

Tiger Hillarp Persson

# The Modern Tiger



A  
**GRANDMASTER**  
Guide

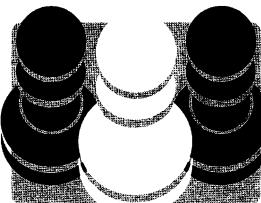
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# The Modern Tiger

By

## Tiger Hillarp Persson



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# The Modern Tiger

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# Key to symbols used

++	White is slightly better
+=	Black is slightly better
+	White is better
+	Black is better
+—	White has a decisive advantage
—+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
?	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

# Bibliography

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Vigus: *Chess Developments: The Pirc*, Everyman Chess 2012

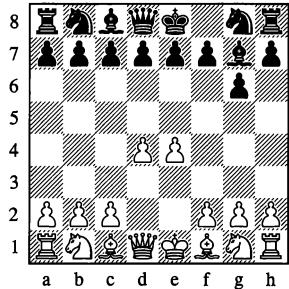
## Electronic/Internet resources

- ChessBase Magazine  
ChessPublishing

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# Preface

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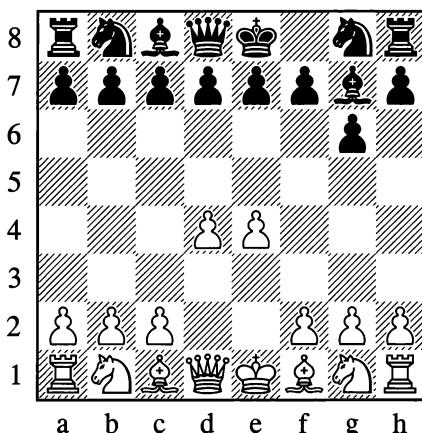
*I know this defies the law of gravity, but – you see – I never studied law.* – Bugs Bunny

When I wrote *Tiger's Modern* ten years ago, I was a different chess player from what I am today, and more so than anything in relation to the opening that this book is about. Back then I thought, “Everyone should play the Modern – it’s such an awesome opening!”, whereas my attitude today is more along the lines of: “If you like to set yourself a challenge then the Modern is for you. (It’s such an awesome opening.)”

It is not a tectonic shift, but it makes a difference, and the difference will be felt as you continue reading. *Tiger's Modern* included sixty-nine games, of which I have re-examined and updated fifty-nine. For the remaining ten I found better examples and integrated the important parts into other games. More importantly, I added another forty-three games to cover the advances in understanding that have occurred in the past decade.

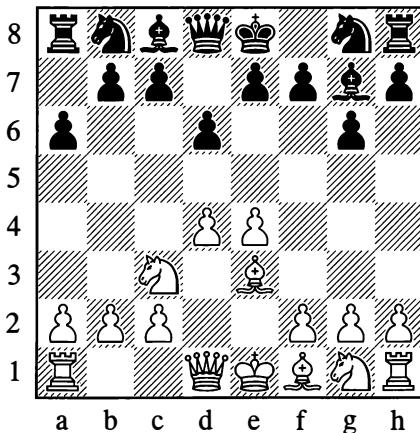
So what is the Modern?

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♖g7**



This is the basic Modern position. This book is not a complete guide to the Modern, but more specifically about a particular interpretation of Black's position. This is best illustrated by adding another two moves:

**3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6!**



This last move might seem like madness, yet there is method in 't. Black is planning ...b5 in order to harass the knight on c3 and thereby weaken White's defence of the e4-pawn. This strategy is no uncommon occurrence in chess, and can be seen in the Najdorf Sicilian as well as the Modern Benoni, among others. So, why not play 4...c6 with the same idea? I do not claim 4...c6 is clearly worse, but logically it seems like the lesser move since Black can no longer play ...♗b7 and attack the e4-pawn.

### A History of the Modern with ...a6

I wish I could take credit for the development of this system, but it does not seem fair when I consider those who came before me. In the sixties and seventies there were Ujtely, Suttles, Keene and Ivkov, who broke new ground by employing ...a6 in the Classical Pirc. Then in the eighties, Seirawan, Speelman and McNab developed the ideas further, followed by the giants of the nineties: Mikhail Gurevich and Azmaiparashvili. In the twenty-first century we have seen the likes of Svidler and Vachier-Lagrave try it out, and there are a number of other grandmasters who use it as a surprise weapon. Nowadays I seem to be the most consistent employer of the Modern with ...a6, although I also play related systems like the Pirc. One of the beautiful things about the Modern is that there are so many ways to play it, that you are almost never stuck for an alternative.

### Breaking the law?

There are indeed times when I ask myself if the Modern Defence actually defies the 'laws' of chess, although usually it is a question that leaves me untroubled. If the Modern Defence is in conflict with something, it is really just with a collection of blunt guidelines – and I have never taken

these guidelines seriously. A certain disregard for rules and authority will actually help you in your quest to understand the Modern. I think Bugs Bunny would have handled it well.

Still, if you do believe in some kind of chess ‘rules’, then I understand that the Modern might be felt as something of an aberration. First of all, as anyone can see, there is the problem of territory – or rather the lack thereof. According to the Classical School of thought, it is of paramount importance to stake out a presence in the centre with the infantry (The Slav and the Ruy Lopez are typical examples of this line of thought). Opposed to this, the Modern School says it is okay to leave the infantry in the barracks in order to land an early counterpunch on your opponent’s centre (the majority of the Indian openings and the Sicilian are good examples of this style). The truly radical way of handling the opening is the Hypermodern School, which is fine with a more laidback approach, just keeping an eye on the opponent’s centre from a distance, while waiting to set up an ambush for later.

There are not many openings that involve the third strategy, but the Modern Defence (perhaps it ought to have been called Hyper-Modern Defence?) is one of the few.

### **Bad news vs. good news**

I have noticed a couple of general trends in the first decade-and-a-half of the new millennium. The first trend is the return of Classical Chess, with more and more of the world’s elite playing classical openings. The second is an enhanced focus on fighting and stretching the limits of the possible. Whereas the first trend clearly collides with the Modern, the second makes me more optimistic about its future.

When I wrote *Tiger’s Modern*, it was at a time when 4...a6 was only the third most common move after 4.♗e3. However, the last ten years have seen a dramatic shift, with 4...a6 taking over as clearly the most common choice. I used to know almost no ‘theory’ on the Modern before I wrote a book about it, but I still managed to achieve good results. However, since then the ...a6 Modern has received more attention, and it has become more difficult to use it as a weapon of surprise. Today it is more important to be well prepared and know a number of concrete lines. Still, if you compare the Modern to any main Sicilian variation, as well as the French, Caro-Kann or just about any other opening, you still need far less theoretical knowledge to be able to play it.

### **Looking Back, Moving Forwards**

The development of computer engines in the last decade has changed the way chess is played, and it has also changed the way I play the Modern. Before the era of super-strong engines I was happy to play a complex and unclear position more than once, whereas now I prefer not to repeat these lines too often, because I do not want to get involved in lines that my opponent might have analysed for hours with an engine. This is especially true of certain variations in the first chapter, where there are a number of lines that are really pressing the limits of the possible (which is the reason why I have given an alternative set-up for Black in Chapter 2). The good news is that there is still plenty of room for new ideas in this arena.

I have seen some improvements in the commentary to Modern games in the chess media of the twenty-first century, but there is still some dreadful ‘information’ being circulated. It is still

easy to be misled by a strong engine unless you work *with it* rather than *for it*, and I am in no way immune to this misuse myself. That is why “all progress depends on the unreasonable man” more now than ever before.

This is not the tale of the “ugly duckling”, where in the end we come to realize that the duckling is in fact a swan. No, this duck is a duck, but I like this duck. It’s a unique duck in its own right, and it may even turn into a hippopotamus.

Tiger Hillarp Persson  
Malmö, Sweden  
November 2014

## Acknowledgements

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My resourceful friends, Alfredo, Hanna and Henke.

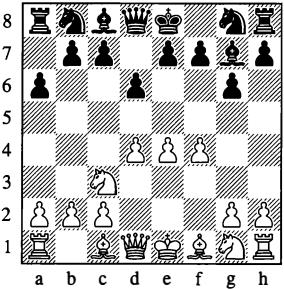
Carla, Garry, Jonathan and Ludvig for making me remember why I love chess.

And my editors, Andrew, Jacob and John, who had more patience with me than I ever had myself.

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# Chapter 1

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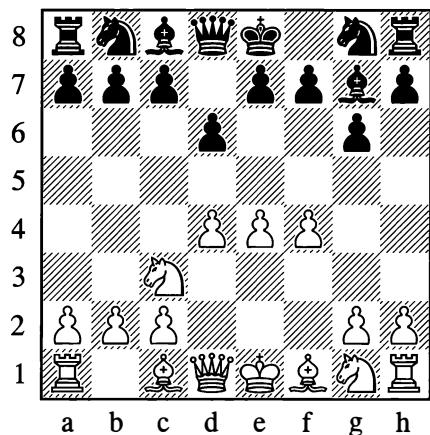
## 4.f4 – Austrian Style

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6

4.♗e3 a6 5.a4!?	b6 6.f4!	Game 16	93
4.f4 a6			
5.a4?! ♘c6!?	Game 15		89
5.♗e3 b5 6.♗e2	Game 12		72
5.♘f3 b5			
6.♗e3 ♜b7 7.♗d3 ♘f6!?	Game 9 (7...♞d7 – 6.♗d3 ♘d7 7.♗e3 ♜b7)		56
6.♗d3			
6...♗b7?!	Game 5		36
6...♞d7			
7.♗e3 ♜b7!			
8.0–0 c5	Game 10		62
8.♗e2 b4?!	Game 11		66
8.e5			
8...c5?!	Game 7		38
8...♞h6	Game 8		52
7.a4 b4 8.♘e2			
8...c5 (8...a5)	Game 13		79
8...e6?!	(8...♞gf6) Game 14		86
7.e5?! c5!			
8.exd6?!	Game 6		37
8.♘g5			
8...cxsd4 9.e6 f5!	Game 1		12
8...♞h6	Game 2		18
8.♗e4 ♞b8			
9.♗e3	Game 3		22
9.0–0!	Game 4		28

*Wer sich nicht in Gefahr begibt, der kommt drin um.* (He who does not face the danger will perish in it.) – Wolf Biermann

### 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{B}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4.f4



This is by far the most brutal way to meet the Modern. White is preparing to answer ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with a future e4-e5, intending to smother us in our cradle. It is a simple strategy to understand, and not a bad idea from the smotherer's perspective. In this chapter we will examine the hyper-modern approach which characterizes the Modern Tiger.

### 4...a6!

This seemingly provocative move is in fact highly logical, in that it prepares an attack on the e4-pawn with ...b5-b4 and ... $\mathbb{B}b7$ . It is an invitation to a Danse Macabre to which I have, with only a few exceptions, remained faithful throughout my 22-year adventure with the Modern. There is no way for White to sidestep it while maintaining civility on the board. We have just turned chess into a game of All or Nothing.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  introduces the more domesticated Pirc Defence. In *Tiger's Modern* I explained my reasons for not playing this move, but since then my opinion has shifted, and I have found

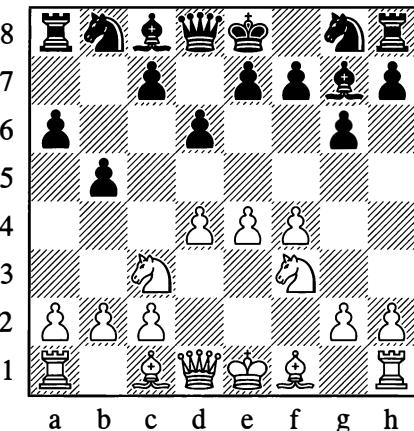
a place for it as a secondary option in my repertoire. See Chapter 2 for more about this.

4...c6 is a popular alternative that I prefer to avoid. If Black continues with ...b5 then he will get a worse version of the present chapter, as his light-squared bishop will not be able to attack the centre from b7. Another idea is to meet 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with 5... $\mathbb{B}g4$  6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ , but after 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8.gxf3 White has excellent prospects.

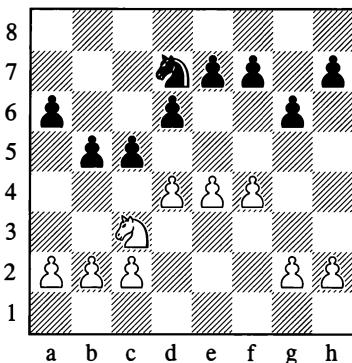
### 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This is by far the most logical and common move, but 5.a4 and 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}f1-e2-f3$ , are also played rather frequently.

### 5...b5



Black's set-up begins to take shape. The last move prepares ... $\mathbb{B}b7$  when ...b5-b4, winning the e4-pawn, is threatened (although as we will see, in certain variations there are concrete reasons why Black should delay the development of the second bishop). The next step is to challenge White's centre by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  followed by ...c5, leading to the following structure:



If the d4-pawn is exchanged or moves to d5, Black obtains control of the e5-square and can play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  without worrying about e4-e5. In effect, Black intends to enter a Sicilian structure with a double fianchetto and knights on f6 and d7, then follow up with ... $\mathbb{E}c8$  and strike at White's centre.

### Possible Plans for White

White has a wide choice of available systems, which can be categorized in the following way.

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and e4-e5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , trying to force through e5-e6 (Games 1, 2 and 5)

This plan is critical, but Black has two plausible replies: either play ...c5 and ...cx $d$ 4, meeting e5-e6 with ...f5 (Games 1 and 5), or answer  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (Game 2). Both ways lead to unbalanced positions where each player will have to take risks.

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and e4-e5-e6 followed by $\mathbb{Q}g5$

(Comments to 8th, 9th and 11th moves in Games 1, 5 and 7 respectively)

I am not worried about this pawn sacrifice. If Black has already played ...c5 then  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  can be met with ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ , and otherwise  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  can be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and e4-e5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}e4$

(Games 3, 4 and 7)

This is a popular plan that should be taken

seriously. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (Game 3) is not to be feared. Much more critical is 9.0-0 (Game 4) when the usual 9... $cxd4$  sees Black rely on an exchange sacrifice, although if this does not appeal he can deviate with 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$ , my latest try which is discussed in the notes. The line featured in Game 7 is also complicated, although Black gets a satisfactory game with 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and e4-e5 followed by exd6 (Game 6)

Giving up the centre like this looks ridiculous to me, and there is nothing in Game 6 to make me change my mind.

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , $\mathbb{W}e2$ and e4-e5 (Game 5)

This plan gives White decent chances against Black's set-up with an early ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , as seen in Game 5. However, if Black plays the more accurate move order with ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  followed by a quick ...c5, he should get a good position.

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , and 0-0 (Game 10)

When White plays  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , Black should generally post his bishop on b7 before playing ...c5. We will see that the set-up with quick castling does not give White anything special.

#### $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and $\mathbb{W}e2$ (Game 11)

This used to give me headaches, but we will see my old recommendation of 8...b4 leading to a decent position for Black in the featured game.

#### $\mathbb{Q}e2-f3$ intending to exchange the b7-bishop (Game 12)

This became quite popular after Morozevich won a few games with it in the late nineties. The main game features an attractive set-up for Black, who plays an early ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  intending to meet  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with ...e5, keeping the bishop blocked in. This seems to work well, although the notes reveal a few other equally playable ways for Black to handle the opening.

### **Qf3, Qd3, followed by a2-a4**

(Games 13 and 14)

In this line White strives to fortify his centre before pressing the action with e4-e5 or f4-f5. It is one of the most challenging lines, and Black has to play precisely to avoid a bad position. Game 13 features 8...c5 and 8...a5, both of which lead to playable positions with just a modest edge for White. Game 14 focuses on 8...e6!?, although the notes indicate that 8...Qg6 may be a slightly more accurate move order.

### **a2-a4, stopping ...b5 (Games 15 and 16)**

Game 15 shows that 4.f4 a6 5.a4! is completely harmless, and Black has at least two good replies. Game 16 features the move order 4.Qe3 a6 5.a4. Here the safest move for Black is 5...Qf6, as seen in Chapter 4 on the Flexible Dragon Restrained. The alternative is 5...b6!?, which also seems fully playable, as long as Black meets 6.f4! with 6...Qb7 7.Qf3 Qf6! as given in the notes.

### **4.Qe3 a6 5.f4 (Game 9)**

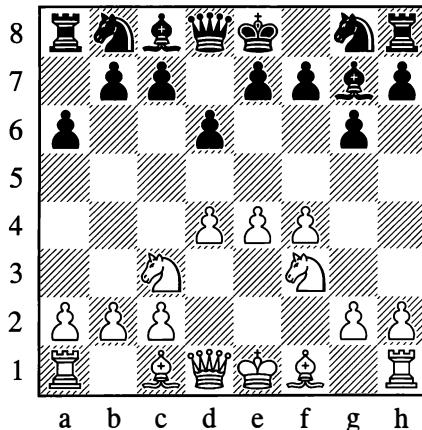
Even if you do not intend to play 4.f4 a6, you still need to be ready for those players who begin with 4.Qe3 and wait for you to play 4...a6 before reverting to the Austrian set-up with 5.f4. White's Qe3 set-ups force us to switch from the 'play ...Qd7 and ...c5 before ...Qb7' rule, and after 5...b5 6.Qf3 Qb7 7.Qd3, we will see 7...Qf6!? leading to a decent position for Black in Game 9, while the equally playable 7...Qd7 reaches a position covered in Games 10 and 11.

## GAME 1

### Marc Ghannoum – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Internacional de Sants 2004

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.Qf3**

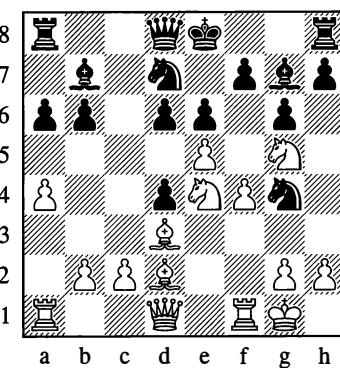


### **5...b5!**

5...Qd7 has been played, but I cannot recommend this move order because of 6.a4! b6 7.Qc4 when we have a structure similar to that of Turov – Hillarp Persson (Game 16), but here White has not spent time on Qe3 and Qd2, which gives him much better chances to punish Black for being too meek. Lars Thiede has tried 6...e6, but I do not like Black's position after 7.a5.

My years of playing this system have taught me that it is generally best to avoid playing ...e6 for as long as possible, for two reasons:

a) If White plays e4-e5, it will be much more difficult for Black to create counterplay with ...c5, as the d6-square will be too weak. See the following position after 13.Qce4:

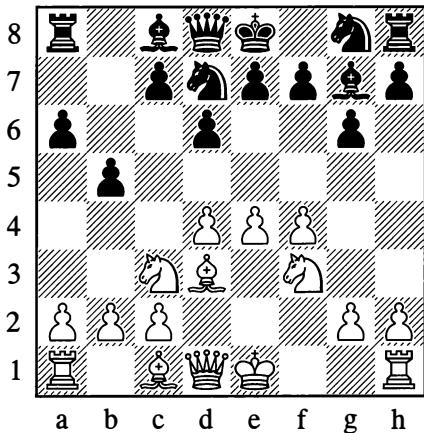


I found myself in serious trouble in Anand – Hillarp Persson, Benidorm (rapid) 2003, as mentioned on page 94 in the note to Black’s 8th move in Game 16.

b) An early ...e6 gives White the possibility of f4-f5, opening lines on the kingside. Therefore, if ...e6 has to be played, Black should at least wait for e4-e5 to be played, so that f4-f5 will no longer be an option. There are indeed quite a few strong players who have chosen to meet White’s early e4-e5 with ...e6, stopping the white pawn from advancing any further. However, as we will see later, I do not consider the march of the white pawn to e6 to be a big threat.

### 6.♗d3 ♗d7!

Since I recommended this move in *Tiger’s Modern*, it has usurped 6...♗b7 as the most popular choice for Black. The advantage of developing the knight first is that Black is now ready for a quick ...c5.



### 7.e5!?

This is one of the most principled and sharpest set-ups available to White. Having developed his kingside pieces, he prepares for a direct attack in the centre.

7.0–0 can be met by 7...c5 8.dxc5 ♘xc5. Now White has nothing better than 9.♗e3, when

Black has a choice:

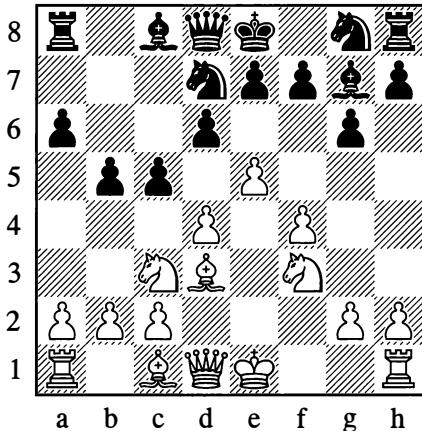
a) 9...♗b7 is playable, and transposes to Game 10.

b) 9...♘xd3?! is an attempt to punish White’s move order. 10.♗xd3 and 10.cxd3 are both met by 10...♗f6, when Black has a solid position and is ready to castle. White has a slight lead in development, but Black’s bishop pair is useful, so the position is balanced.

### 7...c5!

This is much more fun than 7...♗b7, when White has a pleasant choice. 8.♗e2 transposes to Game 5, where we will see White is doing pretty well. However, the direct 8.♗g5! looks even stronger.

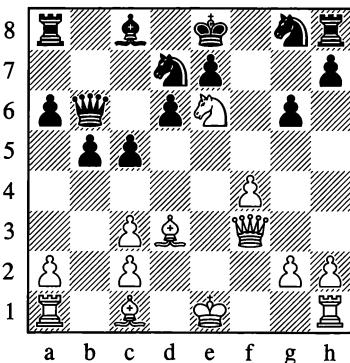
7...e6?! has been played quite a few times, but let me repeat that this move should never be played unless White done something slow like a2-a3 or h2-h3, or perhaps ♘e3. Even then, I would not recommend it, as Black almost always has more useful moves available, and in the present position he has enough resources to withstand White’s direct attacking attempts.



### 8.♗g5!

White has another ‘I’m coming for you now!’ move in 8.e6!?, which was first played by Dan Östergaard against me in the Swedish Team

Championship of 1993/94. In *Tiger's Modern* I showed an improvement on that game and – behold! – a couple of years after publication, I got the chance to play it myself. 8...fxe6 9.♕g5 ♜xd4 10.♕xe6 (10.♕e4 ♜b8 does not help White; 10.♕xh7? ♜xc3† 11.bxc3 ♔f8 12.♕xf8 ♜xf8 13.♗f3 ♜b8 14.♗g3 ♔f6 is highly unclear.) 10...♜xc3† 11.bxc3 ♜b6 12.♗f3



12...d5! (Improving on 12...♝b7 as I played against Dan.) 13.♗xd5 ♜b7 14.♕g7† ♜d8 15.♗f7 ♜g6 16.c4?! ♜xg2 Black went on to win in Van Apeldoorn – Hillarp Persson, Hoogeveen Open 2007.

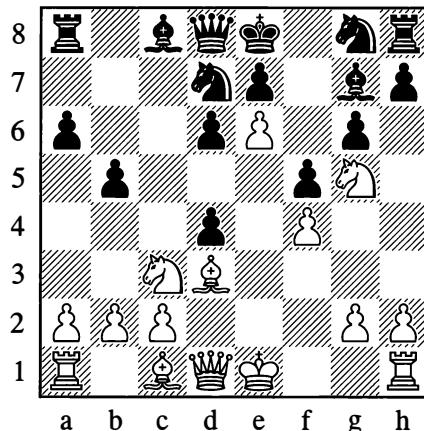
### 8...cx~~d~~4?

This is Black's sharpest continuation, which even implies a queen sacrifice.

The safer 8...♝h6 is seen in the next game.

### 9.e6 f5!

I have used this concept (meeting e5-e6 with ...f5, sacrificing the d7-knight) several times in slightly different situations. In Game 5 we will see it with the moves ♜e2 and ...♝b7 included, and in Game 7, commenting on the 9th move, we will encounter it with the moves ♜e3 and ...♝b7 inserted. In the present position the black position is balanced on a razor wire, but I have not found any refutation of it.

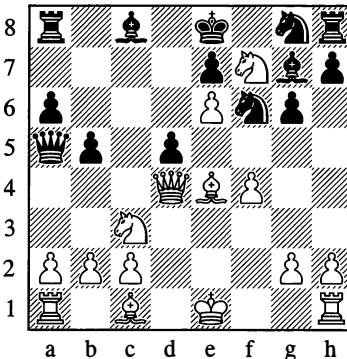


### 10.♕d5!

This is more challenging than any of the three main alternatives:

10.♗f3? has not been played, and with good reason, as 10...dxc3 11.b3 ♜b6 12.♗c6† ♜f8 13.♕f7 ♜d7! 14.♕xd8 ♜xc6 15.♕xc6 ♔f6 leaves Black with a clear advantage.

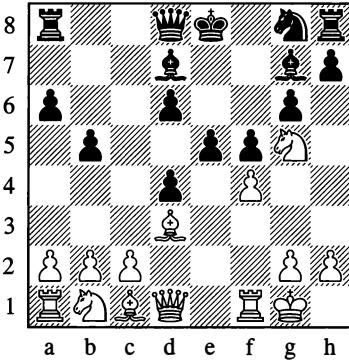
10.♜xf5?! is a bit trickier, but Black can defend successfully with: 10...♞df6 11.♕e4 (11.♗xg6†? hxg6 12.♗d3 ♜f8 13.♗xg6 ♜e8 is excellent for Black.) 11...d5 12.♗f7 ♜a5 13.♗xd4



13...dxe4! This gives Black a fine game, and improves on 13...♞xe6? as given in *Tiger's Modern*.

Apart from the main line, 10.exd7† is the only

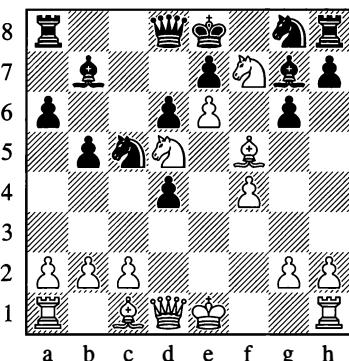
move I found at all worrying, but Black should be fine after: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$  (Neither 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5N$  h6 nor 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 impress for White.) 11...e5 12.0–0



12... $\mathbb{Q}e7N$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  was played in Schnoor – Knickel, Chemnitz 2009, but I prefer to avoid obstructing the g7-bishop.) White has some problems disentangling his pieces. A possible continuation is 13.a4 h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  e4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  0–0 and Black maintains excellent compensation.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f7$

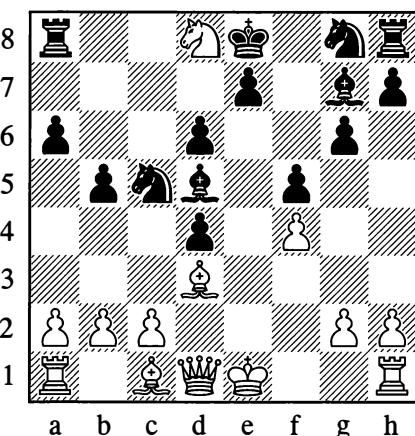
Black is fine after: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  was unclear in Calistri – Hillarp Persson, Paris 2012. This goes to show that I have not always remembered my own recommendations from *Tiger's Modern*). 12. $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is nice for Black.)



12... $\mathbb{W}b8!$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  is complicated but good for Black.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  Black has the advantage.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

It is not everybody's cup of tea to play a position like this, but I believe Black is objectively fine here. After picking up the doomed knight, I will have two minor pieces and two pawns for the queen, so the material deficit is not too severe. Furthermore, I control the centre and my pieces will soon find active squares. On the other hand, White has a hard time finding a plan. If only he could get in a2-a4 and exchange a few pieces. Yeah... try me!



### 13.0–0

After 13.a4 bxa4 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  17. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  Black has excellent counterplay down the c-file.

Also possible is 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  which leads to unclear play. This position is a good example of what you are striving for when you make a positional queen sacrifice; the opponent's pawn structure is no good and you are dominating the centre, making the opponent's pieces passive...

White's most challenging plan is:

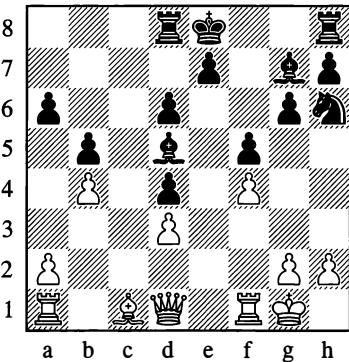
13.b4!

I looked at this move when researching *Tiger's Modern*, but somehow my analysis did not make it into the final book. Allow me to rectify that oversight:

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd3\ddagger$

Avoiding the trap 13... $\mathbb{Q}a4?$  14.c4!.

14.cxd3  $\mathbb{B}xd8$  15.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}h6$

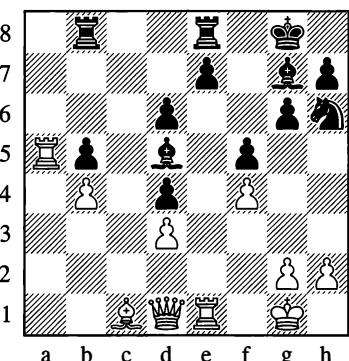


16.a4N

This is the most direct move, and the one on which my analysis was centred. White's plan is to open up the queenside and start creating threats with moves like  $\mathbb{B}a5$ ,  $\mathbb{B}b2$  and  $\mathbb{W}a1$ .

In the game M. Andersen – Thiede, Solingen 2011, White played 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$  followed by a2-a4, leading to similar play. This remains the only practical example with 13.b4!.

16...0–0 17.axb5 axb5 18. $\mathbb{B}a5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  19. $\mathbb{E}e1$   
 $\mathbb{B}fe8$

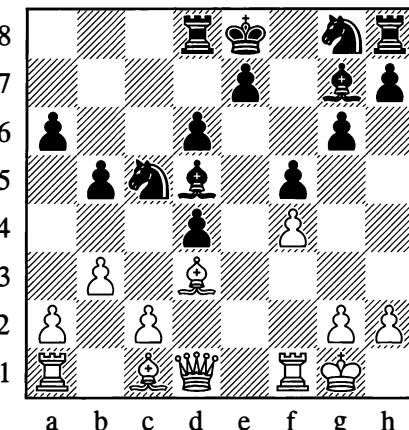


The engines evaluate the position as something approaching "one pawn" better for White, but this does not mean much in a position with such an unusual material balance. Personally I believe Black is doing all right, as his queenside is holding together and he can obtain counterplay with ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) and a timely ...e5-e4.

13... $\mathbb{B}xd8$  14.b3

There is a case for 14. $\mathbb{B}e2N$  here, when 14...e6 15. $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is unclear.

14.b4! has been played, but after the correct 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd3!N$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}a4?$  15.c4!  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  16. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  17. $\mathbb{B}d2$  gave White a winning advantage in Gaponenko – Dussol, Le Port Marly 2009) 15.cxd3 we transpose to 13.b4! above.



14... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$

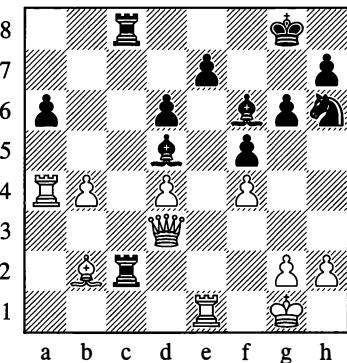
14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with the idea of 15. $\mathbb{B}b2$  (or 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ ) 15...e5 might be better. A possible continuation is 16.a4 bxa4 17.b4  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$  0–0 19. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  21. $\mathbb{B}f2$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  with a nice bit of chaos.

15. $\mathbb{W}e1?!$

After this move I prefer Black's position.

In *Tiger's Modern* I suggested that 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$  would have been better for White. Although

this is certainly a better try than the game continuation, I now believe that Black is all right here too. To get a taste of how wrong things can go for White, I offer a sample line: 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16.a4 bxa4 17.b4  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{E}c4$  20. $\mathbb{E}xa4$  0–0 21.c3?!  $\mathbb{E}fc8$  22.cxd4  $\mathbb{E}c2$



White collapses, since 23. $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{E}c1\uparrow$ ! 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}h1$  leaves him with no decent defence against the mating threats, which include both ... $\mathbb{E}xh2$  and ...h5.

### 15...0–0?

This is unnecessary, but I did not think twice about giving up material that day. Stronger is either 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or 15... $\mathbb{E}c8$ .

### 16.a4?!

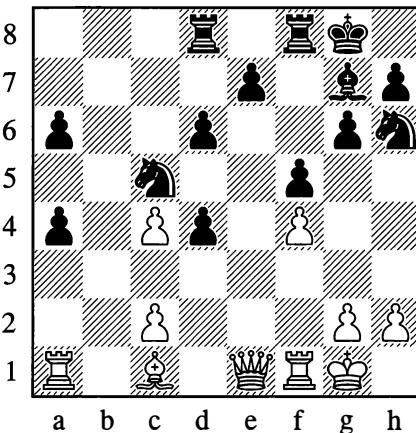
This is not as bad as I originally thought; the weak follow-up is the real problem for White.

The principled continuation is: 16. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17. $\mathbb{E}e1$ ! (After 17. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  18. $\mathbb{W}c7$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  19. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  White has a hard time dealing with the plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  followed by ... $\mathbb{E}c2$ .) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  20. $\mathbb{E}xe7$   $\mathbb{E}f7$  21. $\mathbb{E}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  Material is equal and White keeps a microscopic advantage.

### 16...bxa4! 17.Qc4?

17.bxa4 is correct, though after 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  Black has full compensation.

### 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18.bxc4



### 18... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?

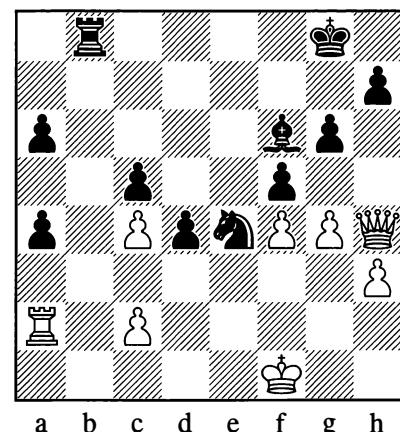
Offering the e-pawn again is quite stupid.

18... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ ! followed by ... $\mathbb{E}c8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is mouth-watering for Black.

19.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}fe4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{E}d7$  22. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{E}b7$  23. $\mathbb{E}a2$   $\mathbb{E}fb8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{E}b1$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{E}xf1\uparrow$

A safer and better option was 25... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  26. $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  28. $\mathbb{E}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  29. $\mathbb{E}xb1$   $\mathbb{E}xb1\uparrow$  30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with an extra pawn for Black in the endgame. Now the game should be a draw.

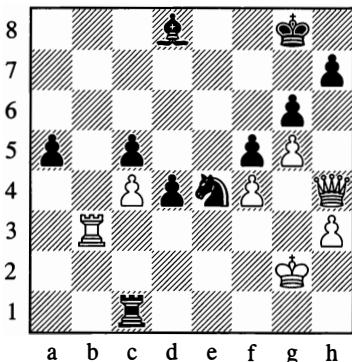
### 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ dxc5? 27.g4! $\mathbb{Q}f6$



**28.♔e1??**

My opponent blunders – in my time trouble.

Best play would have been 28.g5 ♜b1† 29.♗g2 ♜d8 30.♕xa4 a5 31.♕a3 ♜c1 32.♕b3 ♜xc2† 33.♗g1 ♜c1† 34.♗g2, and here Black has a lovely idea:



34...h5!! Giving up more material to cage the white queen. 35.♗b8 a4 36.♗xd8† ♔f7 I have re-checked the analysis in *Tiger's Modern* in an effort to find a win, but alas after 37.♗d7† ♔f8 38.♗d8† ♔e7 39.♗g8 ♔f7 40.♗d8 a3 41.♗a8 I see no way for Black to get anywhere.

**28...♝b1!**

Winning the queen.

**29.♕xa4 ♜xe1† 30.♗xe1 ♔h4† 31.♗f1 ♔g3**

**0–1**

Was that too strong for you? Well, some days I feel that way too. To play 8...cxd4 with confidence, you need to pay close attention to 10.exd7† taking the piece, as well as 13.b4! (or 14.b4!) following the queen sacrifice. Having re-checked my analysis for this book, I (just about) believe in Black's chances, although with so little practical testing I cannot guarantee that White is not capable of improving on my analysis somewhere. In the next game we will consider a different approach which does not commit Black to material sacrifices.

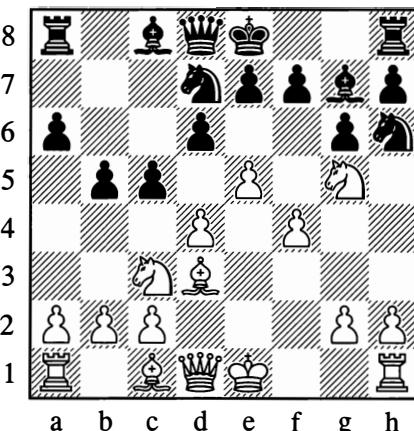
**GAME 2****Vasily Yemelin – Genrikh Chepukaitis**

St Petersburg 2001

Chepukaitis is principally known for being a strong blitz player, but I believe he should also get a lot of credit for developing the ...a6 lines in the Modern.

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4 a6! 5.♘f3 b5 6.♘d3 ♜d7 7.e5 c5 8.♘g5 ♜h6**

This could be viewed as more reliable than 8...cxd4, although it still leads to lively play.

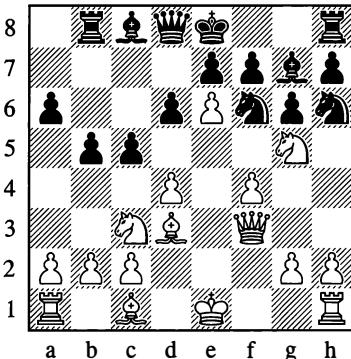


**9.e6**

9.♗e4 is rare but playable, and 9...♝b8 transposes to 9.♘g5 ♜h6 in the notes to the next game.

White has an important alternative in 9.♗f3, when Black has two options: a) 9...♝b8 keeps things tense and unclear, while b) 9...cxd4!? is a more concrete continuation, offering a small material sacrifice to fight for the initiative.

a) 9...♝b8 10.e6 ♜f6



11.dxc5!

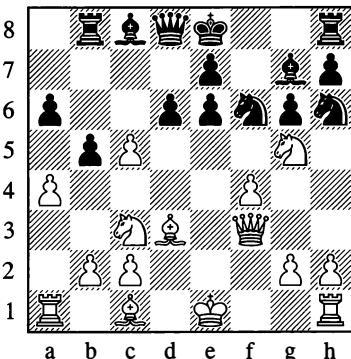
11.exf7† is less challenging: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  12.dxc5 0–0! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  (Worse is 13.a4?! b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  15.fxg5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  [15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?? is also decent] 16.c6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17.c7  $\mathbb{W}xc7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  when Black is slightly better.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  14.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  Black has excellent compensation.

11...fxe6 12.a4!

In the event of 12.c6  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , Black is doing well after 13.a4  $\mathbb{W}a5$  or 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ .

12.cxd6 exd6 13.0–0 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe4$  Now instead of 15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ?, as in Yemelin – Mehmedovic, Neum 2002, Black should have played 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !N with some initiative.

The text move is critical, but Black has more than one playable reply.



12... $\mathbb{W}a5$ ?

In 2013 I completely forgot about my earlier analysis and played 12...b4?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

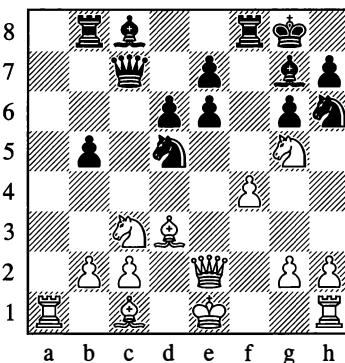
dxc5 14. $\mathbb{W}xa6$  0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! (avoiding 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  when 16.h4! gives White a dangerous initiative) with a complete mess, but not necessarily a bad one in Hagen – Hillarp Persson, Holdturneringen 2013.

13.c6!?

N 13.cxd6 has been played a few times, and 13...exd6 14. $\mathbb{W}c6$ †  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  leads to unclear play.

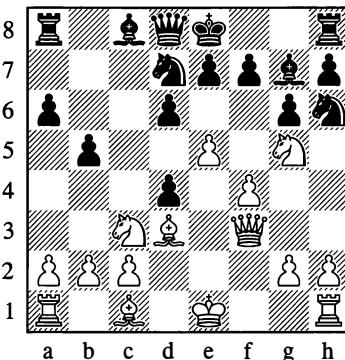
13.0–0N b4 is fine for Black.

13...0–0 14.c7  $\mathbb{W}xc7$  15.axb5 axb5! 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !



The position remains unclear and roughly balanced.

b) 9...cxd4!?

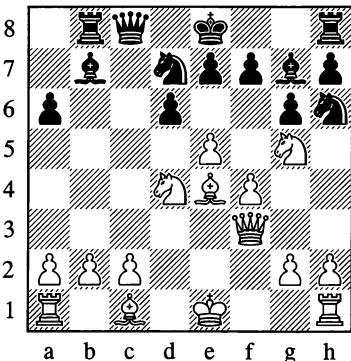


10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

10. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ N has not yet been tested, and after 10...dxc3 11. $\mathbb{W}c6$  dxe5 12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$  0–0∞ Black has a pawn for the exchange and a lot of activity.

10... $\mathbb{B}b8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c8!$

This move has been played in a couple of games, and it improves over 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ ! 13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14. $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow$  when White had the advantage in Kolev – Hillarp Persson, Salou 2005.



13. $\mathbb{Q}c6$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}xb7\rightleftharpoons$  Marrone – Guevara Pijoan, corr. 2010.

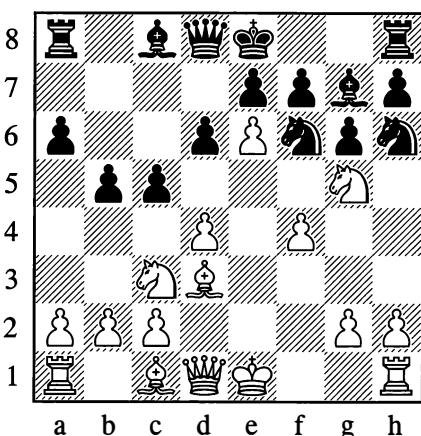
13... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  0–0! 15. $\mathbb{exd6}$   $\mathbb{exd6}$  16.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17.c3 h6?N

17... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is also playable, and Black went on to draw in Mirkowski – Shepherd, corr. 2013.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  d5

Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



## 10.dxc5

Neither 10. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{fxe6}$  12.dxc5 0–0 nor 10. $\mathbb{exf7}\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  is anything to worry about.

## 10...dxc5!?

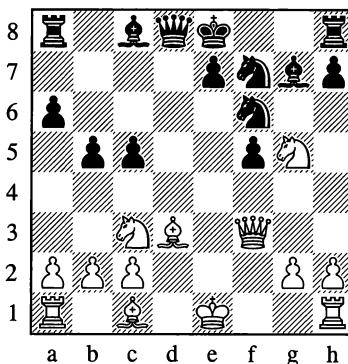
In a few subsequent games Black has preferred 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{fxe6}$ , which also seems perfectly playable, as Black's fluid piece play will make up for White's bishop pair. Nevertheless, I do not believe Black needs to improve on the present game, as he keeps a fine position until a mistake on the next move.

## 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

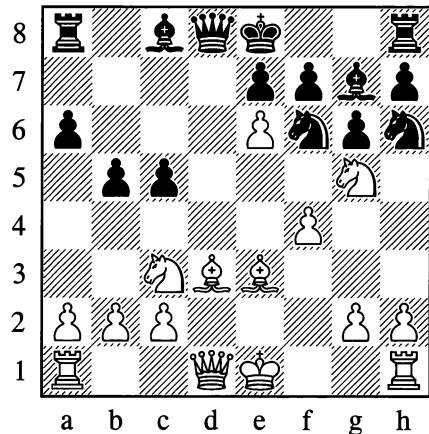
11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{fxe6}$  13. $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  15. $\mathbb{W}a7$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  favours Black.

11. $\mathbb{exf7}\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  12. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  14.f5  $\mathbb{gxf5}$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  16. $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  is unclear) 13. $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  15. $\mathbb{W}a7$  0–0 reaches a position where Black has full compensation for the pawn.

11.f5!? is a critical alternative, but Black can fight back with: 11... $\mathbb{gxf5}$  12. $\mathbb{exf7}\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  13. $\mathbb{W}f3$



13... $\mathbb{E}a7$ ! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  e6! The rook proves its value along the seventh rank, and Black obtains a fine position full of dynamism.



**11...Wc7?**

Black commits a tactical oversight in an excellent position.

Instead after 11...Wxe6!N 12.Qxe6 fxe6 13.Qxc5 Qd5 Black stands better, as his excellent piece coordination more than compensates for his weaker pawn structure.

**12.Wf3! Eb8**

12...Qb7 13.exf7† Qxf7 14.Qe6! is probably the point that Black overlooked when making his previous move.

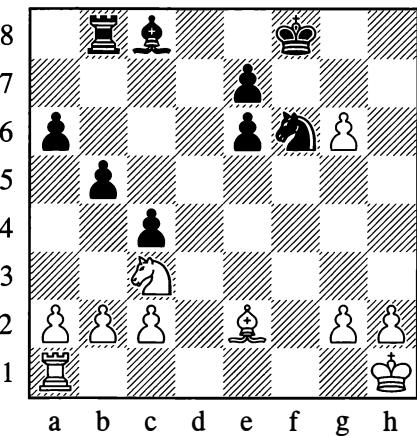
**13.f5**

Black is under some pressure here, although he recovers well and stays in the game. The continuation from here is not theoretically important, but it is worth paying attention to the thematic endgame that ensues.

**13...fxe6 14.fxg6 0–0 15.Qxh7 Qxh7 16.Wh3 Qf6 17.Qxh6 c4 18.0–0 Qxh6 19.Qxh6 Wc5† 20.Qh1 Wh5 21.Qxh5 Qxh5 22.Qxf8† Wxf8 23.Qe2 Qf6**

White's position can be evaluated as clearly better, or perhaps even winning in the absolute sense, considering the long-term potential of his kingside pawn duo. Still, it is not easy for him to keep control of the position. Black is active on the queenside and his doubled

pawns will help to control some important central squares. There is also an attractive plan of activating the rook with a timely ...b4 and ...Bb5. I have had quite a few of these positions with Black, and the outcome has often been like in this game.



**24.h4!?**

White should abandon all thoughts of saving the g6-pawn and instead start centralizing his forces with 24.Ee1, keeping a clear advantage.

**24...Wg7 25.h5 b4 26.Qa4**

Without the help of the latest computer technology, I was under the mistaken impression that this move was clearly worse than 26.Qd1 Bb5 27.g4, but there is no advantage to be found for White after: 27...Bb7† 28.Qg1 Ee5 29.Qf1 Qe4! 30.Qe3 Qg3† 31.Qf2 Qe4† 32.Qe1 Qg3=

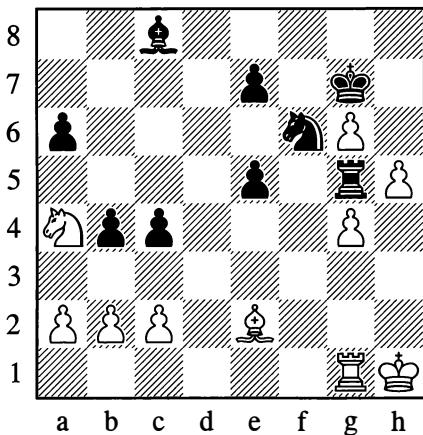
**26...Eb5 27.g4!?**

Since this move does not stop the disintegration of the kingside, it was time for a reality check with 27.a3!.

**27...Bg5 28.Eg1!?**

This further error leaves White clearly worse. Instead 28.Qb6 Bb7† 29.Qh2 would have kept things close to equal.

28...e5



29.♗g3?

This is too cooperative, but 29.♗b6 ♜xg4 30.♗xg4 ♜xg4 followed by ...♝xh5† is also difficult for White.

29...♝xh5 30.♝e3 ♛f6 31.♛c5 a5 32.♝h2 e4 33.♛xe4 ♜e5 34.♜f3 ♜xg4 35.♛xf6

Perhaps White lost on time, or maybe he noticed that 35...♝e3 36.♛e8† ♜xg6 37.♝xg4 c3 38.b3 ♜d3!! would be hopeless for him.

We may conclude that 8...♝h6 seems theoretically reliable, and Black could have obtained an excellent position with the improvement noted on move 11. The endgame also contained some instructive points, and showed how Black may create problems even in an objectively inferior situation.

0-1

In the next two games we will consider a different idea for White on move 8.

## GAME 3

**Richard Forster – Etienne Bacrot**

Bermuda 1999

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♛c3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.♛f3 b5 6.♝d3

White's second-most-popular move in the position has been:

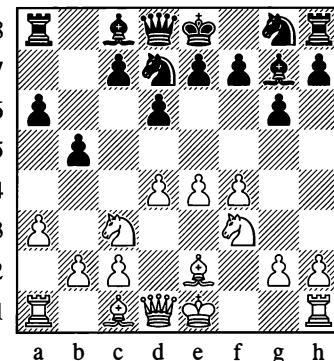
6.a3

This is far from critical and, being a devoted ...a6 fan, I feel rather provoked by such a passive move, and would even go so far as to call it a waste of a tempo.

6...♝d7 7.♝e2

This is the only real attempt to make sense of White's last move. With the bishop on e2 rather than d3, there is more reason for White to want to prevent ...b4.

7.♝e3 ♜b7 8.♝e2 ♜c8 (8...c5 is also fine) 9.0-0 c5 10.dxc5 ♜xc5 11.♝d4 was played in Nolsoe – Hillarp Persson, Faroe Islands 1996, and now I should have played 11...♝f6N with an excellent position.



7...c5!

White's plan is revealed after 7...♝b7 8.0-0 c5 9.d5, when he hopes that the b7-bishop will prove misplaced. After the further 9...♝c7 (9...♝gf6 can be met with 10.e5 without dropping the d-pawn, due to the bishop's placement on e2 instead of d3)

10.♗h1 ♗gf6 11.e5! the game became highly unclear in Berelovich – Svidler, Azov 1996.

8.♗e3

8.d5 is less attractive before the black bishop has gone to b7. Black continues 8...♗b6 followed by ...♗f6, ...o–o and ...e6, with a better position.

8...♗b7!

Now that the white bishop has gone to e3, this decision is justified.

9.d5 ♗gf6

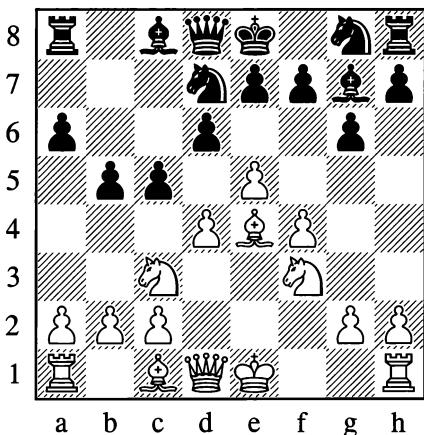
Black develops smoothly, as a quick e4–e5 can be met by ...♗g4.

10.♗d2 0–0 11.0–0 e6 12.dxe6 fxe6

Black had the more promising position in Bouteville – Hamilton, Lugano 1968.

6...♗d7 7.e5 c5 8.♗e4

This move is less committal than the ultra-aggressive 8.♗g5, but it is still one of White's most dangerous set-ups. The bishop takes up an active post in the centre while gaining a tempo against the rook.



8...♝b8 9.♗e3

White's most popular and dangerous move is 9.0–0, which is the subject of the next game.

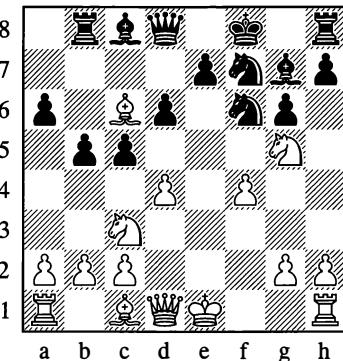
Another option is:

9.♗g5 ♗h6! 10.e6

10.♗xf7? ♗xf7 11.e6 cxd4 12.exf7† ♗xf7 13.♗d5 ♗c5 was clearly better for Black in P. Hansen – Hillarp Persson, Gibraltar 2008.

10...♗f6 11.exf7† ♗xf7 12.♗c6† ♗f8

This might seem awkward for Black, but a deeper analysis reveals that Black has nothing to complain about as his pieces are so active. Another game of mine continued:



13.dxc5 ♗f5!?

If I reached this position again I would probably prefer the simple 13...dxc5!N, since 14.♔e2 ♗d6 intending ...♗f5–d4 leads to the kind of chaotic game that I am striving to obtain when I play the Modern.

14.cxd6

Taking the offered pawn is risky.

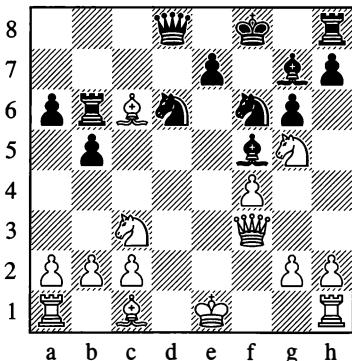
14.♔e2!N looks like a better try for an advantage, hence the suggested improvement for Black on the previous move. The next few moves feature a few inaccuracies on both sides.

14...♝b6 15.♔f3

15.♗d5! ♗xd5 16.♔xd5 ♗xd6 17.a4! h6 18.♔xf5† ♗xf5 19.♗e6† ♗f7 20.♗xd8† ♗xd8 21.axb5 axb5 22.♗a8 would have led to an equal endgame.

15...♗xd6?!

15...♔xd6! 16.♗d5 ♗xg5 17.fxg5 ♔e5† 18.♔e3 ♗xd5 19.♔xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xd5 ♗e6 21.0–0 ♗g7 reaches an endgame that is objectively equal, but practically more difficult to play for White.

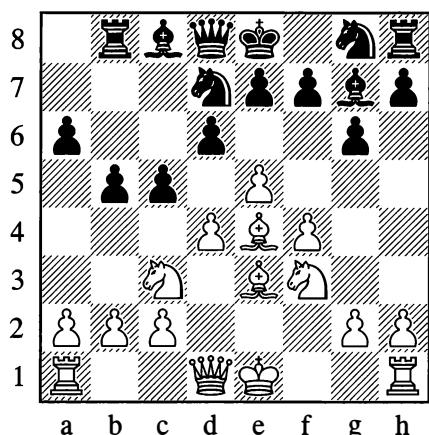


16.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  b4 17.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{R}b5$   
19.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}ge6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$  23.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  is advantageous for White.

20...  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

The position is back to being an unclear mess, but I eventually won in Furhoff – Hillarp Persson, Stockholm 2007.



9... b4!

Black would like to put his queen on c7, so the knight must first be kicked away from the d5-square.

9...  $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  10.  $dxc5!$  b4 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   
 $dxe5$  reached an unclear position in Hoffmann – Ree, Netherlands 2001. Unfortunately 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $dxc5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  leaves Black with a mummified bishop on g7 and a hole on c4, where White sooner or later is going

to plant a most charming knight. I pointed out this improvement in *Tiger's Modern* and I stand by the assessment, even though the one subsequent practical encounter resulted in victory for Black in Jimenez – De Toledo, corr. 2006.

10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$

In a few games White has chosen a different route for the knight:

10.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}c7!$

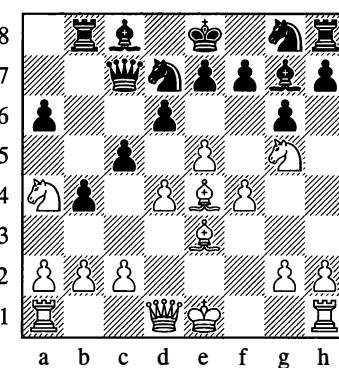
It is important for Black always to be able to answer  $dxc5$  with ... $dxe5$ .

If Black instead plays 10...  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , then 11.  $dxc5!$  is unpleasant, as 11...  $dxe5$  allows 12.  $c6$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xd8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}a7\uparrow$ . Now 14...  $\mathbb{E}a8?$  loses to 15.  $c7\uparrow$ , and 14...  $\mathbb{E}b5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  gives White a clear advantage.

11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$

With the black queen safe from exchange, 11.  $dxc5$  is nothing to worry about: 11...  $dxe5$  12.  $fxe5$  (12.  $c6$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  is advantageous for Black.) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.  $0-0$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5  
The position is messy but fine for Black.

Another game continued 11.  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.  $0-0$ , and now Black should have played: 12...  $bxc3!N$  (Instead of 12...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ , Mekhitarian – Ahmadinia, Zürich 2010, at which point 14.  $exd6N$   $exd6$  15.  $dxc5!$  could have led to an unhappy end for Black.) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (13.  $bxcc3$   $0-0$  is no problem.) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $cxd4$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4\uparrow$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Black is doing fine.



1... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

This is the standard reaction to a knight on g5, planning to meet e5-e6 with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

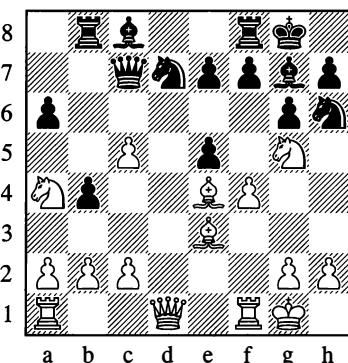
12.dxc5?!

Although 12.e6  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13.dxc5 fxe6 is better for Black, I believe White should prefer a position where his centre has not crumbled totally.

12...dxe5 13.0–0

13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}hg4!$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0–0 gives Black a clear advantage.

13...0–0

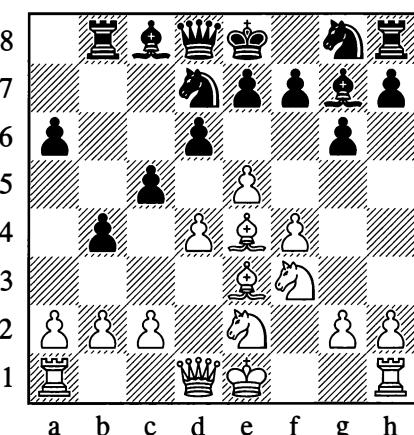


14. $\mathbb{Q}h1?$ !

My silicon companion recommends 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}hg4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , but I would still place my dough on Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  exf4 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Black had an overwhelming position in Sadvakasov – Nyback, Bled (ol) 2002.



10... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ !

More accurate is:

10... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

Black will follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , intending something similar to the game continuation, while avoiding the improvement given in the note to White's next move.

11.c3

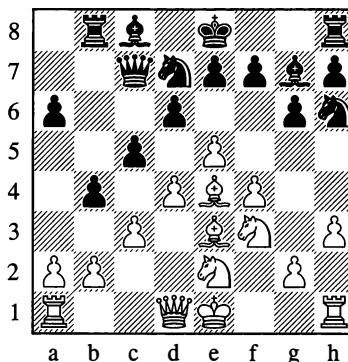
Black was threatening ...cxd4 followed by ...dxe5.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.h3?!

Now 12.dxc5 can be answered by 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ , avoiding a symmetrical structure with the e-pawns still on the board. As a rule, I would suggest not going there.

White should prefer 12.0–0N, since 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  is tolerable for him. Still, 13...0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  should be fine for Black.

After the text move Black is walking on the sunny side of the street.



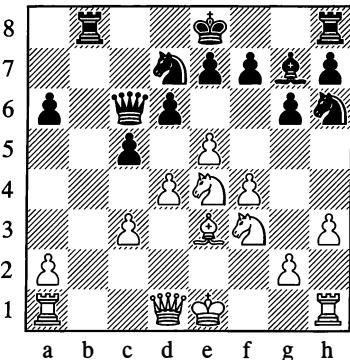
12... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

It is more important to fight for control of the central light squares than it is to castle. In my dreams, I get my queen to e4 and knights to f5 and c4.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

I prefer Black after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7N$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  14.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  bxc3 16.bxc3 0–0, but it is more a question of taste than an objective judgement. (I know, I am sick, sick, sick...)

13...bxc3 14.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}c6!$



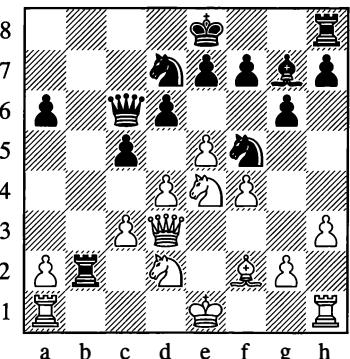
16.  $\mathbb{W}d3$

In the event of 16. d5  $\mathbb{W}b5$  17.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. exd6  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  Black is better.

I think White should prefer 16.  $\mathbb{Q}g3?$  N to restrict the knight on h6, and after 16...0–0 17. 0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  the position is about equal.

16...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}b2!$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$

No better is 18. d5  $\mathbb{W}a4$  19. g4 dx5 20. gxf5 gxf5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  e4 23.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c2$ , when Black has more than enough compensation for the piece.



18... cxd4! N

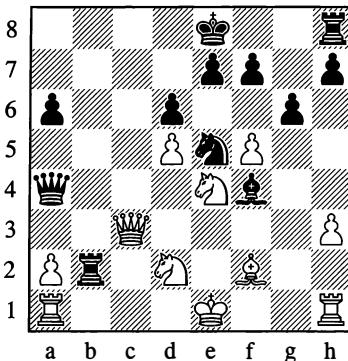
18...  $\mathbb{Q}h6?$  undid my successful opening play, and after 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  White took over the initiative in Van Beers – Hillarp Persson, Bled (ol) 2002.

19. cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  20. d5  $\mathbb{W}a4$

At this point White has two reasonable-looking alternatives, which, after closer scrutiny, prove not to be reasonable at all.

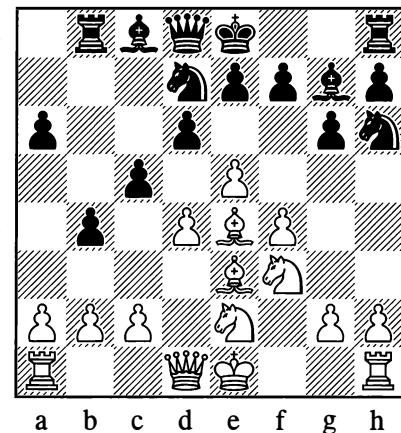
21. g4

After 21.  $\mathbb{E}c1$  0–0 22. g4  $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$  23. gxf5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24.  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b5$  White's position is a wreck.  
21...  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  22. gxf5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23.  $\mathbb{W}c3$



23...  $\mathbb{E}c2!$  24.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}xb3$  25. axb3  $\mathbb{Q}d3†$   
26.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  gxf5

Black is winning.

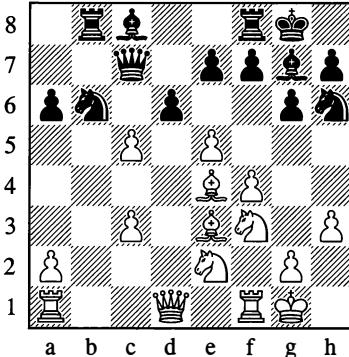


11. h3?!

The reason I advocate 10...  $\mathbb{W}c7!$  is that White has a chance to gain the upper hand here with 11. dxc5! dxc5 (11... dx5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xd8†$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  14. fx5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is also somewhat better for White) 12. h3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  13. 0–0 0–0 and now instead of 14.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  f6, which seems fine for Black, White should continue with 14. c4! followed by  $\mathbb{W}c2$  with some advantage.

11... 0–0 12. c4

12.0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  should be fine for Black, although it is worth checking the following example to see how things may go wrong:  
 13.c3 bxc3 14.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15.dxc5



15...dxc5 (I prefer 15... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ N 16.cxd6 exd6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with a promising game.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (16... $f5?$  should be played, either here or on the next move.) 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ ! 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  20.a4 White was clearly better in V. Gurevich – Shchekachev, Cappelle la Grande 1997. Black played too passively and did not take advantage of the dynamic possibilities in the position.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$

Safer would have been 12... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ , transposing to Van Beers – Hillarp Persson under the earlier note with 10... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ .

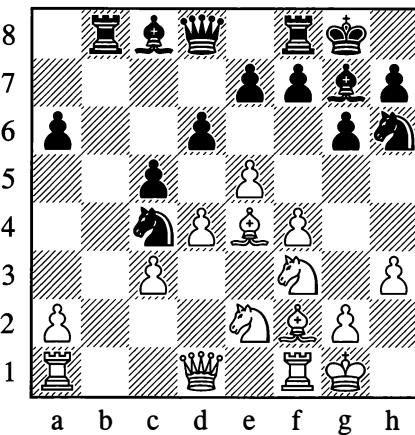
### 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2?$

I have not been able to find anything convincing for Black after: 13.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$  (Improving over 14. $\mathbb{W}d4$  d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  f6 as given in *Tiger's Modern*.) 14...bxc3 15.b3  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  cxd2† 17. $\mathbb{W}xd2$  dxc5 18. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  Black has an uphill struggle to (not) look forward to.

### 13...bxc3 14.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Black has managed to establish a foothold on the c4-square and should be fine. His next objective will be to solve the problem of the passive knight on h6.

### 15.0–0



### 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$

I think Black should hurry to get his knight into the game while he has the chance: 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  16. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}xb7$  and now 18.g4? does not work because of 18... $\mathbb{E}b2!$  with advantage to Black. (Instead White should prefer 18. $\mathbb{E}b1$  with hopes of equality.)

### 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

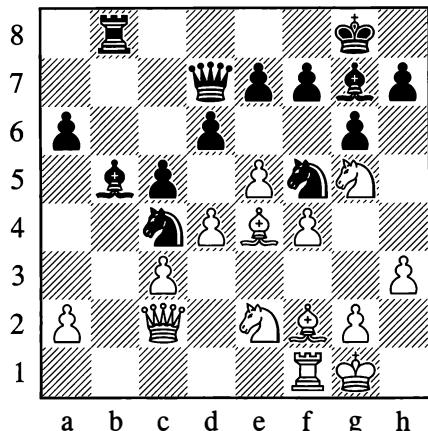
The following manoeuvre does not convince me. It is too slow, and Black forgets about the knight on h6.

17. $\mathbb{E}xb8$   $\mathbb{E}xb8$  18. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  19. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$   
 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

It was time for 20.dxc5 dxe5 21.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  when White's active pieces and passed c-pawn compensate for his odd-looking pawn structure.

### 20... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

Finally the knight comes into play. Black has a grip on the light squares and White has to do something quickly, otherwise his position will steadily deteriorate.



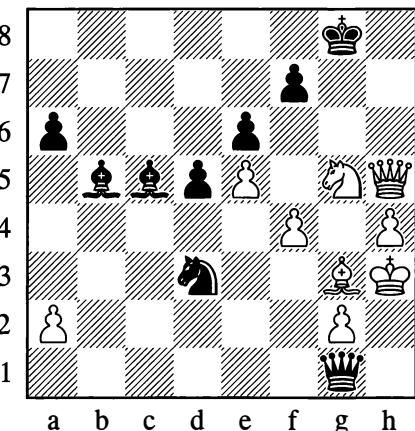
21.♕e1 e6 22.♗f3 cxd4 23.cxd4 ♔c8 24.♗c1  
d5 25.h4 h6 26.♗h3 h5 27.♗g5 ♔f8

Deterioration complete. White is positionally lost.

28.♔d1 ♗b2 29.♔d2 ♗d3 30.♗xc8 ♔xc8  
31.♗g3 ♗xg3 32.♗xg3 ♔c4 33.♔e3 ♗a3  
34.♗xh5

Bacrot refutes this desperation sacrifice with a precise counterattack.

34...gxh5 35.♔f3 ♔xd4† 36.♔h2 ♗c5  
37.♔xh5 ♔g1† 38.♔h3



38...♔h1† 39.♔g4 ♗f2†! 40.♔xf2 ♔xg2†  
0-1

In the next game we will again look at 8.♗e4, this time in conjunction with the more dangerous 9.0-0!.

## GAME 4

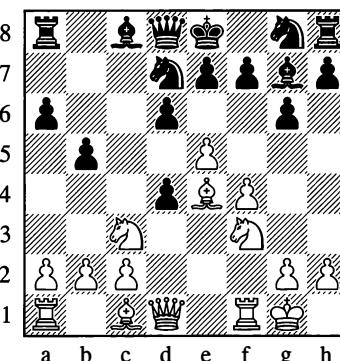
**Artur Yusupov – Richard Forster**

Switzerland 1999

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.♗f3 b5  
6.♗d3 ♗d7 7.e5

I have changed the move order of this game in order to emphasize the most accurate sequence for White beginning at move 7.

The game actually continued 7.0-0 c5 8.e5 cxd4 9.♗e4. At this point Forster chose 9...♔b8, rejoining our main line, but White's move order affords Black a useful extra option:

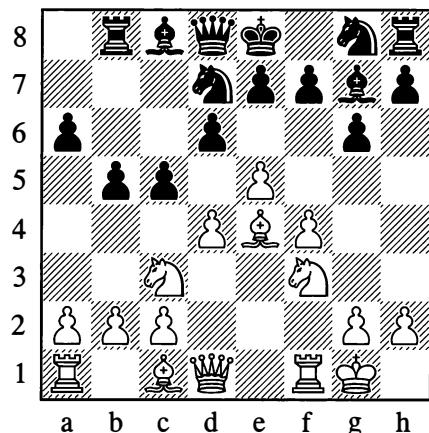


9...dxc3! 10.♗xa8 ♔c7 11.♗h1 dxе5 12.fxе5  
cxе2 (12...♗b6?! 13.♗d5 ♗xd5 14.♗xd5 was a bit better for White in Djuraev – Shoker, Khanty-Mansiysk [ol] 2010) 13.♗xb2 ♗h6  
Black had a good game in Isaev – Mathe, corr. 2007, having a pawn for the exchange and ...♗b6 coming next to take control of the queenside.

7...c5 8.♗e4 ♔b8 9.0-0!

This is undoubtedly the most dangerous move here and, together with 7.a4 as featured

in Games 13 and 14, the greatest threat to the 4...a6 system.



### 9...cxd4

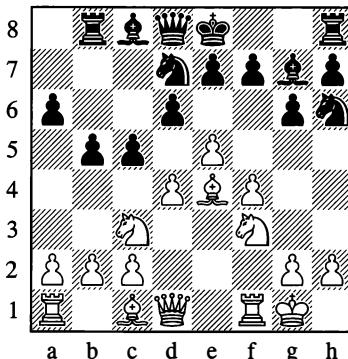
With this move we rejoin Yusupov – Forster.

I spent a lot of time analysing this variation for the book you are now holding in your hand, and I came to the conclusion that White can maintain a small advantage in all of the main variations after 9...cxd4. However, Black has several playable lines, many of them leading to double-edged positions that may prove difficult for White to play in a practical game.

9...b4!? can be considered, although I would not normally play such a move unless White is already committed to ♕e3, in which case Black has a good follow-up in ...♕h6. In the present position, White keeps an edge with either 10.♕e2 or 10.♕a4!?

### 9...♕h6!?

This is my latest try, which I played twice in the same tournament in 2013, although the database also contains a couple of prior games. It deserves serious attention for Black.



### 10.exd6!

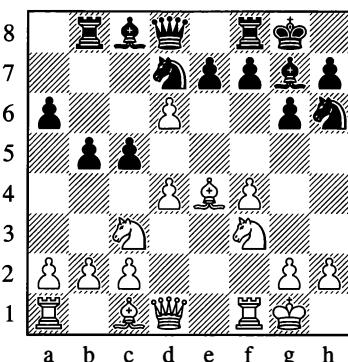
This is the only challenging response.

10.dxc5 ♔xc5 11.♕c6† ♔d7 12.♕xd7† ♔xd7 13.exd6 ♔xd6 14.♔xd6 exd6 gave White nothing in Hammer – Brondum, Helsingør 2007.

10.♕h1 0–0 11.♕e3 b4 12.♕e2 ♔c7 13.♕g3 cxd4 14.♕xd4 dxe5 15.♕c6 ♔f6! 16.♕xb8 was played in Arvola – Hillarp Persson, Oslo 2013, and now 16...♕xe4!N (16...♕hg4 17.♕f3 was unclear in the game, although I went on to win) 17.♕xe4 ♔xb8 18.fxe5 ♔xe5 19.♕xh6 ♔xh6 20.♔e1 ♔b7 21.♕f2 ♔d6 would have offered me more than enough compensation for the exchange.

### 10...0–0!

This is the real idea behind Black's previous move. 10...exd6 11.dxc5 dxc5 was played in Mutschnik – Wildi, Germany 2004, and here 12.♕e5! would have been unpleasant. I also considered 10...cxd4N, but after 11.dxe7 ♔xe7 12.♕d5 ♔d6 13.f5 gxf5 there are loads of moves that give White the advantage.



We have reached a critical position that has only been tested in a single game at the time of writing. White has two main candidates:  
a) 11.f5!N and b) 11.dxe7.

It is also worth noting that 11.Qe5N Qxe5! 12.dxe7 Qf3†! 13.Qxf3 Wxe7 gives Black good compensation for the pawn.

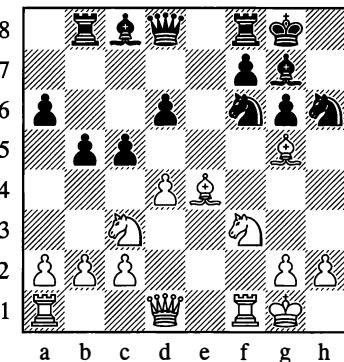
#### a) 11.f5!N

This move may give rise to some amazing possibilities. Here are a few key lines.

11...exd6

11...Qf6!? is another possible direction.

12.fxg6 hxg6 13.Qg5 Qf6



14.Qd5

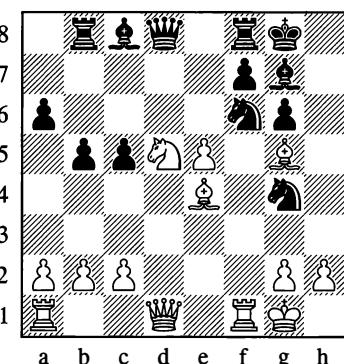
14.dxc5 dxc5 15.Wxd8 Exd8 16.Qf4 Qxe4

17.Qxe4 Ea8 18.Qxc5 Qg4 gives Black more compensation than might at first be suspected.

14...Qhg4! 15.Qe5!

Silicon proof.

15...dxe5! 16.dxe5



16...Qxe4!

This is a key point.

17.Qxd8 Qxe5 18.Qc7

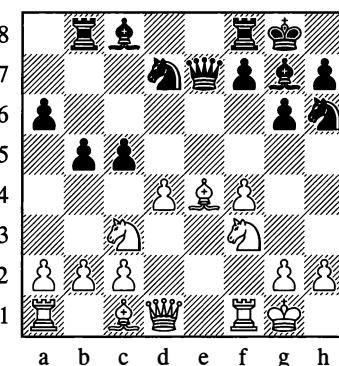
After 18.Qh4 Qxh2† 19.Qh1 Qg7 White can and should force a draw with 20.Qf6†! Qh7 21.Qh4. If he instead tries 20.Wf3?!, then 20...f5! leaves him struggling to find a good response to ...Qh8.

18...Qd4† 19.Wxd4 cxd4 20.Qe7† Qh7 21.Qxb8 Qb7

Black has excellent compensation for the exchange.

#### b) 11.dxe7 Wxe7

This was the continuation of my game against Aryan Tari, which we will follow for a few more moves.



12.Qe5

12.Qe1N should be met by 12...Wd6! intending 13.dxc5 Wxd1 14.Qxd1 Qxc5, when Black has excellent compensation for the pawn and intends ...Qf5, ...Qg4 or ...Qf5 next.

12...cxd4 13.Qd5

Also after 13.Qc6 Wc5 the complications are not unfavourable to Black, for instance:

14.b4? (14.Qd5 should be preferred, although after 14...Qb7 15.b4 Wd6 16.Qde7† Qh8 17.f5 Qxc6 18.Qxc6 Qbe8! Black is better.) 14...Wxc3 15.Qd2 Wb2 16.Qb1 Wa3 17.Qf3 Wa4 18.Qc1 (18.Qxb8 Qf6! 19.Qd3 Qb7–+) 18...Qf6 Black will

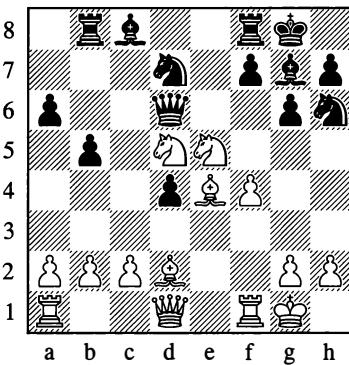
obtain a lot of material and squares in return for the queen: 19.♕a3 ♘xa3 20.♕xa3 ♔xe4 21.♔xb8 ♔xd2 22.♗c1 ♔c4 Black should be winning.

13...♝d6!

I spent some time calculating 13...♝e6, but was correct to avoid it, as after 14.♗c6 ♕b7 15.♗de7† ♔h8 16.♗d5! ♜d6 17.♗xb8 ♜xb8 18.♗f3 Black does not have quite enough compensation for the exchange.

14.♗d2

Now in Tari – Hillarp Persson, Oslo 2013, the strongest continuation would have been:



14...♞c5!

With hindsight, it is a bit annoying that I did not even consider this move, instead preferring 14...♝xe5. The game was eventually drawn.

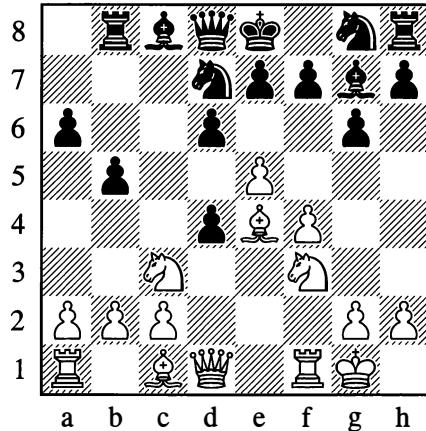
15.♗f3

15.♗b4?! is pointless due to 15...a5! 16.♗xc5 ♜xc5 17.a3 ♕b7 and Black is clearly better.

15...♝e6 16.♗b4 ♜f5

Black has a marvellous position. Just look at those minor pieces – not so minor now, eh?

9...♝h6?! has still only been played in four games according to my database, but it seems like a playable and quite fascinating topic for future analysis and practical testing. However, the time has come to return to the more common 9...cxd4, as played in our main game.



10.♗xd4

When I played this line against Kovacevic in 2009, my opponent sprung a novelty (at least in over-the-board play) on me, that I later learnt was a suggestion of Rybka:

10...♜xd4!?

So, imagine that you have reached this position and you don't know any theory. How would you continue?

10...♝h6!?

The knight is generally well placed here when White has played e4-e5, which is just as well, as it does not have any other squares available.

10...b4?! can be recommended for players looking to keep things relatively simple. I have a little something against moving the b-pawn too early in the game, but here it actually makes some sense. White has three main replies:

a) 11.♗d5N ♜c5 12.♗d1 ♜h6 and Black should be fine.

b) 11.♗a4N ♜c7 12.♗h1 dx5 13.fxe5 e6 14.a3 a5 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗h4 ♜e7 17.♗f6 ♜xf6 18.exf6 ♜f5 19.♗xf5 gx5 With ...♝b7 and ...♝g8 coming, Black is doing well.

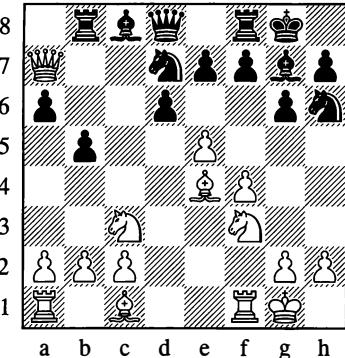
c) 11.♗d1 ♜c5 12.♗c6† ♗d7 13.♗d5 ♜c8 14.♗xd7† ♜xd7 15.♗e3 was played in Galliano – Lanzani, corr. 2012. Here Black exchanged on e5 and swapped down to an inferior endgame, which he failed to hold.

Instead 15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !N deserves consideration, intending 16.exd6 0–0!, sacrificing a pawn for typical compensation.

11. $\mathbb{W}a7$

My opponent kept playing quickly.

11...0–0



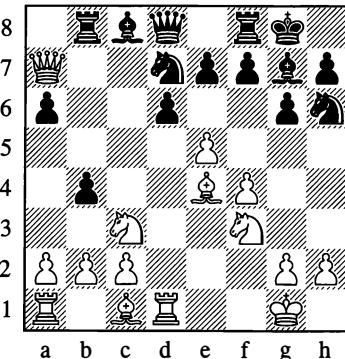
12. $\mathbb{B}d1$

White has two interesting alternatives:

12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ N  $\mathbb{W}b6$  13. $\mathbb{W}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{B}b7$   
15.a4 bxa4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  17. $\mathbb{B}xa4$   $\mathbb{B}c7$  reaches a typically unclear situation, despite the exchange of queens. Black intends ...dxe5 or ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  next.

12.a3!N dxe5! 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{B}b7$ ! 14. $\mathbb{B}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}c7$   
15. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{B}xb7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  (16. $\mathbb{B}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$   
17. $\mathbb{W}a8$  e6 is promising for Black.) 16... $\mathbb{W}c5$ †  
17. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  18. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   
20. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$ † 21. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ † 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  25.g3 f5  
26. $\mathbb{B}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  White is too passive to have any real chance of converting his extra pawn.  
Still, this might be his best option.

12...b4



13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !?

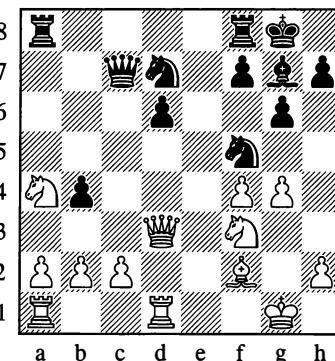
After this move I start to get the upper hand. The superior 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  was played in Cuccumini – Bonoldi, corr. 2013, and here 13...dxe5!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16.e6 fxe6 17.h3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  leads to yet another mess, where it seems to me that Black is doing fine.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 14. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15.exd6 exd6 16. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{B}xb7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{B}bb8$  19.g4!

19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ ?  $\mathbb{W}c6$  20.b3  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  21. $\mathbb{B}xa1$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$  is good for Black.

19... $\mathbb{B}a8$  20. $\mathbb{W}d3$

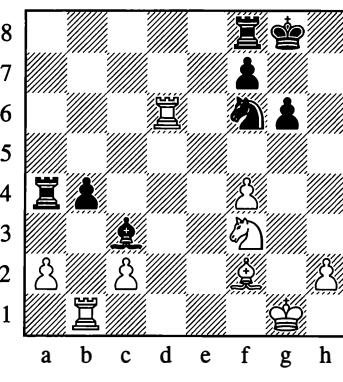
Here I should have played:



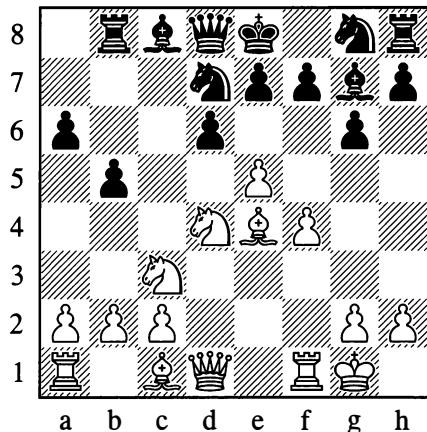
20... $\mathbb{B}xa4$ !N

The weaker 20... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! left me having to fight for a draw, which I obtained on move 40 in Kovacevic – Hillarp Persson, Budva 2009.

21.gxf5  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  22. $\mathbb{B}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  23.fxg6 hxg6  
24. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  25. $\mathbb{B}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$



Here it is White who will have to play accurately to draw.



**10...dxe5 11.Qc6 Wb6† 12.Qh1 Qgf6**

12...b4?! has been tried a few times by the young Swedish player Nithander, but I believe that 13.Qa4! should lead to an advantage for White.

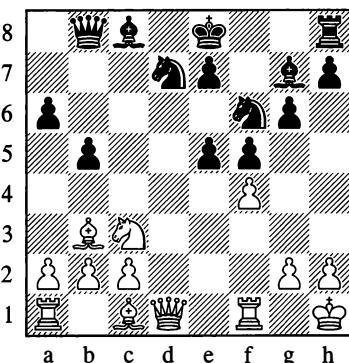
Black's most interesting alternative is:

12...f5!N 13.Qxb8

13.Qd5 Qgf6 14.Qxb8 Wxb8 transposes.

13...Wxb8 14.Qd5 Qgf6 15.Qb3!

15.Qe6 e4 16.a4 b4 17.Qd5 a5 is a bit better for White, although Black has chances here too.



**15...Qc5**

With the help of Ludvig Sandstrom I have analysed lots of other moves, but the general

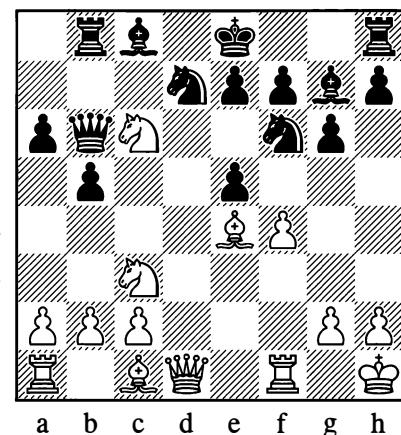
picture is the same: White is objectively better if he plays with computer accuracy, but the position is double-edged and any result would be possible in practice.

**16.fxe5 Qg4 17.h3 h5! 18.Wd5**

White should avoid 18.Qf4?! Qxe5 19.Wd2 Qxb3 20.axb3 g5 21.Qxe5 Wxe5 22.hxg4 hxg4† 23.Qg1 Qb7 when Black has at least a draw.

**18...Qxb3 19.axb3 Qxe5 20.Wc6† Qf7 21.Qe4 Qf6 22.Qg5† Qg7**

Black has some compensation, although it is unlikely that it is fully sufficient. For players who do not mind sacrificing a bit of material for a chance to complicate the game, 12...f5!N could be worth trying.



**13.Qxb8 Wxb8 14.fxe5**

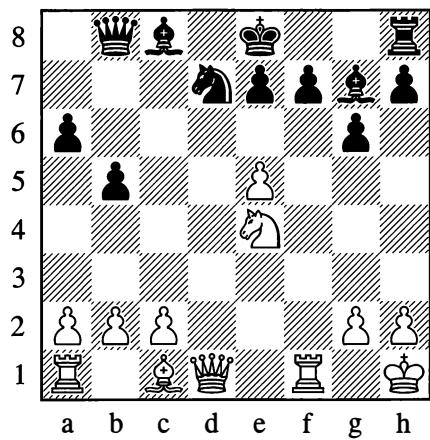
14.Qc6?! 0–0 15.We2 e6 16.g3 b4 17.Qe4 Qh5 (17...Qd5!? is also promising) 18.Qg5 exf4 19.gxf4 was played in Aagaard – Hillarp Persson, Malmö/Copenhagen 2004, and now I like the idea of 19...a5!N followed by ...Wb6 and ...Qa6, although the game continuation of 19...h6 was also pretty comfortable for Black.

**14...Qxe4**

In *Tiger's Modern* I gave 14...Qxe5 as a better chance, while acknowledging that 15.Qf4 0–0 16.Qf3 b4 17.We2 Qfd7 18.Qd5 Qe8 19.a3 bxa3 20.bxa3 gave White the better chances.

I now consider this line more problematic for Black, and prefer the treatment in the main game.

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



### 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

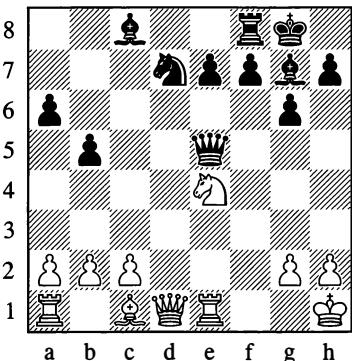
Another option that deserves consideration is:

15...  $\mathbb{W}xe5$ !? 16.  $\mathbb{E}e1$ !

The most challenging reply.

16.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! 0–0 17.  $c3$  was played in Van der Weide – Shchekachev, La Fere 2003. Now instead of 17...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , which should have lost on the spot to 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ !N  $\mathbb{E}xf7$  19.  $\mathbb{W}d8$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !, Black ought to have played 17...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !N when 18.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  19.  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  gives him plenty of counterplay.

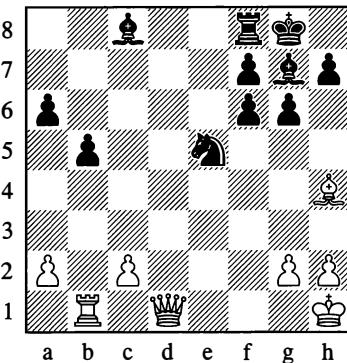
16... 0–0



### 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Another direction is 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  (17...  $\mathbb{W}b8$ !?) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  and the analysis can go on. White is slightly better but, considering his weak king, he has little room for error in the battle ahead.

17...  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  18.  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !  $exf6$  20.  $\mathbb{E}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$



The engines like this for White, but I find it hard to believe that he can win such a position unless he can hold on to the a-pawn, which does not appear to the case here.

21.  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22.  $\mathbb{W}d6$   $g5$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  24.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Even if White manages to exchange rooks, there is no way for him to break through.

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$

17.  $\mathbb{W}d5$ ! looks like the most challenging move, and after 17...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18.  $\mathbb{W}c5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  Black had to decide where to put his queen in Akdag – Burghoff, corr. 2012. Possibly the best idea is to offer a queen exchange on our own terms with 19...  $\mathbb{W}c4$ !N. (19...  $\mathbb{W}c6$ N 20.  $\mathbb{W}xc6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  21.  $c3$  0–0 22.  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  leaves White with some advantage.) Now exchanging on  $c4$  would allow the black knight to take up an excellent outpost, so 20.  $\mathbb{W}b6$  looks logical, but after 20...  $\mathbb{W}d5$  21.  $\mathbb{W}f2$  0–0 22.  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  23.  $b3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  24.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  Black has a reasonable position, with two strong bishops, a pawn for the exchange, and a mobile kingside majority. White has a modest advantage at most.

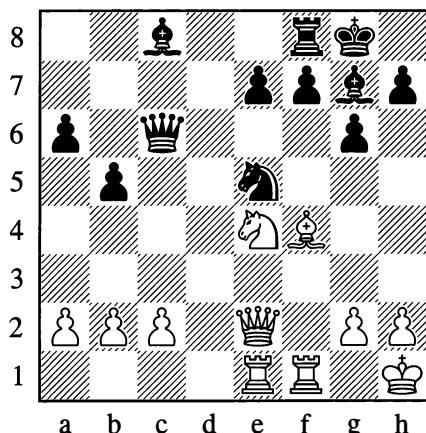
**17...0–0 18.♗ae1 ♖c6?!**

This is objectively speaking not the strongest move, but it bears witness to the intrinsic difficulty of these positions that such a formidable player as Artur Yusupov does not manage to navigate the shoals.

After 18...♗b7?! 19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗c5 Black has to give up the bishop pair with 20...♖xc5 21.♗xe5, leading to a difficult endgame.

A more interesting alternative is 18...♗e6!?, when I can give you an idea of how deeply I tend to analyse these positions: 19.♗xe5? ♗c4 20.♗f2 ♖xf2 21.♗xf2 ♗xe5 22.♗d2 ♗d4 23.♗f4 e5 24.♗f6! ♗e6 25.c3 ♗a7 26.♗xe5 ♗d8 27.♗f3 ♗d3 28.♗e1 ♗g7 29.♗f1 ♗d8 30.♗f4 ♗xa2 The endgame is far from clear.

18...♗c6! might be the strongest move, when 19.c3 ♗e6 20.b3 ♗f5 leads to a situation where all three results are possible. This position has been tested in two correspondence games, both of which ended in draws.

**19.♗d2**

The active 19.♗g5! is stronger, and also happens to be the kind of move that computers are best at finding. Play continues 19...♗b7 20.♗f2 ♗d7 21.♗xe7 ♗f6 22.♗d6 ♗g4 23.♗d2 ♗xb2 24.h3 and Black is clearly worse.

**19...♗b7**

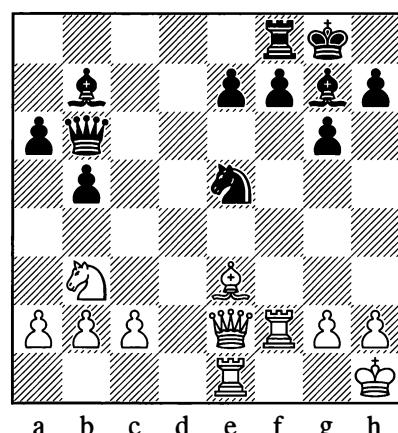
Black's two main objectives are to mount some pressure on the a8-h1 diagonal and to secure the pawns on e7 and f7. If he can achieve both, there will be happy days ahead.

**20.♗f2 ♖c5**

More accurate is 20...♗b6! 21.♗g1 ♗c6 22.c3 b4! 23.cxb4 ♗xb4 24.♗c4 ♗b5 25.b3 ♗d5 with full compensation for Black.

**21.♗b3 ♗b6 22.♗e3**

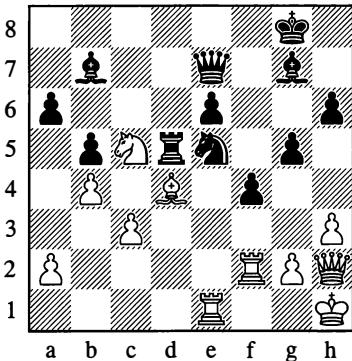
22.♗g1!? also gives White a slight plus.

**22...♗c7 23.♗d4 ♗d8 24.h3 ♗d5 25.c3**

25.♗e3! is slightly more accurate, as after 15...a5 26.♗f4 e6 27.c3 White reaches the game position without having allowed the option given in the next note. However, it should be noted that 26.♗b6 is not so great due to 26...♗c8 27.♗xa5 ♗a8 28.♗g1 ♗f6 when the white pieces are not coordinating well.

**25...a5?!**

Black should stabilize the central pawns with 25...e6! before deciding what to do next. The following line is a nice illustration of what Black may look to achieve in such positions: 26.♗d2 h6 27.♗e3 g5 28.♗g3 ♗d6 29.♗e4 ♗e7 30.b4 f5 31.♗c5 f4 32.♗h2



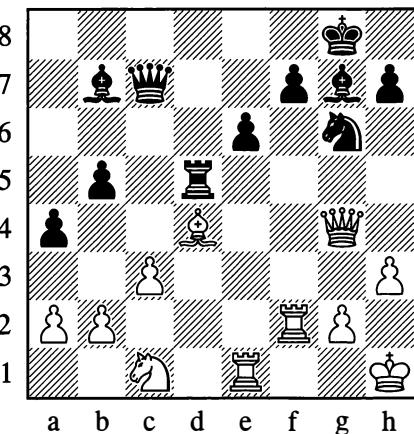
32... $\mathbb{B}xc5!$  33. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  Black has superb compensation for the two exchanges.

**26. $\mathbb{W}e3$  e6 27. $\mathbb{W}f4$  a4 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$**

Better was 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  a3 29.b3 g5 30. $\mathbb{W}g3!$  with advantage to White.

**28...g5 29. $\mathbb{W}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  30. $\mathbb{W}g4?$**

White could have kept an edge with 30. $\mathbb{W}e3$  e5 31. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  32. $\mathbb{W}f3$ .



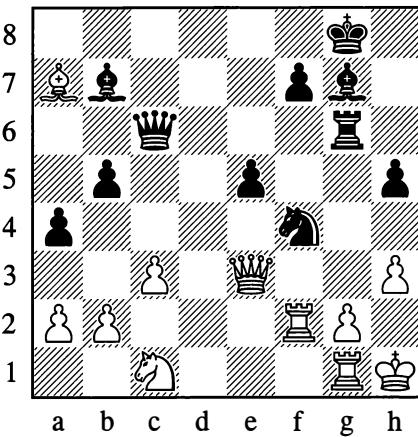
**30...h5! 31. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  32. $\mathbb{W}e3$  e5 33. $\mathbb{Q}b6?$**

White's best chance was 33. $\mathbb{W}g3$  when 33...exd4 34. $\mathbb{W}xf4$  a3 35. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  36. $\mathbb{W}d3\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  37. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  leads to a draw.

**33... $\mathbb{W}c6$**

This move sets up some serious threats on the a8-h1 diagonal, and White's ramparts will soon be broken.

**34. $\mathbb{E}g1$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{E}g6$**



**36. $\mathbb{W}f3?$**

The final error.

36. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  would have kept some hope of survival, although 36... $\mathbb{W}c7$  37.g3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is far from fun for White.

**36... $\mathbb{W}c8$  37. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  38. $\mathbb{E}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg1$  39. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$**

**0-1**

The next game is not so relevant for theory, because it involves a move order that is clearly suboptimal, for reasons discussed in the very first game of the chapter. However, I decided to keep it as part of my updated coverage, as it remains an excellent illustration of some of the crazier ideas in the 4.f4 a6 system.

## GAME 5

**Nick De Firmian – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Copenhagen 1996

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4 a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$**

Over time I have abandoned this move order in favour of 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ , as it is imperative to strike with ...c5 as quickly as possible. If White

proceeds as in this game with 7... $\mathbb{W}e2?!$ , Black easily gets a good position by following the plan: 7...c5! (Black can rejoin the main game with 7... $\mathbb{B}b7$ , but it makes little sense here.) 8.e5 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  At this point both 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$  and 9...dxc3? are promising for Black.

### 7. $\mathbb{W}e2?!$

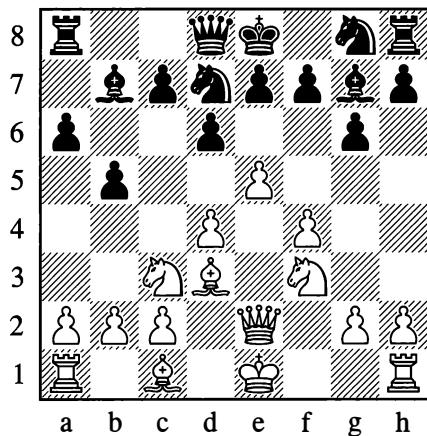
When the bishop goes to b7 early, White can afford the time for this move, although it may not be best.

7.e5 is one idea, hoping for 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$  when White obtains a favourable version of the 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  line. However, Black can instead play 7...c5! 8.dxc5 dxe5 with unclear play.

7.0–0 is more critical, followed by 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8.e5 c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !. This can be compared with 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  in the notes to the main game below. White has an improved version, having castled instead of putting his queen on e2, but I will not analyse it in detail as we have already established that Black should avoid this whole variation with an early ... $\mathbb{B}b7$ .

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8.e5

8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  transposes to Game 11, but the text move introduces a typical attacking scheme. The position is almost identical to Games 1 and 2, the only difference being the inclusion of the moves  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and ... $\mathbb{B}b7$ .



### 8...c5

8... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  is a playable alternative, when one game continued 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0–0 10.c3 c5 11.e6 f5! 12.exd7 c4 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  and White had to fight for the draw in Sax – Vokac, Pardubice 1994. However, White has a few ways to improve. 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  transposes to Game 8, and 9.a4? b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is an independent alternative which has scored heavily for White in practice.

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

I believe this is strongest, although there are three other moves that White may consider.

9.e6 fxe6 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$  could also be an option for risk-takers) 11.dxc5 has been played in a couple of games, and now 11... $\mathbb{W}c7N$  is unclear.

9.exd6? is not as bad as it is ugly. Black has a few possible replies:

a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  is sensible: 10.dxe7N (10.0–0 e6 is solid for Black.) 10... $\mathbb{W}xe7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$  12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}he8$  Black's active pieces compensate for the missing pawn.

b) 9...cxd4? is more adventurous: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  e6!N 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  which is truly messy. A possible continuation is 12.a4  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  14.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15.fxe5  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  16.d7†  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17. $\mathbb{W}f2$  f5 when I do not dare to give a definite verdict.

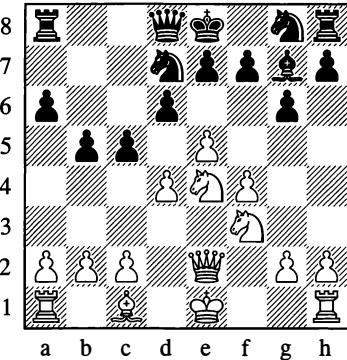
### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Exchanging bishops is a thematic idea in such positions.

#### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Commenting in *ChessBase Magazine*, Yudasin gives 10... $\mathbb{W}xe4$  cxd4 (10...e6? 11.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  is promising for Black) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$  12.exd6 e6 with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . Okay, but why not 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  immediately? It wins for Black. White should of course play 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , though Black

is quite happy here after 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}exd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ . The f4-pawn is a lonely pillar; the last remains of a once mighty centre.



10...cx d4 11.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !

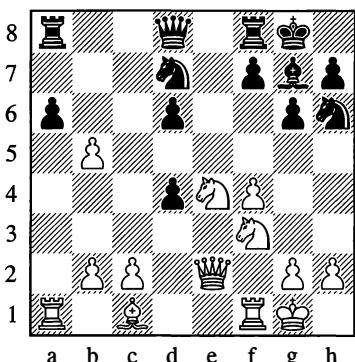
Now it would be a mistake to play 11...e6?! because of: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (Yudasin gives 12... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13.0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6$  with a slight advantage for Black, but 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ! wins on the spot.) 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14.0-0 White has enough compensation to last for this game and one more.

12.a4!

This is the only move! If White is not able to stir up some trouble before Black castles and plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , then White will have to fight a cold draught down the e- and c-files.

12...0-0 13.axb5 exd6 14.0-0

Not 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ ?  $\mathbb{W}c7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  when White has no defence against ... $f5$ .

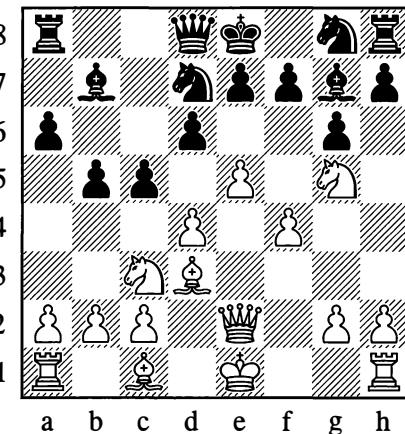


14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ !

14...axb5?! led to an unclear game that eventually Black managed to win in Hartman – Gausel, Gothenburg 1998.

15. $\mathbb{W}d3$  d5

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , when Black is clearly on top.



9...cx d4!

By now there is no way of going back. Alternatives are dismal, for instance 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ? 10.e6  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and White wins.

10.e6 f5!

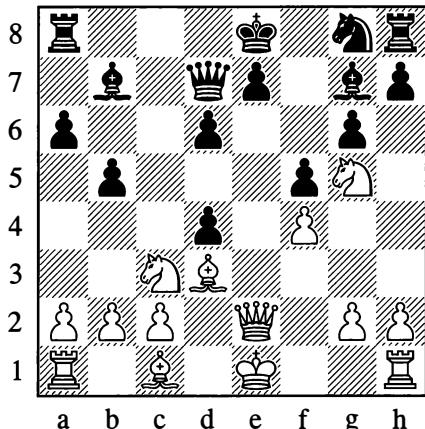
Again the only move.

10...f6? 11.exd7+!  $\mathbb{W}xd7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  dxc3 13.f5 cxb2 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  is horrible for Black.

11.exd7+!

The only move that worries Black, since 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  d5 loses a piece, and 11. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ?!  $\mathbb{W}a5$  12.a3! dxc3! 13.b4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  is clearly better for Black.

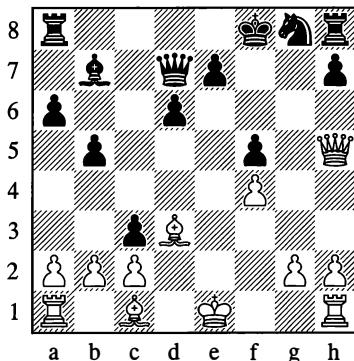
11... $\mathbb{W}xd7$



**12.♕d1**

Nick's move is probably the strongest here, but there are some other tempting possibilities.

12.♕e6?! dx<sub>c</sub>3 13.♕xg7† ♕f7 14.♕xf5 gx<sub>f</sub>5  
15.♕h5† ♕f8



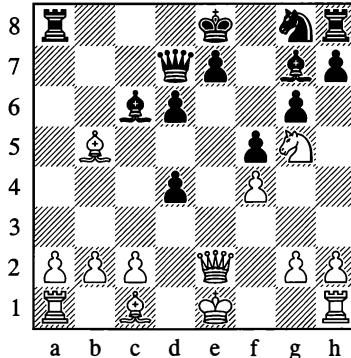
This position looks awful for Black at first, but when you consider the excellent coordination of the black pieces and White's dreadful pawn structure you soon realize that Black is doing all right. A possible continuation is 16.♕xf5 ♕c6 17.♕e6 ♕e4† 18.♕e2 ♕xe2† 19.♕xe2 ♕f6 20.f5 ♕xg2 21.♕d1 ♕e8 and the position is about balanced.

**12.♕xb5!!**

This is the more dangerous alternative.

12...ax<sub>b</sub>5 13.♕xb5 ♕c6

Now White has a choice.



**14.♕c4!**

14.♕xc6 ♕xc6 15.♕e6 ♕f6 16.0–0 ♕c8  
17.♕f2 ♕f7 is unclear; the d4-pawn cuts White's position in two.

14.♕c4 ♕xb5 15.♕f7† ♕d8 16.♕xg7 ♕c6!  
17.♕xh8 ♕c4 18.♕f2 ♕e2† 19.♕g3 ♕g4† leads to a perpetual check.

The text move forces Black to play precisely, but he can get a good game with:

14...♕h6! 15.0–0 ♕f6 16.♕e6 ♕g4 17.♕e1 ♕a7

Black achieves excellent counterplay.

**12...e5 13.fxe5!**

This position is so complicated that I have trouble even presenting an opinion of what is the best move here. Nick's move is logical in that it gets rid of the obstructive f4-pawn. Black seems to be doing fine after the alternatives:

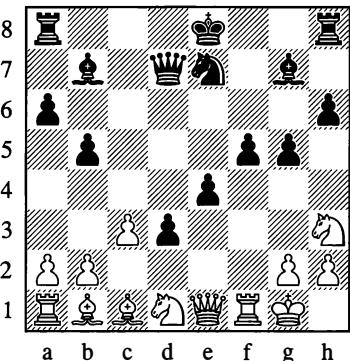
13.c4?! h6 14.♕h3 bxc4 15.♕xc4 e4 is clearly better for Black, who intends ...d5, ...♕e7 and ...0–0.

In *Tiger's Modern* I evaluated 13.c3?! e4 14.cxd4 ♕e7 15.♕b1 h6 16.♕h3 ♕c6! 17.♕e3 ♕xd4 18.♕f2 ♕e6 as "incredibly unclear", in spite of the computer's preference for White. Nine years later, I am happy to see that this evaluation still stands up to scrutiny.

**13...dxe5 14.a4!**

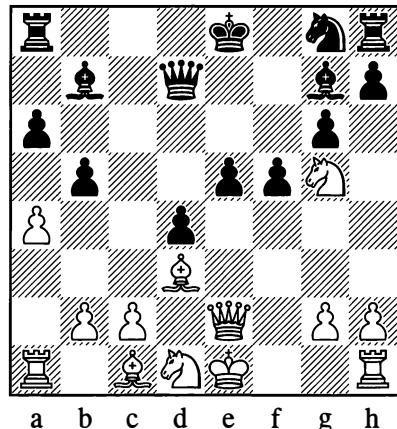
Again the best move. In game after game we find this move to be an integral part of White's plans. Here he has to open up the queenside in order to give his bishop some air.

14.0–0 is a bit like shouting out loud next to a sign that reads "AVALANCHE AREA": 14...h6! 15.♗h3 (15.♗f4? loses to 15...hxg5 16.♕xe5 ♗f7.) 15...♗e7 16.c3 e4 17.♗b1 d3 18.♗e1 g5



"Aaaargh!!"

A better alternative is 14.c3, when 14...♗e7 15.cxd4 h6 16.♗h3 ♜xd4 leaves Black with sufficient compensation.



**14...h6 15.♗f3!**

Nine years ago I thought the best chance to play for a win was 15.♗h3, when Black has to

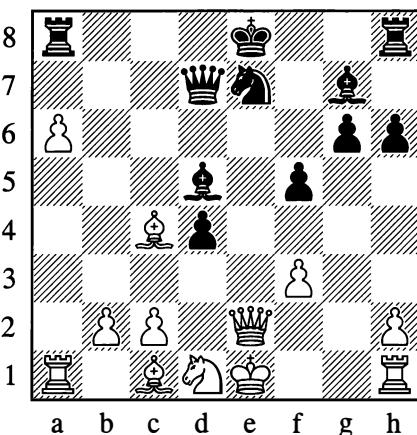
play accurately in order to keep the position balanced... sorry, I mean "messy". The right path is 15...bxa4! 16.c3 ♛e7 17.♕c4! ♜c6 18.0–0 ♜d8 19.b3 d3 20.♗f2 axb3 21.♕xb3 ♘f8 and the mess must go on!

Considering the improvement over my previous analysis on move 21, I now believe the game continuation to be clearly strongest. Now the play becomes forcing for several moves.

**15...e4 16.axb5 ♛e7 17.bxa6 ♜c6 18.♕c4**

Black is doing fine after 18.0–0 exd3 19.cxd3 ♜b5.

**18...exf3 19.gxf3 ♘d5**



**20.♘xd5!**

If I had been playing White in this position I would have gone for the draw with 20.♗b5, but Nick is more ambitious – and rightly so!

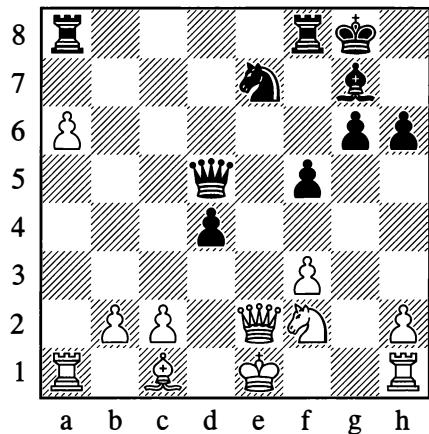
**20...♗xd5 21.♗f2?**

Originally I thought I was doing fine here due to my well coordinated and centralized forces. However, I find it difficult to deal with a new idea from the silicon beast: 21.0–0! ♘f7 22.c4! and there is no doubt that Black is under pressure. I have not been able to find an equalizer here, but please knock yourself out trying.

**21...0–0**

This looks like the obvious move, but is in fact a mistake.

I should have played 21... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ , when 22.0–0  $\mathbb{E}he8$  looks similar to the game, but is in fact a much better version for Black. For example, 23. $\mathbb{E}e1?$  is not possible due to 23... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$  and ... $\mathbb{W}xf3$ . I believe Black is slightly better here, since White has problems with his king and coordinating the flanks.

**22.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$** 

White is slightly better, and the knight on d3 would have made Nimzowitsch smile.

**23... $\mathbb{E}fe8?$** 

After this move I'm clearly worse. Instead 23... $\mathbb{E}f7$  24. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}e7$  25. $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{E}xe1$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  leads to a position where White is still better, but not as much as in the game.

**24. $\mathbb{W}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7!$** 

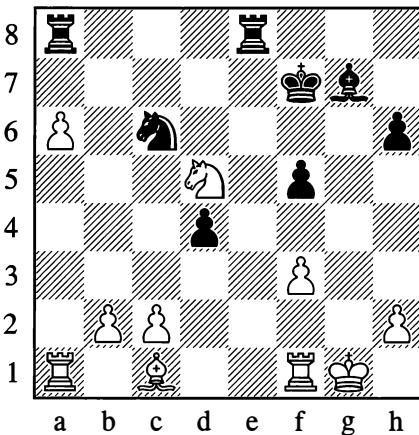
An oversight, but maybe still the best move! I remember making my move, standing up, taking a circular walk in the hall and then, as I closed the circle, I got a nasty shock: my g6-pawn was gone, and Nick's queen was staring at me from the same square. I sat down. Didn't I just protect that guy?

**25. $\mathbb{W}xg6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$** 

Obviously I had missed that one.

**26... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$** 

Commenting in *New In Chess*, Tisdall assumed that I had deliberately aimed for this position rather than playing 24... $\mathbb{g}5$  or 24... $\mathbb{W}d6$ , but this is not true. I'm not *that* mad.

**27... $\mathbb{E}e2$  28. $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{E}e1\#$  29. $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{E}e2$  30. $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{E}e1\#$  31. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $d3$** 

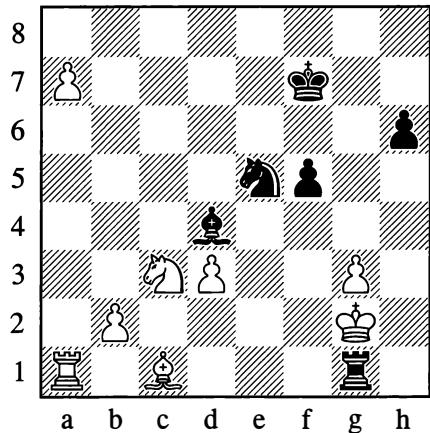
Although I still don't have enough compensation for three pawns, this last pawn bought me considerably more tricks than the first two did.

**32.cxd3**

I spent my time dreaming of 32.c3  $\mathbb{E}e5$  33.f4?  $\mathbb{E}g8\#$  34. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  when White is actually under pressure. After his last move, Nick's worst problem was his lack of time.

**32... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  33. $\mathbb{E}c2$   $\mathbb{E}g8\#$  34. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{E}f1$  35. $\mathbb{E}g2$   $\mathbb{E}xf3\#$  36. $\mathbb{E}g3$   $\mathbb{E}gxg3\#$  37.hxg3  $\mathbb{E}f1$  38. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  39.a7  $\mathbb{E}h1\#$  40. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}g1\#$  41. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{E}h1\#$  42. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}g1\#$** 

After getting through his time trouble, Nick found himself disappointed with the outcome of the game and, on pure emotion, decided to avoid the repetition. Grateful though I am, it was not a wise choice.



43.♔h2?? ♔f3† 44.♔h3 ♕h1† 45.♔g2 ♕h2†

And since 46.♔xf3 ♕f2 is mate, White resigned. Even though the game is not theoretically relevant, it remains a good example of a double-edged middlegame, with some similarities to the lines examined in Game 1.

**0–1**

The next game continues our respite from the cutting edge of theory, as we examine a harmless continuation whereby White relinquishes his strong centre without a fight.

## GAME 6

**Michael Schlosser – Alexander Chernin**

Yerevan (ol) 1996

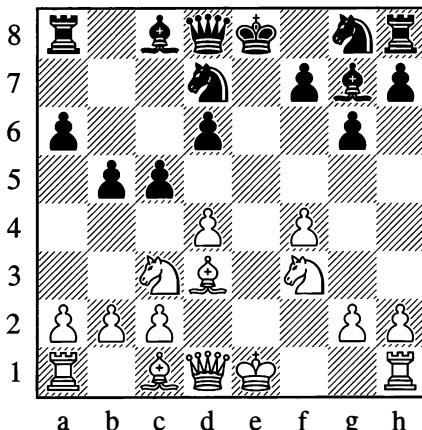
1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♕g7 3.♔c3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.♔f3 b5 6.♔d3 ♔d7 7.e5 c5 8.exd6?

There is no law against ugly moves, but it feels wrong to invest time pushing the pawn to e5 only to exchange it on the very next move. In *Tiger's Modern* I made a comparison with the game Bareev – Pekarek, Dortmund 1990, in which the moves 0–0 and ...♔b7 had been played earlier. In that encounter White got a good game with 9.♔e4 followed by a

quick exd6, but in the present game the pawn exchange has nothing to recommend it.

**8...exd6!**

I would instinctively have played 8...cx d4? which is also fine, as both 9.♔e4?! f5! 10.♔f2 ♔c5 and 9.♔d5 ♕a7 followed by ...♔c5 are good for Black. However, I now believe that Chernin's choice is even better.



**9.♔e4?**

The best thing that can be said about this move is that it attacks the d6-pawn, but that's about it. He should have preferred one of the following alternatives.

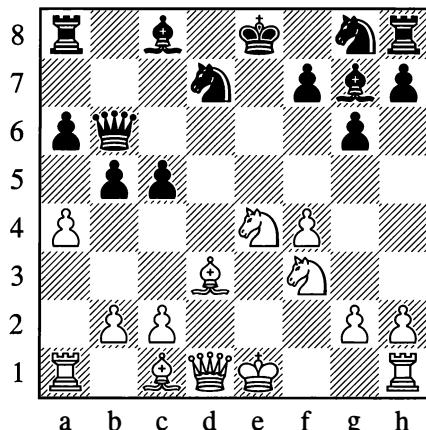
9.0–0 ♔e7 is nice for Black, as 10.f5?! cxd4 11.♔e2 ♕b6 leads nowhere for White.

White's best try is: 9.a4! b4 (9...♔e7?! 10.axb5 cxd4 11.♔e4 ♕b6 12.0–0 0–0 is rather unclear.) 10.♔e4 ♕c7! Keeping an eye on c4. 11.♔c4 ♔gf6 12.♔xf6† ♔xf6 13.♕e2† ♔d8! 14.0–0 (14.♔e5?! ♕e8! 15.♔xf7† ♔d7 16.♔e5† dx e5 17.dxe5 ♕c6 is better for Black.) 14...♕e8 Black's development advantage more than makes up for his slightly weird king position.

**9...♕b6! 10.dxc5 dxc5 11.a4?!**

In *CBM* Dolmatov gives 11.♔e2 ♔gf6

12.♕d6† ♔e7 13.♕xc8† ♕axc8 14.0–0 ♕he8 followed by an “unclear” symbol, but I think Black is better. Still, this would have been a better try for White.



### 11...♝h6!

This is a thematic move. White's centre is in tatters and there are potentially weak squares all over the place. Black does not have to worry about the b-pawn – development is what matters here.

### 12.axb5 0–0 13.♔e2!

White defends against ...♝e8, prepares to castle short and opens the d-file for the queen.

### 13...c4!

Preventing castling.

### 14.♕a3

After 14.♕d6 Black has the pleasant choice between 14...♗xb5 and Dolmatov's 14...♗a7.

### 14...♝f5 15.♕xc4

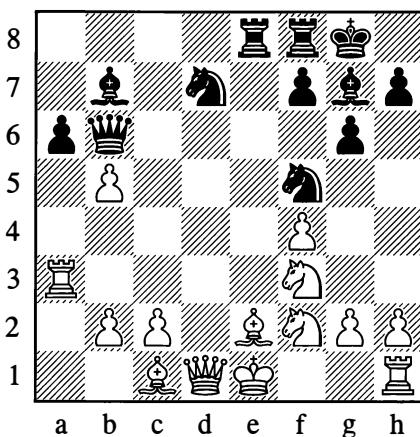
15.g4 ♕e8 is winning for Black according to Dolmatov. It took me some time to understand this evaluation, but in the end I found myself in agreement. Play may continue 16.gxf5 ♕xe4 17.fxg6 hxg6 18.♕d5 ♔b7 19.♕xd7 ♕d8 and there is no good defence against ...♝de8 on the next move.

### 15...♝b7! 16.♕f2

The simple tactical point behind Black's last move is that 16.♕xd7? ♕ad8 wins the queen.

### 16...♜ae8† 17.♔e2

After 17.♔f1 axb5 White is driven back, and his king position is pitiful.



### 17...♝f6?

This lets White off the hook. The strongest move is 17...♝c5!, when both 18.0–0 axb5 and 18.bxa6 ♕xa6 are clearly better for Black.

### 18.0–0 ♜g4 19.♕e5?!

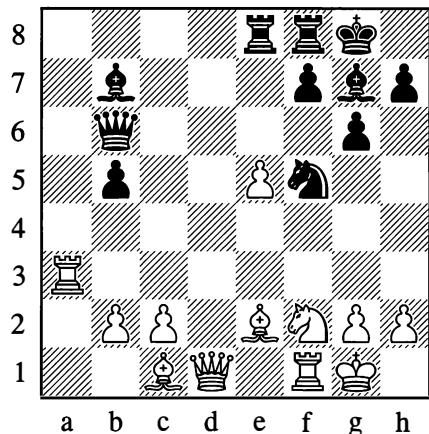
White could have saved himself with 19.bxa6, when Black does not have anything better than 19...♝xf2 20.♖xf2 ♕xf3 21.♖axf3 ♕xe2 22.♗xe2 ♜d4 23.♗d1 ♜xf3† 24.♗xf3 ♜d4 25.c3 ♜xf2† 26.♗xf2 ♕xa6 27.h3 with a drawish position.

### 19...♝xe5 20.fxe5?!

White can still fight with 20.bxa6!, when 20...♝xg2 21.♔xg2 ♕c6† 22.♔h3 ♜c4 is rather unclear.

### 20...axb5

The position has stabilized and the board is ruled by Black's bishop pair.



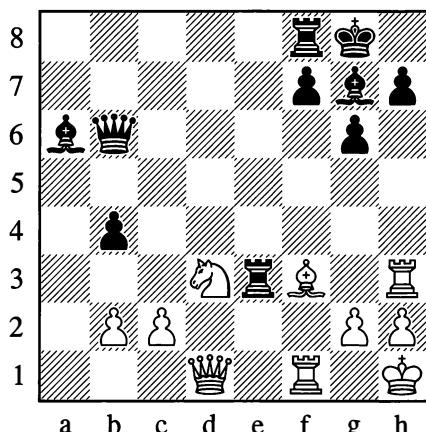
**21.♘h1**

21.♘f3 b4 22.♗b3 ♜a6 23.♗e1 ♜c4 wins the exchange for no compensation.

**21...b4 22.♗h3 ♜xe5 23.♗f3?**

Dolmatov ends one variation after another with “winning advantage for Black”, but it seems like a fairy tale for romantically disposed chess players. Closer to the truth is that Chernin finally, after many inspired moves, obtained a clear advantage that just turned into a really big one. Better was 23.♗d3, when the game would have been far from over.

**23...♜a6 24.♗d3 ♜e3 25.♗xe3 ♜xe3**



**26.♗d2?**

This equals throwing in the towel. More resistant was 26.b3, when White’s position is ugly but not yet hopeless.

**26...b3! 27.♗g4 ♜xh3 28.♗xh3 ♜d6 29.♗f3 ♜d8**

**0–1**

We will now turn our attention to systems in which White plays an early ♜e3.

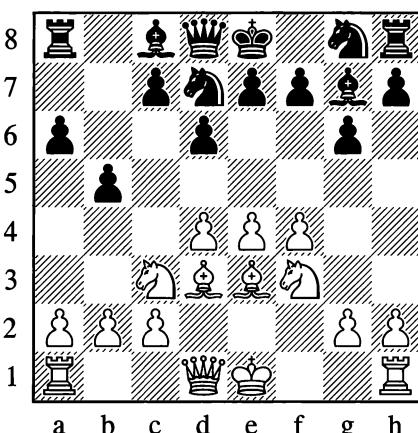
## GAME 7

**Jan Smeets – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**

Wijk aan Zee 2011

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.♗f3 b5 6.♗d3 ♜d7 7.♗e3**

Not for the first time, I have changed the move order of the game to suit my evil purpose. The actual move order was 7.e5 ♜b7 (7...c5! is my recommendation, as covered earlier) 8.♗e3 (8.♗g5! is critical) when we reach the same position as in the main line below.



**7...♜b7!**

The first thing you need to understand about ♜e3 set-ups is that White is ready to meet ...c5 with dxc5, followed by swapping his bishop

for the black knight on c5 if necessary, in order to obtain a favourable structure in the centre. For more about 7...c5?!, turn to page 62 and regard the notes to Game 10, where we will discuss this pawn structure in more detail.

7...e6 is possible now that White has played ♘e3, but I would not recommend it.

### 8.e5

8.0–0 is analysed in Game 10, and 8.♗e2 in Game 11.

### 8...c5?!

This is a risky but playable option.

8...♘h6?! is considered in the next game.

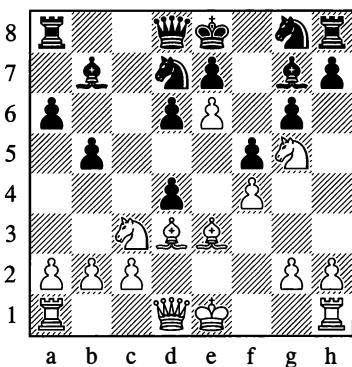
8...e6?! 9.a4 b4 10.♗e4 is the type of position I would stay well away from with Black.

### 9.♗e4

White's early development of the bishop to e3 makes the direct attacking plan with ♘g5 and e5–e6 less attractive here. This assessment is supported by my game against Pablo San Segundo, who tried this plan against me at the 1998 Olympiad:

9.♘g5?! cxd4 10.e6 f5!

Necessary, but strong.



11.♕xf5

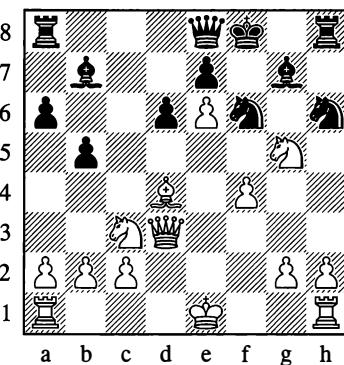
My binary Sancho Panza is quite peckish and suggests 11.♗f7? ♖a5 12.♗xh8 ♘c5 13.♗xd4 ♖xd4 14.♗xb5† axb5 15.♗xd4, but a few moves later I make it choke on 15...b4! 16.♗g7 ♘xe6 17.♗xg8† ♘d7 18.♗xh7 bxc3 19.0–0 cxb2 when White is lost. There are ways for White to diverge, but I do not think it will change the final verdict.

11...♗df6! 12.♗xg6†?!

Better is 12.♗f7 although Black keeps the advantage after 12...♗c7 13.♗xd4 gxh5.

12...hxg6 13.♗d3 ♘h6! 14.♗xg6† ♘f8 15.♗xd4 ♖e8 16.♗d3

This position occurred in San Segundo – Hillarp Persson, Elista (ol) 1998. Black's extra piece should be worth more than three pawns, and the right way to prove it would have been:



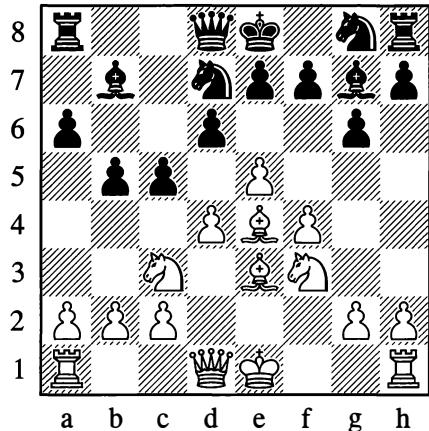
16...b4!N

In the game I played 16...♗h5?!, after which my opponent managed to whip up enough complications to keep me from winning the game.

17.♗e2 ♗b5

The ensuing queen exchange will leave the white pawns irremediably weak.

Before returning to the game, let us briefly note that 9.0–0? transposes to 8.0–0 c5 9.e5?!, as covered in the notes to White's 9th move in Game 10 – see page 63.



### 9...Qxe4!

I have come to consider this move more exact than 9...Wc8 10.Qxb7 Wxb7 11.dxc5 dxe5 when – as explained in *Tiger's Modern* – Black gets a slightly worse and quite boring position after 12.Wd5! Wxd5 13.Qxd5 Qc8 14.Qb6!, as in E. Mortensen – Hillarp Persson, Danish League 2003.

### 10.Qxe4 Qh6!

If you intend to venture 8...c5?! over the board, you should go through this game thoroughly. If you meet a well-prepared opponent here and don't know the ropes, then you are in deep trouble. You do not have to remember all the variations, but rather put up some memory markers.

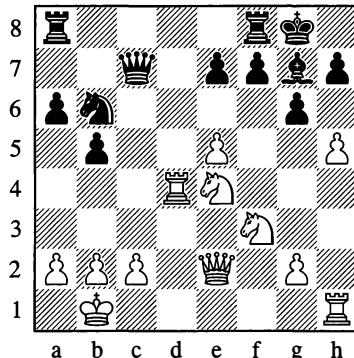
### 11.dxc5

White has a number of alternatives here.

11.0–0 0–0 12.c3 Qf5 13.We1 occurred in De Gloppe – Josefsson, email 2007, and here I see nothing wrong with 13...Qxe3N 14.Wxe3 cxd4 15.cxd4 Qb6, followed by ...Wd7 and ...Wac8, with a harmonious position for Black.

11.We2 cxd4! 12.Qxd4 Qf5 13.0–0–0 (13.Qc3?! dxe5! 14.0–0–0 Wc7 15.g4 Qd4 16.Qxd4 exd4 17.Qxd4 0–0) should be fine for Black, who intends to put a rook on d8

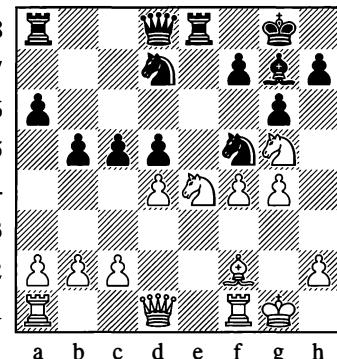
and the knight to b6.) 13...Qxd4 14.Qxd4 0–0 15.Qb1 Qb6 16.h4 Wc7 17.h5 dxe5 18.fxe5



21.Qf2 Qa4 22.Qd3 Qc5 is only a little better for Black.) 21...Qc4 Since White was unable to defend the e-pawn, he got desperate with 22.Qxf7 and soon lost in V. Schneider – Can, Plovdiv 2012.

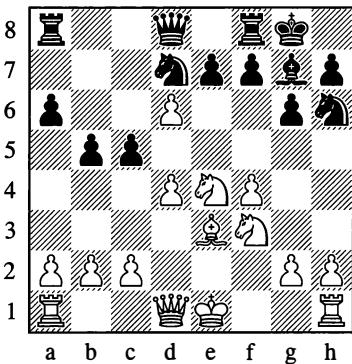
After 11.exd6? Black has two options:

a) 11...Qf5 is possible, but things may become extremely complicated: 12.Qf2 exd6 13.g4? (13.0–0 0–0 is equal.) 13...0–0! 14.0–0 We8 15.Qfg5 d5



16.Qxf7! We7! 17.Qeg5 Qe3 18.Wf3 cxd4 19.Wae1 Qf6 20.Qxe3 dxe3 21.Qe5 Qe4! 22.Qxe4 dxe4 23.Wxe4 Qxe5 24.fxe5 Wxe5 25.Wxe5 Wxe5 26.Wf3 Wa8 The endgame is likely to end in a draw.

b) I prefer the thematic pawn sacrifice 11...0–0!  
when play may continue:

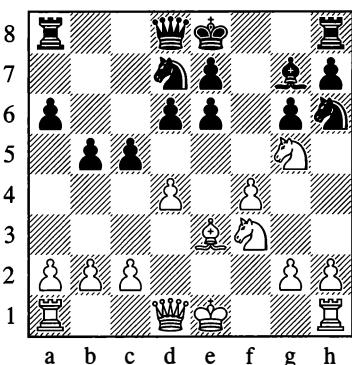


12.dxc5 exd6 13.cxd6 ♖xb2 14.♗b1 ♕e8  
15.♗d3 ♕a5† 16.♗fd2 ♕xa2 17.0–0 ♕ac8  
with unclear consequences.

White's final option on move 11 is:

11.e6?! fxe6 12.♗eg5

After 12.0–0 ♖f5 13.♗f2 cxd4 14.♗eg5 ♖c5  
15.b4 (15.♗xd4 ♕c8 16.♗e1 ♖xd4 17.♗xd4  
0–0 18.b4 h6 19.bxc5 hxg5 20.fxg5 e5 is  
unclear) 15...h6 16.bxc5 hxg5 17.♗xg5  
dxc5 18.♗xe6 ♕d6 the white bishop gets  
shut out of the game and Black is better.



12...♗f5 13.♗f2 ♖xd4

This is how I usually deal with this kind of situation, and it seems to work out well here too.

13...♗f8?! 14.0–0 h6 15.♗e4 cxd4 16.♗xd4  
♕d7 is another possibility.

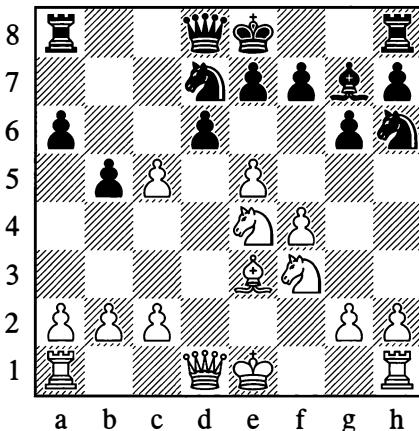
14.♗xd4 cxd4 15.0–0–

15.g4? ♕a5† is annoying for White.

15...e5 16.c3 ♕b6 17.♗b3 ♖c5 18.♗f7† ♔d7

19.♗xh7 ♕c6

We have reached a rather wild position with lots of unbalanced excitement ahead.

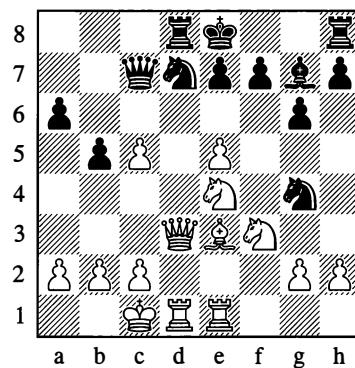


11...♗g4! 12.♗gl

Once again White has a few other possibilities.

12.♗d3 dxe5 13.0–0–0–0 is not too dangerous.

13...♕c7 14.♗he1 ♕d8! 15.fxe5



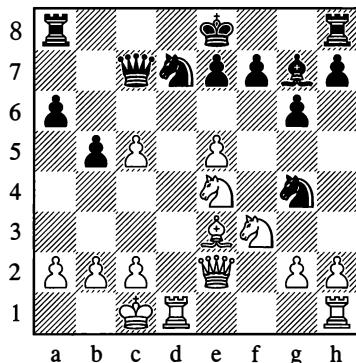
15...♗gxe5 (The engine likes 15...0–0–0!N since  
16.e6?! ♖xc5 17.exf7† ♖xf7! 18.♗fg5† ♖g8  
19.♗e2 ♕e5 is good for Black.) 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5  
17.♗xd8† ♕xd8 18.♗xd8† ♖xd8 19.♗d4  
♗d3† 20.cxd3 ♖xd4 This unclear endgame  
was eventually drawn in Latas – Kroll, email  
2005.

12.  $\mathbb{W}e2!!$

Correspondence players seem to have pinned this move down as the most critical continuation. The next couple of moves are forced.

12...dxe5 13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.fxe5

Now Black must choose the correct knight.



14... $\mathbb{Q}gxe5!$

Black should remove the knight from g4, otherwise it may become tactically vulnerable.

After 14... $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0–0 16.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  18.hxg4  $\mathbb{W}f4\#$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  Black went on to win in Rodriguez Vila – Almeida Quintana, Canovelles 2008, but I do not trust his position at this point.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}c3!!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  (Worse is 15...e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and the strong white knight makes it hard for Black to create counterplay on the queenside.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{W}xh2!$  18. $\mathbb{W}f3$  0–0 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  20.g3  $\mathbb{Q}xf4\#$  21.gxf4  $\mathbb{W}h5$  The position is equal, though still rather double-edged in view of the competing pawn majorities.

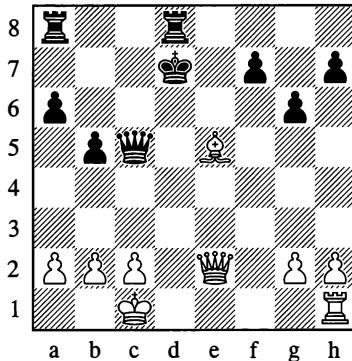
15... $\mathbb{W}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#!!$

After 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  0–0 19.h4 h5 a draw was agreed in Leone – Antonone, email 2009.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}hd8!$

I wish there was something general that

I could say about this position, but the result comes down to pure tactics. White should probably be able to force a repetition somewhere, but no more.



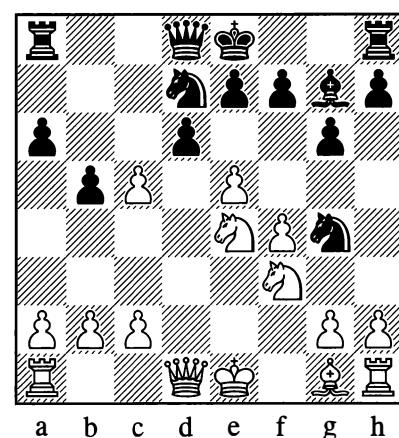
21. $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$   $\mathbb{W}e6$

24. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  25. $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  26. $\mathbb{W}g7$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Having returned a pawn to consolidate his position, Black stands better.

27.b3  $\mathbb{E}c8$  28. $\mathbb{E}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e4$  29. $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{W}xd4!$

The black king will escape the checks after White takes on f7, so White resigned in Klapiszewski – Antonone, email 2010.



12...dxe5 13.h3!!

This is perhaps the most challenging move, although the following alternative also demands accuracy from both sides:

13.c6  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

13... $\mathbb{Q}df6?$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

16.h3 ♜h6 17.c7 ♜c8 transposes to the main game, where White missed an opportunity to secure an advantage.

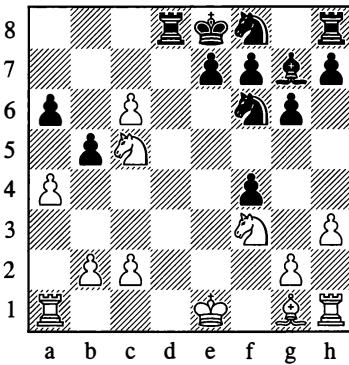
14.♗xd8† ♜xd8 15.h3 ♜f6

Now the critical continuation is:

16.♘c5!N

16.♘xf6†?! exf6 gave Black the more comfortable endgame in Staniszewski – Bocanegra Moreno, corr. 2008.

16...exf4 17.a4

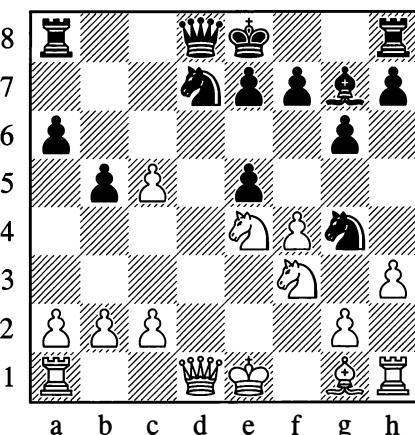


17...♞e6! 18.axb5

18.♘xa6?! is too ambitious, and after 18...bxa4 19.♖xa4 0–0 20.♘b4 ♜e4 21.c3 ♜g3 22.♖h2 ♜d6 Black is better.

18...axb5 19.♘xe6 fxe6

The endgame looks fine for Black. The c6-pawn is obviously strong, but Black has resources in ...♞d5 and ...♜c8 and White is still playing without the rook on h1.



13...♞h6?

The knight will be out of play on h6.

The correct continuation is:

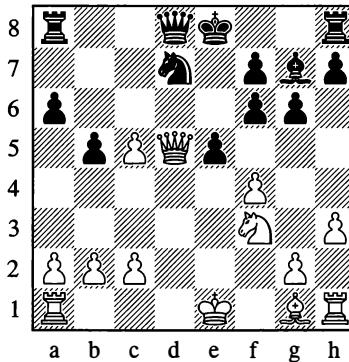
13...♞gf6! 14.♘xf6† exf6!

Now White has a number of reasonable moves from which to choose.

15.♗d5

15.a4 ♜c8 16.axb5 axb5 17.b4 0–0 is unclear.

15.c6 ♜f8! 16.♗xd8† ♜xd8 17.a4 ♜c8 18.axb5 axb5 19.fxe5 (19.♖h2?! is no problem due to 19...exf4 20.♘d4 f5 21.♗xb5 ♜xc6 22.♖a8† ♜e7 23.♖a7† ♜f6! followed by ...♞e6 with advantage to Black.) 19...fxe5 20.♖a5 ♜xc6 21.c3 This position was reached in Staniszewski – Bocanegra Moreno, email 2008, and now 21...♞e6!N 22.♖xb5 e4 looks promising for Black, as the knight on e6 is dominating the board.



15...♜c8 16.0–0–0

In the event of 16.b4 ♜b8! 17.♗xd8† ♜xd8 18.a4 ♜c6 19.c3 0–0 20.axb5 axb5 21.♖a6 ♜e7 White's queenside is weak.

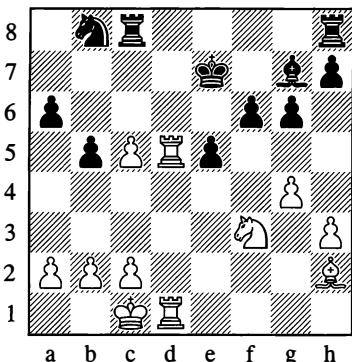
16...♝b8!

16...♛c7?! 17.fxe5 fxe5 18.c3 ♜h6† 19.♗b1 ♜f4 is unclear.

17.fxe5

17.♗b7!N ♛c7 18.♗xc7 ♜xc7 19.fxe5 fxe5 20.♖e3 0–0 21.♗g5 ♜c6 leads to an unclear but roughly equal endgame with mutual pawn majorities.

17...fxe5 18.♔h2 ♖xd5 19.♕xd5 f6 20.♕hd1 ♔e7 21.g4

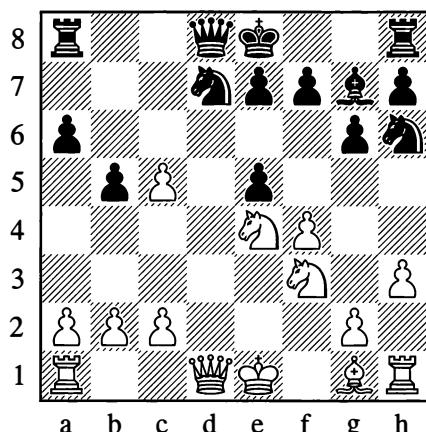


21...♕hd8!N

21...h6? 22.♔h4 gave White the advantage in Kez. Ong – Tikkanen, Gothenburg 2006.  
22.♖xd8 ♕xd8 23.♖xd8 ♔xd8 24.g5 ♔c6  
25.gxf6 ♔xf6

The endgame is fine for Black, and White even has to be slightly careful, for instance:  
26.♔d2?! ♔g5 27.c3 ♔d7 28.♔c2 ♕xd2  
29.♔xd2 ♔e6 30.b3 ♔d5 31.♔g1 g5

Black has some winning chances.



**14.c6 ♔f6 15.♖xd8† ♕xd8**

In a later game Black deviated with the horrible 15...♕xd8?, but it is hard to imagine what he was thinking, since after 16.♕b6† ♔c8 17.♔xf6 exf6 18.0–0–0 he was already losing in Smeets – Siebrecht, Netherlands 2011.

**16.c7 ♕c8 17.♔xf6† exf6 18.♕b6 ♔d7**

Black must avoid 18...♔f5? 19.0–0–0 ♔h6 20.♕d8† ♔e7 21.♕hd1 when White wins.

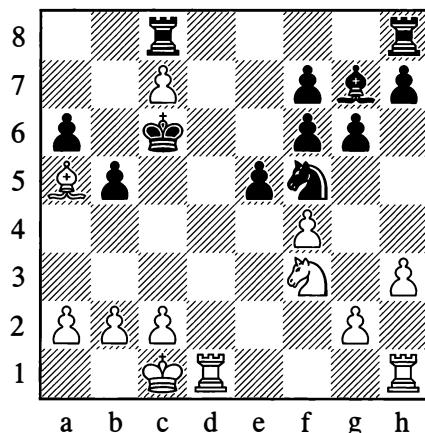
**19.0–0–0†?**

This inaccuracy makes the position equal.

The critical line is 19.g4! ♔c6 20.♔a5! ♕he8 (20...f5 21.g5 ♔g8 22.♔c3 does not help Black) 21.0–0–0 ♕xc7 22.♕xc7 ♔xc7 23.♕he1 and White is clearly better.

**19...♔c6 20.♔a5 ♔f5**

Puh! With the knight back in the game, Black is back in the game.



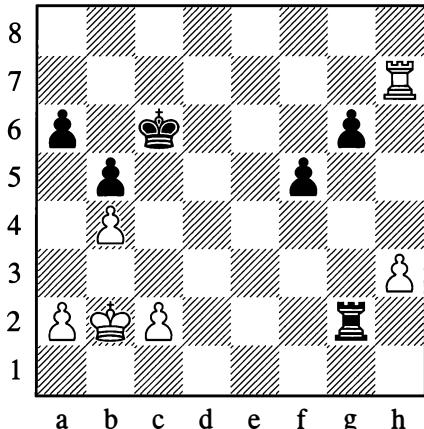
**21.♕d8?**

The correct continuation was 21.fxe5 fxe5 22.♕he1 f6 23.♕d8 ♔d6 24.b3 ♕f8 followed by ...♔e7 with a double-edged but roughly equal endgame.

**21...♔h6**

Black wins a pawn and secures a three-pawn plus on the kingside – bad news for White.

22.♕hd1 ♔xf4† 23.♔b1 e4 24.♔d4† ♔xd4  
25.♕1xd4 ♕xc7 26.♕xc7 ♕xc7 27.♕8d7†  
♔b6 28.♕xe4 f5 29.♕ed4 ♕he8 30.b4 ♕e1†  
31.♔b2 ♕e2 32.♕4d6† ♕c6 33.♕xc6† ♕xc6  
34.♕xf7 ♕xg2 35.♕xh7



**35...Bd2!**

Vachier-Lagrave probably steered away from the obvious 35...f4 since 36.Ba7! leads to a draw after either 36...Qb6 37.Bf7 g5 38.Bf6† Qb7 39.Qc1=, or 36...Qd5 37.Bxa6 f3 38.Bf6† e4 39.a4!=.

**36.Ba7 Qb6 37.Bf7 Be6 38.Qb3?!**

White should be able to draw with 38.h4! Qc6 39.h5 gxh5 40.Bxf5 Bh6 41.Bf3 h4 42.Bh3 Qd5 43.Qb3 followed by a2-a4 and/or c2-c4.

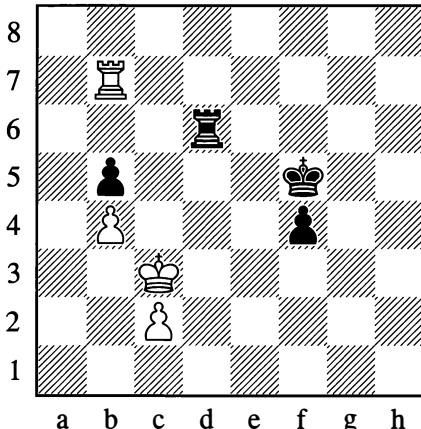
**38...Qc6 39.h4 Qd5 40.h5 Qe4! 41.hxg6 Bxg6 42.a4 f4 43.axb5 axb5 44.Be7†**

Evidently Smeets did not like 44.c4 Bg3† 45.Qc2 bxc4, although 46.b5 Bb3 47.Be7† seems to offer White enough counter-chances.

**44...Qf5 45.Qc3 Bd6 46.Bb7?**

This throws away the draw.

Correct was 46.Bf7†! Qg4 47.Bg7† Qh3 48.Bf7 Qg3 49.Bg7† Qf2 and only now 50.Bg5 going after the b-pawn, when Black can cancel the winning attempts.



**46...Bd5?**

Missing a direct win with 46...f3! 47.Bxb5† Qg6! 48.Ba5 Bd1 49.Ba8 f2.

**47.Qb2?**

White could have scraped a draw with: 47.Bf7†! Qe4! (After 47...Qg4 48.Bg7† Qf3 49.Qb3 Black does not have a winning plan.) 48.Be7† Bb5 At first I thought Black was winning here, but in fact White can hold with 49.Bc7!! The credit for this move goes to Jacob Aagaard, who analysed this endgame in *Grandmaster Preparation – Endgame Play*. I will quote the rest of Jacob's analysis: 49...Qe3 50.Bc5 Be4 51.Bxb5 f3 52.Bh5 (If 52.Bf5? f2 the king is cut off and Black wins.) 52...f2 53.Bh1 Qf3 54.Bf1 Qe2 55.Bh1 Bb4 56.Ba1 Bg4 57.Bh1 and White survives.

**47...f3 48.c4 bxc4 49.Qc3 Qe4**

White's counterplay is too slow, and Vachier-Lagrave wraps things up efficiently.

**50.Bh7 Bf5 51.Bh1 f2 52.Bf1 Qd5 53.b5 Qc5 54.b6 Bf3† 55.Qd2 Qxb6 56.Qe2 Bf5 57.Bxf2 Bxf2† 58.Qxf2 Qc5 59.Qe3 Qb4 60.Qd2 Qb3**

**0–1**

The next game features a different but equally playable option for Black on move 8.

## GAME 8

**Adam Hunt – Peter Svidler**

Gibraltar 2012

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.f4**

It quite often happens that White begins by putting the bishop on e3, and only transposes to the Austrian set-up after ...a6 appears on the board.

**5...b5 6.♗d3 ♜b7**

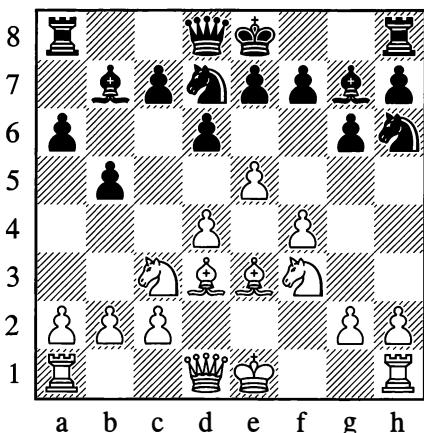
This move order is fine when White has already played an early ♜e3, and it even gives him an extra option as mentioned in the next note.

**7.♗f3 ♜d7**

7...♗f6?!? is seen in Game 9.

**8.e5 ♜h6**

This is a less forcing alternative to 8...c5! as featured in the previous game.



**9.♗e2 c5!?**

This was first played by Sznajek in 1974, but it is only lately that certain players have been able to make it work.

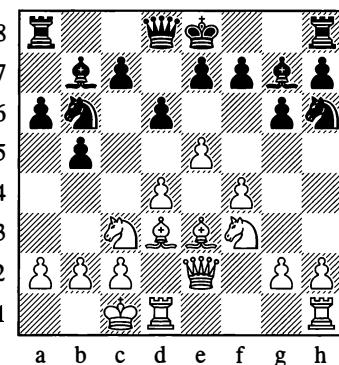
**9...♗b6**

For a long time this move was considered the main line. I think it might be playable... with the emphasis on "might".

**10.0–0–0!**

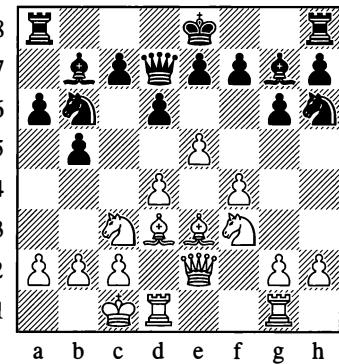
10.a4 b4 11.♗e4 0–0 12.a5 ♜d5 13.♗d2 c5 was fine for Black in Carlsson – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2005.

10.♗e4 ♜d7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♗ae1 ♜d5 was all right for Black in Grischuk – Svidler, Astana (blitz) 2012. However, I believe it is even better to hold back from ...♜d5 in favour of 12...f5!N 13.♗f2 e6 followed by ...♗f7.



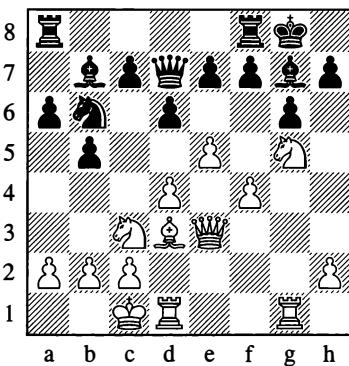
**10...♝d7 11.♗hg1!**

11.♗e4 is not a bad alternative. 11...♝xe4N (11...d5? 12.♗d3 was strategically almost lost for Black in D.V. Pedersen – Aagaard, Denmark 2012.) 12.♗xe4 ♜c6 13.♗d2 ♜c4 14.♗xc4 ♜xc4 15.♗he1 0–0 With the queens and a pair of minor pieces exchanged, Black's spatial disadvantage should not be a big concern.



After the text move we have reached a critical position for the evaluation of Black's 9th move. Both a) 11...0–0?! and b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?! have been played, but the uncontested c) 11...b4!N looks best.

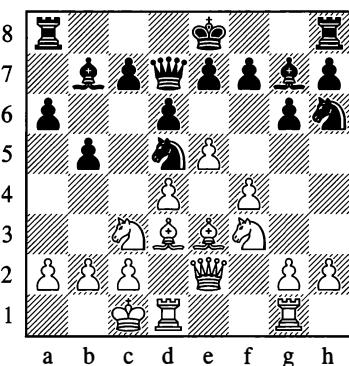
a) In the stem game Black walked right into the line of fire: 11...0–0?! 12.g4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$



14...e6 (Jacob Aagaard pointed out that 14...b4? is losing due to 15.e6 fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ !!  $\mathbb{B}xc3$  17. $\mathbb{E}xg6$   $\mathbb{E}f7$  18. $\mathbb{E}dg1$ !) 15. $\mathbb{W}h3$  White eventually prevailed in Dominguez Perez – Ivanchuk, Barcelona 2006. There have been some attempts to salvage this line, but you can rest assured: there is no salvation, and White wins by brute force.

b) In a later game Black played:

11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?

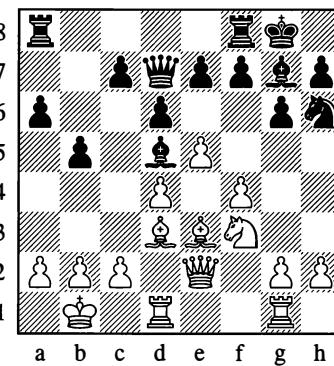


12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

The position is better for White. His plan is to roll the g- and f-pawns, while it will take Black far too long to achieve any real counterplay on the queenside.

13...0–0

13...f6 14.c4?  $\mathbb{B}xc4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  c6 16. $\mathbb{E}ge1$  is clearly better for White.



14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

White can also try 14.g4?!, when 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17.h5 looks dangerous for Black.

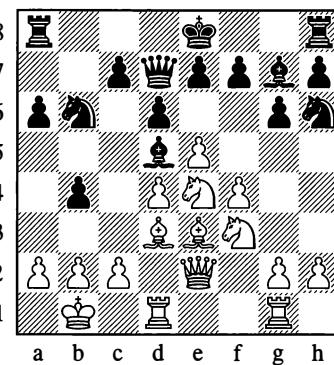
14...f5

14... $\mathbb{W}c6$ ? may be a slight improvement, but I don't fully trust Black's position in any case.

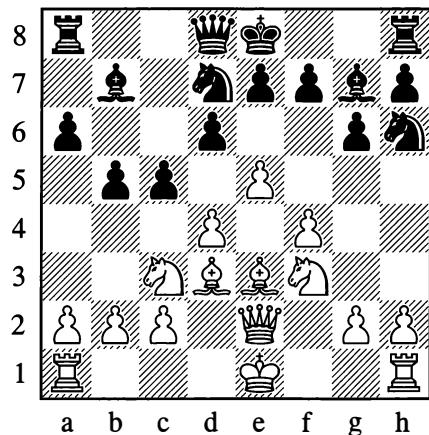
15.h3  $\mathbb{W}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{E}ab8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $dxe5$ ?! 18.dxe5  $\mathbb{E}fd8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White had a clear advantage in Haslinger – Muse, Germany 2010.

c) 11...b4!N is Black's most promising option, but it has yet to be tested. 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  Now I like the following idea: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



13... $\mathbb{W}a4!$  14.b3  $\mathbb{W}c6!$  Now Black has something to bite into on the queenside. A possible continuation is 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (the machine's first choice) 15...0–0 16.h4 a5 17.h5 a4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  and Black has a wonderful position.



### 10.dxc5

The speculative 10.e6?! fxe6 11.dxc5 does not work out well for White after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  0–0.

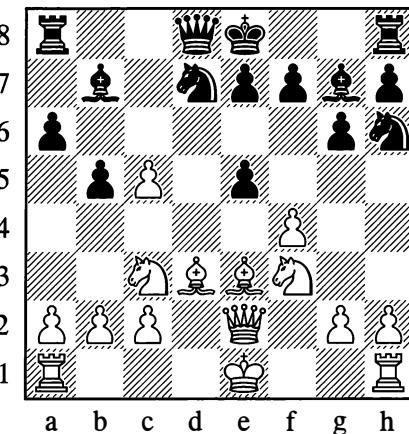
White has also tried: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14. $\mathbb{B}xd4$  0–0 15. $\mathbb{B}hd1$  Here Black should play 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6N$  with an unbalanced game, rather than 15... $\mathbb{W}a5$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17.exd6 exd6 18.f5 when White had the initiative in Couso – Tikkanen, Stockholm 2007.

### 10...dxe5!

This is the fundamental strategy in such positions. Time and again Black sacrifices the c-pawn in order to break up White's centre and leave a weak pawn on e5, which can be kept as a snack for later.

An interesting idea is 10...0–0! when Black gets plenty of counterplay in the event that White embarks on further pawn-grabbing, as seen after 11.cxd6! exd6 12.0–0–0 dxe5 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$  17.h4  $\mathbb{W}c6$ . Unfortunately, the superior

11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !  $\mathbb{W}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  13.0–0–0 leads to an unenviable position for Black.



### 11.fxe5

This move is playable, but I believe White benefits from the exchange of a pair of knights, and should therefore try:

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !N  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.fxe5 0–0!

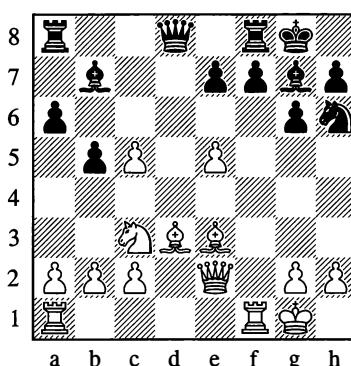
The most flexible move.

After 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 13.0–0–0 Black is worse, since 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ ? is refuted by 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ †.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ! 13.0–0–0–0 is another route to the main line.

13.0–0!

13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{B}he1$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  leads to just the kind of game I am looking for.

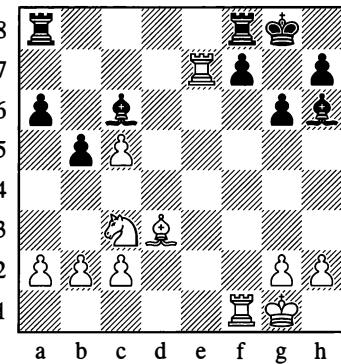


13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ !

13... $\mathbb{W}c8$  14.b4 leaves Black struggling to demonstrate compensation.

14.♗ae1 ♕xe5!

I also considered 14...♝ad8, but after 15.a3! it is difficult to see a continuation for Black, since 15...e6 16.♗e4 ♕xe4 17.♕xe4 ♔f5 18.♕f4 is clearly better for White.  
 15.♕xh6 ♕xe2 16.♕xe2 ♕xh6 17.♕xe7 ♕c6  
 White remains a pawn up, but the bishop pair will save the day for Black.



18.♗c7

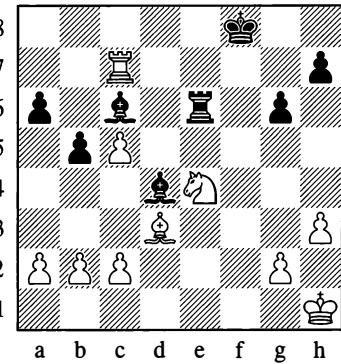
18.a4 bxa4! is fine for Black.  
 18...♕e3† 19.♔h1 ♜ac8 20.♗xf7 ♜xc7  
 21.♗xc7 ♜f6

It is time to pause. White is two pawns up, but Black has an active pair of bishops and a safer king. Black is hardly any worse, as the following lines demonstrate.

22.h3

22.b4?! ♜d4 23.♗xc6 ♜xc6 24.♗d5 ♜f7  
 25.g3 ♜e6 26.♗e2 ♜xc5! leads to an endgame where Black's rook will be at least the equal of White's two minor pieces.

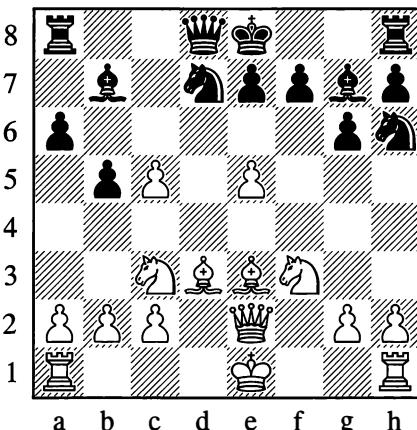
22...♜d4 23.♗c8† ♜g7 24.♗e4 ♜e6 25.♗c7† ♜f8



26.c3

26.♗d2 ♜xb2 27.♗f3 h6 is also equal.  
 26...♜xe4 27.♗xe4 ♜g7 28.♗c8† ♜e7 29.♗f3  
 ♜e1† 30.♗h2 ♜e5† 31.g3 ♜c1

Finally Black equalizes. In theoretical terms, the line is in good health, although a drawn endgame may not be an ideal outcome for those who play the 4...a6 system. If this applies to you, then you should check out the earlier note with 9...♗b6, as well as 8...c5?! as featured in the previous main game.



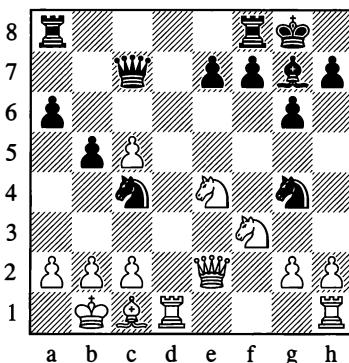
11...♜c7

I believe Black is already in the driver's seat, even though the machine still favours White slightly. How should he deal with the threat to the e-pawn?

12.e6?!

After 12.0–0–0 0–0 13.h4?! ♜xe5 14.♗xe5 ♜xe5 Black has excellent prospects.

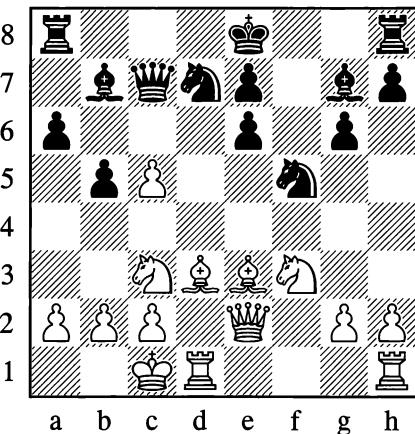
12.♗e4 is a logical try, but Black is fine here too: 12...♜xe4 13.♗xe4 ♜xe5 14.0–0–0 0–0 15.♗b1 (No better is 15.♗f4 ♜d3† 16.♗xd3 ♜xf4† 17.♗b1 ♜ac8 18.♗he1 ♜g4! 19.h3 ♜f6 with some advantage to Black.) 15...♗c4 16.♗c1 ♜g4 It is worth remembering that the knight should rarely go to f5 in such positions, unless there is a really compelling reason. Black has a good position, although it is worth mentioning one critical line:



17.b3  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19.bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}ab8!$   
 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  bxc4 $\#$  21. $\mathbb{Q}a1$  e5 22. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$   
 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  24.c3  $\mathbb{W}xc3\#$  25. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  e4 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   
 $\mathbb{W}b4$  Black has good compensation and will soon get a third pawn for the piece.

### 12...fxe6 13.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

Svidler's move is stronger and more aggressive than 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17.h4 when White is a little better.



### 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Another idea is 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$  exf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  when we are playing for all three results.

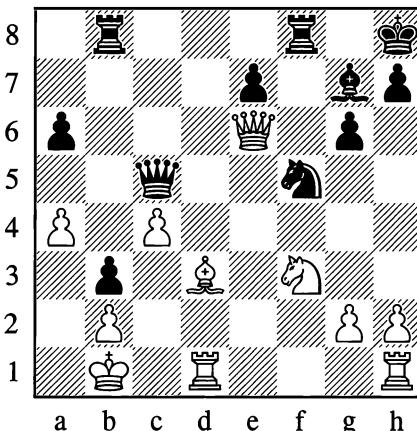
### 14...0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16.a3?

White should have preferred 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , when 16... $\mathbb{W}a5$  and 16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  both lead to complex and dynamic play.

The text move makes no sense, as it gives Black an easy target to bite into.

16... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  b4 18.a4 b3 19.c4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   
 20. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  22. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$

White's position is a wreck, and it does not take Svidler long to break through to the king.



23. $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24. $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$   
 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  27. $\mathbb{W}d8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  28. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}a2\#$   
 29. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a1\#$  30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xb2\#$  31. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   
 $\mathbb{W}f2\#$  32. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   
 $\mathbb{W}xd4\#$

0–1

## GAME 9

Artyom Timofeev – Sebastian Siebrecht

Dresden 2007

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5.f4  
 b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

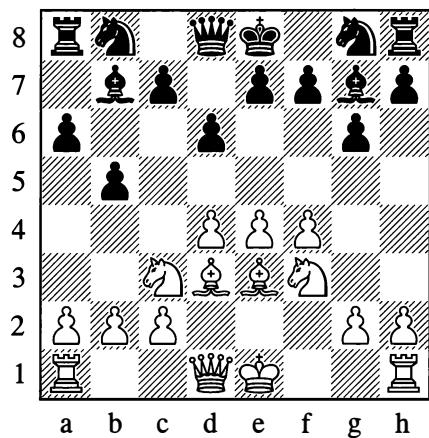
It is also possible to play 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ? in order to overprotect the e4-pawn. After 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? White has the following options:

a) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  transposes to the main game.

b) 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  links over to Game 11.

c) 7.a4?! b4 8.♗ce2 ♗f6! 9.♗g3?! h5! 10.♗d2 h4 11.♗xb4 ♖c8 and Black has a clear advantage.

**6...♝b7 7.♝d3**



**7...♞f6!!**

This interesting move order is available specifically in those lines where White plays ♘e3 before ♘d3. The point is that when White follows f2-f4 with a quick ♘f3 and ♘d3, Black has to play a quick ...♘d7 in order to prepare ...c5. However, when White commits himself to the slightly slower ♘e3, it gives us some leeway.

Putting the knight on f6 may go against your instincts as a Modern player, but in this particular position it is full of purpose, as ...b4 is a direct threat that needs to be addressed.

Black can, of course, play 7...♝d7 transposing to Games 7, 8, 10 and 11.

**8.e5**

This is the critical move.

White could try 8.h3?! b4 9.e5, but after 9...bx<sub>c</sub>3 10.ex<sub>f</sub>6 ♘xf6 11.bx<sub>c</sub>3 ♘d7 I find it hard to believe that Black is anything but fine.

The only other way to safeguard the e4-pawn is:

**8.a3**

Considering that I always sneer at this move, it is not so bad here. The circumstances are a bit uncommon in that Black has developed the knight to f6 and cannot easily carry out ...c5.

**8...e6!?**

I generally try to avoid this move, but when White has spent time on a2-a3 it should be okay.

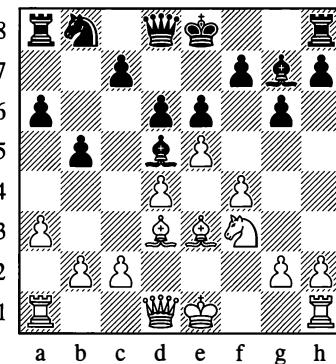
8...0-0 and 8...♝bd7 are normal moves that have done well for Black in practice.

Even the pawn sacrifice 8...c5!?

N 9.dxc5 ♘bd7 10.cxd6 exd6 seems playable, though it is hardly necessary.

**9.e5 ♘d5 10.♗xd5 ♘xd5**

Black has a solid position, and attempting to chase the light-squared bishop may lead to problems for White.



**11.b3**

White should probably prefer 11.a4 b4 12.0-0 0-0 13.c4 bx<sub>c</sub>3 14.bx<sub>c</sub>3 with a balanced position.

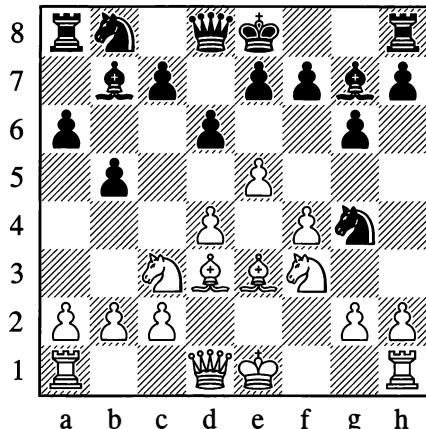
**11...c5! 12.c4**

12.dxc5 dx<sub>e</sub>5 13.fx<sub>e</sub>5 ♘c6 is a bit better for Black.

12...bx<sub>c</sub>4 13.bx<sub>c</sub>4 ♘xf3! 14.♗xf3 cx<sub>d</sub>4 15.♗xa8 dx<sub>e</sub>3 16.♗d1 0-0 17.0-0 dx<sub>e</sub>5 18.♗xg6 ♖c7

Black has great play for the exchange.

**8...♞g4**



9.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$

White has three alternatives, all of which should be taken seriously.

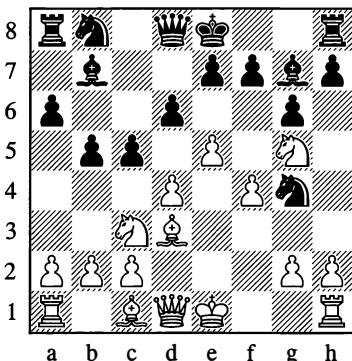
9.  $\mathbb{Q}c1!?$  N

This is an attempt to keep the bishop out of harm's way, but it is hard to believe that White can get an advantage by undoing an earlier developing move.

9...c5 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$

10.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  cxd4 12.  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$  (12. exd6 exd6! leads nowhere for White) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13. exd6 exd6 14. 0-0 0-0 15.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is a little better for Black.

10. dxc5 dxe5 11. h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (11... b4!? leads to heavy complications) 12. fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  13. e6 fxe6 gives Black an improved version of 9.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  below. One simple point is that 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e4??$  is impossible here due to 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ .



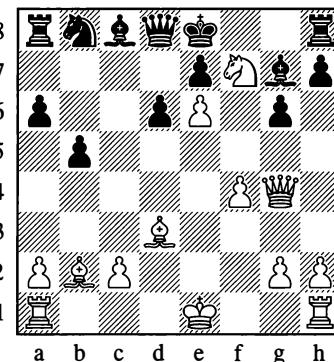
10... cxd4!

10...  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11. dxc5 dxe5 is unclear.

11.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  dxc3 12. e6  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !

A key theme that should be remembered.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  cxb2 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$



14...  $\mathbb{W}a5\#$  15. c3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3\#$

17.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black gets the better of the complications.

9.  $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$

This seems like a reasonable move, but Black can get a decent game.

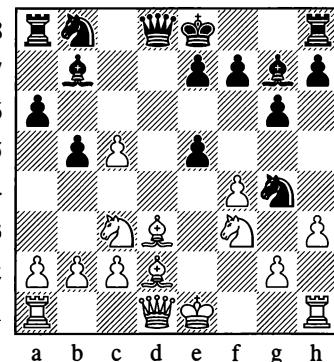
9...c5! N

There is no time for 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  because of 10. e6! fxe6 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  when Black's position is collapsing.

10. dxc5

After 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11. dxc5 dxe5 12.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  White must fight to keep the balance.

10... dxe5 11. h3



11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

Black should avoid 11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15. $\mathbb{W}e2$  when the h6-knight is offside.

12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$

Black is doing well here. One possible continuation is

13.e6 fxe6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\text{!}?$   
16.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

With a balanced game.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2\text{!}?$

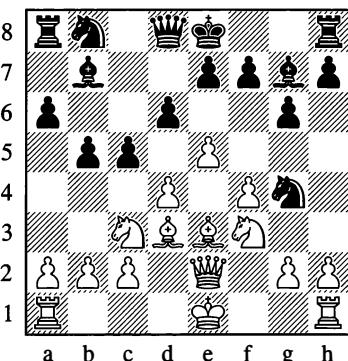
This is the most dangerous alternative to the main line. Now it is important not to panic and grab the enemy bishop.

9...c5!

Thematic and strong.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d2\text{!}$  is annoying.

It looks natural to play 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\text{?!$ } 10. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ , when at first sight Black appears to be doing well with either 10...e6 or 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7\text{N}$ . However, Black will face a big problem when White later plays h2-h4. Black must either allow the pawn to get to h5, leading to obvious danger on the kingside, or block it with ...h5, giving White all kinds of tactical opportunities that I fear may be impossible to defend against. It is up to you to try and make this line work, but I myself have given up on it. Black's best shot at equality is 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6\text{!}?$ , intending to move the knight to b4 or e7 later.



10.dxc5 dxe5

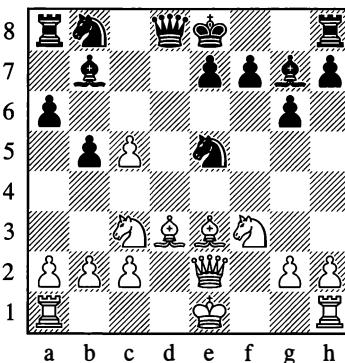
This position is extremely complicated with lots of options for both sides on every turn. I will just give an overview here and recommend that you have a more serious look at it yourselves.

11.fxe5

11.0–0–0N is met by 11... $\mathbb{W}c7\text{!}$ . The queen is often better here than on a5.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5\text{N}$

Another idea is 11... $\mathbb{W}c7\text{!N}$  12.e6 f5.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

12.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  is unclear, in a nice way.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0–0 16.h4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black intends ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ , with excellent counterplay.

9...c5!

It is important to strike while the iron is sizzling. The alternative is... there are no alternatives!

10.dxc5

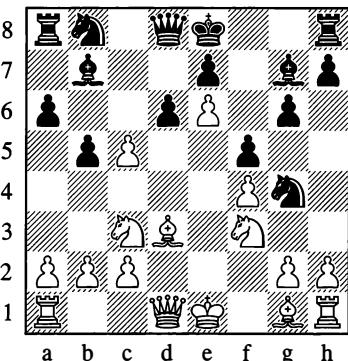
White has a few other options:

10.h3N cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  14. $\mathbb{W}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xe5\text{!}$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with an initiative for Black.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4\text{!}N$  looks weird, but is not at all bad. After 10...d5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c4! 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6\text{!}$

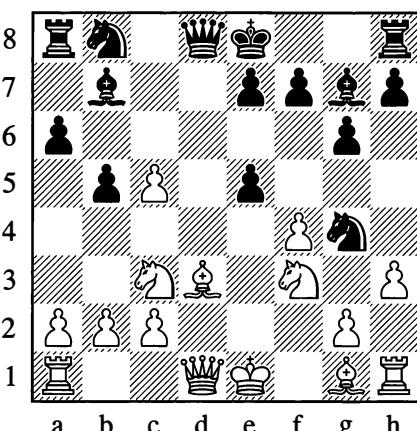
followed by ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , the position is complex and hard to evaluate.

10.e6 f5! 11.dxc5 was played in Kling – Karlsson, corr. 1989, and here my analysis continues:



11... $\mathbb{W}c8!$ N 12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\text{?!!}$  13.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14.cxd6  $\mathbb{W}xe6\text{!}$  15. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  16.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  axb5 leads to equality.) 13.cxd6  $\mathbb{W}xe6\text{!}$  14. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  15.0–0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18.c3 0–0 With unclear play.

### 10...dxe5 11.h3



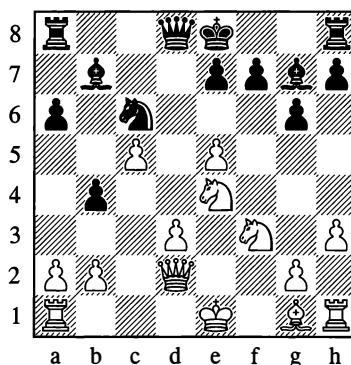
### 11...b4!

11...e4?! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  was played in Svidler – Ponomariov, Biel 2000, and here 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ N

would have given White at least an edge.

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White has also tried: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\text{!}$  exf6! 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$  is more critical, but I prefer Black's chances after 14...0–0.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  15. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3\text{!}$  16.cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  The engine insists that this position is preferable for White, but I would rather be Black any day.



17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  0–0 18.0–0  $\mathbb{W}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  20.d4  $\mathbb{W}d5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  These moves were seen in Andrews – Hynes, email 2008. At this point 21... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ N would have been best, reaching a position where White risks becoming a mere bystander as the black a-pawn races up the class ladder.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !

Black is not averse to a queen exchange, but it will be on his own terms.

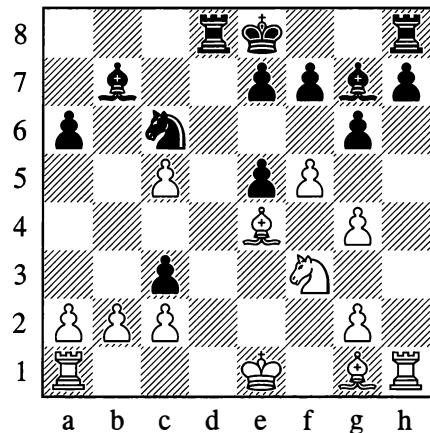
### 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8\text{!}$

After 13.hxg4 bxc3 14.b3 exf4 White's pawn structure is a mess.

Another important line is 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\text{!}$  exf6! 15.f5! gxf5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  and the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  makes it impossible for White to maintain the balance.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 14.hxg4 bxc3 15.f5!

White sees that the c-pawn can become strong in conjunction with an open b-file and a blockade on the e4-square.



### 15...cxb2?!

I am pretty sure I would have played this myself. It looks quite natural, but is an error.

Best play would have been: 15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! N 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  17.b4! (17.c6?!  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  leaves Black better, since White cannot hold the c-pawn; also after 17.bxc3 e4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  19.0–0–0 gxf5 20.gxf5  $\mathbb{E}g8$  the initiative is with Black.) 17...e4 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}d2$  The position remains messy but balanced.

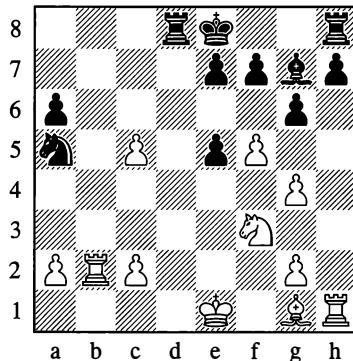
### 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ??

In the event of 16... $\mathbb{Q}a8$  17. $\mathbb{E}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{E}xa8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 20. $\mathbb{E}b6$  White has a slight endgame advantage.

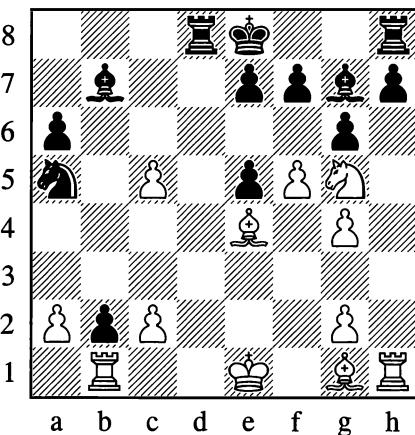
### 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?

A terrible move.

It was much better to play 17. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  18. $\mathbb{E}xb2$  when Black is badly coordinated. The best defence goes: 18... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (18...e4? 19. $\mathbb{E}xb7$  exf3 20.gxf3 gxf5 21.gxf5 is clearly better for White.)



19. $\mathbb{E}b4$ ! (19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e4 20. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{E}d5$  is unclear)  
19...gxf5 20.gxf5 h6 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  White is better since it is hard for Black to get the kingside pawn majority working.



### 17... $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ??

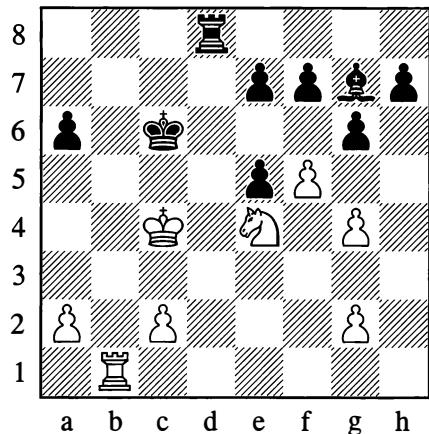
18... $\mathbb{E}b4$ ! intending ... $\mathbb{E}b4$  would have been extremely unpleasant for White.

### 19. $\mathbb{E}h3$ ! $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ??

Black is still better after 20...0–0 21. $\mathbb{E}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  22. $\mathbb{E}a3$   $\mathbb{E}b4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}c4$  24. $\mathbb{E}xa5$   $\mathbb{E}xc3$  25. $\mathbb{E}xb2$   $\mathbb{E}a8$ , though White has decent drawing chances. After the game continuation, the pendulum swings back in White's favour.

21. $\mathbb{E}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  23. $\mathbb{E}b6$   $\mathbb{E}hd8$ †  
24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}xb6$  25.cxb6†  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ †  
27. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  29. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ †  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

It might come as a surprise that Black loses this position in eleven more moves, but it is always difficult to handle a bishop against such a monster of a knight. The position may already be technically lost, but I will not try to prove anything as this is not an endgame book.



**30.c3 gxf5 31.gxf5 ♜g8 32.a4 ♜f8**

This does not turn out well, but the position was hard anyway.

**33.g3 ♜g4 34.♘d3 e6 35.f6 ♜h6 36.♗b8  
♜g6 37.♗c8† ♜d7 38.♗a8 ♜g5 39.♗a7†  
♗e8 40.♗d6†**

**1–0**

In the next game we will begin to explore the structure when Black plays an early ...c5 and White exchanges.

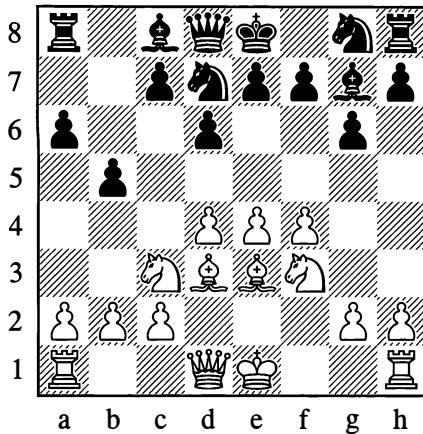
## GAME 10

Hannes Stefansson – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Gausdal 1996

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.♘f3 b5  
6.♗d3 ♜d7! 7.♗e3**

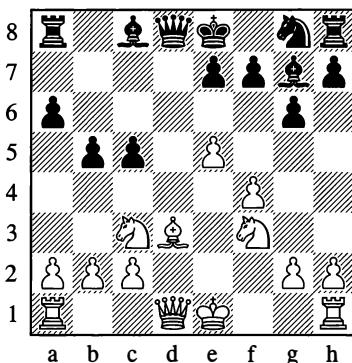
A different move order is 7.0–0 c5 8.dxc5 ♜xc5 9.♗e3, when 9...♗b7 leads back to the main game.



**7...♗b7!**

We have seen that after 7.e5 or 7.♗e2, Black should hurry to strike at the centre with 7...c5, without wasting time developing his bishop. Here the situation is the opposite, for two reasons. First, White has invested a tempo on ♜e3, which slows down his attack, giving Black enough time to develop his own bishop without repercussion. Secondly, the placement of the bishop on e3 means that White can meet ...c5 with dxc5, followed by exchanging his bishop for the knight on c5 if necessary, in order to force the positionally undesirable ...dxc5.

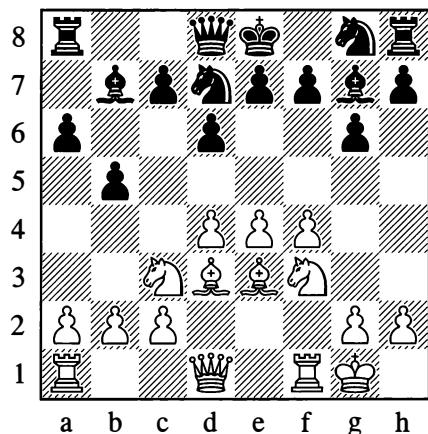
The following line demonstrates why the immediate 7...c5?! is premature: 8.dxc5! ♜xc5 9.♗xc5 dxc5 (9...♗xc3† 10.bxc3 dxc5 looks like a better try, although White keeps the pressure with 11.e5 ♜a5, and now Stellan Brynell's 12.0–0! looks dangerous for Black.) 10.e5



Black should generally avoid this structure with the knight on g8. After 10... $\mathbb{E}a7$  11. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.a4!  $\mathbb{W}a5$  13.0–0 b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  White had a clear advantage in Carlsen – Azmaiparashvili, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

## 8.0–0

8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ !? is a serious alternative which will be considered in the next game.



## 8...c5 9.dxc5!

This is White's typical plan in positions with the bishop on e3. It is the most challenging move here, although there are a few interesting alternatives.

9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  has been played a few times, but is not dangerous: 9...c4 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13.a3 Now 13...a5!N maintains a harmonious position for Black, and improves over 13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ ! 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  bxa3 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  when White was slightly better in Hertneck – Bilek, Kecskemet 1990.

## 9.e5!?

This move is complicated but not too dangerous, and Black has a few decent replies.

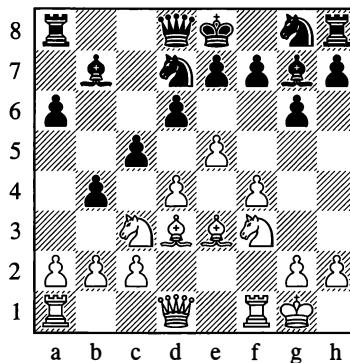
## 9...b4!?

The most complex reply.

9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is sensible. A logical

continuation is 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ N  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxе5 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14.c3 0–0 with a balanced position, where Black's ideas include ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  and possibly ...f6.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is also possible: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (10...cxd4? 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  dxc3 12.e6 fxе6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! is better for White.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  cxd4 13.exd6 This was Barrientos Chavarriaga – Alonso Garcia, Havana 2007, and here I suggest 13...0–0N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd6 with unclear play.



## 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !

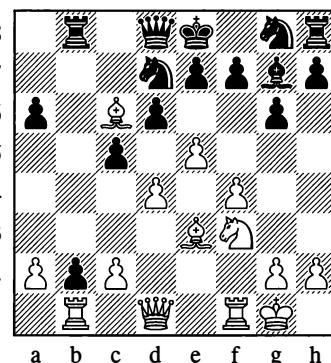
10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is fine for Black.

## 10...bxс3!

Taking up the challenge.

10... $\mathbb{W}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! is hard to deal with, for instance 12...cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxе5 14.fxe5 e6 15.a3! and White has a clear initiative.

## 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ cxb2 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



13... $\mathbb{Q}h6N$

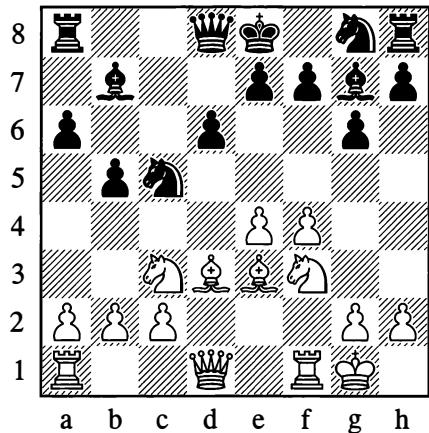
I slightly prefer this over 13... $\mathbb{W}c8$  14.d5 as played in Dolzhikova – Andrenko, Poltava 2011.

14.dxc5 0–0 15.cxd6 exd6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

17.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}e6$

The position remains unclear.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



10. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

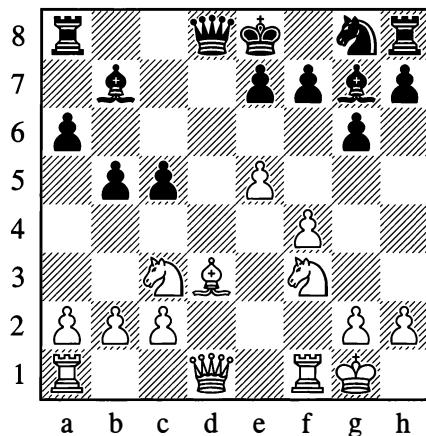
On 10.a3 I planned to pick up a pawn with 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  11.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ . The g7-bishop should not be treated as a venerable member of a seventies music group. If it is past its date, then get rid of it! Generally speaking I am happy if I can reach a Sicilian Dragon structure. In such positions the double fianchetto usually ensures excellent chances for Black, as shown in some of the later chapters.

10...dxc5

It is also possible to play 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$  11.bxc3 dxc5, a line of action that is necessary when White has played the queen to e2 rather than having castled, as seen in the next game. The main difference in that line is that White gets the chance to recapture on e4 with the queen on move 13.

11.e5

This kind of structure is generally slightly better for White, but here Black has just enough resources to hold the balance.



11... $\mathbb{W}b6!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

If you are to play the 4...a6 system successfully, you must rid yourself of all prejudice against a knight on the rim. From h6 the knight can use f5 as a transit point before it moves on.

Even if 13...e6? did not allow a calamitous check on d6, it would leave the d6- and f6-squares vulnerable against manoeuvres such as  $\mathbb{Q}g5-e4-d6/-f6$  in the future.

14.c4

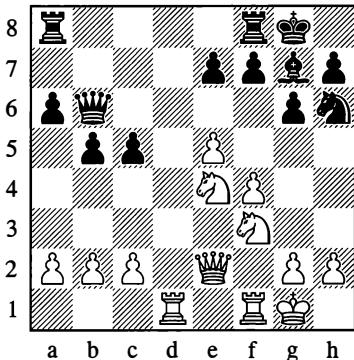
In *Tiger's Modern* I suggested that this could be a good spot to search for an improvement for White. Since that time, almost all games from this position have continued:

14. $\mathbb{W}e2$  0–0

I would not hurry with: 14...c4†?! 15. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  The queen is not very well off on this square. (Better was 15... $\mathbb{W}xf2$ † 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  0–0 17.c3 f6 18.exf6 exf6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}fe2$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  with equality.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  0–0 17.h3 f6?! 18.exf6 exf6 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$  White had a clear advantage in Weiss – Heck, Germany 2009.

15... $\mathbb{E}ad1$ 

If Black wants to give the discovered check, this is a better moment for it.



## 15...c4†

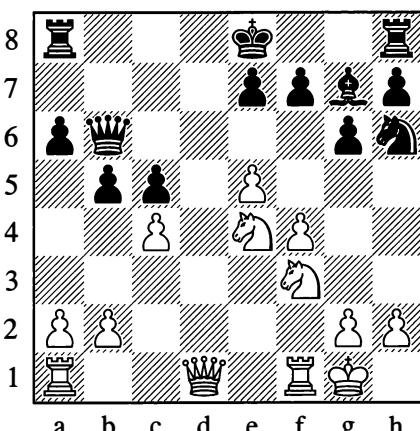
15... $\mathbb{E}fd8N$  is also fine, for instance 16.c3 f6 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$  fxe5 18.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  19. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  20. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5\#$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  with good chances in the endgame.

16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ 

A draw was agreed here in Bos – Ludgate, corr. 2012, but I would be tempted to keep the game going with:

16... $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  f6! 18.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  exf6!

Black has the initiative, although White should be able to hold the endgame.



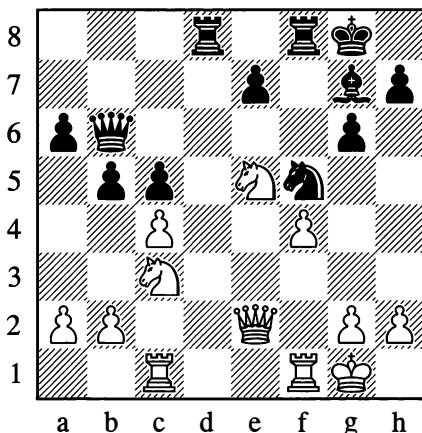
14...0–0 15. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$  16. $\mathbb{W}e2$  f6!

“This move guarantees that Black will activate his slumbering forces on the kingside”, as Tisdall explained in *ChessBase Magazine*. If Black did not have this method of opening the centre, White would have had the better position with his space advantage and centralized forces.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  fxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?

This is superficially active and hands over the initiative to me.

After 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}xd5$ ! 19.cxd5 exf4 Black is again better, but 18.fxe5 would have been about equal.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 

## 19.cxb5?!

White's centre has crumbled and both 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ , followed by ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , lead to better positions for Black. Somewhere around here, Hannes probably missed something. I, on the other hand, did not miss anything. Not that I saw anything either – I just had faith in my resources.

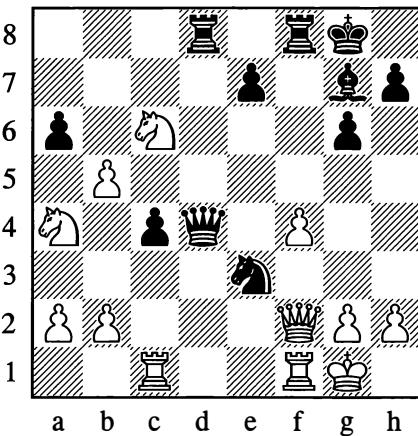
19...c4†! 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ?

The losing mistake in a slightly worse position.

Hannes could have fought on with 21... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ?  $a \times b5!$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  23. $\mathbb{B}cd1$  (White loses quickly after both 23. $\mathbb{B}fe1?$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  24. $\mathbb{B}xf1$   $\mathbb{B}f5$ ) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  24. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ , although Black keeps the initiative after 24... $\mathbb{W}a5$  or 24... $\mathbb{W}b8$ .

**21... $\mathbb{W}d4!$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

22. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$  loses more quickly after 22... $\mathbb{Q}xf1!$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  winning the exchange and more.



22... $\mathbb{Q}xf1!$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xf4$  24. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$   
25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{B}f5$  26. $\mathbb{Q}c6?$

This allows an abrupt and pretty finish.

26.g3  $\mathbb{B}f2$  27. $\mathbb{B}xf1$   $\mathbb{B}xf1\#$  28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}f2\#$  wins easily.

26.h3 is slightly more resilient, but after 26... $a \times b5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$  28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{B}f1$  29. $\mathbb{B}xf1\#$  30. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  31.bxc3 b4 the end result is the same.

**26... $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ !**

White resigned as it is mate next move. Even with the proposed improvement at move 14, White does not have much chance of an advantage in this line.

**0-1**

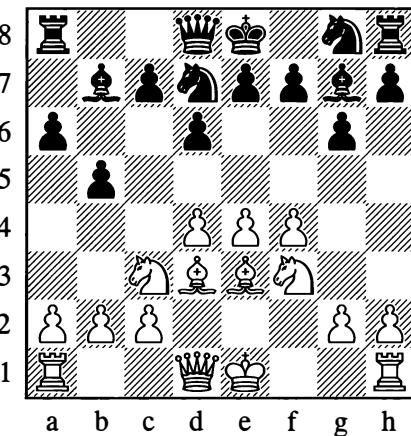
The next game sees White aim for an improved version with the queen on e2.

## GAME 1

Thomas Michalczak – Fabiano Caruana

Ohrid 2009

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{B}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4 a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5  
6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$



**8. $\mathbb{W}e2$**

This is the most challenging version of White's set-up with the bishop on e3. Before looking at it in detail, we will briefly consider an inferior queen move:

**8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

This leaves the f3-knight unprotected a few moves later, and is therefore inferior to the main line.

**8...c5! 9.dxc5**

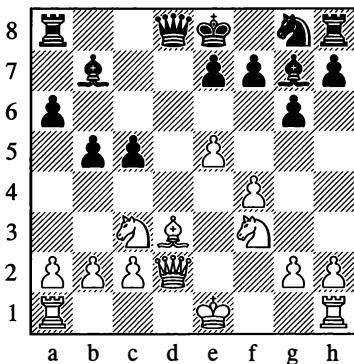
Worse is 9.a4?! c4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12.0-0 a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  when, in Stefanova – Petrovic, Jahorina 2003, Black could have kept the slightly better position with 13... $\mathbb{Q}gf6N$ .

**9... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\?!$**

This move is thematic, but it leads to an inferior position for White.

10.0–0–0 may be a better try, although Black has more than one good reply. 10...b4!? (10... $\mathbb{W}a5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  13.bxc3 dxc5 is about equal.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  The position was unclear in Peptan – Stefanova, Batumi 1999.

10...dxc5 11.e5

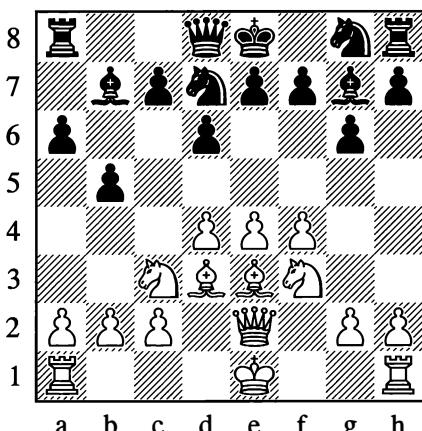


11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !

This improves over 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$  12. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with approximately equal chances, Gershon – Morozevich, Zagan 1997.

12.gxf3 c4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  0–0–0† 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e6

Here, for once, Siliconbrain and I agree that Black is a bit better. This recommendation from *Tiger's Modern* was tested in the game Fiala – Neuman, Plzen 2012, which was eventually won by Black.



8...b4!?

This is an exception to the “Do not play ...b4 unless White plays a4” rule, but it seems like the best bet for players seeking a complicated game.

8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ! 9.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! (10.e6?!  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$  c6 is unclear) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11.0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  was clearly better for White in Ernst – Hillarp Persson, Umea 2003.

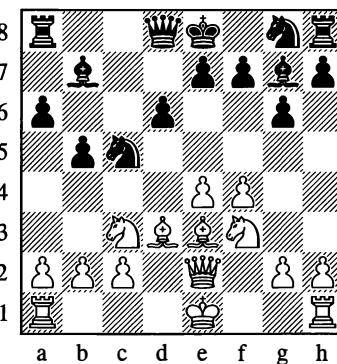
8...c5

This move is perfectly sound, but after a few moves we reach a position where Black has a tiny disadvantage and little chance of winning the game. If this is what he desires then – some might argue – why not just play the Petroff or the French Rubinstein from the outset?

9.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

After 9...dxc5 10.e5! Black’s position has lost its dynamic potential, the queenside pawns are weak and the kingside pieces are not participating in the central struggle. It is obvious that White has a clear advantage. An intriguing alternative is 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !N 10.cxd6 exd6 intending ...0–0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  with counterplay.

Also possible is the somewhat fantastic line 9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !N. A possible continuation is 11.cxd6 exd6 12.a3 bxa3 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d5 16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  which is really messy.



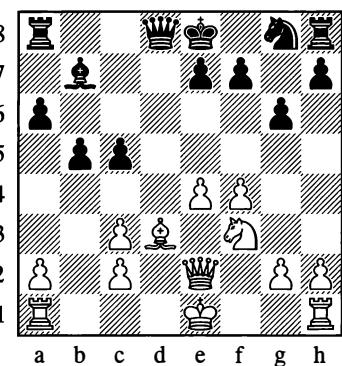
## 10.♕xc5!

After 10.0–0 Black should avoid 10...b4?!N 11.♗d5 ♕xd5 12.exd5 ♕xb2 13.♗ab1 ♕c3 14.♗d4!. Instead 10...♛c8!N intending ...♝f6 is fine for him.

## 10...♛xc3†!

10...dxc5?! 11.e5 ♛b6 has been played, but after 12.♔e4!N Black is clearly worse. If you compare this position to the previous game, the positions are almost the same but the difference caused by the queen on e2 is considerable. In that game, play continued 12...♝xe4 13.♝xe4 ♜h6 with unclear play, but here 12...♝xe4 is met by 13.♛xe4! ♜d8 14.a4 b4 15.♗d5 with a huge advantage for White.

11.bxc3 dxc5

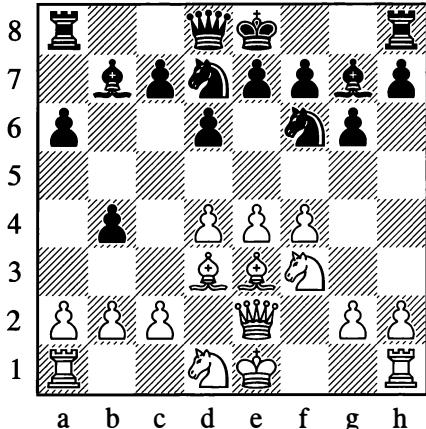


## 12.e5

Defending against ...c4 and stopping Black from completing development with ...♝f6. Now both 12...♝h6, as in Ramesh – Hillarp Persson, Amsterdam 2000, and 12...e6?! are possible. However, I believe White keeps a small edge in both cases.

Let us return to 8...b4?!, which seems like a better idea overall. When I analysed this move in *Tiger's Modern* it was a novelty, but it has since been tested in a few games.

## 9.♗d1 ♘g6



## 10.♔f2

## 10.♗d2N

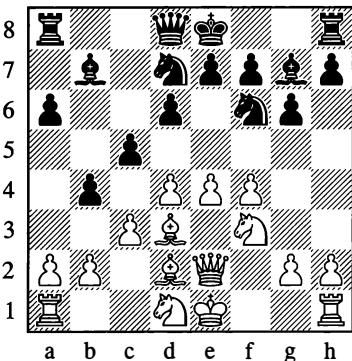
I considered this move in my previous book, but it has still not been tested.

## 10...c5!

The critical move seems to work, although 10...a5 11.0–0 e6 should be playable too.

## 11.c3!

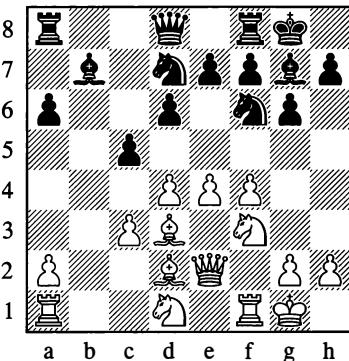
11.e5 ♜d5 12.e6 (Both 12.exd6 cxd4 13.dxe7 ♛xe7 14.♗xe7† ♜xe7 and 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 0–0 are fine for Black.) 12...fxe6 13.♗g5 ♜xd4!? (13...♝f8 14.dxc5 dxc5 15.0–0 ♛b6 16.♗h1∞) 14.♗xh7 (14.♗xe6 ♛b6 is also pretty unclear.) 14...♝f8 15.♗xf8 ♛xf8 16.♗xg6 ♛c8 However strange it might seem, I am not too worried about this kind of position; Black's control of the centre makes up for the slight draught around his king.



11...bxc3 12.bxc3 0–0 13.0–0

13.e5 ♜d5 14.e6 cxd4 15.cxd4 fxe6 is fine for Black.

We have reached a critical position for the 10.♗d2 line. First of all I would prefer to avoid playing ...e6, since it weakens the dark squares and invites the plan of e4-e5 and ♘f2-e4. Instead I propose:

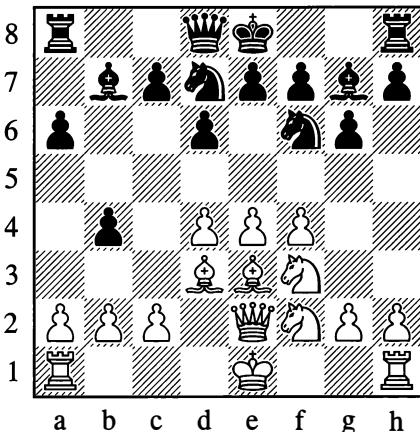


13...d5!?

13...♝e8?! intending 14.e5 ♜c7 is also interesting.

14.e5 ♜e4

It seems that Black is doing fine after 15.♗e3 e6, or 15.♗f2 f5, or 15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♗g5 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♜b6. This all needs testing of course.



10...0–0?!

I used to think this was a mistake but, for

reasons explained in the note to White's next move, I now believe it to be okay.

The alternative is:

10...c5 11.c3

11.dxc5 gives Black a choice:

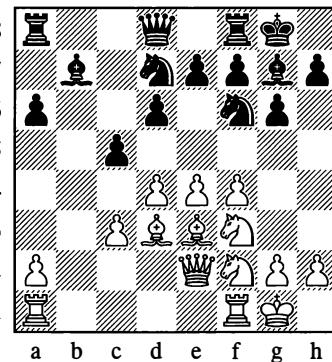
a) 11...♜xc5 is simplest, and 12.♗xc5 dxc5 13.0–0–0 ♛c7! 14.e5 ♜d5 15.g3 0–0 is quite all right for Black since the knight is not shipwrecked on h6.

b) 11...0–0?! is an interesting pawn sacrifice, when 12.cxd6 exd6 13.0–0 ♜e8 14.♗d4 (14.♗d2 ♛c7 15.c3 bxc3 16.♗ac1 d5 17.♗xc3 ♛d8∞) 14...♝xe4! 15.♗xe4 (15.♗xe4?! ♗xd4†) 15...♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♜xe4 17.♗xe4 d5 looks all right for Black.

11...bxc3 12.bxc3 0–0

12...♛a5?! 13.0–0 ♛xc3 is too greedy, and after 14.♗ab1 ♜c6 15.♗fc1 ♛a5 16.e5 it would be a miracle if Black could survive.

13.0–0



13...♝e8?!

N 13...♛c7 has been played, and leads to a similar type of game. The text move is intended to avoid a future e5-e6 push.

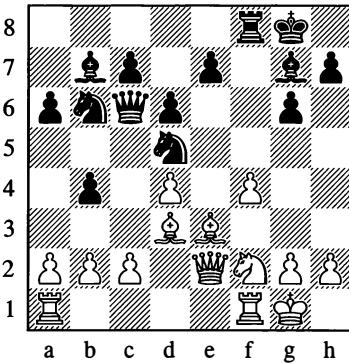
14.♗ab1 ♛c8 15.♗b2 ♜c7 16.♗fb1 ♜c6

Even if White is slightly better here, Black keeps a solid position with plenty of dynamic possibilities.

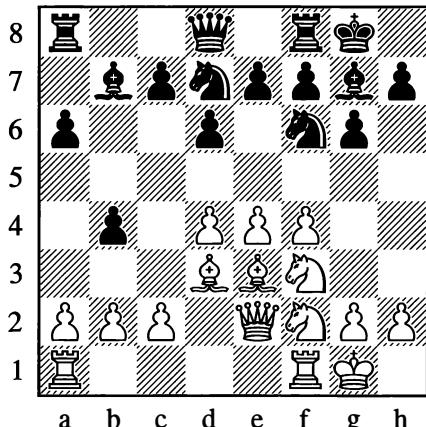
11.0–0

11.e5?N was the move that had put me off this position in the past: 11...♝d5 12.e6 fxe6

(12... $\mathbb{Q}7b6$  13.f5) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  In *Tiger's Modern* I gave this as outright bad, but since then the engines have forced me to change my mind:  
 13... $\mathbb{Q}7b6!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{E}xf8$   
 16.0–0  $\mathbb{W}c6$



Strangely enough, Black seems to have enough compensation for the exchange.  
 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\uparrow$  (18. $\mathbb{W}xc4?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is even better for Black.) 18... $\mathbb{W}xd5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20. $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  Black is set to equalize with ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ .



### 11...c5 12.dxc5?!

The principled move is clearly:  
 12.c3?!

Trying to keep the centre intact. Here are a few lines I analysed.

12...a5!?

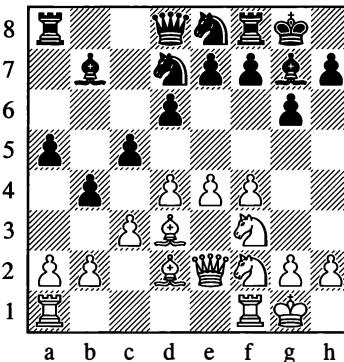
12...bxc3 13.bxc3 transposes to the earlier note with 10...c5.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

13.a3? bxc3 14.bxc3 is also possible, when the advancing a-pawns have left weak squares on both sides.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$

Getting away from the e-pawn before it gets too hot.



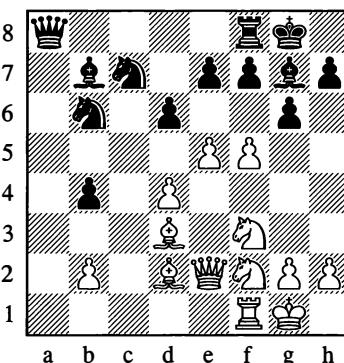
### 14.e5

14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is met by 14... $\mathbb{W}b6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  cxd4 16.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  and Black equalizes.

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15.a3 cxd4 16.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17.axb4

17.f5? also leads to heavy complications.

### 17...axb4 18. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 19.f5

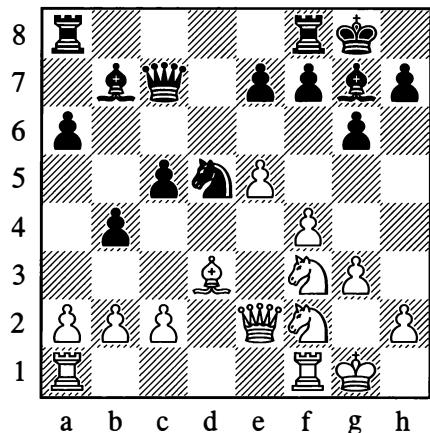


### 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20.gxf3 dxe5 21.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}a5$

Black has enough counterplay with ... $\mathbb{E}d8$  coming soon.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ dxc5 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15.g3 $\mathbb{W}c7$

The opening has been a success for Black, who has a fine pair of bishops without suffering from a misplaced knight on the rim.



### 16.♘d2 ♜f5!?

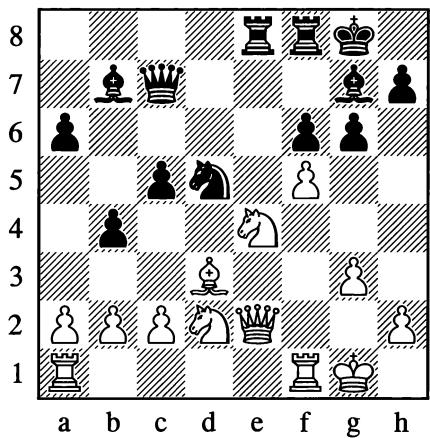
It looks to me like Caruana was looking to provoke White's next move.

### 17. exf6?!

Michalczak probably thought it would be dangerous to allow Black to rule the a8-h1 diagonal, but sacrificing his space advantage and opening the e-file is a bigger concession.

17.♘c4 a5 18.♗fd1 ♜fd8 19.♗e1 would have been the lesser evil, although 19...e6 followed by ...♗f8 can only be better for Black.

### 17...exf6 18.♗f5 ♜ae8 19.♗fe4



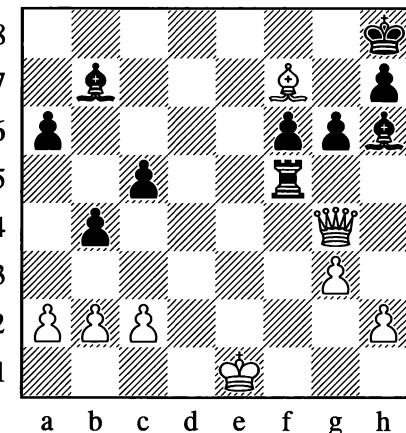
### 19...♗h6

19...♗e5! would have kept up the pressure, and after 20.♘c4 gxf5 21.♗xe5 fxe4 22.♗xe4 f5 23.♗xf5 ♜xf5 24.♗xf5 ♜xe5 25.♗e1 ♜d4† 26.♗f1 ♜f7 27.♗xf7† ♜xf7 28.♗xh7 ♜xb2 it is unlikely that White can survive the endgame.

### 20.♘c4 ♜h8 21.♗ae1 ♜b6 22.♗g4? ♜xc4?

I am guessing that both players were in time trouble since they missed 22...gx5!, when both 23.♗xf5 ♜xc4 24.♗xc4 ♜c6 and 23.♗xf5 ♜xc4 24.♗xc4 ♜d7! 25.c3 ♜c8 are hopeless for White.

23.♗xc4 ♜e5 24.♗g5 ♜xe1 25.♗xe1 ♜xe1† 26.♗f2 ♜e5 27.♗f7† ♜xf7 28.♗xf7 ♜xf5† 29.♗e1



### 29...♗e5†

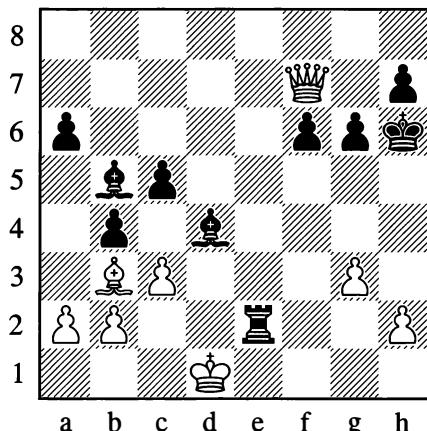
Black could have kept some initiative with: 29...♗g7! 30.♗c4 ♜e5† 31.♗f2 ♜e3† 32.♗f1 ♜c8 33.♗g2 (33.♗g8 ♜h3† 34.♗e1 ♜e7 is also better for Black.) 33...♗d7! The bishop's arrival on b5 will be unpleasant for White.

30.♗f1 ♜f5† 31.♗e1 ♜g7 32.♗b3 ♜e5† 33.♗f1 ♜f5† 34.♗e1 ♜c6 35.♗c4 ♜e5† 36.♗f2 ♜f5† 37.♗e1 ♜e5† 38.♗f2 ♜e3† 39.♗e1 ♜g5†

39...♗c1† 40.♗f2 ♜xb2 would have retained some winning chances.

40.♔f2 ♔e3† 41.♔e1 ♔d4† 42.♔d2 ♔b5?  
43.♕f7† ♔h6 44.c3 ♔e2†? 45.♔d1

After a series of mistakes, Black is now losing.



45...bxc3 46.bxc3 ♔xc3 47.♕f8† ♔g5  
48.♕xc5† ♔e5 49.♕xb5?

Forcing a draw is a tad pessimistic. Instead after 49.a4! ♔d3 50.♔d5! Black has no good defence against the plan of ♔f3, h4† and ♕f8 with mate. 50...♚xh2 51.♔e3† wins the bishop on d3, and 50...♚g4 51.♔b4† ♔f5 52.♔f3 forces Black to give up the exchange, leaving White with a technically won game.

49...axb5 50.♔xe2 ♔g4 51.♔e6† f5 52.♔f2  
b4 53.♔g2 ♔g5 54.♔f3 ♔f6 55.♔g8 h5  
56.h3 g5 57.g4 fxg4† 58.hxg4 h4

½-½

In the next game we will discuss set-ups where White develops his bishop to e2 and f3 in order to neutralize the anticipated bishop on b7.

## GAME 12

Jordi Fluvia Poyatos – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Internacional de Sants 2003

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♔g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♔e3

It is not uncommon for White to play this move order and follow up with f2-f4 on the next move.

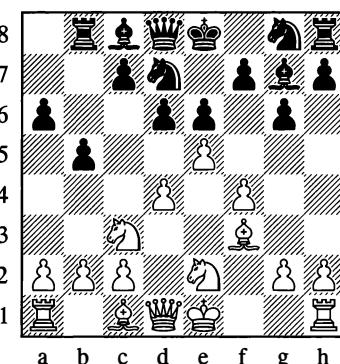
We should also consider 4.f4 a6 5.♔e2!, which is slightly unusual but not inferior to the game continuation, as it is not vital for White to put the bishop on e3 yet. Black has two main replies:

a) 5...♗d7 has done well for Black. Now 6.♔e3 b5 transposes to the main game, and 6.♔f3 b5 reaches a normal position where the bishop belongs on d3 rather than e2.

The only other move to have been tested is 6.♔f3, when 6...e5 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.f5 was a natural continuation seen in Vepkhvishvili – Shalamberidze, Tbilisi 2000. At this point both 8...♗gf6N and 8...b5N are similar to the main game, and may well transpose after a subsequent ♔e3.

The only potential problem I see for Black after 5...♗d7 is the untested 6.a4!N, as I prefer to have the option of ...♗c6 whenever this move is played.

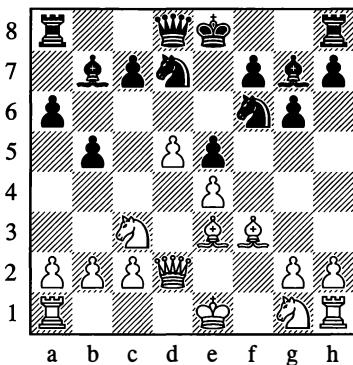
b) For this reason, 5...b5 would be my first choice. Assuming that White continues to delay the development of his dark-squared bishop, a logical continuation is 6.♔f3 ♗d7 7.e5 ♕b8 8.♗ge2N e6, when Black develops in a similar vein as Bricard did against Sokolov – see the note to Black's 7th move in the main line. (8...♗h6!? 9.h4 c5 is another idea.) A possible continuation is:



9.♕e4?! ♜e7! 10.exd6 ♜f5 11.dxc7 ♜xc7  
Black will get plenty of play with ...♜h4xf3† followed by ...♝b7.

#### 4...a6 5.f4

In another game I faced a similar set-up via yet another move order: 5.♗d2 ♜d7 6.f4 b5 7.♗e2 ♜b7 8.♗f3 e5 9.fxe5?! (9.dxe5 dxe5 transposes to 9.♗d2?!N ♜b7 in the note to move 9 in the main game.) 9...dxe5 10.d5 ♜gf6



11.♗ge2 (11.♗h3 is better, though Black is still absolutely fine.) 11...c6 12.dxc6 ♜xc6 13.♗g3 ♜c8 14.0–0 Now after 14...h5?! 15.♗ad1 h4 16.♗h1 my adventurous h-pawn proved to be more of a weakening than an asset in Th. Thorhallsson – Hillarp Persson, Iceland 2004. Next time – if I am so lucky – I will play 14...0–0 and claim a slight advantage.

#### 5...b5 6.♗e2

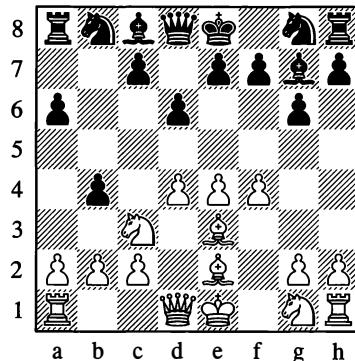
This idea seems to originate from the game Westerinen – Keene, Reykjavik 1976, and was later picked up by Morozevich who made it popular.

#### 6...♝d7

A more popular move here is:

#### 6...b4?

In *Tiger's Modern* I made no secret of the fact that I did not like this advance, but I am no longer so negative about it.



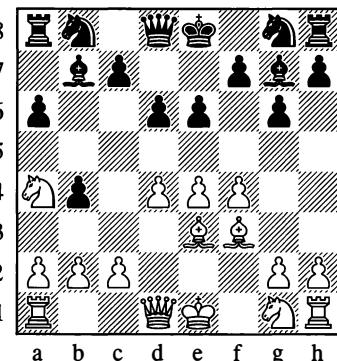
#### 7.♗a4

After 7.♗b1 ♜b7 8.♗f3 ♜f6 the early ...b4 is fully justified, as Black has pressure in the centre and is ready to meet e4–e5 with ...♝d5. After 9.♗d3 ♜bd7 Black had a harmonious position in Galkin – Ponomariov, Lausanne 2000.

Previously I argued that the text move was stronger, and my feeling has not changed.

#### 7...♝b7 8.♗f3 e6

This is not a mistake, but it is also not necessary. I would prefer 8...♝f6. In *Tiger's Modern* I gave some lines after 9.e5 ♜d5 10.♗d2 where White got an advantage, but I now believe that after the simple 10...0–0 Black is doing rather well.



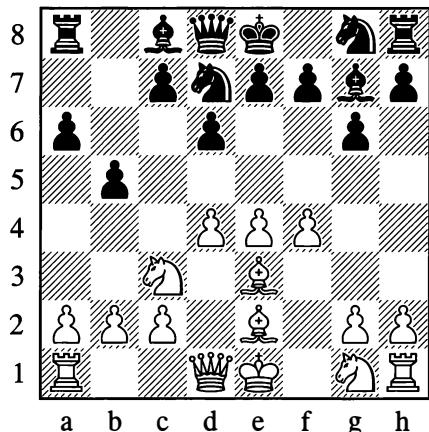
#### 9.c3

9.a3?! a5 10.c4 ♜e7 11.♗h3 ♜c6 12.0–0 ♜d7 13.b3 ♜xa4 14.bxa4 0–0 is unclear.  
9...a5 10.e5 ♜xf3 11.♗xf3 ♜e7 12.0–0 0–0 13.♗f2 ♜d7 14.♗h4 ♜e8 15.♗cl

Also after 15.♗xe7 ♗xe7 16.♕c1 dxe5 17.♗xe5 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♗xe5 19.fxe5 ♘a3! Black is fine.

15...♗d5

Black had enough counter-chances in T. Kosintseva – Koneru, Elista (3.1) 2004.



7.♗f3

Let's see what happens if White stubbornly prevents ...e5.

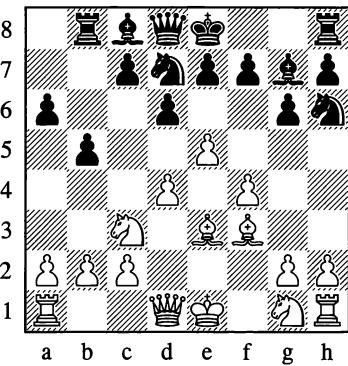
7.e5 ♗h6!

7...e6!? is also playable, now that White has placed one bishop passively on e2, and developed the other to e3 where it allows Black to gain a tempo later with ...♗d5 or ...♗f5. The obvious 8.♗f3 immediately transposes to 7.♗f3 e6 8.e5, as covered in the notes to Black's next move in the main game.

8.♗f3

8.♗f3 ♗b7 leaves the e2-bishop in a passive spot.

8...♗b8

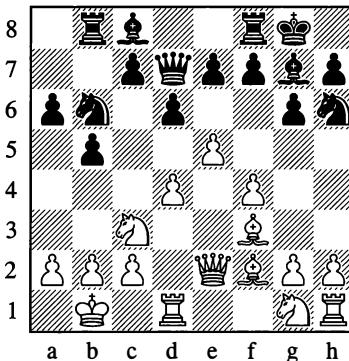


9.♗e2

9.g4?!N ♗b6! 10.h3 0–0 11.♗ge2 b4 12.♗e4 f5 13.♗f2 e6 is unclear, but I would rather play Black.

9.♗d5?!N is well met by 9...b4! 10.♗d2 a5 when White is forced to play the passive 11.♗f2 in order to give the knight a retreat square. After the further 11...0–0 12.♗e3 ♗b6 13.b3 dxe5 14.fxe5 c5 Black takes over the initiative.

9...0–0 10.0–0–0 ♗b6 11.♗f2 ♗d7 12.♔b1



12...d5!N

This is one of those rare occasions when blocking the centre is the right course of action.

After 12...b4 13.♗d5 ♗a4? 14.exd6 White took hold of the initiative and never let go in Morozевич – Gelman, Krasnodar 1997.

13.♗c1 a5!?

White seems to be worse, for instance:

14.h4

14.♗xb5 c6 15.♗c5 ♗b7 16.♗e2 ♗g4 gives Black a strong initiative.

14...a4 15.h5 b4 16.♗d1 ♗c4 17.b3 axb3 18.cxb3 ♗f5† 19.♔a1 ♗xf4

This line well illustrates my feeling from move 13.

7...e5

I believe this is the best way to meet White's set-up, since it makes the bishop look a bit silly on f3. If you prefer to play a more typical

set-up for the ...a6 Modern, then there are other options.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! is a suggestion from the engine, though after the likely response 8.b3 it is not immediately obvious how Black should justify the position of the knight.

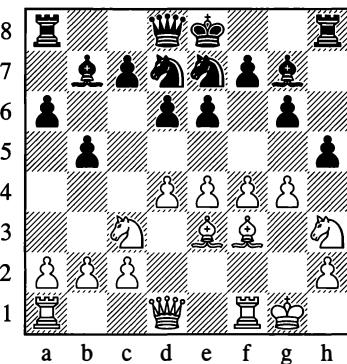
Black's main alternative is to go for a Hippo set-up:

7...e6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

A more principled continuation is 8.e5!N, when Black has to play accurately. 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  9.a4 (The more conservative 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10.0–0 0–0 leads to mutual chances.) 9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  Now 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! is the right idea, intending 11.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$  0–0 when White's extra pawn is a small comfort when you contemplate the other aspects of his position.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10.g4!? h5!

Black has an interesting plan, although 10...h6 was an acceptable alternative, when Black's flexible formation enables him to play any of ...b4, ...c5, ...d5, ...e5 or ...f5 according to circumstances.



11.g5

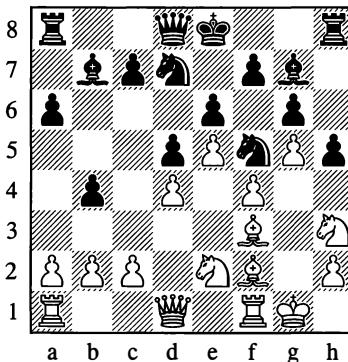
White does not fall for 11.gxh5?!  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d5!

Black is planning to close the door on the kingside and play on the queenside, as in the famous game Nimzowitsch – Capablanca, New York 1927.

13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

We have been following the game A. Sokolov – Bricard, Val d'Isere 2002, in which Black played 14...c5 with an unclear position. A better move is:



14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ !N

Stopping a2-a3 and preparing ...c5. Black is temporarily behind in development, but unless White can open up the position this will hardly matter. It should also be noted that the knight on h3 faces a long journey to participate in the game.

## 8.dxe5

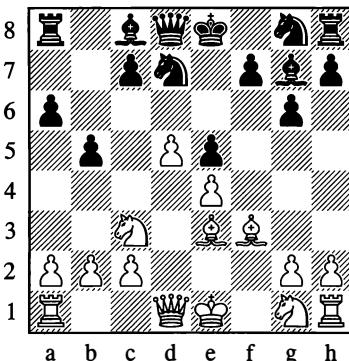
White has a number of alternative options:

8.a4 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5 is fine for Black.

8. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  transposes to Thorhallsson – Hillarp Persson in the note to White's 5th move.

8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.a3 (9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  reaches a normal position.) 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.0–0 0–0 Now in Aranovitch – Neiman, Cannes 2007, White made a committal decision in 11.dxe5?! dxe5 12.f5 which was not that well thought through, since 12...gxf5 just won a pawn for Black.

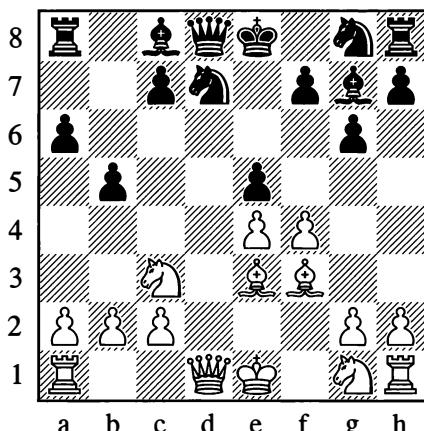
8.fxe5?! dxe5 9.d5 reaches something resembling a weird King's Indian where Black has good prospects, as the following game illustrates.



9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (The engines like 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$ N when the primitive 10.b3 fails to 10...b4! 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1 f5!$  with a strong initiative for Black.) 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  0–0 11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14.b3 f5 Black has obtained a fine position with simple, logical moves. The game continued: 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  18. $\mathbb{W}e3$  f4 (18... $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  19. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  also looks good) 19. $\mathbb{W}c5$  h5 20.a4  $\mathbb{B}b8$  21.axb5 axb5 22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  23. $\mathbb{W}xe7$  A draw was agreed here in Ceric – Mozetic, Subotica 2008, but Black is better in the final position.

All in all, it seems to me that the plan chosen by Fluvia Poyatos is the most critical, and we will return to it now.

### 8...dxe5



9.f5

This is a typical move in such positions, gaining space and leaving a black pawn on the e5-square where it blocks the g7-bishop and d7-knight. Nevertheless, White has some alternatives here too:

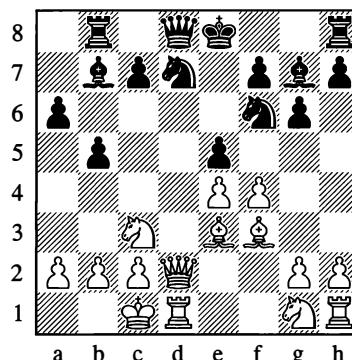
9.fxe5N has not yet been tested. The natural reply is 9... $\mathbb{A}b7$ , preparing to take back on e5 with the knight, and after 10.e6 fxe6 the position is balanced.

In a game against me in 2004, Jonny Hector played:

9. $\mathbb{W}d5$

This actually loses a bit of time as the queen will soon be driven back. Nevertheless, the game is worth analysing as it remains the only practical example in this line where White went for long castling and a quick g2-g4.

9... $\mathbb{B}b8$  10.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$



12.g4!

White is threatening to play g4-g5 and f4-f5 with draconic consequences for Black. This is something for which you always have to watch out and be prepared. In the game I was able to launch a counterattack on the e4-pawn, but what if White had played 12.a3 instead, keeping g2-g4 up his sleeve? The answer is 12... $\mathbb{W}e7!$  13.g4 b4 14.axb4  $\mathbb{W}xb4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a7$  0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{W}xb8$  and Black has marvellous compensation for the exchange.

12...b4 13.Qb1

13.Qd5 exf4 14.Qxf4 Qxd5 15.exd5 0–0 is unclear, and can be compared to the next note after 9.Qd2!N.

13...Qe7

My computer program sees nothing wrong with grabbing a pawn with 13...exf4? 14.Qxf4 (14.Qa7?! Ba8 15.Qd4 c5 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qxf4 Qd7 is clearly better for Black) 14...Qxe4. Indeed the tactics seem to work out okay, but my chosen move is also quite good.

14.f5 gxf5 15.gxf5

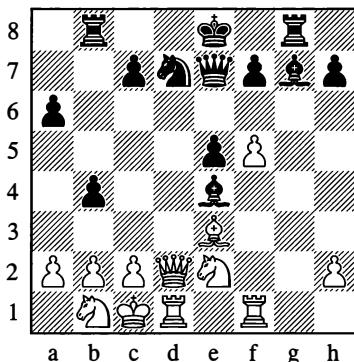
15.exf5 Qxg4 16.Qxb7 Qxb7 17.Qf3 might be compensation for Jonny Hector, but hardly for anybody else.

15...Qg8!?

Another excellent possibility is 15...a5, when 16.Qh3 a4 17.Qhg1 Qf8 18.Qf2 Qd6 is nice for Black.

16.Qe2 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe4 18.Qhf1

We have reached a critical moment.



18...Qd6!N

In the game I went wrong with 18...Qf6?, and after 19.Qg3 White had excellent compensation for the pawn in Hector – Hillarp Persson, Sweden 2004.

19.Qxd6 cxd6 20.Qg3 Qb7 21.Qxd6 Qf8 22.Qd3 Qf6

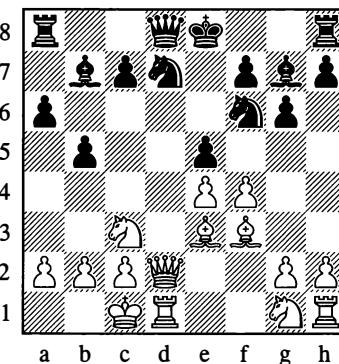
Black has the kind of position that a Sicilian Die Hard dreams about.

After the above game I realized that White can be slightly more conservative with the queen:

9.Qd2!N Qb7 10.0–0–0 Qgf6

10...exf4? 11.Qxf4 Qe5 is also possible.

The position is now the same as in Hector – Hillarp Persson, except that the black rook is on a8 instead of b8. The difference helps White slightly, but Black still seems to be fine, as the following lines illustrate.



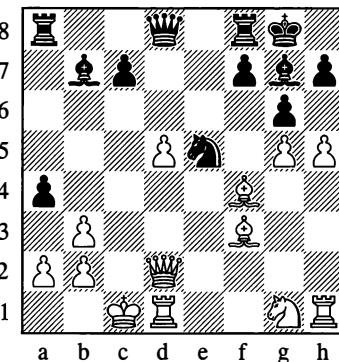
11.g4 b4! 12.Qd5 exf4!

It is important to get the move order right, since 12...Qxd5 13.exd5 exf4 14.Qd4! is better for White.

13.Qxf4 Qxd5 14.exd5 0–0

Black has good chances in this double-edged middlegame. A possible continuation is:

15.g5 Qe5 16.h4 a5 17.h5 b3! 18.cxb3 a4

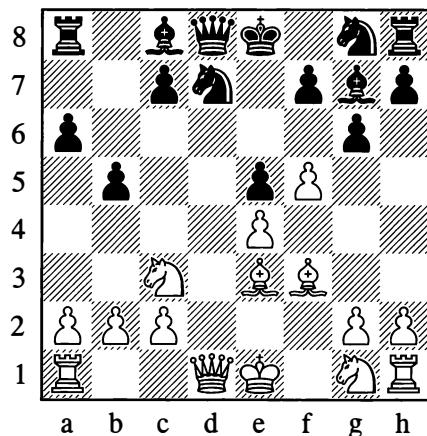


19.Qh2 Qe8!

Defending the knight on e5 and giving the king a square on f8.

20.hxg6 hxg6 21.b4 a3 22.b3 ♜xf3 23.♗xf3  
♝xd5

White is in deep trouble. This is all hypothetical and needs to be tried out in practice, but I feel optimistic about Black's chances.

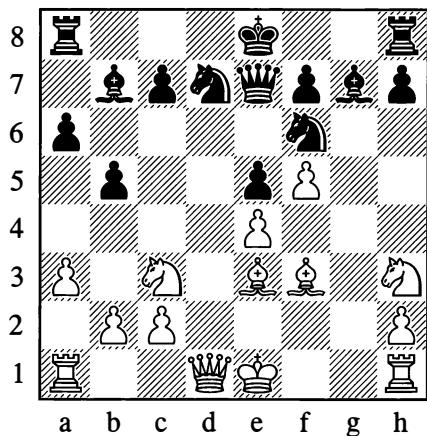


9...♝b7 10.♗h3 ♜gf6 11.a3!

It is important to stop Black from playing ...b4 since this would give him control of the centre. One example is 11.♗f2?! b4! 12.♗a4 gxf5 13.exf5 e4 14.♗e2 ♜c6 15.c4 h5 and Black was clearly better in Lanka – Petran, Groningen 1991.

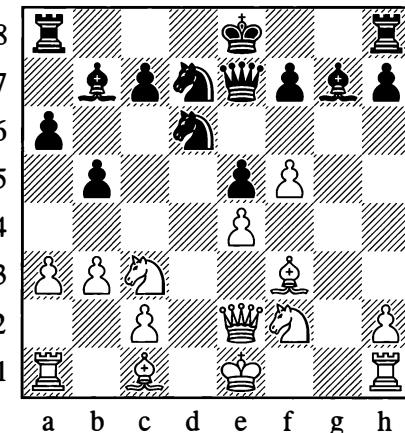
11...♛e7 12.g4 gxf5 13.gxf5

Black is better after 13.exf5 e4 14.♗g2  
♝e5 15.g5 ♜f3† 16.♗xf3 exf3 17.♗d2 ♜g4  
18.0–0–0 ♛d8.



After the text move my pieces are well placed, with the exception of the g7-bishop. The following moves are intended to improve the position of the knights while simultaneously preparing the ...♜f6-g5/-h4 manoeuvre.

13...♝b6 14.♗e2 ♜c4 15.♗c1 ♜d7 16.b3  
♝d6 17.♗f2



17...♝d8?!

Some people are happy to castle on the queenside in such positions, but I generally wait with that until I have a more precise idea of how many moves it will take me and my opponent to develop our respective attacks. The king is quite safe on e8, since there is no way for White to open the centre.

The main alternative is 17...♜f6 but there is no hurry to exchange the g7-bishop, and I wanted to keep my opponent guessing about my next step.

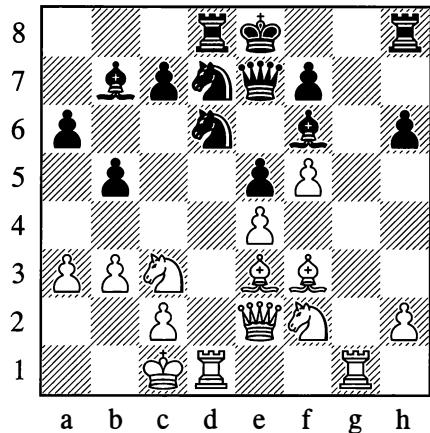
18.♗e3 ♜f6

I considered 18...♝xf5?! but rejected it because of 19.exf5 e4 20.♗cxe4! ♜xe4 21.♗xe4 ♜xa1 22.♗g5 ♛e5 23.c3 when ♜f6† is a serious threat, and after 23...0–0–0 24.♗c2 I did not like the sight of my bishop on a1.

19.♗g1 h6

I definitely prefer Black's position now. My king is stuck in the centre but my pieces are clearly better placed (as soon as I have exchanged the bishop on f6 for the one on e3), being well centralized and attacking e4.

## 20.0–0–0



**20...Qc4! 21.bxc4?**

My opponent crumbles.

At the time of the game I was not sure how to get a clear advantage after 21.Qb1. Only with the help of various computer programs was I able to find 21...Qxa3† 22.Qa2 Qg5! 23.Qxg5 hxg5 24.Qd5 Qxd5 25.exd5 b4 when Black is indeed clearly better.

**21...Qxa3† 22.Qd2!?**

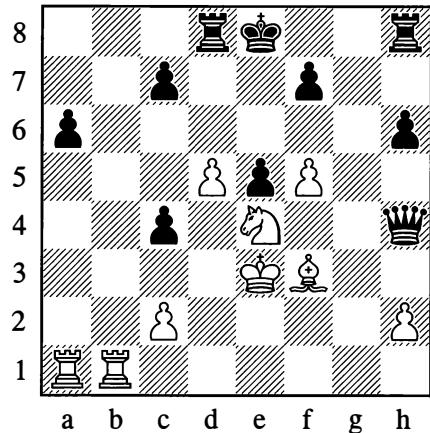
In the objective sense this is worse than 22.Qb1 Qxc3 23.Qd3, but it has the practical advantage of leading to a clearly lost but still complicated position, rather than one where the opponent has an extra pawn plus the initiative.

**22...Qb6† 23.Qd5 Qxc4† 24.Qxc4 bxc4**

**25.Qa1 Qb4† 26.Qe2 Qxd5 27.exd5 Qg5**

**28.Qe4 Qxe3 29.Qgb1 Qe7 30.Qxe3 Qh4!**

The key move, without which White would have some compensation for the queen.



**31.Qxa6 Qf4† 32.Qe2 Qxh2† 33.Qe3 Qg8**

**34.Qh1 Qxc2 35.Qhxh6 Qb8 36.Qf6† Qd8**

**0–1**

Considering the somewhat clumsy position of White's bishop on f3, I do not think this variation is dangerous for Black. 9.Qd2!N is an interesting direction for future games, but White's position lacks harmony and I think Black should be at least equal. The Hippo approach with 7...e6 is also quite acceptable.

The next couple of games will address one of White's most challenging set-ups, where he reacts to ...b5 with a quick a2-a4 and, after the automatic ...b4, reroutes his knight to the kingside.

## GAME 13

**Ildar Khairullin – Vladimir Dzhangobegov**

Moscow 2013

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.Qf3 b5 6.Qd3**

It is also possible – though not as strong – to play:

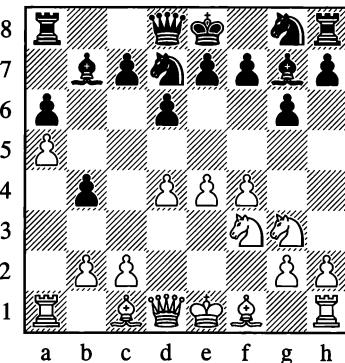
**6.a4? b4 7.Qe2**

**7.Qd5 Qb7 8.Qc4** should be met by 8...e6!

(8...a5?! 9.f5! is dangerous for Black) 9.Qxb4

a5! 10.♘d3 ♘xe4 when Black has done well to exchange his b-pawn for White's e-pawn.  
7...♝b7 8.♗g3 ♘d7 9.a5?!

9.♗d3 leads to a position that resembles the main game, with the difference that White has gone with the knight to g3 prematurely.



9...c5?

This is an instructive mistake by Black, who must have underestimated his opponent's reply.

9...h5!N 10.♘d3 h4 11.♗f1 e5 would have given Black a good game.

10.d5!

White is in the perfect situation to block the centre. His control over the e5- and b6-squares will make it impossible for Black to challenge the bishop that is about to arrive on c4, which in its turn makes the position quite awful for Black.

10...♝gf6 11.♘c4 ♜c7 12.0–0 0–0 13.♗d3 ♜fe8 14.♗g5 ♜f8?!

Now Black's problems escalate.

15.e5 dx5 16.d6 exd6 17.♗xf7† ♜h8 18.♗xe8 ♜xe8 19.♗xd6

White was winning in Karasev – Sznajik, Rubinstein Memorial 1974.

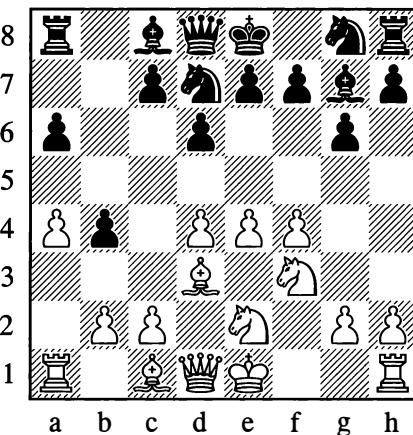
6...♝d7 7.a4 b4

There have been many games with 7...bxa4, but if I have to play this I would rather change my opening repertoire. Even the Petroff comes to mind.

I have done my best to try to make 7...c5 work, but after 8.axb5 cxd4 9.♘d5 ♜gf6 10.♗xf6† ♜xf6 11.b4! I have been unable to find a way to equalize. Still, this is far from exhausted in an analytical sense.

8.♘e2

This is stronger than 8.♘d5, when 8...c5 gives Black a decent game. Black can also consider 8...a5!? 9.0–0 e6 10.♗e3 ♜e7 when the position is unclear. The white knight is more centralized on e3 than on the usual e2, but it is also obstructing the bishop on c1.



I have spent far too much time pondering the ins and outs of this position. There were times when I thought the whole system was unplayable for Black, but nowadays I am not so pessimistic. Still, there is no doubt that White's system is a challenging one, and for this reason I decided to cover four(!) set-ups that I consider playable for Black.

8...c5

8...e6!? and 8...♝gf6 will be covered in the next game.

8...a5?!

This move might seem slow, but there is a certain logic to it: Black wants to exchange the light-squared bishops in order to reduce

White's control over the light squares, especially e4, d5 and c4. Another positive feature of this move is that it gives Black the option of playing ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  later. The downside is that it does not develop a piece and puts no immediate pressure on the opponent.

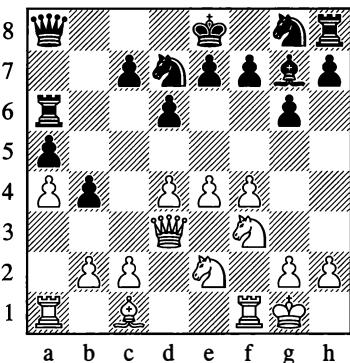
### 9.0–0

An earlier game of mine continued 9.c4 bxc3 10.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  0–0 14.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and Black had a decent game in Khruschiow – Hillarp Persson, Mallorca 2004.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! is a better try for an advantage.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}a8$



12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !? c5 13.c3 cxd4 14.cxd4 gxf5

At this point White clearly lost the thread with:

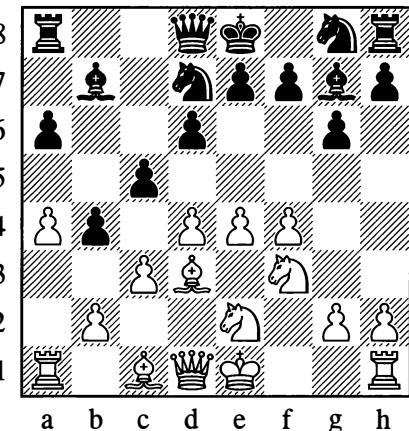
15.e5? e6 16.d5? dxе5 17.dxe6 fxe6 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

White already could have resigned in Narayanan – Hillarp Persson, Reykjavik 2008. There are virtually no other practical examples in this line, so it is hard to draw any firm conclusions about how good it really is. Based on the above two games though, I might play it again.

### 9.c3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !

This is the most flexible move, and is not considered by Greet in *Beating Unusual Chess Defences: 1 e4*.

Pawn exchanges can and should wait: 9...bxc3 10.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?) is another idea, although Black must still reckon on attacking ideas such as 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?) 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  Now 13. $\mathbb{W}e1$ !N leads to a clear advantage for White, and improves over 13.d5 c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  with unclear play, Corrales Jimenez – Almeida Quintana, Havana 2011.



### 10.cxb4?!

The right move order is 10.0–0!, and after the correct 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 White transposes to the game without allowing the option mentioned in the note to Black's next move.

It is worth adding that Black's other tries may lead to trouble, for instance: 10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ! 11.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ?! does not work due to 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , and 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! is equally bad because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  when Black's dark squares are in a mess.) 12.c4!  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13.exd6 exd6 14.f5 Black's position is highly dubious.

### 10...cxb4?!

Black misses the opportunity to exploit White's inaccurate move order with:

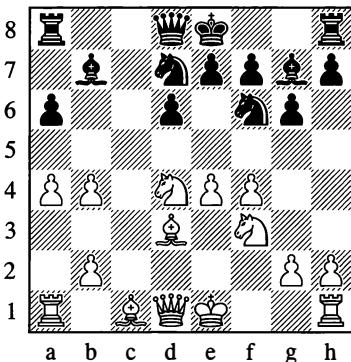
10...cxd4!

This leads to unclear complications where Black's chances are not worse.

11. $\mathbb{Q}exd4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

11...e5!N 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$  d5 14.fxe5

$\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  17.  $b5$   $\mathbb{Q}ec5$  is another possible line, with great complications.



12.  $\mathbb{W}e2$

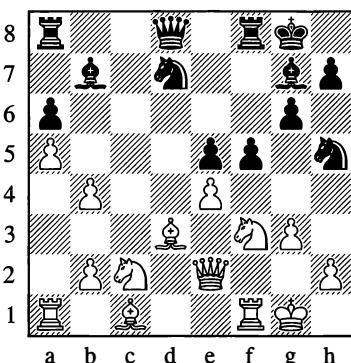
12.e5!N  $dxe5$  13.  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15.  $e6$   $fxe6$  16.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  is far from clear.

12...0-0 13.a5 e5 14.fxe5  $dxe5$

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ? is also playable.

15.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16.  $g3$   $f5$  17. 0-0

Now in Fernandez Garcia – Comas Fabrego, Burguillos 2010, Black should have played:



17... $f4$ !

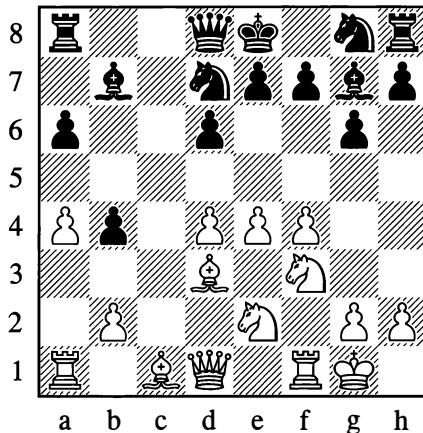
Instead of 17... $\mathbb{W}e8$ , when 18.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! was strong for White.

18.  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}hf6$

With excellent counterplay.

**11.0-0**

We have arrived at a key position, which should have been reached via the move order 10.0-0!  $cxd4$  11.  $cxd4$ .



11... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

This natural-looking move allows White to take a firm hold of the initiative.

Black must absolutely avoid 11...e6? which leads to horrible consequences after 12.  $f5$ !

The critical continuation is:

11...a5!

If Black can get away with this move, it is definitely what he should do. The main improvement over the game is that the b4-pawn will not be weak. Also, Black can often defuse some of the pressure with a well-timed ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .

12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !N

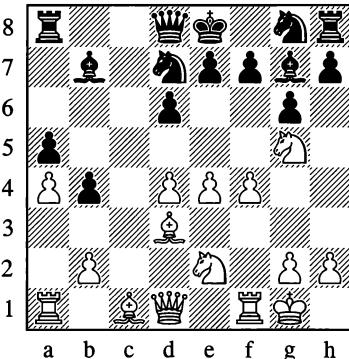
12.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13.  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14.  $e6$   $fxe6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  16.  $fxg5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  is unclear.

12.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  occurred in Hamarat – Burghoff, corr. 2008, and here Black can improve with: 12... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! I would not usually place the knight on the rim unless e4-e5 has been played, but here it is both necessary and fully playable: 13.  $h3$  (13.  $f5$  0-0 14.  $h3$ ?!  $d5$ ) 13...0-0 14.  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15.  $g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16.  $f5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  Black has enough counterplay.

Along with the main line, 12.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  is critical.

12... $\mathbb{W}b6$ !N (12... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13.  $e5$   $dxe5$  14.  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  occurred in Markus – Keller, Internet 2001, and now after 15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !N  $\mathbb{W}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  0-0 17.  $\mathbb{W}g4$  it is unlikely that Black

will survive the attack.) 13.♕h1 ♔gf6 14.e5 ♕d5 15.♕g5 ♔c7 (15...h6? 16.♕xf7 ♕xf7 17.e6† is winning for White.) 16.♗e2 ♕a6 17.♗e3 0–0 White keeps a small plus, but Black has a reasonable position with decent chances of equalizing.



12...h6!

12...♕h6!? is possible, but I would prefer to play it after White has committed the queen to b3. 13.h3 0–0 14.♗e3 e6 Black will defend with ...d5 and ...♔f5-e7, but White still keeps some advantage.

13.♗f3

White hopes that the softening of Black's kingside will justify the loss of time with the knight.

13.♕xf7?! is playable, but after 13...♗xf7 14.♗b3† d5 15.f5 g5 16.♗b5 ♜c8 17.e5 ♔xe5 18.f6 ♔f3†! 19.♗xf3 ♔xf6 Black returns the knight and keeps an extra pawn, leaving the position unclear.

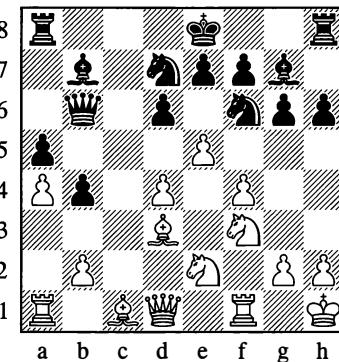
13...♗b6

The evaluation of 13...e6 depends on whether it is possible to meet 14.f5 with 14...exf5 15.exf5 g5. It seems to me that 16.♗g3 ♔gf6 17.♗e1† ♔f8 18.♗b5 leaves White with some advantage, though the final verdict is far from clear.

13...♔gf6 is premature due to 14.e5 ♔e4 15.e6 fxe6 16.♗g3 and White will reap the benefits of the ♔g5-f3 manoeuvre: 16...♗xg3 17.♗xg6† ♔f8 18.hxg3 I doubt

that Black can find a satisfactory spot for the king.

14.♗h1 ♔gf6 15.e5



15...♔e4! 16.♗e3

16.♗c2 ♜c8 17.♗b1 f5 18.exf6 ♔dxsf6 19.♗g3 ♔xg3† 20.hxg3 g5 gives Black the initiative.

16...0–0 17.♗b5 ♜ad8 18.♗d3 dxe5 19.fxe5 g5!

Black has a perfect 'Modern mess'. The bishop on b7 is strong, and ...f5 (which may be prefaced by ...♗d5) will be hard for White to meet.

**12.e5!**

This is the critical test of Black's set-up.

12.♗g3 is well met by: 12...e5! (This move only works after White has played ♗g3 and before Black has played ...a5.) 13.♗e1 (13.dxe5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♔g4 15.♗e2! ♔gxе5 is promising for Black.) 13...a5! 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗xf6 ♔xf6 17.d5 0–0 18.♗b5 ♔a6! The position is balanced.

**12...♗d5**

Black's best bet is:

12...♔e4!N

The point of this rather surprising move is to take White's ♔g5 move out of the picture. The obvious downside is that the knight is isolated on e4, but it seems that Black can

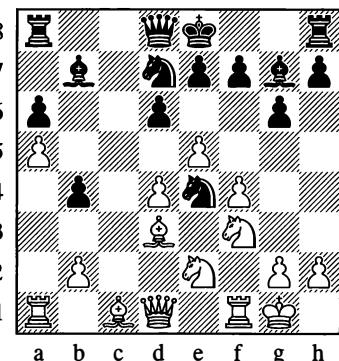
deal with the consequences. White has only one clear route to an edge:

13.a5!

13.♕g3 ♔xg3 14.hxg3 dx5 (14...a5!? 15.exd6 e6 is also possible) 15.fxe5 ♕d5 is fine for Black, who will eventually play ...f6. 13.♗b3 ♖a5! 14.♗g5 (14.♕xe4 ♖xe4 15.♕d2 ♜b8 16.♗ac1 0–0 17.♗g5 ♜d5! 18.♗h3 h6 19.♗xe4 ♖xe4 keeps the balance.) 14...♗xg5 15.fxg5 0–0 16.♕c4 e6 17.exd6 ♗b6 18.♕d2 ♜ab8! Black will have an excellent position whatever White plays next.

13.♗c2 ♜c8 14.♗b1 f5 (14...d5!? is also reasonable) 15.a5 gives Black a couple of decent options. 15...e6 16.♗e3 0–0 is a good example of the type of position for which Black is striving. Even more tempting is 15...♗b8!, taking aim at the pawns on a5 and d4.

Let's return to 13.a5!. This strong move keeps Black's queen out of b6, while isolating both of Black's queenside pawns as possible targets for the future. The upside, from Black's point of view, is that White's minor pieces are in some disarray, while Black has a good grip on the light squares.



13...0–0 14.♗e3!

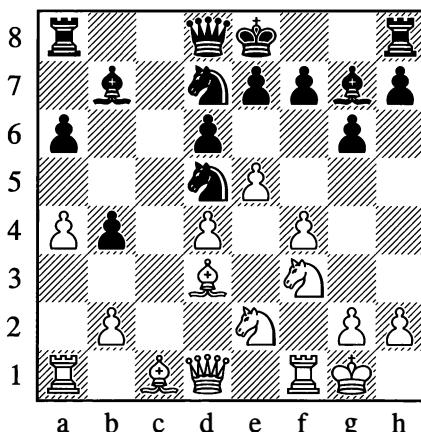
14.♗e1 ♜b8 15.♗e3 e6 16.♗xb4 (16.♗xe4 ♜xe4 17.♗d2 dx5 18.fxe5 b3 19.♗g3 ♕d5 20.♗e4 ♜c7 21.♗d6 f6 22.♗c1 ♜a7 is promising for Black.) 16...dxe5 17.dxe5

18.♗d4 ♜dc5 19.♗xe4 ♜xe4 20.♗d2

♗d6 Black has decent play for a pawn.

14...e6 15.♗b3 ♜b8 16.♗fc1

With ♗d2 coming next, it is hard for Black to protect the b-pawn. Although White must walk a narrow path to get an advantage here, the final assessment does appear to be in his favour, and this constitutes the key argument for playing 11...a5! as noted earlier.



13.♗g5!

I have not been able to find a solution for Black from this position.

White also keeps some advantage with 13.a5 0–0 14.♗b3 e6 15.♗d2, but the game continuation is stronger.

13...dxe5!

13...h6? 14.♗e6 fxe6 15.♗xg6† ♜f8 16.f5 is hopeless for Black.

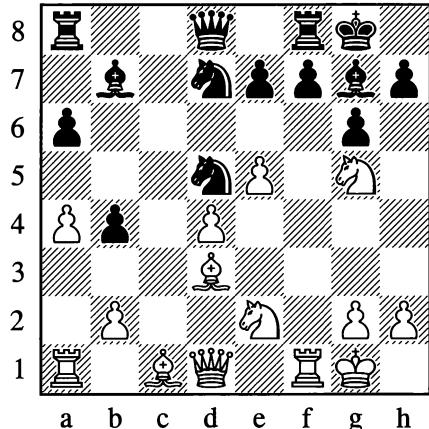
13...e6?! 14.♗e4 is also bad for him.

13...♗f8 is clearly too slow. 14.f5 h6 15.♗xf7 ♜xf7 16.fxg6† ♜g8 17.♗g3 dxe5 18.♗e4 ♜b6 19.♗f5 ♜xg6 20.a5 ♜c6 21.♗h5 is one line that shows what kind of obstacles Black has to overcome in these lines. White has a powerful attack.

14.fxe5

After 14.dxe5?  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  Black takes over the initiative.

**14...0–0**



**15.a5!**

15.  $\mathbb{W}b3$ ?! h6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  a5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}7b6$  is what Black is hoping for.

15.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  h6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e6 17.  $\mathbb{W}g3$  a5 18.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  21.  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  exf5 is unclear.

15.e6 fxe6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1\#$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  19.  $\mathbb{W}f2$  a5 20.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  leaves Black objectively only a bit worse, although his position is still not much fun to be in.

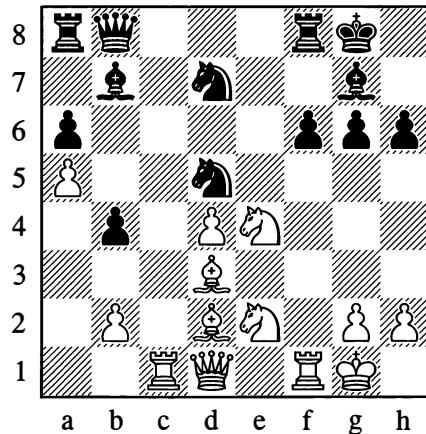
**15...h6**

After 15...e6? White has many ways to get an advantage, the most convincing being: 16.  $\mathbb{W}e1$ !  $\mathbb{W}e7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  f6 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  20.  $\mathbb{W}h4\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  Black cannot defend.

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$**

Black is clearly worse after both 16...f5 17. exf6  $\mathbb{Q}5xf6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}4g3$  and 16...  $\mathbb{W}b8$  17.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

**17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5 18. exf6 exf6 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$**



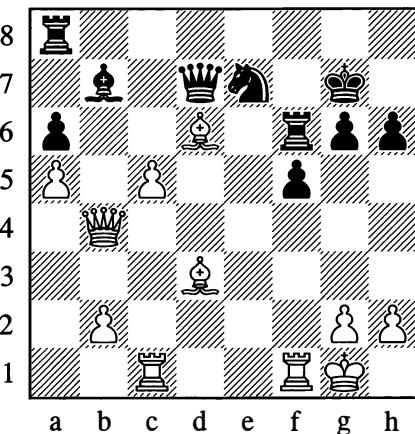
**20.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

Even stronger was 20.  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}4g3$  when Black is close to losing.

**20...  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  21. dxcc5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ??**

21...  $\mathbb{W}e8$  is the best try, although Black is still in trouble. After the move played, he soon finds himself in a hopeless situation after White's pieces swarm in.

22.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  f5 24.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  25.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  28.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$



28...  $\mathbb{W}c6$  29.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  30.  $\mathbb{W}d4\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  31.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Finally Black had had enough.

**1–0**

Although the outcome of the game was unfavourable for Black, there is still a lot to be discovered after both 8...c5 and 8...a5. In the next game we will look at a couple of other branches from move 8, in which Black holds back his queenside pawns and instead looks to develop his kingside pieces.

## GAME 14

**Emil Hermansson – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Elitserien 2001

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4 a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7.a4 b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e6!?

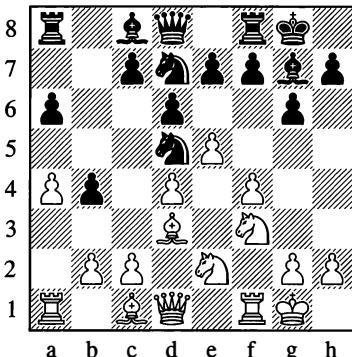
I usually avoid this move early in the f2-f4 lines, but here it makes a bit more sense, as White is not as well placed to exploit the weak dark squares with e4-e5 and a knight to e4.

Considering the strength of 10.f5 in the main game, there is something to be said for holding back the e-pawn with:

8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  9.0–0 0–0

Depending on how White continues, Black may consider any of ...e6, ...e5 or ...c5.

10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$



11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ?

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  has been played, but I do not see any big problems for Black after 11...a5 or 11...c5N.

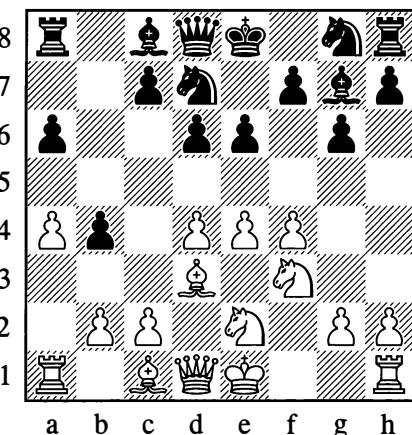
11.e6N fxe6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is fine for Black.  
11.a5N e6 transposes to the main game.

11...e6 12.c4

White should prefer 12.a5!, which transposes to 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! in the notes to the main game below.

12...bxc3 13.bxc3 a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5!

Black is fine.



9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !

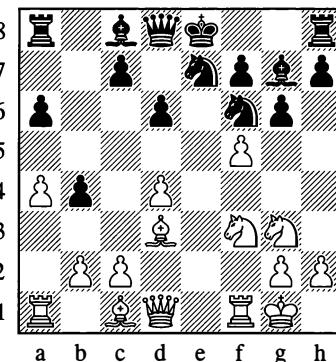
The other knight development is riskier:

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? 10.f5!

10.a5 is usually nothing special unless the moves e4-e5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  have been played first. After 10...c5? (10...0–0 is also decent) 11.f5! exf5 12.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  Black is very much in the game.

10...exf5 11.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !

12.fxg6 hxg6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! is a little better for White, but the text move is stronger.

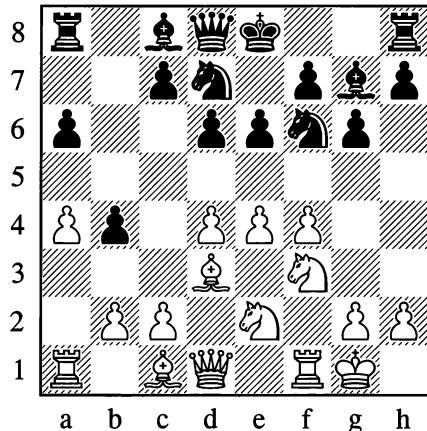


12...0–0 13.♗g5 ♖ed5 14.♗d2

14.fxg6 hxg6 is also advantageous for White, but why release the tension so soon?

14...♝e8 15.h4!

Black is under heavy pressure.



### 10.e5

Another critical option is:

10.f5?! exf5

10...♝b7? loses to 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.♗f4 ♜e7

13.♗g5 ♖f8 14.d5.

10...gxh5?! is also dangerous: 11.exf5 e5

12.♗g3 ♜b7 (12...0–0?! 13.♗g5 ♜b7

14.dxe5 ♖xe5 15.♗h5 is clearly better for

White.) 13.♗e1 a5 14.♗g5 ♜e7 15.dxe5

dxe5 16.♗e4 White has a solid advantage.

10...e5?! 11.♗e1! a5 12.♗h4 ♜e7 13.♗e3

♝b7 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♗g3 looks better for

White. Nevertheless, Black can keep things complicated, either with

15...h6 16.fxg6 fxg6 17.♗h3 0–0–0

18.♗h4 ♜e8, or with 15...0–0–0 16.♗d2

h5 17.♗b3 ♜h6 18.♗xh6 ♜xh6 19.♗h1

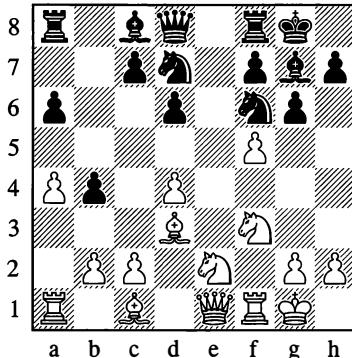
♝g8.

11.exf5 0–0 12.♗e1

Now it is imperative for Black to exchange the bishop on d3 before White can play

♝h4, ♜g5 and ♗f4, followed by a sacrifice

on g6.



12...♝e8!

Black does not have the time to play

12...a5 since 13.♗h4 ♜a6 14.♗g5 ♜e8

15.♗g3 ♜c8 16.♗h6 ♜xh6 17.♗xh6 ♜xd3

18.cxd3 ♜a6 19.♗ad1 ♜b6 20.♗h1 ♜e7

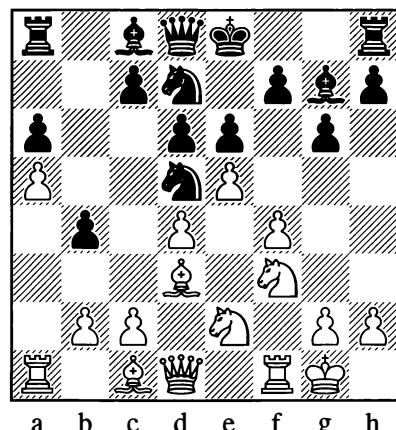
21.♗e4 is troublesome.

13.♗xb4 c5 14.♗e1 ♜c7 15.b3 ♜b7 16.♗h4  
♝e4

Black has compensation, but is it enough? This is a moot point in the event that Black prefers the 8...♝gf6 move order.

### 10...♝d5 11.a5!

Good timing, before Black can get in ...a5.



11...0–0 12.c4

A calmer approach is 12.♗d2 ♜b7 13.♗e1, but after 13...c5 14.c4 bxc3 15.bxc3 ♗e7! it is unclear how White should continue.

Another idea is 12.♗g5!? h6 (12...♝b7!?) 13.♕e4 f5 14.exf6 ♘xf6 15.c4 bxc3 16.bxc3 and although White is a little better, Black has dynamic play and no regrets.

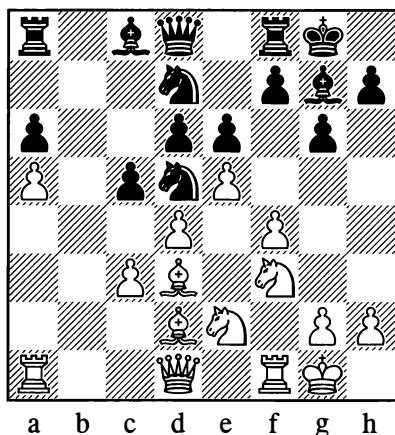
### 12...bxc3 13.bxc3 c5

There is something to be said for playing 13...♝b7 first, when 14.c4 ♘e7 15.♔a3 dxe5 16.dxe5 c5 17.♗g3 ♘f5 18.♗xf5 exf5 is about equal.

### 14.♗d2

14.exd6!? cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘f6 16.♗e5 gives White some activity, but with such a bad pawn structure it is hard to believe that Black will be unable to create enough counterplay. Sure enough, after 16...e5 17.♔a4 ♘xd6 18.♔a3 ♘d8 19.♔c5 ♘d7 20.♔b3 ♘b8 21.♔a3 ♘b5 White's structure is starting to become a cause of displeasure.

14.♗e4 was worth considering. Black can complete development using the small tactical trick 14...♝b7! 15.c4 dxe5 16.dxe5 ♘e3!. Nevertheless, after 17.♘d3! ♘xe4 18.♘xe3 ♘c6 19.♗g3 White keeps a small advantage.



14...♝b7 15.♕e1 ♘e7!

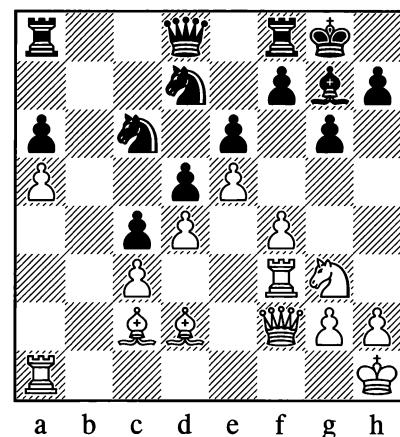
The knight was obstructing the light-squared bishop.

15...cxd4 16.cxd4 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♘c6 does not work due to 18.♗g3, when the d7-knight has nowhere to go and White is ready to invade with ♘e4-d6.

### 16.♗g3 ♘xf3!

It is important to diminish the white forces before closing the centre. The bishop on b7 would have been out of play after ...d5, and White's chances of a successful attack increase with every piece on the kingside.

17.♘xf3 d5 18.♔h1 ♘c6 19.♗f2 c4 20.♔c2



20...f5!

This is a necessary precaution before grabbing the a5-pawn. Instead after 20...♘xa5? 21.f5 exf5 22.♗xf5 Black will not survive for long.

### 21.exf6

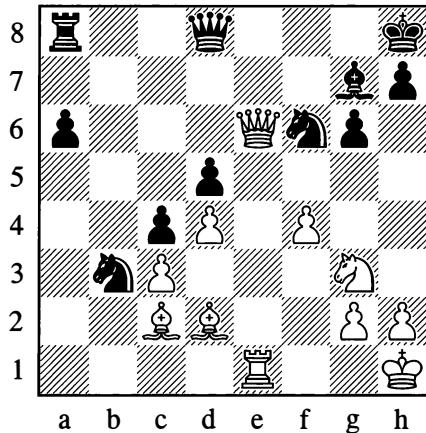
White must open lines against the black king, otherwise the a5-pawn will be lost without any compensation.

21...♗xf6 22.♗e2 ♘e8 23.♗e3 ♘xa5!  
24.♗xe6

Black is on top after 24.♗a4 ♘b3 25.♗e1 ♘e7 26.♗xe6 ♘xe6 27.♗xe6† ♘h8 28.♔c1 ♘a5, when the weak c-pawn is White's road to misery.

24... $\mathbb{Q}b3$  25. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}xe6$  26. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$

## AME 15



27. $\mathbb{Q}xb3?$

With this move White exchanges an integral part of his attacking potential, simultaneously giving me a passed pawn.

After the correct 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  29. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  the position would have remained unclear.

27... $cxb3$  28. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{E}b8?$

I was in grave time trouble and missed 28... $\mathbb{W}a5$  with a winning position.

29. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  30. $f5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5?$  31. $\mathbb{E}xb3$

Emil shares my troubles and misses 31. $\mathbb{E}xb3$  with an obvious advantage.

31... $\mathbb{W}xe6$  32. $fxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  33. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}b6$  34. $e7$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  35. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  36. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  37. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  38. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  39. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{E}b5$  40. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black is slightly better, but unfortunately I lost on time.

1-0

In the next game my opponent prevents my intended ... $b5$ , but nothing could make me happier.

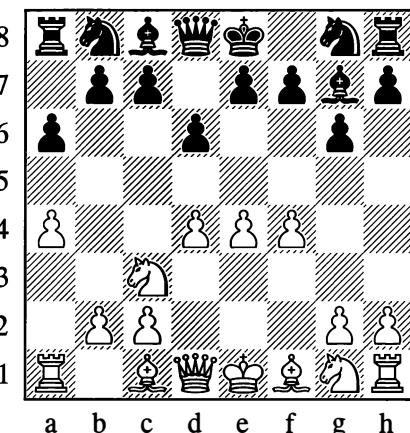
Timo Spiess – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Recklinghausen 2001

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4 a6 5.a4?!

Some would say that this is just one out of many moves of equal value, which could be played according to taste. I disagree. It seems to me that, by playing this move, White renounces all ambitions of an opening initiative.

After the extremely uncommon, but not bad, 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , I recommend 5... $e6$  6.a4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  followed by ... $b6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , or perhaps even ... $d5$  and ... $c5$ .



5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$

Why not play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  one move earlier if it is so good now? Sure, you can, but it is stronger here for a number of reasons:

a) Black can now use the b4-square for the knight.

b) White cannot comfortably castle on the queenside.

c) Finally, Black does not have to worry about  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ .

What did White get in return? Don't ask me.

Another excellent move is 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , intending to enter the ...c5 lines of the Pirc. The moves ...a6 and a2-a4 are then clearly to Black's advantage. After 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 there is no  $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ , so White will have to settle for an equal game with 7.d5 0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 9.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 as in Tan – Senador, Kuala Lumpur 2007.

### 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

This is the main line, but White has two other options.

6. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ ! is nothing to worry about: 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8.gxf3 d5! 9.e5 (After 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ ! e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  Black is clearly better. Also after 9.exd5?!.  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  White is risking a positional catastrophe.) 9...e6 10.h4 h5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  Black held a slight advantage in Barskij – Hillarp Persson, Recklinghausen 2001.

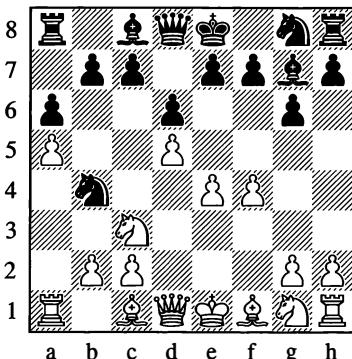
### 6.d5?!

Now the play takes on a forcing character.

6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 7.a5

7. $\mathbb{Q}b1N$  is met by 7...a5! giving the knight an escape square on a6.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  has been played, but 7...c6N should be fine for Black.



### 7...e6!

Every move is fighting for the b4-knight.

It would be a mistake to play 7...c6? because of 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ! and White picks up the knight with c2-c3 on the next move.

### 8.dxe6

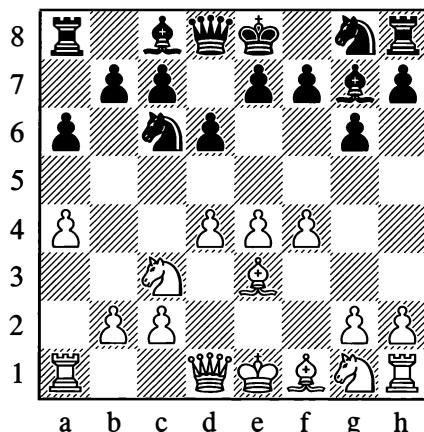
8. $\mathbb{Q}a4N$  is a better try, when 8...c5! leads to a complicated position.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,

Now instead of 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  in Mikhailovkij – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2003, I should have continued with:

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7N$

With some initiative.



### 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

It may look more active to play 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , but then Black grabs the initiative with 8...b6! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and ...c5.

However, in the above line it should be noted that 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ? is too impulsive, and after 9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  e5 10.d5! White is better. One should not play ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  without being absolutely sure that the consequences are favourable.

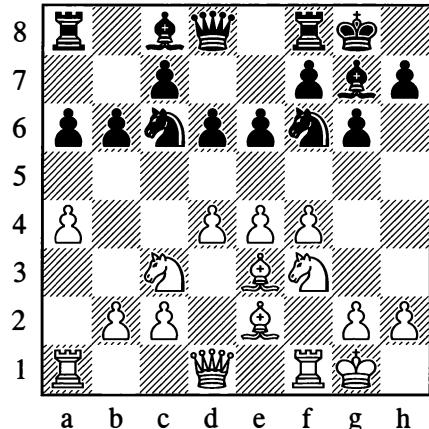
### 8...b6!

There is no need to fear 9.e5 since, as opposed to the previous note, 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! is promising for Black. White can continue with 11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.g4, but Black is doing well after 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

### 9.0-0 e6

I am usually critical towards this move, but here Black is planning ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  with an attack on the e4-pawn.

The direct 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !? 10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c6 12.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is less clear, although Black seems to be doing all right here too.



#### 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

White would like to play e4-e5, so he prepares to retreat the bishop to g1 if Black responds with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

10.h3! was played in Kiik – Paronen, Jyväskylä 2000, and here I would suggest 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4N$  or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7N$  so that e4-e5 can be met comfortably by ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

If White tries the immediate 10.e5N, then 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is okay for Black.

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !N is a provocative alternative, when 11.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  is critical.

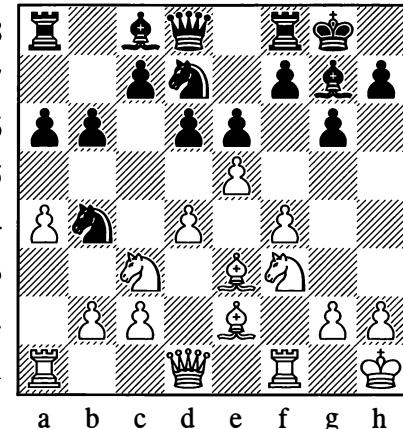
#### 11.e5!

Sooner or later White has to play this, otherwise Black will play ...c5 and undermine his centre.

#### 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?

11... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ !N is objectively best, but I wanted to avoid 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  when

the knight exchange has made the position simpler to play for White. Nevertheless, Black's position is absolutely fine here.



#### 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !?

This does not seem quite right.

12. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13.a5!? is an interesting idea that forces Black to play accurately. 13...b5? is no good due to 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  axb5 15. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ . Better is 13...bxa5 when things are far from clear, although 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  seems to favour White slightly.

#### 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ c5

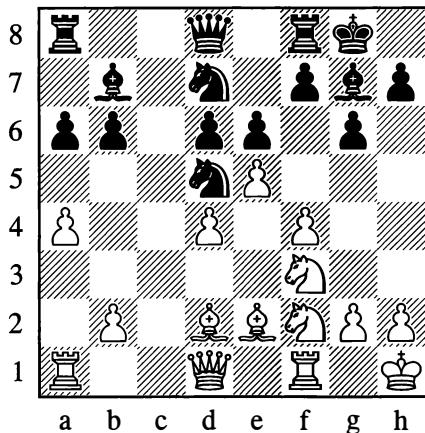
If Black wants to play this move after ...d6 and ...e6, he should be wary of a possible knight invasion on d6. Here it is okay as the e4-square is safely under control.

#### 14.c3

The line 14.exd6 cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  illustrates what Black is hoping for in the Modern: active minor pieces, and the enemy centre torn to shreds.

#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ cxd4 16.cxd4

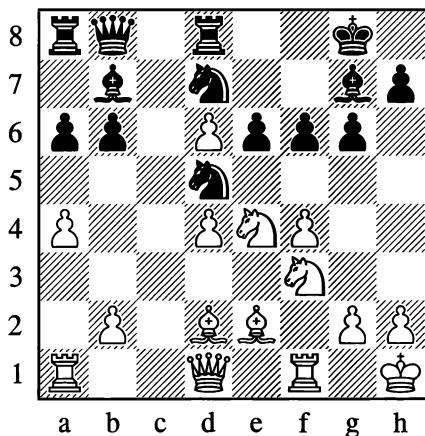
White is finally threatening to launch his knight to e4 and d6, so Black must act before it is too late.

**16...f6!?**

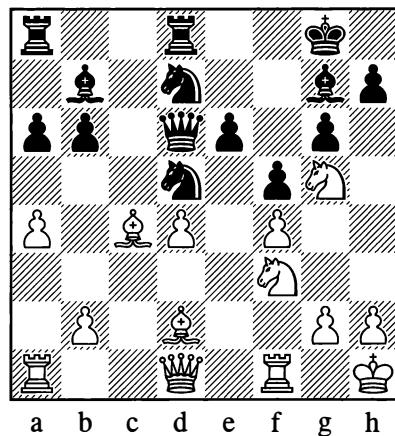
I awarded this move an exclamation mark in *Tiger's Modern*, but subsequent analysis with the latest generation of computer programs has convinced me that 16...f5! is stronger. Play continues: 17.♘c4 dx5 18.fxe5 (After 18.dxe5 ♘c8 Black is doing well, the plan being ...♗e7, ...♗fd8 and ...♘c5 at an opportune moment.) 18...h6 19.♕h3 ♘e8! I prefer Black's position.

**17.exd6**

It would have been stronger to play 17.♗b3! dx5 18.fxe5 fxe5 19.♗g5 ♗e7 20.♗h3 when Black has to defend with precision. Best play continues 20...h5 21.♗xe6 ♘f5 22.♗xg7 ♘xg7 and, with ...♗af8 coming next, Black keeps the balance.

**17...♗b8 18.♗e4 ♘d8****19.♘c4!**

This is better than 19.♗b3 f5 (19...♗f8!?) 20.♗c3 ♗xd6 21.♗e5 ♗b4 when Black's pieces are cooperating better than their white counterparts.

**19...f5 20.♗eg5 ♗xd6****21.♗e1**

White has no plan and proceeds to make small threats. The important question here is: where do you want your pieces to be? Black would like to play ...h6, driving the knight to the poor h3-square.

White's best continuation is 21.♗e2! ♘e8 22.♗e5 ♘xe5 23.dxe5 ♗d7 24.♗f3 when the knight finds a sensible square and the chances are about equal.

**21...♘e8 22.♗b3!?**

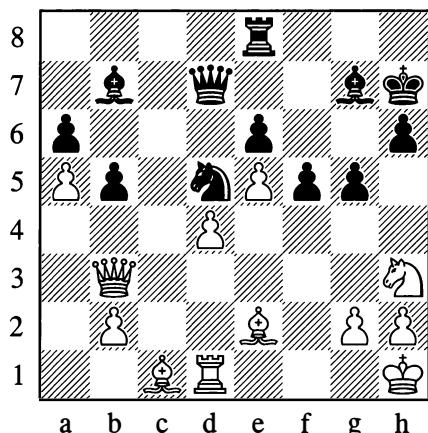
White should have preferred 22.♗e5 ♘xe5 23.dxe5 ♗d7. If you compare this position with the note above, you will notice that the rook is slightly worse on e1 than f1 and the white queen is also a bit lost. Nevertheless, this was still the right way to solve White's problem of the misplaced knight.

**22...h6 23.♗h3**

23.♕xe6? is unsound, and after 23...♕xe6 24.♗b4 ♕c6 25.♕xe6 ♕xe6 26.♕e1 ♕c6 27.♕e7 ♕d8 White has burnt his best gunpowder.

23...♕ac8 24.♕a1 ♔h7 25.♕e5 ♕xe5  
26.fxe5 ♕d7 27.♕ed1 g5 28.a5?! b5 29.♕e2  
♕xc1 30.♕xc1

My position is wonderful, but time is an issue.



30...g4?

I avoided 30...♕c8! because I saw ghosts after 31.♕xg5 hxg5 32.♕xg5† ♔g8 33.♕h5. However it turns out that after 33...♕f4! 34.♕f7† ♕xf7 35.♕xf7 ♔xf7 White is defenceless. (The flashy 35...♕d5?! 36.♕g3 ♕c2 also works).

31.♕f4 ♕c8 32.♕d3 ♕f8 33.♕d2 ♕c4  
34.♕c5 ♕xc5 35.dxc5 ♕d4!?

I would still have been better after 35...♕xc5 36.♕g3 ♕c2. After the text move it should be a draw.

36.♕c1 ♕xd1† 37.♕xd1 ♕g7 38.♕d2 h5  
39.♕g5?! ♕xg5 40.♕xg5 ♔g6 41.♕d2  
♕e7 42.♕g1 ♔e4 43.g3 ♕c6 44.♕c3 f4  
45.gxf4 ♕f5 46.♕d2 ♕e7 47.♕d1 ♕g6  
48.♕b3 ♕xf4 49.♕xf4 ♕xf4 50.♕xe6  
♕xe5 51.♕c8 ♕d4 52.♕xa6 ♕xc5

53.♕c8 b4 54.♕f2 ♕b5 55.a6 ♕b6 56.♕g3  
♕d3 57.♕h4 ♕e2?

Instead 57...♔g6 should have drawn with ease. At this point I offered a draw and my opponent agreed, missing 58.♕g5! with a clear advantage to White.

½-½

The next game is not too relevant for theory, as I believe Black should deviate as early as move 5 or 6. However, it still contains plenty of ideas that can be applied to similar variations.

## GAME 16

Maxim Turov – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Copenhagen 2002

1.e4 g6!

After seven rounds I was sharing the lead in the tournament and had a free day to decide what to play against Turov: whether to spend an uneventful day with the French or go to the Tivoli with the Modern. I felt like the Tivoli.

2.d4 ♕g7 3.♕c3 d6 4.♕e3 a6 5.a4!?

An interesting move order if White is content with a very small advantage indeed.

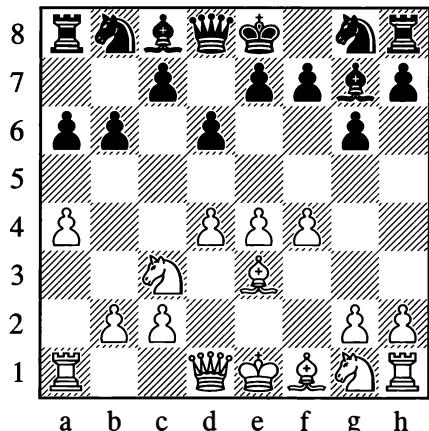
5...b6!?

I am not so keen on 5...♕c6 here, since 6.♕f3 and 6.h3 lead to positions where I can neither advance my c-pawn nor enter a Hippo set-up.

The safest move is 5...♕f6, leading to the Flexible Dragon Restrained – see Game 40 on page 228.

6.f4!

This is White's best attempt to exploit Black's provocative play.



**6...♝d7**

With this move I enter a kind of Hippopotamus set-up. However, as we will soon see, this turns out to be somewhat better for White.

If Black intends to venture the Hippo, then 6...♝b7 7.♝f3 ♝f6! is the right way to do it, when the direct attack on the e4-pawn forces White's hand. There are two main options:

a) 8.e5N is one critical idea, when my main line continues: 8...♝g4! (8...♝d5 9.♝xd5 ♜xd5 10.♜e2 is at least a little better for White.) 9.♝g1 c5! 10.e6 (10.♝g5 cxd4) 10...f5 11.♝g5 0–0 12.♝f7 ♜e8! 13.d5 ♜xf7 14.exf7† ♜xf7 Black has splendid compensation for the exchange. Obviously this requires testing and further analysis.

b) 8.♝d3 0–0 9.0–0 ♜c6! Black is planning ...♝b4 and, surprisingly enough, it is not easy to come up with a good answer for White! 10.e5 (10.d5 ♜b4 11.♝c4 c6 is comfortable for Black.) 10...♝g4 11.♝d2 ♜b4 12.♝e2 c5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.h3 ♜h6 Black was clearly better in Antoli Royo – Movsziszian, Lorca 2004.

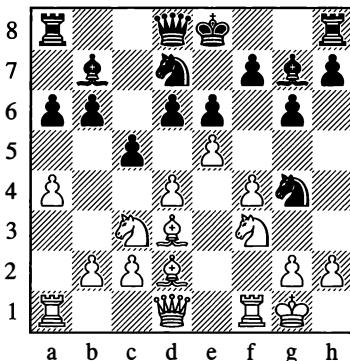
**7.♝f3 e6!**

After 7...c5?! 8.d5! White continues ♜c4, h2-h3 and 0–0, when Black is unable to play either ...b5 or ...e6.

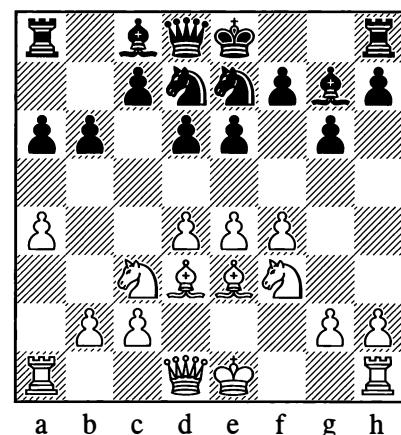
**8.♝d3 ♜e7!**

The bishop should stay on c8 so that f4-f5 can be met by ...exf5, ...♝f6 and ...♞f5.

An excellent example of how not to play this variation is: 8...♝b7 9.0–0 ♜gf6?! (9...♝e7 10.f5 is slightly better for White.) 10.e5 ♜g4? The knight has no future here. 11.♝d2 c5?



12.♝g5! Attacking the knight on g4 while preparing a knight invasion via e4 to d6. Black is already lost. 12...cxsd4 13.♝ce4 ♜xe4 14.♝xe4 Only a miracle saved me from defeat in Anand – Hillarp Persson, Benidorm (rapid) 2003.



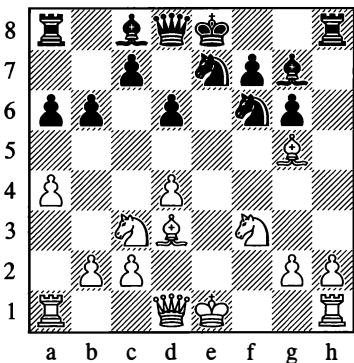
**9.♝e2??**

White prepares to meet ...c5 with c2-c3, but this gives me just enough time to coordinate my forces and defend against f4-f5, which is

generally the most dangerous way for White to proceed after Black has played ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ .

Another possible continuation is: 9.0–0 c5 (9...h6?! 10.f5 exf5 11.exf5 g5 is another idea.) 10.a5?! cxd4 (10...b5 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  dxc5 13.e5 looks unpleasant for Black.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 The position is pretty unclear.

I was more worried about: 9.f5! exf5 10.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11.fxg6 hxg6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



With the bishop on c8, Black at least has the option of 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , which is a good reason not to develop the bishop to b7 too early. Nevertheless, White clearly has the initiative, and I would advise you to avoid such positions altogether with Black.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10.0–0 h6!

Preparing to meet f4-f5 with ...exf5 and ...g5, blocking the kingside.

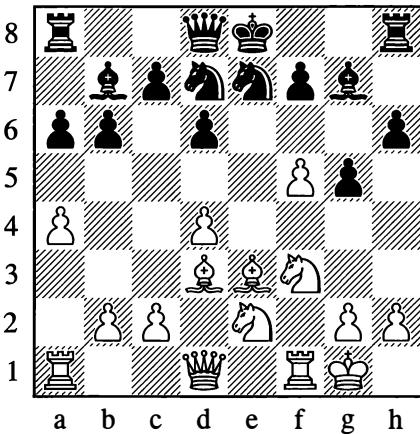
10...0–0?! is too slow due to 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h6 12.f5 exf5 13.exf5 g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h5$  with a clear advantage to White.

### 11.f5?

After 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  I planned to play: 11...f5?! 12.e5 (Otherwise Black gets excellent play with ...fxe4, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .) 12...dxe5! Black gets a reasonable game after either 13.fxe5 c5, or 13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  g5.

### 11...exf5 12.exf5 g5!

It is important to prevent White from opening any additional files and diagonals. After 12...0–0 13.fxg6 fxg6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  15. $\mathbb{W}d2$  White has the initiative.



### 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ??

The knight is not well placed here, as Black will win a tempo when he throws his pawns down the board.

It was better to play 13.c4 intending d4-d5 followed by putting one of the knights on d4. Black should prevent this with 13...d5, and after 14.c5 the position is complicated and difficult to evaluate.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

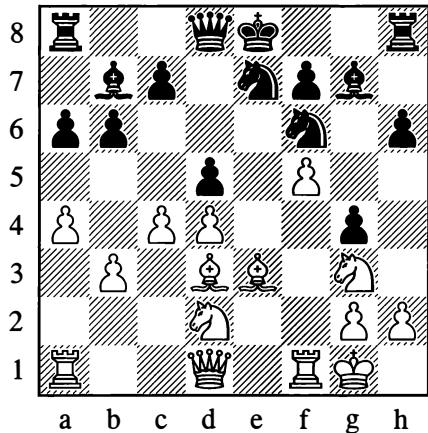
Stopping both  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ .

### 14.c4 g4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ??

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d5 the knight is slightly misplaced on h4, but I am not sure how I would have turned this to my advantage. In the game Black takes a firm grip of the initiative.

### 15...d5 16.b3??

Wasting time. The immediate 16.c5 was more to the point.



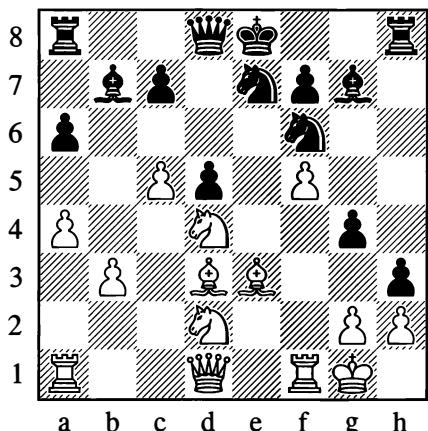
**16...h5! 17.c5 h4 18.Qe2 bxc5?!**

I wanted very much to open up the a8-h1 diagonal for my bishop, but this move unfortunately has the opposite effect.

Better was 18...h3! when White faces a difficult choice. 19.Qc1 (19.g3? is refuted by 19...bxc5 20.dxc5 d4! followed by ...Wd5; 19.cxb6 hxg2 20.Qf2 cxb6 is also unpleasant.) 19...hxg2 20.Qf2 Qc6 Black intends ...Qf8, ...Wd7 and ...Qe8 with a clear advantage.

**19.dxc5 h3 20.Qd4!**

The only move that does not lose immediately.

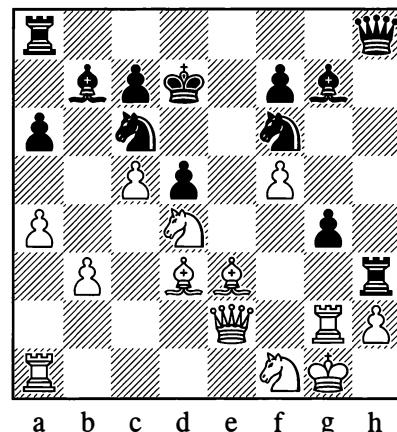


**20...hxg2 21.Qf2 Qh3 22.Qe2 Qd7?!**

This is much too crazy. Black can get a big advantage with 22...Qe4! 23.Qxg2 (23.Qxe4? Qxd4 24.Qxd4 dxe4 25.Qe3 g3+) 23...Qe5 24.Qc1 Qc8 as pointed out by Bytes for Brains.

**23.Qxg2 Wh8 24.Qf1! Qc6?!**

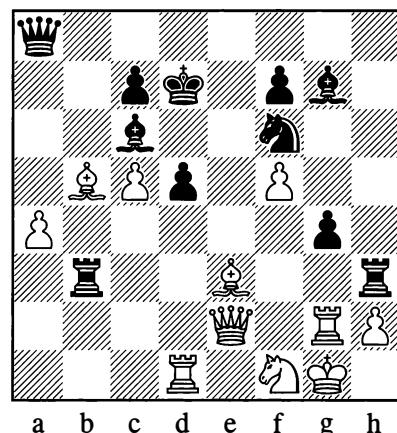
This is better than 24...Qe4?! 25.Qxe4 Qxd4 26.Qd1 Qxe3 27.Qxe3 dxe4 28.Wc4 Qc6 29.Qgd2 Qg8 when White is only a few exact moves away from a win.



**25.Qxc6 Qxc6 26.Qd1 Qb8?!**

Better fighting chances were offered by 26...Qe7, although after 27.Qxa6 d4 28.Qxd4† Qf8 29.Qc4 White is still clearly better.

**27.Qxa6 Qxb3 28.Qb5 Wa8**

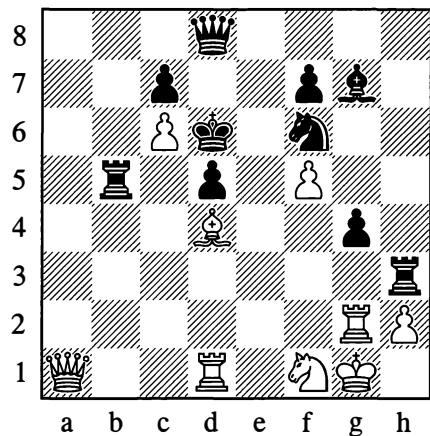


I played the rest of the game in horrible time trouble, and the quality of the game suffers badly.

**29.♗d4 ♜xb5 30.axb5 ♜e8 31.c6† ♜d6?!**  
**32.♕a2?!**

The simplest win is 32.♗e1 ♜xe2 33.♗gxe2 with the devastating threat of ♜e6†.

**32...♝xb5 33.♛a1 ♜d8**



**34.♗e5†?**

34.♗e3! wins easily.

**34...♝e7 35.♗g3?! ♜f8 36.♗e4? ♜xe4  
 37.♗xg7† ♜g8 38.♗xg4 ♜h7 39.♗d4 f6  
 40.♛a2 ♜d6?**

This loses immediately, but 40...♝g5 41.♗g2 ♜bb3 42.♗xf6 ♜xf6 43.♗xg5 is also hopeless.

**41.♗g2**

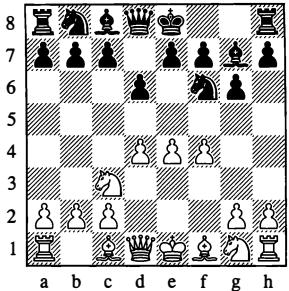
There was nothing to do but resign.

**1–0**

## Conclusion

The “Modern Tiger” has survived close to a decade’s worth of practical testing and computer analysis since *Tiger’s Modern* was first published. White’s three most challenging set-ups are those involving outright aggression with ♜d3 and a quick e4-e5, fast development with ♜d3 and ♜e3, or regrouping with ♜d3 and a2-a4. Against each one, I have presented at least two playable set-ups for Black, attempting where possible to offer a choice between wild complications and a more restrained yet still lively alternative.

# Chapter 2

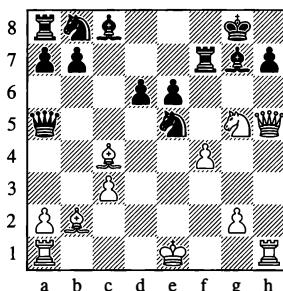


## 4.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ – The Back-up Plan

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

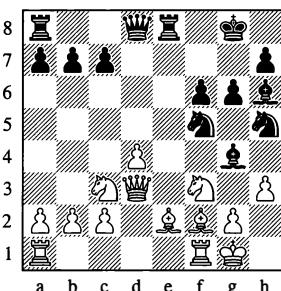
5.e5!?	Game 19	114
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0		
6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Game 20		118
6. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$ Game 24		139
6.a3!?	Game 25	144
6.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$		
7.h4 Game 17		100
7. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ Game 18		109
6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$		
7.0–0 Game 23		135
7.e5 dx $e$ 5		
8.dxe5 Game 21		126
8.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ Game 22		129

Notes to Game 17 – after 15. $\mathbb{Q}h5$



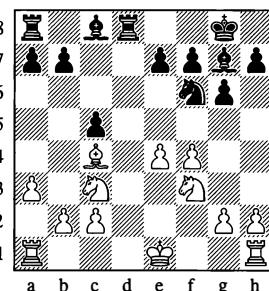
15... $\mathbb{Q}bc6!!$

Notes to Game 22 – after 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xh3!!$

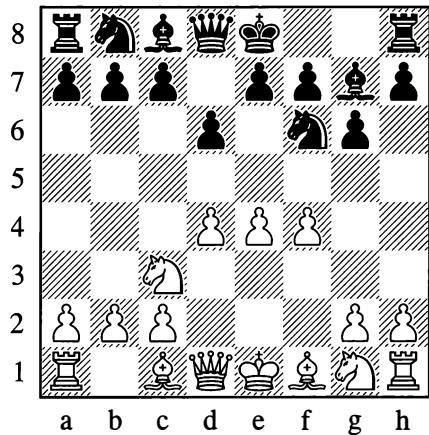
Notes to Game 25 – after 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



11...b5!!

My belief in the ...a6 system against 4.f4 has its own history of ups and downs. In my less optimistic moments I am disinclined to use it against a fellow grandmaster, unless I feel I will have the advantage of surprise. In my more optimistic moments I play it because I enjoy it (and playing what you enjoy is not a bad deal in the long run). Still, I prefer not to allow my opponents to be completely certain about which line I will play, so I have included the Austrian Pirc in my repertoire in order to avoid being too predictable.

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4 ♜f6**



I once thought this to be a bad, or rather illogical, moment to put the knight on f6, believing it to be exactly what White is hoping for, but I now recognize that this type of thinking is too simplistic. The upside to transposing to the Pirc, as opposed to playing 4...a6, is that Black doesn't need to do the blindfolded, backward mambo along the razor's edge. The downside is that the common mambo is a much wider discipline in which to compete. You will no longer be able to make up for a lack of technique with an excess of inspiration.

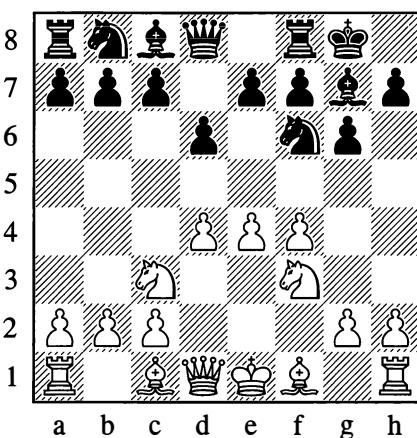
## 5.♘f3

This is by far the most common move,

although there are a few alternatives that will be considered later.

## 5...0–0

5...c5 is a common alternative, which may lead to hair-rising complications after 6.♗b5†, while 6.dxc5 is another valid try for an advantage. I do not consider 5...c5 a bad move for Black, but playing it demands more theoretical knowledge.



Black's set-up has a completely different character to the 4...a6 system, and it implies a clear "au revoir" to the idea of a fast ...c5 (although Black may play this way against certain white set-ups). Now White has a number of plans from which to choose.

## Striking while the iron is hot with e4-e5 (Games 17, 18 and 19)

It requires a certain degree of learning by rote in order to play against this with Black. However, I am confident about Black's resources.

## Overprotecting d4 with ♜e3 in order to make the ...♘c6/...e5 plan less attractive for Black (Game 20)

This makes e4 more of a target, and Black can continue with ...b6 and ...♗b7. It is a complex and interesting variation that I would be happy to play any day.

**Waiting for Black to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  before playing e4-e5, and meeting ...dxe5 with dxe5 (Game 21)**

Sometimes White goes for a symmetrical pawn structure in the hope of exploiting his space advantage, but Black has more than one route to a satisfactory game.

**Similar to the above, but instead going for asymmetry with fxe5 (Game 22)**

The fact that Jonny Hector plays this way says it all.

**Allowing Black to carry out the plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and ...e5 (Game 23)**

This old main line does not pose much of a threat.

**The rare bird 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (Game 24)**

This move invites 6...c5 after all, a chance that Black should jump at.

**6.a3!?** (Game 25)

This subtle move argues that Black needs information in order to come up with a good move. It also stops Black from playing ...c5 under favourable circumstances, so it seems logical to renew the threat with 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .

## GAME 17

### Emil Sutovsky – Vassily Ivanchuk

Khanty-Mansiysk (3.2) 2011

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

And so we enter Pirc territory. If I believe that my opponent has spent the whole evening preparing against my beloved 4...a6, I might decide to throw a stick in his or her wheel. I presume Ivanchuk plays it for other reasons.

**5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6.e5**

This can lead to sharp play if Black is up for it. Since I have written this chapter especially

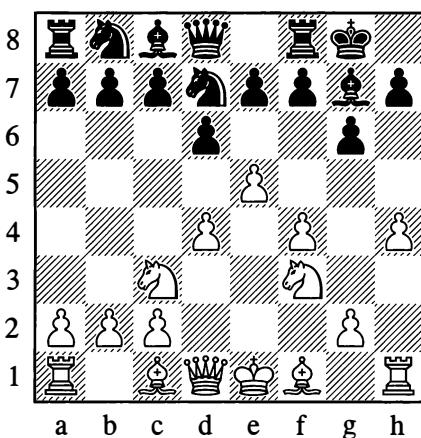
for those who prefer a more solid alternative to 4...a6, I will give the most solid line although the sharp alternative is just as good.

**6... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$**

It is also possible to play 6...dxe5 7.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , when 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  leads to a line analysed in the note to Black's 8th move in the next game – see 8...dxe5 9.fxe5 on page 110.

**7.h4**

This looks like pure scare tactics, but is in fact quite a respectable move. However, the alternative 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ?, as featured in the next main game, worries me somewhat more.



**7...c5!**

There is no time to lose. Play may become extremely sharp from here, but in the majority of lines you will not have to memorize anything beyond about move 15, as most of the good moves should follow fairly naturally from there.

**8.h5**

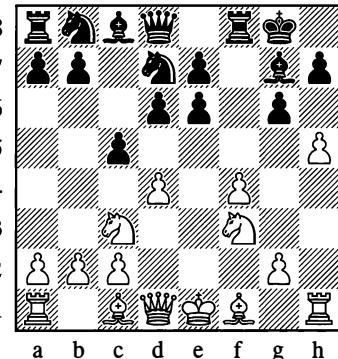
White can also try:

**8.e6!?**

Black has more than one decent way of handling the ensuing positions, but some accuracy is needed, as the following example illustrates.

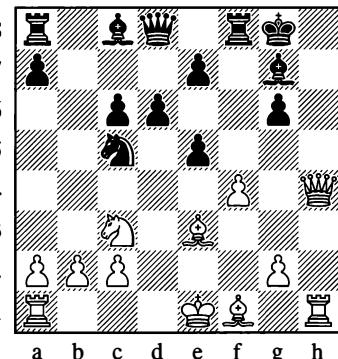
8...fxe6 9.h5!

9.♖g5?! cxd4! 10.♕xe6 ♜a5 11.♗xd4 (11.♗xg5 ♗c6 12.♗e6 dxc3 13.b4 ♗xb4 14.♗xf8 ♗xf8 is excellent for Black.) 11...♗c6! 12.♗c4† ♔h8 13.♗de2 ♗f6 Black has a dream position, with ...♗g4 or ...♗f5 coming next.



9...cxd4?!

9...gxh5 10.♗g5 ♗f6 is a solid alternative. 10.♗xd4 ♗c5 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♗e3 ♗c6 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♗g4 e5 15.♗h4



15...e6?

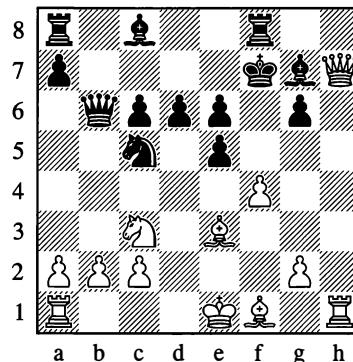
I have kept this as the main line to highlight the dangers.

Correct is 15...♗xf4! 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.0–0–0 as played in Hammerschmidt – Elias, Internet 2012. At this point 17...♗f5?! N 18.♗c4† e6 19.♗xf4 d5 20.g4 g5 21.♗f3 ♗g6 looks complicated, but quite promising for Black. The bishops are truly monstrous.

16.♗h2?!

Also promising is 16.♗h7†! ♔f7 17.♗h6 ♗f6 18.fxe5 and White takes the initiative. 16...♗b6 17.♗h7† ♔f7

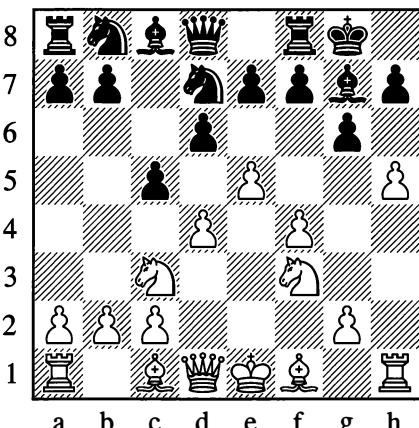
Now instead of 18.♗h6, as was played in Castella Garcia – Palencia, Mislata 2011, White could have won with the fantastic:



18.f5!! gxh5

18...exf5 19.♗h6 ♗xb2 20.♗xg6† ♗g8 21.♗c4† is winning.  
19.♗h6 ♗g8 20.♗e2 ♗d8 21.♗h5† ♗f8  
22.♗g6 ♗e7 23.♗g5 ♗d7 24.b4 e4  
24...♗b7 25.♗e4! wins even faster.  
25.♗h6 ♗e7 26.bxc5 ♗xh6 27.♗xh6† ♗g7  
28.♗xg7† ♗xg7 29.cxd6

The extra piece, along with the d6-pawn, will make White's day.



8...cxd4 9.hxg6?!

9.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  is the older main line. Here Black should leave the knight on b8 and blow up the centre immediately with 9...dxe5!, when White has a choice between a) 10.  $\mathbb{W}g1$  and b) 10.  $\mathbb{W}f2$ .

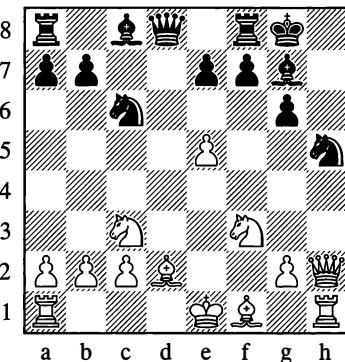
a) 10.  $\mathbb{W}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

10...e4!? 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$  exf6 has been played many times and is considered quite reliable for Black. However, I do not like to give back the pawn so cheaply.

11. hxg6 hxg6 12.  $\mathbb{W}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$

This is the standard defensive scheme in such situations.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$



14...  $\mathbb{W}a5!$  N

This improves over 14...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}a5$  16.  $\mathbb{W}h4$  when White had enough compensation for the pawn in Kostin – Sukhareva, Voronezh 2009.

15. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$

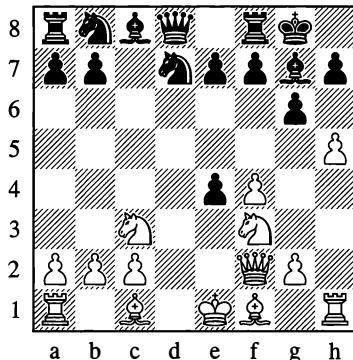
Black has the advantage.

b) 10.  $\mathbb{W}f2$

This time the queen aims for h4 rather than h2.

10...e4!

When the queen goes to f2 Black must play this move, drawing the enemy knight to e4 and thus forcing White to react to the knight when it comes to f6.



11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

11. hxg6? is unsound, and after 11...exf3 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  Black defends easily.

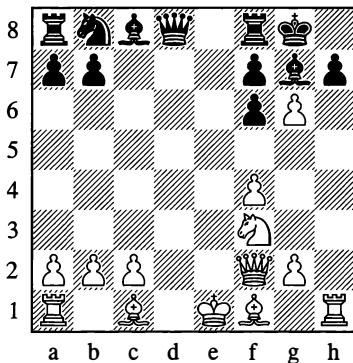
11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12. hxg6 hxg6 13.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  followed by ...  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  is also fine for Black.

11...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$  exf6!

Now the rook can get to the e-file with gain of tempo, which takes most of the sting out of White's assault down the h-file.

13. hgx6

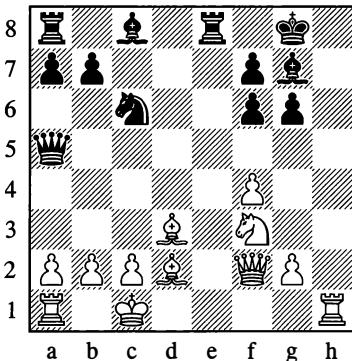
13.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8\uparrow$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. hxg6 hxg6 16.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  followed by ...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is comfortable for Black.



13...  $\mathbb{Q}e8\uparrow$ ! 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

A recent game continued: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  hxg6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (Black can also get a good game with 15...  $\mathbb{W}d5$  or 15...  $\mathbb{W}e7$  to prevent castling.) 16. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  axb6 18.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  b5! Even without queens, Black continued playing dynamically and went on

to win in Vaisser – Jones, Isle of Man 2014.  
 14...hxg6 15.♗d3 ♖b6 16.♗d2 ♖a5† 17.♗c1  
 ♖c6 18.♗d2

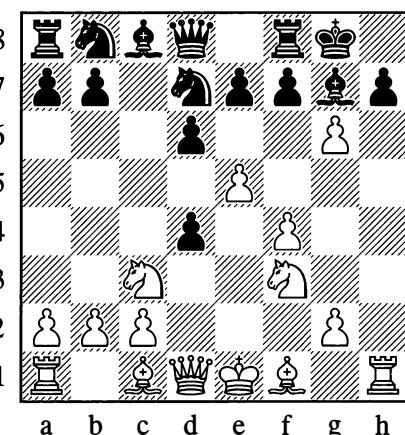


18...♝b4!

18...♝d5 also gave Black some advantage in Varadi – Ianov, Nyiregyhaza 2002, but the text move is more accurate.

19.♗c4 ♜f5 20.a3 ♖c7!

Black is clearly better.



9...dxc3 10.gxf7†

10.gxh7†? is a classic blunder, and after 10...♗h8+– the h7-pawn will shield the black king.

Not much better is:

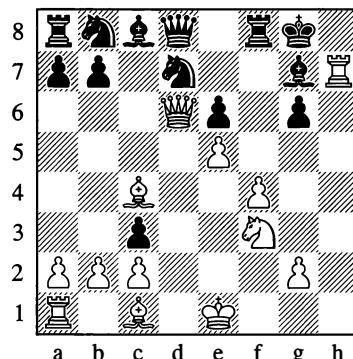
10.♗xh7? fxg6

10...cx b2 11.♗xb2 ♖a5† 12.♗d2 ♖xd2†  
 13.♗xd2 dxe5 is winning for Black

according to the engines, but it does not seem so obvious to a human.

11.♗c4† e6 12.♗xd6

After 12.♗xe6† ♗xh7 13.♗g5† ♖xg5 14.fxg5 ♜xe5 Black has far more material than needed.



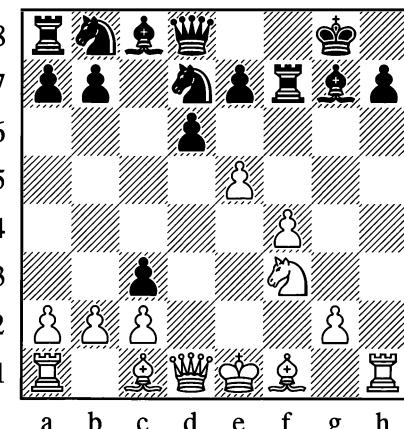
12...♝b6! 13.♗xe6† ♗xh7 14.♗xd8

14.♗g5† is refuted by 14...♖xg5! 15.fxg5 ♜c6 and Black has too many pieces for the queen.

14...♗xd8 15.♗g5† ♗h6! 16.♗f7† ♗h5!  
 17.♗xd8 ♜c6!

Black is winning.

10...♗xf7



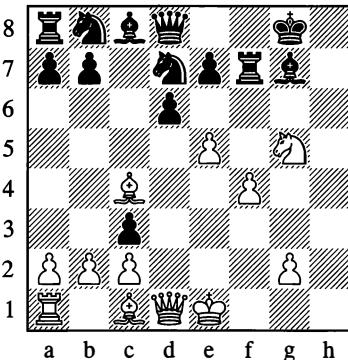
11.♗c4

The alternatives are not good, although some of them are quite complex.

11.b3?N is too slow: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}f5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$  e6 14. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{E}xg5!$  15.fxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  Black is winning after ... $\mathbb{W}e7$  on the next move.

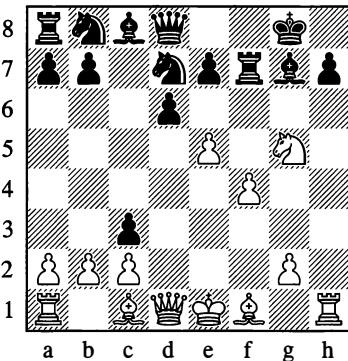
11.e6? cxb2 12.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b1\mathbb{W}a5\#$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f2\mathbb{Q}g7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\mathbb{Q}c3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3\mathbb{Q}c5$  (17...h6!) 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d4\#$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ ! h6 was winning for Black in Pokojowczyk – Nowak, Poznan 1971.

11. $\mathbb{E}xh7\#$ N is objectively bad, but the position is still crazy and if you are not great at calculating long variations, you might find it useful to remember some of the defensive themes here: 11... $\mathbb{W}xh7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



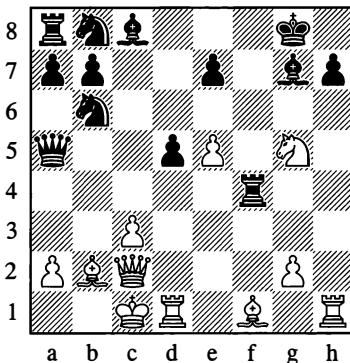
13...e6! It will not be the last time we see this defence. 14. $\mathbb{W}h5$  (14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15.fxe5  $\mathbb{E}e7$  16. $\mathbb{W}h7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17. $\mathbb{W}g6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  White is running out of checks, and Black will win with his extra material.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$



11...cx b2 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xf7?$   $\mathbb{W}a5\#$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  bxa1=  $\mathbb{W}$  14. $\mathbb{W}xa1$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  dxe5 wins for Black.

12... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$  13.c3  $\mathbb{E}xf4$  14. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$  d5 15.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{W}c2$



16... $\mathbb{E}f5\#$

16... $\mathbb{E}f5??$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  left White with a strong attack in Keskinen – Heinimaki, Tampere 2000.

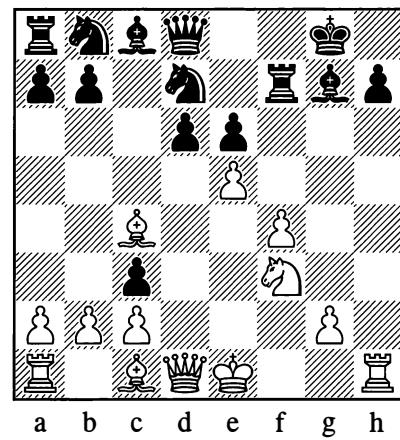
17.g4

White continues to strut and fret upon the stage, but it will do him no good:

17... $\mathbb{E}xg5$  18. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22. $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$   
Black is winning.

11...e6!

This is a standard defence that must be remembered.



**12.♦g5!**

The point is that 12.♦xe6? is refuted by 12...♦xe5, when White must exchange his bishop and say goodbye to his attack.

**12...cxb2?!**

I decided to feature this move in the “illustrative game”, but if I encounter this position myself, I am inclined towards a safer alternative.

**12...♦xe5!**

This is the solid move, and probably the biggest reason why there are so few who try their luck with this variation as White.

**13.♦h5**

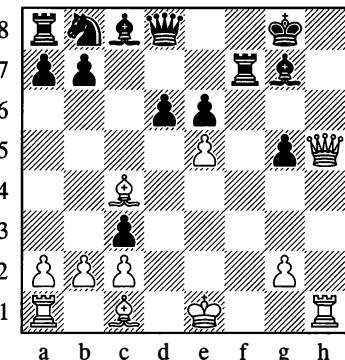
This is White's only decent option as 13.fxe5? cxb2! 14.♦xf7 bxa1=♛! 15.♦xd8 ♜xe5† wins for Black.

**13...h6 14.fxe5**

14.♦xe6? ♛e7! loses on the spot.

**14...hxg5**

Now the game enters a forced phase.

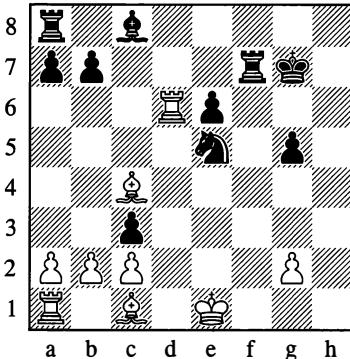


15.♦h7† ♜f8 16.♦h8† ♜xh8 17.♦xh8† ♜g7

17...♜e7?? 18.♦xg5† wins.

18.♦xd8 ♜c6 19.♦xd6 ♜xe5

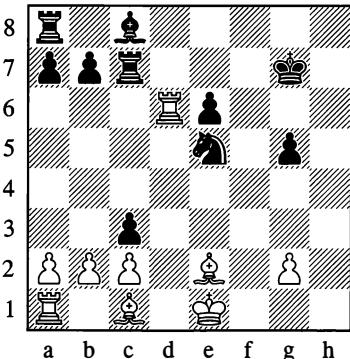
Neither side has had much choice since move 12. The resulting endgame is rather balanced, but Black can certainly play on for a while.

**20.♦e2**

20.♦b3?! ♜d7 21.bxc3 ♜h8 favours Black; 22.♦b2 ♜h1† 23.♦e2?! (23.♦d2 is correct, although after 23...♜xa1 24.♦xa1 ♜f2† 25.♦e3 ♜f1 26.♦b2 ♜b1 27.♦a3 ♜f6 Black remains a bit better, for instance 28.♦c5?! b6 29.♦d4 ♜e7!, or 28.♦b4 ♜f5 29.a4 ♜e1† 30.♦f2 ♜e4 31.♦c5 ♜g4† 32.♦g3 ♜f6! 33.♦d4 e5 34.♦xa7 ♜h4.) 23...♜h2! 24.♦g1 ♜f3! 25.♦f1 (25.c4† ♜f8 26.♦gd1 ♜xg2† 27.♦e3 ♜g1!! is awkward for the white king.) 25...♜xg2† 26.♦d1 g4 27.♦xe6 ♜xe6 28.c4† ♜g6 0–1 Vaassen – Copie, corr. 1992.

**20...♜c7!**

Best, although 20...♜d7 brought Black success after 21.♦xe6 ♜d1† 22.♦xd1 ♜xe6 23.♦xg5?? ♜h8 and White resigned in Perecz – Nunn, Dortmund 1979.



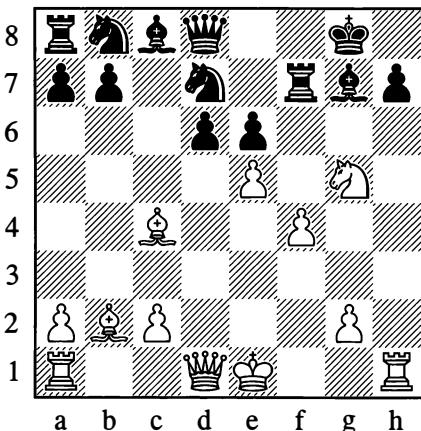
21.bxc3 ♜f7 22.♦d4 e5 23.♦c4 ♜xc4 24.♦xc4 ♜f5

Aragones Cerezo – Reed, corr. 2012. This endgame should be a draw, but Black is well centralized and the e5-pawn takes much of the sting out of White's dark-squared bishop.

Let's now return to Ivanchuk's line, which is riskier but a lot of fun to analyse.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$  Black can play 13... $\mathbb{W}xg5!$  which spoils all the fun for White.

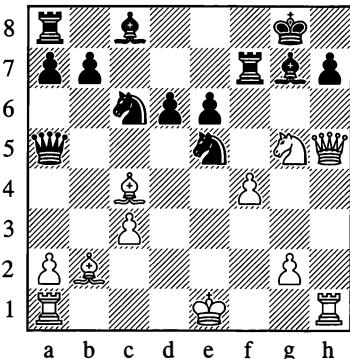


### 13... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

Worse is:

14.c3!? $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6!!$

White is unable even to equalize, as the following lines indicate.



16.fxe5

In the event of 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

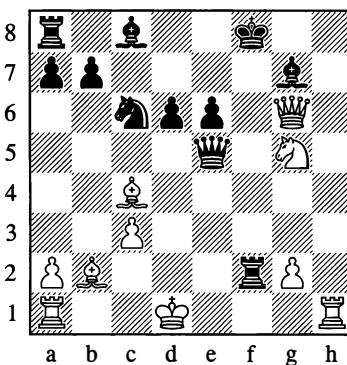
18. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  White will have to play accurately to reach an endgame where he is 'only' a pawn down.

16... $\mathbb{W}xe5\#$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2!$  18. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$

18. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{W}h5$  h6 is nothing.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{W}g6$

This position occurred in Gwozdz – Nicholls, email 2001. The computer gives several moves as promising for Black, but my own preference is:



19... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N

Making room for the king on c7.

20. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}f4$  22. $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Black is better, since White cannot defend both bishops.

23. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$

After 23... $\mathbb{W}f8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  the evaluation is similar.

23... $\mathbb{Q}e2?$  is even worse due to 23... $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ , when ... $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$  is a terrible threat.

23... $\mathbb{W}xg5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

White will have to battle for a draw in a tough endgame.

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ ?

There is a certain logic behind this move. Either White will have to waste a tempo taking on d6, or Black will be able to open up the centre, making the white king vulnerable. Nevertheless, it is not the top choice of the engines.

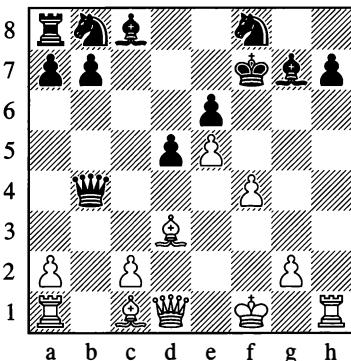
Another game continued:

14...d5 15.♗d3 ♜f8

After 15...♝e7 16.♕xh7† ♔f8 James Vigus states that he does not trust Black's undeveloped position. Good call, I'd say. After 17.a4! ♜c5 18.♗g6 ♜c7 19.f5 ♜b4 20.fxe6 ♜g4† 21.♔e1 ♜g3† 22.♔f1 the situation is unclear.

Another option mentioned by Vigus is 15...h6 16.♗xf7 ♔xf7 17.♗h3, and now 17...♜c6 18.♔f1 ♔f8 19.♗g3 ♜c5 20.c4? looks dangerous for Black.

16.♗xf7 ♔xf7 17.♔f1 ♜b4 18.♗c1



18...♝g8!N

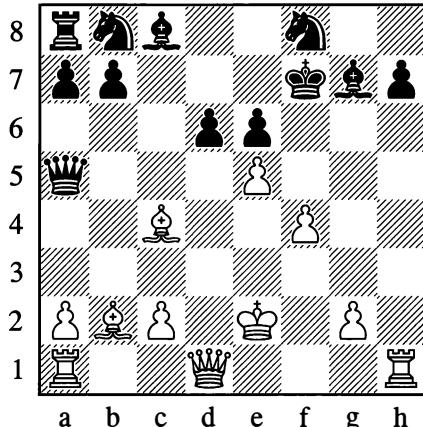
18...h6? 19.♗h3 gave White a clear advantage in Winiwarter – Hager, Austria 1995. Even better is 19.♗h5†N ♜g8 20.♗h4 ♜e7 21.♗g4 when there is no good defence against ♜xh6 followed by ♜b2, ♜f2 and ♜h1.

19.♗h5 b6 20.♗xh7† ♜xh7 21.♗xh7† ♜f7=

I cannot find anything better than perpetual checks for White.

I also spent some time analysing 14...♜b6?, but found that after 15.♗d3 Black seems to be losing in all variations. (It would take another chapter to prove this, but take my word for it.)

15.♗xf7 ♔xf7



16.f5?

In such a sharp position, a single mistake can prove fatal, as is the case here.

James Vigus points out the correct continuation:

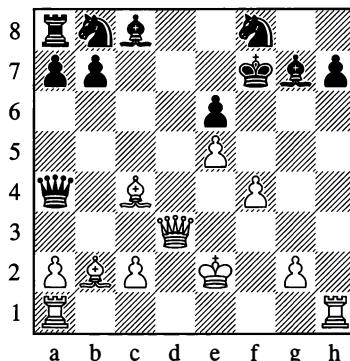
16.♗xd6! ♜a4!

Clearly the strongest reply, forcing White to deal with the threat to the bishop.

16...♜c6 17.♗ad1 is less convincing.

17.♗d3

17.♗d3 ♜d7 18.♗ad1 (18.♗ab1 ♜c6 19.♗a3 ♜e7 20.♗xa4 ♜xa4 21.♗e4 ♜c8 is also good for Black.) 18...h6 19.♗d2 ♜c6 20.♗a3 ♜e7 Black is slowly gaining coordination, and his position will end up being better.



17...♜bd7!

This is Black's best chance.

Vigus mentions 17...♜a6, which he is "afraid"

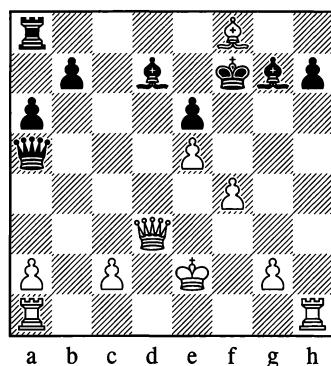
he has to call unclear. I deeply sympathize with that. However, I feel I must add something unless I am to appear a mere scribe. Indeed after 18.♗b5 ♘a5 19.♘c4! Black seems to be in a pickle, for instance 19...♗b4 20.♗xa6 ♗b6 21.♗b5 a6 22.♗a4 ♗xb2 23.♗b3 and White will have a strong initiative once his f-pawn hits the black e-pawn.

18.♗b5 ♘a5 19.♗a3 a6! 20.♗xd7

After 20.♗c4 ♖xe5 21.fxe5 ♗xe5† 22.♗e3 ♗xe3† 23.♗xe3 ♘xa1 24.♗xa1 ♗d7 White has enough compensation for the pawn, but not more.

20...♗xd7 21.♗xf8

Black has to walk a tightrope, but with accurate play he can escape.



21...♗a4! 22.♗b4

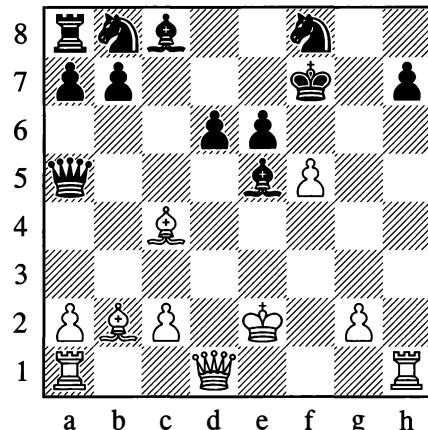
22.c4 ♗xf8 23.♗ad1 ♘c6 24.♗xh7 ♔g8 25.♗h4 ♔f7 is equal according to the engines, presumably because there are some repetitions of moves lurking in the alleyways.

22...a5 23.f5 axb4 24.fxe6† ♗xe6 25.♗af1† ♗e8 26.♗xh7 ♗xa2

It is my turn to say what Vigus had the guts to do on move 17; I am afraid I must call it unclear. The engine evaluation is “0.00”, for whatever that may be worth.

16...♗xe5

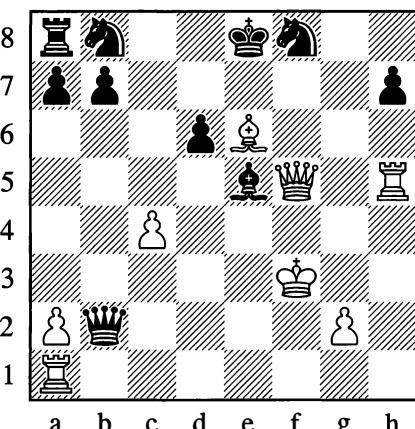
Now Black is winning. The knight on f8 does a great defensive job.



17.♗h5 ♔e8 18.fxe6 ♗xe6

18...♗b4! wins much more easily.

19.♗xe6 ♗b5† 20.♗d3 ♗xb2 21.♗f5 ♗b5† 22.c4 ♗b2† 23.♗f3



23...♗c6

Here too, there was a quicker win: 23...♗xa1 24.♗f7† ♔d8 25.♗xf8† ♔c7 and the extra piece should decide. My guess is that Ivanchuk preferred to go for a position where he could be certain not to miss anything.

24.♗f7† ♔d8 25.♗xf8† ♔c7 26.♗xh7† ♔b6 27.♗xa8?

27.♗f7 would have offered more resistance, although 27...♗d4† 28.♗g4 ♗xg2† 29.♗h5 ♗xe6 should eventually win for Black.

27...♜d4† 28.♝g4 ♜xg2† 29.♝h5 ♜h2†  
 30.♝g6 ♜c2† 31.♝h6 ♜f4† 32.♝g7 ♜xe6†  
 33.♝f6 ♜xh7 34.♝xe6 ♜g6† 35.♝e7 ♜g5†  
 36.♝f8 ♜f6†

White cancelled further resistance.

### 0–1

It cannot be repeated too many times: you *have* to study the above game thoroughly if you want to play 5...0–0 in the Austrian Pirc. The price for missing one move here is the loss of the game.

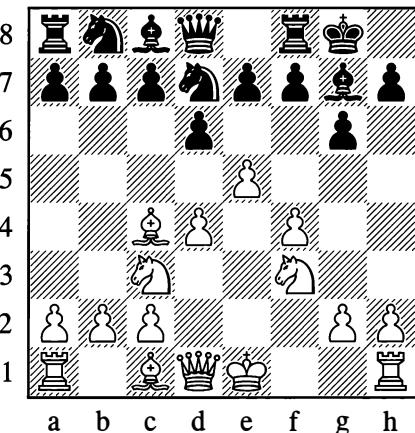
## GAME 18

**Branko Filipovic – Jure Skoberne**

Sibenik 2009

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♝c3 g6 4.f4 ♜g7 5.♝f3  
 0–0 6.e5 ♜fd7 7.♝c4?

This move is more dangerous than previously thought, mainly because of a new idea on move 9.



7...♜b6 8.♝b3

8.♝e2 is occasionally seen, but it is hard to believe that such a move can be dangerous. 8...dxe5 9.fxe5 (9.dxe5 ♜xd1† 10.♝xd1 f6 11.0–0 ♜c6 was comfortable for Black in Marks – Schmaltz, Schwaebisch Gmuend 1994.) 9...♜c6 10.0–0 ♜g4 11.♝e3 f6

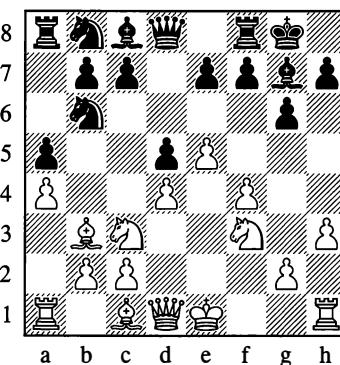
12.exf6 exf6 Black had a good game in Ribli – Timman, Forssa/Helsinki 1972. His plans may include ...♜e8 (intending to meet ♜f2 with ...♜h6) and ...♝e7.

### 8...♜c6

This is the main line, but whether or not you decide to play it will depend on your assessment of 9.a4!, as given in the notes to White's next move. There are three alternatives that may be considered.

8...♜a6?! is an interesting move that prepares ...c5. However, there are plenty of sharp variations that need to be thoroughly analysed before one can play it, and I decided to focus on a couple of other options.

8...d5?! is an intriguing option. I am generally unhappy to allow this kind of structure, as Black will usually find it hard to attack the white central mass. However, here Black can proceed rather fast with the help of a knight on a6, for instance: 9.a4 a5 10.h3



10...♞a6! 11.♝e2 ♜c4?! 12.♛e2 ♜xe3 13.♛xe3 c6 14.g4 ♜c7 15.♝e2 b5 16.c3 ♜b8 Black has splendid counter-chances. Food for thought, although White has some other options at moves 9 and 10.

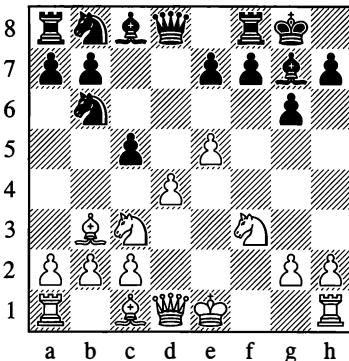
It makes sense to consider direct action in the centre with:

8...dxe5 9.fxe5

9.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   
12. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is fine for Black.

9...c5!

Black has tried lots of other moves, but this is the only one that addresses the main feature of the position: White's pawn centre.

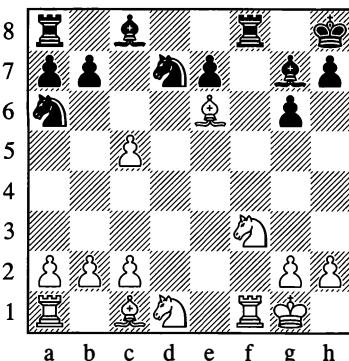


10.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}6d7$  12.e6 fxe6!N

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13.exf7 $\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  was a little better for White in Poliquin – Champetier, Quebec 2006.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !

Here too, 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{E}xc8$  16.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h6 is slightly better for White.

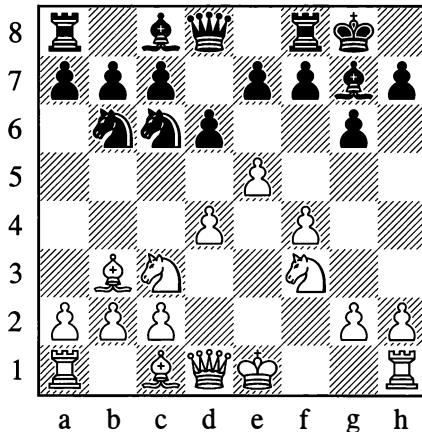


15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

In the event of 15.c6 bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c5 Black's activity makes up for the ruined pawn structure.

15... $\mathbb{Q}axc5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6 18. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{E}axc8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White is microscopically better. I consider this an important line, and I expect to see more games with it in the future.



9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The 'main line' goes:

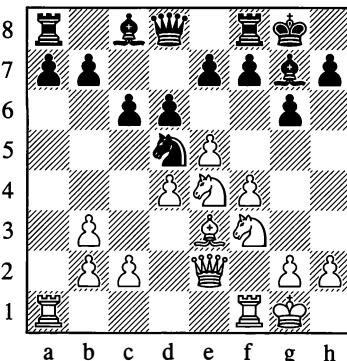
9... $\mathbb{Q}e3$

This may be the most popular move, but it is not a dangerous one.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  11.axb3 c6

A timely ...f6 will give Black excellent chances, as in the following game.

12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



13...f6! 14.c4  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$

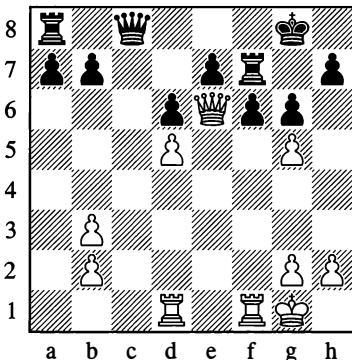
Finding himself overextended, White tries to change the course of the game with a pawn sacrifice.

17.e6!?

$\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

20.♕xe6† ♘f7 21.♗g5 ♖xg5 22.fxg5 ♖c8  
23.d5 cxd5 24.cxd5

Now in Velimirovic – Sailer, Bad Wiessee 2006, Black could have maintained his advantage with:



24...♖c5†N

In the game Black went for the hasty 24...♕xe6?, after which he was no longer better and went on to lose.

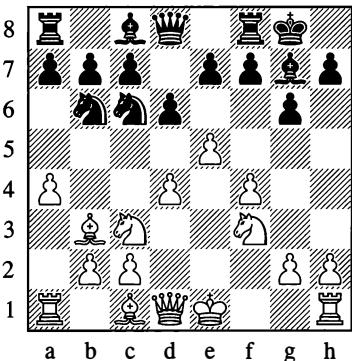
25.♔h1 ♔g7

White remains a pawn down for insufficient compensation.

The real problem for Black is:

9.a4!

I have spent many hours trying to find a safe antidote to this move, which simultaneously destabilizes the b6-knight and gives the b3-bishop a retreat square on a2. I would have featured this move as the main game, had there been anything close to a sensible game in this variation. Researching it, the closest thing to equality I have found is



9...♔a5! 10.♔a2

From this position I spent half a day analysing the various options.

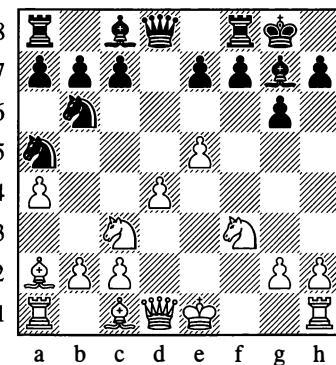
10...dxe5N

Weirdly, this has never been played, although we immediately transpose to some other games after White recaptures.

10...♗f5?! was the choice of the strongest player to reach this position, but I do not see the point of it. 11.0–0 c5 12.dxc5 dxc5 This structure is awful for Black, unless he can play ...f6 and successfully undermine e5. 13.♕e2 c4 14.♗d1 ♕e8 Now in Karpatchev – Chatalbashev, Lüneburg 2013, White could have obtained a clear advantage with 15.♗d4!N ♕d7 16.♗e3.

10...♗g4!N intends ...e6 and perhaps ...d5. 11.0–0 ♔c6 (11...e6 allows White to complicate things with 12.b4? ♔c6 13.a5 ♕c8 14.b5 ♕xa5 15.h3 ♕xf3 16.♕xf3 ♔e7 17.♔a3. The circus continues with 17...a6 18.b6 c5 19.♗e4 ♕f5 20.d5 exd5 21.♗xd5 and I am still not sure whether Black is okay.) 12.♗e3 d5 13.♕e1 a5 White keeps some advantage, but Black is solid and can strive for counterplay with a combination of queenside play and a timely ...f6.

11.fxe5



11...c5!

It is now or never!

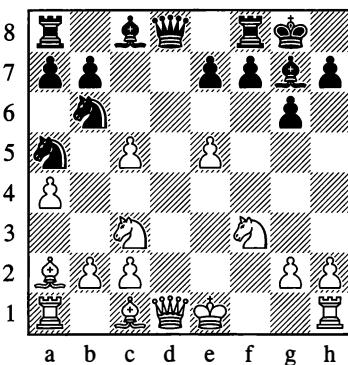
11...♗g4?! 12.♗e4! makes Black's set-up look silly.

12.dxc5!N

The only critical move.

12.0–0 cxd4 13.Qe4 Qc6 14.Qeg5 was played in Filipiak – Gasch, Leipzig 2005, and now instead of weakening the dark squares with 14...e6, Black should have played 14...Qd5!N with the better chances.

12.d5 Qg4 13.Qf4 was played in Shleklis – Shpilker, corr. 1977, and now after 13...Qd7N 14.Qe2 Qb6! White's centre looks overextended.



12...Qbc4!

12...Qxd1† 13.Qxd1 Qbc4 14.Qf4 Qe6 15.0–0 Qd5 16.b4 could be worth further analysis, although it looks at least a bit better for White.

13.Qe2

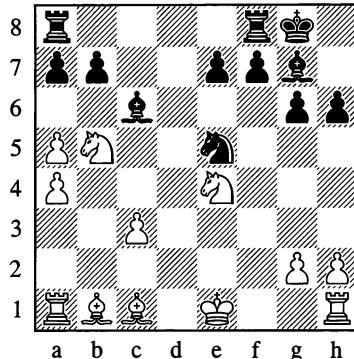
This is the most challenging move.

After 13.Qxd8?!, Qxd8 14.0–0 Black seems to get off the hook with 14...Qg4 15.Qg5 (15.b4 Qxe5 16.Qxe5 Qxe5 17.Qb2 Qc6 18.Qxf7 Qd4† 19.Qh1 Qxb4 20.Qb3 e6 21.Qxb7 Qab8 22.Qxb8 Qxb8 23.Qb1 Qf5 24.Qb5 Qxc5 is balanced) 15...Qf5 16.Qxf7 Qxf7 17.g4 Qxe5 18.gxf5 Qxc3 19.bxc3 Qac8 20.Qe3 Qd5 21.Qd4 Qxf5 22.Qab1 Qxf1† 23.Qxf1 e5 and it is still unclear.

13...Qe6 14.Qg5 Qd4 15.Qb5 Qxc5 16.c3 Qd7!

Yes, we are giving up a piece. Bear with me.

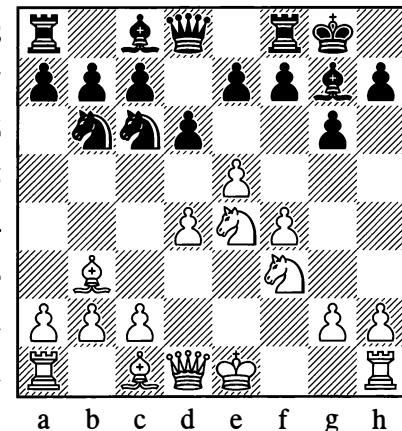
17.b4 Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.bxa5 h6 20.Qe4 Qc6 21.Qb1



21...f5 22.Qd2 Qxg2 23.Qg1 Qc6 24.Qc7 Qab8 25.Qe6 Qf6 26.Qxg7 Qxg7 27.Qa3 Qg4

Although this position is not void of chances for Black, my general conclusion is that this line is crazy. It is obviously not for everyone, so take your pick between this and one of the alternatives presented on move 8.

Let's return to the game continuation, where Black has a somewhat easier time of it.

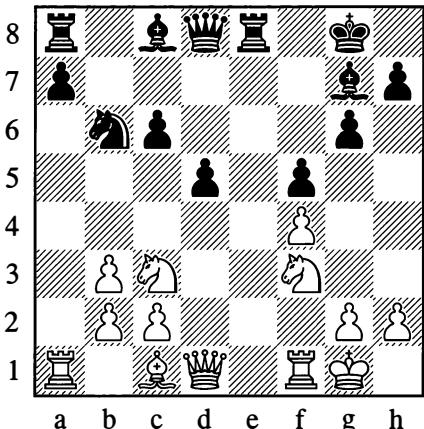


9...Qa5 10.0–0 Qxb3 11.axb3 f6 12.exf6 exf6 13.Qg3 f5 14.d5

If you prefer to not allow White this option, then you can always play ...c6 before ...f6, as in the Velimirovic – Sailer game, as quoted in the note with 9.Qe3.

14...c6 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.Qe2 Qe8 17.Qc3 d5

This move gives White some dark squares to work with. A better idea is 17...♝b7, intending ...c5 and ...♝d7, with the better chances for Black.



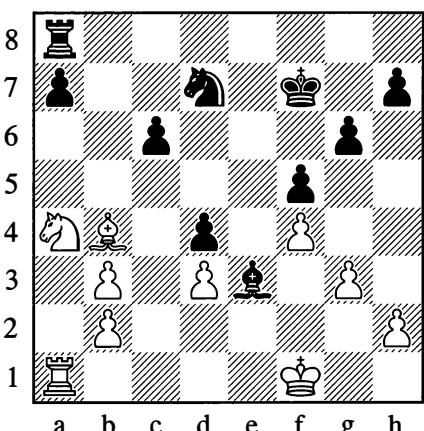
- 18.♗e1 ♜b7 19.♗xe8† ♜xe8 20.♕a4 ♜e6  
21.♗e1 ♜xe1† 22.♗xe1 ♜d4† 23.♗f1 ♜a6†  
24.♗d3 ♜d7 25.♗d2

Black has preserved some advantage due to his bishop pair and better coordination.

25...♝f7

25...♝e8 is also promising.

- 26.♗c3 ♜e3 27.g3 d4 28.♗b4 ♜xd3†  
29.cxd3



29...♜b8?!

Instead 29...a5! 30.♗d6 ♜e6 31.♗c7 ♜a7 32.♗b6 ♜b7 33.♗a3 ♜xb6 34.♗xb6 ♜xb6 would have given Black good winning chances.

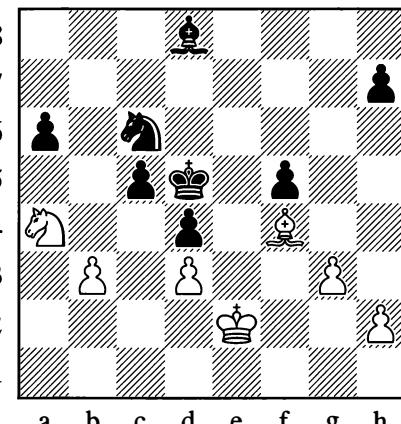
30.♗c5?

30.♗c5! ♜xc5 31.♗xc5 ♜xb3 32.♗xa7† ♜e6 33.♗e7† draws quite easily, since 33...♝d5?? 34.♗e5# is embarrassing.

30...♜xb3 31.♗a3 ♜xa3 32.♗xa3 ♜e6  
33.♗e2 ♜d5 34.b3 g5?!

After 34...♝b6! Black is on the road to victory, since 35.♗c5? fails to 35...♝c1!.

35.fxg5 ♜xg5 36.♗b4 ♜e5 37.♗c5 a6  
38.♗b4 ♜d8 39.♗d2 c5 40.♗f4 ♜c6



- 41.♗d2 ♜e5 42.♗f4 ♜g6 43.♗d2 h5  
44.♗b2 ♜c7 45.♗c4

Now White has reached an ideal set-up and it is hard to see how Black can utilize his extra pawn.

45...♝e5 46.♗f4 ♜xc4 47.dxc4† ♜e6  
48.♗d2 a5 49.♗f3 ♜d7 50.♗e1 ♜e6 51.♗d2  
♝f6 52.♗h6 ♜d6 53.♗d2 ♜c7 54.♗h6

½–½

## GAME 19

Vladimir Kramnik – Alexander Grischuk

Wijk aan Zee 2005

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♜g7 5.e5!?**

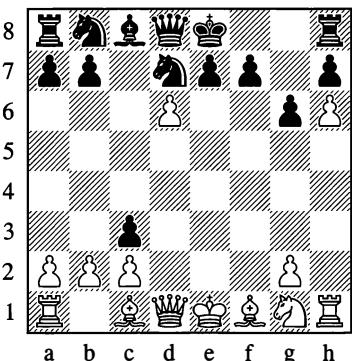
This super-early show of aggression may lead to some unique positions. The actual game went 5.♘f3 c5 6.e5 ♜fd7, but I have changed the move order to fit in with my evil plans.

**5...♜fd7**

Just like in the other cases where White plays e4-e5, it is also possible to play 5...dxe5, but I generally take the early advance of White's e-pawn as a gift from higher powers, and thus see no reason to help White stabilize the centre.

**6.♘f3**

6.h4!? is enterprising, but it is too much when White has no development and Black has not yet castled. 6...c5 7.h5 cxd4 8.h6 ♜xe5! 9.fxe5 dxc3 10.exd6

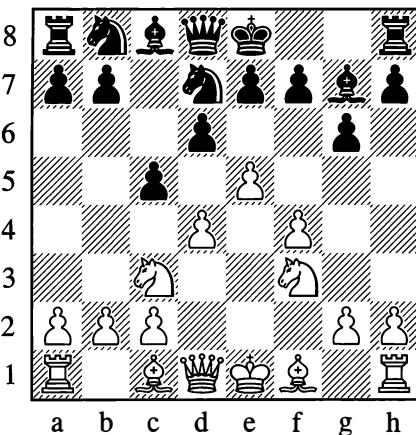


This was seen in Napoli – Moskalenko, Barcelona 2012. Here Moskalenko points out that 10...♜c6!N 11.♘e2 cxb2 12.♗xb2 ♜de5 would have been an improvement. He considers the position to “remain complicated”, but it seems to me that White will have virtually no compensation for the pawn, as the knight on e5 dominates the board, and Black will

always have the option of ...f6 to nullify the b2-bishop.

**6...c5!**

Compared to Game 17, it is to White's disadvantage that Black has not castled yet. There is no attack along the h-file, and the white centre implodes.



**7.exd6**

This is ridiculous for White (although it is too late to go back). First you build up a strong centre and then you just throw it away? I cannot understand how Kramnik came to play this way. My original intention was to give a few brief lines without much further commentary, but then I came to realize that this was a good game to showcase some of the advantages of the Pirc/Modern.

7.e6 is also nothing to worry about after 7...fxe6 8.♗g5 ♜f6! 9.dxc5 ♜c6 10.cxd6 exd6 11.♗e2 0–0 12.0–0 ♜e7, when Black will get a good game with ...h6, ...♜f5 and ...♝d7-c6.

**7...cxd4?**

A safer alternative is 7...0–0, when 8.♗e3 exd6 9.♗d2 ♜c6 10.0–0–0 ♜a5 has been played many times. A natural continuation is: 11.♗b1 ♜f6 12.h3! (12.♗c4 ♜f5 13.dxc5?! dxc5 14.♗d5? ♜xd5 15.♗xa5 ♜xc2†! was

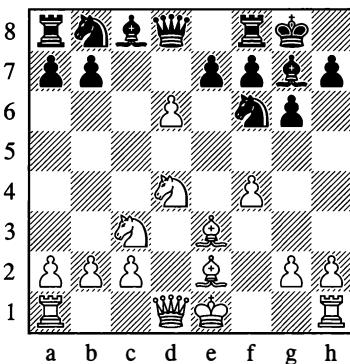
winning for Black in Zelic – Ribli, Pula 1999.)

12...♝e8 13.a3 ♜f5 Black looks absolutely fine.

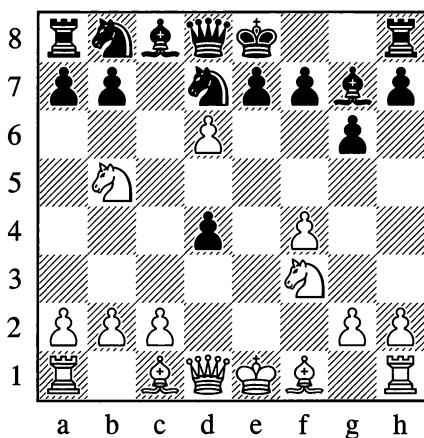
### 8.∜b5?!

This is the most popular move, but I doubt that it is best.

Safer is 8.∜xd4, when Black should reply 8...0–0 9.∜e3 ♜f6! in order to take back on d6 with the queen and obtain the better structure. (After 9...∜c6?! 10.∜b5! I do not see a convincing way for Black to continue.) 10.∜e2



10...♝xd6!N Black is at least equal. He has lost two tempos with the knight, but White's centre is gone and the f4-pawn makes no sense. (Instead the game continued 10...exd6?!, which I find hard to understand, and after 11.0–0 ♜e8 12.♝d2 ♜bd7 13.f5 White had some initiative in Sax – Sapi, Hungary 1974.



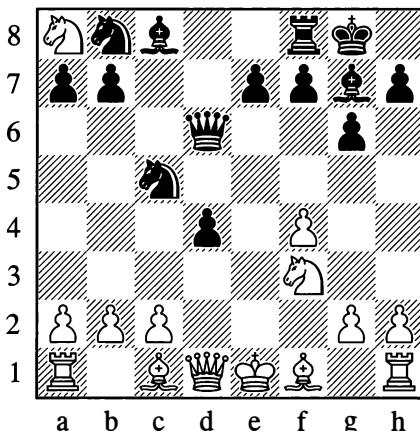
### 8...0–0 9.∜c7 ♜c5!

There are actually those who have played 9...exd6? here. It is atrocious! After 10.∜xa8 ♜e8† 11.∜e2 White can continue with 0–0 and look forward to some advantage. You need a nice pawn structure if you are to get positional compensation for the exchange.

### 10.∜xa8

10.∜xd4?! allows Black to switch plans with 10...exd6!, as 11.∜xa8 ♜e8† catches the white king in the centre. For instance: 12.∜e2? ♜xd4 13.♝xd4 ♜c6 14.♝f2 (14.♝c3 ♜a4! 15.♝a3 ♜d4 is just as bad.) 14...♜g4 15.∜e3 ♜e4 and things are going very wrong for White.

### 10...♝xd6!



### 11.∜d3

The critical move here is:

#### 11.∜c4

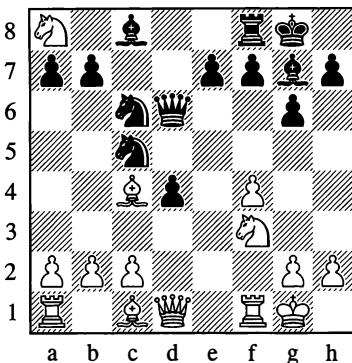
Arguing that the black rook has too many things to do.

#### 11...∜c6

11...∜e6 12.∜xe6 ♜xe6† 13.♝e2 ♜d6

14.0–0 ♜c6 gives Black compensation, but it will be enough for equality at best.

12.0–0

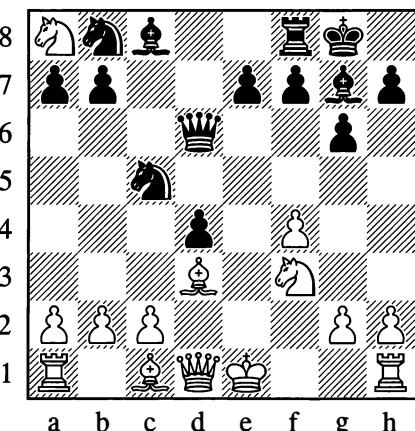


12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

The usefulness of the bishop on c4 is best illustrated with a few lines. Both 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e6 14.f5! and 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  e6 14.f5! gxf5 15. $\mathbb{W}h5$  give White good chances.

13.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

Black is so dominant in the centre that it is hard for White to come up with a good plan.



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$

It is far from clear what Black's best plan is, but centralizing the bishop on d5 can hardly be bad. Generally speaking Black would like to leave the d3-bishop where it is and not exchange it for a while.

In the event of 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e6 16.b4!? White is somewhat better.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.f5!

White must create some space for his minor pieces before Black gets control of f5.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  15.fxg6

After 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  16. $\mathbb{W}h4$  h6! White runs into a dead end.

15...hxg6 16. $\mathbb{W}g4$

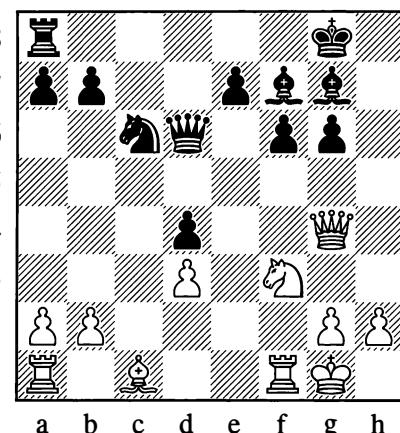
White sets up some primitive but respectable threats on the kingside.  $\mathbb{W}h4$  is coming next.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  17.cxd3 f6! 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Tyomkin mentions 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  fxe4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  when "Black is definitely not worse" in the endgame.

18... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

The machine proposes 18...f5 19. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , but I find Black's position too dangerous after 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .



19. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$

19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  seems like a better idea to bring in more resources, and after 19...e5 the position remains unclear.

19... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$

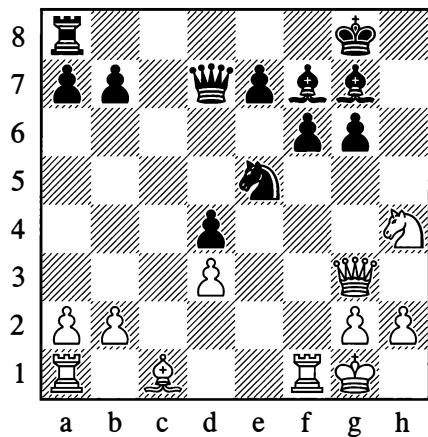
This is more challenging than 19... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , when White can force a draw with 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ ! f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  23. $\mathbb{W}h4\ddagger$ .

The best move is 19...f5!, when 20.♔h3 ♔b4 21.♕g5 ♔c2! 22.♗ac1 ♔e3 23.♗f2 ♕e8 looks promising for Black.

### 20.♗g3 ♕d7

According to Tyomkin, Grischuk was already in time trouble by now.

Tyomkin recommends 20...♕e6 with the intention of meeting 21.♔d2 with 21...♗g4. However, the endgame after 22.♗xg4 ♔xg4 23.♗ac1 ♔e5 24.♗c7 looks slightly better for White. Instead 21...♗c8 is a possible improvement.



### 21.♔f4 g5 22.♕xg5!

Tyomkin believes this is a speculative try from Kramnik to win the game.

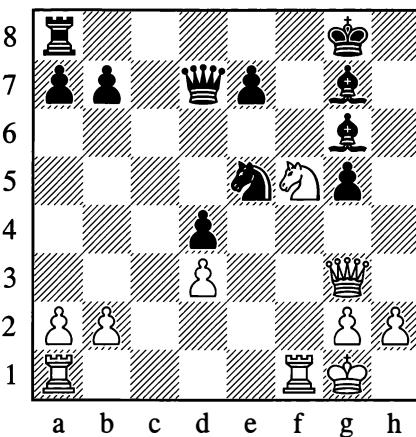
Tyomkin prefers 22.♖xe5 gxh4 23.♗f2, when he only mentions 23...♗d8. Instead 23...h3! 24.♖xd4 hxg2 25.♗fe1 e5 leads to a position where I would rather play Black any day.

### 22...fxg5 23.♗f5 ♕g6!

This forces simplifications that result in approximate equality.

My digital friend prefers 23...♗g6, but after 24.♕xg5 ♕f6 25.♕h5 ♔e5 26.♕h3 ♕e6 I get the feeling that Black is merely trying to postpone the inevitable.

23...♕f6 24.h4! is also promising for White.



### 24.♕xg7 ♔f7! 25.♗xf7 ♕xf7 26.♗e5 ♕xd3!

This is more ambitious than 26...♗d6 27.♗f1† ♕g8 28.♗xd6 exd6 29.♗f5 ♕e8! (Tyomkin), when White can press for a while although Black should hold.

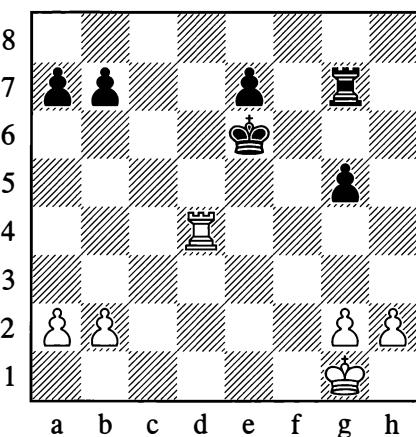
### 27.♗d1 ♕g8! 28.♗xd3 ♕xg7 29.♗xd4 ♕e6 30.♗xe6†

This leads to an endgame where Black is slightly worse.

After 30.♗g3 ♕xa2!? White has nothing better than a perpetual check.

### 30.♗xe6

Tyomkin says: “This rook ending must be objectively a draw, although White wins a pawn in many lines.”

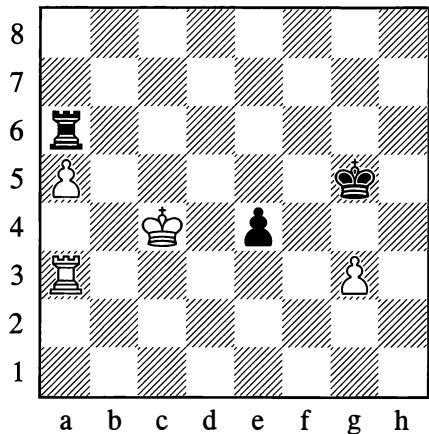


**31.♗b4 b6 32.♗a4 a5 33.b4 axb4?**

Tyomkin shows that Black can draw with: 33...♝f5! 34.bxa5 bxa5 35.♗xa5† e5 36.♗b5 (36.h3 ♜c7 intending ...♜c2 is also drawish according to Tyomkin.) 36...♜a7 37.♗b2 g4 38.♗f2 ♜a3= White can try to diverge in different ways, but Black should be able to stay within the drawing limits.

**34.♗xb4 ♜f5 35.♗xb6 e5 36.a4 ♜e4 37.♗b3 ♜a7 38.♗a3**

White ought to win this, but a mistake on move 46 costs him. Interested readers may refer to Tyomkin's analysis in *ChessBase Magazine*.

**38...♜a5 39.h3 ♜f4 40.♗f2 ♜e4 41.g3 g4!  
42.hxg4! ♜d4 43.g5 ♜d5 44.♗e3 ♜e6  
45.♗e4 ♜f7 46.♗d3? ♜g6 47.♗c4 ♜xg5  
48.♗b4 ♜a6! 49.a5 e4 50.♗c4****50...♝d6!! 51.a6 e3 52.a7 e2 53.a8=♛ e1=♛  
54.♗a5† ♜g4 55.♛g8† ♜f3! 56.♛f7† ♜g2!  
57.♗a2† ♜g1 58.♛a7† ♜f1 59.♛f7† ♜g1  
60.♛a7† ♜f1 61.♗a1 ♜d1 62.♛f7† ♜g1  
63.♛a7† ♜f1 64.♗xd1 ♛xd1 65.♛d4 ♜a4†  
66.♗d3 ♛b3† 67.♛c3 ♛d5†**

Finally Kramnik agreed to a draw, since 68.♗e3 ♜g2! leads either to the loss of the pawn or to perpetual check.  
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

In the next game we will consider White's set-up with an early ♜e3, which may be followed by long castling.

**GAME 20**

Vladimir Sveshnikov – Boris Chatalbashev

Golden Sands 2013

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4 ♜f6 5.♘f3  
5.♘e3 0–0**

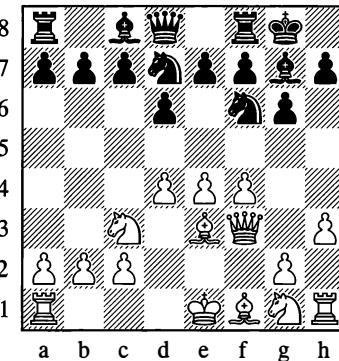
5...♜g4 is also fine, although White might stop this by playing h2-h3 before ♜e3.

**6.h3 ♜bd7!**

There are some maniacs who play this after 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♘e3 and get away with it, so it can hardly be bad here.

**7.♘f3!**

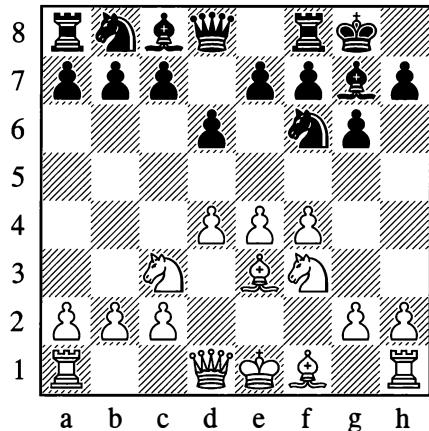
7.♘f3?! c5 8.dxc5 ♜xc5 9.♘xc5 (9.♘d3?! b6 10.♔e2 ♜b7 was already troublesome for White in Drazic – Kovacevic, Dubrovnik 2008.) 9...dxc5 10.♕xd8 ♜xd8 11.♘c4 occurred in Antonio – Todorcevic, Biel 1991, and here Black could have maximized his advantage with 11...♜h5!N 12.♔e2 ♜xb2, bagging a pawn.

**7...c5 8.0–0–0N**

This logical move has not been tested yet. A sensible continuation would be:  
8...cx d4 9.♘xd4 ♜a5 10.♗b1 e5 11.fxe5 ♜xe5  
With a good position for Black.

**5...0–0 6.♗e3**

White's set-up is directed against both ...♕c6 and ...c5. The downside to placing the bishop on e3 is that e4-e5 can now be met with ...♗g4 targeting the bishop.

**6...b6!**

This absolutely logical move is the main line. Black supports a future ...c5, while preparing to take aim at the e4-pawn, the weakest point in White's central phalanx.

**7.♘d2**

White has a number of alternatives, but the general consensus is that he should wait for Black to play ...♗b7 before playing e4-e5.

If White tries 7.♗e2, then the simplest way to continue is 7...♗a6 8.♘d2 ♗b7 leading to the main game.

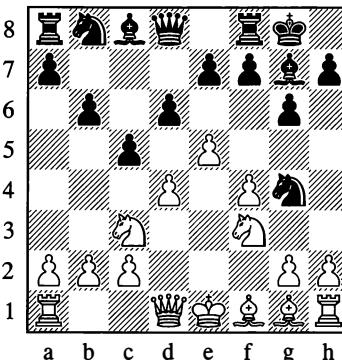
7.♗d3 c5 8.d5 (After 8.e5?! ♗g4 9.♗e2 ♗xe3 10.♗xe3 ♗c6 White does not have time to play ♘e4.) 8...a6 Black has reached an improved version of the 8.♗d3 line given in the notes to the main game, as there is no reason to put the bishop on b7 in this structure.

**7.e5 ♗g4 8.♗g1**

8.♘d2 c5 is an improved version of the main game for Black, who may be able to save time by omitting ...♗b7.

**8...c5!**

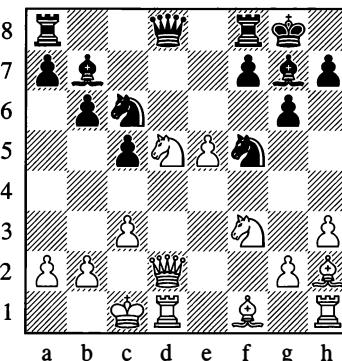
Black has good prospects, as shown in the following model game by Anand.



9.h3 ♗h6 10.d5 ♗b7 11.♗d2 ♗f5 12.♗h2  
12.♗d3 ♗g3 13.♗h2 dxe5 14.fxe5 c4?  
15.♗xc4 ♗d7 gives Black excellent chances.  
12...dxe5 13.fxe5 e6!

Black is doing well, as White has overextended himself in the centre.

14.0–0–0 exd5 15.♗xd5 ♗c6 16.c3?!



16...♗cd4! 17.♗f6† ♗xf6 18.cxd4 ♗g7 19.d5  
c4 20.♗e2 ♗c8 21.♗b1 ♗h6 22.♗f4 ♗xf4  
23.♗xf4 ♗xd5 24.h4 c3 25.bxc3 ♗xc3 26.h5  
♗e3 27.♗g5 ♗c7 28.♗xh7 ♗b3†!

White resigned in Beliavsky – Anand, Munich 1991. When will Anand start playing the Pirc again?

**7.♘c4**

This may look aggressive, but in fact it is something of a trick play, since Black can

successfully undermine White's centre now. Like after all other moves, except for 7... $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , Black should of course continue with:

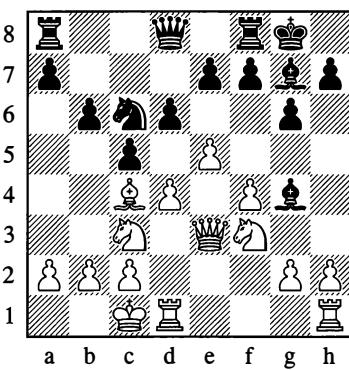
7...c5!

We will follow another exemplary game from Black.

8... $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  9.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3!$

11. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Continuing the policy of undermining the dark squares in the centre.

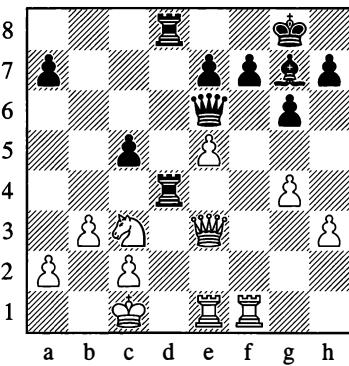


12.dxc5?!

Avrukh indicates that 12.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14. $\mathbb{W}e4$  a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  leads to an equal game, but 15... $\mathbb{W}c7!$  16. $\mathbb{R}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  dxe5 18.f5 b5 offers Black some advantage. This means that White has problems wherever he turns.

12...bxc5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  dxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  17.fxe5  $\mathbb{R}ad8$  18.g4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  19. $\mathbb{R}hf1$   $\mathbb{R}fd8$  20. $\mathbb{R}de1$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  21.b3?

21. $\mathbb{R}e2$  is better, although after 21... $\mathbb{R}b8$  Avrukh states that it is only a matter of time before White's position crumbles.

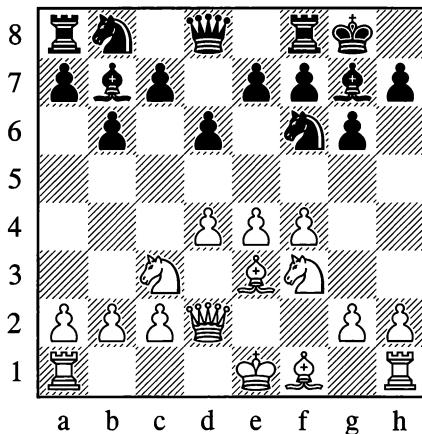


21...c4! 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{R}d2$  23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  24. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$  26. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  27.bxc4  $\mathbb{W}a1\uparrow$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c3$  29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

White resigned without waiting for a reply in Nisipeanu – Avrukh, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

This is something of a necessity since 7...c5 8.0–0–0 (8.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) 8...cx d4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11.h4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.h5! proved dangerous in the famous game Polgar – Smirin, Istanbul (ol) 2000.



8.e5!

Definitely the most energetic.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  is not such a bad alternative, when Black can choose between a) 8...c5 and b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .

a) 8...c5

This has been the most popular choice. Black is significantly better off here than after the direct 7...c5, but White still has the easier game.

9.0–0–0!

9.d5? is weaker: 9...a6 10.a4  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  b5! Thematic, necessary and strong. 13.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  axb5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{R}a5$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$ ! This was Kotronias – McNab, Edinburgh 2003, and now 16... $\mathbb{Q}a4\uparrow$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{R}xa4$

18.0–0 ♜xe4 would have given Black some pressure.

After the text move the position is rather sensitive. If White can only push the knight away from f6, then he will obtain a powerful attack by launching his h-pawn. I will give a few examples to show how Black can get into trouble.

9...♝c8?!

9...cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♜c6 11.♗xf6 ♜xf6 12.h4 ♜b4 13.h5 ♜c8 14.♗b1 ♜c7 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.♗d5 ♜xd5 17.♗xb4 ♜f7 18.e5 White has a strong initiative.

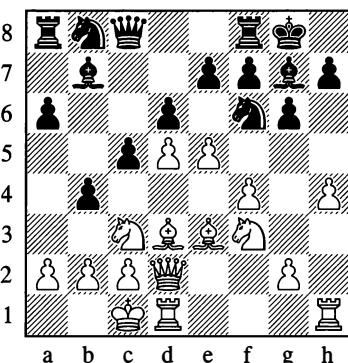
9...♝g4 10.♗b1 ♜xe3 11.♗xe3 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♜c6 13.♗xc6 ♜xc6 14.h4 is another position where Black is too far behind in the attacking race.

9...♜c6?! 10.d5 ♜b4 (10...♜a5 11.h4) may be the best attempt to complicate the game. One rather speculative line is 11.♗b5?! a6 12.♗e2 e6! 13.a3 exd5 14.axb4 dxe4 15.♗g5 cxb4 16.♗a4 ♜d5 when Black has enough compensation.

10.d5

10.♗e2?! ♜c6 11.d5 ♜b4 12.♗c4 a6 13.a3 b5 14.♗b3 c4 15.♗xc4 ♜xc2 is clearly better for Black.

10...a6 11.h4 b5 12.e5 b4



13.♗a4! ♜xd5 14.♗e4

This position illustrates how dangerous it is for Black when White manages to keep the queenside closed.

14...♜xe3 15.♗xe3 ♜d7 16.h5

Black is in trouble, regardless of his extra pawn.

b) 8...♜a6!

Now that the bishop has gone to d3, Black has the additional idea of playing the knight to b4.

9.0–0–0

9.a3 c5 is clearly okay for Black. White's pieces look clumsy and after 10.0–0–0, compared to line 'a' above, White has swapped a2-a3 for ...♜a6, which can hardly be good.

After 9.0–0–0 c5! Black is already better, since the 'natural' 10.d5 gives Black the opportunity to force a favourable minor-piece trade with 10...♝g4!.

9...♜b4! 10.♗e2N

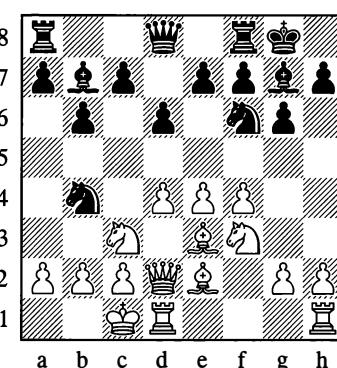
Keeping the bishop seems principled, but I found a good way for Black to continue.

10.♗b1 c5 11.d5 ♜xd3 12.cxd3 (12.♗xd3

♝d7 13.♗he1 ♜fd8 followed by ...a5 and

...♜a6 is promising for Black.) 12...♝g4

13.♗g1 ♜d7 14.h3 ♜f6 15.♗e3 b5 Black has excellent counterplay, and his next move will probably be ...e6.



10...a5!

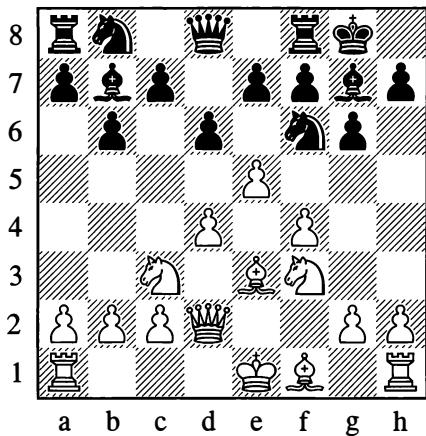
Threatening to take on e4.

11.a3

White gets nowhere with 11.♗g5 because of 11...c5! 12.a3 h6 13.e5 cxd4 14.♗xd4 dxe5 15.fxe5 ♜fd5 with better chances for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  12.axb4 axb4 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c5

I would not like to be White.



8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9.0-0-0

There is not much point in 9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ , since Black is not really threatening to take on e3, and after 9...c5 the second player is doing well.

9...c5 10.dxc5 bxc5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

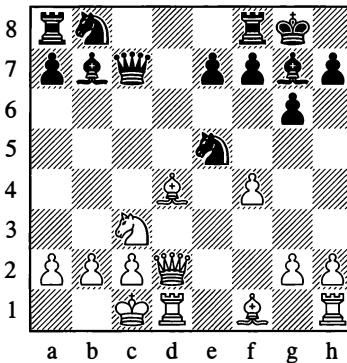
11. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  has only been played in a single game: 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  Now in Filev – Chatalbashev, Plovdiv 2009, Black could have fought for the advantage with 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ , although the game continuation of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  was also good enough for at least equality.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

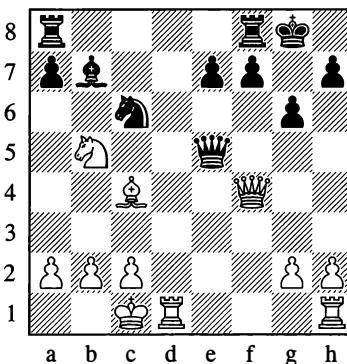
There are two major alternatives for Black here.

11... $\mathbb{W}a5$  has been the most popular, and it leads to heavy complications: 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  dxe5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (13.h3 leads to forcing play after 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  exf4, when Black seems to be okay.) 13... $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$  14. $\mathbb{E}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15. $\mathbb{E}xd5$  Black can choose between 15... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and 15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , although White may be able to preserve an edge.

Building on the work done by Andrew Greet, I have come to regard the as-yet-untested 11... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ N as the most reliable move. 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  dxe5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



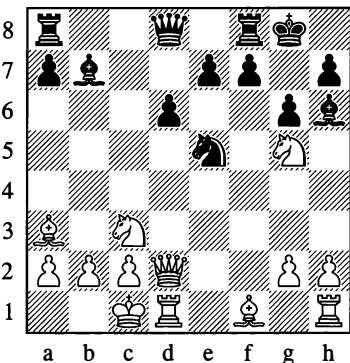
14. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$   $\mathbb{W}c8!$  This is my improvement for Black. (Greet mentions only 14... $\mathbb{W}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  which is a little better for White.) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.fxe5 Since the queen is not on c6, Black can play 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  with decent counterplay. One possible continuation is:



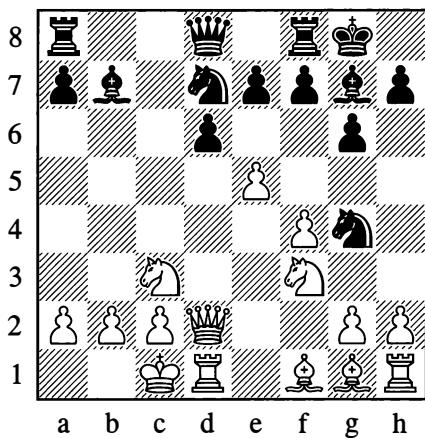
19. $\mathbb{E}hf1$   $\mathbb{E}ab8!$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  21.a4?! a6 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  when Black takes over the initiative.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  I found an attractive new idea: 13... $\mathbb{Q}gxe5!!N$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ ? 14.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  15.h3 was dismal for Black in Ortiz Suarez – Almeida Quintana, Bogota 2013.) 14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



15.h4 f6 16.♗d5 fxg5 17.hxg5 ♜g7 The position is unclear. Black can defend on the h-file with ...♜h8 and ...♝f7, and there is a question of how White will deal with the strong black bishop pair. I would not mind being Black here.



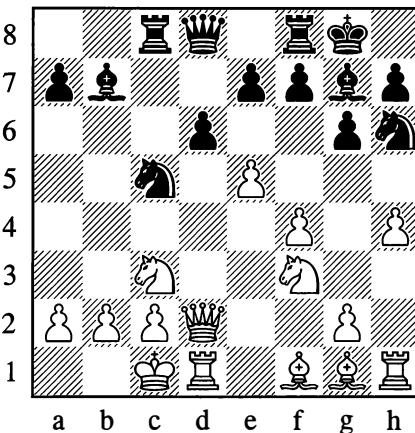
#### 12...♝c8 13.h3 ♜h6 14.h4!

White needs to create threats on the kingside to prevent Black from concentrating his forces on the queenside. The engines prefer 14.♕xa7?!, but after 14...♝a5 15.♕f2 ♜a8 16.♕b5 ♜c5 Black obtains quite an initiative in return for the pawns.

#### 14...♜c5

After 14...♜c5? 15.♕h3! h5 White can take a firm hold with 16.♕d3 ♜h6 17.♕e4 ♜xc3 18.♕xb7 ♜c7 19.♕e4. Black has some

compensation after 19...♝b8, but I doubt it is enough.

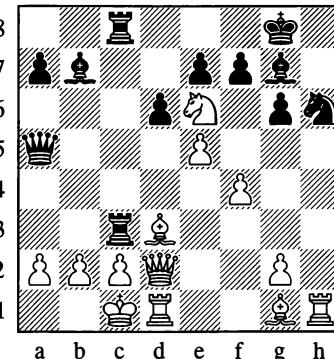


#### 15.h5 ♜e4

This is a good place to look for alternatives.

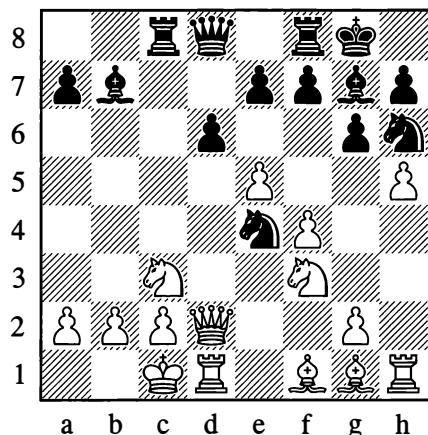
15...♝a5?! proves inadequate after 16.♕c4! ♜f5 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.♕h4 ♜xh4 19.♕xh4 ♜a4 20.♗d5 ♜xd2† 21.♕xd2 ♜xd5 22.♕xd5 dx5 23.fxe5 and White has a clear advantage.

15...♜e6!N is a better idea, keeping the bishop out of c4 and simultaneously eyeing the f4-pawn. A possible line is: 16.♕d3 ♜a5 17.♗d4 (17.♗b1 dx5 18.♗xe5 ♜xc3 19.♕xc3 ♜xc3 20.bxc3 ♜xf4 looks promising for Black.) 17...♜xc3 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♗xe6 ♜fc8!



20.♗xg7 ♜xa2 21.♕e3 ♜b3 22.♕d4 ♜a1† 23.♗d2 ♜a5† Now White should return with

24.♕c1, when Black can at least take a draw. (Instead 24.♔e2?! ♜xd3 25.♕xd3 ♔g4 would be dangerous for White.)

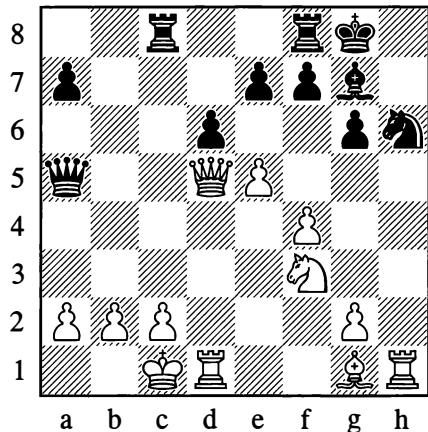


**16.♕xe4 ♔xe4 17.♔d3 ♔xd3 18.♔xd3 ♕a5**

Black has some compensation for the pawn, but White should still be better.

**19.hxg6 hxg6 20.♔d5**

After 20.♔b1 dxe5 21.fxe5 ♜fd8 22.♔d4 ♔f5 23.c3 ♔xd4 24.cxd4 White keeps the extra pawn, but 24...♔d5 still leaves Black with decent compensation, partly since the white king can still come under attack, but also because the endgames are not that bad. If the queens are exchanged Black may be able to create serious counterplay with ...f6.



**20...♔c7**

20...♔a4 is playable, although after 21.♔b3 ♜xf4† 22.♔e3 ♜f5 23.exd6 ♔g4 24.dxe7 ♔xe3 25.exf8=♕† ♜xf8 26.♔b1 ♜xd1 27.♔xd1 ♕f6 28.♔d5 White remains a bit better.

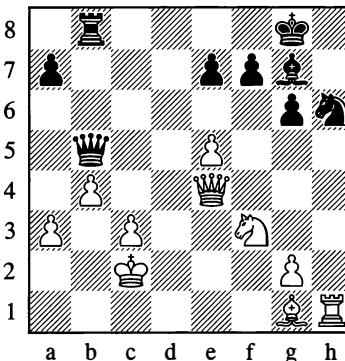
**21.c3 dxe5 22.fxe5?!**

A common occurrence in these Modern/Pirc structures is that Black at first seems to be a little worse, then still a little worse, and then suddenly, after a small White mistake, Black starts to take over. Perhaps the loss of one's central pawns brings with it some additional trauma.

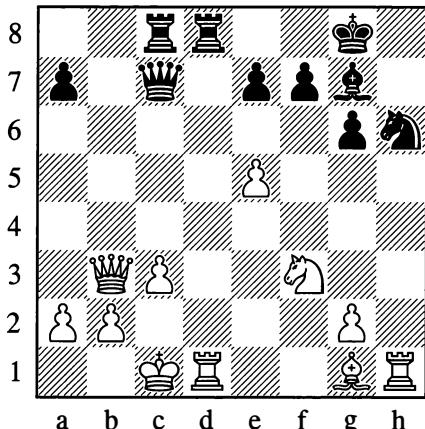
Correct was 22.♔xe5 ♜fd8 23.♔f3 ♜xd1† 24.♔xd1, when 24...♔f5 25.♔f3 ♔xe5 26.fxe5 ♜xe5 27.♔xa7! ♜a5 28.♔h3! ♔g7 29.g4! keeps a clear advantage for White.

**22...♜fd8 23.♔b3?!**

According to the engine White is still better after 23.♔e4! ♜xd1† 24.♔xd1 ♜a5 25.a3 ♜b5 26.♔c2 ♜b8 27.b4.



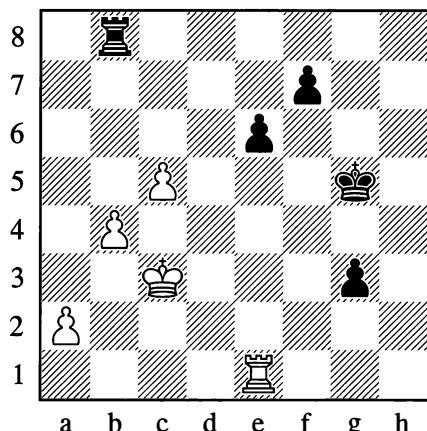
Nevertheless, it is understandable, from a human perspective, that one feels a bit worried about 27...a5 28.♔c5 axb4 29.cxb4 ♔f5. However, if you take the time to study this position it becomes quite obvious that Black is struggling. White's minor pieces are dominating their black counterparts, and the rook and the queen are unable to penetrate anywhere. After 30.♔d3 White is in control.



23...♜xd1† 24.♝xd1 ♜g4 25.♝d4 ♜xe5

This position illustrates one of the aspects that I like about the Modern: when Black finally equalizes, it is seldom dead equality.

26.♝xe5 ♜xe5 27.♝c2 ♜c6 28.♝xe5 ♜e4†  
29.♝c1 ♜xe5 30.♝d2 e6 31.♝e1 ♜b5  
32.♝e3 ♜d5 33.♝xa7 ♜xg2 34.♝d4 ♜b8  
35.c4 ♜g5† 36.♝e3 ♜a5 37.♝e5 ♜xe5  
38.♝xe5 ♜g7 39.♝c2 ♜f6 40.♝e1 g5  
41.♝c3 g4 42.b4 ♜g5 43.c5 g3



44.♝g1??

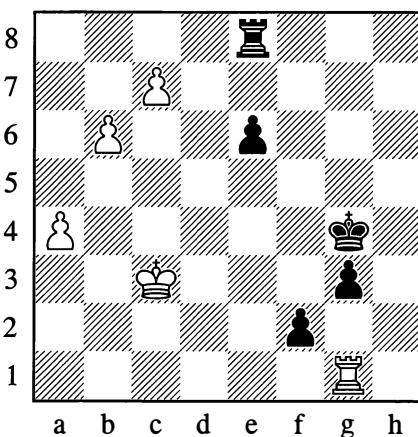
This is a grave mistake, since it will enable Black to march his f-pawn to f2 with gain of tempo.

One correct defence is: 44.♝c1 ♜g4 45.c6 g2 46.♝b3 ♜h8 47.♝g1!. This is okay now that Black has spent time moving his rook to h8. 47...♝h3 48.b5 f5 49.c7 f4 50.b6 f3 51.b7 f2 52.c8=♛ ♜xc8 53.♝xg2 ♜b8 54.♝xf2 ♜xb7† A draw could be agreed.

44...♜g4 45.a4 f5 46.c6 f4 47.b5 f3 48.c7 ♜e8

Even more precise was 48...♜c8! 49.b6 f2 50.♝b1 g2, when 51.b7 loses because 51...♜xc7† comes with check.

49.b6 f2



White resigned. After 50.♝xg3† ♜xg3 51.b7 f1=♛ 52.b8=♛ ♜c1† 53.♝d3 ♜a3† 54.♝e2 ♜f3† 55.♝e1 ♜e4† 56.♝d1 ♜xa4† Black should win eventually.

0–1

We will now turn our attention to White's most popular set-up with 5.♝f3 and 6.♝d3.

## GAME 2

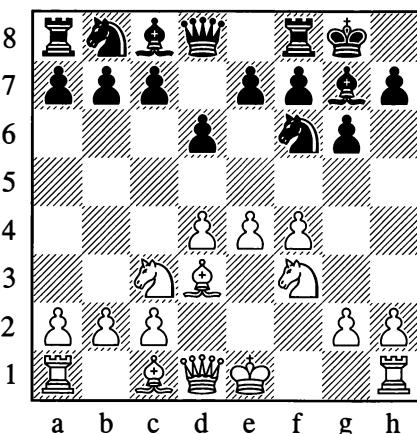
**Victor Nithander – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Gothenburg 2013

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.f4 ♜g7 5.♗f3  
0–0 6.♗d3**

White proceeds with kingside development, having in mind a master plan involving 0–0, ♜e1-h4 and, depending on circumstances, f4-f5 or e4-e5.

White's last move also has the benefit of taking 6...c5 off the table, since it now fails to 7.dxc5 when Black has to take back with the d-pawn, thus ending up with a static pawn structure. So is 6.♗d3 bad news for Black?



**6...♝c6**

Not really. Just like the Modern, the Pirc is a flexible opening where Black can consider a number of different ways to deal with White's centre. The last move takes aim at the d4-square, which was slightly weakened by White's last move.

**6...♝a6** is another common move, and I have nothing against it apart from not knowing it, yet. Why choose one dish when you can have a smorgasbord?

**7.e5**

Another positive feature of Black's last move is that 7.d5 can be met by 7...♝b4!, hitting the d3-bishop with a tempo. After 8.♗e2 c6! 9.a3 ♜a6 10.♗xa6?! bxa6 11.dxc6 ♜b6 Black is better.

White's other option of 7.0–0 will be covered in Game 23.

**7...dxe5 8.dxe5**

The more popular 8.fxe5 is seen in the next game.

**8...♝d5 9.♝xd5**

**9.♗d2?!**

This seems like a more ambitious choice for White.

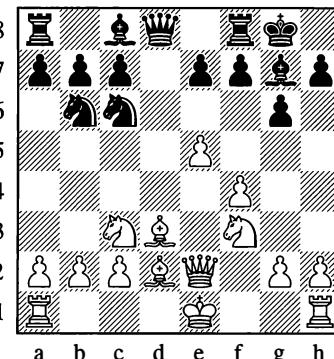
**9...♝b6!**

The seemingly active 9...♝cb4 runs into a dead end after 10.♗e4 c6 11.♗e2. This is a critical position where it seems that White will keep some advantage and – what's worse – can play on without taking any risks.

**10.♗e2**

10.♗e3 is hardly an improvement for White after 10...♝b4!N 11.♗e4 f5 12.♗d3 ♜xd3† 13.cxd3 ♜e6.

10.a3 f6 11.exf6 exf6 proved fine for Black in Sax – Sapi, Petropolis 1974, and several subsequent games.



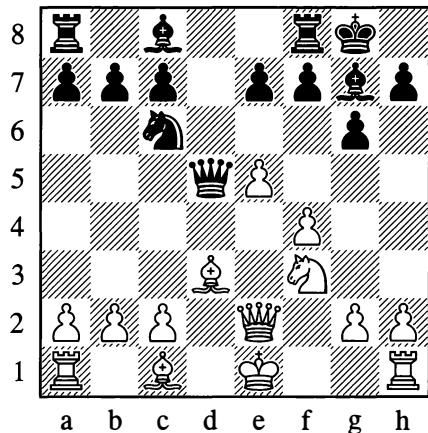
**10...♝b4 11.♗e4 f5 12.♗d3 ♜xd3† 13.cxd3  
♝d5 14.0–0**

14.♖c1N b6 does not change much.

14...b6

The position was balanced in Schwertel – Raupp, corr. 1996. Black has less space, but his light-squared bishop has great potential.

**9...♗xd5 10.♗e2**



**10...♕f5!?**

I did not know the theory at the time, and just went for something that seemed playable.

The (better) alternative is: 10...♗g4 11.♗e4 (11.c3? ♗xf3 12.gxf3 e6 13.♗e4 ♗d7 14.♗d2 ♗e7 15.0–0–0 c6N 16.h4 h5 17.♗e3 ♗c7 is passive for Black, but the pawn structure can become a serious problem for White later.) 11...♗a5† 12.♗d2 ♗b6 13.0–0–0 ♗d4 14.♗c4 c5 The position was roughly equal in Zaw – Sitanggang, Jakarta 1997. It is important not to exchange on f3 until it is absolutely necessary, in order not to give White the option of playing a rapid h4–h5.

**11.♗xf5 gxf5**

This might seem a bit strange, but Black's pawn structure is fine because of the ...f6 possibility.

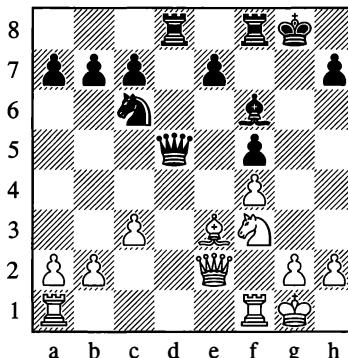
**12.c4**

White has tried a few other moves:

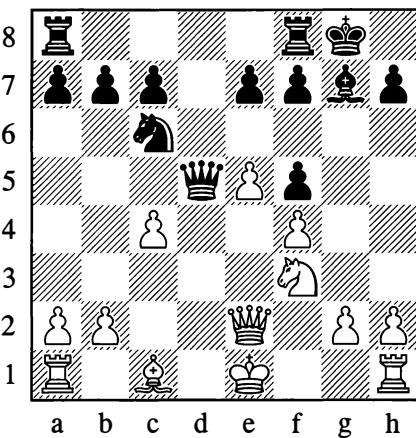
12.c3 ♘ad8 13.♗e3 f6 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.0–0 a6 is balanced.

12.♗e3 ♘ad8 13.0–0 transposes to 12.0–0 below.

12.0–0 ♘ad8 13.♗e3 reaches a critical position. Black should respond with 13...f6! 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.c3 and now there are a few decent options.



15...a5!? (15...a6 seems more prudent, not placing the pawns on the same colour as the opponent's bishop.) 16.♗fd1 ♗e4 17.♗d2 ♗e6 (17...♗d3! is a safe equalizer.) 18.♗e1 a4 19.♗ac1 ♗xa2 20.♗b5 a3 Black had the initiative in Gaehwiler – Skoberne, Rogaska Slatina 2009.

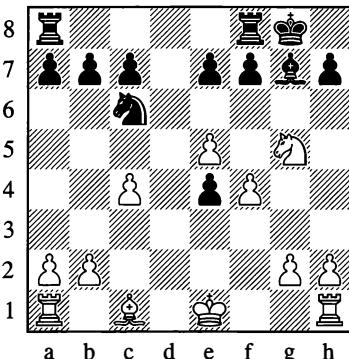


**12...♗e6!?**

I was not in a hurry to enter the endgame, and indeed the choice was not an easy one to make. Nevertheless, the most accurate continuation would have been:

12... $\mathbb{W}e4!$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $f\times e4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Now Black can play dynamically with:



14... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ N

The only game from the above position continued: 14... $\mathbb{E}ad8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  (Better is 15.0–0  $\mathbb{E}d4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}xc4$  17.b3  $\mathbb{E}c3$  18. $\mathbb{E}ae1$  when White has some initiative, although Black should be able to hold.) 15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  Black had a clear advantage in Zadrzny – Rasik, Pardubice 2010.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  f6 16. $\mathbb{E}xf6$   $\mathbb{E}xf6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$

Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

19. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{E}e2\uparrow$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}c2$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 22. $\mathbb{E}ab1$

The position is balanced, but it required some exact moves from White's side in order to come this far.

**13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

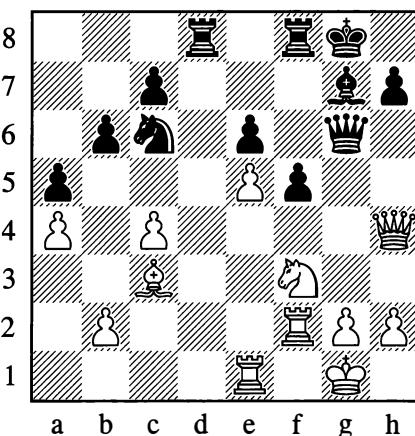
This move is a little slack. Correct is 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  14.0–0, when 14... $\mathbb{E}ad8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  followed by ...f6 leads to a position where White is microscopically better.

**13...f6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3?$**

An ambitious move! I would never have thought of playing such a position with White, as the e5-pawn seems far too weak for me.

14... $f\times e5$  15. $f\times e5$  a5 16.0–0  $\mathbb{E}ad8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  18. $\mathbb{W}e3$  e6 19. $\mathbb{E}el$  b6 20. $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  21. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  22.a4

This move is ugly; there surely must be better alternatives.



**22... $\mathbb{E}fe8$**

Here I had my first chance to take a firm hold on the action with 22... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  24. $\mathbb{E}xd2$   $\mathbb{E}xd2$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{E}d7$ , when Black is at least a little better due to White's weak queenside pawns.

**23. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$   $\mathbb{E}d3$**

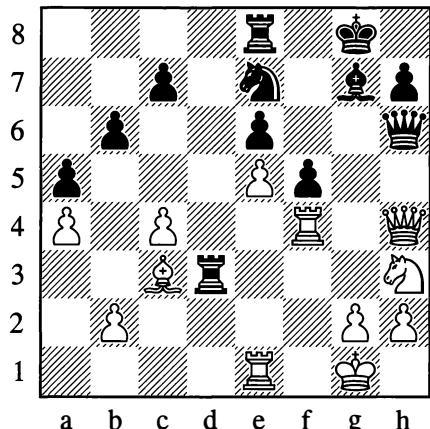
It was also possible to play 23... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $axb4$  25. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  26. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-c5$  and ... $\mathbb{E}g8$ . However, I prefer to avoid the exchange of my knight for White's bishop.

**24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  25. $\mathbb{E}f4?!$**

White should have played 25. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  27. $\mathbb{E}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  28. $\mathbb{E}f3$   $\mathbb{E}ed8$  29. $\mathbb{E}xd3$   $\mathbb{E}xd3$  30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  with equality.

**25... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

25... $\mathbb{E}ed8$  is better. We were both short of time by this point, and neither of us played very precisely.



26.♗f2 ♜g6 27.♗f3 ♜xf3 28.♗xf3 ♜f8  
29.♗d1

Viktor did not have enough time to correctly evaluate 29.♗c6! ♜c5† 30.♗h1 ♜e7 31.♗xa5 bx a5 32.♗xc5 ♜d2, which seems to be unclear.

29...♜c5† 30.♗h1 ♜h4 31.♗c6 ♜e7 32.b3

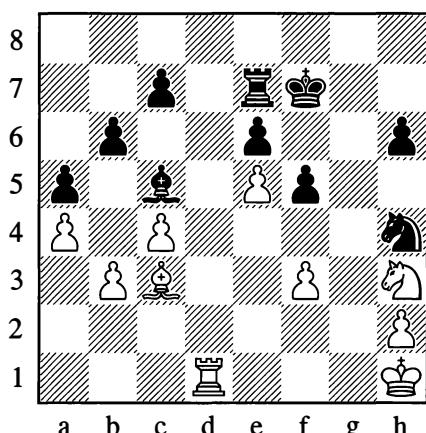
I feel there ought to be something good for Black around here, but I have not been able to find anything convincing.

32...♝g4 33.♗d8† ♜f7

Maybe 33...♜g7 34.♗f3 ♜f7 is better.

34.♗f3 h6 35.♗d1 ♜xf3 36.gxf3 ♜h4

The endgame is slightly better for Black, but White has just enough resources to draw it.



37.♗d3 ♜e8 38.♗e1 ♜g6 39.f4 ♜d7

39...♜g7 40.♗g3 ♜f7 41.♗d3 ♜e7 42.♗g3 is a draw.

40.♗xd7 ♜xd7 41.♗g2 ♜c6 42.♗f3 ♜d4  
43.♗e2 ♜c5 44.♗d3 ♜d7 45.♗e2 ♜e8  
46.♗f2 ♜xf2 47.♗xf2 ♜f8 48.♗g1 ♜d7  
½-½

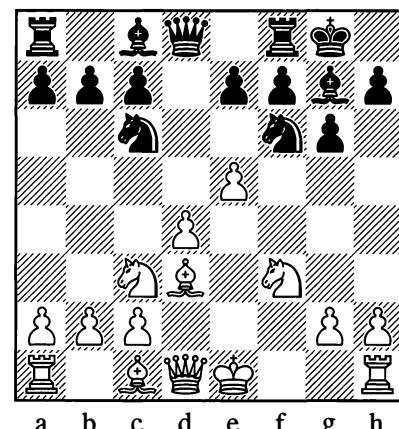
Now we will turn our attention to the more popular and challenging 8.fxe5.

## GAME 22

Jonny Hector – Jens Kristiansen

Denmark 2013

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.f4 ♜f6 5.♗f3  
0-0 6.♗d3 ♜c6 7.e5 dxe5! 8.fxe5



8...♞h5!

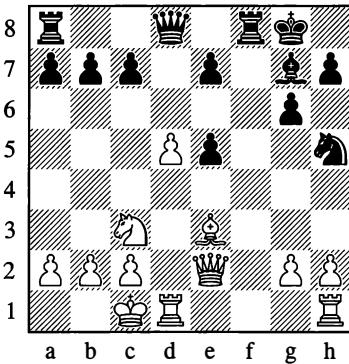
This seemingly strange move is actually quite logical when you think about it. Firstly, it does not compete for the cramped space south of Black's centre. Secondly, it aims at f4 in the future, simultaneously (thirdly) making it hard for White to play h2-h3, as this would allow the knight to jump to g3. For this reason, the knight on h5 works especially well in conjunction with ...♜g4 and ...f6.

**9.♕e3 ♕g4 10.♕e2 f6 11.exf6**

When I tested this variation over the board my opponent played:

11.d5 ♖xe5! 12.♖xe5 ♕xe2 13.♗xe2 fxe5  
14.0–0–0

The last few moves have been pretty forced. White has sacrificed a pawn for some positional compensation.



14...Wd7

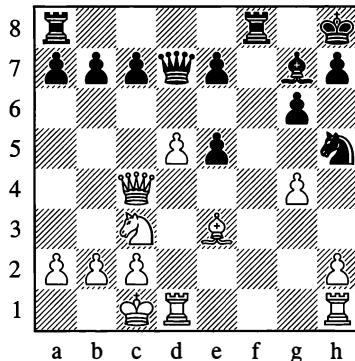
If you evaluate 15.Wb5 as better for White on the next move (as the engine does at first), then you could consider 14...a6. However, I do not believe the queen move is anything to worry about.

15.♘c4

On 15.Wb5 I was planning 15...Wg4 (15...Wxb5? 16.♘xb5 ♜fc8 17.♘xa7 ♜xa7 18.♘xa7 b6 19.♗d3 ♘f4 is far from clear) 16.♘xb7 and here I had not decided whether to play 16...♜ab8 or 16...Wxg2. It seems to me that at least one of these moves must be okay for Black.

15...♘h8 16.g4?

This came as a total surprise; I only had considered ideas where White tries to keep the knight away from f4. After 16.g3 my plan was to continue as in the game: 16...♘f6 17.♗he1 ♘e8 18.♗e2 ♘d6 19.♗b1 ♘ae8 and Black is doing fine.



16...♘f6

After 16...♘f4 17.♗hg1 I did not like the fact that White would be able to install his knight on e4. Still, this line may be better than the one I chose.

17.h3 ♘e8!

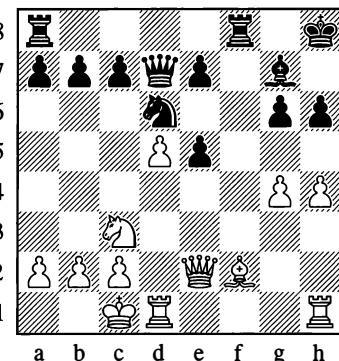
The knight belongs on d6.

18.h4 ♘d6 19.♗e2 h6 20.♗f2?!

After the game, both my opponent and I considered this to be unsatisfactory.

20.♗xh6 ♘xh6† 21.g5 ♘g7 22.h5 ♘f5! 23.hxg6† ♘g8 24.♗h5 looks dangerous for Black, but after 24...♗f4† 25.♗b1 ♘f5 there is no way forward for White.

There is something to be said for 20.♗b1, renewing the threat of ♘xh6, since the g5-pawn will no longer fall with check. I would probably have played 20...♘g8, when 21.♗g2 ♘ad8 leads to an unclear game. However, the engine points out that 20...♗ad8! is more precise, since 21.♗xh6 ♘xh6 22.g5 ♘g7 23.h5 ♘g8 24.hxg6 ♘f5 still defends.



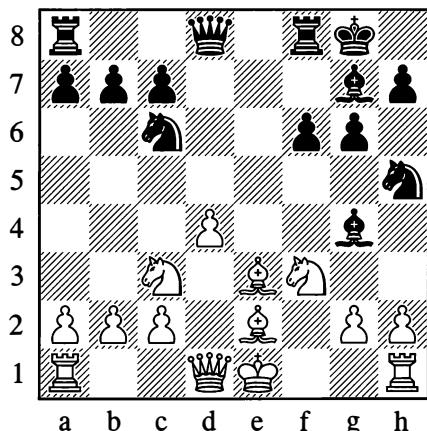
20...b5!N

With a more aggressive mindset, I might have gone for this instead of 20...♝f4?! in E. Hansen – Hillarp Persson, Barcelona 2013. By advancing the b-pawn Black forces the c3-knight to explain itself.

21.b3 b4 22.♕a4 ♜f4

Black is at least a little better.

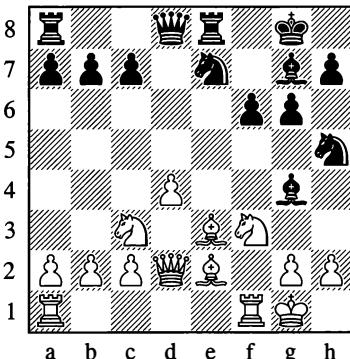
**11...exf6**



**12.♗d2??**

Hector retains the option of long castling.

The main line is 12.0–0 ♜e8 13.♗d2 ♔e7!. The knight has done its job on c6, and is now headed for f5 while keeping an eye on d5.



I am actually quite sceptical about White's chances here! I will present some analysis of

three plausible moves: a) 14.♗f2N, b) 14.♗c4† and c) 14.h3!?.

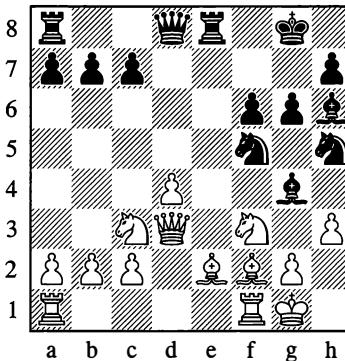
a) 14.♗f2N

Vigus mentioned this move and supplied the following excellent line.

14...♞f5! 15.h3

Otherwise Black gets a fine game with ...♞h6.

15...♞h6! 16.♗d3



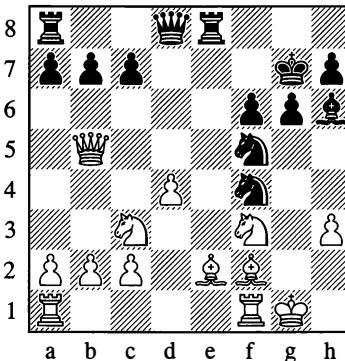
16...♗xh3!! 17.gxh3 ♔f4

White's defence is difficult. A possible continuation is:

18.♗b5

Vigus shows that 18.♗c4†?! ♞h8! is excellent for Black. One possibility is 19.♗ae1 ♛d7 with a massive attack.

18...♗g7!



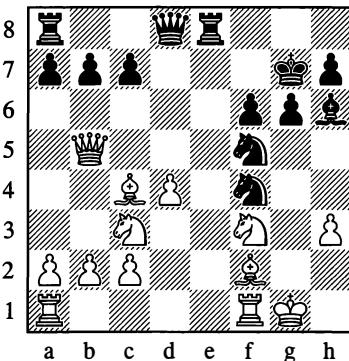
Since the c7-pawn is not under threat here, it seems better to keep the f6-pawn covered

while avoiding any potential checks on the back rank.

19.♕c4

19.♕ae1 ♜c8! 20.♕d1 ♜xh3† 21.♔h1 ♜e3

22.♕xe3 ♜xe3 is at least a bit better for Black.



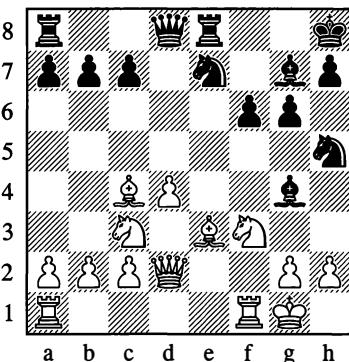
19...♜c8 20.♕c5 b6! 21.♕c6 ♜e7 22.♕e4 ♜ed5 23.♕e5 ♜xc3 24.bxc3 fx5

Black is clearly better.

b) 14.♕c4†

This also leads to a position where Black has no complaints.

14...♔h8



15.♕h4!!?

This was Khalifman's recommendation.

The best alternative seems to be 15.h3 when 15...♝f5 16.hxg4 ♜xe3 17.gxh5 ♜xc4 18.♗d3 ♜xb2! 19.♗b5 g5! intending ...g4, is promising for Black. After 20.♔h1 g4 21.♕h4 ♜xd4 22.♗xb2 f5 23.♗xb7 ♜xc3

24.♗xf5 ♜ab8 25.♗xa7 ♜xa1 26.♗xa1 ♜xa1 the endgame is at least a bit better for Black, and it could even be winning in the absolute sense.

15...♝c6!

Khalifman's repertoire book only mentions 15...g5 and 15...f5, but recent years have seen the successful introduction of this knight move. Indeed, it seems much more logical to activate both the knight and the rook before advancing on the kingside.

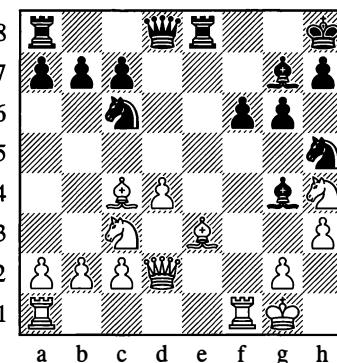
16.h3?

16.♗f3?! ♜xf3N 17.♗xf3 f5 looks excellent for Black.

Vigus mentions 16.♕ae1 ♜xe3 17.♗xe3 f5 18.d5 ♜a5 19.♗d3 ♜xh4. I would add that the tactical sequence 20.b4 ♜f6 21.♗e1 ♜f8 22.h3 ♜xh3 23.♗xh3 ♜xc3 24.♗xc3 ♜xc3 25.bxa5 ♜f6 26.a6 b6 reaches a promising endgame for Black.

16.♗f2 has been played several times, but the relatively forcing 16...g5 17.h3 ♜xh3 18.gxh3 gxh4 19.♗f7 ♜g3 20.♗xg3 ♜e7 21.♗xh4 ♜xf7 22.♗ad1 ♜d7 23.♗h2 ♜e8 gives Black a comfortable position, as demonstrated in a few correspondence games.

16.d5!? may be best, but after 16...♝e5 17.♗b3 f5 18.♗g5 ♜f6 19.♗xf6† ♜xf6 20.♗f2 f4 Black had enough counterplay in Evans – Cook, corr. 2013. I believe Black is at least equal here too.



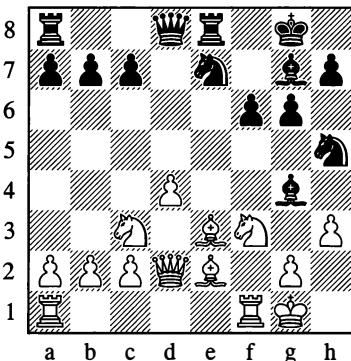
16...♝xe3! 17.♕d5?

Black's idea is to meet 17.♗xe3 with 17...f5!, when the double attack on d4 and h4 gives him a clear advantage. Nevertheless, this would have given White more survival chances than the game continuation.

17...♝e4 18.hxg4 ♜xd4

Black was winning in Kulhanek – Rasik, Czech Republic 2011.

c) A final option is: 14.h3!?



This has hardly ever been tested, but it may be one of the better moves available to White. The only game on the database continued with logical play from both sides: 14...♞e6 15.♕d3 ♘g3 16.♗e1 ♘g5 17.♗f2 ♘h6 18.♗d1 ♘f7 The position was unclear in M. Andersen – Artzi, Porto Carras 2010.

**12...♝e7!**

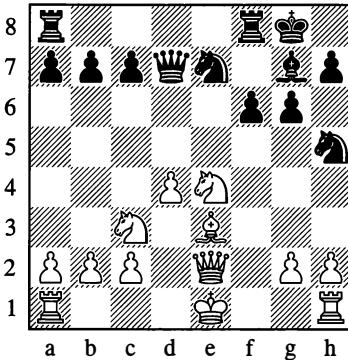
When White plays ♘d2 it is generally a good idea to reroute the knight from c6 to f5.

**13.0–0–0?\***

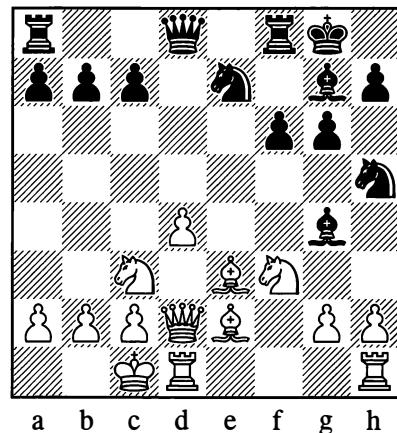
13.0–0 ♜e8! takes us back to 12.0–0 as analysed above.

13.♘d3!? is an interesting move, intending to meet 13...♞f5 with 14.♗xf5 ♘xf5 15.d5 followed by ♘d4. Instead Black should play 13...c6 14.0–0–0 ♜e8, adopting a wait-and-see attitude. The chances are about balanced.

Seventeen years before the present game, Hector played differently with 13.♗g5 ♘d7 14.♗ge4 ♜xe2 15.♗xe2. Here Black can improve with:



15...♞f5!N (15...♞d5 16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗c3 ♘c6 18.d5 ♘d7 19.0–0–0 led to mutual chances in Hector – Cu. Hansen, Malmö 1996.) 16.0–0–0 ♜ae8 17.♗d2 ♘xd4 18.♗c4† ♘f7 19.♗xd4 f5 Black has excellent prospects.



**13...♞f5 14.♗d3?!**

This is far too slow, although 14.♗de1 ♘d7 15.♗b1 ♜ae8 16.♗f2 ♘h6 is pleasant for Black too.

**14...♝xe3 15.♗xe3 ♜e8 16.♗d2 ♘d6 17.♗de1 ♘f4**

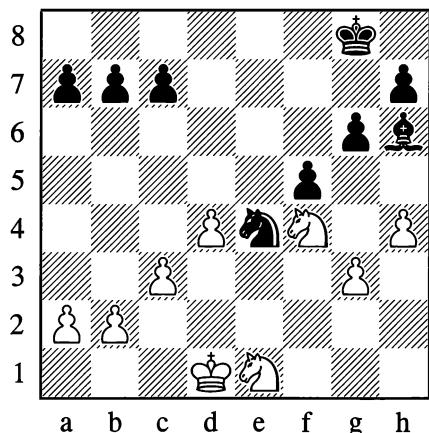
With the bishop pair in an open position, only Black can be better.

Keeping the queens on is also good: 17...a6! 18.♕b1 b5 19.♕d1 f5 20.h3 ♕xf3 21.♕xf3 ♔g3! 22.♕xa8 ♕xa8 Black has a clear advantage.

18.g3 ♕xd2† 19.♕xd2 ♕xe2 20.♕xe2 f5  
21.♕f3 ♕xe2 22.♕xe2 ♕f6

22...♕e8 23.♕d1 ♕e3 24.♕f1 ♕f6 25.♕f4  
♕h6 also puts White under some pressure.

23.c3 ♕e8 24.♕e1 ♕g4 25.h3 ♕f2 26.♕f4  
♕xe1† 27.♕xe1 ♕h6 28.h4 ♕e4 29.♕d1



29...♕xg3?

This move spoils a big part of Black's advantage.

Instead 29...♕f8! 30.♕ed3 ♕xg3 31.♕e6 ♕d6 would have led to a highly unpleasant endgame for White.

30.♕e6 ♕e4 31.♕xc7 ♕f4 32.♕e6 ♕g3  
33.♕f3 b6 34.c4 ♕f7 35.♕eg5† ♕xg5  
36.hxg5 ♕e6 37.♕e2 ♕f4 38.♕d3 a5 39.b3  
♕c1

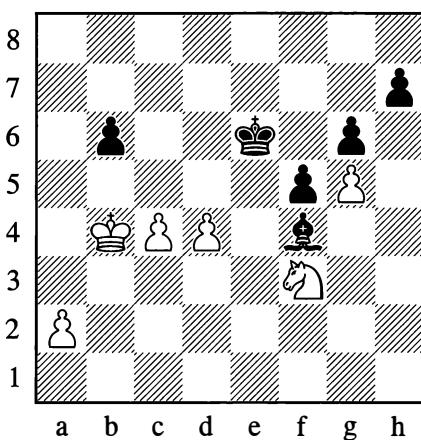
39...h6? is no good because of 40.d5† ♕d6  
41.gxh6 ♕xh6 42.♕h4!

39...h5!? 40.♕e2 ♕g3 would have been equal.

40.♕c3?! ♕f4?!

White's last move gave Black an ideal opportunity for 40...h6!, as 41.d5† ♕e7 42.gxh6 ♕xh6 leaves him with some winning chances.

41.b4 axb4† 42.♕xb4



42...h5?

After this move Black is even losing.

42...♕d6 43.a4 ♕c7 should draw, although White can stir up a fair bit of trouble with 44.♕b5 intending c4-c5.

43.♕b5 ♕g3?

Black can put up more of a fight after 43...h4 44.♕xh4 ♕xg5 45.♕xg6 f4 46.♕e5 ♕f5 47.♕f3 ♕f6 48.d5 ♕d8. Now it is all over.

44.♕xb6 h4 45.a4 ♕d7 46.♕b7 h3 47.a5  
♕f2 48.c5 ♕xd4 49.c6†

A tragic end to a game where Black was doing splendidly after the opening.

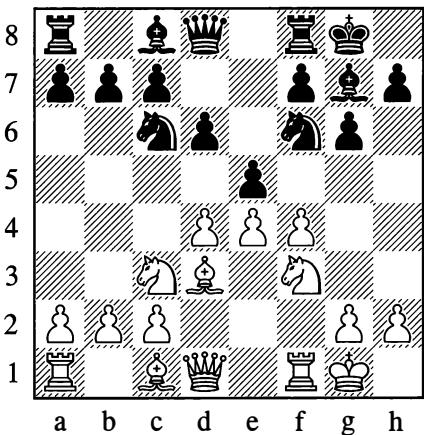
1-0

In the next game we will see what happens when White refrains from e4-e5 and allows Black to occupy the centre with his own e-pawn.

**GAME 23****Douglas Bryson – Gawain Jones**

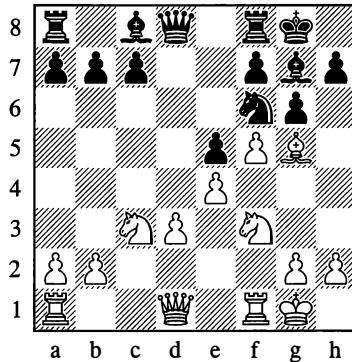
Helensburgh 2013

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♕f6 3.♕c3 g6 4.f4 ♕g7 5.♕f3  
0-0 6.♗d3 ♕c6 7.0-0 e5!

**8.fxe5**

White can also take the other way and direct his forces towards the kingside:

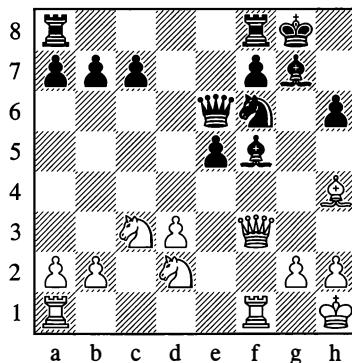
8.dxe5?! dxe5 9.f5 ♕b4 10.♗g5 ♕xd3 11.cxd3  
11.♕xd3 strikes me as a strange decision, but it was the choice of Karjakin against Ivanchuk. 11...♕xd3 12.cxd3 c6 13.♘ae1 ♘d7 14.g4 b6 15.♗f2 ♘e8 16.♗d2 ♘f8 (Marin prefers 16...♗b7 17.♗g2 ♕f6 18.h3 ♘ad8 followed by ...c5. However, I don't like putting the knight on f6, and see nothing wrong with Ivanchuk's set-up. Black has the bishop pair, so White is welcome to open up the position.) 17.♗g2 a5 18.d4 f6 19.♗e3 exd4 20.♕xd4 b5 21.h3 Now in Karjakin – Ivanchuk, Ningbo 2011, Black could have played 21...a4!N, preparing ...b4 with excellent counterplay. 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.e5 fxe5 24.♗xe5 ♕xe5 25.♗xe5 ♘e6 is a line that well illustrates my earlier comment about opening the position for the black bishops.



11...gxh5 12.♗h1?!

After 12.exf5 we get a long forced line:  
12...♕xf5N 13.d4! exd4 14.♕xd4 ♘g6 15.♕f5 ♘xd1 16.♗axd1 ♘xf5 17.♗xf5 ♘g4 18.♗d7 Now Black can play either 18...♘xc3 19.bxc3 f6 20.♗xc7 ♘ad8! 21.♗c1 ♘f7, or 18...f6 19.♗xc7 ♘f7 20.♗xf7 ♘xf7 21.♗g6, in both cases with a balanced game.

12...h6! 13.♗h4 ♘d6 14.exf5 ♘xf5 15.♕d2 ♘e6 16.♗f3  
16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.♗f3 ♘g5 18.♗xf5 ♘xd2 19.♗e4 ♘xf5 20.♗xf5 ♘e3 21.♗af1 ♘ad8 is fine for Black.

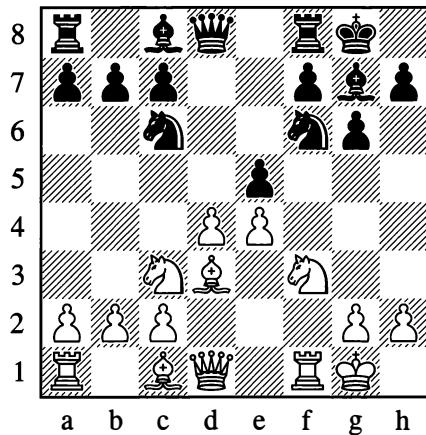


16...♗g4 17.♗xb7 ♘ab8!

This improves over 17...♗fb8, when 18.♗xc7 ♘xb2 19.♗c4 ♘c2 20.♗b7 ♘d8 21.♗xf6 ♘xf6 22.♗e4 ♘g7 23.♗e3 was dangerous for Black in Graf – Narciso Dublan, Torrelavega 2007.

18.♗xa7 ♘d5 19.♗xd5 ♘xd5

Black has a safe position with good prospects in a future endgame.

**8...dxe5****9.d5**

After 9.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}d4\#$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c5!$  Black has good prospects and has achieved a heavy score in practice. It is worth adding the line 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5?N$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  15.b4  $\mathbb{W}xb4$  16. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  and Black is doing well.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$** 

There are other options, but this is by far the most reliable.

**10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$** 

Virtually every other move will be met by 10...c6, giving Black good chances. An exception is if the c3-knight moves somewhere, after which the ... $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  trick will be good for Black.

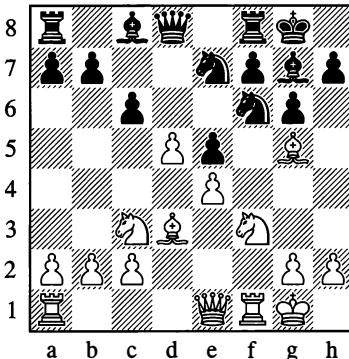
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c6! 11.dxc6 (11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  cxd5 leads to the main game.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6!$  13.c4  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  Black equalizes by exchanging both of his knights: the one on b4 for the bishop on d3, and the one on f6 for the knight on d5.

**10. $\mathbb{W}e1$  c6**

(Of course.) Now White has two main ideas.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$** 

11.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h1?$  Many other moves have been played, but the general rule is that ...h6 will give Black a good game. 12...h6N 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14. $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  15.h3  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  16. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  Black has no regrets.

**11...cxd5 12.exd5**

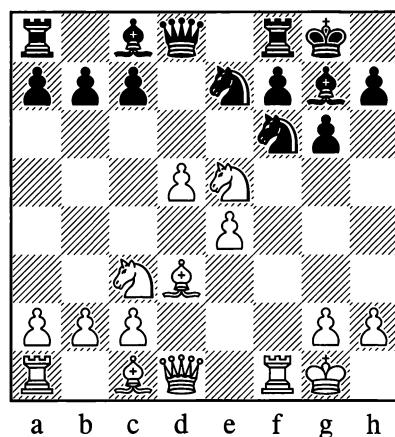
12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4N 14. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  is comfortable for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Aligheorgiu – Litsas, Piraeus 1999. Now the easiest reply is:

**15... $\mathbb{Q}d5N$** 

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , with equality.

**10...c6 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$** 

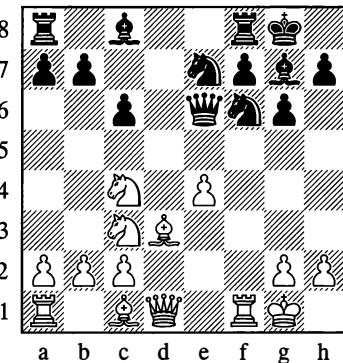
An interesting alternative is:

**11.d6**

For some reason that is difficult to fathom, this move has only been tried in a single game so far.

11...♝xd6 12.♛c4 ♚e6

This is clearly strongest, especially when you see that 12...♝d8?! 13.♝g5 b5 14.♜xf6! is awkward for Black.



13.♝e1!?

13.a4 b6 14.♝g5 ♜d7 15.♝e2 ♜c5 16.♝e3 ♜xd3 17.♝xd3 ♜b7 (17...a5?!) 18.♝ad1 h6 reached an unclear position in Chandler – Rayner, Innsbruck 1977.

13...b6!

The machine suggests 13...b5?!, but after 14.♛a5 the dark squares on the queenside are too weak for my taste.

14.♝h4 ♜a6 15.♝g5 ♜d7!

15...♜xc4 16.♜xc4 ♚xc4 17.♜xf6 ♜xf6 18.♜xf6 ♜c5† 19.♝h1 ♜ad8 20.♝ad1 leaves Black under some pressure, due to the passive knight on e7.

16.♝ad1 f6

Black's chances are no worse in this complex position.

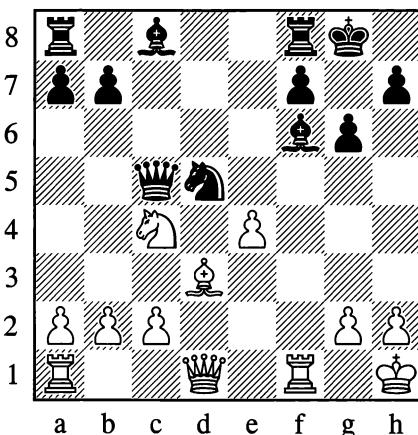
11...cx d5 12.♜xf6 ♚b6† 13.♝h1 ♜xf6  
14.♝xd5 ♜xd5 15.♝c4 ♜c5!

This is a rather new development in this line.

It used to be common knowledge that Black "had to" play 15...♝d8. Then again, the Earth was once flat. After 16.exd5 b5 17.♛a5 ♜h4!

the position soon becomes simplified, for instance after 18.♛d2 ♜xd5 19.♛f4 ♜g5 20.♝b3 a6 21.a4 when a draw was agreed in Yamaliev – Schoeneberg, corr. 2002.

The later attempt 18.b4? did not change much after 18...♝xd5 19.c4 bxc4 20.♝xc4 ♜xd1 21.♝axd1 ♜f5 22.b5 ♜ac8 23.♝c6 ♜c7 24.h3 ♜e8 25.a4 and once again a draw was agreed in Lazan – Vaassen, Internet 2009.



16.exd5 ♜g7 17.♝f3 b6!

This is stronger than 17...b5?!. 18.♛a5 ♜xb2 19.♝ab1 ♜g7 20.♝xb5 which led to an advantage for White in Shkopenko – Markowski, Warsaw (rapid) 2010.

18.c3

It is not clear if White has anything better, although he has tried a few different moves.

18.♝ab1?!, ♜b7 19.♝e3 ♜ae8! 20.♝fe1 was played in Schleiffer – Jordanov, corr. 1990. Now a strong improvement for Black is 20...♝d4!N, when White is unable to hold on to the d5-pawn, leaving Black clearly on top.

18.♝f4 ♜a6! (After 18...♝xd5 19.♝e4 ♜xc4 20.♝xa8 ♜xf4 21.♝xf4 ♜e6 22.♝f3 ♜xb2 23.♝d1 ♜c8 24.♝d5 White has some pressure since the f7-pawn becomes weak; still, Black should be able to hold it.) 19.♝ad1 ♜xd5

20.♕xb6 axb6 21.♔xa6 ♕xa2 22.♔c4 ♕xb2 23.♔xf7† ♔h8 24.♔e4 A draw was agreed in Chripko – Leroy, corr. 2010.

### 18.♕d2!?

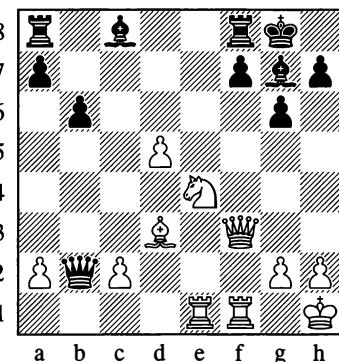
This is the most dangerous move, even if it is not objectively the strongest. White has the square intention of protecting the d5-pawn.

18...♕b4

18...♔b7? 19.c4 f5 (19...♔xb2 20.♔e4 ♕e7 21.♔f6† ♕xf6 22.♕xf6 ♕xf6 23.♕xf6 gives White slightly the more comfortable side of a draw) 20.♔ab1 ♕ae8 We have reached an interesting position where Black has some compensation for the pawn.

18...f5!? 19.♔ab1 ♔b7 20.c4 reaches the same position.

19.♔e4 ♕xb2 20.♔ae1



20...♔d7!

20...♔f5?! occurred in Kotronias – Timman, Malmö 2007, and now 21.♔d6!N would have been a dangerous challenge to Black's set-up.

21.♔d6!?

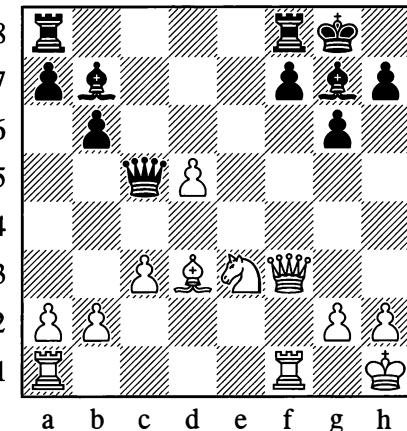
Better is 21.d6 when 21...♕e5! 22.♔c4 ♔h8 23.♕d3 ♔ad8 24.♔f6 ♕c5 25.♔xd7 ♕xd7 26.♔xf7 ♕fxf7 27.♔xf7 ♕xd6 leads to equality.

21...♕b4 22.♔e4 f5

Black had the upper hand in Stets – Chatalbashev, Val Thorens 2007.

### 18...♔b7 19.♔e3

It is necessary for White to try to hold on to the extra pawn. Otherwise Black will just be better.



### 19...f5!?

This is a slight inaccuracy. The correct move order is 19...♔ae8!N 20.♔fe1 f5 when White can no longer play ♔c4. After 21.♔c2 f4 22.♔g4 ♕xd5 23.♔b3 ♕xb3 24.axb3 ♕xf3 25.gxf3 a5 Black is at least equal in the endgame. White has to watch out for ...♔d8-d5-b5, when the b3-pawn could become a major liability.

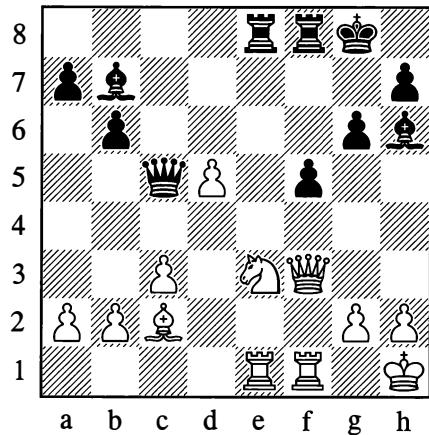
### 20.♔c2

White should have tried 20.♔c4? ♔h8 21.♔b3 b5 22.a3 a5 23.♔c2 ♔ad8 24.♔ad1 when it is unclear whether Black has enough compensation.

### 20...♔ae8

20...f4! 21.♔g4 ♕xd5 22.♔b3 ♕xb3 23.axb3 ♕xf3 24.gxf3 a5 leads to a position similar to that analysed after 19...♔ae8! above.

### 21.♔ae1 ♔h6



**22.♔b3?**

White should have preferred 22.b4! ♘xc3 23.♕xf5 ♘xf3 24.♔xh6† ♔g7 25.gxf3 ♘xe1 26.♖xe1 ♘xd5 27.♔e4 with an equal endgame.

**22...♕a6 23.♘c2 ♕xf1 24.♖xf1 ♕g7!**

Gawain rightly keeps the white knight out of d4. Unless White can stir up some trouble on the queenside, Black will just roll over White on the kingside.

**25.♖d1?!**

It was better to play 25.d6† ♔h8 26.♖d1 ♘e4 27.♖d5 ♘e5 28.♖b7 ♘d8 29.d7, followed by ♘c8, when at least Black has something to worry about.

**25...♗d6 26.a4 ♘e4 27.g3 ♔h8 28.♗d3 ♘fe8 29.♖d2**

**29...h5!**

The beginning of the end.

**30.♗f3 h4 31.♔g2 ♘h6 32.♗f2 hxg3  
33.hxg3 ♘e3**

**0–1**

## GAME 24

Igor Glek – Zoltan Ribli

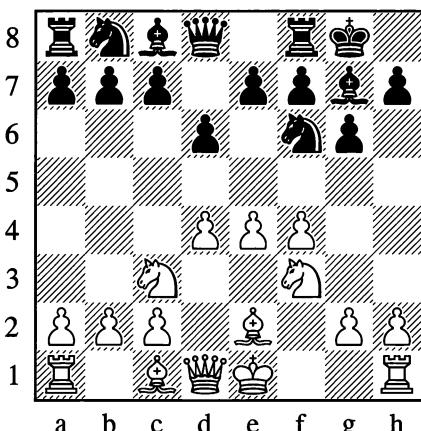
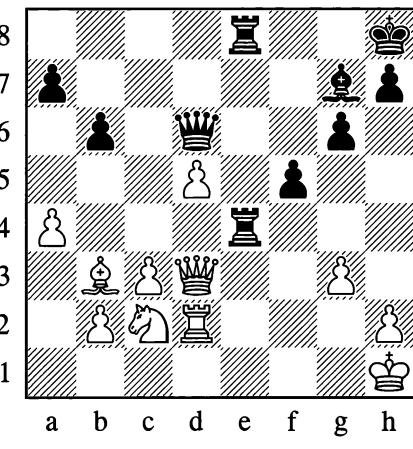
Germany 1997

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♕f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♘g7 5.♗f3  
0–0**

The variation examined in the present game may be compared with the well-known theoretical position arising after 5...c5 6.dxc5 ♘a5 7.♔d3 ♘xc5 8.♗e2 0–0 9.♔e3 ♘a5 10.0–0 ♘g4. It may appear that Glek gets a worse version of this position in this game, but I don't think so; both ♘e2 and ♘e3 are stopover moves and – if we compare with the position after 10...♘g4 in the game – ♘h1 is a move that White is happy to have on the board. All in all, I believe both positions have their ups and downs.

**6.♘e2?!**

This move makes the d4-pawn less weak and thus takes much of the sting out of 6...♘c6. Therefore we will use a different set-up.



**6...c5!**

This is the standard operation in the Pirc. If you can get away with it, then it is generally the right thing to do.

**7.dxc5**

White has two main alternatives:

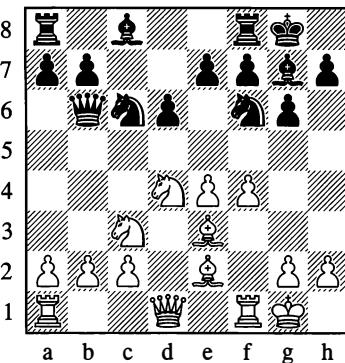
7.d5 is harmless, and after 7...e6 (7...b5?! is also interesting) 8.dxe6 ♜xe6 9.0–0 ♜c6 10.♗g5 ♜d4 Black is at least equal.

**7.0–0 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♜b6!?**

8...♜c6 leads straight to a Classical Dragon and may transpose after 9.♗e3 ♜b6.

**9.♗e3 ♜c6**

We have transposed to a variation of the Classical Dragon that has long been known to be fine for Black.

**10.♗d3**

This is the usual and best move, but there are a few trick lines barely worth mentioning.

10.e5 is foiled by the well-known line: 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♜xe5 12.♗f5 ♜xb2 13.♗xe7† ♜h8 14.♗d4 ♜b4† This is worth remembering, as 10.e5 could be confusing for the unprepared.

10.♗d2 allows Black's trick: 10...♗xe4!

11.♗xc6 ♜xc6 12.♗xe4 ♜xe4 White has insufficient compensation.

10.♗a4 is a feeble try to provoke a repetition with 10...♝a5 11.♗c3 ♜b6. Let's instead go: 10...♝b4 11.c3 ♜a5∞

**10...♝g4!**

I recommend this line because it is simple to learn and has few sidelines, as well as being the strongest move.

**11.♗xg4**

The trick is 11.♗d5?! ♜xd4! 12.♗xb6 (12.♗xg4 ♜xe3† 13.♗xe3 ♜xe3† 14.♗xe3 ♜xg4 15.♗xg4 ♜b4 is comfortable for Black) 12...♜xe3† 13.♗h1 ♜xb6 14.♗xg4 ♜xg4 15.f5 ♜h5 16.h3 gxf5 17.exf5 f6 and Black's three minor pieces clearly outmatch the white queen.

**11...♜xd4 12.♗xd4 ♜xd4† 13.♗xd4 ♜xd4 14.♗d1 ♜d8 15.♗d5 e6 16.♗c7 ♜b8 17.c3 ♜c6 18.♗b3 ♜f8**

Black had easy equality in M. Petrov – P.H. Nielsen, Helsingør 2011.

**7...♝a5 8.0–0**

After 8.cxd6?! ♜xe4 9.dxe7 ♜e8 10.0–0 ♜xc3 11.bxc3 ♜xe7 Black has some advantage due to his better pawn structure.

**8...♜xc5† 9.♗h1 ♜c6**

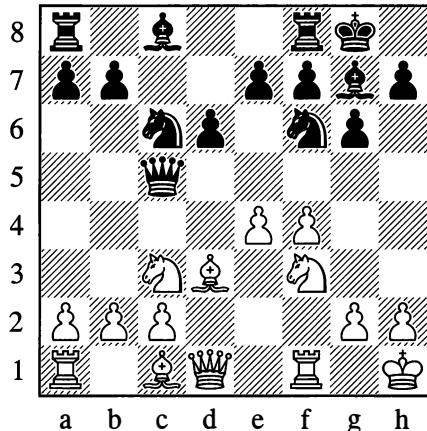
Black is planning to continue with ...♝g4, and the knight is helping to control e5 without obstructing the bishop.

The main alternative is: 9...♝bd7 10.♗d3 b6 11.♗e1 ♜b7 12.♗e3 (Black is well placed to meet 12.f5 with 12...♜ae8 13.♗h4 e6 when he obtains good counterplay.) Here Moskalenko points out that 12...♜c6?! 13.♗d4 ♜c8 14.♗h4 ♜c5 15.f5 is clearly better for White. Possibly 12...♜h5 is an improvement, but I would not aim for this position unless I had it well figured out in advance.

**10.♗d3**

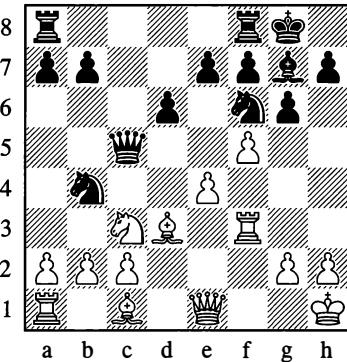
Attempting to launch a quick attack with 10.♗e1 ♜g4! 11.♗h4?! leads nowhere: 11...♜ac8 12.a3 (12.h3 ♜xf3 13.♗xf3 ♜d4 14.♗d1 b5 15.a3 a5 gives Black a strong initiative.) 12...♜h5 13.♗f2 ♜a5 Black is

doing well. White should avoid 14.♗xa7 on account of 14...♝xc3! 15.bxc3 ♜xe4, when ...♜g3†, ...♜xc3 and ...♝xc3 are one threat too many for White to deal with.



**10...♝g4 11.♗e1 ♜ac8**

11...♝xf3 is considered to be the main line, but I see absolutely no reason to exchange so soon. 12.♝xf3 ♜b4 (12...♝d7?! is a better try here, intending ...♝a5 and ...♝c5.) 13.f5!



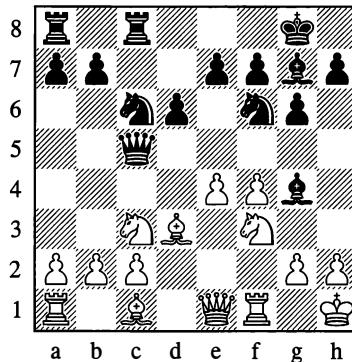
This is awkward for Black according to Moskalenko, and although I would take his word for it (when it comes to a position that depends on understanding), a small part of his evidence ought to be quoted: 13...♝g4 14.♗h4 h5 15.♗g5 e6 16.♗af1 and Black is defenceless. This might well be the case. In any event, Black should at least wait for h2-h3 before exchanging on f3. This not only costs

White a tempo, but also deprives his pieces of the h3-square.

A more tempting alternative is:

11...♝fc8?!

This is similar to the game, but it gives Black the option of retreating his queen to d8 without disconnecting the rooks, in the style of the Accelerated Dragon.



12.a3?!

This seems more dangerous than 12.♝e3 ♜a5 13.♝d2 (13.♗h4 ♜h5!) 13...♝d7 14.♝c4 ♜d8. Black is already pretty comfortable, and after 15.♗h4?! ♜b4 White is suddenly in trouble due to the threat to take on c2. 16.♝a3 ♜a5 17.♝d2 ♜xd3 18.cxd3 b5 19.e5 b4 20.♝c4 Now in Chandler – Ivanchuk, Reykjavik 1991, Black could have claimed a clear advantage with 20...♝a6N. Returning to the main line, White's idea is to make a quality waiting move. What should Black do?

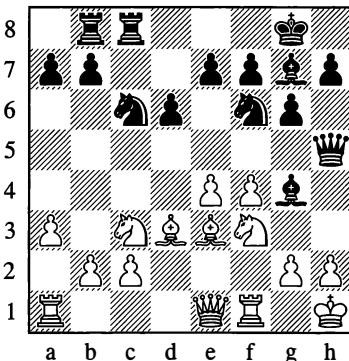
12...♝ab8?!

12...a6 runs into 13.♝a4!, and 12...♝d7 is met by 13.♝d2! when the bishop looks lonely on g4.

The rook move seems like a good way to continue this cat-and-mouse game. The critical continuation is:

13.♝e3 ♜h5!

13...♜a5 14.b4 ♜d8 15.b5 ♜a5 16.♝xa7 leads to hairy complications that seem to favour White.



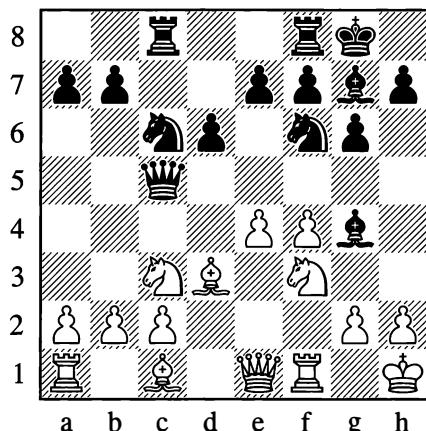
14.h3

14.Qe2 b5?! 15.Qg1 b4 16.axb4 Wxb4 intending 17.h3 Qxh3! 18.gxh3 Wxh3 is excellent for Black.

14.f5?! is interesting, but after 14...gxf5 15.exf5 Wxf5 16.Qxf5 Wxf5 17.Qd4 Wg6 18.Qf5 Wh8! White does not have enough for the pawn.

14...d5! 15.e5 Qxf3 16.Qxf3 d4 17.exf6 Qxf6 18.Qe4 dxе3

The position remains about equal.



12.Qe3

12.a3?! Just like after 11...Wfc8, this waiting move may be White's best. This time 12...a6 is a good response, as there will be no knight fork on b6. 13.Qe3 Wa5 14.Qb1 Wfd8?! Preparing ...d5-d4. 15.Qg1 Qxf3 16.Qxf3 e6 Black is well positioned to continue with ...d5.

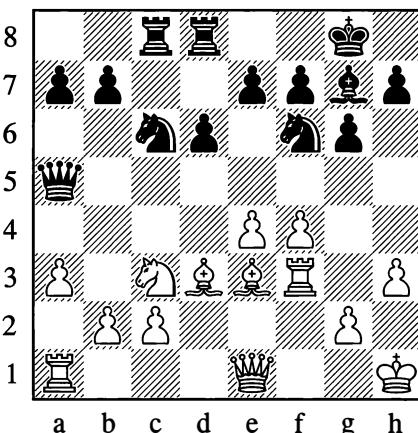
12...Wa5 13.a3 Wfd8

13...Wfe8?! is a good alternative, planning 14.h3 Qxf3 15.Qxf3 Qd7 with a better version of the 15...Qd7 line mentioned below.

14.h3

After 14.Qd2 Wh5?! Black is again planning to advance the d-pawn.

14...Qxf3 15.Qxf3



15...e6

In this position the thematic 15...d5?! 16.e5 d4 does not quite work: 17.exf6 exf6 (17...Wxf6 18.b4 Wc7 19.Qb5 Qd7 20.Qf2 a6 21.a4 axb5 22.axb5 is also a bit better for White.) 18.b4! Wc7 19.b5 Qb8 20.b6 Wxb6 21.Qf2 Wxc3 22.Wxc3 dxc3 23.Qxb6 axb6 24.Qd1 White has some winning chances in the endgame.

Since White has played h2-h3 (meaning it is no longer possible to continue with Wh3 and Wh4), it is a good moment to retreat the knight from f6, so I propose 15...Qd7!N 16.Qd2 We8?! as a valid improvement.

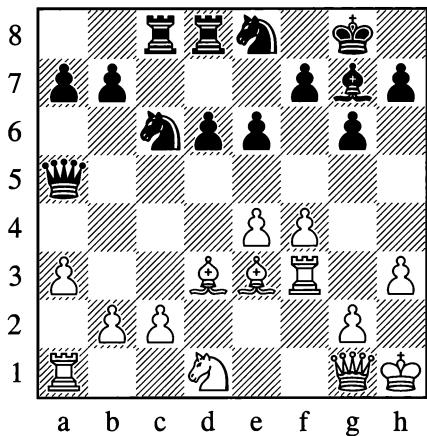
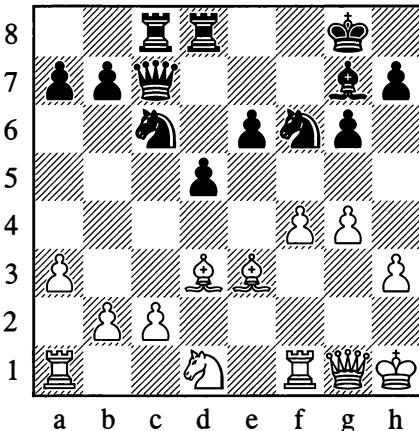
16.Wg1!?

The engines love to jump into lines like 16.b4 Wc7 17.Qb5, but after 17...Wb8 Black is well coordinated and ready to take the initiative in the centre.

**16...♜e8 17.♝d1?!**

This is far too slow.

Critical is: 17.♝b5! ♖xb2 (17...♝c7 18.♝xa7 ♖xa7 19.♝b6 ♕a4 20.♝xa7 ♖xb2 21.♝b1 ♖xa3 22.♝xb7 ♜c5 23.♝xc5 dxc5 24.♕xc5 ♜d5 25.♗g1 ♜b4 26.f5 is also slightly better for White.) 18.♝b1 ♜g7 19.♝xa7 ♖xa7 20.♝xa7 ♖xa3 21.f5 White keeps some advantage here, but we have already seen plenty of improvements and alternatives on previous turns for Black.

**17...d5! 18.e5 f5?**

18...f6! would have led to the same position without allowing the improvement given in the following note.

**19.exf6?**

White should have preferred 19.b4! ♕c7 20.b5 d4 21.♝f2 ♜e7 22.♝xd4 g5 when chaos breaks out, but White has the better chances.

**19...♜xf6 20.♝f1?!**

Glek points out that 20.b4 ♕c7 21.b5 e5 is good for Black.

**20...♕c7 21.g4?!**

This only makes matters worse, but it was hard for White to find a good move.

**21...e5 22.f5?!**

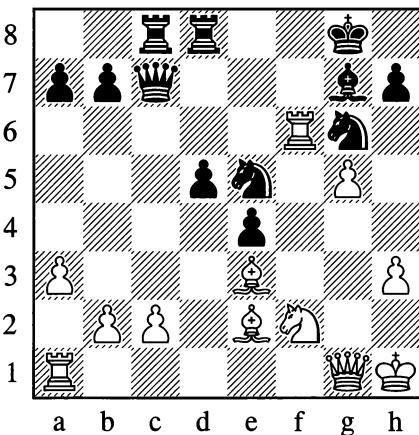
Possibly 22.c3 is better, but White is struggling anyway.

**22...e4 23.♝e2 gx f5 24.g5?!**

White is still in the game after 24.c3 intending 24...fxg4?! 25.♝g5! ♜f8 26.♝e3 with compensation for the pawn. Black should instead play 24...♝f8! 25.gxf5 ♜h8 with some advantage.

**24...♝d7 25.♝xf5 ♜de5 26.♝f2 ♜e7 27.♝f6 ♜7g6**

Ribli is playing it safe (just like I would have done) and stays away from 27...♛xc2 28.♝e1 ♜xf6 29.gxf6† ♜7g6 30.♝g4 ♜f3 which also wins, although it is hard to control for a human.



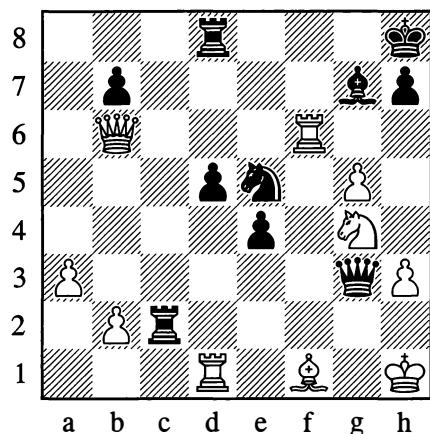
**28.♕d4?**

28.c3!! is the best try to keep things complicated.

**28...♝c6**

Now Black is clearly in the driver's seat, although the drama is not yet over.

**29.♛g4 ♝xd4 30.♝xd4 ♜g3 31.♚f1 ♞xc2  
32.♝d1 ♞h8 33.♝xa7 ♛e5 34.♝b6**

**34...♝dc8??**

This is such a bad move that I am still not sure if it should be attributed to a mess-up with the scoresheet.

34...♝e8 just wins.

**35.♝e3??**

35.♝xd5 creates the serious threat of ♞d8†. This forces Black to go on the defensive with 35...♝c6, which in turn leads to a draw after 36.♝xb7 ♞b8 37.♝xg7† ♞xg7 38.♝d7† ♞g8 39.♞h6† ♞h8 40.♞f7† ♞g8 41.♞h6†.

**35...♝h2† 36.♞xh2 ♜xe3 37.♝e6 ♜f3  
38.♞g4 ♜xg5 39.♝b6 d4 40.♞g2 h5 41.♞f2  
♝c1  
0-1**

In the final game of the chapter we will see what happens if White plays a waiting game with an early a2-a3.

**GAME 25**

**David Howell – Jon Speelman**

London 2003

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♝c3 d6 4.f4 ♜f6 5.♝f3**

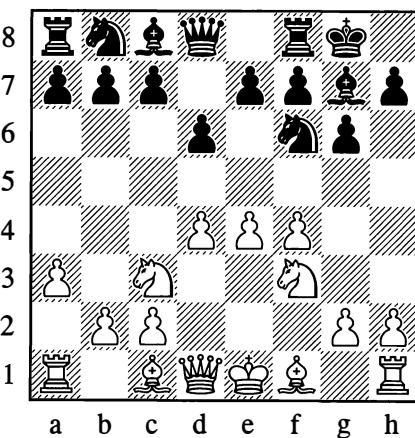
5.a3 does not change anything, as after 5...0–0 White does not have anything better than 6.♝f3 leading to the game.

**5...0–0**

It is hard to even imagine that this move can be critical to the whole variation, but I believe it is. The point is that the natural developing moves (6.♝e3, 6.♝d3 and 6.♝e2) all give away information, enabling Black to choose an appropriate way to strike at White's centre. This is an important point which puts the next move into context.

**6.a3!!**

Now we suddenly have very little information about what kind of set-up White is aiming for.

**6...♝a6!**

This is the most reliable move.

6...b6 7.♗d3 ♖b7 8.0–0 c5 9.d5 reaches a Benoni structure where a2-a3 is a waste of a move, but so are ...b6 and ...♖b7. I believe this is to White's advantage.

There have been some tests on 6...c5 lately, when 7.dxc5 ♜a5 8.b4 ♜d8 9.♗b1 ♔fd7 10.♗d2 dxc5 11.e5 ♔c6?! is one unexplored possibility that seems promising for Black. I will keep my eyes on the developments here, but it seems too early to recommend it.

### 7.♗e3

This is the main line, and a logical choice, since the black knight does not normally go to a6 against the ♗e3 set-up.

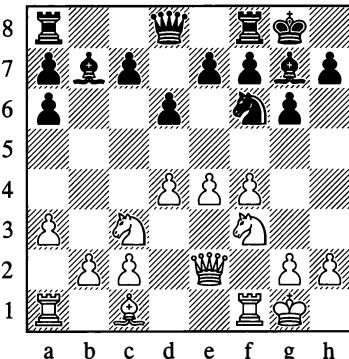
By contrast, 7.♗d3?! makes no sense at all, since 7...c5 8.d5 ♔c7 leads to a position where Black is almost a tempo up on the popular 6.♗d3 ♔a6 line, since a2-a3 is of little value. A possible continuation is 9.0–0 b5, when White is already struggling to keep his centre protected.

A hitherto underestimated alternative is

7.♗xa6?! bxa6 8.0–0

How Black should continue?

8...♗b7 9.♗e2



9...♗c8!N

With the triple purpose of preparing ...c5, defending the light squares and preparing ...a5 and ...♔a6.

9...e6 weakens d6, and after 10.e5 ♔d7 11.♗e4 ♜e7 12.♗d2 Black had trouble defending the dark squares in Groszpeter – F. Arnold, Zalakaros 1995.

10.b4

10.e5 ♔d7 11.b4 c5 is fine for Black, since 12.bxc5?! dxc5 13.d5 ♔b6 loses a pawn for White.

10...c5 11.bxc5 dxc5 12.e5

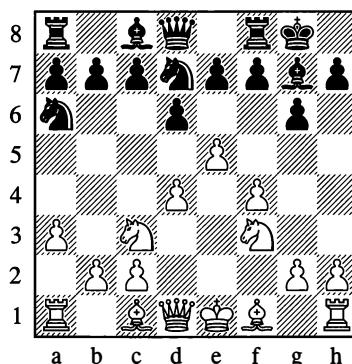
12.d5? is refuted by 12...♗xd5!.

12...♗d7

The position is starting to open up nicely for Black's bishop pair.

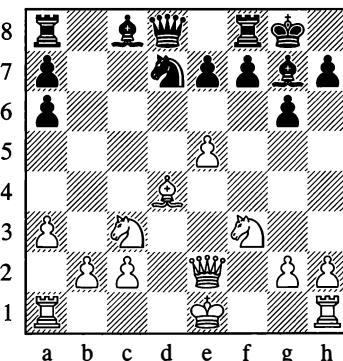
The most dangerous alternative is:

7.e5?! ♔d7



Now a) 8.♗e3 has been played, but it is also important to consider b) 8.h4!N.

a) 8.♗e3 c5 9.♗xa6 cxd4 10.♗xd4 dxe5 11.fxe5 bxa6 12.♗e2



12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

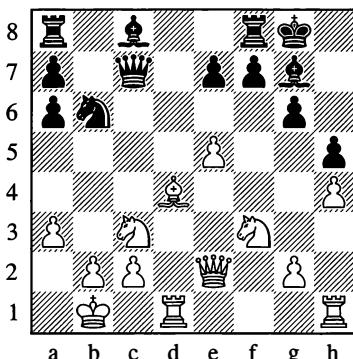
A clear improvement over 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7?$ ! 13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}a5$  14.e6 which was good for White in Sedina – I. Marin, Plovdiv 2008.

13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.h4 h5

It is a bad omen for White that she has struck a dead end on the kingside. Could White's position already be beyond saving?

15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

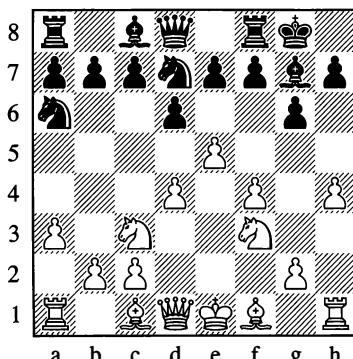
White should try to get the knights active with 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , although Black is still better after 17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .



15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xa3!$  20.bxa3  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

Black was winning in Sedina – Galko, Rockville 2013.

b) 8.h4?!



So far no one has tested this move, which can be compared to Game 17 at the start of

the chapter. Here the insertion of a2-a3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  makes a certain difference.

8...c5! 9.h5

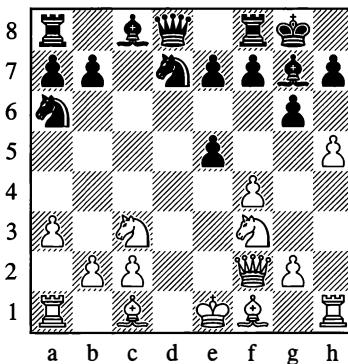
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ ! cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 11.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}db8!$

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$

15.h5  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  leads to an unclear position. I find it quite unbelievable that no one has tested this yet.

9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4$  dxe5 11. $\mathbb{W}f2$

Now Black may consider a different kind of defence than in the positions without a2-a3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .



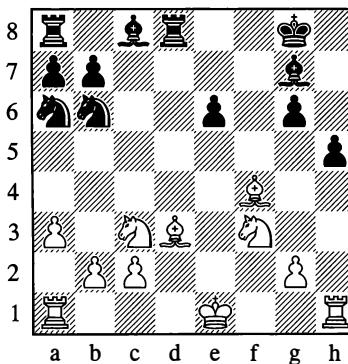
11...exf4?!

11...e4 is playable too: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13.hxg6 hxg6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is complex, but should be fine for Black.) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ! exf6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  I will have to stop here and call it unclear.

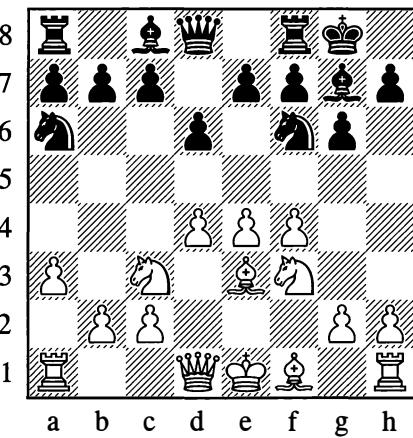
12.hxg6 fxg6! 13. $\mathbb{W}h4$  h5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ †

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c8$  is fine for Black according to the engines.

14...e6 15. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



17...e5 18.♗g5 ♖xd3! 19.cxd3 ♔c5  
Followed by ...♘f5, with great compensation.



### 7...c5

7...b6?! is an interesting alternative, but after 8.e5 ♔g4 9.♗e2 c5 10.0–0–0 White has the initiative. This kind of position is all right for Black if he is able to take on e3 and open up the centre. Here, however, the knight on a6 makes this scenario unlikely, and White will obtain a strong attack with h4-h5.

### 8.♕xa6

White has a few other options.

8.e5?! has not yet been tested. Play may continue: 8...♔g4 9.♗g1 cxd4 10.♗xd4 (10.♖xd4 dx5 11.fxe5 ♔xe5! 12.♗xe5 ♖c7 13.♗d5 ♖xe5† 14.♗xe5 ♔xe5 15.♗xe7† ♗g7 16.0–0–0 ♔g4 17.♗e1 f6 is balanced.) 10...dx5 11.fxe5 ♔c7 12.h3 ♔h6 13.g4 f5 14.exf6 exf6 15.♗c4† ♔f7 16.0–0 ♔e6 White might come to regret the liberal use of pawn moves in front of the king.

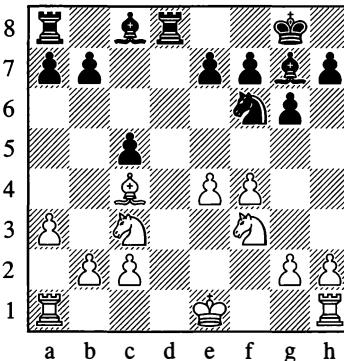
8.dxc5 gives Black a choice between the reliable a) 8...♗xc5 and the interesting novelty b) 8...♔g4?N.

a) 8...♗xc5 9.♗xc5 dxc5 10.♖xd8?!

Better is 10.e5N ♔h5 11.g3 ♔g4 with an

equal but somewhat boring position for Black.

10...♖xd8 11.♗c4



11...b5!!

A splendid idea that, sadly, did not get the right follow-up.

12.♗xb5 ♔b7?!

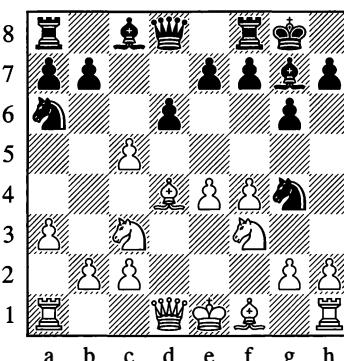
12...♗b8? 13.e5 gave White some advantage in Illescas Cordoba – Sznajik, Thessaloniki 1988.

13.♗d3 c4 14.♗xc4 ♔xe4 15.♗xe4 ♖xe4 16.♗xf7† ♔f8 17.♗b3 ♖xb2

With some advantage for Black.

b) 8...♔g4?N 9.♗d4

After 9.♗g1?! ♖xc3† 10.bxc3 ♗xc5 Black is already better.

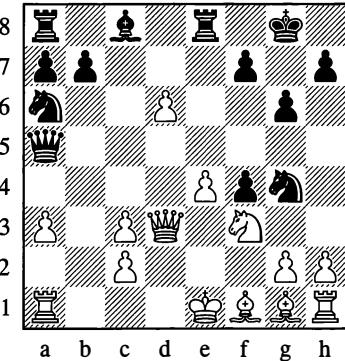


9...e5! 10.♗g1

10.fxe5 dxc5 11.♗g1 ♔xe5 is decent for Black; the machine offers the interesting tactical finesse 12.♗xa6 ♖b6?.

10...exf4! 11.cxd6  $\mathbb{E}e8$  12. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  13.bxc3  
 $\mathbb{W}a5$

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.0–0–0 I find the d-pawn somewhat disturbing.

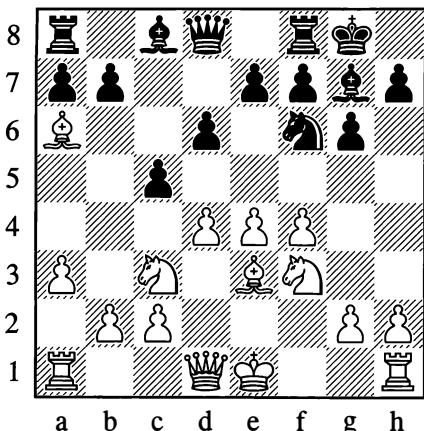


14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

14. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  is highly unclear, and just the kind of thing I would normally be looking for.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4\uparrow$   
17.cxd4  $\mathbb{E}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  h6

The insanity is nearing an end. White will lose the d6-pawn but pick up the f4-pawn, resulting in an endgame with balanced chances.



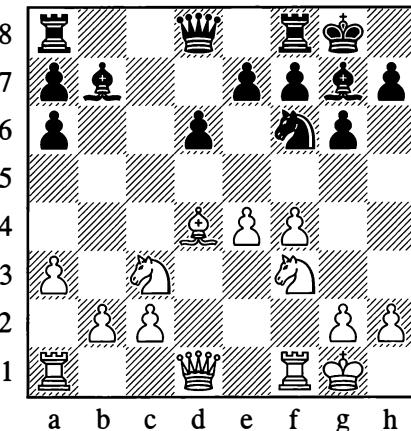
8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow?$  is a playable alternative, when 9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  bxa6 gives White a choice:

a) 10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  11.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}c7!$  and Black has no complaints.

b) 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  is Moskalenko's improvement. Best play continues 11.e5! (11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is excellent for Black) 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  cxd4 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15.gxf3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  with an unclear position.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  bxa6 10.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$



11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Another option for White is 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ , when 11... $\mathbb{E}e8\uparrow$  prepares ...e5 and leads to a good game for Black.

A more critical test is 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$ , overprotecting e4 and preparing f4-f5. Black has a good answer in 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$  12. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{E}ac8\uparrow$ , aiming to exchange queens on c4, when 13.f5  $\mathbb{W}c4$  14. $\mathbb{W}e3$  e5! 15.fxe6 fxe6 is about equal. There may be other decent ways for Black to treat the position, but this line has the advantage of being relatively forcing.

Another logical plan is:

11. $\mathbb{W}e1$

Intending to put the queen on h4 and go for an attack.

11... $\mathbb{E}e8\uparrow N$

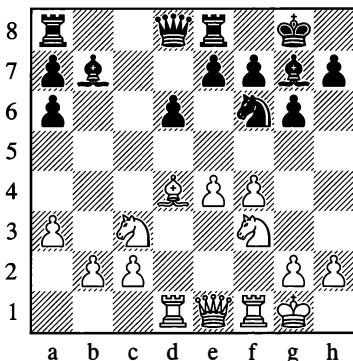
11...a5?! 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$  (12. $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$  e5! 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is fine for Black) 12... $\mathbb{W}c8$  13. $\mathbb{W}h4$  h6 was played in Vega Gutierrez – Lahno, Benidorm 2008, and here White could have gained an advantage with 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6

15.f5. I recommend that you keep your focus in these positions, as it can easily go wrong for Black.

11...♜h5?!N can also be played, in analogy with the main game. However, I prefer the rook move, a useful prophylactic step which is directed against ♜h4.

12.♝d1

12.♛h4? e5! reveals Black's idea.



12...♝c8 13.♛h4?

Once again we will see that this move is tactically flawed.

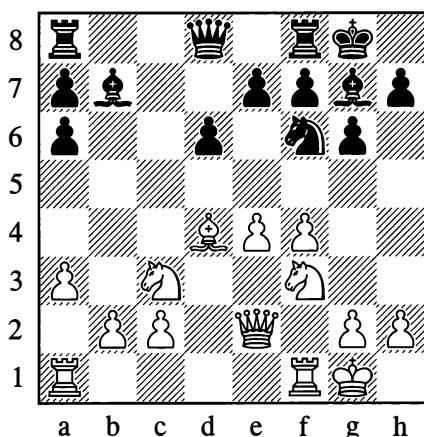
13.f5 is better, although 13...♛a5! offers Black sufficient counterplay.

13...♝xe4! 14.♛g5?

This is the move White would like to play, but it does not work. Alternatives leave White a pawn down for insufficient compensation.

14...♝xc2 15.♝xf6? exf6 16.♛xh7† ♜f8

Black is winning.



11...♜h5!?

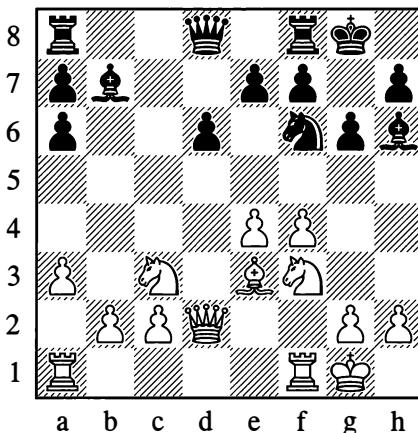
This slightly surprising move works rather well.

12.♛d2

After 12.♝xg7 ♜xg7 13.f5 ♛b6† 14.♝h1 Black should go for 14...♝ac8 (14...♛xb2 15.♝ab1 ♜xc3 16.♝xb7 gives White too much activity) 15.♝ab1 ♜f6 with a good position.

12...♝h6! 13.♝e3 ♜f6

It is already hard to offer good advice for White. When his initiative inevitably fades, Black will have the favourable structure.



14.f5

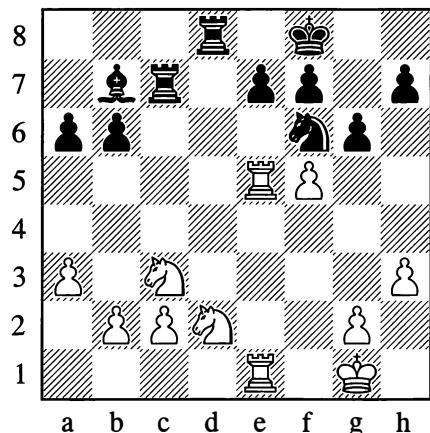
Neither does 14.e5 ♜g4 15.♝ad1 ♜e8! fully solve White's problems.

14...♛b6!

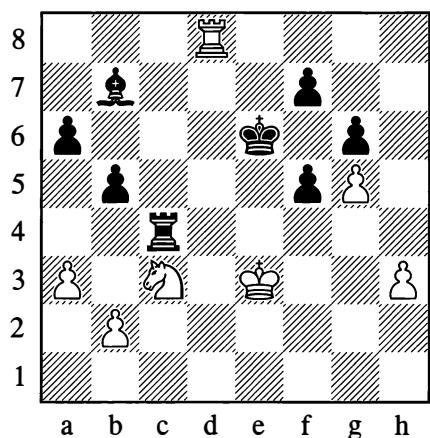
Further exchanges are to Black's advantage.

15.♝xb6 ♜xd2 16.♝xd2 axb6 17.♝ae1 ♜fc8  
18.e5 dxе5 19.♝xe5 ♜c7 20.♝fe1 ♜f8 21.h3  
♝d8

Black is clearly better in the endgame, and Speelman skilfully converts his advantage.



22.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  23.  $f\text{x}g6$   $h\text{x}g6$  24.  $g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$   
 25.  $\mathbb{E}5e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  26.  $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  27.  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  28.  $\mathbb{E}e3$   
 $\mathbb{E}f6$  29.  $\mathbb{E}xf6$   $exf6$  30.  $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  31.  $\mathbb{E}f2$   $b5$   
 32.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  33.  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  34.  $\mathbb{E}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$   
 35.  $\mathbb{E}d8$   $f5$  36.  $g5$   $\mathbb{E}c4$



37.  $\mathbb{E}d4?$

White's best defence was 37.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{E}e4\#$  38.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $f4$  39.  $h4$ , although 39...  $\mathbb{E}c4$  40.  $b3$   $\mathbb{E}c2$  41.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  should win for Black eventually.

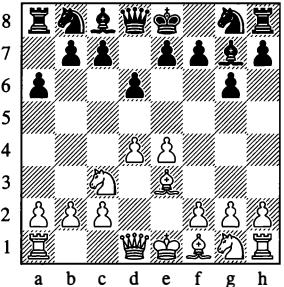
37...  $\mathbb{E}xd4$  38.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $f4$  39.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  40.  $h4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$  41.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $f3$  42.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $a5$  43.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$   
 44.  $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  45.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  46.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$   
 47.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$  48.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  49.  $b4$   $axb4$   
 50.  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  51.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  52.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $f2$   
 53.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$

0–1

## Conclusion

Black can choose between many different systems against the Austrian, but the 5...0–0 set-up advocated in this chapter is the one that requires the least work to learn, and continual updates will not be necessary. The main threats to Black's set-up are seen in Games 18 and 20. Personally I find the symmetrical lines in Game 21 a bit annoying, since they give little room for White to mess things up, but the nice thing about the Pirc (and Modern) is that even the equal positions tend to have enough imbalances to keep things interesting.

# Chapter 3

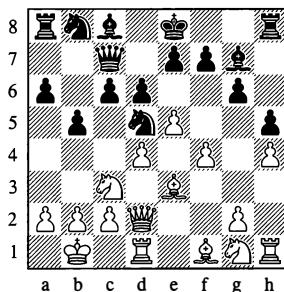


## Flexible Dragon Unleashed

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6

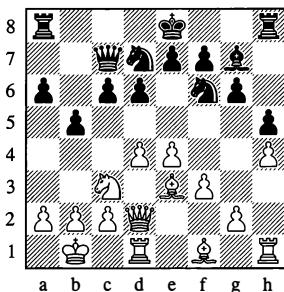
5.g4!?	Game 31	184
5.h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.f3 b5 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5 8.0-0-0 c6!	Game 27	161
5. $\mathbb{W}d2$		
5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$		
6.f3 b5 7.a4	Game 32	187
6.a4 b6	Game 34	197
6.h4		
6...h5	Game 26	153
6...h6	Game 28	169
5...b5!		
6.0-0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7!$	Game 29	174
6.f3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7.g4!?	Game 30	180
6.a4	Game 33	191

Notes to Game 27 – after 11.f4!?



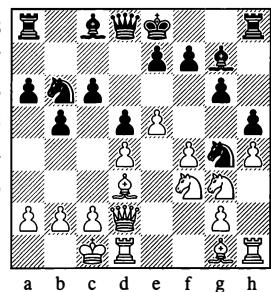
11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#N$

Game 27 – after 12. $\mathbb{E}h1$



12... $\mathbb{E}b8\#N$

Game 28 – after 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1?$



14... $\mathbb{Q}h6\#N$

If you expect this chapter to be about a young orphaned boy who learns Kung Fu and takes on the world, you will be disappointed. This variation has more in common with the Invisible Man – leaving the knight on g8 and the king in the centre is really just a way of staying invisible, not showing the opponent your body or where to strike.

The Flexible Dragon Unleashed is the first of two Dragon siblings that have the first four moves in common.

#### **1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{B}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

In a little over 150 games with the Modern so far, my opponents have played 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  in nearly 70 of them. It is by far the most popular move.

With this move White enters the Flexible Variation: flexible in the sense that White is playing with hidden cards and can still choose between a number of different set-ups. It is up to Black to find a move that is good enough to fit in against any of 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 5.f4, or 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$  followed by f2-f3 and h2-h4. I believe there is only one such move.

#### **4...a6!?**

This move introduces the Flexible Dragon. With pawns on g6, d6 and a6, the structure resembles the back of a dragon and the g7-bishop is preparing to breathe fire on the d4-pawn. Black intends to continue with ...b5, ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and ...c7-c5, exchanging the c-pawn for the one on d4 and thus reaching a Sicilian Dragon structure.

To appreciate the advantages of Black's last move, let us briefly consider a couple of sensible alternatives.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is pretty straightforward, but it gives White excellent attacking chances after  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , 0-0-0 and  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ . This line is not as clear as it once seemed, but I still prefer to avoid it.

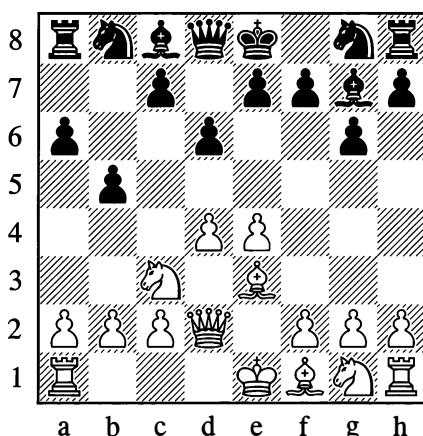
4...c6 prepares ...b5, but I do not like Black's position after 5.f4!. The reason is that it will take longer for Black to achieve ...c6-c5 compared to the 4...a6 lines, as after ...b5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  Black will either have to weaken the light squares on the queenside by playing ...b4, or spend additional time on ...a6, when 4...c6 will prove a tempo loss. Only if White plays an early  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and a2-a4 can I see Black benefitting from this move order.

#### **5. $\mathbb{W}d2$**

This move is by far the most common, but not necessarily the most dangerous. The aggressive 5.f4 leads back to Chapter 1, but 5.h4! is tricky and 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is a dangerous option that will be dealt with in the next chapter.

#### **5...b5**

In *Tiger's Modern* I recommended a move order beginning with 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , but I have since come to change my priorities.



There are many possible plans from here, which can be summarized as follows:

**White plays an early h2-h4, intending to meet ...h5 with  $\mathbb{Q}h3-g5$  (Games 26 and 27)**  
The first game shows how Black can cope with the knight on g5, by delaying castling, slowly developing his queenside pieces, and finally

breaking with ...c5 when fully prepared. In the second game Black plays an early ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and keeps his bishop on c8, in order to eliminate the knight when it arrives on h3.

### **Black meets h2-h4 with ...h6 (Game 28)**

This provocative-looking plan is not a bad alternative, especially considering that there is little to fear from an early f2-f4.

### **0-0-0 and f2-f3 with $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ (Game 29)**

When White makes some developing moves before advancing his kingside pawns, Black gets a good game with the typical plan of ...b5, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  and ...c5.

### **White plays g2-g4 before h2-h4 (Game 30)**

When White opts for an early g2-g4, Black should proceed with the usual plan on the queenside. When h2-h4 is played, Black may respond with either ...h6 or ...h5, the choice depending on certain details, as explained in the notes to Game 30.

### **White plays a quick g2-g4 followed by $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (Game 31)**

This is an interesting hybrid, starting with  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  before switching to an extended fianchetto. In the main game I obtained a good position with the provocative ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , but today I would prefer the standard plan of ...b5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , as given in the notes.

### **White meets ...b5 with a2-a4, and after ...b4 then $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , c2-c3, $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , $\mathbb{Q}e2$ etc.**

(Games 32 and 33)

In Game 32 Black develops his knight to d7 early, and thus is able to follow ...b4 with ...c5. In Game 33 White prevents this by meeting 5...b5 with the immediate 6.a4, so that after 6...b4 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , Black has to lose a tempo with ...a5. On the flip side, Black may develop his knight to the more active c6-square rather than d7.

### **If Black delays ...b5, preventing it with 6.a4 (Game 34)**

Even though Black can avoid this plan with my recommended move order, Game 34 is still worth checking, as it demonstrates some interesting possibilities in the Benoni pawn structure.

### **Switching plans with $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

This leads to the Flexible Dragon Restrained, as covered in the next chapter.

We will start by dealing with one of the most critical lines, where White launches the h-pawn in “Plan A” style and delays f2-f3 until it is necessary.

## GAME 26

### **Artyom Timofeev – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Gothenburg 2005

#### **1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6**

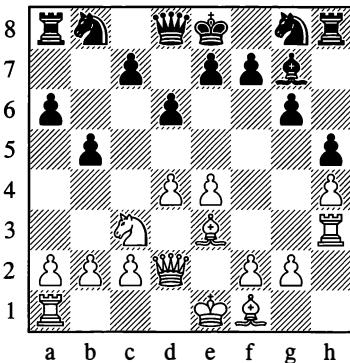
I read somewhere that some other chess authors had speculated about me giving up the ...a6 lines in the Modern. Have they even looked at my games? I do indeed play the Pirc move order from time to time, and have also experimented with 3...c6, as well as 2...d6 and 3...c6 delaying ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , but this does not mean that I stopped playing the 4...a6 lines.

For example, in the present position I have played 4...c6 twice in the last seven years. Crucially, I have only done so against players who are known to favour the plan with h2-h4 and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , in which case Black has more use for ...c6 than ...a6. However, I have also played 4...a6 sixteen(!) times during that same period. So why do I not recommend 4...c6? Because I believe it to be complete rubbish against 5.f4!.

#### **5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

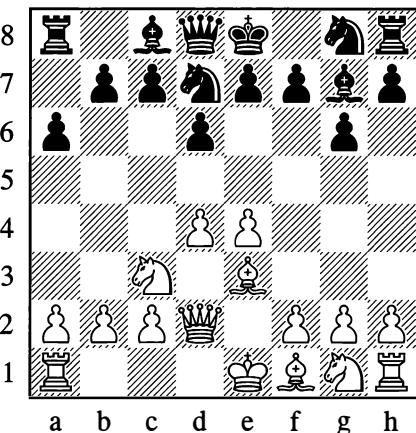
I have since stopped playing this move order. Nowadays I would prefer 5...b5, and after 6.h4 it is worth examining two ideas:

a) 6...h5 is obvious, but not best. White can play: 7.Qh3 (7.Qf3?! Qd7 [7...Qf6?! intending Qg4 might be better] 8.Qg5 c6 transposes to the main game.) 7...Qxh3 8.Qxh3



8...Qf6?! 9.f3 This was the actual move order in Zhou – Hillarp Persson, London 2012 (quoted in the note to White's 12th move in Game 27). Instead of White's last move, it would have been strong to play 9.a4! b4 10.Qd5 Qxe4 11.Qxb4 with some advantage.

b) Instead Black should play 6...Qf6!, when 7.f3 transposes to Game 27.



## 6.h4

The point of combining this move with a later a2-a4 is to provoke ...h5 in order to plant a knight on g5, reducing any subsequent minor-piece traffic congestion in the centre.

## 6...h5 7.Qh3

7.a4 Qgf6! (7...b6 8.Qh3 c5 9.Qc4 is dangerous for Black, so he needs to speed up development) 8.f3 (8.0–0–0 b5!) 8...b6 9.Qh3 c5 10.Qg5 cxd4 11.Qxd4 Qb7 leads to a balanced game. It is troublesome for White to combine a2-a4 and long castling.

An older game of mine continued:

7.Qf3?! Qgf6?

Not a bad move, although nowadays I would prefer 7...b5.

8.e5

My idea was 8.Qg5 Qg4, exchanging off the dark-squared bishop. Then 9.Qc4 0–0 10.Qxf7†! Qxf7 11.Qe6 Qe8 12.Qxc7 Qd8 13.Qxa8 b5 is unclear.

8...Qg4 9.e6 fxe6 10.Qd3 Qf8 11.0–0–0 Qd7?!

Stronger was 11...c6!N, intending ...a5-a4 followed by ...Qa5, when it is an open affair.

12.Qhe1

White had fine compensation for the pawn in Hodgson – Hillarp Persson, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

## 7...b5 8.Qg5

I encountered a rare and interesting plan in 2008:

8.0–0–0 c6 9.f3

9.Qg5 transposes to the note to White's next move in the main game.

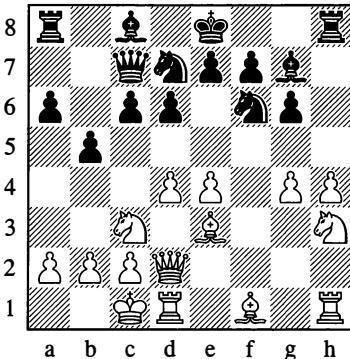
9...Qc7 10.g4?!

10.Qg5 transposes as before.

10...hxg4 11.fxg4 Qgf6

After 11...b4? 12.Qa4 Qdf6 13.Qg5 Qxg4! (13...Qxg4 14.Qe1↑) 14.e5 dxe5 15.dxe5 Qxe3 16.Qxe3 Qxe5 17.Qb1 Black may

well be objectively better, but sacrificing development to go pawn-hunting has never been my style.



**12.g5**

12... $\mathbb{Q}f2$  is met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7!$  intending ...c5, when Black has the initiative.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

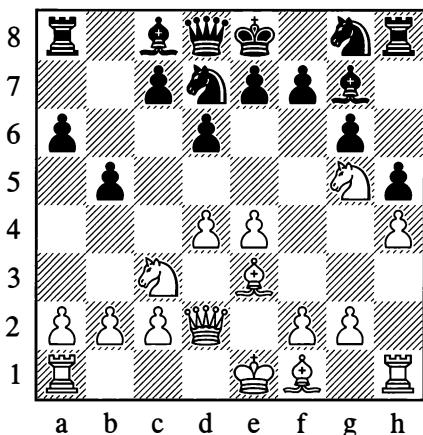
I was afraid that my knight would be shipwrecked after 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , but the engine believes Black can survive this with 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ .

**13. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$**

I like Black after 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5.

**14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$**

The game was balanced in Briscoe – Hillarp Persson, Liverpool 2008.



**8...c6!**

This is somewhat paradoxical, considering that Black has already played ...a6, but it is clearly stronger than 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.0–0–0, when White has a big threat in e4-e5. Black has nothing better than 9...c6, after which 10.e5 dx5 11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.f4!? (there is also 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  13. $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with a slight endgame advantage to White) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  14.f5 gx5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  is unpleasant for Black.

**9.a4**

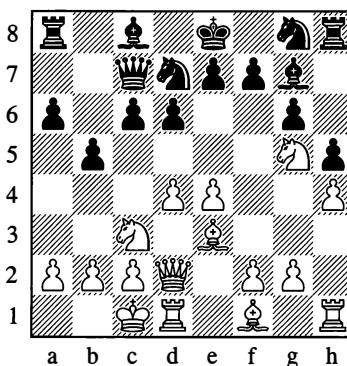
The most critical line in the entire h4/...h5 complex begins with:

**9.0–0–0!**

Now Black has to choose where to put the queen.

**9... $\mathbb{W}c7!$**

9... $\mathbb{W}a5$  is superficial; the queen is generally better placed on c7. Try to remember this. 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.f3 (11.f4?) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Black intends ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  and ...c5, perhaps with castling thrown in somewhere. Black is doing okay, but I would rather have this position with the queen on c7.



**10.f3**

10.g3?  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  is nice for Black. After 10.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  Black has a grip on the light squares and can contemplate ...d5. (11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  13.e6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fx6 is unclear.)

10.♕f4?! should be taken seriously. 10...e5! This is an uncommon move in these positions but, since White has wasted time with the bishop, Black can afford it. (After 10...e6?! it is unlikely that Black will be able to go much longer without playing ...e5 anyway.) 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗e3 ♗gf6 13.♗e2 ♗b7 If you think about this position with two extra tempos for White, you will understand why ...e5 is not a move for every occasion. 14.♗d6 ♗xd6 15.♗xd6 ♗f8 16.♗d2 ♗c5 17.f3 ♗e7 18.a3 a5 Black has equalized.

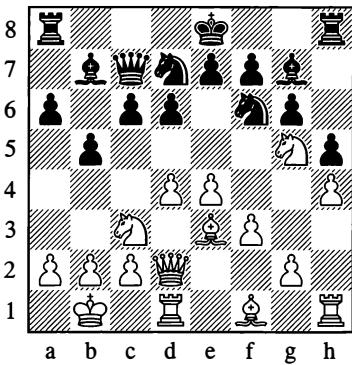
10...♗gf6 11.♔b1!

11.♗f2 b4! 12.♗e2 c5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.e5 b3!! is promising for Black.

11...♗b7!

11...0–0 12.g4! is dangerous as usual. The engine does not mind Black's position at first, but comes to its senses later.

11...♗b6?! 12.e5?! is something to look out for if you put the knight on b6. Black now has a choice between exchanging on e5 immediately or a bit later. Both lines are quite complex and slightly better for White.



Considering how critical this position is, I am surprised at how few serious games have reached it. I think White's best continuation is:

12.♗f2!

12.♗e2 c5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.♗f4 ♘b8?! leads to mutual chances.

12.f4?! ♗g4 13.e5 ♗b6 14.♗ce4 (14.e6?! f5!, followed by ...b4 and ...c5, is great for Black.) 14...♗c8?! 15.♗d3 f6 16.♗f3 (16.exf6 exf6 17.d5 0–0 18.♗e6 ♗xe6 19.dxe6 f5 20.♗xb6 ♗xb6 21.♗g5 d5 favours Black.) 16...♗d5 17.exd6?! exd6 18.♗f2 0–0 19.♗he1 ♗f5 Black had a nice position and went on to win in Tolnai – Kindermann, Berlin 1987.

12...♗c8

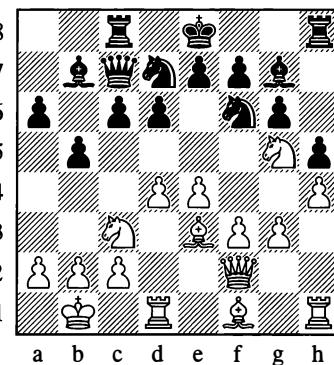
This move involves a degree of prophylactic thinking.

After 12...e5?! 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.g4! it becomes obvious why the queen went to f2, since 14...hxg4? 15.fxg4 ♗xg4?? 16.♗xf7† is out of the question.

12...♗h7?! is a possible continuation if you are thinking about long castling.

13.g3

The idea behind Black's last move is revealed after 13.g4?! hxg4 14.fxg4, when Black can continue with 14...b4 15.♗a4 c5!, all because of the rook on c8.



13...c5

13...0–0 14.g4! is dangerous for Black.

14.♗h3 b4! 15.♗a4 ♗c6

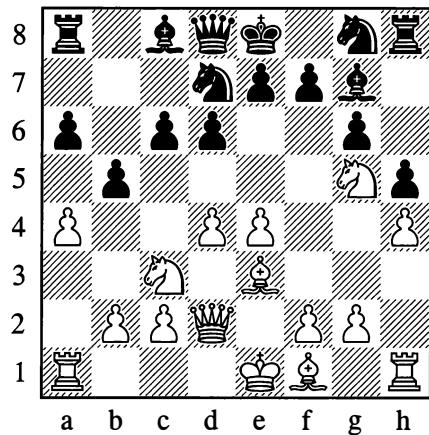
15...♗c8? 16.♗xc5! dxc5 17.e5 is good for White.

16.b3 cxd4 17.♗xd4 a5 18.♗c4 ♗a6 19.♗xc8† ♗xc8 20.♗d4

Finally, now that there is only one pair of rooks left on the board, it is safe to play:

20...0–0!

Phew! Black is fine.



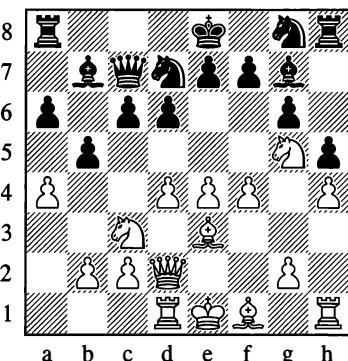
9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10.f3

10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.f3 transposes to 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  as given in the note to White's next move.

In Koge 1997, Ivan Sokolov tried to mix two plans against me:

10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  11.f4?!

If White intends to play this, he should put his bishop on e2 first.



11... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

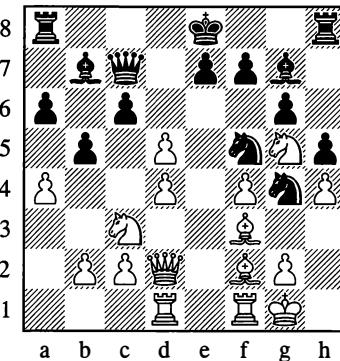
As soon as White commits his pawns to f4 and h4, this becomes an excellent square for the knight.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}fg4$  14.0–0 d5?!

This is not strictly necessary, but it is nonetheless interesting. For the price of

a pawn, the black knights will get to go surfing on the light squares.

15.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



16... $\mathbb{Q}d8?!$

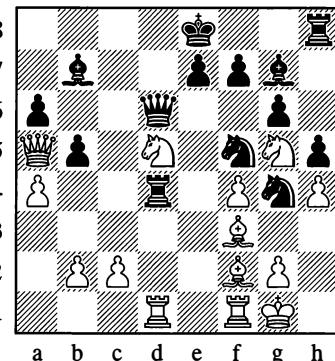
The greedy 16...bx a4 17.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  is excellent for Black, but if 14...d5 was Alpha, then this was my Omega.

17.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  19. $\mathbb{W}a5?!$

Best is 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ , when Black has to play precisely to keep the balance: 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$  22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  0–0 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  25. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  with a complicated position.

19... $\mathbb{W}d6?$

19... $\mathbb{W}d7!$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and Black is much better.



20. $\mathbb{Q}e4?$

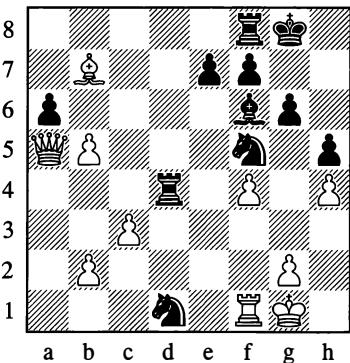
White misses a chance to get a big advantage with 20. $\mathbb{Q}c7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{A}xb5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ .

20... $\mathbb{W}xd5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$

23.♕xb7 ♜xd1 24.axb5 0-0!

Avoiding 24...axb5 25.♔a8† ♔d7 26.♗c6† ♔d6 27.♗b7.

25.c3



25...♝de3!! 26.bxa6

26.g4 hxg4 27.cxd4 axb5 is also great for Black.

26...♝d7?

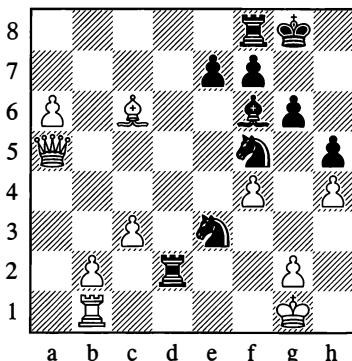
Stronger is 26...♝d2! 27.♔a1 ♕xh4 with a venomous attack.

27.♔c6?

After 27.♔a1 ♕xh4 28.♝f3 ♛g4 29.♕xg4 hxg4 30.a7 ♜a8 Black has only a small advantage.

27...♝d2 28.♜b1

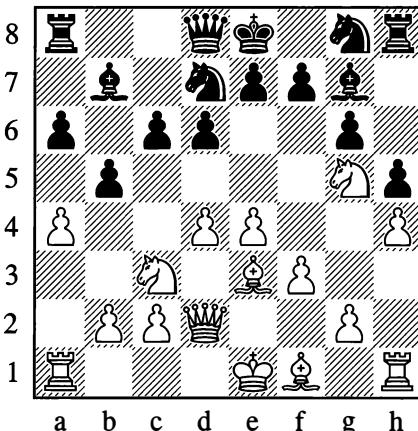
28.a7 is a better try, although 28...♝xh4 29.a8=♛ (29.♔a1 ♛g4) 29...♝f2† 30.♔h2 ♛xf1† 31.♔h3 ♜xa8 32.♛xa8† ♛g7 is still winning for Black.



28...♝xh4 29.♝f3 ♛f2† 30.♔h1 ♛g4 31.♕xg4

hxg4 32.c4? ♛g7 33.♛e5† f6

White resigned in I. Sokolov – Hillarp Persson, Koge 1997.



10...♝gf6

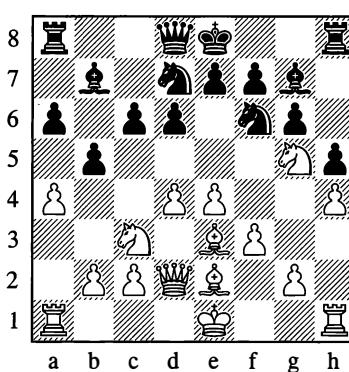
I believe Black has nothing to complain about in this position.

11.♔d3?!

Better is:

11.♔e2!

This avoids blocking the queen's influence along the d-file.



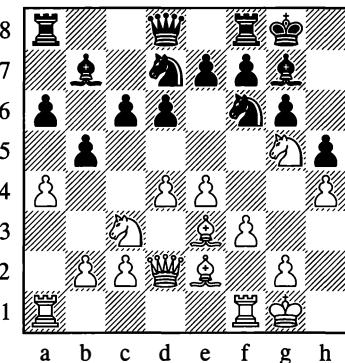
11...0-0!

Black no longer has to worry about White playing 0-0-0 and e4-e5, so there is no reason to delay castling.

11...e5?! is premature. After 12.axb5 axb5 13.♜xa8 ♛xa8 14.0-0 0-0 15.dxe5 dxe5

16.♗d1 ♘e8 17.♗e1 a draw was agreed in Van der Wiel – Azmaiparashvili, Amsterdam 1990, but White could have played on. For instance, after 17...♗f8 18.♗a1 ♗b8 White keeps a slight advantage with 19.♗d1! intending b2-b4 and ♖f2-d3.

12.0–0



12...e5

This is a standard reaction when White has ruled out long castling, but not necessarily the best move.

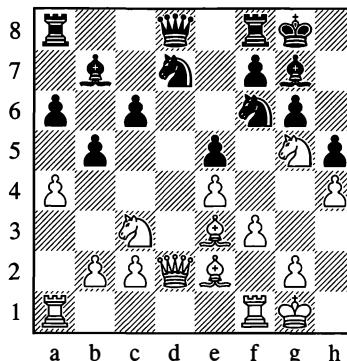
12...♗c7 13.♗d1 e5! 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 is equal. I cannot find a single game with 12...e6!N intending ...b4 and ...c5. A possible continuation is 13.♗d1! (13.f4 b4 14.♗d1 c5 15.♗f2 cxd4 16.♗xd4 a5 is fine for Black) 13...♗b6 14.axb5 axb5 15.♗xa8 ♗xa8 16.b3 ♗bd7 17.♗f2 and I would not mind playing either side of the board.

Another idea is 12...b4 13.♗d1 c5 14.d5 when I find Black's position rather passive, although it may still be okay after 14...a5 intending ...♗c8 and ...♗a6.

13.dxe5!

The start of an interesting plan. Normal, but less dangerous is: 13.♗fd1 ♘e8 14.♗f1 ♗e7 15.axb5 (15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♗d6 ♗xd6 17.♗xd6 ♗f8 18.♗d2 is roughly equal.) 15...axb5 16.♗xa8 Now in Ciocaltea – Swanson, Lucerne 1982, Black made the incomprehensible decision to recapture with the bishop. Instead 16...♗xa8 17.b4 exd4 18.♗xd4 ♗f8 would have been equal.

13...dxe5



14.♗d1!?

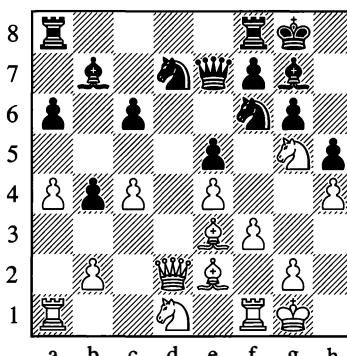
Another game featured a similar plan: 14.♗a2 ♗e7 15.♗c1 (15.c4!) 15...♗fd8 16.♗c3 ♗h7 (16...♗e8 17.♗b3) 17.♗b3 ♗ac8 18.♗fd1 ♗xg5 19.hxg5 ♗f8 20.♗d2 and White had unpleasant pressure in Armas – J. Nogueiras, Matanzas 1994. Unless Black can find a way to improve on this game, he should put 12...e5 on the scrapheap and switch to one of the alternatives noted at move 12.

14...♗e7 15.c4

White could have tried 15.b4 intending c2-c4, but 15...♗fd8 16.♗b2 ♗f8 17.c3 ♗e8 keeps the balance.

15...b4!

Other moves would leave Black with either a bad structure or a weak pawn on b5.



16.c5! a5 17.♗c2?

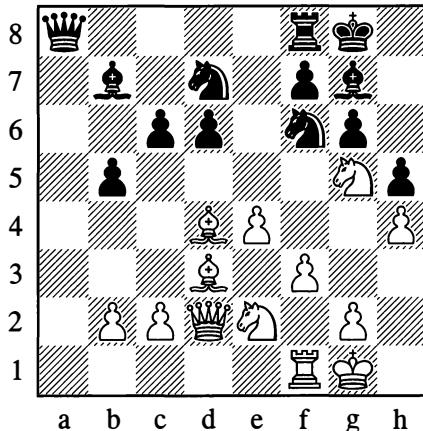
This gives me time to disentangle my position. After 17.  $\mathbb{W}d6!$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  18.  $cxd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19.  $b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  White has excellent compensation for the pawn.

17...♞h7!

White faces an uphill struggle due to the weaknesses on c5 and g5.

18.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  19.  $hxg5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$

Black had some advantage due to the weak c- and g-pawns in Apicella – Hillarp Persson, Zaragoza 1995.



11...0-0 12.0-0 e5!

When White has ruled out long castling in these positions, Black should generally aim for ...e5 rather than ...c5. In the event that White exchanges on e5, it is sometimes okay to play a symmetrical position with ...dxe5, but I would prefer to take back with the knight if possible, in order to keep the position more dynamic.

### 13.axb5 exd4

I was worried that I would lose my chance to get a dynamic centre after 13...axb5 14.¤xa8 ¤xa8 15.¤e2!, although 15...exd4 16.¤xd4 ¤b8 might still be fine for Black.

14. ♗xd4 axb5 15. ♖xa8 ♕xa8 16. ♔e2

Or 16.b4!?  $\mathbb{W}d8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  with a balanced position.

16... ♔ b8!

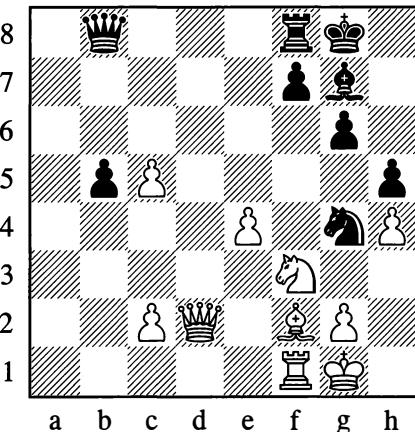
On the next board, Emanuel Berg was playing his immortal game against Bareev, so my attention was somewhat split and I had to rely on my intuition. I already had in mind something along the lines of what happens in the game.

17.♔f2 ♔e5 18.♕d4 d5 19.b4! c5!

A pawn is a small price to destroy the white pawn structure and to utilize the full potential of my pieces.

20.bxc5 dxe4 21.Qxe4 Qxe4 22.Qxe4 Qxe4  
23.fxe4 Qg4 24.Qf3

White is a pawn up, but his pawn structure is horrible.



24... $\mathbb{B}d8$  25. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  26.e5

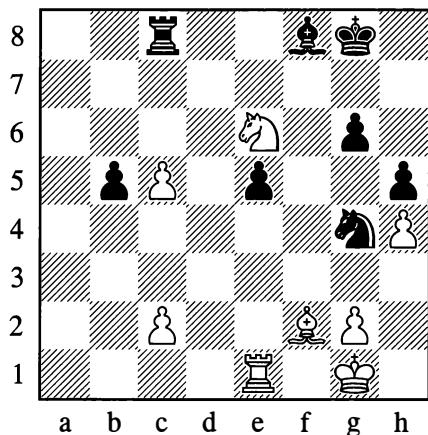
After 26.c6  $\mathbb{B}c8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  28.c3 b4  
White's position is unenviable.

26... $\mathbb{W}c8$  27.e6!  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  28. $\mathbb{W}xe6$  fxe6 29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   
e5 30. $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

White should try 30. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{B}a8$  31.c3  $\mathbb{B}a4$   
32. $\mathbb{B}e1$   $\mathbb{B}c4$  33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  when Black's advantage is  
kept to a minimum.

30... $\mathbb{B}c8$  31. $\mathbb{B}e1?$

The final error, leaving the knight stranded  
on e6.



31... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  32.g3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  33. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  34.hxg5  
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$

The rest is simple.

35. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  36. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{B}xc5$  37. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$   
38. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  b4 39. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  40. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   
41. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  42. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e4† 43. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e3 44. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   
 $\mathbb{B}c4$  45. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{B}e4$  46. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  47. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g5  
48. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{B}xe3\#$

0-1

## GAME 27

Emanuel Berg – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Malmö 2005

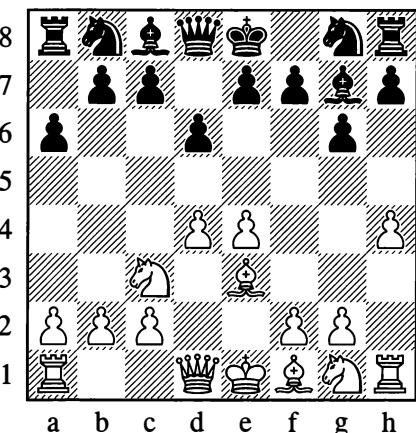
In *Tiger's Modern* I illustrated this line with a game I won against Emanuel in 2003, so it is only fair to give a more recent game that he won. The final result was not the fault of the opening.

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{B}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5.h4

There are many different move orders that may lead to the same position types. White can advance his h-pawn before or after  $\mathbb{B}d2$ , and can play f2-f3 at various times. Later he may castle on the queenside or on the kingside. Black has two basic set-ups: one involving ...h5 in response to h2-h4, and the other with ...h6.

If White plays 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5 6.h4? then 6...h5!! is playable, although 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  will make it impossible for Black to employ the ... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  plan as seen later in this game. A possible way to complicate the game is: 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  f6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  e5 11.dxe5 dxe5! (11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?) 12. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 which seems all right for Black.

Returning to move 6, a simpler way for Black is 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !. Then 7.f3 transposes to the main game, while 7.h5?  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is quite unclear.



**5... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$** 

It is important to get the move order right.

5...h5?! is the standard reaction, but it should not be played before White plays  $\mathbb{W}d2$ . The problem is 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  when it is not attractive for Black to exchange on f3. If there is a way for Black to make his position work, then it might come from 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$ , when 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c5 9.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  is rather unclear. I prefer the move in the game though.

5...h6!? is a playable alternative which is directed against the manoeuvre of the white knight to g5. This will be covered in the next game.

**6.f3**

This is not strictly necessary yet, but it makes little difference, as 6. $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5! 7.f3 immediately transposes to the game (7.0–0–0? b4 wins the e4-pawn).

**6...b5 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$** 

7.g4 is an attempt to argue that the knight has gone to f6 prematurely, but Black has a good answer: 7...b4!?. This is designed to prevent White from answering ...h5 with e4-e5. (After 7...h5 8.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  Black is happy, but 8.e5!? is worth considering for White.) 8. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  h5 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  and ...c5 comes next.

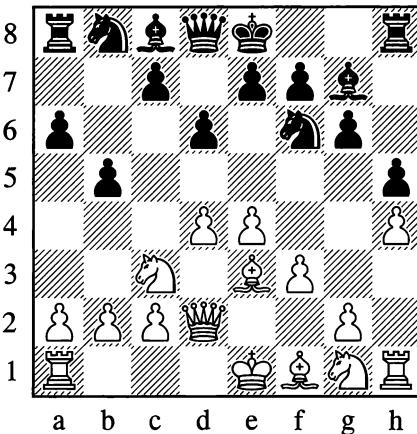
**7...h5**

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is interesting, but I do not fully trust it. A few brief examples:

a) After 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  h5 Black can be happy, since the knight would be better placed on g5 than on f4. 10.0–0–0 e5 11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}fd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{W}xd5$  0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$  Black had a comfortable position in Naiditsch – Nakamura, Istanbul (ol) 2012.

b) 8.g4! seems stronger, as Black can hardly consider ...h5 since his knight no longer has a decent retreat square. The best try is 8...h6!

9.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  when Black might be okay, but I would not bet on it.

**8.0–0–0**

8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  should be met by 8... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  just as in the game.

**8...c6!**

I do not like to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  in combination with an early ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . This led me to work out a plan of delaying the development of the queenside pieces and preparing to eliminate the knight on h3 before it can reach the desired outpost on g5.

A previous game against Emanuel continued 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . At this point, because the e4-e5 threat was so strong, I felt compelled to play 10...0–0–0 in Berg – Hillarp Persson, Umea 2003. I analysed this position in some depth in *Tiger's Modern*, but have since come to the conclusion that Black is unlikely to survive a kingside assault involving a timely g2-g4. This is why I try to avoid castling for as long as possible.

In the comments in *Tiger's Modern* I mentioned 10...e6 as a possible alternative, but added that White had a strong plan of g2-g3,  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}ce2-f4$ . My opinion on this has not changed, and I am convinced that the game continuation is Black's best.

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White can of course play 9.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ , but this is no way to get a knight to g5. A good answer is: 9...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (9...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  might be met by 10. e5!?) 10. e5 b4! This tactic only works if the white king is on c1 or e1. 11. exf6 bxc3 12.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xc3\#$  d7 14.  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

White's strongest move is:

#### 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

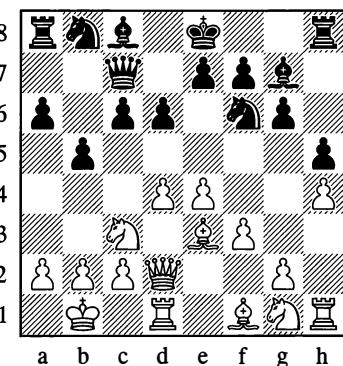
White continues to postpone  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  and challenges Black to find a similarly useful waiting move.

#### 9... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

9...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! abandons the ...  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  plan and gives White a pleasant choice. 10.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  leads to my 2003 game against Berg, as quoted above. Alternatively, 10. e5!? dx5 11. dx5  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. e6 is not much fun for Black.

9... b4?! gives up control of the c4-square while forcing White to improve the position of the knight: not a good combination. 10.  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  a5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  Black has achieved nothing of value on the queenside.

I will make no comment on 9... 0–0 here, apart from “No, don’t!”



#### 10. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !

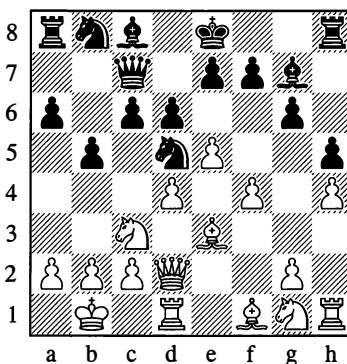
After 10... dx5 11. dx5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12. f4! it is hard for Black to stabilize the centre, since ... e6 will rob the black position of its dynamism

and present White with an inviting outpost on d6.

#### 11. f4!!

11. exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is nothing after 12...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , when Black is doing fine with ...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  on the way.

At the Olympiad in Tromsø 2014, Hracek played the text move against me. I had already analysed it for this book but, when faced with it over the board, I could not remember what my recommendations were. Read on carefully, because this might turn into a fashionable line in the future.



#### 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$

Clearly best, and far better than the not-worth-mentioning move I played against Hracek.

#### 12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 0–0!!

Castling is usually too risky in such positions, but here Black can get away with it as he controls the key light squares on the kingside.

#### 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

The best move, preventing the plan of ...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and ...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

#### 13... c5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

After 14. dx5 dx5 15. fx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  Black is ready to take over the initiative.

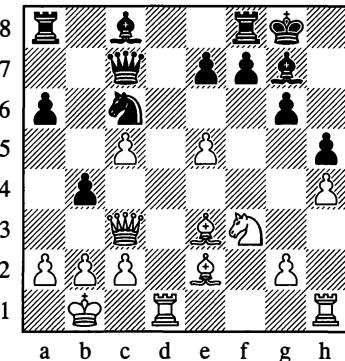
#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 15. dx5

White can enter super-sharp territory with 15. d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 16. b4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17. bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  18.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$  dxc5 19.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , but after 19...  $\mathbb{W}a5$

(or 19...f6!?) 20.♗f3 ♗f5 21.♗e4 ♗g4 White is fighting for survival.

15...dxe5 16.fxe5 b4!

It is important to play this before White gets a chance to put his bishop on f4, which would free the e3-square for the queen.



17.♗c4

Both 17.♗e1 and 17.♗d2 are best met by 17...♗e6 with good counterplay.

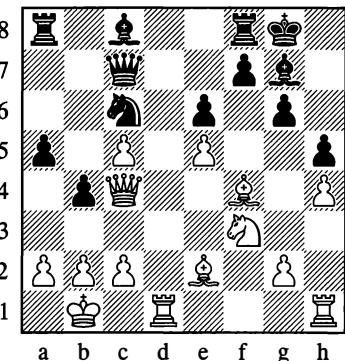
17...a5!

17...♗xe5 18.♗f4 is evaluated by my engine as equal, but I try to avoid this kind of pawn structure in the endgame.

The text move leads to great complications, and I would encourage interested readers to carry out their own analysis from here. One possible continuation is:

18.♗f4 e6!

Preparing ...♗e7.

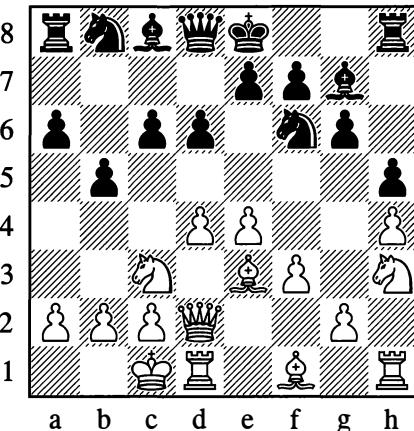


19.♗hg1!

19.g4? hxg4 20.♗g5 ♗xe5 21.♗d4 ♗b7! does not work for White.

19...♗a6 20.♗e4 ♗b7! 21.g4 hxg4 22.♗xg4 ♗e7 23.♗e3 ♗ad8

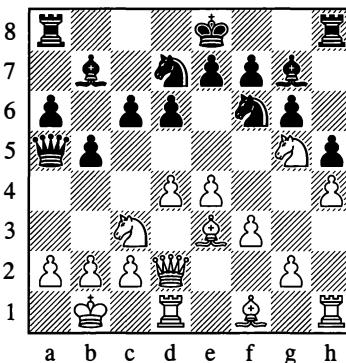
Black is doing well.



9....♗xh3!

I am a bit unhappy with my score from this position, but sometimes it hurts to be a frontrunner. I can live with that.

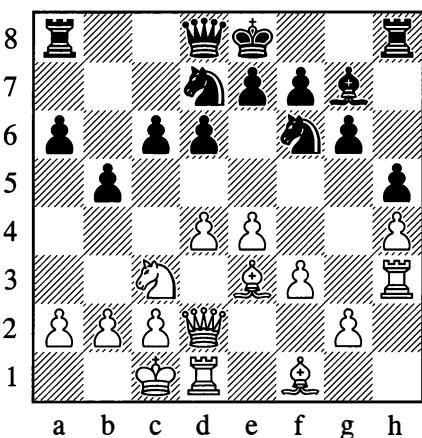
Just as ...0–0 is generally a mistake for Black, the same can be said for 9...♗a5?!. It might seem that ...b4 followed by ...♗xa2 is a threat, but even that is not too bad for White, since the b4-pawn will be captured by the queen. The black queen may be hit by ♗c1-b3, and a2-a3 may also prove annoying. The queen on a5 also blocks the black a-pawn. White gets the advantage after: 10.♗b1 ♗bd7 11.♗g5 ♗b7



12.  $\mathbb{W}f2!$  This excellent move threatens not only e4-e5, but also g2-g4, since ...hxg4 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  hangs the f7-pawn. It is obvious that Black would be better off with his queen on c7. 12...c5 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.g4 White has a strong initiative.

### 10. $\mathbb{E}xh3 \mathbb{Q}bd7$

I believe this position is objectively only a touch better for White, and you should have excellent chances of winning from here if you are ready to learn from my mistakes.



### 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

The somewhat strange 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  prepares to either play f3-f4 or  $\mathbb{E}e2$  without blocking the bishop. Black should respond with 11...  $\mathbb{W}c7!$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (12. f4 c5!) 12...0-0 followed by ...c5 when he is no worse, and I fail to see what the bishop is doing on d3.

### 11... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

This position is the hinge upon which the whole line rests. White has a wide choice of moves, but Black has a simple plan to play ...c5 at the right moment. When is the right moment? This is a tricky question, so pay attention.

### 12. $\mathbb{E}h1$

White starts to bring the rook back into play. Here are a few other ideas:

12.  $\mathbb{W}f2$  is a flexible move that makes it harder for Black to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ . Now that  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is out of the picture, it is a good time for 12...0-0!, followed by either ...c5 or ...a5-a4, with promising play for Black.

After 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  it is worth considering a few options:

a) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}b6?$  13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 15.e6 should be avoided.

b) 12...b4 is also a slight mistake, since 13.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  a5 14.  $\mathbb{E}hh1$  0-0 15.  $\mathbb{W}d3!$  prepares g2-g4 while making it hard for Black to break the blockade on the queenside.

c) I prefer the flexible 12...a5!? which asks White the question: what next? After 13. g4!? hxg4 14. fxg4 b4 15.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  d5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d6!$  White has some compensation, but no advantage.

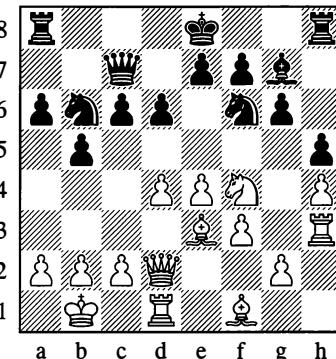
### 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This is a standard manoeuvre.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$

I favour this knight move, although Black can also consider 12...c5!? 13.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  with unclear play.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



### 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd7??$

This allows White to play g2-g4. If I reached this position again I would prefer the flexible 13...  $\mathbb{E}b8$ ! N.

### 14. $\mathbb{E}h1$

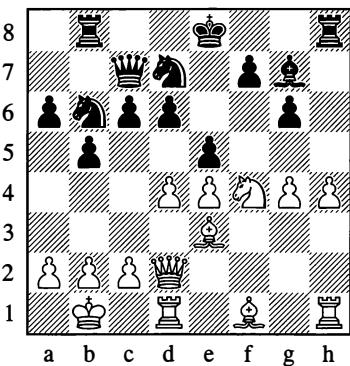
White should try 14.g4! when 14...e5 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.Qd3 Qc4 17.Wel Qxe3 18.Wxe3 0–0–0 19.Qh2 Wb6 is balanced.

14...Qb8

14...Qc4?! is an interesting alternative.

15.g4 hxg4 16.fxg4 e5?!

I prefer White after 16...Qc4 17.Qxc4 bxc4 18.c3 (18.b3?! a5!) 18...Qf6 19.Wg2, but 16...c5! was better than the game continuation.



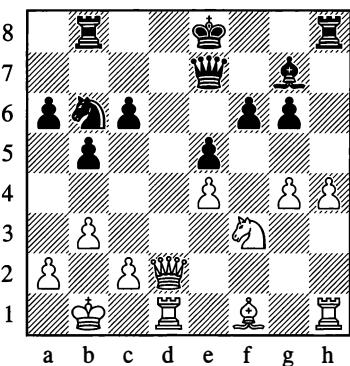
17.Qh3! exd4!

17...Qxh4 18.Wf2 Qxg4 19.Qg5 Qf6 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.Qg2! gives White a strong initiative.

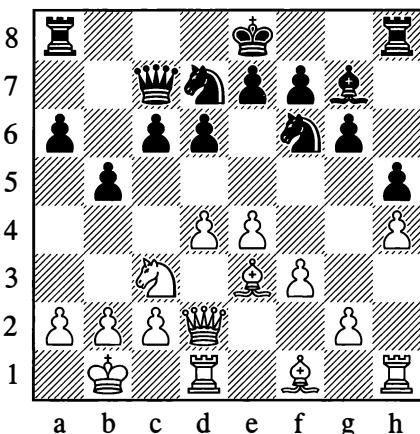
18.Qxd4 Qe5 19.Qg5 We7 20.b3 f6?!

20...Qbd7! 21.Qe2 Qc5 is still balanced. I was dreaming of sacrificing this knight on a4 or c4, and could not bring myself to retreat it just yet.

21.Qxe5 dxe5 22.Qf3



White had an advantage in Zhou – Hillarp Persson, London 2012. I was in horrible form during this tournament and did not believe I could win this game, which is a rare mental occurrence for me. However, considering how well my young opponent played, I am not sure if things would have turned out differently on one of my better days.



12...Qc8?!

I wanted to lure Emanuel into playing g3 and Qh3, but I believe Black should prefer one of the many alternatives.

12...c5 seems a bit premature due to 13.dxc5 Qxc5 14.Qd4 e6 15.Qe3.

12...b4 13.Qa4! a5 14.Wd3! intending Qe2 and g2-g4 is awkward for Black.

12...Qb6?! is a move I would avoid at this stage, even though 13.e5 Qfd5 14.Qxd5 Qxd5 15.e6! f5 16.Qf2 Qh6 17.Wd3 Qf8, intending ...Qf6, is far from clear.

12...Qb8!N

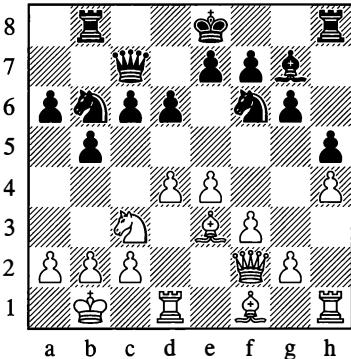
I believe that this subtle move is best.

12...a5?! is another sensible, non-committal move, but there are various lines where the rook proves useful on b8.

13.Wf2 Qb6!

13...0–0 14.g4! is far from clear, but I have a bad feeling about it.

Black should obviously avoid 13...c5? 14.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15.e5!, but 13...a5!? 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  a4 is an interesting alternative.

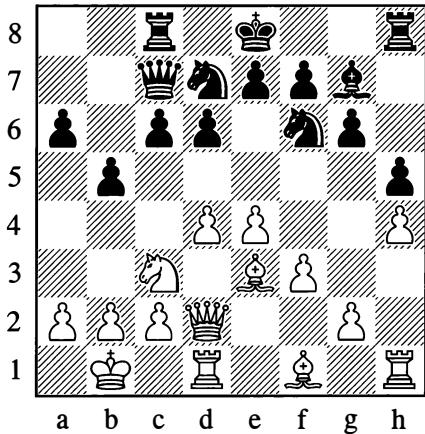


#### 14.e5!?

This is not forced, but it is the most direct and critical move to consider.

14... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16.e6 fxe6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  b4

Black has excellent attacking chances.



#### 13.g3 b4

I rejected 13...0–0 as I was rightly afraid of 14.g4! (14. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ ?! e6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 16.dxc5 dxc5 is unclear) 14...hxg4 15.h5! when it will be difficult for Black to survive. A sample line is 15...b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  gxf3 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c5 18.hxg6 when Black's troubles are just beginning.

#### 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

When Black has moved the rook away from a8, the ...a5-a4 plan loses some of its strength, so Emanuel reroutes the knight towards the f4-square. Nevertheless, 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  is stronger.

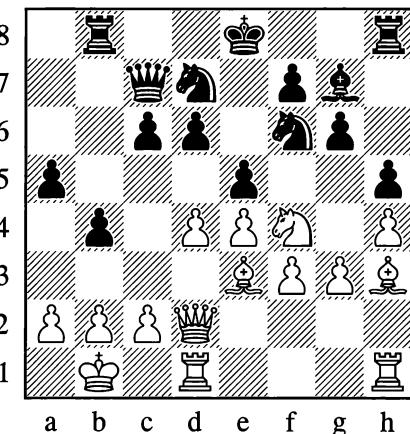
#### 14...a5

Today I find it hard to see why I avoided 14...c5? 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{W}xb4$  [16.e5 dxe5 17. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}cd7$  is unclear] 16...0–0 and the white king starts to feel naked) 15...cxtd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0–0 17. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  with good compensation for the pawn.

#### 15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5?!

I am already worse here, but under the circumstances it was better to play 16...a4! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b3, creating a bit of a mess.

At least I avoided 16...0–0, when 17.g4! hxg4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  19.fxg4 e5 20.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{W}e2$  leaves Black in danger on the kingside.



#### 17.dxe5

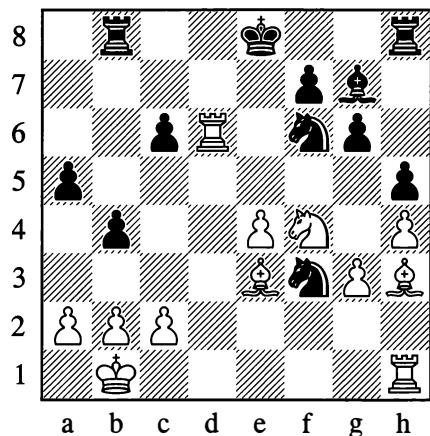
White is spoilt for a choice, as 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ?! exd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is also advantageous.

#### 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Playing for symmetry with 17...dxe5 is not an option, since 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ !, intending  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}e3-c4$ , is horrible for Black.

**18.♕xd6 ♕xd6 19.♗xd6 ♔xf3?!**

19...♔c4?! 20.♔a7 is bad for Black, so I did not really have a choice here. During the game I stared myself blind on the pawn structure and concluded that I was doing fine; it was a weak and mistaken evaluation.

**20.♗xc6!**

Originally I believed 20.♕xg6 fxg6 21.♗f1 to be stronger, but 21...♔h2! 22.♗xf6 ♔xf6 23.♗xf6 ♔g4 24.♗xg4 hxg4 25.♗xg6 ♔f7 26.♗xg4 ♕hg8 27.♔g5 ♔e6 is only marginally better for White.

**20...♔e5 21.♗xf6?!**

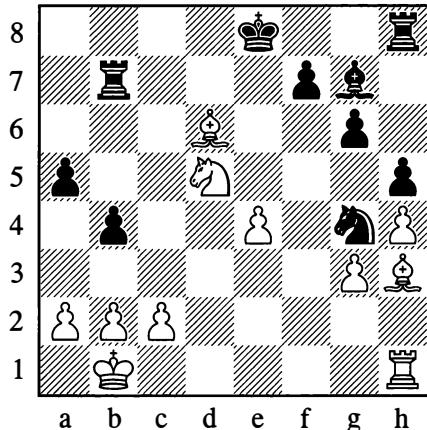
This is uncalled for.

21.♗a6 is unconvincing, as 21...♔xe4 22.♗e1 0-0 23.♗c1 ♔xg3 is unclear, and along the lines I was hoping for.

Stronger is 21.♗c7! ♔xe4 22.♗e6!? ♕f6 23.♔a7 and White has a strong initiative.

**21...♕xf6 22.♗d5 ♕g7 23.♗c5 ♕g4 24.♗d6 ♕b7**

In time trouble I missed that 24...♗d8 25.♗c7 could be met by 25...♗f2!, with a small but clear Black advantage.

**25.♗xg4 hxg4 26.♗e3 ♕d7 27.♗f4 ♕e8?!**

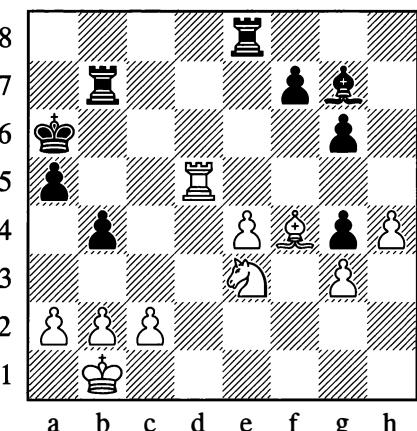
27...♔e6! 28.♗xg4 ♕d7 would have been a little better for me.

**28.♗d1† ♔c6?**

28...♔e7! was better. Now White can force a draw.

**29.♗d6† ♕b5 30.♗d5† ♕a6?**

30...♔c6 invites a perpetual check, but I had not given up on winning this game. This might have had something to do with the state of the other boards in the match.

**31.♗c4!**

Now my position is worse, and being in time trouble does not help.

31... $\mathbb{E}be7$  32. $\mathbb{E}xa5\#$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$   $\mathbb{B}b6$   
34. $\mathbb{Q}xe8?$

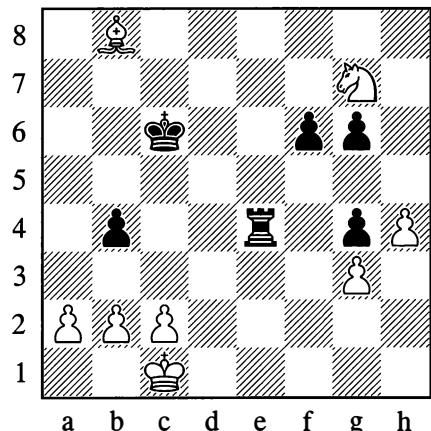
34. $\mathbb{E}b5\#$   $\mathbb{B}c6$  35. $\mathbb{E}xb4$  would have closed the game.

34... $\mathbb{Q}xa5?$

Instead 34... $\mathbb{E}xe8$  35. $\mathbb{E}d5$   $\mathbb{E}xe4$  gives me excellent chances of survival.

35. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{E}xe4$  36. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$   $\mathbb{B}b5$  37. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{B}c6$   
38. $\mathbb{Q}b8$  f6?

Missing the last chance to save the game: 38... $\mathbb{B}b7!$  39. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{B}c6$  and White must repeat with 40. $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , since after 40. $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  f5! he has no defence against ...f4.



39.h5  $\mathbb{E}e7$  40.h6  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  41. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{E}f7$  42. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  43. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}h8$  44. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{E}xh6$  45. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}h2$  46.c4  $\mathbb{E}c2$  47. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}f2$  48. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{E}f1$  49. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}d1\#$  50. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{E}e1$  51. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}d1$  52. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}d3$  53.c5  $\mathbb{E}xg3$  54.c6 $\#$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  55. $\mathbb{Q}e8$   $\mathbb{E}d3$  56. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  57. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

A bad loss for me. However, there was nothing wrong with the opening and there is plenty of scope for experimentation.

1–0

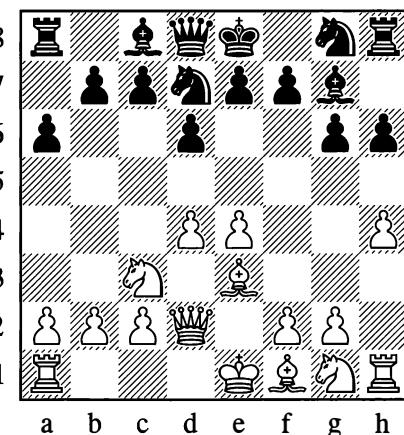
## GAME 28

Anders Olsson – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Gothenburg 2005

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  6.h4 h6?

This is the alternative set-up, intending to meet h4-h5 with ...g5. The downside is supposed to be that White can renew the threat with f2-f4, so let's see how good that really is.



7.f4?

Although this move has been used by Adams, I cannot recommend it for White.

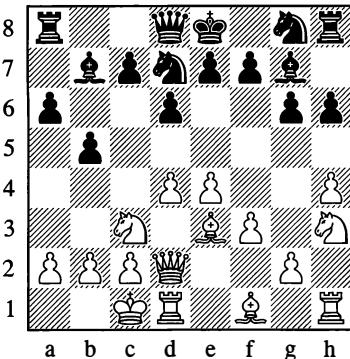
A better plan is:

7.f3! b5 8.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

It is too slow to play 8...c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  10.g4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ .

9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

Another game continued 9.g4 c6 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13.h5 g5 and in Maze – Nyback, Warsaw 2005, Black got an acceptable position after long castling. Personally I do not like the combination of ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , and would prefer 9...e6 or even 9...c5?.



9...e6?!

With this move I reach some kind of strange Hippo, but I doubt that Black can count on a balanced position here.

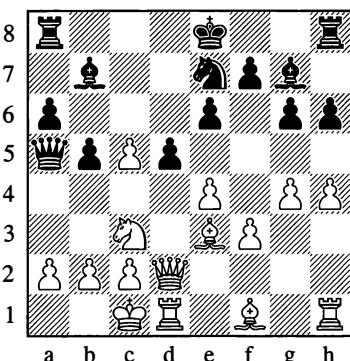
Today I would prefer 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ , when a sample variation is: 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11.a3  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  12.h5 g5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  c5 15.dxc5 dxc5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ !?? (The magician engine at work.) 16...0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  b4 18.axb4 cxb4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f5! 20.exf5  $\mathbb{E}xf5$  With a lovely mess.

Also possible is the simple 9... $\mathbb{E}c8$ , intending ...c5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11.g4!?

This leaves me with a weakness at c5. Instead 11...c5! 12.f4!  $\mathbb{E}c8$  13.h5 cxd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5 15.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is probably a bit better for White, but far from clear.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  14...b4?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  17. $\mathbb{W}xb4$  is even more unpleasant for Black.

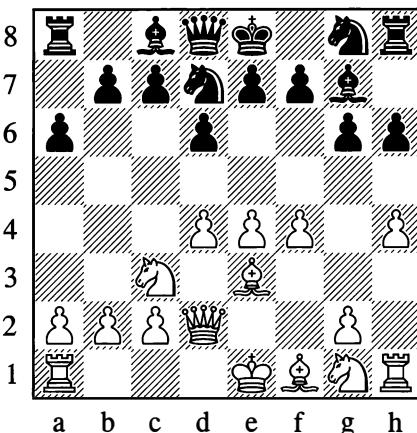


15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  0-0-0?!

16...d4 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  h5 is just a little better for White.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

White had a clear advantage in Gaponenko – Hillarp Persson, Reykjavik 2006. I believe Black should look for an improvement on either move 8 or 9, although the position after 11...c5 would still have been quite playable.



7...b5

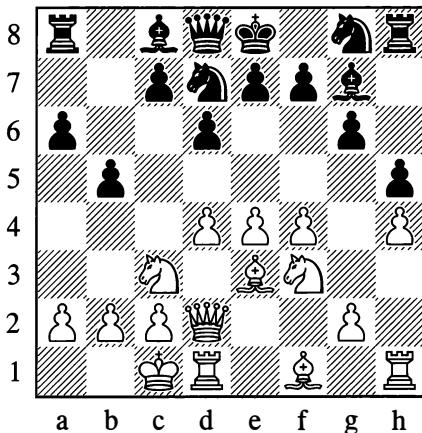
7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ? is too inflexible, since 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ! leaves e4-e5 hanging over Black like the sword of Damocles.

The most accurate move is 7...h5!, intending to exploit the weak light squares on the kingside. Then 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 leads to the game without allowing the improvement given in the next note.

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

White should try 8.h5! g5! (this was my idea, but it seems a bit fishy) 9.fxg5 hxg5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ , when 10...c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.h6! cxd4 13.hxg7  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  looks dangerous for Black, even though the engine suggests otherwise. White has a number of alternatives on move 12, but if he avoids this critical line then Black will have fair compensation for the pawn.

8...h5 9.0-0-0



**9...c6!**

Black has a powerful strategic plan of ...c6 and ...d5, fighting for the light squares.

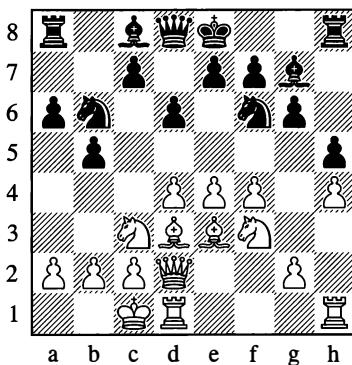
An earlier game between Adams and Hodgson continued:

9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ! 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is unclear according to Adams in *Informant* 81.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

There was no time for ...c6, as White was threatening e5-e6.



**11.f5?!**

Adams attaches an exclamation mark to this move, but I cannot agree.

It seems much stronger to play 11.d5!. Now the positional threat of  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and e4-e5 forces Black to take drastic measures with 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  14. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ ,

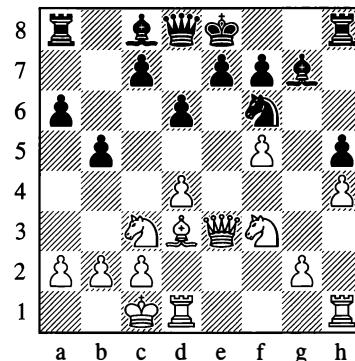
but after 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  White is clearly better.

11...gx5 12.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$

12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is another interesting idea, intending ...b4, ...a5 and ... $\mathbb{W}d7-a4$ .

13. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$

Here Black should have played:



**14...b4!**

After 14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ? 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  White was better and went on to win in Adams – Hodgson, Southend-on-Sea (m/1) 2001.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Or 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !

15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?! 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}fg5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18.c4! seems risky for Black.

16. $\mathbb{W}e2$

16. $\mathbb{W}f4$ ? d5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  and Black has a clear advantage.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$

With an unclear game.

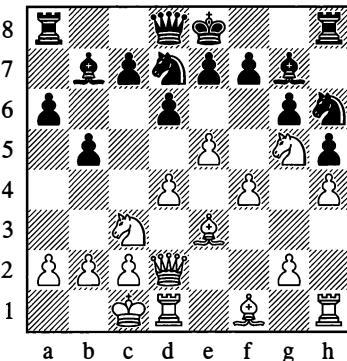
**9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ??**

Although I prefer the plan seen in the main game, the text move deserves to be mentioned, as it was used by Peter Svidler in 2011.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11.e5

This seems a bit cooperative to me, since f4-f5 becomes less of a threat now.

11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  or 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  are to be preferred.



11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Black does not fear 12.e6, since 12...f5 13.a3  $\mathbb{W}c8$ , intending ...0–0, ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and ...c5, is quite dynamic and fun for Black.

12... $\mathbb{W}c8$ ?

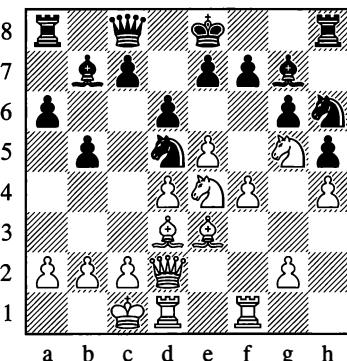
Since White has freely weakened the light squares, one might think it is possible to play 12...e6, but 13.d5!  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ ! seems to favour White. Always be on guard against these  $\mathbb{Q}g6/\mathbb{Q}e6$  tricks.

13. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

I would strongly consider 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  e6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  a5 when I cannot see anything wrong with Black's position.

14. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$

14.e6 f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is nice for Black.

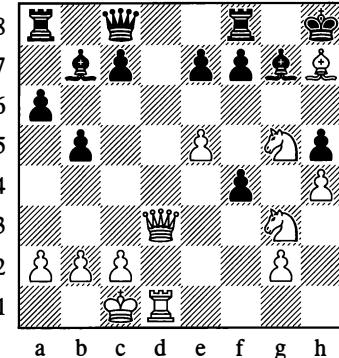


14...0–0 15.f5!  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  gxf5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ ?

According to Golubev and Baburin, 17...f4! 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$  fxe3 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  leads to

a long forced line where Black has chances to survive.

18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  f4 19. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20. $\mathbb{W}d3$  dx5 21.dxe5

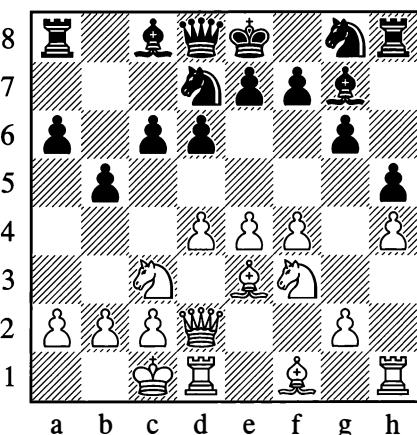


21...f6

21... $\mathbb{W}d8$  22. $\mathbb{W}e2$  f3 23.gxf3  $\mathbb{W}e8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is also losing.

22. $\mathbb{Q}g8$  f5 23. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

Black resigned in Ganguly – Svidler, Ningbo 2011. It seems to me that Black had solved his opening problems after 12... $\mathbb{W}c8$ , but I believe White can do better than 11.e5, which is why I recommend the continuation from my game.



10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

One advantage of 9...c6! over 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is that White is unable to play d4-d5; the other is that e4-e5 can be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .

**11.♘e2??**

The knight is well placed on c3, so my opponent decides to drive it towards greener pastures.

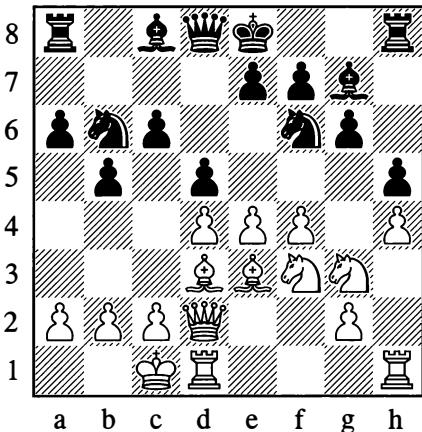
It is better to play 11.f5!, à la Adams, when Black should continue 11...gxsf5 12.exf5 ♘c4!. If White takes this knight then the f-pawn will fall, while if he retreats with 13.♗e1 then 13...♞h6 gives Black a fair share of the chances.

**11...♞f6**

Since the c8-bishop controls e6, I do not have to worry about e5-e6, and thus have no problem developing my knight.

**12.♘g3 d5!?**

This is a thematic move, but it relies on a small tactical detail that will be revealed on move 14.

**13.e5**

Rather a committal move, especially when you consider how difficult it will be for White to open up the kingside in the future.

The only decent alternative was 13.♘e5? ♘c4 (13...♗c7? 14.♗a5! is awkward) 14.♗e1 (after 14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.♗xc6 ♗b6 16.♗e5 ♜b8 17.♗c3 0–0 Black holds the initiative)

14...♗c7 (14...♝g4!? is also playable) with an unclear game.

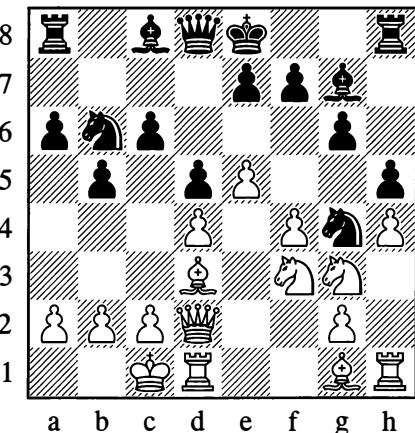
**13...♝g4 14.♗g1?**

In order to prepare f4-f5, my opponent buries the bishop on g1, but it costs too much time.

Here is the aforementioned tactical detail, which also explains why Anders decided to move the bishop from e3: 14.f5? gxsf5 15.♗xf5 ♜xf5 16.♗xf5 ♘c4 and the bishop is a goner.

14.♗e1!? ♘h6 (14...♝xe3!? 15.♗xe3 ♗g4 16.e6 f5 is also interesting) 15.♗b1 prepares to meet ...♞c4 with 16.♗c1. I prefer the Black side, but the struggle will continue.

14.b3 ♘h6! (The careless 14...a5?! allows 15.f5! gxsf5 16.♗g5! and Black is unable to defend f5.) The engine gives a number of variation as “better for White” here, but I take the opposite view. For instance, after 15.♗g5 ♗g4 16.♗d1 e6 17.♗b1 a5 it will take forever for White to create something on the kingside, and I prefer Black.

**14...♞c4?**

It was better to tidy up the kingside: 14...♝h6! N 15.b3 ♗g4 would have been a strategic triumph for Black.

**15.♕e1 ♜h6?!**

Of course Black would like to activate the light-squared bishop before playing ...e6, but because I drove the white queen to e1, this plan now has a tactical flaw.

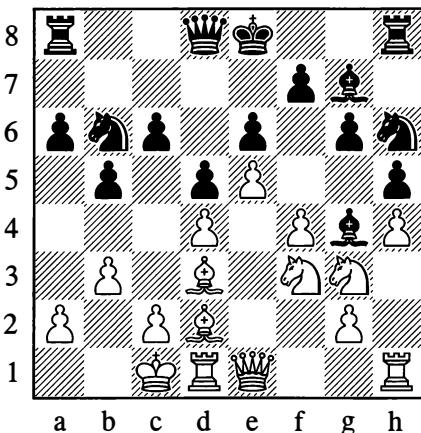
**16.b3 ♜b6 17.♗e3?**

After this move I am safe on the kingside and can start building up my queenside.

White should have taken the opportunity to play 17.e6!, when 17...♝xe6 (17...f5!? 18.♗e5 ♜xe5 19.fxe5 followed by ♜g3-e2-f4 is also promising for White) 18.♗xg6 fxg6 19.♕xe6 ♜d6 20.♗e1 is slightly better for White.

**17...♝g4 18.♗d2 e6**

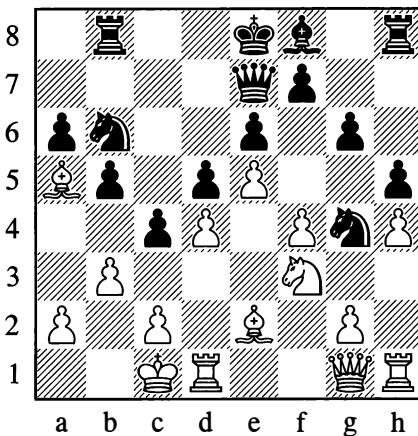
The silicon representatives are still under the impression that White is a little better here, which is something I find hard to grasp. There is absolutely nothing to be unhappy about in the black position.

**19.♗a5?!**

Either here or on the next move White should have put this bishop on b4, when Black would have had to work harder to turn the advantage into something more.

**19...♝f8 20.♗f2 ♜c7 21.♗f1 ♜b8**

Why not 21...c5? I guess I did not regard b3-b4 as a serious defence.

**22.♗e3 c5 23.♗xg4 ♜xg4 24.♗g1 c4****25.♗e2 ♜e7****26.♗c3?!**

This loses quickly, but 26.b4 ♜c8! followed by ...♝a7-c6 would have led to the same result.

**26...♛a3† 27.♔b1 ♜a4 28.♔a1 ♜b4  
29.♗d2 ♜c3†**

0-1

## GAME 29

**Igor Yagupov – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Moscow 2003

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♗d2  
b5**

5...♗d7 6.0–0–0 b5 7.h4 h5 8.♗h3 c6  
9.♗g5 transposes to 9.0–0–0! in the notes to Game 26, where 9...♛c7! is best – see page 155.

**6.0–0–0 ♜b7!**

It is worth playing this move early here, in order to encourage White to play f2-f3.

**7.f3**

White can stubbornly refuse with:  
7.h4?

Now Black has a choice to make.

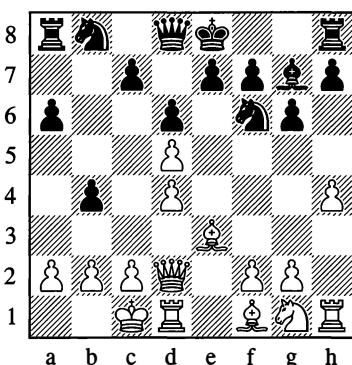
7...b4

The most principled answer.

7...h5 8.Qh3! leads to a line that I do not recommend.

7...h6 makes some sense, especially as f2-f4 is temporarily out of the question. Instead 8.f3 transposes to 7.f3! b5 8.0-0-0 in the notes to Game 28 – see page 169.

8.Qd5 Qxd5 9.exd5 Qf6



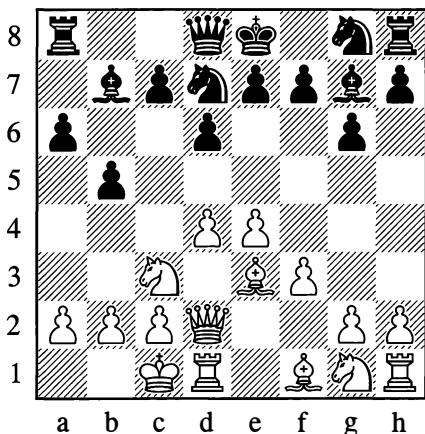
10.h5?

10.Wxb4 Qxd5 11.Wb7 Qxe3 12.fxe3 Qd7 is nice for Black. White will have to play energetically in order not to suffer from the loss of the dark-squared bishop.

10...Qxd5 11.Wh6 Wf6 12.Qf3 Qd7

The situation is unclear. White seems to have enough compensation for the pawn, but I doubt that it is anything more.

7...Qd7



My scheming nature led me to doctor the move order in this game. Now we are back on track.

8.Qb1?

White plays a useful, noncommittal move, albeit not the most energetic one available. Here is a selection of alternatives.

After 8.Qge2 White no longer has the option of h2-h4 and Qh3, so it looks interesting to try 8...c6?! intending ...e5. (8...Wc8 and 8...b4 are reasonable alternatives.)

8.g4 allows 8...c5, when 9.dxc5 Qxc5 10.Qd4 Qxd4! 11.Wxd4 Qf6 is fine for Black, as 12.g5 can be met by 12...Qe6 13.Wd2 Qd7.

A better idea for White is 9.h4, when 9...h6! 10.Qge2 transposes to the next main game.

8.Qh3 b4?

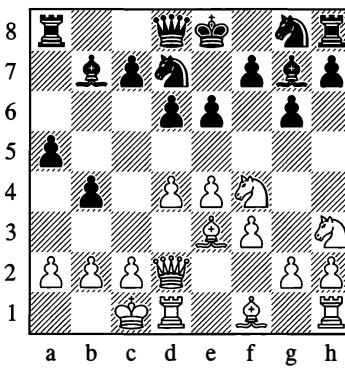
It is generally not a good idea to rush with this move, but this is an exception since White's other knight is blocking the h-pawn, making it difficult for him to attack on the kingside. (Compare 8...b4?! in the note to Black's next move in the main game.)

Despite this point, I think I would still prefer 8...Wc8.

9.Qe2 a5 10.Qef4 e6

A simple solution.

10...Qgf6 allows 11.Qg5! Wc8?! 12.h4! when the game gets messy, since 12...h6?! runs into 13.Qxf7! Wxf7 14.e5!.



11.♕e2 h6 12.♗f2 ♗e7 13.h4 ♘b6 14.h5?! g5  
15.♘d4 h3 d5

15...f5! looks even stronger.

16.♕d3 ♘c4 17.♕xc4 dxс4 18.f4? g4 19.♘xg4  
♘xe4 20.♘e5 ♖d5

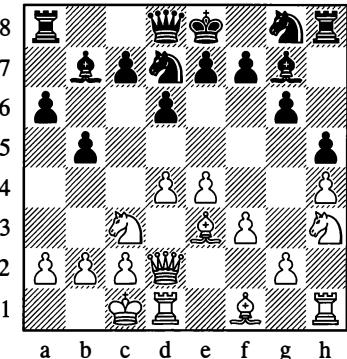
Black was in total control in Gesing – Nevednichy, Creon 2004.

8.h4

As usual, this is the critical approach.

8...h5 9.♘h3

Compared to 9.0–0–0! in the notes to Game 26 (page 155), the position is a bit different since Black has played neither ...c6 nor ...♘gf6.



9...♗c8?!

If Black can get away with this method of preparing ...c5, then it should be the best move.

The immediate 9...c5 is premature due to 10.dxc5! ♘xc5 11.♘d4, since 11...♗f6? 12.e5 is clearly better for White.

9...c6 10.♘g5 ♖c7 leads to a position analysed in the notes to Game 26, but it makes sense to do without the ...c6 move when Black is able to do so.

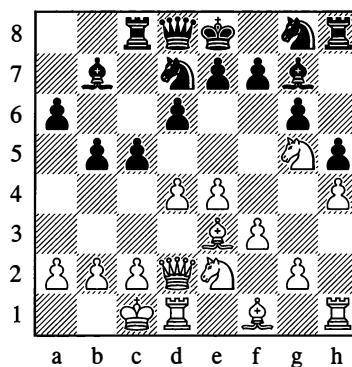
9...e6? 10.♘g5 ♗gf6 11.♘d3?! (More critical is 11.♘e2 ♖e7 12.♘f4 e5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘e2 with an unclear position that requires testing.) 11...♗e7 12.♘b1 c5 13.e5 dxe5 14.dxc5 ♘xc5 15.♘xc5 ♖xc5 16.♘ce4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♖c7 Black went on to

convert his advantage in Schleich – Bacrot, Deizisau 2011.

10.♘g5 c5 11.♘e2?!

This is hardly to be feared.

White should attempt to throw a stick into Black's wheel with: 11.e5 cxd4 12.e6 fxе6 13.♘xd4 e5 14.♘e3 ♖a5! (I recommended 14...♗f8 in *Tiger's Modern*, but this move does not hold up to closer scrutiny.) 15.♘e6 ♕h6 The position is hard to evaluate, but I venture to suggest that Black has a fair share of the chances.



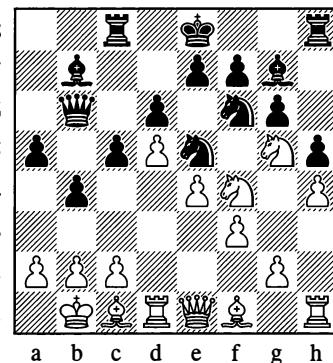
11...♖c7 12.♗b1 ♗gf6 13.d5

13.g3 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘e5 favours Black.

13...♘e5 14.♘f4 ♖b6 15.♔e1

It is difficult to offer advice to White. His pieces seem to be developed in harmony, but they are not achieving anything. Black, on the other hand, can go strolling with his queenside pawns and take his time over any decisions concerning the more valuable bricks.

15...a5 16.♘c1 b4



17... $\mathbb{Q}ge6!$ ?

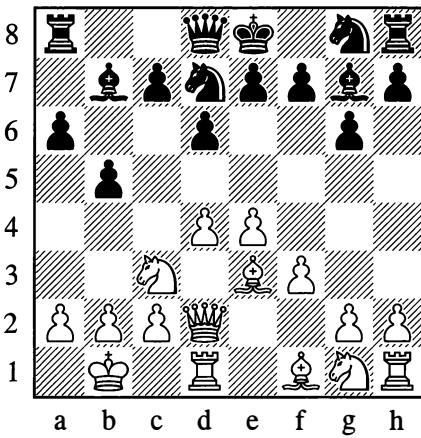
An imaginative but insufficient try to animate the white pieces.

17...fxe6N

In Miladinovic – Hickl, Bled (ol) 2002, Black played 17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !?, when White found nothing better than retreating the knight to g5 and then sacrificing the other knight on e6. However, capturing the knight seems okay, and besides, White could have more or less forced Black to accept the offer by moving the f4-knight to e6 in the first place, which would have threatened f3-f4.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{Q}h6$

White does not have enough for the sacrificed piece, although there is still a tough fight ahead.



8... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

8...b4?! is pointless. 9. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  a5 (9...c5 10.dxc5 dxc5 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is also better for White.) 10.h4 h5 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  Black is vulnerable to the simple plan of  $\mathbb{Q}gh3-g5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

**9.d5**

This offers Black a pretty comfortable version of a Sicilian Dragon.

9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  c5 10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (this is safer than 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.g4? b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ )

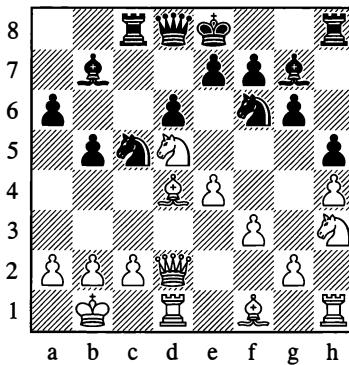
12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13.a3  $\mathbb{W}b6$  leaves Black nicely coordinated.

Another possibility is:

9.h4 h5 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c5 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !? 13. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  15.a3  $\mathbb{Q}cd7$  is level.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

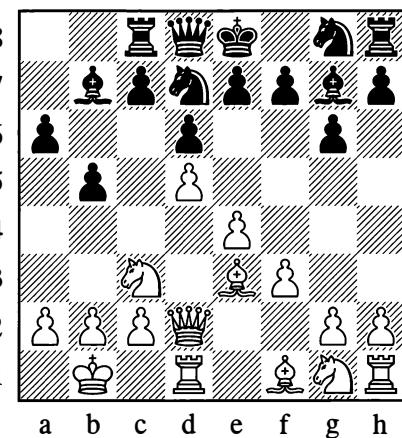


13...e5!

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ? 14.exd5 b4 (14...0–0? 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! I was in trouble in Gwaze – Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2003.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black obtained a slightly better endgame in Gwaze – Davies, Halifax (rapid) 2003.



9...c5 10.dxc6 ♜xc6 11.♘ge2 ♜c7?!

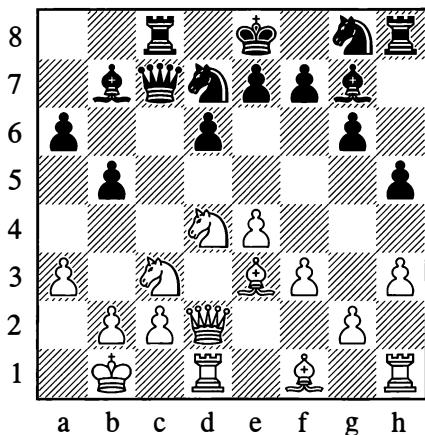
I did not want to allow ♜h6, and played what I thought was a useful waiting move. However, the queen is not especially well placed on c7, and it is possible that 11...h5 (preparing ...♘gf6) 12.♗d4 ♜b7 is better.

**12.♗d4 ♜b7 13.a3 h5!**

A typical move in this kind of position. Black prepares to develop the king's knight without allowing ♜h6, while simultaneously stopping g2-g4.

**14.h3?!**

After 14.g3 ♘gf6 15.♗h3 Black gets excellent play with 15...♝b8 intending ...♘e5-c4.

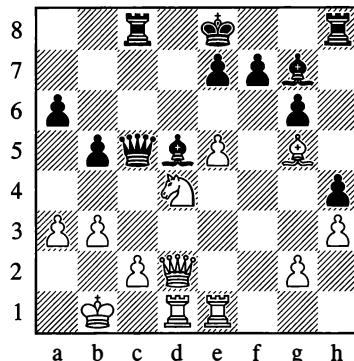


**14...♝gf6 15.♗d3 ♘e5**

This unimaginative move fails to make things harder for White.

An interesting prophylactic continuation is 15...h4?! to stop White from playing g2-g4. The downside is that the h4-pawn may become weak, but Black has attacking chances on the queenside and can even activate the king's rook via h5. 16.♖he1! White should try to roll the central pawns towards the black king. 16...♘e5 (16...♜h5?! and 16...♝f8?! are also possible.) 17.f4 ♘c4 18.♗xc4 ♜xc4 19.e5 dxe5

20.fxe5 ♘e4 21.♘xe4 ♜xe4 22.♗g5 ♜d5 23.b3 ♜c5



At this point White would be wise to scramble for a draw with 24.♗xh4 ♜xh4 25.♘f3 ♜h5 26.♗xd5 ♜xc2† 27.♔a1 ♜c3† and a perpetual.

**16.g4 ♘c4?!**

My engine evaluates the position after 16...♘fd7! to be better for Black, and there might be something to it. White lacks a convincing plan, and Black can further improve his position with ...♘c4, or ...♘b6-c4.

**17.♗xc4 ♜xc4 18.♗b3! b4?!**

It was much better to play 18...♘d7 19.♗d5 ♜xd5 20.exd5 ♘e5, when things are still messy.

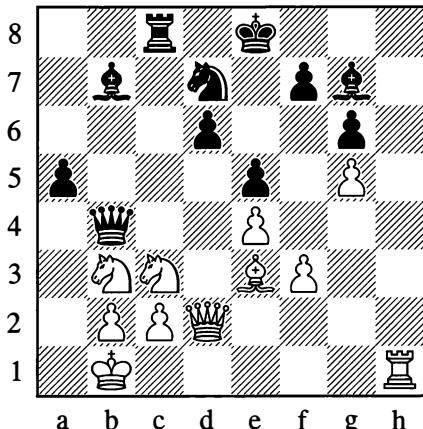
**19.axb4**

There are a few tactical tricks to look out for. In the event of 19.♘a4? ♘xe4 20.fxe4 ♜xe4 21.♗d4 b3 it is obvious that White has fallen for one.

**19...♜xb4 20.♗d4**

White threatens g4-g5 and has – for the first time in the game – the advantage.

**20...e5 21.♗e3 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♜xh1 23.♗xh1 a5 24.g5 ♘d7**



**25.♘c1!**

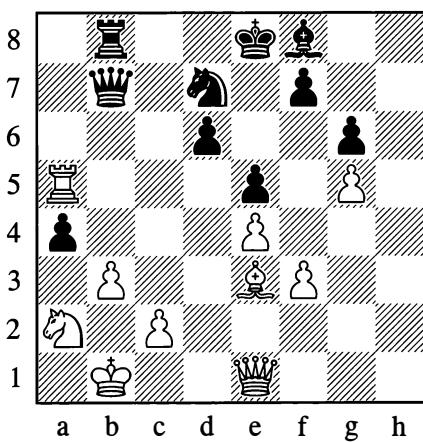
I can do nothing to stop this knight from reaching the d5-square: a sure sign that my position is bad.

**25...♗c6 26.♘a2 ♗b8 27.♗d1 ♗f8 28.♗d5 ♗b5! 29.♗f2**

After 29.♗ac3! ♗b7 30.♗h1 ♗b8 31.♗c1 ♗g7 32.♗h7 ♗f8 33.b3 I doubt that Black can survive for much longer.

**29...♗b7 30.♗d3 ♗xd5 31.♗xd5 ♗b8 32.b3 ♗a6 33.♗e1 a4 34.♗a5 ♗b7?**

I overlooked 34...♗c4!, when the position is suddenly level again.



**35.♗a7! ♗c8 36.♗xa4 ♗c5 37.♗a7 d5**

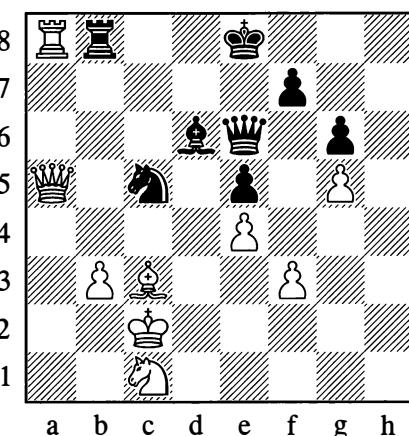
I was bored with the bishop being out of the game and I thought I would rather lose Rock 'n' Roll style.

**38.♗a5?**

After 38.exd5 ♗xb3 39.cxb3 ♗xb3† 40.♔a1 my attack proves to be in vain.

**38...d4 39.♗d2 d3 40.♗c3 ♗e6 41.♗c1 dxc2† 42.♔xc2 ♗d6 43.♗a8**

White should be able to win this position, but in the end I managed to set up a blockade and save the game.



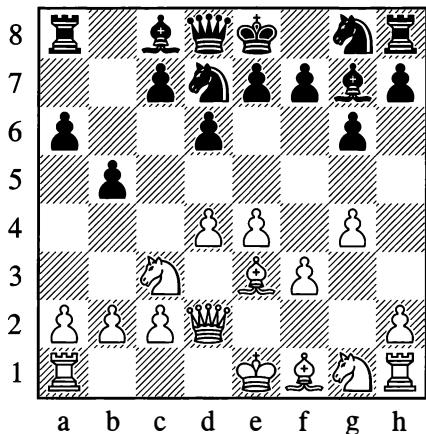
**43...♗xa8 44.♗xa8† ♗e7 45.♗h8 ♗d7 46.♗d2 ♗e7 47.♗a8?!** ♗c6! 48.♗xc6† ♗xc6 49.♗d3 ♗xd3 50.♗xd3 ♗b5 51.♗c3 ♗d6 52.♗e2 ♗c7 53.♗f2 ♗c5 54.♗g3 ♗b8 55.♗h4 ♗c7 56.♗g4 ♗b8 57.♗a5 ♗d4 58.♗b4 ♗c7 59.♗e7 ♗c3 60.b4 ♗c4 61.♗g3 ♗b8 62.♗f2 ♗a7† 63.♗e2 ♗d4 64.♗f6 ♗xb4 65.♗d3 ♗c5 66.f4 ♗d6 67.♗c4 ♗b2 68.♗b4 ♗a1 69.♗b5 ♗d4 70.♗c4

½–½

**GAME 30****Alexander Shabalov – Joel Benjamin**

Connecticut 2000

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$   
**b5** 6.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7.g4!?

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 

The sight of White's last move makes my h-pawn itch, but for the moment it is better to keep it on h7, since after 7...h5 8.gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  White is poised to develop an initiative on the kingside with  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and h4-h5.

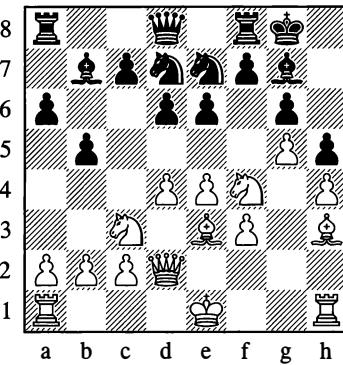
If Black succeeds in exchanging the c-pawn for White's d-pawn, the position will resemble a wonderful Sicilian Dragon. Wonderful in the sense that Black has not yet committed his king, while White constantly has to watch out for ...h5.

8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 

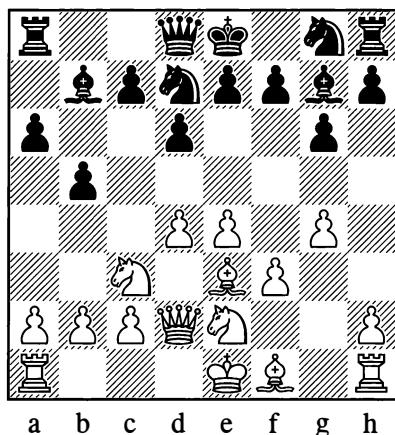
8.0–0–0 transposes to 8.g4 in the notes to the previous game – see page 175.

In one game White received a free lesson on the perils of wasting time in the opening: 8.h4 h5! 9.g5 (9.gxh5?!  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! is the important difference between playing ...h5

after White has committed to h2-h4 rather than before. 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  e5 and Black is fine.) 9...e6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$  (Better is 11.0–0–0 0–0 although Black is both solid and flexible.) 11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



12...e5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14.d5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  White had a dismal position in Randazzo – Movsesian, Lorca 2001, and it is a minor miracle that he was able to survive for another twenty-two moves.



8...c5! 9.h4

9.0–0–0 resembles the main game, and may transpose in the likely event that White pushes his h-pawn in the near future.

White should avoid 9.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  dxc5 11.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is also fine for Black) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  11. $\mathbb{W}c1$  dxc5

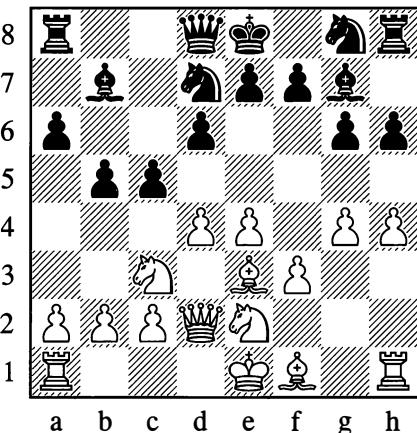
12.♕xc5 ♜c8 13.♕f2 b4 14.♗d1 ♔f6 when Black has a strong initiative.

9.♗g3 ♜c7!? (9...♜c8) 10.♕e2 ♔b6!? This is outside the normal roads, but the knight on g3 and bishop on e2 are not scary, so Black has some room for originality. (Personally I like 10...h6, intending ...cx d4 and ...♗gf6.) 11.♗d1?! cxd4 12.♕xd4 ♜xd4 13.♖xd4 e5 This position was strange, but better for Black in Ferron Garcia – Pablo Marin, Castellar del Valles 2004.

### 9...h6!

It is important to keep the h-file closed. Now h4-h5 can be met by ...g5.

After 9...h5 10.gxh5 (10.g5 e6 11.0–0–0 ♜e7 12.dxc5 dxc5 is unclear) 10...♜xh5 11.♗g3 ♜h7 12.h5 White has the initiative.



### 10.0–0–0

Also possible is:

10.♗g3

Now White threatens h4-h5, as ...g5 will allow ♔f5.

10...♜c7!?

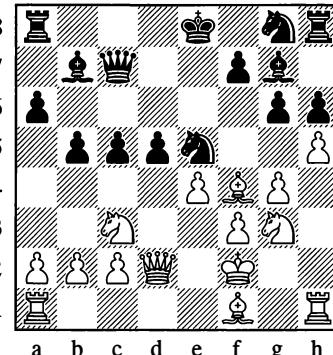
A tricky move, although I would prefer 10...e6.

11.h5! d5!

This is the point behind Black's last move, uncovering an attack on the g3-knight.

12.♕f4 e5 13.dxe5 ♜xe5 14.♗f2?

White should try his luck with 14.♗xd5 ♜xd5 15.exd5 ♜xf3† 16.♔e2 ♜xd2 17.♕xc7 ♜c4 18.♗f3 ♜d2† which is seriously unclear.



14...♜e7!N

This is stronger than 14...0–0–0, when Black just had a slight initiative in Kriventsov – Chase, Las Vegas 2004.

15.exd5 0–0–0!

White is already beyond redemption.

10.dxc5!? b4!?

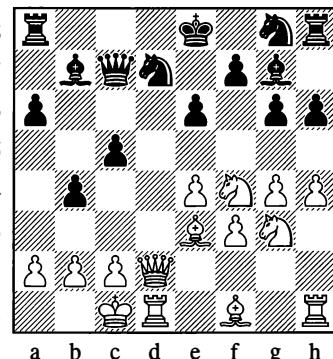
Both 10...♜xc5 11.0–0–0 ♜f6 and 10...dxc5 11.0–0–0 ♜gf6 are worthy alternatives.

11.♗d5

11.♗a4 ♜a5! 12.♗b6 ♜xb6 13.cxb6 ♜xb2 14.♗b1 ♜xa2 15.♗d1 ♜a3 reaches an unclear position.

11...dxc5 12.0–0–0 e6 13.♗df4 ♜c7 14.♗g3

After 14.♗d3 a5 15.♗b1 Black might continue 15...♗gf6 16.♗h3 c4 17.♗f2 c3 18.bxc3 ♜a6 with nice compensation.



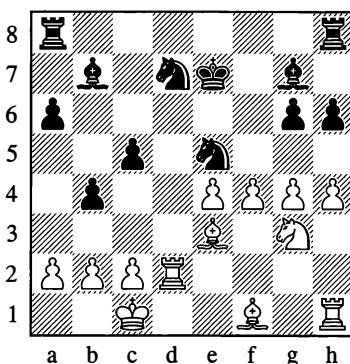
14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{W}d6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  16. $\mathbb{B}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{B}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is a safer option, pointed out by Ribshtein, that leaves Black with a comfortable game.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$  fxe6 18. $\mathbb{B}xe6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19. $\mathbb{B}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}ce5$

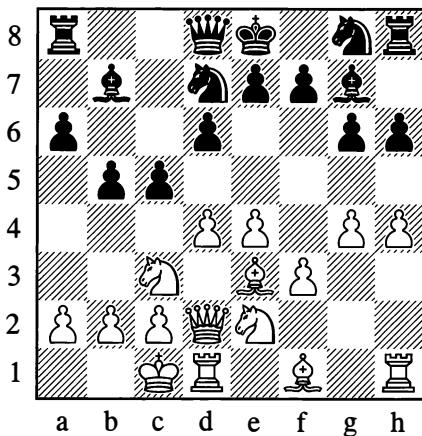
20.f4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? 21. $\mathbb{B}d2$

According to Ribshtein 21.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22. $\mathbb{B}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{B}h7$ ? 24. $\mathbb{Q}g8$   $\mathbb{B}xg8$  25. $\mathbb{B}xg8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  26. $\mathbb{B}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  27.g5 leads to an advantage for White. However, my Silicon Companion points out that 23... $\mathbb{B}ae8$  leaves Black with a reasonably clear advantage.



21... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  22. $\mathbb{B}h3$  h5 23. $\mathbb{B}hd1$

This position was reached in Ribshtein – Avrukh, Ramat Aviv 1999. Now instead of 23... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , Black should have played 23... $\mathbb{B}ad8N$  with a big advantage.



10... $\mathbb{B}b4$

10... $\mathbb{W}a5?$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  b4 has the advantage of forcing 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , avoiding the extra option discussed in the next comment, not that this is too scary for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

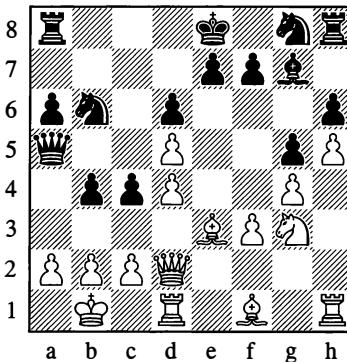
The conservative 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1?$  is interesting, but Black keeps a good position after 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$  12.dxc5 dxc5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ .

11... $\mathbb{B}xd5$  12.exd5  $\mathbb{W}a5$

I believe that this position is about balanced, but it is White who has the more difficult game.

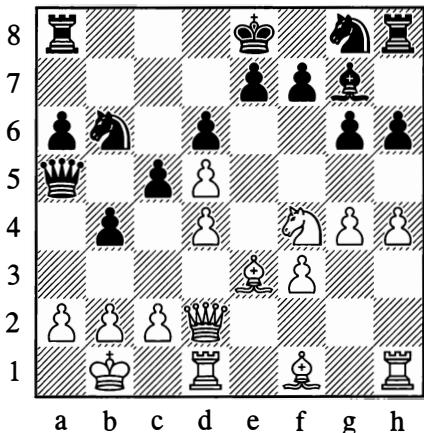
13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

Originally I believed this to be a mistake, but the more I have looked into it, the more I have become convinced that the alternative 14.h5, intending to give the knight a square on f5, is even worse due to: 14...g5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c4



Now the straightforward 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is strongly met by 16...c3! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ . White gains nothing with 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$  fxe6 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ .

Instead of the above line White could try 16.a3, but this also fails to solve White's problems after 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! 17.axb4  $\mathbb{W}a4!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ , when the threats of ... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  and ...a5 give Black a clear advantage.



#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ ?

Black is setting up the attacking plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}a4-c3\uparrow$ , which is well worth remembering. That being said, I am not convinced that it is best, as White soon gets the opportunity for a promising exchange sacrifice.

14... $cxd4$ ?! is premature, since 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  leaves Black without counterplay.

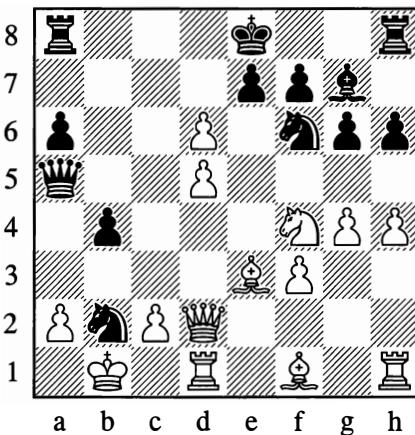
14... $c4$ ?! is risky, but it seems to hold together. 15.a3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}b5$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $h5$ ! 19.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  21. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ !  $axb5$  22.f4 e6 The endgame is balanced.

14... $\mathbb{B}b8$  is the safest alternative, when 15.b3 (15.dxc5?!  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$  17. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ ? b3! would be a brutal finish) 15...g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  (18... $\mathbb{B}b5$  runs into 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$ ) 19. $\mathbb{W}xc5$  dxc5 leads to approximate equality.

#### 15.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! 16.cxd6!

According to the engine White can survive the assault with 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ , but it soon changes its tune after 16... $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$  17.bxc3 bxc3 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (or 18. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{B}b8\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  and there is no defence against ... $\mathbb{B}b2$ .) 18...0–0 when 19. $\mathbb{W}c4$  does not defend the king due to 19... $\mathbb{B}b8\uparrow$  followed by ... $\mathbb{B}b4$ .

#### 16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$



#### 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !

Shabalov characteristically gives up some material in order to slow down Black's initiative and obtain one of his own. The more I think about it, the more I like it, which is why I would personally prefer one of the alternatives discussed at move 14.

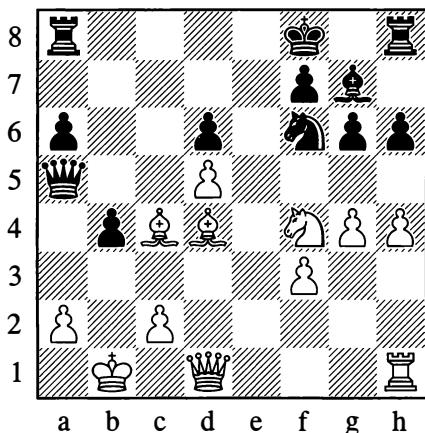
According to the Silicon Besserwisser it is better to hold on to the extra material with 17. $\mathbb{E}e1$ . After the further 17... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  bxc3 20. $\mathbb{E}xe7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  21. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{W}b6\uparrow$  (21... $\mathbb{B}b8\uparrow$ ?! 22. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  23. $\mathbb{E}c7$  favours White) 22. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  23. $\mathbb{B}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  it is time for the author to realize that he has to settle for "unclear".

#### 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $exd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ !?

Even though this move locks up the rook on h8 for a long time to come, it seems to be best.

My recommendation in *Tiger's Modern* was 19...0–0?! 20.g5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , but it runs into 21.gxh6 (21. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  22.h5 is also dangerous for Black) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\uparrow$  fxe6 23. $\mathbb{W}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  24.h5 with lots of compensation for White. It is clear that I trusted the engine too much when I analysed this eight years ago. Had I looked at this position with my own eyes, I am

sure I would have seen that there is ‘something’ for White.



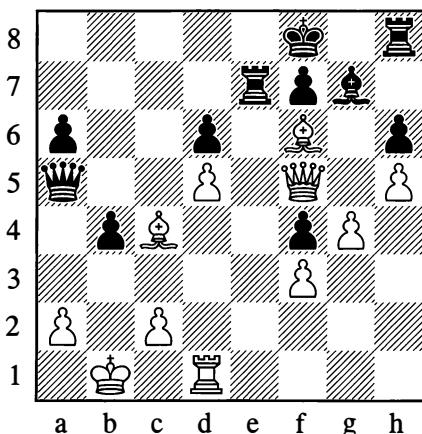
### 20.♕d3 ♜e8 21.♖d1

White can also try 21.h5!? gxh5 (21...g5 is terribly dangerous because of 22.♕f5 ♜d8 [22...gxh4 23.♖xf6 ♜c5 24.g5!] 23.♘e6†! fxe6 24.dxe6 with a fantastic initiative for White) 22.♕f5 ♜d8 23.♖f1 when it is clearly more comfortable to play the white side.

### 21...♜e7?!

Black should prefer 21...♜g8, when there is nothing clear for White. Now Shabalov strikes.

### 22.h5! g5 23.♕f5! gxf4 24.♖xf6



### 24...♛c7?!

Black’s best chance to draw was 24...b3!. The critical line is 25.axb3! ♜e1 26.♖xe1 ♜xe1† 27.♔b2 ♜xf6† 28.♕xf6 ♜e5† 29.♕xe5 dxе5 30.♖xa6 e4 31.fxe4 f3 32.c4 ♔e7 33.c5, reaching a crazy endgame where White’s chances are somewhat higher.

### 25.♕xf4 ♜g8

After 25...♜e8 26.♖xa6 ♜c5 Black can still dream of survival, for a while at least.

### 26.♔xa6 ♜c5?

This makes the end quick and painless, as opposed to 26...♜e8 27.♔b5 ♜b8 28.♔c6, when Black can make a few more moves.

### 27.♔xe7† ♜xe7 28.♖e1† ♜f8 29.♔b5 ♜e5 30.♕xh6† ♜g7 31.f4 ♜c3 32.♕xd6†!

Black resigned, since 32...♜xd6 33.♕e8 is check and mate.

1–0

In the next game White plays g2-g4 at an even earlier stage.

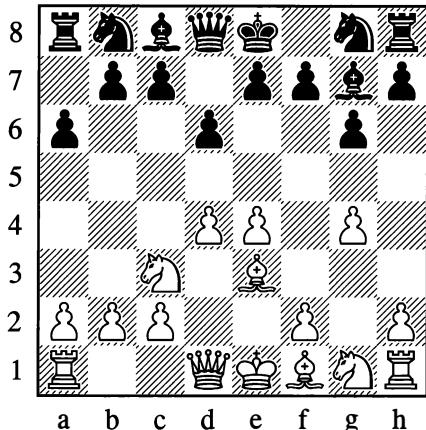
## GAME 31

### Luca Shytaj – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Dresden (ol) 2008

### 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.g4?!

This is just the kind of move that I like. It keeps a lot of flexibility and does not give away too much information to the opponent. If Black decides to treat it as an accelerated fianchetto, then White might continue with f2-f3 and ♜d2, whereas if Black treats it as an Unleashed Dragon, then White might resort to the fianchetto.



5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?

Faced with a move that I had never seen before, I reacted with a certain amount of ‘that can’t be any good’, and chose the kind of move that aims to refute White’s set-up. I have since come to realize that this attitude was built on false assumptions. Black has two decent alternatives.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !? is provocative, but it seems to be playable. White has three main options:

a) 6.f3 b5 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  h5 8.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  9.0–0–0 0–0 10.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is unclear.

b) 6.h3!? 0–0 (6...b5?! 7.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10.exd6 exd6 11.a4 seems a bit better for White.) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e5 Now White should play 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$  if he wants to achieve anything, since 9.0–0?! allows 9... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  10.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  12.fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$  and White has no good way to avoid a draw by repetition.

c) 6.g5!?  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 7. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c5 8.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  9.f3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  10.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  looks curiously playable.) 7.h4 c5 8.h5 0–0! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 looks balanced, but needs to be researched more thoroughly. This line is the reason why I consider the next option 5...b5 more reliable for Black.

5...b5! 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

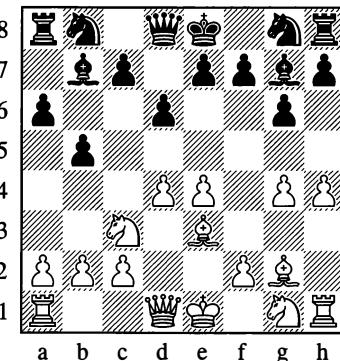
This would be my preference today. White has a wide choice.

7.h4

This has been played by Solodovnichenko, a specialist on the white side of this line.

7.g5 e6!N 8.a3 (8.h4 h5! 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is unclear) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.h4 h5 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  c5 looks promising for Black.

7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  appears sensible, but almost every normal move is good enough for Black: 7...b4!? (7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8.h3 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is solid; alternatively, after 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8.0–0 e5 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  White might come to regret advancing the g-pawn so far.) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  This was Smeets – Pel, Hoogeveen 2007, and now after 8...a5N 9.a3 e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}df4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  Black is doing fine.



7...h6

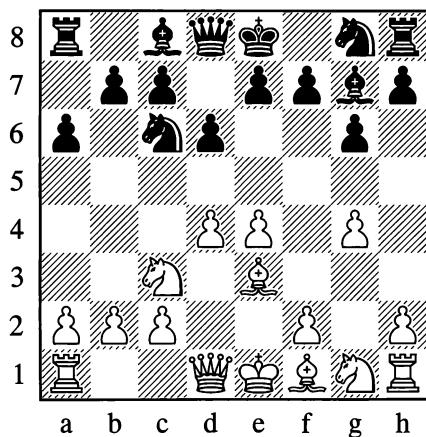
7...b4!? is also playable. One recent example continued: 8. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  10.h5 can be met by 10...0–0!?, for instance 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$  c5 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}a5$  and Black’s attack strikes first.) 9...h5 (I would prefer 9...0–0, when 10.a3 can be met by 10...a5, or even 10...c5!? intending 11.axb4 cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with plenty of play for the pawn.) 10.gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13.h5 gxh5 14.e5 This was Solodovnichenko – Kunin, Vasteras 2014, and here 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !N would have given Black excellent chances.

8.  $\mathbb{W}d2$

8.g5 h5 (8...hxg5 9.hxg5  $\mathbb{B}xh1$  10. $\mathbb{B}xh1$  e6 is safer, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-b6$ , ... $\mathbb{W}d7$  and ...0–0–0) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e6 10.a3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  reaches a double-edged position where anything can happen.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.a3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.f3 c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  12.g5 hxg5 13.hxg5  $\mathbb{B}xh1\uparrow$  14. $\mathbb{B}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{B}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The position was balanced in Solodovnichenko – Haub, Cappelle la Grande 2011.



### 6.h3?!

This move is too slow. Instead White ought to have played 6.d5!, when 6... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ? (6... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  7.h3 c5! might look reasonable, but after 8.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.a4 I have not been able to find a way for Black to get enough counterplay) 7. $\mathbb{B}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  9. $\mathbb{B}e2$  c5 10. $\mathbb{B}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  11.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  leads to an atypical position that is probably a bit better for White.

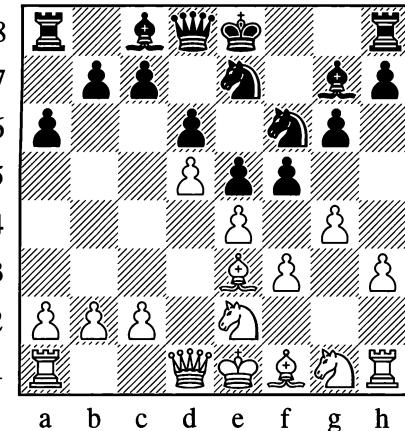
### 6...e5! 7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ ?

This attempt at getting some kind of King's Indian structure is “too talented” (see page 362 for an explanation of this pet phrase of mine).

Better was 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , intending to jump in to g5 in the event that Black hurries with ...f5.

8... $f5$  9.f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Now my position is comfortable; all I have to do is to find a way to activate my passive knight on e7.

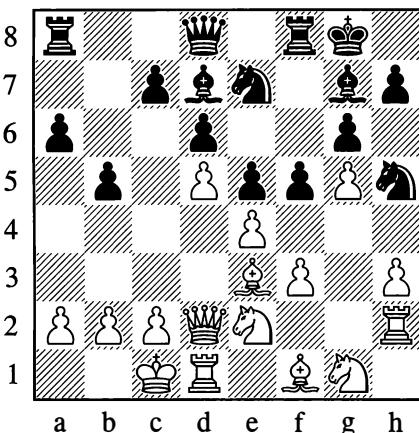


10.g5??  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0–0

It was also possible to play 11...c6!? 12.dxc6 (or 12.c4  $\mathbb{W}c7$ ! and White can no longer castle long) 12...bxc6 13.0–0–0 d5 14. $\mathbb{B}c5$  0–0 with some advantage.

12.0–0–0  $\mathbb{B}d7$  13. $\mathbb{B}h2$  b5

I did not see how White would disentangle his forces on the kingside, so I decided to take some space before deciding on further actions.



14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  a5

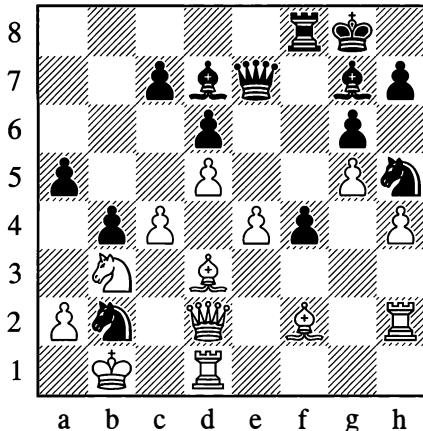
Another possibility was 14...c6 15.dxc6  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (White cannot live with 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  fxe4) 16...d5 with a wonderful position for Black.

### 15.c4 b4!?

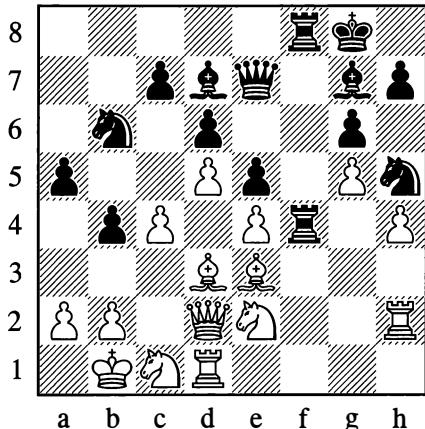
Here I start losing track of what was important. It was better to open up the position with 15...bxc4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$ .

**16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17.h4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$**   
**19. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  fxe4 20.fxe4  $\mathbb{B}f3$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{B}f4$**   
**22. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{E}af8$**

My opponent was short of time, and I felt it would be hard for him to deal with my active pieces if he accepted the exchange sac. However, there were other things going on, which I failed to notice.



**26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  27. $\mathbb{W}xd1$  a4 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$**   
**29. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$  30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  a3 31. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f3 32. $\mathbb{W}c2$**   
 **$\mathbb{W}e5$  33. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  34. $\mathbb{B}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  35.axb3 a2†**  
**36. $\mathbb{W}xa2$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  37. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  38. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e2†$**   
**0–1**



### 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ !?

Better is 23.c5! dxc5 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c4 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  cxb6 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  when Black has to give up the exchange under less favourable circumstances.

### 23...exf4 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ?

After this mistake Black takes over. 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  cxb6 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$  would have led to unclear complications.

### 24... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

The rest is rather simple.

So far we have focused on White's various attempts to expand on the kingside. In the next two games we will examine the plan of striking on the queenside with a2-a4.

## GAME 32

Martin Burrows – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Guernsey 2003

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$**   
 **$\mathbb{Q}d7$**

As stated earlier in this chapter, nowadays I prefer to meet the Flexible Dragon with a direct 5...b5. This is primarily because I like to be able chop off the knight on h3, as in Game 27, but also because I like to be able to play a quick ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  when White plays f2-f4, as shown in Games 7-11 in the first chapter.

### 6.f3

White can also try a different version of the set-up featured in the main game:

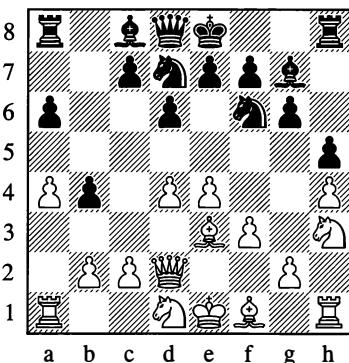
6.h4 h5 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  b5 8.a4!?

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  has been covered in Game 26, along with 8.0–0–0 in the notes – see page 154.

8...b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.f3

It is more accurate to play 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  when 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11.f3 c5 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is about equal.

After the text move Black can keep the bishop on c8 and decide at his convenience whether b7 is the right place for it.

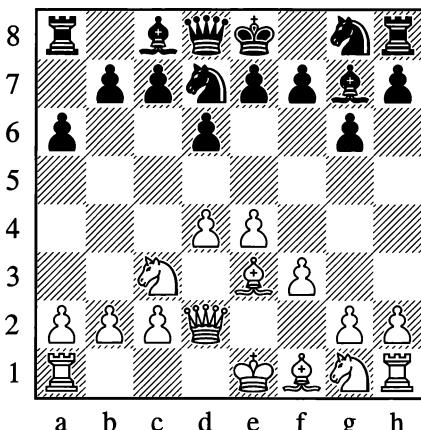


10...c5! 11.c3 bxc3 12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  N

The inaccurate 12...0–0?! allowed 13.a5! with a slight advantage to White in Hebden – Hillarp Persson, Port Erin 2001.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Black has a flexible and promising position.



6...b5 7.a4 b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5!

This is the point behind the early ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

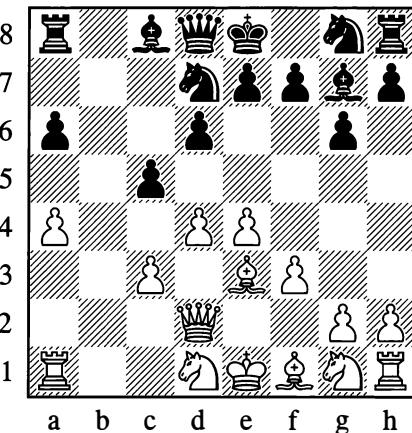
(although today I would aim to reach this position with 5...b5! 6.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ). The point is that Black does not have to waste a tempo on ...a6-a5 to protect the b-pawn.

After 8...a5 Black is a tempo down on a known line in 4...c6 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b5 6.a4 b4 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  a5 8.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

### 9.c3

White can obtain the better structure with 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.a5, but Black is better developed, and after 10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.c3 (after 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  White has trouble finding squares for his pieces) 11...bxc3 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  Black is fighting for the initiative.

### 9...bxc3 10.bxc3

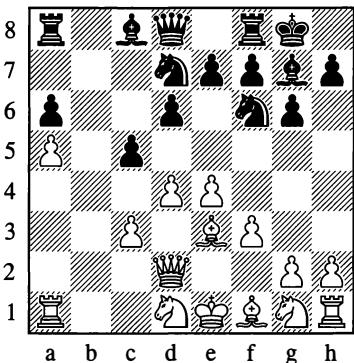


10... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

This move will probably not stop White from playing a4-a5 in the long run, but it makes it more difficult.

Black can also consider 10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6!$ ?, allowing 11.a5. In this kind of position Black generally needs to blow up the centre before White can get a grip on it. If White gets the chance to play  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , d4-d5 and  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , he will get a dominating position. (Compare this to

a situation with the black c-pawn on c6 and pawns on a4 and a5, where Black can open things up with ...e5 and ...d5, as shown on page 195.) Despite all this, after the obvious 11...0–0 I am not convinced that White can achieve full control over the centre.



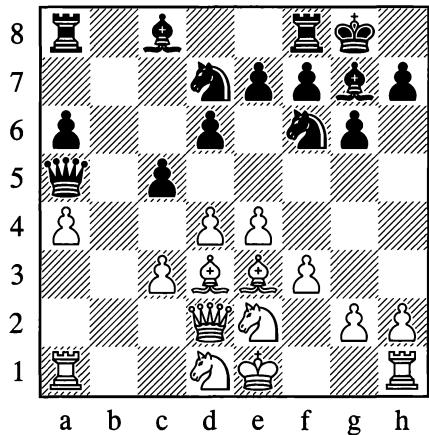
My main point is that 12.♗d3 allows 12...cxd4! 13.cxd4 e5!. Black intends to blast open the centre with ...d5, and 14.d5? is disastrous due to 14...♘xd5! 15.exd5 e4 with a huge advantage for Black.

White should instead play 12.♗h3, when both 12...♝c7, intending ...♞b8-c6, and 12...♞b8?! are worth investigating for Black.

### 11.♗d3 ♘gf6

Tukhaev has tried 11...d5 here, but 12.e5 f6 13.f4 should keep an advantage for White.

### 12.♗e2 0–0



### 13.♘b2?!

This is the beginning of a standard manoeuvre which aims to install the knight on c4.

13.0–0 ♜b8 is fine for Black, for instance: 14.♗h6 (14.♗f2 ♘b6 15.♗fb1 ♛e6?! 16.d5 ♘c8! Black intends ...♝b7 and ...♞bd7 with good play.) 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 ♜xd2 16.♗xd2 e5! A common way to fight for the c5-square. 17.d5? ♘xd5 18.exd5 e4 Black gets the piece back and stands better.

### 13...♜b8

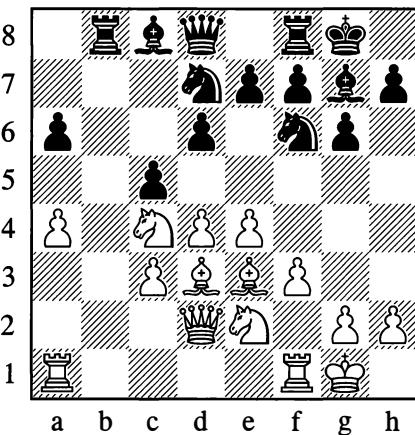
In the game Izeta Txabarri – Damaso, Alcobendas 1994, Black played 13...♞b6 to guard the c4-square. After 14.0–0 ♛e6 15.d5 ♘d7 White blundered with 16.♗h6?, when – instead of 16...c4 17.♗xg7 ♜xg7 18.♗d4 with unclear play – Black could have won an important pawn with 16...♝xh6!N 17.♝xh6 c4 18.♗c2 ♘bxh5! intending 19.exd5 ♜b6† 20.♔h1 ♜xb2.

### 14.♘c4 ♜d8

14...♝c7?! allows 15.a5, when 15...d5? runs into 16.♗f4, which ruins all the fun for Black.

### 15.0–0?!

More critical is 15.d5! ♘b6 16.a5 ♘xc4 17.♗xc4 ♘d7! 18.f4 ♘f6 19.♗d3 e6 20.dxe6 ♜xe6. Now White should avoid 21.♗xa6 ♜e8, when Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.



**15...cxd4?**

The whole idea behind allowing White to play  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  was to open up the centre with 15...d5!. Instead I suffered a hallucination, thinking I first needed to remove the c-pawns in order to prevent dxc5, which is just rubbish. After 16.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  cxd4 18.cxd4 Black is not really better, but he can try to exploit the isolated pawn in the long run.

**16.cxd4 d5 17. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$** 

This is only possible because the c-pawns have been exchanged. Now things are desperate for Black.

**17...dxe4 18.fxe4**

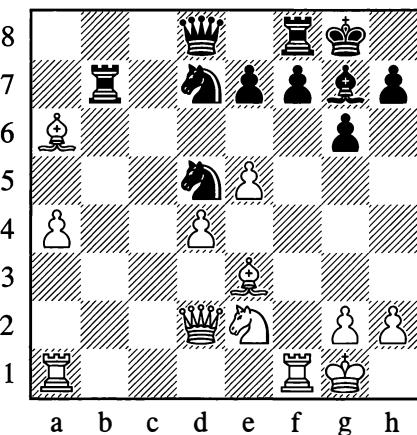
I was dreaming of 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6??$  exd3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  dxe2 20. $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$ , when Black has a fantastic position with three pieces for the queen.

**18... $\mathbb{B}b7?!$** 

18... $\mathbb{B}b6$  is a better try, but I was still grieving over my 15th move.

**19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}xb7$  20.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21. $\mathbb{W}xa6$** 

I am a pawn down and my pieces are not working well together, so it is time to play for tricks.

**21... $\mathbb{B}b3$  22. $\mathbb{Q}h6!?$** 

After 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  I did not, and still do not, know what Black should do.

**22... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  23. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$** 

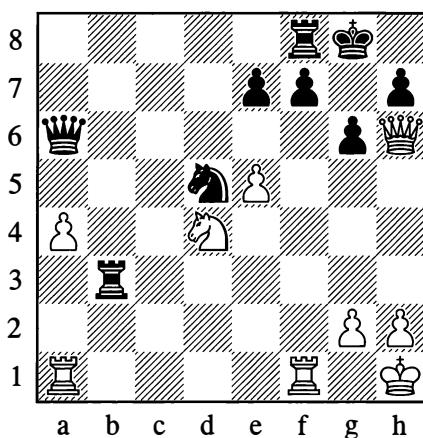
I thought for a long time over this move, checking every variation twice. My opponent's answer came immediately.

**24.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}b6\#$  25. $\mathbb{Q}h1?!$** 

25. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$   $\mathbb{W}xa6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g5 28. $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$   $\mathbb{E}g6$  29. $\mathbb{W}d2$  is much better for White according to Silicon Sid. It makes sense.

**25... $\mathbb{W}xa6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$** 

Now I realized I was being threatened by both  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  If I defend against the latter with 26... $\mathbb{B}b6$ , then White wins the exchange with 27.a5. What shall I do?

**26... $\mathbb{Q}e3!!$** 

It was pure luck that I was able to survive for another move. Now, for once, it was my opponent's turn to think for a while.

**27. $\mathbb{B}f1?$** 

This is a mistake. The safest road to an advantage is 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb3!$   $\mathbb{W}e2!$  (after 27... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  28. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  f6 29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d3$  30. $\mathbb{B}e1$  the black knight will not survive for long) 28. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  29. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  30.gxf3 and the a-pawn will decide the endgame for White.

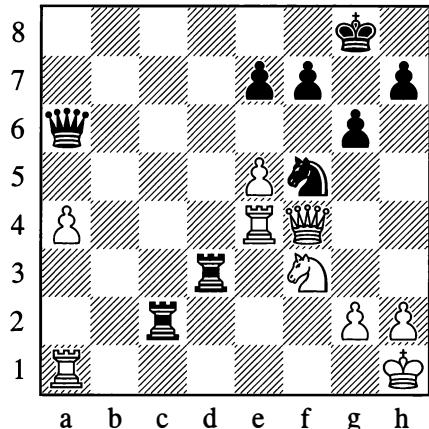
**27... $\mathbb{B}d3!$  28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$** 

My opponent spotted 28. $\mathbb{B}xe3?$   $\mathbb{W}xa4!$

29.  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$ , when Black emerges a clean pawn up.

28...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  29.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  30.  $\mathbb{E}e4$   $\mathbb{E}c2?$

Both players missed that White can play  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  here and on the next two moves.

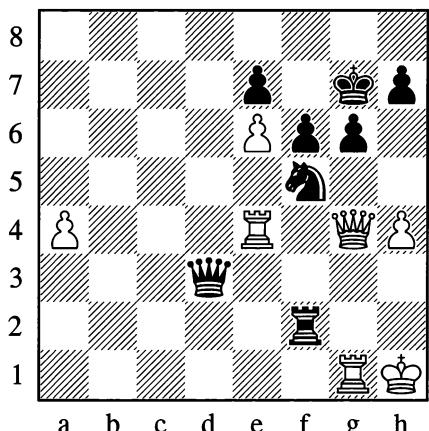


31.  $e6!?$   $f6$  32.  $\mathbb{E}b1?$   $\mathbb{Q}g7?$  33.  $\mathbb{W}b8??$

White goes from a winning (33.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ) to a losing position in one move.

33...  $\mathbb{E}xf3$  34.  $\mathbb{G}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}d3$  35.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{E}f2$  36.  $\mathbb{E}g1$   $\mathbb{E}xf3$  37.  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{E}f2$  38.  $h4$

Or 38.  $a5$   $\mathbb{W}c2$  39.  $\mathbb{E}g2$   $\mathbb{E}xg2$  40.  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}b1\#$  and Black wins the rook.



38...  $\mathbb{W}c2$  39.  $\mathbb{E}g2$   $\mathbb{E}xg2$  40.  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  41.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$  42.  $\mathbb{E}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  43.  $a5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

44.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $g5$

0–1

## GAME 33

Merijn van Delft – Mikhail Gurevich

Amsterdam 2001

1.  $e4$   $d6$  2.  $d4$   $g6$  3.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $a6$  5.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $b5$

As mentioned earlier, this is my preferred move order. There is only one potential downside, which will become clear a few moves later in the game.

6.  $a4$   $b4$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The knight looks misplaced here, but it is only temporary. Given time, it can reach either the kingside with  $f2-f3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , or – after an exchange of pawns on  $c3$  – the queenside with  $\mathbb{Q}b2-c4$ .

7.  $\mathbb{Q}a2?!$

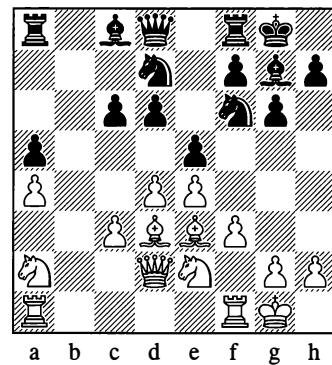
This is clearly inferior, as it will be harder to find a useful role for the knight.

7...  $a5$  8.  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9.  $f3$   $bxcc3$  10.  $bxcc3$

Or 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  0–0 followed by ...  $\mathbb{Q}a6-b4$  with an excellent game for Black.

10... 0–0 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $e5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $c6$  13. 0–0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

If White's knight had gone to  $d1$  instead of  $a2$ , then it would have been possible to continue with  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , with a slight edge to White.



## 14.♕h1

This is an important prerequisite if White wants to meet a future ...dxe4 with fxe4 without allowing Black to hunt down the dark-squared bishop with ...♗g4.

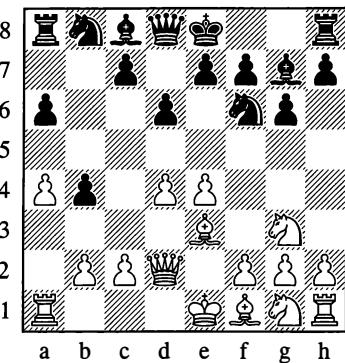
## 14...d5!

Black had the initiative in Lindberg – Hillarp Persson, Malmö 2013.

Another possibility is:

## 7.♗ce2? ♗f6! 8.♗g3

8.f3 ♗c6!? (8...a5 9.♔h6 ♔xh6 10.♗xh6 e5 should also be fine) 9.♗c1 0–0 10.♗b3 ♕e8!! is a remarkable idea, courtesy of Houdini. 11.♗e2 e5 12.d5 ♗e7 13.♗xb4 c6 14.dxc6 ♗xc6 15.♗d2 d5 Black has plenty of compensation for the pawn.



## 8...♗g4!

8...h5!? is also interesting, intending 9.f3 h4 10.♗e2 ♗c6!? followed by a quick ...e5.

## 9.♗xb4 c5 10.♗d2

Now in Vehi Bach – M. Gurevich, Groningen 1997, Black took on e3 immediately. More accurate would have been:

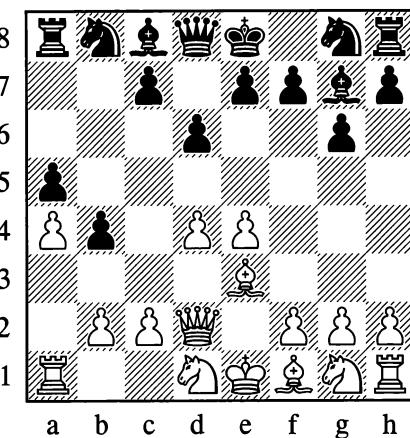
## 10...♗c6! 11.♗f3 cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♖b6 14.c3 ♗e5

Black has wonderful compensation for the pawn.

## 7...a5

Compared to the lines where Black plays 5...♗d7 before ...b5, Black is forced to defend the b-pawn by moving the a-pawn for a second

time. However, there is a silver lining to this scenario: the knight can go to c6, where it is more active.



## 8.c3

White can try to get by without this move with 8.f3 ♗f6 9.♔h6 (9.c3 leads to the game) 9...0–0 10.♗xg7 ♗xg7 11.♗e3, but it seems to me that Black is doing well after 11...e5 12.♗e2 ♗c6 13.d5 ♗e7 14.h4 h5. Black intends ...♗d7 and ...♗b8 with an excellent game.

## 8...♗f6 9.f3 bxc3

Considering how well researched the main line is, I believe it is worth investigating a less common route:

## 9...0–0?

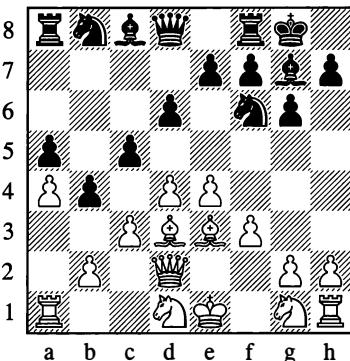
This is more flexible and allows Black to use a plan that would be inadvisable after 9...bxc3.

## 10.♗d3

I find it hard to believe in White after: 10.cxb4 axb4 11.♗xb4 c5!? (A more conservative approach is 11...♗fd7 12.♗d2 c5; perhaps sacrificing one pawn is enough.) 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♗xc5 ♗a6 14.♗xa6 ♗xa6 15.♗e2 ♗b8 There was chaos on the board in Pel – Priborsky, Olomouc 2004.

## 10...c5?

This is more challenging than 10...bxc3 11.bxc3 c5, which leads to the main game.



The big question is whether White can snatch a pawn with:

11.dxc5N

After 11.♕e2 ♜a6 12.♕xa6 ♜xa6 13.0–0 ♜b8 14.c4 cxd4 15.♕xd4 ♜c5 Black had a dynamic position and eventually won in Balabaev – Joppich, email 2007.

11...dxc5 12.♕xc5 ♜a6!

The most straightforward option, although it is far from the only one available.

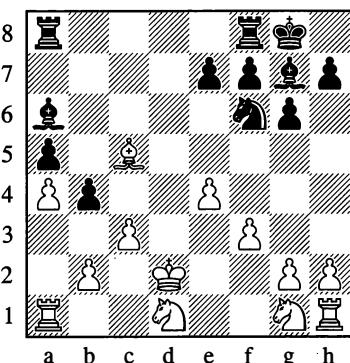
13.♕xa6?!

Swapping off the bishop is a concession, but it is important to check whether Black can generate enough play after a queen exchange.

13.♕e3 bxc3 14.♕xc3 ♜b4 15.♕d1 ♜e6 16.♕b5 ♜b8 offers Black good compensation.

13.♕d4 bxc3 14.bxc3 e5 15.♕e3 ♜e7 and once again Black has enough for the pawn.

13...♜xd2† 14.♕xd2 ♜xa6



15.cxb4

Or 15.♕xe7 ♜fe8 16.♕xf6 ♜xf6 17.♕e2 ♜g5† 18.♕e1 f5 19.h4 fxe4 20.f4 ♜f6 with an initiative for Black.

15...♕d7?!

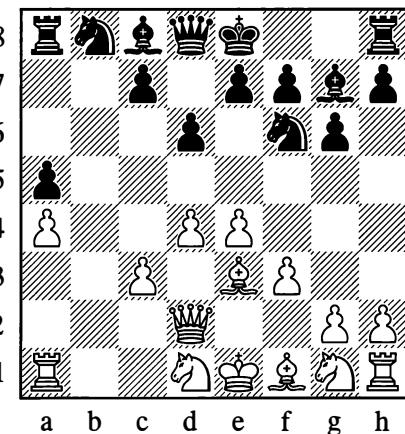
15...♜fc8 16.♕xe7 axb4 17.♕e3 ♜a7 18.♕xf6 ♜xf6 19.♕e2 ♜d8† 20.♕d5 ♜c4 is also slightly better for Black.

16.♕xe7 ♜fe8 17.b5 ♜xe7 18.bxa6 ♜c5 19.♕c2 f5 20.♕c3 fxe4

White is clearly fighting for survival.

## 10.bxc3

In this type of position White often plays 10.♕xc3?!, intending to put pressure on the c-file. However, the weakening of the b4-square and especially the b4-square are of greater importance. 10...0–0 11.♕d3 ♜c6 12.♕ge2 ♜b4?? Black has nothing to complain about.



## 10...0–0

This has become the main line. It is not so clear that 10...c6 is worse, but it fell into disgrace after the following game: 11.♕h6 (11.h4 ♜bd7 12.♕h6 ♜xh6 13.♕xh6 e5 is unclear.) 11...0–0 12.h4 e5 13.h5 ♜e8 (Anand gives plenty of evidence that 13...♜xh5 14.g4! is dangerous for Black.) 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♕xg7 ♜xg7 16.♕f2 ♜a7?! (Anand points out that 16...♜bd7! offers Black counterplay.) 17.♕b1! White had a strong initiative in Anand – Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993.

**11.♗d3**

The big difference between 10...0–0 and 10...c6 is shown after:

**11.♗h6 e5!**

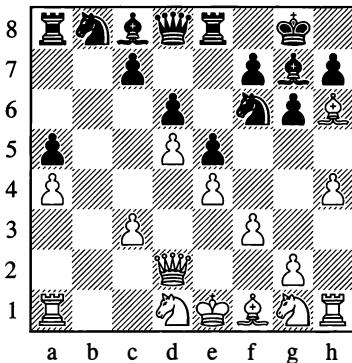
Black is a crucial tempo ahead when it comes to creating counterplay in the centre.

**12.h4 ♜e8**

12...♗xh6?! 13.♗xh6 ♜h5?! is an interesting alternative.

**13.d5?!**

This move does not combine well with the plan of exchanging the bishop on g7, since the dark squares on the queenside will become a playground for the black knights.

**13...c6 14.dxc6**

After 14.c4?! ♜a6 and the knight will enter Nirvana on b4 or c5.

**14...♗xc6 15.♗xg7 ♜xg7 16.♗b5 ♜c7 17.h5 ♜e6**

Threatening to break open the centre with ...d5.

**18.♗e3**

With balanced chances in Skripchenko – M. Gurevich, Groningen 1997. (18.hxg6 fxg6 19.g4 h5! is wild but roughly level.)

**11...♗bd7?!**

Black may run into difficulties after this move, and it is a good idea to search for improvements either here or earlier.

**11...♗a6? 12.♗e2 ♗bd7 13.0–0 ♗b6**

is an

interesting way of taking aim at the c4-square. This seems to almost equalize, but it is a risky strategy. If White manages to gain control of the centre, Black may be left without a clear plan of action.

**11...c5?!**

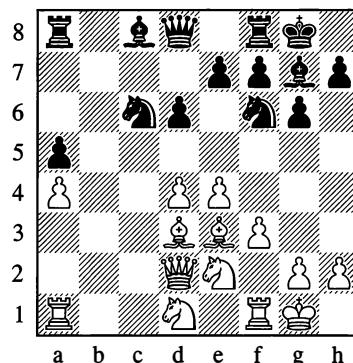
This interesting move intends ...cxd4 followed by ...♗c6-b4, with a harmonious position. We will follow an email game which showed something close to model play for both sides:

**12.♗e2**

12.dxc5?! d5! and 12.d5 e6! are both nice for Black.

**12...cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗c6 14.0–0**

This improves over a game from the previous year: 14.♗b5 ♗b4 15.♗f2 d5?! 16.0–0 (After 16.e5 ♗d7 17.♗d3 ♗xd3† 18.♗xd3 ♗b6 Black equalizes with the help of the c4-square.) 16...♗a6 (I prefer 16...dxe4 17.fxe4 ♗b7 18.♗c3 ♜c8, reaching a balanced and complex position.) 17.♗c3 ♗d7 18.♗h6 ♗xb5 19.♗xb5 The position remained about equal in Hermansson – Palo, Malmö/Copenhagen 2005.

**14...♗b4 15.♗b5 d5**

I have a soft spot for the flexible 15...♗e8?! in this kind of position, keeping ...d5 for later. After 16.♗f2 ♗c7 17.♗d3 ♗ca6 18.♗xb4 ♗xb4 19.♗ac1 d5 20.e5 ♗a6 Black is close to equality.

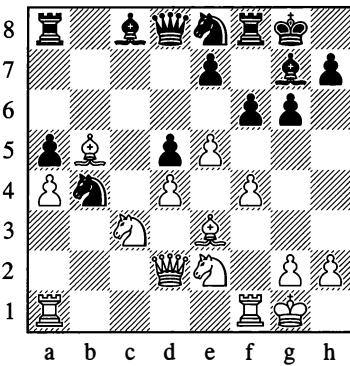
16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

The idea of this move is to make it less attractive for White to answer ...f6 with exf6, since that would give the knight a beautiful square on d6.

After 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  there is a clear point for White in not having played  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , since this knight can now help to control c4. 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (17...f6 would be met by 18.exf6.) 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}cd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  20.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  21. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  22. $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{E}fc8$  23. $\mathbb{E}xc8\#$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  The position is close to equal, but this line demands considerable accuracy from Black.

17. $\mathbb{Q}dc3$  f6! 18.f4

Black is not worse after 18.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (-f5).



This position is critical for the 11...c5 line. Black still has to take care not to end up in a bind.

18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}ca6?$  20. $\mathbb{Q}ec1$  fxe5 21.fxe5

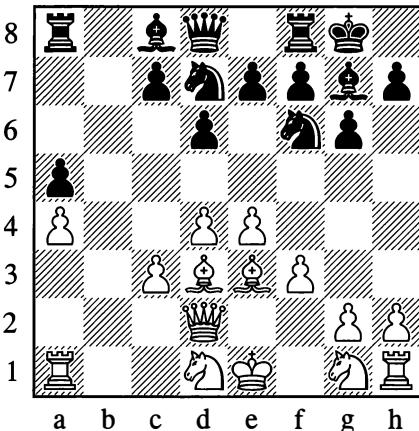
After 21.dxe5 d4! 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

$\mathbb{Q}xb4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  26. $\mathbb{E}xa1$

White has good compensation for the exchange, but Black should be okay.

21... $\mathbb{E}xf1\#$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$

With a balanced position, Voss – Ludgate, email 2006.



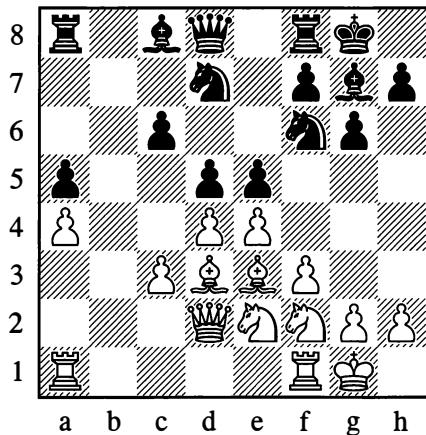
12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6

Black would like to play ...e5, but must take care not to allow White to close the centre. After 12...e5?! 13.d5! the position is reminiscent of the King's Indian Sämisch, where White has the additional advantage of an open b-file. According to Jens Kristiansen Black can get reasonable play here with 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?. I find this hard to believe, but maybe I am too dogmatic.

A better alternative is 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ?, combining development with harassment of the a4-pawn. It is an interesting idea, but I still feel sceptical about the awkward position of the knight on b6. 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (The critical line is 13.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ , when Black is somewhat passive but not much worse.) 13...e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  This move only improves Black's position unless White is able to continue with h4-h5. (It was better to either play 14.h4 now, or avoid  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  altogether.) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  15.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  White was just marginally better in Krivec – Sermek, Bled 2001.

13.0–0 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  d5

In the 4...c6 line, this position is rather common with Black to move. In that case the position is equal, whereas here White has some initiative.



**15.♘fd1**

White has a range of alternatives, but his main ideas are to play either c3-c4 or f3-f4. In the main game White goes for the former plan, but I believe the latter is more testing.

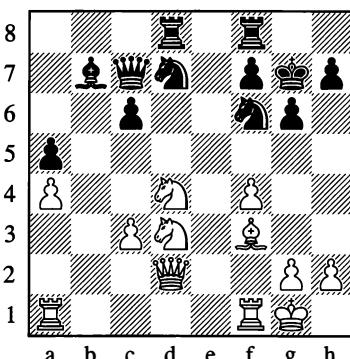
**15.♗h6 ♜c7**

15...♝e8 seems more logical.

**16.♗xg7 ♜xg7 17.f4 dxe4 18.♗xe4**

After 18.fxe5 exd3 19.exf6† ♜xf6 20.♗xd3 ♜e4! 21.♗e3 f5, followed by ...c5 and ...♜a6, Black is fine.

**18...exd4 19.♗xd4 ♜b7 20.♗f3 ♜ad8 21.♗d3**



**21...c5**

The Binary Accountant comes up with the instructive 21...♜a6! when 22.♗xc6 ♜b6 hands the initiative over to Black.

22.♗b5 ♜b6 23.♗xb7 c4† 24.♗d4 ♜xb7 25.♗e5 ♜e4?!

25...♜c7 is better, though White keeps a slight initiative after 26.♗ae1.

**26.♗e3 ♜df6 27.♗ab1**

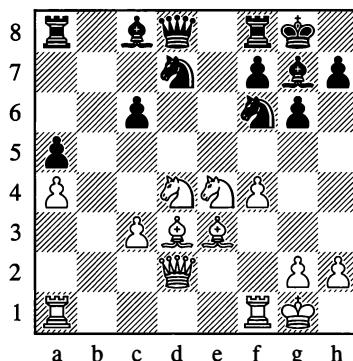
White had a clear advantage in Ljubojevic – Ehlvest, Linares 1991.

**15.f4!?**

This is the most critical move, and it forces Black to flaunt some defensive skills.

**15...dxe4 16.♗xe4 exd4 17.♗xd4!**

The less critical 17.♗xd4 was played in Roschina – Lakos, Medulin 1997.



**17...♜a6!**

This is clearly safest.

17...♜c7 18.f5 gave White some initiative, although Black was able to hold in Cimmino – Straschewski, corr. 1997.

The best alternative is 17...♝e8!? when 18.♗d6 ♜e7 19.♗c4 ♜b7 20.♗b3 c5 21.f5 is double-edged.

**18.♗xc6 ♜c7 19.♗xf6† ♜xf6 20.♗e5 ♜d7 21.♗xd7 ♜xd7 22.♗xa6 ♜xd2 23.♗d2 ♜xa6**

Although White is a pawn up, Black should have little trouble holding the endgame.

**15...♝e8 16.♗ab1 ♜c7 17.c4 dxe4 18.♗xe4 exd4**

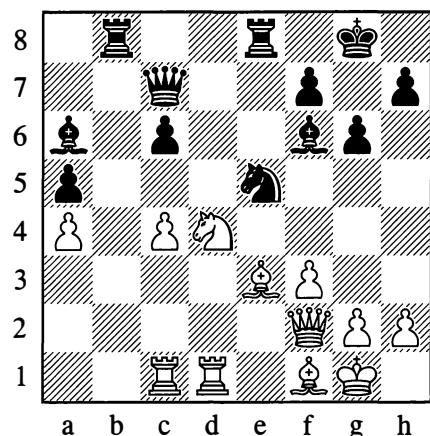
A more ambitious plan is 18...♗xe4 19.♗xe4 f5, when 20.♗c2! ♜a6 21.♗b3 ♜h8 22.d5 cxd5 23.cxd5 ♜d6 leads to complex play.

**19.♗xd4**

19.♕xf6† ♜xf6 20.♖xd4 ♜xd4† 21.♕xd4 ♜c5 is roughly equal.

**19... ♜e5 20.♕xf6† ♜xf6 21.♔f1 ♜a6 22.♗bc1 ♜ad8 23.♘f2 ♜b8?**

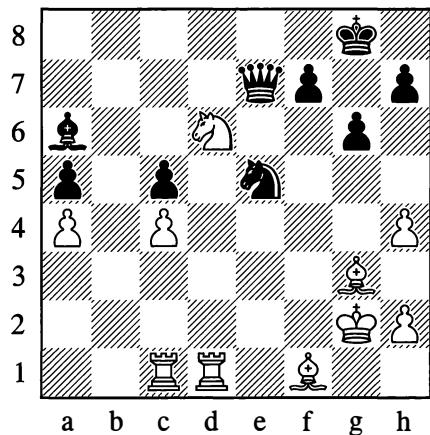
Better is 23...♝e7 24.♝e1 ♜h4! 25.g3 ♜f6 when Black has some initiative. After the text move White obtains a winning position with a tactical trick.



**24.♕b5! ♜e7?!**

In *Tiger's Modern* I gave 24...cx b5 as a better option, but the engine takes me out of my delusion with 25.cxb5 ♜e7 26.bxa6 ♜xf3† 27.gxf3! ♜xe3 28.♖xe3 ♜xe3 29.♕d7, when Black has little hope.

**25.♕c5 ♜h4 26.g3 ♜f6 27.♕c7 ♜xf3† 28.♗g2 ♜b2 29.♕xe8 ♜xf2† 30.♕xf2 ♜e7 31.gxh4 ♜e5 32.♕d6 c5 33.♕g3?!**



White is absolutely winning and should be able to wrap things up with a few precise moves. Instead he loses his way and allows Black to resist.

**33... ♜b7† 34.♕xb7 ♜xb7† 35.♗f2 ♜g4† 36.♗g1 ♜g7 37.♗e1 ♜b3 38.♗g2 ♜xa4 39.h3 ♜h6 40.♕d5 ♜f5 41.♕f2 ♜b3 42.♗g2 a4 43.♗e2 ♜a3 44.♗ce1 ♜b3 45.♗a1 ♜d6 46.♕xc5 ♜xc4 47.♕d4† ♜h6 48.♕c5 ♜g7 49.♕d4† ♜h6 50.♕c5 ♜g7 51.♕d4† ½-½**

The final game of the chapter sees White respond to 5...♝d7 with 6.a4. On the one hand this should be irrelevant to the reader looking to construct a repertoire, since – as I have already stated several times – Black should prefer 5...b5 over 5...♝d7. Nevertheless, the game contains some instructive points which you may find useful should you ever encounter the ensuing Benoni structure over the board. Think of it as offering ideas for a rainy day.

## GAME 34

**Marcelino Sion Castro – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Mondariz 1994

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♗d2 ♜d7 6.a4 b6**

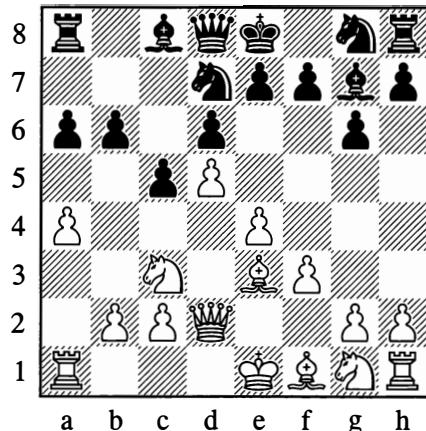
This position resembles Game 16 (Turov – Hillarp Persson on page 93), but there is an important difference as White has played ♜d2 here, which does not fit in so well with the f2-f4 plan.

**7.f3 c5?!**

It is safer to adopt a Hippo formation, the most accurate move order being 7...e6!, as explained on page 287.

**8.d5!**

After 8.♗ge2 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♕b7 10.♕c4 ♜gf6 Black has a reasonable version of a Sicilian Dragon. White has played an early a2-a4, which makes long castling unattractive.



### 8...♝e5!

This is absolutely necessary. After 8...♝gf6?! 9.♗h3! 0-0 10.♗e2 ♜e8 11.0-0 it is difficult for Black to achieve either ...b5 or ...e6. For instance, 11...♝e5 12.♗f2 e6? 13.f4 ♜ed7 14.dxe6 ♜xe6 15.♕c4 is utterly awful for Black.

### 9.h3 f5!

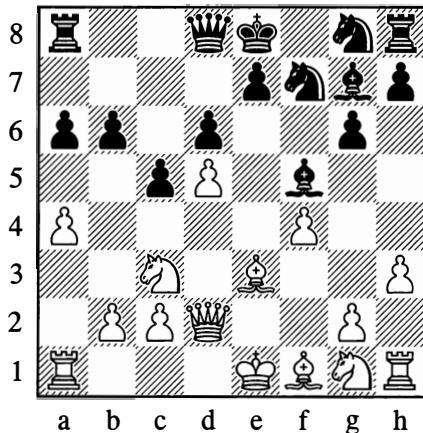
Without this break, the last move would have no meaning. Now the knight can retreat to f7 if attacked – a useful point to remember in this type of Benoni structure.

### 10.f4 ♘f7

The knight is not very active here, but it is not in the way of the other pieces, and it guards the g5-square against an enemy knight potentially looking to invade on e6.

### 11.exf5 ♜xf5!

11...gxf5?! does not appeal to me, as the f5-pawn may become weak and the c8-bishop has a bleak future. After 12.♕c4! (12.♗f3?! e5! 13.dxe6 ♜xe6 14.0-0-0 ♜e7 is fine for Black) 12...♝f6 13.♗ge2 h5 14.♗f2 Black is horribly passive.



### 12.g4!

White is right in avoiding 12.♗f3 ♜f6 13.g4 ♜e4!, when Black takes the initiative.

### 12...♜d7?

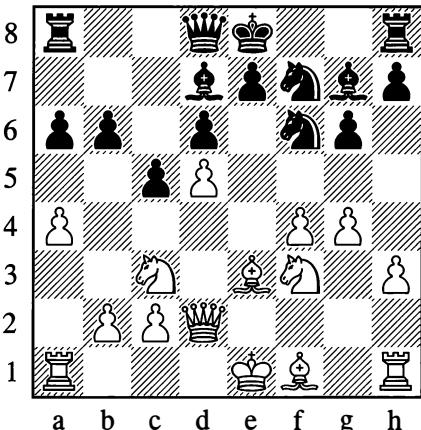
If Black is trying to manage without ...e6, then it is better to play 12...♜c8 13.♕c4 (after 13.♗f3 ♜f6 14.♗g5 ♜xg5 15.fxg5 Black can play 15...♝d7) 13...♜f6 14.♗f3 0-0. The question now is whether White is overextended or Black is too cramped. I believe the position is balanced after 15.0-0 ♜b7 16.♗ae1 ♜b8, intending ...b5.

Also interesting is 12...♝xc3!? 13.bxc3! ♜e4 14.♗h2 ♜f6. After 15.c4 the bishop may seem stranded on e4, but Black can continue with 15...0-0 followed by ...♜e8 and ...e6 with good counterplay.

### 13.♗f3 ♜f6!!

I was quite intoxicated with the creative development of the game and totally forgot to check if my opponent had any threats.

In *Tiger's Modern* I gave 13...e5?! as the best alternative here, but I came to realize that 14.dxe6 ♜xe6 15.0-0-0 ♜e7 16.♗g2 is clearly better for White, since my suggested 16...d5? is hit by 17.f5! gxf5 18.♗g5!. All in all, it seems that my oversight led me to play the best move.



#### 14. ♦g5! ♦c8

14... ♦xg5? 15.fxg5 shows the drawback of putting the bishop on d7 rather than c8: the knight can no longer go to d7, and 15... ♦g8 equals resignation.

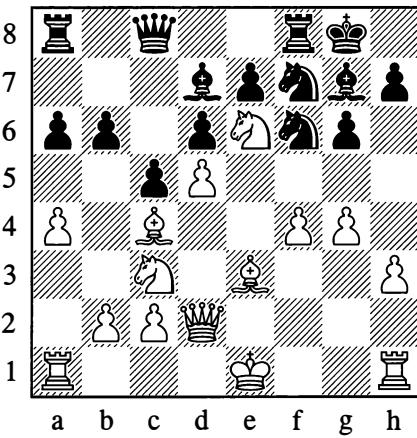
#### 15. ♦c4?!

White ought to play 15. ♦g2! 0–0 16. ♦e6 ♦xe6 17.dxe6 ♦xe6 18. ♦xa8 ♦xa8 19.0–0–0 b5 20.f5 with somewhat better chances.

#### 15...0–0

Here I missed an opportunity to play the thematic 15...b5! 16.axb5 axb5 17. ♦xa8 ♦xa8 18. ♦xb5 0–0 when the lack of coordination becomes a real problem for White.

#### 16. ♦e6



#### 16...b5!

I chose to press my favourite Chaos Button rather than have to suffer after 16... ♦xe6 17.dxe6 ♦d8 18.0–0.

#### 17. ♦xf8 ♦xf8 18.axb5

Both 18. ♦a2 b4 19. ♦d1 ♦xa4 and 18. ♦b3 b4 19. ♦e2 c4 20. ♦a2 c3 21.bxc3 ♦e4 22. ♦d3 ♦xc3 offer Black decent compensation for the exchange.

#### 18...axb5 19. ♦xa8 ♦xa8 20. ♦xb5

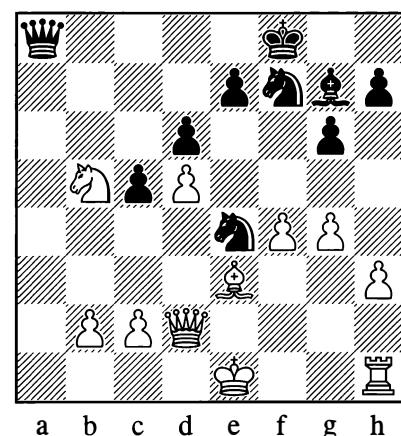
Black has an excellent game after 20. ♦e2? b4 21. ♦d1 ♦xd5 22. ♦f3 ♦c6.

#### 20... ♦xb5

After 20... ♦xd5?! 21. ♦xd5 ♦xb5 22. ♦g1 (22. ♦h2 ♦xb2) 22... ♦c6 23. ♦c3 ♦a1† 24. ♦d1 White has everything protected and is ready to start improving his coordination.

#### 21. ♦xb5 ♦e4!

Black loses the initiative after 21... ♦xd5 22.0–0! ♦a2 23. ♦c3 ♦xc3 24.bxc3 ♦c4 25. ♦b1.



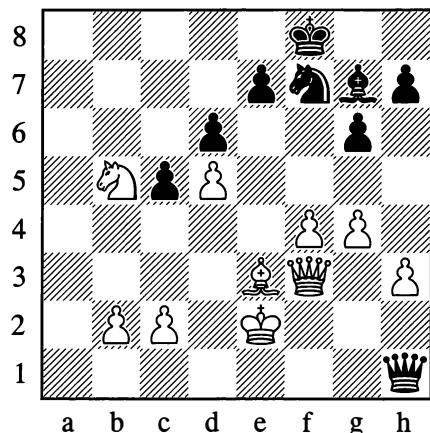
#### 22. ♦g2!

After 22. ♦c1 ♦a5† 23. ♦c3 ♦xc3† 24.bxc3 ♦xc3† Black will soon win back the exchange while keeping a slightly better position.

22... $\mathbb{W}a1\#$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$  24. $\mathbb{W}xg3$   $\mathbb{W}xh1$

**25. $\mathbb{W}f3$**

White will be clearly better in the endgame if I exchange queens, so there is only one thing to do.

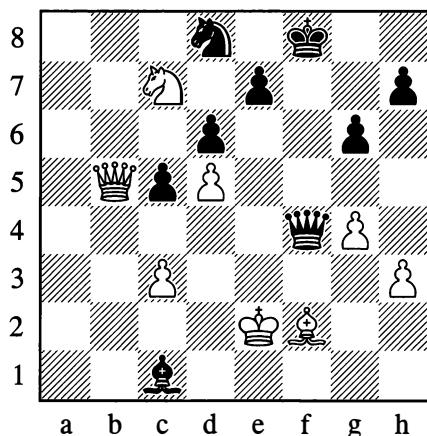


25... $\mathbb{W}h2\#$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  27. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  28.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  29. $\mathbb{W}d3?$

White would have been much better after 29.f5! intending  $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ .

**29... $\mathbb{W}xf4$  30. $\mathbb{W}b5$**

I guess my opponent thought he was winning, otherwise his 29th move would be hard to explain. Evidently, he overestimated the impact of the white queen's invasion.



**30... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$  31. $\mathbb{Q}d1??$**

After 31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  32. $\mathbb{W}e8$  Black has nothing better than 32... $\mathbb{W}h1\#$  33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}e4\#$  forcing a perpetual.

**31... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  32. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

32. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  33. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}d3\#$  34. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$  35. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d2\#$  37. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}xf2$  is mate.

**32...c4 33. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d3$  34. $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  35. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}xd2\#?$**

35... $\mathbb{W}xh3$  36. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$  wins effortlessly.

**36. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  37. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  38. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  39.g5?! e6**

The rest is simple.

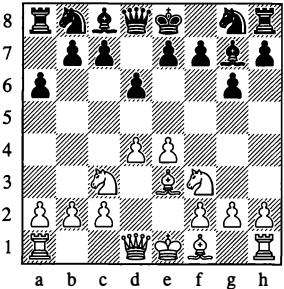
40. $\mathbb{Q}e8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  41. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  42. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  43. $\mathbb{Q}f6$  d5 44.h4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  45. $\mathbb{Q}h7$  e5 46. $\mathbb{Q}f6$  d4# 47. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  48. $\mathbb{Q}e8$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  49. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  50. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  51. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  52. $\mathbb{Q}e8$  d3 53. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  54.h5 gxh5 55. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  e4 56.g6  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

0-1

## Conclusion

Along with the Austrian and 3.c4, this chapter represents one of the most critical ways to meet the Modern. I recommend that the reader pays particular attention to the first three games, where White plays h2-h4, intending to meet ...h5 with  $\mathbb{Q}h3-g5$ . Generally speaking, Black does not have much margin for error here, and it is a good idea to spend a bit more time than usual on the first fifteen moves. The majority of my losses with the Modern have come in this line, but I believe the improvements I have found will help to tip the statistics in Black's favour once more.

# Chapter 4

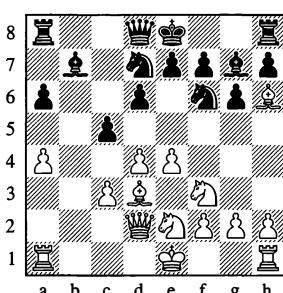


## Flexible Dragon Restrained

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$

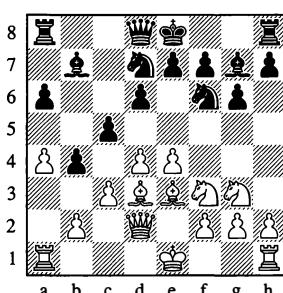
3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ ? $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6! Game 43	240
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6	
5. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ ? Game 38	220
5.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f6!$	
6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ Game 40	228
6.h3 0–0	
7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ Game 41	234
7.g4 Game 42	236
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5	
6. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7.a4!? b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ Game 39	223
6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$	
7.e5!? Game 36	208
7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ 8.a4 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ Game 35	203
7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8.a4 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 10.c3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$	
11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ Game 38	220
11. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ ? Game 37	215

Game 37 – after 12.bxc3



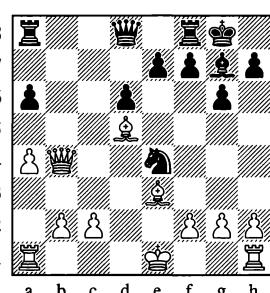
12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ N

Game 38 – after 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



11...h5!

Notes to Game 39 – after 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♘f3**

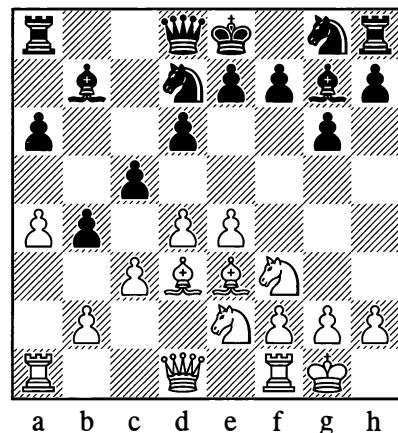
The Flexible Dragon Restrained is distinguished from its sibling, the Flexible Dragon Unleashed, by White's last move, ♘f3. In this line White rarely castles long and instead continues with "normal" moves like ♙d3, 0–0, ♘d2 and a2-a4, hitting b5. Black, on the other hand, plays the usual stuff: ...b5, ...♘d7, ...♗b7 and ...c5.

**5...b5 6.♘d3 ♗b7**

6...♘d7 is an equally valid move order. The knight move gives White the extra option of 7.d5, but it turns out to be harmless.

**7.0–0 ♘d7 8.a4!**

This is by far White's most common plan, intending to force Black to make a concession on the queenside. In the previous chapter we saw a similar scheme, with f3-f3 instead of ♘f3. In that position Black could bolster the queenside with ...c6, but here it is better to play:

**8...b4 9.♗e2 c5 10.c3**

From here Black should exchange on c3 and play ...♗c7 before completing kingside development. White will generally play ♘g3 before deciding whether to attack on the kingside with ♘d2 and ♘h6, or to put a rook on the b-file and attack the a6-pawn.

Over the course of the chapter we will encounter the following plans from White.

**White plays a2-a4 and c2-c3 without ♘d2 (Game 35)**

I consider this to be the most critical move order, and Black has to play precisely to get a good game.

**Sacrificing a pawn with e5-e6 (Game 36)**

This line became popular after Anand used it in 1998. White gets reasonable compensation in the main game, but a pawn is still a pawn. For those who do not like to go after material, I can recommend the alternative 11...h6!?.

**White plays ♘d2 and a2-a4**

(Games 37, 38 and 39)

In Game 37 White sacrifices the e4-pawn with 11.♘h6 in order to prevent Black from castling. Black is in no way forced to take the pawn, but I did take it and would do so again – albeit in a slightly improved way, as noted at move 12. In Game 38 White supports the e4-pawn with 11.♘g3 and Black chooses the unorthodox but effective 11...h5! to renew the attack on White's centre. Game 39 features a slightly different version of the ...h5 idea.

**White plays 5.a4 to prevent ...b5**

(Games 40, 41 and 42)

Black's best answer is 5...♘f6, which leads to a fairly popular variation of the Pirc. The three games feature different plans for White, none of which are terribly dangerous.

**White plays 3.♘f3 ♜g7 4.♗e3 (Game 43)**

This unusual move order discourages the immediate ...a6, so I recommend entering a sub-variation of the so-called '150 Attack' with 4...♗f6 5.♘c3 a6. I urge you to remember some of the key moves in the main line, especially 12...b4 and 13...♗b8, but with that covered you will have nothing to fear.

First up is the most critical line where White leaves his queen on d1.

## GAME 35

Federico Manca – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Bolzano 1998

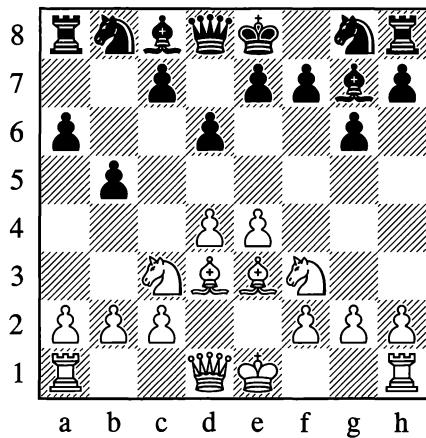
**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5**

When White refrains from 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , there is no reason to play ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  before ...b5. The point is that after 6.a4 b4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , the b4-pawn is not threatened and Black has time to play 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

### 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

6.a4! b4 7. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  should be met by either 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  with equality, or 8...e6 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  bxc3 12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14.0–0 0–0 followed by ...e5 or ...c5.

Instead I opted for 8...c6! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.0–0 e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0–0 in Timman – Hillarp Persson, Dan Hansson Memorial (rapid) 2002, and here White could have claimed a small advantage with 13.dxe5N dxе5 14.c3.

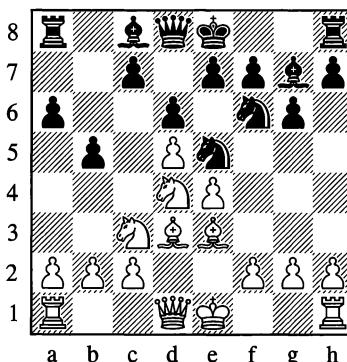


### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

When I play the ...a6 Modern, I always spend a few seconds, on every move, calculating the consequences of both e4-e5 and a2-a4. Whenever I am contemplating ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , I also ask myself whether there is reason to be afraid of d4-d5 followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .

### 7.0–0

In the Classical Variation (see Chapter 6), the plan of 7.d5 can sometimes prove dangerous, but here Black has nothing to fear: 7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ! 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (8.a4 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! c5! 10.dxc6 bxc3 11.cxd7†  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  followed by ...e5 and ...d5 is nice for Black.) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! (8...0–0 9.a4 bxa4 10. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11.0–0 e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  is a bit better for White.)



9.f4  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ † 10.cxd3 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  White has no advantage, and the overambitious 13.e5?!  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  favours Black.

White can also consider 7.a4?!, which leads to the main line without allowing Black to play ...c5 on the next move.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !

### 7...c5?!

I am not too happy about this move, which ignores the basic principle: “do not open up the position while underdeveloped.” Still, it is not easy to refute.

8.dxc5!?

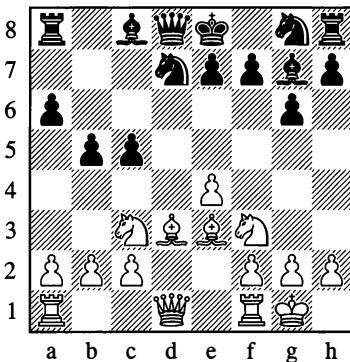
After 8.a4?! b4 9.Qe2 cxd4 10.Qexd4 Qb7 11.Wd2 Qgf6 12.Wxb4 Wb8 Black will regain the pawn with good chances.

8...dxc5

8...Qxc5!? is not as bad as I originally thought: 9.Qd4 Qxd4 (9...Qf6?! 10.e5! is strong,) 10.Qxd4 Qf6 11.b4! Qxd3 (11...Qcd7 12.a4 bxa4 13.Qxa4 Qb7 14.We2 is better for White.) 12.cxd3 Wb6! This is the only move that makes it hard for White to put the knight on a5. 13.Qb3 Qe6! 14.Qa5 Wd4! 15.Qc1 Wxb4 16.Qc6 Wa3

The position is unclear.

Unfortunately, the simple 9.Qxc5! dxc5 10.e5 offers White some advantage.



9.a4!?

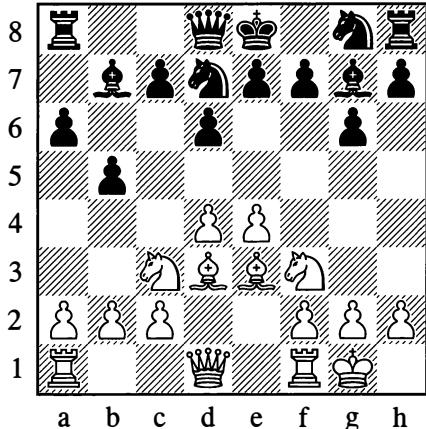
This is the most direct move, but 9.Wd2!? may be an improvement.

9...b4 10.Qe2! Qgf6 11.e5

The position is rather messy. A possible line is:

11...Qd5 12.Qe4 Qxe3 13.fxe3 Wb8 14.e6 fxe6 15.Qg5 Qe5 16.Qf4 Wxd1 17.Waxd1 Wb6 18.a5 Wd6

The situation remains unclear. We may conclude that 7...c5! is worth considering, but please remember that White can avoid this possibility with the 7.a4! move order, as noted earlier.



8.a4 b4

In this position 8...c6 has a bad reputation because of 9.h3! e5 10.axb5! axb5 (10...cxb5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Qxb5!! was extremely dangerous for Black in Van der Weide – Piket, Rotterdam 1998) 11.Qxa8 Qxa8 (11...Wxa8 12.Qxb5!) 12.d5 and there is nothing to stop me from agreeing with Yudasin, who evaluates White to be clearly better.

9.Qe2!?

9.Qd5? is the worst option, since 9...Qxd5! 10.exd5 Qgf6 wins a pawn for which it is hard for White to find compensation.

After 9.Qa2 the simplest solution is 9...Qgf6 (9...c5?! 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.Qxb4 Qxe4 12.We2 is messy, although 12...Wa5 13.Qxe4 Wxb4 14.Qxb7 Wxb7 15.Qa3 Qf6 16.Qb3 Wd7 17.a5 0–0 seems fine for Black) 10.d5 a5 11.c3 bxc3 12.Qxc3 c6 13.dxc6 Qxc6 14.Qb5 Wc8 with a balanced position.

9...Qgf6!?

This has been played in a number of games but, considering White's dangerous option on the next move, I now consider it to be a mistake.

The correct continuation is 9...c5 10.c3 bxc3 11.bxc3 Wc7!. With the e5-square now under

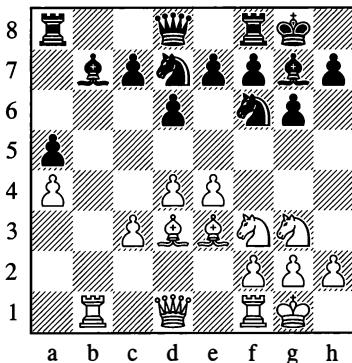
control, Black can continue with ... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  on the next move. The resulting position will be approximately equal and similar to the position that occurs after move 13 in the game.

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

I find it puzzling that no one has tried 10.e5?!N here. 10...dxe5 is more or less forced, otherwise the e5–e6 sacrifice will be strong. After 11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.e6 the game is far from one-sided, but it is still not clear to me whether Black can equalize. At any rate, I see no reason to allow this, and today I would prefer 9...c5 as noted above.

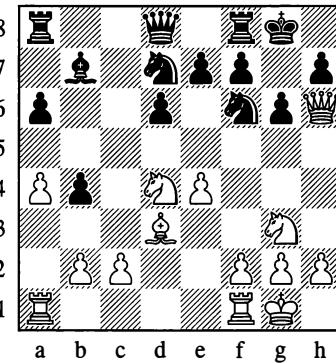
### 10...c5

In a later game I deviated with 10...a5?!, with the idea of preventing White from playing a4–a5, before completing development with ...0–0. Compared to the 4...c6 lines, Black is helped by the fact that the e4-pawn is under attack from the bishop on b7. 11.c3 (11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0–0 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3  $\mathbb{E}b8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  e5 also reaches a balanced position.) 11...bxc3 12.bxc3 0–0 13. $\mathbb{E}b1$  Now the most accurate move is:



13... $\mathbb{E}b8$ !N (Improving on 13... $\mathbb{W}c8$  14.h3, as seen in Stefansson – Hillarp Persson, Iceland 2005.) 14.h3 c6 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  Black has nothing to complain about, and can follow up with either ...e6 and ...c5, or just ...e5.

Another GM game continued: 10...0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (11.a5! is slightly better for White.) 11...c5 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ?! This is just playing into Black's hands. 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  13. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  cxd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15. $\mathbb{E}ae1$  e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}df5$  looks dangerous, although Black may be okay after 16...gx5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ .) 15. $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}fg4$  16. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 18.c3 bxc3 19.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  also gives Black no problems.) 17... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ ? 18.a5 Thanks to Black's error on the last move, the b-pawn soon fell in Cheparinov – Chatalbashev, Mondariz Balneario 2002. Instead after 17...a5!N Black would have been fine.

Finally, if you found yourself wondering about 10...h5?!, it means you have picked up an important idea from this book. However, in this instance it does not seem to lead anywhere after 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}hf6$  13. $\mathbb{E}e1$  h4 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h3 15.g3, when I am afraid that the h3-pawn will prove to be more of a liability than an asset.

### 11.c3 0–0?

Black should have prevented cxb4 by playing 11...bxc3 before castling.

Compared to a position where  $\mathbb{W}d2$  has already been played, there are some advantages for White here. For instance, the bold 11...h5?! does not work due to 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Black is left short

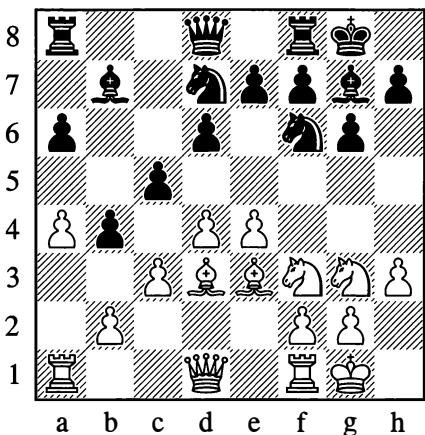
on explosives, since  $12\dots d5?$   $13.e5 \mathbb{Q}e4$  does not attack the queen, and  $14.e6$  is horrible.

### 12.h3?

This is a loss of time, as  $\dots \mathbb{Q}g4$  is still not a threat.

Instead White can get the advantage with  $12.cxb4!$   $cxd4$  ( $12\dots cxb4$  is met by  $13.a5$  and the b4-pawn is weak)  $13.\mathbb{Q}xd4 e5 14.\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{E}e8 15.\mathbb{Q}e1$ , when, contrary to my opinion during the game, Black has too little for the pawn. For this kind of pawn sacrifice to work, Black generally needs to be able to open up the centre with moves like  $\dots e5$  and  $\dots d5$ .

$12.a5$  is also stronger than the game continuation, although Black gets interesting play with  $12\dots c4!?$ . This is rather academic though, as both sides can improve before this position arises.



### 12...bxc3!

Finally making the exchange that should have been made a few moves ago.

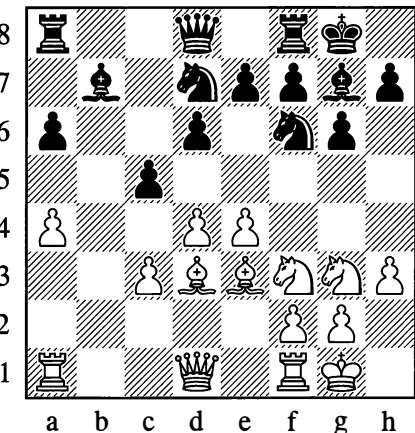
$12\dots c4 13.\mathbb{Q}xc4! bxc3 14.\mathbb{Q}d3! cxb2 15.\mathbb{Q}b1$  gives White a slight advantage.

Even worse is  $12\dots \mathbb{Q}a5!?$   $13.\mathbb{Q}d2 cxd4 14.cxd4$  when the black queen is badly misplaced.

I am also not a fan of  $12\dots a5 13.\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}c7$ , as Black has too many holes on the light squares.

### 13.bxc3

Despite the move-order errors from both sides, we have arrived at a thematic and critical position.



### 13...c4!?

I have included this game because of the many instructive mistakes I committed.

After  $13\dots cxd4!?$   $14.cxd4 a5 15.\mathbb{Q}b1$  the queenside becomes White's playground. Black should almost always avoid positions like this, unless he is able to establish a knight on b4 quickly.

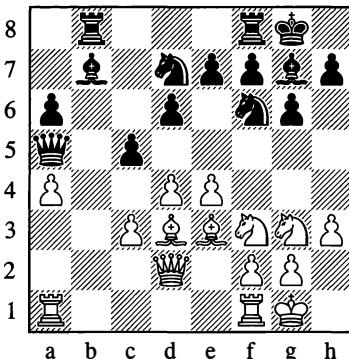
It was clearly better to play:

$13\dots \mathbb{W}a5 14.\mathbb{W}d2$

$14.\mathbb{Q}d2!?$   $c4! 15.\mathbb{Q}c2$  ( $15.\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xe4 16.\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4 17.\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}f6$  is fine for Black)  
 $15\dots e5 16.\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}c7 17.d5 a5$ , followed by  $\dots \mathbb{Q}a6$  and  $\dots \mathbb{Q}c5-d3/-b3$ , gives Black excellent chances.

$14\dots \mathbb{Q}ab8$

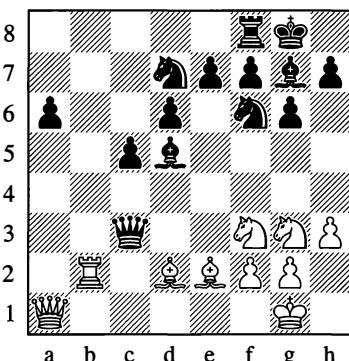
The position is roughly level. I found a computer game in which Black played riskily, leading to an odd material balance of rook and several pawns for a queen.



15.  $\mathbb{Q}fb1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$

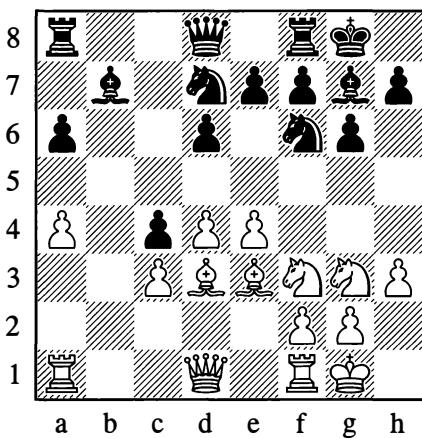
15...  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  and 15...  $\mathbb{Q}fe8!?$  are the sane alternatives.

16. d5  $\mathbb{Q}xb1\uparrow$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   
19.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   
22.  $\mathbb{Q}a1$



22...  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White eventually prevailed in Junior – Twisted Logic, Trier 2010.



#### 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

After 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  Black equalizes easily with 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. a5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  followed by ...e5.

#### 14...e5

I considered 14...a5, but did not like the position after 15.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17. f4, when I could not see a plan for Black.

#### 15.d5

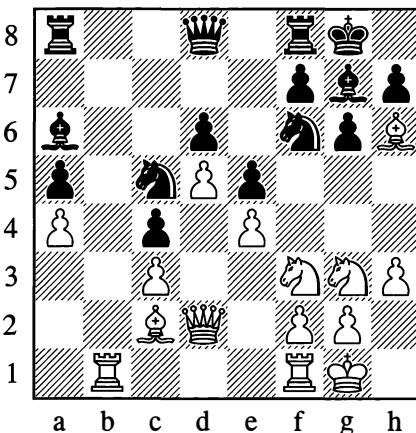
I was more afraid of 15.a5!?. Black can try 15...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , intending 16.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . White should be better, but he will be slightly troubled by the weak a-pawn.

#### 15...a5!

If White is allowed to play a4-a5, then Black will be left with no space and a weak c-pawn.

#### 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1?$

This inexact move gives me the opportunity to jump into the driver's seat. Better was 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , when only 19...  $\mathbb{Q}g8!$  keeps the balance.



18...  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  20. h4 h6!?

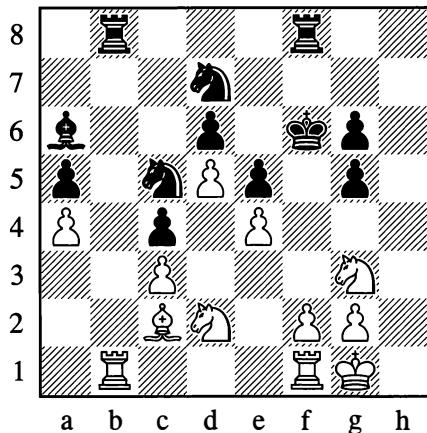
It is better to play 20...  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ , when White will have to prove compensation for the soon-falling a-pawn.

**21.h5 ♜e7 22.♕h2 ♜g5!?**

A rather nervous reaction, fearing a possible attack with f2-f4 and ♜g4.

**23.♗xg5 hxg5 24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♘f3 ♖f6  
26.♗d2 ♕ab8**

I thought I could win from here, but it turns out that there is insufficient scope to improve my position.



**27.♖fd1 ♜b6**

27...g4 was a better try, though White should be okay after 28.♗g1 intending ♜e3.

**28.♖a1 ♜bd7 29.♖db1 ♜xb1† 30.♖xb1 ♜b8  
31.♖xb8 ♜xb8 32.♗g1 ♜bd7 33.♗e3 ♜b6**

The parties are mutually involved in the attack and defence of the c4-pawn. There is no room for improvement on either side.

**34.f3 ♜e7 35.♗h2 g4! 36.♗g3 gxg3 37.gxf3  
♕xa4 38.♕xa4**

Here a draw was agreed, since 38...♕xa4 39.♕dxc4 ♜xc3 is dead equal.

½-½

This game was far from perfect, but it serves as a good introduction to the basic set-ups for both sides. When it comes to move orders in the opening, 9...♗gf6? should be discarded in favour of 9...c5!.

## GAME 36

Felix Levin – Igors Rausis

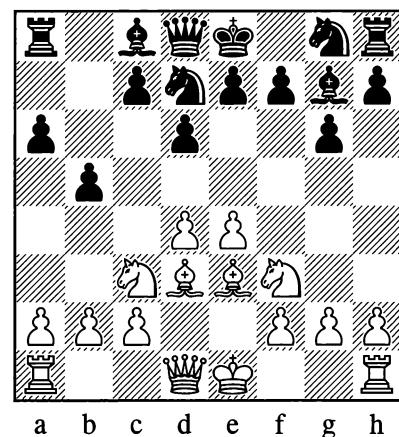
Hamburg 2001

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♘f3  
b5 6.♗d3**

6.a3? would be a horrible waste of time for White. Not only is there no reason to stop Black from playing ...b4 (as long as the e4-pawn is protected), but it is also a clear sign of White's failure to realize that a2-a4 is one of the best available plans.

**6...♗d7**

If it was within my power to ban people from playing 6...e6?, I would jump at the opportunity. It is almost too ugly for words, and the ...b5 move will come back to haunt Black later. This is one breed of Hippo that deserves to go extinct. A possible continuation is 7.♗d2 h6 8.0–0 ♜e7 9.a4 b4 10.♗e2 a5 11.c3 when Black is far behind in development and the queenside is about to open up: a recipe for disaster.



**7.e5!?**

Always think carefully when White advances his e-pawn to the fifth rank. It is a signal of

aggression, and e5–e6 is hanging in the air. Is this something to fear? I would say no, not in general. However, every position must be treated as unique. Sometimes it is best to block the further advance of the pawn (with ...e6) and sometimes it is better to allow it.

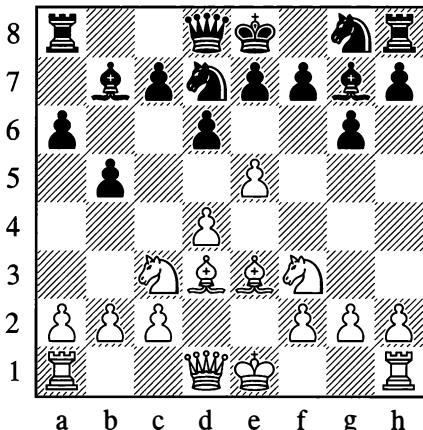
### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

In the present position, I do not see any problem in allowing the further advance of the white pawn.

7...dxe5? is a horrible move, as after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  9.dxe5 Black is almost paralysed.

I have no faith in 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ . After 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  dxe5 12.dxe5 c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{A}a7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15.g4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  Black did not have enough compensation for the pawn in Tkachiev – Spraggett, Ponferrada 1997.

The best alternative to the main line is 7...e6, which makes more sense here than it did on the previous move. Nevertheless, 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  dxe5 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is somewhat better for White.



### 8.e6!

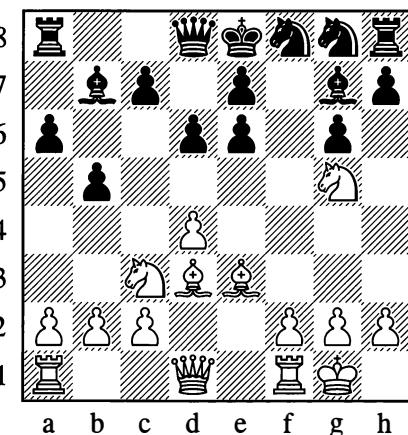
White had better follow through with his plan.

After 8.exd6? cxd6 White has wasted time and improved Black's pawn structure in the process.

### 8...fxe6 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 10.0–0

White should provide his king with a safe haven before attacking.

After 10.h4?!  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.h5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  White has enough compensation for the first pawn, but not the second.



### 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black should avoid 10...h6? 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h5$  as in Svidler – McNab, Gothenburg 2005, as he is left with a much worse version of the 11...h6 variation, as mentioned in the note to Black's next move in the main game.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$

Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is more interesting, although in light of recent developments I prefer the main line.

### 11.a4

After 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12.a4 b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$  a5 14.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  the position is a mess.

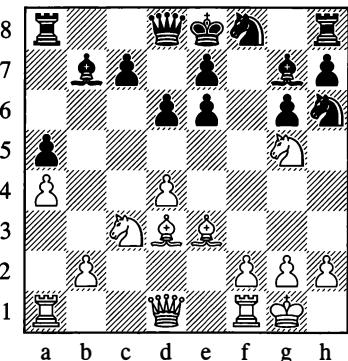
### 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}a2!$

This strong move was played in a computer game, which we will follow for a few more moves.

It is less challenging to play 12.♕e2, when 12...♝f5 13.♝f4 ♜d7 14.♝d2 ♜f6 15.♝e4 ♜xd4 16.♝xd4 ♜xd4 17.♝xb4 c5 was clearly better for Black in Agrest – Azmaiparashvili, Gothenburg 2005.

12...a5 13.c3 bxc3 14.♝xc3!

14.bxc3 ♜f5! 15.♝b1 ♜c6 16.♝b5 ♜xb5 17.axb5 h6 is unclear. The text move threatens d4-d5, when ...exd5 will be met by ♜b5†, and if ...c6 then ♜xd5!.



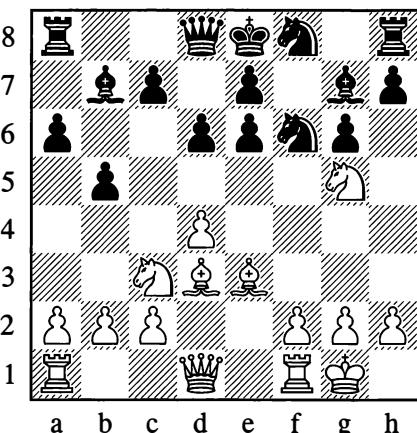
14...♝b8 15.♝e1 ♜f5?!

This move contains a tactical flaw.

15...♜a8 is an improvement which needs further research.

16.d5! exd5 17.♝xf5 gxf5 18.♜a7

Black had no good defence against ♜xd5 in Stockfish – Onno, Trier 2010.



11.♝e1

Possibly more dangerous is:

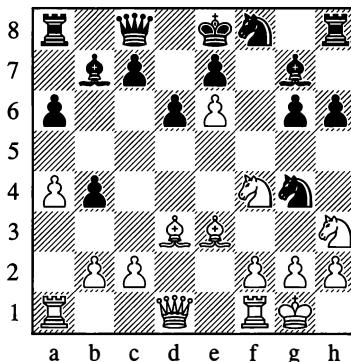
11.a4? b4 12.♝e2 h6! 13.♝h3 e5

13...g5?! is another idea.

14.dxe5 ♜g4!

14...dxe5 15.♝e1 c5 is unclear.

15.e6 ♜c8 16.♝ef4



16...♝e5!N

16...♝xe3?! 17.fxe3 ♜xb2 18.♝b1 ended with an early resignation in Benko – Wilgenhof, Internet 2003.

17.♝xg6 ♜fxg6 18.♝xg6† ♜xg6 19.♝g4 0–0 20.♝xg6 ♜f6 21.♝g4 ♜xe6 22.♝xb4

Now both 22...♜e4 and 22...♜d5 23.f3 a5 give Black enough compensation for the pawn.

11...♛d7

Also interesting is:

11...h6?!

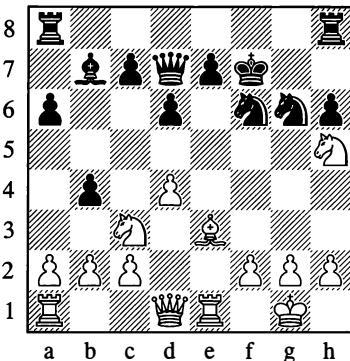
I tested this move in 2002.

12.♝xg6†!

12.♝ge4 ♛d7 13.♝f3 ♜b8 seems fine for Black.

12...♝xg6 13.♝xe6 ♛d7 14.♝xg7† ♜f7 15.♝h5 b4?!

15...♜c6! is more precise. After 16.d5 ♜xd5 17.♝g4 (17.♝e4 ♜ag8 18.♝hg3 ♜e8 19.a4 b4 is unclear) 17...♜ag8 18.♝e4 I originally thought Black's king to be more vulnerable than White's, but my silicon friend disagrees and unleashes 18...♜e8!.



16.♕xf6 exf6 17.♕e2

Now in Ernst – Hillarp Persson, Skara (rapid) 2002, I should have gone for an attack with:

17...♝ag8!

In the game I played 17...♝ae8?!, when my opponent missed a strong idea in 18.♗d3!, stopping the black queen from reaching f5. After 18...♝b5? 19.♗xb5 axb5 20.♗f1!

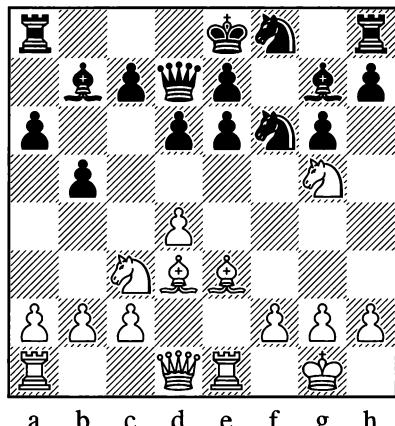
White's chances are better.

18.♗g3

18.f3?! ♔h4! 19.♗g3 ♕xf3 20.gxf3 ♘h3  
21.♗e2 ♘xg3† 22.hxg3 ♘xg3† 23.♗f1  
♝e8! 24.♗d3! ♘h3† 25.♗e1 ♘h1† 26.♗g1  
♘xg1† 27.♗d2 ♘xe2† 28.♗xe2 ♘h2†  
29.♗d1 ♔xf3! with some advantage for Black.

18...h5 19.f3 ♔h4 20.♗e2 ♘xg2

Followed by ...h4.



12.♔d2

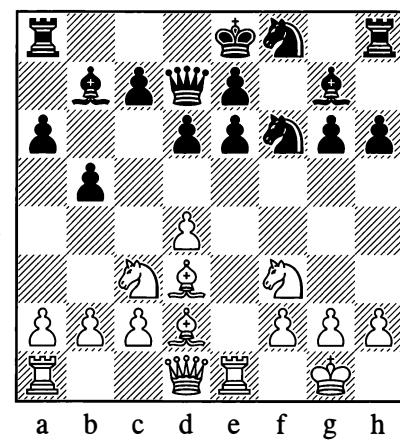
This is the main move, clearing the e-file and preparing a2-a4.

12.f3 h6 13.♗h3 was played in Spraggett – Vassallo Barroche, Maia 2003, and here 13...g5?! is interesting, intending 14.a3 c5 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.♗xc5 g4, when files are opened to Black's advantage.

12.♗e2?! h6 13.♗f3 (Or 13.♗ge4 b4!  
14.♗xf6† exf6 15.♗d1 f5 and Black's extra pawn looks healthy.) Now in the game Velcheva – Minasian, Dubai 2004, Black opted for 13...♝f7?! followed by ...♝g8. To me it looks more promising to go the other way with 13...g5! 14.h3 ♔d8?!, intending ...♝e8 followed by rolling the g- and h-pawns.

12...h6 13.♗f3

The opening is over and the middlegame is commencing. What should the two sides be doing? It is often useful for Black to play ...♝b8, because White generally tries to open the b-file at some point. On the kingside Black should improve slowly; playing ...g5 is fine, but he should not rush with ...g4 unless there is a really good reason (a few such examples are given in the notes below). White's most common plan is to play a4 and then ♔e4. Exchanges will follow on e4, and it is preferable for White to take back with the queen on that square, rather than with the rook.



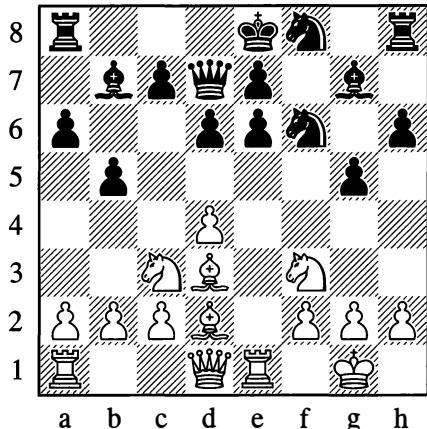
**13...g5?!**

I believe this to be the most useful and flexible move at Black's disposal. Eventually Black may be able to advance further with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , ...h5 and ...g4. White will try to open up the queenside, but it is still not clear exactly how best to do it.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! commits the king earlier than is needed. 14.a4? b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  was played in Calzetta Ruiz – Chatalbashev, Cutro 2002, and here Black should have played 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18.c3 bxc3 19.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , intending ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , ...g5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , with excellent chances of exploiting the extra pawn. However, White could have improved with 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !, preparing a2-a4 and eventually taking back on e4 with the queen. 14.b4? also improves over the above game.

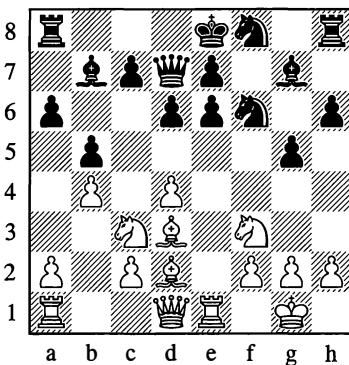
13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ! was played in Magomedov – Urban, Koszalin 1999. Black is preparing ...c5, but White has a good reply: 14.b4! N c5 (14...e5 15.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16.a4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19.axb5 and White has a dangerous initiative for the exchange) 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  and White has the initiative.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  was awarded an exclamation mark by Anand in *Informant* 72, and indeed after 14.a4?! b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19.c3 b3 the position was unclear in Anand – Svidler, Linares 1998. Note the usefulness of the rook on b8 in protecting the b-pawn. However, White has a few ways to improve. 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  prepares the typical idea of a2-a4 and eventually taking back on e4 with the queen. However, it looks even more principled to play 14.b4! followed by a2-a4. Against this plan I might prefer to keep my rook on a8, in order to meet a2-a4 with ...c6.

**14.a4?!**

As usual, White could have prefaced this move with 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , intending to take back with the queen on e4. I mentioned this idea in *Tiger's Modern*, but since then I realized that 14...g4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  h5 is quite promising for Black.

14.b4? has been suggested by Yudasin, intending a2-a4 without allowing ...b4.



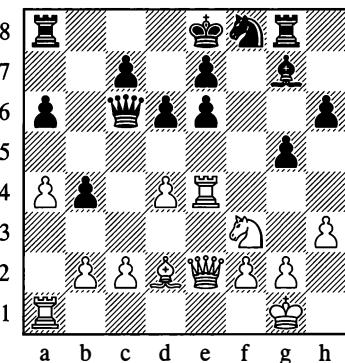
My engine suggests the materialistic 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , with the idea to play 15.a4 bxa4! or 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16.a4 bxa4. This might well be the best defence for Black.

A riskier possibility is 14...g4 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  h5 16.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  axb5 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  when the insanity is just about to begin.

The latest clash in this variation went:

14.h3?!  $\mathbb{g}8$ ! 15.a4 b4 16. $\mathbb{d}e4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{d}xe4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{d}xe4$   $\mathbb{w}c6$  19. $\mathbb{w}e2$

19. $\mathbb{d}e3$   $\mathbb{w}d5$  20. $\mathbb{d}xb4$  h5! leads to mutual chances.



19...a5

I cannot see a convincing reason not to play 19... $\mathbb{w}xc2$  20. $\mathbb{d}c1$   $\mathbb{w}xb2$  21. $\mathbb{d}xc7$   $\mathbb{w}b3$ , when 22. $\mathbb{d}xb4$   $\mathbb{f}6$ ! seems roughly equal, although it is hard to make sense of the rather odd position on the board.

20.c3 bxc3 21.bxc3

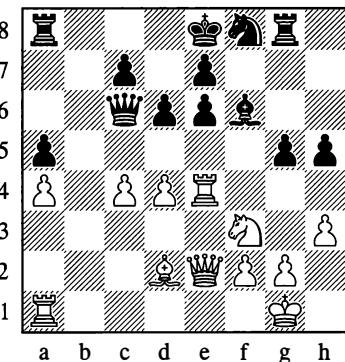
21. $\mathbb{d}xc3$ !  $\mathbb{w}d5$  22. $\mathbb{d}e1$  h5 23. $\mathbb{d}d2$   $\mathbb{d}h8$  24. $\mathbb{d}f1$ ! would have given Black bigger problems.

21... $\mathbb{d}f6$  22.c4!

White has a devious plan involving d4-d5 and  $\mathbb{d}c3$ .

22...h5!

22... $\mathbb{d}d8$ ! is an excellent prophylactic move to draw most of the venom out of the d4-d5 idea. In that case the position would have remained unclear.



23.d5! exd5 24.cxd5  $\mathbb{w}xd5$  25. $\mathbb{d}c3$ !  $\mathbb{d}xc3$  26. $\mathbb{d}xe7\#$   $\mathbb{d}d8$  27. $\mathbb{d}e8\#$   $\mathbb{d}d7$  28. $\mathbb{d}e7\#$

Even stronger was 28. $\mathbb{d}e7\#$   $\mathbb{d}c8$  29. $\mathbb{d}d1$   $\mathbb{w}c6$  30. $\mathbb{d}e8\#$   $\mathbb{d}b7$  31. $\mathbb{d}b1\#$   $\mathbb{d}b4$  32. $\mathbb{d}xa8$   $\mathbb{d}xa8$  33. $\mathbb{d}d4$ !, although this is outside the scope of the average carbon-based life form.

28... $\mathbb{d}c6$  29. $\mathbb{d}xa8$   $\mathbb{d}xa1?$

29... $\mathbb{d}g6$ ! should draw.

30. $\mathbb{w}e8\#$   $\mathbb{d}b6$  31. $\mathbb{d}b8\#$   $\mathbb{d}a7$  32. $\mathbb{d}b5$   $\mathbb{d}g6$  33. $\mathbb{w}e1$   $\mathbb{w}c6$  34. $\mathbb{w}xa5\#$

Black resigned in Magem Badals – Movsziszian, Catalonia 2012.

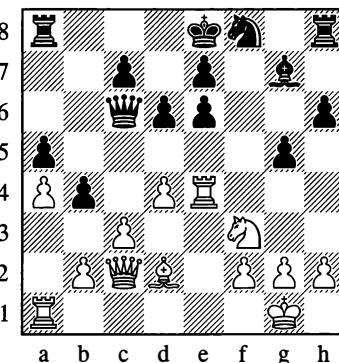
**14...b4 15. $\mathbb{d}e4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$ ?**

Yudasin gives this move an exclamation mark, but I prefer 15... $\mathbb{g}4$ ! 16. $\mathbb{d}h4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{d}xe4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{d}xe4$  h5. Play may continue 19. $\mathbb{d}g5$   $\mathbb{g}8$  20. $\mathbb{w}d2$  c5 21. $\mathbb{d}f5$ ! (after 21.c3 bxc3 22.bxc3 cxd4 23.cxd4  $\mathbb{w}b7$  24. $\mathbb{d}ae1$   $\mathbb{w}d5$  it is not easy for White to get the knight on h4 back into the game) 21... $\mathbb{d}xd4$  22. $\mathbb{d}xd4$  cxd4 23. $\mathbb{d}xd4$  a5 when only Black can be better.

**16. $\mathbb{d}xe4$   $\mathbb{d}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{d}xe4$   $\mathbb{w}c6$**

This improves over a previous game which continued:

17...a5?! 18.c3  $\mathbb{w}c6$  19. $\mathbb{w}c2$



19...bxc3?!

It was better to play 19... $\mathbb{d}f6$  first. White is not threatening cxb4 yet, so there is no point in opening the b-file.

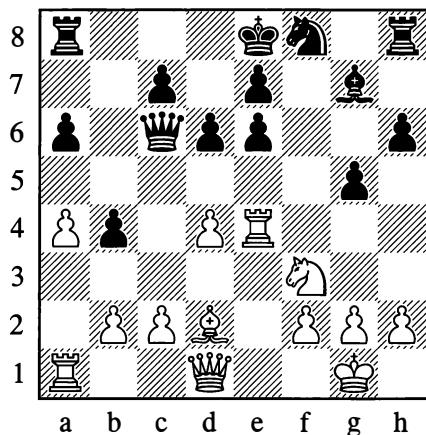
19...b3?! can also be considered in this type of position. It all comes down to time: will White be able to play  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and pick up the pawn before Black can create counterplay somewhere else? It is always a hard decision, but I would generally avoid such a committal course of action unless I am absolutely sure of it.

20.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

In *Informant* 74, Yudasin gives 20... $\mathbb{B}b8$  21. $\mathbb{W}d3$  intending c3-c4 (attacking a5) as better for White. Still, after 21... $\mathbb{B}b3$  Black has better prospects than in the game.

21. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{E}g8$  22. $\mathbb{B}b5$ !

White had the initiative in Yudasin – Kanstler, Israel 1998.



**18. $\mathbb{W}e2$**

Yudasin recommends 18. $\mathbb{W}e1!$   $\mathbb{W}xc2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  “with compensation for the material”.

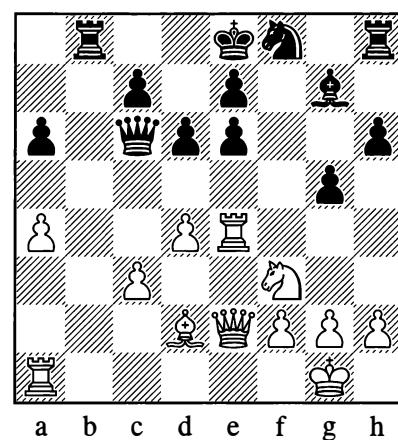
However, Black is not obliged to take on c2, and can instead get a comfortable position with 18... $\mathbb{B}b8!$ . After 19.c3 bxc3 20.bxc3 the position resembles Yudasin – Kanstler above, with the important difference that Black’s a-pawn is still on a6, rather than the more vulnerable a5.

**18... $\mathbb{B}b8$**

It seems better to grab a pawn with 18... $\mathbb{W}xc2$ , when neither the Silicon Monster nor I have been able to find a way for White to get enough compensation. Still, this is not a very human choice, and Rausis’ choice is good and solid.

**19.c3 bxc3 20.bxc3**

Also interesting is 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}el$  a5 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h5 with a highly unclear situation.



**20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21.c4?!**

White is trying to win by a direct attack, but this weakens the centre prematurely and makes Black’s counterplay on the b-file even more efficient.

A better move is 21.h3, when White has just enough compensation for the pawn.

**21... $\mathbb{B}b2$  22. $\mathbb{Q}el$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  23.d5 e5**

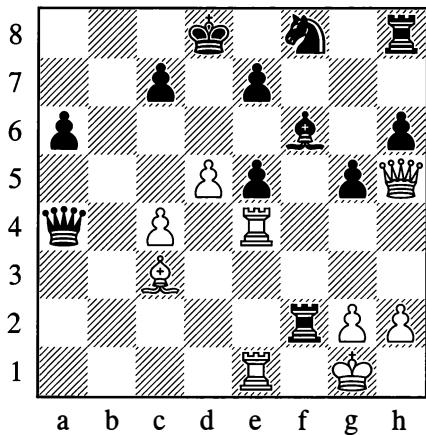
So, what now? Black is two pawns up and White has tripled the heavy mob on a closed file.

**24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$**

The sacrifice is insufficient, but White was done for anyway.

**24...dxe5 25. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}xf2?$**

26... $\mathbb{B}b3!$  wins without any fuss.



**27.Qxe5?**

White repays the compliment. After 27.Qxf2 Wc2† 28.We2 Wxc3 the win will take some extra time.

**27...Wc2 28.Qxf6 Wxf6 29.Q4e2 Wxc4  
30.Qxe7 Qf1† 31.Qxf1 Wc5† 32.Qf2 Wxe7**

**0–1**

The e5-e6 line is a recurring favourite in ‘how to beat the Modern’ literature, but I am not impressed. It is worth checking some of the alternatives mentioned from move 11 onwards, especially 14.h3, which has brought White one practical victory and thus may be tested again.

## GAME 37

Pontus Carlsson – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Stockholm 1999

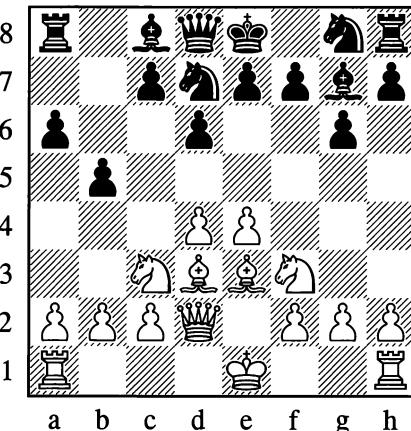
**1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.Qe3 a6 5.Wd2**

The combination of the queen on d2 and an early a2-a4 is less dangerous for Black than the set-up seen in the previous game.

**5...Qd7 6.Qf3 b5 7.Qd3**

This kind of set-up attracts many players, as White’s development is fast and it looks

harmonious. So far, yes, but if Black manages to open up the position, the white pieces may find the centre a bit crowded.



**7...Qb7 8.a4**

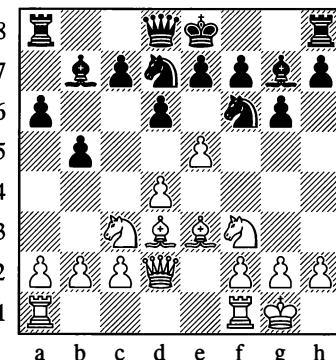
Recommended by Aaron Summerscale in *A Killer Chess Opening Repertoire*.

White can also continue down the developing road with 8.0–0, when Black must make an important choice between a) 8...Qgf6 and b) 8...c5!, the latter being my preference:

a) 8...Qgf6

This is on the verge of being dubious, but I have not yet found a definitive route to a white advantage. The best try is:

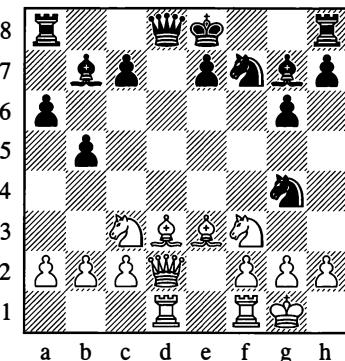
**9.e5!**



**9...dxe5**

This is necessary, as 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.e6 fxe6 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2!$  is clearly better for White.

- 10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11.e6  $\mathbb{Q}de5$  12.exf7†  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   
 13. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   
 13. $\mathbb{W}e2?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14. $\mathbb{E}ad1!$  (14.bxc3?  $\mathbb{W}d6!$ )  
 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15.fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ † axb5  
 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ †  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ †  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is another unclear position.



13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$

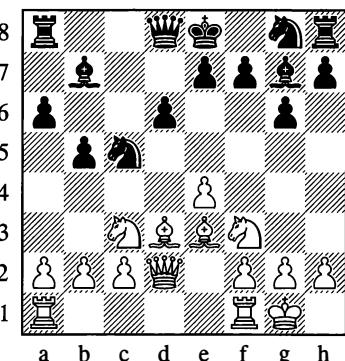
13...0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$  is better for White.

- 14.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  15. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  c6 17.f4  
 $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18. $\mathbb{W}f3$  0–0

The position is in some kind of obscure balance.

b) 8...c5! 9.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

It is best to stay away from 9...dxc5?! 10. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.e6 fxe6 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$  when Black is worse.



10.b4!  $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  11.cxd3 d5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  is better for White.

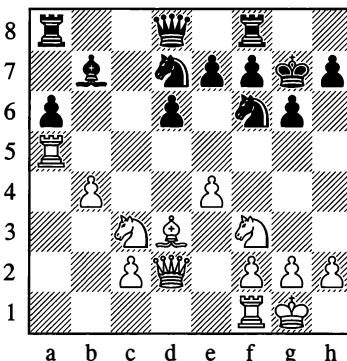
11.a4 bxa4 12. $\mathbb{E}xa4$

This position might appear better for White, but I believe it is balanced.

12... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

13. $\mathbb{E}fa1$  0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15. $\mathbb{E}a3$   $\mathbb{E}fe8!$  is decent for Black, who intends ...e5, ...d5 and ...e4.

13...0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  15. $\mathbb{E}a5$



15... $\mathbb{W}c7$

I recommended this in *Tiger's Modern*, and have found no reason to change my mind. Instead 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$  16. $\mathbb{E}el$  was better for White in Meister – Inarkiev, Moscow 2004.

16. $\mathbb{E}fa1$   $\mathbb{E}fc8$  17. $\mathbb{E}1a3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

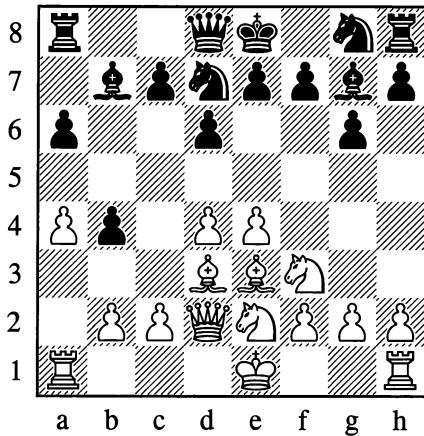
This is where my previous analysis ended. It might even have inspired the game Emelyano – Kroll, email 2005, which continued:

18. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$

With excellent chances for Black.

8...b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  c5 10.0–0 e6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  should be met by the simple 11... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ , with good play for Black. (However, Black had better avoid 11...cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5? on account of 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe6$  fxe6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ †  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h5$  gxh5 17. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ .)



**9...c5**

I have experimented with

9...a5 10.♕g3 h5!?

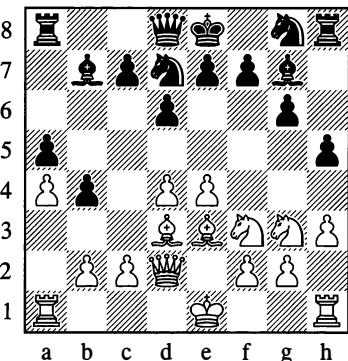
This can be compared with Black's 11th move in the next game.

10...♕g6 is more solid, after which 11.♖h6 0–0 is approximately equal. A similar position is analysed in Manca – Hillarp Persson (Game 35) after 10...a5.

**11.h3**

11.h4?! leads to unclear play after either 11...♕h6 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 ♕g4, or 11...♕g6 12.e5 dxe5 13.dxe5 ♕g4 14.e6 ♘de5.

My game continued 11.♕g5 h4 12.♖xh4 ♖xd4 13.♖xd4 ♕xh4 14.♗f3 ♕h8 15.c3 ♘c5 and I had an excellent position in Nyback – Hillarp Persson, Skellefteå 2001, though I later became too optimistic and my king was massacred.



**11...c5N**

11...e6 has been played a few times, but this is unsuitable terrain for a Hippo.

**12.c3 ♔gf6 13.♔g5**

A typical mistake is 13.e5?!, when 13...bxc3 14.bxc3 dxe5 15.dxe5 ♔d5 leaves Black with some advantage.

**13...h4 14.♕e2 ♕c7 15.♕c1 b3 16.♕c4 0–0**

Followed by ...d5, with complicated play.

**10.c3**

White can also try 10.dxc5?! dxc5 11.0–0 when Black has a choice between the risky 11...♖xb2 12.♕ad1 ♕g7, and the safer 11...♔gf6, when Black is fine after both 12.e5 ♔g4 13.e6 fxe6 and 12.♕h6 0–0!.

Another possibility is:

**10.♕g3 ♔gf6 11.♕h6?!**

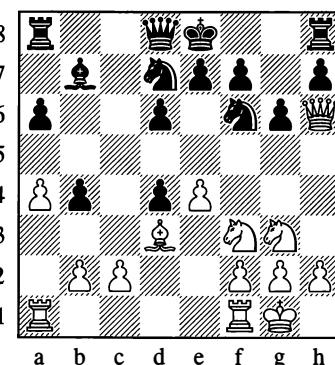
Both 11.0–0 ♔g4 and 11.h3 cxd4 12.♕xd4 a5 are fine for Black.

11.c3 h5! is seen in the next game.

**11...♖xh6 12.♕xh6 cxd4 13.0–0**

After 13.♕d2?! e5! 14.♕xb4 ♕c7 Black is whistling his favourite tune.

Now in Collins – Hillarp Persson, Isle of Man 2001, I should have played:



**13...e5!N**

White does not have enough for the pawn. Black is threatening ...♕g4 followed by ...0–0, and if White prevents it with 14.h3, Black can disentangle with 14...♕g8 and ...♗f8-g7.

An important detail is that ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  cannot be met by  $\mathbb{W}g7$ , as ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  would force the exchange of queens.

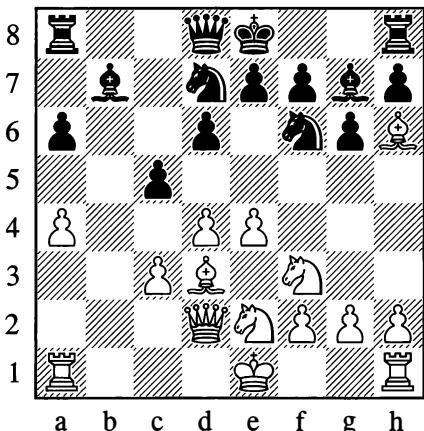
### 10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$

The alternative 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  is seen in the next game.

### 11... $bxc3$

I prefer not to give White the opportunity to take on b4.

### 12. $bxc3$



### 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$

Here the engines come to my help and point out that 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?N 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  14. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is better for Black. One possible line is 15. $\mathbb{W}g7$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{E}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  when Black will get more than enough compensation for the exchange due to White's terrible pawn structure.

### 13. $\mathbb{W}xh6$

White offers a pawn for the initiative and Black has to take it. The position becomes extremely sharp and it is difficult to give a reliable verdict as to whose chances are better.

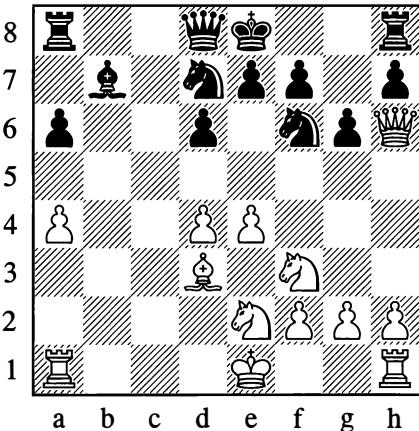
### 13... $cxd4?$

This is illogical, as White is the only one who can benefit from opening the position.

In a subsequent game I improved (while still missing the stronger improvement on the previous move) with 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ . The game continued: 15. $\mathbb{W}g7$ ?!  $\mathbb{E}f8$  16.0–0 (After 16. $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  17. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $cxd4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$  g5 19. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  Black is better due to his superior pawn structure and central control.) 16... $\mathbb{Q}df6$  17. $dxc5$ ? (17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ) 17... $\mathbb{E}g8$  18. $\mathbb{W}h6$  g5! 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  20. $cxd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}g6$  22. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{W}xh3$  23. $gxh3$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  Black soon won in Schmied – Hillarp Persson, Copenhagen 2002.

However, White can do better with 15.0–0. The latest engines evaluate the position as equal, but who would wish to play such a position with Black, having just one extra pawn and no obvious way to solve the problem of his king?

### 14. $cxd4$



### 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Black should avoid exchanging queens, as after 14... $\mathbb{W}a5$ ?! 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$ ? 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  0–0 17.f3 White is dominating the queenside.

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16.0–0 e6 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

After 17. $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  19. $hxg3$  g5 20. $\mathbb{W}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}xg5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , Black is slightly better in the endgame.

### 17... $\mathbb{Q}ef6$

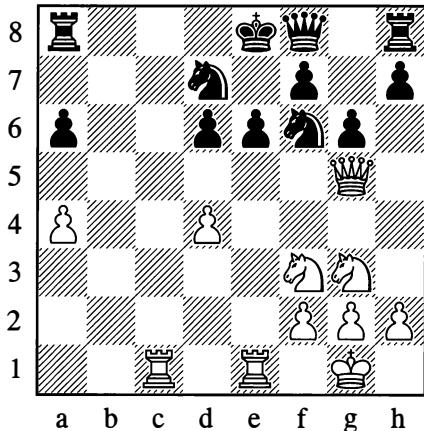
The white knight is not well placed on g3, so I had no reason to exchange it, especially as this would have gifted White an open f-file.

### 18.♘fe1 ♖e7

White has a strong initiative after either 18...♝b6 19.♖ab1 or 18...♝g8 19.♗f4.

### 19.♖ac1 ♖f8 20.♗g5

After 20.♗d2 Black should play it safe with 20...♖e7 rather than go for the speculative 20...h5?!, when 21.d5! e5 22.♗g5 is unpleasant.

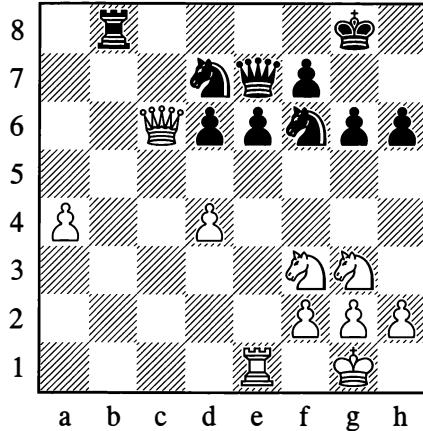


20...h6 21.♗a5 ♖e7 22.♖c6 0–0 23.♖xa6  
♖xa6 24.♗xa6

Objectively speaking White is better, but at the same time the Black side is easier to play. The white knights have no safe squares in the centre, and it is difficult to get them over to the queenside. Black has access to the d5-square and can coordinate his forces with less trouble. If Black is allowed to blockade the a-pawn it might turn out to be weak in the end. At least, that is what I was hoping for.

### 24...♗b8 25.♗c6

After 25.♖c1 ♖f8 26.a5 ♖d8 the position is balanced. Black does not want to play ...d5, as this would weaken the e5-square, and White should be able to trade his a-pawn for the d6-pawn.



25...♗b6 26.♗c8†?! ♖f8 27.♗c2

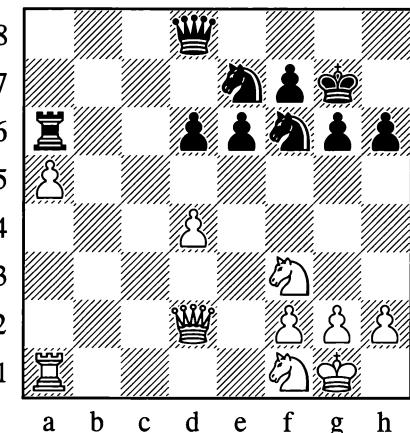
If White exchanges queens, the a-pawn will come under attack sooner than White will be able to defend it.

27...♖a8 28.♗d2 ♜g7 29.a5 ♕a6 30.♖a1  
♗b6

The a-pawn is safely blockaded and Black is slightly better.

31.♗b4 ♜bd5 32.♗d2 ♖d8 33.♗f1 ♜e7?!

33...♖c7 is better, with the idea of 34.♗e3 ♜c3, winning the pawn on a5 since 35.♖cl loses to 35...♗e2†.



34.♗e3 ♜c6 35.d5 exd5 36.♗xd5 ♜xd5  
37.♖xd5 ♕xa5 38.♗d1 ♕x a1 39.♕xa1†  
♖f6 40.♖c1 ♜d4 41.♗xd4 ♖xd4 42.g3 d5

43.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  h5 44. h4  $\mathbb{W}c4$  45.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  d4 46.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  47.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  d3 48.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}e6\#$

At this point White resigned rather prematurely. Possibly Pontus saw something I did not see, but I have not been able to find a simple win for Black after 49.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ .

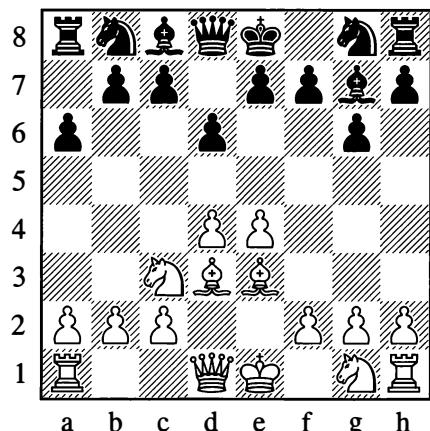
**0-1**

## GAME 38

Oskar von Bahr – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Sweden 2003

1. e4 g6 2. d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5.  $\mathbb{Q}d3?$



5...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The point behind White's move order is that 5... b5 6. a4 b4 7.  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  puts Black in a position where there is no way to avoid 7... a5 8. c3 bxc3 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ , although this should be absolutely fine for Black. A possible continuation is 9...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 11. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13. h3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  c6 15. dxcc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  with a rich, unbalanced position.

It is quite conceivable that 5...  $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  is the best move here, since White's last move has left the d-pawn rather vulnerable. White has three sensible replies:

a) 6. d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8. f4  $\mathbb{Q}ed7$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c6 and Black is doing well.

b) 6.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  does not combine well with  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , and 6... e5 7. d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  leads to a non-standard position where Black can choose between ...c6 or ...f5 next.

b) 6.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  leads to a position from the Classical Pirc, where Black has a tempo extra in ...a6. This position is discussed on page 333, where it occurs via a different move order.

6.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$

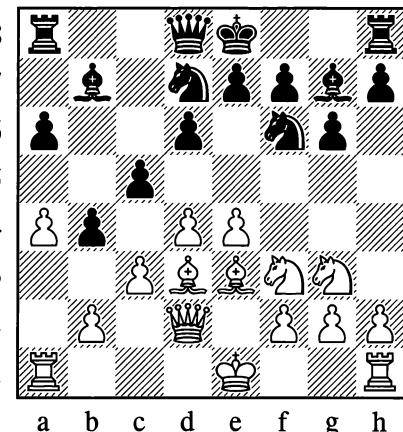
Today I would prefer one of the alternatives on the previous move in order to avoid 6. a4! b6 (6... c5 7. d5 b6 8.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is clearly better for White) 7. f4, which is similar to Game 16, and may transpose within a few moves.

6... b5 7.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8. a4 b4 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5

9... a5 is also possible, but it leads to less dynamic play.

10. c3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$

I am rather proud that, after so many years, modern engines have still not caused me to change my original evaluation of my next move. Seems I wasn't completely bonkers anyway.



**11...h5!**

Threatening ...h4 and thus attacking the e4-pawn indirectly. This move is not mentioned in *A Killer Chess Opening Repertoire*.

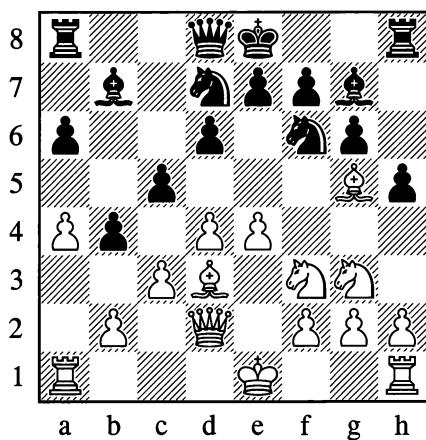
Black can also try: 11...bxc3 12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , when 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5 14.dxe5 (14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15.fxe3 h5! and Black is better) 14... $\mathbb{Q}dxe5$ ! (14...dxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is problematic for Black.) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0–0 18.0–0 d5 This is about equal.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !**

This seems best. I have had two other moves played against me:

12.e5? bxc3! 13.bxc3 cxd4 14.cxd4 (White's best chance is 14.exf6 dxe3 15. $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  18. $\mathbb{W}xa1$  exf2, when Black's weak kingside gives White some compensation for the lost material.) 14...dxe5 15.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  Black had a decisive advantage in Deglmann – Hillarp Persson, Nuremberg 2002.

12.h4? bxc3 13.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?! (14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  is a better option, although 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is still a bit better for Black.) 14...cxd4 15.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$  0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  Black had some advantage in Fraser – Hillarp Persson, Jersey 2004.

**12...d5?**

Opening a Pandora's Box of Complications. The problem is that Black is not ready for this.

Better is:

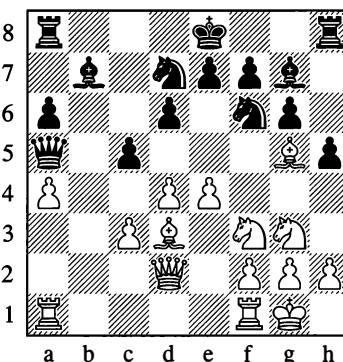
12...bxc3! 13.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}a5$

It is not easy for White to hold on to his central pawns.

14.0–0

14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  16.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is worse for White.

The same goes for 14.h4 d5!.



14...h4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  h3 17.g3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xb8$  20. $\mathbb{W}e3$  d5 and Black is better.

15. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$  cxd4! 16.cxd4  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  White must either lose the e4-pawn, or give up the exchange for insufficient compensation with 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ .

15...cxd4 16. $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

White has to bid goodbye to the central phalanx, meaning Black is slightly better.

**13.e5!**

Correctly avoiding 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?! (or 15. $\mathbb{W}f4$  bxc3! 16.bxc3 cxd4 17.0–0 dxc3 18.e6 0–0 and Black is clearly better) 15...dxe4 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  when White has no satisfactory defence against ...f6.

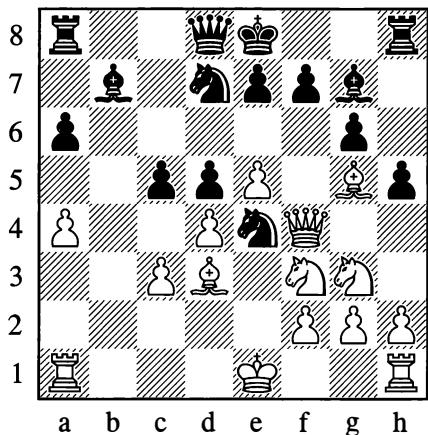
**13...Qe4 14.Wf4!?**

My analysis of this variation had more to do with optimism than quality at the time of this game.

Also good is 14.We3, when 14...bxc3 15.bxc3 cxd4 16.cxd4 Wa5† 17.Qe2 leaves Black clearly worse.

**14...bxc3 15.bxc3**

I was hoping for 15.e6? 0–0 16.exd7 cxb2 17.Qb1 Wa5† 18.Qf1 Qxg5 19.Wxg5 Wc3 with an attack.

**15...cxd4 16.cxd4!?**

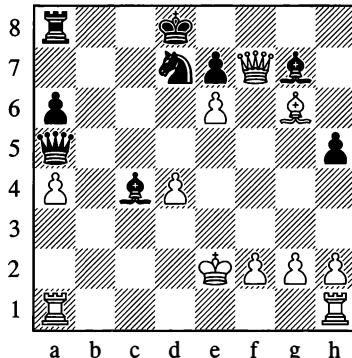
Black has some compensation after 16.e6! 0–0 17.exd7 f6 18.Qh6 e5 19.Wc1 Wxd7, though White is definitely better.

**16...Wa5† 17.Qe2 f5?**

This should lose the game.

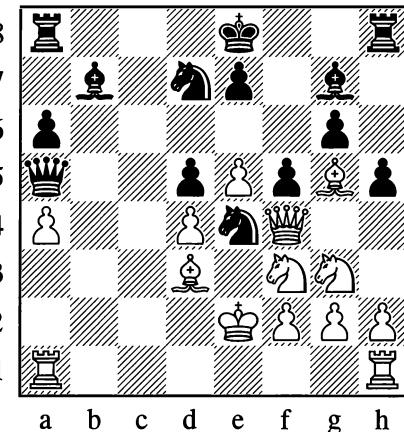
17...Qc3†? 18.Qf1 Qf8? 19.Wd2 Qc8 20.Qe2 is hopeless for Black, and 17...Qf8? 18.Qxe4 dxe4 19.Qxe4 Qe6 20.We3 is also poor.

The only move was: 17...f6! 18.Qxe4 dxe4 19.Qxe4 fxg5 20.Qxg6† Qd8 21.Qxg5 Qd5 22.e6 (22.Qf7† Qxf7 23.Wxf7? Qxe5! is winning for Black.) 22...Qf8 23.Qf7† Qxf7 24.Wxf7 Qc4†



In *Tiger's Modern* I wrote that White has nothing better than going for a perpetual with 25.Qd1 Qb3† 26.Qe2, but Black can actually do better with 25...Qh6! 26.We8† Qc7 27.Wxd7† Qb6 28.Qb1† Qb5 when the checks run out and Black wins, as exchanging on b5 will lead to a rook skewer on a1.

White can, however, force a draw with 25.Qd3! Qe5?! (25...Qxd3† 26.Qxd3 Qe5† 27.dxe5 Qd5† is a simpler perpetual) 26.Wxg7 Qxd3† 27.Qd1! (27.Qe3? Qg4†!) 27...Qc4! 28.Wf8† Qc7 29.Wxe7† Qb8 30.We8† followed by We7† with a perpetual.

**18.Qxe7?**

The slugfest continues.

Best was 18.Qhb1! Qc6 19.Qc1!, when White is just winning.

**18...h4?!**

Again, not the best move, but I was not even trying to calculate; I was merely searching for some coordination.

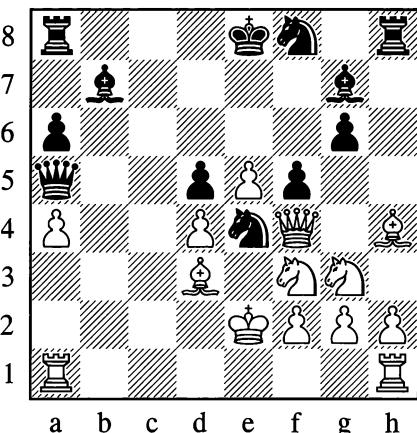
Best is 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 20. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8!$  20... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22. $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}hc1\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  is horrible for Black) 21. $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  22. $\mathbb{W}xg6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  23. $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}c4\uparrow$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b3\uparrow$  and White cannot avoid the perpetual checks.

**19. $\mathbb{Q}xh4?!$** 

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  dxe4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  leads to crazy complications where White has the upper hand.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}f8$** 

This is what I was aiming for when I played 18...h4. The knight will be strong on e6.

**20. $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$** 

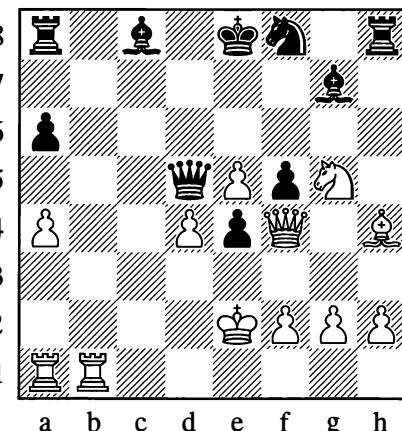
This solves some of White's tactical problems associated with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , but it was still better to play 20. $\mathbb{W}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  when the position is unclear.

20. $\mathbb{Q}hb1?$  is not great because of 20... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}a7\uparrow$  (23. $\mathbb{Q}h7\uparrow$  g5 24. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}c3$  does not change the result)

23... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xa8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$  26. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4\uparrow$  and Black is winning.

**20... $\mathbb{gxf5}$  21. $\mathbb{Q}hb1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$** 

This makes matters worse by weakening the light squares, especially the a6-f1 diagonal.

**22...dxe4 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d5$** **24.e6?**

Faced with a losing position and time trouble, White goes berserk.

**24... $\mathbb{W}c4\uparrow$  25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$** 

White resigned, since both 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  and 26. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$  are hopeless.

**0–1**

## GAME 39

Atanas Kolev – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Zaragoza 1995

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 7.a4!?

A tricky alternative is:

7.d5!?

Intending  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ -c6. Black must react precisely:

7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6!$

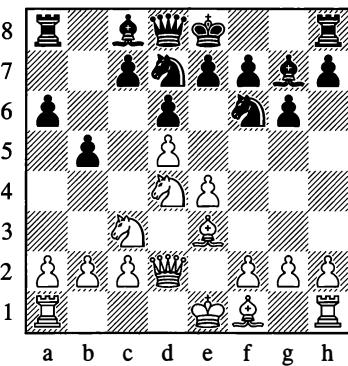
I believe this is the only move here that gives Black enough counterplay.

After 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! 8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  9.a4 b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c5 11.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ , White had the advantage in Beshukov – Kantsler, Cappelle la Grande 2000. It looks as if Black has some compensation, but it is not enough.

An even worse option is 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ? 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  dxc5, when 9. $\mathbb{W}e3$  leaves White clearly on top.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.a4 b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 11. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$  0–0 12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is fine for Black. The plan is ...c5, and if White prevents this with 13.f4, then 13... $\mathbb{Q}eg4$  eliminates the e3-bishop.



8...0–0! 9. $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Or 9.f3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10.a4 b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}a2$  a5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  e6 and Black has equalized.

9... $\mathbb{W}e8$  10.a4 bxa4!

This looks ugly, but Black can get away with it because he is so far ahead in development.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is fine for Black.

11...e6 12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black has decent prospects.

7...b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5!?

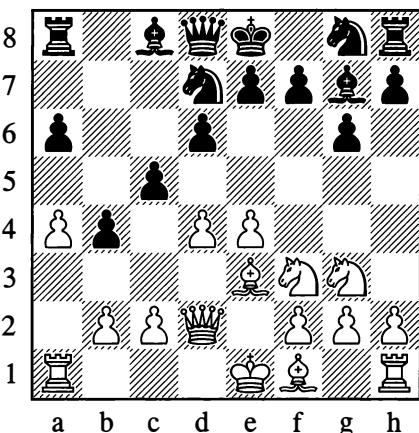
Compared to the main lines where White plays a2-a4 after  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , White can consider delaying the development of this bishop in favour of other, more important moves.

In the event of 8...a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !) 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12.e5 Black is in some danger on the kingside.

8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ?! seems premature. 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  0–0? (9...a5 transposes to 8...a5 above.) 10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  I am not sure why White cannot grab the b-pawn. 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  11. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  Black found himself in a dangerous position with difficulties creating counterplay in Kobalia – Dzhumaev, Abu Dhabi 2004.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !

Black is doing fine after 9.c3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  bxc3 11.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5 13.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}a5$ !?.



9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !?

There I go making mistakes again, allowing White to play dxc5 and  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .

The best move is

9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !?

This has hardly ever been played, but it is the only serious way to diverge from 10.c3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  which transposes to the von Bahr – Hillarp Persson game.

10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.dxc5N

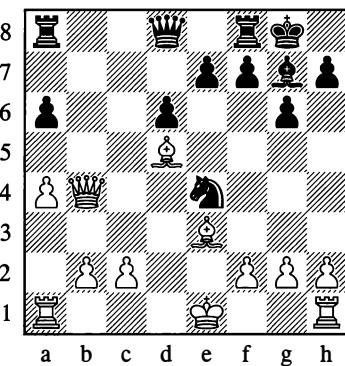
This is stronger than 11.0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !, which gave up the e4-pawn unnecessarily in K. Eriksson – A. Fritz, Tylosand 2012.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

12.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}5xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{E}b8$

17.  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  18.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}a5\#$   
20.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  is fine for Black; true, it is a long line, but I do not see a good way for White to deviate.

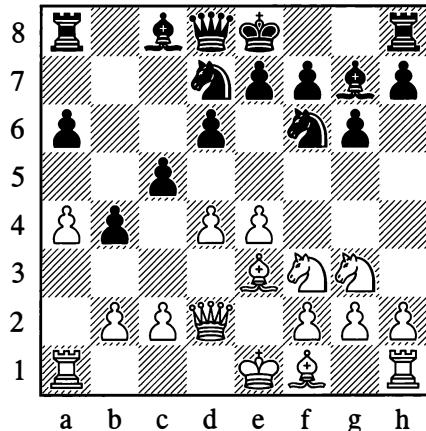
12...0–0 13.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}3xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$   
15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$



16...  $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$

Black's coordination is brilliant, and White has no way to get back the pawn.

17.  $\mathbb{W}xb2$   $\mathbb{W}a5\#$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f1\#$ !  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}c4\#$   
Followed by ...  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and Black is winning.



10.  $h3\?$

This is the kind of lazy move that an ...a6 Modern fan loves to encounter.

A more critical line is:

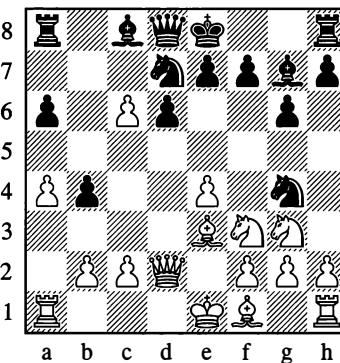
10.  $dxc5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g4\?$

This was my original intention, and maybe it is not so bad.

10...  $dxc5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}c7$   
13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is one of those positions (no dynamic breaks, difficulty castling and a strong bishop on c4) that I always try to avoid.

11.  $c6\!$

11.  $cxd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  is good for Black, while 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 12.  $c6\!$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  transposes to the main line.



11...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

13.  $h3$   $exd4$  14.  $hxg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$   
reaches a typically unclear mess.

13...  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$

I find it difficult to give a correct verdict in this position. Is it an improved or deteriorated version of the Sveshnikov Sicilian? I would put my money on the former.

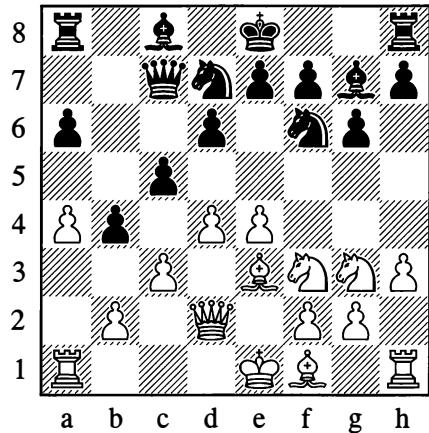
10...  $\mathbb{W}c7\?$

This is also unnecessary and therefore bad.

Much stronger is 10...  $cxd4$ ! 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (or 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $h5\!$  with dynamic play for Black)  
11...  $a5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0–0 13.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  when Black is ready to play ...  $e5$  and ...  $d5$  with a beautiful position.

11.  $c3$

After 11.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$  0–0 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $dxc5$  14.  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.



**11...h5!**

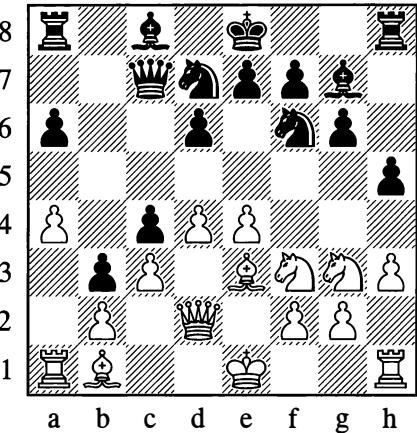
The position is almost the same as in von Bahr – Hillarp Persson. The only differences are that the moves h2-h3 and ... $\mathbb{W}c7$  have been added, while the light-squared bishops are still on their original squares.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$**

After this move the bishop is sent into quarantine on b1, together with the rook on a1.

12.h4?! is hardly an improvement, as after 12... $\mathbb{B}xc3$  13. $\mathbb{B}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  Black is slightly better.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?! may be best, although Black can still obtain a fine game: 12... $\mathbb{B}b7$ ! (12... $\mathbb{B}xc3$  13. $\mathbb{B}xc3$  d5 allows 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! with advantage to White.) 13.d5! (13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{B}xc3$  14. $\mathbb{B}xc3$  d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  20.f3 0-0 is clearly better for Black. For the next few moves, both players failed to grasp the importance of pushing their own pawn to the a5-square.



**14.0-0?!**

14.a5! is better. It is imperative for White to play this move at some point, in order to be able to attack the c4-pawn with  $\mathbb{E}a4$ . If Black is allowed to achieve both ...a5 and ...e5, White will virtually be a rook and bishop down.

**14...e5?!**

After 14...a5 I was afraid that White would mess things up a bit with 15.e5?!, but on closer inspection 15... $\mathbb{B}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{B}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  20.f3 0-0 is clearly better for Black. For the next few moves, both players failed to grasp the importance of pushing their own pawn to the a5-square.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?  $\mathbb{B}b7$ ? 16.f4? a5!**

Finally I realized that the door must be closed on the rook! Now it is essential for White to force an opening of the centre, otherwise Black will connect his forces and win.

**17.f5?!**

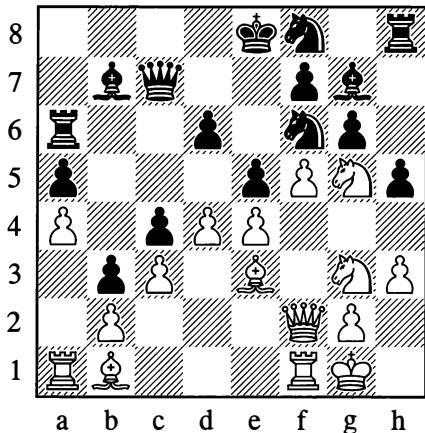
This makes it easier for me to keep the centre closed. More flexible was 17. $\mathbb{W}f2$ .

**17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{B}a6$ !?**

My silicon sidekick claims that 18...h4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{G}xf5$  20. $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  is better for Black, but I did not want to open up the position in any way until I had managed to put my queen on e7.

**12...c4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  b3**

Closing the door on White's rook and bishop.

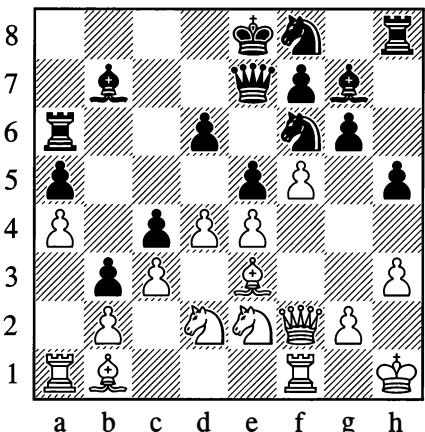


**19.♘h1 ♖c8?!**

This is a bit passive, allowing White to coordinate his knights since e4 is not under attack anymore.

**20.♗e2 ♕e7 21.♘f3 ♖b7 22.♘d2**

After 22.fxg6 fxg6 23.♘d2 ♖c6 24.♗g5 ♖h7 Black has everything defended and intends either ...0–0 or ...♖f8 followed by exchanging rooks on the f-file. White cannot avoid exchanges in the long run, so he has to act fast.



**22...♖c6 23.d5 ♖c8 24.♗b6**

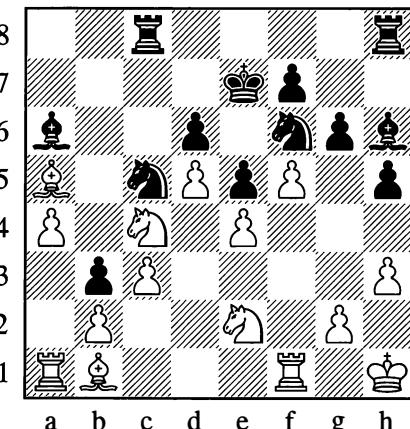
White is winning a pawn, but Black gets to finish his development.

**24...♕d8d7 25.♗xa5 ♖h6 26.♗a7?**

A blunder in a bad position. 26.fxg6 fxg6 27.♘f3 is better, although after 27...0–0 28.♗b4 ♖c5 29.♗xc5 ♖xc5 30.a5 ♖a6 White is still boxed in on the queenside.

**26...♘c5! 27.♗xc4 ♖a6 28.♗xe7† ♖xe7**

The rest is simple.



**29.♗b6 ♖xe2 30.♗e1 ♖a6 31.♗xc8† ♖xc8 32.fxg6 fxg6 33.c4 ♖xc4 34.♗b4 ♖fd7 35.a5 ♖a6 36.♗a3 ♖b8 37.♗c3 ♖f8 38.♗g1 ♖f4 39.♗h1 g5 40.♗b4 g4 41.♗d1 ♖g8 42.hxg4 hxg4 43.g3 ♖xg3 44.♗g2 ♖f4 45.♗h1 ♖d8 46.♗h7 g3 47.♗xc5 ♖xc5 48.♗a7 ♖f1† 49.♗f3 ♖g6 50.♗a4 g2 51.♗b4 ♖g3†**

White resigned. The bishop never had a chance to escape from b1.

**0–1**

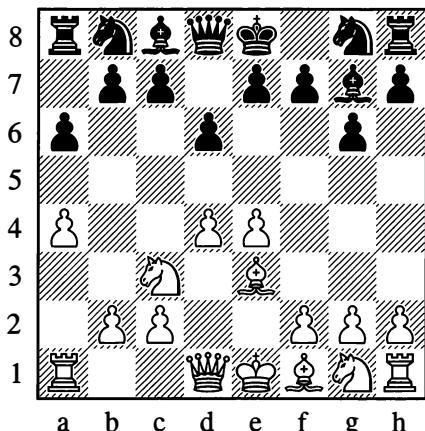
In the next game we will see White meeting ...a6 with a2-a4, preventing ...b5. When I mention the comments of Gurevich, I am referring to his annotations in *Informant 51*.

**GAME 40****Anthony Kosten – Mikhail Gurevich**

France 1991

**1.e4 g6**

The actual move order was 1...d6 2.d4 g6 3.Qf3 Qf6 4.Qc3 Qg7 5.Qe3 a6 6.a4, but I have fiddled it in order to include some details that are relevant to us.

**2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.Qe3 a6 5.a4****5...Qf6!**

This move is fine now that White has played a2-a4, since Black no longer needs to fear the set-up with long castling.

5...b6?! is inadvisable. Generally this move should only be played in response to a2-a4 when White has already committed his king's knight to f3. Here White can switch plans with 6.f4, as seen in Turov – Hillarp Persson on page 93.

There is even a second problem line in 6.g3! (Rogic's 6.g4?! is also interesting) 6...Qb7 7.Qg2, with a slight but definite edge for White. The point is that ...c5 can be met by d4-d5, and the Hippo is not very effective against a standard fianchetto set-up.

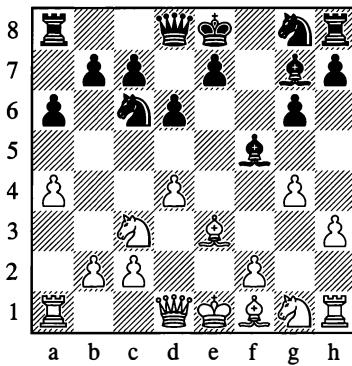
Another interesting idea is:

**5...Qc6 6.h3**

The only thing putting me off Black's last move is 6.Qf3 Qg4 7.Qe2 e5 8.dxe5 with simplifications and dullness ahead.

**6...f5?!**

I suggested this idea in *Tiger's Modern*, without giving any further analysis. It has since been tested in one game.

**7.exf5 Qxf5 8.g4****8...Qc8?!**

8...Qd7N 9.Qc4 e5 is an improvement.

**9.Qc4 Qf6 10.Wd2 e5 11.d5?**

11.Qge2! is a bit better for White.

**11...Qd4 12.g5?! Qh5 13.0–0–0 0–0**

Black was clearly better in Ribeiro – Lewertowski, Nimes 2009.

**6.Qf3**

This move takes us back to Kosten – Gurevich. White can obviously try some other moves as well:

**6.h3** is seen in Game 41.

**6.a5?!** 0–0 7.h3 e5! 8.dxe5 Otherwise Black plays ...exd4, ...Qe8 and ...Qc6, reaching an excellent position where one wonders what the pawn is doing on a5. 8...dxe5 9.Wxd8 Qxd8 10.Qf3 Qc6 11.Qc4 h6 With mutual chances.

**6.Wd2 0–0! 7.Qf3 b6?!**

Black should avoid 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ .

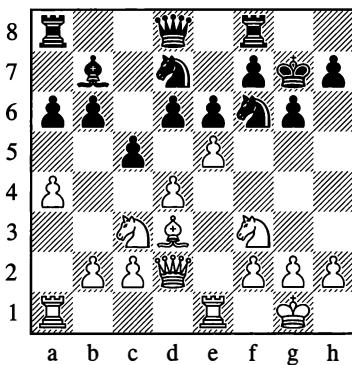
7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  intending ...e5 is a good alternative, although not as ambitious.

8. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

After 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11.0–0 e5 12.d5 c6 13.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  Black had a nice Sicilian structure in Vedder – M. Gurevich, Antwerp 1997.

9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.0–0 e6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12. $\mathbb{W}fe1$  c5 13.e5?

Here a huge improvement can be found in:



13...dxe5!N

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$  was played in Gallagher – Van Wely, Krumbach 1991, and here White could have gained the advantage with 14.exd6!  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  16.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ .

14.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15.exf6†  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16.gxf3 c4

Black regains the piece with the better chances.

6...0–0

6...b6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 is also playable.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

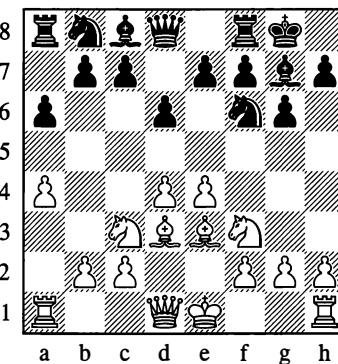
Again White has many options.

7.h3 leads to a line discussed in Chapter 6 – see Game 60 beginning on page 327.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  is dealt with in Chapter 8.

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This makes White more vulnerable to an attack on the d4-pawn.



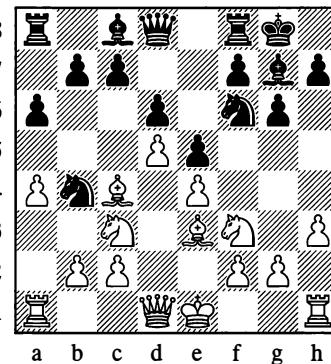
7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ?

Another possibility is 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , when 8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  seems fine for Black, since White cannot stop both ...e5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ .

8.h3 e5

More ambitious is 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$  9. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b6, for instance 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 11.d5 e6 12.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  with an initiative for Black.

9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



10...a5!

Black had better prevent a4-a5, isolating the knight on b4.

10...c6?! 11.a5 cxd5 12.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  This position would be excellent for Black, if only the pawns were on a4 and a5 instead of a5 and a6. As things stand, the b4-knight is walking on water, but in danger of drowning.

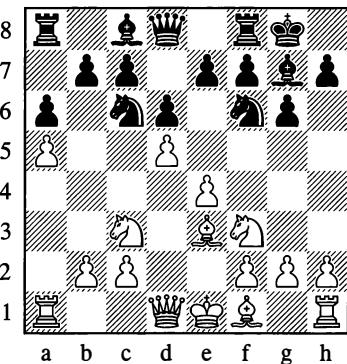
11.0–0 c6

Black has a good position.

A final possibility is:

7.a5?! ♜c6! 8.d5

8.h3 e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 is the same as the 6.a5 line.



8...♜a7!!

With this move Black turns a4-a5 against his opponent, who must now worry about ...♝b5 ideas. White's best try is:

9.♝d3!

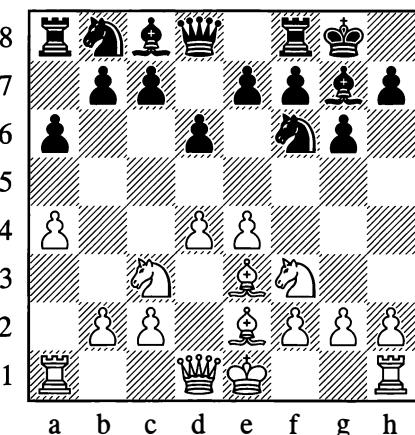
9.♝e2 and 9.♝c4 are both met by 9...♝b5.

9...e6!

9...♝b5 10.♝e2! ♜g4 11.♝d2 is a bit better for White.

10.0–0 ♜b5! 11.♝xb5 axb5 12.dxe6 ♜xe6 13.♝d4 ♜e8 14.f3 c6

It is White who must battle for equality.



7...b6

This is the obvious move, but Black may also try:

7...♛c6? 8.d5 ♜b4 9.a5! e6

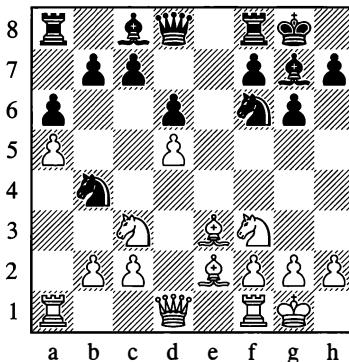
9...♝d7? loses to 10.♝b1! followed by c2-c3 trapping the knight.

10.0–0!

Or 10.♝a4 c5 11.dxc6 ♜xc6 12.♝b6 ♜e7

13.0–0 ♜e8 and Black is doing all right.

10...exd5 11.exd5



11...b5!

11...♝f5 12.♝d4 ♜d7 13.♝c4 ♜e4 14.♝a2! is better for White, as Black's minor pieces are clumsy.

12.axb6 cxb6

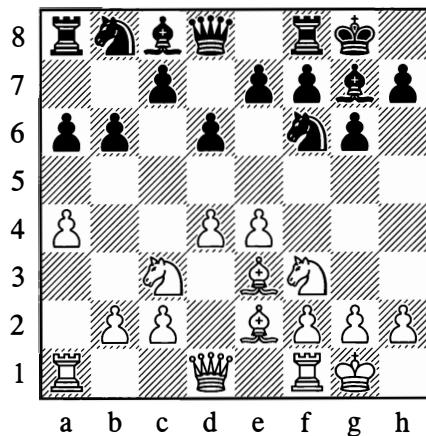
Generally I try to avoid this kind of structure with Black, but this game makes a case for it not being so bad.

13.♝c4 ♜d7 14.♝b3 b5 15.♝d4 ♜e8 16.h3 ♜b8 17.♝c6 ♜xc6 18.dxc6 ♜c7 19.♝f3 a5 20.♝d4 ♜xc6 21.♝xf6 ♜xf3

½-½ Meier – Khairullin, Biel 2012. It seems like Black was never close to being in trouble.

**8.0–0**

White gains nothing by 8.e5, when 8...♝g4 9.♝f4 ♜c6! 10.exd6 cxd6 11.0–0 ♜b7 is about equal, though I prefer Black's dynamism to White's space.



**8...Qb7**

8...e6 is another respectable move which leads to a position covered in the Classical chapter.

**9.Qd2**

This is not going to scare anyone.

The latest try in this line is:

**9.e5? Qg4 10.e6? f5?!**

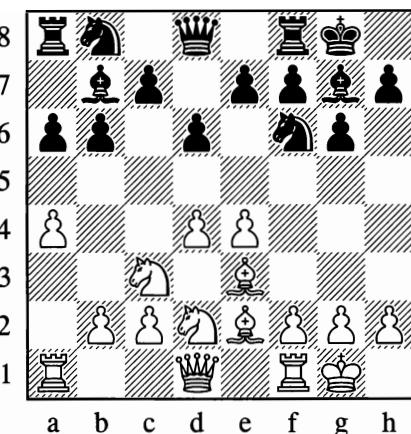
An extremely combative move.

I am curious as to what White had planned after 10...Qxe3 11.fxe3 f5. Black has nothing to fear from 12.Qg5 Wc8 13.d5 c6, while 12.d5 c6 13.Qd4 cxd5 14.Qf3 Qc6 15.Qxc6 Qxc6 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.Qxd5 Bb8 also gives him no cause for complaints.

14.Qe3?! c5 15.c3 Qc6 16.Qa2 b5 17.h4 seems more critical.

**14...c5 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.h5 Qc6 17.Qc1 Bf8 18.h6 Qh8**

Black was doing well in Lybin – Ludgate, corr. 2009.



**9...Qc6**

It is logical to react to White's last move by attacking d4. Now Black is ready to play ...e5, intending to meet d4-d5 with ...Qd4.

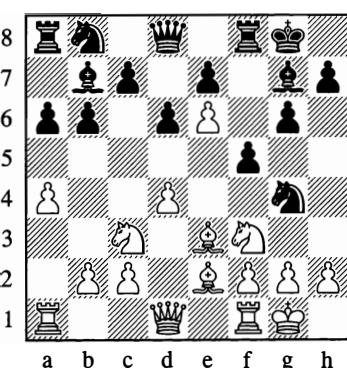
Another good move is 9...e6, planning to meet 10.f4 with 10...c5. The continuation 10.Qf3 Qc6 (10...e5?) 11.Qc4 d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.Qe5 Qxe5 14.dxe5 Qe4 was excellent for Black in Vajda – Czebe, Balatonlelle 2004.

**10.d5 Qb8**

I would tend to favour 10...Qb4?!, provided there is no way for White to take advantage of the stranded knight. In this case both 11.Qcb1 a5, followed by ...e6, and 11.a5 b5 12.Qcb1 Qfxd5 13.exd5 Qxb2 are fine for Black.

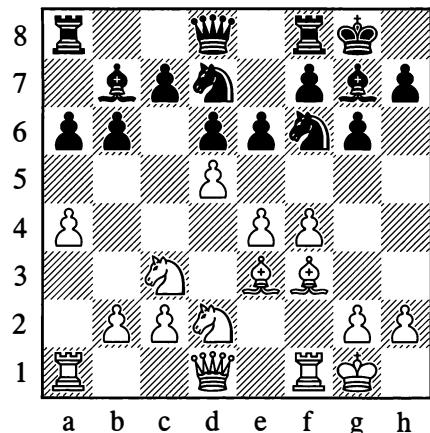
**11.f4 Qbd7 12.Qf3 e6**

Gurevich believes Black has counterplay here. This could well be an understatement, and possibly his first!



**11.Qg5 Qf6 12.Qc4 Qe4 13.Qd5 Bf8 14.h4**

I would rather open the c-file with 12...c6, striving for an asymmetrical pawn structure, but it is a matter of taste.



### 13.♘b3

White is dreaming of turning this ugly knight into a swan on c6. It is a nice fairytale but, alas, that's all it is.

After 13.dxe6 fxe6 14.♕c4 ♔e8 15.♔e1 ♔e7 16.♗d1 the position is complicated but better for White. I do not think this would have upset Mikhail very much. In the post mortem of a game played against a friend of mine, he declared that he "had complications". Not compensation, but complications! I absolutely sympathize with this expression and I should probably use it more often myself.

### 13...exd5 14.exd5 ♔e8 15.♗d4 ♔c5 16.♗d2 ♗d7?

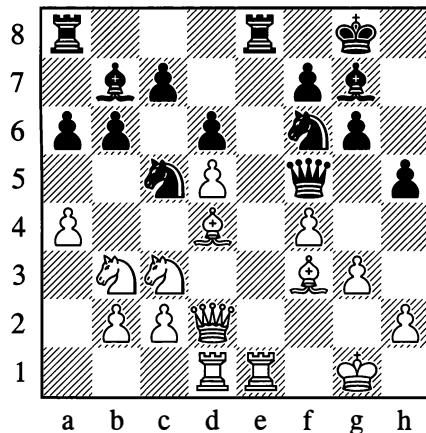
Black intends ...♗f5 and ...h5.

### 17.♗ad1 ♗f5

Gurevich points out that 17...♗xa4? 18.♗xa4 ♗xa4 19.♗c3 loses a piece for Black.

### 18.g3 h5 19.♗fe1

After 19.♗xc5 bxc5 20.♗f2 ♗ab8 21.b3 ♗g4 Black is dancing, singing and winning.



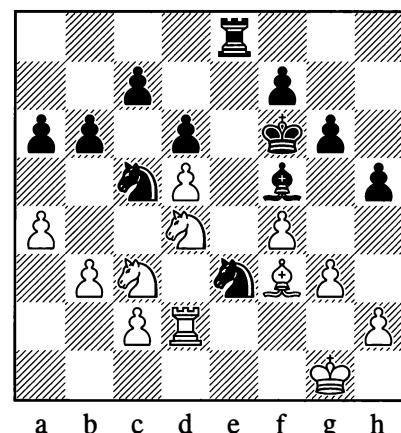
### 19...♗ad8

I prefer Black's position here, but White has everything protected and it is not easy for Black to break through.

### 20.♗g2 ♗c8 21.♗c1 ♗d7 22.b3 ♗g4 23.♗xg7 ♗xg7 24.♗d2 ♗f6 25.♗e2 ♗xe2 26.♗1xe2 ♗e8 27.♗d4

White has defended well and almost equalized. Normal moves will lead to a peaceful end, but Gurevich has a different plan...

### 27...♗f5 28.♗xf6† ♗xf6 29.♗d2 ♗e3 30.♗d4



### 30...♗xc2!!??

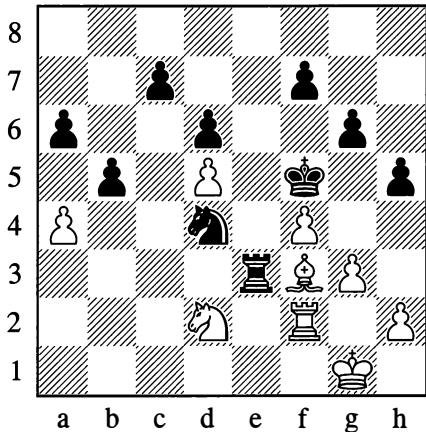
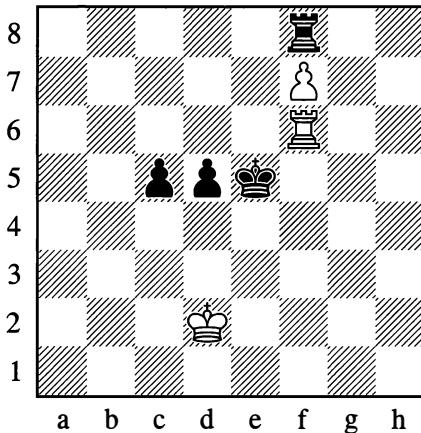
Surprise, surprise. I do not understand how he can get away with these things, but it is impressive.

**31.♕xc2**

After 31.♕xf5 ♕e1 32.♕e2 ♕xf5 33.♕f2 ♕xb3 34.♕xe1 ♔xd2 35.♕xd2 h4?? 36.♕xa6 ♕g4 the position is unclear.

**31...♕xb3 32.♕f2 ♕xc2 33.♕xc2 ♕d4 34.♕f2 ♕e3 35.♕e4† ♕f5 36.♕d2 b5!**

Correctly avoiding 36...♕xf3† 37.♕xf3 ♕e4 38.♕g5† ♕xd5 39.♕xf7 ♕a3? 40.♕h8! ♕xa4 41.♕xg6 ♕e6 42.f5† ♕f6 43.♕f8! when Black loses by force, as there is no defence against ♘h7† followed by pushing the f-pawn.

**37.axb5 axb5 38.♕f1**

Gurevich only gives 38.♕d1 b4 “intending ...b4-b3, with an initiative”.

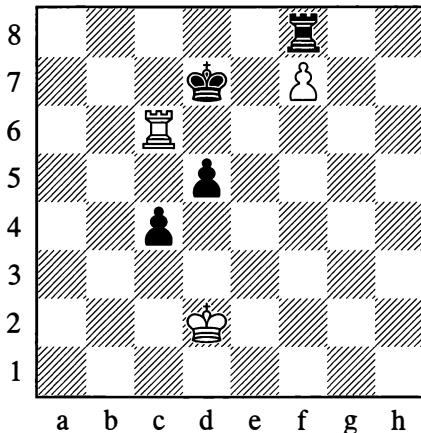
However, 38.♕g2! b4 39.♕f3 looks stronger.

The rest of the game is exciting, and the result is not decided until the very end.

38...♕xf3† 39.♕xf3 ♕e4 40.♕g5† ♕xd5 41.♕xf7 b4 42.♕f2 ♕e7 43.♕h8! ♕g7 44.♕e3 c5 45.h3 ♕c4 46.g4 hxg4 47.hxg4 b3 48.♕d2! ♕b4 49.f5 gxh5 50.gxf5 ♕g2† 51.♕e3 b2 52.♕g6! ♕c3! 53.♕f4 ♕g8! 54.♕d5† ♕c2 55.♕f2† ♕b3 56.♕f1 ♕a8 57.♕d2! ♕a1 58.♕f3† ♕c4 59.♕c3 b1=♕†! 60.♕xb1 ♕xb1 61.f6 ♕b8 62.f7 ♕f8 63.♕d3! d5 64.♕f3 ♕d4 65.♕f6 ♕e5

**66.♕c6?**

White could still have scraped a draw with 66.♕f3 ♕e6 67.♕c3 c4 68.♕e3† ♕xf7 69.♕e5! ♕d8 70.♕c3.

**66...c4 67.♕c7 ♕e6 68.♕c6† ♕d7!**

69.♕a6 ♕xf7 70.♕e3 ♕f1 71.♕d4 ♕d1† 72.♕c3 ♕d3† 73.♕c2 ♕c7  
0-1

The combination of ♕e3 and a2-a4 is flexible, and makes it hard for Black to strike at the centre in true Modern style with ...c5. However, Black seems to be doing well after either a well-timed ...e5 or a more flexible approach with ...e6. I recommend that you spend a minute or two on 7.a5, since this is one of the most strategically dangerous ideas

at White's disposal, and the ... $\mathbb{Q}a7-b5$  plan is far from obvious.

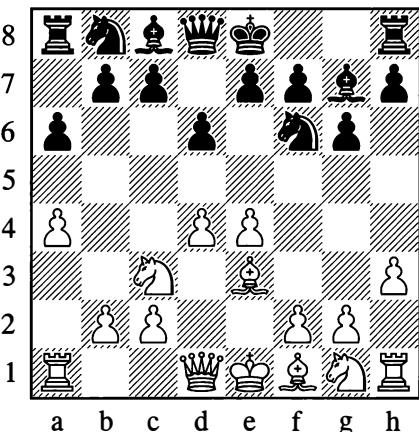
The next game introduces White's set-up with  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , a2-a4 and h2-h3.

## GAME 41

**Joseph Ryan – Alexander Ipatov**

Barbera del Valles 2008

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 5.a4  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  6.h3**



This move is quite tricky, since it prepares either a 'normal'  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  system or a g2-g4 advance. Until White reveals his intentions, Black should stay as flexible as possible.

**6...0–0**

This is the most reliable move.

I am a bit sceptical about 6...b6!?, but have not found anything obviously wrong with it. Now White has a choice:

a) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is a useful simplifying trick that we will see more of in Chapter 8) 8...0–0

9.0–0 (9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.e5?!  $dxe5$  11. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  leads to a good game for Black.

b) 7.g4!  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  is more critical. One interesting continuation is 8...c5 9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  0–0 11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  14. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  b5 15.f4  $\mathbb{W}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  f6 intending ... $\mathbb{W}f7$ , with unclear play.

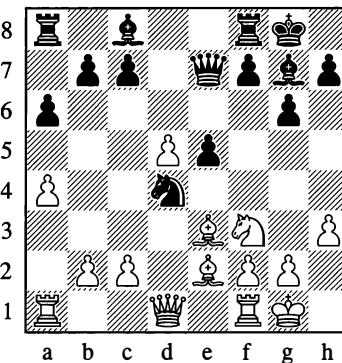
**7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

7.g4 and 7.f4 are covered in the next game.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b6!?**

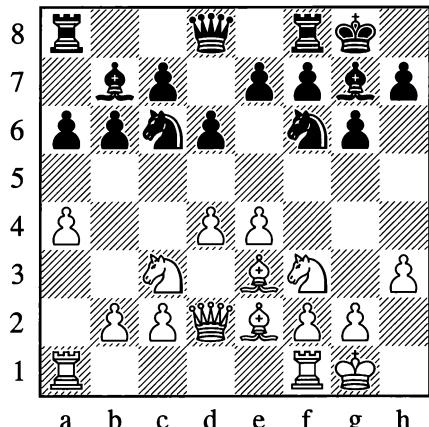
This ambitious move is in keeping with the style of the Modern.

A more Pirc-themed continuation is 8...e5, when 9.dxe5 (9.0–0 is more flexible, with a balanced game) 9...dxe5 10.0–0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  equalizes completely. I found a couple of games where White seemingly overstepped the boundaries of the possible and quickly wound up in trouble: 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$



13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (After 13.c3?!  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  Black was already clearly better in Tsarev – Gofshtein, Kiev 1989. It is hard for White to deal with ...e5-e4-e3.) 13...exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  15. $\mathbb{W}d2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.b4?!,  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  17.c4  $\mathbb{W}d7$  Black was winning in Forques – Chatalbashev, Creon 2006.

**9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10.0–0**



### 10...Wd7?!

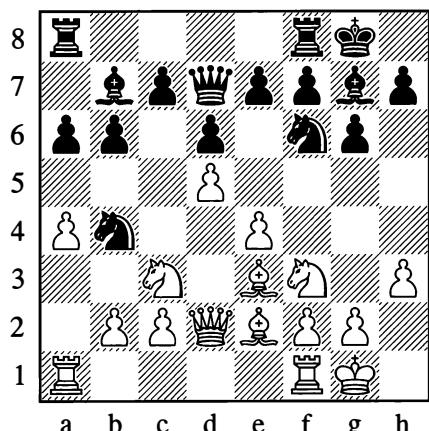
This is not a move I would have played, but there is nothing obviously wrong with it.

I would prefer either 10...Qb4?! 11.a5 bxa5 12.Qd3 Qc8 with a balanced game, or the straightforward 10...e5 11.d5 Qe7 12.Qad1 Qh8 which should be fine for Black, who intends ...Qg8 (or ...Qh5) and ...f5 with some initiative on the kingside.

### 11.d5

Another sensible continuation is 11.Qfd1 e6 12.Qh6 Qad8 with balanced play.

### 11...Qb4

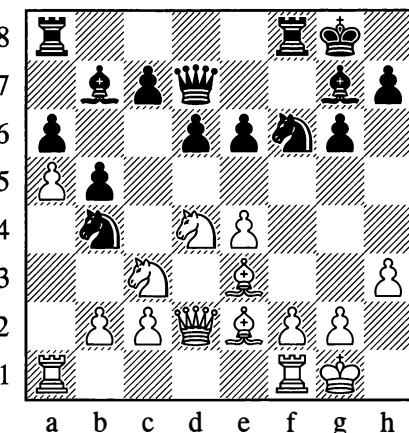


### 12.Qd4

The engines almost always suggest 12.a5 in these positions. The idea is that after 12...b5 the black knight will be slightly stranded on b4. However, what the Silicon Monster fails to appreciate is that the newly acquired stability of Black's queenside gives the second player excellent chances if the position is opened. Here is a nice illustrative line involving an exchange sacrifice: 13.Qfd1 c6 14.dxc6 Qxc6 15.e5 Qe8 16.Qd5 Qd8 17.Qb6 Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.Qxd8 Wxd8 20.c3 e6 21.Qb4 d5! And, since it is difficult for White to take the can opener to the queenside, Black will have excellent compensation.

### 12...e6 13.dxe6 fxe6 14.a5 b5

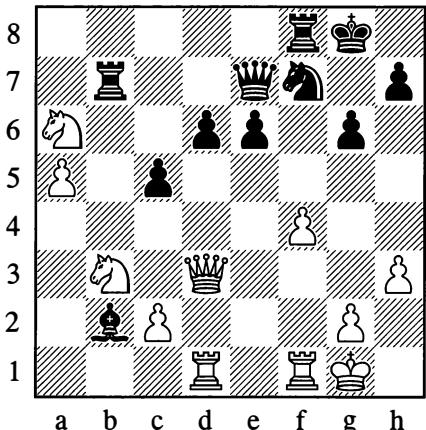
The engine likes 14...c5?! 15.Qb3 Qxe4 16.axb6 Qxc2 when White's centre has been erased.



### 15.Qb3?! Qc6 16.Qd3 Qe5 17.Qad1 Qad8 18.Qg5 Qf7 19.Qxf6 Qxf6 20.f4 We7 21.We3 b4

This allows the white knights to become active, so it would have been better to play 21...c5, when 22.e5 dxe5 23.Qxc5 exf4 24.Qxf4 Qd6 leads to a position where the bishops clearly rule.

### 22.Qa2 Qxb2 23.Wa7 Qb8 24.Qxb4 Qxe4 25.Qxa6 Qb7 26.We3 Qxd3 27.Wxd3 c5



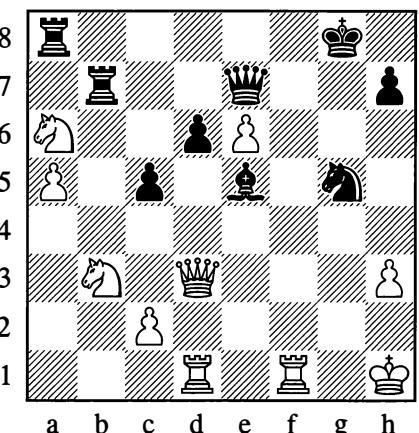
**28.g4?**

White's last chance was 28.♖b1 ♜g7 29.♘d2 ♜a8 30.♗b6 when it is not possible to catch the knight on a6.

**28...♜a8 29.♗f5 gxf5 30.gxf5 ♜e5**

Black is clearly winning after 30...♝h4! 31.fxe6?! ♜g5.

**31.fxe6 ♜g5 32.♗h1**



**32...♜xe6? 33.♗fe1?**

Black had really lost the plot, and 33.♘axc5! ♜xc5 34.♘xc5 dxc5 35.♗d5† ♜h8 36.♗de1 would have led to a clear advantage for White.

**33...♞f4 34.♗c4† ♜h8**

Now Black is back on top, and White is not given another chance.

**35.♗f1 ♜ba7 36.♗e4 ♜g6 37.♘axc5 dxc5  
38.♗c4 ♜f6 39.♗f1 ♜g5 40.♗xc5 ♜g3  
41.♗e2 ♜xh3† 42.♔g1 ♜g7 43.♗g2 ♜ag8  
44.♗ff2 ♜h4 45.♗xe5 ♜f3†**

**0-1**

An impressive display by Ipatov, notwithstanding the minor hiccup near the end. Especially 10...♝d7!? made an impression on me, and it is good to have some clue about how to handle the structure that arises after 13...fxe6.

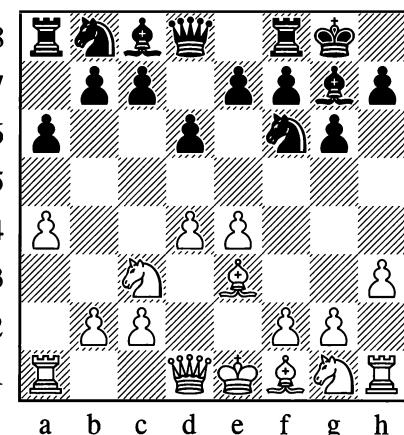
In the next game White tries to obtain an improved version of the Fianchetto System, but he barely gets out of the starting blocks when the centre starts to crumble.

## GAME 42

Oskar Hirn – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Nuremberg 2006

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.a4  
♗f6 6.h3 0-0**



**7.g4**

Apart from 7.♕f3, which was covered in the previous game, White can also consider an aggressive set-up with:

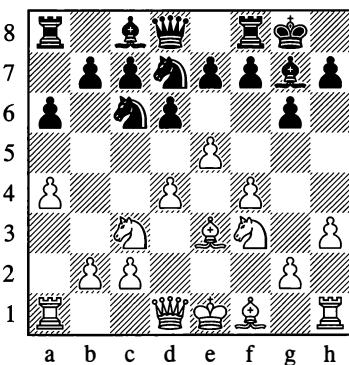
7.f4?

This has hardly ever been tested.

7...♝c6 8.e5

8.g4 e5 9.dxe5 (9.fxe5 dxe5 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♘f3 c5 and Black has the initiative.) 9...dxe5 10.f5 gx f5! 11.exf5 ♘d4 leads to a highly double-edged position.

8...♝d7 9.♘f3

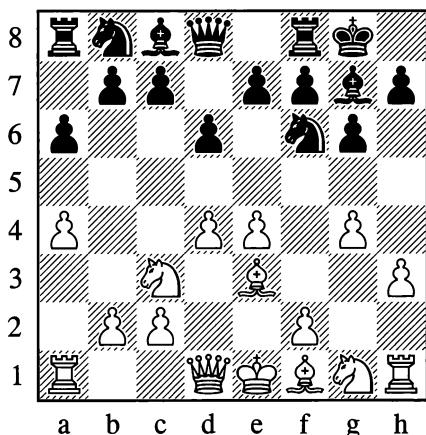


9...e6

This is not necessary. Better is 9...♝b4! followed by ...c5.

10.h4 ♘e7 11.h5 c5 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.exd6 ♘f5

With unclear play, Thorhallsson – Petursson, Munkebo 1998.



7...e5!

This is the move I like most, but it is not the only playable one.

7...♝c6 8.♗g2 e5 9.♗ge2 has been played a few times, and now 9...h5?! is an interesting possibility that needs research.

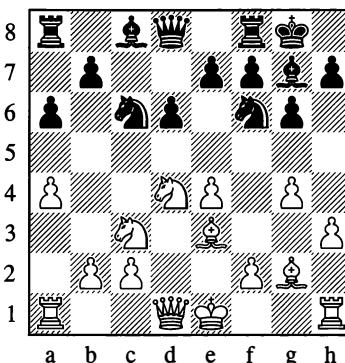
7...c5?! allows White a choice between a) 8.♗ge2 and b) 8.dxc5.

a) 8.♗ge2 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♘c6

9...d5?! 10.e5 ♘e4 11.♗xe4 dxe4 12.e6 ♘d5 13.exf7† ♘xf7 is playable according to the engine, although Black will have to follow up energetically to avoid suffering from his pawn weaknesses.

10.♗g2

We have reached a version of the Sicilian Dragon Fianchetto where Black has nothing to complain about, as having the pawn on g4 instead of g3 is not such a big achievement for White.

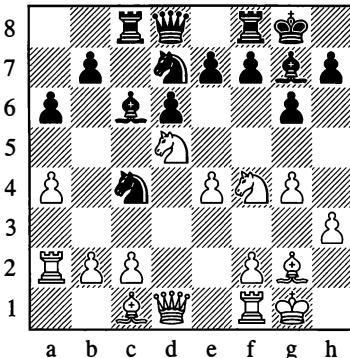


10...♝d7 11.0–0 ♘c8 12.♗de2 ♘a5 13.♗f4

13.b3 ♘xg4 14.hxg4 ♘xc3 15.♗xc3 ♘xc3 16.e5 ♘xe3! 17.fxe3 dxe5 is promising for Black.

13...♝c4 14.♗c1 ♘c6 15.♗a2 ♘d7 16.♗cd5

Now instead of 16...e5?! as played in Kryvoruchko – Banikas, Al-Ain 2012, the best continuation is:

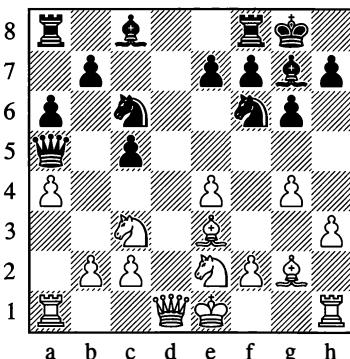


16... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  17.b3 e6 18. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d5 21.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$

With an initiative for Black.

b) 8.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  dxc5 10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !

As Erenburg points out, Black should not hurry with 10... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ , because after 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is annoying for him.



11.0–0!

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  12.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  is a dead end for White.

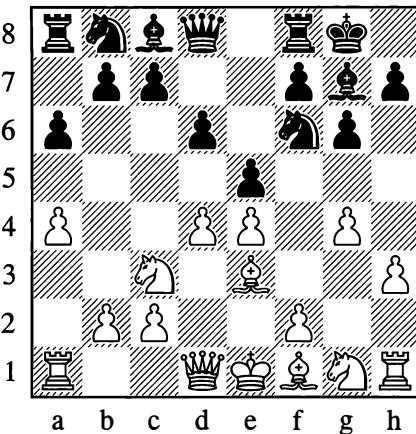
11.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 12.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14.0–0  
(14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  favours Black) 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ !  
followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -c6 is good enough to equalize.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ?

Black should try either 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  instead.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  cxb4  
15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ !

Black did not have full compensation for the pawn in Kristjansson – Thiede, Fuegen 2006.



8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ ??

This allows Black to open the centre advantageously.

8.dxe5!

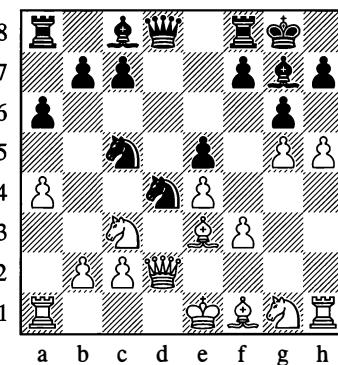
I agree with Gutman that this is White's best move, but I disagree with his assessment that it leads to an advantage for White.

8...dxe5 9. $\mathbb{g}5$

9. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is fine for Black.

9... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  10. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.h4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  12.h5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   
13.f3

Gutman claims that this is better for White, but I am of a different opinion. It is generally not so bad for Black to allow White to occupy the h-file as long as there is a pawn on g5 preventing the white bishop from coming to h6.



13... $\mathbb{W}d6!$

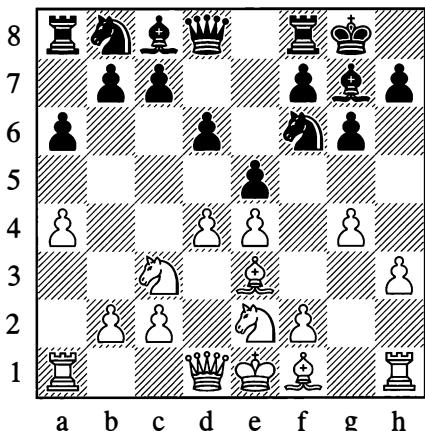
13...c6 14. $\mathbb{W}h2 \mathbb{E}e8$  15.hxg6 hxg6 16.0–0–0  
 $\mathbb{W}a5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ge2 \mathbb{Q}ce6$  is probably fine for Black too, but not as clear.

14.hxg6 hxg6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{E}d8$  16. $\mathbb{W}h2 \mathbb{E}e6$

There is nothing to fear from the check on h7, and by now it seems hard for White even to find equality. When you have a look at the placement of the pieces, this is hardly surprising. White has got stuck on the h-file and is clearly behind in development. I see nothing better than:

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{W}xd6\#$   $\mathbb{E}xd6$   
20.0–0–0  $\mathbb{E}ad8$

Black is slightly better.



8...exd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ !

This allows me to break in the centre and make White regret putting his pawn on g4.

Preferable is 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{E}e3$  when 10...b6 (10... $\mathbb{E}b8?$  11.a5  $\mathbb{E}e8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{E}e5$  is another interesting line) 11. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}b7$  12.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}c5$  is a good way to continue for Black.

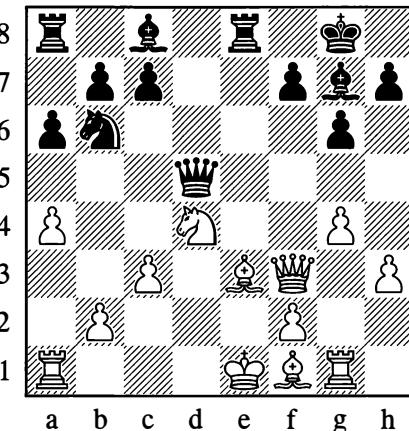
9... $\mathbb{d}5!$  10.exd5

White must avoid 10.e5?!  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (11.f4? c5 loses a piece for White) 11...c6! 12.f4 g5! when his centre falls apart.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  12. $\mathbb{E}g1 \mathbb{E}e8$

13.c3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{Q}b6$

With hindsight it was stronger to keep the queens on the board with 14... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ , but I had seen the combination in the game and believed it would lead to a clear advantage.



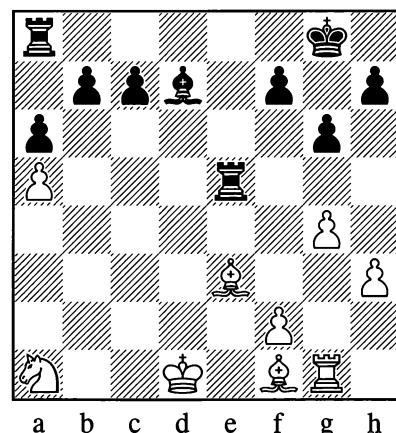
15. $\mathbb{W}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}xc3?!$

There are many ways for me to keep an advantage, but none that is totally convincing. For instance, after 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3 \mathbb{Q}h6$  White defends with 18.g5.

17.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d1?!$

I calculated 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1 \mathbb{Q}e6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}c4\#$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}d5\#$  22. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}xg2$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  which I thought would give me an advantage, but the real evaluation is not so clear-cut.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1 \mathbb{Q}d7$  20.a5  $\mathbb{E}e5$



**21.♕d2??**

It was stronger to play 21.♗b3 although 21...♔a4 22.♗c2 ♔xa5 23.♗c4 ♔e5 is still better for Black. Seeing this now, I cannot fathom why I allowed a queen exchange with my 14th move.

**21...♝d8**

Surprisingly, White resigned here. Both my opponent and I thought that White was losing after 22.♗c1 ♔a4 23.♗c3 ♔d1† 24.♗b2, but it is not easy to find a clear win for Black. One line is 24...♝e4 25.♗c2 ♚f4 26.f3! ♞xf3 27.♗e2 ♞xg1 28.♗xf3 c6 29.h4 and White can still fight on.

**0–1**

We may conclude that 7.g4 e5! gives Black excellent chances. The rare 7.f4!? could be worth further investigation, although I do not believe Black should be too worried about this.

**GAME 4****Nenad Sulava – Mikhail Kozakov**


---

France 2008

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗f3 d6 4.♗e3?!**

This unusual move order effectively rules out ...a6 Modern lines, which had not occurred to me when I wrote *Tiger's Modern*.

**4...♗f6!**

Obviously there is no point in playing 4...a6 before the white knight has gone to c3.

The only decent alternative is 4...c5, but the downside of this is that White can transpose into a Sicilian Dragon with 5.♗c3.

**5.♗c3**

This takes us into the so-called “150 Attack”. Playing ...♗f6 at such an early stage might not have been quite in line with our wishes, but it is still not too late to play:

**5...a6!**

If there is a knight on c3, the pawn can go to a6. It is a simple rule that usually holds.

**6.♗d2**

White has many alternatives, but not many plans to choose from. In the game White aims to exchange the dark-squared bishops followed by direct aggression with 0–0–0 and/or e4–e5. Against this plan Black should play ...b5, followed by the specific plan of development that we will get to shortly. However, if White does not opt for immediate aggression, Black should be in less of a hurry to weaken his queenside.

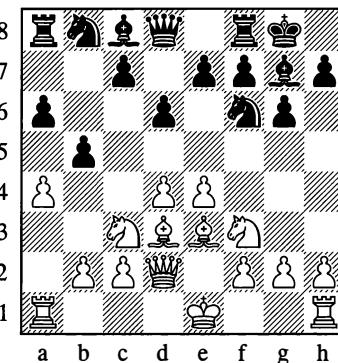
6.h3 0–0! transposes to Game 60 on page 327.

**6.♗d3 0–0!**

6...b5 7.e5 ♗g4 8.♗f4 is not too clear, but it seems better for White.

**7.♗d2 b5 8.a4**

8.♗h6 leads to the main game.

**8...♗b7!**

8...b4 9.♗e2 a5 is ambitious, but slightly better for White. Compared to the lines I have recommended in this chapter, Black is clearly behind.

**9.axb5 axb5 10.♗xa8 ♘xa8 11.b4?!**

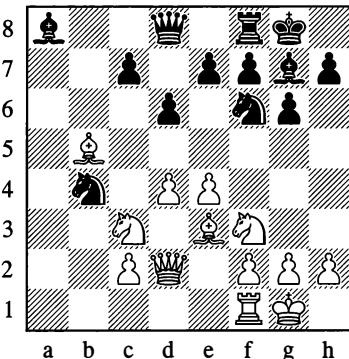
11.♗xb5 ♘xe4! is equal.

11.♗xb5 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗e2 ♘d7 gave Black nothing to complain about in

Priyadharshan – Tkachiev, Kolkata 2009.

11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  13.0–0

Now in Rouse – Huerga, email 2001, Black should have played:

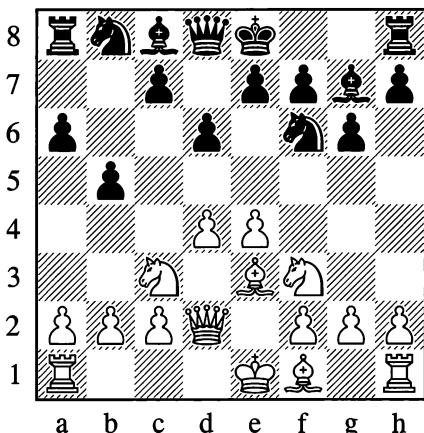


13...c5!N 14.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  dxc5 16. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$

The game ends in a surprising repetition of moves.

## 6...b5

It is important to force White to defend the e4-pawn.

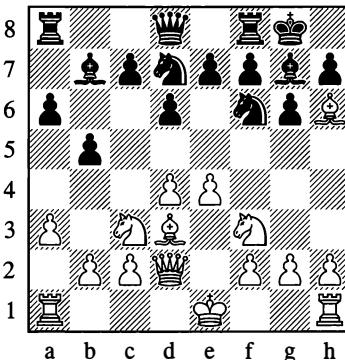


## 7. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0–0 is dealt with under 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ .

I cannot take a move like 7.a3 seriously, but for the sake of being thorough I will recommend a line for Black: 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$

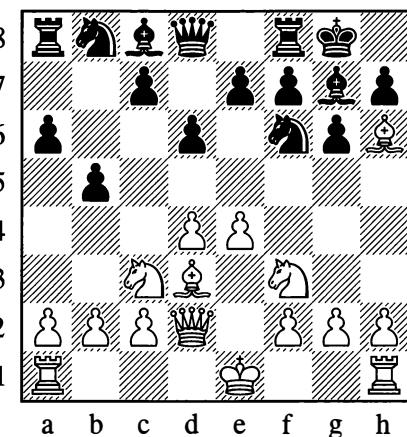
(8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! leads to nothing good for Black. I recommend analysing a few of these ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  lines yourself until you get a good sense of why it is usually a bad idea.) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  0–0 (9... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  has scored better, but after 10. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  I prefer White.)



10. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  11.0–0 Now it is just a question of taste as to whether you prefer 11...e5 12.d5 c6, or 11...c5, both of which are fine for Black.

## 7...0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Now 8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (White can also try 9.h4 but after 9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.h5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! Black is ready to continue with ...e7-e5 with the better chances.) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  leads to the main line. (But please avoid 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! 10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  11.h4 dx5 12.h5 which would be a catastrophic event for Black.)



**8...Qc6!**

I generally prefer set-ups that do not involve this move, but here it is necessary to be prepared for e4-e5 followed by h2-h4, and this is the only move that does the job.

Black is clearly not ready for 8...c5?! since 9.Qxg7 Qxg7 10.e5 Qh5 11.dxc5 leads to a clear advantage for White.

After 8...Qb7 9.Qxg7 Qxg7 10.e5! White has the initiative and Black is in for a lot of suffering.

Another move that does not quite equalize is 8...Qg4, when 9.e5 Qfd7 10.Qxg7 Qxg7 11.Wf4 Qxf3 12.Wxf3 c6 13.exd6 exd6 14.0–0–0 was a bit better for White in Weinzettl – Nyback, Belgrade 2002.

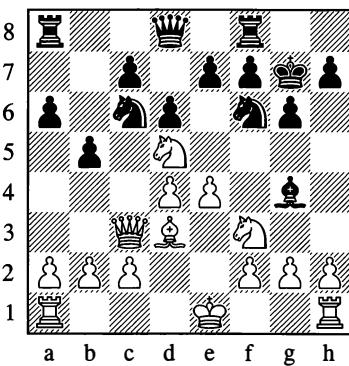
**9.Qxg7**

9.h3 e5 10.d5 Qe7 leads to a position where Black can be quite happy, since ...Qb7 followed by ...c6 will give White no other choice than taking on c6, leaving Black with good control of the d5-square. This illustrates one of the principal aims of the Modern: to get a Sicilian structure where we have a) avoided the Alapin and Qb5 systems; b) bypassed a lot of theory; and c) obtained control over d5.

White has also tried a strange idea:

9.Qd5?! Qg4 10.Qxg7 Qxg7 11.Wc3?!

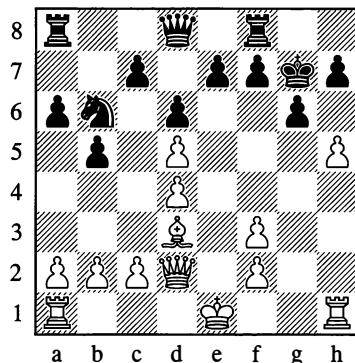
I presume this is the point behind White's mysterious 9th move.

**11...Qxd5**

11...Qxf3 12.gxf3 Wd7 is a simple solution that leads to approximate equality.

**12.exd5 Qxf3 13.gxf3 Qb8 14.h4**

This looks fairly dangerous, and the Silicon Brain initially likes the white position.

**14...Qd7 15.h5 Qb6 16.Wd2****16...Qh8!**

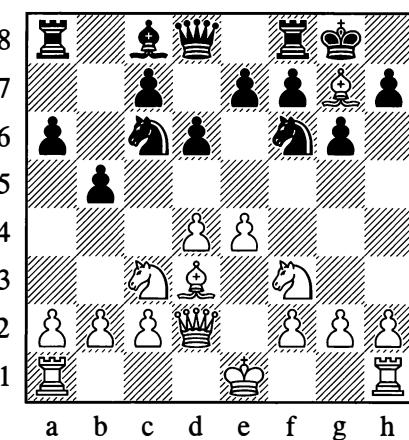
Conveniently defending the kingside.

**17.0–0–0 Qxd5 18.Qe4 c6 19.Qh3**

19.Qdg1 e6 20.Qb1 Qc8 21.a3 Wf6 is similar.

**19...e6**

In Munoz – Grischuk, Istanbul (ol) 2012, it became clear that White was no longer playing for a win. I find it hard to believe in the attacking plan employed by White in this game.



### 9...♝xg7

Now Black will equalize if he is allowed to continue with ...e5.

### 10.e5

It is showdown time. This is one variation where I would recommend learning some of the ensuing lines by heart.

It does not seem logical to play 10.h4, as 10...♝g4 stops the attack while menacing the d4-pawn.

Playing 10.d5 is rather pedestrian with the bishop being on d3. After 10...♝e5 11.♝xe5 dxe5, followed by ...b4, ...a5 and ...e6, Black is at least equal.

10.0–0–0 e5! 11.d5 ♜a5?! This seems like a surprising decision, but it was probably well researched, since Black is a strong correspondence player. 12.♝e2 c6 13.dxc6 ♜xc6 14.♝g3 ♜g4 15.h3 ♜xf3 16.gxf3 ♜c8 17.h4 ♜d4 The position was unbalanced and hard to assess in Mrkvicka – Nyvlt, email 2006.

Finally, Black has nothing to fear from:

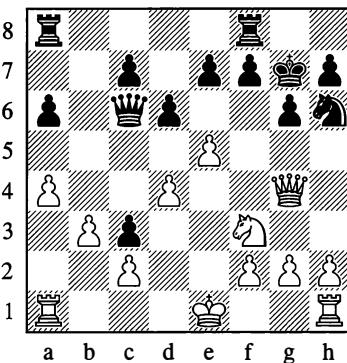
10.a4 ♜g4! 11.e5 ♜g8

Not 11...dxe5?! 12.dxe5 ♜d5 13.♝e4 ♜db4

14.♝e3! ♜xf3 15.gxf3 ♜d7 16.0–0 when the poor coordination of the black knights is more relevant than the damage to White's pawn structure.

12.♝e4 ♜d7 13.♝f4 b4! 14.♝xc6 ♜xc6

15.♝xg4 bxc3 16.b3 ♜h6



### 17.♝f4?!

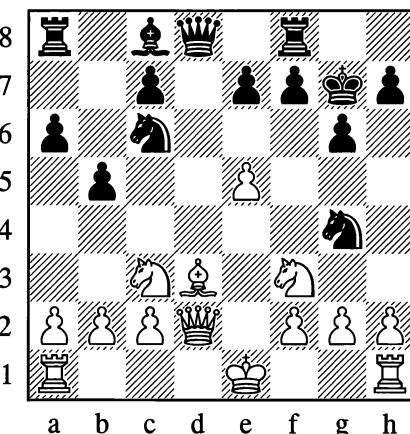
17.♝h4 leads to an unclear position after 17...f6 18.0–0 ♜f5 19.♝g4 ♜ab8?! intending ...♝b4 and ...fxe5.

17...f6 18.e6 ♜d5 19.0–0 g5 20.♝g3?! ♜f5 21.♝g4 ♜g6 22.♝ae1 h5 23.♝e4 ♜xe4 24.♝xe4 d5 25.♝e2 g4 26.♝e1 ♜ac8

Black was winning in Hebden – Jones, Helensburgh 2013.

### 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 ♜g4

This position was originally thought to be better for Black, based on the trick in the next note.



### 12.0–0–0!

12.♝f4? ♜cxe5!! 13.♝xe5 ♜d6 leaves White with nothing better than 14.♝xg6 hxg6, with the better game for Black.

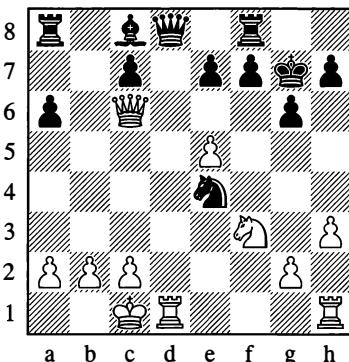
### 12...b4!

This is definitely best, since 12...♝cxe5 13.♝xe5 ♜xe5 14.♝e2 ♜d7 (14...♝xd3† 15.♝xd3 ♜e8 16.♝d5 ♜f5 17.♝c3 is also promising for White) 15.h4 h5 16.g4 gives White more than enough for the pawn.

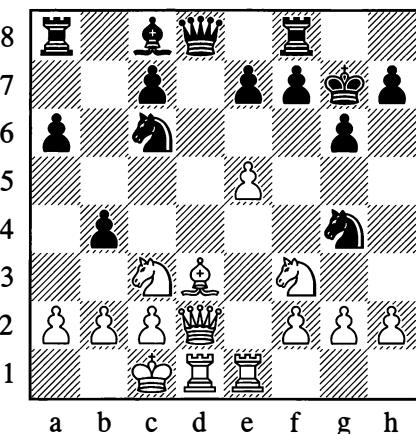
### 13.♝he1!

13.♝b1?! ♜d5 was good for Black in Emms – Pein, Southend 1999, and 13.♝e4?! ♜d5 14.♝b1 ♜d8! is also promising for Black.

My Binary Sidekick has a thing for 13.h3!?. bxc3 (White gets a lot of pressure after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ) 14. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ , although Black can keep the balance with:



16... $\mathbb{W}e8!$  17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  Black was okay in A. Volkov – Shishkov, email 2011. If 18.b3N I like 18...c5!.



### 13...bxc3?

This is not an easy position to handle over the board, and it is quite understandable that Black went wrong.

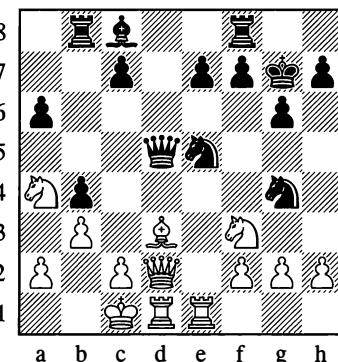
I first analysed this position a few years ago. My engine at the time suggested White's last move, which was then still a novelty, but it was much trickier to find the antidote:

### 13... $\mathbb{B}b8!$

The rook moves away from the e4-a8 diagonal and leaves White without a really strong move. The main line goes:

#### 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

14.h3? is suddenly no good because of 14...bxc3 15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ , when the rook's absence from a8 is felt after 16. $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ . 14... $\mathbb{W}d5$  15.b3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



#### 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ ?!,  $\mathbb{W}xd2\uparrow$  17. $\mathbb{B}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  18. $\mathbb{g}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2!$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d7$  e6 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  is what Black is dreaming of.

#### 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xg2!$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6N$

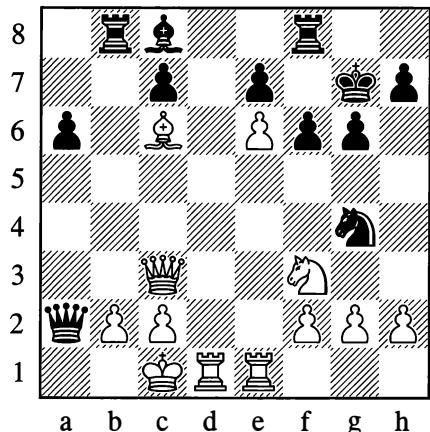
19... $\mathbb{W}xh2$ ?! has been played in a few games, but the text move is better.

#### 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{B}be8!$

This position is still far from clear, but I believe Black will have good chances due to the sorry state of the white kingside pawns. Black's next task will be to reroute the bishop to f5.

#### 14. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 17.e6† f6?

This loses by force. 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  was the only chance, and after 18.exf7  $\mathbb{W}a1\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  20. $\mathbb{W}xb2$   $\mathbb{B}xb2$  21. $\mathbb{B}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  White is just a little better.



## Conclusion

Overall Black is faring rather well in the Flexible Dragon Restrained. The most dangerous challenges lie in a2-a4 without  $\mathbb{W}d2$  (Game 35) and the direct e4-e5 (Game 36). The last game shows that it is not always possible for Black to stay within the Modern boundaries, but even this is no cause for concern. As long as Black remembers a few details around move 13, then the 150 Attack will turn into a “Paper Tiger”, a line far less dangerous than its reputation.

**18.  $\mathbb{B}d4!$**

Black has no good way to deal with the two equally strong threats of  $\mathbb{B}xg4$  and  $\mathbb{B}a4$ .

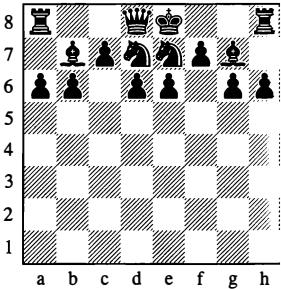
**18...  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $fxe5$  20.  $\mathbb{B}a4$   $\mathbb{W}xe6$**

**21.  $\mathbb{B}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  22.  $\mathbb{B}xe7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  23.  $\mathbb{B}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

**24.  $g4$**

**1-0**

# Chapter 5

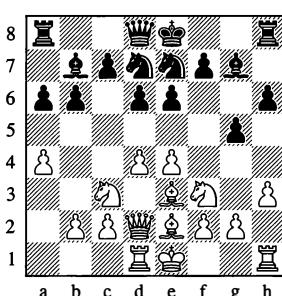


## The Hippopotamus

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$

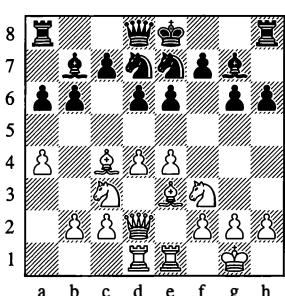
3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6? Game 54	290
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6	
4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ a6 5.a4 h6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Game 52	282
4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6.a4 b6 7.f3?! Game 53	286
4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6 5.a4 b6	
6.h3 e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Game 44	249
6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ Game 52	282
6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6!	
7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.e5 Game 49	270
7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?! $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.0-0 Game 51	278
7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$	
8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ Game 50	273
8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ Game 48	264
8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6! 10.h3 Game 47	258
10.d5?! e5 Game 46	253
10. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ Game 45	250

Game 44 – after 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?



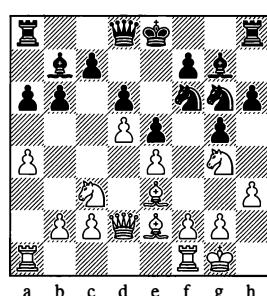
12...f5!!

Game 45 – after 11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$



11...f5!!

Notes to Game 51 – after 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

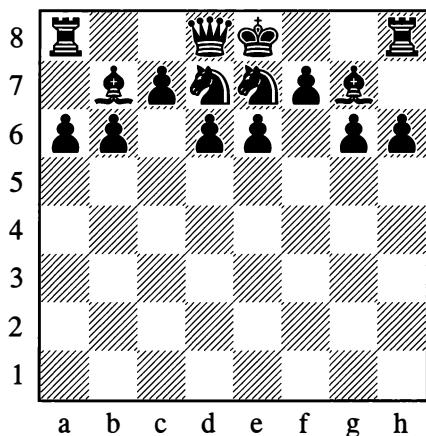


15...Qg8!!

“Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.”

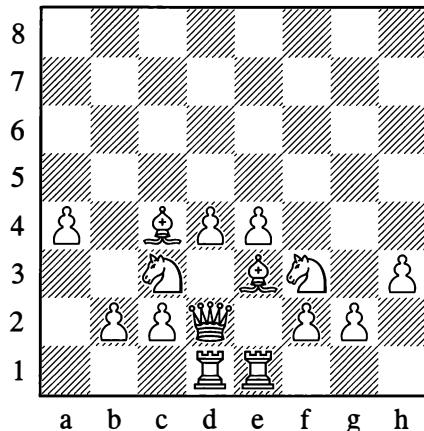
Talking Heads – *Heaven*

The Hippopotamus, which I from now on will refer to as the Hippo, is not so much a variation as it is a system. You can reach the Hippo from four different lines in the Modern: the Classical, the Flexible Dragon, the  $\mathbb{g}5$  line and finally the  $h3$  variation. A fully grown, thick-skinned Hippo looks like this:



As you can see, the Hippo lies low in the water. It looks almost ridiculously passive and many theoreticians consider the Hippo to be a peaceful, almost meek animal. But nothing could be further from the truth. On closer scrutiny the animal, the position, and the statistics look entirely different. The Hippo is a fierce beast, ready to crush anyone who gets too close.

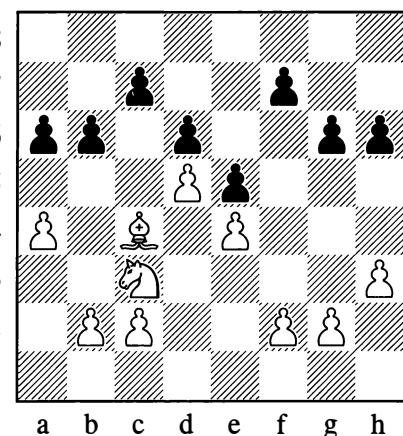
Black starts the game by occupying a solid subsurface position, staying cool in the water, keeping an eye on the opponent. White, on the other hand, seems to have a free hand to develop a heavenly set-up.



OK! White has reached Heaven (of development)! But what should he do next?

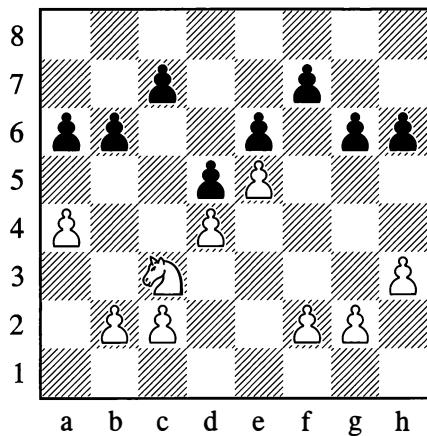
For White to be able to claim any kind of an initiative, advancing to the riverbank will sooner or later be necessary. Considering that the black pawns are controlling the entire fifth rank, this can only happen by advancing a commoner as an *avant-garde* into enemy territory. Normally this will mean one of the two central pawns. This choice is closely related to the development of the c1-bishop. If it goes to f4 you can expect e4-e5 to follow; if it goes to e3, then d4-d5 is much more likely.

After d4-d5, Black usually answers with ...e5.



The game resembles a Classical King's Indian, where White has played a2-a4 instead of c2-c4, while Black has developed his bishop to b7. In this kind of position White's main plan is to play a4-a5, provoking ...b5, and then opening the queenside with c2-c4. This will take some time to carry out, as the bishop and knight are both obstructing the c-pawn. Black's most obvious source of counterplay is ...f5, although if White gives up control over the d5-square, then queenside counterplay with ...c6 may be an option.

Black usually answers White's second road to aggression, e4-e5, with ...d5 followed by ...c5.

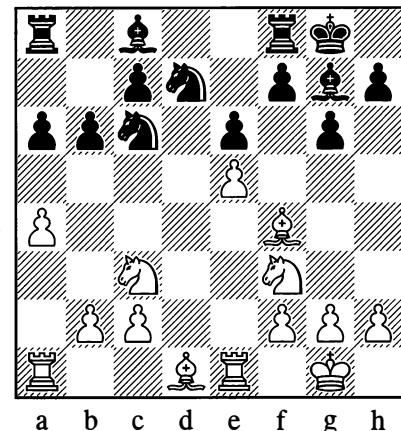


Here the position takes on a more French character. It is generally desirable to play ...c5 *before* White moves the knight from c3, in order to undermine White's central pawn chain before he can reinforce it with c2-c3.

Both pawn moves (e4-e5 and d4-d5) can sometimes be met by exchanges, but only rarely, because opening the position generally benefits the side with better development, which usually means White. There are exceptions to this rule; sometimes an exchange on e5 can lead to positions where White has problems hanging on to the e5-pawn:

## Mikal Johansson – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Swedish Open 1995



In this kind of position White must constantly be on guard against ...g5(-g4) and sometimes ... $\mathbb{Q}$ b4.

I believe few players have ever taken the Hippo seriously, but I intend to show this point of view to be mistaken. There is nothing wrong with the Hippopotamus!

In the near decade since I first wrote these words, I was able to play the Hippo quite often, but almost only when playing opponents rated several hundred points below me. Although some of these encounters were interesting, they are generally not more instructive than the ones I have used as main games in this chapter. I have, however, included some of them in the notes.

### A Beautiful Hippo and a Lazy King

As in many variations of the Modern, White must watch out for quick bursts of activity from Black. If White stays passive then Black may find a good moment to lash out with ...d5 or ...c5. The ...e5 push is not so common in the Hippo, mainly because the knight on e7 will be passive if White maintains the central

tension. If none of these pawn advances are possible, then Black may consider ...g5 and/or ...b5. Our first game shows that even a sixth possible pawn break has potential.

## GAME 44

Sergey Yuferov – Genrikh Chepukaitis

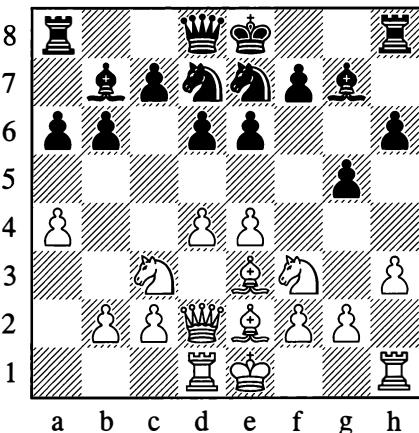
St Petersburg 1996

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♜g7 3.¤f3 d6 4.¤c3 a6 5.a4  
b6 6.h3 e6 7.¤g5?! ♜e7 8.¤d2 h6! 9.¤f4  
9.¤e3 is better, avoiding being hit by ...g5.

9...¤b7 10.¤e2 ♜d7  
Behold the Hippo!

11.¤d1 g5! 12.¤e3?

The white set-up might seem harmonious, but it is not. The pieces are not cooperating, but mainly standing in each other's way.



12...f5!!

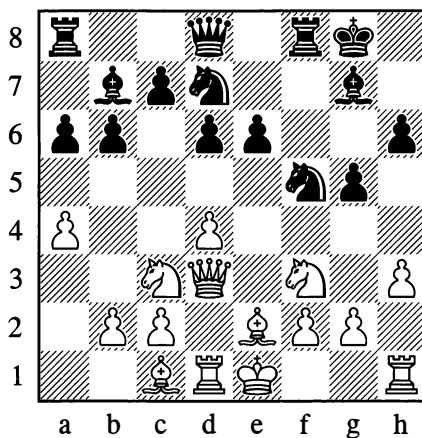
Chepukaitis was a virtuoso of the Hippo, and recognized the perfect moment to strike with his f-pawn.

13.exf5

After 13.d5 ♜xc3! 14.¤xc3 e5 the white centre falls apart, but 13.¤d3 was possibly better.

13...¤xf5! 14.¤d3 0–0 15.¤c1?

This is not the time for walking backwards. 15.0–0 was necessary.



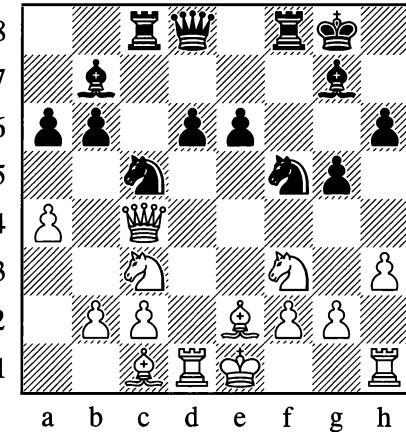
15...c5!! 16.dxc5

There is not much of a choice, since 16.d5 ♜xc3† 17.¤xc3 ♜xd5 sees White lose a pawn without any trace of compensation.

16...¤xc5 17.¤c4

After 17.¤d2 ¤c8 18.0–0 ¤d7 White will end up a pawn down in a bad position.

17...¤c8

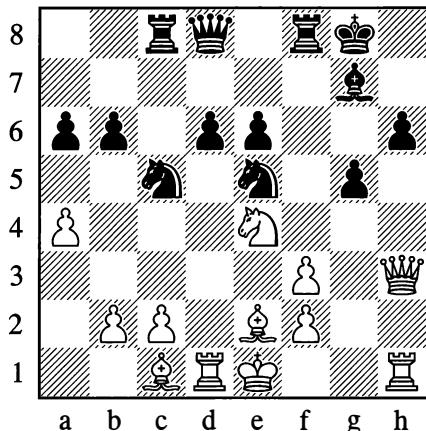


**18.h4?**

A desperate act in an awful position.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  19.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  20. $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6!?$   
21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22. $\mathbb{W}h3$**

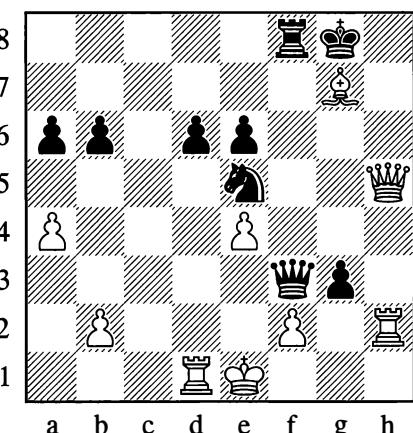
White loses after other moves too, for instance 22. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  23.fxe4  $\mathbb{B}xc2$ .



**22...g4! 23.Wh5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

23...gxf3! is even stronger.

**24.fxe4  $\mathbb{W}f6$  25. $\mathbb{B}h2$   $\mathbb{B}xc2$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{B}xe2!$   
27. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}f3!$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  g3 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$**



**29...gxh2?!**

Very aesthetic, but 29... $\mathbb{W}xe4!$  30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}c4!$  would have won immediately.

**30. $\mathbb{W}h8!$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  31. $\mathbb{W}xf8!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  32. $\mathbb{Q}d2$** 

The point Black's 29th move is revealed after 32. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$  33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g1!$  and the h-pawn promotes.

**32... $\mathbb{W}xf8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g1$   
35. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  h1=**

**0–1**

I love this game.

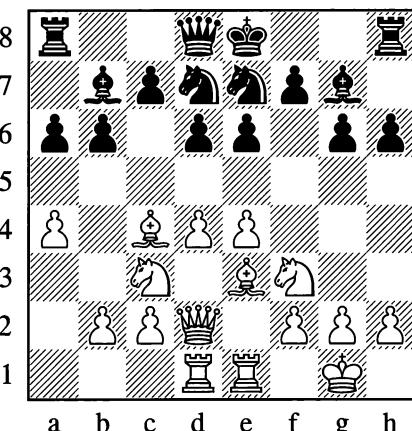
White often stops Black from castling by tying the h8-rook to the protection of the h6-pawn. Do not move this pawn! Doing so would severely weaken Black's kingside. The ideal solution is to castle and play ...h6 before White can double the bishop and queen on the c1-h6 diagonal, so that ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  is possible. In reality though, Black generally does not have time for this. He is thus left with the options of blocking the diagonal with ...g5, or embarking on a somewhat ceremonious manoeuvre with his king, as in the following game.

## GAME 45

**Wouter Spoelman – Vlastimil Hort**

Hoogeveen 2002

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 d6 3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 5.a4  
b6 6. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e6 9.0–0  
h6 10. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{B}ad1$**



**11... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$** 

Black plans to walk the king to h7 via g8, thus defending the h6-pawn and freeing the h8-rook from duty. It might seem too provocative, but the argument is that White can do little to stop the king from reaching h7 and, further, that White cannot do much in general.

Some Hippo connoisseurs even play this manoeuvre fairly routinely, but I always keep it as a last resort. Here, for instance, I prefer 11...g5, when 12.d5 e5 offers mutual chances.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$** 

After 12.d5 e5 White can try 13.g3, intending 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  followed by f2-f4 with an advantage. Black can improve with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  when the play seems balanced; the king is somewhat strange on f8, but there is no way for White to open up the centre.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$** 

White is planning to put the knight on g3 and then answer ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  with the unpleasant h4-h5. It is a good idea, but it was necessary to preface it with 13.h3!. The reason for this will instantly become apparent.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$** 

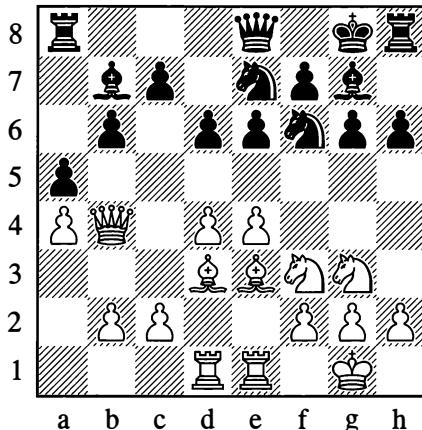
There is nothing White can do to both defend the e-pawn and stop ... $\mathbb{Q}g4xe3$ . (White should only exchange this bishop for its counterpart on g7.)

**14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$** 

This is certainly ambitious, but I would be quite happy with 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5 16.dxe5 dxe5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  with approximate equality.

**15. $\mathbb{W}b4$  a5!?**

I would be less willing to weaken the b5-square in this way. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  Black has a fine position and it is not clear what White has achieved.

**16. $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  17.c4?**

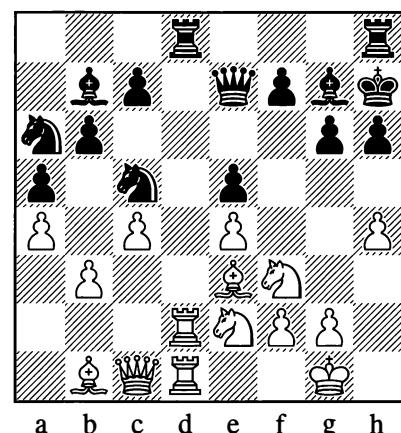
A horrible move that permanently weakens b4. It was better to play 17. $\mathbb{B}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  with a slight advantage for White.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18.h4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  20.b3 e5 21.dxe5?**

It was necessary to keep the position closed.

**21...dxe5 22. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  23. $\mathbb{E}d2!?$** 

White's best chance was 23.h5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  24.hxg6† fxe6 25. $\mathbb{E}d5$ , but Black can and should decline the sacrifice with 25...c6!, keeping a slight advantage.

**23... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  24. $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}dc5$** 

**26.♕c3??**

A blunder in a worse position. The rest is not important.

**26...♝xb3 27.♝xd8 ♕xc1 28.♝e6 ♜e6  
29.♝xc1 ♜c6 30.♝d3 ♜b4 31.♝d2 ♜xc4  
32.♝b2 ♜e8 33.♝c1 ♜e6 34.♝a3 ♜e7  
35.♝d5 ♜xd5 36.♗xd5 ♜g4 37.d6 cxd6  
38.♝xd6 e4 39.♝h2 ♜xh4 40.♝xb6 ♜d4**

**0-1**

White never came close to punishing Black for his strange king manoeuvre. In the rest of the chapter I will seldom comment on this idea unless it is absolutely necessary. It is almost always possible to try ...♝f8-g8-h7, but it should not be thought of as the solution to all of Black's problems.

**Possible Plans for White**

Since Black sticks to virtually the same set of moves again and again, it is White who gets to define the course of the game. Here is a sample of the many possible set-ups available to him.

**♝c4, ♜e3 and ♜d2 followed by d4-d5**

(Games 46 and 47)

I consider this to be the main line and also the most critical. In Game 46 White is in too much of a hurry to advance his d-pawn and Black takes over the initiative. In Game 47 White never gets around to playing d4-d5, but the idea is always there, and is featured in several of the notes. Black's 11...♝f6?! is poorly timed, and some improvements are given in the notes.

**♝c4, ♜f4 and ♜d2 followed by e4-e5**

(Game 48)

Admittedly White never actually executes e4-e5 in Game 48, but most of the references to this plan can be found here. The *Waiting for Godot* strategy that White adopts in this game is not dangerous, and Black missed several opportunities to obtain counterplay.

**♝c4 and ♜e2 followed by e4-e5**

(Games 49 and 50)

By removing the queen from the e-file, White ensures that e4-e5 will not permit ...dxe5 followed by an exchange of queens. In Game 49 White launches the e-pawn at the first possible opportunity, but I achieved an excellent game with 8...d5?!, hitting the c4-bishop and following up with a quick ...c5, with pressure against White's centre. In Game 50 White enjoys the freedom of central domination until move 15, by which time he has run out of small improvements. When 15.e5 finally comes, I strongly advise Black to exchange on f3 before closing the centre with 16...d5, or even trying the messy 16...♝f5?!.

**White loses a tempo with an early ♜g5?!**

(Games 51 and 52)

This is a common mistake that loses a tempo for White, as Black often finds it necessary to play ...h6 anyway. The position may not be the most time-sensitive, but Black should nonetheless be happy to receive the gift of a tempo.

**♝d3, ♜e3 and ♜d2 (Game 52)**

White's set-up here is flexible, but it is not designed to prepare either e4-e5 or d4-d5, and is thus not the most purposeful. Gofshtein's idea of 9...♝b7 10.0-0 ♜gf6?! is interesting, but there is nothing wrong with doing the old Hippo dance.

**♜e3, ♜d2 and f2-f3 (Game 53)**

"Hippo vs. Dragon", as they would call it in Hollywood. The most important thing to learn from this game is to remove the king from the e-file before playing ...d5 and ...c5. Had Black stayed cool and played 11...♝f8 instead of 11...d5, I think he would have been slightly better considering the clumsy position of White's pieces.

**Qc4-b3, followed by the Ruy Lopez manoeuvre Qbd2-f1-g3 (or Qc3-e2-g3) (Game 54)**

I started to worry about this plan soon after finishing *Tiger's Modern*. When I studied the Ruy Lopez in 2008, I came to realize that a knight on g3 is not necessarily a bad thing, even if Black has played ...g6. One benefit is that it becomes hard for Black to open up the centre. In the worst-case scenario (from Black's point of view), ...c5 is met by c2-c3 and ...d5 with e4-e5, while ...e5 will leave Black with a passive knight on e7. Black must exhibit a flexible attitude par excellence, and find a way to achieve one or more of these breaks under relatively favourable circumstances.

## GAME 46

**Andrea Drei – Leonid Gofshtein**

Arco 2000

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Qc3 Qg7 4.Qf3 a6 5.a4 b6**

This is a necessary move order since 5...e6 6.a5! is awkward for Black. After 6...b5 7.axb6 cxb6 White's pawn structure is clearly preferable and Black has lost the dynamic possibility of ...c5.

**6.Qc4**

This is the most active square for the bishop. Another dangerous idea is:

**6.Qg5!?**

Now Black has to react accurately to avoid trouble. It is important to 'put the question' to the bishop on g5 immediately with:

**6...h6!**

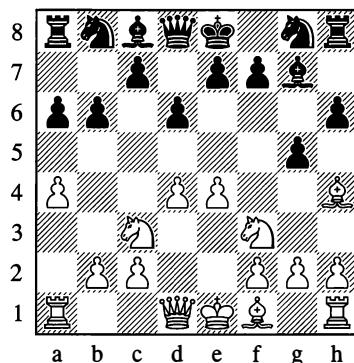
6...Qb7?! is inaccurate, and after 7.Qc4! h6 8.Qh4 Qd7 9.0–0 c6 10.We2 Wc7 11.Qb3 e6 12.Qad1 Qe7 (also after 12...Qgf6 13.e5 dx5 14.dxe5 Qd5 15.Qe4 Qxe5 16.Qg3 Black is unlikely to last long) 13.Qfe1 White's position was overwhelming in Shamkovich

– Ivkov, Amsterdam 1968.

**7.Qh4 g5!**

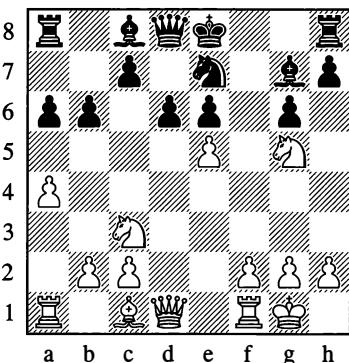
7...Qd7 is inaccurate due to 8.Qc4, when 8...g5? is impossible due to 9.Qxg5! hxg5 10.Qxf7† Qxf7 11.Qxg5† Qf6? 12.Wg4 and Black will soon be mated.

7...Qf6!? is interesting though.



## 7.0–0 ♜e7

7...♜d7?! is also quite playable. One of the most interesting possible continuations is: 8.e5?! ♜e7 9.♝xe6?! fxe6 10.♝g5 ♜xe5 11.dxe5



Now in Makarov – Shchekachev, Russia 1991, Black should have played 11...0–0N with a dynamic game, instead of the mechanical 11...d5?!, after which 12.♝f3 gave White some initiative.

## 8.♝e3!

It is a common plan for White to double the queen and bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal, to stop Black from playing ...h6, ...0–0 and ...♝h7. This is the most logical way to challenge Black's set-up, but is the bishop better placed on e3 or f4? It may be just a matter of taste, but I lean towards the former square, as the latter might present a target for ...g5 or ...e5.

In the following game my opponent permitted me to carry out the aforementioned plan:

8.♝e1 0–0!

When I played Prasca, at the Bled Olympiad in 2002, I totally forgot about a primitive threat: 8...♜d7 9.♝e2 ♜b7?? (9...0–0 is fine for Black) 10.♝f4! and, facing the threat of ♜xe6, I had nothing better than 10...♝f8, leaving me in a sorry state.

Since I started playing the Ruy Lopez with White I have finally come to appreciate the

strength of the ♜c3-e2-g3 manoeuvre. In this kind of position it looks quite slow, but it also limits Black's freedom in the dynamic department. Normally Black will counter it with a well-timed ...e5, but neither ...c5 nor ...f5? (if Black has managed to castle) are out of the question.

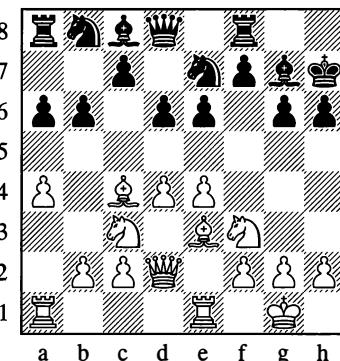
9.♝e3

This is not logical in combination with the rook on the e-file.

It is more critical to play 9.e5, when Black should reply 9...dxe5!. Here both 10.♝xe5 ♜b7 and 10.dxe5 ♜xd1 11.♝xd1 ♜d7 12.♝f4 ♜c6 13.♝e1 h6 14.h4 ♜b7 are fine for Black.

9...h6 10.♝d2 ♜h7

I have completed the desired manoeuvre. Now my opponent embarks on an ill-fated plan of queenside expansion.

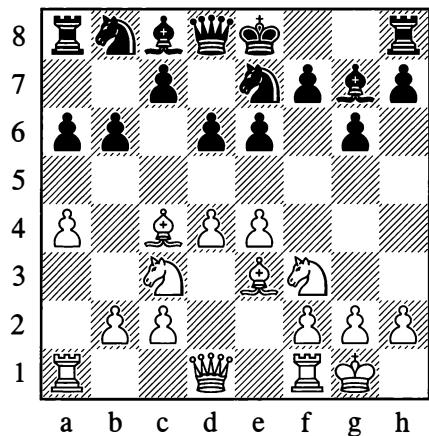


11.b4?! ♜d7 12.h3 ♜b7 13.b5 axb5 14.axb5 ♜f6 15.e5?! ♜d7

Launching the b-pawn to the fifth rank has not improved White's position, and his latest pawn advance has only made matters worse.

16.exd6 cxd6 17.♝e2 ♜f5

We have been following the game Swanson – Hillarp Persson, Jersey 2000. At this point my opponent dropped a pawn with 18.♝f4?!, but he was facing great problems anyway. My pieces are much better coordinated and my pawn structure is more dynamic. If White could have returned the b5-pawn to b2, he would only have been slightly worse.



### 8...Qd7!

There is at least one good reason to delay the development of the light-squared bishop. If White opts for an early d4-d5 and Black answers with ...e5, then the bishop is better placed on c8, where it supports Black's kingside play.

A brief illustrative line is 8...Qb7 9.Wd2 h6 10.d5! e5 11.Qe1! when White is ready for a4-a5, Qd1 and c2-c4, opening up the queenside. Sooner or later, Black will have to return the bishop to c8, leaving him two tempos down compared to the main game.

### 9.Wd2 h6!

Since the main point of the Hippo is to strive for complex positions where there are many pieces left on the board, it seems counterproductive to play 9...0–0 allowing 10.Wh6. This kind of position is generally worse for Black when the knights are on e7 and d7 rather than on f6 and c6.

The text move is designed to prevent the bishop exchange and keep the white pieces at bay. The downside is that Black postpones castling for the foreseeable future, and we have to think carefully about whether White can take advantage of this. If White is allowed to open up the centre, then Black will indeed

be in trouble, but such a scenario is unlikely to happen if you play your cards right. As a general rule, do not play ...e5, ...d5, ...c5, or ...f5 until you have evacuated the king to a place of relative safety, such as g8 or even f8. Always make sure you have a good answer to both e4-e5 and d4-d5, and then free your position slowly.

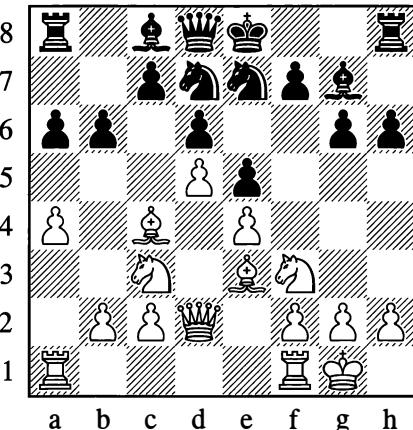
### 10.d5?!

Better is 10.h3, as seen in the next game.

White should try as hard as possible to delay the advance of the d-pawn until Black has committed the bishop to b7. The challenge is to find a waiting move that fits in with his plan, namely (after d4-d5 and ...e5 are played) to advance with a4-a5, intending to meet ...b5 by evacuating the c-file and opening the queenside with c2-c4. 10.Qac1? and 10.Qfc1? both prepare for the opening of the c-file, although Black can consider meeting either rook move with 10...g5?.

### 10...e5!

With the bishop on c8, Black is well placed to start operating on the kingside.



### 11.Qe1 f5 12.f3

After 12.exf5 Black should play 12...Qxf5! with mutual chances.

It is worth considering the problems with the other recapture: 12...gxf5 13.f4! e4 This kind of position, except with a pawn on c4, is quite common in the King's Indian. In that opening, the structure generally favours White, since the c8-bishop is boxed in and the passed e-pawn is securely blockaded. White can utilize the d4-square for his pieces, and may gradually prepare a g4-break on the kingside.

In the Hippo this will not necessarily be the case, since Black can try to exploit the absence of a pawn on c4 to attack the d-pawn with ...Qf6, ...Bb7 and ...We8-f7. The question is whether this is enough to make up for the problems outlined above. In the present position I don't think it is, but you might find other situations where the opposite is true.

### 12...Qf6 13.Qe2?!

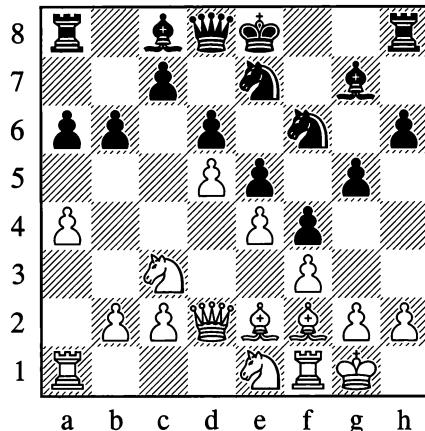
White is preparing a4-a5, intending to meet ...b5 by moving the c3-knight somewhere and then playing c2-c4, breaking up Black's queenside.

### 13...f4

Another possibility is 13...g5?!, keeping the c3-knight bound to the defence of e4. The downside is that White can start playing for control of the e4-square with 14.exf5 Qxf5 15.Qc4 0-0 16.Qd3 intending Qf2-e4. Nevertheless Black should be okay.

### 14.Qf2 g5

This position is reminiscent of the Mar del Plata variation of the King's Indian Defence. The main differences are that White's c-pawn is on c2 instead of c4 and the queen is uncomfortable on d2 where it does nothing to stop Black from playing ...g4. Meanwhile, Black has advanced the a- and b-pawns and lost a tempo by playing ...e5 in two moves. I believe the ups and downs of these differences should not be disadvantageous for Black; rather the opposite.



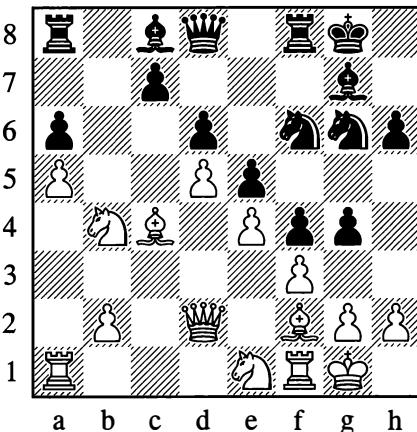
### 15.a5?!

White must create weaknesses on the black queenside as quickly as possible, but this move turns out to be counterproductive.

A better idea was 15.Qa2! 0-0 16.c4 a5 17.b4 axb4 18.Qxb4, although Black keeps some initiative with 18...g4! 19.Qh4 We8.

### 15...b5 16.Qa2 0-0 17.c4 bxc4 18.Qxc4 Qg6 19.Qb4 g4

This is a complicated position and, for an outsider, it would be easy to draw the wrong conclusions. My personal belief is that Black's kingside attack is strong enough to compensate for White's obvious advantage on the other wing.



**20.♕d3?!**

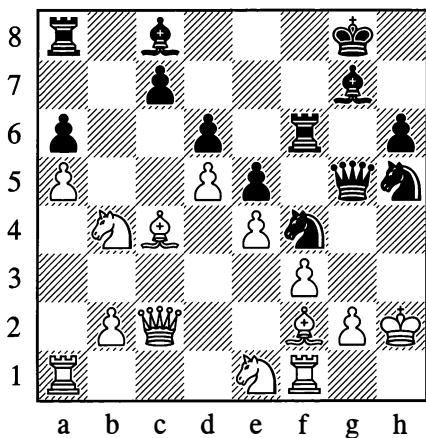
The queen will soon find herself in the line of fire, but it is hard to suggest anything better for White. Now Black is at least forced to act. Had White not provoked him, Black could have continued with ...h5-h4 and so on.

**20...g3!?** 21.hxg3 ♘h5 22.gxf4

In the event of 22.♕c6 ♘g5 23.gxf4 ♘gxf4 (23...exf4!?) 24.♔c2 ♘h3 25.♔e3 ♘d7 Black keeps a strong initiative.

**22...♘gxf4**

22...exf4!? is also promising.

**23.♔c2 ♘g5 24.♔h2 ♘f6****25.g3?**

White commits a blunder, but Black had the initiative anyway.

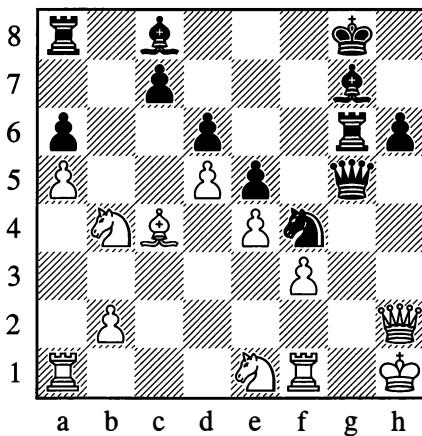
25.g4 ♘g6 (25...♘h3!? 26.♗g2 ♘xf2 27.♗xf2 ♘f4 is another dangerous option.) 26.♗g1 ♘f6 27.♗c6 (After 27.♗g2 ♘xg4† 28.fxg4 ♘xg4 White has no defence against ...♘h5† and ...♘f6.) 27...♗f8! 28.♗g2 ♘xg4 The computer indicates that White can survive, but for any human player this would be like doing a tightrope act over the abyss.

**25...♘xg3 26.♗xg3 ♘g6 27.♗h1 ♘xg3****28.♗h2**

White has avoided immediate mate, but in the long run his king will be too exposed.

**28...♗g5?!**

Sometimes exchanging queens and attacking are not incompatible options: 28...♗xh2†! 29.♗xh2 ♘g5 30.♗ed3 ♘f7 and White's king is in trouble.

**29.♗g1 ♘f6 30.♗xg6 ♘xg6 31.♗g3?**

After 31.♗c1 the position is unclear. Now Black is allowed to improve his position by activating his 'King's Indian bishop'.

**31...h5! 32.♗ed3 ♘h6 33.♗g1 ♘h7 34.♗g2 ♘e3 35.♗c2 ♘h6 36.♗cb4 h4 37.♗f2 ♘f4 38.♗xf4 ♘xf4 39.♗d3 ♘g3**

Black has a big advantage and the rest is a one-sided story.

**40.♗e2 ♘d7 41.♗f2 ♘f4 42.♗d3 ♘g5 43.♗f2 h3 44.♗g1 ♘h4 45.♗g4 ♘xg4 46.♗xg4 ♘f2 47.♗d1 ♘g3 48.♗f1 ♘f3† 49.♗h2 ♘g7**

Here White resigned, presumably after spotting that 50.♗xh3 runs into the evil 50...♗g3†! followed by a quick mate.

**0–1**

Although improvements are possible, the general conclusion from this game is that Black

does not have any problems if White plays d4-d5 before Black is committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . In the next game White is in less of a hurry.

## GAME 47

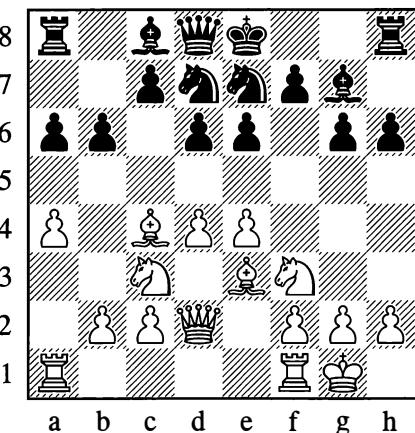
Alexander V. Ivanov – Joel Benjamin

Seattle 2000

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a6 5.a4 b6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 7.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9. $\mathbb{W}d2$  h6

It is common in the world of opening theory that the same, frequently mistaken, judgements are passed on from one commentator to another. This is greatly beneficial for those of us who dare to enter Modern territory, as we repeatedly encounter opponents who think they ought to punish us for our insolence because their books give the impression that the Modern is rubbish. Let them try...

In *Tiger's Modern* I wrote that I had played this system for ten years without knowing a single prepared line. Not much has changed, apart from the timescale, which is nearing two decades at the time of writing.



10.h3

I have little confidence in:

10.h4!?

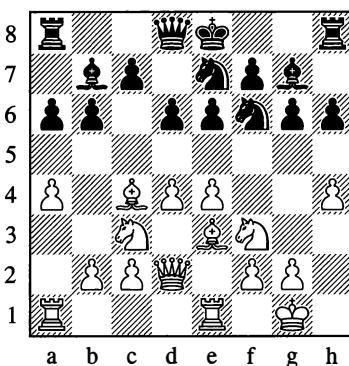
This move makes much more sense in

connection with long castling from White. Here it stops Black from playing ...g5, but the weakness of g4 counts for more.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

A logical move, eyeing the g4-square.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! is also possible, intending either ... $\mathbb{Q}g8-h7$ , or ...d5 and ...c5. I am sceptical about treating the king manoeuvre as a standard procedure, since it is quite slow. However, if White does not find a way to exploit the loss of time, there is nothing wrong with it.



12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d5?

Black could have obtained an excellent position with 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0–0 (but not 13...e5?!, when 14.dxe5 dxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  favours White, since the e7-knight is too passive). Black has completed development, is blessed with a beautiful square for the knight on g4, and can start to contemplate all kinds of dynamic central strikes.

I do not like the text move at all. Unless he is guaranteed a good position, Black should not open the centre, especially when White is clearly better developed. Nevertheless, I will show a few more moves of the game to show how White can take advantage of Black's mistake.

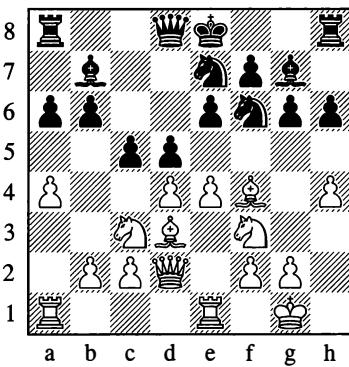
13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !

Black was probably hoping for 13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (or 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?! dxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.h5 gxh5 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  with an advantage

for Black) 14...c5?! 15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  when his position is fine. Black can target the e-pawn and can feel happy not to have castled yet, as White might get into trouble if he attacks too early on the kingside.

13...c5

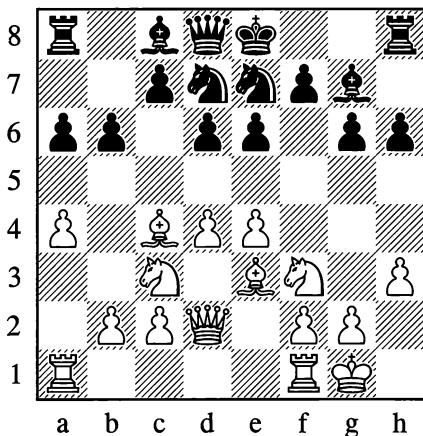
This does not end too well for Black, but the alternatives were not much better. For instance, 13...dxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  is the advice of the Silicon Monster. It is time for a word of advice: do not always trust the Monster! After 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  0–0 16.c3 a5 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  I would not like to play the Black side.



14.dxc5 bxc5 15.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?! 16... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  is still only marginally better for White.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

White had a clear advantage in Vescovi – Vadász, Budapest 1993.



10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

In one sense this is the main “tabiya” of the Hippo. So far White has played moves that you don’t need to be Sherlock Holmes to find, but now we get to the stage where it becomes harder to discriminate between all the different options.

11. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$

Several other moves have been tried, and I will focus on three illustrative examples:

11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

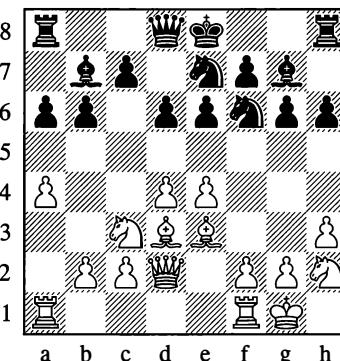
White wants to mobilize the f-pawn, but this invites a central counter.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?

This should work fine, but even stronger is 11...d5! 12.exd5 (12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ?! is met by 12...c5! when the threat of ...cx4 forces White into 13.e5 cxd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , when Black wins at least a pawn) 12...exd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 and Black takes over the initiative.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

12.d5 exd5 13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  g5 is balanced.



12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ !?

12...c5! is the perfect timing, as White has just blocked the d-file while trying to protect the e-pawn. Now 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  looks nice for Black. On the horizon I can already see the outlines of a minority attack on the queenside.

13.♗ad1 d5 14.f3

14.e5 is critical.

14...♝h5 15.♗f2 f5?! 16.g4 dx4

16...f4! would have been unclear.

17.fxe4 ♐f6 18.♗f3 0–0–0 19.♗e5

By now White was better in Xie Jun – Chiburdanidze, Manila 1991. Despite the earlier inaccuracies, it was an impressive display of creativity from both players, and the game was eventually drawn after further adventures.

11.♗fe1 ♐f6?!

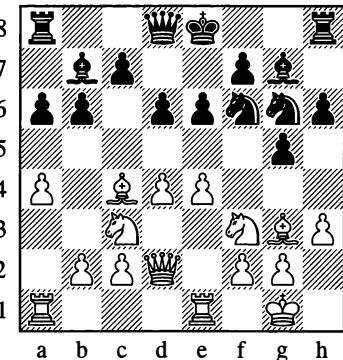
This is similar to our main game. Here too, I recommend 11...g5!.

12.♔f4?!

12.d5! is strong.

12...g5 13.♗g3 ♐g6

Black can also steer towards a do-or-die position with: 13...♝h5 14.♗h2 ♐g6 15.d5 ♘xc3! 16.♗xc3 e5 17.a5! b5 18.♗f1 White has an automatic initiative on the queenside, but Black has chances on the kingside with ...0–0, ...♝c8 and ...f5.



14.e5 ♐h5! 15.d5! ♐xg3 16.fxg3 0–0?!

After 16...♗xe5 17.♗xe5 dx5 18.♗ad1 ♗e7 19.dxe6 fxe6 White has compensation for the pawn, but hardly more.

17.♗ad1

White should have played 17.dxe6 ♘xf3

18.exd6! when Black has to defend precisely:

18...♝c6 19.♗ad1 cxd6 20.♗xd6 ♗xd6 21.♗xd6 ♐e5 22.exf7† ♗h8 23.♗xe5 ♘xe5

24.♗xh6† ♗g7 25.♗xc6 ♘xc3 26.bxc3 ♘ac8

27.♗xc8 ♘xc8 28.♗b3 White can continue to press for a win without taking any risks.

17...♗h8 18.exd6 ♗xd6 19.♗f2 e5 20.g4 ♗b4

21.♗b3 f5 22.gxf5 ♘xf5 23.♗e4 ♐h4

Black emerged with some initiative in Tissir – Inarkiev, Catalan Bay 2004.

11.♗ad1 ♐f6

As usual, 11...♗f8? is possible.

12.♗d3

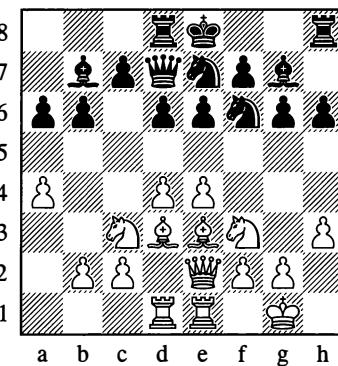
This is a logical moment for 12.d5?, as blocking the centre would leave the b7-bishop and f6-knight misplaced. It follows that Black should choose 12...exd5! (12...e5?

13.♗h2 ♐d7 14.f4 is promising for White)

13.exd5 ♐f5 14.♗d4 ♐xd4 15.♗xd4 0–0

with equality.

12...♗d7 13.♗fe1 ♘d8 14.♗e2



14...♗c8?!

Today I would prefer 14...0–0!? intending 15.♗xa6 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♐xe4 when White has the bishop pair, but Black has the denser pawn structure.

15.♗d2

It is easy to be criticize White for the loss of time, but this move illustrates how difficult it can be to find a good plan.

15...♗a8?!

I was trying to confuse my opponent, and I may have had an exaggerated idea of the strength of the queen on a8.

My engine advocates 15...c5 16.d5 exd5 17.exd5 ♜fxd5 18.♕xd5 ♜xd5 19.♗f4 ♜xf3 20.gxf3 c4 21.♗f1 d5, but this seems quite dangerous for Black after 22.b3!?.

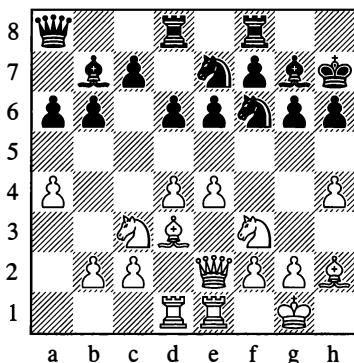
16.♗f4

16.d5! exd5 (16...e5 is not a move that fits with the queen's position) 17.exd5 ♜fxd5 18.♗d4 offers White compensation for the pawn.

16...♜d7 17.♗f1 ♜f8 18.♗d3 ♜g8 19.h4 ♜f6

20.♗h2 ♜h7 21.♗e2 ♜hf8

Finally the artificial castling has been achieved.



22.♗b1! ♜g8 23.c3 c5 24.♗c2 cxd4 25.♗xd4

My opponent probably did not want to leave an outpost on b4 after 25.cxd4 ♜c6, but this hardly seems like a serious problem after 26.♗c3.

25...e5 26.♗f3 ♜fe8

Black had a comfortable position in Steil-Antoni – Hillarp Persson, Reykjavik 2010.

11...♝f6?!

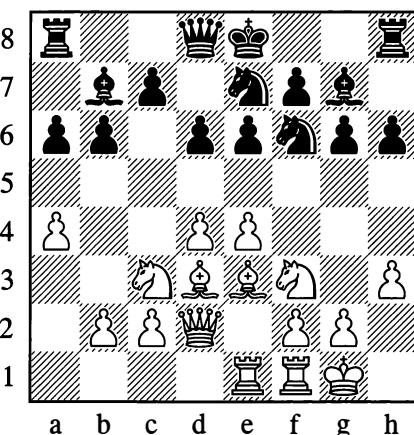
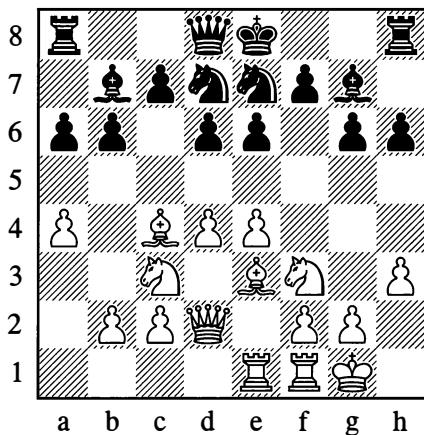
This gives White the chance to close the centre, achieving a position similar to Drei – Gofshtein, but with a few extra tempos. I normally wait with ...♝f6, either until I have played ...g5 and ...♝g6 so that the ...♝h5-f4 manoeuvre is in the air, or until White has committed some positional crime and I no longer have to watch out for d4-d5.

I would prefer 11...g5!? intending to meet 12.d5!? with: 12...e5 (12...♝xc3!? 13.♗xc3 e5 can sometimes be considered, but here it is probably a bit too ambitious.) 13.♗h2 f5 (13...♝g6? is complete rubbish here; Black must achieve ...f5 before White gets control of the light squares.) 14.exf5 ♜xf5 15.♗d3 0–0 With unclear play.

A totally different approach is 11...c6!?, intending to post the queen on c7 before deciding which pawn to push to the fifth rank.

12.♗d3?!

White defends the e-pawn, but misses the perfect time to play 12.d5! when, after 12...e5, the knight on f6 obstructs Black's counterplay with ...f5, leading to the eventual loss of two tempos. An important point is that 12...exd5!? would be even worse due to 13.♗xd5! ♜xe4 14.♗d3 ♜xd5 15.♗xd5 ♜xd5 16.♗xe4† ♜e7 17.♗d4 when White has a strong attack.



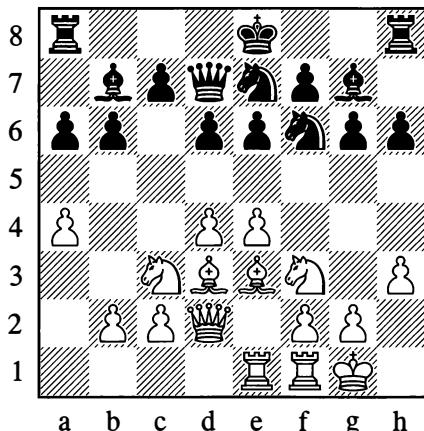
**12... $\mathbb{W}d7$** 

Black continues to improve his position.

Black should stay away from 12...d5?!, when 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  (13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14. $\mathbb{W}d1$  c5 15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  is fine for Black) 13...dxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is advantageous for White.

Usually ...d5 works best in one of two situations. One scenario occurs when White plays e4-e5 and Black chooses to block the centre. Ideally, this should be done at a moment when White will not be able to answer ...c5 with c2-c3. The other occurs when there is a bishop on c4, especially when White has no alternative but to play exd5, when Black replies ...exd5 followed by a quick ...c5. There are other scenarios when it can be considered, but Black should always think twice before sending the d-pawn on a fifth-rank mission.

12...g5?! is another idea. In *Tiger's Modern* I gave 13.e5?! as better for White, but after 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  the evaluation is not so clear. Instead 13.d5 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15.a5 b5 16.c4 is objectively a little better for White, but the position is quite chaotic, making it a reasonable outcome if one is playing for a win with the black pieces.

**13.b4**

I cannot see how this move improves White's

position. However, the obvious developing moves have already been made, so it is time to think about some kind of action.

After 13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! 17.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  Black is doing splendidly.

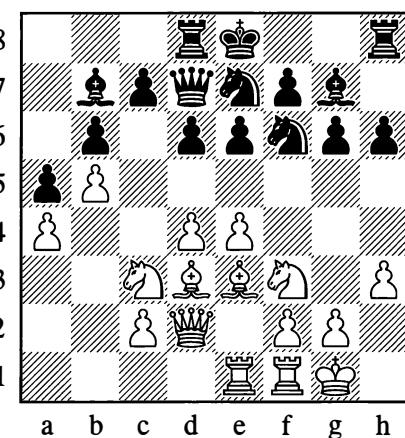
**13... $\mathbb{E}d8?$** 

Black tries to avoid ...g5 and plays a 'natural' move, possibly intending ... $\mathbb{W}c8-a8$  putting pressure on the e-pawn. The downside of this plan is that d4-d5 becomes more of a threat than before.

Both 13...d5?! and 13...g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  seem like better options. The black rook should stay where it is, anticipating the opening of the a-file.

**14.b5 a5**

It would have been possible to play 14...axb5 with the rook still on a8, but now it is inadvisable because 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  c6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , intending  $\mathbb{E}b1$  and d4-d5, gives White a strong initiative.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$** 

Black has no counterplay on the queenside, so White can do more or less as he likes on the kingside.

**15... $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $f3$** 

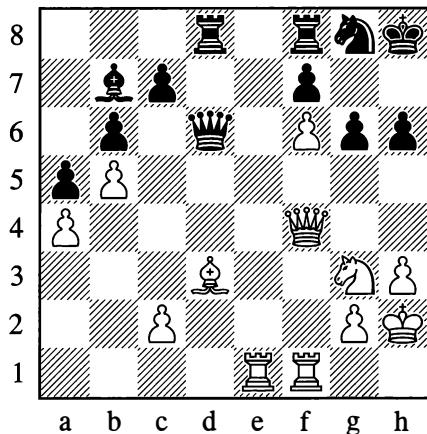
Why put on the silk gloves? After 16. $f4!$  0–0 17. $f5$  the f-pawn is acting as the first nail in Black's coffin.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2??!$** 

White keeps a clear advantage after this move, but 17. $g4!$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $h5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $h4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  was even better.

**17... $e5$  18. $f4??$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xf4$  0–0 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  24. $e5$   $dxe5$  25. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  27. $exf6$   $\mathbb{W}d6$**

Black has some counterplay against the  $f6$ -pawn, but White should be close to winning somehow.

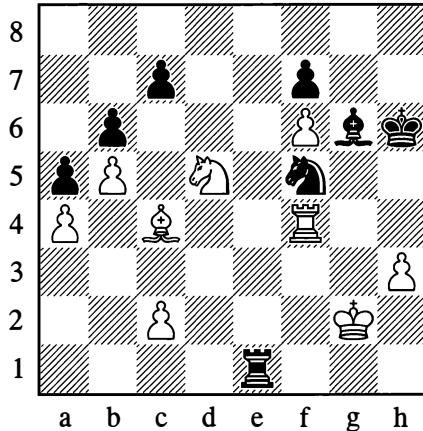


**28. $\mathbb{R}e5$   $\mathbb{R}de8$  29. $\mathbb{R}xe8$   $\mathbb{R}xe8$  30. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{R}f8$  32. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $g5$  33. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  34. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  36. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{R}c5$  37. $g4$   $h5$  38. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  39. $gxh5$**

Missing 39. $\mathbb{R}e2!$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  40. $h4!$   $gxh4\uparrow$  41. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  42. $g5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  43. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , when White is in complete control and should win easily.

**39... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  40. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  41. $\mathbb{R}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  42. $\mathbb{R}xg5$   $\mathbb{R}d8$  43. $\mathbb{R}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  44. $\mathbb{R}f4$   $\mathbb{R}e8$  45. $\mathbb{R}c4$   $\mathbb{R}e1$  46. $\mathbb{Q}g2?$**

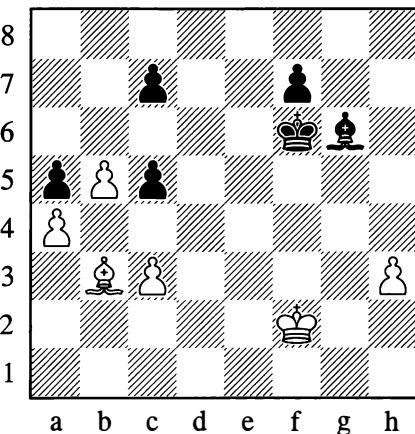
46. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  would have kept some advantage for White. The rest of the game is rather strange.

**46... $\mathbb{Q}e3\uparrow$  47. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  48. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$** 

Not 48. $\mathbb{R}h4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  49. $\mathbb{R}g4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  50. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  51. $\mathbb{R}xg6\uparrow$   $fxg6$  52. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  when it is Black who is winning.

**48... $\mathbb{R}e5$  49. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  50. $\mathbb{R}c4$   $\mathbb{R}c5$  51. $\mathbb{R}xc5\uparrow$   $bxc5$  52. $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$**

By now only Black can try to win this endgame. White will have to keep a constant eye on the  $a4$ -pawn, and Black has slightly the more active monarch. Still, the game should end in a draw.

**53. $h4?$** 

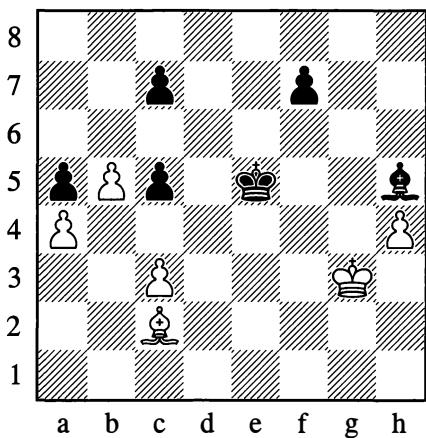
53. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$  was necessary to stop ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . Now White can answer 53... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with 54. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , and 53... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with 54. $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$ . I do not see how Black can make progress here.

**53... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  54. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  55. $\mathbb{Q}c2\#?$** 

Now it turns from bad to worse. The only chance was 55.. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Black can try 55... $\mathbb{Q}d1$  56. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ , when 57. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$   $\mathbb{Q}d1$  58. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $a4$  59. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  60. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  61. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $axb3$  62. $c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  63. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  64. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  leads to a win. But better is 57. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  58. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  when White should be able to draw.

**55... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$** 

White is in zugzwang: he will have to either let go of the  $a4$ -pawn, or allow Black's king to advance to  $e3$  or  $g4$ .

**56. $\mathbb{Q}b3$** 

Black also wins after 56. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , or 56. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  57. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $f5$  58. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , when White cannot stop ... $\mathbb{Q}g4xh4$ .

**56... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  57. $\mathbb{Q}c2\#?$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  58. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  59. $\mathbb{Q}c2\#?$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$** 

Here the monarch is ideally placed to support the  $f$ -pawn (if it can reach  $f4$ ). At the same time, ... $c4$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d2xc3$  is a horrible threat.

**60. $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}d1$  61. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $c4$  62. $\mathbb{Q}e8$   $f5$  63. $h5$   $f4\#$  64. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $f3$  65. $h6$   $f2$  66. $h7$   $f1=\mathbb{W}$  67. $h8=\mathbb{W}$   $f4\#$** 

Both 68. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$  69. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}f2\#$  and

68. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$  69. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$  70. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}f2\#$  lead to mate on the next move, so White resigned.

**0-1**

12. $d5!$  would have given White the better chances in this game, but only because 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6\#?$  was a mistake. 11... $g5$  should be fine for Black. It is also possible to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , but I would rather not resort to this so early in the game.

In the next game White prepares to push his  $e$ -pawn instead of the  $d$ -pawn, but he never finds a good moment to play it.

**GAME 48****Stellan Brynell – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Sweden 1997

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a6 5.a4 b6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$** 

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  Black can play flexibly with 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , before deciding whether to play ... $e6$  entering the Hippo, or ... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ , ... $0-0$  and ... $e5$ , when the game may start to take on the character of a Ruy Lopez.

**6... $e6$  7.0-0**

White can also combine the  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  plan with an advance of the  $h$ -pawn:

7. $h4$   $h6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

A common continuation is:

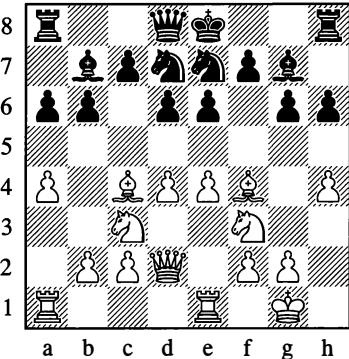
8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Here Black has a number of possible plans, as illustrated in the examples below.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$** 

11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (Black can also play 11... $\mathbb{W}b8$  as in the main line below.) 12. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $d5\#?$  Black is hoping that the insertion of  $h2-h4$  will make this otherwise premature operation viable. (I would prefer any of 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ , 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or 12... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ .) 13. $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $h5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6\#?$

(17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18.c4 a5 would have kept Black's disadvantage to a minimum.) 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  19.c4 Black was clearly worse in Korobov – Bezold, Chalkidiki 2002.



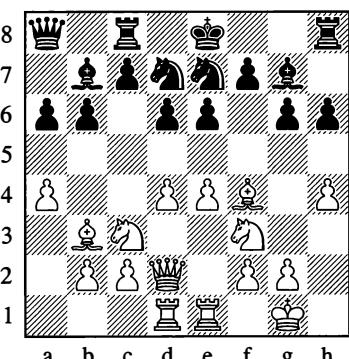
11... $\mathbb{W}b8!$

A beautiful move, intending ... $\mathbb{W}a7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ -somewhere, and then ... $\mathbb{W}a8$ , slightly improving Black's position. Observe that this plan would be much too slow if White had not weakened the kingside with h2-h4, since the d4-d5 plan would be strong for White. Now if White tries d4-d5, the reply ...e5 reaches a position where the pawn on h4 becomes a huge liability for White. Another idea is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , when 12.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  should be okay for Black, but 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  keeps a certain advantage for White.

12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a1$

This can hardly be critical, but White has taken the path of natural development and now finds himself facing a jungle of possibilities, none of which are especially tempting.

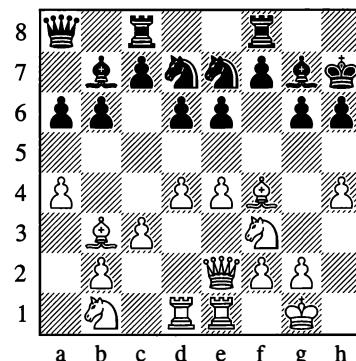
13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



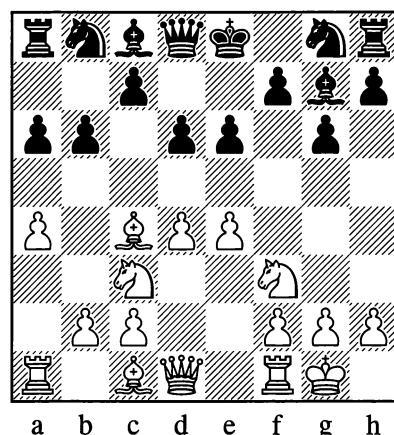
15... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

Black chooses the perfect moment to start walking the king to h7. White cannot arrange  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , h4-h5 and e4-e5 without losing a lot of time, which would give Black the chance to nip this plan in the bud with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

16. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  18.c3  $\mathbb{Q}hf8$



Black was doing well and eventually won in Blauert – Lau, Bad Neuenahr 1989. I really like the manoeuvres used by Black in this game.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

This move generally signals that White is less interested in the d4-d5 idea, but more leaning towards e4-e5.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9. $\mathbb{W}d2$

After 9.e5 Black should avoid 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when 10.d5! is promising for White. Instead

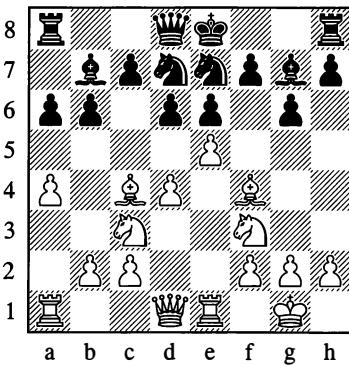
9...dxe5! 10.♕xe5 ♜b7 is about equal.

9.♖e1

This is a logical way of supporting e4-e5, but Black has a good way to meet it.

9...♜b7 10.e5

White can play more slowly, but the direct approach is the critical one for us to consider.



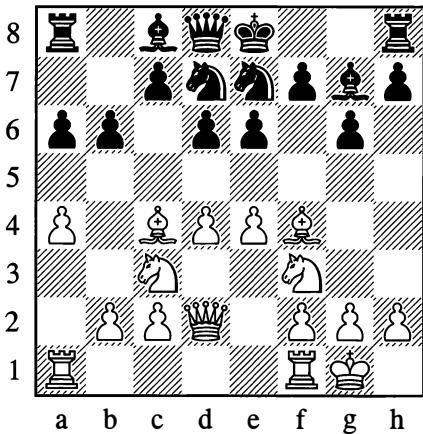
10...♝xf3?!

White is slightly better after 10...d5 11.♗f1 c5 12.♘e2.

However, 10...dxe5 11.♕xe5 (11.dxe5 h6! intending ...g6-g5 and ...♝g6 is nice for Black) 11...♝xe5 12.♗xe5 ♜xe5 13.dxe5 ♜xd1 14.♖ad1 ♜d8 is about equal.

11.♗xf3 d5 12.♗f1 c5 13.♗e2 ♜c6 14.c3

Black can be happy with this position that resembles a French where the light-squared bishop has been exchanged. It would be clearly to White's advantage if Black was left with a passive bishop on b7.



9...h6 10.♗ad1

It is not clear what the function of this move is, so it seems more logical to play 10.h3 before deciding what to do with the rooks. Black replies 10...♜b7, and now 10.♗ad1 transposes to the game, having avoided the improvement given on Black's next turn, while 11.♗fe1 leads to line 'a' in the note below.

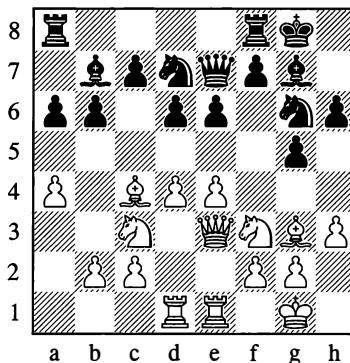
Another normal-looking continuation is 10.♗fe1 ♜b7, when both a) 11.h3 and b) 11.♗b3 have given rise to some interesting games:

a) 11.h3 g5 12.♗g3

12.♗h2 leads to similar play, but it avoids exposing the bishop to a future ...♝f6-h5.

12...♝g6 13.♗ad1 0-0 14.♗e3 ♜e7

White has more space and harmonious development, but Black is flexible and I believe he is no worse. If you doubt this, then try and come up with a good plan for White.



15.♗e2 ♜f6

Other ideas are 15...♝h8 intending ...♜ae8 and ...f5, or 15...♝c6 intending ...b5.

16.♗d3 e5!? 17.♗h2 ♜h5 18.♗g3 ♜xg3 19.fxg3 c5??

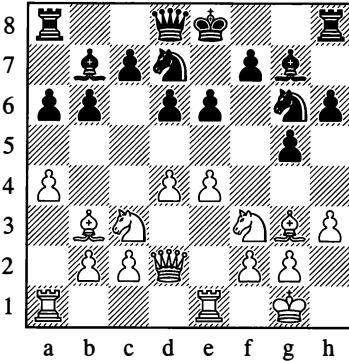
This is absolutely incomprehensible.

After 19...g4! 20.hxg4 exd4 21.♗xd4 ♜g5! White's position is sad to behold.

20.dxc5 dxc5 21.♗c4 ♜ad8 22.♗e2 a5 23.♗d2

It is a miracle that Black survived in Manca  
– Chatalbashev, Padova 2000.

b) 11.♗b3 g5 12.♗g3 ♗g6 13.h3



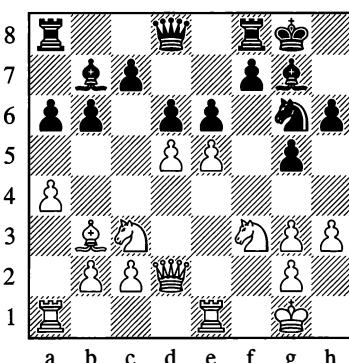
13...♗f6?!

This leads to unclear complications.

A safer option was 13...0–0! with a balanced game.

14.e5 ♗h5 15.d5?! ♗xg3 16.fxg3 0–0?

After 16...♗xe5! 17.♗xe5 dxе5 18.♗ad1 exd5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd5 c6 21.♗b4 ♗xd2 22.♗xd2 c5 23.♗c6 0–0 Black is no worse.

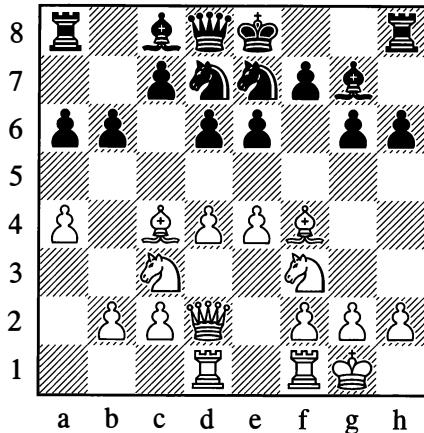


17.dxe6 ♗xf3 18.exd6 cxd6??

Black blunders instead of playing 18...♗c6 19.e7 ♗xe7 20.♗xe7 ♗xd6 with a slightly worse position.

19.exf7† ♗h8 20.gxf3 ♗e5 21.♗g2

Black's position was almost resignable in Kleinplatz – Barlov, Cannes 1996.



10...♗b7?!

I was operating under the mistaken idea that I should not play ...g5 until my opponent had 'weakened' his kingside with h2-h3, but this pawn move is actually an improvement for White.

This would have been the perfect time for:

10...g5! 11.♗g3

11.♗e3 is also possible, when 11...0–0?

12.h4! g4 13.♗h2 h5 14.♗g5 is exactly the kind of position that Black should try to avoid, as White will open up the kingside with f2-f3 at some moment, and Black will not be able to defend. Instead 11...♗f6? 12.d5 e5 intending ...♗h5 and ...f5 is fine for Black, and 11...c6? intending ...b5 is also interesting.

11...♗g6! 12.♗e1

12.h3 can be met by 12...0–0! intending ...♗f6-h5, and if 13.d5 ♗de5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗b3 ♗g6 16.♗h2 e5 Black is doing fine.

12...♗b7!

By delaying castling, Black renders f2-f4 less appetizing for White for the time being. The most important thing to contemplate before playing ...g5 is whether White can achieve an advantage with a quick h2-h4. If he cannot, then Black should be all right.

11.h3 g5

It is also possible to play: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12. $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5?$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g5 followed by 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  looks nice for Black.) 13...g5 (After 13...0–0? 14. $\mathbb{W}e2!$  Black cannot stop e4–e5, which is no good at all when the knight is on h5.) 14.g4? If Black was allowed to follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  then he would be fine. 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.d5 e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ ! dxе5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  Now Black can get the upper hand with 17... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19.d6  $\mathbb{Q}de5!$  when White is running out of good moves.

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ 0–0

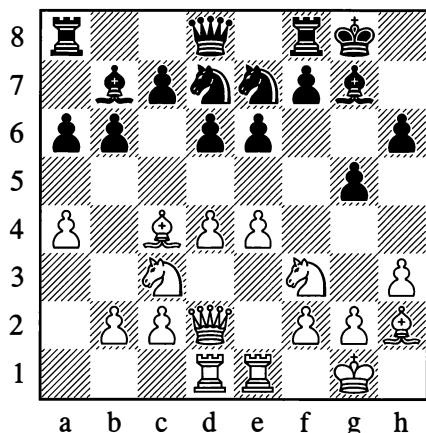
I usually castle when I see no way for White to punish me for it. The following alternatives are all found wanting in one respect: a castling deficit.

12...f5? 13.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14.gxf3 exf5 15. $\mathbb{B}fe1$  is horrible for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ ! 13. $\mathbb{B}fe1$  g4 What else? 14.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16.e5 dxе5 17. $\mathbb{W}e2!$  and we are still on the subject of horrible.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13. $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  (13...0–0 leads to the main game.) 14.e5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15.d5 is beyond bad for Black.

### 13. $\mathbb{B}fe1$



### 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

White dominates most of the board, and you would not have to ask a chess classicist twice which side he or she would prefer. Still, to turn this domination into something less abstract, White has to cross the fifth rank; somehow, somewhere. In this position d4–d5 can be met by ...e5, e4–e5 by ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , and h3–h4 by ...g4 when White loses the h-pawn. Stellan improves his position slowly, by first preparing e4–e5.

### 14. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b8?$

There are times when I do not understand myself. With this move I step away from the d-file and prepare to meet 15.e5 with 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ .

However, a far more natural way of doing it is 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$ , when one game continued: 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (This isn't very scary, but 15.e5 dxе5 16.d5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is at least equal for Black.) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (I also like 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{B}ae8$  with the idea of ... $\mathbb{W}d8$  and ...f5.) 16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{W}a3$  dxе5 18. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}dxe7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  Solomon – Benjamin, Sydney 1999. Considering the weak pawn on e5, the endgame was somewhat more comfortable for Black.

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

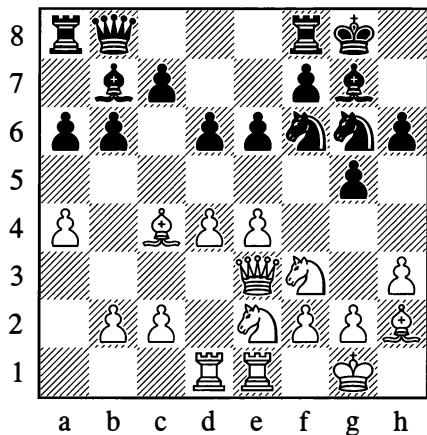
This knight is heading for h5, where it may cause considerable damage.

From a prophylactic point of view it seems better to play 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , stopping Black from hitting the bishop with ...d5. If White instead plays 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  it will be easier for Black to arrange ...d5 followed by ...c5, as the d5-square is no longer under attack.

### 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This is a bit of a nervous reaction to the  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ -h5 idea.

It would have been more in the spirit of the Modern to play 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , when 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  17.e5 d5 18.h4 g4 is unclear. However, in this position I would wish that the queen was still on d8.



### 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ??

Maybe I am too harsh when I criticize this move, but it seems to be more passive than is necessary.

It was more critical to play 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! (but not 16...c5?! 17.c3 when all Black has accomplished is to weaken the d-pawn) 17.b3 b5 and Black has enough counterplay.

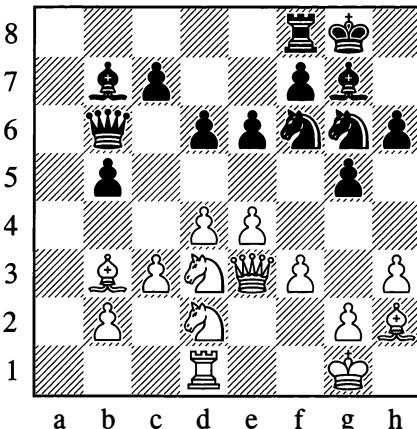
### 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ?

This is quite stupid, missing a typical Modern trick: 16...d5! This is exactly the kind of situation when this move is at its most effective. White has moved the knights away from their active positions in the centre and my development is completely finished. 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  dxе4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5! 20. $\mathbb{Q}4c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  White is in deep trouble on the a8-h1 diagonal. A possible continuation is 21.f3 f4 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  when Black has a strong initiative.

### 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ??

In the rest of this game I had no plan and was totally crushed. Stellan had a fantastic score against me at the time, and his mysterious strategy somehow hypnotized me, so that I missed the main threat, 24.f4.

18.f3 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a1$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$



24.f4  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b4 26.c4 gxе4 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  28. $\mathbb{Q}h5$  f5 29.c5 dxс5 30.dxс5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  31.exf5 exf5 32. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  35. $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  36. $\mathbb{W}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  37. $\mathbb{W}xd7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  38. $\mathbb{W}e6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  39. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  40. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  c6 41. $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  42. $\mathbb{W}xh6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  43. $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  44. $\mathbb{W}xf5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  45. $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  46. $\mathbb{W}xc6$

Here I came to my senses.

### 1–0

Stellan's 10. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  is not the most logical move for White, but the alternatives 10.h3 and 10. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  also seem fine for Black. It is worth noting that it might be best to play ...g5 before White has played h2-h3, if you get the chance.

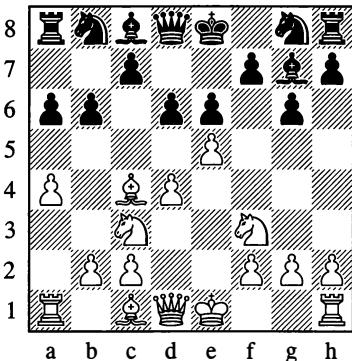
In the next game White chooses an aggressive set-up with  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and e4-e5, but Black obtains an excellent position by playing ...d5 and ...c5.

**GAME 49****Jennifer Shahade – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Reykjavik 2002

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗f3 a6 5.a4  
6.♗c4 e6 7.♕e2**

7.e5?! is an interesting alternative, when it is worth discussing two ideas for Black:



a) ...d5? is the kind of move I am horrified to see. I would only play like this if I won more than one tempo in the process. 8.♘a2 ♜e7 (8...c5 is preferable, although 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.♗exd4 ♜e7 11.0–0 h6 still leaves White slightly better.) 9.♗e2 c5 10.c3 ♜bc6 11.h4 h6 12.♗b1 a5 13.0–0 ♜a6 14.♗e1 ♜c8 15.♗f4 ♜c7 16.♗a3! White had a clear advantage in Nisipeanu – Nevednichy, Bucharest 1998.

b) I prefer the flexible 7...♗e7! 8.♗f4 ♜b7 9.0–0 (Black is better after 9.d5?! exd5 10.♗xd5 dxе5 11.♗h6 0–0!) 9...0–0. Now after the logical 10.♗e1 Black can get a good game with either 10...dxe5 if he wishes to simplify the centre, or 10...♗xf3 followed by ...d5 if he wishes to keep things more complicated.

**7...♗e7 8.e5**

This is the main idea behind 7.♕e2, but Black has more than one good reply. Considering

the game continuation, one might wonder if White should play 8.♗b3 before advancing the e-pawn. In that case Black can play 8...♗b7 intending to meet e4–e5 with ...♗d7, keeping the thematic ...♗xf3 as an option.

We should also consider:

8.h4!?

This move is just one small step in a master plan to control the entire board. It is ambitious and Caesar-like, in the best and worst sense you can think of.

8...h6 9.♗f4 ♜d7 10.0–0–0?!

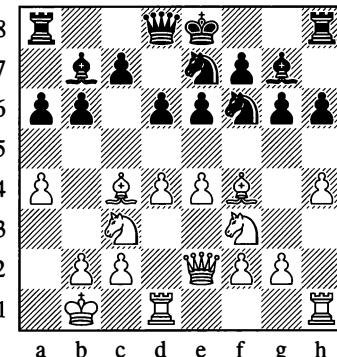
Combining a2–a4 with long castling seems highly suspect, and is not something I can recommend for White.

Better is 10.0–0, which is similar to the Blauert – Lau game, as given in the note to move 7 of Brynell – Hillarp Persson.

10...♗b7 11.♗b1 ♗f6?!

11...0–0?! allows White to seize the initiative with 12.♗d2! ♜h7 13.♗d3 intending h4–h5.

But why not play the obvious pawn sacrifice? 11...b5?! 12.axb5 axb5 13.♗xb5 0–0 Black has the makings of a fantastic initiative on the queenside, and White is clearly in for a wild ride.



12.d5

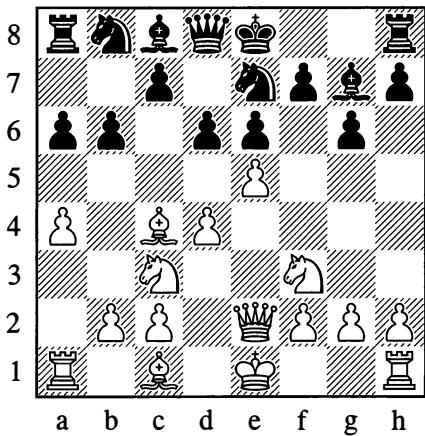
After 12.♗a2 b5 13.axb5 axb5 14.e5 ♜h5 15.♗h2 0–0 16.♗xb5 ♜a5! we get another rich position where Black has nothing to complain about.

12...exd5!

This is the clearest equalizer, although 12...e5?! is not a bad alternative, for instance 13.♕e3 0–0 14.♗d2 ♖d7 followed by ...♗g4, ...♖fb8 and ...c6 with serious counterplay.

13.♗xd5 ♗exd5 14.exd5† ♖e7?!

The chances were balanced in Lastin – Privakov, Margantes 1999.



8...d5?!

Usually I prefer to wait with this move until after I have played ...♗b7xf3, but here I decided to go for ...d5 and ...c5 immediately. Didn't I say earlier that I was horrified to see such a move? Yes, but here the inclusion of the moves ♖e2 and ...♗e7 changes the situation considerably. It is not just that Black has made a useful developing move. More significant is that White's queen has moved away from protecting the d4-pawn, while also blocking the c3-knight from dropping back to the desirable e2-square. Taking all this into account, I did not see how White could protect her centre.

Having said that, there is nothing wrong with the standard continuation:

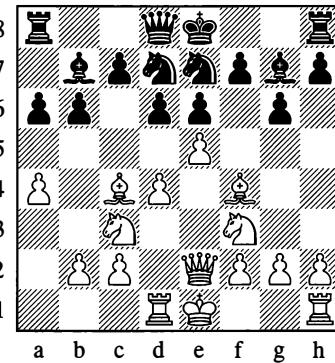
8...♗d7 9.♗f4

After 9.exd6 cxd6 10.♗e4 ♗f6 11.♗xf6† ♖xf6 Black has a flexible position and is doing fine.

9.♕xe6 fxe6 10.♗g5 ♗xe5 11.dxe5 d5! is similar to the Makarov – Shchekachev game, as referenced on page 254 in the note to move 7 in Drei – Gofshtein. Crucially, White has lost time with his queen here, and after 12.♗f3 he is a full tempo down. Black continues 12...♗f5 13.g4 ♗h6! followed by ...♗e7 and ...♗f7, with the better position.

9...♗b7 10.♗d1

10.exd6 cxd6 11.♗xd6?! ♗f5 12.♗a3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♗xd4 14.♗d1 ♗e5 15.♗d3 ♗c7 followed by ...f5 and ...♗f7 is promising for Black.



10...♗xf3

10...d5?! is also possible, by analogy with the main game.

11.gxf3 d5 12.♗xa6 0–0

Followed by ...c5, with excellent compensation for Black.

Overall I would say 8...♗d7 is more in the spirit of the Hippo, but the game continuation works well in this specific situation.

9.♗a2?!

I imagined Jennifer was planning to develop her pieces to the most active squares and then sacrifice her way through my centre by means of ♗ad1 and ♗xd5 or ♗xd5. Another good reason for withdrawing the bishop to a2 is that it will not get in the way of the other pieces.

**9...c5!**

It is vital to undermine the centre before White is allowed to move the c3-knight away and meet ...c5 with c2-c3. If that were to happen I would be clearly worse.

**10.♗g5?!**

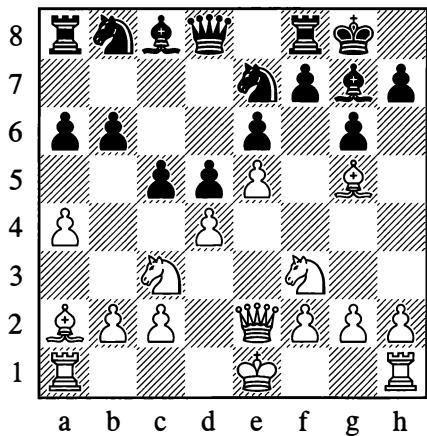
After this move the e-pawn becomes weak.

Also bad is 10.♕f4?! ♜bc6 11.♗d2 ♜xd4 12.♗xd4 cxd4 13.♘e2 ♜c7 when White is losing a pawn.

10.♘d1 is best, and after 10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♜bc6 12.♘xc6 ♜xc6 13.f4 Black is only slightly better.

**10...0–0**

Even when the position is closed, one should be mindful not to fall too far behind in development. Take for instance 10...h6?! 11.♕f6! ♜xf6? 12.exf6 ♜ec6 13.♘xd5 when Black can resign.

**11.♘d1?!**

White strengthens her centre and prepares dxc5 and ♘e4, with some initiative on the dark squares.

The ‘normal’ 11.0–0 runs into 11...h6 12.♗f4 ♜d7 when White’s centre is about to dissolve.

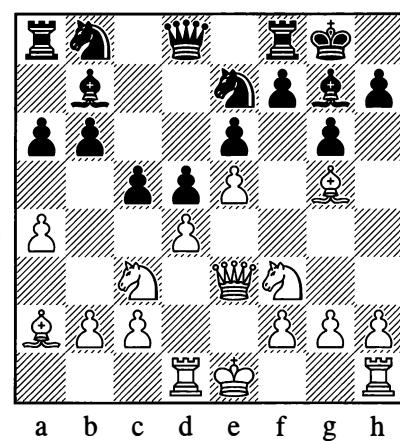
In the game she is ready to meet ...cxd4 with ♜xd4.

**11...♝b7**

Even better is 11...h6?!, which gives Black the advantage however White responds, for instance: 12.♗f4 ♜d7, or 12.♗xe7 ♜xe7, or 12.♗f6 ♜xf6 13.exf6 ♜f5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♘xd5 exd5 16.♗xd5 ♜a5†.

**12.♗e3**

12.♗d2 avoids the small trick seen in the game, but does not solve White’s other problems: 12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 (After 13.♗e2 ♜c7 14.♗exd4 ♜ec6 Black wins the e5-pawn.) 13...♗d7 14.0–0 h6 Now White is forced to give up a key bishop with 15.♗xe7. The resulting position is clearly better for Black, who can attack the e5-pawn and make good use of the c-file.

**12...h6! 13.♗f6?!**

Jennifer senses that things are going in the wrong direction and tries to pull us into muddy waters.

After 13.♗xe7 ♜xe7 14.♗e2 cxd4 15.♗fxd4 ♜b4† 16.♗c3 ♜c6 I would have a clear advantage without having to take any risks.

**13...♜xf6 14.exf6 ♜f5 15.♗f4 ♜xf6**

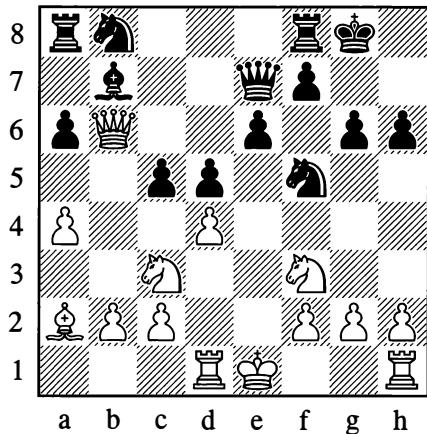
My Binary Helper insists on 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  being the better move.

### 16. $\mathbb{W}c7!$

The best try, although White is still in trouble.

On 16.g4 I was intending 16...g5 17. $\mathbb{W}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (the engine points out that 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ , intending 18. $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  19. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , is winning for Black) 18. $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  19. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  20.h4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and Black wins with little effort.

### 16... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb6$



### 17...c4!

I now threaten ... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ , ...a5 and ... $\mathbb{E}a6$ , trapping the queen, which forces White to take extraordinary measures.

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}cxd4$  19. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$  20.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  Black is also clearly better.

### 18.b3 cxb3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb3?$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  had to be played, though 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20.g4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  21.0–0  $\mathbb{E}fc8$  is quite awful for White.

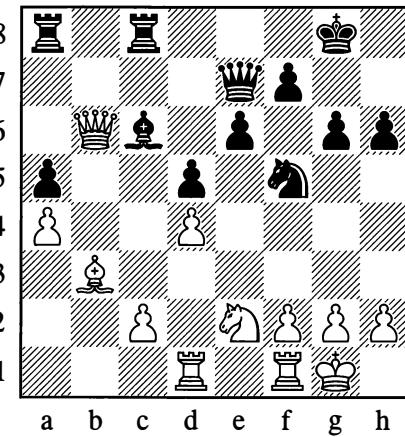
### 19... $\mathbb{E}c8$

Now Black is winning, as the white queen is stranded far from home.

### 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a5

Threatening ... $\mathbb{E}a6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

### 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 23.0–0



### 23... $\mathbb{E}e8!$

White has no defence against ... $\mathbb{E}c6$ . The rest of the game plays itself.

24. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}c6$  25. $\mathbb{W}b5$   $\mathbb{E}xc2$  26. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{E}b2$   
27. $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  28. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{E}xc2$  29. $\mathbb{W}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   
30. $\mathbb{W}c7$   $\mathbb{E}xd1$  31. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  32. $\mathbb{W}c1$  a4  
0–1

In the next game White prepares e4-e5 until he runs out of preparations, reaching Heaven. When the long-awaited advance of the e-pawn finally occurs, Black does not react in the best way.

## GAME 50

Christian Gabriel – Klaus Bischoff

Altensteig 1994

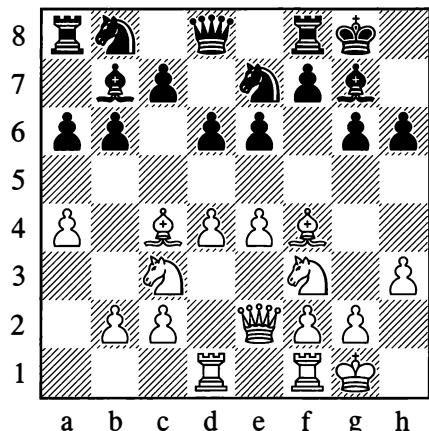
1.d4 g6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a6 5.a4 b6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 7.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8. $\mathbb{W}e2$  h6 9.h3 0–0

## 10.♗f4

White is ready to meet ...g5 with ♘h2.

## 10...♝b7 11.♝ad1

In *ChessBase Magazine* Stohl judges White to be slightly better here. So far I agree.



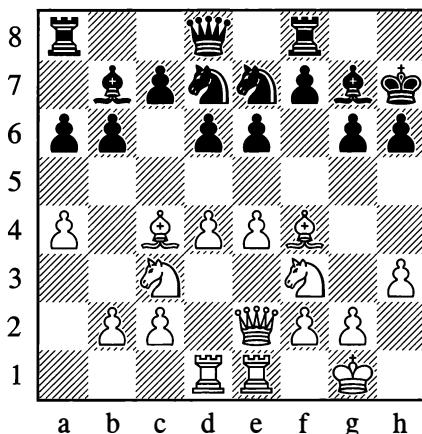
## 11...♝d7

According to Stohl, 11...d5 12.♝d3 is slightly better for White. I would intuitively agree with this, and would be tempted to shout “No, no, no!” upon seeing someone reach for the black d-pawn, as I believe these positions should be played with a certain amount of patience. However, when I had a deeper look at the position, taking into account that White had played a less than optimal move in ♘ad1, and that the bishop had been kicked with tempo, I decided there might be some logic to Black’s play. The engine actually evaluates the position as almost equal after the counterintuitive 12...♝bc6!? intending ...♝b4 and ...c5. For instance: 13.exd5 exd5 14.♝de1 ♕e8 15.♝d2 ♜xd4! 16.♝xd4 ♜xd4 17.♝xh6 c5 18.h4 ♘h8 19.h5 c4 with huge complications. The early ...d5 followed immediately by ...♝bc6 goes against everything I thought I knew about the Hippo, but it is a pleasure to discover yet another manoeuvre to add to one’s arsenal.

## 12.♝fe1 ♘h7

After this move it is seldom a good idea to play ...g6-g5, as – among other things – the sacrifice ♘xg5 will be dangerous.

I see no reason to disclose my intentions so easily, and would thus prefer the more flexible 12...♝f6 13.♝d3 ♜d7.



## 13.♝g3!?

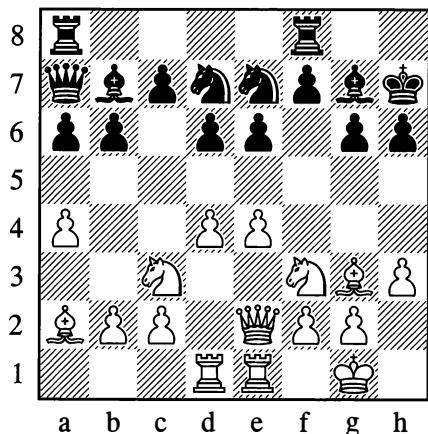
White prepares to play e4-e5, but it seems more important to move the c4-bishop. That way, if e4-e5 is met by ...d5 (with or without an exchange on f3), White will be able to move his knight away from c3, planning to answer ...c5 with c2-c3.

## 13...♛b8!?

Stohl does not approve of this move, instead proposing 13...♝f6 with ideas of ...♝xe4, ...d5 and ...♜d7. I do not see anything wrong with Bischoff’s choice though; his eventual demise is caused by errors that occur much later.

## 14.♝a2 ♜a7

If Black is allowed to play ...♝ad8 and ...♜a8, then White will hardly be able to change the nature of the position without making it worse. His pieces have reached Heaven and nothing is happening.

**15.e5**

The critical test of Black's queen manoeuvre is 15.d5!?, but both 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16.bxc3 e5 and 15...exd5 16.exd5  $\mathbb{E}ae8$  seem fine for Black.

When you embark on the ... $\mathbb{W}b8-a7-a8$  plan, it is vital to ask yourself if White will be able to play d4-d5 under favourable circumstances. For Black's queen manoeuvre to be viable, the position must generally meet one of the following two conditions. One is that White has advanced his pawn to h4. This makes it possible to answer d4-d5 with ...e5 followed by ...f5, when White will regret the weaknesses created by the h4-pawn more than Black will regret the strange position of the queen. The other condition is that Black has castled. This makes it possible to answer d4-d5 with ...exd5.

**15...d5!?**

This is very risky indeed.

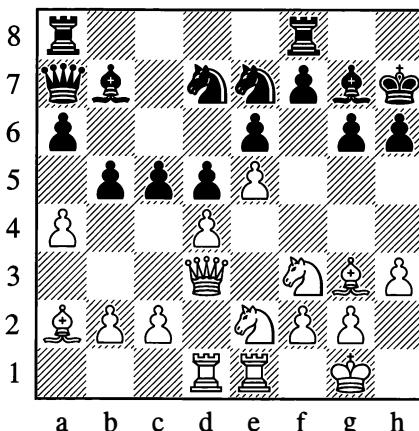
It is much safer to exchange a would-be-passive piece while diminishing White's attacking potential with: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  d5 (there is also 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !? intending ...c5, with a chaotic but promising position for Black) 17.h4! c5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 19.h5 g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21.c3 bxa4 With mutual chances.

**16. $\mathbb{W}d3$** 

White starts reorganizing his pieces. The plan is  $\mathbb{Q}e2-f4$ , c2-c3 and  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , so Black must act fast before he is blown away on the b1-h7 diagonal.

**16...c5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5**

Stohl gives 17...cxtd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}exd4$  with a large advantage for White, but I believe 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19. $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  to be quite playable for Black.

**18.a5!?**

White is trying to slow down his opponent's counterplay, but he needs every tempo he can get for the attack.

18.c3 is better, after which 18...bxa4 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is unclear.

**18...b4 19.c3 bxc3**

There is no time for 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ? 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ , as 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c4 22. $\mathbb{W}c2$  b3 (otherwise  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  wins on the next move) 23. $\mathbb{W}d2$  reaches a position where the black bodyguards have captured an enemy but, alas, forgotten their monarch.

**20.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}ab8$ !?**

Why not use the other rook so that the g6-point can be defended with ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ? When going through Stohl's comments, one can easily get the feeling that White was better all the time and Black never had a real chance.

The game leaves me with a completely different impression.

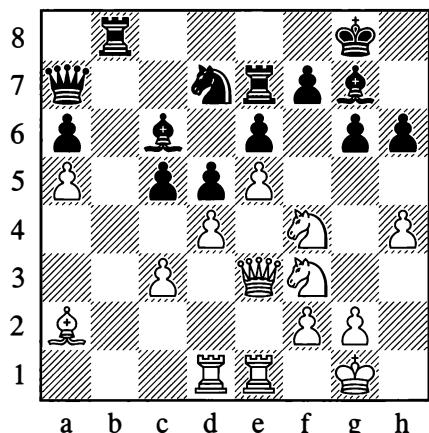
After 21... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ ! White must show his hand, but he is not holding any aces. 22. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (After 22.c4 dxc4 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 24. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  cxd4 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  Black is a pawn up and e5 is weak.) 22... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  23.g4  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  Black is rock solid on the kingside and has great prospects on the other flank.

### 22. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! $\mathbb{E}fe8$ !

Not 22... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ? 23.g4!  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  when Black can only postpone the catastrophe from striking on g6: 24... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  25. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$ , but then 26. $\mathbb{Q}hxg6$  anyway and Black's defences are shattered.

### 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 24.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e3$

Stohl evaluates this position as clearly better for White. I could not disagree more. Unless White is able to force his way through on the kingside – which I find unlikely – he is positionally almost lost.



### 25...c4?

An absolutely horrible move that Stohl fails to comment on. White has a dangerous initiative on the kingside and Black must make use of every open file and diagonal to get the attention of White's pieces. How do you best

meet a flank attack? By closing the centre? I don't think so.

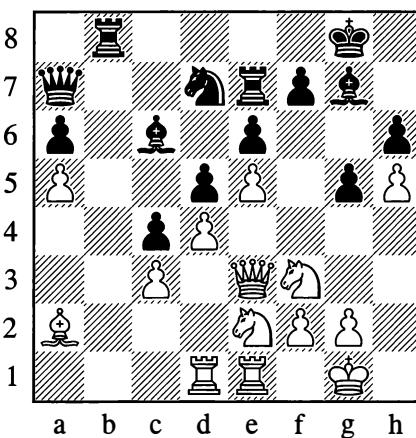
25... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ?! is a clear improvement, when 26.h5 g5 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{E}b2$  is just better for Black.

### 26.h5?!

It was more accurate for White to hide his intentions with 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , so as not to allow the defence with ... $\mathbb{E}f8$  and ...f6. For instance, after 26... $\mathbb{W}c7$  27.h5 g5 28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  White has an improved version of the game.

### 26...g5 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

If White is given time for  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  followed by either  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , or  $\mathbb{Q}h2-g4$  and f2-f4, then Black can resign. However, even after the serious error on move 25, Black still has some defensive resources.



### 27... $\mathbb{E}f8$ ! 28. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6! 29.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ??

The position would still be unclear (I actually think Black is better, but I am biting my tongue as the engines disagree with me) after 29... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  followed by ...e5. Black's kingside is a bit airy, but I see no way for White to exploit this.

### 30. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ !?

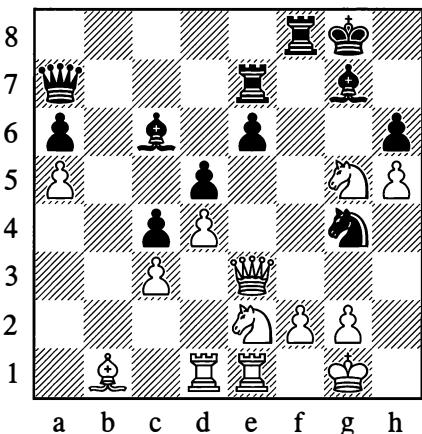
Stohl awards this move an exclamation, but also gives 30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  31.g4 with a big advantage for White. Well, that is at least a huge

exaggeration, as 31... $\mathbb{W}c7$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is absolutely fine for Black.

White does have one route to a clear advantage: 30. $\mathbb{Q}g3!$  Threatening  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . Black can try to complicate matters with 30... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  31. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2?$  32. $\mathbb{W}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ , but after 33. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  g4 34. $\mathbb{W}c2$  gxf3 35. $\mathbb{W}h7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  36. $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  37. $\mathbb{E}xe6$  White will take the whole point.

### 30... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$

Stohl gives 30...hxg5 31. $\mathbb{W}xg5$  with a clear advantage for White. However, after 31... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  (I gave 31...e5 in *Tiger's Modern*, but missed 32. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  with an advantage for White) 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 Black is looking fine again, as 33.h6! e3! 34.f3  $\mathbb{E}f5$  35. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{E}h5$  36.hxg7  $\mathbb{E}xg7$  37. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{E}h5$  is deeply problematic for White.



### 31. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 32. $\mathbb{E}f1!$ hxg5

Black probably missed that 32... $\mathbb{Q}xd1?$  33. $\mathbb{Q}h7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  34. $\mathbb{E}xf8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  35. $\mathbb{Q}f7\uparrow$  forces mate on the next move.

### 33. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{E}xf2$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xf2$

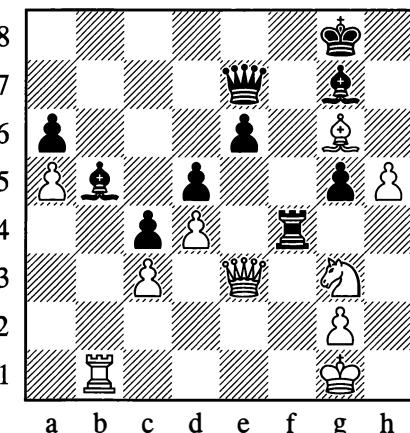
Now things look bleak for Black.

### 34... $\mathbb{E}f7$

34...e5 35. $\mathbb{W}f5$  e4 does not solve Black's problems. Stohl's 36. $\mathbb{W}xg5?!$  allows 36... $\mathbb{E}e5!$  with some resistance, but the superior 36.h6!

$\mathbb{Q}xh6$  37. $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  38. $\mathbb{W}xc6$  wins cleanly. In the game White exploits his advantage in good style.

35. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  36. $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  37. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  38. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}f4$  39. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  40. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}f4$



41. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  42. $\mathbb{E}xb5!$  axb5 43.a6 e5 44.a7  $\mathbb{W}a6$  45. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}xa7$  46. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{W}a1\uparrow$  47. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{E}h4\uparrow$  48. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}d1$  49. $\mathbb{Q}f7\uparrow$ !

Black resigned since 49... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  50. $\mathbb{Q}xg5\uparrow$ , followed by 51. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  leaves White a piece ahead.

1–0

Looking back on this game, I have the feeling that Black was slightly worse after 15...d5, even though I cannot prove it. As a general rule, I would advise playing ... $\mathbb{E}xf3$  before closing the centre with ...d5. It is only when Black can somehow afford to open up the centre that the bishop should be retained.

There are some other points to take away from this game. Closing the centre with ...c4 is unlikely to be a good idea when your opponent is ready to use all his pieces in a kingside onslaught. Finally, when White's kingside attack does get underway, the ...f6 break is an important resource which may prove an absolute necessity to avoid being smothered.

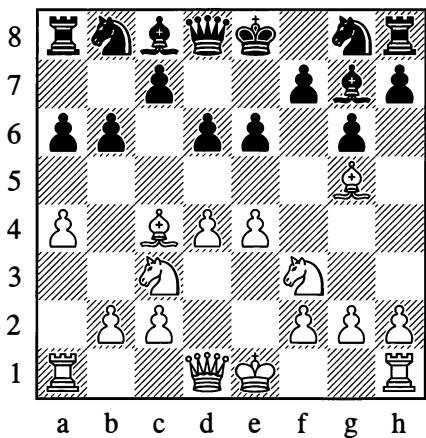
## GAME 51

Igor Yagupov – Andrei Shchekachev

Bela Crkva 1990

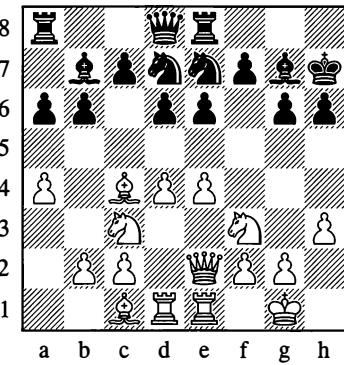
**1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♜g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c3 a6 5.a4  
b6 6.♗c4 e6 7.♗g5?!**

It is really incredible how common this move is, considering that it throws away a tempo. This will be obvious after move 8.



**7...♗e7 8.♗d2**

Other moves would give Black the opportunity to castle. A good example is the following game of mine: 8.0–0 h6 9.♗e3 0–0 10.♗e1 ♛d7 11.♗e2 ♛b7 12.♗ad1 ♛h7 13.♗c1 ♛e8 14.h3 Black has got through the opening comfortably, and is ready to take action.



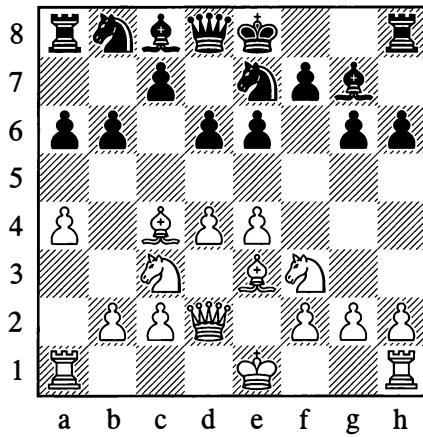
14...d5! 15.♗b3 c6!? (Preparing ...b5 is interesting, but 15...c5! seems better still, as 16.exd5 exd5 17.dxc5 ♛xc5 is pleasant for Black.) 16.♕h2?! This cannot be correct when Black is ready to play in the centre. (16.♗f4 is more logical, as the d6-square has been weakened.) 16...c5! Black held the initiative and eventually won in Gruvaeus – Hillarp Persson, Orebro 2000.

**8...h6!**

This move is an integral part of the Hippo, and Black would be happy to play it even if the white bishop stood on f4 or e3. The fact that it wins a tempo here is a welcome bonus.

**9.♗e3**

Worse is 9.♗f4?! (9.♗h4?! ♛d7 leads to the same thing) 9...♗d7 10.0–0 g5! 11.♗g3 ♛g6 12.♗e1 ♛f6 13.f3 0–0 14.♗e2 ♛h5 with an initiative for Black, Zeier – Hillarp Persson, Recklinghausen 2001.



**9...♗d7 10.0–0 ♛b7**

In an eventful game from Reykjavik 2000 against Bykhovsky, I played:

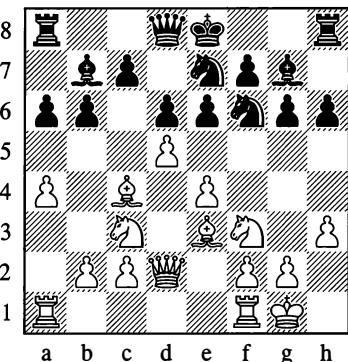
**10...♗f6?!**

When I first annotated this game in my private database I gave this move a question mark, but it is not so bad if Black follows it up in the right way.

Still, if I reached the same position again I would prefer 10...g5!, when 11.h3 ♘g6 followed by ...0–0 is fine for Black.

11.h3 ♘b7 12.d5!

After 12.♗d3 c5! Black is happy.



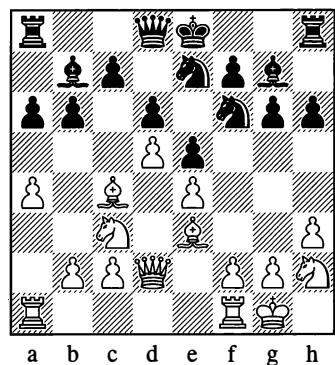
12...e5!

With this move I enter a position where my knight on f6 would have been better off on d7, where it would not obstruct ...f5. Nevertheless, it was the best choice overall. In general it is fine for Black to exchange on d5 in this kind of position, but here the hanging h6-pawn becomes an issue after 12...exd5 13.exd5 ♘f5 14.♕f4. Now 14...0–0 15.g4 g5 16.♗xg5 hxg5 17.gxf5 ♘h7 18.♗h2! is dangerous for Black; ergo, taking on d5 is no good.

Even worse is 12...♗xe4? 13.♗xe4 exd5 14.♗d4! when Black will not get the piece back.

13.♗h2!

A strong move that prepares to meet ...♗h5 with ♜e2.

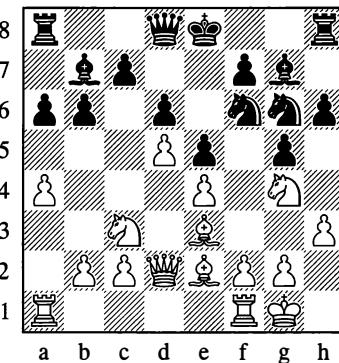


13...g5!!

Such moves can be hard to evaluate, so here are some guidelines. The ...g5 move is generally good if Black can plant a knight on f4 before White can arrange g2-g3 (or win control over f5). This normally depends on whether Black can attack the h3-pawn and thereby force White to leave the g2-pawn at home. If White can exchange the light-squared bishops and plant a knight on f5, it can be considered a bad omen for Black. Previously I thought 13...c6 was good enough for equality, but the latest breed of Silicon Monster points out that 14.♗g4! ♘xg4 15.hxg4 leaves White in control of d5, rendering Black's whole idea a failure. The continuation might be 15...c5 16.♗fb1 ♘c8 17.♗e2 ♘g8 18.b4 ♘f6 19.bxc5 bxc5 20.f3 and White is in complete control.

14.♗e2 ♘g6 15.♗g4

Here I could have obtained a good position with a remarkable idea that I missed when writing *Tiger's Modern*.



15...♗g8!!

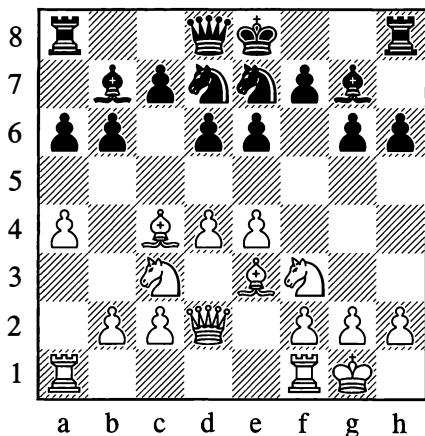
Making use of the fact that White cannot put both the bishop and a knight on g4 simultaneously. At the same time, Black prepares to bolster the weak f5-square.

In the game I chose 15...h5?, but after 16.♗xf6† ♜xf6 17.♗d1!! I realized I had been outmanoeuvred, as there is no way to keep control of the light squares. I tried

17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $gxf4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  but failed to obtain enough compensation, although I eventually won after a blunder by my opponent in Bykhovsky – Hillarp Persson, Reykjavik 2000.

16. $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h5

Black is doing quite well.



### 11.d5

As discussed earlier, it makes sense to play this move after the bishop has gone to b7.

White has little to gain from further waiting moves, for instance:

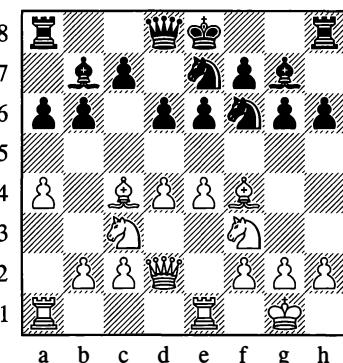
11. $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

I would prefer 11...g5!.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ?

This allows Black to force an advantageous exchange and take the initiative.

The best move is 12.d5.



### 12...g5!

Black seizes the opportunity to force the exchange of the enemy bishop for a knight.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6?!$

This weakens Black's control of f5, making White's next move more effective.

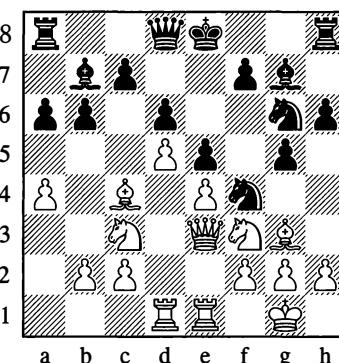
14...0–0 is correct, after which 15.d5 exd5 16.exd5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  is a little better for Black.

15.d5 e5!

After 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?!$  16. $\mathbb{W}xc3$  e5 Black is better placed on the kingside, but White is quick to open up the queenside with a4-a5 and c2-c4. The engines prefer White, but this is the kind of position where I do not fully trust silicon-based evaluations.

16. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}hf4$

There is nothing wrong with this move, but even stronger was 16...g4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18.f3 h5 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  when Black has a strong initiative. White would, however, have a winning advantage if he could somehow get a knight to f5, so take care not to allow this.



17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $exf4$  18. $\mathbb{W}d2$  g4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h5 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$

Now instead of 22... $\mathbb{W}f6?!$ , which led to a balanced game in Milos – Shchekachev, Las Palmas 1993, Black should have played:

22...f3!

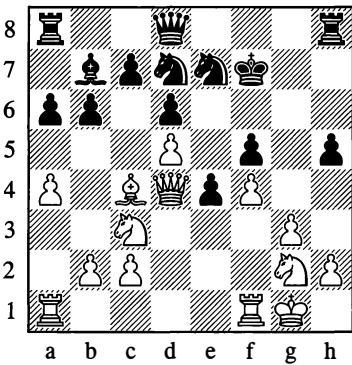
With a clear advantage.

**11...e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f5**

12...g5 is not attractive here since White has not played h2-h3. This means that Black's g-pawn has nothing to bite on, and White has no trouble playing g2-g3 to guard the f4-square if needed.

### 13. exf5 ♜xf5

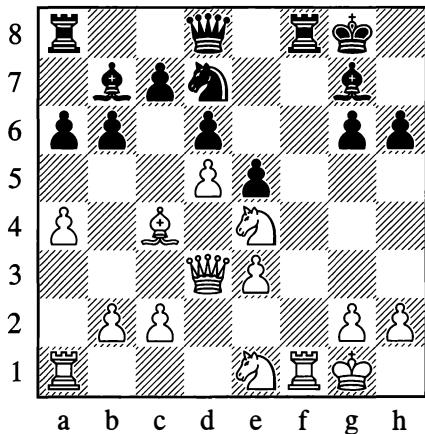
13...gxf5 is also possible, for instance: 14.f4 e4 15.♗d4 ♜xd4†? 16.♘xd4 ♔f7?! 17.g3 The knight is headed for e3. 17...h5 18.♗g2



18...h4?! Black's idea is 19.♗xh4 ♜xh4! 20.gxh4 ♜h8, with excellent counterplay thanks to the weaknesses on d5 and f4.

### 14. ♜d3 0-0 15. ♜e4 ♜xe3 16. fxe3

Black is also fine after 16. ♜xe3 b5?!. Time and time again White has problems with his d-pawn.



### 16...♜xf1† 17. ♔xf1 ♜c8!

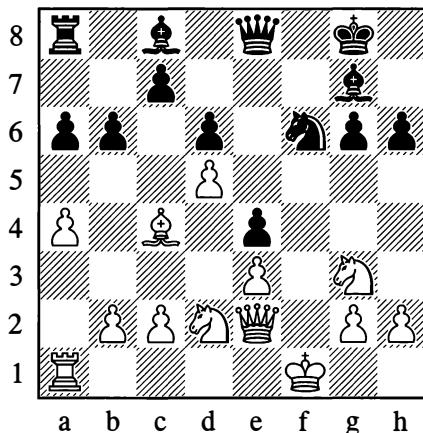
The bishop has served well on b7, but the time has come to seek new horizons, such as putting the e4-knight under pressure.

### 18. ♜f3 ♜f6 19. ♜g3?!

White dreams of controlling e4 with one of his pieces, but he probably missed Black's 20th move. Better was 19.♗xf6† ♜xf6 20.e4 h5! with just a slight advantage for Black, who can generate play on the dark squares with ...♝h6 and ...♝f4.

### 19...♜e8 20. ♜d2 e4! 21. ♜e2

After this move one cannot envy White's situation, but 21.♗dxe4 ♜xe4 22.♗xe4 ♜xe4 23.♗xe4 ♜xb2 is not inspiring either. The black bishops dominate the board and White's a-pawn is weak in the endgame. White is probably lost.



### 21...♜e5 22. c3 h5!

Gaining space on the kingside and making room for the bishop to attack the e3-pawn.

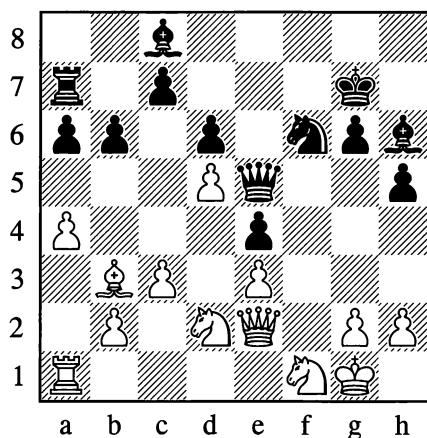
### 23. ♔g1 ♜h6 24. ♜g1 ♜g7?!

Simpler is 24...♝g4 25.g3 ♜b7, intending either ...♝f8, or ...♝f6 and ...♝xd5.

### 25. ♜b3 ♜a7?!

Black could have secured a clear advantage

with 25... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  26. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Even if White achieves his best-case scenario and regains the pawn, Black will retain at least three advantages: better pawn structure, more space and the bishop pair.



26. $\mathbb{W}c4$  a5 27. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  h4 28.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  29. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7?$

White is still in trouble after 29... $\mathbb{W}g5$ , for instance: 30. $\mathbb{Q}h1!$ ? A mistake, but the alternative is to give up the h-pawn. 30... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  31. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , winning the queen.

30. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  31. $\mathbb{W}c6$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  32. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  33.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  34. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  35. $\mathbb{W}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  36. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

At this point a draw was agreed – a sad end to a game that Black ought to have won.

½–½

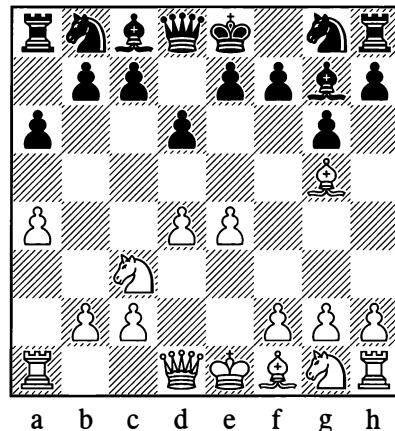
In the next game White chooses a set-up reminiscent of the Flexible Dragon Restrained. Flexible is indeed the word, but efficient is not.

## GAME 52

Thorbjorn Bromann – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Stockholm 2002

1.d4 g6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  a6 5.a4



5...h6

I did not like the look of 5...b6 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  h6 7. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , when 7...c5 8.d5! leads to a horribly passive position for Black. Instead I pressed the g5-bishop to declare its intentions.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! is a valid alternative – see the note to White's 5th move in Game 62 on page 339.

6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  the d4-pawn is weakened and it is time for Black to strike at the white centre. 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is one method, when 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  g5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f5!? is interesting. Another idea is 6...c5, when both 7.d5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  and 7.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  seem fine for Black.

6...b6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

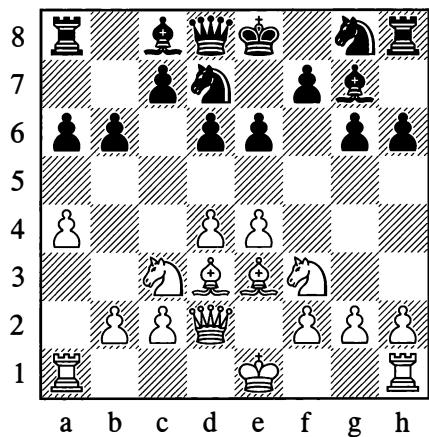
After 7.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e6 Black has an improved version of Game 16, as ...h6 is a useful extra tempo.

7...e6

Initiating the Hippo without a regret in the world.

**8.♗d2 ♜d7 9.♗d3**

At the time of the game I had no understanding of this set-up, as I considered e4-e5 and d4-d5 as the only serious plans for White. With time, I have come to understand that, strategically speaking, Thorbjorn was a step ahead of me. White is planning ♘e2-g3, making it difficult for Black to create counterplay against the white centre.



**9...♝e7**

In another game Black tried an interesting idea:

**9...♝b7 10.0–0 ♘gf6!?**

From a Hippo viewpoint this is slightly unorthodox. However, when we consider that Black has won a tempo with ...h6, and White has played the slightly passive ♘d3, there are good reasons not to fear the usual problem associated with ...♝gf6: the e4-e5 push.

**11.h3 c5!**

Black is aiming for a Sicilian structure where White's pieces will look silly.

**12.♗f1?!**

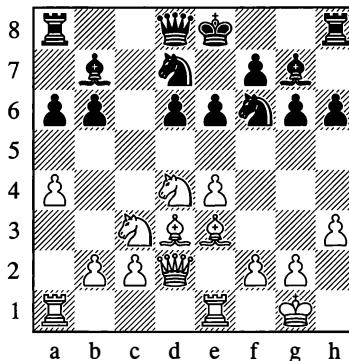
This is rather cooperative.

12.e5 is more critical, but after 12...dxe5

13.dxe5 ♘d5 14.♗e4 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♗xh6 ♖d6 Black has nothing to complain about.

**12...cxd4 13.♗xd4**

Black has reached a wonderful Sicilian position with only one defect: difficulty in arranging castling.



**13...♞c5!?**

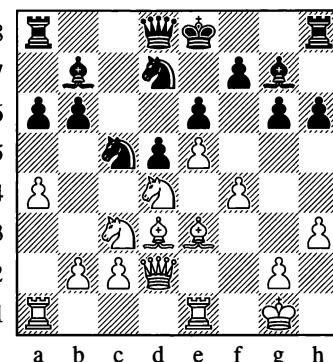
The best solution to the above problem is 13...g5! when Black has every reason to feel happy.

The game continuation is also interesting. Black has nothing to gain from exchanging his knight for the bishop on d3, and forcing White to play f2-f3 is a superficial victory. However, Black has a special idea in mind.

**14.f3 d5!**

This follow-up is key.

**15.e5 ♘fd7 16.f4**



**16...0–0?!**

The safe alternative was 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  17.cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  with just a small advantage for White.

However, it is far more interesting to press the Chaos Button with 16...g5!, when one of the many wild variations is 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  gxf4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0–0 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  22. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ , intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with highly unbalanced play.

17.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e4?$

A better chance was 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  18.cxd3  $\mathbb{W}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  f6 when Black has some counterplay.

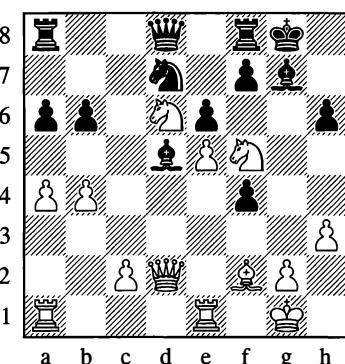
I will give a few more moves of the game, just to scare you away from such positions.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  g5!

Black goes dynamic, but only makes things worse.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  gxf4 21. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}4f5!$

Rublevsky is a tough guy who steadily pulls his catch into the boat, even though it wriggles.

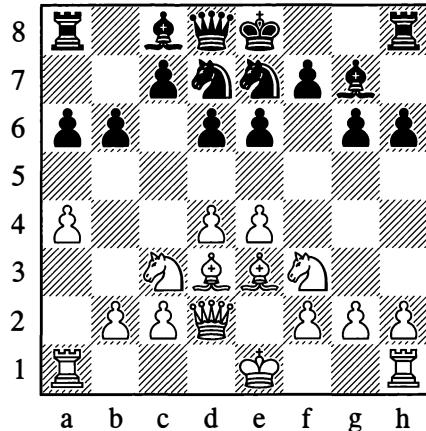


22... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?!$

The last chance to survive was 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  26. $\mathbb{W}d4$  e5 27. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  29. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  30. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  when White is clearly better, but not yet winning.

23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$

Black soon ran out of defensive resources in Rublevsky – Gofshtein, Frankfurt 2000. Still, Black had good prospects on moves 13 and 16.



**10.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$**

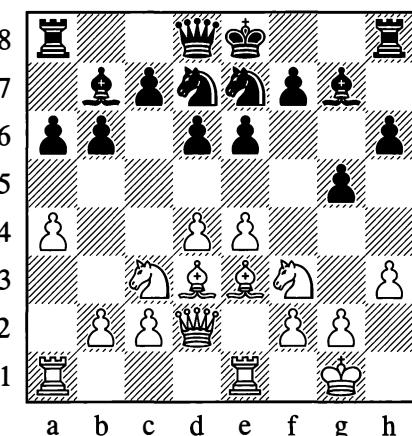
11. $\mathbb{Q}e2?!$  is premature in view of 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5! forcing the exchange of White's dark-squared bishop for a knight.

**11...g5**

It is also possible to play 11...c5?!, though I would generally wait with this kind of action until my king is away from the centre.

**12.h3**

White has developed his pieces harmoniously, but what next? Does this question seem familiar? White will get nowhere until he moves one of the bishops and plays either e4-e5 or d4-d5.



**12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$**

In *Tiger's Modern* I was critical of this move, but now I find it hard to understand why.

A playable alternative is 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  intending either ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  and a knight to f4, or even a central break with ...d5.

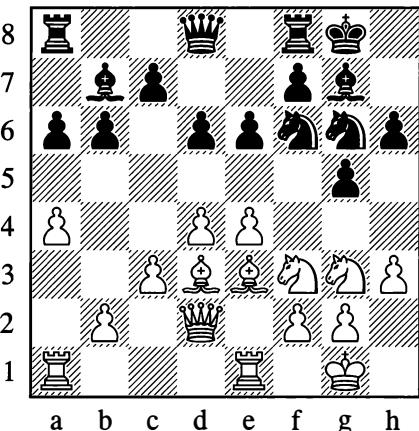
Black can also look towards the queenside with 12...c5?!, or even 12...c6?! intending ...b5.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

White ensures that ...c5 can always be met by c2-c3, as well as improving the knight, which had no future on c3.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0-0 15.c3

Thorbjorn has managed to pamper his centre and can claim a slight advantage, as it is not easy for Black to open up the queenside.



### 15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c8?$

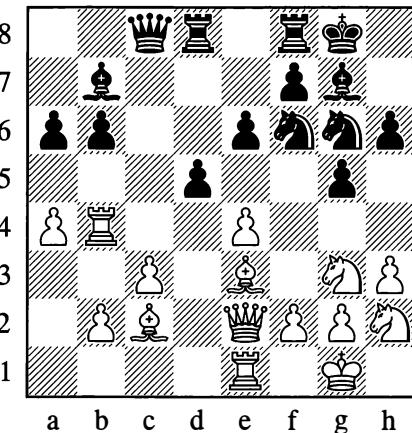
Preparing ...c5 and starting a flirtation with the a8-square.

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ c5 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ cxd4 20. $\mathbb{B}xd4?$

A pleasant surprise. I was intending to meet 20.cxd4 with 20... $\mathbb{B}d7$  followed by doubling the rooks on the c-file. After the move played I can open the centre with ...d5 at my leisure, after which my slumbering bishops will come alive.

### 20...d5 21. $\mathbb{B}b4!$

White correctly avoids 21.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{F}xg6$  23. $\mathbb{E}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$ , when the black pieces dominate the board and the c4-rook has problems returning to home base unharmed.



### 21...dxe4!

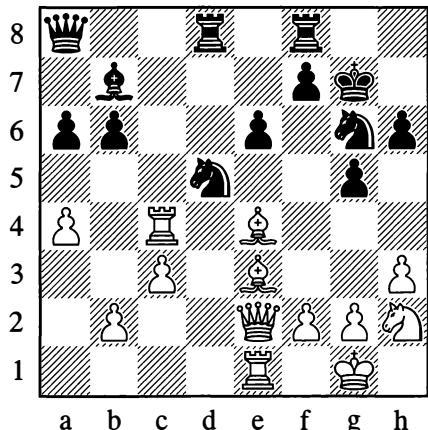
Avoiding 21... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{G}xf4$  23.e5  $\mathbb{F}xg3$  24. $\mathbb{E}xf6$   $\mathbb{G}xh2\#$  25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  when White has two annoying options. 26. $\mathbb{W}d3?$  looks dangerous and is the move I feared at the time. White also has the option of forcing a draw with: 26. $\mathbb{E}g4\#$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (26... $\mathbb{Q}g5?$  still allows White to force a draw if he wants it with 27. $\mathbb{E}xg5\#$   $\mathbb{H}xg5$  28. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  29. $\mathbb{W}h6$ , but he can also play for a win with 27.h4!) 27. $\mathbb{E}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  28. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  29. $\mathbb{W}f4$  and Black must repeat.

### 22. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Black should not fear the exchange of the g7-bishop. In this position it is doing nothing but hanging around, thinking about this and that. The knights, on the other hand, are aiming for the f4-square, where one of them will eventually strike with awesome power.

After 22... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ ?! 23. $\mathbb{W}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$  24.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xc3$  25. $\mathbb{E}bb1$   $\mathbb{W}xc2$  26. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  the Black Emperor needs new clothes.

### 23. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



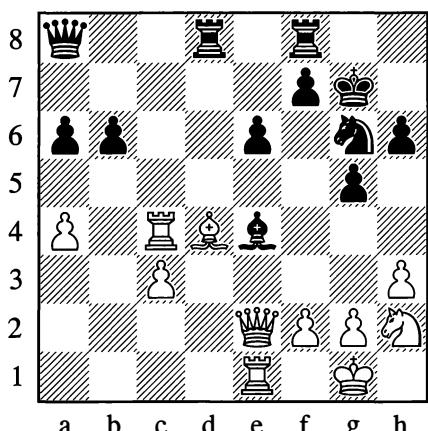
**25...Qxc3?**

I do not know why I passed on 25...Qdf4 26.Qxf4 Qxf4 27.Qf3 Qxe4 28.Qcxe4 Qd3 29.Q1e3 Qfd8 with a nice initiative for Black.

**26.bxc3?**

White is blinded by the material. Better was 26.Qxc3! Qxe4 27.f3 Qd5! 28.Qd4† e5 29.Qxb6 Qd7 30.Qg4 f6 with an unclear game.

**26...Qxe4 27.Qd4†**



**27...Qxd4! 28.Qxd4 Qxg2 29.Wg4 e5 30.Qb4 a5 31.Qxb6?**

31.Qc4 was the last chance to fight on.

**31...Qf4 32.Qf3 Wxf3 33.Wxf3 Qxf3**

**34.Qxe5 Qxh3† 35.Qh2 Qf4 36.Qxa5 Qd8  
37.Qb1 Qd3 38.c4 Qe4**

**0-1**

This game featured an early Qg5, and consequently White lost a tempo (Qg5-e3). That aside, it is especially worth noting the idea of ...c6!? as mentioned in the notes. This method of preparing ...b5 is not common, but in certain situations it may be worth considering. Please note, however, that it should not be played if White can either attack the d6-pawn (for instance with Qf4), or play a quick e4-e5, in which case Black will not have the option of ...Qxf3 before blocking the centre with ...d5.

The next game features a mix of different breeds: half Hippo; half Dragon (at least, the White side of a Dragon).

## GAME 53

**Luis Couso – Ralf Åkesson**

Linkoping 2001

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.Qe3 a6 5.Wd2**  
“Sure, you can play ...b5,” offers White.

**5...Qd7?! 6.a4**

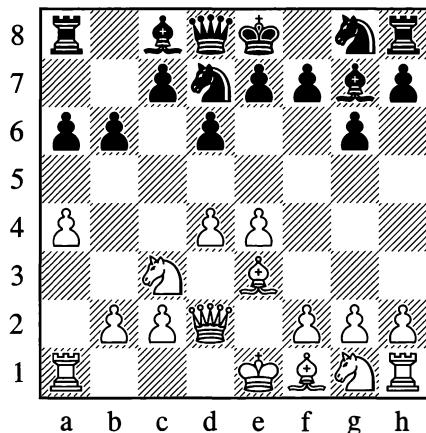
“Actually, no you can’t.”

Black should really have taken the opportunity to play ...b5 on the previous move. The problem is not so much that White has been given the chance to prevent it with a2-a4, but rather that he could have switched plans with 6.h4!, when the natural 6...h5 leaves Black unable to carry out the recommended ...Qxh3 plan from Chapter 3.

**6...b6!**

“It’s Hippo time!”

This move is absolutely necessary to discourage White from continuing with a4-a5. With the knight still on b8 this might not be such a horrible scenario, as Black could continue with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and ...e5, getting a reasonable position. However, with the knight on d7, the cramping a4-a5 would leave Black in a miserable state, as the knight blocks the c8-bishop and does nothing to attack the white centre. Obviously, now that the pawn is on b6, the continuation 7.a5 b5 would only serve Black's interest.



### 7.f3??

This is rather unusual in combination with a2-a4, giving the position a Pseudo-Hippo character. After the more conventional 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  Black should play 7...h6! followed by ...e6 with normal Hippo play.

An important point is that 7...e6 would be inaccurate due to 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !, when 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  forces the exchange of dark-squared bishops. Usually the more cramped side would be happy to exchange pieces, but this is generally not the case in the Hippo, for a couple of reasons. First of all, White's bishops and knights are not so easily deployed, and tend to obstruct each other. Secondly, Black's pawn structure will look like Swiss cheese if you take away the bishops and the knights. One might say there is a kind of symbiosis between the pawns and the pieces in Black's camp. So please, if you get

tempted to exchange a piece early in the game, I recommend that you at least think about it carefully.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

At the risk of sounding like an old record that got stuck, I will reiterate that if White answers ...e6 with d4-d5, then b7 is unlikely to be the best square for the bishop.

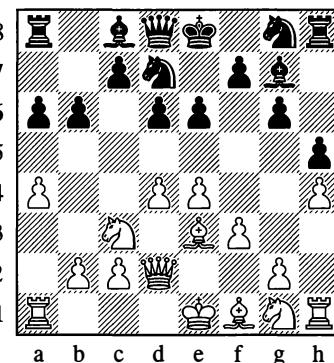
For this reason, I recommend starting with: 7...e6!

Intending ...h6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  before committing the bishop. This position has occurred many times. We will follow an eventful game where White was in an aggressive mood.

### 8.h4? h5!?

This weakens the dark squares on the kingside, but I do not see how White can exploit it.

A second possibility is 8...h6. Here White can try 9.h5 g5 10.d5, intending to take a firm grip on the light squares after 10...e5 11.g4. However, 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! is better, when 11.dxe6 fxe6 leaves the position unclear; I would certainly not mind playing Black here.



### 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ??

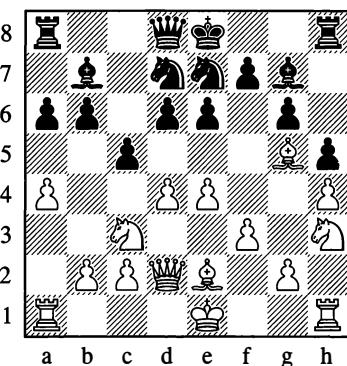
The bishop would do a better job on e3, keeping an eye on the d4-square.

9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is more critical. Nevertheless, after 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Black is ready

to lash out with ...d5 followed by ...c5, achieving an excellent position.

A third possibility is 9.♗ge2, after which 9...♝e7 10.♝f4 ♘f6 11.♝d3 c5! reached a position where Black had every reason to be happy in Schmittdiel – Muse, Recklinghausen 1999.

9...♝e7 10.♝h3 ♕b7 11.♔e2 c5!

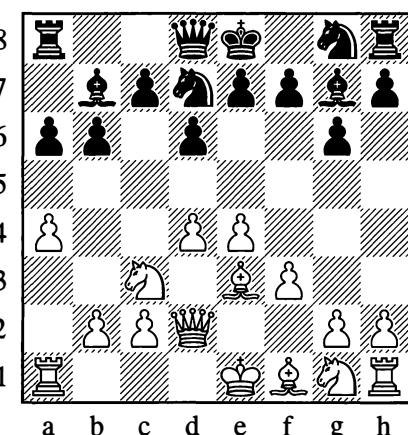


12.dxc5

Or 12.d5 exd5 13.♝xd5 ♕xd5 14.♔xe7 ♜xe7 15.♕xd5 ♜xh4†! 16.♝f2 ♜d8 17.0–0–0 0–0 18.♕xd6 ♜g5† and Black has some initiative.

12...dxc5 13.♝d1 ♘e5 14.♕f4?! ♜b8 15.0–0–0 c6

In Lazic – Delchev, Turin 2000, Black was enjoying a private party on the dark squares.



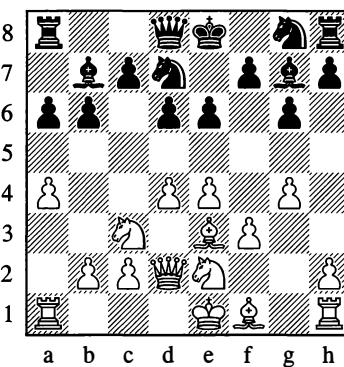
8.♝h3

After 8.h4!! h6! 9.♗c4 ♘gf6! White's 8th move has made ...c5 an attractive plan for Black, as the white king will not be safe on either flank.

There have been quite a few games where White has developed his bishop to either c4 or d3, followed by ♘ge2 and 0–0, just waiting for Black's reaction. I do not think it is necessary to waste time on this. The combination of f2-f3, a2-a4 and ♘d3/♘c4 cannot be critical, and Black should be fine after ...e6, followed by either ...d5 and ...c5, or ...c5 by itself.

8.♗ge2 e6 9.g4??

This is a more aggressive possibility. Here I recommend:



9...h5!

Black should avoid 9...♝gf6?, when 10.♗g3 h5 11.g5 ♘h7 left his knight misplaced in Sekulic – Ianov, Bijeljina 2001, and White could have claimed a clear advantage with 12.h4.

9...♝e7?!N 10.♗h6 ♘xh6 11.♕xh6 ♘g8 12.♗e3 ♘h4† is an improvement over the above game, but I prefer the main proposal.

10.gxh5?!N

10.g5 ♘e7 was fine for Black in Ruiz – Escobar Forero, Antioquia 2014.

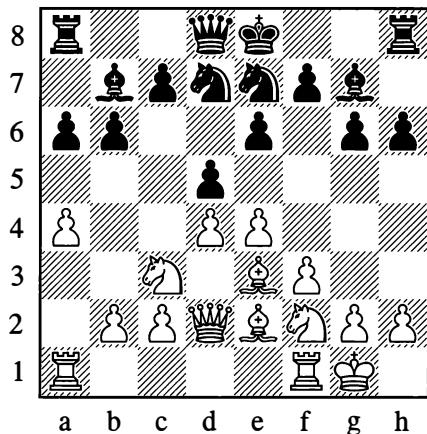
10...♜xh5 11.♗g3 ♜h7

Black has a promising position.

**8...e6 9.♗e2 h6! 10.♗f2 ♗e7 11.0–0 d5?!**

Black is not fully prepared for action yet, and should have played 11...♗f8! first. Then Black is ready to blow up the centre with ...d5 and ..c5, when White's cluster of minor pieces will be unhappy.

If you have a silicon friend it will tell you that White has a huge advantage. You might even think I am an unreliable Hippo lover who disagrees on principle. Just calm down, have a look at the moves it is suggesting, and then play a few moves against it. The evaluation will soon change. (If you remember the Introduction you will, of course, know all of this already...)

**12.exd5?!**

White was right to avoid 12.e5? c5, when he is ill-equipped to deal with Black's threats in the centre.

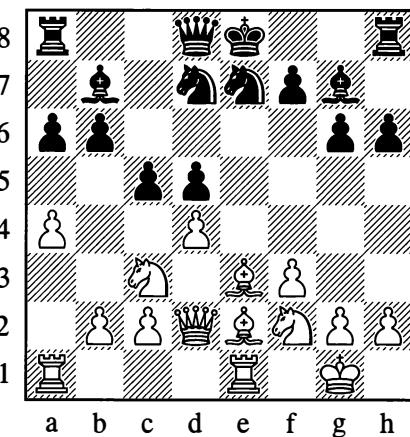
One way to take some of the venom out of the ...c5 idea is to weaken Black's control over this key square with: 12.a5! b5 If White could play axb6 it would improve his chances dramatically. Now 13.♗g4 g5! 14.e5 c5 is critical. White's centre will disappear, but Black's king will be stuck in the middle for some time. "The position is a mess" may be an uninformative expression, but it is quite appropriate here.

**12...exd5 13.♗fe1 c5?!**

Considering the position of the black king, this is premature.

13...♗f5? loses to 14.♕xa6 ♕xa6 15.♗g5† winning the queen.

13...♗f8! was better, taking the king off the open file and preparing to hunt down the bishop on e3 with ...♗f5. Whatever the evaluation from here, it reinforces the point that Black should have taken steps to improve his king before taking action in the centre.

**14.♗f1!**

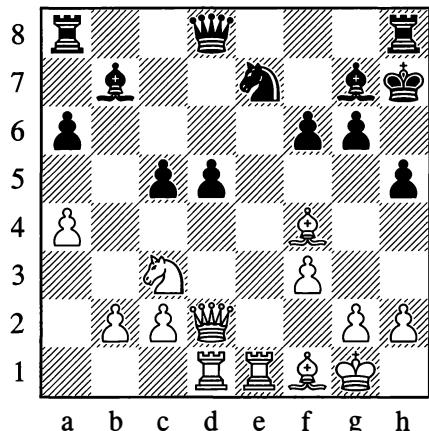
Clearing some of the debris from the e-file. White's pieces were treading on each other's toes, but now they have picked up on the rhythm better.

**14...♗f8 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♗f4**

Black is lagging behind in development, his pawns are weak and his king is in trouble.

**16...♗g8 17.♗ad1! ♗h7 18.♗g4 h5 19.♗e5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 f6 21.♗f4**

White has a clear advantage, but Ralf is a formidable defender.



**21... $\mathbb{E}e8$  22. $\mathbb{E}e6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  23. $\mathbb{E}d6$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  24. $\mathbb{E}e1$  d4??!**

Black was probably in time trouble. Better is 24... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  25. $\mathbb{E}xe8$   $\mathbb{W}xe8$  26. $\mathbb{E}b6$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  with good chances to resist.

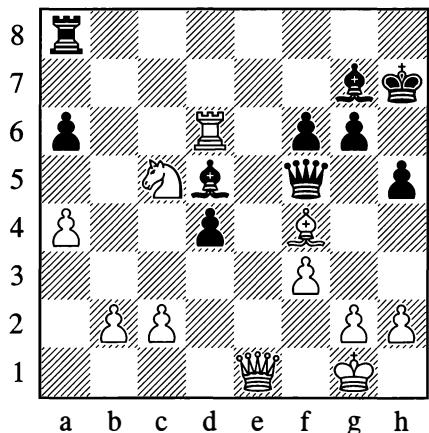
**25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  26. $\mathbb{Q}c4!!$**

Black's position would have been hopeless after 26. $\mathbb{Q}g3!!$  followed by  $\mathbb{W}a5$  or c2-c4.

**26... $\mathbb{W}f5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$**

White can still keep a huge advantage with 27. $\mathbb{Q}g3!!$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  29. $\mathbb{Q}d3!!$   $\mathbb{W}g5$  30.f4 followed by  $\mathbb{E}xf6$ . With this and the next mistake, the advantage passes to Black.

**27... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$   $\mathbb{E}xe1\uparrow$  29. $\mathbb{W}xe1$**



**29... $\mathbb{Q}xf3??$**

One can almost see the hands flying back and forth over the board. After 29... $\mathbb{Q}c4!!$  30. $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  31. $\mathbb{E}c6$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  32. $\mathbb{E}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  33. $\mathbb{W}xa8$  d3! White is lost. The rest of the game is really horrible and should not be commented upon.

**30. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  31. $\mathbb{Q}g3!!$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  32. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  33. $\mathbb{W}f2$  h4 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6!!$   $\mathbb{W}h5??$  35. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}hg3$  36.hxg3  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  37. $\mathbb{W}xf6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  38. $\mathbb{W}f4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}g5$  39. $\mathbb{W}f7??$   $\mathbb{W}e3\uparrow$**

39... $\mathbb{W}xg3$  would have left White in a resignable position, but Black simultaneously missed this and ran out of time.

**1–0**

Despite his eventual victory in the above game, White's f2-f3 set-up does not impress against the Hippo. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  the pressure would have been on White to do something constructive with his cumbersome cluster of pathetic pieces.

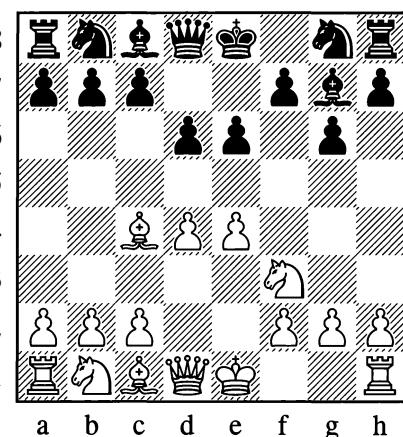
## GAME 54

Mateusz Bartel – Michal Krasenkow

Warsaw 2002

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6!!?**

My main recommendation is 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , but if you tire of the taste of lobster you might want to try crab.



This is what I refer to as a “Desert Hippo”. I have played it myself, but beware: it is not quite as sound to play the Hippo when there is no knight on c3.

Please repeat this three times to yourself, so that you, like Evgeny Agrest, Emanuel Berg and others who practise this set-up, understand that you are placing the Hippo in the desert and hoping for rain.

That being said, over time I have come to realize that Black’s set-up is not as unfavourable as I once thought. I still believe White is better off compared to the  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  lines, but Black’s set-up is playable. What really matters when you play ...e6 is that White is unable to play c2-c4. After 4... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  this is obviously impossible.

### 5. $\mathbb{Q}b3!!$

I am not at all sure that the bishop belongs here. Maybe it is a better idea to play 5.c3 and later retract the bishop to d3.

I have only once ventured with the Hippo into the desert. The game continued:

5.  $\mathbb{W}e2?$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6.0–0 0–0 7.  $\mathbb{Q}d1!?$

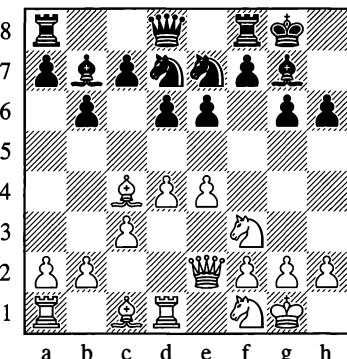
The rook is well placed here, as it makes it more difficult for me to play ...c5.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

7...d5?! 8.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  does not really help Black, who is behind in development.

8.c3 h6 9.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  b6 10.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Black is finally ready to push the d-pawn.



11.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$

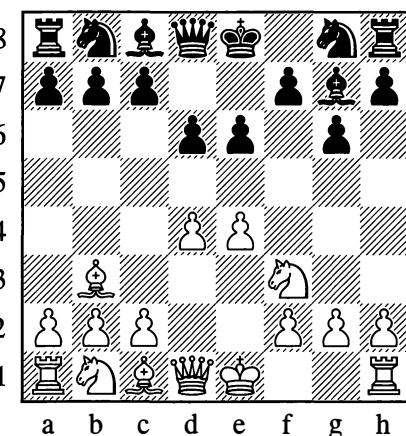
11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! is more flexible and therefore better. After 11...c5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  the position resembles the main game, except that White’s pieces are on slightly different squares.

11...d5

I did not think I could wait any longer.

12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  dx4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Now instead of 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  which led to approximate equality in Moren – Hillarp Persson, Tylosand 2012, I should have played 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  with counterplay.



5...  $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  6.0–0

Another move to look out for in this kind of position is 6.h4?!. Black has no real choice but to play 6...h6!, but this is not such a bad move to make. Now White will have to think twice before castling, and I doubt it is to his advantage to disrupt the kingside so early.

The last time Bartel got this position with White, he tried an accelerated knight manoeuvre to g3:

6.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  b6 7.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.0–0 0–0 10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$

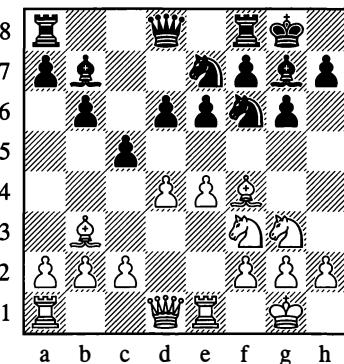
This move does not fit in with the rest of White’s set-up. The bishop should stay on c1 for the time being.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

10...h6 is quite reasonable, when 11.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

12.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $d5!$ ? leads to mutual chances.  
11.  $\mathbb{A}e1$   $c5!$

This idea is new to me!



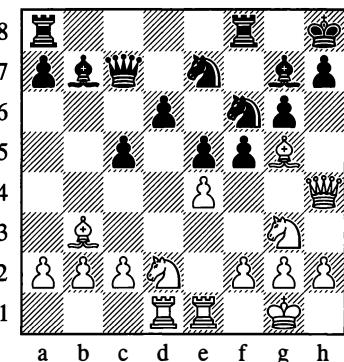
12.  $dxc5$

After 12.  $c3$   $cxd4$  13.  $cxd4$  Black is flexible and can chose between 13...  $\mathbb{E}c8$  and 13...  $h6$ .  
12...  $e5!$  13.  $\mathbb{A}g5$   $bxc5$

Suddenly Black has an extra pawn in the centre. Now everything revolves around the  $d5$ -square.

14.  $\mathbb{A}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15.  $\mathbb{A}f3$   $\mathbb{A}e8$  16.  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{A}h8$   
17.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $f6$  18.  $\mathbb{A}h6$   $f5$  19.  $\mathbb{A}g5$   $\mathbb{A}f6$  20.  $\mathbb{A}ad1?$

White should have played 20.  $exf5$   $\mathbb{A}xf5!$   
(20...  $gxsf5$  21.  $\mathbb{A}e6$   $\mathbb{A}c8$  22.  $\mathbb{A}xc8$   $\mathbb{B}axc8$   
23.  $c4!$  is a little better for White) 21.  $\mathbb{A}xf5$   
22.  $\mathbb{A}e6$   $\mathbb{A}e8$  23.  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{A}f6!$  with an unclear game.



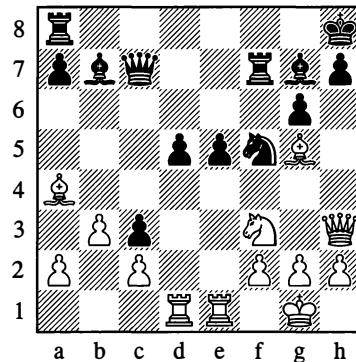
20...  $fxe4$  21.  $\mathbb{A}dxe4$   $\mathbb{A}xe4$  22.  $\mathbb{A}xe4$   $\mathbb{A}f5$   
Black has achieved a good level of coordination along with control over the  $d5$ -

square, which does not bode well for White.  
23.  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $c4$  24.  $\mathbb{A}a4$   $d5$  25.  $\mathbb{A}d2$   $\mathbb{A}f7$

A success for the Modern strategy; it does not get much better than this.

26.  $b3$   $c3$  27.  $\mathbb{A}f3$

Here Black could have best exploited his advantage with:



27...  $e4!N$

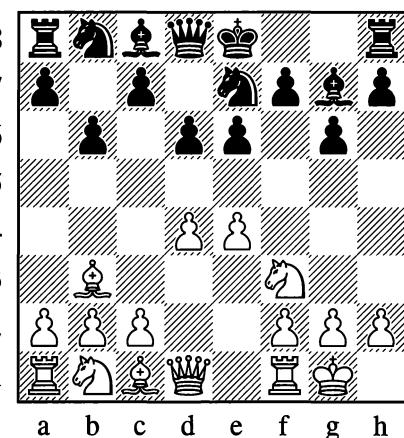
27...  $\mathbb{A}g8$  was a strange choice, although it did not stop Black from eventually winning in Bartel – Milov, Warsaw 2005.

28.  $\mathbb{A}h4$   $\mathbb{A}d4$  29.  $\mathbb{A}xg6\#$   $\mathbb{A}g8$

Black is winning.

## 6... $b6$

It is also possible to play 6...  $0-0$  in order to be able to answer 7.  $\mathbb{A}f4$  with 7...  $h6$ . This way, White does not get the time to play  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and prevent ...  $h6$ .



### 7.♗e1

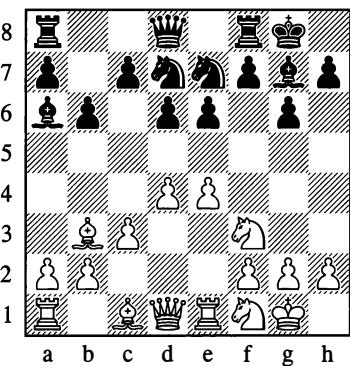
After 7.♗f4 ♜b7 8.♗e1 ♜d7 White can play 9.♗d2, when 9...h6 will probably lead to a more traditional Hippo, since White does not seem to have anything better than 10.♗c3.

7.c4?! is another idea to consider. After 7...0–0 8.♗c3 c5 9.d5 e5 the b3-bishop is less than optimally placed, and Black can get a good game with ...h6 followed by ...f5.

It is also worth pointing out that 9...exd5 is a safe alternative. White has nothing better than 10.♗xd5 ♜xd5 11.♗xd5 ♜c7 12.♗f4 ♜b7 13.♗d3 ♜c6 14.♗xd6 ♜d7 15.♗ad1 ♜fd8 16.♗a4 ♜d4! 17.e5 ♜xe5 when Black achieves full equality.

### 7...♗d7 8.♗bd2 ♜b7

If we presume that Black can later continue with ...c5, ...cxsd4 and (after White responds with cxsd4) ...♗c6-b4, then it might seem logical to play 8...♗a6?!. However, please do not follow the example of this game: 9.c3 (Black has nothing to fear from 9.a4 0–0 10.a5, when 10...c5! takes over the initiative.) 9...0–0 10.♗f1



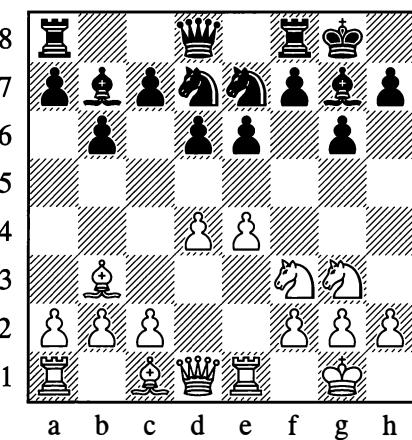
10...♗xf1? This is positionally awful. (Instead 10...c5 11.♗f4 cxsd4 12.cxd4 ♜f6 13.♗c1 ♜d7 looks all right for Black.) 11.♗xf1 c5 12.♗f4 cxsd4 13.cxd4 ♜f6 14.e5? This move only serves to gift a central outpost to the black knights. 14...dxe5 (14...♗fd5! is more precise.)

15.dxe5 ♜fd5 After a positional blunder on each side, the position was close to equal in Lau – Feustel, Bad Neuenahr 1978.

### 9.♗f1 0–0 10.♗g3

With this move White gets the knight out of the way of the other minor pieces and bolsters the e4-pawn, while preparing h4-h5.

It is important to observe that White can play 10.a4 at any time. Black should not be lured into 10...a5?!, when the light squares on the queenside will turn out to be troublesome later on. One big difference in this structure, compared to one where Black has not played ...a5, is that White can now contemplate taking back on d4 (after ...c5 and ...cxsd4) with the knight. I would almost automatically answer 10.a4 with 10...a6, keeping as flexible as possible.



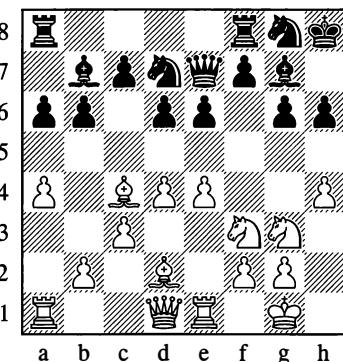
### 10...c5?!

Krasenkow probably reasons that there is nothing to stop him from playing ...c5 and, since he is likely to have to play it anyway at some stage, he might as well do it now.

The most common continuation is 10...h6 11.c3 and now Black is out of good waiting moves. A move like 11...a6, for instance, makes absolutely no sense now. Instead there are two alternatives worth discussing:

Both Evgeny Agrest and Emanuel Berg have tried their luck with 11... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  12.h4  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13.h5  $\mathbb{W}e7$ , but I do not like this at all. My view is that if Black is unable to meet h4-h5 with ...g5, he will be clearly worse. After 14.e5 dxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}c5$  17. $\mathbb{W}g4$  White had a clear advantage in Brynell – Agrest, Gothenburg 2006.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ! is more interesting. 12.h4 (This is indeed the normal way to continue, but since Black's last move is almost an anti-h4 move, it might have been better for White to try 12.a4 or 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ .) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ ! The knight is headed for f6, when h2-h4 may not look like such a great idea. 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14.a4 a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  Now in Ruck – Bezold, Fuegen 2006, Black should have played:



15... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !N Black has a healthy position and can prepare ...c5 or ...d5. In the game Black chose the outrageously ugly 15...e5? which led to serious problems after 16.h5!.

### 11.c3

Statistically speaking Black has not been doing too well from this position, but I believe this is at least partly because White has usually been the higher-rated player.

### 11... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?

On this square the bishop obstructs the defence of the e4-pawn.

It is a bit better to play 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , although 12...cxsd4! 13.cxd4 e5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  leads to good play for Black. It is worth noting that it is useful for Black to have exchanged the c-pawns in order to give the knights more space. Here the g3-knight looks out of play and it seems that White's strategy has failed.

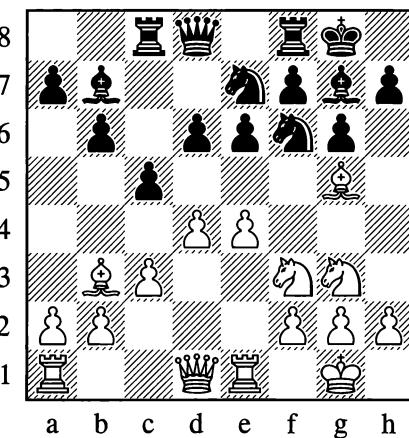
If I were playing White here, I would choose between 12.h3 and 12.h4 h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , although in both cases Black should have reasonable counterplay.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

There is nothing wrong with 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ . If White gets carried away with 14.h4?  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , he will be left with an unattractive choice between allowing either ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

It is hard to come up with a good alternative, but this move is a clear sign that something has gone wrong for White.



### 13...h6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

Black's bishop pair gives him excellent prospects, and White is left playing for tricks on the kingside.

### 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$

After 15.e5 dxe5 16.dxe5 ♘g7 17.♗e4 ♗f5 I would much rather be Black. The e5-pawn will remain weak, potentially until deep into the endgame.

### 15...♘g7 16.♗ad1 c4?!

This seems a bit counterintuitive to me since it closes the position and makes the bishop pair count for nothing. However, Krasenkov has a dynamic plan in mind.

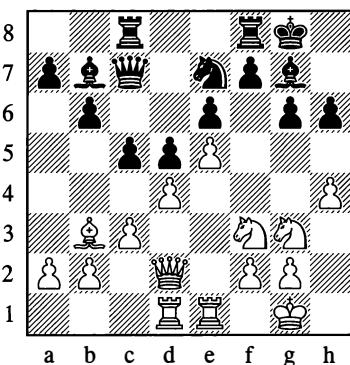
### 16...♗c7

This seemingly safe continuation is probably best, although it may lead to hair-raising complications after:

### 17.h4!

This is an important move, without which White would simply be slightly worse. White now has the positional threat of advancing the pawn to h5 when, after ...g5, the follow-up d4-d5 will make it hard for Black to keep the light squares under control. This explains Black's next move.

### 17...d5! 18.e5



### 18...♗c6

This seems natural, intending ...cxd4 and ...♗a5.

18...♗a6?! is a good alternative. Unless White can achieve something definite on the kingside, Black will have the better chances in the long run.

### 19.h5! cxd4!

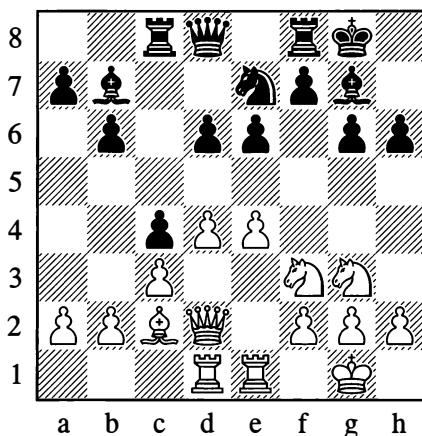
An important finesse.

Instead after 19...g5 20.♗c2 cxd4 21.♗d3! ♖fd8 22.♗h7† ♖f8 23.♗xd4 ♗xe5 24.♗xe5 ♖xe5 25.♗d3 d4! the position is dynamically balanced.

### 20.cxd4 g5

White is struggling to keep the balance.

### 17.♗c2



### 17...f5!

This is the complementary idea behind Black's last move.

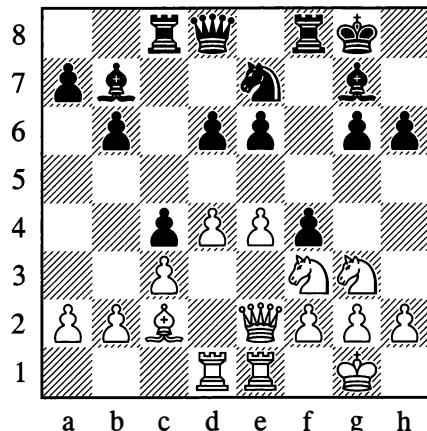
### 18.♗e2

It is hard for a human to see that 18.exf5! exf5 19.♗h4! ♖h7 (19...♗f6! 20.b3 ♗d5 is unclear) 20.♗xg6!! ♖xg6 21.♗e2 is dangerous for Black.

### 18...f4?!

This is premature and also one of those instances where the threat is stronger than the execution.

Better is: 18...♗c7! Preparing ...f4. 19.♗f1! ♗d7?! 20.♗1d2 b5 21.a4 (21.b3?! cxb3 22.♗xb3 ♖h7! and Black has the initiative.) 21...a6 22.♗a1 g5 Black has nothing to complain about.



**19.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  g5 20.  $e5?!$**

White makes a positional error.

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}3d2!$**

This is advocated by Finkel as leading to an advantage for White.

**20...  $\mathbb{Q}g6!$**

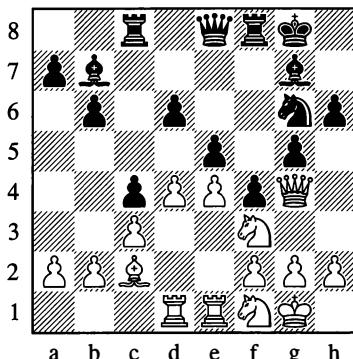
Finkel does not consider this, but I think it is Black's best try. Play may continue:

**21.  $\mathbb{W}g4!$**

Black's idea was to meet 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  with 21...  $f3!$ .

21.  $f3$  e5 22.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  exd4 24. cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  reaches an unbalanced position with chances for both sides.

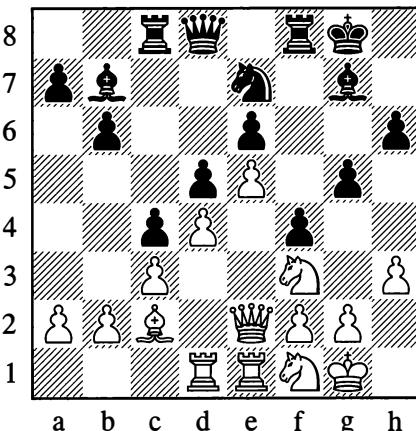
21...  $\mathbb{W}e8!$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e5



23.  $h4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $gxh4$  25.  $dxe5$   $h5$  26.  $\mathbb{W}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  29.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxe5$  30.  $f3$

Black is struggling to achieve equality, which is why 18...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  was the stronger move.

**20...  $d5$  21.  $h3$**



**21...  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$**

This bishop was bad a moment ago, but now it is headed for a new life on the kingside.

**22.  $\mathbb{Q}1h2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

Not 23...  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  24.  $h4!$  and Black loses control of the light squares on the kingside.

**24.  $\mathbb{Q}fh2$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  25.  $h4?!$**

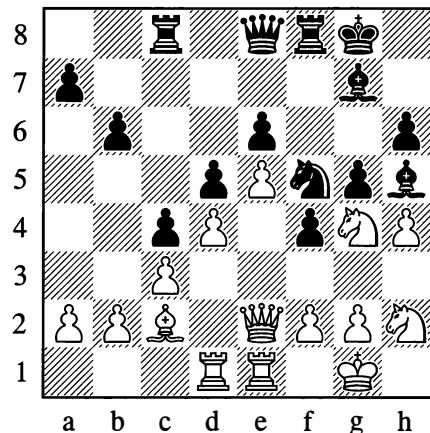
Objectively speaking it seems that Black is better after this move, but it is not easy to see why.

In the event of 25.  $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , I think 26...  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  is Black's best shot at an initiative. (Finkel gives a line starting with 26...  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ .) Then White should play 27.  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  29.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  30.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$   $dxe4$  31.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $h5$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  with some compensation for the lost exchange.

**25...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

25...  $gxh4!$  is objectively stronger, although it takes some accurate play to prove it. The critical line goes 26.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (intending  $\mathbb{W}h3$ ) 26...  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  28.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  29.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

$\mathbb{Q}xd1$  30.  $\mathbb{W}xd1$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  31.  $\mathbb{E}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  32.  $\mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  33.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  when White does not have full compensation for the exchange, although Black still has some work to do to bring home the point.



26.  $hxg5$   $hxg5$  27.  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  28.  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7\uparrow$

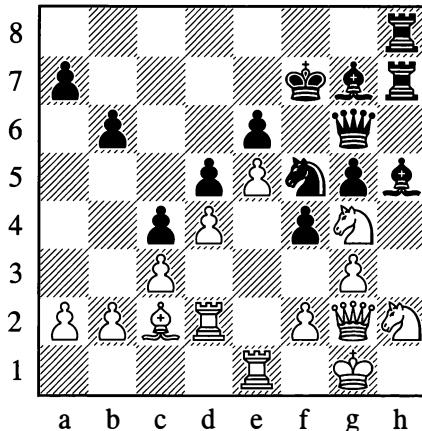
Now Black's rooks are headed for the h-file. White is forced to evacuate.

### 29.g3

The engine gives 29.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{E}h8$  30.  $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{E}h7$  31.  $\mathbb{E}ed2$   $\mathbb{E}ch8$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ , but slowly comes to its senses and claims an advantage for Black after 32...b5!?

29...  $\mathbb{E}h8$  30.  $\mathbb{W}g2$   $\mathbb{E}h7$  31.  $\mathbb{E}d2$   $\mathbb{E}ch8\uparrow$

This move throws away the advantage. Better was 31...  $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{E}ch8$  when 33.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  34.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $fxg3$  35.  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  36.  $f3$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  is excellent for Black, if not yet winning.



### 32. $\mathbb{Q}e3\uparrow$ ?

After 32.  $f3!$  the only way for Black to fight for an advantage is 32...  $\mathbb{Q}f8\uparrow$ . My main line continues 33.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  34.  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  35.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  36.  $\mathbb{E}de2$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  37.  $\mathbb{E}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  38.  $\mathbb{E}d6$   $\mathbb{E}h1\uparrow$  39.  $\mathbb{W}xh1$   $\mathbb{E}xh1\uparrow$  40.  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  41.  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  42.  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $fxe3$  43.  $\mathbb{E}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  44.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and White should have good chances of holding.

### 32... $fxe3$ 33. $fxe3$ $g4$

33...  $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$  34.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{W}xf5$  35.  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  36.  $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{E}xh2$  37.  $\mathbb{E}xf5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  38.  $\mathbb{W}xh2$   $\mathbb{E}xh2$  39.  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  wins easily.

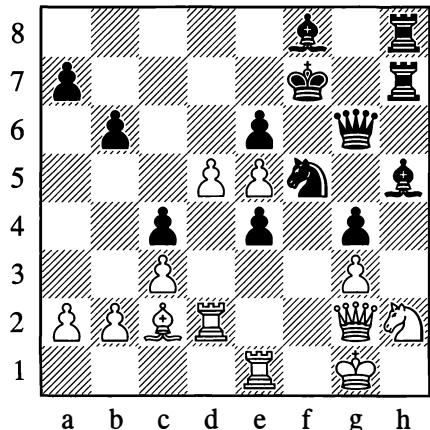
### 34. $e4$

34.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $exf5$  35.  $\mathbb{W}xd5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  36.  $\mathbb{W}b7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  is winning for Black.

The best try is 34.  $\mathbb{E}f2\uparrow$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  35.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $exf5$  36.  $e4$   $dxe4$  37.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  38.  $\mathbb{E}xf5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  when Black is certainly better, but White can offer plenty of resistance.

### 34... $dxe4$ 35. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\uparrow$ ?

The simplest way was 35...  $exd5$  36.  $\mathbb{E}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  37.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  when Black is coordinated and wins quickly.



**36.d6 ♜g5 37.♗f2?**

37.♗xe4 was better, although Black should win in the long run.

37...♝g6 38.♗xe4 ♜h3 39.♗xc4 ♜xg3†  
40.♔f1 ♜f3! 41.♗xf3 gxf3 42.♗xf3 ♜h1†

White resigned. Even in the desert, the Hippo is still alive and kicking.

**0-1**

## Conclusion

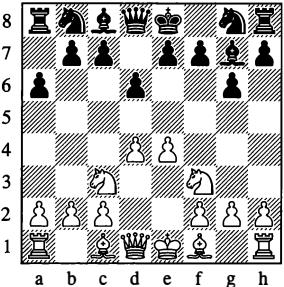
The Hippo is still thriving. Time has been standing still for the last nine years and I have not been able to find a single new game that is good enough to merit inclusion as a “main game” in this chapter. If you know the ideas, you will hardly ever need to remember a single specific line. Do not be afraid of White’s ‘heavenly’ set-up, as nothing actually happens in Heaven.

At the beginning of the chapter I quoted a Talking Heads song. The song continues:

“It’s hard to imagine that nothing at all could be so exciting, could be so much fun.”

With that utter lack of ironic intentions so typical of me, I say: “Amen”.

# Chapter 6



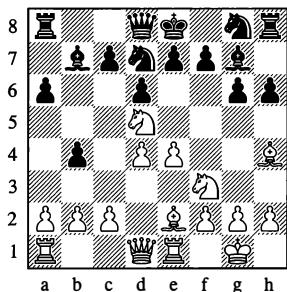
## Classical Variation

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$

3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6

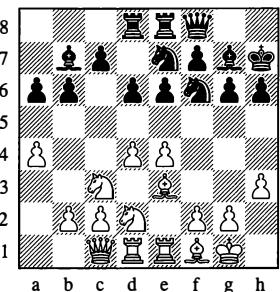
4.h3!?	$\mathbb{Q}f6$	5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	0-0	6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	a6!	7.a4	b6	Game 60	327
4. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$	$\mathbb{Q}f6$	5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	0-0	6.0-0	e6!?				317
		7.h3	$\mathbb{Q}c6$	8. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$	Game 57				312
		7. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$	Game 58						317
		7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	Game 59						322
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	d6	4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	a6						
5. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$	Game 61								332
5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	b5	6.0-0							
6... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$	7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	c5!?	Game 55						301
6... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$	7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	$\mathbb{Q}d7$	8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$	Game 56					306

Notes to Game 56 – after 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



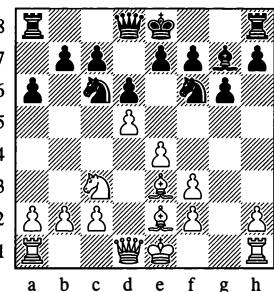
10...g5!

Notes to Game 57 – after 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



18... $\mathbb{Q}d7!N$

Notes to Game 61 – after 9.gxf3



9... $\mathbb{Q}b8!N$

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘f3**

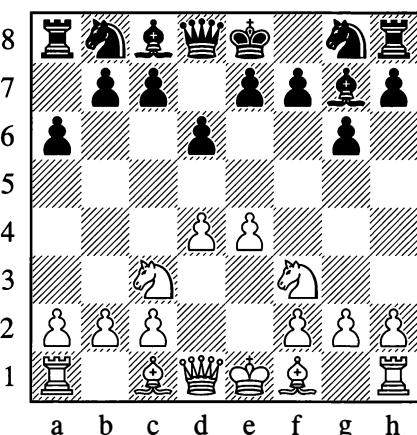
White can of course start with 3.♘c3. However, if he intends to bring the king's knight to f3 anyway, he can gain some extra options by doing it immediately.

**3...d6 4.♘c3**

Only the first and second games in this chapter will deal with this move order, which might be termed the "Classic Classical". The remaining games will focus on the cheeky 4.♗e2 and 4.h3, both of which are intended to take the sting out of the ...a6 plan.

**4...a6!?**

The most common move is 4...♘f6, transposing to the Pirc, but I have always preferred the nudge the a-pawn, preparing the familiar plan of ...b5, ...♘d7, ...♗b7, and ...c5.

**5.♗e2**

This move is characteristic of the Classical variation. The majority of my opponents have played 5.a4, when 5...b6 leads to the Hippo set-up of the previous chapter.

**5...b5**

Here is a summary of White's plans and the games in which they can be found.

**Normal development with ♗e2, 0–0 and ♜e1 (Games 55 and 56)**

I consider this the main line of the chapter. In the first game Black commits a slight inaccuracy by playing 7...c5, which is a bit too risky even for my taste. More reliable is 7...♗b7, as covered in Game 56 – although please take care to use the right move order as explained in the notes.

**White plays 3.♘f3 and 4.♗e2!?**

(Games 57, 58 and 59)

By postponing the development of his queen's knight, White discourages the plan of ...a6 and ...b5. However, with the bishop committed to the e2-square, Black can transpose to a Pirc, having bypassed the most critical lines. After 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.0–0 we will focus on the Hippo-like 6...e6!?, which avoids heavy theory while offering Black a reliable position with decent chances to play for a win.

**White plays 3.♘f3 and 4.h3!? (Game 60)**

Once again I advocate transposing to a Pirc. White's system with h2-h3 and ♜e3 is quite popular, but 6...a6! is an active reply with a healthy theoretical reputation, which also benefits from a certain synergy with the ...a6 Modern.

**White plays 3.♘c3, 4.♘f3 and 5.♗d3!?**

(Game 61)

By developing the bishop to d3, White prepares a set-up with ♜e2-g3, which offers him excellent chances against the Hippo. Black's best solution is to transpose to another version of a Pirc with 5...♘c6!, as covered in the notes.

**GAME 55**

**Alexander Khalifman – Valerij Popov**

St Petersburg 1997

**1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘f3 a6 5.♗e2!**

I believe this is more poisonous than forcing a Hippopotamus with 5.a4 b6 6.♗c4. The main reason is that, after Black's next move, White actually has something to attack: the b5-pawn.

**5...b5**

This is the standard move, but two other options can be considered.

**5...e6!?**

Despite the daft appearance, this move is an interesting alternative which refuses to present the b-pawn as a target for a2-a4. The only downside is:

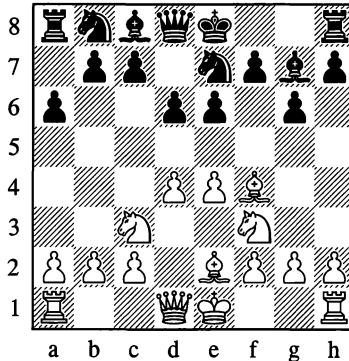
**6.♗f4!**

There have been many games with 6.0–0 and ♜e3, which leads to an excellent Hippo set-up for Black after ...e7, ...h6, ...♘d7 and so on.

6.e5?! should be met by 6...dxe5! 7.♗xe5 c5! when 8.♗e4 cxd4 9.♘c4 ♜c6 10.0–0 ♜ge7 11.♘ed6† ♜f8 reaches a position where White has some compensation for the pawn, but hardly more.

**6...♗e7!**

6...♗d7?! would be a mistake, because after 7.e5 it is difficult to protect the d6-pawn and neither 7...d5 nor 7...dxe5 will make Black happy.



**7.e5!N**

This is without question the most dangerous move.

**7...h6! 8.♗e4**

Black has no problems after 8.exd6 cxd6 9.♗e4 ♜f5, since 10.g4 is met by 10...d5!.

**8...d5 9.♗g3**

White is slightly better. (Instead after 9.♗f6?! ♜xf6 10.exf6 ♜g8 the machine prefers White, but I find it hard to believe that White has full compensation for a pawn.)

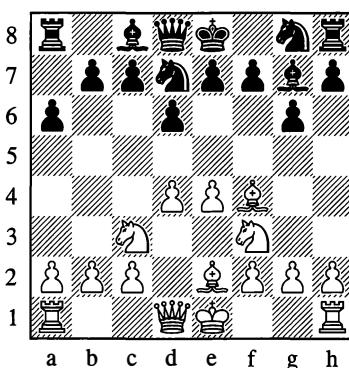
Considering the difficulties that arise in the above line, a better option seems to be:

**5...♗d7?!**

This flexible option allows Black to play either ...e6 or ...b5 on the next move. The question is whether it is possible to defuse the plan of ♜f4 and e4-e5.

**6.♗f4?!**

White is ready to meet ...e6 with e4-e5, but Black has some other options available.



6...b5!

6...c5?! 7.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  8.e5! leads to an initiative for White.

6...e5?!N seems playable. The critical line continues 7.dxe5 dxe5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  c6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

h6 13.f4 hxg5 14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with balanced play.

7.e5N

This has not been played, but it is the only serious move that needs to be checked.

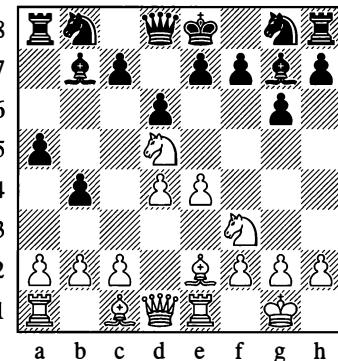
7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  c5 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12.exd6 0–0!

Black is doing well. This is quite a sharp line, and I recommend that you have a serious look at it.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  c5 9.a4! is analysed in the next game.

8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5

8...e6?! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  gives White a strong attack.



9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !

After 9...e6?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  Black is too soft on e6. Here White can improve on the game Arribas Robaina – Mera Cedeno, Quito 1997, with:

10.a3!N  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12.exd5 axb4 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White has a huge advantage.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Amazingly, no one has tried 7.d5!N, when 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  9.a3 leaves White with an advantage, as his control over c6 and e6 makes it difficult for Black to challenge the d5-pawn. This is the main reason for preferring 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! on the last move.

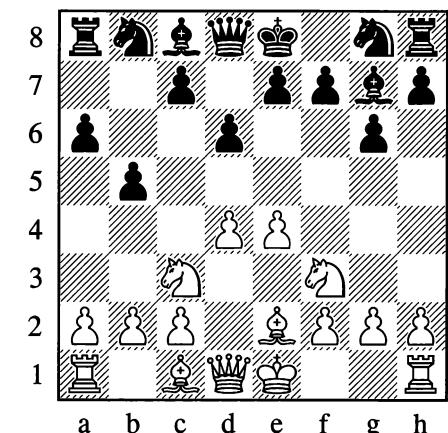
7...c5!?

This is playing with fire. I would feel more comfortable with 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !, as seen in the next game.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.a4!

9.d5!?

In the next game we will take a closer look at this structure in conjunction with  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ . With the bishop already on g5, it is not dangerous for Black.



6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?

This position is a notable exception to the “play ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  before ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ” rule.

6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5 looks fine for Black, who intends ...g5 and ...e6.

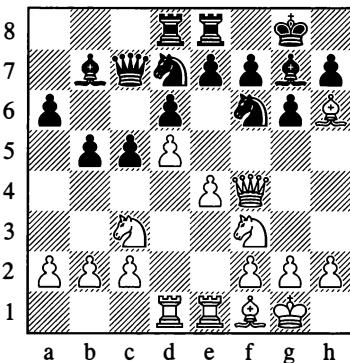
7...b4?

Here I would like to point out that Black should generally avoid pushing the b-pawn unless forced to. Even if it wins the e-pawn, Black ought to think twice about it. There are exceptions to this rule, but the present position is not one of them.

9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$

11.a4 b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  h6 gives Black an improved version of the next game, with several extra tempos.

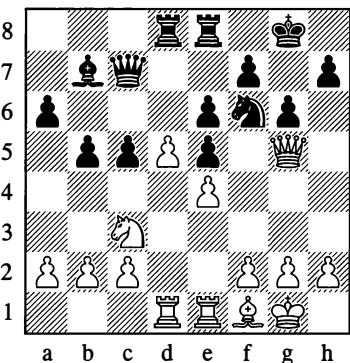
11... $\mathbb{W}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  14. $\mathbb{W}f4$



14... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ?

I prefer 14...e6!N 15.dxe6 fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ , the tactical justification being: 17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$  (17. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ ?! b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  e5 is even worse for White.) 17... $\mathbb{W}xd6$  18. $\mathbb{E}xd6$  b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  Now White has nothing better than 20. $\mathbb{E}xd7\#$   $\mathbb{E}xd7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{E}de7$  when Black is slightly better.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  17. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  e6 18. $\mathbb{W}g5$



18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !?

A creative but mistaken move.

After 18... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  19.d6!  $\mathbb{E}xd6$  20. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}d7$  21. $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}xc7$  22.e5 White is slightly better.

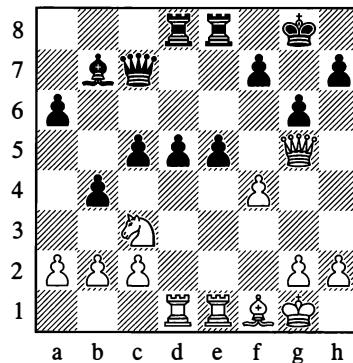
18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 19.dxe6  $\mathbb{E}xe6$  is enough to keep

White's advantage to a minimum after something like 20.a4 b4 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22.exd5 f6 followed by ... $\mathbb{E}d6$ .

19.exd5 exd5 20.f4?!

Better is 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and h4-h5, when Black has nowhere near full compensation.

20...b4

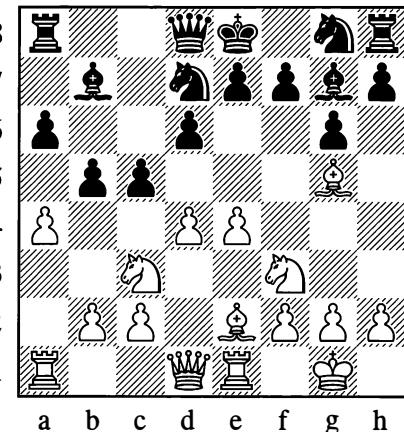


21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?

White should prefer 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e4 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ . In that case White has a strong attack and Black cannot get his centre rolling, because ...d4 can be met by  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

21... $\mathbb{E}xd5$  22. $\mathbb{E}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}xe5$  24. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  25.fxe5 a5

Black had a slight endgame advantage and went on to win in Doncevic – Nunn, Germany 1984.



**9...h6!**

It is important not to head for the Sicilian structure too quickly.

**9...cxd4?!**

This brought Black victory in one game, but not because of the opening.

**10.Qxd4 bxa4?!**

Black should try 10...b4 11.Qd5 Qgf6, although after 12.Qxb4 Wa5 13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.c3 White is clearly on top.

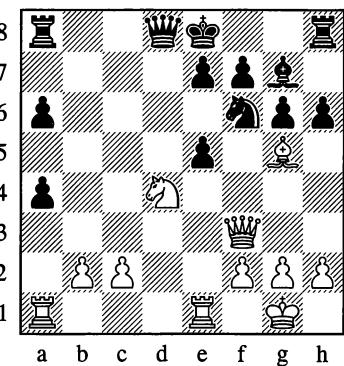
**11.Qd5?**

This is absolutely unnecessary.

After the normal 11.Qxa4! h6 12.Qe3! Qgf6 13.Qb3 intending Qa5, Black's position is unenviable.

**11...Qgf6 12.Qxf6†?!**

12.Qxa4! Qxd5 13.exd5 0-0 14.Qf3 Qe5 is still a bit better for White.

**12...Qxf6 13.Qf3 h6 14.e5 Qxf3 15.Wxf3 dxe5****16.Wxe5?**

White should minimize the damage with 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qc6 Wd2 18.Qxe5 0-0, when Black is only slightly better.

**16...hxg5 17.Qc6 Wd6 18.Wxe7† Qf8**

Black was winning in Kapnisis – Postny, Mureck 1998.

It is possible that Black can disarm some of White's pressure with:

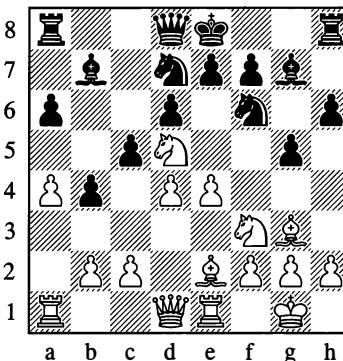
**9...b4? 10.Qd5 h6 11.Qh4 g5!**

11...Qgf6?! 12.Qxe7! Wxe7 13.e5 dxe5

14.dxe5 0-0-0 15.Qxa6 Qxe5 16.We2 is awful for Black.

**12.Qg3 Qgf6**

Now in E. Moskalenko – Fortunato, Internet 2010, White could have kept some initiative with:

**13.Qxf6†!N Qxf6 14.e5 dxe5**

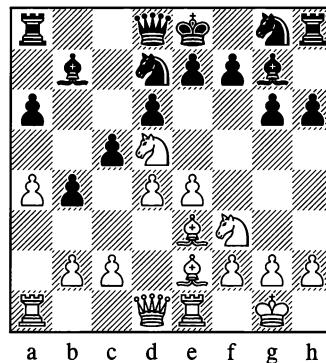
14...Qh5 15.e6! is dangerous.

**15.Qxe5 0-0 16.dxc5 Wc8 17.Qd3! Wxc5 18.We2 e6**

The engines initially favour White, perhaps because of the weakened black kingside, but I consider the position to be unclear.

**10.Qh4**

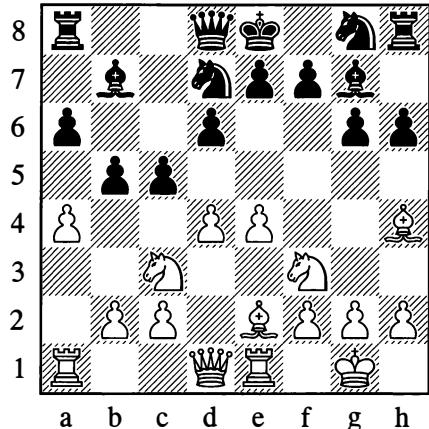
10.Qe3?N b4 11.Qd5 sets a small trap:

**11...Qgf6!** (Please watch out for 11...e6?

12.Qf4! exd5 13.exd5! Qe7 14.Qxd6 when White has a nasty attack.) 12.Qxf6† Qxf6

13.e5 Qd5 14.e6 Qxe3! (14...0-0 15.exf7†

$\mathbb{E}xf7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 17.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  is good for White.) 15.  $exf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  16.  $fxe3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17.  $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ! 18.  $e5$   $dxe5$  19.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $hxg5$  The position is balanced.



#### 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

White can also try: 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !?  $bxa4$ ! 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13.  $\mathbb{E}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! This is the only decent move. White was threatening  $\mathbb{B}b4$ . 14.  $exd5$  0–0 15.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16.  $dxc6$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17.  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  White keeps a slight edge.

#### 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ?

This is a unique possibility after the bishop has been forced to h4.

11...  $bxa4$  12.  $\mathbb{E}xa4$  has been played a couple of times. Now the most logical continuation seems to be 12...  $\mathbb{Q}gf6N$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , when White is slightly better but Black has counterplay.

For a moment I thought that 11...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?! 12.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  e5 was strong, but the computer ruined it all with 13.  $\mathbb{W}d5$ !, when 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd8$  is bad for Black.

#### 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !

This is the only way to justify the queen's expedition to b6. I have included this game partly to show how dangerous such a line

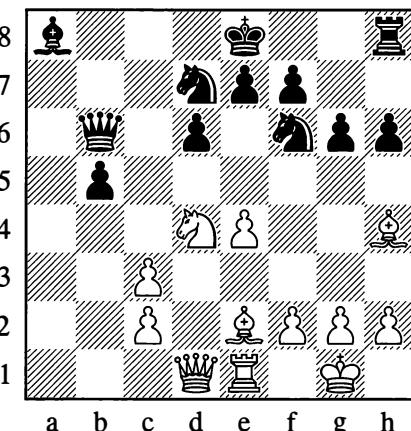
of action can be for Black. Objectively the position is fine, but this evaluation hangs by a thin thread.

#### 13. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !

Black finishes his development, but is left with a weak pawn on b5.

The alternative 13...  $bxa4$  14.  $\mathbb{E}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  is hardly a better defence, as the active white rook may prove annoying.

#### 14. $axb5$ $axb5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xa8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



#### 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ??

The best move was missed, not only by Black in the game, but also by me in *Tiger's Modern*: 16...  $e5!N$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  (17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $g5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $gxh4$  leaves White with inadequate compensation for the piece.) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $g5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  Black is doing fine.

#### 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $g5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $e5$

After 18...  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  19.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $e5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! it is time for painkillers.

#### 19. $f3$

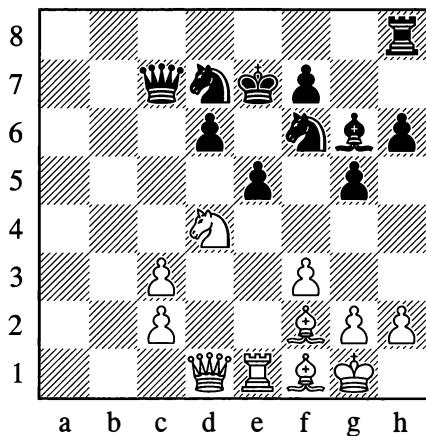
White also has a strong initiative after 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , intending c4-c5.

#### 19... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

If one feels tired of fighting, then 19...exd4 is a solution, allowing 20.♕xd7† ♕xd7 21.fxe4 dxc3† 22.♕f2, when Black is defenceless against the threats of e4-e5 and ♕d4.

### 20.♕f2 ♜c7 21.♕f1 ♜e7?!

Movsziszian suggests 21...0–0 22.♕b5 ♜c6, but 23.♕xd6 leads to an endgame with excellent winning chances for White.



### 22.♕d2 ♜b8 23.♕b5 ♜c6 24.c4 ♜e8

White is certainly better, but there does not seem to be a forced win. Khalifman finds a good way to increase the pressure.

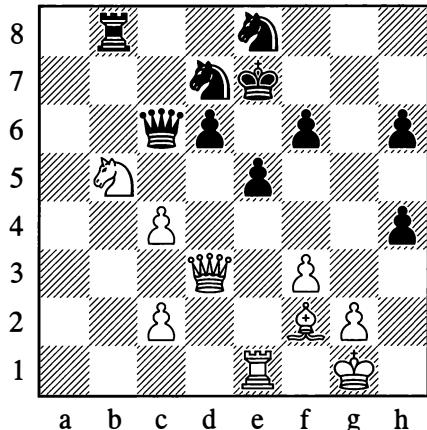
### 25.h4! f6 26.♕d3!

White forces a weakening of the light squares on the kingside, clearing the way for the queen to infiltrate on g6 or h7.

### 26...♕xd3 27.♕xd3 gxh4?

A blunder in a clearly worse position.

27...♕f8?! is more stubborn. Then White gains nothing from 28.♕h7 ♜xc4 29.♕xh6† ♜e7 30.♕d4 ♜d8, but after the accurate 28.♕a7! ♜c7 29.♕h7 is close to winning.



### 28.♕d4

Now everything falls into place for White.

### 28...♜a4 29.♕h7† ♜d8 30.♕e6† ♜c8 31.♕e7 ♜b7 32.♕b1† ♜a8 33.♕xe8!

Faced with ♜c7 mate, Black resigned.

**1–0**

This game contained some important themes, although there are two problems with the plan involving a quick ...♕d7 and ...c5. For one thing, it is plain risky to open the centre so early. Secondly, we saw that the move order with an early ...♕d7 invites White to play d4-d5 followed by ♜d4 with a queenside clamp.

Black's best set-up involves ...b5, ...♗b7 and ...♕d7 – in that order! The target position occurs at move 7 of the next game, although the move order was inaccurate as I did not understand all the nuances at the time.

## GAME 56

Per Vernersson – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Elitserien 2003

### 1.♘f3 g6 2.e4 ♘g7 3.d4 d6 4.♘c3 a6 5.♘e2

5.♘f4?! is a rare but tricky move. Black should probably avoid 5...b5 6.e5!, even though the position after 6...♗b7 7.♘d3 e6 is

not completely clear. Instead 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! looks better, intending 6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with decent counterplay in the centre.

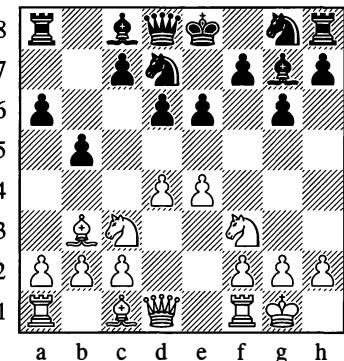
Although it does not strictly lead to a “Classical” set-up, it is worth considering the active development of the king’s bishop:

5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  b5!?

5...e6 leads to a Hippo and might be the best choice.

6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  e6 7.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

There are days when this type of position makes me fear that Black might come to regret the early ...b5. Other days I say “Bring it on!”



8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! can be met by 8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ . It is worth adding that after 9.e5 dxe5 10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , Black does not have to fear 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !?, as after 11...exd5 12. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  White has to play precisely in order to avoid being worse.

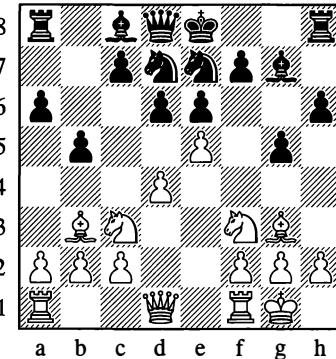
8.a4 b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.e5 (10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !?) looks quite dangerous, but after 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  Black is doing all right.) 10...dxe5 11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}ec5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  Black has enough compensation for the pawn.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9.e5

After 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$  h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Black is doing surprisingly well due to the weak e4-pawn.

9...h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! g5 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

This position was reached in Aalbersberg Kroon – K. Movsziszian, Salou 2008. Now the simplest continuation is:



11...dxe5!N

The game continued 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !?, when White could have pressed the Chaos Button with 12.d5!?.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  15. $\mathbb{E}fxd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$

White will suffer in the endgame due to the weak e-pawn.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?

I wanted to tempt my opponent into playing a2-a4, but this move order has its downside.

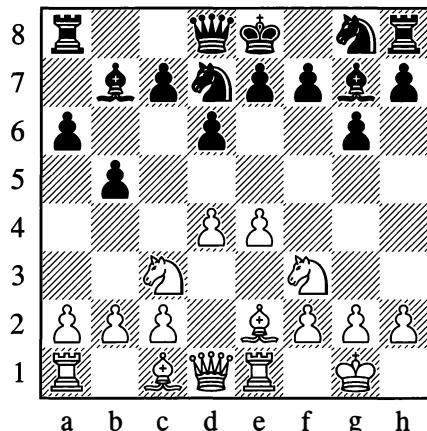
Let me remind you of the correct sequence: 5...b5 6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 7. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , reaching the same position as in the game, without allowing d4-d5 to be played with good effect.

**6.0–0 b5 7. $\mathbb{E}e1$**

Just as in the last game, White misses the opportunity to play 7.d5!. It took me a while to realize this detail and to mend my ways.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

With this move Black arrives at the target position, which should be reached via the sequence noted after Black’s 5th move above.



### 8.Qf1

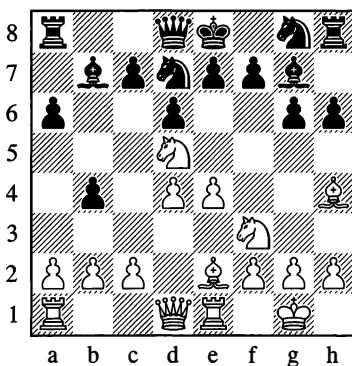
An important alternative is:

### 8.Qg5 h6 9.Qh4

Black must react energetically in order not to be run over. The strongest continuation has yet to be tested.

### 9...b4!N 10.Qd5

10.Qa4 and 10.Qb1 should both be met by 10...g5 11.Qg3 Qxe4, when White can claim some compensation for the pawn, but no advantage.



### 10...g5!

10...Qxd5 11.exd5 g5 12.Qg3 Qgf6 is well met by 13.a3! Qxd5 14.axb4 Qxb4 15.c3 Qd5 16.Qxa6 Qxa6 17.Qxa6 0-0. White is slightly better, although the reduced material gives Black good chances to hold.

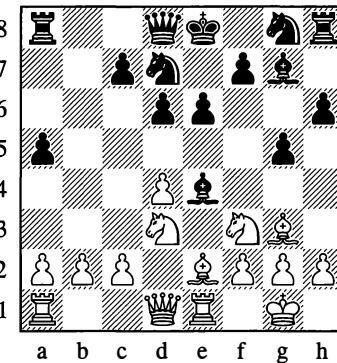
### 11.Qg3 e6!

11...a5 is too slow, and after 12.Qd3 (or

12.Qd3) 12...e6 13.Qe3 White is better.

### 12.Qxb4 a5 13.Qd3 Qxe4

Black seems to be fine, as the following brief lines show.



### 14.c3

14.Qf1?! Qxf3 15.Qxf3 Qxd4 16.c3 Qg7 leaves White with too little compensation for the pawn.

### 14...Qe7! 15.Qd2 Qg6

I prefer Black.

### 8...c5!?

This is the consistent continuation, but not the only playable one.

Both 8...e5?! 9.a4 c6 10.d5 and 8...b4?! 9.Qa4! Qgf6 10.e5! are bad for Black.

8...e6!? I am generally suspicious about this kind of accelerated Hippo, where Black has already played ...b5. However, I have not been able to find a refutation. Would I recommend it? If you study it first, then yes. A possible continuation is: 9.d5 Qgf6 (9...e5 is well met by 10.b4! followed by a2-a4.) 10.Qd4 We7 11.a4 b4 12.Qa2 a5 13.c3 bxc3 14.Qxc3 0-0 15.f3 Qc5 16.Qg5 The position remains unclear. Black will kick the bishop with ...h6 and ...g5 and then follow up with ...Qd7-e5.

### 9.d5

Another important option is:

9.a4!? b4!

After 9...cxd4?! 10.Qxd4 bxa4 11.Qxa4 a draw was agreed in D. Antic – D. Barlov, Nis 1995. Compared to the similar positions analysed in the last game, White has wasted a tempo on Qf1, but he should still be able to claim an edge: 11...Qc5 (11...Qgf6 is playable, although 12.Qb3 a5 13.Qe3 0–0 14.Qd4 Wc7 15.Qb5 Wd8 still seems a bit shaky for Black.) 12.Qb4! Qf6 Black is only marginally worse.

10.Qd5 Qgf6!

10...e6? 11.Qf4! is Game Over.

10...cxd4?! is also poor: 11.Qxd4 Qgf6

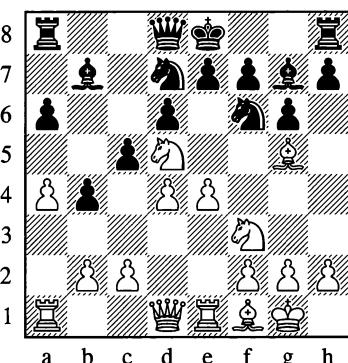
12.Qxb4 Wb6? (12...Qxe4 is better, but after 13.c3 White is threatening both Qbc6 and Qxa6, and I have not been able to find anything acceptable for Black.) 13.c3 Qxe4 (13...Qxe4 14.a5 Wc7 15.Qxa6 Qxa6 16.Qxe4 wins for White.) 14.a5 Wb7 15.f3 Qd5 16.Wa4 Qf8 17.c4 Qc5 A draw was agreed here in Rublevsky – Sakaev, Khanty-Mansiysk (4.2) 2005. A strange outcome, since White would be clearly better after 18.Wa3.

11.Qg5

11.Qc4 cxd4 12.Qxb4 e5 13.c3 Wc7! is already better for Black.

11.Qxf6† Qxf6 12.d5 0–0 13.Qc4 (13.a5 e6 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.Qg5 Qe8 is roughly equal.)

13...a5 Black should have been able to equalize with ...Qd7-b6, ...Wc8 and ...Qa6 in Geller – Hort, Linares 1983.



11...0–0!N

Once again, 11...cxd4 is riskier as it leaves the b-pawn hanging. 12.Qxd4 0–0? (My silicon friend comes up with 12...h6?N, claiming no advantage for White. The point is that after 13.Qh4 0–0 14.Qxb4 Qe8! there is no good way for White to protect e4. Nevertheless, the main line seems better to me.) 13.Qxb4 Black never got quite enough for the pawn in Belikov – Shchekachev, Sochi 1990.

12.dxc5

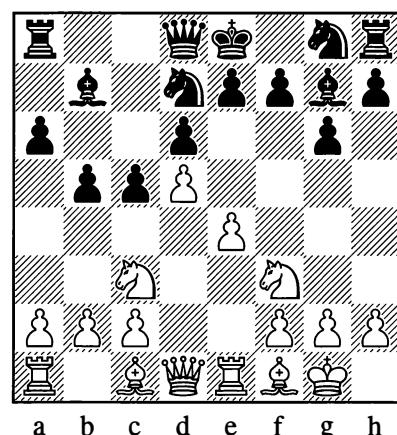
After 12.Qxf6† Qxf6 13.d5 h6 I do not see any advantage for White.

12...dxc5

12...Qxc5?! 13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.Qxf6† exf6 15.Wd4 a5 is also fine for Black.

13.Wd2 Qxd5 14.exd5 Qe8! 15.c4 bxc3 16.bxc3 Qf6

Black is perfectly okay.

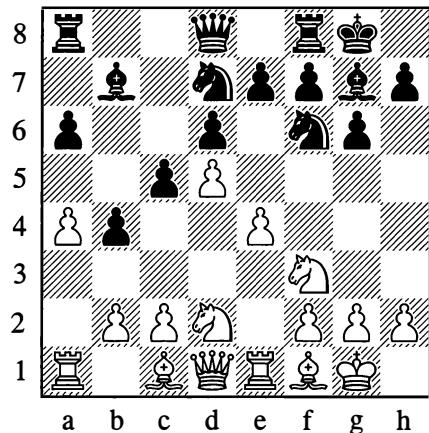


9...Qg6 10.a4! b4 11.Qb1

White's plan is simple; reroute a knight to c4, put the bishop on f4 and, if possible, play a4-a5. If he can achieve all of this, Black will be choking.

11...0–0 12.Qbd2

12.a5 gives Black time for 12...Wc7 and ...e6, with a good position.



**12... $\mathbb{W}c7$  13. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$  a5!?**

A decent alternative is:

**13... $\mathbb{E}fe8$  14.a5**

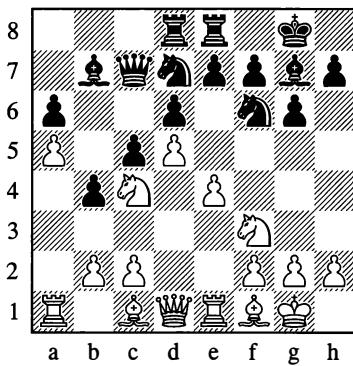
I believed that my set-up would be positionally suspect at this point, but I did not take into account certain resources.

**14... $\mathbb{E}ad8$**

Played to give the d6-pawn some extra protection.

Even after several hours of analysis, I am still not sure if Black cannot get away with

**14...h6?!** intending ...e6.



**15.h3**

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathfrak{Q}h5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathfrak{Q}hf6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h6  
18. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathfrak{Q}h7$  followed by ...e6 seems okay for Black.

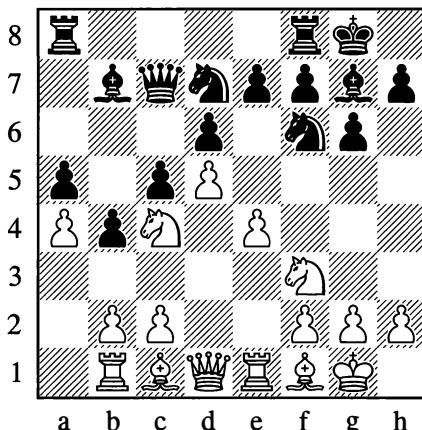
**15...e6 16.dxe6  $\mathbb{E}xe6$  17. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}xe4$  18. $\mathfrak{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{E}xe4$**

Black has reasonable compensation for

the exchange. I have analysed this position quite a bit deeper, and concluded that the sacrifice is more or less good enough for even a correspondence game.

**14. $\mathbb{E}b1!?$**

Vernersson wants the pawn on b2 to be defended in the event that I challenge the c4-knight with ... $\mathfrak{Q}a6$  and ... $\mathfrak{Q}b6$ .



**14... $\mathbb{E}fe8?!$**

I am dreaming of ...e6, but then it would have been better not to waste a tempo with 13...a5. True, White has only moved his rook to b1 in the meantime, but I still think it would have been better for Black to choose one plan and stick to it.

14... $\mathfrak{Q}b6$  is one idea, but White obtains some advantage with 15. $\mathfrak{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  followed by  $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ -c4.

The best choice would have been 14... $\mathfrak{Q}a6!$  intending 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathfrak{Q}h5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  with a balanced position.

**15.h3 e6?!**

This does not work out well.

I considered 15... $\mathfrak{Q}h5$  16.g4 (16. $\mathbb{W}d3!?$ ) 16... $\mathfrak{Q}hf6$ , intending 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathfrak{Q}xe4!?$  18. $\mathbb{E}xe4$   $\mathfrak{Q}f6$  19. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathfrak{Q}xd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$ . Black has

some compensation for the piece, but probably not enough.

The best idea was to return to the reliable plan with 15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , although 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  18.c4! leaves White with a clear initiative.

### 16.dxe6!

White does not fall for 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , when Black gets nice compensation thanks to his strong centre and bishop pair.

### 16... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$

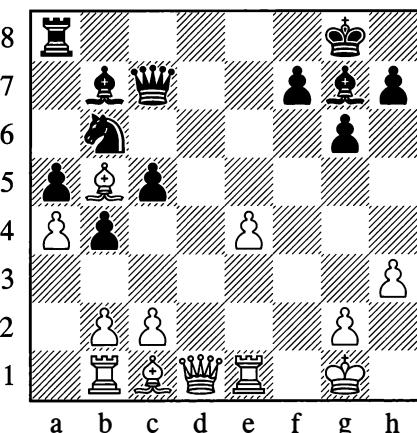
This was all according to my plan. Unfortunately, my plan was not that great...

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19.f3?!

19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! is stronger, intending 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21.f3 d5 22.fxe4 dxc4 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  25. $\mathbb{W}e2$ . White is a tempo up on the game, as Black has not played ...f5 here.

### 19...d5 20.fxe4 dxc4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

After 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  Black is happy.



### 22...f5! 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b3?

A bad time to start being materialistic. After this move I am facing an uphill struggle in the endgame.

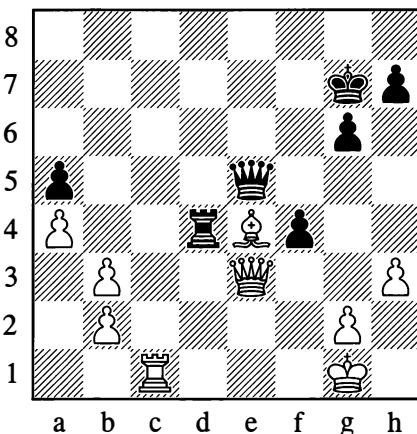
Much better was 24... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ! intending ...c4.

### 25.cxb3 $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ??

It was better to play 26... $\mathbb{W}e5$ , although the weaknesses on a5 and c5 should eventually tell. I was more bothered by my passive knight and planned to activate it at the price of a pawn.

### 27. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f4?

After 34...fxe4 35. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  Black still has chances to save the game.



### 35. $\mathbb{W}c3$ ?

Neither I nor my opponent spotted 35. $\mathbb{Q}c7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ? 36. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\uparrow$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  37. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\uparrow$  winning for White. Black can avoid this with 35... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ , but the endgame after 36. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  37. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}el\uparrow$  38. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  39.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  40. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  is hopeless for Black.

### 35... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ ?

35... $\mathbb{W}xe4$  would have prolonged the game, although White has excellent winning chances.

### 36. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Vernersson refuses to fall for my only trap: 36. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ??  $\mathbb{W}e3$ ! 37. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$  when I would have won. Now it is the other way around.

36... $\mathbb{W}d3$  37. $\mathbb{W}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  38. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  39.a5  
 $\mathbb{Q}h4$  40. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{B}xd3$  41.a6  $\mathbb{B}d7$  42. $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{B}a7$   
**43.b4**

I felt this was a suitable time to resign.

**1–0**

This was not the greatest day for the Modern, but it was a good day for learning something. Nowadays I am faster to challenge the c4-outpost in similar structures and would only – nah, mostly! – play ...e6 after protecting the d6-pawn. I hope you will do the same.

## GAME 57

**Andrey Zontakh – Roman Jenetl**

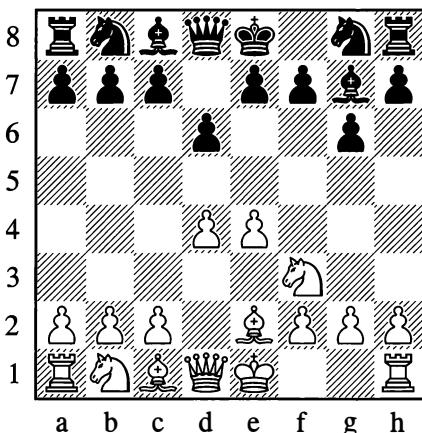
Krasnodar 2000

**1.e4**

The game actually started 1. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3.d4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , but I have changed the move order to show when it is necessary to abandon the ...a6 and ...b5 plan.

**1...g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?**

This is a tricky move order if White wants to avoid the ...a6 lines.



**4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !**

Black's best bet is to transpose to the Classical

Pirc – a rather toothless set-up which allows Black to choose between several decent lines.

Black must avoid 4...a6?!, since 5.c4! gives White a favourable version of a King's Indian where the ...a6 move is completely out of place.

**5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0–0 6.0–0 e6?!**

The most popular moves in this position are 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and 6...c6. Both are okay for Black, but playing them demands a lot of theoretical knowledge. In light of this, I am happy to recommend a more "Modern" approach.

**7.h3**

According to my database, White's most popular choice has been:

**7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?**

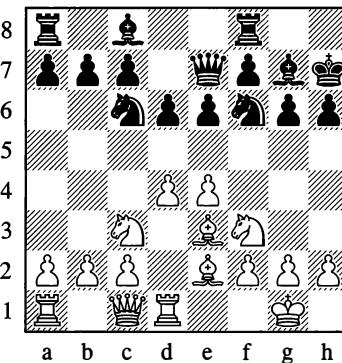
This is inaccurate, as the inclusion of ...h6 helps Black.

**7...h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. $\mathbb{W}c1$**

The point of playing this move rather than 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$  is that the imminent  $\mathbb{B}d1$  will bring an X-ray threat to the black queen.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  10. $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$**

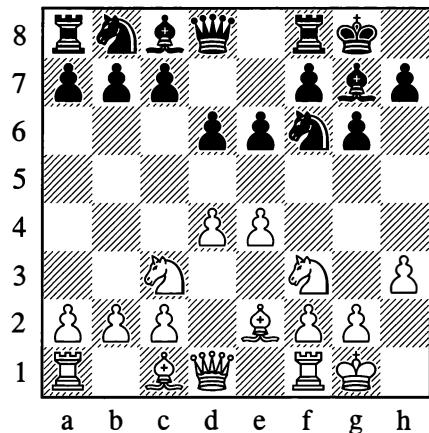
It is also possible to play 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?, 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12. $\mathbb{B}xd4$  e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a6 with a balanced position.



**11.h3 e5?!**

I would prefer 11...b6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .  
**12.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$**

Black was just a bit worse in Moiseenko – Delchev, Porto Carras 2011. I would definitely prefer one of the alternatives noted at moves 10 and 11; the former leads to a similar structure as the above game, but in a more pleasant version for Black.



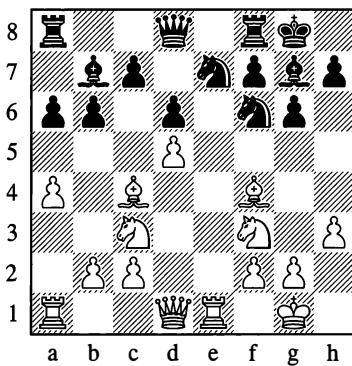
7...Qc6 8.Qg5?

Some say that these positions are not tempo-sensitive, but I disagree. This game provides a good example of how Black should make use of the extra ...h6 move.

The Swedish grandmaster Evgeny Agrest is a brilliant champion of the 6...e6 line, and there is much to be learnt from his games. Here is one such example:

8.Qe1 b6 9.Qf4 Qb7 10.d5 exd5 11.exd5 Qe7 12.Qc4 a6 13.a4

This can be considered one of the key structures for the whole ...e6 variation.

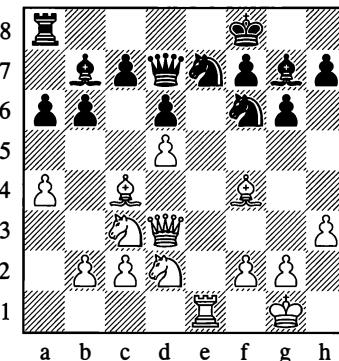


13...Qd7 14.Qd2 Qe8 15.Qad1 Qf5 16.Qd3 Qxe1† 17.Qxe1 Qe7

The position is equal but, since there are so many pieces left, both sides can play ambitiously.

18.Qd2! Qf8

18...c6 19.dxc6 Qxc6 is a suggestion from the silicon bug that I would avoid, since it exchanges White's biggest problem – the weak d-pawn.



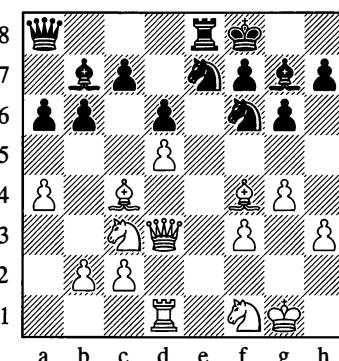
19.g4?

White tries to squeeze his opponent for space, but in doing so he seriously weakens the kingside.

Better was 19.Qde4 Qxe4 20.Qxe4, with a slight advantage for White.

19...Qe8 20.f3 Qc8 21.Qf1 Qa8 22.Qd1

This would have been a perfect time for the thematic pawn break:



22...b5!N

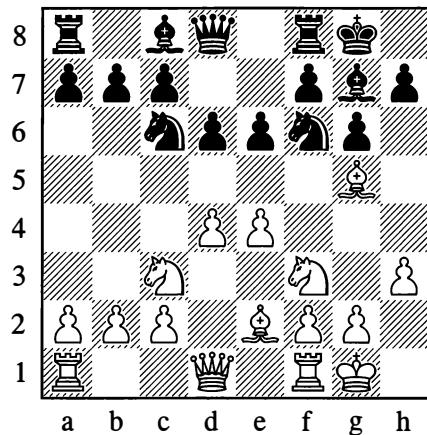
Evgeny preferred a calmer approach with 22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , and went on to win in Brynell – Agrest, Orebro 2000.

23.axb5 axb5 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

24. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  is similar.

24... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}b8$

Black has the better chances thanks to his central control and White's weakened kingside.



8...h6! 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$

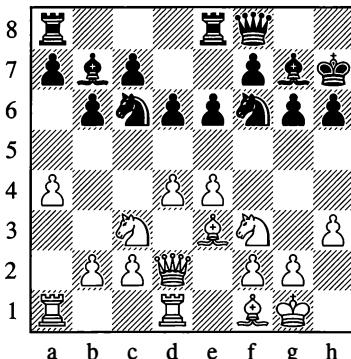
Practice has also seen:

10. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$

A flexible move that steps away from all sorts of tricks on the d-file.

12.a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  14. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}f8$ ??

Black seems to be teasing his opponent: "You can't get to me!"



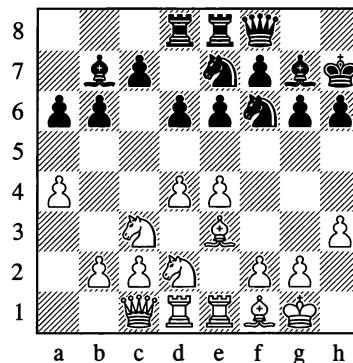
15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  17. $\mathbb{W}c1$

With this move White finishes one of the

least impressive manoeuvres I have seen:  $\mathbb{W}d1-c1-d2-c1$ ;  $\mathbb{Q}f1-d1-e1$ ;  $\mathbb{Q}a1-d1$ .

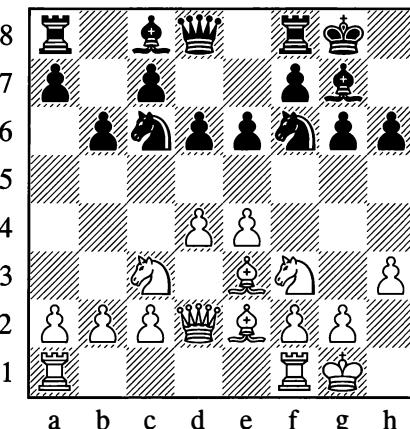
17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

At this point Black opted for 18...e5?!, after which 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.a5! b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  24. $\mathbb{W}e3$  reached a double-edged position in Roos – Shchekachev, Metz 2000, as White's outpost on c5 compensated for Black's bishop pair. Instead I would prefer a more flexible approach for Black:



18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !

Black avoids committing himself in the centre just yet, and will choose between ...e5 or ...f5 according to circumstances.



10... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? is a more accurate move order, as it enables Black to defuse the interesting  $\mathbb{Q}h2-g4$

plan as featured in the next note. Now 12.♕h2 can be met by 12...e5, while 12.e5 leads only to simplifications: 12...dxe5 13.dxe5 ♜xd2 14.♖xd2 ♜d5 15.♕xd5 exd5 16.♗xd5 (16.♗f4 ♜d8 is pleasant for Black.) 16...♗xe5 17.♗xe5 ♜xf3 18.♗xf3 ♜xe5 19.♗xa8 ♜xa8 The position is equal.

### 12.♗c1

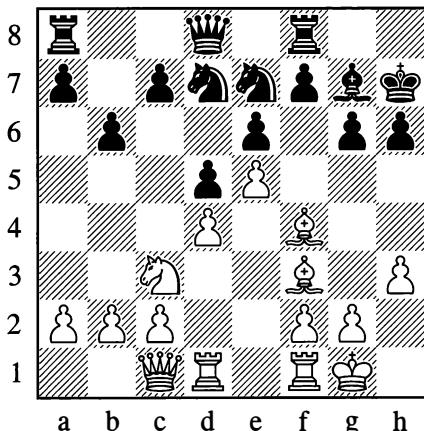
12.♕h2? ♜b7 13.f3! is an interesting plan, intending ♜g4. (Black should not be afraid of 13.♗g4 ♜fg8 14.f3 f5 15.♗f2 ♜f6.) 13...♗h5 14.♗e1 f5 15.g4 ♜f6 was played in Garbett – Benjamin, Hawaii 1998, and here I would be worried about 16.g5!N hxg5 17.♗xg5 intending e4–e5. I do not like this line for Black and would rather try 11...♜b7, although Black may also look for an improvement on move 13 in the above game.

### 12...♜b7 13.e5 ♜d7!

13...♗fd5 14.♗xd5 ♜xd5 15.♗d2 is a bit better for White.

### 14.♗f4 ♜xf3?! 15.♗xf3 d5

I have propagated this idea in the Hippopotamus chapter and I like it here too. During the time it will take for White to coordinate a kingside attack, Black will start rolling his queenside pawns.



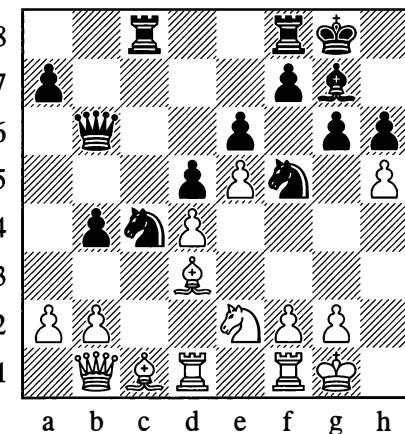
### 16.♗e2 c5 17.c3 b5 18.♗g3 cxd4?!

It is premature to release the tension in the centre. Black should have preferred either 18...b4 or 18...♗c8 19.♗b1 ♜g8, both of which leave White guessing as to how Black will play his cards.

### 19.cxd4 ♜a5 20.♗b1 ♗ac8 21.♗e2 ♜b6 22.h4!

White gets nowhere with 22.♗h5 ♜h8, since 23.♗f6? ♜xf6 24.exf6 ♜g8 25.♗e5 ♜d7 favours Black.

### 22...♜g8 23.h5 ♜c4 24.♗c1 b4 25.♗d3 ♜f5 26.♗e2 ♜b6



### 27.♗xf5?

A terrible decision. White could have increased his advantage with 27.hxg6 fxg6 28.♗xf5 gxg5 (28...♗xf5? 29.g4 wins) 29.♗d3, when it would be hard for Black to resist the coming attack along the h-file.

### 27...gxg5

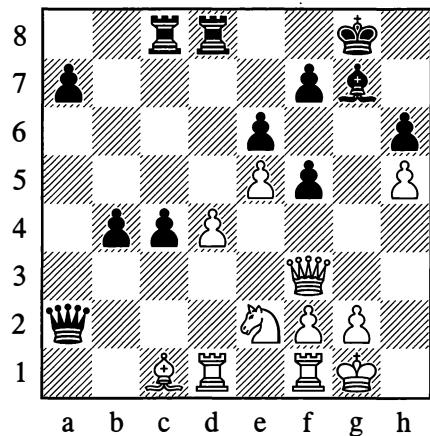
Now it will be hard for White to open files against the black monarch. The h5-pawn is doing more to defend Black than to attack him.

### 28.♗d3 ♜a6 29.b3?!

With this move the game enters a phase of complications, where I cannot tell what is up and what is down.

29... $\mathbb{W}xa2$  30.bxc4 dxc4 31. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$

It seems to me that Black has excellent compensation for the piece here. It all boils down to one thing: can White use his extra piece to threaten the black king? If not, then Black is at least equal.



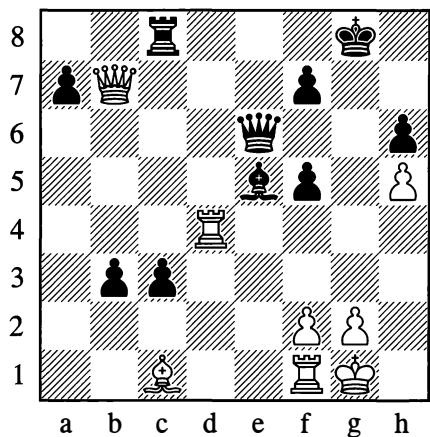
32.d5 c3 33.dxe6  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  34. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}xd4!$

With such strong passed pawns, Black is not fussy about material. The knight was White's most active piece and so it had to go!

35. $\mathbb{E}xd4$  b3 36. $\mathbb{W}b7$

Also after 36. $\mathbb{E}d6$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  37. $\mathbb{W}b7$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  38. $\mathbb{E}d7$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  Black has enough compensation for the rook.

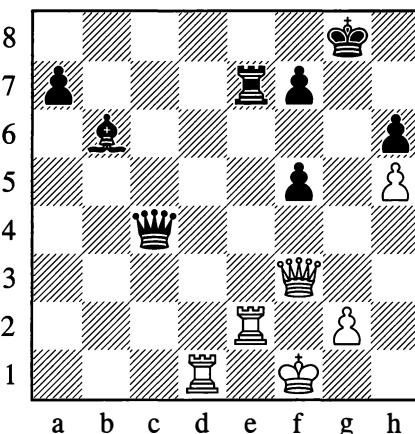
36... $\mathbb{E}xe5$



37. $\mathbb{E}e1?$ ! b2 38. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{C}xb2$  39. $\mathbb{E}dd1$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  40. $\mathbb{W}b5$   $\mathbb{E}e7$  41.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$  42. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}e3$  43. $\mathbb{W}xb2$   $\mathbb{W}c4\#$  44. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xf4\#$  45. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c4\#$  46. $\mathbb{E}e2$

Also after 46. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  47. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}h1\#$  48. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$  49. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}xe1$  50. $\mathbb{W}g3\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  51. $\mathbb{E}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}xh5$  Black keeps some winning chances.

46... $\mathbb{E}b6$



47.g3??

Here the game ended according to my database, possibly because of 47... $\mathbb{E}e3$  48. $\mathbb{W}g2$  (48. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{E}a3$  49. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  wins) 48... $\mathbb{W}g7$  49. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{E}d3$  and Black wins.

Instead of 47.g3, White could have fought on with 47. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  48. $\mathbb{W}h3$ , when Black's advantage is kept to a minimum.

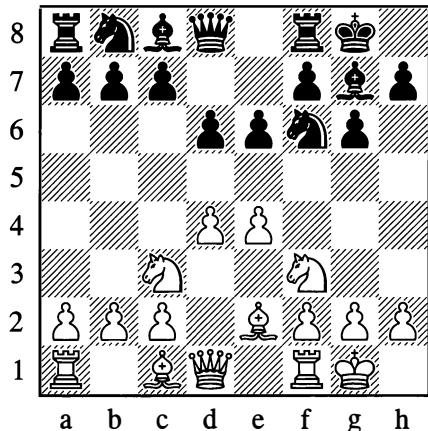
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The above game and accompanying notes have demonstrated that the early  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  loses time for White, as the extra ...h6 move is quite useful for Black. In the next two games we will see how White can challenge 6...e6 for real.

**GAME 58****Sergei Azarov – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Kusadasi 2006

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0–0 6.0–0 e6

7. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 

White prepares a future e4-e5.

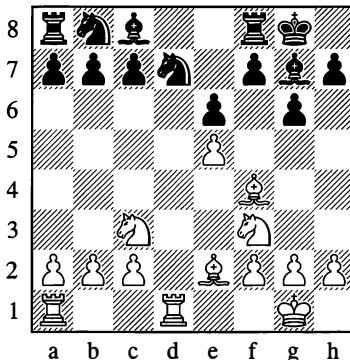
7.e5?! is also quite venomous if followed up correctly. After 7...dxe5 White can try a) 8.dxe5 or b) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !.

a) 8.dxe5

This move lacks ambition, and Black has no problem equalizing.

8... $\mathbb{W}xd1$  9. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 

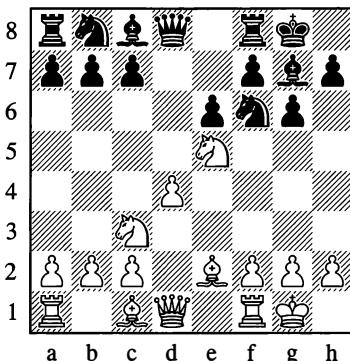
10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ? is refuted by 10...a6! 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$  (a sad but necessary retreat, since after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}a7$ ? the knight will perish) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  and White had nothing to show for the lost pawn in Yermolinsky – Benjamin, Denver 1998.

10...a6! 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ 11. $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13. $\mathbb{E}e4$  c5! is better for Black.11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{E}e1$  h6 13.h4 b5

With mutual chances, Roos – Gachon, corr. 2008. This position may be compared with the Amrein – Belotelov game, as mentioned on pages 324/5 in the note to Black's 10th move in the next main game, where Black could have been left a bit behind in development after 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ !. In the present position Black has more space and will have no problem connecting the rooks, while the e5-pawn remains a target for the future.

b) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !

This is more challenging, but I found an interesting improvement over the existing games.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !N

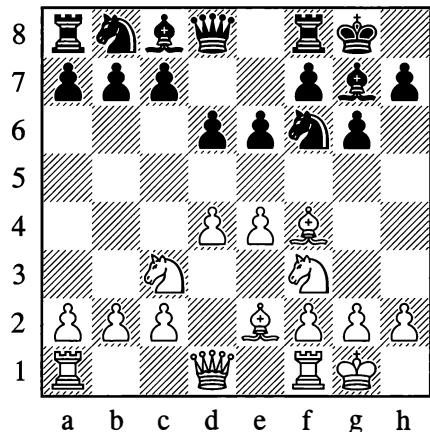
8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  also gives Black a playable position. The critical continuation is 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c6 11.f4! as seen in Rhodes – Nyvl, corr. 2012. White has some pressure here, although Black may also be happy to reach a position where small mistakes come at a high price.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.f4

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is comfortable for Black.

10...b6 11.c4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

White is slightly better, but Black is not without trumps, and a complex battle lies ahead.



7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

7...h6?!

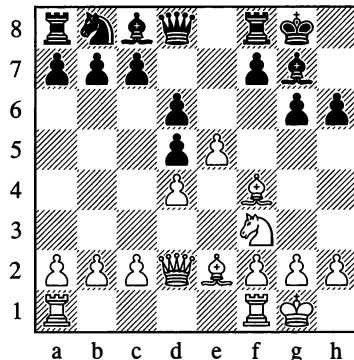
This is a bit too provocative, although it is worth showing a game that contained some interesting ideas.

8.e5

White gains nothing from 8. $\mathbb{W}c1$  g5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , as there is no way to take advantage of Black's weakened kingside.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ?

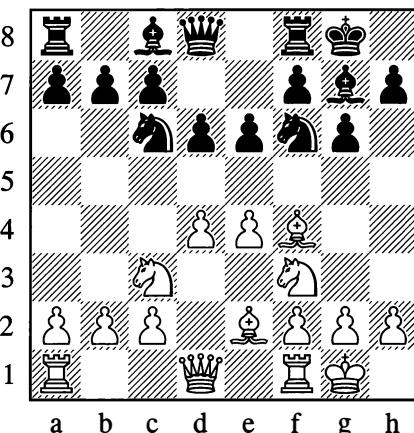
The correct continuation is 10.exd6 cxd6 11.h3!, when it is hard for Black to make up for the doubled pawns.



10...g5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$

12...f5?! 13.exf6  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  14.c3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$  13. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14.c3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  dx5 16.dxe5?!

Black was no longer worse off in Bertholee – Goloshchapov, Hoogeveen 2001. However, it would be pushing one's luck to follow this example.



8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

The alternative is:

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Now Black has two playable options.

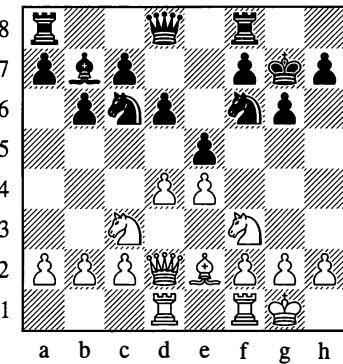
8...b6!

This is the move that best fits with the recommended repertoire.

8...e5 leads to massive exchanges and drawish positions: 9.dxe5 (After 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?! exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11.f3 d5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ )

White has to think about equalizing.) 9...dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♜xd8 11.♗xe5 ♜d4! 12.♗d1 (I would be more worried about 12.♗c4N ♜e6 13.♗g5. Black should probably play 13...h6!? [13...♗xc2 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗ac1 ♜d4 leaves White with a positional plus.] 14.♗xe6 ♜xe6 15.♗xf6 ♜xf6 16.♗d3 ♜xc3 17.bxc3 ♜d6 when he has just about enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.) 12...♝e8 13.♗e3 ♜xe4 14.♗xd4 ♜xc3 15.♗xc3 ♜xe5 16.♗e1 f6 17.♗f3 ♜f7 18.♗xe5 fxe5 19.♗e3 c6 20.g4 ♜f6 ½–½ Zagorskis – Nyvlt, email 2002.

9.♗ad1 ♜b7 10.♗h6 e5 11.♗xg7 ♜xg7



12.dxe5?!

If White was happy with an equal position, then 12.♗e1N would have achieved it in a more comfortable way.

The ambitious option is 12.d5!N, when 12...♗b8 13.b4 ♜bd7 14.a3 a6 15.♗d3 ♜h5 16.g3 ♜g8 17.♗d2 ♜g7 18.♗c4 f5 gives Black enough counterplay.

12...♗xe5 13.♗xe5 dxe5 14.♗g5 ♜e7

Black was slightly more comfortable in J. Houska – Rowson, West Bromwich 2004.

8...h6?!

With ...♗c6 and ♜e1 included, I felt that I could justify this move.

I did not like 8...b6 on account of 9.e5! dxe5 10.dxe5, when I am behind in development and have some weak squares to keep track of.

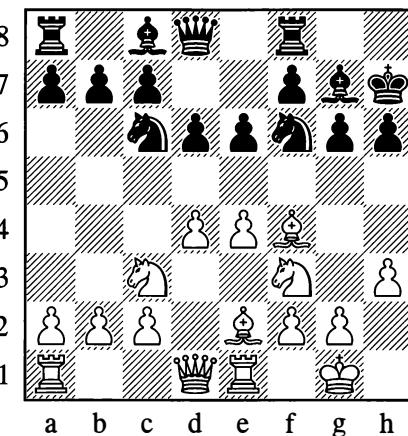
However, it turns out that after 10...♗d5 11.♗d2 ♜xf4 12.♗xf4 ♜b7 13.♗ad1 ♜e7 14.♗e4 ♜fd8 Black is not doing too badly. 15.♗f6†?! ♜h8 achieves nothing for White, and after other moves Black can either trade some rooks on the d-file or improve his knight with ...♗b4-d5.

### 9.h3

9.e5 dxe5 10.dxe5 ♜d5 gives Black an improved version of the previous note. The ...h6 move is more useful than ...b6, as it helps Black to cover the sensitive dark squares on the kingside. More concretely, 11.♗d2?! g5! is unpleasant for White, so 11.♗xd5 is more or less forced, when 11...exd5 leaves Black with nothing to complain about.

### 9...♗h7

I suspected that my opponent would play ♜d2 at some stage, and I decided that ...g5 was not such a good idea now that the h2-square was available for the bishop. So, why not keep as flexible as possible?



10.♗d2 a6?!

10...b6 is also perfectly playable: 11.d5 exd5 12.exd5 ♜e7 13.♗c4 ♜b7 14.♗e2 a6 15.♗ae1 ♜e8 16.a4 ♜d7 17.♗d3 ♜f5 We have reached a thematic position, similar to the Brynell – Agrest game mentioned earlier on pages 313/4.

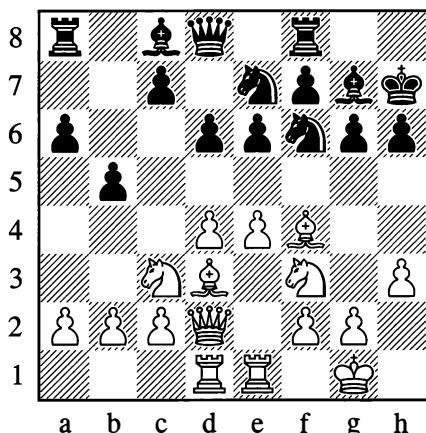
White's space advantage gives him a small plus, but everything is left to play for, even if the heavy artillery gets exchanged.

### 11.♕ad1 ♔e7

Continuing my cautious approach, I avoided 11...b6 on account of 12.e5! dxe5 13.♕xe5 when I was unable to find a convincing continuation for Black.

### 12.♗d3 b5!?

Not so cautious any more. Normally I prefer not to give White a target on the queenside when I have already committed to ...e6, but the a2-a4 plan loses a bit of its sting after the rook goes from a1 to d1.



### 13.♗h2 ♕b7 14.e5

White cannot wait forever with this move.

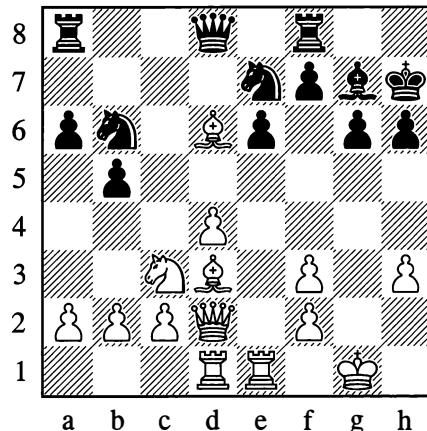
### 14...♗d7!?

I do not mind sacrificing a pawn if I get the better pawn structure in return.

Instead 14...b4 15.♗e2 dxe5 16.♗xe5 a5 leads to a more open position where White's pieces are more active.

### 15.exd6 cxd6 16.♗xd6 ♕xf3 17.gxf3 ♕b6

Objectively speaking White should be better here, but I find it easier to play Black's side.



### 18.♗c5

After 18.♗e5 ♕f5 19.♗xf5 exf5 20.b3 ♜c8 White's pieces lack coordination and Black is taking over the initiative.

### 18...♗g8!?

These positions where you have lots of moves to chose between are some of the most difficult to play. Did I not say that Black's position was the easier to play? Can't remember.

18...♗e8 is a natural move to consider, although 19.♗f4 ♕f5 20.♗xf5 gxf5 21.♗h1 ♕d5 22.♗xd5 ♜xd5 23.♗g1 ♕f6 is slightly better for White.

The most interesting alternative is 18...♗g8!? intending 19.♗f4 ♕f5 20.♗e4 ♜b8 21.b3 ♕d7, with a mess that I can relate to.

### 19.d5!?

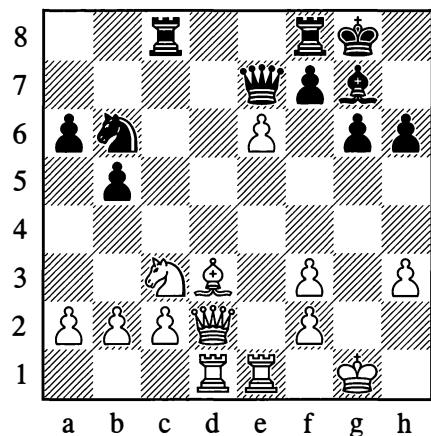
I cursed myself when my opponent played this move. I had not seen it in advance, and when it appeared on the board I thought my position was really bad. However, the flashy moves are not always the strongest.

19.♗e4 ♕f5 20.c3 would have made it harder for Black to find counterplay.

### 19...♗c8! 20.♗xe7

I was hoping for 20.♗b4 ♗exd5! 21.♗xd5 ♜xd5 22.♗xf8 ♜xf8 with some kind of counterplay on the dark squares, although the machine is not convinced.

**20...♝xe7 21.dxe6**



**21...♝f5?!**

That is a bit over the top. I thought I could keep the white bishop out of the game, but I miscalculated.

After the correct 21...♝h7 22.exf7 ♜xf7 23.♗e4 ♜cd8 we reach a seriously unbalanced position where Black is only slightly worse.

**22.♗f1**

22.a4! is stronger. I had been planning 22...♜xc3 23.bxc3 ♗xa4, but failed to appreciate that 24.♗xh6 ♜g7 25.♗g5! is too strong to be survived. Play may continue 25...♜f6 26.♗xf6 ♜xf6 27.c4 ♗b2 28.♗al and White's pieces are coming alive – now in 3D, at a cinema called “the a-file”.

**22...♝c6**

Now I am almost in control again. It is difficult for White to get any mileage out of the e-pawn.

**23.♗d5**

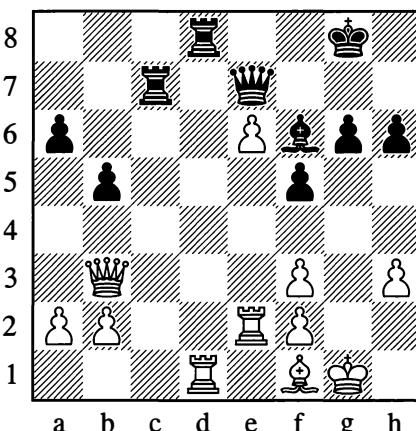
It was possibly better to play 23.a4 first.

**23...♝xd5 24.♗xd5 ♜xc2 25.♗d7 ♜f6**

I have managed to set up a blockade and the rest of the game is not very interesting.

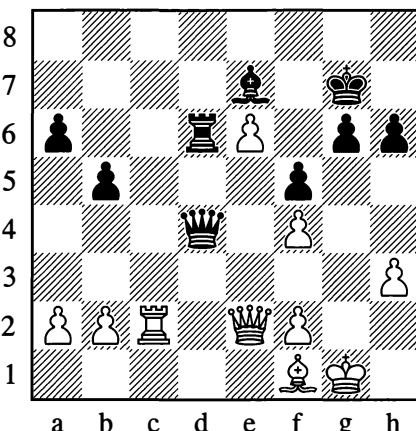
**26.♗e2 ♜c7 27.♗d5 ♜d8 28.♗b3**

After 28.♗xd8† ♜xd8 29.♗xd8† ♜xd8 30.♗d2 ♜e7 31.♗d7 ♜xd7 32.exd7 ♜f7 33.a4 ♜e6 34.axb5 a5! it is a dead draw.

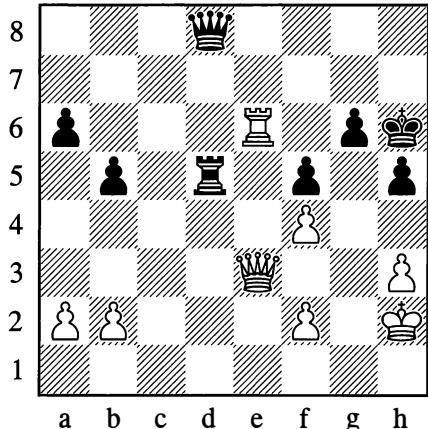


**28...♜xd1 29.♗xd1 ♜c5 30.f4 ♜g7 31.♗d3 ♜e7 32.♗d2 ♜c8 33.♗f3 ♜c6 34.♗e2 ♜d6 35.♗c2 ♜d4?!**

Instead 35...♜b6! would have forced 36.♗e5† ♜f6 37.e7 ♜xe5 38.e8=♛ ♜f6 with complete equality.



36.  $\mathbb{E}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  37.  $\mathbb{E}c8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  38.  $\mathbb{E}c7$   $\mathbb{W}f6$   
 39.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}xe6$  40.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  41.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{E}e6$   
 42.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $h5$  43.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  44.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{E}xd5$   
 45.  $\mathbb{E}xe7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  46.  $\mathbb{E}e6$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  47.  $\mathbb{Q}h2$



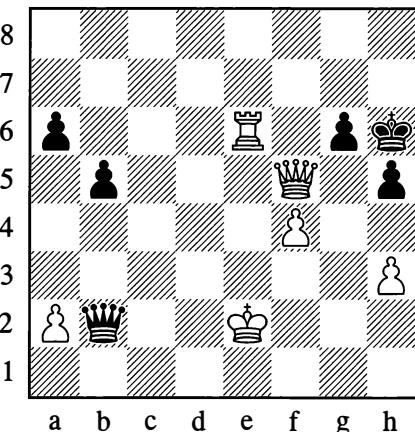
47...  $\mathbb{E}d3?$

47...  $\mathbb{E}d6$  is a draw.

48.  $\mathbb{W}c5$   $\mathbb{E}d2$  49.  $\mathbb{W}xf5\#$   $\mathbb{E}xf2\#$

During the game I believed I had a perpetual check, but I had overlooked an important detail.

50.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}d1\#$  51.  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}d2\#$  52.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d1\#$   
 53.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}d2\#$  54.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d1\#$  55.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c1\#$   
 56.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xb2\#$



57.  $\mathbb{Q}d1?$

We both missed that 57.  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$   $\mathbb{W}c3\#$  58.  $\mathbb{E}e3!$   $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$  59.  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $gx5$  60.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  61.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  62.  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  wins easily for White.

57...  $\mathbb{W}a1\#$  58.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xa2\#$  59.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}b3\#$   
 60.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}b2\#$  61.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $h4\#$  62.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c3\#$   
 63.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b2\#$  64.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}d4\#$  65.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}c4\#$   
 66.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}b4\#$  67.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}c4\#$  68.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}b4\#$   
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

We saw in the notes that 7.  $e5!?$  is a critical test, although 7...  $dxe5$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5!N$  leads to a decent position for Black. After the game continuation of 7.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.  $\mathbb{E}e1$ , Black can play either 8...  $h6$  or 8...  $b6$ , depending on whether he feels like pressing the “risky” or the “safe” button.

In the next game we will consider a few other set-ups for White, which do not revolve around a quick  $e4$ - $e5$ .

## GAME 59

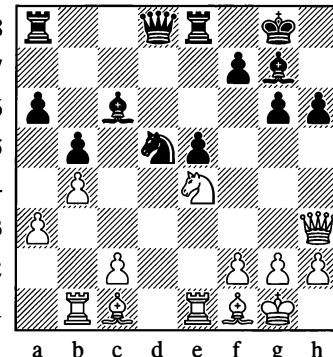
Ivan Salgado Lopez – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

1.  $e4$   $d6$  2.  $d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $g6$  4.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$   
 5.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 6. 0-0  $e6$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White has many other options:

7.  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $h6$  9.  $a3!?$   $a6$  10.  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $b6$   
 11.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.  $b4$   $e5$  13.  $d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $b5$   
 15.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $c6$  16.  $dxc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $d5$  18.  $exd5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  21.  $\mathbb{W}h3$



Now in Corkett – Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2004, instead of playing 21...f5?!, I could have gained a clear advantage with 21...Qf4N.

7.a4?!

Surprisingly, this is one of the most critical moves.

7...Qc6

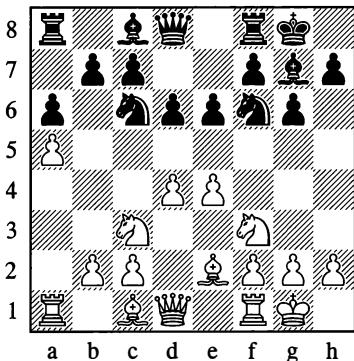
This is clearly strongest.

If 7...a5?! then 8.e5! will gain in strength.

8.a5! a6!?

Just like Jonathan, I have not been able to find anything better than this.

8...Qe7 is met by 9.a6 b6 10.Qf4 h6 11.h3 and it is hard to see how Black will develop the queenside.



9.h3 h6

It is worth considering 9...b5? 10.axb6 cxb6 11.Qe3 (or 11.Qg5 h6 12.Qe3 Qb7) 11...Qb7 when Black had a reasonable position in S. Ahmed – Rahman, Dhaka 2004.

10.Qe3 Qh7 11.Qe1 Qd7

Once again, Black could have played more dynamically with 11...Qe7N 12.Qd2 b5? 13.axb6 cxb6. I usually avoid this kind of pawn structure, but here I believe it is Black's best shot at counterplay. A possible continuation is 14.Qf4 Qb7 15.Qd3 b5 16.Qh2 Qb6 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxe5 Qd7 19.Qxb5 axb5 20.Qxd7 Qf5 and Black's pieces have sprung to life.

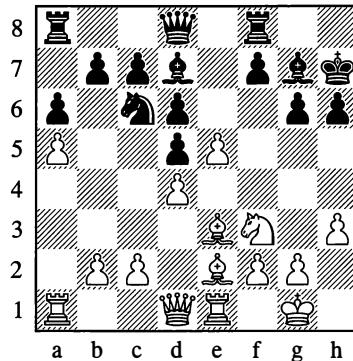
Instead Jonathan seems to be trying to make

all the possible moves that do not disclose any real plan. Now White gets tired of waiting.

12.e5

12.Qd2 Qe7 13.Qd3 looks a bit better for White.

12...Qd5 13.Qxd5 exd5

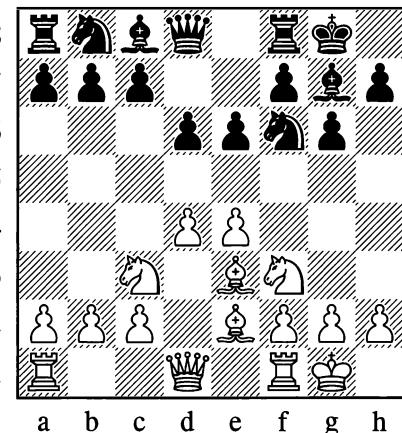


14.Qf4

It is not good for White to play 14.exd6 cxd6, as White's a-pawn finds itself in the crosshairs of two enemy pieces. After 15.Qd2 Qc8 the a1-rook is bound to the defence of a5.

14...Qe6 15.c3 dxe5 16.dxe5 Qc8 17.Qd3 Qe7 18.Qd4 c5 19.Qxe6 fxe6 20.Qg4 c4 21.Qc2 Qf5 22.Qe3 h5 23.Qe2 Wh4

Black had achieved counterplay and eventually won in Friedrich – Rowson, Porto Mannu 2007.



**7...h6?**

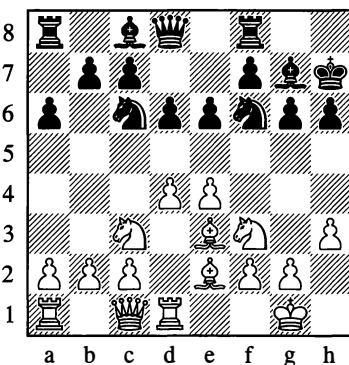
This move is a bit slow, but if Black can get away with it then it should be played.

7...b6 is possible, although 8.e5! dxe5 9.Qxe5 ♖b7 10.Qf3 ♖d5 11.Qxd5 exd5 12.c4 is somewhat better for White.

7...Qc6 is the best alternative, but 8.Wc1 b6 9.Qg5 is slightly annoying for Black.

**8.h3**

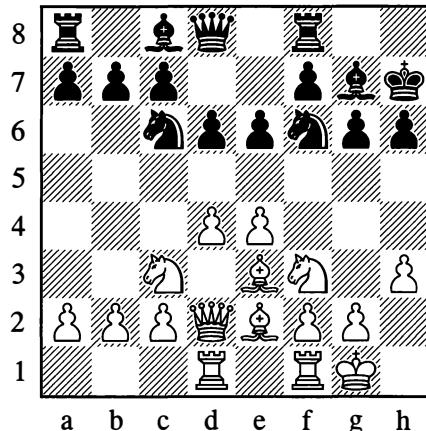
The critical line is 8.Wc1! ♖h7 9.Qd1, but I believe Black can calmly continue with: 9...Qc6 10.h3 a6! The point is that Black can continue to improve, bit by bit, for quite a long time, whereas White will need to do something about his queen's rook. (10...b6? 11.e5 ♖d5 12.Qxd5 exd5 13.c4 gives White some initiative.)



11.e5?N This is not the only playable move of course, but it is the most important one to check. 11...Qd5 12.Qxd5 exd5 13.c4 Since Black avoided ...b6 a few moves ago, he can play 13...Qe6! with a balanced position.

**8...Qc6 9.Wd2 ♖h7 10.Qad1**

One of the points of Black's set-up is illustrated after 10.Qh2 e5! when White has nothing better than returning to f3 with the knight, leaving Black a tempo up on standard lines.

**10...b6**

After the game I was not happy with this, since it involved a miscalculation on the next move. The black position is still not bad though.

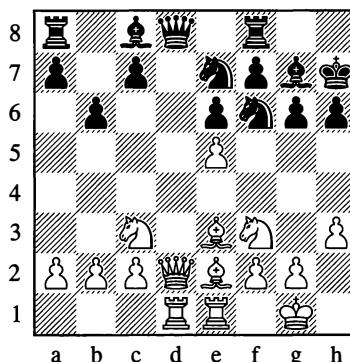
More ambitious is 10...Qe7!, intending to meet e4-e5 with ...Qfd5. Now we will consider a few ideas after both a) 11.Qfe1 and b) 11.Qd3.

## a) 11.Qfe1 b6 12.e5 dxe5?!

If a2-a4 and ...a6 had been played and Black had not wasted time on ...Qh7 and ...Qe7, this exchange would be fine. However, here Black is clearly behind in development and should prefer 12...Qfd5! 13.Qxd5 Qxd5 with an excellent position.

## 13.dxe5

13.Qxe5! ♖b7 14.Qf4 is a little better for White.



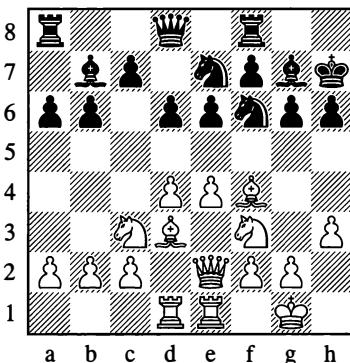
13... $\mathbb{W}xd2$  14. $\mathbb{B}xd2?$ !

After 14. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  16. $\mathbb{B}d2$  White keeps a bit of pressure although Black should be okay.

14... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

A draw was agreed here in Amrein – Belotelov, Harkany 2000, although by now I would have been ready to play on with Black.

b) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b6 12. $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  a6 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$



14...b5?!

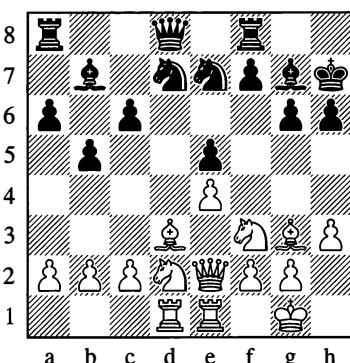
I would prefer 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7N$  or 14... $\mathbb{W}d7N$ . 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  e5?!

16...c5!N 17.c3 e5 18.dxe5 dxe5 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  c4

20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  looks better.

17.dxe5 dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c6?!

Once again 18...c5 should have been played, although White keeps some advantage with 19.c4 b4 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5 24.f4!.



19.c3

19.c4! is more energetic.

19... $\mathbb{W}c7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}b1?$  c5

White has lost the thread over the last few moves, allowing Black to take over the initiative in Klundt – Ponomariov, Bad Wiessee 1999.

11.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ !

I did not realize that it was actually possible to play 11...dxe5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  14. $\mathbb{B}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , when 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 16. $\mathbb{B}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  leads to immediate equality. This all happened in the game Vajda – Belotelov, Budapest 2000.

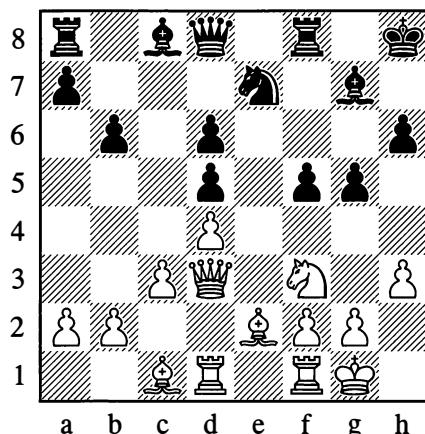
12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 13.exd6 cxd6

Due to my mistake on move 11, I have ended up in a slightly worse position.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  g5?! 15. $\mathbb{W}d3\ddagger$  f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17.c3

$\mathbb{Q}e7$

Things are not so bad for Black at this point. The doubled pawns are hard to attack, and White has plenty to think about on the kingside.



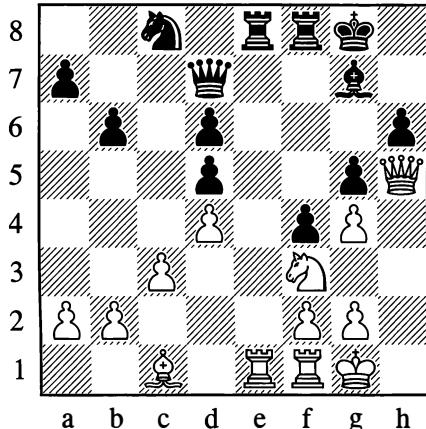
18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  f4 19. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  20.hxg4  $\mathbb{W}d7$

21. $\mathbb{Q}de1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$

It was better to play 21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c6$ , intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g6-h4$ , followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ .

22.♕f3 ♕c6 23.♕h3 ♔c8 24.♕h5 ♔g8  
25.♔f3 ♕d7

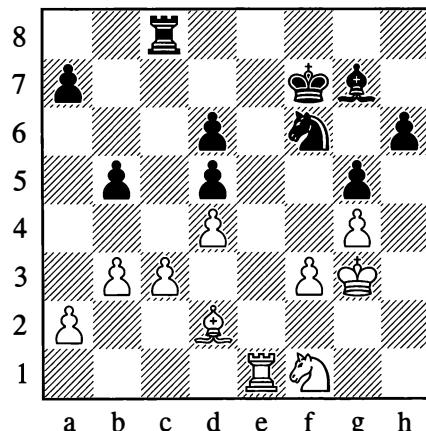
25...b5! was stronger, preparing for the endgame.



26.b3 ♕f7 27.♕xf7† ♔xf7 28.♔h2 ♕xe1  
29.♕xe1 ♔e7

Here too, it was better to play 29...b5 followed by ...a5.

30.g3 fxg3† 31.♔xg3 ♔g8 32.♔h2 ♕c8  
33.♔d2 ♔f6 34.f3 b5 35.♔f1



35...♕e8

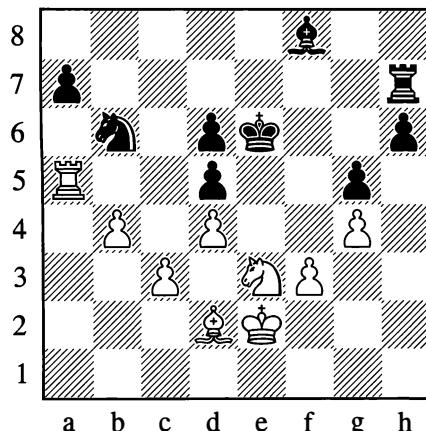
Here I missed a chance to force a simplified position with 35...h5! 36.gxh5 ♔xh5† 37.♔g4 ♔f6† 38.♔f5 g4! 39.fxg4 ♔e4, with excellent drawing chances.

36.♔e3 ♕f8 37.♔f2 ♕g6 38.♔a1 ♕b8 39.a4

Now I am in trouble and it is a minor miracle that I manage to survive.

39...bxa4 40.b4 ♕b7 41.♔xa4 ♕f7 42.♔a5  
♔e6 43.♔e2 ♕e7 44.♔f5 ♕f8 45.♔g3 ♔d7  
46.♔f5 ♔b6 47.♔e3 ♕h7?

After 47...♕f7 White is still a long way from the goal.



48.♔a1?

We both missed 48.f4! gxf4 49.♔g2! ♕e7 50.♔xf4† ♔d7† 51.♔d3 with an even bigger advantage for White.

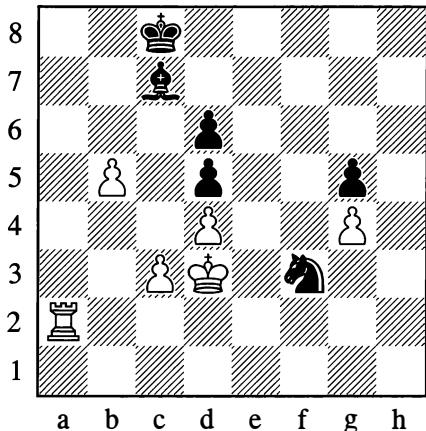
48...♕f7 49.♔h1 ♔d7 50.♔f5 ♔c4 51.♔xh6?

Had my opponent played 51.♔c1 ♕f6 52.f4 gxf4 53.♔xf4, I probably would not have survived

51...♕e7† 52.♔d3 ♔xd2 53.♔f5 ♔xf3  
54.♔xe7 ♕xe7 55.♔a1 ♕d8 56.♔xa7† ♕c7  
57.b5 ♔c8 58.♔a2?

White's best chance is 58.♔a8† hoping for 58...♔b7? 59.♔g8 ♔b6 60.♔e3 ♔h4 61.♔xg5 ♔xb5 62.♔g8 ♕a5 63.♔d3 when my pieces are too scattered to make any organized resistance.

However, Black can defend successfully with 58...♔d7! 59.♔g8 ♕d8.



58... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! 59. $\mathbb{R}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  60.c4?!  $dxc4\#$   
 61. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  62. $\mathbb{R}f8$   $\mathbb{Q}g2$  63. $\mathbb{R}g8$   $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$   
 64. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  65. $\mathbb{R}xg5$

½-½

This line might not be for me! I'm just kidding of course, although when I analysed this game and others, it became clear that I have a tendency not to actively equalize the game when I still have chances to keep things in flux. This was clearly seen on move 11; the equalizing line is not hard to find, *provided you are looking for it in the first place.*

This leads on to an important point. Playing the ...e6 system with an overly ambitious mindset can be a recipe for disaster. Black should aim to finish development first, then to equalize the chances, and finally, with those obstacles overcome, you can look for ways to make the game difficult for your opponent. In this sense, the ...e6 system against the Classical is similar to some of the lines in the Averbakh chapter.

In the next game we will deal with another possible Pirc transposition.

## GAME 60

Zlatko Ilincic – Miodrag Todorcevic

Ulcinj 1997

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4.h3?!

This move has a similar effect as 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , namely to discourage 4...a6?!, which would now run into 5.c4!.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !

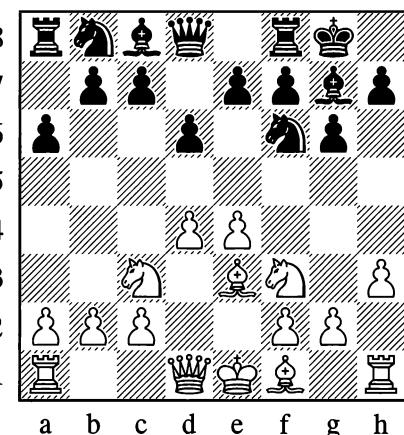
There is no good way to avoid this move.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

We have transposed to a significant variation of the Pirc, which normally occurs via the move order 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5.h3 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ . The actual move order of the game was 1.d4 g6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5.h3 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , but I have altered it to fit in with our subject.

6...a6!

The combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ...a6 has had its ups and downs in the history of chess. At the moment it is mostly 'up' as even Kramnik has used it in similar positions to this one. In this particular case, Black's last move is justified by the fact that White has played the slow h2-h3, which means that Black does not have to worry about a quick e4-e5, and thus has time for the desired queenside expansion.



**7.a4**

White has few other options.

7.♗c4 b5 8.♗b3 b4 9.♕e2 (I prefer Black after 7.♗c4 b5 8.♗b3 b4 9.♗e2 I prefer Black after 9.♗d5 ♗xe4 10.♗xb4 ♗b7) 9...e6 10.♗g3 ♗b7 11.♗d3 a5 and Black has an excellent position.

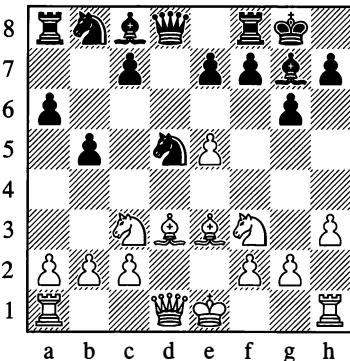
7.♗d3 b5 8.e5

8.0–0 ♗b7 9.b4!? ♗c6!? (An unclear alternative is 9...♗bd7 10.a4 c5!?, intending 11.bxc5 b4.) 10.♗b1 e5 11.dxe5 (11.d5 ♗e7 12.a4 c6 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.axb5 axb5 15.♗e2 ♗a3 is unclear.) 11...♗xe5 12.♗xe5 A draw was agreed in Dvoiryš – Chernin, Skellefteå 2000.

8...dxe5!

This is clearly the best move, since 8...♗fd7 9.e6 fxe6 10.h4! ♗f6 11.h5! gives White a dangerous initiative.

9.dxe5 ♗d5



10.♗xd5

After 10.♗e4?! ♗xe3 11.fxe3 c6 White runs into a blind alley.

10...♗xd5 11.♗e2 ♗b7 12.c4?

This idea proves to be mistaken.

12.0–0 is better, although I still prefer Black after 12...♗d7.

12...bxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗a5† 14.♗d2 ♗xf3

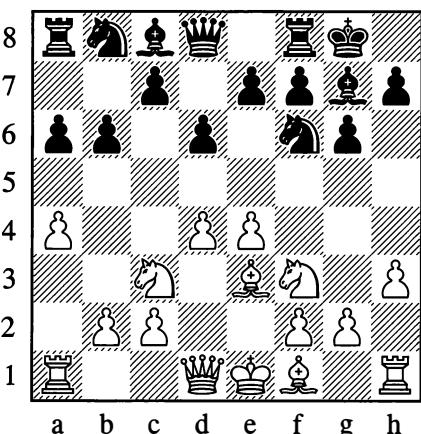
15.♗xa5 ♗xe2 16.♗xe2 ♗c6 17.♗d2 ♗d4

18.♗c1 ♗xe5

Black went on to convert his advantage in Kveinys – Ponomariov, Lubniewice 1998.

**7...b6**

This position often arises via the move order 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.a4 ♗f6 6.♗f3 0–0 7.h3 b6. Black can also play 7...♗c6, as seen in the game Ryan – Ipatov on page 234.



8.♗c4

This is the most aggressive option. White can also try:

8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.0–0

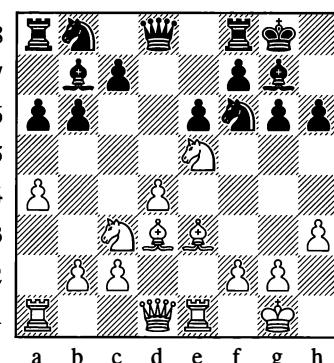
9.e5 should be met by 9...♗fd7! with a complicated position.

9...e6 10.♗e1 h6 11.e5 dxe5

If Black wishes to avoid simplifying he can try 11...♗fd7!?.

12.♗xe5

This idea is generally stronger when White develops the bishop to c4 or e2 instead of d3.



12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  14. $f4$ ?

A questionable sacrifice.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  is approximately level.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

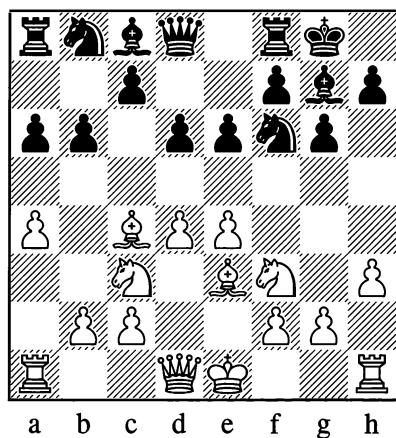
White's original intention may have been 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$   $fxg6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , but then 16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $g5$ ! 18. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $gxf4$  leaves Black clearly better.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

White was struggling to justify the pawn deficit in Boensch – Gallagher, Germany 2000.

**8...e6**

White was threatening e5-e6.



**9.0–0**

9.e5  $dxe5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  14. $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  15. $f3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  gives Black comfortable equality. Interestingly, Mikhail Gurevich has scored two wins for Black from here.

9. $d5$ ?! has been played, but it is better to put this move on ice until Black has committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . 9... $e5$  10.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. $g4$ ?!  $\mathbb{W}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  The position was unclear in Brynell – Hillarp Persson, Malmö 1996.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

9... $d5$ ?! is playable, but after 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! (10. $exd5$   $exd5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is fine for Black) 10... $dxe4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13.c3 White keeps a slight advantage.

**10.d5 e5?!**

Black takes the most ambitious and complicated approach.

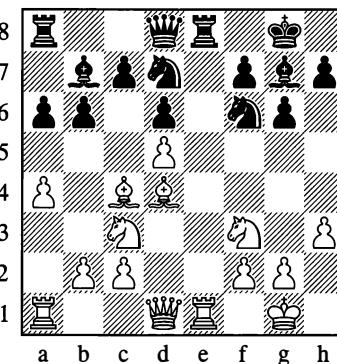
A solid alternative is:

10... $exd5$  11. $exd5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$

Black's back ranks are slightly crowded, but practice has shown that there is just enough space for everyone. It is important to keep the knight on b8 for the moment, since 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ?! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  gives White control of the c6-square.

12. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Now 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  can be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with approximate equality.



13... $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}f8$

An improvement over 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15.b4  $\mathbb{Q}cd7$  16.a5 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  18. $\mathbb{W}d2$  with a balanced position in Istratescu – Chernin, Moscow 1994.

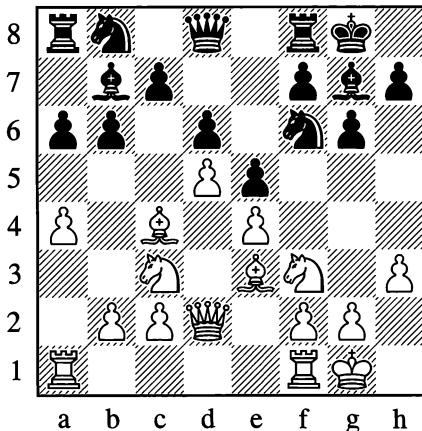
15. $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  17.b3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b4$  a5 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{E}e7$

Black had a firm grip on the initiative in Istratescu – Slobodjan, Halle 1995. White has trouble defending the d-pawn and Black can gradually expand his operations on the kingside.

**11.♕d2!!**

White has two main objectives in the short term: preventing Black from playing ...♝h5-f4, and preparing to meet ...f5 with exf5, and if ...gxf5 then f2-f4.

After 11.♕e1 ♜bd7 12.♗d3 Black can play either 12...♝h5, intending ...♛e8 and ...f5, or 12...♝c5!!, when 13.♗xc5 dxc5 intending ...♝e8-d6 is interesting.

**11...♝bd7!**

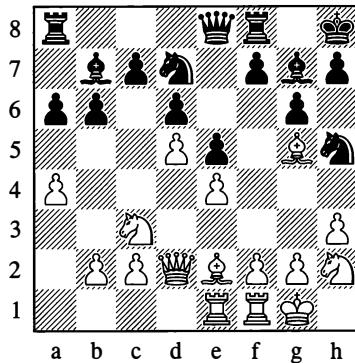
Black should not be in too much of a hurry to prepare ...f5. In the event of 11...♝e8 12.♗h2 f5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.f4 ♜d7 15.♗f3 Black is clearly worse.

**12.♗g5!!**

After 12.♗h2 ♜c5 (12...♝h5 is met by 13.♗e2 and the knight has to go back) 13.f3 ♜h5 the position is unclear.

**12...♛e8 13.♗fe1**

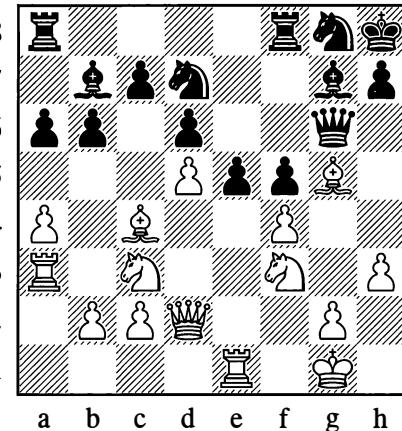
After 13.♗ae1 ♛h8 14.♗h2 Black can and should try a different approach from the main game: 14...♝h5! (14...♝g8 15.b4 f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.f4 ♛g6 18.♗f3 h6 19.♗h4 ♛ae8 gives White an improved version of the main game, as the rook is better on e1 than on a3.) 15.♗e2



15...f5! 16.♗xh5 gxh5 17.exf5 ♛xf5 18.f4 h6 Black seems to be doing fine. A possible continuation is 19.♗d3 ♛g6 20.g4 hxg4 21.hxg4 exf4 22.♗xh6 ♛g8! with unclear complications.

**13...♝h8 14.♗h2 ♜g8 15.♗a3 f5 16.exf5 ♛xf5 17.f4 ♛g6 18.♗f3**

Black has a definite initiative; just enough to compensate for his inferior pawn structure. The initiative must be fed constantly or transformed into something else.

**18...h6 19.♗h4 ♛ae8**

Black should not even think about advancing his e-pawn, as it would rob his position of all dynamism: 19...e4? 20.♗d4 ♛xd4† 21.♗xd4† ♛gf6 22.♗d1 ♛h7 23.♗e3 Having safely blockaded the e3-square, White continues ♛e2, c2-c4, ♛f2, ♛g1, g2-g4 and wins.

A slight exaggeration? Yes, but it is not easy for Black to put up resistance when the only active plan remaining is ...b5.

### 20.b4 ♜gf6 21.♔f2 ♜h7

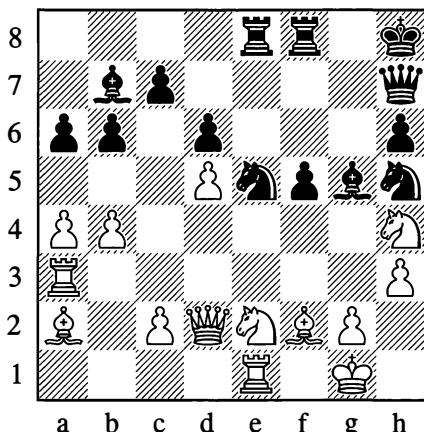
To keep the initiative, Black should combine pressure down the g-file with an attack on the d5-pawn. Correct was therefore 21...♝f7! 22.∜h4 exf4 23.♜xe8 ♜xe8 24.♝xf4 ♜e5 25.♚e2 ♜xd5 and Black is far better coordinated than White.

### 22.∜h4 exf4 23.♝xf4 ♜e5

Better was 23...♝xe1! 24.♚xe1 ♜e5 25.♚e2 ♜g8, when ...∜xd5 is one of those threats one can do nothing about. Now White gets off the hook.

### 24.♚a2 ♜h5 25.♝d2 ♜f6 26.∜e2 ♜g5

26...♝g8!? 27.∜d4 f4 28.♝f1 ♜c8 29.∜e6 ♜e7 reaches a highly unclear situation.



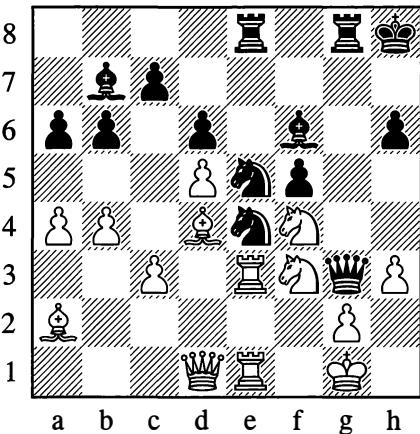
### 27.♝d1 ♜f6 28.∜f3 ♜e4 29.♚d4 ♜f6 30.∜f4 ♜g8 31.♜ae3?!

It was important to exchange the strong knight on e4 with 31.∜d2. Now Black gets a second chance to seize the advantage.

### 31...♜g7 32.c3 ♜g3?

But he fails to take it. After 32...∜xf3† 33.♝xf3 ♜xd4 34.cxd4 ♜xd4 35.∜e6 ♜e5

White does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn.



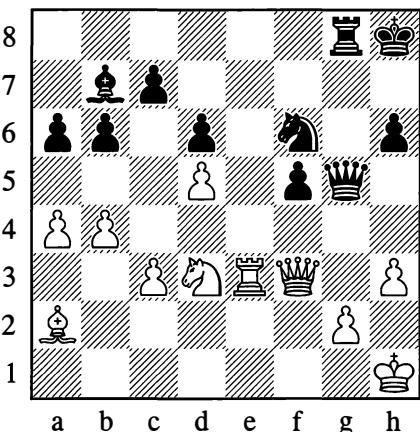
### 33.∜xe5?

Missing the opportunity for 33.♝f1!, when Black's initiative would have come to an end, leaving White with clearly better chances.

### 33...♝f2† 34.♚h1 ♜xf4 35.∜d3?! ♜g5 36.∜xf6† ♜xf6 37.♝f3?!

37.♝3e2 was better, although White is in trouble in any case.

### 37...♝xe3 38.♝xe3



### 38...∜xd5?

38...∜xd5! 39.♝e1 ♜xb4 40.♝xb7 ♜xa2

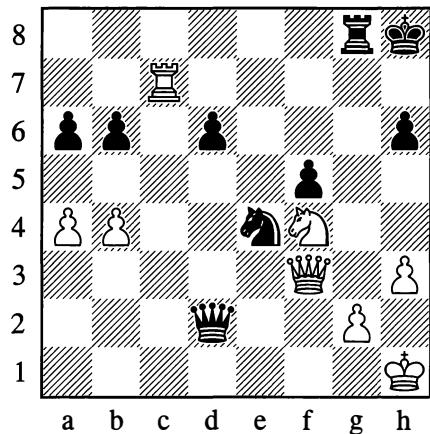
would have given Black two extra pawns and a decisive advantage.

**39.♕xd5 ♕xd5 40.♗e2 ♔xc3 41.♗c2 ♔e4  
42.♗xc7**

Now White is only one pawn down, and the active rook gives him annoying counterplay.

**42...♔d2 43.♗f4?**

43.♔h2 was necessary, holding on to the b-pawn.



**43...♔xb4! 44.♔h2 ♔e1?**

Black could have kept some winning chances with 44...♔d4! 45.♔h5 ♔f6 46.♗f7 ♔g5 47.♗xf5 ♔xh5 48.♗xh5 ♔g7.

**45.♔h5 ♔f8 46.♗f4 ♔g8 47.♔h5 ♔f8**

Black correctly avoids 47...♔d2?! 48.♗e7! ♔g5 49.♗f7 when only White can be better.

**48.♗f4**

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Since Black can play 7...♘c6 with a transition to the Flexible Dragon Restrained chapter, this game is not of much theoretical significance, but it does no harm to know about this kind of middlegame since it can easily arise from more than one of the Modern variations.

## GAME 61

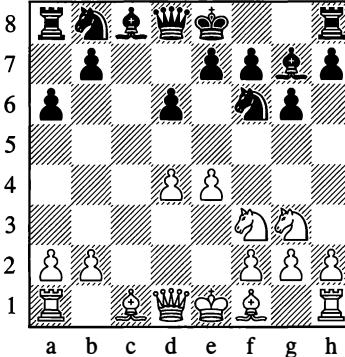
Antonio Frois – Karen Movsziszian

Benasque 2009

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♔g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗f3 a6 5.♗d3!?**

On one hand this is not strictly a part of the Classical system, but it does fall under the Classical move order. There are some similarities with the Flexible Dragon Restrained, but White hopes to gain some flexibility by leaving his dark-squared bishop at home.

An accelerated version of the idea I'm trying to illustrate with this game is 5.♗e2!? ♔f6 6.♗g3. Black's best response is: 6...c5! 7.c3 (7.d5 h5 8.h4 ♔g4 9.♗e2 ♔bd7 looks comfortable for Black.) 7...cx d4 8.cxd4



8...h5! 9.♗d3 h4 10.♗e2 h3 11.g3 ♘c6 The position is unclear.

**5...♘d7!?**

The following line illustrates what Black should *not* do:

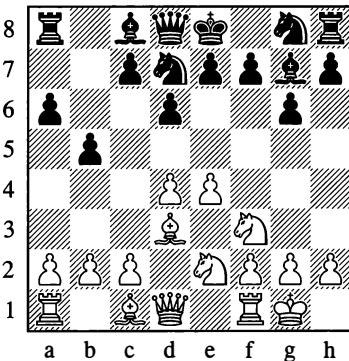
**5...b5?!** 6.0–0

6.♗e2!? gives Black an extra option in 6...c5 7.c3, when the knight may not have to go to d7. Nevertheless, I remain suspicious of Black's position. The b5-pawn is a sitting duck, waiting to be poached by a2-a4.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?

White also obtains good prospects with 7.a4 b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , or even 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !?.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  is not altogether convincing, despite White's easy victory in the following game:  
 7...c5 8.e5 cxd4 9.e6 f5?? (Better is 9...dxc3!N  
 10.exf7†  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ †  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  cxb2  
 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$   
 and I see no reason for Black to complain.)  
 10.exd7†  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  White won fairly easily in Hawkins – Clanchy, Leeds 2012.



7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

7...c5 8.c3 does not change anything.

8.a4 b4 9.c3 bxc3 10.bxc3

Black has some problems, for instance:

10... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  11.e5!?

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c5 is slightly better for White.

11...dxe5 12.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.e6 fxe6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

$\mathbb{Q}c5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Black is in trouble.

Black's most reliable move is:

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !

Taking advantage of the weakness of d4.

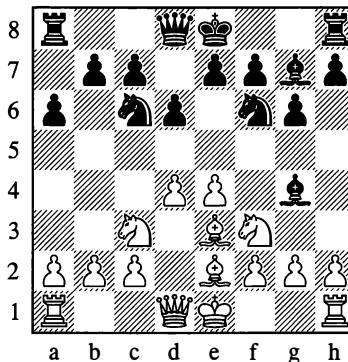
6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

After 6.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !?, 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 is also possible) 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10.h3 0–0 11.a4 e6 Black has equalized.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

We have reached a position from the Pirc where Black has gained the ...a6 move for free. It is hard to place an exact value on this

move, but it certainly does not harm Black's chances. Play may continue:

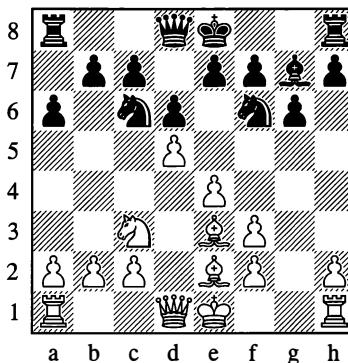


8.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ?? might be even more exact.

9.gxf3

9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  has also been played. Here Black can make interesting use of the extra ...a6 move with 9... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ !N 10.a4 c5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.c3 b5 13.axb5 axb5 with decent counterplay.

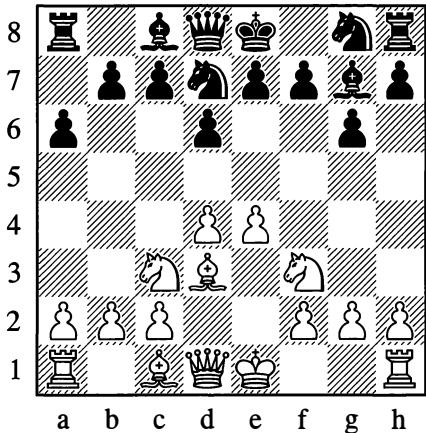


9... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !N

9... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  10. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 11.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (12...0–0 13.h4!) 13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.0–0–0 was a bit better for White in Rybka 3 – Critter 0.60, Trier 2010.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 11.dxc6 bxc6

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ . Compared with the note above, if White opts for long castling then the open b-file will offer Black excellent counterplay.

**6.0–0!**

$6.\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 leads to Chapter 3. However, the present move order allows White some extra flexibility with the bishop, which is one reason why I recommend  $5...\mathbb{Q}c6$  on the previous turn.

Another option is:

$6.\mathbb{Q}e2?!$  e5?!

This would be my choice for Black.

**7.d5**

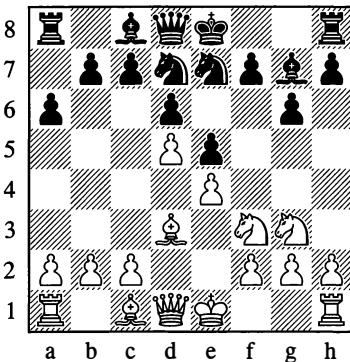
This is the most critical reply.

$7.c3 \mathbb{Q}gf6$  8.0–0 0–0 is fine for Black.

$7.dxe5$   $dxe5$   $8.\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$   $9.h3$  0–0  $10.\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{We}7$  Black is waiting to see if c2–c4 appears on the board.  $11.0–0$  b6  $12.\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $13.\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  Black has no complaints.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$** 

This is the logical follow-up to White's earlier moves. Against other continuations Black will castle short and play ...f7–f5.

**8...c6! 9.c4 b5!**

This is possible because the white knights are both a long way from the d5-square.

$10.dxc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $11.cxb5$   $axb5$   $12.0–0$   $\mathbb{W}b6$   $13.\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $14.\mathbb{Q}c3$  0–0  $15.\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Black can celebrate the outcome of the opening.

**6...e6**

This seems like Black's best bet. Now we get a Hippo where White has put the bishop on d3.

$6...b5?!$  transposes to  $5...b5?!$   $6.0–0$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  as covered earlier.

It is risky to play:

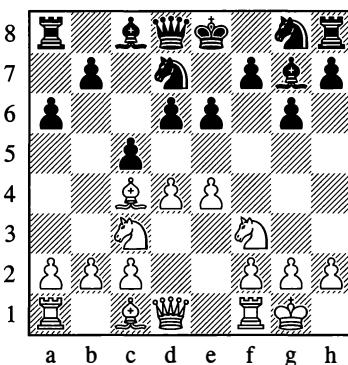
$6...c5?!$   $7.\mathbb{Q}c4!$

Suddenly  $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$  is a terrible threat.

**7...e6**

$7... \mathbb{Q}h6$   $8.dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $9.\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is slightly better for White

$7...xd4?!$   $8.\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $9.\mathbb{Q}g5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$   $10.\mathbb{Q}e6$   $dxc3$   $11.\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  has been played. Black has three minor pieces for the queen, but I suspect that the position is quite bad for him. Compared to similar sacrifices in earlier chapters, here White's pawn structure is in decent condition and Black has problems with his king.

**8.a4!N**

$8.dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $9.e5$   $d5$   $10.\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$   $11.\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$   $exd5$   $12.\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is only good enough for a

draw after 12... $\mathbb{W}c6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .  
8.d5 is met by 8...e5! 9.a4 b6 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   
11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}el$  f5 13.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  14. $\mathbb{W}g4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and Black is okay.

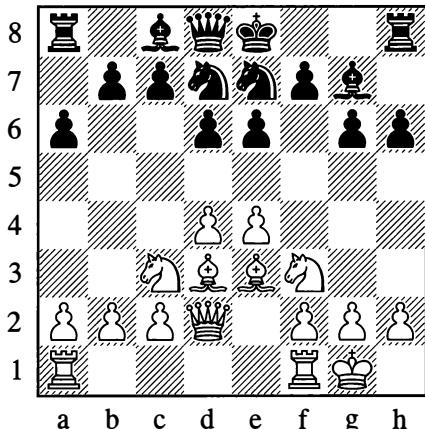
8...b6 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10.e5! is dangerous for Black.  
10.d5 e5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !

White is definitely better.

### 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6

It is also possible to play 8...0–0, although the position becomes less dynamic after 9. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ . Still, this might be the lesser evil. After the text move Black is stuck with the king in the centre, just like in the “normal” Hippo. However, I am afraid that the present line, where White has played  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and can continue with  $\mathbb{Q}e2-g3$ , is simply better for White if Black cannot castle. You can judge for yourself, but my advice would be to deviate with one of the improvements noted before this point, especially at move 5.



### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

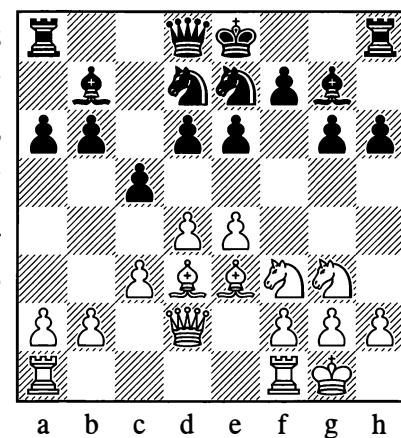
This is one of the most annoying plans against the Hippo. The point is that ...c5 can be met by c2-c3, while ...g5 is out of the question as the knight is ready to jump to h5. The upshot is that, compared to other Hippo variants, it is noticeably harder for Black to create counterplay.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.c3 c5?

This is a bit surprising, considering that Black has not finished developing. When the king cannot leave the centre, the new weakness at d6 may become quite a burden. Still, it is hard to suggest a fully satisfactory plan for Black.

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12.h4!  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$  it is dangerous for Black to allow 13... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  14.h5! g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  16.f4 gxf4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  when Black’s king will get into trouble.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.h3 d5 (12... $\mathbb{W}d7$  13.c4 h5 14.d5 is also better for White) 13.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  15.fxg3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h5 17.a4 and Black is under a lot of pressure.



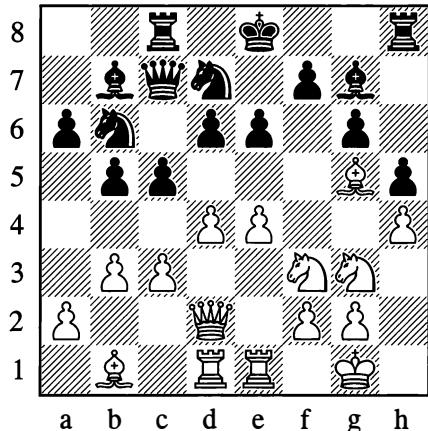
### 12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ b5 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ?

15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is also unpleasant.

### 16.h4

It is more challenging to play 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! when I cannot find a good way for Black to continue. One illustrative line is 16...e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0–0 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21.b3  $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  22.a4 and Black is suffering. This position reminds one of a Ruy Lopez where everything has gone White’s way.

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}cb6$ 17.b3 h5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$



### 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ !

Thank you. This enables Black to solve most of his opening problems.

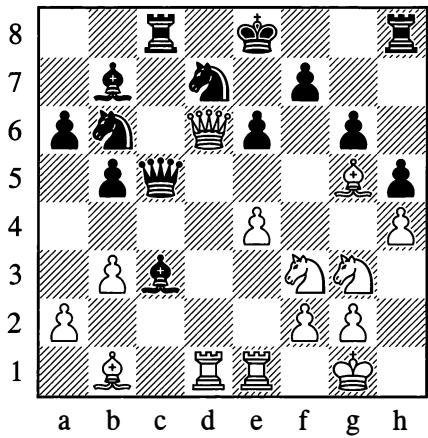
Instead 19.  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $gxf5$  20.  $exf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  21.  $fxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22.  $gxf3$  would have been extremely dangerous for Black.

### 19... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd6?$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  was better, intending to meet 20...d5 with 21. e5!  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  24.  $cxd4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with more than enough compensation for the pawn.

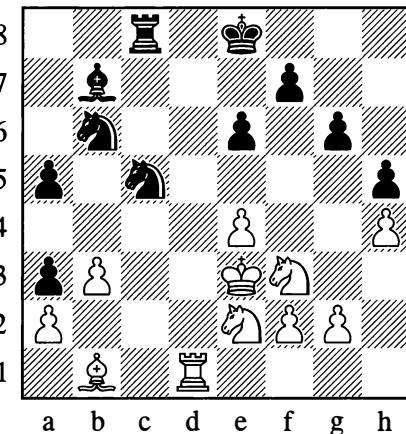
### 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Black has equalized. In the next phase of the game he manages to develop a bit of pressure in the endgame.



21.  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  22.  $\mathbb{E}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  23.  $\mathbb{E}dd1$  0-0 24.  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  25.  $\mathbb{E}xc8$   $\mathbb{E}xc8$  26.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  27.  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  28.  $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  29.  $\mathbb{E}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  30.  $\mathbb{E}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  31.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  32.  $\mathbb{E}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  33.  $\mathbb{E}c1$  b4 34.  $\mathbb{E}xa3$   $bxa3$  35.  $\mathbb{E}e3$  a5 36.  $\mathbb{Q}e2?$

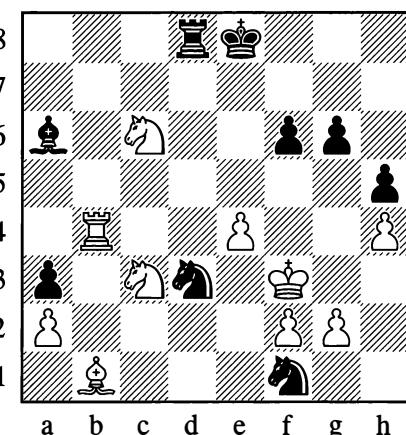
36.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  keeps the balance.



### 36... a4 37. bxa4 $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ 38. $\mathbb{E}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

38...  $e5\#$ ! would have given Black a sizeable advantage. The trick is 39.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$   $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$  winning the knight.

39.  $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  40.  $\mathbb{E}b3$  e5# 41.  $\mathbb{E}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  42.  $\mathbb{E}b4$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  43.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d2$  44.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  f6 45.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}f1\#$  46.  $\mathbb{E}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$



**47.♕d4??**

47.♕xd8?? is refuted in exactly the same way as the game continuation.

White should have played 47.e5! ♕d2† 48.♗e3 ♗xb4 49.♗xg6† ♖d7 50.♕xd8 ♗c4† 51.♗d4 ♗xe5 52.♗xh5 ♖xd8 53.♗b1 with good drawing chances.

**47... ♗e1† 48.♗f4 ♗xg2†**

Here White resigned, presumably after spotting 49.♗f3 ♗xh4† 50.♗f4 g5#.

**0–1**

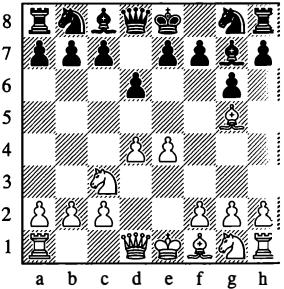
This pretty finish made for a happy ending to a rather depressing line. At the risk of repeating myself, simply playing on autopilot with a standard Hippo or ...b5 does not quite cut it against the set-up seen in this game. I recommend sticking with 5...♗c6!.

**Conclusion**

The Classical system is not the most dangerous for Black, but the move orders are extremely important. In Games 55 and 56 we saw that Black should follow ...b5 with ...♗b7, ...♗d7 and ...c5, in that order. The next three games dealt with the 6...e6 system in the Classical Pirc. This is life in the outskirts of theory, and I recommend that the reader keeps track of subsequent developments here.

I have never feared the Classical, and I have not encountered any reason to change my mind while rewriting this chapter. If there should eventually prove to be a problem with any of the recommended lines, there will still be plenty of other fish swimming in *this sea*.

# Chapter 7



## 4. $\mathbb{B}g5$ – Into Midair

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{B}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.  $\mathbb{B}g5$  a6

5.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5 Game 62

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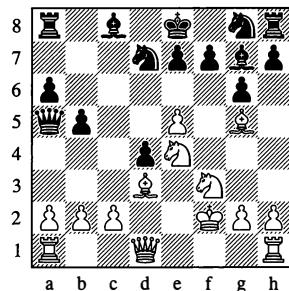
5.  $f4!?$  b5 Game 63

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5.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 Game 64

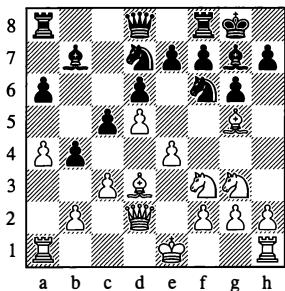
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Notes to Game 63 – after 11.fxe5



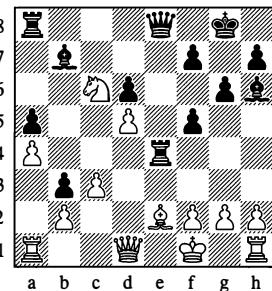
11...  $\mathbb{Q}h6!?$  N

Game 64 – after 12.d5?



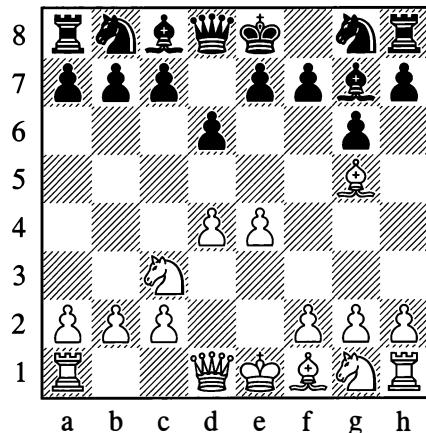
12... c4!

Game 64 – after 23.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$



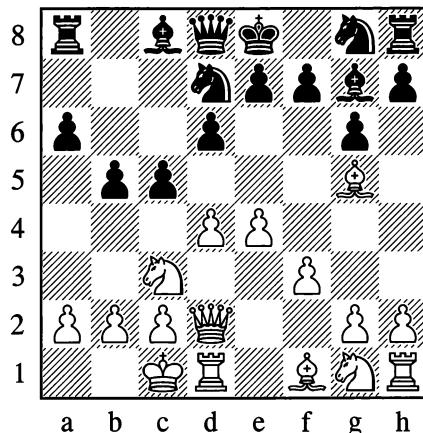
23...  $\mathbb{B}xe2!!$

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗g5**



This set-up is one of the most poisonous available to White against the Pirc, but against the Modern it loses some of its venom. Instead of hitting the knight on f6, White's last move only invites a staring contest with the e7-pawn. The bishop is more active on g5 than on e3 in some vague sense, and sometimes it will be easier to defend the e4-pawn later with ♖e1, but overall I believe the bishop is better placed on e3.

Some of the White players who launch the bishop to g5 tend to be quite aggressive, verging on impatient. The attitude is "I am going to play ♖d2 and 0–0–0 and then run you over on the kingside with h4–h5, or in the centre with e4–e5." Wait! Hello there! I recognize that. Is that not the same stunt that White tries to pull in the Flexible Dragon Variation? The answer is yes, but here there is even less to be afraid of. The key difference is that it is easier for Black to attack the d4-point in the present system, as the bishop does not support d4 from g5, and Black can achieve ...c5 more easily. Take the following position:



If the bishop was on e3 instead of g5, White would be able to win a pawn with dxc5.

White can also go for a more temperate approach involving ♖f3, ♖d3, 0–0, etc. This is reminiscent of the Flexible Dragon Restricted but, once again, the position of the bishop on g5 makes it easier for Black to obtain counterplay with ...c5.

## GAME 62

Hermann Tydecks – Thomas Paehtz (Jr)

Oberhof 1999

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗g5 a6 5.♖d2**

This is the most flexible option, but White can also try 5.f4!?, which is seen in the next game.

Another possibility is:

5.a4 ♘c6!?

It seems logical to attack the d4-pawn.

5...h6 was seen in the game Bromann – Hillarp Persson in the Hippo chapter – see page 282.

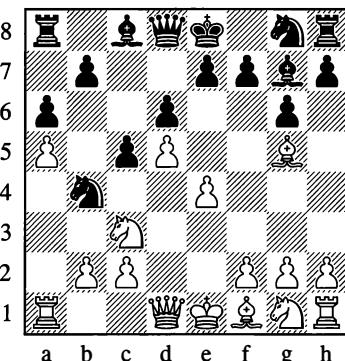
6.d5

6.♘f3 ♘g4 is pleasant for Black.

6...♘b4 7.a5 c5!?

The safest move is 7...h6, when 8.Qe3 e6 9.Qa4 c5 10.dxc6 Qxc6 11.Qb6 Qe7 leads to an unclear position.

The text move invites complications. The critical line continues:



8.Qce2!N

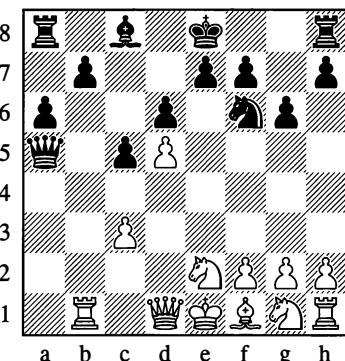
Improving over 8.Qa4?! Qxa5 9.c3 b5 10.cxb4 Qxb4† 11.Qc3 Qxb2 12.Qxb5 Qd7 13.Qb1?! (White should try his luck with 13.Qc7†) 13...Qa2 14.Qc7† Qd8 15.Qd3 Qc3† 16.Qf1 Qxc7 and Black had a winning position in Ulibin – T. Paehtz (Sr), Biel 2004.

8...Qxb2 9.Qb1

Forcing Black to give up a piece for three pawns.

9...Qf6 10.Qxf6 Qxf6 11.c3 Qbxd5 12.exd5 Qxa5

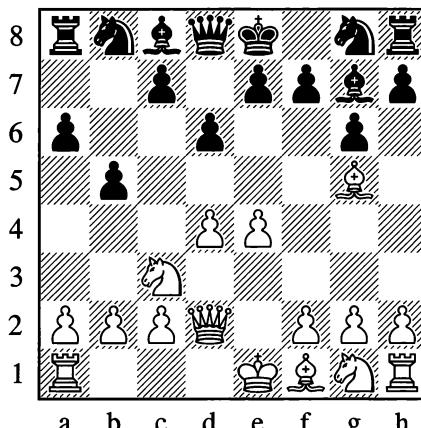
This position is key for deciding whether one should choose 7...c5 over 7...h6. One possible continuation is:



13.Qa1 Qb5 14.Qf4 Qb2 15.Qc1 b5  
15...g5?! 16.Qfe2 b5 might be better.  
16.Qd3 c4 17.Qb1 Qg4  
With unclear consequences.

5...b5

5...Qd7?! would be a clear mistake here, as after 6.a4! it is hard for Black to even enter a Hippo structure, since the e-pawn is pinned.



6.a4

Compared with the Flexible Dragon Unleashed, aggressive set-ups with long castling make less sense here, as the d4-pawn is weaker and it is easier for Black to achieve ...Qd7 and ...c5.

6.f3 should be met by 6...Qd7 7.h4 h6!, which is similar to the note with 8...h6! below.

6.0–0–0

The following game offers convincing evidence for putting the combination of Qg5 and 0–0–0 back on the shelf.

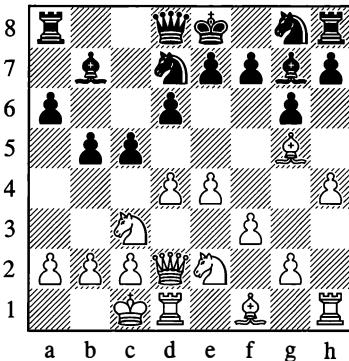
6...Qb7 7.f3 Qd7 8.h4 c5!

8...h5 is also quite good if you prefer to avoid 9.dxc5.

8...h6! is a strong alternative. Turn to page 169 and check 7.f3! in the notes to Olsson – Hillarp Persson, and you will see that Black is a tempo up here.

9.♘ge2

9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.h5 ♜c8 11.♔b1 ♘e6  
12.♕e3 ♘xc3! 13.bxc3 g5 is fine for Black.



9...♝a5

9...♞gf6 is possibly better, intending 10.dxc5 ♘xc5 11.♕h6 ♘xh6 12.♗xh6 b4 with unclear play.

10.♔b1

10.dxc5! ♘xc5 11.♔b1 h5 12.♘d4 ♘d7!  
13.g3 ♘gf6 is unclear. As I have written elsewhere, it is often better for Black to keep the queen on d8 until it is absolutely clear where she belongs.

10...b4 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.exd5 ♘b6 13.♘c1?!

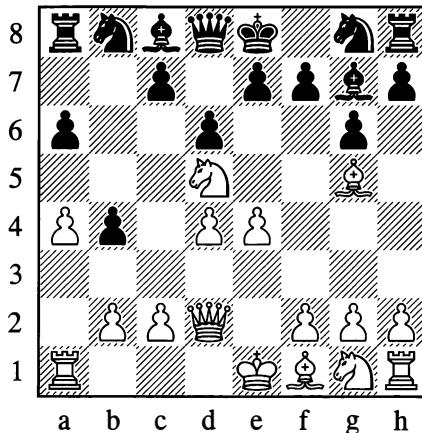
13.a3 is better, although 13...♝a4! leaves White with plenty to think about on the queenside.

13...c4 14.♗e1 ♛b5 15.b3 h6 16.♕f4 ♘f6  
17.♕xd6 ♘fxd5

White was overrun in Spangenberg – Azmaiparashvili, Moscow 1994.

6...b4 7.♘d5

After 7.♘a2 a5 8.c3 Black can chose between 8...♞f6 9.♕d3 0–0 and 8...bxc3 9.♘xc3 ♘b7, the former being my own preference.



7...a5 8.c3 c6!

This move is flexible, and it helps to induce a slight weakening with f2-f3 on move 10. When Black has played ...a5 it is generally best to avoid following up with ...c5, as the light squares on the queenside will become weak, and neither ...d5 nor ...e5 will open up the centre because of, respectively, e4-e5 or d4-d5. Instead Black should aim for ...c6 and ...e5, covering the b5-square and keeping the option of striking at the centre with ...d5.

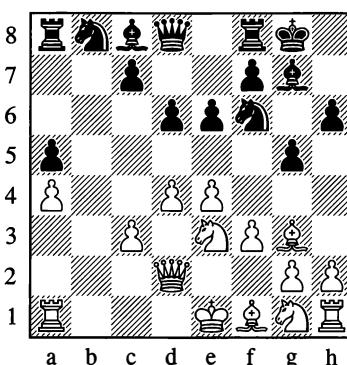
The following path is less convincing:

8...h6 9.♕h4 g5 10.♗g3 e6?!

This weakening move makes it more difficult for Black to achieve ...c5, leaving him with a rather passive position.

10...♝b7N 11.♕d3 f5! is the best chance to make Black's set-up work, and it leads to highly unclear play.

11.♘e3 ♘f6 12.f3 bxc3 13.bxc3 0–0



14.♗d3

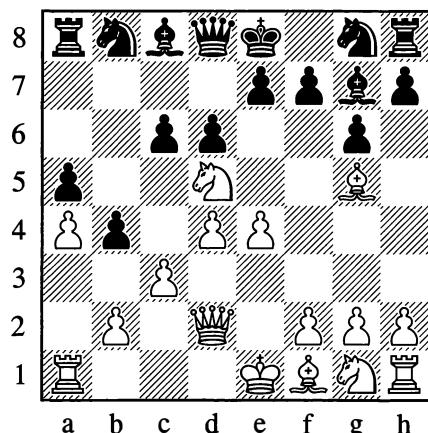
14.h4 seems more energetic.

14...♝h5 15.♝e2 f5?

If Black plays slowly with 15...♝d7 then White is comfortably better, because Black is unlikely to be able to challenge the enemy centre with good effect. The text move makes things worse though.

16.♗f2 ♛c6 17.exf5 exf5 18.h4

Black was in trouble in Filipenko – Shchekachev, Smolensk 1992.

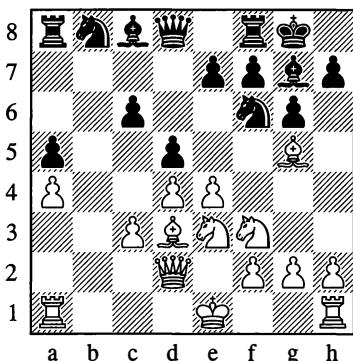


9.♝e3 ♛f6!

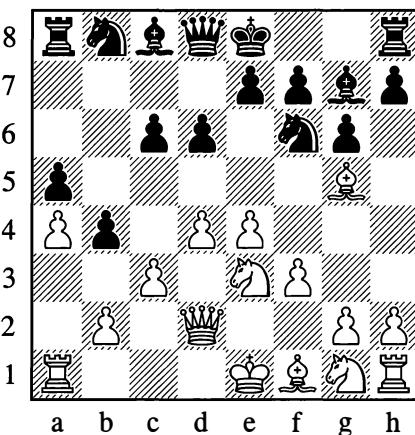
This is the logical follow-up to the previous move, and it induces White to make a slight concession with the f-pawn.

10.f3

White would prefer to develop with 10.♗d3 0–0 11.♗f3 (11.♗e2 allows 11...e5), but this gives Black the chance to strike in the centre with: 11...bxc3 12.bxc3 d5!



13.♗xf6 (13.e5 ♜e4 gives Black nothing to complain about; 13.exd5 cxd5 14.♗h4 is favoured by the engines, but it is nothing for White after 14...♜a6 15.0–0 ♜bd7 intending to play on the light squares.) 13...exf6! With chances for both sides. Considering all of this, the game continuation is White's most ambitious.



10...♛b6?!

There is no reason to protect the b-pawn, and I do not see what use the queen is on the b-file.

10...0–0! is better, with the point that 11.cxb4 axb4 12.♛xb4 ♜bd7 13.♛d2 h6 14.♗h4 e5 15.d5 ♜c5 leaves Black with plenty of compensation for the pawn. It is worth adding that the natural 16.♗c4 allows 16...♝fxe4!.

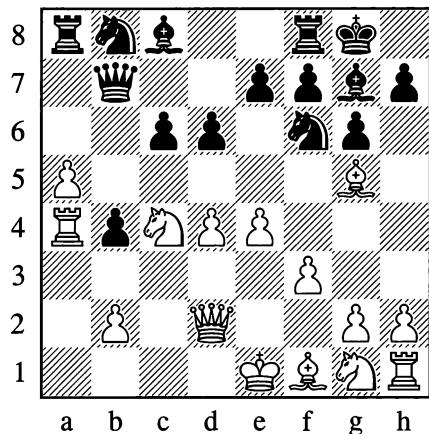
11.♝c4 ♛b7 12.cxb4?!

White should never make such an exchange unless it wins a pawn. As things stand, White ruins his own structure and makes his centre more vulnerable to future attacks.

It was better to play 12.♗d3 followed by ♜e2, keeping the centre intact.

12...axb4 13.a5 0–0 14.♗a4

White has totally forgotten about development, and his last move challenges destiny one time too many.

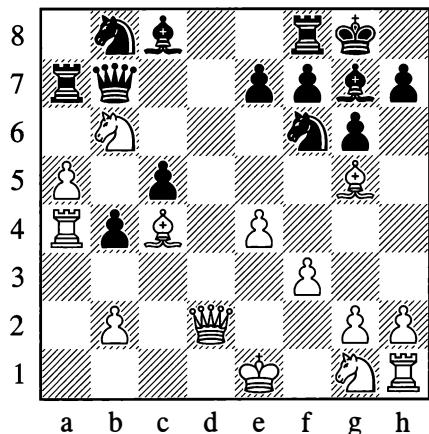


**14...c5! 15.♗b6 ♕a7**

I would probably have played 15...♕xa5!? 16.♕xa5 ♜xb6 with excellent compensation, but the game continuation is perfectly good.

**16.dxc5 dxc5 17.♗c4**

After 17.e5 ♜fd7 18.♗xc8 ♜xc8 19.f4 ♗c6 White must try to prevent ...♕xa5, ...♗d4, ...f6, and ...h6 followed by ...g5. Not even Hercules could manage all of that.



**17...♗bd7**

17...♗c6! would have won a pawn, but the game continuation keeps an advantage.

**18.♗d5? ♜c7?!**

Not the best, but it does not matter, since White had clearly lost the plot.

**19.♗c4? ♜xd5 20.exd5 ♜e5 21.♗e3 ♜a6**

And it was high time for White to resign.

**0–1**

We may conclude that the early a2-a4 is not a threat to Black, and that White remains hard-pressed to make sense of the bishop on g5.

In the next game we will see White aiming for an Austrian-style set-up with the bishop on g5.

## GAME 63

**Stephen Short – Ingvar Thor Johannesson**

Bunratty 2008

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗g5 a6 5.f4**

This is less flexible than 5.♗d2, which is the reason why I find it to be an inferior move.

**5...b5**

The actual move order in this game was 5...♗d7 6.♗f3 b5, but I prefer moving the b-pawn first in order not to allow 6.a4!, when the d7-knight is slightly misplaced.

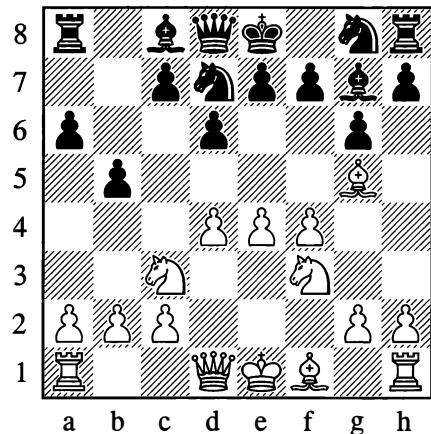
**6.♗f3 ♜d7!**

Already in 2005 I stated that this was clearly the strongest move. The point is that White's set-up is aimed at e4-e5, and Black's most efficient antidote is to prepare a quick ...c5.

After 6...♗b7 7.♗d3 ♜d7 I recommended 8.a4! b4 9.♗e2 c5 10.c3 in *Tiger's Modern*. Although there is nothing wrong with White's position here, the assessment is less clear than I originally thought.

A stronger continuation is 8.e5! c5 9.♗e4 ♜xe4 10.♗xe4, when White threatens ♜xd6† and stands clearly better. This has been

played in a few games, and I find it hard to understand why anyone would wish to repeat it from Black's side.



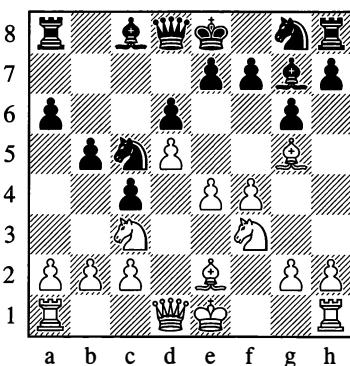
### 7.Qd3

After 7.a4?! b4 8.Qe2 c5 9.c3 bxc3 10.bxc3 Qgf6! Black is doing well, for instance 11.Qg3 (11.e5 Qe4! also favours Black) 11...Wa5 12.Wd2 Qb7 13.Qd3 d5! and Black has a clear advantage.

7.e5?! f6! 8.exf6 Qgxf6 9.Qd3 c5 also leads to promising play for Black.

### 7...c5 8.e5

As usual, blocking the centre with 8.d5?! is not great. Whenever this structure arises, I recommend that you ponder the consequences of moving the b- and c-pawns before throwing them forward. Sometimes it is better to keep them where they are, but not in this case: 8...c4! 9.Qe2 Qc5! (9...b4 is less clear.)



10.e5 f6! 11.Qh4 fxe5 12.fxe5 b4 13.Qb1 dxe5 14.Qg3 e4 15.Qe5 Qh6 Black is clearly better.

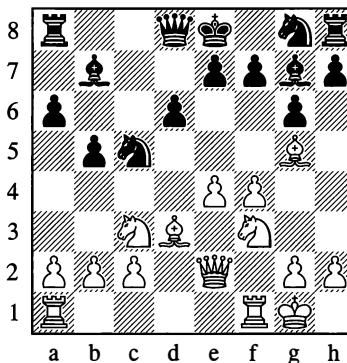
Equally harmless is:

8.dxc5 Qxc5 9.0-0 Qb7

Black already has a wonderful position.

10.We2

Another possible continuation is 10.We1 Qf6 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 Qg4 13.Qe4 Wb6 14.Qh1 Ec8 when White is slightly worse.



10...Wc7!

Black should generally avoid such moves, unless there is a really compelling reason. In this instance, it is necessary preparation for ...Qf6.

The immediate 10...Qf6?! is rather dangerous due to 11.e5 Qd5 12.Qxd5 Qxd5 13.f5! when the whole position is thrown onto the barbecue.

Another interesting possibility is 10...b4? 11.Qd5 Qxd5 12.exd5 Qxb2 13.Qab1 Qc3 when I doubt that White has enough for the pawn.

11.e5 dxe5N

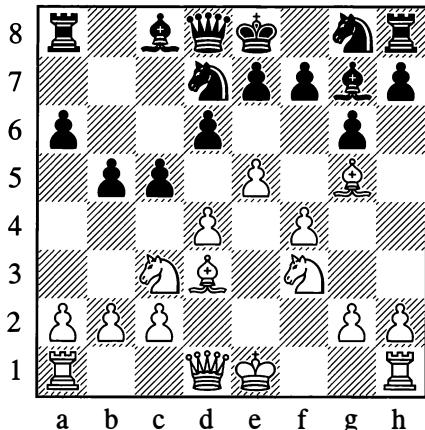
11...d5? was a positional mistake which left White immediately better in Adams – Prevost, Internet 2006.

12.fxe5 Qh6 13.a4

13.Qe4 Qe6! is strong.

13...0-0

Black has a fine position.



**8...cxd4!**

There is a huge difference between this position and the one where Black has ‘wasted’ a tempo on ...♗b7.

**9.♗e4?**

This leads to an early collapse of White’s position.

The best chance is:

**9.♗e4! ♖a5†**

9...dxe5 would unnecessarily give White compensation after 10.♗d6† ♖f8 11.0–0.

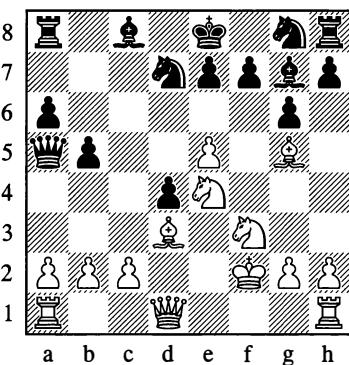
**10.♗ed2!**

10.♗f2?! is dramatic, but not much good.

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♗h6 (11...♗xe5!N is even better) 12.♗e1 0–0 was better for Black in Docx – Gryson, Gent 2009.

**10...dxe5 11.fxe5**

Now in Ali Marandi – Pozanco Romasanta, Budva 2013, Black could have obtained a good position with:



**11...♗h6!N**

11...♗xe5N 12.♗xe5 ♖xe5 13.0–0 ♖b7 14.♗e2 ♖c7 15.♗f3 offers White some compensation for the pawn, although objectively it is hardly enough.

12.0–0 ♖b6 13.a4 ♖b7 14.♗e2 ♗g4!

White is facing an uphill struggle.

**9...dxc3 10.♗xa8 cxb2**

Black’s dream scenario has come true.

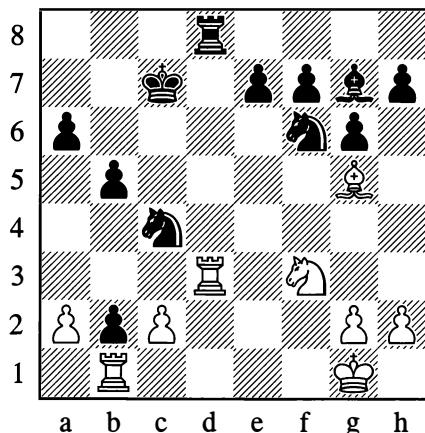
**11.♗b1 dxe5**

11...♖c7!N is even stronger if we are to believe the silicon monsters.

**12.fxe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xd8† ♗xd8**

With three pawns for the exchange and a giant pawn on b2, it is almost impossible for Black to go wrong.

**14.0–0 ♖c4 15.♗fd1† ♗c7 16.♗d4 ♗g4  
17.♗d3 ♗f6 18.♗f3 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♗d8**



**20.♗f4† ♗c8 21.♗e5 ♗h5 22.♗xd8† ♗xd8  
23.♗d1† ♗c8 24.♗xc4 bxc4 25.♗e3 ♗e5  
26.♗c5 ♗f4 27.♗f2 ♗d3† 28.cxd3 c3**

**0–1**

I remain unimpressed by the combination of ♗g5 and f2–f4. The simple plan of ...b5, ...♗d7 and ...c5 gives Black an improved version of the Austrian positions as covered in Chapter 1.

In the final game of the chapter we will see what happens when White plays 4.♗g5 without an early f2-f4 or a2-a4.

## GAME 64

Sandor Videki – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Budapest 1996

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗g5 a6 5.♘f3

5.♗c4!?

This aggressive option should be met by: 5...b5!

Clearly the most ambitious move.

5...h6?! runs into 6.♘f3! ♘f6 7.♗xf6 exf6

8.♗ge2, when White has a huge lead in development and should be slightly better.

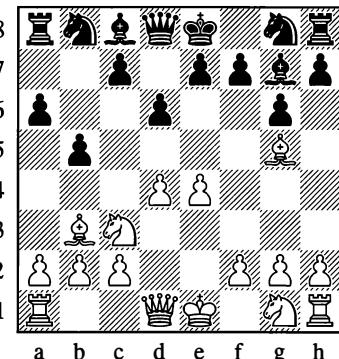
5...♘c6! 6.♘f3 (6.♗ge2 ♘f6 7.f3 b5 8.♗b3

0–0 seems fine for Black, who intends ...♘a5 at an opportune moment) 6...♘f6 7.d5 is a little better for White.

6.♗b3

6.♗d5?! c6 7.♗b3 ♘d7 8.♗f3 ♗c7 9.a4 b4

10.♗e2 ♗gf6 11.♗d3 was played in Smirin – Kanstler, Rishon le Zion 1997. Here Black should be in no hurry to castle, and both 11...a5N 12.0–0 ♗a6 13.♗e3 c5 and 11...c5!N look promising for him.



6...♗b7!

This move is necessary in order to be able

to answer 7.♗f3 with 7...♗f6, without allowing the reply e4-e5.

7.♗f3 ♘d7? 8.0–0 h6!

This is Kanstler's recommendation from *ChessBase Magazine*.

It is actually difficult to find another reasonable move for Black. For instance: 8...c5? 9.♗d5! ♗c8 10.♗e1 and White had a fantastic initiative in Kanstler – Bitansky, Tel Aviv 2001.

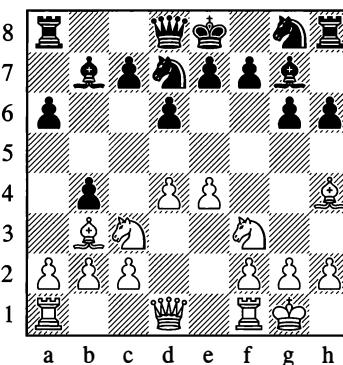
9.♗h4

White would ideally prefer to play 9.♗e3, but it is no good due to 9...b4! 10.♗d5 e6 11.♗f4 ♗xe4 with some advantage to Black.

9...b4

This is an exception to the general rule that Black should not push the pawn to b4 unless forced to do so. The reason will soon become apparent.

9...g5? is also possible, based on 10.♗xg5? (10.♗g3! b4 11.♗d5 e6 leads to the main line) 10...hxg5 11.♗xf7† ♗xf7 12.♗xg5† ♗e8 13.♗e6 ♗c8 14.♗g4 ♗df6 15.♗xg7 ♗xe6 16.♗xh8 b4 with a promising position for Black.



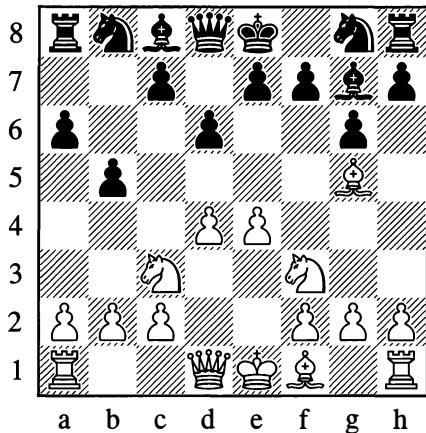
10.♗d5 g5! 11.♗g3 e6!

In *Tiger's Modern* I gave 11...a5 as an alternative, but I now consider it inferior due to 12.e5! e6 13.♗e3 ♗b6 14.c4! when White is clearly better. Compared to the main line, the knight is well placed on e3.

12.♗xb4 a5 13.♗d3 a4 14.♗c4 ♗xe4

Kanstler judges this position to be unclear, which seems like a reasonable verdict. The pressure is on White though, because if Black is allowed to castle smoothly and then expand in the centre, White will soon be in trouble.

**5...b5**



**6.♗d2?!**

This is not the best move. More dangerous is:

**6.♗d3**

In this position Black must decide whether or not to nudge the g5-bishop. The best option is:

**6...♗d7!**

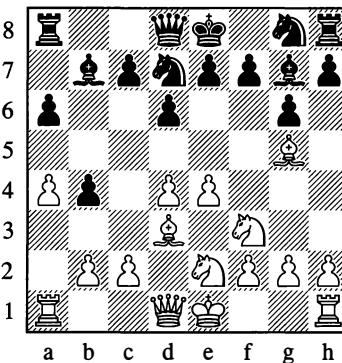
After 6...h6 7.♗e3 Black has won a tempo compared to the main line of the Flexible Dragon Restrained. Sadly, this is not a tempo to be proud of, since the g6-pawn will miss its bodyguard on h7, especially if White plays e4-e5-e6.

**7.a4 b4 8.♗e2 ♗b7!**

Black should not play ...c5 here unless White plays ♘d2.

8...c5 9.c3 bxc3! (Azmaiparashvili has played the outrageous 9...♘a5, but after 10.0–0 ♗b7 11.♗d2! it was suddenly problematic for Black to take on c3, and White went on to win in Frolyanov – Azmaiparashvili, Dresden 2007.) 10.bxc3 ♗b7 11.♗b1 ♘c7

12.0–0 ♗gf6 Black is doing all right here, but White is slightly better.



**9.0–0 ♗gf6 10.♗g3 0–0!N**

10...e5?! brings about a central structure which is not great for Black when the c4-square has already been weakened. 11.c3 exd4 12.cxd4 h6 13.♗d2 c5 14.♗f4 Black was in serious trouble in Lim Yee Weng – Azmaiparashvili, Singapore 2007.

**11.♗d2 c5 12.c3 ♜c8?!**

Black has good prospects, for instance:

**13.cxb4 cxd4! 14.♗xd4 d5!**

With excellent counterplay.

**6....♗b7?!**

At the time of this game I had not yet realized the greater importance of achieving ...c5, compared to attacking the e4-pawn.

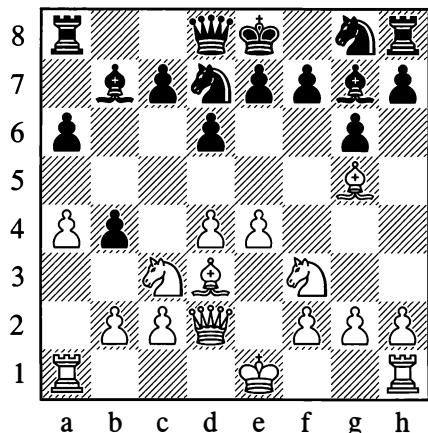
The best move is 6...♗d7!, when White has a choice:

a) 7.♗d3 c5 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.0–0 ♗b7 10.♗fe1 ♗f6 (10...♜c8?! is more ambitious) 11.♗h6 0–0 is a clear improvement over the game and leads to approximate equality.

b) 7.a4? b4 8.♗d5 (8.♗e2 is similar to the game) 8...a5 9.♗c4 c6 10.♗e3 ♗b6! 11.♗d3 h6! 12.♗h4 g5 13.♗g3 h5 14.♗xg5 h4 15.♗f4 ♗xd4 16.♗d1 e5 reaches a pleasingly chaotic position where Black's chances are no worse.

**7.♗d3 ♗d7 8.a4 b4**

8...c5?! is an interesting possibility that deserves a practical test. The critical line continues 9.axb5 cxd4 10.♕d5 h6 11.♗h4 axb5 12.♗xa8 ♗xa8 13.0–0 ♗gf6 14.♗xf6† ♗xf6 15.♗xd4 ♖b6 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♗xb5 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 ♖xb5 19.b4 ♘f8 and the chances are about equal.



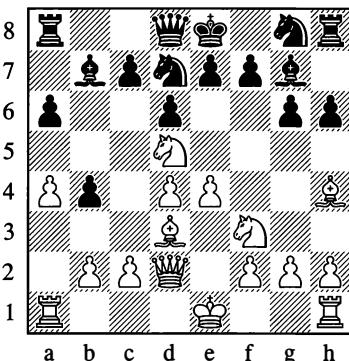
9.♘e2

White can also consider:

9.♘d5!?

Now I believe the best continuation for Black is:

9...h6! 10.♗h4



10...c5!

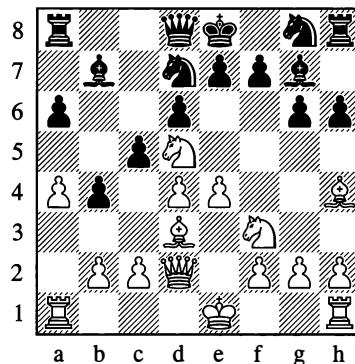
10...♗xd5?! 11.exd5 g5 12.♗g3 ♗gf6

13.♖xb4 ♗xd5 14.♗c4 e6 is rather unclear;

I would not mind playing this position.

10...a5 is more solid, but a bit too slow. 11.c3

bx<sub>c</sub>3 (11...g5?! 12.♗g3 does not work, as neither 12...f5?! nor 12...g4 is as promising as it first seems.) 12.bxc3 g5 13.♗g3 ♗gf6 14.♗xf6† ♗xf6 15.e5 ♗e4 16.♗e2 ♗xg3 17.fxg3 This position might be all right for Black, but it is clearly White who has the initiative.



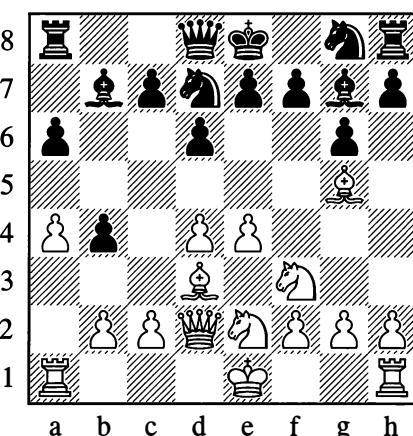
11.0–0 cxd4

This move is perfectly reliable, but it may lead to a forced draw if White is in that mood.

11...♗a5?! is an ambitious alternative.

12.♖xb4 ♗b8 13.♗c4 ♗c8=

White has nothing better than repeating moves.



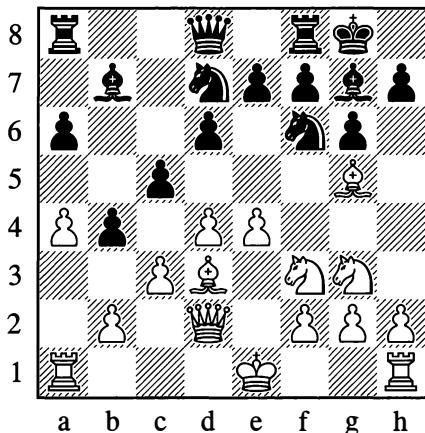
9...c5! 10.c3 ♗gf6?!

A good alternative is: 10...bxc3 11.bxc3 h6 12.♗h4N (12.♗e3 ♗gf6 13.♗g3 ♗g4 was

at least equal for Black in Monokroussos – Nogueiras Santiago, Dos Hermanas 2003.) 12...g5 13.♕g3 ♔gf6 Black is doing well, since 14.♔e3 (14.♔c2 is met by 14...cx d4 15.cxd4 ♕c8) 14...♗g4 15.♔c1 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♕c8 hands the initiative over to Black.

### 11.♗g3 0–0

Black can also consider 11...h6 12.♔e3 h5!, transposing to the Flexible Dragon Restrained – see Game 38 beginning on page 220.



### 12.d5?

From a positional point of view, there is nothing wrong with closing the centre, especially if White is allowed to follow up with c3-c4. However, Black will have something to say about that.

The engines often recommend moves like 12.cxb4 in such situations, but Black gets good compensation in the centre after 12...cx d4 13.♗xd4 ♗e5 14.♔c2 d5, when his pieces work wonderfully together.

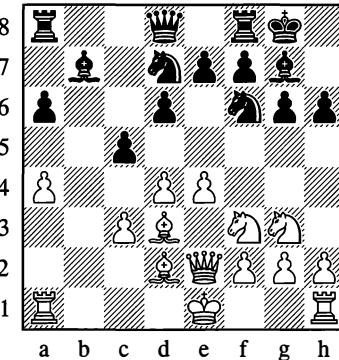
The natural 12.0–0 can be neutralized with 12...c4! 13.♔xc4 bxc3 14.bxc3 ♗xe4! 15.♗xe4 ♗xe4 with equality.

It would have been better to keep the tension in the centre with:

### 12.♗e2

Now Black must react before White castles and claims a comfortable advantage.

### 12...bxc3! 13.bxc3 h6 14.♔d2



### 14...cx d4!

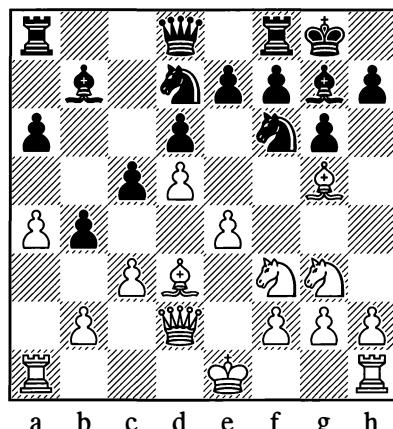
After 14...♗c7?! 15.0–0 I wrote that “it is time for Black to contemplate his sins” in *Tiger’s Modern*. Actually things are not quite that bad, as after 15...e6 16.a5 ♘fb8 17.♘fb1 ♘c6 Black is close to equality.

### 15.cxd4 e5!

Harassing d4, in order to give the d7-knight a strongpoint at c5.

### 16.♗b1 ♘c6

Black has excellent counterplay.



### 12...c4!

A recurrent theme in these structures. Compare Game 39 (Kolev – Hillarp Persson).

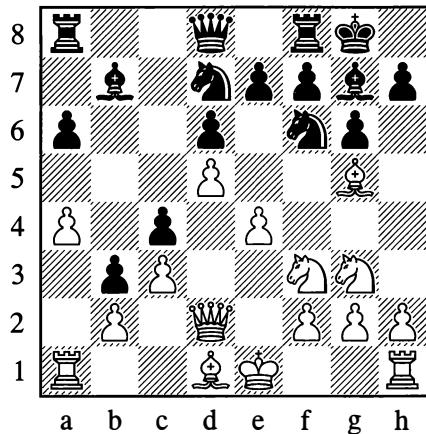
**13.♖c2**

13.♖b1? loses outright after 13...♕c5 14.♗e2 bxc3 15.bxc3 ♖xd5!.

Also bad is 13.♖xc4 bxc3 14.bxc3 ♜c7! 15.♗a2 (15.♗b1? is refuted by 15...♗xc4 16.♗xb7 ♖c5) 15...♗fc8 16.♗b1 ♜xc4 17.♗xc4 ♜xc4 18.♗xb7 ♖c5 when Black has a clear advantage.

**13...b3! 14.♗d1**

After 14.♗b1 a5!! White's queenside is paralysed in similar fashion to the Kolev – Hillarp Persson game, but at least White can fight on by trying to attack the c4-pawn.

**14...♘c5 15.♗xf6 exf6!**

Opening the e-file for the rook, and making it possible to hit the e4-pawn with ...f5.

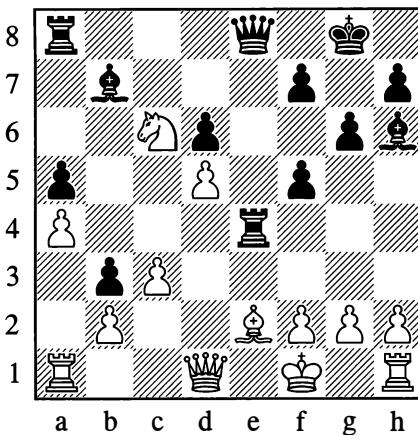
Worse is 15...♘d3† 16.♔f1 ♗xf6 17.♗e2 when White wins a pawn. True, Black gets plenty of compensation, but the game continuation is more convincing.

**16.♗e2**

After 16.0–0 ♜e8 17.♗e1 ♜c8! White has trouble moving and Black can slowly increase the pressure on e4 before playing ...f5.

**16...♜e8 17.♗xc4 ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 ♜xe4† 19.♔e2 ♜e8!**

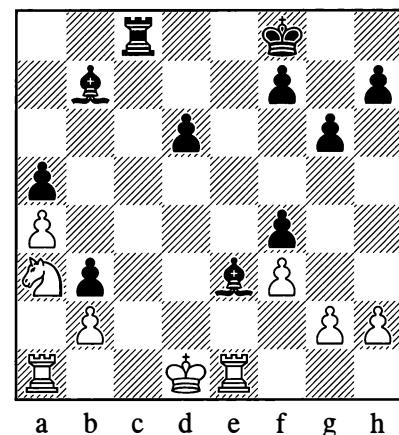
Stopping White from castling, while eyeing the a4-pawn and leaving the e7-square free in case the rook needs to retreat.

**20.♗d4 f5 21.♗c6 ♜h6 22.♗d1 a5 23.♗f1****23...♗xe2!!**

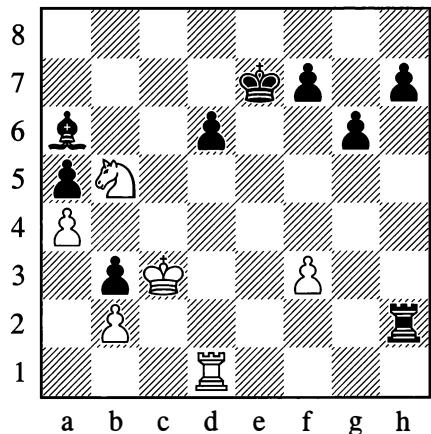
With the enemy king stuck in the centre, the bishops turn evil.

**24.♗xe2 ♜a6 25.c4 ♜xe2† 26.♗xe2 ♜xc4† 27.♗d1 ♜f8!**

Robbing White of a possible check on e7, but giving White time to find a defence... if only there was one.

**28.♗d4 ♜xd5 29.f3 ♜e3 30.♗b5 ♜c8 31.♗e1 f4 32.♗a3 ♜b7**

- 33.♗xe3 fxe3 34.♔e2 ♔a6† 35.♗xe3 ♕e8†  
 36.♗d2 ♕e2† 37.♗c3 ♕xg2 38.♗b5 ♕xh2  
**39.♗d1 ♔e7**



The endgame is hopeless, so White resigned.

**0–1**

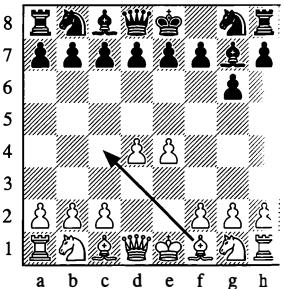
## Conclusion

Throughout this short chapter, we have seen that White's early ♗g5 has the drawback of allowing Black to prepare ...c5 more easily and with greater impact. White's most challenging way to handle the position is to play an early ♗f3 and ♗d3, as mentioned in the notes to Game 64 above. This leads to positions resembling those dealt with in Chapter 4 on the Flexible Dragon Restrained. I would argue that the white bishop is slightly worse on g5 than on e3, since the e5-e6 plan is much more dangerous if it can be followed up by a quick ♗g5. Considering the disadvantages of the bishop's placement on g5, I am not impressed by White's system.

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# Chapter 8

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## 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ – Mad Dog

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$

3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0–0

6.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  Game 71 378

6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  Game 70 375

5. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  6.e5!

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  Game 72 382

6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  Game 73 388

7.e6? Game 74 391

3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  5. $\mathbb{W}e2$  0–0

6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$

7.e5 Game 66 360

7.h3 Game 65 354

6.e5

6...dxe5 Game 69 371

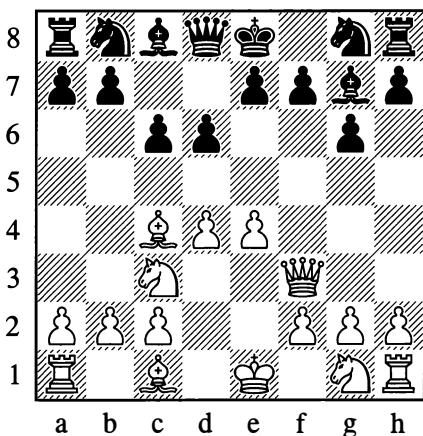
6... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  7.0–0! Game 67 364

7.h3 Game 68 368

As beginners, many of us learned to calibrate our weapons by firing wildly at the f7-pawn. Who has not heard of Scholar's Mate (1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♜c6 3.♗h5 and 4.♗xf7#), and who has not – at least once – tried his or her luck with this naive scheme? For some, this is an important threshold to overcome on the road to becoming a better chess player. Many never get past it, and I have often heard comments like: "My interest in chess declined slowly from the day my uncle/father/brother/classmate learned to defend against Scholar's Mate."

With time, one expects a chess player to outgrow this infantile obsession with aiming the queen and bishop towards f7; to wipe the foam from the corner of their mouth, and develop a more nuanced approach to the game. Alas, some people just can't let go...

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗c4 c6 5.♗f3**

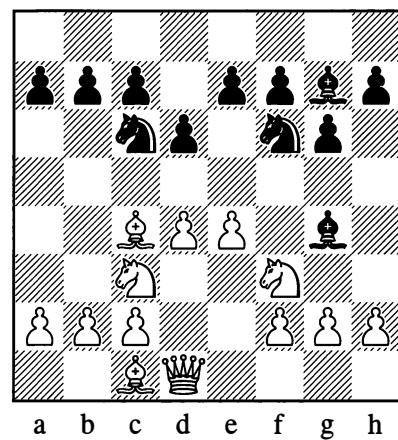


My early chess development followed a somewhat unusual path and, though this position is free from sentimental temptations for me, I cannot recommend that you aim for it as Black. After 5...e6 6.♘ge2 we are on the verge of a large and complicated opening system, which I am going to completely ignore since there are better alternatives for Black.

When I started writing the equivalent chapter

in *Tiger's Modern*, I had only a vague idea of what 'theory' said about the different variations. 4.♗c4 was reputed to be one of the less dangerous variations of the Modern/Pirc complex, so I thought it was going to be a piece of cake to write the chapter. In the process, however, I learned that things are not so simple.

Let us retrace our steps to the beginning. After the obligatory 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 it is time for White to decide which knight ought to be developed first. (After 3.♗c4 d6, White still faces the same dilemma.) 3.♘f3 is a positional choice which is often favoured by those wishing to avoid heavy theory. 3.♘c3 is popular among players who prefer a theoretical duel with high stakes. I recommend that you meet both these lines with 3...d6, ...♘f6 and ...0–0. The main idea of this logical system is to attack the d4-pawn with a combination of ...♗g4 and ...♘c6.



In order to avoid this kind of position, White often plays an early h2-h3, preventing ...♗g4. In that case Black should just castle, intending ...♘xe4 followed by ...d5, immediately regaining the piece.

Here is a more detailed summary of the main set-ups and plans available to White.

$\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , meeting ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  with  $h2-h3$  (Game 65)

With this plan White secures the bishop pair and can support his centre with c2-c3. However, he loses a tempo with his queen, and Black obtains good play in the centre with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and ...e5.

**The same set-up, but meeting ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  with e4-e5 (Game 66)**

Black should react by taking on e5 and putting the knight on d5, obtaining a reasonable version of an Alekhine.

#### White plays $\mathbb{W}e2$ and e4-e5 before ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

(Games 67, 68 and 69)

In Games 67 and 68 Black reacts to 6.e5 with 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ . White's strongest continuation is 7.0-0!, although 7.h3 has been more popular. In either case Black does best to react with 7...c5!. Game 69 shows another valid approach in 6...dxe5!?

**White plays  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  without  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (Games 70 and 71)**

If White develops his pieces and leaves his queen on d1, Black should be able to get a good game with the ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fork trick. The ideal timing for this move is usually immediately after White has spent a tempo on h2-h3.

#### White plays $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and $\mathbb{W}e2$

(Games 72, 73 and 74)

When White has a queen on e2 and no knight on f3, Black does best to strike at the centre with a quick 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , when 6.e5 is the only challenging continuation. Game 72 features the safe and solid 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , while the final two games focus on the more complicated 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?

## GAME 65

Lars Blomström – Tiger Hillarp Persson

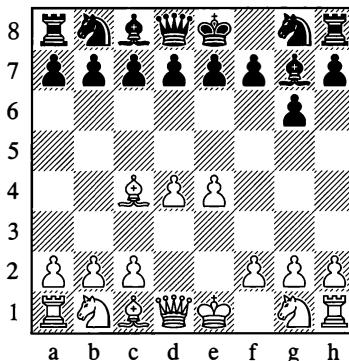
Västgöta 2002

### 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

The main advantage of this move over 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is the extra defence of the d4-pawn. This means that, after  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , the reply ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  will not immediately threaten the pawn (as occurs in Games 72, 73 and 74). Moreover, White retains the option of c2-c3 if needed.

Before we move ahead, you may be wondering what happens if White postpones the decision over which knight to develop.

### 3. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



Ignoring the fact that 3...d6 leaves White in the same predicament as before, Black can also try a more principled reaction:

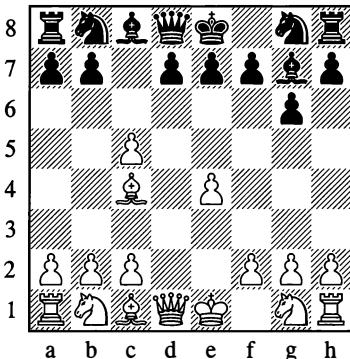
### 3...c5!?

I say “principled”, because it is hardly useful for White to play d4-d5 with the bishop on c4. Now White has several ideas.

### 4.dxc5

4. $\mathbb{W}f3$ ?! allows a trick: 4...d5! 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (5.exd5 cxd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7.0-0 a6, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , is fine for Black.) 5...e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 10. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  Black had a great position in Petrenko – Gorbunov, Odessa 2001.

In the event of 4.♕f3 cxd4 5.♕xd4 ♕c6 6.♕e3 ♘a5† White is not able to enter a Sicilian Dragon with 7.♕c3?!, since 7...♘b4! leads to a clearly better game for Black. Instead he should settle for 7.c3, when 7...♕f6 8.♕d2 0–0, followed by ...♕e5 and ...d5, is at least equal for Black.



4...♘a5† 5.c3 ♘xc5 6.♕b3?! e6 7.♕e3 ♘c6?! 7...♘c7 8.♕a3 a6 has been more popular, but nobody has tried the critical 9.♕f3!!N (after 9.♕b6 ♘c6 10.f3 ♕e7 11.♕d1 d5 the white pieces are all standing in each other's way) when 9...♕e7 10.0–0 ♘xe4 leads to a messy game.

#### 8.♕d2?!

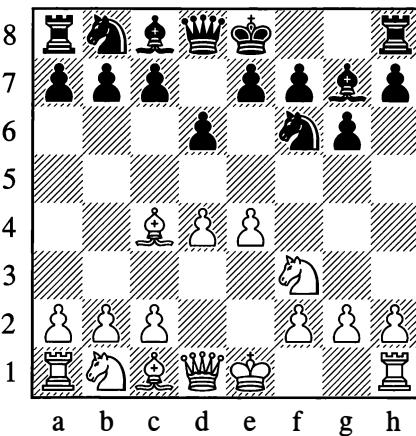
8.♕a3 is better, but Black is doing well after 8...♕f6.  
8...♕f6 9.♕b5 ♘c7 10.♕e2 0–0 11.♕f4 d6 12.0–0 ♕bd7 13.♕g3 ♕c5

Black was better in Shevchenko – Gorbunov, Odessa 2001.

#### 3...d6 4.♕c4 ♕f6!

Why not 4...a6 here? It seems logical, since White cannot answer with c2-c4 anymore, and ...b5 will harass the c4-bishop. Still, it's not good enough. After 5.c3? b5 6.♕b3 ♕b7 7.♕e2 White will finish developing and play a2-a4, when Black has no good answer: ...b4 loses a pawn, ...bxa4 leaves Black with a silly pawn structure, and ...c6 is too passive.

However, 4...e6?! is an interesting alternative which was featured in the last game of the Hippopotamus chapter – see page 290.



#### 5.♕e2 0–0!

I prefer this to 5...♕c6, when 6.h3! leaves Black rather passive. White has successfully prevented our two main ideas of ...♕g4 and ...♕xe4.

#### 6.0–0

The main alternative is 6.e5, which will be seen in Games 67, 68 and 69.

#### 6...♕g4 7.h3

The aggressive 7.e5 will be dealt with in the next game.

White can also try 7.c3 ♕c6 8.♕bd2 e5 9.h3, when 9...♕d7 reaches a position resembling something from the "Lazy Variation".

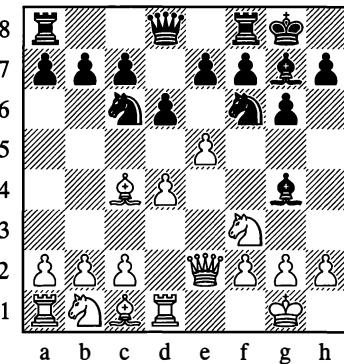
Another possibility is:

#### 7.♕d1 ♕c6 8.e5?!

8.h3 ♘xf3 9.♘xf3 e5 10.c3 ♕d7 11.♕e3 transposes to 11.♕d1 in the note to move 11 in the main game.

The silly 8.♕b5?! was played in Vallejo Pons – Carlsen, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011. After 8...♕d7! 9.c3 e5 10.♕xc6 bxc6 11.h3 ♘xf3 12.♘xf3 exd4 13.cxd4 c5 14.♕e3 ♘b8

15.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  Black had no complaints, but 12...  $\mathbb{W}h4!N$  would have put even more pressure on White.



8...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$

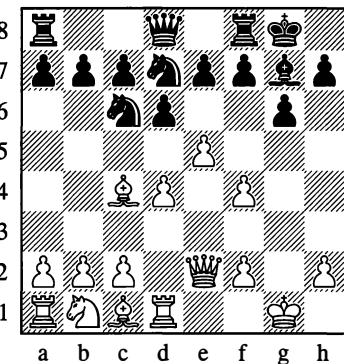
8...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.e6  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10.exf7†  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  is dangerous for Black.

9.gxf3?!

9.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  dx5 10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  11.e6 (11.  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  e6 is a solid extra pawn for Black) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}de5$  12.exf7†  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14.  $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  15.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f3†$  (15...  $\mathbb{W}d5$  and 15...  $\mathbb{Q}c2?$  are also promising for Black) 16.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}d6†$  Black had the advantage in Boehm – Hort, Dortmund 1985.

9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.f4

Now in O. Berg – Hillarp Persson, Faroe Islands 2004, I should have played:



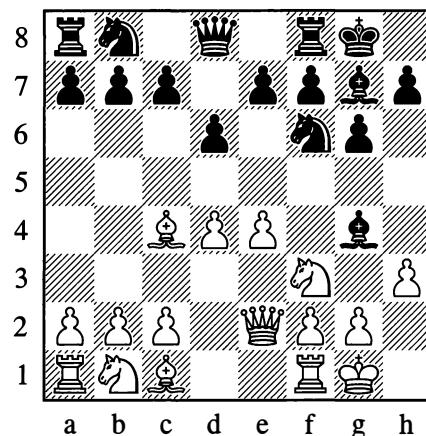
10...  $\mathbb{Q}b6!N$

In the game I played 10...e6, when 11.  $\mathbb{W}g4!$

$\mathbb{Q}e7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  would have offered White counterplay.

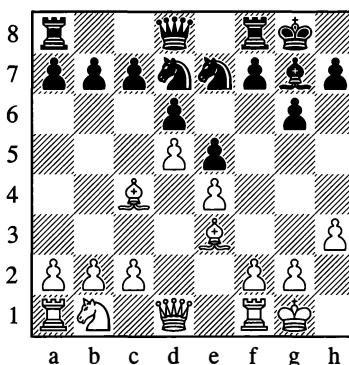
11.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6

Black has the better chances. Both sides have structural weaknesses, but White's king is more exposed.

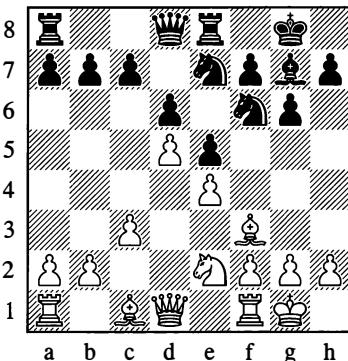


7...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9.c3

If White intends to close the centre later, it might be an idea to play 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{W}d1!N$ , intending to do without c2-c3. After 10...e5 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  we reach an interesting position.



Black is slightly ahead in development and ready for ...f5, so I would suggest that closing the centre is not such a good idea for White when he has played  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . It is worth comparing this to a similar position from the Classical Pirc:



Despite some similarities, there are two major differences between the two positions. In the second one, Black is not as well developed, with his knight blocking the f-pawn and the rook badly placed on e8. Secondly, White's bishop is on f3 rather than c4, so it supports the e4-pawn and leaves White free to advance on the queenside with c2-c4 and ♘c3. White may even respond to ...♝d7 and ...f5 with h4-h5! In short, White is clearly better in the second position, but not the first.

### 9...e5 10.♗e3

After 10.d5 ♘e7 I find it hard to believe that Black should be worse. It will take a long time for White to get anything going on the queenside, while Black's ideas include counterplay with ...♝d7 and ...f5, and possibly swapping off the bad bishop with ...♝h8, ...♝g8 and ...♝h6.

Another game continued:

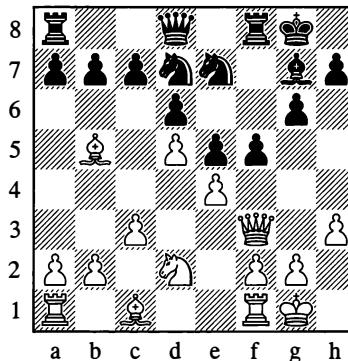
### 10.♗b5 ♘d7!

After 10...exd4 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.cxd4 ♘d7 13.♗e3 the c6-pawn is weak on the open file. 11.d5?!

White is lagging behind in development and is badly prepared for a closed centre.

The logical choice would be 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗e3, when 12...♝b8 maintains the balance. Black should generally not exchange on d4 unless there is some immediate benefit. 11...♝e7 12.♗d2 f5

Black already stands better.



### 13.♗xd7 ♜xd7 14.♗d3 c6!?

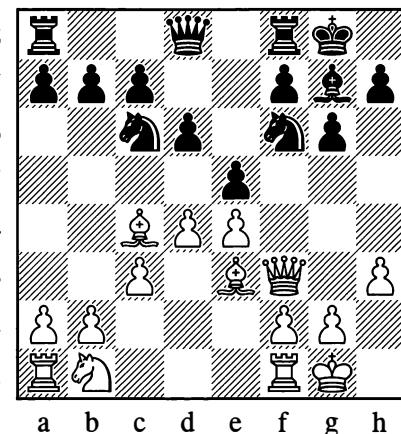
I would have preferred 14...♝h6 followed by ...♝xd2, ...f4 and an attack.

### 15.dxc6!?

White loses faith in his centre. Better was 15.c4 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♜c8, though Black still has the initiative due to his better coordination.

### 15...bxc6 16.♗c4 d5 17.exd5 cxd5 18.♗g5 ♘c6 19.♗e3?! d4

Black's pieces were working together harmoniously and he eventually won in Nikolac – Tkachiev, Solin 1999.



### 10...♝d7 11.♗d1

### 11.♗d1

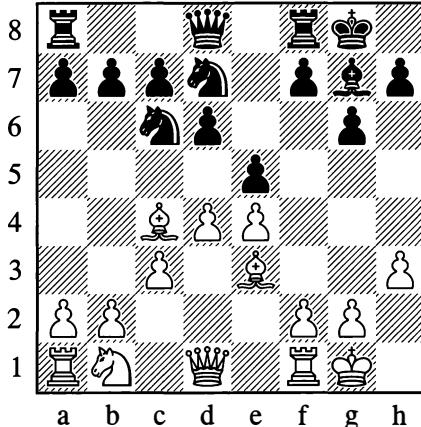
Since *Tiger's Modern* was published, this move surfaced as something of a main line. Nevertheless, my original recommendation still holds its ground.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$  f5 (12...a6!N 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5 17.c4 a4 18.d5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5 leads to double-edged play) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 14.exf5 has been played a few times. Here I suggest 14...exd4N 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  and Black is doing well.

12...f5 13.exf5 gxf5!N

This improves on Ernst – Hillarp Persson, Skara 2002, which continued 13... $\mathbb{E}xf5$  14. $\mathbb{W}e2!$  exd4 (14... $\mathbb{W}e7?!$  15.d5±) 15.cxd4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , and now 17.d5N  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  18. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  would have been favourable for White.



11... $\mathbb{Q}h8!?$

In the previous note we saw this move working well against 11. $\mathbb{E}d1$ , but here it might be a bit too much.

Two years later, I chose a safer alternative and obtained a slightly better game.

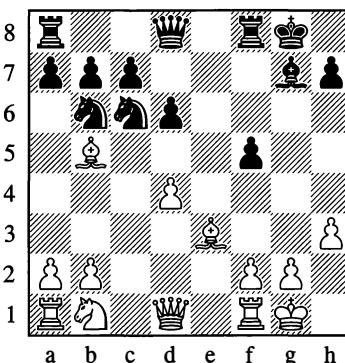
11... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  exd4 13.cxd4  $\mathbb{W}f6$  White cannot hold on to his centre anymore.

12...exd4

12...d5? 13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  dxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  18.f4  $\mathbb{Q}ed7$  gives Black reasonable compensation for the exchange, but is hardly necessary.

13.cxd4 f5 14.exf5 gxf5



14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

This suggestion of the engine is the only move that seems threatening.

14.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  is promising for Black.

14.dxe5? f4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  17.dxc7  $\mathbb{W}xc7$  is bad for White) 15... $\mathbb{Q}dxe5$  looks like a lot of fun.

14...e4! 15. $\mathbb{W}f4$

15. $\mathbb{W}h5$  d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  f4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  gives Black excellent chances.

15. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  18.axb3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is also no problem.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  d5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}ac4$

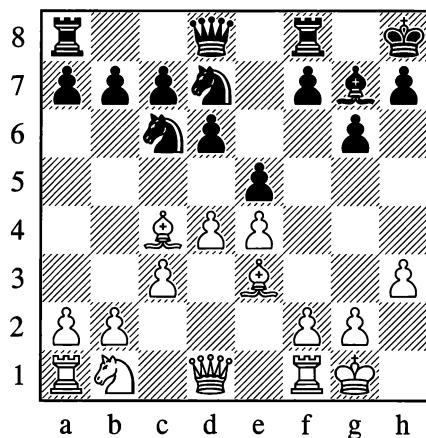
Black is doing fine.

15.d5

This leaves Black with some initiative, but White had to do something about the impending advance of the f-pawn.

15.g3 f4 16.♗xf4 ♗xd4 17.♗d3 ♘xf4!?  
(17...♘e8) 18.gxf4 ♘f6 19.♗g4 ♗e6  
20.♗c3 ♘xf4 is clearly more fun for Black.  
15...♗e5 16.♗xb6! axb6 17.f4!?

Having blocked the advance of the f-pawn, White eventually managed to draw in Perez Candelario – Hillarp Persson, Calvia (ol) 2004.



### 12.f4!?

My moderately-rated opponent plays well and puts pressure on me before I can arrange things my way.

After 12.♗b5 f5 Black is doing well.

In the event of 12.♗a3 Black can choose between 12...f5 and 12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♘e7, with a good game in either case.

The main reason why I would suggest deviating on move 11 for Black is 12.dxe5! ♗cxe5 13.♗e2 when White has a certain advantage due to the bishop pair.

### 12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♗b6 14.♗b3

I was more worried about 14.♗b5!? during the game, but 14...f5! 15.e5 ♗e7 16.♗c3 c6 17.♗e2 ♗ed5 seems no worse for Black than the game continuation.

### 14...f5

I did not want my opponent to consolidate his centre, but it was not necessary to use such drastic measures. Instead 14...♘e7! 15.♗c3 ♗a5 offers Black good counterplay on the dark squares.

### 15.e5 g5!

Having said A, I proceed to B; thank God there was no C...

### 16.e6!?

Again my opponent finds a good move and avoids 16.fxg5?! dx5 17.dxe5 ♘xd1 18.♗xd1 ♗xe5, when Black is clearly better. White's pieces are shattered and ...f4-f3 is hanging in the air.

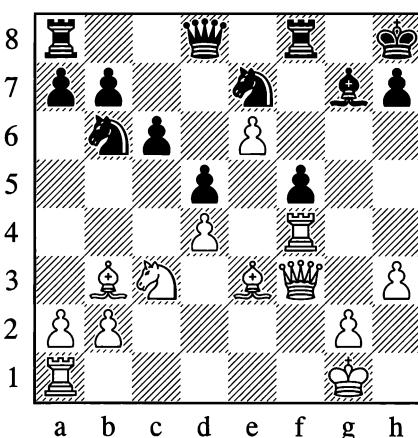
I was expecting 16.d5 ♗e7 17.e6 exf4 18.♗d4 ♘e5 19.♗c3 ♗g6 with an unclear position.

### 16...gxsf4 17.♗xf4 d5 18.♗f3 ♗e7

The greedy 18...♗h6?! backfires after 19.♗c3 ♘xf4 20.♗xf4, when White has fantastic compensation for the exchange.

### 19.♗c3 c6

Now, however, it was time to be greedy. The simple 19...♗f6! wins the e6-pawn, and it is not clear how White can prove compensation.



### 20.♗e1 ♗bc8

I 'talked to my pieces' and the b6-knight told me "e4 would be a nice square, thank you".

Perhaps it was still better to play the brutal 20... $\mathbb{W}d6!$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}f6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{E}xe6$ .

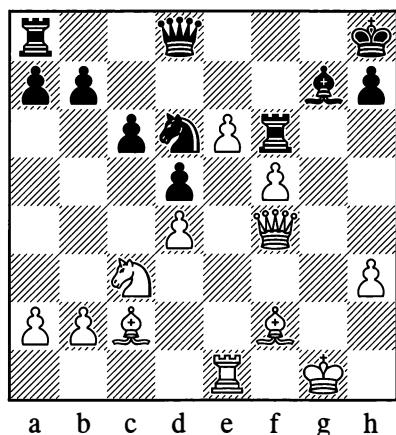
### 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22.g4??

My opponent wisely avoids 22. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$ , and realizes it is time to change the character of the position.

### 22... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ ??

From a practical point of view this is dubious – unless one has calculated correctly, which I had not. The rook is not a good blocker, and it would have been safer to play 24... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with a small advantage.

### 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



### 25... $\mathbb{W}f8$ ?

With time running out, I missed that 25... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  26. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  27. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is winning for Black. The rest of the game was played in mutual time trouble.

### 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ? 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ?

Had Lars chosen 29. $\mathbb{W}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$  30. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ , there is a fair chance he would have won.

### 29... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xg8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ 32.e7 $\mathbb{W}g4\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

### 35. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h5 37. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

The game continued for another ten to twenty moves or so, until I realized I was being outplayed and offered a draw. Being short of time, my opponent accepted.

...½-½

Playing  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  on the seventh or eleventh move has been tested at the highest level, but it seems that Black is doing well in both cases. In the main game I should have continued with 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with a balanced position.

In the next game White plays in a more consistent manner, meaning that if you start out with  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , then why hold back on e4-e5?

## GAME 66

Philipp Schlosser – Victor Bologan

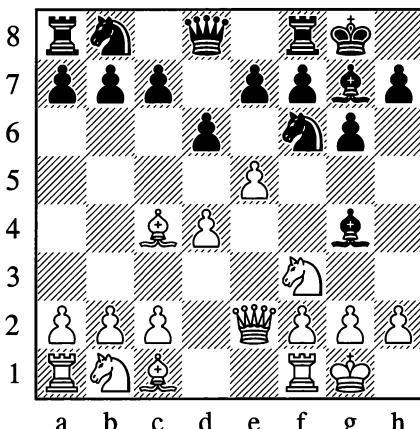
Mulhouse 2001

### 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0-0

Beware of 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! 6.e5 dx5 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$  when White is better.

### 6.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7.e5

I believe this is more critical than 7.h3, as played in the previous game. Now, Black has to play accurately to avoid a passive position.



**7...dxe5!**

When Black has already played ...♗g4, this is the only fully satisfactory way to play. The next game will deal with 7...♝e8?! (via a slightly different move order), after which White can obtain an edge with 8.♝bd2! – see the note on page 365.

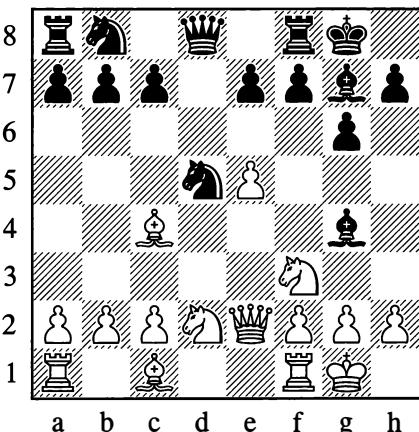
**8.dxe5 ♐d5!**

This is something of a ‘good Alekhine’, where Black has been able to play ...♗g4 without having to waste a tempo on ...c6.

**9.♝bd2!**

Preparing to meet ...♗xf3 with ♐xf3, when the e-pawn will be safely guarded. This would be the set-up of White’s dreams, since Black’s knights have no strongpoints and the remaining bishop is biting the rock.

After 9.h3 ♐xf3 10.♗xf3 e6 we also reach a dream set-up, but this time for Black, who can continue with ...♝d7 and (if necessary) ...c6, forcing White to play ♘e2 and f2-f4. In the resulting position Black has a lead in development and can choose from a smorgasbord of ideas including ...b5, ...f6 and even ...g5.

**9...♝b6!**

The point behind this move is to make

**10...♛c6 a double threat.**

9...e6?! gives White the chance to enter the dream scenario of above: 10.h3 ♐xf3 11.♗xf3 c6 12.c3 ♐d7 13.♗e1 ♖c7 14.♗b3 with a big advantage, Ravi – Dzhumaev, Dubai 2001.

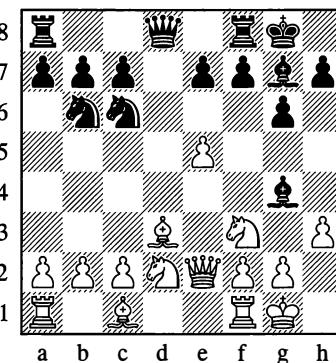
Another less attractive possibility is 9...♝c6?! 10.♗e4 ♛e6 11.♗b3 b6 12.♗bd4 when White obtained a clear advantage in Volkmann – Brittner, Leon 2001. The conclusion seems to be that it is important for Black to mix things up a bit.

**10.♗b3**

Time has more or less stood still in this line.

Leko tried a different course against Shirov in 1996. Black had some difficulties in that game, but there are some decent alternatives given in the notes:

10.♗d3 ♐c6 11.h3

**11...♝e6?!**

An interesting alternative is 11...♝f5?! 12.♗xf5 gx5 13.e6 (13.c3 e6 14.♗b3 ♖d5 15.♗e1 ♖c4 is balanced) 13...h6 14.exf7† ♘xf7 15.♗b3 e5 with mutual chances.

The safest and most obvious continuation is 11...♝d4 12.♗e4 ♐xf3† 13.♗xf3 ♘xf3 14.♗xf3 c6, when Black has a solid position with active ideas like ...a5-a4 and ...♖d4. The position is reminiscent of a line from

Alekhine's Defence (1.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  3.d4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6 6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  7. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  dx $e$ 5 8.dxe5 e6), but I prefer to have exchanged both of White's knights. Black's dark-square holes after a subsequent ...e6 will be much less of a problem when he does not have to worry about a knight landing on d6 or f6.

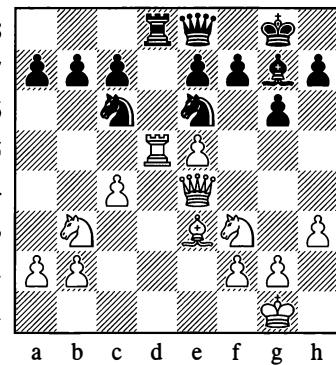
12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

My friend Ludvig Sandström used to say I had "too much talent", when I came up with excessively imaginative moves when natural ones seemed good enough. He meant, in a friendly way, that I should at least make a small effort to be objective. It seems that Shirov is slightly too talented here (ignoring the fact that he is massively talented in general). Leko gives 12... $\mathbb{W}c8?$ ! in *Informant* 67, and I think 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  c6 looks interesting.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $\mathbb{W}e4$

White has more space and a clearly better position. Black must try to relieve some of the pressure by exchanging pieces.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  19.c4  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



20... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$

Shirov goes into an endgame where his pawn structure is clearly inferior, but the alternatives are even worse.

20...b6 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  is given by Leko, but

after 22. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$  Black is facing an uphill struggle.

21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  22. $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

Black was clearly worse and had to suffer for a draw in Leko – Shirov, Vienna 1996.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

The double threat that I referred to in the comment to Black's last move is ... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .

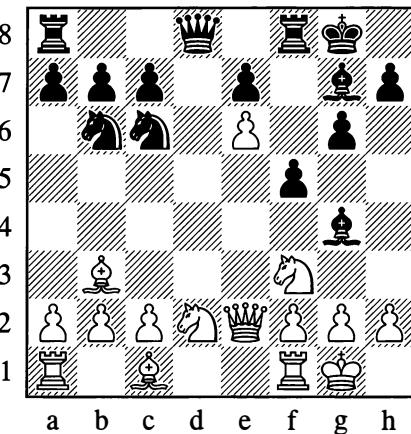
**11.e6**

After 11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  12. $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  13.axb3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  16. $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  Black has enough compensation for the pawn.

11. $\mathbb{W}e3$  a5 12.a4  $\mathbb{W}d7$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is nice for Black.

**11...f5!**

This is much stronger than 11...a5?! 12.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13.c3! a4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe6$  a3 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  axb2 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fg5!$  when White is better. It is a recurring theme in the Modern that you can get away with taking certain liberties (in this case allowing an enemy pawn on e6) as long as your pawn structure is intact.

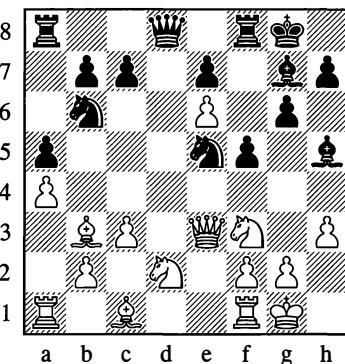


**12.c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$**

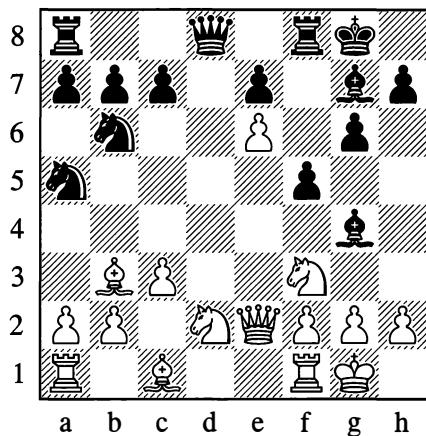
Up to this point Black's play has been fine, but here there are two superior alternatives:

12...♝e5 13.h3 ♜h5 14.♗e3 ♛d3 (14...f4?! is worse: 15.♗e4 ♜d3 16.♗xb7 ♜xf3 17.♗xf3 ♜c5 Compared to the line below where ...a5 and a2-a4 have been played, the bishop is not hanging on b3!) 15.♗c5 ♛d6 16.♗xd6 ♜xf3† 17.♗xf3 cxd6 The position is unclear.

Even better for Black is: 12...a5! 13.a4 (After 13.h3 ♜h5 14.♗c4 a4 15.♗xb6 cxb6 16.♗c4 ♜e5 17.♗d1 ♜c7 18.♗d5 f4 19.a3 g5 Black has a strong initiative on the kingside.) 13...♝e5 14.h3 ♜h5 15.♗e3



15...f4! This is where the mutual a-pawn advances become significant. 16.♗e4 (16.♗e2 ♛d3 17.♗xd3 ♜xd3 and Black has a certain initiative.) 16...♝d3 Black is doing well, since 17.♗xb7? ♜xf3 18.♗xf3 ♜c5 wins the bishop on b3.

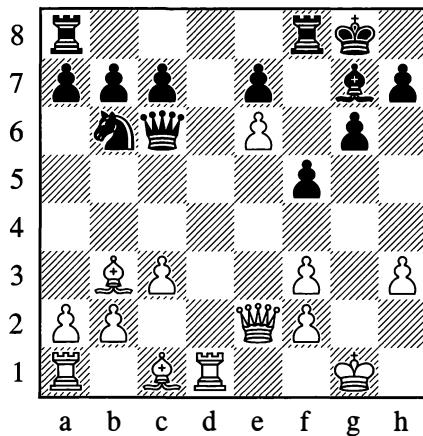


### 13.♗c2??

There was no reason to allow the black queen to become active. Better is 13.♗fd1! ♜xb3 (13...♛c8 14.♗c2 is horribly passive for Black) 14.♗xb3 ♛e8 15.h3 ♜h5 16.♗a5 when I prefer White's position.

### 13...♛d5! 14.h3 ♜h5 15.♗d1 ♛c6 16.♗b3 ♜xb3 17.♗xb3 ♜xf3 18.gxf3?!

Black's queen is more active than White's, so there is no good reason not to exchange queens when the chance is there.



### 18...f4!

Bologan closes the door on the c1-bishop and simultaneously opens a road to the fifth rank for his rooks.

### 19.a4 a5 20.♗e4 ♜f5 21.♗c2 ♜af8 22.♗xc6 ♜g5† 23.♗f1 bxc6

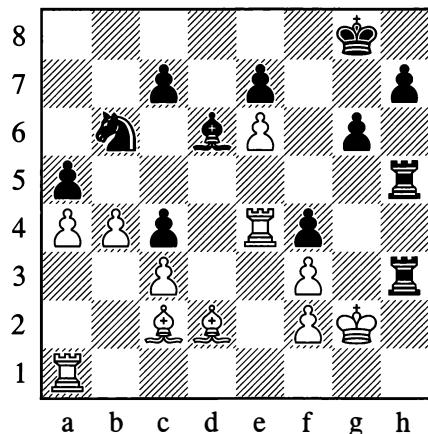
It is difficult to point out exactly what went wrong for White. It is possible that Black was already better after the 18th move.

### 24.♗a3 c5 25.♗e1

After 25.♗b3 c4 26.♗b5 ♜xb5 27.axb5 Black keeps an advantage with 27...♝e5, intending ...a4 and ...♝d6.

### 25...c4 26.♗e4 ♜e5 27.b4 ♜d6 28.♗d2 ♜d5 29.♗e1 ♜h5 30.♗a1 ♜ff5 31.♗g2 ♜fg5†

32.♔h2 ♔h4 33.♕d2 ♔gh5 34.♔g2 ♔xh3



35.♕xf4??

White could have fought on with 35.♕g1 or 35.♕d1. Now it ends quickly.

35...♕xf4 36.♕xf4 ♔h2† 37.♔g3 ♔5h3†  
38.♔g4 ♔h4† 39.♔g3 ♔2h3† 40.♔g2 ♔xf4  
41.♔xh3 ♕xf3† 42.♔g2 ♕xc3 43.♔e4 axb4

44.a5 ♔c8

Here White resigned, since 45.a6 is easily repelled by either 45...♔a3 or 45...♔a7, when Black's three extra pawns will decide the outcome.

0-1

The key move to remember from this game is 9...♔b6!, which leads to a complicated game with mutual chances.

## GAME 67

**Leonid Shamkovich – Raymond Keene**

New York 1980

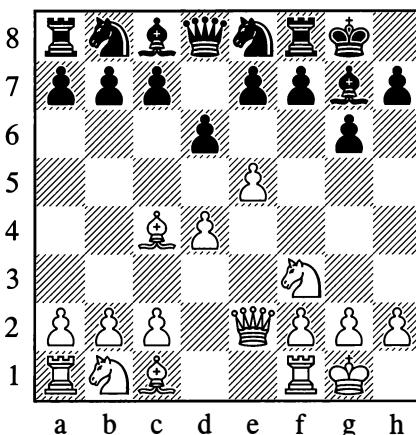
1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♔g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c4 ♘f6  
5.♗e2 0-0 6.e5 ♘e8?

This is a truly challenging move. Black intends to blow up the enemy centre with ...c5.

The solid alternative 6...dxe5!! is seen in Game 69.

7.0-0!

I cannot find any convincing reason why this move is less popular than 7.h3, which is seen in the next game.



7....♗g4?!

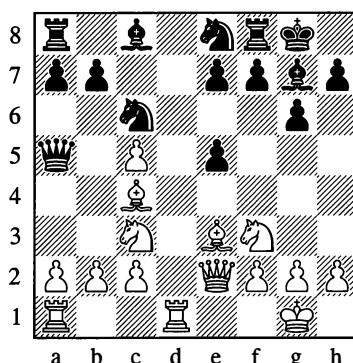
It seems logical to develop the bishop when allowed to, but the more I investigated it, the more attractive I found the alternative:

7...c5!! 8.dxe5! dxe5 9.♘c3

9.♗xe5 ♖d4 10.♘f3 ♖xc5 is fine for Black.

9...♘c6 10.♗d1 ♖a5 11.♗e3

Now the best move is:



11....♗g4!

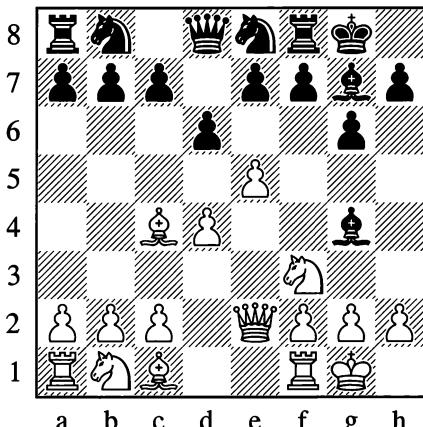
11...♖c7? has been played, but what kind of a move is this? 12.♘d5 ♖b8 Now in

Eckhardt – Pflug, Bavaria 2000, Black would have been in deep trouble if only White had played 13.♗b5.

12.a3

This is the critical try.

- 12.h3?! ♗d4 13.♗xd4 exd4 14.hxg4 dxc3  
 15.b3 ♘xc5 is good for Black.  
 12...♗d4! 13.♗xd4 exd4 14.b4 ♘d8 15.♗b5  
 Or 15.h3 ♘xf3 16.♘xf3 b6! 17.♗d5 ♘c8  
 18.♗a6 ♘b8 19.c6 e6 20.♗f4 ♘c7 with an unbalanced position.  
 15...b6! 16.c3 bxc5 17.bxc5 e5 18.cxd4 exd4  
 19.h3 ♘xf3 20.♘xf3 ♘c8  
 Black has equalized.



**8.♗d1**

This effectively stops Black from playing ...c5. However, the strongest move is:

8.♗bd2!

From this position I have not been able to find a line for Black that I am entirely happy about. White is threatening to achieve the ideal set-up with h2-h3 on the next move, so Black is in urgent need of a countermeasure.

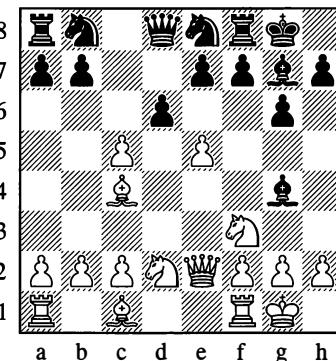
8...c5?!

8...♗c6 9.♗e3! is a line where I have been looking for equality in vain.

The text move was my original recommendation, but I have come to doubt it.

9.dxc5

9.exd6 ♘xd6 (9...♗xd6?! 10.dxc5 ♘xc4 could be considered) 10.dxc5 ♘xc5 11.h3 ♘c8 12.♗e4 and White had a slight initiative in Podgaets – Usmanov, Riga 1975.



9...dxe5

9...♗c6?! was my recommendation in *Tiger's Modern*, but it does not quite hold up to closer scrutiny after 10.h3!.

10.h3

10.♗e4?! ♘xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘c6 12.c3 ♘f6  
 13.♗h4 is rather unclear, although the bishop pair should give White some advantage.

10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘c7 12.♗e3 ♘f6

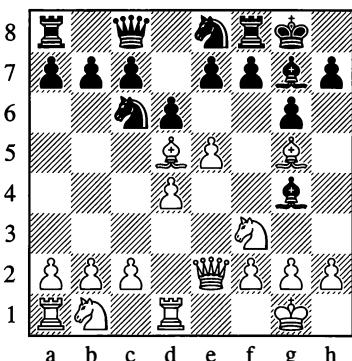
Black will follow up with ...♗bd7 or ...♗c6, depending on circumstances. Black's kingside pawn majority gives him interesting chances, but there is no doubting the fact that White's bishop pair gives him the upper hand.

**8...♗c6**

From a strategic point of view I am not happy with this move, since it leaves the knight passive on e8. However, from a tactical viewpoint it works out quite well.

8...c6? 9.h3! ♘xf3 10.♗xf3 has hardly ever been played. It seems to me that after 10...♘c7! 11.exd6 ♘xd6 12.♗b3 ♘d7 Black has a weird but quite good version of some sort of Alekhine.

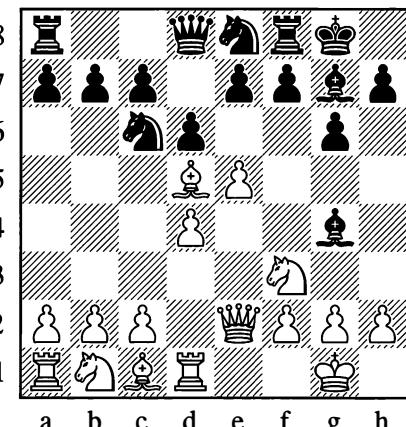
Also interesting is: 8... $\mathbb{W}c8$ !?



9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (10... $\mathbb{W}f5$ !?) might be an improvement, when 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $dxe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxcc6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $e4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  15.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16.gxf3  $\mathbb{W}xh3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18.f4  $\mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e2$  20. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$  results in a draw. All totally forced. Fingers crossed.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $g5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  Now in G. Garcia – Benjamin, Connecticut 2000, Black should have played 12... $e6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxcc6$  14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $f5$  with unclear play.

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  should be met by 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 10.gxf3 (10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !?)  $dxe5$  11. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  wins for Black) 10... $e6$ , intending ... $\mathbb{W}h4$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7-h5/f5$ .



9... $\mathbb{W}d7$

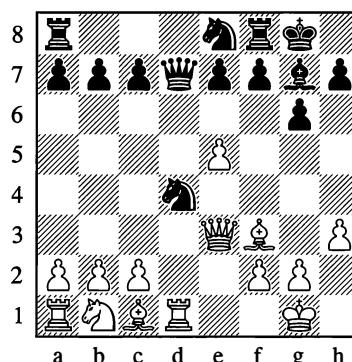
9... $\mathbb{W}c8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  resembles Garcia – Benjamin above, and is probably just as good as the game.

Also interesting is 9... $e6$ !?

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ? would be a mistake due to 10... $dxe5$  11. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  and White has to let go of the e-pawn.

Another possibility is: 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $dxe5$  12. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  13. $\mathbb{W}e3$



13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  15.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  17. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}ed6$  With an unclear position.

### 10... $e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $d5$

Instinctively I prefer 11... $dxe5$  12. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  with a complicated game, but Keene's move is also good.

### 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $f6$ !

The strength of this idea is due to the clumsy placement of the b3-bishop and the c3-knight.

### 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$

After 14. $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  Black has the initiative.

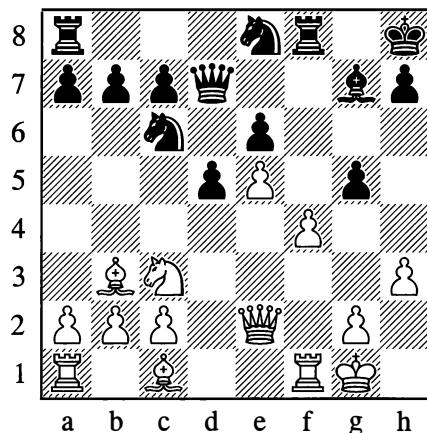
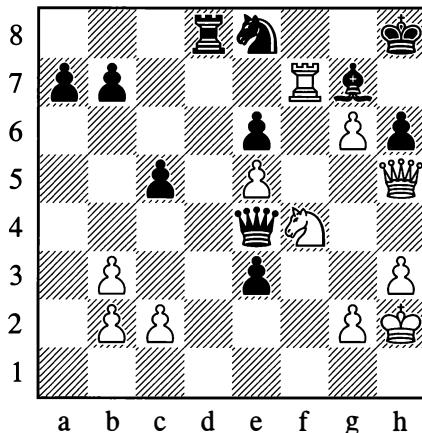
**14...fxe5 15.dxe5 ♔h8 16.f4 g5!**

The standard procedure, which also features in the first game of this chapter.

**17.♔f1**

Another possibility is 17.g3 gxf4 18.♕xf4 ♔e7 with an unclear position where I would still bet on Black.

The superficial 17.♗g4 is met with 17...♗e7 18.♗e1 gxf4 19.♗xf4 ♗g8 20.♗f3 ♖d4 when Black has some initiative.



**17...♔d4 18.♗h5 c5 19.♗e3?**

White sacrifices a piece, but does not get enough compensation.

Better was 19.♗xg5 b5 20.a3 c4 21.♗d1, although Black keeps a strong initiative with 21...♗f3† 22.gxf3 ♗g8 23.♗h1 cxb3 24.cxb3 ♘f8 25.♗h4 ♗g7. The knight will go to f5, and I doubt that White will be able to defend in the long run.

**19...♗xb3 20.axb3 d4 21.fxg5**

21.♗e4 dxe3 22.♗xg5 h6 is no better.

**21...♗xf1† 22.♗xf1 dxe3 23.g6 h6 24.♗f7 ♘d4 25.♗e2 ♗e4 26.♗f4 ♘d8 27.♗h2**

**27...♔g8??**

Black commits a horrible blunder.

Instead 27...e2! 28.♗xe2 ♗xe5† 29.♗f4 ♘d6 leaves Black a piece up, and the win should be pretty straightforward.

**28.♗h4!**

Hitting the rook and threatening the lethal 29.♗e7. Black has no defence.

**28...♗c8**

Black is lost after both 28...♗d2 29.♗e7 ♘xg2† 30.♗xg2 ♗xe5† 31.♗h1, and 28...♗d7 29.♗xd7 ♗xe5 30.♗d8 ♗xf4† 31.♗xf4 ♗xf4† 32.♗g1 ♗f8 33.g7† ♗xg7 34.♗xe8 ♗f6 35.♗f1.

**29.♗e7 ♗xf4† 30.♗xf4 ♘c7**

Black resigned (or lost on time). A possible finish is 31.♗f7† ♗h8 32.♗h4, followed by ♘xh6† and ♗h7 mate.

**1–0**

Considering how dangerous 8.♗bd2! is for Black after 7.0–0 ♗g4?!, I suggest that you make up your mind beforehand on whether to play 7...c5?!, or avoid this line altogether with 6...dxe5.

## GAME 68

**Parimarjan Negi – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Malmö 2007

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{B}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{B}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
5. $\mathbb{W}e2$  0–0 6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  7.h3**

Even though I regard 7.0–0! as more accurate, the text move is also quite challenging, and has been White's most popular choice. A couple of rare alternatives are also worth considering:

**7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !?**

This makes reasonable sense now that Black has placed his knight on a passive spot.

**7...c6!**

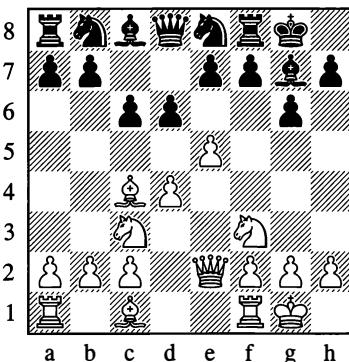
This is one of the rare instances where I will recommend this move. The point is that White's pieces are badly coordinated to meet Black's ideas involving ...d5 followed by ...f6, ...b6 or ...c5, depending on circumstances.

After 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! the brutal 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !  $dxe5$  9.0–0–0 is dangerous for Black.

7...c5?! 8.dxc5! is also problematic.

**8.0–0**

In the event of 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  9.0–0–0 b5, the black pawns will hit home on the queenside.



**8...d5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$**

Black swaps off his bad bishop and eliminates an important defender of White's centre.

**10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 13.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

Now Black has a simple tactical trick.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 15.dxc5 f5!?**

Black's central majority gives him excellent chances.

**7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?**

Another unusual but tricky move. Black's best reply is:

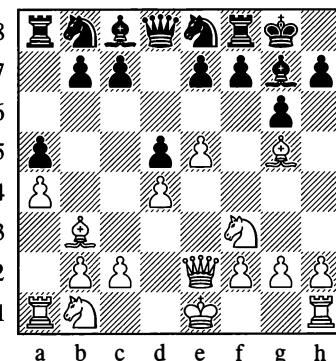
**7...d5! 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5!**

This clearly strongest.

8...c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10. $\mathbb{W}e3$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  a5 12.a4 c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  cxd4? 14. $\mathbb{W}h6$  led to a quick win for White in Hamad – Wajdy, Teheran 2007.

**9.a4**

9.c3 f6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12.h3 a4 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  gives Black the initiative.



**9...f6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  g5!?**

If the reader finds this to be too risky, there is a solid alternative in 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{W}xe5$  c6.

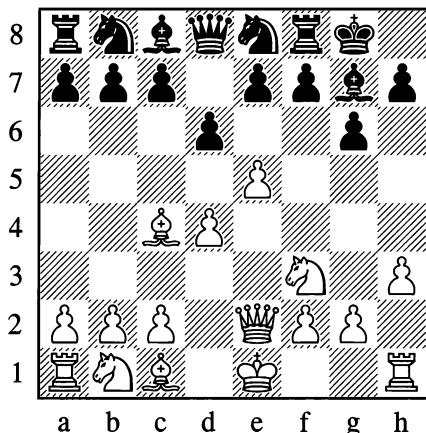
**11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  g4 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  fxe5 13.dxe5**

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}c6$  is good for Black.

**13...c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15.c3  $\mathbb{W}b6$**

The position is a mess. I recommend that the reader spends a bit of time playing through these lines, because they are unlike anything else in this book.



**7...c5!**

This is the whole point of Black's set-up. Now White has to fight to keep his centre alive.

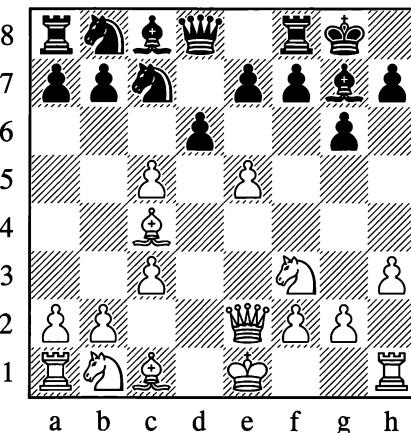
**8.c3 ♘c7?!**

The main point of this move is to have the option of ...b5.

Two years before this game I tried 8...♘c6, and obtained a decent position before making a mistake which led to trouble: 9.0–0 ♘c7 10.♗d1 cxd4 11.cxd4 d5 (11...b6!?) 12.♗b3 f6?! (12...b6! 13.♕f4 ♘a5 14.♗c3 ♘b7 was correct.) 13.♗c3 Here I realized that I was worse and decided to complicate things, but my opponent kept his head cool: 13...g5 14.♗c2 h6 15.♗d3 f5 16.a3 e6 17.g3! I was unable to deal with the threat of h3-h4 in Iordachescu – Hillarp Persson, Copenhagen 2005.

**9.dxc5!**

The point of playing ...♘c7 before ...♘c6 is seen in the line 9.0–0 b5! 10.♗d3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c6 when Black is doing well. One possibility is 12.♗xb5 ♘xb5 13.♗xb5 ♗d7?! with excellent compensation for the pawn.



**9...d5 10.♗d3**

After 10.♗b3 I intended to play 10...♗d7 11.♗e3?! (11.0–0 ♗xc5) 11...b6! with excellent counterplay. However, White can instead play 11.0–0 ♗xc5 12.♗d1 with an unclear position.

**10...♗e6**

Looking back on this game, I find it hard to explain why I did not prefer 10...♗d7!. Perhaps I thought that the knight belonged on c6. In any case, White had better avoid 11.b4 a5 12.0–0 (or 12.h4 ♗b8! 13.b5 ♗g4) 12...f6 13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.♗b2 e5 15.♗c2 b6 when Black has massive compensation for the pawn.

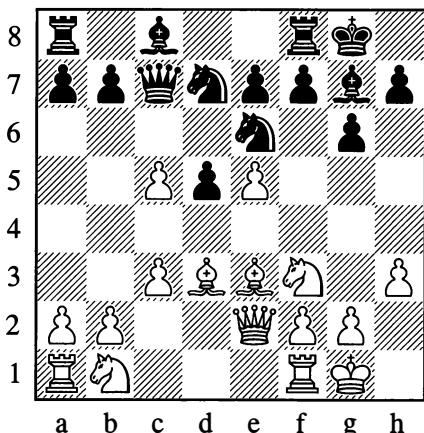
**11.♗e3**

Just like in the line above, it is dangerous for White to get materially carried away with 11.b4, since 11...a5 12.0–0 axb4 13.cxb4 ♘c6 14.♗b2 f6 is too hard to handle.

11.0–0 ♗xc5 12.♗c2 b6 leads to another position where I believe Black is doing all right, although it could do with a practical test.

**11...♗d7 12.0–0 ♗c7?!**

This allows White to obtain a more active set-up. Better is 12...♗exc5 13.♗c2 b6 with a promising position for Black.

**13.c4!**

This clears the c3-square for the knight, showing why I should have played differently on the last move.

**13...dxc4?!**

It is better to play 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$  15. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  d4 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  when White still has to fight to find compensation for the awkward pawn structure. The best chance seems to be 19.b4 axb4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  when there is no obvious way for Black to gain an advantage. Still, White's position is ugly, and I have my doubts about it.

**14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$** 

In the event of 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  White retains some pressure.

**16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  17.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$** 

I was hoping my superior structure would enable me to hold a draw against White's strong bishops.

**18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$** 

I was more afraid of a flexible move such as 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ .

**18...fxe6?!**

This is clearly making things hard for myself. I guess I was put off by 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ , but after 19... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{W}c6$  Black has nothing to worry about.

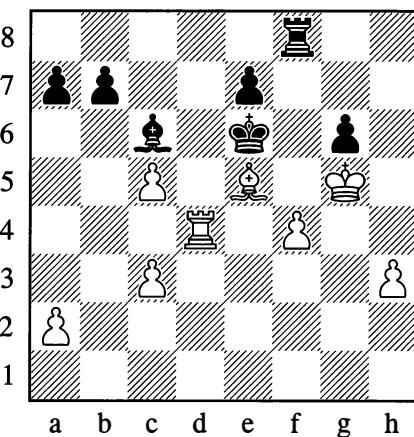
**19. $\mathbb{W}e4$** 

Now I have to struggle to hold a draw.

19...e5 20.f4  $\mathbb{W}c6$  21. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  22. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  23.g4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  24. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  27. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  28. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  29. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  32. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  h6 34. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  35.g5!?

$\mathbb{Q}xg5\#$  36. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$

It was no doubt safer to stick to passive defence with 36... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , but I decided to make it more interesting.

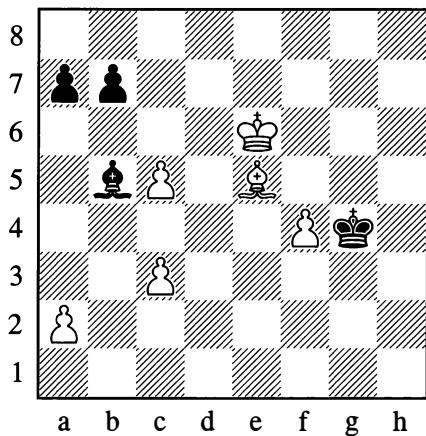
**37. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$** 

The sane thing to do would be 37... $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$  38. $\mathbb{Q}g7$   $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$  39. $\mathbb{Q}h7$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  40. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , but I was afraid that White would somehow be able to start an attack on my e-pawn with 41. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

38.h4  $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$  39. $\mathbb{Q}g7$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  40. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  41. $\mathbb{Q}h8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  42. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  43. $\mathbb{Q}g7$

My idea can be seen in the line 43.h5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  44.h6  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  45.h7 (45. $\mathbb{Q}g8$   $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$  46. $\mathbb{Q}f8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  47. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  also draws) 45... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , when the white king is locked up in the corner.

43...♗g4 44.♗f7 ♗xh4 45.♗xe7 ♗g4  
46.♗e6 ♗b5



#### 47.c6

47.♕b8 is also insufficient to win. One possible line is 47...♗c4† 48.♗d6 ♗xa2 49.c6 bxc6 50.♗xc6 a6 51.♗c5 ♗e6 52.♗e5 ♗f5 53.♗b4 ♗e4 54.c4 a5† 55.♗b5 a4! and Black draws.

#### 47...♗xc6 48.c4

Or 48.f5 ♗b5 49.f6 ♗c4† 50.♗e7 ♗f5 51.♗d4 ♗g6 52.a3 a6 with a dead draw.

#### 48...♗e4 49.♗b8 ♗d3 50.♗d5 a6 51.a4 ♗f5 52.a5 ♗e4† 53.♗c5 ♗h1

½–½

Although I was under pressure towards the end, we have seen that Black can get a good game with both 10...♗d7 and 12...♗exc5. It seems to me that 7.h3 is less critical than 7.0–0.

In the next game Levon Aronian shows how it is possible to avoid 6...♗e8 altogether.

## GAME 69

David Howell – Levon Aronian

Bundesliga 2012

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♗f3 d6 4.♕c4 ♗f6  
5.♗e2 0–0 6.e5 dxe5!?

I have come to re-evaluate this move because of this game.

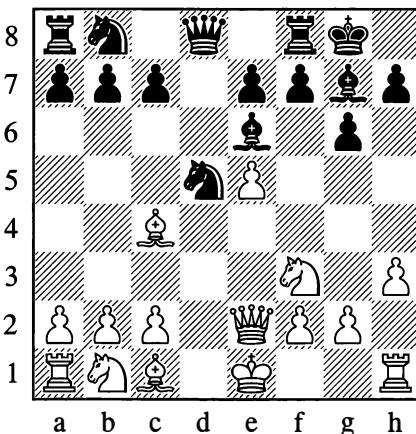
#### 7.dxe5 ♗d5 8.h3

8.0–0 ♗g4 leads to Game 66.

#### 8...♗e6!

When Black is unable to develop the bishop to g4, it is not such a great idea to play 8...♗b6, because of 9.♗b3 ♗c6 10.0–0 ♗d4 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗e1 e6 13.♗d2 and Black is too passive.

It is incredible how few times the present position has arisen.



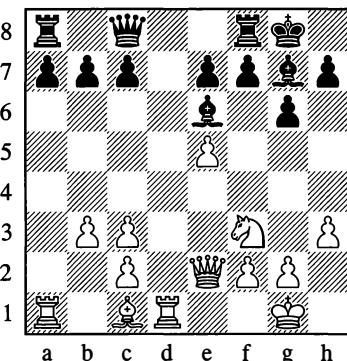
#### 9.0–0

One important point is that 9.♗g5 ♗c6! 10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.0–0 ♗xe5 12.♗b3 ♗d6 is nice for Black.

#### 9...♗d7 10.♗d2

White has also tried: 10.♗b3 ♗c5!? (10...c6 is more in the spirit of the Alekhine Defence.)

11.♗d1 ♗xb3 12.axb3 ♜c8 13.♗c3 ♗xc3  
14.bxc3



14...c5! 15.c4 ♜c6 16.♗g5 ♜fe8 17.♗e1 a5? (17...h6! 18.♗f4 a5, followed by ...♗ed8 and ...a4, is a little better for Black.) 18.♗a4 b6 19.♗d2 ♜d7 20.♗b1 ♜e6 21.♗a3 ♜c6 Black had a clear advantage in De la Villa Garcia – Larino Nieto, Sanxenxo 2012.

A more critical alternative is:

10.♗d1?! c6 11.♗g5

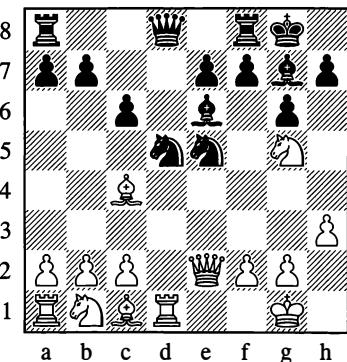
11.♗b3 ♜c7 hits e5 again.

11...♗xe5

After 11...♗a5?! 12.f4 I fail to see the point of Black's last move.

11...♗b6 12.♗b3 ♗c5 13.♗c3 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♜b5 is unclear.

Also interesting is 11...♜c7 12.f4 ♜ad8 13.♗xe6 fxe6, when the evaluation depends on whether White is able to defend the f-pawn sufficiently. After 14.g3 g5?! it seems to me that Black has enough counterplay.



12.♗b3 ♜b6!

This stops White from moving his f-pawn while preparing to meet c2-c4 with ...♗a6.

12...b5 13.a4 ♜a5 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗c3 ♜f5 16.♗e4 ♜af8 is a crazy line that I don't like, because Black's pawn structure is in disarray.

The engine likes 12...♗f5, but I am deeply suspicious about it. 13.g4 ♜d7 14.c4 ♜b4 15.f4 h6 16.♗e4 ♜ed3 17.♗xd3 ♜xd3 18.♗xd3 f5 19.♗f2 e5 is a long but rather forcing line that ends with some advantage for White.

13.♗xe6

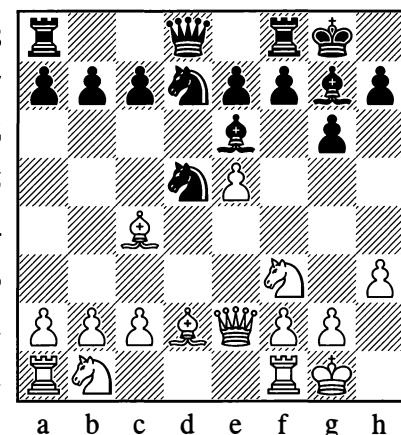
13.c4 ♜a6! 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗c3 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 c5! intending ...♗f7-d6 is fine for Black.

13...fxe6 14.♗c3 ♗xc3 15.♗xe6†

15.bxc3?! c5! defends e6 and threatens to shut the bishop out of the game.

15...♗f7 16.bxc3 ♗xc3

White has decent compensation for the missing pawn, but Black should be okay. The choice between this or 11...♗b6/11...♜c7 is up to you.



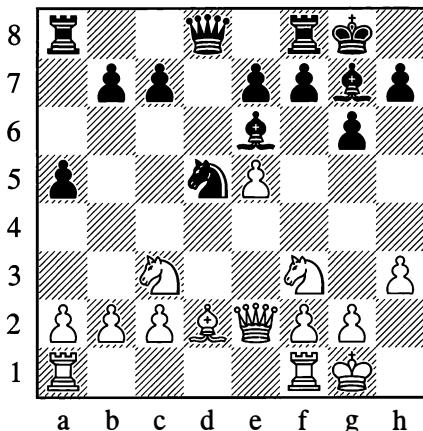
10...a5?!

Aronian's move is faster and more ambitious than 10...c6, although the latter move seems perfectly playable too: 11.♗e1 a5 (11...♗b6 12.♗b3 ♗c5 13.♗c3 ♗xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗xb3

15.axb3 ♜c7 seems to equalize.) 12.♘c3 ♔7b6 13.♔xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗e4 ♜c7 15.♘c5?! (15.♗eg5) 15...♔c8 (15...♔f5?!) 16.c4 ♘b4 17.♔c3 b6 18.♗e4 c5 Black was doing well in Riordan – A. Ivanov, Connecticut 2007.

### 11.♘c3 ♔7b6 12.♔xd5! ♘xd5!

12...♔xd5 13.♔xd5 ♜xd5 14.b3 a4 15.♗ad1 axb3 16.axb3 ♜fd8 17.♔f4 ♜c6 18.♔xd8† ♜xd8 19.c4 is a little worse for Black, due to his bad coordination.



### 13.♗e4

White has a slight advantage here, but Black has enough resources to eventually equalize.

### 13...♘b4?

After spending considerable time on this position, I concluded that Black's most accurate continuation is:

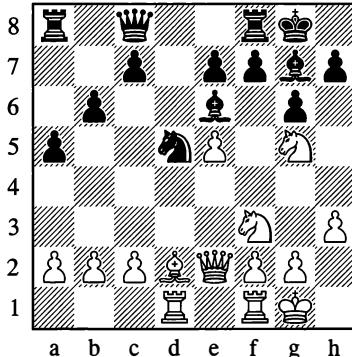
13...♜c8 14.♗ad1 b6!?

Keeping the white knight out of c5 and preparing ...♝b7 or ...♝a6.

### 15.♗eg5

15.c4 ♘b4 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♘c3 ♜d8 18.♗f4 ♜b7 19.♗d5 ♜d7 20.♗g5 ♘d8! 21.♗e3 c6 and Black has equalized.

15.♗d4 c5! 16.♗xe6 ♜xe6 17.f4 ♜ad8 18.c4 ♘b4 19.♗g5 ♜f5 20.♗xb4 ♜xd1 21.♗xd1 axb4 22.♗f1 ♜d8 Black has a good endgame ahead.

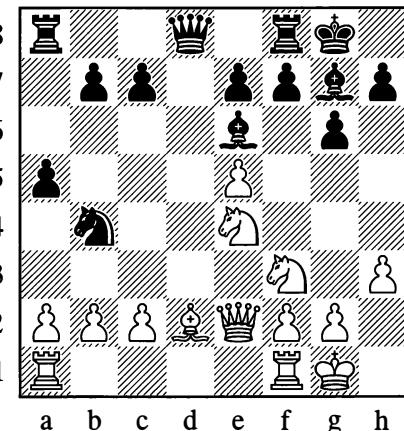


### 15...♔f5 16.♗c4

Another interesting line is 16.♔c1 ♘b4 17.a3 ♘c6 18.e6 f6 19.g4 fxg5 20.gxf5 ♜xf5 21.♗e4 ♘d8 22.♗d7 ♔f6 23.♗fd1 ♘b7 24.♗g4 ♘c5 25.♗xg5 ♜b7 and the position remains sharp but balanced.

16...c6 17.♗d4 h6 18.♗xf5 ♜xf5 19.♗f3 ♜ac8 20.♗fe1 ♜fd8

White maintains a space advantage but Black is solid enough.



### 14.♔xb4?

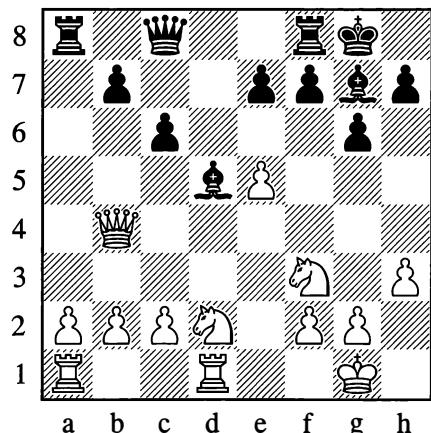
14.♗fd1 ♜c8 15.a3 ♘c6 16.♔c3 would have maintained a slight edge for White.

### 14...axb4 15.♗fd1 ♜c8 16.♗b5 c6 17.♗xb4 ♘d5

Black's bishop pair gives him excellent compensation for the pawn.

**18.♕ed2**

18.♕el ♕f5 19.a3 ♕fe8 20.♕ad1 looks preferable.

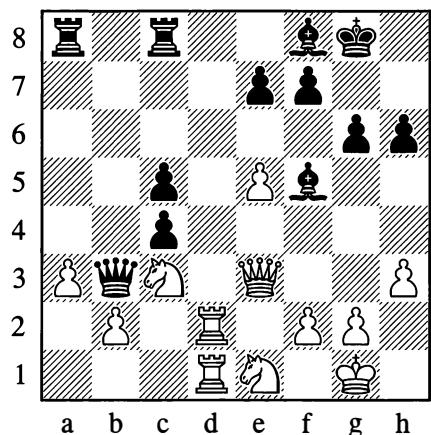


**18...Wc7 19.c4 c5 20.Wb5 ♕e6 21.Qe4 ♕a5 22.Wb3 b5 23.We3 bxc4 24.Qc3 h6 25.Qd2 ♕b8 26.Qad1 ♕c8 27.Qe4 ♕a7 28.a3 ♕f8 29.Qd5 ♕b3 30.Qc3**

Both sides have manoeuvred sensibly, but now Black goes slightly astray.

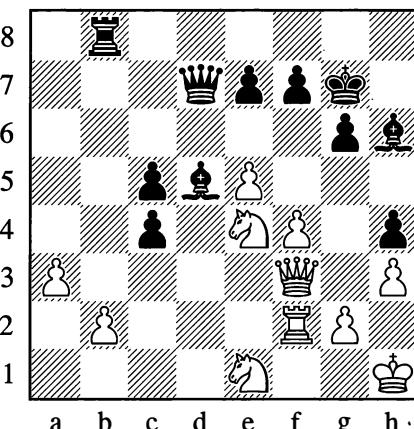
**30...Qf5?!** 31.We3 ♕aa8 32.Qe1?!

Missing the opportunity to reclaim the upper hand with 32.g4! ♕c2 (or 32...Qe6 33.Qh4!) 33.Qc1 ♕d3 34.e6 f6 35.Qe1 ♕d8 36.Wxc5±.

**32...h5!**

Preventing any g2-g4 ideas. In the remaining part of the game, Aronian expertly capitalizes on the advantage of the two bishops.

**33.Qh2 ♕g7 34.f3 ♕b7 35.f4 ♕h6 36.Qg1 ♕a6 37.Qd5 ♕e6 38.Wf2 ♕g7 39.Qc3 ♕b6 40.Qh2 ♕b3 41.Qe2 ♕b6 42.Qg1 ♕a5 43.Wf3 ♕d8 44.Qxd8 ♕xd8 45.Qf2 h4 46.Qh2 ♕d7 47.Qh1 ♕b8 48.Qe4 ♕d5**



**49.We3 ♕xe4 50.Wxe4 ♕d4 51.Wc2 ♕xf4 52.Qe2 ♕g3 53.Qf3 ♕d3 54.Qg1 ♕d8 55.Qd2 ♕xc2**

**0-1**

The critical test of this line is probably 10.Qd1!? when I recommend that the reader has a look at Black's alternatives. Even if you do not remember the variations, it is a good idea to have seen the ideas involved.

In the next part of the chapter we will see what happens when White withholds We2 and develops the knights first.

## GAME 70

**Antonio Angel Medina Garcia – Bent Larsen**

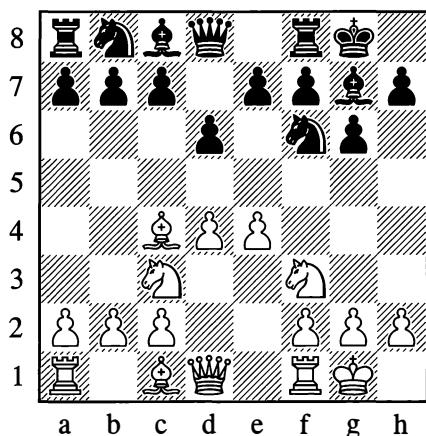
Las Palmas 1972

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗c4**

I would go so far as to say that this is not critical in conjunction with ♘c3.

**4...♘f6 5.♗f3 0–0 6.0–0**

The flexible 6.♗e3 does not impress here because of 6...♗xe4 7.♗xf7† (7.♗xe4 d5 8.♗d3 dxe4 9.♗xe4 c5 is fine for Black) 7...♝xf7 8.♗xe4 d5 9.♗eg5 ♜f8 10.♗e5 c5!, with a complicated game where Black is no worse.



**6...♘c6!**

The impatient 6...♗xe4?! meets with 7.♗xe4 d5 8.♗d3 dxe4 9.♗xe4 when White is slightly better.

6...♗g4?! is met by 7.h3 ♜xf3 8.♝xf3 when, compared with Game 65, White has gained a free tempo in ♘c3. It might not be the most important tempo in the world, since White has lost the useful option of c2-c3, but I would still recommend avoiding this.

The text move is an ideal solution, as it develops a piece while keeping both of the above options open. Generally Black should postpone ...♗g4 until White has committed himself to ♜e2 or ♜b3, both of which defend against ...♗xe4. If White prevents the bishop development with h2-h3, then the ...♗xe4 trick should be deployed.

**7.h3**

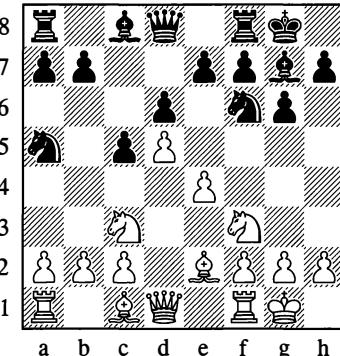
This is the main line, but there are plenty of half-decent alternatives:

7.♗e2?! ♘g4 8.♗e3 e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♗xd4 exd4 11.♗b5 ♜e8 is bad for White.

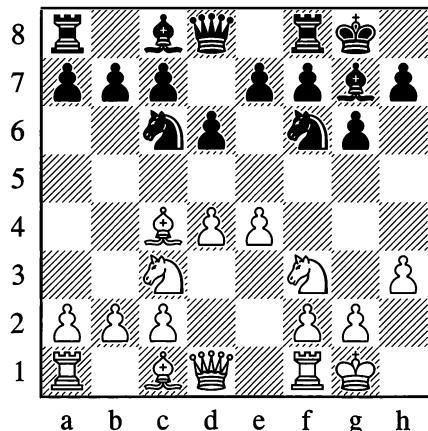
7.e5 is harmless, and after 7...dxe5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 9.e6 ♘xe6 10.♗xe6 ♜xd1 11.♗xd1 fxe6 the black pieces are working well together.

7.♗e3 is an interesting alternative, when 7...♗g4! (7...♗xe4 8.♗xe4 d5 9.♗d3 dxe4 10.♗xe4 ♜d6 11.c3 was a bit better for White in Torre Repetto – Yates, Marienbad 1927) 8.h3 ♜xf3 9.♝xf3 e5 10.d5 ♘e7 leads to similar play as in Game 65. Note that the knight on c3 prevented White from bolstering his centre with c2-c3.

7.d5 ♘a5! 8.♗e2 c5! leads to a funny kind of Benoni where the a5-knight is not as bad as it looks.



9.a3 (9.h3 a6 10.a3 [10.a4 e6! is fine for Black] 10...b5 11.b4 ♜b7 12.♗b1 ♜d7 with an unclear game.) 9...♝g4 10.♗d3 (10.b4?! ♜xf3 11.gxf3 ♜d7 12.♗d2 cxb4 13.axb4 ♜c8 14.♗xa5 ♜xc3 is good for Black.) 10...♜d7 Black will continue with ...a6 and ...b5 (and possibly ...e6), with excellent counterplay.



7...♞xe4! 8.♝xf7†

This move is played almost automatically by most players, and for good reason. Instead after 8.♞xe4?! d5 9.♝xd5 ♜xd5 10.♞c3 ♜c4! Black has the bishop pair in an open position, and we all know what that means.

8...♝xf7 9.♞xe4 d5!

Equally common is 9...h6?!, to keep the knights out of g5. However, I do not see the necessity for this, and I am unconvinced by Black's position after 10.d5! ♜b4 11.c3 ♜a6 12.♞d4 as in Young – Ginsburg, New York 1993.

## 10.♞c5!

White is striving for control of the e5-square, and he intends ♜d3-e5 if Black allows it. I have difficulty in seeing the meaning behind other knight moves.

10.♞eg5? is plainly bad due to 10...♝f8 11.♝e1 ♜d6 and White has no good way to meet ...h6 on the next move.

10.♞g3?!

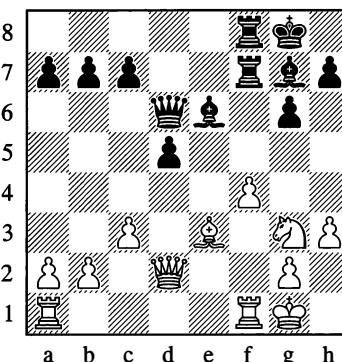
This move leaves me absolutely clueless as to the reasoning behind it. Where is the knight going next? If you know, then do please inform me.

10...♝d6 11.c3 e5 12.dxe5 ♜xe5 13.♞xe5 ♜xe5 14.f4

I guess one could argue that this move, intending f4-f5, is the idea behind the knight on g3. Well, come on then!

14...♝g7 15.♝e3 ♜e6 16.♝d2 ♜af8!

Black discourages f4-f5 for all eternity, unless White is prepared to double rooks on the f-file, then play ♜g3-e2, g2-g4, and finally return with the knight to g3. Obviously Black will have launched the d-pawn long before all that happens.



17.♝f3?! b6 18.♝d1 ♜c8 19.♝f2

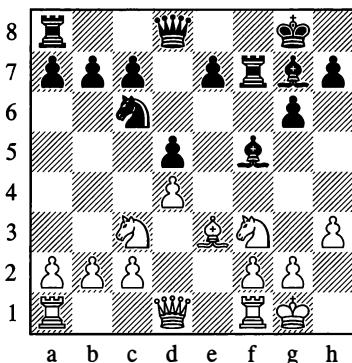
Here Black can cement his advantage with:  
19...c5!

Black's central pawn mass and bishop pair leave him in full control. The last move improves on 19...♝b7? 20.f5 when White managed to make a mess of things in Bojkovic – Gligoric, Novi Sad 1979.

10.♞c3?!

This move is even more puzzling to me than 10.♞g3. On c3 the knight serves one purely defensive purpose of discouraging Black from going ...e5, but apart from that it does nothing.

10...♗f5 11.♗e3



11...h6!N

11...♗d7 gave White the chance to prevent ...e5 with 12.♗g5! ♜ff8 13.f4, when the chances were approximately equal in Unzicker – Keene, Berlin 1971.

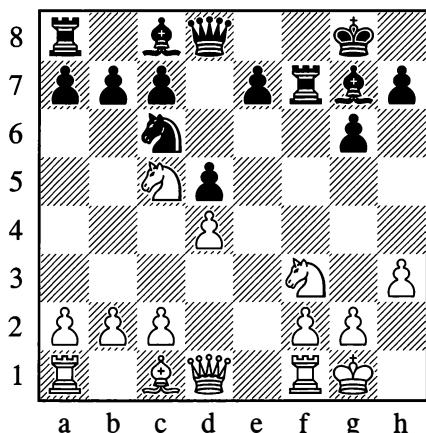
The text move stops the above plan, leaving White with the difficult problem of finding a plan. He may have developed his pieces, but there is no harmony, no coordination between them.

12.♗e1

12.♗d2 runs into 12...♗xh3 13.♗xh6 ♜xf3!.

12...♗d7

Black has the simple plan of ...♗af8 and ...g5-g4, which looks awkward for White.



10...♗d6 11.♗e3!

In Letelier Martner – Garcia, Buenos Aires

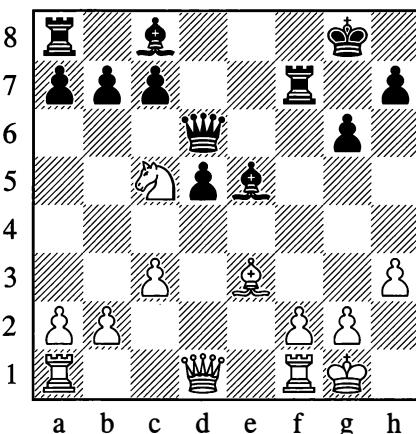
1975, White chose a weaker strategy with 11.c3 e5 12.♗e3?!, at which point Black could have gained the advantage with 12...e4!N. A possible continuation is 13.♗g5 ♜e7 14.♗b3 ♜a5 15.♗gxe4 ♜xb3 16.♗xd6 ♜xa1 17.♗xc8 ♜xc8 18.♗xa1 when the only question is whether Black will be able to overcome the technical problems.

11...e5

If Black prefers to keep the tension, it is possible to play 11...b6 12.♗d3 ♜a6 with an unclear position.

12.dxe5 ♜xe5 13.♗xe5 ♜xe5 14.c3

After 14.♗d4 the simplest line is 14...♗h2†! 15.♔h1 b6 16.♗d3 c5 17.f4 cxd4 18.♗xh2 ♜a6 19.♗d2 ♜e8 when White has to play a few exact moves more to keep the balance.

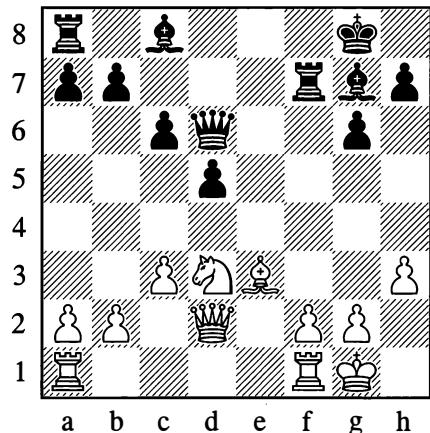


14...c6 15.♗d3 ♜g7 16.♗d2

White's main goal should be to exchange the dark-squared bishops. When these bishops stay on the board, Black's position tends to improve move by move.

16.♗c5 ♜c7 17.♗b4 ♜f5 18.♗c2 ♜d8 19.♗e3 ♜e6 20.♗d4 c5 21.♗xg7 ♜xg7 was the continuation of Najjar – Almahmoud, Cairo 1998. White managed to exchange the bishops in the end, but I still prefer Black's position

thanks to his strong centre and the possibility of entering a favourable endgame with bishop against knight.



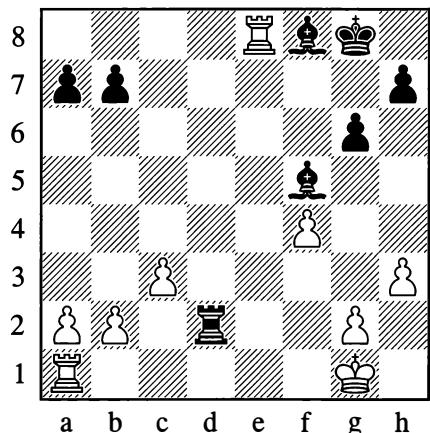
16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  18. $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $d4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   
 $\mathbb{E}d8$  20. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  21. $f4!$ ?

This is far too materialistic.

It was better to give up the exchange with 21. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ , even though Black keeps a clear advantage after 21... $\mathbb{E}xe3$  22. $\mathbb{E}xe3$   $b6$  23. $b4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  24. $\mathbb{E}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ , when he is threatening ... $c5$ .

21... $c5!$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{E}e8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   
 $\mathbb{E}xd2$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$

White is leading on points, but has no way of protecting himself. Black not only threatens ... $\mathbb{E}xb2$ , but also ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , followed by ... $\mathbb{E}e4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ .



26. $\mathbb{E}ae1$   $\mathbb{E}xb2$  27. $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{E}b1\uparrow$  28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

The endgame after 28. $\mathbb{E}el$   $\mathbb{E}xe1\uparrow$  29. $\mathbb{E}xe1$   $h5$ , intending ... $h4$ , is utterly hopeless for White.

28... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  29. $\mathbb{E}d8$   $h5$  30. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{E}c1$  31. $\mathbb{E}e3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$  32. $\mathbb{E}f3$   $h4\uparrow$

White resigned since he loses a rook after either 33. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{E}e7\uparrow$  or 33. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{E}g1\uparrow$  34. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{E}b6\uparrow$ .

**0–1**

Nothing much has happened in this line since *Tiger's Modern*, and I doubt a lot will happen ahead. Knowing the main positional themes will get you quite far.

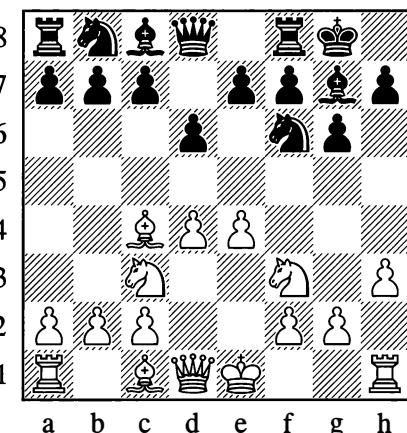
## GAME 71

Pavel Votruba – Paul Motwani

Forli 1991

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $d6$  4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0–0 6.h3

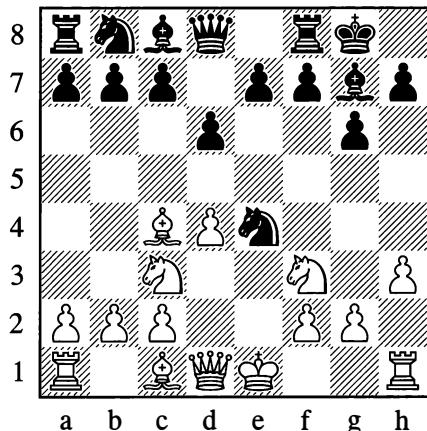
With this move White is threatening to play  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , when neither ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  nor ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  will be available anymore.



6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

As a rule, I like to play this in response to h2-h3.

It is also possible to play 6...♝c6, although it seems to me that 7.♕e3! ♝xe4 8.♕xe4 d5 9.♗d3 dxе4 10.♗xe4 leads to a position that is slightly but clearly better for White, since Black will have a hard time achieving either ...e5 or ...c5.



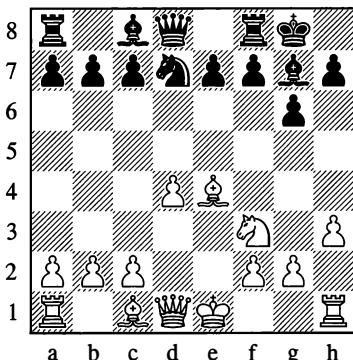
7.♕xf7†

White can also try:

7.♕xe4 d5 8.♗d3 dxе4 9.♗xe4 ♗d7!

This prepares ...c5 and makes the reply dxс5 less attractive for White.

The immediate 9...c5?! is also playable, as 10.dxc5 ♜a5† 11.c3 ♜xc5 12.0–0 ♗d7! 13.♗e1 ♜c7, followed by ...♝c5, should be fine for Black.



10.c3 c5 11.0–0 cxd4

11...♜c7 12.♗g5 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♗f6 14.♗d3 ♗e6 15.♗d2 ♜fd8 16.♗f4 ♜b6 was decent

for Black in Soltanici – Itkis, Kishnev 2001.  
12.♗xd4 a6 13.♗c2 ♜c7 14.♗e1 e5 15.♗f3 ♜b8 16.♗d5 b5 17.♗e3 ♗f6 18.♗b3 ♜b7 19.♗ad1 ♜bc8

A draw was agreed in Pilz – Lau, Austria 2002. Instead of the last move, I believe 19...a5?! would have given Black chances to take over the initiative.

7...♜xf7 8.♗xe4 h6?!

There is nothing wrong with this move, but Black can also play by analogy with the previous game:

8...d5

In *Tiger's Modern* I remarked that I did not understand why so few people played this way, and I still do not.

9.♗c5

9.♗eg5 ♜f8 10.♗e5 c5! 11.c3 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♜c6 13.♗g3 ♜b6 is good for Black.

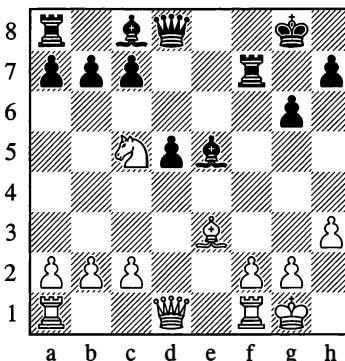
9...♝c6 10.♗e3 e5

I think Black should avoid 10...b6 11.♗d3 ♜a6 12.h4! when White gets some kind of attack.

11.dxe5

After 11.♗b3? a5! 12.c3 a4 13.♗c1 a3 14.b3 exd4 15.cxd4 ♜f5 White was on his way to getting crunched in Jaquez – Comp Hiarcs, Dominican Republic 1998.

11...♝xe5 12.♗xe5 ♜xe5 13.0–0

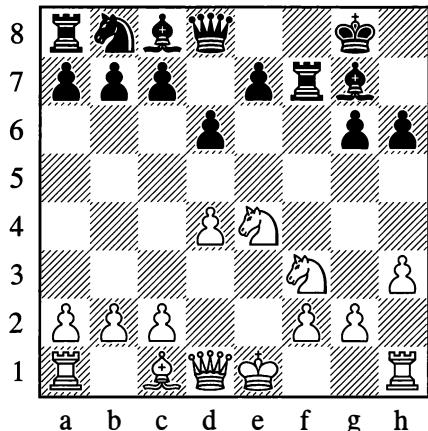


13...b6!

13...♜xb2 14.♗b1 ♜g7 15.♗xb7 leads to an easier game for White.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  d4 16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17.  $\mathbb{B}fe1$   
 $\mathbb{W}d5$  18. f3  $\mathbb{Q}af8$

With mutual chances in I. Sokolov – Miles,  
Wijk aan Zee 1989.



#### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White must take care not to stumble into a deep rabbit hole: 9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (9...  $\mathbb{W}f8!$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  is even better.) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  12.  $\mathbb{B}ae1?$  (12.  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  leads to approximate equality.) 12...  $\mathbb{B}xf3$  13.  $\mathbb{G}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  In Pytel – Kosten, Toulouse 1990, White could already have resigned with a clear conscience.

#### 9... $\mathbb{W}f8!$ ?

This multipurpose move protects the h6-pawn while setting up tactical threats against the f3-knight.

A second possibility is 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ , but I like this less, as the king's position makes Black vulnerable to all sorts of tactical tricks.

#### 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$

It is probably too harsh to brand this move as a mistake, but it is clearly naive to invite the sacrifice on f3 in this way.

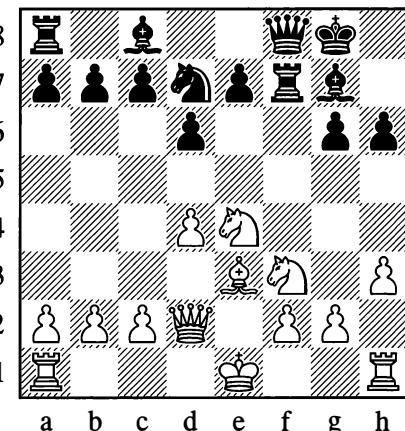
White must watch out for 10.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$  when Black wins a pawn.

One game continued: 10.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. 0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  This should not be played unless White has committed to c2-c4, which weakens the d4-square. 12. dxе5 dxе5 13.  $\mathbb{W}c4$  White had a clear advantage in Ritz – Roemer, Seefeld 1998. Black's 11th move was really ugly though, and 11...  $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$  is a definite improvement.

The latest Binary Helper prefers 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , when 10...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  e5! seems like a logical continuation. After 12.  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{B}xf3$  14.  $\mathbb{G}xf3$  exd4! 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16.  $\mathbb{W}b3\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xf7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  Black is doing rather well.

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$

Black should jump at the chance to play 10...  $\mathbb{B}xf3!$  11.  $\mathbb{G}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with excellent compensation for the exchange.

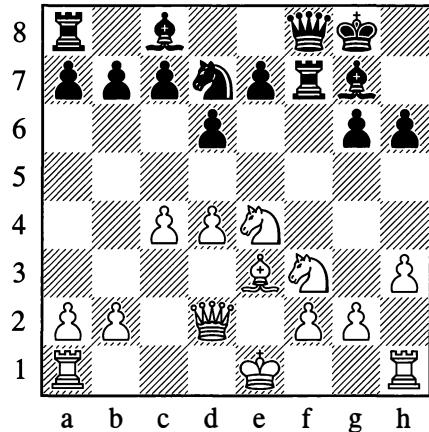


#### 11. c4?

This move invites the exchange sacrifice under even more advantageous circumstances.

11.  $\mathbb{Q}h4?!$  was White's 'solution' to the ...  $\mathbb{B}xf3$  problem in Delektar – Sieg, Germany 1997, when for some reason Black avoided the obvious reply: 11... g5! 12.  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  13.  $\mathbb{h}4$   $\mathbb{B}f5$  14.  $\mathbb{h}5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15.  $\mathbb{f}4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  16.  $\mathbb{h}xg6$   $\mathbb{g}xf4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{W}xg6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xh6?!$  Now 18...  $\mathbb{B}d5!$  creates a large "SPLASH!", and after 19.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{B}xd4$  only Black can be seen above the surface.

The critical move is 11.0–0–0! when White has some initiative. This is the reason why Black ought to have committed to the exchange sacrifice one move earlier.



### 11...♞b6

In the spirit of Tarrasch, my first reaction to this move was something like “what the H... is the knight doing there?” At the same time, although the knight is not perfectly placed on b6, it avoids obstructing the other black pieces. White has to spend a few moves getting his act together, during which time Black can develop his remaining pieces.

I would instinctively prefer 11...♝xf3! 12.gxf3 ♜xf3 13.♞g3 c5. The more I look at it, the more I like it. And the engine affirms that this is not just one of those instances where I got carried away with an exchange sacrifice that *almost* leads to compensation. White is in real trouble here.

### 12.♕c1?! ♜d7

White has the sword of Damocles (...♝xf3), constantly hanging over his head. Still, I have a hard time understanding Black’s reluctance to take on f3.

### 13.♞g3

This move makes it possible to meet 13...♝xf3 14.gxf3 ♜xf3?! with 15.♗xh6.

13.♗h4? is even worse than before due to 13...g5 14.♗g6 ♜e8 15.h4 ♜f5 when the knight will end up in Black’s nets.

13.♗h2? was possible though.

### 13...♝d8!?

Black is preparing ...c5, so White removes his queen from the d-file.

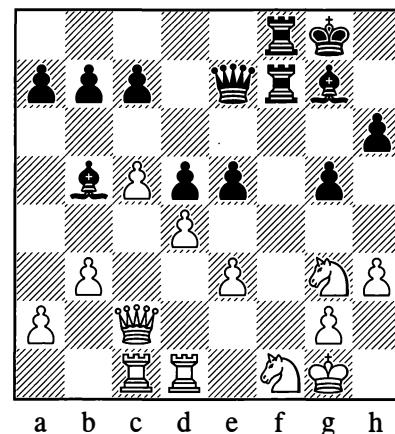
### 14.♗c2 g5 15.♗h2 d5! 16.c5?!

It was better to play 16.b3, though Black still has the advantage after 16...e5 17.dxe5 dxc4.

### 16...♞c4 17.0–0 e5! 18.♗fd1 ♜e7 19.♗h1 ♜df8 20.b3 ♜xe3 21.fxe3 ♜b5!?

Black is a virtuoso with the bishops.

A different approach was 21...g4, when White cannot avoid 22.hxg4 ♜xg4 23.♗d2 h5 with a winning advantage for Black. Observe how helpless the knights are when they are uncoordinated and have no outposts.



### 22.a4 ♜xf1 23.♗xf1 exd4 24.exd4 ♜f4

Black wins a pawn. The rest is simple.

25.♗g6 ♜e4 26.♗xe4 ♜xe4 27.♗g3 ♜xd4  
28.♗e1 ♜d3 29.♗h2 ♜f2 30.c6 bxc6 31.♗xc6  
♗dd2 32.♗g1 ♜e5 33.♗xh6 ♜g7 34.♗e6  
♗f4 35.h4 gxh4 36.♗h3 ♜xg3 37.♗ee1 ♜d3

**38.♗g4 ♜f4†**

**0–1**

Black had a nice position from the opening, and 8...d5 is a second option that looks fully satisfactory. Although Black ended up winning the game convincingly, he could have played even more strongly by executing the ...♜xf3 sacrifice at a favourable moment.

We will now turn our attention to set-ups where White plays ♜c4 and ♜e2 while delaying ♜f3.

## GAME 72

Aloyzas Kveinys – Jon Speelman

Moscow (ol) 1994

When I mention Speelman in the notes to this game, I am referring to his annotations for *ChessBase Magazine*.

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♗c4 ♜f6! 5.♗e2**

This move generally signals that White is ready to launch e4-e5, and the present case is no exception. What should Black do about it? When I find myself seriously troubled by this question, I usually pose a counter-question: what is the weakest point in my opponent's position?

**5...♝c6!**

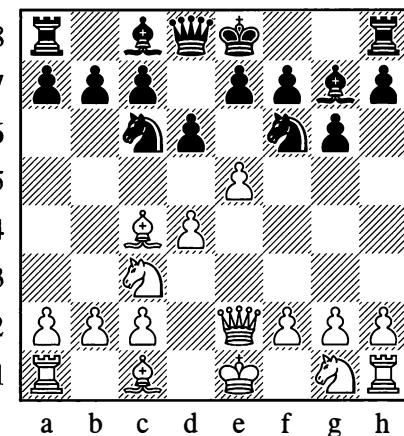
The answer here is quite obviously the d4-pawn.

5...0–0?! allows 6.e5! when Black is already in trouble, since 6...♝e8 (after 6...dxe5 7.dxe5 Black cannot play ...♝d5 anyway) 7.♗g5! ♜c6 8.0–0–0 makes White's dream come true.

**6.e5!**

6.♗f3?! will be met by 6...♗g4, leading to a good game for Black after: 7.♗e3 e5

8.dxe5 ♜xe5 9.♗b3 0–0 10.0–0–0 ♜h5! This avoids exchanging the bishop after White's next move. 11.h3 Threatening to trap the bishop. 11...♝xf3 12.gxf3 ♜d7 13.♗hg1 ♜e5 14.♗g3 c6! This was recommended by Chernin and Alburt in *Pirc Alert*, and indeed Black seems to have a nice game.

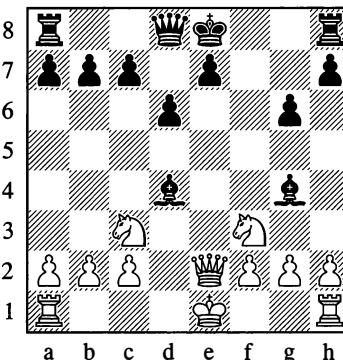


**6...♝d7**

This move is the safe positional alternative. In the next game we look at the chaotic 6...♝g4.

**7.♗f3**

White gains nothing from 7.♗xf7†?! ♜xf7 8.e6† ♜e8 9.exd7† ♜xd7 when Black's bishop pair and better development more than compensates for losing the right to castle. In the following game White did not manage to solve the problem of securing the d-pawn: 10.♗f3 ♜g4 11.♗e3 ♜xd4 12.♗xd4 ♜xd4

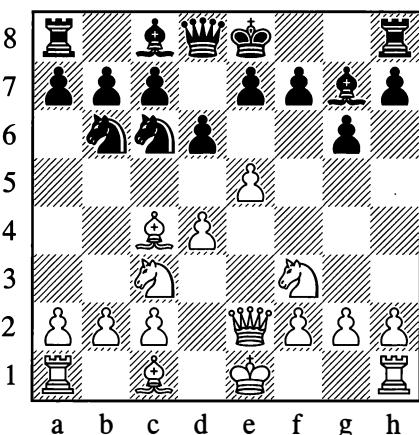


13.♗b5†?! (13.♗c4 is better, although 13...♝xc3† 14.♗xc3 e5 still favours Black.) 13...c6 14.♗c4 ♜xc3† 15.♗xc3 e5 and Black had an extra pawn and a clear advantage in Kahn – Resika, Budapest 2001.

Another equally unsuccessful try was 10.♗e3? ♜xd4 11.♗xd4 ♜xd4 12.♗d2 ♜xc3 13.♗xc3 ♜f8, when White did not have the faintest compensation for the missing pawn in Zieher – Chandler, Hamburg 1980.

### 7...♝b6

7...dxe5?? is a grave mistake due to 8.♗xf7† ♜xf7 9.♗g5† ♜g8 10.♗c4†, which is Game Over.



### 8.♗b3†?

In a later game in this chapter we will see White launching the bishop to b5, but here it is not much good: 8.♗b5 0–0 9.♗xc6 (or 9.♗f4?! dxe5 10.dxe5 ♜d4 11.♗xd4 ♜xd4 12.♗g3 ♜f5 and Black is better) 9...bxc6 10.0–0 f6 11.exf6 exf6 White is fighting for equality.

### 8...0–0 9.h3 ♜a5

Just like in the Sicilian, this is something of a standard manoeuvre when the enemy bishop settles on b3. By eliminating this important piece, Black makes it possible to attack the

white centre with ...f6, thereby opening up the position for the bishops.

A common mistake in this kind of position is 9...dxe5?! 10.dxe5 ♜d4 11.♗xd4 ♜xd4, after which 12.f4! leaves Black in a horrible state, where not one single piece has anywhere to go. A good rule of thumb is to never exchange on e5 without having a clear follow-up.

### 10.0–0

White is planning ♜f4, ♜e3 and ♜h6. This would leave Black too passive, so it is time to put a stick in White's wheels.

### 10...h6!

Preparing ...♜h7 and putting an end to the above plan. In some positions ...g5 may prove annoying for White.

10...♜xb3 11.axb3 ♜f5 has been quite a common choice, but I find it completely illogical. Just what is the bishop doing on f5?

### 11.♗e4

Another logical continuation is:

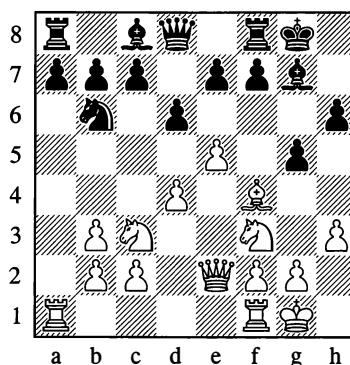
#### 11.♗f4 ♜xb3 12.axb3

Now Black is at an important juncture.

#### 12...g5!

It would be a huge mistake to play 12...f5?, since 13.h4! kills Black's counterplay.

12...f6?! 13.e6 c6 14.g4? g5 15.♗d2 f5 gave Black excellent play in Ciuksyte – E. Hagesaether, Istanbul 2003. However, the prosaic 13.exd6! exd6 14.d5 would have given White a definite pull.



13.♕h2?! N

13.♕xg5? hxg5 14.♗xg5 f6! (It is unnecessary to allow 14...♕f5 15.g4 ♕g6 16.f4 ♕h6 17.h4 with some fishy compensation for White.) 15.exf6 exf6 16.♗e6 ♕xe6 17.♗xe6† ♕f7 White does not have enough for the sacrificed piece.

13.♕e3 c6 (It is also possible to play 13...♗f5 intending 14.♗fd1 ♘d7, or 14.♗e1 dxe5 15.dxe5 ♗d5, with mutual chances in an unorthodox position.) 14.h4 g4 15.♕h2 ♘d7?! (15...h5! was necessary.) 16.exd6 exd6 17.♗fe1 ♘d8 Now in Demetrio – Rain, email 2003, White could have played 18.♕f4 with a clear advantage; but see the improvements noted above for Black.

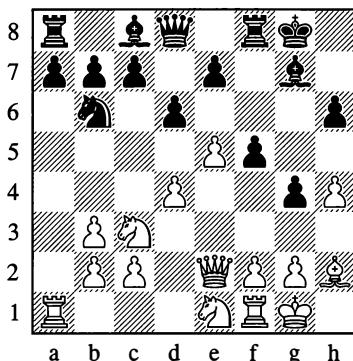
13...f5

13...♗f5?! is another possible direction.

14.h4 g4 15.♗e1!

15.♗d2?! f4! is promising for Black.

Now the knight is heading for f4.



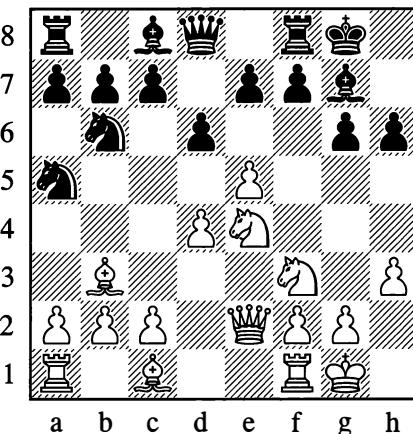
15...f4! 16.♗e4 d5

16...♗f5?! 17.♗xf4 ♘xc2 18.♗xg4 ♘xb3 is quite unclear too, although probably better for White.

17.♗d3 f3 18.gxf3 ♘f5 19.♗e3 gxf3 20.♗h1 e6 21.♗g1 ♘xh4 22.♗xf3 ♘h5

The engines initially favour White in this position, but I have analysed it a bit further and come to the conclusion that it is difficult for White to get anywhere. In fact, if Black is able to solve the problem of the passive knight

(for instance with ...♗c8-e7), then White will suffer because of the passive bishop on h2.



11...♗xb3 12.axb3 f6

Speelman logically tries to open up the centre for his bishops.

Another interesting possibility is:

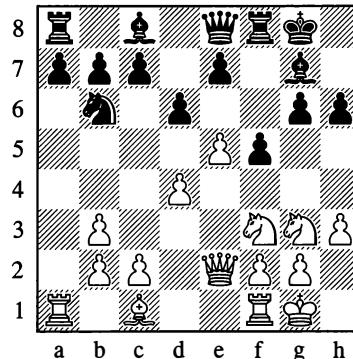
12...f5?!

My friend Ludvig Sandström has tried this move twice in correspondence play, and he shared some of his analysis with me.

13.♗g3

13.♗c3 g5 leads to a complicated position where Black has a certain initiative.

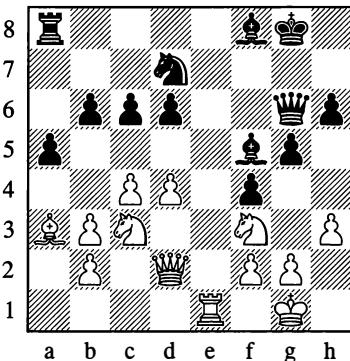
13...♗e8



14.c4

The later game continued: 14.♗d2 g5 15.♗fe1 f4 16.♗e4 ♘f5 17.c4 ♘g6 18.♗b4

♕d7 This position must be fine for Black, whose two bishops and dynamic possibilities on the kingside easily outweigh White's central space. As soon as the spearhead on e5 has to be exchanged, White will have little to show for giving up the bishop pair.  
 19.♗c3 c6 20.♗d2 a6 21.exd6 exd6 22.♗e2 ♘fe8 23.♗ae1 ♘xe2 24.♗xe2 ♘f8 25.♗a3 a5 26.♗d2 b6! A strong plan.



27.♗d1 ♘f7 28.♗d2 Now in Lisetskaya – Sandström, corr. 2011, Black could have obtained a strategically winning position with 28...c5! 29.♗de4 ♘e8, when the a3-bishop will never see daylight again. Ludvig explained that in his state of “early-morning confusion” he simply played the moves in the wrong order, allowing White to equalize by playing b3-b4.

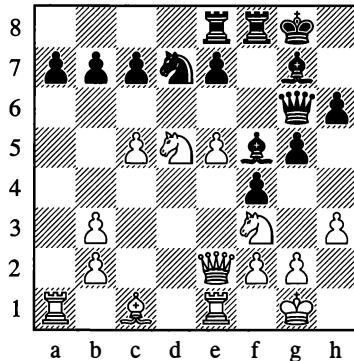
14...g5 15.♗e1 f4 16.♗e4 ♘g6 17.♗c3 ♘f5  
 Black's pawn thrust on the kingside made room for easy development, in particular of the usually problematic light-squared bishop. The downside is that the queenside has been left somewhat vulnerable.

18.c5

This must be critical. Removing the black pawn from d6 makes it possible for White to maintain the spearhead on e5. Black now has to tread carefully.

18...dxc5 19.dxc5 ♘d7 20.♗d5 ♘ae8!

Black has to abandon the queenside but he gets interesting counterplay.



21.♗xa7

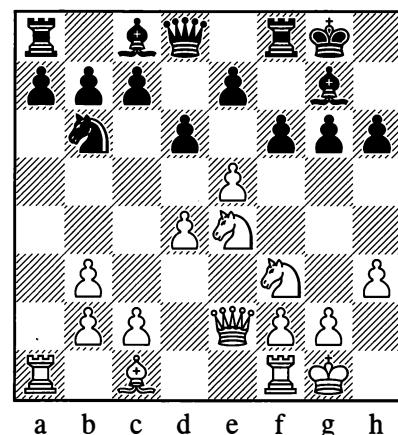
Probably best.

21.♗c4 e6 22.♗f6† ♘xf6 23.exf6 ♘xf6  
 24.♗xa7 ♘d3 25.♗b4 e5 26.♗xb7 e4 would be painful for White.  
 After 21.♗xc7 ♘c8 22.♗d5 ♘e6 23.♗c3 ♘xc5 24.♗d4 ♘g6 Black has the initiative  
 21...c6 22.♗b6 ♘xb6 23.cxb6 ♘b8 24.♗d2 ♘d3 25.♗d1

Now in Begliy – Sandström, corr. 2009, Black should have played:

25...♗fd8

The position is close to equal. (In the game Black played 25...♗c2?! and fell into some trouble.)



13.♗c4!

After 13.exf6 exf6 Black has no problem developing the rest of his pieces.

**13...fxe5**

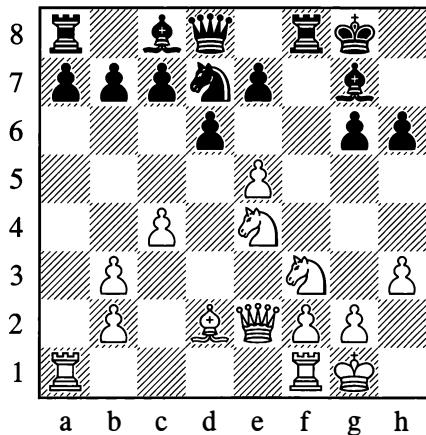
This is the logical follow-up to Black's last move. The resulting position is unclear and hard to handle for both sides, although I suspect that White should be a bit better somehow.

**14.dxe5 ♖d7!?**

Speelman mentions 14...♗e8 and 14...g5! as alternatives. I still believe White should be better.

**15.♖d2**

After 15.♕e3 Speelman gives the attractive variation 15...b6 16.♗d2 ♕b7 17.♕xh6 ♕xe4 18.♕xg7 ♕xg7 19.♗g5 ♕f5 20.g4 ♖xe5! 21.gxf5 (21.f4 ♖f7 22.gxf5 ♕xg5 23.♗d4† e5 leads to equality) 21...♗xf5 22.f4 ♕xg5† 23.fxg5 ♕d7 when White's ropey kingside leaves Black with plenty of compensation for the exchange.

**15...b6!**

Speelman is displeased with this move, but I believe his intuition was – for once – stronger than his analysis. Neither 15...♖xe5 16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♕xh6, nor 15...♗xf3!? 16.♗xf3 ♖xe5 17.♗e3, intending ♖c3 and f2-f4, is anywhere close to attractive for Black.

**16.e6!?**

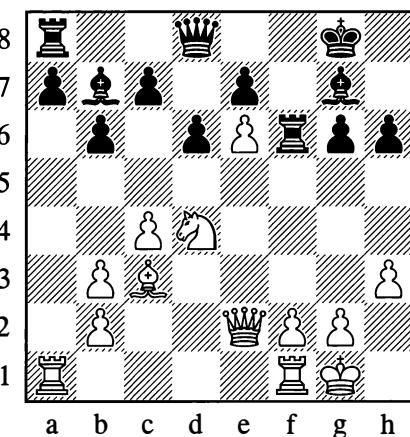
White has a clear space advantage with better centralization, and thus should not be looking to close the game. After 16.♕c3! he would have kept the better chances.

**16...♗f6 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♗d4 ♕b7?!**

Here Black could have gained a small advantage with 18...c5 19.♗e4! d5! (Speelman only gives 19...♗b8, but he probably did not have access to a strong computer engine in those days) 20.♗c6 dxe4 21.♗xd8 ♕xe6.

**19.♕c3!**

Now White is back on the road to converting his advantage, but the road is still full of pitfalls.

**19...a6 20.f4!?**

It seems unnecessary to open up the position further for Black's bishop pair, but White is trying to avoid 20.♗c2 ♗f4 when Black is doing all right.

**20...♗f8 21.♗c2 c5!**

If you like Russian roulette, then 21...♗xf4 22.♗xf4 ♗xf4 23.♕xg7 ♕xg7 is the variation for you. Black is in danger, but after 24.♗f1 ♗g5 25.♗f7† ♕g8 I cannot see anything clear for White.

**22.♗xf6!? ♗xf6 23.♗ab1**

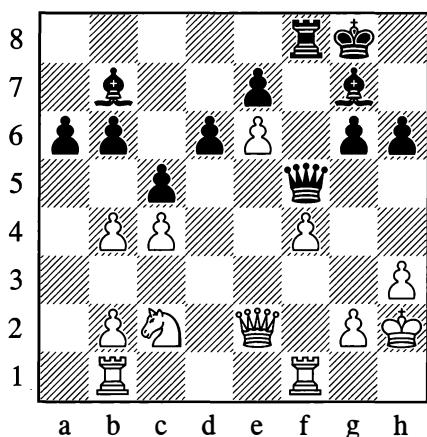
My original suggestion of 23.b4 is not that great due to 23...cx b4 24.♕xb4 ♕xb2 25.♕c2 ♕f6 when Black seems to have enough counterplay.

### 23...♝f8

23...a5 can be met by 24.♗a3! intending ♗b5-c3-d5.

### 24.b4 ♕f5 25.♔h2

White has no time to play 25.bxc5? because of 25...♕e4! 26.♕e3 ♕d4! when the bishops are close to reaching their critical mass.



### 25...♕e4!

Speelman enters a promising endgame where his bishops are terribly strong.

### 26.♕b1 ♕xf4 27.♕xe4 ♕xe4 28.bxc5 ♕xc4

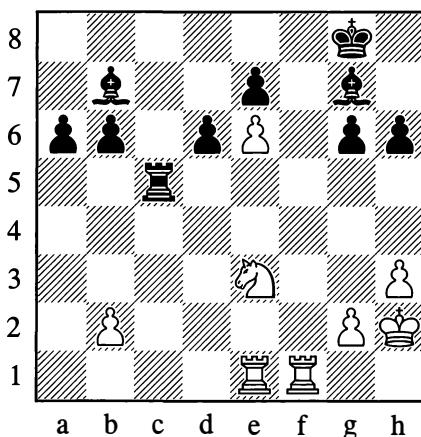
### 29.♗e3

Black is clearly better after 29.cxd6 ♕xc2 30.♕g1 exd6 31.e7 ♕c6 32.e8=♕† ♕xe8 33.♕xe8† ♘f7 34.♕a8 ♕e5† 35.♔h1 a5 (Speelman). White can do little to stop Black from creating a passed pawn on the a-file, which will eventually promote.

### 29...♕xc5

The smell of gunpowder is receding and it is time to evaluate the outcome of the battle so far. Materially speaking the position is equal,

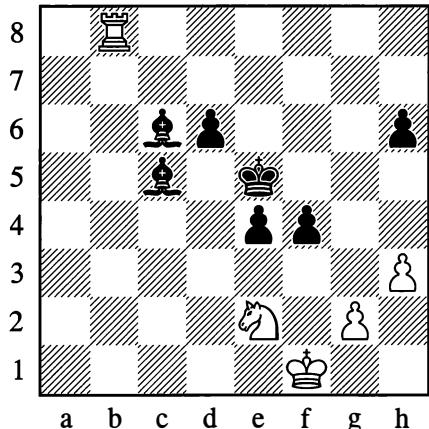
but the bishops and two pawns are much stronger than the knight and rook. White's only trump is the e6-pawn, which can be used to attack the e7-pawn with ♘f7 and, on a beautiful day, might turn into a queen. White also has to keep an eye on his weak b-pawn. It is reasonable to say that if White loses one more pawn he will probably lose the game as well.



### 30.b4!

After 30.♘f7 ♕c7 31.♕ef1 h5! Black is improving his position and White is almost in zugzwang, as every knight move is answered with ...♗d5, winning the e6-pawn. The rest of the game is technique propaganda from Speelman. For those interested in the details, I recommend looking it up in either *ChessBase Magazine* or *Mega Database*.

30...♗e5 31.♗c4 ♕g5 32.♗e2 ♕d5 33.♗f4? b5 34.♗b6 ♕b3 35.♗d7? ♘f5! 36.♕xf5 gxf5 37.♗g3 ♕c4 38.♗e3 ♕d4 39.♗a3 ♕xe6 40.♗b8 ♕e5†?? 41.♗f2 ♘f7 42.♗c6 ♕b2 43.♗xa6 ♕d5 44.♗a7?? ♕c3 45.♗xb5 ♕xb4 46.♗a1 f4! 47.♗c1 ♕c5† 48.♗f1 e5?? 49.♗c3 ♕c6 50.♗a1? ♘e6 51.♗b1 ♕a7 52.♗a1 ♕d4 53.♗a3 e4 54.♗e2 ♕c5 55.♗b3 ♕e5 56.♗b8



56...f3 57.gxf3 exf3 58.Qg3 Qd7 59.h4? Qh3† 60.Qe1 f2† 61.Qe2 Qf4 62.Qg8 Qg4† 63.Qxg4† Qxg4 64.Qe4 Qh3 65.Qf1 h5 66.Qf6 Qxh4 67.Qe4 Qh3 68.Qf6 h4 69.Qe4 Qh2 70.Qf6 Qg3 71.Qe4† Qf4 72.Qxd6 h3

White resigned, as there is no defence against ...h2-h1=Q†, followed by f1=Q.

## 0-1

Looking back on the end of the opening phase, I have great trust in Ludvig Sandström, and if he has come to the conclusion that 12...f5 is more promising than 12...f6, then I would be inclined to follow in his footsteps.

## GAME 7

### Aloyzas Kveinys – Mikhail Gurevich

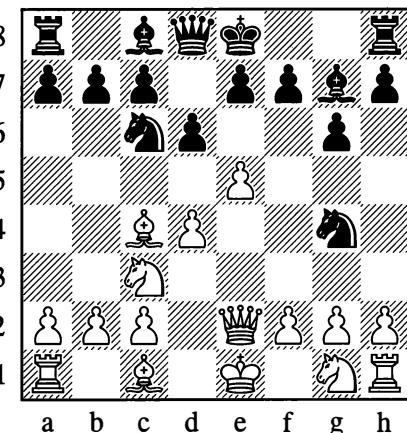
Bonn 1996

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.Qc3 d6 4.Qc4 Qf6! 5.Qe2 Qc6 6.e5 Qg4

There are two other sharp ways to tackle White's early aggression:

6...Qxd4?! 7.exf6 Qxe2 8.fxg7 Qg8 9.Qgxe2 has been played a few times, but the statistics confirm that White has an awesome attack with three pieces for the queen. I would never play like this.

Also quite optimistic is 6...dxe5, when 7.dxe5 Qg4 8.e6 (8.f4 Qd4 9.Qd1 Qf5 10.Qd3 Qe6 11.Qxf5 Qxd1† 12.Qxd1 gxf5 13.Qe2 f6 is fine for Black) 8...Qge5!!? (the only way to mix things up) 9.exf7† Qf8!!? 10.Qe3 Qd4 11.Qxd4 Qxd4 12.Qb3 leaves White with a steady advantage.



## 7.Qb5

The aggressive but incorrect 7.e6? is seen in the next game.

7...0-0 8.Qxc6 bxc6 9.h3 Qh6 10.Qf3 c5

Opening up the position for the bishops is thematic, but it is quite possible that one of the alternatives is better.

10...Qf5?! 11.g4 (11.Qf4! a5 leads to a line covered under 10...a5 below.) 11...dxe5 12.gxf5 exd4 13.Qe4 Qxf5 with decent compensation for the piece.

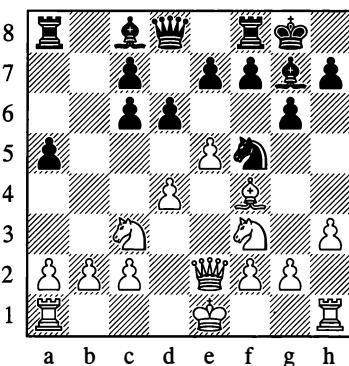
10...Qb8?! at first seems a bit superficial, because it is not clear what the rook will achieve on the b-file. On the other side of the coin, it stops White from castling long. 11.0-0 Qd7?! (11...f5?! is an untested idea.) 12.Qe1 Qf5 13.g4 Qh6! (13...dxe5?! 14.gxf5 exd4 15.Qe4 Qxf5 16.Qg3 is far from clear, but I prefer White.) 14.Qd2 c5 15.dxc5 dxe5 16.Qc4 f6 The game is unbalanced and rather exciting.

10...a5!?

It is logical to activate the bishop on the a6-f1 diagonal.

11.♗f4 ♜f5!?

Black must find a solution to the problematic h6-knight. Opening up the centre is another way of doing just that: 11...c5 12.dxc5 ♜a6 13.♗d2 ♜f5 Now g2-g4 can be met by ...♗b7. 14.0–0–0 ♜b8 15.g4 ♜b7 16.♗e2 ♜c8 Now in De Buhr – Guehl, corr. 1991, White could have obtained a clear advantage with 17.♗he1 ♜a8 18.♗d3.



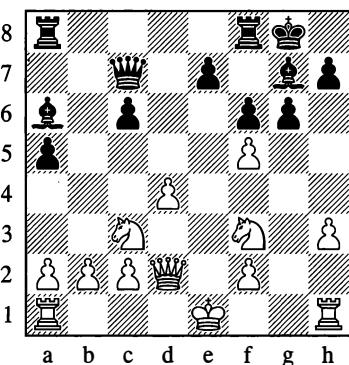
12.g4

12.0–0–0 ♜a6 13.♗d2 ♜b7 14.♗he1 c5 15.d5 e6!? 16.dxe6 ♜xf3 17.exf7† ♜xf7 18.e6 ♜f8 19.gxf3 ♜b8 seems quite interesting from Black's perspective.

12...dxe5 13.♗xe5 ♜a6 14.♗d2 f6!

14...♜h6 15.g5 f6 16.gxh6 fxe5 17.0–0–0 is better for White.

15.♗xc7 ♜xc7 16.gxf5



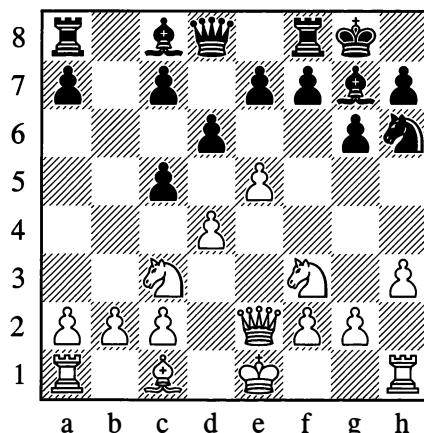
16...♜d7 17.fxg6 ♜f5! 18.♗h2 ♜h5!?

18...♜e6† 19.♗e3 ♜xe3† 20.fxe3 hxg6 and it is unclear if Black has enough for the pawn.

18...c5!? 19.d5 ♜h5 20.gxh7† ♜h8 is another possible direction.

19.gxh7† ♜h8 20.♗g1 ♜h6 21.♗d1 ♜xh3 22.♗g4 ♜ad8

This line illustrates how things might go wrong for White, although improvements are possible of course. All things considered, there are many interesting paths from which Black may choose.



11.dxc5 ♜b7

Having spent some time analysing this game, I consider 11...a5! more promising. White should play 12.♗e4!? (12.♗f4 ♜a6 13.♗e4 dxc5 is unclear) 12...♜a6 (preventing castling) 13.♗g5 dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♜f5 15.♗d5 ♜b8 16.b3 ♜xe5 17.♗xe5 f6 18.♗e6† ♜f7 19.♗e3 ♜b7 when the position is hard to assess. I would advise you to have a closer look before playing this.

12.♗xh6

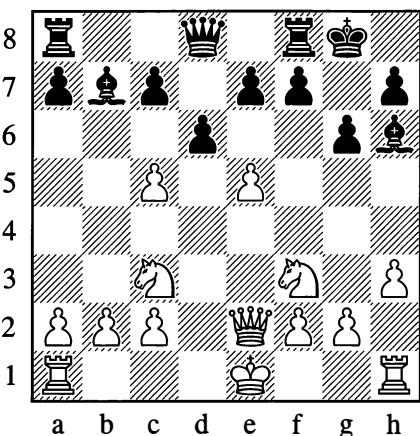
This move allows White to keep an extra pawn, but it makes life quite easy for Black.

Instead, much more dangerous is: 12.♗f4! ♜b8 (After 12...♜c8 13.0–0–0 ♜f5 14.♗he1

$dxc5$  15.g4!  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  17. $\mathbb{W}e4$  White is better.) 13.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  This was Topakian – Van Wely, Arnhem 1988, and now after the accurate 14. $\mathbb{B}he1!$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15.g4  $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $\mathbb{B}d3$  I have not been able to find sufficient counterplay for Black.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$

It is quite possible for similar structures with bishops versus knights to arise via other move orders, so I recommend having a look through the rest of the game even if you intend to play ...a5 on move 10 or 11.



### 13.0–0 $\mathbb{B}b8$ !?

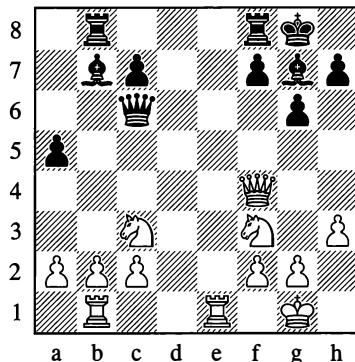
Black poses the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , followed by ... $\mathbb{B}xb2$ . Another possibility was 13... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ .

### 14. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ !?

The position after 14.exd6 cxd6 15.cxd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  illustrates what Black is hoping for. White's extra pawn is not doing much, and Black's bishop pair may become monstrously strong.

GM Kveinys is an expert on the white side of this line, and in a later game he tried: 14. $\mathbb{B}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15.exd6 exd6 (15...cxd6! 16. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{B}xb1$  19. $\mathbb{B}xb1$   $dxc5$  seems like a simple route to equality.) 16.cxd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  17. $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  18. $\mathbb{W}e3$  a5 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$  Now in Kveinys – Keskinen, Jyvaskyla 2001,

Black could have obtained a nice position by means of:



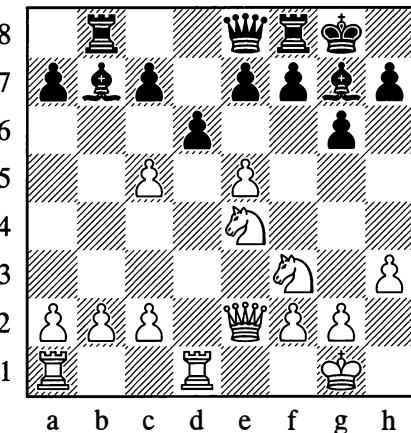
19... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ ! with ideas of ... $\mathbb{B}b4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ .

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !?

Mikhail Gurevich is too strong to be afraid of 15.exd6 exd6 16.cxd6. In his annotations he points out that Black has good compensation after both 16...cxd6 and 16... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$  cxd6.

### 15... $\mathbb{W}e8$ !

A beautiful move that hints at ...dxe5.



### 16.b4

After 16.cxd6 exd6! the e-pawn is pinned. White will have to endure a tough middlegame with knights against bishops, without an extra pawn for his trouble.

**16...♛c6**

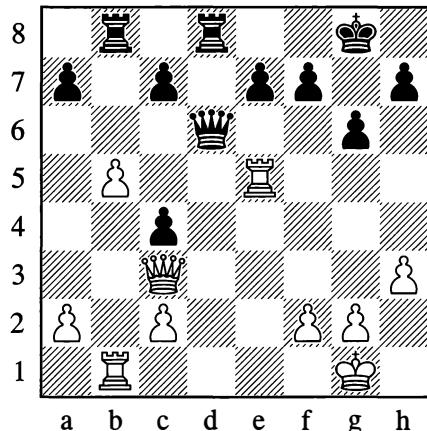
The alternative 16...dxe5 was not exactly pleasing to the eye, but a pawn is a pawn is a pawn, and White would have to do something before being steamrolled by ...h6, ...f5 and ...e4.

**17.♕c3 dxc5**

Gurevich is critical of this move. Instead he advocates 17...dxe5 18.♕d5 ♛fe8, offering several variations implying that Black has the better chances. The silicon brain immediately comes up with 19.♕g5!, intending 20.b5 ♜xc5 21.♕e4 when Black loses his queen. I do not see a convincing reply for Black, so the move played is probably best after all. In the game Black is slightly better, but White is never in serious danger of losing.

**18.b5 ♜e6 19.♕e1 ♜fd8 20.♕ab1 ♜xf3  
21.♕xf3 ♜xe5 22.♕e3! ♜xc3 23.♕xc3 ♜d6  
24.♕e5 c4**

The position is absolutely equal after 24...c6 25.a4 cxb5 26.axb5 a6. For those who are interested, Gurevich annotated the rest of the game in *ChessBase Magazine*.



**25.♕be1 e6 26.♕xc4 ♜d7 27.♕c5 ♜d2  
28.♕e4 ♜bd8 29.♕c3 ♜d1† 30.♕e1 ♜d6  
31.♕c6 ♜f4 32.♕e5 ♜xe5 33.♕xe5 ♜d1†  
34.♕h2 ♜d2 35.♕xc7 ♜xf2 36.♕xa7 ♜xc2**

**37.a4 ♜b2 38.♕e3 ♜a1 39.♕f3 ♜aa2  
40.♕f6† ♜xg2† 41.♕h1 ♜h2† 42.♕g1  
爵g2† 43.♕f1 ♜c2 44.♕g1 ♜cg2†**

Since neither player can make progress, they agreed a draw.

½-½

Since I have not been able to find an antidote against 12.♕f4 I suggest that you either test my recommendation 11...a5 or play as in Game 72 instead.

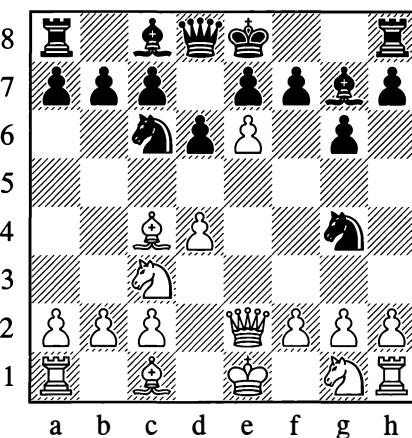
## GAME 74

**Eric Petit – Boris Chatalbashev**

Montpellier 2000

**1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♜g7 3.♕c3 d6 4.♕c4 ♜f6  
5.♕e2 ♜c6 6.e5 ♜g4 7.e6?**

This used to be just another line, but subsequent developments have consigned it to the scrapheap.



**7...♕xd4!**

I used to be suspicious about the complications arising after this move, but now it seems that White is just worse.

7...f5 leads to interesting play and was recommended in TM, but I see no reason to consider this move anymore; the game continuation is just too good not to be played.

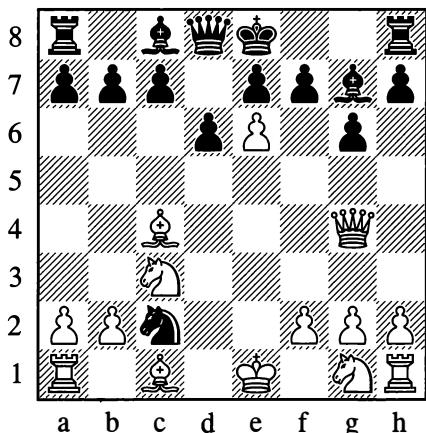
### 8. $\mathbb{W}xg4$

White has two alternatives:

8.  $\mathbb{W}d1?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  10.  $h3$  (10.  $f3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  is close to winning for Black) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  0–0# and Black has excellent compensation for the piece.

8.  $exf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  9.  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  12.  $cxd3$  (12.  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  gives Black a huge advantage.) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  14. 0–0 Now instead of 14...  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , as in Horak – Pick, Czech Republic 2005, Black should have played 14...  $\mathbb{Q}hf8!N$  with a clear advantage.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc2\#$



### 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

If 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  then 9...  $f5!$  is strong, since the queen cannot reach d1. 10.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  12.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c6 and White does not have enough compensation.

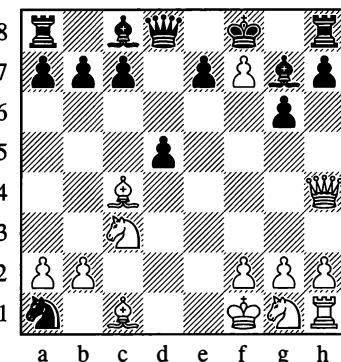
### 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$

It is also quite possible to play 9...  $f5$ , when 10.  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is clearly better for Black according to the engine. This may be true, but I have a healthy respect for knights against a rook. On further reflection, seeing

the evaluation ticking down towards minus one, I am starting to doubt whether it is really a question of healthy respect or just prejudice. I will leave it to the reader to form his own opinion.

### 10. $exf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}h4$ d5!

This is an important blow to the whole variation. The last move wreaks havoc on White's coordination.



### 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  c6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  was played in Fontana – Rog. Fischer, Frankfurt 2002, and here 13...  $\mathbb{Q}c2N$  14.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{W}d6!$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $exd6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  would have won easily for Black.

### 12... c6! 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

Black was better and went on to win in Isonzo – Belotti, Mantova 1996.

### 9... $f5!$

Black is also better after 9...  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  10.  $exf7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , but the position after 11.  $\mathbb{W}h4$  is more complicated to deal with than the position in the game.

### 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$

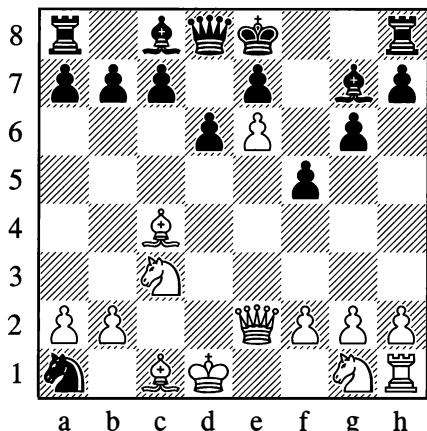
White's alternatives are not much to brag about:

After 10.  $\mathbb{W}h4?$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ , followed by ...c6 and ...b5 (or ...d5) Black is winning.

Black has fabulous compensation after 10.♗b5† c6!? (10...♔f8 11.♕h4 ♗xa1 12.♗h6 ♖xe6 is also clearly better for Black) 11.♕a4 ♖d4 12.♗d3 b5 13.♕a3 ♕b6 14.♗ce2 ♖xe6, when it is not a happy day for the white king.

### 10...♗xa1

White is already losing, because there is nothing to be done when the pawns come charging. What? Where? You don't have to wait long for it.



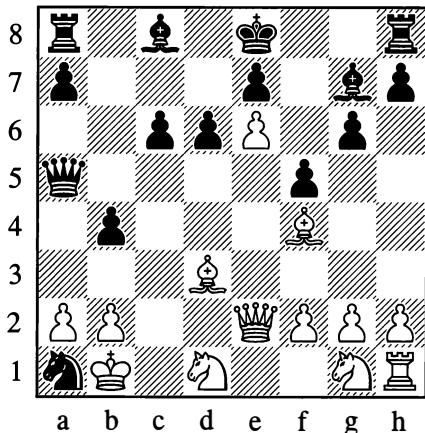
### 11.♗f4

Another way to go is 11.♗f3 c6 12.♗g5. Now in Harman – Stirling, London 2001, the accurate 12...0–0! 13.♗f7 ♕a5 14.♗h6† ♖xh6 15.♗xh6 b5 followed by ...b4 would have been winning.

### 11...c6 12.♗c1 b5! 13.♗d3 b4!

Black's play is blunt but effective.

### 14.♗d1 ♕a5 15.♗b1



15...b3! 16.a3 ♗c2 17.♗f3 ♕b8 18.♗cl ♕d5

18...0–0 19.h4 ♕f6 is also perfectly adequate.

### 19.♗g5 0–0 20.f4 h6

And White had had enough.

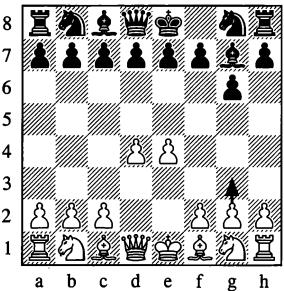
### 0–1

I started this chapter by stating that I never used to know a lot of theory about these lines, and that not much has happened since then. To this day, I still only have the vaguest idea of what 'theory' says. On the other hand, I do know most of the relevant positional themes, and use them as lighthouses that show me the way.

### Conclusion

The ideas featured in the first five games of the chapter are by far the most dangerous for the Black player. That is to say that if ♗c4 is on White's agenda, he does best to combine it with an early ♗f3 rather than ♗c3. In such positions, the early e4–e5 advance can always be met by ...dxe5 and ...♗d5, but sometimes Black prefers the more ambitious knight retreat to e8. In the last five games Black has fewer problems. Certainly the lines involving a well-timed ...♗xe4 fork trick turn out nicely. When White avoids this with 5.♕e2 ♗c6 6.e5, both 6...♗d7 and 6...♗g4 have a solid theoretical reputation, but I prefer the latter since it is more complicated.

# Chapter 9



## Fianchetto (In Excelsis)

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6

4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

5.g3 c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  – 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

5.h3! Game 79

413

4.g3

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  Game 80

417

4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  7.0–0 0–0

409

8.d5? Game 78

8.h3  $\mathbb{E}b8$

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6! 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$  Game 75

397

9.a4 b6

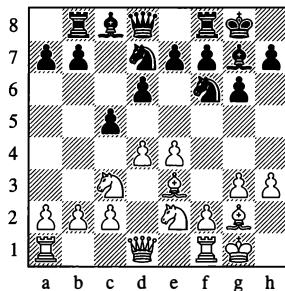
10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 Game 76

402

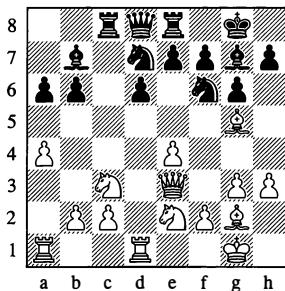
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$  a6 Game 77

406

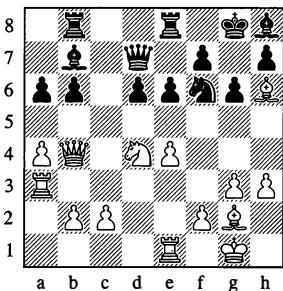
Game 75 – after 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



Notes to Game 77 – after 15. $\mathbb{Q}de2$



Game 77 – after 18. $\mathbb{W}b4?$



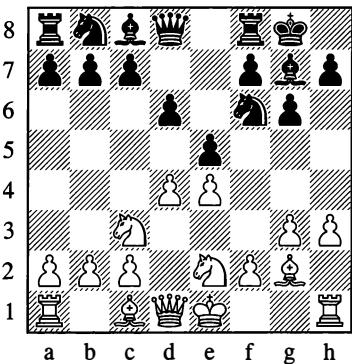
9...b6!

15... $\mathbb{E}c5!$

18... $\mathbb{E}e5!$

Yes, please come and join the choir. We have not yet seen the end of the mass emigration towards the fianchetto systems in the Indian openings, and for a 1.e4 player jealously eyeing the development on the other side of the fence, this is as close to the real thing as one can get. Still, the Fianchetto System against the Modern does not annoy me anywhere near as much as it does in the King's Indian. In the latter case White can often press without taking any real risks, but the same can hardly be said in the present chapter.

When reading through some theoretical works on the Pirc/Modern, it is easy to get the impression that Black can get away with almost anything against White's Fianchetto System, but this is a long way from the truth. In the popular line with 1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{g}7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e5 7.h3

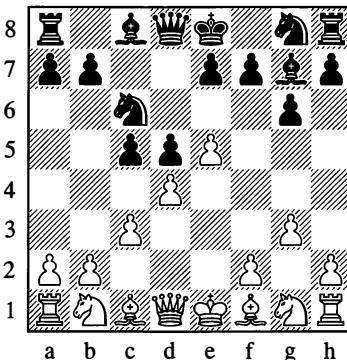


Black can choose between two main set-ups, one of them involving ...exd4, ... $\mathbb{E}e8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , the other featuring ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ . Each of these options has a decent theoretical reputation, but I do not like either of them, as I prefer to aim for a Sicilian pawn structure rather than a Philidor one. With a little help from the likes of Khalifman, Gulko and Tkachiev, I will try to convince you that this is both possible and promising.

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{g}7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

White can try to confuse Black with 3.g3!?, intending 3...d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , possibly followed by c2-c4.

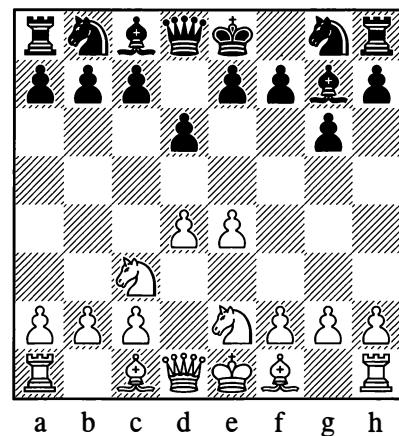
A less cooperative course of action for Black is: 3...d5!? (3...c5 is another good idea.) 4.e5 c5 5.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$



6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  7.a3  $\mathbb{W}a5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  cxd4 9.b4  $\mathbb{W}a6$  10.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  (10...e6 also looks good for Black.) 11.0–0 e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c4$ . In Strikovic – Azmaiparashvili, Candas 1992, White did not have enough compensation for the pawn.

**3...d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ ?**

This move order is somewhat trickier than 4.g3, since it leaves Black guessing as to what will come next. After 4.g3 Black has the extra option of 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? (Game 80), but now this would be wrong since White can avoid the fianchetto with 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  or 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (!), in which case the knight would be misplaced on c6.



#### 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

I would love to play 4...a6 here, but I am a bit worried about: 5.a4! b6 (Otherwise a4-a5 gives White a queenside clamp.) 6.g3!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}b8?$  (After 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8.0-0 c5 9.d5 Black will find it difficult to play ...b5.) 8.d5?! Intending  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ . If Black instead tries to play a Hippo set-up, White gets the advantage by playing d4-d5, answering ...e5 with f2-f4.

Another possibility is 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , but in that case you will have to be willing to play a Pirc position after 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 6.f3.

#### 5.g3

White can also try 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , but in that case 5...a6! makes better sense than on the previous move, since after 6.a4 b6 7.g3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6!$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}b8!$  9.h3 c5 Black is back on track.

Instead of 6.a4, White can play 6.g3 b5 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  8.0-0, when many moves have been tried. Chernin once played 8...c6 in this position, but I prefer Chepukaitis's 8...c5 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  when Black is fine.

#### 5...c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , adventurous players can try 6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6?$  7.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  9.fxe3  $\mathbb{W}b6$  with compensation for the pawn, but there is also a safe option in 6...b6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  with similar play to the main line.

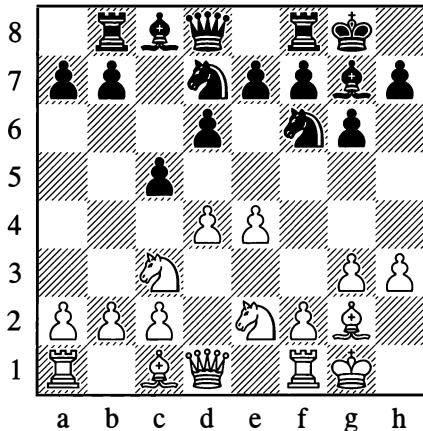
#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7.0-0

7.h3?! should be answered with 7... $\mathbb{B}b8!$ , rather than 7...0-0 when 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is slightly awkward for Black, since 8...b6? 9.e5 loses the exchange. I am surprised that there are so few games where White has tried this move-order trick.

#### 7...0-0 8.h3

White prepares to put the bishop on e3, and it is time for Black to come up with a plan.

#### 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$



This position is covered in the first three games of the chapter. (In the second game the move order is slightly different, but it comes to the same thing in the end). Over the course of the chapter we will see the following plans for both sides.

#### Black postpones ...cxd4 (Game 75)

This provocative treatment led to a comfortable position for Black in our first game, but the key question is how to evaluate the position after White blocks the centre with d4-d5 on move 12 or 13.

#### White attacks with g4-g5 (Game 76)

Boris Gulko is the star of this variation, but his treatment in this game was not the most accurate. Still, the game contains plenty of instructive points. See the notes to Black's 13th move for my suggested improvements.

#### White plays $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (Game 77)

This is an important plan to consider, but Alexander Khalifman shows a good way to meet it.

#### White meets ...c5 with d4-d5 (Game 78)

The Benoni structure is covered in my game against Naiditsch. One of White's most important plans is to prepare b2-b4, but we will see that Black has enough resources to deal with it.

**White plays 4.♘ge2 followed by h2-h3 and g2-g4 (Game 79)**

Allan Stig Rasmussen played this rather challenging plan against me. White hopes to gain a tempo over Game 76 by playing g2-g4 in one move rather than two. The most accurate reply for Black is 5...a6!, as given in the notes.

**Black meets 4.g3 with 4...♘c6? (Game 80)**

I include this game to present an alternative set-up for those of you who feel adventurous.

## GAME 75

Drazen Sermek – Vladislav Tkachiev

Pula 1999

### 1.e4 d6

The Pirc move order in this and the next game does not change anything in the long run. I usually play 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.g3 ♘d7 followed by ...c5 before moving the g8-knight, but there is nothing wrong with 4...♞f6, which can lead to the same position as in this game.

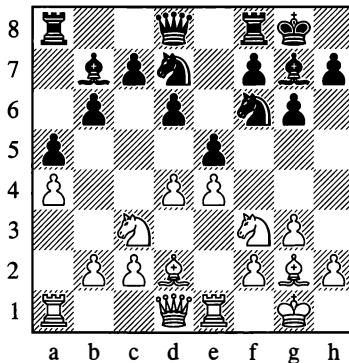
### 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.g3 ♘g7 5.♗g2 0–0

5...♝bd7?! loses control over the g4-square, allowing 6.♗e3 0–0 7.h3 when it is hard for Black to carry out ...c5. He can play 7...e5 instead, but after 8.♗ge2 we reach a position outside of my recommended repertoire.

### 6.♗ge2

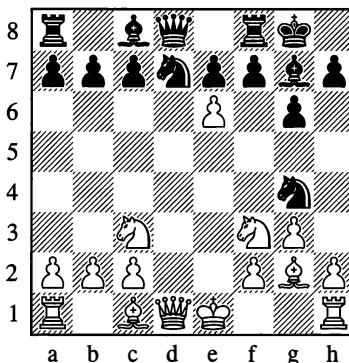
Also rather common is 6.♗f3, when after 6...♝bd7 White has two important options:

a) 7.0–0 e5! This set-up is quite good when White puts the knight on f3 rather than on e2. 8.♗e1 b6 9.a4 a5 (9...a6 is another way to handle the a4-a5 idea.) 10.♗d2 ♘b7



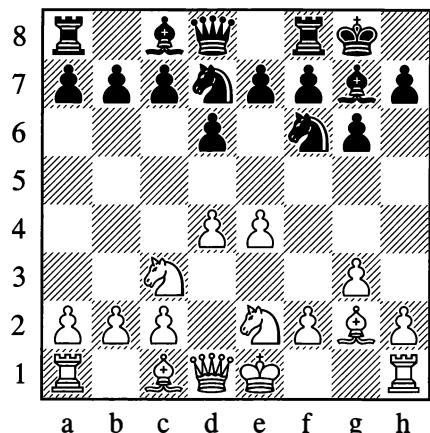
11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗c1 ♘e8 13.♗h6 ♘c5 14.♗xg7 ♘xg7 Black had a slight advantage in Tregubov – McNab, Gibraltar 2005. I could write much more about this line, but my general impression has not changed since I wrote *Tiger's Modern*, and I still believe Black can obtain a good game by following this simple recipe: play ...b6 and ...♝b7, and if White is ambitious and plays d4-d5, then ...a5, ...♞c5 and ...c6 will make White regret putting the knight on f3.

b) 7.e5 dxe5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 9.e6



9...♝de5! Now both 10.♗xd8 ♘xd8 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5 12.exf7† ♘xf7 and 10.♗xe5 ♘xd1† 11.♗xd1 ♘xe5 12.exf7† ♘xf7 are all right for Black, albeit slightly drawish. These are the kinds of positions I try to avoid by playing ...♞d7 and ...c5 before ...♞f6.

6...♝bd7



## 7.0–0

In the event that White plays 7.h3 it is important to avoid 7...c5, since 8.♕e3 more or less forces Black to exchange on d4, leaving White with a distinct advantage. Instead 7...♝b8! works fine, when 8.♕e3 (8.♗b5?! c5! 9.♗xa7?? ♜a5†) 8...b6 9.d5 ♜e5 10.♗d4 ♜b7 11.0–0 ♜d7! followed by ...c5 is balanced. This is another line that can be avoided with the 4...♗d7 move order.

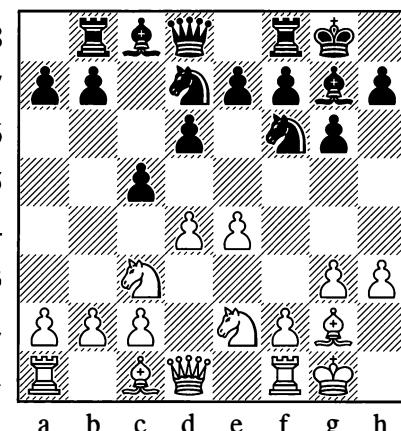
Another option is 7.♕e3, when once again 7...♝b8! seems to be best. After 8.0–0 b6 9.d5? (other moves lead to the main lines) 9...♝b7 10.♗d4 ♜e5 11.f4 ♜c4 12.♗c1 ♜a5! Black is doing fine.

## 7...c5 8.h3 ♘b8!

This multipurpose move prepares to launch the b-pawn and simultaneously evacuates the rook from the a8-h1 diagonal. In this kind of position Black should generally avoid ...cxd4 until after ...b5 (or ...b6), so that ♜xd4 can be answered by ...♝b7.

Instead after 8...cxd4 9.♗xd4 it is harder for Black to play ...♝b8 and advance the b-pawn, since the d4-knight is hovering like a fork-carrying devil over the c6-square. In general, the exchange on the d4-square also enables the white pieces to breathe more easily. In the good old days it was not uncommon for Black

to play ...♝c7 in these positions, but that has fallen out of grace – for good reasons, as the queen will be vulnerable to all kinds of ♜d5 tricks.



## 9.♕e3

White has quite a wide choice here.

9.a4 is seen in the next game.

## 9.dxc5 ♜xc5

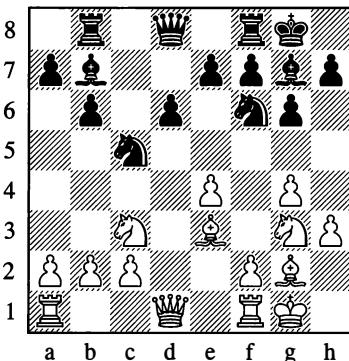
There is a certain logic to this exchange, as White hopes that the knight will somehow not be so well placed on c5. We'll see about that.

## 10.♕e3

10.♗d4 is the only line where Black is prevented from playing ...b6 and ...♝b7, but 10...♝d7! works out just as well. A possible continuation is: 11.♗e1 ♜c8!! 12.♗h2 ♜e8!N (12...b5 allowed White to seize the initiative with 13.♗d5 in Ptak – M. Ivanovic, Prague 2007.) Now one spectacular line goes 13.f4 ♜a4 14.♗xa4 e5!! 15.♗e2 ♜xa4 16.♗c3 ♜c6 17.♗xd6 ♜h5 18.♗f3 exf4 19.gxf4 ♜xc3! 20.bxc3 ♜g7 with excellent chances for Black.

## 10...b6 11.g4 ♜b7 12.♗g3

White is playing according to the master plan of the Fianchetto System, but it is just not good enough here.



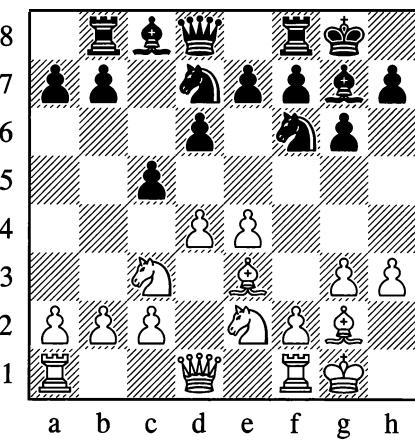
12... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This move forces b2-b3, but does not otherwise improve Black's position.

More promising is 13... $\mathbb{E}c8!?$ , intending 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  15. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  b5!

14.b3  $\mathbb{E}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17.c3  $\mathbb{W}c7$   
18. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  19. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  e5

Black eventually got the better of this unclear position in Luecke – Khalifman, Germany 1998.



9...b6!

Black overprotects c5 and prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  or even ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .

The impatient 9...b5?! is strongly met by 10.e5! (10.dxc5 b4! 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  12.c4 dxc5 13.f4 is a little better for White too) 10...dxe5 11.dxc5 b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13. $\mathbb{E}e1$  when the c5-pawn, supported by the strong bishop pair, will become a huge headache for Black.

## 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

The aggressive 10.f4 was defused by 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15.exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  and Black emerged with a slight pull in Prandstetter – Ftacnik, Pardubice 1998.

## 10... $\mathbb{E}e8!?$

With this ambitious move, Black intends to avoid the exchange of dark-squared bishops, as  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  can now be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ .

A good alternative is:

10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6!N$  13. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  b5  
14.a3  $\mathbb{W}b6$  is nice for Black.

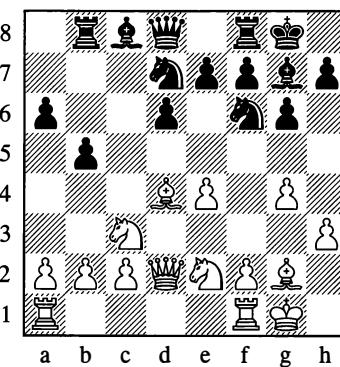
11...a6!N

This is the simplest way for Black to get counterplay.

Instead 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.g4 a6 13.a4 is quite unclear

12.g4 b5!

12...h6!? is playable too, but Black has nothing to fear on the kingside.



13.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $gxh5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   
17.f4  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19.a3  $\mathbb{E}c8$  should be a bit better for Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  15.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

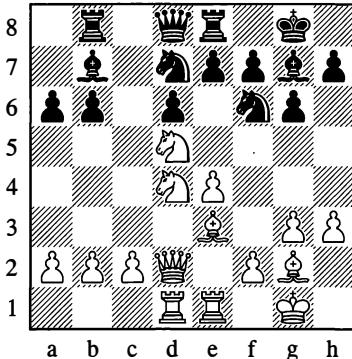
Black is active and has nothing to complain about.

**11.♗fe1**

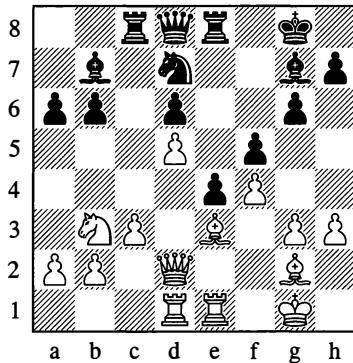
White has two main set-ups at his disposal. The first involves overprotecting the d5-square (to stop Black from going ...cxd4, ...e5 and ...d5) and then expanding on the kingside with f2-f4, g3-g4, ♖g3, g4-g5 and maybe h4-h5. The downside of this plan is that it is slow and Black has time to start a counterattack on the queenside with ...b5. The second set-up involves playing useful moves like ♘h2 and ♘fd1, waiting for the moment when Black will lose patience and exchange on d4. In the resulting position White plans ♖c3-d5 with a small advantage. Black should not worry too much about this, although he can always keep in mind the possibility of ...e6 to eliminate the ♖d5 plan altogether.

11.a4 a6 leads to a position analysed in the next game.

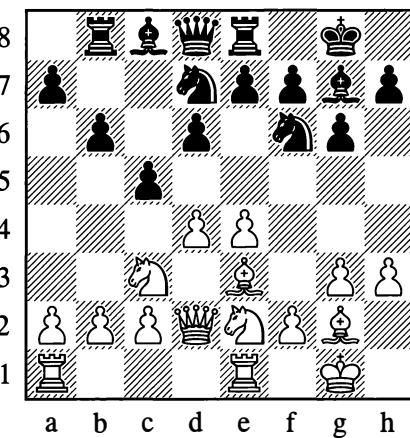
One of the more recent encounters in this line continued: 11.♗ad1 cxd4 12.♖xd4 ♕b7 13.♗fe1 a6 14.♖d5?! This is dealt with in an instructive manner.



14...e5! 15.♖b3?! (15.♕xf6† ♔xf6 16.♖b3 ♕xe4 17.♕xd6 ♕c8 gives Black some initiative, but this was the lesser evil.) 15...♖xd5 16.exd5 f5 17.f4 ♕c8 18.c3 e4 Black is doing well, as there is no way for White to get his knight to e6 or c6 under favourable circumstances.

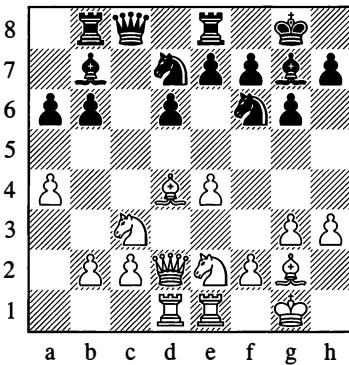


19.♗f2 b5 20.♗d2 ♕f6 21.♗ed1 ♕wd7 22.♗a5 ♕a8 23.♗f1 ♕c7 24.♗c6 ♕xc6 25.dxc6 d5 26.a4 ♕xc6 Black went on to convert his advantage in Vianin – Abbasov, Calvia 2010.

**11...♕b7?!**

Playing this move before ...cxd4 in such positions generally invites White to play d4-d5.

The normal continuation would be 11...a6 12.a4 cxd4 13.♖xd4 ♕b7 14.♗ad1 ♕c8! (not 14...♕c6?! 15.e5! dx5 16.♕xc6 exd4 17.♗xd4 ♕c7 18.♗g2 when the light squares have been seriously weakened) intending ...♕c6 and ...b5 with interesting counterplay.



An important point is that 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?! can be met in the same manner as in the Vianin – Abbasov game shown above: 15...e5! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17.exd5 f5 (or 17... $\mathbb{W}c7$ !) and Black is doing well.

### 12.a4

In the next two games White plays this a few moves earlier, but it does not make much of a difference, since White has nothing to gain from avoiding it forever.

The critical continuation is:

12.d5!?

Trying to exploit the fact that Black has played ... $\mathbb{B}b7$  (losing control of b5) and ... $\mathbb{E}e8$  (blocking the ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ -c7 manoeuvre). Despite these handicaps, Black is not doing badly after:

12...a6!

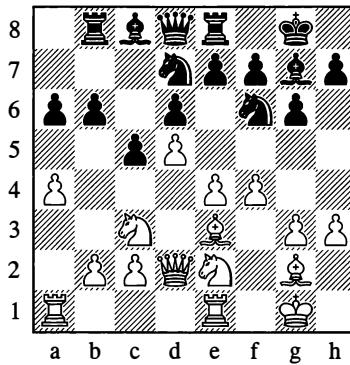
In *Tiger's Modern* I was a bit too optimistic about 12... $\mathbb{A}a6$ !. The reality is that after 13.a4!  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe2$  it will be hard for Black to achieve ...a6 and ...b5.

13.a4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !

13...b5 14.axb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  17.b3 is a little better for White, although we are still playing for all three results.

14.f4!

White has to watch out, so as not to fall for 14. $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! 15.b3?  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ !



14...b5

Black has lost two tempos with his bishop, yet he still seems to do all right.

15.axb5 axb5 16.b4!

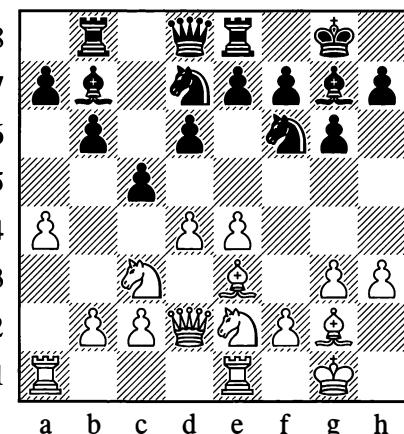
This is clearly the most dangerous idea at White's disposal.

16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !?

16...cx b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  e5 is also unclear.

17. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18.bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  19. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  20. $\mathbb{W}c1$  b4

We have arrived at Chaos. Obviously this can be avoided by playing ...cx d4 before developing the bishop to b7.



12...a6!?

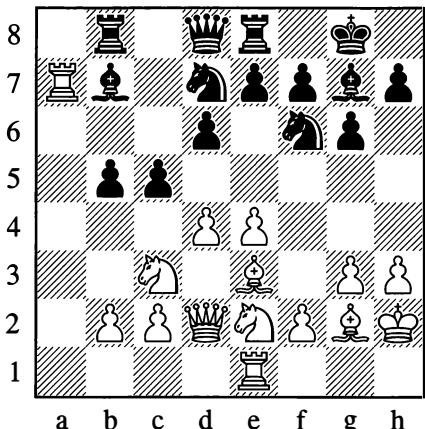
Black continues to invite his opponent to play d4-d5, possibly thinking "If he hasn't done it yet, he probably won't do it now".

**13.♕h2**

13.d5 is similar to 12.d5 above. Today I would not hesitate to play such a move with White, nor would I fear it with Black. It is one of those types of positions I would be happy to play with either colour.

**13...b5**

Since White has no pressure on the d-file, Black can even play 13...cxd4 14.♕xd4 e6! (stopping ♖d5) 15.♖ad1 ♕f8 with an excellent game.

**14.axb5 axb5 15.♖a7****15...b4**

Here the players somewhat prematurely agreed to a draw. The game could have continued 16.♗d5 ♜c8!? when I would prefer Black's side.

The dramatic 15...♗b6!? is not as good as I originally thought because of 16.♖xb7! ♜xb7 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxc5! ♜d7 19.♘c1 ♜c4 20.c6 ♜c7 21.♗xb5 ♜c8 22.♗ec3 with good compensation for White.

The engine's suggestion of 15...♝c8! is interesting, when 16.♗d5 ♜xd5 17.exd5 ♜b6 18.dxc5 ♜c4 19.♝d3 dxc5 20.b3 ♜d6 leads to a dynamically balanced position with everything still to play for.

½-½

Despite my comment about not fearing the pawn structure after the d4-d5 advance, on balance I would generally prefer to play ...cxd4 before developing my bishop to b7, since the latter invites d4-d5 under more favourable circumstances for White. In the next game Black does not allow this option.

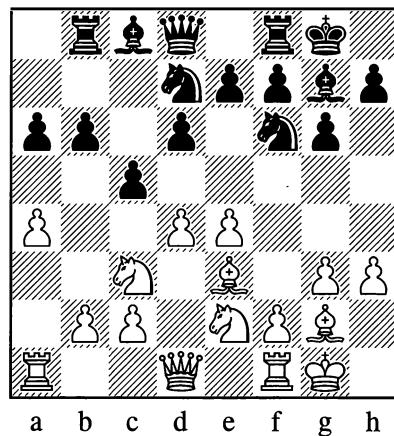
**GAME 76****Karel van der Weide – Boris Gulko**

Wijk aan Zee 2001

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.g3 ♜g7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.♗ge2 ♜bd7 7.h3 ♜b8!**

Let me repeat that one should avoid 7...c5?! due to 8.♗e3!, when Black is forced to take on d4 in order not to allow dxc5 and e4-e5.

**8.a4 c5 9.♗e3 b6 10.0-0 a6**



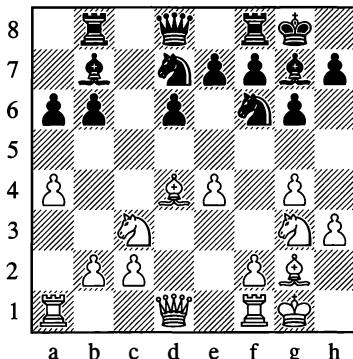
**11.♗d2**

Another idea is 11.♗b1, intending 12.d5 b5 13.axb5 axb5 14.b4. The solution is obvious: 11...cxd4! 12.♗xd4 ♜b7 Now Black is ready for ...b5, and the audience is left wondering what on Earth the rook is doing on b1.

11.g4 ♜b7 (11...cxd4 12.♗xd4 h6 is another possibility.) 12.♗g3 (12.g5 ♜h5!! 13.f4?! cxd4

14.♕xd4 e5 15.fxe5 ♔xe5 is great for Black.)

12...cxd4 13.♕xd4



Now in Al Sayed – Izoria, Dubai 2003, Black should have played 13...h6!N with a good position, rather than 13...♔c7?! 14.g5 ♔e8 15.♕d5 ♕xd5 16.exd5 which favoured White slightly.

**11...cxd4!**

Black can play 11...♗b7, but after 12.g4 there is nothing better than 12...cxd4 13.♕xd4 b5 leading to the main game.

Black can play in a similar vein to Sermek – Tkachiev with:

11...♗e8

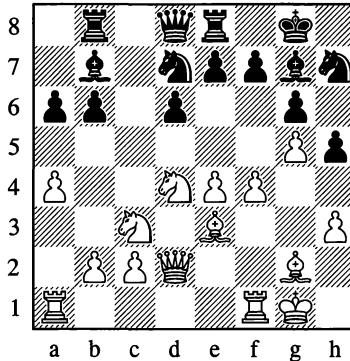
However, White can try going on the attack.  
12.g4?! h5!

In *Tiger's Modern* I wrote that “I was highly suspicious about this move”, and my feeling has since been confirmed with some help from the electronic magician.

Black should prefer 12...cxd4 13.♕xd4! when the ...♗e8 move has lost some of its meaning, but 13...♗b7 14.♕g3 h6 15.f4 e5 16.fxe5 ♔xe5 17.b3 still leads to an unbalanced game.

13.g5 ♔h7 14.f4 cxd4 15.♕xd4 ♗b7

This position has been reached in a couple of games. In *Tiger's Modern* I concentrated on 16.e5?! as played in Djurhuus – Van Wely, Tunja 1989, but a more damaging move is:

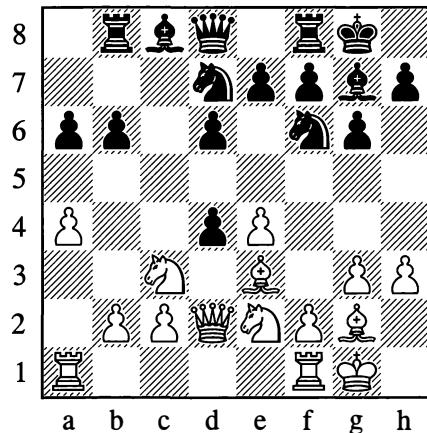


**16.f5!N**

This should be enough to put Black out of business. A possible line is:

16...♔e5 17.fxg6 fxg6 18.♕e6 ♘c8 19.♗f2 ♔h8 20.♕d5 ♔xe6 21.♗f7† ♔h8 22.♗xg6 ♐df8 23.♗xh5† ♔g8 24.♗f2

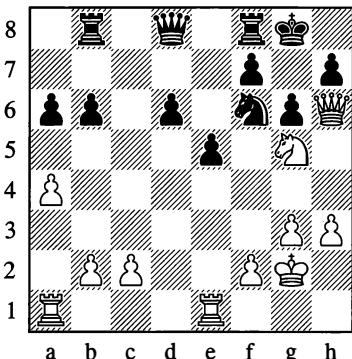
Black has no defence against the plan of ♐af1, ♘f7† and ♘f4-h4.



**12.♕xd4**

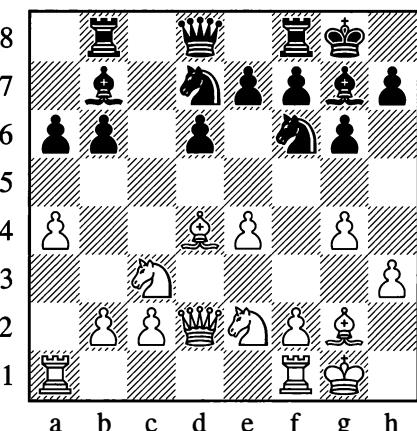
White is planning g3-g4(-g5), ♘e2-g3, f2-f4 and so on.

After 12.♕xd4 ♗b7 13.♕h6 ♘xh6 14.♗xh6 ♘c5 15.♗fe1 there is nothing wrong with a move like 15...♗ac8, but in the following game, Black found a more forcing way to handle the situation: 15...e5 16.♗f3 ♘cxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♗g5 ♘xg2 19.♗xg2



19... $\mathbb{B}b8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (20... $\mathbb{B}c8$  21. $\mathbb{B}h4$   $\mathbb{B}xc2$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  23. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is slightly better for Black, but 21.c3 could be an improvement.) 21. $\mathbb{B}h4$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}xh6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$   $\mathbb{B}xe8$  25. $\mathbb{B}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  26. $\mathbb{B}d1$  and the position was approximately equal in Milov – Agrest, Villarrobledo 2001.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13.g4**

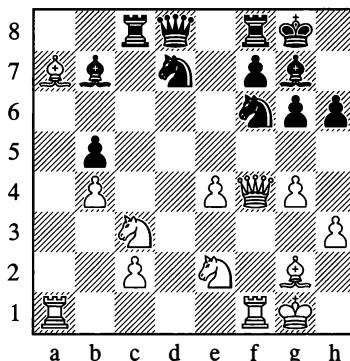


**13...b5?!**

The evaluation of this move depends on what you think about the lines after 15.g5! in the notes below. It seems to me that Black is, at best, taking an unnecessary risk with the game continuation.

My own preference is for 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6\#N$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 16.axb5 axb5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  d5? with unclear consequences.

Another interesting move is 13...h6N intending 14.f4 (14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  is unclear) 14...b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.b4 e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$  exf4 19. $\mathbb{W}xf4$  with a rather complicated position. The engine prefers White, but I take the opposite view:



19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$  (20. $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  21. $\mathbb{B}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  bxa4 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{B}xc5$  24.bxc5  $\mathbb{W}c8$  and Black has good compensation.) 20... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  The evaluation is tipping in Black's direction.

**14.axb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ??**

Now Black gets a second chance at equality.

Critical is:

**15.g5!  $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

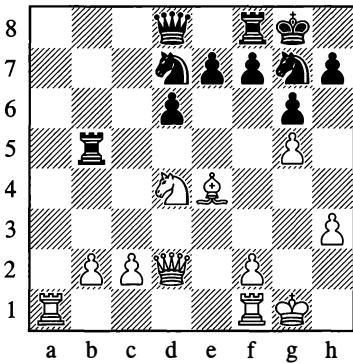
After 15...b4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  19. $\mathbb{W}d4\#$  e5 20. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$  21. $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$  22.hxg4  $\mathbb{B}fc8$  Black has some compensation for the piece, but he can most likely forget about winning.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ !**

16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  allows a promising idea from the Silicon Monster: 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !?(16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  leads to the main line after 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ ) 17. $\mathbb{Q}bxh4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5 19. $\mathbb{Q}de2$  f5 20.gxf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21.b3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}ef4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  25. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  Black has excellent compensation for the pawn.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

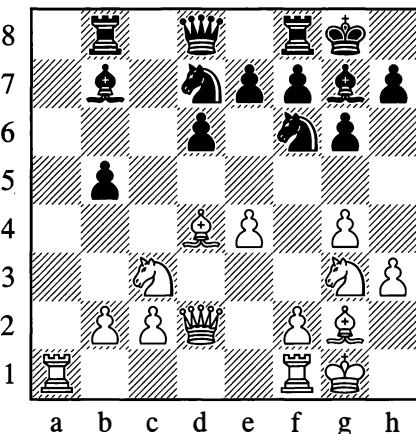
Black is under some pressure, and is forced to go fishing in murky waters with the following exchange sacrifice:



19... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  21. $\mathbb{W}f4$   
21. $\mathbb{W}e3?$ ! d5 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  gives Black excellent compensation.

21...d5 22.c4  
22. $\mathbb{R}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23. $\mathbb{W}xe4?$ ! dxe4 24. $\mathbb{R}xd8$   $\mathbb{R}xd8$  25.h4  $\mathbb{R}d2$  is fine for Black.  
22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}4xg5$  24.f4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  25. $\mathbb{R}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The engines favour White, but Black has a pawn for the exchange and a safer king, so anything may happen.



15...b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   
After 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  Black has lots of activity and is doing well.

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Believe it or not, this seems to be a mistake. I would surely have played it myself.

The thematic 16...e5? does not work here due to 17. $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ .

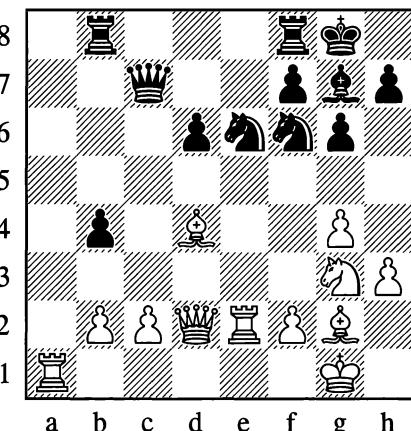
The computer suggests 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  (17.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  is fine for Black) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  with mutual chances.

My favourite move of all is 16...b3!, intending to weaken White's queenside pawns before deciding how to proceed in the centre.

### 17.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{R}fe1$

In *Tiger's Modern* I wrote that Black is doing all right after 18. $\mathbb{R}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ , but I failed to notice that the b-pawn can turn out to be weak in the endgame after 20.b3!  $\mathbb{W}b6$  21. $\mathbb{R}fa1$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  22. $\mathbb{R}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , when the plan of  $\mathbb{Q}d4-c6$  puts Black under some pressure.

### 18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{R}e2$ e5 20.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$



### 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ !

It appears that both players overlooked the devious 21. $\mathbb{R}xe6!$   $\mathbb{fxe6}$  22. $\mathbb{R}a7$ . Now Black has to defend precisely, the correct path being:

22... $\mathbb{W}d8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{B}f7$  24. $\mathbb{B}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  26. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  28. $\mathbb{W}a7+$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  29. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  30. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  White is clearly better, although Black can probably hold with accurate defence.

### 21...d5

Now Black has everything in order.

**22. $\mathbb{B}a7$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  23. $\mathbb{B}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$**

**25. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  26. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}f4$**

In this level position a draw was agreed. Despite being a relatively short draw, the game proved to be an exciting one when analysed in depth.

½-½

From a theoretical point of view, the critical moment of this game occurred when Black played 13...b5?!. Such moves are often played on an intuitive basis, but sometimes your intuition does not take all sides into account. On this occasion it was hard to spot 15.g5! followed by 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ . Now that you know about this theme, I expect you to be able to avoid it.

## GAME 77

### Konstantin Aseev – Alexander Khalifman

Vilnius 1997

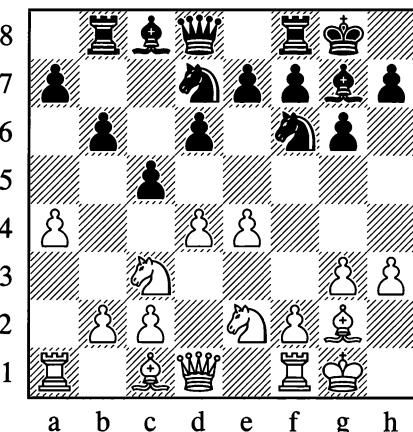
**1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7.0-0 c5 8.h3  $\mathbb{B}b8$  9.a4**

This is by far the most common move, stopping ...b5 and giving White the chance to deploy the dark-squared bishop later.

### 9...b6

This has become far more common than 9...a6?!, which appears anti-positional due to the weakening of the b6-square. Things are not so clear though, since 10.a5 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is fine for Black, who intends ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$

next. The real question is how to evaluate the position after 10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  11.a5 b5 12.axb6  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ , Frolov – Golovchenko, St Petersburg 2004, and now 14. $\mathbb{Q}a2N$ . On one hand Black's structure is a bit weak, but the pressure on e4, in combination with the additional space on the queenside, might just about make up for that. If the reader is happy with this position, then he may prefer the 9...a6 move order.



### 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$

White is anticipating an exchange on d4, and hopes to benefit from having his bishop on a more active square than e3.

### 10...a6

10...h6 is possible too, when 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1!$ ? (White should prefer 14.a5, when the position is about equal) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15.f3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  led to a pleasant position for Black in Bacallao Alonso – Fernandez Hernandez, Havana 2013.

### 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

Compared to the first game in this chapter, this move is even better now. Partly because it defends against  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ -d5 in some variations, and partly because the dangerous plan of g3-g4,  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and g4-g5 is obstructed by the bishop on g5.

**12.♗fe1**

**12.♗fd1**

This was once played by Boris Gukko, who I regard as an expert with Black in these lines. His idea was probably to discourage the plan of ...cxd4 followed by ...e6, but Matveeva reacted excellently.

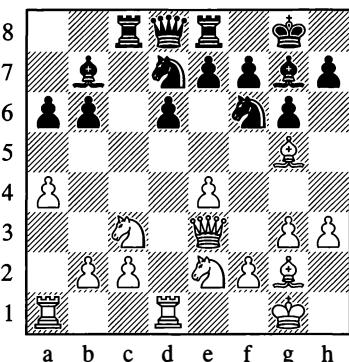
**12...cxd4**

After 12...♗b7 13.♗h6 ♗h8 14.d5 b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.♗xb5 ♗xd5 17.exd5 ♗xb5 18.b3 White has a small advantage.

**13.♗xd4 ♗b7! 14.♗e3**

14.♗d5 e5?! (14...e6 15.♗xf6† ♗xf6 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.c4 is about balanced) 15.♗b3 ♗xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗xd8 ♗exd8 18.♗xd5 ♗f6 19.♗d3 ♗f8 reaches an endgame where Black is okay.

**14...♗c8 15.♗de2**



**15...♗c5!**

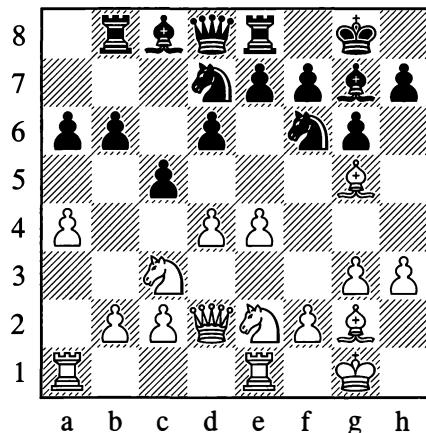
This move is much stronger than the conservative 15...♗c7. On a good day the rook can help the b6-pawn to move forward, stop White from controlling d5, and even become a nuisance on h5.

**16.♗d2 ♗a8 17.♗ad1 ♗e5N**

In Gukko – Matveeva, Helsinki 1992, Black displayed an excess of talent and played 17...♗xg5?! which, in all fairness, was not at all bad, although she later went wrong and lost. The text move keeps things simpler.

**18.b3 ♗ed7!**

Having been forced to weaken himself along the c-file, White will have to make some difficult decisions in the near future.



**12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 ♗b7 14.♗d5?!**

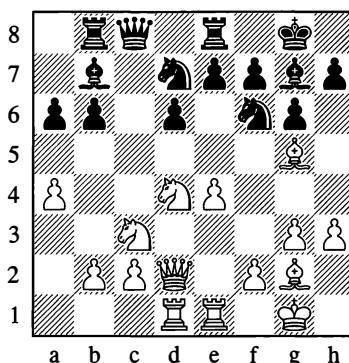
White is planning c2-c4 with a bind on Black's position.

A more subtle continuation is:

**14.♗ad1 ♗c8!**

Black went wrong with 14...e6? 15.♗f3! ♗f8 in Gabriel – Prusikin, Switzerland 2003. At this point the engine points out a tactical trick that I missed in *Tiger's Modern*: 16.e5!N ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 dxе5 18.♗c6 ♗e7 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♗e2 ♗c8 21.♗xe8 ♗xe8 22.♗xe5 and White is winning.

14...♗c8?N is playable, since both 15.e5 ♗xg2 16.exf6 exf6 and 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.e5 ♗xg2 17.exf6 ♗b7 are okay for Black. I still prefer the main line though.

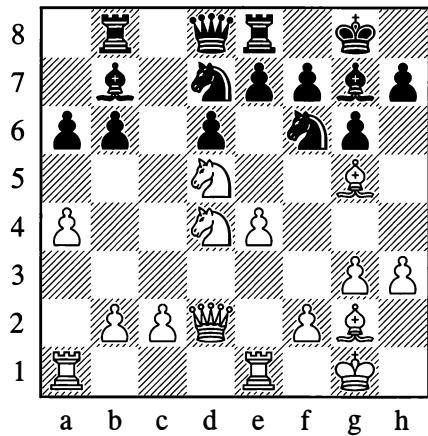


15.♕d5!

15.♔h2 was played in Tadjerbashi – Sandberg, Sweden 2009, and now 15...♛c4!N 16.b3 ♛c5 17.♗e3 ♛b4 would have given Black an easy game.

15...e5 16.♕xf6† ♕xf6 17.♗b3 ♜e6

The position is approximately equal, and there is plenty of scope for further analysis here.



14...e6!

Better sooner than later. Black cannot do without this move in the long run.

15.♕xf6† ♕xf6 16.♗a3?!

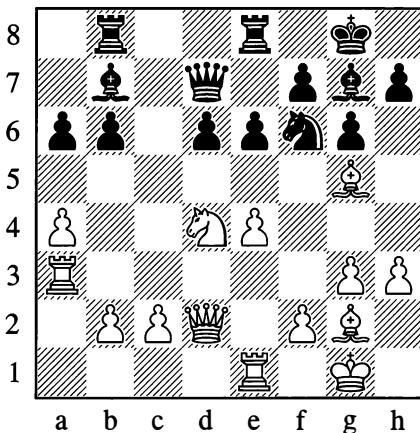
An unorthodox way to activate the rook in such a position.

Usually – if allowed to – White plays c2-c4, stopping Black from playing ...d5 or ...b5. In the present case, 16.c4 ♛c7 17.♗a1 ♕d7 leads to a position where the chances should be balanced. Compared to a normal Maroczy set-up, Black can be happy to have exchanged a pair of knights. Another important point is that it will be difficult for White to go on the offensive on the kingside without allowing serious counterplay on the queenside.

16...♛d7

A somewhat odd square for the queen,

but Khalifman realizes that it is best to put pressure on a4 in order to stop White from consolidating with ♘d3 and b2-b3, which would lead to unpleasant pressure on the d6-pawn.



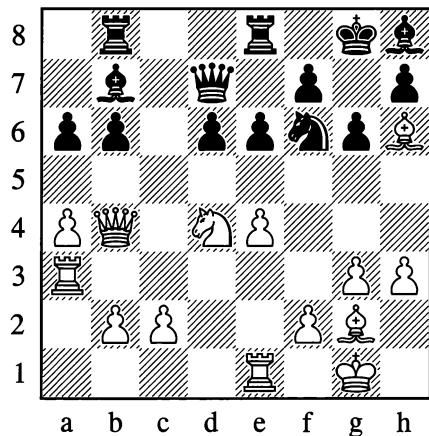
17.♔h6?!

One way to get some idea of who is better in a Sicilian structure is to count the number of pieces that control the d5-square for each side. In general, the one who has the better control of this square also has the better position. Such a statement should, of course, be taken with a pinch of salt, but I think there is some truth to it. If you apply this principle to the position at hand, then it immediately becomes obvious that a bishop on g5 indirectly weakens Black's control of d5 (as the f6-knight can be eliminated) and therefore should have stayed put.

17...♔h8! 18.♛b4?!

White does not realize that his opening advantage is gone, and forgets all about the d5-square.

It was better to admit the previous mistake with 18.♗g5, when the loss of time is of no great consequence, although Black is still pretty comfortable after 18...♝bc8.



**18...e5! 19.Qb3 a5**

Black is playing it safe. Also promising was 19...d5?!, as 20.Wxb6 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 dxe4 22.Qc5 Wxh3 23.Qxb7 Wxh6 24.Wxa6 Wd2 is unattractive for White.

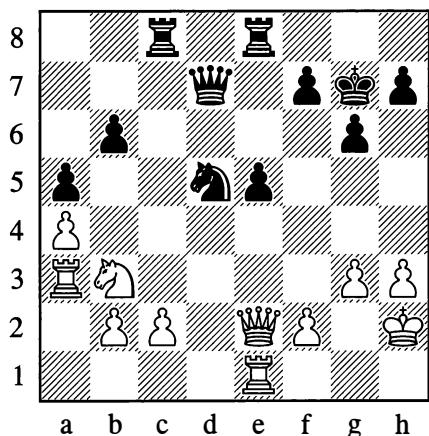
**20.Wc4 Qxe4 21.Qxe4 d5 22.Qxd5 Qxd5**

**23.Qh2 Bbc8 24.We2 Qg7**

More energetic is 24...e4?! 25.c3 e5 26.h4 Bh5 with a strong initiative.

**25.Qxg7 Bxg7**

There are many factors that speak in favour of Black here. The b3-knight is badly placed and has no good squares within reach. The d5-knight dominates the centre and supports a future ...e4-e3. The a3-rook makes you feel ill, and is bound to the defence of the a-pawn. Moreover, the white kingside is weak and difficult to defend.



**26.Qaa1 Qb4 27.c3 Qd3 28.Qed1 Qcd8  
29.Qc1 e4 30.We3?**

30.Qb3 would have offered more resistance.

**30...Wf5 31.Qd2 Qe5 32.Qxd8 Qxd8  
33.Qb3 Qf3† 34.Qg2 Qd3**

White gets nicely packed and wrapped after 35.Wf4 Wxf4 26.gxf4 Qf6, followed by ...Wf5 and ...Qxf4. The same is true after 35.We2 Wd5 or 35.Wxb6 Qg5, which led Aseev to the conclusion that resigning was a good idea.

**0–1**

In the next game we see White closing the centre early.

## GAME 78

Arkadij Naiditsch – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Stockholm 2010

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 Qf6**

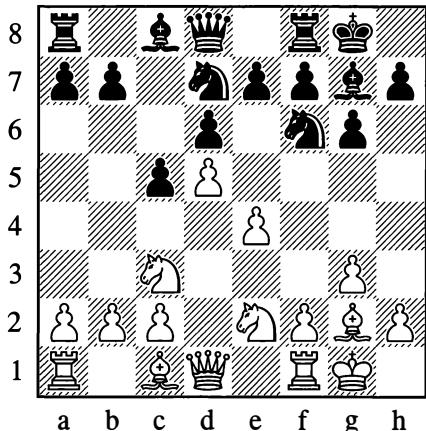
Since I wrote *Tiger's Modern* I have been playing all sorts of different move orders, sometimes favouring the Pirc and sometimes the Modern. It's nice to be able to surprise one's opponent.

**3.Qc3 g6 4.g3 Qg7 5.Qg2 0–0 6.Qge2 Qbd7 7.0–0 c5 8.d5?**

This move looks weird at first sight, as Black will have no problem achieving ...b5. How can White be fine with that? The point is that, since the centre is stable, White can play a2-a4, intending to meet ...b5 with axb5 followed by b2-b4, which will leave Black with a weak pawn on b5. That is a rather superficial sketch of what will happen though, and we will see other factors coming into play further down the line.

**8.Qe3 Qg4 9.Qg5 h6 10.Qc1 Bb8 11.h3 Qgf6  
12.Qe3 b6** leads to a main line where Black has

the “extra” move ...h6. This is something of a mixed blessing since White can gain a tempo with 13.♘d2, but I still believe Black should be fine after 13...♗h7.



**8...♞e8!?**

I thought the knight had done its job on f6 and was not needed there anymore. Now I am a bit less convinced about this line of reasoning. For one thing, the knight could be used to harass a bishop on e3 and possibly go to e5 at some point. At the same time, I prefer to avoid a scenario with both of the black knights competing for the same outpost on e5, especially when there are limited escape squares available.

I could go on making arguments and counterarguments without getting closure. Let’s just say I believe it is just as good for Black to play:

**8...♝b8**

This move is slightly more flexible.

**9.a4 b6 10.♝b1!**

10.h3 a6 11.g4 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.♗g3 ♛e8 14.f4 b4 15.♗ce2 ♛c7 (15...♛b6!?) 16.♗d3 ♛b7 17.c4 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♜a8 19.♗e3 ♛a6 and White was under pressure in Czebe – Chernin, Hungary 2008.

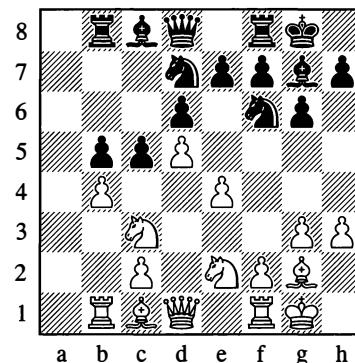
The rook move is more challenging, and is one of the reasons why I decided against

this path in the game. Black should be okay though.

**10...a6 11.h3**

After 11.♗d2!? ♛c7 White has no more good waiting moves, and Black is bound to get in ...b5 with good counterplay.

**11...b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.b4**



**13...♝a6!**

13...cx b4 14.♗a2 is unclear.

**14.♗e3**

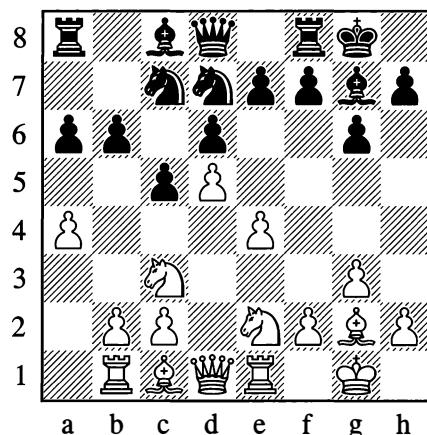
This was Sharevich – Ant. Fuchs, Dresden 2004. Here I like:

**14...♛c7N 15.bxc5 b4! 16.♗a4 ♛b5 17.cxd6 exd6 18.♗b2 ♜fe8**

Black has a strong initiative for the pawn.

**9.a4 b6 10.♜e1 a6 11.♜b1 ♛c7**

The rook can be left on a8 for the moment, which is also part of the reason why I opted for the knight manoeuvre on move 8.



**12.b4!?**

There are plenty of alternatives here, but Black can always keep the balance by playing either ...b5 or ...e6.

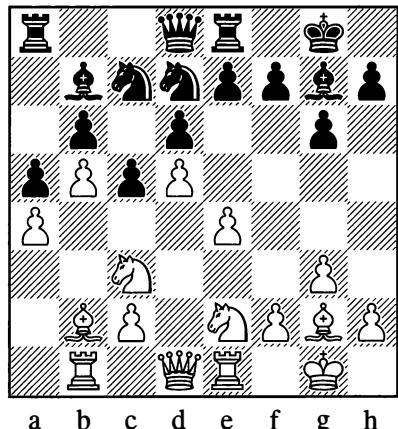
**12...a5!?**

My aim was to close the queenside and then break with ...e6. I felt that the white knights were badly coordinated and ill-equipped to deal with my plan.

The engines like 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , intending ... $\mathbb{W}c7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e5-c4$ , or possibly ...cx b4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . I hate to say it, but this is indeed a more flexible approach than mine.

**13.b5  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ !?**

This is part of the right idea, but the wrong move order. After 14.f4 f5!? the position is unclear, but 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! intending 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ! e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  would have given White some advantage.

**14... $\mathbb{E}e8$** **15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ !?**

Now 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$  is not as effective due to 15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . Nevertheless, after 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  White is still a bit better, so this should have been preferred.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  16. $\mathbb{E}xb2$  e6**

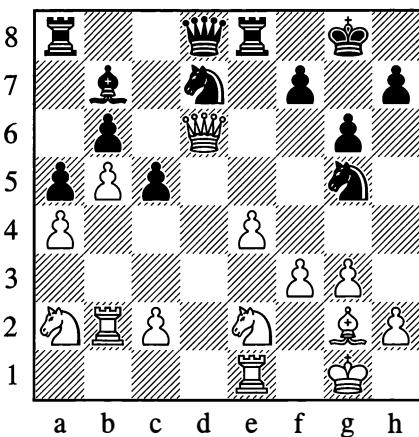
This is a small success for Black. The knights on a2 and e2 are struggling to get coordinated.

**17.dxe6?!**

It was better to play 17.c4 when Black still has to solve the problem of the bishop on c8.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! 19.f3**

Here I realized that I was better and spent too much time trying to find a winning line – how stupid. I ought to have focused on finding good moves.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !?**

Quite obvious and strong is 19... $f5$ ! when 20.f4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{E}xe4$  22. $\mathbb{E}bb1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  leads to a difficult position for White.

**20. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}axd8$  21. $\mathbb{E}b3$   $\mathbb{E}d2$** 

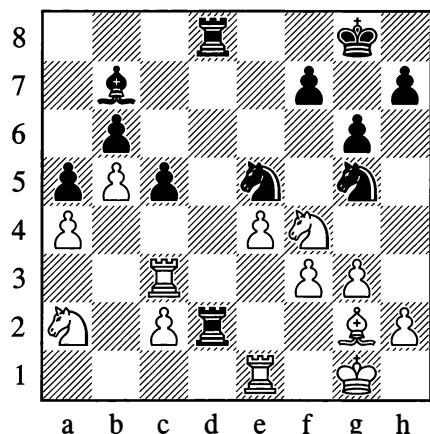
Despite the above inaccuracy, I still have good compensation here.

**22. $\mathbb{E}c3$ ?!**

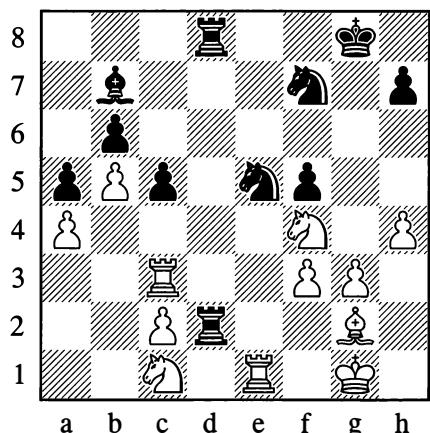
White has problems with the coordination of his minor pieces, and needs to take care. It was better to play 22.f4  $\mathbb{E}xc2$  23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  c4 24. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  cxd3 26.fxg5 dxe2 27. $\mathbb{E}3xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  28. $\mathbb{E}a2$   $\mathbb{E}e5$  with approximate equality.

**22...♝ed8 23.♛f4?**

After the correct 23.♔f1 ♛e6 24.♕ac1 ♜d4 25.♕xd4 ♕2xd4 26.f4 ♜c4 27.♕b3 ♜d2† 28.♕xd2 ♜xd2 Black still has plenty of compensation, but White should be able to hold.

**23...f5?**

After this mistake I do not get another chance. Instead 23...♝8d4! 24.h4 ♜e6 (24...♝xg2†? also leads to some advantage) 25.♕xe6 fxе6 26.♕c1 ♜xa4 27.♕b3 ♜d7 leaves White with serious problems to solve.

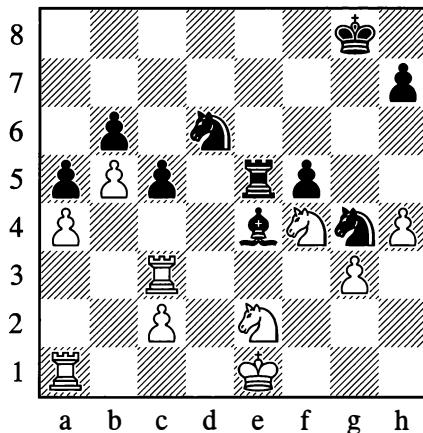
**24.h4! ♜gf7 25.exf5 gx£5 26.♕c1****26...♝8d4?!**

The last chance to fight was 26...♝d1 27.♕f1 ♜xe1† 28.♕xe1 ♜d6 when White has some work to do in order to turn his advantage into a win.

**27.♕cd3**

The rest of the game is a good technical display from my opponent.

**27...♝xg2† 28.♕xg2 ♜xf3† 29.♕f2 ♜e4 30.♜a1 ♜g4† 31.♕e1 ♜d6 32.♕e2 ♜d5 33.♕df4 ♜e5**



**34.♝d1 ♜f7 35.♝d7 ♜f6 36.♜a7 ♜e8 37.♕d2 ♜d6 38.♕c1 ♜a8? 39.♝d3 ♜c4 40.♕e6 ♜xe6 41.♝d8† ♜e8 42.♜axa8 ♜f7 43.♜a7† ♜g8 44.♕f4 ♜e1† 45.♝d1 ♜xd1† 46.♕xd1 ♜f6 47.♕c1 h6 48.♝b7 ♜e4 49.♕d5 ♜xg3 50.♝xb6 ♜e2† 51.♕d1 ♜c3† 52.♕e1**

**1-0**

The main thing when White blocks the centre is to keep an eye out for the b2-b4 plan in response to ...b5. As long as you have a good follow-up in those lines, there is nothing to fear from White's set-up. The next game features a more serious challenge.

**GAME 79**

Allan Stig Rasmussen – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Holdturneringen Graested 2012

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗ge2!?**

This move order is quite tricky, as White has not yet decided whether to continue with 5.♗e3 or 5.g3/5.h3, so Black has to find something that fits well with each scenario.

A similar idea is seen in the line 4.♗e3 a6 5.a4 ♜f6 6.h3, followed by g4. This line is covered in Hirn – Hillarp Persson, in the Modern Dragon Restrained.

**4...♗d7!?**

This is my preferred move order.

After 4...♗d7?! 5.h3 0–0 6.g4 e5 7.♗g2 White has gained a tempo (g2-g4 instead of g2-g3-g4) compared to the normal g3-lines.

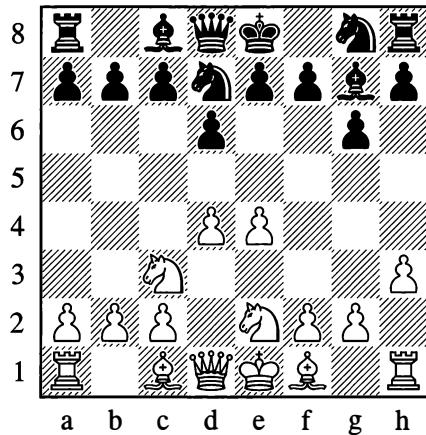
4...a6 is also possible, but after 5.a4 I am not completely happy with either of Black's options:

a) 5...♗f6 leads to a type of position that I am less familiar with. The insertion of the mutual a-pawn moves makes it less dangerous for Black to face the ♗e3/♝d2 set-up, but White can instead play 6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2 ♜c6 8.h3 e5 9.♗e3, reaching a variation outside the recommended repertoire.

b) Black could instead try 5...b6, but 6.g3 ♜b7 7.♗g2 ♜d7 8.0–0 favours White slightly. Compared to the lines I advocate in this chapter, Black has placed the bishop on b7 rather early, and after 8...c5 9.d5 it will be difficult to achieve ...b5.

**5.h3!**

After 5.g3 c5! 6.♗g2 ♜b8! 7.♗e3 b6 we are back in our main lines.



**5...c5?!**

This move is too “business as usual”. White's last move was a clear signal that he intends to win a whole tempo compared to the main lines, and Black needs to find an antidote. It has to happen now, otherwise it may be too late to change the tide.

I believe this is the right moment for 5...a6!, when White has two main roads to chose between:

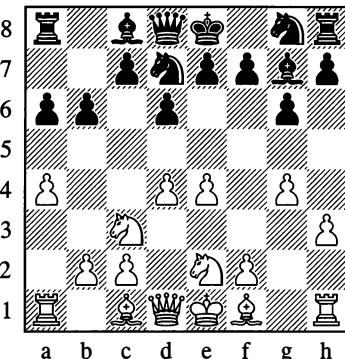
a) 6.a4

Taking ...b5 off the board for the time being. Now White is ready to gain a tempo by playing g2-g4 in one move, and Black should not comply too timidly with this scenario.

6...b6! 7.g4!

This is a critical position for the present line, where there remains plenty of scope for discoveries of your own. (This is the kind of possibility that I myself would jump on.)

7.d5?! ♜gf6 8.g4 e5 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.♗g2 occurred in Cicak – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2006. Now 10...♗b7!N followed by ...♝e7 would have given Black excellent chances. Instead I chose 10...e5?, when 11.g5 ♜g8 12.0–0 led to an advantage for White.



7...h5!?

7...c5 8.♗g2 ♘b8 9.♕e3 is clearly worse for Black than the main lines where White plays g2-g3-g4.

8.g5

White cannot avoid this move for long. For instance, after 8.♗g2 ♘b7 9.♕g3?! hxg4 10.hxg4 ♘xh1† 11.♕xh1 e5! and Black is better.

After the text move I recommend a kind of a mutant Hippo set-up with:

8...e6 9.♗g2 ♔e7 10.♕e3 ♘b7 11.♗d2 0–0  
12.0–0 c5 13.dxc5 dxc5

This is similar to the note to Black's 9th move in line 'b' below. Both positions seem all right for Black, but need testing. One important feature of the position is that Black has induced an early g4-g5, which makes f4-f5 almost impossible to achieve. This is a good reason to play ...h5 before ...e6.

b) White can also ignore the queenside and get on with his own plan:

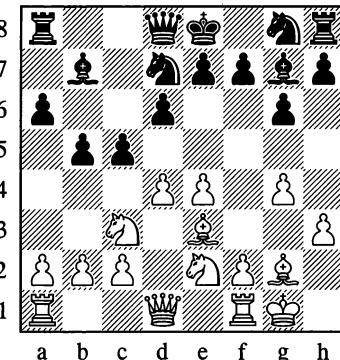
6.g4 b5 7.♗g2 ♘b7 8.♕e3 c5

There are plenty of interesting ideas here that need to be analysed and tested. One is 8...e6 9.0–0 ♔e7 10.♕g3 0–0 11.♗d2 ♘b8 12.b3 f5!? which seems quite promising for Black.

9.0–0

9.d5!N is interesting, in the style of Naiditsch. However, Black should be happy to have some space on the queenside and

should at least be better off compared to the lines where a2-a4 has been inserted.



9...b4!?

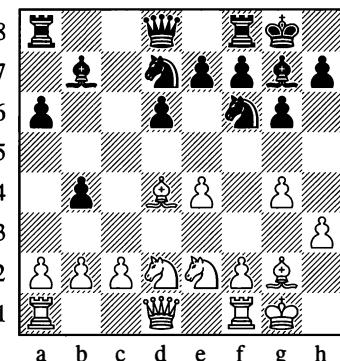
For the umpteenth time, I would not play this move unless I found it to be necessary, but Bacrot is (was?) of a different opinion. My preferences are for something like 9...♘c8, or even 9...h5!N intending 10.g5 e6! 11.♗d2 ♔e7 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♗ad1 ♘c7, which is also quite exciting.

10.♕b1!?

It is clearly more critical to play 10.♕a4 ♘gf6 11.dxc5, although 11...♔xe4 12.cxd6 ♘xd6 13.♗xb7 ♘xb7 seems fine for Black. It seems that Bacrot made a good evaluation on move 9.

10...♘gf6 11.♗d2 cxd4 12.♗xd4 0–0

Now Black is over-the-moon happy with the opening. It is, praise Caissa, a Sicilian structure where Black is clearly in control of d5.



13.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$

13...a5! is also good.

14.  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15. g5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  17. f4 f5!

Now in a clearly worse position, White misjudges the ensuing tactics and soon has to resign.

18.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  fxe4 19.  $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}ce6$  20. f5 gxf5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{E}xf5$  22.  $\mathbb{E}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$

0–1 Thorhallsson – Bacrot, Bermuda 1999.

6.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  b6

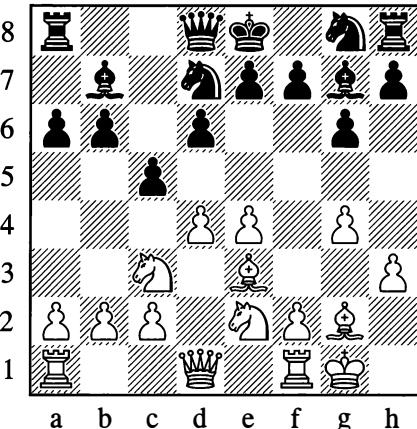
After 6...  $\mathbb{W}a5$  7. g4  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0 9.0–0 I am not sure of how to continue with Black, although this does not mean there isn't a decent way.

7. g4

Unless Black can come up with something to disturb his opponent's set-up, White will be a tempo up on the normal lines.

7... a6 8.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9.0–0

More accurate was 9.  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ , taking ...h5 off the table.



9... h5?! 10. gxh5?!

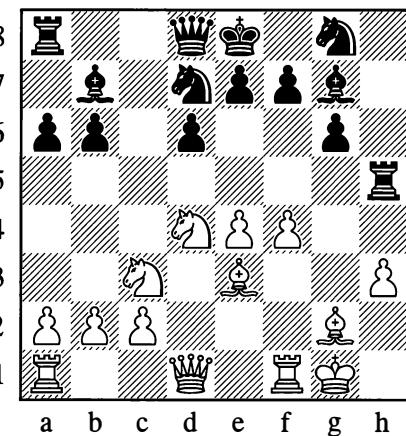
This move truly surprised me, and my instincts told me it must be bad. Still, I have not been able to find a clear route to an advantage for Black.

I was expecting 10. g5 e6 11. dx5 dx5 with a balanced position.

10...  $\mathbb{E}xh5$  11. f4 cxd4

A case can be made for a move like 11...  $\mathbb{W}c8$ , preparing both ...  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (since e4-e5 will not win a piece) and a counterattack against h3. The pawn structure is clearly to Black's advantage, and I would consider it a nightmare to get this position with White.

12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



12...  $\mathbb{E}h7$

From a carbon-based perspective there is nothing wrong with 12...  $\mathbb{Q}gf6?$ , since 13. e5 dx5 14.  $\mathbb{E}xb7$  exd4 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}xh3$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}h4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8\#$  18.  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  reaches a position that might be better for White in silicon land, but looks quite interesting from where I stand.

13.  $\mathbb{W}e2!$   $\mathbb{E}c8?!$

Here both Allan Stig and I overlooked an important tactical feature of the position.

The correct 13...  $\mathbb{W}c8!$  leads to a complex position where all three results are possible.

14.  $\mathbb{E}ad1?!$

White can play 14. e5!  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xg2$ , when

the terrible trap 15...dxe5?? 16.Qe6! forces me to continue with 15...Qf8. This is still far from clear and I am not too worried about the engine's assessment of "small advantage to White".

#### 14...Wc7 15.Wf2

After 15.Qd5 Wc4 16.Wxc4 Bxc4 17.b3 Bc8 18.c4 e6 19.Qb4 Bh6 White is struggling to keep the centre from falling apart.

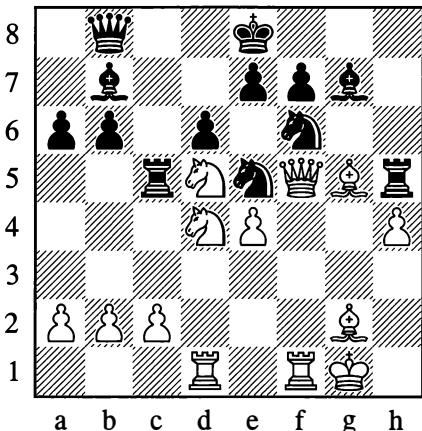
#### 15...Wb8 16.f5 gxf5 17.Wxf5 Qg6 18.Qd5 Bh5?

The only good thing that can be said about my next few moves is that they were played at a slightly quicker tempo than those of my opponent.

18...Bh6 is much better and leads to an unbalanced game where White has to find a way to turn the momentary pressure into something more tangible, in order not to fall into a worse endgame.

#### 19.Qg5! Qe5 20.h4! Bc5?

This move ought to have lost on the spot. Better was 20...Qxd5 21.exd5 Wc7 although White is clearly better here too.



#### 21.Qxe7!

On the plus side, by now my opponent was down to the last thirty seconds per move.

#### 21...Qh7 22.Qe6! Bf6 23.Qxc5

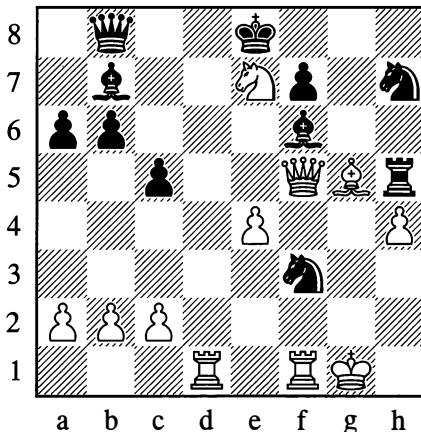
23.Qg8! would have put an end to my misery.

#### 23...dxc5 24.Qf3?

This does not throw away the advantage, but it makes White's task much more difficult.

After 24.Qd5 Qxd5 25.exd5 Qxg5 26.hxg5 Qxg5 Black's counterplay is not half as dangerous as it might seem, for a number of reasons, one of which is the line 27.d6! Qh3† 28.Qxh3 Bxf5 29.Bxf5 when Black can resign.

#### 24...Qxf3†



#### 25...Wxf3??

White's last chance for salvation was 25.Wxf3 Qxg5 26.Wd7† Bf8 27.Bxf6 Wg3† 28.Qf1 Qxe4 29.Wc8† Qg7 30.Bf2. It is a pretty thin line to walk in time pressure, but it is the only one and it ends with an advantage for White. After the move played, it is all over.

#### 25...Qxg5 26.Wg4

Or 26.Wxh5 Wg3† 27.Qh1 Qxe4† and White is mated.

#### 26...Qxe7 27.Bf5 Bxh4

White resigned.

0-1

White's move order felt like a serious threat when I first encountered it, but now I feel there are plenty of ideas to work with. 4...a6 is probably the most reliable, but Black can also play the knight to d7 first.

In the final game of the chapter we will explore an alternative set-up for Black.

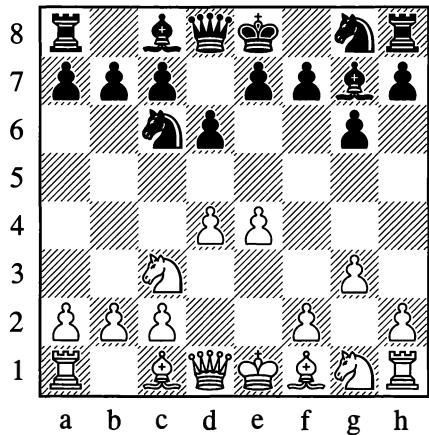
## GAME 80

Ivan Marinkovic – Goran Vujadinovic

Niksic 1997

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ?**

This is an interesting alternative if you are prepared to take some risks. I played it myself in the nineties and have been considering it again lately. However, you should be aware that it does not work against the 4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  move order.



**5. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$**

After 5.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  Black continues with ...c6 and has nothing to complain about.

White can also play:

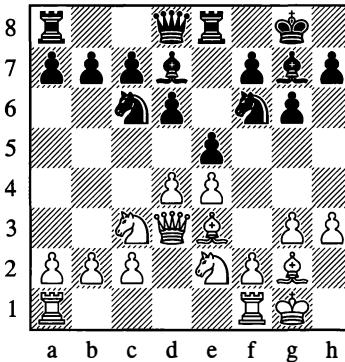
5. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6. $\mathbb{W}d3!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0 8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Compared to standard lines, Black has lost

a tempo with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ -d7, but White's  $\mathbb{W}d3$  is not such a great achievement. Nevertheless, it is a modest gain for the first player.

**9.0–0 e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$**

I find it hard to believe in Kurnosov's 10...b5 because of 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a5 13.a4 bxa4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  when the black queenside has been weakened.

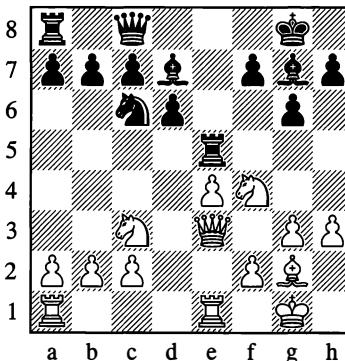


**11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$**

After this move Black has nothing to complain about.

11.d5!N is more ambitious.

11...exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{E}e5!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}de2?!$   $\mathbb{E}h5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{E}e5$

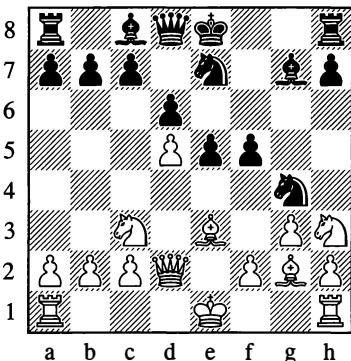


Black was doing great in Malakhov – Korotylev, Moscow (blitz) 2006.

**5...e5 6.dxe5**

This is much more challenging than: 6.d5

$\mathbb{Q}ce7$  7.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  f5 8.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9. exf5 gxf5!  
(Improving over 9...  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}ge4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gxe3$  14. fxe3 h5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ , which was clearly better for White in Stefansson – Hillarp Persson, Stockholm 1992.) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$



11. 0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$  0–0 13. f4 e4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5 Black had a fantastic position in Gamback – Hillarp Persson, Sollentuna 1995, although 14...c6!N would have been even better.

#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Not 6...dxe5? 7.  $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  when White has a clear advantage.

#### 7. h3!?

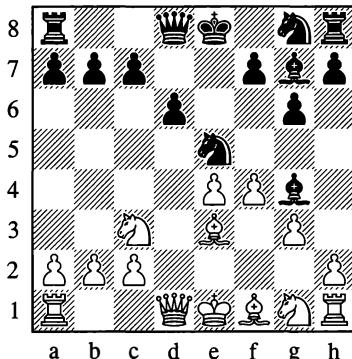
The most critical continuation is:

#### 7. f4! $\mathbb{Q}g4$

This is the obvious attempt to justify Black's play, but it may not be best.

7...  $\mathbb{Q}d7\#?$  sees the knight retreat to a passive square, and Black will have trouble justifying the loss of two tempos.

7...  $\mathbb{Q}c6\#?$  is more interesting though. On the one hand, I am sceptical about moving the knight so many times in the opening. On the upside, White might turn out to be overextended on the kingside, and the e4-pawn could become a target. I might be tempted to try this in the future.



#### 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2\#?$

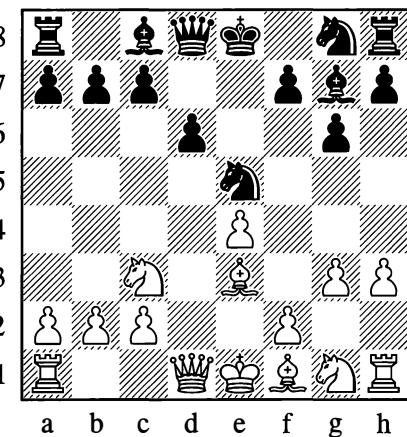
8.  $\mathbb{W}d5N$  is not the best, since 8...  $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$  9.  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}5c6$  11.  $\mathbb{W}a3$  0–0 gives Black a terrific initiative.  
8.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is not as bad as I originally thought.  
8...  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  9.  $\mathbb{W}xe2$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}gxe2\#?$  is also possible.)  
9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.  $\mathbb{W}f2\#?$  (10.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0–0 12. 0–0–0 is better, with a balanced middlegame.) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$  11. bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  White's position was a wreck in Shaheen – Hillarp Persson, Elista Olympiad 1998.

#### 8... $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Black has to try this, as 8...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  is comfortably better for White.

#### 9. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$

Krivec – Sermek, Nova Gorica 2007. White is ready for long castling, and stands slightly better. Rather than follow this path, I think Black should try 7...  $\mathbb{Q}c6\#?$  as mentioned above.

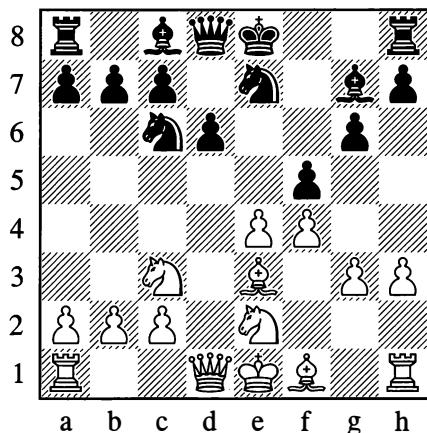


7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 8.f4  $\mathbb{Q}ed7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! is good for White.

7... $f5$ ?! is a more interesting alternative. After 8.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  Black has the opportunity to play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  rather than the passive ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ . I do not see how White will fight for an advantage unless he goes for a mutually dangerous set-up with long castling.

**8.f4  $\mathbb{Q}5c6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  f5**



**10.exf5**

This is better than 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ?! fxe4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , when 11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13.0–0  $\mathbb{W}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ ! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  d5 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$  d4 led to a clear advantage for Black in Nezar – Tkachiev, Cannes 1999.

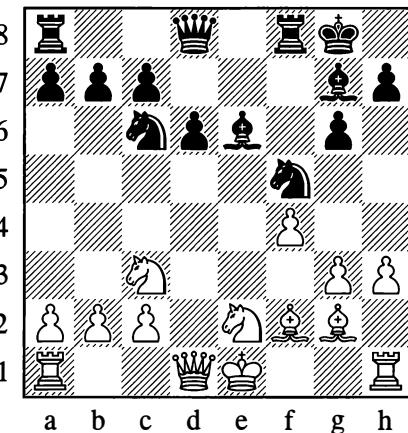
**10... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$**

Compared to taking back with the bishop, this move has the advantage of being more disruptive to White. Moreover, the bishop is better off on e6 if White plays 0–0–0.

Nevertheless, 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  is playable, and 11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12.g4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$  leads to mutual chances.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0**

After 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0–0–0?! 14.0–0–0 Black cannot create counterplay by advancing the queenside pawns, and is thus deprived of his main plan of action.



**13.g4  $\mathbb{Q}fe7$  14. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$**

Black can also try 14... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ?!N 15.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}f7$  in order to make it harder for White to play  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ -d4.

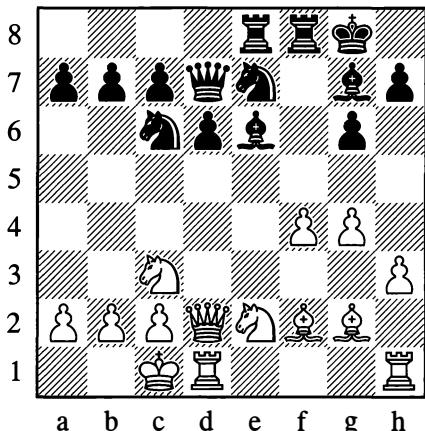
**15.0–0–0!**

Going to the queenside is the best choice, since after 15.0–0 White would have to worry about ...h5 ideas at every turn.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$**

Black chooses to strengthen his position in the centre. This seems like a good idea, since 15...b5?! 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ! (16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ !?) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  is unclear) 16... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  does not achieve anything.

Nevertheless, I would be tempted to try 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ?!N, intending to meet 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with 16... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ . I would evaluate Black's position as quite playable over the board, although I would not play this way in a correspondence game.

**16...♞f7**

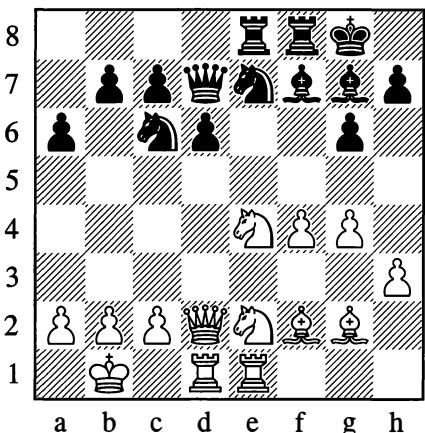
16.♘d4 is more accurate, before the bishop gets the chance to retreat to g8 in one go.

**16...♝f7**

Black appears to be unable to find a plan, and does not know how to improve his position. It was better to play 16...♝h8 intending 17.♘d4 ♜g8.

**17.♝b1 a6 18.♞e4**

White intends to put the knight on g5, but it was better to play 18.♘d4 followed by doubling the rooks on the e-file.

**18...♝h8 19.♞g5?!**

The knight has no value here apart from looking pretty.

**19...♜g8 20.♛c3? b5 21.a3? ♜b8**

Here the players agreed to a draw, which is a surprising decision from Black. After 22.♕ce4 (what else?) intending ♕c5, Black plays 22...♝c8, after which he is ready to advance the a- and b-pawns. The machine does not see a big problem, but I believe White is in trouble.

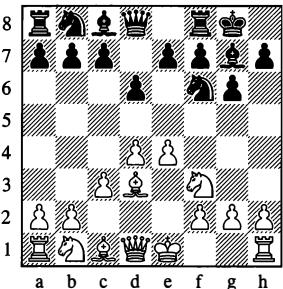
$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

The 4.g3 ♜c6?! line is a reasonable secondary option for Black, although it may not be to everyone's taste. Please also remember that it is not a complete solution against the g2-g3 systems, as it does not work against the 4.♗ge2 move order.

## Conclusion

My recommended system with an early ...♞d7 and ...c5 is aimed at reaching a Sicilian structure, although we have seen that Black will often wait to develop his queenside before exchanging on d4. Black's set-up is only superficially covered in most books on the Modern. One might assume that this is because it has a bad reputation or is somehow inferior to the Pirc treatment (involving ...e5), but I have found no evidence to support this view. On the contrary, Black gets an excellent game in all of the major lines we have looked at.

# Chapter 10

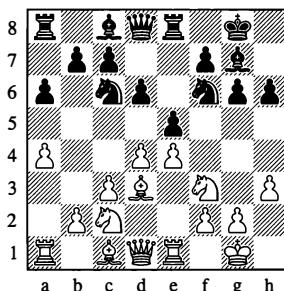


## Lazy Variation with c2-c3

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7**

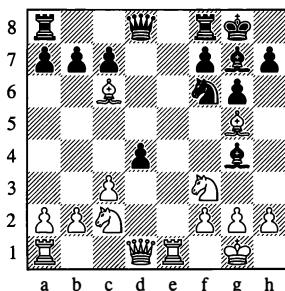
<b>3.c3 d6 4.♗g5 ♜f6 5.♘d2 0-0 6.♘gf3 Game 85</b>	<b>440</b>
<b>3.♘f3 d6</b>	
<b>4.c3 ♜f6 5.♘bd2 Game 86</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>4.♗d3 ♜f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.c3 ♜c6</b>	
<b>7.h3 Game 81</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>7.♗e1 Game 82</b>	<b>428</b>
<b>7.d5 ♜b8</b>	
<b>8.c4 Game 83</b>	<b>431</b>
<b>8.h3! Game 84</b>	<b>434</b>

Notes to Game 81 – after 11.a4



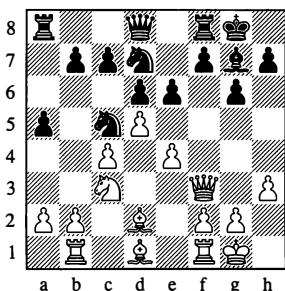
11...d5!

Game 82 – after 12.♗xc6



12...dxc3!

Game 83 – after 15.♗d1



15...f5!

The c2-c3 lines are among the least ambitious of White's choices against the Modern, but that does not mean they are all bad. White's early pampering of the d4-pawn enables him to develop his pieces behind the centre, without worrying too much about what Black is doing.

White usually plays  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and 0–0 in the early stages, while Black has a couple of obvious developing moves in ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ...0–0. Once those moves have been played Black has several ways to continue, but I will be recommending a set-up involving ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , which I have used many, many times, usually with good results. White has the following plans available:

#### **White meets ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with an early h2-h3 to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (Game 81)**

Black proceeds with ...e5 followed by the flexible ...h6. Sometimes he will follow up with the aggressive plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , but he should only do so under certain conditions, as explained below.

#### **White tries to save time by omitting h2-h3 (Game 82)**

Once again Black should start with ...e5. If the white knight goes to a3, then ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  should be played. Black can then decide whether to follow up with the calm ...h6 or the more active 9...d5!.

#### **White reacts to ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ with d4-d5**

(Games 83 and 84)

Chasing the knight before Black has time for ...e5 is one of the critical tries. Black retreats the knight to b8 and aims to play on the dark squares. In Game 83 White gains space with 8.c4, when 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! gives Black good prospects. In Game 84 White prevents this with 8.h3, forcing Black to switch plans. Fortunately, he can choose from various plans involving ...c6 and/or ...e6.

#### **White plays $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (Game 85)**

Here I like the early ... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! followed by ...e5. Black delays the development of the b8-knight, maintaining maximum flexibility.

#### **White plays an early $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (Game 86)**

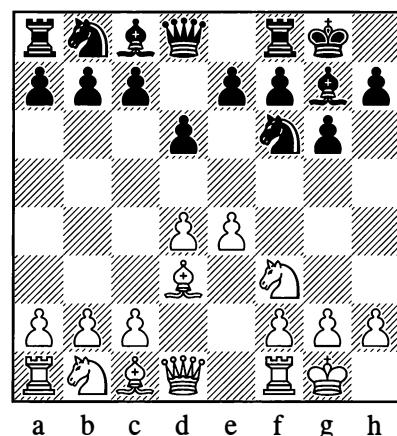
This is one of the most boring ways to meet the Modern, but there is still plenty of life in the position.

## GAME 81

**Einar Gausel – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Karlstad 2005

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5.0–0  
0–0



**6.c3**

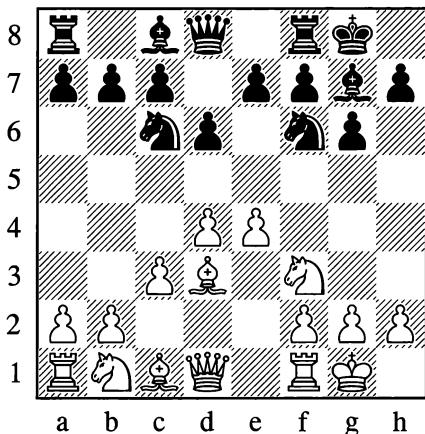
White can try 6.c4, but Black is fine after 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  intending ...e5.

Another tricky line is 6.h3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.c4 (after 7.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  Black has a good game) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?, 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is also possible; the h2-h3 move does not fit with the rest of White's set-up) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xd3$  a6 10.a4 a5 when the position is quite unclear.

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Preparing ...e5 is the standard plan, although 6...c5 has also yielded good results for Black.

6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$  is another line that you may wish to study as a secondary option. After 7.h3 e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  b6 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  we get a position that is reminiscent of a decent Ruy Lopez for Black, but things are not that easy; for instance, if Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  then d4-d5 may prove annoying.



### 7.h3

7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  is seen in the next game, and 7.d5 is dealt with later in this chapter.

### 7...e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ h6

I used to play this with the intention of playing a primitive but effective scheme, involving ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , as advocated in *Tiger's Modern*. However, with time I have come to realize that this plan should only be used in certain situations, as shown in some of the following notes, and should not be seen as a universal solution to be used regardless of what White plays.

For the time being, the ...h6 move fits with Black's general strategy, which is to play decent moves and wait and see what White does. He may still proceed with the ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ /... $\mathbb{W}f6$  plan if the conditions are right.

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

This knight is dreaming of the d5-square, and the a3-c4(c2)-e3-d5 route is more flexible than d2-f1-e3-d5. Firstly, the knight is not in the way of the other pieces on a3 and, secondly, from c4 or c2 (via b4) the knight might also cause some other problems for Black.

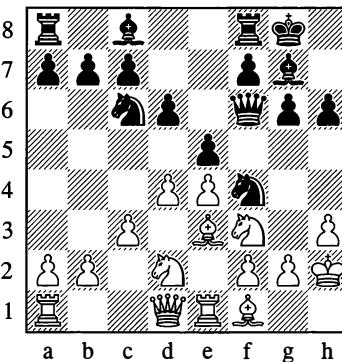
White can also chose to develop the c1-bishop, but this is not so dangerous:

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

Since the bishop obstructs the b1-knight from reaching d5, Black's plan involving ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  is quite to the point.

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

After 12.b4 g5 13.dxe5 dxe5 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$  h5 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6?$  White gained the advantage with 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  in Rausis – Hillarp Persson, Gausdal 1996. Instead 16...g4! looks more critical, since White does not have access to the f1-square, for manoeuvring his knight to g3 and f5.



### 12...g5

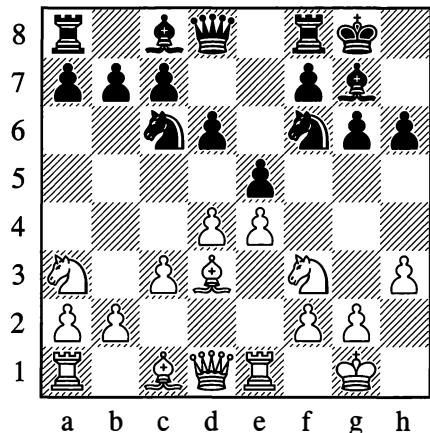
Normally Black should be wary about playing this move when White is in a position to immediately expel the knight from f4. However, in this particular position it works okay.

### 13.g3

Black is fine after 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ . 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  Now in Villavicencio Martinez – Bologan, Las Palmas 1993, Black should have played:

16... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

With good counterplay, since 17.gxf4 gxf4 immediately regains the piece.



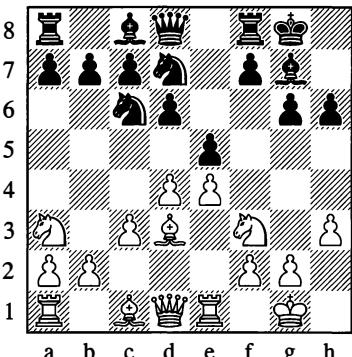
9... $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$

This is the most ambitious move, but not the strongest.

In some earlier games I preferred:

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$

The idea behind this move is that White has developed the knight to the rim, so Black can start flirting with ...f5.

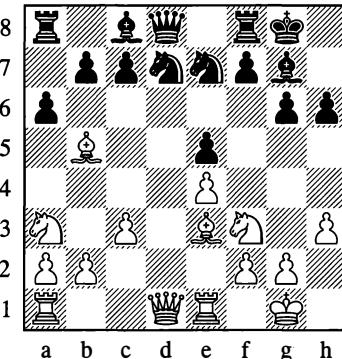


10. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$

In another game my opponent was more restrained: 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f5 11.dxe5 (11.exf5 gxf5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Qe3 e4 14.Qc4† Qh8 is nice for Black, who will soon land a knight on d3.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}dxe5!$  (After 11...dxe5?! 12.b4

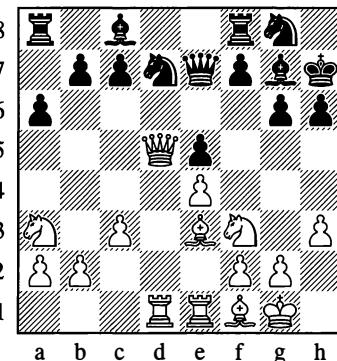
White gets a clear advantage.) 12.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  13.Wxd3  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  14.Wd5† Qh7 15.Qcd4 Qxd4 16.Qxd4 c6 17.Wb3 Wd7 18.Qxf5 Wxf5 19.Qe3 Now in S. Schneider – Hillarp Persson, Copenhagen 1999, I should have played 19...a6N 20.Qad1 We8, with a level position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Qe3 a6



Godena, a specialist with White in this line, has encountered this position three times and only achieved a single draw.

13.Qf1 Qh7?! 14.Wd2 Qg8 15.Qad1 We7 16.Wd5?!

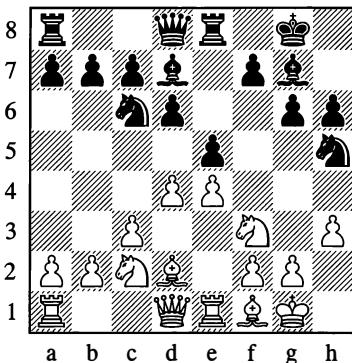


If Black is allowed to continue with ...Qgf6, ...b6 and ...Qb7, White will have trouble with his e-pawn.

16...Qgf6 17.Wc4 c5

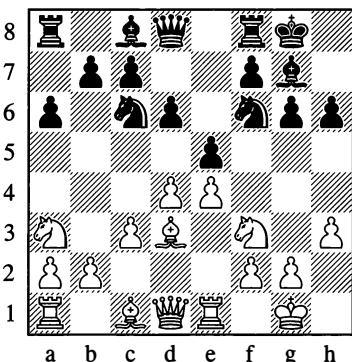
Black was doing all right in Godena – Hillarp Persson, Bolzano 1998.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is another logical move, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  after White plays  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2$ . The main line goes: 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{E}e8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (11.b3?! d5! 12.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  and Black has the initiative.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  Now in Godena – Gashimov, Reggio Emilia 2007, Black's soundest continuation would have been:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ N (But not 12... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ N 13. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$ , when it is not obvious how Black should continue.) The text move leaves White with an unappealing choice as to whether to repeat moves or continue 13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.c4  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  15. $\mathbb{W}c1$  h5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{E}f8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  f5 when Black is doing well.

A third and final move that I like is:  
9...a6!?

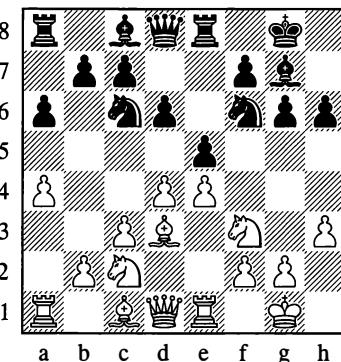


Waiting to see what White will do before deciding whether to play ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ .  
10. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{E}e8!?$

Normally this move would invite d4-d5 and c2-c4, but this plan becomes less dangerous when the white knight has gone to c2.

#### 11.a4

11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  is a better move if you intend to play ... $\mathbb{Q}h5-f4$ ) 12.c4  $\mathbb{E}f8$  13. $\mathbb{E}b1!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  14.b4 f5 was comfortable for Black in Eriksson – Hillarp Persson, Borup 2010.



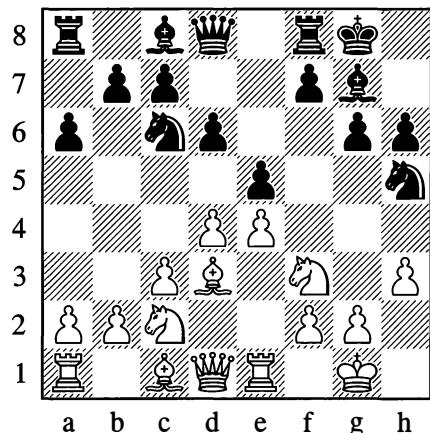
11...d5! 12.exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14.dxe5

$\mathbb{E}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}xe1\ddagger$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  c5  
With equality in Marcotulli – Joppich, email 2004.

#### 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a6!?

This move has a couple of uses. Apart from ruling out  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , it also asks White for a little more information before deciding what plan to commit to. I would ideally like to play ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , but it is advisable to wait and see what White will do first.

Against Bologan in the European Individual Championship in 2007, I played 10... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 12.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13.b5 c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  d5 15.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  and obtained a nice position. However, White could have obtained a slight advantage with either 11.a4 or 14.bxc6. Nowadays I try to avoid the kingside structure with ...exf4 unless I am able to push the h- and g-pawns, or if the white centre is unstable.



### 11.a4 Wf6?!

I used to play this without any regard for what my opponent did, but nowadays I believe it is inexact as long as White can send a knight to d5 in the near future, as is the case here.

11...Ee8! is better, intending 12.Ef1 Ee4 or 12.d5 Eb8. In either case we reach a complex position with only a slight advantage for White.

### 12.a5?!

Wasting valuable time. More critical is:

12.Qe3! Qf4

12...Qe7?! 13.Qg4 does not help.

12...exd4 13.Qd5 Wd8 14.cxd4 Qxd4

15.Qxd4 Qxd4 16.Qxh6 Qg7 17.Qxg7

Qxg7 18.Wb3 c6 19.Qb6 is at least a little better for White.

13.Qd5!

13.d5?! Qb8! 14.Qg4 Wd8 15.Qf1 intends g2-g3, but 15...f5! 16.exf5 gxf5 17.Qe3 Qd7 leads to unclear play.

13...Qxd5 14.exd5 Qe7 15.Wb3 c6! 16.dxc6

There is even 16.Qxe5?! Qxd5 17.Qg4 Wh4 with a small plus for White.

16...Qxc6 17.d5 Qe7 18.Qd2 Qf5 19.Qc4

White has some advantage.

12...Qf4 13.Qf1

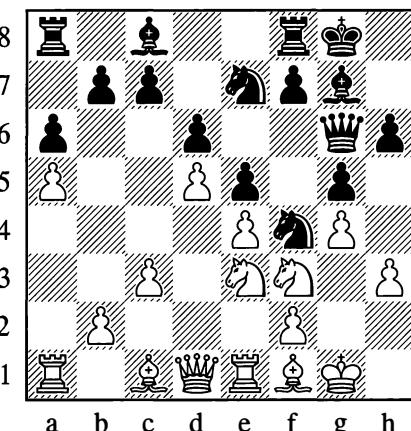
After 13.Qxf4 Wxf4 14.Qe3 Wf6 15.Qd5 Wd8 the position is equal.

### 13...g5

This is the kind of position Black has been striving for all along. Next I would like to continue with ...Wg6, ...h5 and ...g4.

### 14.d5 Qe7 15.Qe3 Wg6 16.g4?!

It is clearly better to play 16.Ea4! intending 16...h5?!, 17.Ec4! with an advantage. Instead Black should try 16...Eb8 17.Ec4 c6, with unclear play.



16...Wg6! 17.Qf5 Qxf5 18.Exf5 Qxe4

19.Qc4

Not so good is 19.Qxf4?!, hoping to take control of e4. After 19...gxsf4 20.c4 Eh7! 21.Qd2 f5 22.c5 e4 Black has plenty of counterplay.

### 19...c6?

This is correct from a strategic point of view, but it falls down in the tactical department.

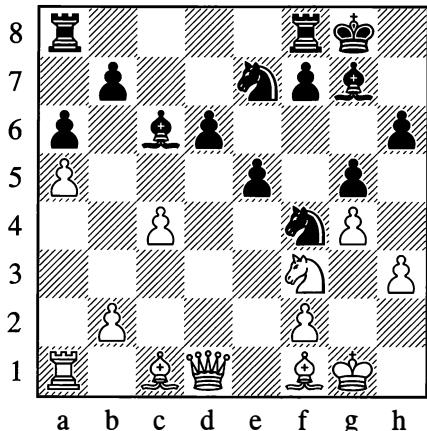
It is better to play 19...Eh7 20.Wb3 Eb8 followed by ...f5.

### 20.dxc6?

Missing the chance for 20.Qxf4! gxf4 21.Qd2 Eh7 22.Wb3 Eb8 23.Qd3 f5 24.gxf5 Qxf5 25.Qe4 when Black faces an uphill struggle, as the bishop on g7 has become too passive.

### 20...Qxc6

Now I prefer Black's position.



### 21. Wxd6?

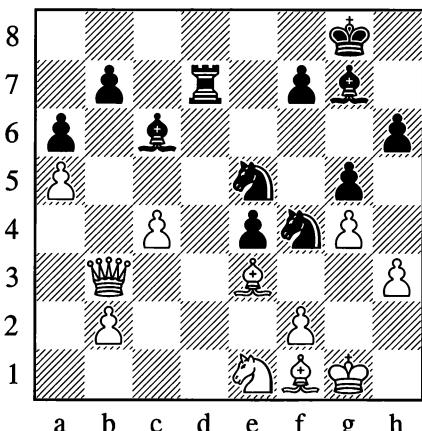
In my notes it says 21.h4 f5! 22. Wxf4 gxf4 23.g5 Ead8 with compensation. Nice to be right for once.

### 21... Qeg6 22. Qe1 Ead8 23. Wa3 e4 24. Qe3 Qe5 25. Wb3

After 25.b3 Ed7 26.Eb1 Ef8 27.Wc1 Ef3 28.Qxd3 exd3 29.Wd2 f5 Black has a dangerous initiative.

### 25... Ed7 26. Ed1?! Ef8 27. Exd7 Exd7

Now I threaten ...Qfd3, removing White's knight from the defence of f3.



28. Qg2 Qxg2 29. Qxg2 Qd3 30. Qc2 Qf4†!  
31. Qh2

It is already too late to salvage the white position.

After 31.Qg3? Qe2† 32.Qg2 Ed1 Black wins in a similar manner to the game.

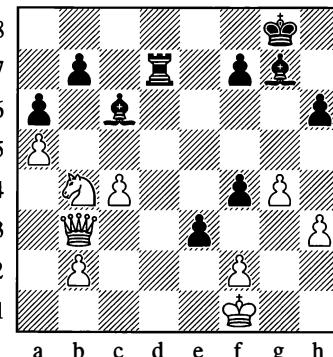
### 31. Wxf4 gxf4 32. Qb4

This is the most resilient try, but it comes unstuck.

### 32... e3† 33. Qf1

33. Qxc6 e2! 34. Wb4 bxc6 35. Qf3 Eb7!! wins for Black.

33. Qd5 e2 34. Wb4 Qxd5† 35. cxd5 Eb5 36. Qf3 Eb5 comes to the same end.



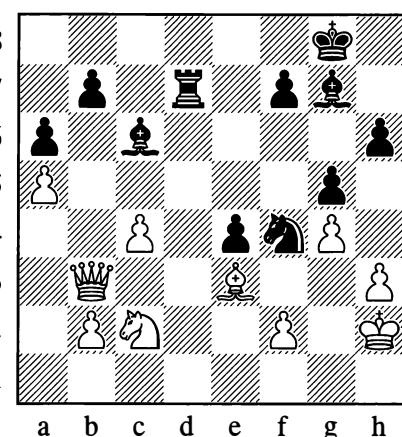
### 33... Ed2! 34. Qxc6 Exf2† 35. Qg1

Or 35. Qe1 bxc6 36. Wb8† Qf8 37. We8 f3 and White has no defence against ...Eh2.

### 35... bxc6 36. Wb8† Qf8 37. We8!

37. Wc5 Ed2 38. Wxf4 Ed1† 39. Qg2 e2 wins.  
37... Ed2 38. g5 Ed6!

There is no defence against ...Ee6 and ...e2.



31... $\mathbb{E}d3$  32. $\mathbb{W}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  33. $\mathbb{W}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$  34. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d1$  35.h4  $\mathbb{E}g1\uparrow$  36. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  h5 37.f3  $\mathbb{E}h1\uparrow$

38. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  exf3 $\uparrow$

0-1

The key branching point comes on move 9, where Black has a number of alternatives and it is a question of taste which you prefer. If pushed for an answer, I would probably prefer the calm 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  today.

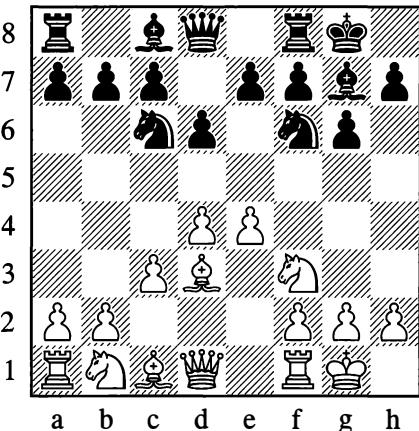
In the next game we will see White trying to save a tempo by delaying h2-h3.

## GAME 82

Robert Rabiega – Rainer Polzin

Austria 2004

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   
0-0 6.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$



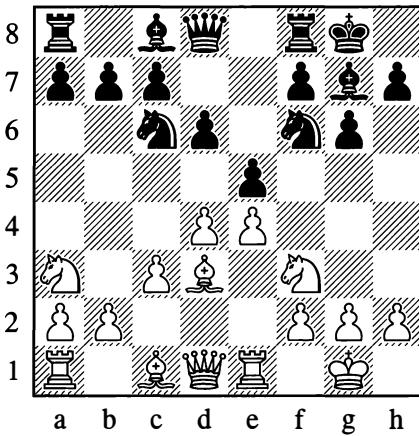
7. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White can hardly do without this move. For instance, after 7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  d5! 9.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  10.cxd4 e4 Black has equalized.

7...e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  discourages ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , but blocks the development of White's other queenside pieces. 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7\text{?}$  9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  This looks ugly, but

unless Black can get active, White will slowly improve the minor pieces and get a good position. 9...a5? 10.a4 (10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11.h3 h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a4 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  seems fine for Black.) 10...exd4 11.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  Now in Ionov – McNab, Cappelle la Grande 1996, Black could have obtained a decent position with either 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6, or 12...b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ .



8... $\mathbb{Q}g4\text{!}$

8...exd4 9.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c5 11.h3 was slightly better for White in Espig – Gofshtein, Nuremberg 2007.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  does not equalize. 9.d5 is one idea, but it is also possible to continue with 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , when Black has nothing better than 9...d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5\text{!}$  dxе4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe1$  bxс6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , allowing White to play for a win without taking any risks.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

This line is a serious challenge to Black's set-up.

9...d5!

9... $\mathbb{Q}h5\text{?!$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2\text{!}$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$  g5 has been played in a lot of games, but it does not equalize. A good example is 13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  h6 14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

17.♕g4 with a clear advantage for White, Rabiega – Schulz, Travemuende 2009.

Another possible continuation is:

9...h6? 10.h3 ♕d7

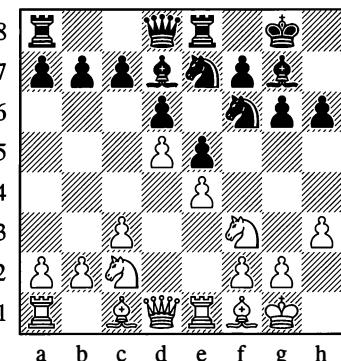
White is a tempo up on Game 81, but it may not matter a great deal. A relevant game continued:

11.♕f1

11.♕d2 ♜e8 12.♕c1 is the critical test, when 12...♕h5 is logical. Now 13.♕f1 ♜f6 seems fine for Black, and 13.b4 a6 14.a4 ♜f4 is rather unclear.

11...♜e8 12.d5 ♜e7

The extra move ♜c2 actually helps Black here, since the knight is further away from c4.



13.c4 ♜h7 14.♕e3 f5 15.c5 ♜f6 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♕c4 f4 19.♕f1 ♜c8 20.♕b3 ♜h8 21.♕h4 ♜f5 22.♕xf5 ♜xf5 23.♕h2 ♜g8 24.♕d2 ♜f8 25.♕f3 ♜d7

White had had enough and resigned in Rabiega – Almasi, Muelheim 2011. This game vividly illustrates how things may go wrong for White after d4-d5.

**10.♕g5**

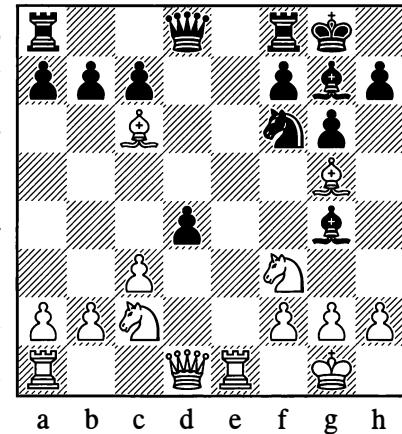
Not 10.exd5 ♜xd5! when Black is taking over the initiative.

**10...dxe4 11.♕xe4 exd4**

It is also possible to play 11...h6 12.♕xc6 (12.♕xf6 ♜xf6 13.d5 ♜e7 14.♕e3 ♜xf3

15.♕xf3 ♜c8 16.♕c4 ♜e7 is level) 12...h5 (13.♕xb7 ♜b8 14.♕c6 ♜xf3 15.♕xf3 ♜g4 16.♕xg4 ♜xg4 17.♕xg4 ♜xb2 seems okay for Black) 13...bxcc6 14.♕xd8 ♜fxd8 15.exf6 ♜xf6 when the bishop pair makes up for the doubled c-pawns.

**12.♕xc6**



**12...dxc3!**

A key improvement over 12...bxcc6 13.♕cd4, which had brought White a small advantage in several games. One such example continued 13...♗d6 14.h3 ♜d7 15.♕e5 c5 16.♕xd7 ♜xd7 17.♕b3 ♜f5 18.♕xf6 ♜xf6 19.♕g4 ♜xg4 20.hxg4 ♜fb8 21.♕ab1 ♜b5 22.♕e4 a5 23.♕a4 and White maintained a nagging endgame edge in Mainka – Espig, Senden 1998.

**13.♕xd8?**

After this move only Black can be better. The alternatives are more critical:

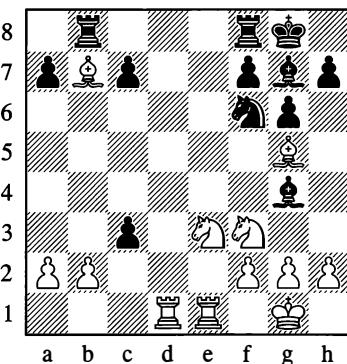
**13.♕xb7 ♜b8 14.♕e3 ♜xd1**

Now there is quite a big difference between taking back with one rook versus the other.

**15.♕axd1!**

15.♕exd1?! allows 15...c2! 16.♕d4 (16.♕d2 ♜xb7 17.♕xf6? ♜xf6 18.♕xg4 ♜xb2 wins for Black) 16...h5! 17.♕xg4 hxg4 18.♕c6 gxf3

19.  $\mathbb{E}c4$   $\mathbb{E}xb2$  20.  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $fxg2$  21.  $\mathbb{E}1xc2$   $\mathbb{E}fb8$   
with a balanced endgame. Black should play ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  next, preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .



15...  $\mathbb{E}xb7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

White gives up the exchange for an initiative, but it is only good enough for a draw.

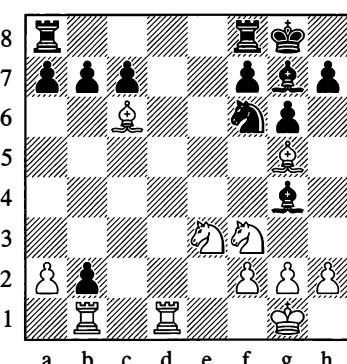
17...  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  23.  $b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  24.  $h4$   $c5$

White has nothing better than taking the perpetual check.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

This is the most ambitious move.

13...  $cxb2$  14.  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{W}xd1$  15.  $\mathbb{E}xd1$



15...  $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

This is one of those moves that it makes sense to memorize, rather than trying to find it over the board. Now White has a choice.

16.  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$

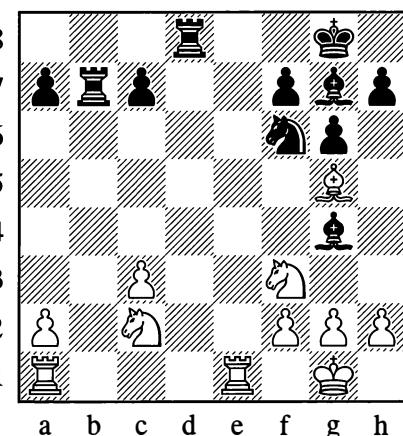
16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (or 17.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and the knights are dislocated) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  18.  $\mathbb{E}xd7$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  19.  $\mathbb{E}xd8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{E}a6$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (22.  $\mathbb{Q}d5?$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is promising for Black) 22...  $\mathbb{E}xa2$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $c5$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $b5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $c4$  with an advantage to Black.

16...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$   $fxe6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb1$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xb1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

A complex endgame lies ahead, but I prefer the Black side. The immediate plan should be ... $b5$  and ... $c5-c4$ , before deciding how to continue.

13...  $\mathbb{E}fd8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}ab8$  15.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{E}xb7$

Bishop pair, open game and weak pawns. Yes, please.



16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

17...  $\mathbb{E}e8$  is also good. Now White should avoid 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$ ?!  $\mathbb{E}xe6$  19.  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{E}b2\uparrow$ ? when Black's edge just got edgier.

18.  $\mathbb{Q}ec6$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}a6$  21.  $c4$   $\mathbb{E}c8$

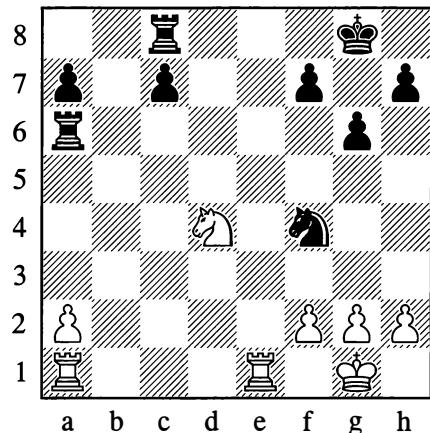
A good alternative is 21...  $\mathbb{E}a8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}ab3$   $\mathbb{E}a4$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{E}axc4$  when Black is clearly better in the endgame.

**22.cxd5?!**

The best chance is 22.♕db3 ♜a8 23.♖ad1, when it is not obvious how Black can make good use of the bishop pair.

**22...♝xd5 23.♛ac6 ♜xd4 24.♝xd4 ♛xf4**

Black is a clear pawn up and the rest is technique.



**25.g3 c5 26.♝b5 ♜d3 27.♜e3 c4 28.a4 ♜b8  
29.♞c3 ♜b3 30.♝e4 ♜e6 31.a5 f5 32.♞d2  
♜xe3 33.♝xb3 ♜e1† 34.♜xe1 ♜xe1 35.♞c1  
♞d3 36.♞a2 ♜f7 37.♞f1 ♜e6 38.♞e2 ♜d5  
39.f4 ♜d4 40.♞d2 ♜f2**

**0-1**

Black has an important choice to make on move 9. The sharp lines with 9...d5! work well, although Black must be aware of some details, such as the 15...♝c8! move mentioned in the notes. The calmer 9...h6!? also seems quite playable, and it is not a bad idea to have both strings on your guitar.

In the next two games we see a critical plan involving d4-d5.

**GAME 83**

Viktor Korchnoi – Aleksander Sznajpik

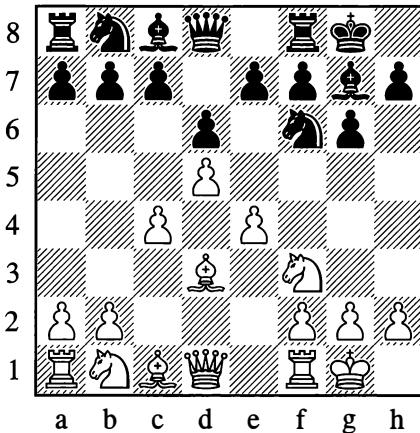
Lucerne 1982

**1.♞f3 d6 2.e4 g6 3.d4 ♜g7 4.c3 ♜f6 5.♗d3  
0-0 6.0-0 ♜c6 7.d5!?**

With this move White aims for a King's Indian structure where the d-pawn is exchanged for either the e-pawn or the c-pawn. Black must react with precision to avoid being slightly worse.

**7...♝b8 8.c4**

After this move Black gets active play on the black squares. The alternative 8.h3!? is seen in the next game.

**8...♝g4!**

When playing the King's Indian at a high level one can easily get the idea that this is never a good move, but here the circumstances are rather special. Since Black has not committed his pawns to either the e5- or c5-squares, he can use both of them as outposts for his knights.

After 8...c6 9.♞c3 a5 10.h3 ♜a6 11.♜e1! e6 (or 11...♝c5 12.♜e3 ♜xd3 13.♝xd3) 12.dxe6 ♜xe6 13.♞f1 White has a slight advantage.

**9.h3**

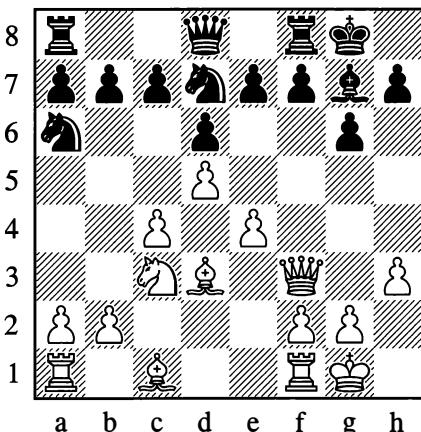
If White tries 9.♕bd2 c6 10.h3, then Black should avoid the exchange on f3 with 10...♘d7! when the knight is not well placed on d2.

**9...♘xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘a6!**

This seems more flexible than 10...♘bd7, which leads after 11.♕c3 c6 12.♗e2 to a position from which Black has a depressing score. One example is 12...a5 13.♕c2 ♗b6 14.♗b1 ♗ac8 15.♗e3 ♗a6 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♗fe1 with a small advantage to White, Tiviakov – Arizmendi Martinez, San Sebastian 2006.

**11.♕c3 ♘d7!**

White has more space and the bishop pair, but Black is still happy; his pieces are active and White is vulnerable on the dark squares.

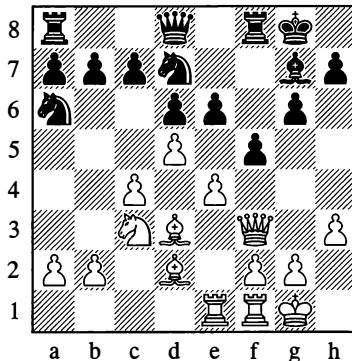
**12.♗e2**

After 12.♗c2 Black can obtain enough counterplay with either 12...c6 intending ...♗c8, or 12...e6 intending ...f5.

Another interesting game continued:

**12.♘d2 e6!?**

An extremely ambitious move. Both 12...♘ac5 13.♗c2 a5 and 12...♘e5 13.♗g3 ♘xd3 14.♗xd3 c6 are fine for Black.

**13.♗ae1 f5!?****14.exf5**

White does not fall for 14.dxe6 ♘e5 15.♗g3? f4! 16.♘xf4 ♗xf4 17.♗xf4 ♘xd3 18.♗f7+ ♘h8 when Black is winning.

14...exf5 15.♗g3 ♘e5 16.f4 ♘xd3 17.♗xd3 ♘d7 18.♗e3 ♗e8 19.♗d4??

A blunder. 19.♗e2 is better.

19...♗xe1 20.♗xe1 ♘b4 21.♗d2 ♘xd4† 22.♗xd4 ♘c2

White could already have resigned in Cybulak – Shchekachev, Moscow 1991.

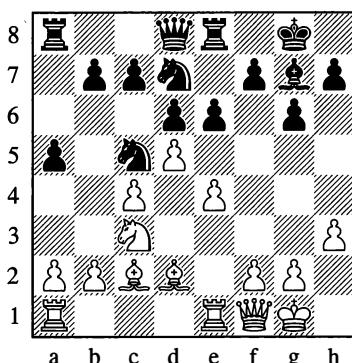
A third possibility is:

12.♗e2!? ♘ac5 13.♗c2 a5 14.♗d2 e6

14...c6 followed by ...♗c7, ...♗e8 and ...e6 is also possible.

15.♗fe1 ♗e8 16.♗f1

White is aiming for a doctorate in procrastination.

**16...a4**

16...c6!? looks interesting.

17.b4 axb3 18.axb3

In this position, in order to get some more space for my pieces I would have played:

18... $\mathbb{Q}xa1N$

18... $\mathbb{Q}a6?$ ! 19. $\mathbb{Q}eb1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  20.b4 exd5 21.exd5

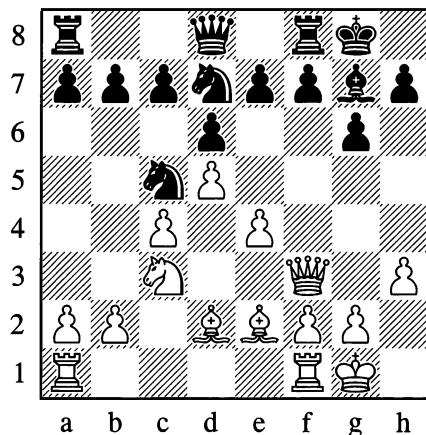
gave White some pressure in Sadkowsky – Vandenbussche, Gent 2008.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}dc5$  and ...c6, when Black should be fine.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}ac5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

White may have been avoiding 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  on account of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.bxc3 e5, but objectively this position is better for White. Instead of exchanging on c3, Black should play 13...a5 with a complicated position.



**13...a5 14.Qab1 e6! 15.Qd1 f5!**

This highly original plan is the best way to break up the white centre.

**16.dxe6?!**

This move is often a mistake, but here it seems like the best option.

Worse is 16.exf5 exf5 17.Qg3 (defending against ...f4) 17...Qe5 when Black has the initiative.

**16...Qe5 17.Qe2?!**

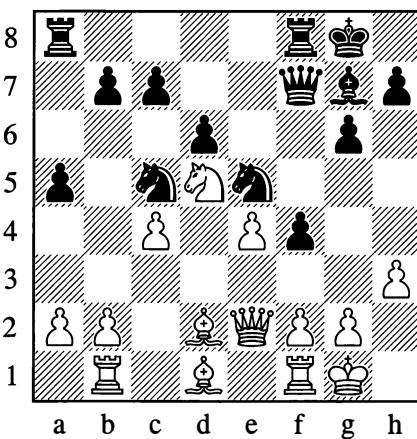
It is important to stop Black from playing ...f4, so 17.Qg3 was better. Black should continue 17...fxe4 18.Qe3 Qxe6 19.Qe2 Qd3 20.Qxe4 Qe5 21.Qg4 Qdf4, maintaining the pressure.

**17...f4!**

Korchnoi probably thought this was impossible due to his next move.

**18.e7 Qxe7 19.Qd5 Wf7**

Even better is 19...Qh4! 20.Qxf4 (not 20.Qxf4?! c6 21.Qxe5 Qxe5 22.Qe3 Qxe4 23.Qg4 Qae8 when Black has a strong attack) 20...Qxf4 21.g3 Qf3† 22.Qg2 Qxe4 23.Qxf3 Wf7 and Black has the initiative.



**20.Qxf4 c6 21.Qxe5 Qxe5 22.Qe3 h5!**

Taking an important square away from the e3-knight. After 22...Qxe4 23.Qg4 Wf4 24.Qc2 Qd2 25.g3 Qf3† 26.Qg2 Wd2 27.Qd1 the position is unclear.

**23.f4? Qxf4 24.Qf5 Qe6?!**

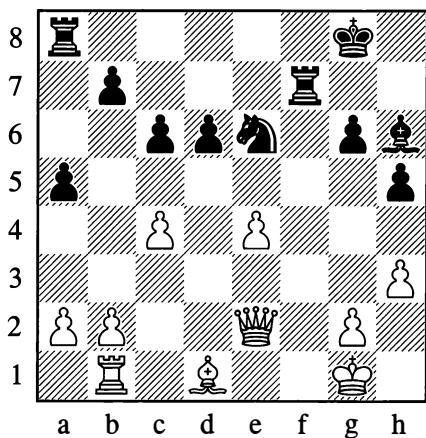
Sacrificing the queen for a rook and knight.

After 24...gxf5 25.Qxf4 Qxe4 26.Qc2 Wg6 the position is level.

**25.Qh6† Qxh6 26.Qxf7 Qxf7**

A critical moment has been reached. If Black

is allowed to put his bishop on e5 or c5, White will just about live to regret it.



**27.c5?**

Korchnoi decides to exchange his bad bishop for the enemy knight: an understandable choice, but it lands him in a lost position.

A better chance to survive was 27. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  28. $\mathbb{W}a3!$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$  30. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  31. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , although only Black can improve his position from here.

The best continuation was 27.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  28. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $dxe5$  29. $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{E}f5$  30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with an unclear position.

**27... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  29. $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{E}af8$  30. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  31.e5?  $dxe5$  32. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  33.h4  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  34. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{E}f4$  35. $\mathbb{W}d7$   $\mathbb{E}8f7$  36. $\mathbb{W}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  37. $\mathbb{W}xa5$   $\mathbb{E}xh4\#$  38. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  e4 39. $\mathbb{W}b6$  e3 40.g3  $\mathbb{E}e4$**

40... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  wins on the spot, but White's position is hopeless all the same.

**0-1**

Black did a good job in keeping up the pressure so that White did not get time to consolidate the dark squares. The timing of 14...e6 and 15...f5 was superb in this game, but one cannot build a whole system around such a plan. I recommend that you spend some

time familiarizing yourself with the different types of position that can arise between moves 10 and 16.

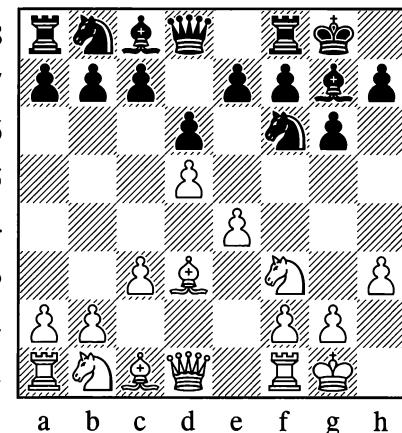
## GAME 84

Viktor Korchnoi – Curt Hansen

Biel 1993

**1.d4 d6 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 3.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0–0 6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  8.h3!**

When I wrote *Tiger's Modern* I did not understand how critical this move was, but now I believe it to be White's most ambitious option against the 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  variation.



**8...c6!**

Black should avoid 8...e5?! 9.c4 a5 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  when he is a tempo down on a King's Indian.

8...e6?! 9.c4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  could be worth investigating further. The following game is a good starting point: 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ) 13...exd5 (13...b6 14.a3) 14.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$  16. $\mathbb{W}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  and Black was doing well in Gelfand – Morozevich, Moscow 2008.

**9.c4 e6!?**

This is Black's most ambitious plan.

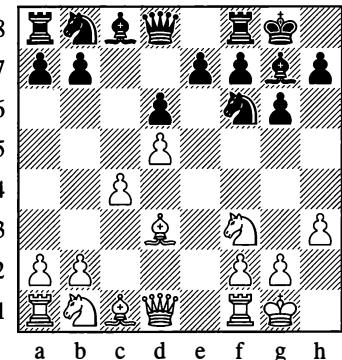
9...a5?! may look all right at first, but the problem is that Black will have to play ...e6 eventually, in which case ...a5 will turn out to be an unnecessary loss of an important tempo.

Another possibility is 9...d4, when 10.d3 d5 11.c2 (11.e3 dxd3 12.Wxd3 a6 is a little better for White, although Black has a flexible position as well as the bishop pair) 11...cxd5! (11...e6?! 12.e5! dx5 13.e3 is awkward for Black) 12.exd5 transposes to 9...cxd5 below.

If you prefer to avoid a King's Indian structure, the best option is:

9...cxd5 10.exd5

So far no one has tried 10.cxd5, when 10...e6! 11.dxe6 dxe6 12.d3 d6 13.f4 d5 (13...a6?!) 14.e5 d7 15.e1 a6 16.c2 e8 is approximately balanced.



10...d4!?

Black is trying to force the bishop to move from d3 before playing ...e6.

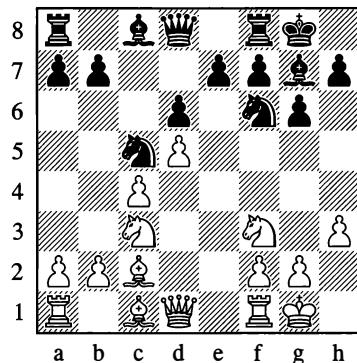
The direct 10...e6 is possible, but after 11.dxe6 dxe6 12.d3 Black has to find a way to deal with the fact that 12...d5 is met with 13.g5. I am not sure how to proceed here, and would therefore prefer the main line.

**11.Qc3**

11.e1 d5 12.f1 fe4 is comfortable for Black.

**11...d5 12.Qc2**

After 12.e3 dxd3 (12...e6?!) 13.Wxd3 f5 14.We2 a6 15.Qd4 Qd7 16.Qfc1 Qc8 17.b3 e6 Black has excellent counterplay.



12...e6 13.Qg5

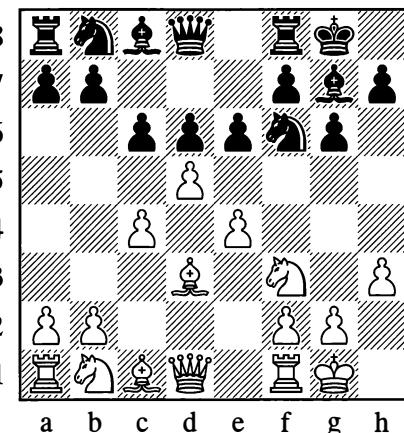
Another possibility is 13.b4 d4 14.Qb1 exd5 15.cxd5 d7, when Black is low on space but White might turn out to be overextended.

13...exd5 14.cxd5

14.Qxd5 Qe6 15.Qxf6 Qxf6 16.Qxf6+ Wxf6 17.Wxd6 Wxb2 18.Qxg6 Qac8 19.Qab1 Qg7 20.Qc2 Qxc4 is fine for Black.

14...Qd7

The game was level in Sturua – Yrjola, Komotini 1992.



**10.dxe6**

Black is quite flexible after 10.♕c3 exd5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.exd5 ♜e8! 13.♗f4 ♜bd7 14.♗d2 ♜c5 15.♗fe1 ♜d7 followed by ...a5.

**10.dxc6**

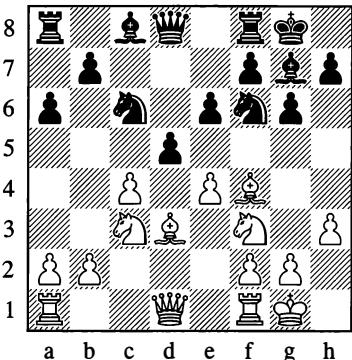
This has not yet been tested, but it may transpose to some existing games after a few moves.

**10...♛xc6 11.♕c3**

Here Black should strive for ...d5 as soon as possible.

**11...a6**

It is important to take the b5-square away from the enemy knight.

**12.♗f4 d5!****13.e5**

13.cxd5 exd5 14.e5 ♜d7 15.♗e1 d4 16.♗a4 ♜e8 17.e6 ♜xe6 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.♗b3 ♜f6 is pretty unclear.

**13...♜d7 14.♗e1 dxc4 15.♗xc4 b5 16.♗d3 ♜b7 17.♗c1 b4**

17...h6? also deserves attention.

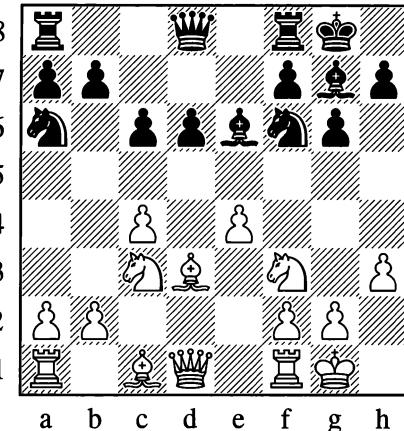
**18.♗a4 ♜e7**

The position was comfortable for Black in B. Svensson – Gavrikov, Gothenburg 2000.

**10...♜xe6 11.♕c3 ♜a6**

It is premature to play 11...d5? because of 12.exd5 (or 12.♗d4?) 12...cxd5 13.♗d4 with a clear advantage for White.

A more challenging approach is 11...a6!? when 12.♗g5! (12.♗f4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.a3 ♜e8 is fine for Black) 12...♜bd7 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♗e3 ♜e7 is highly unclear.

**12.♗e1 ♜d7**

It is possible to play 12...♛c5, but after 13.♗f4 ♜h5 14.♗h2 ♜e5!? 15.♗f1! ♜xh2† 16.♗xh2 White is ready to attack the d-pawn.

12...♜e8 suffers from a similar ailment, as it does not really challenge the basic ‘White gets coordinated, then takes over and wins’ story: 13.♗f1 ♜d7 14.♗g5! (14.♗xd6?! ♜e5 gives Black decent compensation for the pawn.) 14...♝b6 15.♝c2 The position is similar to the game, but here Black is too slow to create any real trouble for his opponent.

**13.♗g5! ♜b6?!**

I believe this to be dubious, because it allows White to play ♜e3 later, winning a tempo for ♜d4 (or ♜g5) followed by eliminating the bishop on e6. Generally speaking, this is quite a sensitive position where Black should avoid settling down and playing as if nothing bad will ever happen. Make no mistake; something bad *will* happen. In the long run White will be able to slowly rob the black knights of their outposts and then squish Black into a gooey mess.

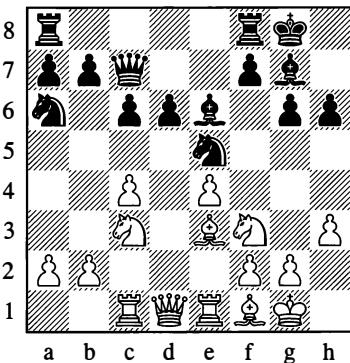
13... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

This is Black's best chance, intending to attack the c4-pawn.

14. $\mathbb{B}c1$

14. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxe5$  16.a3 f6! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{B}fd8$  18. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  19. $\mathbb{B}ad1$  b6 20.b4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is about equal.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{B}f1$  h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$

This direct approach is meant to equalize – no more, no less.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  18.b3

18. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  makes no difference.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  19. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$

19...g5?! could be considered.

20. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{B}fd8$  22. $\mathbb{B}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$

23.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  24. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

26. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Black is doing well. This long line may be a bit farfetched, but it is up to White to find a meaningful improvement.

14. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$

Ambroz points out that 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxe5$  16.b4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  17.c5 is a little better for White.

I reached this position against Stellan Brynell in the 2006 Swedish Championship, but I had completely forgotten my home preparations: 14...h6?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (I guess I was hoping for some kind of compensation after 15. $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}dc5$ , but I am suspicious about Black's position after 17.e5.) 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  White was clearly better, and I had to use the best of my imagination in order to eventually draw the game.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?

I am convinced that White should be better somehow, but I am not so certain of how best to prove it.

After 15. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  it is not easy for White to keep control of everything.

15... $\mathbb{W}d8$

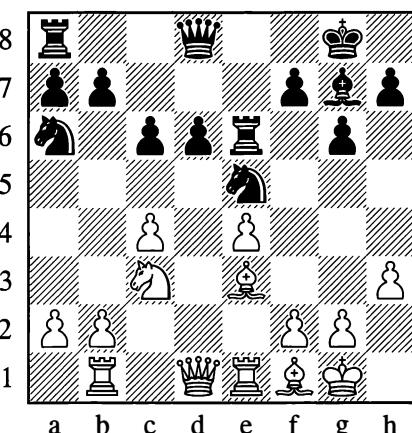
Why not 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$  instead?

16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White is a little better after 16. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxe5$  18.b4, but it is not much.

16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{B}xe6$  18. $\mathbb{B}f1$

This kind of position holds serious danger for Black, which will become clear if White manages to establish control over the dark squares. However, that is not so easy to achieve.



18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}ac5$  20.f3

This move gives one the feeling that something has gone wrong for White. I am

certainly not in favour of weakening the dark squares on the kingside, and would prefer 20.b4!  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  22. $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{W}h4!$  23. $\mathbb{E}bd1$  with compensation for the pawn.

### 20...a5 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ??

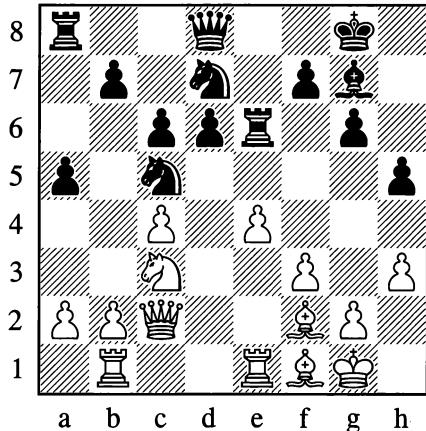
This looks a bit passive, but after an alternative such as 21. $\mathbb{E}bd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a4 23.g3  $\mathbb{W}a5$  Black is also doing fine. It is hard for White to achieve f3-f4 without letting go of the e4-pawn. Even though this is close to a dream position for Black, he is still not objectively better, as there is no obvious way to improve his position. It is a bit like two octopuses hugging; both sides are stuck, and breaking the deadlock will involve significant risk.

### 21...h5?!

Since White's plan involves f3-f4 and possibly e4-e5 followed by f4-f5, it is not such a great idea for Black to weaken his kingside. The f4-square is the critical point for which both sides are fighting.

21... $\mathbb{E}e8$ ? 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (22. $\mathbb{E}bd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  should be met by 23... $\mathbb{W}f6$ , when it is hard for White to achieve g2-g3 and f3-f4) 22...a4 23. $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! is a line given by Ambroz, intending 25.f4?  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  when White's e-pawn is falling.

Initially I did not see the need to retreat the rook from e6, and wondered if 21... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a4 could be an improvement. However, after 23. $\mathbb{E}ed1$ !  $\mathbb{W}c7$  24.b4 axb3 25.axb3  $\mathbb{E}ee8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  27. $\mathbb{W}d2$  Black is clearly on the defensive, so Ambroz's line seems best after all. One advantage of retreating the rook is that the black queen will be able to defend the d-pawn from e7 without the rook being caught in the middle of the board.



### 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! h4

If you have said "A", you have to say "B". At least White is no longer able to set up a fianchetto to support the pawn on e4.

22...a4?! is met by 23.b4 axb3 24.axb3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  25. $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  26.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  27. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and Black is in dire straits.

22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ?! is still the best move, forcing White to play f3-f4 if he wishes to attack the d6-pawn. In the process the e4-pawn will also become weak.

### 23.b3 $\mathbb{W}g5$

After 23... $\mathbb{E}e8$  24. $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  25. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  it is not obvious how White should continue. For instance, 26.a3 a4 27.b4  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  28. $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is quite complex and not without chances for Black.

### 24. $\mathbb{W}c1$ ! $\mathbb{W}xc1$

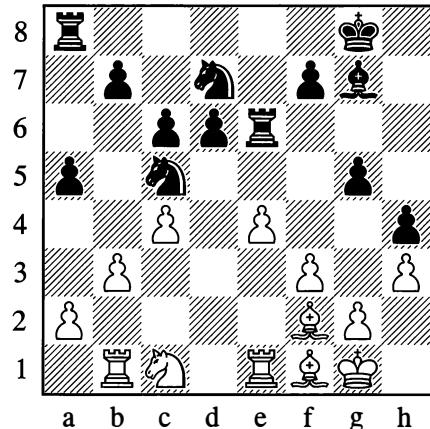
After 24... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ?! 25. $\mathbb{E}d1$  intending  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4/d4$ , Black is struggling to defend the d-pawn.

### 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ g5

The downside to this move is that White can strive to manoeuvre his knight to f5.

A completely different way of treating the

position is 25... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ !?, 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  f5! 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  fxe4, when Black seems to have enough counterplay.



**26.a3!  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{E}ae8$**

27... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}f6$  29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is given by Ambroz. This line clearly shows the downside of ...g5, as  $\mathbb{Q}d4-f5$  becomes a positional nightmare for Black.

**28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?**

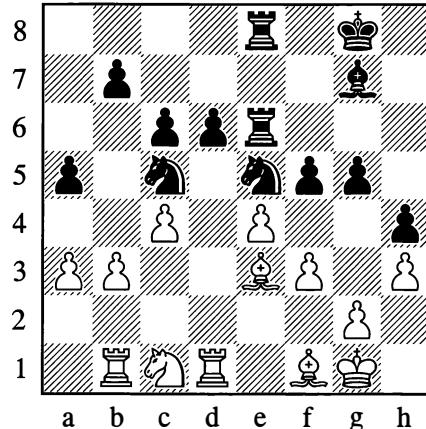
Somewhat surprisingly, Korchnoi allows Black counterplay just after he got the position under control. Maybe he saw what was coming and evaluated it too optimistically.

Another possibility is 28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , but then 28... $\mathbb{Q}ed3$  29. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ † 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  32.b4 axb4 33.axb4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is nice for Black. The bishop on f1 is awful, and the knight will dominate the board from e5.

I think the best move is 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ! intending b3-b4 and eventually  $\mathbb{Q}e2-d4-f5$ . If 28... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  then 29. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  keeps control. Black would need to defend well to survive against this plan.

**28...f5!**

Black takes the opportunity to free himself before  $\mathbb{Q}e2-d4-f5$  comes.



**29. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}dx5$  30. $\mathbb{Q}exf5$   $\mathbb{E}f6$  31. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}xf5$**

After 31... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ ! 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  White has to settle for a draw: 33. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (White cannot play for a win with 33. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}ed8$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{E}xd6$  35.b4?? since 35... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  36.axb4 a4! is even losing for White.) 33... $\mathbb{E}ed8$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{E}xd6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{E}xd1$ † 36. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  37.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ † 38. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  with an easy draw for Black. These lines are mostly built on Ambrož's comments from *CBM*.

**32. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}fe5$  34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}5e6$**

One line that illustrates Black's counterplay is 34... $\mathbb{E}5e7$  35. $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  37. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ †  $\mathbb{E}fxf7$  38. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ † 39. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f2$ † 40. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  when White has to take care not to end up in a worse position.

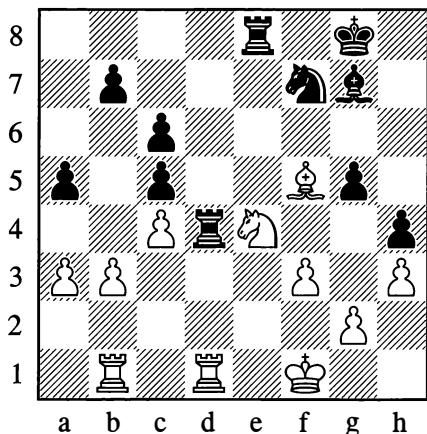
**35. $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{E}d6$ ?**

Exchanging a pair of rooks is a bad decision, since Black's counterplay on the kingside will be significantly reduced.

35... $\mathbb{E}6e7$ ! 36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}f8$  37. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  was still balanced.

**36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}d4$ ?**

After 36... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ † 37. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  38. $\mathbb{Q}g6$  Black will lose the g-pawn, but that is not the end of the story since the h-pawn still does a good job of crippling White's kingside majority. This is probably Black's best practical chance.



37.♕g6 ♜e5 38.♕xf7† ♜xf7 39.♕d6† ♜e7

40.♕xb7

White is a pawn up, and is poised to win a second. The rest of the game is not much of a fight, which is hardly surprising when you consider that Korchnoi was almost a pawn stronger in the endgame than his fellow grandmasters.

40...a4 41.bxa4 ♜d7 42.a5 ♜c7 43.a6 ♜xd1† 44.♖xd1 ♜b6 45.♖d7 ♜f8 46.♕d6! ♜xd6 47.a7

**1–0**

Black had to make a critical choice on move 9. Exchanging on d5 is perfectly playable, as given in the notes. The game continuation of 9...e6?! is also okay, but Black should memorize the improvement 13...♝c7! in order to avoid falling into a passive position after 13...♝b6.

## GAME 85

Dimitri Tyomkin – Zlatko Ilincic

Belgrade 1999

**1.e4**

I have changed the move order to fit in with my evil plans. The actual move order was 1.d4 ♜f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.♗g5 ♜g7 4.♗bd2 0–0 5.c3 d6 6.e4.

**1...g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.c3 d6**

Black gains nothing from 3...♗f6 apart from inviting the central thrust 4.e5. White can also play 4.♗d3 or 4.♗c2.

**4.♗g5**

Another possibility is:

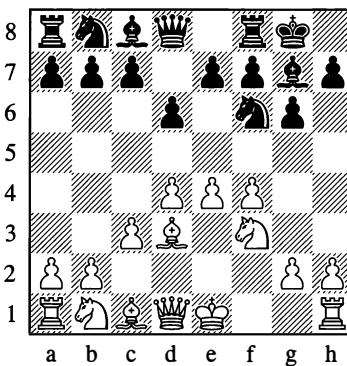
**4.f4**

This looks impressive, but it should not scare Black. The important thing is to put pressure on White's centre.

**4...♗f6 5.♗d3**

After 5.e5 dxе5 6.fxe5 ♜d5 7.♗f3 0–0 8.♗c4 should be met by 8...c5! (8...♗b6 is fine, but the text move is even better) intending 9.dxc5 ♜e6 10.♗g5 ♜e3! 11.♗xd8 ♜c2† 12.♔f2 ♜xd8 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♗xe6† ♜h8 15.♗a3 ♜xa1 16.♗e3 ♜c6 with some advantage to Black.

**5...0–0 6.♗f3**



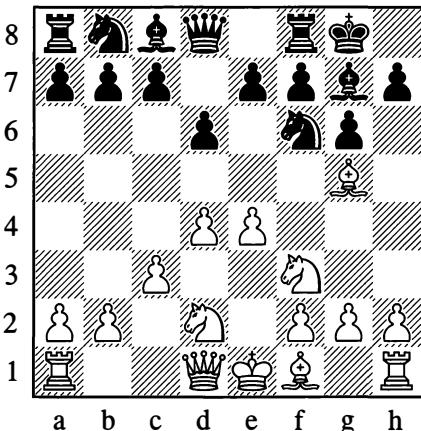
6...c5! 7.dxc5 ♜bd7! 8.cxd6 exd6 9.0–0 ♜c5 10.♗c2

Or 10.♗e3 ♜fxe4 11.♗xe4 ♜xe4 12.♗d4 ♜h6 with unclear play in Kiik – Yrjola, Finland 2001. 12...♝e8 is also fine.

10...♝e8 11.♗bd2 ♜d7 12.♗d4 ♜c8 13.♗h1 ♜e7

Black had a pleasant initiative in Hodgson – Norwood, Plymouth 1989.

**4...♗f6 5.♗d2 0–0 6.♗gf3**

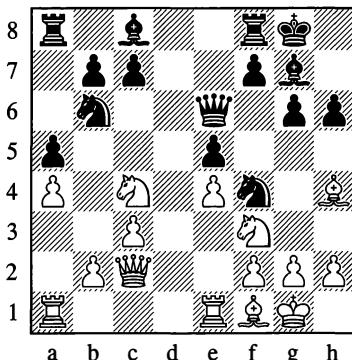


### 6...h6!

Black has many moves at his disposal in this position, but this is the most flexible one.

The most popular continuation is 6...c5 (it can also be played on the next move). It is reliable enough, but I prefer the set-up in the main game.

After 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 8.0–0 h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  10.dxe5 dxe5 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  we get a position similar to the main game, but the black knight has committed itself to the d7-square. This somewhat narrows Black's options, but the position is still roughly balanced: 12. $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14.a4 a5 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$ !?



16. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ ? (16. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is equal.) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  Black is a pawn up and should be winning,

so it is a mystery why a draw was agreed in Danielian – Levada, Novgorod 1999.

### 7. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

After 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  8.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  a draw was agreed in Harikrishna – Gallagher, Torquay 2002, but I believe Black has more reason to play on than White.

### 7... $\mathbb{W}e8$ !?

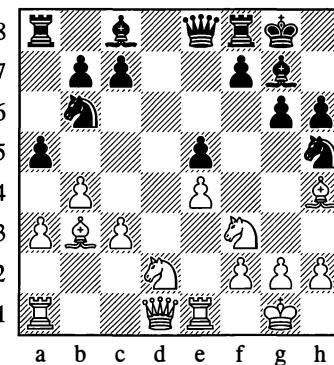
This move keeps White guessing where the b8-knight will go.

### 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

#### 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

This might seem more active, but the bishop gets in the way of the  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ -e3-d5 manoeuvre.

8...e5 9.dxe5  
9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 is something Black can be happy about.  
9...dxe5 10.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.b4  
12.a4 a5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is fine for Black.  
12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5 14.a3



### 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !N

14... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ?? 15.c4 gave White some initiative in Gelashvili – Sarkar, Philadelphia 2012.

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  axb4 17.axb4  $\mathbb{W}d3$

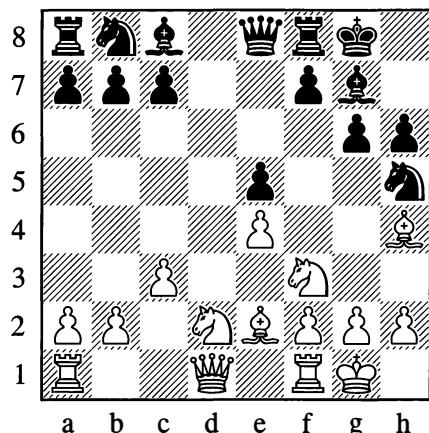
Black has a nice position, and White has yet to solve the problem of the awkwardly-placed bishop on h4.

**8...e5 9.dxe5**

In this variation White seldom gains anything from keeping the tension in the centre.

**9...dxe5 10.0–0 ♖h5**

The fact that Black has not yet committed the b8-knight to a particular square makes it hard for White to choose an appropriate plan of action.

**11.♖e1**

By preparing ♖f1, White is not so much overprotecting e4 as discouraging Black from playing ...f5.

**11...♘e6!?**

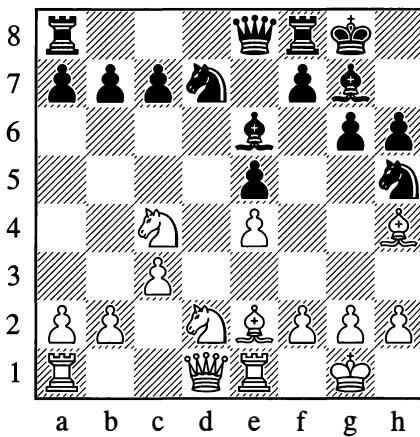
Ten years ago, whenever I reached such a position I would hurl myself at the white king with ...♘f4, ...g5, ...f6 and ...h5. Now I would urge you to refrain from such ideas until you have developed your queenside; or at least be aware that such an attack will not hurt the opponent unless it is combined with pressure along the d-file.

The text move is solid, but 11...a5 and 11...♗d7 are also fine.

**12.♘c4 ♗d7 13.♘fd2!?**

After 13.♘f1? f6 14.♘fd2 ♘f7 15.b4 ♘fe8

(after 15...♗fd8 Black is not threatening ...f5) 16.♘e3 the players agreed to a draw in Delemarre – Reschke, Schoeneck 1996. The position is full of life and I think 16...a5! gives Black a slight initiative.



After the text move White is planning f2-f3 and ♖f2, followed by launching the a- and b-pawns towards the black queenside. This could be a dangerous scenario for Black, unless we can throw a stick into White's wheel before he arrives there.

**13...♗f4 14.♗f1 ♗c5!**

Black takes aim at the weak d3-square: a theme that we will see again and again.

**15.♗c2**

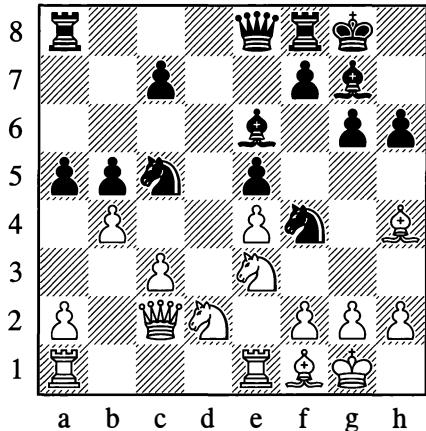
After 15.b4?! ♗cd3 16.♘e3 g5! 17.♗xd3 (17.♗g3 ♗d8) 17...gxh4 Black has the initiative on the kingside and the d-file.

**15...a5 16.♘e3!?**

White should not give up the queenside so easily. Better was 16.a4, when 16...g5 17.♗g3 ♗c6 18.♘e3 ♗ad8 19.♗ed1 is unclear.

**16...b5 17.b4**

White gains nothing from 17.♗b3 ♗b7! 18.♗c1 a4.



**17... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{A}xb4$  19. $\mathbb{C}xb4$   $c6$  20. $\mathbb{E}e1!?$**

Tyomkin gives 20. $\mathbb{E}a1$   $\mathbb{E}a6$  21. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  22. $\mathbb{E}e7$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  23. $\mathbb{E}d6$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  with equal chances.

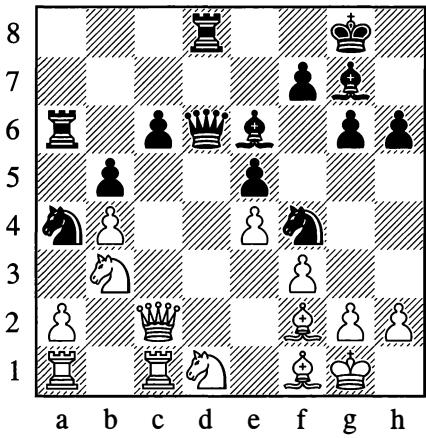
**20... $\mathbb{E}a6$  21. $f3$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  22. $\mathbb{E}f2$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

In the event of 23. $a3$   $\mathbb{E}xb3$  24. $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  Black has the initiative, with ... $h5$  and ... $\mathbb{E}h6$  coming next.

**23... $\mathbb{E}d8$**

Tyomkin gives an interesting line: 23... $\mathbb{W}xb4!?$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  26. $\mathbb{E}xf8$   $\mathbb{E}xf8$  with compensation for the material deficit.

My silicon friend recommends 23... $\mathbb{E}c8$ , when the position remains about equal after 24. $a3$   $\mathbb{E}xb3$  25. $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{E}ca8$ .



**24. $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$**

Giving Black the opportunity to grab the initiative.

Better according to Tyomkin was 24. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , when 24... $\mathbb{E}c8$  25. $a3$  is unclear. Still, it seems that White should be comparatively happy with this position, and therefore I believe 23... $\mathbb{E}c8$  would have been a slight improvement.

**24... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}d2!$  26. $g3$ ?**

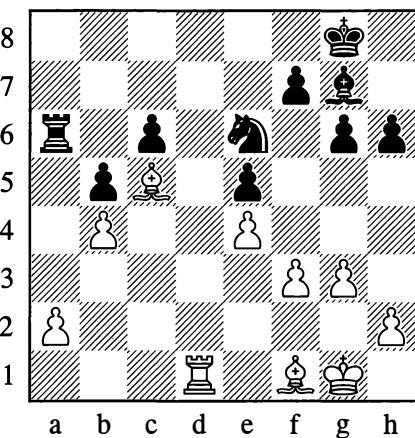
White could have minimized the damage with 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xc2$  27. $\mathbb{E}xc2$   $\mathbb{E}da8$  28. $\mathbb{E}d1$ , when he is only slightly worse.

**26... $\mathbb{W}xc2$**

26... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$  27. $\mathbb{E}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  28. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{E}xd2$  29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}e6$  30. $a3$   $f5$  also gives Black some pressure.

**27. $\mathbb{E}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  28. $\mathbb{E}cc1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  29. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{E}xd1$  30. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$**

Tyomkin rightly comments that Black should not be permitted to exchange the dark-squared bishops and place the knight on d4. In such a position he could combine pressure against the a-pawn with creating a weakness on the other flank, with devastating consequences for White.



**31. $\mathbb{E}d6!?$**

This move should have lost by force, but at least it avoids 31... $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  when Black achieves his aim.

### 31... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ?!?

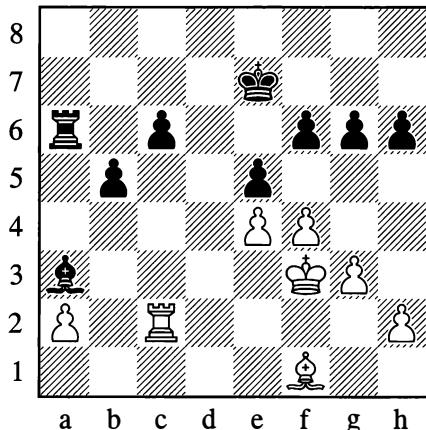
This is exactly what White was hoping for. Instead 31... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! 32. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  33. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  (33.bxc5?  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  34. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  35.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  should win for Black) 33... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  would have given Black excellent winning chances.

32.bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5\uparrow$  34. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$   
35. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$

This seems illogical to me. Black should prefer 35... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  36.h4 h5 37.a4 (what else) 37... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  38. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}a2\uparrow$  39. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g1$  40.g4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ . White's position is hopeless.

### 36.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ f6?

37... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  38.f5  $\mathbb{Q}a3\uparrow$  39. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is better. The text move weakens the light squares and gives White the opportunity for f4-f5, trying to create a path for the king to reach g6. The rest of the game is annotated in *ChessBase Magazine* by Tyomkin.



38.h4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  39.f5 gx f5 40.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  41. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  42. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  43. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  b4 44. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  45. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  bxc3 46. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f2$  47. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e1$

48.h5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  49.g4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  50.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  51. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c1$  52. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  53.a5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  54. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  55. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  56.a6  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  57. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  58. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  59. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  60. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  61. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  62. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  63. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  64. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  65. $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  66. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  67. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  68. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  69. $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  70. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  71. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  72. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  73. $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  74. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  75. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  76. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  77. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  78. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c2 $\uparrow$  79. $\mathbb{Q}xc2\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  80. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  81. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  82. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  e4 83. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

½–½

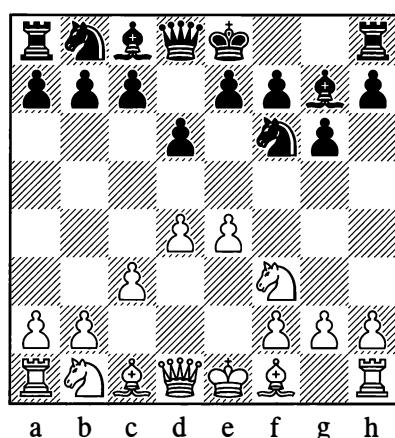
Summing up, Black has no complaints in the 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  variation, and I see no reason to migrate from it.

## GAME 86

Arnold Denker – Mato Damjanovic

Lone Pine 1975

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$



5. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

This is the least dangerous of White's options, unless you are easily bored.

Also harmless is: 5. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.0–0 e5 8.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! is dead equal.)

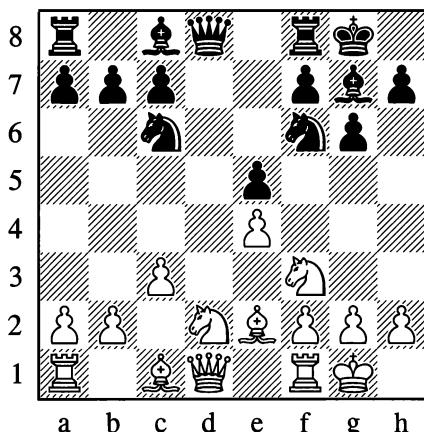
7.0–0 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 If you wish to avoid exchanging knights on e5, it is better to have the knight on d7. 9.Qg5 h6 10.Qh4 W e8 We reach a position similar to Tyomkin – Ilincic above.

### 5...0–0 6.Qe2 Qc6

6...b6!? is not completely out of the question now that White has placed both the knight and bishop on passive squares. If you have a good feeling about the Hippo, then this is the way to go.

### 7.0–0 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5!?

8...Qxe5 9.Qxe5 dxe5 10.Wc2 is almost dead equal, and may not be the best choice if you are trying to win against a lower-rated opponent. However, if you are happy with an absolutely level position then both 10...Qh6 and 10...b6 are fine for Black.



### 9.Wc2 Qh5!

It's déjà vu all over again!

I see no reason to weaken the queenside with: 9...a5

Yes, it stops b2-b4, but I am more worried about giving White an extra tempo on the kingside. Even though I am not recommending this, I will show a game with some instructive points.

### 10.a4!?

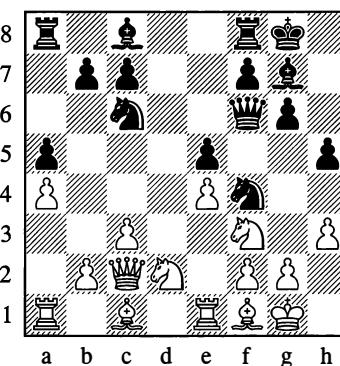
10.Qc4! Qh5 11.Qd1 is awkward for Black.

### 10...Qh5 11.Qe1

Possibly White should try 11.Qd1! Qf4 12.Qf1 Wf6 13.Qe3, when 13...h6 14.b3 Qd8 15.Qxd8† Qxd8 16.Qf1 Qe6 is about level.

### 11...Qf4 12.Qf1 Wf6 13.h3 h5!?

I would prefer 13...g5, not allowing White the opportunity to block the kingside with h2-h4. After 14.Qh2 h5 the position is complicated.

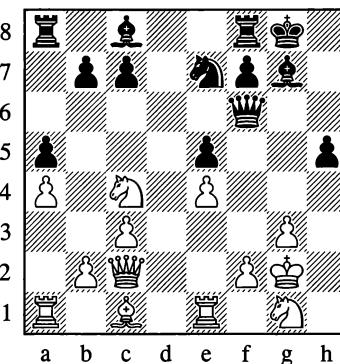


### 14.Qh1 g5 15.Qg1 g4

Hodgson has succeeded in getting exactly the kind of position Black should be striving for.

### 16.Qc4 gxh3 17.g3 Qg2 18.Qxg2 hxg2† 19.Qxg2 Qe7

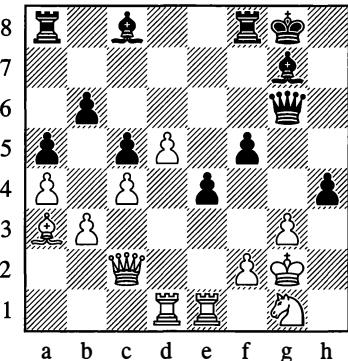
It is better to play 19...h4!, when 20.Qf3? loses a piece to 20...h3†.



### 20.Qe3!?

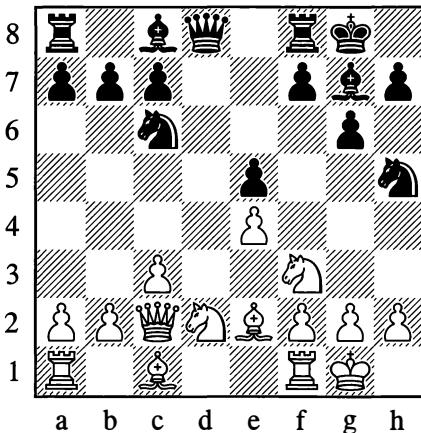
Missing a chance to play 20.♕f3! ♜e6 21.b3 ♘h3† 22.♔g1 with an unclear position.  
 20...h4 21.b3 b6 22.c4 ♜g6 23.♔a3 c5 24.♗ad1 f5 25.♗d5 ♜xd5 26.exd5 e4

White is defenceless against ...hxg3 followed by ...f4.



27.♔b2 ♜a7 28.♗d2 ♘xb2 29.♗xb2 ♜g7  
 30.♗e5 hxg3 31.fxg3 f4 32.♗xe4 ♜xg3†  
 33.♔h1 ♜f5 34.♗e7 ♜xe7 35.♗xe7 ♜h4†

White resigned in Hracek – Hodgson, Neu Isenburg 1992 – a beautiful game by Hodgson.



### 10.♗d1

White has a number of alternatives.

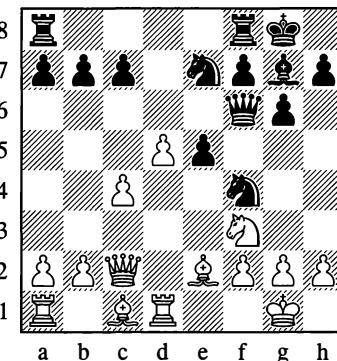
10.♗e1 ♘f4 11.♗f1 ♜f6 (Black has also tried to provoke h2-h3; for instance, 11...♘g4?! 12.b4, and now in Gipslis – Hoi, Ostrava 1992, Black could have played 12...♗f6!N 13.b5 ♘b8!

14.a4 a6! with an initiative.) 12.♗c4 h6 In Van Bentum – Rudolf, Rostock 2002, Black could have played 12...♗h3†N 13.♔h1 ♘g4 with an attack.

### 10.♗c4 ♘f4

Black does not have to think twice about this move when White has exchanged on e5, since 11.♗xf4 exf4 leaves Black with excellent play on the kingside and against the weak e4-pawn, without White getting much in return.

11.♗e3 ♜e6 12.♗d1 ♜f6 13.♗d5  
 13.g3?! ♘xe2† 14.♗xe2 h6! 15.b3 ♜fd8  
 16.♔b2 a5 17.♗d5 ♜xd5 18.exd5 ♘b8  
 19.c4 ♘d7 reaches an unclear position.  
 13...♗xd5 14.exd5 ♘e7 15.c4



15...♗f5! 16.♗xf5 ♘xe2† 17.♔f1 ♘xf5  
 18.♔xe2 e4 19.♔e1 c6

Black had a strong initiative in Chloupek – Vokac, Czech Republic 2012.

### 10...♘f4 11.♗f1

Another game continued: 11.♗f1 ♜f6 12.h3 g5?! (I prefer either 12...♗d8 13.b4 a6, or simply 12...a5 followed by ...♗d8.) 13.♗h2 h5 14.♗c4 ♘e7?! (14...♗e6! 15.♗e3 ♜fd8 16.♗xd8† ♜xd8 17.b3 ♘f8 is nice for Black.) 15.♗e3 ♜e6 16.b3 ♜fd8 (16...♗g6?!) 17.♔b2 c5 18.♗d2 ♘c6 19.♗ad1 ♜xd2 20.♗xd2 ♜d8 21.♗xd8† ♜xd8 22.♗f5 By now the position was a nightmare for Black in Troeger –

Degenhardt, Bad Aibling 1965, but there was plenty of room for improvement earlier.

### 11... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Another option is 12...h6?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14.b3  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is balanced) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (or 14.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with mutual chances) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 16. $\mathbb{W}a4$  b6 17.b3  $\mathbb{W}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  with approximate equality.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ! transposes to the earlier note with 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , and is probably Black's best move.

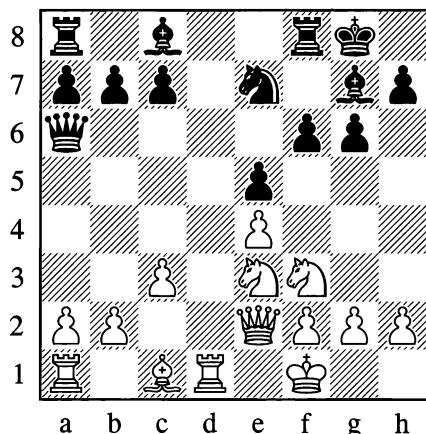
### 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?

Black is fine after both 13.b3 b6 14.h4  $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$  15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  and 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h3\uparrow$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?) 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  g4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  when there is no way for White to avoid repeating moves.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$ ? 14. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ ! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f6

Only Black can be better here, as he possesses the bishop pair and no weaknesses.

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



### 16... $\mathbb{W}xe2\uparrow$

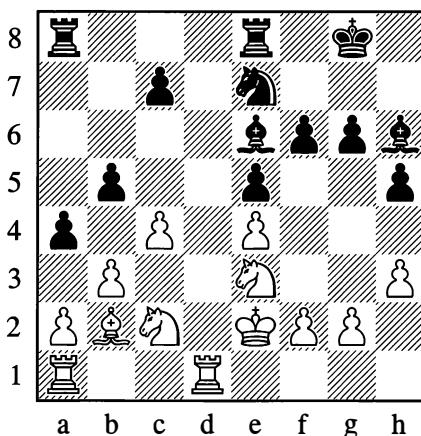
I prefer 16... $\mathbb{W}c6$ , when 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18.exd5  $\mathbb{W}d6$  is better for Black, and it is difficult to see an alternative for White.

### 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18.b3 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

This is not bad, but 18... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  looks more to the point.

### 19.h3 a5 20.c4 a4 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h5 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}1c2$ b5?!

In an attempt to win the game, Black throws himself into complications that favour White, who is better coordinated on the queenside.

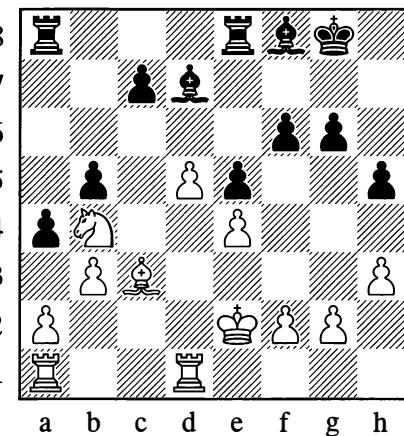


### 26. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !

26.cxb5?!,  $\mathbb{Q}eb8$  hands Black the initiative.

### 26... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 27.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

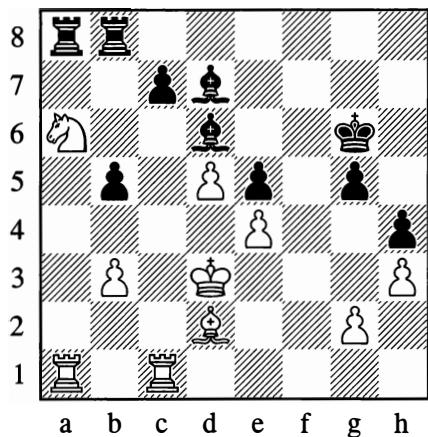
White is slightly better due to the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , but Black should not lose this position.



**29...♝eb8**

29...♝d6! is a better defensive idea, intending 30.♗d3 c6!.

**30.♝dc1 ♜d6 31.♝d2 g5 32.f3 h4 33.♝d3 ♜b7 34.♝ab1 ♜f7 35.♝c2 axb3 36.axb3 ♜g6 37.♝cc1 ♜bb8 38.♝a1 f5 39.♝a6 fxe4† 40.fxe4**

**40...♝b6??**

A blunder. After 40...♝c8 41.♝b4 g4 Black has enough counterplay.

**41.♝xc7 ♜xal 42.♝xal ♜xc7 43.♝a7 b4  
44.♝xc7 ♜b5† 45.♚e3 ♜f6 46.♝xb4**

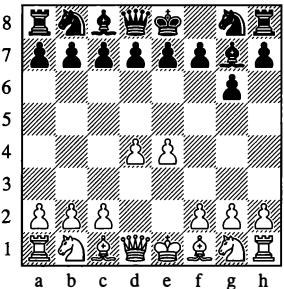
The e5-pawn will fall soon, so Black resigned.

**1–0**

## Conclusion

In my experience it is not unusual for “natural e4-players” to play the Lazy line, not because they believe the Lazy variation to be a way to punish Black for, well, anything. Rather it is a way to get a decent Ruy Lopez set-up and to continue from there. A similar philosophy is seen in the Ruy Lopez when White plays d3 at an early stage. Don’t underestimate White’s set-up, and be flexible. Compared to a main line Ruy Lopez, at least you don’t have to spend four moves getting the bishop to g7.

# Chapter 11



## Unusual Lines

**1.e4 g6**

**2.♘c3 ♜g7**

3.f4 c5! Game 91 464

3.g3 c5! 4.♗g2 ♘c6 5.d3 d6 6.♕e3 e5 468

7.♗d2 Game 92 472

7.♗h3!? Game 93 472

**2.d4 ♜g7**

3.f4 Game 87 450

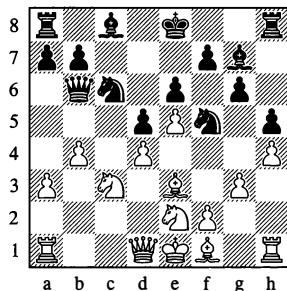
3.♘c3 d6 4.h4!? Game 90 459

3.♕e3 d5! 454

4.exd5 ♜xd5 Game 88 456

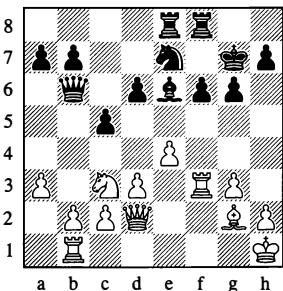
4.e5 c5 Game 89 456

Notes to Game 90 – after 12.♕e3



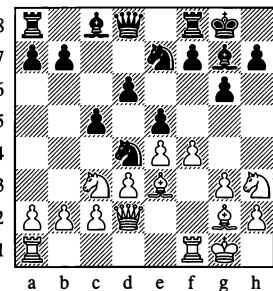
12...♘xe5!

Game 92 – after 17.a3!



17...d5!

Game 93 – after 10.♗d2



10...f6!?

This is the chapter of leftovers, where we will examine several offbeat systems that do not fit in anywhere else.

### **White plays 3.f4 (before ♜c3) (Game 87)**

The lack of a knight on c3 makes the ...a6 set-up pointless, but Black gets a fine game with 3...c5!, striking at the centre.

### **White plays 3.♗e3 (Games 88 and 89)**

This move has a double agenda: if Black plays ...c6 or ...a6, then White will play c2-c4 under favourable circumstances, and if ...♝f6 then ♜c3 and Black has been lured into a Pirc. 3...d5! is the best response, and the two games show how Black can handle 4.exd5 and 4.e5 respectively.

### **3.♘c3 d6 4.h4!! (Game 90)**

This unusual line is not without venom. Black should start with 4...♝f6!, but do pay attention to some of the later details, such as how to react to h4-h5 in different situations.

### **White avoids d2-d4 (Games 91, 92 and 93)**

When White refuses to occupy the centre, I recommend switching to a Sicilian set-up with ...c5. The final three games of the chapter will cover different versions of a Closed Sicilian, none of which are especially worrying for Black.

## GAME 87

Tiger Hillarp Persson – Per Andreason

Holdturneringen 2003

### **1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♘g7 3.f4**

I have tried this move a few times myself, with considerable success. The point is that the knight is not optimal on c3, and White would ideally like to play ♜f3 and ♛d3 before deciding how to develop this piece. Another obvious point

is that the plan of ...a6 and ...b5 is worthless without the target of a knight on c3.

### **3...c5!**

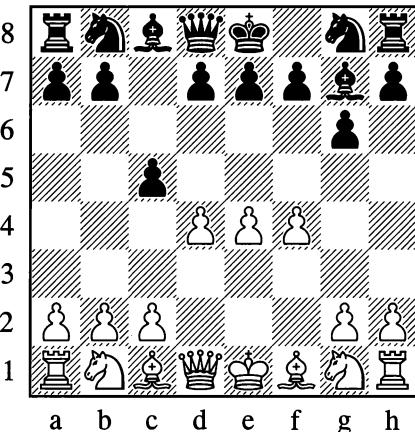
With Black I prefer to avoid 3...d5?! 4.e5 c5 5.dxc5!. (Note the difference between this and 3...c5 4.c3 cxd4 5.cxd4 d5!, when White does not get the same chance.)

The best alternative is 3...d6, when White can continue the do-not-play-♜c3 strategy in three main ways:

4.♗d3 c5 is no problem for Black.

4.a3?! is annoying. White intends to meet 4...c5 with 5.dxc5 ♘a5† 6.b4 ♘c7 (or 6...♘a4 7.e5!) 7.cxd6 exd6 8.♗a2 ♜f6 9.♗d3 ♘e6 10.♗b2 and I doubt that Black has enough compensation for the pawn. Instead Black should transpose to a Pirc with 4...♝f6, when 5.♘c3 0–0 5.♗f3 leads to Game 25 on page 144.

4.♗f3 c5 5.dxc5 (5.c3 ♜f6 6.♗d3 0–0 was covered in the previous chapter – see the note to White's 4th move in Game 85 on page 440; 5.d5 may be best, when 5...♝f6 6.c3 transposes to the main game.) 5...♘a5† 6.c3 ♘xc5 7.♗d3 ♜f6 8.♗e2 0–0 9.♗e3 ♘c7 10.♗bd2 (10.c4 ♗g4!) 10...♗bd7 11.♗b3 b6 12.0–0 ♘b7 and Black had an excellent position in Fercce – Davies, Porto San Giorgio 1998.



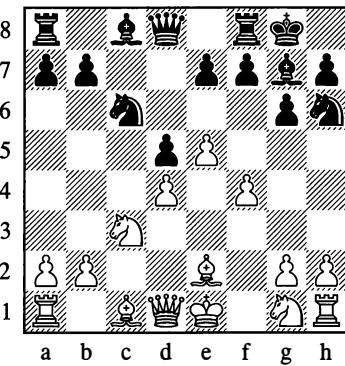
**4.d5**

After 4.♘f3?! cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘c6 White has no reason to be happy about the pawn on f4.

**4.c3 cxd4 5.cxd4**

Now Black can get a good position with:  
5...d5! 6.e5 ♘h6 7.♗e2 0–0 8.♘c3 ♘c6

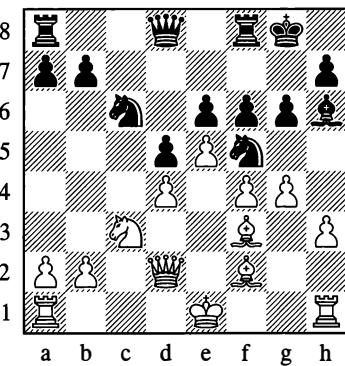
Black is well placed to exert pressure against the enemy centre, as the following games illustrate.

**9.♘f3**

9.♘f3 ♘f5 10.♗ge2 ♗e6 11.g3 ♘b6 12.♘a4 occurred in Svetushkin – Iordachescu, Bucharest 2000, and now 12...♗b4!N 13.♗d2 ♘b5 14.♗c3 ♘fc8 15.b3 ♘c7 is at least slightly better for Black.

**9...♗g4 10.♗e3 ♘f5 11.♗f2 ♘h6 12.♗d2 f6 13.h3?**

Better is 13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.0–0 ♘xf3 15.♗xf3 e6 16.♗ae1 ♘d7, when White's extra space and bishop pair is balanced by Black's active minor pieces and the weakness on d4.

**13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 e6 15.g4****15...♗fxd4! 16.♗xd4 ♘xf4!N**

16...fxe5 gave Black fantastic compensation in Laursen – Hillarp Persson, Helsingør 2008, but the text move is even better.

**17.♗xf4 fxe5 18.♗g3 exd4 19.♘e2 ♘a5†****20.♗f2 d3**

White can resign.

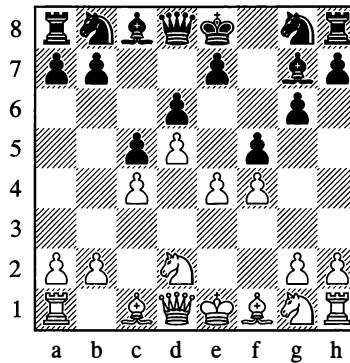
**4...d6 5.♘f3****5.c4 f5!?**

This outrageous move is quite good here. Instead 5...♗f6 6.♘c3 0–0 7.♘f3 e6 reaches a variation of the King's Indian which is regarded as quite okay for Black.

**6.♗d2**

6.♘c3? just loses a pawn to 6...♗xc3† 7.bxc3 fxe4.

6.exf5 ♘xf5 7.♗d3 ♘a5† (7...♗h6 followed by ...♗a6-c7, ...♗d7, ...0–0 and ...e6 also looks fine for Black) 8.♗d2 ♘b6 9.♗xf5 ♘xb2 10.♗c8 ♘a6! 11.♗xb7 ♘xb7 is about equal.

**6...♗f6**

6...b5!? 7.♗gf3 ♘f6 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxe5 ♘g4 10.♗b3 ♘a5 11.cxb5 ♘d7 leads to a wonderful picture of chaos that I would love to try out with Black.

**7.e5**

7.♗d3 ♘a6 8.♗gf3 b5 9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 ♘g4 is unclear; White's centre is falling apart.

**7...dxe5 8.fxe5 ♘g4 9.e6 ♘a5**

The position is unclear although the engines

like Black. There is a certain danger in allowing White a protected pawn on e6 though, and if you prefer to avoid this then 6...b5! is an excellent alternative.

5.a4 ♜a6!?

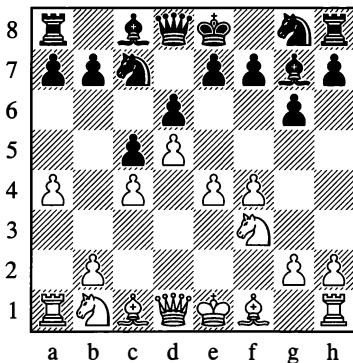
What wonderfully original play!

The simple 5...♝f6 6.♗b5† ♜fd7 7.♗f3 ♜a6 is also quite possible.

6.♗f3 ♜c7 7.c4

I do not like this move.

7.♗d3 is better, when 7...e6 is unclear.



7...f5! 8.e5 e6!

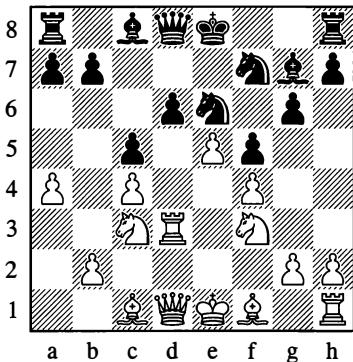
In the spirit of the Modern, the white centre is blown to smithereens!

9.dxe6

9.♘c3 is met by 9...♝h6 10.♗e2 ♜f7 when White cannot maintain the centre anymore.

9.♗a3 is what my engine comes up with, but Black has a good reply in 9...♝h6!. With the knight coming to f7, everything is in order in the black camp.

9...♝xe6 10.♗a3 ♜h6 11.♗d3 ♜f7 12.♗c3

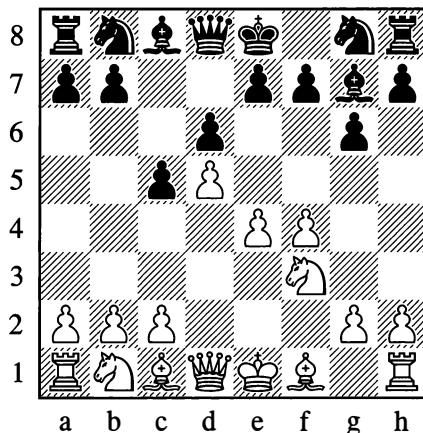


12...♝d7! 13.♗xd6?!

13.exd6 is better, although after 13...0-0 Black has a beautiful position with ...♞c6 coming next.

13...♝xd6 14.♗xd6 ♜f7! 15.h4 ♜c6

Black showed the necessary technique and won in Bareev – Speelman, Debrecen 1992. An original and beautiful game from Jon Speelman.



5...♝f6 6.c3!?

Rather a surprising way to (indirectly) defend the e4-pawn. White has some alternatives of course:

6.♗c3 0-0 7.♗d3 e6! This is the standard reaction when White meets ...c5 with d4-d5. 8.dxe6 fxe6! Compared with the main game, it makes more sense to recapture this way when White has developed the knight to c3. 9.0-0 (9.e5?! dxe5 10.♗xe5 ♜d5 gives Black the initiative) 9...♞c6 The position is roughly equal.

6.♗b5† ♜d7 7.♗xd7† ♜bx d7! (This is best, since 7...♝fxd7 8.0-0 0-0 9.a4 ♜a6 10.♗a3 is a bit passive for Black.) 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxe5 ♜g4 10.e6 ♜de5 I do not see any problem for Black. White's best continuation seems to be 11.h3, when 11...♝xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♜e5 13.exf7† ♜xf7 14.0-0 0-0 is pleasant for Black.

**6...0–0 7.♕d3 e6!**

The thematic break, and one that Black cannot do without. Moves like ...a6 and ...b5 are without meaning, but rather suicidal, in positions where White has not played ♕c3.

**8.dxe6 fxe6?!**

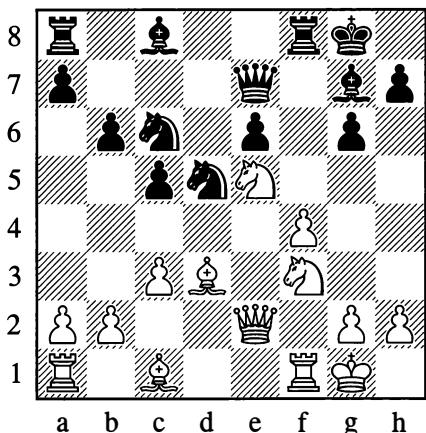
Correct is 8...♕xe6! 9.0–0 ♕c6 (but not 9...d5?! 10.e5 ♕fd7 11.♕g5 when I prefer White) 10.♕bd2 d5! 11.e5 ♕g4 12.♔e2 f6 when Black is at least equal.

**9.0–0 ♕c6 10.♔e2 ♔e7 11.♕a3 b6?!**

Better is 11...♕h5! followed by ...e5, with an interesting game where Black's chances are no worse.

**12.e5 ♕d5 13.♕c4**

Possibly 13.exd6 ♔xd6 14.♕g5! was even stronger.

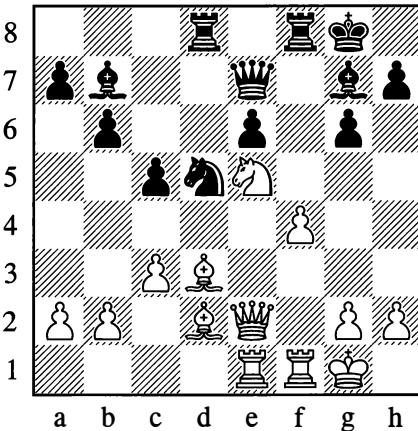
**13...dxe5 14.♕cxe5****14...♕xe5?!**

This exchange gives White the chance to take back with the knight and simultaneously defend the f4-pawn.

Better was 14...♗b7! 15.♕xc6 (15.♕d2? ♗xf4) 15...♗xc6 16.♕e5 ♕xe5! 17.♔xe5 ♕ad8 with an active position for Black.

**15.♔xe5 ♕b7 16.♔d2 ♕ad8 17.♔ael**

White has more space and a better pawn structure. His plan is simple: ♔c1 and ♔b1, followed by either g2-g3 and h4-h5, or ♔f3-h3. Black has no active plan.

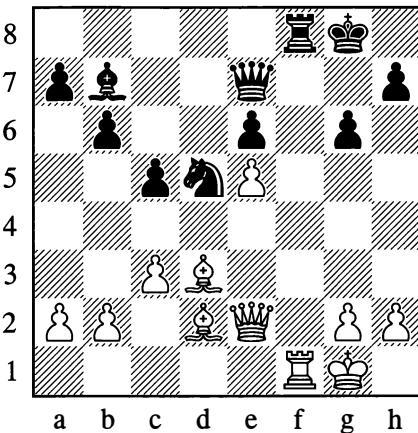
**17...♕xe5**

After 17...♔h4 18.g3 ♔h3 19.♔e4 the black queen is in trouble.

**18.♗xe5 ♕xf1†**

Black aims for a bad endgame where he might have some chances to hold.

After 18...♔h4 19.g3 ♔h3 20.♔e4! threatening c3-c4.

**19.♔xf1 ♕f8**

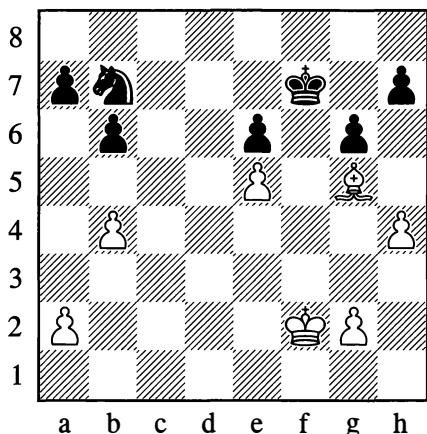
20.♕h6 ♜xf1† 21.♗xf1 ♜f7 22.♗xf7† ♜xf7  
23.♔f2

If only the pawns were not spread over such a large area, Black would have reasonable chances to hold a draw, but here it is difficult.

23...♝e7 24.♕g5 ♜d5 25.b3 ♜b7 26.h4  
♝c6 27.♕e4? ♜d8 28.♕xb7!?

Better was 28.♕d3 ♜c6 29.♕f4.

28...♜xb7 29.b4 cxb4 30.cxb4



30...♝e8?

Black can build a fortress starting with 30...b5!. After 31.♝g3 ♜g7 Black intends ...h6, so White has to try 32.h5 gxh5 33.♝f4 ♜g6 34.♕f6. A possible continuation here is 34...a5 35.a3 h6 36.♝e7 ♜f7 37.♝h4 ♜g6 38.♕f6 ♜f7 39.♝g3 ♜g6 40.♝h4 axb4 41.axb4 ♜d6 42.exd6 ♜xf6 43.♝xh5 e5 44.♝xh6 e4 45.g4 e3 46.g5† ♜e6 47.g6 e2 48.g7 e1=♛ 49.g8=♛† ♜xd6 with a draw.

31.♝g3

Now Black is lost because there is no time to set up the fortress.

31...h6!? 32.♕xh6 ♜d8 33.b5 ♜b7 34.♕e3 ♜a5 35.♝f4 ♜c4 36.♕c1 ♜f7 37.♝e4 ♜a5  
38.g4 ♜b7 39.♕a3 ♜a5 40.♝d4 ♜b7 41.♕d6  
1-0

The only ‘problem’ I can see with the opening of this game is 5.c4, when Black has to either go fishing in murky waters with 5...f5, or enter a straight King’s Indian with 5...♝f6. If you feel like trying your luck with 5...f5 I recommend doing a bit of homework first.

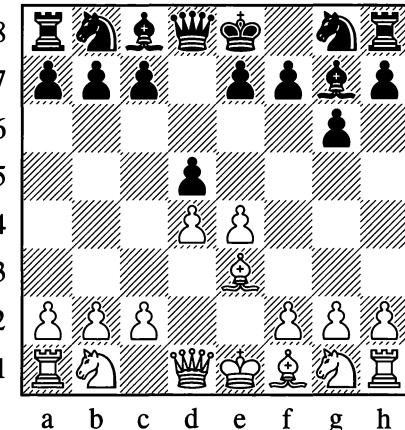
## GAME 88

Juergen Fleck – Frans Andre Cuijpers

Germany 2010

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♕e3 d5!

I cannot remember who first told me that 3...c5 4.♝c3 ♜a5 was not such a great repertoire recommendation since 5.♝f3 pretty much forces a Sicilian Dragon, and not a very good one at that. This was probably my biggest oversight in *Tiger’s Modern*.



4.exd5

This is critical and leads to a sideline of the Scandinavian. The upside is that White has already committed the bishop to e3, which is hardly the most challenging set-up.

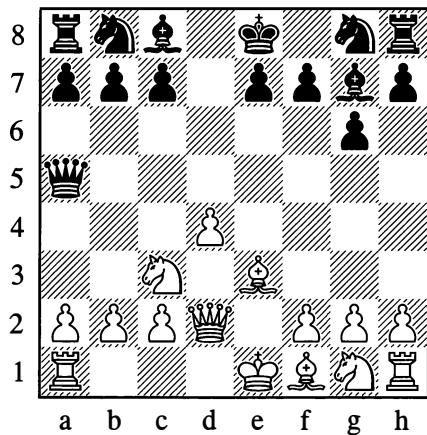
4...♛xd5 5.♝c3 ♜a5

5...♛d6!? 6.♛d2 ♜f6 7.♕f4 ♜d8 (7...♛b6 looks more active) 8.0–0–0 0–0 9.h4 h5

(9...c5!?) 10.f3 c6 11.Qh6 gave White some advantage in Alford – D. Huerta, Merida 2008.

#### 6.Wd2

After 6.Qf3 Qh6! Black seems to be doing well. For instance, 7.Qc4 Qf5 8.0–0 0–0 9.Wd2 Qd7! and Black can continue with either ...Qxe3 or ...c5 next.



#### 6...Qf6 7.Qc4

7.0–0–0 looks quite principled, but it is actually not too dangerous. 7...0–0 8.Qh6 Wd8 9.Qxg7 Qxg7 10.Qf3 Qg4 11.Wf4 This was Gomez Esteban – Illescas Cordoba, Leon 2006, and now 11...Qxf3!N 12.Wxf3 Qc6 13.d5 Qb4 14.Qc4 c6! is more comfortable for Black.

#### 7...0–0 8.Qge2 c6?!

This is both unnecessary and passive. Much better was 8...Wd8!N intending ...c5. Just like my Silicon Sidekick, I already prefer Black here.

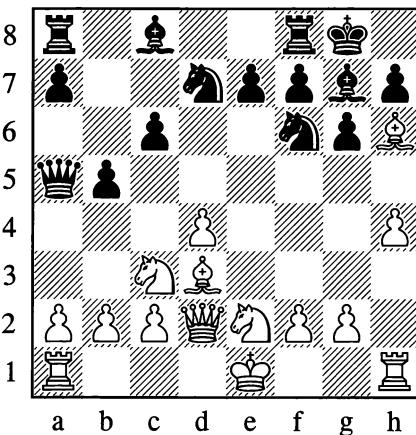
#### 9.Qh6 Qbd7 10.h4 b5!?

This plan is positionally suspect, but it seems to hold up on tactical grounds.

Simpler was 10...Qxh6 11.Wxh6 Wf5 12.h5 Qg4 13.Wf4 Wxf4 14.Qxf4 g5 with equality.

#### 11.Qd3

11.Qxg7 Qxg7 12.Qd3 seems better at first, but after 12...b4 13.Qe4 Qa6 14.h5! (in the event of 14.Qxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxa6 Wxa6 16.h5 Qae8 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.0–0 e5 Black's pawn structure could be better, but he has a lot of activity) 14...Qxd3 15.cxd3 gxh5 16.Q2g3 Qg8 17.Qf1 Qh8 18.Qe1 Wxa2 things are still not clear.



#### 11...b4 12.Qe4

Now Black's queenside pawns are a sorry sight.

#### 12...Wd5?

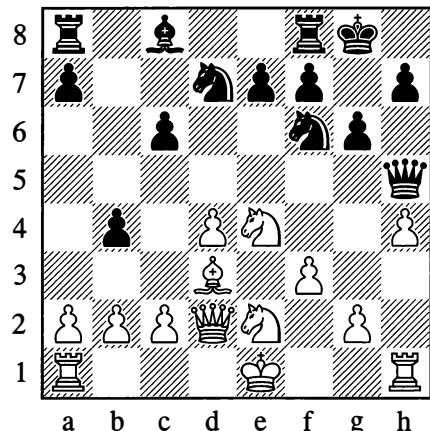
Black could have obtained decent prospects with 12...Qxh6! 13.Wxh6 b3† 14.Q2c3 (14.c3 Qa6! is good for Black) 14...Qxe4 15.Qxe4 Qf6 16.h5 Qf5 17.Qxf5 Wxf5 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.cxb3 e5 when the position is double-edged.

#### 13.f3?!

13.Qxg7! Qxg7 14.f3 is better, when White is threatening both h4-h5 and Wxb4.

#### 13...Qxh6 14.Wxh6 Wh5 15.Wd2

15.Wxh5 Qxh5 16.a3! is thematic and leaves White with a pleasant endgame, where Black will regret the self-inflicted harm that has been done to his queenside.



15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$

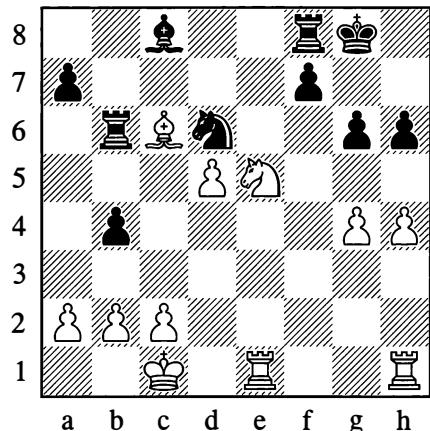
18. $\mathbb{W}g5$

Black should not survive this position, but miracles can happen.

18... $\mathbb{B}b6$  19.d5 h6 20. $\mathbb{W}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  21.g4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22.0-0-0 e6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5?! 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e4

25.fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  26. $\mathbb{E}de1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  27. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

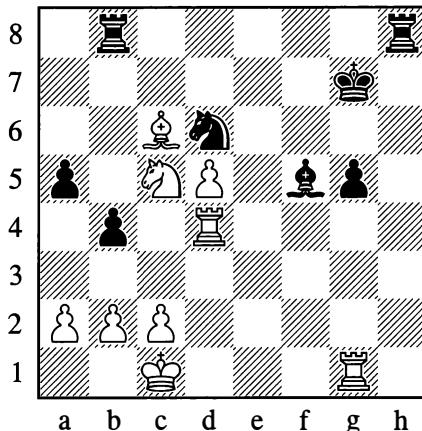
27. $\mathbb{W}hg1$  was stronger, leaving the path open for a future  $\mathbb{E}e7$ .



27... $\mathbb{B}d8$  28. $\mathbb{W}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  29. $\mathbb{W}f4$  g5 30.hxg5 hgx5 31. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  32. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ??

32. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! was a better way to continue, intending  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ .

32...a5 33. $\mathbb{W}h1$  f5! 34.gxf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  35. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  36. $\mathbb{E}g1$



36... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ??

After 36... $\mathbb{B}h2$ ! 37. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{B}xd2$  38. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  Black is doing quite well, and can even dream of a third possible result.

37. $\mathbb{W}d7$   $\mathbb{B}h2$  38. $\mathbb{W}xf5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  39. $\mathbb{E}dg4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  40. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

40. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! intending  $\mathbb{E}f1\uparrow$  would have given excellent winning chances.

40... $\mathbb{E}c8$  41. $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  42. $\mathbb{E}4g2?$   $\mathbb{B}xg2$  43. $\mathbb{B}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  44. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  g4 45. $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  46. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  47.c3

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Although Black suffered a bit in the endgame, the opening is nothing to be afraid of. In the event of 8... $\mathbb{B}d8$ !N White will be hard pressed to prove equality.

## GAME 89

Jorge Cori – Tiger Hillarp Persson

Porto Mannu 2009

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  d5! 4.e5 c5 5.c3  $\mathbb{C}xd4$  6. $\mathbb{C}xd4$

The actual move order in this game was 3...c5 4.c3  $\mathbb{C}xd4$  5.cxd4 d5 6.e5, but I have altered it to emphasize the more accurate sequence.

**6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?**

Strangely, there are hardly any high-quality games featuring Black's strongest move:

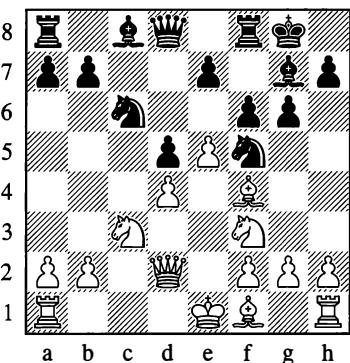
6... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !

This highlights the downside of having developed the bishop to e3.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0–0 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$

It seems better to play 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  intending 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10.0–0, when 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  11. $fxe3$   $\mathbb{f}6$  12. $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13. $\mathbb{E}c1$  e6 14.a3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  looks balanced.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  f6

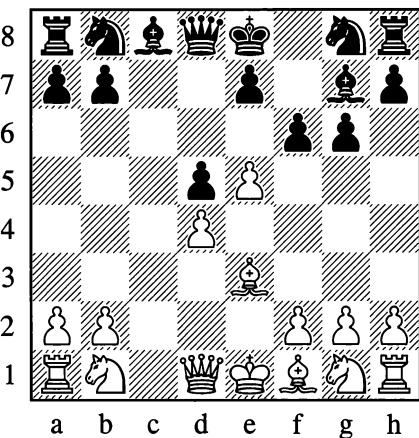


11.g4?  $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ !?

11... $fxe5$ ! 12. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13.h3 e6 is better for Black.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $fxe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxcc6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$

In Karatorossian – Chernyshov, Budapest 2004, Black had decent prospects with three pawns for a piece.

**7.f4!?**

There is no reason to be worried about 7. $exf6$ !?, when 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{E}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is pleasant for Black, since 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ? allows 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !.

The most challenging move is: 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (After 9... $fxe5$ ! 10. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$   $bxcc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  Black has no good answer to the plan of  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and later  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .) 10. $exf6$   $exf6$  11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  0–0 13.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  Intuitively I would evaluate this position as somewhat better for White, but the engine suggests that it is close to equal after either 14... $\mathbb{E}c8$  or 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15. $fxe3$  f5.

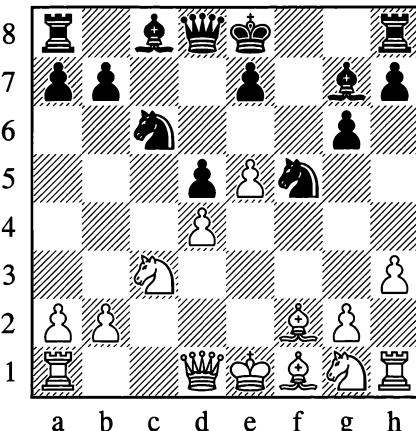
**7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$** 

I was more than happy with my position at this point, and maybe I even lowered my guard a bit.

**8.h3!?**

White should prefer 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , although 8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.0–0  $fxe5$  11. $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is at least equal for Black.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $fxe5$ ! 10. $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



11...0–0?!

I cannot understand how I missed 11... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ , which should lead to a clear advantage. After 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  White must take care not to run into 15. $\mathbb{W}d3?$   $\mathbb{B}xf3!$  16. $\mathbb{G}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d3\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  with fantastic compensation for Black.

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$

I planned to meet the critical 12. $g4!$  with 12... $\mathbb{Q}fxd4!$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  looks far too passive) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e6 with good compensation.

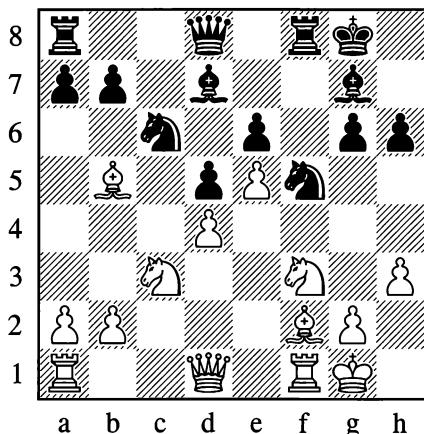
### 12...e6?

Objectively speaking there is nothing wrong with this move, provided Black follows up with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  in the near future. However, since I obviously did not plan on doing that, my move deserves the question mark. I should have known better than to end up in the kind of position that arises after move 16.

Once again, 12... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  is clearly better for Black.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.0–0 h6?

If a student of mine played such a passive and slow move I would be horrified. There was still time for 14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  15. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with something close to equality.



### 15. $g4!$ $\mathbb{Q}fe7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This is the kind of position that Black should avoid at all costs. I don't have a single active piece!

### 16...a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

I was hoping for 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  24. $\mathbb{B}xf7$   $\mathbb{W}g3\uparrow$  25. $\mathbb{W}g2$   $\mathbb{W}xg2\uparrow$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  when things are much less clear.

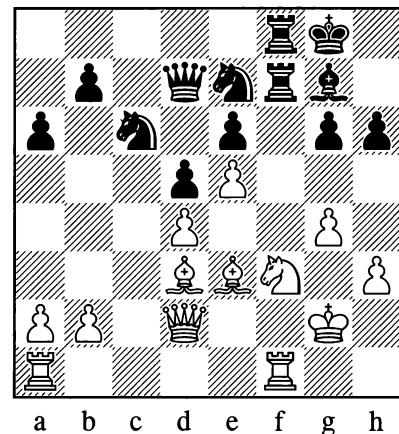
### 20... $\mathbb{B}af8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd7?!$

This gave me some hope. For one thing, I get rid of my bad bishop. (Who am I kidding? The other one is just as bad.) Secondly, I am happy to have one less minor piece in need of a personal space on my first and second row.

I have no idea how I would have survived after 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22. $\mathbb{B}ac1$  g5 (22... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  is even worse after 23.h4 intending h4-h5) at which point White can either play 23.h4 immediately or continue to strengthen his position.

### 21... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

Despite White's previous inaccuracy, Black still has a poor position with no counterplay.



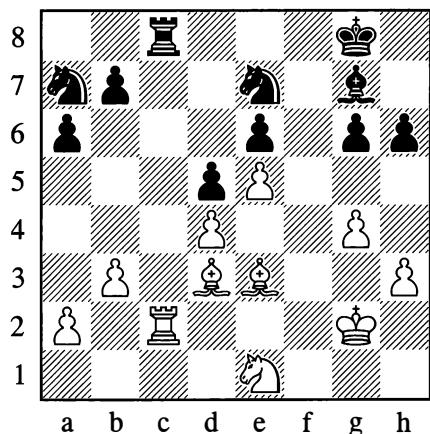
### 22... $\mathbb{W}c7?!$ 23. $\mathbb{B}f2$

23. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  allows 23... $\mathbb{B}xf3!$  24. $\mathbb{B}xf3$   $\mathbb{B}xf3$

25.♕xf3 ♗xd4† 26.♕g2 ♘xe5 27.♗xg7 ♘xg7. Even though Black does not have full compensation for the exchange, I considered this to be a huge improvement on my position from a few moves ago.

23...♘a5! 24.♗xa5 ♗xa5 25.b3 ♗ac6 26.♗af1 ♘c8 27.♗e1 ♘xf2† 28.♗xf2 ♗a7 29.♗c2!

White has more space and should not help me by exchanging more pieces. Now I believe Black's position can be held.



29...♗xc2† 30.♗xc2 ♘f7 31.♗f3 ♘f8 32.♗d2 ♗ec6 33.a4 a5 34.♗e3

34.h4 ♗b4 35.♗xb4 axb4 36.♗f4 ♘e7 is dead equal.

34...♗b4 35.♗xb4 ♘xb4 36.♗e2

½-½

Despite my falling into trouble in the middlegame, I could have secured a great position had I only played ...♗h6 at the right time. Feel free to follow in my footsteps in the opening, although 6...♗h6! looks like an even more convincing route to equality.

In the next game we will look at a few ways in which White may attempt a quick pawn advance on the kingside.

## GAME 90

Andres Rodriguez – Vladislav Tkachiev

Villa Martelli 1997

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗c3

Apart from this move we have covered 3.♗f3, 3.f4, 3.♗e3, 3.♗c4 and 3.g3. Are there any other alternatives? The answer is yes.

3.f3 d5! Other moves give White more options. 4.e5 c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗e3 ♘h6 7.g4 cxd4 8.cxd4 f6 9.♗d2 ♗f7 10.exf6 exf6 11.♗b5 f5 Black was clearly better in Kaloskambis – Grivas, Chalkidiki 2003.

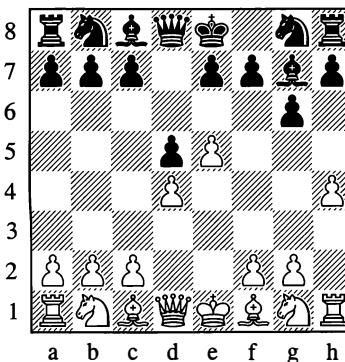
White has also tried the exotic:

3.h4?! d5!

It is common knowledge that the most effective way to counter an attack on the flank is by striking in the centre.

4.e5

After 4.exd5 ♘xd5 5.♗e3 ♗f6 the meaning of h2-h4 is lost on me.



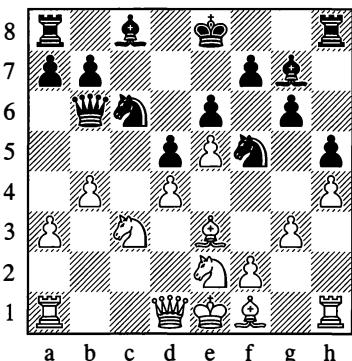
4...h5! 5.♗e2

Both 5.♗d3 and 5.♗e3 are better, but in both cases Black gets an excellent game by playing 5...c5 followed by ...♗c6 and ...♗h6, waiting for the right moment to develop (and hopefully exchange) the c8-bishop.

5...c5 6.c3 ♗c6 7.a3?

White has to play ambitiously, otherwise Black will get a wonderful version of an Advance Caro-Kann.

7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  8.b4 cxd4 9.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  e6  
11.g3  $\mathbb{W}b6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$

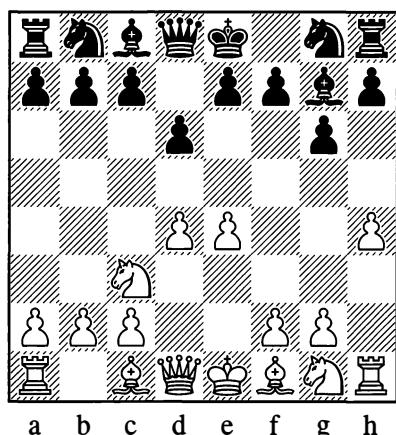
This theme is unique to this structure.

13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14.fxe3  $\mathbb{W}xe3$  15. $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$   
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black had three pawns for a piece, plus the bishop pair and the initiative, and went on to win a splendid game in Granda Zuniga – Kakageldyev, Yerevan 1996.

### 3...d6 4.h4

After 4.g4!? I am not sure about 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 6.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  7.h3 c6, but Black can try 4...a6 or – because f4 has been weakened – 4...e5.



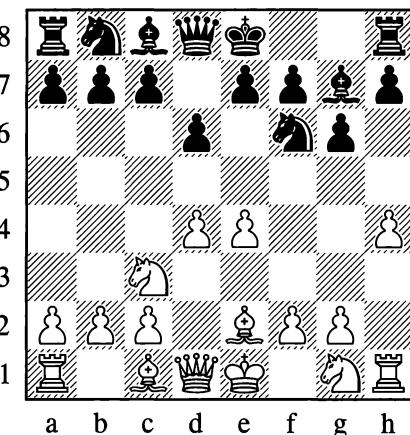
### 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

After 4...h5?!, the black kingside is prematurely weakened and White should go for the most aggressive of ideas: 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! c6 (5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 6. $\mathbb{W}f3$  e6 The position resembles a well-known variation where the pawns are still on h7 and h2. This small difference is clearly to White's advantage, as 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  8.0–0–0 looks horrible for Black.

### 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

5.f3 should be met by 5...c6!, when 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 gives Black an improved version of the Flexible Dragon Unleashed. The difference is felt after 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  h5 8.0–0–0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  when Black is virtually a tempo up on my main line from Game 27, since he has avoided ...a6.

The game continuation has been surprisingly popular, but it is reduced to something of a paper tiger by Black's next move.



### 5...c5!

This is a convincing answer, although there are still dangers ahead.

5...h6?! is flexible, but Black's kingside looks a bit shaky after 6.h5 g5 7.f4 gxf4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  and White had a strong initiative in Rodriguez – Spangenberg, Vicente Lopez 2002. Black can improve with 8...c6, but White is still better.

5...h5 is well met by 6.Qf3! (6.Qh3 Qxh3! 7.Qxh3 c6 can be compared with my recommendation in the Flexible Dragon Unleashed) 6...Qg4 7.Qg5 Qxe2 8.Wxe2 Qc6 9.Qe3 Qg4 10.0–0–0 and White has the initiative.

### 6.dxc5

The alternative is:

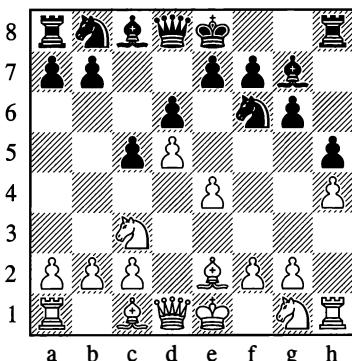
#### 6.d5

Considering the bad reputation of the game continuation, I was expecting this move to be played a lot more.

#### 6...h5!

This is Black's best idea, stopping the white h-pawn from causing trouble.

Black should avoid the frequently recommended 6...0–0 7.h5 b5 8.hxg6 b4. Black may be doing fine after 9.gxh7†? Qh8 10.Qb1 Qxe4, because the white centre is crumbling and the king is absolutely safe on h8 behind the enemy pawn. However, it makes much more sense for White to play 9.gxf7† Qxf7 10.Qb1 Qxe4 11.Qf3, when I suspect Black's position is more original than good.



#### 7.Qh3

7.Qf3 Qg4! 8.Qf4 Qbd7 9.Wd2 Wa5 10.0–0 0–0 11.Qfe1 Qxf3 12.gxf3 Qe5 was comfortable for Black in Milov – Gerber, Switzerland 2012.

#### 7...Qa6

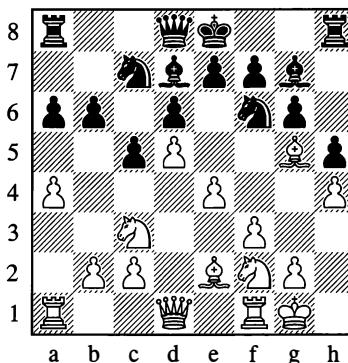
7...Qxh3!? 8.Qxh3 reaches a strange situation where it will be hard for either side to open the position without giving the opponent the upper hand.

#### 8.Qg5 Qc7 9.a4 b6 10.f3 a6 11.Qf2 Qd7

11...Qb8!? 12.Qb1 Qh7 (or 12...b5 13.axb5 axb5 14.b4) 13.Qd2 0–0 is unclear.

#### 12.0–0

Here Black can improve on the game Jansson – Elsness, Norway 1993.

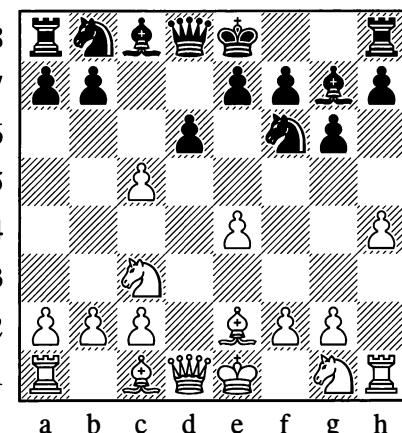


#### 12...Qh7!N

In the game Black preferred 12...b5?. Now instead of playing 13.Wd2 with an equal position, White could have gained a considerable advantage with 13.e5! dx5 14.d6!.

#### 13.Qe3 b5

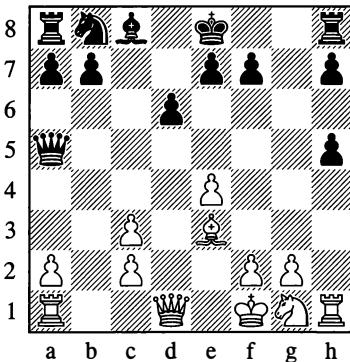
I prefer Black's position.



**6... $\mathbb{W}a5$  7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

White has two other sensible ways of dealing with the threat to the e4-pawn:

7. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  9.h5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  11.bxc3  $gxh5$  is an important idea to remember.



Black has given up the dark-squared bishop for the c3-knight in order to ruin White's pawn structure and gain a freer hand on the light squares. White is slightly worse, since 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c4\uparrow$  leaves him a pawn down. Alternatively, after 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  Black obtains an excellent game with the plan of ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  and ...0-0-0. White's pawn structure is badly damaged, and Black can build up the pressure along the g-file and the a6-f1 diagonal.

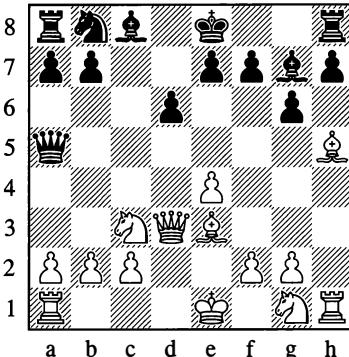
7. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  9.h5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ !

There it is again.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  12.e5  $dxe5$  13. $\mathbb{W}xd8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  is better for Black.

10. $\mathbb{W}b5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $gxh5$  13.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (13..f5 is fine for Black according to Chernin and Alburt) 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  15.g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is good for Black, who intends ...h4 next.



10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ ! 11.bxc3  $gxh5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14.f3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$

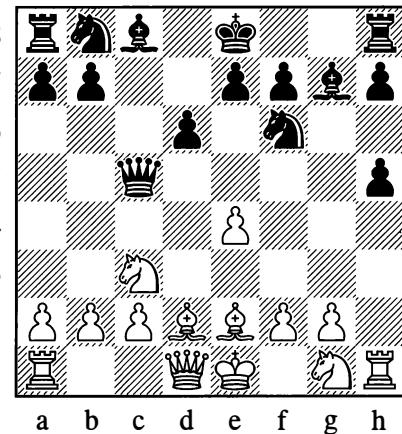
Black can also ignore the pawn with 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  f6, with a good position.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  17. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black was clearly better in Balzar – Thiede, Germany 2006.

**7... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  8.h5  $gxh5$**

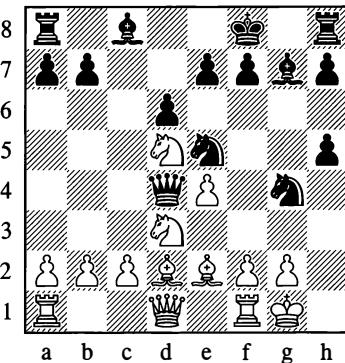
8... $\mathbb{Q}xh5\uparrow$ ! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $gxh5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  gives White too much activity.



**9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$**

It is important to prevent White from picking up the h-pawn in such a way that the rook ends up on h5.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}ce5$  13.0-0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  looks dangerous for Black.



Now the weak 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4?$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  was fine for Black in Malaniuk – Azmaiparashvili, Kiev 1986, but I am not sure if Black would have been able to survive after 14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5!N$ .

### 11. $\mathbb{B}f3!?$

This weakening of the e3-square is exactly what Black was hoping for. Instead White should try:

11.  $\mathbb{Q}xh5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$

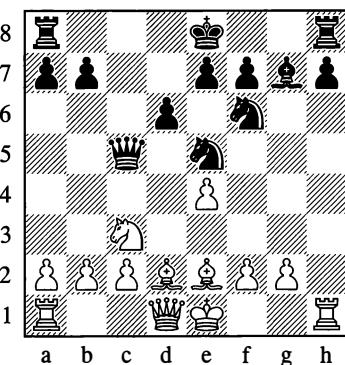
12...  $\mathbb{B}d8?N$  is also playable, for instance

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is fine for Black)

13...  $d5!$  14.  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$

16.  $c3$   $\mathbb{W}xg2$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  18.  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $h5!$  and with ...  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  coming next, the position is balanced.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$



13...  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$

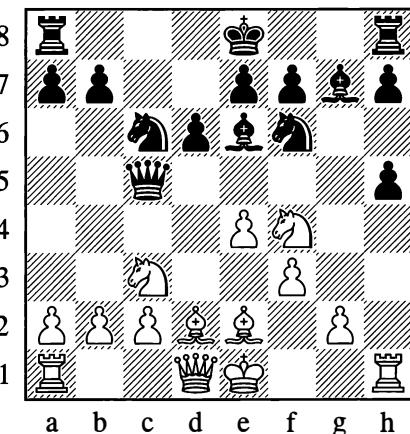
13...  $\mathbb{B}c8!N$  is better, adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  15.  $\mathbb{W}f3$

White had a slight advantage due to his better pawn structure in Royset – Bull Jager, Tromsø 1996.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$

Another, possibly better, idea is 11...  $\mathbb{Q}d7N$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  13.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  with mutual chances.



### 12. $\mathbb{W}c1$

White makes a strange move to get the bishop to e3, but Black should be fine anyway.

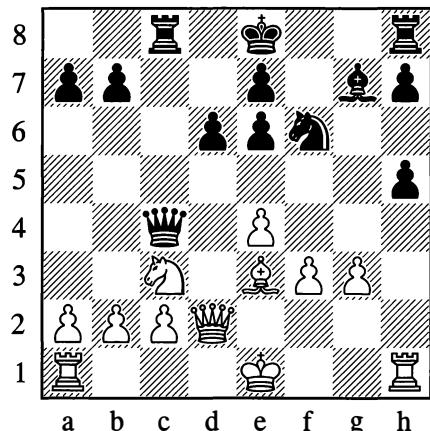
Another plan is 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  intending  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and 0–0–0. Play may continue 13...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14.  $f4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  0–0–0 16. 0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with an unclear position.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  can be met by 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  15.  $cx d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c2\uparrow$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xc2$   $\mathbb{W}xe3\uparrow$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  0–0 when Black's initiative on the dark squares makes up for the damaged kingside structure.

### 14... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 18. $g3!?$

Black gets a strong initiative after 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xa7!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{B}g8$ , but 18. 0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  20.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21.  $\mathbb{B}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  is about equal and should have been played.



**18...Qd7 19.Qxh5 Qxc3**

I do not quite understand why a draw was agreed here, since after 20.Qxc3 Qxc3† 21.bxc3 0–0 (or 21...Qf8) 22.Qg5† Qf7 Black is slightly better, as White's pawn structure is the stuff of nightmares.

½–½

White's set-up with an early h2-h4 is reasonably challenging, but Black's reply with a timely ...c5 works well. The position after 11.Qxh5 is fairly critical, but Black should have enough counterplay. In the event of 11.f3, I would tend to favour 11...Qd7 instead of Tkachiev's 11...Qe6.

In the remainder of the chapter we will see what happens when White refrains from 2.d4, which usually results in some sort of Closed Sicilian.

## GAME 91

Jean Marc Degraeve – Etienne Bacrot

Marseille (rapid) 2001

**1.e4 g6**

The actual move order of this game was 1...c5 2.Qc3 Qc6 3.f4 g6 4.Qf3 Qg7.

**2.Qc3**

This is quite a tricky move order which makes it hard, if not impossible, to reach a Modern set-up. On the other hand it leads to a variation of the Sicilian that I see no reason to fear.

If White is trying to avoid the Modern, it is less precise to play 2.f4, since Black can counter with: 2...d5! (of course there is nothing wrong with 2...Qg7, when 3.Qf3 c5 reverts to a Closed Sicilian.) 3.e5 c5! 4.Qf3 Qc6 Now 5.Qb5 Qh6! is fine for Black, and 5.c3 Qh6 6.d4? cxd4 7.cxd4 Qg4 loses a pawn for White.

**2...Qg7!**

After 2...d6 3.f4 Qg7 4.Qf3 Black has nothing better than 4...c5, when 5.Qc4 gives White an improved version of a Grand Prix Attack, as a future ...d5 will involve the loss of a tempo.

**3.f4**

3.g3 is seen in the next game.

**3...c5!**

Now we are heading for some version of a Closed Sicilian. I expect some complaints over this recommendation, but I truly believe Black should be extremely happy to get this in the opening. If White played these systems in every game against the Sicilian, I would stop playing the Modern immediately.

It is also possible to play 3...c6 if you have the position after 4.d4 d5 5.e5 in your repertoire.

**4.Qf3**

4.g3 Qc6 5.Qg2 d6 leads to the next game.

4.Qc4 is met by 4...e6!, just as in the next note.

**4...Qc6 5.Qb5**

5.g4 gives Black a pleasant choice. The surprising 5...Qxc3!? 6.dxc3 Qf6 wins a pawn

(including after 7.  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ?  $d5!$ ). White has more than one way to obtain some compensation, but Black should be better in the long run due to the numerous holes that will arise in White's pawn structure. Alternatively, 5... $d5!$ ? 6. $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  looks like an excellent, and most likely temporary, pawn sacrifice.

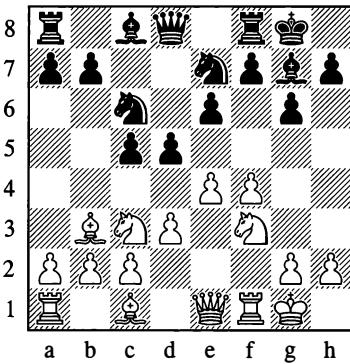
White can initiate the so-called "Grand Prix Attack" with:

5.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$

This move is generally stronger after Black has played ... $d6$ . In this position I believe it to be somewhat dubious.

5... $e6$ ! 6.  $f5$ ?

This is White's best try to complicate things. 6.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  7.  $d3$  (After 7.  $e5$ ?!  $d6$  8.  $exd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  White will have a hard time remembering why on Earth the pawn went to f4.) 7... $d5$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0–0 9.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  Now Black easily gets a good position with:



9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! The simplest and strongest plan is to relieve White of the b3-bishop. 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $b6$ ! 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  12.  $axb3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13.  $e5$   $a5$  with a promising position for Black. Some chess writers have practically made a living from writing books about this rubbish (from White's side), but I recommend playing something real instead.

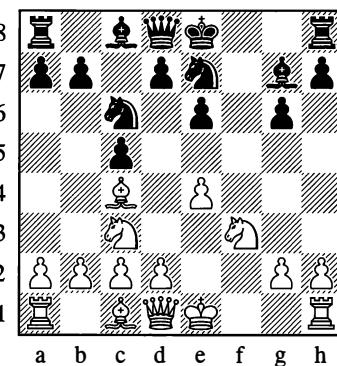
6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  7.  $fxe6$

Here Black can choose between two good moves.

7... $fxe6$ !

This is the ambitious option which aims to refute White's set-up.

7... $dxe6$  is the solid alternative. A possible continuation is 8.  $d3$  0–0 9.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}ec6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $f6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  13.  $axb3$  as in Pavlovic – Semkov, Yerevan 1988, and here 13... $b6$  would have been at least equal for Black.



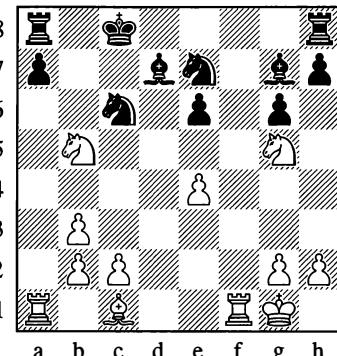
8.  $d3$   $d5$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $b5$ !

This line has been tested in several hundred games, but I will just mention one illustrative game featuring logical play on both sides.

10.0–0  $c4$  11.  $dxc4$   $dxc4$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $cxb3$  14.  $AXB3$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $AXB3$   $h6$ ! also leaves White without enough of an initiative to make up for his material deficit.

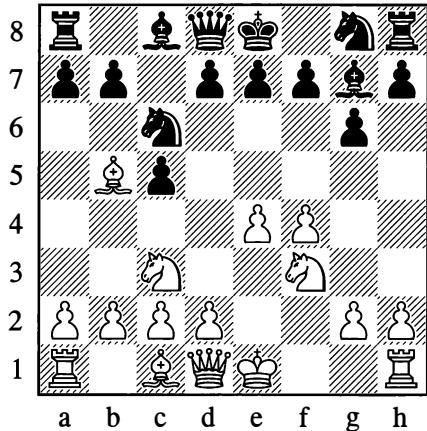
14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$



16.  $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17.  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}fd6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

19.♕xf8† ♕xf8 20.♕f4 ♕xb5 21.♕xb5 ♔7c6  
22.♔d4 ♔b7

White did not have enough for the piece in Compton – White, Uxbridge 2009.



### 5...♘d4!

If White is allowed to take on c6, then Black will get an inferior version of the popular 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.♗xc6 line, since the f4-pawn will help White to control the centre, improving his chances of stifling the bishops.

### 6.0–0

This is much more common than 6.♘xd4 cxd4 7.♗e2, which is best met by: 7...a6 (I prefer to avoid both 7...♗b6 8.a4!, and 7...♗f6 8.e5 ♘d5, when 9.c3 is rather unpleasant for Black.) 8.♗d3 (8.♗c4?! d5! 9.exd5 b5 10.♗b3 d3 11.cxd3 ♘f6 is better for Black.) 8...d6 9.b3!? (9.0–0 leads to the main line.) 9...b5 10.♗b2 e5 Black will continue with ...♗f6, ...0–0 and ...♗b7, with excellent play.

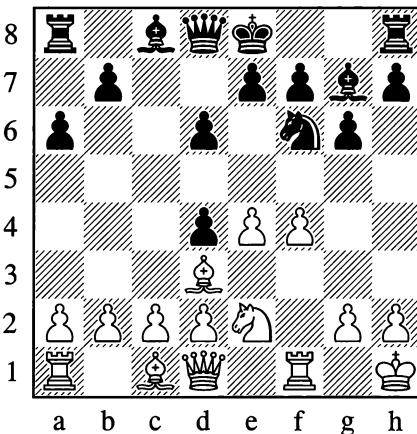
### 6...a6

It is also possible to play 6...♘xb5 7.♘xb5 d5, but I prefer to keep the pawn structure as flexible as possible considering that the opponent has two knights.

**7.♗d3 d6 8.♘xd4 cxd4 9.♗e2 ♘f6 10.♗h1**

Obviously 10.♘xd4? ♗b6 11.c3 e5 loses a piece.

Also possible is 10.c3, when 10...dxc3 11.bxc3 (11.dxc3 0–0 12.f5 b5 13.♘d4 ♗b7 14.♗e2 ♗c8 15.♗d2 ♗c5 This position is balanced, but now White loses it. 16.b4? ♗e5 17.♗f4 ♗xe4 18.♗xe5 ♗xd3 19.♗xd3 dxe5 and Black was winning in Lopez Abad – Anand, Villarrobledo 1998.) 11...0–0 12.♗c2 b5 With ...♗b7 coming next, Black was at least equal in Hickl – Damljanovic, Graz 1987.



### 10...♘d7 11.b4!

This move is important for two reasons: it makes it impossible for Black to play ...♘c5, and it prepares to attack the d4-pawn with ♗b2.

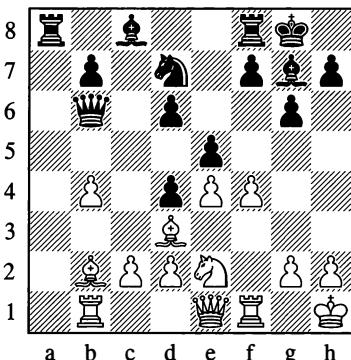
### 11...♗b6?

This is an attempt to force White's hand. The original game of this line continued 11...0–0 12.♗b2 ♗b6 13.♗b1 ♗b8 14.c3 ♘c6 15.h3 ♗e6 16.a4 ♗ac8 17.♗e1 dxc3 18.♗xc3 ♘xc3 19.dxc3 f6! with equality, Adams – Anand, Groningen 1997.

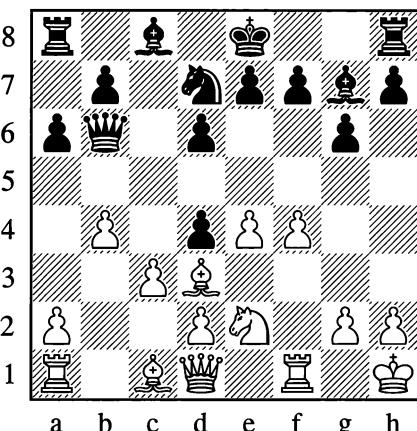
### 12.c3

After 12.♗b1?! ♘c5! 13.bxc5 ♗xb1 14.cxd6 exd6 15.f5 ♗e5 White does not get enough compensation.

12.a3 was once tried by Gawain Jones, who has been something of a champion of this line. His opponent reacted well with 12...0–0! when, compared to the Adams – Anand game, White has already been forced to play a more passive move. The game continued: 13.♗b2 e5 14.♕e1 a5! 15.♗b1 axb4 16.axb4



16...♝f6! 17.c3 dxc3 18.♕xc3 ♜e8 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♝g1 ♜d7 (20...♝h5!N is more flexible; it is not clear that the bishop is best placed on d7.) 21.b5 This was Jones – Ramnath Bhuvanesh, New Delhi 2007, and here 21...♝h5N intending ...♝f4 would have left Black with some initiative.



12...dxc3 13.dxc3 a5! 14.♗b1 axb4

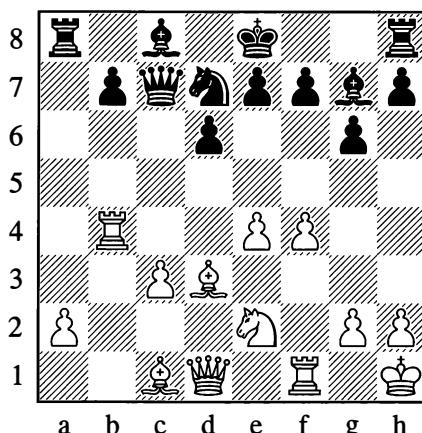
**15.♗xb4!?**

After this move White's pawn structure is poor, but the attacking plan of f4-f5 followed

by ♜f4 is not without poison. The alternative was 15.cxb4 ♜xa2 16.♗c4 ♜a8 17.♗d3 with some compensation for the pawn.

**15...♛c7?**

It is better to play 15...♛d8! 16.f5 0–0 17.♗f4 ♜c5 18.♗c4 ♜h8, when a subsequent ♜d5 will not gain a tempo against the black queen.



**16.♗b1?!**

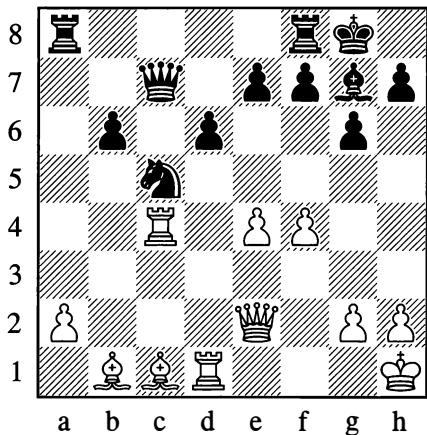
This move is far too slow. It was better to play 16.f5! 0–0 17.♗f4 when Black comes under a serious attack. One possible defence is 17...♝f6 (in comparison to 15...♛d8!, it is worth noting that 17...♜c5 18.♗d5 ♛d8 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗e3 turns out badly for Black) 18.♗b3 g5 19.♗d5 ♜xd5 20.exd5 h6. Black has avoided an immediate disaster, but 21.c4 ♜e5 22.♗c2 f6 23.a4 leaves him extremely passive.

**16...0–0 17.♕e1 b6 18.♗h4**

Degraeve truly had a bad day. This ‘attack’ is not at all realistic.

**18...♜a6 19.♗f2 ♜c5 20.♗d1 ♜xe2 21.♗xe2 ♜xc3 22.♗c4 ♜g7**

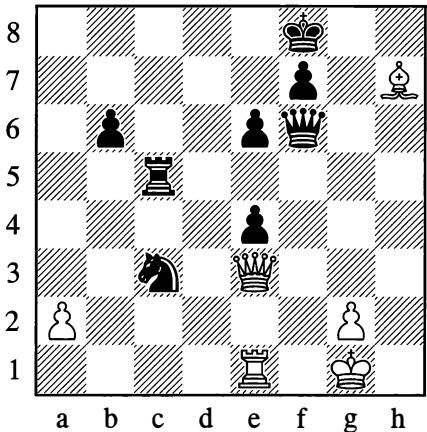
With an extra pawn and a rock-solid position, the rest should be simple for Black.



23.♗b2 ♗xb2 24.♗xb2 ♘a4 25.♗cc1 ♗b8  
26.♗c2 ♘a7 27.♗b1 ♘c8 28.h4 ♘ac7 29.♗d2  
♗a4 30.♗xc7 ♗xc7 31.h5 ♗c3 32.♗e2 ♘c5  
33.hxg6 hxg6 34.f5 ♘g7

34...♗h8†! 35.♗g1 ♘c3 would have ended the fight.

35.♗f2 ♗f6 36.♗g1 ♘c3 37.♗e1 gxg5 38.e5  
dxe5 39.♗xf5 e6 40.♗g3† ♘f8 41.♗h7 e4  
42.♗e3



42...♗h4?

42...♗c4 wins. Now Black is forced to start all over again, but he eventually prevails after a few more errors on both sides.

43.♗xe4 ♘xe4 44.♗xe4 ♗xe4 45.♗xe4  
♗e7 46.♗b4 ♘c6 47.a4 e5 48.♗b5 ♘e6

49.a5 bxa5 50.♗xa5 ♘f5 51.♗a7 f6 52.♗a4  
♗c2 53.♗a6 e4 54.♗f1 ♘g5 55.♗a5† ♘f4  
56.♗a6 f5 57.♗a5 ♘g4 58.♗e5 ♘f4 59.♗a5  
e3 60.♗b5 ♘f2† 61.♗g1 ♘g3 62.♗e5 ♘xg2†  
63.♗f1 ♘f2† 64.♗e1 f4

0-1

I expect some bad blood due to my reluctance to take White's system more seriously. But in truth, I consider it one of those lines where it is a bad idea to know too much. Stick to the essentials; everything else is a waste of brain cells!

## GAME 92

Michael Adams – Vladimir Kramnik

Las Vegas (Rapid – 5.3) 1999

1.e4 g6

Again I have doctored the move order; the actual sequence was 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♘g7.

2.♘c3 ♘g7 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♘c6 5.d3

5.♗f3?! makes little sense. After 5...e5! 6.0-0 ♘ge7 7.d3 d6 White's only decent plan is to move the knight from f3 to make way for f2-f4, when Black will take on f4 and continue by analogy with the main game.

After 5.♗ge2 d6 6.0-0 White's knight is somewhat misplaced on e2, since the attacking plan of f2-f4, h2-h3, g3-g4, f4-f5 and ♗e1-h4 is less threatening when there is no knight on f3. In this position I would avoid 6...♗f6, as this gives White the extra option of 7.d4, leading to a type of Sicilian Dragon. Instead I recommend 6...♗b8!, which enables Black to get his queenside play underway with ...b5 (and possibly ...b4), and wait for White to commit to d2-d3 before playing ...♗f6 and ...0-0.

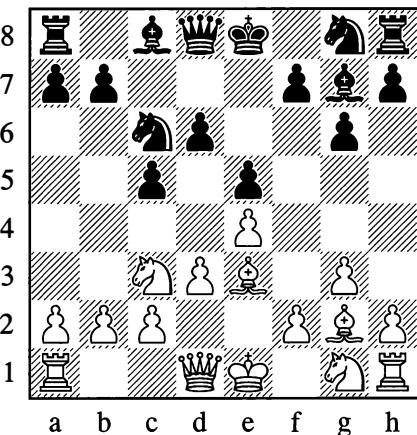
5...d6 6.♗e3

This is sometimes played with the intention of  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , which is as close to laughable as it gets. Obviously Adams has something else in mind.

6.f4 e5 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8. $\mathbb{W}d2$  transposes to the main game, while 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  is mentioned in the notes to the next game) 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  leads to the main game after 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ . However, please note that 8...0–0 9.f5!? gxf5 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is complex, and should be avoided unless you know it well.

### 6...e5

This move is the main pillar of the “Botvinnik System”. Now f2-f4 can be met by ...exf4, when each possible recapture will entail a drawback of some kind.



### 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8.f4

8.h4 h5! 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is at least equal for Black, who intends to meet f2-f4 with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

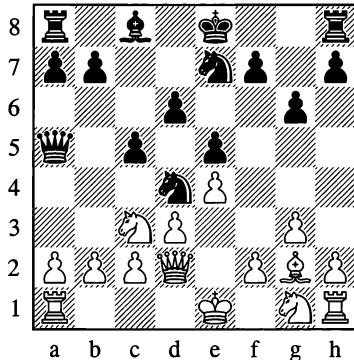
Black also has nothing to fear from:

8. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$

8...0–0! 9.h4  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  10. $\mathbb{W}xh6$  f6! is also good, as 11.h5? g5 gives Black a big advantage.

9. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  10. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !

10...0–0 is more ambitious, intending to meet 11.h4 with 11...f6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and ...d5.

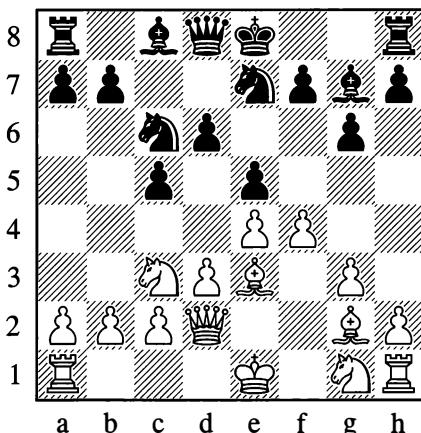


### 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

If White tries 11.h4 then 11...h6!? looks reasonable.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15.exd5 0–0

With approximate equality. After 8. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , this must be considered something of a success for White. I have a feeling that Black should be able to play for more with one of the alternatives mentioned at moves 8 and 10.



### 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 10.0–0

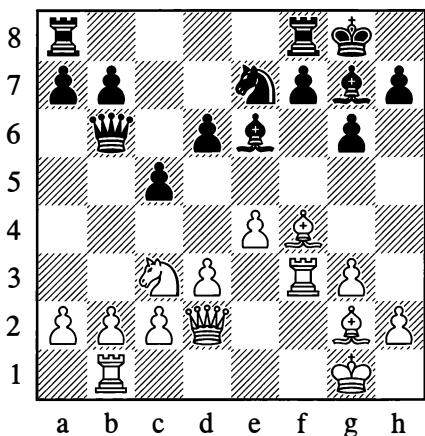
When White puts the queen on d2, it means that f4-f5 will generally not be a threat, as the queen cannot jump to h5. Nevertheless, it is still a good idea for Black to exchange on f4 now.

### 10...exf4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

After 11.gxf4?! f5! it will be hard for White to change the pawn structure to his advantage. In the meantime Black has a simple way to coordinate his forces: 12.e5 ♜ec6 13.♗g5 dxе5 14.♗d5† ♜h8 15.♗f7† ♜xf7 16.♗xf7 ♜b4 and Black has fantastic compensation for the exchange.

### 11...♗xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♜b6! 13.♗b1 ♜e6

This is a critical moment for White. How to continue?



### 14.♗h6

No better is 14.♗g5 ♜c6 (14...♜ae8 15.♗f6 is a bit annoying for Black) 15.♗d5 ♜xd5 16.exd5 ♜e5 17.♗ff1 f5?! 18.♗h1 ♜fe8 19.a3 ♜ac8 20.b3 ♜c7 with a good game for Black, Bachin – Kokarev, Dagomys 2010.

### 14...♜ae8

There is obviously nothing wrong with this, but in some variations it is preferable to put the rook on c8, so maybe 14...f6?! is the most exact move. 15.♗xg7 ♜xg7 16.♗f2 was played in Houska – Delchev, Saint Vincent 2003, and now 16...♜c6! 17.a3 ♜ac8 reaches a position where Black has gained a tempo on Houska – Schandorff in the next note.

### 15.♗xg7 ♜xg7 16.♗h1

Another game continued: 16.♗f2?! f6

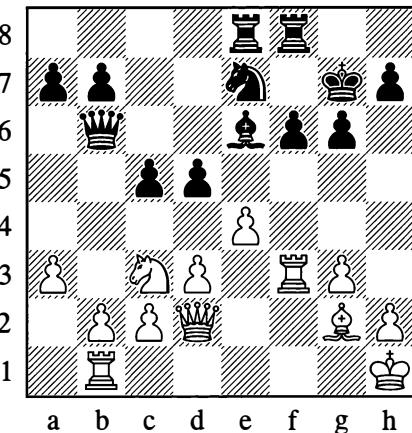
(16...♜c6! is more accurate, when both 17.♗f4 ♜e5! and 17.a3 ♜c8 are pleasant for Black.) 17.a3 ♜c6! 18.b4 cxb4 19.axb4 ♜c8 20.♗d5?! (20.♗e2 a5 21.d4 ♜c4 22.d5 ♜e5 23.♗d4 ♜b5 24.♗f4 ♜f7 leads to a messy position where Black has some positional trumps and can look forward to the future with optimism.) 20...♜xd5 21.exd5 We have been following Houska – Schandorff, Copenhagen 2003, and here 21...♜e5N 22.h3 f5 would have led to a position where Black's long-term chances seem to be preferable; the bishop on g2 is especially passive.

### 16...f6 17.a3!

White needs to throw a stick into Black's wheel before he gets complete control of the dark squares. Merely lining up the pieces against f6 will lead nowhere.

### 17...d5!

17...♜d8 18.b4 b6 leads to a balanced game, but I prefer Kramnik's move.



### 18.b4 cxb4! 19.♗xb4 ♜c7 20.♗b5

After 20.♗f2 dxe4 21.♗xe4 b6 I would not mind being Black. The general rule in this kind of position is: the more pieces get swapped, the weaker White's king becomes.

### 20...♜d7 21.♗d4 ♜g8 22.♗e3 ♜c6

Black can also try 22...b6 23.♗g1 dxe4 24.dxe4? ♜d8 25.♗d3 ♜c7 when White has to stay active to avoid drifting into an endgame where his pawn structure will be a constant headache.

### 23.♗xc6 ♜xc6 24.h4 b6

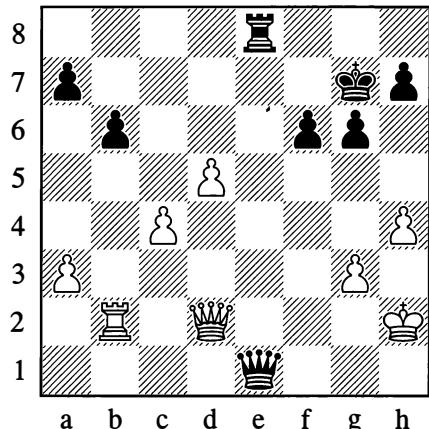
This position is about equal, but still more comfortable for Black who can generally rely on perpetual checks if things start to go wrong.

### 25.♗h2 ♜c5 26.d4 ♜d6

After 26...♜c7?? 27.exd5 ♜xe3 28.♜xe3 ♜xc2 29.♜e7† ♜f7 30.♜d8 White seems to have just enough counterplay.

27.exd5 ♜xd5 28.♗xd5 ♜xd5 29.c4 ♜f7  
 30.d5 ♜xe3 31.♗xe3 ♜e8 32.♗d3 ♜e7  
 33.♗b2 ♜e1 34.♗d2!

Adams wisely offers a queen exchange.



### 34...♜xd2†

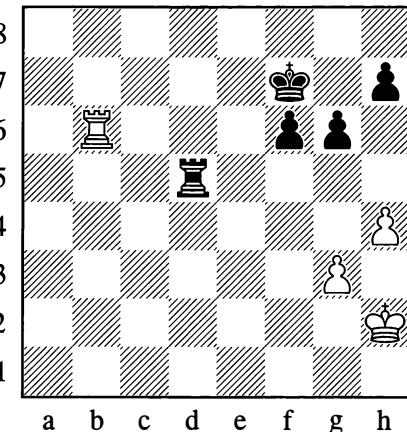
Black would obviously prefer to keep both his queen and his rook on the board, but Kramnik was obviously not convinced by any such attempts. For instance, 34...♜f1 35.♗c2 ♜e1 looks tempting, but after 36.♗g2 ♜d3 37.♗d2! ♜xc4 38.d6 ♜e8 39.♗b7† White defends successfully.

### 35.♗xd2 ♜f7 36.a4 ♜e4 37.a5!

Adams steers towards a theoretically drawn position. A slightly more complicated path is 37.♗c2? ♜e7 (37...♗d4 38.c5 ♜xd5 39.cxb6 axb6 40.♗c7† ♜g8 41.♗c6 is dead equal) 38.a5 bxa5 39.c5 ♜d8 40.c6 a4 41.♗c5 and White is more or less out of trouble.

### 37...♗xc4 38.axb6 axb6 39.♗b2 ♜d4 40.♗xb6 ♜xd5

The endgame is well known to be drawn, and Adams holds firm.



41.♗b7† ♜g8 42.♗g2 h5 43.♗f3 ♜e5  
 44.♗a7 ♜f8 45.♗b7 ♜e7 46.♗b6 ♜f7 47.♗a6  
 ♜d7 48.♗b6 ♜e7 49.♗a6 ♜d6 50.♗a5 ♜e6  
 51.♗a3 ♜e5 52.♗e3† ♜f5 53.♗a3 ♜d5  
 54.♗e3 g5 55.hxg5 fxg5 56.♗a3 g4† 57.♗e3  
 ♜e5† 58.♗f2 ♜c5 59.♗a4 ♜c2† 60.♗g1 ♜e2  
 61.♗f1 ♜d2 62.♗gl ♜e5 63.♗a5† ♜d5  
 64.♗a4 ♜d1† 65.♗f2 ♜d2† 66.♗g1 ♜f5  
 67.♗f4† ♜e5 68.♗a4 ♜d4 69.♗a5† ♜e4  
 70.♗xh5 ♜f3 71.♗a5 ♜d1† 72.♗h2 ♜d2†  
 73.♗g1 ♜g2† 74.♗h1 ♜e2 75.♗g1 ♜xg3  
 76.♗a3† ♜f4 77.♗b3 g3 78.♗b8  
 ½-½

I see no reason for a Modern player to be unhappy about the transposition to a Closed Sicilian. The rock-solid set-up with ...d6 and ...e5 leaves White with little hope for more than equality. Having been pioneered by Botvinnik and later taken up by Kramnik,

Black's system could hardly come with stronger recommendations.

In the next game we see a slightly more dangerous version of White's system involving a knight on h3 instead of f3.

## GAME 93

**Magnus Carlsen – Radoslaw Wojtaszek**

Tromsø (ol) 2014

### 1.e4 g6

The actual move order in the game was 1...c5 2.Qc3 d6 3.g3 Qc6 4.Qg2 g6.

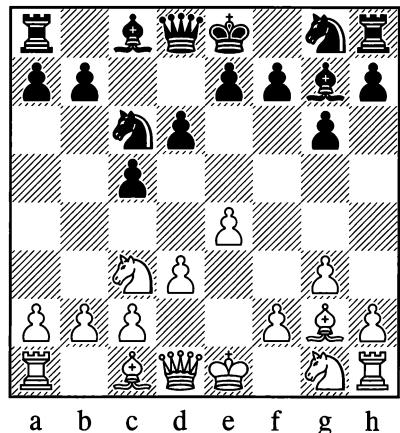
### 2.Qc3 Qg7 3.g3

3.f4 c5 4.g3 Qc6 5.Qg2 d6 6.d3 is a move order that reduces Black's options slightly, but it makes no real difference to us.

### 3...c5

It is also possible to play 3...d6 4.Qg2 Qf6, but after 5.f4 you are out of the recommended lines.

### 4.Qg2 Qc6 5.d3 d6



### 6.Qe3

White can go for a slightly different version

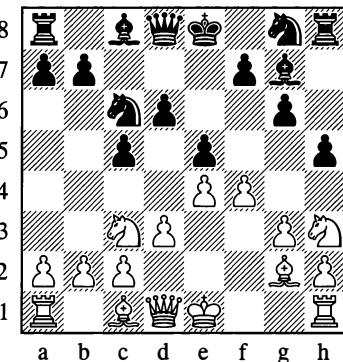
of the Qh3 theme with:

6.f4 e5 7.Qh3!?

Now Black has to make an important choice. 7...h5!?

This looks best to me. If Black is to play this move, it is important to do so before committing to ...Qge7.

7...Qge7 8.0–0 is something I prefer to avoid altogether. The difference between this line and the one I recommend after 7.Qh3 in the main game is that here White has not 'wasted' a tempo on Qe3 and can thus aim for f4–f5, meeting ...gxh5 with Wh5 and Qh6. If Black tries to stop this with 8...Qd4, then 9.fxe5 dxe5 10.Qg5 is slightly annoying, for instance 10...h6 11.Qxe7 Whx7 12.Qd5 Whd6 13.Qf2 0–0 14.c3 Qc6 15.Qg4 and White's game is a bit easier due to the strong knight on d5.



### 8.Qe3

Black is also doing fine after other moves:

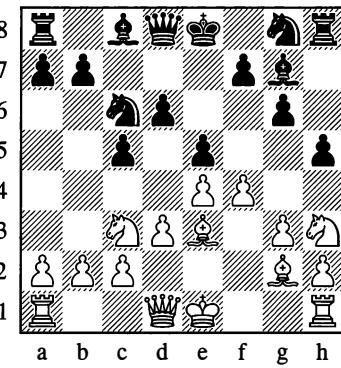
8.Qf2 Qge7! There is no reason to hurry with ...h4 here. 9.Qe3 Whb6 10.Bb1 h4 and Black takes over the initiative.

8.Qg5 h4! 9.Bf1 hxg3 10.hxg3 f6 (10...Qf6!?) 11.Qf3 Qge7 12.Qe3 Qd4 13.Wd2 Qe6 is fine for Black.

8.f5?! gxh5 9.0–0 Qge7 The h5-pawn keeps the queen away from h5. White has run out of good ideas and turns desperate. 10.Qg5?! f6 11.Qh4 Qg6 12.exf5 Qxh4 13.gxh4 Qe7 14.Wf3 Qxf5 The position was complicated

but still clearly better for Black in E. Atalik – Paasikangas Tella, Vammala 2001.

8.0–0 ♜g4! 9.♗e1 ♜d4!? (9...h4 is also playable; my main line continues 10.gxh4 ♜xh4 11.♗xh4 ♜xh4 12.♗f2 ♜d7 13.♗b5 ♜d4! 14.♗c7† ♜d8 15.♗xa8 ♜e2† 16.♗h1 ♜g3† with perpetual checks.) 10.♗f2 ♜d7 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗f3 ♜xf3! 14.♗xf3 ♜e7 Black will follow up with ...0–0–0 and ...f5, with good chances.



8...♜f6!

It is important to harass the bishop before White plays ♜d2 and 0–0–0.

Both 8...♝ge7 9.♗d2 and 8...h4?! 9.♗d2 ♜ge7 10.0–0–0 ♜a5 11.♗b1 b5 12.♗df1 are promising for White.

9.fxe5

This is critical.

9.♗g5 h4! 10.♗d2 ♜g4 11.♗g1 f6 12.♗f3 h3 13.♗f1 ♜e6 is promising for Black.

9.♗f2 h4! 10.♗d2 (10.♗4?! exf4 11.♗xf4 h3 leaves White poorly coordinated.) 10...hxg3 11.hxg3 ♜xh1† 12.♗xh1 ♜g4! 13.0–0–0 ♜xe3 14.♗xe3 exf4 15.gxf4 ♜e6 Black will take a firm grip on the rudder with ...♗f8 and ...♜a5.

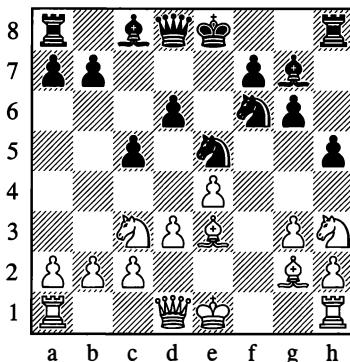
9.♗d2 ♜g4 10.♗g1 (10.♗d5 ♜e7!) 10...b5!

Black's counterplay comes just in time!

11.0–0–0 (11.♗xb5?! exf4! 12.♗xf4 ♜b8 13.c4 a6 14.♗c3 h4 with a strong initiative for Black.) 11...0–0 12.♗b1 b4 Black's attack will make contact before White gets

out of the starting blocks.

9...♝xe5!



10.♗g5

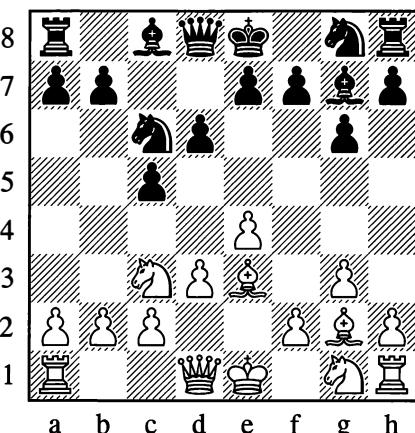
Now Black has a few ideas, but I like:

10...b5! 11.h3 b4 12.♗e2 a5 13.0–0–0–0

With a nice position.

14.♗d2 ♜fd7 15.♗f2 ♜e7 16.♗af1 ♜b7

White has carried out the typical plan of doubling on the f-file, but now what? Black, on the other hand, has plenty of small improvements that can be made before he carries out his main plan of ...f6 followed by ...d5, taking the initiative.



6...e5 7.♗h3!?

The idea behind this move is that White can continue with f2-f4 and meet ...exf4 with ♜xf4, giving him good control of the light squares in the centre.

**7...Qge7**

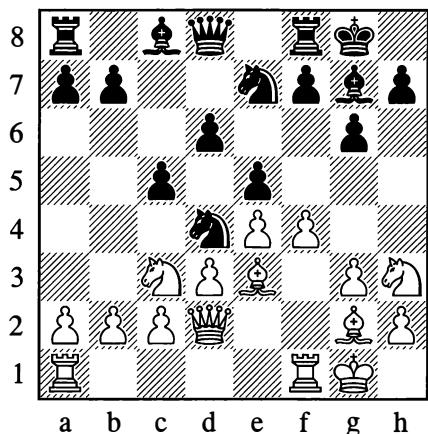
It is quite possible to play 7...h5!? with similar ideas as the 6.f4 e5 7.Qh3 h5 line analysed above. A possible continuation is 8.0–0 (8.Qd2?! Qd4 9.0–0–0 Qg4 is better for Black; 8.f3 Qge7 is also fine) 8...Qge7 9.f4 Qg4 10.Qd2 h4 and Black is doing well.

**8.f4 Qd4**

Black can also play 8...0–0, since 9.f5!? (9.0–0! is best, leading to the game after 9...Qd4) 9...gxf5 10.Qh5 f6! 11.0–0–0 Qd4 12.Qf2 Qe6 is far from convincing for White.

**9.0–0 0–0 10.Qd2**

10.f5? gxf5 11.Qh5 does not work due to 11...Qxc2 12.Qh6 f6, when White does not get enough compensation.

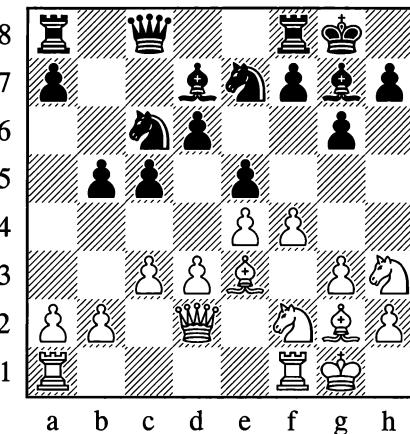
**10...Qd7**

My first reaction when I saw this game was that I did not like this move. I used to tell my students that Qd2 and ...Qd7 are generally “non-moves”; that is, moves that do not really improve your position. There are obviously plenty of exceptions to this ‘rule’, but the point is that you should always ask yourself twice whether it is a good idea to play these moves. In this position I would much rather put the bishop to e6, but in this position it would soon be hit by Qg5.

Is there a good way to prepare ...Qe6? Yes there is! 10...f6! The plan used by Magnus in the game would be toothless here. 11.Qd1 b6 12.b4? (12.f5 gxf5 13.exf5 Qxf5 is great for Black, as is 12.c3 Qdc6 13.f5 gxf5 14.exf5 d5.) 12...Qb8 13.c3 Qe6 14.b5 Qd7 15.a4 a6 The position remains complex yet balanced. Having said all that, Black seems to get a decent position in the game as well.

**11.Qd1 Qc8 12.Qdf2 Qdc6 13.c3 b5?!**

13...b6! was proposed by Mihail Marin as an improvement. The point is that 14.fxe5 can now be met by 14...dxe5 since the c-pawn is protected, and the d3-pawn will be a long-term weakness. This also poses the question: if the plan of fxe5 and Qh6 is not working for White, then what else is he going to do? One thing’s for sure: the knight cannot stay on h3 forever, so 14.Qg5 aiming for Qf3 and d3-d4 seems like the best option. Then 14...a5? 15.Qf3 Qe6 16.a4 f6 leads to a complex position that requires practical testing. One logical continuation is 17.d4 exd4 18.cxd4 f5 19.dxc5 dxc5 20.e5 Qb4 with mutual chances.

**14.fxe5!**

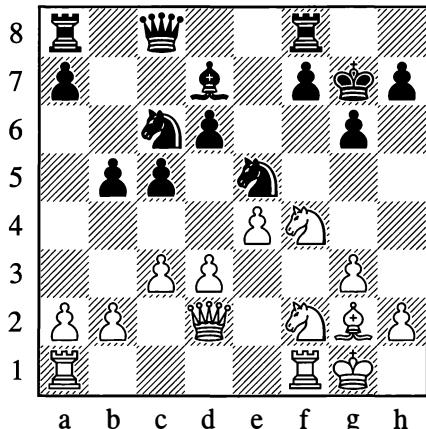
Magnus spots a way to improve his control of the dark squares in the centre.

**14...Qxe5 15.Qh6!**

The alternative 15.b3 a5 16.d4 ♜xh3 17.♕xh3 ♜g4 18.♗g5 ♜c6 19.e5 b4 invites a kind of chaos that, considering the circumstances, Black can be happy about.

**15...♝c6 16.♛xg7 ♜xg7 17.♝f4**

Things have gone seriously wrong for Black. His king is weak, he has lost control of the dark squares and he can forget about playing ...d5.



**17...♛d8 18.♜ad1 ♜c8 19.♝e2!**

Carlsen starts fighting for the g4-square and simultaneously takes “the queen out of the e5-knight’s range (d3-d4, ...♝c4)” as Marin puts it.

**19...h5**

Black feels obliged to take up the gauntlet rather than hand over control of g4 and organize a disorderly retreat of his forces. Unfortunately for him, the resulting weakening of the king’s shelter soon proves decisive. Still, it is hard to criticize Black for this decision since there are no good alternatives.

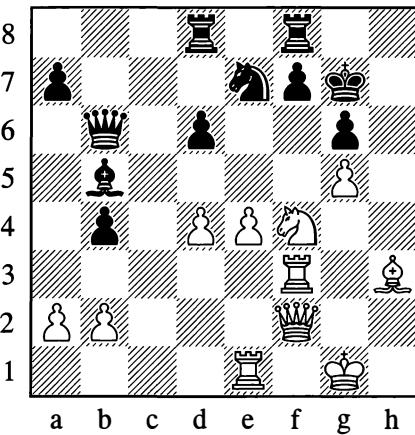
**20.d4 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♜g4 22.h3 ♜xf2  
23.♛xf2 ♜e7 24.♝d3**

Carlsen simply piles up on the f-file.

**24...b4 25.♝f3 ♜e8?**

25...♜b5 loses to 26.♛xh5†, but 25...♝g8! would have prolonged the resistance.

**26.g4! hxg4 27.hxg4 ♜b5 28.♜e1 ♜d8 29.g5  
♜b6 30.♛h3 ♜cd8**



**31.♛e6! ♜e8 32.♝d5 ♜xd5 33.♝xd5**

Black resigned, perhaps after spotting that 33...♜d7 34.♜h3 f6 does not work due to 35.♜h7† ♜xh7 36.♜h4† ♜g7 37.♜h6#.

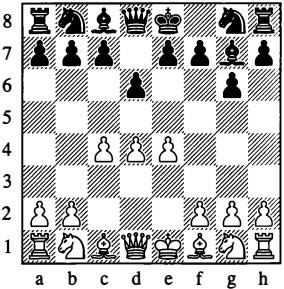
**1–0**

The combination of ♜h3 and f2-f4 makes a lot of sense against Black’s set-up with ...e5, since ...exf4 will be counterproductive after ♜xf4. On the upside, we have seen that Black can get an excellent game, either by playing a timely ...h5, or by improving on Wojtaszek’s play with 10...f6 or 13...b6, as given in the notes.

## Conclusion

Black has no theoretical problems after the rare options such as 3.f4 and 3.♜e3, and the various Anti-Sicilian lines are also comfortable for Black. I started by describing this as a chapter of leftovers, and there is only one verdict: leftovers are yummy!

# Chapter 12



## Averbakh Variation

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.c4 d6

4.♘c3 e5

5.d5 Game 96 492

5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♗xd8† ♔xd8 Game 97 496

5.♗ge2 Game 98 503

5.♘f3 ♘c6 479

6.d5 ♘d4! Game 94 479

6.♗g5! f6 7.♗e3 ♘h6 Game 95 482

4.♘f3 e5

5.♗e3?! ♘f6! 6.♘c3 exd4 7.♗xd4 Game 99 508

5.♗e2 ♘c6 525

6.d5 ♘d4! Game 102 525

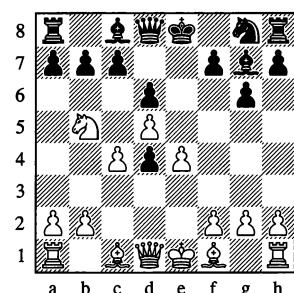
6.♗e3 ♘h6!? 511

7.d5 ♘e7 Game 100 511

7.♘c3 ♘g4 Game 101 518

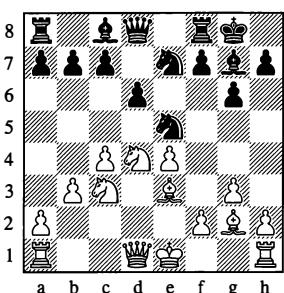
4.♗e2 e5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.d5 ♘d4! Game 102 525

Game 94 – after 8.♘b5



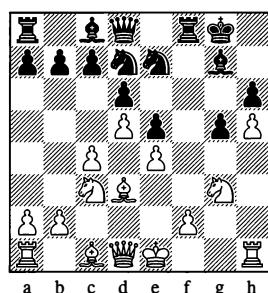
8...a6!

Notes to Game 98 – after 10.b3



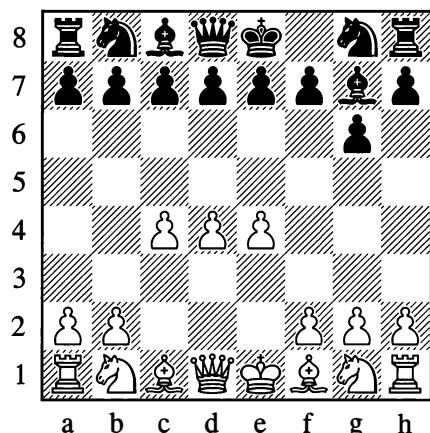
10...♗g4!

Notes to Game 98 – after 13.♘xg3



13...♗f4!

If someone woke me in the middle of the night and screamed in my ear, “What’s the biggest problem with the Modern?” I would probably mumble “3.c4, if you don’t play the King’s Indian. Now leave me alone.” After all, I would be too tired to lie and I would definitely want to be left alone.



So why did God – or someone – create the Modern Defence just to demand that you should also be able to play the King’s Indian? It seemed to me that Creation was flawed. There was, of course, the Averbakh – which I define as any Black line from the above position that does not involve transposing to a King’s Indian with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  – but it never used to appeal to me.

But the ways of the Modern are obscure, so I ventured on a quest for a line that I could recommend to the reader without feeling like a fraud. In other words, something I could and would play myself in a serious tournament game. After long consideration I ended up with 4...e5 in the Averbakh Variation, which I feel gives Black a reasonable game, although I still consider the King’s Indian Defence (KID) the more reliable choice.

My general opinion of the Averbakh has not changed a great deal since 2005 when *Tiger’s Modern* was published. In one sense I feel more comfortable playing the Averbakh now that I have some experience with it, but it does not

change the basic fact that the KID is the more reliable option. So why even bother with this chapter? Well, if you don’t already play the KID, choosing the Averbakh means that you can avoid a ton of theory.

### 1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3.c4

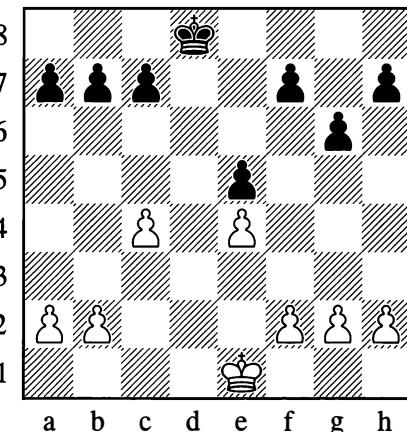
This is the starting position of the Averbakh System, as shown in the earlier diagram.

### 3...d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5!

This is considerably less common than 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , a line that I cannot recommend because of 5.d5.

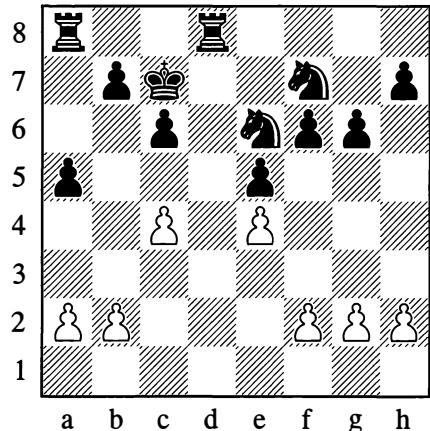
The common denominator in my interpretation of the Averbakh is that Black should always play ...e5 on the 4th move. The main point is to force White to relieve the tension in the centre, which can be done in two ways: a) exchanging with  $dxe5$ , and b) blocking with  $d4-d5$ .

a) Following the pawn exchange on e5 and the likely exchange of queens on d8, Black will have slightly the better structure, since White has a weak square on d4.



In general, you can expect to have to withstand a slight White initiative in the opening, but when you know the best way to

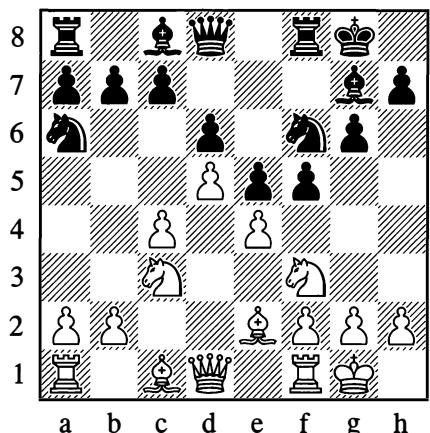
develop the pieces, you will have every chance to soak up the pressure and obtain a promising endgame, ideally having swapped off the dark-squared bishops.



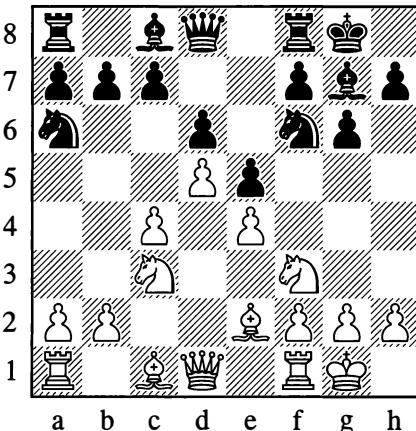
The above position gives a good idea of what Black should be aiming for.

b) If White blocks the centre with d4-d5, Black can try to win a few tempos compared to normal KID lines by playing ...f5 before developing his knight to f6. If White fails to adapt to the special circumstances, he may find himself two tempos down. Take the following line for an example:

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{g}7$  3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5! 5.d5 f5 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 8.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$**



Compare this position with the Petrosian variation of the Classical KID: 1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 g6 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{g}7$  4.e4 d6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 7.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  8.0-0



It is obvious that Black is much better placed in the Averbakh position, as e4 is under attack and White will not be able to keep the centre closed for much longer.

The Averbakh Variation is a hybrid between the Modern and the King's Indian, and should not be compared with other Modern lines – especially those involving ...a6. The Averbakh is defined by the early c2-c4, which more or less eliminates the possibility of an early ...b5.

### What I want to avoid

Before diving into the recommended system involving 4...e5!, I will show a few of the problems with the more popular alternative.

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{g}7$  3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5.d5**

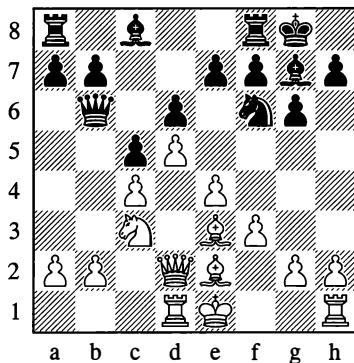
I am also not completely happy with 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  exd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ . Now the aggressive 8.h4!? may not be so bad for Black, but I would not be so happy facing the boring 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ . My investigation revealed too many lines where Black is playing to equalize, without getting much of a chance to take over the initiative.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  8. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
Black can try other moves here, but I know  
of none better.

9.f3 0–0

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. $\mathbb{E}d1$  0–0 11.b3!  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   
 $\mathbb{W}a5$  13. $\mathbb{E}c1$  a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  15. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   
b5 16.h4 f6 17.f4  $\mathbb{E}f7$  was not so clear in  
Hernandez Ruiz – Calderin, Colon 1991,  
but 14.h4 and 17.cxb5 are both strong  
improvements for White.

10. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$



I disliked this position when I wrote *Tiger's Modern*, and there has been nothing in the intervening years to make me change my mind.

With that relatively lengthy chapter introduction behind us, we will dive into our first game, where we will see what happens when White waits for the black knight to appear on c6 before pushing with d4-d5.

## GAME 94

Alexey Dreev – Zurab Azmaiparashvili

Saint Vincent 2005

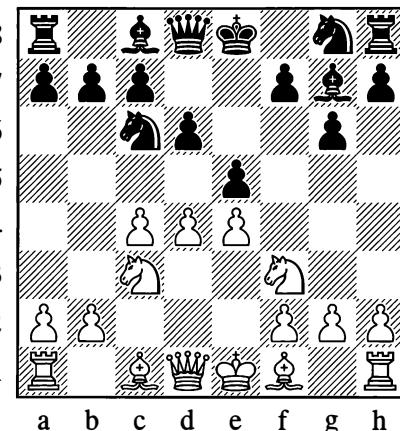
1.e4

The actual move order was 1.d4 d6 2.c4 g6  
3.e4 e5 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

1... $\mathbb{g}6$  2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Lately there have been quite a few developments in the 5...exd4 variation. Although it seems theoretically playable, I decided to stick to my old recommendations, partly because I have no experience with this move, but mainly because I hate to just reproduce the analysis of other authors. After 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  we reach a position discussed above under the “What I want to avoid” heading. I have heard a rumour that Black can survive after 8...0–0 9.0–0 f5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , but it sure as ‘L’ isn’t fun.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6.d5 a5 is also quite common, but with the light-squared bishop prematurely developed, Black is heading for a bad version of a King’s Indian.



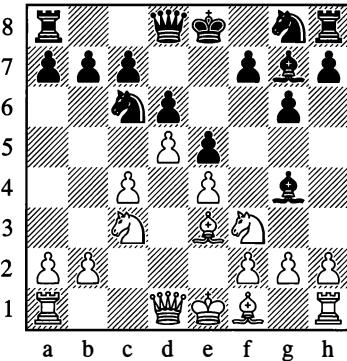
6.d5

White only has a limited number of ways to deal with the attack on the d4-pawn.

The structure arising after 6.dxe5 dxе5 will be dealt with in Games 95 and 97, as well as the note to White’s 6th move in Game 98. Here it is not dangerous at all, as the knight on f3 takes away the useful option of f2-f4.

6.♕e3 ♕g4 7.d5

7.dxe5?! dxe5 is pleasant for Black, who controls the d4-square and will not have to misplace his king in the event of a queen exchange.



7...♝d4

This move generally works well in positions where White has already played ♜c3.

8.♜e2

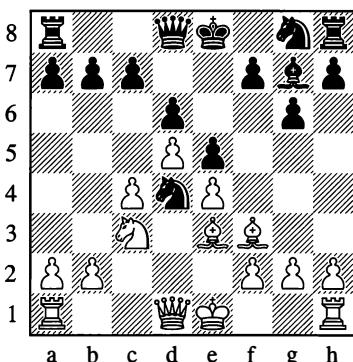
8.♜xd4 exd4 9.♝e2 ♜f6 10.♝xd4 0–0 gives Black superb compensation for the pawn.

8.♝b5 ♜xf3! 9.gxf3 c5 10.dxc6 (10.♝a4 ♜f8) 10...bxc6 11.♝xd4 exd4 12.♝xd4

♝a5† 13.♝e2 ♜f6 14.♝xf6?! (14.♝h3 0–0 15.♝f1 ♜ad8 is also promising for Black)

14...♝xf6 15.♝h3 ♜c5 and Black had fantastic compensation for the pawn in Seret – Skripchenko, Cappelle la Grande 2003.

8...♝xf3 9.♝xf3



9...c5!

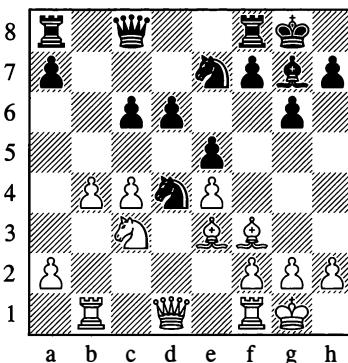
I find it hard to believe that Black should not be at least okay here.

10.dxc6 bxc6 11.0–0 ♜e7 12.b4

12.♝xd4 exd4 13.♝e2 ♜b6 is very nice for Black.

12...0–0 13.♝b1 ♜c8!

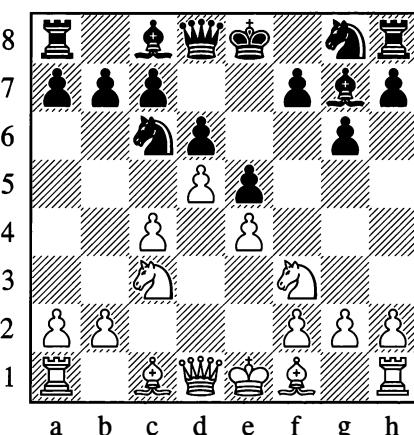
Black prepares to deploy the queen on the e6-square while also preventing b4–b5 due to ...cx b5.



14.♝g4?! f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♝h3 ♜e6 17.c5 dxc5 18.bxc5 ♜ad8

18...♜c4!N was even stronger, but Black had an excellent position anyway in I. Ivanov – R. Burnett, Dearborn 1992.

A more challenging option is 6.♝g5!, which can be found in the next game.



**6...Qd4!**

This is definitely the most reliable move.

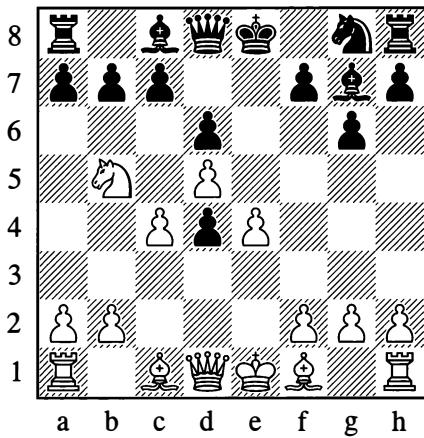
6...Qce7 is regrettably not good enough because of 7.c5!, a thematic move that I completely missed in *Tiger's Modern*. Now Black has to choose between bad and worse. I have studied the position after 7...dxc5 8.Qe3 b6 9.Qe2! in some detail, without much joy. For a few more details about this type of position, see the note to Black's 6th move in Game 102 on page 525. (From the present move order, Black may transpose to page 526 directly with 9...h6.)

**7.Qxd4**

7.Qe3 Qg4 transposes to 6.Qe3 above.

**7...exd4 8.Qb5**

Now Black has many possibilities, but only the game continuation seems to equalize.

**8...a6!**

Black has an interesting alternative in 8...We7?!, when the only real challenge lies in 9.Qe2! (9.f3 f5 10.Wa4 c6 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.Qxd4 Qd7 13.c5 fxe4 is better for Black) 9...a6 10.Qxd4 Wxe4 leads to a position from the main game) 10...c6 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.Qxd4 Qd7 with good compensation for the pawn. Considering that White can

enter the main game with 10.Qxd4, it is more of a trick play than a separate line.

Nisipeanu has tried 8...Qf6, but after 9.f3 0–0 (or 9...Qh5 10.g3) 10.Qe2 Black is short of compensation.

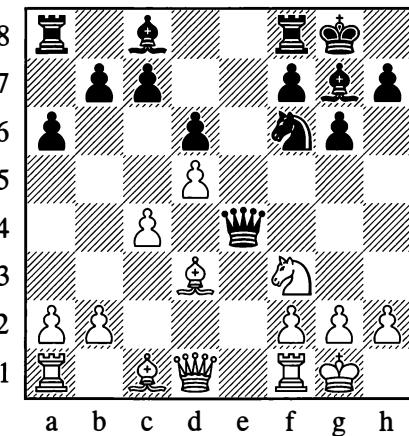
**9.Qxd4 Wh4! 10.Qe2**

10.e5? dx5 11.Qf3 We7 12.Qd3 e4 13.0–0 f5 14.Qc2 Qf6 15.Qa4† b5 16.cxb5 0–0 is unclear.

10.Qe3 is playable, but 10...Wxe4 11.Qd2 Qh6 12.Qd3 Qxe3 13.Qxe4 Qxd2† 14.Qxd2 is well and truly equal.

**10...Wxe4 11.Qf3 Qf6 12.0–0 0–0 13.Qd3**

13.h3 occurred in Cramling – Foisor, Montreal 2007. Now instead of the passive 13...Qd7?!, Black should have played 13...Qf5!N (13...We7 14.Qe1 Qe8 15.Qd3 Qd8 is also acceptable, with similar play as in the main game) 14.Qd4 Qd7 15.Qe3 We7 followed by ...Qfe8, with a fine position.

**13...We7**

If you want to keep the game more complicated, you may wish to consider 13...Wg4?!, intending to meet h2-h3 with ...Wh5. White responded with 14.Qe1 in Kotov – Aitbayev, Moscow 2012, and here

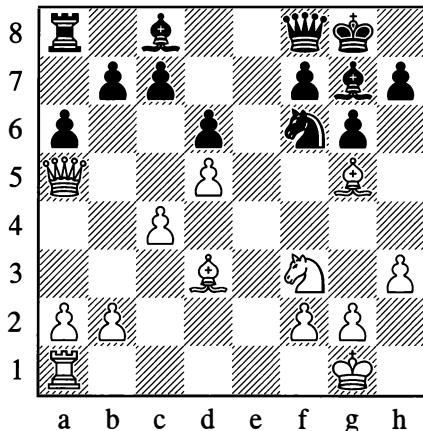
14... $\mathbb{Q}d7N$  would have been logical. Play may continue 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}fe8$  16.h3  $\mathbb{W}h5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}e7$ , when the position is equal but Black has the possibility to unbalance the game with ...b5 at some point in the future.

#### **14. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{W}d8$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

White can play more ambitiously with 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!N$ , trying to make it harder for Black to exchange rooks. However, after 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  c5 20.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  the position remains about equal.

#### **16... $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a5$**

18. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  comes to much the same thing.



#### **18...b6 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$**

It is somewhat disappointing not to get a more complex position when you play the Modern, but in this line it cannot be helped.

½–½

My old recommendation of 6... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  does not hold up to scrutiny after 7.c5!, but 6... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  gives Black a safe albeit slightly dull position. This is the price you have to pay to avoid the KID.

The next game involves a greater challenge to the Averbakh.

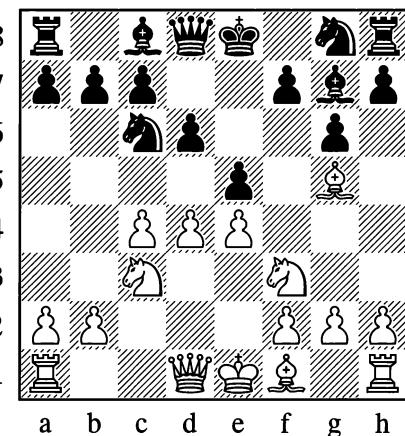
## **GAME 95**

### **Anatoly Karpov – Yasser Seirawan**

Roquebrune (rapid) 1992

#### **1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e5 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$**

This is more critical than the options discussed in the above game.



#### **6...f6**

This is usually played. 6... $\mathbb{W}d7?!$  is an interesting alternative, but after 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  it is hard to make sense of Black's last move. One example is 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9.h3 and the black queen looked silly in Ziegler – Todorcevic, Mondariz 1994.

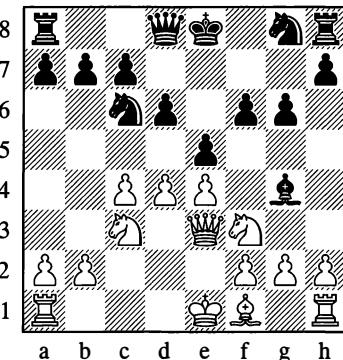
#### **7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$**

It is too early to exchange the dark-squared bishops:

#### **7... $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$**

8. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  11.h3 c5 12.a3 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5 14.b4 b6 reaches a position that the silicon brain does not seem to understand one bit. Black should be fine.

#### **8... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$**



**10.d5!**

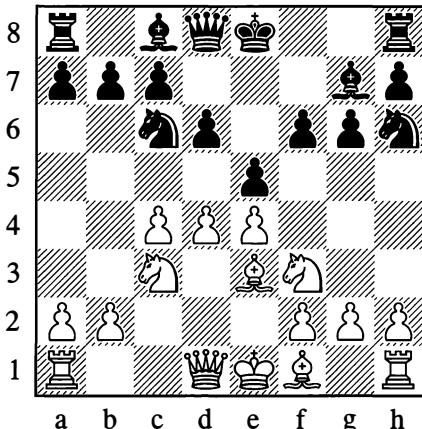
I am not so worried about 10.dxe5?!  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11.gxf3 as played in Radjabov – Basagic, Izmir 2004, after which 11...dxe5 would have been okay for Black.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$**

After 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  the plan of a2-a3, b2-b4 and c4-c5 (or even c4-c5 first) will hurt Black.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.c5**

White was clearly better in Grigorov – Azmaiparashvili, Kallithea 2009.



**8.dxe5**

This has been considered critical for a long time, and there has not been any recent evidence to change this assessment.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  is covered later – see 9. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  in the notes to Game 101 on page 518.

**8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$**

8...f5? is more or less refuted by 9.dxe5 dxe5 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  and Black cannot hold the c7-pawn.

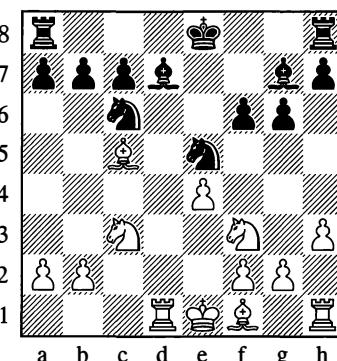
**9.c5!**

This energetic continuation seems best, since other moves can be met by ...f5. Nevertheless, Black seems to be okay after accurate defence.

**9...dxc5! 10.dxe5**

White runs out of energy after 10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11. $\mathbb{W}a4$  0–0 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e8!$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (or 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}xe6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$ ) 13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ .

**10... $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$  12. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**



**13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ N**

After 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0–0–0 a draw was agreed in I. Sokolov – Vallejo Pons, Sanxenxo 2004.

**13...fxe5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  0–0–0**

Black's control of the d4-square is quite valuable. White should probably settle for:

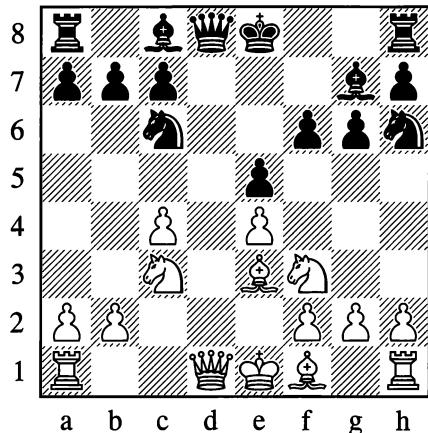
**15. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  17.f3**

With equality.

**8...dxe5**

In the event of 8...dxe5 9.c5! Black is too passive, and lacks dynamic possibilities.

However, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$  could be worth a try. After 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11. $\mathbb{E}d1\#$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.c5 c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{E}ab8$  Black is slightly worse, but has good chances to eventually equalize.



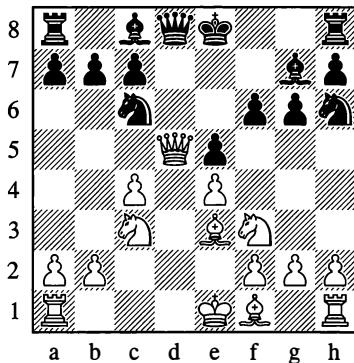
**9.♕xd8†**

It was only by serendipity that I realized that White actually has other moves here.

If White plays the calm 9.♔e2, then 9...♝g4 10.♗c5 ♕xd1† 11.♕d1 ♝d8 followed by ...♝e6 gives Black a good game.

**9.♕d5!?**

This has almost never been played, but it is not easy to meet.



**9...♝d7!N**

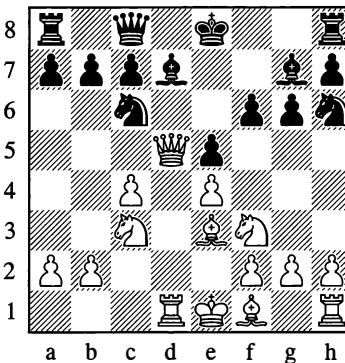
This new move is necessary. I have not found a single acceptable alternative, for instance: 9...♝f7, Stephenson – Minkin, Internet 2008, 10.♔e2N 0–0 11.♗c5 ♜e8 12.♗b5 and Black is already deep in trouble.

Black should also avoid 9...♝e7?, as the knight proves to be horribly placed after

10.♗b5†! c6 11.♗b3 0–0 12.♕d1 ♜c7 13.♗c5† ♔h8 14.♗c4 when Black is under huge pressure.

**10.♕d1 ♜c8!**

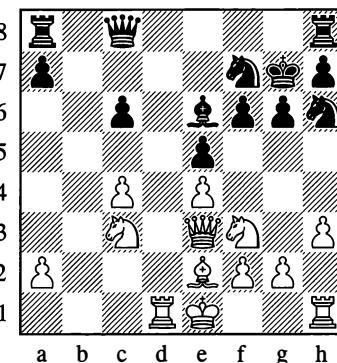
My idea is to slowly unravel with ...♝e6, ...0–0, ...♝f7, ...♜e8 and then either ...a5, or ...♝b8-d7, followed by ...c6. A possible line is:



**11.♔e2 ♜g4!**

It is important to force the bishop to the c5-square so that White's queen cannot go there.

12.♗c5 ♔e6 13.♕d3 ♔f8! 14.♕xf8 ♜xf8 15.♗d5 ♔g7 16.b4 ♜d8! 17.h3 ♜h6 18.♕e3 ♜df7 19.b5 c6 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.♗c3



**21...♛a6!**

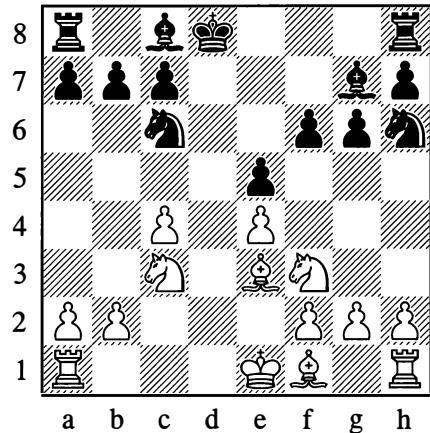
Black should attack the c-pawn before White has the chance to manoeuvre a knight around to c5.

**22.♗d2 ♜hd8**

Black has finally reached equality. The barely-tested 9... $\mathbb{W}d5?$  seems genuinely dangerous for Black, so it is worth paying attention to the details of this line.

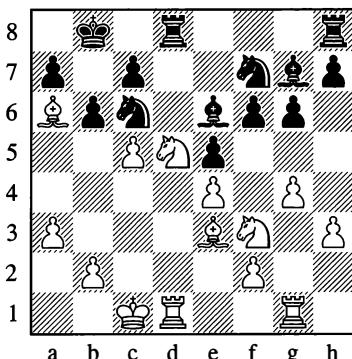
### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd8?$  loses a pawn after 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}e6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\# \mathbb{Q}xf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ .



### 10.0–0–0†

This is stronger than 10.h3, when an instructive game continued: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  11.0–0–0†  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  leads to the main game.) 11.0–0–0†  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12.g4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  b6 (I unfairly criticized this in *Tiger's Modern*.) 14.c5!  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17.a3



This position occurred in Zsu. Polgar – Azmaiparashvili, Dortmund 1990. At this point, instead of 17... $\mathbb{Q}c8?!$ , Black should have

played the paradoxical 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , when Black's pieces suddenly come to life and White is having trouble holding onto the e4-pawn.

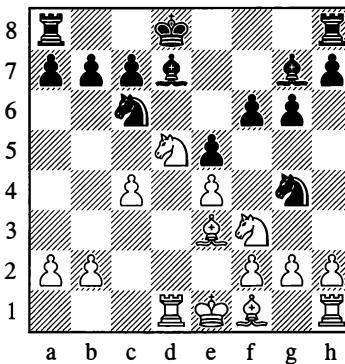
A tougher test is:

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#!$

For some time I thought I might have to throw this entire variation on the scrapheap because of this relatively rare move. The advantage of checking with the rook compared to long castling is that the f2-pawn remains defended by the king, which enables White to meet ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  by moving his bishop out of harm's way. Now Black has to play precisely to avoid a bad position.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  12.c5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  14.b4 Black had a miserable game in Mayer – Kroll, email 2005.



### 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

This is the point behind Black's last move. Now White cannot win a pawn by taking on h6 and then on f6.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

Since Black is lacking in space and coordination, White should try to avoid exchanges for the time being.

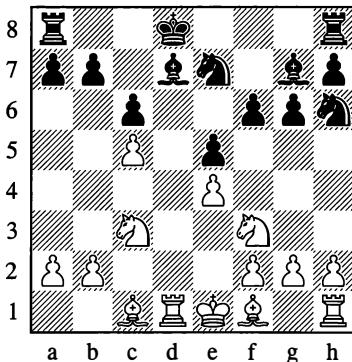
After 13.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.exd5? (14.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is about equal) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  15.c5  $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$  Black was a bit worse in Hanko – Krivoshey, Prievidza 1998, but

15... $\mathbb{b}6N$  and 15... $\mathbb{d}f7N$  both seem like better moves.

13... $\mathbb{d}h6!N$

13... $\mathbb{d}c8$  has been played a couple of times, but I prefer the text move, as the king will be able to go to  $c7$  within a short time.

14. $c5$   $c6!$

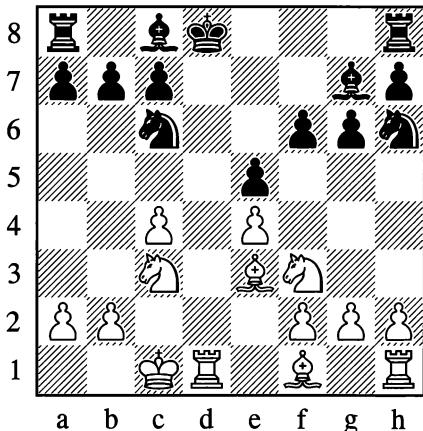


This move is what Black has been aiming for.

Now he is ready to organize the forces.

15. $\mathbb{d}c4$   $\mathbb{d}c7$  16. $h3$   $\mathbb{d}hd8$  17.0–0  $\mathbb{d}e8$  18. $\mathbb{d}d2$   $\mathbb{d}f8!$  19. $b4$   $\mathbb{d}f7!$  20. $\mathbb{d}e2$   $b5!$  21. $a4$   $a6$

With ... $\mathbb{d}e6$  and ... $\mathbb{d}f7$  coming, Black is poised to finish development. With that done, he can start thinking about launching the g- and h-pawns against White's king.



10... $\mathbb{d}d7$  11. $h3!$   $\mathbb{d}f7$

11... $f5?!$  was suggested by Zsuzsa Polgar in pre-computer times, and I recommended it in

*Tiger's Modern*. However, I have since come to appreciate that the ... $f5$  break is often a mistake in positions where Black's rooks are not connected. After 12. $g3!$   $\mathbb{d}c8$  13. $\mathbb{d}g5$   $\mathbb{d}d4$  14. $\mathbb{d}g2$  White can open the position with  $\mathbb{d}h1$  and  $f2-f4$ , a scenario that Black is poorly equipped to deal with.

An even more precise move order for Black is: 11... $\mathbb{d}c8!$  12. $c5$   $\mathbb{d}e6!$

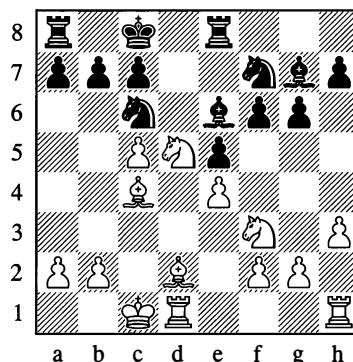
Keeping the white bishop away from  $c4$  for the moment.

13. $d5$   $\mathbb{d}f7$  14. $\mathbb{d}c4$

14. $g4$  was played in Sammalvuo – Palliser, Eilat 2012, and now 14... $\mathbb{d}cd8!N$  15. $\mathbb{d}c3$   $c6$  16. $b3$   $\mathbb{d}c7$  followed by ... $b5$  would have been promising for Black.

14... $\mathbb{d}e8!$  15. $\mathbb{d}d2$

Now in Bosboom Lanchava – Timman, London 2006, it would have been good for Black to play:

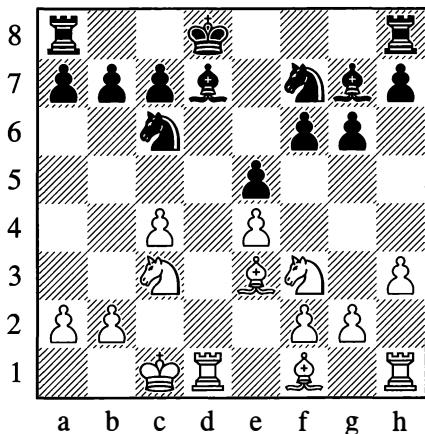


15... $\mathbb{d}cd8!N$

The game continued 15... $a5$  16. $h4$   $h5!$  17. $\mathbb{d}b1$   $\mathbb{d}b8$  (17... $f5?!$  could be an improvement) 18. $\mathbb{d}b5$   $\mathbb{d}d7$  19. $a4$  when Black needed some creativity to get himself out of the rather tricky bind. The text move is a much easier solution to Black's problems.

16. $\mathbb{d}e2$   $c6$  17. $\mathbb{d}c3$   $b5$

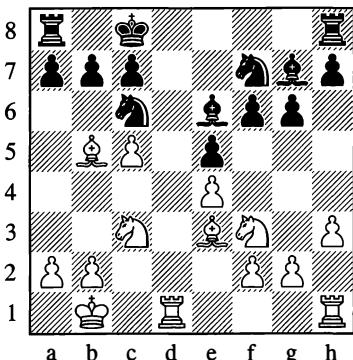
I would rather be Black.

**12.c5**

12.g4N should be met by: 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (12...h5? 13.gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  14. $\mathbb{E}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.h4 is horrible for Black, who must worry about an exchange sacrifice on d7, among other things.) 13. $\mathbb{E}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}cd8$  14.c5 c6 Black is doing all right, and can creep forwards with ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  and ...b6. If White plays  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , then ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  will come, and if he does not, then ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  will be played at some point.

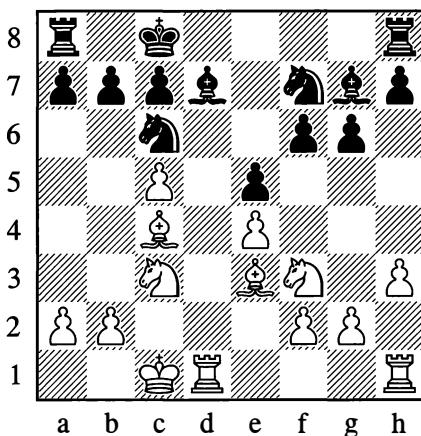
**12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$** 

White can also go one step further with the bishop: 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  Here Black should proceed with the typical regrouping move:



14... $\mathbb{Q}cd8!$ N, intending ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ . Instead 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? misplaces the knight, and after 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  White

was clearly better in Cramling – Foisor, Tilburg 1994. Black's central pawns are vulnerable, as they cannot be supported by the rooks. Once again, the lesson is that Black should keep the position closed until the king is safe(r) and the rooks connected.

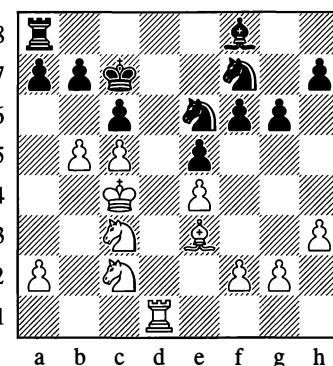
**13... $\mathbb{Q}cd8$** 

This is the standard manoeuvre that we see again and again in this structure.

**14.b4**

It is worth mentioning a few other illustrative examples:

14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c6 16. $\mathbb{E}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$   
17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18. $\mathbb{E}hd1$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  19. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}exd8$   
20.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  21.b5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



Now 23...b6?? 24.bxc6 bxc5 25. $\mathbb{E}d7\#$

1–0 was the abrupt end of Illescas Cordoba – McNab, Gothenburg 2005. Better was 23... $\mathbb{Q}d8N$  with equality. There is no way through for White on the queenside, and Black still has potential for counterplay in the centre and on the kingside.

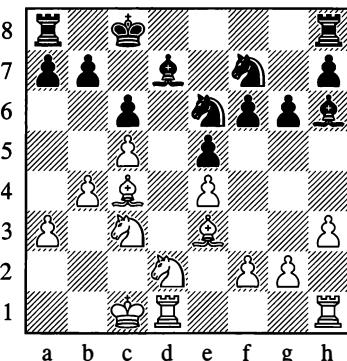
Similar to the main game is:

14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 15.a3?!

This is completely unnecessary; 15.b4 is more to the point.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16.b4  $\mathbb{Q}h6$

This loses too much time. 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7!N$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  is better.



Here White should have played:

17. $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$

Instead of 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  with just a slight edge for White in Spielmann – Foisor, Clichy 2002.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d6$

With a strong initiative.

In another game Black lost two tempos with his rook before finally deciding to play ...b5:

14.g4 c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

After 16...b5? 17.cxb6 axb6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  White can play 19.a4? with some compensation for the exchange.

17.b4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$

X-raying White's king along the c-file, and planning to meet b4-b5 with ...cx b5.

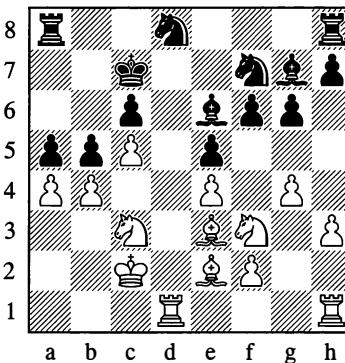
17...b5!N is better, intending 18.a4 a5!

19.axb5 axb4 20.b6†  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

18. $\mathbb{Q}dd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8?$

I would probably prefer 18... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-d7$  to neutralize the pressure along the d-file. There is nothing wrong with Angus's move though.

19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  b5! 20.a4 a5



21. $\mathbb{Q}d5†?$

Black is doing well after 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  axb4 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  bxa4.

21...cx d5 22.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4†$  25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  bxa4† 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}hd8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  29. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

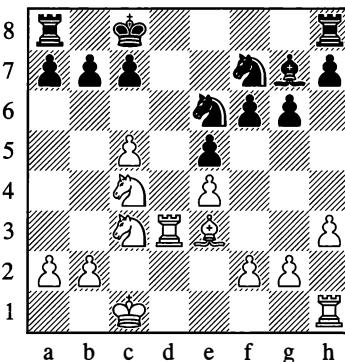
White had just enough compensation for the pawn in Yakovich – Dunnington, Biel 1992.

Perhaps the most critical line of all is:

14. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Now I believe Black should invite multiple exchanges on the d-file with:

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$



17.  $\mathbb{E}hd1!$

17.b4  $\mathbb{E}d8!$  18.  $\mathbb{E}hd1$   $\mathbb{E}xd3$  19.  $\mathbb{E}xd3$  c6 20.a4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is equal. In the event of 21.b5?  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  White may wish to retract the last move.

17.h4  $\mathbb{E}d8!$  (After 17...h5?, then 18.  $\mathbb{E}hd1$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  c6 20.  $\mathbb{Q}db6\uparrow$  axb6 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  23.  $\mathbb{E}d7$   $\mathbb{E}xd7$  24.  $\mathbb{E}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  25.g3 works perfectly for White, as his rook cannot be trapped in the same way as in the main line below.) 18.  $\mathbb{E}xd8\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  Black is fine, as the h4-h5 push will not hurt him.

17...  $\mathbb{E}d8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  c6 19.  $\mathbb{Q}db6\uparrow$ ?

This is an important idea to consider, but the following analysis demonstrates that Black is okay.

19...axb6 20.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  22.  $\mathbb{E}d7$   $\mathbb{E}xd7$  23.  $\mathbb{E}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$

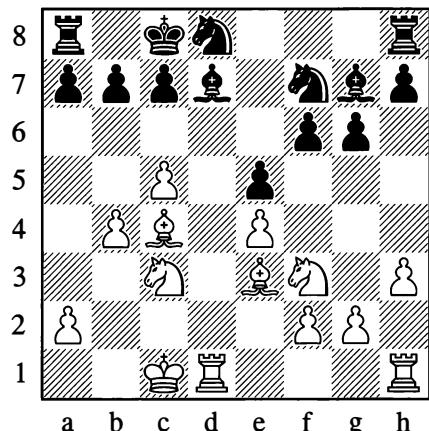
This kind of position is fine for Black, as long as ...h5 has not been played. The explanation comes soon:

24.g4  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  25.b4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  26.  $\mathbb{E}e7$ ?

26.  $\mathbb{E}d3$  is better, although Black is at least equal after 26... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  27.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ .

26...g5 27.a4 h6 28.b5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  29.  $\mathbb{E}h7$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  30.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  31.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ !

Black picks up the rook with ... $\mathbb{Q}h8-g6-f8$ .



14...c6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?

This plays into White's hands.

The flexible 15... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ! is better. Depending on how White continues, Black may continue with ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  or ...b6 next.

16.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !

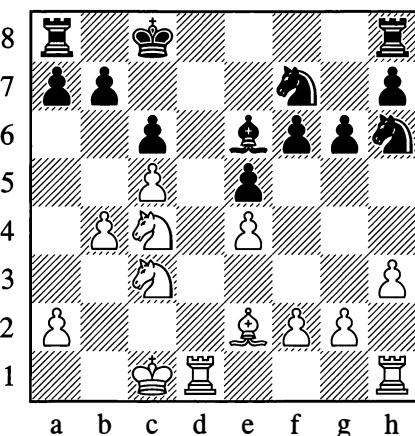
White should avoid exchanging pieces if possible. After 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  18. b5?!  $\mathbb{E}hd8$  Black is happy.

16... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

This loses a lot of time, but 16...f5?! 17. exf5 gxf5 18.f3 intending g2-g4 is clearly better for White.

17.  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}df7$ ??

It was better to play 18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  immediately, in order to be able to meet 19.a4 with 19...b6. However, after 19.b5! White keeps some advantage.



19.a4

With the help of the engines, one can see that 19.b5?! would have posed more concrete problems.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20. b5

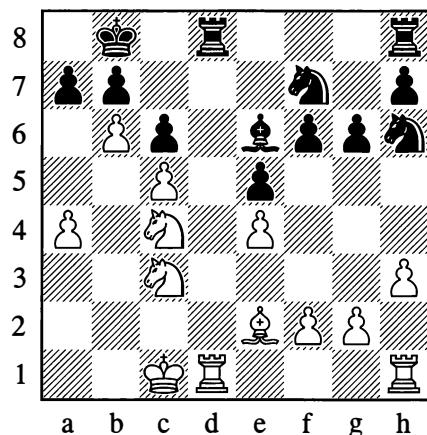
White is only slightly better now, because Black has managed to get coordinated and has no weaknesses. The remaining pressure can be relieved by exchanging a pair of rooks on the d-file.

**20...♝ad8!**

Black prepares to carry out the desired rook exchange, rather than weakening his queenside further with 20...b6, when 21.cxb6† axb6 22.bxc6 ♜xc6 23.♗b2 favours White, who is quicker to take control of the newly opened lines on the queenside.

**21.b6† ♜b8!**

In principle Black should not give White the opportunity to get a potential passed pawn on the queenside, but it would still have been interesting to play 21...axb6?! 22.cxb6† ♜b8 intending ...♝d4 and ...♝d6, with a complicated game.

**22.♝e3**

White should have a slight advantage after 22.a5 ♜d4 23.♜xd4 exd4 24.♝a4 ♜e8 25.♝d2.

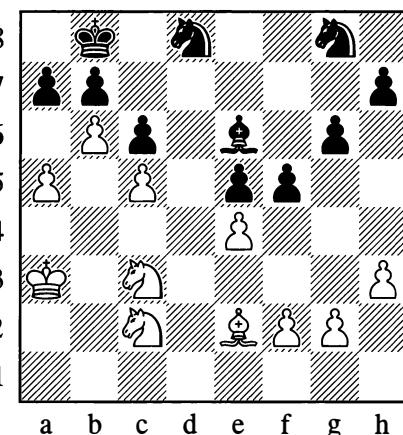
**22...♜d4 23.♝c2 ♜xd1† 24.♜xd1 ♜d8****25.♝b2 f5?!**

If the rooks are to come off the board, then it is better to play 25...♜xd1 26.♜xd1 axb6! 27.cxb6 ♜d6 28.♝e3 ♜hf7 29.♝b3 ♜d8, when it will be difficult for White to generate winning chances.

**26.a5 ♜g8 27.♜xd8† ♜xd8 28.♝a3**

I am sceptical about Black's chances for

survival after 28.exf5! gxf5 29.♝b4, because the black king will find it difficult to leave b8. White's king, on the other hand, can walk towards the centre, and a timely f2-f4 will open the road into the black position via d4 and e5. The engines disagree with me, but I still believe in my original evaluation.

**28...♞f6 29.♞d3 fxe4 30.♞xe4 ♜d7?**

I am not sure how it happened, but it is suddenly not so easy to keep the c5-pawn guarded.

**31.♝e3**

After 31.♝b4 ♜d5 32.♞e1 ♜e6 33.♞c4 ♜f4 34.f3 ♜xe4 35.fxe4 ♜f6 36.♞d3 the position is approximately level.

**31...♞d5 32.♝b4?!**

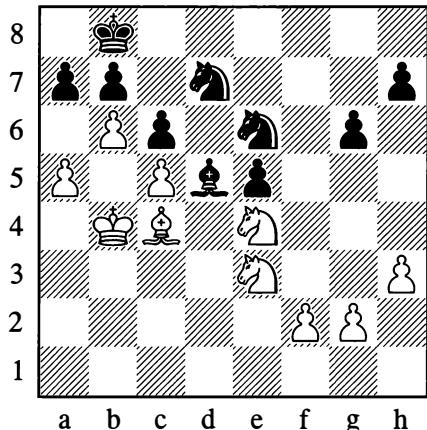
White should play 32.♞xd5 cxd5 33.♝b5! with a messy endgame ahead.

**32...♜e6?**

This was a rapid game, and I guess time was running short on both sides by now. After 32...♜xe4! 33.♝xe4 ♜e6 White will lose the c5-pawn.

**33.♞c4**

Now White is fine again.



33... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  34. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 35. $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  36. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$  37. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}3xc5$  38. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$

White also keep a certain advantage with 38.bxa7#  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  39. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  40. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , but in the game the black king is less active.

38...axb6 39.axb6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  40. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}axb6\#$   
41. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

After 41. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$  42. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  43.h4  
 $\mathbb{Q}f4$  44.h5  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  45. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  46. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$   
Black should be able to draw.

41... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  42.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  43. $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  44. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Karpov is trying to win the game, but it was probably wiser to force a repetition of moves with 44. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ .

44... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  45. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  46. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   
47. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#?$

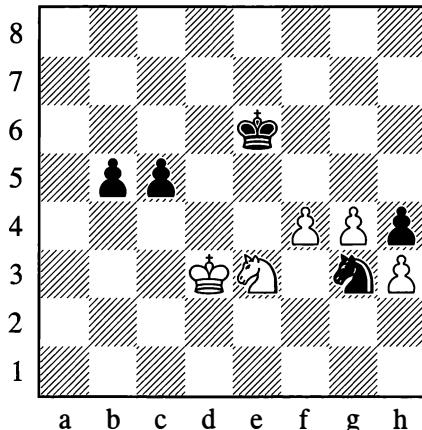
After this move White starts drifting into a worse position. 47. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  48. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  b5  
49.h4 would have led to a double-edged but roughly equal endgame.

47... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  48. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  h5 49. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 50. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5  
51.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  52.g4  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$

52...c4# 53. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxc4# 54. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  is a draw.

53. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  h4 54. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

54.f5# followed by 55. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  draws fairly easily.



54...c4# 55. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$  56. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   
56. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f2$  57. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  58. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f2$   
59. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  60. $\mathbb{Q}b4$  draws.

56... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  57. $\mathbb{Q}g2?$

Missing the final chance to save the game:  
57. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  b4 58. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  with a dead draw.

57...b4 58. $\mathbb{Q}xh4?!$

58. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  would have prolonged the game, although after 58... $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$  59. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  b3 60. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$  61. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$  62. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  b2 63. $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c3  
Black will make a touchdown with the help of the knight and king.

58...b3 59. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$  60. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

It is not clear if Karpov resigned or lost on time, but there is nothing he can do against ...c3, ...b2#, ... $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and b1= $\mathbb{Q}$ .

0-1

The fact that Karpov failed to win this game, in spite of Black's ugly 18th move, says something about the inherent soundness of Black's set-up. Such queenless middlegames may not be to everybody's liking, but the rewards make it worthwhile. Black has a simple plan: to exchange a few pieces and then use the d4-square as a lever for future operations. The pawn breaks ...f5 and ...b6 may work well after suitable preparations have been made. White's most dangerous continuations are 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$  and

10.♕d1†. Both moves demand exact defence, but the fun part for Black may come later in the endgame.

In the next game we will see what is, statistically speaking, White's main line in the Averbakh System.

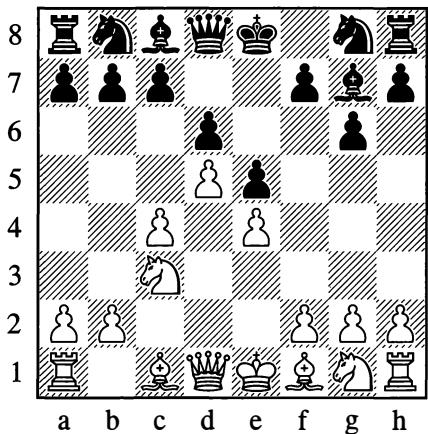
## GAME 96

**Nebojsa Nikcevic – Tiger Hillarp Persson**

Vasteras 2013

**1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♕g7 3.e4 d6 4.♘c3 e5 5.d5**

With this move White forces a King's Indian structure, hoping to arrange his pieces optimally behind the blocked pawn centre. For Black to make sense of his opening play, he should look for a way to prepare ...f5, or at least avoid putting the knight on f6 in the immediate future.



**5...a5!?**

I started experimenting with this move after suffering a defeat against Sasikiran in 2005. That game continued:

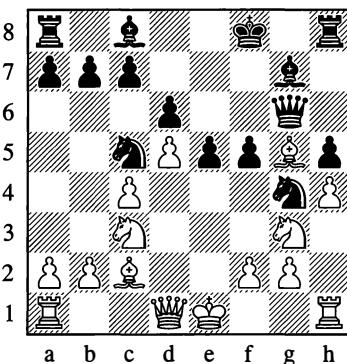
**5...f5**

This is principled, but the f5-pawn soon comes under attack, making it hard for Black to keep a dynamic pawn arrangement.

**6.exf5 gxf5 7.♗h5+ ♔f8 8.♕d3! ♘f6**

Black should prefer 8...♗e8, but White is still better after 9.♕d1 followed by ♘e2-g3.

**9.♕d1! ♘a6 10.♗ge2 ♗e8 11.♗g3 ♗g6 12.h4! h5 13.♗g5 ♘c5 14.♗c2 ♗g4**



**15.♗h3**

15.♗b5! is even stronger.

**15...e4 16.♗ge2 ♘e5?!**

16...♗f7 17.♗f4 a6 followed by ...b5 gives more counter-chances.

**17.♗f4**

White had a clear grip on the position in Sasikiran – Hillarp Persson, Malmö 2005. The more I looked at this line, the less I liked it for Black, so it was time to find something else.

**5...♘d7?!** has been played many times, but this move closes the door on ...f5 and leads – at best – to an inferior version of some King's Indian line. For instance, after 6.♕d3 ♘e7 7.h4! it is a problem for Black that the light-squared bishop is being obstructed by the knight on d7. This is one reason why I prefer the game continuation.

**6.h4!?**

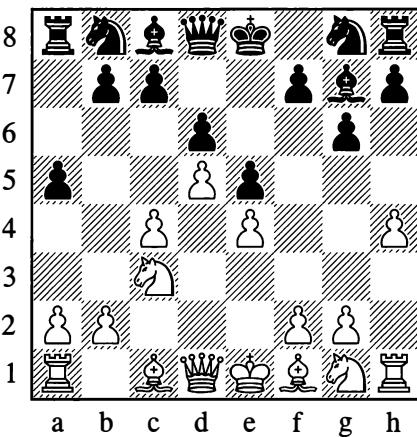
Although my opponent was rated over a hundred points below me, this move is a clear indication of positional understanding. Since White has not castled and the centre is closed, it makes sense for him to try to settle the structure on the kingside. His last move also

makes it virtually impossible for Black to play ...f5.

A number of other moves have been tested from this position:

6.a3 ♜a6 7.b4 ♜f6 led to a good game for Black in Coleman – Hillarp Persson, Helsingør 2007, but 7...f5!N intending 8.c5 (or 8.exf5 ♜xf5! and ...axb4 becomes a threat) 8...♜f6 9.♛a4† ♜d7 10.c6 bxc6 11.dxc6 ♜e6 seems like an even more promising continuation.

6.♗d3!? is the safe positional way for White to proceed, making it unattractive for Black to continue with ...f5. On the other hand, 6...♜a6 7.♗ge2 ♜h4!? leads to an unorthodox position where Black has excellent chances. The knight on e2 is not well placed and Black can continue with ...♝h6 later. (However, please note that 7...♝c5?! 8.♝c2 leads to a KID position where ...♝c5 has been played prematurely.)



#### 6...♝f6!?

I was aiming for rapid development. However, it will soon be clear that this move involved a slight misconception on my part.

6...f5!? is not completely out of the question. In the event of 7.exf5 gxf5! 8.♝h5† ♜f8 9.♗d3 the position may be compared with Sasikiran – Hillarp Persson above, but I sense that Black's

chances are improved by the respective pawn moves to h4 and a5. Alternatively, after 7.h5 ♜f6 8.hxg6 hxg6 9.♝xh8† ♜xh8 10.♗f3 ♜xe4 11.♗xe4 fxe4 12.♗g5 ♜a6 13.♗xe4 ♜h4! things have gone wrong for White. This means that White has to resort to a more subtle way to fight for an advantage.

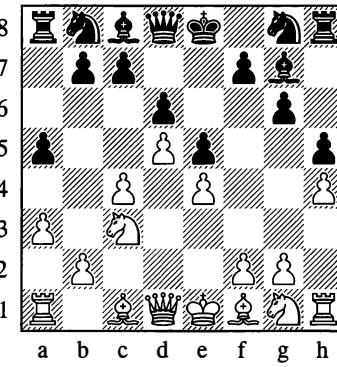
Since the position is not tempo-sensitive, it would have been best to think about my structure first and foremost:

#### 6...h5!

This position has certain aspects in common with an Averbakh structure from the KID. (The King's Indian – again? Yes, it is a huge advantage to know this opening!)

#### 7.a3

7.g3 ♜a6 8.♗h3 ♜h6 9.♗xc8 ♜xc8 10.f4?! ♜c5 11.♗e3 ♜f6 12.♗xc5 dxc5 13.♗ge2 0–0 was promising for Black in Petkov – Pancevski, Kragujevac 2013, but both 10...♜g4 and 10...exf4 might have been even better.



#### 7...♝d7

I am suspicious about this move, but Todorov usually knows what to do in this kind of position.

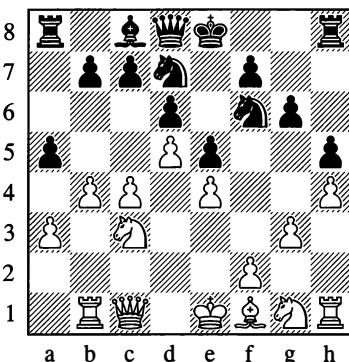
I would prefer 7...♝d7 8.♗f3 ♜a6 9.♗e2 ♜h6 10.♝xh6 ♜xh6 11.0–0 0–0 and, with the dark-squared bishops exchanged, this structure suddenly looks quite nice for Black.

#### 8.♝b1

After 8.♗f3 ♖h6 9.♗g5 ♗c5 Black can continue with ...f5 with a good game.

8...♖h6 9.b4 ♕xc1 10.♕xc1 ♗gf6 11.g3?!

This is too slow and hands over the initiative to Black.



11...c6!

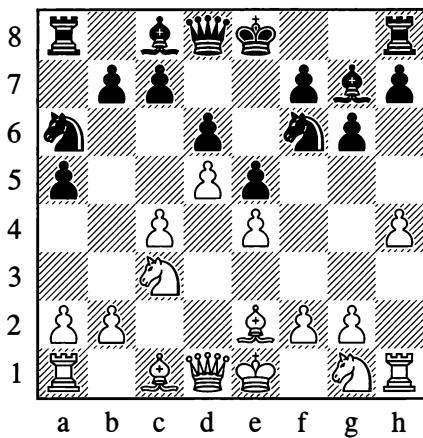
Excellent timing. When White signals that his bishop is about to vacate the f1-a6 diagonal, it makes perfect sense to open up the queenside.

12.♖h3 axb4 13.axb4 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♗b6

Black was clearly better in Coursaget – Todorov, France 2003.

7.♗e2 ♗a6

After 7...h5? 8.♗f3 ♗a6 9.♗g5 White is better. If Black wishes to play ...h5 then he should do so before developing his knight to f6. That way he keeps the option of ...♖h6, as well as that of meeting ♗g5 with ...f6.



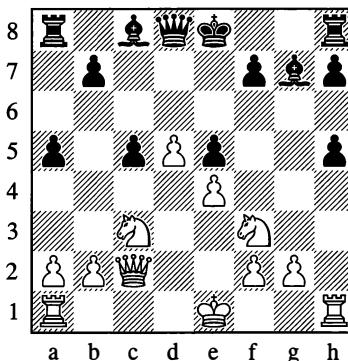
8.h5 ♗c5

This looks pretty standard, right? But actually, it is a sign of desperation on my part. The whole idea of 5...a5 is that the knight does not have to rush to c5 (as opposed to 5...♗d7, when the knight will eventually have to move in order to let the c8-bishop out), and it was with a heavy heart that I played this move. My hope was that I would gain enough tactical compensation to make up for the horrible pawn structure that lay in my future.

After 8...c6 9.♗e3 ♗d7 10.hxg6 fxg6 (or 10...hxg6 11.♗xh8† ♗xh8 12.♗f3 and Black lacks dynamic possibilities on the kingside, whereas White is clearly better on the queenside) 11.♗f3 White is aiming for ♗g5-e6 and has a clear advantage.

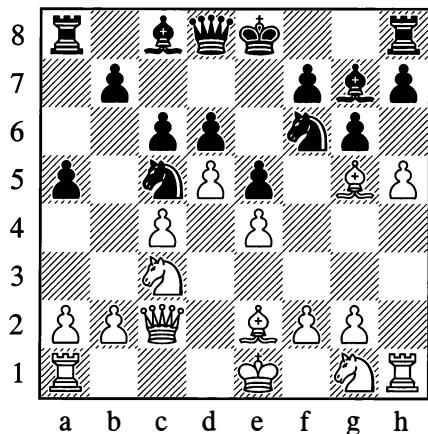
9.♗c2 c6 10.♗g5

I was more afraid of: 10.♗e3! cxd5 (10...♗b6?! 11.0–0–0 a4 12.dxc6 is bad for Black) 11.♗xc5 dxc5 12.cxd5 ♗xh5 13.♗xh5 gxh5 14.♗f3



This position might look awful for Black, but in fact it is not so simple. One possible continuation is 14...0–0 15.♗xh5 ♗a6! 16.0–0–0 ♗g6 and Black will get counterplay with some combination of ...f5, ...c4, ...♗d7 and ...b5. I still feel that White should be objectively better, but I cannot make a convincing case. The reader can make up his

own mind whether to venture this position or go for the safer 6...h5 as noted earlier.



**10...h6! 11.Qe3 cxd5 12.cxd5**

After 12.Qxc5 dxc5 13.hxg6 d4 14.gxf7† Qxf7 the position is highly unclear.

**12...Qxh5! 13.Qxh5 gxh5 14.Qxh5?!**

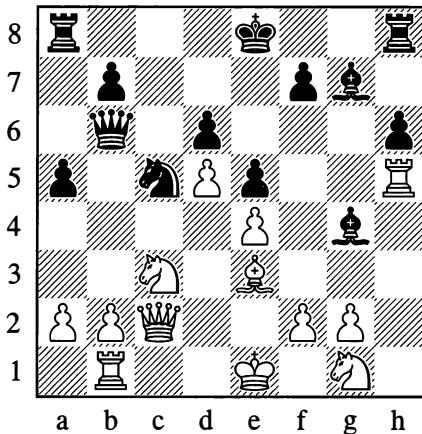
A better idea was 14.Qf3, heading for f5.

**14...Wb6**

Threatening ...Wxb2 followed by ...Qd3†.

**15.Qb1?!**

White should play 15.Qf1 Qg4 16.Qh4 h5 17.Qge2 with an improved version of the game.



**15...Qg4**

This move would not have been possible had White preferred 10.Qe3, as the h6-pawn prevents Qg5.

**16.Qh4**

This eventually allows me to gain another tempo, so 16.Qh1 may have been better.

**16...h5 17.Qge2 Qf6 18.Qh1 Qc8 19.Wd2 Wa6**

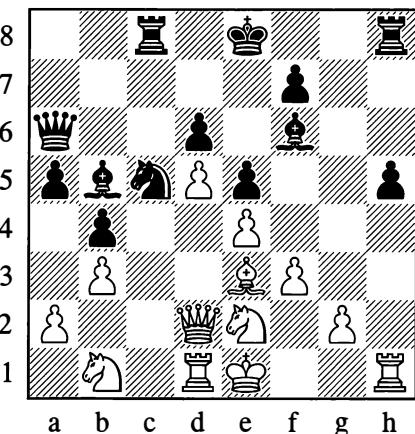
Things are beginning to look bright for Black.

**20.Qd1 b5 21.f3 Qd7 22.b3?!**

It was better to play 22.Qc1 although Black keeps a strong initiative with 22...b4 23.Q3e2 Qd8.

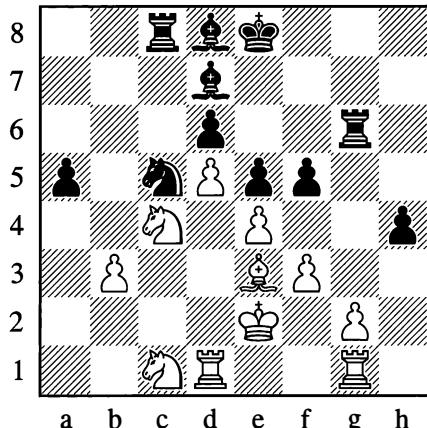
**22...b4 23.Qb1 Qb5**

There was no reason to delay 23...h4!. Still, Black remains in the driver's seat.



**24.Qc1 Qd8 25.Qf2 h4 26.a3 bxa3 27.Qxa3 Eg8 28.Qhg1 Qd7 29.We2 Wxe2† 30.Qxe2 f5 31.Qc4 Eg6**

The queen exchange has done nothing to alleviate White's suffering, and his position soon tumbles downhill.



32.♕xc5 ♕xc5 33.♘d3 ♕b5 34.♗b1 ♖xe4  
 35.♖xe4 ♔e7 36.♘f2 ♕g3 37.♘d3 ♕b8  
 38.♘e3? ♕b6

**0–1**

After 6...♘f6 Black has to be prepared to play a strategically suspect, although not necessarily bad, position. 6...h5 is a reliable alternative and 6...f5 is also possible, although I am suspicious about the latter.

In the next game we see White exchanging queens at the earliest opportunity, hoping to make Black's king uncomfortable in the centre.

## GAME 97

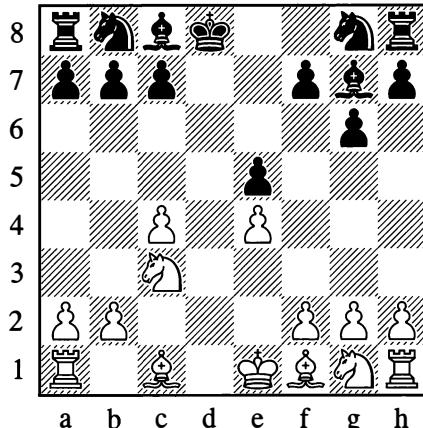
**Andras Adorjan – Miodrag Todorcevic**

Szirak 1987

1.c4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.e4 e5 5.dxe5

5.♘e3 is not much good here because of 5...exd4 6.♘xd4 ♘f6, intending ...♘c6, when White will have to lose time retreating the bishop from d4.

5...dxe5 6.♗xd8† ♘xd8



**7.f4**

This is clearly the most principled continuation. Another possibility is:

7.♘e3 ♘e6!

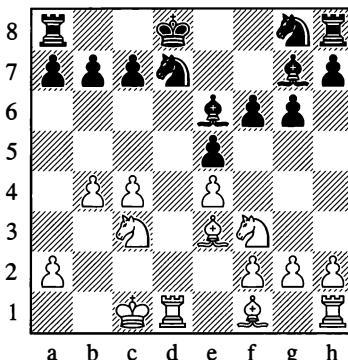
This seems like the most flexible move to me. 7...♘c6? 8.0–0–0† ♘d7 9.♘f3 f6 leaves Black a tempo down compared to Karpov – Seirawan.

7...c6 is the move Black would most like to play, but it is risky to weaken the d6-square so soon. After 8.0–0–0† ♘c7 9.♘c5 White has some initiative.

8.0–0–0† ♘d7 9.♘f3 f6

Now Black has an improved version of Karpov – Seirawan.

**10.b4**



10...♘h6!N

10...c6 is not strictly necessary, although Black soon equalized after 11.♘d2 ♘h6

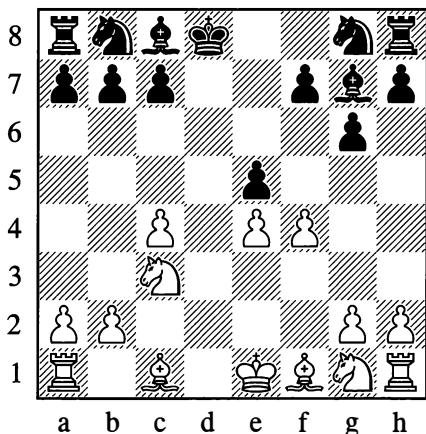
12.c5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13.fxe3 a5 14.a3 axb4 15.axb4  
 $\mathbb{Q}a1\uparrow$  in Khismatullin – Khairullin, Moscow  
 2005.

11.c5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3\uparrow$  12.fxe3 a5 13.a3 axb4 14.axb4  
 $\mathbb{Q}h6$  15.h3

White has to waste a tempo with this move,  
 since 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is good for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black is doing well.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

After 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$ ? 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  it is hard for Black to find good moves in the long run.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6\uparrow$  is more interesting, when White can choose between a) 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and b) 8.fxe5:

a) 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ ?

8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  leads to the main game.

9. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$  10.gxf3 c6 11.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   
 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13.0–0–0 b6 followed by  
 $\dots\mathbb{Q}e7$  is fine for Black.

9...exf4!

9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is also possible.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

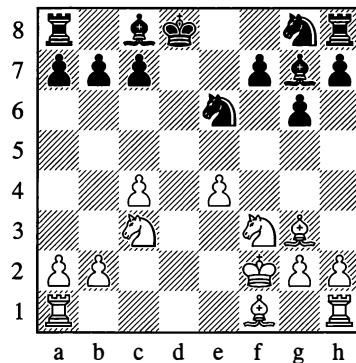
11. $\mathbb{Q}d1\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  c6  
 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  was Zayac  
 – Zakharevich, St Petersburg 1998, and  
 now 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  would be slightly better for  
 Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$   
 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$  a5

20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$

This position, from M. Petursson – Ehlvest, Yerevan (ol) 1996, is a nice example of what Black is dreaming of in these lines.



11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ !

Such decisions must not be taken lightly, but here it seems good enough.

12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

It is hard for White to make the bishop pair count. Black may follow up with ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , with a good position.

b) 8.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5\uparrow$  f6 10.0–0–0 $\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c6  
 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}h6\uparrow$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  fxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$   
 also seems fine for Black.) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f5! Black  
 is perfectly okay, as there is no way for White  
 to take advantage of the pin along the h2–b8  
 diagonal. A possible continuation is 15.exf5  
 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  17.h3  $\mathbb{Q}hf7$  18.b3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$   
 with obvious equality.

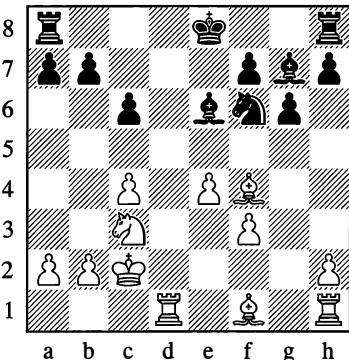
9...c6!

9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$  10.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  11.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$

12.c5 is more comfortable for White, who  
 can improve his position with a4–a5,  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ,  
 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ –h5 and so on.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$  11.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12.0–0–0 $\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$   
 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$

The knight has better prospects here than on e7



14.b3

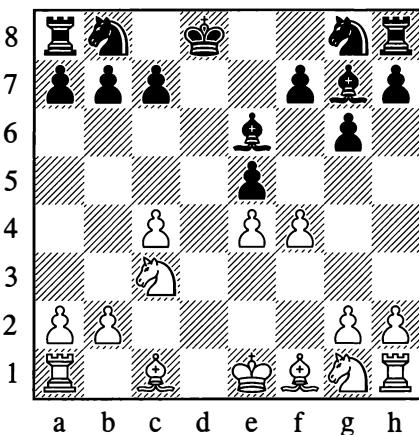
14.Qe5 Qh5 is fine for Black.

14...Bd8!

14...Qd7 15.Qd5 is somewhat better for White. It is important to exchange a pair of rooks first.

15.Qg2 Qe7 16.Qe3 b6

Once again Black has equalized.



8.Qf3

The most convenient answer to 8.fxe5 is: 8...Qd7! (8...Qc6 is possible, when 9.Qf3 Qxe5 transposes to 8...Qc6 9.fxe5! Qxe5 as discussed below.) 9.Qf3 (9.Qg5†?! Qc8 10.Qf3 h6 11.Qf4 as in Baragar – Hergott, Canada 1986, is a tempo worse for White.) 9...h6 10.Qf4 Qe7 Black is fine; the plan

is ...Qc8 and ...Qc6xe5, possibly with ...g5 thrown in along the way.

8...Qd7

This is by far the most common move.

8...Qc6

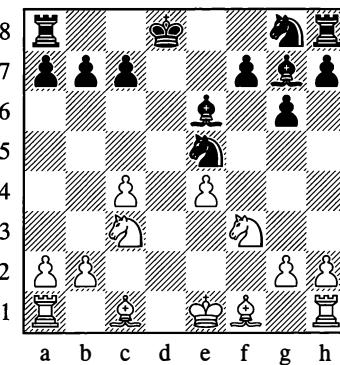
This was my recommendation in *Tiger's Modern*. Today I regard it as a playable alternative, rather than an improvement over the game continuation.

9.fxe5!

In *Tiger's Modern* I was correct to identify this as the critical move, but I was wrong in my assessment of how Black should respond.

9...Qxe5!

9...h6?! was my original recommendation, but I now consider it second best due to 10.Qf4 g5 11.0–0–0† Qc8 12.Qg3 g4! is not so convincing) 10...Qxe5 (Black is bound down after 10...Qge7 11.0–0–0† Qc8 12.Qd5!) 11.0–0–0† Qc8 12.Qd5 and White was better in Van Wessel – Pel, Unive 2013.



10.Qf4!

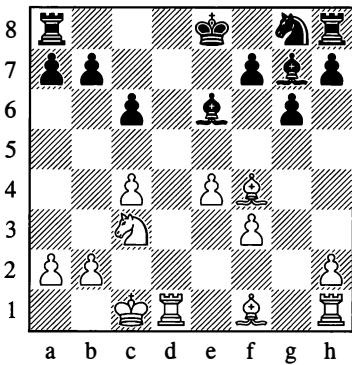
This is the critical move.

10.Qg5† was played in Pytel – Kluger, Wroclaw 1972, and now 10...Qc8!N 11.0–0–0 b6 would have enabled Black to consolidate.

10...Qxf3† 11.gxf3 c6 12.0–0–0† Qe8

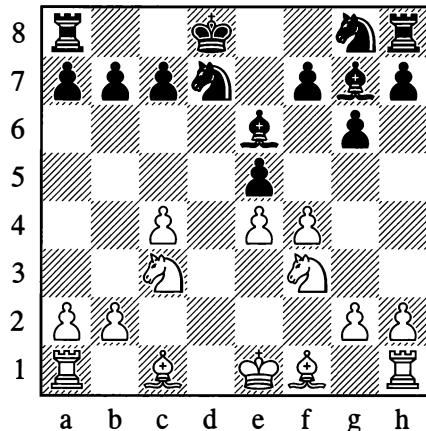
White is obviously a little ahead in

development here, but I have not found a way for him to stop Black from equalizing with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{B}d8$ . A possible continuation is:



13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $b6$  15. $a4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16. $a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black has neutralized White's initiative and a complex ending lies ahead.



### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This has been the most common choice, but virtually any sensible move can be tried. Here are a few examples:

9. $g3$  threatens  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , but 9... $h6$  deals with this conveniently. Alternatively, 9... $exf4$ !? 10. $gxf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  11. $bxcc3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is rather double-edged, but White's many pawn weaknesses make his position quite hard to handle.

Rather toothless is:

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $h6$

9... $exf4$ !?? 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$  11. $bxcc3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is an interesting alternative.

Once again, the bishops are not at their best.

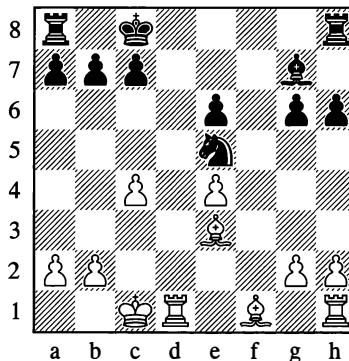
10.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Also possible is 10... $exf4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ , and now both

11... $g5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

and 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !?? 12. $bxcc3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  offer Black a good game.

11. $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}dx5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

16. $c5$ !??  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{B}xd1\uparrow$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is also equal. It is extremely hard for White to break down this kind of set-up.

16... $b6$  17. $c5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18. $\mathbb{B}hf1$

A draw was agreed in Vitiugov – Nepomniachtchi, Olginka 2011.

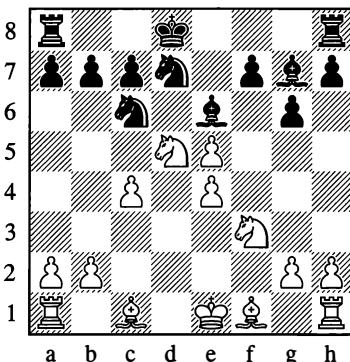
9. $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The pedestrian 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is met by 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}dx5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! 13. $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $c6$  when Black is already ruling the dark squares.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black should avoid 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , when he has not real choice but to play 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12. $cxdd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$  13. $gxf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  14. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{B}b8$ , giving White more than

enough compensation for the pawn after either 16.h4 or 16.Qf4.



11.Qg5+ Qc8 12.Qf6 Qxf6 13.exf6 Qce5  
14.0-0-0 c6 15.h3 Qd8 16.Qe2 Qxf3 17.gxf3  
cxd5 18.cxd5 Qxf6 19.dxe6 fxe6

Black's knight is at least as good as White's bishop in this endgame.

### 9.Qg5

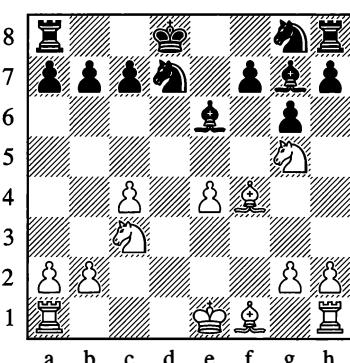
The idea behind this move is to follow up with g2-g3, after which it will be hard for Black to develop.

9...exf4!

9...Qe7 10.g3 followed by Qe3 and 0-0-0 is good for White.

10.Qxf4

Now Black has a choice.



10...Qe5?

10...Qe7? is too passive, and after 11.0-0-0  
Qc6 12.Qe2 Qce5 13.Qhf1! Qc8 14.Qd5 c6

15.Qb1! Black is under heavy pressure.

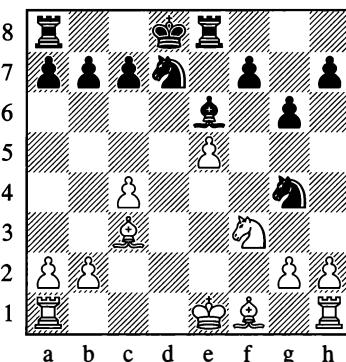
10...h6 is more reliable. 11.Qxe6+ fxe6  
12.0-0-0 (12.Qb5 Qe5 13.Qxe5 Qxe5  
14.Qd1+ Qe7! 15.Qxc7 Qc8 16.Qb5 Qf6  
gives Black some initiative.) 12...Qxc3  
13.bxc3 Qgf6 14.Qd3 e5 15.Qe3 b6 It seems  
to me that the bishops are struggling to find  
a sense of purpose here, so I prefer Black.

11.Qd2 Qgf6

Black takes the next step of an ugly but effective plan.

12.Qf3 Qxc3! 13.Qxc3 Qe8! 14.e5 Qg4

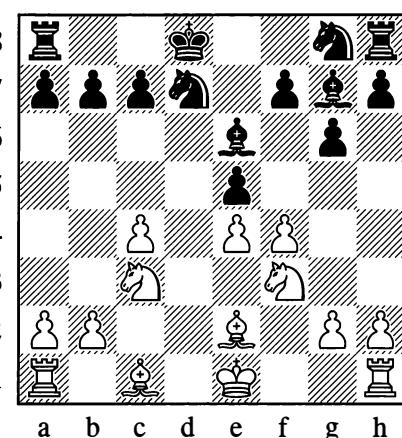
White cannot avoid the loss of a pawn, for instance:



15.Qd3 Qe3 16.Qf2 Qxc4 17.Qhd1 Qc8

18.Qac1 Qcb6

White has some compensation for the pawn, but it is hardly enough.



**9...h6**

In Morley – Vegjeleki, corr. 2012, Black tried the somewhat inhuman 9...exf4? 10.♕xf4 ♜xc3† 11.bxc3 ♜gf6 12.♕g5 ♜c5. Objectively this position might be okay for Black, but it is not something that I would play in a live game.

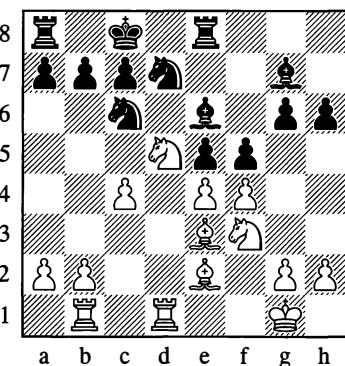
**10.0–0 ♜e7 11.♕e3**

In the following email game White tried a more dangerous plan: 11.♗d1 ♜c8 12.♗d5 ♜c6 13.♗b1 ♜e8 14.♕e3 But not 14.b4?! ♜d4 15.♗xd4 exd4 when it is hard for White to deal with the ideas of ...♗xd5, ...c6 and ...♗b6.

**14...f5!?**

One of the rare occasions where this move works.

Black does not have time to play 14...exf4 15.♕xf4 ♜de5 since 16.b4! intending b4-b5 and ♜b3-a3 is too dangerous. However, Black has a reasonable alternative in 14...a5, intending to slow White down on the queenside before deciding how to deal with the central tension.

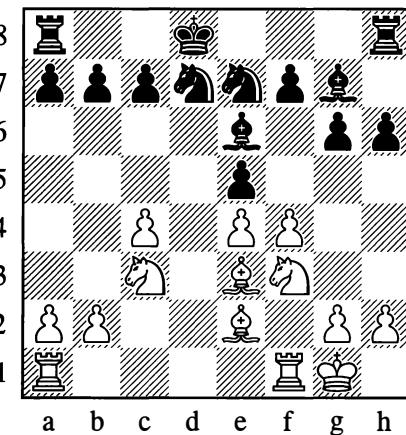
**15.♗h4**

White can also try 15.♗d3?! ♜f7 16.exf5 e4 17.fxg6 ♜xd5 18.cxd5 ♜b4 19.♗f1 exf3 20.♗f2 with some weird compensation.

15...♗d4 16.♗xd4 exd4 17.e5 c6 18.♗xd4 cxd5 19.cxd5 ♜f7 20.♗b5 ♜xe5

A draw was agreed in Koetsier – Koch,

email 2001. There is still a lot to play for, but the chances are about even.

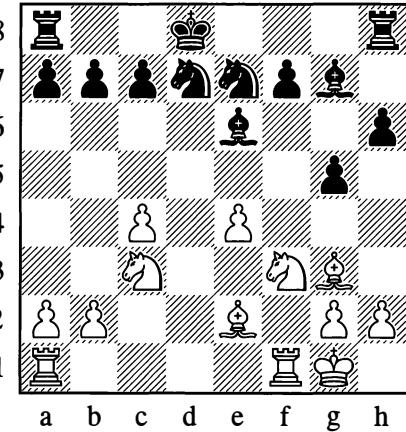
**11...exf4**

Black can also try 11...♗c8?! although after 12.♗ad1 it will not be possible to put off ...exf4 forever.

A typical mistake would be 11...c6?!, when 12.♗ad1 ♜c8 13.♗d2 leaves the e7-knight misplaced.

**12.♗xf4 g5 13.♗g3**

It is also possible to play 13.♗e3, intending to manoeuvre a knight to d4 and eventually f5. Black should play 13...♗c6 14.♗b5 ♜c8! 15.♗bd4 (15.♗fd4 a6!) 15...g4 16.♗xe6 fxе6 17.♗e1 ♜xb2 18.♗b1 ♜d4 with a balanced game.



**13...g4!**

This is clearly stronger than 13...Qg6, Ivanisevic – Todorcevic, Vrnjacka Banja 1999, when 14.Qad1!N is strong, intending 14...Qc8 15.Qb5 Qf4 16.Qxf4 gxf4 17.Qfd4 a6 18.Qc3 Qe5 19.Qd5 Qxd5 20.exd5 with a clear advantage for White.

**14.Qh4**

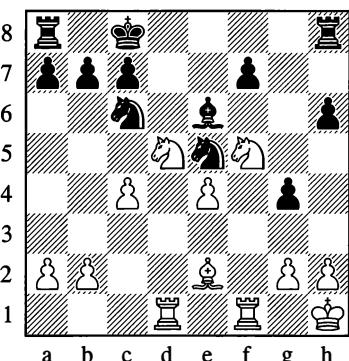
White tries to use every tempo to his advantage. There are two other options:

14.Qd2 Qg6 15.Qb3 Qe5 16.Qad1 Qxg3 17.hxg3 Qge5 18.Qc5 Qc8 19.Qxd7 Qxd7 20.Qd5 h5 21.Qf4 a5 22.Qf2 a4 23.Qe3 Qa5 and the game remains balanced.

14.Qe1 allows the knight to make its way to either f4 or e3, but the question is whether it will achieve anything on either outpost. After 14...Qg6 15.Qd1 h5 16.Qd5 Qe5 17.Qd3 Qxg3 18.hxg3 c6 Black is doing well.

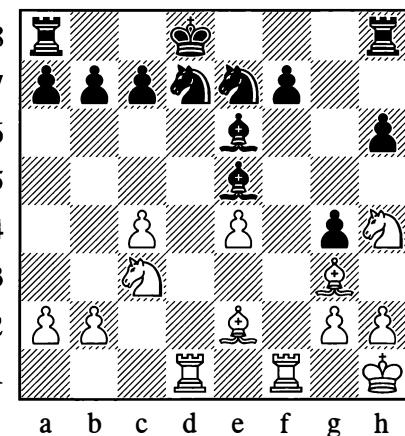
**14...Qd4† 15.Qh1 Qe5 16.Qad1**

16.Qxe5! Qxe5 17.Qad1† Qc8 18.Qd5 Q7c6 19.Qf5 would have maintained some initiative and forced Black to defend carefully. Best play continues:



19...a5! (19...h5 20.b4! is awkward for Black, since after 20...Qd7 21.c5 Qce5 22.Qcl Qb8 23.b5 Black is forced to play 23...b6.

From here, the engine gives 24.cxb6 axb6 25.Qxc7 Qxa2 26.Qa6† Qa8 as almost equal, but I have a bad feeling about this line.) 20.Qg7 a4 21.Qf6 Qd7 Black has not completely equalized yet, but if he manages to hold on to the e5-blockade, then the future will be bright. I would say the position is objectively slightly better for White, but at the same time easier to play for Black, since White cannot afford to lose steam.

**16...Qxg3 17.hxg3 h5 18.Qd5 Qc6**

At this point a draw was agreed. A possible continuation is 19.Qf5 a5 (or 19...Qce5 20.Qd4 c6 21.Qg1 Qc8 22.a3 Qh6 23.Qd2 cxd5 24.cxd5 a6 and Black has a nice endgame) 20.Qg7 Qce5 21.Qg1 Qc8 when White has nothing better than 22.Qe7† Qd8 23.Qd5, repeating the position.

½–½

Despite the early draw, there was plenty going on in this game. The slight misplacement of Black's king means that he will generally have to soak up some pressure, but he can look forward to the future endgame where White's weak dark squares will count in Black's favour. We have seen that the deviations 7...Qc6 and 8...Qc6 are both playable, so you have some options in the event of a problem occurring in the main line.

The next game features a dangerous set-up where White maintains the central tension.

## GAME 98

Klaus Bischoff – Dimitri Reinderman

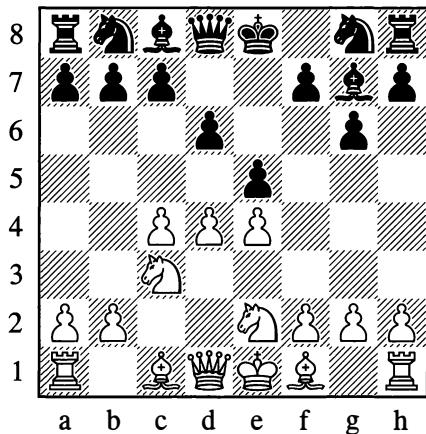
Venlo 2000

**1.c4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.e4 d6 4.♘c3 e5**

According to habit, I have adjusted the move order. The game actually continued 4...♘d7 5.♗e3 e5 6.♗ge2 ♜e7.

**5.♗ge2**

This flexible move can be followed by either g2-g3, or ♜e3 and f2-f3.



**5...♜e7**

I have come to the conclusion that 5...♜c6 6.♗e3 ♜h6 7.f3 f5 8.♗d2! is beyond saving. Neither 8...f4 9.♗f2 g5 10.d5 ♜e7 11.c5!, nor 8...fxe4 9.♗xe4 ♜f5 10.♗g5 ♜d7 11.d5 ♜cd4 12.♗xd4 exd4 13.♗f6†!, nor 8...♜f7 9.exf5 ♜xf5 10.d5 holds a future for Black.

If you wish to prevent White from exchanging queens, then 5...♜d7 might appeal to you. Most of the time this move will transpose to the main game, but there are a few unique

scenarios after both a) 6.g3 and the more critical b) 6.d5!.

a) 6.g3 ♜e7 7.♗g2 exd4 8.♗xd4 ♜c6!

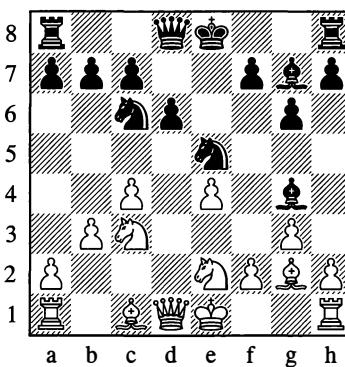
This leads to an accelerated version of a line that I have played with castling thrown in for both sides. We will see how this small difference may benefit Black.

9.♗de2

Both 9.♗c2?! ♜ce5 10.♗e3 ♜c5 11.0–0 ♜ed3 and 9.♗e3 ♜de5 are pleasant for Black.

9...♜de5 10.b3 ♜g4!

If both sides had castled then this move would achieve nothing, but here it causes White real problems.



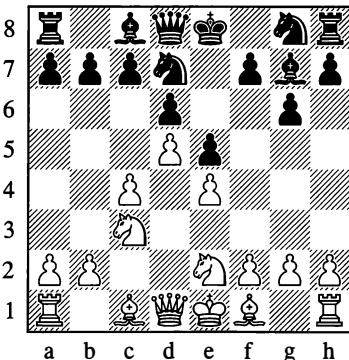
11.h3 ♜f3† 12.♗f1 ♜xc3 13.♗b1 ♜h2†

13...♜d2† 14.♗xd2 ♜xe2† 15.♗xe2 ♜xd2 16.♗xd2 ♜f6 is also sensible.

14.♗g1 ♜xe2 15.♗xe2 h5 16.♗xh2 h4 17.g4 g5 18.e5 ♜xe5† 19.f4 gxf4 20.♗xc6† bxc6 21.♗xf4 0–0

Black was slightly better in Ippolito – A. Ivanov, Philadelphia 2006.

b) 6.d5! is more of a problem. White is aiming to play a Sämisch set-up, and if Black is to avoid an inferior version of a KID, he needs to arrange an early ...f5. Unfortunately, the knight on d7 gets in the way of this, as well as hindering any possible queenside play with ...c6.

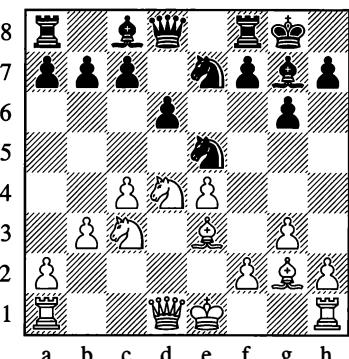


6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  looks logical, but 7.h4! is annoying. In the event of 7...f5 8.h5 0–0 9.hxg6 hxg6 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  I am suspicious about Black's position. 7...h5! is a better try, but after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  f5 9.g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  White retains a positional grip. This is the main reason why I would stick with 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ .

### 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

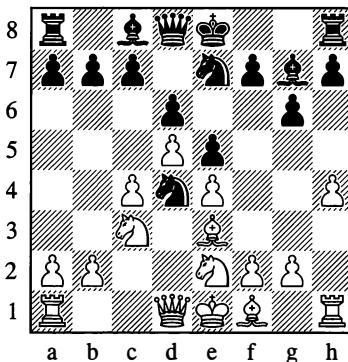
There are several other options that White can consider:

6.g3?! is a move that Black should be more than happy to face: 6...exd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ ! 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is at least equal for Black.) 8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10.b3



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! White is already in trouble, since 11.f3 c5! 12.fxg4 (or 12. $\mathbb{Q}db5$  a6) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  is really bad for him.

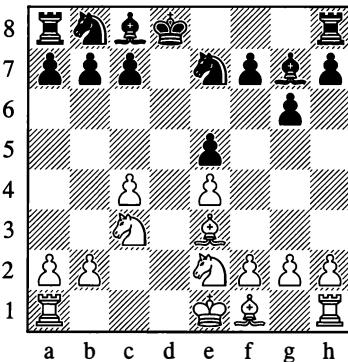
6.h4! is quite logical. I suggest 6... $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  7.d5, and now 7... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! is surprisingly a novelty. 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (8.h5 c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0–0 is unclear.)



8...c5! 9.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}exc6$ ! This structure and piece arrangement is not exactly an everyday occurrence, but I believe Black is doing all right. One possible continuation is 10.h5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and now 12... $\mathbb{E}c8$  is sensible, while 12...f5? is interesting, albeit risky.

White can also go for another version of the queenless middlegame with:

6.dxe5 dxe5 7. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !  
8.b3 b6 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 10.0–0–0–0 $\dagger$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  is equal.  
8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 9.0–0–0–0 $\dagger$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6 11.h4  
h5 12.g3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14.f4 b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16.b3  $\mathbb{E}ad8$  and Black has equalized.



8...b6!  
8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.0–0–0–0 c6 10.g3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11.f4 b6 is

pretty solid. However, I believe Black should strive for ...c5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}bc6-d4$ , otherwise there is a risk that the e7-knight will become passive.

9.0–0–0†  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.c5?

Otherwise Black executes the plan of ...c5 followed by plonking a knight on d4.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}ec6$

Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and Black is fine.

6.d5

I found a few games that reached this position via different move orders. This may not be the most logical moment for White to block the centre, but it is still important for Black to react correctly

6...0–0!

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?! 7.h4! h6 8.h5 g5 9.g4 is horrible for Black. The kingside is closed and White has a free hand on the queenside.

7.h4N

This has not been tried, but it seems like the only critical idea.

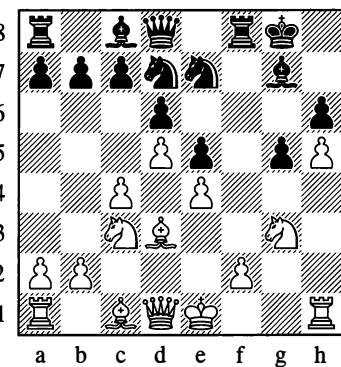
7...h6!

Absolutely necessary. 7...f5 8.h5 is worse for Black.

8.h5 g5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$   
13.a3 c6 gives Black excellent counterplay.

10...f4 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.g4 fxg3 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$

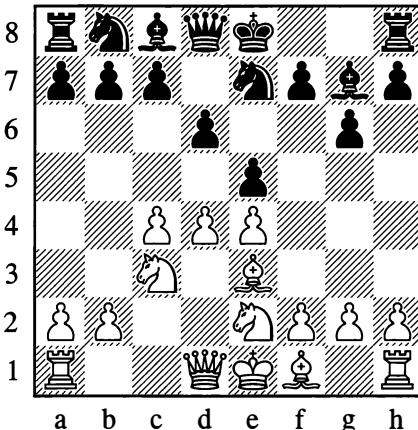


13... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !

A thematic and powerful sacrifice.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5

Black has fantastic positional compensation for the exchange.

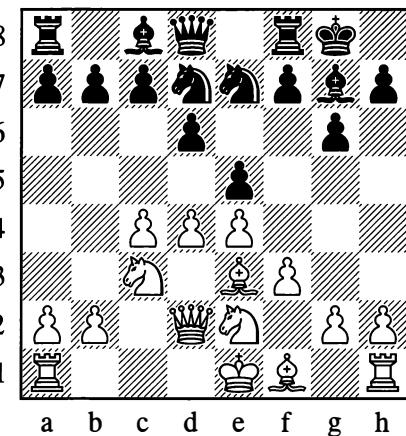


6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{W}d2$

7.g3 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ? (8.d5 leads to the game)  
8...exd4! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is the same disastrous line that was analysed after 6.g3?! above.

7...0–0 8.f3

The alternative is: 8.0–0–0 f5 (8...a6?! is interesting; for instance, 9.h4 h5 10.f3?! b5 is nice for Black.) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (9.f3 transposes to the note to White's next move in the main game.) 9...fxe4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  The position is similar to the 9.0–0–0 line examined below.



**8...f5 9.d5**

Once again White can consider 9.0–0–0, when 9...fxe4 leaves him with a choice of recaptures:

a) 10.fxe4 a6 11.h3 b5! is something White should avoid. The critical line goes 12.Qg5 Qf7 13.Qd5 Qb7! 14.Qxe7+ Qxe7 15.dxe5 (or 15.Qxe7 Qxe7 16.d5 Wh4 17.Qc2 Qf6 and White's centre is starting to fall apart) 15...Qxe5 16.Qc3 c6 17.Qe2 Qc5 18.Qc2 Qe6 19.Qxe7 Qxe7 20.Qb1 Qc8! Black has good compensation for the exchange.

b) 10.Qxe4 is better, when 10...Qf5 11.Qg5 We8 12.d5 h6 13.Qe3 a6 14.Qc3 Qf7 15.Qb1 Qf6 16.Qxf6+ Qxf6 17.Qd3 Qd7 18.Qf2 b5 offers sufficient counterplay.

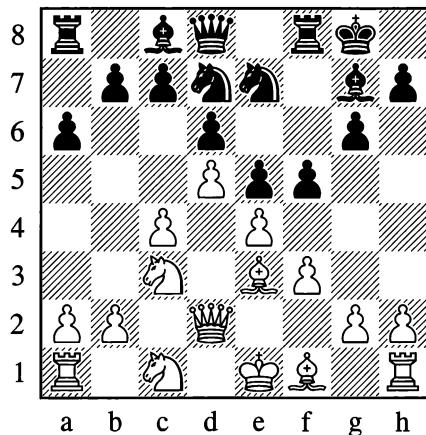
**9...a6!**

This is clearly the best choice, preparing to answer long castling with a quick ...b5 break.

**10.Qc1**

10.h3 Qf6 11.g4 b5 12.cxb5 axb5 13.gxf5 gxf5 14.b4 Qg6 15.h4 Qh5 is problematic for White, whose king lacks a safe shelter.

White should absolutely avoid 10.0–0–0?! b5! 11.cxb5 axb5 when both 12.b4?! Qf6 and 12.Qxb5 Qxa2 13.Qec3 Qa5 14.Qc4 Qf6 15.Qc2 Qd7! 16.Qa1 Qxb5 17.Qxb5 fxe4 offer Black excellent chances.

**10...fxe4?!**

This operation seems a bit premature to me.

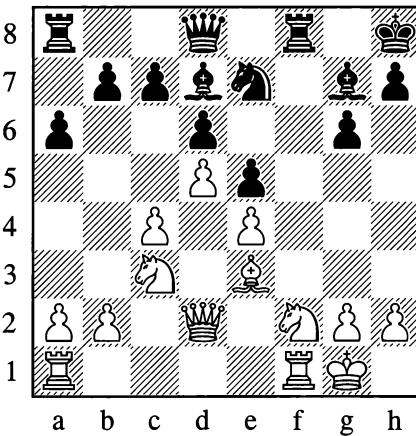
I would prefer 10...Qf6! intending 11.Qe2 c5?! 12.0–0 (or 12.Qd3?! b5!) 12...f4 (12...Qb8? 13.a4 a5 is another idea, sealing up the queenside before focusing on the other wing) 13.Qf2 g5 14.b4 b6 15.Qd3 g4 16.Qab1 Qg6 with an attack.

**11.fxe4 Qf6 12.Qe2 Qg4 13.Qxg4?!**

It was more challenging to play 13.Qg5 h6 14.Qxg4 hxg5 15.Qxc8 Qxc8 16.Qf1 when Black may regret the doubling of the g-pawns in the long run.

**13...Qxg4 14.Qd3 Qh8 15.Qf2 Qd7 16.0–0**

I guess Bischoff considered this position to be somewhat better for White, but Reinderman finds a nice way to regroup.

**16...Qg8?**

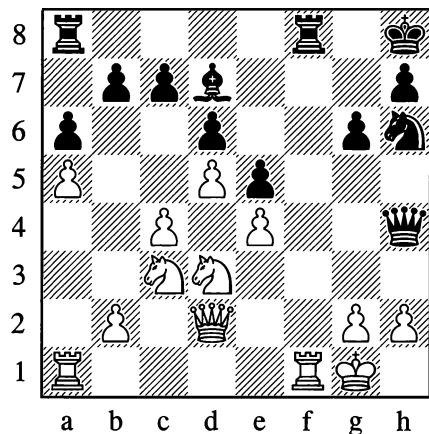
Opening the path for the queen and preparing to exchange the bad bishop.

**17.a4 Wh4 18.a5**

White fixes the pawn structure to his advantage, but he will not get the time to reap what he has sowed on the queenside.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$** 

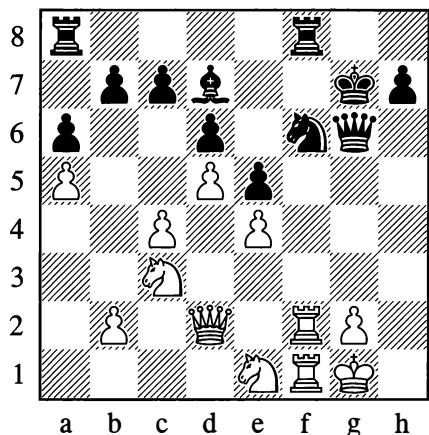
It would have been better to try 20.c5!  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  22.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ , when White is at least starting to create some threats on the queenside, with cxd6 followed by  $\mathbb{W}b6$  on the agenda.

**20... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  21.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{W}h6!$** 

A queen exchange would lead to equality, but Black is quite right to play for more.

**23. $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$** 

Black's attack is quite venomous, and it is not easy to offer advice to White.

**24. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  25. $\mathbb{B}af1$  g4 26.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   
27. $\mathbb{B}3f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  29. $\mathbb{W}d2$** **29...h6**

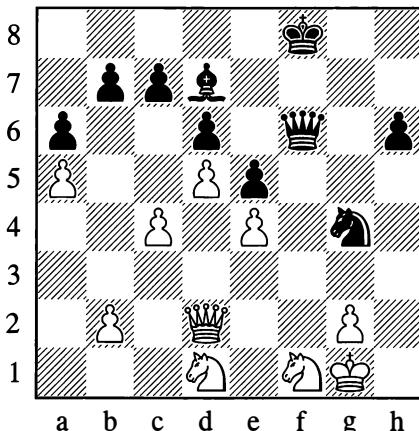
29... $\mathbb{W}h5!$  is more accurate. The best line according to the Silicon Monster is 30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  31. $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  32. $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$   $\mathbb{W}xg5$  33. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{B}xf1\uparrow$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{B}b8!$  35. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  b6 36.axb6  $\mathbb{B}xb6$  when the c4-pawn is in trouble. Maybe White can defend; maybe not.

**30. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$** 

Also after 30... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  32. $\mathbb{B}xf8$   $\mathbb{B}xf8$  33. $\mathbb{B}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  34. $\mathbb{W}xh6\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  35. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}f4$  36. $\mathbb{W}h7\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  37. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  Black keeps some advantage.

**31. $\mathbb{B}xf8$   $\mathbb{B}xf8$  32. $\mathbb{B}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g5$   
34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$** 

White is starting to get his ducks in a row. It is important to neutralize the strong knight on g4.



35... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  36. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  37. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$  38. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  39. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  40. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}f4$  41.g3  $\mathbb{W}g4$  42. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}h3$  43. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$  44. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  45. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$  46. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  47. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$   
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

The line chosen by White in the above game is one of the most critical against the Averbakh, and my recommended 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  was sorely needed, since 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is under a dark cloud. However, I am optimistic about

the future of this line. The usual downside to playing an early ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is that White can exchange on e5 and d8, but with the knight on e2, this is not such an attractive option anymore.

The remaining games will deal with those lines where White plays an early  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and delays  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  for at least a few moves.

## GAME 9

Smbat Lputian – Miodrag Todorcevic

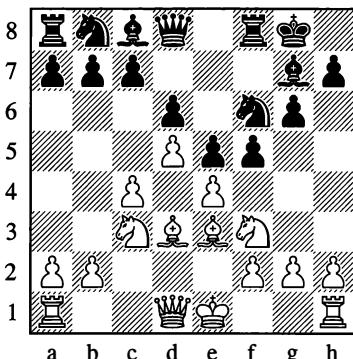
Cannes 1996

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3.c4 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e5! 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ??**

This move will henceforth be known as the black sheep of the family. The other family members are:

5.dxe5 dx5 6. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  is not dangerous for Black: the knight on f3 makes it difficult for White to take the initiative and Black can complete development with ..f6, ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , ...c6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-f7$ .

5.d5 closes the centre prematurely. 5...f5 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

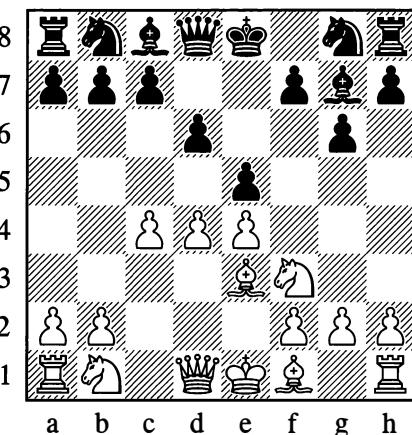


Now in Kempinski – Solak, Biel 2001, Black prematurely released the tension by exchanging on e4. Instead, any of 8...c6N,

8...h6N or 8... $\mathbb{W}e7N$  would have been slightly better for him.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! is mentioned in the notes to the next game.

5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is the main line, and will be the featured move in each remaining game in the chapter.



**5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !**

Once again I have altered the move order to emphasize the most accurate sequence. Funnily enough, I did not find a single practical example of this move.

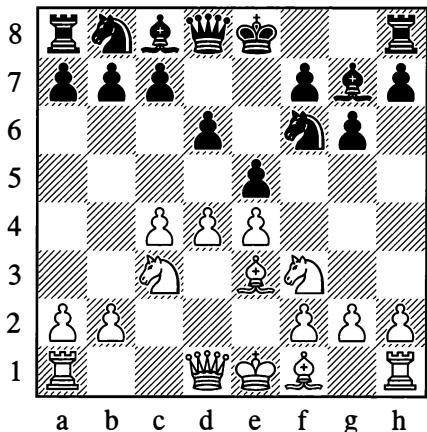
The game actually continued 5...exd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , reaching our bolded main line below. The problem with this move order is 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !, intending 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7.f3! when Black cannot avoid transposing to a Sämisch KID. It is worth adding that 6...c5?! 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  is too risky due to 8. $\mathbb{Q}1c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$  (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  9. $\mathbb{W}xa1$  and White has fantastic compensation with  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  on the way) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  when the black king was caught in a hurricane in Brinck Claussen – Mestel, Esbjerg 1978.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! is also unsatisfactory due to 6.d5!. This move is strong now that White controls d4. 6... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  7.c5! White is better, since

7...f5 8.cxd6 cxd6 9.Qb5† Qd7 10.Qxd7† Qxd7 11.Qg5! is unpleasant for Black.

### 6.Qc3

In the event of 6.dxe5 Qxe4! 7.Wc2 (or 7.Qd3 Qc5 8.Qxc5 dxc5 and it is only a matter of time before the e5-pawn falls) 7...Qc5! 8.Qc3 Qf5 I am pretty sure that Black is fine, but I will continue the analysis for a few more moves just to prove my point. 9.Wd2 Qc6 10.exd6 Wxd6 11.Wxd6 cxd6 12.Qb5 0–0–0 (12...0–0–0!) 13.0–0–0 Qb4 14.Qxd6† Qxd6 15.Qxd6 Qxa2† 16.Qd1 Qe4 Black has plenty of compensation for the exchange.



### 6...exd4 7.Qxd4

This takes us back to Lputian – Todorcevic.

Also possible is:

### 7.Qxd4?

Black must act immediately to avoid drifting into a bad version of a Sämisch KID. The key move is:

### 7...Qg4!

Forcing the bishop to move, and thus ruining White's coordination.

7...0–0–0?! 8.f3 Qe8 9.Wd2 is the transposition that Black should avoid.

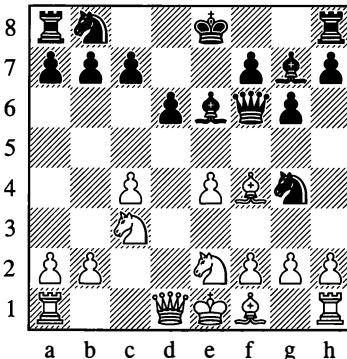
### 8.Qf4

8.Qc1 Wh4 9.g3 Wf6 10.Qf3 Qc6 11.Qd5 Wd8 and Black is doing well.

### 8...Wf6

8...Qc6?! is also interesting.

### 9.Qde2 Qe6!

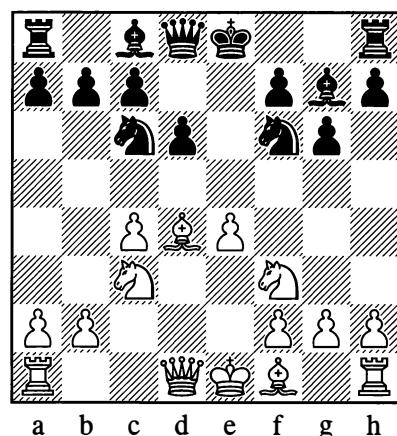


White is in some trouble, since both 10.h3 Qxf2 11.Qxf2 g5 12.Qd5 Qxd5 13.Wxd5 gx4 14.Wxb7 0–0 15.Wxa8 Wxb2 and 10.Wb3 Qd7 11.Wxb7 Qb8 12.Wxc7 Wxb2 13.Wc8† Wd8 14.Wxd8† Qxd8 are excellent for Black.

### 7...Qc6

It is also possible to play 7...0–0–0?!, intending 8.Qe2?! Qe8 9.Qd2 Qh6! (this option does not exist after 7...Qc6 8.Qe3), when White will have to either give up the dark-squared bishop or accept a miserable pawn structure after 10.0–0 Qc6 11.Qe3 Qxe3 12.fxe3.

However, White can avoid all this with 8.Qd3!, when 8...Qc6 9.Qe3 Qg4 10.0–0 Qd7 leads to a balanced position.



**8.♗e3 0–0**

Given the chance, I would have gone for 8...♝g4!? 9.♕g5 (or 9.♗d2 0–0 10.h3 ♘ge5 and Black is ahead in development) 9...♝xc3†! 10.bxc3 f6 11.♖h4 ♜e7 12.♗d2 g5 13.♗g3 f5. This is a typical King's Indian trick: exchanging the dark-squared bishop on c3 and then taking the initiative on the light squares. I strongly prefer Black's position.

**9.♗e2**

Since this move leads to a passive position for White, there is something to be said for developing the bishop to the alternative square:

9.♗d3 ♘g4

9...♝g4!? is also possible.

10.♗g5 f6 11.♗h4

11.♗c1 ♜e6 12.0–0 ♘ge5 13.♗xe5 dxe5

14.♗e3 ♜d7 is a little better for Black due to the weak d4-square.

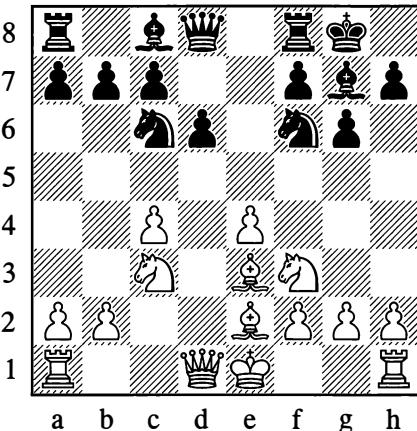
11...♝ge5 12.0–0

Or 12.♗e2 ♜e6 13.♗d5 ♘xf3† 14.♗xf3 g5

15.♗g3 f5 with an initiative for Black.

12...♜e6 13.♗d5 ♘xd3 14.♗xd3 ♜e5 15.♗c3 ♘xf3† 16.♗xf3 ♜d7

Black is ready to open things up for his bishop pair with ...c6 and ...f5.

**9...♜e8 10.♗d2 ♘d7 11.0–0 ♘d4**

I believe it was better to play 11...♝c5!,

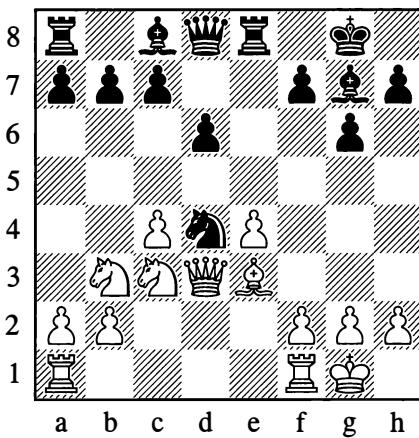
intending 12.f3 ♜e5 13.♗c1 f5 14.f4 ♜g7 (but not 14...♝xc3 15.♗xc3 fxe4 16.♗b3, when White has good compensation) 15.♗xc5 dxc5 16.e5 ♘d4 17.♗b3 ♘xb3 18.♗xb3 c6 with an unclear position.

**12.♗d3 ♘c5 13.♗b3!**

With this move White regains some control of the central dark squares and is back in the game.

**13...♝xd3 14.♗xd3**

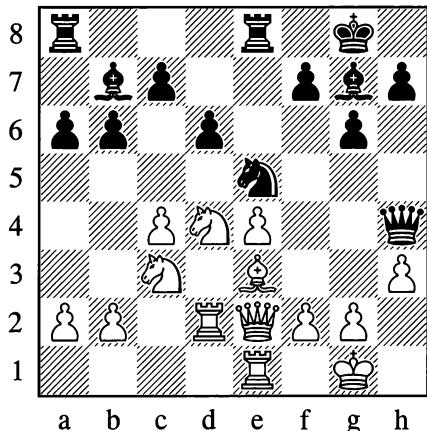
More challenging is: 14.♗xd4! ♘f4 (14...♝e5?! 15.f4 ♜g4 16.♗b1 ♘xc4 17.♗xg7 ♘xg7 18.♗d3 ♜e6 19.♗d4 is dangerous for Black.) 15.♗xg7 ♘xg7 16.g3 ♘h3† 17.♗h1 ♘g5 In this position White would have been much better if only the g3-pawn had been back home on g2. Here however, the weakened light squares offer Black reasonable prospects for counterplay.

**14...♝c6 15.♗fd1 ♘e5 16.♗e2 b6!**

Stopping c4-c5 and preparing ...♝b7, or even ...♝a6.

**17.♗d4 a6 18.h3 ♜b7 19.♗d2 ♜h4 20.♗e1?**

20.f3! leaves Black slightly worse, as he has no way of opening the centre. In the game he seizes the opportunity to force the play, resulting in equality.

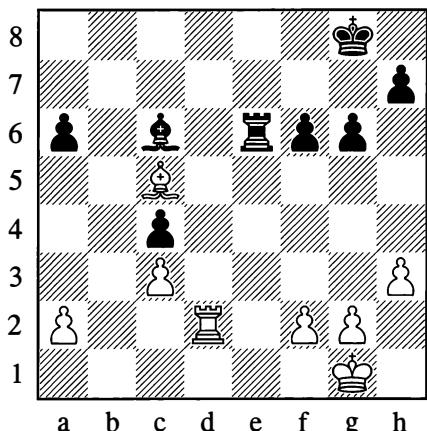


20...c5! 21.Qf3

White must avoid 21.Qc2? f5 22.Rxd6 f4 23.Rxb6 f3 24.Qf1 fxg2 25.Qxg2 Qc8, when there is no defence against both ...Rxf3 and ...Qxc4.

21...Qxf3† 22.Qxf3 Rxd8 23.Red1 Qxc3 24.bxc3 Qxe4 25.Qf4 Qxf4 26.Qxf4 Re6 27.Qxd6 Qc6 28.Qc7 Rxd2 29.Rxd2 b5 30.Qd6 bxc4 31.Qxc5 f6

Lputian is strong in the endgame, but even he cannot win this.



32.Rd8† Qf7 33.Rc8 g5 34.f3 h5 35.Qf2 h4 36.Qe3 Qg6 37.Rc7 Rd6 38.f4 Qd5 39.fxg5 fxg5 40.Qd4 Qf5 41.a4 Rg6 42.Re7 Qe6 43.a5 Qe4 44.Ra7 Qd5 45.Rd7 Qe6

46.Rd6 Qf5 47.Qf6 Qc8 48.Rd4† Qf5  
49.Qd8 Qe6 50.Rd6 Qg8 51.Rd7 Qe6  
52.Rd2 Qg8 53.Qf1 Qe6 54.Qc7 Qg7  
55.Rf2† Qg6 56.Qe5 Rf7 57.Rf6† Qh5  
58.Qd4 Rf7 59.Qf2 Rxf6† 60.Qxf6 Qg6  
61.Qd8 Qf5

½-½

We may conclude that 5.Qe3 is not much of a try for an advantage due to the accurate 5...Qf6!, especially if Black takes the opportunity to improve with 8...Qg4!?

## GAME 100

Uwe Boensch – Yasser Seirawan

Lugano 1989

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Qg7 3.c4 d6 4.Qf3 e5 5.Qe2

This is a flexible option that makes it less attractive for Black to jump in with the knight on d4.

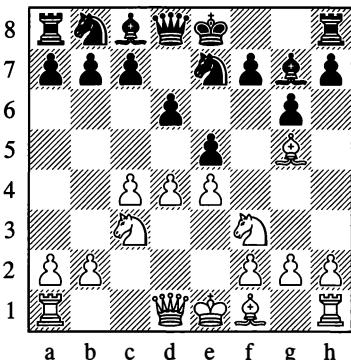
Another respectable option is:

5.Qg5?! Qe7!

I chose 5...f6, and after 6.Qe3 Qc6 7.Qe2! Qh6 8.d5 Qe7 9.Qc3 c5 10.h3 Qf7 I was doing fine in Ramondino – Hillarp Persson, Stockholm 2013, but White's play can be improved. 9.c5 was more critical, and he was under no obligation to close the centre before that. All things considered, the knight move seems more reliable.

6.Qc3

6.dxe5 dxе5 7.Qxd8† Qxd8 8.Qc3 reaches an unusual version of the thematic queenless middlegame. Both sides have certain disadvantages: the knight on f3 prevents f2-f4, while Black's knight is not ideally placed on e7. The untested 8...h6! seems best, and after 9.0–0–0† Qd7 10.Qe3 Qbc6 Black intends ...Qc8 and possibly ...f5.



6...Qbc6!

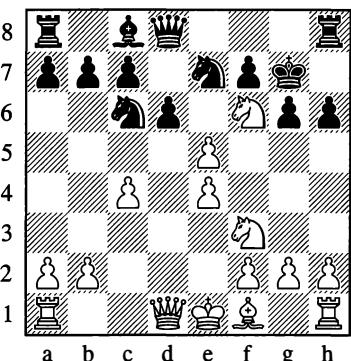
This is clearly to be preferred over 6...h6?! 7.Qe3 Qd7 8.Qd2 f5?! 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.exf5 gxf5 11.0-0-0 which is highly unpleasant for Black.

7.Qd5

7.dxe5 dxe5 8.Qxd8+ Qxd8 is not dangerous for Black: 9.Qd5 (9.Qxe7 Qxe7 10.Qd5+ Qd7 11.Qd1 Qb8! 12.g3 c6 is equal.) 9...Qxd5 10.cxd5 c6 If White is to keep any winning chances here, it will have to involve a certain risk: 11.Qc1 f6 12.Qe3 cxd5 13.exd5 Qf7 14.Qc1 0-0 15.Qd2 Qd6 Who knows whether the d-pawn will turn out to be strong or weak? Black has a nice blockade and cannot complain.

7...h6 8.Qf6 Qxf6 9.Qxf6+ Qf8 10.dxe5 Qg7!

This is clearly stronger than 10...dxe5 11.Qxd8+ Qxd8 12.Qd5 Qxd5 13.cxd5 Qg7 14.Qc1 c6 15.Qc4 when White is a little better.

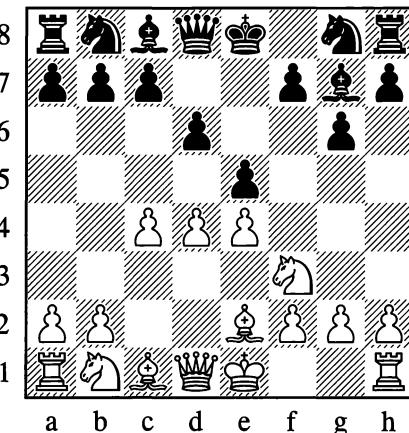


11.exd6 Qxf6! 12.dxe7 Qxe7 13.Qc2!

13.Qd3?! Qg4 14.h3 Qb4+ 15.Qd2 Qxf3 16.gxf3 Qad8 gives Black more than enough compensation for the pawn.

13...Qb4+ 14.Qc3+ Qxc3+ 15.bxc3 Qd8 16.Qe2 Qg4 17.Qb1 Qxf3 18.Qxf3 Qe5

Black's active pieces make up for the missing pawn.



5...Qc6

5...Qd7 followed by ...Qgf6 is a safe transposition to a KID, if your repertoire includes this particular set-up.

6.Qe3

6.Qg5 f6 7.Qe3 Qh6 can be compared with Karpov – Seirawan. It is hard to imagine that having played Qe2 instead of Qc3 will benefit White.

6.d5 is seen in Game 102 at the end of the chapter.

6...Qh6!?

This is truly a challenging move.

6...exd4 7.Qxd4 Qf6 8.Qc3 0-0 9.0-0 Qe8 10.f3 leads to a variation of the KID that I'm not inclined to recommend.

The main line here goes:

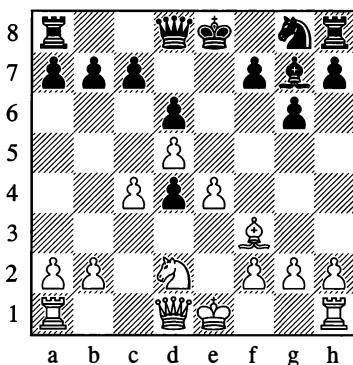
6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$

The problem with this line is that White can take advantage of the fact that his knight has not yet gone to c3.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

White has preferred 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  in quite a lot of games. This position has been discussed in the note to White's 6th move in Game 94, where it was shown that 9...c5! gives Black a good game.

9...exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$



10... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

This move was first played by Djuric in 1999, and has been at the centre of attention ever since. (I mean this in relative terms; we are talking about the Modern Defence, and this particular move has been repeated in about ten games.)

Historically speaking, Black has generally preferred 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  or 10...c5, but in those lines there is a tendency for Black to end up with a passive knight on e7.

11.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White has tried a couple of other moves:

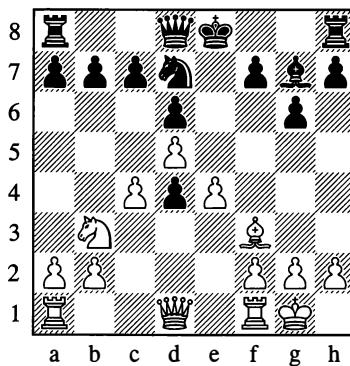
12. $\mathbb{Q}g4?$  0–0 13.f4 (In the event of 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c5

16.dxc6 bxc6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  f5! Black gets plenty of compensation.) 13...c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Now 14...f5?! was premature in Peralta – Alvarez Pedraza, Burguillos 2010. A better continuation is 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ !N 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  17.h3 a5 with excellent chances for Black.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d3 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15.g3 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  18. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a5 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  occurred in Buhmann – Kurnosov, Rijeka 2010. At this point, since Black was only thinking about a win, he played 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ?? 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$  a4, resulting in a weird position. Obviously 19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  would have been equal.



12...0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  is quite good for Black, whose knight will get a fantastic square on c5 after the b2-pawn falls.

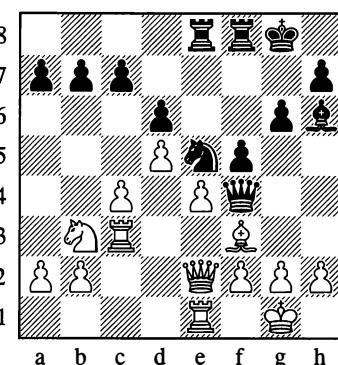
13... $\mathbb{W}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  d3

If you are happy to win the pawn back with an equal position, then 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is good enough.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}f4$

18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?? could be a slight improvement.

19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f5

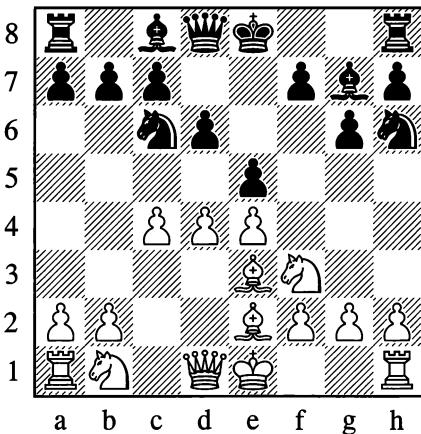


20.♕d4?

20.g3! ♗xf3† 21.♔xf3 ♗xf3 22.♗xf3 ♘g7  
23.♗fe3 is a bit better for White.

20...fxe4 21.♗xe4 ♘g4 22.g3?! ♗xf2†  
23.♗xf2 ♗xf2 24.♗d3 ♘d2 25.♗d1 ♘e3  
26.♗xe3 ♘xe3

White resigned in Gladyshev – Rotstein, Longeville-les-Metz 2011. We may conclude that 6...♘g4 is fully playable, as long as Black knows what he is doing after White exchanges on d4 and puts the knight on d2.



### 7.d5

7.dxe5 dxe5! (Also possible is 7...♘g4 8.♗g5 ♖d7 9.♗c3 h6! [9...dxe5 10.♗b5] 10.♗f4 ♘gxe5, although this leads to a version of a KID position where one needs to know the ropes.) 8.♗xd8† ♗xd8 Black will continue with ...♗e6, ...f6 and ...♗f7 before deciding how to proceed.

7.♗c3? is seen in the next game.

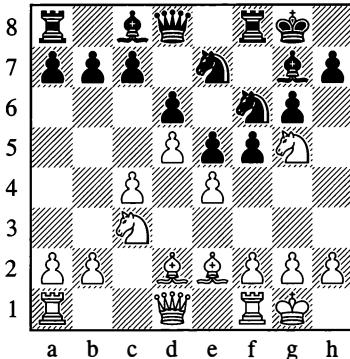
### 7...♗e7 8.♗fd2

Another possibility is:

8.♗c3 ♘g4 9.♗d2 f5 10.♗g5 ♘f6 11.0–0 0–0

We have reached something similar to a Classical King's Indian. There is a known line in that opening where White has played both b2-b4 and ♔e1 in place of ♔d2. This

difference should be to Black's advantage, but the position is still objectively unclear.



### 12.f3

12.♗f3 c6 followed by ...h6 is fine for Black.  
12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♗d3 a5 14.♗ge4 b6  
15.♗xf6† ♗xf6 16.♗e4 ♗e7 17.♗e1 ♗d7  
18.b3 ♗h6 was balanced in Sanikidze – Mamedov, Konya 2010.

### 12...c6

Also possible is 12...♗h5!? 13.c5 ♗f4  
14.♗b3 h6 15.♗e6 ♗xe2† 16.♗xe2 ♗xe6  
17.dxe6 d5 with an unclear position.

After the text move a computer game continued:

13.♗e3 ♗h6 14.h4 c5 15.♗d2 f4 16.♗f2 ♗h5  
17.♗d3 ♗xg5 18.hxg5 b6 19.♗a4 a5 20.♗e2  
♗d7 21.♗d1 ♗c8

Black was ready to pick off the g5-pawn with a clear advantage, Twisted Logic – Shredder 12, Trier 2010.

More critical is:

### 8.c5! ♘g4!

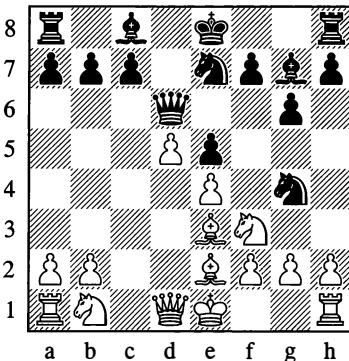
After 8...0–0? 9.♗g5! it is almost impossible for Black to do anything.

### 9.cxd6

9.♗g5 h6 10.♗b5† ♗f8 11.♗d2 dxc5 is unclear.

### 9...♗xd6!

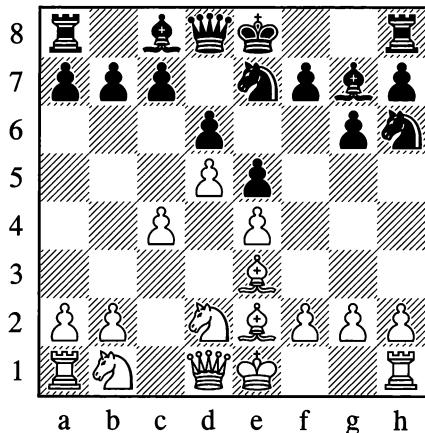
9...cxd6 is also possible, although 10.♗d2 0–0 11.h3 ♗f6 12.♗c3 must surely be a bit better for White.



10.♘c1?

Or 10.♗d2 c6 11.dxc6 ♘xc6 12.0–0 0–0 13.♕c3 ♘f6 14.♗e3 ♖e7 and Black is doing well.  
10...c6 11.♗fd2 ♖c5! 12.0–0 ♘f6 13.♗b3 ♖d6 14.dxc6 ♖xc6 15.♕c3 0–0 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗d2 b6 18.♗c1 ♖d7 19.♗c4 ♖b7

With mutual chances.



8...f5 9.f3 ♘f7!

I think it is more exact to play this before rather than after castling, so that the h4-h5 idea loses some of its charm for White.

9...♗eg8? is a creative attempt to solve the problem of the passive knight. Strategically it is the right idea, but tactically it fails to 10.c5! ♘f6 11.♗a4† ♘d7 12.♗b3 when there is no good way to defend the b-pawn.

The direct 9...c5!? is also possible, intending 10.h4 ♘f7 11.h5 f4 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♗xh8† ♘xh8 14.♗f2 ♘f6 15.♗c3 ♘d7 16.♗b3 ♖c7 17.0–0–0 0–0–0 when Black is doing all right.

The following game featured some mistakes on both sides, but there are a number of instructive points that one can learn from:

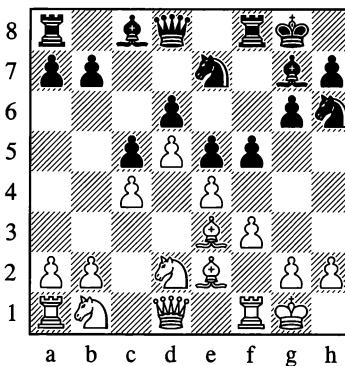
9...0–0 10.0–0

10.g4?? leads to disaster after 10...fxg4 11.fxg4 ♘xd5 intending ...♖h4 with check and mate.

10.h4! ♘f7 11.h5 f4 12.hxg6 ♘xg6 13.♗f2 is slightly better for White.

10...c5!

This is generally more important if White plays 0–0–0, as it allows Black to prepare ...b5 without allowing the reply c4-c5. Still, it is a good idea here too, as White's queenside offensive is slowed down significantly.



11.♗c3 ♘f7 12.a3 ♘h6! 13.♗f2

In the event of 13.♗xh6 ♘xh6 14.f4 exf4 15.♗xf4 g5 16.♗f2 f4 Black is fine.

13...♗d7

I prefer the plan of improving the e7-knight with 13...♔h8! 14.b4 b6 15.♗b1 ♗g8. White may proceed with 16.♗d3 ♘f6 17.bxc5 bxc5 18.♗c2, but then 18...♗xd2!? 19.♗xd2 f4 20.♗b2 g5 21.♗h1 ♗g8 22.♗e2 ♗f8! gives Black dangerous counterplay on

the kingside. It is worth remembering this idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  followed by ...f4 and ...g5.

14.b4 b6 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ ! 17.bxc5 bxc5 18. $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  22.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ !?

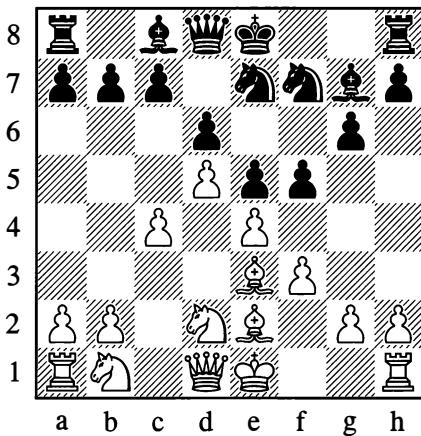
This seems a bit slow. A better idea is 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  23. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  24. $\mathbb{W}c2$  f4 intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  and ...g5.

23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  24.exf5 g5!? 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  g4 26.g3 gxf3 27.gxf4 exf4 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  29. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ ??

After 29. $\mathbb{W}d1$ ! White should be able to defend and win with his extra piece.

29... $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ † 30. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  31. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$ † 32. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  fxg3 34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  35. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}h3$  0–1

Brenninkmeijer – Cu. Hansen, Groningen 1991. When Curt Hansen plays the Modern, the opening often appears solid and strategically superior to, well, anything. This game went wrong for Black somewhere around move 22, and must be considered an exception to the above statement. It is, however, a typical example of how to save a bad position in the Modern, the rule being: do not retreat to the trenches, but instead throw everything you have at your opponent!



## 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

10.h4 is not dangerous when Black has yet to castle. A good answer is 10... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ !?

14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (15... $\mathbb{W}h4$ †? 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}h1$ † 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  leads nowhere for Black) 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}g5$  17.0–0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ † 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}xe3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  and Black has no complaints.

## 10...0–0

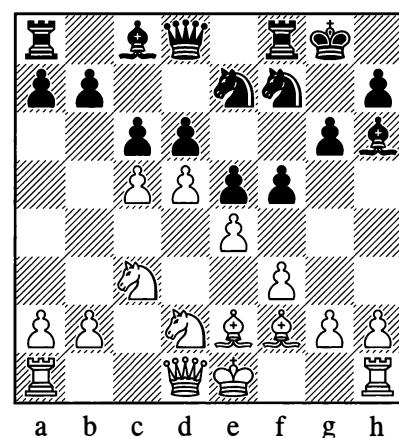
Here it is quite possible to play 10...c5, with a possible transposition to the Brenninkmeijer – Hansen game in the event that both sides castle short.

## 11.c5 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

White should prefer 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  13.cxd6 cxd6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , although 14...a6 15.a4 fxe4 16.fxe4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  17. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  18.a5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is quite okay for Black.

## 12...c6!

The black knights are perfectly placed to support this idea.



## 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !

This is more ambitious than 13.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  14.dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  b6 with some initiative for Black.

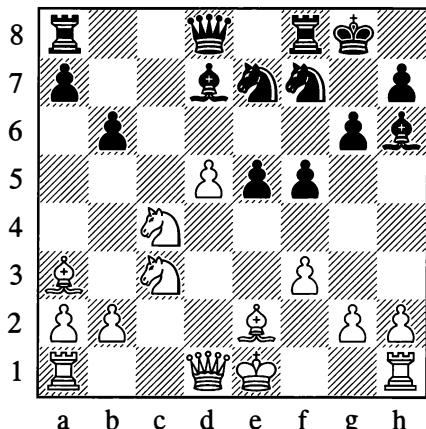
## 13...cxd5

I would prefer 13...fxe4! 14.fxe4 cxd5 15.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.0–0 dxc5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  with mutual chances.

**14.exd5 dxc5 15.Qxc5 b6 16.Qa3 Qd7?!**

This is far too passive, but I have come to realize that this position is a bit worse for Black anyway.

That being said, Black can still get a reasonable game with 16...Qg7!, when 17.Qb3 Qb8! 18.Qd1 b5! 19.Qb4 Qe8 20.Qd6 Qxd6 21.Qxd6 Qd7 leads to unclear play. For instance, after 22.Qc5 b4 23.Qb5 Qxb5 24.Qxb5 Qxb5 25.Qxd8 Qxd8 26.Qxe7 Qc8 27.Qxb4 Qc2 28.Qd2 Qxd2† 29.Qxd2 Qc1† 30.Qd1 Qc2 Black's counterplay is quite tricky for White to deal with.

**17.Qb3 Qh8 18.Qd1 Qe8 19.Qb5 Qxb5**

Black is also clearly worse after 19...Qc8 20.d6 Qb8 21.Qc7.

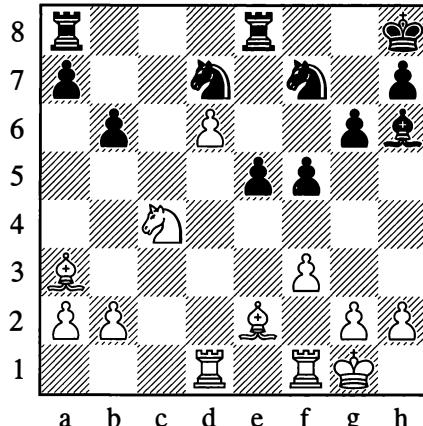
**20.Qxb5 Qg8 21.d6 Qf6 22.0–0?**

With one poor move White squanders a large part of his advantage.

Better was 22.d7! Qe6 23.Qb3, when Black has no acceptable defence against Qd6.

**22...Qd7 23.Qxd7 Qxd7**

Black has managed to block the d-pawn and can look forward to the future.

**24.b3 b5 25.Qa5 a6 26.g4 Qg7?! 27.Qc1?!**

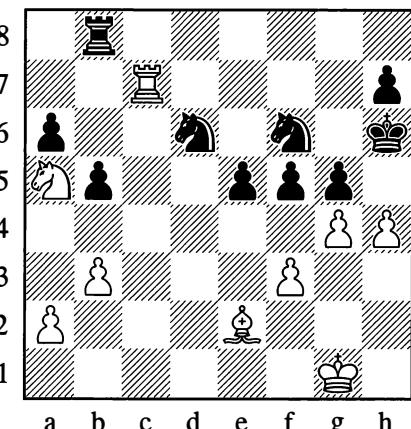
White could have reclaimed a clear advantage with 27.gxf5 gxf5 28.Qc6 intending Qe7. Now the initiative passes to Black.

**27...Qe6 28.Qxh6† Qxh6 29.Qd2 Qb8 30.Qc1 Qxd6**

It was better to play 30...Qxd6 31.h4 Qf8 32.Qc7 Qb6 33.g5† Qh5, although this is a difficult decision to take for a carbon-based life form.

**31.Qxd6 Qxd6 32.Qc7 Qf6 33.h4!? g5**

The rest of the game is quite complicated, but White manages to stay just on the right side of the drawing line.



34.♕c6 ♕fe8 35.h5 fxg4 36.fxg4 ♜c8  
 37.♖xa6 ♜c1† 38.♔f2 ♔g7 39.♔e3 ♜c3†  
 40.♔d2 ♜e4† 41.♔d1 ♜d8d6 42.♖c6 ♔f7  
 43.♖xc3 ♜xc3† 44.♔d2 ♜xa2 45.♔c6 e4  
 46.♔e3 ♜c3 47.♔f1 ♔e6 48.♔d4 ♜b1  
 49.♔e2 ♜d2 50.♔d1 ♜f3† 51.♔c5 ♜e1  
 52.♔d4† ♔e5 53.♔c6† ♔e6 54.♔d4†  
 ♔d7 55.♔d5 ♜d3 56.♔c2 h6 57.♔e3  
 ♔e7 58.♔c2 ♜b4† 59.♔e5 ♜d3† 60.♔d5  
 ♔d7 61.♔b1 ♔e7 62.♔c2 ♜f2 63.♔e5 b4  
 64.♔d5 ♜b5 65.♔e5 ♜c3 66.♔f5† ♔f8  
 67.♔e3 ♔f7 68.♔f5 ♜e2 69.♔e5 ♜c3  
 70.♔f5 ♜e2 71.♔e5 ♜c1 72.♔xe4 ♜xe4  
 73.♔xe4 ♜xb3 74.♔f5 ♜c5† 75.♔d4 ♜d7  
 76.♔xh6†

½-½

As long as Black can deal with 8.c5! as given in the notes, there is nothing much to fear. In case you mistrust my idea with 9...♘xd6, you will find 6...♗g4 followed by 10...♗f6! to be a reliable alternative.

In the next game we will see what happens when White maintains the central tension after 6.♔e3 ♜h6.

## GAME 101

Karlheinz Weber – Timur Irzhanov

Email 2003

1.e4

The game actually started via a King's Indian move order with 1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♔c3 ♔g7 4.e4 d6 5.♔f3 0–0 6.♔e2 e5 7.♔e3 ♔g4 8.♔g5 f6 9.♔h4 ♜c6.

1...g6 2.d4 ♔g7 3.c4 d6 4.♔f3 e5 5.♔e2 ♜c6 6.♔e3 ♜h6 7.♔c3!

Refusing to block the centre for the time being.

7...♗g4

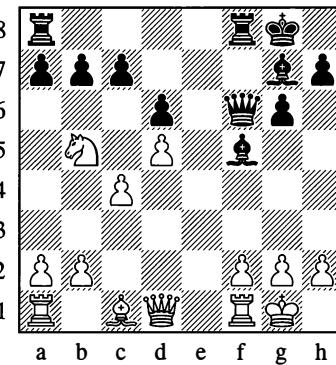
Having come this far, Black does not have much choice.

7...f5? is no good after 8.dxe5!.

8.♔g5 f6 9.♔h4!

9.♔c1 gives Black a wider choice of acceptable options:

a) 9...0–0 transposes to a KID. The critical line from here is 10.d5 ♜d4! 11.♔xd4 exd4 12.♔b5 f5 13.0–0 ♜e5 14.exf5 d3 15.♔xd3 ♜xd3 16.♔xd3 ♔xf5 17.♔d1 ♘f6, which has proven to be quite reliable for Black:

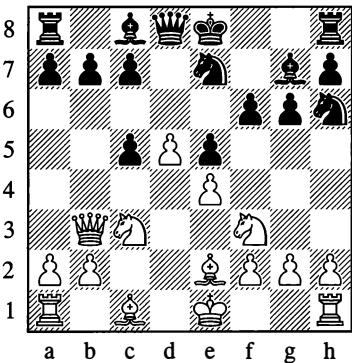


18.a4 (18.♔xc7 ♜ac8 19.♔e6 ♔xe6 20.dxe6 ♘xe6 21.♔e3 a6, followed by ...♘xb2 or ...♗xc4, is approximately equal.) 18...♗f7 19.♔a3 a6 20.♔c3 ♘h4 21.♔e2 ♘af8 22.♔d1 ♔g4 23.f3 ♔e5 24.g3 This position was reached in Jovanic – Janovic, Marija Bistrica 2011, and now 24...♘e7!N 25.♔g2 ♘d7 26.♔h1 ♔d4 would have been good for Black.

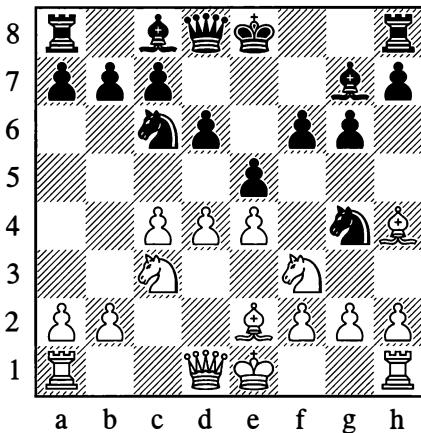
b) 9...h5!? is a dangerous move, and the ensuing positions require practical testing before one can say much about them: 10.0–0 (Another possible line is 10.d5 ♜e7 11.h3 ♜h6 12.♔h4 ♔f7 13.0–0 g5 14.♔f5?! ♔xf5 15.exf5 ♔xf5 16.♔xh5 ♘d7 17.♔e1 0–0–0 and White is in trouble.) 10...0–0 11.h3 ♜h6 12.d5 ♜e7 13.♔h4 ♔d7 If Black can get

himself coordinated on the kingside, his pawns will start to roll.

c) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? 10.d5 (10.dxe5 dxe5 11. $\mathbb{W}xd8$  $\mathbb{t}$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  gives Black an improved version of Karpov – Seirawan.) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11.c5!? dxcc5 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$  is an interesting pawn sacrifice, but Black should be fine after:



12...b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  $\mathbb{t}$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  15. $\mathbb{W}d1$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  Followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-d6$ .



9...0–0!

We are now back in Weber – Irzhanov. The text move transposes to a King's Indian, which seems like the most reliable choice here.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! is not out of the question. White has nothing to gain from 10.dxe5 dxe5 11. $\mathbb{W}xd8$  $\mathbb{t}$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12.0–0–0 $\mathbb{t}$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , so 10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

should be preferred, leading to the same kind of position as in the main game.

Another idea is:

9...g5!?

Previously I was keen on the idea of avoiding the KID transposition, and wanted to get this move to work. However, with absolutely no practical tests so far, I have really been fumbling in the dark. Black can transpose to a KID by castling at any moment, but the question is whether it is possible to use that tempo for something better. Here are some lines I have analysed.

10.d5!

10.h3 exd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}h5$  $\mathbb{t}$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{W}d3$  fxe4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is not clear at all. Black's king looks exposed, but the bishop is fantastic on e5.

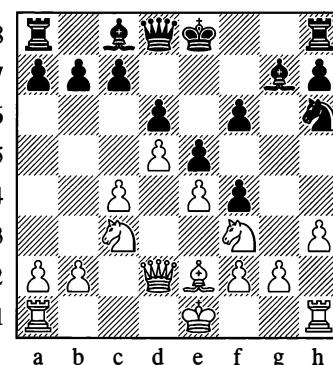
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  h5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  is better for White.

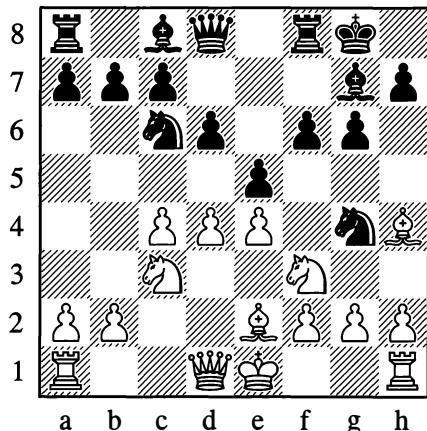
11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

13. $\mathbb{W}a4$  $\mathbb{t}$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{W}b3$  0–0 15.0–0–0 f5 is promising for Black.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  gxf4



How is this position to be evaluated? I am still not entirely sure. White can probably claim some sort of advantage, but Black will surely get some counterplay.

**10.d5**

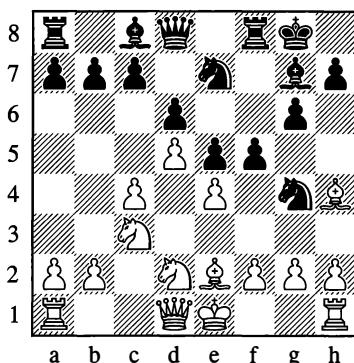
10.h3 ♕h6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♕xd8 is quite good for Black.

**10...Qe7 11.Qd2 ♕h6**

An intriguing alternative is:

11...f5!?

This should take 99% of your opponents out of their comfort zone.



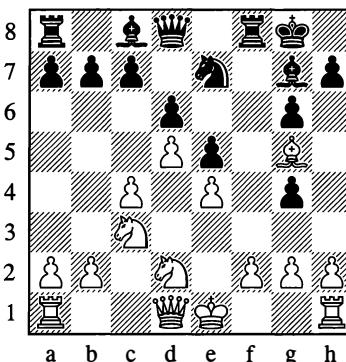
12.♕xg4

12.h3 ♕f6 13.g4 c6! 14.f3 ♔h8 15.♗b3 b5 16.cxb5 cxd5 17.exd5 ♕b7 18.0-0-0?! (18.♗d1 ♕fxd5 19.♕xd5 ♕xd5 20.♗xd5 ♕xd5 21.♗xd8 ♕axd8 22.♘c4 ♕f4 is unclear) 18...♕exd5 19.♕xd5 ♕xd5 was better for Black in Biyiasas – Browne, Manila 1976.

12.exf5 gx5 13.♗xg4 fxg4 14.♗de4 ♗e8 15.♗xe7 ♗xe7 16.♗e2 ♔h6 17.0-0 ♗h4?!

18.c5 was better for White in Kruppa – Loskutov, St Petersburg 1997, but 16...♗f5 and 17...♗f5 are improvements that should leave Black no worse.

12...fxg4 13.♗g5



This is White's main line, intending to recentralize the bishop. Now I would find it hard to resist:

13...♗f4!?

Objectively it is more reliable to play 13...h6 14.♗e3 c5, but in a practical game it will be hard for White to deal with the dark-square control that Black gets in return for the exchange sacrifice.

14.♗xf4N

Nobody has played this so far, but it is worth considering what kind of compensation Black may achieve.

Quite a few people have played 14.g3, but after 14...♗f7 the weakening of the light squares must count as an achievement for Black.

14...exf4 15.♗b3

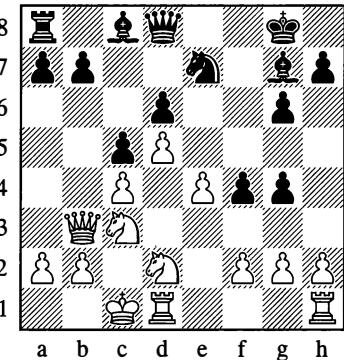
15.♗b3 g5 16.♗d4 ♕g6 17.0-0 ♗f6! 18.♗cb5 ♗f7 19.♗a4 a6 20.♗ad1 f3 21.g3 ♕e5 22.♗c3 ♕f4 is one example of how easily things may go wrong for White.

15...c5!

15...b6 is met by 16.0-0-0 g5 17.h4 gxh3 18.gxh3 ♕g6 19.♗f3 and the knight is headed for d4 and e6.

16.0-0-0

16.dxc6 bxc6 17.c5† d5 18.exd5 ♕xd5 19.♕xd5 ♖e6 20.0–0 ♖xd5 gives Black good compensation for the exchange.

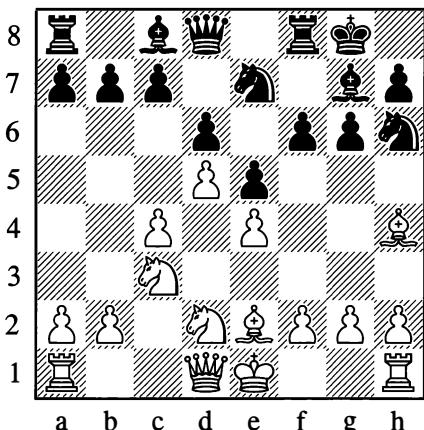


16...g5

16...a6 17.h3 gxh3 18.gxh3 b5 19.cxb5 axb5 20.♕xb5 ♖b8 is crazy, but probably better for White.

17.h3 gxh3 18.gxh3 ♕g6 19.♖dg1 a6 20.♗f3 h6 21.a4 ♖b8

Black has compensation for the exchange. I would not venture this line in a correspondence game, but in a live game I would not hesitate.



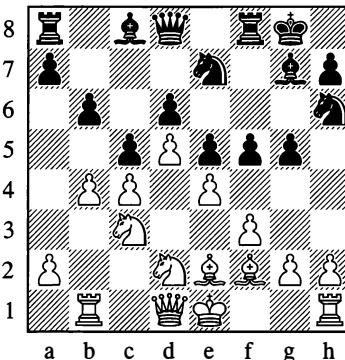
**12.f3 c5**

This is quite a popular theoretical variation of the KID. I believe in Black's position, but if you prefer to stay off the beaten track, you can try one of the possible evacuation plans given in the earlier notes.

### 13.dxc6!?

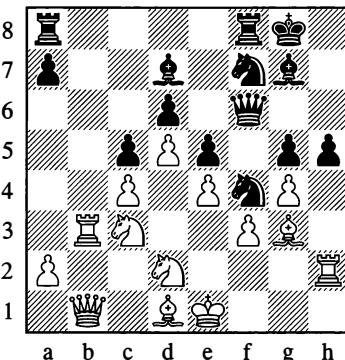
This exchange completely alters the character of the middlegame.

White can also keep the centre closed with 13.♖b1 g5 14.♗f2 f5 15.b4 b6.



From this position we will check a couple of instructive examples. In the first of them White blocks the kingside with g2-g4, and in the second he presses ahead on the queenside:

a) 16.h3 ♕g6 17.g4 fxg4 18.hxg4 ♕f4 Radjabov organizes his position skilfully from here. 19.♖h2 ♖f6 20.bxc5 bxc5 21.♗g3 ♖d7 22.♗b7 ♖c8 23.♗b3 ♖d7 24.♗b1 ♖f7 25.♗d1 h5 Black has promising counterplay and can hardly be worse.

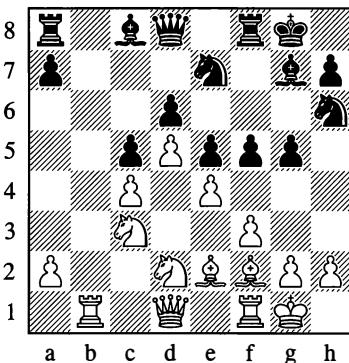


26.♗f1 h4 27.♗f2 ♖fc8 28.♗e3 ♖d8 29.♗g1 ♖cb8 30.♗hb2 ♖xb3 31.♗xb3 ♖a5 32.♗f1 ♖h3 33.♗h2 ♖f6 34.♗b2 a6 35.♗b7 ♖c8

36.♗b6 ♜d8 The position remained balanced and was eventually drawn in Topalov – Radjabov, Porto Carras 2011.

b) 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.0–0

Now I believe Black should avoid closing the kingside.



17...♝g6!

This flexible move is best. Black waits to decide whether ...fxe4, ...f4 or ...g4 will be the best way forward.

17...f4?! seems far too slow to me. After 18.♗b3 ♜g6 19.♗b5 ♜f7 20.♔e1 ♜f8 21.♔a5 White was clearly ahead in Komarov – Hebden, Bratislava 1996.

17...g4?! has the downside of prematurely weakening the f5-square. 18.fxg4 ♜xg4 19.♕xg4 fxg4 20.♔e3 ♜g6 was seen in Tunik – Shimanov, Moscow 2012, and now the simplest way to an advantage for White is 21.♗xf8+ ♜xf8 22.♗f1! ♜f4 23.♗e2! ♜f6 24.♗eg3 ♜d7 25.♗c1 h5 26.♗e3, when there is no way for Black to repair the damage.

18.♘a4

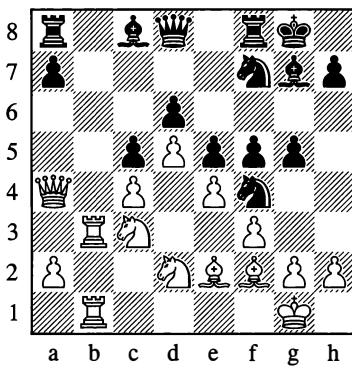
After 18.g3 f4! 19.g4 ♜f7 Black continues with ...♜f6, ...♝g7, ...♞h8 and ...h5. Meanwhile, it will not be easy for White to break through on the queenside.

18...♝f7

This move makes it possible to meet ♜c6 with ...♝d7.

19.♗b3 ♜f4 20.♗fb1

Having skilfully built up his position, Black now finds a nice way to increase the pressure.



20...g4! 21.fxg4 ♜d7 22.♗a3 fxg4 23.♔e3 ♜h6 24.♗f1 ♜g5 25.♗c1?

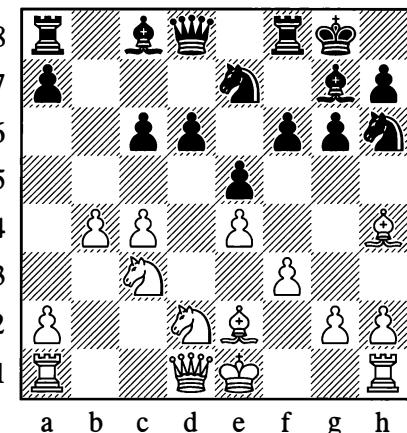
25.♗h1 is better, although 25...♝g7 26.♗b7 h5 keeps some initiative for Black.

25...♝xe4!

Black had a clear advantage in Evdokimov – Vishnu, Dubai 2012.

**13...bxc6 14.b4**

Gaining space on the queenside is the most logical way to follow White's last move.



**14...♚e6**

Some other games have continued 14...g5 15.♗f2 f5 16.0–0 ♜h8 17.♗b3. Here Black's best bet seems to be: 17...g4!? (17...fxe4 is

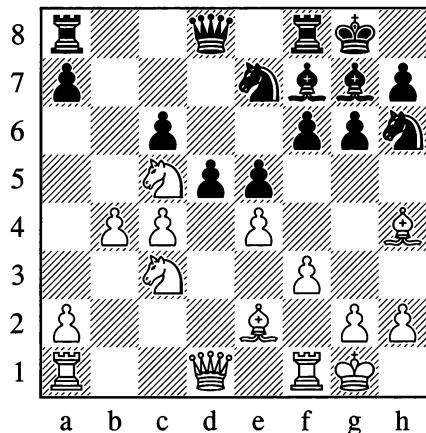
more common, but I have failed to find a good continuation for Black after 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ .) 18.exf5 gxf3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}hxf5$  20. $\mathbb{W}d3$  Here the game Frey – Petrovic, email 2002, came to an abrupt end when a draw was agreed. After 20... $\mathbb{B}b8$  21.b5 cxb5 22.cxb5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  the position is highly unclear.

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

16.cxd5 makes life easier for Black, and after 16...cxd5 17.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19.0–0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  he had a comfortable position in Gelfand – Radjabov, Astrakhan 2010.

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17.0–0

17.cxd5 cxd5 18.0–0 d4 19. $\mathbb{Q}3a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  left White with a tiny edge at best in Arlandi – Van Wely, Bukfurdo 1995. Vigorito points out that the absence of c-pawns favours Black somewhat. I would not dare to make a definitive evaluation of this position, but it is surely the kind of position that you are hoping for when playing the Modern.



### 17...d4

Vigorito gives 17...dxc4!?. 18. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (19.exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  cxd5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  is safe enough for Black) 19...cxd5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  d4! with compensation for the exchange. However, there is no need for

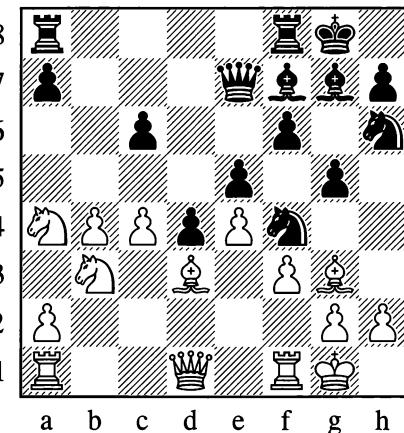
White to play so materialistically on move 18. Instead 18. $\mathbb{W}c1$ !, followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  or  $\mathbb{Q}3a4$ , is at least a little better for White. I always prefer to keep the centre intact until I can be sure to get something tangible in exchange for giving it up.

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}3a4$ g5

Now the position becomes quite hard to understand. White is obviously better on the queenside, so the question is whether Black can create enough of a diversion on the kingside to make up for it.

### 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

It is hard to make logical sense of this position, but somewhere around here White seems to drift a little.

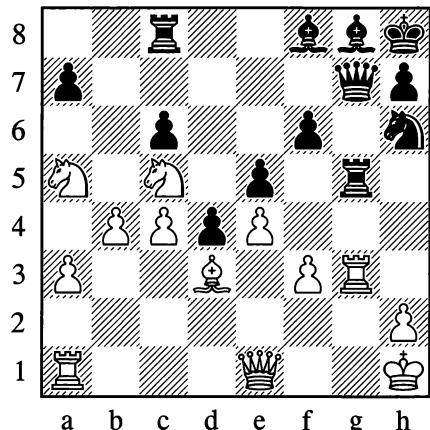


### 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ gxf4 23. $\mathbb{Q}ac5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$

With the c6-pawn easily defended, it is difficult for White to make sense of the way his minor pieces are positioned.

### 25.a3 $\mathbb{E}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{E}g5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ ! 29.g3 fxg3 30. $\mathbb{E}xg3$ $\mathbb{W}g7$

30... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! is also good, for instance 31. $\mathbb{Q}ab3$   $\mathbb{E}c7$ ! 32. $\mathbb{E}xg5$  fxg5 33. $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{E}g7$  and Black has a definite initiative. The plan for the next few moves will be ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , ...h5 and ...g4.



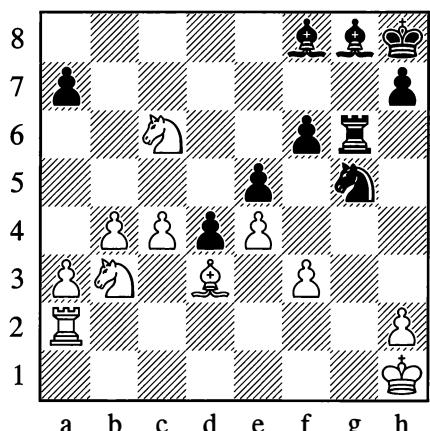
**31.♕ab3 ♜g6 32.♖a2 ♜xg3 33.♗xg3 ♜c7**

The rest of the game is rather chaotic and confusing.

**34.♕a6 ♜g7 35.♗xg6 ♜xg6 36.♕b8 ♜f7**

**37.♕xc6 ♜g5**

Only in a correspondence game is it possible to ascertain that Black is not worse here, but indeed he isn't.



**38.♗g2 ♜xf3 39.♕e2**

One line that illustrates why White's queenside pawns don't just win is 39.♗xg6 hxg6 40.♕xa7 ♜e1 41.♕f1 d3 42.♗g1 ♜xc4 43.♕d2 ♜g8, when White is the one who needs to take care.

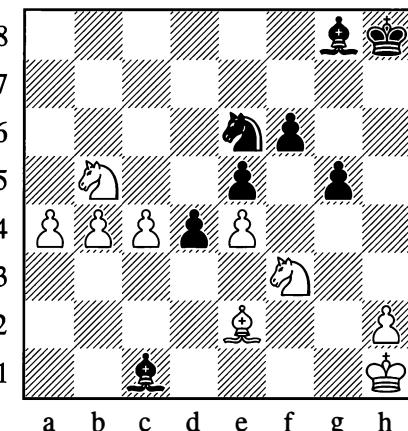
**39... ♜g5 40.♕d2 ♜e6 41.♗xg6 hxg6**

**42.♕xa7 ♜h6 43.♕f3 ♜c1 44.a4 g5!**

Suddenly ...♜h7 is a dangerous threat.

**45.♕b5**

It is unclear whether it is still possible for White to save himself. One unsuccessful attempt is 45.a5 ♜h7 46.♗g1 ♜xe4 47.♕f1 d3 48.♕d1 ♜f4 49.♕b5 g4 50.♕h4 ♜d2 51.♕d6 ♜a8 52.b5 e4 53.♕df5 e3 54.♕g3 ♜xa5 55.♕xg4 ♜b4 and Black is winning.



**45... ♜h7 46.♕d3?**

Now there is definitely no way back.

**46.♗g1!** was the way to fight on.

**46... ♜f4 47.♕b1 d3 48.♕c3 g4 49.♕e1 ♜d2 50.♕xd3 ♜xc3 51.♕xf4 exf4 52.b5 ♜g8 53.♕d3 ♜e6 54.h3 gxh3 55.♕e2 ♜e5 56.a5 ♜c3 57.a6 ♜d4**

**0-1**

Unless you can get 9...g5!? to work, there is no real way around transposing to the KID in the event that White meets 6...♜h6 with 7.♕c3. I believe in Black's position though, and I hope I have made a strong enough case for it. Since the variation in question lies within mainstream KID theory, I recommend keeping an ear to the ground if you intend to play it, as it will surely be tested in high-level games in the future.

## GAME 102

Dietmar Kolbus – Sebastian Siebrecht

Budapest 1994

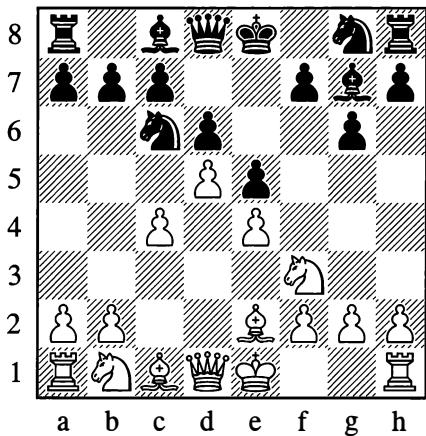
**1.c4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.e4 d6 4.♗e2**

This slightly unusual move is intended to prevent Black from pinning the knight when it comes to f3, but it makes no difference to us.

After a silly move like 4.h3, then 4...♝c6 5.♞f3 e5 6.d5 ♜ce7?! is better than in the game, as the c4-c5 sacrifice is less dangerous when White has spent a tempo on h2-h3.

It is also possible to play 6...♝d4 7.♝xd4 exd4, although you should be aware that White's silly move might prove useful after 8.♗d3 ♜e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♗d2 c5 (Black has some other options here) 11.f4. It is a matter of taste which continuation you choose.

**4...e5 5.♞f3 ♜c6 6.d5**



**6...♝d4!**

As a general rule, I try to avoid this move when White has not already developed his knight to c3. However, the present position is a special case.

**6...♝ce7**

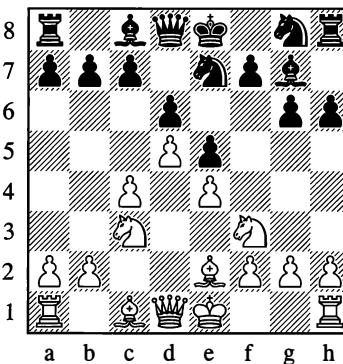
This was the move I originally intended to recommend, but it runs into some problems that I was unable to solve. Here is a quick summary:

**7.♛c3 h6?**

This is the best try, waiting for the right moment to play ...f5.

7...♝h6?! is dubious for a few reasons, one being 8.h4 and another 8.c5!?.

I have used 7...f5!? successfully, but it is positionally risky. The critical reply has hardly ever been played: 8.c5! ♜f6 (8...dxc5 9.♔a4† is awkward for Black.) 9.cxd6 cxd6 10.♗b5† ♜d7 11.♗xd7† ♜xd7 12.♗g5! 0–0 13.0–0 White was a little better in Gonzalez Zamora – Palma, Merida 1997.

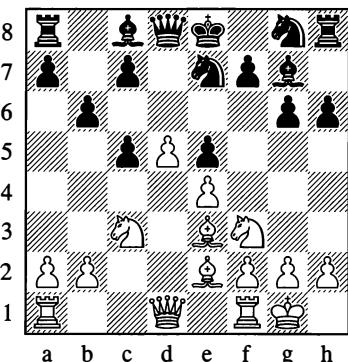


**8.c5!**

8.0–0 f5 9.exf5 ♜xf5 10.♗e4 ♜f6 11.♗d3 0–0 was balanced in Gleizerov – Pedzich, Cappelle la Grande 1995.

8.h4?! is a serious challenge, but I was able to solve Black's problems: 8...f5! (8...♝f6?! 9.♝h2 h5 is far from an ideal solution, as the e7-knight is left in a miserable place.) 9.h5 g5 10.g4!! Now we see White's idea in full bloom. Whichever pawn Black takes, White intends to put the g7-bishop out of business. The critical line continues: 10...fxg4! 11.♝h2 ♜f6 12.♝xg4 ♜xg4 13.♝xg4 ♜xg4! 14.♔xg4 ♜d7 15.♔e2 Now both 15...♝g8 16.♗e3 ♜f6 and 15...0–0 16.♗e3 ♜f4? give Black enough counterplay.

8...dxc5 9.♗e3 b6 10.0–0



Now Black has a difficult choice to make.

10...g5

I mostly focused on this move, but it does not seem to be good enough.

11.♗c2 a6

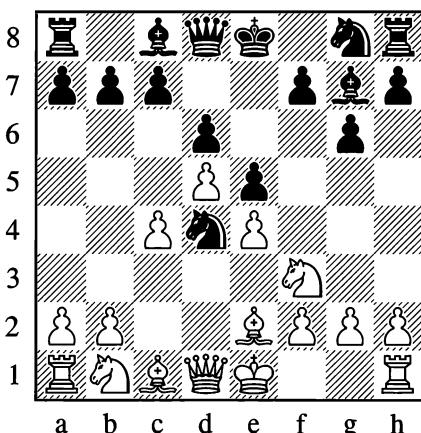
Directed against b2-b4 followed by ♘b5.

12.♘fd1 ♗g6 13.a3

13.a4 is another interesting plan.

13...♗f6 14.b4 cxb4 15.axb4 0–0 16.♘d2

White pieces are just too well placed. If there is a way for Black to repair this line, it may lie with the crazy 11...f5!?, but I do not want it on my conscience to recommend such a move.



7.♘xd4

After 7.♘e3?! ♘xe2 8.♗xe2 f5 9.♗c3 ♘f6 it is White who will have to fight for equality.

7...exd4

The same pawn structure can also arise via the move order 3...♘c6 4.♗f3 e5 5.d5 ♘d4 6.♘xd4 exd4. However, in that position White can play 7.♗d3!, immediately placing the bishop on its optimal square, before continuing with 0–0, f2-f4 and ♘d2-f3. In the main game Black is virtually a tempo up, as White will probably move the bishop from e2 to d3 at some point.

8.0–0

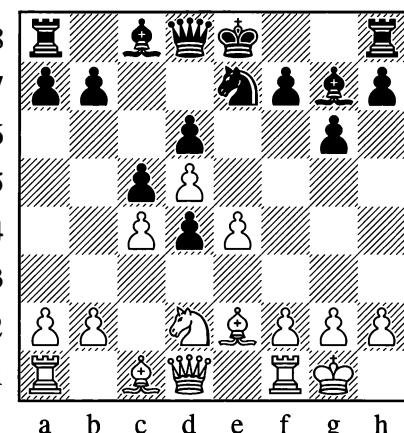
8.♘d2! is a bit more challenging. The point is that 8...c5 can be met by 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.c5?!, leading to a position where White has some strategic trumps, whereas Black has to rely on dynamics. After 10...dxc5 11.♗a4 ♘e7 12.♗c2 a5 13.♗b3 f5 14.♘xc5 fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘f5 16.0–0 0–0 I prefer White, since Black's pawn structure lacks dynamism.

However, Black can improve on the above line with 8...♗f6! 9.♗d3 0–0 10.0–0 ♘e8 11.♗e1 c5 with a complex position.

8...♗e7!

I also considered 8...c5N 9.♗f4 ♘f6 (9...♗e7 10.♗a4†! is annoying) 10.♗d2 0–0 11.h3 ♘e8 12.♗d3 but, since ...f5 is out of the picture, this line seems more passive.

9.♘d2 c5



### 10.♕b1

After 10.dxc6 the simplest way to continue is 10...♛xc6?!, when Black's dynamic pieces compensate for his slightly damaged pawn structure. A possible continuation is 11.a3 a5 12.♕f3 0–0 13.♗c2 ♜e8 14.♗f4 ♜g4 with balanced chances.

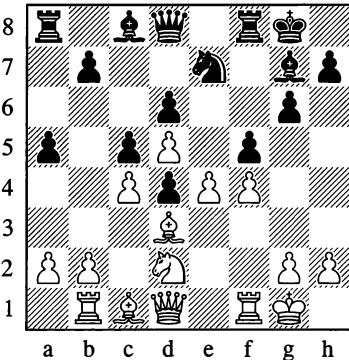
10...bxc6 is also playable. The position after 11.c5 d5 12.♗e1 0–0 13.♗a4 ♜b8 14.♗d3 ♜e8 is hard to evaluate with precision, but it seems to me that Black has a fair share of the play.

### 10...a5

It is also possible to play 10...0–0 11.b4 b6, although White will have more options in this kind of position.

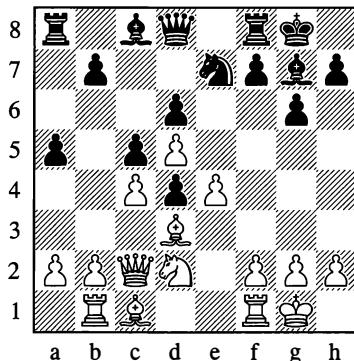
### 11.♕f3

The standard set-up for White in this pawn structure involves 11.f4 0–0 12.♗d3, when White plans to continue with ♕f3 so that a future ...f5 can be met with e4-e5. We can't let that happen, so it is time to act with: 12...f5!

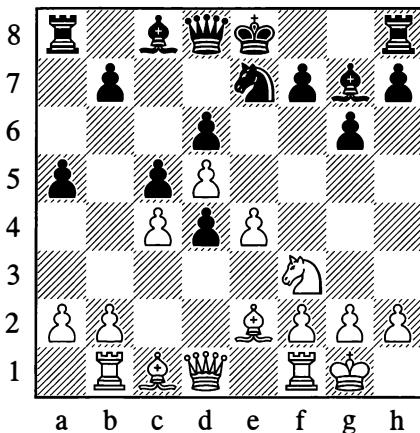


In this position White has plenty of options, but Black should do well against all of them. One possible continuation is 13.♗f3 ♜c7, reaching a balanced position where both sides have to be alert. Another is 13.♗e1 fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♜f5, when the seemingly strong 15.♗g5 runs into 15...♜e3! with an advantage for Black.

If White chooses a slower set-up with 11.♗d3 0–0 12.♗c2, then Black can consider:



12...g5?! Followed by ...♝g6. This is another position that is hard to evaluate, but it seems to me that the white pieces are a bit crowded, and may have a hard time finding good squares.



### 11...0–0?!

It is more exact to play 11...h6!, intending to meet 12.♗f4 with 12...g5 13.♗g3 ♜g6. If White counters this idea with 12.h4, Black continues 12...f5 13.♗d3 0–0 14.♗e1 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♜g4. The weakening of the e6-square should not be taken lightly, but I believe the activity of the minor pieces makes up for it.

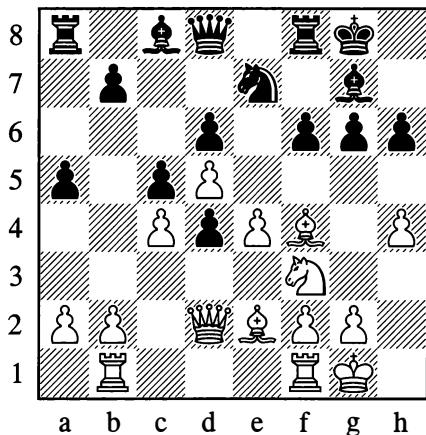
### 12.♗f4 h6 13.h4

Now ...f5 can be met with e4-e5, which counts as a definite success for White. However, Black now comes up with a radical solution to the what-to-do-now problem.

**13...f6! 14.♗d2?!**

White forces Black to carry out his plan, without getting anything in return.

The Silicon Monster suggests 14.♗h2 ♖c7 15.h5 g5 16.♗d2 f5 17.f4!? with some advantage for White, although to me it still looks pretty unclear.

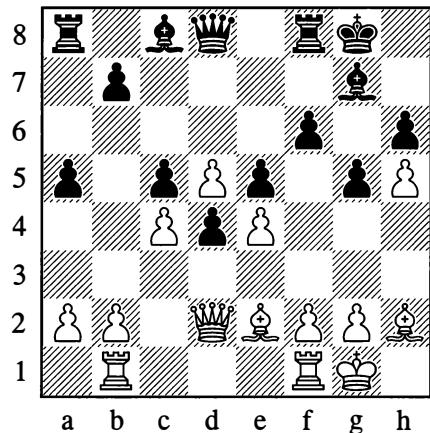


**14...g5! 15.♗h2 ♗g6**

It was more ambitious to play 15...g4 16.♗e1 f5 17.exf5 ♖xf5 18.♗d3 ♗g6 19.h5 ♗e5 with some initiative for Black. White's king could easily end up in trouble.

**16.h5 ♗e5 17.♗xe5 dxe5?**

An inexplicable decision. It is obviously stronger to play 17...fxe5, when White still has to work to draw the game. The best way to do it seems to be 18.g4 a4 (otherwise White closes the whole board with a2-a4) 19.b4 axb3 20.axb3 ♕a3 21.♗b2 and White should be okay.



**18.g4 ♕f7 19.a4**

The position is completely equal, and nothing else of interest happens.

**19...♗b6 20.b3 ♔f8 21.f3 ♗b4 22.♗xb4 axb4  
½-½**

## Conclusion

When I wrote the corresponding chapter in *Tiger's Modern*, I had never tried the Averbakh System over the board, instead preferring to transpose to a King's Indian. Since then I have tested it in a number of games, with reasonable success. Summing up, yesterday and today I believe the Averbakh is perfectly playable for Black. But who knows what I'll believe tomorrow?

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## Chapter 1 – 4.f4 – Austrian Style

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5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ Game 12	72
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5	
6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !? Game 9 (7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ – 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ )	56
6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$	
6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !? Game 5	36
6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$	
7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !	
8.0–0 c5 Game 10	62
8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b4!? Game 11	66
8.e5	
8...c5!? Game 7	38
8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ Game 8	52
7.a4 b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	
8...c5 (8...a5) Game 13	79
8...e6!? (8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ) Game 14	86
7.e5! c5!	
8.exd6? Game 6	37
8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	
8...cxd4 9.e6 f5! Game 1	12
8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ Game 2	18
8. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$	
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Game 3	22
9.0–0! Game 4	28

## Chapter 2 – 4.f4 ♜f6 – The Back-up Plan

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.f4 ♜f6**

<b>5.e5!?</b> Game 19	<b>114</b>
<b>5.♗f3 0–0</b>	
<b>6.♕e3</b> Game 20	<b>118</b>
<b>6.♕e2!?</b> Game 24	<b>139</b>
<b>6.a3!?</b> Game 25	<b>144</b>
<b>6.e5 ♜fd7</b>	
<b>7.h4</b> Game 17	<b>100</b>
<b>7.♕c4!?</b> Game 18	<b>109</b>
<b>6.♗d3 ♜c6</b>	
<b>7.0–0</b> Game 23	<b>135</b>
<b>7.e5 dxе5</b>	
<b>8.dxe5</b> Game 21	<b>126</b>
<b>8.fxe5 ♜h5!</b> Game 22	<b>129</b>

## Chapter 3 – Flexible Dragon Unleashed

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.♕e3 a6**

<b>5.g4!?</b> Game 31	<b>184</b>
<b>5.h4 ♜f6 6.f3 b5 7.♗d2 h5 8.0–0–0 c6!</b> Game 27	<b>161</b>
<b>5.♗d2</b>	
<b>5...♗d7</b>	
<b>6.f3 b5 7.a4</b> Game 32	<b>187</b>
<b>6.a4 b6</b> Game 34	<b>197</b>
<b>6.h4</b>	
<b>6...h5</b> Game 26	<b>153</b>
<b>6...h6</b> Game 28	<b>169</b>
<b>5...b5!</b>	
<b>6.0–0–0 ♜b7!</b> Game 29	<b>174</b>
<b>6.f3 ♜b7 7.g4!?</b> Game 30	<b>180</b>
<b>6.a4</b> Game 33	<b>191</b>

## Chapter 4 – Flexible Dragon Restrained

<b>1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7</b>	
<b>3.♘f3 d6 4.♗e3?!</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>5.♘c3 a6! Game 43</b>	
<b>3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6</b>	
<b>5.♗d3? Game 38</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>5.a4 ♜f6!</b>	
<b>6.♘f3 Game 40</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>6.h3 0–0</b>	
<b>7.♘f3 Game 41</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>7.g4 Game 42</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>5.♘f3 b5</b>	
<b>6.♗d2 ♜d7 7.a4?!</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>b4 8.♘e2 c5 9.♘g3 Game 39</b>	
<b>6.♗d3 ♜d7</b>	
<b>7.e5? Game 36</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>7.0–0 ♜b7! 8.a4 b4 9.♘e2 Game 35</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>7.♗d2 ♜b7 8.a4 b4 9.♘e2 c5 10.c3 ♜gf6</b>	
<b>11.♘g3 Game 38</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>11.♗h6? Game 37</b>	<b>215</b>

## Chapter 5 – The Hippopotamus

<b>1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7</b>	
<b>3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c4 e6?!</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>3.♘c3 d6</b>	
<b>4.♗g5 a6 5.a4 h6 6.♗e3 Game 52</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>4.♗e3 a6 5.♗d2 ♜d7 6.a4 b6 7.f3?!</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Game 53</b>	
<b>4.♘f3 a6 5.a4 b6</b>	
<b>6.h3 e6 7.♗g5?!</b>	
<b>♘e7 8.♗d2 h6 9.♗f4 ♜b7 10.♗e2 ♜d7 Game 44</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>6.♗g5 h6 7.♗e3 e6 8.♗d2 ♜d7 9.♗d3 Game 52</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>6.♗c4 e6!</b>	
<b>7.♗e2 ♜e7 8.e5 Game 49</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>7.♗g5?!</b>	
<b>♘e7 8.♗d2 h6 9.♗e3 ♜d7 10.0–0 Game 51</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>7.0–0 ♜e7</b>	
<b>8.♗e2 Game 50</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>8.♗f4 Game 48</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>8.♗e3 ♜d7! 9.♗d2 h6! 10.h3 Game 47</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>10.d5?!</b>	
<b>e5 Game 46</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>10.♗fe1 ♜b7 11.♗ad1 Game 45</b>	<b>250</b>

## Chapter 6 – Classical Variation

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7**

**3.♘f3 d6**

4.h3? ♜f6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♗e3 a6! 7.a4 b6 Game 60	327
4.♗e2? ♜f6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.0–0 e6?	
7.h3 ♜c6 8.♗g5?! Game 57	312
7.♗f4?! Game 58	317
7.♗e3 Game 59	322

**3.♘c3 d6 4.♘f3 a6**

5.♗d3?! Game 61	332
5.♗e2 b5 6.0–0	
6...♗d7?! 7.♗e1 c5?! Game 55	301
6...♗b7! 7.♗e1 ♜d7 8.♗f1 Game 56	306

## Chapter 7 – 4.♗g5 – Into Midair

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗g5 a6**

5.♗d2 b5 Game 62	339
5.f4?! b5 Game 63	343
5.♘f3 b5 Game 64	346

## Chapter 8 – 4.♗c4 – Mad Dog

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7**

**3.♘c3 d6 4.♗c4 ♜f6**

5.♘f3 0–0	
6.h3 ♜xe4! Game 71	378
6.0–0 ♜c6! Game 70	375
5.♗e2 ♜c6! 6.e5!	
6...♗d7 Game 72	382
6...♗g4	
7.♗b5 Game 73	388
7.e6? Game 74	391

**3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c4 ♜f6! 5.♗e2 0–0**

6.0–0 ♜g4	
7.e5 Game 66	360
7.h3 Game 65	354
6.e5	
6...dxe5 Game 69	371
6...♗e8?!	
7.0–0! Game 67	364
7.h3 Game 68	368

## Chapter 9 – Fianchetto (In Excelsis)

1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6	
4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$	
5.g3 c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ – 4.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$	
5.h3! Game 79	413
4.g3	
4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? Game 80	417
4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 7.0–0 0–0	
8.d5!? Game 78	409
8.h3 $\mathbb{E}b8$	
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6! 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ Game 75	397
9.a4 b6	
10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 – Game 76	402
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? a6 Game 77	406

## Chapter 10 – Lazy Variation with c2-c3

1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$	
3.c3 d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ Game 85	440
3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6	
4.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ Game 86	444
4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.0–0 0–0 6.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$	
7.h3 Game 81	422
7. $\mathbb{E}e1$ Game 82	428
7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$	
8.c4 Game 83	431
8.h3! Game 84	434

## Chapter 11 – Unusual Lines

1.e4 g6	
2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$	
3.f4 c5! Game 91	464
3.g3 c5! 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5.d3 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5	
7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ Game 92	468
7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !? Game 93	472
2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$	
3.f4 Game 87	450
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4.h4!? Game 90	459
3. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d5!	
4.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ Game 88	454
4.e5 c5 Game 89	456

## Chapter 12 – Averbakh Variation

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.c4 d6		
4.♗c3 e5		
5.d5 Game 96	492	
5.dxe5 dxе5 6.♔xd8† ♔xd8 Game 97	496	
5.♗ge2 Game 98	503	
5.♗f3 ♗c6		
6.d5 ♗d4! Game 94	479	
6.♔g5! f6 7.♔e3 ♗h6 Game 95	482	
4.♗f3 e5		
5.♔e3?! ♗f6! 6.♗c3 exd4 7.♔xd4 Game 99	508	
5.♔e2 ♗c6		
6.d5 ♗d4! Game 102	525	
6.♔e3 ♗h6!?		
7.d5 ♗e7 Game 100	511	
7.♗c3 ♗g4 Game 101	518	
4.♔e2 e5 5.♗f3 ♗c6 6.d5 ♗d4! Game 102		

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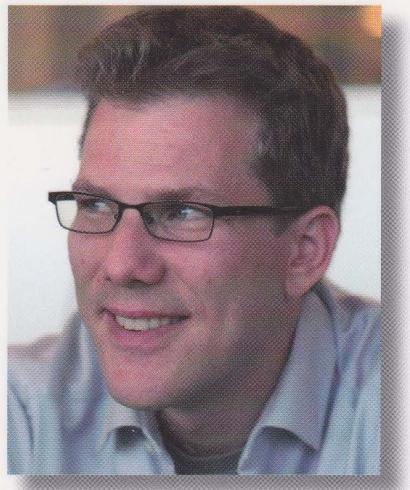
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