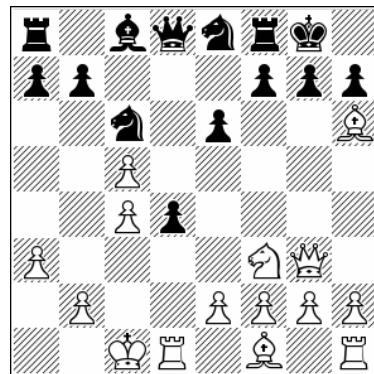
A) 10... ♗e8 11.0-0-0



Position after: 9. ♗f3

9...e5

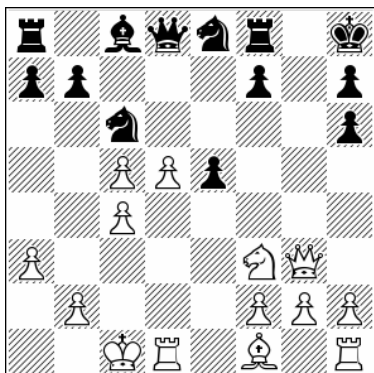
9...0-0 10. ♘h6



Position after: 11.0-0-0

A very sharp option, which seems strong. 11...e5  
[11...b6 12.e3 bxc5 13.exd4 ♜b8 14. ♘f4 ♜b3  
15. ♘d3 cxd4 16. ♘xh7+ ♗xh7 17. ♗g5+ ♗g8  
18. ♖xb3 White is clearly better, 0-1 (94)

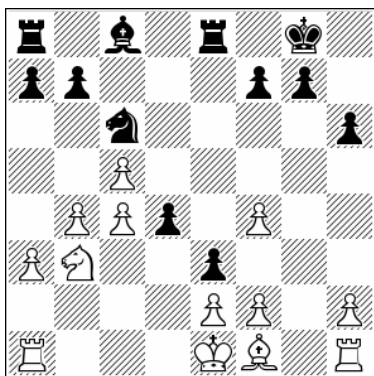
Georgiev, K (2666) – Gyimesi, Z (2652) Porto Carras 2011] 12.e3 ♖h8 13.exd4 gxh6 14.d5



Position after: 14.d5

14...♗e7 15.♗xe5 White has strong attacking chances, 0-1 (36) Wagner, D (2581) – Georgiev, K (2592) chess.com INT 2020.

**B)** 10...♗h5 11.♖g5 ♖xg5 12.♙xg5 e5 13.b4 ♞e8 14.g3 e4 15.♗d2 h6 16.♙f4 e3 17.♗b3 ♗xf4 18.gxf4



Position after: 18.gxf4

18...exf2+ [18...a5 19.b5 a4! 20.bxc6 axb3 Black is much better, ½-½ (54) Stella, A (2500) – Romanishin, O (2443) Figueira da Foz 2018] 19.♖xf2 ♞e4 Black is OK.

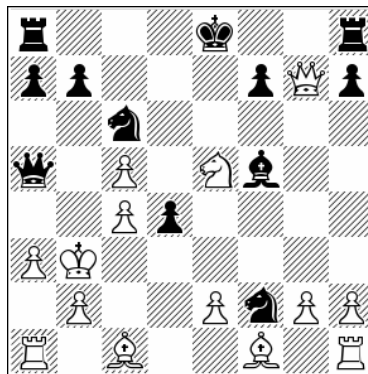
### 10.e3

**A)** 10.b4 This transposes to the 9.b4 subchapter and that is really critical for the assessment of this gambit.

**B)** 10.e4 ♗h5 11.♖g5 ♖xg5 12.♙xg5 h6 13.♙d2 f5 14.exf5 ♙xf5 15.♗h4 ♙h7 16.g4 ♗f6 17.f3 e4

Black is better, 0-1 (32) Durakovic, A (2268) – Volokitin, A (2634) Austria 2019.

**C)** 10.♗xe5 ♖a5+ 11.♖d1 ♗e4 12.♖xg7 ♗xf2+ 13.♖c2 ♙f5+ 14.♖b3



Position after: 14.♖b3

14...0-0-0 15.♖f6 ♙e6 16.♗xc6 ♖b5+ 17.♖c2 ♖xc4+ 18.♖b1 ♖xc5 19.♖xf2 ♙f5+ 20.♖a2 ♙e6+ This line leads to a draw.

**D)** 10.♖xg7 ♞g8 11.♖h6 ♞g6 12.♖h4 ♞g4 13.♖h6 ♞g6 Black has at least a draw.

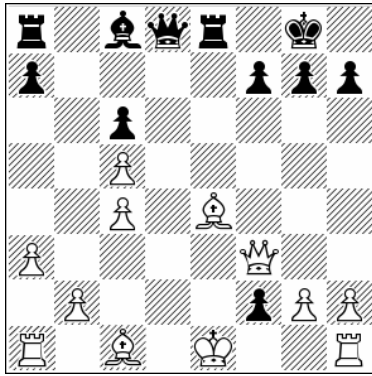
### 10...0-0

10...♙f5 11.♗xe5 ♖a5+ 12.♙d2 ♖xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♗e4+ 14.♖e1 ♗xg3 15.♗xc6 ♗xh1 16.♗xd4 ♙d7 17.g3 ♞c8 18.b4 b6 19.cxb6 axb6 20.a4 ♖e7 21.♙d3 White has chances to obtain an advantage.

### 11.b4

This is risky.

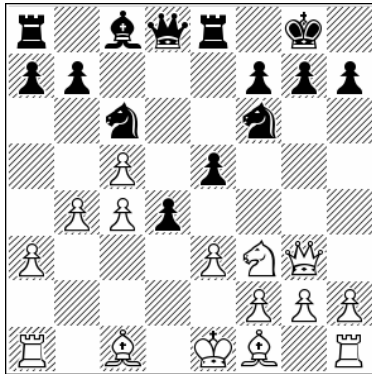
11.♗xe5 ♗e4 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♖f3 ♞e8 14.♙d3 dxe3 15.♙xe4 exf2+



Position after: 15...exf2+

16. ♖xf2 ♔d4+ 17. ♗e3 ♗f6+ 18. ♗f4 ♗xf4+  
 19. ♘f4 ♗xe4 20. ♘d6 ♗xc4 21. ♖ac1 Chances are equal.

11... ♖e8



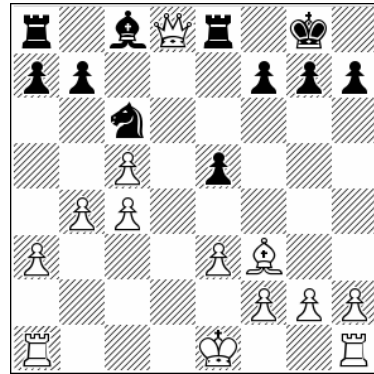
Position after: 11...♖e8

**i) 6...c5 7.dxc5 d4 8. ♖c2**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4. ♗c2 d5 5.a3 ♘xc3+  
 6. ♗xc3 c5 7.dxc5 d4 8. ♖c2

Now it's difficult to find good moves.

12. ♘e2 d3 13. ♘d1 ♘e4 14. ♗h4 d2+ 15. ♘xd2  
 ♘xd2 16. ♗xd8 ♘xf3+ 17. ♘xf3

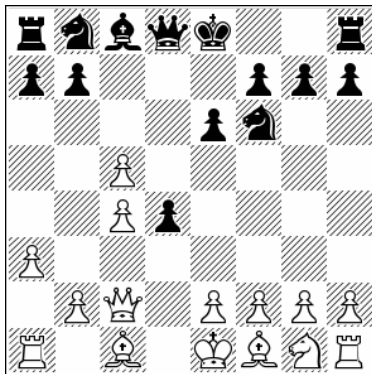


Position after: 17.♘xf3

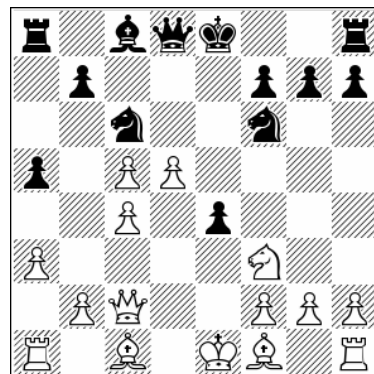
17... ♗xd8

Black is better, 0-1 (46) Hracek, Z (2572) – Navara, D (2724) Katowice 2019.

8...e5  
 8...a5 9.e3 ♘c6 10. ♘f3 e5 11.exd4 e4 12.d5!



Position after: 8. ♖c2



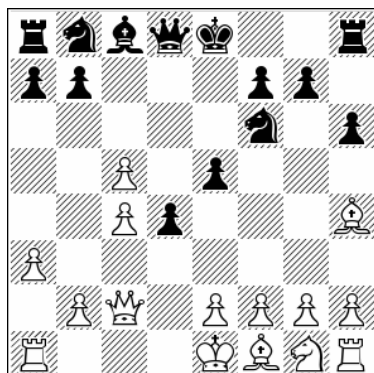
Position after: 12.d5!

Less committal, but on the other hand less demanding for Black as well.

12...exf3 13.dxc6 0-0 14.gxf3 ♖e8+ 15.♙e3  
 White is better, 0-1 (26) Shipov, S (2541) –  
 Rozman, L (2362) chess.com INT 2021.

9.e3

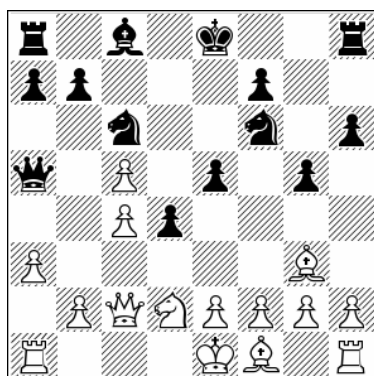
9.♙g5 h6 10.♙h4



Position after: 10.♙h4

Rarely played, but worth a look:

A) Placing a black knight on c6 is perhaps not the best at this early stage. 10...♞c6 11.♞f3 g5 12.♙g3 ♜a5+ 13.♞d2



Position after: 13.♞d2

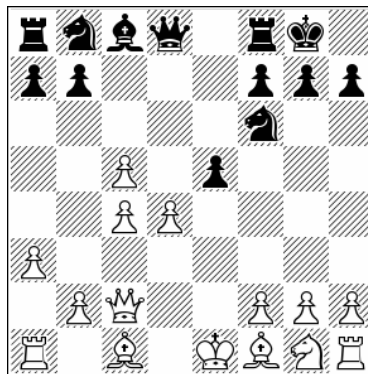
13...♙e6! [13...♜xc5 14.b4 ♜e7 15.e4! ♞h5 16.c5 ♞f4 17.♞c4 White has gained an advantage, 0-1 (31) Ashiku, F (2419) – Georgiev, K (2592) chess.com INT 2020] 14.♜c1 ♜xc5 15.b4 ♜d6 16.e4 dxe3 17.fxe3 ♞d8 18.♜c3 The position is balanced but White can try to press for more.

B) 10...0-0 11.♞f3 ♞e8 12.♞d2 a5 This is strong for Black.

9...♞c6

Straight away heading towards the center.

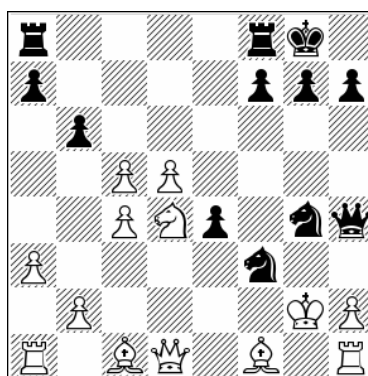
9...0-0 10.exd4



Position after: 10.exd4

This position is critical for the assessment of the line.

A) Alternatives can be very complicated but I will show a few possible ideas. 10...♞c6!? 11.d5 ♞d4 12.♜d1 Black now has a variety of choices. 12...♞xd5 [12...b6 13.♞e2 ♙g4 14.f3 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♞xf3+ 16.♞f2 e4 17.♞d4 ♞g4+ 18.♞g2 ♜h4

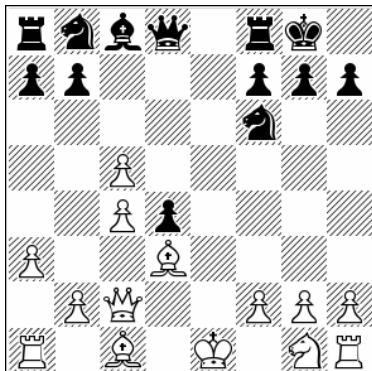


Position after: 18...♜h4

White's position looks really dangerous, but actually he has resources. 19.♞xf3 ♜f2+ 20.♞h3 exf3 21.♜d2 ♞ae8 22.♜xf2 ♞xf2+ 23.♞g3 ♞xh1+ 24.♞xf3 ♞e1 25.♞g2 White seems to be doing well] 13.cxd5 ♙f5 14.♙d3 ♜xd5 15.♙xf5 ♜xg2 16.♜d3 ♜xh1 17.♙xh7+ ♞h8 18.♞f1 ♜xh2 19.♙f5 ♜h5 20.♜h3 ♜xh3+ 21.♙xh3 ♞b3

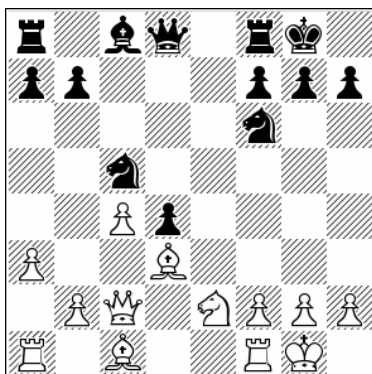
22.♖b1 ♜xc5 23.♙e3 It seems that White is going OK.

B) 10...exd4 11.♙d3



Position after: 11.♙d3

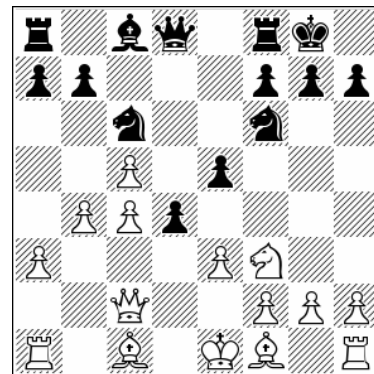
11...♞bd7! Probably best. [11...♞c6 12.♞e2 ♜a5+ 13.♙d2 ♜xc5 14.0-0 ♜h5 15.♞fe1 a5 16.♙f4 ♜c5 17.♞g3 Such positions favor White, 1-0 (42) Derbenev, A (2331) – Fedoseev, V (2520) St Petersburg 2011] 12.♞e2 ♞xc5 13.0-0



Position after: 13.0-0

13...♞e8 [13...♙g4 14.f3 ♙e6 15.♞f4 ♜c7 16.♞xe6 fxe6 17.b4 ♞xd3 18.♜xd3 e5 19.♙g5 ♞h5 20.c5 an unbalanced position, perhaps slightly favoring White but Black has his chances] 14.b4 ♞xd3 15.♜xd3 ♙g4 16.♞g3 ♞h5 17.f3 ♞xg3 18.hxg3 ♙e6 19.c5 ♜f6 20.♙b2 ♞ad8 21.♞ad1 ♜e5 This is also OK for Black.

10.b4 0-0 11.♞f3



Position after: 11.♞f3

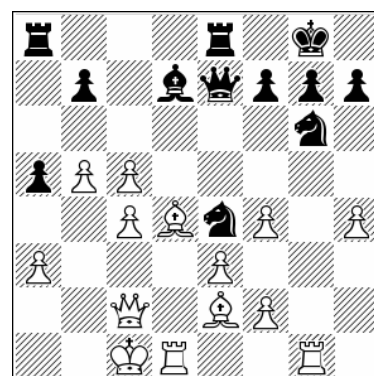
11...♞e8

11...♜e7 12.b5! ♞d8 13.exd4 exd4+ 14.♙e2 ♞e6 15.0-0 ♞d8 16.♞d1 ♜xc5 17.a4 b6 18.♙a3 ♜c7 19.♙b2 White is better.

12.e4

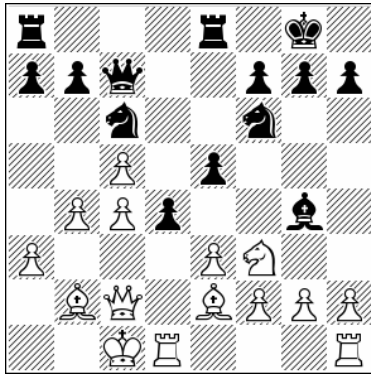
Probably it's best here to close the center and try to keep the extra pawn.

12.♙b2 White is actually looking to sac a piece. 12...♙g4 [12...d3 13.♙xd3!? e4 14.♙e2 exf3 15.gxf3 ♞e5 16.♞g1 a5 17.b5 ♞g6 18.♙d4 ♜e7 19.0-0-0 ♙d7 20.f4 ♞e4 21.h4!?



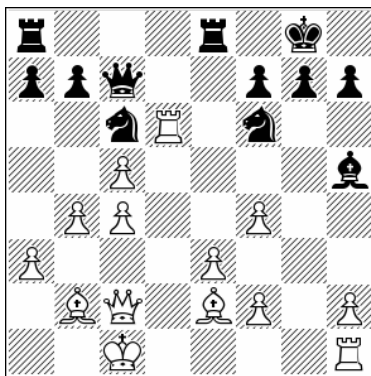
Position after: 21.h4!?

21...♞xf2 22.h5 ♞xd1 23.hxg6 hxg6 24.♞xd1 ♙f5 25.♙d3 ♙xd3 26.♜xd3 White has compensation] 13.0-0-0 ♜c7 14.♙e2



Position after: 14.♙e2

14...dxe3!? Releasing the tension in the center is a good idea [Taking the piece is not so clear actually. 14...d3 15.♖xd3 e4 16.♗d6 exf3 17.gxf3 ♙h5 18.f4!



Position after: 18.f4!

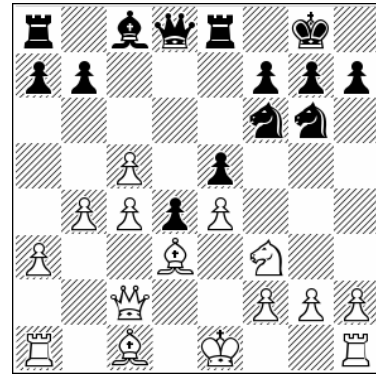
18...♙xe2 19.♖g1 ♙h5 20.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 21.♗f5 White has a winning attack; 14...♙h5!? 15.♘h4 a5 16.b5 ♙xe2 17.♗xe2 ♘d8 18.♘f5 ♘e6 19.exd4 exd4 20.♗c2 ♖ad8 Black has counterplay]. 15.fxe3 a5 16.b5 ♘d8 Black seems to be doing OK.

### 12...♘e7!?

Black is going to the kingside and that is a good idea in my opinion.

It's probably too early for Black to push his a-pawn. 12...a5 13.b5! ♘e7 14.a4 ♗c7 15.♙a3 ♘d7 16.c6 bxc6 17.c5 White now has his play on the queenside, 1-0 (41) Carlsen, M (2847) – Radjabov, T (2765) chess24.com INT 2021.

### 13.♙d3 ♘g6



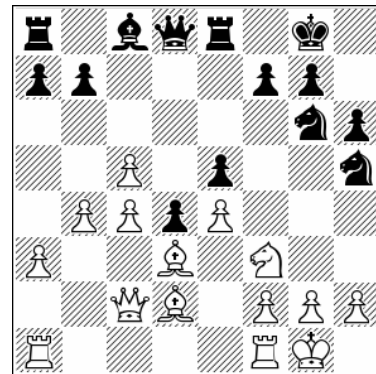
Position after: 13...♘g6

White's problem is that his activity on the queenside is stopped and Black is getting play on the kingside now. White has a choice here.

### 14.0-0

14.h3 a5 15.♖b1 axb4 16.axb4 ♙d7 17.g3 White's idea is to control all the squares on the kingside. 17...h6 18.♔f1 ♖e6 19.♔g2 ♖ea6 Also here we can see that Black has a lot of play.

### 14...h6 15.♙d2 ♘h5

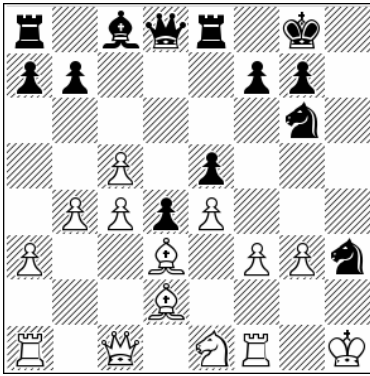


Position after: 15...♘h5

### 16.♘e1

16.g3 ♙h3 17.♖fb1 ♗d7 White is a pawn up but his queenside advantage has been blocked and he cannot make any progress there, while Black is building up play with all his pieces on the kingside.

### 16...♘hf4 17.f3 h5 18.g3 ♘h3+ 19.♔h1 h4 20.♗c1 hxg3 21.hxg3



Position after: 21.hxg3

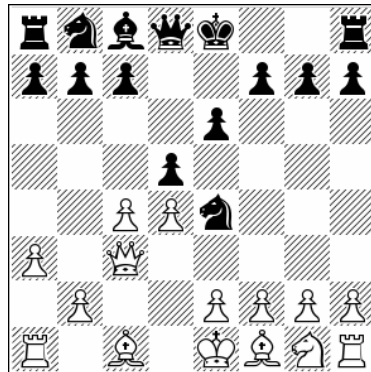
21...♘gf4!

Black has at least a safe draw.

# Chapter 10

## 5.a3 – With 6...♞e4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.♚xc3 ♞e4



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 10 – 5.a3 – With 6...♞e4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.♚c2 d5 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.♚xc3 ♞e4 7.♚c2

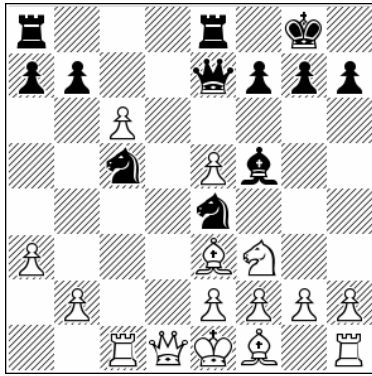
a) 7...-- & 7...♞c6

b) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♞c6 9.cxd5

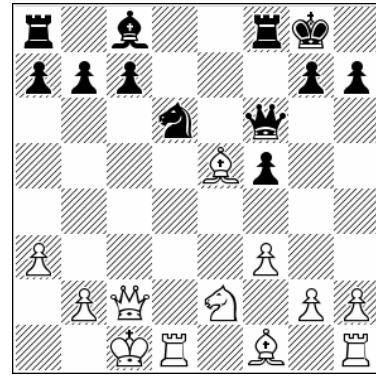
c) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♞c6 9.e3

d) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♞c6 9.♞f3





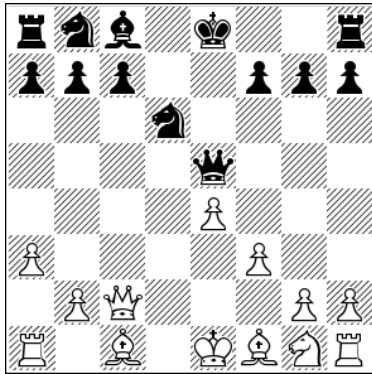
Position after: 15.♖c1!



Position after: 16.♗xe5!

Simple and strong. 15...♖ad8 16.♖c2 White has a winning position.] 9.f3 ♘d6 10.dxe5 ♗xe5 11.e4

16...♗xe5 17.♖xc7 ♘f7 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.♘c3 White keeps his edge.

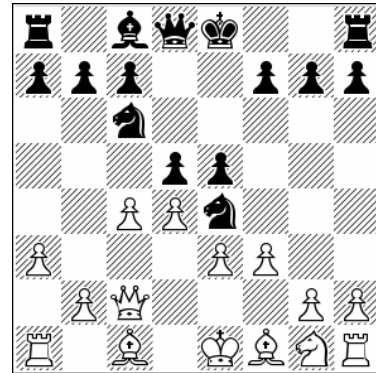


Position after: 11.e4

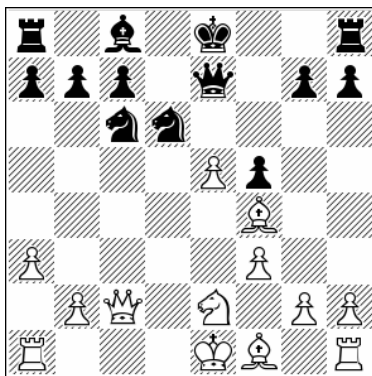
**B2)** 11...f5 12.♘e2! It is essential for White to find the best play at this juncture. 12...fxe4 [12...♘c6 transposes to 11...♘c6] 13.♗f4 ♗e7 14.♗xd6 ♗xd6 15.♖xe4+ ♗e6 16.♘c3 ♘c6 17.♚f2 ♗xe4 18.♘xe4 White exerts some pressure in this endgame.

8.e3 e5 9.f3

**B1)** 11...♘c6 12.♘e2 f5 13.♗f4 ♗f6 [13...♗e7 14.e5!?



Position after: 9.f3

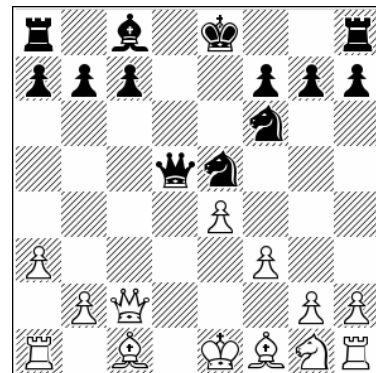


Position after: 14.e5!?

9...♗h4+

9...♘f6 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.cxd5 ♗xd5 12.e4

White can do this thanks to his fast and more harmonious development. 14...♘xe5 15.0-0-0 ♘c6 16.♚b1 0-0 17.♗xd6 cxd6 18.♘f4 ♘e5 19.h4 White has strong play for the sacrificed pawn.] 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.e5! ♘xe5 16.♗xe5!



Position after: 12.e4

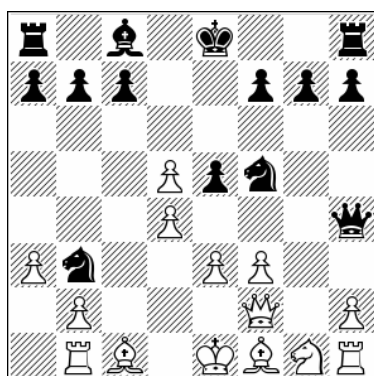
**A)** 12...♖e6 13.♘e2 0-0 14.♘f4 ♗e7 15.♙e3 b6  
 16.♙e2 c5 17.0-0-0 White does not need to play  
 so sharply, but this is indeed possible. 17...♙b7  
 18.♖b1 c4 19.♙d4 b5 20.♗c3 ♜fe8 21.♞he1 a5  
 22.♙xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗xe5 ♞xe5 24.a4! This earns  
 White an advantage, ½-½ (55) Strunski, A (2328)  
 – Fedorovsky, M (2395) Lindau 2012.

**B)** 12...♗a5+ 13.♙d2 ♗b6 14.♗c3 ♗e6 15.♗xc7  
 0-0 16.♙c3 ♘c6 17.♞d1 ♘e8 18.♗g3 White is  
 winning, 1-0 (52) Dvirnyy, D (2555) – Piscopo, P  
 (2431) Civitanova Marche 2016.

**10.g3 ♘xg3 11.♗f2 ♘f5 12.cxd5 ♘a5 13.♞b1**

With the obvious threat of b4.

**13...♘b3**

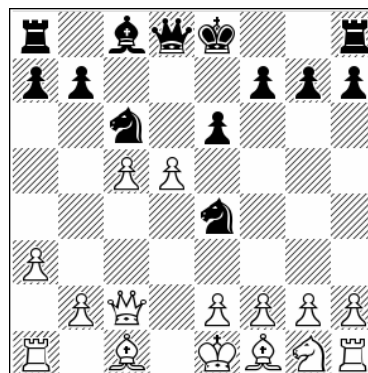


Position after: 13...♘b3

It seems that now White can keep an advantage  
 in two different ways.

**b) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♘c6 9.cxd5**

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗c2 d5 5.a3  
 ♙xc3+ 6.♗xc3 ♘e4 7.♗c2 c5 8.dxc5 ♘c6 9.cxd5**

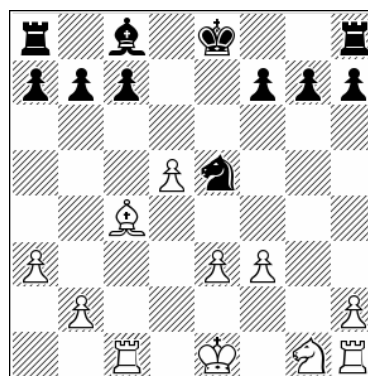


Position after: 9.cxd5

**14.♙c4**

Another idea is 14.dxe5 ♗h6 [14...c6 15.♗xh4  
 ♘xh4 16.♙c4 ♘a5 17.♙a2 cxd5 18.♙d2 ♘c4  
 19.♙xc4 dxc4 20.♖f2 ♙e6 21.♘e2 0-0-0 22.♙b4  
 This gives White an edge as well] 15.♙d3 ♘xc1  
 16.♙xf5 ♙xf5 17.♞xc1 0-0 18.♘e2 White is  
 better, ½-½ (56) Steingrímsson, H (2562) –  
 Lupulescu, C (2655) Germany 2011.

**14...♘xc1 15.♗xh4 ♘xh4 16.dxe5 ♘g6 17.♞xc1  
 ♘xe5**



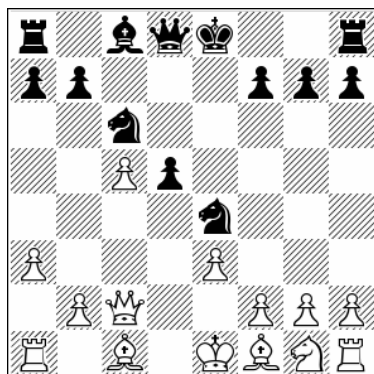
Position after: 17...♘xe5

**18.f4**

Here White has the preferable endgame, ½-½  
 (23) Bluebaum, M (2264) – Brunner, N (2478) Aix  
 les Bains 2011.

That's one of three options for White, and a critical one in the sense that White can try to keep his extra pawn.

9...exd5 10.e3

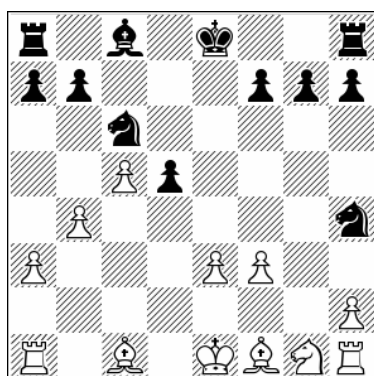


Position after: 10.e3

10...0-0

A) 10...♖a5+ 11.b4 ♗xb4 12.axb4 ♕xa1 13.♙b5+ ♔f8 14.♘e2 a5 15.f3 ♘f6 16.0-0 White has a big attack, 1-0 (25) Ivanisevic, I (2650) – Stojanovic, D (2505) Kragujevac 2016.

B) 10...♖f6 11.f3 ♖h4+ 12.g3 ♗xg3 13.♖f2 ♘f5 14.♖xh4 ♗xh4 15.b4

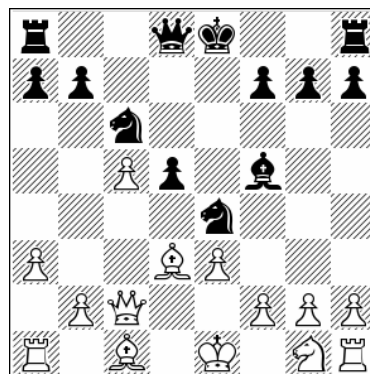


Position after: 15.b4

This is such an interesting endgame. 15...a5 [15...0-0 16.♔f2 ♙e6 17.♙b2 f5 18.♘h3 This is better for White, 0-1 (37) L'Ami, A (2446) – Sihite, C (2206) Tromsøe 2014] 16.b5 ♘e5 17.♔f2 0-0 18.♙b2 f6! 19.♞d1 ♙e6 20.♘e2!? ♗exf3 21.♘f4 ♙f7 22.♘d5 ♞ae8! [22...♞fd8 23.e4 ♘g5 24.♙d3 This favors White, ½-½ (41) Morozevich, A (2675) – Harikrishna, P (2737) Biel 2017] 23.c6

bxc6 24.bxc6 ♘g5 25.♙e2 ♘e4+ 26.♔g1 ♞b8 27.♘e7+ ♔h8 28.c7 ♞xb2 29.♞d8 ♞b1+ 30.♙f1 A draw is on the cards.

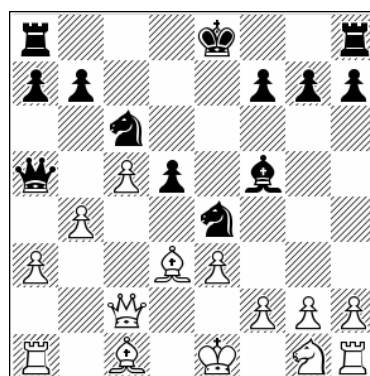
C) 10...♙f5 11.♙d3



Position after: 11.♙d3

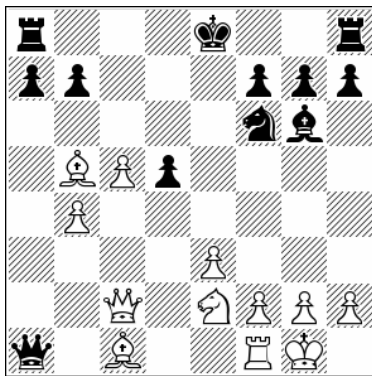
C1) 11...♘e5 12.♘f3 ♗xd3+ 13.♖xd3 ♘g3 [13...0-0 14.♖d4 ♞c8 15.b4 b6 16.♙b2 f6 17.cxb6 axb6 18.0-0 White is a healthy pawn up, 1-0 (62) Zaitsev, A (2375) – Arakeljan, A (2300) Kireevsk 2011] 14.e4 ♗xe4 15.0-0 0-0 16.♖d4 ♖f6 17.♖xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘d4 ♙g6 19.♙f4 ♞fe8 20.f3 White has the superior endgame, ½-½ (44) Kasimdzhanov, R (2682) – Asrian, K (2634) France 2007.

C2) 11...♖a5+ 12.b4!



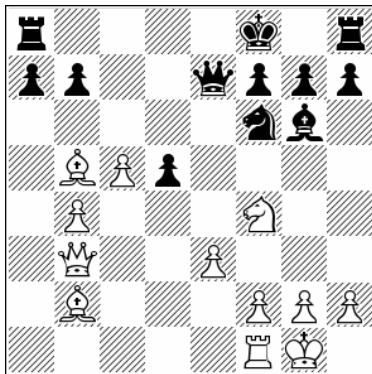
Position after: 12.b4!

12...♗xb4 13.axb4 ♖xa1 14.♘e2 ♙g6 15.0-0 ♘f6 16.♙b5+



Position after: 16. ♖b5+

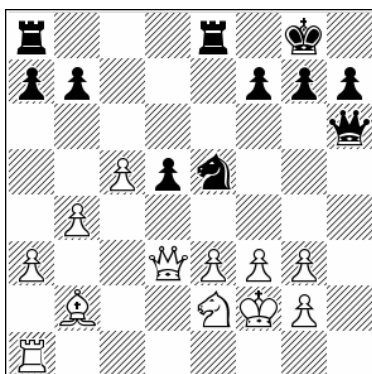
Also here we can see that such play is dangerous for Black. 16... ♖f8 [16... ♖e7 17. ♗b3 ♖e5 18. ♖b2 ♗f5 19. c6 already winning for White, 1-0 (26) Vocaturo, D (2579) – Parkhov, Y (1997) Jerusalem 2015] 17. ♗b3 ♖e5 18. ♖b2 ♖e7 19. ♖f4!



Position after: 19. ♖f4!

19... a6 20. ♖a4 ♖d8 21. ♖d1 h5 22. ♗c3 ♖f5 23. f3 ♖e6 24. ♗d4 White has tremendous pressure.

**C3)** 11... ♗g5 12. f3 ♖h4+ 13. ♖f1 ♖g3+ 14. hxg3 ♖xd3+ 15. ♗xd3 ♗xh1 16. b4 0-0 17. ♖f2 Another position in which White sacrifices the exchange in order to get harmonious play. 17... ♗h6 18. ♖b2 ♖fe8 19. ♖e2 ♖e5 Now we have a couple of ideas to check.



Position after: 19... ♖e5

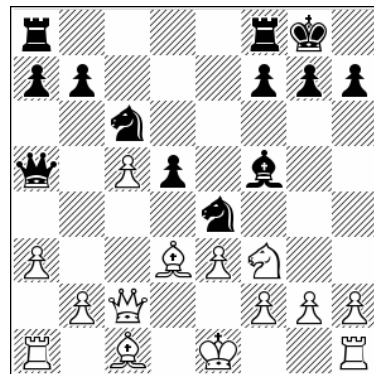
**C3.1)** 20. ♗b3 a5 21. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 22. ♖d1 axb4 23. axb4 ♗a6 24. f4 ♖ee8 Black is just in time to defend everything and reach a balanced game. 25. ♖xd5 ♖ad8 26. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27. ♖d4 h5! With equal chances, ½-½ (35) Kasimdzhanov, R (2683) – Aronian, L (2750) Mainz 2007.

**C3.2)** 20. ♖xe5! ♖xe5 21. f4 ♖ee8 22. ♖d1 ♖ad8 23. ♖d4 ♗f6 24. ♖b5 Now this looks good for White.

### 11. ♖f3 ♖f5

11... ♗f6 12. ♖d3 b6 13. 0-0 bxc5 14. ♖xe4 dxe4 15. ♗xe4 ♖a6 16. ♖e1 ♖fe8 17. ♗c2 ♖ab8 18. ♗xc5 ♖e4 19. h3 ♖c4 20. ♗g5 Black didn't achieve much for the sacrificed material, ½-½ (61) Bures, J (2395) – Duda, J (2599) Czechia 2015.

### 12. ♖d3 ♗a5+



Position after: 12... ♗a5+

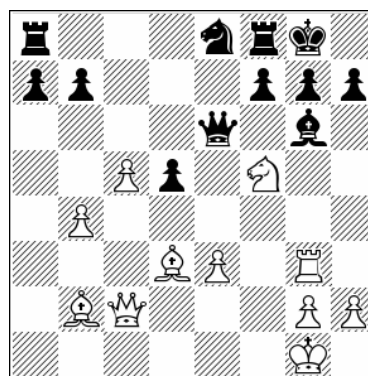
This is a critical position. Let's see if there are some ideas still unexplored.

### 13. b4

I didn't find anything for White in other lines.

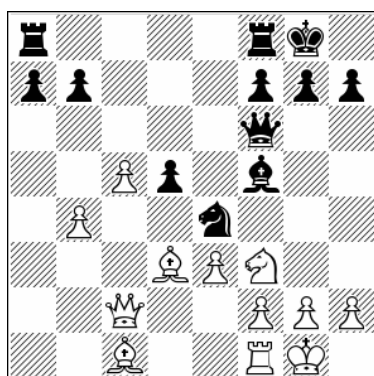
**A)** 13. ♖e2 ♖fe8 14. ♖d1 ♖g4 15. b4 ♗c7 16. h3 ♖xf3+ 17. gxf3 ♖g5 18. ♖b2 d4 Black has counterplay, ½-½ (24) Nakamura, H (2789) – Karjakin, S (2759) Wijk aan Zee 2014.

B) 13.♘d2 ♘xd2 [Black has a complicated alternative. 13...♘b4!? 14.axb4 ♚xa1 15.f3 ♘xd2 16.♙xf5 ♘b3 17.0-0 ♚a4 18.♙xh7+ ♔h8 19.♙d2 g6 20.♙xg6 fxg6 21.♚xg6 It's going to be a draw.] 14.♙xd2 ♙xd3 15.♚xd3 ♚xc5 16.♞c1 ♚b6 17.♙c3 ♞ad8 18.♙d4 ♘xd4 19.♚xd4 ♚xd4 20.exd4 ♞fe8+ 21.♔d2 ♞e7 22.♞c2 f6 23.♞hc1 ♔f7 We see an equal endgame, ½-½ (29) Ivanisevic, I (2643) – Lenic, L (2624) Bled 2016.



Position after: 23.♞g3

13...♘xb4 14.axb4 ♚xa1 15.0-0 ♚f6

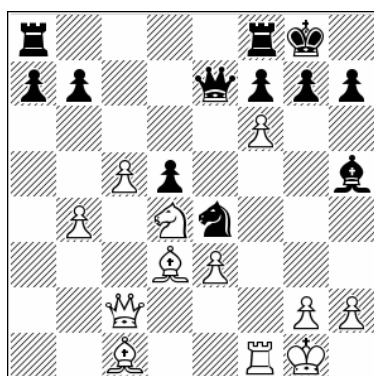


Position after: 15...♚f6

16.♘d4!?

16.♙b2 ♚e7 17.♙d4 a6 Black is solid and faces no dangers here, ½-½ (48) Gurevich, M (2618) – Halkias, S (2564) Chalkida 2009.

16...♙g6 17.f4! ♚e7 18.f5 ♙h5 19.f6!?



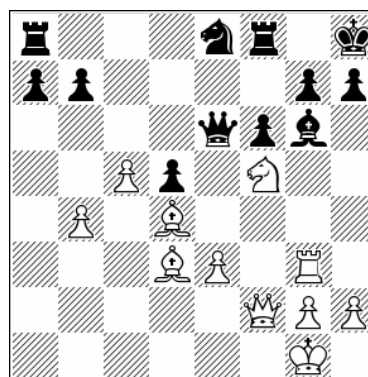
Position after: 19.f6!?

White forces matters.

19...♘xf6 20.♘f5 ♚e6 21.♙b2 ♙g6 22.♞f3 ♘e8 23.♞g3

This is interesting now. Black is the exchange and a pawn up, but for the moment he needs to focus on the defense of his kingside.

23...♔h8 24.♙d4 f6 25.♚f2!?

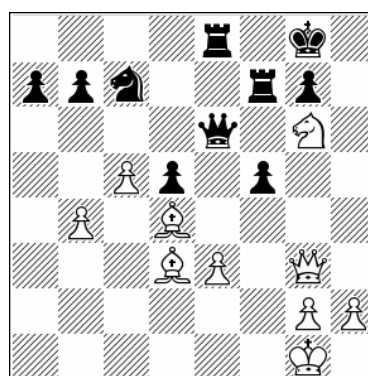


Position after: 25.♚f2!?

25...♞f7

25...a5 26.♞xg6 hxg6 27.♚h4+ ♔g8 28.♘e7+ ♔f7 29.♘xg6 White is attacking.

26.♚f3 ♘c7 27.♞xg6 hxg6 28.♘h4 f5 29.♚g3 ♔g8 30.♘xg6 ♞e8



Position after: 30...♞e8

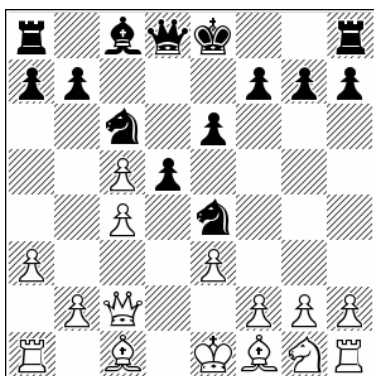
### 31.h4

This fantastic position is also unclear. It's not a forced line, but a very nice example of how

such an attacking position can develop. This whole line is definitely more complex than it may initially appear.

### c) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♞c6 9.e3

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♟b4 4.♞c2 d5 5.a3 ♟xc3+ 6.♞xc3 ♜e4 7.♞c2 c5 8.dxc5 ♞c6 9.e3



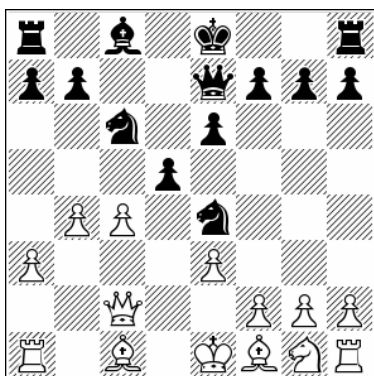
Position after: 9.e3

This is very solid play by White.

9...♞a5+ 10.♟d2 ♜xd2

Black can also play in a slightly different manner.

10...♞xc5 11.b4 ♞e7 12.♟c1!

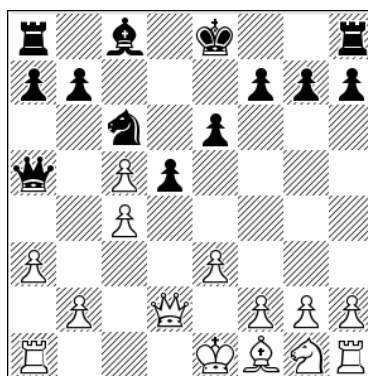


Position after: 12.♟c1!

That's one of the points behind the fast b4: White wants to keep his bishop pair. 12...a5 [12...0-0 13.♞f3 ♜g5 14.♞xg5 ♞xg5 15.♟b2 dxc4 16.♟xc4 e5 17.0-0 ♟f5 18.♞e2 e4 19.♞fd1 White has the edge due to his strong bishop pair, ½-½ (67) Zhou, W (2548) – Karthikeyan, P (2426) Al Ain 2008] 13.b5 ♜e5 14.♟b2 ♜g4 15.♞h3 0-

0 16.♟d3 f5 17.♞e2 ♞h4 18.♞c1 ♟d7 19.cxd5 exd5 20.0-0 White is better, and threatens f3, 1-0 (61) Sokolov, I (2673) – Lie, K (2563) Heraklio 2007.

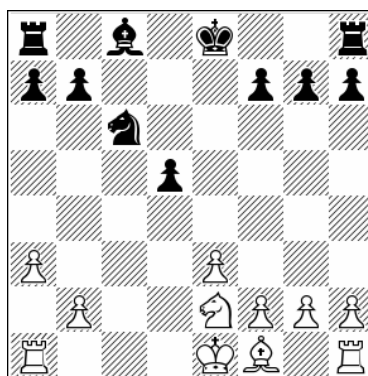
11.♞xd2



Position after: 11.♞xd2

11...dxc4

11...♞xc5 12.cxd5 ♞xd5 [12...exd5 13.♞c1 ♞b6 14.♞f3 0-0 15.♟e2 ♟g4 16.0-0 ♞ad8 17.h3 ♟h5 18.♞fd1 ♞fe8 19.g4 ♟g6 20.♞d4 ♜e7 21.♞b4 ♞xb4 22.axb4 ♞c8 23.b5 ♜f8 24.♞a1 ♞a8 25.♞a3 ♜c8 26.♞da1 ♜e7 27.h4 h6 28.h5 ♟h7 29.f3 ♜d6 30.♜f2 ♜c5 31.b4+ ♜b6 32.♞c1 ♜e7 33.♞b3 a6 34.♞c5 ♞ec8 35.♞d7+ 1-0 (35) Korobov, A (2667) – Sihite, C (2235) Minsk 2018] 13.♞xd5 exd5 14.♞e2!?



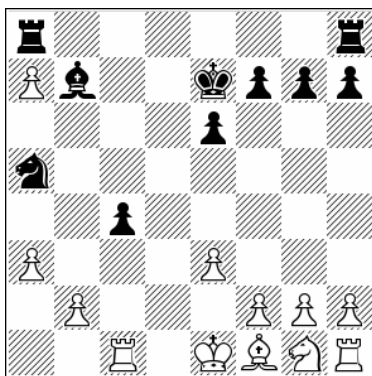
Position after: 14.♞e2!?

14...0-0 15.♖d1 ♕e6 16.g3 ♜ac8 17.♗g2 ♘e5 18.♘d4 This is something that can give White chances for an advantage.

### 12.♗xc4

This is best if White is playing for a win.

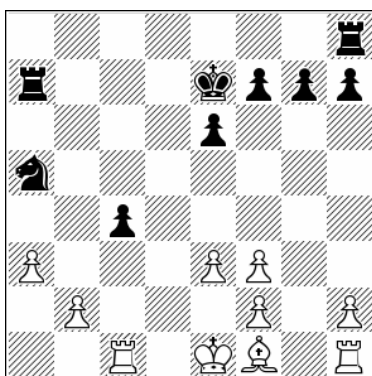
12.♖xa5 ♘xa5 13.♞c1 b5 14.cxb6 This line has been known for a while. White takes pawns on the queenside, but Black has sufficient play. 14...♗b7 15.bxa7 ♖e7



Position after: 15...♖e7

**A)** 16.♘e2 ♜xa7 17.♘c3 ♜b8! 18.♘a2 [18.f3 ♗c6 19.♘d1 ♗a4 20.♘c3 ♗c6 21.♘d1 ♗a4 22.♘c3 ♗c6 White has nothing better than to make a draw, ½-½ (22) Zhao, X (2508) – Hou, Y (2661) Sharjah 2014] 18...♗d5 19.♘b4 ♘c6 20.♘xc6+ ♗xc6 21.♞xc4 ♗a4 22.♞b4 ♞xb4 23.axb4 ♗b5 24.f3 ♜a1+ 25.♖f2 ♞b1 26.g4 ♗xf1 27.♞xf1 ♞xb2+ Just another equal game, ½-½ (30) Rasulov, V (2506) – Abasov, N (2583) Baku 2017.

**B)** 16.♘f3 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♞xa7

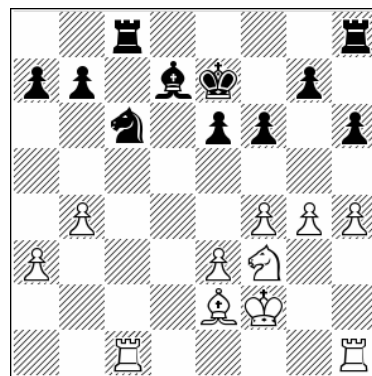


Position after: 17...♞xa7

18.♞g1 [18.♖d1 ♞b8 19.♖c2 ♞ab7 20.♞b1 ♞b3 21.♗e2 ♞c8 22.a4 c3 23.bxc3 ♞bxc3+ 24.♖d1 ♞d8+ 25.♖e1 f5! Keeping the white rooks away from the g4-square is an important idea here. 26.♞g1 ♖f6 Black is fine here despite being a pawn down] 18...♞b8 19.♞c2 ♞ab7 20.♗xc4 ♞xb2 21.♞xb2 ♞xb2 22.♗d3 g6 23.♞g4 ♘c6 24.♞a4 ♘e5 25.♞a7+ ♖d6 26.♗e2 ♞b1+ 27.♖d2 ♞b2+ 28.♖d1 g5 This is good enough to keep an equal game.

### 12...♞xc5 13.♞c1 ♞e7

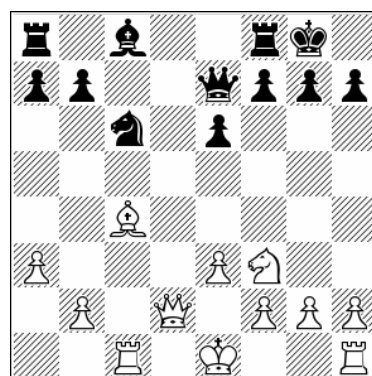
13...♞g5 14.f4 ♞h4+ 15.♞f2 ♞xf2+ 16.♖xf2 ♗d7 17.♘f3 ♞c8 18.b4 ♖e7 19.♗e2 f6 20.g4 h6 21.h4



Position after: 21.h4

It's not much, just a more pleasant endgame for White. 21...a6 22.g5 hxg5 23.hxg5 b5 24.♘h4 ♖f7 [24...♖e8? 25.♘f5! White is clearly better, 1-0 (57) Sokolov, I (2615) – Korchnoi, V (2635) Wijk aan Zee 1997, a famous game] 25.♞cd1 ♞cd8 26.♗f3 fxg5 27.fxg5 ♘e5 28.♖g3 White still maintains some pressure.

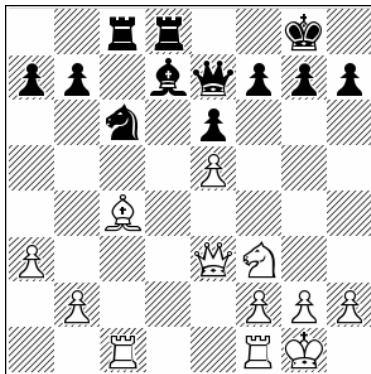
### 14.♘f3 0-0



Position after: 14...0-0

### 15.0-0

White can also try an interesting move order.  
15.e4!? ♖d8 16.♙e3 ♘d7 17.0-0 ♜ac8 18.e5!?

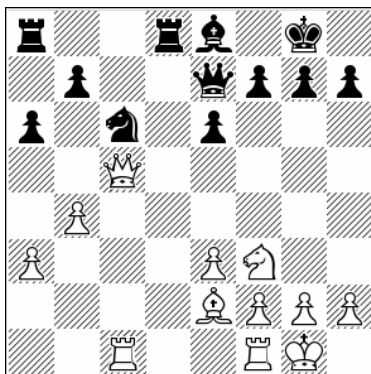


Position after: 18.e5!?

Otherwise I don't see the point of going e4 in the first place. 18...♙e8 19.♘d3 ♙c7 20.h4 ♙b6 21.♙e4 g6 22.b4 ♘e7 23.♞xc8 ♞xc8 24.♙f4 ♙d8 25.♞d1 Some plan like this is more to the point. White wants to go h5 now.

### 15...♞d8 16.♙c2

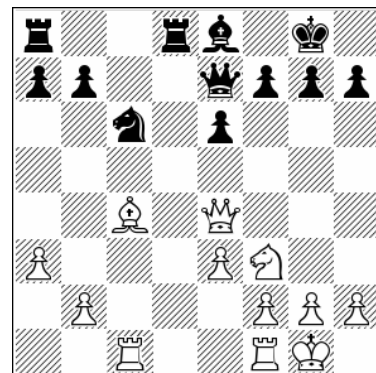
16.♙c3 ♘d7 17.b4 a6 18.♙e2 ♙e8 19.♙c5!



Position after: 19.♙c5!

19...♙xc5 20.♞xc5 ♔f8 21.♞fc1 ♔e7 22.♔f1 f6 23.♔e1 This plan is a positional one, similar to the Sokolov game above. White wants to place a knight on d2 and try to put pressure on the queenside. 23...♞d7 24.♘d2 ♞ad8 25.♘b3! [25.♘c4 ♞d5 This helps Black to exchange one rook and ease his defense, ½-½ (49) Fridman, D (2601) – Ter Sahakyan, S (2640) chess.com INT 2021] 25...♘e5 26.♘d4 ♙g6 27.♞5c3 White can try to increase his small advantage in this endgame.

### 16...♙d7 17.♙e4 ♙e8



Position after: 17...♙e8

### 18.h4!

18.b4 a6 19.h3 ½-½ (19) Martinovic, S (2564) – Palac, M (2557) Tuzla 2019.

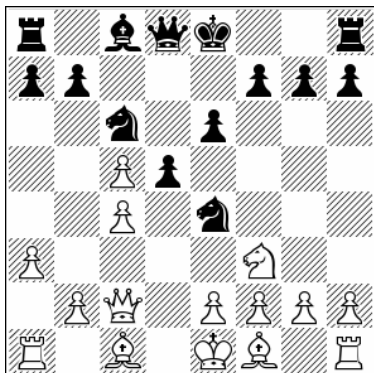
### 18...♞ac8 19.b4 a6 20.♘g5 g6 21.f4

This is also an interesting setup. Our conclusion is that the position is balanced, but White has some ideas which can give him chances to play on and press for an advantage. It's not dry; it's quite playable.

**d) 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♖c6 9.♗f3**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.a3  
 ♙xc3+ 6.♖xc3 ♗e4 7.♖c2 c5 8.dxc5 ♗c6 9.♗f3

bx3 Just one possible example of how Black can  
 play this line.



Position after: 9.♗f3

This was popular in the past, but Black seems  
 able to solve his problems.

9...♖a5+ 10.♗d2 ♗d4

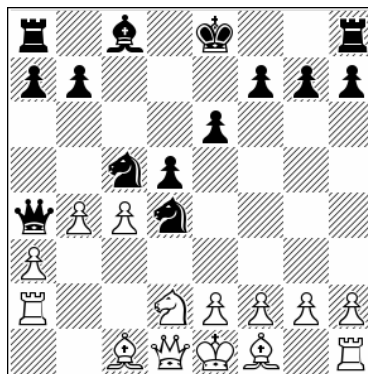
This has been known for a long time to be OK for  
 Black:

10...♗xd2 11.♙xd2 ♖xc5 12.e3 dxc4 13.♙xc4  
 ♗e5 14.♙b3 ♙d7 15.0-0 ♖xc2 16.♙xc2 ♙c6  
 17.♖fd1 0-0 18.♙c3 ♗d7 19.f3 ♖fd8 20.e4 White  
 has an edge here; it's a dry position but one  
 sided, ½-½ (123) Mamedyarov, S (2808) –  
 Karjakin, S (2782) Leuven 2018.

11.♖d1

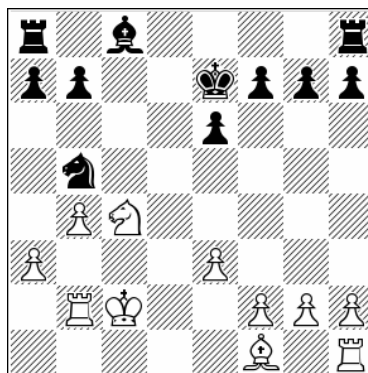
11.♖d3 e5 12.b4 ♖a4 13.♖a2 ♗xd2 14.♖xd2 a5  
 15.cxd5 axb4 16.e3 ♗b3 17.♖c2 ♗xc1 18.♖xc1

11...♗xc5 12.b4 ♖a4 13.♖a2



Position after: 13.♖a2

13...♖xd1+ 14.♗xd1 ♗a4 15.♙b2 ♗xb2+  
 16.♖xb2 dxc4 17.♗xc4 ♗e7 18.e3 ♗b5 19.♗c2



Position after: 19.♗c2

19...♙d7

Black is fine in this endgame, ½-½ (39) Granda  
 Zuniga, J (2612) – Hou, Y (2509) Zafra 2007.

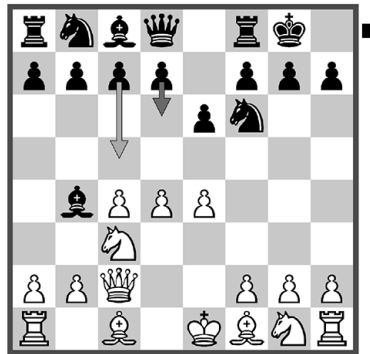
# Part IV

## 4. c2 0-0

# Chapter 11

## 5.e4 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 11 – 5.e4 – Sidelines

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4

a) 5...c5

b) 5...d6 6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘g4

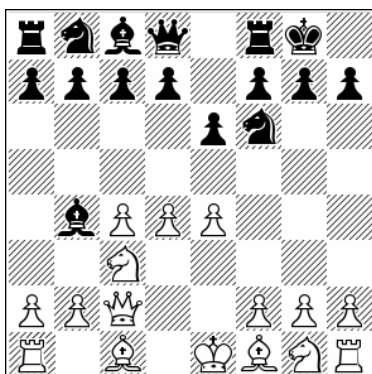
c) 5...d6 6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘fd7

d) 5...d6 6.e5 ♙xc3+

e) 5...d6 6.e5 ♘fd7

## a) 5...c5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4



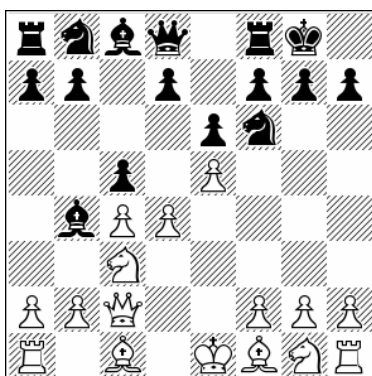
Position after: 5.e4

Actually this line is now the main one. It has completely replaced the traditional 5.a3, and has become one of the most analyzed variations.

### 5...c5

This is really an abandoned line, now considered inferior.

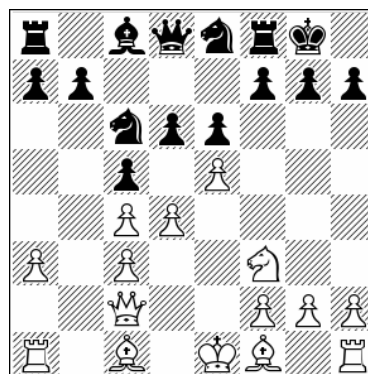
### 6.e5



Position after: 6.e5

### 6...cxd4

A) 6...♗e8 7.a3 ♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♘c6 9.♗f3 d6



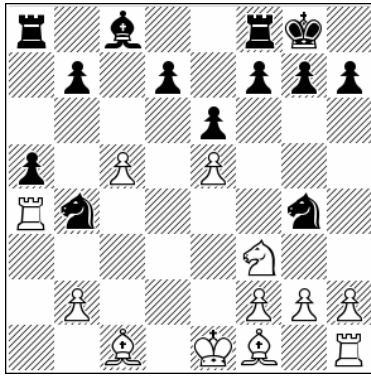
Position after: 9...d6

Now in both these games Black failed to achieve the desired counterplay. 10.exd6 [10.♙d3 f5 11.exf6 ♗xf6 12.0-0 h6 13.♖e1 ♗h5 14.dxc5 dxc5 15.♙h7+ White is close to winning, 0-1 (73) Fodor, T (2491) – Hansen, E (2573) London 2015] 10...♗xd6 11.♙d3 f5 12.0-0 b6 13.♖e1 ♗a5 14.♙g5 ♗e8 15.d5! ♗axc4 16.♗e2 exd5 17.♙xc4 dxc4 18.♙e7 Also in this game Black has quickly run into serious difficulties, 1-0 (29) Nguyen, T (2553) – Hjartarson, J (2524) Tallinn 2019.

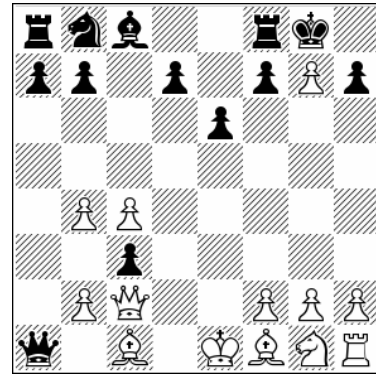
B) 6...♗c6!? An enterprising idea! 7.exf6! ♗xd4 [7...cxd4 8.fxg7 ♖e8 9.a3 ♗a5 10.axb4 ♗xa1 11.♗e4 White wins] 8.♗d1 ♗xf6 9.♗f3 d5 10.♙d2 ♗g6 11.♖c1 ♖d8 12.♗xd4 cxd4 13.♗e2 ♙xd2+ 14.♗xd2 d3 15.♗f4 ♗e4+ 16.♗e3 White has refuted Black's concept, 1-0 (21) Mohammad, N (2413) – Geshko, A (2260) Moscow 2018.

### 7.a3 ♗a5

A) 7...dxc3 8.axb4 ♗g4 9.♗f3 ♗c6 10.♗xc3 ♗b6 11.c5 ♗xb4 12.♗xb4 ♗xb4 13.♖a4 a5



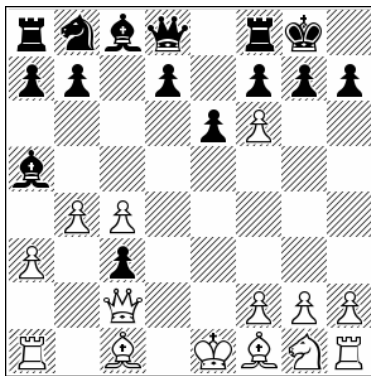
Position after: 13...a5



Position after: 10.fxg7

14.h3! [14.♙d2 b5! 15.cxb6 ♙b7 with complications not unfavorable for Black] 14...♘h6 15.♙d2 b5 16.♙xb5 ♙b7 17.♚e2 ♜fb8 18.♙xb4 ♙xf3+ 19.♚xf3 ♜xb5 20.♙c3 ♜xc5 21.♜d1 White is better.

B) 7...♙a5 8.exf6 dxc3 9.b4



Position after: 9.b4

9...♜xf6 [9...♙c7 10.fxg7 ♚xg7 11.♜xc3+ ♜f6 12.♙h6+ 1-0 (12) Krueger, E (2033) – Schuetze, M (1696) Binz 2011] 10.bxa5 d5 11.♘f3 g6 12.♙g5 White is winning, 1-0 (45) Soffer, R (2488) – Abergel, T (2474) Israel 2011.

8.axb4 ♜xa1 9.exf6 dxc3 10.fxg7

White has plenty of compensation for the sacrificed exchange. Now Black has to decide whether to lose a move with his rook or take the pawn on g7.

10...♜e8

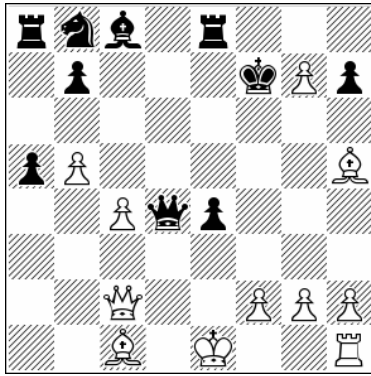
10...♚xg7 11.♜xc3+ f6 [11...♚g8 12.♙d3 ♘c6 13.♘e2 f6 14.0-0 ♜a4 15.b5 ♘e5 16.b3 ♜a2 17.♙c2 ♘xc4 18.bxc4 d5 19.♙a3 ♜f7 20.♙d3 1-0 (20) Banschikov, V – Saevich, Y corr. 2015] 12.♙d3 ♘c6 13.♘e2 ♜a4 14.b5 ♘e5 15.0-0 ♘xd3 16.♜xd3 ♜b4 17.b3 b6 18.♜g3+ ♚f7 19.♜f3 ♜b8 20.♜h3 White has nice attacking play, 1-0 (47) Fridman, D (2626) – Baginskaite, C (2100) Puhajarve 2021.

11.bxc3

Black has to find a quick way to develop his pieces, as White is threatening to advance his knight to f3 and then g5.

11...b5

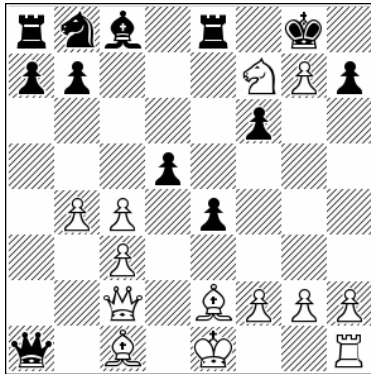
A) 11...a5 12.b5 e5 13.♘h3 d5 14.♘g5 e4 15.♙e2 d4 16.cxd4 ♜xd4 17.♘xf7 ♚xf7 18.♙h5+



Position after: 18. ♖h5+

18... ♔g8 19. ♙xe8 1-0 (19) Laczay, I – Metz, L corr. 2012.

B) 11... d5 12. ♘f3 e5 13. ♘g5 e4 14. ♙e2 f6 15. ♘f7

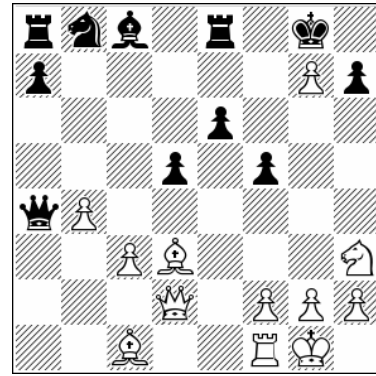


Position after: 15. ♘f7

15... d4 16. ♘d6 ♖e5 17. cxd4 ♗xd4 18. ♘b5 ♗d3 19. ♗a2 ♗d7 20. c5+ ♔xg7 21. ♙f4 White has a big advantage, 1-0 (61) Houdini 1.5a – Houdini 1.5a Internet (blitz) 2011.

### 12. ♙d3

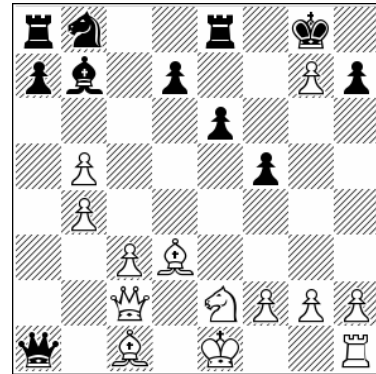
Here is another example of how White could conduct his attack. 12. ♘h3 ♗a4 13. ♗d2 bxc4 14. ♙xc4 d5 15. ♙d3 f5 16.0-0



Position after: 16.0-0

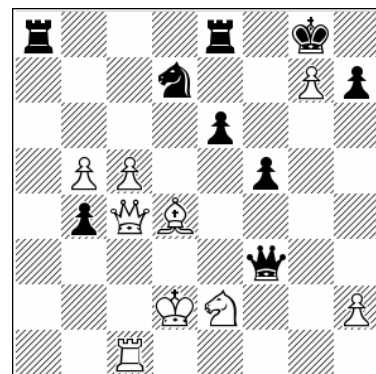
White plans to send his queen to h6! 16... a5 17. ♗h6 ♖a7 18. ♙g5 ♖xg7 19. ♘f4 ♘d7 20. ♖e1 ♗c6 21. c4! dxc4 22. ♙xf5 White should win.

12... f5 13. cxb5 ♙b7 14. ♘e2



Position after: 14. ♘e2

14... ♙xg2 15. ♖g1 ♙e4 16. ♔d2 a5 17. ♙b2 ♗a2 18. c4 ♙xd3 19. ♔xd3 d5 20. c5 d4 21. ♙xd4 ♗d5 22. ♗c4 ♗e4+ 23. ♔d2 axb4 24. ♖c1 ♘d7 25. f3 ♗xf3



Position after: 25... ♗xf3

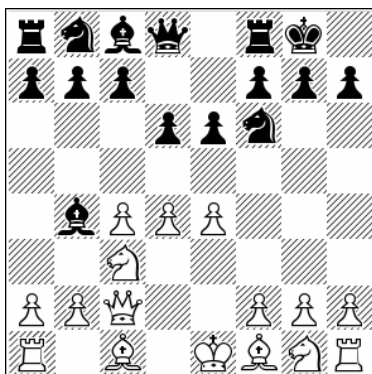
26. c6

Another fabulous correspondence game. No need for extra comments; the game speaks for

itself, 1-0 (26) Kiselev, V – Zavrzhnov, A corr. 2013.

## b) 5...d6 6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♖g4

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.e4 d6



Position after: 5...d6

More cautious than the 5...c5 line. Black wants to take a more classical approach, closing the center first.

6.e5

I am focusing on this critical aspect of the line. White can, of course, choose to play less sharply with 6.a3, but that is not so important for this book, as this work is about critical lines.

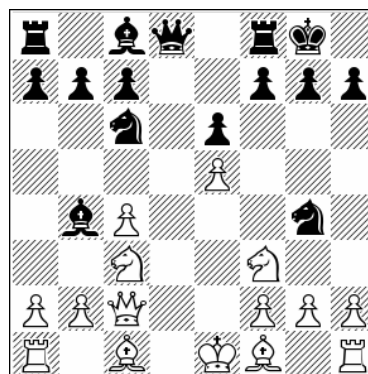
6...dxe5 7.dxe5 ♖g4

This is a well-known line. It was supposed to be good for Black, but the positions are far from easy to play.

8.♗f3

8.a3 ♘c5 9.♗e4 ♘d4 10.♗f3 ♗xe5 11.♗xd4 ♙xd4 12.♘e3 ♙d7 13.♘e2 f5 14.f4 ♗g6 15.♗c3 ♗c6 16.♖d1 ♙f7 17.0-0 e5 The sacrifice of the central pawn did not out work well. Black has better prospects, ½-½ (38) Fier, A (2636) – Nisipeanu, L (2667) Linares 2015.

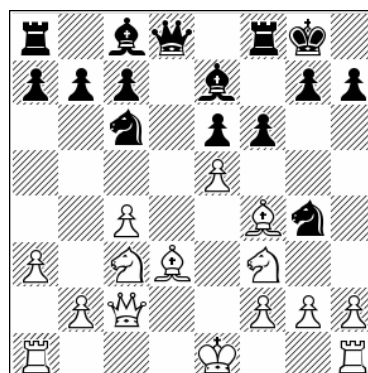
8...♗c6



Position after: 8...♗c6

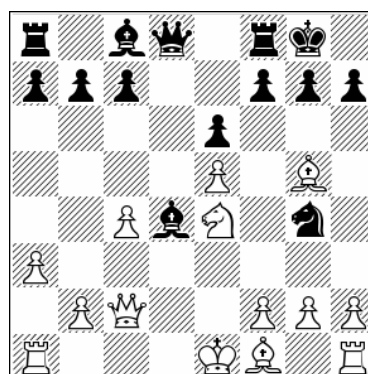
9.♘f4

9.a3 ♘c5 [9...♘e7 10.♘f4 f6 11.♘d3!



Position after: 11.♘d3!

11...f5 12.h3 ♗h6 13.0-0-0 Already White has established a big advantage, 1-0 (35) Fridman, D (2627) – Kasimdzhanov, R (2700) Rosmalen 2014] 10.♗e4 ♗d4! 11.♗xd4 ♘xd4 12.♘g5

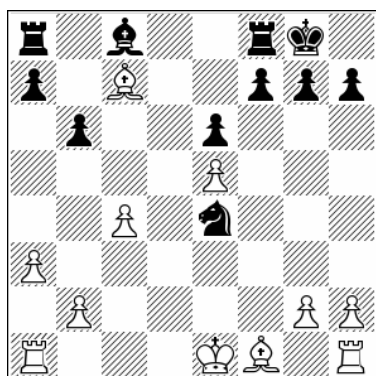


Position after: 12.♘g5

A) 12...f6 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♙h4 ♘h6 15.g4! White has a clear advantage, ½-½ (46) Fridman, D (2639) – Kveinys, A (2527) Liepaja 2014.

B) 12...♙e8 13.0-0-0 c5 14.♙e2 ♘xe5 15.♞xd4 cxd4 16.♘f6+ gxf6 17.♙xf6 ♘g6 18.♙d2 d3 19.♙h6 d2+ 20.♙b1 1-0 (20) Al Sayed, M (2443) – Tissir, M (2416) Dubai 2004.

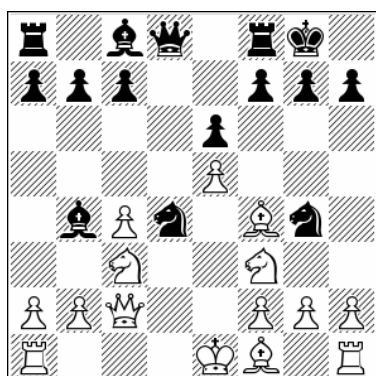
C) 12...♙xf2+! Black has to be vigilant, otherwise White is quick with his play. 13.♙xf2 ♘xf2 14.♙xd8 ♘xe4 15.♙xc7 b6



Position after: 15...b6

We have reached an endgame that is OK for Black. 16.a4 ♙a6 17.a5 ♞fc8 18.♙d6 ♞d8 19.♙b4! Best by far. [19.♙e2 ♘d6 20.exd6 ♙b7 now it is White who is in danger, ½-½ (54) Vedrickas, T (2357) – Kveinys, A (2522) Lithuania 2015] 19...♞db8 20.axb6 ♞xb6 21.♙e7 ♞e8 22.♙d6 ♞c8 23.c5 ♘xc5 24.♙xc5 ♞xc5 25.♙xa6 ♞xa6 26.♞xa6 ♞c1+ 27.♙d2 ♞xh1 28.♞xa7 g5 29.h3 ♞h2 30.b4 ♞xg2+ 31.♙c3 ♞g3+ 32.♙c4 ♞xh3 33.b5 ♞h1 This is equal.

9...♘d4



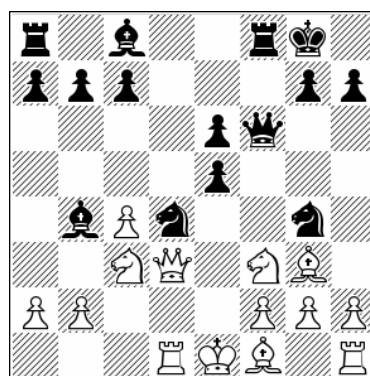
Position after: 9...♘d4

Again this is probably the only good choice.

9...f6 10.♙d3 h6 11.0-0-0 ♙e7 12.exf6 ♙xf6 13.♙g3 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 This is simply a bad endgame for Black, 1-0 (47) Predke, A (2615) – Vokhidov, S (2446) St Petersburg 2018.

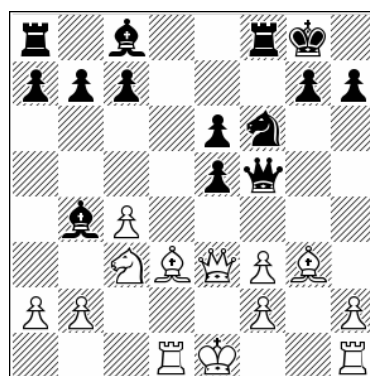
10.♙d2

10.♙d3 f6 11.♞d1 fxe5 12.♙g3 ♙f6



Position after: 12...♙f6

13.♙e4 [13.♙e2 ♘xe2 14.♙xe2 e4 15.♙xe4 ♙xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♙xc3+ 17.♞d2 ♙a1+ 18.♞d1 ♙c3+ Black already has perpetual check, ½-½ (36) Khodashenas, M (2393) – Ghaem Maghami, E (2570) Rasht 2016] 13...♙f5 14.♙d3 ♘f6 15.♙e3 ♘xf3+ [15...♘g4 is also OK, and now White has nothing better than repeating moves] 16.gxf3



Position after: 16.gxf3

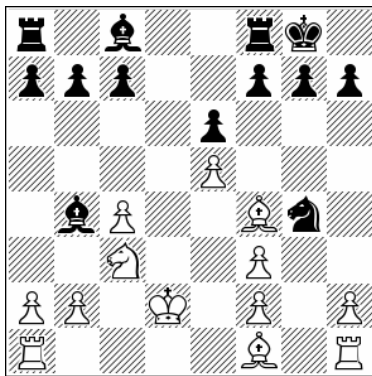
16...♙h5 [16...e4 17.fxe4 ♙h5 18.e5 ♙xc3+ 19.bxc3 ♘d7 20.♙e2 ♙f5 21.h4 b6 This is not so clear, ½-½ (29) Akshat, K (2342) – Gozzoli, Y

(2594) Escaldes 2017] 17.♙xe5 b6 18.♖g1 ♗b7 19.♙e2 ♖f7 Black is also fine here.

### 10...f6

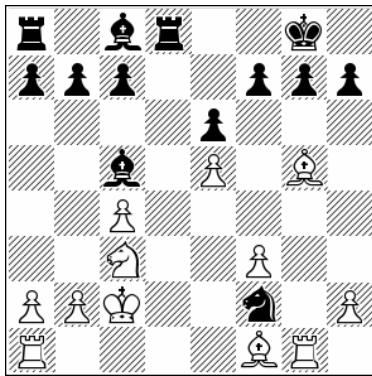
Black has an important alternative which at first glance may appear rather a strange choice, but it not easy for White to extract a significant advantage.

10...♗xf3+ 11.gxf3 ♖xd2+ 12.♔xd2



Position after: 12.♔xd2

A) 12...♗xf2!? This is very unusual but it might be playable. 13.♖g1 ♖d8+ 14.♔c2 ♙c5 15.♙g5



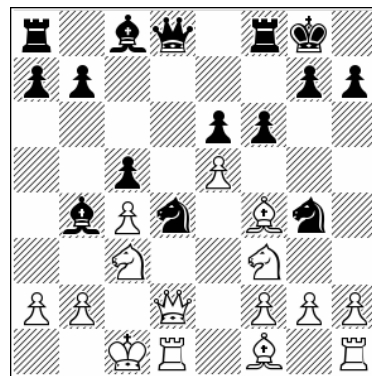
Position after: 15.♙g5

15...♙d7! A really unusual position – the black knight on f2 can't move, but White doesn't have a useful plan for capturing that knight! [15...♖d7 16.♙f6 g6 17.♖g2 ♔f8 18.♙h4 ♗h3 19.♗e4 b6 20.♖g4 h5 21.♖g3 g5 22.♗xg5 ♗xg5 23.♙xg5 this position is clearly better for White, 1-0 (51) EvilKnievel – MarioDeMonti Internet 2017] 16.♖g2 ♙c6 17.b4 ♙d4 18.♙e2 ♗h3 19.♙f6 g6 20.b5 ♙xb5 21.cxb5 ♗f4 22.♙xd8 ♖xd8 23.♖g4

♗xe2 24.♖d1 ♗xc3 25.♖gxd4 ♗d5 This endgame is OK for Black, as White can't break this structure, 1-0 (79) EvilKnievel -- mateinfour Infinity Chess (blitz) 2017.

B) 12...♗h6 More natural. 13.♖d1 ♗f5 14.♙d3 ♙e7 15.♔c1 ♗h4 16.♙e4 a6 17.♙e3 ♖b8 18.♖hg1 b6 This is not so clear. The knight on h4 can actually come back to f5, especially after Black goes bishop to b7 at the first possible moment.

### 11.0-0-0 c5

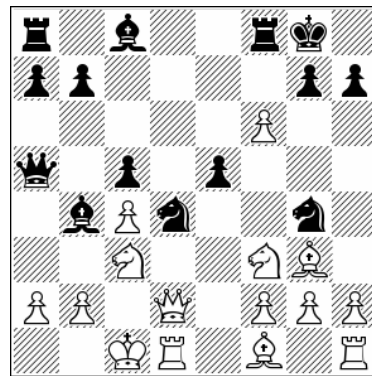


Position after: 11...c5

### 12.♙d3

Alternatives are possible and some of them are good actually.

A) In fact this whole line has been known for a long time. 12.♙g3 ♖a5 Best. 13.exf6 e5!

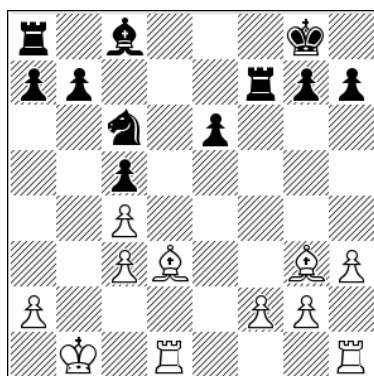


Position after: 13...e5!

This is energetic and best. 14.♙d3 [14.♗xe5 ♖xf6! 15.♗d3 ♙xc3 16.♖xc3 ♖xa2 17.♗xc5 ♙f5!

with counterplay] 14...e4 15.f7+ ♖xf7 16.♙xe4 ♗f6 17.♙d3 ♙g4 18.♗e5 ♙xd1 19.♗xf7 ♙b3 20.♗h6+ ♗h8

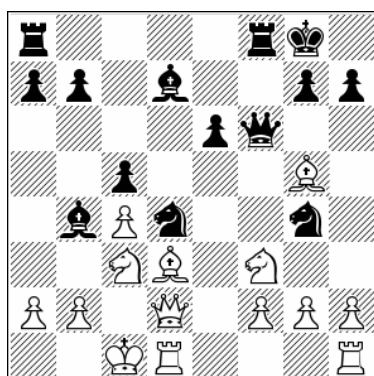
**B)** 12.h3 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 fxe5 14.♙xe5 ♖a5 [14...b5 15.♖e3! ♖a5 16.♗b1 bxc4 17.♙xc4 ♙xc3 18.♖xc3 ♖xc3 19.bxc3 ♗c6 20.♙d6 ♖xf2 21.g4 White is better in this endgame] 15.♙d3 ♖f7 16.♗b1 ♙xc3 17.♖xc3 ♖xc3 18.bxc3 ♗c6 19.♙g3



Position after: 19.♙g3

19...♗a5! This is the right way and now it's balanced.

**12...♙d7 13.exf6 ♖xf6 14.♙g5!**



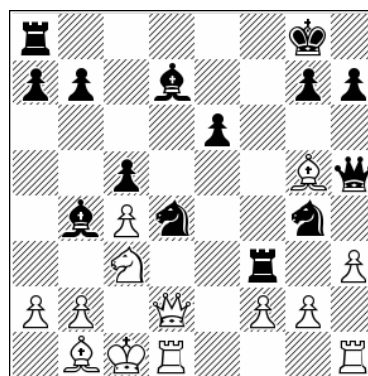
Position after: 14.♙g5!

**14...♖f7**

14...♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♖xf3 16.♙e2 ♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♖e4 18.♙xg4 ♖xg4 19.♖hg1 ♖xc4 20.♙h6 White wins.

**15.h3**

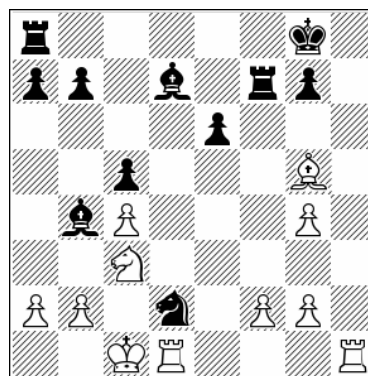
15.♙b1 Losing momentum. 15...♖h5! 16.h3 ♖xf3!!



Position after: 16...♖xf3!!

Outstanding tactics! 17.hxg4 ♖xc3+! 18.bxc3 ♙a3+ Black wins.

**15...♗xf3 16.♙xh7+ ♗h8 17.hxg4 ♗xd2 18.♙g6+ ♗g8 19.♙xf7+ ♖xf7**

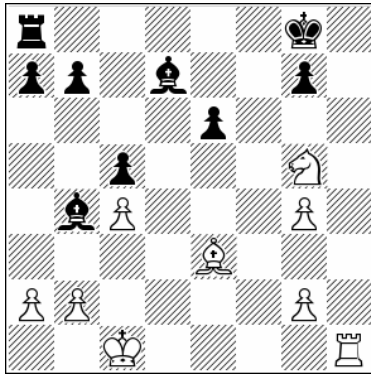


Position after: 19...♖xf7

**20.♙xd2!**

20.♖xd2 e5 21.f3 ♙xc3 22.bxc3 e4 23.♖e1 exf3 24.gxf3 ♙c6 25.f4 ♙f3 Black has managed to equalize the chances, ½-½ (79) Bernasek, J (2515) – Svoboda, V (2406) Czech Republic 2016.

**20...♖xf2 21.♙e3 ♖f7 22.♗e4 ♙c6 23.♗g5 ♖d7 24.♖xd7 ♙xd7**



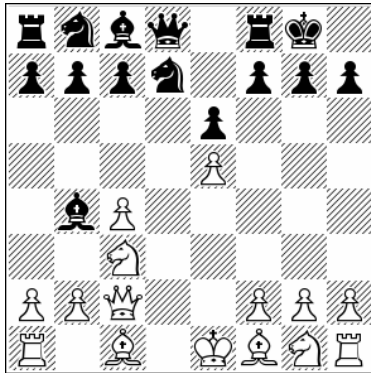
Position after: 24...♙xd7

25.♘f3

White has some advantage here.

**c) 5...d6 6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘fd7**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d6  
6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♘fd7

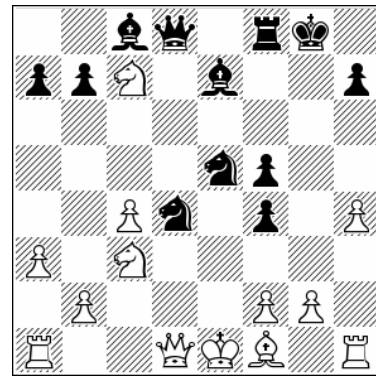


Position after: 7...♘fd7

This is another way. Black is hoping his knight will reach the good c5-square.

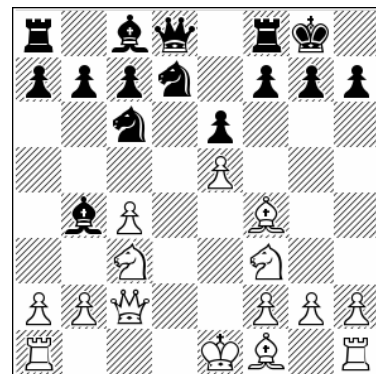
8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♙f4

9.a3 ♙e7 10.♙f4 g5 A consequent move. [10...f5  
11.exf6 ♙xf6 12.♙e3 ♘de5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5  
14.♙e2 White has the better game, as he has the  
important e4-square for a knight and the better  
structure in general, 1-0 (32) El Gindy, E (2526)  
– Hussein, H (2354) Abu Dhabi 2008] 11.h4 Best  
by far, according to the engines. 11...gxf4  
12.♘g5 f5 13.♘xe6 ♚e8 14.♘xc7 ♚d8 15.♘xa8  
♘d4 16.♚d1 ♘xe5 17.♘c7



Position after: 17.♘c7

17...f3!? [17...♙c5 18.♘3d5! The knight on c7  
covers the e8-square, preventing a dangerous  
check by Black. 18...♘g4 19.b4 ♙b6 20.♚a2 ♙xc7  
21.♚xd4 White is winning, 1-0 (40) Zhigalko, A  
(2603) – Fedorchuk, S (2660) Legnica 2013.]  
18.♘3d5 ♘ec6 19.gxf3 a6 20.♚d3 ♙d6 21.0-0-0  
♙xc7 22.f4 ♙e6 23.♚g1+ ♚h8 24.♙g2 A strange  
position but it seems OK for White.



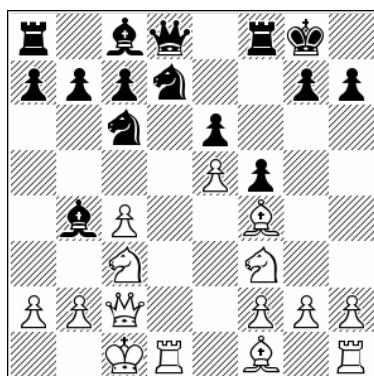
Position after: 9.♙f4

9...f6

Black has other choices.

**A)** 9...♘c5 10.♖d1 ♕e7 11.a3 ♙xc3+ 12.♗xc3 a5 13.♙e2 a4 14.♗e3 b6 15.♙g5 f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.♙h6 ♖d8 18.♗xd8+ ♘xd8 19.♘d4 White is better, 1-0 (40) Ippolito, D (2445) – Kaufman, L (2376) ICC INT 2008.

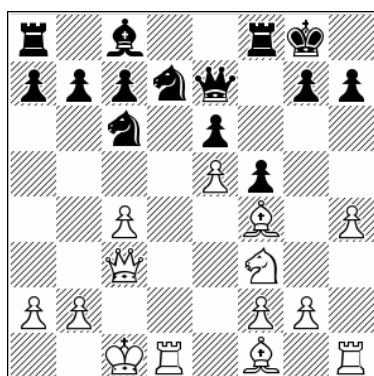
**B)** 9...f5 10.0-0-0 White does not need to do this, but it is alright.



Position after: 10.0-0-0

**B1)** 10...b6 11.♘b5! a6 [11...♙c5 12.♘g5 Black faces serious problems] 12.♘bd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♕e8 14.c5! ♘b8 15.cxb6 cxb6 16.g3 White keeps the advantage.

**B2)** 10...♙xc3 11.♗xc3 ♕e7 12.h4!



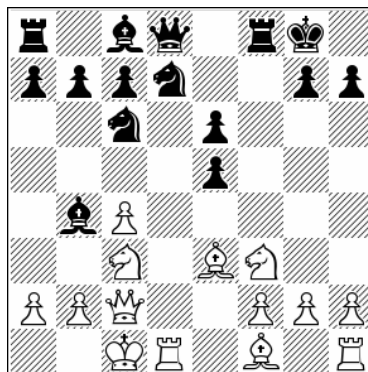
Position after: 12.h4!

12...a5 13.h5 ♘c5 14.♗e3 b6 15.h6 g6 16.♙g5 ♕e8 17.♘d4! ♘e4 18.♙f4 ♙b7 19.f3 ♘c5 20.♙g5 ♘b4 21.a3 ♘c6 22.♙b1 ♘xd4 23.♗xd4 a4 24.♙e2 White has easier play, as the bishop on g5 is very strong, 1-0 (51) Deep Shredder 13-ICE 3.0 Internet 2018.

**10.0-0-0**

10.exf6 e5 11.♙e3 ♘xf6 12.♖d1 ♕e8 Black is very active here, ½-½ (54) Svoboda, V (2428) – Bartel, M (2626) Czechia 2013.

**10...fxe5 11.♙e3!?**



Position after: 11.♙e3!?

An interesting concept, giving up a pawn but gaining the important e4-square for his pieces.

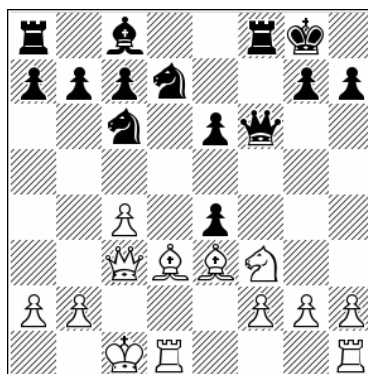
**11...♙xc3**

Probably the best chance, eliminating the strong knight.

**A)** 11...♕e7 12.♙d3 g6 13.h4 ♘c5 [13...♘f6 14.♘e4! White has a big advantage] 14.h5 ♘xd3+ 15.♗xd3 ♖d8 16.♕e4 ♙xc3 17.♗xd8+ ♘xd8 18.hxg6! It's winning for White.

**B)** 11...♘d4 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♙xd4 ♕g5+ 14.♙e3 ♕f6 15.♙d3 This is easy play for White, who has a big advantage already, 1-0 (41) Potapova, M (2277) – Paichadze, L (2565) lichess.org INT 2021.

**12.♗xc3 ♕f6 13.♙d3 e4!**

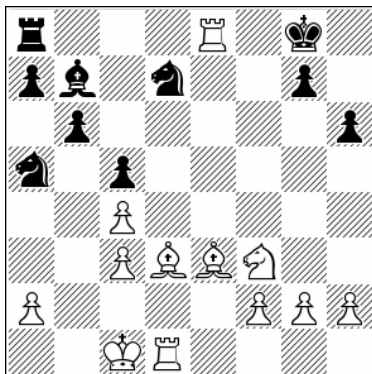


Position after: 13...e4!

14. ♖xe4 ♔xc3+ 15. bxc3 ♘a5 16. ♙d3 b6  
 17. ♖he1 h6 18. ♙d4 ♙b7 19. ♖xe6 c5 20. ♙e3  
 ♖fe8 21. ♖xe8+

21... ♖xe8

It's still not so easy, but we can say that White has some edge.



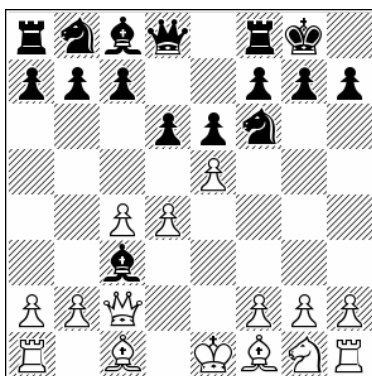
Position after: 21. ♖xe8+

**d) 5...d6 6.e5 ♙xc3+**

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♔c2 0-0 5. e4 d6  
 6. e5

We have a recent interesting try that is a bit unusual but playable.

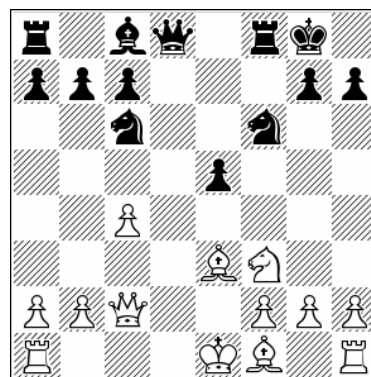
6... ♙xc3+



Position after: 6... ♙xc3+

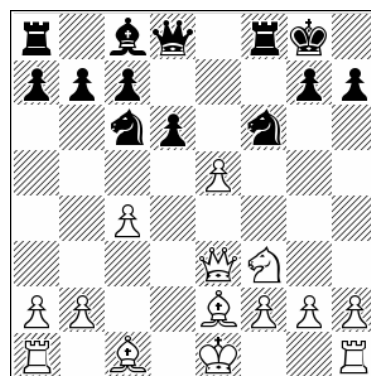
7. bxc3!?

7. ♔xc3 Certainly a logical reaction. 7... ♘e4 That is the idea, to plant the knight in the center.  
 8. ♔e3 [8. ♔c2 f5 9. exf6 ♘xf6 10. ♘f3 e5 11. dxe5 dxe5 12. ♙e3 ♘c6!]



Position after: 12... ♘c6!

13. ♖d1 ♔e7 14. ♙e2 e4 15. ♘d4 ♘b4 16. ♔c3 ♙g4 [Black has seized the initiative] 8...f5 9. exf6 ♘xf6 10. ♘f3 ♘c6 11. ♙e2 e5 12. dxe5

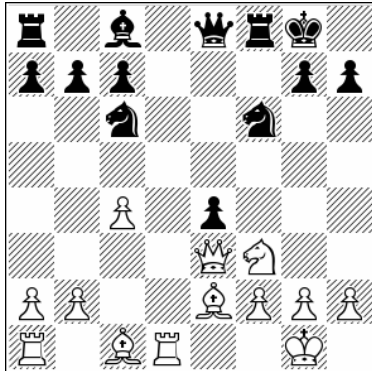


Position after: 12. dxe5

A) 12... ♘g4 13. ♔g5 ♔xg5 14. ♙g5 ♘gxe5 15. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16. ♙e3 ♙f5 17. ♔d2 b6 18. ♖he1 ♖ae8 19. f3 ♘g6 20. ♙f1 White has a pleasant

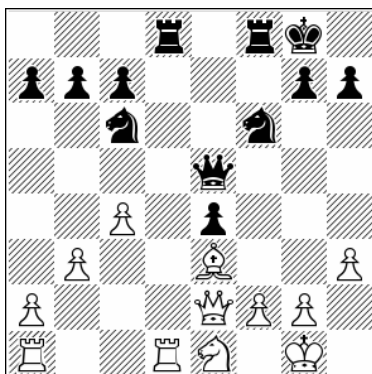
endgame but it's not easy to extract a win from here, as Black is solid, ½-½ (37) So, W (2770) – Xiong, J (2709) lichess.org INT 2020.

**B) 12...dxe5** This is perhaps stronger. 13.0-0 e4 14.♖d1 ♕e8



Position after: 14...♕e8

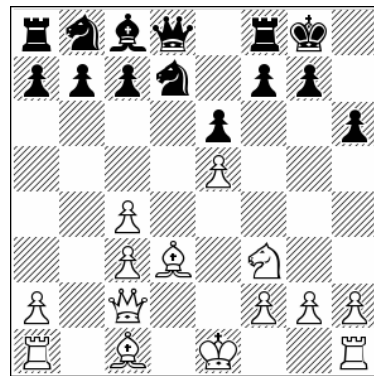
15.♘e1!? [15.♘d4 ♘g4 16.♙xg4 ♙xg4 17.♞e1 ♞d8 18.♘xc6 ♗xc6 19.♗g3 ♙c8 20.b3 ♞d3 21.♙e3 h6 White doesn't have anything here, so his play needs to be improved earlier if possible] 15...♙g4 16.h3 ♙xe2 17.♗xe2 ♗e5 18.♙e3 ♞ad8 19.b3



Position after: 19.b3

19...♘b4! Again Black is not worse.

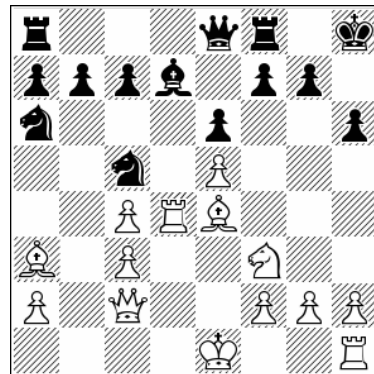
**7...dxe5 8.dxe5 ♘fd7 9.♘f3 h6 10.♙d3!**



Position after: 10.♙d3!

**10...♗e7**

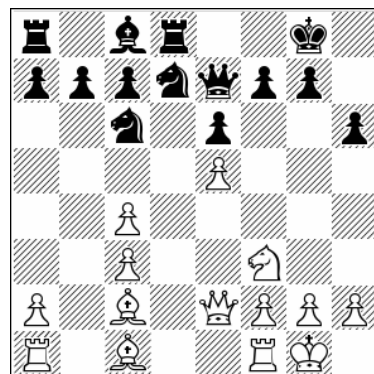
Another idea also fails to solve Black's problems. 10...♘c5 11.♙h7+ ♘h8 12.♙a3 ♘ba6 13.♞d1 ♙d7 14.♙e4 ♗e8 15.♞d4!



Position after: 15.♞d4!

A nice square for the rook. 15...♙c6 16.♙xc6 ♗xc6 17.h4 White is better.

**11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♞d8 13.♙c2**



Position after: 13.♙c2

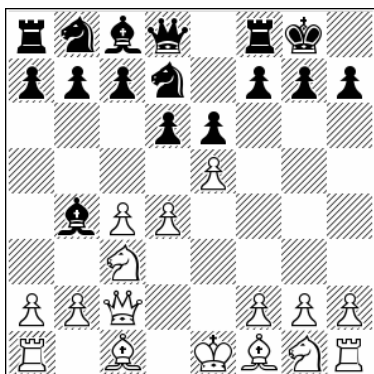
Black's problem is that his concept is passive. Now the only way is to go knight to f8 and bishop to d7, but that is also a dubious strategy.

13...f6 14.exf6 ♖xf6 15.♗d4 ♗f8 16.♖b1

White is better, 1-0 (31) Xu, X (2573) – Liu, Y (2524) Xinghua 2021.

### e) 5...d6 6.e5 ♗fd7

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.e5 ♗fd7



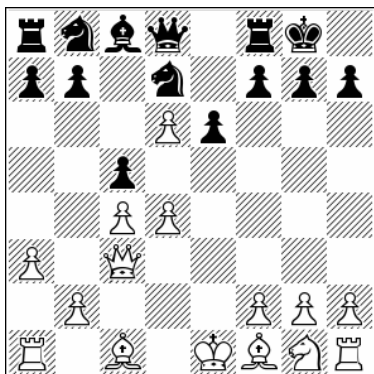
Position after: 6...♗fd7

A flexible approach. Black wants to hit White's center with ...c5.

7.♗f3

The natural reaction, but not the only reasonable one.

A) 7.a3 This is probably premature but it's not clear whether Black can exploit it. 7...♗xc3+ 8.♖xc3 c5 9.exd6

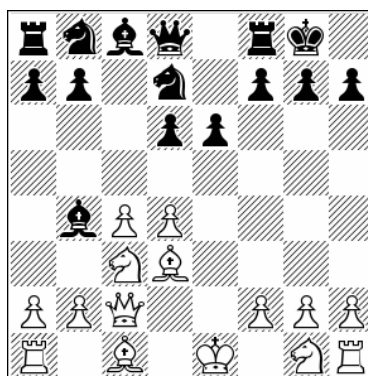


Position after: 9.exd6

9...e5 [9...cxd4 10.♖xd4 ♗c6 11.♖e3 ♗f6 12.♗e2 ♖xd6 13.♗f3 e5 14.0-0 ♖e8 15.♖d1 ♖c7

16.h3 ♗f5 17.♗d2 ♗d4 Black is doing OK, 0-1 (28) Woodward, T (2343) – Dgebuadze, A (2552) West Bromwich 2004] 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.♗e3 ♖xd6 12.♖d1 ♖e7 13.♗f3 ♗bd7 14.b4 ♗e4 15.♖c2 ♗ef6 16.c5 e4 17.♗d4 ♗e5 18.♗e2 ♗g6 19.0-0 This position is fine for White, 0-1 (54) Pershin, D (2387) – Antipov, M (2607) Sochi 2020.

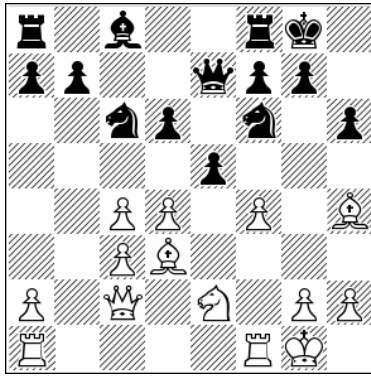
B) White can decide to release the tension in the center and develop in a slightly different way. 7.exd6 cxd6 8.♗d3



Position after: 8.♗d3

B1) 8...♗f6 9.♗ge2 b6 10.a3 ♗xc3+ 11.♗xc3 ♗b7 12.0-0 ♗bd7 13.b4 White has a space advantage and the bishop pair, an ideal outcome for the Classical line, 0-1 (32) Bok, B (2624) – Martirosyan, H (2617) chess.com INT 2020.

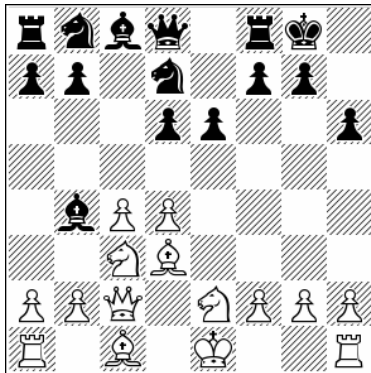
B2) 8...e5 9.♗ge2 ♗c6 10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♗f6 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4 ♖e7 14.f4!



Position after: 14.f4!

[14.♖ae1 g5 this is less clear, 0-1 (32) Vrolijk, L (2501) – Niemann, H (2459) chess.com INT 2020] 14...exd4 15.♖ae1 ♖d8 16.cxd4 The pin is very unpleasant for Black.

**B3) 8...h6 9.♗ge2**



Position after: 9.♗ge2

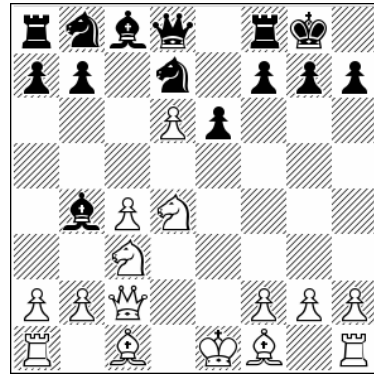
9...d5 [9...♗c6 10.0-0 ♗a5 11.a3 e5 12.♗e3 ♖h4 13.♗b5 ♗f6 14.d5 e4 15.dxc6 exd3 16.♖xd3 bxc6 17.♗xd6 ♖d8 18.c5 Black doesn't have enough compensation, 1-0 (42) Bok, B (2624) – Gorodetzky, D (2495) chess.com INT 2021] 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a3 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♗c6 13.0-0 ♗f6 14.♗f4 ♖e8 15.♖ae1 ♗d7 16.♖c1 ♖e6 17.♗g3 ♖xe1 18.♖xe1 ♖f8 19.h3 ♖c8 20.♗b1 White has the initiative, the bishop pair and chances to create an attack, 0-1 (56) Van Foreest, L (2531) – Paichadze, L (2574) Batumi 2019.

**7...c5**

7...♗c6 8.exd6 cxd6 9.♗d3 h6 10.0-0 ♗a5 11.a3 ♗b6 12.♖d1 e5 13.dxe5 ♗dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗f4 White has the edge, ½-½ (63) Vallejo

Pons, F (2695) – Abdusattorov, N (2546) St Petersburg 2018.

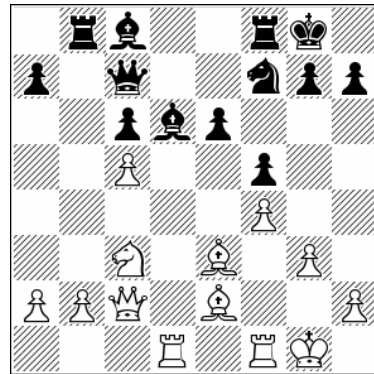
**8.exd6 cxd4 9.♗xd4**



Position after: 9.♗xd4

**9...♗xd6**

9...♗c6 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♗e3 ♗xd6 12.♖d1 ♖c7 13.g3 ♗e5 14.♗e2 f5 15.0-0 ♗f7 16.f4 ♖b8 17.c5!



Position after: 17.c5!

17...♗e7 18.♗c4 ♗f6 19.♖fe1 ♗h8 20.b3 e5 21.♗e2 White has the better chances here, since his pieces are better prepared for the middlegame.

**10.♗e3 ♖e7**

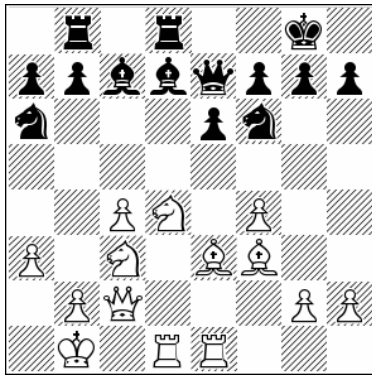
**A) 10...a6 11.0-0-0 ♖c7 12.♗d3 ♗f6 13.♗e4 ♗xe4 14.♗xe4 f5 15.♗d3 ♗c5 16.♗b1 ♖d8 17.♗f3 ♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♖c5 19.e4 White has the initiative, ½-½ (30) Akobian, V (2614) – Valderrama Quiceno, E (2430) Krasnaya Polyana 2021.**

**B)** 10...♘c6 11.0-0-0 ♕e5 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.f4 ♕xc3 14.♚xc3 ♚c7 15.♕d3 This is better for White, with g4 coming soon, ½-½ (34) Ioannidis, E (2382) – Nikolaidis, I (2564) Thessaloniki 2018.

**11.0-0-0 ♘a6 12.♖b1 ♘f6 13.a3 ♕d7 14.♕e2 ♕e5 15.f4 ♕c7 16.♞he1 ♞ab8 17.♕f3 ♞fd8**

**18.g4**

White has developed a tremendous position, 1-0 (34) Mamedyarov, S (2772) – Caruana, F (2822) Bucharest 2019.

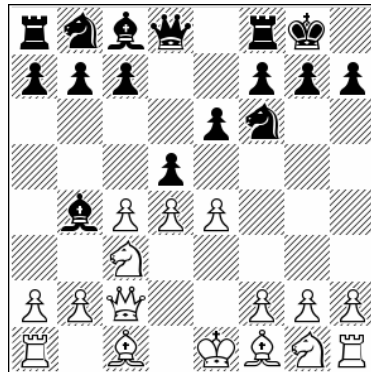


Position after: 17...♞fd8

# Chapter 12

## 5.e4 d5 – Early Deviations

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 12 – 5.e4 d5 – Early Deviations

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♗e4

a) 7.a3

b) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙xe4

c) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xd3 13.♚xd3 b6 14.cxd5 ♚xd5

d) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xd3 13.♚xd3 b6 14.cxd5 exd5

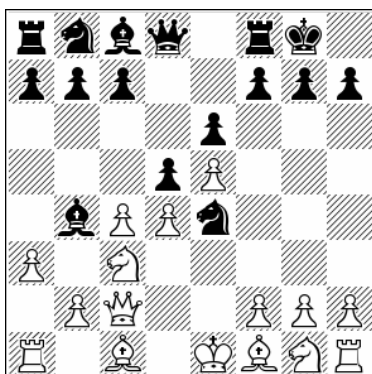
e) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♙d7

## a) 7.a3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5

Black's main move here, and the best. We will deal separately with two other options, 5...c5 ad 5...d6.

6.e5 ♘e4 7.a3

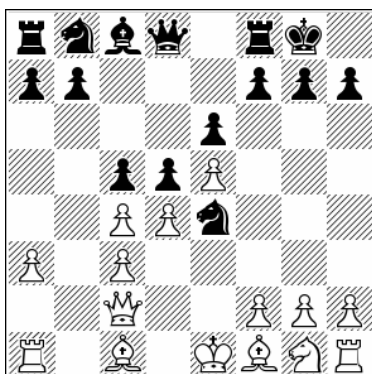


Position after: 7.a3

We will start with this, which was the main reply at the beginning of this line but is not so popular anymore, as Black found ways to counter it. From time to time it is still seen in tournament practice, and it is very sharp.

7...♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 c5

It's all about the knight on e4 -- can that knight survive in the center, or will Black will be forced to remove it?

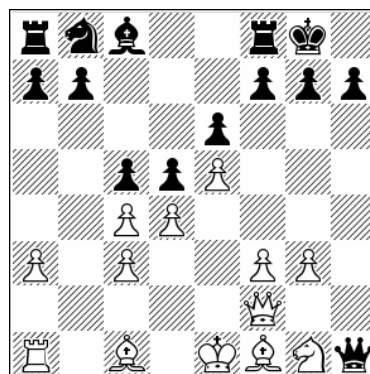


Position after: 8...c5

9.♙d3

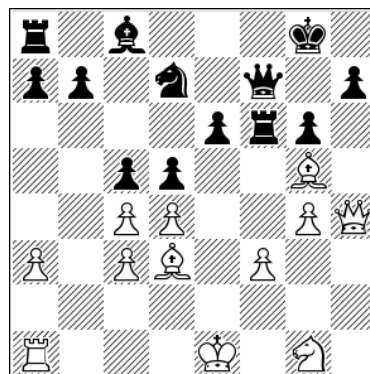
White has a few other interesting ideas and all of them should be treated equally.

A) One interesting new attempt poses the question: can Black escape after putting his queen in a corner?. 9.f3!? ♚h4+ 10.g3 ♘xg3 11.hxg3 ♚xh1 12.♚f2



Position after: 12.♚f2

12...♚h5 [12...♘d7 13.♘h3 f6 14.♙e2 already we can see problems for Black] 13.♙d3 f6 14.exf6 ♖xf6 [14...gxf6 15.g4 ♚f7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♚h4 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♘c6 19.♖a2 f5 20.♙h6 The engines persistently give an edge to Black, but a closer look tells us that Black has to be careful. Anyhow, it's very sharp.] 15.g4 ♚f7 16.♚h4 g6 17.♙g5 ♘d7

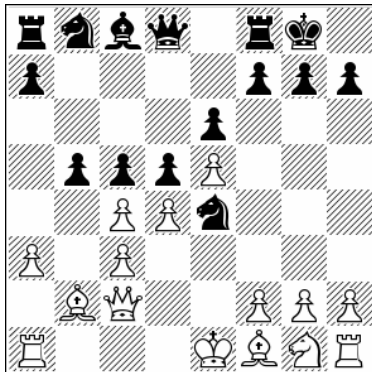


Position after: 17...♘d7

18.♖a2!? [18.♙f2 dxc4 19.♙xc4 cxd4 20.cxd4 b5 21.♙xb5 ♙b7! 22.♚g3 ♖f8 23.♙xf6 ♘xf6 Black is better, 0-1 (32) Caruana, F (2835) – So, W (2770) lichess.org INT 2020] 18...cxd4 19.cxd4 dxc4

20. ♖xc4 b5 21. ♖xb5 ♜b8 22. ♞c2 ♞xf3 23. ♜xf3 ♞xf3 24. a4 It seems that the game is balanced now, and will probably end in a perpetual.

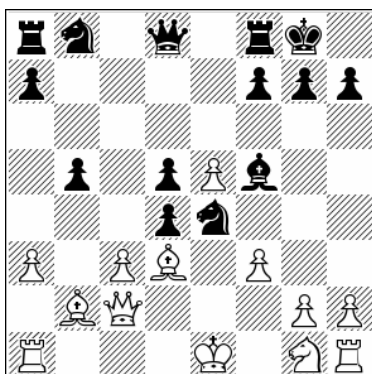
**B)** 9. ♖b2 b5!?



Position after: 9...b5!?

This seems to be strong.

**B1)** 10. cxd5 exd5 11. ♖d3 ♖f5 12. f3 cxd4!



Position after: 12...cxd4!

13. ♜e2 [13. fxe4 dxe4 14. ♖xb5 d3 15. ♞f2 ♖g6 16. ♖a4 ♞a5 17. ♖d1 ♜c6 18. ♜h3 ♜xe5 19. 0-0 ♜c4 completely winning for Black] 13... ♜c6 14. 0-0 dxc3 Also here it's clear that Black is doing more than fine.

**B2)** 10. f3 ♞h4+ 11. g3 ♜xg3 12. ♞f2 ♜f5 13. cxb5 cxd4 14. ♞xh4 ♜xh4 15. cxd4 ♜d7 16. a4 f6 Black is fine.

**B3)** 10. cxb5 cxd4 11. cxd4 ♞a5+ 12. ♜e2 ♖d7 13. ♜e3 ♞c8 14. ♞d3 ♖xb5 Black is winning, 0-1 (34) Martins, D (2398) – Aleksandrov, A (2525) chess.com INT 2021.

**9... ♞a5**

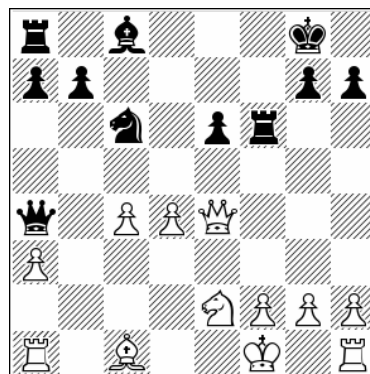
There is another sharp possibility. 9...cxd4 10. cxd4 ♞a5+ 11. ♜f1 ♜c6 12. ♜e2 f6



Position after: 12...f6

13. exf6 [13. ♖xe4 dxe4 14. exf6 ♞f5! 15. ♖e3 ♞xf6 16. ♞d1 b6 17. ♞xe4 ♖b7 Black has compensation, ½-½ (38) Nisipeanu, L (2655) – Yilmaz, M (2630) PlayChess INT 2020]

**A)** 13... ♞xf6 14. ♖xe4 dxe4 15. ♞xe4 [15. ♖e3 ♖d7 16. ♜g1 ♞af8 17. h4 this interesting position might favor White] 15... ♞a4!

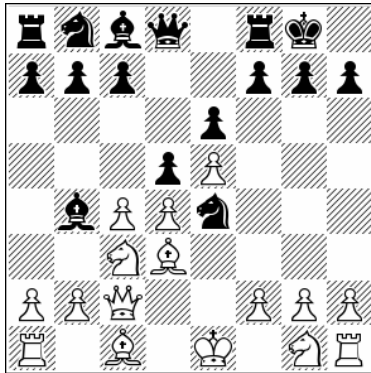


Position after: 15...♞a4!

Attacking the c4-pawn gives Black fine play. [15... ♖d7 16. ♖e3 ♞af8 17. ♜g1 e5 18. d5 ♜d4 19. ♜xd4 exd4 20. ♞xd4 White has a winning position, 1-0 (33) Gretarsson, H (2440) – Runarsson, G (1946) Tornado INT 2020]

**B)** 13... ♜xf6! Due to the bad position of the white king we can say that already Black is doing fine.





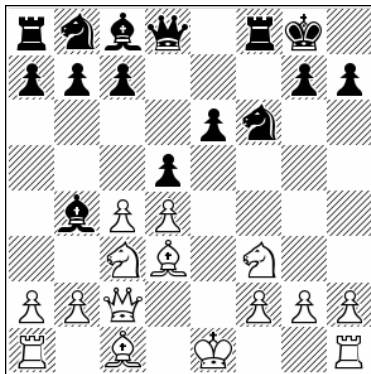
Position after: 7.♔d3

The main move here. White develops as fast as possible.

**7...c5**

The critical continuation.

7...f5 8.exf6 ♖xf6 9.♘f3



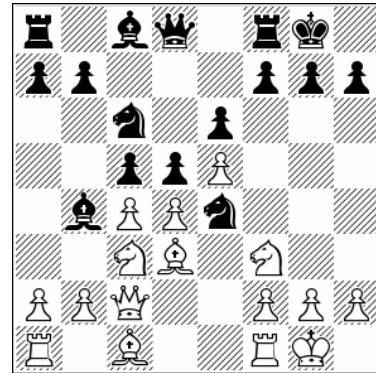
Position after: 9.♘f3

9...♖c6 [9...c5 10.a3 cxd4 11.axb4 dxc3 12.♙xc3 ♖c6 13.♙g5 dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♙b6 15.♙xf6 ♖xf6 16.b5 ♖e7 17.0-0 we can say that White is clearly better, 1-0 (26) Potapova, M (2252) – Doluhanova, E (2207) chess.com INT 2021] 10.0-0 h6 11.a3 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 dxc4 13.♙xc4 This gives White a clear advantage, 1-0 (47) Holt, C (2549) – Timmermans, M (2385) chess.com INT 2021.

**8.♘f3 cxd4**

Best by far.

8...♖c6 9.0-0

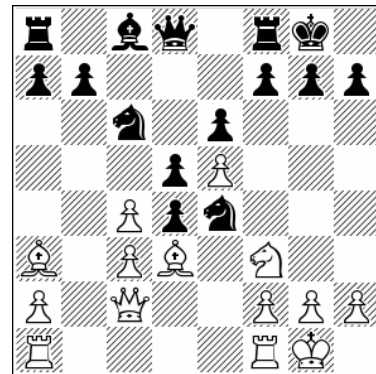


Position after: 9.0-0

Already in this position Black is facing serious problems.

**A)** 9...f5 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♖xd5 ♙e6 12.♘f4 ♙f7 13.d5 White is winning, 1-0 (18) Holt, C (2549) – Karacsonyi, G (2359) chess.com INT 2021.

**B)** 9...♙xc3 10.bxc3 cxd4 11.♙a3!



Position after: 11.♙a3!

11...♙e8 12.cxd4 f5 13.exf6 ♖xf6 14.♙ad1 White has better play.

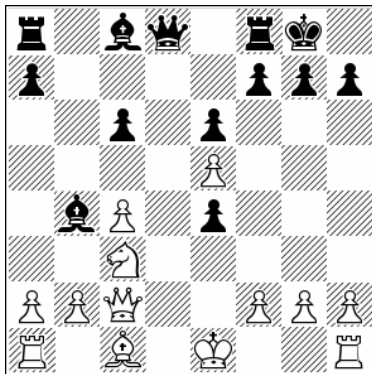
**C)** 9...♖xd4 10.♖xd4 cxd4 11.♖xe4 dxe4 12.♙xe4 h6 13.a3 ♙c5 14.♖b1 a5 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♙e7 17.♙e2 White is better here, because the pawn on d4 is weak.

**D)** 9...cxd4 10.♖xe4 dxe4 11.♙xe4 h6 12.♙f4 ♙c5 13.♖fd1 ♙e7 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.♖xd4 White is clearly better, 1-0 (21) Potapova, M (2257) – Rodchenkov, V (2330) chess.com INT 2021.

**9.♖xd4 ♖d7**

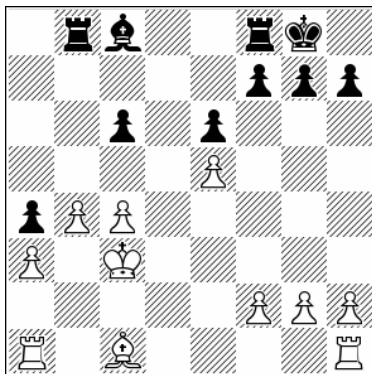
We are in the main system now.

Other moves are not as good. 9...♘c6 10.♘xc6  
 bxc6 11.♙xe4 dxe4



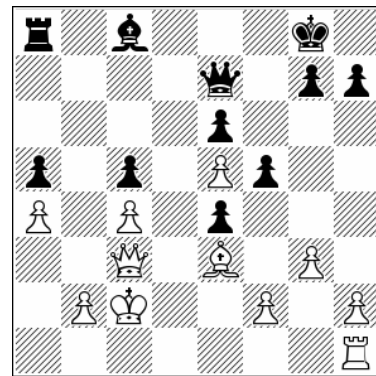
Position after: 11...dxe4

**A)** 12.a3!? ♙xc3+ 13.♖xc3 White's idea is not exactly to win a pawn, but rather to rely on his better bishop and better pawn structure. 13...f5 [13...♖d3 14.♖xd3 exd3 15.♙d2! a5 16.♙xd3 a4 17.♙c3 ♖b8 18.b4!



Position after: 18.b4!

18...axb3 19.♖d1 the bishop on c8 is simply a bad piece and White is much better] 14.♙e3 ♖e7 15.g3 ♖d8 16.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 17.♙xd1 a5 18.♙c2 c5 19.a4!



Position after: 19.a4!

19...♖c7 20.b3 ♖b8 21.♖d1 ♙d7 22.♖d6 White is clearly better. In this position with opposite-colored bishops it is obvious that White has the better bishop. 22...♖b4

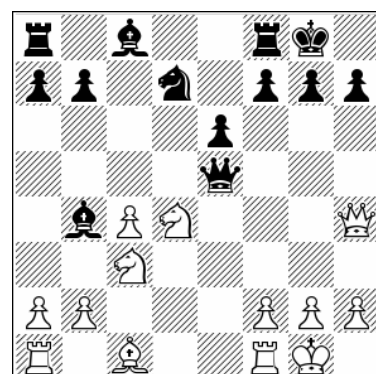
**B)** Now taking the e4-pawn is a safe option; it's just a question of whether White can win the game. 12.♖xe4 ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖a5 14.0-0 ♙a6 15.a4 ♖c5 16.♙a3 ♖xc4 17.♖xc4 ♙xc4 18.♙xf8 ♙xf1 19.♙d6 ♙a6 20.f4 f6 21.♙f2 ♖d8 22.♖b1 fxe5 23.fxe5 ♖d7 24.♖b8+ ♙f7 25.♙e3 c5 Although Black is passive, it is not clear that White can actually win this, ½-½ (48) Pashikian, A (2621) – Cebalo, M (2509) Budva 2009.

### 10.♙xe4

In this subchapter we will deal with less common lines for White.

10.f4 ♘dc5 11.♙e3 ♖h4+ 12.g3 ♘xd3+ 13.♖xd3 ♖h3 14.0-0-0 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙d7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♙b2 ♖ac8 18.♖c1 ♖c4 Black is clearly better.

### 10...dxe4 11.♖xe4 ♖a5 12.0-0 ♖xe5 13.♖h4



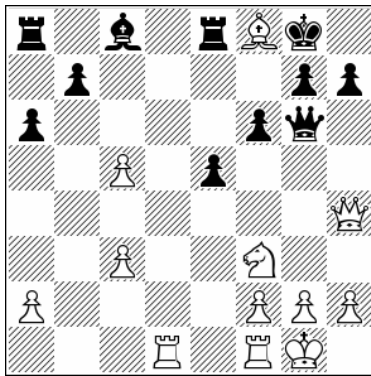
Position after: 13.♖h4

13...a6

13...♘f6 14.♙g5 h6 15.♙xf6 ♖xf6 16.♗xf6 gxf6  
17.♞ac1 ♙d7 18.♞fd1 ♞fd8 19.♞d3 ♙e8 20.a3  
♙e7 21.♞cd1 ♞ac8 Black is fine and his two  
bishops are working well here, ½-½ (54)  
Onischuk, A (2699) – Bologan, V (2668)  
Poikovskiy 2010.

14.♘f3 ♗f5

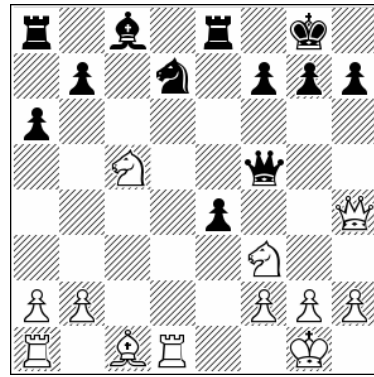
There is another way of handling this line.  
14...♗f6 15.♙g5 ♗g6 16.♙e7 ♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♞e8  
18.♞ad1 f6 19.♙d6 e5 20.c5 ♘f8 21.♙xf8



Position after: 21.♙xf8

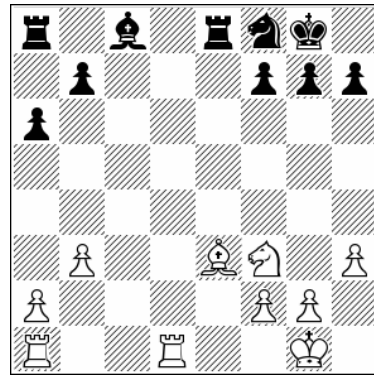
Now Black has a very strong move. 21...♙g4!  
[21...♞xf8 22.♞d6 ♗f7 23.♗e4 ♙d7 24.♗xb7  
♙b5 25.♗xf7+ ♞xf7 26.c4 ♙xc4 27.♞c1 ♙xa2  
Black is better, ½-½ (98) Li Chao (2687) –  
Tomashevsky, E (2733) St Petersburg 2012]  
22.♘xe5 ♞xe5 23.f3 ♙xf3 24.♞xf3 ♞xf8 Black has  
seized the initiative.

15.♞d1 ♞e8 16.♘e4 e5 17.c5 ♙xc5 18.♘xc5 e4



Position after: 18...e4

19.♘xe4 ♗xe4 20.♗xe4 ♞xe4 21.h3 ♞e8 22.b3  
♘f8 23.♙e3



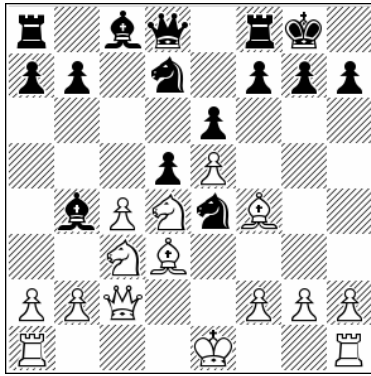
Position after: 23.♙e3

23...♙e6

Black has an equal game, ½-½ (31) Mamedyarov,  
S (2765) – Sargissian, G (2664) Terme Catez 2021.

**c) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7 10.♙f4 ♘dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3  
12.bxc3 ♘xd3 13.♗xd3 b6 14.cxd5 ♗xd5**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.e4 d5  
6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7  
10.♙f4



Position after: 10.f4

A key move in this line.

### 10...dxc5

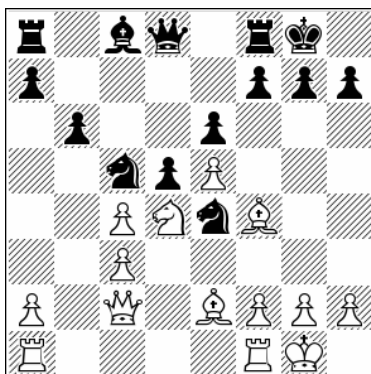
This is one of two main choices here; the other one of course is 10...Wh4, also a big main line, and that is covered in Chapter 13.

### 11.0-0 xc3 12.bxc3 xd3

Taking the bishop is Black's main idea, which we will examine in two parts. In subchapter e) we will examine 12...d7, which is the main alternative to 12...xd3.

**A)** Other moves at this point are less good. 12...Wh4 13.g3 We7 14.e2 f6 15.exf6 xf6 16.e3 e5 17.b3 xb3 18.axb3 White has some edge, 1-0 (46) Ivanisevic, I (2665) – Enchev, I (2470) Skopje 2016.

**B)** 12...b6 13.e2



Position after: 13.e2

13...h6 [13...f6 14.ad1 b7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.c4 fxe5 17.xe5 We7 18.f4 White is better, 1-0 (33) Ghimpu, S (2313) – Filgueiras, N (2311) chess.com INT 2020] 14.f3 g5 15.ad1 b7 16.b5 We7 17.d6 c6 18.d4 fd8 19.Wd2 White has the advantage, 0-1 (52) Holt, C (2553) – Hakobyan, A (2602) chess.com INT 2022.

### 13.Wxd3

This is a strategically interesting position, White is planning to launch major pawn play on the kingside as compensation for his weak pawn on c3. Although it may appear that many pieces have already been exchanged, the position is still complex from every aspect, including the tactical aspect.

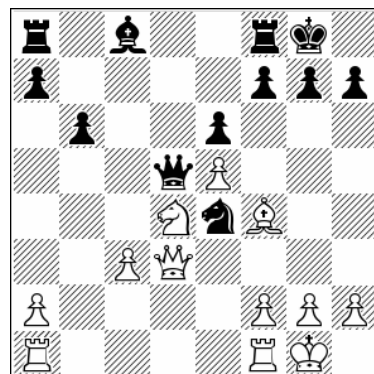
### 13...b6

That's the main move, but there are a few other examples.

**A)** 13...Wd7 14.f6 b6 15.cxd5 exd5 The game transposes to the main line.

**B)** 13...d7 14.cxd5 exd5 15.c4 c5 16.Wg3 dxc4 17.h6 g6 18.xf8 Wxf8 19.ab1 b8 20.f1 b5 21.e6 xe6 22.xc4 Black doesn't have enough compensation, 1-0 (46) Gretarsson, H (2410) – Morrison, G (2262) Batumi 2019.

### 14.cxd5 Wxd5



Position after: 14...Wxd5

This is a very important position Black takes back with the queen because he wants to keep his pawns intact. Another important line is to take back with the pawn, 14...exd5, and that is in the next subchapter.

### 15.♖fd1

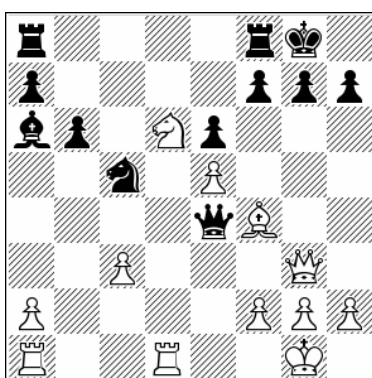
The main approach, and the best one.

15.♖fe1 White wants to keep his rooks on e1 and d1 in order to give them attacking possibilities, but it's not so simple. 15...♙b7 [15...♘c5 16.♗g3 ♕h8 17.♞e3 ♙b7 18.f3 ♙a6 19.♙g5 ♞ac8 20.h4 ♘d3 Black is better, 1-0 (29) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Vasquez Schroeder, R (2459) lichess.org INT 2021] 16.f3 ♘c5 17.♗e3 ♗c4 18.♞ad1 Now Black has no problems. 18...♞fd8 19.♙g5 ♞d5 20.h4 ♘d7 21.♙f4 ♞c8 22.♞c1 ♘c5 23.♞ed1 ♘a4 24.♙h2 ♘xc3 Black is OK in these complications, 1-0 (33) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Potapova, M (2277) lichess.org INT 2021.

### 15...♙b7

This is one of two main ideas here for Black:

15...♘c5 16.♗g3 ♗e4 17.♘b5 ♙a6 18.♘d6!



Position after: 18.♘d6!

18...♗g6 19.♗e3!? Now when the black queen is far away on the kingside, White goes for positional play. 19...♞ad8 20.♞d4 ♞d7 21.h3 ♗h5 22.c4! ♘b7 23.♗a3 ♘c5 24.♞e1 ♙b7 25.♙c1 ♗g6 26.♞g4 ♗d3 27.♞g3 ♗xa3 28.♙xa3 White has played very well and now claims the

advantage, 1-0 (42) Zhao, X (2549) – Sukandar, I (2288) Zaozhuang 2012.

### 16.c4 ♗a5

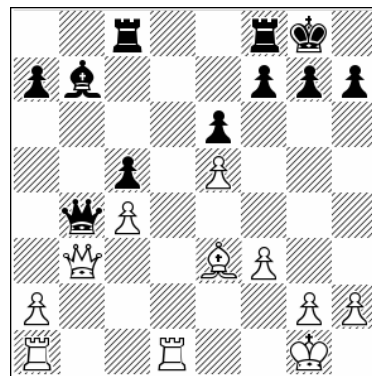
The most popular choice and also the best one.

16...♗d7 17.♗a3 ♘c5 18.♘b5 ♗c6 19.f3 ♞fd8 20.♘d6 ♞d7 21.♞d4 This is very good for White.

### 17.♘b3 ♗b4

The most common move here.

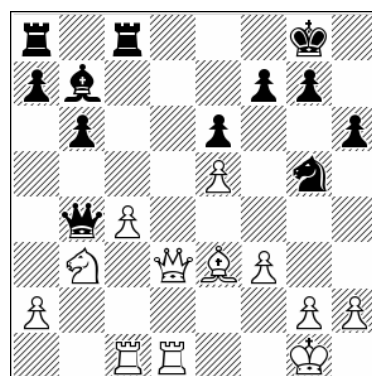
17...♗a4 18.♙e3 ♞ac8 19.f3 ♘c5 20.♘xc5 bxc5 21.♗b3 ♗b4



Position after: 21...♗b4

22.♞d7! [22.♞ab1 ♙a6 23.♗xb4 cxb4 24.c5 ♞b8 25.♞d7 ♙c4 26.♞xa7 ♞fc8 27.♞a4 ♙d5 not so clear, ½-½ (35) Juksta, K (2397) – Klabis, R (2332) Vilnius 2021] 22...♙a6 23.♞c1 h6 24.♞d6 ♙b7 25.♙d2 ♗xb3 26.axb3 This endgame is not easy to defend.

### 18.♙e3 ♞fc8 19.♞ac1 h6 20.f3 ♘g5

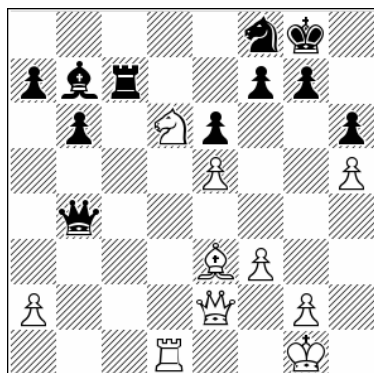


Position after: 20...♘g5

Now, when the black knight has been driven to a bad square, White can regroup.

**21. ♖d4!?**

Also in the following game Black didn't have an easy time. 21.h4 ♗h7 22.♖d4 ♜d8 23.♞e2 ♗f8 24.h5 ♞ac8 25.♗b5! ♞xd1+ 26.♞xd1 ♞xc4 27.♗d6 ♞c7

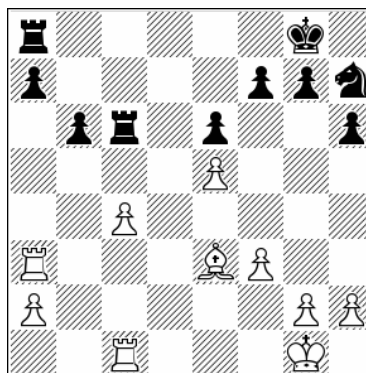


Position after: 27...♞c7

28.♞f2! [28.♞d4 ♞b1+ 29.♗h2 ♞c2 30.♗d2! here too Black does not have enough activity to

compensate for his bad pieces] 28...♗h7 29.♞d4 ♞c3 30.♗d2 ♞c5 31.♞e3 ♗g8 32.♗h2 A very unpleasant position for Black, as his knight and bishop are both badly placed.

**21...♗a6 22.♞b3 ♞e7 23.♞d3 ♗h7 24.♞a4 ♗b7 25.♞a3 ♞xa3 26.♞xa3 ♗c6 27.♗xc6 ♞xc6**



Position after: 27...♞xc6

**28.c5**

Not an easy position for Black.

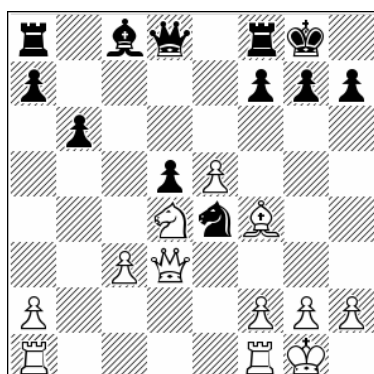
**d) 7.♗d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♗f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xd3 13.♞xd3 b6 14.cxd5 exd5**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♞c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♗e4 7.♗d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♗f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xd3 13.♞xd3 b6 14.cxd5 exd5

15.♞fe1

Probably best, since the rook is best placed on e1 to support White's pawn majority on the kingside.

Here we deal with this rather unbalanced pawn structure.

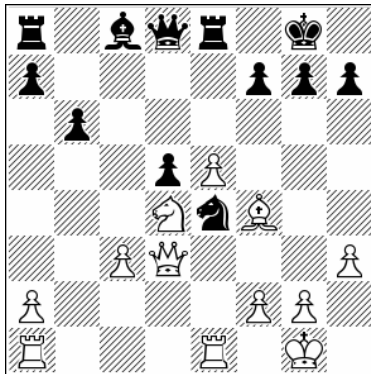


Position after: 14...exd5

15.♞ad1 ♞h4 [15...♞d7 16.f3 ♗c5 17.♞d2 ♗e6 18.♗e3 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♞f5 20.h4 h5 21.♗h2 ♞g6 22.♞g1 ♗f5 23.♞f4 ♞ac8 24.g4 hxg4 25.fxg4 ♗e4 26.h5 Such positions favor White because the bishop on d4 is very strong, 1-0 (34) Holt, C (2553) – Supatashvili, K (2463) chess.com INT 2021] 16.♗g3 ♞h5 17.♞fe1 ♗c5 18.♞e3 ♗e6 19.♗e2 ♞f5 20.f3 ♞ac8 21.♞d4 ♞fe8 22.♞d2 White has created a certain amount of initiative, ½-½ (70) Atalik, S (2505) – Xu, Z (2506) Novi Sad 2019.

15...♔d7

A) 15...♖e8 16.h3



Position after: 16.h3

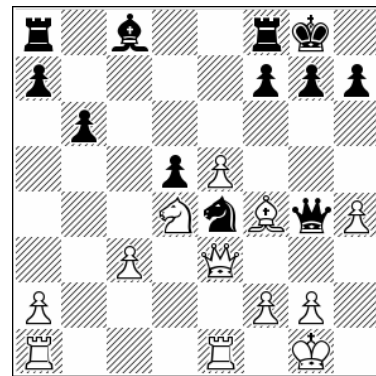
16...♕e6 [16...♔d7 17.a4 ♘c5 18.♗g3 ♘e4 19.♗e3 ♕a6 20.a5 ♗c8 21.axb6 axb6 22.f3 ♘c5 23.♖eb1 with some pressure for White, 1-0 (122) Stockfish 260616 64 – Komodo 10.1 Internet (blitz) 2016] 17.♘b5 ♕f5 18.♗d4 ♖c8 19.♘d6 ♘xd6 20.exd6 ♖c4 21.♗d2 Such positions favor White slightly but it's not easy to make a breakthrough, ½-½ (140) THE\_MACHINE, B – Stockfish ZR 1.0 64 Internet (blitz) 2016.

B) 15...♗h4 The idea behind this move is to keep the queen on the kingside in order to prevent those h4-h5 plans. 16.♕g3 ♗h5 17.f3 ♘c5 18.♗d2 ♗g6 19.♘b5 ♕e6 20.♖e3 ♖fd8 21.♘d6 ♖d7 22.♖d1 ♖ad8 23.♗e1 White has managed to achieve some edge, as the knight on d6 is very strong, but still the position is closed.

### 16.h3

That may appear to be a modest little move, but the point is to take the g4-square under control first.

16.h4!? This is in my opinion the principled reaction. 16...♗g4 17.♗e3

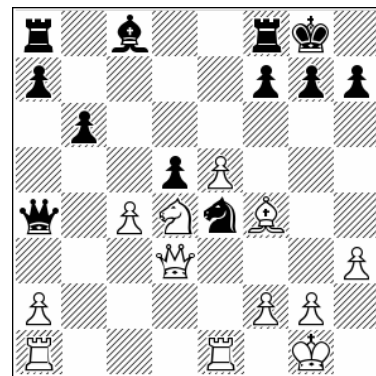


Position after: 17.♗e3

17...♘c5 [17...♗xh4 18.c4! ♕e6 19.cxd5 ♕xd5 20.f3 ♘c5 21.♘f5 winning for White] 18.♕g5 ♖e8 19.f3 ♗d7 20.g4 ♘e6 21.♘f5 White has the initiative.

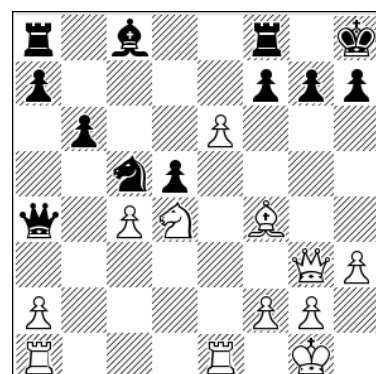
### 16...♖e8

16...♗a4 17.c4!



Position after: 17.c4!

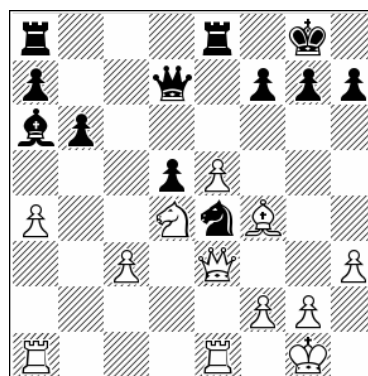
17...♘c5 [17...♕a6 18.♘f5 ♗xc4 19.♗d1! ♕c8 20.♘e7+ ♔h8 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.♘xd5 ♘c5 23.♘c7 ♖b8 24.♘b5 ♖b7 25.♘d6 as we have seen on many occasions, White maintains his initiative] 18.♗g3 ♔h8 19.e6!



Position after: 19.e6!

19...♙xe6 [19...fxe6 20.♘b5 ♗e4 21.♖xe4 dxe4 22.♙e5 ♜f7 23.♘d6 ♚d7 24.♘xf7+ ♜xf7 25.♞d1 ♙b7 26.♞d6 White is better] 20.cxd5! ♙xd5 21.♗f5 g6 22.♙h6 White is winning, 1-0 (62) Basso, P (2541) – Sonis, F (2508) Spilimbergo 2021.

17.a4 ♘c5 18.♚g3 ♗e4 19.♚e3 ♙a6



Position after: 19...♙a6

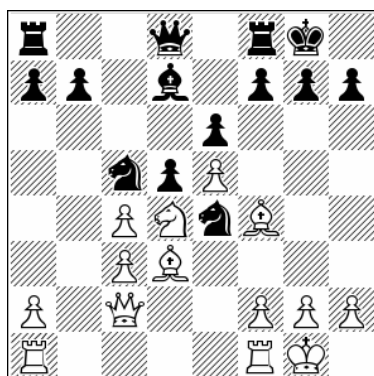
20.a5

The a-pawn thrust gives White some edge, but Black does not need to get too worried.

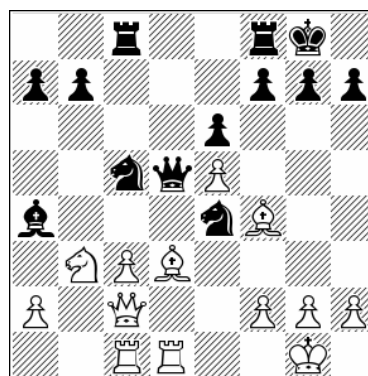
**e) 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7 10.♙f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♙d7**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♗e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♗dc5 11.0-0 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♙d7

A) 14...♚xd5 15.♞fd1 ♞ac8 [15...♞fd8 16.c4 ♚c6 17.♙f1! this is a key difference: now this square is very good for the bishop] 16.♞ac1!



Position after: 12...♙d7



Position after: 16.♞ac1!

This is the main approach in the system where Black plays 10...♗dc5 instead of 10...♚h4.

13.♙e2

White wants to keep his bishop pair and that is the most-played option.

13.cxd5 ♙a4 This is an independent try in order to sidestep the main-line move order. [13...exd5 14.♙e2 Black's best now is to transpose into the main line] 14.♗b3

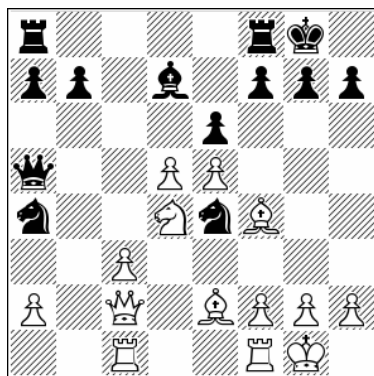
16...♘d3 17.♞xd3 ♚c6 18.♞e3 f5 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.♞ee1 ♗d5 21.♙e5 White has some chances to develop an advantage.

B) 14...♘d3! This is best, and now White's chances of getting an advantage are zero. 15.♚xd3 ♚xd5 16.♚e3 ♚c4 This is fine for Black. 17.♞ac1 ♞fc8 18.♗a5 ♚d5 19.♗b3 ♚c4 With a possible repetition of moves, ½-½ (185) Demuth, A (2482) – Lupulescu, C (2660) Dubai 2014.

13...♗a4

Black launches a direct attempt to take the pawn on c3.

13...♖a5 14.♞ac1 The other rook is needed for potential play in the center, but White could certainly play in different ways here. 14...♘a4 15.cxd5

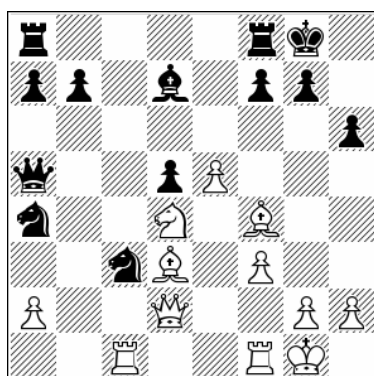


Position after: 15.cxd5

**A)** 15...♘exc3!? An engine suggestion. 16.dxe6 fxe6 17.♙e3 ♘xe2+ 18.♞xe2 ♞ac8 [18...♞xe5 19.♘f3 ♞h5 20.♞c7 ♙c6 21.♙d4 ♞f7 22.♞xe6 ♙xf3 23.gxf3 ♞af8 24.♞xb7 White has the initiative] 19.♞xc8 ♞xc8 20.♞f3 b6 21.♞g3 ♔h8 22.h4 ♘c3 23.h5 h6 It is not clear whether White can extract any advantage here. 24.♙d2 ♞b4 25.♙xc3 ♞xc3 26.♞h4 ♞a4=

**B)** 15...exd5 This is not forced. 16.f3!

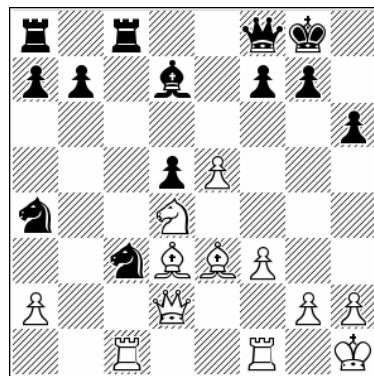
**B1)** 16...♘exc3 17.♙d3 h6 18.♞d2



Position after: 18.♞d2

18...♞b4 [18...♞fe8 19.♔h1 b5 20.♞fe1 b4 21.♙xh6! ♞b6 22.e6 ♙xe6 23.♙xg7 ♔xg7 24.♞g5+ ♔f8 25.♞f6 1-0 (25) Shmeliov, D (2420)

– Zhang (2265) Las Vegas 2017] 19.♙e3 ♞fc8 20.♔h1 ♞f8

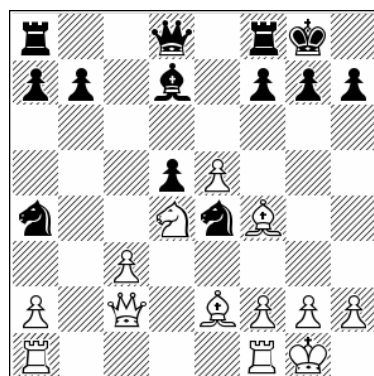


Position after: 20...♞f8

21.g4!! The concept is to shift the bishop to f5 so that after a possible exchange on that square White can take back with the g pawn, planning an attack along the g-file.

**B2)** 16...♘ec5 17.♘b3 ♞c7 18.♙g3 ♞c6 19.c4! ♞ac8 20.cxd5 ♞xd5 21.♙c4 ♞c6 22.♙f2 b6 23.♞d2 White has a clear advantage.

**14.cxd5 exd5**

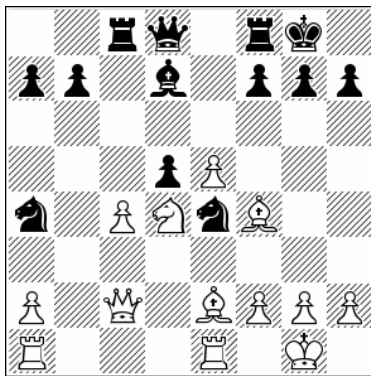


Position after: 14...exd5

**15.f3**

This gambit is very interesting and I decided to give it as the main line, although alternatives are very important as well. White has a tremendous knight on d4 and the value of the whole line depends on the question: will Black be fast enough to somehow eliminate this knight in time, or will White be faster in generating attacking plans?

15.c4 ♖c8 16.♞fe1!

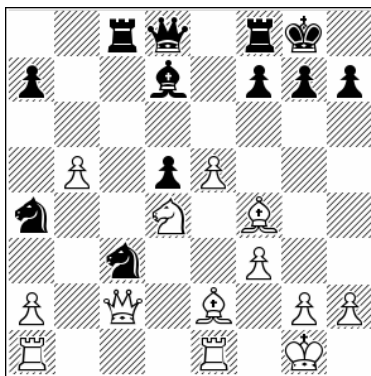


Position after: 16.♞fe1!

Best in my opinion. Other moves have been played and some of them are OK as well, but this one probably offers more.

**A)** 16...♞b6 17.♙d3! ♞xc4 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♞xe4 ♙c6 20.♞xc6 ♞xc6 21.h3 ♞e8 22.♞ad1 ♞c8 23.♙g3 b5 24.♙h2 White's plan is clear, pushing f4-f5 gives him a slightly more promising position, although Black has his chances as well.

**B)** 16...b5 17.f3 ♞ec3 18.cxb5!



Position after: 18.cxb5!

18...♞a5 19.♞d2 ♞xe2+ 20.♞xe2 ♞xd2 21.♞xd2 ♞c4 22.♙e3 ♞e8 23.f4 White has the advantage.

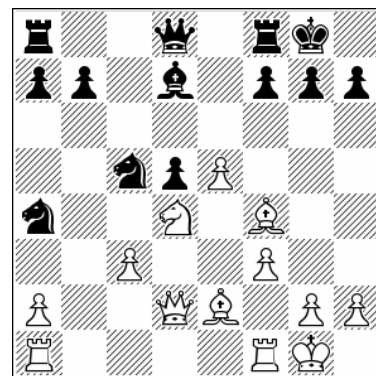
**C)** 16...♞ec3 17.♙d3 h6 18.♞d2 dxc4 19.♙c2 ♞b5 20.♞xb5 ♙xb5 21.♞b4 ♞e8 22.e6 fxe6 23.♙d6 ♞f7 24.♙g6 c3 25.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 26.♞g4 ♞c4 27.♞e4 ♞xe4 28.♞xe4 ♞c6 29.♞f4+ ♙g8 30.♞f8+ ♙h7 31.♙e5 ♞d7 32.♞b4 White is

better in this example of sensational engine chess, ½-½ (132) Longin – Klaus Internet 2017.

15...♞exc3

Of course Black can decline this offer.

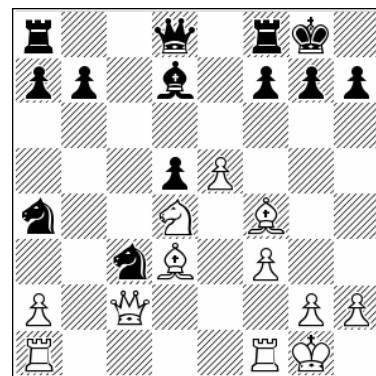
15...♞ec5 16.♞d2



Position after: 16.♞d2

16...♞c8 [16...♞b6 17.♞ae1 ♞e8 18.♙g3 ♞c4 19.♙xc4 dxc4 Black will use the d3-square to create counterplay from this unclear position, 1-0 (35) Shmeliov, D (2420) – Williams, J (2310) Las Vegas 2015] 17.♞ac1 ♞e8 18.c4 dxc4 19.♙xc4 ♞b6 20.♙e2 ♞e6 21.♙e3 ♞xd4 22.♙xd4 ♞xc1 23.♞xc1 ♙c6 Black's position is now solid, as he has managed to eliminate the strong knight on d4, ½-½ (50) Shmeliov, D (2414) – Azarov, S (2588) Rockville 2017.

16.♙d3



Position after: 16.♙d3

Now Black has three ways to defend his pawn on h7.

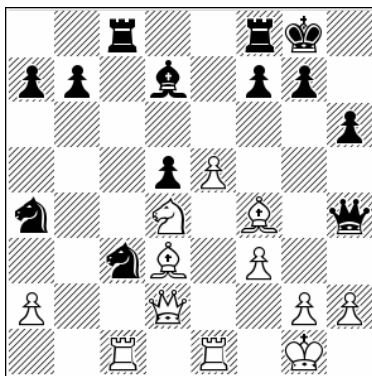
**16...g6**

Black weakens his dark squares, but he is hoping that his counterplay on the queenside will prove more significant.

**A)** 16...♖h4 17.g3! ♕h3 18.♞fe1 ♞ac8 19.♗d2 h6 20.e6! fxe6 21.♞e5 Next the white bishop goes to f1, trapping the queen!

**B)** 16...h6 17.♗d2 Hitting the pawn on h6.

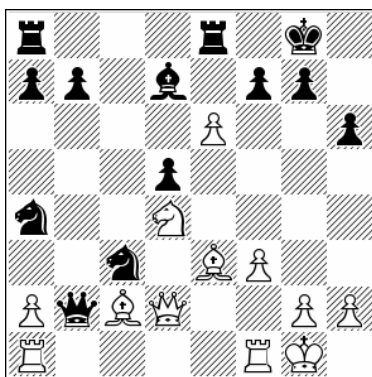
**B1)** The queen can go to the kingside to defend the target on h6, but it can't stay there for long. 17...♖h4 18.♞ac1 ♞ac8 19.♞fe1!



Position after: 19.♞fe1!

19...♞fe8 20.♔h1 b5 21.g3 ♖h5 [21...♗d8 22.♙xh6! White is much better] 22.g4 ♖h4 23.♞g1 ♔h8 24.♞g3 Here too it is clear that on the kingside the black queen can't survive the harassment from the white pieces.

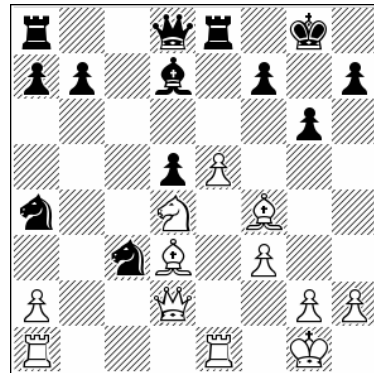
**B2)** 17...♗b6 18.♙e3 ♗b2 19.♙c2 ♞fe8 20.e6!



Position after: 20.e6!

20...♙e6 21.♔h1 ♙d7 22.♙xh6! ♗b6 23.♙f4 ♞e7 24.♞fe1 ♞ae8 25.♞xe7 ♞xe7 26.♙g5 ♞e8 27.h3 Black has problems because he can't untangle his pieces.

**17.♗d2 ♞e8 18.♞fe1!**



Position after: 18.♞fe1!

**18...♗b6**

18...♞c8 19.♙f1!? ♗b6 20.♞ac1 ♗b2 21.♗e3 a6 22.♙g5 Interestingly, the bishop is good on f1 and there's no need to shift it to c2.

**19.♙f1**

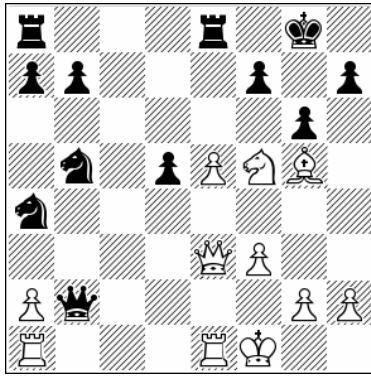
Logical and strong.

**19...♙b5**

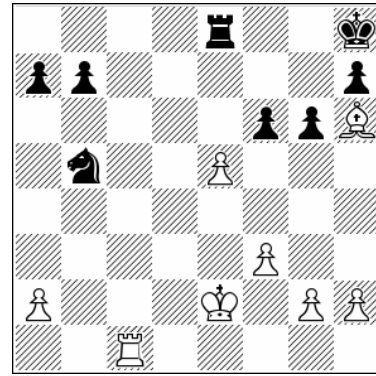
Black aims to exchange as many pieces as possible.

19...♞ac8 20.♞ac1 ♗b2 21.♗e3 a6 22.♙g5 ♗a3 23.♗d2 White can play without moving his king to h1. It's getting dangerous for Black.

**20.♙g5 ♙xf1 21.♔xf1 ♗b2 22.♗e3 ♞b5 23.♞f5!**



Position after: 23. ♖f5!



Position after: 32...f6

23... ♖c3 24. ♜e7+ ♔f8 25. ♜xd5 ♚c4+ 26. ♜e2  
 ♜ac3 27. ♜h6+ ♜g8 28. ♜f6+ ♜h8 29. ♜xe8  
 ♜xe8 30. ♜c1 ♚xe2+ 31. ♚xe2 ♜xe2 32. ♜xe2 f6

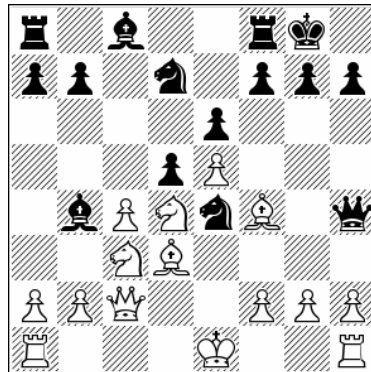
33. ♜d3

Black has survived so far with the help of engine-type tactics, but still it's not over yet.

# Chapter 13

## 5.e4 d5 – Mainline with 10...♔h4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♔h4



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 13 – 5.e4 d5 – Mainline with 10...♔h4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♗f3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♗d7 10.♙f4 ♔h4 11.g3

a) 11...♚h3 12.0-0-0 ♙xc3

b) 11...♚h3 12.0-0-0 ♗xc3

c) 11...♚h5 12.cxd5

d) 11...♚h5 12.h4

e) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 ♙xc3

f) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.♙xe4

g) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♗xc3

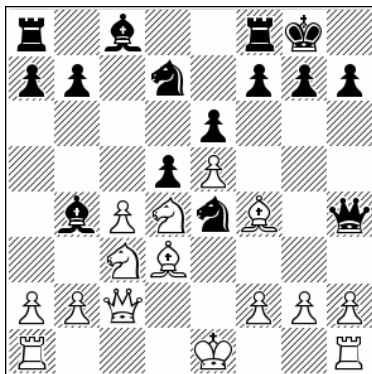
h) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♗xe5 15.♗xe4 fxe6 16.f3

i) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♗xe5 15.♗xe4 fxe6 16.gxf4

j) 11...♚h5 12.0-0 g5 13.♙e3

**a) 11...♖h3 12.0-0-0 ♗xc3**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.e4 d5  
6.e5 ♘e4 7.♗d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7  
10.♗f4 ♖h4



Position after: 10...♖h4

We have come to another main line of this system. It's very sharp, but it has been played and analyzed a lot so there is plenty of material to guide us. In some lines White castles queenside, which can lead to some very long analysis lines reaching as far as the endgame.

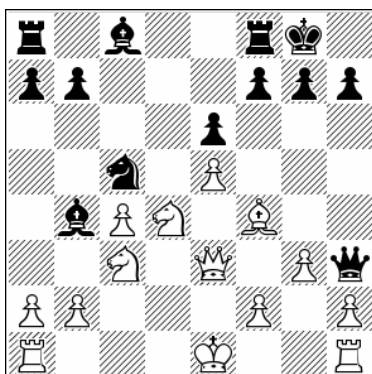
**11.g3 ♖h3**

With this move Black prevents kingside castling by White.

**12.0-0-0**

Best by far; other moves offer nothing.

**A) 12.♗xe4 dxe4 13.♖xe4 ♘c5 14.♖e3**



Position after: 14.♖e3

14...♘a4! [14...b6 15.0-0-0 ♗b7 16.♖he1 ♖ad8 this is not so clear, 1-0 (28) Ter Sahakyan, S (2645) – Sousa, A (2390) lichess.org INT 2021] 15.0-0-0 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♗d7 Black is fine, as his counterplay along the c-file has already been set in motion.

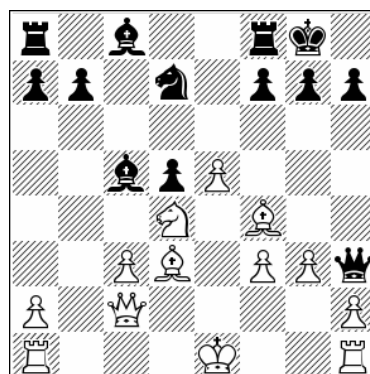
**B) 12.cxd5 exd5**



Position after: 12...exd5

**B1) 13.0-0-0 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♗a3+ 15.♔b1 ♘b6 16.♔a1 ♗d7** After cxd5 exd5 has been played, it is much more difficult for White to achieve a successful pawn-storm attack on the kingside. 17.♗f1 ♖h5 18.♗e2 ♖h3 19.♗f1 ♖h5 A logical repetition of moves.

**B2) 13.f3 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♗c5!**



Position after: 14...♗c5!

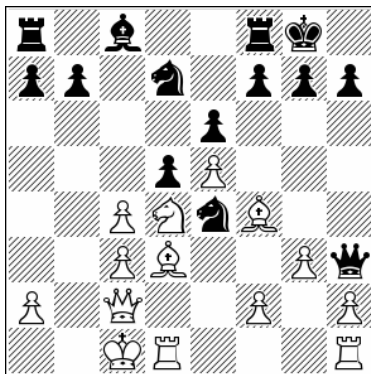
It is essential to put pressure on the strong knight on d4. 15.♗f5 ♖h5 16.♗g4 ♖g6 17.♗f5

♖h5 18.♙g4 ♖g6 19.♙f5 ♖h5 This leads to a draw.

### 12...♙xc3

That's the first of two choices about the capture on c3. Taking with the knight is covered in another subchapter.

### 13.bxc3

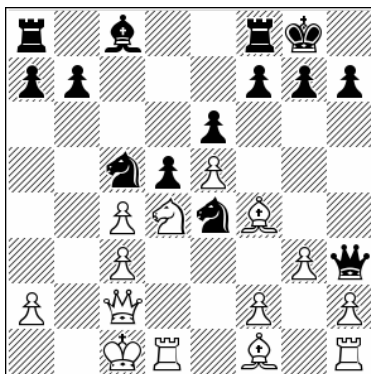


Position after: 13.bxc3

### 13...♗b6

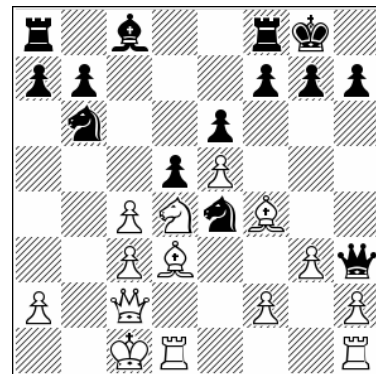
Best, and really the only move.

13...♗dc5 14.♙f1!



Position after: 14.♙f1!

14...♖h5 15.f3 g5 [15...♗g5 16.h4 this wins for White, 1-0 (17) Swiercz, D (2649) – Dragun, K (2561) lichess.org INT 2020] 16.♙e3 ♙d7 17.fxe4 ♙a4 18.♗b3 Another quick win, 1-0 (42) Potapova, M (2257) – Protopopova, A (2257) Sochi 2021.



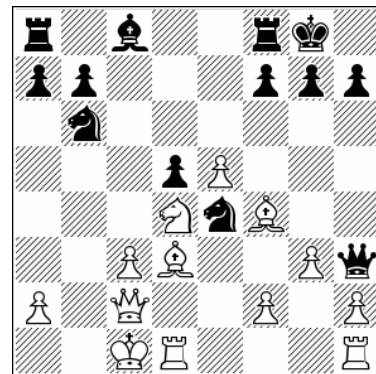
Position after: 13...♗b6

### 14.f3!?

A very human approach and actually the most logical. The play becomes very sharp now.

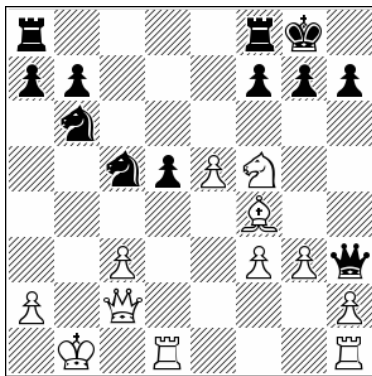
A) 14.♗f3 ♙d7! 15.♙xe4 dxe4 16.♗g5 ♖f5 17.♖xe4 ♙c6 18.♖xf5 exf5 19.♖he1 h6 20.♗h3 ♗xc4 Black is better.

B) 14.cxd5 exd5

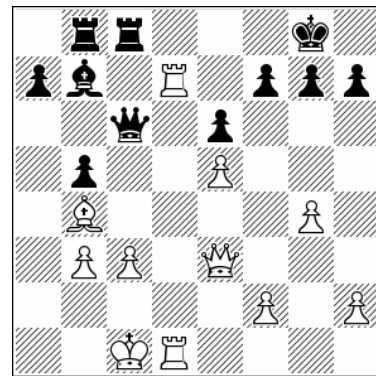


Position after: 14...exd5

15.♙b1!? Playing for a win. [15.f3 ♗c5 16.♙f5 ♙xf5 17.♖xf5 ♖g2 18.♖c2 ♖h3 19.♖f5 ♖g2 with a possible repetition, and anyway the position is balanced, ½-½ (21) Muzychuk, M (2545) – Muzychuk, A (2545) Chengdu 2016] 15...♙d7 16.f3 ♗c5 17.♙f5 ♙xf5 18.♗xf5



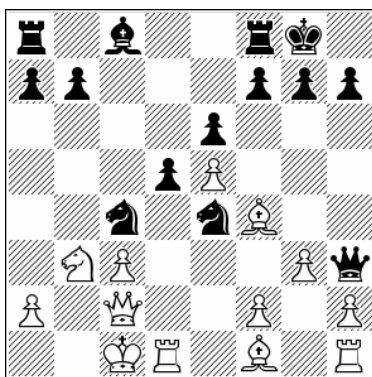
Position after: 18. ♖xf5



Position after: 26. ♕b4

18... ♖ae8 [18... ♖c4 19. ♔a1 ♖a3 20. ♖e7+ ♔h8 21. ♗f5 ♗xf5 22. ♖xf5 ♖a4 23. ♕c1 ♖b5 24. ♖xd5 ♖bxc3 25. ♖d3 White has some prospects in the endgame] 19. ♖d6 ♖e7 20. ♕e3 ♖ca4 21. ♕d4 ♖c7 22. ♔a1 ♗d7 Unclear play again.

C) 14. ♖b3 White has a few interesting ideas and we will inspect them here in depth. 14... ♖xc4 15. ♕f1

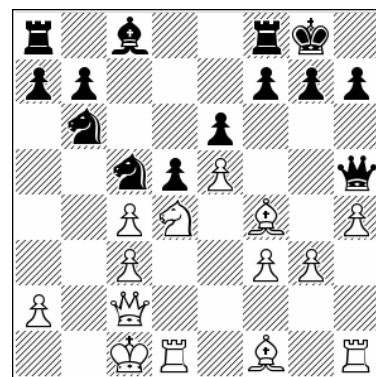


Position after: 15. ♕f1

15... ♗h5 [15... ♗g4 16. ♕xc4 dxc4 17. ♗xe4 cxb3 18. axb3 ♖b8 19. h3 ♗h5 20. g4 ♗g6 21. ♗xg6 hxg6 22. ♖d6 b6 23. ♔b2 ♖b7 24. c4 ♖c7 25. ♕e3 ♕b7 26. ♖hd1 ♕c6 27. h4 White has the initiative in this endgame, which is rather simplified but nevertheless full of potential] 16. ♕xc4 dxc4 17. ♗xe4 cxb3 18. axb3 ♖b8 19. g4 ♗h4 20. ♗e3 ♗e7 21. ♖d6 ♗c7 22. ♖hd1 b5 23. ♕g5 ♕b7 24. ♖d7 ♗c6 25. ♕e7 ♖fc8 26. ♕b4

A nice setup for White, who controls the d-file and has the stronger bishop. 26... h6 27. ♔b2 ♖a8 28. ♖1d3 ♖c7 29. ♖7d4 ♗g2 30. ♕a5 ♖cc8 31. h3 ♗h2 32. ♖d2 White has the edge here. It's not easy for him to make progress, but Black also has problems to solve, ½-½ (69) Thomas\_A\_Anderson – Akhtar Internet 2017

14... ♖c5 15. ♕f1 ♗h5 16. h4!?



Position after: 16. h4!?

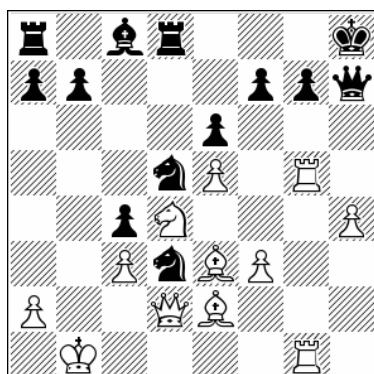
White is ready to storm the kingside.

16... ♕d7

A) 16... ♖xc4 17. ♗f2 f6 18. exf6 ♖xf6 19. ♖b5 ♖a6 20. ♕xc4 dxc4 21. ♖d6 ♗a5 22. ♗c2 ♕d7 23. ♖xc4 ♗b5 24. ♖e5 It seems that in fact White has the better prospects, ½-½ (63) EvilKnievel – Soloman Internet 2017.

B) 16... dxc4 17. g4 ♗g6 18. ♗d2 h5 [18... h6 19. h5 ♖d3+ 20. ♕xd3 ♗xd3 21. ♗e1 ♗h7 22. g5 this pawn push gives White clear attacking play]

19.gxh5 ♖xh5 20.♖g1 ♔h8 21.♙e3 ♖d8 22.♙e2 ♘d3+ 23.♕b1 ♘d5 24.♖g5 ♗h7 25.♖dg1!

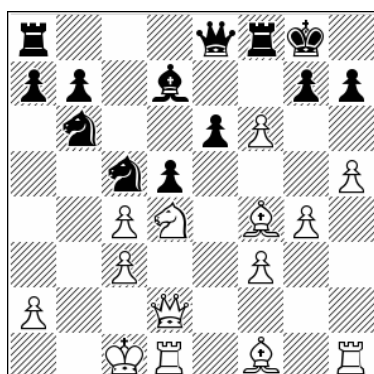


Position after: 25.♖dg1!

25...♘xe5+ 26.♕a1 f6 27.♖xg7 ♗xg7 28.♖xg7 ♕xg7 29.h5 White is better with his slow-motion attack, 1-0 (72) MCDermont – HOB0 Internet 2017.

17.♗h2!?

17.g4 ♗g6 18.♗d2!?! f6 19.h5 ♗e8 20.exf6

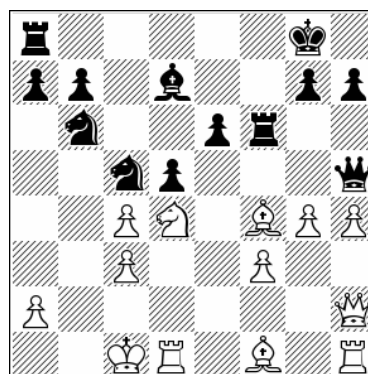


Position after: 20.exf6

20...♘xc4 [20...♖xf6 21.♙d6 ♖c8 22.g5 ♖f8 23.cxd5 ♘xd5 24.♕b2!! Fantastic! The king finds a safe spot on a1. 24...♘xc3 25.♖e1 ♗d8 26.♕a1 White is clearly better; it may not appear so at first glance but it definitely is, with h6 will

coming next.] 21.♙xc4 dxc4 22.♗e3 e5 This not at all clear.

17...f6 18.exf6 ♖xf6 19.g4

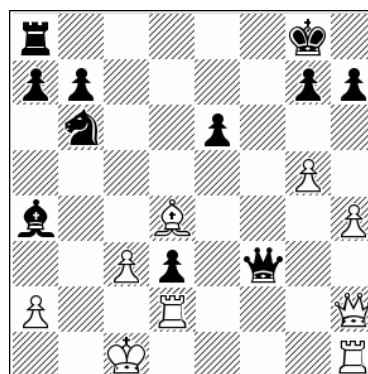


Position after: 19.g4

19...♗f7

19...♗e8 20.♙d6 ♘ca4 21.g5 ♖f8 22.h5 ♘xc3 23.♖e1 An amazing position. Black is under heavy pressure.

20.♙e5 dxc4 21.g5 ♖xf3 22.♘xf3 ♗xf3 23.♙d4 ♙a4 24.♖d2 ♘d3+ 25.♙xd3 cxd3



Position after: 25...cxd3

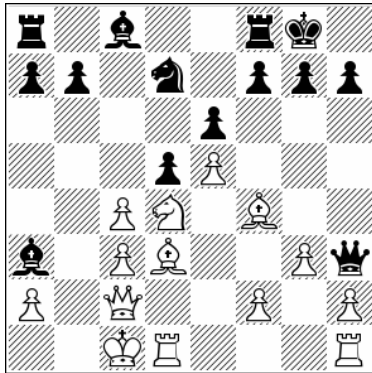
26.♖e1

White has the better chances; his bishop on d4 is an exceptional piece.

**b) 11...♗h3 12.0-0-0 ♘xc3**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7

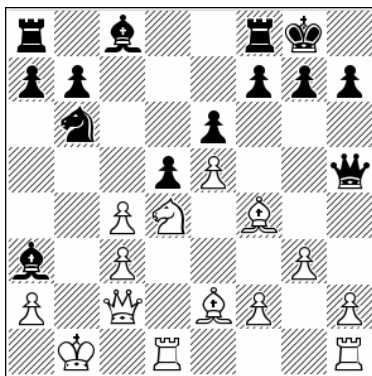
10.♙f4 ♗h4 11.g3 ♗h3 12.0-0-0 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♙a3+



Position after: 13...♙a3+

This way of handling the variation keeps the bishop alive.

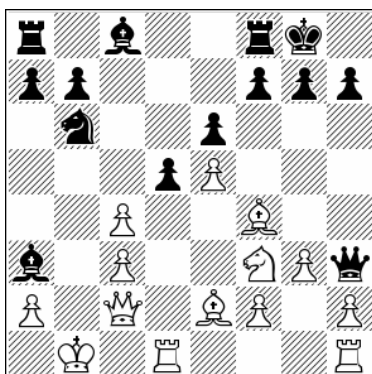
14.♖b1 ♜b6 15.♙f1 ♚h5 16.♙e2



Position after: 16...♙e2

16...♚g6

Black doesn't have the luxury of being able to go back hoping for a draw. 16...♚h3 17.♜f3!



Position after: 17...♜f3!

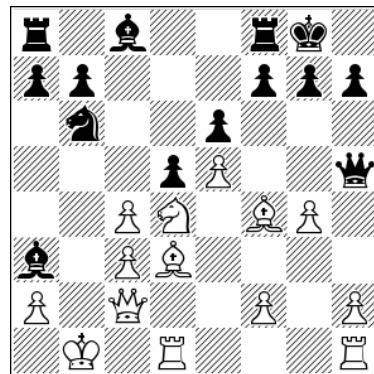
17...♜xc4 [17...h6 18.♜h4! ♜xc4 19.♙f1 ♚g4 20.h3 ♚h5 21.♙e2 White wins on the spot; 17...f6 18.exf6 gxf6 19.g4 e5 20.♙e3 ♙xg4

21.♚hg1 ♖h8 22.♜g5 fxg5 23.♙xg4 ♚h6 24.♙e2! ♜xc4 25.♙xc4 dxc4 26.♚xg5 ♚c6 27.♚xe5 ♚g6 28.♙d4 White keeps a big advantage] 18.♜g5 ♚h6 19.h4 ♙e7 20.♖a1 ♜a3 21.♚d2 ♚g6 22.♙d3 ♚h5 23.g4 No additional comments are needed, 1-0 (23) Richardt, M – Burrige, R corr. 2015.

17.♙d3 ♚h5

17...f5 18.cxd5 ♜xd5 19.♙c1 ♙xc1 20.♚xc1 ♙d7 21.♖a1 ♚f7 22.♚b3 a5 23.♚hd1 ♜b6 24.♚xb6 1-0 (24) Richardt, M – Cleto, D Jr corr. 2015.

18.♙e2 ♚g6 19.♙d3 ♚h5 20.g4!



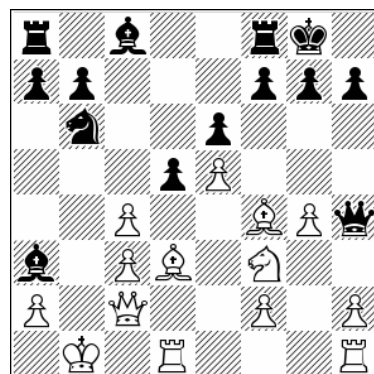
Position after: 20.g4!

White decides to go for the win. Perhaps the repetition of moves was just to gain time on the clock.

20...♚xg4

Black does not need to take the pawn.

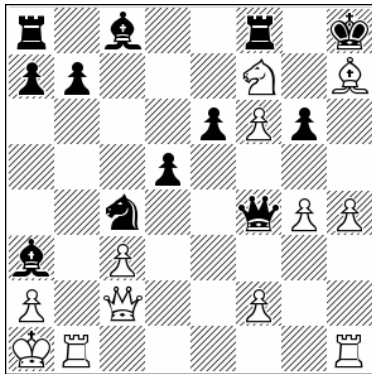
20...♚h4 21.♜f3



Position after: 21...♜f3

Now Black has a few different queen moves, but none can solve his problems.

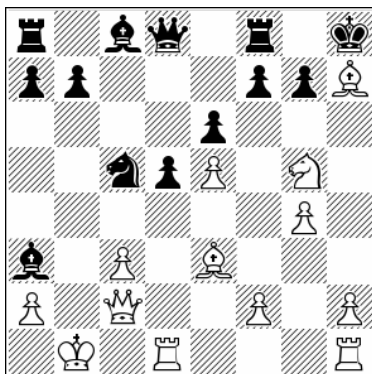
A) 21...♙e7 22.♘h7+ ♔h8 23.♖g5 ♚c7 24.♕a1 ♜xc4 25.♞b1 g6 26.h4 f6 27.exf6 ♚xf4 28.♗f7+!



Position after: 28.♗f7+!

28...♞xf7 29.♚xg6 ♘d7 30.♚xf7 ♚h6 31.♚xd7 ♚xf6 32.♞h3 ♚xf2 33.♚xb7 Another White victory, 1-0 (45) serjant – MaVP corr. 2017.

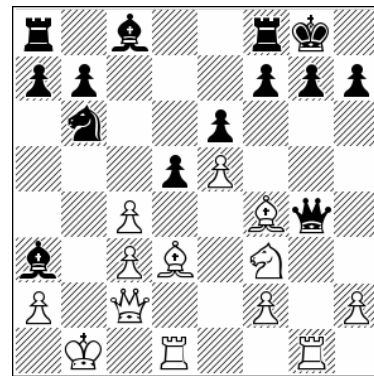
B) 21...♚d8 22.♘h7+ ♔h8 23.c5 ♖d7 24.♖g5 ♜xc5 25.♘e3



Position after: 25.♘e3

This is good enough. 25...♚c7 [25...♘d7 26.♘xc5 ♘xc5 27.♘g8 g6 28.♗xf7+ ♞xf7 29.♘xf7 White is winning] 26.♘xc5! ♚xc5 27.♞d3! f6 28.exf6 gxf6 29.♞h3 ♚b6+ 30.♕a1 ♚b2+ 31.♚xb2 ♘xb2+ 32.♕xb2 fxc5 33.♘c2+ ♔g8 34.♞e1! ♞xf2 35.♞e5 ♕f7 36.♞xg5 ♕e7 37.♞h8 b6 38.h4 The same story, White is winning.

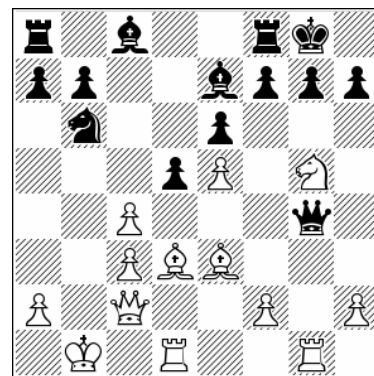
C) 21...♚xg4 22.♞hg1!



Position after: 22.♞hg1!

22...♚xf4 [22...♚h5 23.♞g5 ♚xf3 24.♘h7+ ♔h8 25.♞xg7!! ♕xg7 26.♞g1+ ♔h8 27.♘h6 f5 28.exf6 ♚xf6 29.♘g7+ ♚xg7 30.♞xg7 winning again; 22...♚xf3 23.♘h7+ ♔h8 24.♞xg7! it's the same as 22...♚h5, 1-0 (35) Diener, R – Mary, P corr. 2015] 23.♘h7+ ♔h8 24.♞d4 ♚h6 25.♞h4 ♜xc4 26.♘d3! White wins, 1-0 (50) MCDermont – Soloman Internet 2017.

D) 21...♚h3 22.♖g5 ♚xg4 23.♘e3! ♘e7 24.♞hg1



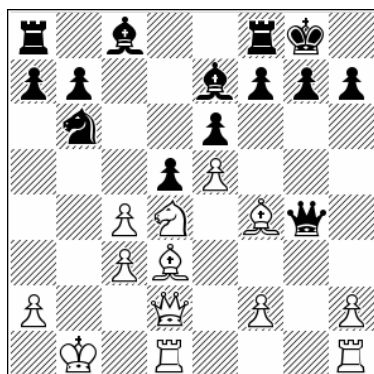
Position after: 24.♞hg1

24...♚h5 [24...♚h4 25.♘h7+ ♔h8 26.♞d4 ♚xh2 1-0 MCDermont – MedusaV3 Internet (rapid) 2017] 25.♗xh7 dxc4 26.♘e4 g6 [26...♖d5 27.♘g5! White's attack is far too strong, 1-0 (30) MCDermont – MedusaV1 Internet (rapid) 2017] 27.♖g5 ♘d7 28.♘f3 ♘a4 29.♘h5 ♘xc2+ 30.♕xc2 Winning again, 1-0 (58) AlbusDumbledore – MedusaV3 Internet (rapid) 2017.

21.♚d2 ♜xc4

A) 21...f6 22.♖hg1 ♕h5 23.♙h6 ♜f7 24.exf6 g6  
 25.cxd5 ♘xd5 26.♘b5 ♙f8 27.♙xf8 ♖xf8  
 28.♘d6 White is on the road to victory, 1-0 (54)  
 Kiselev, V – Sgherri, M corr. 2013.

B) 21...♙e7

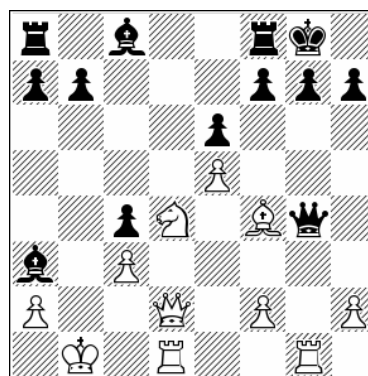


Position after: 21...♙e7

22.h4! 1-0 Richardt, M – Packroff, H corr. 2015.  
 Black resigned here because of 22...♘xc4  
 23.♙xc4 dxc4 24.h5 and his queen is trapped.

C) 21...♕h5 22.♜dg1 f5 23.♙h6 ♜f7 24.♖f4 ♘a4  
 25.♔c2 1-0 Sergy -- Pioneer corr. 2014.

22.♙xc4 dxc4 23.♖hg1

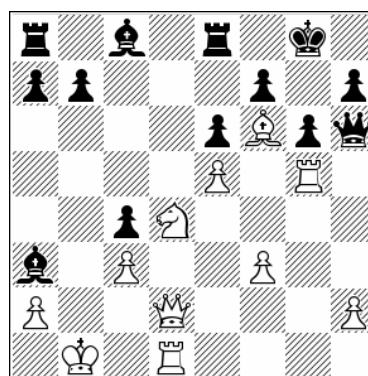


Position after: 23.♖hg1

23...♕h4

23...♕h5 24.♜g5 ♕h3 25.♜g3 ♕h5 26.♜dg1 g6  
 27.♖e3 White chalks up another victory.

24.♙g5 ♕h5 25.♙f6 g6 26.f3 ♜e8 27.♜g5 ♕h6



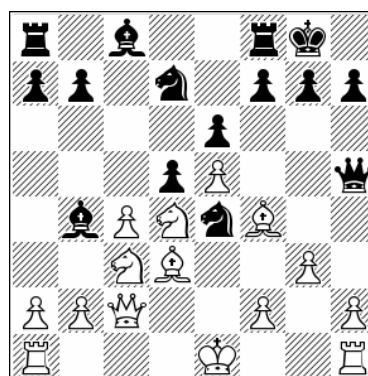
Position after: 27...♕h6

28.♘b5

A winning attack for White, 1-0 (38) Holt, C  
 (2539) – Schroer, J (2359) ICC INT 2013.

### c) 11...♕h5 12.cxd5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.e4 d5  
 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7  
 10.♙f4 ♕h4 11.g3 ♕h5



Position after: 11...♕h5

The main move, critical for the assessment of the whole line that starts after 5.e4 d5.

## 12.cxd5

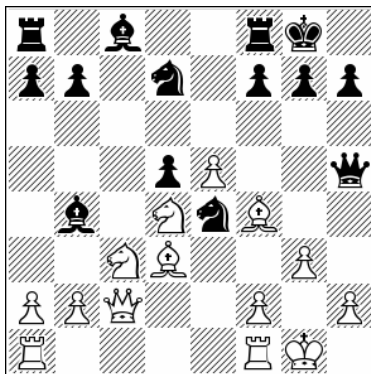
We will deal here with less common lines that still show interesting ideas.

12.f3 ♘xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖ec5 14.g4 ♗xd3+ 15.♚xd3 dxc4 16.♚xc4 ♚h3 17.♔f2 ♖b6 18.♚d3 ♙d7 19.♞ag1 ♚h4+ 20.♙g3 ♚e7 Black is fine here, 0-1 (29) Holt, C (2553) – Vidit, S (2727) chess.com INT 2021.

## 12...exd5 13.f3!?

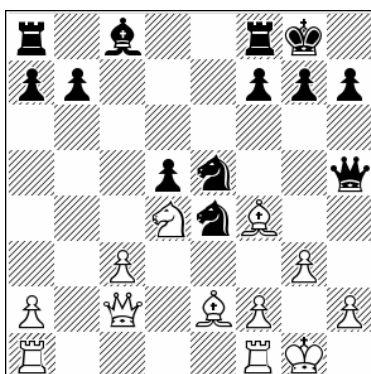
Rare, though a few games have been played recently.

13.0-0 A solid option.



Position after: 13.0-0

## A) 13...♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♗xe5 15.♙e2!



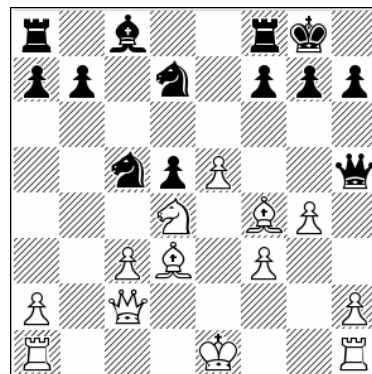
Position after: 15.♙e2!

15...♗g4 16.♙xg4 ♙xg4 17.f3 ♙h3 18.fxe4 White is better.

B) 13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♙c5 15.♞fe1 ½-½ (61) L'Ami, A (2376) – Brynell, S (2500) Hoogeveen 2012 White has more prospects here.

C) 13...♗xe5 Probably best. 14.♙xe5 ♚xe5 15.♗f3 ♚h5 16.♗xd5 ♗d2! 17.♗xd2 ♚xd5 18.♗c4 g6 19.a3 ♙c5 20.♙e4 ♚g5 21.♞ad1 ♙e6 22.♗d6 ♙xd6 23.♞xd6 ♞ac8 24.♚d2 ♚xd2 25.♞xd2 b6 Black is OK, ½-½ (46) Stockfish 260616 64 – Stockfish 240716 64 Internet 2016.

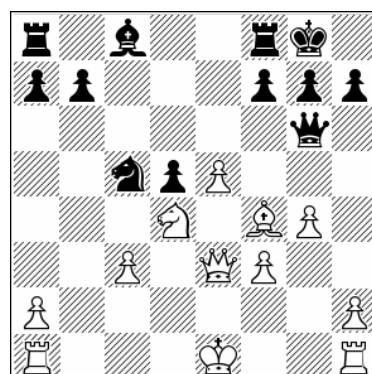
## 13...♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖ec5 15.g4



Position after: 15.g4

## 15...♚h4+

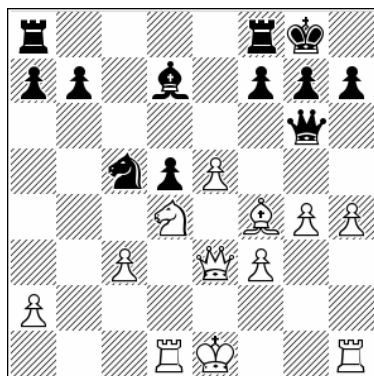
The alternative is 15...♗xd3+ 16.♚xd3 ♖c5 17.♚e3 ♚g6



Position after: 17...♚g6

18.h4!?! [18.0-0 ♙d7 19.♞ad1 ♞ac8 20.♙g3 ♗a4 21.♞c1 ♞c4! Black is OK after this typical move, ½-½ (36) Xiu Deshun (2538) – Liu Guanchu (2462)

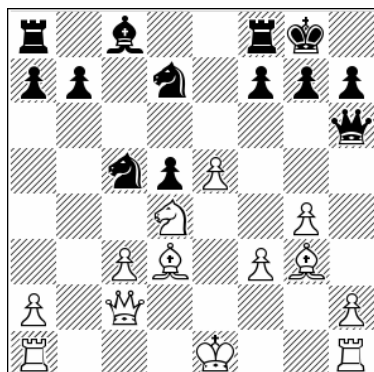
Daqing 2019] 18...♙d7 [18...♚d3 19.♞d1 ♚xe3+ 20.♙xe3 ♜e8 21.♘b5 ♜xe5 22.♚f2 White has some chances] 19.♞d1



Position after: 19.♞d1

19...h5 [19...♞fe8 20.h5 ♚a6 21.♘f5 ♘e6 22.♚f2! it's still balanced but Black has to be a bit careful here] 20.gxh5 ♚xh5 21.♘e2 b6 22.♘g3 ♚h7 23.h5 f6 24.0-0 ♞ae8 25.♞xd5 This unusual position shows that this line can generate interesting play.

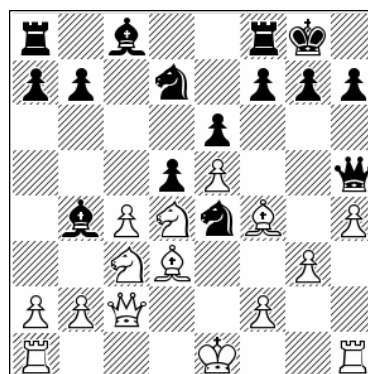
16.♙g3 ♚h6



Position after: 16...♚h6

### d) 11...♚h5 12.h4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7 10.♙f4 ♚h4 11.g3 ♚h5 12.h4

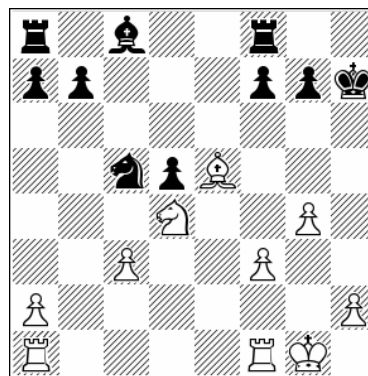


Position after: 12.h4

17.♘f5

17.♚f2 ♘xd3+ 18.♚xd3 ♘c5 19.♚e3 ♚xe3+ 20.♚xe3 ♙d7 It's around equal.

17...♚e6 18.0-0 ♘xe5 19.♘d4 ♚h6 20.♙xh7+ ♚xh7 21.♚xh7+ ♚xh7 22.♙xe5



Position after: 22.♙xe5

22...♞e8

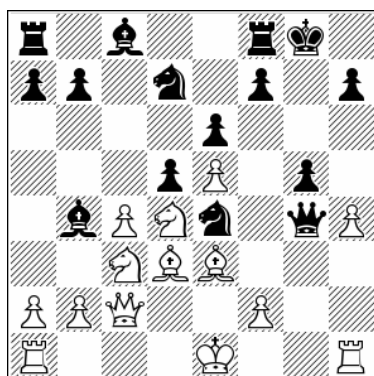
Black is OK here, but I should add that White's three versus two majority on the kingside and good dark-squared bishop guarantee him safe play, ½-½ (60) Yu Yangyi (2738) – Aronian, L (2752) Stavanger 2019.

A very popular line, and one of the two main ideas here. With his last move White has created the direct threat of trapping the black queen with bishop to e2. The line with 12.0-0 is covered in subchapter e).

**12...♗xe5**

Black's main idea, but there are other options that need to be checked.

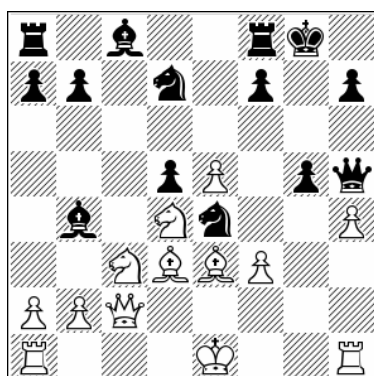
**A) 12...g5 13.g4! ♖xg4 14.♗e3**



Position after: 14.♗e3

**A1) 14...♗xe5 15.♗e2 ♖g2 16.0-0-0 ♗xf2 17.♖hg1 ♗xd1 18.♖xg2 ♗xe3 19.♖xg5+ ♔h8 20.♖b3** White has better chances.

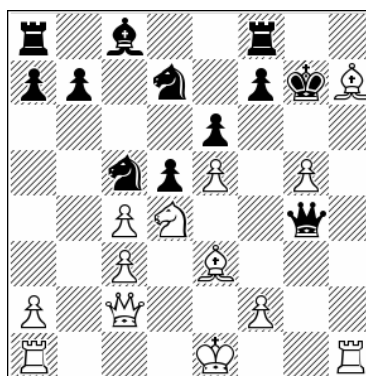
**A2) 14...♖h5 15.cxd5 exd5 16.f3!**



Position after: 16.f3!

White must castle as soon as possible. 16...♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♗a5 18.0-0-0 ♗xe5 19.♗f5 ♗xf5 20.♗xf5 ♖fc8 21.♗d4! ♗xf3 22.♗f6 g4 23.♖xd5 It seems that White preserves attacking chances in this nice line.

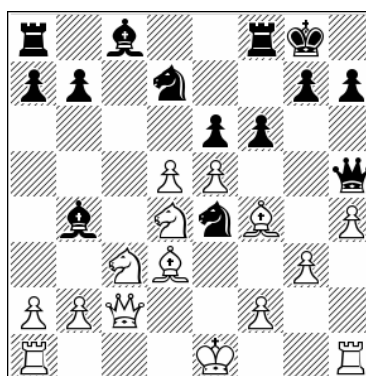
**A3) 14...♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♗ec5 16.♗xh7+ ♔g7 17.hxg5!**



Position after: 17.hxg5!

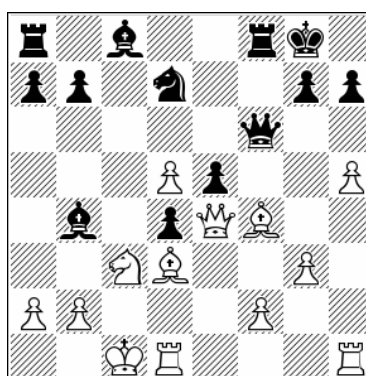
17...♖h8 18.♔d2 ♗e4+ 19.♗xe4 ♖xe4 20.cxd5 ♖xc2+ 21.♗xc2 Another win for White.

**B) 12...f6 13.cxd5** The best move and the only way to play for an advantage, even if it's only a microscopic one.



Position after: 13.cxd5

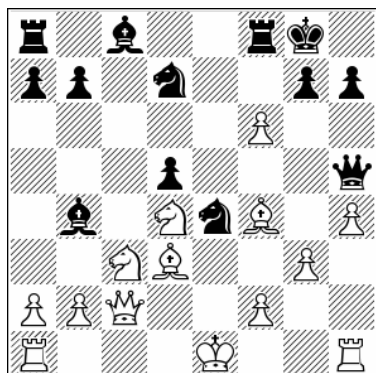
**B1) 13...fxe5 14.♗e2!** This seems to be the only serious attempt here for White. 14...♖g6 15.h5 ♖f6 16.♖xe4 exd4 17.0-0-0 e5 18.♗d3!



Position after: 18.♗d3!

18...dxc3 [18...♔f7 19.♚xh7 dxc3 20.♙e3 this transposes to 18...dxc3] 19.♚xh7+ ♔f7 20.♙e3! Things are getting very interesting. White has a strong attacking plan involving h6. 20...cxb2+ 21.♔b1 ♘c5 22.♙g6+ ♔e7 23.d6+ ♔d8 24.h6! ♙e6 25.♙c2 With lots of complications, but harder for Black than White.

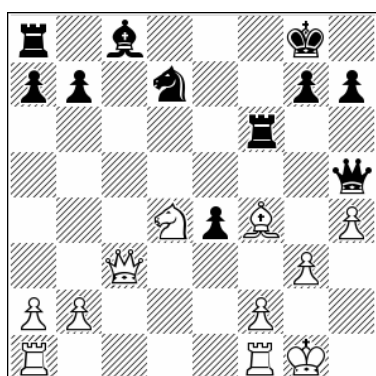
**B2)** 13...exd5 14.exf6



Position after: 14.exf6

**B2.1)** 14...♘dxf6 15.f3 g5!? [15...♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♙c5 17.0-0 ♙h3 18.♚f2 ♘d7 19.♚d2 ♘b6 20.♚e1 White maintains some edge; 15...♙xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♘c5 17.0-0 ♘d3 18.♚xd3 ♙d7 19.♔g2 also some edge for White, 1-0 (46) Gines Esteo, P (2434) – Pogorelov, R (2362) Barcelona 2020] 16.♙e3 ♘xg3 17.♚g1 gxh4 18.0-0-0 ♙d7 19.♘de2 ♚xf3 20.♙d4 ♚g4 21.♔b1 ♙xc3 22.♘xc3 White has the initiative. His bishop on d4 is very strong, but still the position is far from being simple.

**B2.2)** Black has a serious alternative. 14...♚xf6!? 15.♙xe4 ♙xc3+ 16.♚xc3 dxe4 17.0-0

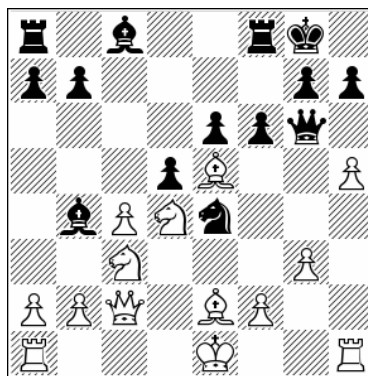


Position after: 17.0-0

17...♚f7 [17...♘e5 18.♙xe5 ♚xe5 19.♘e2 ♚b5 20.♘f4 ♙g4 the position is balanced; the knight on f4 is strong but Black has good control over the light squares] 18.♚fe1 ♘f6 19.♙g5 ♚g6 20.♙xf6 ♚xf6 21.♚d2 ♚e7 22.♚e3 ♙g4 23.♚ae1 ♚ae8 24.♘b5 a6 25.♘c3 White has some edge but it's not so easy, as the black bishop is strong.

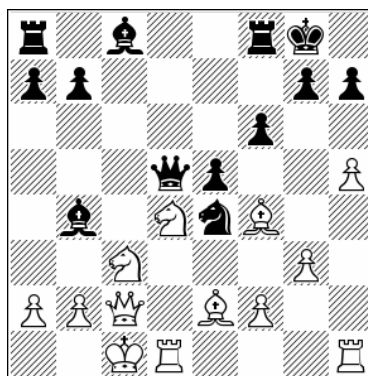
**13.♙e2 ♘g4**

A rarely played alternative involves a temporary piece sacrifice. 13...♚g6 14.♙xe5 f6 15.h5



Position after: 15.h5

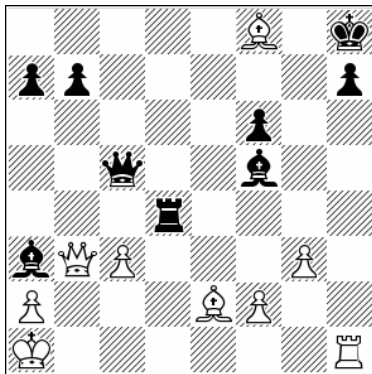
15...♚f7 [in a recent game Black opted for 15...♚e8 16.cxd5 fxe5 17.♚xe4 exd4 18.♚xd4 ♙xc3+ 19.bxc3 exd5 20.h6 but White was still better, ½-½ (42) Mueller, N (2368) – Brunner, N (2448) Mayrhofen 2022] 16.♙f4 e5 17.cxd5 ♚xd5 18.0-0-0



Position after: 18.0-0-0

18...♘xc3! [18...♙xc3 19.♘b3! ♚c6 20.♙e3 ♙f5 21.♙d3 ♚fc8 22.bxc3 ♚xc3 23.♚xc3 ♚xc3+ 24.♔b2 ♚xd3 25.♚xd3 ♘xf2 26.♙xf2 ♙xd3 Black does have some compensation for the sacrificed

piece, but this is not to be recommended]  
 19.bxc3 ♖a3+ 20.♔b1 exd4 21.♚a4 ♕f5+  
 22.♔a1 ♚c5 23.♚b3+ ♔h8 24.♞xd4 ♞ad8 25.h6  
 ♞xd4 26.hxg7+ ♔xg7 27.♕h6+ ♔h8 28.♕xf8



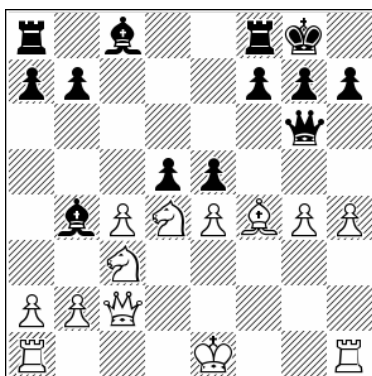
Position after: 28.♕xf8

28...♚c6! A great line -- Black is holding well here.

**14.♕xg4**

14.cxd5 ♕xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♖exf2 16.♞f1 e5 Black is winning, 0-1 (36) Gretarsson, H (2401) – Kuzubov, Y (2643) chess.com INT 2020.

14...♚xg4 15.f3 ♚h5 16.g4 ♚g6 17.fxe4 e5

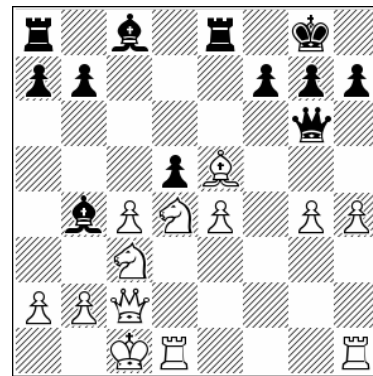


Position after: 17...e5

This is a key moment. Black is attacking two white pieces so the question, how does White escape?

**18.0-0-0**

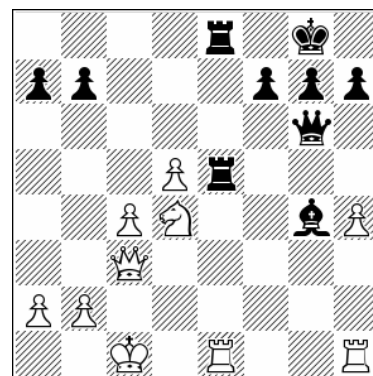
18.♕xe5 ♞e8 19.0-0-0



Position after: 19.0-0-0

**A)** 19...♞xe5 20.♖xd5 ♕xg4!? 21.♖xb4 ♕xd1 22.♞xd1 ♞xe4 23.♖d5 ♞ae8 Black seems to have adequate play here, as the pawn on h4 is weak. 24.a4 To prevent possible ...b5 plans. 24...h5 25.♚f2 ♚g4 Black has secured counterplay.

**B)** 19...♕xc3 Not forced. 20.exd5 [White has a sharp and interesting alternative. 20.bxc3 ♕xg4!? 21.♞dg1 ♞xe5 22.exd5 f5 it's a complicated game mutual chances.] 20...♞xe5 21.♚xc3 ♕xg4 22.♞de1 ♞ae8



Position after: 22...♞ae8

**B1)** 23.♞xe5 ♞xe5 24.♞e1 ♞xe1+ 25.♚xe1 h5 26.♔d2 ♚f6 27.♔c3 g5 28.hxg5 ♚xg5 This is almost exactly the same position as in the Vallejo game below; the only difference is the pawn on b3, which is of no importance. It's an equal game, as Black's h pawn is fast enough, ½-½ (34) Kristoferitsch, D (2325) – Srienzi, C (2182) Innsbruck 2021.

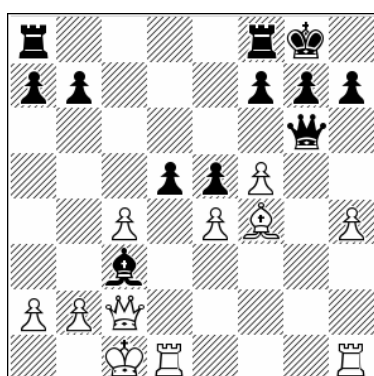
**B2)** 23.b3 h5 24.♞xe5 ♞xe5 25.♞e1 ♞e4 26.♔b2 ♞xe1 27.♚xe1 ♚f6 28.♔c3 g5 29.hxg5 ♚xg5 As I said, this is virtually the same as the game above

so it's equal play, 1-0 (53) Vallejo Pons, F (2698) – Sebenik, M (2540) chess.com INT 2019.

18...♙xc3 19.♘f5 ♙xf5

19...♙xb2+ 20.♖xb2 ♙xf5 21.gxf5 ♖c6 22.♙xe5 f6 23.♙c3 White is winning, ½-½ (36) Quirke, J (2107) – Lopez Gracia, F (2299) chess.com INT 2021.

20.gxf5

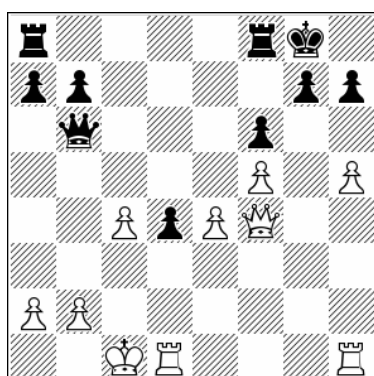


Position after: 20.gxf5

20...♖a6!

This seems best, though other moves are also complex.

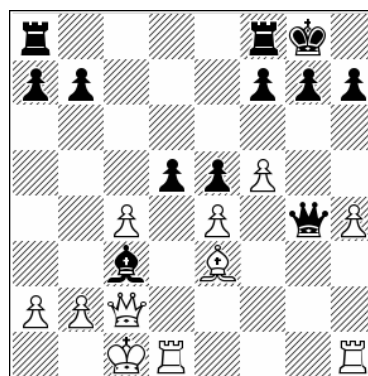
A) 20...♖b6 21.♖xc3 ½-½ (21) Moranda, W (2605) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2682) Warsaw 2020. Actually White could play on here, for example 21...d4 22.♖g3 exf4 23.♖xf4 f6 24.h5!?



Position after: 24.h5!?

24...♖c5 25.h6 g5 26.fxg6 hxg6 27.♖hg1 ♔h7 28.♖xd4 ♖f7 29.♖gd1 ♖e8 30.♔b1 b5 Black is doing a good job of maintaining the balance.

B) 20...♖g4 21.♙e3

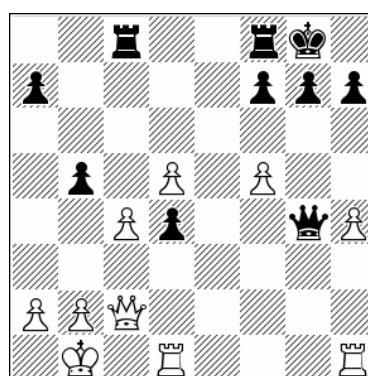


Position after: 21.♙e3

B1) 21...♙b4 22.♖hg1! ♖xh4 23.♖g2 g6 24.♖xd5 ♖fc8 25.b3 ♙f8 26.♔b1 ♖f6 27.♖h3 White has a strong initiative here, 1-0 (43) Fridman, D (2608) – Engel, L (2543) Magdeburg 2021.

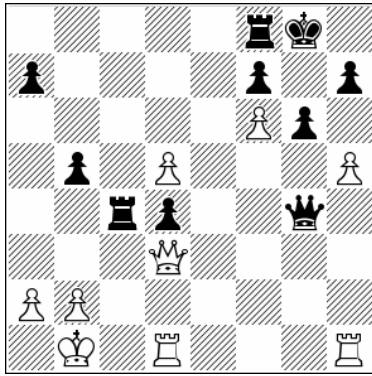
B2) 21...d4!? This move I annotated in my article in *Chess* magazine about the British championship, where I analyzed a game of Howell's. 22.♙h6 ♖h5 23.♙xg7 ♙xb2+ 24.♔xb2 ♔xg7 25.♖g2+ ♔h8 26.♖g5 ♖xg5 27.hxg5 ♖g8 28.♖h5 ♔g7 29.♖dh1 ♔f8 A slightly unusual line, typical for engines but apparently playable for humans.

B3) 21...♙d4 Black has a few other options. 22.♙xd4 exd4 23.exd5 ♖ac8 24.♔b1 b5



Position after: 24...b5

B3.1) 25.f6!? g6 26.h5 ♖xc4 27.♖d3



Position after: 27. ♖d3

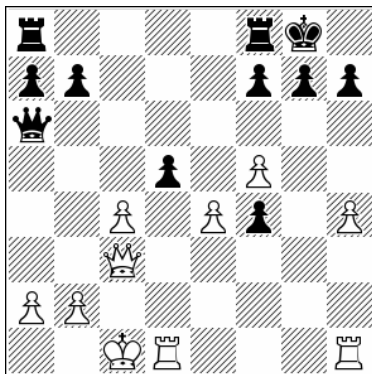
27... ♗g5! [27... ♖e8 28. hxc6 hxc6 29. d6 ♖e3 30. d7 1-0 (30) Sturt, R (2478) – Vergara Jofre, F (2343) Sabadell 2019] 28. hxc6 fxc6 29. ♗h3 ♗f5+ 30. ♗xf5 gxf5 31. b3 ♖c3 32. ♖dg1+ ♔f7 33. ♖h6 d3 34. ♖g7+ ♔e8 35. ♖hxh7 d2 36. ♖h1 ♖xf6 37. ♖xa7 It's an equal endgame.

**B3.2)** 25. ♖hg1! Other moves are playable but less strong. 25... ♗f4 26. c5 ♖fd8 27. ♖df1 ♗h6 28. f6 ♖xd5 29. ♖xg7+ ♔h8 30. ♖fg1 d3 31. ♗g2 ♖dd8 32. ♖xf7 d2 33. ♖d1 White is better.

**21. ♗xc3 d4**

That's the easiest way to play, although there is one safe alternative.

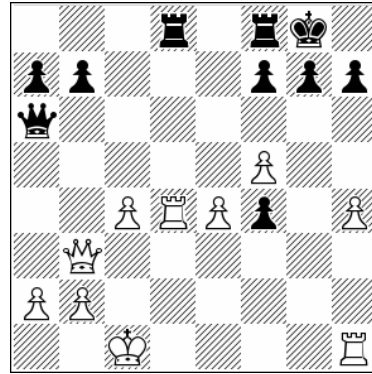
21...exf4



Position after: 21...exf4

22. ♖xd5 [22. ♖hg1 f6 23. ♖xd5 ♖ac8 24. ♔b1 ♖xc4 25. ♖d7 ♖f7 26. ♗d3 ♗c6 Black has reached a balanced game] 22... ♖ac8 23. b3 ♗xa2 24. ♖g1 f6 25. ♗b2 ♗a6 26. ♖d7 ♖f7 27. ♗d4 ♗a3+ 28. ♔c2 ♖cf8 Black is not in any kind of danger.

**22. ♗b3 exf4 23. ♖xd4 ♖ad8**

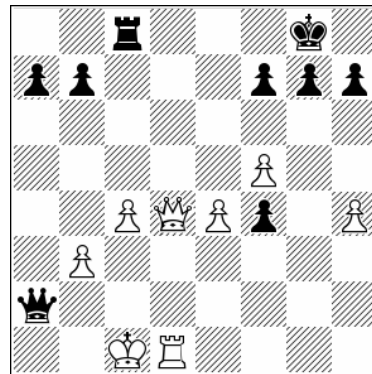


Position after: 23... ♖ad8

**24. ♗d3**

24. ♖d5 ♖xd5 25. cxd5 ♖c8+ 26. ♔b1 ♗e2 Black is better.

**24... ♖xd4 25. ♗xd4 ♖c8 26. b3 ♗xa2 27. ♖d1**



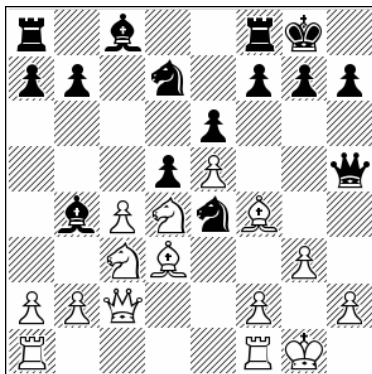
Position after: 27. ♖d1

**27...g6**

Black is doing fine here, 1-0 (49) Xiong, J (2709) – Esipenko, A (2682) chess.com INT 2020.

## e) 11...♖h5 12.0-0 ♗xc3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.e4 d5  
6.e5 ♘e4 7.♗d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7  
10.♗f4 ♖h4 11.g3 ♖h5 12.0-0



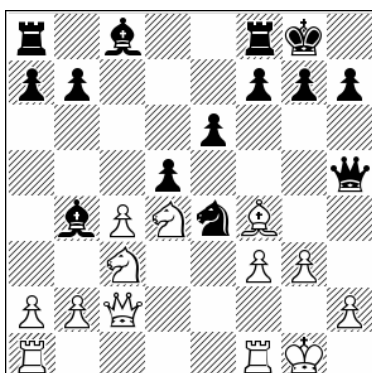
Position after: 12.0-0

The most logical continuation and probably critical for the assessment of this entire line.

### 12...♗xc3

Black decides to take on c3 at once, reducing White's pressure on e4 and d5. On the other hand, Black has lost his dark-squared bishop, so it's an interesting struggle ahead of us. We will deal with the big main line after 12...g5 in other subchapters.

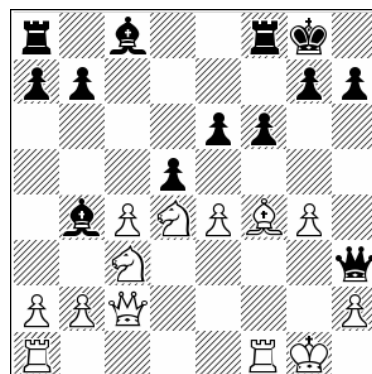
One alternative is actually suspicious but not that easy to refute. 12...♘xe5 13.♗e2 ♘g4 14.♗xg4 ♖xg4 15.f3 ♖h5



Position after: 15...♖h5

16.g4 This is not as clear as it seems. [16.fxe4 e5 17.♗xe5 ♖xe5 18.♘f3 ♖h5 19.♘xd5 ♗c5+

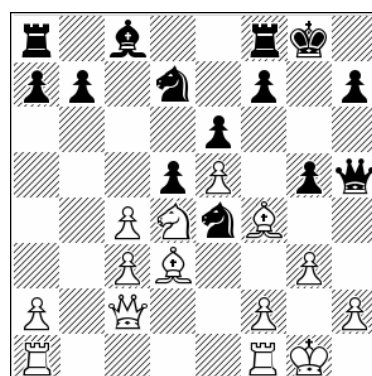
20.♔h1 White is a clear pawn up and has a strong knight on d5, but Black has some compensation in the form of his bishop pair, 1-0 (41) Holt, C (2553) – Stoleriu, G (2419) chess.com INT 2022] 16...♖h3 [16...♖g6 17.fxe4 ♗c5 18.♗e3 e5 19.♘f5 d4 20.♘a4 ♗xf5 21.exf5 ♖xg4+ 22.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 23.♔xg2 ♖ac8 24.♗f2 White is just a piece up] 17.fxe4 f6!



Position after: 17...f6!

18.♘db5 d4 19.♘d1 ♗c5 20.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 21.♔xg2 e5 22.♘c7 ♖b8 23.♗d2 ♗xg4 24.♖c1 ♖fc8 25.♘d5 ♗d6 26.♖g1 It seems that this is the way for White to go. It's still not so easy, but he is a piece up for only two pawns.

### 13.bxc3 g5



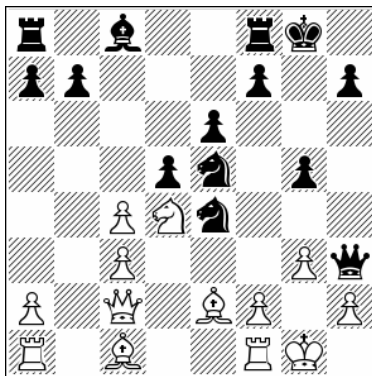
Position after: 13...g5

The same idea as mentioned above, but this time Black has taken on c3 first and that is an important difference.

### 14.cxd5

The most popular move, and the best one.

14. ♖c1 ♜xe5 15. ♙e2 ♚h3



Position after: 15... ♚h3

We have already seen this idea, which effectively stops f3.

**A)** 16. cxd5 exd5 17. f3 ♜xg3 18. hxg3 ♚xg3+ 19. ♔h1 ♚h3+ ½-½ (19) Shtembuliak, E (2600) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2675) Lutsk 2019.

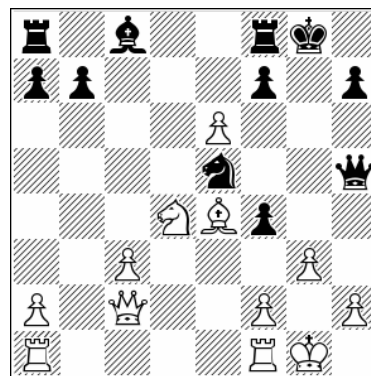
**B)** 16. ♖b1 b6 17. cxd5 exd5 18. f3 ♜xg3 19. hxg3 ♚xg3+ 20. ♔h1 ♚h3+ 21. ♔g1 ♚g3+ ½-½ (21) Feller, S (2626) – Naiditsch, A (2720) Montpellier 2015.

**C)** 16. f3 ♜xg3 17. hxg3 ♚xg3+ 18. ♔h1 ♚h3+ 19. ♔g1 ♚g3+ 20. ♔h1 ♚h3+ 21. ♔g1 ½-½ (21) Mamedyarov, S (2782) – Korobov, A (2683) Zagreb 2021.

**D)** 16. f4!? Other moves have ended up in quick draws, with no need for any comments. 16... ♜g4 17. ♙xg4 ♚xg4 18. fxg5 e5 19. ♜f3 ♖e8 20. cxd5 ♙f5 21. ♚b2 ♜d6 22. ♚b4 ♚xb4 23. cxb4 ♙e4 24. a4 ♖ac8 25. ♜h4 Black has no problems here.

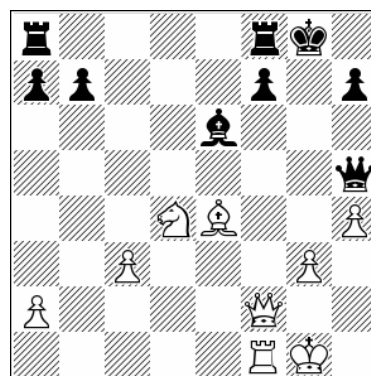
#### 14...exd5

14...gxf4 Here with the inclusion of ... ♙xc3 the situation changes. In a similar line, but without the exchange on c3, Black often keeps his bishop pair, which can help him to generate counterplay. 15. dxe6 ♜xe5 16. ♙xe4



Position after: 16. ♙xe4

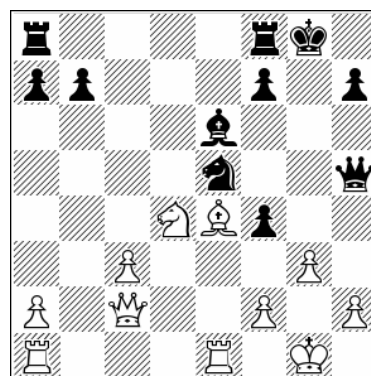
**A)** 16... ♜g4 17. h4! fxe6 [17... fxg3 18. fxg3 ♜e3 19. ♚f2 ♜xf1 20. ♖xf1 ♙xe6



Position after: 20... ♙xe6

21. ♚f6! now either the knight or the bishop go to f5 and Black cannot defend; 17... ♙xe6 18. ♚d2 ♚h6 19. ♜xe6 fxe6 20. ♚e2 ♜f6 21. ♙xb7 this is also better for White] 18. ♖ae1 e5 19. ♜f3 ♙f5 20. ♜g5 ♙xe4 21. ♚xe4 ♖ae8 22. ♚xb7 White has the initiative.

**B)** 16... ♙xe6 17. ♖fe1 This is definitely better for White, as the knight stands firm on the important d4-square, supported by the c3-pawn.



Position after: 17. ♖fe1

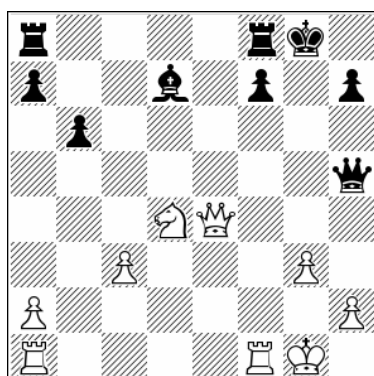
17...♔h8 [17...♖ad8 18.♚d2 fxg3 19.hxg3 ♘d5 20.♚f4 ♘g6 21.♚f6 ♘xe4 22.♗xe4 ♖d5 23.♖b1 b6 24.a4 Also here White enjoys easier play and chances for an advantage, 1-0 (41) Spoelman, W (2571) – L'Ami, E (2650) Amsterdam 2014] 18.♘b7 ♖ab8 19.♘g2 fxg3 20.fxg3 ♘c4 21.♚a4 White has better play, 1-0 (35) So, W (2772) – Van Foreest, J (2698) chess24.com INT 2021.

### 15.♘e3

We are still following the main line. The bishop move is probably best, but there are some other moves worth checking.

A) 15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.e6 gxf4 This is just a transposition to the 15.e6 variation below.

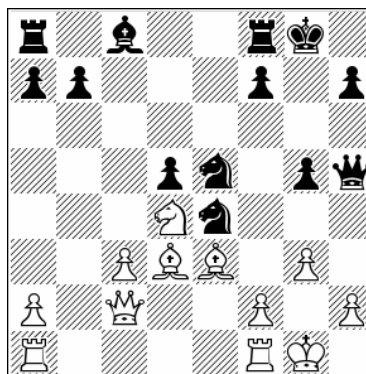
B) 15.e6 gxf4 16.exd7 ♘xd7 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♚xe4 fxg3 19.fxg3 b6 Black's bishop is not worse than the white knight. Both sides have control of some vital squares.



Position after: 19...b6

20.♘f5 [20.♖ae1 ♖ae8 21.♚f3 ♚xf3 22.♘xf3 ♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♖c8 24.♖e7 ♖xc3 25.♖xd7 ♖xf3 the game is on course for a draw, ½-½ (33) Radjabov, T (2763) – Ding Liren (2799) chess.com INT 2021] 20...♖ae8 21.♚d5 ♘xf5 22.♖xf5 ♚e2 23.♖af1 ♚e3+ Black has sufficient counterplay, ½-½ (27) So, W (2770) – Firouzja, A (2759) chess24.com INT 2021.

### 15...♘xe5

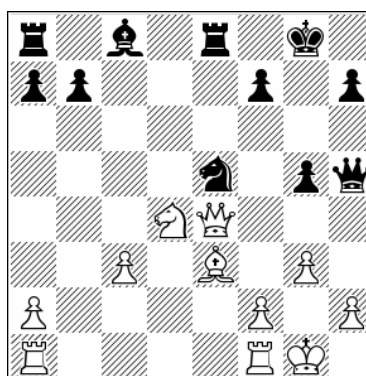


Position after: 15...♘xe5

### 16.f3

Best and critical.

16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♚xe4 Taking the pawn just loses momentum and Black gets the upper hand. 17...♖e8!



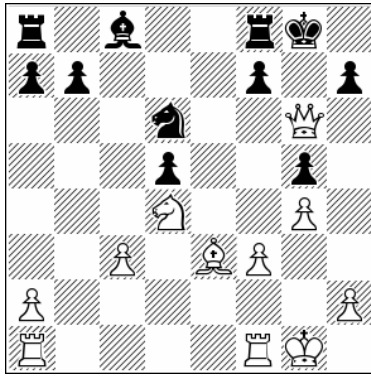
Position after: 17...♖e8!

18.♖ab1 ♘g4 19.♚xb7 ♘f3+ 20.♘xf3 ♘xf3 21.♚d7 h6 Black is better, ½-½ (28) Posedaru, B (2318) – Berescu, A (2458) Cap Aurora 2017.

### 16...♘c5

That's one of two main ideas. In this case Black doesn't want to eliminate the bishop on d3, but instead retreats his attacked knight.

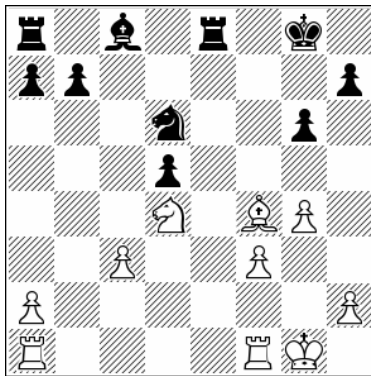
16...♘xd3 17.♚xd3 ♘d6 18.g4 ♚g6 19.♚xg6+



Position after: 19. ♖xg6+

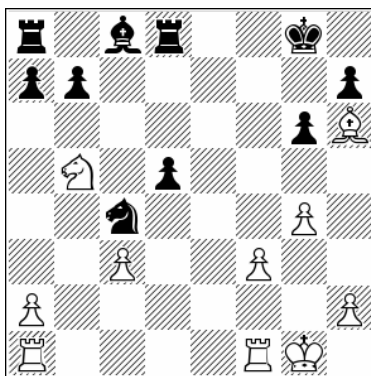
We have reached an interesting endgame, which we can consider as offering slightly better chances for White.

**A) 19...fxg6 20. ♗xg5 ♜e8 21. ♗f4**



Position after: 21. ♗f4

21... ♖c4 [21... ♜d8 22. ♜fe1 ♖f7 23. ♜e7 ♖f8 24. ♜c7 this is a big advantage for White, 1-0 (30) Howell, D (2648) – Quparadze, G (2475) Terme Catez 2021] 22. ♖b5 ♜f8 23. ♗h6 ♜f7 [23... ♜d8?



Position after: 23... ♜d8?

24. ♜fe1! ♖f7 25. ♜ad1 b6 26. ♜d4 g5 27. ♗xg5 ♜d7 28. ♜f4+ ♖g6 29. ♜e6+ White won quickly, 1-

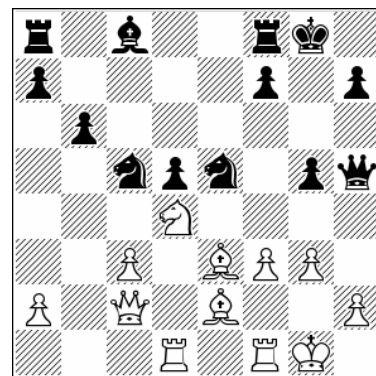
0 (29) Caruana, F (2792) – Vidit, S (2727) Warsaw 2021] 24. ♜ae1 ♗d7 25. ♖c7 ♜d8 26. ♖xd5 White is clearly better, 1-0 (50) Basso, P (2541) – Thorfinnsson (2439) Reykjavik 2021.

**B) 19...hxg6 20. ♗xg5 f6 21. ♗h6 ♜f7 22. ♗f4 ♖c4 23. h4 ♗d7 24. ♖f2 ♖e5 25. ♖g3** White has some edge, as the bishop on f4 is better than its counterpart on d7, 1-0 (46) Burg, T (2536) – Wiedenkiller, M (2458) Budva 2019.

**17. ♗f5**

The most popular option, but a recent idea deserves serious attention.

17. ♗e2 b6 [17... ♗d7 18. ♖f5! White is better; exchanging queens at once doesn't equalize: 17... ♜g6 18. ♜xg6+ hxg6 19. ♗xg5 ♖e6 20. ♖xe6 ♗xe6 21. ♗f6 ♖d7 22. ♗d4 White has chances in this endgame, 1-0 (57) Peng, L (2517) – Cummings, D (2321) Reykjavik 2022] White is not forced to go for the sharp g4 advance. 18. ♜ad1!?



Position after: 18. ♜ad1!?

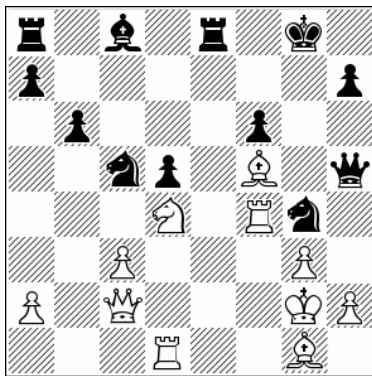
18...g4 [18... ♜e8 19. ♖b5 ♗h3 20. ♜f2 g4 21. fxf4 ♖xf4 22. ♗xc5 bxc5 23. ♖c7 ♜e5 24. ♗xg4 ♗xg4 25. ♜xd5 ♜xc7 26. ♜g5+ ♖h8 27. ♜xg4 ♜e1+ 28. ♖g2 ♜c6+ 29. ♖h3 White has some edge; 18... ♖c4 19. ♗c1 ♗d7 20. ♖b3 ♗c6 21. ♖xc5 bxc5 22. ♗xc4 dxc4 23. ♜f5 White has an advantage] 19. ♗f4 gxf3 20. ♖xf3 ♜g6 21. ♜xg6+ ♖xg6 22. ♗h6 ♗h3 23. ♗xf8 ♗xf1 24. ♖xf1 ♖xf8 25. ♜xd5 ♜c8 Black is OK in this endgame.

17...♘e6

Probably the best defense, although there are valid alternatives.

17...f6 Black defends his g5-pawn and opens an escape route for his queen if White plays g4.

A) 18.♖ad1 In many cases now the bishop can go back to c1, if required, without blocking this rook. 18...b6 19.♔g2 g4 20.fxg4 ♘xg4 21.♙g1 ♞e8 22.♞f4

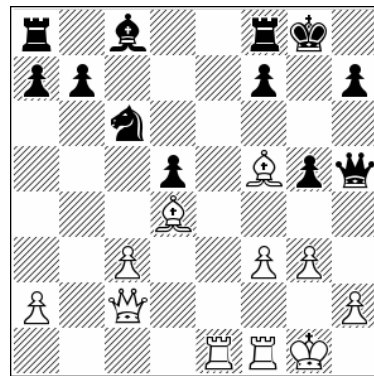


Position after: 22.♞f4

22...♘e5 [22...♘e3+?! 23.♙xe3 ♞xe3 24.♙xc8 ♞xc8 25.♞h4 ♚g6 26.♘f5 White has serious attacking play, 1-0 (51) Budisavljevic, L (2508) – Van Foreest, L (2543) Riga 2021] 23.♞df1 ♘g6 24.♞g4 ♔h8 25.h3 ♙a6 26.♞f2 ♞g8 27.♚d1 This position is razor-sharp.

B) 18.h4 g4 19.fxg4 ♘xg4 20.♚d1 ♔h8 21.♘e6 ♙xe6 22.♚xg4 ♚xg4 23.♙xg4 ♙xg4 24.♙xc5 ♞f7 25.♙d4 ♔g8 It seems that the worst is over for Black, ½-½ (30) Van Foreest, L (2568) – Dardha, D (2610) Weyhe 2022.

18.♞ae1 ♘xd4 19.♙xd4 ♘c6

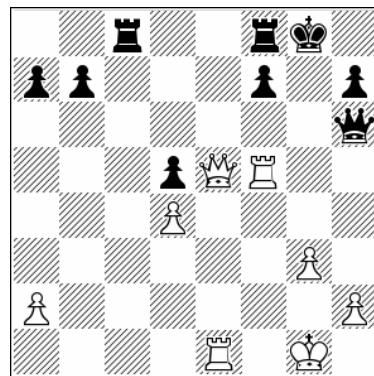


Position after: 19...♘c6

20.♙e3

Alternatives are possible, but not dangerous.

A) 20.f4 gxf4 21.♞xf4 ♙xf5 22.♞xf5 ♘xd4 23.cxd4 ♚h6 24.♚c7 ♞ac8 25.♚e5

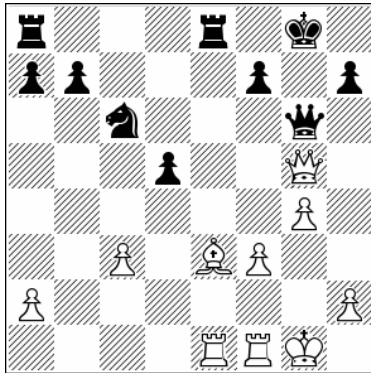


Position after: 25.♚e5

This position has been reached twice by grandmasters. After 25...f6 26.♚xd5+ ♔h8 27.♚xb7 ♞c2 28.♞f2 ♞f2 29.♔xf2 ♚xh2+ 30.♚g2 ♚h5 Black didn't face any problems, ½-½ (30) So, W (2778) – Nakamura, H (2750) Berlin 2022. The earlier game Xiong, J (2700) – So, W (2778) Saint Louis 2021 varied with 27.♞f2 but also ended in a draw, after 48 moves.

B) 20.♙c5 ♙xf5 21.♚xf5 ♞fe8 22.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 23.♚d7 ♞e2 This led to a draw in ½-½ (30) Mamedyarov, S (2767) – Navara, D (2717) Batumi 2019.

20...♞e8 21.g4 ♙xf5 22.♚xf5 ♚g6 23.♚xg5



Position after: 23. ♖xg5

### 23... ♖e5

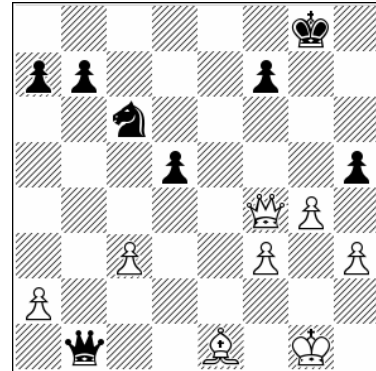
23... ♖ad8 24. ♗f4 ♖d3 25. ♙d4 ♘xd4 26. cxd4 ♗g6 27. h4 This is favorable for White, ½-½ (56) Perez Ponsa, F (2559) – Della Morte, G (2369) Buenos Aires 2020.

### 24. ♗f4

24. ♗xg6+ fxg6 25. ♙f4 ♖xe1 26. ♖xe1 ♙f7 27. ♙f2 ♖e8 28. ♖b1 b6 This is an equal endgame, as here

the knight is not worse than the bishop, ½-½ (57) Dardha, D (2532) – Ganguly, S (2627) Wijk aan Zee 2022.

24... ♖ae8 25. ♙f2 ♖xe1 26. ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 27. ♙xe1 h5 28. h3 ♗b1



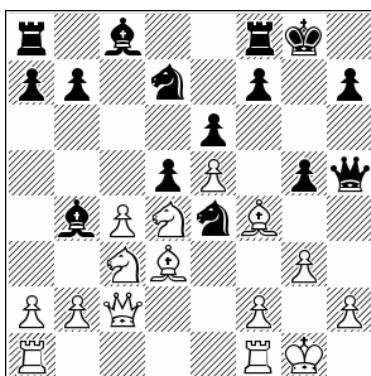
Position after: 28... ♗b1

### 29. ♗d2

The position is roughly equal.

## f) 11... ♗h5 12. 0-0 g5 13. cxd5 gxf4 14. ♙xe4

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♗c2 0-0 5. e4 d5 6. e5 ♘e4 7. ♙d3 c5 8. ♘f3 cxd4 9. ♘xd4 ♘d7 10. ♙f4 ♗h4 11. g3 ♗h5 12. 0-0 g5



Position after: 12... g5

Black has pinned his hopes on this move, either at once as we have here or after taking on c3 first. Obviously Black wants to take the e5-pawn, but at the same time his king is becoming weak and his pawn on g5 is becoming a target.

### 13. cxd5

The moves 13. ♙e3 and 13. ♙c1 are covered in the last subchapter, j).

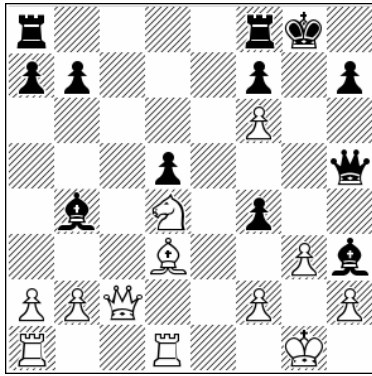
### 13... gxf4

13... ♘xc3 14. dxe6! This is best, transposing to another line that we've seen.

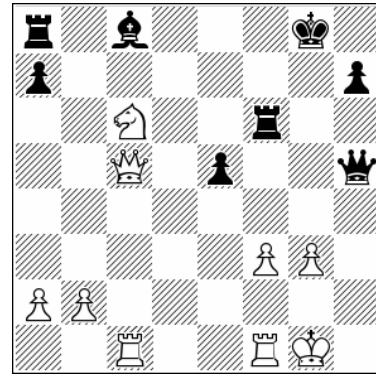
### 14. ♙xe4

We will start with two less played, perhaps less critical, lines. We will examine 14. dxe6 separately.

14. ♘xe4 exd5 15. ♘f6+ ♘xf6 16. exf6 ♙h3 17. ♖fd1



Position after: 17. Bfd1



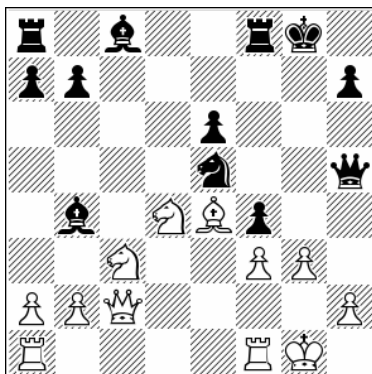
Position after: 23. Qxc6

We can consider this position to be balanced, but there can be some interesting moments. 17... Bxc8 [17... Bfe8 18. Bxc1 Bxc8 19. Qa4 Qf8 20. Bxc8 Bxc8 21. Re1 Qg5 22. Qe2 f3 23. hxg3 the position is balanced, ½-½ (37) Rios, C (2460) – Alsina Leal, D (2497) Barbera del Valles 2021] 18. Qe2 Qg4 19. f3 Qd7 20. g4! Qh6 21. Qe5 Qc5 22. Qh1 Bfe8 23. Qxd5 Bcd8 Black is doing fine.

14... Qxe5 15. dxe6 Qxe6

This is the most popular continuation, but there is one reasonable alternative.

15... fxe6 16. f3



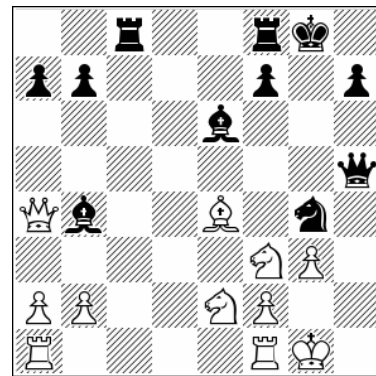
Position after: 16. f3

16... Qc5!? A really interesting idea. [16... Qc4 17. Qb3 Qc5 18. Bf2 Qa5 19. Qce2 Qd2 20. Qxh7+! Qxh7 21. Qd3+ Qh8 22. Qg6 White has strong attacking chances, ½-½ (40) Ivanisevic, I (2614) – Almasi, Z (2685) Novi Sad 2009] 17. Qce2 Qc6 18. Qxc6 f3 19. hxg3 bxc6 20. Bxc1 Qxd4+ 21. Qxd4 e5 22. Qc5 Bf6 23. Qxc6

23... Bxh6 24. Qc4+ Qh8 25. Qh4 Qxh4 26. gxh4 Bxh4 27. Qxe5 Qe6 Such a line shows clearly that Black is not in any danger.

16. Bcd1

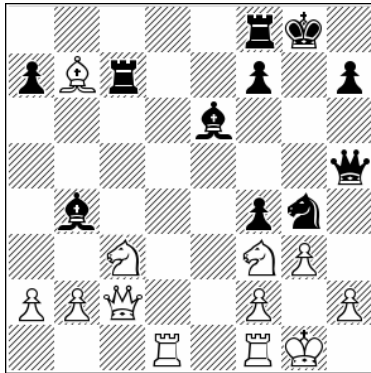
16. Qce2 Qg4 17. Qf3 f3 18. hxg3 Bxc8 19. Qa4



Position after: 19. Qa4

Now Black missed a very strong continuation. 19... Bc4! [19... Qd6 20. Bxc1 Bxc1 21. Bxc1 Qe5 22. Bc3 this is around equal, as the bishop pair helps Black to hold the balance, ½-½ (22) So, W (2770) – Grischuk, A (2777) lichess.org INT 2020] 20. Qf4 Qh6 21. Qxb7 Qd2 Black is winning.

16... Qg4 17. Qf3 Bxc8 18. Qxb7 Bc7

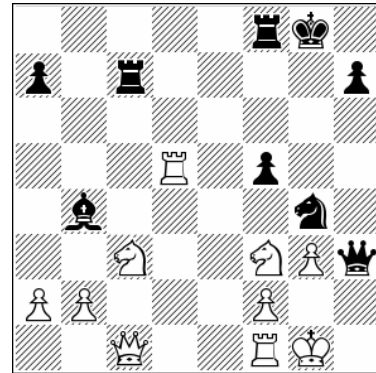


Position after: 18...Rc7

19. Qe4

19. Qe4 Rc4 20. Rd4 Qxh2 21. Rxc4 Qxf3+  
22. Qxf3 Qxf3 23. Qxf3 Qxc4 Again Black is fine.

19...fxg3 20.hxg3 Qh3 21. Qc1 f5 22. Qd5 Qxd5  
23. Rxd5



Position after: 23...Rxd5

23...f4

Black is better, 0-1 (29) Kulaots, K (2574) –  
Naiditsch, A (2698) Belfort 2012.

**g) 11...Qh5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 Qxc3**

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qb4 4.Qc2 0-0 5.e4 d5  
6.e5 Qe4 7.Qd3 c5 8.Qf3 cxd4 9.Qxd4 Qd7  
10.Qf4 Qh4 11.g3 Qh5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4

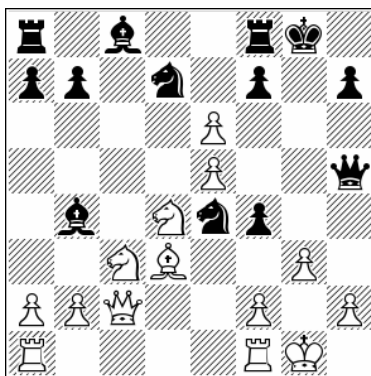
This is one of the possibilities here for Black, but  
in my opinion White gets some slight but  
continuing pressure.

13...Qxc3 Black uses this move order and here  
White's best is 14.dxe6! gxf4 15.exd7  
transposing to the main line.

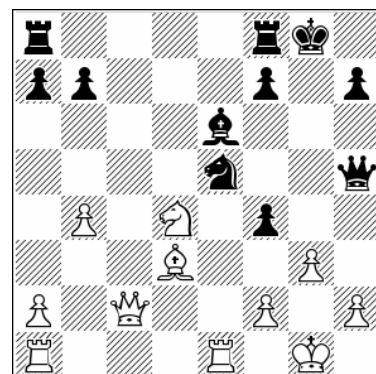
15.exd7

15.bxc3 Qxe5 16.cxb4 This position can also  
arise from the move 13...Qxc3, but it seems it's  
not White's best course of action; he should  
stick with 15.exd7. 16...Qxe6 17.Qfe1

14.dxe6



Position after: 14.dxe6



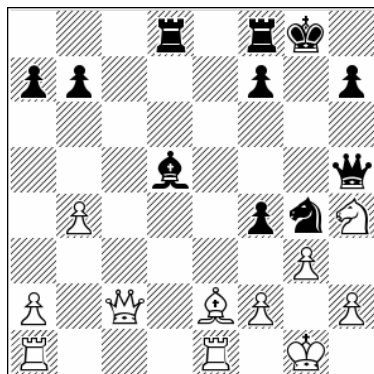
Position after: 17.Qfe1

This is the main option and indeed the critical  
one.

14...Qxc3

**A) 17...Rad8 18.Qe2 [18.Qxh7+!? Qxh7 19.Rxe5  
Qxc2 20.Qxc2 Rd2 21.Rc5 b6 22.Rc3 fxg3  
23.hxg3 Rfd8 24.a3 Rd1+ 25.Qg2 Qd5+ 26.f3  
Rd2+ Black is OK]**

**A1) 18...♞g4 19.♜f3 ♘d5 20.♞h4!**



Position after: 20.♞h4!

This is some advantage for White, as his knight on h4 is strong now. A knight on the edge is not always a bad piece! 20...fxg3 21.hxg3 ♜fe8 22.♞ad1 ♞e5 23.♞c1 ♞f6 24.♘b5 ♞d6 25.♞g5+ ♜h8 26.♞f5 ♜g8 27.♞xg8+ ♜xg8 28.♞xd6 ♜xd6 29.♘c4 ♞d7 30.♘d5 ♞xd5 31.♞e5 ♞b6 32.♞xd7 ♞xd7 33.♞e7 1-0 (33) Holt, C (2553) – Yilmaz, M (2631) chess.com INT 2021.

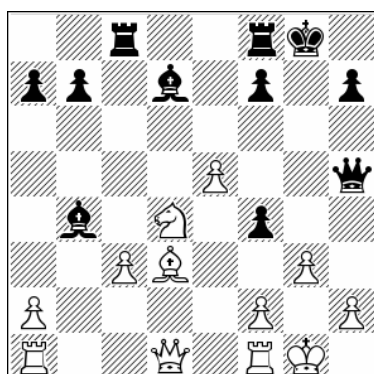
**A2) 18...f3! 19.♞xe6 fxe2 20.♞xd8 ♞f3+ 21.♜g2 ♞h4+ 22.♜g1 ♞f3+ Black is getting a draw.**

**B) 17...♞xd3!** The simplest in my opinion. 18.♞xd3 ♞ad8 Black centralizes and now the knight on d4 is actually not feeling so great in the center. 19.♞e4 fxg3 20.fxg3 ♘h3 Black is fine.

**15...fxg3**

Black probably has to take at once on g3 as otherwise, with the help of some tactics, White will be able to play gxf4 at some point.

15...♘xd7 16.bxc3 ♞ac8 17.♞d1!



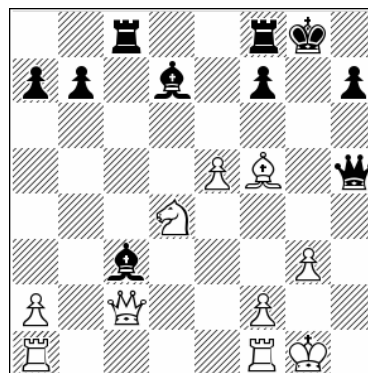
Position after: 17.♞d1!

17...♘g4 18.♘e2 fxg3 19.hxg3 ♘xe2 20.♞xe2 This is easier to play with White, ½-½ (29) Cardoso Cardoso, J (2411) – Garcia Guerrero, I (2322) Mexico City 2021.

**16.hxg3 ♘xd7 17.bxc3 ♞ac8 18.♘f5**

The tactics start.

**18...♘xc3**



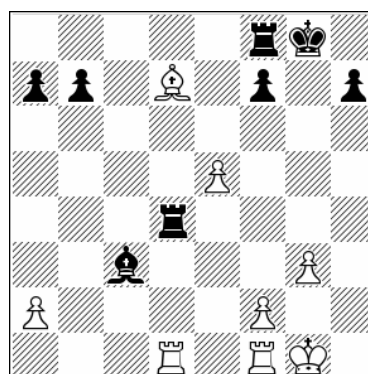
Position after: 18...♘xc3

**19.♞d1**

There is another path in this position which is, I must say, not easy for Black. It might be a draw, but Black has to play many moves defending it.

19.♘xd7 ♘xa1 20.♘xc8 ♘xd4 21.♜g2 ♞xe5 22.♘b7 ♞b8 23.♞d1 ♜g7 24.♞e4 ♞xe4+ 25.♘e4 ♘b6 26.♞h1 h6 27.♞h5 ♞d8 28.♘d5 ♞c8 29.♞f5 f6 30.♘b3 Although this is a slightly less favorable version than the main line, still White keeps some options to play on, ½-½ (47) Atalik, S (2504) – Moksh, A (2332) Paracin 2021.

**19...♞xd1 20.♞axd1 ♞c4 21.♘xd7 ♞xd4**

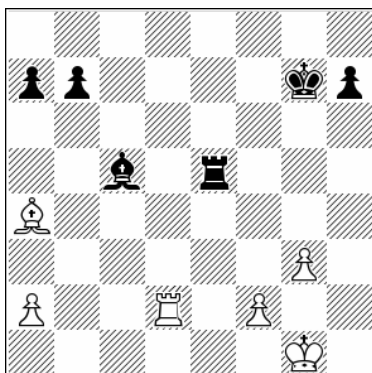


Position after: 21...♞xd4

## 22. ♖xd4

22.e6 fxe6 23. ♘xe6+ ♔g7 24. ♕g2 b5 25. ♖xd4 ♘xd4 26.f4 ♖e8 27. ♘g4 Here too White keeps some advantage, ½-½ (60) fati64 – THE\_MACHINE Internet (rapid) 2017.

22... ♘xd4 23. ♖e1 ♖d8 24. ♘a4 ♖d5 25.e6 fxe6 26. ♖xe6 ♖e5 27. ♖d6 ♘c5 28. ♖d2 ♔g7



Position after: 28... ♔g7

## 29. ♔g2

This is an instructive game because White managed to prevail here, 1-0 (59) Vachier Lagrave, M (2778) – Giri, A (2764) chess24.com INT 2020.

**h) 11... ♖h5 12. 0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♗xe5 15. ♗xe4 fxe6 16.f3**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♘b4 4. ♖c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♗e4 7. ♘d3 c5 8. ♗f3 cxd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗d7 10. ♘f4 ♖h4 11.g3 ♖h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♗xe5 15. ♗xe4 fxe6

That's the first big option.

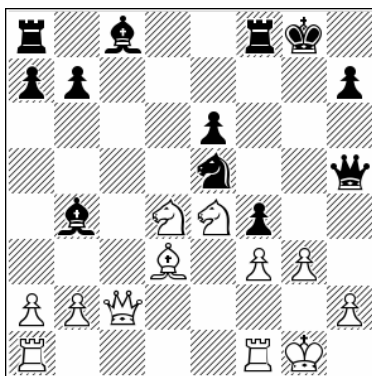
16. ♖ad1 ♘a5! 17.h4 h6 18. ♘e2 f3 19. ♘c4 ♖g4 Black is doing OK.

This is an important position. Now there are a few paths for White.

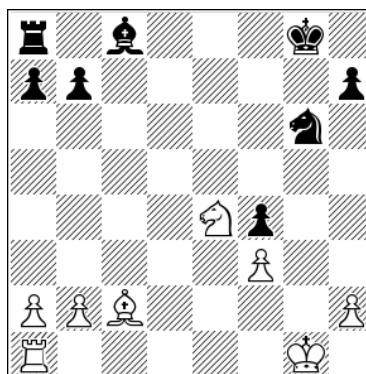
## 16.f3

## 16...fxg3

16... ♘a5 17.gxf4 ♖xf4 18. ♔h1 ♘b6 19. ♖g1+ ♗g6 20. ♖d2 ♖h4 21. ♘c2 e5 22. ♗e2 ♘g1 23. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 24. ♖xf4 exf4 25. ♔xg1



Position after: 16.f3

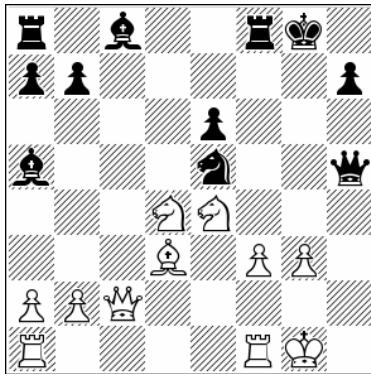


Position after: 25. ♔xg1

25...♙f5 26.♖d1 ♔f8 27.♗f2 ♕e7 28.♖d5 Not much advantage for White, if any at all, but of course it's risk-free.

**17.♘xg3**

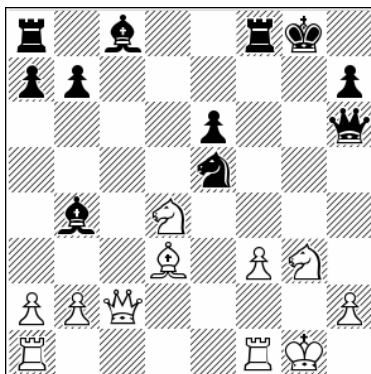
17.hxg3 ♙a5!



Position after: 17...♙a5!

That move is an important asset for Black in this whole system. 18.♔g2 ♙b6 Black is fine, ½-½ (24) Agibileg, U (2413) – Munkhzul, T (2278) Torneio INT 2021.

**17...♖h6**



Position after: 17...♖h6

**18.♖ad1!**

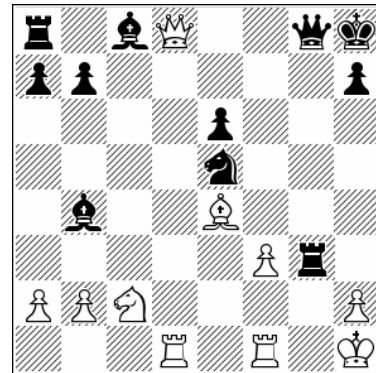
Best and probably the only decent move here.

18.♙e4 ♖e3+! 19.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 20.♔xf2 ♙c5 This is fine for Black.

**18...♘xd3**

**A)** 18...♙d7 19.♙e4 ♖ac8 20.♖e2 ♗f7 21.♙xb7 ♖c7 22.♙e4 ♙d6 23.f4 ♔h8 24.♖d2 ♖g8 25.♗de2 Complicated play, probably balanced.

**B)** 18...♔h8 19.♙e4 ♖g8 20.♔h1! ♖xg3 21.♖c7 ♖g7 22.♖d8+ ♖g8 23.♗c2!



Position after: 23.♗c2!

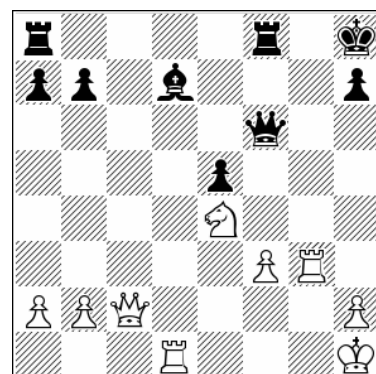
23...♖xd8 24.♖xd8+ ♖g8 25.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 26.♗xb4 White has some chances in this endgame.

**19.♖xd3 ♙a5**

**A)** 19...♙d7 20.♗df5 exf5 21.♖xd7 White has the initiative here.

**B)** 19...a5 20.♔h1 ♖a6 21.♖b5 ♙d6 22.♗de2 ♙c7 23.♖g1 ♔h8 Another highly complex middlegame, ½-½ (43) Murx – Coco69 Internet 2017.

20.♔h1 ♙c7 21.♖c2 ♙e5 22.♖fe1 ♙xg3 23.♖g1 ♔h8 24.♖xg3 e5 25.♗b5 ♖f6 26.♗d6 ♙d7 27.♗e4



Position after: 27.♗e4

27...♙f5

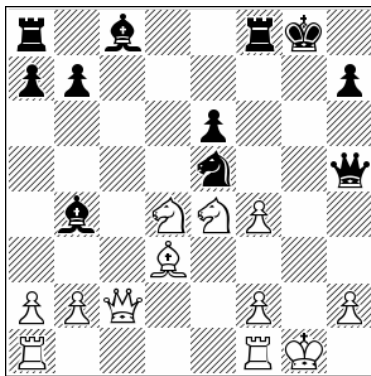
A very good correspondence game. It seems that Black made the most of his chances, ½-½ (30) Klauner, T – Sikorsky, R corr. 2013.

**i) 11...♙h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♘xe5 15.♘xe4 fxe6 16.gxf4**

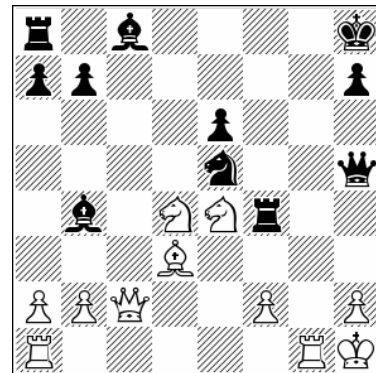
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♙d3 c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘d7 10.♙f4 ♙h4 11.g3 ♙h5 12.0-0 g5 13.cxd5 gxf4 14.dxe6 ♘xe5 15.♘xe4 fxe6 16.gxf4

20.♙b3 ♙e7 21.♘xe6 ♙xe6 22.♙xe6 ♘xf3 23.♙h3 This is more dangerous for Black.

17.♙h1 ♙h8 18.♙g1



Position after: 16.gxf4



Position after: 18.♙g1

This is yet another way of handling this line. White opens up the g-file intending to use it to increase the pressure on the black king.

White prepares to double rooks on the g-file.

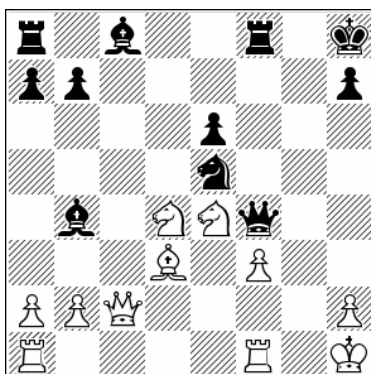
16...♙xf4

18...♘xd3

16...♙g4+ 17.♙h1 ♙xf4 18.f3 ♙h8

18...♙h4? 19.♙g8+! This little tactic wins on the spot.

19.♙xd3 ♙e7

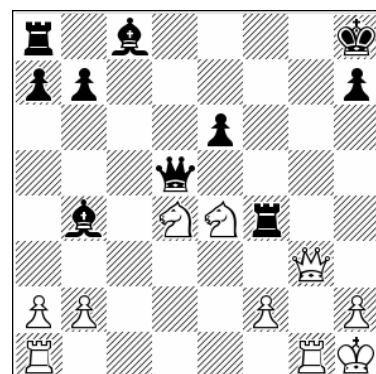


Position after: 18...♙h8

One alternative also runs into a tactical refutation.

19...♙d5 20.♙g3!

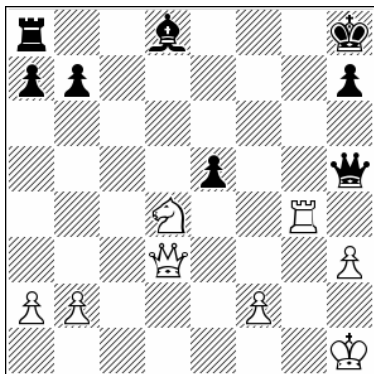
19.♙ad1! [19.♙c4 ♘xc4 20.♙xc4 ♙d6 21.♘xd6 ♙xd6 22.♘b5 ♙e5 23.♙ad1 ♙f6 24.f4 a6 25.♘d6 ♙d7 This is OK for Black, ½-½ (27) Rawlings, A – Glanville, C corr. 2014] 19...♙d7



Position after: 20.♙g3!

20...♔xe4+ 21.f3 ♖g4 22.fxe4 ♖xg3 23.♖xg3  
 White is winning, 1-0 (34) Nguyen Huynh Minh Huy (2420) – Manish Anto, C (2354) Budapest 2021.

20.♖ac1 e5 21.♖c7 ♕d8 22.♖cg7 ♕g4 23.h3  
 ♖xe4 24.♖1xg4 ♖xg4 25.♖xg4



Position after: 25.♖xg4

25...♔h6

Black can develop his bishop on either the kingside or the queenside.

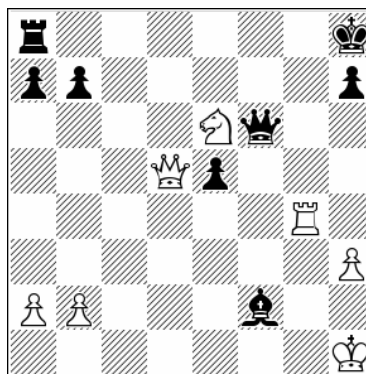
A) 25...♕b6 26.♔f3 ♔h6 27.♗f5 ♔f6 28.♔xb7  
 ♖f8 29.♖g2 e4 30.♔d5 It's in White's favor though not by a lot, on account of the much simplified position.

B) 25...♕f6 26.♗e6 ♖e8 27.♔f3 ♔h6 28.♗c5 e4  
 29.♖xe4 ♖xe4 30.♗xe4 ♕xb2 31.♔f5 This endgame is favorable for White, since the f2-pawn is a strong asset and the queen plus knight are a formidable pair here.

26.♔g3

White has another way to cause trouble for Black.

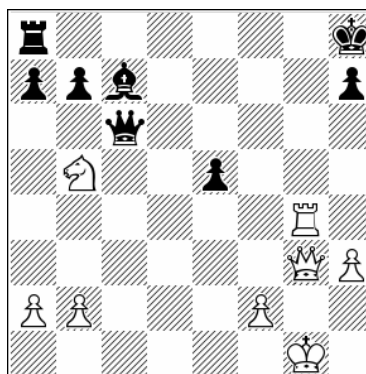
26.♔b3 ♕b6 27.♗e6 ♔f6 28.♔d5 ♕xf2



Position after: 28...♕xf2

29.♔xb7 [29.♗g5 ♖f8 30.♔xb7 ♔f5 31.♗e6 ♔f7  
 Black is playing only moves, but they are good enough for a balanced game] 29...♖g8 30.♖xg8+  
 ♕xg8 31.♔g2+ ♔g6 32.♔xg6+ hxg6 33.♗d8 ♕b6  
 34.♗c6 e4 35.♕g2 ♕f7 36.♗e5+ ♕g7 37.♕f1  
 ♕h6 38.b4 ♕g5 39.a4 ♕f5 40.♗c6 ♕e6 41.a5  
 ♕e3 42.♕e2 ♕g1 43.b5 ♕d5 Black reaches a draw here! Not an easy task, especially if one is not familiar with this long line of analysis.

26...♕c7 27.♗b5 ♔c6+ 28.♕g1

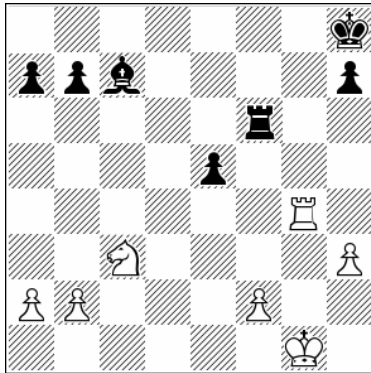


Position after: 28.♕g1

28...♖d8

28...♖f8 29.♗xc7 ♔c1+ 30.♕h2 ♔xc7 31.♔e3  
 It's not easy to convert, but this slightly favors White due to the bad position of the black king ½-½ (45) MCDermont – Coco69 Internet 2017.

29.♗c3 ♖e8 30.♔e3 ♖f8 31.♔g5 ♔f6 32.♔xf6+  
 ♖xf6



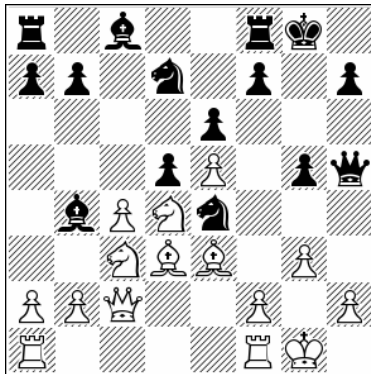
Position after: 32...Rxf6

### 33. ♖d5

White has slightly the better endgame, and now he will march his king towards the center, ½-½ (43) Celestini, M – Sazon, A corr. 2015.

## j) 11... ♖h5 12. 0-0 g5 13. ♗e3

1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♗b4 4. ♖c2 0-0 5. e4 d5  
6. e5 ♗e4 7. ♗d3 c5 8. ♗f3 cxd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗d7  
10. ♗f4 ♖h4 11. g3 ♖h5 12. 0-0 g5 13. ♗e3!?



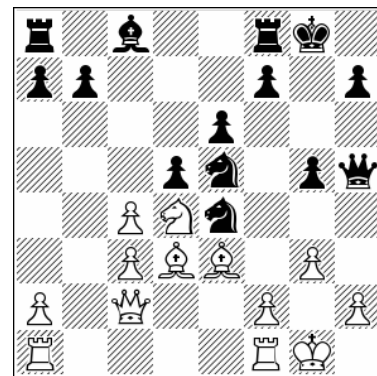
Position after: 13. ♗e3!?

An interesting line, so far played only a few times.

13. ♗c1!? This will probably transpose to the subchapter that deals with the 12... ♗xc3 13. bxc3 g5 15. ♗c1 option following 13... ♗xe5 14. cxd5 ♗xc3 15. bxc3 exd5.

### 13... ♗xe5

There is a very important alternative here. 13... ♗xc3 14. bxc3 ♗xe5



Position after: 14... ♗xe5

**A)** 15. f3 ♗xd3 16. ♖xd3 ♗c5 17. ♖d2 dxc4 18. ♗xg5 f6 19. ♗h4 ♗d3 This is fine for Black, the knight on d3 is a fortress, ½-½ (43) Gago Padreny, I (2289) – Mollema, T (2234) chess.com INT 2020.

**B)** White has no time here for exchanging pawns in the center. 15. cxd5 ♗g4! Otherwise if 15... exd5 16. f3 we transpose to the subchapter under 12... ♗xc3 13. bxc3 g5 14. cxd5 exd5 15. ♗e3. Back to the analysis. 16. h4!? ♗xe3 17. fxe3 ♗xg3 18. ♖f3 gxh4 19. ♖h2 ♖g5 20. ♗f2 e5 21. ♖g1 ♗g4 22. ♗f5 e4 23. ♗xh4 f5 24. ♖xg3 exd3 25. ♖f4 ♖ae8 This is OK for Black.

**C)** 15. ♗e2 Critical and best.

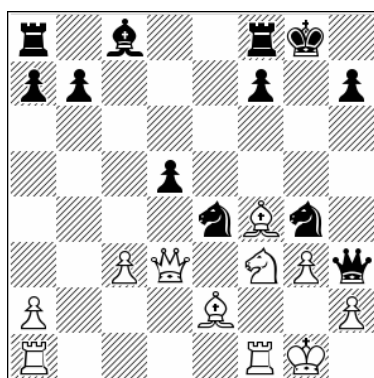
**C1)** 15... ♖h3 Black stops White from going active with f3. 16. cxd5 exd5 We are now in more familiar territory. 17. ♗xg5

**C1.1)** 17... ♗xg5 18. f4 ♗g4 19. ♗xg4 ♖xg4 20. fxe5 ♖xg5 21. ♖f4 ♗d7 22. ♖af1 ♖ae8 Control

over the e-file is good enough for Black to have counterplay.

**C1.2)** Actually Black had counterplay in the following game as well, but it's not without some questions. 17...♙g4 18.♙f4 ♙xe2 19.♚xe2 ♘g6 20.♙e3 ♜fe8 21.♞ac1 ♞ac8 22.♚f3 It's a balanced game. White has eliminated the g5-pawn but Black still has his strong knight on e4 and pressure along the c-file, 1-0 (23) Holt, C (2549) – Smirnov, P (2544) chess.com INT 2021.

**C2)** Black can also go more consequent play. 15...g4 16.f3 gxf3 17.♘xf3 ♘g4 18.♚d3 ♚h3 19.cxd5 exd5 20.♙f4



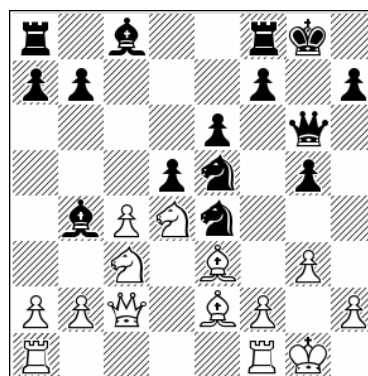
Position after: 20.♙f4

20...♙d7 21.♚d4 ♜fe8 22.♙d3 ♙c6 23.♞ab1 a6 24.♞b2 ♞ad8 25.a4 White prevents ...♙b5. It's certainly a complex position: Black is a pawn up, but White controls a lot of squares. Probably it's easier to handle with Black, as the knight on e4 is very strong.

#### 14.♙e2

14.cxd5 ♘g4 15.♘f3 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♘xe3 17.fxe3 ♙c5 18.♘d4 exd5 This is not bad for Black. We see from this line that sometimes the white bishop on e3 helps Black to find good tactics.

#### 14...♚g6



Position after: 14...♚g6

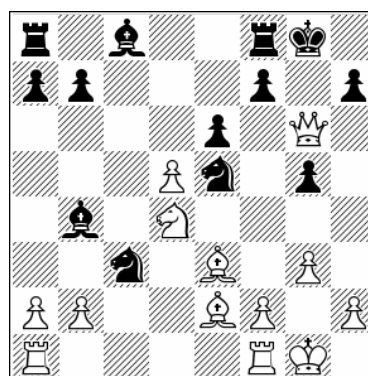
#### 15.♘xe4!?

Probably best if White is playing for a win, and making use of the fact that Black didn't take early on c3 when he could have.

15.cxd5

**A)** 15...♙xc3 16.bxc3 exd5 17.f3 ♘d6 18.♚xg6+ fxg6 19.♙xg5 White has some edge but actually this is another transposition to the 12...♙xc3 13.bxc3 g5 line where 15.♙e3 is the main option, 1-0 (67) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Domingo Nunez, A (2358) chess.com INT 2021.

**B)** 15...♘xc3! This is possible because Black didn't take early on c3. Now taking it with the knight is a valuable option. 16.♚xg6+



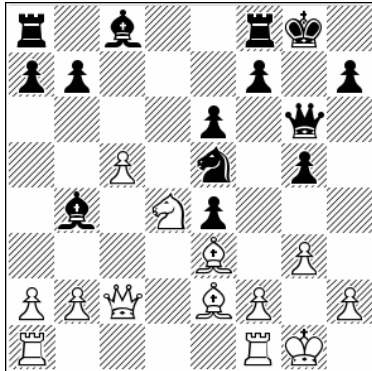
Position after: 16.♚xg6+

[16.bxc3 ♚xc2 17.♘xc2 ♙xc3 18.♞ad1 g4 that looks OK for Black] 16...♘xg6 17.bxc3 ♙xc3 18.♞ac1 ♙xd4 19.♙xd4 exd5 20.♙f6 h6 21.♞fd1 ♙e6 22.♞c7 b6 23.♙a6 White has good activity but can't play for more than just a draw.

15...dxe4

15...♔xe4 16.♔xe4 dxe4 17.♙xg5 Advantage for White.

16.c5!

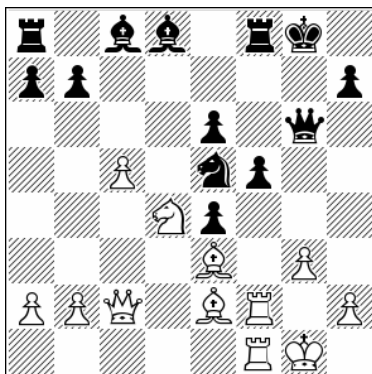


Position after: 16.c5!

White has activity for the sacrificed pawn.

16...♙d7

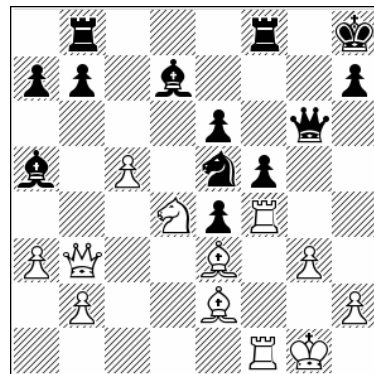
16...f5 17.f4! exf3 [17...gxf4 18.♖xf4 ♙a5 19.♗af1 ♙d8 To prevent the white rook from coming to the strong h4-square. 20.♗4f2!



Position after: 20.♗4f2!

20...♙d7 21.♗b3! White has the initiative.] 18.♗xf3 f4 19.♗xg6+ ♗xg6 20.a3 ♙a5 21.gxf4 ♗xf4 22.♙c4 h6 23.h4 ♙d8 24.♖ad1 ♙f6 25.b4 White has compensation but the position is still far from clear.

17.a3 ♙a5 18.f4 gxf4 19.♖xf4 f5 20.♗b3 ♔h8 21.♗af1 ♖ab8



Position after: 21...♖ab8

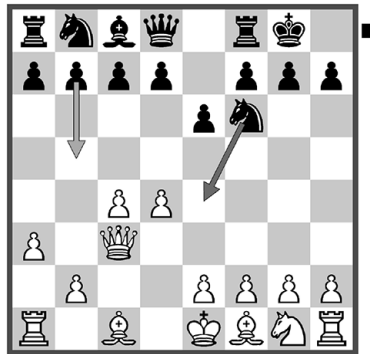
22.♗h4

In this highly interesting position perhaps White has some initiative because of Black's weak e6-pawn.

# Chapter 14

## 5.a3 – Sidelines 6...b5 & 6...♞e4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.♚xc3



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 14 – 5.a3 – Sidelines 6...b5 & 6...♞e4

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.♚xc3

a) 6...b5

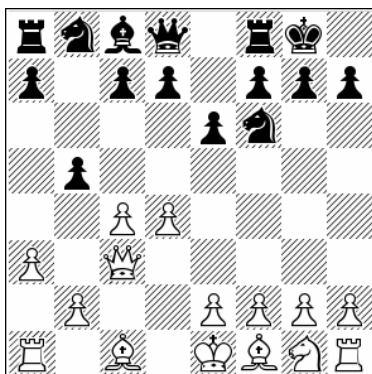
b) 6...♞e4

## a) 6...b5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0

Apart from 5.e4, 5.a3 is the other main line. White immediately gets the bishop pair.

5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♚xc3 b5



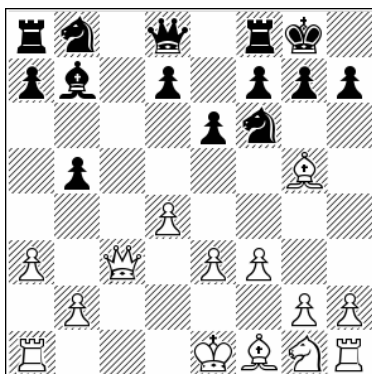
Position after: 6...b5

A well-known gambit (another one!) in which Black exploits the fact that White is simply playing too much with his queen.

7.cxb5 c6

White does best to ignore this gambit play.

8.♙g5 cxb5 9.e3 ♙b7 10.f3!?



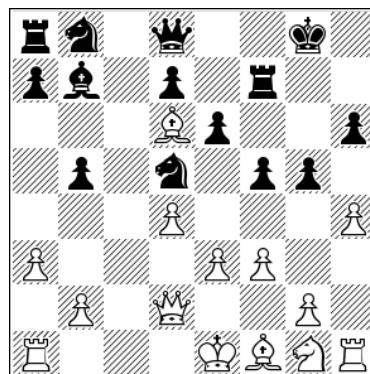
Position after: 10.f3!?

10...a6

Black should defend his b-pawn now.

A) 10...♘c6?! 11.♙xb5 ♜c8 12.♘e2 h6 13.♙h4 g5 14.♙f2 There is not enough compensation here.

B) 10...h6 11.♙h4 g5 12.♙g3 ♘d5 13.♚d2 f5 14.♙d6 ♜f7 15.h4!

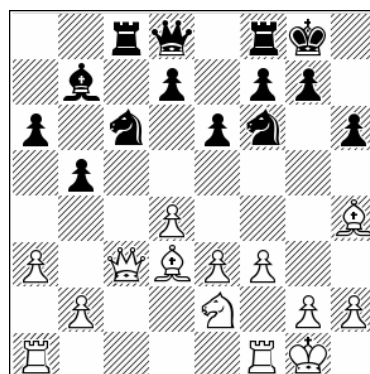


Position after: 15.h4!

15...g4 16.e4 fxe4 17.fxe4 ♘f6 18.♚xh6 ♙xe4 19.♘e2 ♘c6 20.♘c3 ♙h7 21.♚g5+ ♜g7 22.♚d2 White is still in control of the game.

11.♙d3 h6

11...♘c6 12.♘e2 ♜c8 13.0-0 h6 14.♙h4



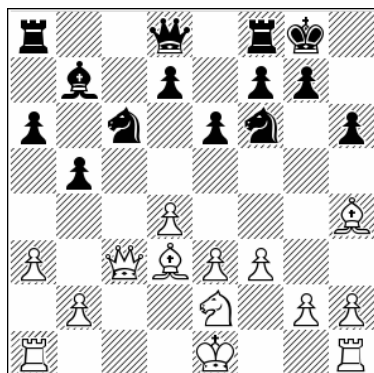
Position after: 14.♙h4

A) 14...g5 15.♙f2 d6 16.♚d2 ♘a5 17.♜ac1 ♜xc1 18.♚xc1 ♙d5 19.♙b1 ♚c8 20.♘c3 ♙c4 21.♜e1 This is better for White, ½-½ (32) Krush, I (2472) – Baginskaite, C (2342) Saint Louis 2011.

B) 14...♖e5 15.♔d2 ♘c4 16.♙xc4 ♜xc4 17.b3 ♞c8 18.♔d3 This is dangerous for Black because of the pin on the kingside, and breaking the pin with ...g5 can create further weaknesses.

C) 14...♗d5 15.♔e1! ♔a5 16.♗c3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 White has fantastic attacking chances.

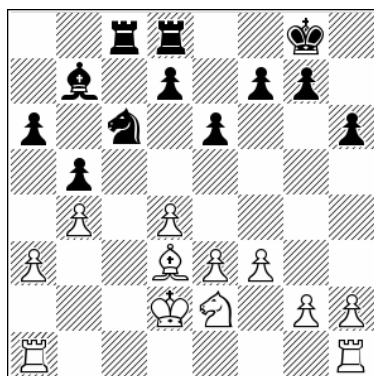
12.♙h4 ♗c6 13.♗e2



Position after: 13...♗e2

13...♗e4

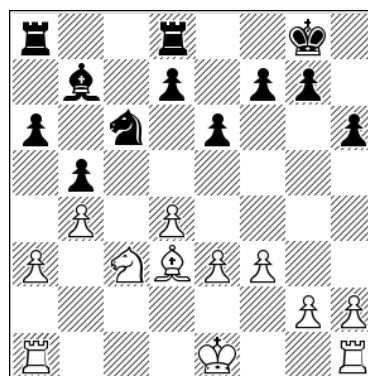
13...♞c8 14.♔d2 ♗e4 [14...♗a5 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♞c1±] 15.♙xd8 ♗xd2 16.♗xd2 ♞fxd8 17.b4!



Position after: 17.b4!

There is some edge here for White, as he is better organized and has more space. Also he has the important option of playing a4 at the right moment. 17...♗f8 18.♞hb1 ♗b8 19.♗c3 No need to go a4. 19...d6 20.a4 bxa4 21.♞xa4 ♞d7 22.♞a3 ♗e7 23.d5

14.♙xd8 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♞fxd8 16.b4!



Position after: 16.b4!

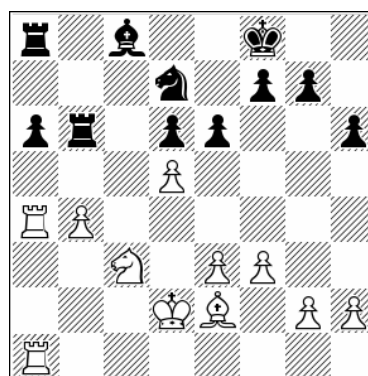
16...d6

16...♗f8 17.♗d2 ♗e7 18.♞hb1 ♞db8 19.g4 ♙c8 20.♞b2 d5 21.♞ab1 ♙d7 22.♗e2 ♗d6 23.♞c1 ♞c8 24.♞c5 ♗d8 25.♗c3 Nice play, White has established pressure, 0-1 (47) Gagunashvili, M (2547) – Iordachescu, V (2609) Warsaw 2005.

17.♗d2 ♗f8 18.♞hb1 ♞db8 19.a4

White could also leave the a4 idea and play as in the Gagunashvili game above.

19...bxa4 20.♞xa4 ♙c8 21.d5 ♗e5 22.♙e2 ♞b6 23.♞ba1 ♗d7



Position after: 23...♗d7

24.dxe6

24.♗c2?! ♞ab8! Only now, after an inaccuracy by White, can Black survive, ½-½ (26) Drozdovskij, Y (2550) – Beliavsky, A (2622) Odessa 2006.

24...fxe6 25.b5 ♗c5

25...♖bb8 26.♜4a3 ♘c5 27.♙e1 White is much better.

26.♜4a3

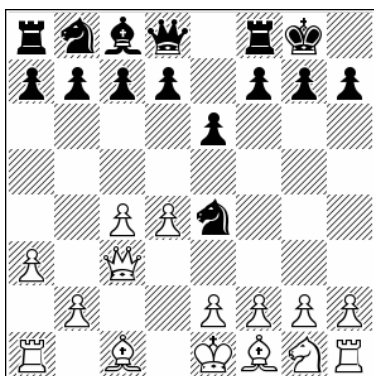
White is better here.

**b) 6...♘e4**

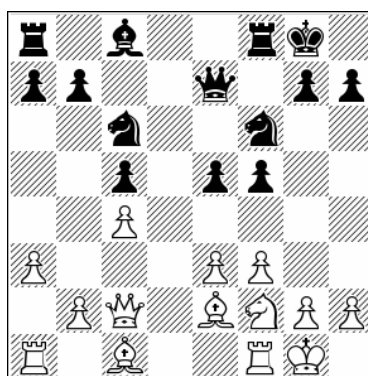
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♞c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♞xc3 ♘e4

A) 12...a5 13.b3 ♘c6 14.♗e2 This will transpose to the main line.

B) 12...♞e7 13.♗e2 ♘c6 [13...c5 14.0-0 ♘c6



Position after: 6...♘e4



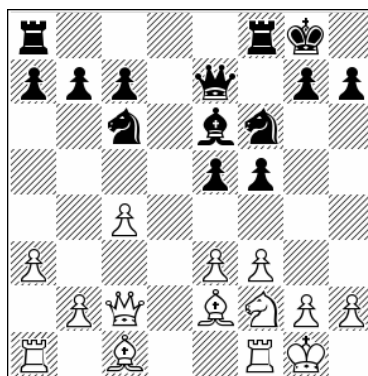
Position after: 14...♘c6

7.♞c2 f5

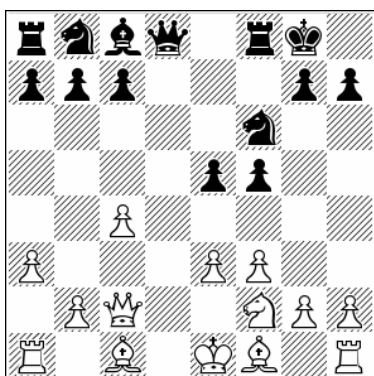
This is a popular positional line. Here I decided to use a principled idea in which White retains his bishop pair, which is the main plan anyway, and keeps his pawn structure flexible.

15.b4! We have seen this idea before] 14.0-0 ♗e6

8.♘h3 d6 9.f3 ♘f6 10.e3 e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♘f2



Position after: 14...♗e6



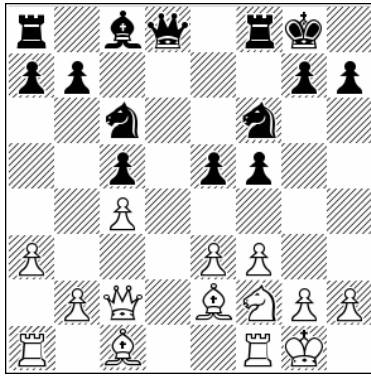
Position after: 12.♘f2

15.b4! Whenever this is allowed, White should do it.

C) 12...c5 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.0-0

This knight can go to d3 or d1, with further ideas depending on how the middlegame goes.

12...♘c6

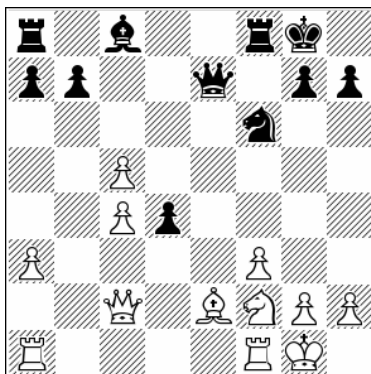


Position after: 14.0-0

14...a5 [14...♖e7 15.b4! cxb4 16.axb4 ♘xb4 17.♗b3 a5 18.♙a3 ♙e6 19.♘d3 ♜fc8 20.♘xe5 ♗c5 21.♙b2 some edge for White] 15.♙d2! b6 [15...a4 16.♙c3 ♙e6 17.♘d3! ♘d7 18.f4 e4 19.♘f2 ♗e8 20.♙h1 White has a plus] 16.♞ad1 ♗e7 17.♙c3 ♙e6 18.b3 ♞ad8 19.♞xd8 ♗xd8 20.♘d3 ♗c7 21.♗b2! ♘d7 22.f4 e4 23.♘f2 Again the same idea that brings White a positional advantage.

### 13.♙e2 a5

**A)** 13...f4 Black is trying to equalize with fast play. 14.0-0 fxe3 15.♙xe3 ♘d4 16.♙xd4 exd4 17.b4 c5 18.bxc5 ♗e7

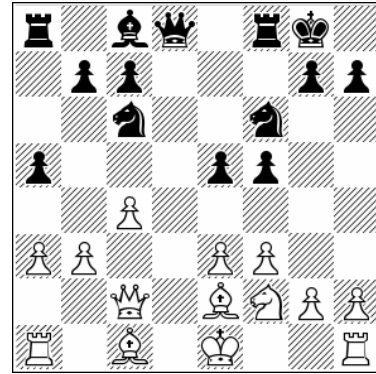


Position after: 18...♗e7

19.♗b2 [19.♞fd1 ♗xc5 20.♗b2 ♞d8 21.♞d2 ♙f5 22.♞ad1 b6 Black has somehow managed to find a balance here, 1-0 (92) Socko, B (2631) – Georgiev, K (2634) Austria 2009] 19...♗xc5 20.♘d3 ♗b6 21.♞fb1 ♞e8 22.♙f1 ♗xb2 23.♞xb2 b6 24.♘b4 White has the better endgame.

**B)** 13...♞e8 14.0-0 f4 15.♞d1 ♗e7 16.exf4 exf4 17.♙f1 g5 18.b4 White has a big initiative on the long diagonal, 1-0 (38) Sameer, G (1938) – Krishna, M (1430) Mumbai 2016.

### 14.b3



Position after: 14.b3

### 14...♙e6

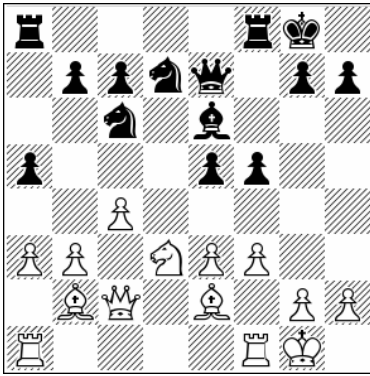
**A)** 14...f4 15.0-0 fxe3 16.♙xe3 ♘d4 17.♙xd4! ♗xd4 18.♙d3 [18.c5 ♙e6 19.♞ad1 ♗f4 20.♞fe1 White has a small plus but Black is OK, ½-½ (43) Villegas, P (2137) – Soulages, L (2146) France 2009] 18...♙e6 19.♙h1 ♞ad8 20.♞fd1 ♗c5 21.♘e4 White has good play.

**B)** 14...♗e7 15.♙b2 ♘d7 16.0-0! ♗g5 17.f4! exf4 18.♘h3 ♗e7 19.♘xf4 White has claimed a huge advantage.

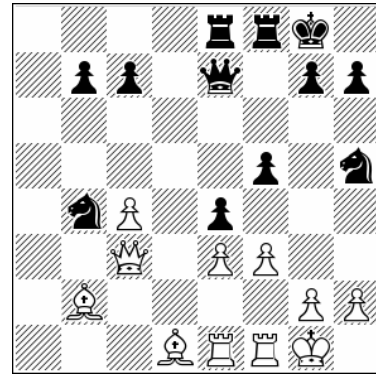
### 15.0-0 ♗e7

15...♘d7 16.♙b2 f4 17.exf4 ♞xf4 18.♙d3 h6 19.♙e4 a4 20.b4 ♘b6 21.♘d3 White is better, 1-0 (31) Gabriel, C (2545) – Hall, J (2501) Germany 2002.

### 16.♙b2 ♘d7 17.♘d3!



Position after: 17.♖d3!



Position after: 24...♗xh5

17...♖ae8 18.♖ae1 ♔f7 19.♚c3 ♘f6 20.♙d1

25.fxe4

We see in this game a clear path for handling this line.

White is much better, 0-1 (39) So, W (2770) – Fedoseev, V (2678) chess. com INT 2020.

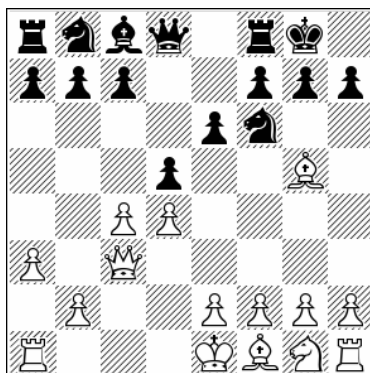
20...♙h5 21.b4 axb4 22.axb4 e4 23.♗f4 ♗xb4

24.♗xh5 ♗xh5

# Chapter 15

## 5.a3 – With 6...d5 7.♙g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.♚xc3 d5 7.♙g5



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 15 – 5.a3 – With 6...d5 7.♙g5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♘xc3+ 6.♚xc3 d5 7.♙g5

a) 7...dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♞c1

b) 7...dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♙a6 10.♚c2

c) 7...dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♙a6 10.♚a4 ♚d7

d) 7...dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♙a6 10.♚a4 h6 11.♙h4 ♚e7

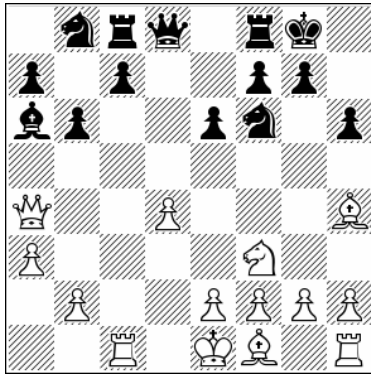
e) 7...dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♙a6 10.♚a4 h6 11.♙h4 ♚d7

f) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♚f3

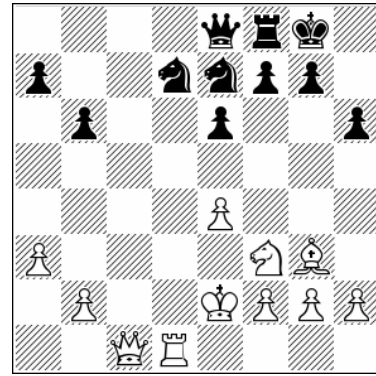
g) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♚g3

h) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♚c2





Position after: 14. ♖a4

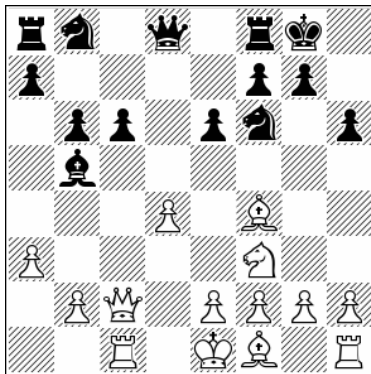


Position after: 21... ♗e8

14...c5! [14... ♖d7 15. ♗xd7 ♘bxd7 16. e3 ♙xf1 17. ♖xf1 c5 18. ♙xf6 gxf6 19. ♕e2 c4 20. ♘d2 b5 21. b3 cxb3 22. ♘xb3 ♘b6 23. ♖c5 this position favors White slightly, 0-1 (42) Obolentseva, A (2305) – Dimitrova, A (2193) Moscow 2020] 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16. ♖xc5 bxc5 17. e3 ♙xf1 18. ♖xf1 ♖d3 Black is fine, as White is simply losing too much time moving his queen here and there.

### 10... ♗d7

Black has an alternative that looks a bit passive at first glance, but that may not be the case. 10...c6 11. ♘f3 h6 12. ♙f4 ♙b5 13. ♖c2



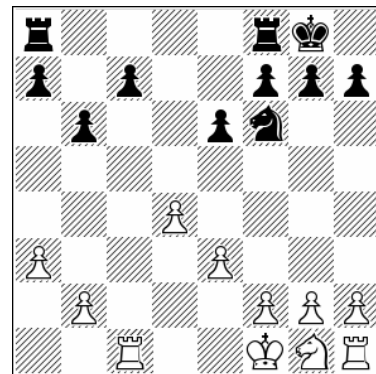
Position after: 13. ♖c2

A) 13... ♘d5 14. ♙g3 ♘d7 15. e4 ♙xf1 16. ♕xf1 ♘e7 17. ♕e2 c5 18. ♖hd1 ♖c8 19. dxc5 ♖xc5 20. ♖d2 ♖xc1 21. ♖xc1 ♖e8

22. ♖c4! [22. ♖c7 ♘c5! suddenly it's Black who has the initiative, 1-0 (45) Alekseenko, Y (1880) – Karacsonyi, K (2004) chess.com INT 2020] 22... ♘c5 23. ♙d6 ♘b7 24. ♙b4 a5 25. ♙c3 ♘g6 26. g3 ♘c5 Again Black is able to find active moves.

B) 13... ♘bd7! 14. e4 [14. a4 ♙a6 15. ♖xc6 ♖c8 Black is winning] 14... ♙xf1 15. ♕xf1 c5 Black's counterplay is coming fast.

11. ♗xd7 ♘bxd7 12. ♙xf6 ♘xf6 13. e3 ♙xf1 14. ♕xf1



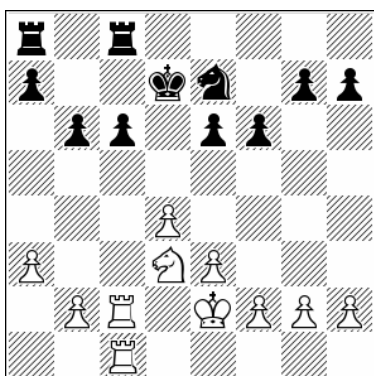
Position after: 14. ♕xf1

### 14...c5

Very direct play.

14... ♖fc8 15. ♖c6 ♘d5 [15... ♘d7 16. ♘f3 ♘b8 17. ♖c2 c5 18. ♕e2 ♘d7 19. ♖hc1 ♖c7 20. b4 ♖ac8 21. dxc5 bxc5 22. ♘d4 this is a typical way for White to exploit Black's passive play, 1-0 (43) Cordes, H (2256) – Grimm, J (1939) Hofheim

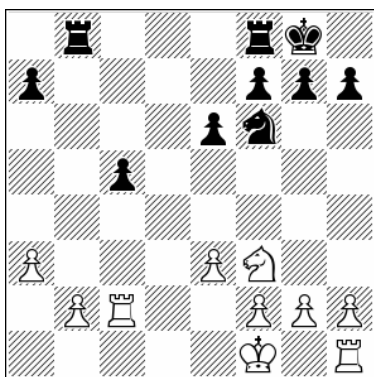
2014] 16.♘f3 ♘e7 17.♖c2 f6 18.♙e2 ♙f7  
19.♗hc1 c6 20.♘e1 ♚e8 21.♘d3 ♙d7



Position after: 21...♙d7

22.g4 This is an advantage for White, not a big one but enough to stop activities such as ...e5 or ...c5, 0-1 (57) Eljanov, P (2734) – Lenderman, A (2565) Tbilisi 2017.

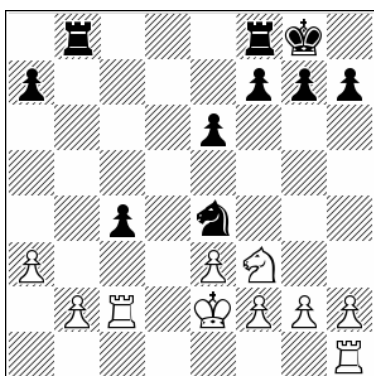
15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♘f3 ♖ab8 17.♖c2



Position after: 17.♖c2

17...♗b5

17...♘e4 18.♙e2 c4



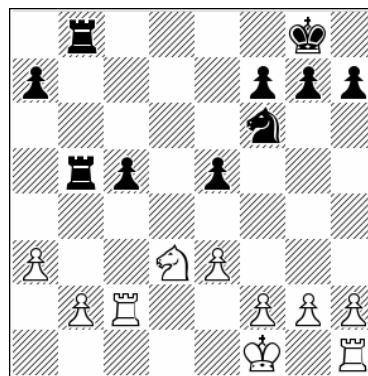
Position after: 18...c4

19.♘e5! This is strong because White can attack a black knight on d6 along the d-file, an option that White did not have in Grachev's game cited next. [19.♘d2 ♘d6 20.♗hc1 g6 21.♘xc4 ♘xc4 22.♗xc4 ♗xb2+ 23.♖1c2 ♗fb8 Black has secured an equal endgame, ½-½ (38) Grachev, B (2654) – Andreikin, D (2708) Sochi 2017] 19...♗fc8 20.♗hc1 ♘d6 21.♖d1 ♗b6 22.♗cd2 White is better.

18.♘e5 ♗fb8 19.♘d3

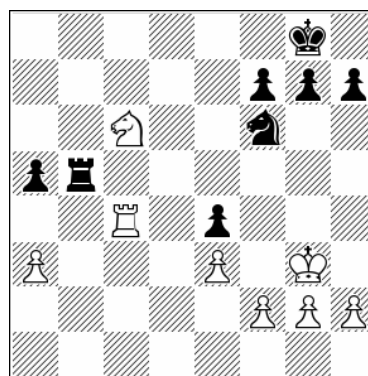
19.♘c4 ♘d5 20.♙e2 ♘b6 21.♘d2 c4 This is also equal, as Black has managed to achieve his full potential.

19...e5!



Position after: 19...e5!

20.♙e2 c4 21.♘b4 a5 22.♘c6 ♗xb2 23.♗hc1 ♗8b5 24.♗xb2 ♗xb2+ 25.♙f3 e4+ 26.♙g3 ♗b5 27.♗xc4



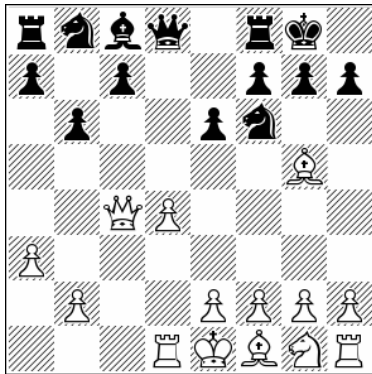
Position after: 27.♗xc4

27...♗g5+

Black has equalized, ½-½ (31) Vaibhav, S (2561) – Gajek, R (2444) Dresden 2018.

**b) 7...dxc4 8.♖xc4 b6 9.♖d1 ♘a6 10.♖c2**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.a3  
 ♘xc3+ 6.♖xc3 d5 7.♘g5 dxc4 8.♖xc4 b6 9.♖d1

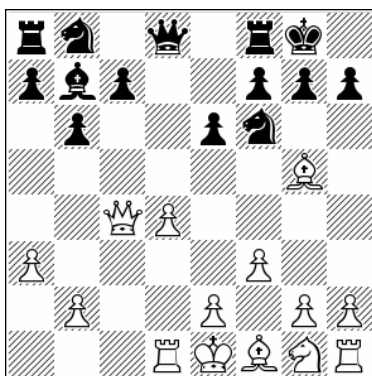


Position after: 9.♖d1

Here we deal only with positions where White does not play an early ♘f3, which would transpose to a main line that we will address later. The point of 7.♘g5 is to try to profit from not playing the early ♘f3. Another important variation for White in this move order is 9.♖c1, which we analyzed in the previous subchapter. And we need to say is that definitely 9.♖d1 is the critical move here.

9...♘a6

9...♘b7 10.f3!



Position after: 10.f3!

This is the idea behind the early ♖d1. Now White can build a strong center precisely because his knight is still on g1. 10...♘bd7 11.e4 ♖c8 12.♘e2 c5 13.♘c3 ♖b8 14.♘e2 White has a firm grip on the position, with the bishop pair and more space while the black bishop b7 is closed

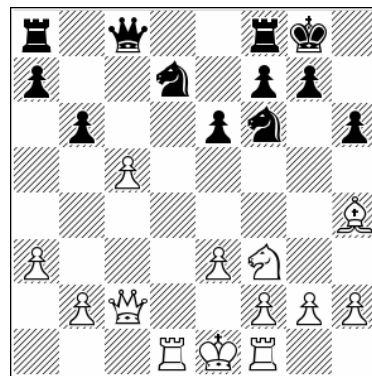
off, 1-0 (29) Jovanic, O (2524) – Zelcic, R (2527) Vinkovci 2020.

10.♖c2

Here we deal with this retreat.

10...h6 11.♘h4 ♘bd7 12.e4

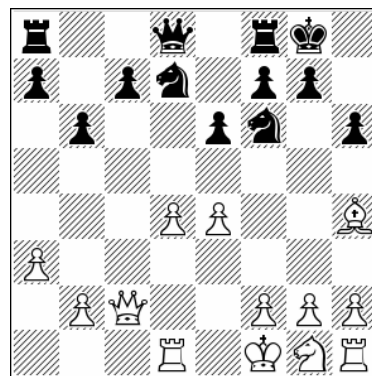
12.♘f3 ♖c8 13.e3 ♘xf1 14.♖xf1 c5 15.dxc5



Position after: 15.dxc5

15...bxc5 Now, when Black is developed and with queens on the board, opening the b-file is good for him. [15...♖xc5 16.♖xc5 ♘xc5 17.♘xf6 gxf6 18.♘e2 ♖fd8 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♖c1 ♖d7 21.b4 ♘e4 22.g4 ♘g7 23.♖c4 ♘d6 24.♖c6 such endgames are on White's wish list and may pose problems to Black, 1-0 (59) Mirzoev, A (2555) – Korennoi, V (2227) St Petersburg 2017] 16.♘xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘d2 ♖c7 18.g3 ♖fd8 Black has the initiative.

12...♘xf1 13.♘xf1

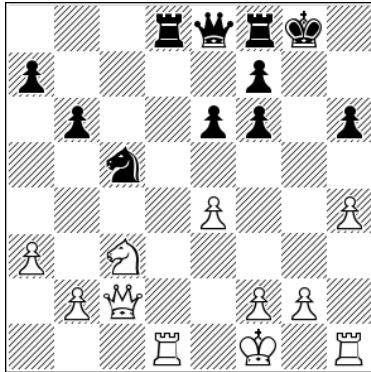


Position after: 13.♘xf1

### 13...♖c8

This is more to the point than the alternative below.

13...♖e8 14.♘e2 c5 15.dxc5 ♘xc5 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♘c3 ♞d8 18.h4



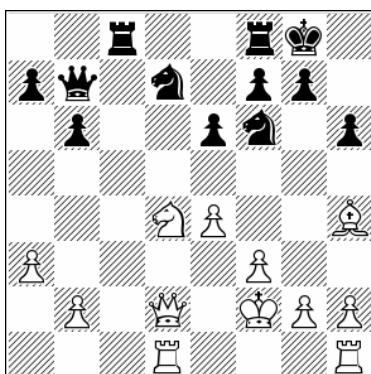
Position after: 18.h4

18...♞xd1+ 19.♚xd1 ♚d7 20.♚xd7 ♘xd7 21.♙e2 ♞c8 22.♞d1 ♘e5 23.♘b5 a6 24.♘d4 h5 25.♞d2 ♙f8 26.f4 ♘c6 27.♘c2 ♙e7 28.♘e3 It's about equal but certainly White can play for more in this endgame, where the weakness on h5 is a problem for Black, 1-0 (70) Xiong, J (2709) – Macovei, A (2453) chess.com INT 2021.

### 14.♖c6

A) 14.f3 c5 15.♘e2 ♖a6 16.♙f2 ♞ac8 17.dxc5 ♞xc5 18.♘c3 b5 19.♞he1 ♖c6 20.♙g1 a5 Black is OK again.

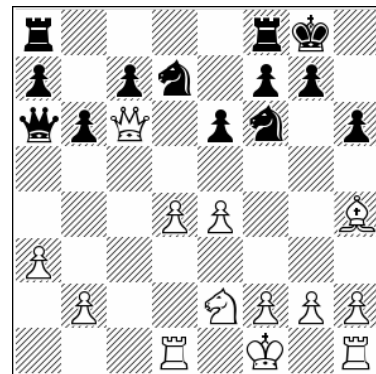
B) 14.♘e2 ♖b7 15.f3 c5 16.♙f2 ♞ac8 17.♚d2 cxd4 18.♘xd4



Position after: 18.♘xd4

18...♘xe4+ [18...g5 19.♙g3 ♘c5 20.♚e2 ♘cxe4+ 21.fxe4 ♘xe4+ 22.♙e1 f5 Black has good compensation for the sacrificed piece] 19.fxe4 ♘c5 20.♚e3 ♘xe4+ 21.♙g1 ♚d5 Black has good counterplay, ½-½ (34) Ivanchuk, V (2779) – Kramnik, V (2785) Monte Carlo 2011.

### 14...♖a6+ 15.♘e2



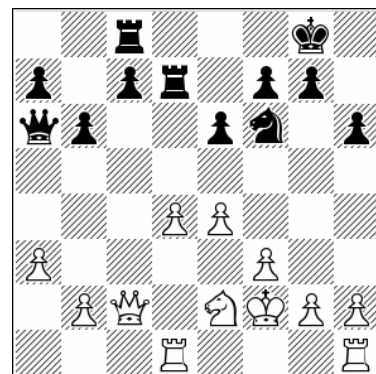
Position after: 15.♘e2

### 15...♞ac8

15...♞ad8 16.♙xf6 ♘xf6 17.f3 The awkward positioning of his rooks gives Black problems in trying to generate play, 17...♚c8 18.♙f2 ♞d6 19.♚c2 ♞d7 Next comes ...c5 but this is a worse version for Black than 15...♞ac8.

### 16.f3 ♘b8 17.♚c2 ♘bd7 18.♙f2

18.♙xf6 ♘xf6 19.♚c6 ♞fd8 20.♙f2 ♞d6 21.♚c2 ♞d7!

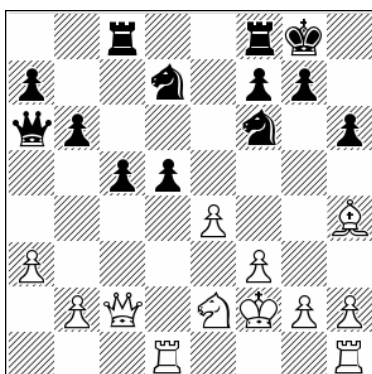


Position after: 21...♞d7!

22.♞d2 [22.♘f4 ♖b7 23.♞d2 c5 Black is better] 22...c5 23.dxc5 ♞xc5 Black has equal chances

here, ½-½ (77) Anastasian, A (2578) – Amin, B (2568) Abu Dhabi 2010.

18...c5 19.d5 exd5

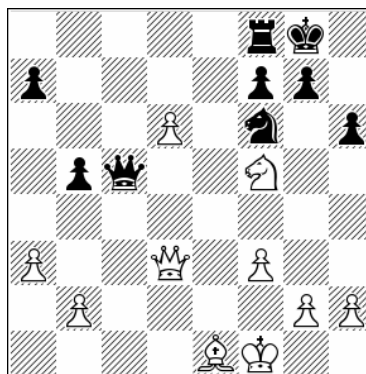


Position after: 19...exd5

20.exd5

20.♙xf6 ♜xf6 21.e5 ♞e8 22.♞xd5 ♜c7 23.♞d6 ♞e6 24.♞hd1 c4 This is a sharp position but Black is doing OK, ½-½ (40) Kuzubov, Y (2635) – Lalith, B (2579) Grosseto Prugna 2016.

20...b5 21.♞g3 c4 22.♞he1 ♞ce8 23.♞f5 ♞e5 24.♞f1 ♞d3 25.♞xd3 ♞xe1+ 26.♞xe1 cxd3 27.♞xd3 ♞b6 28.d6 ♞c5



Position after: 28...♞c5

29.♞c3

White has good play for the sacrificed exchange, but the position is simplified so it's probably OK for Black as well.

**c) 7...dxc4 8.♞xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♞a6 10.♞a4 ♞d7**

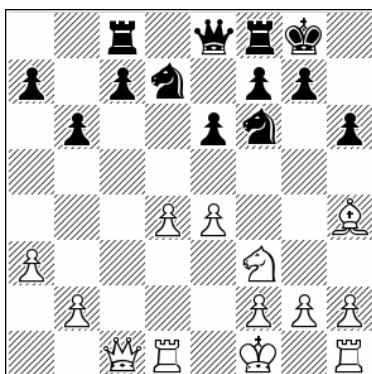
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.♞c2 0-0 5.a3 ♞xc3+ 6.♞xc3 d5 7.♞g5 dxc4 8.♞xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♞a6 10.♞a4

15.♞c6 ½-½ (42) Rapport, R (2776) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2773) Bucharest 2022. Here the best idea for Black is 15...♞h5 16.g4 ♞f4 17.♞g3 ♞g6, which leads to a balanced position.

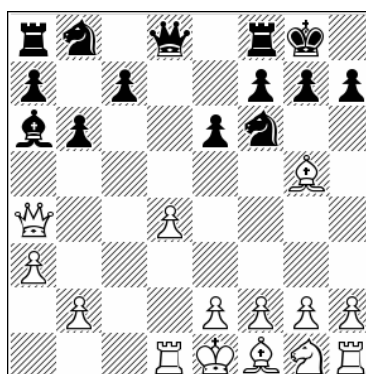
This is one of two main approaches.

10.♞c1 This is an interesting new try, aiming to discourage Black from ...h6 and ...g5 ideas. 10...♞bd7 11.♞f3 ♞c8 12.e4 ♞xf1 13.♞xf1 h6 14.♞h4 ♞e8

Now, back to the main line.



Position after: 14...♞e8

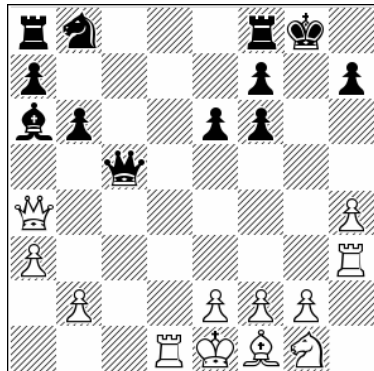


Position after: 10.♞a4

10...♞d7

A) 10...♞d5 11.♞xf6 gx6 It seems that White can maintain good play in different ways. 12.h4!?

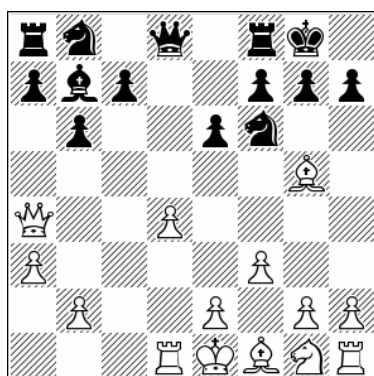
[12.f3 ♖g5 13.♔f2 ♜d8 14.♘h3 ♚b5 15.♙xb5 ♟xb5 16.e3 ♟xf1 17.♞hxf1 ♞d7 18.♞f4 White has an advantage in this endgame, ½-½ (31) Vrolijk, L (2477) – Petkidis, A (2411) Roquetas de Mar 2022] 12...♟b5 [12...c5 13.dxc5 ♚xc5 14.♞h3



Position after: 14.♞h3

14...♚c4 15.♙xc4 ♟xc4 16.♞g3+ ♔h8 17.♞c3 ♟b5 18.♞f3 ♞c6 19.e3 ♟xf1 20.♔xf1 ♞ac8 21.♞d7 White is better. Lifting the rook to h3 is one possible idea behind 12.h4, which is often thematic in this line.] 13.♚c2 ♞d7 14.e4 ♚c6 15.♚b1 ♟xf1 16.♔xf1 ♚b5+ 17.♞e2 c5 18.d5 This gives White an edge as well.

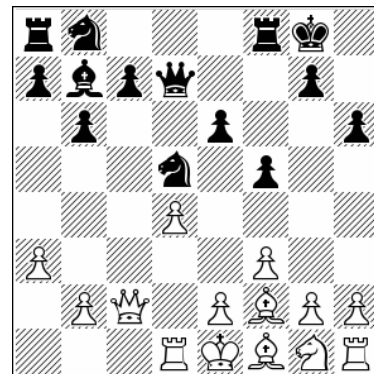
**B) 10...♟b7** Now, with the white queen driven to a4, Black is hoping that the fianchetto is better than the version starting with 9...♟b7. 11.f3



Position after: 11.f3

I still believe that here too this is the best idea. 11...h6 [11...♞bd7 12.e4 h6 13.♟h4 ♚e8 14.♞e2 c5 15.♞c3 a6 16.dxc5 ♞xc5 17.♚xe8 ♞fxe8 18.♟e2 b5 19.♟f2 ♞ac8 20.0-0 such endgames work well for White and this is his

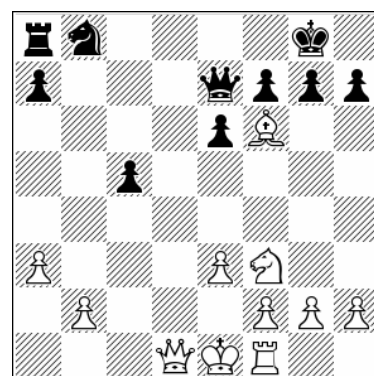
main objective, ½-½ (43) Santos Ruiz, M (2505) – Vrolijk, L (2427) Amsterdam 2018] 12.♟h4 ♚d7 13.♚c2 ♞d5 14.♟f2 f5



Position after: 14...f5

This is a significant point. Black wants to keep his knight in the center. 15.e3 ♚e7 16.♞h3 ♞d7 17.♟c4 ♞ac8 18.0-0 c5 19.♚e2 White still has an advantage, 0-1 (88) Khismatullin, D (2621) – Lalith, B (2573) Moscow 2016.

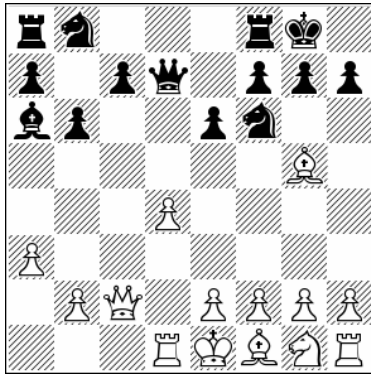
**C) 10...♚e7 11.♞f3 ♜d8** This is not the best version of this line. It is better to go first 10...h6, as we will see in one of our following subchapters. 12.e3 ♟xf1 13.♞xf1 c5 14.dxc5 ♞xd1+ Unlike in the 10...h6 system. here Black doesn't have the useful ...g5 idea. 15.♚xd1 bxc5 16.♟xf6!



Position after: 16.♟xf6!

16...gxf6 17.♚a4 ♚b7 18.♔e2 ♞c6 19.b3 ♞b8 20.♞c1 ♚xb3 21.♚xb3 ♞xb3 22.♞xc5 ♞e7 23.♞c7 With some advantage for White.

**11.♚c2**

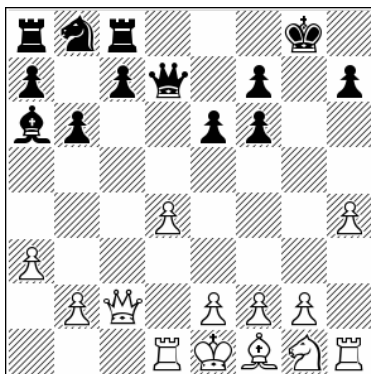


Position after: 11...Qc2

### 11...c5

Black has various choices, but we consider this one and 11...Qc6 as the best chances.

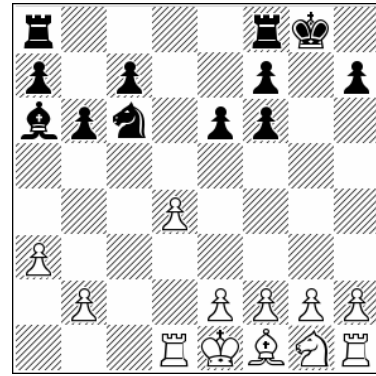
**A)** 11...Rc8 12...xf6 Whenever it is possible, White does best to take the knight. 12...gxf6 13.h4



Position after: 13.h4

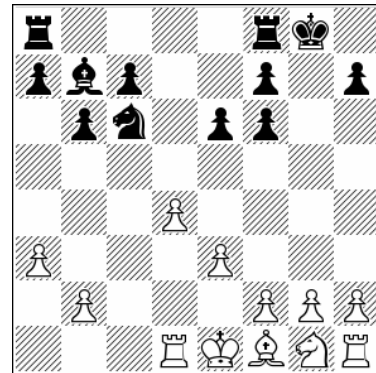
This idea is important here. It's not so much about attack; it is more about positional gain and developing in a useful way. 13...Qe7 14.Rh3 Qd7 15.e4 Qb7 16.Qe2 c5 17.d5! exd5 18.exd5 Re8 19.d6 White has an initiative, 1-0 (26) Morozevich, A (2659) – Neiksans, A (2575) Puhajarve 2021.

**B)** 11...Qc6 This is a very important line because it can come from positions with and without ...h6. 12.Qxc6 Qxc6 13.Qxf6 gxf6



Position after: 13...gxf6

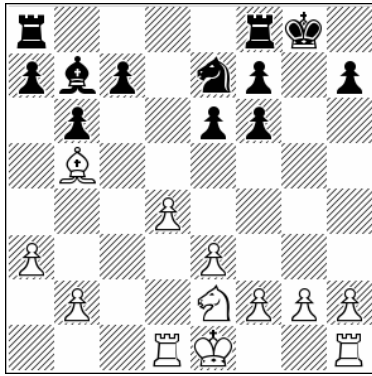
**B1)** 14.e3 This move order is almost the same as 14.Qf3 but there is a small difference, which can be exploited also in a line with 10...h6 included. 14...Qb7



Position after: 14...Qb7

**B1.1)** 15.Qf3 Rac8 16.Qe2 Qe7 17.Rc1 Rfd8 18.Qd2 Qf8 19.Qf3 Qxf3 20.Qxf3 c5 21.dxc5 Rxd5 22.Qe2 Rdx5 23.Rxc5 Rxc5 24.Qd3 Qd5 25.Rd1 Qe7 26.g3 f5 27.Qd4 a6 28.Qb3 Rc8 29.Rc1 Rxc1 30.Qxc1 Qd6 31.Qe2 Qf6 32.f3 Qd7 33.Qd4 Qe5+ 34.Qc3 It's an equal endgame but not so easy for Black, who must be careful because his pawn on h7 is a potential target, a known feature of this type of endgame, ½-½ (64) Wang, H (2717) – Wang, Y (2718) Huaian 2016.

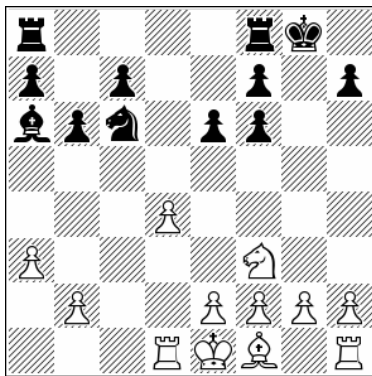
**B1.2)** 15.Qb5 Qe7 16.Qe2!



Position after: 16. ♖e2!

This might be a crucial difference compared with positions where the knight is already on f3. 16... ♖ac8 17. 0-0 ♔g7 18. ♖c1 ♖fd8 19. ♗g3 f5 20. b4 c6 21. ♕e2 White keeps some edge so that might be an important difference, the knight can go on e2 especially when Black doesn't exchange on f1.

**B2)** 14. ♗f3

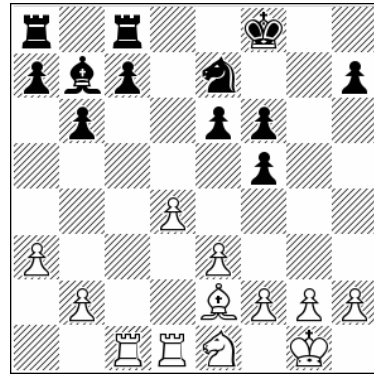


Position after: 14. ♗f3

**B2.1)** 14... ♗a5 15. e3 ♕xf1 16. ♖xf1 It's same position as in the Carlsen – Caruana game in the 10...h6 line.

**B2.2)** 14... ♖fc8 15. e3 ♗b8 A slightly unusual strategy, but it has its points. 16. ♕e2 ♔f8 17. d5 c5 18. dxc6 ♕xe2 19. ♔xe2 ♔e7 20. ♖d4 ♗xc6 21. ♖h4 ♗a5 22. b4 ♗b3 23. ♖b1 ♖c3 24. ♖xh7 ♖d8 25. ♔e1 e5 26. g4 Interesting play. Black is facing tough choices: he has to play only moves to achieve a balanced game, 1-0 (36) Khismatullin, D (2652) – Predke, A (2503) Taganrog 2013.

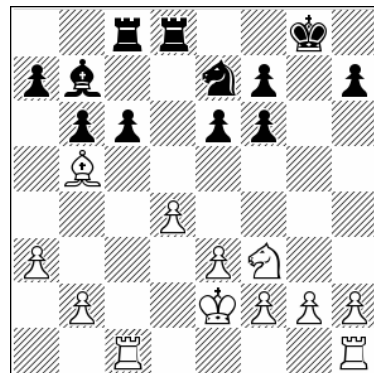
**B2.3)** 14... ♗e7 15. e3 ♕b7 16. ♕e2 ♖fc8 17. 0-0 ♔f8 18. ♖c1 f5 19. ♖fd1 f6 20. ♗e1!



Position after: 20. ♗e1!

20... ♗d5 21. ♗d3 White achieves a small but stable advantage, ½-½ (47) Anastasian, A (2532) – Olafsson, H (2543) Radebeul 2016.

**B2.4)** 14... ♖fd8 15. e3 ♕b7 16. ♖c1 ♖ac8 17. ♕b5 ♗e7 18. ♔e2 Here Black should do as in a game Beliavsky-Yu, cited in a line with 10...h6 included (that makes no difference). 18...c6!

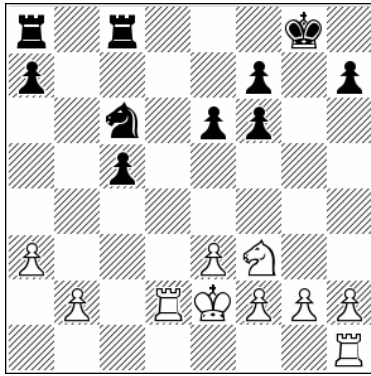


Position after: 18...c6!

19. ♕d3 c5 20. dxc5 ♕xf3+ 21. gxf3 ♖xc5 22. ♖hg1+ ♔f8 23. ♖xc5 bxc5 24. ♖c1 ♖b8 25. ♖c2 ♗c8! White can't take the pawn on h7 on account of ...f5. so it's the same defensive setup.

**12. dxc5**

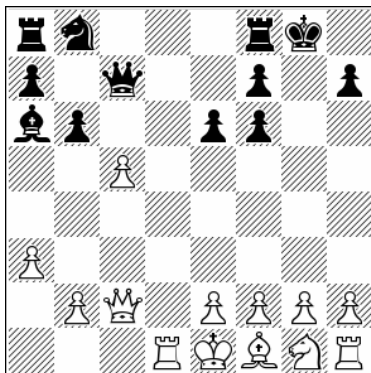
12. ♕xf6 gxf6 13. dxc5 ♖b5 14. ♗f3 ♖xc5 15. ♖xc5 bxc5 16. e3 ♖c8 17. ♕e2 ♕xe2 18. ♔xe2 ♗c6 19. ♖d2



Position after: 19...Rd2

19...♞a5 [19...♞ab8 20.♞c2 ♞a5 21.♞d2 ♞c6 22.♞hc1 ♞b3 23.♞d1 ♞xd2 24.♞xd2 ♞f8 25.♞c1 ♞e7 26.♞c4 White has the better endgame, 1-0 (58) Michiels, B (2554) – Winants, L (2513) Belgium 2019] 20.♞c2 c4 21.♞d2 ♞ab8 22.♞hc1 ♞d8 23.♞d1 ♞d5 24.♞e4 ♞db5 25.♞dd2 f5 26.♞d6 ♞5b6 27.h3 h5 28.e4 White has some initiative but probably Black has enough play for a draw.

12...♞c7 13.♞xf6 gxf6

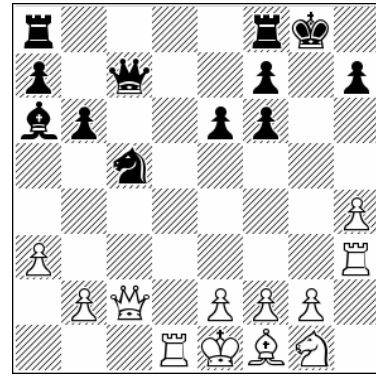


Position after: 13...gxf6

14.h4

This is a real test and a very important asset, because the rook can develop via h3 and that's a clever thing to do.

14...♞d7 15.♞h3 ♞xc5

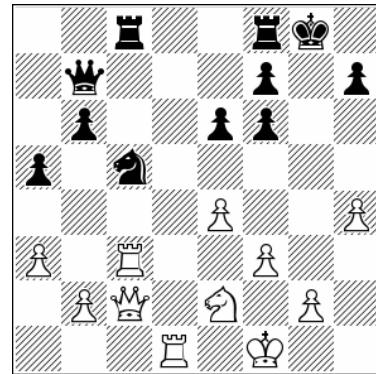


Position after: 15...♞xc5

16.♞c3!

16.♞c1 A waste of time. 16...♞fd8 17.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 18.♞g3+ ♞f8 19.♞c3 ♞e5 Black is better, ½-½ (33) Girya, O (2484) – Gunina, V (2510) St Petersburg 2017.

16...♞ac8 17.e4 ♞xf1 18.♞xf1 ♞b7 19.f3 a5 20.♞e2

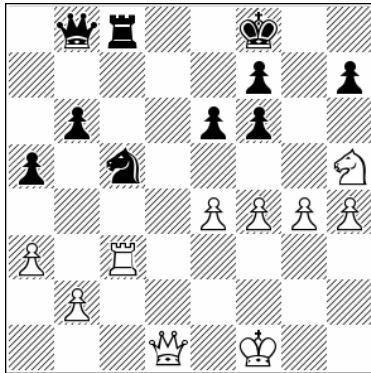


Position after: 20...♞e2

20...♞fd8

20...a4 21.♞g3! Already we can see that the doubled pawns are a constant problem for Black. Now knight to h5 will be a serious issue.

21.♞f4 ♞b8 22.♞h5 ♞e5 23.g4 ♞xd1+ 24.♞xd1 ♞f8 25.f4 ♞b8



Position after: 25...♙b8

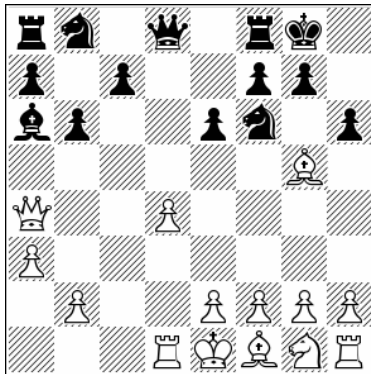
26.♖c4

White has reached his limits but can still play on here.

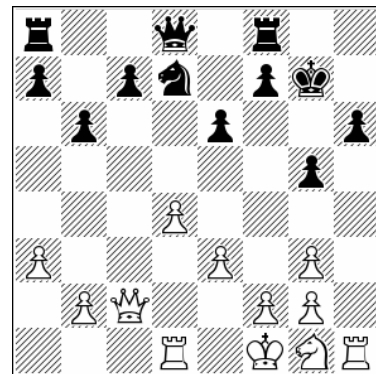
**d) 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 b6 9.♖d1 ♘a6 10.♙a4 h6 11.♙h4 ♙e7**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♙xc3 d5 7.♙g5 dxc4 8.♙xc4 b6 9.♖d1 ♙a6 10.♙a4 h6

11...g5 12.♙g3 ♘e4 13.♙c2 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 ♙g7 15.e3 ♙xf1 16.♙xf1 ♘d7



Position after: 10...h6



Position after: 16...♘d7

This is considered best, to include this move first and only later to search for activity. In many ways this is very different from the positions without ...h6.

**11.♙h4**

Black has here two main replies, which are the same as in the position without 10...h6.

**11...♙e7**

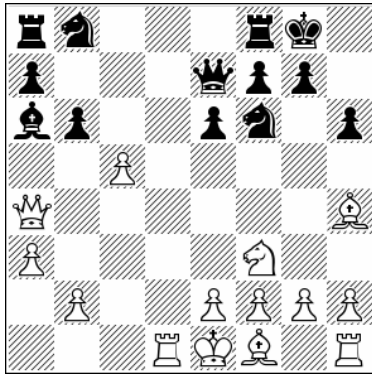
Here we deal with this logical reply. Black is ready to place a rook on d8 followed by ...c5. We examine here a few other options apart from the two big lines, 11...♙e7 and 11...♙d7.

17.g4 [17.♘e2 ♘f6 18.d5! this looks strong for White] 17...♘f6 18.♘e2 ♖c8 19.♘g3 White is better, 1-0 (24) Bach, N (2198) – Gedajlovic, M (2337) chess.com INT 2021.

**12.♘f3 ♖d8**

That's the main reply, although Black can also go ...c5 at once.

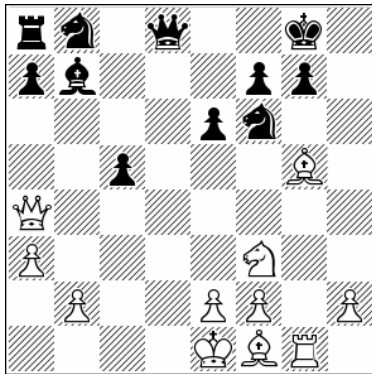
12...c5 13.dxc5



Position after: 13.dxc5

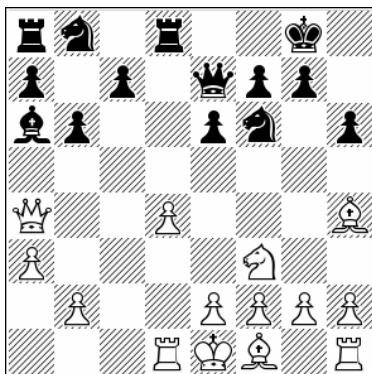
**A)** 13...♞xc5 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.e3 ♕xf1 16.♖xf1 ♜c6 17.♗e2 ♝fc8 18.♞c1 ♚a5 19.♞xa5 ♜xa5 20.♞d4 a6 21.a4 ♜f8 It is not clear how White can make progress here. The black knight on a5 will eventually land on d6, ½-½ (37) Bindrich, F (2598) – Movsesian, S (2671) Internet 2017.

**B)** 13...bxc5 14.g4!? ♙b7 15.g5 hxg5 16.♙xg5 ♞d8 17.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 18.♞g1



Position after: 18.♞g1

18...♞bd7 19.♞d2 ♞b6 20.♙h6 g6 21.♞c2 ♜h7 22.♙g5 ♞h8 Another unclear game.

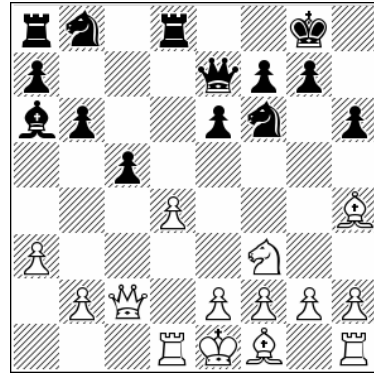


Position after: 12...♞d8

### 13.e3

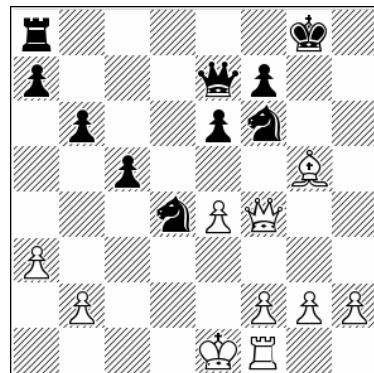
That's the usual continuation, but White can play more sharply with some other ideas.

**A)** 13.♞c2 c5



Position after: 13...c5

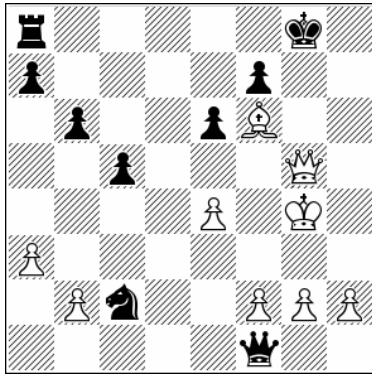
**A1)** In a recent game White tried a surprising piece sac here. 14.e4 ♕xf1 15.♞xf1 g5 16.♞xg5 hxg5 17.♙xg5 ♜c6 18.♞c1 ♞xd4 19.♞xd4 ♞xd4 20.♞f4



Position after: 20.♞f4

**A1.1)** The stem game continued as follows. 20...♞c2+ 21.♜d1 ♞d7+ 22.♜xc2 ♞a4+ 23.♜b1 ♞xe4+ 24.♞xe4 ♞xe4 25.♙f4 ♞f6 26.h4 ♞d5 White exerts some pressure in the endgame, which Nakamura managed to defend with some tough moves, ½-½ (53) Firouzja, A (2793) – Nakamura, H (2760) Madrid 2022.

**A1.2)** 20...♞d7! The best defensive idea. 21.♙xf6 ♞c2+ 22.♜e2 ♞b5+ 23.♜f3 ♞d3+ 24.♜g4 ♞xf1 25.♞g5+

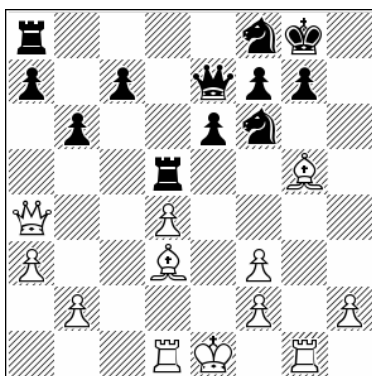


Position after: 25. ♖g5+

25...♔f8 26.♖g7+ ♔e8 27.♖g8+ ♔d7 28.♖xf7+ ♔c6 29.♖xe6+ ♔b5 30.♖d7+ ♔a5 31.♙c3+ ♔a6 32.♖a4+ ♔b7 And it seems that White has nothing better than to give perpetual check.

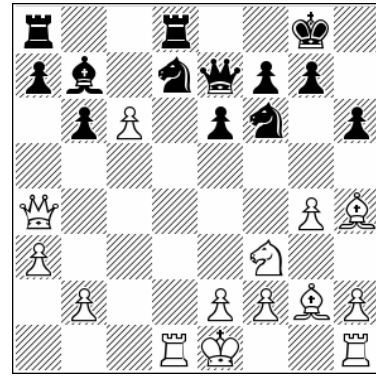
**A2)** 14.♙xf6 ♖xf6 15.dxc5 ♖xd1+ 16.♔xd1 ♘d7 17.e3 ♙xf1 18.♖xf1 ♘xc5 Black is fine, ½-½ (20) Seresin, F (2300) – Schitco, I (2424) Karlsruhe 2019.

**B)** 13.g4 ♙b7 [13...c5 14.g5 hxg5 15.♘xg5 ♙b7 16.♖g1 ♖xd4 17.♖xd4 cxd4 18.♖xd4 ♘bd7 it seems that this is a good version for Black, 0-1 (26) Mamedyarov, S (2770) – Sargsyan, S (2601) chess.com INT 2020] 14.♙g2 [14.g5 hxg5 15.♙xg5 ♘bd7 16.♖g1 ♙xf3 17.exf3 ♘f8 18.♙d3 ♖d5!?



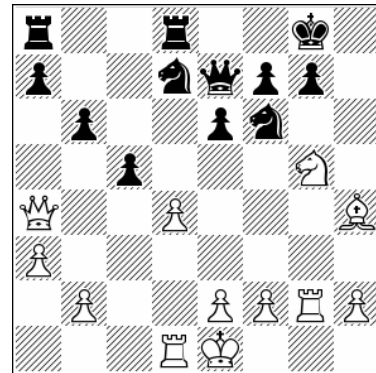
Position after: 18... ♖d5!?

19.♖b4 ♖xb4+ 20.axb4 ♘d7 now this looks fine for Black because his rook on d5 is strong and his knights are not worse than the white bishops] 14...♘bd7 [14...c5 15.dxc5 ♘bd7 This is wrong, it seems. 16.c6!



Position after: 16.c6!

16...♘c5 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♙xf6 gx6 19.♖f4 ♙xc6 20.♖xh6 White is better.] 15.♖g1 This is the only critical try. 15...c5 16.g5 hxg5 17.♘xg5 ♙xg2 18.♖xg2



Position after: 18. ♖xg2

Now Black can consider two ideas apart from what was played in a game:

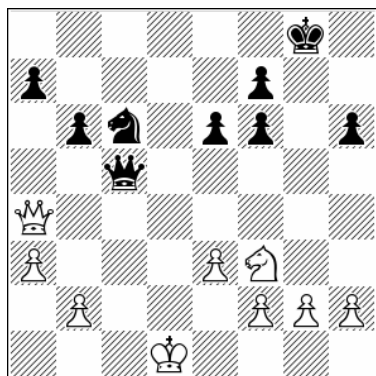
**B1)** 18...♘f8 19.♘e4 ♘g6 20.♙g5 ♖b7 21.♙xf6 ♖xe4 22.f3 ♖f4 23.♙xd8 ♖xd8 Black has compensation for the sacrificed exchange, ½-½ (36) Mamedyarov, S (2782) – Nakamura, H (2736) Saint Louis 2021.

**B2)** 18...♖d6 19.♘e4 ♖f4 20.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 21.♙g5 ♖f5 22.f3 ♖xd4 23.♖xd4 cxd4 24.♖xd4 ♘e8 It's fine for Black.

**B3)** 18...♘e8!? 19.♖c2 ♘f8 It seems that Black is not worse here, although it may look dangerous because White could be able to make effective use of his bishop-and-rook battery.

**13...♙xf1 14.♖xf1**

14. ♖xf1 ♜bd7 15. ♛c6 ♞ac8 16. ♔e2 ♜b8  
 17. ♜a4 c5 18. dxc5 ♛xc5 19. ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 20. ♙xf6  
 gxf6 21. ♞d1 ♞xd1 22. ♔xd1 ♜c6



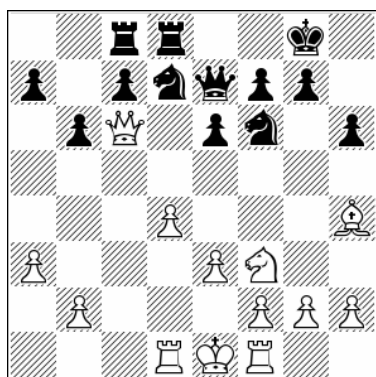
Position after: 22...♜c6

23. ♜d2! [23. ♛c2 ♛d5+ 24. ♛d2 ♛b3+ 25. ♛c2  
 ♛d5+ 26. ♛d2 ♛b3+ 27. ♛c2 ½-½ (27) Stupak, K  
 (2478) – Lazavik, D (2465) Minsk 2022] 23... ♛d5  
 24. ♛g4+ ♔f8 25. ♛f3 ♛xf3+ 26. ♜xf3 f5 This is  
 also OK for Black.

#### 14...c5

Things can get unclear if Black waits one more  
 move.

14... ♜bd7 15. ♛c6 This is critical. 15... ♞ac8

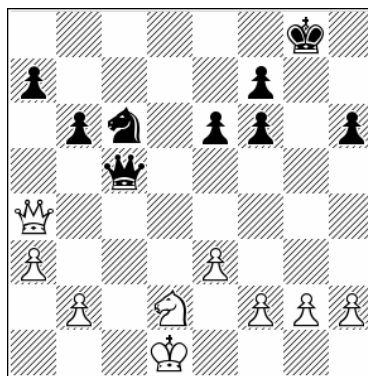


Position after: 15... ♞ac8

**A)** 16. ♞d2 ♜b8 17. ♛b7 ♛e8 18. ♙xf6 gxf6  
 19. ♛xa7 ♛b5 20. ♛b7 ♜c6 21. ♞g1 ♞b8 22. ♛xc7  
 e5 Black has seized the initiative, ½-½ (35)  
 Turczynski, M – Trzcinski, I corr. 2016.

**B)** 16. ♞c1 g5 17. ♙g3 ♜b8 18. ♛b7 ♛e8! 19. ♜e5  
 c5 Black is fine here, ½-½ (32) Stockfish 6 RC1 64  
 – Stockfish 6 RC1 64 Internet (blitz) 2015.

**C)** 16. ♔e2!? This is a serious test. 16... ♜b8  
 17. ♛a4 c5 The same idea as in the game given  
 in the note about 14. ♖xf1 [another line might  
 be 17...g5 18. ♙g3 c5 19. dxc5 ♛xc5 20. ♞c1 ♛xc1  
 21. ♞xc1 ♞xc1 22. ♜e1 ♞c5 23. ♙xb8 ♞a5 24. ♛c6  
 ♞xb8 25. ♛c7 ♞f8 26. ♜d3 ♞d5 when Black is OK].  
 18. dxc5 ♛xc5 19. ♙xf6 gxf6 20. ♞xd8+ ♞xd8  
 21. ♞d1 ♞xd1 22. ♔xd1 ♜c6 23. ♜d2!



Position after: 23...♜d2!

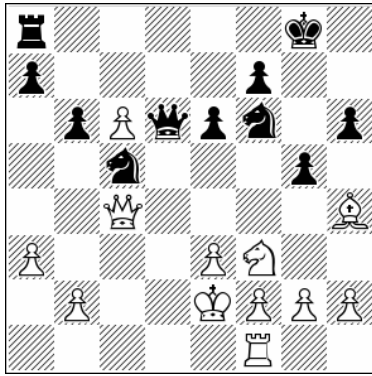
23... ♛d5 24. ♛e4! ♛d7 25. ♔e2 ♜e5 It's an equal  
 game.

#### 15.dxc5

15. ♔e2 ♜bd7 16. ♜e5 ♜xe5! 17. dxe5 g5 18. exf6  
 ♛xf6 19. ♙g3 ♛xb2+ 20. ♔f3 ♛f6+ 21. ♔e2 ♛b2+  
 Perpetual, ½-½ (27) Karpov, A (2616) – Matlakov,  
 M (2697) Sochi 2019.

#### 15...♞xd1+ 16. ♛xd1

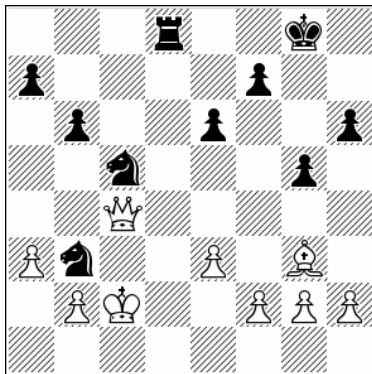
Taking with the king is actually very interesting.  
 16. ♔xd1 g5 Best. [16... ♜bd7 17. c6 ♜c5 18. ♛c4  
 ♛d6+ 19. ♔e2 g5



Position after: 19...g5

20. ♖g3 ♜xc6 21. b4 ♜a4 22. ♞c1 ♞ce4 23. ♜c6 ♜xc6 24. ♞xc6 ♞d8 25. ♞d4 White has some initiative; probably he was hoping for a position like this one] 17. ♖g3 ♜xc5

**A)** 18. ♔d2 ♞c6!? [18... ♞bd7 19. ♞c1 ♜d5+ 20. ♔e2 ♞c5 21. ♜c4 ♞d8 22. ♜xd5 ♞xd5 23. ♞d4 a5 24. ♞c4 ♞d7 25. f3 White has an initiative, ½-½ (65) Carlsen, M (2847) – Nakamura, H (2736) chess24.com INT 2021] 19. ♞c1 ♞d8+ 20. ♞d4 ♞e4+ 21. ♔d1 ♞xd4 22. ♞xc5 ♞xc5 23. ♜c4 ♞db3+ 24. ♔c2



Position after: 24. ♔c2

24...f6! White can't improve from here. Black has only rook and knight versus the queen, but it's a brilliant setup.

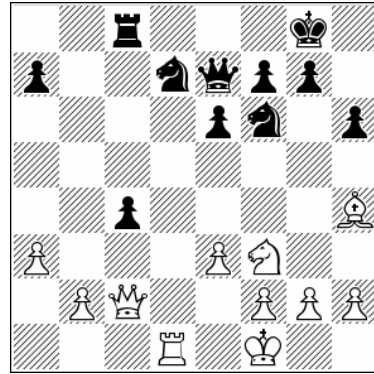
**B)** 18. ♞d4 ♞bd7 19. ♔e2 ♞c8 20. ♞d1 ♜d5 Black is OK.

### 16...g5

Black can take at once on c5 with the pawn or the queen.

**A)** 16... ♜xc5 17. ♜d8+ ♔h7 18. ♖xf6 gxf6 19. ♜xf6 This is bad for Black, 1-0 (42) Taylor, M (2328) – Dargan, P (2123) Daventry 2019.

**B)** Taking with the pawn is OK. 16...bxc5 17. ♔e2 ♞bd7 18. ♜c2 ♞c8 19. ♞d1 c4 20. ♔f1



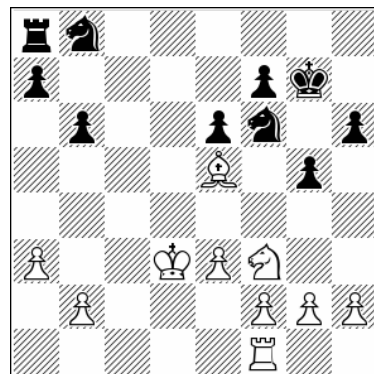
Position after: 20. ♔f1

20...c3 [20... ♞b6 21. h3 c3 22. ♔g1 ♜c5 23. ♖xf6 gxf6 24. bxc3 ♜xa3 Black is still OK, but it's a bit complicated because Black has to take care about his king safety, 1-0 (43) Mamedyarov, S (2801) – Caruana, F (2822) Saint Louis 2018] 21. ♔g1 ♜c5 22. h3 a5 Black is doing OK.

### 17. ♖g3

17. ♞xg5 hxg5 18. ♖xg5 ♞bd7 19. ♜f3 ♞c8 20. c6 ♜c5 21. ♖xf6 ♜c1+ Leading to a forced draw, ½-½ (25) Wang Hao (2763) – Wei Yi (2732) chess.com INT 2020.

17... ♜xc5 18. ♜d8+ ♔g7 19. ♖e5 ♜c1+ 20. ♔e2 ♜c4+ 21. ♜d3 ♜xd3+ 22. ♔xd3

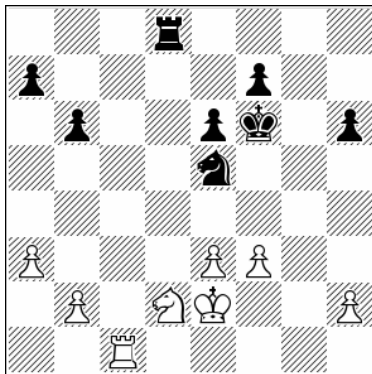


Position after: 22. ♔xd3

22...♖bd7 23.♞c1 g4 24.♙xf6+ ♕xf6 25.♘d2  
♘e5+ 26.♕e2 ♞d8 27.f4 gxf3+ 28.gxf3

28...♞d7

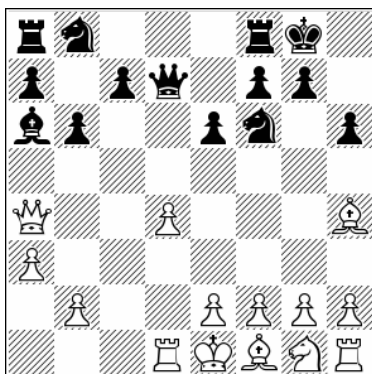
This is OK for Black. They played on for quite a long time, but this position is objectively equal, ½-½ (69) Artemiev, V (2700) – Ding Liren (2799) chess24.com INT 2022.



Position after: 28.gxf3

**e) 7...dxc4 8.♞xc4 b6 9.♞d1 ♙a6 10.♞a4 h6 11.♙h4 ♞d7**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♞c2 0-0 5.a3  
♙xc3+ 6.♞xc3 d5 7.♙g5 dxc4 8.♞xc4 b6 9.♞d1  
♙a6 10.♞a4 h6 11.♙h4 ♞d7



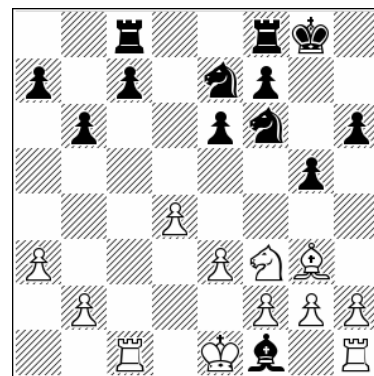
Position after: 11...♞d7

This is one of two main choices in front of Black, the other one being 11...♞e7, which was analyzed in the previous subchapter.

**12.♞c2 ♞c6**

This is the main option, but there are a few interesting ideas as well.

**A)** In a recent game Black used a slightly unusual move order but still ran into some problems. 12...g5 13.♙g3 ♞c6 14.♞xc6 ♘xc6 15.♘f3 ♞ac8 16.♞c1 ♘e7 17.e3 ♙xf1

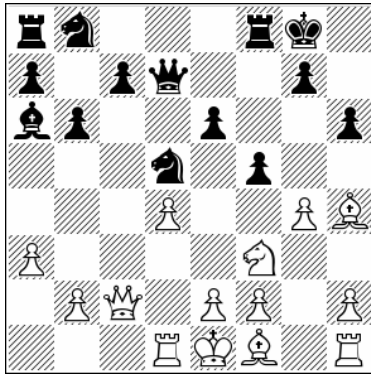


Position after: 17...♙xf1

18.♞xf1 It's the same thing if the king takes in this position [18.♕xf1 ♞fd8 19.♕e2 c6 20.♘d2 ♘h5 21.b4 ♞d5 22.♘c4 White keeps some advantage; the knights don't equalize easily in such positions, ½-½ (51) Vaclav, I – Serner, D corr. 2011]. 18...♘e4 [18...c5 19.dxc5 ♘e4 20.♕e2 bxc5 21.♞c4 f5 22.♘d2 ♘xd2 23.♕xd2 ♘g6 24.f3 h5 25.♕e2 f4 26.♙f2 Such aggressive play in the endgame doesn't bring balanced positions, 1-0 (66) Houdini 1.5ay.d – Houdini 1.5a Internet (blitz) 2011] 19.♘d2 ♘xd2 20.♕xd2 c6 21.♙d6 ♞fe8 22.♞c2 ♘f5 23.♙e5 c5 24.dxc5 ♞ed8+ 25.♕e2 ♞d5 26.♙c3 Black still hasn't equalized completely, ½-½ (54) Indjic, A (2607) – Donchenko, A (2660) Tornele INT 2021.

**B)** 12...♘d5 Black's idea is to avoid ♙xf6. Next will come ...♞c8 and if White pushes e4 the knight will happily go to the flexible e7-square.

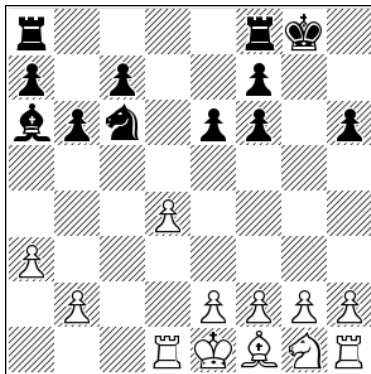
13.♘f3 ♖c8 [Blocking e4 actually is possible.  
13...f5!? 14.g4



Position after: 14.g4

14...♘c6 15.g5 hxg5 16.♙xg5 ♖ae8 17.♚b3 ♘b7  
18.♙g2 ♜f7 19.♙c1 Well, it seems that it's a bit  
complicated.] 14.♘e5 ♜e8 15.e4 ♙xf1 16.♔xf1  
♘e7 17.♙xe7 ♜xe7 18.g3 c5 19.♔g2 ♘c6  
20.♘xc6 ♖xc6 21.d5 ♖d6 22.♖d2 Black is not  
worse here, ½-½ (22) Mamedyarov, S (2772) –  
Jakovenko, D (2698) Jerusalem 2019.

13.♜xc6 ♘xc6 14.♙xf6 gx6



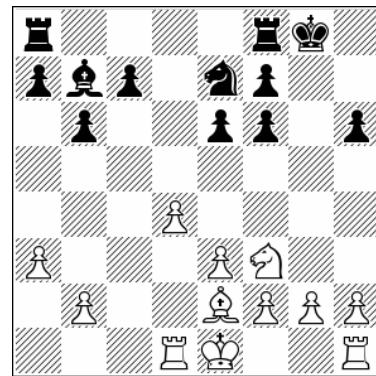
Position after: 14...gx6

This whole system is really the same as the line  
without 10...h6, so the two can be closely  
compared.

15.e3

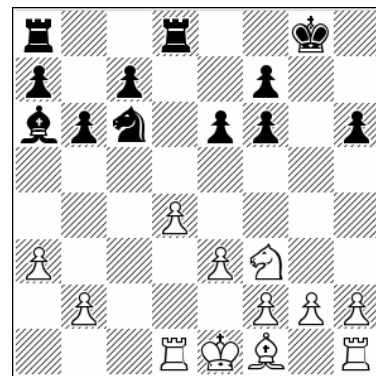
This is slightly different, and we will see why.

15.♘f3 ♖fd8 [15...♘e7 16.e3 ♘b7 17.♙e2!



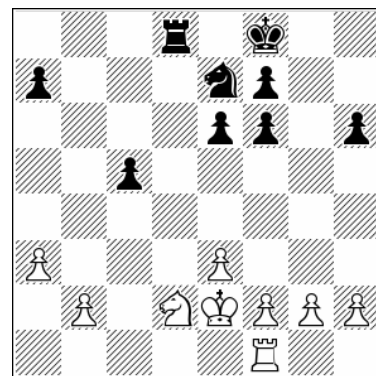
Position after: 17.♙e2!

17...♖fc8 18.0-0 ♔f8 19.♖c1 as we analyzed in  
the line without 10... h6] 16.e3



Position after: 16.e3

A) 16...♙xf1 17.♖xf1 ♖ac8 [17...♘a5 18.♔e2  
♖ac8 19.b4 ♘b7 20.♖b1! a5 21.b5 c6 22.bxc6  
♖xc6 23.♖fc1 ♖dc8 24.♖xc6 ♖xc6 25.♔d3 White  
has pressure here, ½-½ (72) Morozvich, A  
(2675) – Navara, D (2737) Biel (rapid) 2017]  
18.♖c1 ♘e7 19.♔e2 ♔f8 20.♖c4 c5 21.dxc5 ♖xc5  
22.♖xc5 bxc5 23.♘d2!

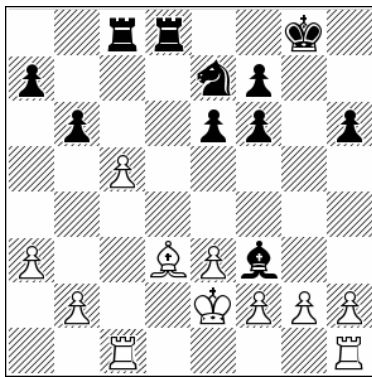


Position after: 23.♘d2!

This is probably the precise way to go. 23...♖b8  
24.b3 ♘c6 25.♖c1 ♘a5 26.♖xc5 ♘xb3 27.♖c7

♟xd2 28.♞xd2 a6 29.♞c6 ♞a8 30.a4 White has the better rook endgame.

**B) 16...♞b7** This can be compared with the same line with the pawn still on h7. It's the same thing and in my opinion best in both cases. 17.♞c1 ♞ac8 18.♞b5 ♟e7 19.♞e2 c6 20.♞d3 c5 21.dxc5 ♞xf3+!



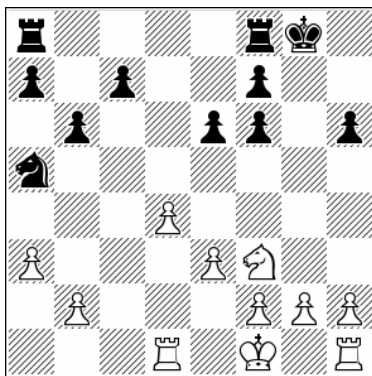
Position after: 21...♞xf3+!

22.gxf3 ♞xc5 23.♞xc5 bxc5 24.♞c1 ♞b8 25.♞c2 ♟c8! 26.♞d2 ♟d6 Excellent strategy by Black and now it's equal, as the knight on d6 holds everything together, ½-½ (43) Beliavsky, A (2651) – Yu Yangyi (2662) Tromsøe 2013.

**15...♞xf1**

15...♞b7 This can be closely compared with a position without 10...h6. 16.♞b5 ♟e7 17.♟e2! I briefly analyzed this in another subchapter where Black doesn't go 10...h6.

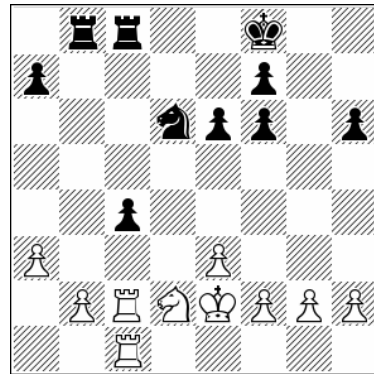
**16.♞xf1 ♟a5 17.♟f3**



Position after: 17.♟f3

**17...♞ac8**

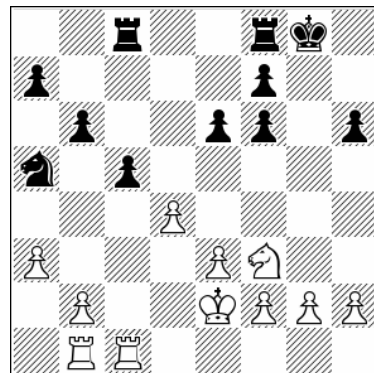
17...♟c4 18.♞b1 c5 19.♞e2 ♞fc8 20.♞hc1 ♟d6 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♞c2 ♞f8 23.♟d2 c4 24.♞bc1 ♞ab8



Position after: 24...♞ab8

25.♞f3! This move keeps an edge, 1-0 (51) Carlsen, M (2863) – Caruana, F (2828) Stavanger 2020.

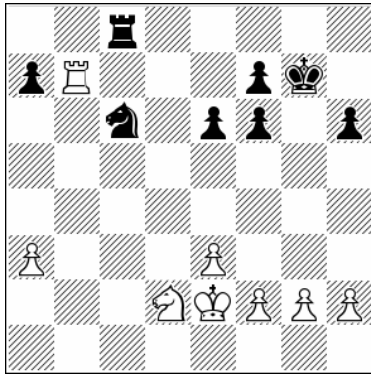
**18.♞e2 ♟c4 19.♞b1 c5 20.♞hc1 ♟a5**



Position after: 20...♟a5

This is a different route for the knight compared with the Carlsen game.

21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♞c3 ♞c6 23.♟d2 c4 24.b4 cxb3 25.♞xc6 ♟xc6 26.♞xb3 ♞c8 27.♞b7 ♞g7



Position after: 27...c6g7

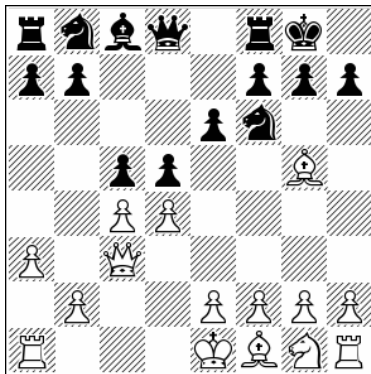
28.♘e4

White has the advantage, ½-½ (54) Plazuelo Pascual, J (2465) – Ponkratov, P (2624) Torneo INT 2021.

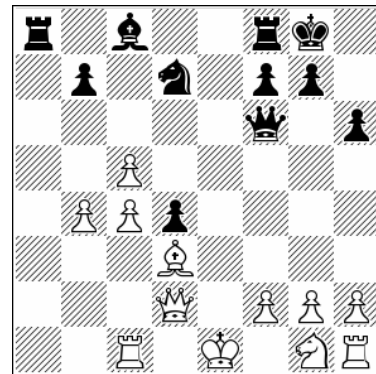
### f) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♙f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♙xc3 d5 7.♗g5 c5

better] 10...h6 11.♗xf6 ♙xf6 12.exd4 exd4 13.♗d3 ♘d7 14.b4 a5 15.♞c1 axb4 16.axb4



Position after: 7...c5



Position after: 16.axb4

We already saw a gambit similar to this one in the chapter about 4.♙c2 d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♙xc3 c5. Here we have a similar but slightly different situation. It's definitely critical because if White is preparing lines where Black will play the usual 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 b6, first he needs to be ready to confront this tactical idea.

16...♗e5 Black has already achieved winning play, 0-1 (21) Malisauskas, V (2450) – Weichhold, P (2382) Police 2013.

### 8.dxc5 d4 9.♙f3

### 9...♗bd7

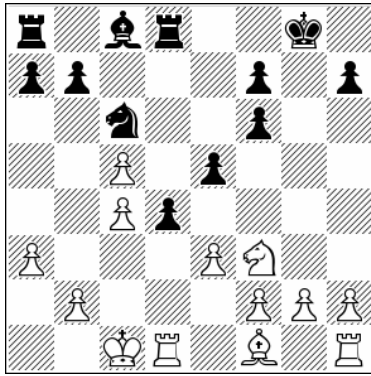
Carlsen plays this so it must be critical for the assessment of this gambit. We will examine the other two usual continuations, 9.♙c2 and 9.♙g3, separately.

Almost unanimously accepted as best.

Here is one line that is probably not so good for White. 9.♙d2 e5 10.e3 [10.g3 h6 11.♗xf6 ♙xf6 12.♗g2 a5 13.♘h3 and now the easiest is 13...♗d7 14.0-0 ♗xc5 when Black is clearly

A) 9...e5 10.♗xf6 ♙xf6 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.e3 dxe3 13.fxe3 a5 14.0-0 ♗e6 15.♞d6 ♞c8 16.♗e2 ♘d7 17.♗c3 ♗xc5 18.♗e2 ♖f8 19.♞hd1 ♖e7 20.♞b6 We have approximate equality, but Black is stuck in his defensive setup rather than pursuing activity, 1-0 (81) Carlsson, L (2355) – Urkedal, F (2553) Prague 2022.

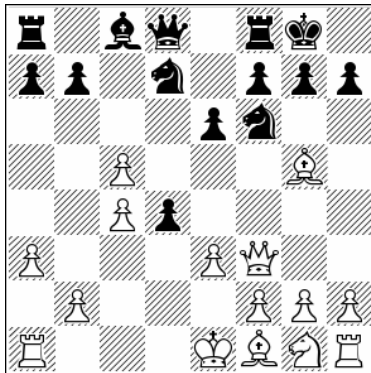
B) 9...♗c6 10.0-0 e5 11.♗xf6 ♙xf6 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.e3 ♞d8 14.♗f3!



Position after: 14...d3!

14...g4 15.gd3 a5 16.b3 Rac8 17.g4 e7  
18.d2 White has better prospects.

### 10.e3

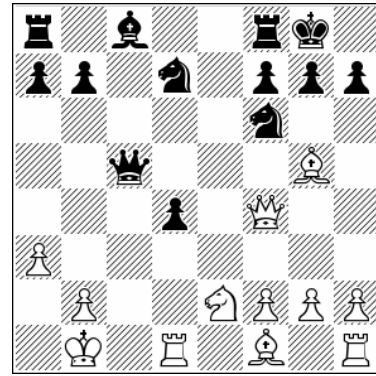


Position after: 10.e3

### 10...h6

The most popular.

Another important line is also logical. 10...e5  
11.exd4 This is forced, more or less. 11...exd4  
12.d2!? Perhaps the best chance to play for an  
advantage. 12...e7!? [12...xc5 13.gxf6 gxf6  
14.gxf6 gxf6 15.dxd4 e8+ 16.g2 d3+  
17.d2 xb2 18.ab1 a4 19.gf3 White can  
hope for a plus in this endgame; 12...e8 13.0-0  
d5 14.gxf6 gxf6 15.gxf6 gxf6 16.exd4  
White already has a winning position, 1-0 (41)  
Bok, B (2618) – Harvey, M (2456) chess.com INT  
2022] 13.0-0-0 xc5 14.f4 xc4+ 15.b1 c5

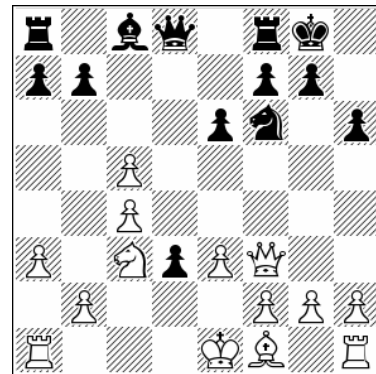


Position after: 15...c5

16.dxd4 [16.c1 d5 17.dxd4 h6 18.gxf6 dxf6  
19.gd3 d8 20.hd1 h8 Black is OK] 16...h6  
17.h4 e8 18.gxf6 dxf6 19.gd3 gd7 20.gc2  
ac8 21.he1 b5 22.xe8+ xe8 23.d5 gxf5  
24.gxf5 With g4 coming soon, White has some  
prospects.

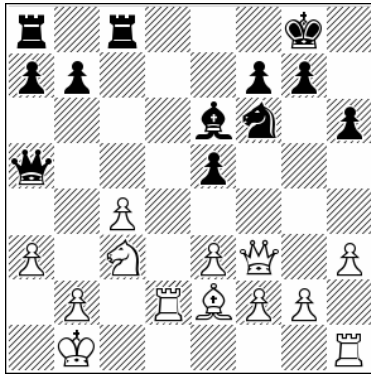
### 11.gxf6 dxf6 12.0-0-0

12.d2!? While writing this book I spotted this  
game, Shankland – So FIDE Grand Prix Berlin  
2022. 12...d3 13.c3

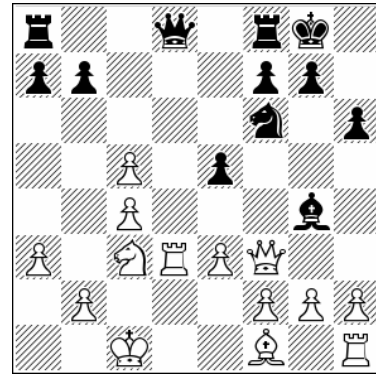


Position after: 13.c3

**A)** That game Black continued as follows. 13...e5  
14.h3 e6 [Black missed a much better move.  
14...d2+! 15.d1 e6 16.c2 e7 17.d1 xc5  
18.exd2 fc8 19.b1 a5 20.g2



Position after: 20.♙e2



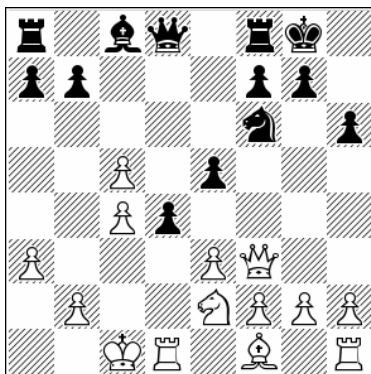
Position after: 15.♞d3

20...b5! Black is very fast here with his counterplay.] 15.♞d1 ♙xc4 16.♙xd3 ♙xd3 17.e4 ♚e7 18.♞xd3 ♚xc5 19.0-0 ♞fd8 20.♞fd1 ♞xd3 21.♞xd3 ♚b6 22.♚e2 ♞d8 23.♜d5 ♚e6 24.♚d1 ♜xd5 25.♞xd5 ♞c8 White keeps some plus here, with safe play, Shankland, S – So, W FIDE Grand Prix Berlin 2022.

B) 13...d2+!? It's probably best to take advantage of this opportunity. 14.♞d1 e5 15.h3 ♙e6 The game transposes to the note 14...d2+.

12...e5 13.♜e2

It's sharp and there are options here.



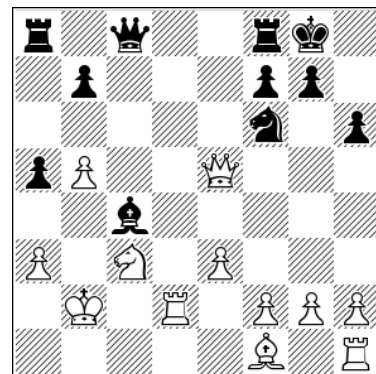
Position after: 13.♜e2

13...♙g4

Not the only sharp idea here.

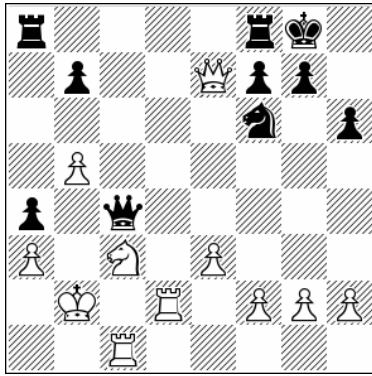
13...d3 14.♜c3 ♙g4 15.♞xd3

15...♚a5 [15...♙xf3 16.♞xd8 ♞fxd8 17.gxf3 a5 18.♜a4! ♞ac8 19.♙h3 ♞c7 20.♞d1 ♞xd1+ 21.♞xd1 ♜h7 22.b4 ♜g5 23.♙g2 ♞f8 24.♞c2 White has strong play for the sacrificed exchange] 16.♚g3 ♚xc5 17.♞d2 This is a clever move order. 17...♙e6 [17...b5 18.♜d5! This is good for White; 17...♞fd8 18.♙d3 e4 19.♙c2 ♞xd2 20.♞xd2 ♚xc4 21.♚e5! ♞d8+ 22.♞c1 b6 23.♞e1 White can hope for more than equality because the black pawn on e4 is mostly a target rather than an asset] 18.b4 White wants to grab the pawn on e5, which is understandable considering that alternatives don't offer anything. [18.♙d3 ♚a5 19.♞b1 ♞ac8 20.♞hd1 ♙xc4 Black is doing OK]. 18...♚c8 19.♚xe5 ♙xc4 20.♞b2 a5 21.b5



Position after: 21.b5

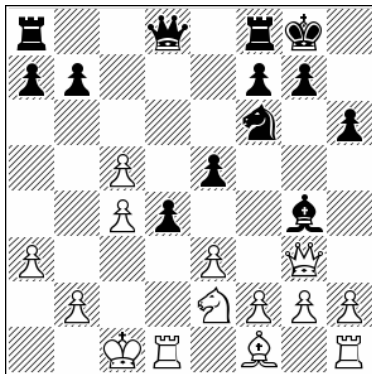
21...a4 Perhaps this is the most precise, but in any case, in my opinion Black's task here is not an easy one. [21...♙xf1 22.♞xf1 ♚c4 23.♞c1 a4 24.♚e7!]



Position after: 24. ♖e7!

24... ♗b3+ 25. ♔a1 ♜fe8 26. ♗b4 ♖e6 27. ♔b2 ♗f5 28. ♞cc2 White is a pawn up and it's not easy to show clear compensation for Black, although there is some] 22. ♞d4 There are other ideas as well. On each Black has to find an adequate reply, which is not simple. 22... ♞e8 23. ♗d6 ♙xf1 24. ♞xf1 ♗f5 25. h3 ♞ac8 26. g4 ♗f3 27. ♗f4 ♗xh3 28. ♞fd1 ♗g2 29. ♗f5 An unbelievable line, where Black is holding on to a thin line of defense. All his moves must be accurate because if he loses the a4-pawn for no compensation the game is finished.

#### 14. ♗g3



Position after: 14. ♗g3

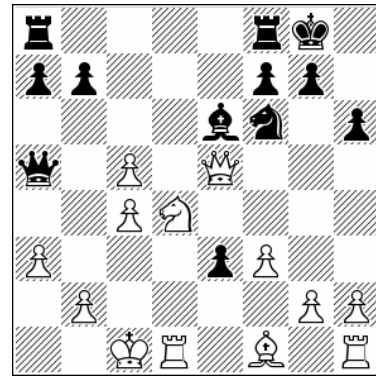
Again we have a split of lines.

#### 14...d3

Due to a recently played game it seems that this is a very promising idea:

**A)** 14... ♗a5 15. f3 [15. exd4!? exd4 16. f3 ♙h5 17. ♘xd4 ♙g6 18. ♙d3 ♙xd3 19. ♞xd3 ♗xc5

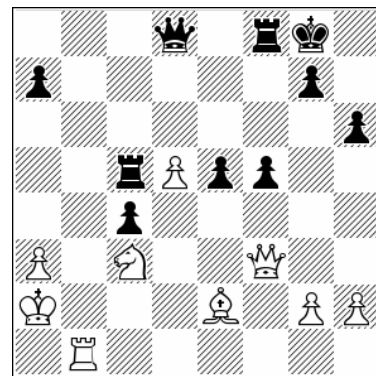
20. ♞hd1 ♗xc4+ 21. ♔b1 here it seems that although the center has disappeared White is more active] 15... ♙e6 16. ♗xe5 dx3 17. ♘d4!?



Position after: 17. ♘d4!?

17... ♞fe8 18. ♗xe3 ♙xc4 19. ♗c3 ♗xc3+ 20. bxc3 ♙xf1 21. ♞hxf1 ♞ac8 22. c6 bxc6 23. ♞fe1 White has slightly better chances in this endgame.

**B)** 14... ♘e4 A consequent reply that will take us to a complicated game. 15. ♗xg4 ♘xf2 16. ♗f3 ♘xd1 17. exd4 ♘xb2 18. ♔xb2 ♞c8 19. d5 ♞xc5 20. ♘c3 b5 21. ♙e2 bxc4 22. ♔a2 f5 23. ♞b1



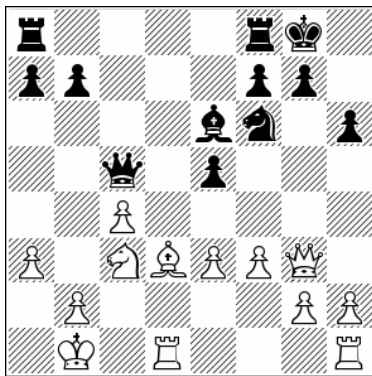
Position after: 23. ♞b1

It seems that the two players evaluated this position in different ways. 23... ♗g5 24. ♞d1 e4 25. ♗f2 e3 26. ♗g3 ♗xg3 27. hxg3 ♔f7 28. ♞f1 ♔e7 29. ♞f3 ♔d7 30. ♙d1 White keeps chances because his pawn on d5 is unpleasant for Black, 1-0 (75) Carlsen, M (2847) – Aronian, L (2781) chess24.com INT 2021.

#### 15. f3 ♞c8!?

A very sharp idea that appeared recently.

15...♙e6 16.♘c3 ♗c7 17.♙xd3 ♗xc5 18.♖b1



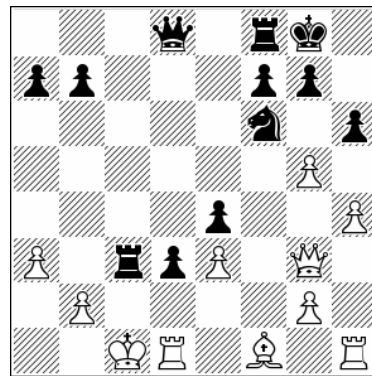
Position after: 18.♖b1

We have a position similar to some in the main line. With e4 coming soon, White is giving up his c4-pawn but gaining a firm grip on a the center. 18...♖ac8 [18...♖fe8 19.♗f2 ♙xc4 20.♙xc4 ♗xc4 21.e4 ♖ec8 22.♗d6 b5 23.♖c1 White has an edge, as his knight on c3 is better than its counterpart on f6, ½-½ (76) Riazantsev, A (2654) – Inarkiev, E (2707) Geneva 2017] 19.e4 ♘h5 20.♗e1 ♘f4 21.♘d5 ♘xd3 22.♖xd3 b5 23.♗a5 bxc4 24.♗xc5 ♖xc5 25.♗d2 Some advantage for White, who has the better pawn structure.

16.♘c3 e4 17.fxc4 ♖xc5

Black is sacrificing a piece and soon a rook as well!

18.h4 ♖xc4 19.g5 ♖xc3+!



Position after: 19...♖xc3+!

20.bxc3 ♗c8 21.♖d2 ♘g4

What a fabulous position!

22.♗f4

22.gxh6 ♗d8 23.h5 ♗e6 24.♖e1 d2+ 25.♖xd2 ♖xd2 26.♖xd2 ♗a2+ This leads to a draw.

22...f5 23.♖h3

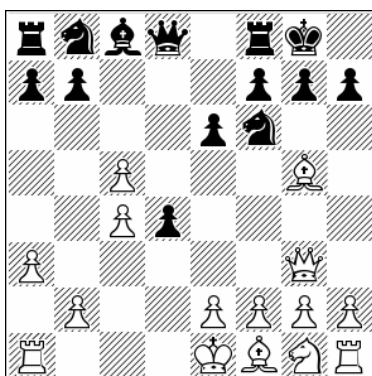
23.♙xd3 exd3 24.♖xd3 ♖e8 25.♖he1 ♖e4 26.♗d6 ♗c4+ 27.♖d2 ♗a2+ 28.♖c1 Another perpetual is coming.

23...♗c4!

Black wielded the initiative while a rook down!, 0-1 (44) Dai, C (2515) – Wei Yi (2727) Shaoxing 2022.

## g) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♗g3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♗xc3 d5 7.♙g5 c5 8.dxc5 d4 9.♗g3



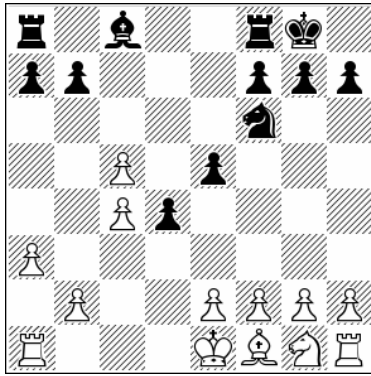
Position after: 9.♗g3

This is a complex line so we need to examine it closely.

9...♘bd7 10.♘f3

A) 10.0-0-0 ♘xc5 11.♗e5 b6 12.♘f3 ♙a6 13.♘d4 ♙xc4 14.e3 ♙a2 15.♘c6 ♘b3+ 16.♖c2 ♖c8 17.♙b5 ♗e8 18.♗d6 ♘d7 19.♗g3 f6 20.♙h6 ♖f7 21.♖d1 ♖h8 22.♙c4 ♘f8 23.♙b5 a6 0-1 (23) Sarana, A (2636) – Yuffa, D (2565) Sochi 2020.

B) 10.♗d6 e5 11.♙xf6 ♗xf6 12.♗xf6 ♘xf6



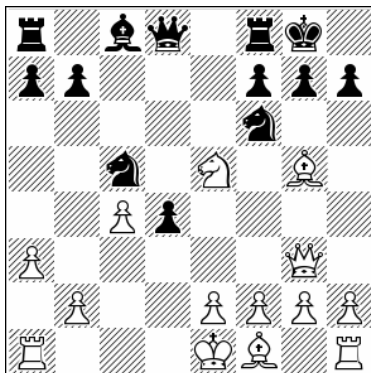
Position after: 12...xf6

13.g3 [13.f3 e8 14.b4 a5 15.Bb1 axb4 16.axb4 Ba4 Black threatens bishop to f5, winning almost at once] 13...e4 14.g2 xc5 15.f3 e8 Black is fine.

**10...e5 11.Bd1!?**

Introduced recently. It hasn't been tested much and it might be a bit risky.

**A) 11.fxe5 xc5**



Position after: 11...xc5

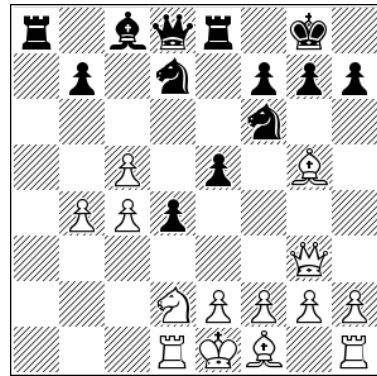
Black has compensation. 12.f3 [12.d3 ce4 13.f6 xf6 14.e3 e8 15.0-0-0 dxe3 16.fxe3 g4 17.Bd2 Bb6! Black has already gained a winning position, ½-½ (75) Georgiev, K (2669) – Kosintseva, N (2552) Caleta 2011] 12...b3 13.Bd1 Ba5+ 14.d2 xd2 15.Bxd2 And now the simple 15...e6 gives Black the better game.

**B) 11.e3 e8** The game transposes to the main line.

**11...e8 12.b4 a5 13.d2**

That's the point.

**13...axb4 14.axb4**

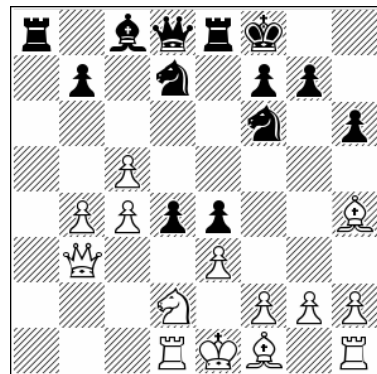


Position after: 14.axb4

**14...e4**

This is logical and strong.

**A) 14...f8?! This move is difficult to understand. 15.Bb3 h6 16.h4 e4 17.e3**



Position after: 17.e3

17...e5! [17...d3 18.h3 g5 19.g3 e5 20.Bb2 Now it's complicated. White is very strong on the dark squares and he can manage to develop somehow, 1-0 (56) Rapport, R (2763) – Praggnanandhaa, R (2612) Wijk aan Zee 2022] 18.h3 f5 Again Black is standing nicely.

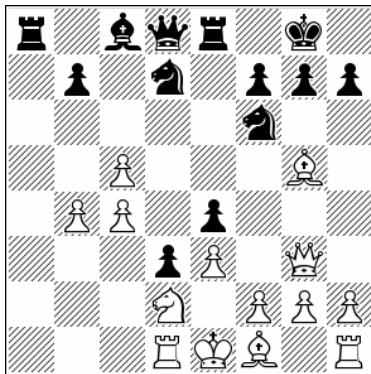
**B) 14...h8** This is a more natural approach. 15.Bb3 As in the game above. 15...h6 16.h4 Bc7 17.e3 Bc6 It's not easy to find good moves for White.

**15.e3**

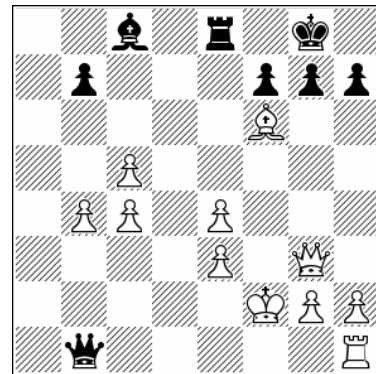
15. ♖d6 e3 16. fxe3 dxe3 17. ♘f3 h6 18. ♙xf6 ♗xf6  
19. ♗xf6 ♘xf6 This is bad for White.

16. f3 ♖a3 17. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18. fxe4 ♘f6 19. ♙xd3  
♖xd3 20. ♖xd3 ♗xd3 21. ♙xf6 ♗b1+ 22. ♘f2

15...d3



Position after: 15...d3



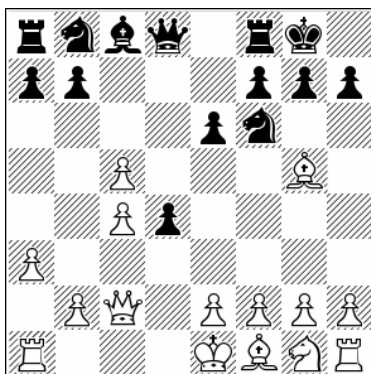
Position after: 22. ♘f2

22... ♗c2+

Bringing us to a draw.

**h) 7...c5 8.dxc5 d4 9. ♗c2**

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♗c2 0-0 5. a3  
♙xc3+ 6. ♗xc3 d5 7. ♙g5 c5 8. dxc5 d4 9. ♗c2

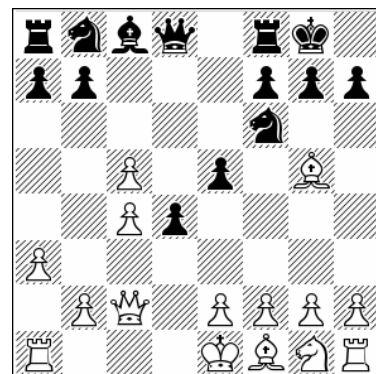


Position after: 9. ♗c2

9...e5

That appears to be the most logical, except that it is perhaps even better to start with 9...h6. In most of these lines that proves to be a useful idea.

9...h6 10. ♙h4 [10. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 11. ♘f3 e5 12. e4 a5 13. b3 ♘a6 Black is already much better, 1-0 (50) Shaw, P (2164) – Lyell, M (2202) London 2010] 10...e5 Basically this is a refined version. Sooner or later Black usually does play ...h6.



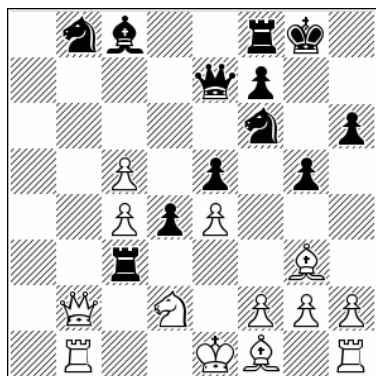
Position after: 9...e5

10.e3

Basically it's dangerous for White to stay passive and block the position with e4. It's much more in the spirit of the line to open up the play with e3 at some point.

**A)** 10. e4 h6! 11. ♙h4 ♘bd7 12. b4 a5 13. ♖b1 ♖e8 14. ♙d3 ♘f8 15. ♘e2 g5 16. ♙g3 ♘g6 We have compensation similar to what we have seen in another gambit line. Black ignores simply the queenside and gets firm control over play on the kingside.

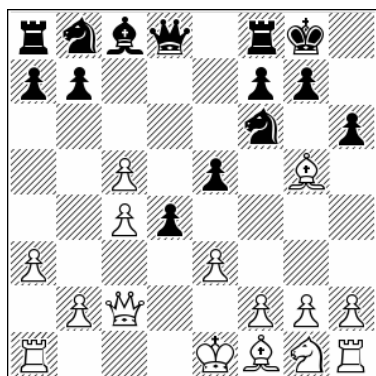
B) 10.♘f3 h6 11.♙h4 ♚e7 12.b4 a5 13.♖b1 axb4  
 14.axb4 ♜a3 15.♚b2 ♞c3 16.♘d2 g5 17.♙g3 b6  
 18.e4 bxc5 19.bxc5



Position after: 19.bxc5

19...♘a6! [19...♘c6 20.♙e2 ♚xc5 Black is still better right now. 21.♚b5 ♚d6 22.0-0 ♞c2 23.♞fd1 ♙e6 24.♙d3 ♞c3 25.♘f3 ♘d7 26.♙f1 f6 27.♚b2 ½-½ (27) Volkov, S (2575) – Satyapragyan, S (2435) Livigno 2012.] 20.c6 ♘c5 This looks tremendous for Black.

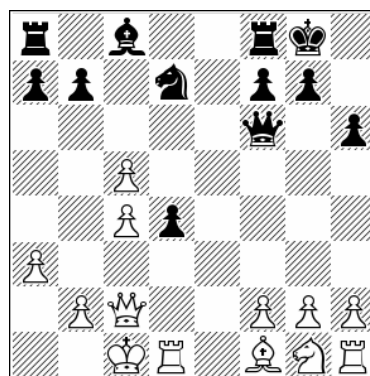
10...h6



Position after: 10...h6

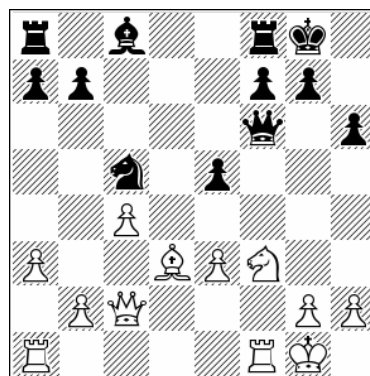
11.♙h4

11.♙xf6 ♚xf6 12.♙d3 [12.exd4 exd4 13.0-0-0 ♘d7!



Position after: 13...♘d7!

14.♘f3 ♘xc5 15.♞xd4 ♙f5 16.♞f4 ♙xc2 17.♞xf6 ♙e4 Black is almost winning already] 12...dxe3 13.fxe3 ♘d7 14.♘f3 ♘xc5 15.0-0



Position after: 15.0-0

15...♚e7! [15...♙d7 16.♙h7+ ♔h8 17.b4 this gave White the momentum to get a playable position, 1-0 (37) Volkov, S (2593) – Arvola, B (2355) Fagernes 2013] 16.♙h7+ ♔h8 17.b4 f5! This time it's fine for Black.

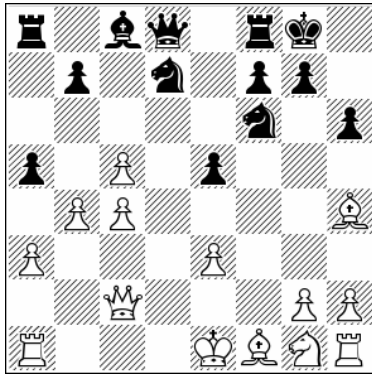
11...dxe3

This is one of the main points behind ...h6. Black is weakening the white pawn structure.

12.fxe3 ♘bd7 13.b4

13.♞d1 ♚a5+ 14.♚d2 ♚xd2+ 15.♞d2 ♘e4 16.♞d5 f6 17.b4 a5 This is strong for Black.

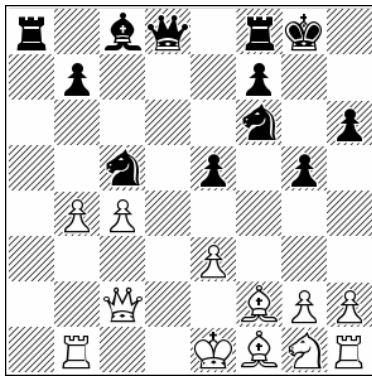
13...a5



Position after: 13...a5

14.♖d1

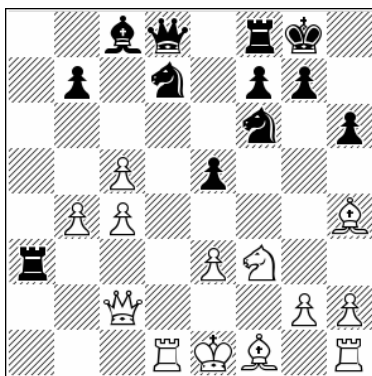
14.♖b1 axb4 15.axb4 g5 16.♙f2 ♘xc5!



Position after: 16...♘xc5!

17.bxc5 ♖a5+ 18.♙d2 ♖xd2+ 19.♙xd2 ♙f5  
 20.♖c1 ♘e4+ 21.♙e1 ♖a2 22.♙g3 ♖fa8 23.♙e2  
 f6 24.♙f1 ♖a1 25.♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 26.♙e1 g4! What  
 a fabulous line! White is completely paralyzed.

14...axb4 15.axb4 ♖a3 16.♘f3



Position after: 16.♘f3

16...♙c7!

Now what?

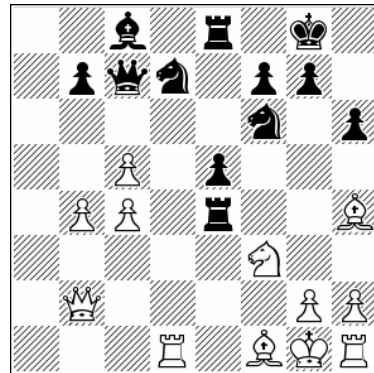
16...e4 17.♘d4 g5 18.♙c1 ♖a6 19.♙g3 Black has  
 just hit a wall and White is winning, 1-0 (39)  
 Lobersli, H (2034) – McPhillips, J (2191)  
 Helsingor 2015.

17.♙b2

A) 17.♖d3 ♖a1+ 18.♖d1 Black has at least a draw.

B) 17.♙e2 ♘g4! 18.♙b2 ♖xe3 19.0-0 e4 20.♙g3  
 exf3! 21.♙xc7 fxe2 Black is better.

17...♖xe3+ 18.♙f2 ♖e4 19.♙g1 ♖e8



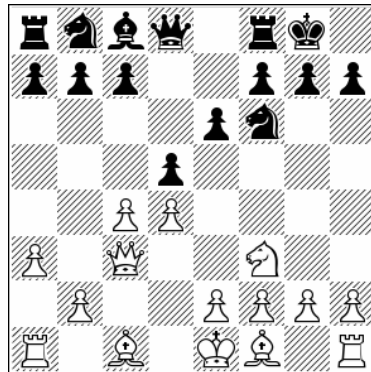
Position after: 19...♖e8

White's artificial chess is not really paying off  
 here and Black is already better.

# Chapter 16

## 5.a3 - With 6...d5 7.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♕b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.a3 ♕xc3+ 6.♗xc3 d5 7.♘f3



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 16 – 5.a3 – With 6...d5 7.♘f3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♕b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.a3 ♕xc3+ 6.♗xc3 d5 7.♘f3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 b6 9.♕g5

a) 9...♕b7 10.e3

b) 9...♕b7 10.♖d1

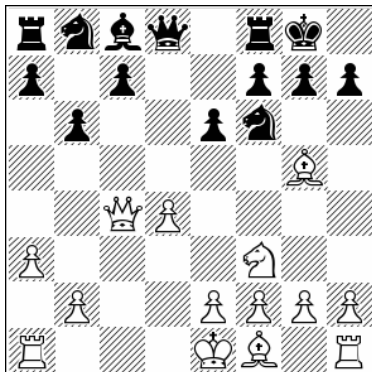
c) 9...♕a6 10.♗a4 ♗d7

d) 9...♕a6 10.♗a4 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♖c1 h6

e) 9...♕a6 10.♗a4 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♖c1 ♗b6

## a) 9...♟b7 10.e3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♟b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3  
 ♟xc3+ 6.♚xc3 d5 7.♘f3 dxc4 8.♚xc4 b6 9.♟g5



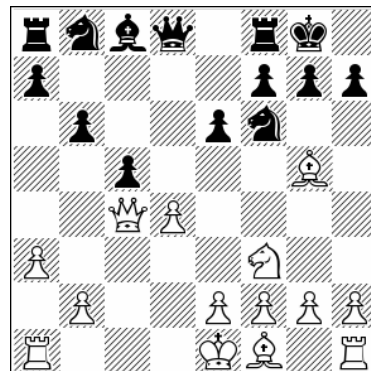
Position after: 9.♟g5

This position has been considered as a main line for a while, though now it seems that Black has found antidotes. Still the positions are very important and perhaps there are still some places to look for improvements. Now, as we can see, the knight is on f3 and that makes these positions rather different from the tactical point of view when compared with, for example, the 7.♟g5 line.

### 9...♟b7

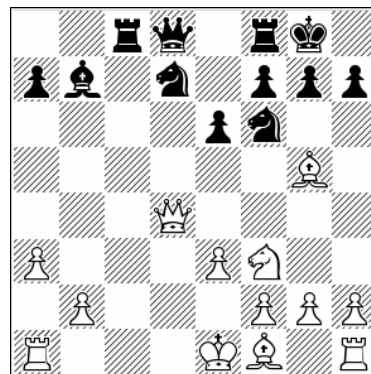
This is another setup for Black, who is ready for standard development and only later going ...c5. It's more solid than 9...♟a6, but on the other hand the line that starts with 9...♟a6 helps Black to generate a dry, equal endgame, which is not the case here.

9...c5



Position after: 9...c5

This is gaining popularity. It has been known in engine games but I didn't see any human games with it until Grishuk played it in 2022. Also I have to say that if this proves as good as it seems in the beginning, I guess this move order with 7.♘f3 can't promise anything for White. 10.dxc5 bxc5 11.♚xc5 ♘bd7 12.♚d4 ♟b7 13.e3 ♜c8

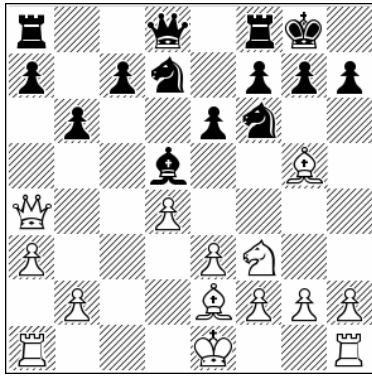


Position after: 13...♜c8

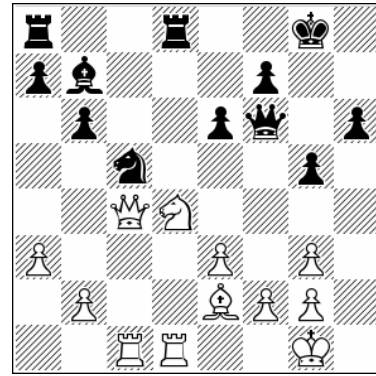
14.♟xf6 [14.♟e2 ♟xf3 15.♟xf6 ♘xf6 16.♚xd8 ♜fxd8 17.♟xf3 ♜c2 18.b4 ♜dd2 19.0-0 ♜a2 20.♜xa2 ♜xa2 21.h3 ♜xa3 this endgame is equal, ½-½ (41) Stockfish 8 64 POPC – Dikuk, B Internet (blitz) 2016] 14...♘xf6 15.♚xd8 ♜fxd8 16.b3 ♜c2 17.♟b5 g6 18.0-0 ♟xf3 19.gxf3 ♜d5 20.♟c4 ♜g5+ 21.♚h1 a5 22.♜ac1 ♜a2 23.a4 ♜f5 24.f4 ♚g7 Black is out of any danger. White can't improve his position with such a bishop.

### 10.e3!?





Position after: 12. ♖a4



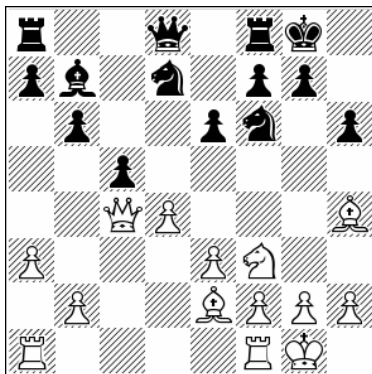
Position after: 19... ♖f6

12...h6 [12...c5 13.0-0 a6 14. ♘xf6 ♗xf6 15.dxc5 bxc5 (it's the same position as in Dreev – Vidit below), ½-½ (15) Hambleton, A (2456) – Roiz, M (2585) Hooegeveen 2014] 13. ♘h4 c5 14.0-0 a6 15. ♘xf6 ♗xf6 16.dxc5 bxc5 17. ♖fc1 ♗b6 18.b4 ♖fc8 This is equal play, 0-1 (45) Dreev, A (2623) – Vidit, S (2727) chess.com INT 2022.

These positions are really tricky. If White manages to place his bishop on f4 and follow up with b4 he will reach an advantage. 20. ♗c3 ♖ac8 21. ♗e1 a5 22.b4 axb4 23.axb4 ♗e4 24. ♘f3 ♘d5 With approximate equality, ½-½ (30) Mamedyarov, S (2767) – Aronian, L (2758) Batumi 2019.

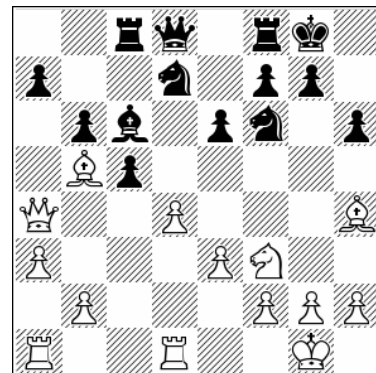
#### 12.0-0 h6 13. ♘h4

#### 14. ♖fd1 ♗e7



Position after: 13. ♘h4

14... ♘d5 15. ♗a4 ♘c6 16. ♘b5!



Position after: 16. ♘b5!

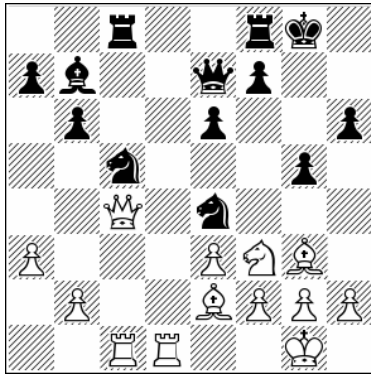
#### 13... ♖c8

A) 13... ♘d5 14. ♗c2 Here 14. ♗a4 transposes to the note on 11... ♘d5. 14... ♗c8 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 16. ♘xf6 gxf6 17. ♗c3 ♗b3 18. ♗xf6 ♗xa1 There's no more than a draw here for White, 0-1 (55) Dreev, A (2623) – Robson, R (2676) chess.com INT 2022.

16... ♘b5 17. ♗xb5 cxd4 18. ♗xd4 ♗c7 19.f3! ♗b7 20.e4 a6 21. ♗e2 This is alright for White.

B) 13...g5 14. ♘g3 ♗e4 15. ♖fd1 ♗xg3 16.hxg3 ♗e7 17. ♖ac1 ♖fd8 18.dxc5 ♗xc5 19. ♗d4 ♗f6

#### 15. ♖ac1 g5 16. ♘g3 ♗e4 17.dxc5 ♗dxc5

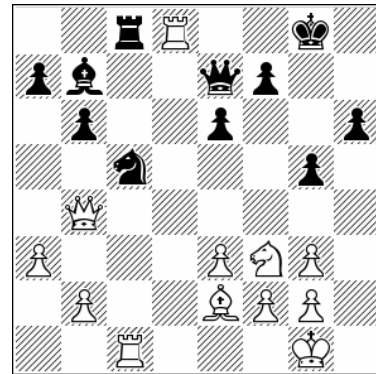


Position after: 17...dxc5

### 18. ♖b4

18. ♖a2 ♜xg3! [18... ♖fd8 is unclear, 1-0 (40) Sahil, T (2201) – Moksh, A (2396) chess.com INT 2022] 19. hxg3 ♖f6 As in the Gelfand game below, but the white queen is misplaced on a2.

### 18... ♜xg3 19. hxg3 ♖fd8 20. ♖xd8+



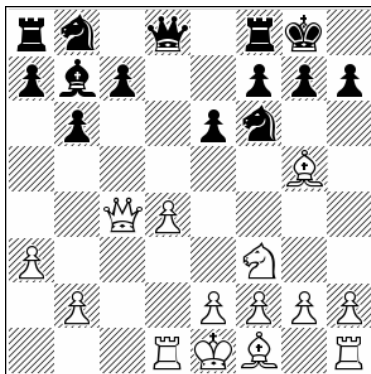
Position after: 20. ♖xd8+

### 20... ♖xd8

Black is OK here, ½-½ (58) Parligras, M (2575) – Gelfand, B (2663) Warsaw 2021.

## b) 9... ♗b7 10. ♖d1

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♜c3 ♗b4 4. ♖c2 0-0 5. a3 ♗xc3+ 6. ♖xc3 d5 7. ♜f3 dxc4 8. ♖xc4 b6 9. ♗g5 ♗b7!? 10. ♖d1!?

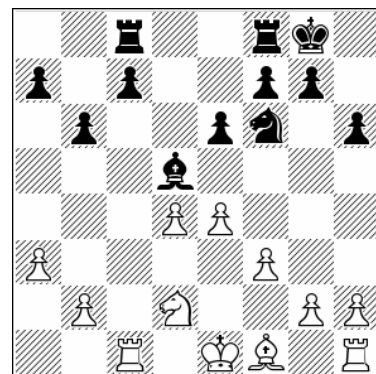


Position after: 10. ♖d1!?

White tries a rook move.

### 10... ♜bd7

A) 10... ♖d5 11. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 12. ♜d2 ♜bd7 13. f3 h6 14. ♗xf6 ♜xf6 15. ♖c1 ♖ac8 16. e4



Position after: 16. e4

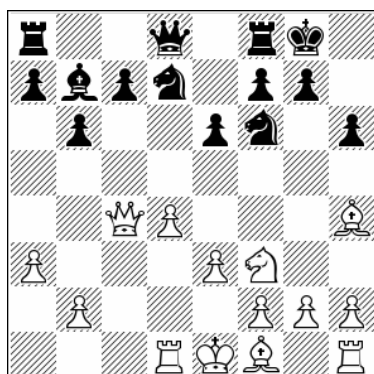
16... ♗b7 17. ♜f2 ♖fd8 18. ♜e3 ♜d7 19. b4 White has an edge, 1-0 (82) Korley, K (2447) – Nakar, E (2433) Charlotte 2019.

B) 10... ♗d5 11. ♖a4!? ♜bd7 12. ♜e5 h6 13. ♗h4 ♖c8 14. f3 ♜xe5 15. dxe5 ♜d7 16. e4 ♜c5 17. ♖d4 White is better in this type of position, 1-0 (39) Michiels, B (2546) – Levin, F (2513) Belgium 2014.

### 11. ♜e5!?

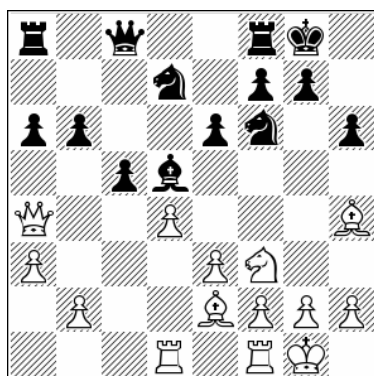
This is a main point of going 10. ♖d1. It's a more or less forced line which will probably lead to a draw, as has happened many times.

11.e3 h6 It's good for Black to make this move before deciding what to do. 12.♔h4



Position after: 12.♔h4

12...♖c8 Black must get active with ...c5. [12...♖c8 13.♘e5! g5 14.♙g3 c5 15.♘xd7 ♖xd7 16.dxc5 ♖c6 17.♙e5 ♘d7 18.♙c3 This maneuver is good for White. 18...♘xc5 19.f3 White has some chances to obtain an advantage, 1-0 (23) Korobov, A (2684) – Sargissian, G (2664) Terme Catez 2021.] 13.♙e2 c5 14.0-0 ♙d5 15.♖a4 a6

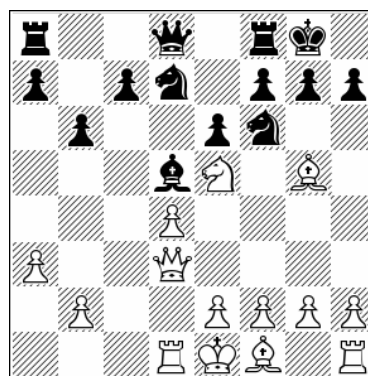


Position after: 15...a6

16.♖c1 [16.dxc5 bxc5 Black is OK with this] 16...♖b7 17.♙xf6 ♘xf6 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.♖xc5 ♖xb2 Black is fine, ½-½ (82) Gordievsky, D (2559) – Le Quang Liem (2709) lichess.org INT 2020.

### 11...h6

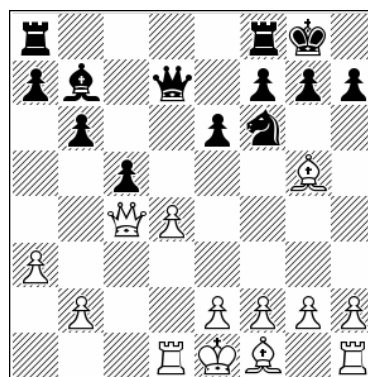
A) 11...♙d5 12.♖d3!?N



Position after: 12.♖d3!?N

12...♖e8 13.f3 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘d7 15.e4 ♙c6 16.♖c3 White has more space and the two bishops.

B) 11...c5 12.♘xd7 ♖xd7



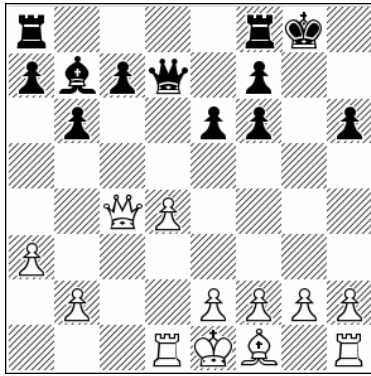
Position after: 12...♖xd7

B1) 13.dxc5!? ♖c7 14.f3 It's worth mentioning that because ...h6 ♔h4 has not been played, here the bishop can retreat to d2. 14...♖e5 15.♙d2 ♖ac8 16.♙c3 ♖g5 17.e4 ♖xc5 18.♖d4 ♖cc8 19.♖d2 ♖g6 20.♙b5 White has an edge thanks to his bishop pair.

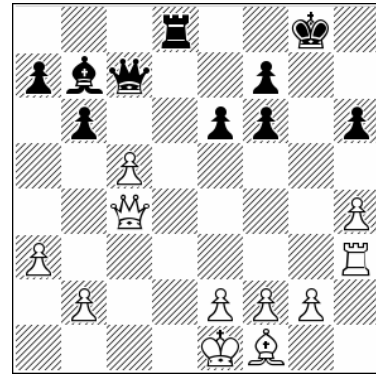
B2) 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.dxc5 ♖c7 15.h4 ♖fd8 16.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♖h3 ♖d5 18.♖g3+ ♔f8 19.♖c3 ♖xc5 20.♖b4 ♔g7 Exactly the same as a line with ...h6 implemented, ½-½ (31) Atalik, S (2469) – Gharibyan, M (2455) Novi Sad 2021.

### 12.♔h4

12.♘xd7 ♖xd7 13.♙xf6 gxf6



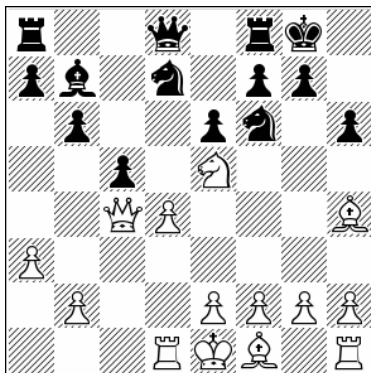
Position after: 13...gxf6



Position after: 18...Bh3

14.e3!? [14.d5 ♗xd5 15.♖f4 ♘h7 16.♖xf6 ♗d8 17.♖xd8 ♖fxd8 18.e3 ♖d6 Black is fine in this endgame, 1-0 (52) Sethuraman, S (2617) – Gelfand, B (2737) Douglas 2017] 14...f5 15.♗e2 ♖ac8 16.b4 ♘h7 17.0-0 This is a solid positional plan. 17...♖g8 18.g3 ♗e7 19.♖c1 White doesn't allow ...c5. It's a sharp position with mutual chances, 1-0 (31) Xiong, J (2709) – Gelfand, B (2676) lichess.org INT 2021.

12...c5



Position after: 12...c5

13.♗xd7

13.f3 cxd4 14.♖xd4 ♗xe5 15.♖xe5 ♗e7 16.e4 ♖fd8 17.♗e2 ♖xd1+ 18.♗xd1 ♗a6 Black is fine, ½-½ (24) Deac, B (2618) – Gelfand, B (2684) Bucharest 2019.

13...♖xd7 14.dxc5 ♖c7 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.h4 ♖fd8 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♖h3

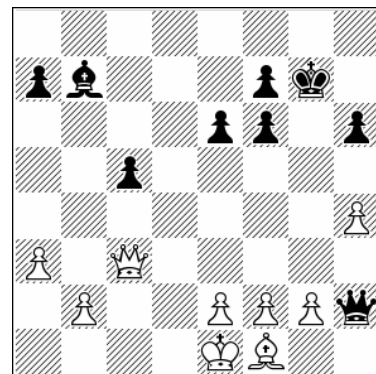
18...♖d5

18...♗d5 19.♖g4+ ♘f8 20.♖c3 bxc5 21.♖h5 ♘e7 22.♖xh6 ♖e5 23.g3 c4 White is a pawn up but things are not so simple, as Black has a firm grip on the center and the bishop on f1 is out of play.

19.♖g3+ ♘f8 20.♖c3 ♖xc5 21.♖b4

White's idea is to play a pawn or queen endgame, as in the Atalik game above, but that's not enough.

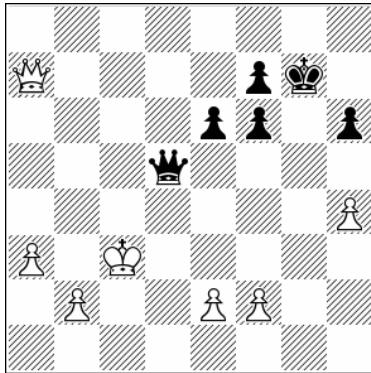
21...♘g7 22.♖xc5 bxc5 23.♖c3 ♖h2!



Position after: 23...♖h2!

Black forces matters.

24.♖xc5 ♗xg2 25.♗xg2 ♖xg2 26.♖xa7 ♖h1+ 27.♘d2 ♖d5+ 28.♘c3



Position after: 28.♖c3

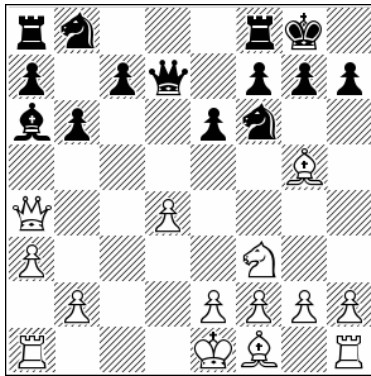
28...♙c6+

Perpetual, ½-½ (31) Yilmaz, M (2595) – Berkes, F (2667) Douglas 2019.

**c) 9...♙a6 10.♙a4 ♖d7**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♙xc3 d5 7.♘f3 dxc4 8.♙xc4 b6 9.♙g5 ♙a6 10.♙a4 ♖d7

The easiest, I think. 14.♖c1 ♖ac8 15.♘e5 ♖fd8 16.f3 c5 17.dxc5 ♘d7 18.♘xd7 ♖xd7 19.e4 ♖f8 20.♙b5 ♖dc7 The game is equal.



Position after: 10...♙d7

11...c5

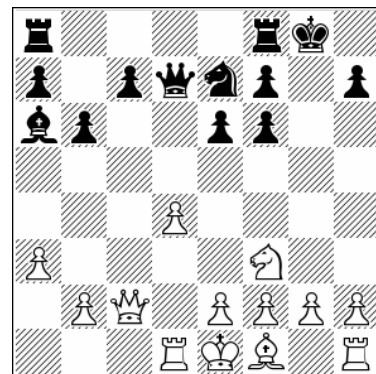
After Black pushed the white queen to the c-file, this move is more effective because a black rook will come to c8.

A) 11...♘c6 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.♖d1 ♘e7

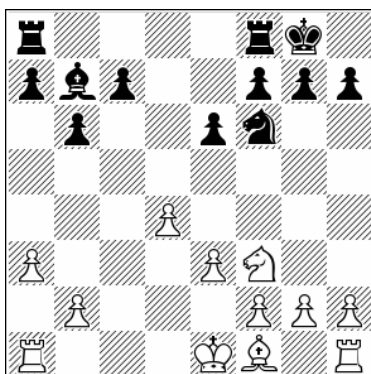
This is another important plan here for Black.

11.♙c2

11.♙xd7 ♘bxd7 12.♙xf6 ♘xf6 13.e3 White can choose to play like this because his rook can come to c1 quickly. 13...♙b7!



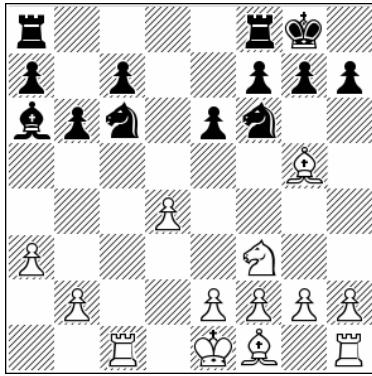
Position after: 13...♘e7



Position after: 13...♙b7!

14.g3!? In my opinion this is very solid. [14.e4 ♙xf1 15.♖xf1 this is less clear, ½-½ (122) Kozak, A (2512) – Tarlev, K (2559) Mamaia 2019] 14...♖ac8 15.♙g2 ♙b5 16.♖d2 c5 17.dxc5 ♖xc5 18.♙d1 ♖c7 19.0-0 ♖fc8 20.♘d4 White has a typical small initiative.

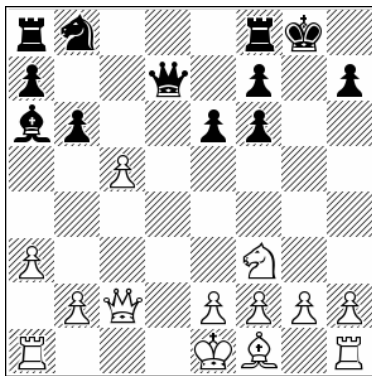
B) 11...♙c6 12.♙xc6 ♘xc6 13.♖c1!



Position after: 13. Rxc1!

Now we see that the rook can come early to c1, which makes this type of play quite different from the 7. g5 line. 13... b7 14. xf6 gxf6 15. e3 Bxc8 16. b5 b8 17. e2 c6 18. d3 a5 19. d2! d7 20. d4 White has an edge here.

**12. xf6 gxf6 13. dxc5**

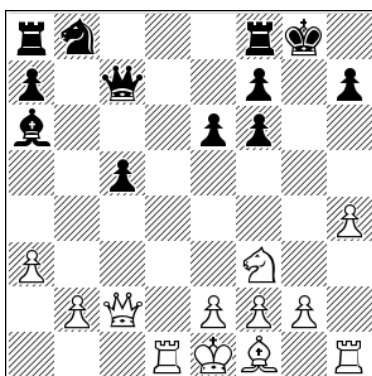


Position after: 13. dxc5

**13... Bc8**

Not the only option, but it's the main one.

**A) 13... bxc5 14. Rd1 Qc7 15. h4!?**



Position after: 15. h4!?

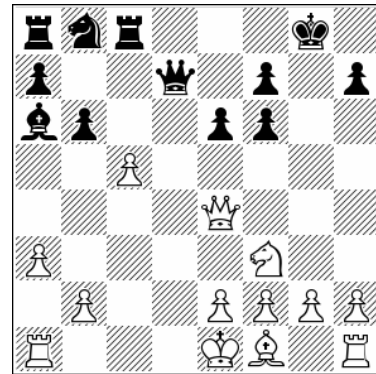
15... d6 16. Rh3 Bfd8 17. Rxd8+ Qxd8 18. g3+ h8 19. Qc1 White has the initiative.

**B) 13... Qc6 14. g3 d7 15. b4 bxc5 16. g2 Qb5 17. Qe4 Bxc8 18. Qg4+ h8 19. 0-0 Qxe2 20. Qh4** White retains the initiative here too.

**14. Rd1**

Again White has another possible way.

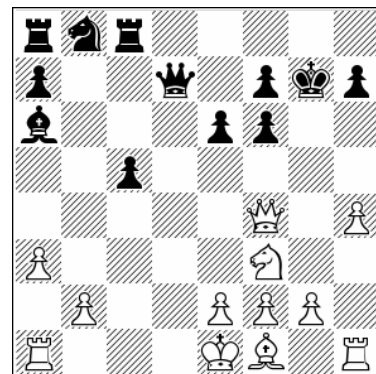
**14. Qe4**



Position after: 14. Qe4

**A) 14... b7 15. Qg4+ h8 16. Qh4 Qe7 17. e3 dxc6 18. d3 f5 19. Qxe7 dxe7 20. cxb6** White wins a pawn for no compensation, 1-0 (51) Sahil, T (2165) – Stocko, J (2340) Zadar 2016.

**B) 14... bxc5 15. Qf4 Qg7 16. h4!?**

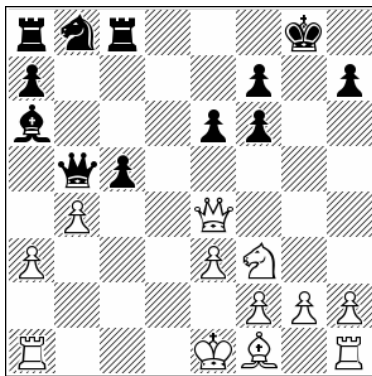


Position after: 16. h4!?

16... Qc7 17. Qxc7 Bxc7 18. Rh3 d7 19. d2 c4 20. Bc3 Bb8 21. Bc2 Bcb7 22. Bb1 c3 23. Bxc3 Bxb2 24. Bxb2 Bxb2 25. Bc7 Bb7

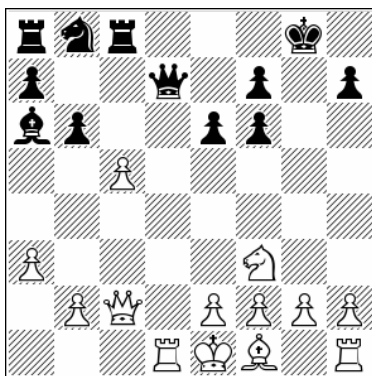
Another equal game.

C) 14...♖b5 15.b4 bxc5 16.e3



Position after: 16.e3

16...♖b7 [16...♖b6 17.♗xa6! ♖xa6 18.♖xa8 ♗c6 19.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 20.0-0 cxb4 21.axb4 ♖b7 22.♖fd1 the rooks are good here against the queen] 17.♖g4+ [17.♖xb7 ♗xb7 this is equal, ½-½ (46) Rychagov, A (2535) – Lintchevski, D (2546) Kazan 2014] 17...♗f8 18.b5 ♗xb5 19.♖b1 a6 20.a4 f5 21.♖h4 ♖e4 22.♖xe4 fxe4 23.axb5 exf3 24.b6 ♖d8 25.gxf3 ♗c6 Black is OK here.



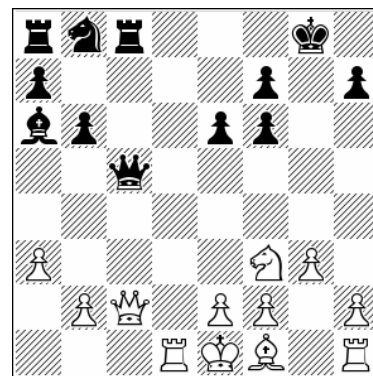
Position after: 14.♖d1

14...♖e7

In my opinion this is the safest choice for Black.

**A)** 14...♖xc5 15.♖e4 ♖d5 16.♖xd5 exd5 17.♖f4 ♖c8 18.♗d4 ♖c4 19.♖d2 ♖a2 20.f3 ♗d7 21.♗f2 ♗c5 22.♗f5 ♗e6 23.e3 White is clearly better, ½-½ (44) Akobian, V (2625) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2701) Antalya 2013.

**B)** 14...♖c6 15.g3 The best way to go, in my opinion. 15...♖xc5



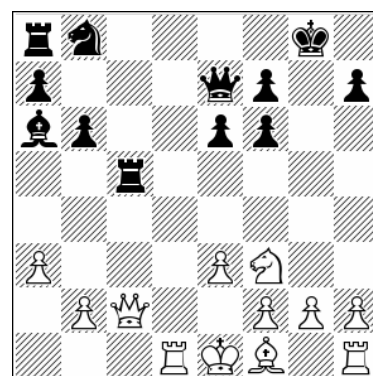
Position after: 15...♖xc5

16.♖xc5! [16.♖e4 ♗c6 17.♗g2 ♖d8 18.0-0 ♖c4 19.♖xc4 ♗xc4 Black is OK here, 0-1 (62) Ivanchuk, V (2731) – Leko, P (2730) Beijing 2013] 16...♖xc5 17.♗g2! ♗b7 18.0-0 ♗a6 19.♗d4 ♗xg2 20.♗xg2 f5 21.b4 ♖c4 22.e3 ♗c7 23.♖c1 ♖xc1 24.♖xc1 ♗d5 25.♗f3 ♗f8 26.h3 White has some edge here and this is another typical example of what White is looking to achieve.

15.♖e4!?

Perhaps the best attempt among some slightly dry options.

**A)** 15.e3 ♖xc5

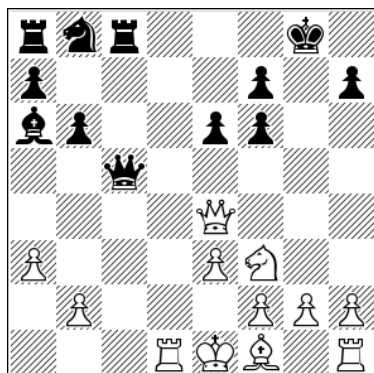


Position after: 15...♖xc5

Best. 16.♖a4 [16.♖e4 ♗b7 17.♖a4 f5 18.♗d3 ♖d5 19.0-0 ½-½ (19) Goganov, A (2586) – Andreikin, D (2706) Tbilisi 2017] 16...♗xf1 17.♗xf1 ♗c6 18.♗e2 a5 19.♖he1 ♖d8 20.♗f1 It's around equal; there's no harmony in White's position, ½-½ (51) Stockfish – Stockfish 7 64 POPC Internet (blitz) 2016.

B) 15.e4 ♖xf1 16.♔xf1 ♚xc5 17.♗xc5 bxc5  
 18.♕e2 ♜c6 19.♞d2 e5 20.♞c1 ♞d4+ 21.♞xd4  
 cxd4 Black has equalized easily, ½-½ (30)  
 Lenderman, A (2565) – Leko, P (2679) Douglas  
 2017.

15...♗xc5 16.e3

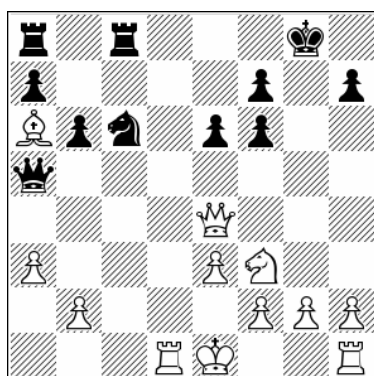


Position after: 16.e3

16...♞c6

16...♖xf1 17.♔xf1 ♚b5+ 18.♔g1 ♞c6 19.h4 ♞d8  
 20.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 21.♞h3 White can hope to make  
 some progress from this position.

17.♖xa6 ♚a5+

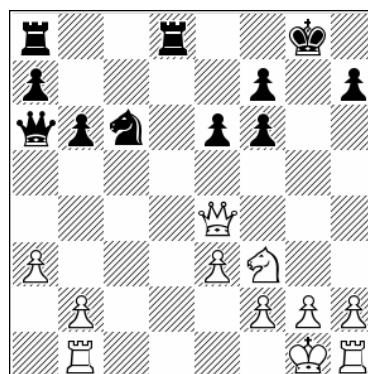


Position after: 17...♚a5+

18.♔f1!

18.b4 ♗xa6 Black is OK, ½-½ (26) Balinski, D  
 (2193) – Gierulski, K (2270) Sypniewo 2021.

18...♗xa6+ 19.♔g1 ♞d8 20.♞b1

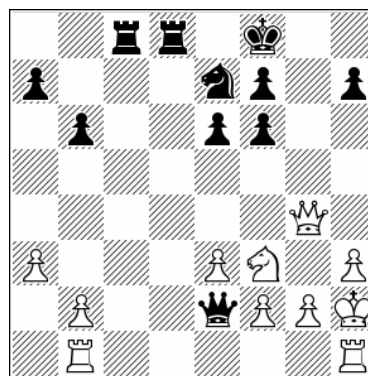


Position after: 20.♞b1

20...♞e7

20...♗d3 21.♗xd3 ♞xd3 22.♔f1 ♞c8 23.♔e2 ♞d7  
 24.g4 Again we have a similar endgame with  
 knights on the board, roughly equal.

21.♗g4+ ♔f8 22.h3 ♞ac8 23.♔h2 ♗e2



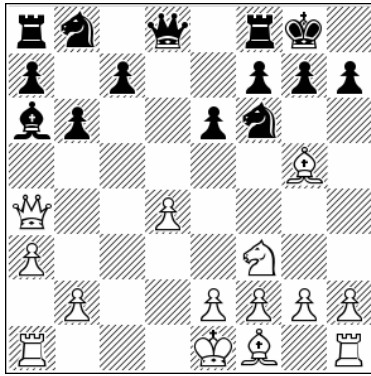
Position after: 23...♗e2

24.♞hf1

Black's weak structure on the kingside might  
 give White some chances.

**d) 9...♖a6 10.♗a4 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♞c1 h6**

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♖b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.a3  
 ♖xc3+ 6.♗xc3 d5 7.♞f3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 b6 9.♖g5  
 ♖a6 10.♗a4



Position after: 10. ♖a4

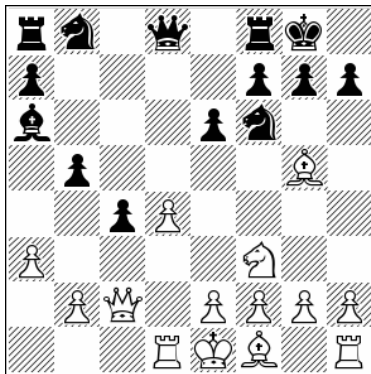
Here we have a knight on f3 instead of a rook on d1 or c1, which is a huge difference. Now some plans simply give White quick development, while Black can aim to get in a quick ...c5.

### 10...c5

This is one of two main ideas for Black, the other being 10... ♖d7 which we have already checked in the previous subchapter

### 11.dxc5

11. ♖d1 b5! 12. ♖c2 c4 That is good strategy.

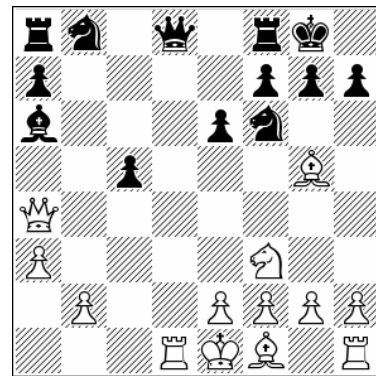


Position after: 12...c4

13.g3 [13. ♟xf6 ♖xf6 14.g3 ♟b7 15. ♟g2 ♞c6 16.0-0 ♞a5 17.e4 ♞ad8 18. ♞fe1 ♞b3 19. ♖c3 a6 the position is balanced] 13... ♞bd7 14. ♟g2 ♟b7 15.0-0 h6 16. ♟f4 ♟e4 17. ♖c1 ♞c8 Black has the initiative, 0-1 (30) Lorscheid, G (2238) – Lalith, B (2586) Douglas 2016.

### 11...bxc5 12. ♖c1

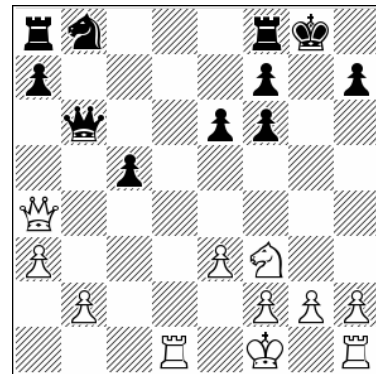
12. ♖d1!? An important move order.



Position after: 12. ♖d1!?

**A)** 12... ♖e7 13.g3! ♟b7 14. ♟g2 ♞bd7 15.0-0 h6 16. ♟xf6 ♞xf6 17. ♖d2 ♟d5 18. ♞e5 White has easier play, 0-1 (36) Durakovic, A (2298) – Zelic, R (2486) Schwarzach 2017.

**B)** 12... ♖b6 13. ♟xf6 gxf6 14.e3!? Here we have the same line as in the Anand – Karjakin game mentioned below, except that the pawn is still on h7. [14. ♖d2 ♞c6 15. ♖g4+ ♞h8 16. ♖h4 ♞g7 17. ♖g4+ ♞h8 18. ♖h4 ♞g7 19. ♖g4+ ½-½ (19) Carlsen, M (2772) – Kramnik, V (2759) Dortmund 2009] 14... ♟xf1 15. ♞xf1

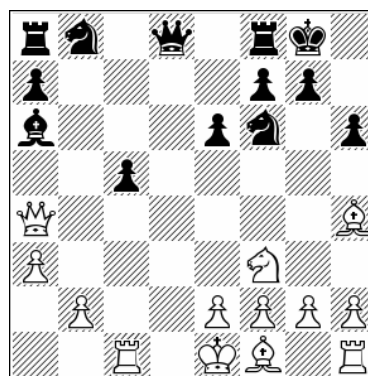


Position after: 15. ♞xf1

It seems that pawn-grabbing doesn't work here.

**B1)** 15... ♖xb2 16.h4 ♞c8 [16... ♖b6 17. ♖g4+ ♞h8 18. ♖f4 e5 19. ♖f5 ♞a6 20.g4 White has the initiative] 17. ♖h3 c4 18. ♖g3+ ♞f8 19. ♞d2 ♖b6 20. ♞xc4 ♖a6 21. ♖b4+ 1-0 (21) Xiong, J (2709) – Duda, J (2757) chess.com INT 2020

**B2)** 15...♖c6 16.♞b1!?N It is essential to compare this with the Anand – Karjakin game given in the ...h6 ♞d1 line. 16...♞fd8 17.♔e2 Now it seems that, as is often the case, White can achieve some advantage. 17...♘e5 [17...♞ac8 18.♞hc1 ♘a5 19.b3 ♔g7 20.h3 ♔g8 21.♔f1 the king is going to a safe refuge and White secures long-term pressure; 17...♞ab8 18.♞hc1 ♘a5 19.b4 White has a big advantage] 18.♘e5 fxe5 19.♞hc1 Even without the knights White has a small but solid initiative.



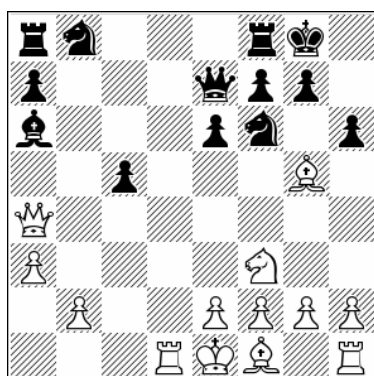
Position after: 13.♙h4

### 12...h6

An interesting intermediate move that is connected with a super-modernized idea here. In the next subchapter we will deal with some ideas that are a bit older but still also important, so that the differences can be presented in a clear way.

### 13.♙h4

If White changes his mind and want to shift into a 12.♞d1 line, Black does not need to oblige. 13.♞d1!? ♞e7!



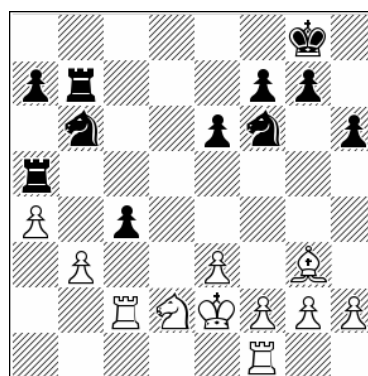
Position after: 13...♞e7!

This must be the move now. 14.h4 c4 15.♙d2 ♞b7 16.♙b4 ♞e8 17.g4 ♘c6 18.g5 ♘e4 19.♙g2 ♞ad8 Black has very good play.

### 13...♞b6

The main move in recent years.

**A)** 13...♞d7 14.♞xd7 ♘bxd7 15.e3 ♙xf1 16.♞xf1 ♞fb8 17.♞c2 ♞b5 18.♘d2 ♞ab8 19.b3 ♞a5 20.a4 ♘b6 21.♙g3 ♞b7 22.♔e2 c4



Position after: 22...c4

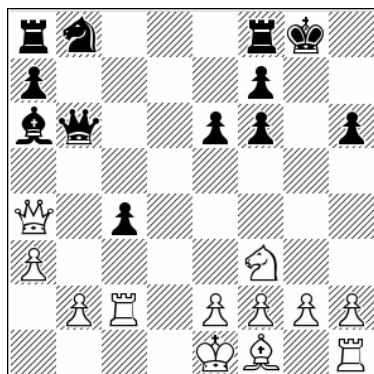
23.♞d1!?N This is not easy to meet. [23.♞fc1 ♘h5 24.bxc4 ♘g3+ 25.hxg3 ♞xa4 26.♘f3 ♞c7 Black can hold, ½ (42)-½ (42) Dreev, A (2710) – Fedorchuk, S (2632) Melilla 2011] 23...cxb3 24.♘b3 ♞d5 25.♘c5 ♞e7 26.a5 ♞xd1 27.♔xd1 ♘bd5 28.e4 ♘b4 29.♞c4 ♘c6 30.♘b3 ♞d7+ 31.♔c2 ♘e7 32.f3 White has an edge. Dreev didn't extract the maximum from the position.

**B)** 13...♞e7 14.e3 ♙xf1 15.♞xf1 ♘bd7 16.♔e2 ♞ab8 17.♞c2 ♞b7 18.♘d2 ♞fb8 This is fine for Black, ½-½ (30) Lou, V (2114) – Cvitan, O (2470) Switzerland 2021.

### 14.♙xf6

It is wrong to wait with the capture on f6 because then Black can connect all the dots.  
 14.♖c2 ♕b5! 15.♗f4 ♜bd7 Black is better.

**14...gxf6 15.♖c2 c4!**



Position after: 15...c4!

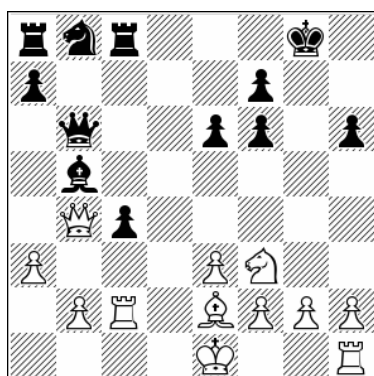
That's a big idea. It seems that all White's hopes of playing for an advantage end here.

**16.e3 ♕b5 17.♗b4 ♜c8**

Best.

17...♞a6 18.♗c3 ♜fc8 19.♗xf6 ♞c5 20.♗xh6  
 Winning for White, 1-0 (28) Parligras, M (2614)  
 – Huschenbeth, N (2509) Plovdiv 2012.

**18.♕e2**



Position after: 18.♕e2

**18...♞a6!**

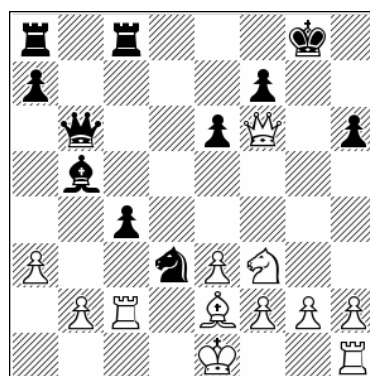
18...♞d7 19.0-0 ♜ab8 20.♜fc1 This is fine for  
 White, ½-½ (33) So, W (2810) – Anand, V (2783)  
 Saint Louis 2017.

**19.♗c3**

19.♗d2 ♕a4 20.♖c3 ♜ab8 21.0-0 ♗xb2 22.♜xc4  
 ♜xc4 23.♕xc4 ♗xd2 24.♞xd2 ♞c5 It's an equal  
 game, ½-½ (24) Bross, H (2579) – Lafarga  
 Santorroman, D (2649) ICCF INT 2016.

**19...♕a4**

Black has another idea that also seems OK.  
 19...♞c5 20.♗xf6 ♞d3+



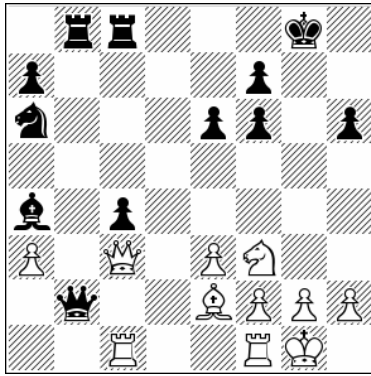
Position after: 20...♞d3+

21.♞f1 [21.♕xd3 cxd3 22.♜c3 ♜xc3 23.bxc3 d2+!  
 24.♞xd2 ♕d3 there is nothing for White here, ½-  
 ½ (34) Michiels, B (2567) – Vrolijk, L (2479)  
 Netherlands 2021] 21...♕a4 22.♖c3 e5 23.♗xb6  
 axb6 24.g4 ♞xb2 25.♞g2 ♕b3 26.♜b1 ♞a4  
 27.♜cc1 b5 Black is doing fine in this endgame.

**20.♜c1**

20.♞d2 ♞c5 21.♗xc4 ♞b3 22.♗g4+ ♞h8  
 23.♗xa4 ♞xd2 24.♞xd2 ♜c1+ 25.♕d1 ♞d8 Black  
 is better, 0-1 (32) Moksh, A (2242) – Santos Ruiz,  
 M (2543) Caleta 2019.

**20...♜ab8 21.0-0 ♗xb2**

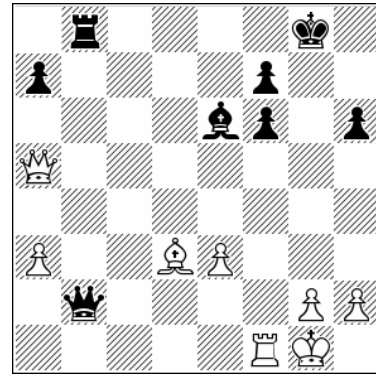


Position after: 21... ♖xb2

22. ♘d4!

22. ♖xb2 ♖xb2 23. ♙xc4 ♘c5 24. ♘d4 ♘e4 25. f3 ♘d6 26. ♙d3 ♖xc1 27. ♖xc1 ♖a2 Black is fine, ½-½ (34) Yu Yangyi (2709) – Wei Yi (2732) chess.com INT 2021.

22... ♙d7 23. ♖a5 e5 24. ♖xc4 exd4 25. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8 26. ♙xa6 dxe3 27. fxe3 ♙e6 28. ♙d3



Position after: 28. ♙d3

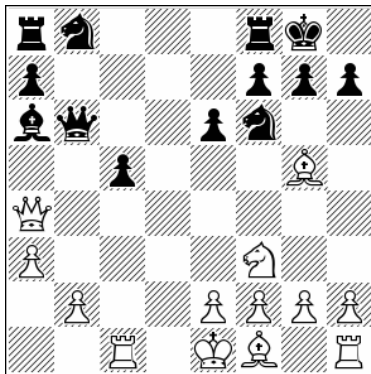
28... ♖e5

Black has secured equality.

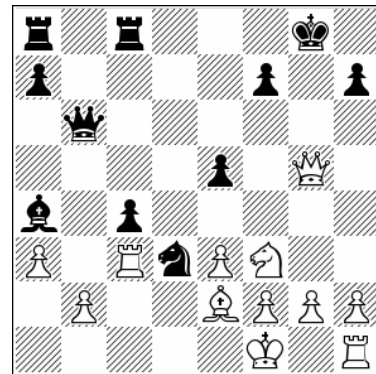
**e) 9... ♙a6 10. ♖a4 c5 11. dxc5 bxc5 12. ♖c1 ♖b6**

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♖c2 0-0 5. a3 ♙xc3+ 6. ♖xc3 d5 7. ♘f3 dxc4 8. ♖xc4 b6 9. ♙g5 ♙a6 10. ♖a4 c5 11. dxc5 bxc5 12. ♖c1 ♖b6

option of retreating to a square like d2. 15. e3 ♙b5 16. ♖b4 ♖c8 17. ♙e2 ♘a6 18. ♖c3 ♘c5 19. ♖xf6 ♘d3+ 20. ♔f1 ♙a4 21. ♖c3 e5 22. ♖g5+!



Position after: 12... ♖b6



Position after: 22. ♖g5+!

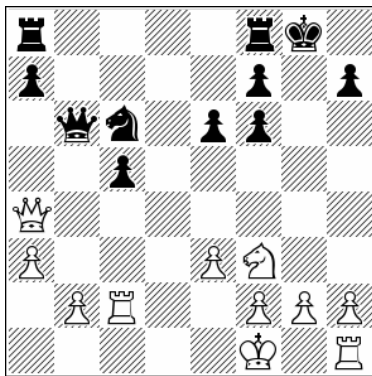
The older lines are solid, but White can keep playing for a while and hope to force matters in an endgame.

13. ♙xf6 gxf6 14. ♖c2 ♖d8

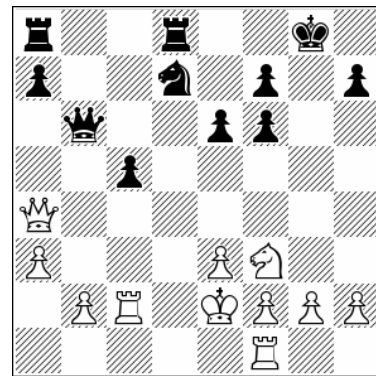
A) 14...c4 The same plan as we saw under 11...h6. Here it's similar for sure, but that pawn on h6 prevents White from using the g5-square in some tactics that may occur. Perhaps that's one reason why players go ...h6, another being that they don't want to give the bishop the

22... ♔f8 Perhaps positions like this display the difference between playing ...h6 and not playing it, so players of the black pieces concluded that ...h6 was the way to go.

B) 14... ♘c6 15. e3 ♙xf1 16. ♔xf1



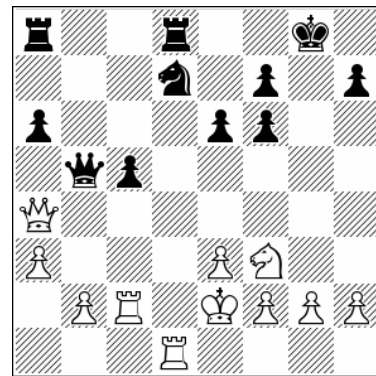
Position after: 16.♔xf1



Position after: 17.♔e2

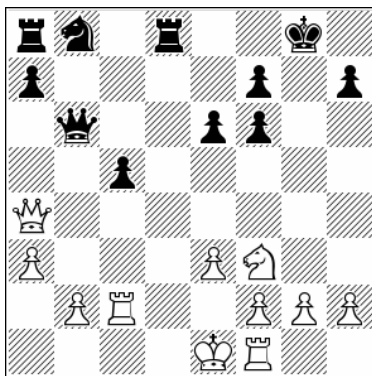
16...♖ab8 This is a slightly different approach because Black doesn't place a rook on d8, but instead goes for activity on the b-file. [16...♘e5 17.♘e5! fxe5 18.♔g1 Due to Black's weak pawns, this seems to offer White a standard advantage. Next will come h4! and the rook will activate itself (and create threats) via h3.] 17.♔e2 ♘a5 18.♘d2 ♘b3 19.♘e4 ♔g7 20.♞d1 f5 21.♘d2 ♘d2 22.♞dx2 With a standard edge for White, small but long-lasting, 1-0 (57) Georgiev, K (2627) – Riff, J (2468) Roquetas de Mar 2017.

A) 17...a6 18.♞d1 ♕b5+



Position after: 18...♕b5+

15.e3 ♕xf1 16.♞xf1

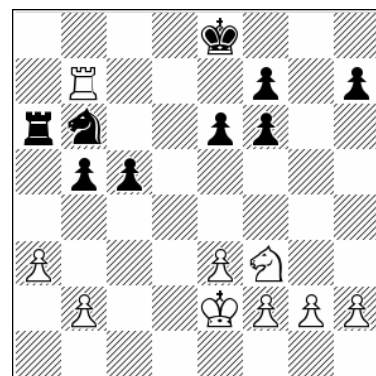


Position after: 16.♞xf1

[18...♘e5 19.♘xe5 fxe5 20.♖g4+ ♔f8 21.♖c4 ♞xd1 22.♔xd1 ♞d8+ 23.♔c1 ♞d5 24.e4 ♞d4 25.♖xc5+ ♖xc5 26.♞xc5 ♞xe4 27.♔d2 rook endgames are all drawn -- except for those who are not, 1-0 (37) Romanko, M (2349) – Stetsko, L (2184) Moscow 2013] 19.♖xb5! [19.♖c4 ♖xc4+ 20.♞xc4 ♔f8 21.♘e1 ♖ab8 22.♞d2 ♞b7 23.♘d3 White preserves some edge, ½-½ (45) Lupulescu, C (2655) – Tiviakov, S (2647) Germany 2012] 19...axb5 20.♞cd2 ♖a7 21.♞d6 ♔f8 22.♞b6 ♘xb6 23.♞xd8+ ♔e7 24.♞b8 ♖a6 25.♞b7+ ♔e8

16...♘c6

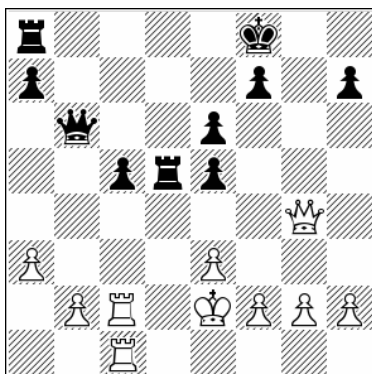
Black can take a different route with his knight, but it's not as good. 16...♘d7 17.♔e2 Now Black has lots of possibilities.



Position after: 25...♔e8

26. ♖d2! White has a big advantage.

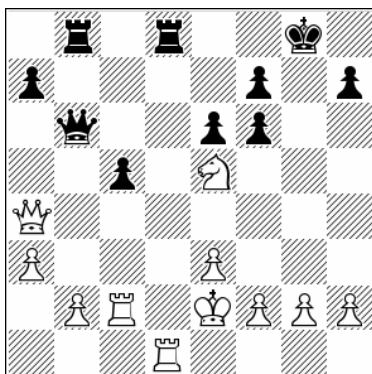
**B)** 17... ♖e5 18. ♗xe5 fxe5 19. ♖g4+ ♔f8 20. ♖fc1 ♖d5



Position after: 20... ♖d5

21. g3! [21. ♔f1 ♖ad8 22. h3 ♖d2 23. ♖c4 ♔g8 24. ♔g1 this is also safe play with chances for advantage, ½-½ (106) Ronka, E (2243) – Seppala, A (2053) Jyvaskyla 2016] 21... ♖ad8 22. ♖h4! ♖b5+ 23. ♔f3! ♖d2 24. ♔g2 White is better.

**C)** 17... ♖ab8 18. ♖d1 ♗e5 OK, this is more to the point because the rook is active on b8. [18... ♗f8 19. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20. ♖c4 ♖b8 21. ♗e1 ♗d7 22. ♗d3 this is some edge for White, ½-½ (32) Prohaszka, P (2598) – Socko, B (2584) Civitanova Marche 2016] 19. ♗xe5

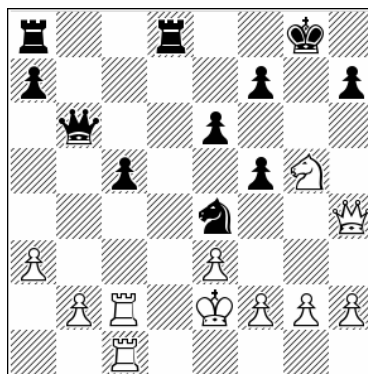


Position after: 19. ♗xe5

[19. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20. ♗xe5 ♖d6 21. ♔f3 fxe5 22. ♖c4 ♖d1+ 23. ♔g3 ♔h8 24. h3 also here White has an edge, 1-0 (32) Sarkar, J (2390) – Sachdev, T (2429) Reykjavik 2017] 19... fxe5 20. ♖g4+ ♔h8 21. ♖c4 ♖g8 22. g3 ♖b7 23. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 24. ♖xc5 ♖xb2+ 25. ♖d2 Even this simplified endgame is clearly favorable for White, 1-0 (51)

Kuljasevic, D (2564) – Neelotpal, D (2456) Paleochora 2012.

**D)** 17... f5 18. ♖fc1 ♗f6 [18... ♖ab8 19. ♔f1 ♖b7 20. ♖h4 ♗f8 21. ♖g5+ ♗g6 22. h4 White is better, 0-1 (43) Li, L (2256) – Illingworth, M (2394) Melbourne 2012] 19. ♖h4! ♗e4 20. ♗g5!



Position after: 20. ♗g5!

20... ♗f6 21. ♖h6 e5 22. ♔f1 This is the way to go. Now White is better.

**17. ♔e2 ♗a5**

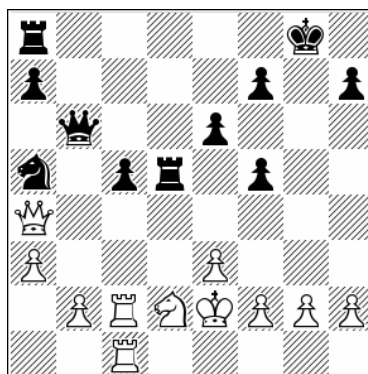
**A)** 17... ♗e5 18. ♗xe5 fxe5 This transposes to the note on ... ♗d7 instead of ... ♗c6.

**B)** 17... ♖d5 18. ♖fc1 ♗e7 19. e4 ♖d6 20. ♔f1 ♖ad8 21. g3 ♔g7 22. ♔g2 ♗g6 23. ♖xc5 White has won a crucial pawn, 0-1 (76) Kogen, J (2244) – Sinha, S (2324) ICC INT 2020.

**18. b4**

White has an interesting alternative.

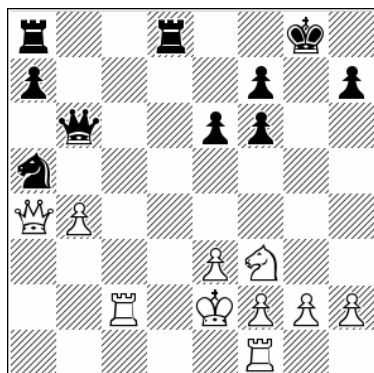
18. ♗d2 ♖d5 19. ♖fc1 f5



Position after: 19... f5

20.b4!? [20.g4 ♖ad8 21.gxf5 exf5 22.h3 ♕f8 23.♔e1 ♕g8 24.♔e2 ♕f8 25.♔e1 ♕g8 26.♔e2 ½-½ (26) Lenderman, A (2637) – Sevan, S (2642) Saint Louis 2019] 20...cxb4 21.axb4 ♖b7 22.♞c7 ♞b5+ 23.♞xb5 ♞xb5 24.♞d7 ♞xb4 25.♞cc7 ♖d8 26.♖c4 a5 27.♖e5 a4 28.♖xf7 ♖xf7 29.♞xf7 h6 Black is OK after all.

18...cxb4 19.axb4

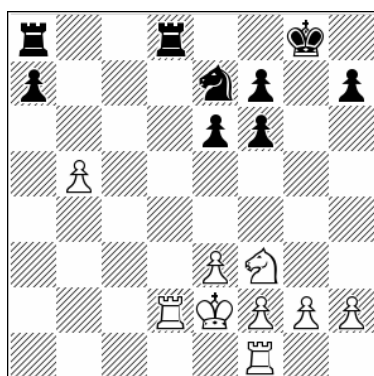


Position after: 19.axb4

19...♞d6

19...♞a6+ 20.b5 ♞d6 21.♞g4+!? [21.♞d2 this is simply wrong, 0-1 (69) Machlik, M (2082) – Kvaloy, A (2174) Fagernes 2020] 21...♔f8 22.♞d4 ♖b7 23.♞fc1 White has an edge

20.♞d2 ♞c6 21.♞xc6 ♖xc6 22.b5 ♖e7



Position after: 22...♖e7

23.♞xd8+

White has an interesting sideline. 23.♞a1!? ♖d5 24.♞c2 f5 25.♖d4 ♞d7 26.♞a5 ♕g7 27.g3 ♞b7 Obviously White has pressure.

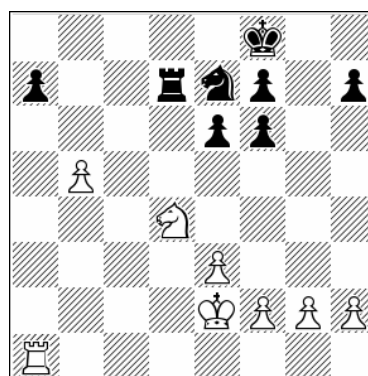
23...♞xd8 24.♞a1

24.♖d4 ♞d5 25.♞c1 ♖f5 26.♖xf5 ♞xf5 27.♞c8+ ♕g7 28.♞b8 ♞d5 29.♞b7 ½-½ (29) Kharitonov, A (2564) – Vocaturo, D (2609) Benasque 2018.

24...♞d7

24...♞b8 25.♖d4! [25.♞xa7 ♖d5 26.♖d4 ♖c3+ 27.♔f3 ♖xb5 28.♔e4 this is just a draw, ½-½ (28) Lenaerts, L (2355) – Godart, F (2431) Saint-Quentin 2019] 25...♖c8 26.♞a5 ♖d6 27.g4 With some chances to play on.

25.♖d4 ♕f8



Position after: 25...♕f8

26.♔f3!N

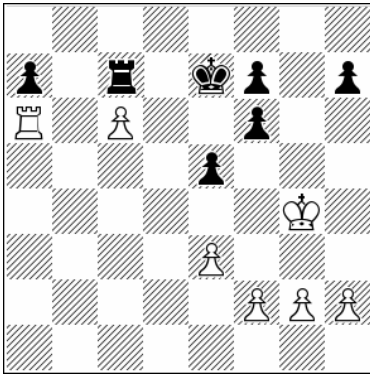
Again the same idea: centralization.

26.g4 e5 27.♖b3 ♞d5 28.♞a5 f5 Bacrot twice successfully defended this position so this is OK, ½-½ (46) Dreev, A (2703) – Bacrot, E (2705) Mulhouse 2011.

26...e5

26...♞b7 27.♞a5 Some initiative for White.

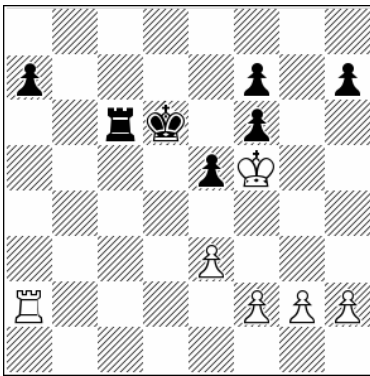
27.♖c6 ♖xc6 28.bxc6 ♞c7 29.♞a6 ♕e7 30.♔g4!



Position after: 30.♔g4!

Going towards the weak h7-pawn.

30...♕d6 31.♕f5 ♖xc6 32.♖a2

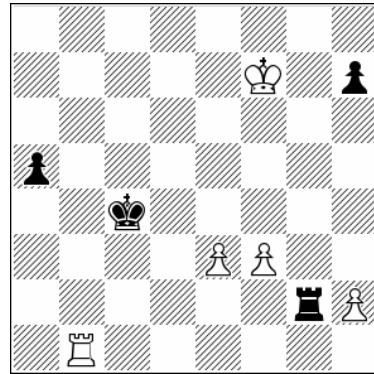


Position after: 32.♖a2

32...a5

32...♕e7 33.♖xa7+ ♕f8 34.♖a4 ♖c2 35.f3 ♖g2 36.♕xf6 OK, White will be a pawn up. This whole line seems a really super-passive way for Black to hold a draw.

33.♕xf6 ♖a6 34.♖a4 ♕c5+ 35.♕xf7 ♕b5 36.♖a1 ♖g6 37.♖g1 e4 38.f4 exf3 39.♖b1+ ♕c4 40.gxf3 ♖g2



Position after: 40...♖g2

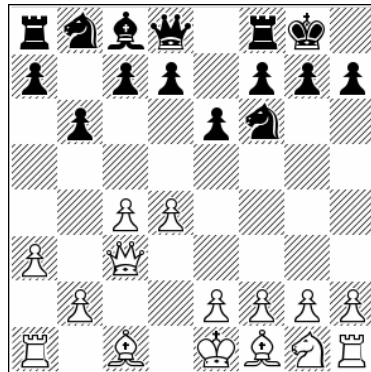
41.f4

White has chances to win this. Black will have to suffer many moves in order to make a draw, if indeed he manages that.

# Chapter 17

## 5.a3 – With 6...b6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♚xc3 b6



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 17 – 5.a3 – With 6...b6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♚xc3 b6 7.♙g5

a) 7...♙a6

b) 7...♙b7 8.f3

c) 7...♙b7 8.♘f3

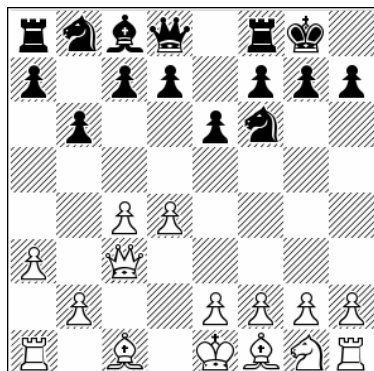
d) 7...♙b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.--

e) 7...♙b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.♚d3 h6 11.♙h4 ♙a6 12.♘c3 d5 13.♚c2 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 dxc4 15.♚a4 c5 16.♚xc4

f) 7...♙b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.♚d3 h6 11.♙h4 ♙a6 12.♘c3 d5 13.♚c2 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 dxc4 15.♚a4 c5 16.♚d1

## a) 7...♔a6

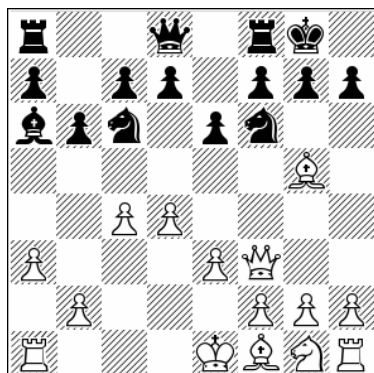
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♙c2 0-0 5.a3  
 ♗xc3+ 6.♙xc3 b6



Position after: 6...b6

This is a big system that used to be a main line, but has been replaced by Kramnik's clever ...dxc4 plan. It's a simple plan really, ...d6 or ...d5 followed by ...c5 trying to generate fast counterplay in the center. It has been played many times.

7.♗g5 ♗a6!? 8.♙f3 ♘c6 9.e3



Position after: 9.e3

9...♘a5

**A)** 9...♗b7 10.♙d1 a5 11.♘h3 h6 12.♗xf6 ♙xf6  
 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♘f4 ♙fd8 15.♙g1 ♖f8 16.g4 a4  
 17.♙g3 We can consider this to be the right plan for White, but still it's complex play, ½-½ (65) Girya, O (2414) – Iljushina, O (2354) Tyumen 2012.

**B)** 9...♙c8 10.♙c1 ♗b7 11.♘e2 h6 12.♗xf6 ♙xf6  
 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♘f4 As in the 9...♗b7 line, White has some more chances due to the usual doubled pawns on the black kingside, which give him some targets, ½-½ (30) Walter, S (2397) – Rozentalis, E (2509) Austria 2018.

**C)** 9...h6

**C1)** 10.h4 ♙e8 11.b4!

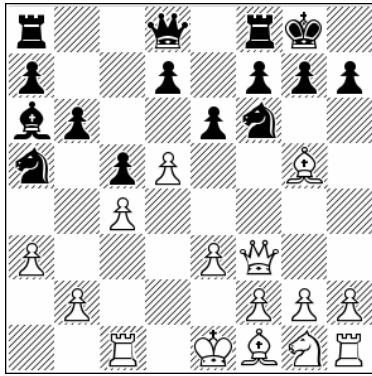


Position after: 11.b4!

That is the idea behind the unusual 10.h4. It's not about attack, it's about gaining time. 11...♗b7 12.♗xf6 ♙xf6 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.f3 f5 15.♘e2 d6 16.♖f2 ♘b8 17.♘c3 ♖f8 18.♗d3 ♘d7 There's an interesting long endgame is in front of us, ½-½ (70) Komodo 2551.00 (3743) – Stockfish 202005232210 (3796) TCEC INT 2020.

**C2)** 10.♗xf6 ♙xf6 11.♙xf6 gxf6 12.♘h3 ♘e7  
 13.♘f4 f5 14.♗e2 ♗b7 15.f3 a5 16.♖f2 a4  
 17.♙hg1 f6 18.g4 This is good play, earning White an edge, 1-0 (43) Gritsak, O (2464) – Schneider, S (2399) Gothenburg 2018.

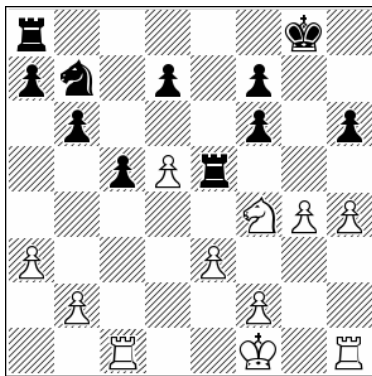
**10.♙c1 c5 11.d5**



Position after: 11.d5

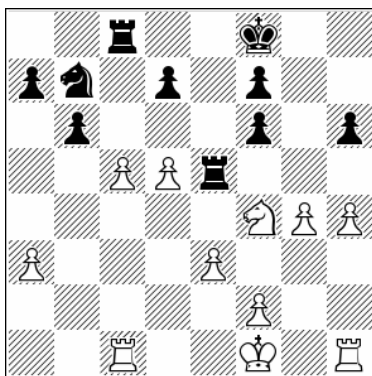
### 11...exd5

A different possibility is actually another example for both sides as to how to conduct the game in the best manner. 11...h6 12.h4 ♖e8 13.♗h3 exd5 14.♘xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.cxd5 ♘xf1 17.♕xf1 ♖e5 18.♗f4 ♖b7 19.g4!



Position after: 19.g4!

19...♗d6! Black must activate the knight. [19...♕f8 20.b4! ♖c8 21.bxc5!



Position after: 21.bxc5!

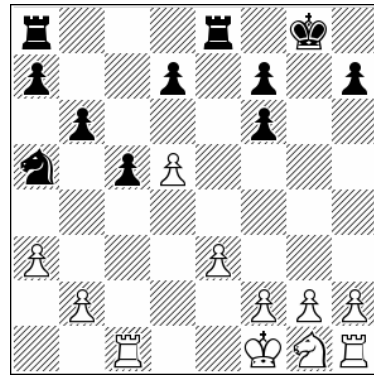
21...♖xc5 22.♕e2 ♕e7 23.f3 ♖b5 24.♖hd1 ♖b2+ 25.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 26.♕xd2 White has some

initiative, 1-0 (36) Korobov, A (2705) – Kazimova, N (2209) Baku 2012] 20.♗h5 ♕f8 21.♗xf6 ♕e7 22.♗h5 ♖g8 23.♖g1 ♖xd5 24.♕e2 It's complex.

### 12.cxd5

White can also take at once on f6; both moves are OK.

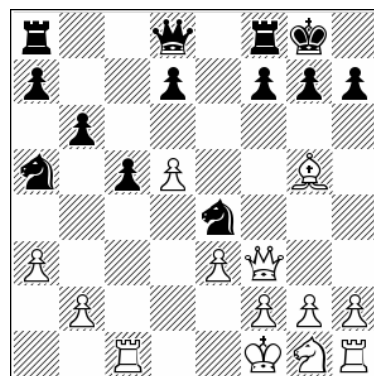
12.♘xf6 ♗xf6 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.cxd5 ♘xf1 15.♕xf1 It's some kind of Benoni structure with knights and rooks and weak pawns on the black kingside, but Black has a majority on the queenside. 15...♖fe8



Position after: 15...♖fe8

16.♗f3 [16.♗e2 ♖b7 17.♗f4 ♕f8 18.g4! ♗d6 19.♖g1 ♖e5 20.♕e2 c4 21.♖g3 b5 22.♖h3 ♕g8 23.f3 This is better for White] 16...♕f8 17.b4 ♗b7 18.♕e2 ♕e7 19.bxc5 [19.♖hd1 cxb4 20.axb4 a5 Black is OK, ½-½ (56) Luukkonen, T (2348) – Agopov, M (2419) Finland 2017] 19...♗xc5 20.♗d4! This is the way to go, as in the 12.cxd5 line.

### 12...♘xf1 13.♕xf1 ♗e4!?

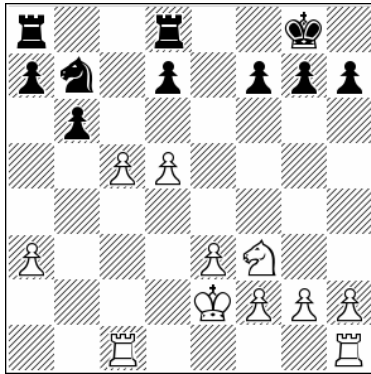


Position after: 13...♗e4!?

14. ♖xd8 ♜d2+ 15. ♔e2 ♜xf3 16. ♜xf3 ♜fxd8  
17. b4

17.g4 ♜ac8 18. ♜d2 ♜b7 19.e4 f6 20.b3 ♜d6  
21. ♔d3 ♜e8 22.h4 b5 23.f3 ♜f7 Not so clear.

17... ♜b7 18.bxc5!



Position after: 18.bxc5!

Good strategy.

18... ♜xc5

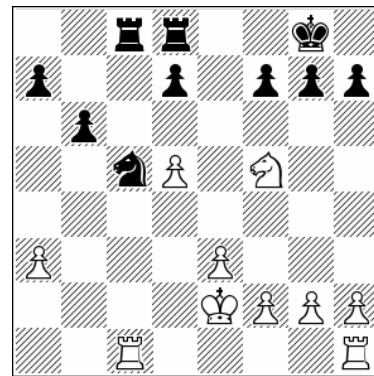
18...bxc5 19. ♜c2 ♜ab8 20. ♜b1 The black knight remains passive.

19. ♜d4

White's knight is the stronger one, but is that enough?

19...g6

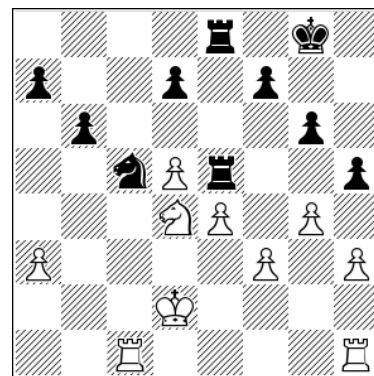
19... ♜ac8 20. ♜f5!



Position after: 20. ♜f5!

20... ♔f8 21. ♜d6 ♜b8 22.e4 f6 23.f4 ♔e7 24.e5  
This is better for White, nice strategy, 1-0 (34)  
Purtseladze, M (2313) – Agopov, M (2429)  
Tallinn 2013.

20.g4 ♜e8 21.f3 ♜e5 22.e4 ♜ae8 23. ♔d2 h5  
24.h3



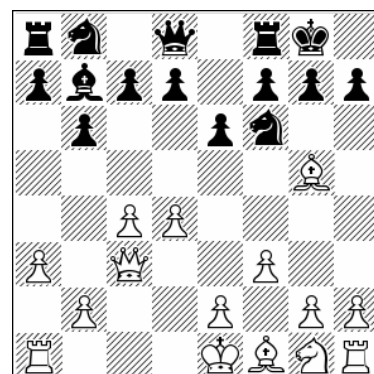
Position after: 24.h3

24... ♔g7

White holds the initiative.

## b) 7... ♖b7 8.f3

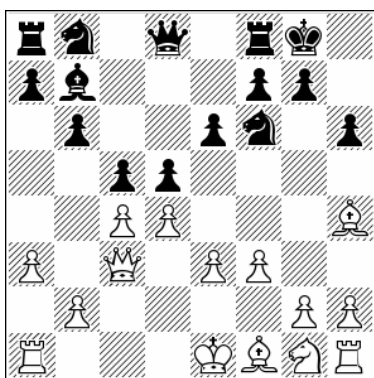
1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♜c3 ♖b4 4. ♔c2 0-0 5.a3  
♖xc3+ 6. ♔xc3 b6 7. ♖g5 ♖b7 8.f3



Position after: 8.f3

In the past this was a main line not only in the Classical system, but perhaps also in the whole Nimzo-Indian, that's how popular it was. The idea is clear: White has the bishop pair and wants to have a flexible pawn structure, while also looking to build a space advantage.

8...h6 9.g4 d5 10.e3 c5!?

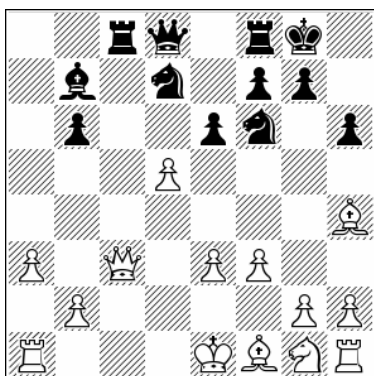


Position after: 10...c5!?

Another sharp solution that aims to stop White's positional ideas by going for fast development. The point of such play is to challenge White at the beginning, when he is still underdeveloped.

11.dxc5 b7 12.cxd5

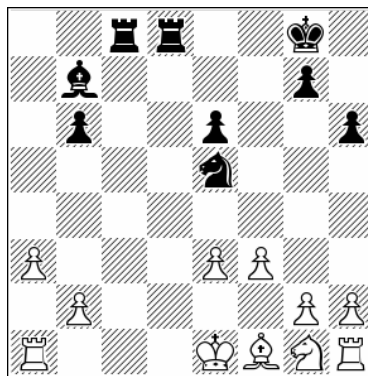
12.cxb6 axb6 13.cxd5 c8



Position after: 13...c8

14.Wd2 [14.Wd4 e5 15.Wd2 e4! Now what? 16.e2 g5 17.g3 c5 18.d4 Wxd5 19.e2 exf3 20.gxf3 b3 21.b3 Wxb3 22.d1 e6 23.0-0 f8 24.We2 d5 For the sacrificed pawn Black has a nice, very active setup.] 14...e4!

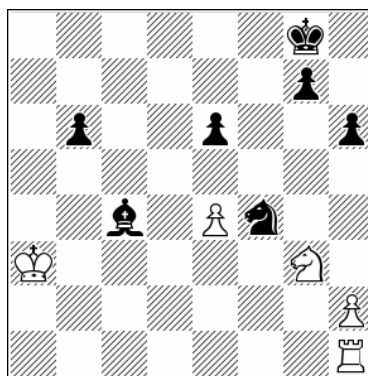
15.e8 dxd2 16.dxd2 fxd8 17.dxe6 e5+ 18.e1 fxe6



Position after: 18...fxe6

It seems that here White has limited options, as Black threatens rook to c2.

19.Rd1 [19.f2 Rd2+ 20.g3 Rxb2 21.h4 f7 22.h3 Rc3 23.e4 xe4 24.f4 d3 25.xe5 Rc4 26.f4 b5+ 27.d6 xf1 28.Rxf1 Rxf4 this rook endgame is equal] 19...Rxd1+ 20.xd1 d5 21.d2 b3 22.e4 Rc2+ 23.e3 Rxb2 24.e2 c4+ 25.d3 xa3 26.c3 b1 27.g3 a2 28.e2 Rb3+ 29.d4 c2+ 30.e5 Rb2 31.f4 e3 32.d4 xg2 33.c3 Rb3+ 34.c2 xf4 35.c4 a3 36.b2 xc4 37.xa3



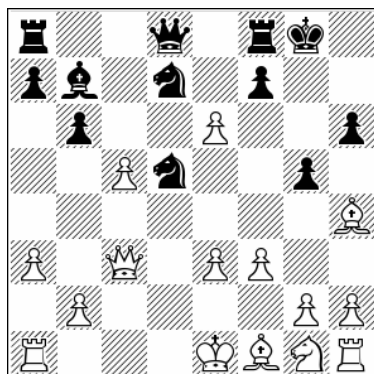
Position after: 37.xa3

37...d3!! A great point, the white king can't get to the center or kingside! A fantastic game, ½-½ (60) Urban, M – Egoshin, G corr. 2015.

12...g5 13.dxe6

13. ♖f2 ♜xd5 14. ♛c2 ♜xc5 15. e4 ♜f4 16. ♞d1 ♞f6 Black has nice activity, ½-½ (31) Semcesen, D (2457) – Aczel, G (2506) Copenhagen 2016.

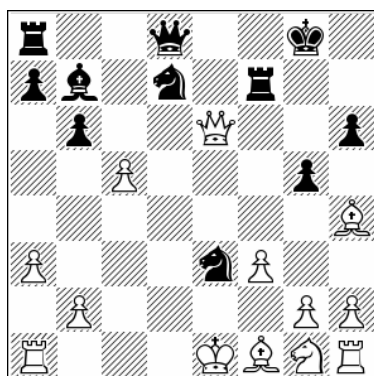
13... ♜d5



Position after: 13... ♜d5

14. ♞d2

A) 14. ♞c2 ♜xe3 15. exf7+ ♞xf7 16. ♞g6+ ♞g7 17. ♞e6+ ♞f7



Position after: 17... ♞f7

18. ♞g6+ Drawing, ½-½ (20) Stockfish 290816 64 – HerzsjeMZ, B Internet (blitz) 2016.

B) 14. exf7+ ♞xf7 15. ♞c2 gxf4 16. c6 ♖xc6 17. ♞g6+ ♞g7 18. ♞e6+ ♜f8 19. ♞d6+ ♞e7 20. ♞xc6 ♞d8 Black has reached a winning position already, 0-1 (22) Ponting, A – Baydashkin, A corr. 2015.

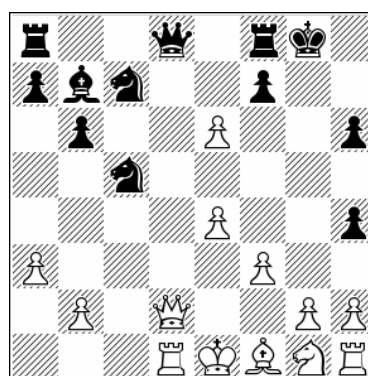
**c) 7... ♖b7 8. ♜f3**

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♜c3 ♖b4 4. ♞c2 0-0 5. a3 ♖xc3+ 6. ♞xc3 b6 7. ♖g5 ♖b7 8. ♜f3 d6 9. ♜d2

14... ♜xc5 15. ♞d1

15. exf7+ ♞xf7 16. ♖c4 gxf4 17. e4 ♞c8 18. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 19. ♞d1 h3 20. ♜xh3 ♞h4+ 21. ♞f2 ♞xf2+ 22. ♜xf2 ♖b3 23. ♞d2 ♞d7 Black has better coordinated pieces.

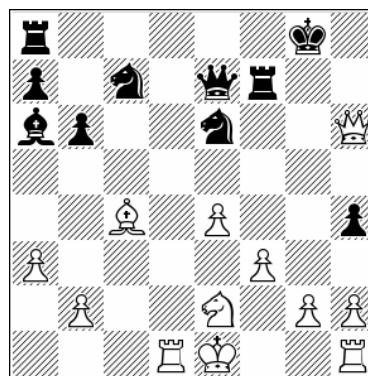
15... gxf4 16. e4 ♜c7!?N



Position after: 16... ♜c7!?N

In many correspondence games they have played 16... fxe6, but this also seems to be alright.

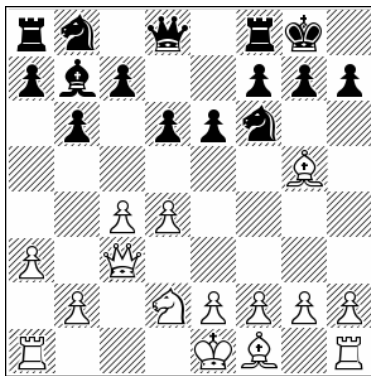
17. ♞xh6 ♞e7 18. exf7+ ♞xf7 19. ♖c4 ♜5e6 20. ♜e2 ♖a6!



Position after: 20... ♖a6!

21. ♖xa6 ♜xa6 22. 0-0 ♜ac7

Black is not worse here.



Position after: 9...d2

This is yet another idea, similar to 8.f3 in concept, but using a knight to support the e4 setup.

### 9...d7 10.f3

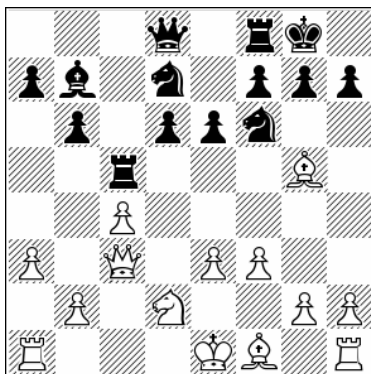
This game, Carlsen – Karjakin Moscow 2011, is a key one for the system in which White employs the f3 and e4 setup. I must stress here that it makes a big difference whether or not Black plays ...h6. If Black plays an early ...h6 then the f3 and e3 structure is possible, while otherwise f3 and e4 is probably White's only chance for a plus.

### 10...c8

This is the best move order for Black, who is looking for a direct equalizer.

### 11.e4

11.e3 c5 12.dxc5 cxc5!



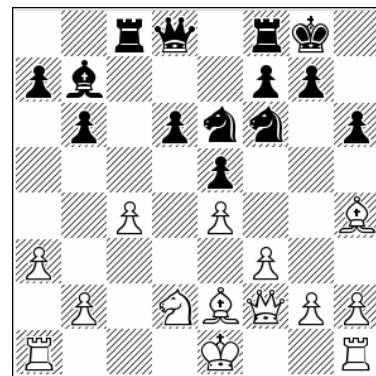
Position after: 12...cxc5!

Black gains a tempo by hitting the bishop – that's why Black avoids an early ...h6 in this particular line. 13.h4 d5 14.b4 c7 15.g3 e5 16.b3 e7 17.e2 fc8 18.0-0 dxc4 19.xc4 xc4 20.xc4 d5 Winning for Black, ½-½ (27) Vega Gutierrez, S (2375) – Cramling, P (2471) Mulhouse 2016.

### 11...h6 12.h4 c5

12...xe4? 13.xd8 xc3 14.h4 a4 15.b3+-

13.d3 cxd4 14.xd4 c5 15.e2 e5 16.f2 e6



Position after: 16...e6

We have reached a partially closed type of position and it seems that overall Black is doing fine here. White's bishop pair isn't doing much.

### 17.0-0

17.0-0-0 e7 [17...g5 18.g3 h5 This is a plan for when White castles kingside, 1-0 (63) Steingrímsson, H (2537) – Stefánsson, H (2548) Kopavogur 2014] 18.b1 d4 19.d3 e6 20.he1 d7 Black seems to have good counterplay.

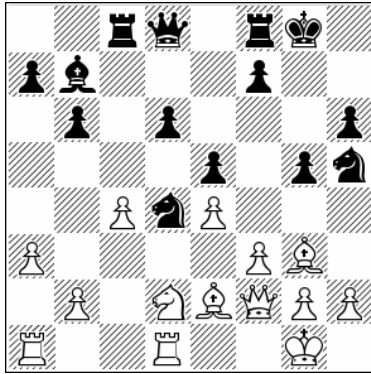
### 17...g5 18.g3 d4

It's hard to say what's going on in this position.

### 19.f1

19.♔d3 ♖h5 20.♖ac1 ♗d7 21.♙c3 f6 22.♗d1  
 ♘xg3 23.♗xg3 h5 24.♘f1 h4 25.♗f2 h3 26.g4 f5  
 27.gxf5 ♖xf5 28.exf5 ♘xf3+ ½-½ (28)  
 Campano1947, B – Stockfish 7 64 POPC Internet  
 (blitz) 2016,

19...♘h5



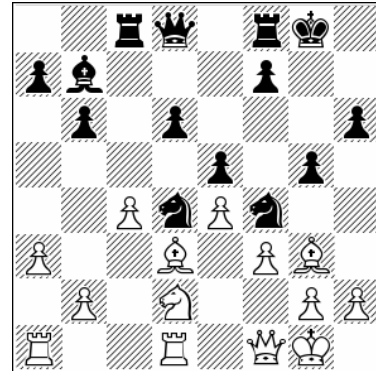
Position after: 19...♘h5

20.♔d3

20.♖ac1 ♘f4 [20...♔c6 it's still unclear; this is a  
 random type of chess, 0-1 (47) Storkebaum, K –

Schmidt, T corr. 2014; 20...♗f6 21.♘f1 ♘f4 this  
 is similar to the main line] 21.♔f1 f5 This is also  
 thematic here, earning Black a good game.  
 That's why Carlsen kept his bishop on d3.

20...♘f4 21.♗f1



Position after: 21.♗f1

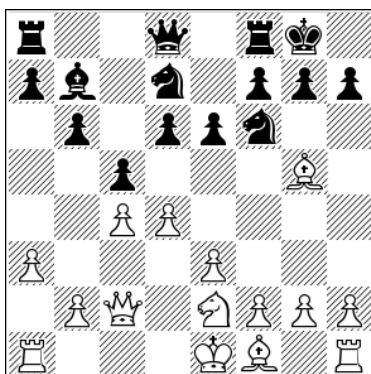
21...♗f6

Black has much easier play, ½-½ (67) Carlsen, M  
 (2826) – Karjakin, S (2763) Moscow 2011.

**d) 7...♔b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.--**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♔b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.a3  
 ♔xc3+ 6.♗xc3 b6 7.♔g5 ♔b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2  
 ♘bd7 10.♗d1!?

10.♗c2 c5



Position after: 10...c5

11.♗d1 [Other moves are nothing at all. 11.dxc5  
 bxc5! 12.♘c3 ♗b6 13.f3 d5 14.♗d1 ♔c6 15.♗d2  
 d4 16.♘d1 e5 Black has seized the initiative, ½-  
 ½ (41) Bulski, K (2538) – Drasko, M (2447)

Warsaw 2013] 11...♖c8 So here we have  
 transposed into a line analyzed under 10.♗d1.

10...♖c8!?

If my analysis in this subchapter stands, then the  
 rook move is a solution also against 10.♗c2.

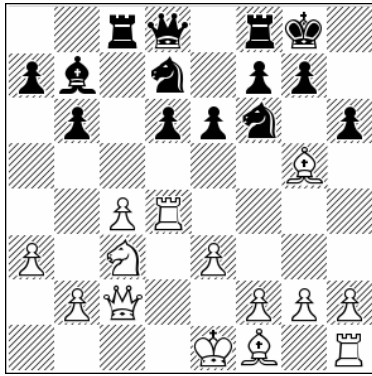
11.♗c2

11.♗d3 ♗e8!? 12.♘c3 ♘h5 13.f3 f5 14.♔h4 ♗g6  
 15.♗d2 e5 An extremely unclear game.

11...c5

So here we have transposed to a line analyzed  
 under 10.♗d1.

12.♘c3 cxd4 13.♖xd4 h6



Position after: 13...h6

#### 14. ♕h4

14. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 15. ♖xd6 ♜fd8 Black has fine development.

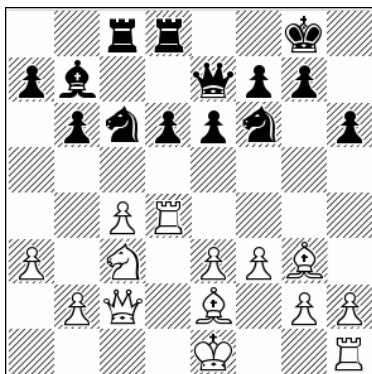
#### 14... ♗e5!?

This move introduces a sacrifice made in order to gain activity.

#### 15. ♗b5

That's White's main response, but alternatives are also important.

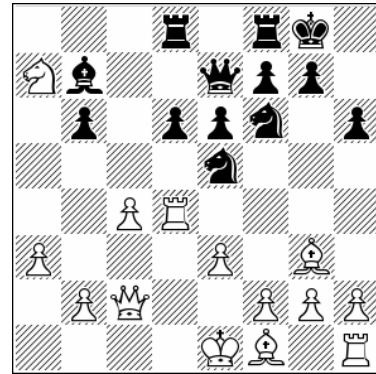
15. ♕g3 ♖e7 16. ♗b5 Consequent play, and probably the only way because otherwise it's not easy for White to develop on account of the strong bishop on b7 [16.f3 ♜fd8 17. ♕e2 ♗c6!



Position after: 17...♗c6!

18. ♖d1 ♗a5 Switching over to the queenside. 19. ♗b5 d5 20. ♗xa7 ♖a8 21. ♗b5 ♗xc4 22. ♕xc4 dxc4 23. ♕d6 ♖e8 24. ♗c7 ♖c6 25. ♗xa8 ♖xd6 26. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 27. ♖xc4 ♕xa8 28. ♖c8+ ♖f8

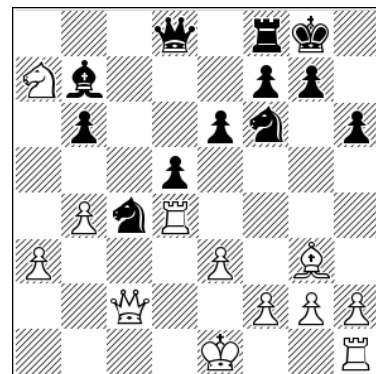
29. ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 Black is fine.]. 16... ♖cd8! [16... ♗c6 17. ♖d1 White is better, 1-0 (37) Van Wely, L (2680) – Wells, P (2517) London 2007] 17. ♗xa7



Position after: 17. ♗xa7

17... ♕e4!? [17... ♗e4 18. ♗b5 ♗xg3 19. hxg3 ♖d7 20. ♗c3 Black doesn't have much to show for the lost pawn, ½-½ (33) Woelfl, S – Dasiewicz, R corr. 2008] 18. ♖d2 ♗g6 19. ♗b5 [19. ♖xd6 e5 20. ♗b5 ♕c6 this simply transposes; 19. ♕xd6 ♖xa7 20. ♕xf8 ♖xf8 21. f3 ♕c6 22. ♕e2 ♖c7 23. 0-0 e5 Black is fine, his minor pieces are stronger than the rook and two pawns] 19...e5 20. ♖xd6 ♕c6 21. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22. ♖c1 h5 It's very interesting to see how underdeveloped White is. Black has fine counterchances.

15...d5 16. ♗xa7 ♖c5 17. b4 ♖c7 18. ♕g3 ♖xc4 19. ♕xc4 ♗xc4



Position after: 19...♗xc4

#### 20. ♗b5

20. 0-0 ♖d7 21. ♖xc4 [21. a4 ♕a6 22. b5 ♖xa7 23. bxa6 ♖xa6 Black's knight on c4 is fantastic]

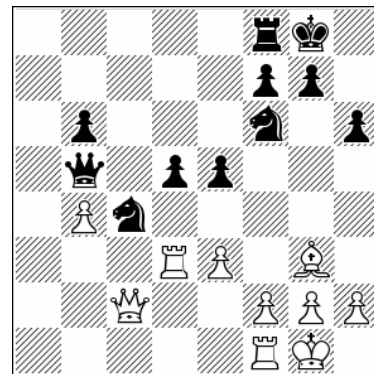
21...dxc4 22.♖xd7 ♘xd7 23.♘b5 ♕c6 24.♘c3 b5  
It's a draw.

Black doesn't have any problems.

20...♕c6!?

There seems to be a decent alternative.

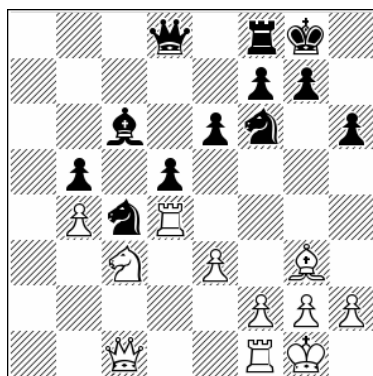
20...♖d7 21.♗xc4 dxc4 22.♖xd7 ♘xd7 23.f3 ♖a8  
24.♘d6 ♖xa3 25.0-0 ♕a8 26.♖c1 ♖xe3 27.♖xc4  
♖a3 28.h4 f5 Black is not in a danger zone, ½-½  
(37) Beckstroem, B – Hechl, G corr. 2012.



Position after: 24...♗xb5

21.a4

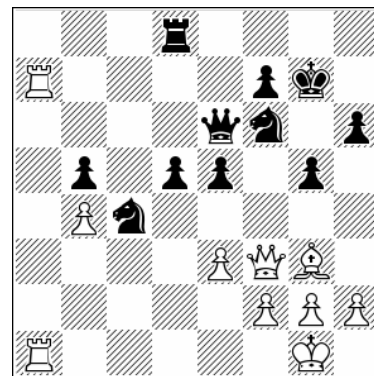
21.♘c3 b5 22.0-0 ♘xa3 23.♗c1 ♘c4



Position after: 23...♘c4

Now White has to play energetically because Black will have strong counterplay as soon as his queen leaves the d-file. 24.♕h4 g5 25.e4 e5 26.♖xc4 dxc4 27.♕xg5 hxg5 28.♗xg5+ ♔h8 29.♖d1 ♗e7 The draw is not far away.

25.♖c1 ♗e8 26.♖dd1 b5 27.♗f5 ♗e7 28.♖a1 g6  
29.♗f3 ♖d8 30.♕h4 g5 31.♕g3 ♗e6 32.♖a7 ♔g7  
33.♖da1



Position after: 33.♖da1

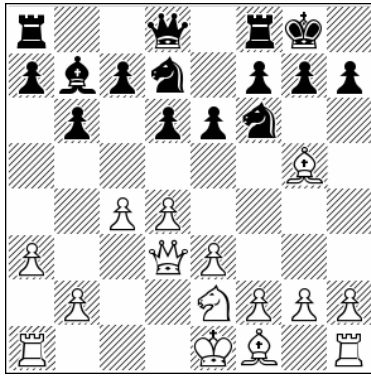
21...e5 22.♖d3 ♕xb5 23.axb5 ♗e8 24.0-0 ♗xb5

33...♖d7

We can see that the bishop on g3 is out of play and pressure on the e5-pawn is not enough to give White winning chances.

**e) 7...♕b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.♖d3 h6 11.♕h4 ♕a6 12.♘c3 d5  
13.♗c2 ♕xc4 14.♕xc4 dxc4 15.♗a4 c5 16.♗xc4**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♕b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.a3  
♕xc3+ 6.♗xc3 b6 7.♕g5 ♕b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2  
♘bd7 10.♖d3



Position after: 10. ♖d3

The knight is heading towards c3, where it will cover the center nicely. White is also ready to apply pressure along the d-file and develop the f1-bishop on e2.

### 10...h6

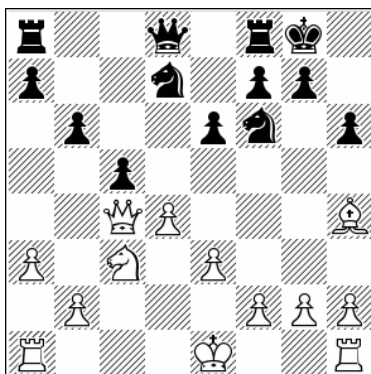
This is the main reaction to the ♖d3 move. Black is seeking simplifications, which he can do with or without ...h6 but usually Black does play ...h6 at some point.

11. ♘h4 ♘a6 12. ♗c3 d5 13. ♖c2 ♘xc4 14. ♘xc4 dxc4 15. ♖a4 c5

More or less forced moves, and logical ones.

### 16. ♖xc4

White can wait with the recapture by simply playing 16. ♖d1 and this we will examine in another subchapter.



Position after: 16. ♖xc4

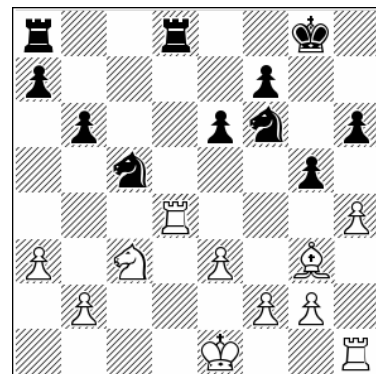
### 16...cxd4

16... ♖c8 So far this has been played only once, but it is an interesting move order. 17. ♖d1! cxd4 18. ♖xd4 ♖c7 [18... ♗c5 is a line from the Dreev – Kulaots game cited below] 19. 0-0 ♖c4 We transpose back into the main line except that the rook on c8 has come from a8, instead of f8. 20. f4 ♖b3!? 21. ♖d2 ♗c5 22. ♘xf6 gxf6 23. h3 f5 With the rook on f8 this is more to the point, so this idea of ... ♖ac8 is certainly a serious one.

### 17. ♖xd4 ♖c7

A) 17... ♗c5 This is a very important position because it can arise from various lines with a doubled pawn structure on the black kingside. 18. ♘xf6 ♖xf6 19. ♖xf6 gxf6 20. ♔e2 ♖fd8 21. ♖ad1 1-0 (37) Dreev, A (2682) – Kulaots, K (2530) Moscow RUS 2004 This version of the endgame when his king is still in the center is more to the point for White.

B) 17... g5 18. ♘g3 ♗c5 19. ♖d1 ♖xd4 20. ♖xd4 ♖fd8 21. h4



Position after: 21. h4

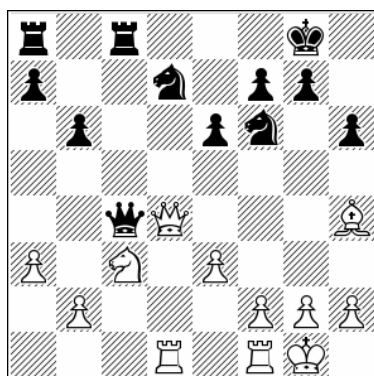
21... ♔g7! [21... ♖xd4 22. exd4 ♗cd7 23. hxg5 hxg5 24. ♔e2 ♖c8 25. ♔d3 1-0 (40) Dreev, A (2682) – Timman, J (2578) Reykjavik 2004. White has some play here] 22. ♔e2 ♔g6 23. ♖hd1 ♖xd4 24. ♖xd4 ♗b3! 25. ♖b4 ♗a5 26. ♗b5 ♗d5 27. ♖d4 ♖c8 28. ♗xa7 ♖c2+ 29. ♖d2 ♖c1 Black has adequate play, so this line is also interesting for Black.

### 18. 0-0 ♖fc8 19. ♖ad1

To avoid those ...♘b3 tricks here.

19.♖fd1 ♖c4 20.f3 ♖xd4 21.♖xd4 ♘e5 22.e4 ♘h5 23.♙g3 ♘xg3 24.hxg3 ♙f8 Black is fine, ½-½ (50) Van Wely, L (2617) – Ivanchuk, V (2716) Monte Carlo 2004.

19...♖c4



Position after: 19...♖c4

20.f4!?

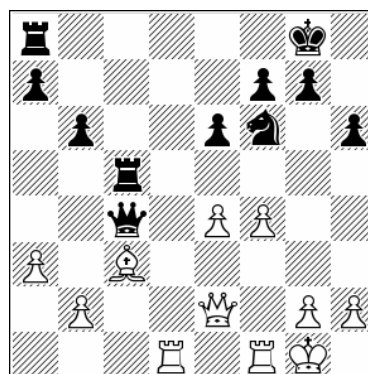
Now Black must be careful.

20.♖xc4 ♖xc4 21.♙g3 a6 22.f3 b5 23.e4 ♘c5 24.♖f2 b4 25.axb4 ♖xb4 This is too simplified to ask for any advantage, ½-½ (40) Socko, B (2614) – Kryvoruchko, Y (2706) Czechia 2015.

20...♖b3

20...♖xd4 21.♖xd4 ♘c5 22.♙xf6 gxf6 23.f5  
White wields an initiative.

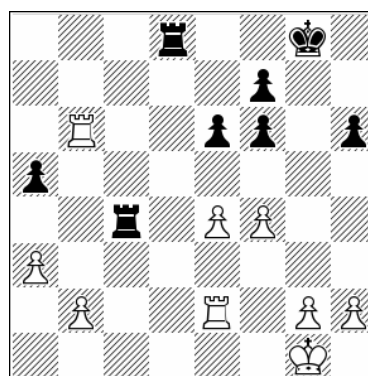
21.♖d2 ♖c5 22.♖e2 ♘d5 23.♙e1 ♘7f6 24.e4 ♘xc3 25.♙xc3 ♖c4!



Position after: 25...♖c4!

Black is OK.

26.♖fe1 ♖xe2 27.♖xe2 ♖c4 28.♙xf6 gxf6 29.♖d7 a5 30.♖b7 ♖d8 31.♖xb6



Position after: 31.♖xb6

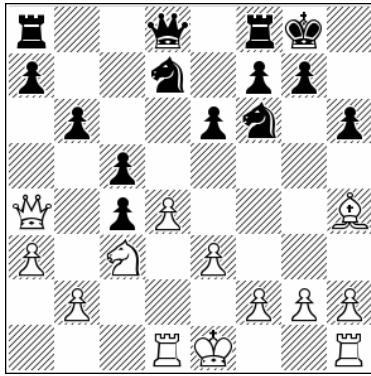
31...f5

Black is fine.

**f) 7...♙b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.♖d3 h6 11.♙h4 ♙a6 12.♘c3 d5 13.♖c2 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 dxc4 15.♖a4 c5 16.♖d1**

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♖xc3 b6 7.♙g5 ♙b7 8.e3 d6 9.♘e2 ♘bd7 10.♖d3 h6 11.♙h4 ♙a6 12.♘c3 d5 13.♖c2 ♙xc4 14.♙xc4 dxc4 15.♖a4 c5 16.♖d1

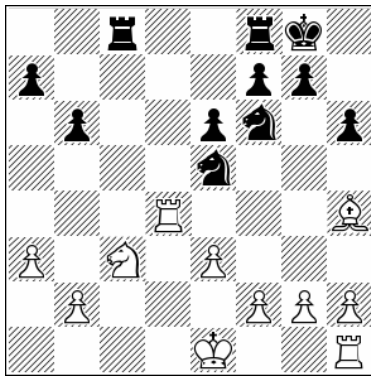
We analyzed 16.♖xc4 in the previous subchapter.



Position after: 16. R d1

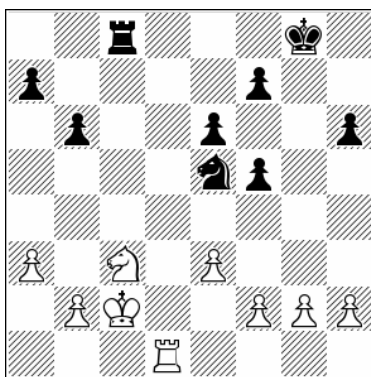
16... Q c8 17. 0-0

17. Q xc4 cxd4 18. Q xc8 R axc8 19. R xd4 N e5!



Position after: 19... N e5!

This is the right idea for Black, preparing ... N c4. 20. Q xf6 gxf6 21. Q d1 [21. Q d2 R fd8 is the same thing] 21... R fd8 22. R xd8+ R xd8+ 23. Q c2 f5 Black is forcing White to try to exchange one more rook. 24. R d1 R c8!

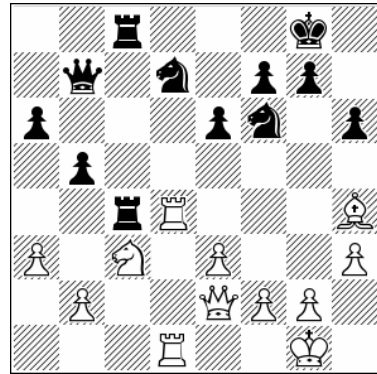


Position after: 24... R c8!

25. R d4 Q f8 26. h3 Q e7 This is the right plan for Black to hold.

17... Q b7

17... cxd4 18. R xd4 a6 19. R xc4 Q b7 20. R d4 b5 21. Q c2 R ac8 22. Q e2 R c4 23. R fd1 R fc8 24. h3

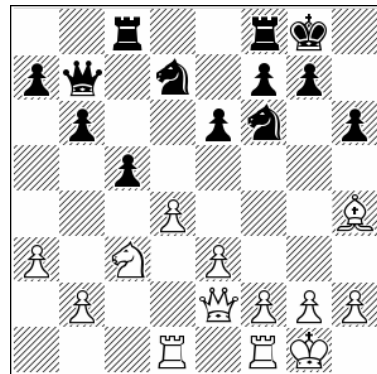


Position after: 24. h3

24... R xd4 This is necessary. [24... e5 25. R xc4 R xc4 26. Q xf6 N xf6 27. R d8+ Q h7 28. Q d3+ e4 29. Q d6 this is the type of position that White is aiming for, 0-1 (49) Khenkin, I (2602) – Timman, J (2616) Malmo 2006] 25. R xd4 N e8! The knight controls all the right squares and Black is fine, with no weak points.

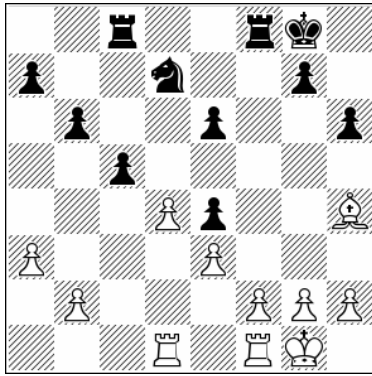
18. Q xc4 N e4!?

18... R ac8 19. Q e2



Position after: 19. Q e2

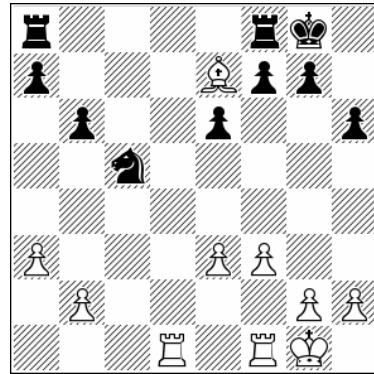
19... N e4!? [19... c4 20. e4 b5 21. f4 a5 22. e5 N d5 23. f5 White has the initiative, ½-½ (34) Sokolov, I (2689) – Shirov, A (2709) Poikovsky 2006] 20. Q f3 f5 21. N xe4 Q xe4 22. Q xe4 fxe4



Position after: 22...fxe4

23.dxc5= [23.♖d2 c4 24.♖c1 b5 25.♔f1 ♔f7  
 26.♔e2 ♘b6 27.f3 g5 28.♙g3 exf3+ 29.gxf3 ♔e7  
 The game is balanced, ½-½ (31) Sevostianov, P  
 (2260) – Frolov, A (2425) Lviv 2019]

19.dxc5 ♘dxc5 20.♘xe4 ♙xe4 21.♙xe4 ♘xe4  
 22.f3 ♘c5 23.♙e7



Position after: 23.♙e7

23...♖fc8

Black has equalized.

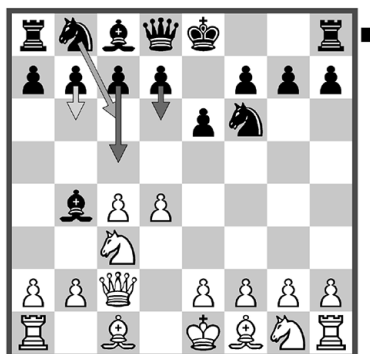
## Part V

### 4.👑c2 – Other Sidelines

# Chapter 18

## Various Sidelines on Move 4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 --



### Chapter Guide

#### Chapter 18 – Various Sidelines on Move 4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2

a) 4...♘c6

b) 4...c5

c) 4...d6

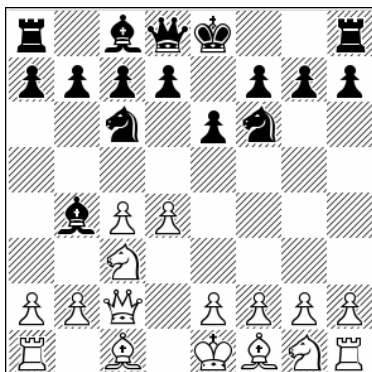
d) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♚e7 7.♘ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙g5

e) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♚e7 7.♘ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙d2 d6 10.0-0-0

f) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♚e7 7.♘ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙d2 d6 10.f3

## a) 4...♖c6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 ♘c6



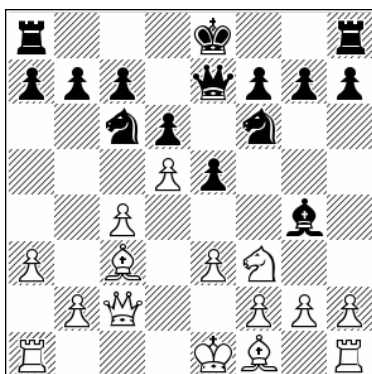
Position after: 4...♖c6

Here we have a well-known Nimzo Taimanov type of idea as Black attacks the center at once. His main concept is going for a fast ...e5.

5.♗f3 d6 6.♘d2 0-0

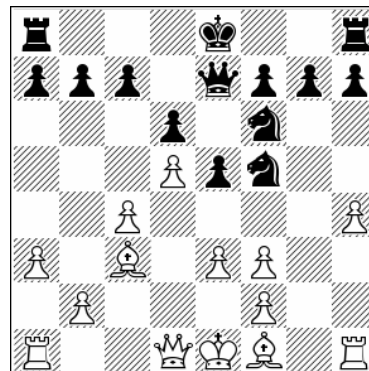
Basically it's a positional game so Black will castle sooner or later and we would end up in the same positions.

6...♚e7 7.a3 ♘xc3 8.♘xc3 e5 9.e3 ♘g4 10.d5



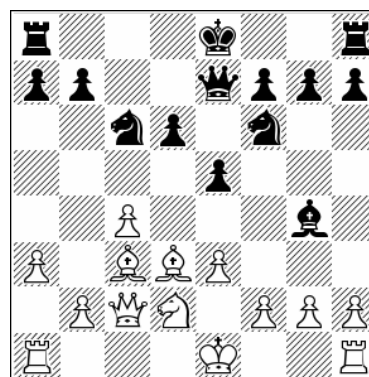
Position after: 10.d5

10...♗b8 [10...♘xf3 11.gxf3 ♗d4 12.♚d1 ♗f5 13.h4!



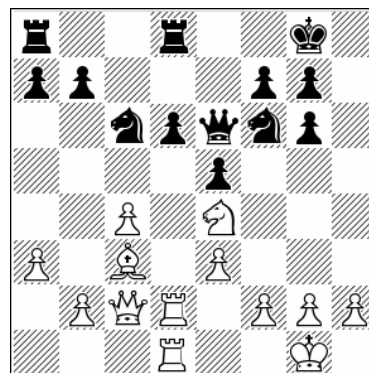
Position after: 13.h4!

13...0-0 14.♘d3 ♗h6 15.♚e2 this is better for White] 11.♗d2 c6 12.dxc6 ♗xc6 13.♘d3



Position after: 13.♘d3

A) 13...♘h5 14.0-0 ♘g6 15.♖ad1! [15.b4 This is pointless as now the pawn on c4 is weak. White's plan is to attack the d6-pawn, 0-1 (60) Kashlinskaya, A (2494) – Sielecki, C (2431) chess.com INT 2020] 15...0-0 16.♘xg6 hxg6 17.♗e4 ♖fd8 18.♖d2 ♚e6 19.♖fd1!

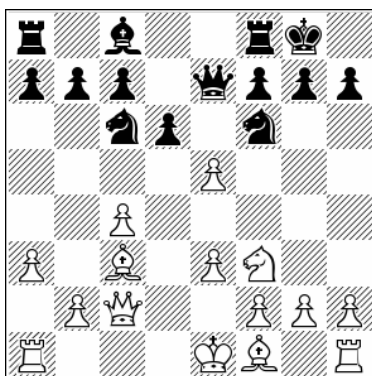


Position after: 19.♖fd1!

19...♘xe4 20.♚xe4 ♖d7 21.h3 ♜c8 22.b3! That's the way to do it.

**B)** 13...d5 14.0-0 ♜c8 15.h3 ♙e6 16.b4! Now this is good, when the position opens up and we need to attack the e5-pawn. 16...dxc4 17.♗xc4 b5 18.♗d2 a6 19.♞ac1 0-0 20.♗b3 White has managed to get out of the opening in a good way.

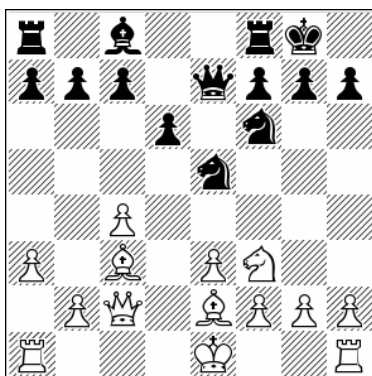
7.a3 ♙xc3 8.♙xc3 ♚e7 9.e3 e5 10.dxe5



Position after: 10.dxe5

**10...dxe5**

This is considered the most solid move here, as Black keeps a pawn in the center 10...♗xe5 11.♙e2

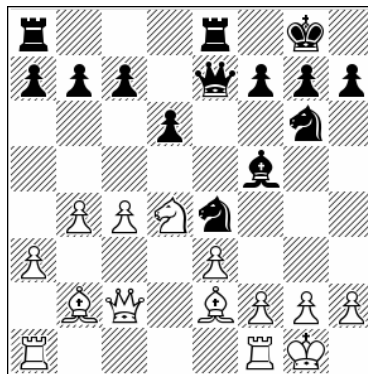


Position after: 11.♙e2

These positions can arise from many 1.d4 openings. In general White has the preferable chances thanks to his bishop pair, but Black is solid.

**A)** 11...♙d7 12.0-0 ♜fe8 13.♞ad1 ♞ad8 14.c5! ♗xf3+ 15.♙xf3 ♙c6 16.♙xc6 bxc6 17.♚a4! ♗e4 18.cxd6 ♞xd6 19.♞xd6 ♗xc3 20.bxc3 cxd6 21.♚xc6 White is a pawn up.

**B)** 11...♞e8 12.0-0 ♗g6 13.b4 ♗e4 14.♙b2 ♙f5 15.♗d4!

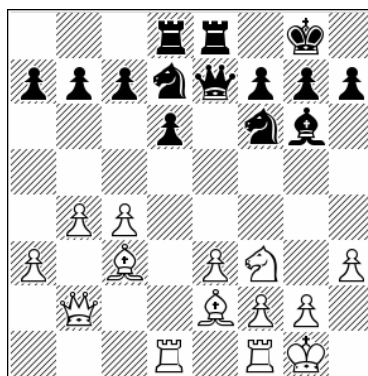


Position after: 15.♗d4!

White must play accurately. 15...♙d7 16.♞ad1 With typical play.

**C)** 11...g6 12.b4 ♙f5 13.♚b2 ♗fd7 14.♞d1 f6 15.0-0 b6 16.♗d4 ♙e4 17.f3 ♙b7 18.e4 White enjoys an advantage that's typical for such positions, 1-0 (35) Nielsen, B – Leepin, P Munich 1941.

**D)** 11...♙g4 12.♞d1 ♞ad8 13.b4 ♜fe8 14.h3 ♙h5 15.0-0 ♙g6 16.♚b2 ♗ed7



Position after: 16...♗ed7

17.♗e1! The knight is going to f4! The great Capablanca naturally comes up with the right idea, 1-0 (51) Capablanca, J – Milner Barry, P Hastings 1934.

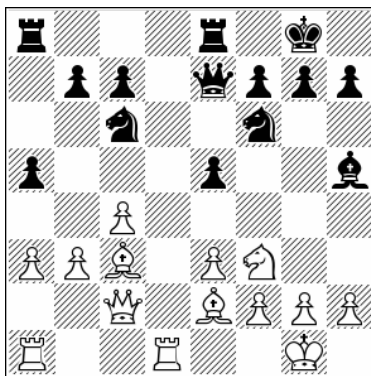
**11. ♖e2 a5**

11... ♖g4 12. 0-0 ♜fe8 13. ♞ad1 h6 14. b4 e4  
 15. ♘d4 ♘xd4 16. ♞xd4 ♙xe2 17. ♚xe2 ♞ad8  
 18. ♞fd1 ♞xd4 19. ♙xd4 a6 20. ♙xf6 ♚xf6 21. ♚d2  
 This is also good strategy. White controls the only open file, so he holds some advantage, ½-½ (33) Van Doesburgh, D – Tartakower, S Zandvoort 1936.

**12. b3**

This is always good to do because it also opens the b2-square for the queen and also it keeps the structure compact.

**12... ♖g4 13. 0-0 ♜fe8 14. ♞fd1 ♙h5**

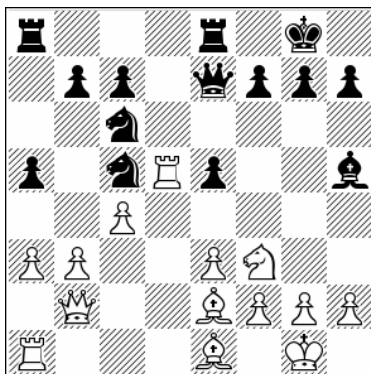


Position after: 14... ♙h5

**15. h3!**

Waiting until the bishop gets to g6.

**15. ♚b2 ♘e4 16. ♙e1 ♘c5 17. ♞d5**

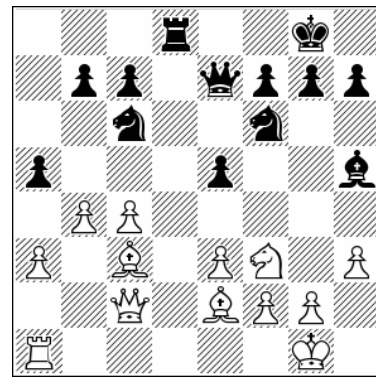


Position after: 17. ♞d5

17... ♙xf3! [17... ♙g6 18. b4 This is also unclear, ½-½ (102) Cramling, P (2491) – Kulaots, K (2581) Caleta 2012] 18. ♙xf3 e4 19. ♙e2 ♘e5 Black is fine.

**15... ♙g6**

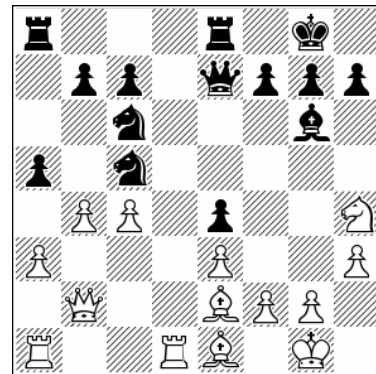
**15... ♞ad8 16. ♞xd8 ♞xd8 17. b4!**



Position after: 17. b4!

17... axb4 18. axb4 ♙xf3 19. ♙xf3 ♘xb4 20. ♚b2 ♘d3 21. ♚xb7 e4 22. ♙d1!? The two bishops are stronger than the knights here.

**16. ♚b2 ♘e4 17. ♙e1 ♘c5 18. b4 e4 19. ♘h4!?**



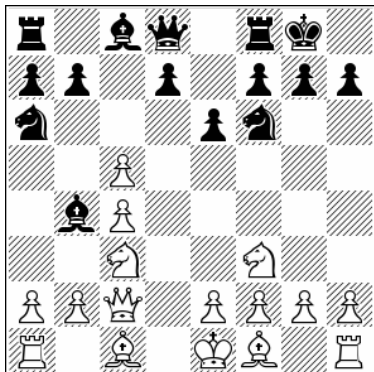
Position after: 19. ♘h4!?

**19... ♚xh4 20. bxc5**

Better for White.

## b) 4...c5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘b4 4.♚c2 c5 5.dxc5 0-0 6.♗f3 ♗a6



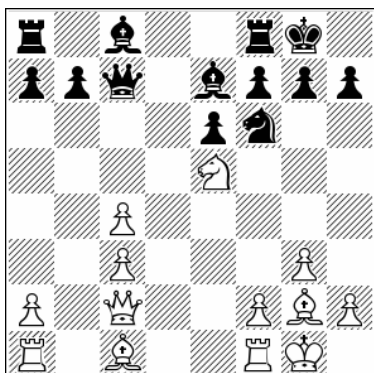
Position after: 6...♗a6

This is an important line because it can also arise from other move orders, for instance 4...0-0 5.♗f3 c5. In my book on the Nimzo and QGD, which is not yet out of date even by today's standards, I partly covered this line so here I will focus on a specific line that I have analyzed to help my students understand rook endgames. Somehow this line recommended itself to me, so let's check it out.

7.g3 ♗xc5 8.♙g2

In my other book I covered 8...b6, which was fashionable at the time.

8...♗ce4 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♙e7 11.e4 d6 12.e5 dxe5 13.♗xe5 ♚c7



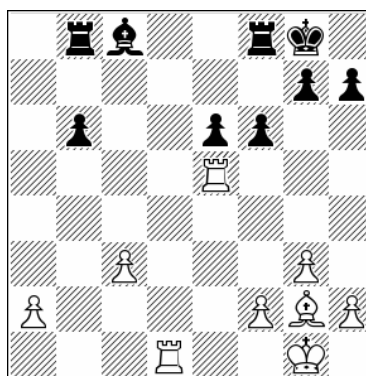
Position after: 13...♚c7

This is a very well-known line, considered to give White a small plus.

14.♚e2 ♗d7 15.♙f4 ♗xe5 16.♙xe5 ♙d6 17.♞fe1 ♞b8 18.♞ad1 ♙xe5 19.♚xe5 ♚xe5 20.♞xe5 b6

After massive exchanges we arrive at this position, which is all more or less forced if Black chooses to go 9...♗xc3.

21.c5 f6 22.cxb6 axb6



Position after: 22...axb6

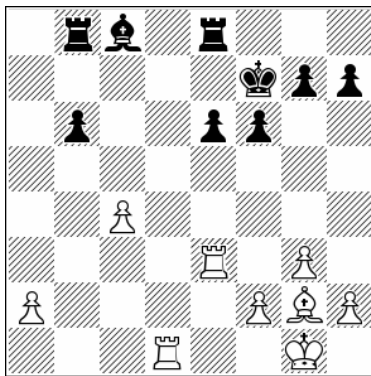
There are a few different ideas for White here, considered give White a little pressure. I was curious to see if I could come up with a better defensive setup for Black.

23.♞e2

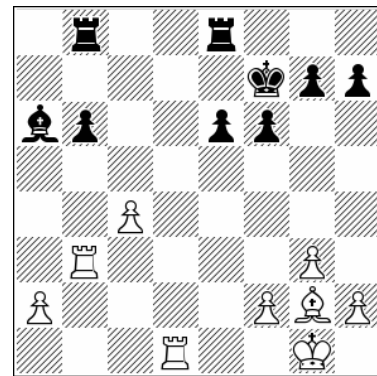
That's the most popular move, but others are also instructive.

A) 23.♞e4 e5 24.f4 ♙b7 Just equal.

B) 23.♞e3 ♔f7 24.c4 ♞e8!?N



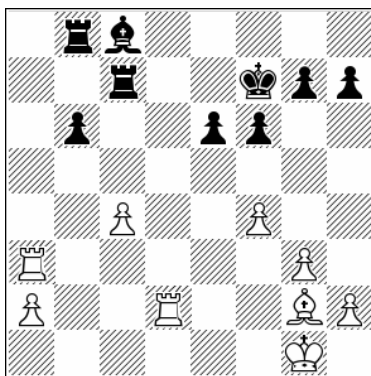
Position after: 24...♖e8!?N



Position after: 25...♙a6

The point of this move is to defend the seventh rank. Now what White can do? I think that analyzing this endgame helped me (and my students) to improve a lot.

**B1)** 25.f4 ♖e7 26.♞d8 ♗e8 27.♞d2 ♗e7 28.♞a3 ♞c7!



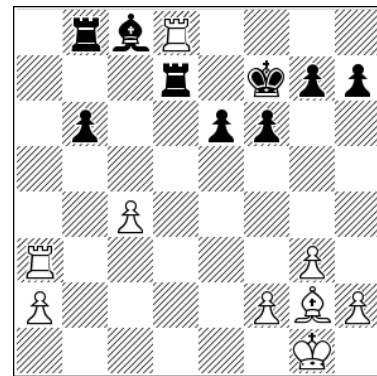
Position after: 28...♞c7!

No progress for White. This is a key defensive idea, not only defending the seventh rank but also defending the bishop and attacking the pawn on c4. 29.♞d8 [29.♙f1 ♞bb7 30.♞a6 ♞b8 31.♞a3 ♞bb7 Black has equalized] 29...b5 30.c5 ♔e7 31.♞h8 b4 32.♞a5 b3 33.axb3 ♞xb3 34.c6 ♞b1+ 35.♔f2 ♞b2+ 36.♔g1 It's equal here too.

**B2)** 25.♞b3 This is another idea, directly attacking the b6-pawn. 25...♙a6

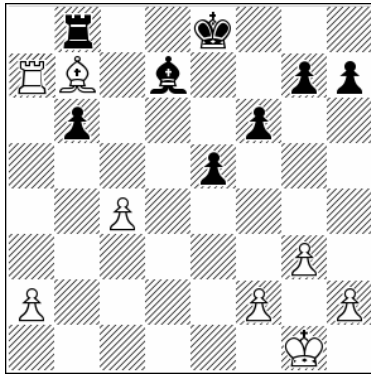
26.♙f1 [26.♞d7+ ♗e7 27.♞xe7+ ♔xe7 28.c5 ♞d8!→ suddenly Black wins!] 26...♞bc8 27.♞b4 ♞c6 28.♙g2 ♞c5 29.♞xb6 ♙xc4 30.a4 ♞a5 31.♞b7+ ♗e7 The rook move to e8 has proved to be very useful, and the game is equal.

**B3)** 25.♞a3 White's main idea. 25...♗e7 26.♞d8 [26.h4 ♙b7 White has no pin now so it's just equal] 26...♞d7



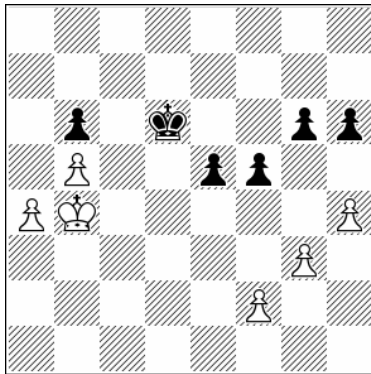
Position after: 26...♞d7

27.♞xd7+ [27.♞h8 ♞d1+ 28.♙f1 e5! 29.g4 h5 30.h3 hxg4 31.hxg4 e4 Black is fine] 27...♙xd7 28.♞a7 ♔e8! This is interesting now as it seems that White is achieving something, having the better rook with active play on the seventh rank, but Black is not out of ideas yet. 29.♙b7 White takes the c8-square away from the black rook. 29...e5!



Position after: 29...e5!

30.♔f1 [30.♙d5 ♕e7 31.♔g2 ♖d6 32.a4 ♜c8  
33.♞b7 ♙xa4 34.♞xb6+ ♙c6 more equality]  
30...♕e7 31.♙c6 ♞d8 32.♞b7 [32.♕e2 ♖d6  
33.♙b5 ♙xb5 34.cxb5 ♞d7! 35.♞xd7+ ♕xd7  
36.♕d3 ♕d6 37.♕c4 f5 38.h4 g6 39.a4 h6  
40.♕b4

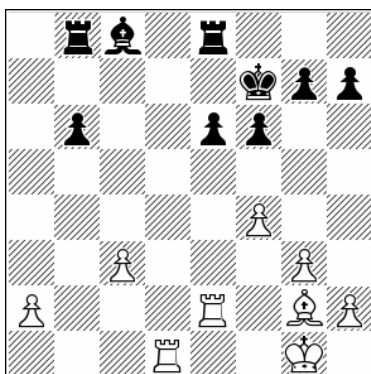


Position after: 40.♕b4

40...f4! The pawn endgame is a draw] 32...♕d6  
33.♙xd7 ♞xd7 34.♞xb6+ ♕c5 35.♞a6 ♕xc4  
36.♕e2 f5 37.h4 g6 Draw.

**23...♕f7 24.♞b2**

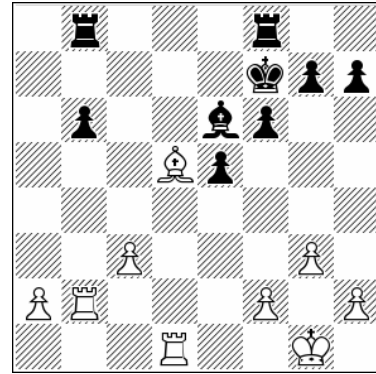
24.f4 ♞e8!?N



Position after: 24...♞e8!?N

Again this is the key defensive idea. 25.♙c6 ♞e7  
26.♞d8 ♞c7 27.♙b5 ♞xc3 28.f5 ♞b7 29.♙a6 ♞bc7  
30.♙xc8 ♞xc8 31.fxe6+ ♕e7 32.♞d7+ ♕f8 33.a4  
♞3c6 34.♞b7 ♞8c7 35.♞b8+ ♞c8 It's equal.

**24...e5 25.♙d5+ ♙e6!N**

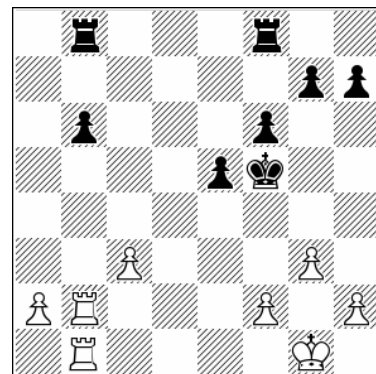


Position after: 25...♙e6!N

A crucial idea.

25...♕e7 26.f4 White has some activity, 1-0 (50)  
Hawkins, J (2583) – Adair, J (2480) Internet  
(rapid) 2017.

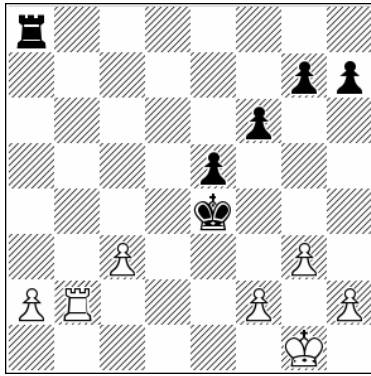
**26.♙xe6+ ♕xe6 27.♞db1 ♕f5!**



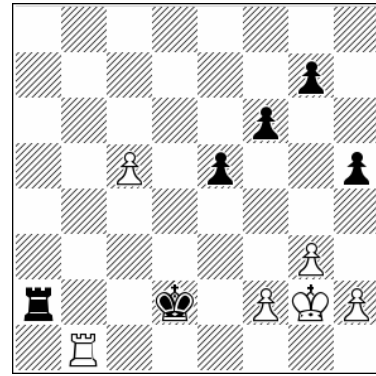
Position after: 27...♕f5!

When I reached this position in my analysis I  
remembered an old game of Akiba Rubinstein,  
who with an active king fought successfully  
against queenside pawns in a rook endgame.

**28.♞xb6 ♞xb6 29.♞xb6 ♞a8 30.♞b2 ♕e4!**



Position after: 30...♔e4!



Position after: 36...h5

That's what it's all about. A fascinating endgame, two pawns versus none on the queenside but Black's active king and great kingside pawn structure secure the draw.

### 31.♔g2

A) 31.♖b7 g5 32.♗xh7 ♖xa2 33.h4 gxh4 34.gxh4 ♔f5 Equal again.

B) 31.♖b4+ ♔f3 32.♖b2 [32.a4 f5 33.c4 ♖a5 34.h3 g6 35.h4 ♖c5 36.♖b3+ ♔e4 37.♖b4 ♔f3 White can't improve, so this is just another path to equality] 32...♗d8 33.♖b1 ♗d2 34.♖a1 ♖xf2 35.a4 ♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖c2 Now Black is much better.

### 31...♖a7!

Fantastic! The rook also keeps an eye on the kingside.

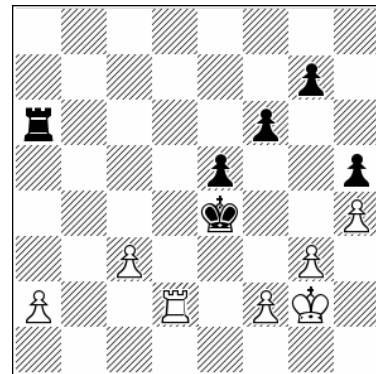
### 32.♗d2

A) 32.c4 ♔d4 33.♖c2 ♔d3 34.♖c1 ♖xa2 35.c5 ♔d2 36.♖b1 h5

37.♖b7 [37.c6 ♖c2 38.♖b7 ♖xc6 39.♖xg7 e4 equal] 37...♔e1 Black has counterplay.

B) 32.♖b4+ ♔d3 33.c4 ♔d4 34.a3 h5 35.h4 ♖xa3 36.♖b7 g5 37.hxg5 fxg5 38.♖g7 Yes, it's equal again.

### 32...h5 33.h4 ♖a6

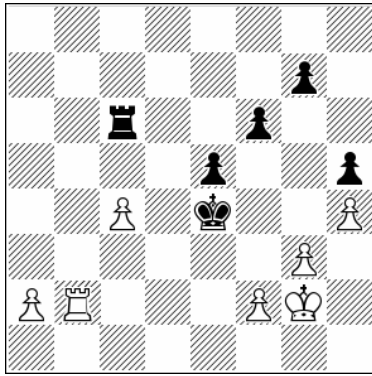


Position after: 33...♖a6

### 34.c4

34.♗d7 g6 35.♗d2 ♖c6 36.a4 ♖xc3 37.♖a2 ♖c6 38.a5 ♖a6 39.♖a1 f5

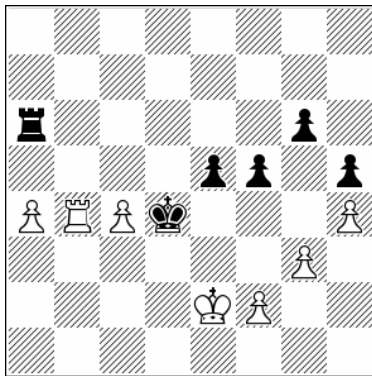
### 34...♖c6 35.♖c2 ♔d3 36.♖b2 ♔e4!



Position after: 36...♔e4!=

Going back, not allowing the white king to come out. Black holds on to equality.

**37.♖b4 ♕d4 38.♕f3 g6 39.♕e2 f5 40.a4 ♖a6!**  
Maintaining equality.

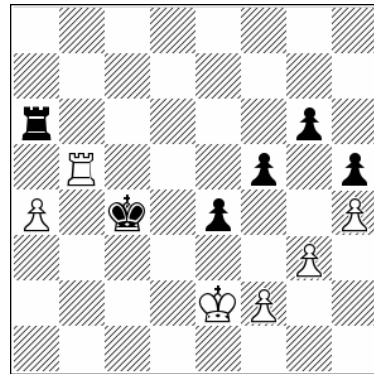


Position after: 40...♖a6!=

**41.♕d2 e4 42.♕e2**

42.♕c2 ♖a7 43.♕b3 ♕d3 44.♕a3 [44.♖b6? ♕e2 45.♖xg6 ♖f7 Black wins] 44...♕d4! This keeps Black on the road to a draw. 45.♖b6 ♕xc4 46.♖xg6 ♖f7 47.a5 f4 48.gxf4 ♖xf4 49.a6 ♖f3+ 50.♕a4 ♖xf2 51.♕a5 e3 52.a7 ♖a2+ 53.♕b6 e2 54.♖e6 ♕d3 Equal.

**42...♕c5 43.♖b5+ ♕xc4**

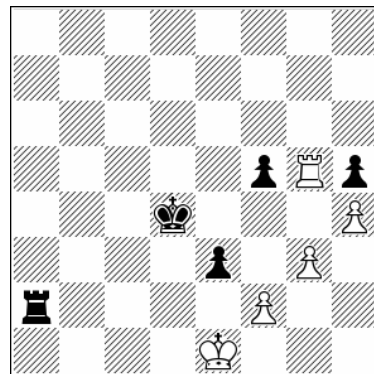


Position after: 43...♕xc4

**44.♕d2**

44.♕e3 ♖xa4 45.♖b6 ♖a3+ 46.♕e2 f4 47.gxf4 ♖f3 This line is equal too.

**44...♖xa4 45.♖b6 ♖a5 46.♖xg6 ♕d4 47.♖g5 ♖a2+ 48.♕e1 e3**



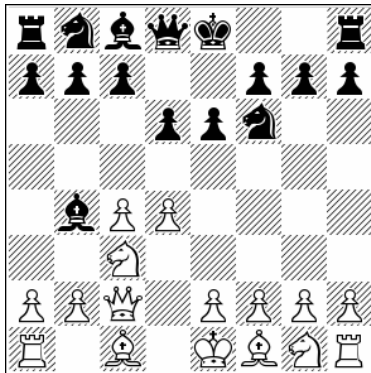
Position after: 48...e3

**49.fxe3+ ♕xe3**

A fabulous endgame, at least for me. I hope readers will also learn something from this.

## c) 4...d6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 d6



Position after: 4...d6

This is a practical line, popular among players who prefer less theory and more of a positional struggle. White has many choices.

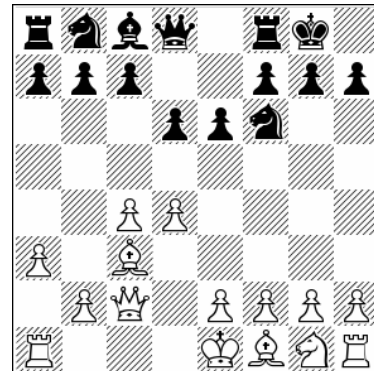
### 5.♙d2!?

The 4.♙d2 lines given at the beginning of the book are very much to the point in covering this system here.

### 5...c5

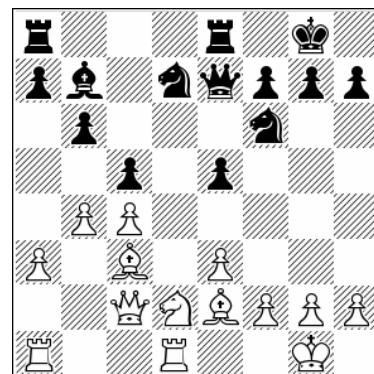
**A)** 5...♗bd7 6.a3 ♙xc3 7.♙xc3 b6 [7...0-0 8.e3 ♗e8 9.♗e2! b6 10.♗g3 ♙b7 11.♙e2 ♗f8 12.0-0 a5 13.♖ad1 d5 14.b3 ♗8d7 15.♙b2 ♖a7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♖c1 White has better chances, 1-0 (35) Euwe, M – Mueller, H Bladel 1969] 8.e4! 0-0 [8...e5 9.♙d3 0-0 10.♗e2 this transposes to the note on 5...0-0] 9.e5 ♗e8 10.f4 ♙b7 11.♗f3 White has attacking play, 0-1 (25) Zatonskih, A (2447) – Sokolov, I (2567) Amsterdam 2018.

**B)** 5...0-0 6.a3 ♙xc3 7.♙xc3



Position after: 7.♙xc3

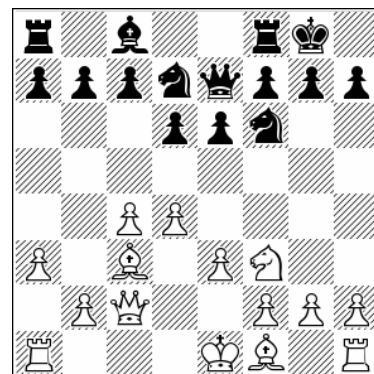
**B1)** 7...♗e8 8.♗f3 ♗bd7 9.e3 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♙e2 ♖e7 12.0-0 [12.h3 a passive move, 1-0 (27) Krasenkow, M (2614) – Turova, I (2421) Stockholm 2014] 12...b6 13.♖fd1 ♙b7 14.b4 c5 15.♗d2!



Position after: 15.♗d2!

15...♗f8 16.b5 ♗g6

**B2)** 7...♖e7 8.♗f3 ♗bd7 9.e3

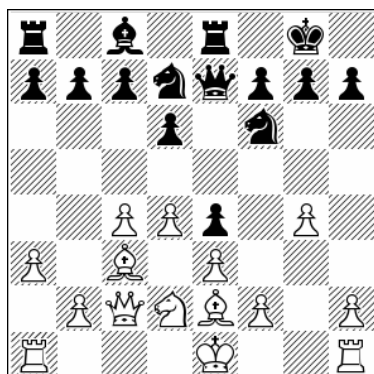


Position after: 9.e3

**B2.1)** 9...e5 10.♙e2

**B2.1a)** 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.0-0 ♘ce4  
 13.♙e1 c5 14.♘b5 ♙f5 15.♙d3 ♙g6 16.♖d1  
 White is slightly better, 1-0 (45) Chernin, A (2605)  
 – Oll, L (2600) Pamplona 1991.

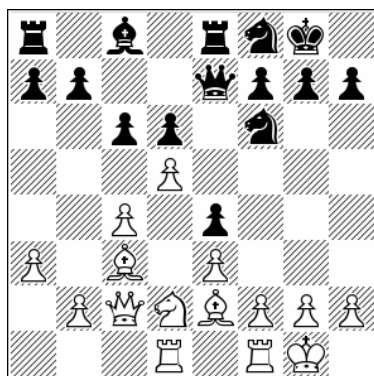
**B2.1b)** 10...e4 11.♘d2 ♖e8 12.g4!



Position after: 12.g4!

12...♘f8 13.g5 ♘6d7 14.0-0-0 ♘b6 15.h4 d5  
 16.♙b4 ♖e6 17.♙xf8 ♙xf8 18.c5 ♘d7 19.f3  
 White has gained a big advantage, 1-0 (31)  
 Shcherbakov, V – Lisitsin, G Moscow 1942.

**B2.1c)** 10...c6 11.♖d1 ♖e8 12.0-0 e4 13.♘d2 ♘f8  
 14.d5!



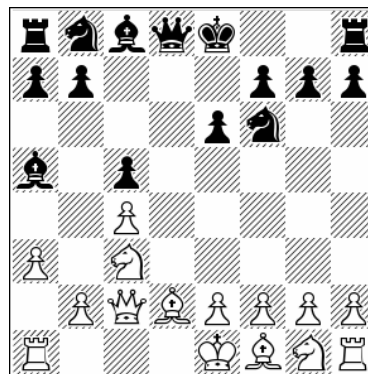
Position after: 14.d5!

14...c5 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.♖fe1 f5 17.♘f1 ♘g6  
 18.♘g3 ♘e5 19.♘h5 ♙h8 20.♖c3 ♖g8 21.♘f4  
 White has some edge but it's not so easy, as  
 Black also has a good knight, ½-½ (71) Santos  
 Latasa, J (2588) – Anadkat, K (2170) lichess.org  
 INT 2020.

**B3.2)** 9...b6 10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.0-0 ♘e4 12.♙e1 f5  
 13.♙d3 ♖ae8 14.b4 ♖f6 15.♘d2 ♖h6 16.f3 ♘xd2

17.♖xd2 There's a similar line with the bishop  
 going to e1 in the part of this book that deals  
 with the 4.♙d2 line, 1-0 (43) Ragozin, V – Lisitsin,  
 G Moscow 1940.

**6.a3 ♙a5 7.dxc5 dxc5**



Position after: 7...dxc5

**8.e3!? ♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♖e7 10.♙e2!**



Position after: 10.♙e2!

White must play flexibly here.

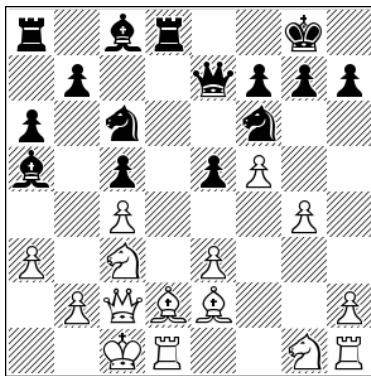
**10...0-0**

10...♙d7 11.♘h3 0-0-0 12.f3 ♙c7 13.♘f2 This is  
 also an advantage for White, not in the sense of  
 direct lines or tactical strikes, but rather because  
 White has more flexible ideas for continuing the  
 struggle.

**11.f4! ♖d8 12.g4**

12.♙f3 ♙xc3 13.♙xc3 ♖xd1+ 14.♙xd1 ♙d7  
 15.♘f3 Simple chess gives White easy play.

**12...e5 13.f5 a6**



Position after: 13...a6

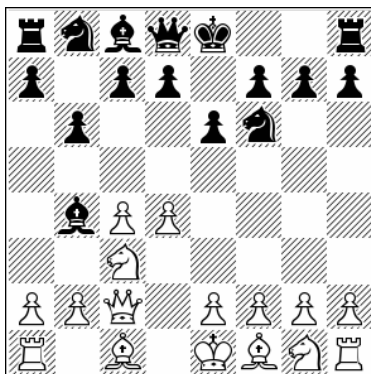
14. ♖h3

This is dangerous for Black.

**d) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♕e7 7. ♖ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9. ♗g5**

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♗b4 4. ♕c2 b6

This is a modern line that appeared a few years ago. Actually this was always considered to be inferior because of 5.e4, but in modern chess, with the use of engines, some ghosts can appear on the surface and this is one of those cases. We have a complex position in front of us.

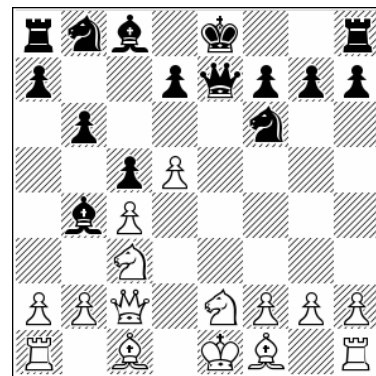


Position after: 4...b6

5.e4

Of course this is critical for the assessment of the system. We will see that what was considered in the past to be the ultimate refutation of 4...b6 is now seen as producing a very complex game as the result of engine-type chess. So it has to be on the list of lines to be covered in this book.

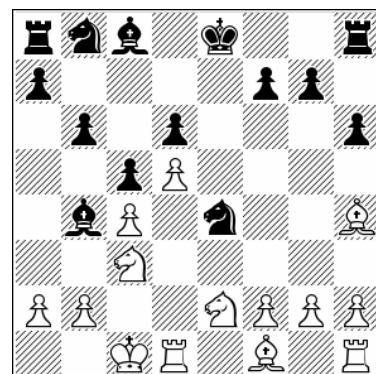
5...c5 6.d5 ♕e7 7. ♖ge2 exd5 8.exd5



Position after: 8.exd5

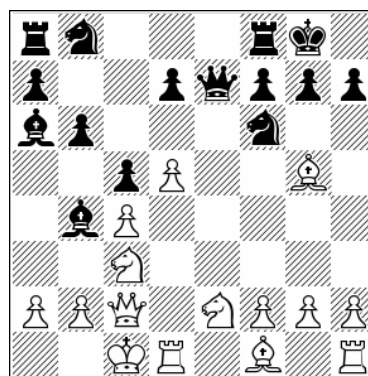
8...0-0

**A) 8...d6** Black can also use this move order, but in my opinion he can't benefit from it so it's better to castle. 9. ♗g5 [9. ♗d2 0-0 this leads to a line we have already analyzed] 9...h6 10. ♗h4 ♕e4 [10...g5 11. ♗g3 h5 12.f3 h4 13. ♗f2 ♕e5 14.0-0-0 ♖f8 15.g4 White has a big edge, 1-0 (40) Van Foreest, L (2535) – Bashirli, N (2382) Plovdiv 2021; 10...0-0 this is best, transposing to the main line] 11. ♖xe4+ ♗xe4 12.0-0-0



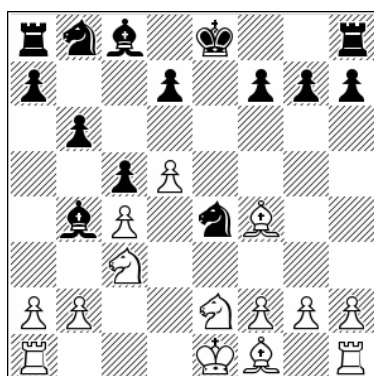
Position after: 12.0-0-0

12...♙f5 [12...♙xc3 White is very active. 13.♘xc3 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♖d7 15.♞e1 g5 16.♙g3 f5 17.h4 f4 18.♙h2 ♙b7 19.g3 ♞f8 20.gxf4 gxf4 21.♞g1 ♞f7 22.♙h3+ ♖c7 23.♙e6 ♞f6 24.♞g7+ 1-0 (24) Ioannidis, E (2411) – Miszler, L (2266) chess.com INT 2021] 13.♗b5 ♖d7 14.♗g3 g5 15.♗xe4 ♙xe4 16.♙g3 ♙g6 17.♗xd6 f5 18.♙e5 1-0 (18) Vallejo Pons, F (2677) – Cornette, M (2573) Karlsruhe 2016.



Position after: 10.0-0-0!

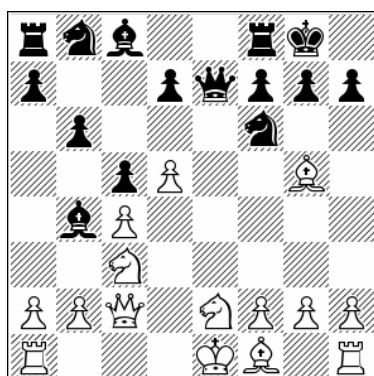
B) 8...♙e4 9.♙xe4+ ♗xe4 10.♙f4!



Position after: 10.♙f4!

Strongest by far, and now Black has problems with his development. 10...d6 11.f3 g5 12.♙e3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♙a5 14.♖d2 h6 15.h4 White is already winning and that's no exaggeration.

9.♙g5



Position after: 9.♙g5

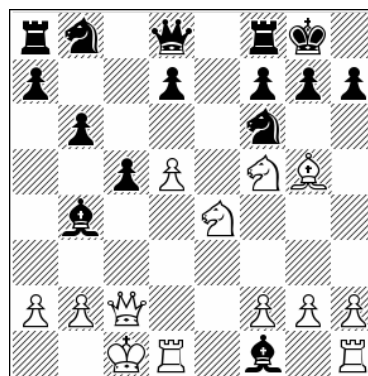
This is another aggressive plan.

9...h6

9...♙a6 10.0-0-0!

This is bad for Black. 10...♙xc4 [10...h6 11.h4 d6 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.♗e4 ♙e7 14.g4 ♙c8 15.g5 h5 16.♙h3 ♙xh3 17.♞xh3 ♞e8 18.♞e3 White has a winning attack, 1-0 (42) Laiz Ibanez, H (2268) – Horton, A (2388) Sanxenxo 2019] 11.♗g3 ♙xf1 12.♗f5!

A) 12...♙d8 13.♗e4!



Position after: 13.♗e4!

White is winning easily in both the following games. 13...♙a6 [13...♙xg2 14.♗xf6+ gxf6 15.♙h6 1-0 (15) Rezan, S (2423) – Hoelzl, F (2327) Zadar 2010] 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♙b3 ♖h8 16.♗ed6 1-0 (16) Santos Ruiz, M (2543) – Wemmers, X (2418) Caleta 2019.

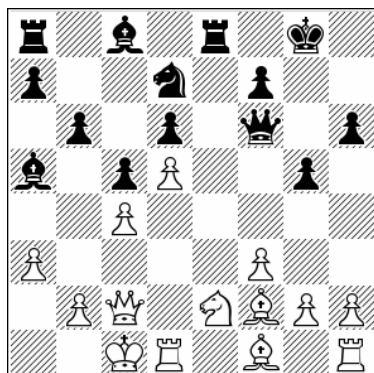
B) 12...♙e5 13.f4 ♙e8 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♗e4 ♙d8 16.♞xf1 Another quick win for White, 1-0 (20) Galaviz Medina, S (2374) – Fernandez Pozas, P (2072) Mexico City 2022.

10.♙h4 d6

10...♖e4 11.♗xe4 ♘xe4 12.0-0-0 ♙xc3 13.♘xc3  
 ♘xc3 14.bxc3 d6 15.♙e7 ♜e8 16.♙xd6 Easy, 1-0  
 (38) Rasmussen, A (2487) – Skytte, R (2412)  
 Kolding 2016.

**11.0-0-0 ♘bd7**

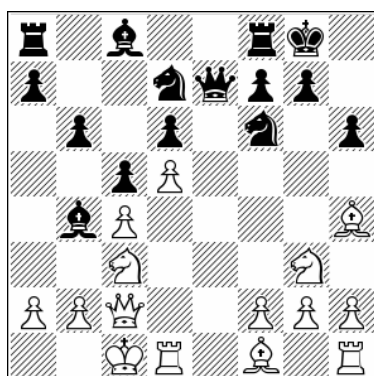
11...♜e8 12.a3 ♙a5 13.f3 ♘bd7 14.♘e4 g5  
 15.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16.♙f2!



Position after: 16. ♙f2!

This is the best idea, allowing the knight to come out to g3. 16...♘e5 [16...b5 17.cxb5 a6 18.♘g3! Black's bishop is at all not well placed on a5] 17.♘g3 ♔f8 18.♔b1 ♗g6 [18...♙d7 19.h4 White is better] 19.h4 ♗xc2+ 20.♔xc2 White has the edge, since the bishop on a5 is now a bad piece.

**12.♘g3**

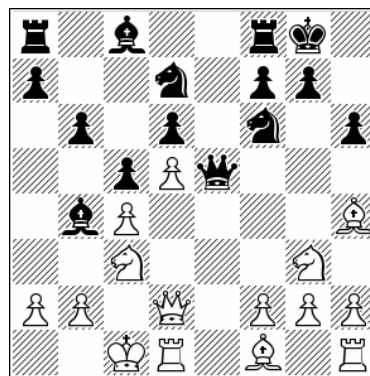


Position after: 12. ♘g3

**12...♙xc3!?**

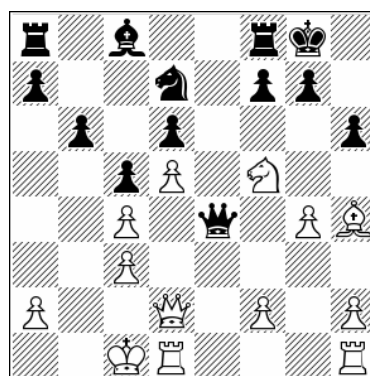
This takes us to a sequence of moves that is very long but probably best play, because alternatives are good for White.

**A) 12...♗e5 13.♗d2**



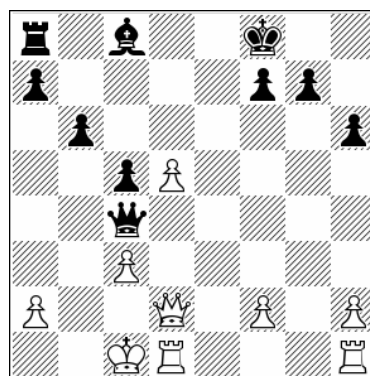
Position after: 13. ♗d2

**A1) 13...♗d4!? 14.♘f5 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♗g4  
 16.♙d3 ♘e4 17.♙xe4 ♗xe4 18.g4!**



Position after: 18.g4!

18...♘e5 [18...♗xc4 19.♘xd6 ♗a4 20.♙e7 ♘e5  
 21.♙xf8 ♔xf8 22.♘xc8 ♜xc8 23.d6 c4 24.d7  
 ♗a3+ 25.♗b2 ♗xb2+ 26.♔xb2 ♜d8 27.♞d4  
 White is close to winning] 19.♘xd6 ♗xg4  
 20.♙e7 ♘xc4 21.♘xc4 ♗xc4 22.♙xf8 ♔xf8

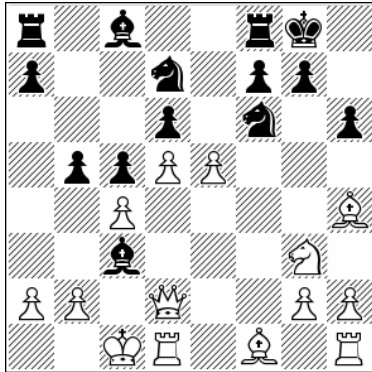


Position after: 22... ♔xf8

White seems to be better after this forced sequence of move. 23.f3 ♙f5 24.♔b2 ♗a4

25.♔a1 ♕g8 26.♖he1 It's not easy, but the passed d-pawn and the exchange up favor White.

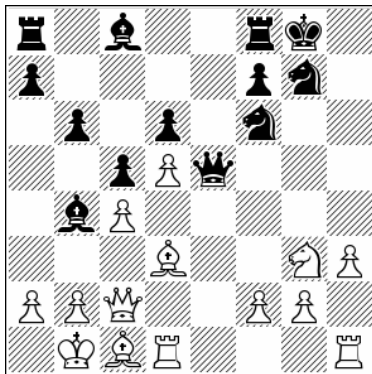
A2) 13...b5 14.f4 ♘xc3 15.fxe5!



Position after: 15.fxe5!

15...♗xd2+ 16.♖xd2 dxe5 17.♘f5 White has the initiative here.

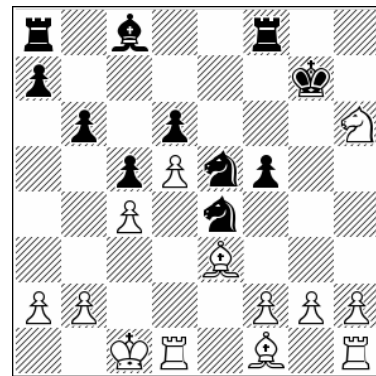
B) 12...♗e5 13.♗ce4! g5 14.♗xg5 hxg5 15.♗xg5 ♗eg4 16.♔b1! ♖e5 17.♗c1!! ♗e8 18.h3 ♗gf6 19.♗d3 ♗g7



Position after: 19...♗g7

20.b3!! It's amazing what engines can do if you know how to find right plans. White has an attack.

13.♖xc3 g5 14.♗f5 ♖e5 15.♗xh6+ ♔g7 16.♖xe5 ♗xe5 17.♗xg5 ♗e4 18.♗e3 f5



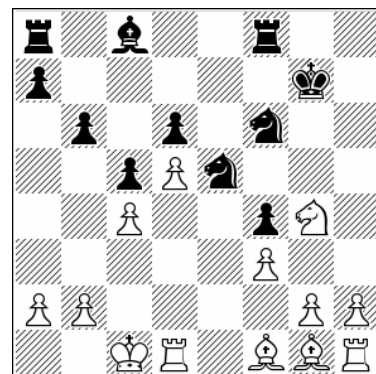
Position after: 18...f5

Black has centralized his pieces and is ready to take the initiative, with ...f4 in the air.

19.f3

19.g3 ♖h8 20.♗e2 ♖xh6 21.♗xh6+ ♔xh6 This is fine for Black.

19...f4 20.♗g1 ♗f6 21.♗g4



Position after: 21.♗g4

Now Black has many choices here and it appears that this long sequence of moves has actually taken us to an interesting endgame.

21...♗exg4

Also in the following sequence of moves it seems that Black is doing OK. 21...♗xg4 22.fxg4 ♗fxg4 23.♖e1 ♖f7 24.b3 ♖h8 25.h3 f3

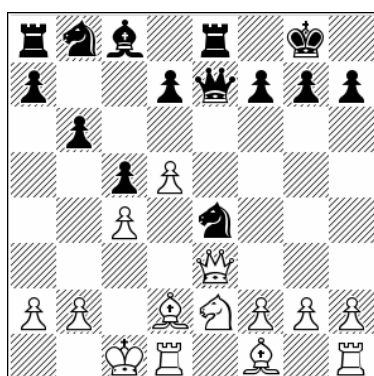
22.fxg4 ♗xg4 23.♖e1 ♖ae8 24.♖xe8 ♖xe8 25.♗f2 ♗e2!? 26.b3 ♗g4 27.♗h4 ♖e4 28.h3 ♗e5 29.♗e1 ♗xf1 30.♖xf1 ♖e2 31.♗c3 ♔g6

Black has enough play.

**e) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♖e7 7.♗ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙d2 d6 10.0-0**

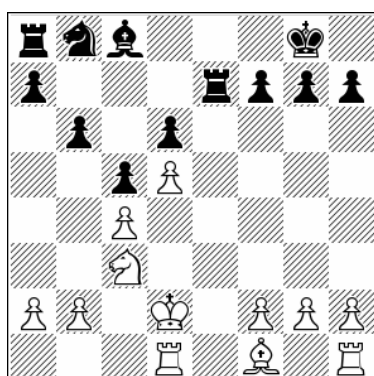
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 b6 5.e4 c5  
6.d5 ♖e7 7.♗ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙d2 d6

Black has a solid but slightly passive way to handle this position. 9...♙xc3 10.♖xc3 ♗e4 11.♖e3 ♖e8 12.0-0-0



Position after: 12.0-0-0

12...♗xd2 [12...b5 13.♗g3 ♗xd2 14.♖xe7 ♖xe7 15.♙xd2 bxc4 16.♙xc4 ♙f8 17.♗f5 White is winning, 1-0 (59) Rakhmanov, A (2670) – Rozum, I (2573) Sochi 2017] 13.♖xe7 ♖xe7 14.♙xd2 d6 15.♗c3



Position after: 15.♗c3

15...♙f5 [15...♙a6 16.♙d3 ♗d7 17.b3 ♗f6 18.f3 ♙c8 19.g4 White has a space advantage and good endgame play but Black is solid, ½-½ (49) Teplyi, I (2431) – Ochsner, B (2428) Denmark 2017] 16.♗b5 ♖d7 17.♖e1 ♗a6 18.h3 ♗c7 19.♗c3 ♖e8 20.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 21.g4 ♙g6 22.f4 f5 23.♙d3! [23.g5 Some advantage for White, ½-½

(39) Zanan, E (2505) – Erenberg, A (2442) Pardubice 2019] 23...fxg4 24.♙xg6 hxg6 25.hxg4 It's a one-sided game; the knight on e8 is passive with few prospects.

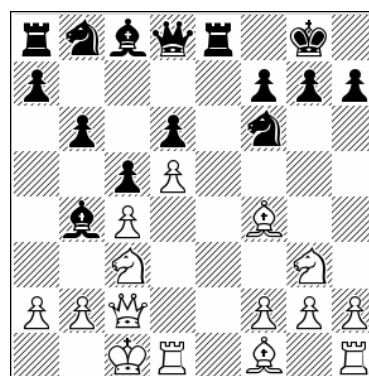
**10.0-0-0**

There is another way for White to prevent some ...♗g4 activity and that is 10.f3, which we will see in the next subchapter.

**10...♗g4**

By far the best move here.

**A) 10...♖e8 11.♗g3 ♖d8 12.♙f4!**



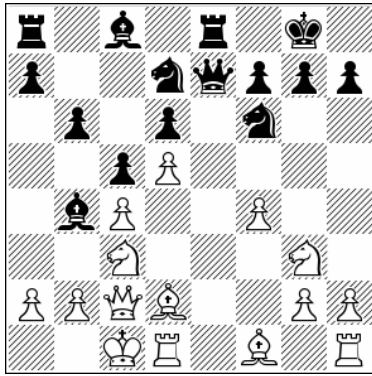
Position after: 12.♙f4!

12...♙xc3 13.♖xc3 ♗g4 14.♗h5 ♗e5 15.♖g3 White is close to winning, 1-0 (30) Ramirez, A (2562) – Benitez Lozano, J (2288) Mexico City 2021.

**B) 10...♗bd7 11.♗g3**

**B1) 11...♗e5 12.f4!** [12.♖e1 there's no need for this because actually the black queen is better placed on d8, ½-½ (21) Baburin, A (2432) – O'Connor, J (2165) Dublin 2019] 12...♗eg4 13.♖e1 ♖d8 14.h3 ♗h6 15.f5 White is better.

**B2) 11...♖e8 12.f4!**



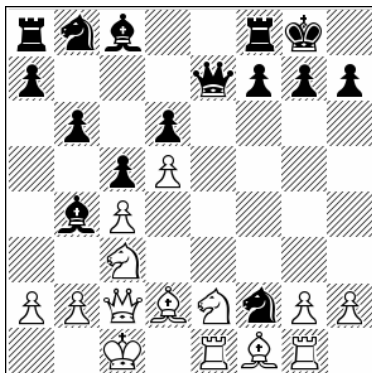
Position after: 12.f4!

White is a tempo up on the 10.f3 line. 12...♘f8 13.♙d3 ♙g4 14.♖de1 ♚b7 15.f5 Winning the bishop, 1-0 (33) Van Foreest, J (2612) – Alvarado Diaz, A (2388) chess.com INT 2019.

### 11.♙e1

OK, this is a main idea.

White can also offer a pawn, a gambit that cannot be dismissed lightly. 11.♖e1 ♘xf2 12.♖g1



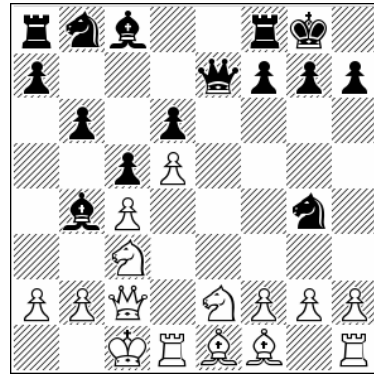
Position after: 12.♖g1

**A)** 12...♘d7 13.♘d4 ♚xe1+ 14.♙xe1 cxd4 15.a3 ♙c5 16.b4 White is better, 0-1 (42) Bocharov, D (2611) – Tomashevsky, E (2724) Novosibirsk 2016.

**B)** 12...♚h4 13.g3 ♚f6 14.g4 ♙xg4 15.♘g3 Already this is dangerous for Black, despite being two pawns up, 0-1 (47) Dardha, D (2555) – Kozak, A (2523) chess.com INT 2022.

**C)** 12...♘g4 13.a3 ♙a5 14.♘f4 ♘e5 15.g4 ♚d8 16.♖g3 It's a bit like playing a Sicilian. 16...♘bd7

17.♙d3 ♙g6 18.g5 ♖e8 19.♘e4 With complications.

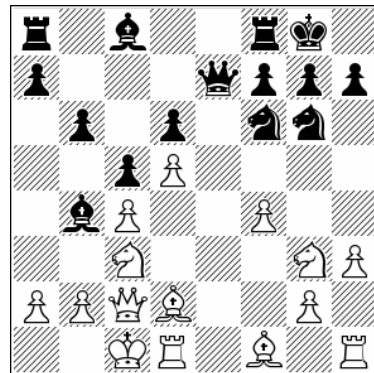


Position after: 11.♙e1

### 11...♚g5+

Probably best.

**A)** 11...♘d7 12.h3 ♘ge5 13.♘g3 ♘f6 14.f4 ♘g6 15.♙d2



Position after: 15.♙d2

15...♚d8! Again we see this idea, and again it seems best. [15...b5 Black is not forced to do this. 16.♘xb5, 1-0 (35) Zhou Jianchao (2597) – Wei Yi (2743) Shenzhen 2017; 15...a6 Another bad idea. 16.h4! ♙g4 17.♖e1 ♚d8 18.h5 ♘e7 19.f5 White is better.] 16.h4 h6 17.♙d3 a6 18.♙xg6 fxg6 19.♚xg6 b5 20.♘f5 ♙xf5 21.♚xf5 bxc4 22.♖he1 ♖b8 23.g4 ♚b6 The complications continue.

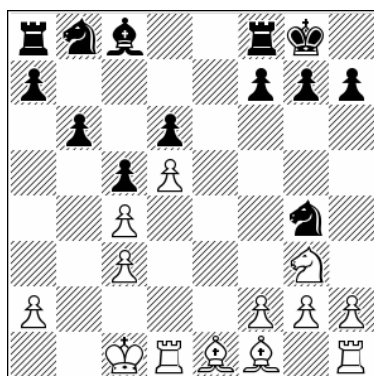
**B)** 11...♘e5 The plan behind this move is good but the question is, does White have to cooperate? 12.h3!? Perhaps White has to do something like this. I will give one sample of this idea to show what I mean. 12...♘xc4 13.♘g3 ♘e5 14.a3 ♙a5 15.f4 ♘g6 16.♙d2 f5 17.h4 ♚d8

18.h5 ♖e7 19.♗d3 ♜a6 20.♞b5 ♗xd2+ 21.♞xd2 ♜c7 22.♞xc7 ♞xc7 23.♞e1 ♞f7 24.♞de2 White has the initiative.

### 12. ♞d2 ♞xd2+

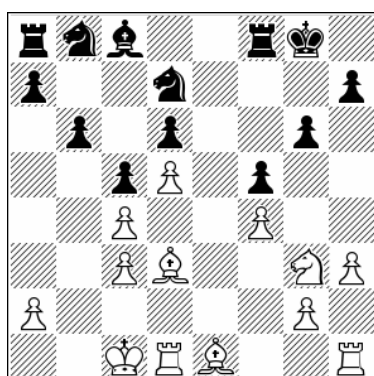
Black can seek exchanges in a slightly different way.

12... ♞f6 13. ♞g3 ♗xc3 14. ♞xc3 ♞xc3+ 15. bxc3 Doubling the white pawns doesn't necessarily mean that Black eases his play.



Position after: 15.bxc3

15...f5 [15... ♗a6 16. ♞f5 ♞d8 17.f3 ♞e5 18.f4 ♞g6 19. ♗g3 White is better] 16.h3 ♞e5 17.f4 ♞ed7 18. ♗d3 g6

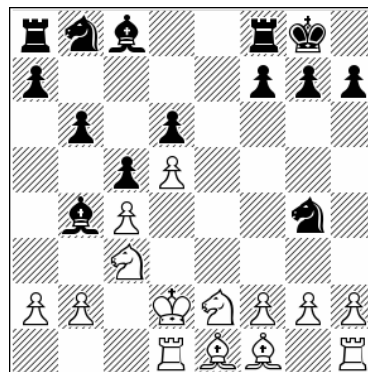


Position after: 18...g6

19. ♞f1! As in the Nimzo Saemisch lines, the bishop goes to h4 and the knight to e3 or d2. [19. ♗d2 ♞f6 20. ♞he1 ♞a6 21. ♞f1 ♞c7 22. ♞h2 ♗d7 23. ♞e2 a6 24. ♞f3 b5 25. ♗e1 bxc4 26. ♗xc4 ♗b5 27. ♗xb5 axb5 28. ♞g5 ♞cxd5 29.g3 ♞fe8 30. ♞xe8+ ♞xe8 0-1 (30) Lehtila, T (2131) – Kulaots, K (2571) Jyvaskyla 2016] 19... ♞f6

20. ♗h4 ♞bd7 21. ♞d2 ♗a6 22. ♞c2 ♞ae8 23. ♞he1 ♗c8 24.g3 Some edge for White, but not much solid play.

### 13. ♞xd2



Position after: 13. ♞xd2

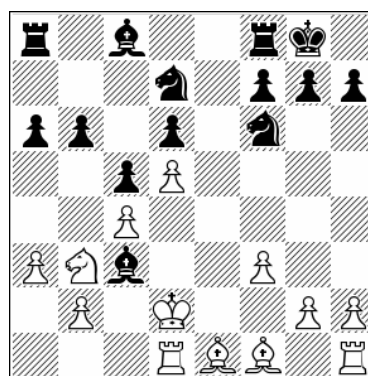
Both sides are solid in this endgame. Perhaps White has a tiny edge on account of his extra space.

### 13...a6

A) 13... ♞d7 14. ♞c1! a6 15.a3 ♗a5 16.h3 ♞ge5 17. ♞g3 f5 18.f4 ♞g6 19. ♞h5 This is the right plan to gain a small advantage, but Black is solid.

B) 13... ♞e8 14.a3 ♗a5 15. ♞g3 ♗a6 16. ♞f5 ♞d8 17. ♞c2 g6 18.h3 ♞f6 19. ♞e3 ♞bd7 20. ♞b1 ♗xc3 21. ♗xc3 ♞e4 22. ♗e1 White has secured the bishop pair and taken the initiative, 1-0 (39) Navara, D (2697) – Safarli, E (2598) Torneo INT 2020.

14.a3 ♗a5 15. ♞c1! ♞f6 16.f3 ♞bd7 17. ♞b3 ♗xc3+



Position after: 17... ♗xc3+

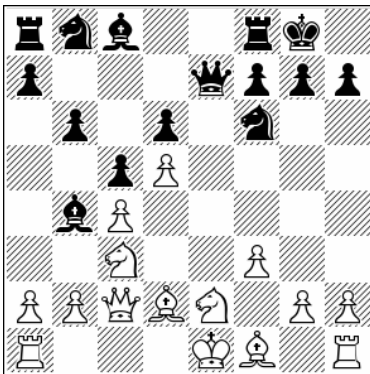
**18. ♖xc3**

This is similar to the Navara game above. White can hope to profit from his bishop pair and extra

space plus the weak black pawn on d6, ½-½ (78) Gretarsson, H (2577) – Kovalev, V (2634) Riga 2021.

**f) 4...b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♖e7 7. ♘ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9. ♙d2 d6 10.f3**

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 b6 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♖e7 7.♟ge2 exd5 8.exd5 0-0 9.♙d2 d6 10.f3**



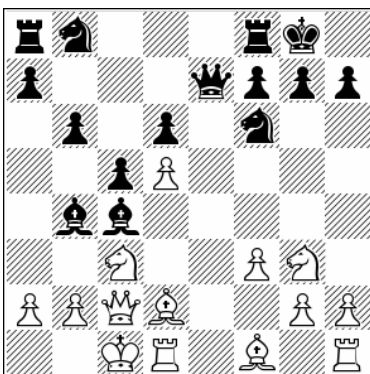
Position after: 10.f3

This is yet another important idea. White stops any attempts by Black to use the e4-square.

**10...♟bd7**

Probably best, Black is developing in the most logical way.

**10...♙a6 11.0-0-0 ♙xc4 12.♟g3**



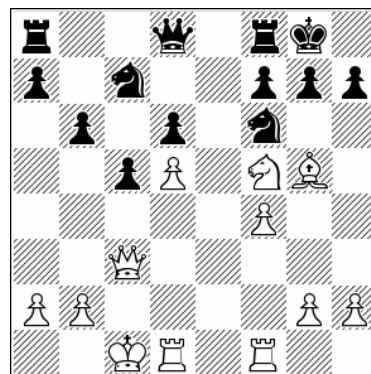
Position after: 12.♟g3

This is dangerous for Black.

**A) 12...♙xd5 13.♟f5 ♚d8 [13...♚d7 14.♟xd5 ♟xd5 15.♙g5! ♟c7 16.♞xd6 winning, 1-0 (35) Milikow, Y (2296) – David, A (2436) Graz 2020] 14.♟xd5! [14.♙g5 is less clear, 1-0 (31) Indjic, A (2618) – Aditya, M (2438) lichess.org INT 2020] 14...♟xd5 15.♚e4 ♟c7 16.♙xb4 cxb4 17.♞xd6 ♚g5+ 18.f4 White wins in short order.**

**B) 12...♙xf1 13.♞hxh1** Now Black's problem is the f5-square.

**B1) 13...♟a6 14.♟f5 ♚d8 15.♙g5 ♙xc3 16.♚xc3 ♟c7 17.f4!**

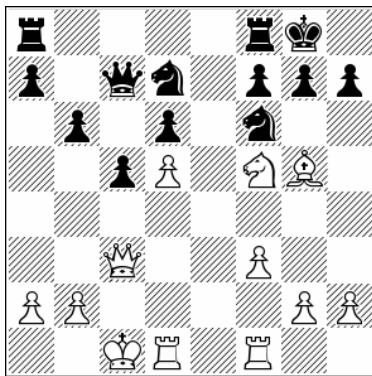


Position after: 17.f4!

**17...♟ce8 18.♞fe1 ♚d7 19.♟xg7 ♟xg7 20.♚xf6 ♚f5 21.♚xd6** Clear advantage to White.

**B2) 13...♟bd7 14.♟f5 ♚d8 15.♙g5 ♙xc3 16.♚xc3**

**B2.1) 16...♚c7**



Position after: 16...Qc7

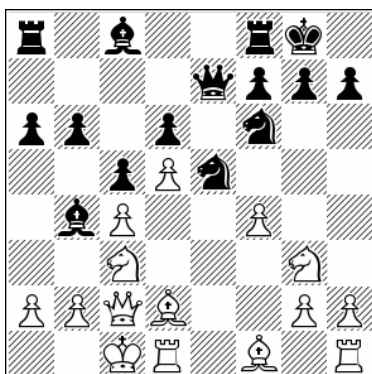
17. ♕f4! [17. ♖d4 ♜ae8 unclear, 1-0 (48) Dreev, A (2652) – Moussard, J (2567) Bastia 2017] 17... ♗e5 18. ♕xe5 dxe5 19. d6 ♜b7 20. ♜xe5 White has tremendous attacking play.

**B2.2)** 16...b5 17. ♗xd6 b4 18. ♜c2 a5 19. ♜fe1 It appears that White has better prospects, 1-0 (36) Indjic, A (2612) – Tran Tuan Minh (2522) Moscow 2018.

### 11.0-0-0 ♜e8

That's probably the right plan, keeping a rook on e8 and retreating the queen to d8, with ...a6 and ...b5 in the offing. This seems to be a good strategy.

11... ♗e5 This looks to be premature. 12. ♗g3 a6 13. f4!



Position after: 13.f4!

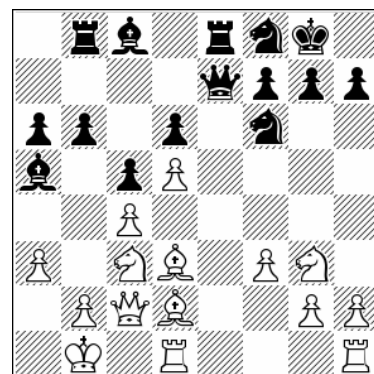
13... ♗eg4 [13... ♗g6 14. h4! now there's no time to retreat to e7 and White is clearly better] 14. ♜e1 ♜b7 15. h3 ♗h6 16. ♕d3 b5 17. f5! ♕d7

18. ♕xh6 gxh6 19. ♗ce4 White has mounted a winning attack.

### 12. ♗g3 ♜d8

Best. It's a bit paradoxical to retreat a piece that is already developed, but on e7 the queen was vulnerable.

Passive play does not help Black. 12... ♗f8 13. ♕d3 a6 14. a3 ♕a5 15. ♖b1 ♜b8



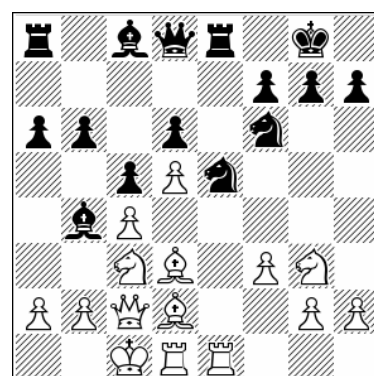
Position after: 15...♜b8

16. ♜he1! [16. ♗f5 ♕xf5 17. ♕xf5 b5 this is fine for Black, 0-1 (33) Ciorgovean, I (2331) – Gonda, L (2541) Mamaia 2019] 16... ♜d8 17. ♕g5! ♜xe1 18. ♜xe1 h6 19. ♕xf6 ♜xf6 20. ♜e8 Black is lost.

### 13. h3

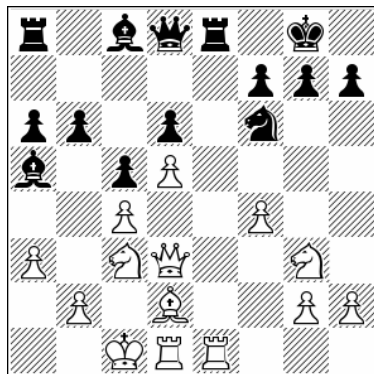
That's just one of many possible moves. but it seems that Black is doing OK with his plan.

13. ♕d3 ♗e5 14. ♜he1 a6



Position after: 14...a6

15.a3 [15.♙g5 h6 16.♙f4 ♘xd3+ 17.♚xd3 ♜xe1 18.♞xe1 b5! also here we can see this activity for Black, 0-1 (49) Tang, A (2538) – Firouzja, A (2759) chess.com INT 2021] 15...♙a5 16.f4 ♘xd3+ 17.♚xd3



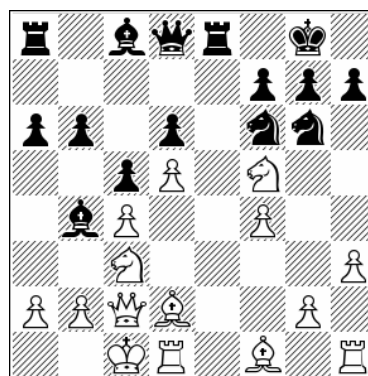
Position after: 17.♚xd3

17...b5! Typical play on the queenside. [17...♙g4? 18.♞xe8+ ♚xe8 19.♞e1 ♚d7 20.h3 Black is lost, 1-0 (27) Tang, A (2538) – Firouzja, A (2759) chess.com INT 2021]

**13...a6 14.♘f5**

14.a3 ♙a5 15.f4 b5 16.cxb5 ♘b6 Just unclear, 0-1 (30) Daneshvar, B (2300) – Gadimbayli, A (2443) Baku 2019.

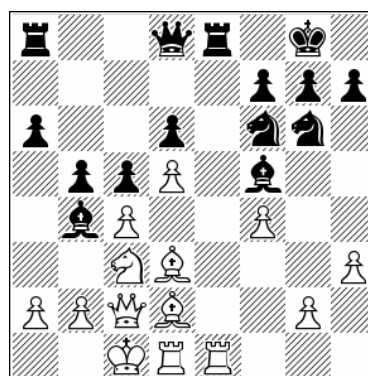
**14...♘e5 15.f4 ♘g6!**



Position after: 15...♘g6!

As we have seen in other examples, this is good strategy for Black. Now ...b5 is coming.

**16.♙d3 b5 17.♞he1 ♙xf5!**



Position after: 17...♙xf5!

**18.♙xf5 bxc4 19.♙xg6 hxg6 20.f5 gxf5 21.♙g5 ♚a5 22.♙xf6 gxf6**

Black is better, ½-½ (27) Nikolov, M (2547) – Perez Ponsa, F (2554) Krasnaya Polyana 2021.

