

White will wreak havoc on f7 and e6 as direct sacrificial blows and the savage ♖h5 lurks. If Black stands idle, even the effortless f4-f5 will smash through.

Finegold Defense – 12.♙xe6!

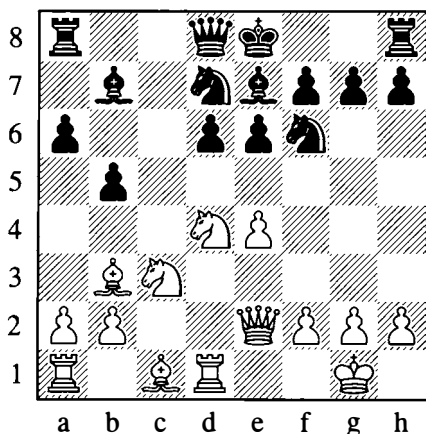
1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♟xc3 d6 5.♟f3 e6 6.♙c4 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♟f6 8.♞e2 a6 9.♟d1 b5 10.♙b3 ♟bd7

We arrive at the main position of the notorious Finegold Defense. Again, Black adopts a Scheveningen formation, but obstructs the bishop's guard of e6 while his king waits in the center to receive incoming missiles. With the preconditions for a strike on the e6/f7 complex met, the gambiteer does not hesitate.

11.♟d4!?

Black lacks the time to respond with 11...♟c5 as 12.♟c6 or 12.e5! first plows through.

11...♙b7?!



12.♙xe6! fxe6 13.♟xe6

And I went on to win in both Esserman – Chow, Chicago 2000 and Esserman – Finegold, Internet (blitz) 2006. The black king must endure a protracted central siege as White's rooks and minor pieces pillage.

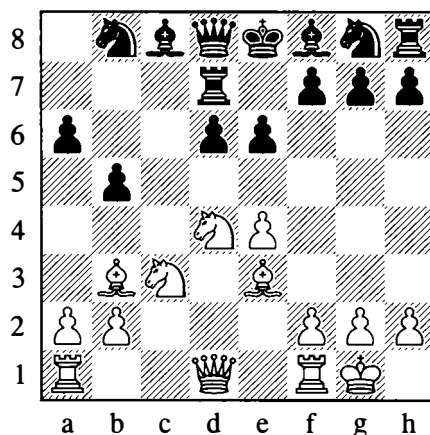
Chicago Defense – 10.♟d4!

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♟xc3 e6 5.♟f3 a6 6.♙c4 d6 7.0-0 b5 8.♙b3 ♞a7 9.♙e3 ♟d7

A main variation of the Chicago Defense. Black places his rook on the awkward square d7 to shield his queen from the menacing ♞e2, ♟fd1, and e5. However, he again blocks his queen's bishop from guarding e6 in a Scheveningen system, so the thematic response should not be hard to spot.

10.♟d4!

Target acquired.



10...♟f6 11.f4!

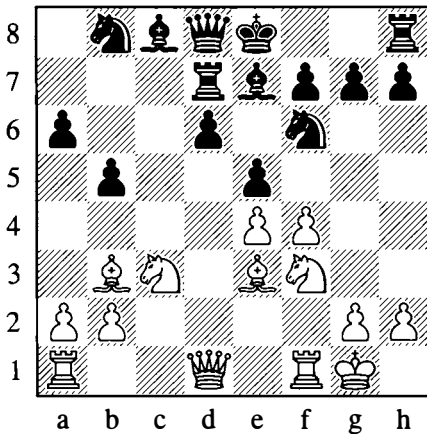
The famous pawn advance, found principally in the Open Sicilian, is extremely effective in ripping apart the e6/f7 complex.

11...e5

Black avoids doom and gloom on e6, but in turn opens the gates to f7. It is rarely a good idea for the defender to play ...e6-e5 (or ...e7-e5) with his king more than a move away from castling, as White will have time to mount a dangerous offensive against the f7-pawn. In this case the attack features ♟g5 and ♙f7, but in other premature ...e5 positions, the gambiteer can jet his queen to b3, with themes echoing the classical e4/e5 gambits.

12. ♖f3 ♗e7

Black tries to castle but it is too late.

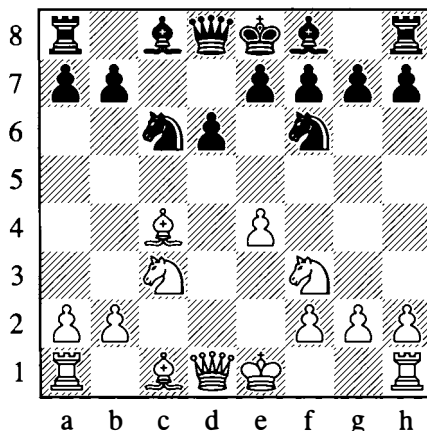
**13. ♗xf7! ♔xf7 14. ♖g5+–**

Showcased in Esserman – Nakamura, Chicago 2000. 14... ♔e8 15. ♖e6 and the knight grazes freely on e6 while the black king withers in the center once more.

In the Morra Gambit, due to White's extreme lead in development, sound sacrifices can instantly appear from just about anywhere on the board. So keep an open mind to any possibility and be alert.

Be Alert – 9. ♖b5!

1. e4 c5 2. d4 cxd4 3. c3 dxc3 4. ♖xc3 ♖c6 5. ♖f3 d6 6. ♗c4 ♖f6



Black has developed normally and without reproach, following well established opening principles. He has obeyed the classic rule: “knights before bishops,” while not wasting any time. And the necessary ...d6 inhibited White's e4-e5 thrust. Who would then think that White can seize the advantage with a forcing tactical sequence?

7. e5!

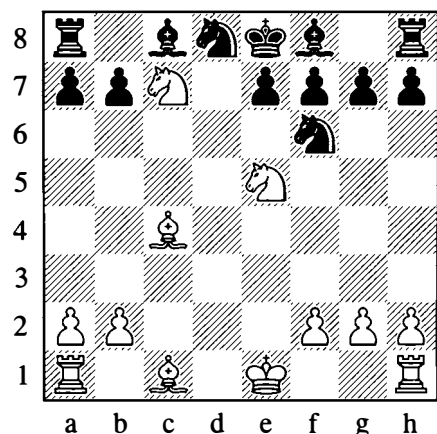
The gambiteer charges ahead regardless, ignoring Black's d6-barricade. But his advance is far from reckless, for if 7... ♖xe5, then 8. ♖xe5 dxe5 9. ♗xf7! nets the queen.

7... dxe5 8. ♗xf7 ♖xd8

If 8... ♖xd8, then 9. ♖g5 hits Black from other side!

9. ♖b5!

Despite making three logical opening moves, Black falls into grave danger, and if he is not inspired enough to find 9... ♗b8 (which still leads to his ruin), he may get shamefully mated in only 11 moves.

9... ♖d7?? 10. ♖xe5! ♔e8 11. ♖c7#

I'm sure I'm not the only Morra player to spring this embarrassing trap several times on unsuspecting opponents. Black must therefore