

Grandmaster Repertoire

Vassilios
Kotronias

**Beating the
Anti-Sicilians**



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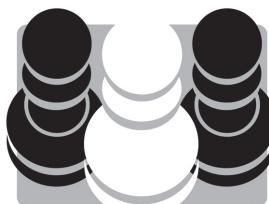


Grandmaster Repertoire 6A

Beating the Anti-Sicilians

By

Vassilios Kotronias



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Preface

Dealing with the Anti-Sicilians has never been a trivial task for chess players and writers alike. One has to be ready for a wide spectrum, which varies from boring to surprisingly dangerous, and this diversity is extremely hard to cope with, especially if you are not armed with sound positional knowledge.

I believe that this book divulges as much of this positional knowledge as I am able to offer; while at the same time contributing to the development of opening theory. I tried to create a universal weapon, paying attention to both tactical and positional mechanisms, and I sincerely hope that this attempt has paid off, but this is ultimately for the reader to judge. An important consideration was to reduce White's options and suggest lines that could be viable irrespective of the Sicilian system one plays as Black, and whenever possible I tried to make the repertoire choice work in this manner.

As the reader will notice, it is the 2.c3 and the 3.♗b5(†) Sicilians that take a lot of the space in this book, and this is not surprising as they are both quite popular. The means I used to combat them adhered to the rule "one tool for many purposes". In the first case, by suggesting a system based on ...e6, I complied with the needs of the move order 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.c3.

In the latter case I chose a set-up including both ...♗c6 and ...d6 on moves 2 and 3 – making the line accessible to various types of Sicilian user. These systems require tactical mastery, and there is a slight disadvantage that one has to be aware of: sometimes castling is delayed, bringing whatever dangers this may incur. On the other hand, it is probably for this reason that they offer better winning chances than other set-ups, as Black aims for the best possible structure before resorting to safety. In this world, nothing comes for free.

One point to note is that I cover the Morra Gambit in Chapter 19, via the move order 2.♗f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.c3, rather than in the Various 2nd Moves section.

Of course, this book includes practically all Anti-Sicilians, and there are other dangerous systems to cope with. I am particularly happy with the results of my work in the system 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3. The Sveshnikov is a line a lot of people want to play as Black, and my suggestion of 3...e5 coincides with the choice of Sveshnikov himself. It has been postulated that this big hole on d5 is something that denies Black winning chances, but this is a rather simplistic assessment, as the reader will notice by going through Chapter 12.

I would like to thank my editors, and wish all my readers many creative achievements in battling the Anti-Sicilians.

Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, November 2015

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2. \mathbb{Q} f3 \mathbb{Q} c6

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Key to symbols used

++	White is slightly better	?	a weak move
+≡	Black is slightly better	??	a blunder
++	White is better	!	a good move
++	Black is better	!!	an excellent move
+-	White has a decisive advantage	!?	a move worth considering
-+	Black has a decisive advantage	?!	a move of doubtful value
=	equality	#	mate
≈	with compensation		
⇄	with counterplay		
?	unclear		
→	with an attack		
↑	with the initiative		

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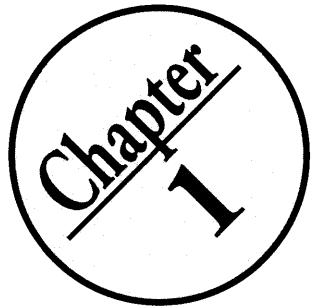
Periodicals

The Week in Chess

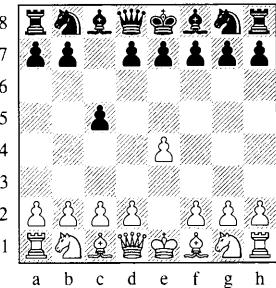
Electronic/Internet resources

ChessBase Magazine

ChessPublishing.com



Various 2nd Moves



Rare Options

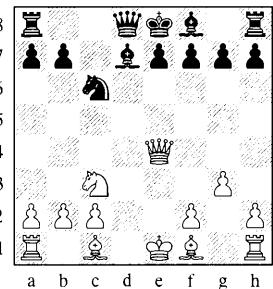
Variation Index

1.e4

1...c5

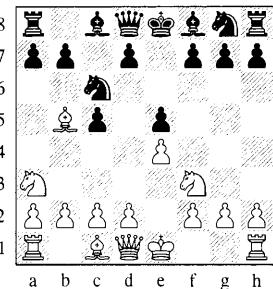
A) 2.♘c4	8
B) 2.c4	9
C) 2.♗e2	11
D) 2.♗a3 ♗c6	13
D1) 3.♘b5	13
D2) 3.♗f3	14
E) 2.f4 g6 3.d4!?: cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.e5 ♗c6	15
E1) 6.♗d1 ♗e4!?	16
E11) 7.♗d2	16
E12) 7.♘e3	18
E2) 6.♗d3	19
F) 2.a3 g6! 3.b4 ♘g7	20
F1) 4.c3?!	21
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C) after 9.♗e4!



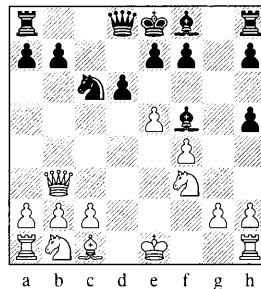
9...g6!N

D1) note to 4.d3!N



4...♗ge7!N

E2) after 10.♗f3



10...♘g7?N

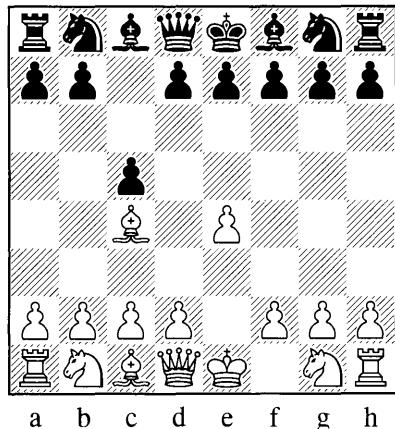
1.e4 c5

This chapter will concentrate on the rare moves: A) 2.♗c4, B) 2.c4, C) 2.♗e2, D) 2.♗a3, E) 2.f4 and F) 2.a3.

2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 gives us a choice: the solid 3...♗f6 4.e5 ♗d5 enters the c3 Sicilian (see Chapters 5 to 9), while accepting the gambit with 3...dxc3 4.♗xc3 ♗c6 5.♗f3 g6 transposes to variation A of Chapter 19 on page 343.

2.♗e2 is likely to transpose elsewhere, e.g. 2...♗c6 3.f4 d5 4.d3 is line B12 of Chapter 2.

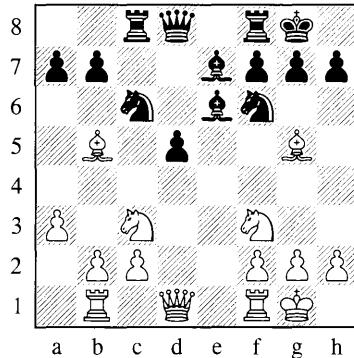
2.a4 is a strange-looking move, but it has some point to it, although I struggle to believe you will face it regularly in tournament play. 2...♗c6 3.♗b5 ♗f6 4.♗c3 g6 5.♗f3 ♗g7 6.0–0 0–0 7.d3 d6 8.h3 a6 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♗b1 ♗e8= was fine for Black in Quaddy – Neapus, engine game 2011, which was agreed drawn an emotionally-draining 115 moves later.

A) 2.♗c4

This is rather harmless, as the bishop will be an object of attack on c4 and will have to move again. Black will be allowed to obtain good development.

2...e6! 3.♗e2

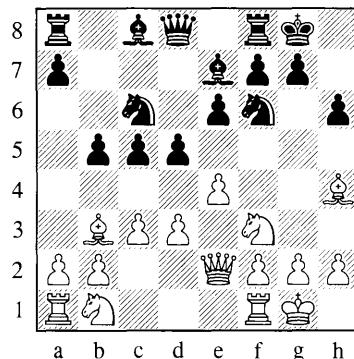
3.♗f3 ♗f6! 4.♗c3 (4.e5 d5! 5.exf6 dxc4 6.fxg7 ♗xg7 7.♗e2 [7.♗a3 e5!] 7...♗c6 8.♗xc4 b6! 9.0–0 ♗g8! → was better for Black in Osipov – Rimkus, corr. 2010) 4...♗c6 5.0–0 d5 6.exd5 exd5 7.♗b5 ♗d6 8.d4 0–0 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗g5 ♗e6 11.♗b1 ♗c8 12.a3 ♗e7 Bersamina – Kantans, Pune 2014, and now:



13.♗e1!N= (Instead, 13.♗d4?! should have led to a slight pull for Black after 13...♗xd4!N 14.♗xd4 a6 15.♗e2 ♗e8± as the c3-knight is clumsy and White is blockading the d5-pawn with the wrong piece.)

3...♗c6 4.♗f3

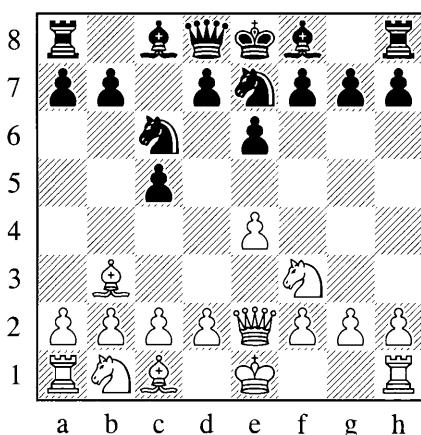
4.c3 ♗e7 5.♗b3 d5 6.d3 ♗f6 7.♗f3 0–0 8.0–0 b5 9.♗g5 (9.♗c2 b4±) 9...h6!? (9...c4 10.dxc4 bxc4 11.♗a4 dxe4 12.♗xc6 exf3 13.♗xf3 ♗b8 14.♗f4 ♗b5 15.b4 ♗d5 16.♗g3 ♗f6 17.a4 ♗xb4 18.cxb4 ♗xa1 19.♗xc4 ♗b7 20.♗a3 ♗c3± was a wild affair that eventually ended in Black's favour in Rasik – Smirin, Czech Republic 2003.) 10.♗h4



10...a5!? 11.e5 ♜d7 12.♕xe7 ♜xe7† In my opinion Black has an excellent position. He has a lot of space on the queenside, offering him promising chances in that sector of the board.

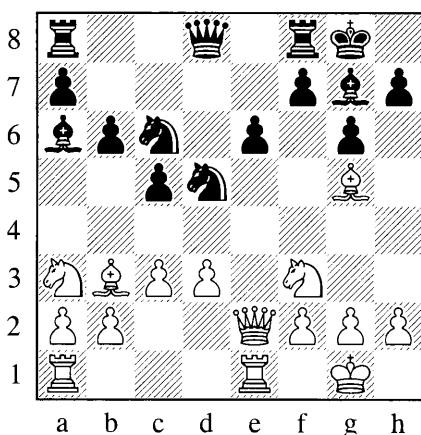
4...♝ge7?!? 5.♗b3

5.d3 ♜g6 6.h4!? (6.0–0 ♜e7 7.c3 d5 8.♗b3 0–0† is great for Black) 6...♗d6! 7.♗bd2 h6 8.h5 ♜ge5 9.♗xe5 ♜xe5 10.♗f3 ♜b8!? 11.c3 0–0 12.♗b3 d5‡ is fine for us.



5...g6!? 6.c3 ♜g7 7.d3 b6 8.0–0 ♜a6 9.♗e1 0–0 10.♗a3 d5 11.exd5 ♜xd5 12.♗g5

Black had the more harmonious development in Rasik – Jirovsky, Karlovy Vary 2004, and should have now chosen:



12...♛c7N†

Black enjoys a slight edge due to the weakness of the d3-pawn.

B) 2.c4

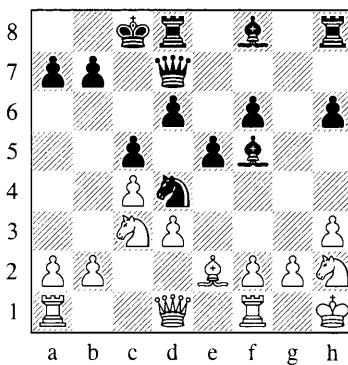
This will most likely transpose to an English Opening. Here we will look at possible deviations from White's perspective.

2...♝c6 3.♝e2?!

Toying with the possibility of d2-d4, transposing to a Maroczy Bind.

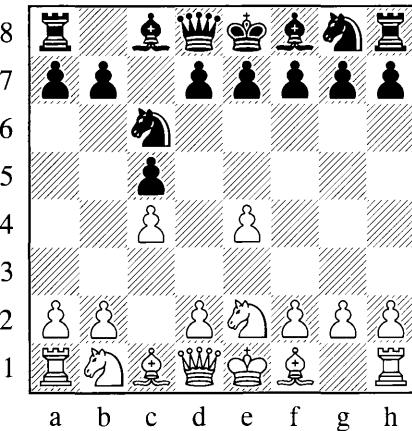
Instead, 3.♝c3 g6 leads to the English and is outside the scope of this book.

3.♝f3 e5 is obviously fine for Black, as the knight stands badly on f3. One recent example went: 4.♝c3 d6 5.d3 (5.g3 g6 6.♗g2 ♜g7 7.0–0 ♜ge7 8.d3 0–0 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗h3 ♜e6 11.f4 ♜d7 12.♗f2 ♜d4 13.♗e3 ♜ab8† was excellent for Black in Plueg – Shaw, Coulsdon 1997.) 5...f5! 6.exf5 ♜xf5 7.h3?! ♜d7 8.♗e2 ♜f6 9.♗h2?! White is fighting for the light squares, but Black has enough resources to combat this plan. 9...♝d4 10.♗g5 0–0–0! 11.0–0 h6 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♗h1?! (13.♗d5?!, preparing to counterattack by b2-b4, might have made a fight of it.)



13...h5! 14.♗xh5 ♜e6 15.♗e2 ♜b8 16.♗xd4 cxd4† Black's attack eventually proved too

much for White in Karacsony – S. Petkov, corr. 2012.



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

It turns out that Black does not intend to simply reach the Maroczy. Again, the clumsy knight on e2 gives him the signal for a quick opening up of the centre.

4. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ e6! 5.d4 d5!

So, there we have it. The only one who seems to believe in White's chances here is the German player Amadeus Eisenbeiser, but practical examples suggest it is Black who has the easier game.

6.cxd5 exd5 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Eisenbeiser's trademark.

7.e5?!

This led to a quick disaster for White after:

7... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 8.f4?

8.h3 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ had to be preferred, although it is clear that White is struggling a pawn down.

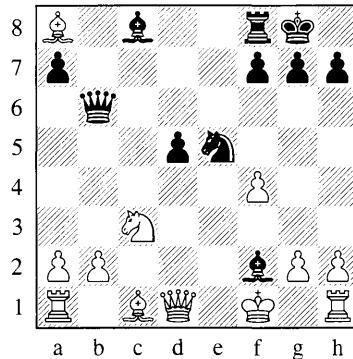
8...cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0–0! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

14... $\mathbb{Q}h4!N-$ would have been cleaner.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f1?$

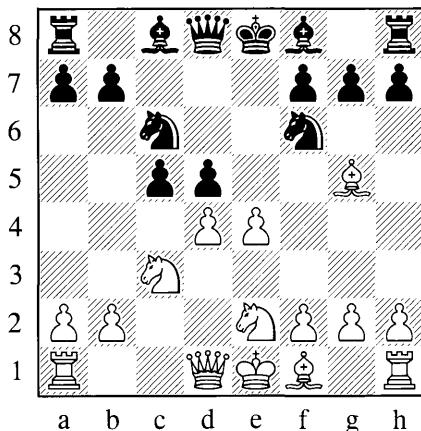
Better was 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, although Black would

still gain a sizeable advantage after: 15... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ g5#



15... $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 17.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

0–1 Tukhvatullin – Karpeshov, Sterlitamak 2011.



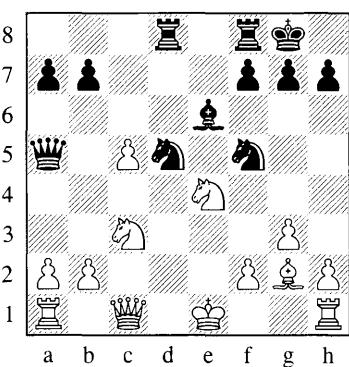
7... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

After this simple reply, it is rather White who is playing for equality. I think he can achieve it by:

8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$

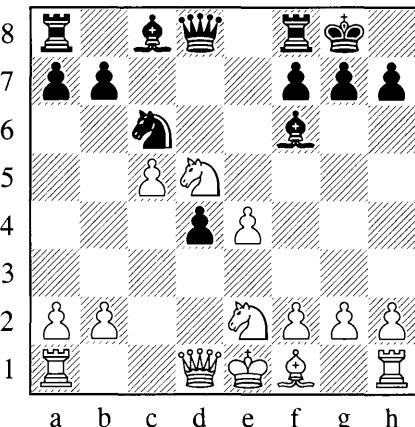
8.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe7$ 10.dxc5 0–0

leaves the white king too exposed in the centre, and I don't like his chances at all. For example: 11.♗d2 (11.♗d4?! ♜e6 12.♗f4 ♖xf4 13.♗xf4 ♜d5! 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗e2 ♗xg2 16.♗f3 ♗g6† left White in dire straits in Eisenbeiser – Solak, Dresden 2007.) 11...♜e6 12.♗e4 ♗c7! 13.g3 ♕ad8 14.♗g2 ♔f5 15.♗c1 ♕a5† 16.♗c3 Eminov – Yilmazerli, Antalya 2013, and now:



16...♗xc3!N 17.♗xc3 ♕a6 18.♗f1 ♗c6
19.♗g2 ♕d5 20.f3 ♗d4!†

8...♗xf6 9.dxc5 d4 10.♗d5 0–0



11.g3?N

Weaker is 11.♗xf6† ♗xf6 12.♗g3 ♗e5!
13.♗d3 b6! 14.c6 (14.0–0? bxc5 15.♗e1 c4
16.♗f1 d3 17.♗d2 ♕b8–+ was simply lost
for White in Eisenbeiser – Fluvia Poyatos,

Barcelona 2007) 14...♗xc6 15.0–0 a5 16.♗c1
♗d6† when Black still maintains a nagging
initiative.

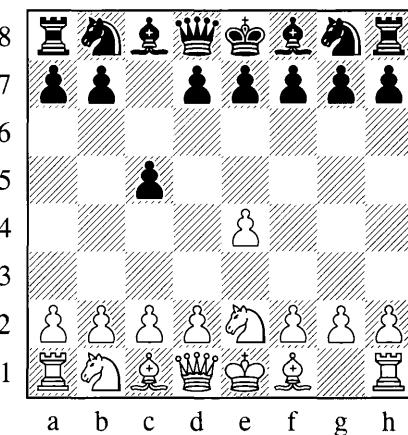
11...♗g4

11...d3 12.♗ec3 ♗xc3† 13.bxc3 ♕e8
14.♗xd3 ♗e5 15.♗e3 produces another
interesting position, where Black has a choice
between 15...f5?! and 15...♗f3† 16.♗xf3
♗xd5 17.♗d3 ♗xc5 18.0–0 ♕e6=.

**12.♗g2 d3 13.♗xd3 ♗xb2 14.♗d1 ♕a5†
15.♗d2 ♕a3 16.♗xa5 ♗xa5 17.h3 ♕e6
18.0–0 ♗xc5 19.♗ef4=**

In this ending there is still plenty of play left
for both sides, but the objective evaluation is
equality: opposite-coloured bishops will soon
appear on the board.

C) 2.♗e2



White is trying to postpone d2-d4 and
create an awkward dilemma for Najdorf
players: 2...♗c6 runs into 3.d4, while 2...d6
3.♗bc3 ♗f6 4.g3 could be luring them into
a g3 Dragon or a Closed Sicilian with ...e6
(which is beyond the subject of this book).
Therefore, I have decided to offer a more clear-
cut solution, in an attempt to satisfy all tastes:

2...♗f6?! 3.♗bc3 d5!

That's it! Usually this pawn thrust would be premature, but the knight on e2 will prevent White from exploiting Black's opening of the centre.

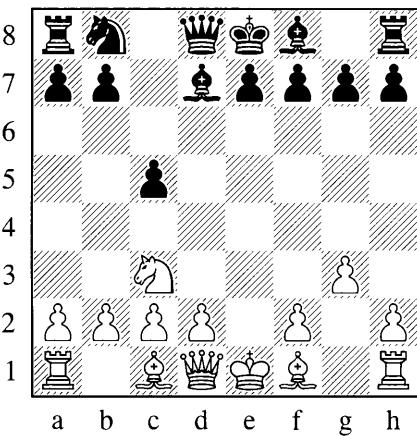
4.exd5

I think that White has to take.

The alternative 4.e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (5.f4?! is better for Black after either 5...e6= or 5...h5=) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 8.g3 (8.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9.g3? $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$) 8...f5! 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7\Rightarrow$ leads to a situation where Black's control over the d4-square easily guarantees him at least equal prospects.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$!

Black is ready to bring his bishop to c6, so White must act.



7.d4!

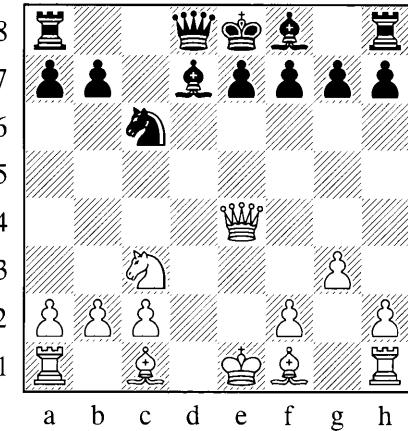
The only chance to develop an initiative.

7...cx d4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$!

An accurate choice of Hou Yifan's, keeping the queen in the centre without allowing Black the luxury of harassing it.

9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ allows 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$) 10...a6! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g6 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\bar{\infty}$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f3\ddagger$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\bar{\infty}$ and Black

is not worse, in spite of his two-pawn deficit. A likely conclusion is a repetition after: 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\ddagger$ 17.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ f6= is okay for Black) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f3\ddagger$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$



9...g6!N

A strong idea: combining development with the creation of a good square on f5 for the bishop. Now Black has nothing to worry about.

In Hou Yifan – Ju Wenjun, Lopota 2014, Black continued with the weakening 9...f5?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$. After the further 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$! $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$, Hou Yifan could have wrapped up the game with 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ N $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\bar{+}$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11.0–0 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8=$

14... $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4=$

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

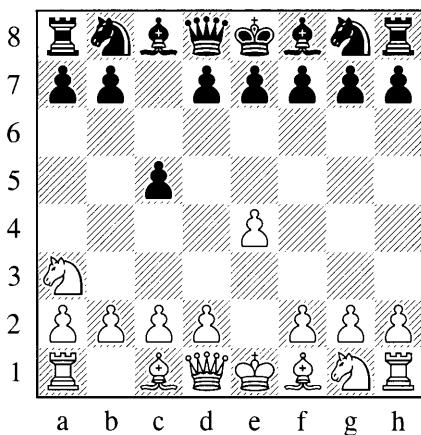
15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

16...♝d5

16.♝d2 ♛e5=

16...♛e6=

The chances look to be completely equal.

D) 2.♞a3

A rather weird move, designed to keep the c-pawn unblocked in order to use it in the fight for the centre later on. The other major accomplishment of having the knight on a3 is that it controls the c4-square, which means that, according to circumstance, White may try to turn it into either a base or a transfer point for the sidelined beast.

2...♞c6

I consider this logical reply as the best possibility for Black, although plenty of other good ones exist.

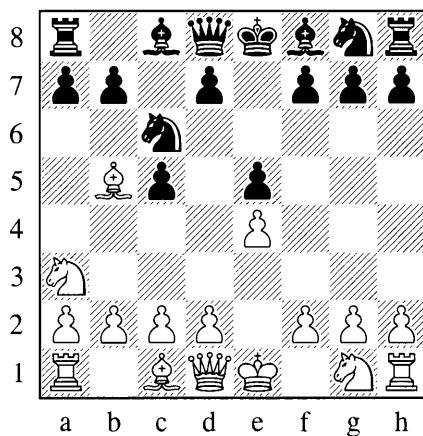
We will consider two moves for White:

D1) 3.♝b5 and D2) 3.♝f3.**D1) 3.♝b5**

A move which has some purpose, especially as jumping to d4 with the c6-knight is less appealing without a knight standing on c3. My preference for Black is an almost untried move:

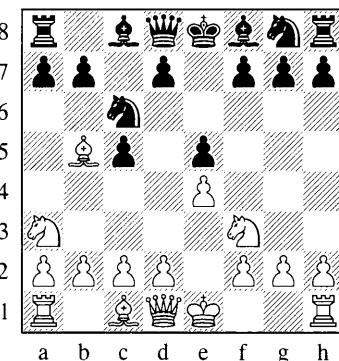
3...e5!?

This logical approach has been tried in only a handful of games so far, but I believe it offers the best practical chances and is also strategically sound: it will be a long time before the a3-knight can obtain access to the d5-square.

**4.d3!N**

The only testing move.

Saule – Jemec, email 2006, continued with 4.♝f3, and here I would like to suggest a new idea:

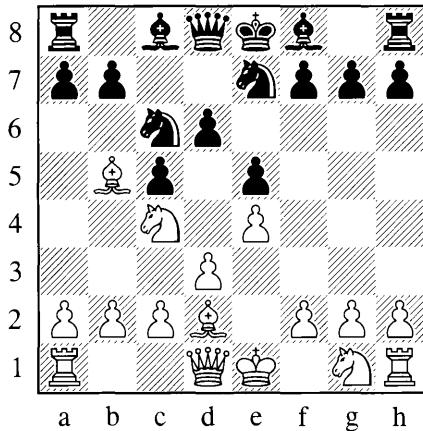


4...♝ge7!N 5.♝c4 (5.0–0 a6 6.♝e2 d5 7.exd5 ♝xd5 8.♝e1 f6 9.♝f1 ♝e7† looks quite unimpressive for White) 5...d6 6.♝e3 a6 7.♝e2 d5 8.d3 d4 9.♝c4 ♝g6 10.a4 ♝e6† The position is simply excellent for Black.

4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $dxc6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $b5!?$ 6. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $h6$ 8. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is in no way better for White as Black will transfer his knight to $d7$, defending everything.) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 6. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 7. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f6=$ gives Black the perfect Rossolimo set-up.

4... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $d6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

Preventing Black from playing ... $a6$ and gaining the bishop pair. Without this move White would be worse.



6... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

6... $a6!?$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$ is not the kind of bind we'd like to fall into.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Both 8. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 0-0 and 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ are level.

8...0-0 9.0-0

So far, the moves have been rather obvious for both sides. A simple equalizing idea is:

9... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$

9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $h6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$, planning ... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$, is also quite good.

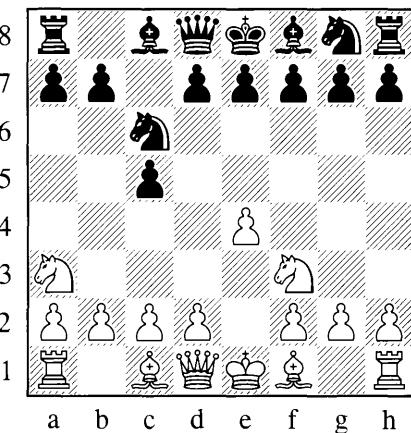
10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 13. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 12. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$

Black has typically contested $d5$, getting rid of all his problems.

D2) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



The most obvious developing move.

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

With the knight on $a3$ this looks excellent, as $e4$ is now under attack.

4.e5

The only try; without this move White obviously has nothing.

4. $d3$ $g6$ 5. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 7. 0-0 $d5$ 8. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $b6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $h4$ $h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6=$ was fine for Black in Gallinnis – Kabatianski, Germany 2007.

4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$

The correspondence player Hynes has been the chief exponent of this position as White, but he barely managed to scrape half a point out of his last two encounters with it.

5... $f6!?$

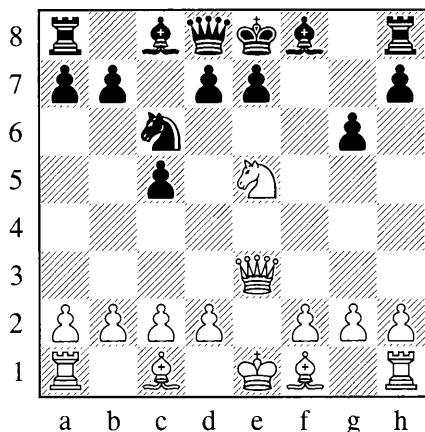
A drastic solution – and a good one it seems.

Alternatively, 5... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 7.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 8.d4 cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ gxh6 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11.c3 b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ dxc3 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{E}g8$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{E}b8\#$ was double-edged in Hynes – Isigkeit, corr. 2008.

6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ fxe5 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ g6!?

This looks dubious.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ dxc6! 10. $\mathbb{W}e5!$ (10.h4 $\mathbb{W}d5$ is fine for Black) 10... $\mathbb{W}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ d3) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ may look a shade better for White, but in fact the position is just balanced: Black has a lot of space and will keep his e-pawn on e7, where it is safely defended.

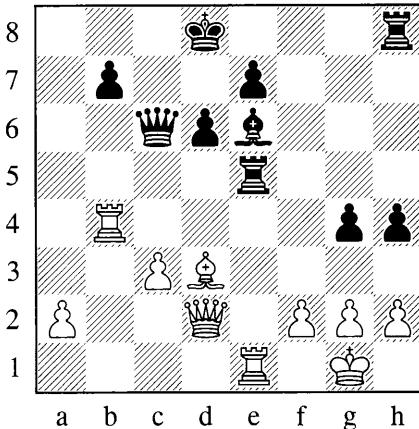


9... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16.c3 g5!

White's attack lacks the ingredients of success and has obviously backfired. I will present the remaining moves of the game, as Black plays instructively.

17. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18.0–0 g4 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ h5 20.b4 cxb4 21. $\mathbb{B}b1$ a5 22.cxb4 axb4 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25.dxc3 $\mathbb{E}e5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h4! 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

28. $\mathbb{Q}fb1?$ must be an improvement.



28...h3! 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}hh5!$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}eb1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}1b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 33.g3 $\mathbb{W}f5-$

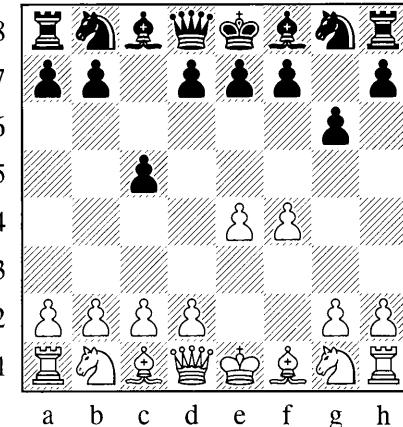
Black was doing all the attacking and went on to win a nice game in Hynes – Benlloch Guirau, corr. 2008.

E) 2.f4

In this way, White avoids placing his knight on c3 for the moment; after 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$? 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ he would achieve his aim of obtaining a favourable version of the Rossolimo Variation.

2...g6

Black declares his intention of transposing into lines analysed under 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.



3.d4!?

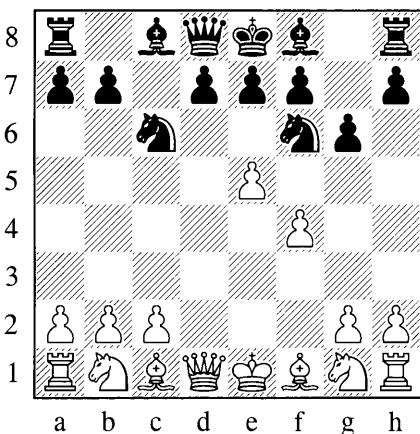
Leading the game to relatively untrdden paths.

3.♘f3 ♗g7! Waiting for White to put his knight on c3 before resorting to ...♘c6. 4.♘c3 ♘c6 A Grand Prix has been reached.

3...cx d4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘c6

White can retreat his queen with either

E1) 6.♗d1 or E2) 6.♗d3.

E1) 6.♗d1

This has been sporadically played; White wishes to avoid being harassed by a subsequent ...♗f5. Now, however, Black can exploit the fact that e4 is no longer covered:

6...♘e4!?

Black places his knight on a wonderful central outpost. White may try to exchange the knight on e4, or ignore it, at least for the time being, and concentrate on development: **E11) 7.♘d2 or E12) 7.♘e3.**

7.♘f3N may well be best. A possible line of play is: 7...d6 (7...♗b6 8.♗e2 d5 9.♗e3!) 8.♗e2 (8.♗e3 transposes to the note on 8.♘f3! in variation E12) 8...♘c5 9.♗e3 ♘e6 (9...♗g4!; 9...♗b6 10.♗b5!) 10.♘c3 dx e5 11.fxe5 ♗g7 12.♗d1 ♗a5 13.♗d5 ♗c7=

E11) 7.♘d2

The attempt to exchange the knight leaves the queenside a bit bare, for example:

7...♘xd2 8.♗xd2

The natural move, but Black can now play ...d6 without worrying about weakening his pawn structure.

8.♗xd2!N

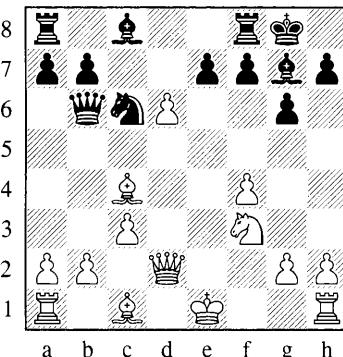
This is relatively best.

8...d6! 9.exd6 ♗g7 10.♗f3!

10.dxe7?!! ♗xe7† 11.♗e2 (11.♗e3 ♗e6!?) leaves White terribly exposed, as he is seriously lagging in development.) 11...0–0 12.♗f3 ♗f5!↑ Black has a tremendous initiative for the pawn.

10...0–0 11.♗c4 ♗b6! 12.c3!?

White might hold after 12.d7 ♗xd7 13.♗xd7 ♗ad8 14.♗g4 ♗b4† 15.♗d2 ♗xb2 16.♗b1 ♗xc1 17.♗xb4 ♗xd2† 18.♗f2 ♗xb4 19.♗d1 ♗c5† 20.♗f1 ♗d4†, but obviously Black has some chances to exploit the coordination of his pieces and the opponent's queenside weaknesses.

**12...exd6 13.♗e3! ♗a5 14.0–0 d5 15.♗b3 ♗e6 16.♗f2!****16.♗d2?! ♗b5†****16...♗b5 17.♗e3 a5!**

Black has excellent counterplay in the IQP position that has arisen, but White has an accurate reply:

18. f1!

White should have enough to maintain approximate equality.

8... $\hat{g}7$ 9. $\hat{c}3$ d6 10. $\hat{f}3$ 0-0

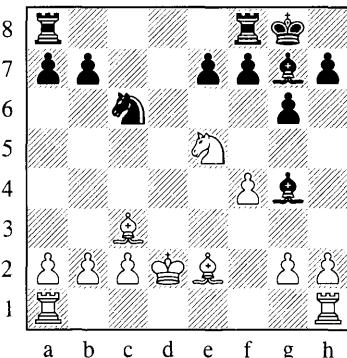
White is having difficulty maintaining control over e5, as the following variations show:

11.b5

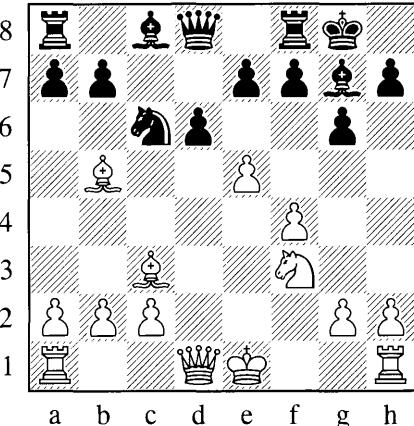
This is the most thematic move, but all the same Black manages to keep a degree of unpleasant pressure.

Weaker is instead 11.exd6?! ♕xc3† 12.bxc3 ♖a5!†.

11. $\mathbb{W}d2$?! might be tenable. I consider the following line to best for Black: 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (12. $\mathbb{W}xd6$?! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$) 13. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b6\bar{f}$) 12.. $dxe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (13. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\bar{f}$) 13... $\mathbb{W}xd2\bar{f}$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! 15. $fxe5$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$? $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5-$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ † 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18. $cxsd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ † Black has good chances to press in the ending in view of his superior minor piece.



11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$

This exchange is necessary.

Instead, 13.0–0–0 ♜h6! costs White a precious pawn for little compensation.

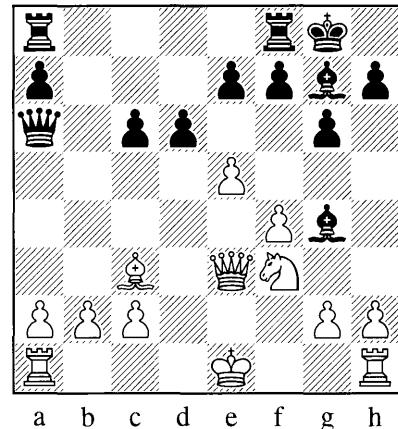
13...bxc6 14.♔f2! ♔a6!

Black insists on preventing White from castling.

15. $\mathbb{W}e3$

15. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ was a better try, but after 15... $\mathbb{W}a4!?$ Black maintains a nagging edge.

A good reply to 15. ~~W~~e3 is:



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18.0-0-0
d5! 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d4$ e6 21. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6#

The ending was slightly better for Black due to his central mass, Salmensuu – Hillarp Persson, Reykjavik 2000.

E12) 7.♘e3 d6!?

Trying to exploit the active e4-knight by opening up the position. White now faces a struggle to keep the balance.

7...d5

This leads to more static play, although Black should basically be okay; the move ...f6 can perhaps be employed at some point to liquidate the annoying e5-pawn.

8.♗d3

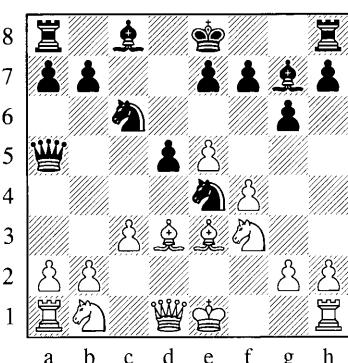
8.♗f3?! ♘g4 9.♗e2 ♘g7 10.0–0 0–0
11.♗bd2 ♗xd2 12.♗xd2 ♗a5?! 13.c3?!

(13.♗xa5 ♗xa5=) 13...e6∞

8...♗a5†

8...♗f5 9.♗f3 ♘g7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗bd2
♗c7=

9.c3 ♘g7 10.♗f3

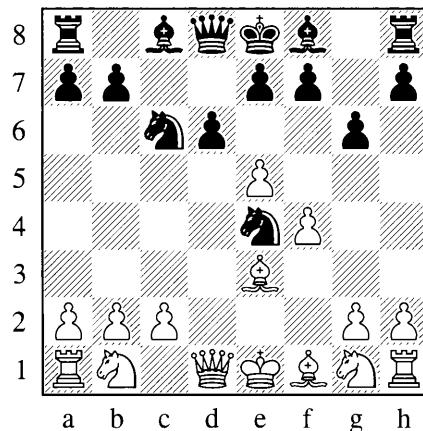


10...f6?! 11.exf6?!

11.0–0?! 0–0 12.b4! ♗c7 13.♗b3± e.g.
13...e6 14.♗xe4! dxe4 15.exf6 ♘xf6 16.♗fd2
11...♗xf6 12.♗bd2 ♗c7 13.♗b3 0–0 14.♗b5
♗h8 15.♗e2 ♗g4! 16.♗d2 e5 17.h3 ♗f6
18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.fxe5 ♗e4 20.♗e3 ♘a6?

Black was better in Damljanovic – Z. Arsovic, Belgrade 1995. However, as was obvious from the comments, White could have improved earlier on.

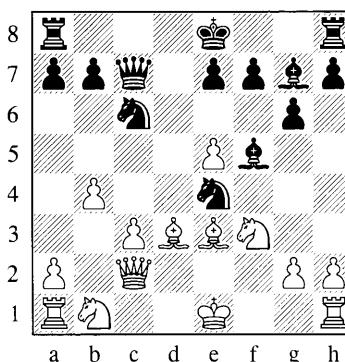
The following lines illustrate Black's potential:



8.♗d3?!

Intriguing, but Black still comes out on top. Weaker is 8.♗d5?! ♘f5 9.♗b5 ♗c8† when White will be pushed back.

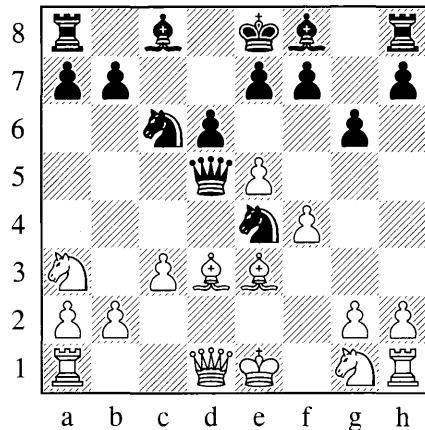
After 8.♗f3?! ♗a5†! 9.c3 dxe5 10.fxe5 ♘g7 the e5-pawn looks fatally exposed. 11.b4? (White is also worse after 11.♗d3 ♗c5 12.♗c4 ♘e6) 11...♗c7 12.♗d3 ♘f5! White is in big trouble. For example: 13.♗c2 (or 13.g4 0–0–0!! 14.gxf5 ♗xe5+– and White is about to be massacred along the open lines)



13...♗xc3!! 14.♗xc3 (14.♗xc3 ♗xe5 15.♗xf5
♗xf3† 16.gxf3 ♗xc3† 17.♗f2 gxf5+–)
14...♗xd3 15.♗xd3 ♗xe5 16.♗b5† ♗d7
17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗c1† 19.♗e2 ♗xh1
20.♗xh8 ♗xg2†+–

Finally, Black also ends up slightly better after:
 8. $\mathbb{W}f3$ f5! 9. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. h3
 (11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}g3$ d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$ is
 harmonious for Black) 11... 0–0 \mp

8... $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 9. c3 $\mathbb{W}d5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3?$



10... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

10... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2!\pm$

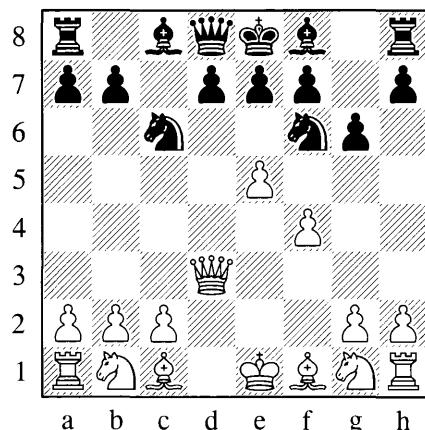
11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

11. $\mathbb{Q}f1?!$ might be a better chance.

11... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}b8!\mp$

Black is for preference.

E2) 6. $\mathbb{W}d3$



White is trying to justify the queen sortie.

6... $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$

The knight is safely placed on the rim here:
 it is important not to lose time by retreating
 it to g8.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

An attempt to exploit the knight's placement.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6!

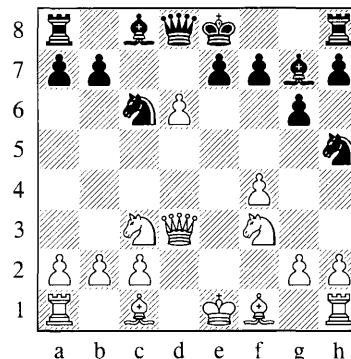
White has problems containing Black's activity.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 9. dxе7?!, $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0–0–0
 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. c3 $\mathbb{Q}he8$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$

8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. exd6

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b5$ dxе5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0–0
 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b8!\mp$ with the idea 13. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$
 17. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 18. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 $\mathbb{Q}ab8-\mp$



9... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$

Disturbing the coordination of White's forces.

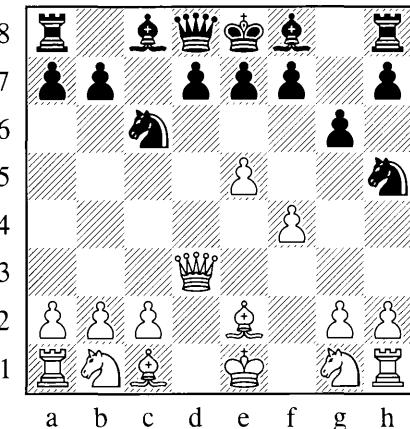
9... 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2\infty$ and White
 breathes a lot easier.

10. dxе7 $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$

11... $\mathbb{W}xe3\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 0–0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}he8$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5\infty$

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$

13.♕a4 ♕xc2!
 13.♕f2 ♕xc2 14.♗xe7† ♔xe7 15.♗b1 ♕d4
 16.♗a1 ♕hd8#
 13...♔xe7 14.0-0 ♕xc2 15.♗b1 ♕d4 16.♗a1
 ♕hd8#



7...d6!

Black ignores White's threat, as ...♗f5 will gain even more time.

8.♗xh5 ♗f5 9.♗b3

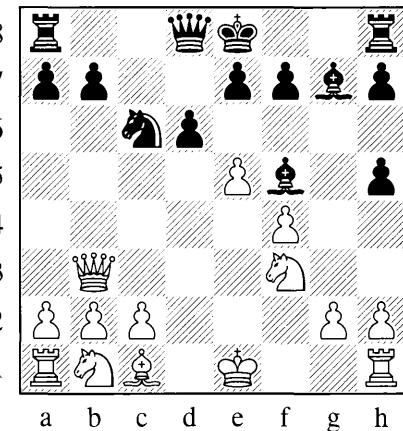
The solid choice.

After 9.♗b5 gxh5 10.exd6 (10.♗xb7 ♗e4! yields tremendous compensation for the pawn)
 10...♗d7! 11.♗f3 (11.dxe7?! ♗xe7 12.♗f3 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♕xc2 14.♗xh5 ♗g6! 15.♗h6 ♗hg8→) 11...e6? Black stands well.

9...gxh5 10.♗f3 ♗g7?N

It seems more to the point to concentrate on development rather than lose time defending the pawn.

10...♗d7 11.0-0 e6∞ happened in Westerinen – Arnason, Brighton 1981.



11.♗xb7?!

11.0-0 dx5 12.fxe5 (12.♗xb7 ♕d4# exchanges White's good knight on f3, giving Black the better prospects.) 12...♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗d4† 14.♗h1 ♗xe5 15.♗c3 0-0 16.♗xb7 (16.♗f4 ♗c5#!) 16...e6# Black is fine in view of his two bishops.

11...♗c8#

Black has excellent compensation in return for the pawn.

F) 2.a3

White prepares b2-b4, with the idea of attacking the pawn on c5. If Black then replies with ...cb4, that helps White achieve a central pawn preponderance. However, in practice things are not simple.

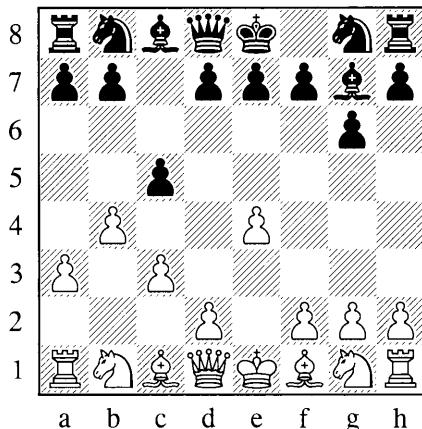
2...g6!

It is a traditional idea to meet similar flank attacks by fianchettoing the king's bishop.

3.b4 ♗g7

We will check the dubious F1) 4.c3?! before moving on to the main line with F2) 4.♗c3!.

F1) 4.c3?!



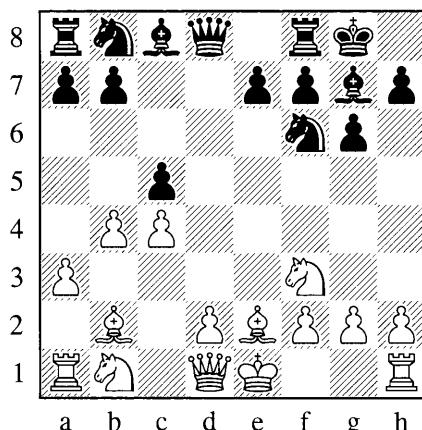
This impedes the knight's development and weakens the light-square complex in the centre.

4...d5! 5.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0

Black is threatening ...c4, so White's response is practically forced.

8.c4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$!

9.bxc5? e5!†



9...b6! 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.d4!N

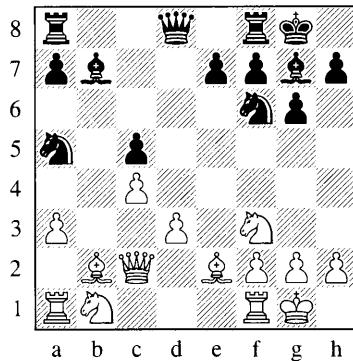
11. $\mathbb{W}b3$?

White is preparing $\mathbb{W}d1$ followed by d2-d4, but it proves too slow.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 12.bxc5

12. $\mathbb{W}d1$ e5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ †

12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ bxc5 14.d3



14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5!†

Black went on to win a model game in Mamedyarov – Kotronias, Calvia (ol) 2004.

11...cx d4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$!
15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ †

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

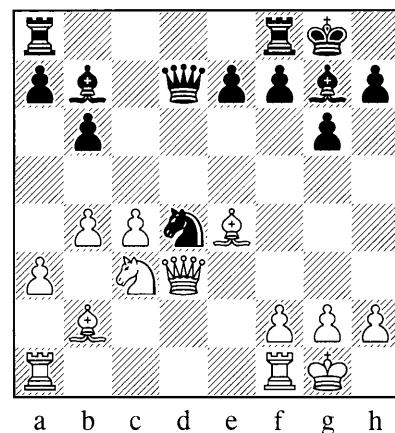
White has made too many pawn moves, which allows Black's better-developed army to take the leading role in the proceedings.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$! 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

15. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ † 17. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ †

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

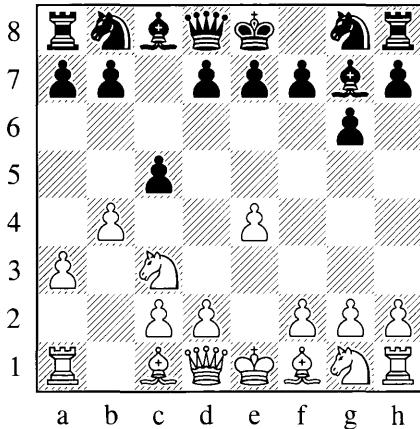
16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$? $\mathbb{Q}fd8$!



16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$
17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 18.c5 $\mathbb{W}g4!$

17... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$

F2) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$



The critical move: White intends to bring the rook to b1, support the pawn on b4, and thus complete the Bayonet Attack set-up. White will then try to develop the kingside, either by $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and $\mathbb{Q}f3$, or with a fianchetto of the king's bishop.

4...b6!

The most solid move available to Black, maintaining the central equilibrium.

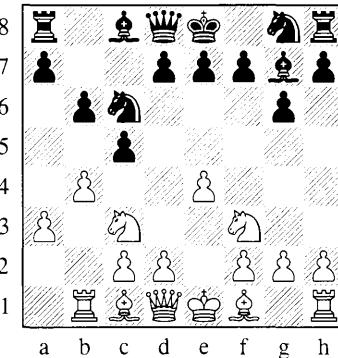
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

After 5.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{E}b1$ e6! (6...d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 9.0–0 0–0 10.d3 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11.bxc5 bxc5 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.f5! gxf5 14.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}exf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ is what White is hoping for) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 9.0–0 d5 \mp Black may well be slightly better already.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b2!?$ N

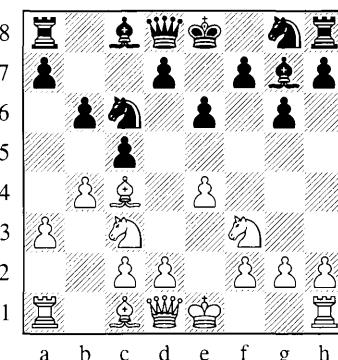
Probably the best way to sacrifice the b4-pawn.

On 6. $\mathbb{E}b1$, holding on to the pawn, the best reply is:

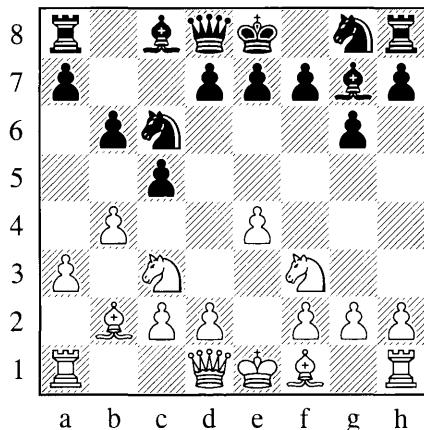


6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 7.bxc5 (7.b5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 8.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ is fine for Black) 7...bxc5 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$? (8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$?! 0–0 9.0–0 d5 \mp) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$? (8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ dxc6 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf3\pm$) 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 11. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ dxc3 ∞ Black has a fully playable game.

After 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6! the bishop on c4 bites on granite! For example:



7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8.d4?! (8.bxc5 bxc5 9. $\mathbb{E}b1$ is preferable) 8...cxd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}bxsd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\mp$ Black had the better pawn structure, as well as the more harmonious development, in Dobrov – Aroshidze, Kavala 2004.



6...e5!

With the bishop on b2 this looks like the strategically correct move.

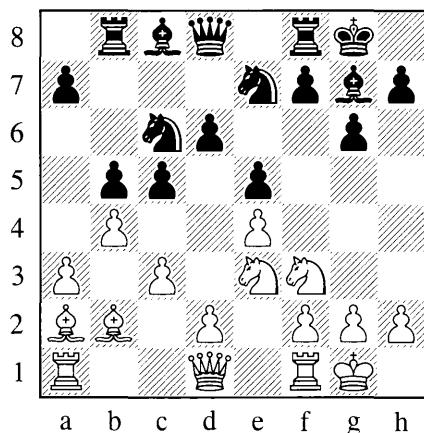
6...cxb4 7.axb4 ♜xb4 8.♘c4∞ is unclear.

7.♘c4 ♜ge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘d5 d6=

The computers are happy to be White here, which is difficult to understand as the b2-bishop is inactive. The position is approximately balanced: Black intends ...♝b8, followed by ...b5 and/or a timely capture on d5. A sample line is:

10.c3 ♞b8 11.♘e3 b5 12.♘a2

12.♘e2 f5↑



12...a5 13.bxc5 dxc5 14.a4 b4 15.♗e2 ♘d7
16.♘c4
 16.h4!? ♜c8∞

16...♜c8

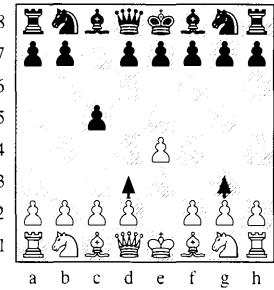
The computer finally agrees that Black stands well, and obviously his position is more pleasant from the human perspective in view of the protected passed pawn on b4.

Conclusion

The 2nd move options examined in this chapter are not in any way theoretically dangerous for Black, but some may require careful memorization of details. Throughout the chapter I tried to give sound recommendations without jeopardizing our winning chances, and I am particularly satisfied with the results. Overall, an engrossing chapter with many interesting ideas for Black, which I hope will enhance the readers' winning ways.

Chapter 2

Various 2nd Moves



2.g3 and 2.d3

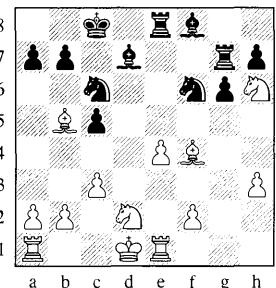
Variation Index

1.e4

1...c5

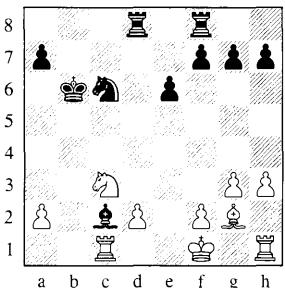
A) 2.g3 d5!	25
3.exd5 ♕xd5	
4.♘f3 ♘g4	
5.♗g2 ♖e6†	
6.♗f1 ♘c6	
7.h3 ♘h5	
A1) 8.d3 ♖d7	26
9.♘a3 e6	
A11) 10.♘c4	26
A12) 10.g4!?	27
A2) 8.♘c3 ♖d7	27
A21) 9.d3 e6	28
A211) 10.a4	28
A212) 10.♗e3	29
A22) 9.♘e5!?	30
B) 2.d3 ♘c6	32
B1) 3.f4 d5!?	32
B11) 4.♘f3	33
B12) 4.♗e2	34
B2) 3.g3 d5!?	35
B21) 4.exd5	35
B22) 4.♘d2	36

A) note to 3.exd5



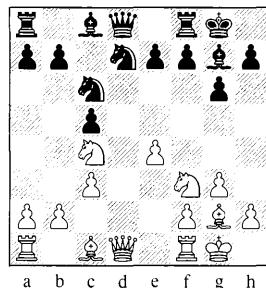
17...g5!N

A22) note to 15...♘d5



18...♗d3†!N

B22) note to 10.♖e2



10...b5!N

1.e4 c5

In this chapter we will focus on A) 2.g3 and B) 2.d3.

A) 2.g3

This one allows Black to free himself with an immediate central thrust.

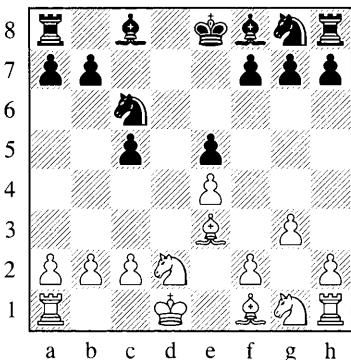
2...d5! 3.exd5

3.d3 dxe4 4.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$

I have faced this ending twice in my practice, and despite my minus score I can boast of having excellent positions out of the opening.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5! 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

7.c3 g6! 8.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ f5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$? (13.exf5 gxsf5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b6=) 13...b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{f}$ was slightly better for Black in Totsky – Kotronias, Pardubice 2007, although I managed to lose in the end.



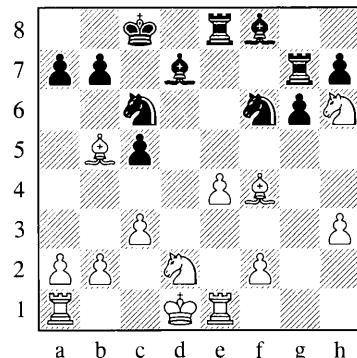
7...g6!

This is always the idea, obtaining a fluid pawn centre.

8.c3 f5 9. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12.exf5 gxf5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e4 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5! 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 17.cxb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ is rather dangerous for White.

11...0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ f4! 16.gxf4 exf4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

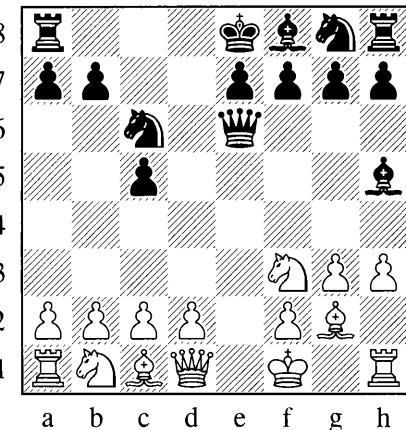


So far we have been following Zvjaginsev – Kotronias, Vrnjacka Banja 2005. Now instead of the game's 17... $\mathbb{Q}xh3?$!, which allowed my opponent the reply 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ∞, I should have played:

17...g5!N 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3\uparrow$

The initiative clearly rests with Black. After my mistake in the game White soon equalized, leading to an eventual draw.

3... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e6\uparrow$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$



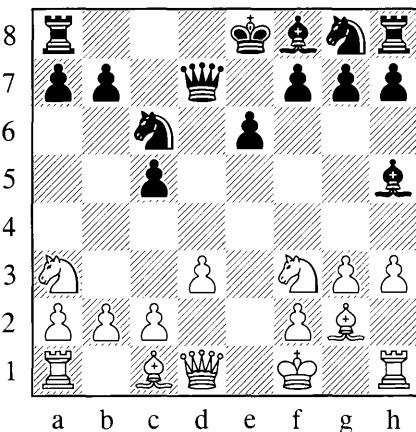
After White's choice on the 3rd, the moves so far look like a (more or less) forced sequence. White has lost the right to castle, but the black queen is awkwardly placed in front of the e-pawn, and the c-pawn may become a weakness if Black is not careful. At this point

there are two main continuations for the first player: A1) 8.d3 and A2) 8.Qc3.

A1) 8.d3

Delaying the development of the queen's knight with the idea of Qa3-c4. This plan appears time-consuming, but White's structure is solid and perhaps he can afford it.

8...Wd7 9.Qa3 e6



White's options now are A11) 10.Qc4 and A12) 10.g4?!

A11) 10.Qc4 f6!

A typical and strong move!

11.Qe3 Wd8!

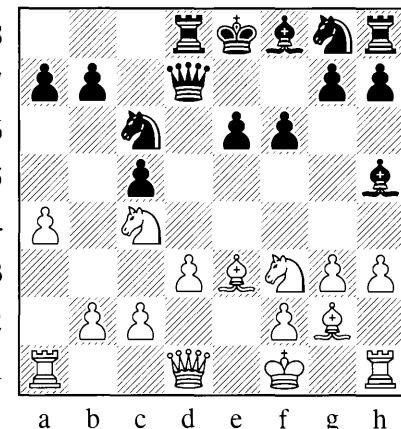
Preventing 12.g4 followed by 13.d4.

12.a4

After 12.g4?! Wf7 13.a4 b6 14.We2 Qge7 15.Wf4 Qd5 16.Qg3 We7 17.h4 0-0 18.h5 h6 19.Qh4 Qd4 20.Wd1 e5† Black clearly had the upper hand in Flower – Aseev, London 1994.

20...f5?N is also possible according to the engines, but weakening e5 in such a way is a difficult decision for a human to make.

12.Qg1N is untried according to my knowledge. Perhaps Black should play 12...Wf7 13.Qfd2 b5 14.Qa3 Qd4 15.Qh2, and here both 15...Qf5 and 15...h5 lead to interesting positions.



12...e5

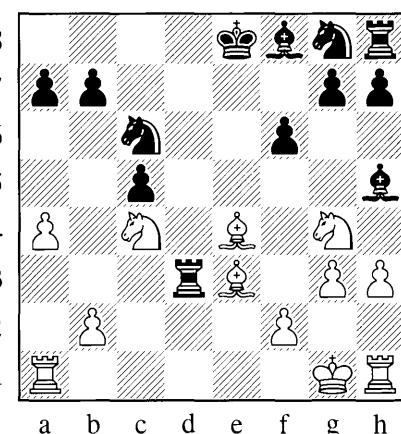
12...Qd4 13.Qxd4 cxd4 14.We1 was unclear in Sepp – Yakovich, Leeuwarden 1993.

13.Qg1

13.Qfxe5?! does not work in view of 13...Qxd1 14.Qxd7 Qxc2 15.Qxf8 Qxd3† 16.Qg1 Qxc4 17.Qc1 Qa2†, and only Black can be better.

13...e4 14.Qfe5 Wf5 15.Qg4 exd3 16.cxd3 Wxd3 17.Wxd3 Wxd3 18.Qe4

18.Qh2?? Wf7+– costs White a piece.



18...♝d8 19.♔g2

19.a5 ♜g6=

19...♝f7=

We have reached an approximately balanced ending, as White does have enough compensation for his pawn.

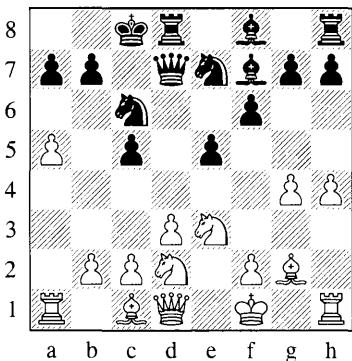
A12) 10.g4!?

White tries to get the bishop pair as compensation for his loss of castling.

10...♝g6 11.♕h4!

Having said A he says B. Otherwise White will have nothing to show for his weakened kingside.

This time 11.♕c4?! is pointless after 11...f6!. For example: 12.a4 (Better is 12.♗e3 b6 13.♗f4 e5 14.♗fxe5 fxe5 15.♗xe5 ♜xe5 16.♗xa8 ♜c6 17.♗g2 ♜ge7 18.♗e1 ♜f7 19.c3 ♜g8 when the position is complicated.) 12...♜ge7 13.h4 e5 14.♗fd2 ♜f7 15.♗e3 0–0–0 16.a5 Balashov – Filipenko, Katowice 1992, and here I like:



16...♝d5! 17.a6 b6 18.h5 ♜b8 Black has the better game.

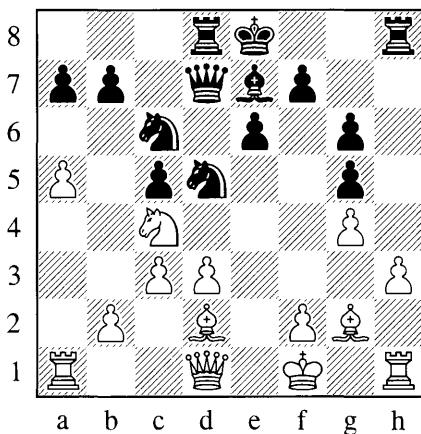
11...♝e7

The only move tried in praxis.

One might wonder what happens in case of 11...♜ge7?!, since it is not clear that Black has to commit his bishop to e7 so early. However, after 12.♗c4 ♜d5 we will probably reach positions similar to those arising from 11...♜e7, as there appears to be no better square for the bishop.

**12.♗xg6 hxg6 13.♗c4 ♜f6 14.a4 ♜d5
15.♗d2 g5 16.a5 ♜d8 17.c3 g6=**

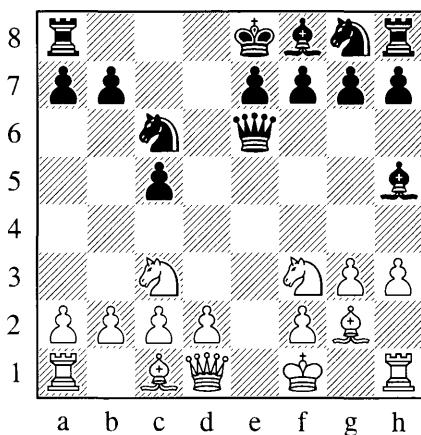
All this happened in King – Sveshnikov, Neu-Isenburg 1992. A possible line is:



18.♗f3N ♜f8 19.♔g2 ♜g7 20.♗e2 ♜c7

Black may be a trifle better, but White's position is solid.

A2) 8.♗c3

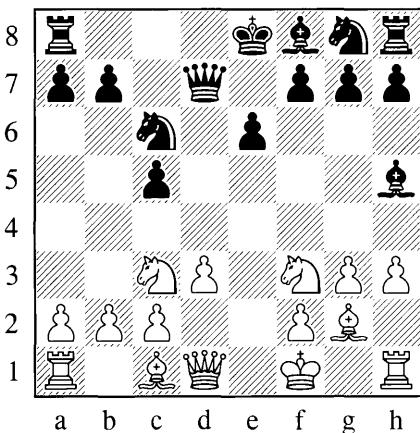


Developing fast in anticipation of ... $\mathbb{W}d7$, against which White prepares a tactical liquidation.

8... $\mathbb{W}d7$

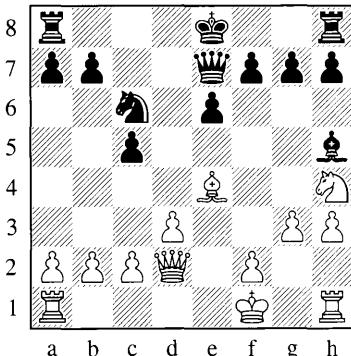
Now White's most common reply is A21) 9.d3, while A22) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5!!?$ is the forcing line alluded to above.

A21) 9.d3 e6



We immediately have another parting of the ways with A21) 10.a4 or A212) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$.

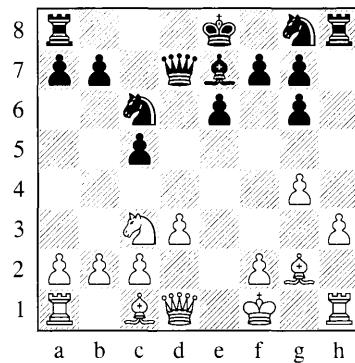
10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ looks artificial, but it should be taken into account. The reply I like for Black is: 10... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



15... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0–0 17. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

$\mathbb{W}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}he8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $f6=$
With balanced play in Kristol – Brekke, corr. 2006.

10.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ and now:



a) 13.g5?! $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ is complicated, with Black having good dark-square compensation in return for the pawn; I wouldn't like to be White here.

b) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b6= was level in Suetin – Sveshnikov, Dubna 1979. Black's c-pawn is safe and he is about to evacuate the long white diagonal.

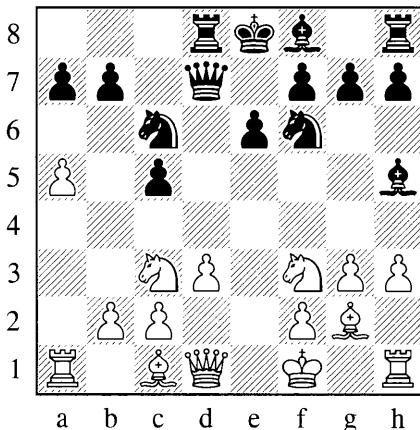
c) 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14.a5 is unclear after either 14...a6 or 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$.

A211) 10.a4

A well-motivated move, designed to weaken Black on the long diagonal or undermine the defence of his c-pawn. However, it seems that Black is able to neutralize the pressure by relying on common-sense measures.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d8$

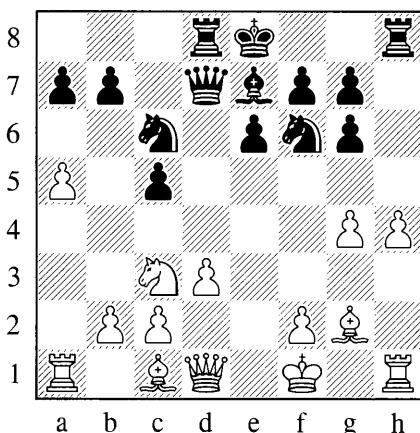
Again, Black removes any potential targets from the long diagonal.



12.g4 ♖g6 13.♕h4 ♖e7 14.♕xg6 hxg6

15.h4

15.♖d2 has been suggested by various analysts as a better move, but I doubt it is so after 15...♖d5 16.♕xd5 exd5†.



15...a6! 16.♔e3

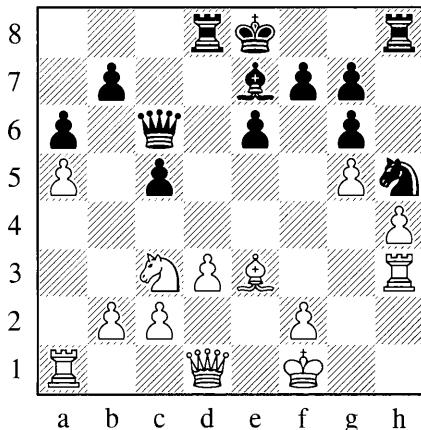
16.♖h3!= seems more to the point, followed by ♕g1. In that case, the position looks even to me.

16...♗c7 17.g5 ♔h5 18.♕xc6†

18.♕a4?! fails to 18...♕xa5†, e.g. 19.b4? ♕c4! 20.♕xc5 ♕xc5 21.♕xc5 ♕g3†!–+.

18...♗xc6 19.♕h3

So far we have followed Short – Sveshnikov, Solingen 1992.



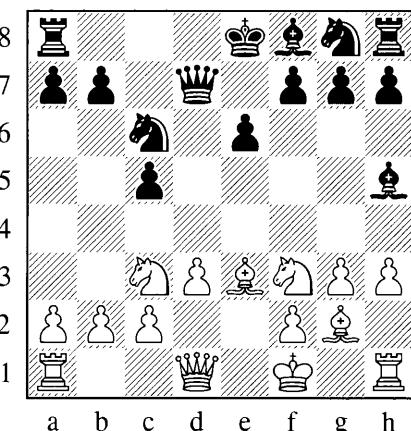
19...f5!?

Sveshnikov recommended this as better for Black, but the computers rather prefer his game choice of 19...c4? 20.♕a4 cxd3 21.cxd3 0–0 22.♕b6. Then the position is just level after either 22...♕d6!= or 22...♕c8 – which was the move actually played.

20.♕f3! ♗c8 21.♕a4 e5∞

We have reached an unclear position with chances for both sides, but in practical chess it would be more difficult to handle as White. Therefore, I agree with Sveshnikov's assessment that 19...f5 is the best continuation after all.

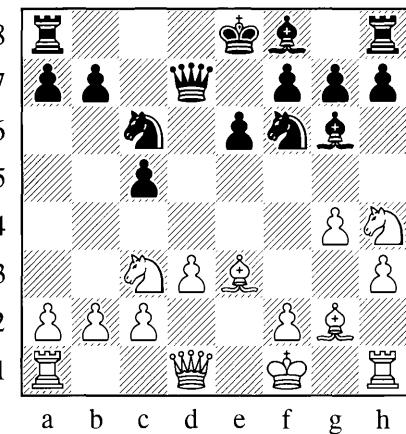
A212) 10.♕e3



A natural move: White is trying to initiate pressure against the c5-pawn.

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

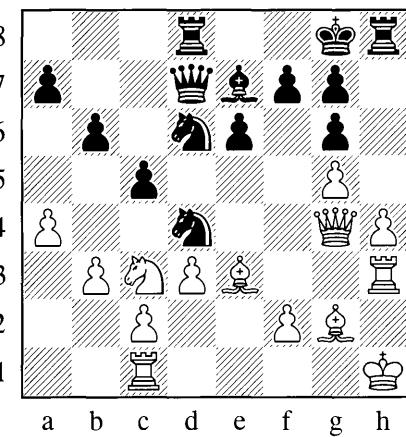
12.d4 0–0–0 left Black with a good position in Nyberg – Geus, email 2001.



12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$

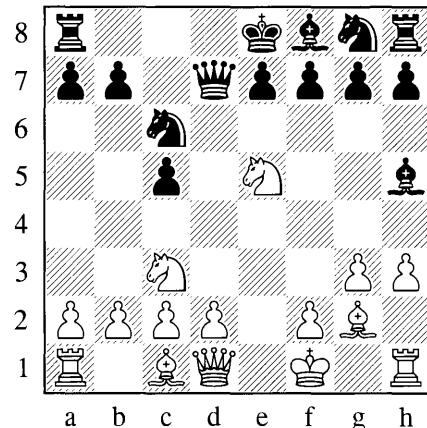
13.g5?! $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (as seen in a couple of games) should be better for Black in spite of the pawn deficit arising after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Exd}5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 0–0–0+. White is uncoordinated and his king is weak.

13...hxg6 14.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Qf8}$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b6 18. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19.b3 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21.g5?! $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$ ∞



Black was at least equal in Hort – Ribli, Baden-Baden 1992. There is of course some room for improvement during the last sequence of moves, but I cannot hide the feeling that Black's position is the more pleasant. White seems to be bashing his head against the wall trying to effect a breach in the black fortress.

A22) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$



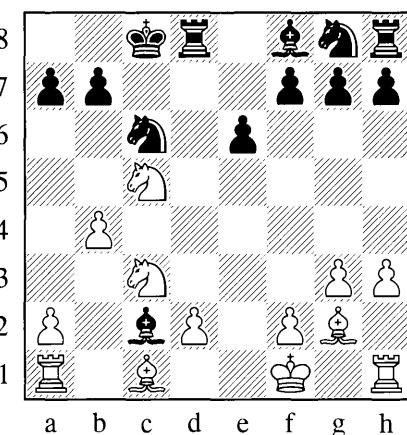
This bails out to an equal endgame.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 0–0–0 12.b4

The main point of White's operation, reminding Black that his king can be exposed as well.

12...e6

The c5-knight must be terminated.



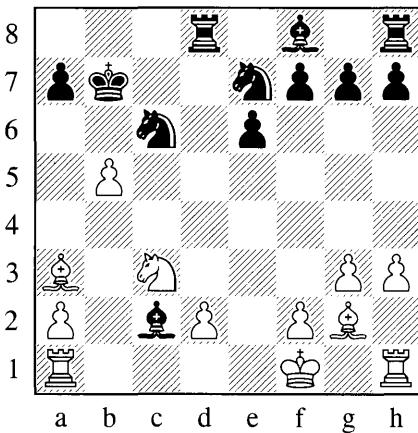
13.♘xb7! ♘xb7 14.b5 ♘ge7

The c2-bishop does a fine job of restricting the a1-rook here, so the only question is if Black can emerge better from this position or not.

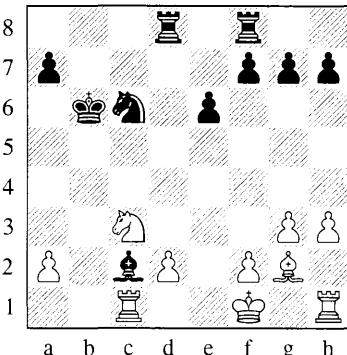
15.♗a3

An attempt to force a draw by increasing the pressure on the pinned knight.

Instead, 15.bxc6† ♘xc6‡ leads to a small yet clear advantage for Black.

**15...♗d5**

15...♗b6?! 16.bxc6 ♘xc6 17.♗xf8 ♘hxf8
18.♗c1

**18...♗d3†!N**

This seems a better try than 18.♗d4, after which the continuation 19.♗g1 a6 20.♗h2

♗a7 21.♗e2 ♘xe2 22.♗xc2 ♘d7 23.♗b1 ♘b8 24.♗xb8 ♘xb8 25.♗c6 ♘a7 26.♗f1 ♘b7 27.♗g2 ♘a7 28.♗f1= left the players no other choice but to agree a draw in Mozes – Loginov, Budapest 1990.

19.♗g1 ♘d4 20.♗a4†

20.♗h2 ♘c8 21.♗he1 ♘e7‡ looks a bit passive for White.

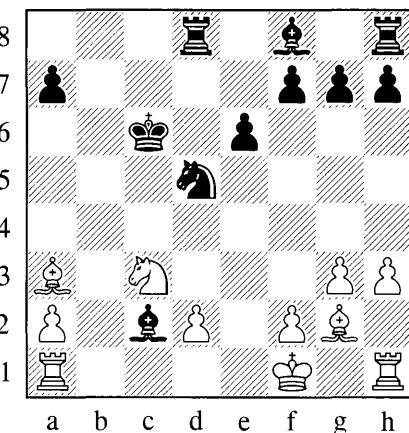
**20...♗xa4 21.♗xc6† ♘a5 22.♗h2
22.♗d6 ♘b5 23.♗c6?!**

22...♗xa2 23.♗d6 ♘b5 24.♗c1 ♘a3 25.♗e4 g6 26.♗c7 a6 27.♗g2 ♘b3 28.d4 ♘b4 29.♗b7 ♘c4 30.♗e7‡

We have tried hard to keep the game alive, but White has an active position and further progress will be difficult to achieve for the second player.

16.bxc6† ♘xc6

Now I believe White has to choose carefully so as to equalize:

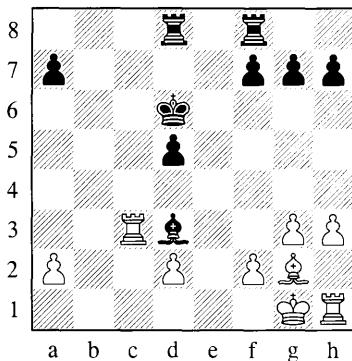
**17.♗xd5†!N**

Untried, and best.

Bad is instead 17.♗xd5?! ♘d3†! 18.♗g1 ♘xa3† and Black's position is by far the more pleasant one.

17.♗xf8 ♘d3† 18.♗g1 ♘hxf8 19.♗xd5 exd5
20.♗c1† ♘d6 21.♗c3

I was once confronted with this position, and managed to keep some winning chances alive with:



21... $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$

21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 23. $d3=$ was agreed drawn in Nadyrkhanov – Serper, Tashkent 1993.

22. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

22. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ $a6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$ would have reduced Black's edge to a minimum.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}hc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 24. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Black's extra space and active king makes the ending difficult for White.

28.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

28... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is also better for Black.

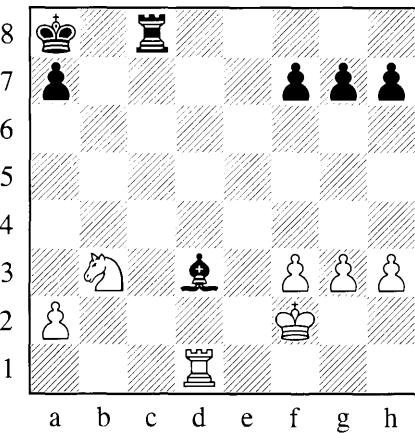
29. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $f5$ 30. $h4$ $g6$ 31. $h5$

As played in Zivic – Kotronias, Thessaloniki 2007, and now best was:

31... $\mathbb{Q}e6!N\uparrow$

It is already doubtful whether White can draw.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 21. $d3$ $d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
 $\mathbb{Q}hxf8$ 24.f3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1=$

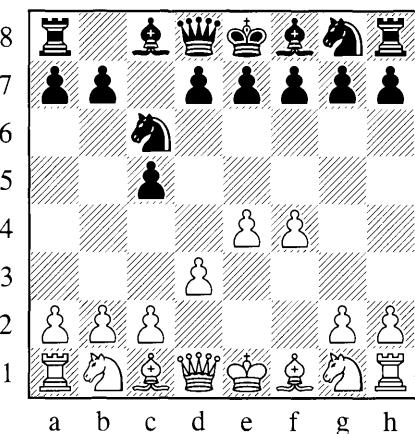


There are obviously no real winning chances for Black and the game should end in a draw.

B) 2.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The remainder of the chapter will focus on B1) 3.f4 and B2) 3.g3.

B1) 3.f4

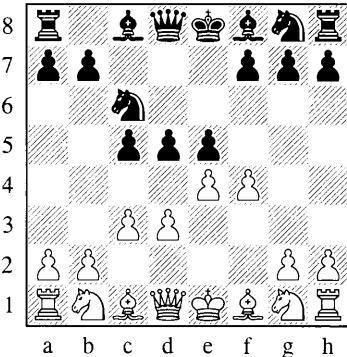


3...d5!?

I like this dynamic solution, opting for an open game. White now has the following possibilities: B11) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and B12) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

4.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $g3$ $g6$
8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 $\mathbb{Q}e6!\mp$ is excellent for us.

4.c3 is dealt with convincingly by 4...e5!, when Black's better development is bound to give him the upper hand. For example:



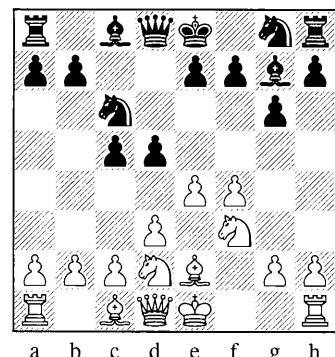
5.♘e2 (5.♗f3? is best answered with 5...♝f6 6.f5 b5! 7.♗g5 d4↑, and Black's colossal space advantage on the queenside offers him the better chances.) 5...♝e7 6.♗f3 exf4 7.♗xf4 ♝f6 8.♗bd2 0–0 9.g3 h6 10.♗g2 ♜e8↑ It is clear that the queen on e2 is only a problem for White.

4.♗d2

Now I like the following continuation:

4...g6! 5.♗gf3 ♜g7! 6.♗e2

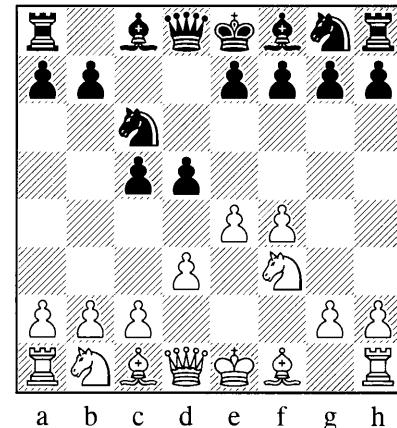
6.g3?! ♘f6 7.e5 (7.♗g2? ♘g4! 8.♗e2 ♘b4! gives White a headache, as 9.♗b3 dxе4 10.dxe4 b6! is quite hard to meet without significant concessions.) 7...♝g4 8.♗b3 0–0 9.c3 b6 10.♗g2 f6!↑ Black has all the play. He leads slightly in development and the b3-knight is misplaced.



6...♝h6! 7.h3 0–0 8.0–0 b6

Black had the better game in Hussian – Al Hadarani, Dubai 2002.

B11) 4.♗f3



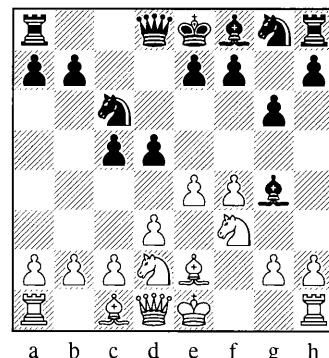
4...♝g4!?

Svidler's idea, which is both simple and strong. Black is planning ...e6, followed by ...g6, ...♝g7 and ...♝ge7. Of course this involves giving up the bishop pair, but the ensuing set-up gives Black easy play and he is by no means worse.

5.c3

5.♗bd2N g6! 6.♗e2

6.h3 ♜xf3 7.♗xf3 (7.♗xf3?! dxе4 8.dxe4 ♜xd1↑ 9.♗xd1 0–0–0↑ 10.♗d2 ♜h6 looks problematic for White, e.g. 11.♗g5 ♜xg5 12.fxg5 h6 13.gxh6 ♘xh6↑) 7...♝d4 8.♗d1 e5! 9.♗f3 exf4↑ is also not worse for Black.



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

An experimental move, but it seems to work.

6...e6= is of course safe and sound.

7.exd5!?

7.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.0–0 (8.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.h4 $f6\uparrow$ is better for Black) 8...0–0 9.c3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ leads to a complicated strategic fight, where Black's chances do not seem inferior. He has good chances in the centre and on the queenside, and after 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ both 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8!?$ and 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}c7\rightleftharpoons$ look good.

7... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

8.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is similar to 9.h3 right below.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9.0–0

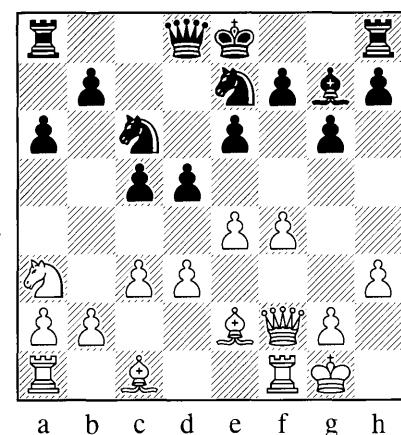
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 11.g3 0–0 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 13.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.0–0 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$

9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8=$

Leading to approximate equality.

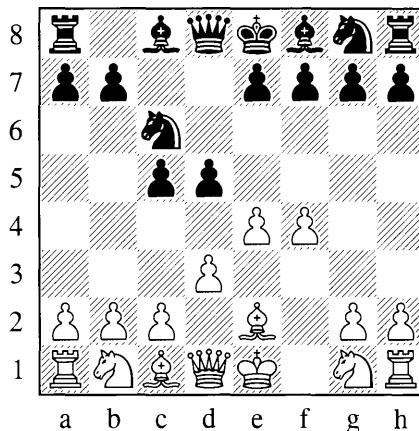
5...e6 6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ g6 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a6 11. $\mathbb{W}f2$



11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 0–0 13.e5 d4 14.c4 f6
15.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ cxb4 19. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 \rightleftharpoons

With a complicated struggle in Grischuk – Svidler, Moscow (blitz) 2006.

B12) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



Meek, but the engines consider it best.

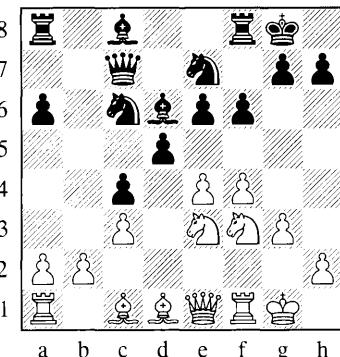
4...e6!?

With the bishop developed on e2 White's attacking potential is reduced, so Black doesn't have to fianchetto his king's bishop.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 7.e5

Delaying this move is not so good, as Black will then prevent it with ...f6:

7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0–0 8.c3?! f6! 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$ a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11.g3 b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c4! 13.dxc4 bxc4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$?! 14.exd5N exd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}a7\uparrow$! 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ would have been preferable, although after 22... $\mathbb{W}b5\mp$ Black retains an extra pawn and winning prospects.



14... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$

14...dxe4N 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}dxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ is great for Black.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

15...d4!N 16.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$

18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ dxe4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 \uparrow

With some initiative for Black, who eventually prevailed in Ansell – Shirov, Gibraltar 2012.

After 7.e5, a possible continuation is:

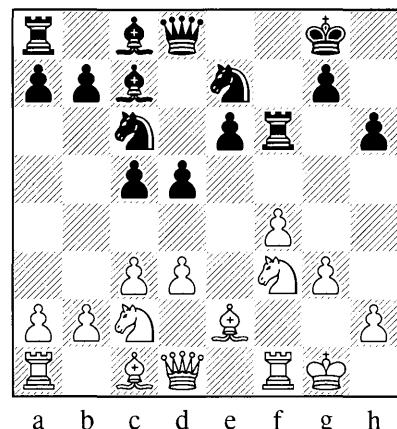
7... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0–0 9.c3 f6 10.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

11.g3 h6N

Less clear is: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8N$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ was tested in PurePower – El-Shaddai, engine game 2012, with a draw being the eventual outcome.) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b4 ∞

12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

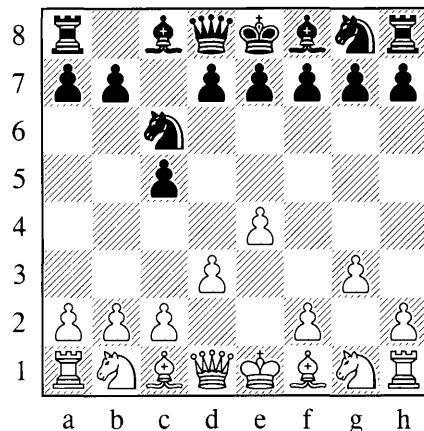
12... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ dxc3 14.bxc3 a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5=) 15...b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5 \rightleftarrows



12...e5 13.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15.d4 cxd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

With a balanced game.

B2) 3.g3



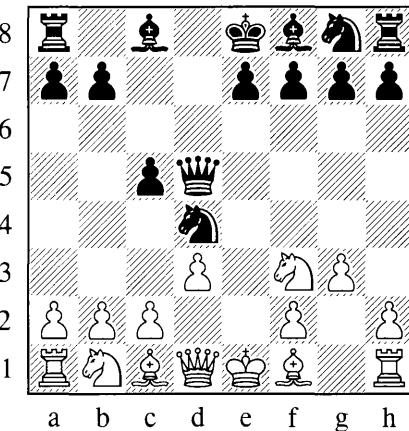
White's idea is to develop in the style of the Closed Sicilian, except he doesn't want to put his knight on c3 and seriously hamper any central operation. He'd rather reserve that square for the pawn, hoping to build a broad centre by means of c2-c3 and d3-d4 later on.

3...d5!?

A no-nonsense solution, aiming to transpose to a reversed Fianchetto King's Indian.

White can try B21) 4.exd5, but the most popular move by far is B22) 4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

B21) 4.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$



There is no question of an advantage for White.

6.♗g2

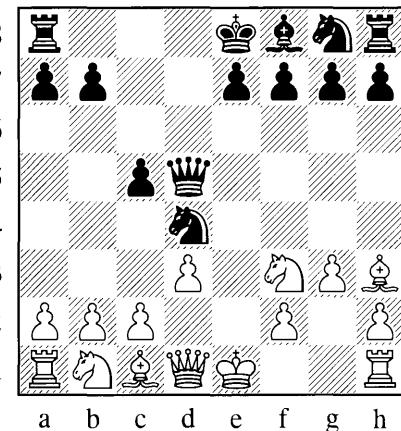
6.♗bd2?! ♜e6†! ensures the exchange of White's precious light-squared bishop and lands the first player in an inferior position.

6...♝h3

A winning attempt is: 6...♜e6†!? 7.♝e3 ♜f5! 8.♜e2 (8.0–0 ♜xe3 9.fxe3 g6∞) 8...♝xe3 9.fxe3 (9.♝xe3!? ♜xe3† 10.fxe3 g6 11.♗c3 ♜g7 12.♗b5 ♜b8 13.c3 ♜d7 14.a4 ♜h6∞) 9...g6 10.♗c3 ♜h6 11.e4 (11.♗d2!?) 11...♝f6 12.0–0 0–0∞ Black was already better in Davies – Chandler, Blackpool 1990.

7.♝xh3

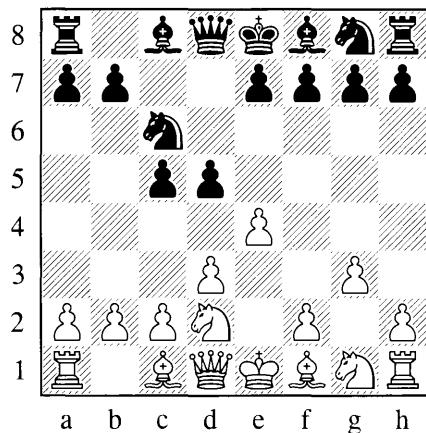
A balanced game arises after 7.0–0 ♜xg2 8.♝xg2 ♜f6 9.♗bd2 (9.♗c3 ♜c6 10.♝e1, as played in Strikovic – Suba, Zaragoza 1995, is comfortably dealt with by the simple 10...g6!=) 9...e6 10.♗c4 Arkhipov – Semeniuk, Vladivostok 1995, when best is 10...♝e7N=.



7...♝xf3† 8.♝f1 ♜d2†=

The players agreed a draw in Davies – Renet, Haifa 1989.

B22) 4.♗d2



A logical and fighting continuation.

4...♝f6 5.♝g2 g6 6.♝gf3

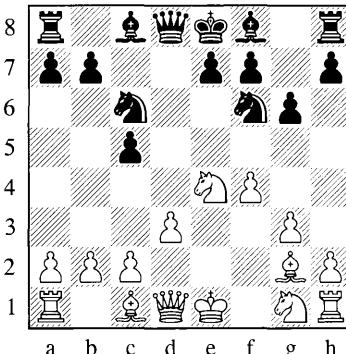
6.f4?

This leaves White in a difficult situation.

6...dxe4! 7.♝xe4

This recapture is forced, with a worse but tenable position for White.

In Movsesian – Kamsky, Moscow (blitz) 2008, White blundered with 7.dxe4??, and surprisingly Kamsky failed to find the simple 7...♝g4!N+ leading to a decisive material gain.



7...c4!N

The main point of this move is revealed after: 8.♝xf6† exf6 9.dxc4 ♜xd1† 10.♝xd1 ♜g4† 11.♝f3

11.♕f3 0–0–0† 12.♗d2 ♗d4 13.♗f1 ♗c5
14.c3 ♗f5 15.♔c2 ♗e3! 16.♔e1 ♗xf4! is tough for White.

11...0–0–0† 12.♗d2 ♗f5 13.♗d5 ♗b4
14.♗xb4 ♗xb4 15.♗f3 ♗e4 16.♔e2 ♗xc2†

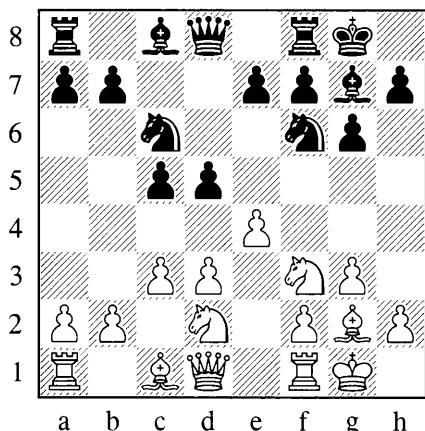
Black's big lead in development and the exposed white king become significant factors in Black's favour.

6...♗g7 7.0–0 0–0

A reversed Fianchetto King's Indian has been reached where White has an extra tempo – but that hardly gives him the advantage. Although I am a fan of White's set-up even with a tempo less, as everyone who has read my book on the King's Indian Fianchetto Systems knows, it has to be said that these positions are about equal if Black knows what he is doing.

8.c3

Undoubtedly the most critical continuation. A logical reaction to 8.♗e1 is 8...d4?!, exactly because the rook is not functional on e1 when the centre is blocked. After 9.a4 e5 10.♗c4 ♗e8!=, intending ...♗d6, Black had comfortably equalized in Pachow – Uhlmann, Munich 1996.



8...dxe4!?

I thought for a long time to find an equalizer here, as I did not want to play a Kasparov

variation with colours reversed and a tempo down. I finally decided that we should refrain from ...e5, and try to exploit the slight weakness of the d3-square.

9.dxe4 ♗d7!

Black sets his sights immediately on the critical square.

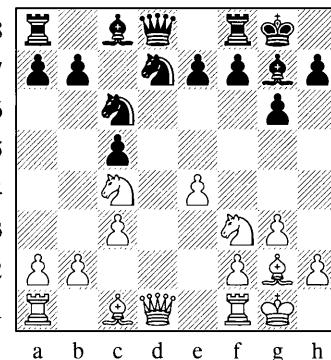
10.♗e2

The best move, first played by Polugaevsky back in 1991.

After 10.♗c2 ♗de5! Black equalizes comfortably. 11.♗xe5! This is best. (11.♗d1?!! ♗d3†; 11.♗e1?!! ♗e6† is worse for White, whose queen has lost contact with the important g4- and c4-squares.) 11...♗xe5 12.f4! ♗d3 13.♗c4 b5!= With approximate equality.

10.♗c4

Now I would like to recommend an untested move:



10...b5!N

10...♗b6? 11.♗e3 ♗xd1 12.♗xd1 occurred in Sarno – Borgo, Mantova 1996, when most accurate would have been 12...♗e6N 13.♗g5! (13.♗d5 ♗fd8 14.♗g5 ♗g4 15.f3 ♗d7 16.f4 h6 17.♗f3 ♗e6=) 13...♗d7 14.f4 (14.♗d5 ♗ad8=) 14...h6 15.♗f3 ♗fd8 16.e5 with a slight edge for White.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b4!

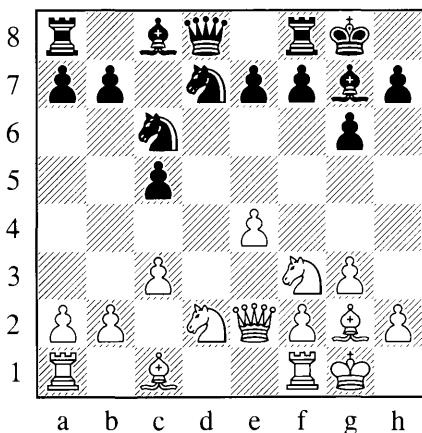
Black gets a fine position and immediate counterplay. For example:

12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

15. $\mathbb{W}b3!$

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ bxc3 16. bxc3 $\mathbb{E}d8\#$

15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
bxc3 19. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd2$
 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 24. e5
 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ 25. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3=$



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

Black keeps flexibility in the position.

10... $\mathbb{Q}de5$ is not so good in view of the standard reply 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$, preparing to push the e5-knight back.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b4∞ also looks fine for Black.

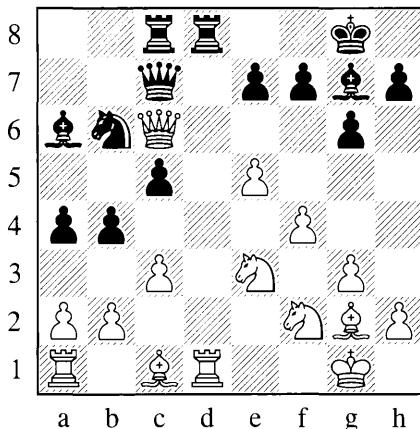
11... b6 12. f4 a5 13. e5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b5

Black's counterplay comes just in time to distract White from kingside operations.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b4

18. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ a4! 20. $\mathbb{W}xc6$

20. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 23. cxb4 cxb4 24. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
26. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b3!∞ would have been unclear.



20... $\mathbb{E}xd1\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}fxd1$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$
23. cxb4 cxb4 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f6! 25. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$
26. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}d6$
29. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}d3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$
32. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

A draw was agreed in Polugaevsky – J. Polgar, Aruba 1991, crowning a well-played game by both sides.

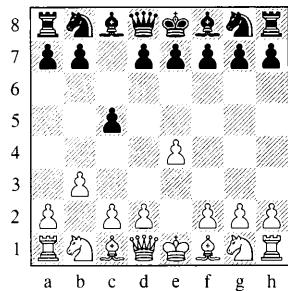
Conclusion

After 2.g3 the usual continuation is 2...d5!
3.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ when we reach an odd position where White has given up the right to castle, but the black queen is misplaced. If White is careful he can retain equality, but Black has nothing to fear if he follows my lines.

In order to combat the topical 2.d3 variation, I adopted the Reversed Fianchetto King's Indian. This meant that I was fighting against a beloved system of mine a whole tempo down. However, it turns out being a tempo down is not always a problem in chess, as every move has its weaknesses to offset its strengths. Such was the case in the fine illustrative game Polugaevsky – Polgar in the concluding section of the chapter. Black equalized by brilliantly utilizing the slight weakening along the a6-f1 diagonal caused by 8.c3.

Chapter 3

Various 2nd Moves



2.b3

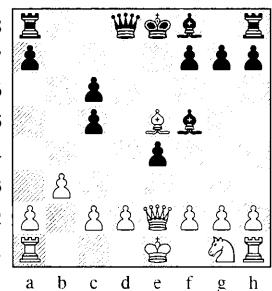
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.b3 ♜c6 3.♗b2

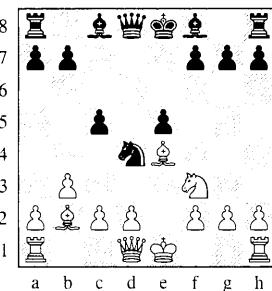
3...e5!

A) 4.♗c3	40
B) 4.♗c4 ♜f6	42
B1) 5.♗c3 ♜xe4! 6.♗xe4 d5	43
B11) 7.♗b5!?	43
B12) 7.♗d3	44
B2) 5.d3!? d5! 6.exd5 ♜xd5	45
B21) 7.♗c3	46
B22) 7.♗f3	46
C) 4.♗b5	47
D) 4.f4!? exf4	50
D1) 5.♗c4	50
D2) 5.♗f3	51

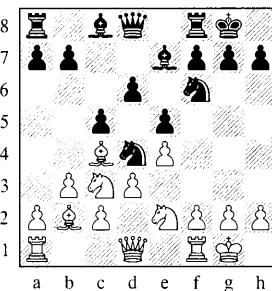
B11) note to 10.f3!?



B12) after 9.♗f3!?



C) after 9.0–0



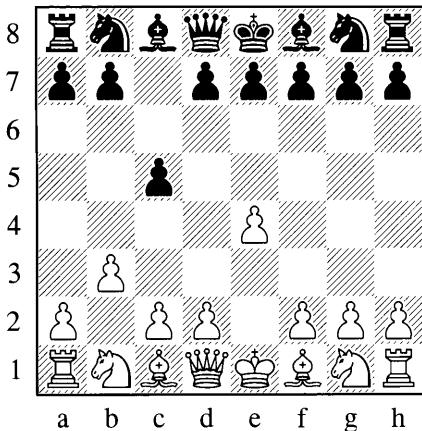
10...♝e7!N

9...f5!N

9...♝d7!N

1.e4 c5 2.b3

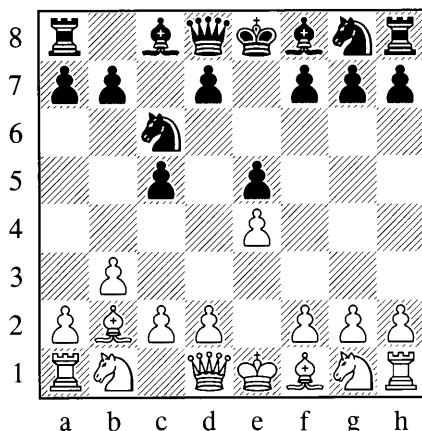
An opening that contains a certain amount of venom if Black is not well prepared to meet it; the bishop on b2 offers White dangerous attacking chances against inexact play.

**2...d5 3.Qb2**

3.f4 e5 4.Qf3 exf4 5.Qc4 (5.Qb2 will transpose to variation D1) 5...Qf6 6.Qc3 Qd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qe1?! Qe5 9.Qf1 was Walta – Paasikangas Tella, Tampere 1991, when Black's best is: 9...Qxf3†N 10.Qxf3 Qe5 11.Qb2 d6† One brief finish could be 12.Qad1? Qd4† 13.Qh1 Qg4 –+.

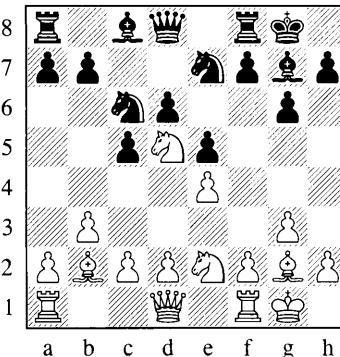
3...e5!

Probably the most efficient way to block the radius of the ambitious bishop. The weakness of d5 can be covered up.



We will focus on four tries for White: A) 4.Qc3, B) 4.Qc4, C) 4.Qb5 and D) 4.f4!?

Opting for a double fianchetto with 4.g3 does not have any particular merits. After 4...g6! 5.Qg2 Qg7 6.Qe2 d6 7.0-0 Qge7 8.Qbc3 (8.c3?! 0-0 9.d4 exd4! 10.cxd4 was Suarez Uriel – Rubio Mejia, Madrid 2011, and now I like 10...b6!N↑ 8...0-0 9.Qd5



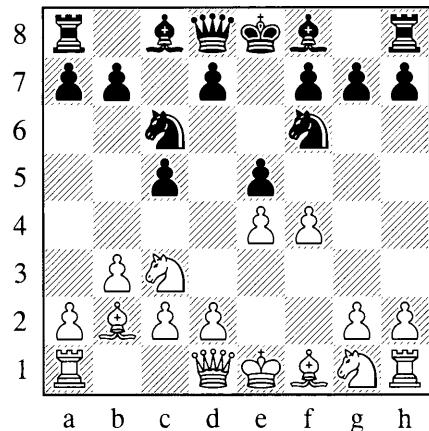
9...f5?! (9...Qxd5 10.exd5 Qd4=) 10.exf5 gxf5 11.d3 Qe6 12.Qxe7† Qxe7 13.f4 Qae8 14.Qd2 Qd7! 15.Qae1 Qe7! 16.a4 b6 Black was fine in Spassky – Nemet, Lugano 1982; his intention was to follow with ...Qd5, trading White's useful defending bishop. For this reason White should have continued with 17.c4!∞ with balanced chances.

A) 4.Qc3

An attempt to play for f2-f4 by first luring the black knight to f6, depriving Black of the possibility of giving an annoying check on h4.

4...Qf6 5.f4!?

5.g3 is too slow: Black gets an excellent game by 5...d5! 6.exd5 Qxd5 (6...Qd4?! 7.Qg2 Qg4∞ deserves consideration too) 7.Qg2 Qe6 8.Qge7 Qd7 9.0-0 Qxc3?! (9...0-0-0∞) 10.Qxc3 Qd5!∞ exchanging the good bishop on g2.

**5...exf4!**

The rarely-played central thrust 5...d5?! is not so good, due to: 6.exd5! (6.fxe5?! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx e 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3!\pm$

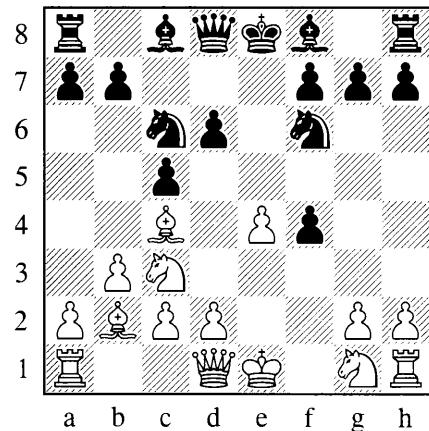
6. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$?

6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ transposes to the note on 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ in variation D2.

6...d6!?

This non-committal move appears to be Black's best.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e5$?! 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$?! 8.bxc4 d6 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.d3 0–0 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ can easily become better for White.

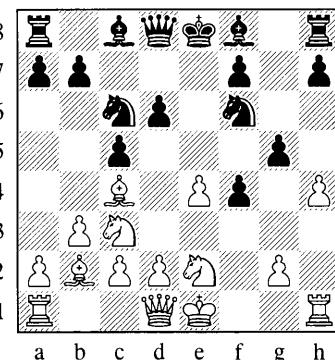
**7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!?**

7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$?! $\mathbb{g}5$!?

This typical King's Gambit move looks like a good response.

8.h4!?

8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9.0–0 0–0 10.g3 $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$



8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

9.hxg5?! $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 10. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$)

10... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$?

9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

9...0–0 also looks interesting.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

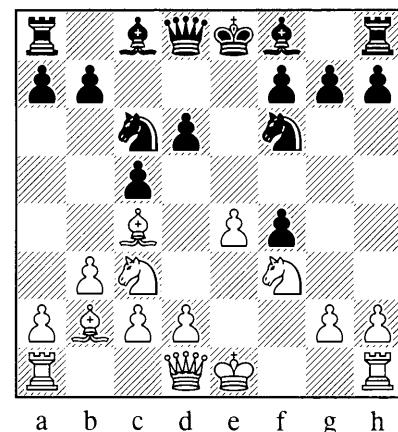
10. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#\mp$ is slightly better for Black.

10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ g4 12.h5!

12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5\#\mp$

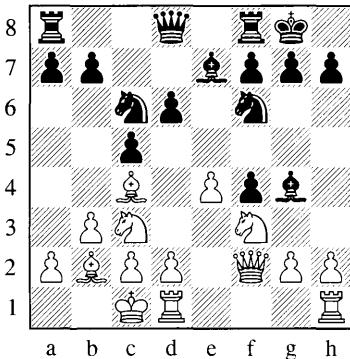
12...h6 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 14.0–0–0 a6?

Black's position is for preference, although the game remains complex.



7...♝g4 8.0-0

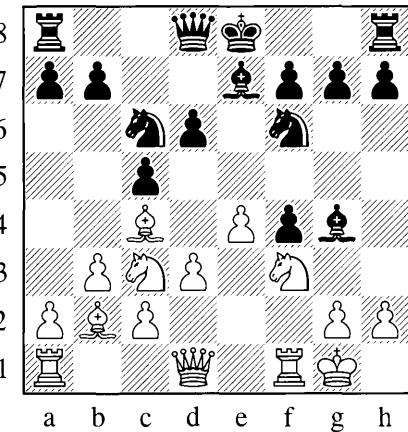
On 8.♔e2? Black should calmly develop by 8...♝e7! (8...♝d4?! 9.♗d3 ♛xf3 10.gxf3± is better for White) 9.0-0-0 0-0 when the castling on opposite sides appears to favour him. So far, White has mostly tried 10.♗f2, trying to get out of the annoying pin. (10.♗dg1, as played in Choisy – Jaulin, France 2008, should be answered by 10...a6!N with the better game for Black.)



For some strange reason, Black players have refrained from the natural and strong: 10...♝xe4!N 11.♝xe4 d5 12.♝d3 c4! 13.bxc4 dxe4 14.♝xe4 ♜a5→

8...♝e7=

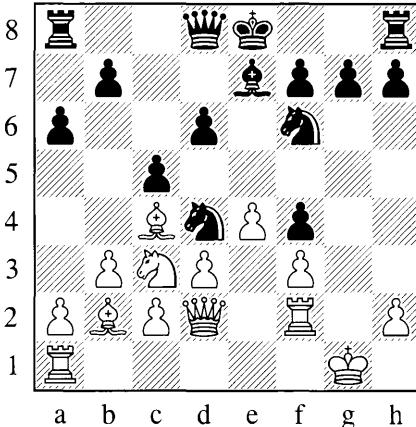
The game looks equal. In the only practical example from this position so far, Black managed to slowly outplay his opponent and win:

9.d3

It is not clear that this is necessary.

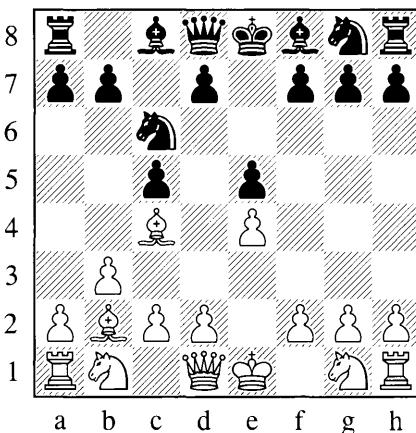
9...♝d4! 10.♗d2 ♛xf3 11.gxf3 a6! 12.♗f2?!

12.a4! or 12.♝d5 are both improvements.



12...b5 13.♝d5 b4 14.♗e2 ♛xe2† 15.♔xe2
♝xd5 16.exd5 0-0 17.♗xf4 ♛g5! 18.♗g4
♝f6 19.♝xf6 ♛xf6 20.♗ae1 a5 21.♗g2 g6†

Fernandes – Kouatly, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988.

B) 4.♝c4

One of the most popular continuations in the position. White wants to control d5 and then develop by ♘ge2, 0-0 and f2-f4, with an initiative on the kingside. The disadvantage of having the bishop on c4 is that sometimes

Black can exploit its position with ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ and ...d5 tricks.

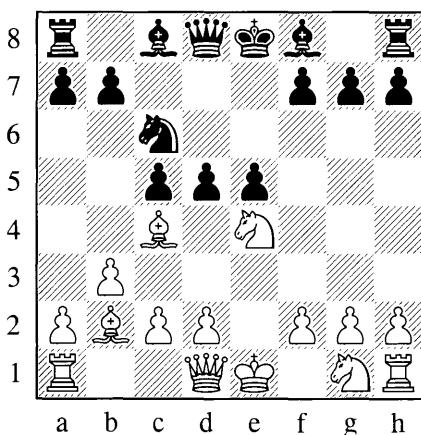
4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

White's most popular move is **B1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$** , but **B2) 5.d3!?** also merits serious consideration.

B1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

6. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is okay for Black in view of his bishop pair and pawn centre. If 9.c4, then 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ leads to complications that are not unfavourable for Black.

6...d5



White can head for complications with **B11) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$** or regain the pawn immediately with **B12) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.**

B11) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$

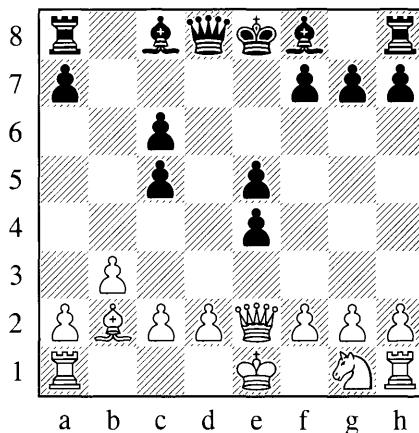
White tries to create weaknesses in Black's pawn structure, resulting in interesting play.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$

8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ will most likely transpose.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2!?$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}g5!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$



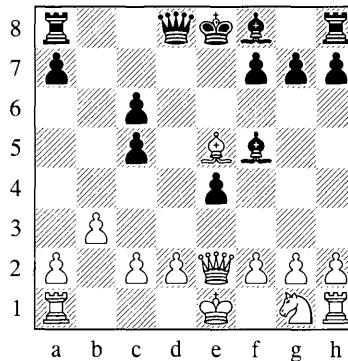
9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 11.f3!± White prepares d2-d3, leaving Black's c5-pawn weak. (Instead, 11.d3!? immediately can be met by 11...c4!?)

10.f3!?

Creating a favourable pawn skeleton for White, admittedly at some cost of time.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



10... $\mathbb{Q}e7!N$

10... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, as played in MacQueen – Rees, Augsburg 2013, looks tenable too. A possible follow-up is 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!N$, giving the black queen a useful retreat square on f7.

11. $\mathbb{W}e3!?$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!?$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 13.f4 (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ $\mathbb{W}xf6+$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}d5\#$

11...0–0 12.♗e2 ♗g5! 13.♗f4 ♗f6 14.♗d1 ♗d4! 15.♗g3 ♗e8 16.0–0 ♗e6!

Black threatens ...♗g6.

17.♗g5! ♗xg5 18.♗xg5 h6 19.♗e3 ♗g4=

10...♗d6! 11.0–0–0!?

11.fxe4? ♗h4†?

11...a5!?

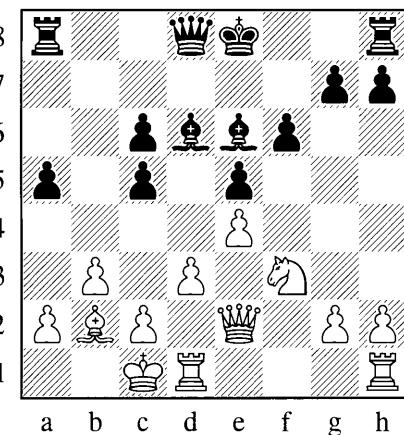
Creating attacking chances before White stabilizes the situation on the queenside.

12.fxe4

12.a4?! exf3! 13.♗xf3 0–0 14.♗xe5 ♗e8 15.♗f3 ♗xe5 16.♗xf5 ♗xb2† 17.♗xb2 c4!?

12...♗e6 13.♗f3 f6 14.d3

14.a4 c4! 15.d4! (15.bxc4? ♗b6†) 15...cxd3 16.♗xd3 ♗e7 is unclear. Black has the bishop pair, and will aim to push his c-pawn to c4 to improve their power.



14...a4?

B12) 7.♗d3

The most common move so far in practice, but in my view it gives Black good prospects.

7...dxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗d4!

Black does not have anything to worry about

here. He is creating problems for both white bishops.

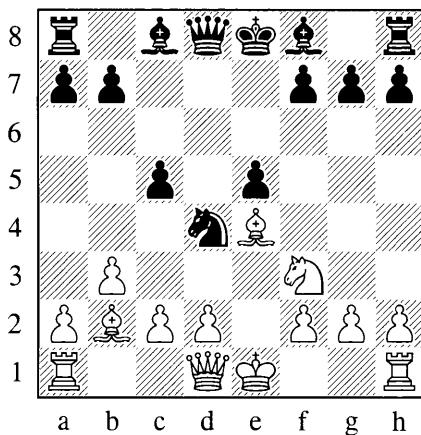
9.♗f3!?

Alternatively, 9.♗xd4?! ♗xd4† is clearly bad for White.

9.♗h5 ♗d6 10.♗f3 g6! 11.♗h6 ♗f8 12.♗e3 ♗g7 13.c3 ♗e6† is also better for Black.

9.c3!? Not the most critical, but certainly thematic. After 9...♗e6 10.♗f3 f5!N (10...♗d6 11.d4=) 11.♗xf5! ♗f4 12.♗xc8 ♗d3! 13.♗h3 ♗e4† 14.♗f1 ♗d3† 15.♗e1= the game ends with perpetual check, unless White is willing to venture 15.♗g1? ♗e2† 16.♗xe2 ♗xe2 17.♗e1 ♗a6 18.♗xe5∞ with wild complications.

The text occurred in Melnikov – Alieva, St Petersburg 2014, and should be answered by:



9...f5!N 10.♗xd4 cxd4 11.♗d3 g6! 12.♗c4

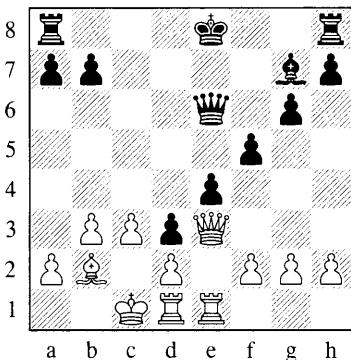
12.0–0 ♗e6 is in no way threatening for Black.

12...♗d6!

White gets no advantage in any of the following three continuations:

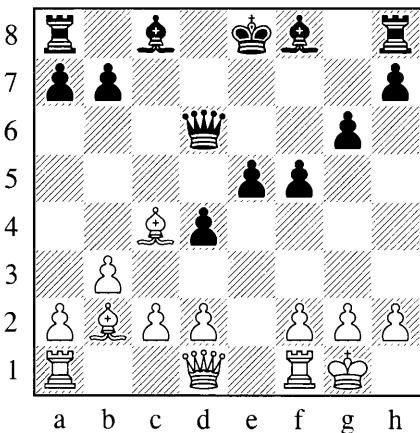
13.0–0

13.c3 d3! 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ e4 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16.0–0–0
(16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}he1$
leads to equality:



18... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19.f3 $\mathbb{Q}he8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21.fxe4
fxe4 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}de1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
25. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$

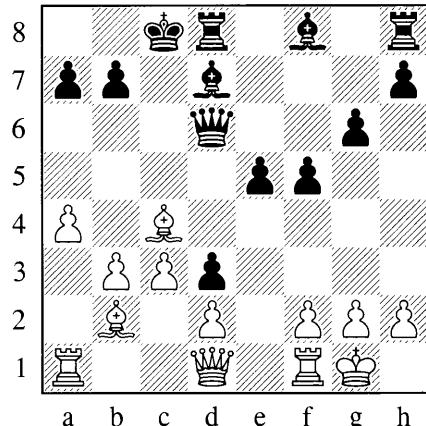
After 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$, the cool 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ prepares long castling with balanced play. For instance: 14.c3 0–0–0 15.cxd4 exd4 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$
18.a4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\rightleftharpoons$

**13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$**

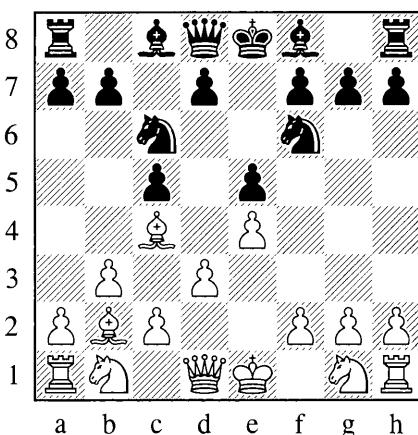
Again this move is Black's best.

14.a4 0–0–0 15.c3 d3?!

I slightly prefer this to 15...dxc3 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a5?!$.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}hxh8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ e4=**

In my view Black's compensation is sufficient for the pawn.

B2) 5.d3?!

This quiet move has been Short's choice, trying to avoid the above-mentioned ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ trick.

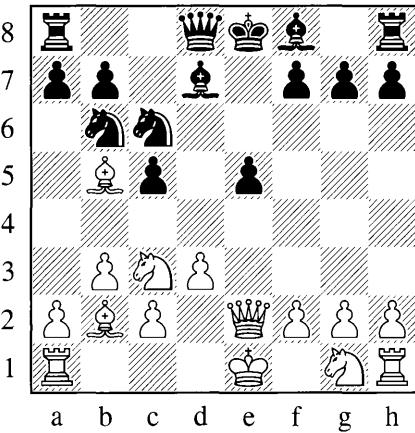
5...d5!

My preference is to steer Black towards a Sämisch pawn centre.

5...d6?! 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g6 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ 0–0 is also playable, but White's position looks more pleasant to me.

6.exd5 ♜xd5

B21) 7.♕c3N has yet to be played but needs checking, while **B22) 7.♗f3** has been the most common reply, albeit from a small sample range.

B21) 7.♕c3N ♜b6! 8.♗b5!! ♜d7 9.♘e2?!**9...♝d4!**

A radical way of dealing with White's pressure on e5.

9...♝e7?! is a safe solution. Black is perfectly okay after: 10.0–0 0–0–0–0–0 11.♗f3 f6 12.♗d2 ♜d4 13.♗xd7† ♜xd7 14.♘e3 ♜c6=

Black should be careful though. The tempting 9...f6?! is inaccurate after 10.♗xc6! ♜xc6 11.f4!. Black gets a weakness on e5 and his piece activity does not offer sufficient counterplay.

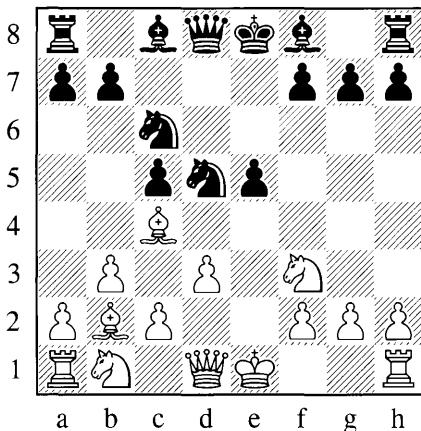
10.♗xd7†

It is best for White to admit his mistake and sound a retreat.

After 10.♗xe5†?! ♜e7 11.♗xg7 (11.0–0–0 ♜xb5 12.♗xb5 ♜xb5 13.♗xg7 ♜f8†; or 11.♗xd7† ♜xd7 12.♗xg7 ♜f6†) 11...♗f6 12.♗xd7† ♜xd7† Black is close to winning.

10...♜xd7 11.♗d2 ♜e7†

Black has a slight edge, although strategically White's position remains sound.

B22) 7.♗f3

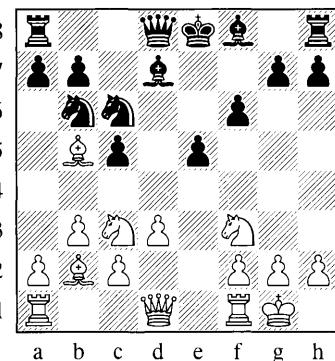
The normal developing move.

7...f6N

The Sämisch centre has been built! This means that Black has a solid central structure, while it is difficult for White to organize f2-f4. I find it surprising that Black's last move has never appeared in practice.

8.0–0!

Less critical is: 8.♗c3 ♜b6?! (8...♝e6 9.♗xd5 ♜xd5 10.0–0 ♜d7∞) 9.♗b5 (9.0–0 ♜xc4 10.bxc4 ♜e6= or 10...♝e7=) 9...♜d7 10.0–0

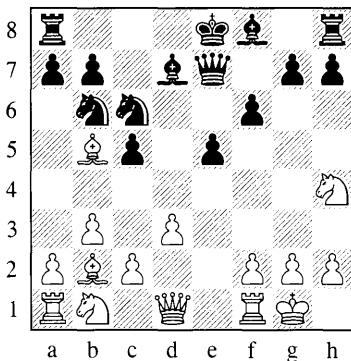


10...a6! (10...♝e7 11.♗d2 0–0 12.♗c4 ♜h8 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xf4 a6 15.♗xb6 ♜xb6 16.♗c4 ♜e5 17.♗d5±) 11.♗xc6 ♜xc6 12.♗d2 ♜d5!

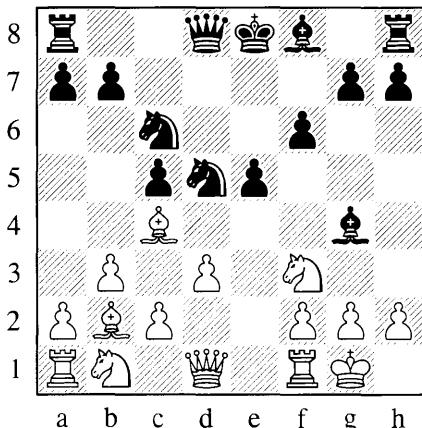
13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5=$ Black has no troubles whatsoever; his powerful c6-bishop outweighs a slight lag in development.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Less accurate is: 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$! The point of delaying $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is to gain a tempo for carrying out f2-f4. 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ This is necessary to defend against $\mathbb{W}h5\#$.



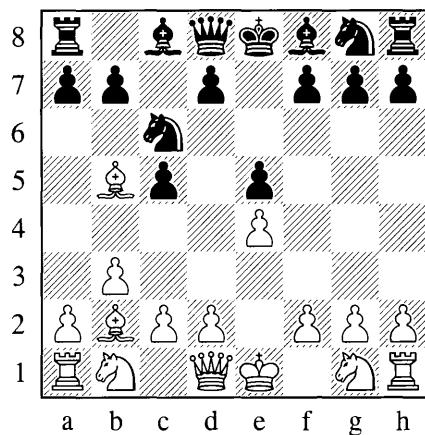
11.f4! 0–0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$! (12.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$! $\mathbb{W}xd7=$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ fxe5 \mp) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13.fxe5 fxe5 14. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$!± White is better. (The hasty 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ allows 14... $\mathbb{W}g5\mp$ and the tables are turned.)



9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$

The position is unclear; Black's centre is strong and prevents White from utilizing his lead in development.

C) 4. $\mathbb{Q}b5$



Another popular continuation, which is strategically well motivated. White develops quickly, intending to take on c6 and render Black's central pawn formation static. Then, the usual plan with f2-f4 will be even more effective.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

This counterattacking option is the best one available to Black. Moving the same piece twice in the opening can be acceptable if it disturbs the opponent's harmonious scheme of development.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$

Liquidating the strong knight immediately in the hope of playing a quick c2-c3 and exposing the weakness of d5. This is how matters can evolve:

5...cxsd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.0–0!

7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ $\mathbb{W}a5\rightarrow+$

7. $\mathbb{W}e2?!$ blocks White's development: 7...a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 9.c3 0–0! 10.cxd4 exd4 11.0–0 b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\mp$

7...a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

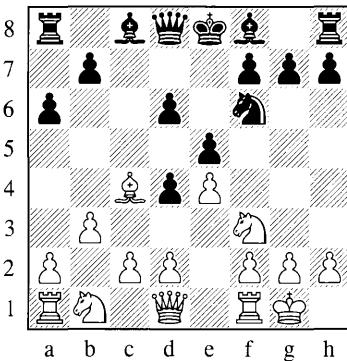
8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ happened in Wohl – Palac, Metz 2001, and here I like 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6!N$ 9.c3 dxcc3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 0–0–0 with the idea 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$ b5

12.♕d5 ♜xd5 13.♕xd5 ♜b7=.

8...d6N

8...b5 9.♕d3 d6 was also fine for Black in Buchnicek – Cizek, Czech Republic 2008.

8...♞d6?! is another interesting possibility.



9.c3!

9.♕g5 d5! 10.exd5 h6 11.♕f3 e4!? 12.♕xd4 ♜c5 13.c3 b5 14.♗e2 ♜xd4 15.cxd4 ♜xd5=

9...b5 10.♕d3 dxc3 11.♕xc3 ♜e7 12.b4!

Intending to attack the a6-b5 pawn chain with a2-a4.

12...0-0 13.a4 bxa4 14.♗xa4 ♜b7 15.♘e2

15.♘a1 will be met in the same way with 15...d5.

15...d5! 16.exd5 ♜xd5 17.♕xd5 ♜xd5=

5...♞f6!

It is best to delay the ...d6 move, as in some cases the opportunity for our ...♝xe4 and ...d5 trick may arise.

6.♞c3

After 6.♞xd4?! cxd4 7.♕f3 ♜d6! 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗e1 ♜c7 10.c3 d5! Black obtains a strong attack: 11.exd5 e4! 12.♕xd4 ♜xh2†! 13.♕xh2 ♜g4† 14.♗g1 ♜h4++

6...♜e7 7.♝ge2

7.d3 0-0 8.a4!? d6 9.♝ge2 ♜e6= Black is intending to break with ...d5.

7...0-0 8.d3!

8.0-0?! ♜xe4! 9.♝xe4 d5=

8...d6!

8...♝b8?!

The problem with this move is that White obtains powerful compensation after the following sequence:

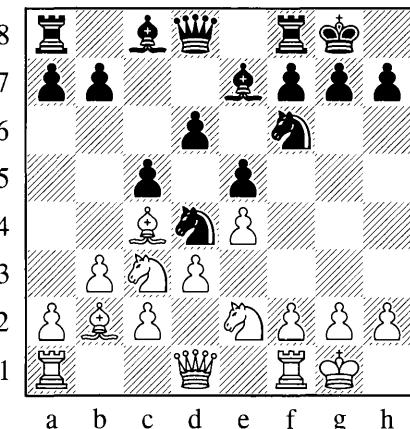
9.a4 a6 10.a5!

10.0-0 offers nothing due to 10...b5 11.axb5 axb5 12.♕xd4 bxc4 13.♕f3 (13.♕f5?! cxb3 14.cxb3 d6 15.♗e3 ♜e6 16.♗c4 ♜c7=) 13...cxb3 14.♕xe5 bxc2 15.♘xc2 ♜b7 16.♗c4 d5 17.exd5 ♜xd5 18.♕xd5 ♜xd5= or 18...♜xd5=.

10...d6 11.0-0 ♜c6 12.♕d5! ♜xd5 13.♕xd5 ♜xa5 14.f4!

The stray a5-knight cannot come back into play without allowing serious damage to Black's pawn structure.

9.0-0



9...♞d7!N

Here lies the point: Black prepares ...b5 by putting the bishop on d7. This ensures that Black's knight will be able to retreat to c6 without allowing a weakening of his pawn structure if White decides to sacrifice a pawn with a2-a4-a5 – in the style of the previous note.

10.f4

The most testing.

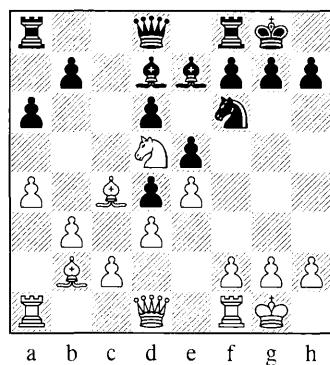
10.♕xd4?! cxd4 11.♗d5 b5! 12.♗xf6† ♜xf6 13.♗d5 ♜c8† leaves the c2-pawn weak, especially as Black can control c1 with his bishop.

10.h3 prepares f2-f4 without allowing a knight invasion on g4. However, this allows Black to carry out the same plan as above at his leisure: 10...♝b8! 11.a4 a6 12.a5 ♜c6! 13.♗d5 ♜xd5 14.♗xd5 ♜xa5 15.f4 ♜f6†

10.a4 a6 11.♗xd4!

The pawn sacrifice 11.a5 ♜c6 is now inferior. 12.♗d5 ♜xd5 13.♗xd5 ♜xa5 14.f4 ♜f6!† is fine for Black, who prepares to bring his knight back to c6 without loss of time or damage to his pawn structure.

11...cxd4 12.♗d5



12...♝xd5! 13.♗xd5 ♜e6! 14.♗xe6
14.♗xb7?! ♜a7 15.♗d5 ♜xd5 16.exd5
♛a5 17.♗f3 ♜c8 18.♗ac1 ♜ac7† White's weaknesses on c2 and d5 give Black a clear advantage.
14.♗c4 d5 15.exd5 ♜xd5 16.f4 ♜c6?
(preparing ...b5) 17.a5 exf4 18.♗g4 ♜g5
19.♗c1 ♜d7 20.♗f3 ♜c6 21.♗g4 ♜d7=

14...fxe6 15.♗g4 ♜f6!†

There are chances for both sides.

10...a6!

10...b5?!

It is instructive to show why Black shouldn't

be overly enthusiastic and play this move immediately.

11.♗xd4!

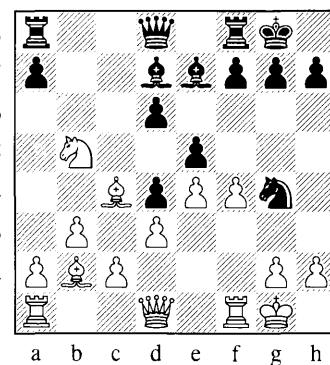
It is best to refrain from opening up the a3-f8 and c1-h6 diagonals for Black. After 11.fxe5? dx5 12.♗xd4 cxd4 13.♗xb5 ♜g4 14.♗c1 a6 15.♗a3 ♜c5† Black has dangerous pressure, while 15...♝g5?! and 15...♝e3?! are also appetizing possibilities.

11...cxd4

11...exd4? 12.♗xb5 d5 13.exd5 ♜xb5 (13...a6 14.♗a3 ♜g4 15.♗d2† intending c2-c3) 14.♗xb5 ♜xd5† is another way of playing, but all the same Black does not get full compensation.

12.♗xb5 ♜g4

The weakness of e3 does not compensate for the pawn minus if White finds:



13.♗c1!±

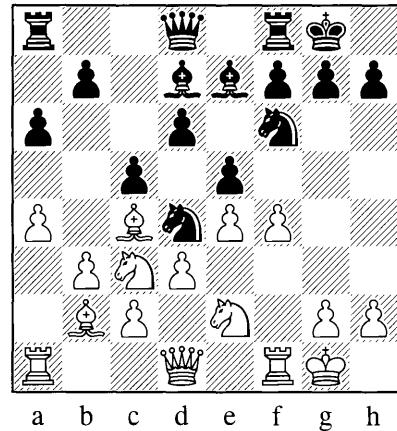
The only move, but sufficient!

Instead, 13.♗f3?! ♜e3 14.♗fc1 ♛a5 15.a4 ♜xc4 16.dxc4 (16.bxc4 a6 17.♗a3 ♜ab8†) 16...a6 17.♗a3 f5† leaves White exposed on the kingside.

13.♗d2 (designed to prevent the queen invasion to a5) is strongly met by: 13...♝e3 14.♗f2 (14.♗f3?! ♜xc4 15.bxc4 [15.dxc4 a6 16.♗a3 ♜c6 17.♗e1 f5†] 15...a6 16.♗a3 ♜b8 17.♗c1 f5†) 14...♛b6 15.♗a3 exf4 (15...h6?! 16.g3?) 16.♗xf4 ♜g5†

11.a4

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ leads to the usual pressure on c2, amounting to a slight edge for Black.



11...b5!

This move is now possible.

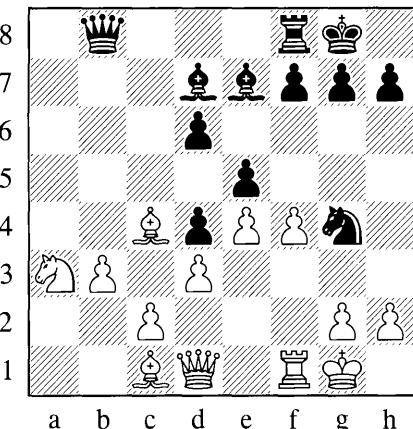
12. axb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ bxc4#

13... $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

Here lies the difference; the position opens up with Black controlling the a-file.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



17... $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ dxe3 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ exf4
 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4?!$ d5!+–

20... $\mathbb{Q}e6\infty$

Reaching a messy position. Black would like to bring his bishop to f2 via h4, while White will hope to make use of his control over the d5-square.

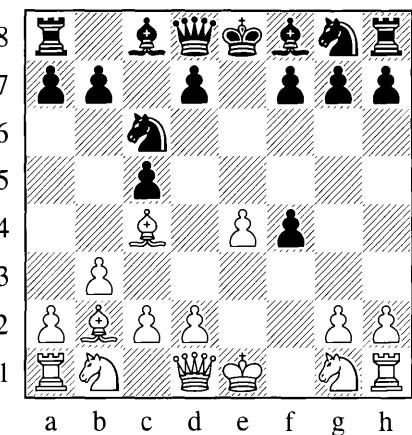
D) 4.f4!?

A thematic response, and probably the best move in the position. White opens up the long diagonal at the cost of a pawn, gaining sufficient attacking chances in return.

4...exf4

We will briefly examine the provocative D1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, before moving on to the critical D2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

D1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



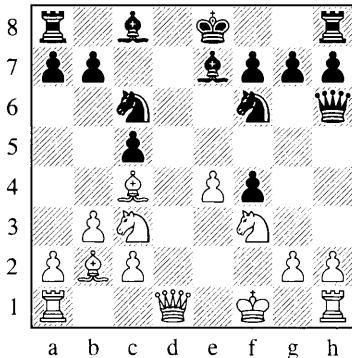
This move is risky but playable.

5... $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ d6!?

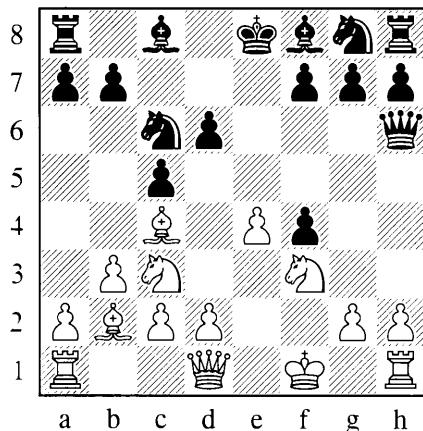
6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$
 (9. $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$ N) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10. e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 11. d4! cxd4
 12. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ was Lukin – Shirov, Klaipeda 1988, an exciting battle which later ended in a draw.

7.♘f3 ♘h6 8.♘c3

8.d4?! ♘f6 9.♘c3 ♘e7 10.dxc5 dxc5 happened in Iskandarov – Antipov, Moscow 2011, and here White should have tried to simplify with:



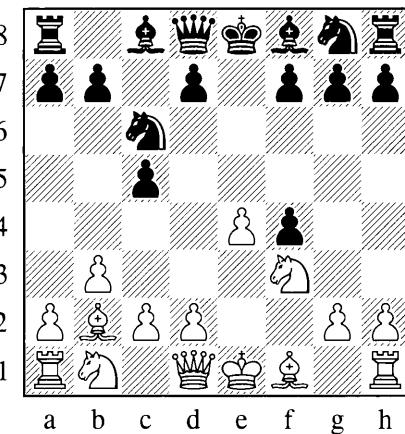
11.♘d5 N 0–0 12.♘xe7† ♘xe7 13.♗d6 ♘c6 14.♗xf6 ♗d8 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♗xd8 ♗e6†. White has some chances to hold.

**8...♗e6!!? 9.d4!?**

9.♘d5 0–0–0 10.d3 ♘ge7 was at least equal for Black in Liiva – Zjukin, Tallinn 1999.

9...♗xc4† 10.bxc4 ♘f6 11.♘d5 0–0–0 12.♗d3 ♗g4∞

Or 12...♗e8∞. An interesting struggle lies ahead.

D2) 5.♘f3

Obeying the dictum “knights before bishops” looks like the best choice here.

5...♘f6!

The most principled continuation: preparing for ...d5 if the opponent allows it.

6.e5!

White chooses to initiate complications. The chief merit of playing e4–e5 immediately is to prevent the f6-knight from reaching the fine g4-square later on.

After 6.♘c3 ♘e7! 7.♗e2 0–0 8.0–0–0 (8.e5?! ♘g4 9.♘d5 [9.0–0–0 d6 10.exd6 ♘xd6†] 9...d6 10.0–0–0 ♗e8 11.h3 ♘gxe5 12.♘xf4 ♗f8† Velickovic – Antic, Yugoslavia 1991) 8...d5 (8...d6!?) 9.exd5 ♘xd5† Black has a fine, free game.

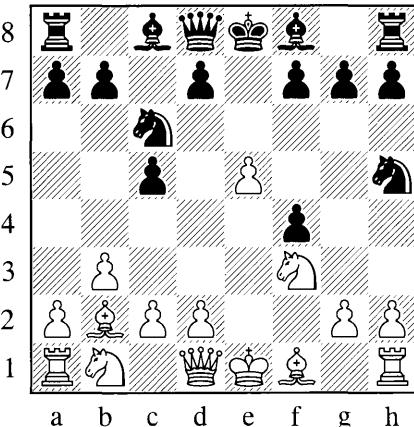
6.♘c4 can be met by 6...♗e7!? (6...d6 is equal; Black will follow up with ...a6, ...b5 and ...♗g4). After 7.e5 d5 8.exf6 ♘xf6 Black has a fantastic game, thanks to the hanging b2-bishop and a1-rook.

6...♘h5!?

The knight is safe here, and also protects the f4-pawn.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ is unclear. (But not 7.h3? $\mathbb{Q}gxe5\#$.)

6... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$ has not been tried but looks playable too.



7. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

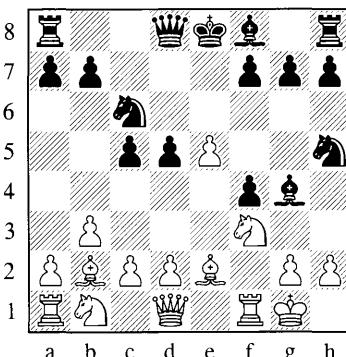
Now that the knight is on the edge of the board, going for long castling is much more interesting.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$!

This is too passive.

7...d5 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

White now has a choice that is anything but inspiring:



9. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$

Relatively best.

9.h3? decisively weakens g3. 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

$\mathbb{Q}g3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c4! was close to winning for Black in Grosar – Kupreichik, Ljubljana 1989.

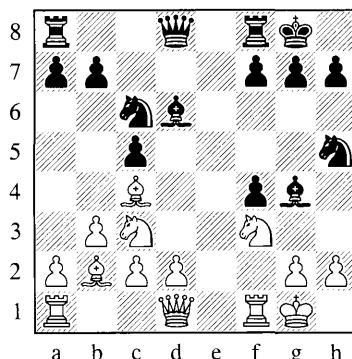
9.d4?! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ (12.c3 g6 13.e6 0–0+) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ d4+ White was badly lost in Blatny – Serper, New York 1996.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ 11.e6?! $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ leaves White with very little for the pawn.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0–0

Liebold – Grafl, Regensburg 1998.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d5! 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (Or 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 12.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}de1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 15.a4 h6! and Black maintains a valuable extra pawn.) 9...0–0 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$



11.h3?! (11. $\mathbb{Q}e4?$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14.gxf3+) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12.d3 $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ White's position was dismal in Cucancic – Jelen, Kastav 1999.

A bit better from White's perspective is:

7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ d5 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

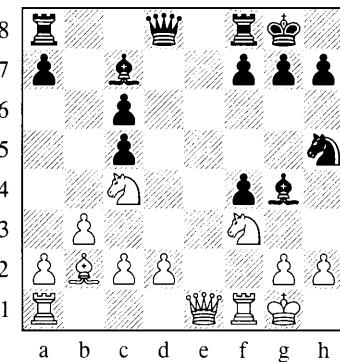
12. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#\uparrow$ The knight cannot be taken as the queen will be trapped on f2.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Planning ... $\mathbb{W}d5$ and ... $\mathbb{E}ae8$.

13. $\mathbb{W}e1!$ N

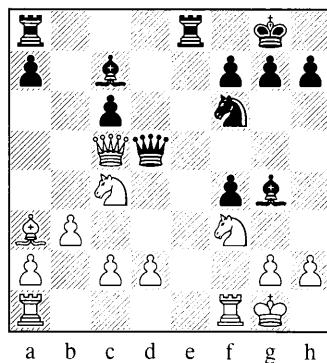
13.h3?! should be answered with 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!N, instead of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}f3!$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 17. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xd2!$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{E}f2$ g6 21. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1\infty$, as played in Lyell – Palliser, West Bromwich 2004.



13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}d5\infty$

With an unclear situation, where Black keeps an extra pawn for the time being. An important thing to know in these positions is that the sacrifice ... $\mathbb{Q}g3$ is on the cards if White is not careful. A positional trap emphasizing that it is not so easy for White to recover the pawn without some concession is:

15. $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5?$



16... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 20.fxe4 $\mathbb{E}xe4\mp$

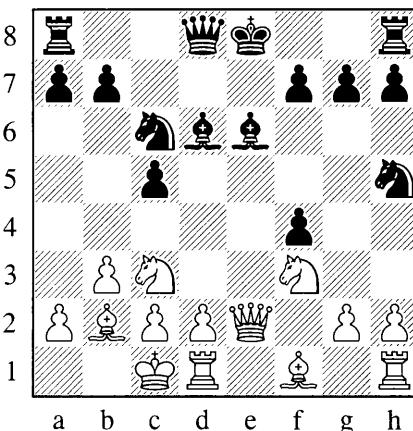
7... $\mathbb{d}5!$

The only way to free Black's play.

8.exd6† $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 10.0–0–0–0!

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ commits the knight prematurely, and after 10... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 12.d4 (12. $\mathbb{Q}c3\?!$ $\mathbb{W}f5$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0–0= the game is perfectly balanced.

After the text move we reach the only really critical juncture of this chapter:



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

This is an important move to remember.

10...0–0–0?! 11.d4! $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ f3!

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4\?!$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ f3 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ happened in Philippe – Wagner, France 2004, and now 16. $\mathbb{E}a4!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (16... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3\!)$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ would have been better for White.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\?!$

After 13... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ (14. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a3\?;$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5\rightleftharpoons$) 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b5\uparrow$; 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6\?!$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ White is also slightly better.

14. $\mathbb{W}f2!$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5\!±$

White is ready to take on c6 and the advantage is firmly in his hands.

11.d4!

Black's pieces on the d-file are White's targets, but still there is a way out.

11...cxd4 12.♗b5!N

Insisting on the initiative.

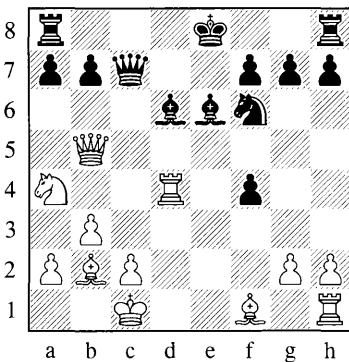
12.♗xd4?! ♗xd4 13.♕xd4 ♖b6!

Attacking the rook and protecting the queenside. It seems that then White cannot even equalize, for example:

14.♗a4!?

14.♗xd6 ♖xd6 15.♗b5 ♖c5! Making use of the f-pawn! 16.♘a3! ♖e3† 17.♗xe3 fxe3 18.♗c7† ♖d7 19.♗xa8 ♖xa8 20.♗c5 ♗d5† This is, if anything, slightly better for Black.

14...♖c7 15.♗b5†



15...♔f8!N

A novelty over Lyell – Kafka, Scarborough 2004, where 15...♗d7?! 16.♗c4!± was played.

Alternatively, 15...♗d7 16.♗e2† should be equal, while 15...♔e7 16.♗d3 a6 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗h4† seems to surrender the initiative to White.

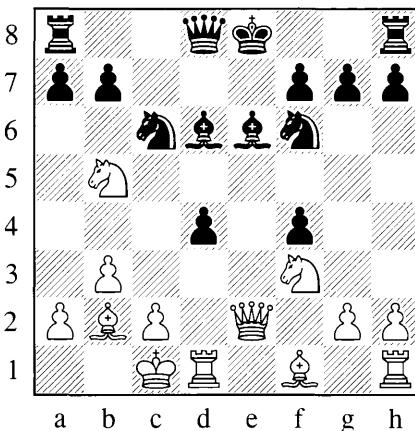
16.♗d3

16.♗c4?? ♗d7 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗h4 ♗xa4 19.bxa4 ♗e5–+

16...♗d7?! 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗h4 ♗c6 19.♗d1 ♗e5†

Black has a fine game.

Black now needs to play with extreme accuracy:



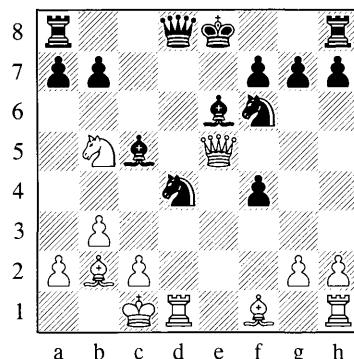
12...♗e7!

This looks like the only equalizer.

Weaker is 12...a6?! 13.♗fxd4! ♗xd4 14.♗xd6† ♖xd6 15.♗xd4 ♖c7 16.♗d2±.

The same can be said of 12...0–0?! 13.♗fxd4! ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗d5 15.♗xd6! (15.c4 ♗e8) 15...♖xd6 16.♗d2 ♖c6 17.♗xf4 ♗fe8 18.♗d3±, which is better for White in view of his powerful bishops.

12...♗c5 13.♗fxd4 ♗xd4 14.♗e5! (14.♗xd4 ♖b6! 15.♗xe6 ♖xe6 16.♗b5†! ♖c6 17.♗xf6! gxsf6 18.♗xc6† bxc6 19.♗a6 ♗d8 20.♗b7 ♗e3† 21.♗b2 c5= is only symbolically better for the first player)



14... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ fxe6 18. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}hc8$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21.bxc4 e5 This is probably better for White, though the game is by no means over.

13. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4!$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 0–0–0= is okay for Black.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$

A tremendous move, designed to provoke a weakness in the white king's position.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{gxf6}$
 16. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ → gives White certain pressure.

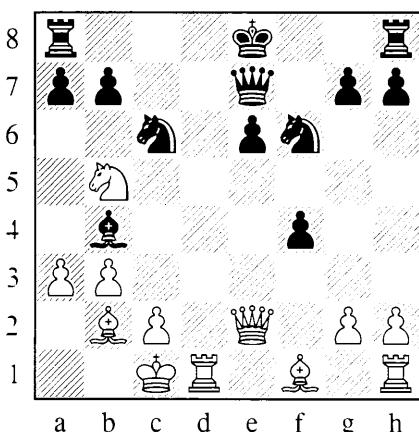
14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$

14.a3 allows 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$?
 16. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$
 19. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5 with a double-edged ending.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}hb8\#$ is about equal too.

14...fxe6 15.a3!

15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ does not work with the bishop on e4, in view of 15... $\mathbb{W}xf6$.



15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Weaker is 15...a6?!, 16.axb4! (16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{gxf6}$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19.axb4 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}a2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}a3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$) 16...axb5 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$, and after planting his rook on e4 White will be better.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{gxf6}$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Here, the weakness of the a3-pawn makes itself felt, but White can still pour oil into the fire:

21. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is less good as a queen exchange is threatened.

21... $\mathbb{Q}hd8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

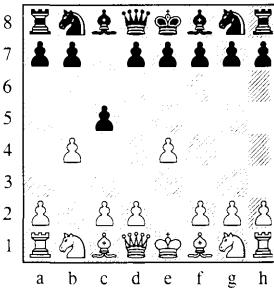
The black king has escaped to the queenside and the game is approximately balanced.

Conclusion

The variation 2.b3 against the Sicilian can produce some interesting chess, but if Black knows his theory he will end up at least equal in most of the lines. I have suggested a system designed to block the bishop's radius by placing our pawn on e5, which seems both thematic and challenging at the same time. I think that the only really dangerous lines for us occur after 1.e4 c5 2.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 4.f4?!, as White tries to storm our position. I recommend that readers study the resulting positions carefully, as some accuracy is required and the slightest mistake can lead to a difficult game. By following my suggestions I believe they will have no particular problems in attaining equality.



Various 2nd Moves



Wing Gambit

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.b4

2...cxb4

A) 3.c4?!	57
B) 3.♗b2 d5? 4.exd5 ♗xd5	58
B1) 5.d4?!	59
B2) 5.c4?!	59
B3) 5.♗f3!	60
C) 3.d4 d5	62
C1) 4.exd5	62
C2) 4.e5	63
D) 3.a3	65
D1) 3...d5 4.exd5 ♗xd5	65
D11) 5.♗b2?!	65
D12) 5.♗f3!	67
D2) 3...e5?!	70
E) 3.♗f3 ♗c6	71
E1) 4.a3? e5!	71
E2) 4.d4 d5! 5.exd5 ♗xd5 6.c4 bxc3 7.♗xc3 ♗a5	73
E21) 8.d5?!	74
E22) 8.♗d2!	75

1.e4 c5 2.b4

After this gambit the first player is usually struggling to equalize, but Black has to be alert as he has several tricks to cope with. White's idea is to gain a pawn preponderance in the centre and quickly open up lines for his pieces.

2...cxb4

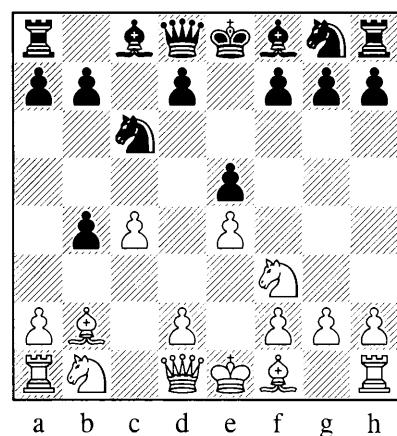
Now we will examine A) 3.c4?!, B) 3.♗b2 and C) 3.d4, before moving on to the immediate D) 3.a3. Finally, we will consider White's strongest reply: E) 3.♘f3.

A) 3.c4?!

White intends to build a wide central front by continuing with d2-d4 next.

3...e5!

Black prevents White's plan and gains sufficient control over the centre.

4.♘f3 ♗c6 5.♗b2**5...♗c5!?**

This excellent move renders White's opening play entirely pointless.

5...d6?!

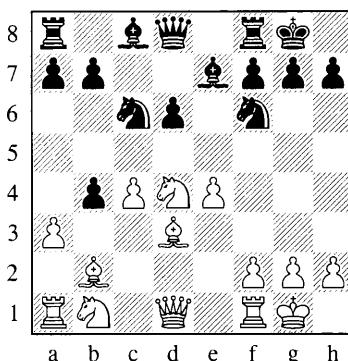
This might also be enough for a slight advantage, but the following line looks somewhat problematic:

6.d4 exd4 7.♘xd4 ♗f6 8.♗d3!

8.♗d2?! ♗e7 9.♗d3 (9.♗a4 ♗d7 10.♗xc6 ♗xc6 11.♗xb4 d5! 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.c5 a5 14.♗c3 dxe4 15.♗d1 ♗d5 16.♗g3 ♗xc5 17.♗g7 0–0–0–+ Huenerkopf – Chandler, Erlangen 1986) 9...0–0 10.0–0 ♗xd4 11.♗xd4 ♗d7† Hector – Kudrin, Palma 1989.

8...♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.a3!

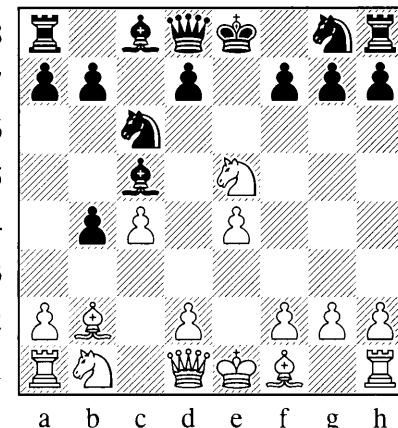
The point of delaying ♗d2 is to develop the knight via a3.

**10...bxa3 11.♗xa3 ♗d7! 12.♗f5!**

12.♗ab5? ♗c5†

12...♗f6 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♗g3!

White has some play for the pawn, as his structure is pretty solid and d6 is a permanent weakness.

6.♘xe5

6...♝d4!N

The main idea behind 5...♝c5!. As the following variations will demonstrate, White is in great difficulty.

In Eade – Appleberry, Berkeley 1983, the inferior 6...♝f6 was played.

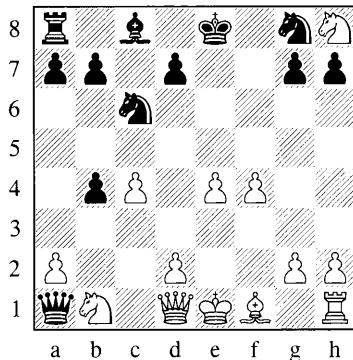
7.♝xd4

After 7.♝xc6? dxc6 8.♝b3 ♘f6–+ White is dead lost.

The main point of Black's play is revealed after:

7.♝xf7 ♘f6!

7...♝e7?? 8.♝xd4 ♘xd4 9.♝xh8 ♘xe4†
 10.♝e2 ♘xg2 11.♝f1 ♘e4 12.f3 ♘c2†
 13.♝f2 ♘d4† 14.♝g2 ♘xa1†
 8.♝xd4 ♘xd4 9.♝xh8 ♘xa1 10.f4
 10.♝d3 g6†
 10.♝c3 ♘xd1† 11.♝xd1 ♘ge7 12.c5 ♘f8
 13.♝c4 ♘e5 14.♝e3 ♘xc4 15.♝xc4 ♘g8
 16.d4 b6 17.♝d6 ♘xh8 18.♝d2 bxc5
 19.dxc5 ♘a6†



10...♞f8 11.e5 ♘ge7 12.♝d3 g6†

The desperate situation of White's knights should seal his doom. For example:

13.♝g4

Even after 13.h4 ♘d4 14.♝f3 d5! White won't make it, for example: 15.cxd5 (15.h5 ♘g4!; 15.exd6 ♘xd6 16.h5 ♘g4 17.♝xg4 ♘xd3 18.♝f2 ♘d4†) 15...♝g4! 16.♝g3 ♘xd5 17.♝xg6 ♘xe5! 18.fxe5 hxg6–+

13...♝d4! 14.♝h4 ♘xd3 15.♝f6† ♘g8
 16.♝f7 ♘f5–+

7...♝xd4 8.♝e2

8.♝d3?! ♘h4! and White's position is hopeless.

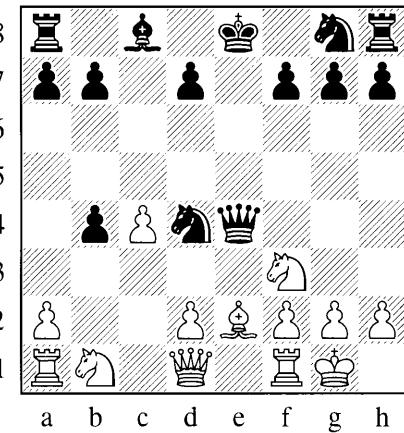
8.♝g4!? ♘f6 9.♝e3 ♘xe4 10.♝g4 d5 11.♝xg7
 ♘f6 12.♝xf6 ♘xf6 13.cxd5 0–0–+

8...♝e7 9.♝f3

9.♝d3 d5!–+

9...♝xe4 10.0–0

The only move.



10...♝xe2† 11.♝h1 ♘xc4 12.♝e1 ♘e7
 13.♝xe2 d5†

It is clear that Black dominates the game, and that his large material advantage should eventually decide it in his favour.

B) 3.♝b2

This is a logical developing move.

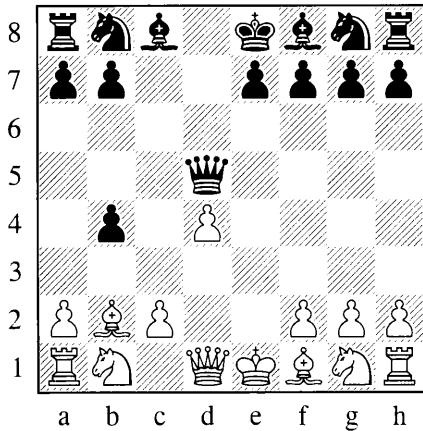
3...d5?! 4.exd5 ♘xd5

White is a pawn down and saddled with an inferior pawn structure, so he must try to make the most out of his slight lead in development by trying to exploit the position of the black queen.

Both B1) 5.d4?!; B2) 5.c4?! fail to do this adequately, but B3) 5.Qf3! holds some venom.

5.a3?! transposes to variation D11 – see below.

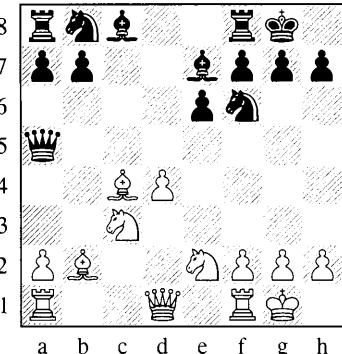
B1) 5.d4?!



Blocking the bishop like this cannot be good.

5...Qf6 6.a3

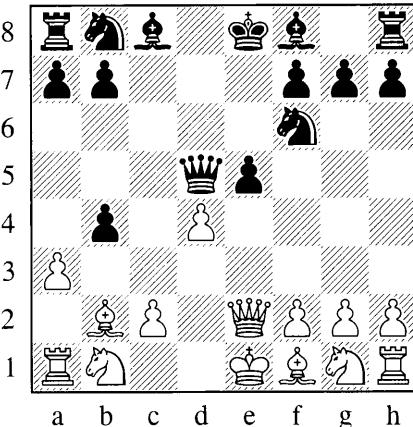
6.c4?! bxc3 7.Qxc3 Wa5?! This is the best square for the queen; enabling Black to stop an early liquidation in the centre by d4-d5 after ...e6 is played. 8.Qc4 (8.d5 e5!+) 8...e6 9.Qe2 Qe7 10.0–0 0–0



11.Qb3 (11.Qf4?? has been played several times, but it should lose instantly to 11...Qc7!N) 11...Qbd7+

6...e5?! 7.Qe2

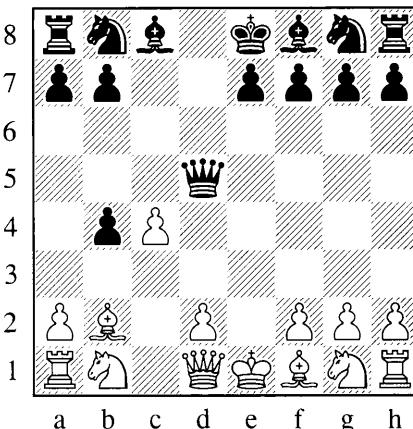
7.dxe5 Qxd1† 8.Qxd1 Qg4 9.Qe2 Qc6 10.Qf3 (10.f4 Qc5 11.Qf3 Qf2 12.Qg1 Qe4 13.Qh1 Qg4+) 10...Qc5 11.axb4 Qxb4+



7...e4 8.c4 bxc3 9.Qxc3 Wa5 10.f3 Qc6 11.Qb5 exf3 12.Qxf3 a6 13.Qxa5 Qxa5 14.0–0–0 Qf5 15.Qe1† Qe7 16.Qe5 Qb3† 17.Qd1 Qg4+

White was a clear pawn down without anything in return, Jakubiec – Oral, Czech Republic 1995.

B2) 5.c4?!



This has been the traditional choice of the gambiteers, but in my opinion it is not the best.

5...bxc3!

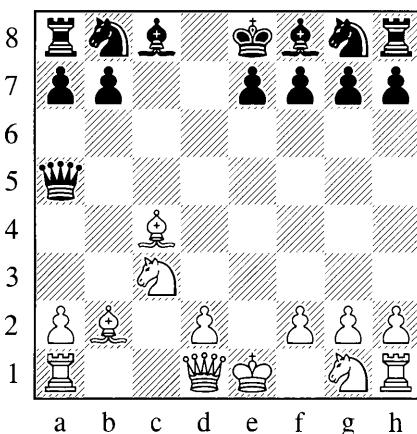
5... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ is a rather adventurous check. Black maintains an edge according to my analysis, but one good move is enough.

6. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{W}a5!$

The point of having the queen on a5 is to avoid drawish liquidations in the centre by an early d2-d4-d5 advance.

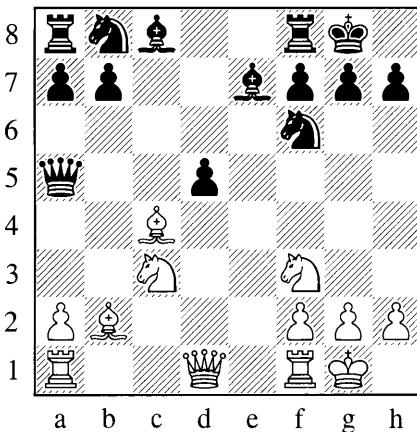
7. $\mathbb{Q}c4N$

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}b3 e6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5\# \mathbb{Q}d7!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bx7\#$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xb7?? \mathbb{Q}b8\#+$



7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3 e6$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.d4 0-0
11.d5 exd5

11... $\mathbb{Q}d8\#?$ could be even better, a nice point being 12. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{W}b4!$.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$**

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{E}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe7 \mathbb{Q}c6\#$

13... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}c6\#$

White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

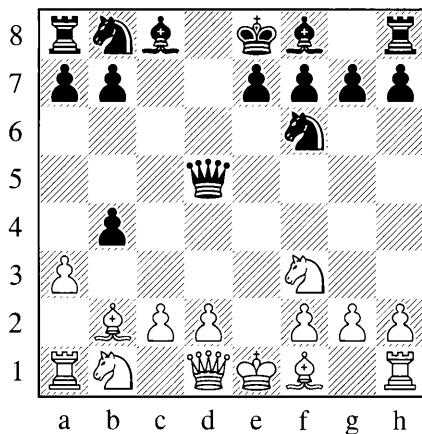
B3) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

This is the best move, after which White has good chances to equalize.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6.a3!

The cramping pawn on b4 has to be liquidated.

Much weaker is 6.c4?! bxc3 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ when play will transpose to the previous variation: 7... $\mathbb{W}a5\#?$ is again the best square for the queen.

**6...e5!?**

A clear-cut way of playing, trying to accelerate development by returning the pawn.

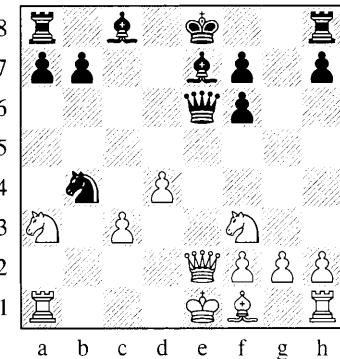
I don't like 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ (7.axb4? $\mathbb{W}e4\#?$) 7...e6 due to 8.axb4!, when we cannot take back: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb4??$ is a blunder due to 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10.c3! and Black loses a piece.

7.axb4!

The most testing.

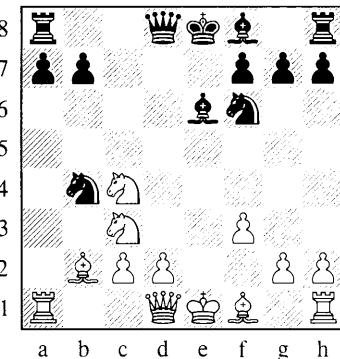
Instead, 7.c4?! $\mathbb{W}e6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ is better for Black.

7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ gxf6 10.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ Preventing $\mathbb{Q}d4$. 12.d4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Black's chances look slightly superior in this ending. One important point to note is: 13.c3



13... $\mathbb{W}b3!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black is at least equal.

Finally, 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

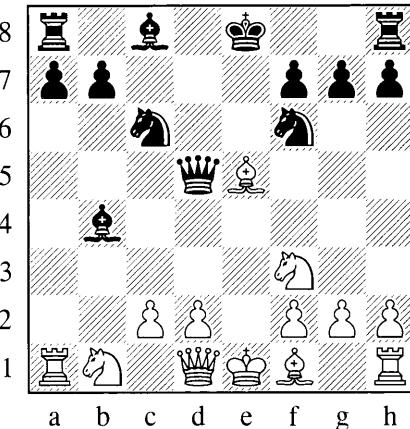


12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 13. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ was better for Black in Zhdanenia – Florea, corr. 2007, although White eventually managed to draw.

After 7.axb4!, a logical line of play runs:

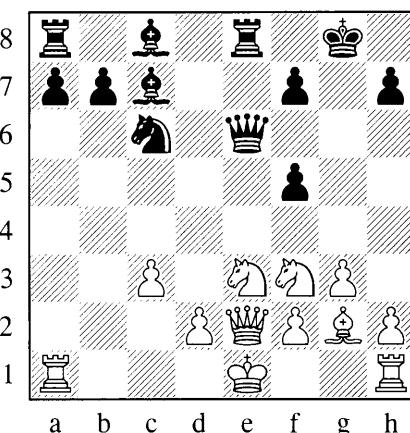
7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 12.0–0 b6 13.c3 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b7=$ is less sharp.



9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ gxf6 11.c3 $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5! 15.g3 $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

After 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Black can avoid the repetition with 17... $\mathbb{W}h6\infty$.

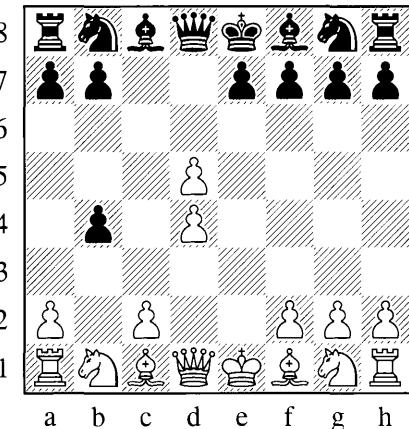


16...f4 17.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h8\infty$

With an unclear position.

C) 3.d4 d5

The two major continuations are **C1) 4.exd5** and **C2) 4.e5**.

C1) 4.exd5

White wishes to carry out the a2-a3 idea without wasting a tempo on $\mathbb{Q}b2$ – as in the relevant variations featured under 3. $\mathbb{Q}b2$. However, it should not flourish against correct defence:

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 5.a3!?

5. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?!$) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.0–0 0–0 13.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ Ozsvath – Varnusz, Hungary 1973.

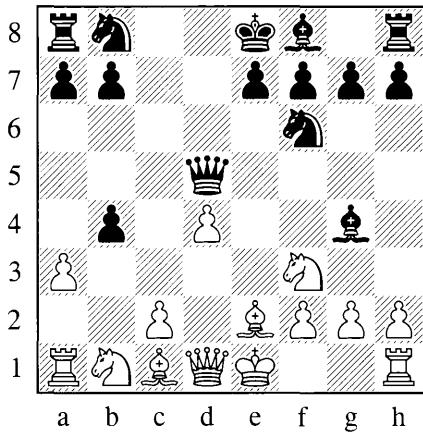
5... $\mathbb{W}xd5?!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

White has to continue this way.

6.axb4 e5? is excellent for Black.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Once again, 7.axb4 is met by 7...e5?.



7...e6 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.axb4

9.c4 bxc3 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}d7?$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$

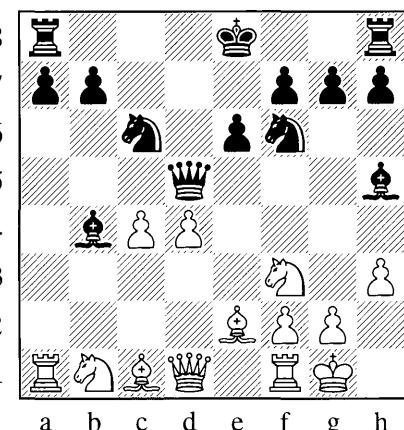
Black must be careful to maintain his plus, as White starts to expand his position.

10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d7?$

11.c4

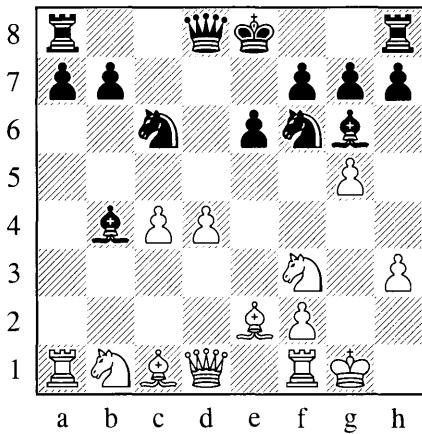
11.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.c4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0?

**11... $\mathbb{W}d8!$**

11... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 12.g4! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 14.d5 exd5 15.cxd5 left Black with nothing better than a draw after 15... $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 16.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}d6=$ in Teufel – Freise, Koenigsfeld 1969.

12.g4!? ♕g6 13.g5

13.d5!? exd5 14.g5 0–0!±



13...♝d7!

13...♝e4? 14.d5±

14.d5 ♐e7!±

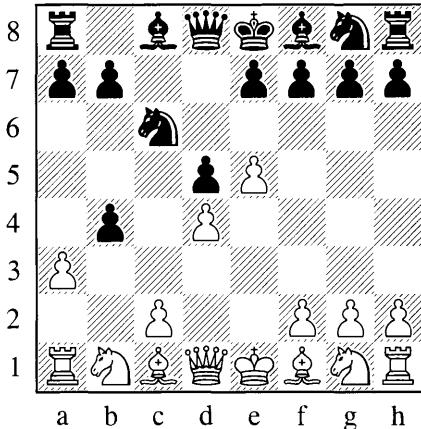
When I first looked at this position, some programs disagreed with my assessment here. For example, Deep Junior in those old times liked White, but it appears to me that White's kingside has been weakened for not much. In any case he is a pawn down, so Black should be much better.

C2) 4.e5

One of the main ideas behind the gambit: White wishes to play a2-a3, and after ...bxa3, ♜xa3, exchange dark-squared bishops on the a3-f8 diagonal. He will then make use of both the bind offered by the wedge on e5 and his good bishop on d3 to obtain attacking chances on the kingside.

4...♝c6 5.a3

White has no good waiting move and must proceed with a2-a3 immediately.



5...♛b6!

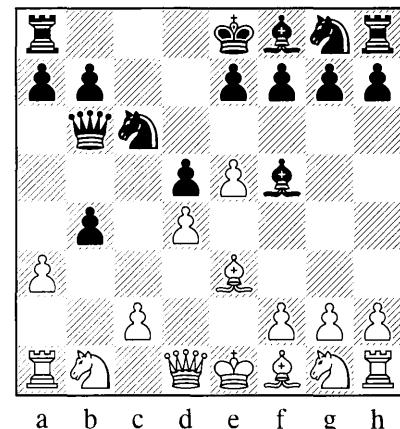
By hitting the sensitive point in White's camp, Black disrupts his opponent's plan.

6.♝e3

After 6.♝e2? ♕g4!? 7.f3 ♛f5 White's position is riddled with weaknesses, and he can hardly develop: 8.g4 (8.axb4 ♜xb4 9.♝a3 ♜c8 10.♝f4 ♜xc2† 11.♝xc2 ♜xc2 12.♝xd5 ♜b3!+) 8...♜g6 9.h4 (9.axb4 ♜xb4 10.♝a3 ♜c8 11.c3 ♜d3† 12.♝d2 ♜c6!+) 9...h5†

6...♞f5

6...♝h6?! is not so good due to: 7.axb4 (7.♝xh6? ♜xd4!+) 7...♜xb4† 8.c3! ♜b2 9.♞a3!∞



7.d3

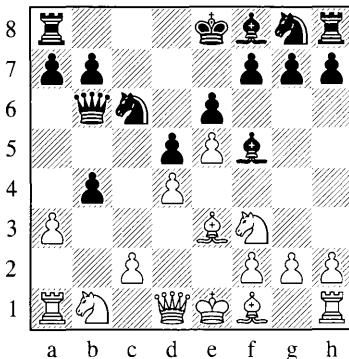
The most common move in this position. The idea is to develop the king's knight on e2, so as to leave the f-pawn unobstructed.

7.g4?! weakens the kingside without any real point. After 7... $\mathbb{E}e4$! 8.f3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9.e6 fxe6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ e5! White's position was full of holes in Orienter – Grünfeld, Vienna 1946.

7. Nf3

First played by no less a player than Alekhine in a simultaneous game back in the 30's.

7...e6



8. d3

This doesn't help White, although the alternatives are unappetizing too. With the f-pawn blocked and f5 securely in Black's hands, White doesn't have the slightest chance of launching an attack.

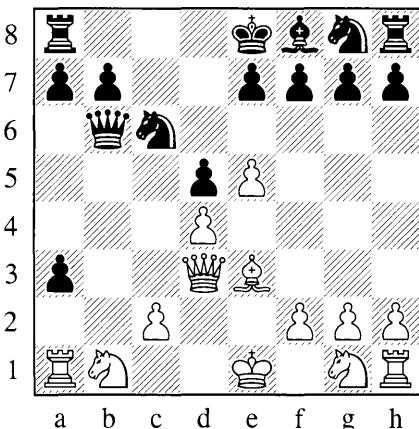
- a) 8.axb4?! is simply bad in view of:
 $8... \mathbb{W}xb4\#$! 9.♗bd2 (9.c3? ♖b2 10.♗bd2
 ♜a3!–+) 9...♖c3! 10.♗b5 a6 11.0–0 ♕c8–

b) Alekhine's 8.a4 could have left him in an awkward situation after the simple $8...a6N\#$, or the interesting evacuation sacrifice $8...b3?$ 9.cxb3 ♜b4# 10.♗bd2 ♜c3!N
 11.♕c1 ♜b2 12.♕c5 a6#, when the rook's position on c5 is anything but inspiring.
 $8... \mathbb{W}xd3$ 9.♔xd3 a5! 10.0–0 ♖a6! 11.♔d1
 $\mathbb{W}xa3\#$

After a comparison of both sides' pluses, Black emerges far ahead on the count. In fact, it is difficult to detect anything positive in the White camp.

7... \ddagger xd3 8. $\ddot{\mathbb{w}}$ xd3 bxa3!

By luring the knight to a3, Black prepares to carry out mass exchanges that will make his extra pawn significant.

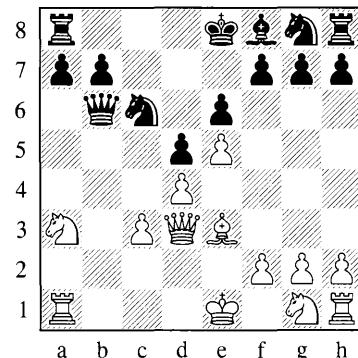


9. $\text{Nxa}3 \text{ e6}$

White will have great difficulty in proving any compensation.

10. $\text{N}e2$

10.c3?! To cover b4, but Black succeeds in carrying out favourable exchanges anyway:

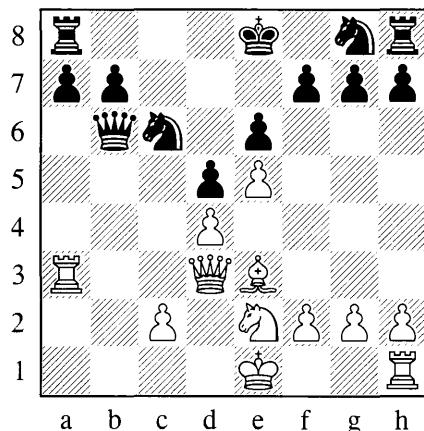


10... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$! 11. $\mathbb{K}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}b2$! 12. $\mathbb{K}a4$ a6 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$
(13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b3$! 14. $\mathbb{K}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ --) 13... $\mathbb{W}b1\ddagger$

14. $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{W}xd1\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd1 \mathbb{Q}ge7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3 b5-$
Montheard – Fressinet, Auxerre 1996.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

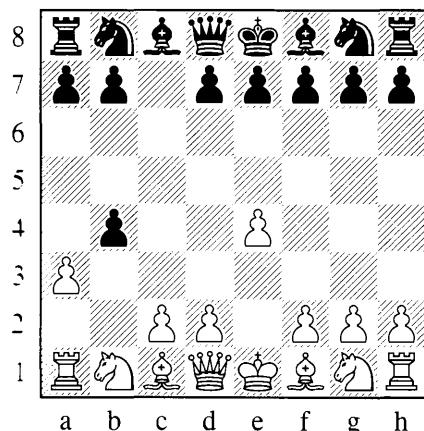
11. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}b4\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}hb1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$
 $\mathbb{Q}c8\bar{F}$ achieves nothing, and White will be mercilessly driven back.



11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 12. 0–0 0–0 \bar{F}/\bar{F}

White has only the slightest compensation for the pawn.

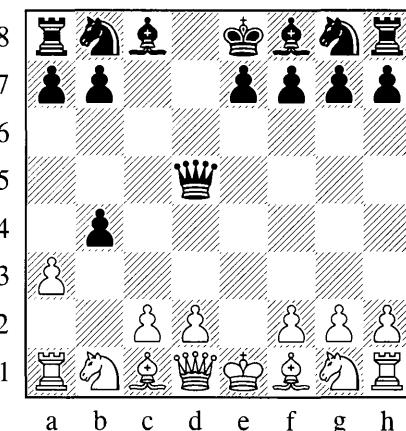
D) 3.a3



The most natural follow-up to White's gambit. Black should avoid taking on a3,

and concentrate on central play instead. I will present two alternatives: D1) 3...d5 and D2) 3...e5!?

D1) 3...d5 4.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$



It is important to be able to deal effectively with D11) 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2\text{?!}$ but, as is often the case in this chapter, D12) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3\text{!}$ is the strongest continuation.

D11) 5. $\mathbb{Q}b2\text{?!$

A rather pointless manoeuvre, as normally White would like to force Black take on a3 and then develop the bishop in one go with $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ – or even take with the knight on a3.

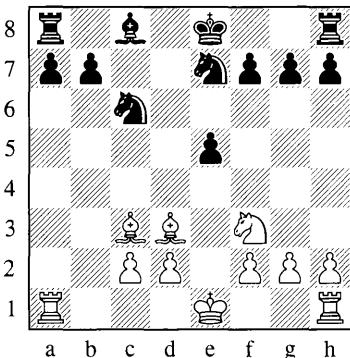
5...e5 6.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

The b4-bishop dominates the knight on b1, meaning that White cannot gain a tempo on the black queen. White has little chance to obtain even partial compensation.

7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3\text{?!}$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}f3$
9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 11. 0–0 $f6\bar{F}$
Spielmann – Sämisch, Marianske Lazne 1925.

9... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$



11...f6!

Black obtains a significant edge, as the bishop on c3 bites on granite due to Black's compact central pawn formation.

12.♗c4 ♜f5 13.0–0 ♜d7 14.♗fb1 ♜d8!

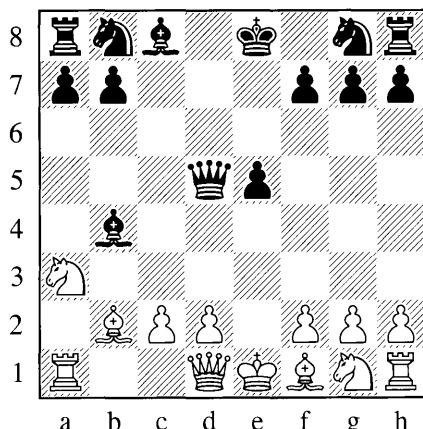
A nice tactical motif, allowing Black to consolidate.

15.♗d5

15...♝xb7?? ♜d6+–

15...♝c7 16.h3 ♜hd8+

Black went on to win in Kuban – K. Lutz, Oberursel 1989.



7...♝c6!

7...♜xa3?!

Another principled reply.

8.♜xa3 ♜e7 9.♗e2

9.c4 ♜d6! (9...♜e6?! 10.♗e3! ♜bc6 11.d4

♞f5 12.d5 ♜xe3 13.fxe3∞) 10.f4 e4?!

(10...exf4 11.♗xg7 ♜g8 12.♗b2 ♜bc6

13.♗f3∞) 11.♗xg7 ♜xa3 12.♗xh8 ♜bc6
13.♗a1 ♜xa1† 14.♗xa1 ♜b4 15.♗c3 a5↑
This is fine for Black. White's kingside pieces are all on their original squares, while the passed a-pawn is a dangerous asset.

9...♜bc6 10.♗c3 ♜d8 11.♗c4 0–0 12.0–0
♜f5N+

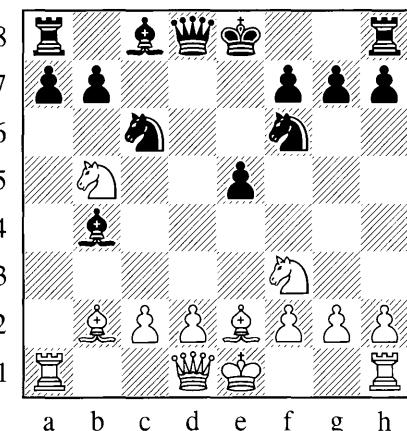
Black will flick in ...a6 to stop any counterplay on the queenside, while he has lovely control over the d4-square. 12...♝d4 can be met by 13.♗b5?N, improving on 13.♗a2 ♜f5 14.d3 a6+ in Day – Livshits, Canada 1994.

8.♗b5

8.♗c4 ♜f6! 9.♗b6 ♜e4† 10.♗e2 ♜b8
11.♗xc8 ♜xc8+

8...♜d8 9.♗f3 ♜f6! 10.♗e2

10.♗xe5 0–0–0† has scored a quick-fire 2/2 for Black on my database.

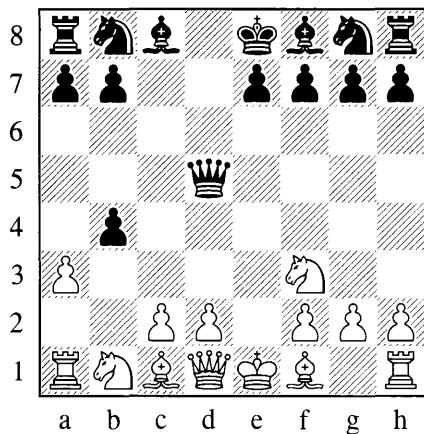


10...0–0 11.0–0 ♜e8 12.d4 exd4 13.♗fxd4
♝xd4N

The immediate 13...♝d7 is also good for Black. However, after 14.♗xc6 he should be careful not to recapture with 14...bxcc6 as in Gulko – Pohla, Tallinn 1977, and instead prefer 14...♜xc6N†.

14.♗xd4 ♜d7

Black holds a considerable advantage.

D12) 5.♘f3!

White keeps his position flexible by again following the dictum “knights before bishops”.

5...e5!

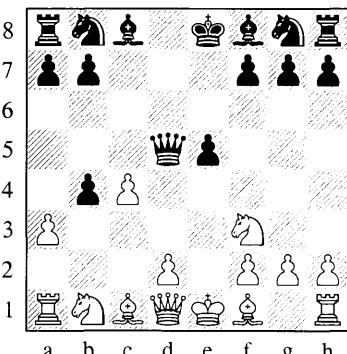
A logical reaction, trying to obtain some space in the centre. We now have a parting of the ways:

6.axb4

This is what most people would probably play, but it is not clear what White's best option is.

6.c4!?

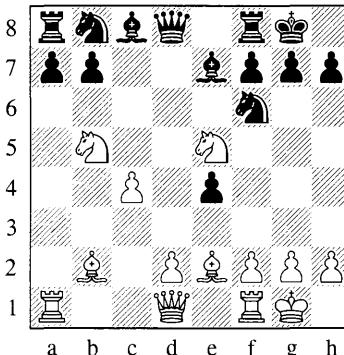
A more intriguing choice, though I prefer Black after the following sequence.



...♗d8! 7.♗b2

7.axb4 ♜c6! 8.♗b2 (8.b5 ♜b4!) 8...♗xb4 9.♗xe5 ♜e7N 10.♗e2 ♜f6 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♗xe7† ♜xe7† gives Black the more comfortable ending.

7...e4 8.♗e5 bxa3 9.♗xa3 ♜f6 10.♗e2 ♜e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗b5



12...♜c6!?

N 12...a6 13.d4! exd3 14.♗xd3 ♜xd3 15.♗xd3 ♜c6 16.♗c7 ♜b8 17.♗d5 ♜e8 18.♗f3 ♜xd5 (18...♗f5 19.♗xe7† ♜xe7 20.♗c5=) 19.cxd5 ♜f5 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.♗e5 led to an easy draw for White in Meissen – Dias, corr. 2012.

13.d4 exd3 14.♗xd3!

The difference is that now 14.♗xd3?! is simply worse for White after 14...♜xd3 15.♗xd3 ♜d8 16.♗fd1 ♜d7†.

14...♗b4! 15.♗b1

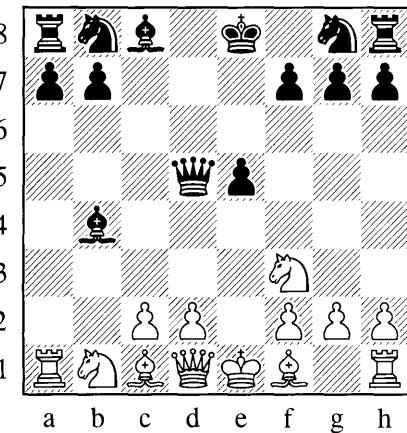
15.♗xa7 ♜xd3 16.♗xc8 ♜xc8 17.♗xd3 ♜xc4 18.♗b3 ♜d5 19.♗a7 ♜c7 20.♗xd5 ♜xd5 21.♗e5 ♜d7 22.♗b1 f6 23.♗d4 ♜b8† Black is still a pawn up, and it is not so easy for White to draw.

15...a6 16.♗b3 ♜c5 17.♗c3 a5! 18.♗b2 ♜e8 19.♗g3 ♜a6†

Although the strong b5-knight partially compensates for White's pawn deficit, Black undoubtedly has the better chances.

6...♗xb4

Another critical position for the evaluation of the whole system has arisen.

**7.c3!?**

An interesting try, but even after this Black has the more pleasant game.

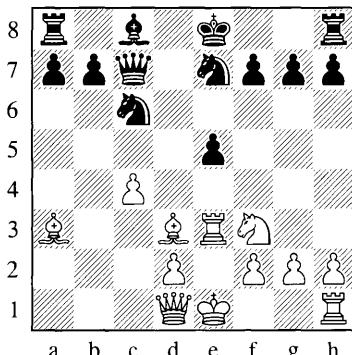
7.♘xa3 ♗xa3 8.♗xa3 (8.♗xa3 ♘f6 9.♗b5 ♖d8!?) 8...♝c6 9.♗c3 ♖d6 10.♗b5 ♖e7 was at least slightly better for Black in Podgorny – Pachman, Prague 1953.

7.♗a3?!

Initially this looks promising for White, but it is merely an illusion. Black should opt for:

7...♝f6!

7...♝xa3 gives White a choice of recapture:
a) 8.♗xa3?! ♘c6 9.c4 ♖d6 10.♗e3 ♗ge7
11.♘a3 ♖c7 12.♘d3 This was Lamothe – Fairclough, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, and now:

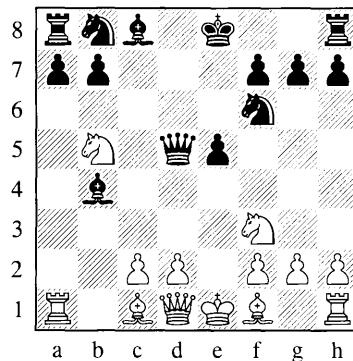


12...♝f5?!N 13.♗b1 (13.♗xe7 ♘xd3?; 13.♗xf5 ♘xf5?) 13...♞xd3 14.♗xd3 ♖d8?

b) 8.♗xa3! ♘c6 9.c4! ♖d8 10.♗b1! ♗ge7 11.♘d3 f5 12.♗xe7 ♖xe7 13.♗xf5 ♖xf5 14.♗xf5 ♖f7 was equal in Bronstein – Benko, Moscow 1949.

8.♗b5

The logical follow-up to the previous move, but Black has a fantastic reply:

**8...0–0!!**

Boldly sacrificing a rook for the initiative.

9.♗c7 ♖c5! 10.♗xa8 e4! 11.♗g1 ♗g4!
12.♗h3

12.♗e2 ♘c6 13.c3 ♘ce5!–+ A devastating check on d3 is imminent.

12...e3 13.♗e2N

13.♘d3? ♖e5!N (13...♝xf2 was also sufficient in Madsen – Barfoed, corr. 1994)
14.♘a3 ♖xd2†! 15.♗e2 ♘xf2! 16.♗xf2 ♖f4!!–+

13...exd2† 14.♗xd2 ♖d8 15.0–0

15.♘d3 ♖e5† 16.♗f1 ♖xd2 17.♗xa7 ♘e3!–+
15...♝xd2 16.♗xg4 ♕xd1 17.♗fxd1 ♖f8!
18.♗xc8 ♖xc8 19.♗xa7 ♘c5 20.♗aa1 ♘a6
21.♗d5 h6 22.♗ad1 ♘h7 23.♗d8 ♖f5†

White can hardly hope to survive; his forces are simply too uncoordinated. I think that, in light of the above analysis, we can safely consider 7.♗a3 refuted.

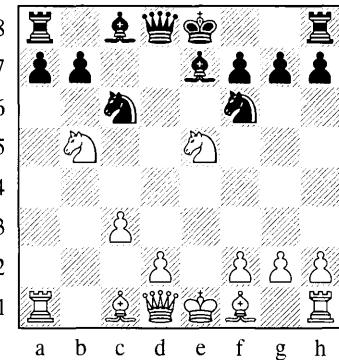
7...♝d6!

This has been tested in correspondence chess and is standing up well to scrutiny.

A less ambitious solution is:

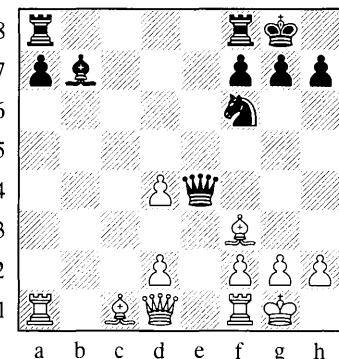
7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$
 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 10.d4??
 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$

Black has returned the extra pawn, aiming to overtake White in development.



11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$
 11.d4 0–0??
 11...bx c 6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$
 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}a6$
 (14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$) 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15.h3 c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$
 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21.0–0 $\mathbb{W}fe8\rightarrow$ K. Lutz –
 De Firmian, Biel 1993.

12...0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$
 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6=$ was M. Jones –
 Smyth, email 2007. The chances are more or
 less balanced; Black's inferior pawn structure
 is compensated by his greater piece activity.
 13... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
 $\mathbb{W}e8\#$; 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 16.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}e4$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

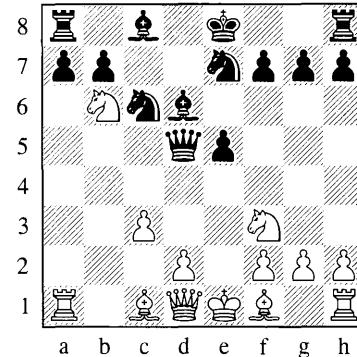


18... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$
 21. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$
 24. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ a5

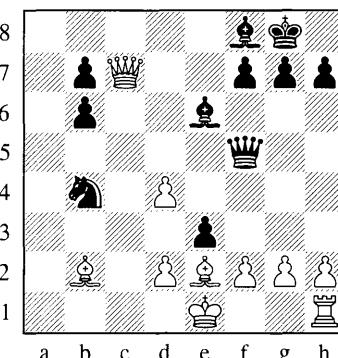
Reaching a level ending.

8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

White receives a shock after: 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7!$
 10. $\mathbb{Q}b6$



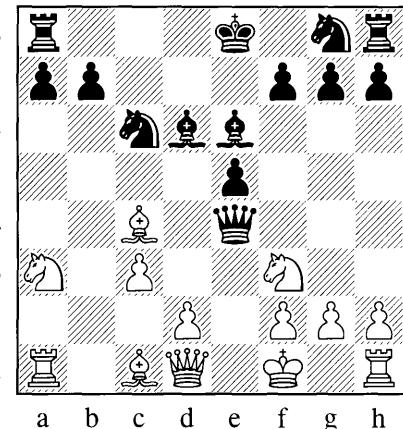
10...axb6!N (10... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$
 $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 13.d3 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5 was also fine
 for Black in Baum – Contrera Poblete, corr.
 2008.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ e4 With a huge initiative for
 the sacrificed material. For example: 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13.cxd4 0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
 19. $\mathbb{W}c7$ e3



20.0–0 (20.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$; 20.dxe3 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$)
 20... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 22.dxe5 exd2 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ Reaching a level position,
 although White had to be very careful along
 the way.

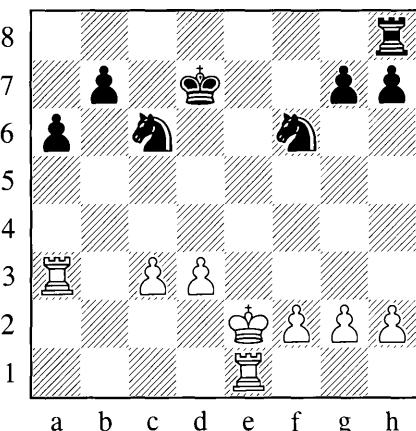
9... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

An instructive move: whatever attacking chances White may have possessed have been nipped in the bud.



11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}d8$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6
 20. $\mathbb{Q}a7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25.d3

The correspondence player B. Ivanov has reached this position as White in two of his games – losing both. The plain truth is that White has little compensation for the material because Black has an outside passed pawn, and this fact alone is sufficient to tip the scales in his favour:



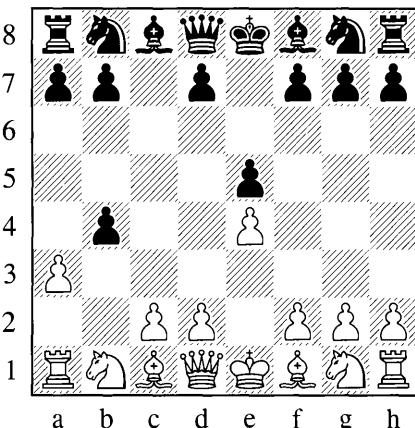
25... $\mathbb{E}a8$

25.. $\mathbb{E}d8$ 26.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}d5$ 28. $\mathbb{E}b1$
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 31. $\mathbb{E}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 32. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 33.c4 b5 34.cxb5# axb5 35. $\mathbb{E}a8$
 b4 36. $\mathbb{E}b8$ $\mathbb{E}d4$ 0–1 B. Ivanov – Yaroshenko, corr. 2012.

26. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b5 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}a7$ 28.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 29.h3
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ a5 31.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 32.g4 $\mathbb{E}d7$
 33. $\mathbb{E}e4$ b4 34.cxb4# axb4 35. $\mathbb{E}a8$ b3

White resigned in B. Ivanov – Mikhalkchuk, corr. 2012.

D2) 3...e5!?



This interesting move is worth examining in more detail. White basically has three options:

4.axb4

4. $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$ is not so good; the bishop move invites ...d5. 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6.f4 exf4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ d5! 8.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ Vidmar – Filgueira, Villa Ballester 1996.

4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5!?

This untested move looks good for Black. The following lines provide a confirmation of this assessment:

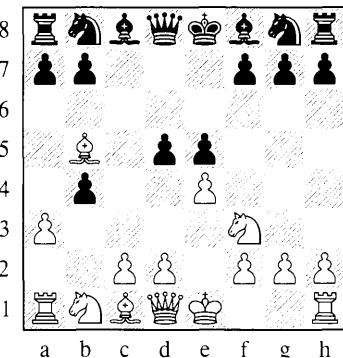
5. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$

Best according to the engines.

a) Weaker is instead: 5. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dx e4 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$

(6. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 8. d4 $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$)
6... $\mathbb{W}d4$ 7. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$

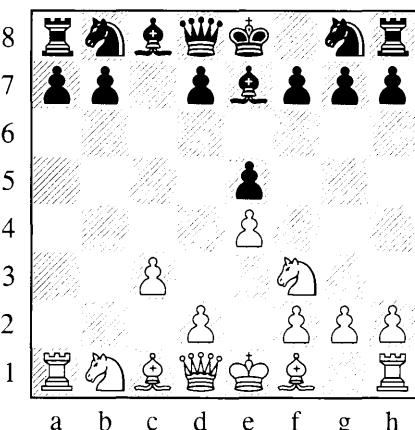
b) 5. axb4 dxe4 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ allows Black to exchange White's only active unit and get the more comfortable game, for instance:
7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (8. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$
9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 11. 0–0 0–0#
After 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$, a logical continuation is:



5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
7. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$
7... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xb5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$
10. $\mathbb{W}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11. e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Black holds the slightly better chances.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 5. c3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$
6. d4 d6 7. f4? $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$



6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Also interesting is 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0–0

8. $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5 9. exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 10. d4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e8\#$. Black had a huge initiative in Polo Alza – Rivas Romero, corr. 2012.

7. d4 d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$
11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ Reinke – Ostermeyer, Dusseldorf 1995.

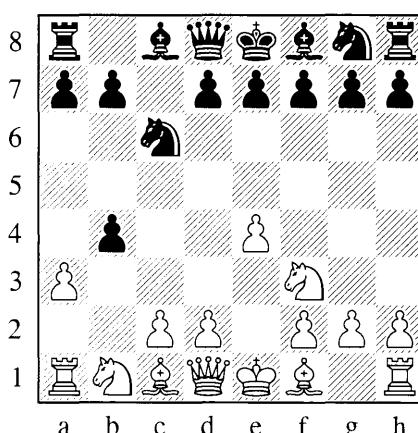
8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0–0 10. h3 d5 11. dxе5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
12. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$

White's position was just bad in K. Lutz – Nehmert, Hessen 1991.

E) 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This position is somewhat critical, because it may also arise via the move order 1. e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. b4 cxb4. E1) 4. a3? is tricky, and we should be careful with our reply, while E2) 4. d4 is by far the most common continuation.

E1) 4. a3?



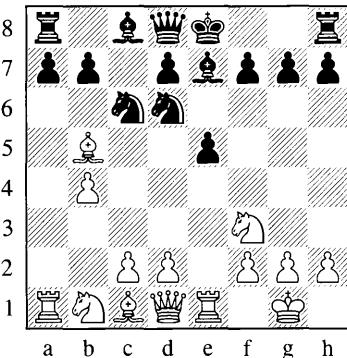
4... e5!

The most logical move: overprotecting the pawn on b4 and gaining space.

5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

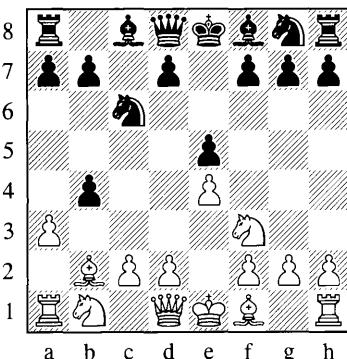
The natural square for the bishop.

5.♗b5 ♗f6 6.0–0 ♗xe4 7.axb4 ♗e7 8.♗e1 ♗d6 An echo of the Berlin Defence?



9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.♗xe5 0–0 11.d3 ♗e8 12.♗d2 f6 13.♗g4 ♗b5 14.♗a3 ♗c7 15.♗c4 ♗e6 16.h3 ♗d7 17.♗ge3 ♗f8 18.♗f1 ♗d5 19.♗b1 b5 20.♗ce3 ♗f4† Black was better in Windhausen – De Oliveira, corr. 2010, although White eventually drew after a colossal effort.

5.♗b2



5...♗b6!?

I like this rare move, threatening to force an exchange of the b2-bishop by taking on a3. Instead, 5...♗f6 6.♗xe5 ♗e7 7.♗f3 ♗xe4† 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♗e1 bxa3 11.♗xa3 d5 12.♗b5 ♗f4 13.g3 ♗b8 14.♗d3 ♗g4 15.♗a4! ♗h5 16.♗h4 ♗g6 17.♗g5 ♗xd3 18.cxd3 ♗d8 was agreed drawn in Bobel – Ovaskainen, corr. 2013, probably in view

of 19.♗xh7 ♗xh7 20.♗xh7 ♗xh7 21.♗g4= when a perpetual is unavoidable.

Denis Khismatullin has tried 5...bxa3, which gave him a slight edge after 6.♗xa3 d6 7.♗b5 ♗f6 8.0–0 ♗e7 9.d4 exd4 10.♗xd4 ♗d7† in Dotsenko – Khismatullin, St Petersburg 2012.

A possible continuation after 5...♗b6!? is:

6.♗c4

6.♗d3 d6 7.0–0 ♗e7 was balanced in Bobel – Glukhovtsev, corr. 2013.

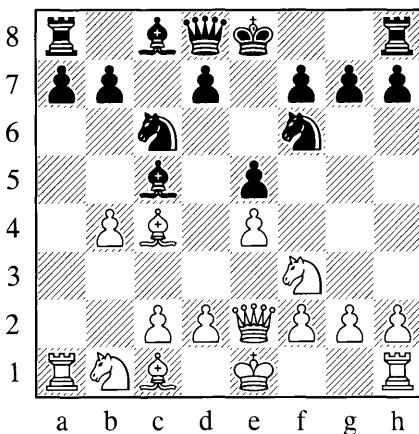
6...bxa3 7.♗xa3

7.♗xa3? ♗xb2 8.♗b5 ♗b4 9.♗e2 ♗d8+ 7...♗xa3 8.♗xa3 ♗f6 9.0–0 0–0 10.d3 d6†

Black has a small but stable advantage, in view of his extra pawn.

5...♗f6 6.♗e2 ♗c5 7.axb4!

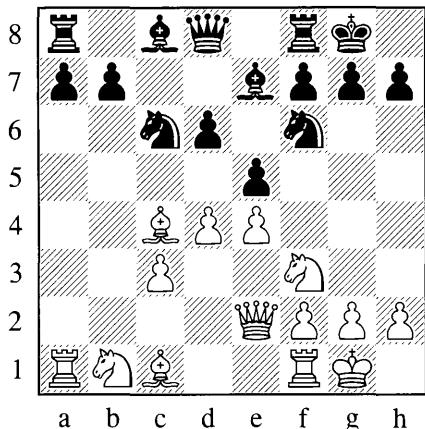
7.0–0 0–0 8.axb4 ♗xb4 9.c3 ♗c6 10.♗a3 d5 11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xe5 ♗f4 13.♗e4 ♗h4 14.♗xf7 ♗h3† 15.gxh3 ♗xe4 16.♗g5† ♗xc4 17.♗xc4† was better for Black in B. Ivanov – Beecham, corr. 2012.



7...♗xb4!

7...♗xb4 8.♗xf7† ♗xf7 9.♗c4† d5 10.♗xc5 a5 11.♗xe5† ♗e6 12.0–0 ♗xe5 13.c3 ♗a6 14.♗d4† ♗e6 15.e5 ♗g8 16.c4! ♗e7 17.♗c3 ♗b4 18.♗a3 ♗a6! 19.♗xb4 axb4 20.cxd5† ♗xd5 21.♗g4† ½–½ was an interesting draw in Alcala – Bernal Varela, corr. 2011.

8.c3 ♜e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.d4 d6



White does have some compensation for the pawn, but I believe Black should be slightly better. The highest-rated game between humans to reach this position continued as follows:

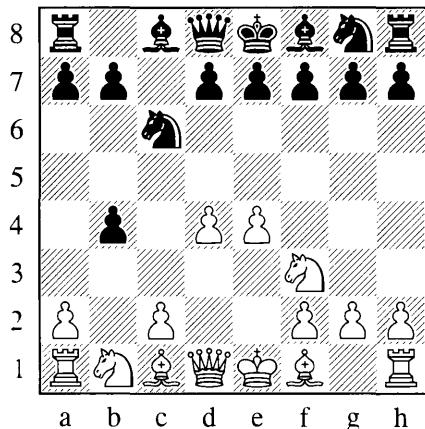
11.♗d1 ♜c7 12.h3 ♜a5 13.♗a2 b6 14.c4 ♜a6 15.♗a3 ♜b7 16.♗e1 ♜fe8

A draw was now somewhat prematurely agreed in Gerasimov – Gromotka, corr. 2012. One possible continuation is:

17.♗b5?

White shouldn't be any worse, but I believe Black could have improved earlier on.

E2) 4.d4



Gaining central control and preventing ...e5.

4...d5! 5.exd5 ♜xd5 6.c4

The point of White's play, which should more or less be enough to equalize.

6.a3 e5!= is good for Black.

6.♗e2

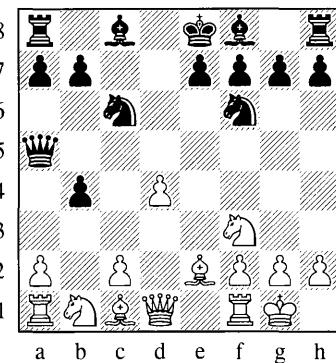
This is playable, but is not better than the usual path. Black may continue:

6...♝f6

6...e5?! 7.c4! bxc3 8.♗xc3 ♜b4 9.♗d2 ♜xc3 10.♗xc3 e4 11.♗e5 ♜xe5 12.dxe5 ♜xd1† 13.♜xd1 ♜e7= is about to turn completely drawish. White's bishop pair offsets the pawn.

7.0–0 ♜a5?!

To stop c2-c4 ideas, in preparation of ...♝g4. 7...♝g4 is the other possibility: 8.c4 bxc3 9.♗xc3 ♜a5 10.d5! (10.♗b3 ♜b4!N; 10.♗d2 e6 11.d5 ♜xd5 12.♗xd5 ♜xd5 13.♗a4 ♜f5∞) 10...♝d8 11.♗d2 ♜xd5 12.♗b5 ♜b6 13.♗b1 e6! 14.♗d6† ♜xd6 15.♗xb6 ♜xb6∞



8.h3?!

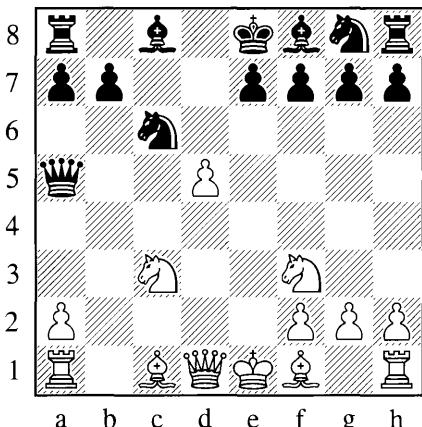
8.a3 ♜g4! 9.♗b2 e6 10.axb4 ♜xb4 11.♗a3 ♜b6 12.♗xf8 ♜xf8 13.c3 ♜xf3 14.♗xf3 g6=
8...e6 9.a3 ♜d5! 10.♗b2 ♜c3=

With fine chances for Black.

6...bx_c3 7.♗xc3 ♜a5

We will briefly cover E21) 8.d5?! before moving on to the correct E22) 8.Qd2!.

E21) 8.d5?!



White wants to prevent ...e6, stabilizing the central structure, but the advance will be proven premature. This is not the best continuation, but I have covered it for instructional purposes.

8...e6!

A surprising retort, rendering White's opening idea dubious.

9.Qd2

The only chance.

9.dxc6?! Qb4! 10.Qd2 Qxc3 11.Qe2 Qxd2+
12.Qxd2 Qe7 13.0-0 0-0 14.Qc4 Wg5! 15.c7
Qd5 16.Qf3 Qxc7 17.Wd6 Qb5! 18.Wb4
Qd4+ led to a disaster for White in Tempone – Scarella, Chaco 1996.

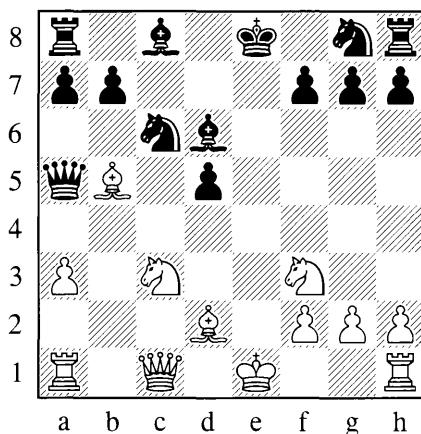
9...Qb4 10.Wc1

Or 10.Qc1 exd5 11.a3?! Qd6! and White doesn't have a useful discovery.

10...exd5 11.a3 Qd6! 12.Qb5

12.Qb5 Wd8 13.Qc3 f6! Preparing to play ...Qge7. 14.Qxd6+ Wxd6 15.Qb5 We6†

16.Qf1 Qge7 17.Qd4 Wf7† Black's queen is powerfully placed and he holds a considerable advantage.

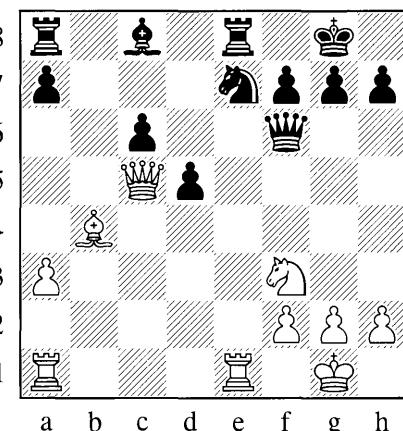


12...Qge7 13.Qe4 Wd8 14.Qxd6+ Wxd6
15.Qb4 Wf6 16.0-0 0-0 17.Qxc6 bxc6
18.Qe1 Be8

18...Qe6?! also looks to maintain an edge.

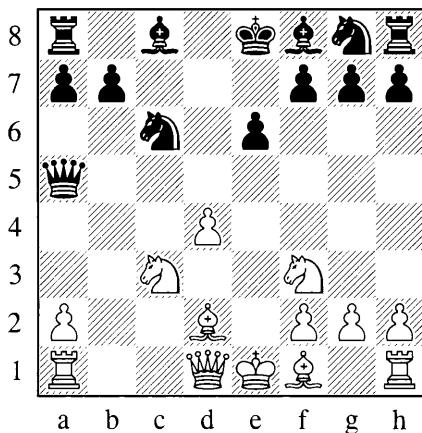
19.Wc5

19.Qxe7 Qxe7 20.Qxe7 Wxe7 21.Wxc6 Qb7
22.Wa4 Wc5+



19...Qe6 20.Qc3 Wf4 21.Qd4 Qf5†/†

Black held the advantage in Shirazi – Bonin, New York 1990.

E22) 8.♗d2! e6

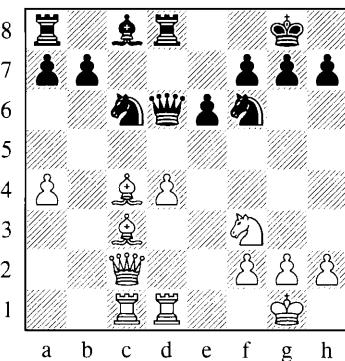
This results in a more static structure, but with accurate play White should be able to equalize by utilizing his better development. I looked at the following lines:

9.♗b1!?

Trying to prevent ...♗b4, when Black aims to remove one of the pieces that can control d5. I couldn't find complete equality in cases where White allows the bishop sortie:

9.♗b3 is met by 9...♗b4† intending ...♗ge7.

A continuation at the end of which White stands worse is: 9.♗c4?! ♗b4 10.♗c2 ♗f6 11.0–0 0–0 12.a3 ♗xc3 13.♗xc3 ♗c7! 14.♗ac1 ♗d6 15.a4 ♗d8 16.♗fd1



16...♗b4! 17.♗b2 (17.♗xb4 ♗xb4 18.♗e5 [18.♗b1 ♗d6 19.♗e5 b6†] 18...♗d7†) 17...♗bd5 18.♗d2 ♗d7 19.a5 ♗a4 20.♗e1 ♗d7! 21.♗a1 ♗c6 22.♗e5 ♗c7† This was Bronstein – Deep Thought, Palo Alto (rapid) 1992. Black is a clear pawn to the good and has turned d5 into a fortress.

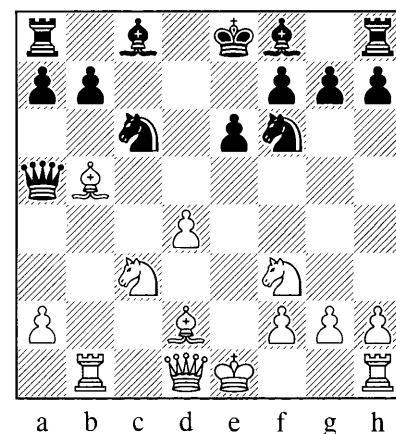
9...♗f6

9...♗b4 can be met by 10.♗b5?!, when White has reasonable prospects.

10.♗b5!?

This straightforward development should be good enough for equality.

10.♗e4 ♗d5 11.♗xf6† gxf6 12.♗d3 ♗g8! 13.♗b5 ♗d7 14.0–0 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗e3 ♗g4 17.g3 ♗xd1 18.♗xd1 was an equal ending in Grobler – Wettstein, corr. 2012, in spite of Black's two extra pawns. The game was indeed drawn some time later.



10...♗c7 11.0–0 ♗e7 12.♗e2 ♗d7 13.♗fc1 0–0

White does have sufficient compensation, but no more than that. For example:

14.♗d3!?

Less impressive is:

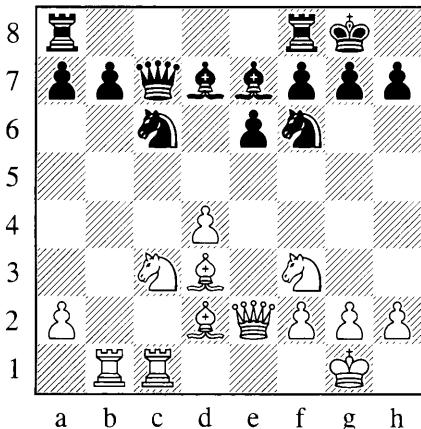
14.♗e4 ♗d5 15.♗e5

15. $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (16. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8\pm$)
 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\pm$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a1\pm$
 15... $\mathbb{W}d8!?$

15... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5?!$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$ might allow White some attacking chances.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bcx6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}d7\pm$

Black has the better game, thanks to the strength of his knight on d5 and White's pawn weaknesses.



14... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5!N$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ was better for Black in Bronstein – Deep Thought, Palo Alto 1992.

15... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 16. $g3$

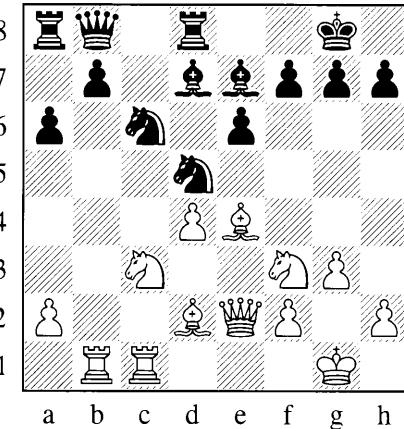
Preparing $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $a6!$

17... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}c7\pm$

18. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $axb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (20. $d5?$
 $exd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!-+)$ 20... $\mathbb{W}a7\pm$



18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $d5$ $exd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$
 24. $\mathbb{W}b2=$

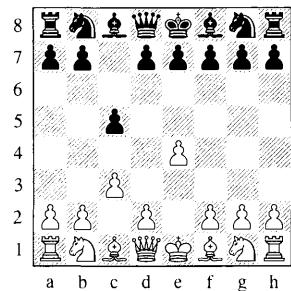
The game can continue, but the verdict here is certainly equality.

Conclusion

The Wing Gambit certainly keeps Black on his toes, but from a theoretical perspective it is nothing for us to worry about. The earlier variations in the chapter should all lead to an advantage for Black, but after 3. $a3$ $d5$ 4. $exd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ and 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4. $d4$ $d5!$ 5. $exd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 6. $c4$ $bcx3$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ White has some practical chances. Careful study of the lines presented here will leave Black players fully equipped to handle White's trickery, and will leave the first player with the rather depressing prospect of searching for good moves to merely secure equality.

Chapter 5

c3 Sicilian



Introduction

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3

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

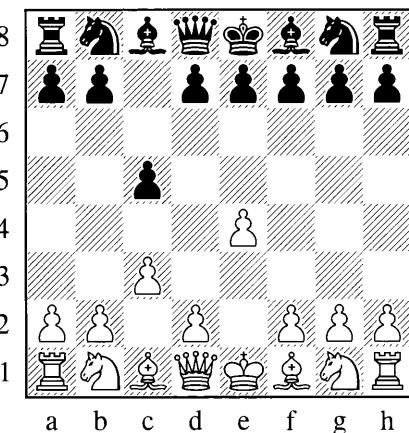
A) 3.d3	78
B) 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$	79
B1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	80
B11) 4...e6	80
B12) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$	81
B2) 4.d4 cxd4	83
B21) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	83
B22) 5.cxd4	85
B23) 5. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ e6	87
B231) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	87
B232) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5!	89
B2321) 8.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$	89
B23211) 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$	89
B23212) 9. $\mathbb{W}h4$	90
B2322) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5!	92
B23221) 9.g3	93
B23222) 9. $\mathbb{W}xb5$	94

1.e4 c5 2.c3

This is designed to control the centre by playing d2-d4 next. It has been a pet line of GMs Sveshnikov, Tiviakov and Rozentalis, and many consider it as the most principled choice after 1...c5. However, the truth is it cannot lead to an advantage, because it neglects development. Also, after Black's principled next move, White is forced to abandon control of the d5-square, which is already a strategic success for the second player.

For this section of the book I have expanded on Jacob Aagaard's excellent work in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*, adding improvements where possible. These improvements were not always forthcoming, but only because the original was of such a high standard! It would become rather repetitive to continually mention where the repertoires meet, so this paragraph will serve to give Jacob the credit he fully deserves.

I have also written a series of articles on the c3 Sicilian for *Chess Informant*, some of which was appropriate to include here. Again I do not want to make too many references to these similarities, but have instead focused my energy on presenting a complete repertoire against 2.c3 for the readers. So let us begin:



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

The most challenging continuation. The attack on e4 prevents White's intended set-up

with pawns on e4 and d4, and also leads to complicated positions. The weakness of the d5-square is that little 'something' upon which Black can build his central strategy, and is an important long-term asset for us.

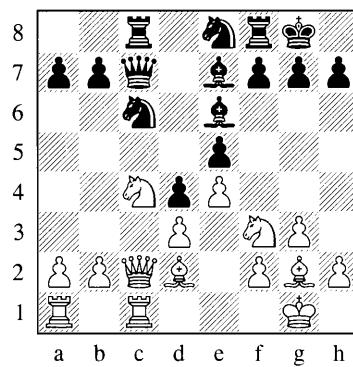
We will briefly examine our resources against
A) 3.d3 before beginning our coverage of
B) 3.e5.

A) 3.d3 e5!

I believe this is already excellent for Black.

4.f4

4. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5 5. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6.g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 8.0-0 produces a reversed King's Indian, where the extra tempo hardly gives White the advantage. For instance: 8...d4?! 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.cxd4?! (10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{f}$) 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ (11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{f}$) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$?! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\infty$ With a complicated position.



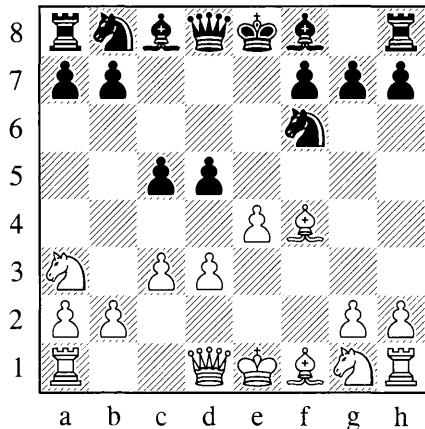
14. $\mathbb{W}b1$?! (14. $\mathbb{W}d1N$ looks better) 14... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 15.a4 f6 16.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17.b5?! $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ This was played in Sepp – Yrjola, Myyrmanni 1999, when simplest was 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb4N$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ b6 21.c5 (21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\bar{f}$) 21...bxc5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 26.a5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 27.b6 axb6 28.a6 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ and White is clearly struggling.

4...exf4 5.Qxf4 d5

I consider White's best try to be:

6.Qa3!?

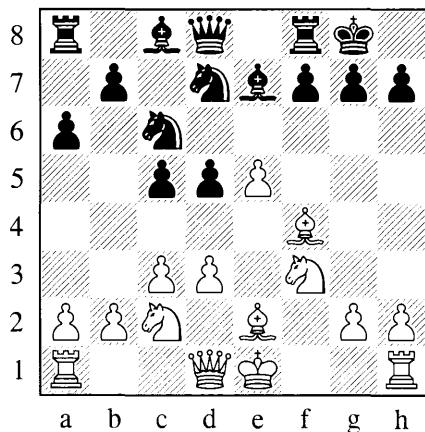
Instead, 6.e5 Qfd7 7.Qf3 Qe7 8.Qe2 Qc6 9.d4 (9.0-0 g5!?) 9...0-0 10.0-0 f6? leads to a position where Black is at least equal.



6...a6 7.e5 Qfd7 8.Qf3 Qc6 9.Qc2 Qe7
10.Qe2 0-0

The solid option.

10...g5? 11.Qg3 g4 12.Qd2 Qdxe5 13.d4 cxd4 14.cxd4 Qg6 15.Qxg4 f5 16.Qf3 f4 17.Qf2 0-0 18.0-0 Qh4 (18...Qf5 is another interesting possibility, but White may be able to claim a slight plus with the peculiar manoeuvre 19.Qc1 Qc8 20.Qb1!) 19.Qxh4 Qxh4? deserves closer scrutiny.



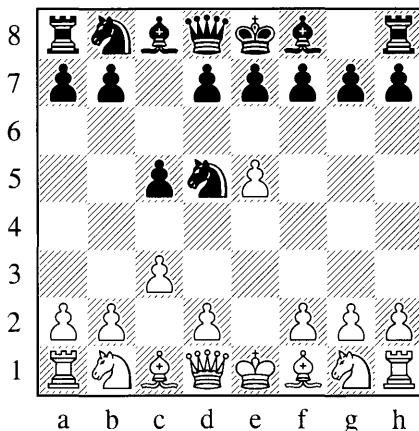
11.0-0 f6

11...d4?! may be a better attempt to complicate the play.

12.exf6 Qxf6 13.Qd2 Qd6 14.Qae1 b6
15.Qxd6 Qxd6 16.d4 Qa7=

With approximately level chances.

B) 3.e5 Qd5

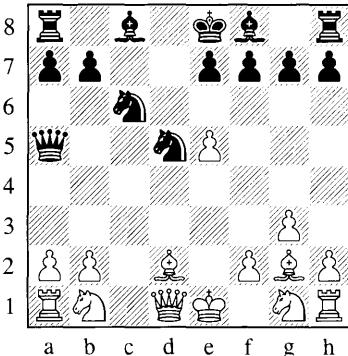


I will give two possibilities against B1)
4.Qc4, and then move on to analysing B2)
4.d4.

4.Qf3 is covered in the next four chapters.

4.g3 will transpose to the related line featuring g2-g3 examined in Chapter 6, after 4...d6 5.exd6!. For example, 5...e6 6.Qg2 Qxd6 7.Qe2 Qc6 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 10.Qxd4 and we have a direct transposition to variation C2 on page 102.

Instead, 5.d4? leads to a much worse position for White after 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 dx5 7.dxe5 Qc6 8.Qg2 Wa5+!? (8...Qe6+) 9.Qd2N (9.Qd2? Qdb4+ and 9.Qf1? Qdb4 10.Qf4 L. Rozentalis – Eliseev, corr. 1990, 10...Wa6+N 11.Qe2 Qg4+ are both clearly close to being lost for White.)



9... $\mathbb{Q}db4!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ bxc6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$
12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6↑

B1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

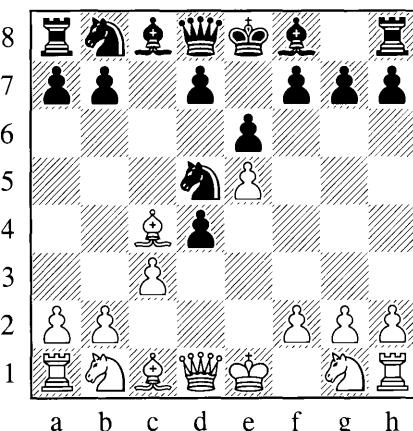
Black has the choice of keeping his knight in the centre with **B11) 4...e6**, or simply retreating it with **B12) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$** . In my view both options are viable.

B11) 4...e6

This aims to transpose to our 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ main line.

5.d4 cxd4

White's only attempt at deviation is as follows:

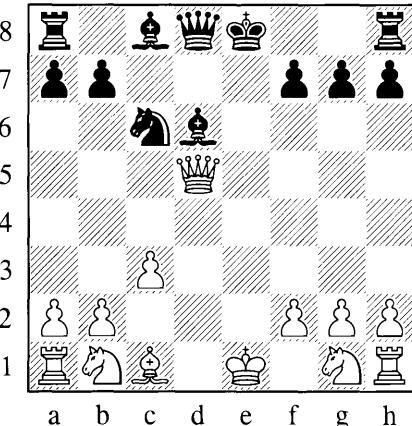


6. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

6.cxd4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ transposes to Chapter 8.

6...exd5 7. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ d6 9.exd6
 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

I consider Black's compensation to be sufficient for the pawn in this position.



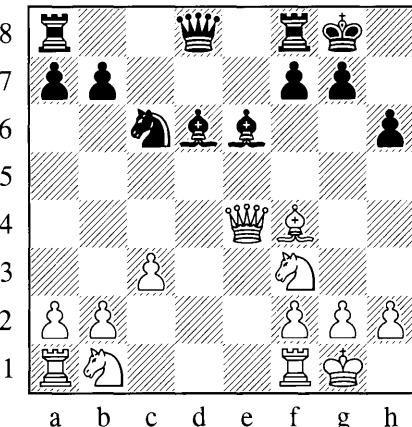
10. $\mathbb{W}e4\#$!

Dangerous is 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (11.0–0?? $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$) 11... $\mathbb{E}e8\#$, in view of the lurking trap 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2??$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$!–.

However, even after 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or 12. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, Black is doing well.

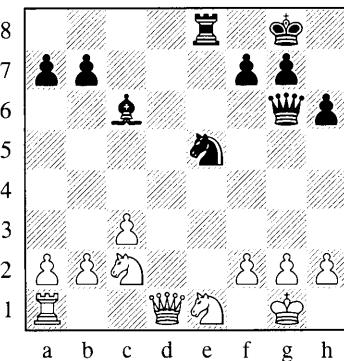
10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6 12.0–0 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 18.c4 $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ gives Black at least enough play for the pawn; White has lost the strong d4-base for his pieces, a fact which renders our bishop pair dangerous.



13...♝c5!?

13...♝e8N 14.♗xd6 ♜xd6 15.♗e1 (15.♗c2 ♜g4 16.♗bd2 ♜e2 17.♗b3 ♜e5 18.♗xe5 ♜xe5 19.♗c4 ♜c7 20.♗e3 ♜e6 21.♗b5 ♜d2 22.♗fd1 a6 23.♗b4 a5 24.♗b5 ♜ad8 25.♗xd2 ♜xd2= should not worry Black either) 15...♝d7 16.♗c2 ♜xe1† 17.♗xe1 ♜e8 18.♗a3 ♜e5 19.♗d1 ♜g6 20.♗ac2 ♜c6



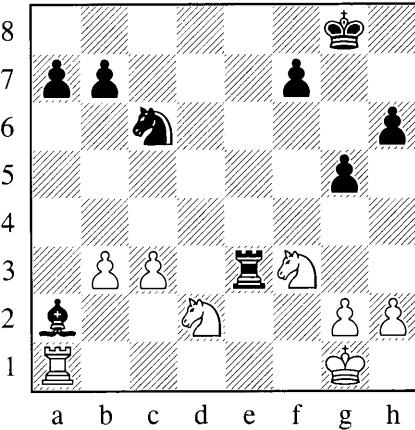
This is another way to play for Black. I regard the alignment of his forces as excellent, offering him sufficient play for the pawn. The computer suggests 21.b3 (21.♗d4 ♜d3!!† is one brilliant point), but then 21...♝e4 22.♗d4 ♜c6 23.♗df3 ♜e5 24.♗xe5 ♜xe5 25.f3 ♜f5 should easily hold the balance. White is suffering in view of his passive e1-knight.

14.♗bd2 ♜e8 15.♗ae1

15.b4 ♜f8 15.♗c2!N ♜d5 16.♗fe1 ♜ad8 17.b4 ♜f8 18.a4 may have been the best try, when 18...♜c8! 19.♗b1 g5 20.♗e4 ♜g7 21.♗d1 ♜c4 22.♗e3 ♜ed8 23.♗fd2 ♜d5 24.b5 ♜e7 produces a tense fight.

15...♝xa2 16.♗xe8† ♜xe8 17.♗xe8† ♜xe8 18.b3 g5 19.♗e3 ♜xe3 20.fxe3 ♜xe3 21.♗a1N

21.♗c1 g4 22.♗f1 was played in Lazar – Kozul, Rogaska Slatina 2011, and here Zdenko should have chosen 22...♜e2 23.♗d2 ♜a5 24.♗a1 ♜xb3 25.♗xa2 a5 26.♗b2 a4 27.♗a2 ♜e5 28.c4 bxc4 29.♗xa4 ♜xd2=.



21...♝xb3 22.♗xb3 ♜xc3 23.♗bd4 ♜xd4
24.♗xd4 a6=

The ensuing ending is balanced.

B12) 4...♝b6

I have chosen this to be our main line, because I consider it to be the most complicated way to play.

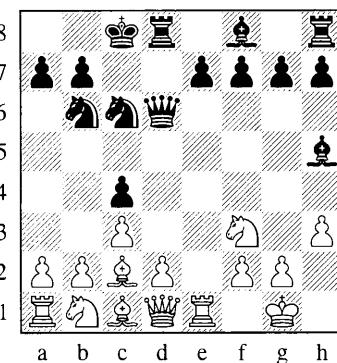
5.♗b3 d5!

I like this solid option here.

5...c4 6.♗c2 ♜c6 7.♗f3 d6! 8.exd6 ♜xd6 9.0–0 ♜g4

9...g6 is also possible, and in fact quite theoretical, but I am going to refrain from analysing it here.

10.h3 ♜h5 11.♗e1 0–0–0



12.♕e4!?

This move, which has been played in a few correspondence games, has caused me a great deal of worry. White keeps open the option of a direct a2-a4-a5 in some positions.

12.b3 ♕f6 13.♕e4 ♔e5 14.g4 ♔xf3† 15.♔xf3 ♕xf3 16.♔xf3 ♕g6 17.♔a3 e6 seems to give Black the more pleasant ending.

12...♕f6

12...e6 13.b3 f5 14.♔c2 ♔e5N 15.♗xe5 ♕xf3 16.♕e1 ♕d5 17.♔a3 ♕c6 18.bxc4 ♔xc4 19.♔xc4 ♕xc4 20.d3 ♔d5 21.f3 ♕c5† 22.♔e3 ♕d6 23.♔d4 ♕xe5 24.♔xe5∞ looks like a sturdier try, although White has dangerous compensation for the exchange.

13.a4! ♔e5

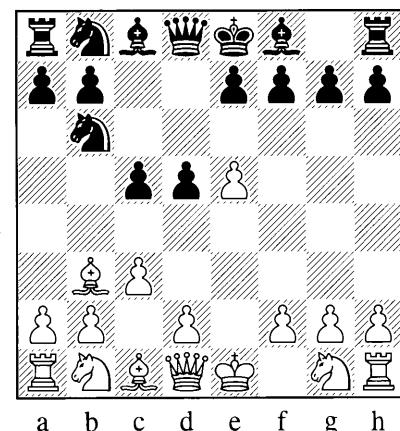
13...♔d7 14.d4 cxd3 15.♔e3 ♕g6 16.♔xc6 ♕xc6 17.♔xa7 e5 18.♔xe5 ♔xe5 19.♔xe5 ♕d6 20.♔e3 ♕c7 21.♔d2 ♕he8 22.a5† led to a White win in Ghysens – Tolstik, corr. 2012.

14.d4! ♔xf3†

14...cxd3 15.♔bd2† looks unpleasant for Black with g2-g4 coming.

15.gxf3 a5 16.♕e2 e6 17.♔a3 ♔b8 18.b3! ♔d5 19.♔b5 ♔d6 20.bxc4 ♔f4 21.♔f1 ♕g5† 22.♔h2! ♕h4 23.♔xd6 ♕xd6 24.♔a3 ♕d7 25.♔ab1

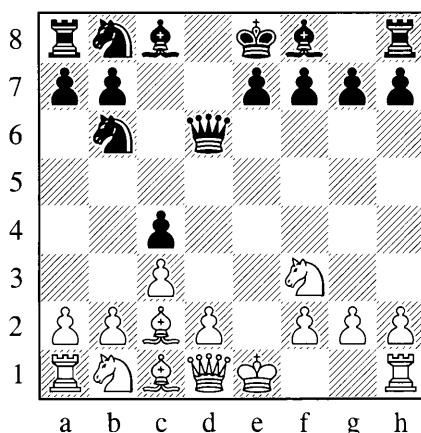
Black had an unpleasant position and went on to lose in Pospisil – Tiemann, corr. 2010.



6.exd6 ♕xd6 7.♔f3

7.♔a3 ♕f5N 8.d4 cxd4 9.♔b5 ♕c6 10.♔xd4 ♕xg2 11.♔f3 ♕xf3 12.♔gx3 ♕g6 13.♔b5 ♔a6, to be followed by ...e6, hardly looks worrying for Black.

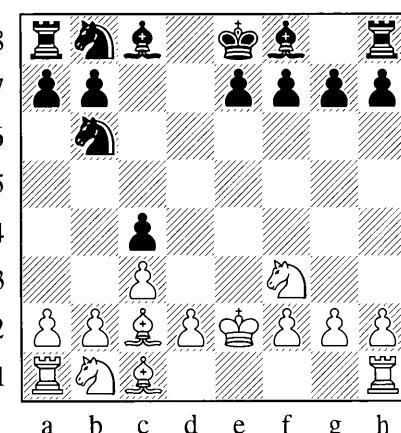
7...c4 8.♔c2



8...♕e6†

This is the important move, leading to the loss of castling for White.

9.♕e2 ♕xe2† 10.♔xe2



10...f6!N

Preparing to take a strong grip on the centre by playing ...e5.

11.b3

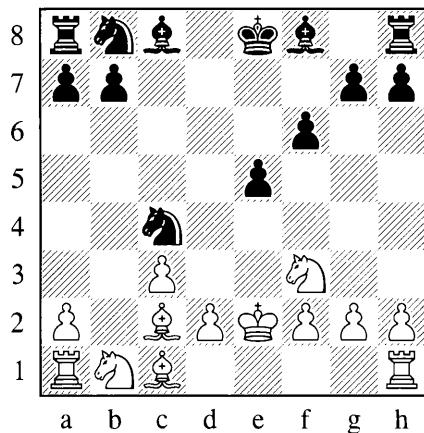
11.♘a3 e5 12.♗b5 ♘a6!?

11...e5 12.bxc4

12.♘a3 ♕e6 13.♗b5 ♘a6?!

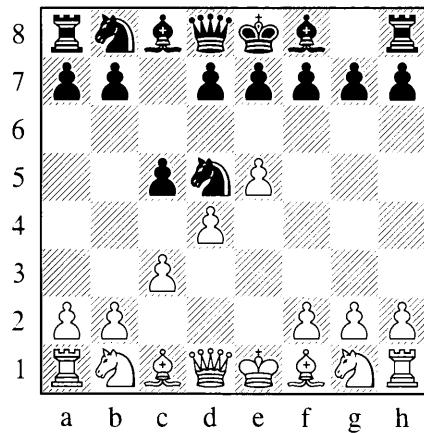
12...♗xc4?!

I am reasonably optimistic about our chances, favouring Black in the present position: his king will be safe on f7 and he has two pawn islands compared to White's three. One variation I have in mind is:



13.d3 ♘a5! 14.d4 exd4 15.♗xd4 ♕d7
16.♕e1 ♘bc6 17.♔f1† ♕f7 18.♗b3 ♕e6

Black has good chances to press for a long time, with no risk involved.

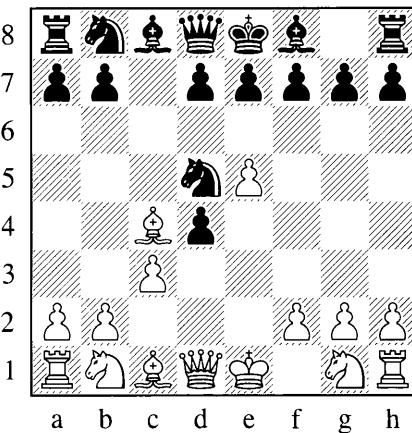
B2) 4.d4

This direct move is less elastic than 4.♗f3, but may transpose anyway.

4...cx d4

We will focus on B21) 5.♕c4, B22) 5.cxd4 and B23) 5.♗xd4.

5.♗f3 e6 6.cxd4 d6 may well be White's best option, transposing back to our main line repertoire.

B21) 5.♕c4

This can clearly be met in typical repertoire fashion by 5...e6, which transposes to line B11 above. For those wishing to avoid the relatively drawish positions that arise in that case, my recommendation is:

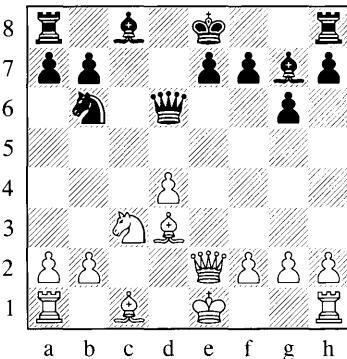
5...♗c7?!

The important main line runs as follows:

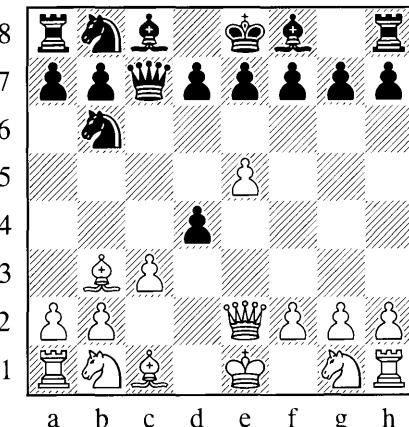
6.♗e2 ♘b6 7.♔b3!

After 7.♔d3 ♘c6 8.♗f3 d5! 9.exd6 ♗xd6 10.♗xd4 (10.0–0?! ♗g4! 11.♗d1 g6 is more pleasant for Black), the simplest solution is 10...♗xd4? 11.cxd4 g6 12.♗c3 ♗g7∞ with a decent position for Black. His king will be quite safe and, with just three pairs of minor pieces left on the board, it is more likely that the isolated d-pawn will turn out to be a

weakness than a strength. A relatively recent game continued:



13.0–0 0–0 14.♘b5 ♖d8 15.♗g5 (15.♗f4!N ♗d5 16.♗e5 a6 17.♗c3 ♗e6 18.♗xg7 ♗xg7 19.♗fe1? would have offered White more chances of keeping the equilibrium.) 15...♗e6 16.♗fd1 ♗d5 17.♗c3 Tovillas – Perez Ponsa, Buenos Aires 2013. Most accurate would have been 17...♗c8N 18.♗ac1 ♗a5↑ with annoying pressure for Black.

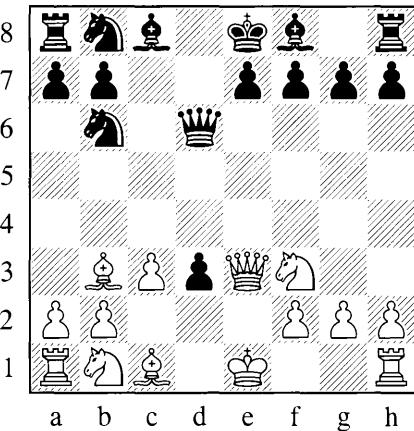


7...d5! 8.exd6 ♖xd6 9.♗f3!

9.cxd4?! ♗c6! saw Black go on to win in Voller – Firt, Czech Republic 1997.

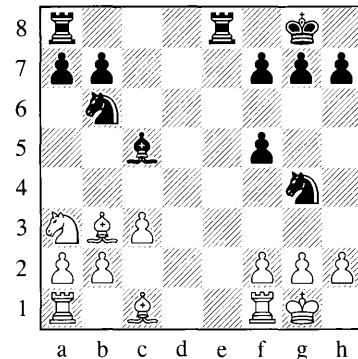
9...d3! 10.♗e3N

10.♗e4 ♗8d7?



10...♗f5!! 11.♗a3

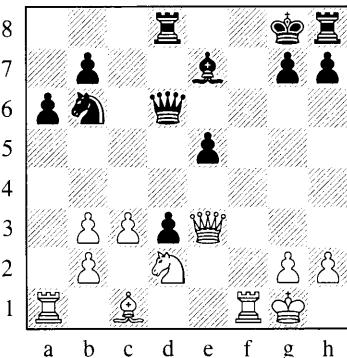
11.♗d4 does not bring White any advantage, in view of: 11...♗g6! 12.0–0 e6 13.♗xf5 (13.♗b5?! ♗a6+) 13...♗xf5 14.♗d1 ♗c5 15.♗f4 ♗c6 16.♗xf5 exf5 17.♗xd3 ♗e5 18.♗d1 0–0 19.♗a3 ♗g4 20.♗f1 ♗fe8= White has two bishops and the better pawn structure, but Black's strong piece placement and better development are quite significant factors.



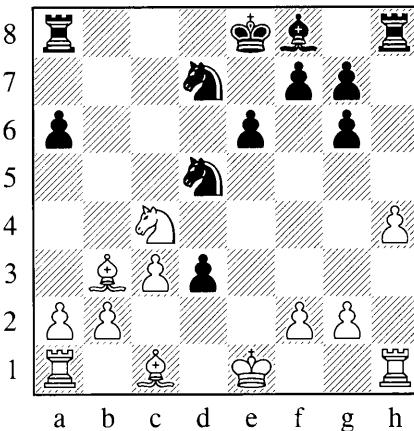
21.♗c2 a5 22.a4 g6 23.♗d4 ♗e5 24.♗d1 ♗d3
Black gets the precious dark-squared bishop, and should be fully equal in due course.

11...a6 12.♗h4??

Also possible is 12.♗d4?! ♗g6 13.f4! ♗c6 14.f5 ♗xd4 15.fxg6 ♗xb3 16.gxf7† ♗xf7 17.0–0† ♗g8 18.axb3 e5 19.♗b1 ♗d8 20.♗d2 ♗e7? The main thing here is to play ...h6 and get the king to safety, so White should hurry:



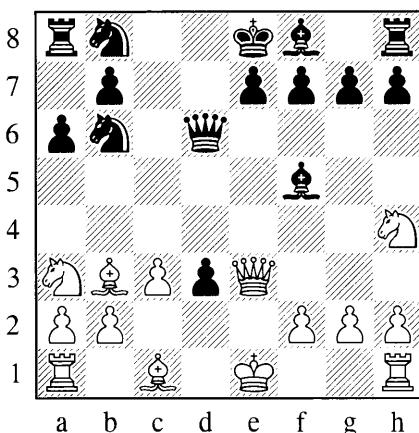
21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 23. $\mathbb{E}a5$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=)$ 23... $h6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ = is an instructive line.



18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}a7\#$

The position is difficult to evaluate, in view of the total imbalance in the pawn structure.

B22) 5.cxd4



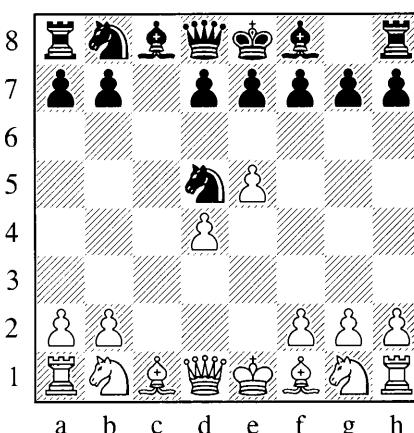
12... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f3!$ $e6$
15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8d7$
15... $\mathbb{W}e5\#?$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a7$ 0–0 20. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$
21. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xa1$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
24. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $d2=$ is a more concrete line.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Although the d3-pawn may appear weak, the position is still very complicated.

18. $h4$

18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $f6$!, planning ...0–0–0 or even ... $\mathbb{E}c8$, is not clear either.



We will not devote too much time and space to this move.

5... $d6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

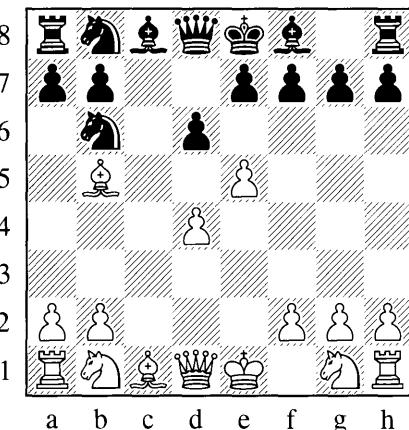
An independent try.

6... $e6$ transposes to our standard positions, examined later on in Chapters 8 and 9.

7. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$

7. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$! $dxe5$ 8. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $e6$ 9. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d3!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

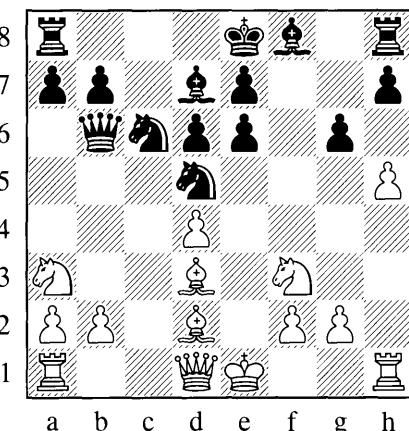
$\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3N$ 16. $bxc3$ b6!? leads to approximately balanced positions. In the endings that are likely to arise, White's broken queenside pawns will give Black enough chances to play for a win.



7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8.e6!? $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 10.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$
11.h5 $\mathbb{W}a5\#$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$
13... $\mathbb{W}xd4??$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3!+-$

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

As played in Kouba – Wassilieff, corr. 2012.
My suggestion is:



14...gxh5N 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Intending to castle long. Originally I considered the position as slightly better for Black, but things may not be entirely clear.

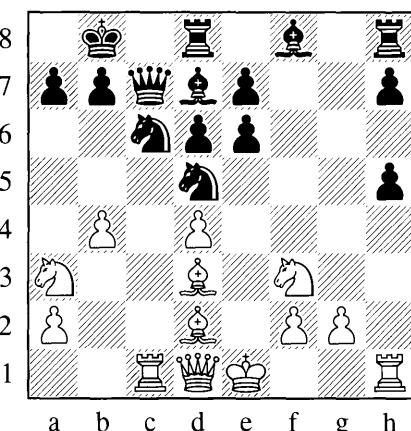
16. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$

White anticipates our castling manoeuvre.

16...0–0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

17. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ is a fine point in our favour.

17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18.b4



18...b5!

The star move, temporarily halting White's offensive so as to allow Black the necessary respite to find counter-chances.

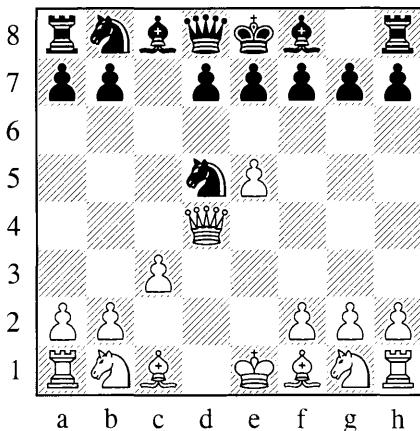
18... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ is better for White.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ is another position requiring analysis, but I don't feel Black can be worse.

19... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

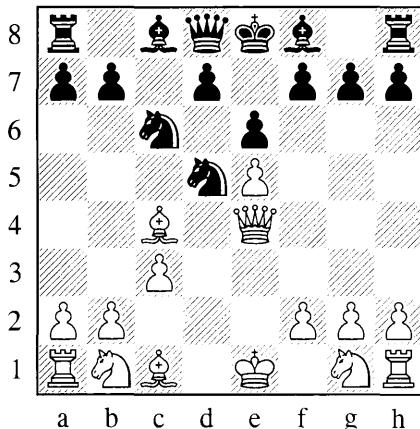
Producing a tense position with chances for both sides. What makes me optimistic for Black is some X-ray pressure against g2, and the fact that his own b-pawn shields White's attack.

B23) 5.♕xd4

Trying to develop some kind of momentum, this move has the obvious disadvantage of bringing the queen out too early. As we will soon witness, Black gets an excellent game by utilizing the opportunities offered to harass Her Majesty.

5...e6

Now **B231) 6.♗c4** shouldn't cause us too many problems, while the main move is **B232) 6.♘f3**.

B231) 6.♗c4 ♘c6 7.♕e4

7...♗de7!

The knight is redeployed to g6 to attack the sensitive e5-pawn, giving Black an excellent game.

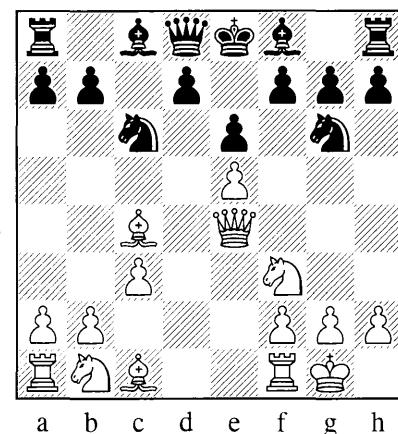
8.♘f3

Clearly this developing move has to be preferred.

Instead, 8.♗f4 ♘g6 9.♗g3 ♘gxe5!! (9...f6?! also looks good) 10.♗xe5 d5 11.♗xd5 exd5 12.♕e3 ♕e6 13.♗d2 ♖b6 14.♗xb6 axb6 is better for Black.

8...♘g6 9.0-0

9.♗b5?! ♖c7 10.♗xc6 ♖xc6 11.♗xc6 (11.♗bd2 b6 is at least slightly better for Black too) 11...bxc6 12.0-0 f6! 13.♗e1 ♖b7+ gave Black a clear advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and pawn centre, in Semeniuk – Yuferov, USSR 1977.

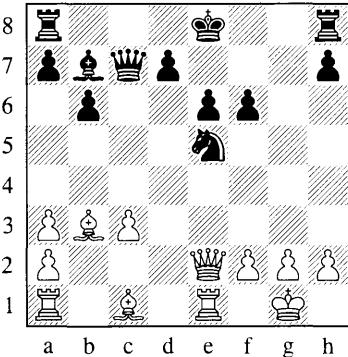
**9...♖c7 10.♗e1 b6!**

10...♗cxe5 11.♗xe5 ♘gxe5 12.♕xe5 ♖xc4 13.♗a3 ♖c6 14.♗c2 d6 15.♗g3∞ allows White certain compensation for the pawn.

11.♗bd2

11.♗b3?! ♖b7 12.♗e2 f6! 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♗a3 ♖xa3 15.bxa3 ♘ce5! (An improvement over 15...0-0-0 16.♗d4! ♗f4 17.♗xf4 ♖xf4 Timoschenko – Zaichik, USSR 1977, when

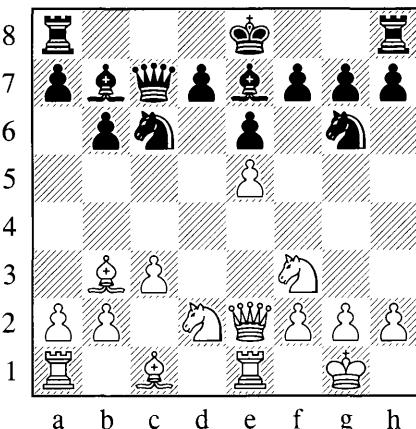
after 18.♕c4!N∞ things are not so clear.)
16.♘xe5 ♘xe5†



This was Troger – Pock, corr. 1997, where Black had a dream position: White has no serious antidote to Black's looming pressure against g2. The game continued: 17.♗g5?? (17.♗f4!N would have been a better choice, but even then 17...♗c6 18.f3 ♗g8 19.♗g3 leaves White with an unenviable defensive task after either 19...h5→ or 19...♗c8?!→.) 17...♗c6! 18.♗h5† ♘f7+ White soon had to resign.

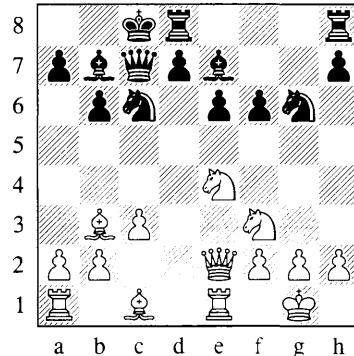
11...♗b7 12.♗e2 ♗e7 13.♗b3!

13.♗b3? ♘cxe5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xc4 16.♗xg7 0–0–0 17.♗d4 ♘c6 18.f3 ♘hg8 19.♗f1 ♘g6→ is a bad position for White, who has nothing in return for Black's strong attack.



13...0–0–0

13...f6!N 14.exf6 gxf6 15.♗e4 0–0–0∞ is my suggestion for those who wish to play for a win as Black. Without an exchange of light-squared bishops handy, White may be facing a serious attack here. The computer gives:



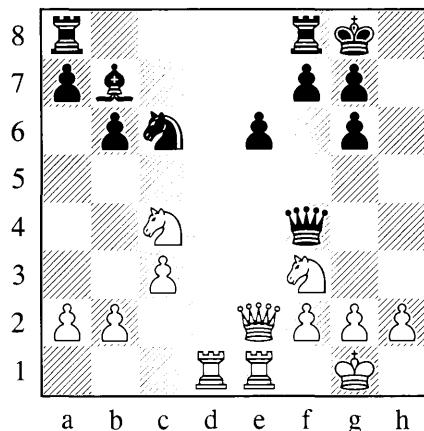
16.♗d4 ♘f4 17.♗xf4 ♘xf4 18.♗ad1 ♘b8 19.g3 ♘hg8 20.♗h5 ♘g4 21.♗xc6† ♘xc6 22.♗xg4 ♘xg4 23.♗d2 h5 24.♗c2 h4 25.♗e4 White seems to be holding, but this line may be susceptible to improvement.

14.♗c2 d6

14...♗ad8N∞ is the last chance to keep the position unclear.

15.exd6 ♘xd6 16.♗c4 ♘f4 17.♗xg6 hxg6 18.♗xf4 ♘xf4 19.♗ad1

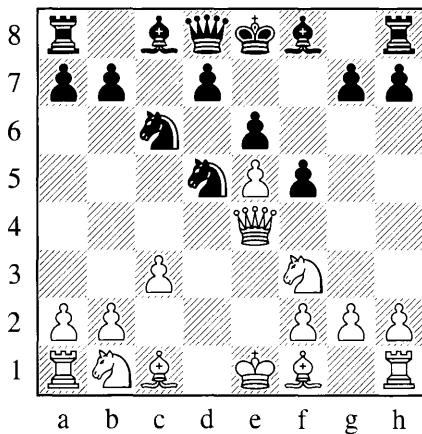
Here a draw was agreed in Sandaogo – Dempster, corr. 2005. I will give the following variation for completeness:



- 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 22. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$

The position is completely level.

B232) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5!



Black's last move gains time while improving his kingside prospects. White can capture with **B2321) 8.exf6** or retreat the queen immediately: **B2322) 8.We2**.

B2321) 8.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

White must decide where to put his queen: **B23211) 9.Wc2** or **B23212) 9.Wh4**.

B23211) 9.Wc2

This looks rather passive, but it may be just tenable.

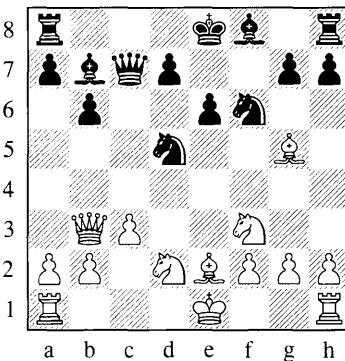
9...Wc7 10.Qd3!

This might be the only way to maintain chances of equality.

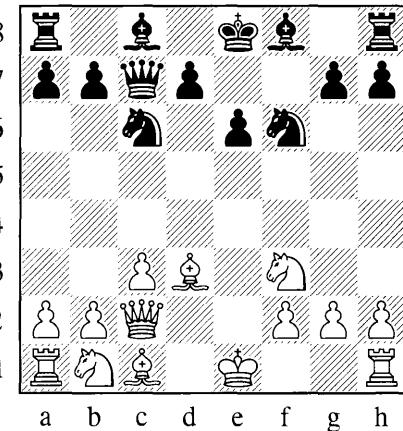
10.Qg5?! d5! 11.Qbd2 Qd6= 12.Qb3? (12.Qxf6N gxf6 13.c4 is a better way of playing, although Black maintains an edge after 13...Qd7 14.Qe2 0-0-0 15.a3 Qb8↑ due to his two bishops and better developed position.) 12...0-0 13.Qd3 e5 14.Qxf6 gxf6

15.Qf5 e4 16.Qfd4 Qxf5 17.Qxf5 Qb4= Black was much better in Galvao – Paramos Dominguez, Evora 2008.

10.Qe2 b6 11.Qg5 Qb7 12.Qbd2 Qb4 13.Wb3 Qbd5= is already an excellent position for Black, featured in one of my own games:



14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15.Wc4 h6 16.Qh4 Qf4 17.Qg3 Q6h5= I went on to win in Trifonas – Kotronias, Korinthos 1997.



10...Qe7!

10...Qc5?N= also seems fully playable.

11.0–0 b6

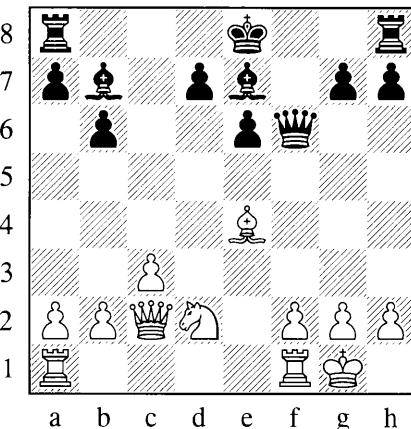
11...0–0?N is an interesting alternative, based on the idea 12.Qg5 (or 12.Qbd2 d5= and the d2-knight feels clumsy) 12...h6 13.Qxf6 Qxf6 14.Qbd2 d5=. By expanding

in the centre, Black should be slightly better – he has the two bishops and no apparent weaknesses. For example, 15.♗fe1 e5 16.c4 e4 17.cxd5 exd3 18.♗c4 ♗f7 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♗ad1 ♗xb2 21.♗xf7† ♗xf7 22.♗c4 ♗f6 and it is obvious that White is struggling to equalize.

12.♗g5! ♗b7 13.♗bd2!

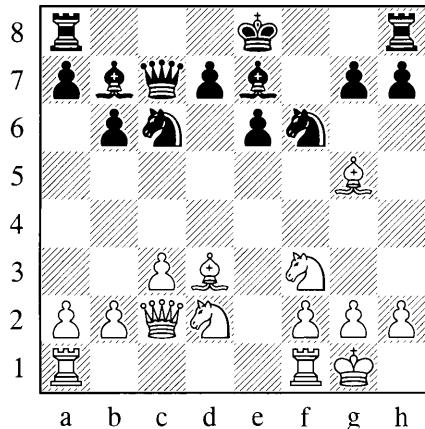
An improvement for White.

13.♗e2?! ♗g4! 14.g3 ♗ce5 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♗e4 d5 17.♗f4, as played in Westerinen – Cramling, Alicante 1989, should be slightly worse for White after 17...dxe4N 18.♗h5† g6 19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 0–0 21.♗d4 ♗ad8 22.♗d2 ♗g5† although, admittedly, it is less clear than I originally thought.



16...d5 17.♗a4† ♗f7 18.♗c2 ♗hf8 19.♗f3 ♗g8=

With a balanced position. I will give a further plausible variation:



13...♗e5!

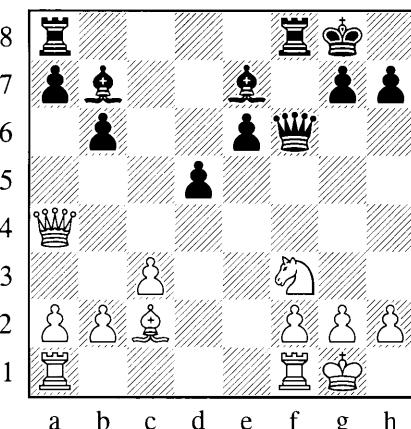
It feels right to exchange a pair of knights to unveil the power of the b7-bishop, however things are not so clear.

14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xf6!

15.f4 ♗c7 was unclear in Ziffer – Da Silva Filho, email 2002.

15...♗xf6 16.♗e4!

This is White's idea: opposing bishops on the long diagonal. Black must make a concession to keep his bishop pair.



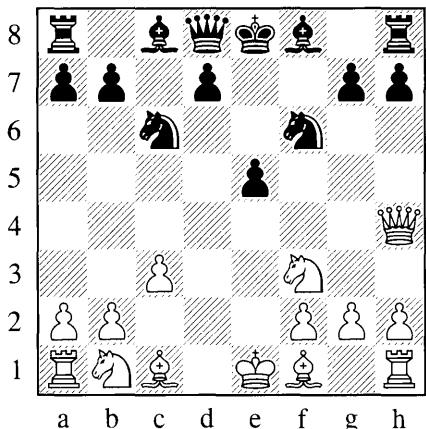
20.♗ae1 a5! 21.♗g4 ♗c8 22.♗e5 ♗c5
23.♗h1 ♗d6 24.f4! ♗xe5 25.♗h5 g6
26.♗xe5 ♗xe5 27.♗xe5 b5=

Black's counterplay with ...b4 comes just in time.

B23212) 9.♗h4 e5!?

This powerful move seems to tip the scales in Black's favour.

9...d5 10.♗d3 ♗d6! is at least equal for Black. However, the text is simpler and more effective.



10.♕b5

White's only move. 10.♕d3?? is a clear blunder in view of 10...e4+.

10.♕g5 is met simply by 10...♕e7, since 11.♕d3 d5 12.♕g6† ♕f8# leaves White in an awful state of discoordination.

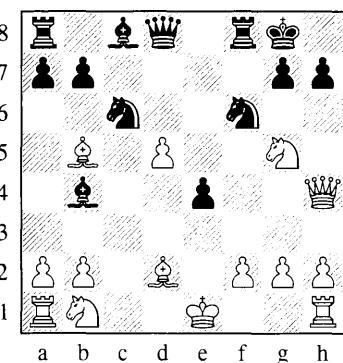
10...e4 11.♕g5 d5

I have not been able to find any resource for White to challenge the idea that Black already stands better.

12.0–0

Apparently the lesser evil.

12.c4? ♕b4# is close to winning for Black. 13.♕d2 (13.♕c3 d4 14.♕xc6† bxc6 15.a3 ♕a5 16.b4 dxc3 17.bxa5 ♕d3+) 13...0–0 14.cxd5 was N. Kosintseva – Trofimova, Kolontaevo 1997.



14...♗xd2†N 15.♕xd2 ♔d4 16.♕a4 ♕a5 17.♔d1 ♕e8# clinches the issue immediately.

Another move that fails to address the problems of the position is 12.♕e3?, when 12...♕e7 13.♕d4 ♕f5 14.♕f4 ♕d7# was already lost for White in W. Moser – Neumann, Germany 1988.

12...a6!#

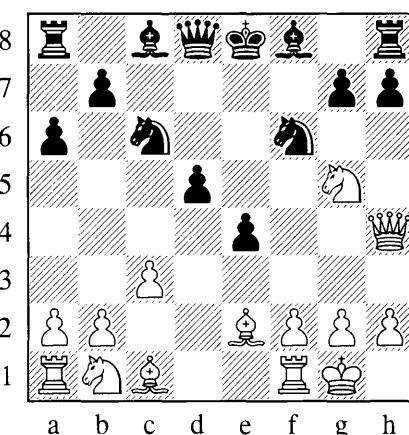
Black is aiming for a solid centre.

12...h6?! is not as strong due to 13.c4!N, which undermines Black's central control. After 13...♕g8 14.cxd5 hxg5 15.♕xg5 ♕xd5 16.♕c3 ♕f5 17.♕ae1 ♕f7 18.♕c4† ♕e6 19.♕xe6† ♕xe6 20.♕xe4 ♕f5 21.♕e3 White has good compensation for the sacrificed piece.

13.♕e2!?

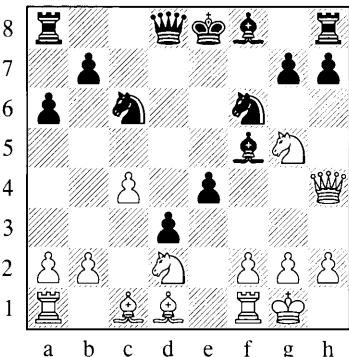
White at least tries to make a fight out of the game.

Instead, 13.♕a4?! b5 14.♕b3 ♕e5! 15.♕d2 ♕g6 16.♕g3 ♕d6 17.f4 ♕f5# was fairly dismal for White in Sobh – Hakki, Cairo 2003.



13...♗d6!N

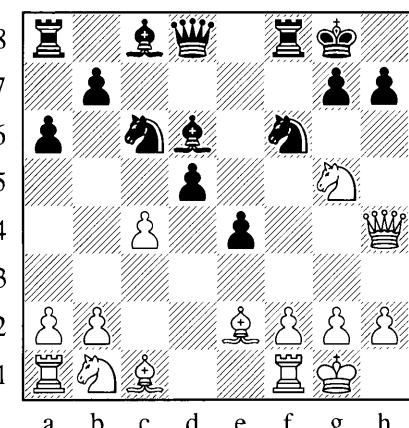
I prefer this natural developing move, preparing to castle and eyeing h2. Alternatively: 13...♕f5 14.c4! d4 15.♕d2 d3 16.♔d1



16... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17.c5!! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 18.g4! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 21.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2\infty$ is a mess where White could be just okay.) 17. $\mathbb{W}f4$ g6 (17... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}dx4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa1\bar{t}$ leads to a position where White might be holding, but obviously the onus is on him.) 18. $\mathbb{Q}dx4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ d2 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\bar{t}$ bxc6 25. $\mathbb{W}xc6\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d5\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e5\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}ed5$ A balanced ending had arisen in Van Enk – Tenev, corr. 2008.

14.c4 0-0

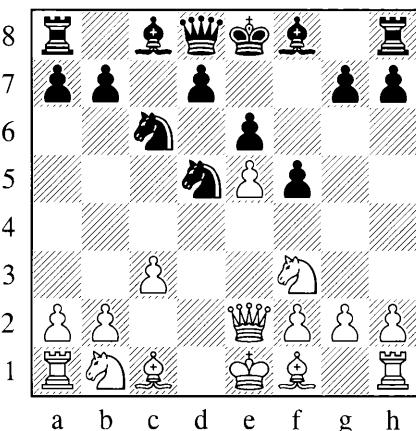
14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17.cxd5 h6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4\infty$



15.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ h6 \bar{t}

White is obviously struggling an exchange down, but on the other hand there are certain drawing chances.

B2322) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$



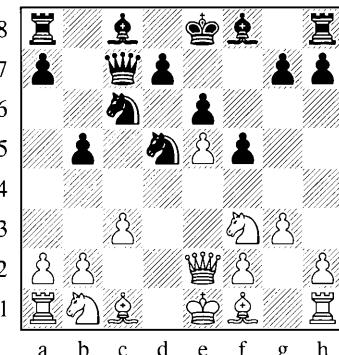
This is probably the most critical reply at this point.

8...b5!

Black tries to establish the knight on the powerful d5-base as quickly as possible. I have always liked cases where tactical nuances serve a strategic aim, and this is such an example.

8... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9.g3 b5?

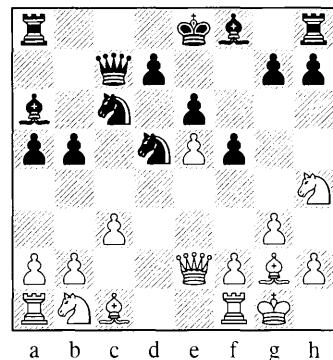
This time it is not even a pawn sacrifice. 9...d6 also comfortably equalizes for Black in due course.



10.♕g2

10.♕xb5 ♜xe5 11.♕xe5 ♜xe5† 12.♕e2 ♜xe2† 13.♕xe2 ♜b7 was level in M. Zaitsev – Drabke, Germany 2005.

10...a5 11.0–0 ♜a6 12.♕h4?



12...b4! 13.♕h5†

13.c4 g6 14.b3 ♜g7 15.f4 0–0= Shishkov – Fernandez Vicente, email 2006.

13...g6 14.♕xg6 hxg6 15.♕xg6†
 15.♕xh8 ♜xf1 16.♕xd5 exd5 17.♕h6 0–0–0
 18.♕xf8 ♜d3 19.♕d2 bxc3 20.bxc3 ♜xe5∞
 15...♕d8 16.♕xd5 ♜c8 17.♕f6 ♜g8 18.♕g2
 ♜xf1 19.♕xf1 ♜c5 20.♕f4N

20.♕d2 bxc3 21.bxc3 ♜b8= Da Fonseca – Leite, email 2006.

20...♜b7 21.cxb4

21.♕d2 ♜af8=

21...axb4 22.♕d2

22.♕h6 ♜d4†

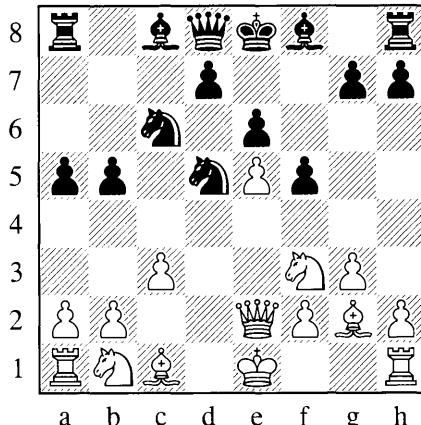
22...♜af8 23.♕h6 ♜h8=

With a verdict of equality.

White can choose to ignore the pawn with B23221) 9.g3 or grab it with B23222)
 9.♕xb5.

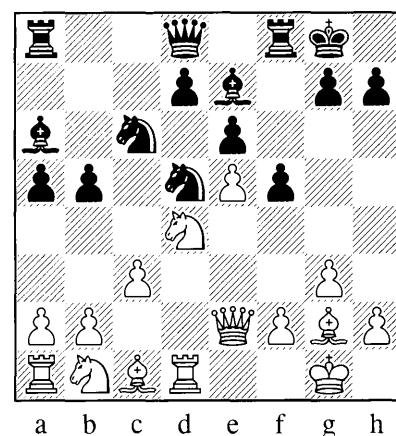
B23221) 9.g3 a5 10.♕g2

10.♕xb5?! is now bad in view of 10...a4!
 11.♕e2 ♜c7 12.♕bd2 a3†.



10...♜e7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♕d1 ♜a6 13.♕d4

13.♕bd2 just looks bad to me, in view of the cunning 13...a4 14.♕e1 b4 15.c4 ♜c8† with huge pressure for Black.



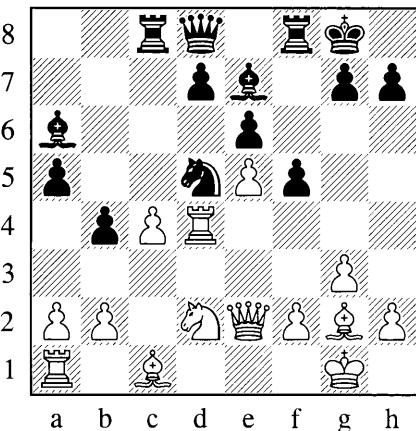
13...♜xd4! 14.♕xd4 b4 15.c4

Weaker is 15.♕d1 ♜c7 16.♕xd5?! exd5
 17.♕xd5 ♜c6 with a clear advantage to Black.

15...♜c8 16.♕d2

This position was reached by transposition in Mamedjarova – Smirin, Baku 2010.

16.b3 ♜c5 17.♕xd5 exd5 18.♕xd5† ♜h8
 19.♕d2 (19.a3 ♜b6 20.axb4 ♜xb4†)
 19...♕d4 20.♕b1 ♜c5! 21.♕f3 ♜e7 22.♕f1
 ♜xe5 23.♕f4 ♜d6 24.♕e3 ♜cc8† gives White no real compensation for the exchange.



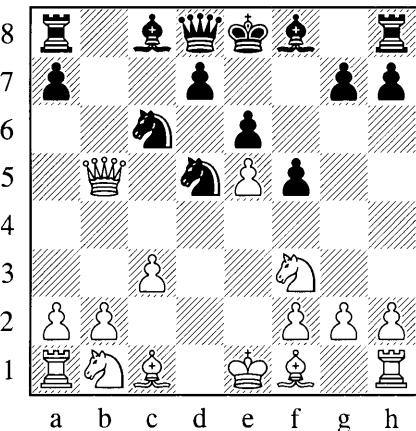
16... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ N 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c5$

Forcing a displacement of the white rook.

**18. $\mathbb{E}h4 \mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 20.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$
21. $\mathbb{E}h5 \mathbb{Q}b7\#$**

Black is much better: with such an awful rook on h5, White will hardly survive.

B23222) 9. $\mathbb{W}xb5$



Most certainly the critical test.

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$

This is the point: Black develops with gain of time, and will have more punches available against the white queen to substantiate his compensation.

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a5!

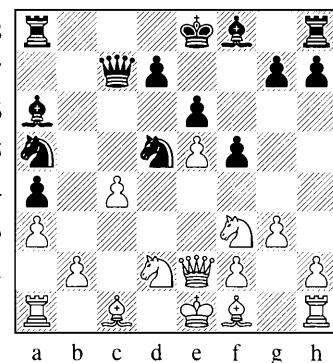
The bishop is coming to a6. With a safe kingside and a juicy target on e5 to pile up on, Black seems to have at least enough for his pawn investment.

11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2N$

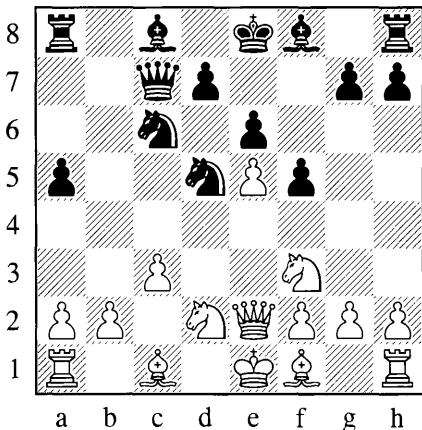
The best move, although the position is already worse for White.

Instead, 11.c4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d1$ (12.g3 transposes to the next line) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ allows Black a double attack which ensures he regains his pawn: 13.c5 (13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ e5!# also looks awful) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ White's position was dire in Deviatkin – Najer, Moscow 2007.

After 11.g3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12.c4, the move 12...a4! is bad news for White. 13.a3 Trying to stave off invasions or checks on b4. (13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a5\#$ and 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}db4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ both emphasize the weakness of the c4-pawn.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



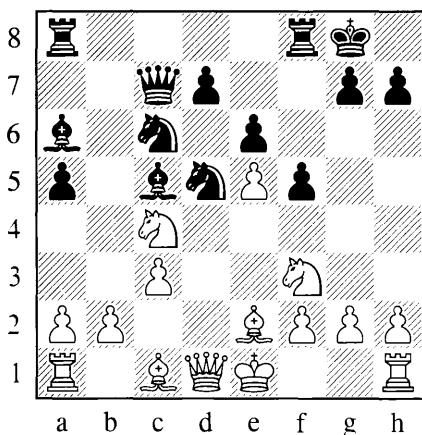
14... $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$? (Also good is 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6N\#$, when I don't see a way out for White.) 15.h3 0–0 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}axc4+$ White's opening strategy had been a complete disaster in Poulheim – Walter, corr. 2012, and he went on to lose quickly.



11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0 is also okay.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



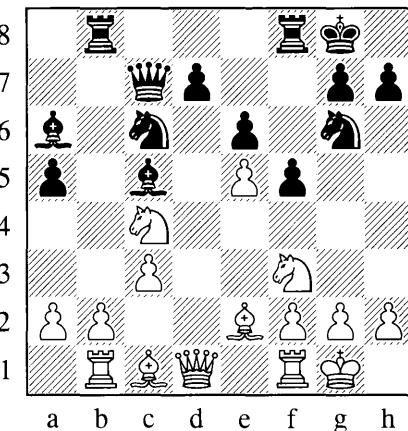
14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

I like this redeployment, directing Black's fire against the feeble e5-pawn.

White is also struggling after: 14... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ (15.0–0?! $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ leaves Black clearly on top. He has the better minor pieces and White is totally static – without even mentioning his weak pawn.) 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 20.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}g8\uparrow$ Best according to the engines. Black has

more than enough compensation, but White might be able to hold.

15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8\bar{f}$



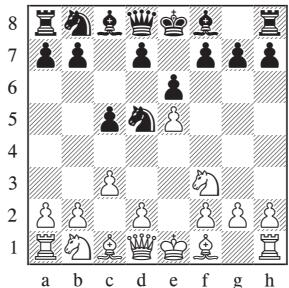
White is kept at bay. Black's position is wonderfully coordinated, and recovery of his pawn is possible at any moment. I think that Black has the better long-term chances because, as soon as the pawn falls, his central preponderance will be the most important factor in the position.

Conclusion

This chapter served as an introduction to the c3 Sicilian, and after 1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ focused on moves other than the 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ main line. Black is in excellent theoretical shape here, and I hope the reader will be satisfied with my attempts to inject some life into White's more insipid tries. In the lines where White plays more energetically I believe I offer a path to full equality for Black, with every chance to press later on in the game.



c3 Sicilian



Rare 5th Moves

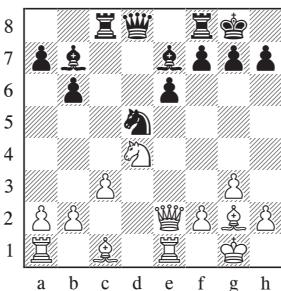
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘f3

4...e6

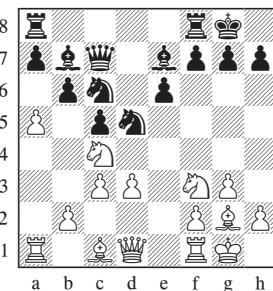
A) 5.c4	97
B) 5.♘a3	98
C) 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♗g2 d6 7.exd6 ♘xd6 8.0–0 0–0	100
C1) 9.♘a3	100
C2) 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♗c7 12.♘d2 ♗d7	
13.♘e4 ♗e5	102
C21) 14.♗d3	103
C22) 14.♗c5!?	104

C1) note to 10.d3



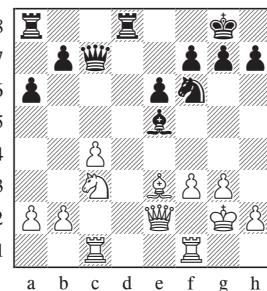
15....♗f6!N

C1) note to 13.♗e2!?



13...b5N

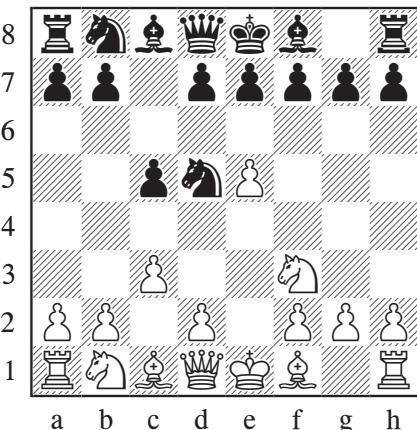
C2) note to 12.♘d2



19...♗ac8!N

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♜f6 3.e5 ♜d5 4.♗f3

The most logical and flexible development, which maintains several options for White.

**4...e6**

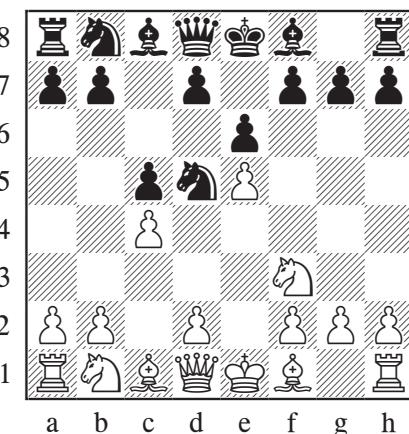
This provides us with a universal system against c3 Sicilians. It is a solid move: supporting the d5-knight and preparing to castle quickly.

At this point there are several less popular alternatives worth mentioning. I will only make a brief report of what I consider essential, to arm readers sufficiently for their tournament games. This chapter will cover A) 5.c4, B) 5.♗a3 and C) 5.g3.

5.d4 is covered in the next three chapters.

5.b4?! is an extravagant gambit which Black does best to accept. After 5...cxb4! 6.c4 ♜c7! 7.d4 d6 8.exd6 ♜xd6 9.♗d3 ♜c6 10.0–0 ♜e7! White has no real compensation for the pawn.

After 5.♗c4 I have analysed the move 5...♜b6! in detail, concluding that Black has a good game. However, in an ...e6 based repertoire like the present one, it would be a waste of time and energy to devote space to it. The simple 5...d6 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 is a direct transposition to our main line, featured in Chapters 8 and 9.

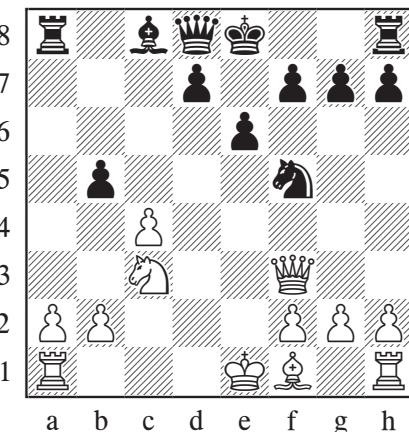
A) 5.c4

A time-consuming attempt to challenge control of d5.

5...♜e7!

Seeking to contest control of the critical d4-square. The main line of my analysis continues as follows:

6.♗c3 ♜bc6 7.d4! cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♜xe5
9.♗db5 ♜f5?! 10.♗f4! a6! 11.♗xe5 axb5
12.♗xb5 ♜b4† 13.♗c3 ♜xc3† 14.♗xc3 b5?!
15.♗f3
15.♗xb5 ♜b7=



15...d5!?:=

In my opinion, it is obvious that Black gets enough counterplay in return for the pawn here. He has superb piece activity and fast development.

16.cxb5

16.cxd5 0–0∞

16...♝d7 17.a4

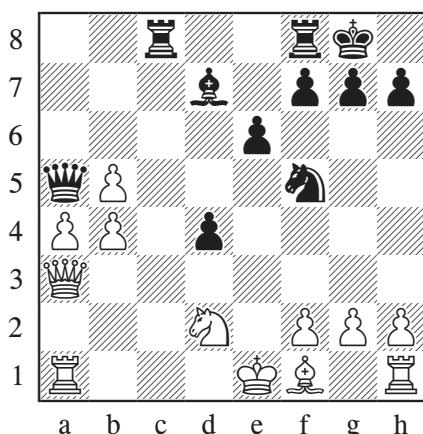
17.♗d3 d4 18.♗e4 ♜a5† 19.♗d2 0–0 20.♗a3
 ♜d6∞ is a complete mess. The white king is stuck temporarily in the centre, while Black threatens to take on b5.

17...d4 18.♗e4 ♜a5† 19.♗d2 0–0 20.♗a3 ♜ac8∞

20...♜fc8 21.♗d3 ♜h4 (21...♗e3 22.fxe3 dxe3 23.0–0 exd2 24.♗d6! is better for White)
 22.♗e4 ♜a7 23.b4 ♜d8 24.♗d3 f5 25.♗f3± gives White a slight edge, so the other rook move should be trusted more.

21.b4

After 21.♗d3 the knight invasion 21...♘e3! looks strong. 22.fxe3 dxe3 23.0–0 exd2 24.♗d6 does not work anymore, in view of 24...♞fd8†. Black coordinates his defences excellently, by putting the bishop on e8 next while maintaining the strong pawn on d2.



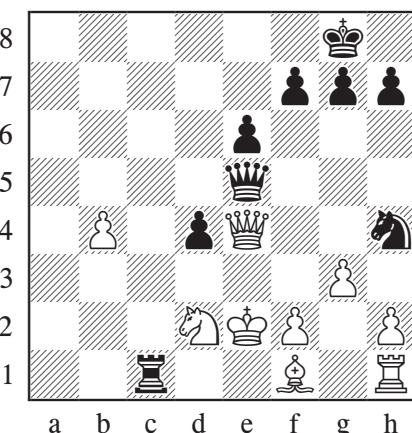
21...♝b6!

The weakness of the c3-square and White's stilted development gives Black excellent chances. For example:

22.♗c1 ♜xc1† 23.♗xc1 ♜c8 24.♗b1 ♜h4!
 25.g3 ♜b7 26.♗e4 ♜c1† 27.♗e2 ♜xb5†!

28.axb5 ♜xb5† 29.♗d3 ♜e5† 30.♗e4

30.♗e4?? ♜c3 would spoil White's day somewhat.



30...♜b5† 31.♗d3 ♜e5†=

With a picturesque perpetual check.

B) 5.♘a3

Putting the knight on the rim may look strange, but the idea is to control d6 – or even challenge the d5-knight by means of ♘c4–e3.

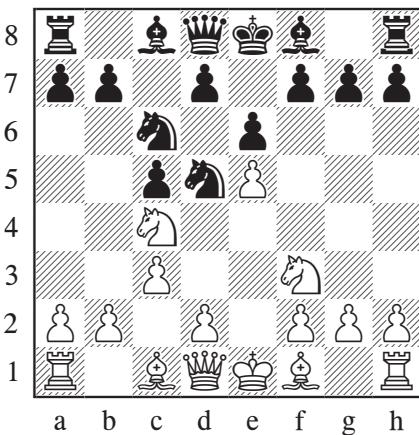
5...♘c6

5...d6 is another sound way to continue, but for the purposes of our repertoire I will rely upon the text.

6.♘c4

The only move to have any point.

After 6.♘b5 ♜c7 7.♘xc6 ♜xc6† Black is already threatening ...b5 and is slightly better.



6...Wc7!?

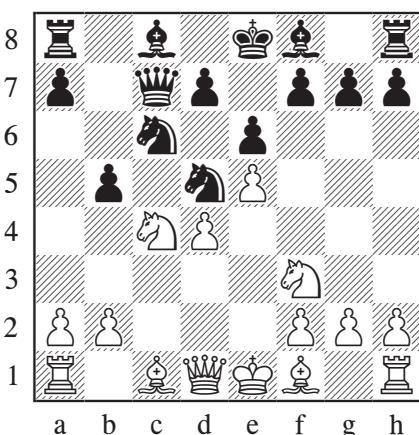
This move, covering d6 and intending ...b5, was the reason I decided to refrain from offering 5...d6. It leads to intriguing play, with excellent chances for Black.

6...b5 7.Dxe3 Dxe3 8.fxe3 Wb6 9.d4 leads to a position where White's play on the kingside, based on the newly opened f-file, might cause Black serious concerns later on. The Ukrainian GM Vladimir Baklan is a specialist in this line as White.

7.d4

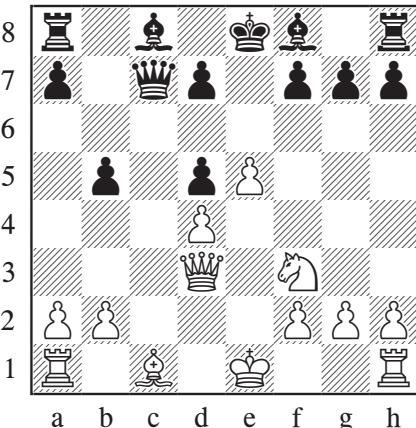
The obvious continuation. Black has no reason to worry after: 7.a4 Db6! 8.Dxb6 axb6 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d6 11.Db5 Dd7= With comfortable equality.

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 b5!



An incisive move, leaving Black with a pleasant position. The temporary weakness of the c2-square is an important factor that allows him to play in this fashion.

9.De3 Dcb4! 10.Dxd5 exd5! 11.Qd3 Dxd3† 12.Qxd3



12...Wc4!

This move is the point of the whole operation. White has to either undouble our pawns or stay with his king in the centre.

13.Wxc4

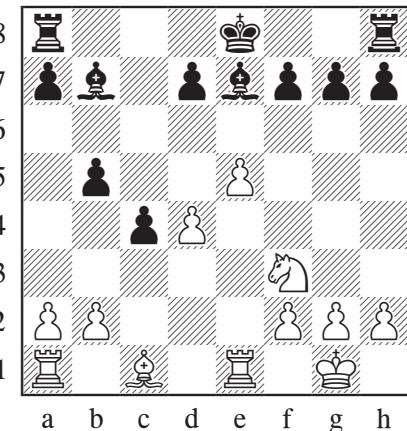
After 13.Wc4 b4! 14.b3 Wa6! 15.Qh4! g6 16.f4 Qe7 17.Qf3 d6 18.Qd2 Bb8 Black has successfully completed his development and is at least equal.

13...dxc4 14.0–0 Qb7

Black may even be slightly better at this stage.

15.Qe1 Qe7

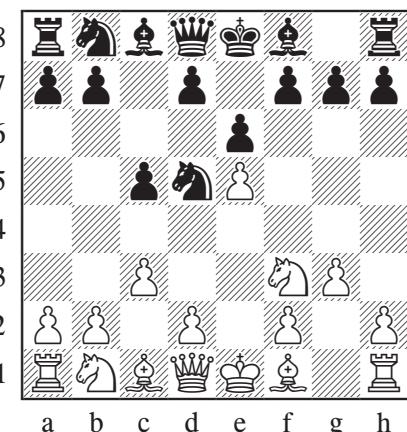
15...Bc8!N looks like a good way to play for the full point.



16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5
19. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$
22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

The position was balanced, and the players soon agreed to a draw, in Bontempi – Jurčík, Stare Mesto 2010.

C) 5.g3



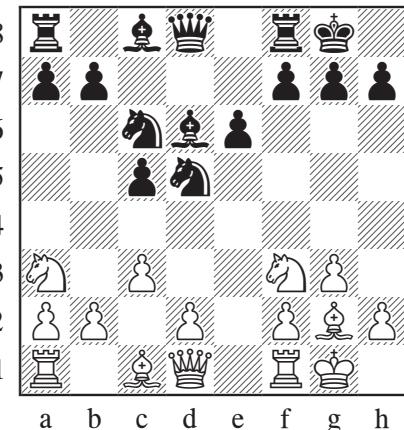
A natural move, which is mostly employed by players who hate too much theory. So, if you are playing one of them, please beware!

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6 7. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 8. 0–0 0–0

After liquidating the e5-pawn Black is certainly fine, but he shouldn't relax.

White may continue with either C1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ or C2) 9. d4.

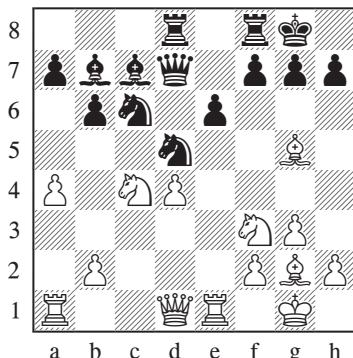
C1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$



This slow move can be answered in two ways: retreating the d6-bishop to either c7 or e7. Needless to say that both treatments are okay, though I will give the latter move as my main line.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

9... b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (11. d3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$ was also equal in Erenburg – Jakovenko, Oropesa del Mar 2001.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. a4 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. d4 cxd4 14. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ So far, this is Lupu – Florescu, Romania 1994.

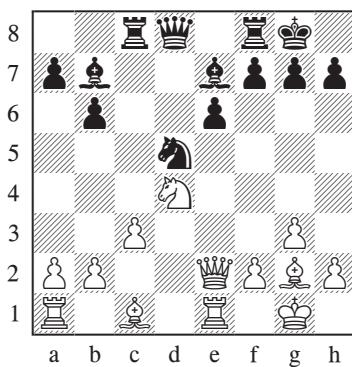


15... f6!N 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8=$ Although objectively

equal, I would like Black's position in actual play. The manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-e7-f5$ is on the cards, while White is hard pressed to find a constructive plan.

10.d3

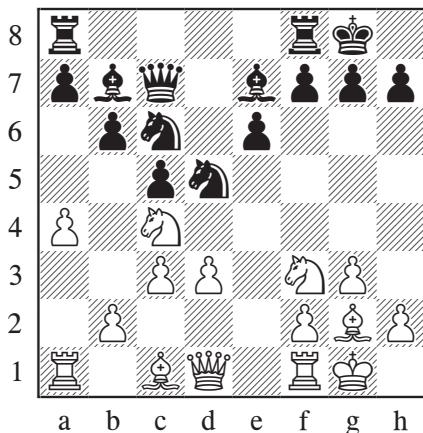
In case of 10. $\mathbb{B}e1$ (preventing ...e5, as 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 is quite okay for the second player), Black plays normal moves and gets a nice position: 10...b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12.d4 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ This was Deviatkin – B. Savchenko, St Petersburg 2009, when most accurate was:



15... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ N Putting the question to the knight on d4, with complete equality. It is possible to take this position a bit further: 16. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ h6 20. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$ After the exchange of light-squared bishops, the white monarch becomes weaker, and this renders White's pawn preponderance on the queenside unimportant; Black will always have counterplay by harassing His Majesty, one way or another.

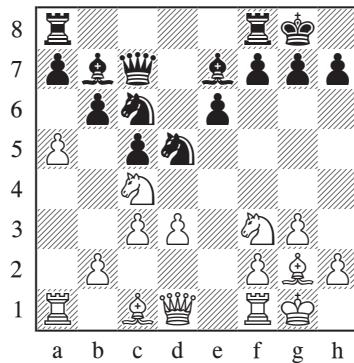
10...b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12.a4 $\mathbb{W}c7$

Black's position is harmonious, and his slightly superior pawn structure means that he can never be worse. The next step is to place the rooks on the central files.



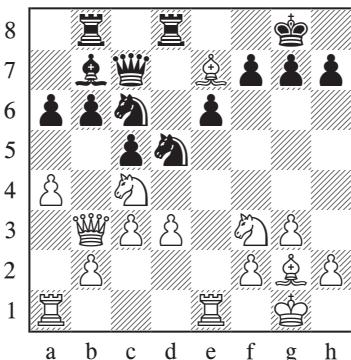
13. $\mathbb{W}e2!?$

A friend pointed out to me that White can already play 13.a5 here, when I think one possible reply for Black is:



13...b5N 14.a6 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6! \rightarrow$ A complicated position has arisen, though it is not unfavourable for us.

When the pawn is on e6, defending the d5-knight, the following queen sally looks rather harmless: 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ a6! To prevent a4-a5. 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}fe1$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}cxe7$) 15... $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$



16... $\mathbb{Q}dxe7$?! Playable, albeit not forced.
 17. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 20. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$
 23. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $g6=$

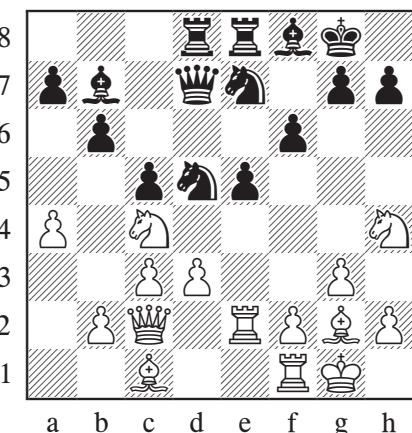
13... $\mathbb{W}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$
 f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7=$

Black has the somewhat easier game, though objectively the chances are approximately balanced. We will follow a correspondence game to verify this assessment:

20. $\mathbb{W}e2$

This may actually not be best.

20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$!N g6 21. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 23. $\mathbb{W}fe1=$ would have kept the position equal by maximizing White's activity.



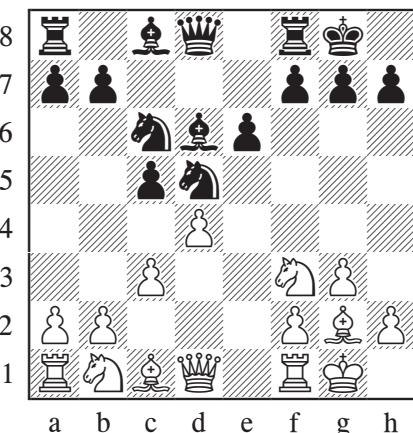
20... $g5$!?

20... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!N 21.b3 a6! \mp , intending ...b5, seems to lead to an advantage for Black.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}b3$ g4 23. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24.a5
 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 25.axb6 axb6 26. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ b5 \nexists

Black was doing fine in Chopin – Bertrand, corr. 1994.

C2) 9.d4



Obviously, White can only hope for an advantage by fighting for the centre.

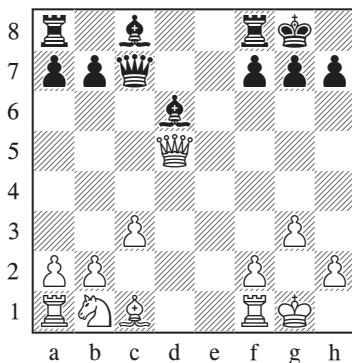
9... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Weaker is 10.cxd4 b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$! \nexists when, if anything, Black is slightly better. I do not see how White can generate threats on either side of the board, while Black's firm control over d5 is a long-term asset.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

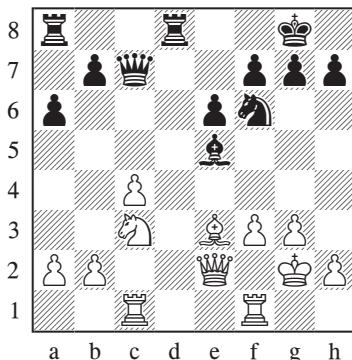
This is the standard developing move in the position.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$?! (If I were White, I would have chosen 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$!N \mp with better hopes of weathering the storm.)



13... $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 14. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ (16... $h5!?$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8\uparrow$ Black was certainly the one dictating events in Ziffer – Learte Pastor, corr. 2004. However, I would like to point out that this is not an automatic win for Black.

12.c4 has been played by Deviatkin, a man who knows his way around in the 2.c3 variation, so it should be treated with respect. 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ a6 19.f3 This was played in Deviatkin – Tregubov, Dagomys 2009, and now I recommend:



19... $\mathbb{W}ac8!N$ 20. $\mathbb{R}fd1$ (20.b3 b5? $\mathbb{Q}z$ or 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc3=$) 20... $\mathbb{R}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ h5!? 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h4? $\mathbb{Q}z$ With good counterplay for Black. Once more, the exchange of light-squared bishops has weakened the position of the white king, and the advance of the h-pawn hurries to

exploit this fact by creating a weakness on g3 to pile up on. A sample line showing how things might evolve is: 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}hg3$ 24. $\mathbb{f}4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}hxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d2=$

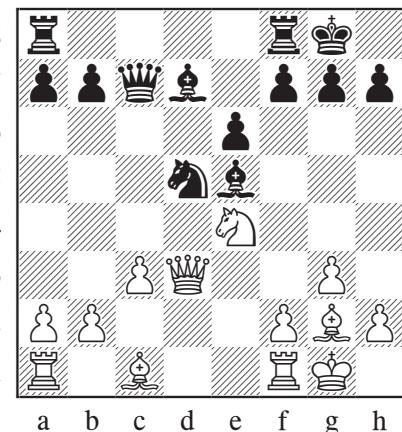
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is already a bit better for Black.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

An important moment, with two possibilities for White: the older C21) 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ or the fashionable C22) 14. $\mathbb{W}c5!?$.

C21) 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$

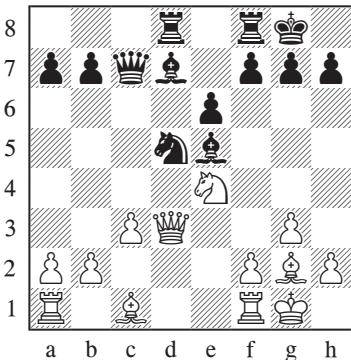


14...a6=

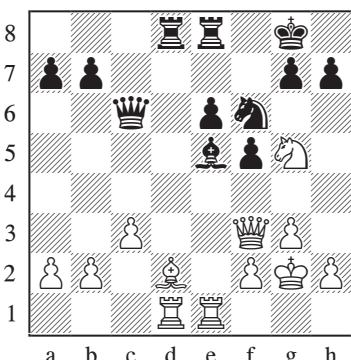
This natural move has been tested in a number of games.

14... $\mathbb{R}ad8$ adheres to the rule of placing a rook opposite to the enemy queen. Efim Petrovic Geller used to tell me how important this rule is in chess, and I must admit that this and other teachings of his, no matter how simple they may appear now, significantly helped me to evolve as a player. After 14... $\mathbb{R}ad8$ I analysed several possibilities for White, concluding that none of them offer the first player any chances for an advantage. What follows is a summary

of my analysis, comprising what I consider the most important points for the readers:

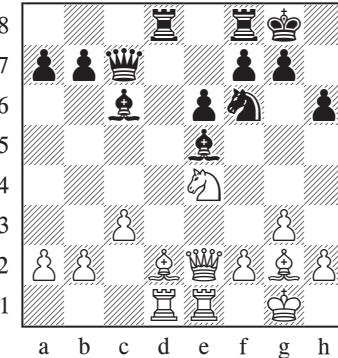


- a) 15.Bg5?! g6 16.Be1 Bc6 17.We2 Bg7??
 b) 15.f4 Wb6†! 16.Bh1! (16.Bf2 f5!) 16...Bb8!
 17.c4! (17.Wc2 Bc6†) 17...Be7∞ leaves Black with a good game; he would like to place his bishop on c6 and knight on f5.
 c) I also analysed the move 15.Bg5N which, although untested, seemed logical to me. After 15...f6 16.Bd2 f5! 17.Bg5 Bf6 18.Bfe1 (18.We2 Bd6†) 18...Bc6 19.We2 Bxg2 20.Bxg2 (20.Bxe6? Wc6 21.Bxd8 Bxd8+) 20...Bfe8 21.Bad1 Wc6† 22.Wf3 (22.Bf3 Bc7∞)



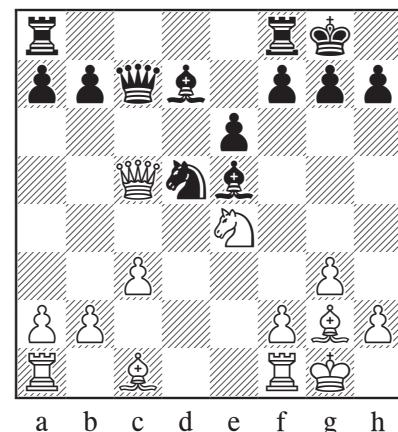
22...Bd5! Black reaches comfortable equality. A nice tactical point is: 23.b3 (23.Bc1 is answered by 23...Bxd1 24.Bxd1 Wa6! 25.Bh3 Bb6 26.Bf4 Bxf4 27.Wxf4 Wc6† 28.Wf3 Be4= with balanced play.) 23...Bxd2 24.Wxc6 bxc6 25.Bxd2 Bxc3=

d) 15.Be1 is by far the main line. After 15...Bc6 16.We2 (16.Wc2?! h6†) 16...h6! 17.Bd2 Bf6 18.Bad1 Black has a choice of routes to a draw:



18...Bxe4 (18...Bd5?!N 19.Bxf6† Bxf6 20.Bxd5 Bxd5 21.Bf4 Wc6 22.Bxd5 Wxd5 23.c4 Wa5 24.b3 Bd8 25.Be3=) 19.Bxe4 Bxe4 20.Wxe4 Bf6 21.Be3 a6 22.Wg4 Wa5 23.a3 Wb5 24.Bc1 Bg5 25.c4 Bb3 26.Bxg5= The players shook hands in Rozentalis – Akopian, Philadelphia 1994.

C22) 14.Wc5!?



White's latest attempt, seeking to transfer play into an ending where he hopes his 3–2 queenside pawn majority might prove of significance.

14...Wb8!

Houdini also gives this move the seal of approval, so I will not analyse any others.

15. $\mathbb{W}c4$

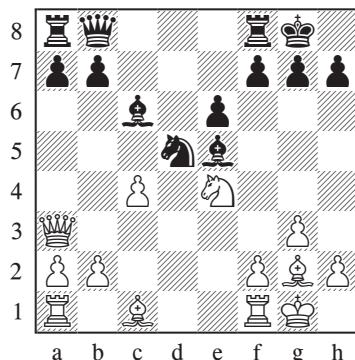
The least committal in my opinion, but there are alternatives:

15.f4 creates weaknesses around the white king without gaining anything substantial in return. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!$! 18. $\mathbb{W}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}axb8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$? I prefer Black, if only slightly. The idea is simply ... $\mathbb{W}fd8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f5$, maximizing the activity of all the black pieces.

15. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 16.c4N

16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b5\#$ is slightly better for Black, at least in human chess.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ can be met by 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$, as in Van Dooren – Coenen, Maastricht 2015.



16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}ad8\#$

The looming positional idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ gives Black a slight edge. For example:

19. $\mathbb{R}fe1!$

19. $\mathbb{R}fc1?!$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 20. $\mathbb{R}ab1$ b6! is worse.

19... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 20. $\mathbb{R}e2$ b6 21. $\mathbb{R}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 22.f4!

22.c5 $\mathbb{W}a6\#$

22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{R}d2$ e5?

23... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{R}xd2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (26... $\mathbb{R}d8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c2$) 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

$\mathbb{R}d8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e2$ shouldn't be worse for White.

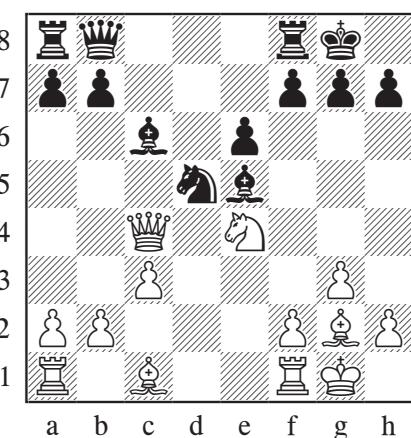
24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{R}xd4$ 25. $\mathbb{R}xd4$ exd4 26. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{R}d8$ 27.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}xc5$ 29. $\mathbb{R}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 31. $\mathbb{R}e2$ g6?

Black has the nicer position, but with careful play White should eventually draw.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

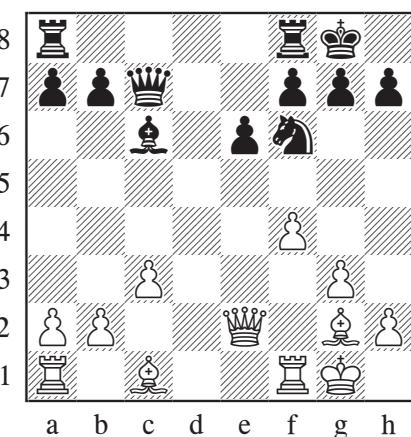
This centralizing move looks best.

After 15...a6 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ I slightly prefer White, as I don't like to have my pawn on e5.

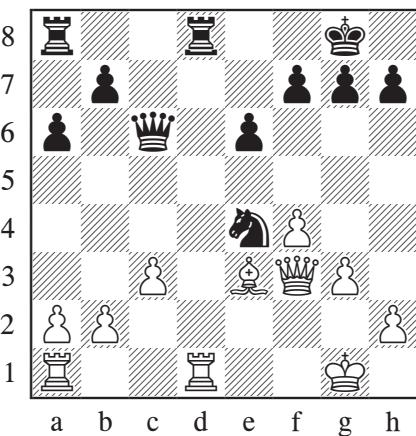


16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$

With a balanced position. One way to continue would be:



19.♕e3 ♕xg2 20.♔xg2 ♜c6† 21.♗f3 ♔e4
22.♖fd1 ♖fd8 23.♗g1 a6



A draw was agreed here in Garagulya – Ionov, Smolensk 2000, though a decent amount of play remains. I would take Black: he has the better minor piece, and White's queenside pawn majority is idle for the time being.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with less common 5th move tries for White after 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♔f6 3.e5 ♔d5 4.♔f3 e6. The most dangerous of these is 5.g3, where the first player hopes to take the game away from well-trodden theoretical paths. After the further continuation 5...♔c6 6.♕g2 d6 7.exd6 ♔xd6 8.0–0 0–0 Black no longer has to worry about White's central e-pawn, but he should still proceed with care. There are several positional ideas that Black should familiarize himself with, but the second player can look forward to a safe game with chances to play for more.

Chapter 1

c3 Sicilian

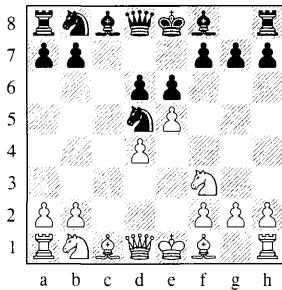
Various 7th Moves

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♜f6 3.e5 ♜d5 4.♘f3 e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4

6...d6

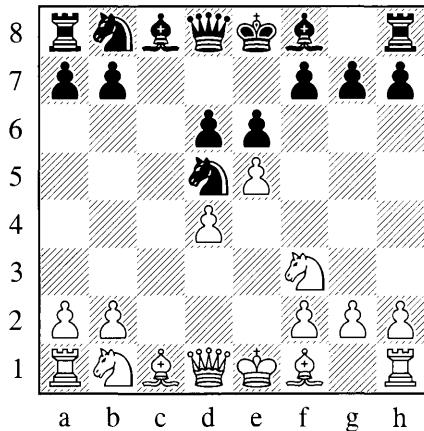
A) 7.♗d3 ♜b4!	108
A1) 8.♗e2	108
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1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♜f6 3.e5 ♜d5 4.♗f3 e6 5.d4

Clearly the most challenging option.

5...cxd4 6.cxd4 d6

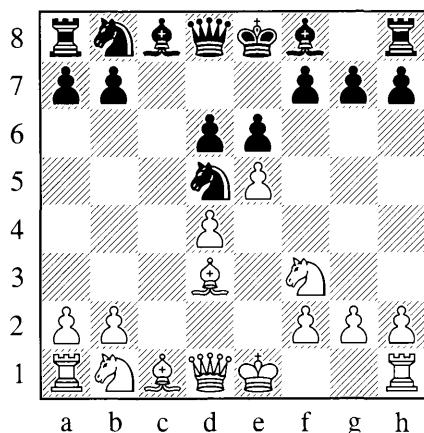


This can be considered as the tabiya of our repertoire. Black wants to quickly develop his kingside and then pile up on the e5-pawn, while White wants to utilize this pawn for attacking purposes – by exploiting both the space it offers and the possibility of creating pressure on the b1-h7 diagonal.

In this chapter we will examine A) 7.♗d3, B) 7.♗d2, C) 7.♗c3 and D) 7.a3.

7.♗c4 is the subject of Chapters 8 and 9.

A) 7.♗d3



Black can exploit the bishop's exposed position to equalize:

7...♗b4!

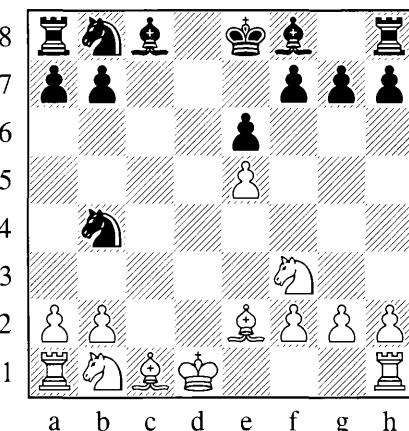
As on the previous move, White has a choice of four continuations: A1) 8.♗e2, A2) 8.0–0, A3) 8.♗b5† and A4) 8.♗g5.

A1) 8.♗e2 dxе5 9.dxe5

9.♗xe5? ♜xd4 is a free pawn which has scored 3/3 for Black on my database.

9...♜xd1† 10.♔xd1

The position should favour us: White has lost castling privileges, and his e5-pawn looks more of a weakness than a strength in the ensuing endgame.



10...♗c5?!

I consider this to be the most accurate choice.

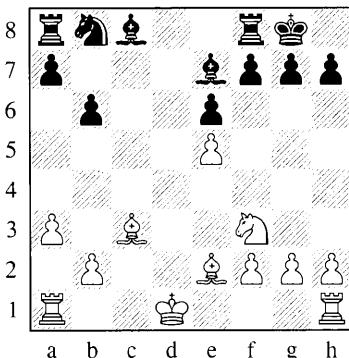
I would like to show an instructive game where Black went astray by exchanging the wrong pieces:

10...♗e7 11.a3 ♜d5 12.♗d2 0–0

12...♗d7! 13.♗c3 ♜xc3† 14.♗xc3 ♜a4† 15.♗d2 ♜d7= as played in Pujos – Delchev, St. Afrique 2002, looks a trifle better for Black.

13.♘c3 ♘xc3† 14.♗xc3 b6?!

14...♝d7! Nf was better, in Delchev's style.



15.♗d4! ♜b7 16.♗f3 ♜xf3† 17.♗xf3=

Now White has equalized, and Black should take care not to become overexposed on the light squares.

17...♞a6 18.♗c1 ♜fc8 19.♗e2 ♜c7 20.♗d2 ♜d5 21.♗xc8† ♜xc8 22.♗c1 ♜xc1 23.♗xc1 b5?!

A step in the wrong direction.

23...♝f8 24.♗d4 ♜e8= would have easily maintained equality.

24.♗d4! a6 25.♗c6 ♜c5 26.♗e3! ♜xe3 27.♗xe3 ♜b6 28.♗d3 ♜f8 29.♗b4 a5 30.♗c6 ♜e8 31.♗d4 ♜c7 32.♗e4 b4 33.axb4 axb4 34.♗c6 f5† 35.♗xf6 gxf6 36.h3 ♜d6 37.♗d3 ♜d7 38.♗d4 f5 39.♗c4†

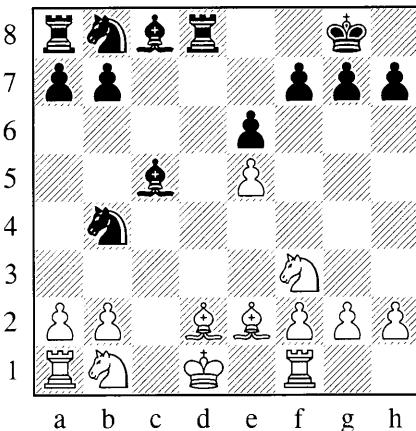
By this point White had a distinct advantage, and he went on to convert the full point in Gomez Esteban – Illescas, Benasque 2013. This game serves as a good example of the type of relaxation this structure might cause, and at the same time is a warning that every position can be lost – even by the very best.

11.♗f1

11.♗c3? ♜xf2 12.♗e4 ♜b6 13.♗d6† ♜e7† just blunders away a pawn.

: 11.a3 should probably be met by 11...♝d5Nf.

11...0–0 12.♗d2 ♜d8



13.♘c3 ♘8c6

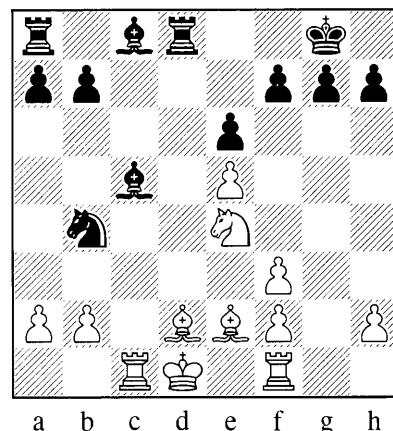
13...♝d7?! 14.a3 ♜c6 15.♗g5 ♜e7 16.♗xe7 ♜xe7 may be even simpler.

14.♗c1N

14.♗e4 ♜b6 is slightly better for Black, as was 14.a3 ♜d5f in Olszewski – Reinderman, Warsaw 2005.

14...♝d4 15.♗e4 ♜xf3 16.gxf3

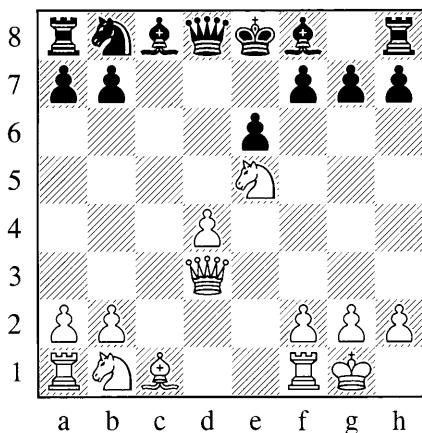
16.♗xf3 ♜f8†



16...♜e7 17.♗g1 ♜d7†

Black holds a slight edge.

A2) 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $dxe5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

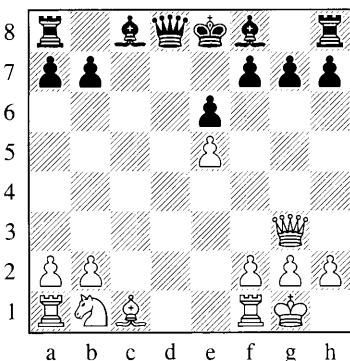


White places his hopes on quick development, to compensate for his structural weakness and the loss of his light-squared bishop. Let us see what Black's best reaction is:

10... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ N

A developing move: threatening to take on e5 and preparing to castle.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}g3$!? (11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ happened in Gneiss – Rooze, Velden 2009, and now 12...0–0N 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ = leads to equality.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (11... $g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is unpleasant) 12. $dxe5$

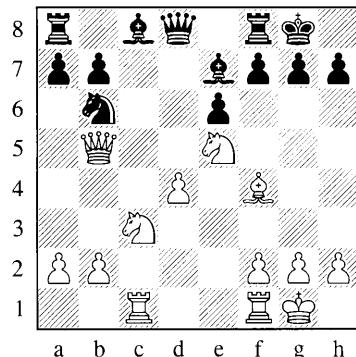


12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ↑
White has some pressure due to his better development.

11. $\mathbb{W}g3$

Clearly the most challenging option.

After 11. $\mathbb{W}b5$ ↑ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, the refined reply 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! leaves White with little firepower to exploit his lead in development. Play is likely to continue 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$, when Black's control over d5 and his bishop pair are sufficient equalizing factors. For example:

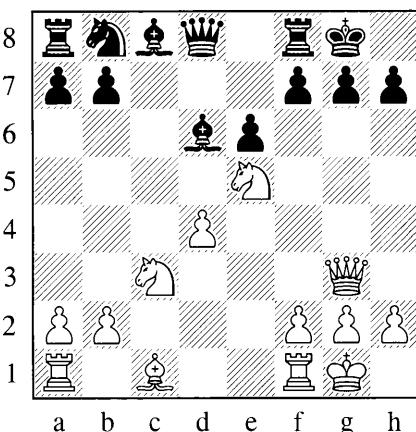


15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
18. d5!? $\mathbb{E}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$!=

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

This maintains some momentum in White's play, but with a few accurate moves Black should be able to defuse the pressure.

Things are easier for the second player after 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $fxe5$ =. The resulting ending is rather drawish.



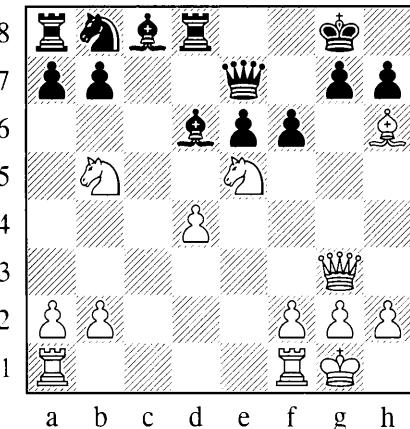
12...f6!

It is difficult to make such a move, but it is the most principled as it does not allow White to weaken our pawn structure.

Second-best is: 12...Qc6?! 13.Qxc6! (13.Qh6 Qf6 14.Qe4 Qxh6 15.Qxd6 Qxd4 16.Qd3 Qf4 17.Qfe1 Qc6 18.Qxc6 bxc6 19.Qad1 Qb8 20.b3 c5=) 13...bxc6 14.Qf4 Qxf4 15.Qxf4 Qa6 16.Qfd1 White gets a lasting edge due to his better minor piece.

13.Qh6 We7 14.Qb5 Qd8

We are at the crossroads, with White facing the usual chess problem of how to configure his rooks.

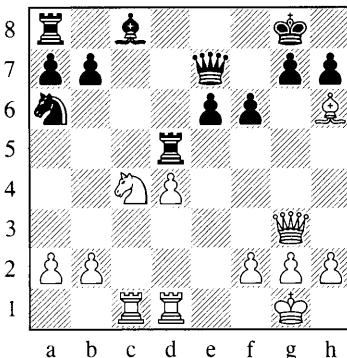
**15.Qad1!!**

This feels more critical. The other rook is destined for e1 to direct his fire against the $\text{e}1$ -pawn.

5.Qxd6 Qxd6= releases the tension, leading to a position where Black has no problems.

5.Qfd1!? is the other way to play: 15...Qa6 Qxd6 Qxd6 17.Qc4 (17.Qg4 Qd7∞) 18.Qd5 18.Qac1 (18.Qf4 b6! 19.Qd6 Qb7! 19.Qe1 Qd8 21.Qxb7 Qxb7 22.Qxe6 Qxd4=) is one displaying the problem with this rook configuration, as the king's rook had to end up

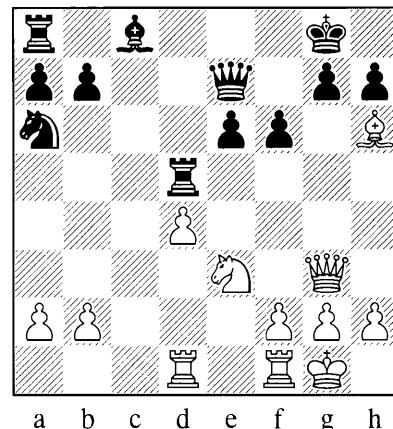
on e1 to be of any use. Black's pieces are active and he is fine.)



18...b6 19.Qe3 Qd8 20.h4 Qb7= A balanced position has arisen, with excellent chances for us.

15...Qa6 16.Qxd6 Qxd6 17.Qc4 Qd5 18.Qe3!

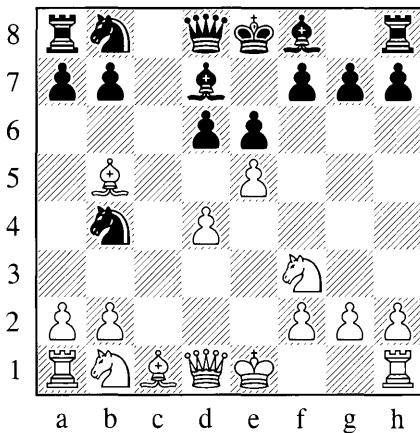
18.Qfe1 Qc7! 19.Qd3 Qh5 is a major point in our defence, forcing an exchange of queens.

**18...Qh5**

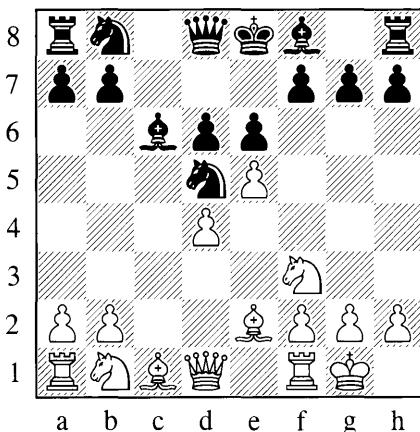
Displacing the rook, but gaining time.

19.Qf4 Qd7 20.Qfe1 Qf7?

With a double-edged position that should be fine for Black.

A3) 8.♗b5† ♜d7

This is another possibility worth examining, but it fails to shake the evaluation that Black stands fine in the 7.♘d3 variation. At this point White has two options: A31) 9.♗e2 or A32) 9.♗xd7†.

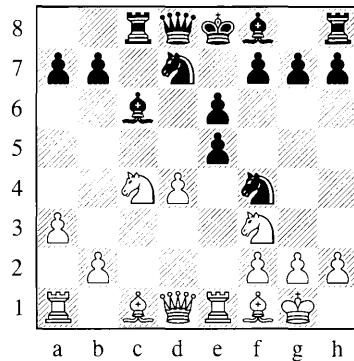
A31) 9.♗e2 ♜c6 10.0–0 ♜d5

The bishop has found a great home on c6, and this should be an excellent position in general for the second player.

11.♗g5

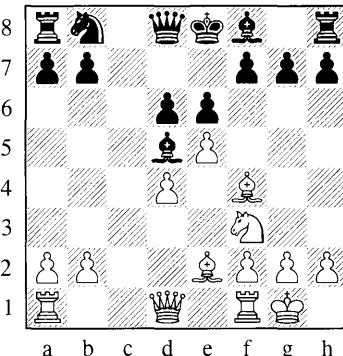
I also looked at a couple of alternatives which may well be of equal significance.

After 11.♗e1, a logical continuation is: 11...♝d7 12.a3 ♜c8 13.♝bd2 ♜f4 14.♝f1 dx5 15.♝c4



15...♝g6! (The terrible blunder 15...e4?? gave White an easy point after 16.♝xf4 exf3 17.d5 fxe2 18.♝xg2 ♜b5 19.dxe6 ♜f6 20.exf7† ♜xf7 21.♝e5† 1–0 Kargascha – Bjelobrk, Sydney 2014.) 16.dxe5 ♜d5 17.♝e3 ♜c6 18.♝c4= With equality.

11.♝c3 is the strongest continuation according to the computers, but I see no danger after: 11...♝d7 12.♝xd5 ♜xd5 13.♝f4 ♜b8!N= (13...dx5 allows White a slight pull after 14.♝xe5 ♜xe5 15.dxe5 ♜c5 16.♝b5† ♜f8 17.♝c1±.)



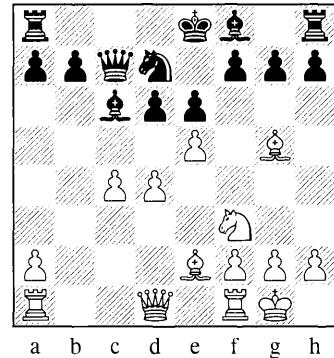
The knight comes to c6 to shield the c-file, and Black can carry on with his kingside development without any problems.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$

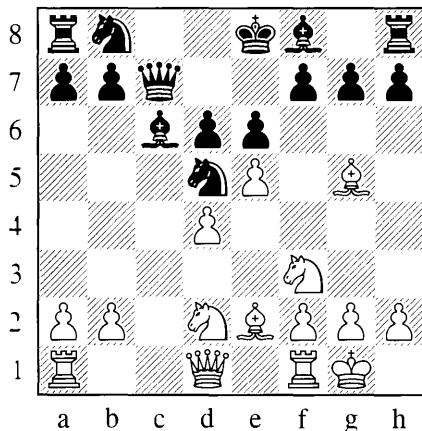
11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7=$ is also acceptable for Black.

12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3!N$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $c4$ was a stiffer test:



14... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $f4$ $h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $dxe5$ 19. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\infty$ The resulting situation is just a mess that could go either way.



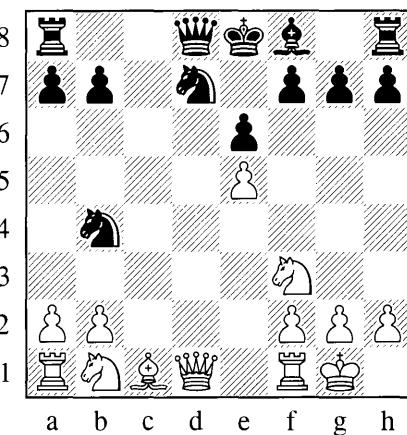
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $dxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6=$

Play was balanced in Barbaric Vuk – Palac, Zadar 2002, although Black went on to win.

A32) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\ddagger$

White's most natural move, but it seems to give

Black an easy ride. He can develop, and at the same time relieve his constriction by trading off White's most dangerous attacking piece.

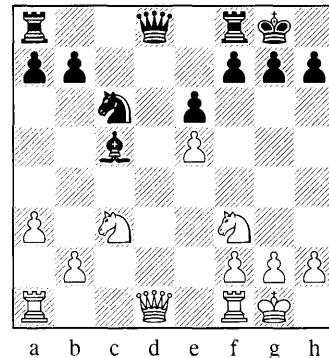
9... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 10.0–0 $dxe5$ 11. $dxe5$ **11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7N$ (or 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ as in Pierrot – Vescovi, Buenos Aires 1988) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}hd8\infty$ This is an interesting possibility to unbalance the play.

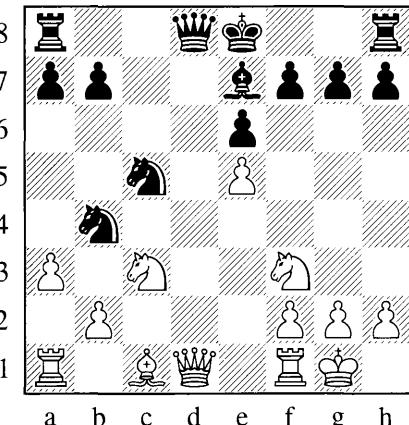
11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4=$ comes strongly into consideration too.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13.a3N

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ should be also equal after the correct:



16. $\mathbb{W}e2!N=$ (In Durarbayli – Damljanovic, Dresden 2007, White played 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$, when the obvious 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$ leaves Black with the easier game in my opinion.)



13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $b4$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 16. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 17. $\mathbb{E}bxcl$

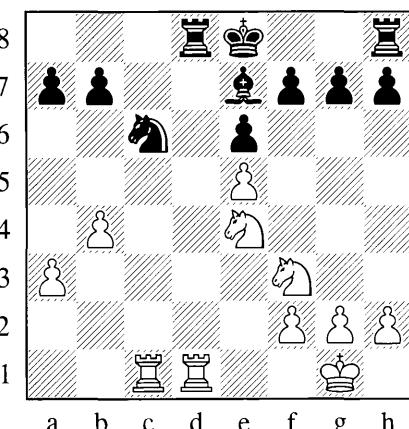
White seems to have a slight pull due to his better development, but Black has at least one good way to nullify it.

17... $\mathbb{E}d8$

17... $a5!$? 18. $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 19. $bxcl$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ creates some imbalance, but it should be a draw anyway.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

18. $\mathbb{E}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $a6$ 20. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

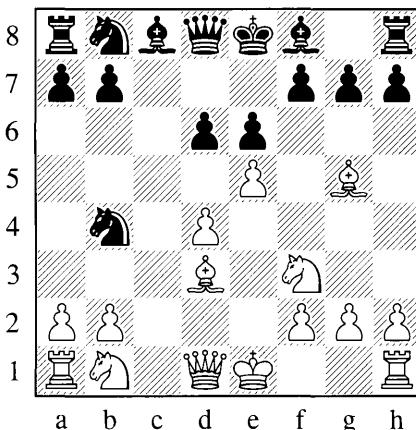


18... $a6$ 19. $g3$ $f6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}d1+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $b5=$

Although there is some play left, the position is essentially drawn. Black's plan is to play ... $a5$ and create some chances on the queenside, but if White conducts himself prudently he shouldn't be in any danger.

A4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

In my view the most natural, as it is a move that develops quickly while trying to avoid an exchange of queens.



8... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$

There are other moves of course, but taking the bishop immediately cannot be a bad idea.

9. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$

I think this is the best move, and one that gives us good chances to play for a win.

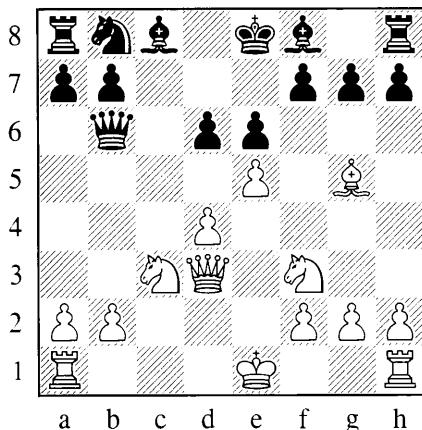
I'm not as enthusiastic about 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$, when I think White is slightly for choice after 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 12. 0–0 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $dxe5$ 15. $dxe5\pm$.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The alternatives cannot offer White any advantage either:

10.d5?! dx5! (10... $\mathbb{W}xb2?$ 11.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2!\pm$) 11.0–0 f6 12. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a6\mp$

10.0–0 h6 11. $\mathbb{B}e3$ d5 12. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7\rightleftharpoons$



10...h6

Black is heading for a French Advance variation structure where White will be missing its precious light-squared bishop. As soon becomes obvious, in a closed position White's development advantage hardly matters.

11. $\mathbb{B}e3$

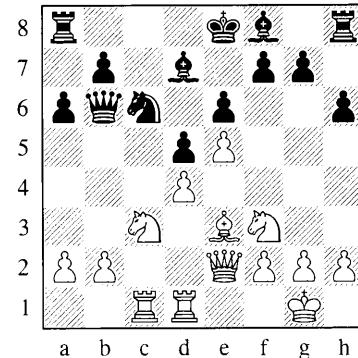
11. $\mathbb{B}d2$ can be met by either 11...d5=+ 11... $\mathbb{B}e7$ 12.d5 0–0 13.0–0 $\mathbb{W}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}f4$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.d6 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 25.h3 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 26.a3 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{B}f5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f5=\pm$ when the players agreed to a draw in Venus – Ness, corr. 2009.

11...d5!

Black has reached the desired formation and should be fine.

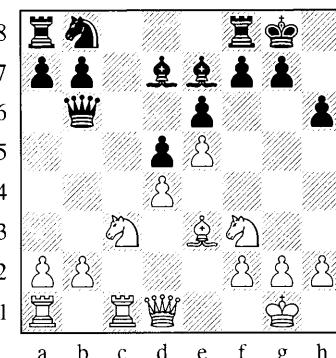
12.0–0 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 13.a3

This further weakening of the light squares does not look appealing but, nevertheless, it is playable.

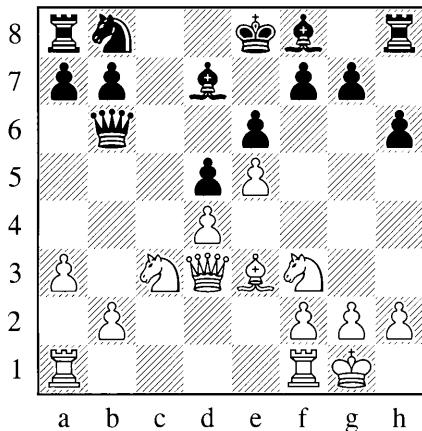


15... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ (15... $\mathbb{B}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}el!?\pm$ unveils the idea behind White's set-up, as the knight is heading for d3 and exploiting the fact that the d-pawn is immune; White has slightly the better position in that case.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 19.g4 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\infty$ Yielding a complicated position that is hard to evaluate, but in practical play I would slightly prefer Black.

13. $\mathbb{B}fc1!N$ looks like the most harmonious move and is probably best. After 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ (In case of 13... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}el!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ [18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g4$] 19. $\mathbb{B}c2!$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\pm/\mp$ the position remains complicated, but White may have a slight edge as Black can no longer castle.) 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ 0–0



15. $\mathbb{Q}el!$ $\mathbb{W}d8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ The position is balanced.

**13... $\mathbb{W}a6!$ N**

I was happy to find this positional continuation.

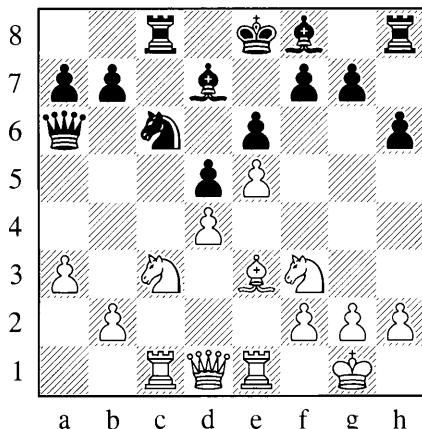
Instead, 13...a5!? 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a4 occurred in R. Stein – D. Popovic, corr. 2000. Rather than the game's 15. $\mathbb{E}fb1$, I would have preferred 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ N $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{W}d1$ with some attacking chances for White.

14. $\mathbb{W}d1$

To keep access to the kingside, but now $\mathbb{E}fc1$ has been obstructed, which is quite a success for Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ can be answered with either 16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ or 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

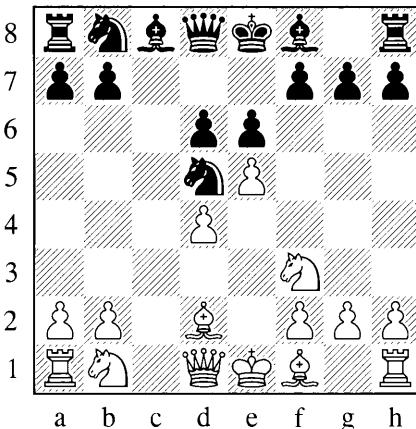
16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! is more complex.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}g6=$

With complete equality.

B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This is a solid continuation, guarding b4 and preparing to play $\mathbb{Q}c3$ – without allowing a loosening of the pawn structure that follows ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, $bxcc3$. It also keeps more development options open for the f1-bishop, depending on what Black plays. So, does this move give White the advantage?

**7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

The answer is no. Notwithstanding its merits, White's move is slow and allows Black to bolster his control over the most important square in the position: d5.

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

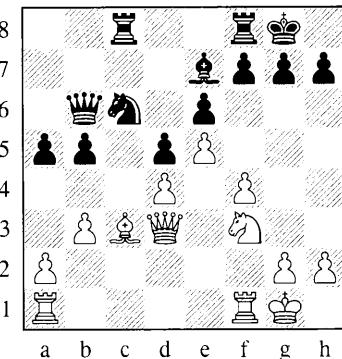
Black has achieved his aim and the position is equal.

9. $\mathbb{E}c1$

This looks more in keeping with White's strategy of developing the queenside first.

9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d5!

12.0–0 ♜e7 13.♘e1 b5 14.b3 ♜c8 15.♗d2 ♜b6 16.f4 0–0 17.♘f3 a5 18.♗d3



This all occurred in Schmitz – Cramling, Gibraltar 2003, when rather than the game's 18...♝c7, which allows 19.f5!N†, I would have preferred:

18...g6!N

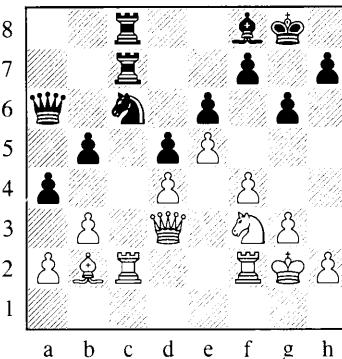
Tempting White to expose himself on the kingside should he wish to prove his attacking chances on that side of the board. An example of what may follow is:

19.♗ac1

After 19.g4?! ♜c7 20.f5 ♜fc8† it turns out that White has weakened himself for nothing, as there is no attack.

19.a4?! bxa4 20.bxa4 ♜b4† is also clearly better for Black.

19...♜c7 20.♗c2 ♜fc8 21.♗f2 ♜b4! 22.♗b2 a4 23.g3 ♜a6 24.♗g2 ♜f8



25.♗d1

25.♗c3 axb3 26.axb3 ♜a3! 27.♗e1 (27.♗xb5?? ♜a7+) 27...♜b4! is also tough for White.

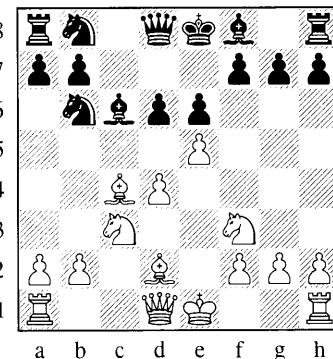
25...♜b4 26.♗xc7 ♜xc7 27.♗b1 ♜c8 28.♗e1 ♜c6 29.♗d3 a3 30.♗c3 ♜xe5 31.fxe5 ♜xc5 32.♗xb5 ♜h6! 33.♗e2 ♜e3 34.♗b6 h5↑

With weaknesses at a2, d4, and an exposed king, it is highly unlikely that White will survive.

9.♗c4

I believe the most interesting way to play is: 9...♝b6!?

9...♝xc3N 10.♗xc3 dxe5 11.dxe5 ♜xd1† 12.♗xd1 ♜d7= is also safe and sound.



10.♗b3!

10.♗b5?! ♜e7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♗f4 ♜d5 13.♗xc6 ♜xc3 14.bxc3 ♜xc6 15.♗b1 b6 16.exd6 ♜xd6 17.♗xd6 ♜xd6 18.♗e1 ♜a5 19.♗e5 ♜ac8 20.♗e3 ♜c4† was excellent for Black in Vu – Das, Kuala Lumpur 2014.

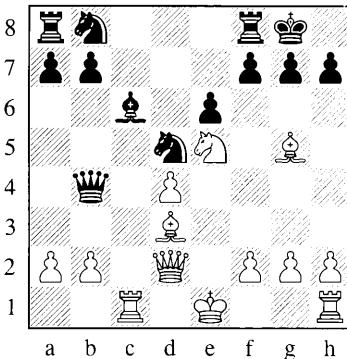
10...♝d7 11.0–0 dxe5N 12.dxe5 ♜e7 13.♗f4!

After 13.♗e2 ♜xf3 14.♗xf3 ♜xe5 15.♗e2 ♜c6! 16.♗ad1 ♜b8 17.♗g4 ♜e5 18.♗fe1 ♜f6 19.♗b5 0–0 20.♗c3 ♜g6 White's compensation, if it exists, is not at all clear to me.

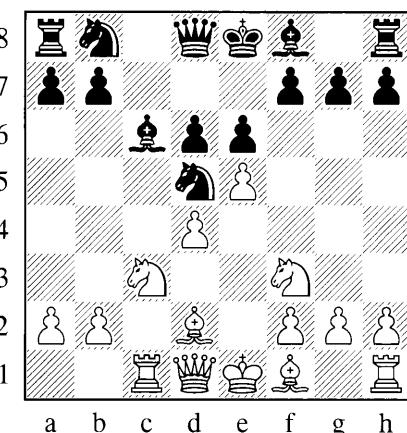
13...♝c5 14.♗d4 ♜xb3 15.axb3 0–0 16.♗xc6 bxс6

With a double-edged position; both sides have their chances.

As they say, moving the same piece twice in the opening is rarely good, and that seems to be the case with 9.♘e4 after: 9...dxe5! 10.♕xe5 ♜e7 11.♗c1 0–0 12.♗d3 ♖b6 13.♗g5 ♜xg5 14.♗xg5 ♖b4† 15.♗d2 (15.♔f1? ♖b5†)



15...f6 16.♘xc6 ♜xc6 17.♗e3 ♜ac8 18.a3 ♖xd2† 19.♔xd2 f5 20.g3 ♜fd8† White will probably hold the ending, but obviously the onus is on him. The knight on d5 is a tower of strength and White lacks an active plan.

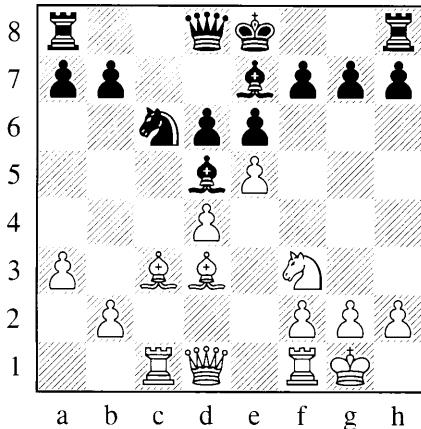


9...♘xc3!N 10.♗xc3 ♜d5!

We've seen this configuration before; the bishop cannot be harassed on d5, and the knight will come to c6 to pressurize the white centre.

11.♗d3 ♘c6 12.0–0 ♜e7 13.a3

13.♗b1?! 0–0 14.♗d3 g6† is not a serious plan for White as he has no attack.



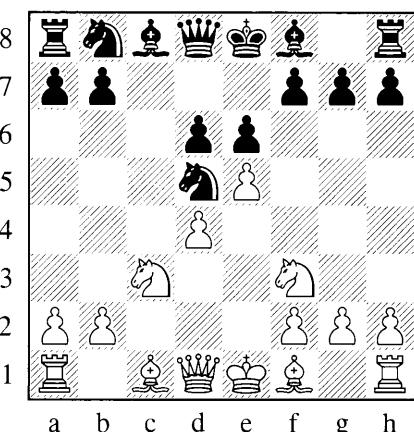
13...0–0 14.♗e2 ♜c8 15.♗e4

15.♗fd1 ♜g5?! is excellent for Black.

15...♘xe4 16.♗xe4 d5 17.♗d3 ♜d7=

Black may have a tiny pull due to his better bishop, but the position should obviously be drawn with correct play.

C) 7.♘c3

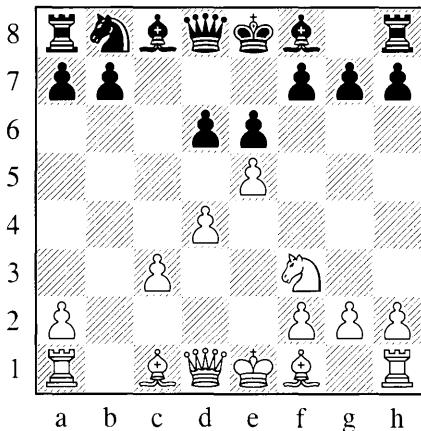


This is a fairly acceptable continuation, but is also a committal one; White adheres to the rule "knights before bishops" at the cost of allowing a loosening of his pawn formation.

7...♘xc3 8.bxc3

In situations similar to the one that has arisen here on the board, getting saddled

with ‘hanging’ c- and d-pawns is a common occurrence for White. On the other hand, his lead in development is a factor not to be underestimated, and Black should be careful not to fall too much behind in development. The next move is a step in the right direction:



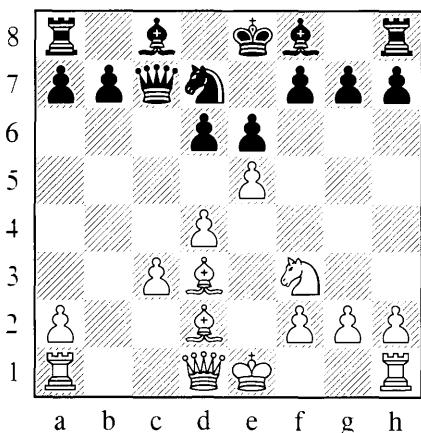
8... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

Developing while also forcing the enemy queen’s bishop to take up a passive stance on $\mathbb{d}2$ can already be considered a small success for Black.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d7$

We need to have a reply to the dangerous C1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$, while the main line is C2) 10.exd6.

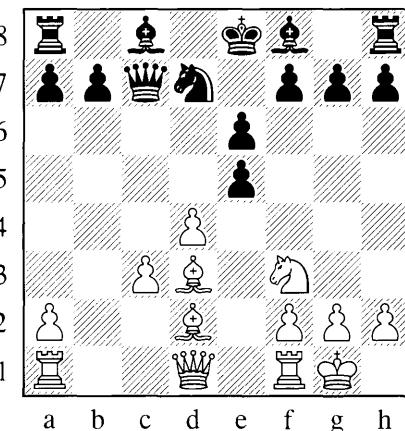
C1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$



This sacrifice is perfectly viable. Let us review a couple of options designed to combat it.

10...dxe5 11.0–0

After these introductory moves, I would like to recommend a tricky possibility at Black’s disposal:

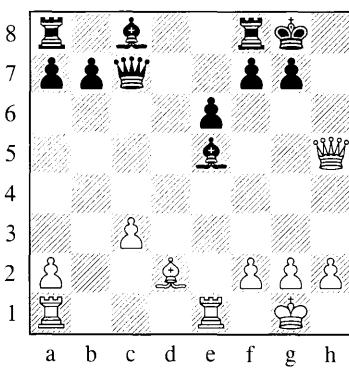


11...g6!?

Black is prepared to give back the pawn, and opt for some sort of middlegame where his better structure might prove a long-term asset. However, as we shall see, even in this case it is not easy to avoid a draw against a well-prepared opponent.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0–0! 13.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

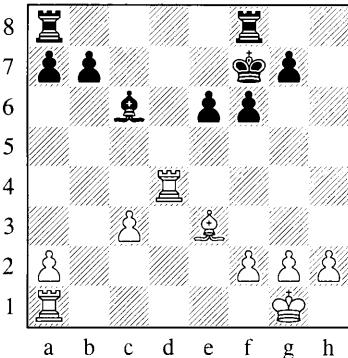
White must now choose which way to recapture on e5:



17. $\mathbb{E}xe5!$

Only this move convincingly maintains equality.

17. $\mathbb{W}xe5?!$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ f6 19. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#/\mp$



This is not a piece of cake to defend after a rook switch to the fifth rank via h5; after all, White's weak queenside pawns are going nowhere. Anatoly Karpov is a specialist in winning such endings.

After 17. $\mathbb{E}xe5!$ I could indeed find nothing better for Black than equality, for instance:

17...f6 18. $\mathbb{E}e3$

18. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f7\#$ Kozliceck – Cerveny, Czech Republic 2007.

18...e5

18... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ (19. $\mathbb{W}h4$ e5 20. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ remains worse for White, if only slightly) 19... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}g3$ e5 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ g6 22. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7=$ leads to a draw as well.

19. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 22. h3 $\mathbb{W}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g6$ $\mathbb{E}dd7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$

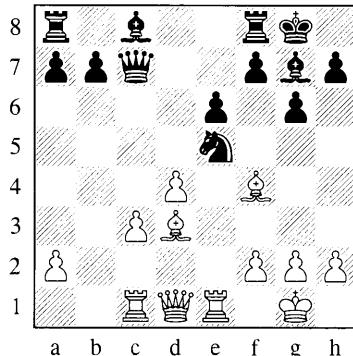
A draw was the unavoidable outcome in Fuentes Parra – Gajek, Caldas Novas 2011.

12. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

Unfortunately, White has this move.

The theoretical main line 12. $\mathbb{E}el?!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}cl$ (13. $dxe5?!$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

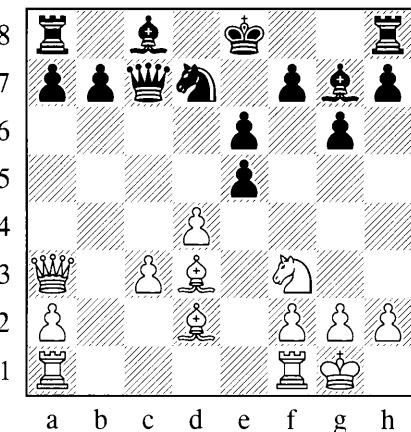
b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 18. h4 $\mathbb{E}d5$ 19. f4 as played in Schmittdiel – Acs, Austria 2000, looks poor for White after the simple 19...h5N \mp) 13...0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ has by now been rendered harmless because of Giardelli's discovery.



15...f6! For example, 16. $dxe5$ $fxe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. h4 $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (19. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ is also slightly better for Black) and at this point, in Flores – Giardelli, Tres de Febrero 2003, Black could have gotten the upper hand by means of: 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6!N$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (20. h5 $gxh5!$) 20... $\mathbb{W}f7\#$

12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a3!$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 0–0 14. f4 $\mathbb{E}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ a6 16. h4 b5 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ was complicated in Stromboli – Frischmann, Pardubice 2013, but, as far as I can see, not worse for Black.



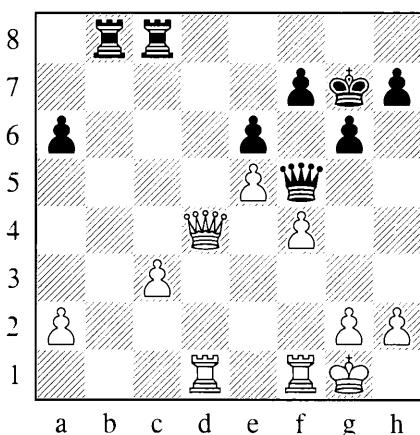
13...b6

13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ leads to a draw.

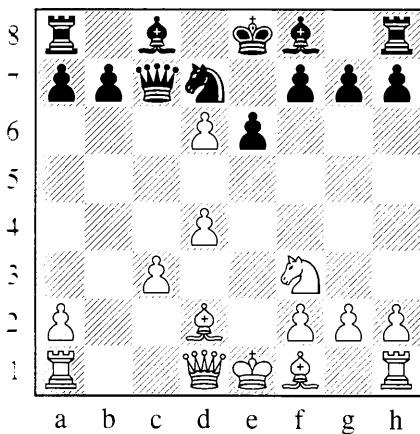
14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6N

I didn't like the look of 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.dxe5 in S. Coates – Caridi, corr. 2004.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22.f4 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}hc8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8=$



Black has enough compensation for the pawn, but no more. Therefore we may conclude that the pawn sacrifice 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ is viable for White, and our hopes for an advantage lie only in facing inadequately prepared opponents.

C2) 10.exd6

This move is hardly forced, and perhaps sacrificing the e-pawn better suits White players who are interested only in a draw.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b6!

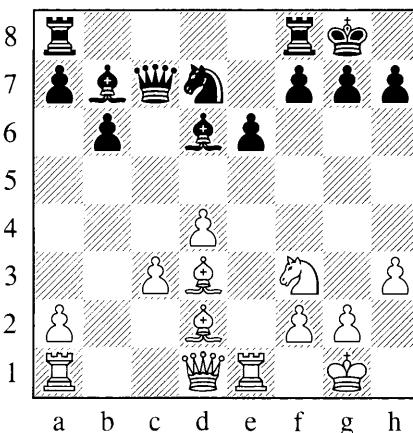
The key move: with both his bishops pointing at the white kingside, Black has little to fear.

12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0

Black has easily equalized out of the opening, and perhaps even a bit more than that.

14.h3

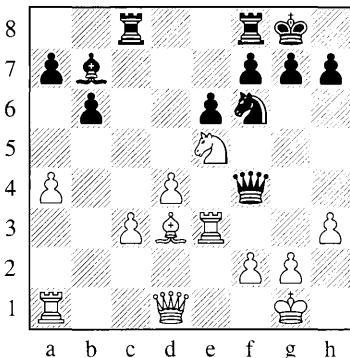
After 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ Black is given a chance to play on the light squares, as in Khamrakulov – Bologan, Sanxenxo 2003.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8?!$**

This is the move I employed in my own praxis.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4=$ was quite level in Timman – Piket, The Hague 1995.

14... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 15.a4?! (15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ was better, intending to meet 15... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ with 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd2=$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (18.c4 $\mathbb{Q}fd8\#$)



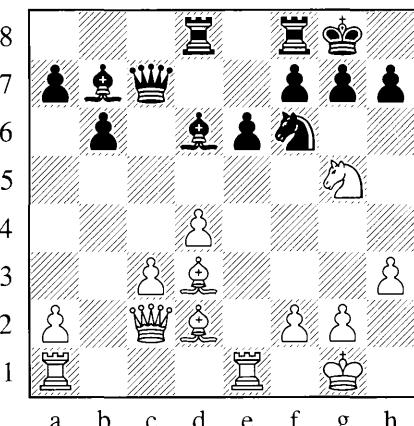
18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$
 $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ Black
was at least slightly better in Seitaj – J. Polgar,
Halkidiki 2002.

After 14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ my game took the following course:

15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$

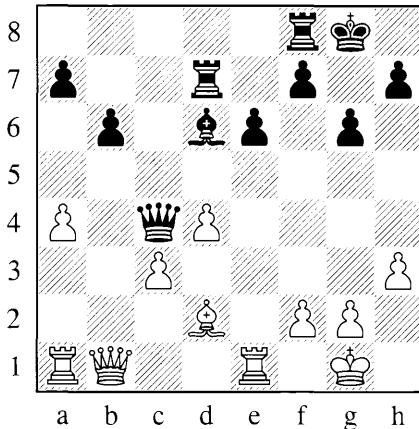
15.a4! $\mathbb{Q}fe8!$ was Radulski – Oral, Bled (ol) 2002. Black is playing for ...e5 and is at least equal, but this was the best chance for White.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



16...g6! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 20.a4
20. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$

20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



21...a6!!#

A brilliant point, directed against $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xb6?$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ was the tactical justification of my idea.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}eb1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 26.g3 h5! 27.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b4$

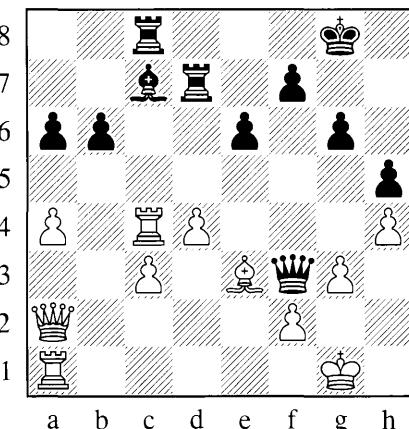
28.c4? is bravely answered by 28... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$, as the temporary pin on the c-file cannot be exploited.

28... $\mathbb{Q}f3$

28... $\mathbb{Q}d8\#?$ also looks good.

29. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$

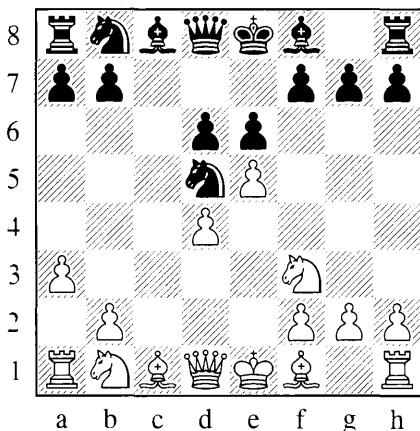
29. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#?$ was the move to keep White in the game, but it is actually rather hard to find.



29... $\mathbb{E}e8!$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6+$

With the rook trapped on c4 White had no hopes of survival. I went on to exploit my advantage in Managadze – Kotronias, Achaea 2012.

D) 7.a3



White prepares to get his bishop out on d3, aiming at a kingside attack. The move is rather slow, however, and this fact allows Black to equalize easily.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

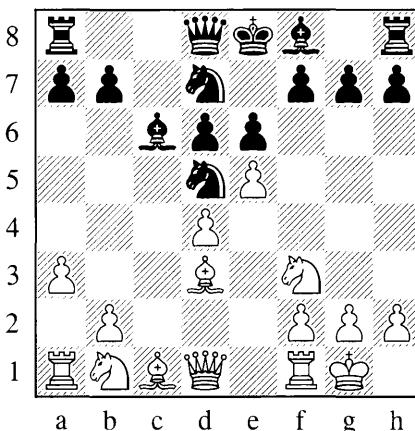
Slightly awkward at first sight, but in fact very principled. The bishop hurries to occupy the long diagonal and intensify Black's control over d5.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $dxe5$ 9. $dxe5$ $g6!$ is another excellent equalizing method. For the purposes of this repertoire, however, I decided to follow my own rule of thumb: when given the chance, Black should develop his light-squared bishop to the a8-h1 diagonal, as that gives him typical play with the minimum of risk.

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

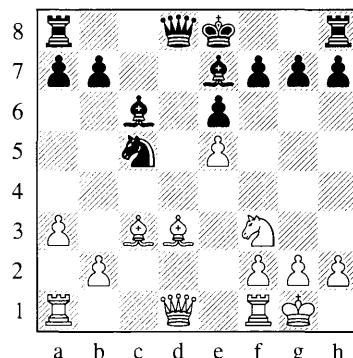
Let us pause for a moment and examine the situation. Black is close to completing his set-up, while White faces problems with the development of his queenside; $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ allows

the d5-knight to invade on the f4-square. In addition, the first player should be wary of a timely ... $dxe5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, as there is a whole complex of light-square weaknesses on his queenside that he needs to take care of. Considering this, it is not surprising that White often employs the move b2-b4 to take c5 away from the black knight, but this has the disadvantage of weakening c3.



We will first examine what happens if White does allow Black the option of ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ by playing D1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$. Then D2) 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ is slightly more common but, as was alluded to above, D3) 10.b4 is an important prophylactic measure.

Passive is instead 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, intending to bring out the knight on c3 without weakening the pawn structure. After 10... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $dxe5$ 13. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$



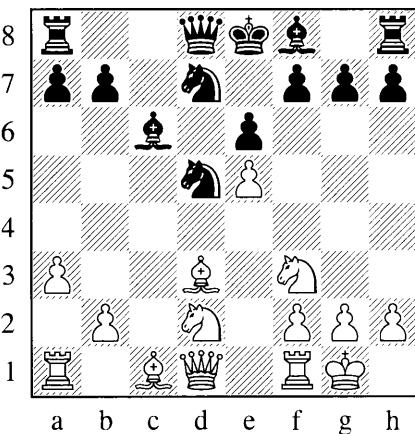
14.♕c2 (14.♕c4 allows 14...♝a4!± Milton – Karasev, St Petersburg 1999; 14.♕e2 0–0 15.b4 ♜e4 16.♕d4 a5! 17.b5 ♜d5± was better for Black in Doncevic – Illescas, Las Palmas 1989) 14...♝xd1 15.♕fxd1 ♜a4 16.♕d4 0–0 17.♕ac1 ♜fd8=/ \mp Black is just a shade better in this dry ending.

D1) 10.♗bd2

Allowing Black to invade on f4, with fully equal chances.

10...dxe5 11.dxe5!

I'm not sure White has enough for the pawn after 11.♕e1 exd4 12.♗xd4 ♜e7 13.♕c4 (13.♗xe6 ♜c5!± is a nice point) 13...0–0 14.♕c2 h6 15.♗xc6 bxc6=.

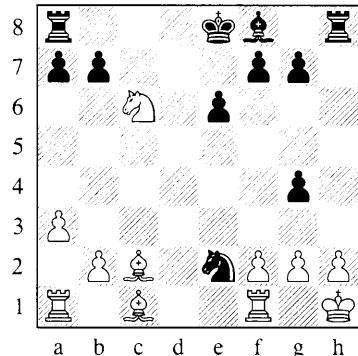


11...♝f4 12.♕e4!

This is the only way to maintain equal chances.

12.♕e4? is simply a blunder because of 12...♝xd3 13.♝xd3 ♜xe5!–+.

12.♕c2?! leaves White at least slightly worse after the following impressive tactical sequence: 12...♝xe5!! 13.♝xe5 ♜g5! 14.♝g4 ♜xe5 15.♝c4 ♜e2† 16.♔h1 h5! 17.♝xe5 hxg4 18.♝xc6



18...♝d6!! 19.g3 ♜xg3 20.fxg3 ♜xg3† 21.♔g2 ♜xf1 22.♕a4 ♜xh2=

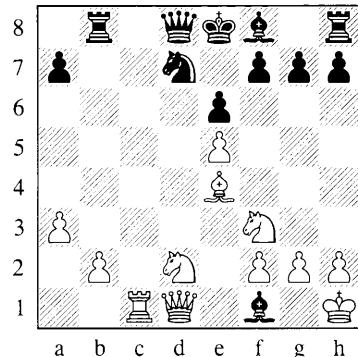
12...♝b5

We are at a crossroads, with White having to make an important practical decision:

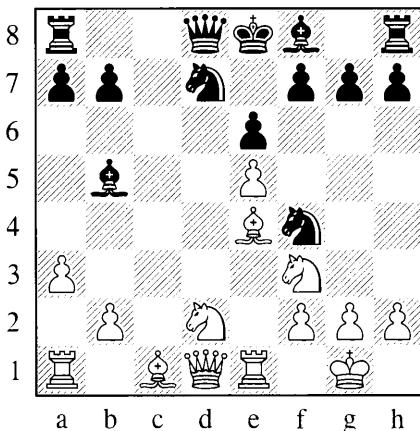
13.♗e1

I consider this to be the most clear-cut way to equality.

The alternative 13.♗xb7?!N leads to slightly more unbalanced positions, but in the end it should be a draw all the same: 13...♝b8 14.♕e4 ♜e2† 15.♔h1 ♜xc1 16.♝xc1 ♜xf1



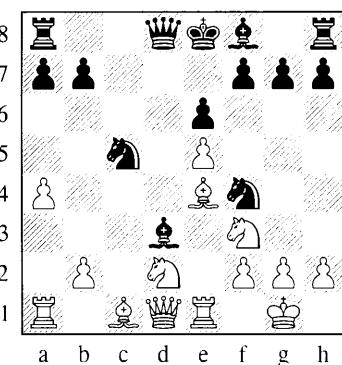
17.♝xf1! (In case of 17.♝xf1 ♜e7 18.b4 0–0 19.♕c4 ♜c8∞ White does have some compensation, but I am not sure whether it is fully sufficient.) 17...♝c8 18.♕c6 ♜e7 19.♔a4 0–0 20.♗d1 ♜xc6! 21.♝xc6 ♜xe5 22.♗xd8 ♜xc6= With prudent play, neither side should be in any danger here.



13...Qc5 14.b4!N

I think this is the accurate move that equalizes here.

The alternative 14.a4 Qd3! was better for Black in the following game:



15.Qc4 Qxc4 16.Qxf4 Qxd1 17.Qaxd1 Qe4 18.Qxe4 Qd5# Hinojar Basa – Baron Rodriguez, Spain 2004. Black had a nice bishop pair and some weaknesses to pile up and went on to win the game.

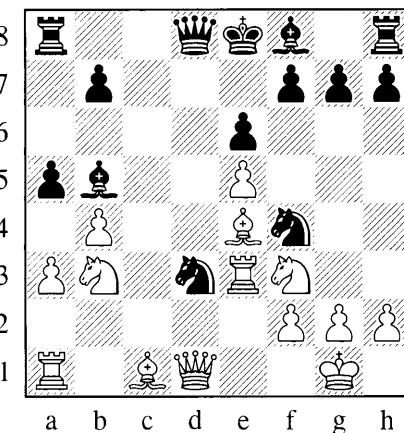
15.Qxd3?!N also fails to get White out of the woods after 15...Qxd3 16.Qf1 Qe7 g3 (17.Qe4 Qd5 18.Qc3 [18.Qxf4 Qxe4#] 19.Qc4 19.Qxf4 Qf4#) 17...Qg6#, but nevertheless seems a better choice.

14.b4! play takes on a tactical character, but at the end of the skirmishes a dead drawn position arises.

14...Qcd3 15.Qe3 a5! 16.Qb3!

The only move to keep the fight going.

16.bxa5 Qc5 17.Qxd3 Qxd3 18.Qe4! Qxe3 19.Qd6# Qxd6!! 20.exd6 Qxf2# 21.Qh1 Qc5= leads to a nice draw.

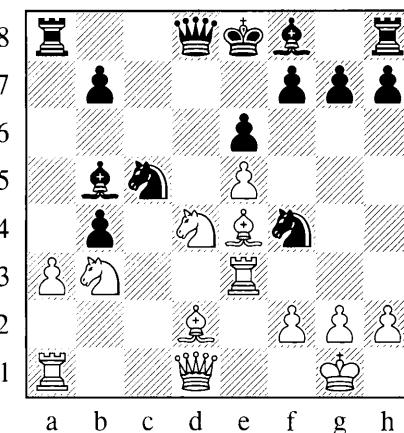


16...axb4 17.Qfd4?!

17.Qbd4 Qc5 18.Qd2 Qa4 19.Wb1 Qxe4 20.Qxe4 Qd5 21.axb4 Qd7# is also balanced, but I would prefer Black in view of the bishop pair.

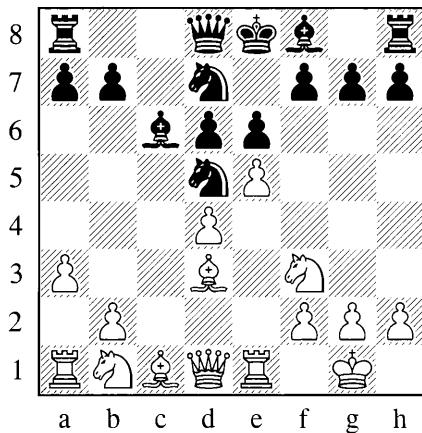
17...Qc5 18.Qd2!?

18.Qf3 Qc6 19.Qxc6# bxc6 20.axb4 Qxa1 21.Qxa1 Qd5 22.f3 Qd7 23.Qac2 c5 24.bxc5 Qxc5= is level, although it is White who has to be more careful.



18... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 19. $a \times b4$ $\mathbb{Q} \times b3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q} \times b3$ $\mathbb{Q} \times b3$
 21. $\mathbb{Q} \times a8$ $\mathbb{Q} \times d1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q} \times d8\#$ $\mathbb{Q} \times d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$
 $\mathbb{Q} \times b4!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q} \times b4$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q} \times b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5=$

D2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



I would almost be tempted to describe this as the most logical and natural move in the position. However, refraining from b2-b4 does not seem to improve White's chances.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!

The no-nonsense reaction: Black avoids an early ...dxe5 so as not to free the d4-square for the white knight.

11.exd6

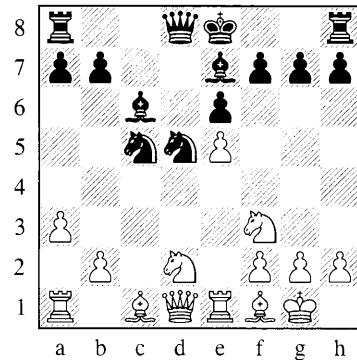
This seems to me like the most testing. White forces the bishop to move again, hoping that hitting it with $\mathbb{Q}bd2-c4$ (or e4) will give him enough time to build either an attack or positional pressure.

11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12.b4 a6 transposes to variation D32, while 11.b4 a6 is variation D33.

Harmless is instead:

11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ dxe5! 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Black has a variety of good choices. My preference is for:



13...0-0!

13... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 14. $g3N$ $\mathbb{Q}fd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ is a bit too time-consuming for my taste.

However, 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6N$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15.b4
 $\mathbb{Q}ca4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0-0 is worth a further look.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

14.b4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}5a4$ is at least equal for Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$

15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ f5!! 16.exf6?? $\mathbb{Q}xf6-$ + is a major point.

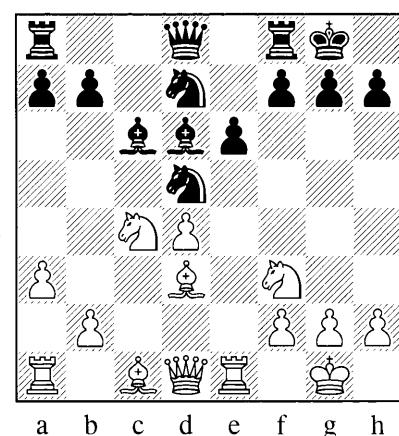
15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$

The only move.

17... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5=$

In my view Black has the more pleasant position, but the computer says it's completely equal.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



13...♝f4!

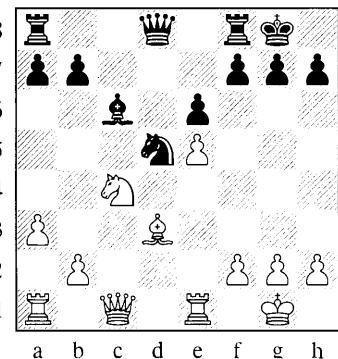
The star move, after which Black easily equalizes. With his dark-squared bishop gone White has no realistic hopes of initiating a dangerous attack.

14.♝d2N

It is hard to say which move is the most testing, as I found Black to be fine after all White's replies.

14.♝ce5 looks unlikely to cause any trouble. After 14...♝xe5 15.♝xe5 ♜c8 16.g3 ♜xc1 17.♜xc1 ♜e7 18.♜c5 ♜d5 19.♝a4 ♜c6= Black doesn't have the slightest problem. He actually went on to win in Morvay – D. Nagy, Hungary 2005.

More to the point seems 14.♝fe5N, but Black has two good ways to cope with it. The nearest one is: 14...♝xe5 (14...♝xe5?! 15.dxe5 ♜5 16.♝d6 ♜xe5 17.♜xh7† ♜xh7 18.♝h5† ♜g8 19.♝xe5 ♜d7= is slightly riskier but also possible) 15.dxe5 ♜xc1 16.♜xc1 (16.♜xc1 ♜d4 17.♝e4 ♜xe4 18.♜xe4 ♜d3=)

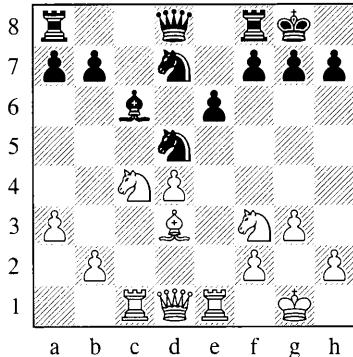


...♝b5 17.♝b1 ♜xc4 18.♜xc4 ♜c8 19.♝e4
= ♜d5=

+ ♜g3

This looks smooth, but White will have no chances to attack by utilizing a rook lift to the third rank. Black equalizes easily:

+ ♜xc1 15.♜xc1



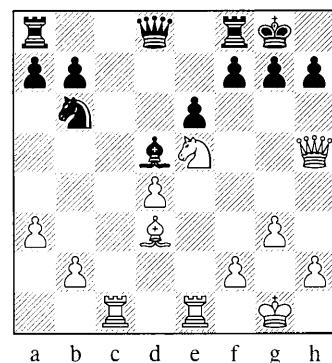
15...♝5b6!N

15...♝e7?!N is possible too.

Black also had few concerns following 15...♝f6 in Rantanen – Seeman, Jyväskylä 2015.

16.♝ce5 ♜xe5 17.♝xe5 ♜d5 18.♝h5

18.♝e2 ♜c8 19.♝c5 ♜d7 20.♝xd5 exd5
21.♜f5 ♜xe5 22.♝xc8 ♜e8! 23.dxe5 ♜xc8=



18...g6

18...h6! could be more combative.

19.♝h6 ♜c8

The diminished material means that White's attack lacks punch. A possible end to the game could be:

20.♝xc8

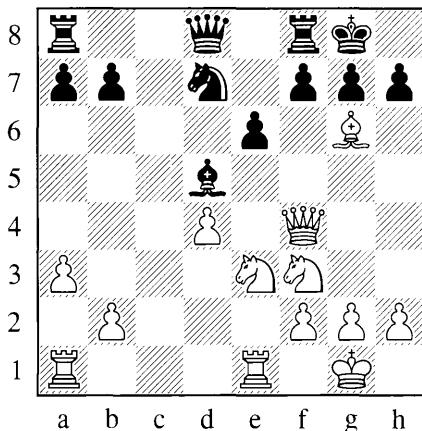
20.♝c3 ♜e7!?

20...♝xc8 21.h4 ♜e7! 22.h5 ♜f5 23.♝xf5 exf5 24.hxg6 hxg6 25.♝xg6 fxg6 26.♝xg6†=

14...♝xd2

14...♜c8 15.♝c1 h6 is also fairly good.

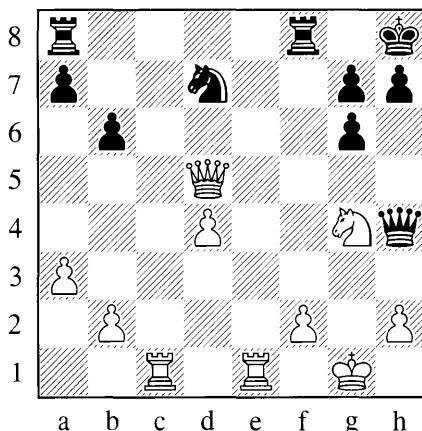
15. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$



18... $f \times g 6!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$
21. $g \times f 3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$
23. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$

23... $b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}h4!$

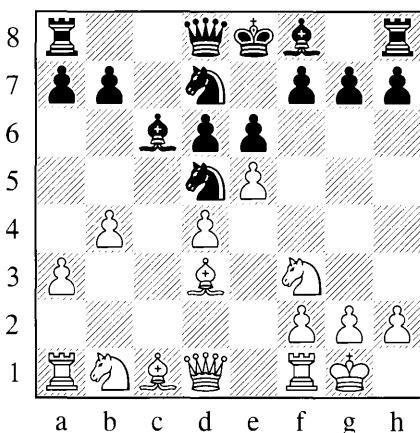
This move nullifies White's slight initiative.
A likely conclusion is:



25. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}de8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe8$
 $\mathbb{Q}xg4\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$

With a perpetual check.

D3) 10. b4



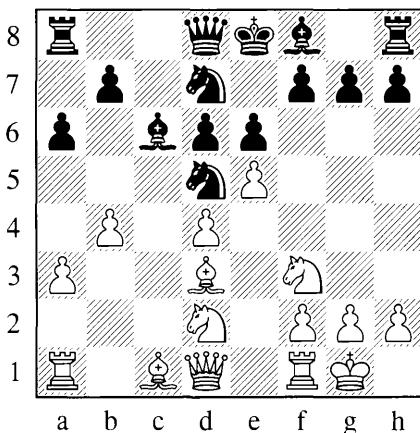
I believe this to be the critical test.

10... $a6$

White has weakened his light squares (as well as c3) further, but now controls the important c5-square. A double-edged struggle is about to start, where the first player hopes his space advantage will prove more important than his weaknesses.

The three main moves are: D31) 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$,
D32) 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ and D33) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$.

D31) 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

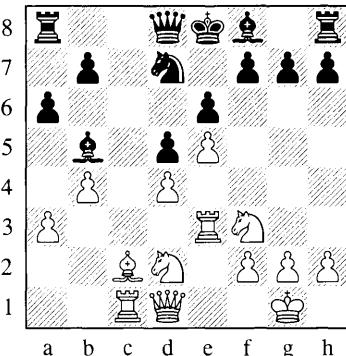


This allows Black a variety of good replies.

11...dxe5?!

I promoted this standard undermining of White's queenside to be my main line here.

Also possible is: 11... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$

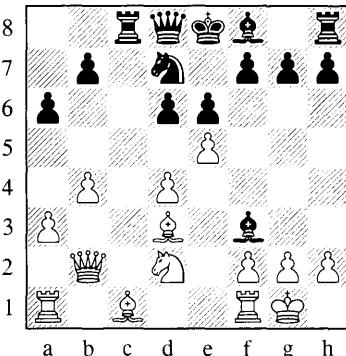


16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ Intending to answer 17.a4N $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ with 18... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 19.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$. My belief is that Black is quite okay, for instance: 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 1-0!?. 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dxc4 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ We have at least sufficient compensation for the missing pawn.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The main theoretical recipe.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

**11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

Also viable is 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!?. 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ dxe5 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$!?. 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ N 18.b5! $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20.bxa6 bxa6

21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 0-0 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}a8=$ is another way to equalize) 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0-0 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b5 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (19.a4N bxa4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6=$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ g6 24.g3 $\mathbb{Q}b6=$ with approximate equality in Cerveny – Cvek, Pardubice 2013.

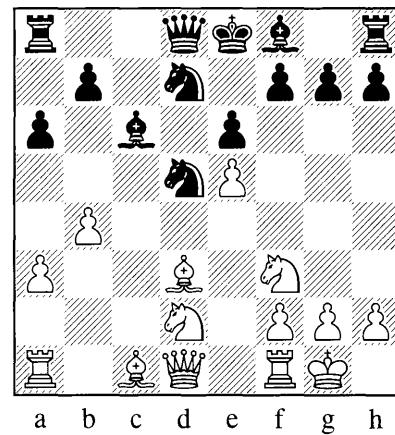
15.b5

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ White's slight initiative is defused in the following way: 15...dxe5 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}b5$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ allows 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ N 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$!) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0-0 21. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4=$ Black had no reason to complain in Lanin – Soreghy, corr. 2009.

15...axb5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

This was Kalvaitis – Genutis, Lithuania 2007, and now I would like to recommend: 16...dxe5N 17.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ h6=

Black has a fully equal game.

12.dxe5**12...a5!N**

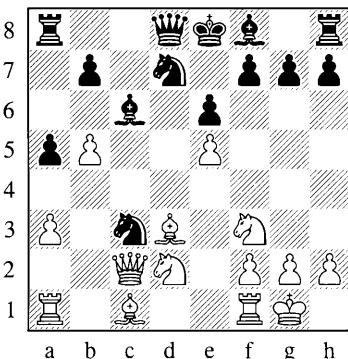
To my knowledge this has not been played in this particular position, but it is a typical reaction, exploiting White's overextension.

13.b5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$!

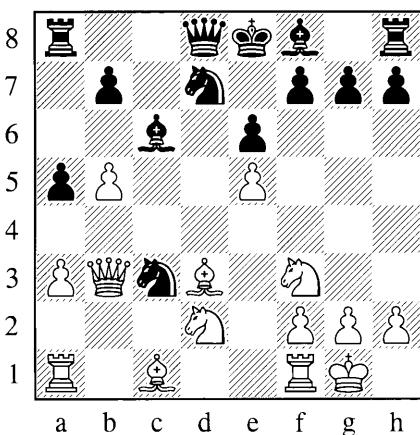
The point: hitting both the queen and the b5-pawn.

14. $\mathbb{W}b3$

After 14. $\mathbb{W}c2?$ Black does not have to take the pawn, but may instead continue with:



14... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ (15. $bxc6 \mathbb{W}xd3$ 16. $cxb7 \mathbb{B}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{B}xb7\#$ is difficult for White) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{W}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ is a direct transposition to our main line with 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{B}b2 \mathbb{Q}a4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xb2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1 \mathbb{W}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 exd5$ 22. $a4 0-0$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{E}fd8=$



14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

Leading to mass simplifications that are not unfavourable for Black.

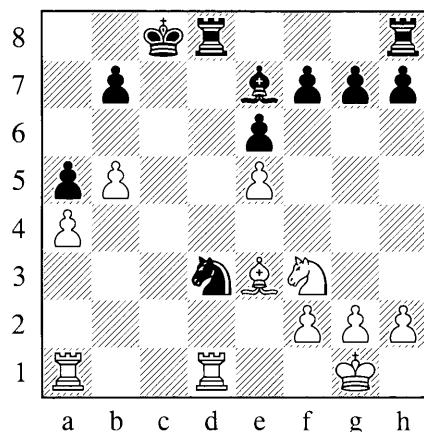
15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc3 \mathbb{W}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3 \mathbb{Q}xd3$

18. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1 0-0-0!$

The engines say that the black king is not in danger on the queenside, and I have no reason to doubt them.

20. $a4$

After 20. $\mathbb{B}b6 \mathbb{B}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa5 \mathbb{E}xb5$ only Black can be better.

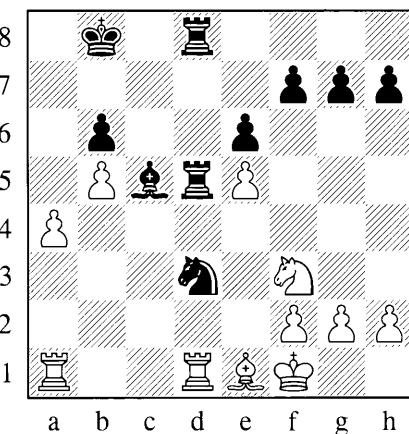


20... $\mathbb{B}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b6 \mathbb{Q}b8!$

As it turns out, the threat to the a-pawn is not a problem for us.

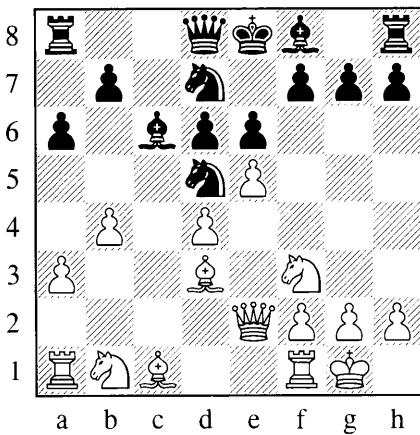
22. $\mathbb{Q}xa5 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1 b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{E}hd8$

Black is so strongly placed that it is White who has to start searching for ways to secure the draw. In my view, the human way is:



25.g3 g6 26.Qg5 Qxe5 27.Qxd5 exd5
 28.Qxh7 Bb8 29.Qf6 Bxh2 30.Qxd5 Qf3
 31.Qa2 Qxe1 32.Qxe1 Bb1† 33.Qe2 Qxf2
 34.Qa3=

D32) 11.Qe2



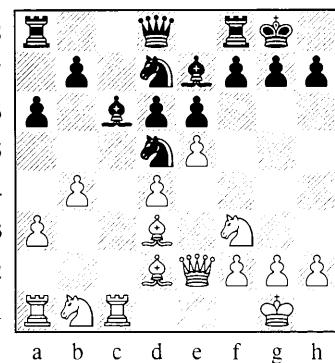
Throwing this in with the b2-b4 set-up might appear natural, but what does White do next?

11...Qe7 12.Qe1

In my opinion more prudent is:

12.Qd2?! 0–0 13.Qc1

13.Qc3 Qxc3 14.Qxc3 b5! Nf7 sees b6 become an excellent square for the black knight.



13...Bc8!N

Less convincing is 13...Bb6 14.Qc3 Qxc3 15.Qxc3 dxe5 16.dxe5 Bfc8 17.Qd2 Bd8 as

played in Khaetsky – Ortiz Suarez, Barcelona 2013, although Black went on to win the game after an unsound sacrifice by White.

14.Qc3 Qxc3 15.Qxc3
 15.Qxc3 dx5 16.dxe5 Qxf3 17.gxf3 Bxc3
 18.Qxc3 Bb6∞

15...Qb6 16.Qd2 Bd7 17.Qf4 f6∞

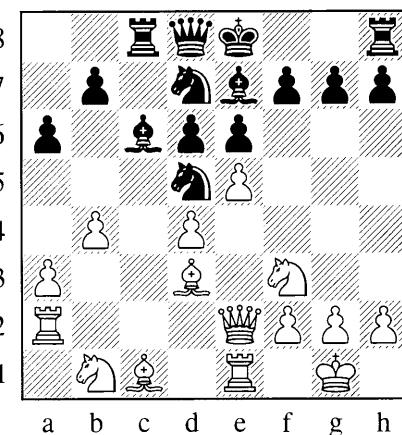
Black does not look any worse to me, although he is probably not better either.

12...Bc8

It will now be hard for White to complete the mobilization of his queenside forces without using some artificial means.

13.Qa2

13.Qd2 was played in Alaykin – Negi, Moscow 2005, when it appears simplest to me to wait with 13...b5!N, as White hasn't really done anything constructive yet. The computer now gives 14.Qa2, but then a human-like approach with 14...Qa8 15.Qc2 Bxc2 16.Qxc2 dx5 17.dxe5 Q7b6 18.Qd3 h6 19.Qc1 Bd7 20.Qe1 g6!†, intending ...Bf8-g7, emphasizes the lack of any serious plan for White.



13...Qa4!N

I think it is better for Black to refrain from 13...Q7b6, as played in Markovic – Rublevsky, Budva 2004, since the text move allows Black to halt White's idea to improve his rook

with $\mathbb{E}c2$. I believe Black holds the slightly better chances.

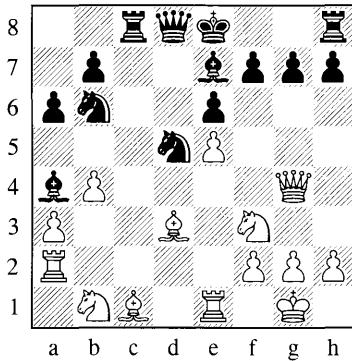
14. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $dxe5$ 15. $dxe5$ $h5!?$

Denying the queen a transfer to g4.

Also possible is:

15... $\mathbb{Q}7b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g4!$

After 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $g6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$) 17... $h5!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (18. $\mathbb{W}g3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$) 18... $0-0$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ 20. $a xb4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8\#$) 19... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}fc8\#$
Black has obtained complete control.



16... $g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

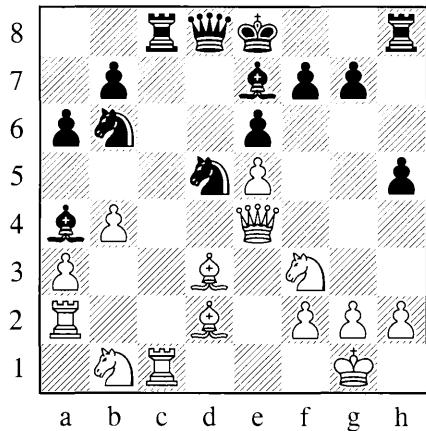
17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$

17... $h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21. $h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$

I would evaluate this position as balanced.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}7b6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c1$

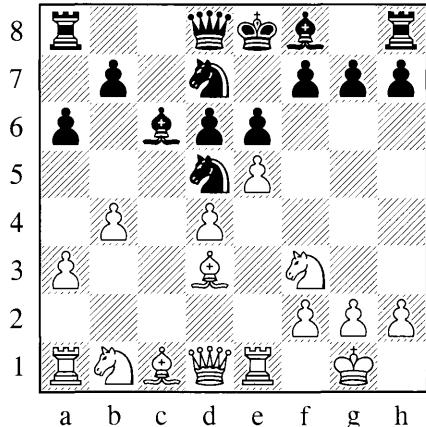
17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}xc1\#$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $g6$ looks excellent for Black too. For example, 20. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ and the weakness of the c4-square tips the scales slightly in our favour.



17... $\mathbb{E}xc1\#$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $g6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $0-0\#$

White has no attack and the problems with his coordination have not been solved. The advantage, even if it is a slight one, rests with Black.

D33) 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$



This is the best move in my opinion.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $exd6!$

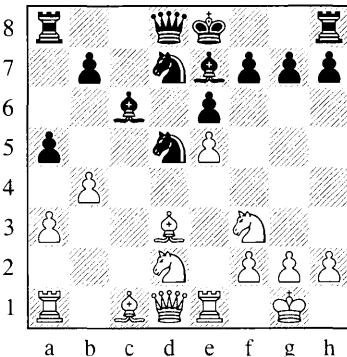
I think this is the most logical continuation, forcing the bishop to move again. White's idea is to plant a knight on c5, making use of the extravagant-looking b2-b4.

12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

This can be met in typical fashion:

12... $dxe5$ 13. $dxe5$ a5!

Black frees the c5-square for use by his pieces, and he may already be slightly for choice.



14. $bxa5$

14. b5 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3N$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0–0–0 \mp is a position that compares favourably with the one arising after 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $dxe5$! 12. $dxe5$ a5!, as White has wasted a tempo on $\mathbb{E}e1$. Still, this might have been the lesser evil for him.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16... 0–0 \mp

17. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 0–0 20. a6

20. $\mathbb{W}f4$!? N $\mathbb{E}xa5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}a7\mp$

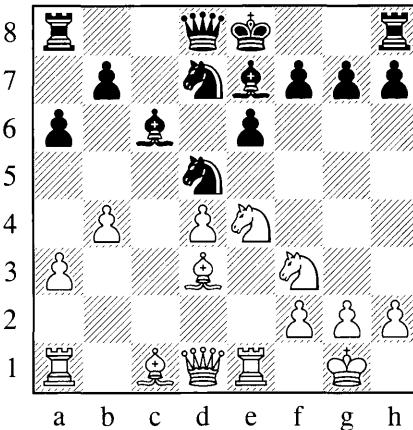
20... $\mathbb{E}xa6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{E}a4$! 24. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ $\mathbb{E}xa4$ 25. h4 $\mathbb{Q}c2\mp$

Black was dominating proceedings in Velchev – P.H. Nielsen, Rogaska Slatina 2011.

12... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The knight continues its trip towards the target square.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ does not offer White anything, in view of 14... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}b5$?) 16. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and Black is at least equal.



14... 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Jumping immediately to c5 looks like the most sensible way to play.

Much weaker is instead 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$?! $\mathbb{Q}5f6\mp$, after which the knight jump has been rendered impossible and White already has to think about equalizing.

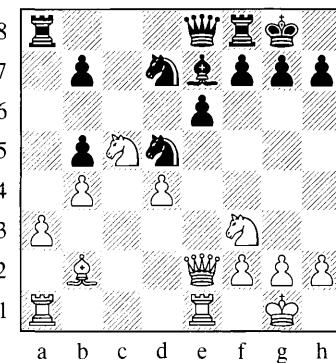
A viable alternative is:

15. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Now I found the following impressive (by my own standards) continuation:

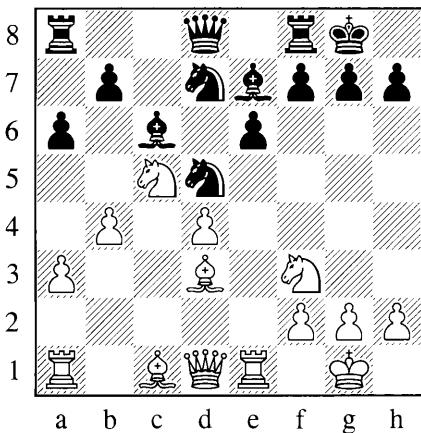
15... $\mathbb{Q}b5$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $axb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e8!!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$!

18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$! 19. $\mathbb{W}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\mp$ 20. $gx f3$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe8\mp$ is, unsurprisingly, a position where Black may even be better in spite of being a pawn down, as he has a much better bishop and a healthy pawn structure.



18... $\mathbb{Q}7b6!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$
 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ 20.bxc5
 20.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f6! 22. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$
 23. $\mathbb{E}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 25. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$
 26.g3 $\mathbb{E}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}d8=$
 20... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ f6! 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$
 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe6$ $\mathbb{E}fd8\#$

Black has excellent compensation for the pawn due to his powerfully placed knights, and is not at all worse.



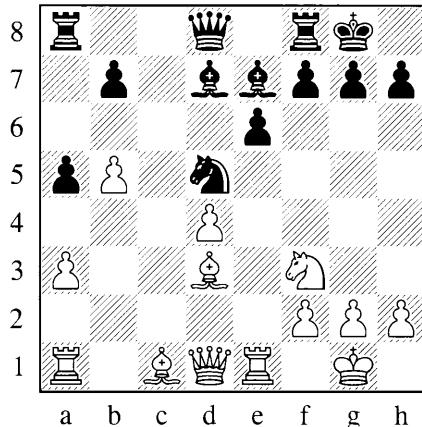
15...a5?

This undermining attempt, although as not as strong as in the cases we have already seen, is also good here.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16.bxc5! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d7\pm$ is solid but slightly better for White, who controls more space and has the bishop pair.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 17.b5!

Trying to cramp us. Without this move White would of course be worse.



17...f6!

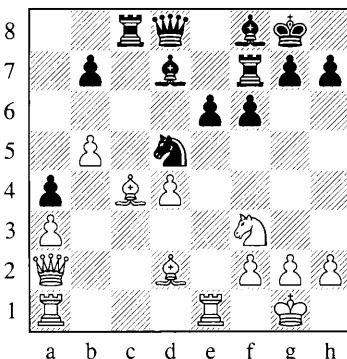
I like this move, guarding the critical e5-square and giving the black queen a possible outlet on h5.

17...a4? 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6=$)
 18... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b1$ g6 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ is also perfectly possible, and the verdict is none other than equality.

18.a4

An attempt to further cramp Black by preventing ...a4. Some other options are below:

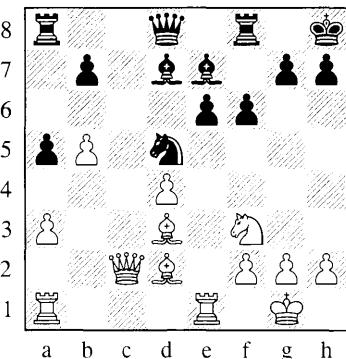
18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ a4! 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ is excellent for Black, as the weaknesses at b5 and a3 offer him considerable counterplay.



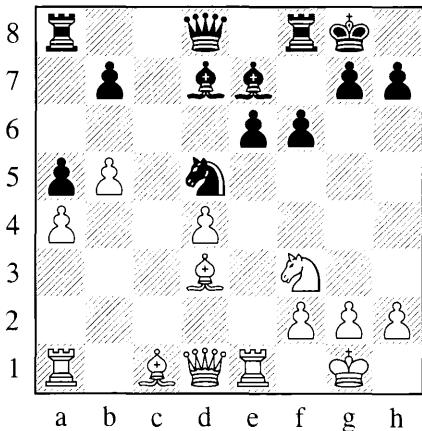
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Exd5}$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ is simply met by 23... $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$, underlining the above statement.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ (18...a4!?) 19. a4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ is at least equal for Black, in view of the strong knight on b4 and the possibility of doubling rooks on the c-file.

Finally, 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ is simply answered by: 18... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is a draw)



19... $\mathbb{W}e8!$ 20. a4 (20. $\mathbb{Q}xh7?$ f5) 20... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b3$ b6 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$ With a solid position for the second player.

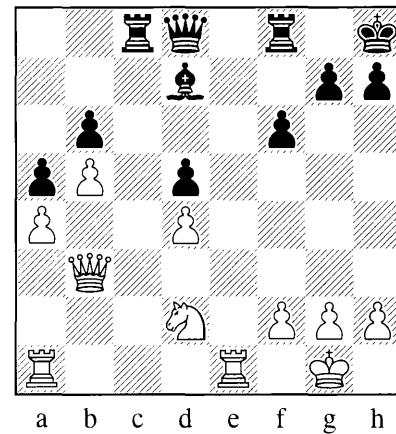


18... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$
Riskier is 20...g6! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3=$; 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ f5 22. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ f5 23. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b6 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

24. $\mathbb{W}b3$

24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}e8=$



24... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$

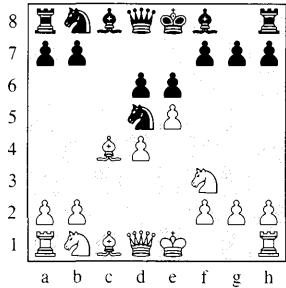
Conclusion

This chapter took us into more main line territory after 1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6. White has a dangerous sacrifice after 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ when I have managed to find a path to equality, though probably not more.

I also spent a lot of time analysing 7.a3 $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$, concluding that Black has excellent chances. The game will remain double-edged, but the variations presented here provide Black with a solid positional basis from which to begin the middlegame battle.

Chapter 8

c3 Sicilian



7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

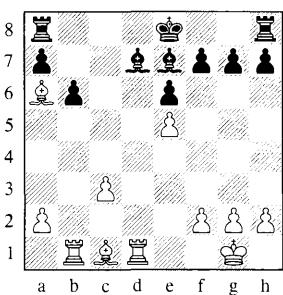
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.0-0

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

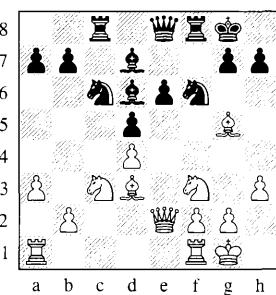
A) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	137
B) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$	138
C) 9.exd6!?	139
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E1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5	
13. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	145
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A) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}a6$



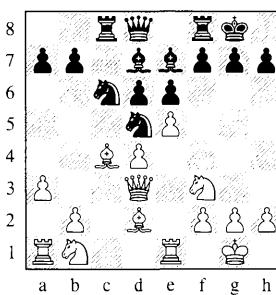
15... $\mathbb{Q}d8!N$

E11) after 17.h3



17... $\mathbb{Q}h5!N$

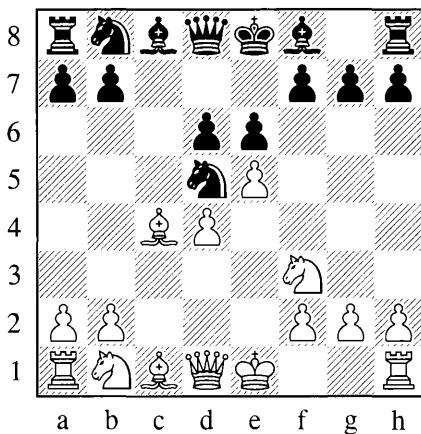
E23) after 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



12... dxe5!N

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♗f6 3.e5 ♗d5 4.♗f3 e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7.♗c4

A standard development for this bishop: placing it on a square where it cannot be purposefully annoyed by the black knights, while also keeping the d-file open. The alternatives, all considered in the previous chapter, allow Black an easy game where he has decent chances to play for a win.



7...♗c6 8.0–0 ♖e7

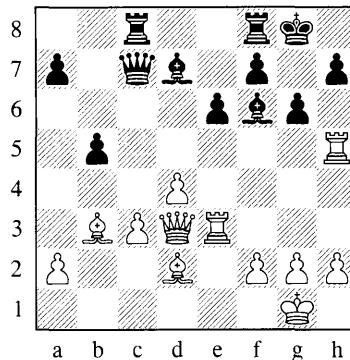
Black is relying on solid developing moves and is preparing to castle. After he does that, he will be ready to attack White's overextended centre. White has tried several continuations in an effort to build his position in the best possible way but, as the following pages will show, if Black reacts alertly it will be impossible for White to reach an ideal set-up.

We will consider A) 9.♗c3, B) 9.♗xd5, C) 9.exd6!, D) 9.♗d2 and E) 9.a3.

The main line 9.♖e2 is the topic of Chapter 9.

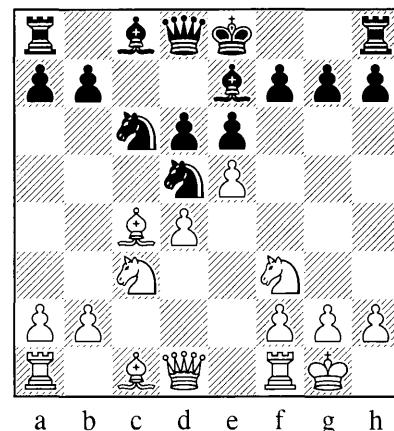
One last possibility is 9.♗e1, which should normally transpose to other lines of our repertoire. A deviation that we should only consider as a gift is: 9...0–0 10.♗c3?! (10.exd6? ♗xd6 11.♗c3 h6 and 10.a3 ♗d7 lead to positions we look at in variations C2

and E respectively) 10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 dxe5 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♖c7 14.♗d3 ♗d7 15.♗d2 (15.♗f4 ♗d6 16.♗c5 ♗c6 is slightly better for Black) 15...♗ac8 16.♗b3 ♗f6 17.♗g6 18.♗e1 b5 19.♗e3



19...b4! 20.♗c5 ♖d6 21.cxb4 ♗xd4 22.♗xc8 ♖xc8↑ Black went on to win in Eschmann – Caruana, Winterthur 2007.

A) 9.♗c3



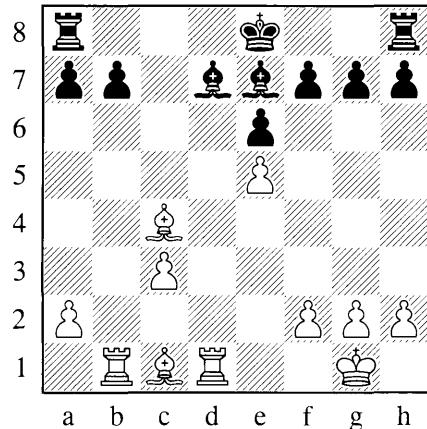
This is exactly the sort of move that White should avoid.

9...♗xc3 10.bxc3 dxe5 11.♗xe5 ♗xe5 12.dxe5 ♖xd1! 13.♗xd1 ♗d7

White has a worse pawn formation and must play accurately to make a draw.

14.♗b1?!

14.a4! a6 15.♗e2! ♜c6 16.♗f3!N ♜xf3 17.gxf3 ♜c8 18.♗b1 ♜c7 19.♗e3 f6 20.♗b6 ♜d7 21.♗e3 ♜xd1† 22.♗xd1 fxe5 23.♗b1 b5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♗xb5 ♜f7 26.♗xe5 ♜c8 27.♗d4 ♜f6 28.♗e4 ♜xd4 29.cxd4= is actually the way for White to proceed, but it involves finding a series of accurate moves.

**14...b6!**

14...♜c6 15.♗b5 ♜xb5 16.♗xb5 b6 17.♗e3 ♜d8 18.♗db1!= allows White to draw rather easily by pushing the a-pawn.

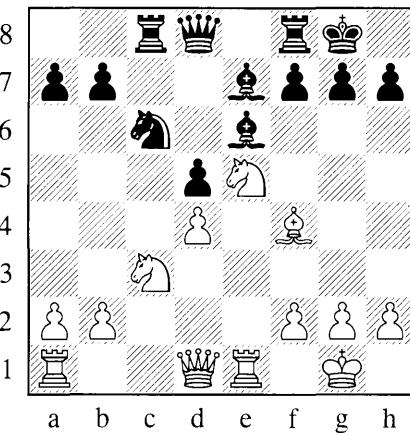
15.♗a6 ♜d8!N

15...♜c5, as played in Arribas Robaina, – Galego, Santa Clara 2005, allows the somewhat surprising 16.♗e3!N ♜xe3 17.fxe3 ♜e7 18.♗b4! (intending ♜c4) 18...♜c8 19.♗b5 ♜d8 20.♗xd8 ♜xd8 21.♗g4 g6 22.♗d4† ♜e7 23.a4= when White has eliminated all his problems.

16.♗e3 0–0?

White is fighting to draw, as it is not easy for him to get rid of his weak pawns. Black is ready to contest the d-file by ...♜a4, and I would really rate his winning chances as significant – especially against a somewhat weaker opponent.

B) 9.♗xd5 exd5 10.♗c3 ♜e6 11.♗f4 dxe5 12.♗xe5 ♜c8 13.♗e1 0–0



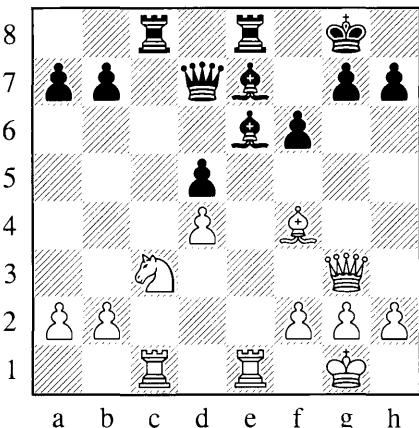
This sequence that has occurred in a number of games: White gives up his light-squared bishop, makes a few natural developing moves, and hopes to draw the symmetric position that arises. However, I think that Black's bishop pair is quite an important factor in this type of structure, and that he enjoys a small but lasting advantage. I will give a couple of examples to substantiate my opinion.

14.♗c1

14.♗xc6 ♜xc6 15.♗d3N (15.♗h5?! ♜c4 16.♗ad1 ♜d7 17.♗f3 ♜fc8 18.♗d3 b5! 19.♗g3 b4 20.♗d1 ♜c2† left White almost paralysed in Cordel – Lorin, corr. 2008) 15...♜d7 16.h3 (16.♗ac1 ♜fc8† is not a clear equalizer either) 16...♜fc8 17.a3 ♜c4 18.♗g3 b5 19.♗e3 ♜f8† This line illustrates a typical way for Black to increase the pressure: doubling rooks on the c-file, and then pushing the b-pawn to evict the guardian knight from c3.

14...♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♜d7 16.♗d3 ♜fe8 17.♗g3 f6 18.♗f4

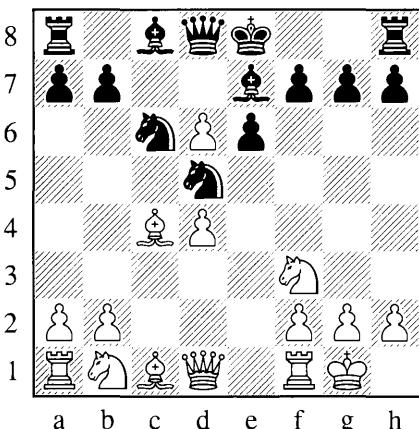
This happened in Narciso Dublan – Comas Fabrego, Mataro 2005, and now I like the following improvement:



18...♝d8!?

Black holds the advantage, as the bishop is coming to b6 to put the d4-pawn under siege. An important remark to be made is that in all these positions White seems to be lacking a clear plan. There are no strongpoints for his bishop and knight, and his light squares are particularly weak. It is not surprising that Black has scored only wins and draws in this variation.

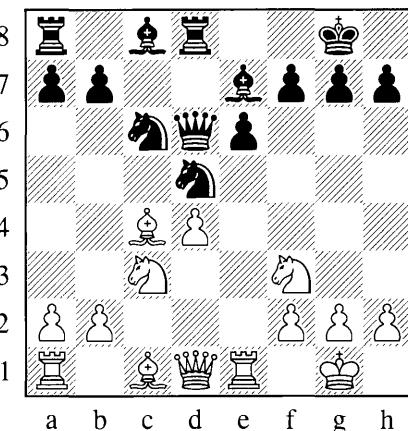
C) 9.exd6!?



So far we have looked at two moves that shouldn't cause Black any trouble. This try is a more serious one: White opts for an IQP position, and hopes that his extra

space will offer him good attacking chances. I would like to present both recaptures on d6: C1) 9...♝xd6 and C2) 9...♝xd6!?.

C1) 9...♝xd6 10.♝c3 0–0 11.♜e1 ♜d8!?



This has been the standard way of treating this variation so far. Black should be okay, but I have my reservations about the line. The main one was that this is the type of game where we have to defend most of the time, with few chances of getting anything more than a draw.

12.♝b3

12.a3!? is an interesting possibility, as 12...♝b6!?, 13.♝d3!N ♜xd4 14.♝e5 ♜f5 15.♝b5↑ is too dangerous for my taste and is perhaps even worse for Black.

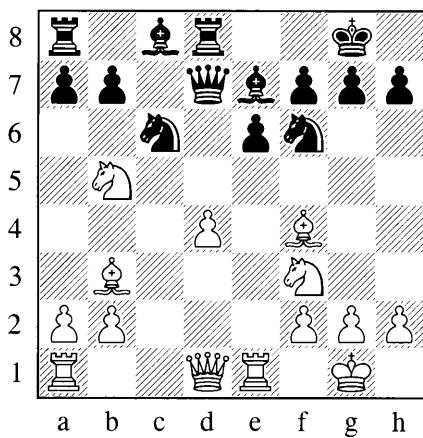
12...a6! is correct, but that represents some sort of gain for White. He didn't have to lose a tempo by retreating his bishop to b3, and therefore has some extra options due to the useful move a2-a3.

12...♝f6 13.♝b5!?

Black is fine after 13.♝e3, as the bishop's passive placement does not put Black under pressure. If I were Black I would be more concerned about the text move.

13...♝d7 14.♝f4

The real expert of the position – French super-GM Romain Edouard – now demonstrated a way out for Black:



14...Qb4! 15.Qe2 a6!

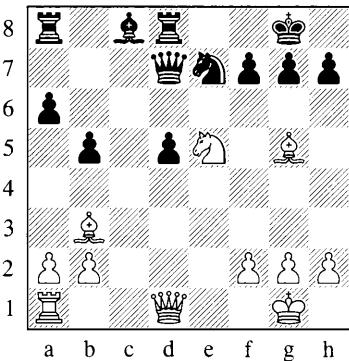
15...Qa5 takes the bishop too far away from the kingside, allowing 16.Qg5!↑.

16.Qc3!

16.Qc7?!N Qa7! 17.d5 exd5 18.Qxd5 Qxd5 19.Qxd5 Qxd5 20.Qxd5 Qf5= forces a draw if White wants one.

16...b5 17.Qg5 Qe7 18.Qe5!

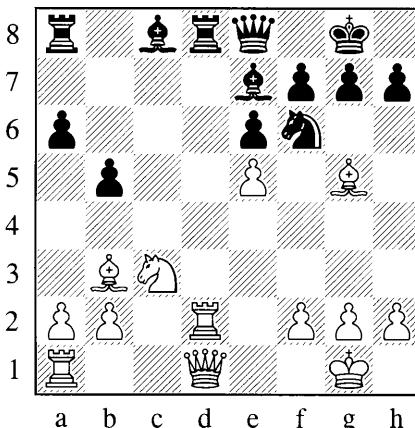
18.d5!N Qxd5! (18...Qa5 19.dxe6 Qxd1† 20.Qxd1 Qxb3 21.exf7† Qxf7 22.Qe5† Qf8 23.axb3 Qb7±/ is a position where Black should eventually equalize in spite of the minus pawn, but in my view it is more pleasant to play as White.) 19.Qxd5 exd5 20.Qxe7! Qxe7 21.Qe5



21...Qe6! 22.Qxe7 Qe8! 23.Qxf7! Qxe7 24.Qxd5 Qe6 25.Qxa8 Qxa8 26.Qe5 Qxa2= Another line where play bails out to a completely drawish position.

18...Qxe5 19.dxe5 Qe8 20.Qd2!

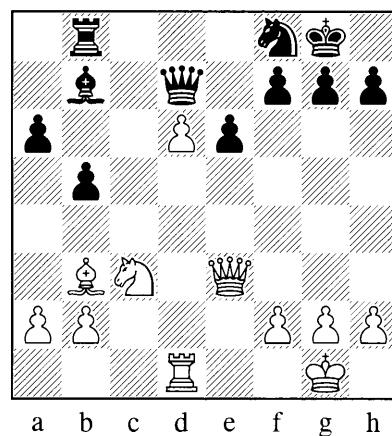
So far, we have been following Asis Gargatagli – Edouard, Leon 2012. At this point Romain missed the best defensive course, which was:



20...Qd7!N

20...Qxd2 21.Qxd2 Qd7 22.Qxe7 Qxe7 23.Qd1± led to some suffering for Black, although he eventually won.

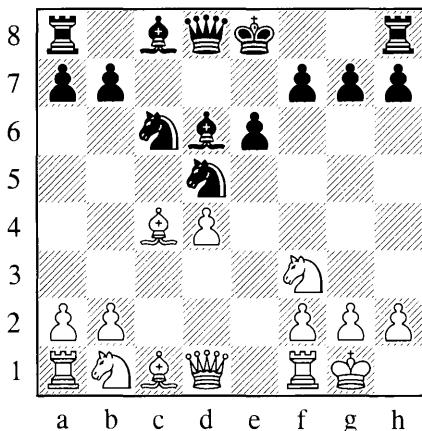
21.Qxe7 Qe7 22.Qf3 Qb8 23.Qad1 Qb7 24.Qe3 Qf8 25.Qd6 Qxd6 26.exd6 Qd7∞



The situation is rather unclear, in spite of the dangerous-looking passed pawn on d6.

To conclude, 9...♝xd6, although objectively okay, leads to the type of positions I would like to avoid as Black. Thus, Kozul's idea finally came to the fore as the best practical solution.

C2) 9...♝xd6!?



I like Zdenko Kozul's treatment the most here, seeking an active deployment of the black forces.

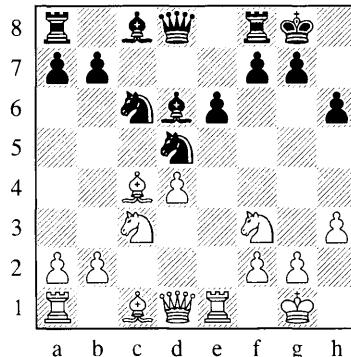
10.♞c3 0–0 11.♝e1 h6

This can be considered a tabiya for Kozul's idea. An important argument in favour of his configuration is that e7 has been freed for the black knights, and that the f4-square is under surveillance.

12.♛d3

This looks like the most logical way to treat White's side, and is also the top recommendation of the engines (although admittedly only by a small margin). The idea could be to create a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal.

12.h3 creates the threat of taking on d5, but after:



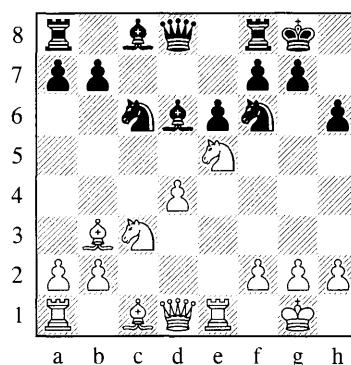
12...♞xc3N 13.bxc3 b6 14.♕d3 ♜b7 15.♕c2 ♜e7 16.♗d3 ♜g6= Black has coordinated his defence just in time and has a fair share of the chances.

12.♝b3 ♜f6

After this suggestion by John Shaw I don't see any reason why Black should be worse. For example:

13.♞e5!?

13.♕e3 b6 14.d5N (14.♗e2 ♜b7 15.♗ad1 ♜e7! 16.♗e5 ♜ed5) left Black in an excellent state in Coimbra – Oliveira, Lisbon 2011) 14...exd5 15.♗xd5 ♜b7= is completely equal



13...♞c7!?

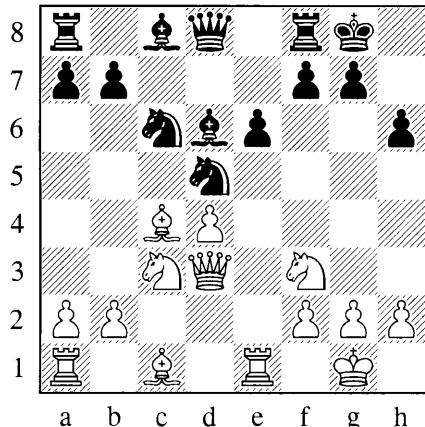
13...♞xe5 14.dxe5 ♜xd1 15.♗xd1 ♜d5 is satisfactory too.

14.♕e3 ♜xe5 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♕c5 ♜xc3 17.♗xf8

17.bxc3 ♜e8 18.♗f3 ♜a5! is okay for Black.

17... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 18. $\mathbb{B}exd1$ $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$
20. $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

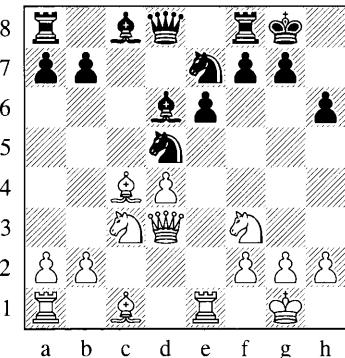
With two pawns for the exchange, I think we are in excellent shape.



12... $\mathbb{Q}cb4!$ N

I think this is a slight improvement over Kozul's play, completely equalizing the chances.

In Stevic – Kozul, Stari Mikanovci (rapid) 2010, the Croatian maestro played 12... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$, giving his opponent the opportunity to play:



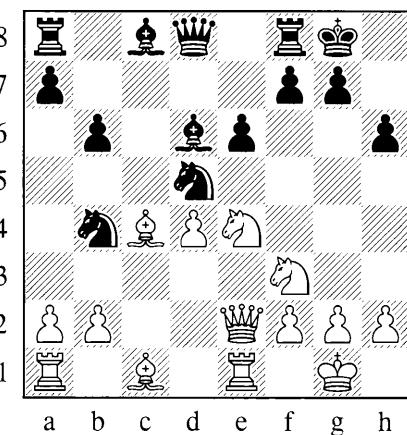
13. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ N \pm

Instead, Stevic chose 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$, which should have led to approximate equality after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ 16.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$.

After my improvement, play is most likely to continue as follows:

13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

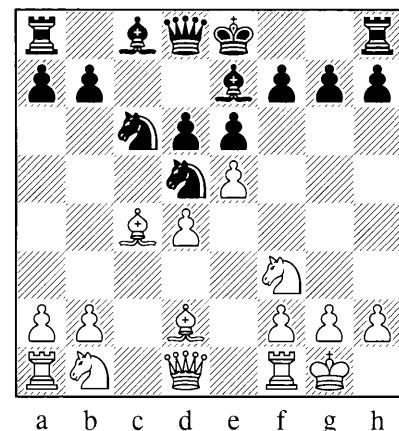
14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is more than okay for Black.



14... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18.b4 a6=

The chances are completely balanced, and due to the opposite-coloured bishops a draw is the most likely outcome.

D) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

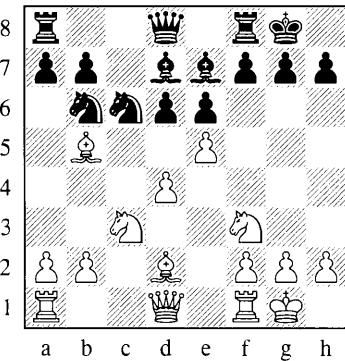


A logical move at this point: White wishes to develop without allowing any damage to his pawn structure.

9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$

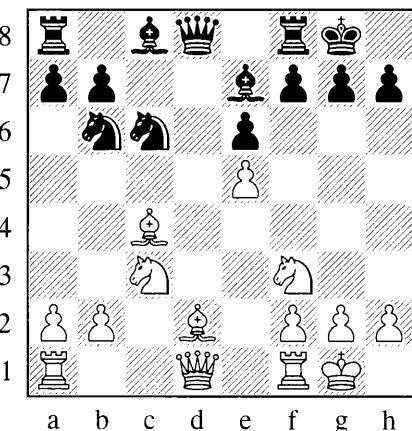
The alternative method of implementing our

plan is 10...♝b6 11.♝b5 ♜d7, but it is slightly riskier due to:



12.exd6! (12.♗e3 ♜b4! is what Black is aiming for. This would be impossible with the d-pawns exchanged, due to ♜xb6.) 12...xd6 13.♗d3! The white bishops were optimally configured for the attack in Stockfish 4 – Houdini 4, engine game 2013. Consequently, Black first freezes the central structure.

11.dxe5 ♜b6!



The knight retreats but the black position gains in potential, as the white bishop does not have good squares to flee to.

12.♝b5

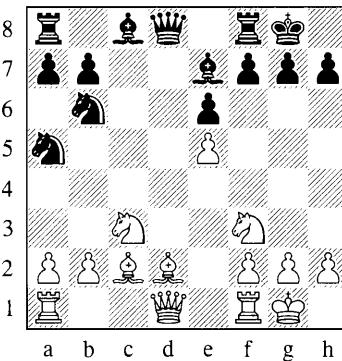
The trickiest possibility.

12.♝b3 ♜a5!

12...♜d7?! 13.♗f4! ♜c5 14.♗b1! ♜xb3 15.axb3 ♜d4 16.♗d1!± gave White some chances to apply pressure in BarmikiM – Ludving, engine game 2011.

13.♗c2

13.♗e2 ♜xb3 14.axb3 ♜d7= is okay for Black.



13...♜ac4! 14.♗e2 ♜xd2 15.♗xd2 ♜d7 16.♗de4 ♜c6 17.♗ad1 ♜d7!

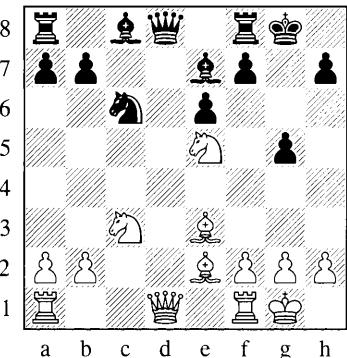
In the case of 17...♝c7 the pseudo-sacrifice 18.♗f6†! causes us a slight annoyance, although even here Black should be okay in the long run: 18...♝xf6 19.exf6 ♜f4! 20.fxg7 ♜fd8 21.♗e4 ♜a4! 22.♗xc6 ♜xc3 23.bxc3 bxc6 24.♗a6 ♜c7±=

18.♗d6 ♜a5! 19.f4 ♜ad8N

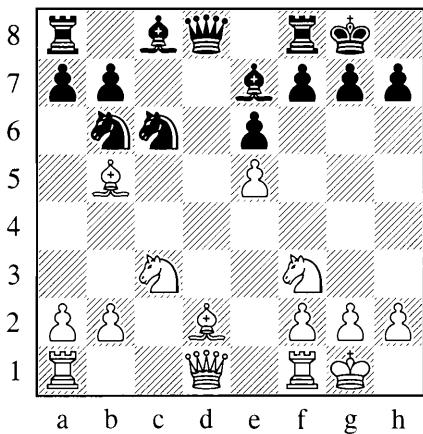
19...♝b6† 20.♗f2 wasn't as convincing for Black in Alfoo – Neapus, engine game 2012. After the text move, Black has reached full equality. A possible sequel is:

20.♗h1 ♜xd6 21.♗xd6 ♜c5 22.♗fd1 ♜xd6 23.♗xd6 ♜b4 24.♗d2 g6=

12.♗e2 is best answered by: 12...♜d7?! 13.♗f4 g5?! 14.♗e3! (14.♗g3 g4 15.♗d4 ♜dxe5 16.♗xg4 f5! 17.♗xe5 ♜xe5 18.♗e2 ♜f6N 19.♗c1 a6!∞ is another important variation, guaranteeing Black fine chances.) 14...♜dxe5 15.♗xe5 At this point I would like to recommend a clear-cut equalizer for Black:



15... $\mathbb{W}xd1!$ 16. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$
(17...f6 18. $\mathbb{B}ac1\mathbb{B}$ is slightly annoying)
18. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5=$



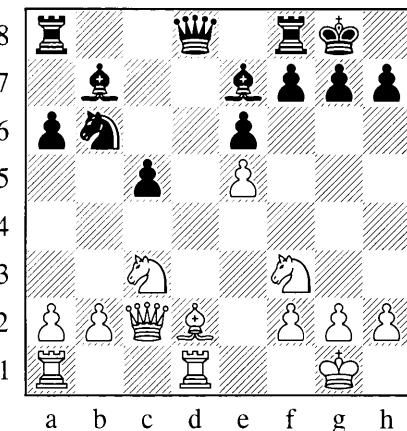
12...a6!

I was a bit amazed to find out that this is the best reaction here, letting White weaken our structure with gain of time. But a bishop is a bishop, and it must be taken!

My original intention was to suggest 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, but then I realized that, with the d-pawns gone, White has 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ stopping ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$. Black stands worse, even if only slightly, and the text is much stronger.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ c5

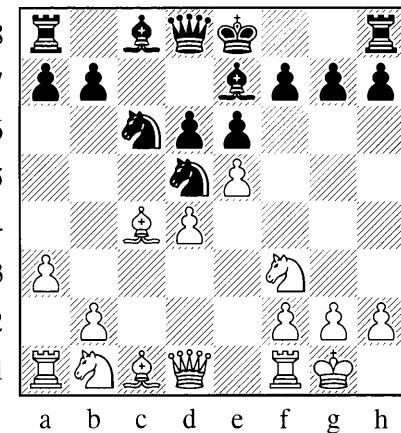
The light-squared bishop has found a beautiful diagonal, and Black is already enjoying fine prospects.



16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7=$

The strongpoint on d5 outweighs the slight weakness of the c5-pawn, and the chances can be considered even. Thus 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, although interesting, poses no real threat to our system.

E) 9.a3



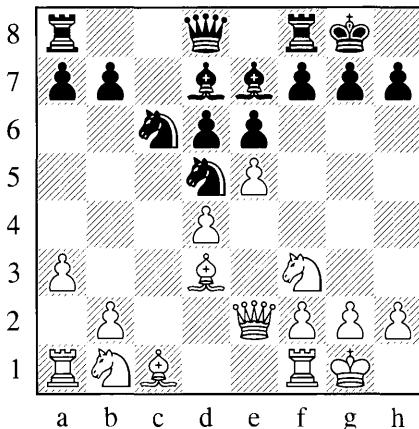
One of the most commonly played moves, which has a prophylactic nature. It deserves serious attention, as White intends to set up the typical battery $\mathbb{Q}d3$, $\mathbb{W}e4$ without being harassed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ sallies.

9...0-0

White can decide between the direct attacking approach with E1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$, or the refined course E2) 10. $\mathbb{B}e1$.

E1) 10.♗d3 ♗d7 11.♗e2

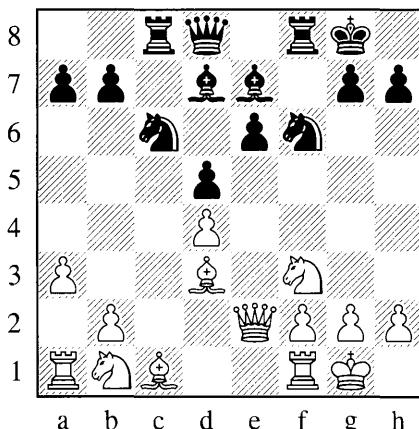
11.♗e1? ♘c8 12.♗bd2 dxe5 13.dxe5 ♖c7 transposes to variation E22.

**11...♘c8 12.♗e4**

I don't believe that White has anything special in this line.

12...f5 13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.♗e2 d5

Black simply gets a good version of a French Tarrasch structure.

**15.♗c3**

15.♗f4?! does not impress in view of 15...♗h5 16.♗e3 ♗f4 17.♗xf4 ♗xf4 18.♗e3 ♗d6 19.♗bd2 ♗f8±, with the better game for Black.

As in the earlier part of the chapter on page 139, I would like to give the reader a choice of continuations: **E11) 15...♗d6** or the untested **E12) 15...♗e8!?**

E11) 15...♗d6

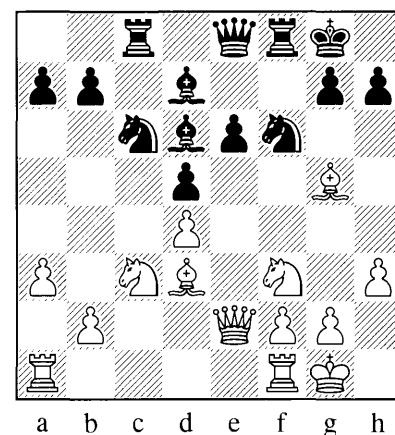
This leads to a lively struggle where Black has good chances.

16.♗g5

16.h3 h6, intending ...♗h5, should be pleasant for Black.

16...♗e8!?

16...♗b6 17.♗ad1 ♗h8 18.♗b1±, as played in Adianto – Zhang Zhong, Beijing 2008, is better for White in my opinion.

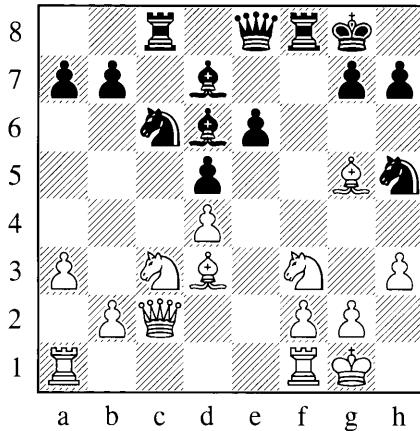
17.h3**17...♗h5!N**

An important improvement over Andronov – Sklyarov, Joensuu 2008, which went 17...♗h5?! 18.♗fe1 ♗ce8 19.♗d2 h6 20.♗e3 g5 21.♗e2! ♗e7 22.♗e5 ♗g7 23.♗g3± with a clear advantage for White.

18.♗c2!?

18.♗ad1 a6 19.♗b1 ♗f4 20.♗xf4 ♗xf4 21.♗fe1 ♗d8 22.♗d3 g6 23.♗e2 ♗f8

24. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{W}e7\bar{f}$ is a tad better for Black, due to his two bishops and control over e5.



18... $\mathbb{B}xf3!?$

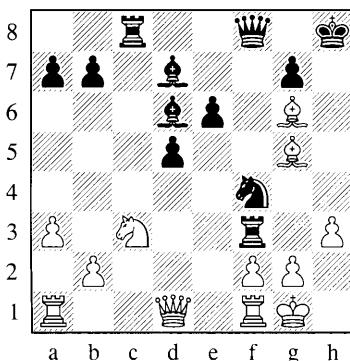
18...g6 19. $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{Q}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6\infty$ is playable for both sides.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g6 \mathbb{W}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{Q}xd4$

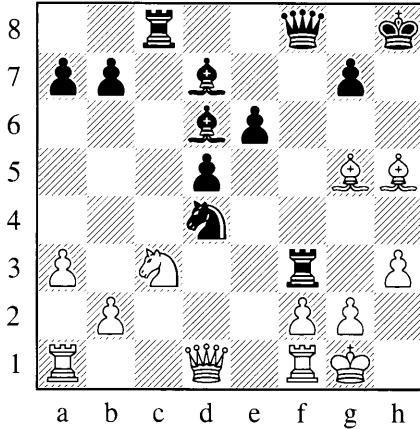
22. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$

White should probably be able to maintain the balance.

22. $\mathbb{W}xd4?$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d1$ does not look healthy, in view of:



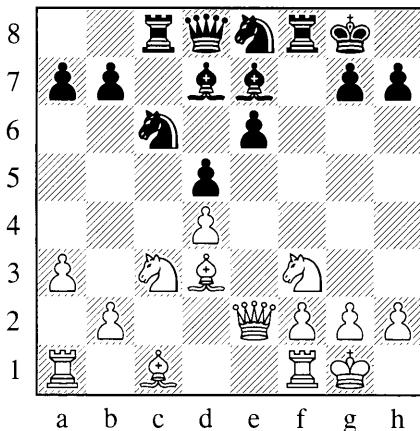
23... $\mathbb{Q}xh3\bar{t}$! 24. $\mathbb{G}xh3 \mathbb{Q}e8!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ (25. $\mathbb{Q}xe8?$ $\mathbb{W}f5-+$ or 25. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}h5-+)$ 25... $dxe4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}f4!$ 27. $f3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 28. $h4 \mathbb{Q}c7!$ With a powerful attack for Black.



22... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23. $f4 \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\bar{t}$ 26. $gxf3 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}f2\bar{t}$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{W}d6\bar{t}$! 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf2 \mathbb{W}h2\bar{t}$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{W}g1\bar{t}$

A perpetual is the likely outcome.

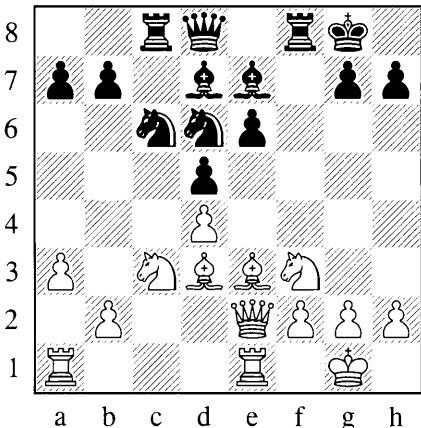
E12) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$ N



I like this non-standard manoeuvre here; designed to arrange a configuration with a knight on f5 and bishop on d6. After this is achieved, Black will have interesting attacking chances.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$

17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{W}e8$ 20. $h3 \mathbb{W}h5$ does not change much.



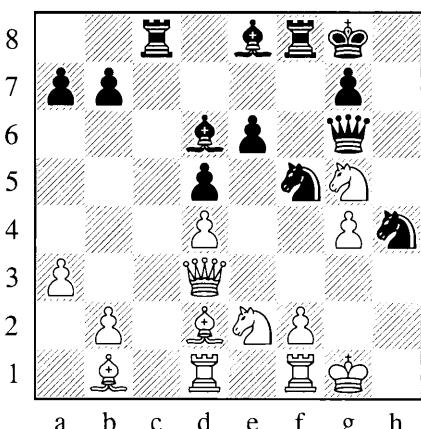
17... ♜f5 18.♗ad1 ♜d6 19.♗b1 ♜e8 20.♗d3
♗h5 21.h3 ♜ce7!

After activating all his forces, Black starts to bring more pieces to the kingside to attack the white king. The fight is already very complicated: what follows is a sample line with some exciting tactical shots, which I hope the reader will enjoy playing through.

22.♗d2 ♜g6 23.♗g5? ♜gh4 24.g4 ♜g6
25.♗e2!

25.♗h1? h6± or 25.gxf5? ♜xf5±.

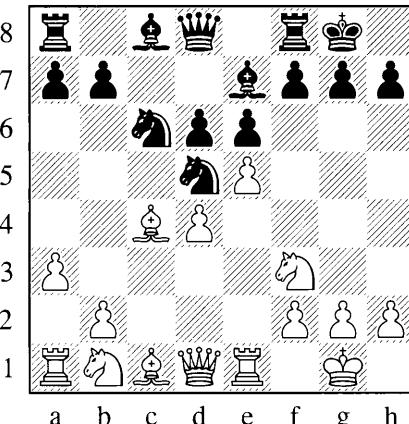
25...h6 26.♗f3 ♜e8!! 27.♗f1 h5 28.♗g5
hxg4 29.hxg4



29... ♜b5!! 30.♗xb5 ♜f3†! 31.♗g2! ♜xd2

32.♗xf5! ♜xf5 33.♗d7! ♜c2 34.♗xd6 ♜xg5
35.♗d8† ♜f7=

E2) 10.♗e1



White will post his queen on d3 and, after developing the queenside pieces, opt for ♜a2-b1 – forcing a weakness in the enemy castled position.

10... ♜d7

In the final split of the chapter, White can play E21) 11.♗d2?!, E22) 11.♗bd2 or E23) 11.♗d3.

E21) 11.♗d2?!

The circumstances are different from those a couple of moves ago. In the present case, the route to equality seems to be:

11... ♜c8 12.♗c3

12.♗d3 ♜a5± is fine for Black.

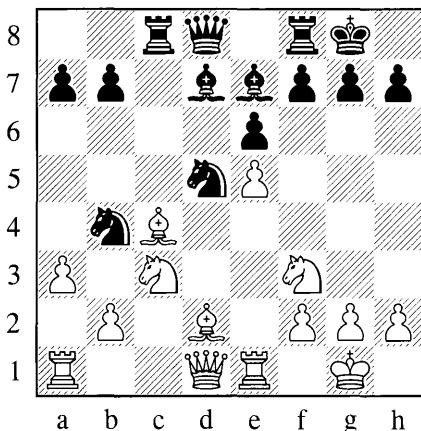
12...dxe5!

12... ♜xc3 13.♗xc3 d5 (13... ♜xe5 14.dxe5 ♜xc4 15.exd6 ♜f6 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♗c1 ♜xc1 18.♗xc1± is a position I don't like from Black's point of view, Potapov – Ki. Georgiev, Khanty-Mansiysk [rapid] 2013) 14.♗d3± This is known to slightly favour White, as he has

more or less achieved a harmonious attacking configuration.

13.dxe5 ♜cb4!?

This position is, surprisingly, untested at the highest level. I am going to offer some analysis to support my opinion that Black stands fine:



14.♗xd5!N

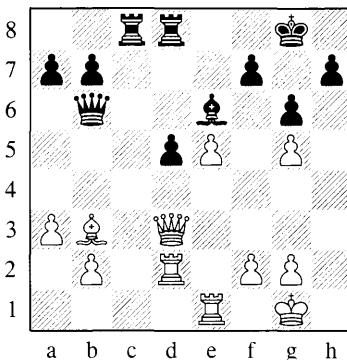
I believe this to be by far the most critical line, as it saddles Black with an isolated pawn.

Instead, 14.♗f1 ♜xc3 15.♗xc3 ♜d5 16.♗d4 was played in Jo. Hodgson – Snape, Coulsdon 2008. The obvious 16...♗c6N 17.♗d3 ♜b6† leaves Black with the slightly superior chances.

14.♗e4 is rather artificial. After 14...♜xc3 15.♗xc3 ♜c6! 16.♗d4 ♜d5 17.♗b3 ♜c5 18.♗d2 ♜c7 19.♗d4 ♜xd4 20.♗xd4 ♜b6† Black was controlling events in Goodger – Rawlinson, Sunningdale 2007.

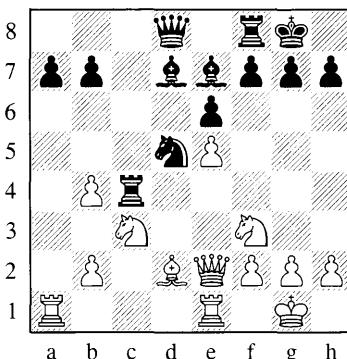
14.♗b3 has the same purpose as the text, yet after 14...♗d3 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♗a5! ♜xa5 17.♗xd3 ♜e6 18.h4 ♜b6 19.♗ad1 ♜fd8 20.♗d2 g6 21.♗g5 ♜xg5 22.hxg5 Black had a fine position in Potapov – Zhou, Chotowa 2010 – his d-pawn is unassailable and his king is well protected. However, his very next move proved to be an instructive positional error,

giving his opponent that ‘little something’ c3 Sicilian players are forever angling for:



22...d4?! This weakens both the d-pawn and the king by allowing the precious e6-bishop to be exchanged. (After something like 22...a5!N 23.♗f3 ♜c5 24.♗ed1 ♜b5 25.♗xd5 ♜dxd5 26.♗xd5 ♜dxd5 27.♗xd5 ♜dxd5 28.♗xd5 ♜xb2= the game would have been easily drawn.) 23.♗xe6 ♜xe6 24.♗e4! ♜d5 25.♗xd5 ♜xd5 26.f4 ♜b5 27.b4 ♜d5 28.♗ed1 ♜c4 29.♗f2 a5 30.bxa5 ♜f8 31.♗b1 ♜xa5 32.♗xb7 ♜xa3 33.♗d7 ♜aa4 34.g3±/± In due course White made masterly use of his advantage, and went on to win the ending.

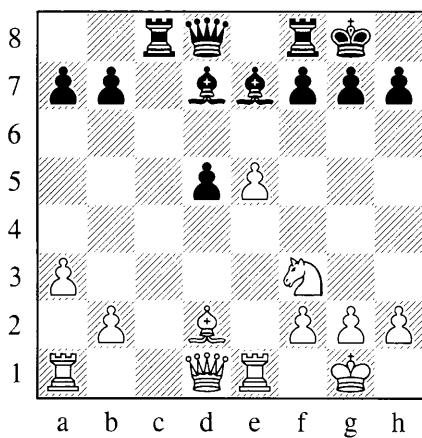
Finally, 14.axb4 ♜xc4 15.♗e2 is designed to create some imbalance, yet after the rook switch:



15...♗g4! Black is fine. 16.♗xd5 exd5 17.♗xa7 ♜b6=

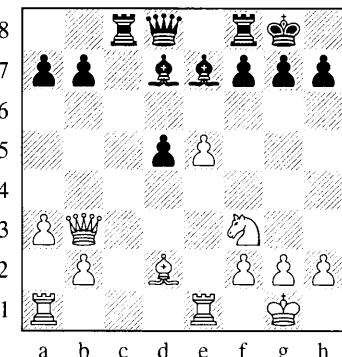
14...♝xd5 15.♝xd5 exd5

White has carried out his positional operation, saddling us with an isolani. The only question remaining is whether he can successfully blockade the d5-pawn and then make use of his kingside pawn majority. The answer is that the blockade can be achieved – but Black's pieces are so strong that White can make no further progress.

**16.♗d4**

Undoubtedly the most pressing option.

16.♗b3 allows Black to activate his bishop:



16...♝g4! Black has no problems. After 17.♗d4 17.h3 ♜xf3 18.♗xf3 ♜b6 19.♗xd5 ♜c5 20.♗e3 ♜xe3 21.♗xe3 ♜xb2=) there comes 17...♝c4 18.♗e3 ♜c5, and White cannot keep the blockade on d4.

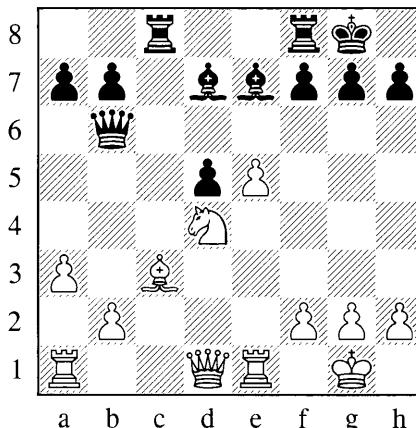
16.h3 is a way to avoid ...♝g4 incursions, but Black is okay after: 16...♝f5 17.♗d4 (17.♗b4 ♜e4 18.♗xe7 ♜xe7 19.♗d4 ♜c4=) 17...♝e4= The bishop on e4 is an excellent piece.

16...♜b6!

Black prepares a doubling of rooks on the c-file, to outweigh White's domination over d4.

17.♝c3

After 17.♝e3 ♜xb2 18.♗b1 ♜xa3 19.♗xb7 ♜fd8 20.♗a1 h6 21.♗xa7 ♜xa1 22.♗axa1 ♜b4 23.♗ed1 ♜c3= the game is obviously dead level.

**17...♝c4! 18.♗d3**

The alternative way to bolster d4, namely 18.♗e3, runs into 18...♝a4! 19.b3 ♜c5=.

18...♜fc8 19.h3 ♜g6!

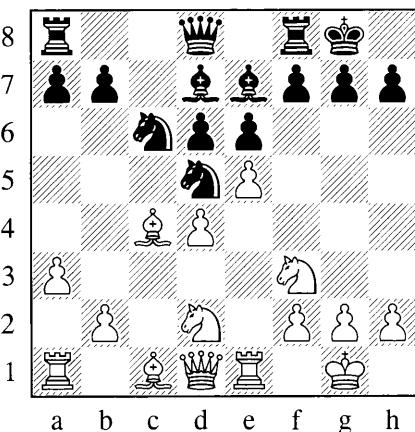
Black has activated his pieces to the maximum and the draw is unavoidable. Play could continue:

20.♗xg6 hxg6 21.♗ed1 g5 22.♗d3 ♜h7

23.♗d2 ♜c5

23...♝g6=

24.♗e3 ♜xd4 25.♗xd4 ♜f5 26.♗dd1 b6
27.♗e3 ♜e4 28.♗xd5 ♜e6=

E22) 11.♗bd2

A logical attacking gesture: White wants to use e4 as an attacking base for his knight. However, he will never get that far.

11...dxe5? 12.dxe5 ♕c7!

Surprisingly, this powerful move, stopping ♔e4, has been played only once. I think it leads to interesting positions where Black is at least equal. Let us examine some possibilities for White:

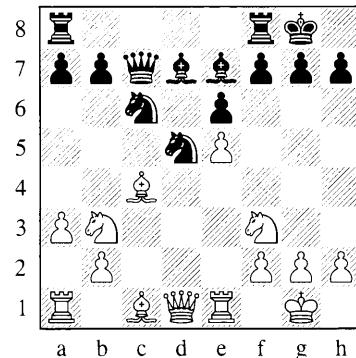
13.♗d3N

I think that redirecting the bishop's fire towards h7 is the most principled way of playing.

Plain equality results from: 13.♗e4N ♔xe5 14.♗xd5 ♔xf3† 15.♔xf3 exd5 16.♗c3 ♔e6 17.♗xd5 ♔xd5 18.♗xd5 ♔f6 19.♔e3=

13.♗b3N

Freeing the c1-bishop, but we have gained from the knight's failure to land on e4 or c4. White's position has lost its attacking potential.



13...a5!

13...♗cb4 is slightly better for White after the accurate sequence: 14.♗e4! b5 15.♔e2! (15.♔f1 ♔c2! 16.♔e1 ♔xd1 17.♔xd1 ♔c2 18.♗b1 ♔fc8 19.♗d3 ♔xa3 20.bxa3 ♔c3∞) 15...♗c6 16.♗d3 ♔fd8 17.♔e2 a6 18.h4 ♔e8 19.♔d2±

14.♗xd5 exd5 15.♗bd4

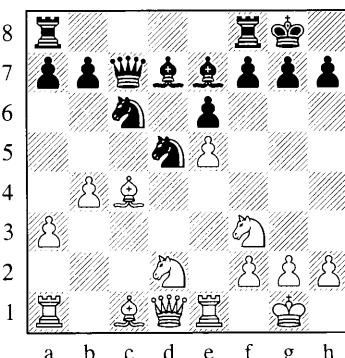
There is obviously no advantage for White after 15.♗xd5 ♔e6 16.♗b5 ♔ad8 17.♔e3 ♔d5 18.♔e2 ♔xe5 19.♗bd4=.

15...♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♔fe8∞

Black has an isolani but runs no risk of being worse, in view of his two bishops and overall activity. Play could continue:

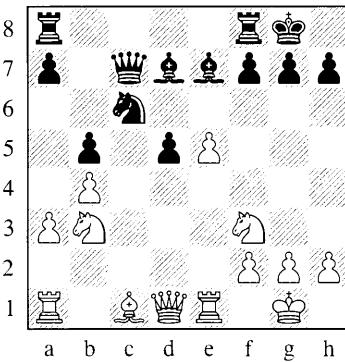
17.♔d2 ♔c5 18.♔c1 ♔b6 19.♔c3 ♔ac8 20.♗d3 a4 21.h3 ♔g6 22.♗xg6 hxg6=

Finally, 13.b4 has been the only try in practice so far, but it gives Black a target for counterplay:

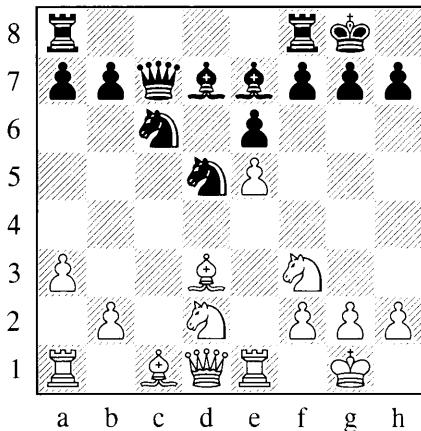


13...b5! 14.♗xd5!N (14.♗b3?! a5∞ is already

slightly worse for White, and after 15.bxa5 ♜xa5 16.♗e4 ♜xb3 17.♕xb3 b4 18.♗g5 ♜a4!+ he went down quickly in Luk – Novikovas, corr. 2003.) 14...exd5 15.♗b3? (15.♗b2 a5=; 15.♗b1 ♜e6 16.♗c3 ♜xe5 17.♗xd5 ♜xf3† 18.♕xf3 ♜xd5 19.♕xd5 ♜f6 20.♗b1 a6=)



15...a5!? 16.♗g5! ♜xg5 17.♗xg5 axb4 (17...h6 18.♗xf7!∞) 18.♕xd5 ♜d8 19.♗c5 ♜g4 20.♕xc6 ♜xg5 21.axb4 ♜xa1 22.♖xa1 ♜xe5 23.♗f1 h6=



13...♜ac8!

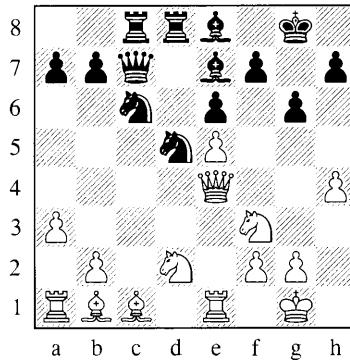
A configuration with rooks on c8 and d8 is what Black should be aiming at, as it guarantees him maximum counterplay on the central files.

Instead, 13...♜ad8 14.♗b1!± gives White the easier position to play.

14.♗c2

The most direct attempt to weaken our defences. In this way, White also finds time to transfer his queen to the kingside.

Instead, 14.♗b1 ♜fd8 does not offer White anything special now, for example: 15.h4 ♜e8 16.♕e2 g6 17.♕e4



17...♗b6! 18.h5 (18.♗b3 ♜d7 19.♗g5 ♜xg5 20.hxg5 ♜b6 21.♔a2 a5=) 18...♗d7 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.♗c4 ♜d4! 21.♕xd4 ♜xc4 22.♕e3 ♜c5 23.♕h6 ♜g4 24.♗g5 ♜xg5 25.♗xg5 ♜h5 26.♕xh5 gxh5=

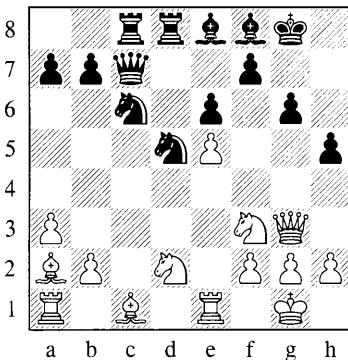
After 14.♗c4 b5! 15.♗d6 ♜xd6 16.exd6 ♜xd6 17.♗xb5 ♜ce7 18.♗d3 ♜fd8 the position is certainly unbalanced, but Black's piece activity seems to outweigh the enemy bishops.

14...g6 15.♗c4 ♜fd8 16.♕g4 ♜e8

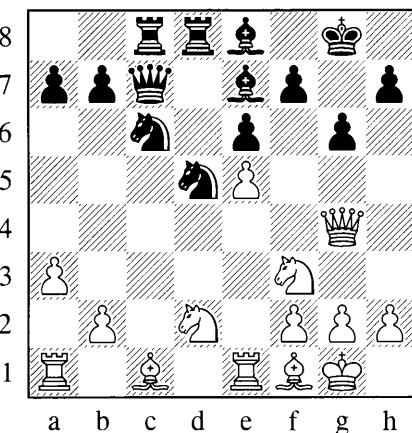
Black has coordinated his defence and White has to make a decision about the future of the d3-bishop. The computers give:

17.♗f1!

White would like to keep the bishop trained on the kingside with 17.♗b1, but after: 17...h5 18.♗g3 ♜f8 19.♔a2 (19.♗e4? ♜xe5!+ is a major point, since 20.♗xe5 ♜xc1 21.♗f6† ♜xf6 22.♗xg6 ♜h6! 23.♗xf7† ♜h7 24.♗xe6 h4 25.♗h3 ♜c7 leaves White with insufficient compensation.)



19... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$) 20... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}2f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$
The advantage seems to lie with Black.



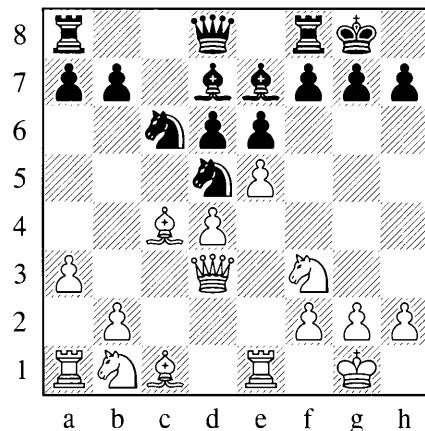
17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $b5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

24. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ gives Black enough play, as the bishop is heading to f6.

24... $f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$

With a complicated ending, which I am tempted to describe as easier to play for Black. Objectively, however, it should be equal.

E23) 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$



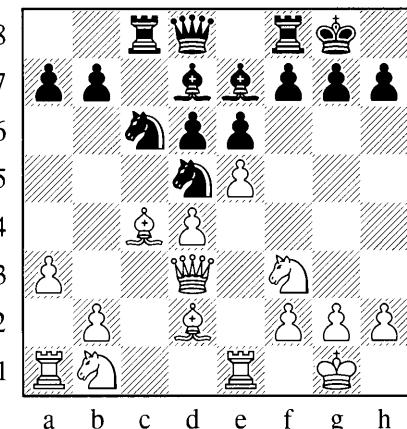
White continues with his original plan of setting up the battery.

11... $\mathbb{R}c8$

Placing the rook opposite to the white bishop looks like the strongest move.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

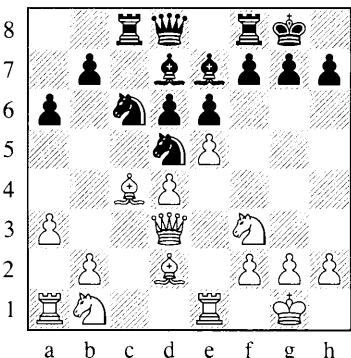
White is finally ready to develop the b1-knight.



12... $dxe5!N$

Black is trying to exploit the uncertainty along the d-file.

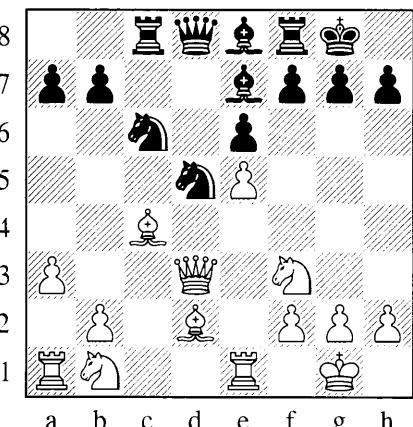
I think 12...a6 is too slow:



13.♖a2! (13.♕c3 ♖xc3 14.♕xc3 d5! 15.♖a2 ♕a5 16.♖ac1 ♖c4 17.♖b1 g6) is our preferred position, but I think after the subtle 13.♖a2! it is impossible to reach it.) 13...dxe5 14.dxe5 ♖a7 (14...♕e8 15.♗e4± is now better for White, as Black has wasted a tempo on the useless ...a6.) 15.♖xd5! ♕b5 16.♗e3! exd5 17.♕c3± Black has an isolani in the centre and his men are somewhat awkwardly placed – granting White a slight plus.

13.dxe5 ♕e8!

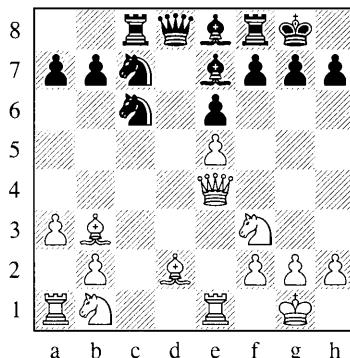
This is the point: Black tries to harass the enemy forces before they can reach an optimal configuration. The immediate threat is ...♖b6.



14.♗e4

A different way to configure the white pieces on the b1-h7 diagonal.

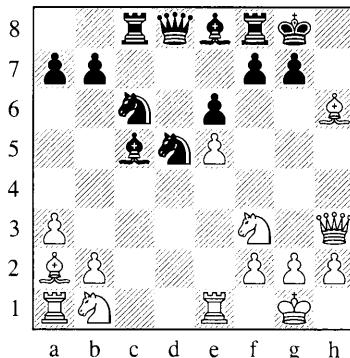
14.♗b3 prepares to set up the battery. I found the following equalizing line of play for us: 14...♖c7! 15.♗e4



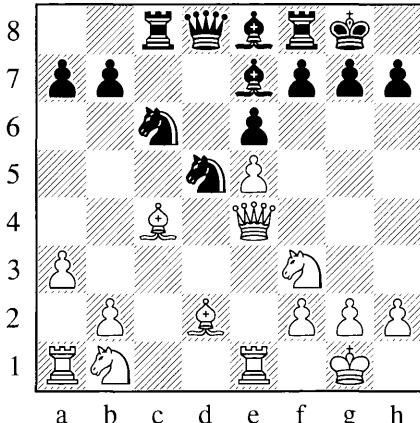
15...♖b5! 16.♗e3 (16.♖c2 g6 17.♖h6 ♖cd4 18.♖xf8 ♖xf8 19.♖xd4 ♖xd4 20.♖d1 ♖xc2 21.♗xc2 ♖c6 22.♖xd4 ♖xd4 23.♗c3 ♖g4 24.f3 ♖xf3 25.♖f1 ♖c6) is a position with excellent compensation for Black, but probably no more.) 16...♕a5 17.♖c2 g6 18.♗bd2 ♖c6 19.♗d3 ♖xf3 20.♗xf3 ♖c4=

14.♖a2 is a more patient method of trying to set up the battery, yet after 14...h6 15.♗e4 ♕c5 16.♗g4 ♘h8 17.♗h3 (17.♗c3 ♖xc3 18.♗xc3 ♘e7= is perfectly okay for Black) 17...♗g8! White has to swallow his pride and play 18.♗g4=, drawing.

Instead, 18.♖xh6?! is met stunningly with:



18... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$!! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7\rightarrow$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}ce7!$ 21.g3 gxh6 22. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ f6! 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ fxe5 \mp Black has all the chances, due to his better pieces and the weaker enemy king.



14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

This somewhat startling move comes to Black's aid. Although the position is dangerous-looking, I couldn't find anything for White.

15.b4

The immediate 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ allows 15... $\mathbb{W}b6\mp$, with a double attack on b2 and f2.

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$! f5! 16.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\mp$, Black is at least guaranteed of regaining his pawn with the better position.

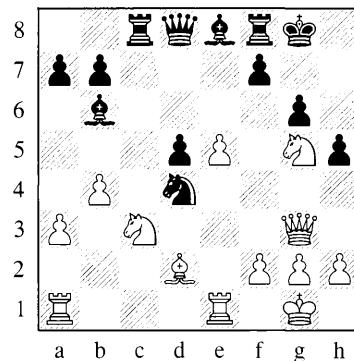
15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$ is a decent try, yet after 16...h5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (17.g4? $\mathbb{Q}d4\mp$) 17...exd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\!\!\rightarrow$ the weak light squares c2 and f5 provide Black with sufficient resources to equalize – if not more.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

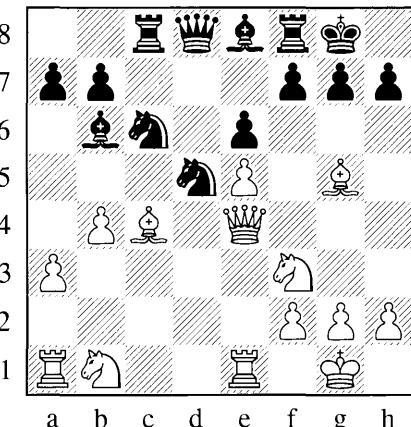
Now there is no pressure against b2, but White still has to organize his somewhat hanging position.

16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

After 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6 17. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ exd5 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (19. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ will transpose) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3!$ the position is wild-looking, but Black should be okay. For example:



20... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (20... $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ is the safe way to play) 21. $\mathbb{E}ad1?$ (21.e6 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 25.exf6 $\mathbb{E}xg3$ 26.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 27. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}d8\bar{\infty}$



16... $\mathbb{W}d7!$

The black queen stands awkwardly on d7, but there is method in Black's madness: he prepares to shield his kingside by means of ... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$, after which he will have no problems.

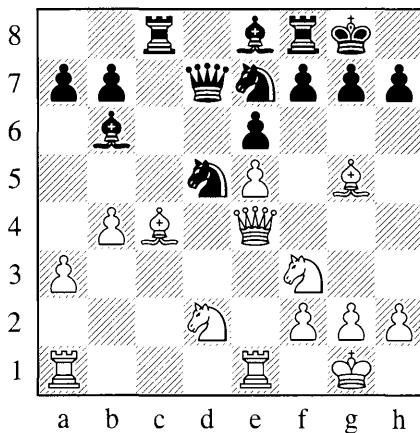
17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

The logical developing move.

Again, 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ fails to 17...f5 18.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}g6\mp$.

17...♝ce7!

Black is close to achieving complete coordination, while the g5-bishop is quite strangely placed. These two factors guarantee Black equality. Play could go on:



- 18.♗ac1 h6 19.♗h4 ♛f5 20.♗b5 ♘xc1!!
 21.♗xd7 ♘xe1† 22.♘xe1 ♘xd7 23.♗c4 ♘c8
 24.♗xb6 axb6 25.h3 ♘c3 26.♗d8 ♘xa3
 27.♘d2 ♘c3=

The game should be drawn.

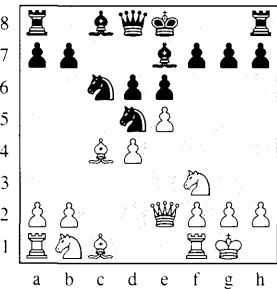
Conclusion

Chapter 8 saw us begin our coverage of the critical 7.♗c4 variation. After 7...♝c6 8.0–0 ♘e7 9.exd6 I have given two options. I personally prefer 9...♝xd6, but there is nothing objectively wrong with 9...♛xd6, and I think it was instructive to present both options.

Another important branch of the chapter arose after the continuation 9.a3 0–0 10.♗d3 ♘d7 11.♗e2 ♘c8 12.♗e4 f5 13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♗e2 d5 15.♗c3 where I examined 15...♝d6 and 15...♝e8. Both options lead to rich tactical battles, and my analysis will leave the readers well-equipped to catch out an underprepared opponent.



c3 Sicilian



9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

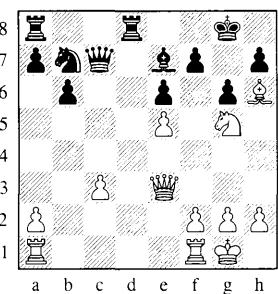
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1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5.d4 cxd4
6.cxd4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

9...0–0

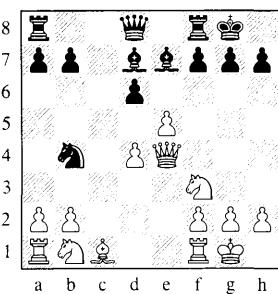
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C21) note to 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$



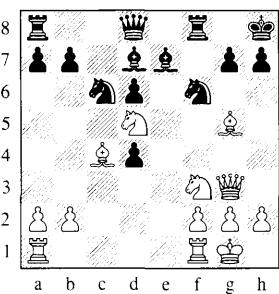
19... $\mathbb{Q}d5$!N

D) note to move 11



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

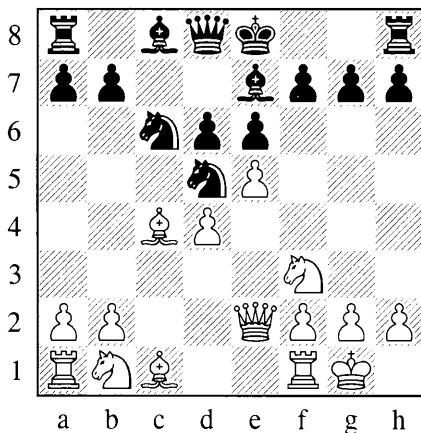
D) note to move 11



16... $\mathbb{Q}e4$!N

1.e4 c5 2.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

Having examined White's 9th move alternatives in detail in the previous chapter, we will now focus on our main line. Developing, while also removing the possibility of a queen exchange along the d-file, looks like a principled follow-up to White's play so far.

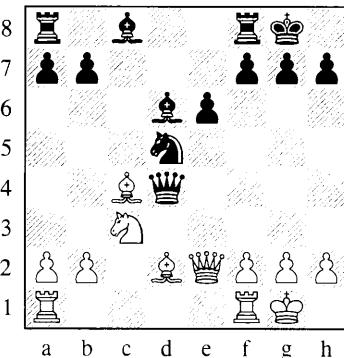


9...0–0

At this point we will consider A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, C) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3!?$ and D) 10. $\mathbb{W}e4$.

10. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ is approximately balanced, with lively play for both sides.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ allows 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ in this particular situation, hitting b2 and d4 simultaneously. 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1!$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3=$) 15. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$ The game peters out to an uneventful draw.

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

This is a logical move, centralizing the rook while defending the d4-pawn.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

Black attacks the c4-bishop which, as it turns out, has nowhere to flee. This move is also possible against 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, but here it is more effective as the white rook is passively placed.

11. $\mathbb{b}3$

11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

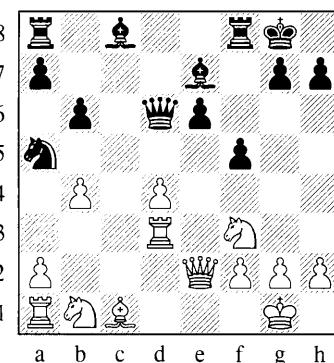
This attempt to save the bishop is well answered by:

11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ f5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$

15. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ f4!

18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 19. f3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. b3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ was better for Black in Rublevsky – Caruana, Dagomys 2009.

15... b6 16. b4



16... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ N

16... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}b3?$ b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ bxc4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ gave Black everything he could wish for in Roop – Debasish, Dharamshala 2014) 17... b5 18. a4

$\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$ is just equal.

17.b5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{B}b3$

18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ a5!!↑

18... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}xe8$ 26.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}e1\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4\mp$

With a tiny edge for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

This is considered quite drawish, in view of the upcoming exchange of dark-squared bishops. A good line of play for Black is:

13...a6

13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6=$

14.h3

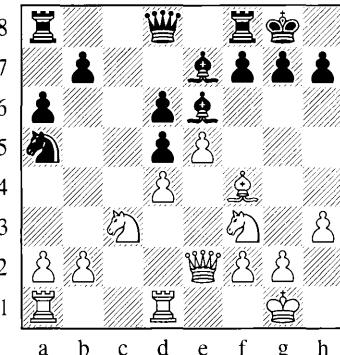
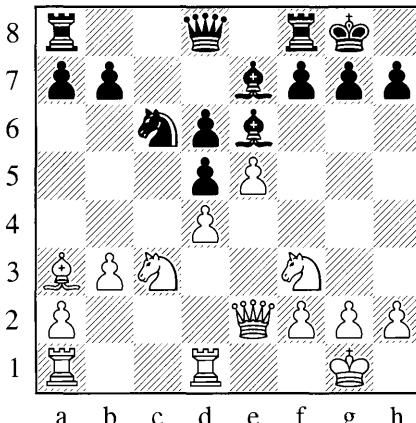
14.b3 $\mathbb{B}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ dxe5 18.dxe5 d4 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$ h6

20. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{W}a5\infty$ was unclear in Manca – Vocaturo, Porto San Giorgio 2006.

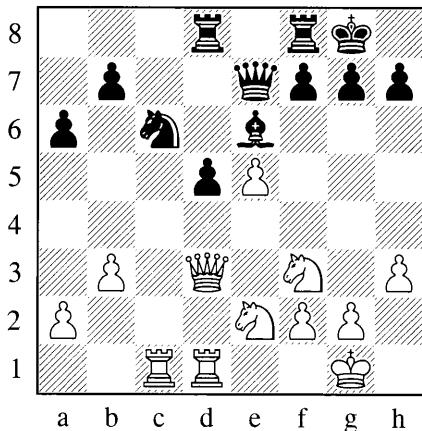
11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

White's dark-squared strategy is rather harmless for Black. The bishop on e6 may appear bad, but one should never forget that a bishop is a bishop. The position is also semi-open, meaning that the chances are approximately balanced.



19... $\mathbb{E}cd8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2N$

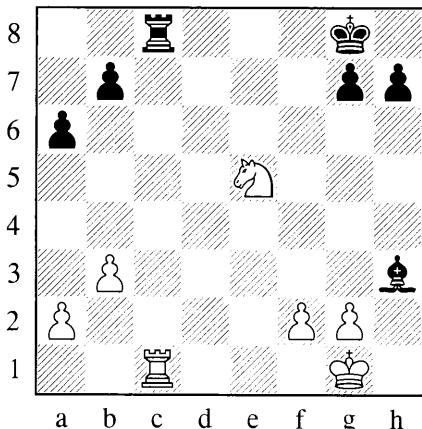
20. $\mathbb{E}el$ d4 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$
 23. $\mathbb{W}f5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}fg3$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$ was
 Andriuschenko – Ozmen, email 2005.



20... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

The final equalizing touch. All Black needs is the disappearance of both central pawns.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d4 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f6 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ fxe5 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$
 27. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$



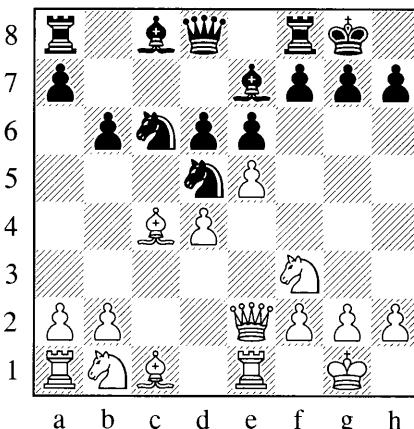
29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 31. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ g5 37. $g3$ h5 38. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $gxf4\#$
 39. $gxf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

There is no doubt about the final outcome.

B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

A move praised by Evgeny Sveshnikov – one of the most prominent c3 Sicilian theoreticians. White waits with a useful move before resorting to any kind of threatening gesture. I would like to analyse B1) 10... b6!? before moving on to my main recommendation of B2) 10... $\mathbb{W}b6!$.

B1) 10... b6!?

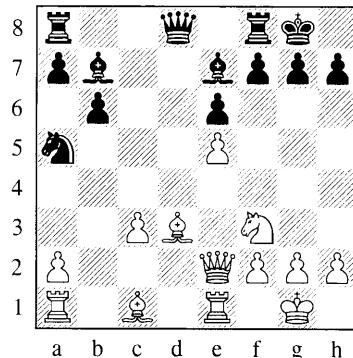


This move was recently tried by the Ukrainian GM Moiseenko. The question here is whether White can launch an attack quickly, because otherwise Black will develop harmoniously and be strategically better.

11. $\mathbb{W}e4!$

This is the reply that annoys me the most.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is a plausible idea, but Black shouldn't have any problems after it. There can follow: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $bxc3$ $dxe5$ 13. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$



15. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$! (15. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}d5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{W}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $g6\#$ looks excellent for Black) 15... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g4 \mathbb{Q}fc8\#$ Black is at least equal.

11.a3 dxe5 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}b7=$

This position seems equal to me, but it is rather White who has to proceed with caution as he is lagging in development. In the following game he did not proceed cautiously enough:

13.b4?!

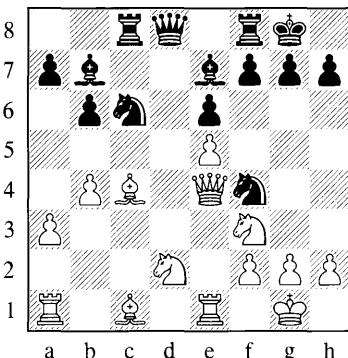
This severely weakens White's queenside.

Preferable was 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ N $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{Q}a5=$ with balanced chances.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2?!$

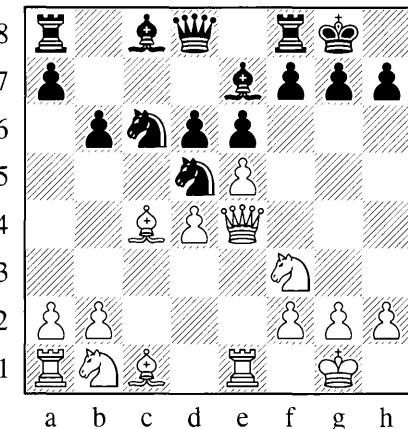
14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ N $f6!!$ 15. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ (16. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}e8\#$) 16... $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ would have been a bit better for Black, but was nevertheless imperative.

What comes now is an impressive blow, leading to a rather rare material imbalance: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e4$



15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2?!!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17. $bxa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $bxa5\#$

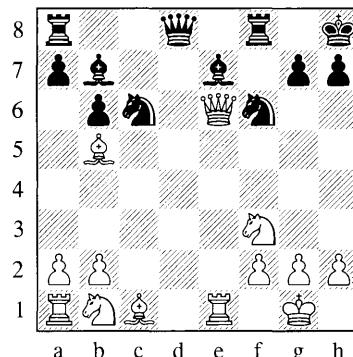
White does have a few practical chances with three pieces for a queen and two pawns, but they are only practical. With both a material and positional advantage in his hands, Black went on to convert the full point in Zubarev – A. Moiseenko, Lvov 2014.



11... $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$ N

This looks like the best move, and is probably what Moiseenko intended.

I also considered 11...dxe5 12. dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5 14. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ when White seems to be a good pawn ahead, but actually Black shouldn't be too far away from the draw:

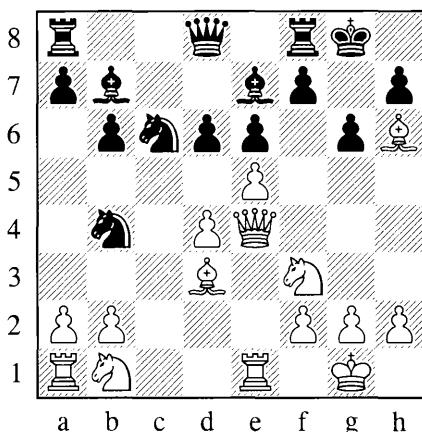


16... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$ I think this endgame is drawable if Black exercises a little bit of caution.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}db4?!$

This is my conception, sacrificing the exchange before White gets organized.

Instead, 13...♝e8?! 14.♗bd2 ♜db4 15.♗f1!→ looks better for White: the idea is simply ♜ad1 followed by ♜f4, when the attack plays itself. (The first player only needs to avoid 15.♗b1? ♜xe5! 16.♗xb7 ♜ec6! 17.a3 ♜b8 18.♗xb8 ♜xb8 19.axb4 ♜xb4∞ with an unclear game.)

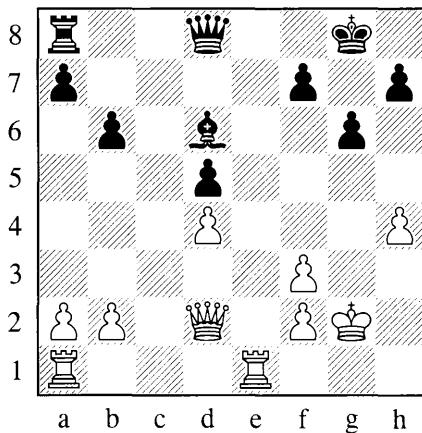


14.♗xd6 ♜xd6 15.♗xf8 ♜xf8 16.♗c3 ♜xd3 17.♗xd3 ♜b4 18.♗d2 ♜xf3 19.gxf3 ♜d5 20.♗xd5 exd5?!

Black seems to have good chances to equalize despite being a clear exchange down, for example:

21.♗g2 ♜d6 22.h4!

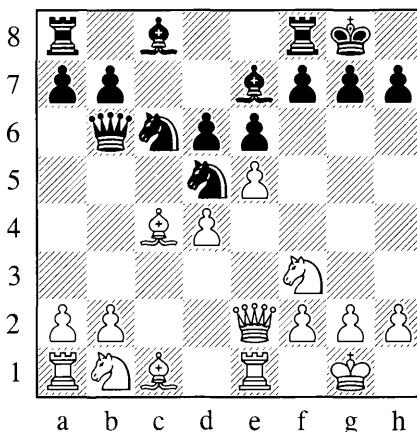
Otherwise Black will play ...♝h4 and ...♝f4.



22...♝xh4 23.♗h1 ♜f4! 24.♗xh4 ♜xd2 25.♗d1 ♜g5 26.♗g4 ♜f6 27.f4 ♜e8! 28.♗f3 ♜c8 29.♗d2 h5 30.♗g1 ♜g7 31.♗e1 a5 32.♗e3 ♜c4 33.b3 ♜c1∞

Black has decent counterplay. Still, in spite of all this analysis and the satisfactory conclusions, I find Black's task a bit laborious after 10...♝b6?!. The same cannot be said of 10...♝b6!:

B2) 10...♝b6!



A strong reply which hits White where it hurts him most: the d4-pawn is under attack, and if the white queen hurries to e4 in order to protect it, there is also some looming pressure against f2.

11.♗c3?!

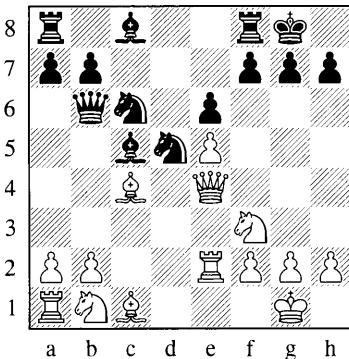
This is probably the best move at White's disposal, but our main line will provide an excellent antidote.

11.♗xd5 exd5 12.♗c3 ♜e6!= is harmless.

11.♗d1 dxe5 12.dxe5 ♜d8 13.♗d3 ♜db4 14.♗e4 ♜xd1† 15.♗xd1 ♜c5 16.♗d2 ♜d4 17.♗c3 ♜d7 18.a3 ♜d5! 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♗xd5 ♜xf3† 21.♗xf3 ♜d4 22.♗e2 ♜e8 is equal too.

11. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $dxe5$ 12. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e2$

13. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7!$ shouldn't worry us, as now the kingside is sufficiently defended and there is also the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-b5(c6)$.

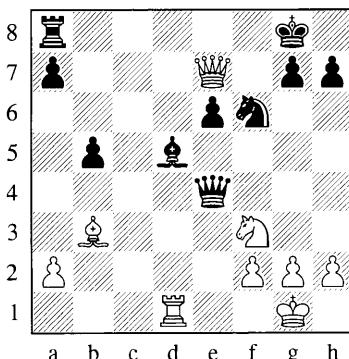


13... $f5!$ 14. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{E}d8$

Black has an excellent game. White's development is simply inferior and the d4-square is in our hands, although the first player should be able to hold after either 16. $\mathbb{E}d2$ or 16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$. I will just present one example:

16. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $b5$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e7!$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$

We have followed Karacsony – Bastos, corr. 2003, when the correct move was:



26. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!N$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

26... $exd5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d4!=$ with the idea 28... $a6??$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e6!=$.

27. $\mathbb{W}d7!$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$

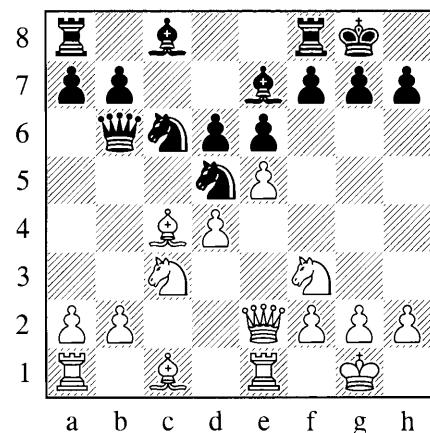
27... $\mathbb{Q}c3??$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d8\#+=-$

28. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 30. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3\#$

31. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

32... $e5$ 33. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f3=$

33. $\mathbb{E}a3=$ White will hold the ending.

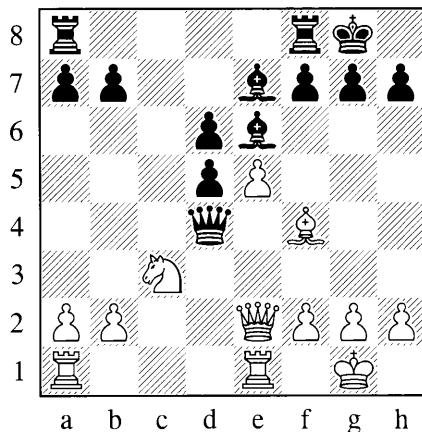


11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

I think that 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $exd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $a4$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $f6=$ gives White enough for the pawn, but of course it cannot be anything more than that as the d5-knight is unassailable.

13... $exd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

14... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ will probably hold too, but our main line is clearer.



15.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 16.dxe7 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d6!$
 18. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ d4! 20. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{E}ee8!=$

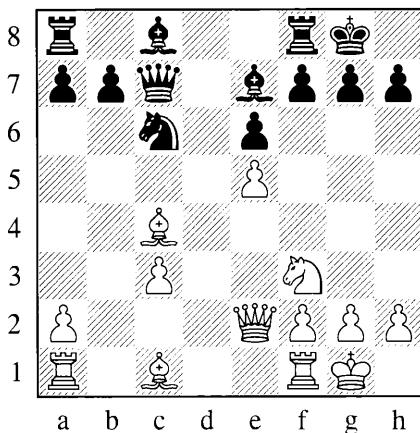
With full equality. Wonderful stuff.

C) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3!!$

With this move White decides to cut the Gordian knot, accepting a weakness in his pawn structure for potential attacking chances.

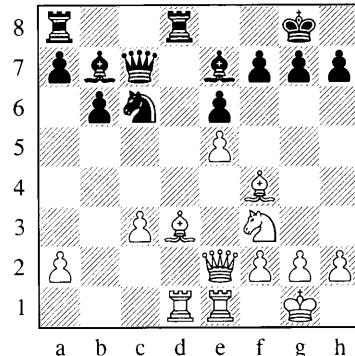
10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11.bxc3 dxe5 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}c7$

An active choice: deploying the queen to a square from where it both observes e5 and X-rays White's weaknesses along the c-file. Of course it also vacates d8 for the rooks, allowing them to participate in central affairs and harass the pieces of the adversary – particularly the bishop once it reaches d3. Overall, the move makes a good impression on me, as the primary object of achieving mobilization while maintaining flexibility is fulfilled.



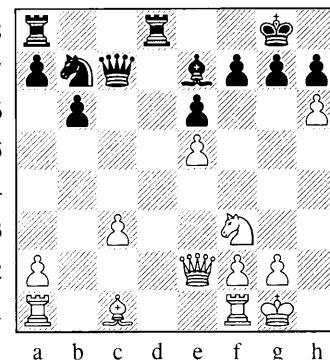
White's two main options are C1) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and C2) 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$.

Instead, 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$ b6 14. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ is too slow:



16... $\mathbb{E}d5$! A typical device in these positions. 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1?!$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 19.h4 In Martinez de Miguel – Moreno Ruiz, Collado Villalba 2013, Black should have played 19... $\mathbb{Q}a5!N\bar{F}$. White has no attack, and each exchange brings him closer to a worse ending.

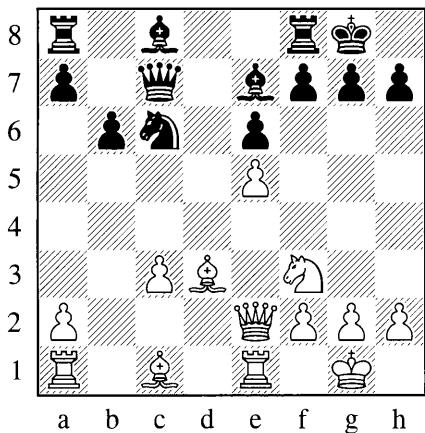
13.h4?! is an attacking gesture that looks more like a bluff. After 13...b6 14.h5 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 18.h6



18... $\mathbb{W}xc3!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{E}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$ g6 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e8\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$ Black had a slight edge in Vajda – Filip, Mamaia 2013, which he could have best maintained by playing: 28... $\mathbb{Q}e4N$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (29. $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ f5!–+) 29...f5! 30.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6\bar{F}$

13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ has no independent significance, because after 13...b6 it will transpose to either 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ or 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$.

C1) 13.♗d3 b6 14.♗e1!?

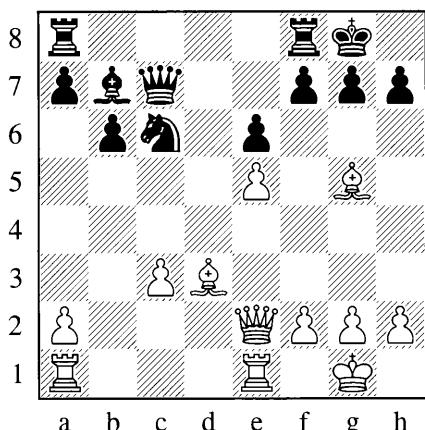


A sensible way of continuing: White has overprotected the pawn on e5, and keeps both ♘e4 and ♗g5 in reserve.

14...♗b7 15.♗g5!

Exploiting the opportunity to get the bishop pair, but Black's position remains resilient enough.

15...♗xg5 16.♗xg5



16...♘e7!

This important move should be remembered. Black transfers the knight to the vicinity of his king, to defend him from the combined force of the white pieces. In addition, the

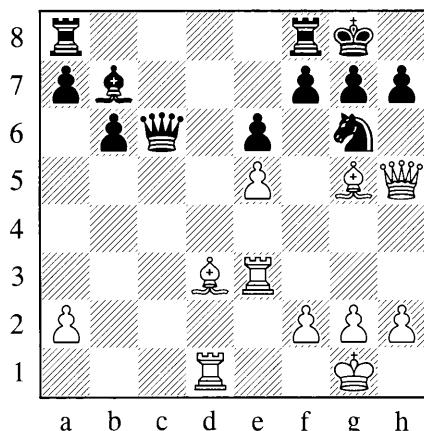
firing line of the b7-bishop is opened up, with counterplay against the soft g2-spot.

17.♗h5 ♗g6 18.♗e3

White has dangerous threats, so Black must be incisive.

18...♗xc3 19.♗d1 ♗c6!

Annoying White on g2 is the key for the defence.



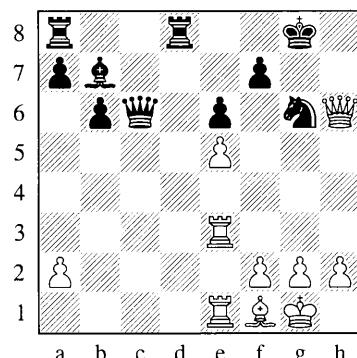
20.♗e4

20.♗f1?! h6 21.♗xh6!

21.♗h3 ♗c5 22.♗xh6 gxh6 23.♗d3 (23.♗xh6 ♗fd8+) 23...♗xe5 24.♗xg6 ♗xh5 25.♗xh5 ♗fd8 is a losing endgame for White.

21...gxh6 22.♗xh6 ♗fd8 23.♗de1

This occurred in Istratescu – Kurayan, Vaujany 2012. White's play looks rather overoptimistic, and I like:



23... $\mathbb{W}c5!N$ 24. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xg6\#$ $f x g 6$
 26. $\mathbb{B}xg6\#$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{B}f8!$

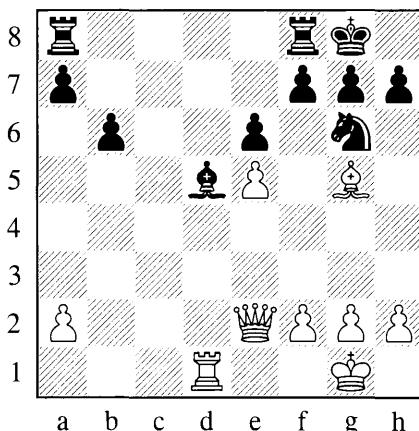
The safer 27... $\mathbb{B}h8$ leads to a draw after
 28. $\mathbb{W}c4!!$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 29. $\mathbb{B}e3!$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 30. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{B}xf1$
 31. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 32. $\mathbb{B}h3\#$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 33. $\mathbb{B}g3\#$ $\mathbb{B}h8$
 (33... $\mathbb{B}f8$ 34. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$) 34. $\mathbb{B}h3\#$.

28. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{B}d7!$ 29. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 30. $\mathbb{W}d3!$ $\mathbb{B}c8$
 31. $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 32. $h4!$ $a6$ 33. $h5$
 33. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 34. $\mathbb{B}g3$ $\mathbb{W}h7$ 35. $h5$ $\mathbb{B}c6\#$
 33... $\mathbb{W}g8$

It is not clear whether White has enough for the sacrificed material. In any case, I don't see any point for White to enter all of this when the most he can get is a draw.

20... $\mathbb{W}xe4!$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}d5$

Black has safeguarded his king and is okay from a material point of view.



23. $h4$ $h6$ 24. $h5$ $h x g 5$ 25. $h x g 6$ $f x g 6$ 26. $\mathbb{B}c1$
 $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xc8=$

The players agreed to a draw in Krutov – Zhorov, corr. 2012.

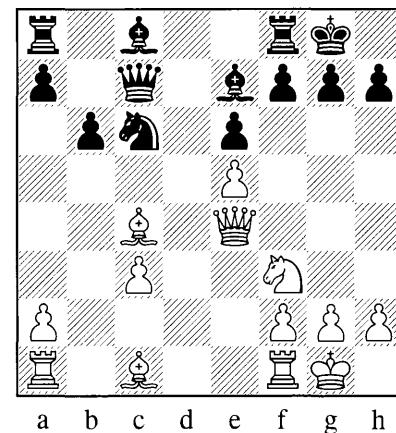
C2) 13. $\mathbb{W}e4$

Preparing to set up the battery against h7.

13... $b6$

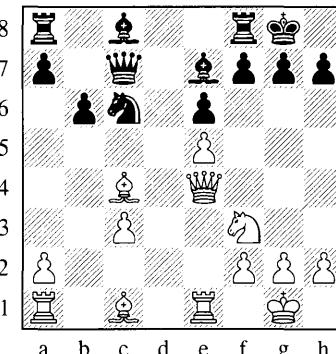
Black continues with the standard plan of developing his bishop on the long diagonal.

An interesting alternative is: 13... $\mathbb{B}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $g6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 18. $h4$ $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{B}a5$ 20. $h5$ $\mathbb{B}dd5\#$
 Black had good counterplay and was actually pressing his illustrious opponent in Nisipeanu – Jianu, Legnica 2013.



We will first cover C21) 14. $\mathbb{B}d3$ before moving on to C22) 14. $\mathbb{B}g5$, which I think is the most critical. In fact, no matter what White plays at this point, he cannot pose any really serious problems to us.

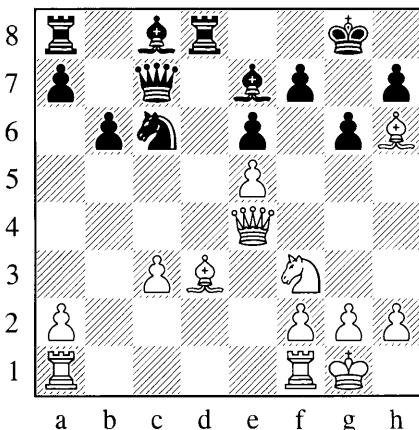
14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ looks like a feeble way of handling the position. A combination of $\mathbb{W}e4$ and $\mathbb{B}e1$ doesn't suit White's aims well. Black should continue:



14... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{B}d3$ $g6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f4$ ($16. \mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{B}fd8\#$ is also better for Black) 16... $\mathbb{B}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$

18. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c4!$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{E}fd8\mp$
Black's advantage was more than obvious in Sivokho – S. Novikov, St Petersburg 2003.

C21) 14. $\mathbb{B}d3$ g6 15. $\mathbb{B}h6$ $\mathbb{E}d8$

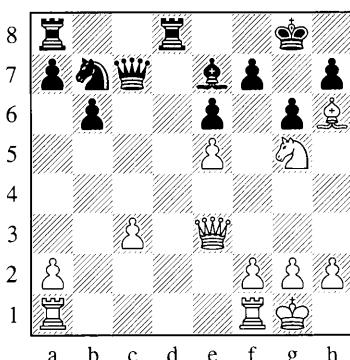


This is considered to be the main line, but it offers White no more than equality.

16. $\mathbb{B}ad1$

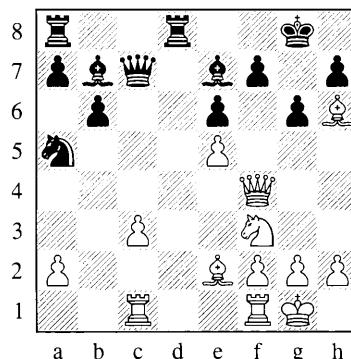
Protecting the bishop in order to free the queen for action.

16. $\mathbb{W}e3$ seems to lack bite: after 16... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ Black was, if anything, slightly better in Bortnik – Antal, Kocaeli 2013. In the game White made matters worse by 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$, and now Black should have chosen the typical manoeuvre:



19... $\mathbb{E}d5!N$ Black has a solid plus. The idea is evident after: 20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h3$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}xe5\mp$) 22... $h5$ 23. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 24. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ 25. $gxh5$ $\mathbb{E}h8\mp$

16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is another way to free the queen from the burden of defending the bishop, but it looks awfully passive. Play could proceed as follows: 16... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (17... $\mathbb{E}d5!N\mp$ looks even better) 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$



18... $\mathbb{E}xf3!$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 20. $h4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3\mp$ White was already struggling to equalize in Vajda – Filip, Mamaia 2012.

16. $\mathbb{B}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}d5$

This typical recipe is again the best move in the position. Black prepares to double rooks, and at the same time puts pressure on the e5-pawn.

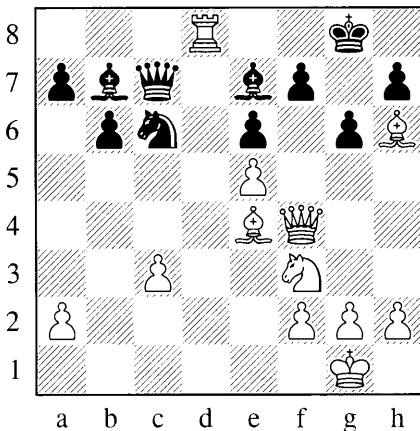
I don't like 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ so much, due to 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $f5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3!$. White has good prospects: e6 is under attack and h2-h4-h5 is a realistic possibility.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White has nothing better than evicting the rook, but this leads to wholesale exchanges.

18... $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd8\ddagger$

20. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $f5!$ 21. $exf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$ is now okay for Black.



20... $\mathbb{Q}xd8!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

Black has simplified the position and c3 is a weakness.

22. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

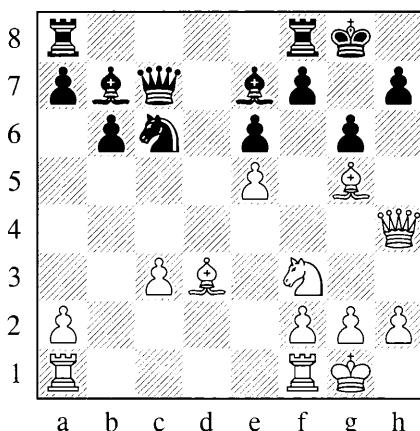
22.h4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is excellent for Black.

22... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 25. h4

The players agreed a draw in Barle – Jansa, Sombor 1976.

C22) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ g6 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is well met by: 16... $\mathbb{Q}b8!N$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}h8=$

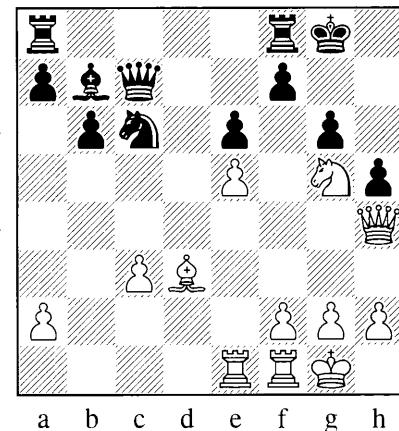


16... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ h5

Black's castled position has been weakened, but counterplay in the centre guarantees equality.

18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$

White has nothing better than this.



18... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!$

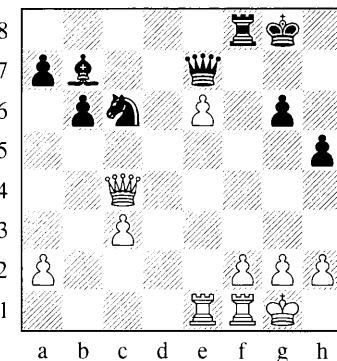
Leading to forced play which will ultimately end in a draw.

19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Forcing a perpetual.

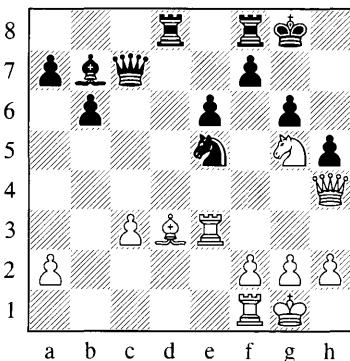
After 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6!$ $\mathbb{fxg}6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\ddagger$ 23. $\mathbb{gxf3}$ $\mathbb{W}xg3\ddagger$ 24. $\mathbb{hxg3}$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 28. f4 $\mathbb{E}a4$ 29. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 30. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\ddagger$ White's extra pawn is completely meaningless.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg6!N$ has not been tried yet, but after: 19... $\mathbb{fxg}6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 22. e6 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c4$ (23. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7\ddagger$ is more pleasant for Black, in view of White's broken pawns.)

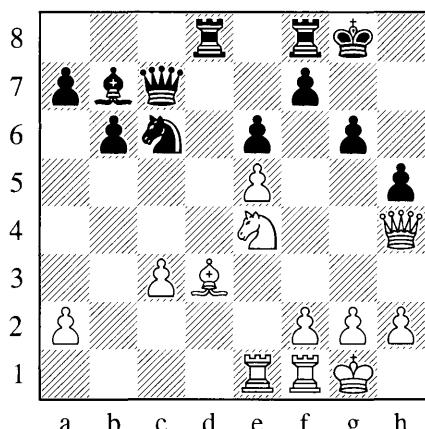


23... $\mathbb{E}f5!$ 24.f4 b5 25. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6\rightarrow$ Black has excellent counterplay and at least equal chances.

Finally, we should consider: 19. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!



20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$!N (20. $\mathbb{W}g3$? $\mathbb{W}d6\mp$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}d1\mp$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\mp$ 0–1 was an opening disaster for White in Perez Rodriguez – Hambleton, Montreal 2013.) 20...fxg6 21. $\mathbb{W}g3$ h4 22. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}df8$ 24.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3=$) 23... $\mathbb{W}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}df8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d8\mp$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}h4$ (28. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$ is a position with mutual chances) 28... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d8\mp$ = Forcing a draw by repetition.

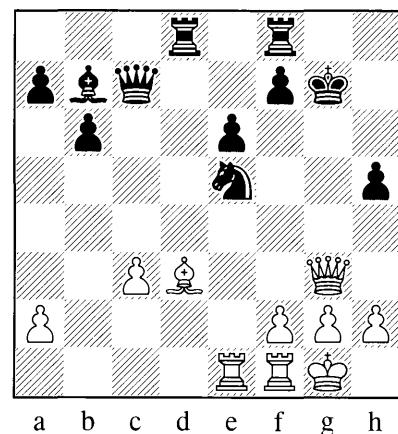


19... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!

19... $\mathbb{E}xd3??$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f6\mp$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh5\mp$ –

20. $\mathbb{Q}f6\mp$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh5\mp$!
21. $\mathbb{W}g5?$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\mp$ –

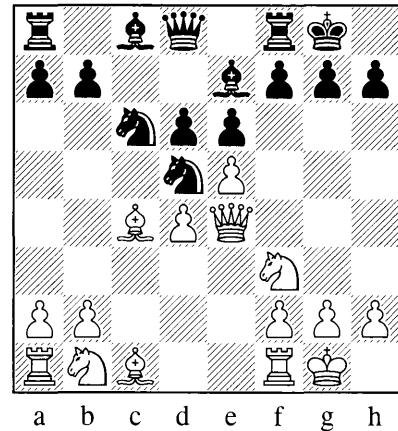
21... $\mathbb{g}xh5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g3\mp$!



22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 23. $\mathbb{W}h4\mp$!
23. $\mathbb{W}f4\mp$? $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$ –

23... $\mathbb{Q}g7=$

D) 10. $\mathbb{W}e4$

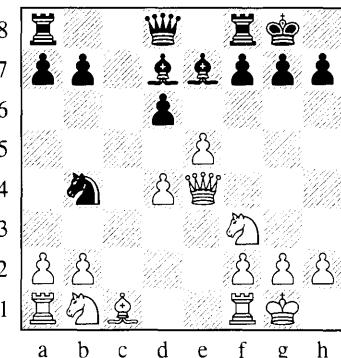


We know this motif, don't we? The only difference here is that White tries to set up the battery of queen and bishop without the preparatory a2-a3.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

We will now focus on D1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ and D2) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

Pawn grabbing with 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $exd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ should certainly lead to a difficult position for White, with the only question being the extent of Black's plus. 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e4!?$ (13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $dxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2=$ leaves White much worse, as Black has two bishops and the better pawn structure.) This was R. Nielsen – Drabke, Koge 2010, and now correct is:



13... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ N 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ Black has an obvious advantage.

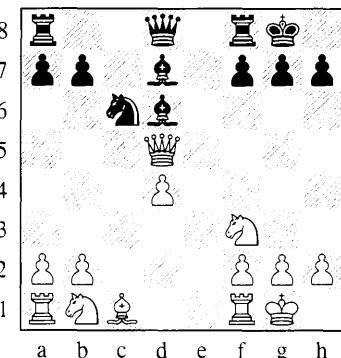
11. $exd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$

15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ is a position where I would certainly take Black, despite the pawn minus.

12... $exd5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

A better version of the pawn grabbing shown above.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

However, White is again on the defensive and struggling to draw. I think the best chances to achieve this are offered by:

15. $d5!?$

15. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ happened in Pavlikov – Van den Cruyce, corr. 2007, and here I like: 16... $\mathbb{Q}fe8N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 21. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3=$ 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3=/\mp$

Black's plus is really quite small.

11. $\mathbb{W}g4$

White vacates e4 for the minor pieces and threatens $\mathbb{Q}h6$. This is not a bad accomplishment for a single move, but Black stands fine nevertheless.

11... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $f5!?$

This defends the king and takes space, so it cannot be bad.

13. $exf6$

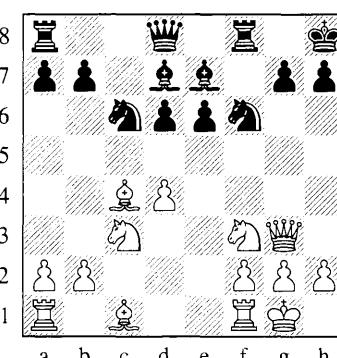
13. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $dxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc3=$ is approximately equal.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}g3?$

A serious mistake, putting the queen in jeopardy.

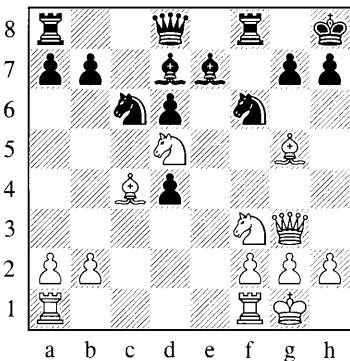
14. $\mathbb{W}h4!N$ $d5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$

17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4=/\mp$ is better for Black, but only slightly.



14...e5!

Threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$, trapping the queen in broad daylight.

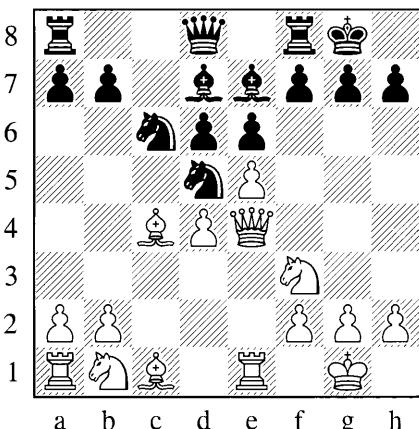
15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ exd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 

As in Afek – Lie, Gausdal 2006, and here Black could have obtained a considerable plus by:

16... $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$
19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 20.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d3 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ h6! 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$

Admittedly that was a hard variation to calculate.

D1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



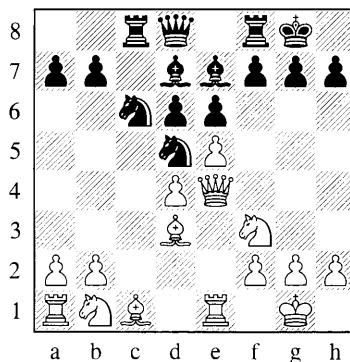
A logical continuation: further strengthening the position before embarking on concrete action.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12.a3

White is making all the preparatory moves he can.

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2?!$ a strong continuation for Black is 12... $\mathbb{Q}db4!$ 13.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ (16... $\mathbb{Q}d5?N$ could also be a possibility) 17.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$, when he had the slightly better chances in Yilmazerli – Kanmazalp, Kocaeli 2008.

The direct 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ leads to an equal position after:



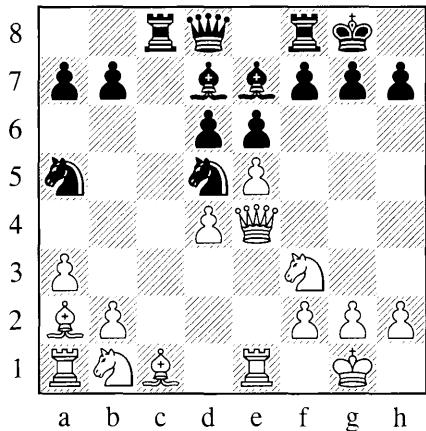
12...f5! 13.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3N$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ was slightly better for Black in Aljelda – Emiroglu, Antalya 2009) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3=$

12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

This is universally adopted, as White does not want to allow Black at least a draw.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5 14.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ Otherwise ... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ wins material. 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ is a draw if Black needs one.

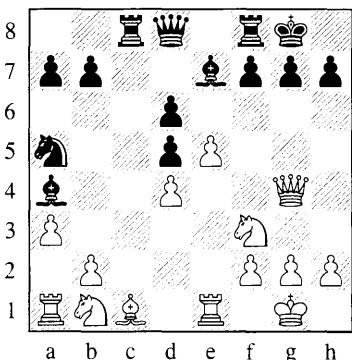
Playing to win with 16...g6?! is also perfectly feasible, although after 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19.b4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ a6 22. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ the position is highly complex. Maybe Black can start an attack at some point by ...g5-g4, but of course he should think twice before doing that as pawns don't move back.

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

With this fine infiltrating move Black seizes more light-square control. White actually has a big plus score from this position, but as we are going to witness soon, it should be quite the opposite.

14. $\mathbb{W}g4$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ would be a success for White if Black now had to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$, because that transposes to the Pavasovic – Jurkovic game seen below. However, as it turns out, there is something much better for the second player:



15... $\mathbb{Q}xc1!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ dxе5 21. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$ The dust had cleared and Black had a slight but annoying plus in Racki – Gluszko, Caldas Novas 2011. Black went on to win.

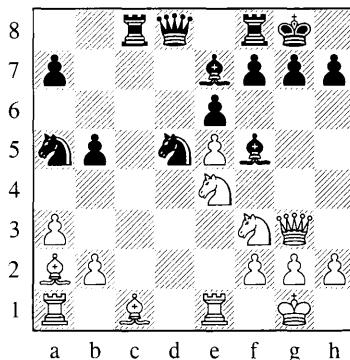
14... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

The bishop should not miss this chance to join the kingside defence.

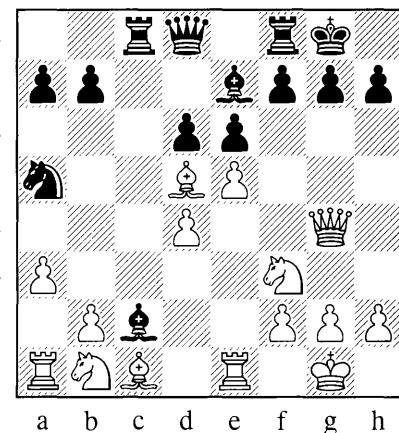
15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$

A tactical try: mixing things up in a strategically inferior position.

Instead, 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ b5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ dxе5 18. dxе5 was played in Pavasovic – Atlas, Austria 2007, and now rather than retreating with his bishop immediately to g6, Black should have played:



18... $\mathbb{Q}c4!N\#$ Black would have maintained the slightly better chances.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$**

A stunning improvement over 15...exd5?!. 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ f5 Trying to stop $\mathbb{W}xc8$,

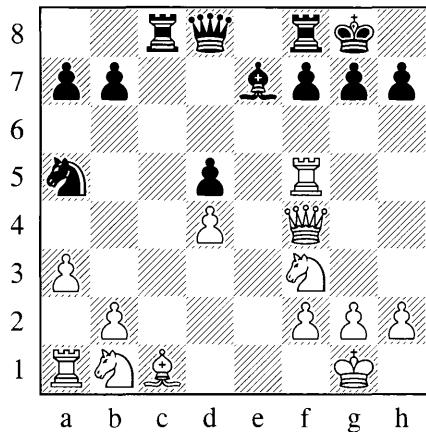
among others. 18.exf6 ♖xf6 19.♕g5! ♕xg5 20.♗xg5 ♖f5 21.♗f4! ♗xa1 22.♗e7+ ♖h8 23.♗xc8 ♖xc8 24.♗xa1 White had an extra pawn and a winning advantage in Pavasovic – Jurkovic, Bizovac 2007. The text move is designed to avert any ♖xc8 ideas.

16.♗f4

This move allows Black to illustrate the devilish point of his idea.

16.♗g3N is perhaps a better possibility, but is still worse for White after: 16...exd5 17.♗c3 ♗b3 18.♗f4 ♗xa1 19.exd6 ♖f6 20.♗xa1 ♖e6+

16...dxe5 17.♗xe5 exd5 18.♗xf5



18...♗d6!

Exploiting the overloading of the white queen. Black wants to achieve the capture of the a1-rook under the most favourable circumstances.

Instead, 18...♗b3 19.♗c3 ♗xa1 20.♗xd5 is about even.

19.♗e5

The only move.

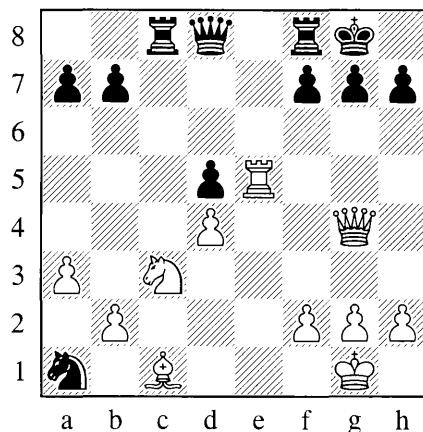
19.♗e3? ♗e8 20.♗e5 ♗b3!+ allows Black to win a full exchange without anything in return.

19...♗b3 20.♗c3 ♗xa1 21.♗g4N

21.♗xf7 ♖xe5 22.♗xf8+ ♗xf8 23.♗xe5 ♗f7 24.♗e3 ♗c2 25.♗xd5 ♗e8 26.♗d6 ♗e6+ (26...♗xd4!N+ may be even more accurate) was Skawinski – Maksimenko, Poznan 2015.

21...♗xe5! 22.♗xe5

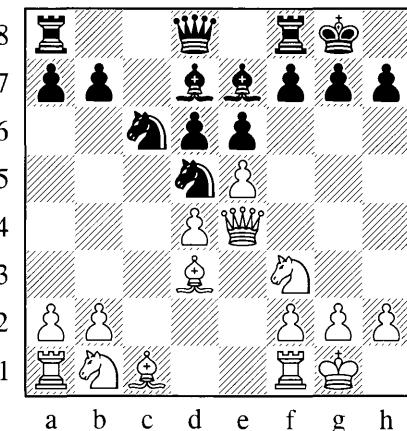
22.dxe5 ♗d7!+–



22...♗e8 23.♗f4 ♗c2

I believe that this should be a technical win for Black.

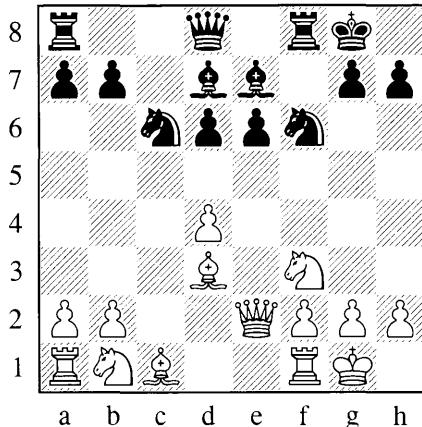
D2) 11.♗d3



With an unmistakable threat of mate in one, but I guess this is something we can parry

when it comes as early as move 11 (at least most of the time).

11...f5 12.exf6 ♜xf6 13.♕e2



13...♗b6!

I like this idea a lot. Black directly attacks the d-pawn; forcing the enemy bishop into passivity.

Weaker is 13...♝b4?! 14.♖c4 d5 15.♗b3 ♜e4 16.♗c3 ♜d6 17.♗e5 ♜f5 18.♗d1±.

However, also viable is:

13...♛a5?! 14.♗c3

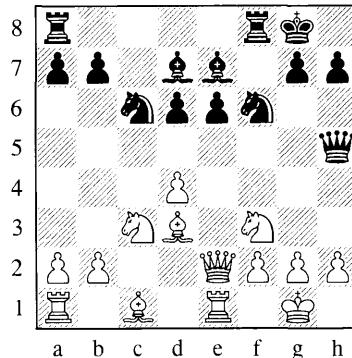
14.♗c4?! has the idea to induce 14...d5, when the a5-queen is cut off from the kingside.

14...♝h5

With an interesting situation: Black has some ideas to attack the white king.

15.♔e1!

15.a3 is too slow, and after 15...♗d5 16.♗e4 ♜ae8 17.♗d2 ♜xc3 18.♗xc3 d5 19.♗d3 ♜d6= the position was already more pleasant for Black in Sermek – Atalik, Beijing 1997. 15.♗f4 ♜d5?! 16.♗xd5 exd5 17.♗d2 ♜ae4 18.♗e2 ♜g6 19.♗g3 ♜f5 20.♗fd1 ♜e4† saw Black pressing in Brandenburg – Giri, Groningen 2009, as the e7-bishop was soon regrouped to b6.



15...♜ae8!

Slightly inaccurate is 15...♗d5 16.♗e4!, with the idea being: 16...♗b6 (16...♜ae8?! 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♗b5! gives the first player serious chances for an advantage, as 18...♝e6?! 19.♗xh7† ♜xh7 20.♗xe6 ♜xf3 21.gxf3± does not seem to offer Black much for the exchange.) 17.d5! exd5 18.♗xd5 ♜xd5 19.♗g5! ♜xe2 20.♗xd5† ♜h8 21.♗xe2 ♜xg5 22.♗xg5 ♜f5 23.♗xc6 ♜xc6 24.♗e3 With a tiny plus for White.

16.h3 ♜d5 17.♗e4! ♜f6N

17...♗b6 18.♗c3! d5 19.♗d3 is unclear.

18.♗c2 ♜d5 19.♗b3 ♜h8?

The position offers chances to both sides. White has averted an exchange sacrifice on f3 for the time being, but he does not seem to have a clear plan – exactly because he has to be on constant alert for this possibility.

14.♗e3

14.♗d1?! ♜b4 15.♗g5 (15.♗c4 d5 16.♗b3 ♜b5†), as in Dolzhikova – Ogaard, Norway 2010, looks worse for White after 15...♗xd3! 16.♗xd3 e5! 17.dxe5 ♜g4 18.♗e4 ♜xe5†.

14...♗d5! 15.♗c3 ♜ac8! 16.a3

16.♗xd5?! exd5 17.h3 ♜b4† is something White should avoid.

16...♗xe3 17.fxe3 d5 18.♗c2?!

18.♗f2 allows Black to build an even healthier defensive formation: 18...g6! 19.♗af1

$\mathbb{B}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (20. $\mathbb{B}b5$ $\mathbb{B}cf8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{B}xf2$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\infty$ is not better for White, as the two bishops outweigh the outpost on e5.) 20... $\mathbb{B}cf8$ 21. b4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$

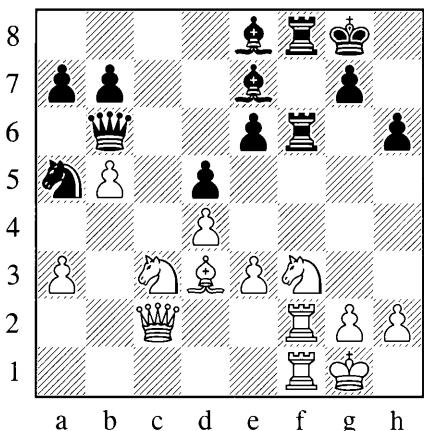
18... h6 19. $\mathbb{B}f2$ $\mathbb{B}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}af1$ $\mathbb{B}cf8$ 21. b4 $\mathbb{Q}e8!$

22. b5!

22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ b6 24. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\mp$

22... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

We have been following Lahdenmaeki – Mathias, corr. 2012, and now best is:



23. a4!N $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$

The position is balanced, and there is actually not much either side can do.

Conclusion

Our final chapter in this section saw us tackle the main line 1. e4 c5 2. c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 5. d4 cxd4 6. cxd4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$, and I believe the variations presented give Black excellent chances. I think this would also be an appropriate moment to give an overall impression, much of which is relevant to the current chapter.

The c3 Sicilian is a dangerous system for those unacquainted with its nuances, as White

tries to gain space and dictate developments by utilizing his central pawns. In this work we have witnessed an attempt by Black to obtain counterplay by adopting the system 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6, which is based on sound development and a solid base on d5 for our further operations.

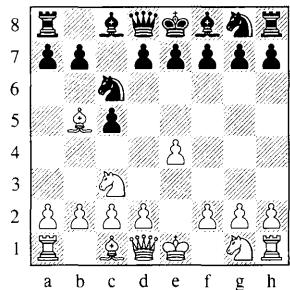
The essence of Black's strategy is to fight for light squares on every part of the board, but particularly in the centre and on the queenside. We often found ourselves chasing or harassing White's precious light-squared bishop, with the aim of either exchanging it or improving our piece deployment and defensive prospects. Against slow play by White, I suggested set-ups where our own light-squared bishop was developed on the long diagonal, as I believe this significantly improves our prospects for counterplay. However, in some of the main lines I adopted a set-up with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, in the spirit of quick development and queenside play.

Overall, I am optimistic about Black's chances in the whole system, as I couldn't find any positions that are worse for us. That said, Black has to be accurate in lines where White goes straight for the throat, but these are rare and are easy to master – by adhering to the strategic principles of the particular structure.

In these ... e6 structures we should always be on the alert to avoid the b1-knight landing on the e4-square, as in conjunction with the e5-pawn it gives White the makings of a strong attack. So, one rule of thumb is to have the e5-pawn under pressure from an early stage. Another important remark is that, in general, endings are good or better for us, as we have plenty of squares on the queenside: we shouldn't miss our chance for a queen exchange when given the option. Finally, perhaps the most important advice I could give to the readers is to adhere to centralization, as this is often the main source of our counterplay.

Chapter 10

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



Tiviakov Grand Prix

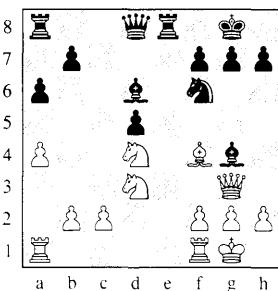
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$

3... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

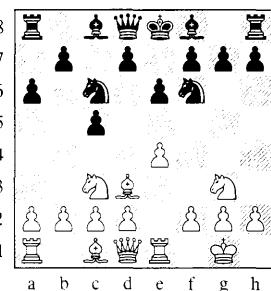
A) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	177
B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$	179
C) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ a6	181
C1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	181
C2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$	183
C3) 5.a4 e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$	184
C31) 7.d3	185
C32) 7.0-0	186
C4) 5.d3 e6	188
C41) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	189
C42) 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$	190

note to move 4



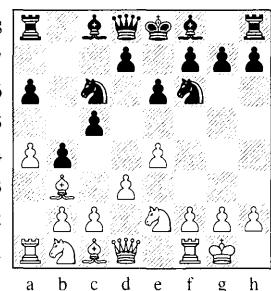
19... $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$

B) after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



8... $\mathbb{Q}d6!N$

C42) note to 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



10... d5!N

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This is a flexible move, maintaining options. White does not block his f-pawn, and so keeps open the possibility of playing a favourable version of the Grand Prix Attack if Black replies with 2...d6. The other main options, namely 2...e6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$, would mean that Black cannot play the Najdorf Variation anymore – a serious blow to most Sicilian players were the position to open up with a subsequent d2-d4. With the above considerations in mind, I tried to find a universal system after the move 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$. I decided that, in order to reduce White's choice, d2-d4 shouldn't be allowed anymore. Thus, I came up with 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ as the most practical solution.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$

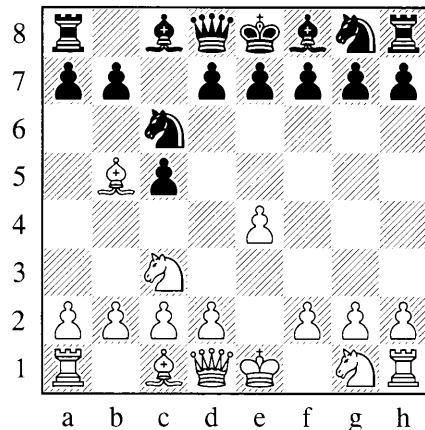
Sergei Tiviakov has been the staunchest advocate of this apparently strange move, which is, however, associated with a fine positional idea: White wants to play $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and then follow up with f2-f4, rendering Black's position static and obtaining good control of the centre. White's other options will be dealt with in separate chapters and are as follows:

After 3. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ I decided to stop d2-d4 by 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ which I would like to call the Ikonnikov Variation (Chapter 11).

After 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ I decided on 3...e5, preventing d2-d4 once and for all. This may not be to everyone's taste, but in my opinion Black's position is sound enough to offer equality – see Chapters 12 and 13.

3.f4 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ leads to the Grand Prix Attack after 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, while another option is 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (Chapters 14 and 15).

Finally, 3.g3 g6 is the Closed Sicilian, which has a good reputation for Black – see Chapters 16 to 18.

**3... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$**

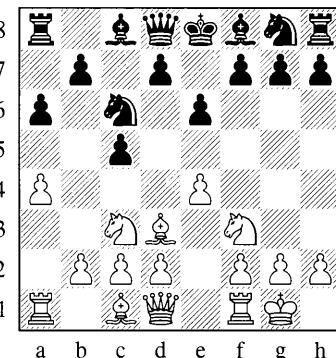
This is by far the best move: Black places his knight in a strong central position and attacks the b5-bishop. White may ignore the threat to his bishop with A) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ or B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, or retreat it with C) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

4.a4 a6

Now 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ would transpose to variation C3. Alternatively:

5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This looks rather clumsy, as White has played a2-a4 and not even developed his king's knight yet. Black has many good choices at his disposal here, with one being:

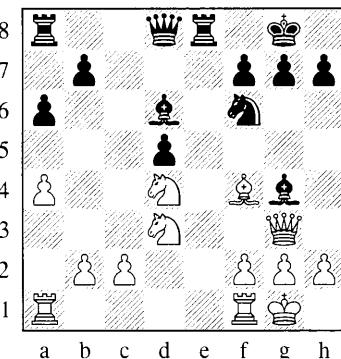
5...e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.0–0**7...d5**

The safe way. However, if I had this position with Black I would try 7...g5!N 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g4

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. c3 d5 11. exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6 with an unclear game.

8. exd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. d4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

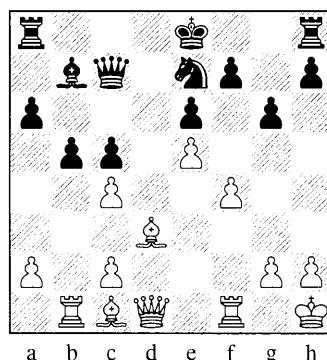
We have followed Ponomariov – Dreev, Lugo 2006, when most accurate would have been:



19... $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 25. c3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 27. gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}c4=$

With complete equality.

Let us now turn our attention to the bishop retreats. 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ This has a flavour of the 4.a4 line seen above, or variations A or B below. Actually, after 4...a6! it leads to a direct transposition to one of them, unless White tries something exotic like: 5. f4 g6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. 0–0 d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. b4 b5 12. bxc5 dxc5 13. e5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. c4 $\mathbb{W}c7\#$



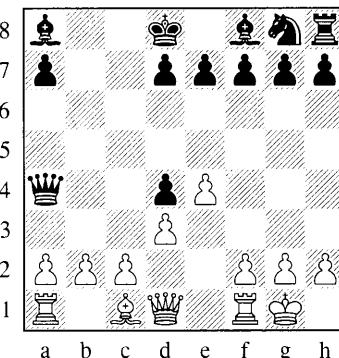
Black's chances still look excellent to me, in view of his hegemony on the long diagonal.

4. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}a5?!$

This extra option is pointed out by Matthieu Cornette in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

5. d3 b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 7. cxb3 e6 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$ is not a problem for Black.
5... b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. d3 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 11. 0–0



11... g6N

Black has a good position, with both the text and 11...e6 giving him decent chances in the upcoming double-edged fight.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. c4 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 14. b4 f5 15. f3 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15... $\mathbb{W}xb4?!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17. e5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ is not out of the question. I cannot see anything clear for White.
16. b5 fxe4 17. fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xf1\#$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ d6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. c5 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 25. cxd6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. dxe7 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The position remains imbalanced, but it should be close to a draw.

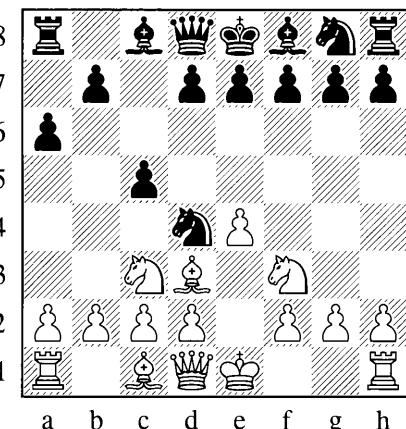
A) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Instead of capturing the bishop, which is the more common reply, I would like to recommend:

4...a6! 5.♗d3

An independent attempt, but the bishop looks clumsily placed here.

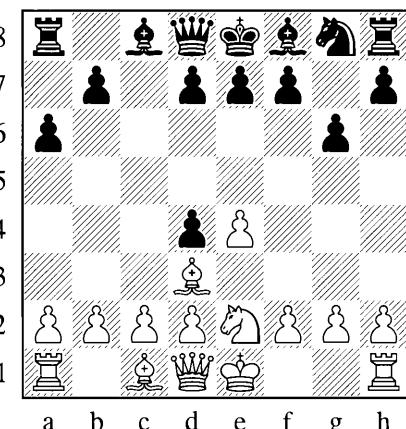
Instead, 5.♗c4 transposes to variation C1.

**5...g6! 6.♗xd4**

6.0–0 ♔g7 7.♗xd4 cxd4 8.♗e2 d5 9.exd5 ♕xd5 is nothing but a transposition.

6...cxd4 7.♗e2

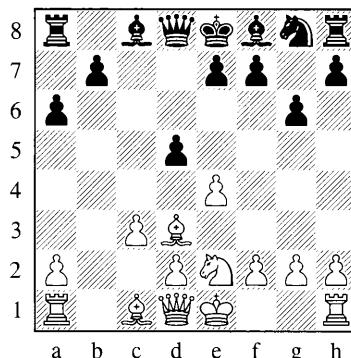
Leading to a position where I would like to propose the immediate:

**7...d5!! 8.exd5**

White is trying to clear the atmosphere in the centre.

Instead, 8.e5 f6! is a major point of our move order, the idea being: 9.f4 (9.exf6?! e5!?) 9...fxe5 10.fxe5 ♔g7 11.♗xd4 ♔xe5 12.♗f3 ♔g7 13.♗e2 e5 14.d4 e4 15.♗e5 ♔e7 16.0–0 ♕b6! 17.♔h1 ♔f5 18.c3 0–0 19.♕b3 ♕xb3 20.axb3 ♕e6= Black is most certainly not worse in the ending.

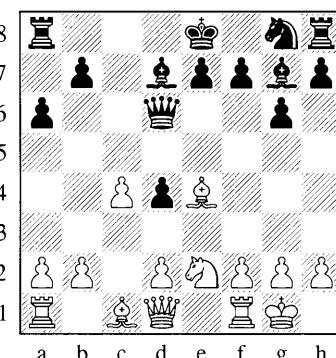
8.c3 dxc3 9.bxc3 should be okay in various ways, so I will mention just one:



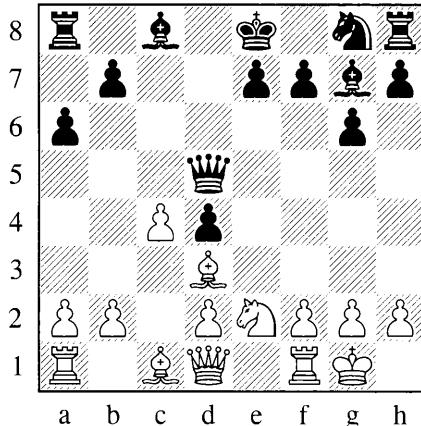
9...dxe4 10.♗xe4 ♔f6 11.♗f3 ♔g7 12.0–0 0–0 13.d4 ♔g4!= with the idea 14.♗xb7 ♕a7!.

8...♕xd5 9.0–0 ♔g7 10.c4!

Instead, 10.c3?! is just a tempo loss, because after 10...♗d7! White has nothing better than 11.c4. Then 11...♕d6 12.♗e4, trying to untangle the bishop before Black controls e4 with his own pieces, is what happened in M. Muzychuk – Kuipers, Wijk aan Zee 2010, when I like:

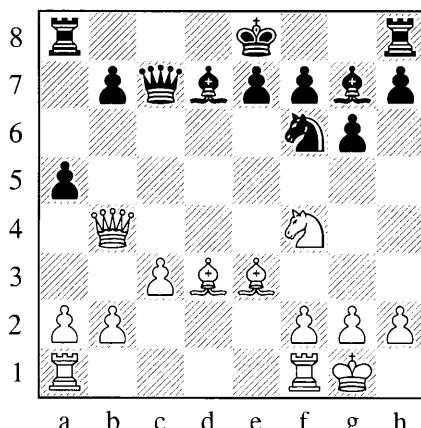


12...d3! 13.♗c3 ♕b8 Blacks simply stands well, as 14.♕f3 ♗f6 15.♕xd3 ♗xe4 16.♕xe4 ♘f5 leads to a position where his two bishops offer tremendous compensation for the pawn.



10...dxc3 11.dxc3 ♗f6 12.♗f4 ♜c5 13.♗e3 ♜c7 14.♕a4† ♔d7 15.♕b4 a5

15...0–0?! N 16.♕xe7 ♗g4 is an interesting pawn sacrifice to consider.



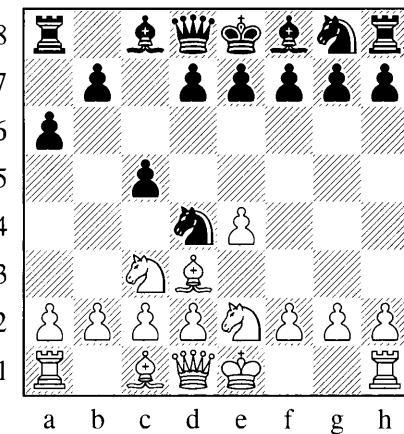
16.♕c5 ♗c6 17.♗c4 0–0 18.♗d5 ♗xd5
19.♗xd5 ♗e5=

Black had fully equalized in M. Muzychuk – Krush, Istanbul (ol) 2012.

B) 4.♗ge2 a6 5.♗d3?!

5.♗c4 transposes to variation C2.

This is a worse version of variation A because, with ♗ge2 played, Black has:



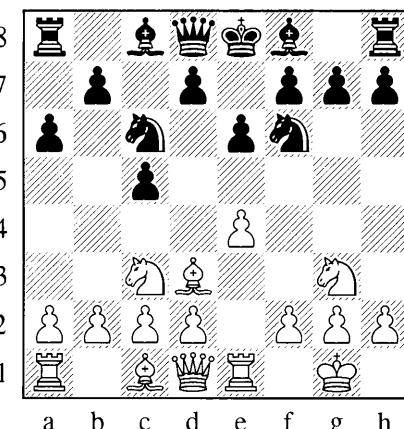
5...♗c6!

Had the knight been on f3, White would be able to retreat his bishop to e2 with a normal position. However, as things stand he is slightly worse.

6.0–0

6.♗c4 e6 7.d3 ♗f6 8.0–0 b5 9.♗b3 ♗e7 leaves White with an awful bishop on b3.

6...e6 7.♗g3 ♗f6 8.♗e1



8...♗d6!N

Improving on 8...♗c7 in Gurgenidze – Gufeld, Volgodonsk 1981, although Gufeld

still got the better position after: 9.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ d6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g6 15. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ f6 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ b5=

9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

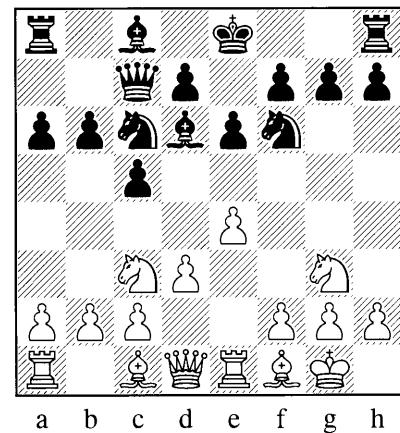
9.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0= compares favourably to the above-mentioned game.

9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10.d3

10. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ exd5 11.exd5† $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\bar{=}$ is not a serious sacrifice.

10...b6

Black holds a small but stable positional plus.

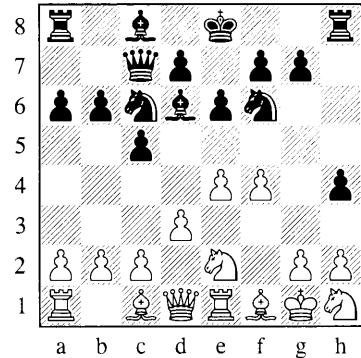


11. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$

This one, intending f2-f4, looks rather necessary.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ exd5 12.exd5† $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 15.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ is, once more, hardly sufficient.

11. $\mathbb{Q}ce2?!$ h5! is just bad for White, as 12.f4 (12.h4 $\mathbb{Q}g4\bar{=}$; 12.h3 h4 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$ is a really funny checkmate!) is met strongly with the tremendous idea: 12...h4 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



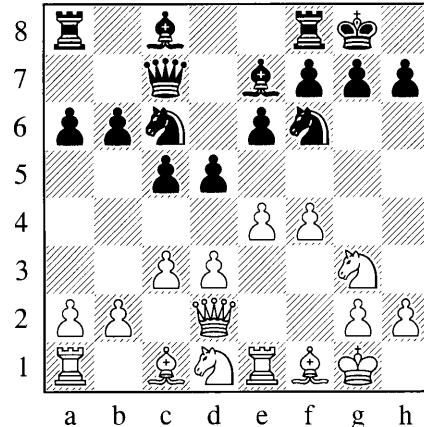
13...g5!! 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5\bar{=}$ Making full use of Black's potential on the dark squares.

11...0–0 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ d6 15.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6\bar{=}$ is great for Black.

13...d5 14.c3!

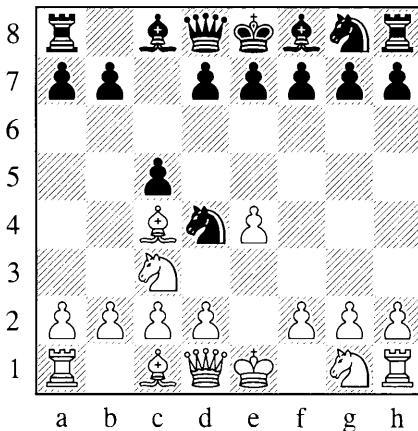
14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ fxe5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\bar{=}$



14...b5!?

Black initiates the usual queenside play, keeping a small edge.

C) 4.♗c4



The most logical reaction: the bishop eyes f7 and White would like to prove that it has a future on this diagonal. Our task, of course, is to prove the opposite.

4...a6

The deeper point of this move is to induce a2-a4, as that loses time for White and facilitates the realization of ...e6, ...♗f6 and ...d5.

Instead, 4...e6 5.♗f3 ♗f6 6.0–0 d5? 7.exd5 exd5 8.♗xd5! ♗xd5 9.♗xd4 cxd4 10.♔h5 ♔e6 11.♕e1+– is a typical trap that many players have fallen into. The bad thing about Black's position is that 11...♗f4 loses to 12.♗b5† – so our 4th move is directed against this possibility.

At this point we will explore four continuations for White: C1) 5.♗f3, C2) 5.♗ge2, C3) 5.a4 and C4) 5.d3.

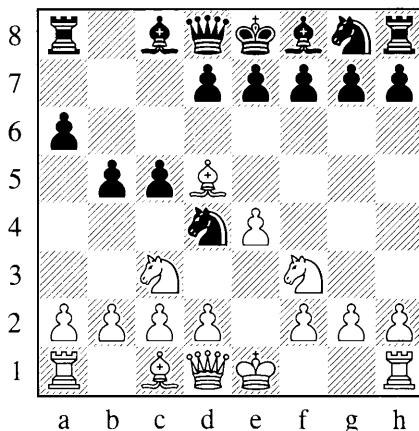
C1) 5.♗f3 b5!

This give Black gets a good game, as the following lines indicate.

6.♗d5

6.♗d3 ♕b7 7.0–0 ♗f6 8.a4 (8.♗xd4 cxd4 9.e5 dxc3 10.exf6 cxb2 11.♗xb2 gxf6 is similar)

8...b4 9.♗xd4 cxd4 10.e5 dxc3 11.exf6 cxb2 12.♗xb2 gxf6 13.♔h5 e6 14.♗ae1 ♔g8 15.g3 h6† This is excellent for Black, as his central pawn mass renders all White's attacking efforts ineffective.



6...♗b8 7.♗xd4

Harmless is:

7.d3 e6 8.♗b3 ♗xb3

8...a5N 9.a4 ♗xb3 10.cxb3 bxa4 11.bxa4 ♘a6 12.0–0 ♗f6 13.♗e1 ♔e7 14.d4 d6 is probably also okay for Black.

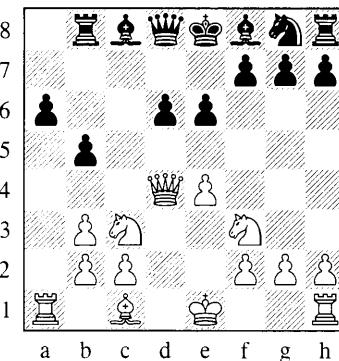
8...♗xf3†?N 9.♔xf3 ♔d6! 10.♗f4 ♔xf4 11.♔xf4 d6 12.0–0 ♗e7= is quite balanced, but Black has a bit more space, making his life easier.

9.axb3 d6 10.d4

10.0–0 ♗f6=

10...cxd4 11.♔xd4

This was played in Plaskett – Nicolas Zapata, La Roda 2014, and now I like:



11... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$

With a slight edge for the second player: he has the two bishops and pressure against e4.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}f6$

This is the point of Black's operation, ensuring he either exchanges the enemy light-squared bishop or gains the important pawn on e4.

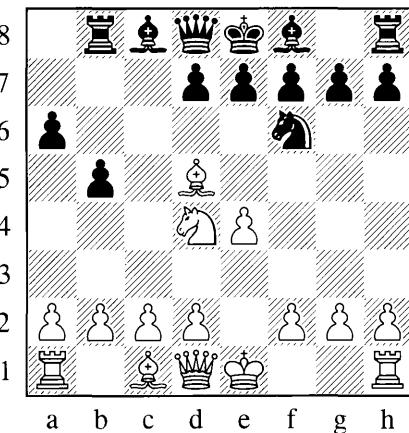
9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

I couldn't find anything better for White.

9. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 11.0–0 e6 12.d3?!

(12.c3 transposes to the main line) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (13. $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5! 14. $\mathbb{W}h3 \mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. f4 $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$) 13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ (intending ... $\mathbb{W}f6$) is slightly better for Black, as he has the more compact centre and two bishops.

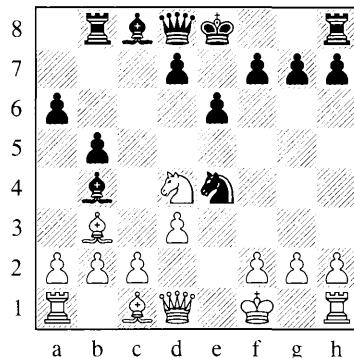
9.d3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b7\mp$ is a small but clear plus for us too.



9...e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11.c3

Trying to keep the bishop.

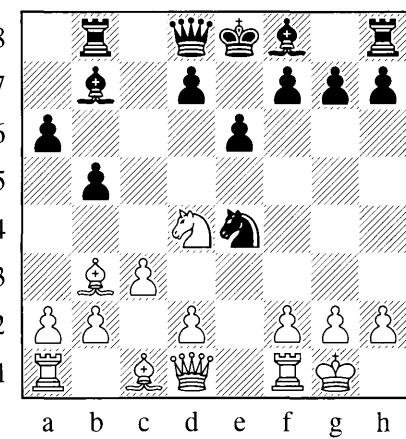
11.d3 $\mathbb{Q}b4\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ happened in Didderen – Van Oosterom, Belgium 2009, and now instead of the unclear sacrifice 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf2?$, it was better to play:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ N 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{E}b6!$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d6\mp$ With an edge for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12.0–0

In my view this is an excellent position for Black. I recommend:



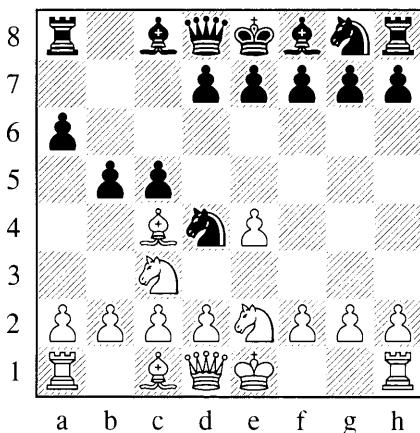
12... $\mathbb{W}c7\uparrow$ N

Instead, 12... $\mathbb{W}h4?$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{W}h5$ 14. d4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{W}h4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g4 \mathbb{W}xg4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg4\infty$ was unclear in Heberla – Peschlow, Dresden 2009.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0–0 15. d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. d4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $d5\rightleftarrows$

I believe Black is at least equal and can play for the full point, as he has a clear plan of a minority attack on the queenside.

C2) 5.♗g2 b5!

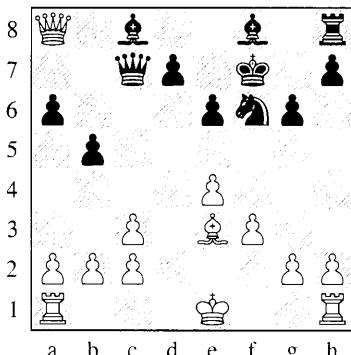


This will almost certainly transpose to variation C1 above. A possible deviation could be:

6.♘d5

6.♘d3?! ♘c6!?? is, as we know, bad with the knight on e2.

6.♘xf7?!! is simply an unsound sacrifice for White: 6...♘xf7 7.♘xd4 cxd4 8.♗h5+ g6 9.♗d5+ e6 10.♗xa8 dxc3 11.dxc3 ♘c7 12.♗e3 ♘f6 13.f3



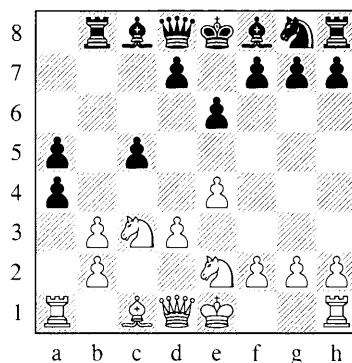
13...♘d6! 14.♗a7 ♘xh2 15.♗xc7 ♘xc7 16.a4 ♘b7 17.axb5 axb5 18.♗a7 ♘g3† 19.♗f2 ♘xf2† 20.♗xf2 ♘c6?? Simonian – Solak, Golden Sands 2012.

6...♗b8 7.a3!?

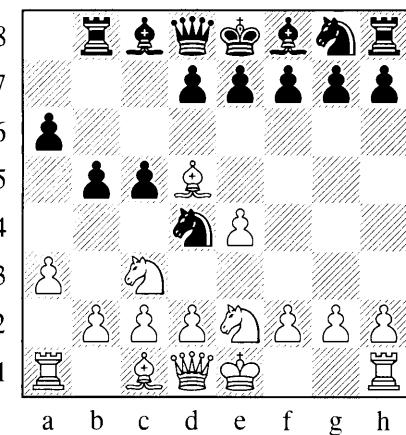
As suggested by Dragan Solak in *Chess Informant*.

Instead, 7.♘xd4 transposes to lines analysed above.

7.d3 e6 8.♗b3 a5! looks fine for Black even with the knight on e2. For instance: 9.a4 ♘xb3 10.cxb3 bxa4



11.bxa4!N (After 11.♗xa4 d6 12.d4 ♘d7 13.♗c4 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘f6 15.0–0 ♘e7 16.♗e3 0–0 17.f3 ♘b7?? White gradually got outplayed in Engelhard – Eckel, corr. 2008.) 11...♘a6 12.0–0 ♘d6? 13.♘b5 (13.f4 ♘e7??) 13...♗xb5 14.axb5 ♘xb5 15.d4 ♘e7 White's compensation for the pawn does not look quite enough to me.



7...e6 8. $\mathbb{Q}a2 \mathbb{Q}e7!N$ 9. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 10. d3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$
11. f4

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$
0–0 14. f4 d5!= with the idea 15. exd5 exd5
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe7 \mathbb{Q}b7\#$.

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

12. f5 b4 13. axb4 cxb4 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b3 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 18. cxb3
exf5?

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

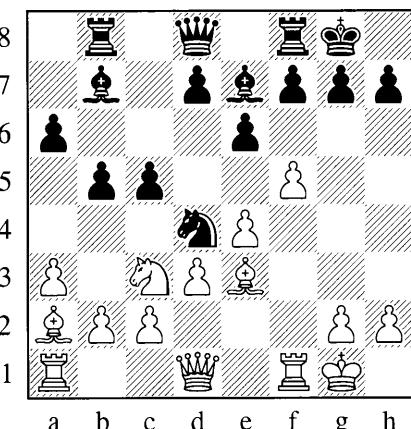
After 13. f5, the typical pawn sacrifice 13...b4! 14. axb4 cxb4 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b3 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 17. cxb3 d5# should again suffice for equality.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Black looks perfectly okay to me, as ...f5 might soon be possible.

14. f5

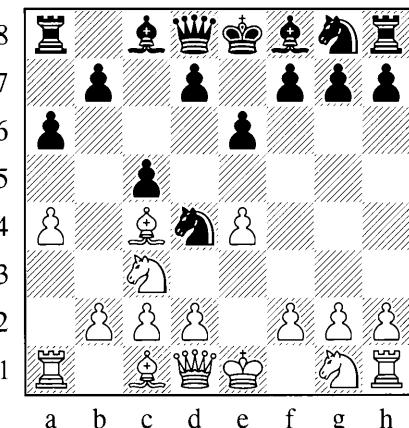
If White plays this move himself, then the following sequence leads to a double-edged position:



14... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}bc8\#$

Black seems to enjoy the more purposefully placed pieces.

C3) 5. a4 e6

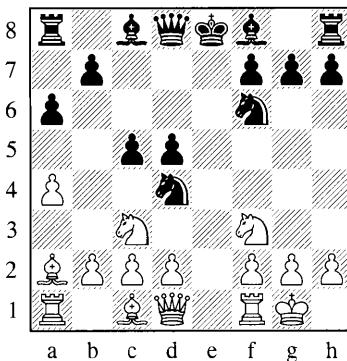


Black enjoys an excellent position, as he can continue his plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ... d5 – as mentioned in the note to Black's 4th move on page 181 – without any worries.

6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2!$

6. $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7. 0–0 d5 8. exd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

The difference with the main line is that Black now has an important pinning move.



9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Forcing White to continue as follows:
10. $\mathbb{W}e1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d3
13. cxd3 0–0

I don't think there is any advantage for White, and he could even be worse. A top-level encounter from this position continued:
14. d4 $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$

15.h3N looks more to the point, although after 15... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ (16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 17.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 18.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\rightarrow$ is surely not the best type of position to play as White against Shirov) 16... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 17.f3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 19.d3 $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 20.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h6 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\mp$ Black is certainly the one dictating events.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

15... $\mathbb{E}e8N$ 16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 17.d3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\uparrow$ would have placed White in real difficulties, but it is rather difficult to conceive that returning the bishop to d7 can be best.

16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22.g3 h6 23.d3 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{E}xe4=$

McShane – Shirov, Germany 2012.

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

Now the two most common replies are: C31) 7.d3 and C32) 7.0–0.

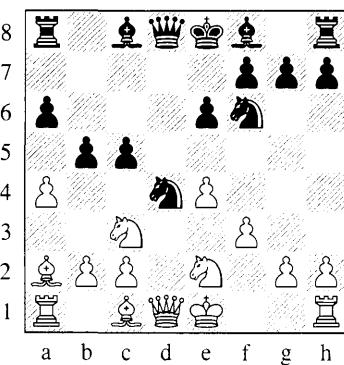
C31) 7.d3 d5 8.exd5

8. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ dxe4 9.dxe4 b5!?

Reaching a double-edged position.

10.f3

10.e5!N $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ dxс3 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3$ (15.axb5 axb5 16. $\mathbb{E}d1$ h5 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}a4$ gives Black tremendous play for the pawns) 15...bxa4∞ was more critical.



10... $\mathbb{E}a7?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$ cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.f4 bxa4 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b6\mp$

Black had the better position and went on to win in Dinev – Miladinovic, Cetinje 2012.

8...exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6?$ 10.0–0

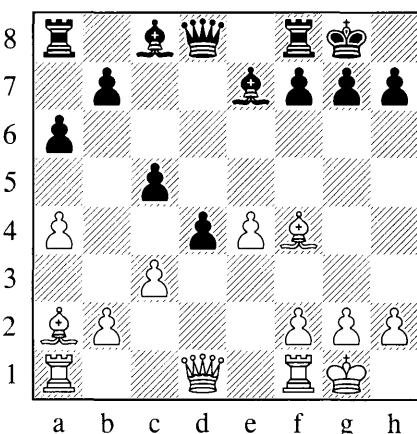
After 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, the reply 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ leads to an approximately equal ending.

10... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ d4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14.dxe4 0–0=

With all knights gone it does not matter so much that the a2-bishop has seen the light again; the a2-g8 diagonal can (and should) be contested by Black. For example:

15.c3!?

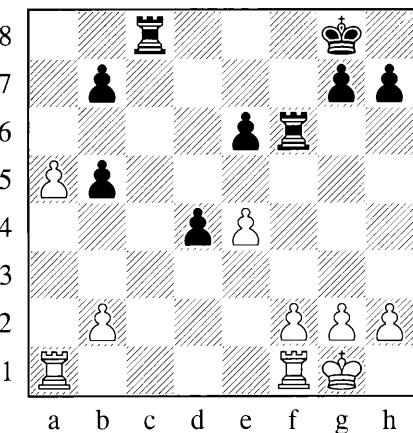
15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}a7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19.exd5 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 23.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e5$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}ael$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$ is equal.



15... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ N

15... $\mathbb{W}b6?$ 16.cxd4 cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.a5 $\mathbb{W}d8$ is not as good for Black, and in Predojevic – Cvitan, Zadar 2011, White could have gained a clear advantage with 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6N$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21.a5 $\mathbb{W}b5!$
 22. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $axb5$ 23.cxd4 cxd4

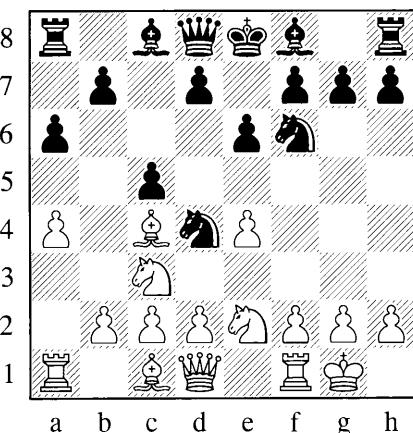


Black should hold the ending, as his worse structure is compensated for by both the activity of his rooks and his control of the c4-square. The importance of this square is highlighted after the further:

24. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{E}ff8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}c4!$ 26.b3 $\mathbb{E}c3$
 27. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $dxc3$ 28.b4 $\mathbb{E}c8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c4$
 30. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xb4$

The draw is near.

C32) 7.0-0

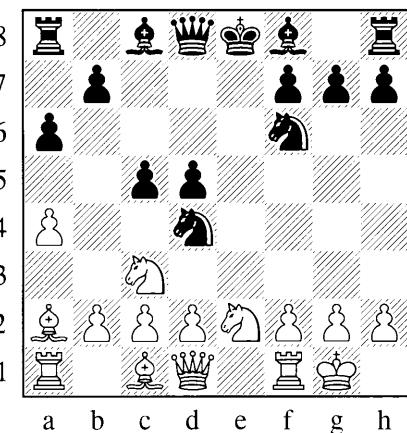


7...d5

7...d6!? 8.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9.d4 cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ does not look like a bad option, especially if Black is going all out for a win.

8.exd5 exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

Here I recommend a tried and tested move:



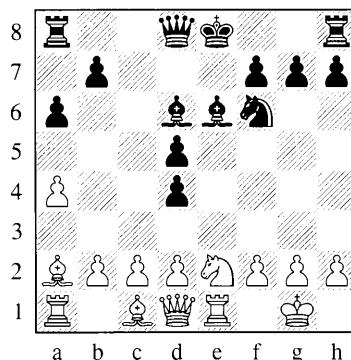
9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Stopping $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and preparing to castle. This is how play might proceed:

10.d3!

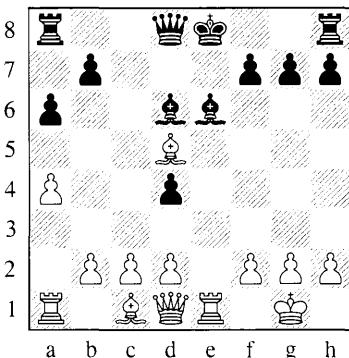
Now White starts toying with the idea of taking on d4.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$! cxd4 11. $\mathbb{E}e1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$! was the continuation in Keosidi – Maletin, Russia 2007, and now:



12...d3N 13.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ with the idea 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$! $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$!! 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f4$

18.♕xg7† ♜d7† would have been strong for Black.) 12...♝xd5 13.♝xd5



13...♜xh2† 14.♞xh2 ♖xd5 15.d3 0–0N
16.♝f4 ♜ac8 Black is slightly better, because of his safer king and the potential pressure down the c-file.

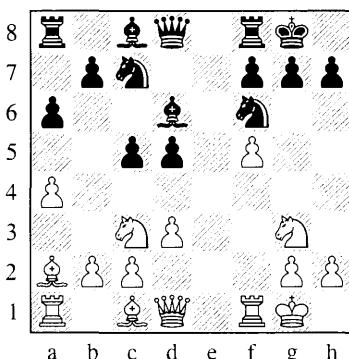
10...♝e6!?

Not forced, but in my opinion good enough: Black covers the f4- and g5-squares so as to reduce the pressure on his sensitive d5-pawn.

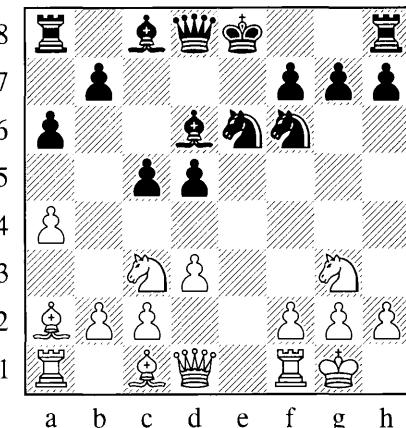
11.♞g3

This looks like the most testing continuation, intending to soften up Black's defences by means of ♜h5.

11.f4 looks a bit anti-positional to me, although it might just be okay. 11...♝c7!
12.f5 0–0 13.♞g3 was Xie – Votava, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010:



13...b5!N 14.♗f3 (14.♗g5 ♜e5 15.♗h5? just drops a pawn to 15...b4 16.♝e2 ♜xh2† 17.♗h1 ♜e5†) 14...♝b7 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗h4 ♜e5 17.♗h5 ♜ce8 18.♗ae1 ♜d6 19.♗xf6†! (19.axb5 ♜xh5 20.♗xh5 ♜f6†) 19...♝xf6 20.♗xf6 ♜xf6 21.♗xd5 ♜xd5 22.♗xd5 bxa4=



11...0–0!?

I find it quite surprising that this move has remained untested.

11...♝xg3 12.fxg3 0–0 has been the standard continuation in practice, but I'd rather not give White the advantage of the two bishops so easily. That said, the position is just unclear.

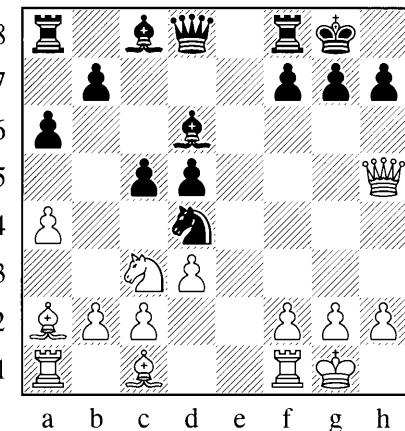
12.♗h5

The critical reply.

12.♗d2 ♜f4 is in my opinion fine for Black, for instance: 13.a5 ♜xd2 14.♗xd2 ♜b8 15.♗a4 b5! 16.axb6 ♜d7 17.♗b3 ♜xa4 18.♗xa4 ♜xb6= The a4-bishop is still not functional, and Black's well-placed knights outweigh his slightly inferior pawn structure.

12...♝xh5 13.♗xh5 ♜d4

This counterattack against c2 is the point behind 11...0–0!?. White gets a temporary initiative now, but it shouldn't be enough to distort the balance of power.



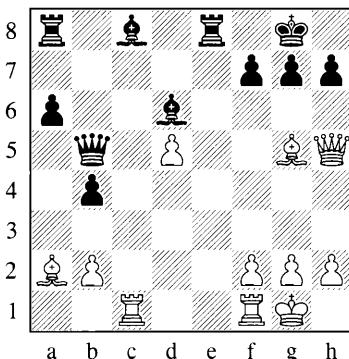
14. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xc2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}b4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b6!

18. $\mathbb{Q}ce1 \mathbb{W}g4$ looks okay for Black.

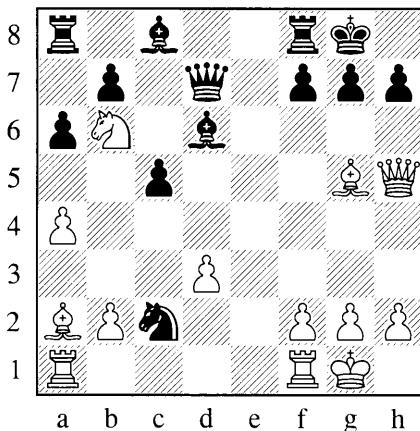
15... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$

16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ cxb4 18. d4 is probably a stiffer test, yet after 18... b5 19. axb5 (19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ g6 20. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$) 19... $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 20. d5 $\mathbb{E}e8!$ I wouldn't say that Black has any real problems. A wonderful tactical point associated with Black's last is:



21. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ h6!) 21... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6??$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ is about equal) 22... $\mathbb{W}xf1\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ and Black wins!

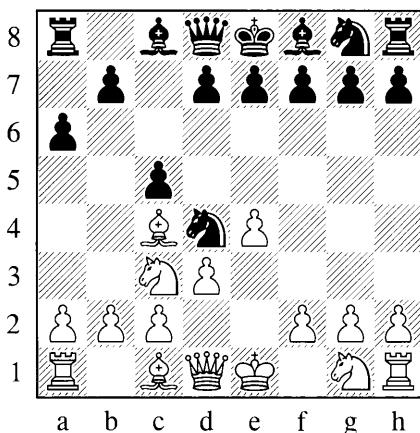
After 16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ the game peters out to a drawish ending:



16... $\mathbb{W}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8=$

C4) 5.d3



Trying to secure a retreat for the bishop on b3.

5...e6

Here there is no point in playing 5...b5 first, as the bishop can be moved to b3 instead of d5.

The final split of the chapter will cover C41) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and C42) 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$.

C41) 6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.0–0

7.e5?! is bad in view of: 7...d5 8.exf6 dxc4 9.fxg7 ♘xg7 10.dxc4? (After 10.0–0 cxd3 11.♗xd3 ♘d7 12.♗xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗e3 ♘c6† we have transposed to the game Tiviakov – Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001, where Black already had the upper hand due to the open g-file and his strong bishops.) 10...b5!† Black's razor-like bishops offer him more than enough compensation on a wide-open board.

7...b5 8.♗b3 ♘xb3 9.axb3 ♘b7

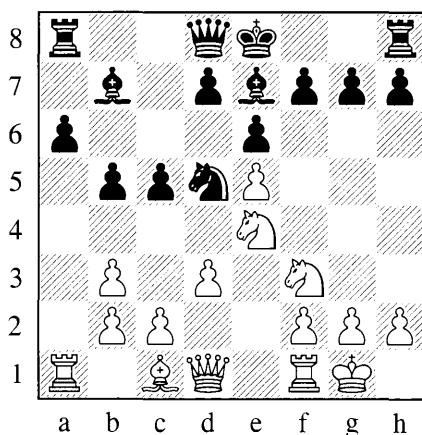
Leading to a position where the f3-knight blocks the f-pawn, thus depriving White of any serious attacking chances.

10.e5

There is nothing else.

10...♘d5 11.♗e4 ♘e7

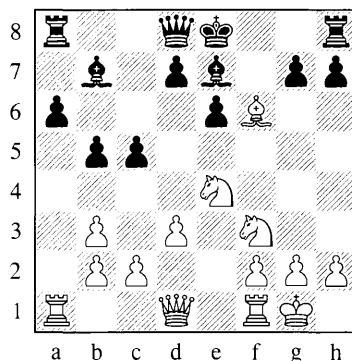
Now White has another decision to make:

**12.c4?!**

An interesting possibility: evicting the black knight from its strong centralized position.

12.d4 cxd4 13.♗xd4 0–0 14.♗d2 was Tissir – Bengafer, Dubai 2005, and now 14...f6!N† would have shown up White's strategy as a complete failure.

12.♗g5 Designed to soften Black's control over d6 and c5. 12...f6! An easy yet correct move: Black keeps the two bishops and opens lines. What could be more natural? 13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♗xf6 (After 14.♗e1 0–0 15.♗d2 h6 16.♗f4 d6 17.♗g3 Black was already better in Degraeve – P. Popovic, Germany 2004. I think that the best way to increase Black's advantage was 17...e5!N†, making the g3-bishop a passive spectator at the game.)



14...gxsf6! 15.♗e1 0–0 16.d4 cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♘h8 18.♗g3 ♘g8† Black had the better chances in Hou Yifan – Ushenina, Krasnoturyinsk 2007. In the end White managed to win the game, but this had nothing to do with the outcome of the opening.

After 12.c4 there follows what I consider to be a correct sequence:

12...♗b4 13.♗e2!

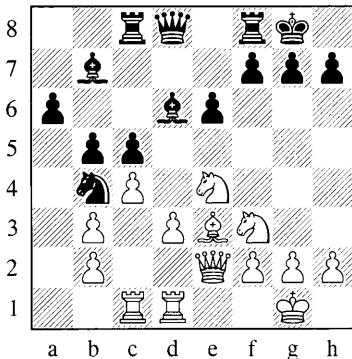
This is designed to enable ♘d2-c3 by protecting d3.

13.♗e3 ♘c8 14.♗c1 ♘a2 15.♗a1 ♘b4 16.♗c1 ♘a2 17.♗a1 ♘b4= does not let White pressurize the c-pawn, and the game was given up as a draw in Solak – Kutuzovic, Sibenik 2005.

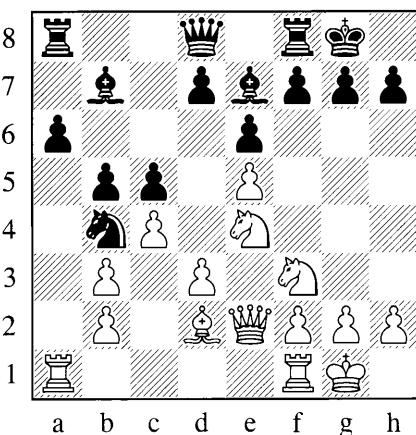
13...0–0 14.♗d2!

Sticking to the original plan.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ has the idea to coordinate the rooks before pressurizing c5, but after: 14... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1!$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}fc1?$ d5! 16. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6\#$ is even worse for White as d3 has turned into a weakness.) 15... d5! 16. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$



17... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ 18. cxb5 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 19. b6 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ The result is an unclear position; Black intends ...a5 and has good compensation for the pawn.



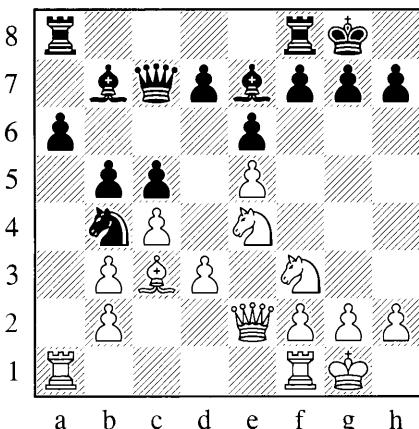
14... $\mathbb{W}c7N$

Cornette's suggestion is strongest here.

14... a5!? 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ bxc4 16. bxc4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ gxf6 18. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4=$ led to a draw in Pospelov – Varlamov, corr. 2009, but I am not sure whether White had to play 17. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

In case of 15. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ bxc4! 16. bxc4 f5 17. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!=$ Black stands absolutely fine, as he can operate simultaneously on both the f-file and the long h1-a8 diagonal – creating counterplay.



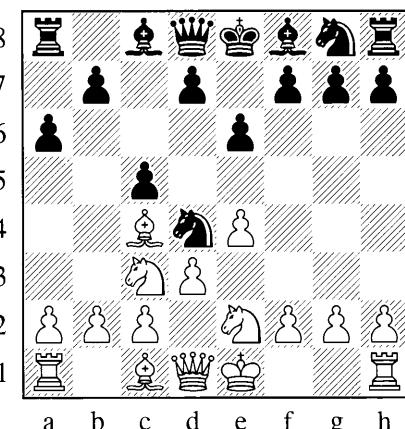
15... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

This is the point: the e5-pawn is under pressure due to the ...b4 threat, so White is forced to immediately sacrifice his knight. After the sacrifice, however, the position becomes equal.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ gxf6 17. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}f4$
19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}g4=$

Black has good pressure against g2 and this outweighs his weakness on the dark squares.

C42) 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



This is considered the best move: White needs his f-pawn unblocked to work up some action.

6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.0–0

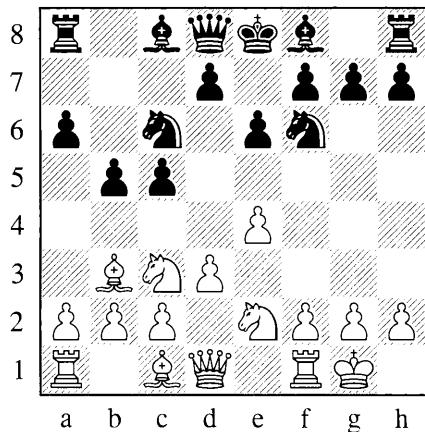
7.a4 d5= transposes to variation C31.

7...b5

Black immediately grabs the offered space.

8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

Although I am a big fan of bishops, my conviction is that in the present situation retreating is best. After all, what is the white bishop doing on b3? In my own games I have chosen to take this bishop mechanically, but I now think that this relieves White and gives him something to play for. What makes our knight retreat good is that White's play is too one-sided with his king's knight developed on e2, because he lacks control of the e5-square.



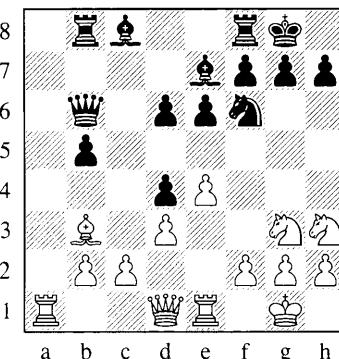
9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

This is actually the most popular move according to my database, but it has a dismal score. I'm not sure what White should play though.

After 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, for example, Black simply plays 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, renewing the idea of ...d5. The continuation 10.f4 d5 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

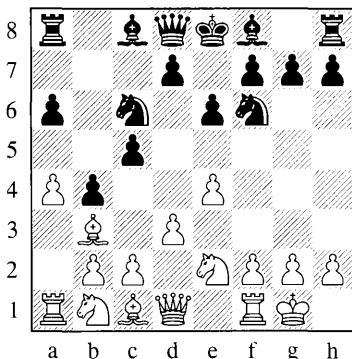
12.a4? (12. $\mathbb{W}g3$ 0–0 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b8\bar{F}$ would have given White a bad but tenable position) 12...c4 13.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 0–1 saw White suffer an opening catastrophe in Kapce – Gil, corr. 2008.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ has been tried in correspondence chess, but I doubt it is a solution to White's problems. After 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4\bar{F}$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ happened in Vocaturo – Cmilyte, Wijk aan Zee 2012, and here I think that Black could have obtained the upper hand with 13...g5!N. No, the computers won't suggest this move to you! 14. $\mathbb{W}c1$ gxf4! 15. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}g5!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf7\bar{F}$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\bar{F}$ Black is a pawn down and cannot castle, but his total dark-square domination, in conjunction with the bad b3-bishop, make this position extremely dubious for White.) 10...d6 11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 13.axb5 axb5 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19.f4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ b4 21.f5 b3 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 23.cxb3 e5 24. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ d5 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g4$ f6 \bar{F} Black had the better prospects in Pospelov – Y. Petrov, corr. 2012.

9.a4 is a move that has been played by Rauf Mamedov, so it deserves attention. After 9...b4 (9... $\mathbb{Q}b8\bar{F}$ is not out of the question) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ R. Mamedov – Vidit, Kolkata 2009, I believe Black would have secured the more pleasant position after the direct:

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 

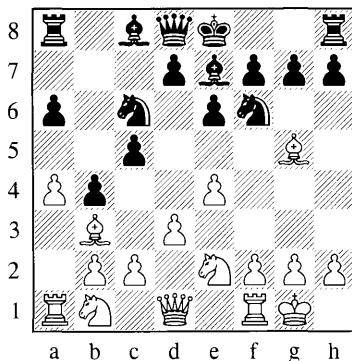
10...d5!N 11.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$
0–0 \bar{f} Admittedly, White's control of the c4-square means that he has his chances too.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

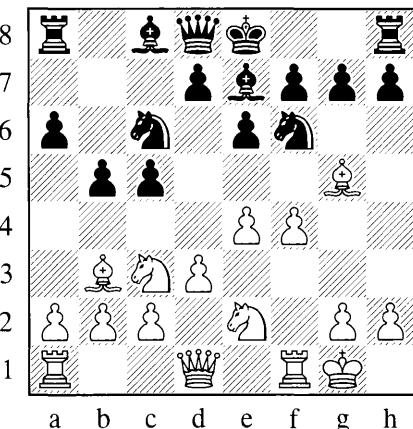
White is rather struggling for equality, with a sample line being:

10.f4

10.a4 b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ happened in Drabke – Bauer, Switzerland 2004, and here I like:



11...h6N 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ d5 13.exd5 exd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}e8\bar{f}$ Black has a small but definite plus due to his space advantage. The b3-bishop is still out of play and the white knights are struggling to find appropriate squares.



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe7 \mathbb{Q}xe7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e1$ c4!
13. $dxc4$ $bxc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4 \mathbb{W}b6\ddagger$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ 0–0 ∞

Black seemed to have the more pleasant position in Van Overdam – Anton Guijarro, Prague 2012.

Conclusion

The Tiviakov Grand Prix Attack is an interesting system that includes several positional nuances, but in the end the precarious state of White's light-squared bishop seems to be the telling factor – denying the first player any chances for an advantage. After the correct 3... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ I believe that Black gets the better practical chances, perhaps with the exception of those lines where White retreats his bishop to c4 and employs a set-up involving a2-a4 and $\mathbb{Q}g1-e2$. In these lines the play is approximately balanced, though this is only natural as White avoids being suffocated too much on the queenside. In addition, with the knight on e2, he has as many guns as possible targeting the critical d5-square, securing himself just enough counterplay to avoid being worse.

Overall this system is not troublesome for us, and I expect the readers to score a lot of points after studying the material I have presented here.

Chapter 11

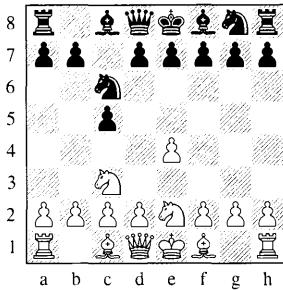
2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

3. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

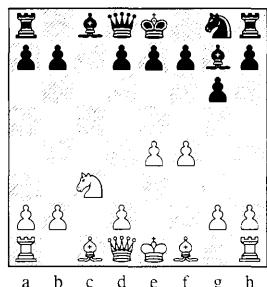
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}ge2!?$

3... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$	
A) 4.f4	194
B) 4. $\mathbb{E}b1$	196
C) 4. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4	197
C1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$	197
C2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	199
D) 4.d3	201

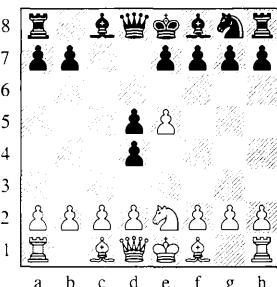


A) after 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$



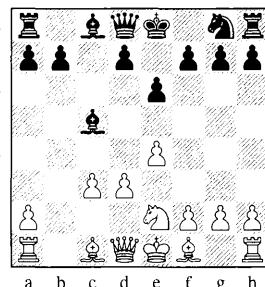
8...a6!N

C) after 6.e5!?



6... $\mathbb{Q}c7!N$

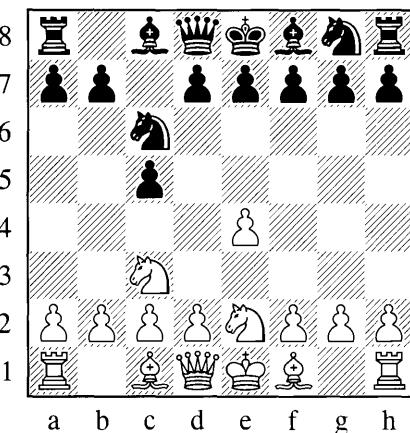
D) after 8.bxc3



8...d6!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗ge2!?

This way of developing appears more cunning than 3.♘f3, as the king's knight would be far more flexibly placed if Black now decided to stop d2-d4 with ...e5. However, Black does not have to comply with White's wishes, and can exploit the rather clumsy placement of the e2-knight to stop d2-d4 in a slightly unorthodox way:

**3...♘d4!?**

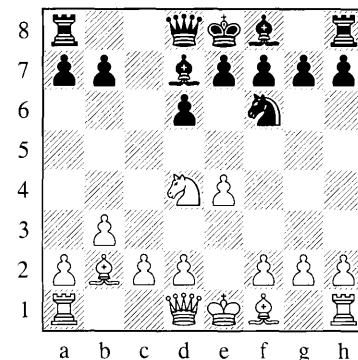
Moving the same piece twice at such an early stage may appear bad strategy, but the Russian GM Vyacheslav Ikonnikov has proven the move's viability over the years by employing it regularly. If the white knight stood on f3 instead of e2, the first player could play 4.♘c4 with a slight edge. As things stand though, this natural reply is not possible and White's development is impeded by the enemy knight's presence in the centre. As for the argument that taking the d4-knight gives White a better pawn structure, praxis has shown that it merely enables Black to develop quickly and actively, obtaining good counterplay.

White's main options are A) 4.f4, B) 4.♗b1, C) 4.♘xd4 and the natural D) 4.d3.

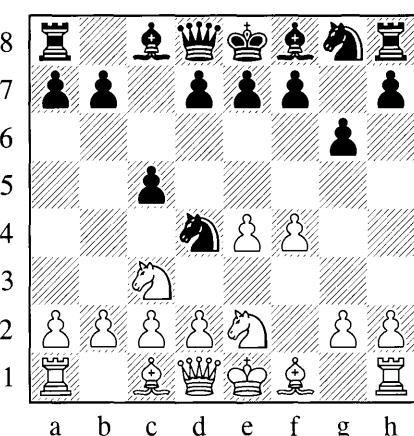
You cannot really call 4.g3?? an option, as 4...♘f3# would end the game in a rather ridiculous manner. This does highlight that

chess is a game of exceptions, as the black knight has moved three times in a row to deliver mate as early as the 4th move – not a bad achievement for a poor beast.

4.b3 has been the topic of discussion in a couple of correspondence games, but the bishop appears misplaced on b2. One game continued: 4...d6 5.♗b2 ♘d7!? 6.♘xd4 cxd4 7.♗e2 ♘f6 8.♘xd4



8...e5! 9.♘f5 ♘xe4 10.♗f6 11.♘xg7+ ♘xg7 12.♗xg7 ♘g8 13.♗h6 ♘g6 14.♗e3 ♘d5 15.♗e4 ♘c6 16.f3 ♘g5! 17.♗c4 ♘f4 18.0–0–0 ♘xg2 19.♗g1 ♘xf3 20.♗d3 ♘xd1 21.♗xg6 ♘xg6 22.♗xd1 ♘d8 23.♗d5 ½–½ A draw was agreed in Enescu – Zlatariu, corr. 2008, as 23...♗c8 24.♗c3 ♘e3 25.dxe3 ♘xc3 26.♗a5† ♘c7= leads to a position where White has just enough for the pawn.

A) 4.f4 g6

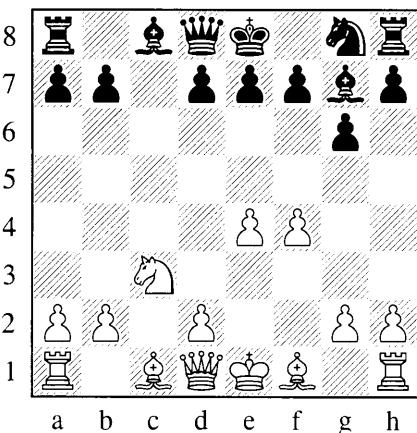
I don't believe that Black should experience any problems here.

5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. d3 e6 8. g3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0–0
10. 0–0 d6 11. c3 dxс3 12. bxс3 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightleftharpoons$ looks excellent for Black too.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. c3 dxс3 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

This appears more natural than 8. dxс3 a6 9. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6 11. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. f5 0–0
13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8\rightleftharpoons$.



8... a6!N

8... e6?! happened in Ubach Miralda – Gardela Batlle, Barcelona 2011, but I don't like it so much in view of 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ N↑.

9. d4 b5!

9... d5?! 10. e5! $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ is less appealing.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. d5 e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

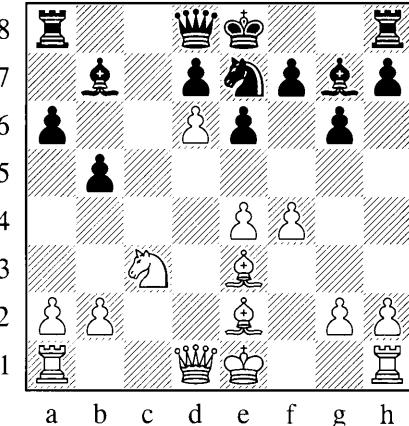
12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$?! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 \mp with the idea 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ exd5 15. e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3\mp$

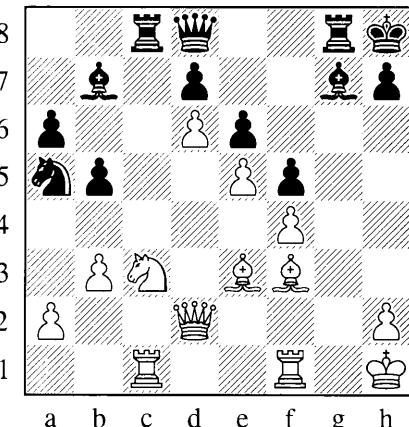
13. d6

13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d4\mp$ f6=



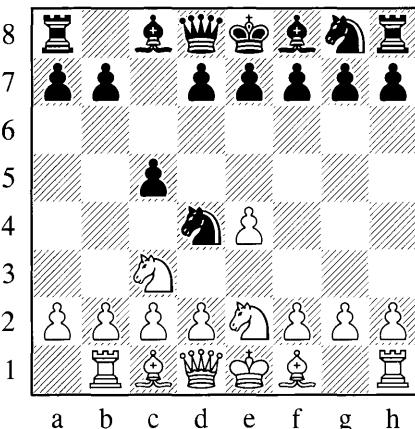
13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. 0–0 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$
f5 17. e5 g5 18. g3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19. b3 gxf4 20. gxf4
 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

The bishop on g7 is not as bad as it seems; it has a square on h6 from which to operate, and the white king feels the draught on the a8-h1 diagonal. A possible continuation is:



22... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ b4 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1\uparrow$
25. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 27. h3! $\mathbb{Q}c6$
28. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ a5 \rightleftharpoons

White has safeguarded his king, but Black has obtained counterplay due to the possibility of ...a4 and a timely sacrifice on e5: two factors which make the position approximately balanced.

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 

Boris Spassky once played this, but it doesn't feel like the most critical move in the world.

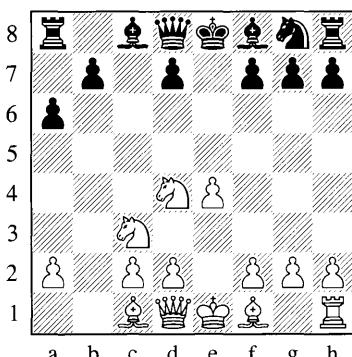
4...a6!?

4...e6N 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5\infty$ gives rise to an unclear position which is worth further investigation.

4...e5 was tried in Spassky – Bartsch, Germany 1984, and the 10th World Champion went on to win a long game.

5.d3

Interesting is 5.b4!? $cx b4$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ e5 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!? $exd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$, and now:



8...d6 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f3$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc8$ $\mathbb{E}axc8$ 17. c3 b5= leads

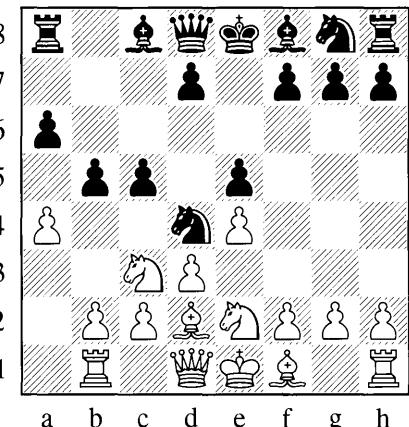
to an approximately balanced ending, with chances for both sides.

5...b5!?

White looks a bit better after: 5...d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 8. c3! $dxc3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. 0–0 0–0 12. d4 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14. f3±

6.a4! e5 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$!

7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $cxd4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\bar{\infty}$

7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 8. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$! 9. $\mathbb{Q}a1$!?

9. $bxa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h5! 11. h4 $\mathbb{Q}e7\bar{\infty}$ leads to a position with decent compensation for Black, as the h4-pawn will be weak after White castles.

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $bxa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ d5 $\bar{\infty}$

12...d5 13. 0–0 $dxe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d6\bar{\infty}$

16... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 18. f3 $\mathbb{W}a2$ 19. c3 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5\bar{\infty}$

19... $\mathbb{Q}b3\bar{\infty}$

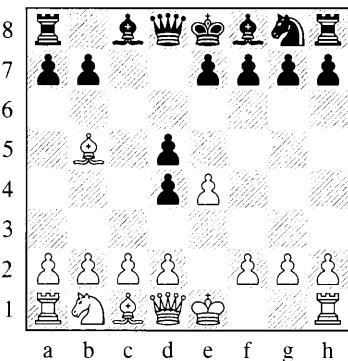
Black's compensation for the pawn appears quite good, and I would rate the chances as even.

C) 4.♕xd4 cxd4

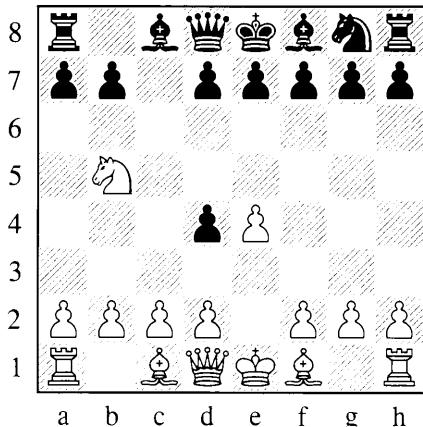
This has been the most popular continuation in tournament practice. White has a choice between an active and a more restrained course: **C1) 5.♕b5!?** or **C2) 5.♕e2.**

Weaker is 5.♕d5?! e6 6.♕f4 b6! 7.d3 ♜b7†.

5.♕b1?! d5! 6.♕b5† (6.e5 ♜d7† is also a bit better for the second player, who can try to provoke f2-f4 by attacking the e5-pawn with ...♝c7; White's kingside would be rather weak, and relatively bare of defenders.)



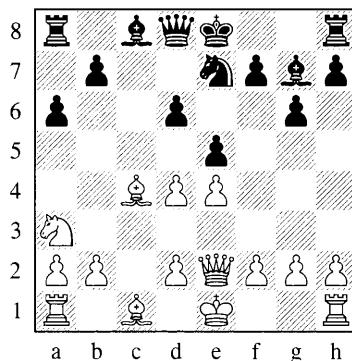
6...♜d7 7.♕xd7† ♜xd7 8.exd5 ♜c8 9.0–0 ♜f6† Black has a slight spatial advantage and better long-term chances.

C1) 5.♕b5!?

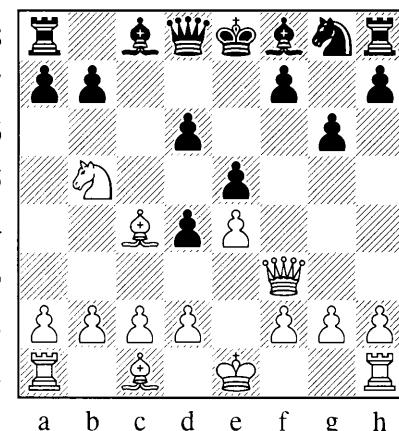
An active move that has been tried by strong players, so it is deserving of close attention.

5...e5 6.♗h5! d6 7.♘c4 g6 8.♗f3!

Instead, 8.♗e2?! a6 9.♘a3 ♜g7 10.c3 ♜e7 11.cxd4 was the continuation in Antoniewski – A. Kovalev, Czech Republic 2006, and here most accurate appears:



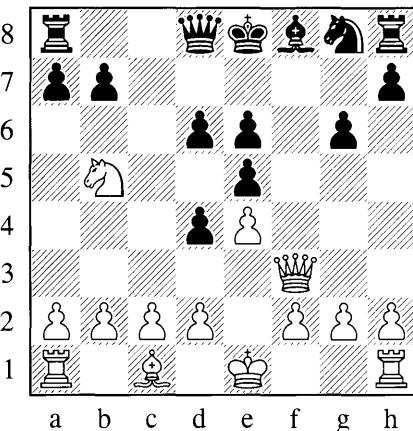
11...d5!N 12.exd5 b5! 13.♘b3 exd4 14.d3 0–0 15.♘g5 ♜e8 16.0–0 h6 17.♘xe7 ♜xe7† With a slight advantage for Black.

**8...♞e6 9.♘xe6**

9.♘b3?! a6 10.♘a3 ♜g7 11.d3 ♜c8 12.♘d2 b5!† was more comfortable for Black in Wedberg – Bistrík, Sweden 2000, in view of the awkward position of the a3-knight.

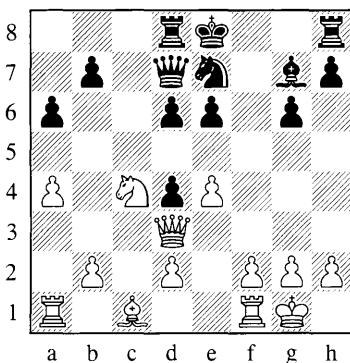
9...fxe6

With an unclear position, offering chances to both sides.



10. $\mathbb{W}b3!?$

10.c3 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d3$ a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.cxd4 exd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}d8$ 16.a4 should have been better for the variation's leading exponent in Colijn – Ikonnikov, Leuven 2011, but he had to find the incisive:



16...d5!N 17.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\uparrow$ Black is far better developed, and the white queen stands on a bad spot. In fact, the Russian GM allowed his opponent some much needed respite to reorganize his forces by playing 16...0–0?!, after which he even stood significantly worse at a later stage of the game.

10... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11.0–0

11.c3 d5! 12.exd5 a6 \rightleftarrows

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. d3

12.c3!?

Black should be careful to find an accurate reply:

12...a6!

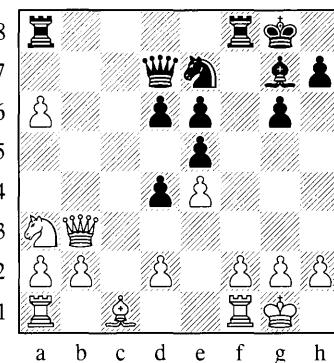
12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ (13.cxd4 exd4 14. $\mathbb{W}b4?!$ 0–0! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ [15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a3 \mathbb{Q}ad8\bar{\square}$ is awful for White, as Black has a huge lead in development and ...d3 is coming] 15...d5! $\bar{\square}$ gives Black lots of compensation for the pawn.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14.a4 \pm White has the more pleasant position.

13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b5 14.c4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15.cxb5 0–0?!

With unclear play. For example:

16.bxa6

16.d3 axb5 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (after 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5$, a typical line illustrating Black's compensation is 17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ d5! 19. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}fc8!\bar{\square}$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}fb8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}c6=$ The engines say it's equal, and I cannot see any problem with Black's position.



16... $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$

White is better after 16...d5?! 17. $\mathbb{W}b7!$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 18.axb7 $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 19.d3 \pm .

17. $\mathbb{W}h3$

17.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ d5 $\bar{\square}$ looks at least equal for Black, as White's men are clumsily placed.

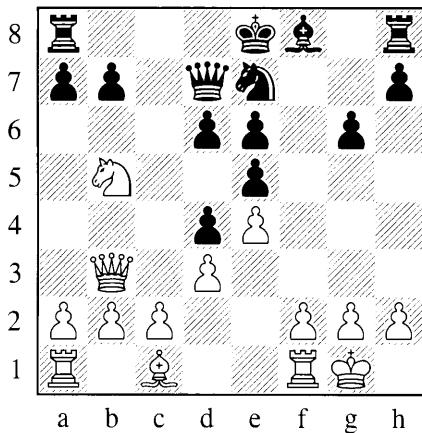
17...d5! 18.d3

18.exd5 e4! $\bar{\square}$

18... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 19.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e8\bar{\square}$

Although White is a pawn up, his position

appears cut in two and his forces are uncoordinated.



12...♝c6 13.♗g5N

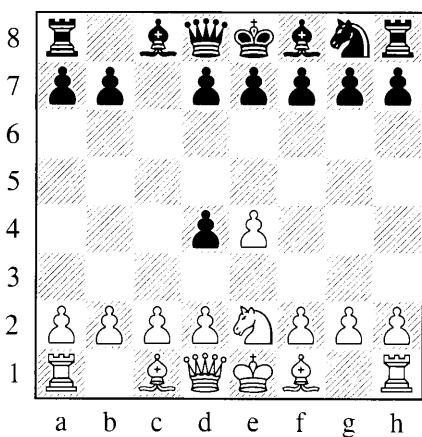
13.c3N ♜e7 14.cxd4 a6 15.d5 axb5 16.dxc6 bxc6= looks even.

13.f4 a6 14.♗a3 b5 15.fxe5 ♜a5 16.♗b4 ♜c6 was also level in Critter – Strelka, engine game 2012.

13...♝e7 14.♝xe7 ♜xe7!?:

The chances look balanced to me, as White's pieces are a bit strange on the queenside.

C2) 5.♗e2



This is the move the engines prefer, even if only by a small margin.

5...d5!

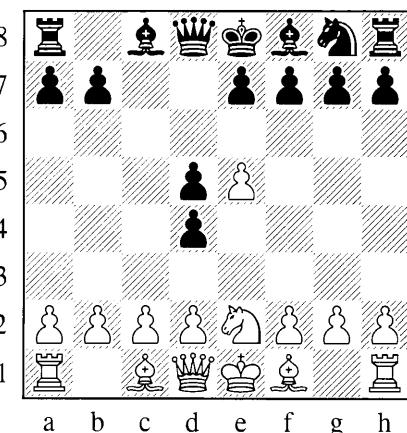
A standard reaction.

5...e5 has also been played, but I don't like it so much. After 6.♗g3 ♜f6 7.♗c4± White seems to have a slight edge, in view of the strongly placed bishop on c4 and the possibility to play c2-c3 at a later stage. In the ensuing positions it will not be easy for Black to stir up counterplay.

6.e5!?

The critical reply.

Obviously 6.♗xd4 dxe4 7.♗b5† ♜d7 8.0–0 ♜f6= is okay for us.



6...♛c7!N

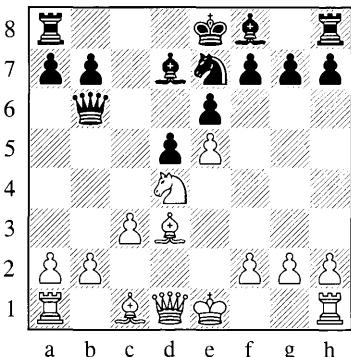
In my view, it is important to force weaknesses in the enemy camp.

6...♝b6

This is the usual continuation in praxis, but I believe it leads to a small but solid edge for White.

7.c3 dxc3 8.dxc3 e6 9.♗d4 ♜d7 10.♗d3 ♜e7

This was Rowson – Gallagher, Scarborough 1999, and here Rowson rightly recommends:



11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. b4?! is another possibility, intending $\mathbb{Q}e3-d4$, but after 13... $\mathbb{Q}b5!$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{W}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g4 \mathbb{E}c8$ it is not clear whether White has more than a tiny edge.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

With a pleasant position for the first player. The following point is important:

13... 0–0?!

13... $\mathbb{E}c8$? is probably better, but still I don't like Black's position

14. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ →

With dangerous pressure, as Black is forced to weaken the protective pawn cover in front of his king.

7. $f4 \mathbb{Q}g4!$

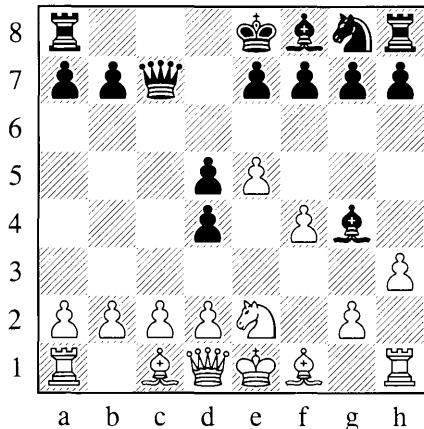
This may appear a bit provocative, but Black wants to tempt his opponent to weaken himself further.

8. $h3$

The natural reply.

8. $b3 e6$ 9. $h3 \mathbb{Q}h5$?! 10. $g4 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ leads to a rather unclear position; Black certainly has serious compensation for the pawn.

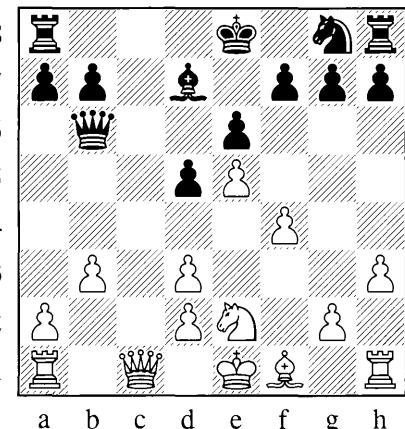
8. $d3 e6$ 9. $c3 dx3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 12. $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3 h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}f5=$ is a comfortable ending for Black.



8... $d3$!

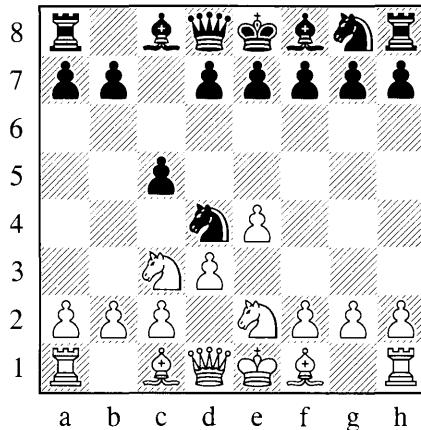
Giving up a pawn, to slow down White's development and make the position static, looks like the best choice.

9. $cx d3 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $b3 e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{W}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c1 \mathbb{W}b6\#$



a b c d e f g h

We have reached a position that is hard to assess: Black has play for the pawn, and he can try to set up a formation with ...h5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-f5$ to contain a future kingside expansion, while White should try to exchange queens as quickly as possible and subsequently push his opponent back, in order to make something out of his doubled extra pawn. I feel the position should be about equal, but practical tests are needed.

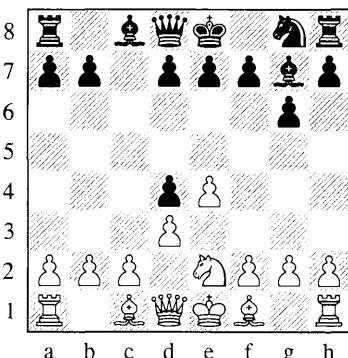
D) 4.d3

This move is the main preference of the silicon entities, trying to put the knight on d4 under quick pressure by developing the c1-bishop to e3. But White may also want to play $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ under better conditions, which is something d2-d3 prepares.

4...e6!?

I like this modest developing move.

The overambitious 4...g6 5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ led to an advantage for White after:



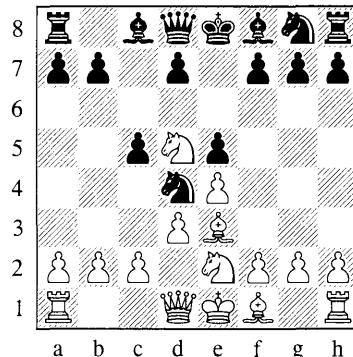
7.c3! dxcc3 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ d6 9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 11.0–0 e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.f3 a6 17.a4± Ponomariov – Moiseenko, Kharkov 2001.

5. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

I have found nothing better for White at this point.

5. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ does not have much point when d2-d3 has already been played, due to 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.c3 dxc3 9.bxc3 d5=.

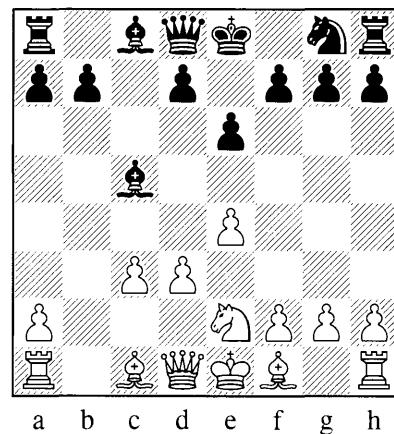
After 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Black, somewhat surprisingly, moves the e-pawn again: 5...e5! 6. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (6.f4 d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}ec3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$)



6... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ g6 10.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7=$ is also quite level) 9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b6 11.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13.f4 0–0 14.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}ac8!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$

5...cxd4 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 7.c3!

With this move White creates a mobile pawn centre, and it goes without saying that it is his only chance for an advantage.

7...dxc3 8.bxc3

8...d6!?

I believe that Black should start with this cautious move.

Instead, 8...e5?! 9.d4 exd4 10.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4\ddagger$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ allowed White a clear central preponderance in Anderson – Mutton, London 2000, and he went on to win.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This one is also viable.

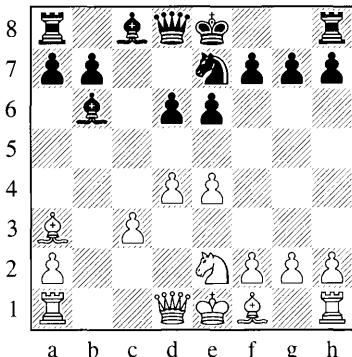
9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$

Black's task is easier after: 10.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5 12.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\ddagger$ axb5 17.0–0 g6∞

The same is true of: 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d6 13.0–0 0–0∞

10...d6

I haven't been able to find an advantage for White, but the truth is that Black has to tread carefully.



11. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$

This is the most testing.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (16.f4 exd4! 17.cxd4 f5!= is not a problem for us) 16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17.f4 exf4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ f6= is quite solid for the second player

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ or 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e5=.

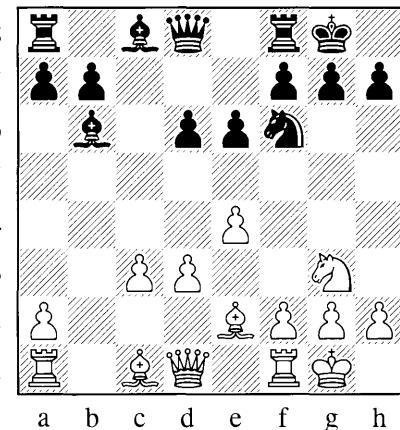
13... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$

13...f5 14.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$

14.0–0 e5! 15.f4 exf4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ = 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8=$

White looks slightly more comfortable, but he has his weaknesses too; this is a position where anything can happen.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. 0–0 0–0



12. $\mathbb{Q}h1!$

White has to go for f2-f4; otherwise he has nothing.

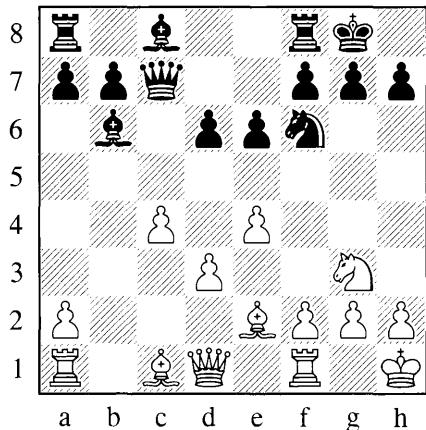
12.d4 is well met by: 12...e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ d5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$?

A committal decision, but there is nothing else if White aspires to win.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5= is excellent for Black.

A draw arises after 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b2=$.



**13...Qd4 14.Qb1 Qd7 15.f4 b6 16.Qf3 Qb7
17.Qe2 Qf6 18.Qe3∞**

The position is highly complicated, with chances for both sides.

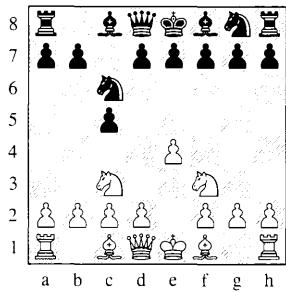
Conclusion

After 1.e4 c5 2.Qc3 Qc6 3.Qge2, Ikonnikov's 3...Qd4?! is an interesting way to take play into relatively uncharted territory, where Black has good chances to play for a win. There are a few challenging positions, particularly after 4.d3 and 4.Qxd4 (even Spassky's 4.Qb1 shouldn't be underestimated), but I think that overall I provided interesting suggestions where required. In several cases White obtains a pawn more in the centre – meaning that we have to counter-strike with accuracy in order to maintain equality. It is in these positions the reader should delve deeper, as they are the most difficult to handle.

In general this was a pleasant chapter, with many original opening ideas and lots of room for improvisation for the dedicated and ambitious researcher. I hope that my ideas will be expanded and shaped into formidable weapons, bringing Black players a lot of points.

Chapter 12

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

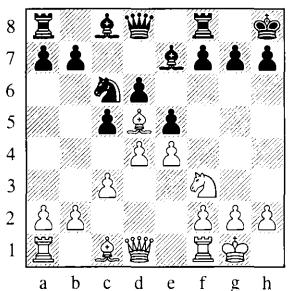
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

4... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

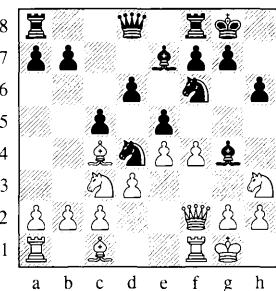
A) 5. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ d6 6.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$	205
A1) 7.c3 0–0	205
A11) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$	206
A12) 8.0–0	208
A2) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	209
B) 5.d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$	210
B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	210
B2) 6.0–0 0–0	214
B21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$	215
B211) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	216
B212) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	217
B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 8.f4! exf4	218
B221) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$	219
B222) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	221

A12) note to 10.a3



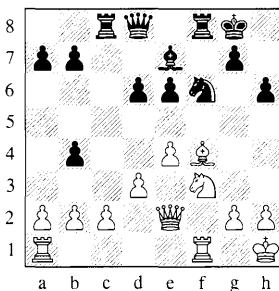
10...exd4!N

B22) note to 8.f4!



11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ N

B222) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



15...e5!N

1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 ♗c6 3.♗f3

A change of direction. White wants to transpose to an open Sicilian after all, having sidestepped the dangerous Najdorf and Sveshnikov Variations.

3...e5

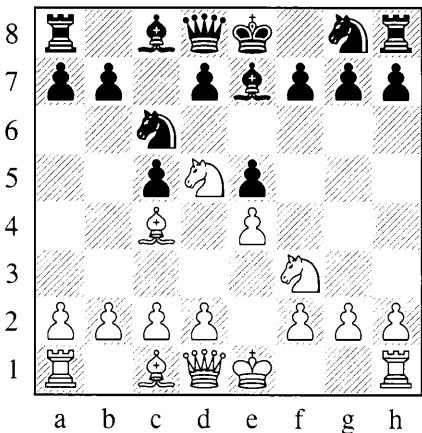
The no-nonsense Universal System, stopping d2-d4 once and for all. The d5-square seems to be a bit weak now, but Black will have enough time and resources to reinforce it due to the closed nature of the position.

4.♘c4 ♘e7!

This move is most elastic, keeping open the option of a direct ...d7-d5 in the future, if the circumstances allow it.

It is worth checking A) 5.♗d5 before moving on to the main line B) 5.d3.

5.0–0 will most likely transpose to variation B2 after 5...♗f6.

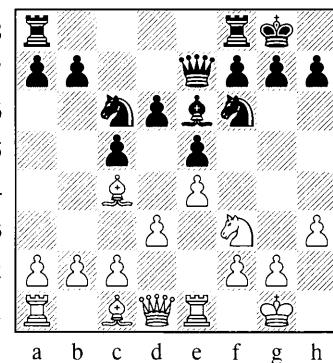
A) 5.♗d5

When I first saw this position I started wondering what happens if White goes after the bishop pair. The answer is nothing much: White loses time and the bishop on e7 is clearly not Black's best unit.

5...d6 6.d3 ♗f6

We reach another split: A1) 7.c3 is a common choice, while A2) 7.♗e3 has been played at a very high level.

Weaker is instead: 7.♗xe7 ♘xe7 8.0–0 (8.♗g5?! h6 9.♗xf6 ♘xf6= is comfortable for Black) 8...0–0 9.h3 (9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 ♘e4 11.♗d2 g5! 12.♗g3 ♘xc4 13.♗xc4 ♘e6! 14.♗e3 d5 15.f3 d4 16.♗f5 ♘e8= is fine for Black, who plans to exchange the f5-knight by playing his knight to g7 or d6 next move.) 9...♘e6 10.♗e1

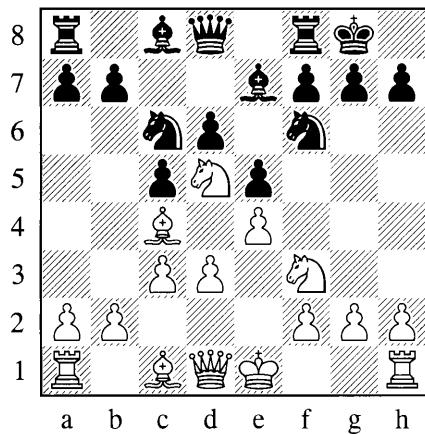


10...♗d7! 11.c3 Black is contesting the light squares, so White cannot really do anything constructive. So far we have followed Deutsch – Dub, Israel 2003, and here the simple 11...h6N= keeps everything under control and secures equal chances. It is not unthinkable that Black can opt for ...f5 in such a structure in the future, but of course the consequences of such an advance need to be well thought out.

A1) 7.c3

This is a logical consequence of the previous moves, highlighting the fact that White can control d4 with a pawn while Black can't do the same with the important d5-square.

7...0–0



The first player has the following choice:
A11) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ is an interesting option, blocking a potential march of Black's f-pawn, though most White players opt for
A12) 8.0-0.

8.h4 has been played a few times, but looks more like a joke to me after: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4N$ Surprisingly, this has never been played. 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h6 13. f3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6\#$ There is no attack for White and perhaps Black has a slight plus.

A11) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$

This move has been tested by Vallejo, and so should be treated seriously.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 9.0-0

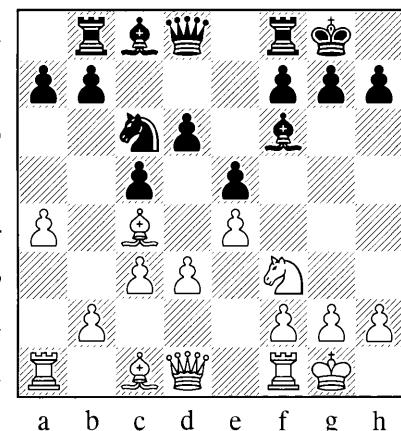
In this type of structure White would like to carry out b2-b4 at some point, starting pressure on the queenside. Black should take measures to minimize the consequences of this advance.

9... $\mathbb{E}b8?$ 10.a4

Obviously the critical response.

10.a3 b5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (In the case of 11. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ a5 12. a4 b4= White's queenside play has been stifled, and Black can look to the future with

confidence.) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. a4 (13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ a5 14. b4 axb4 15. axb4 cxb4 16. cxb4 $\mathbb{Q}a8=$) 13... a6= There are no weaknesses in Black's camp and he enjoys a fine game.



10... $\mathbb{W}e7!$

This solid reply prevents White from carrying out b2-b4 under favourable circumstances.

Vallejo Pons – Radjabov, Morelia/Linares 2006, continued with the less accurate 10... b6 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$, and after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6$ 13. b4! $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ White had the easier game with no risk involved.

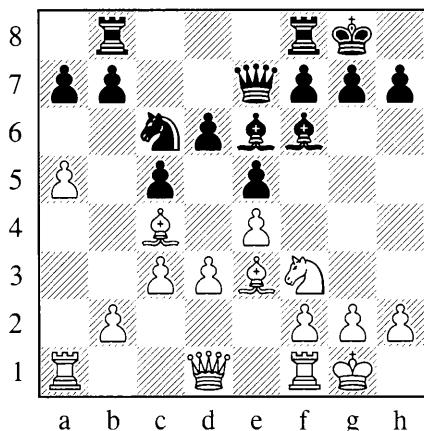
11. $\mathbb{Q}e3N$

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ was Topchess – Letchatsspain, engine game 2014, although the bishop came to e3 a few moves later anyway.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. a5

This weakens the a-pawn, but there is no other way to make progress.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6!=$ is completely equal, as Black controls d5 sufficiently and can retreat his bishop to e7, planning ...f5 or ...d5.



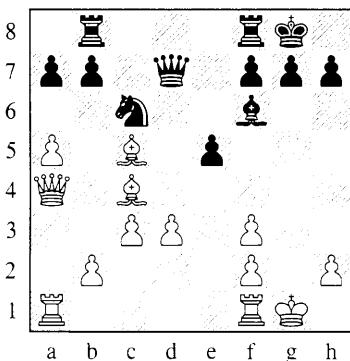
12...♕d7!

A second strong move with the queen, controlling d5 and allowing the f6-bishop to harass the a5-pawn from d8 according to circumstance. I believe that Black has completely equalized here, with the following lines providing some evidence:

13.♕xe6

Having secured a place on a4 for his queen, White decides it's the most appropriate moment for this exchange.

Weaker is 13.♕a4 due to the powerful retort 13...d5!!, for example: 14.exd5 ♕xd5 15.♕xc5 (safer is 15.♕xd5 ♕xd5 16.♕g4!=) 15...♕xf3 16.gxf3



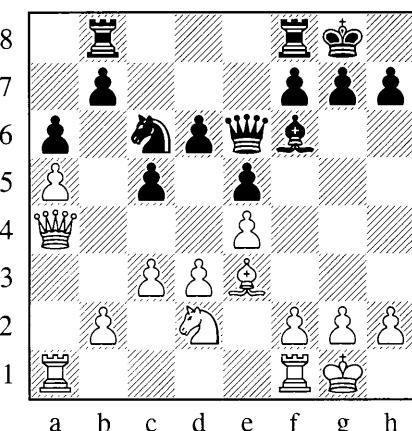
16...e4!! 17.♕d1 ♕f5! 18.d4 (18.♕xf8 exf3 19.♕h1 ♕h3 20.♕g1 ♕e5 21.♕g3 ♕xg3

22.♕g1 ♕e5 23.♕c5 ♕h5+) 18...exf3 19.♕h1 ♕fd8 20.♕d3 ♕h5→ Black has a dangerous attack as ...b6, followed by a knight sac on d4, is a realistic possibility.

13.♕b3, on the other hand, is met simply by 13...♕d8→.

13...♕xe6 14.♕a4 a6! 15.♕d2?!

15.b4 cxb4 16.cxb4 d5 17.b5 dxe4 18.dxe4 ♕d4 19.♕xd4 exd4 20.e5 ♕xe5 21.♕fe1 f6= is completely level.



15...♕d8?!

I like this peculiar-looking retreat.

16.♕c4 f5 17.f4 fxe4 18.dxe4 exf4 19.♕xf4 ♕c7

The bishop functions well on c7 despite its clumsy appearance.

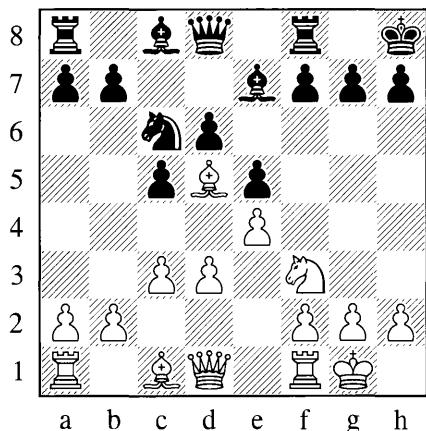
20.♕b3

20.♕ae1? ♕xf4 21.♕xf4 d5=+

20...h6 21.♕g3 ♕xf1† 22.♕xf1 ♕h7=

There is no question of an advantage for White.

A12) 8.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!?$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}h8!?$



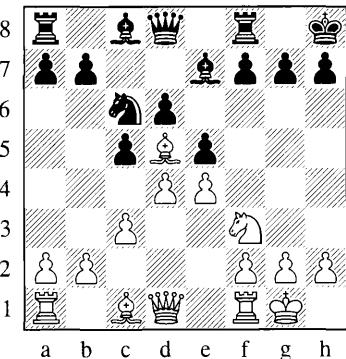
I like this human idea, preparing to play ...f5.

Correspondence chess has focused on 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 11. a3!?. White wants to gain space by b2-b4, and I consider his practical chances as slightly better.

10.a3

This is the preference of Houdini, but there have been other attempts as well:

In the stem game Yates – Tartakower, Hastings 1928, White chose the obvious 10.d4.



Tartakower surprisingly replied with the passive 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$.

Correct is instead the typical: 10...exd4!N

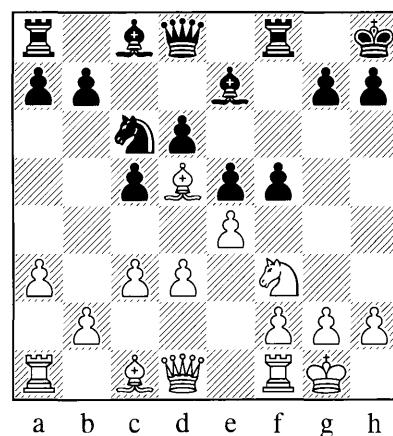
11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}g4!?$ Black already threatens ...f5, assuring himself of equality. For instance, 13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}f6=$ or 16... $\mathbb{Q}g5!?=$.

The logical sequence 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 11. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}e8$ 13. b4 cxb4 14. cxb4 happened in the game Moroz – Lputian, Podolsk 1990. The game was approximately balanced, but rather than Lputian's 14... $\mathbb{W}g6$, I would have chosen 14...a6N= or even 14...a5!? $\mathbb{N}f5$. The idea is to take the sting out of b4-b5.

Finally, 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ looks rather primitive to me, but it has been played in correspondence chess and so deserves a mention. I think that a simple and sound reply is 10... $\mathbb{W}c7!N=$, when I failed to find anything impressive from White's point of view. The idea is simply ...f5.

10...f5

I see no reason for Black to deviate from this.

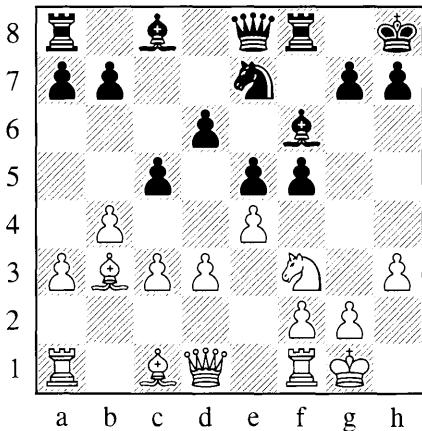


11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Simple and strong, preparing to evict the bishop from d5.

12.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{W}e8$

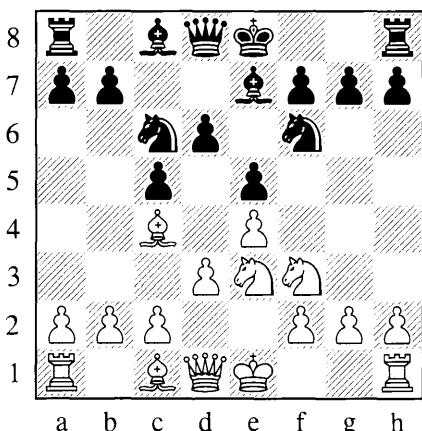
A key move that is part and parcel of Black's attacking strategy, bringing the queen closer to the kingside.



**14.bxc5 dxc5 15.♗e1 fxe4 16.dxe4 ♜g6
17.♔h2 b6?**

Black is about to finish his development harmoniously and has a promising kingside initiative.

A2) 7.♘e3



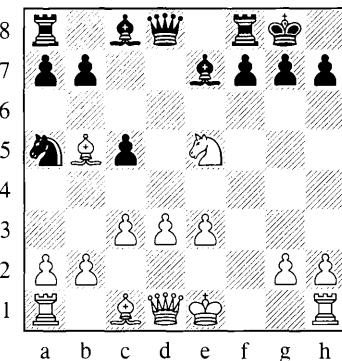
Topalov's choice, aiming to maintain some life in the game, makes sense.

7...0–0 8.c3

White has redeployed his knight to e3 so that he can control the centre better by c2-c3, but the whole operation looks a bit time-consuming and Black should equalize easily.

8...♝b8

8...♝a5!? 9.♗b5 d5!? (9...♝g4!= looks more to the point) 10.exd5 ♜xd5 11.♗xe5 ♜xe3 12.fxe3! (12.♗xe3 ♜b6?)

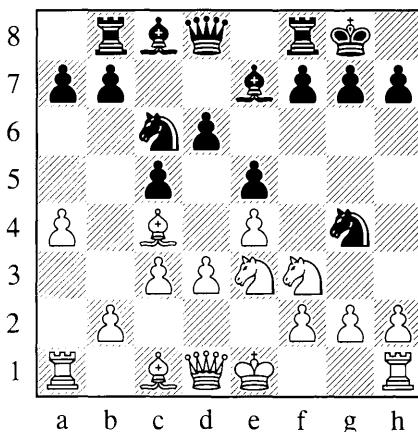


12...a6 13.♗a4 ♜h4† 14.g3 ♜f6 15.♗f3 b5 16.♗c2 ♜h3 This is liked by some engines, but the extent of Black's compensation is unclear after 17.♗f2. White is a pawn to the good, and the three musketeers at c3, d3, and e3 protect a lot of important squares.

9.a4 ♜g4

This looks the simplest and most human. Black wants to free the way for his f-pawn.

9...♝e6N is a quite reliable way of playing as well. Possibly White had planned: 10.♗d5 (10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.0–0 d5= is nothing here, as Black controls b4 and the e3-knight is clumsily placed.) 10...♜d7 11.0–0 Black can equalize without much trouble after 11...♝d8!.



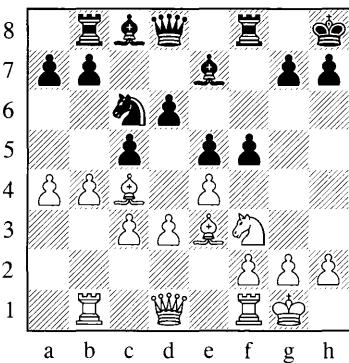
10.0-0 ♜xe3 11.♗xe3 ♔h8

Black threatens ...f5, so Veselin decided it was time to act in the centre.

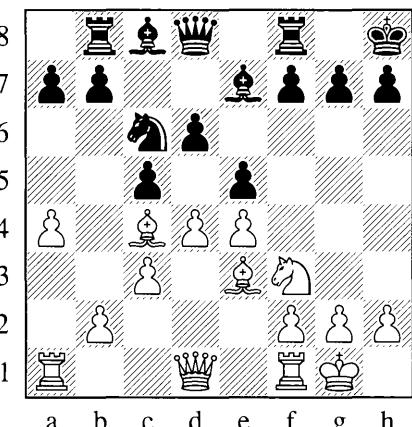
12.d4

A good practical decision.

12.♗b1N f5 13.b4 was also possible, but at the same time much riskier.



Black has a choice between the immediate 13...f4→ or 13...♗e8? 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.♗d5 (15.exf5 ♜xf5 16.♗d5 ♜d8↑) 15...f4 16.♗c1 ♗g6! 17.♗h1 ♜g4→ with powerful attacking chances, as the d5-bishop is cut off from the defence.



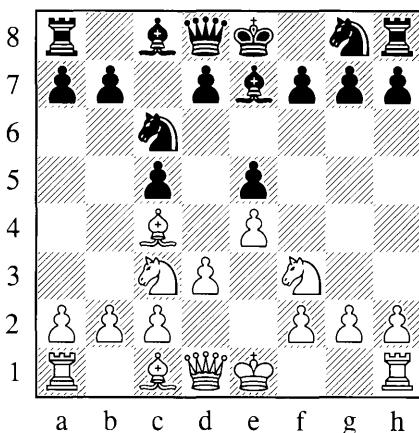
12...exd4! 13.cxd4 ♗g4

13...f5?N also looks excellent.

14.dxc5 dxc5 15.♗xd8 ♜bx d8 16.♗d5 ♜b4
17.♗xb7 ♜xf3 18.gxf3 ♜d7 19.♗d5 ♜xd5
20.exd5 ♜xd5 21.♗fd1 ♜fd8=

The players had reached an equal ending in Topalov – Radjabov, Nice (rapid) 2009.

B) 5.d3

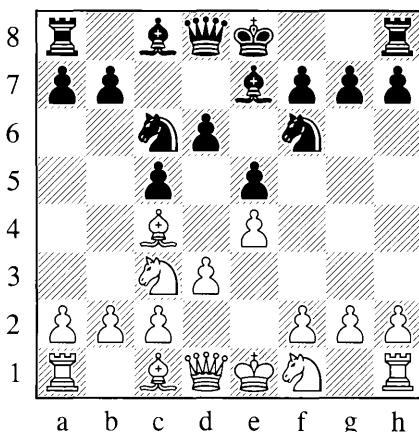


White calmly continues his development, keeping open a variety of schemes.

5...♝f6

Now **B1) 6.♗d2** is a more positional alternative to the main line of **B2) 6.0-0**. The critical 6.♗g5 is the subject of the next chapter.

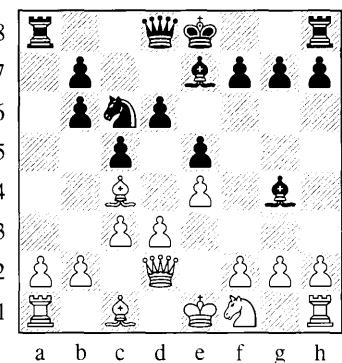
B1) 6.♗d2 d6 7.♗f1



Preparing to control d5 by all available means.

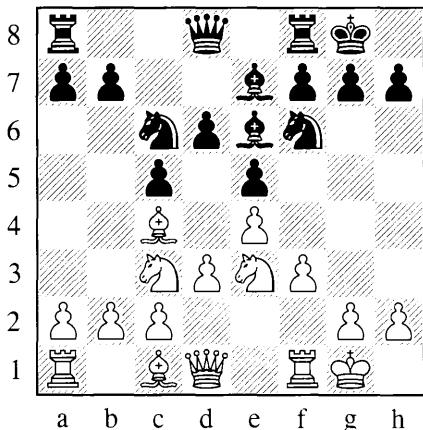
7...♝g4! 8.f3

Ernesto Inarkiev has tried 8.♗d2, but after: 8...♝d7! 9.♗d5 (9.♗e3 ♛g5=) 9...♝b6 10.♗xb6 (10.♗xe7 ♛xe7 11.♗e3 ♛e6 12.0–0 0–0= is equal according to Roiz, who considers that a follow-up with ...♝ad8 and ...d5 is on the cards. I would add that an alternative way of playing based on ...♝xc4 and ...f5 is also perfectly feasible.) 10...axb6 11.c3



11...0–0 12.♗c2 ♛e6 13.♗e3 ♛g5= Black had an excellent position with full equality in Inarkiev – Roiz, Moscow 2003.

8...♞e6 9.♗e3 0–0 10.0–0



We have reached a tabiya for the 6.♗d2 variation, with Black having a choice of knight

moves to improve his position. These moves are designed to allow the e7-bishop to reach g5, and subsequently achieve a favourable trade for the e3-knight or the c1-bishop. The most conventional method of trying to materialize the above plan is Sveshnikov's favourite 10...♝d7, but I prefer the slightly riskier 10...♝h5?! – fighting with all available means for dark-square control on the kingside. Although I had an unhappy experience with this move I would still recommend it, as I don't see how White can obtain a plus.

10...♝h5?! 11.g3

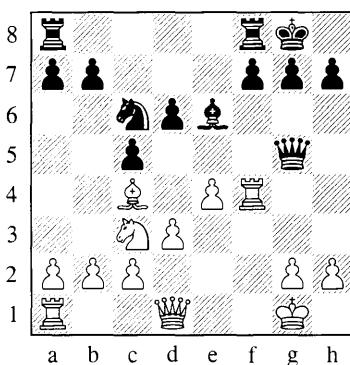
Normally White tries this or 11.♗cd5, but the moves are likely to transpose to each other. The idea is to play f3-f4.

11.♗ed5 ♛g5

This allows Black easy equality, as an exchange of dark-squared bishops is structurally healthy and relieves him from his cramp.

12.♗xg5

12.f4?! ♗xf4 13.♗xf4 ♛xf4 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.♗xf4 ♛g5=



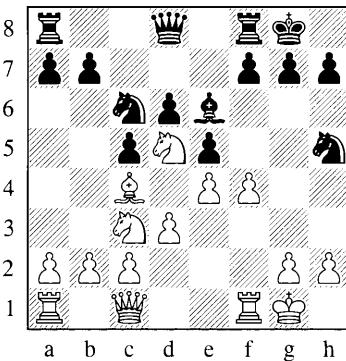
This is slightly better for us, with a possible sequel being: 16.♗f1! (16.♗f1 ♗d4↑; 16.♗f2 ♗e5! 17.♗d5? ♛g4 18.♗f3 ♛e5!+) 16...♗d4 17.♗c1! ♛xc1 18.♗axc1 a6 19.♗fe1 b5 20.♗b3 a5 Black holds a slight initiative.

12...♗xg5 13.♗c1 ♗d8?!

13.♗xc1 14.♗axc1 ♘d4 15.♗f2 ♘ab8 16.a4 ♘fd8 17.♗e3 g6= is also equal, but the position is easier for Black if he tries to exchange the minor pieces rather than the major ones.

14.f4

14.a4 h6 15.♗f2 ♘e7= was soon drawn in Adams – Leko, San Luis 2005.



14...exf4 15.♗xf4 ♘xf4 16.♗xf4 ♘d4 17.♗f2 ♘xc4N

17...♗d7 18.♗d5 ♘ae8 19.♗af1 ♗e7 20.a4 a6 21.a5 h6 22.♗g3± left Black under some pressure in Gritsaenko – Dibley, corr. 2008.
18.dxc4 ♘d7 19.♗d5 ♘ae8 20.c3

20.♗g5 ♘h8 21.♗af1 f6=

20...♘c6 21.♗d1 ♘e6=

Reaching a position where attack and defence seem to balance each other. White's weakness on e4 prevents him from making any real progress.

11.♗cd5 ♘g5

This will most probably transpose to 11.g3, unless White plays a move like:

12.a4

Allowing Black to demonstrate his main equalizing idea.

12...♗e7! 13.♗xe7†

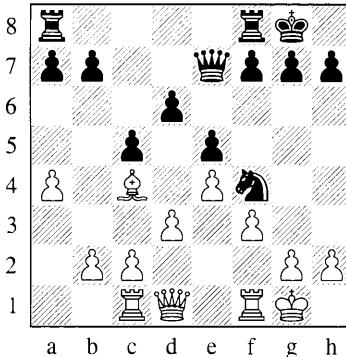
13.g3 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♘xc1 15.♗xc1 ♘f6= leaves almost nothing to play for.

13...♗xe7 14.♗d5 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♘xc1

16.♗xc1

With six minor pieces gone there is no question of an advantage for White. The following sample lines provide evidence that this is indeed so:

16...♗f4 17.♗c4



17...g5!N

17...♗h8 18.g3 ♘g6 happened in Leskur – Vuckovic, Mataruska Banja 2008, and here 19.c3?!N± would have offered White a slight edge.

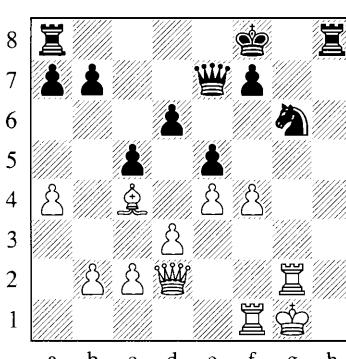
18.g3 ♘g6 19.♗d2 ♗g7! 20.♗f2 h5! 21.♗g2! ♘h8 22.♗f1 h4 23.f4!

23.gxh4 ♘xh4 24.♗xg5 ♗xg5 25.♗xg5 ♘ah8±

23...hxg3 24.hxg3 gxf4

24...♗f6?!

25.gxf4 ♗f8!

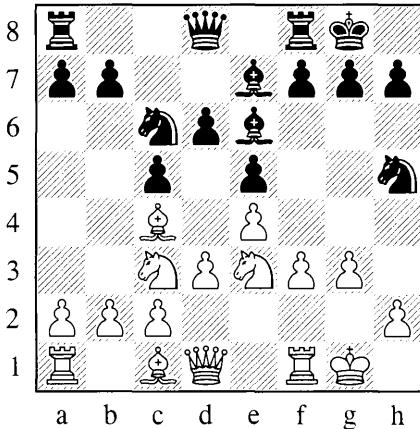


26.♗xg6?!

26.fxe5 ♘xe5 27.♗g5 (27.♗f4 ♗h4=)

27...♘xc4 (27...♗e8!?) 28.dxc4 ♗e6=

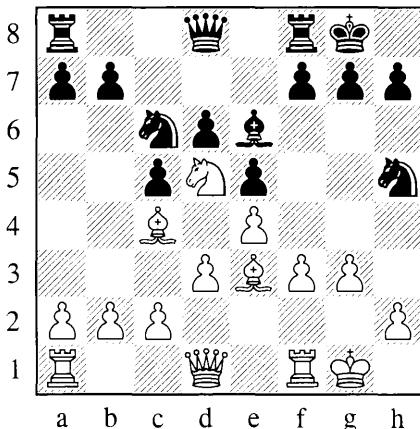
26...fxg6 27.fxe5† $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}f6$
 28.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b5†$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}g5†$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 31. $\mathbb{E}f7†$ $\mathbb{Q}b8=$
 28.e6 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{E}f7$ $\mathbb{W}e1†=$
 28... $\mathbb{W}h7!$ 29. $\mathbb{W}g2$ dxe5 30. $\mathbb{E}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$



11... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}cd5$

Almost universally adopted in praxis.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3†$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$



13... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

This move of Eljanov's is best, and it completely equalizes the chances.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

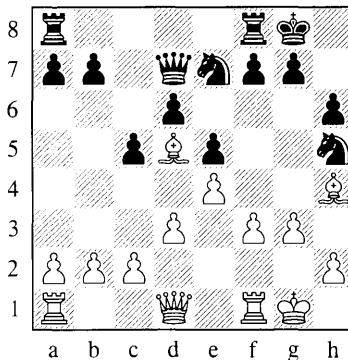
I once chose this inferior move, allowing:

14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

White is already for choice, as he will be left with the superior minor piece.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$

I made matters worse by 16...g5?, and my position was soon in ruins after the energetic 17. f4! $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. exd5 gxh4 20. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21. fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e3†$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 24. $\mathbb{E}af1$ f6 25. $\mathbb{E}f5$ f4± in Vachier-Lagrange – Kotronias, Moscow 2011.



17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$

17. f4?! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. exd5 g6 19. f5 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. g4 gxf5! 21. gxf5 f6 22. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f7!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 25. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8?$ was approximately balanced in spite of its scary appearance in Cimicki – Degtyarev, corr. 2012.

17... $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 18. f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4=$

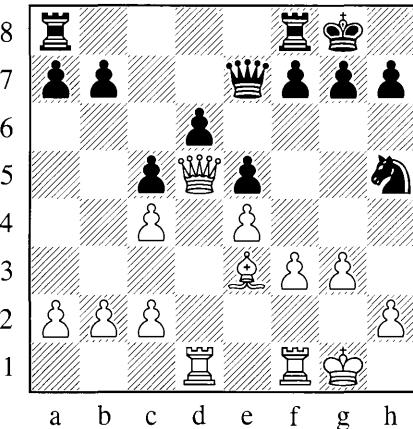
As in J. Buecker – Oikamo, corr. 2012. Black is only slightly worse, but this is not a position I would recommend to the readers as White has various ideas to put pressure on us.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

This position may appear better for White to the uninitiated, but the plain truth is that d6 is easily defendable and the black knight is potentially a better piece than the enemy dark-squared bishop. White cannot open up the position easily, because he is weak on the light squares and the knight will start attacking them.

17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

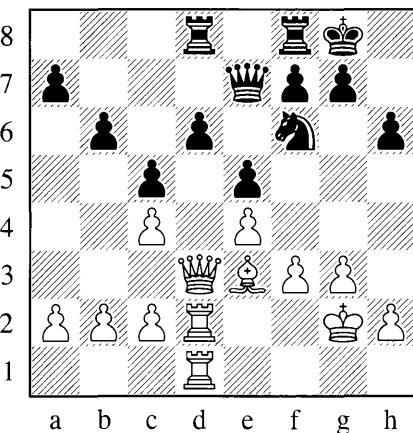
Unclear is: 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6! Making sure that the knight will not be exchanged. 18. g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. g5 (19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ ∞) 19... hxg5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}g1$ g6 24. b3 $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ ∞ White's king is no less exposed than Black's. Once his rook reaches h8, Black will have enough counterplay not to be worse.

**17... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ h6! 20. $\mathbb{E}fd2$ b6**

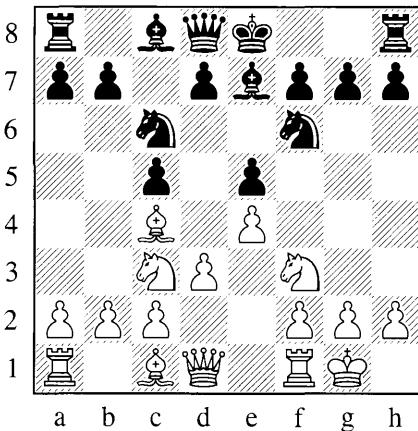
After 20... $\mathbb{E}d7$ a draw was agreed in Movsesian – Eljanov, Merida 2005. I will give another possible continuation just for completeness. Black has a rock-solid position in either case.

21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

21. a4 a5!? 22. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 24. h4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ∞



21... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 24. a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. a5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 26. axb6 axb6 27. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
28. $\mathbb{E}a1$ $\mathbb{E}ee8=$

B2) 6.0–0

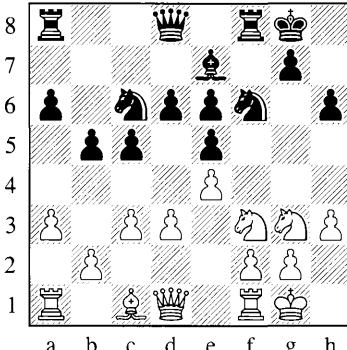
White is not rushing things: he would like to open the f-file by means of $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and f2-f4, but he first brings his king into safety.

6...0–0

White has a choice of minor piece to place on g5: B21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ or B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

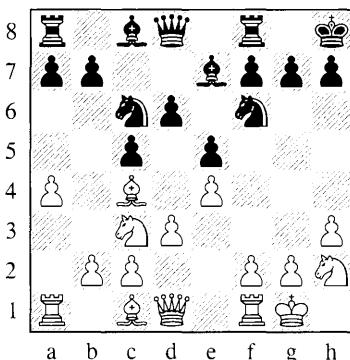
7. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ d6 and now 8. c3 transposes to variation A12, while 8. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ transposes to the note on 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ on page 205.

7. a3 opts for a typical anti-Marshall formation with a knight transfer to g3. I think I handled the situation quite well in one of my own games: 7... d6 8. h3 a6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5 10. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 13. c3



13...♝d7 (13...c4!?) was more double-edged) 14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 exd4 16.♗xd4 ♜xd4 17.♗xd4 ♜ac8 18.♗d2 d5! 19.♗ae1 ♜c4 20.♗d3 dxe4 21.♗xd7 ♜xd7 22.♗xe4 ♜xe4 23.♗xe4 ♜f6 24.♗e1 ♜f7 25.♗f1 ♜c8 26.♗xf6 ♜xf6 27.♗c1 The mass simplification led to an ending where neither side had winning chances, so the players agreed a draw in Svetushkin – Kotronias, Baile Herculane 2010.

Finally, a relatively recent example with 7.a4 continued: 7...d6 8.h3 ♜h8!? White has played too many preparatory moves, so Black can think of ...f5. 9.♗h2 To prevent falling under an attack, White decides he will be the one to push his f-pawn first:

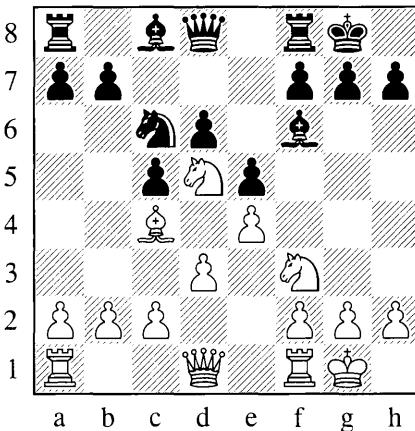


9...♝e6! 10.f4 exf4 11.♗xf4 d5 12.exd5 ♜xd5 13.♗xd5 ♜xd5= Black had no problems at all in Drozdowski – Moiseenko, Warsaw (blitz) 2013, and even stood slightly better.

B21) 7.♗g5

This positional try was once employed by Anand. White wants to play on the light squares, and taking the f6-knight followed by ♜d5 facilitates that. However, Black has no problems if he knows what to do, as we shall see.

7...d6 8.♗xf6 ♜xf6 9.♗d5



9...♝b8!

This move is most accurate, fighting against the idea a2-a3 followed by b2-b4.

9...♝g5 10.a3 (10.♗xg5 ♜xg5 11.f4 exf4 12.♗d2± is also better for White) 10...b6! (10...♝h6! 11.b4 ♜e6± was preferable, although even then White maintains the upper hand) 11.b4 ♜h6 12.c3 ♜e7 13.bxc5 bxc5 14.♗b1± This was better for White in Anand – Leko, Dortmund 2004.

10.a4

The point of 9...♝b8! is revealed after: 10.a3 b5 11.♗a2 a5! 12.a4 (12.c3 a4→ denies White any expansion. 13.b4 axb3 14.♗xb3 ♜e6 and Black has no problems at all.) 12...bxa4! 13.c3 ♜xb2 14.♗xa4 ♜e7!? 15.♗a3 ♜b8 16.♗xf6 gx f6 17.♗d2 f5 18.♗c4 ♜g6→ With excellent counterplay on the kingside.

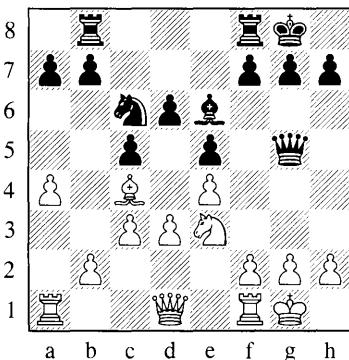
10...♝e6!

Now Black is ready for ...♝g5, with an excellent game.

The immediate 10...♝g5 allows 11.♗xg5 ♜xg5 12.f4! exf4 13.♗d2 ♜e6 14.♗xf4 ♜xf4 15.♗xf4 a6 16.♗b6±, with slight endgame pressure for the first player.

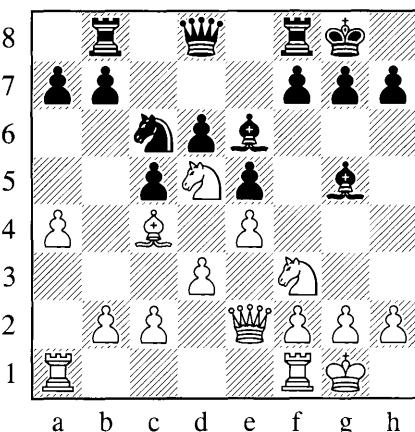
White can now continue with either **B211)** 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ or **B212)** 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$.

After 11.c3 Black should continue with his original intention by playing 11... $\mathbb{Q}g5$. White has nothing to worry us, as the following correspondence games illustrate: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (13.a5 $\mathbb{W}d8!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 18.d4 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ was thoroughly balanced in Lucki – Gebur, corr. 2012)



13... $\mathbb{h}5?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe}6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{g}6$ 17. $\mathbb{g}3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{h}4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}bf8$ Black had completely equalized, and perhaps even a bit more, in Cuccumini – Veiga Rodriguez, corr. 2013.

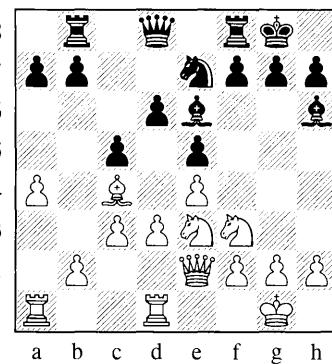
B211) 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$



This position is business as usual, for example:

12. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 13. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6=$ is simpler, but at the same time is also harmless for Black.



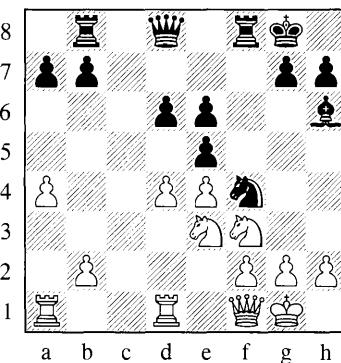
14... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

After 15.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 18. $f3?!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $f4$ $\mathbb{exf}4$ 20. $\mathbb{gxf}4$, the cool 20... $\mathbb{W}f6!$ gives Black the initiative by pointing at the weak f4-pawn.

15... $\mathbb{fxe}6$ 16. $d4?$

16.g3N $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{fxe}3=$ would have maintained the status quo.

16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{cxd}4$ 18. $\mathbb{cxd}4$



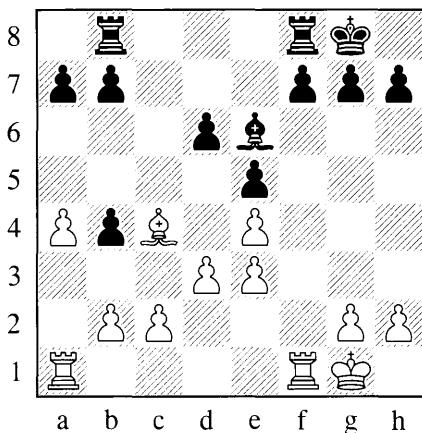
18... $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 20. $\mathbb{gxf}3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{dxe}5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2+$

Black had a winning attack in Uifelean – Atakisi, corr. 2006.

12...♝xg5 13.♝e3! ♝xe3 14.fxe3 ♗b4!

15.♗xb4 cxb4

We have reached an ending where White's pressure comes to naught after a few accurate moves by Black.



16.♗xe6

Acquiescing to the inevitable draw.

Instead, 16.a5 ♞xc4 17.dxc4 b5! 18.axb6 axb6 19.♗fd1 (19.♗a4 b5= or 19.♗a6 h5=) 19...♗fc8 20.b3 b5 21.cxb5 ♞xb5 22.♗xd6 ♞bc5 23.♗a2 h5 24.♗d2 ♞c3 25.♗f2 g5 26.♗e2 (26.♗e2 g4 27.♗a4 ♞xc2 28.♗xb4 ♞g7=) 26...♗e6! 27.♗e1 (27.h3 ♞g7 28.♗e1 g4?) 27...g4! is completely equal, the fine point being 28.♗d1 ♞d6† 29.♔c1 ♞dd3!=.

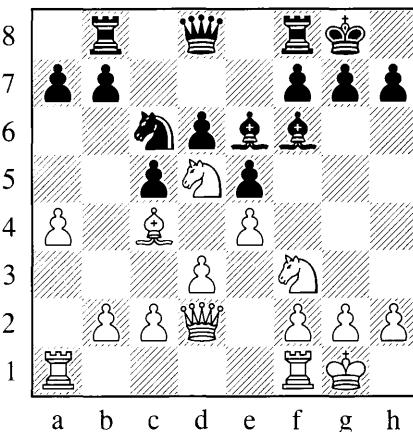
16.b3 a5 17.♗f2 ♞bc8 18.♗e2 ♞fe8= is not a position to worry Black either, as White has no breakthrough.

After 16.♗xe6, a high-level correspondence game concluded:

16...fxe6 17.c4 bxc3 18.bxc3 ♞fd8 19.♗a3 d5 20.exd5 exd5 21.♗b1 ♞d7 22.♗ab3

½–½ Gerola – W. Fischer, corr. 2012.

B212) 11.♗d2



This strange move is a bit annoying as it prevents the ...♗g5 idea.

11...♗g4!?N

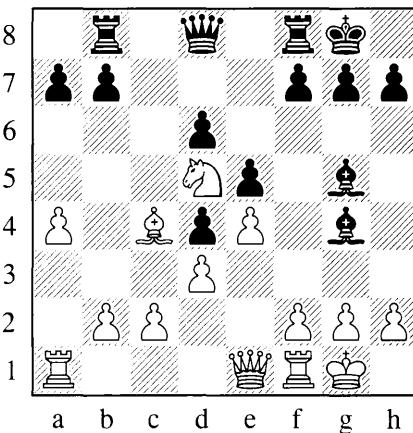
The principled reaction, fighting for the g5-square.

12.♗e3 ♗d4!

Forcing matters.

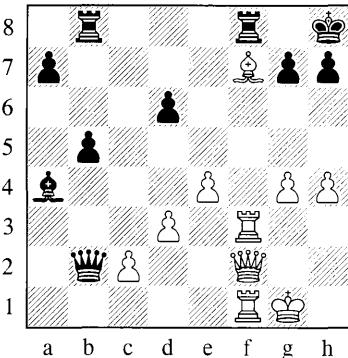
13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.♗e1 ♗g5

Black has two bishops but White can create some weaknesses to attack, so the position is approximately balanced. A logical continuation is:



15.f4! exf4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

17. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$
20. $h4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 21. $g4$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$
 $dxe3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



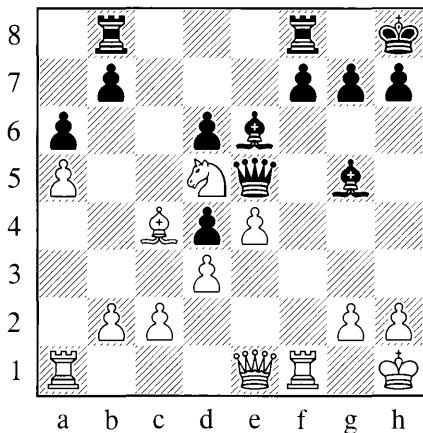
26... $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $dxc5$ 29. $e5$
b4 30. $e6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 31. $h5$ b3 32. $g5$ b2 33. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
34. $exf7$ g6 35. $h6$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}bf7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8=$ This is another typical line, showing how play might unfold after correct play by both sides.

17... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}a5!$

18. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$

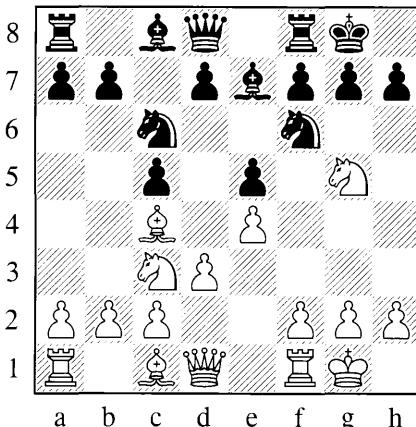
18...a6 19. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ 20. $a5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}b6?$ $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ with the idea 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$
23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ 24. $\mathbb{B}f5$ $fxe6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$
26. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{B}f1\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1\#$



21... $f5!$ 22. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$
24. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $dxe5=$

B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



Trying to open the f-file is White's best option.

7...h6 8. f4!

The point of White's play, ensuring the opening of the f-file under good conditions.

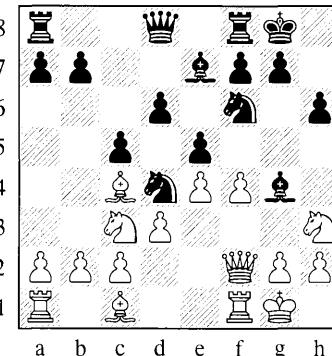
8. $\mathbb{Q}h3?!$ d6 9. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

Approximate equality results from 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$
11. $gxh3$ $exf4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5=$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f2?!$

Better is 11. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ (11... $\mathbb{W}d7?!$) 12. $fxe5$
 $dxe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h5 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $fxe6\#$

The text happened in Naiditsch – San Emeterio Cabanes, France 2009, and here Black should have continued with:



11...♝h5!N 12.fxe5

12.f5 ♜h4 13.♗d2 ♜xh3 14.gxh3 ♜g5† leads to a bad ending for White, as the h5-knight will settle on f4.

12...♜h4 13.♗d2 dxe5†

Black has a dominant position.

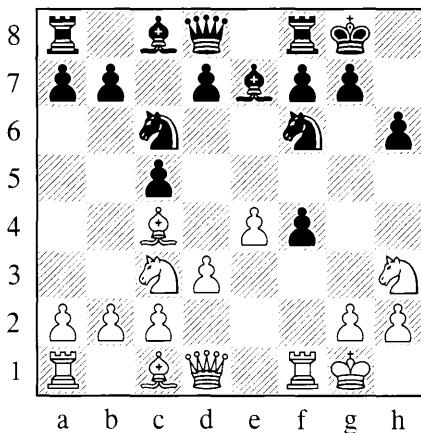
8...exf4

8...hxg5?! 9.fxg5 ♜g4 10.g6 d5 looks bad for Black after: 11.gxf7† ♜xf7 12.♗xd5 ♜f6 13.♗xf7† ♜xf7 14.♗d5 ♜e6 15.♗xe7 ♜xe7 16.♗g5↑ White has serious pressure without any material investments.

The final branching point of the chapter is between **B221) 9.♗h3** and **B222) 9.♗f3**.

Unsound is 9.♗xf7?! ♜xf7 10.♗xf7† ♜xf7 11.♗xf4 d6 12.♗d5 ♜g8†, when White has no compensation for the material.

B221) 9.♗h3



An acceptable option now that Black has taken on f4.

9...f3?!

This is my main recommendation, but there are a couple of other options too:

9...♝e5 looks a bit better for White after

10.♗xf4 ♜xc4 11.dxc4 d6 12.b3 ♜g4

13.♗cd5N† (13.♗fd5 ♜g5† was also worse for Black in Nakamura – Arakhamia-Grant, Gibraltar 2007.)

9...d5?!

This doesn't quite work, in view of:

10.♗xd5!N

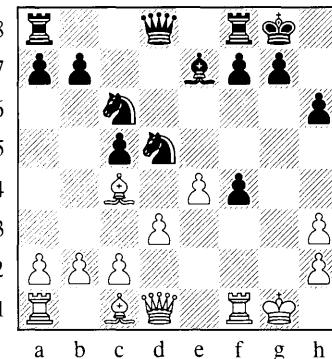
10.exd5 ♜d4 11.♗xf4 ♜d6 12.h3 (12.♗e4 b5! 13.c3 bxc4 14.cxd4 ♜xe4 15.dxe4 cxd4 16.♗xd4 ♜e8→ could even be a tad better for Black.) 12...♜e8! 13.a4! a6 14.a5 (14.♗d2 b6 15.♗h5 ♜xh5 16.♗xh5 ♜f5! 17.♗xf5 g6 18.♗xh6 ♜xf5 19.♗g5 ♜e5=) 14...♜c7 15.♗d2 ♜d7 16.♗h5 ♜xh5 17.♗xh5 ♜b5! 18.♗xh6 gxh6 19.♗xh6 ♜xc4 20.♗g5† ♜f8 21.♗h6† ♜g8= is just a draw.

10...♜xh3 11.gxh3!

11.♗xe7†?! ♜xe7 12.gxh3 ♜e5 13.b3 g5† is better for Black as his kingside grip cannot be shaken.

11...♝xd5

11...g5?! 12.h4 ♜e5 requires analysis, but I would be rather scared to be Black here.



12.♗xd5!

12.exd5 ♜b4 13.♗xf4 ♜xd5=

12...♝b4 13.♗b3†±

Putting the bishop on a secure square and preparing to take on f4. Other moves are not so convincing:

a) 13.c4 ♜f6 14.♗xf4 ♜d4† 15.♗h1 ♜xd5

16.exd5 ♜d7† is better for Black.

b) 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}d6!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ (14. $c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}e5\infty$ gives Black excellent compensation in view of the clumsy c4-bishop/d3-pawn set-up.) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 b5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?? \mathbb{W}b8!+-$) 16... $a5!$ 17. $a3$ (17. $a4 c4!$ 18. $dxc4 \mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1 bxc4\infty$) 17... $a4=$ Black does not have any problems.

After 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ I couldn't find full equality:

13... $g5$

13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$

14. $a3!?$

14. $h4!?$

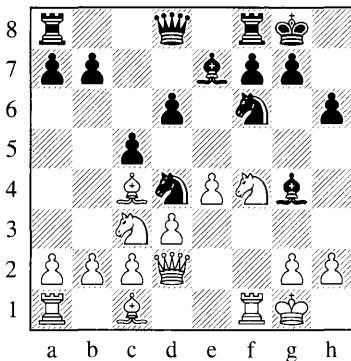
14. $\mathbb{W}h5 \mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}h7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf7 \mathbb{W}f6$
17. $\mathbb{Q}b3 c4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xc2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}ad8\infty$

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $h4 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5\uparrow$

White is for preference due to the powerful d5-bishop.

10. $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{Q}e5!?$ N

Sveshnikov's 10... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ should be answered by 11. $\mathbb{W}d1!N$ (Instead, 11. $\mathbb{W}g3? d5\infty$ was almost winning for Black in Somkin – Sveshnikov, Miass 2006.) A logical continuation is: 11... $d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

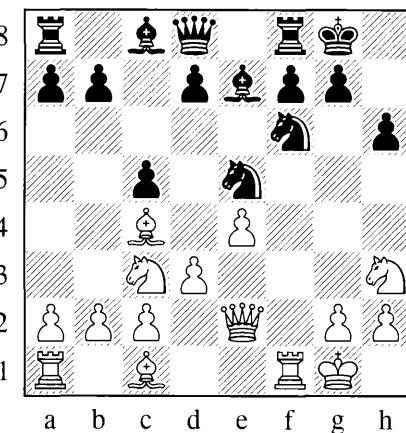


13... $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ 14. $h3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xc4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}cd5\pm$) 17. $dxc4 \mathbb{Q}h4$ 18. $g3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}cd5 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $c3\pm$ White holds a slight, yet permanent, plus.

11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

11. $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{Q}xe4\infty$

11. $\mathbb{W}g3 \mathbb{Q}fg4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}h4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4 d6\infty$



11... $d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}g4!$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f2$

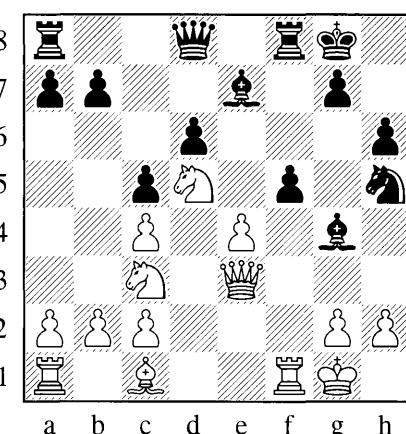
13. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd5 \mathbb{Q}g5\infty$

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $dxc4 \mathbb{Q}h5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd5 f5!$

16. $\mathbb{W}e3$

16. $e5 f4\rightarrow$

16. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{Q}h4$ 17. $g3 \mathbb{Q}f6\infty$



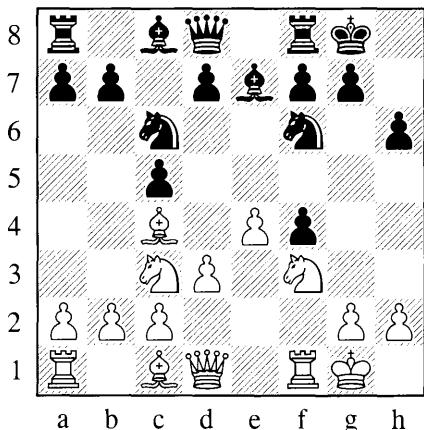
16... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow \mathbb{W}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{W}h4$

19. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{W}xe1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$

A balanced ending has been reached.

20... $f4\infty$

Both the text and 20... $f4!?\rightarrow$ should be good enough.

B222) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

This is the more prudent retreat.

9...d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

White has recovered his pawn and achieved his aim of opening the f-file, but Black has a harmonious position and catches up on development with his next move:

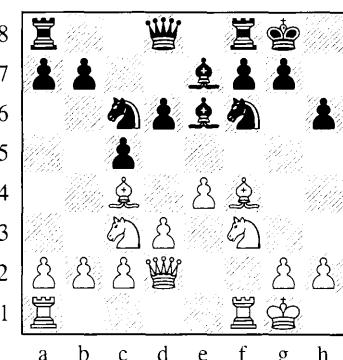
10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Now ...d5 is threatened, so White must act.

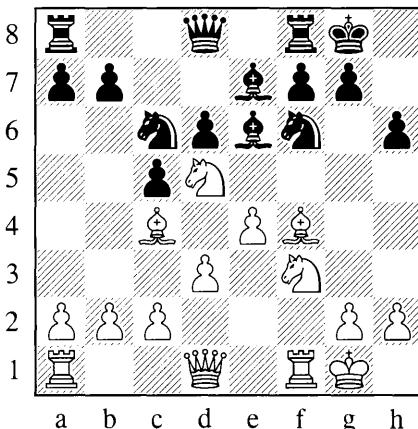
11. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

The only way.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2??!$ allows a brilliant tactic:



11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ d5= Black recovers his piece with the better game.

11... $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$

Sveshnikov's calm way of playing the position appears the best choice under these circumstances. Black disputes control of d5 without allowing his opponent attacking chances.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ leads to positions where White's control over f5 and sacrificial possibilities on h6 make the position more pleasant for him. There have been many games here, with mixed results, but I'd rather take White if given the option.

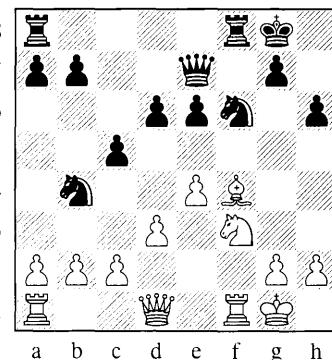
12. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$

This is not a problem for Black as he is assured of exchanging the c4-bishop, after which he should have fair chances.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 14. axb3 d5 15. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. c3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. d4 cxd4 18. cxd4 $\mathbb{W}e6=$

13...fxe6



14.e5

In case of 14.c3? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ 16.exd6, the accurate sequel is: 16... $\mathbb{W}e8!$ (16... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}xf1\#$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ b4 23. $\mathbb{W}d2$ bxc3 24.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 26.c4= is not intolerable, but White's position is the more pleasant.) 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xf1$ b6∞ leads to a fight where anything can happen, but I believe White's compensation for the exchange is objectively only sufficient for equality.) 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ Black equalizes after either 19... $\mathbb{E}f6=$ or 19...e5? 20. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f5$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 23.d4 $\mathbb{E}de7=.$

14... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$ 15.exd6 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 17.a3 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ cxb4!∞

17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{E}af8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

This was Zubarev – Sveshnikov, Cappelle la Grande 2009, when best is:

20...e5!=

This improvement was played in the subsequent game Cerrato Torrijos – Moreno Ruiz, Madrid 2012. Black has full equality, and in fact went on to win both games.

12... $\mathbb{C}xb4$

An interesting imbalance in the pawn structure has arisen: Black has a pawn less in the centre, but that is compensated by the prospect of pressure along the c-file.

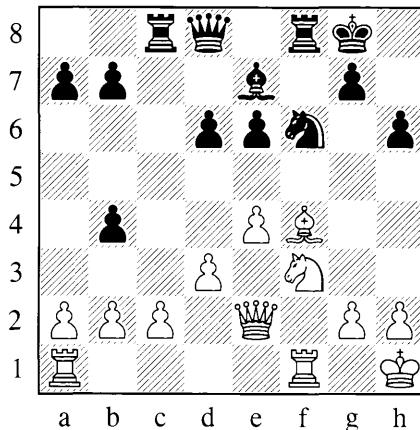
13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ d5 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.d4 (15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ allows 15...a5! 16.c3 a4 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ a3!↑, with a strong queenside initiative for Black) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16.c3 (16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$) 16...bxc3 17.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}c6\#$ This is another interesting position with chances for both sides. If 23. $\mathbb{W}h5$ then 23... $\mathbb{E}g6!$ is a fine defensive point.

13...fxe6 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

A good precaution.

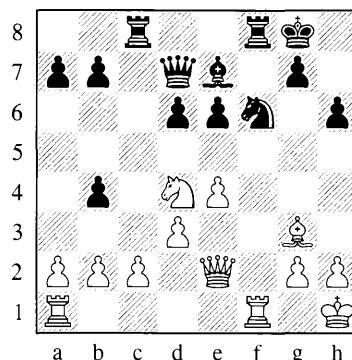
15. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ d5! 16.e5 (16.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18.c3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is at least equal for Black.



15...e5!?

A dynamic move, seeking immediate counterplay in the centre.

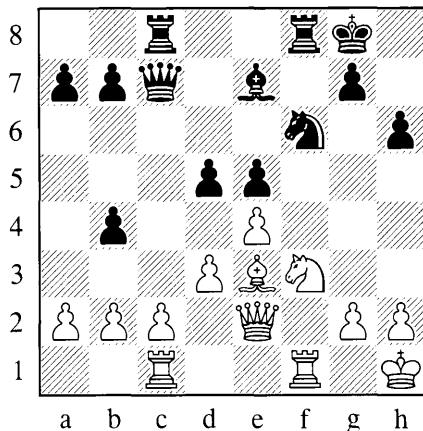
15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (17.e5 dx5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d5=$) was played in T. Kosintseva – Manakova, Moscow 2009, and now:



17... $\mathbb{Q}d8!?$ N 18.e5 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 19.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 20.fxg7 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xf8\#$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ e5 23.h3 a5 is not as bad as it seems. The play is probably balanced.

16.♗e3 ♜c7! 17.♗ac1 d5!

This is the point: Black wants to liquidate White's strong centre.

**18.exd5 ♜xd5**

Black's activity compensates for the pawn weaknesses. I shall present a few sample lines:

19.♗f2

This looks logical to me, directing the bishop's fire against the e5-pawn.

19.♗g1 ♜d6 20.♗e4 ♜f6 21.♗f5 ♜ce8
22.♗h4 e4 23.♗g6 (23.c3 bxc3 24.♗xc3 ♜f7
25.♗g6 ♜d5! 26.dxe4 ♜xc3 27.♗xf8 ♜xf5
28.♗xf5 ♜xf8 29.bxc3 b6) 23...♗f4 24.♗ce1
e3 25.♗f5 ♜d5 looks okay for Black.

19.♗d2

This does not trouble Black either.

19...♗d6 20.♗h4
20.d4 ♜fe8! 21.dxe5 (21.♗xe5 ♜xe5
22.dxe5 ♜xe5 23.♗d3 ♜ed8 24.♗g6 ♜c6
25.♗f7+ ♜h7 26.♗xb7 ♜g6↑) 21...♗xe5
22.♗d3 ♜c6 23.♗xe5 ♜xe5=, intending
...a5, is balanced.
20...♗d7 21.♗e4 ♜f6 22.♗f3
22.♗g6 ♜f7!=
22...♗f7

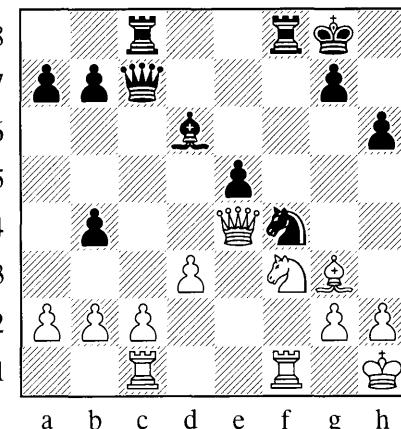
There is not really much White can do. The game is approximately even.
23.♗f5 ♜cf8=

19...♗d6 20.♗g3 ♜f4!

This direct move should equalize.

21.♗e4

After 21.♗xf4 exf4! Black has repaired his pawn structure and can hardly be worse, for example: 22.♗e6† ♜h8 23.♗ce1 ♜ce8! 24.♗g6 ♜e3! 25.♗xe3 fxe3 26.d4 ♜f6 27.♗e4 (27.♗d3 ♜f7! with the idea 28.b3?! g5! 29.h3 h5!↑)
27...♗c4! 28.♗e1 ♜e6 29.♗f5 ♜f6 30.♗e4=

**21...♗c6!**

Challenging control of e4 is the key here.

22.♗fe1 ♜xe4 23.♗xe4 ♜f7=

Black even has some slight chances to press, due to the weakness of c2.

Conclusion

After 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♜c6 3.♘f3, the reply 3...e5 is a perfectly acceptable way of playing, fully equalizing the chances. The resulting positions may not be to everyone's liking, but practice has shown that Black will defuse the slight positional pressure by alternating tactics, according to circumstance. These may involve exchanging the minor pieces that can invade the d5-square, or ignoring the d5-square and playing for ...f5, especially in those cases where the f6-knight has already been traded for a white knight on d5.

Chapter 13

2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

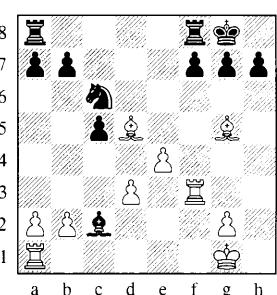
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e7!$ 5. d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0-0 7.f4

7...d5!?

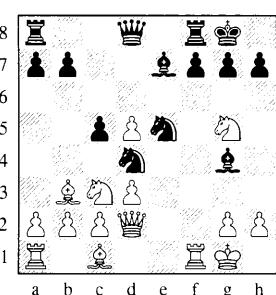
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B222) 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$	243
B3) 10. h3	243

A1) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



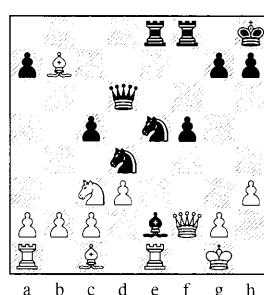
15... $\mathbb{Q}ac8!N$

B2) after 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$

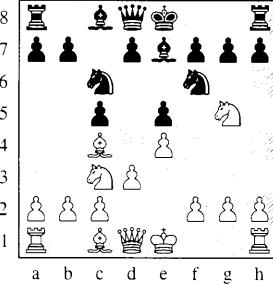


12... b5!N

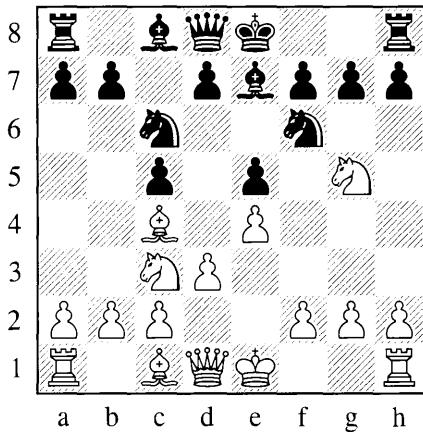
B3) after 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



19... $\mathbb{Q}b8!N\mp$



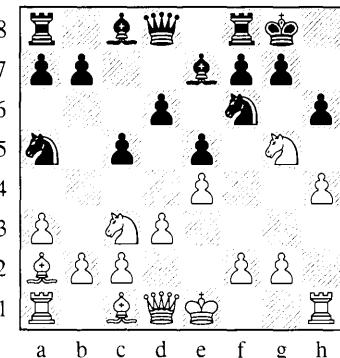
1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗f3 e5 4.♕c4 ♔e7!
5.d3 ♘f6 6.♘g5



This knight sally is designed to facilitate the advance f2-f4.

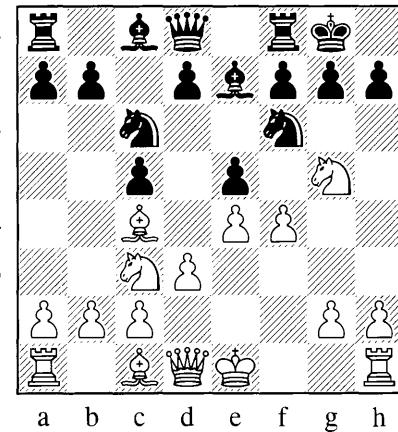
6...0–0 7.f4

7.h4?! has been tried by the Slovak GM Martin Mrva, but it is unclear to me what he had in mind after 7...♗a5!N. I don't see how White can get on with the attack in the absence of the c4-bishop. An attempt to maintain it by 8.♗d5 (8.♗d5 ♘xc4 9.dxc4 d6 looks rather pointless for White) 8...d6 9.a3 h6 10.♔a2 runs into:



10...♗g4! 11.f3 ♘d7 White has further weakened himself without gaining anything substantial in return.

Black may use the fact that he has kept his d-pawn on d7 by striking at the centre:



7...d5!?

A move invented and popularized by Evgeny Sveshnikov. The following lines demonstrate that the move is sound, and gives the second player good chances to play for a win in a complicated position.

White has a choice of capture: A) 8.♗xd5 or B) 8.exd5.

8.♗xd5

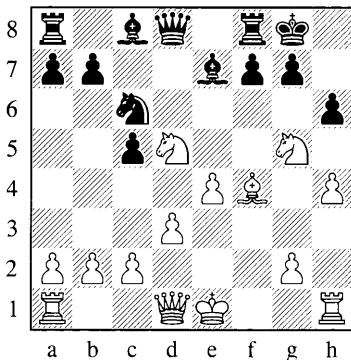
This is best met by:

8...♘xd5!N

I also looked at 8...exf4, but I prefer White's position after: 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♗xf4 ♘d5! 11.♗h5! (11.exd5? ♘xg5 12.♗xg5 ♗xg5 13.0–0 cxd5 14.♗f3 ♘e6= is not as good, because the black queen occupies an active position on g5.) 11...h6 12.exd5 hxg5 13.♗g3!!N (13.♗d2 cxd5± was slightly better for Black in Moingt – Calistri, Bastia 2004.) 13...♗f6 14.0–0! cxd5 15.♗ae1± The brilliant point is 15...♗e6 16.♗e5! ♘e7 17.h4!! gxh4 18.♗f4 ♘g5 19.♗c7! ♗xc7 20.♗xg5→ with powerful attacking chances.

9.♗xd5 exf4 10.h4! h6 11.♗xf4!

11.♗h5? ♘b4!± or 11.♗f3 ♘g4!±.



11... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

Black seems at least equal to me despite his pawn deficit.

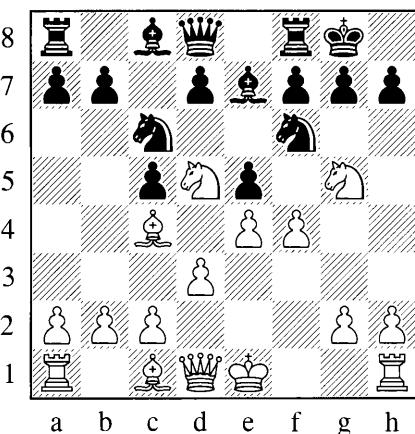
12. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}e6$

12... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4 \mathbb{Q}g3+$
15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $cxb4\infty$ is also interesting.

13. $c4 \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}e8?$ 15. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4\rightleftarrows$

Black has strong counterplay, but White should be able to hold by returning the extra pawn somehow.

A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



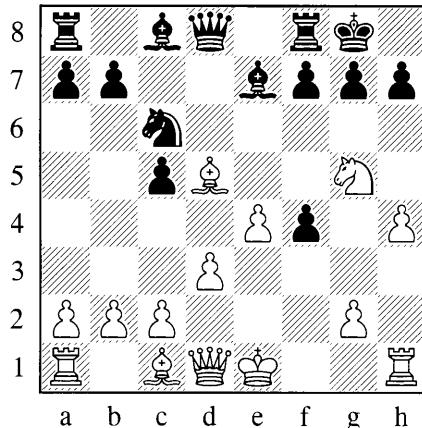
This looks like the most natural way of taking on d5, keeping the c4-bishop alive.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exf4$

The hanging state of the g5-knight and the fact that White has not yet castled suffice to give Black at least equal play.

At this point White has played: A1) 10. $h4!?$, A2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ and A3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$.

A1) 10. $h4!?$



White's least popular response. I guess the reason is:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$

Less impressive is:

10... $h6!?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf7 \mathbb{Q}xf7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}f6\bar{=}$ is more than okay for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h5 \mathbb{Q}e5!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}f6$
14. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}e8$ Preparing to embarrass White by dropping the bishop back to f8. 15. 0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd8 \mathbb{Q}xd8$ 18. $exd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5\bar{=}$ Black is slightly better, as he has regained his pawn and has the two bishops.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Black's position is unenviable after 11... $h6!?$ 12. $h4!?$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3\bar{=}$.

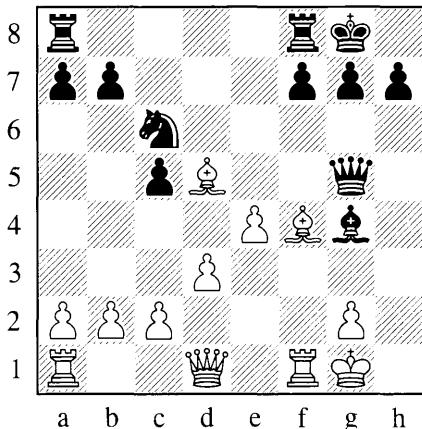
12. $c3! \mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $g3! \mathbb{Q}xf4$ 14. $gxf4\bar{=}$

White emerges a pawn up with the better position.

11. $h4!?$ 12. $0–0 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$

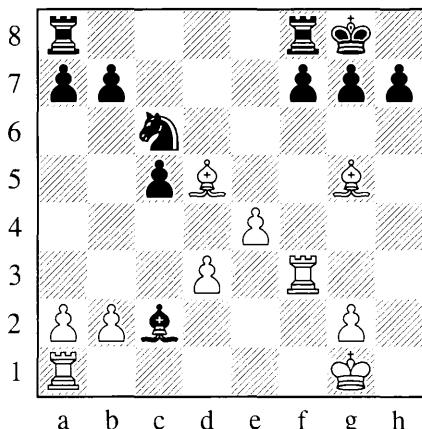
Black gets excellent counterplay after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}ad8$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{Q}fe8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. $b3$ (18. $c3 \mathbb{Q}e2\bar{=}$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe2 \mathbb{Q}xe2$ 20. $d4 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 21. $e5 cxd4$

22.cxd4 ♜b6 23.♕e4 ♜xb2†) 18...♝e2† 19.♗xe2 ♜xe2∞ as the white king's cover is flimsy.



13...♜xd1! 14.♕xg5 ♜xc2 15.♗f3

We have been following Szoen – Ejsmont, Sielpa 2004, and now I like:



15...♝ac8!!N

Richard Palliser mentions this as being interesting, but I believe it is Black's only move. We reach an ending where White's compensation is enough for the missing pawn, but nothing more than that. The following lines show the main ideas for both sides:

16.♗af1

16.♗g3 ♔h8 17.♗c1 ♘d4 18.♗h2 b6 19.♗e7 ♜fe8 20.♗d6∞ is complicated, but both 20...f6 and 20...f5 should suffice for Black.

16...♜c7!

The main defensive point, harmoniously defending f7.

17.♗g3 ♘d4! 18.♗f2?!

18.♗h2 ♜e6! 19.♗f6 ♜xd3! 20.♗xg7! ♜xg7 21.♗xd3 ♜e7∞ produces a balanced ending.

18...♜a4 19.♗f6 ♜e6! 20.b3

20.♗f4?! ♜d1! 21.♗e5 ♜d7 22.♗f6 ♜e8 23.♗h6 ♜e2† is even a bit better for Black. 24.♗h4? runs into 24...h5†, and the bishop will be anchored on g4.

20...♜c6 21.♗c2! ♜d7 22.♗xc5 g6! 23.♗xc6

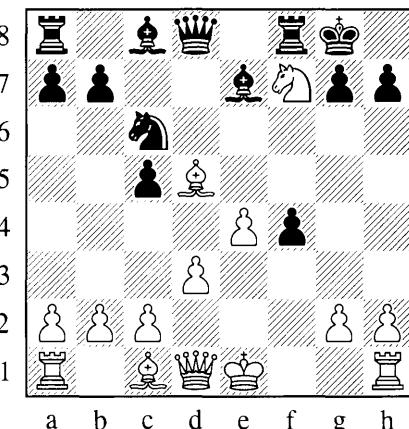
♜xc5 24.♗xd7 ♜xd7 25.♗b2

25.♗d4 f6!=

25...♜c8=

This position is drawn, as White will have to play ♗f3-f2 to oppose ...♜c2. After the exchange of rooks Black simply has ...f5, followed by bringing his king to e6.

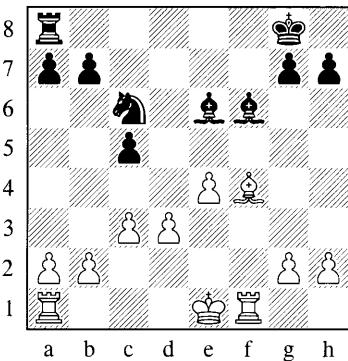
A2) 10.♗xf7



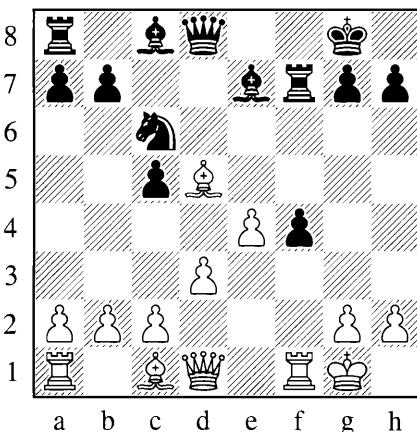
I have never believed that this sacrifice of two pieces for a rook can pose any serious problems to Black.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 11.0–0

Also possible is: 11. $\mathbb{W}h5!?$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 16. c3 $\mathbb{Q}e6\infty$



As played in Paschall – Nilssen, Budapest 2004. White has no advantage, as Black's two bishops and control of d4 make it difficult for White to utilize his central pawn preponderance.



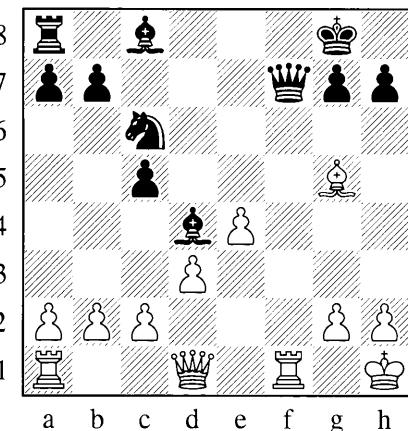
11... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$

11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 16. c3 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ was balanced in Sutovsky – Kharlov, Moscow 2005, but I prefer to keep the bishop pair if possible.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e7!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\infty$ gives Black massive compensation for his slight material deficit.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



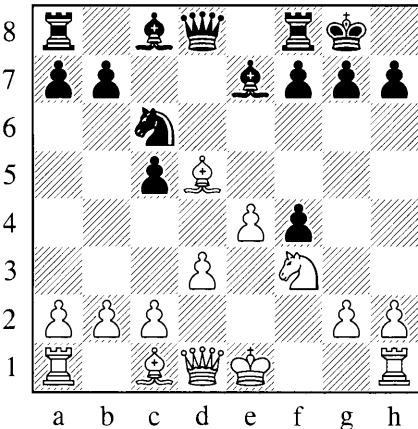
15... $\mathbb{W}e8!?$ N

Praxis has only seen 15... $\mathbb{W}e6\infty$, when Black went on to win in Rodriguez Guerrero – Maze, La Roche sur Yon 2006.

16. c3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\infty$

Black has kept the two bishops without sacrificing his coordination. This position awaits practical tests, but I believe that White has no advantage.

A3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



I consider this retreat to give White approximate equality.

10... $\mathbb{Q}h4\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

The position resembles a King's Gambit, which I think is already an achievement for Black.

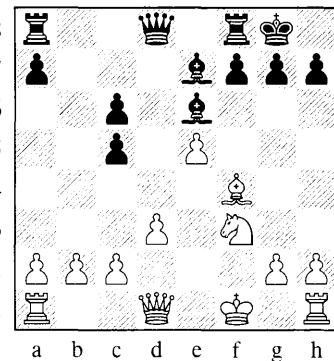
11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Sveshnikov's choice.

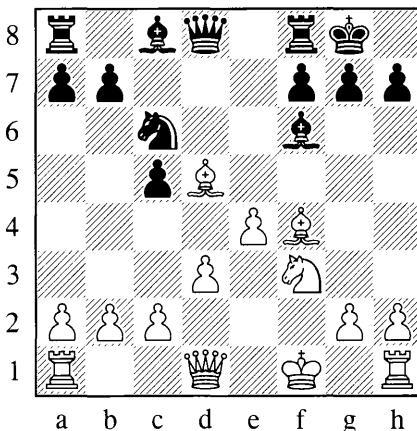
11... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ N is another interesting possibility, but I see no reason to deviate from the text move.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 13.e5 (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\bar{\square}$ is a pleasant position for Black) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\bar{\square}$ Black has tremendous compensation, with annoying moves like ...c4 and ...f6 already on the cards according to Richard Palliser in his ChessBase comments. I consider White's task unenviable, with a sample line being:



15. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ g5!?? 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5! 17. g3 g4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}d5!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xb2\uparrow$ The computer says this is equal, but I'd rather not be in White's shoes here.

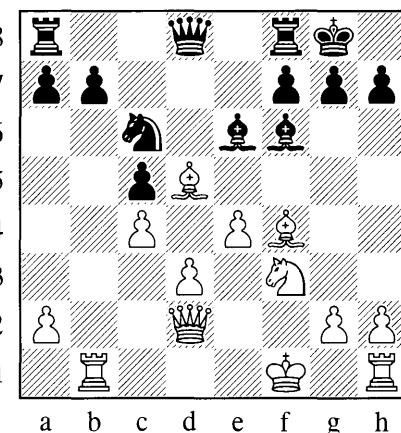


12... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

12... $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ N is an interesting possibility, but I think White is okay after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f6\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, despite the menacing look of Black's game.

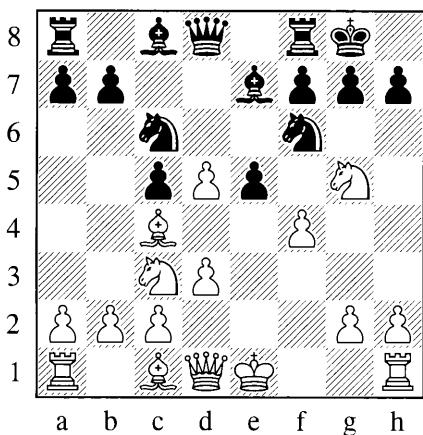
13. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. c4

Also possible is 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$, but after 16...c4!? \bar{Z} Black's chances are clearly not inferior. Instead, Palliser gives 16...e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c8\bar{\square}$ with compensation.



15... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. h3 $\mathbb{B}ae8$ 17. g4 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b4 \bar{Z}

Black was in good shape in Gruskovnjak – Sveshnikov, Celje 2004, and he actually went on to win.

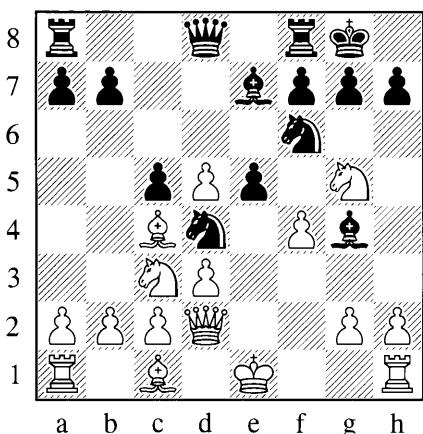
B) 8.exd5

By far and away the critical capture.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

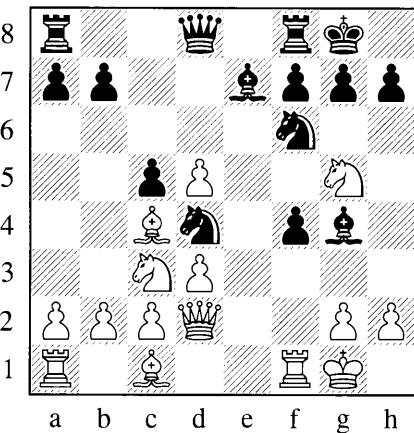
Developing with tempo and forcing a disharmony in the white camp looks best.

9. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}d4$



Black has given up a pawn and is about to lose a second one, but his big lead in development and powerful centralization offer him good compensation. One should not forget that the c4-bishop is blocked by its own pawn on d5, making it a spectator for the time being.

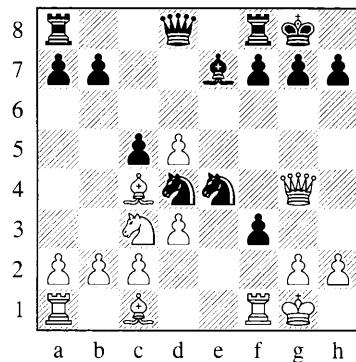
We will examine three continuations for White: B1) 10.0–0, B2) 10.fxe5 and B3) 10.h3.

B1) 10.0–0 $\mathbb{exf}4$ 

This position was excellently analysed by Baramidze in his notes to Negi – Krasenkow in the *Chess Evolution* series.

White can play B11) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$, but the critical move is of course B12) 11. $\mathbb{W}xf4!$.

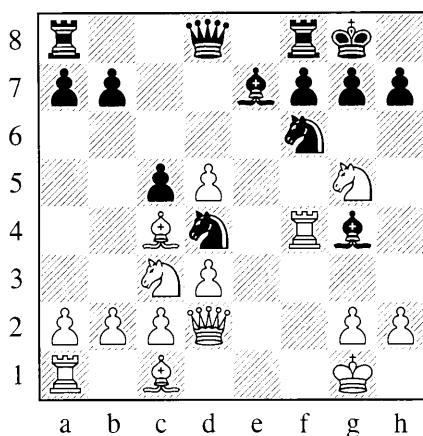
I also looked at 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge4?$, which should be bad in view of: 11...f3! 12. $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ (13. $dxe4$ $fxg2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}g3 \mathbb{Q}ae8$ 16. e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ b5 18. d6 $\mathbb{Q}d8\uparrow$ looks really scary for White, as his king is exposed and his central pawn duo is likely to crumble any moment.)



13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $gx\mathbb{f}3$ $a6$ 17. $a4$ $\mathbb{B}b8\#$ White's position is riddled with weaknesses and ... $b5$ is quite hard to cope with.

Another alternative is 11. $h3$, but I think it merely drives the black bishop to a better position. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $b5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $b4\#$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3\#$ Black has equalized, and perhaps a bit more than that.

B11) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$



Black has a choice of good replies, but the best one seems to be:

11... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

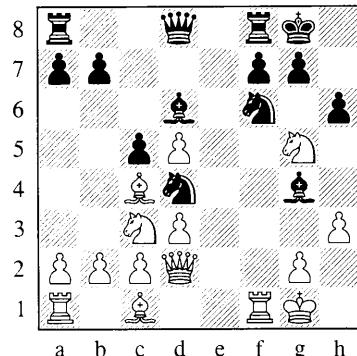
White in turn has several possibilities at his disposal.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

A common-sense retreat, protecting both $e2$ and $c2$.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f1?!$ $h6$ 13. $h3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}ge4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $dxe4$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ allows 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$, and White has to give up his queen for not much.) 14... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15. $g3$ $\mathbb{W}h5\rightarrow$ Black has a strong attacking position.



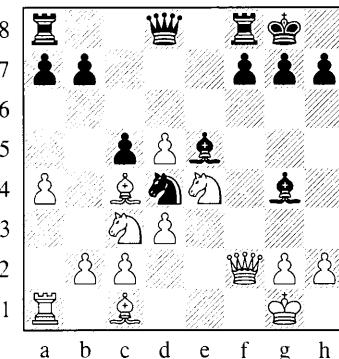
13... $hxg5!$

13... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $dxe4$! (15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $b5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $f5!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6\rightarrow$ is a line displaying a typical attacking idea for Black. The plight of the $b3$ -bishop is particularly noticeable here.) 15... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 16. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g2\infty$ Black should be fine here as well.

14. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$

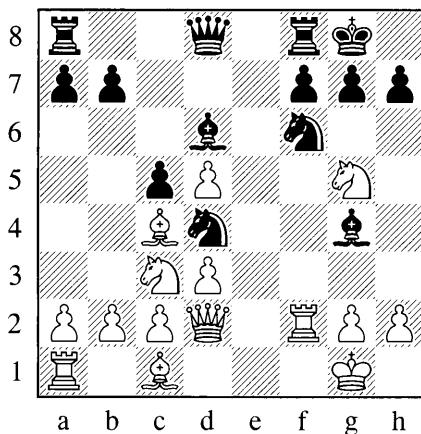
Black emerges with the better pawn structure and a useful initiative on the dark squares.

12. $\mathbb{W}f2$ is a move designed to harmonize the white position at the cost of an exchange: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $b5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\infty$ leads to unclear play) 13. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$



16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2\!-\!+$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5\infty$ The outcome is a double-edged

position, with mutual chances, that requires practical tests.



12... $\mathbb{E}e8!N$

An obvious and strong move, restricting White's movements.

12...b5 was rather suspect in Heberla – Chanoine, Montpellier 2007.

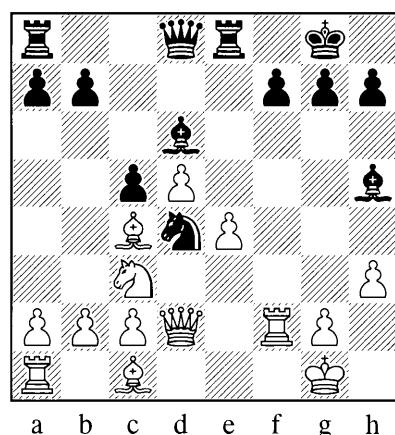
13.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

Forcing a structural weakness in the enemy camp.

15.dxe4

White is obliged to take back with the pawn.

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$ b5 Black has a sizeable advantage.



15... $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$

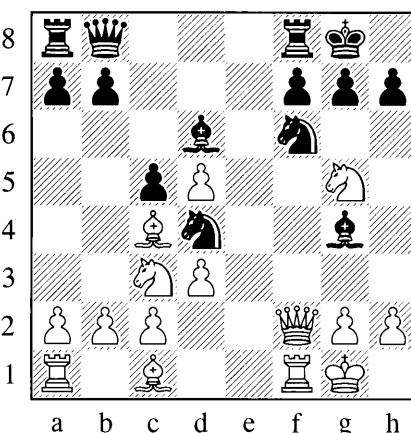
With pressure on e4 and a bind on the dark squares, Black has at least enough compensation for the pawn.

B12) 11. $\mathbb{W}xf4!$

Eyeing the d6-square and preparing to untangle by $\mathbb{Q}ce4$.

Sveshnikov has tried B121) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$, so we will take a look. However, B122) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc2!N$ is the stronger reply.

B121) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$



This queen shuffle has the two-fold function of attacking h2 and preparing ...b5, but I am not sure whether the concept is entirely correct.

13.h3?!

White seems to maintain the extra pawn. Although Black has certain compensation, it is hard to say whether it is fully sufficient.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ b5

This has been tried in several games, with the conclusion being that Black can equalize the chances.

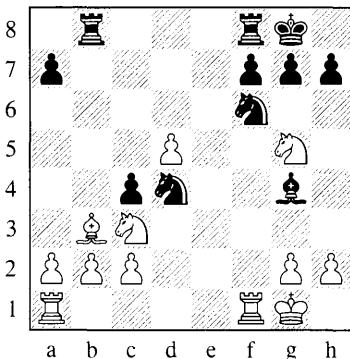
15. $\mathbb{W}xb8$

15. $\mathbb{Q}b3?N$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ cxd4

18. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ $h6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ requires examination here, but Black is probably okay. A possible variation is: 21. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$) 25... $d3\#$ 15... $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $c4!$ 17. $dxc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $cx b3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $bx c2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $b4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ should be approximately balanced according to Palliser.

17... $bx c4\#$

Black has broken into White's vulnerable queenside.



18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4?!$

Palliser rightly suggests 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4!N$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ab1=$ as a better choice for White.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

19. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ didn't fare any better after 19... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $h6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ in Frolyanov – Fedorov, Samara 2012.

19... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 20. $b3?!$

20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$

20... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$

White had some compensation for the exchange in Srebrnic – Sveshnikov, Bled 2008, but it is questionable whether it would be enough for the draw after the correct: 21... $\mathbb{Q}bd8!N\#$

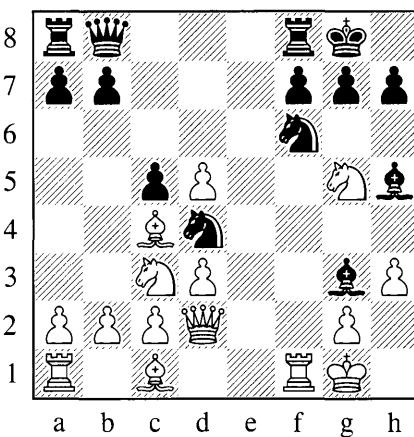
13... $\mathbb{Q}g3$

Of course Black has to play this move, so as to cause White some discomfort.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5N$

Practically the only move.

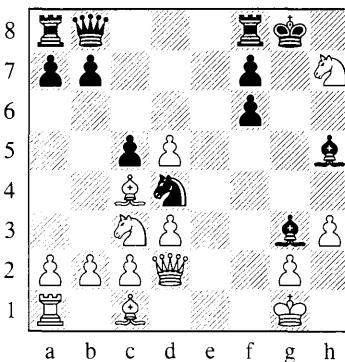
As Baramidze has correctly pointed out, 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $b5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ leads to a technically won position for White.



15. $a4!$

Palliser fails to analyse this move, but it is the only one to cause Black real problems as it stifles his ... $b5$ counterplay.

The English opening connoisseur only looked at 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?!$, which is merely unclear after: 15... $gxf6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}ge4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $d6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$! 20. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $fxe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $exd3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ can only be better for Black)



16... $\mathbb{W}e5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}hx6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. d4!? cxd4 21. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc1\infty$ Both sides have their strengths and weaknesses in the resulting ending.

Another move is 15. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$, but after: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. dxe4 (16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ c4 19. dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$ leads to a mess as ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is threatened. If 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ then the accurate 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe2!\rightarrow$ forks the f1-rook and the c4-pawn.) 16... b5 \rightarrow Black pushes his opponent further back, gaining excellent counterplay for the pawn.

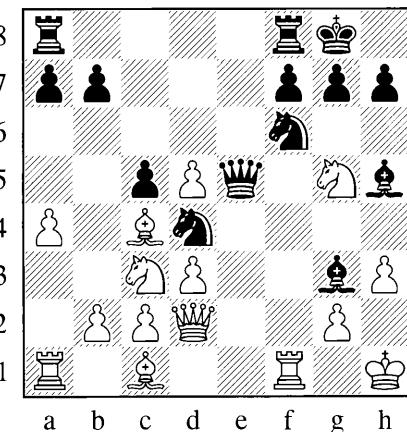
15... $\mathbb{W}e5!$

This centralization is the only way I could find to make White's life difficult.

After 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$ there comes: 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. dxe4! h6 18. d6! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. c3 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20. cxd4 hxg5 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5!+$ — Black is objectively lost, although White still has to show some good technique to cash in the point.

16. $\mathbb{Q}h1!$

A good reply, getting the king away from nasty knight checks on e2.



16... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

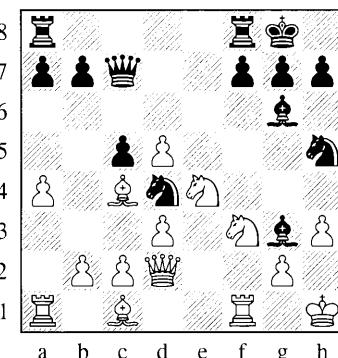
And this is the best reaction too; not only controlling e4 with another piece, but also

vacating h5 for the knight so as to keep harassing the white king.

17. $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$

This looks like the best chance, at least in the practical sense.

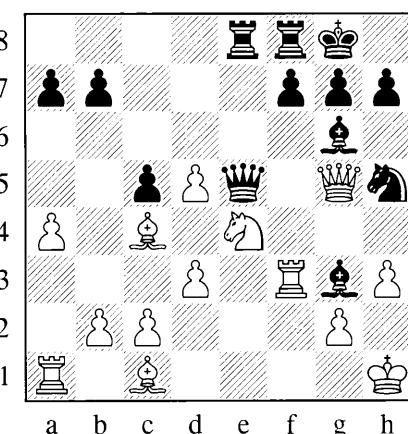
The engines prefer 18... $\mathbb{W}c7$, but I think they tend to underestimate the danger:



19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 20. $\mathbb{W}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. d6! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4\pm$ The smoke has cleared and Black has regained his pawn. Still, White looks better in view of the more active bishop and his adversary's inferior pawn structure. Even if the position is defendable, it is clearly not pleasant for Black in human chess.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g5!$

White should seek refuge in an ending, as all middlegames are dangerous for his king.



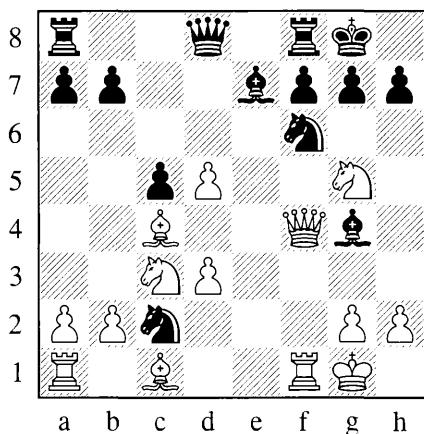
20... $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm/$ =

The ending remains complicated, but White is probably slightly for choice in view of the bishop pair. For the moment I haven't been able to discover anything better for Black in this line, so I would rather advise the reader to adopt Baramidze's 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc2!N$.

The obvious 14. $dxe6?!$ is weaker in view of 14... $fxe6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 17. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\mp$. Black's modest material advantage gives him the better chances.

14. $\mathbb{W}e5$ is met strongly by: 14... $b5!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ $gxb6$ 16. $dxe6$ $bxc4$ 17. $exf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

B122) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc2!N$



This strong move, deeply analysed by Baramidze in *Chess Evolution*, completely equalizes the chances.

12. $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$

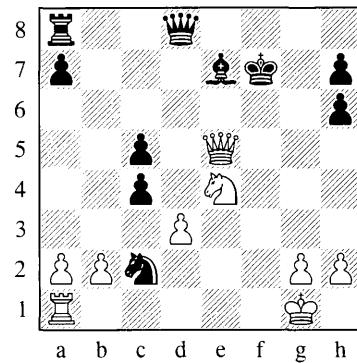
This was supposed to be the point after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$, creating the threat of $d5-d6$, but Baramidze's brilliant analysis completely neutralizes White's initiative.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

Fantastic! Black exploits the fact that an opening of the f-file would highlight the insecure state of White's queen and rook along it. The remainder of this analysis is largely based on Baramidze's notes in *Chess Evolution*.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2?!$

This looks logical, trying to keep the position as closed as possible. White's main problem is the temporary weakness of his back rank.

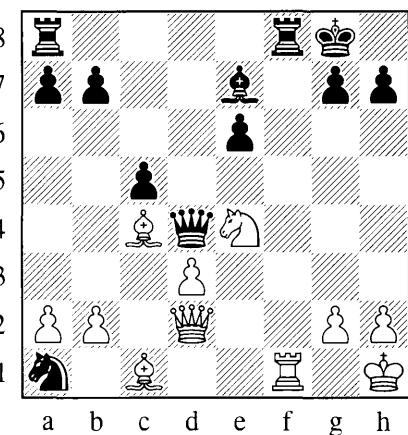


19. $\mathbb{Q}f1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5\mp=$ and White must take the draw by perpetual.

Another line given by Baramidze is 14. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\mp$, when I consider the chances to be approximately even.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 15. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $fxe6$

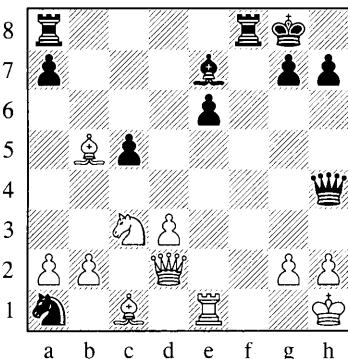
Black is an exchange up, but White has good pieces and the trapped a1-knight is in danger of being captured. Black's counterplay is associated with guerrilla tactics involving the advance ... $b5$.



17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

It is clear that White should keep the rooks as his first rank is weak.

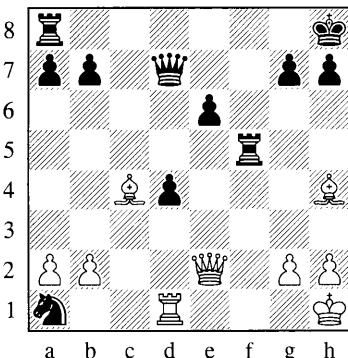
Baramidze also gives 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ b5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$) 18... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$, when the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ keeps White occupied:



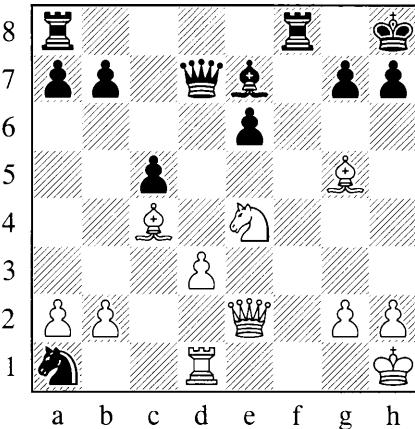
20. $g3$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\infty$ It seems that neither side is worse here, but it is easier to lose this position with White in a practical game.

17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

I would like to add at this point that 19. $d4?!$ $cxd4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ fails to: 21... $\mathbb{E}f5!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h4$



22... $d3!!$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xd3$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$) 23... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (25. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\rightarrow$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$

**19... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$**

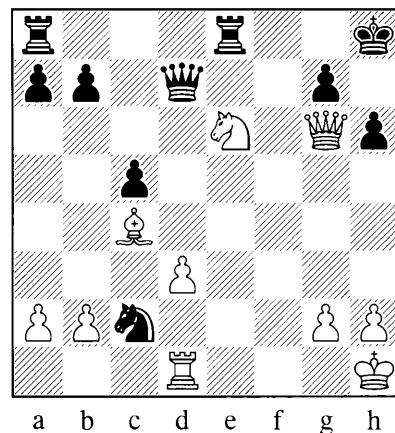
White's activity secures the draw no matter how Black continues, for example:

20... $h6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa1=$

21... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g6$

By threatening the lethal $\mathbb{Q}g5$, White forces his opponent to give back the exchange.

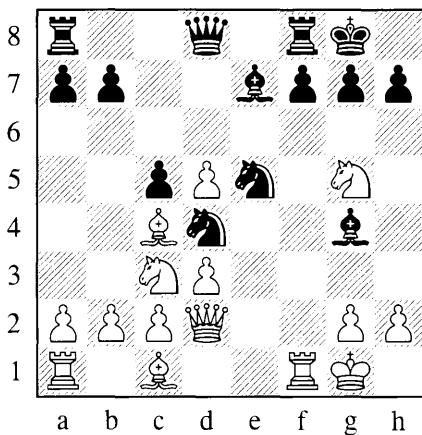
**23... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$**

23... $\mathbb{E}f8$ should also hold, but it looks much less clean to the human eye.

24. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}d6=$

Thus, 10.0–0 is not a problem if Black is aware of the above lines, which serve once more to demonstrate the importance of preparation in modern chess.

B2) 10.fxe5 ♕d7 11.0–0 ♕xe5



Producing another important position: one that I would love to play in a tournament game, as it is obvious that White has burned his bridges for the sake of a mere pawn. Black's great piece activity and 3–2 pawn majority on the kingside give him interesting attacking chances, and fully compensate for the material deficit.

12.♗b3?!

Retreating the bishop is the most critical possibility according to my research. Surprisingly, it has been played in only one relatively obscure correspondence game so far.

12.♗ge4?!

This allows Black to start attacking with tempo and leads to a complete cramping of the white pieces.

12...f5! 13.♗g3

13.♗g5 f4! → is obviously not a big improvement for White.

13...♗d6

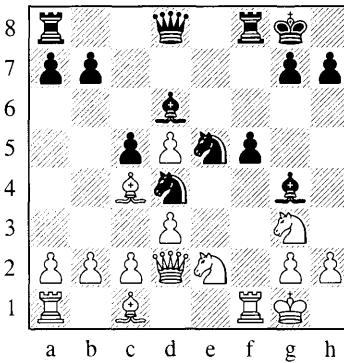
Black has achieved a dream position where

all his minor pieces work at maximum capacity, while White's position, in contrast, is a monument of disharmony.

14.♗ce2

After 14.♗f2 f4 15.♗ge4 f3! 16.♗xd6 ♗xd6 → Black has a winning attack.

14.♗b5 f4 15.♗e4 ♗xb5 16.♗xb5 f3 17.g3 ♗h3† is terrible for White too.



14...♗xe2!

14...f4?! 15.♗xf4 ♗ef3† 16.gxf3 ♗xf4† was also good for Black in Chatterjee – Thakurta, Kolkata 2004.

15.♗xe2 ♗h4 16.♗f4N

16.h3? was played in Ramirez – Gregoire, Cappelle la Grande 2004, and here the quickest way to finish the game for Black was: 16...♗ef3†!N 17.♗xf3 ♗xf3† 18.gxf3 ♗f6+–

16...♗ae8

The threat of ...♗ef3† already rears its ugly head.

17.♗f2! ♗xf2† 18.♗xf2 ♗g4 19.♗f1 ♗xc2 20.♗b1 ♗d4†

Black has regained his pawn and obtained a much better ending due to White's numerous weaknesses. The push ...b5 is an immediate threat, and I can see nothing better than:

21.h3

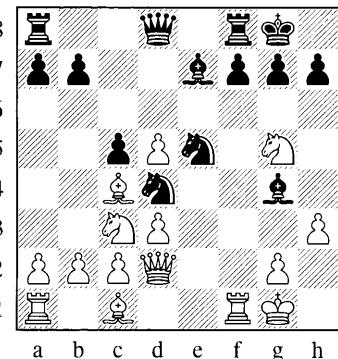
After 21.a4? disaster comes from another pawn push: 21...g5! 22.♗e6 ♗e2† 23.♗h1 ♗xh2!–+

21...b5 22.♗b3 ♗e3 23.♗xe3 ♗xe3 24.♗e6

With just a few chances of survival for White.

12.h3?!

Better than 12.♗ge4?!, but still rather unfortunate in view of:



12...h6!! 13.♗xf7?

Better is 13.♗ge4! ♗xh3! 14.♗f4 ♗xc4 15.dxc4 f5! 16.gxh3 fxe4+, although even in that case Black enjoys tremendous attacking chances in return for the pawn.

13...♗xf7! 14.hxg4 ♗d6! 15.g3

15.♗e4?? ♗h4+–

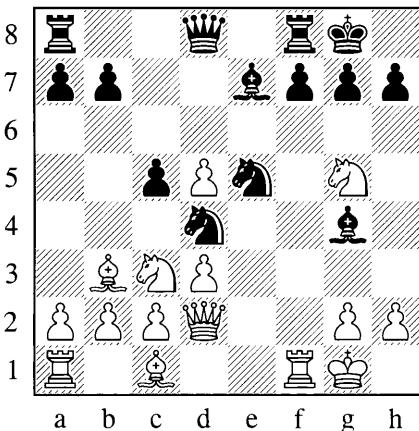
15...♗g5 16.♗g2 ♗xf1† 17.♗xf1 ♗gf3†

18.♔h1

18.♔g2? ♗d7+–

18...♗d7 19.♗h3 ♗f8=

It turns out that White has played a series of only moves, only to realize that he is still close to being completely lost.



12...b5!N

Gaining space and making the bishop's life difficult is tempting and strong.

12...♗b6 13.♔h1 f6 was played in Kevicky – Boecker, corr. 2004, and is perhaps worth analysing, but I prefer my move.

Now **B21) 13.h3** is slightly less accurate than **B22) 13.♗e3**.

B21) 13.h3 ♗h5

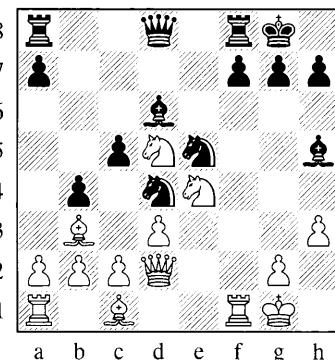
The bishop is in fact angling to get to g6 in some lines, to contest the e4-square. White then has the following choice:

14.♗e3

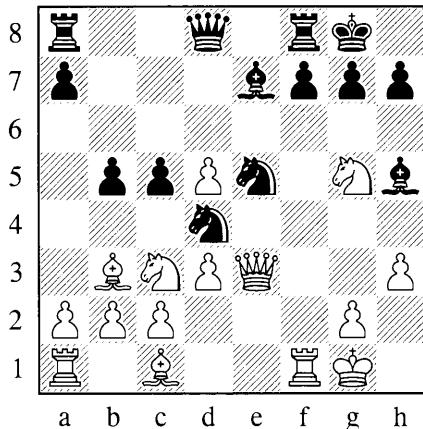
This is most thematic.

14.♗f4? ♗d6↑ allows Black to solidify his central position with gain of time. After 15.♗f2 a5! White is in trouble.

I also looked at: 14.♗ge4 b4! 15.d6! (15.♗d1 a5 16.♗e3 a4 17.♗c4 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♗e2† 19.♔h1 f5! is bad for White) 15...♗xd6 16.♗d5



16...f5!! 17.♗xd6 (17.♗df6†?? ♗h8 18.♗xh5 fxe4+) 17...♗e2†! 18.♔h1 (18.♔h2 ♗xd6+) 18...♗g3† 19.♗g1= The game ends in a peculiar perpetual.



14...♝e8!

14...♝d6 is also playable, transposing to variation B22.

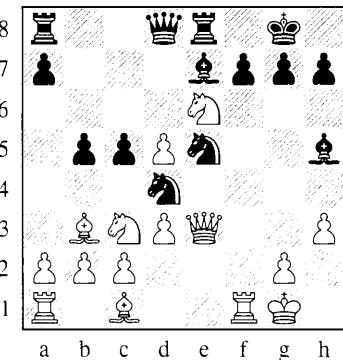
However, the text leads to a sharp position with good chances for Black, as the following lines illustrate:

15.♛xe5

It is of course natural to grab the offered piece.

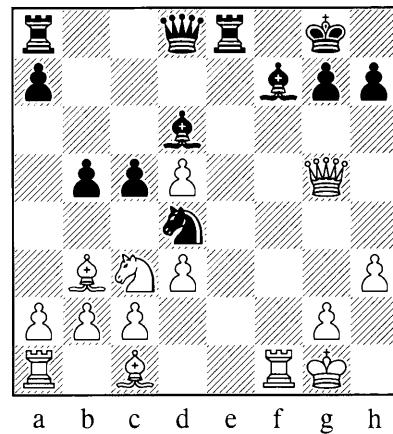
15.♛h1 b4? is at least equal for Black.

15.♞e6?! is interesting, yet after:



15...♝ef3?! 16.♜xf3 fxe6! 17.♜f2! (17.♜f1 ♜f6?) 17...♞h4 18.dxe6 ♜xf2+ 19.♜xf2 ♜xb3 20.axb3 ♜xe6 21.♞e3 ♜e8!? Black regroups his bishop successfully to c6, obtaining strong pressure along the long diagonal. I consider his prospects at least equal in that case.

15...♝d6 16.♞xf7! ♜xf7 17.♛g5



17...c4! 18.dxc4 b4!

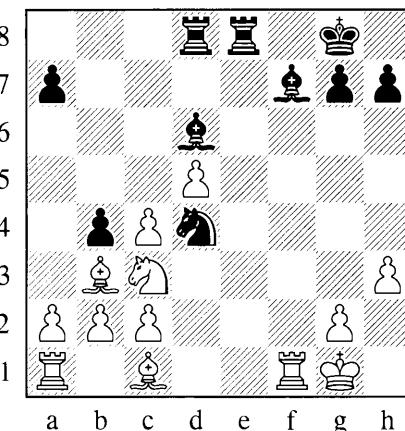
A nice tactical idea: White has been deprived of e4 for his knight, and the game must end in perpetual check.

19.♛xd8

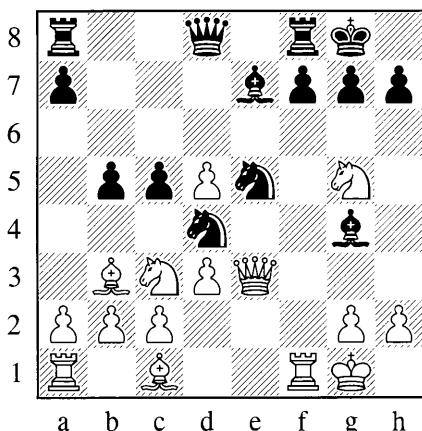
Acquiescing to the draw.

19.♜xf7? allows: 19...♛xg5 20.♜xg5 bxc3 21.♜f2 cxb2 22.♜b1 ♜e2† 23.♚h1 (23.♜xe2 ♜xe2 24.♜xb2 ♜f8–+) 23...♞c3 24.♜ff1 ♜xb1 25.♜xb1 ♜g3–+ White is lost, as his king is caged in a deadly trap.

19...♝axd8



20.♞a4 ♜e2† 21.♚h1 ♜g3† 22.♚g1=

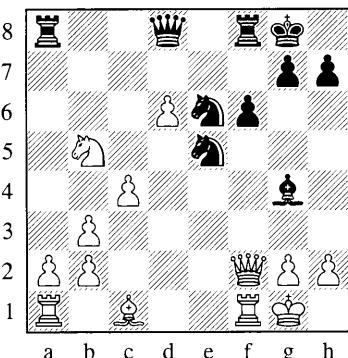
B22) 13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 

The point: having defended c2 with the bishop, White has freed his queen to attack the e5-knight, which is an integral part of his defence. By luring the e7-bishop to d6 to defend the centralized knight, White gives substance to $\mathbb{Q}e4$ moves and hopes to successfully untangle his position.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$!

Placing the bishop on d6 allows White to attack it, but I didn't find anything better at this point.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ f6 15. $\mathbb{W}h4$ a5 16. $d6\#$
 $c4$ 17. $dxc4$ a4 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $axb3$
 $20. cxb3\pm/=$



The computer claims equality here, but I am a bit sceptical about Black's chances in view

of White's massive queenside pawn armada. If Black wants to play this position he has to deploy his bishop to c6, so 20... $\mathbb{Q}h5\#?$ springs immediately to mind. The problem is the disruptive 21. $\mathbb{W}f5\#?$, placing some obstacles in Black's path before he can realize his idea.

14. h3!

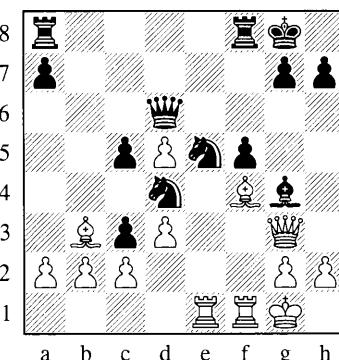
This useful move gives the white king some extra breathing space.

An immediate 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ allows 14... f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $fxg5$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}d6\#?$. Black obtains the slightly better chances by exploiting both the plight of the b3-bishop and White's temporarily weak back rank.

14. $\mathbb{Q}ge4\#?$

This can be met by a typical reaction:
14... $f5$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ b4

Leading to strong counterplay.
17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $bxc3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ae1$!



18... $c4!!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

19. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#?$ f4!!
21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#!!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#/\mp$ is the brilliant tactical justification of Black's play; the queen is untouchable because of 23... $cxb2$.) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 22. $bxc3$
 $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ Reaching an incredibly sharp position with chances for both sides.

19... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

23.dxc4!?. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ cxb2 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb2\infty$ produces a rare material imbalance which is difficult to evaluate.

23... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f3$ cxb3 25. axb3 cxb2 26. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f4 \rightarrow

The intrusion of the rook to e3 should secure enough counterplay.

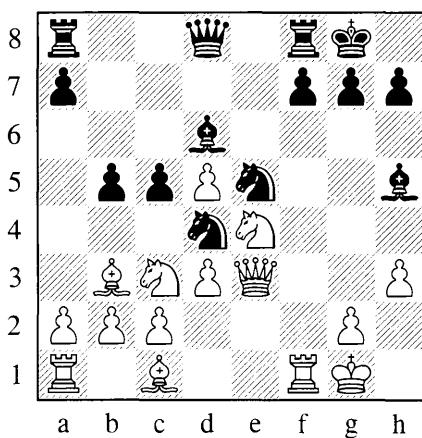
14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

White can move either knight to e4: **B221)**

15. $\mathbb{Q}ge4!?$ or **B222) 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$.**

Instead, 15.a4? $\mathbb{E}e8\#$ and 15. $\mathbb{W}f2?$ a5# are both weaker options leading to a massive advantage for Black, who exploits the bad position of the b3-bishop.

B221) 15. $\mathbb{Q}ge4!?$



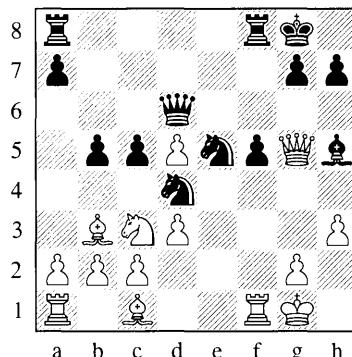
This should not be underestimated, although now Black can make use of the following possibility:

15... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

Pressurizing White on e4. This move also prevents the $\mathbb{W}g5$ idea, which was already on the cards.

Instead 15...f5?! does not come close to equalizing, in view of 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g5!$. White exploits the important tempo on the

h5-bishop to free his queen and activate his pieces. A sample line is:

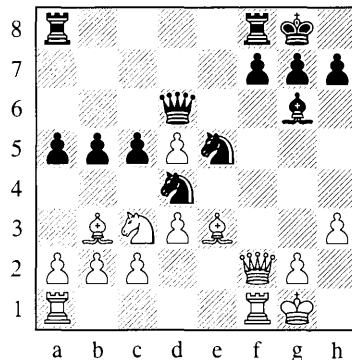


17... b4 18. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ cxb3 19. $\mathbb{W}d1!$ (19. bxc3?? $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) 19... cxb2 (19... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 20. bxc3±; 19... f4?! 20. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 21. axb3 f3 may be a better practical chance, but White has an advantage all the same.) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ f4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 22. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ f3 23. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e4!\pm$ The first player should gradually overcome the technical difficulties and win.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

Logical, but it also develops Black.

16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ seems to keep more possibilities open, yet after: 16... a5! (16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ a5 18. c3 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 19. axb3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f5!?\pm$ is a little better for White as the pawn on d5 is rather strong) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



18... $\mathbb{E}ab8!!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (19. a4? $\mathbb{Q}xb3\#$) 19... cxd4 20. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ a4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{E}b4$

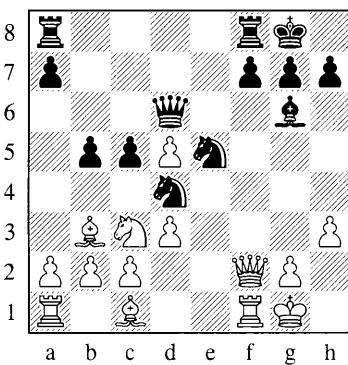
23. $\mathbb{W}a7! \mathbb{Q}d7=$ I would prefer the piece to the white pawns.

16... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

With this move the opening fight is approaching its climax, as White is trying to unblock his queenside and evict the enemy knight from d4.

17. $\mathbb{W}f2$

Black now has a choice:



17... $\mathbb{E}ae8!?$

17... a5 transposes to the previous note.

18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

Preparing to develop the c1-bishop. 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ef3\#!$ 19. $gxf3 \mathbb{E}xe3=$ leads to a perpetual.

18... b4

In my opinion this leads to a wonderful tactical struggle and an eventual draw. Although the line is unnecessary, I cannot resist the temptation to give it in full:

19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

19. $\mathbb{Q}a4?? \mathbb{Q}ef3! -+$

19... $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 20. $dxe4$ f5! 21. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $fxe4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$

22. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ c4 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{E}xf1\#$

25. $\mathbb{E}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ h6 27. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e3

28. $\mathbb{W}b3$ e2 29. $\mathbb{W}c4 \mathbb{W}xd5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xd5\# \mathbb{E}xd5$

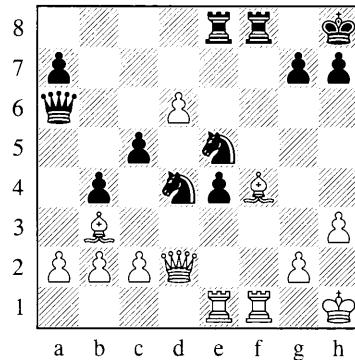
31. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}d1\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{E}a1=$ is an equal ending.

22... $\mathbb{W}a6!$ 23. $d6\#$

23. $\mathbb{E}fe1?!$ $\mathbb{Q}df3$ 24. $gxf3 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25. $d6\# \mathbb{Q}h8$ is at least equal for Black.

23... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

24. $c3$ e3! 25. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xe8 \mathbb{E}xe8$ 27. $cxd4$ c4 28. $d7 \mathbb{E}g8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $cxb3$ 30. $axb3$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 31. $d8=\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ h6 33. $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{W}xd4=$ is a position Black should hold easily.

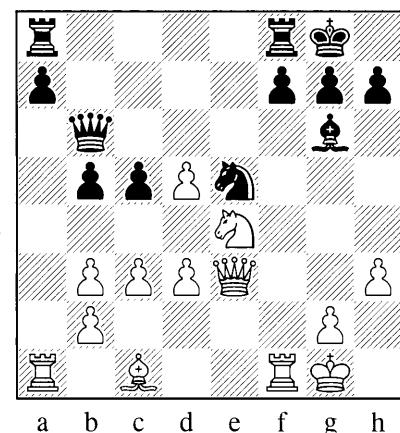


24... $\mathbb{Q}ef3!!$ 25. $gxf3 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}xe2$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xe2 \mathbb{E}xf4$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xf3?!$ $\mathbb{E}xf3$ 29. $d7 \mathbb{Q}ef8$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xe4 \mathbb{E}xh3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{E}hf3=$

The game should end in a perpetual check.

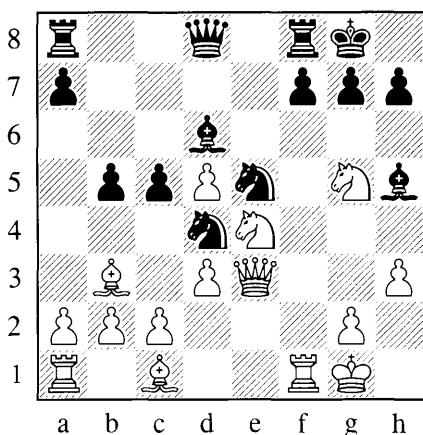
17... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 19. $axb3$

White might appear to be better, but Black has a tactical stroke that equalizes the chances:



19... $\mathbb{Q}xd3!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ c4! 21. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{E}xe4$ 22. $bxcc4$ $bxcc4$ 23. $d6 \mathbb{W}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ f6 25. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{E}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ a5=

The d6-pawn has been contained, and Black may exert counterbalancing pressure on b2 after getting his pawn to a4.

B222) 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ 

This one looks logical; White wants to untangle on the queenside.

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

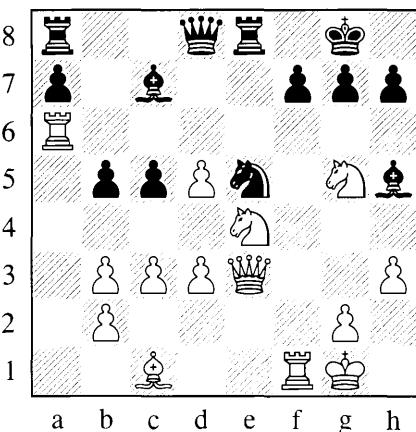
This strong move seems to equalize completely now, as White lacks the move $\mathbb{W}g5$ to put Black under pressure.

16.c3

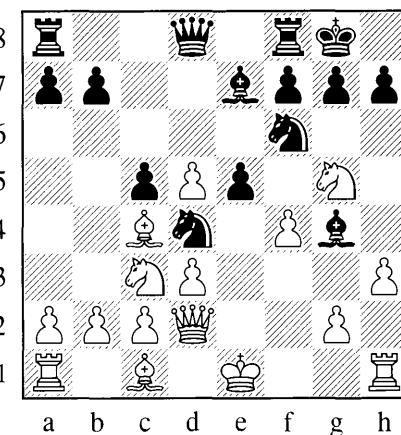
White should play this to clarify the situation.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 17.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{E}a6!$

18.c4 bxc4 19.bxc4 h6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ gxf6
21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$
24. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ looks better for Black.

**18... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$
21. $\mathbb{Q}hxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$**

Black has enough compensation for the pawn and should draw comfortably.

B3) 10.h3

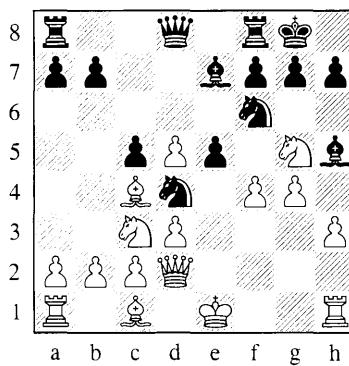
This move was Negi's choice against Krasenkow. Black seems to be hanging all over the place, and the g4-bishop appears to be in a spot of bother.

10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.fxe5

Parimarjan opts for the most critical continuation.

11.g4

Instead, this was Kulaots – Fedorov, Moscow 2004, and here Black missed the energetic:



11...exf4!N

White looks slightly worse, but with some accurate moves he might be able to equalize.
12.0–0!

Bringing the king to relative safety is the first and most important step.

Terrible is instead: 12.gxh5? $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{Q}g3!+$ White's fate has been sealed.

After 12. $\mathbb{W}g2$ the safest course is Baramidze's suggestion of 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ (12... $b5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$) also looks interesting to me) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{E}c8=$ when he considers Black's compensation satisfactory, in view of the exposed position of the white monarch.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$

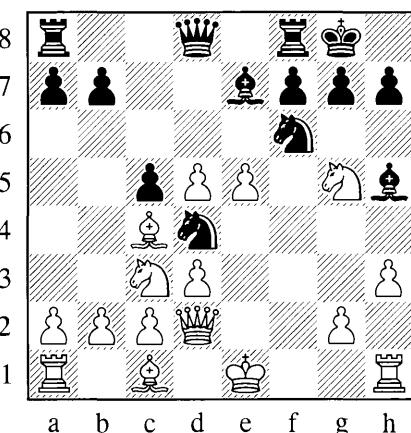
12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ is also possible.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6 14. a4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ hxg4 18. $\mathbb{W}g2$

Now the safest course is:

18. ... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. hxg4 $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ fxg6 21. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4=$

With equality according to Baramidze.

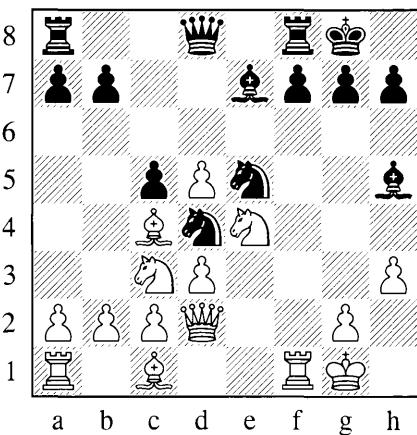


11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

White has gained something compared to the 10.fxe5 line here, as the bishop has been forced to h5. Still, Krasenkow demonstrates that this is not a big deal.

13. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5 is a position that has already been analysed in variation B21 above.



13... $\mathbb{Q}h8!?$

A logical move by Krasenkow, preparing a push of the f-pawn.

14. $\mathbb{d}6!?$

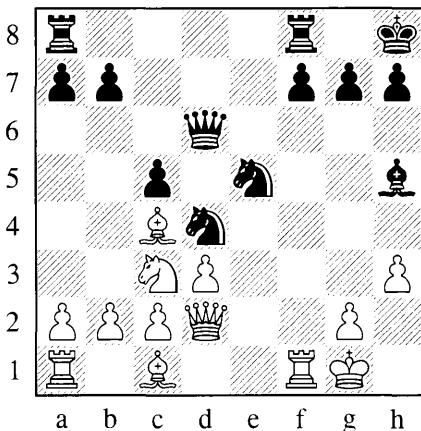
I don't like this move so much, as it makes Black's life easier.

Baramidze extensively analysed 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$ f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3!?$ in *Chess Evolution*, concluding that the position is about equal. His main variation is 16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f4 18. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$ with equality.

After the move in the game Black even obtains some initiative:

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$

Around here the computer starts to prefer Black's position. The truth is that he has free play and is not even a pawn down.



Conclusion

I recommended playing 7...d5!? as a gambit when White resorts to the $\mathbb{Q}g5$ sally before castling. I am satisfied with the analysis presented here, and I believe that knowing it inside out will enable you to score well – even against the stiffest of opposition.

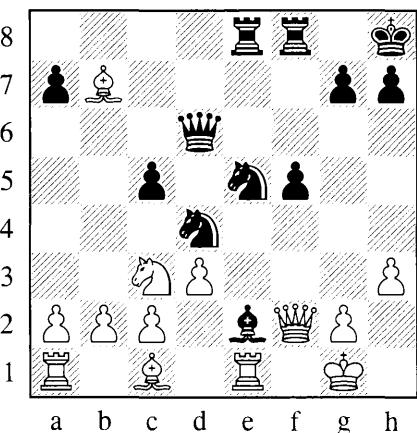
16. $\mathbb{Q}d5?$

A mistake according to Baramidze.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5=$ was the best choice according to him. Black may have a slight edge, but White faces no serious problems.

16... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $f5\uparrow$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

So far we have followed Negi – Krasenkov, Melilla 2011. Baramidze's recommendation is excellent once more:

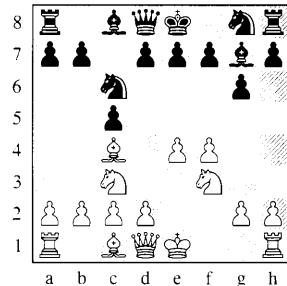


19... $\mathbb{Q}b8!N\ddagger$

The position is extremely dangerous for White, and he may even already be lost.



2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



Grand Prix Attack - 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

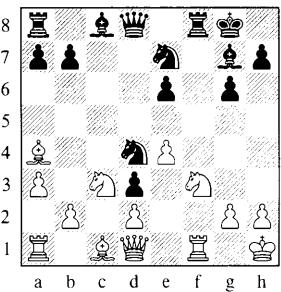
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.f4 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 6.f5!? $\mathbb{Q}ge7!$ 7.fxe6

7...fxe6

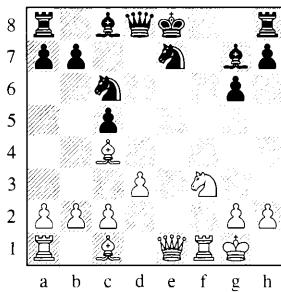
A) 8.0-0	247
B) 8.d3 d5	249
B1) 9.exd5?! exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5! 11.0-0?! c4 12. dx c 4 dx c 4 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8!!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ cx b 3 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ bx c 2!	249
B11) 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$	250
B12) 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$!?	251
B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5!	252
B21) 10.a4?!	253
B22) 10.0-0	256

A) note to 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$



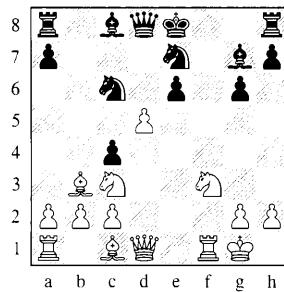
15... $\mathbb{Q}d7\#N+$

A) note to 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$



12... $\mathbb{Q}f8\#N$

B22) after 12.exd5?!



12... cx b 3!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4 g6 4.♗f3 ♗g7 5.♗c4

With this move, White enters the old-fashioned continuation of the so-called Grand Prix Attack. His primitive idea is to provoke ...e6 and then open lines by f4-f5. There is a positional alternative to this crude opening scheme, which is examined in the next chapter.

5...e6

Blocking the dangerous bishop.

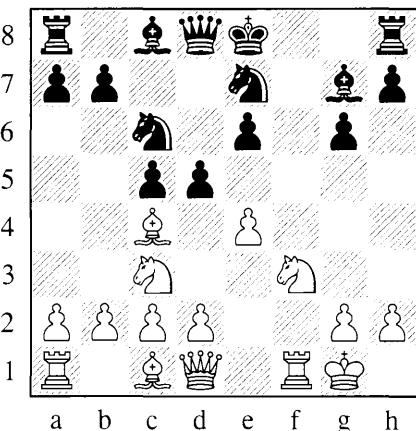
6.f5? ♗ge7!

Black adheres to the rule of developing with tempo. Besides the transparent threat to the f5-pawn, there is also a positional idea in ...d5.

7.fxe6 fxe6

Black remains faithful to his plan of playing against the c4-bishop. 7...dxe6 is a worthwhile alternative, but we will not devote any space to it here.

White will now continue with either A) 8.0–0 or B) 8.d3.

A) 8.0–0 d5!

The bishop is forced to the less appealing b5-square, facilitating Black's task. My analysis from this position goes as follows:

9.♗b5

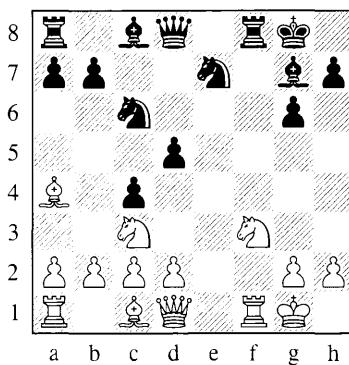
The lesser evil.

9.♗b3? c4 10.exd5

10.♗a4 d4 is also awful, as shown by: 11.♗e2?! (11.♗b1 d3 12.♗a3 a6 13.♗xc6† ♗xc6 14.♗xc4 b5 15.♗e3 0–0 16.c3 ♗b7 17.b3 ♗f4† looks ridiculous for White, but was the only way to hold on.) 11...d3 12.♗c3 0–0 13.cxd3 cxd3 14.a3 ♗d4 15.♗h1 Sakhatsky – Terekhov, Kiev 2010. Black went on to win comfortably, but most clinical at this point would have been 15...♗d7!N–+.

10...exd5 11.♗a4 0–0†

The bishop is markedly offside, and White does better to part with it immediately:

**12.♗xc6**

12.d3?! amounts to an unsound piece sacrifice: 12...♗xc3! 13.bxc3 b5 14.♗h6 ♗f7 15.♗xb5 ♗b6† 16.♗d4 ♗xd4 17.cxd4 ♗f5! (17...♗xf1† 18.♗xf1 ♗f5 19.dxc4! ♗xh6 20.c5 ♗c7 21.♗f3 ♗e6 22.♗e1 ♗f7 23.c3† gave Black some problems in realizing the extra piece in McKay – Hartston, Siegen [ol] 1970.) 18.dxc4 ♗xh6 19.♗xf7 ♗xf7–+ White has no compensation.

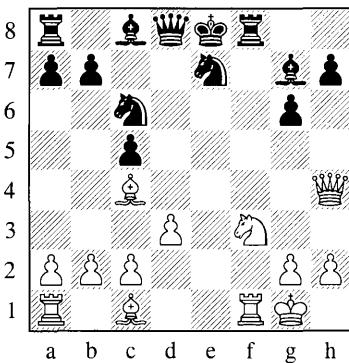
12...♗xc6

12...bxc6 13.d3 cxd3 14.cxd3 ♗g4† is also good.

13.d3 ♗g4 14.dxc4 dxc4 15.♗xd8 ♗axd8 16.♗g5 ♗de8†

White has few chances of survival, despite the symmetrical structure that has arisen, as the black bishops are extremely powerful on an open board.

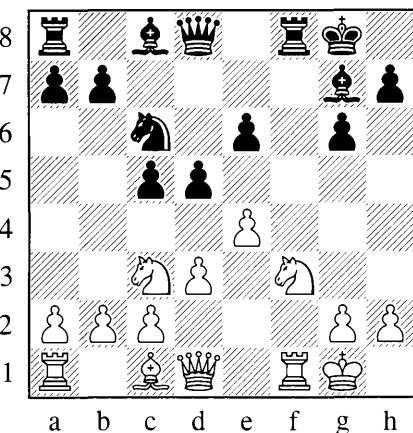
9. $exd5$ $exd5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}de7\uparrow$ also fails to offer White adequate compensation. After 12. d3, the most exact defence is probably 12... $\mathbb{E}f8!N$, preparing ... $\mathbb{W}d6$. In case of 13. $\mathbb{W}h4$, Black can return part of his material advantage:



13... $\mathbb{E}xf3!?$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\uparrow$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$ Black enters an ending with decent winning chances. The next couple of moves could be ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and ... h5.

9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 11. d3

White is ready to initiate play on the dark squares on the kingside, but Black won't let him!



11... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

A principled reaction, enabling Black to take over the initiative. The f3-knight is White's best piece, guarding d4 and g5, and defending the king, so it makes sense to exchange it right away.

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

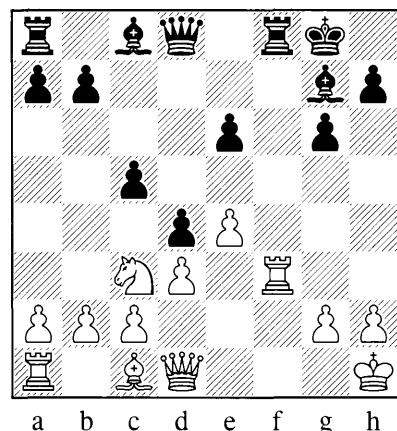
This looks like the most reasonable reaction. White is intending to play $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ $\mathbb{E}xf1\uparrow$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $cxd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $dxe4$ 15. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$ left Black with a massive advantage in Phillips – Vancini, corr. 1990, as ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ is coming and White is weak on both c2 and e4.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $b5!?\uparrow$ is also much better for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xf3$ d4!

Gaining space is important when you have the two bishops!



14. $\mathbb{E}xf8\uparrow$

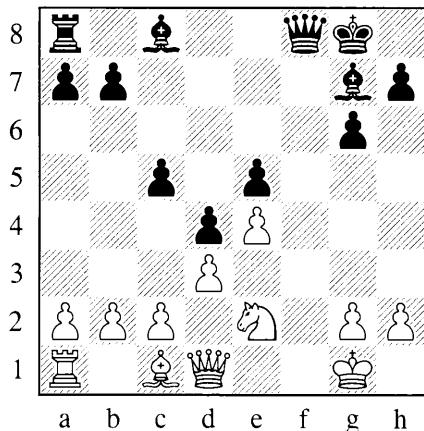
In case of 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, best seems 14... $\mathbb{E}xf3!?$ 15. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}f8\uparrow$ with a clear advantage for Black.

14... $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5

Black has all the chances. We will briefly follow one game which reached this position.

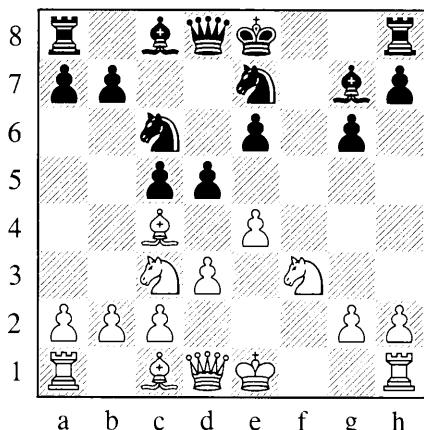
16.♔g1

16.♔g1 ♜e6 17.♗f3 c4 is also better for Black.

**16...♜e6 17.b3 b5 18.a4 c4**

This was Kharlampidi – Tsanas, Athens 2006, and now White's best chance to hold was:

**19.axb5N cxb3 20.cxb3 ♜b4 21.♗d2 ♜xb5
22.♗c1†**

B) 8.d3 d5

The main trump of White's system is about to turn into his major headache. Black is ruthlessly piling up on the c4-bishop, but he must also be careful as in doing so he

may overextend. I will go into some detail explaining the flaws of **B1) 9.exd5?!**, before moving on to the more advisable **B2) 9.♗b3**.

9.♗b5?! 0–0 is, as we already know, better for Black.

B1) 9.exd5?! **exd5 10.♗b3**

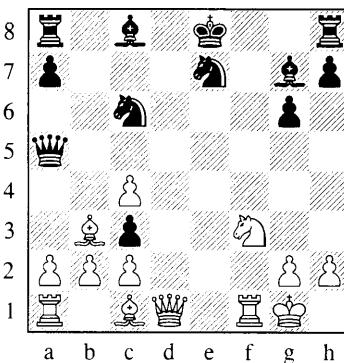
According to my analyses this position is almost unplayable for White. Black should take the bull by the horns:

10...b5!

With the brutal threat of ...c4.

11.0–0!?

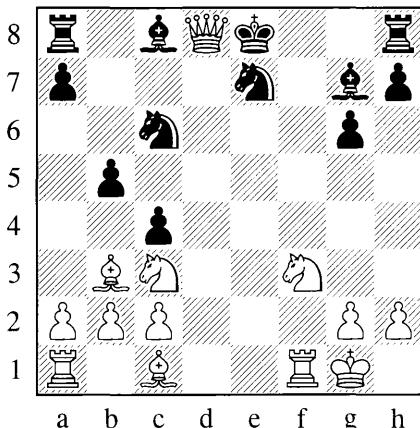
11.♗xb5? ♜a5† 12.♗c3 c4!? (12...d4 has also been tried, but then White has some compensation as his bishop comes to life.) The text is a fine suggestion by Hodgson and Day in *Grand Prix Attack: f4 Against the Sicilian* that has given Black a perfect score in tournament practice. 13.dxc4 d4 14.0–0 dxc3† Black has a sizeable advantage; his king is not really exposed, so the material plus should eventually prove a telling factor. One game from this position continued:



15.bxc3 ♜c5† 16.♗d4 ♜xd4 17.♗e3 ♜ef5 18.cxd4 ♜xe3 19.dxc5 ♜xd1 20.♗axd1 ♜f8 21.♗fe1† ♜f7 22.c6 This was Bangiev – Wittmann, corr. 1986, and here best seems

22... $\mathbb{Q}f6N\mp$, when 1 cannot see any serious compensation for White.

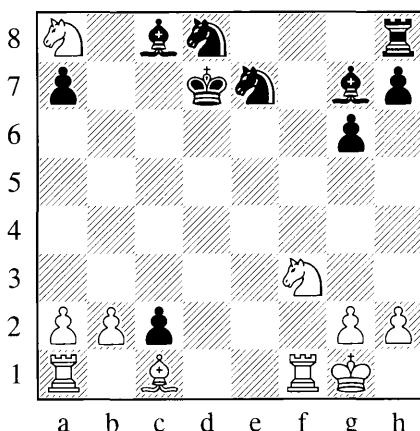
11... $c4$ 12. $dxc4$ $dxc4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8\ddagger$



13... $\mathbb{Q}xd8!!$

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd8?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $cxb3$ 15. $a xb3\bar{\infty}$ allows White fantastic compensation, in the shape of two pawns and powerful dark-square pressure around the black king.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $cxb3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $bxc2!$



It is time to review the situation. White has a material advantage, but it is only temporary as the a8-knight is trapped. In addition, Black has a monstrous pawn on c2 and his bishops (particularly the one on g7) are raking the

board. All this amounts to good winning chances for Black, but he must be careful.

White now usually plays **B11) 17.Qf2**, but **B12) 17.Qf4??** may be the better try.

B11) 17.Qf2

The best way of playing was found by John Shaw:

17... $\mathbb{Q}d5!!$

The a8-knight will not run away. In the meantime, Black takes care not to allow the equalizing manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}f4-e5$.

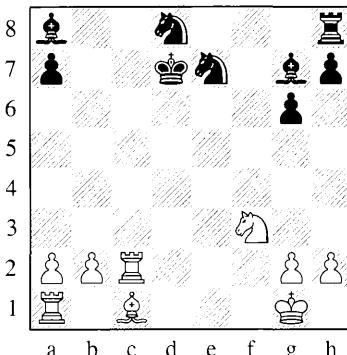
17... $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$

As I stated in the note to move 16, Black has to be careful. This gives White an opportunity to take the pawn immediately: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2!$

The late Russian grandmaster Andrei Kharlov gave 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2\ddagger?$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ in his notes to the game referenced on page 252, failing to notice the strong reply 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5\ddagger$ after which White lacks a satisfactory follow-up. For example, 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8\ddagger$ and we transpose to an unsatisfactory position for White mentioned below.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xa8$

18... $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ allows White too much play.



19. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1\ddagger!$

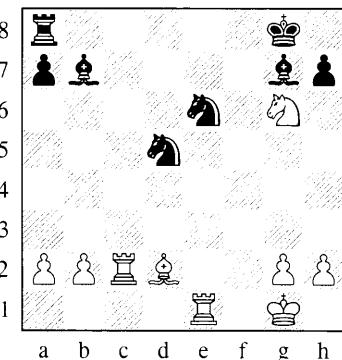
After 20.♗e5?! ♜xf3! 21.♕xg7 ♜xg7 22.gxf3 ♜gf5 23.♗d1† ♔e6 24.♗f2 ♜b8= Black is slightly better, provided he is prudent enough to keep his rook on the board.

20...♝d5 21.♗e5=

Equalizing for White, and perhaps doing a bit more than that, Wolf – Gorecki, Seefeld 2000.

18.♗xc2

18.♗d2?! is pointless because of 18...♝b7 19.♗xc2 ♜e6! Guarding d4 and fully coordinating Black's army. 20.♗d2 ♜xa8 21.♗d1 ♔e8! 22.♗e1 ♜f7 23.♗e5† ♔g8 The black king has escaped from the firing line of the white rooks. An attempt to recover some material by 24.♗xg6? fails to the following wonderful tactical sequence:



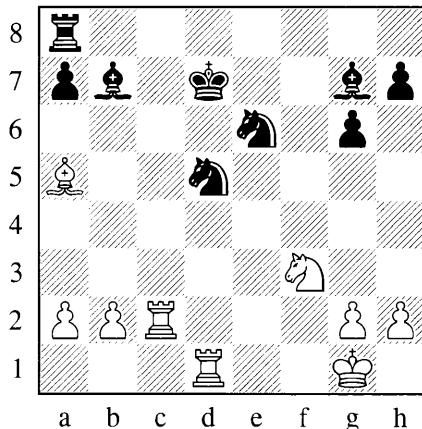
24...♜e8 25.♗f4 (25.♗h4 ♜d4†! 26.♔h1 ♜f2 27.♗e4 ♜f6 28.♗b4 ♜e4–+) 25...♜d4† 26.♔h1 ♜e3!! Unleashing both the e8-rook and the b7-bishop. 27.♗xe3 ♜xf4–+ White is dead lost.

18...♝e6!

Containing both the c1-bishop and the a8-knight; in this way, Black seems to obtain a small yet clear advantage.

19.♗d2 ♜b7 20.♗d1 ♜xa8 21.♗a5?!

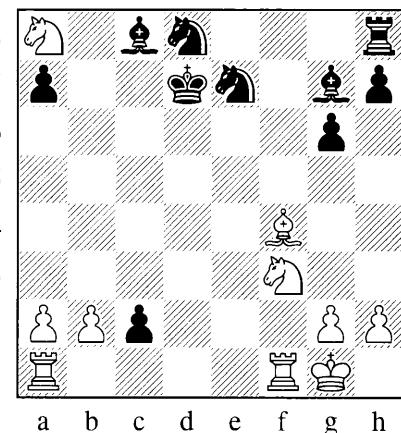
The lesser evil is: 21.♗c3 ♜c8 (21...♜h6?!) 22.♗cd2 ♜xc3 23.bxc3 ♜d6=



21...♜f8! 22.♗cd2 ♜f5 23.♗h4 ♜h5 24.♗f3 ♜h6 25.♗e2 ♜f4 26.♗c3 ♜g5! 27.♗e5† ♜c8 28.h3?? ♜xc3 29.bxc3 ♜xe5

White resigned in Guerrero Fuentes – Shaw, Gibraltar 2004.

B12) 17.♗f4?!



White intends to block the g7-bishop by interposing a piece on e5.

17...♜f8!

Black immediately puts pressure on the bishop, and activates his rook at the same time.

18.♗g3

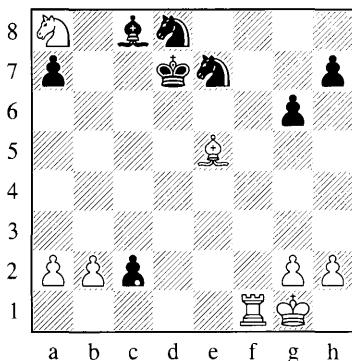
Suggested by Kharlov, but it's not a great improvement as we shall see.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xf1\#$

Black is practically winning, as the exchange of rooks has rendered the c2-pawn untouchable.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$

Black is also dictating events after 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1 \mathbb{Q}dc6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}d6!$ Preparing to support the pawn by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, as the check on e3 means it is untouchable for now. 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}e5\#$

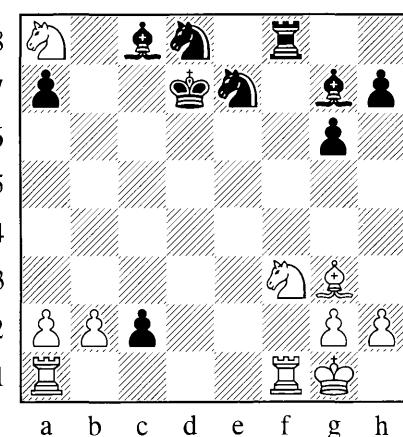


20... $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

21. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}d5\#$ is not an improvement.

21... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}d3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}cb4!$ 25. $a3 \mathbb{Q}c6!$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 27. $h3$ $h5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}d4\#$

Black went on to win on move 39 in Wedberg – Kharlov, Haninge 1992.

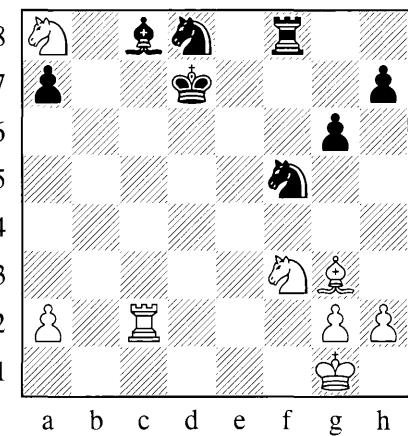


18... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$

It seems that White has few chances to survive after this.

19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}xc1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc1 \mathbb{Q}f5!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$

21. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}b7\#$



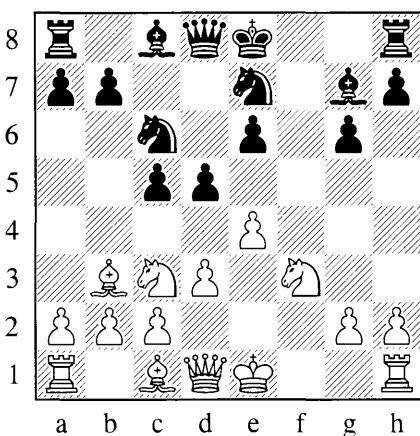
21... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 22. $hxg3$

22. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc8 \mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}d4\#$ leaves White in a state of despair. The threat is simply ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, swapping rooks and trapping the hapless knight on a8, and there is nothing to be done about it.

22... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xf3\#$

Black has excellent winning chances in the ensuing ending.

B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



It looks more prudent to refrain from freeing the c8-bishop.

9...b5!

Black continues in the same thematic style, by threatening to trap the ambitious bishop. White now has four options, and I will pay particular attention to **B21) 10.a4?!** and **B22) 10.0–0**.

10.exd5?! exd5 transposes to variation B1 above.

10.♗xb5?! ♕a5† 11.♗c3

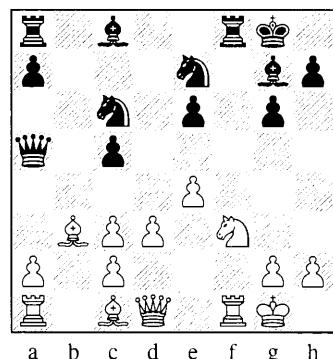
This is an unsound piece sacrifice.

11...d4

11...c4? 12.♗d2 cxb3 13.♗xd5 bxc2 14.♗xc2 ♕d8 as in Rudensky – Kozlov, USSR 1974, also looks fine for Black.

12.0–0 dxc3 13.bxc3 0–0

White doesn't seem to have enough for the knight; the c3-pawn is about to fall, with Black obtaining full control of the important dark-squared long diagonal.



14.♗g5 ♖d7 15.♗xe6†

15.♗xe6 ♖xe6 16.♗xe6† ♕h8 17.♗d2 ♖xc3 18.♗h6 (18.♗g5 c4!+ is a nice motif 18...♗xf1† 19.♗xf1 ♗g8!+) should win for Black as well.

15...♗xe6 16.♗xe6 ♕xc3?

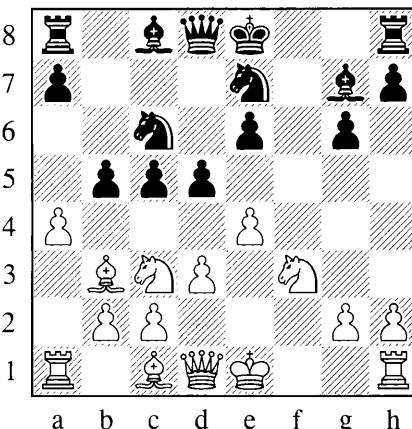
16...♗xf1†!N 17.♗xf1 ♕xc3+ looks stronger: it enables the queen to establish

contact with the kingside without allowing White to preserve an active rook on f1

17.♗xf8 ♕xa1 18.♗e6 ♕xa2?! 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♗f3! ♕e6 21.♗e3 ♕e5 22.♗f2 ♘d4 23.c3 ♘dc6 24.♘e3 ♕xc3 25.♘xc5 ♕e5 26.d4 ♕xe4 27.♗f6†

½–½ Bilek – Ribli, Hungary 1969. Due to Black's inexact play White had managed to reach a perpetual check.

B21) 10.a4?!



White intends to soften Black up on the a2-g8 diagonal. This idea is well-motivated strategically, but Black is able to come out on top with tactics.

10...b4 11.♗e2 ♘a5?!

The most circumspect, renewing the threat of ...c4.

11...h6N, however, may also be playable.

12.♗a2?!

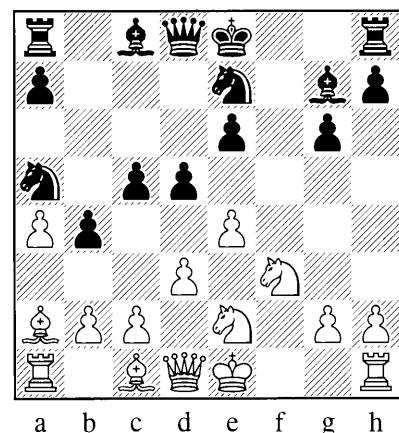
This idea was first brought to my attention by the game Nykopp – Niemela, Helsinki 1992, which continued 12...0–0 13.♗g5?! ♖b7 (13...♗xb2?N) 14.c3 with an unclear position.

Instead, 12.0–0?! ignores all positional rules,

allowing: 12...dxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ (13.dxe4! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}xb3!$ 15.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}b6\bar{f}$ would have kept White's disadvantage to a minimum) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 14.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}d4\bar{f}$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}e5\bar{f}$ Black's wonderful centralization offered him a clear plus in A. Stein – Liberzon, Tel Aviv 1978.

12.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 13.cxb3 $\mathbb{W}xd5\bar{f}$ is at least slightly better for Black, as White's pawn structure is the more damaged of the two and Black's bishops are supreme.

Finally, 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ dxe4 13.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}xd1\bar{f}$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ c4 15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ b3 16.cxb3 cxb3 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}xb2\bar{f}$ was better for Black in Yap – Williams, Sheffield 2011, as White's activity does not fully compensate for the pawn.



12...dxe4!?

Entering crazy complications: Black accepts the challenge and tries to prove that White's strategy has been a failure.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$

This is the point of White's play, preparing to pile up heavily against e6.

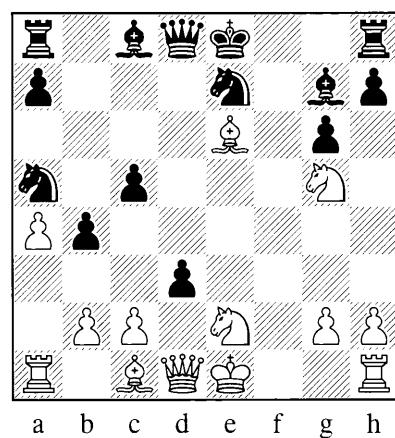
13.dxe4? $\mathbb{W}xd1\bar{f}$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd1 \mathbb{Q}ec6!$ (14...c4?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}ed4\bar{f}$) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e5 \bar{f})

17...0-0 \bar{f} Black held a large endgame advantage in Klitchev – Baikov, Moscow 1995.

13...exd3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!?$ N

This should be the critical test of the line, but Black seems able to survive the storm.

14.cxd3 is simply met by 14...b3! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}d5\bar{f}$ and White's weak queenside will be a target for the black bishops.

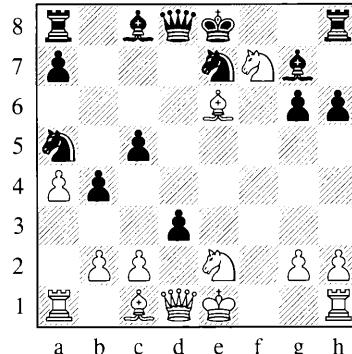


14...h6!

A cool and unexpected reaction which, in fact, is the only move!

15. $\mathbb{Q}f7\bar{f}$

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}f7\bar{f}$? it's time for a grandiose queen sacrifice:

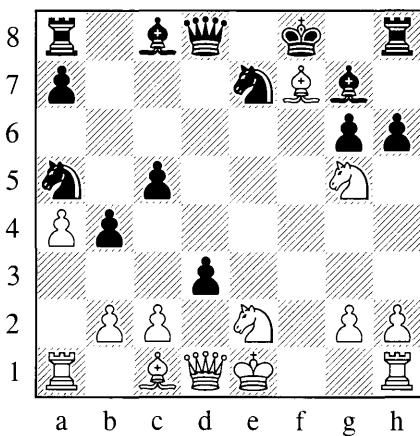


15... $\mathbb{Q}xe6!?$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ dxe2 17. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ (17. $\mathbb{W}d6?$)

♝xd8 18.♗xe6 ♜d1† 19.♗xe2 ♞xh1† with the idea 20.♗g5? ♛ac6!–+) 17...♞c4† Black will not be able to hold out for long with his king so exposed.

15...♞f8

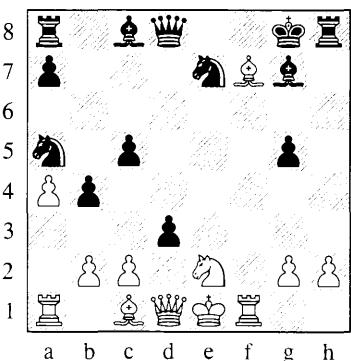
The area surrounding Black's king looks a bit draughty, but White is hanging all over the place and he cannot exploit it.



16.0–0!?

The most combative.

In case of 16.♗f1 there follows: 16...hxg5 17.♗xg6† (17.♗xg5 d2†!– forces White to pull the bishop back, after which his attack fades away.) 17...♝g8 18.♗f7† (After 18.♗xg5 d2†! the same motif appears again, exploiting the weakness of the king staying on e1.)



18...♝h7 19.♗g3 (19.♗d4? ♘xd4 20.♗h5† ♜h6–+) 19...g4† Black has weathered the storm, as White cannot access h5 with his queen and the rook is coming to f8.

16...hxg5

Black has won a piece, but from now on great accuracy is required as White has attacking resources.

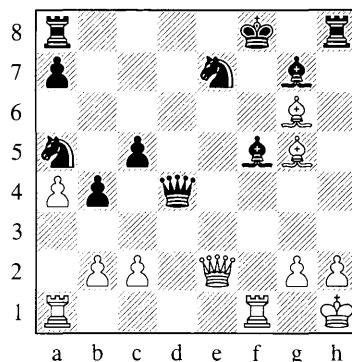
17.♗xg6†

Other lines won't suffice for White either.

It is easy to understand that Black is practically winning after 17.♗d5† ♜f5 18.♗xa8 ♘xa8†.

More complicated is:

17.♗xg6 ♜f5 18.♗xg6! dxе2 19.♗xe2?!
19...♝xe7† 20.♗xf5† ♜f6–+
19...♝d4† 20.♗h1



20...♜exh2†!

20...♝xg6? 21.♗xf5† ♜g8 22.♗e6† ♜h7
23.♗f3!–+

21.♗xh2 ♘d6†

White is worse no matter which of the following variations he chooses:

22.♗h1

White's king has become weak too, and every move has its defects:

- a) 22.♗g1 ♜d4†–
- b) 22.g3 weakens the light-square complex h3-g2-h1, something that Black should be

able to exploit. 22... $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xc5 \mathbb{Q}e4\#$ with the idea: 25. $\mathbb{W}xa5?$ (25. $\mathbb{W}xb4?$ $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{W}e2\#$) 25... $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{W}e2\#-$ 22... $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$

With threats like ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ Black is clearly in the driver's seat.

17... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{Q}e6\#$

18... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3!?$

Weaker is 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1 gxf4-$ -.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5 dxe2$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe2 \mathbb{W}d4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}g4!$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe7 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{E}ad8$ Black has obtained a winning counterattack. After 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, the strong reply 24... $\mathbb{E}hf8!$ emphasizes the overloading of the white pieces.

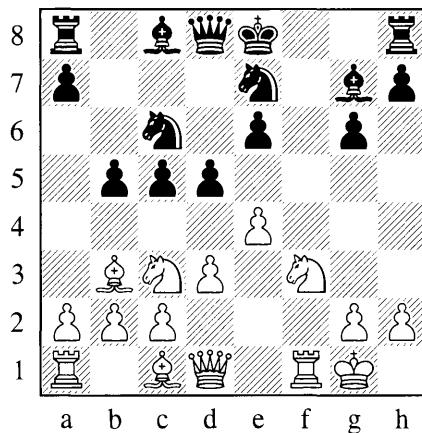
19... $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e1$

21. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$ is another try, although we are still well in control after 21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.

22... $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$

Now it becomes clear that Black is taking over the initiative; his king can move to g7, opening up pressure against h2. White's compensation is insufficient.

B22) 10.0–0



The best move, offering White approximate equality.

10... $c4$

There is no going back now.

11. $dxc4 bxc4!$

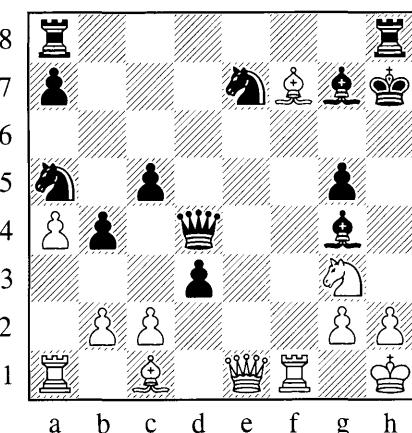
Playing to get a pawn on c2 is the order of the day here too.

11... $dxc4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 cxb3$ 14. $a xb3\#$ is a position where White's initiative fully compensates for the piece.

12. $exd5!?$

White wants to open lines in the centre, where the black king is still located.

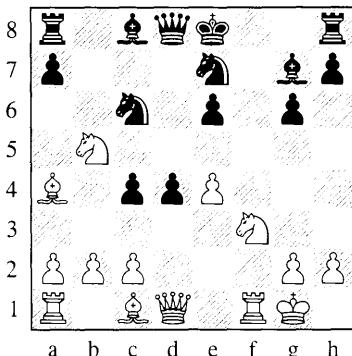
Better is: 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ $d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5!N$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$; 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1 0-0$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5 c3$ 15. $b xc3 \mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3 dx3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{E}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb6 \mathbb{E}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd1 axb6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{E}a8$ 23. $a3 \mathbb{E}a4=)$



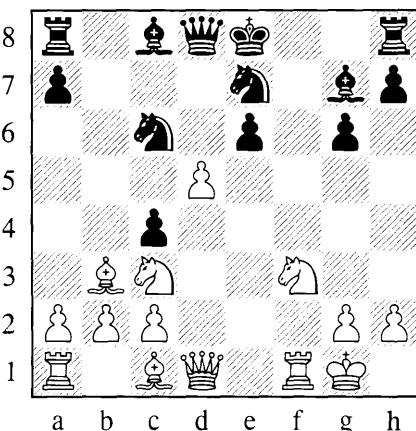
21... $dxc2!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

22. $\mathbb{W}xe7 \mathbb{W}e5!$ By exchanging queens, Black removes any potential danger to his king and obtains a winning ending.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{Q}g6-$ - is also hopeless for White.



13...0–0 14.♘d2 ♘e5 15.♗xf8+ ♖xf8 16.♕f3 ♘c6 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 19.♘xd4 ♖c5 20.c3 ♖b7= Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but no more.



12...cx b3!N

White is better after 12...exd5 13.♖a4 0–0 14.♗xc6 ♗b6+ 15.♗f2 ♗xc6 16.♘d4 ♗b6 17.♗xf8+ ♖xf8 18.♗e3 ♗xb2 19.♗e1!↑.

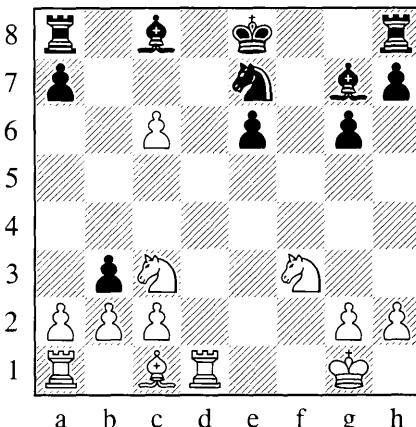
13.♗xc6 ♗xd1

Black has achieved his aim of exchanging queens without allowing the opening of the a-file, and without losing the castling privilege. Of course he has no material advantage here, but it is the initiative that counts.

14.♗xd1

14.♗xd1 bxc2 15.♘e3 ♘xc6 (15...♖a6

16.♗f2 ♗c8+) 16.♘xc2 ♗b8 is annoying for White, with moves like ...♖a6 and ...0–0 about to emphasize the pressure.



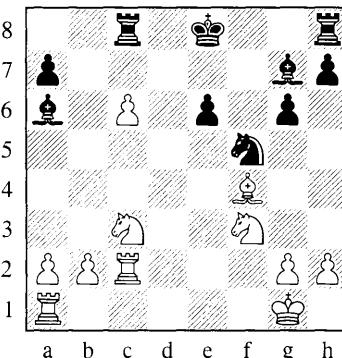
14...bxc2 15.♗d2

White wants to get rid of the dangerous pawn right away.

15.♗d6

This does not fully equalize either:

15...♗f5 16.♗d2 ♖a6! 17.♗xc2 ♗c8 18.♗f4 18.♘e4 ♖d3 19.♗d6+ ♗xd6 20.♗d2 ♖e4 21.♗xd6 ♗xc6 22.♗xc6 ♗xc6= 18.♘a4 ♗d4+ 19.♗xd4? ♗xd4+ 20.♔h1 ♖d3! 21.♗d2 ♗f8 22.♗d1 ♗c2+–



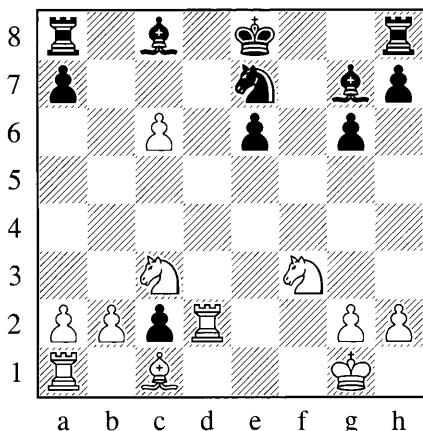
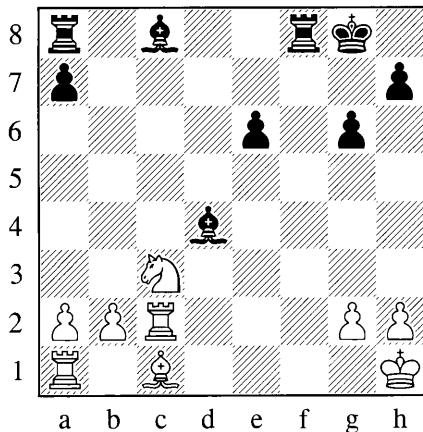
18...♗d4!

It is important to exchange the good knight on f3.

18...♗xc6 19.♔e5=

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d2 \mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 20. $gxf3 \mathbb{E}xc6\#$ 19. $\mathbb{E}f2 0-0\#$ 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{E}xc6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d2 e5\#$

The black bishops are dominating the board.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xc2 \mathbb{Q}d4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1 0-0\#$ 

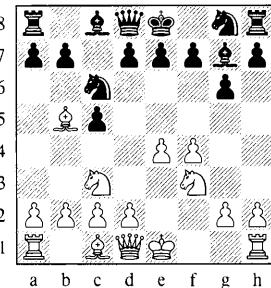
Black has two good bishops, and the e-pawn is more of a strength than a weakness. Still, White's position is not that bad and he should be able to draw with correct play.

Conclusion

The Grand Prix Attack against the Sicilian is a lively yet brutal system. White places his bishop on c4 and hopes that the march of the f-pawn will soften up Black's defences – making this piece an important attacking tool. Our strategy throughout this chapter was to block the bishop's radius by placing a pawn on e6; playing to then restrict it further or exchange it, all according to circumstance. I think that the repertoire offered here provides Black with sound ways to neutralize White's initiative while keeping his winning chances alive, and at the same time does not put him in any kind of jeopardy. The verdict is equality, but I think Black's position is the easier one to play: I would expect readers to score reasonably well by mastering the lines and the nuances presented here.



2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Grand Prix Attack – 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Variation Index

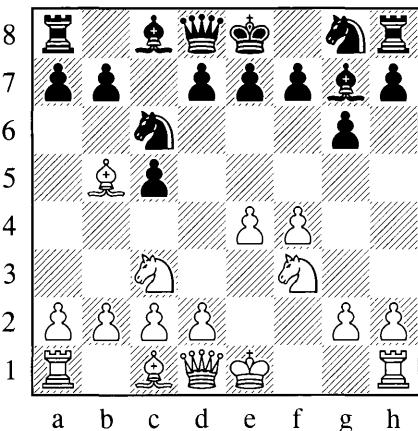
1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.f4 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}b5$!?

5... $\mathbb{Q}d4$!

A) 6.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$!?	260
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C) 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$	271
C1) 8.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$	272
C11) 9.c4?!	272
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D) 6.0–0!? a6!	283
D1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$!?	283
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1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.f4 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g7$
5. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$?

The more fashionable branch of the Grand Prix. White has a positional threat now in $\mathbb{Q}xc6$, leaving Black with a rather inflexible pawn formation.



5... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

A typical reaction. The knight moves again, but this is fully justified as it occupies a fine central position while attacking the b5-bishop. An extra advantage of the knight's new location is that if White were to exchange it by $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ at some point, then ...cx d 4 gains space and time by hitting the c3-knight.

White's four options at this point are: A) 6.a4, B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, C) 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ and D) 6.0–0!?

6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ will likely transpose to lines mentioned elsewhere, for example 6...d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cx d 4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ takes us to variation D1.

A) 6.a4

This is a widely adopted move, with the idea being to maintain the annoying pin on the d-pawn and to prevent a queenside expansion by ...b5. Black has various ways to react.

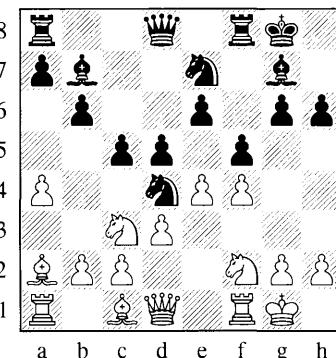
6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$?

The most straightforward reply. Black's play is associated with a direct ...d5.

6...b6

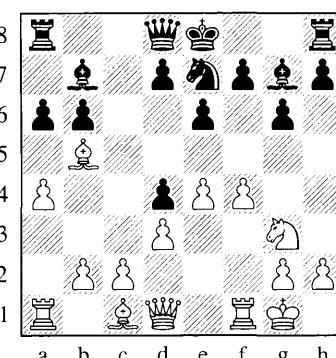
Another logical idea; Black wants to continue development, whilst avoiding an immediate confrontation in the centre.

7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8.d3 e6 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
9. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$? $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ d5 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$
0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ leaves both the a2-bishop and f2-knight as passive spectators. 13...f5!?



14. exd5? (14.e5 N \bar{r}) 14...exd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17.c3 d4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ dx c 3 20. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ Black was clearly better in Meister – Pugusov, Tula 1991.

9...cx d 4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ a6!?
11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. a5! $\mathbb{N}\bar{r}$ is unclear. Instead, 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$? a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ dx e 4 15. dx e 4 h5! \bar{r} was better for Black in Ljubarskij – Meister, Altenkirchen 2005.



12.♗c4 d5 13.♗b3 dxe4 14.dxe4 h5 15.♗d3∞

A double-edged position arises, where Black can continue logically with either 15...h4? or 15...♗c7?. Both moves are aiming to put e4 under pressure.

Another option is:

6...a6 7.♗d3?!

7.♗c4 e6 8.0–0 ♜e7 9.d3 d5? transposes to the note on 9.a4?! in variation D2.

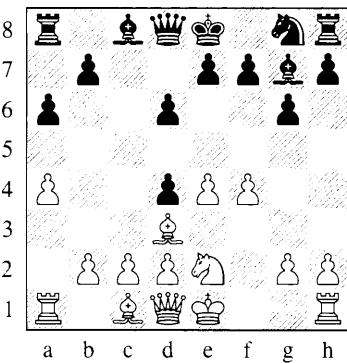
7...d6

Intending the dangerous ...♗g4.

8.♗xd4 cxd4

8...♗xd4?! 9.a5? is better for White as the weakness of b6 gives us headaches.

9.♗e2



9...e5?!

This rare move looks okay for us.

10.0–0

10.b3 ♘h4?!, 11.g3 ♘d8? is at least equal for Black.

10...♗f6N

10...♗h6 was Drahorad – Cekan, Klatovy 2013, when Black soon went wrong and lost.

11.c3 dxc3 12.bxc3

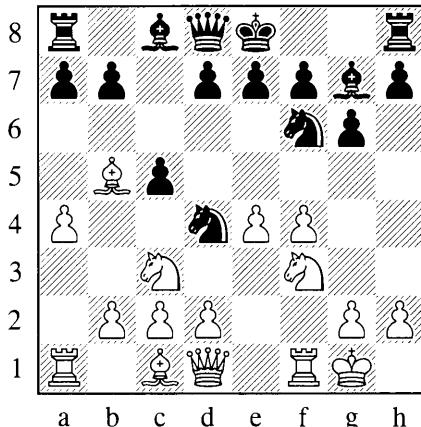
12.dxc3 0–0 13.a5 b5? is also fine for Black, as he has a healthy queenside and the pressure on e4 will be strong

12...0–0 13.♗c2 ♘e8∞

Leading to very complicated play.

We immediately reach another branching point. White has A1) 7.0–0 or A2) 7.e5.

A1) 7.0–0



Slightly less committal, intending to push e4–e5 only after Black has castled.

7...0–0 8.e5

8.d3 d5? looks more than okay for Black.

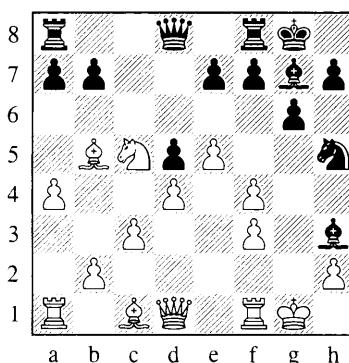
8...♗h5

White now has a choice, although not a satisfactory one in my opinion.

9.♗xd4

9.f5?!, ♗xf3† 10.♘xf3 ♘xe5 is a rather speculative pawn sacrifice. I don't see real compensation for White here.

9.♗e4? can be answered by: 9...d5! 10.♗xc5 ♗g4 11.c3 (11.♗e2 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗xf4 13.c3 ♘xe5!, 14.cxd4 ♗xd4† 15.♗h1 ♘xc5 16.d4 ♗d6 17.g3 ♗e6 18.♗h6 ♗g7 19.♗xd5 ♗f4!, 20.♗xf7† ♗xf7† is better for Black.) 11...♗xf3† 12.gxf3 ♘h3 13.d4



13...b6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}xf1$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf1 \mathbb{Q}h6!$)
 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ f6! → In addition to an extra exchange, Black obtains a strong attack too.

9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Black should be able to hold his own comfortably, and can perhaps hope for a bit more than that.

10...d5?! 11. $\mathbb{Q}c5$?

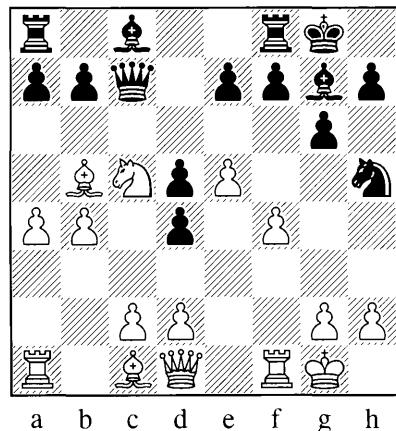
Both 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$?! f6! 12. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13. g3 e5! and 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 12. hxg3 f6! are worse for White.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7$?

One interesting possibility among many. Black prepares to sacrifice a piece.

12.b4

On 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$, best appears: 12...f6! (12... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ is not so clear. But not 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$? $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. c3 e5!) 13. g4 fxe5 14. gxh5 e4! With excellent compensation for the sacrificed piece. Black's powerful bishops and pressure on f4, combined with White's stilted development, make this position more pleasant for him.



12... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ a6!

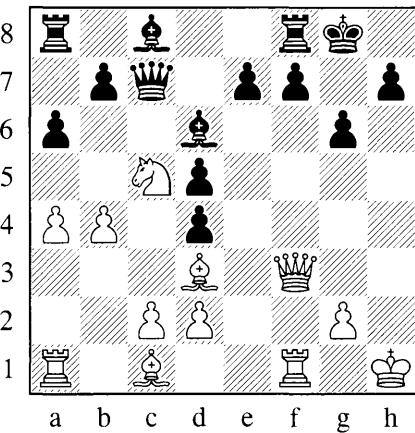
Forcing White to block his d-pawn.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Now, however, the c1-bishop is hemmed in.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ † 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f3$

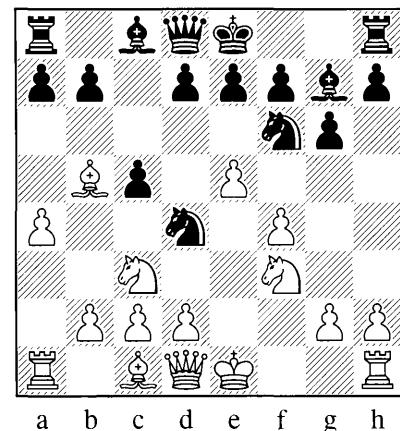
17. a5 e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e4 → looks awful for White as Black threatens ... $\mathbb{W}d8-g5$.



17...b6! 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ e5→

Black has strong compensation, thanks to his powerful bishops and massive centre.

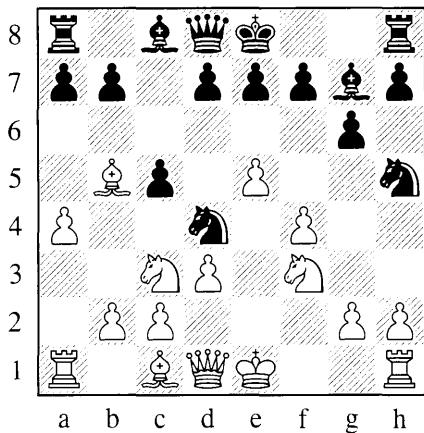
A2) 7.e5



The principled reaction, trying to gain space in the centre.

7... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 8. d3?

8.0–0 0–0 transposes to variation A1, analysed above.



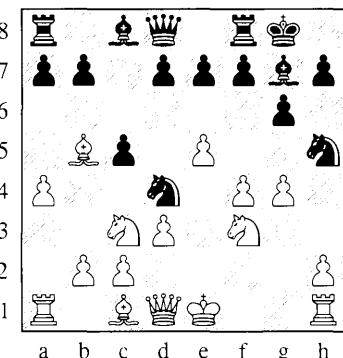
8...0–0!?

Apparently losing a piece, but the exposed nature of the b5-bishop's placement gives Black the necessary counterplay.

9.♗xd4

9.g4

This is strongly met by:



9...d5!

9...a6 10.gxh5 (10.♗c4 d5 11.exd6 ♗xg4+) 10...axb5 11.♗xd4 cxd4 12.♗xb5 d6 13.exd6 exd6 14.0–0 ♗h3 is also good, but is less convincing.

10.f5

10.♗g1 ♗xf4! 11.♗xf4 a6=

10...a6 11.gxh5 axb5=

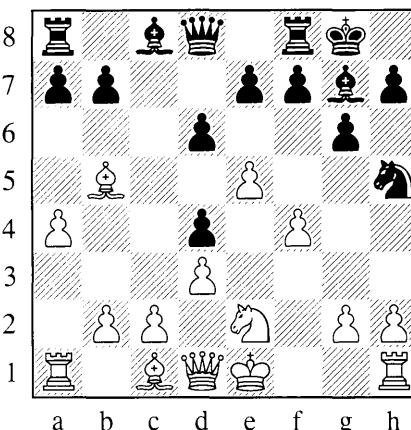
A sample line could be:

12.♗xd4 cxd4 13.♗xb5 ♗xf5 14.♗f4 ♗b8!
15.♗e2 f6!↑

Black holds all the trumps.

9...cxd4 10.♗e2 d6

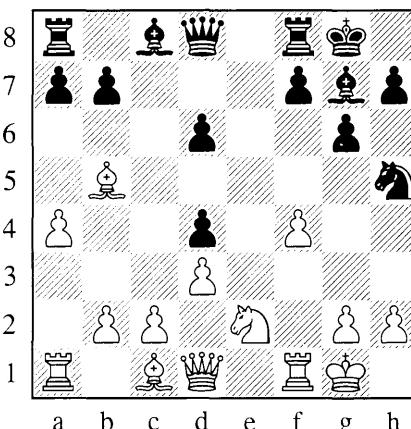
The opening up of the game finds White underdeveloped.



11.exd6 exd6!?

Black fights against the stray b5-bishop and highlights the weakness of e3. Taking with the queen is also more comfortable for Black.

12.0–0



12...♗g4!?

12...d5N, with the idea of 13...a6, is another good option. For instance, 13.a5 a6 14.Qa4 ♕xa5 15.h3 ♕c5† and it is doubtful that White has enough compensation for a pawn.

13.Qf2

The best defence, allowing the queen to unpin by moving to f1 if needed.

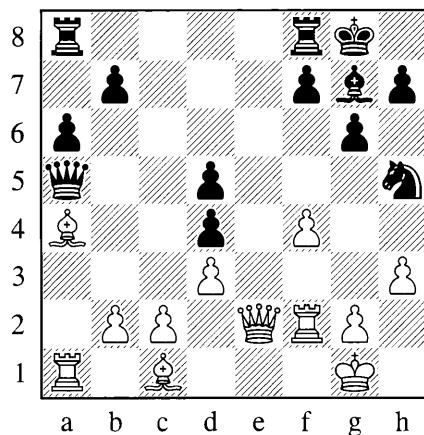
13.Qe1?! a6 14.Qc4 ♕h4 15.Qd2 Qfe8 looks dangerous for White, with the point being 16.h3 Qf6!.

13...d5

With the idea of 14...a6.

14.a5 a6 15.Qa4 ♕xa5 16.h3 Qxe2 17.Qxe2!

Worse is 17.Qxe2, as given by Bangiev, because after 17...Qg3 18.Qe1 Qf5† Black keeps all the trumps.



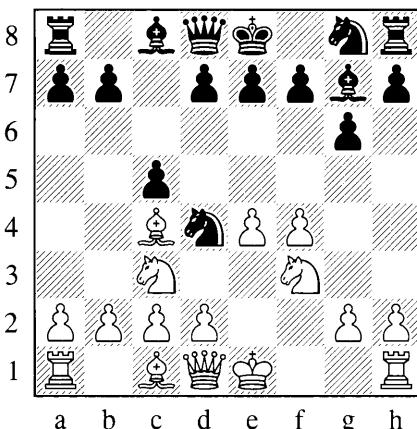
17...Qg3!

Bangiev gave 17...Qfe8?! as better for Black, overlooking the fine reply 18.b4! Qxe2 19.bxa5 Qg3 20.Qd2 Qc8 21.Qb1=, when White is not worse.

18.Qf3 Qf5 19.Qd2 Qc5 20.Qe2 Qe3†

We have been following Gulko – Gomez Esteban, Pamplona 1996. Black has a slight initiative, although White did manage to hold.

B) 6.Qc4



Retreating the bishop spares Black a tempo he would probably invest on ...a6. That is because the second player does not necessarily intend to play ...Qxb5, but would prefer to “bury” this bishop by advancing his queenside pawns.

6...e6!

We are at another crossroads: **B1) 7.d3** is the less incisive path, focusing on development, while the more ambitious **B2) 7.e5!?** is a playable alternative. White also has the following options:

7.Qxd4 cxd4 8.Qe2 Qe7 9.0–0?!

9.d3 is a direct transposition to variation B1. The text is an attempt to play without d2-d3 that fails to:

9...d5! 10.Qb5†

10.exd5 Qxd5 led to an edge for Black in Choisy – Favarel, France 2006.

10...Qc6!†

Black has the better chances. For example: 11.d3

11.e5 Qb6!†

11...0–0

11...Qb6!N also looks good on this move.

12.Qh1!?

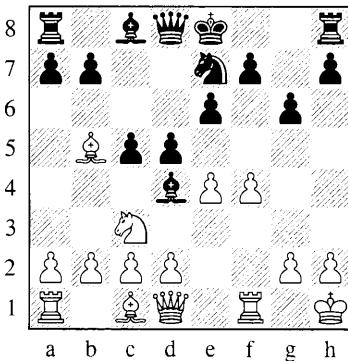
12.e5!N Qb6 13.Qa4 f6 14.exf6 Qxf6

15.♗d2 ♘c5† was preferable.

12...♗d7 13.♗a4 ♘c8 14.♗d2 dxe4 15.dxe4 ♗b8 16.♗xd7 ♘xd7 17.e5 ♘fd8 18.♗g3 ♘b5†

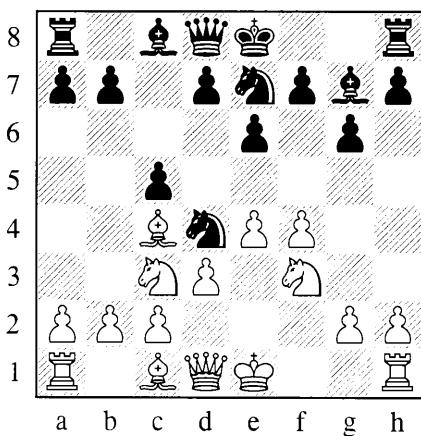
Black won easily in Mahjoob – Kupreichik, Kish 2003.

Finally, 7.0–0 is a weaker move order, because after 7...♝e7 8.♗xd4 (8.d3 d5† is a clear edge for Black) Black takes back with the bishop on d4: 8...♗xd4†! 9.♔h1 d5 10.♗b5†



10...♗d7!N (10...♝f8!? 11.♗e2 dxe4 12.♗xe4 b6 13.c3 ♗g7 14.d3 ♘b7= was approximately balanced in Dinev – Damljanovic, Skopje 2014, although Black later outplayed his opponent.) 11.a4 ♘xb5 12.axb5 0–0† Black has better development, and has targets to pile up on in the future.

B1) 7.d3 ♘e7



Black is ready for ...d5, so White needs to be incisive to avoid falling into a prospectless position.

8.♗xd4!

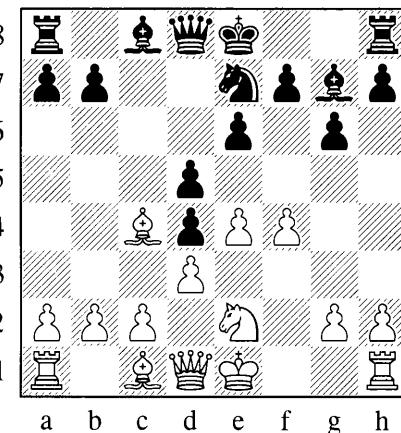
An appropriate moment to take on d4, as Black is forced to recapture with the pawn.

8...cx d4

8...♗xd4? is unfortunately bad here, because White has 9.♗b5†.

9.♗e2 d5

Despite having been lured into ...cx d4, Black appears to have sufficient counterplay, as this central thrust forces White to make some concessions too:



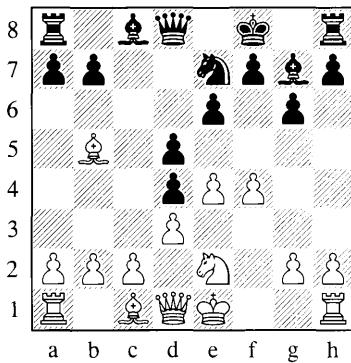
10.♗b3

A logical retreat, but at the same time an admission that any chance for an initiative has evaporated; the bishop is rather cramped on b3.

10.♗b5†N ♘f8!?

This is an interesting possibility, in Damljanovic style, trying to prove that the b5-bishop is a liability.

10...♗d7 is natural and fine for Black after: 11.♗xd7† ♘xd7 12.e5 f6 13.♗xd4 (13.exf6 ♘xf6†) 13...fxe5 14.fxe5 15.♗f3 ♘g7=



We have reached a position that is quite satisfactory for Black, but it does not offer many winning chances as White is solid too. White now has three ways to cope with the threatened check on a5:

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White wants to maintain contact with d3, from where the e4-pawn can be defended.

- a) Instead, 11.0-0? is just a blunder on account of 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ dxe4??
- b) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$?! a6?! (11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ dxe4 13.dxe4 $\mathbb{W}xb2$ is also worth considering)

12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ dxe4 14.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}b7\uparrow$ This underlines the weakness of e4, as the queen cannot protect it. After 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$, Black comes up with the typical 15...h5!↑ and has all the trumps on his side.

11...a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ dxe4 14.dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$
15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$??

Black intends ... $\mathbb{W}c6$, when he maintains good counterplay as e4 can still become the object of serious pressure.

10...dxe4

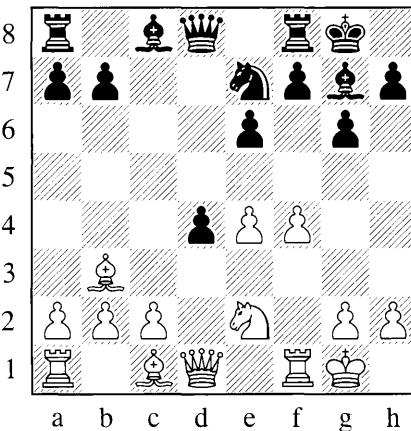
The move preferred in praxis.

10...a5?! is best answered by 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 13.e5 f6! 14.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6\infty$, when it's not clear whether the pawn on a5 improves or worsens Black's chances.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$?! is a logical move, preparing to take on e4 and then use the bishop on c6 or b5. The

computer suggests 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{W}b6=$, with a position it evaluates as slightly better for Black, but I think it tends to underestimate the chances of the first player. I consider the position to be approximately balanced, as we are a bit static in the centre.

11.dxe4 0-0 12.0-0



12...b6

This appears to be the human reaction, making both the a8-h1 and a6-f1 diagonals accessible to the black bishop.

12...b5?! is an interesting suggestion by the computers. Black intends to follow up with ...a5, enforcing a line opening on the queenside. It seems that Black may have a slight pull.

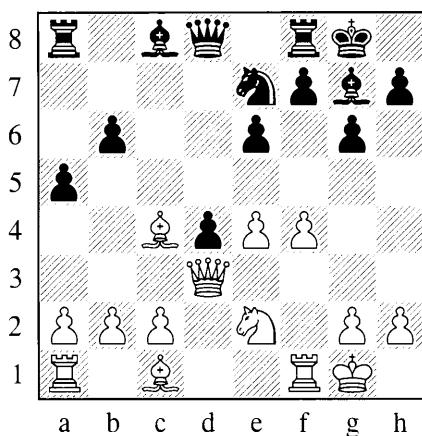
13. $\mathbb{W}d3$?

White wants to stop ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$, planning either e4-e5 followed by $\mathbb{Q}e4$, or f4-f5, allows 13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ d3?! 15.c3 $\mathbb{W}d7$, when Black stands fine. 16.f5? (16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5?! 17.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5\mp$ looks excellent for Black) 16...exf5 17.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ gxsf5 19. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$! This was Szell – Kosanovic, Szekszard 1994, and at this point White should

have bailed out with 22.♕xf5!N ♜e3† 23.♕xe3 ♜xe3 24.♗d1 ♜e2 25.♗f2 ♜g7 26.♗d5 ♜fe8!= when the ending is equal in various ways.

13...a5?! **14.♗c4**



14...♗b7! 15.a4N

15.♗d1 was Vasilevich – Gomes, Beijing (rapid) 2008, and now 15...♝c7N† looks best.

15.♗g3 ♜c8 16.♗d2 h5! 17.f5 h4 18.fxe6 f5!†

15.b3 ♜xe4! 16.♝xe4 d3 17.♗b1 dxе2 18.♝xe2 ♜c7†

15...♝c8 16.b3 ♜xe4! 17.♝xe4 d3 18.♗b1 dxе2 19.♝xe2 ♜d5=/?

In spite of producing some interesting positions, this line is at most equal for White.

B2) 7.e5?!

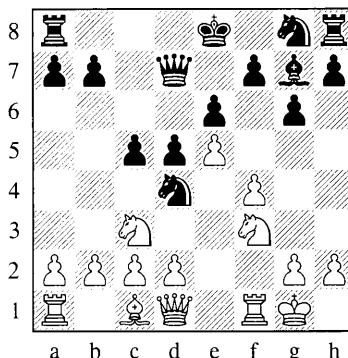
Intending ♜e4, or ♜xd4 followed by ♜b5.

7...d5!

We have reached another split, with White having to make a difficult choice: **B21) 8.exd6** has been the most common reaction in the past, but it gives Black a free hand in the centre. Recently **B22) 8.♗xd4?!** has grown in popularity, and is the main alternative.

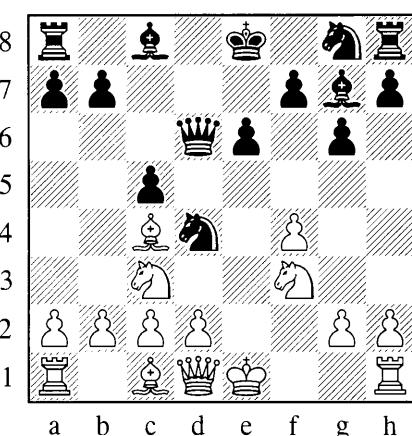
Weaker is the clumsy 8.♗d3?!, as played in Donadio – Di Pietro, corr. 2009, in view of the powerful reply 8...f6!N, when in my opinion Black is already better. Play could go on 9.0–0 ♜xf3† 10.♕xf3 ♜e7†, and it is clear that the d3-bishop obstructs White's development.

The continuation 8.♗b5† ♜d7 9.♗xd7† ♜xd7 10.0–0?! (better seems 10.♗xd4 cxd4, transposing to variation B22) adopted by White in Kowalczyk – Wozniak, Polanica Zdroj 2009, is probably best met with:



10...♜xf3†?N 11.♕xf3 f6!† Black has effortlessly obtained a typically good position.

B21) 8.exd6 ♜xd6



9.d3

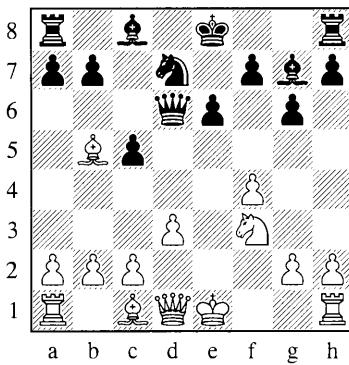
Black can develop his king's knight in two plausible ways: **B211) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$** or **B212) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$** .

B211) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This appears to guarantee a small advantage with the minimum of risk, as e4 is being covered. In fact, every exchange renders the c4-bishop even more impotent than it is right now.

10.0–0

10. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ Black should not exchange his light-squared bishop, as it has a bright future on the long diagonal.



12. a4 0–0 13. 0–0 a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ b6 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ Black was clearly better in Vranešević – Korbut, Budva 2003, as the c4-bishop has turned into a spectator, and Black is threatening to shut it completely out of the game by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (or ... $\mathbb{W}c6$) followed by ...b5.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$ is preferable for Black too.

10...0–0

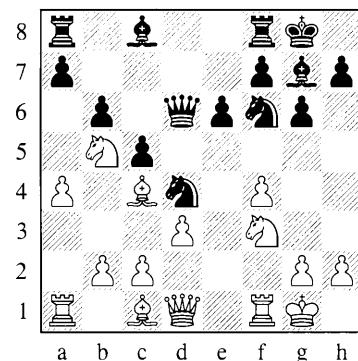
It seems to me that White lacks a constructive plan.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

This move is designed to avoid unpleasant

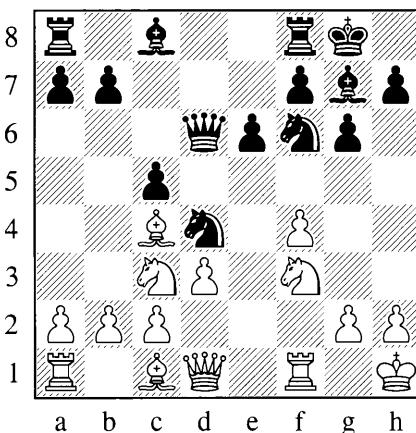
checks on d4.

11. a4!? should be answered by 11...b6!, with the idea: 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#N$ (12... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13. axb5= was balanced in Gorozhankina – Nguyen Thi Mai, Kemer 2009, as White had stabilized the position of the c4-bishop and even obtained some pressure against a7.) 13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}b8!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6 \mp Black obtains a small but persistent advantage.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ allows 11... $\mathbb{W}xd4\#!$ (11... cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4=$) 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ b6 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7\#$, and again the onus is on White to seek equality.



11...b6!?

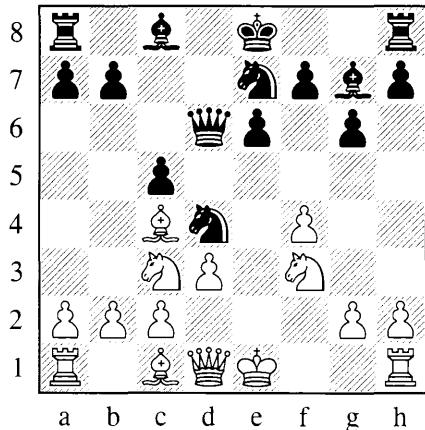
The most exact.

11...a6 allows the extra option: 12.♗xd4N (12.a4 b6 13.♕e4 ♜c7 14.c3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♜b7† led to the usual slight edge for Black in Boeller – Purucker, Krumbach 1973, as the unstable position of the c4-bishop means that gradually White will face problems with his d3-pawn. In addition, the c1-bishop is also a problematic piece as the pawn on f4 blocks its activity.) 12...cxsd4 (12...♗xd4 13.♗f3† would allow White to develop with ♔e3, obtaining some sort of momentum) 13.♗e4† Black is still slightly better though.

12.a4 a6†

Black's position is the more comfortable, in view of the looming pressure on the long diagonal and the lack of prospects for the c4-bishop. As the reader might have noticed, we have transposed to Boeller – Purucker in the above note – a game that was eventually won by Black.

B212) 9...♗e7!!



This move is not to be dismissed lightly as the knight heads for the extremely appealing f5-square, from where it can operate at maximum capacity. Black seems to be dictating events here too.

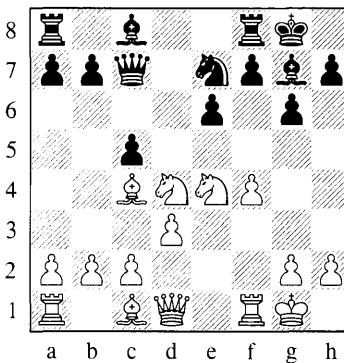
10.♗e4

10.0–0 0–0 11.♗e4

11.♗xd4?! should be answered by: 11...♗xd4†! 12.♔h1 b6!N 13.♗f3 (13.♗e4 ♜b7 14.c3 ♜d7 15.a4 ♗f5†/† is not a significant improvement for White, as he will soon find himself under heavy pressure on the d-file after moves like ...♗ad8 and ...♗d6.) 13...♗d7! 14.♗xa8 (14.♗e4 ♜b7 15.a4 [15.♗h3? b5! 16.♗xc5 ♜c7–+] 15...♗c6† also looks bad for White.) 14...♗b7 15.♗xf8† ♗xf8† The black queen seems to be more than a match for the white rooks, due to the powerful pressure against g2. Once the knight arrives on f5 Black can toy with the idea ...♗h4(d4), and the c4-bishop seems completely out of play.

11...♗c7 12.♗xd4N

12.c3?! b5! 13.♗b3 was Mariano – Zambrana, Rio de Janeiro 2011, when best was 13...♗xf3†!N 14.♗xf3 ♜b7 15.♗e2 ♗f5 16.♗c2 ♜fd8†, intending ...b4, with a sizeable plus for Black.



12...♗xd4†! 13.♔h1 b6! 14.c3

14.♗e1 is also met by 14...♗f5†.

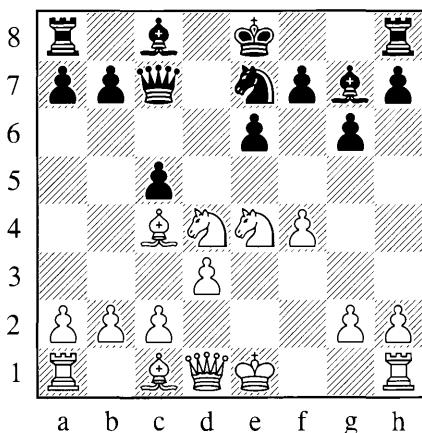
14...♗g7 15.♗e1 ♗f5†

Black is slightly better, as White has run out of ideas.

10...♗c7 11.♗xd4

11.c3 ♗xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♜d7 is better for Black, for example: 13.♗f2? (After 13.0–0 I like the untested 13...♗c6!N 14.♗e2 b5

15... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 0–0– \bar{f} with the better game for Black, but other methods of play are also viable.) 13...b6 (interesting is 13...b5!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c4 15.dxc4 0–0 16.c5 b4!– ∞) 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ h5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0– \bar{f} Black went on to exploit his advantage in Hebden – Chandler, Brighton 1980.

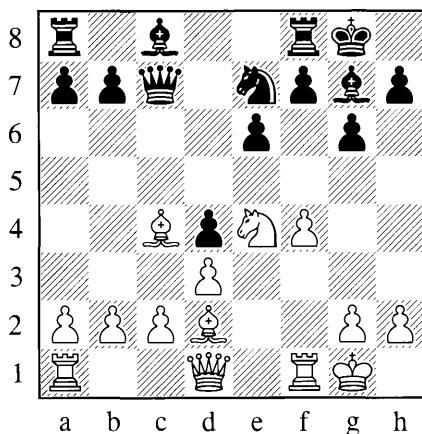


11...cx d 4!

Unnecessary is 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?! 12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ †!, when Black will either have to forfeit castling or lose a pawn.

12.0–0 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

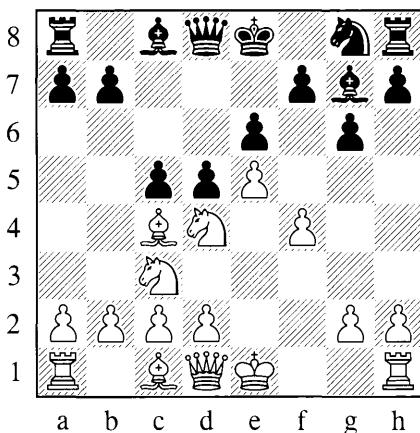
Black will have long-term pressure on the a8-h1 diagonal and strong points for his knight, so the position is better for him. A possible follow-up is:



13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ – \bar{f}

The second player has reached the ideal configuration and has lasting pressure. If White tries to just “stick”, an idea could be ... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ followed by a timely ... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ jump.

B22) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$?



This may well be the best move.

8...cx d 4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ † $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ † $\mathbb{W}xd7$

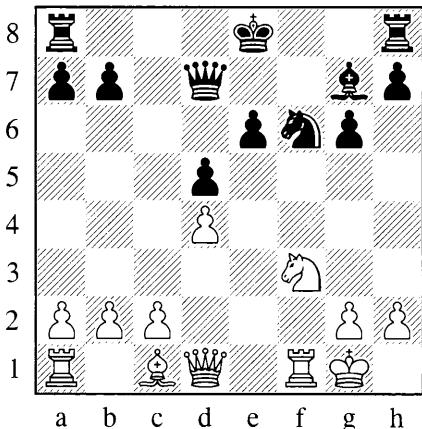
White has succeeded in exchanging his rather problematic light-squared bishop.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f6! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$!

12.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 13.d3 (13.0–0 d3! 14.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ – \bar{f} is probably better for Black, as his knight will plunge to either c6 or f5, leaving White completely stuck with his queenside development.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ – \bar{f} Black has fine counterplay and the better long-term chances, as c2 is feeble and e3 is a potential weakness.

12...fx e 5 13.fx e 5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16.d4

16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 17.d3 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5! 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ b6 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 23.d4 $\mathbb{W}xa7$ – ∞ led to a complicated position that was not worse for Black in Van der Merwe – Azarya, Albena 2014.

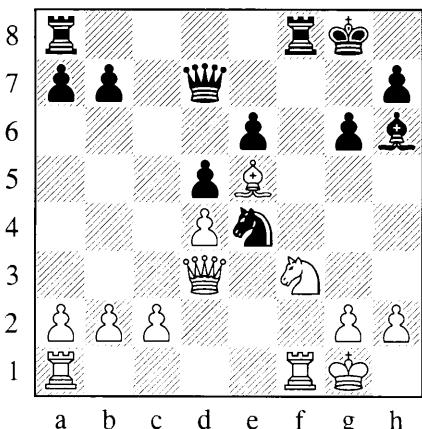


16...0-0 17.♕f4!?

17.♘e5 makes less sense in view of the simple 17...♗d6†. Black will follow up with ...♘e4, obtaining a comfortable game.

17...♘e4 18.♗e5 ♕h6!? 19.♗d3

The chances seem to be approximately balanced. We will follow a correspondence game for a short while:



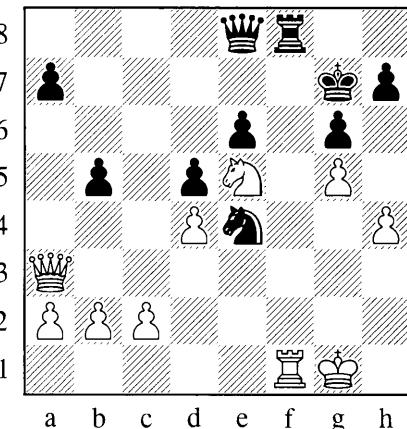
19...b5

I think that a more flexible way of preventing c2-c4 is 19...♗a4?!N→, or even 19...♗c6N 20.♗ae1 ♗ac8→. In both cases Black maintains access to a4 for his queen, to annoy White on the queenside.

20.♗ae1 ♗f5 21.h4! ♗af8 22.g4! ♗5f7 23.g5

♗g7 24.♗xg7 ♗xg7 25.♗e5 ♗xf1† 26.♗xf1 ♗e8 27.♗a3

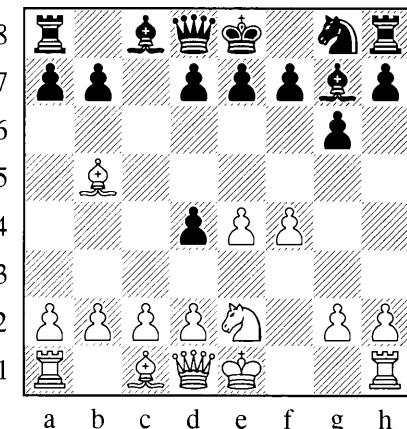
As in Sorroche Lupion – V. Kalashnikov, corr. 2001. I think the most accurate now is:



27...a5N=

The position remains thoroughly equal.

C) 6.♗xd4 cxd4 7.♗e2



This is the most direct attempt at refutation of Black's set-up. The disadvantage is the positioning of the bishop on b5.

7...♗f6!

Perhaps the only move to equalize, hitting the e4-pawn when White cannot protect it with d2-d3.

White has two ways to deal with the threat to e4: C1) 8.e5 and C2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

8.d3?? would be a horrible blunder in view of 8... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$.

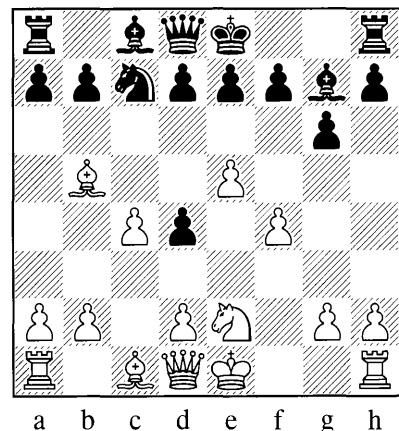
C1) 8.e5

Black has got what he wants – the white centre will now be the object of attack with ...d6.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Already White is the one struggling to equalize. C11) 9.c4?! doesn't seem like a satisfactory answer, while C12) 9.c3! is a better try.

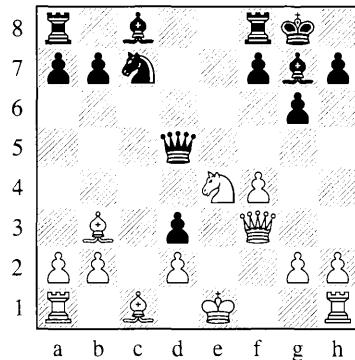
C11) 9.c4?! $\mathbb{Q}c7!$



Black will obtain a fine position, as the following lines will show:

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

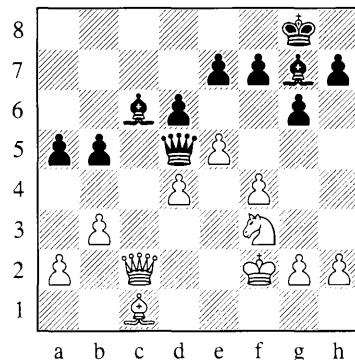
10. $\mathbb{Q}a4?$ d3! 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0-0+ leaves White exposed in view of his backward development. A practical example continued: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d6 13.exd6 exd6 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ d5 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



16... $\mathbb{W}d4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e8\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 20.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e2!+$ Bryzgalin – Filippov, Smolensk 1997.

10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

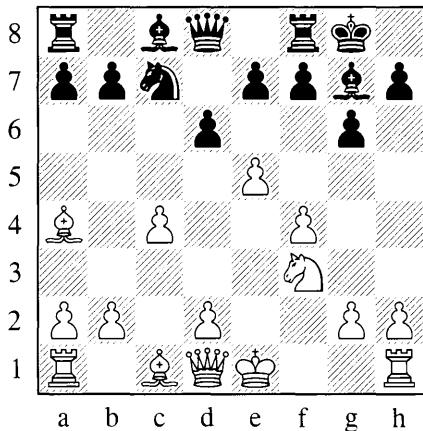
11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 (11... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 12.cxb5 d6 is also appealing, as Black's two bishops, the light-squared one in particular, are ready to target White's weaknesses.) 12.d4 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13.cxb5 $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}hc1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 18.b3 a5 19. $\mathbb{E}xc8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xc8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ b5 22. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$



I stood excellently in Gelashvili – Kotronias, Kavala 2007, although I failed to convert the advantage into something tangible and the game was eventually drawn. Perhaps reversing the line-up of pieces on the long diagonal with 22... $\mathbb{W}b7\#N$ would have given me more possibilities at this point, but with so many tempting options it was difficult to decide which one was the most accurate.

11...d6 12.♘f3

Black is doing fantastically well, provided he discovers the right idea to put the enemy centre under pressure:

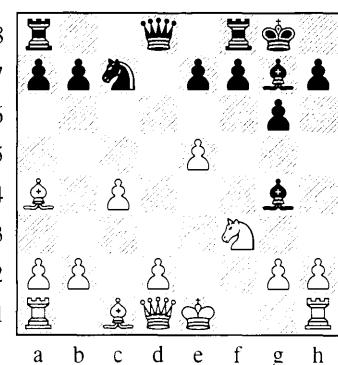
**12...♗g4!N**

The plan is to follow up with ...♗e6-d4. White is under heavy pressure.

Also possible is:

12...dxe5? 13.fxe5 ♗g4!

After the tempting 13...♗d3?! 14.♗e2! ♖f5 it is not clear that Black has full compensation for the pawn. 15.♗d1! Getting himself ready for b2-b3. (Weaker is 15.♗xd3? ♖xd3 16.b3 a6!± and the a4-bishop is exposed.) 15...♗e6 16.♗xd3 ♖xd3 17.b3 g5? (17...f6? 18.♗b2 fxe5 19.♗xe5 ♖xf3 20.♗xg7±; 17...f5 18.h4?) 18.♗b2± If equality exists, it has to be by some accurate manoeuvring which I haven't been able to discover.

**14.d4 ♗e6 15.d5N**

15.♗e3?! ♖a5† 16.♗d2 ♖c7 17.♗c3?! ♖ad8± was terrible for White in Jelica – Milliet, Rijeka 2009.

15....♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♗c5 17.♗c2 ♗xe5 18.f4 ♗g7±

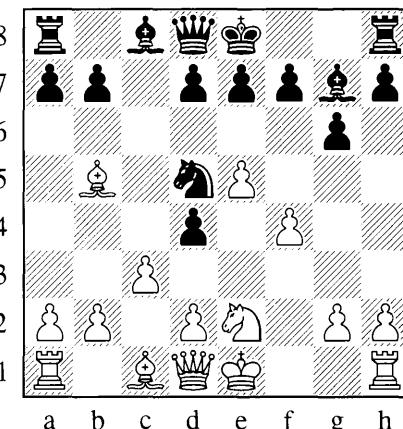
With an advantage for Black, although the bishop pair offers White some saving chances.

13.d4 ♗e6 14.♗e3 ♗xf3!

The point: White must retake with the pawn to avoid losing the a4-bishop.

15.gxf3 ♖h6!±

Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn, thanks to White's weakened pawn structure and his insecure king.

C12) 9.c3!

This is the logical reaction, opting for freedom in the centre and aiming to open up lines for the c1-bishop.

9...0–0!

Black simply ignores his opponent and develops, as taking on d4 is not a real option for White.

10.♗b3?!

The critical move, and the one employed by strong players. The idea is to force the knight

away from d5 or create a weakening of Black's dark squares. However, with correct play Black still stands fine.

Much weaker are 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $d6\mp$ or 10. $cxd4$ $d6\bar{\omega}$. In both cases Black has the more pleasant game.

10...e6!

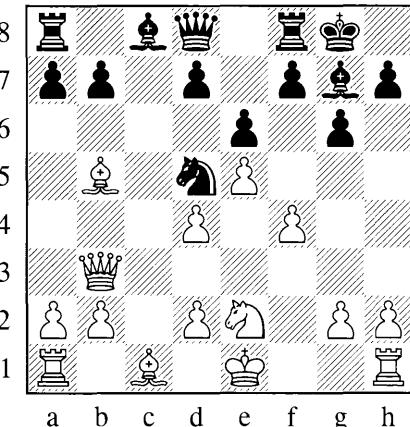
With two pawn breaks (...d6 and ...f6) in reserve, it seems like the best solution to maintain the knight in the centre.

Instead, 10... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $dxe5$ 14. $fxe5$ $f6$ as played in Pachman – Najdorf, Leipzig (ol) 1960, is perhaps not so good due to 15. $d4N\pm$.

11. $cx d4$

At this point White has nothing better than to take the pawn.

11. $c4?!$ proved much better for Black after 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4?!$ $d6$ 13. $exd6$ $Wxd6$ 14. $d3$ $a6$ 15. $Wc2$ $b5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $bcx4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\mp$ in Wademark – Persson, corr. 1996.



11...d6 12.0–0 f6!

Black strikes immediately at the white centre, trying to open up the position to exploit the undeveloped state of the c1-bishop.

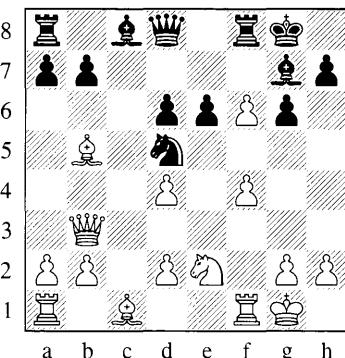
13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

This is probably not the best reply, but I have promoted it to be our main line for instructional reasons. Alternatively:

13. $d3?!$ is just bad due to 13... $fxe5$ 14. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{E}xf1\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $dxe5$ 16. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\mp$. Black has recovered his pawn with the better game.

13. $exd6$ is strongly answered by 13... $f5!$ (13... $Wxd6$ 14. $f5!$ $gxf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2\infty$ produces a mess that could be a bit better for White) 14. $Wa3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $d3$ $\mathbb{E}f7\uparrow$, and it is obvious that Black has seized the initiative.

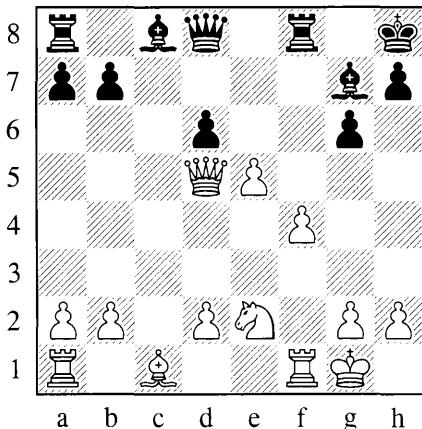
Finally, 13. $exf6$ is probably best.



13... $Wxf6!N$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$ was better for White in Fries Nielsen – N. Nielsen, Denmark 2007.) 14. $Wf3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$; 14. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$) 14... $a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 16. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 17. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $W e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 19. $Wb6$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 20. $Wxd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2=$ The computer shows equality, but I think that almost any strong player would favour the black position, as it is the easier one to handle in a practical game.

13... $fxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 15. $Wxd5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 16. $dxe5!$

16. $fxe5? \mathbb{E}xf1\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $W h4\mp$



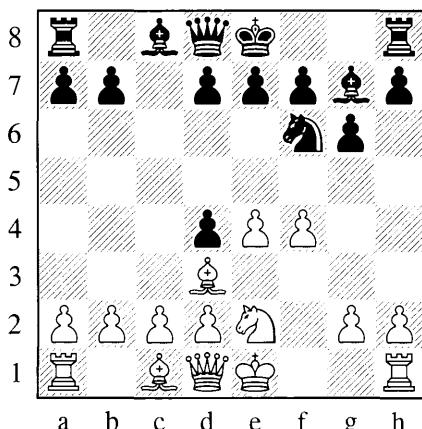
16...♝g4! 17.♝e1 dxe5 18.♝xd8 ♜axd8
19.fxe5 ♜xe5

19...♝d3?!N is an interesting alternative.

20.d4 ♜g7 21.♝e3 ♜de8 22.♞c3 ♜xe3
23.♝xe3 ♜xd4 24.♝ael1 ♜d7†

Black was, if anything, slightly better in Campora – Gomez Esteban, Seville 1993. The experienced Argentinian GM held on to draw, but obviously the bishop is stronger than the knight, as the beast has no stable point to settle in the centre.

C2) 8.♝d3



The most logical reaction, avoiding overextension.

8...♝b6

Not only protecting the pawn but also creating veiled tactical problems for White on the a7-g1 diagonal.

White has a choice of three moves: C21) 9.b3, C22) 9.0–0 and C23) 9.a4.

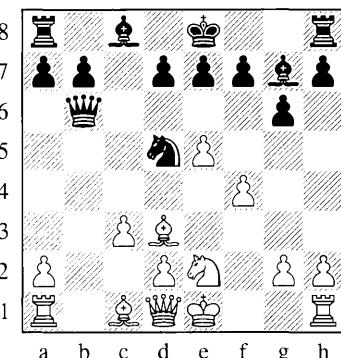
9.e5?!

Once more this is rather premature.

9...♞d5†

With the idea of ...d6. Play could continue as follows:

10.c3 dxc3 11.bxc3?!
11.dxc3 ♜e3†



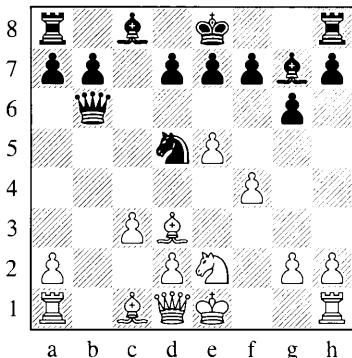
11...d6!N

But not 11...g5?! 12.♝e4! ♜xf4 13.♝xf4 gxf4 14.d4 d6 15.exd6 ♜xd6 16.0–0 e5 17.♝b1! ♜c7 18.dxe5 ♜xe5 19.♝h5! ♜d6 20.♝h1!+– with a crushing advantage for White in Nordal – Jenkinson, corr. 2000.

12.♝b1

12.♝c4 ♜c7 13.♝a4†? (13.d4?! ♜c6 14.♝b3 0–0 15.0–0 b5! 16.♝d3 ♜e6†) 13...♜c6 (13...♞d7?! 14.♝xf7†!) 14.♝xc6† bxc6 15.exd6 exd6 16.♝a3 c5† This is a bit better for Black, as the white pawn on f4 makes an ugly impression.

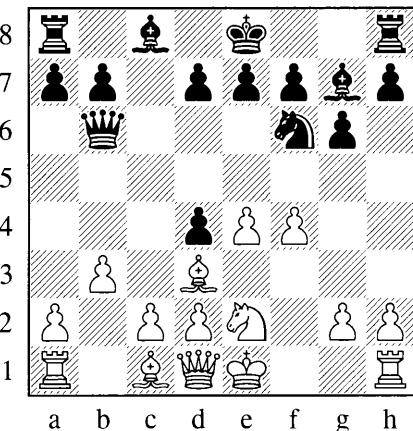
12...♜c7 13.♝b3 ♜b6 14.exd6 ♜xd6 15.♝b5† ♜f8 16.♝a3 ♜c7 17.0–0 ♜e6†



The onus is on White to prove equality. The black king is not in any real danger, while the first player has three pawn islands compared to Black's two.

The natural looking 9.c3 is well met by: 9...dxc3 10.dxc3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}xd4\pm$ Black had an excellent game and went on to win comfortably in Herzenstein – Struk, Hamburg 2001.

C21) 9.b3



White prepares to attack the d4-pawn.

9...d6!

9...d5? 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

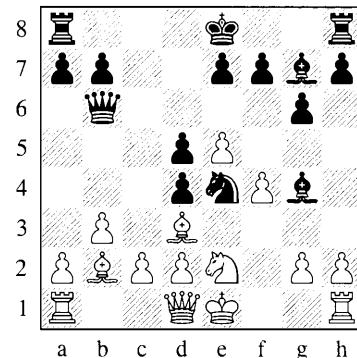
The knight is strongly placed, but it turns out that the weakness of the d4-pawn is more important

11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$!

White shouldn't get distracted by the tempting 11.a4, intending either a4-a5 or $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$, as then 11...f6! 12.a5 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\infty$ gives Black strong counterplay.

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Now White employs an astonishingly simple idea:



12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$!

12.0–0? $\mathbb{Q}c3$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ dxc3 \pm 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ cxd2 15. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 0–0 ∞

12...dxe4 13.h3! $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe2\pm$

Black is unable to protect his pawns.

14...f5 15.exf6 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b5\pm$!

16. $\mathbb{W}xe4?$! $\mathbb{W}h4\pm$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4\infty$

16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$

16... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc6\pm$ bxc6 18.0–0+– is winning for White, as $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ will cash in a vital pawn.

17.0–0 \pm

It is clear that White has won the opening battle, as Black has too many weaknesses.

10. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ e5 11.0–0 0–0

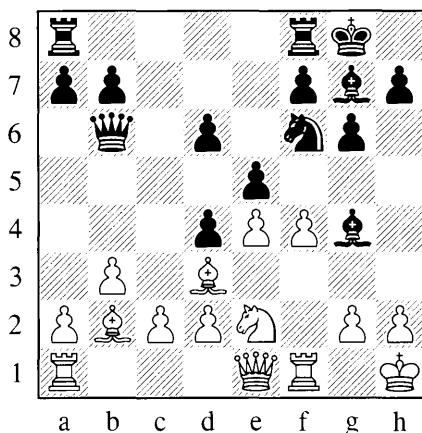
Now Black threatens to take on e4.

12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$!

Once more the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is on the cards.

13. $\mathbb{W}e1$

13.h3? is just a blunder on account of 13...♝xe2 14.♔xe2 ♜h5†.



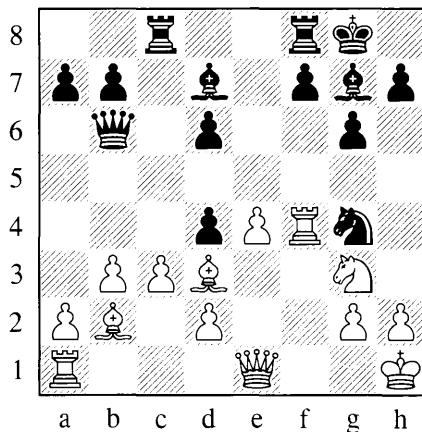
13...♝ac8! 14.♗g3 ♜d7 15.c3?!

White loses patience and weakens his position.

Interesting is: 15.a4N a5!? (15...♝fe8 16.a5 ♜c7 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.♗c4∞ leads to a position with mutual weaknesses as f7 is somewhat weak, but on the other hand the g3-knight can easily turn out to be a liability.) 16.h3 (16.f5?! d5 17.exd5 ♜xd5†) 16...♝fe8∞ Black has some pressure against e4, but White is probably not worse. Another possibility for the second player is 16...♝c7?..

15...exf4 16.♝xf4 ♜g4!

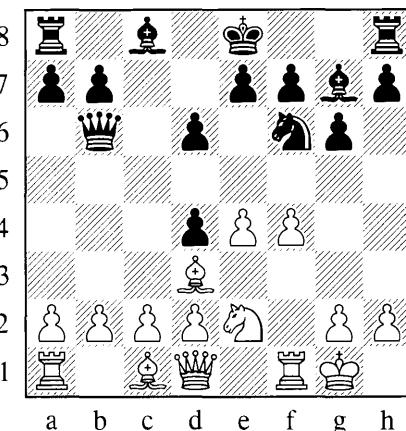
Grasping the opportunity to improve the knight, by transferring it to the fine e5-square.



17.♗e2 ♜e5 18.♗g3 ♜xd3 19.♗xd3 ♜b5!
20.c4 ♜xc4 21.bxc4 ♜xb2 22.♗ff1 ♜b4
23.♗fc1 ♜c5†

Black was a pawn to the good and clearly better in Ozsvath – Vasiukov, Havana 1967.

C22) 9.0–0 d6!



Black simply wants to protect the pawn on d4 with ...e5 in order to free his queen. Other moves are not so good:

For example, 9...d5?! 10.e5 ♜e4 11.a4!± is slightly better for White, as the d4-pawn has become vulnerable due to the possibility of a4-a5. Less clear would be 11.♗g3 ♜xg3 12.hxg3 ♜f5∞.

9...♝xe4 seems like an obvious way of continuing, but after 10.♗xe4 d3† 11.♗h1 dxe2 12.♗xe2 0–0 13.c3!± White has chances for a tiny edge, as d2-d4 cannot be stopped.

10.♗h1

The universally adopted move. White rules out tactics on the a7-g1 diagonal and can now play c2-c3 according to circumstance.

10.♗g3?!

This is too anti-positional.
10...h5!

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$? also looks good.

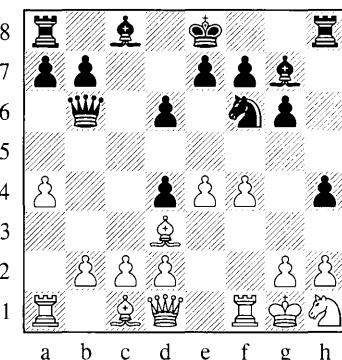
11.a4

11. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ d3!
14. cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$

11...h4! 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1N$

The lesser evil.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$? occurred in Mossong – Massana, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, and here Black could have obtained a serious advantage with:
12...h3 13.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ a6 15. $\mathbb{W}e1 \mathbb{Q}d7$
16.a5 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 17.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f5!?



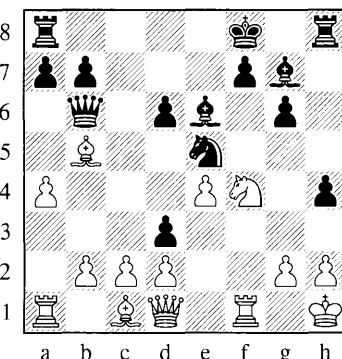
12...e5!

Black should avoid a blockade of the kingside.

12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$?! 13. $\mathbb{W}e1$ h3 14. g3∞ is unclear. White can expand on the queenside and try to bring the knight back into play on f2 at an appropriate moment.

13. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

16. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ d3† 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



18...d5!!

Black has obtained a pleasant initiative, as the following lines indicate:

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

Probably the lesser evil, although even in this case Black's pressure persists.

Instead, 19. exd5? $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e1$ h3 → is close to lost for White, as he is totally uncoordinated and his king is badly exposed.

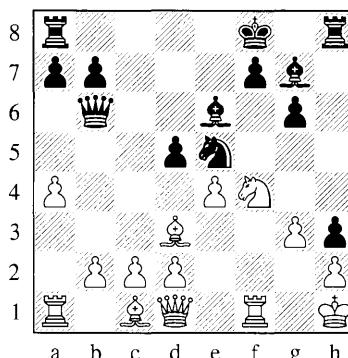
After 19. cxd3 Black should play the accurate 19... $\mathbb{Q}g8$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. exd5 $\mathbb{W}d4$ 22. h3 a6 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3\mp$, when his advantage is obvious.

19...h3!

Black should not miss his chance to expose the white king.

20. g3

The only move.



20... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21. cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\mp$

It is not unlikely that White will be able to save himself here, but obviously whatever chances exist lie with Black.

10. $\mathbb{W}e1$

Black has two good options:

10...0–0

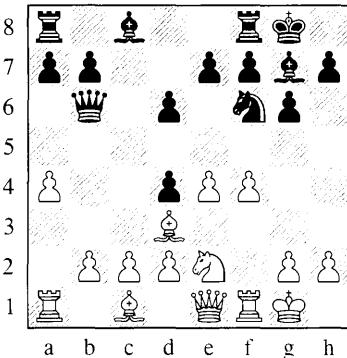
Postponing ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -c5 to keep the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ in hand.

The immediate 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$? is also possible, for instance: 11.a4! $\mathbb{Q}c5$!N (11...0–0?! 12. a5! $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. b4!±) 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 14. d3 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0

(16...f5!) 17.♕c1 ♕c6 18.b3 e6!? Planning ...f5. 19.f5 exf5 20.exf5 ♔fe8 21.♘g3 ♘f6? With an excellent position for Black.

11.a4

11.♗h1 ♘d7 12.♗c4 ♕b4! 13.d3 ♕xe1 14.♕xe1 ♘b6 15.♗b3 ♕e6=



11...♘xe4!

Weaker is 11...a5!? 12.♗h1!, when the intended c2-c3 seems to clarify the position in White's favour, e.g. 12...♗d7 13.♗c4± or 13.♗b5±.

12.♗xe4 d3† 13.♗h1 dxe2 14.♕xe2 e6=

With a typically good situation for Black, as White cannot achieve the formation with c2-c3 and d2-d4 which he could get earlier on (Black reacts to c2-c3 with ...d5-d4).

10.a4 0–0 should have no independent significance unless White plays 11.a5!? (instead, 11.♕e1 transposes to 10.♕e1 above). Then 11...♕c5 12.♗h1 b5! is good for Black, who can organize pressure against e4 by putting his bishop on b7.

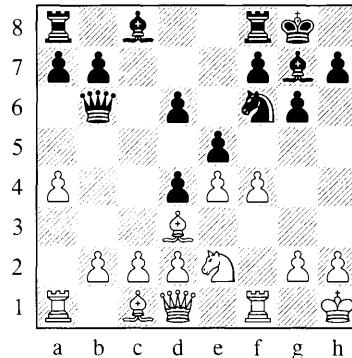
10...0–0

Black is now ready for either ...♗d7-c5 or ...e5, all according to circumstance.

11.c3

This logical move is also the most frequently played.

11.a4 As the reader may have already realized, this move is typical in these positions. White wants to harass the defender of the d4-pawn and gain space on the queenside. 11...e5!? We have reached a double-edged position. A sample line is:

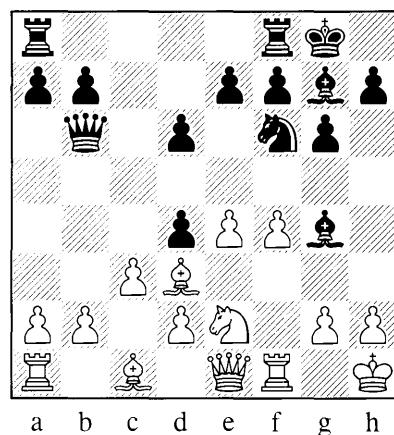


12.b3 ♕e8 13.♗b2 ♘d7 14.♕e1 ♕c6 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♗g1! (16.♗h4? ♕d8†) 16...♕c7 17.♗f3 h6= With a balanced game that is rich in possibilities for both sides.

11.♕e1 prepares c2-c3 by moving the queen out of a potential ...♗g4 pin. However, after the accurate 11...♗d7 12.♗c4 ♕b4! 13.d3 ♕xe1 14.♕xe1 ♘b6= Black stands fine in the resulting endgame, as we already know.

11...♗g4! 12.♕e1

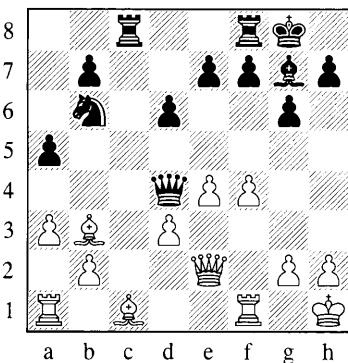
Black now has two interesting possibilities:



2. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$

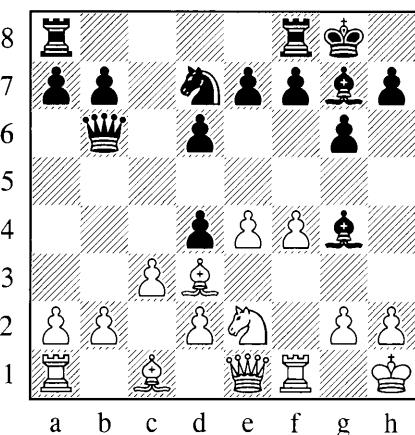
Probably best.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (13... $\mathbb{E}ac8N!?$)
 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 15. $cxd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 16. $d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $a5!?$ 18. $a3!$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b4=$)



18... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $e6$ 21. $b4$ $a4!?$

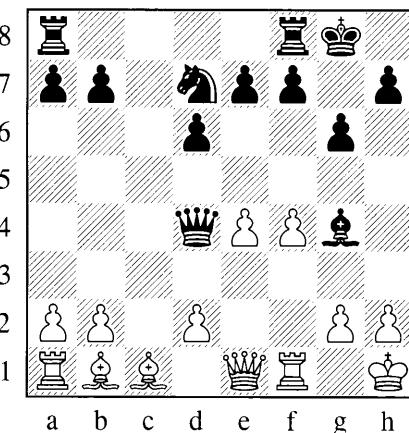
This may not be so good due to 22. $f5!?$ $N\pm$.
 (22. $\mathbb{W}d1!?$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 23. $b5$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 24. $f5$ $d5$ gave Black good counterplay in Teran Alvarez – Cardenas, Murcia 1997.)

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4N$

13. $\mathbb{Q}g1? \mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 15. $d3$ $f5!?$ was better for Black in Montoro – Hase, Villa Ballester 2003, but even stronger is 15... $\mathbb{W}a6!N\mp$, when Black's advantage is close to reaching decisive proportions.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $cxd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

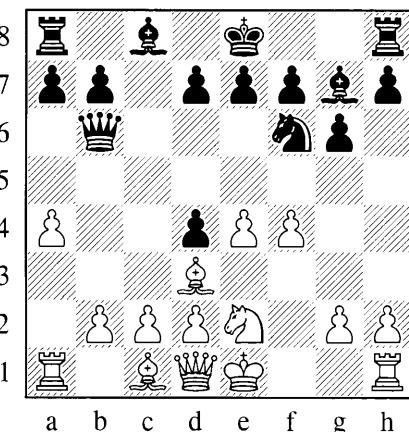
15. $\mathbb{W}g3? \mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}e2!?$ is almost lost for White, as the upcoming ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ will completely bust his queenside development.

15... $\mathbb{E}ac8!$ 16. $d3$

16. $h3$ $\mathbb{E}c6!$ leaves White in trouble along the c-file.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightleftarrows$

Black's excellent centralization means that he stands well in spite of White's bishop pair.

C23) 9. $a4$ 

In most of the above lines the move $a2-a4$ was instrumental in White's quest for counterplay,

so it makes sense to examine what happens in case of the immediate a2-a4, planning to evict the queen from the defence of d4.

9...d6!

To both protect the pawn on d4 by ...e5 and prepare the manoeuvre ...♗d7-c5, as we already know.

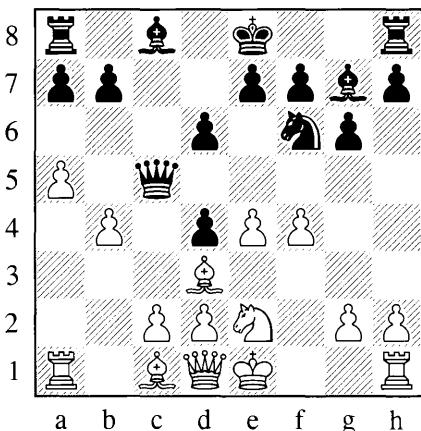
Instead, 9...0–0 10.a5 ♜c7 11.0–0 d6 12.♗xd4! (12.b4 e5 13.♗b2 ♗g4!! is fine for Black, as the impending ...♗h5 will augment the pressure) 12...♗xe4 13.♗xe4 ♖xd4† 14.♗h1 ♖d7 15.c3 ♗g7 16.d4± is slightly better for White, who has a solid position.

10.a5!! ♜c5!

10...♜c7 is again not the best, due to 11.♗xd4! ♗xe4 12.♗xe4 ♖xd4 13.c3 ♖f6 14.d4± with a slight edge for White.

White can now try the aggressive C231) 11.b4!? or the calmer C232) 11.b3.

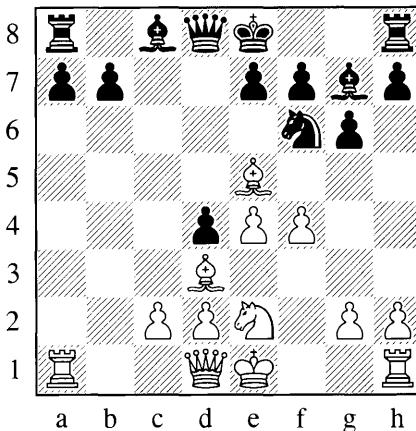
C231) 11.b4!?



An interesting sacrificial possibility to enliven the struggle.

11...♝xb4 12.♗a3 ♜xa5 13.♗xd6 ♜d8 14.♗e5

This is the idea, to have a strongly centralized bishop pressurizing d4.



14...0–0!N

The premature 14...♗h5?! allowed White to mount some kingside pressure after 15.♗xg7 ♗xg7 16.0–0 0–0 17.f5?! e5 18.♗e1→ in Perelshteyn – Faulks, Mermaid Beach 1997.

15.♗a4!?

This rook lift is aesthetic and appears best.

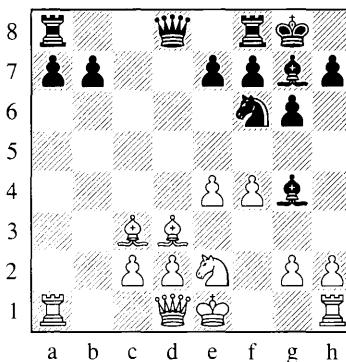
15.0–0?! ♗g4! 16.♗e1 ♗xe2 17.♗xe2 ♗d7 18.♗xg7 ♗xg7† is better for Black, as he is a pawn up and White does not have serious attacking chances.

15.♗xd4

This can be answered strongly with:

15...♗g4 16.♗c3

16.♗e3?! ♗xe2! 17.♗xe2 (17.♗xe2 ♗xe4↑) 17...e5?↑ is hardly impressive for White as his king is exposed.



16... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18. h3

18.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 19. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ (20. $\mathbb{W}xe2$

$\mathbb{Q}xf4!-\rightarrow)$ 20... $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

$\mathbb{W}d4\#$ is a tiny edge for Black in view of his well-centralized forces and outside passed pawn.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d7!\infty$

Reaching a complicated position where Black's chances are by no means inferior.

15...a5!

Black mobilizes his main asset.

16. $\mathbb{W}a1$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a4! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa4 \mathbb{Q}xa4$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xa4 \mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$

22. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}g4$ is at least a draw for Black.

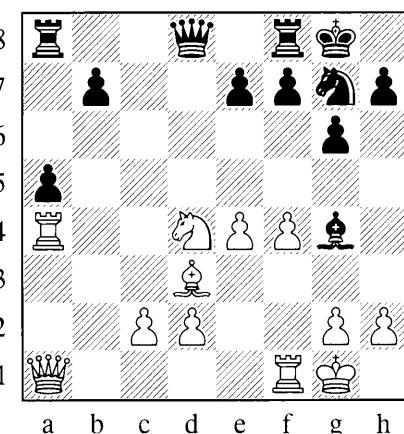
16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

With the queen diverted to a1 White does not enjoy serious attacking chances on the kingside, so this move is better now than it was in the Perelshteyn game above.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$ 18.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{W}a7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}xe2\#$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xe2 \mathbb{Q}e6\rightleftarrows$



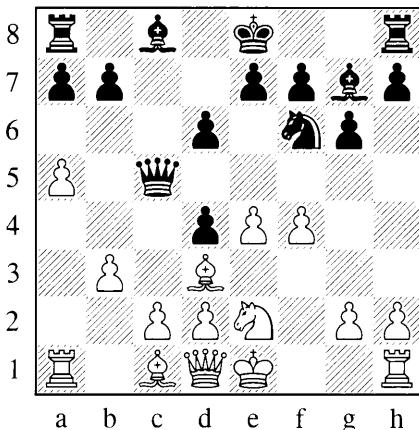
19... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{Q}xb5$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{W}xd2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{Q}ac8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{W}d6$

25. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}c4\rightleftarrows$

The game is approximately level, with excellent active play for Black.

C232) 11.b3



The more reserved course.

11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

By attacking d4 White wants to tempt his opponent into ...e5, weakening himself along the a3-f8 diagonal. At this juncture, Black should use a slightly more daring way than usual to secure counterplay:

12... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ 13.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

This weird combination of moves seems to work here.

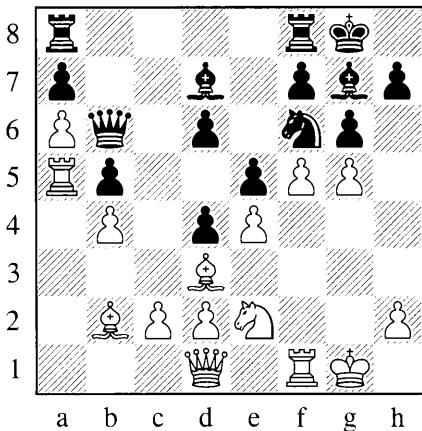
14.a6

14. $\mathbb{W}e1$ f5! ∞ highlights a weakness of the f4-pawn.

14...b5 15.b4! $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a5 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. f5 e5

18.g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.g5

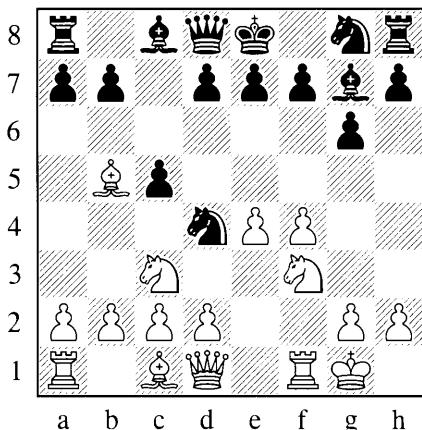
We have been following Smithers – Wepener, corr. 1997, and at this point I prefer:



19...♝xe4!N 20.♝xe4 d3† 21.♝d4 dxс2
22.♗xc2 exd4 23.♗d3 ♝xf5 24.♗xf5 gxf5
25.♗xa8 ♞xa8 26.♗xb5 ♗c6 27.♗xf5 ♗e8=

With approximate equality.

D) 6.0–0!!?



The overall impression is that White's 6th move alternatives give Black a pleasant game, so we will now proceed to have a look at the more topical 6.0–0. Leaving the bishop to its fate, White trusts that time is more important in this position than any dogmatic considerations.

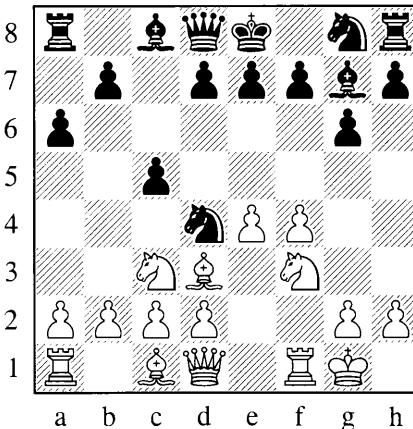
6...a6!

Black, in turn, refrains from taking the bishop. His strategy is much more subtle:

to surround the bishop with his pawns and render it inactive.

White can retreat with either D1) 7.♗d3!!? or D2) 7.♗c4.

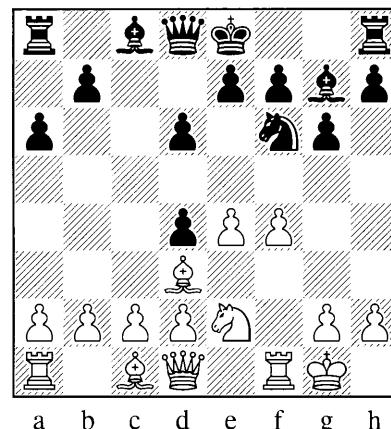
D1) 7.♗d3!!?



This has been the main move employed in practice, although it certainly looks awkward to block the d-pawn.

7...d6 8.♗xd4 cxd4 9.♗e2 ♛f6

White's main plan is to free himself by c2-c3, obtaining a preponderance in the centre.



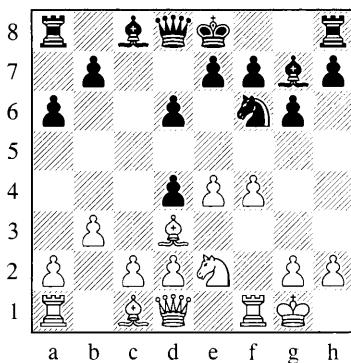
10.♗h1

White threatens the d4-pawn, thus tempting the e7-pawn forward.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4??$ is an awful blunder as 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $c3 e5+$ wins a piece.

10.b3

One could argue that this position compares favourably with 6. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{W}b6$ 9. $b3$, but here Black can omit the move ... $\mathbb{W}b6$.



10...0–0!

White has a terrible minus score in the database in this line, with one typical example being:

11. $\mathbb{Q}b2 e5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e1 b5$ 13. $a4 bxa4!?$

I prefer 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$ 14. $fxe5 dxe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{E}e8$ Cooper – Ward, corr. 2014, when 16. $axb5$ can be met by 16... $\mathbb{W}b6!?$.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xa4 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a1!?$

16. $fxe5!N$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 20. $cxd3 f6$ looks at least equal for White after either 21. $h4\bar{x}$ or 21. $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ $gxh5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g3!$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{W}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd6$.

16... $exf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3 f5!$

Black had some initiative, which he eventually converted, in Quillan – McShane, West Bromwich 2004.

10.c3

This is White's other main idea – to immediately liquidate the black centre.

10... $dxc3$ 11. $bxcc3$

11. $dxc3$ leaves White with a weak pawn

on e4, so Black should have no problems.

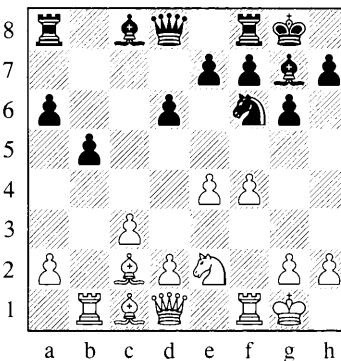
12. $f5!?$ Possibly the only way to make something out of taking with the d-pawn.

12... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ (12... $b5!?$ looks like a decent alternative) 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}d7$ Now Black is ready to put e4 under pressure by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c6$, which explains White's next. 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4 e5!?$ Clear-cut play, leading to an equal position. This was Stoltz – Tyutynnik, corr. 2014, which ended in a draw after an interesting struggle.

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

Reaching a kind of tabiya for the Grand Prix Attack, with White possessing a pawn centre that he would like to put into motion.

12... $b5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



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

Putting pressure on c3 in advance(!), as White should try sooner or later to advance his d-pawn. The bishop remains on c8 for now, as it might be useful on g4 if White resorts to d2-d3 (or d2-d4) without the prophylactic h2-h3.

14. $h3$

After 14. $d3 \mathbb{Q}g4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}h5!$ 16. $d4 e5$ 17. $fxe5 dxe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}ac8!$ Black's idea becomes clear – the white centre is under fire.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

14... $\mathbb{W}c4!?$ is also possible.

15. $d3 \mathbb{Q}d7$

This formation looks harmonious for Black, as the f-pawn might be thrown forward to

contest control of the centre.

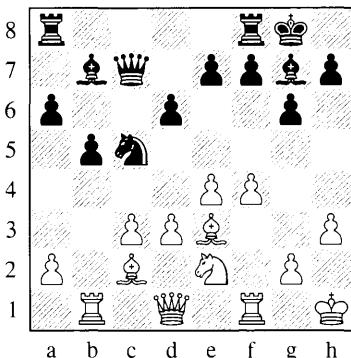
16.♗e3 ♗c5!

So as to discourage a2-a4.

17.♔h1

17.f5 d5! 18.♗xc5 ♗xc5† 19.d4 ♗b6! 20.e5?

♗xe5=



17...f5!∞

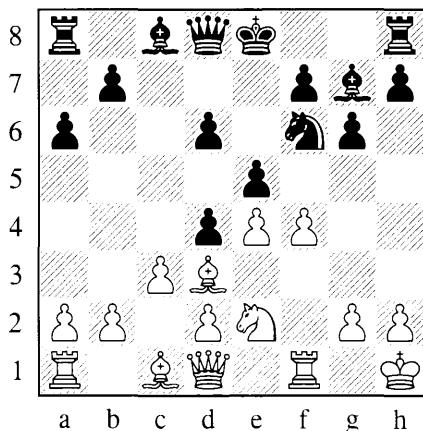
Black has fine counterplay on both long diagonals.

10...e5

After 10...♗d7 White should probably deny his opponent the c5-square by 11.b4? 0–0 12.♗b2 e5∞, when an unclear position arises.

11.c3

An important juncture has been reached, as Black must decide how to deal with the pressure on his d4-pawn.



11...0–0!?

Simply ignoring the pressure looks like an interesting possibility.

11...dxc3

This is also possible, for example:

12.dxc3

White leaves himself with a weak e-pawn.

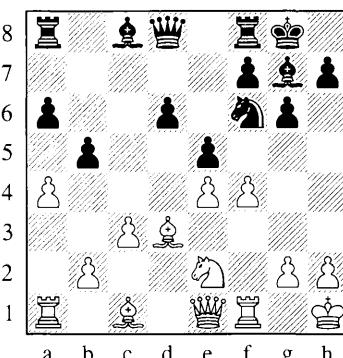
12.bxc3? 0–0 13.♗c2 Otherwise Black might play ...d5. 13...♗c7!∞ A good square for the queen when this central formation arises, with a playable position for Black.

12...0–0 13.♗e1

13.f5?! d5 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.fxg6 hxg6 16.♗g3 happened in T.L. Petrosian – Gagunashvili, Istanbul 1998, and here 16...♗e6N 17.♗e2 ♗ad8 18.♗c2 ♗c6 19.♗b3 ♗xb3 20.axb3 ♗h7!+, intending to advance ...f5, is simply better for Black.

13...b5 14.a4!?

14.♗g3 exf4 15.♗xf4 ♗b7=



14...♗b7 15.♗g3 bxa4 16.♗xa4 ♗d7 17.♗a1 exf4

17...♗c5?! 18.♗c2 d5∞

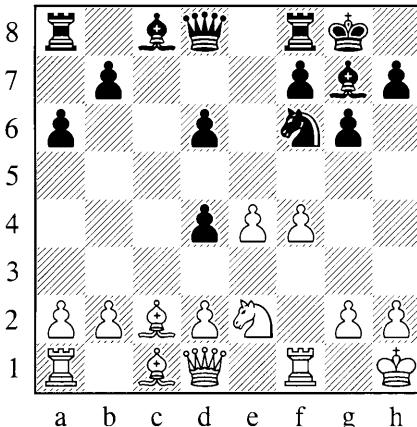
18.♗xf4 ♗e5→

With satisfactory counterplay for Black. The difference in the strength of the knights is evident, and e4 will soon come under pressure.

After 11...0–0 Black's results in practice have been encouraging, as White is facing problems with his development.

12.cxd4 exd4 13.Qc2

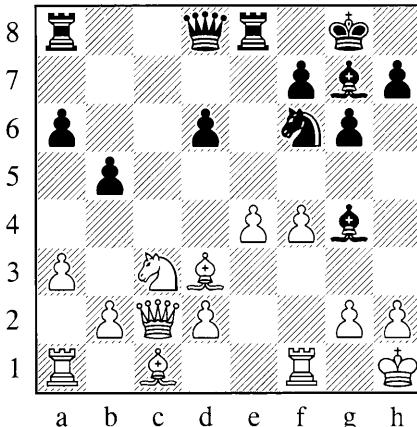
13.b3?! $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14.Qg3 h5! 15.Qb2 Qg4 16.Wb1 h4 17.Qe2 Qxe2 18.Qxe2 Qxe4+ was winning for Black in Roberts – McDonald, Budapest 2003.

**13...d3!**

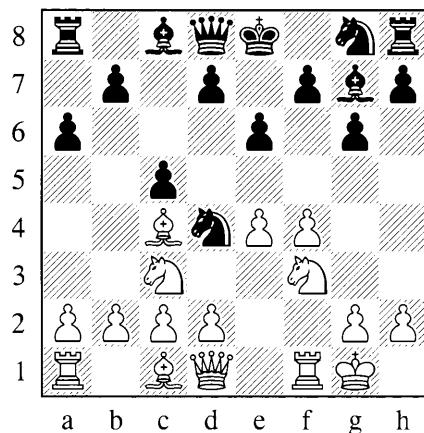
A splendid sacrifice, freezing White's queenside development.

14.Qxd3 Ee8 15.Qc3 b5! 16.a3 Qg4! 17.Wc2

17.Wb3 Ec8 18.Qb1 Qh5 gives Black a dangerous attack.

**17...Ec8!→**

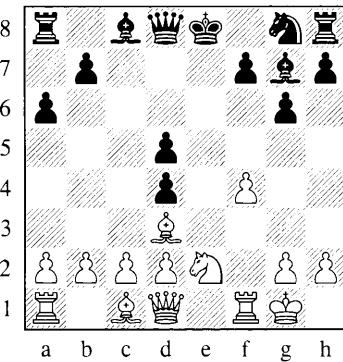
Black was dictating events in Cabrera – Tsuboi, Havana 1998.

D2) 7.Qc4 e6

Naturally, Black continues with his plan of putting a block on the bishop's activity.

8.d3**8.Qxd4 cxd4**

8...Qxd4†?N 9.Qh1 b5 (9...Qe7 10.Wf3!?) 10.Qe2 Qb7† is also possible, and may well be best, as the b7-bishop is quite strong.

9.Qe2 d5! 10.exd5 exd5 11.Qd3!**11...Qf6!N 12.b3**

12.Qxd4 Qe4 13.c3 Wb6 is at least equal for Black.

12...Qe4 13.Qb2 Wb6 14.a4 0–0 15.a5 Wa7 16.Qh1**16.Wa4 Qc3****16...Qd7**

Black enjoys tremendous activity for his

doubled d-pawns, and in my view is certainly not worse.

8...♝e7!

Black has almost completed development and is ready to bust the bishop by ...d5, so White must make his decision.

9.♝xd4

9.a4?!

Leading to a worse position for White, as the c4-bishop becomes a bad piece:

9...d5! 10.♗a2 0–0 11.♝xd4?

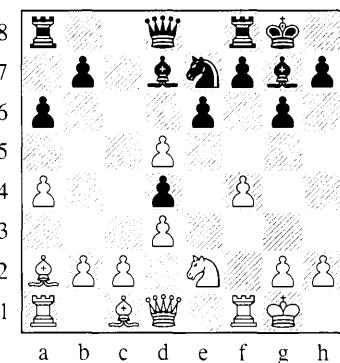
11.♔h1 b5! 12.♝xd4N (12.axb5? axb5 13.♝xd4 cxd4 14.♝e2 dxe4 15.dxe4 ♜b7 16.♕d3 was Hernandez – Gulko, Merida 1999, and now 16...♞a6!N† seems to give White huge problems, as the queen is coming to a8 to embarrass White both on e4 and a2.) 12...cxd4 13.♝e2 dxe4 14.dxe4 bxa4!† White does not have enough for the pawn, e.g. 15.♝g3 ♜c7 16.♕e2 ♜d7 and ...♜b5 is an awkward threat to meet.

11...cxd4 12.♝e2 ♜d7!

12...dxe4?! 13.dxe4 ♜b6 14.♕d3?!

13.exd5

13.♝g3 dxe4 14.dxe4 ♜b6! is a typical line where White is kept under pressure, because 15.♔h1 ♜xa4 16.f5 exf5 17.exf5 ♜b5! seems to deny him real compensation for the pawn.



13...exd5?!

We have a situation where White is hard-pressed to justify his strategy.

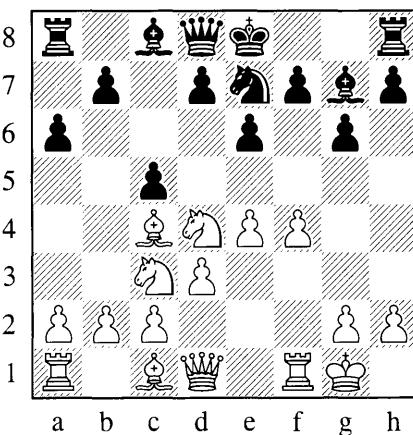
14.♗b3 ♜e6!

Solidifying Black's stance in the centre and thus guarding against f4-f5 ideas.

Weaker are both 14...h5 15.f5?! and 14...a5 15.♝g3! h5 16.f5! ♜xf5 17.♝xf5 ♜xf5 18.♕xf5! gx f5 19.♖xh5=.

15.♝g3 ♜d7†

Having bolstered f5, Black can look forward to a better game.



9...♝xd4†!

Now taking with the bishop looks like a good option for Black, because the check gains time for the development of the queenside.

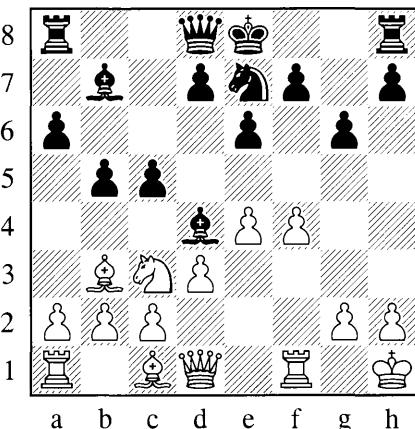
An example of what can go wrong for Black is 9...cxd4 10.♝e2 0–0 11.♕e1 d5 12.♗b3 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♜d7 14.♕f2 ♜b5 15.♗d1 ♜xe2 16.♕xe2 ♜b6 17.♗d3 ♜c6 18.♗d2 a5 19.a4 ♜b8 20.♗f1 ♜d7 21.f5, when White eventually prevailed in Cvak – Hildebrand, corr. 2014.

10.♔h1 b5!

Black should develop his bishop on the long diagonal as quickly as possible, to minimize the effects of f4-f5.

11.♗b3 ♜b7

Planning ...f5; the opening struggle is reaching a climax.



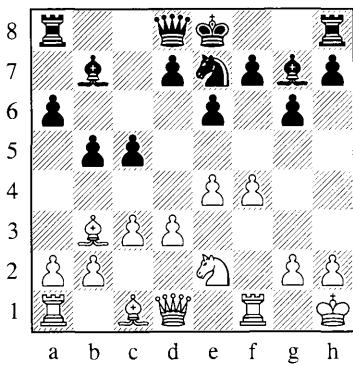
12.f5?!

This is not the best move but it is thematic, and I have promoted it to the main line to show that White's attempts to attack lack bite.

12.e5 ♕xc3! 13.bxc3 ♕c7† The b3-bishop and the f5-square are weak, and Black has ideas of ...h5, ...d5, and ...♕c6, leading to a better position. He has powerful control of the light squares and the white bishops lack targets.

12.a4 b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15.c3 bxc3
16.bxc3 $f5\bar{f}$ and Black was slightly for choice
in Cvak – Gromotka, corr. 2014.

The other possibility is: 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $c3!$ (13. $f5?$ [13. $a4$ $d5$ 14. $e5$ $c4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and Black is ready for the ... $f6$ break, with a good game] 13... $gx f5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $h5!$ →, with the idea 15. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$, is once more better for the second player, as he will be the one doing the attacking.)



13... $\mathbb{W}c7$! Planning ...f5, when Black still has the more pleasant position. After 14.a4 f5 15.e5 0-0 he will look to press on the queenside with ... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ and ...c4.

12...gxf5

Of course Black takes with the g-pawn, keeping a compact central mass and preparing to counterattack via the g-file.

13.exf5!?

This seems to yield some chances but, with best play by Black, White's operations seem doomed to failure.

13. $\mathbb{W}h5?$

Black has many options and could well be much better. One old line I had analysed is:

13... $\mathbb{Q}g8$!?

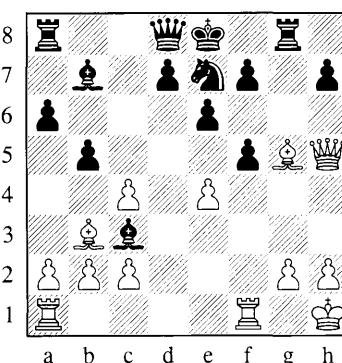
A typical resource to open up the long diagonal.

15,dxc4

15.exf5? cxb3 16.fxe6 does not yield White anything after: 16...dxe6 17.♘xf7† (17.♗xf7 ♜xg5! 18.♗xe7† ♔xe7 19.♘xg5† ♔f6–+) 17...♔d7† The black king escapes, giving the signal for a venomous counterattack.

15...xc3

I wouldn't be surprised if 15...h6!? wins here.
My computer gives a large plus to Black.



16.bxc3

16.exf5? ♕f6! 17.h4 (17.fxe6 ♕xg2†! 18.♔g1

♗b6† 19.♗f2 dxe6→) 17...♘xf5 18.♘xf5 exf5 19.♗e1† ♗e4!→ wins for Black.

16...♗xe4 17.♗ae1!

17.cxb5 axb5 18.♗ae1 d5†

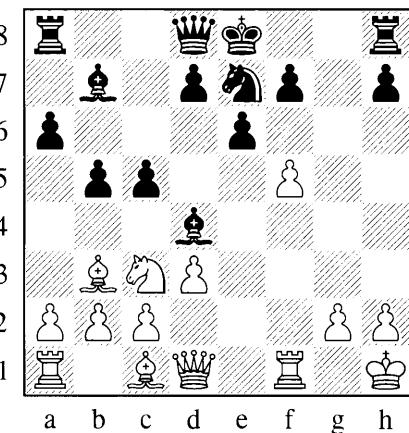
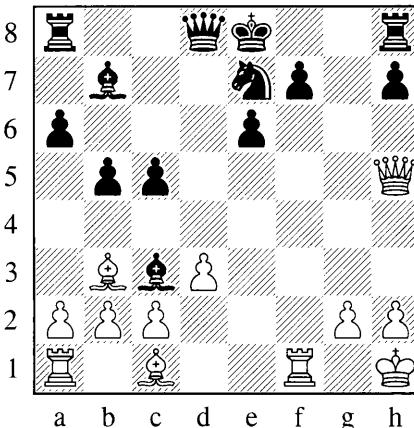
17...bxс4 18.♗xe4! ♗xg5! 19.♗xg5 fxe4

20.♗g7!

But not 20.♗f6? ♘f5 21.♗xf5 ♗xf6 22.♗xf6 cxb3†.

20...♘f5 21.♗xf5! exf5 22.♗h8† ♗e7 23.♗e5† ♗f8 24.♗h8†=

With a perpetual, although the dedicated analyst will notice that only Black has chances to improve upon it.



13...♗xc3!

A strong move, preventing a knight leap to e4.

After 13...♗g8?! 14.♗e4 ♘xf5 15.♗xf5! ♗xe4 16.dxe4 exf5 17.♗d5?! ♗c8 18.♗h5 ♗f6 19.exf5 c4!→ the game is unclear, but from the practical point of view White's position is preferable.

14.fxe6

14.bxc3? ♗g8 15.♗f2 ♘xf5 is hopeless for White.

14...dxe6 15.♗h5

The only move.

15...♗d6!!

Black simply ignores the threat to f7 and develops.

16.bxc3 ♗g8 17.♗f2 ♗g6→

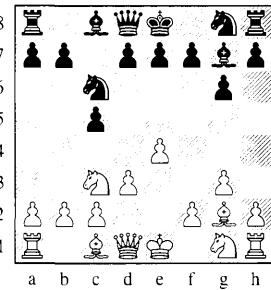
Both this and 17...c4 18.dxc4 0–0–0→ give the second player terrific attacking chances.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the topical 5.♗b5 variation of the Grand Prix Attack, when I am advocating 5...♗d4 so as to prevent White from capturing on c6 and giving us an unfavourable pawn formation. If the white bishop returns to c4 then Black's plan is similar to the previous chapter – play the blockading ...e6 to restrict the bishop's power. White can of course exchange on d4, with 6.♗xd4 cxd4 7.♗e2 ♘f6 8.e5 ♘d5 9.c3! being a particularly forcing attempt to punish Black's set-up. However, I think it is rather White who is struggling for equality, and I am satisfied that the variations presented will give Black good chances to fight for the initiative. White can also employ a system where he combines 0–0, ♘xd4 and ♘d3, but I believe that his lack of queenside development, combined with Black's potentially powerful pawn mass on d6, e5 and d4, gives the second player excellent prospects for the better game.

Chapter 16

Closed Variation



Various 6th Moves

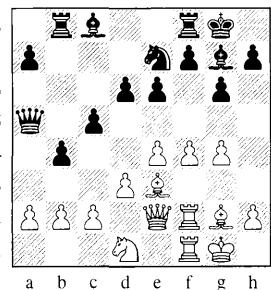
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. \mathbb{Q} c3 \mathbb{Q} c6 3.g3 g6 4. \mathbb{Q} g2 \mathbb{Q} g7 5.d3

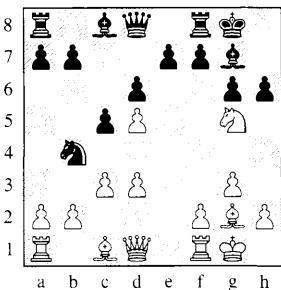
5...d6

A) 6. \mathbb{Q} h3	291
B) 6. \mathbb{Q} ge2 e6	293
B1) 7. \mathbb{Q} e3	293
B2) 7.0-0! \mathbb{Q} ge7	295
B21) 8. \mathbb{Q} b1?!	296
B22) 8. \mathbb{Q} g5	297
C) 6. \mathbb{Q} f3 \mathbb{Q} f6 7.0-0 0-0	298
C1) 8. \mathbb{Q} e1	300
C2) 8. \mathbb{Q} d5	301
C3) 8. \mathbb{Q} g5	302
C4) 8. \mathbb{Q} h4	303
C5) 8.h3 \mathbb{Q} b8	304
C51) 9. \mathbb{Q} e3?!	305
C52) 9.a4! a6 10. \mathbb{Q} e3 b5 11.axb5 axb5 12. \mathbb{W} d2	306
C521) 12... \mathbb{Q} e8	307
C522) 12...b4	309

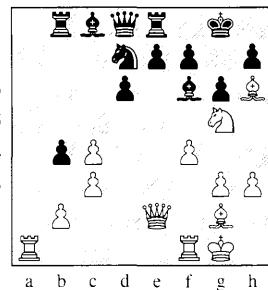
B1) note to 11. \mathbb{Q} a1



C2) after 11.c3?!



C521) note to 18.d4

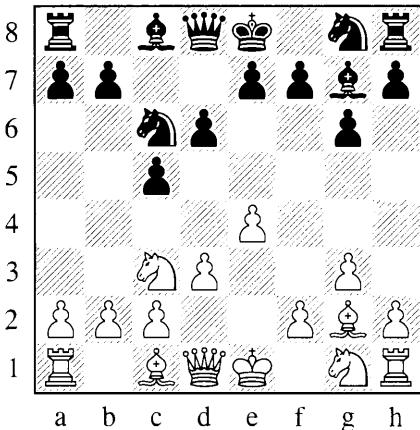


15...f5! \mathbb{N} \mp

11...hxg5! \mathbb{N}

21. \mathbb{Q} xf7!!

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3 d6



The starting tabiya for the Closed Sicilian. This is an opening where White fights for space and attacking chances on the kingside, most usually based on a push of his f-pawn to f5, while Black counterattacks on the other wing, aided by his strong fianchettoed king's bishop. However, things are not always as simple as that: White can often seek play in the centre or even on the queenside himself. There is flexibility for both sides, so ideas come very much into prominence and are more important than memorizing moves.

This chapter will cover: A) 6.♘h3, B) 6.♗ge2 and C) 6.♗f3.

The main options of 9.♗e3 and 9.f4 will be covered in the next two chapters.

A) 6.♘h3

Designed to add more firepower to the push of the f-pawn, but developing a piece at the edge of the board and neglecting control of d4 are surely not the best advertisements for a move.

6...e6!

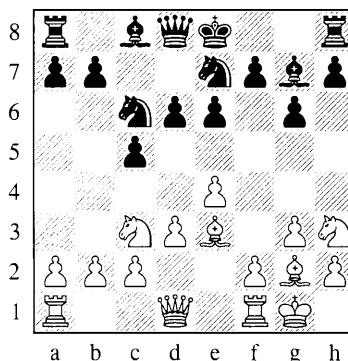
Considering that White would like to carry

out f2-f4-f5 as quickly as possible, I see no reason not to bolster the f5-square in advance.

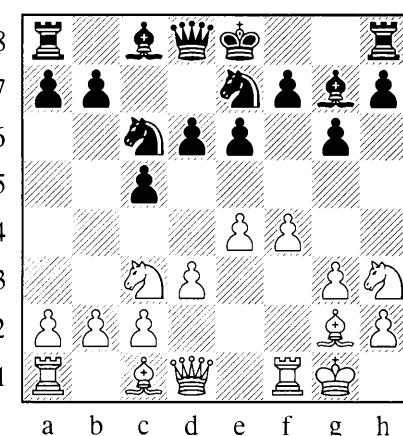
7.0-0 ♗ge7 8.f4

Not the only move.

White has also tried to play for an exchange of dark-squared bishops with 8.♗e3, when I think a good line for Black is:



8...b6! 9.♗d2 h6! 10.♗f4 ♗b7 11.♗ab1 ♜c8 12.♗ce2 (12.♗fe2 is met strongly with 12...d5! 13.exd5 exd5 14.d4 ♗f5†, when Black already has the better chances.) 12...♗e5! 13.f3 d5! 14.b3 dxe4 15.dxe4 ♜xd2 16.♗xd2 0-0 17.♗f2 ♗c6† Black was already pressing and went on to win the game in Piersig – Michael, corr. 2011.



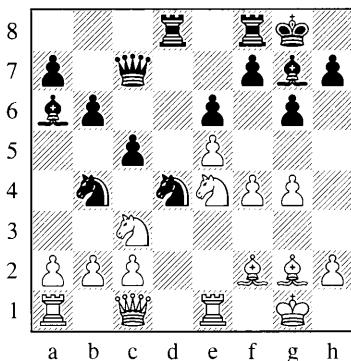
8...0-0

Now that White cannot pursue the idea of exchanging dark-squared bishops, Black can safely castle.

9.♗e3 b6 10.♗h1

This is a situation where White has deprived himself of any plans associated with d3-d4, while f4-f5 is difficult to carry out. Consequently, a waiting move like 10.♗h1 may well be his best strategy.

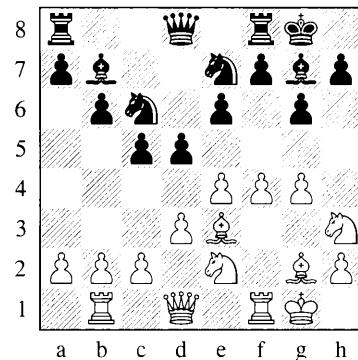
Alternatively, 10.g4?! d5! 11.♗f2 happened in Cristobal – Felgaer, Mar del Plata 2001, and at this point, if I were Black, I would have preferred: 11...dxe4N (11...d4 12.♗e2 f5?? was also good enough in the game) 12.dxe4 ♘a6 13.♗e1 ♖c7 14.e5 ♖ad8 15.♖c1 ♗d4 16.♗g5 ♗ec6 17.♗ge4 ♗b4↑



Black has dangerous queenside pressure. The counterattack 18.♗f6†?! ♗xf6 19.exf6 ♗bxc2 20.f5 doesn't quite work in view of: 20...♗xe1! 21.♗xd4 (21.♗h6 ♗ef3† 22.♗h1 ♖xh2†+) 21...♗h8! 22.♗h6 ♗g8 23.♗e4 gxh5 24.♗g7† ♗xg7 25.fxg7† ♗g8 26.♗f6† ♗xg7 27.♗e8† ♗g6 28.♗xc7 ♗xg2+

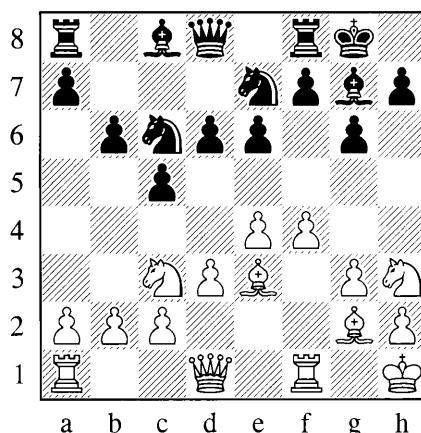
10.♗b1?! defends b2 but is rather slow. Black should continue: 10...♗b7 11.♗e2 (11.♗f2 d5! 12.♗d2 ♖d7 13.e5 f6 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.♗h3 ♗ae8 16.♗e2 ♗f5 17.c3 ♗g7†) also left Black with the better game in Padevsky – Mainka, Dortmund 1991.) 11...d5 Black

has an excellent game. In this type of position Black is not afraid of the e4-e5 advance, as he can always blunt the force of the enemy attack by replying with ...f6. The game Belev – Filev, Sofia 2009, saw the extravagant 12.g4?!, and here Black could have punished his opponent for his optimistic play:



12...dxe4N 13.dxe4 ♗a6 14.♗e1 ♗d4 15.♗xd4 cxd4↑

Finally, an example featuring two strong GMs in action continued: 10.♗f2 ♗b7 11.♗d2 ♖d7 12.♗ae1 ♗ae8 13.g4 f5! 14.gxf5 exf5† Black stood better in Zvjaginsev – Moiseenko, Sochi 2007. However, the game was given up as a draw a few moves later.

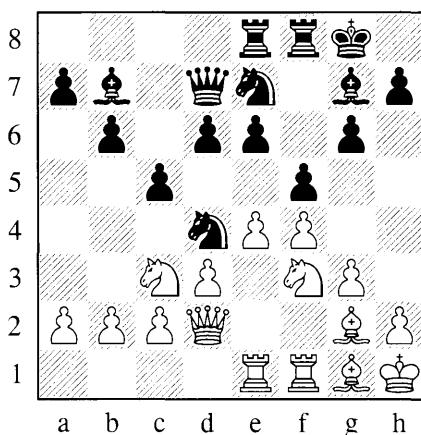


10...♗d7 11.♗g1 ♗b7 12.♗d2 ♗ae8 13.♗ae1 f5!

Black has deployed his forces in the most convenient manner and should be at least equal after this timely attack on the enemy centre.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

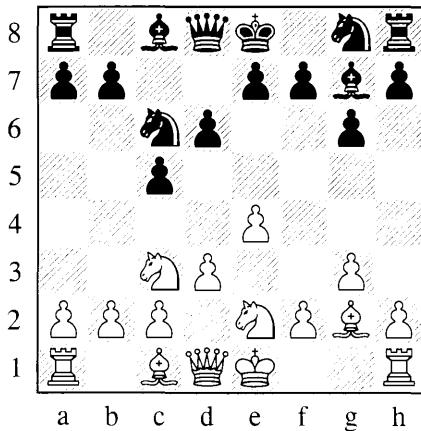
As in Nakamura – Sasikiran, Bursa 2010, when Black should have preferred Ftacnik's recommendation:



15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $d5!$ 17. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
18. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$
21. $c3\#$

Black will have the more pleasant side of a probable draw.

B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



Spassky has widely used this move, which is more to the point than 6. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ as the centre is not neglected.

6...e6

At this point B1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is possible, but the most elastic reply is B2) 7.0-0!.

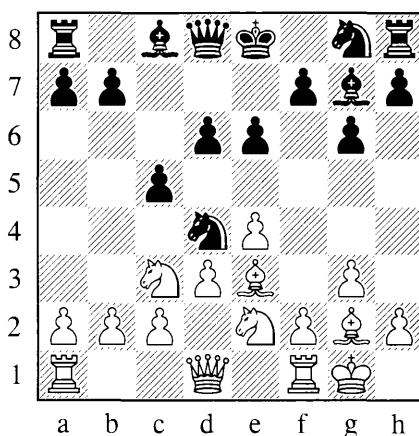
Alternatively, the move 7.a3 is rather useless in a set-up involving $\mathbb{E}b1$ and b2-b4. For example, after 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $b6$ 9.0-0 $\mathbb{E}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ 0-0 12. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $b4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8\#$ Black stood superbly in Seirawan – Andersson, Mar del Plata 1981.

B1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

I would consider this rather premature, as White misses the chance to provoke ...h6 by planting the bishop on g5. A high-level encounter from this position continued as follows:

7... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 8.0-0

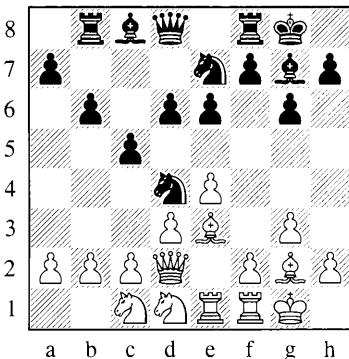
8. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $cx b4$
11. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$
14. 0-0 0-0∞ is unclear, as the black queen can return to the defence via a5.



8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $f4$

Nigel Short has played 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$, which looks like a logical move to me. However, Black's structure is so solid that even logical moves

can hardly challenge it: 9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ Losing too much time. (It seems to me that White could have renounced his ambitions at this point and chosen instead 12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1=$ with an approximately even game.)



12...d5! 13.c3 $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ dxe4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}bd8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\#$ exf5 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ Black had the slightly better chances in Short – Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2000, but White held on.

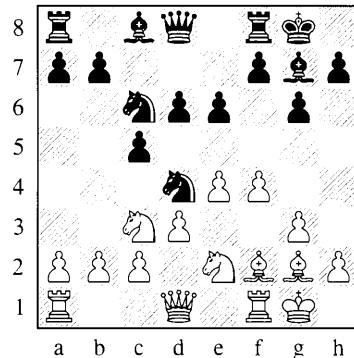
9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$

Similar to the English GM's continuation, but with the vital difference that the pawn on f4 obstructs the white bishop.

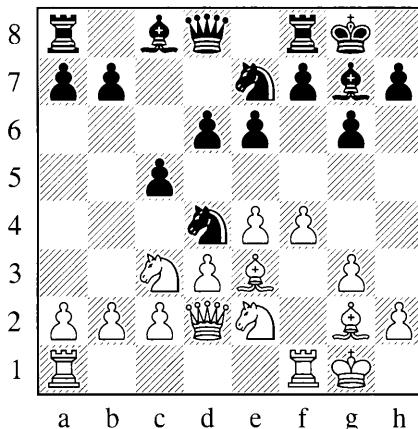
10.g4?! seems to me like tempting fate. After the customary 10...f5! 11.gxf5 exf5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}b8\#$ White's structure is loose and only Black can be better.

A similar case is: 10. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b6! 11.g4?! $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5! 13.gxf5 exf5 14. $\mathbb{Q}ce2??$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ fxe4 19.dxe4 d5# Black was already much better in Kabisch – Spassky, Germany 1987.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f2$! plans a piece trade on d4 and can be described as drawish. 10... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ I could find nothing better than this solidifying manoeuvre. Play may proceed as follows:



11. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a5!!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16.c3 This was S. Johannessen – Ostenstad, Asker 2000, and now I think best is: 16... $\mathbb{Q}xb3N$ 17.axb3 $\mathbb{Q}c6=$



10... $\mathbb{E}b8$!

Black is ready to march with his b-pawn and I can see no advantage for White.

11. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

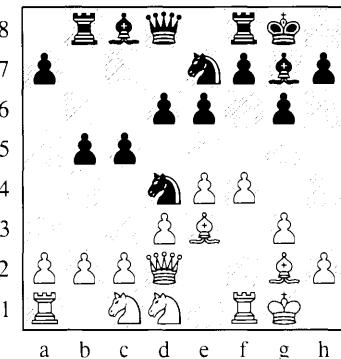
Basically White needs to retreat both his knights to the first rank in order to evict the d4-knight, but this is a time-consuming operation.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$?

This direct attempt to carry out the above plan allows:

11...b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ b4 14.c4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ (16... $b3!?$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$
 $f5\#$ was at least equal for Black in Maze –
A. L'Ami, Reykjavik 2013.

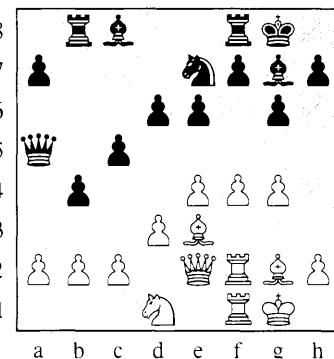


12...b4 13.c3 bxc3 14.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\#$; 15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 d5#;
15.g4 f5#

15... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16.g4 f5! 17.gxf5 exf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$
Black had the more pleasant game in Leburgue – Ikonnikov, Bethune 1997. White's passive knight on d1 disrupts his coordination.

11.g4?! is, as usual, best met with 11...f5!. After 12.gxf5 exf5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b4 15.c3 bxc3 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ d5# Black was dictating events in Hoen – Hübner, Oslo 1974.

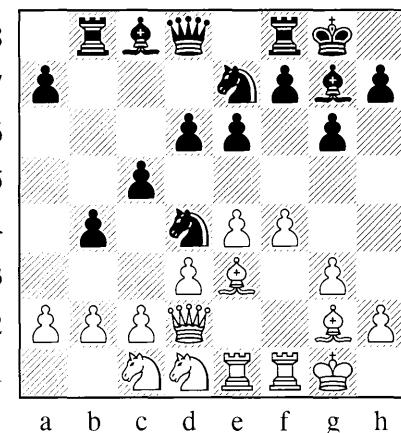
Finally, 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}af1$ b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 15.g4 happened in Claviere – Vamos, Bratislava 1993, and here Black should have of course played:



15...f5! $\mathbb{N}\#$ In the game 15... $\mathbb{W}xa2?!$ 16.f5# gave White good attacking chances.

11...b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

Black's queenside prospects look the more promising.



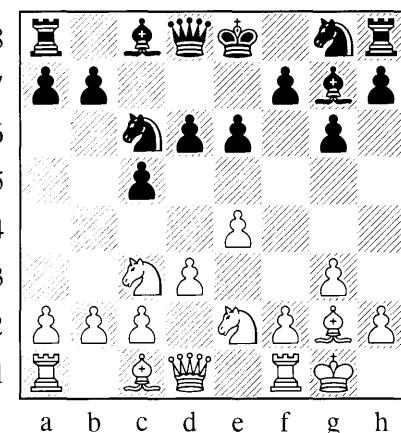
13...a5 14.c3 bxc3

14... $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ N at once looks more accurate, as it maintains the undermining idea ...a4-a3.

15.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 16.g4 f5#

Black went on to win in Vassallo Barroche – Sorin, Benidorm 1992.

B2) 7.0–0!

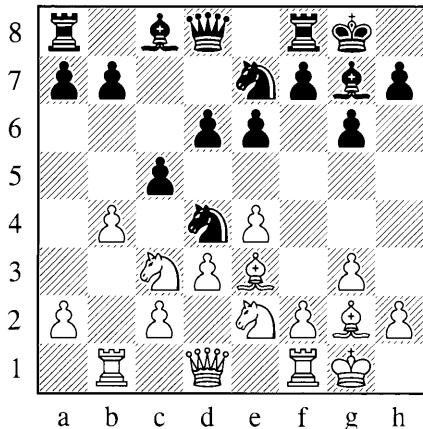


Reserving options for the c1-bishop.

7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

We should look at the interesting **B21) 8. $\mathbb{B}b1!$? before moving on to **B22) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$. 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ transposes to variation B1.****

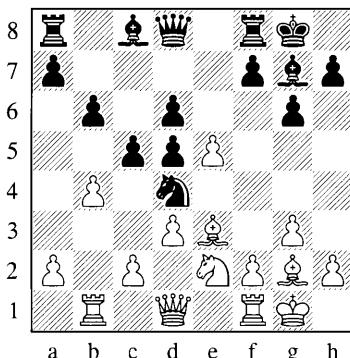
B21) 8. $\mathbb{B}b1!$? 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10.b4



The right method of carrying out the b2-b4 idea, but it shouldn't concern us too much.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#!$

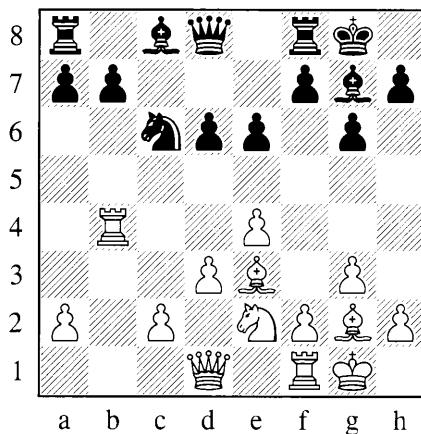
I don't like 10...b6?! 11.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ N (12.exd6?! $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ cxb4?) was better for Black in Spassky – Chandler, Germany 1987.) 12...exd5



13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ cxd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15.b5 dxe5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 17.bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18.c4 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ White has valuable pressure due to his powerful d5-bishop.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ cxb4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The older 1...d5!?? has had good results in praxis and shouldn't be dismissed lightly either.

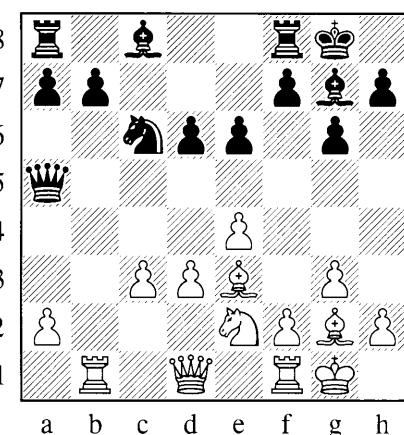


13. $\mathbb{Q}b1N$

13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16.c4 d5! 17.exd5 exd5? was excellent for Black in Shishkov – Danenkov, corr. 2008.

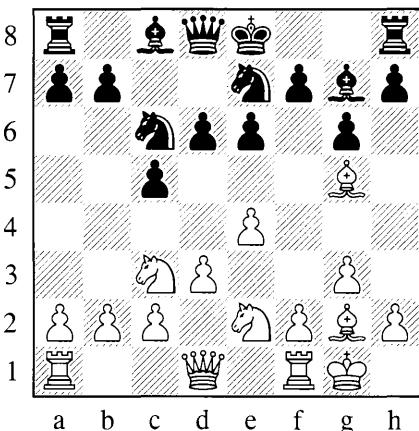
13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14.c3

14.d4 $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a5\infty$ is a pawn sacrifice which leads to an unclear game.



14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$

Black gets a good position, with chances to press White's weak pawns after moves like ...b5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$.

B22) 8.♗g5

A refined method of putting Black under pressure, trying to provoke ...h6 or otherwise achieve an exchange of dark-squared bishops.

8...h6!?

After this move it will not be easy for Black to castle, but I prefer it to allowing an exchange of dark-squared bishops.

9.♕e3 ♔d4

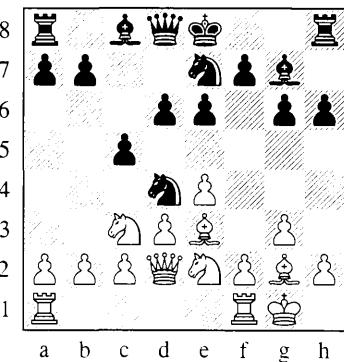
Now White has a choice between the direct 10.♗d2 and the slyer 10.♗b1.

10.♗b1!?

White prepares b2-b4, with an interesting idea against castling in mind.

10.♗d2

This one should not worry us due to:

**10...♔d7! 11.♗d1**

Finally acquiescing to letting Black castle. White gains nothing by 11.♕ae1 ♘ec6! 12.♗d1 ♖xe2† 13.♗xe2 0–0!= with the idea 14.♗xh6?! ♗d4!..

11...♖xe2† 12.♗xe2 0–0 13.♗d2 ♘h7 14.d4 ♕b5! 15.♗e1 ♖b6 16.c3 a5! 17.b3

As in Rufenacht – Hall, corr. 2001.

17...♗c6N

This seems to successfully force matters, for instance:

18.dxc5

18.d5 exd5 19.a4 ♘a6 20.♗xd5 ♘e5 21.♗b2 ♘ad8 22.h3 ♗d7 23.♗ac1 ♗f6 24.♗d1 ♘fe8 25.♗d2 ♖c7∞

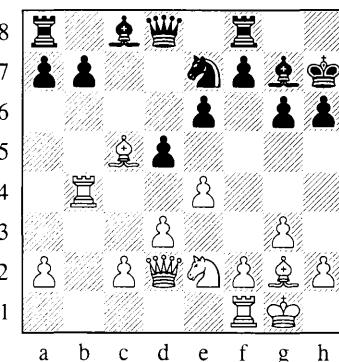
18...dxc5 19.♗b2 ♘e5 20.♗c2

20.b4? ♘fd8 21.♗c2 axb4 22.cxb4 ♘a3!±

20...♘fd8 21.♗ad1 ♖c7=**10...♗ec6!**

A clever retort.

10...0–0?! 11.b4 ♗xe2† 12.♗xe2 cxb4 13.♗xb4 d5?! 14.♗d2! ♘h7 15.♗c5!±



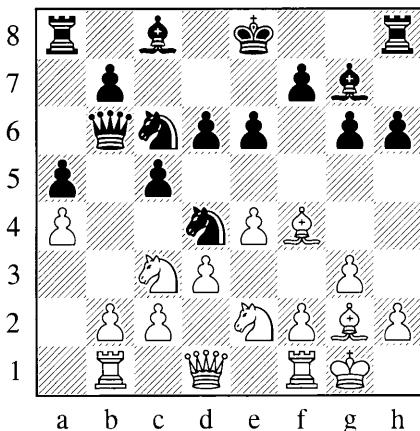
A positional trap that no less a player than Dr. Hübner fell into in Mesropov – Hübner, Germany 1997. The point is that with the b4-rook protected by its queen, Black no longer has the simple reply ...♖c7. The natural 15...dxe4!, albeit best, leads to queenside pressure for White after 16.♗xe4 ♖c7 17.♗a3 ♘d8 18.♗f4! ♗d5 19.♗xc7 ♗xc7 20.♗b1†.

11.a3 a5 12.a4 $\mathbb{W}b6!$

It is important to prevent White from untangling by playing $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

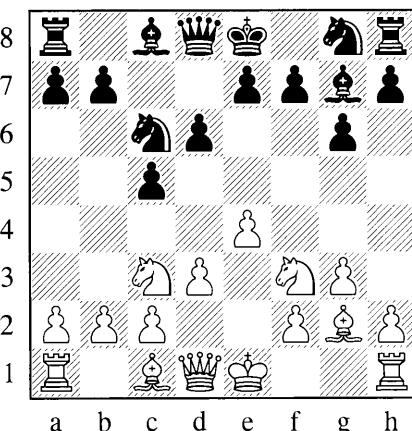
13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ is already better for Black, who threatens to invade b4.



13... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$ 14.b3 h5 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h4 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$
17.g4 0-0-0 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ f5!

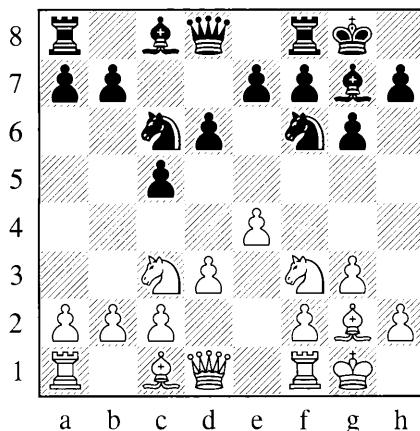
Black had strong counterplay in Bohak – Balzert, corr. 2012.

C) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

This has the disadvantage of blocking the f-pawn, but it keeps the line open for the c1-bishop and prepares to castle immediately.

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

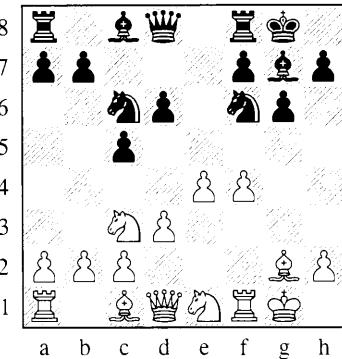
I have refrained from offering 6...e6 here, though I have to stress that this is a matter of taste, as 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5! 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12.f4 $\mathbb{W}d7\#$ is a position that is merely unclear.

7.0-0 0-0

We have reached another important position for our repertoire. White has a wide choice of continuations, but hardly an effective plan to attack us. His main problem is that the f3-knight stands in the way of the f-pawn, while the benefits of having the c1-h6 diagonal open are not clear, as an exchange of dark-squared bishops is difficult to achieve.

We will consider five main options for White: C1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, C2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$, C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, C4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ and C5) 8.h3.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ has the idea of playing f2-f4 under better circumstances, but it doesn't seem to offer any real improvement. 8...e5 9.f4 exf4 10.gxf4 (10. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ h5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}af8$ 20.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ h4= was balanced in Mamedyarov – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2008.)



10...Qg4! 11.Qf3 f5 The c1-bishop is not such a good piece and Black's king looks like the more secure of the two, making the position slightly preferable for the second player.

8.a3

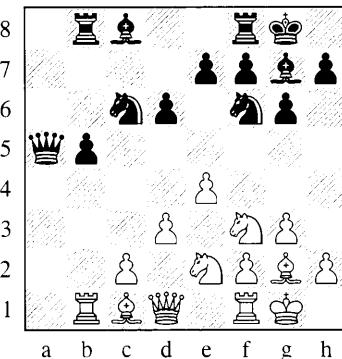
Black's play is easy to carry out, and the following game is a good example of this:

8...Bb8 9.Bb1 b5 10.b4 cxb4?!

Also possible is 10...Qe8N 11.Qd2 Qc7∞.

11.axb4 a5! 12.bxa5 Wxa5 13.Qe2

13.Qd2 b4 14.Qe2 Wc7 is at least equal.



13...b4 14.Qed4 Qxd4 15.Qxd4 Qd7 16.Qd2

Wc5 17.Qb3 Wc7?

By this point Black had obtained an easy game with a clear target on c2.

18.Qa1? Qg4! 19.h3?

19.Bxb4 Bxb4 20.Bxb4 Bb8∞ was probably preferable, although Black maintains nagging pressure.

19...Qe5 20.Bxb4 Ba4 21.Qd2 Qc6 22.Qa3

Qd4 23.c4

This occurred in Yudasin – Krush, New York 2003, and now most efficient is the immediate:

23...Bxb1N 24.Qxb1 Bb8?

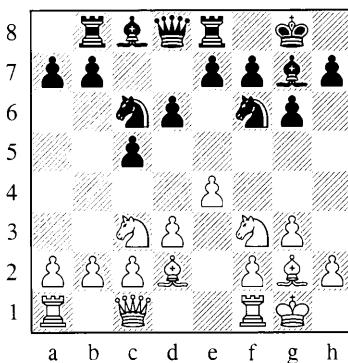
Every exchange of wood makes the plight of the a1-knight even more critical.

8.Qd2 Bb8 9.Wc1

A rather primitive attempt to exchange dark-squared bishops.

9...Bb8

9...b5? 10.Qh6 Qg4? 11.Qxg7 Qxg7∞ was also excellent for Black in Wellen – Noble, email 2005. White's manoeuvre has been too time-consuming.



10.Qh6 Bh8 11.h3

11.Qd5 Qxd5 12.exd5 Qd4 13.Qxd4 cxd4

14.Wd2 Qf5 15.h3 Wb6 16.g4 Qd7 17.c4

dxc3 18.bxc3 Bbc8 19.Bac1 Wa5 20.c4

Wxd2 21.Qxd2 b5 leads to an approximately balanced endgame.

11...b5 12.a3 e6 13.Qg5 Wc7?

Black has the easier play.

8.Qg5 h6 9.Qd2

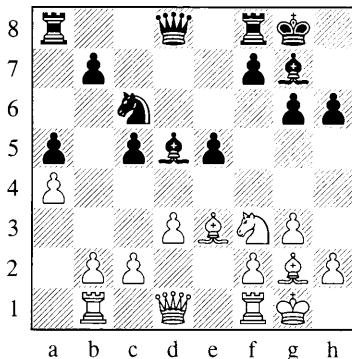
9.Qe3 e5?

9...e5! 10.a3

10.Qe1 Qd4 11.f4? Qg4∞ favours Black.

10...Qe6 11.Bb1 a5! 12.a4 d5 13.exd5 Qxd5

14.Qxd5 Qxd5 15.Qe3



15...Qd4!

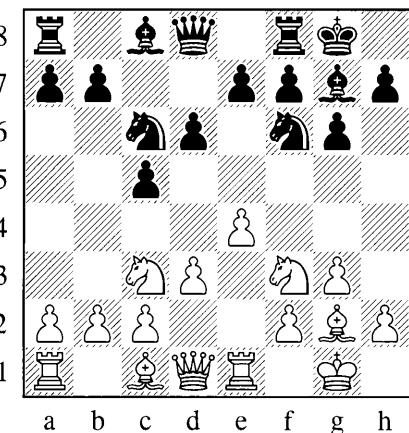
Instead, 15...c4 16.dxc4 Qxc4 17.Qxd8= 18.Qfd1 Spassky – Tal, Tbilisi (10) 1965, is unclear after: 18...f5? N∞

16.Qxd4 cxd4 17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.c4 Qc6 19.Qd2

As played in Mayer – Perez, corr. 2001. Black should have chosen the prophylactic: 19...Qh7! N

With excellent play. For example:
20.b4 axb4 21.Qxb4 Ra6 22.Qb3 b6 23.f3 f5
24.Qb5 Re8=

C1) 8.Qe1



This would be a logical move with the queen's knight standing on d2, but here I find it rather pointless. One might argue that it centralizes the rook and creates the threat of e4-e5, but in my view the threat is easily parried and the rook appears clumsy on e1.

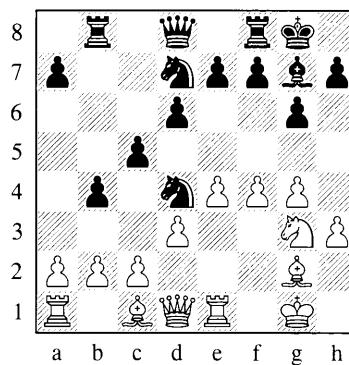
8...Qg4!

Also possible is 8...e5?! 9.Qd2 (9.Qg5?! h6 10.Qxf6 Qxf6 11.Qd5 Qg7 12.Qd2 Qe6 13.a4 Qe7= is about equal) 9...Bb8 10.a4 a6 11.Qc4 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.Qe3 b4 14.Qcd5 Qxd5 15.Qxd5 Qe6= with balanced play in Hug – Gligoric, Bath 1973.

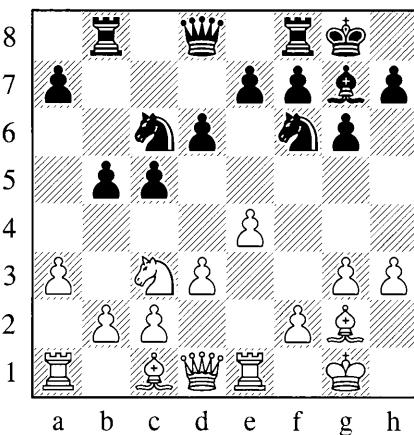
9.h3 Qxf3 10.Qxf3 Bb8 11.Qg2 b5 12.a3??

This restrained course is best.

12.f4 b4 13.Qe2 Qd7 14.g4?! (14.e5 Qc7! 15.exd6 Qxd6= would have been only slightly better for Black) 14...Qd4 15.Qg3??



15...a5! 16.Qd2 Qb5! 17.Qc1 a4 18.c4 a3 19.b3 Qb2 20.Qd1 Qc3+– Black had punished White's overambitious play in Golovin – Zubarev, Voronezh 2005, and went on to win. This is an instructive example of what Black wants to achieve on the long diagonal.

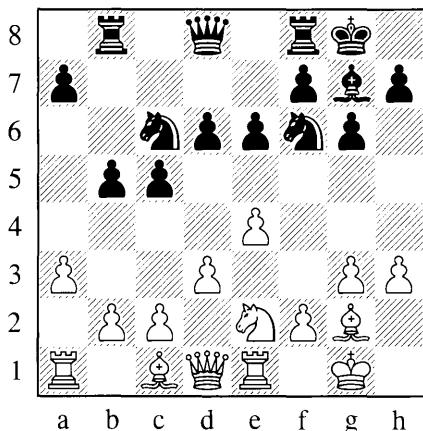


12...e6!

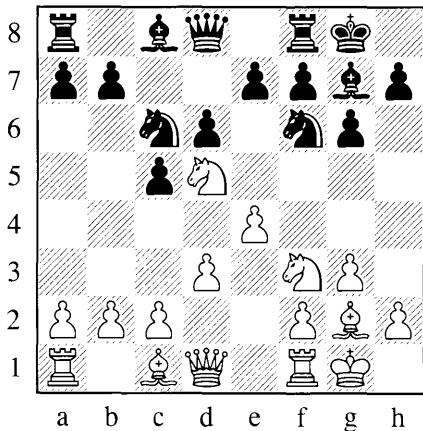
Black needs to pay attention. 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ 13.e5! $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 14.exd6 exd6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ was Kramnik – Anand, Moscow (rapid) 1994, when 17.c3!N $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 19.cxd4 $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ would have yielded a clear positional advantage for White.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$

13.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7\#$, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, is better for Black.

**13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14.c3 a5 15.d4 a4 \rightleftarrows**

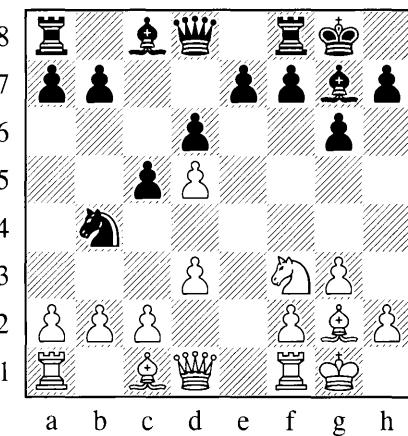
Black will have the more pleasant position by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ next.

C2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 

I would like to propose a radical continuation:

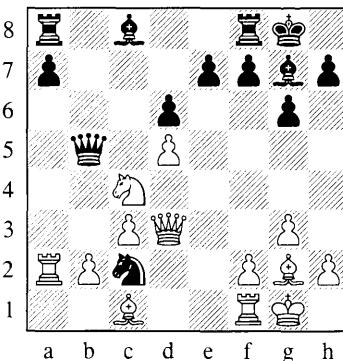
8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!?$

8... $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightleftarrows$ is undoubtedly the safest way.

9.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ **10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

The white knight tries to imitate its adversary by jumping at the enemy camp.

More restrained is: 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5!? 11.a4! c4! 12.axb5 cxd3 13.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 14. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd3$



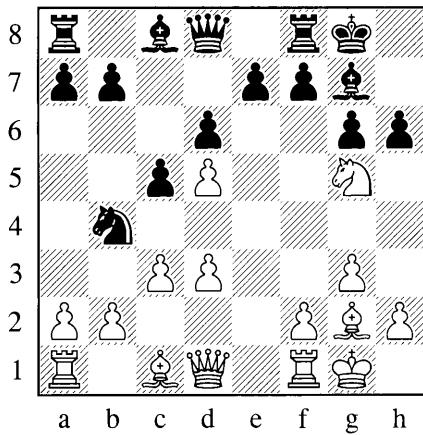
With approximately balanced play after either 16...a5!= or 16... $\mathbb{E}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}b6\rightleftarrows$.

10.c4 gives Black a useful target for ...b5 later on. After 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 12.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ Black was ready to carry out this plan and stood fine in Raisanen – Laine, corr. 2009.

10...h6 11.c3?!

More accurate seems 11.a3 hxg5 12.axb4 cxb4 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a5 14. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2\infty$.

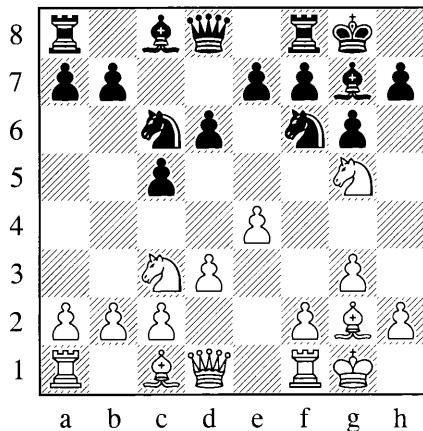
After the text, as played in Mollov – Palac, Toulouse 1990, the solid and strong reply for Black was:



11...hxg5!N 12.cxb4 cxb4 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$!
14. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$! 15. $\mathbb{W}a4$ a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}b5\uparrow$

Black has annoying pressure.

C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



White opens up the way for the customary march of the f-pawn. However, in doing so he places the knight on a rather unnatural square for the attack's purposes, and Black should be at least slightly better by replying as follows:

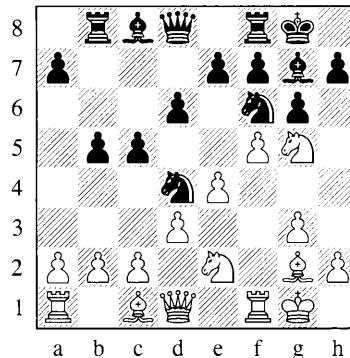
8... $\mathbb{E}b8$! 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

10.f5

In this case Black should remain unperturbed: 10...b5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

11.a4?! b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$ only helps Black get his pawn to b4, which is something he wants to achieve.

11.fxg6?! allows the favourable recapture 11...fxg6!, with a clear advantage for Black in the line 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xf8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 14.exd5 h5! 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5\mp$. White gets weaker and weaker on the dark squares.



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$! 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The fine base on e5 thwarts any attacking ideas the first player might have. I could find nothing better for White than:

13.fxg6 hxg6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b4 15.h3
15.a3 b3\# or 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a5\#

15... $\mathbb{Q}fd7\uparrow$

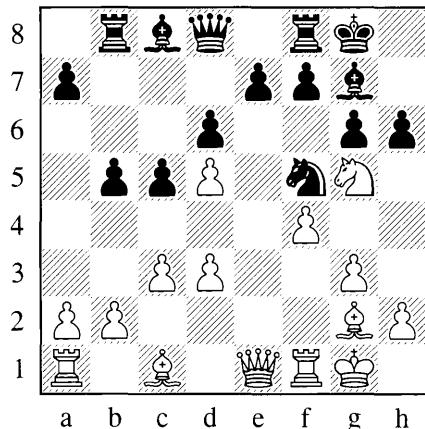
Intending ...e6.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}e7\mp$

Black maintains the more realistic chances of success, as he has a clear plan to attack in the centre and on the queenside.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11.exd5 b5 12.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e1$ h6

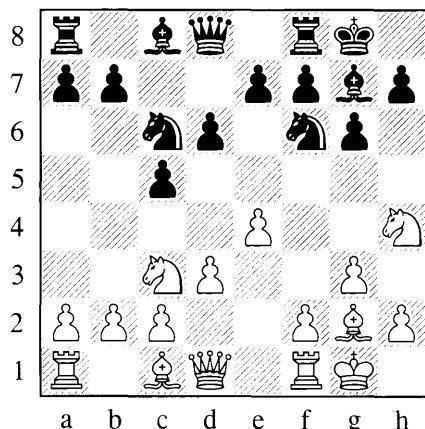
Also possible is 13...b4!? 14.g4 bxc3 15.bxc3 $\Delta h6$ 16.h3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 17. $\Delta d2$ $\mathbb{E}b2\bar{f}$ Stripunsky – Braylovsky, New York 2003, when the strong pressure against all White's queenside pawns outweighs the slight displacement of the knight on h6.



14. $\Delta e4$ e6 15.dxe6 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 16.g4 $\Delta e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$ f5 18. $\Delta xc5$ dxc5 19. $\mathbb{W}xe6\bar{f}$ $\Delta h7$ 20.g5 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 21.gxh6 $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 22.hxg7 $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g4\bar{f}$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3\bar{f}$ 25.hxg3 $\Delta d5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 27. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}f7\bar{f}$

Black had the more pleasant ending in Galego – Ki. Georgiev, Eilat 2012.

C4) 8. $\Delta h4$



This looks like the most natural way of preparing f2-f4. I think Black should react in the following manner:

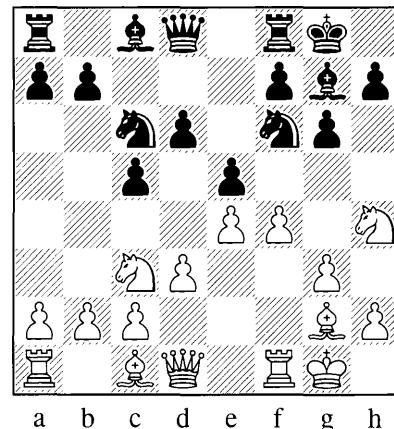
8...e5!?

Gaining space in the centre and creating some obstacles against the smooth realization of White's idea.

9.f4

Now this advance is less effective as Black can capture on f4 under favourable circumstances, successfully disrupting White's direct attacking plans.

On the other hand, delaying the pawn push by 9.h3 $\mathbb{E}b8$ 10.a4 is clearly too slow, and after 10...a6! 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ (11.f4? $\Delta h5\bar{f}$; 11. $\Delta d5$ $\Delta xd5!$ 12.exd5 $\Delta e7\bar{f}$ with the idea 13.a5?! $\mathbb{W}f6\bar{f}$) 11...b5 12.axb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b4 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\Delta e8$ Black's position looks good to me.



9...exf4!

A major point: Black stops the further f4-f5, which would give White a strong attack if carried out. In view of the loose situation of the h4-knight, White is forced to recapture with the bishop on f4.

10. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ h6!?

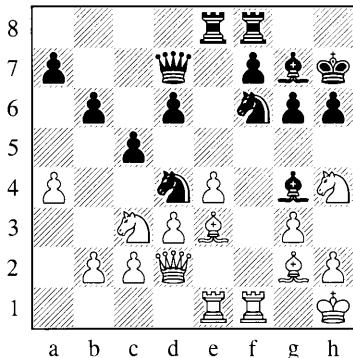
Another important move, preventing $\mathbb{W}d2$

and threatening ...g5. Black has a massive plus score from this position.

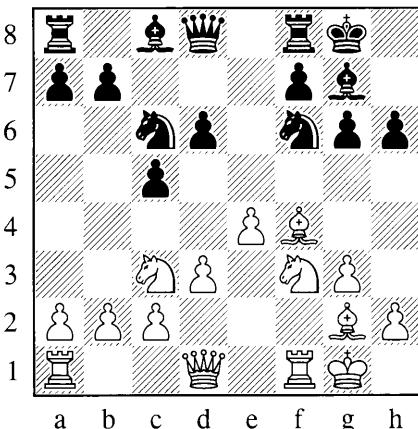
11.♘f3

Trying to control d4.

11.♘d2 ♗d4 12.♗h1 ♗g4 13.♗c1 ♖h7
14.♗e3 ♘d7 15.♗d2 ♘ae8 16.a4 b6 17.♗ae1



17...g5!! 18.♘f3 (18.♗xg5 hxg5 19.♗xg5 ♘e5 20.♗d2 ♘e6† leaves White with insufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece) 18...♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♘xf3† 20.♗xf3 d5!↑ White's position was already difficult in Malaniuk – Chiburdanidze, Baku 1979.



11...♗g4!

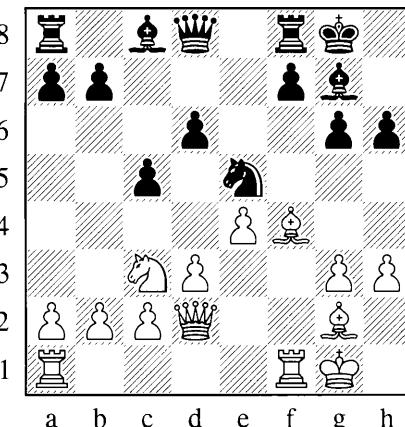
I like this positional move, seeking to exchange a pair of knights. It frees Black's game completely.

Also possible is 11...♗e6 12.♗d2! ♖h7 (12...g5? 13.♗xg5 hxg5 14.♗xg5→ gives White dangerous pressure) 13.♗ae1 ♖h5 14.♗e3 ♘b6∞ as in Engstrom – Cicak, Stockholm 1991, but our main continuation is more harmonious.

12.h3

12.♗d5 ♘e6 is unclear.

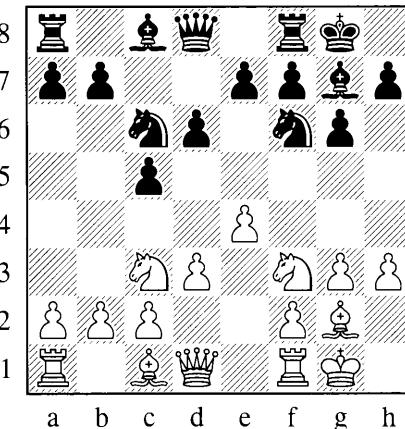
12...♗ge5 13.♗xe5 ♘xe5 14.♗d2
14.g4 ♘e6∞



14...♖h7 15.♗h2 ♘e6 16.♗ab1 ♘c8 17.a3 a6 18.♗f2 b5

Black had the easier game and went on to win in N. Popov – Savon, Ivano Frankovsk 1971.

C5) 8.h3



This is perhaps the most interesting continuation at White's disposal. It toys with the ideas $\mathbb{Q}e3$, $\mathbb{W}d2$, $\mathbb{Q}h2$ and $f2-f4$, and is a useful prophylactic move in any case.

8... $\mathbb{B}b8$

Black prepares to carry on with his queenside play.

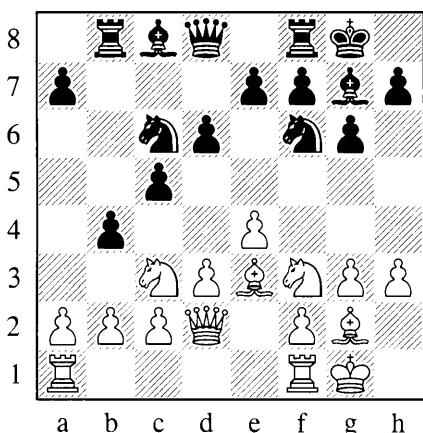
I do not rate C51) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$! highly, and C52) 9.a4! is the more common response.

C51) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$!

It seems inferior for White to choose a set-up where the a-file remains closed.

9...b5 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b4

The first player has a choice of knight moves but, apparently, equality is the most he can hope to attain.

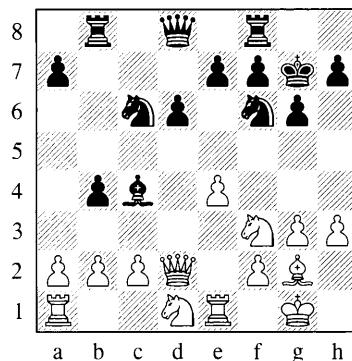


11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This one looks a bit clumsy, so there have been attempts to place the knight on a better square:

11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ proved worse for White after 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15.c4 e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a5= in Gallego – Damaso, Portugal 1994.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ has been tried by Morozevich, the idea being to deploy the knight on e3 after the exchange of dark-squared bishops. After 11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ c4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 14.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ Morozevich – McShane, Biel 2004, I favour:



15...e5!N 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ Black holds a slight positional advantage.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6?!$

We are at a crossroads, with White having to make a crucial decision:

14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

Allowing an opening of the queenside does not look wise, but the alternatives create a hole on c3.

14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Black would like to invade on c3 with his knight, and this severely impedes any attacking tries by White. A few sample lines highlighting this fact follow:

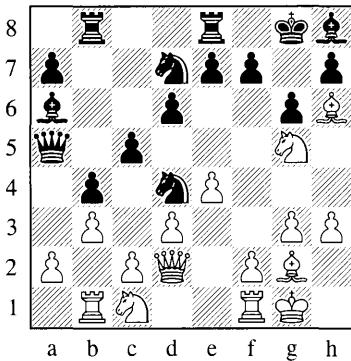
17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

In case of 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$ (17... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 18.e5! $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5=$ should lead to a draw by repetition, as the black queen finds it hard to escape) 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e5= Black gets the upper hand, in view of the weakness on c2 and the possibility to open more lines with ...d5.

17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$

18.f4 e6!? slows down the attack decisively without jeopardizing Black's chances, for example: 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (19.f5 exf5 20.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$)

19... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7!$
22.f5 exf5 23.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{E}e7\mp$



18... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

19.a4? $\mathbb{Q}a3\rightarrow$

19... $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 20.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

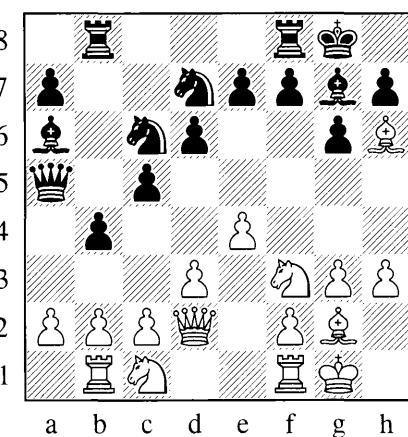
The march of the a-pawn is already on the cards, so White must act.

23.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

I would rate Black's chances as better here. White does have some pressure on the kingside, but it is hard to believe it is enough, as all the black pieces are magnificently posted.

24. $\mathbb{W}f4$ f6!→

Carefully removing any pressure from f7 and h7 before grabbing the pawn on c2.

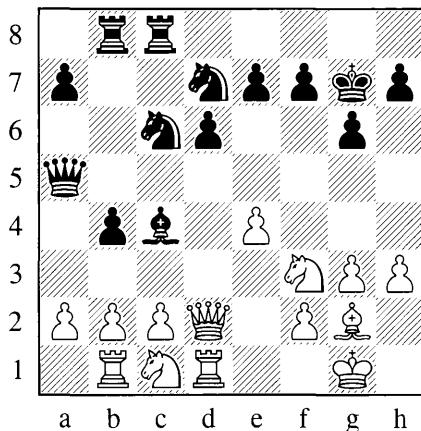


14...c4!

Of course! Black should take his chance while it is there.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 16.dxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$

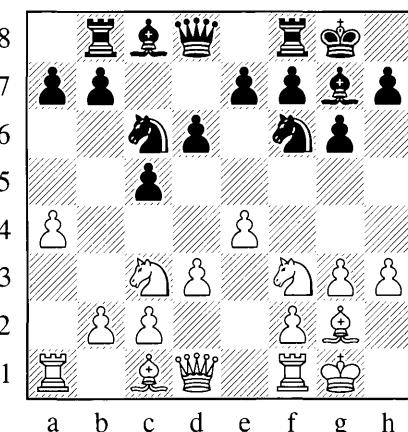
Black has lost the valuable defender of his king but enjoys the better chances, as White does not have enough forces to attack him. A game from this position continued:



18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19.b3 $\mathbb{B}b5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e5!$ 22.f3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}c5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}c3\uparrow$

Black had all the pressure in Lazic – Huzman, Belgrade 1988.

C52) 9.a4!



We'll now switch our attention to similar positions where the a-file opens up.

9...a6

Black should continue unperturbed with his queenside expansion.

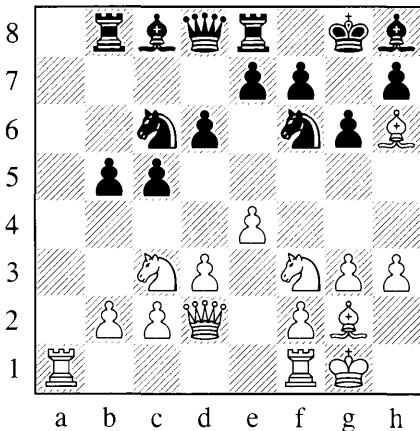
10.♗e3 b5 11.axb5 axb5 12.♗d2

This natural move, with the idea of exchanging dark-squared bishops, is the best for White.

Trying to disrupt Black's play on the long diagonal by means of 12.e5 dxe5 13.♕xc5 shouldn't be anything to fear: 13...b4?! 14.♗a4 (White is struggling in case of 14.♗e4 ♗xe4 15.dxe4 ♘c7 16.c3 bxc3 17.bxc3 ♖e6 18.♗a4 ♘fc8†) 14...♘c7 15.♗e1 ♘d8 16.♗e2 ♘d5† Black had a favourable position in Kogan – Illescas Cordoba, Spain 2002.

Now I would like to give two options: C521) 12...♗e8 is an alternative to C522) 12...b4.

C521) 12...♗e8 13.♗h6 ♗h8



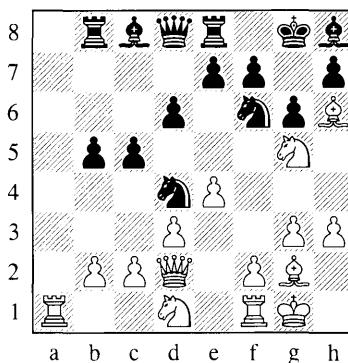
Aiming to keep the dark-squared bishop on board.

14.♗g5!

White's most dangerous try, preparing

to unleash the f-pawn and exert cramping pressure on Black's kingside. Other moves should not annoy us:

14.♗h2?! is artificial, allowing Black to generate central play. 14...b4 15.♗d1 was Hug – Fedorowicz, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, and here I like:

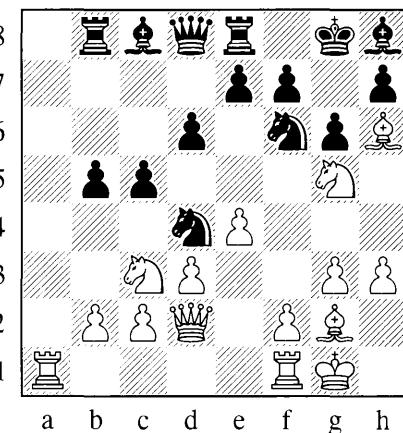


15...d5!N 16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.♗e3 ♗e6†

14.♗d5?! ♗xd5 15.exd5 ♗b4 16.c3 ♗xd5 17.♗g5 ♗f6 is also ineffective. White's compensation will evaporate once the bishop reappears on g7.

14...♗d4!?

We have reached a crucial juncture, with White having the following choice:



15.♘e2!N

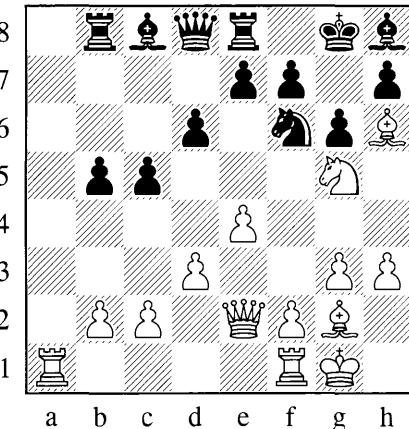
This is the move that annoys me most, challenging our well-placed central knight.

Weaker is instead 15.♘d1 d5! 16.e5 ♘d7! 17.e6 fxg6 18.c3 ♘f5 19.♘xe6 ♜b6 20.♘f4 (20.♗xd5? succumbs to 20...♗f6 21.♘c7+ ♘xd5 22.♘xe8 ♜b7+-) 20...d4 when I cannot see anything concrete for White.

15.f4 b4 16.♘d1 d5! ↗ also appears insufficient to give the first player an edge.

15...♗xe2† 16.♕xe2

This is an important position that has yet to be reached in tournament practice. The question is whether White's kingside pressure amounts to something tangible. I reckon that with correct play it doesn't:

**16...♘d7?!**

A more dynamic way than the one I had originally devised.

My original analysis preferred 16...♗h5, but now I see that 17.c3 b4 18.d4! bxc3 19.bxc3 cxd4 20.cxd4 ♜g7 21.♗xg7 ♘xg7 gives White a tiny edge due to his space advantage.

17.c3 c4?!

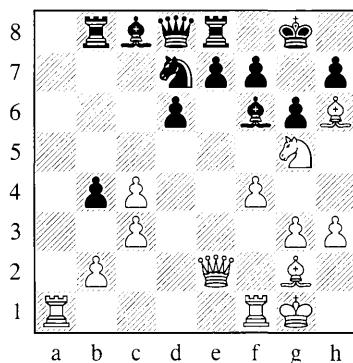
An original idea I found after some meditation.

I am not so keen on: 17...b4 18.d4! ♜f6 19.♗c4! e6 20.h4! cxd4 21.cxd4 ♜b6 22.e5! dxe5 23.d5† White has some initiative.

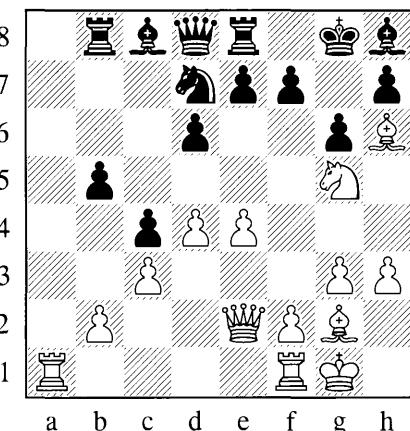
18.d4

By no means the only move, but it is thematic to block the h8-bishop.

18.dxc4 b4! is an important point, granting Black powerful compensation for the pawn. A possible follow-up is: 19.e5?! ♜xe5 20.f4 ♜f6



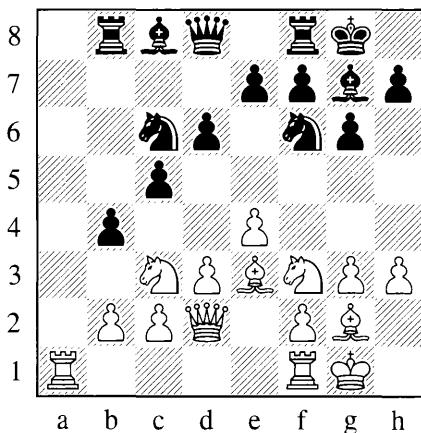
21.♗xf7!! ♜b6† (21...♗xf7?? 22.♗e6†!!) 22.♗h2 ♜b7! 23.♗g5 ♘c5 Black's central control and queenside counterplay render the enemy's attack ineffective, for example: 24.f5 ♜xg2 25.♗xg2 gxh5 26.♗xf5 bxc3 27.bxc3 ♜b2 28.♗a2 ♜xg2† 29.♗xg2 ♘xc3=



18...e5! 19.Qf3 exd4 20.Qxd4 Qe5=

An unclear position arises: Black still has the ...b4 lever at his disposal and controls the important d3-square with his knight. This position is open to all three results, but I believe Black does not stand worse at this point.

C522) 12...b4

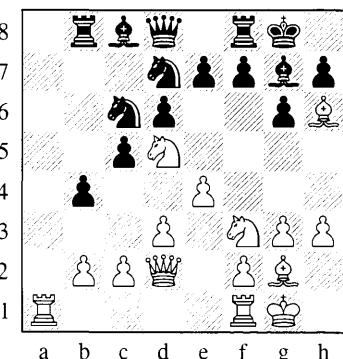


Gaining more space and preparing to challenge the a-file later on.

13.Qe2

This looks like the automatic reaction, but there are alternatives:

Weaker is 13.Qd5?! Qd7!?N, when Black attacks b2 and at the same time plans ...e6, forcing the knight to the awkward f4-square. After 14.Qh6 I recommend:



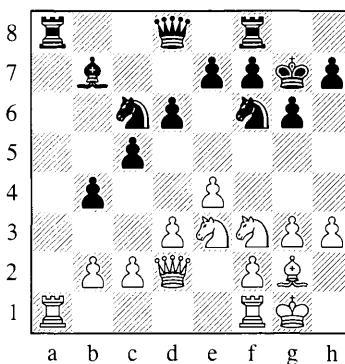
14...Qxb2?? 15.Qxf8 Qxf8= with excellent compensation for the exchange.

13.Qd1? Qb7

13...Qe8?! is less clear, but is a viable alternative.

14.Qh6 Qa8 15.Qxg7 Qxg7 16.Qe3

16.Qb1?! grants Black the better game after the accurate: 16...b3! 17.c4 (17.c3 c4=) 17...e5 18.Qe3 Qd4 19.Qxd4 cxd4=



16...Qxa1 17.Qxa1 Qc7 18.c3

18.Qd5 Qxd5 19.exd5 Qb8!=

18...Qa8 19.Qxa8 Qxa8 20.Qd5

Zvaginsev – Dreev, Krasnoyarsk 2007, was agreed drawn at this point. I will give one sample line to show that this was a justifiable result:

20...Qa5 21.Qxf6 exf6 22.d4 bxc3 23.Qxc3 Qxc3 24.bxc3 Qa7 25.d5 f5 26.Qd2 fxe4 27.Qxe4=

13...Qb7

Again, ignoring the exchange of dark-squared bishops looks like an acceptable tactic. With the white f-pawn blocked by its own knight there is no real prospect of a White attack on the kingside, so the only thing Black should take care with is to not let his opponent gain space in the centre.

14.Qh6 Qa8 15.Qab1

Trying to avoid too many exchanges is

White's only realistic hope to maintain chances of an attack.

Instead, 15.♗g5 led to a colourless draw after: 15...♝d7 16.♗xg7 ♜xg7 17.♗d2 h6 18.♗e3 ♜c7 19.f4 ♜xa1 20.♗xa1 ♜a8 21.♗xa8 ♜xa8 22.♗c4 ♜a5 23.♗d2 e5 24.♗f2 ♜b7 25.♗f1 ♜c6 26.♗e3 ♜d4 ½–½ P. Karlsson – Ould Ahmed, corr. 2009

15...e6

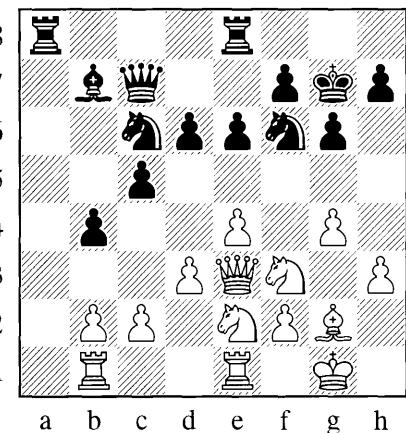
There are several good moves for Black at this point, and the text is just one of them.

16.♗fe1

An immediate 16.c3 would be answered by 16...♝c7 as in the game. After 17.♗xg7 ♜xg7 18.♗e3, one simple method of continuing is 18...♝d7 19.d4 e5= with balanced play.

16...♝c7 17.♗e3 ♜fe8 18.♗xg7 ♜xg7 19.g4

Trying to secure an outlet for the knight on g3 seems like the only way to make some progress.

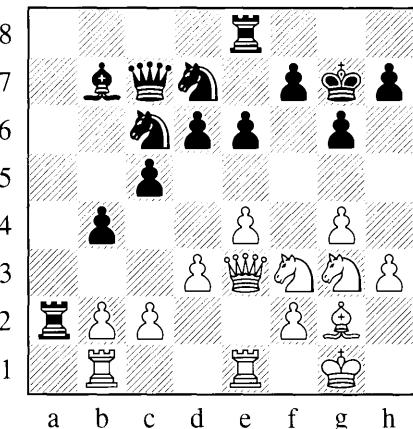


19...♝d7?

Black proceeds cautiously, as he does not want to weaken the squares around his king with 19...e5.

20.♗g3 ♜a2

20...♝ce5!? 21.♗xe5 dxe5 was already possible at this point, with an excellent game for Black.



21.c3 ♜ce5 22.cxb4 cxb4 23.d4 ♜xf3† 24.♔xf3 ♜b6 25.♔d1 e5 26.♔b3 exd4 27.♔f4 ♜e5†

Black had a slight initiative in Inarkiev – Van Wely, Dagomys 2008.

Conclusion

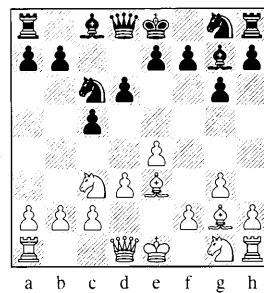
In spite of its sly nature (or perhaps exactly because of it) the Closed Sicilian can be extremely dangerous to the uninitiated. The computers tend to underestimate the attacking chances it offers, and will almost always tell you that Black is better, even in positions where the human eye feels that something is going wrong.

Realizing that the spearhead of White's strategy is the f4-f5 advance I decided to offer a Black repertoire based upon the ...e6, ...♝ge7 set-up. However, against 6.♗f3, when a quick f4-f5 is not on the cards, I recommend a different approach. Black is often able to expand on the queenside, giving him excellent chances for the battle ahead.



Closed Variation

6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



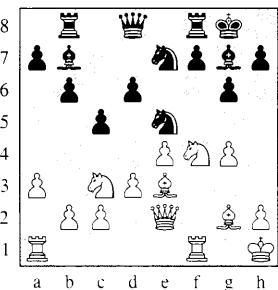
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.g3 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

6...e5

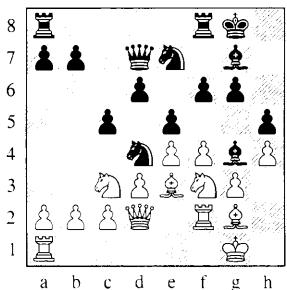
A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$	312
B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$	313
B1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h6$?! $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$!	313
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B511) 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$!?	322
B512) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$	323
B52) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$	325

A) after 14.g4



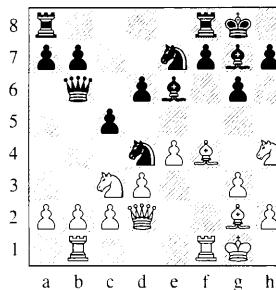
14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$!N

B2) note to 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$



14...b5!N

B52) after 13. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$



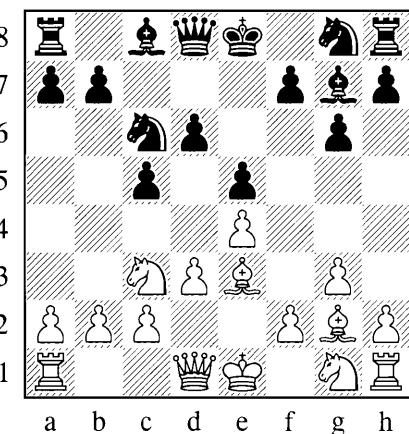
13...c4?N

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3
d6 6.♗e3

This is a popular move, aiming for ♖d2 and a subsequent exchange of dark-squared bishops after the g8-knight moves.

6...e5

I think that in this particular situation a set-up based on ...e5 is more thematic, trying to cover as many dark squares as possible.

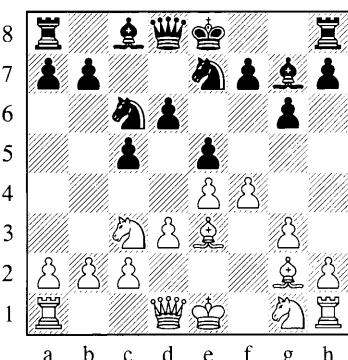


We will briefly look at A) 7.♘h3, but by far the main move is B) 7.♖d2.

7.♗ge2 will most probably lead to play similar to 7.♘h3 or 7.♖d2.

An independent try is:

7.f4 ♗ge7



8.fxe5?!

8.♘f3 ♘d4 9.♗d2 leads to variation B5.

8.♗ge2 ♘d4 9.0–0 0–0 10.♗d2 transposes to variation B4.

8...♗xe5 9.♗ge2 0–0 10.0–0

10.♗d2 ♖h3?! 11.0–0 ♖xg2 12.♗xg2∞ leads to a position where the exchange of White's fianchettoed bishop renders his king more exposed than usual.

10...h6∞

Black had good chances in Jonitz – Duscek, Germany 1998. He can pursue his queenside play without fearing an exchange of dark-squared bishops.

A) 7.♘h3

This is answered in the standard manner:

7...♗ge7! 8.f4

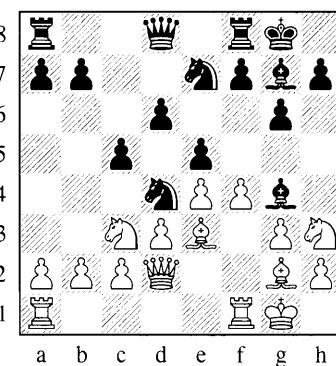
8.0–0 0–0 9.♗d2

9.f4 exf4 will transpose to the main line.

9...♘d4 10.f4 ♖g4!

Nataf's move anticipates the consolidating manoeuvre ♘c3-d1-f2, which happened in the top-level encounter Carlsen – Wojtaszek, Tromso (ol) 2014, after 10...♘d7.

The following analysis is mostly based on Nataf's notes on his game versus Koch from *Chess Informant* 81:



11.♗g5

11.♗f2?! ♖e6!± intending ...♗d7, ...b5-b4.

11.fxe5?! dx5 12.♗f2 ♖e6±

11.♗h1?! ♖d7 12.♗g1 ♖ac8!±

11.♗d1? ♖d7 12.♗df2 ♗e2 13.♗fe1 ♗f3
 14.fxe5 ♗xg2 15.♗xg2 dxe5 16.c3 ♗e6
 17.♗g5= 11...h6! 12.♗f3 exf4! 13.gxf4
 13.♗xf4?! g5! 14.♗e3 f5!†
 13...♗xf3! 14.♗xf3 ♗xf3† 15.♗xf3 f5!†

Black had a pleasant edge in Koch – Nataf, France 2001.

8...exf4 9.♗xf4 0–0 10.0–0 ♗b8

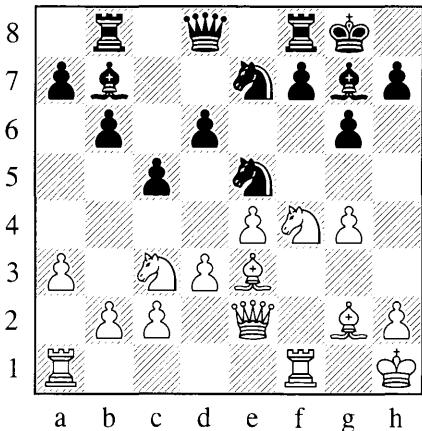
The slight weakness of the d6-pawn is outweighed by the powerful g7-bishop and Black's excellent control over the dark squares in the centre.

11.a3

11.♗d2 b5 12.a3 a5 13.♗ab1 b4 14.♗cd5
 ♗xd5 15.♗xd5 ♗e6 16.♗f4 as in Spassky – Franco Ocampos, Buenos Aires 1979, is easily balanced after 16...♖d7N=.

11...♗e5?! 12.♗h1 b6 13.♗e2 ♗b7 14.g4

This was Spassky – Sax, Reykjavik 1988, when choosing the correct knight seems to give Black a small edge:



14...♗c6!N†

The main thing in these positions is to have the d5-square well covered and to keep control over the dark squares – in this case Black has succeeded in doing both.

B) 7.♗d2

A common choice, continuing with the original idea.

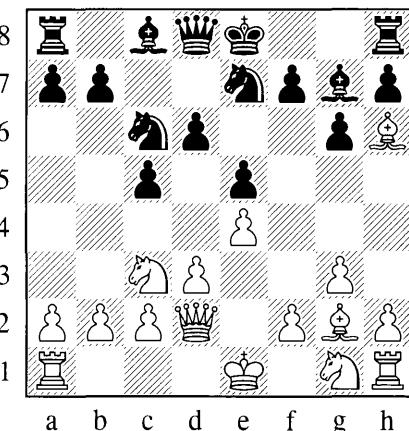
7...♗ge7

Black develops in the knowledge that White can now exchange dark-squared bishops. However, the exchange is time-consuming and Black is well placed to meet it.

There are five main possibilities to cover:

- B1) 8.♗h6?!, B2) 8.h4?!, B3) 8.♗f3, B4) 8.♗ge2 and B5) 8.f4.

B1) 8.♗h6?!



The obvious choice, but it is now White who has to play with care to maintain equality.

8...♗xh6

Black exchanges bishops in order to jump at the enemy camp with gain of time.

9.♗xh6 ♗d4!

An interesting situation: Black is fighting dynamically to compensate for the absence of his precious g7-bishop. White has the following choice: B11) 10.0–0–0?! or B12) 10.♗d2!.

Much weaker is instead:

10.♘c1?! ♜e6! 11.♗ge2

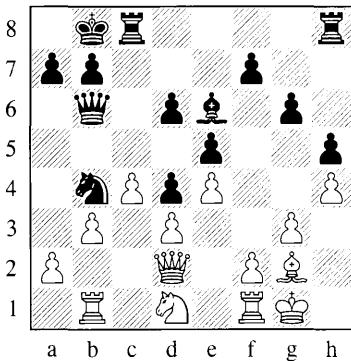
11.♗f3 ♜b6 12.♗d1 0–0–0 will most probably transpose after 13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.0–0.

11...♜b6!N 12.♗xd4

12.b3 ♜a5 13.0–0 ♜ec6 14.f4 ♜xe2†
15.♗xe2 ♜g4†

12...cxd4 13.♗d1 0–0–0 14.0–0 ♜b8 15.c4
♝c6 16.♗b1 ♜b4! 17.♗d2 ♜c8! 18.b3 h5
19.h4

19.a3 ♜a6 20.b4 h4 21.f4 hxg3 22.hxg3
♜d8→



19...g5!! 20.a3 ♜xd3! 21.♗xd3 gxh4 22.gxh4
♝hg8

White has landed himself in a precarious situation, in view of the weak state of his king and the badly placed knight on d1. After a doubling of rooks on the g-file he will be hard pressed to find a defence, despite being a piece up. One possible line is:
23.f4 ♜g4 24.♗b2 ♜cg8 25.♗f3 ♜a5
25...♜d8?! is also promising.

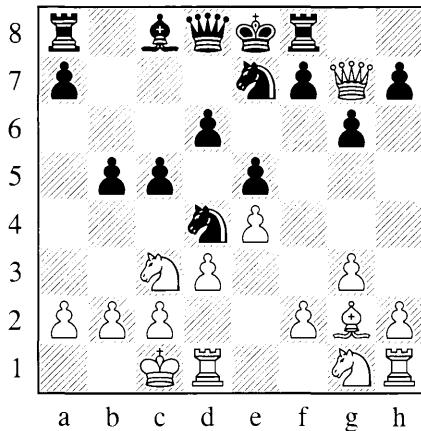
26.♗f1 ♜xa3 27.♗c2 ♜b4

Although Black has no direct threats, the pressure is so strong that White can hardly move.

B11) 10.0–0–0?!

This looks exceedingly dangerous in view of:

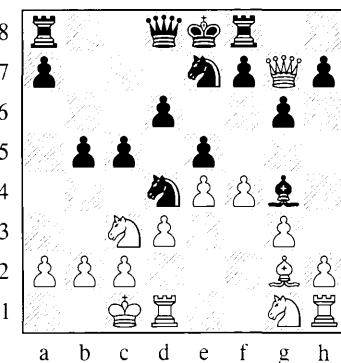
10...b5! 11.♗g7 ♜f8



12.♗b1?

As they say, in a bad position every move looks bad, and an author's task of deciding which is the least of the evils becomes difficult. White's last is not promoted to the main line because of its worth, but mainly for instructional reasons.

In case of 12.f4? the correct reply is 12...♜g4!, leading to great difficulties for the first player. (Weaker is instead 12...b4?! 13.♗ce2 ♜g4 as in Grebennikova – Labasheva, Dagomys 2009, because the d1-rook doesn't have to move. After 14.♗xd4!N ♜xd1 15.♗gf3 ♜xf3 16.♗xf3 ♜c6 17.♗g5† White has enough play to keep the balance.)

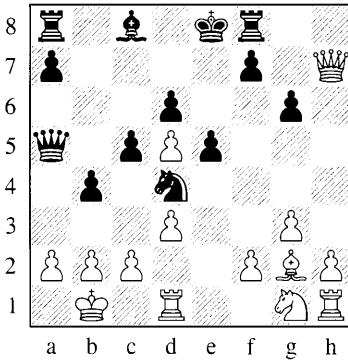


13.♗e1 b4 14.♗ce2 ♜ec6 15.♗xd4 ♜xd4
16.♗f1 b3! 17.axb3 ♜a5 18.fxe5 ♜a1† 19.♔d2
♜xb2 20.♔e3 ♜xc2† 21.♔f4 h5 22.♗f6 ♜d4

White had to throw in the towel in Pinho – Hugo, corr. 2012.

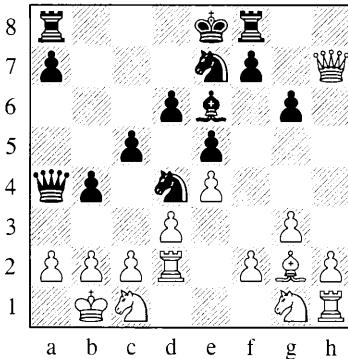
12.♗xh7? is met vigorously by 12...♛a5 13.♕b1 b4 and now:

a) 14.♗d5 ♔xd5 15.exd5 Zaporozsets – Arzumanian, corr. 1992



15...c4!N 16.♗f3 ♔xc2! 17.♗xc2 ♛xa2
18.♗d2 ♛xb2† 19.♗e3 ♛f5+– White is lost.

b) 14.♗ce2 ♔e6 15.♗c1 ♛a4 16.♗d2

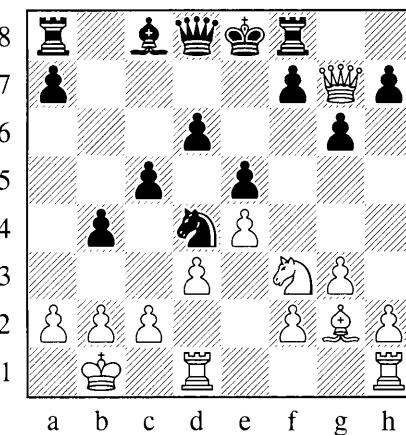


16...♗xc2!! 17.♗xc2 ♛xa2†! 18.♗xa2 b3+–

12.♗f3?! is met strongly by 12...♛a5 13.♗f6 ♛g4 14.♗de1 ♛xf3 15.♗xf3 b4 16.♗d5 ♔xd5 17.exd5 ♛d8?! 18.♗xd8† ♔xd8† with a superior ending for Black. However, it seems to me that this is the best White can hope for after his risky opening.

**12...b4! 13.♗ce2 ♔ec6! 14.♗xd4 ♔xd4
15.♗f3**

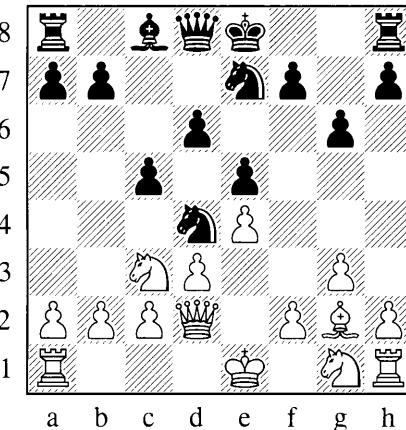
White tries to exchange as many pieces as possible in an attempt to reduce our attacking potential, but as we shall see, the pressure persists nevertheless.



15...♗g4! 16.♗xd4 cxd4→

It is hard to imagine White surviving here, so 12.♗f3?! seems to be his only chance to save the game after the extravagant 10.0–0–0?!

B12) 10.♗d2!



The queen has done her duty and returns to the defence.

10...♗e6!

This looks best: the bishop is finely placed on e6 and eyes both sides of the board.

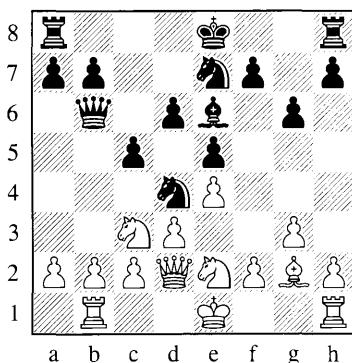
11.♗d5

Alexander Krapivin, who is the staunchest advocate of this system for White, seems to rely on this move.

As Vigorito correctly points out on ChessPublishing, 11.♗f3? is a mistake due to 11...♝h3!† and Black wins material.

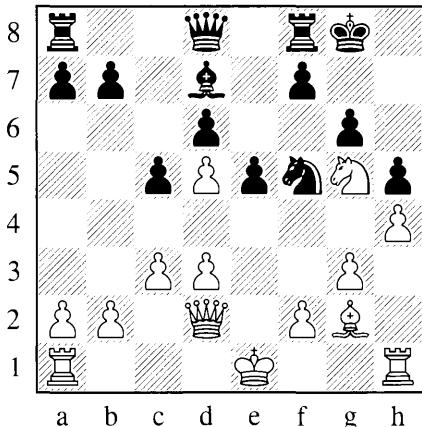
11.♗ce2?! has the idea of evicting the d4-knight by c2-c3, but it neglects control of d5. After 11...d5 12.f4 ♜b6!† Black obtains the better game.

Finally, 11.♗ge2 should be answered by 11...♜b6!, inviting White to castle queenside. 12.♕b1! (12.0–0–0?! is what Black wants, and he can obtain a better game by means of 12...♝ec6 13.♗b1 ♜b4! 14.♗c1 ♜a5 15.a3 ♜a2! 16.♗cd1 ♜xc3† 17.♗xc3 b5→)



12...h5! 13.h4 ♜c8! 14.0–0–0 ♜xe2† 15.♖xe2 c4! 16.♘e3 ♜xe3 17.fxe3 cxd3 18.cxd3 a6 19.♗bc1 0–0† Black has an advantage in the ending thanks to his better structure, but White should hold with careful defence.

11...♝xd5 12.exd5 ♜d7 13.c3 ♜f5 14.♗f3 0–0 15.h4 h5 16.♗g5

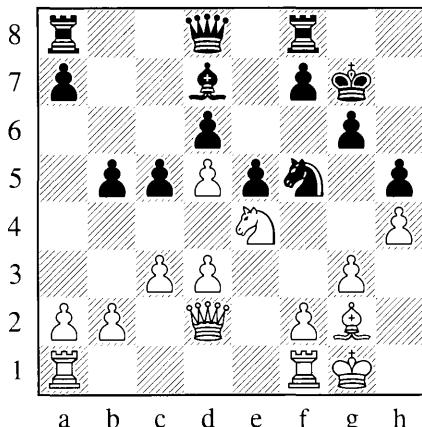


16...b5

This position has occurred in two Krapivin games. The central structure favours Black's bishop, but White has a good square on g5 for his knight and so chances should be approximately balanced.

17.♗e4 ♜g7 18.0–0!

18.f3?! ♜h8 19.0–0–0? b4 20.c4 ♜d4 21.♗df1 f5 22.♗g5 was the continuation in Krapivin – Sjugirov, St Petersburg 2009, and here I think that 22...a5N† would have left White struggling badly.

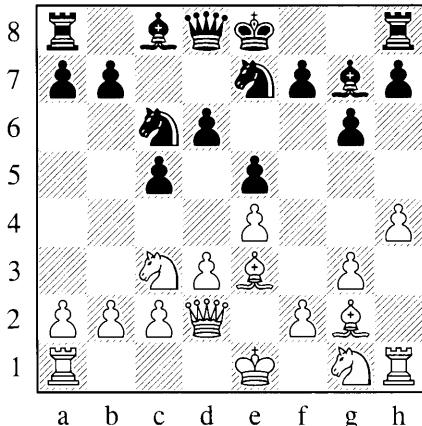


18...♜b6! 19.♗ae1 f6 20.♗h2 ♜h6 21.f3 ♜ae8=

The chances were approximately balanced in Krapivin – Kremenetsky, Moscow 2011, and

I think this is the best position White can get after his eccentric opening.

B2) 8.h4?!



Hort's idea, but it weakens the kingside for not a great deal. Black should react as follows:

8...h5!

Not only stopping potential attacks, but also preventing an exchange of dark-squared bishops.

9.♘h3 ♘d4

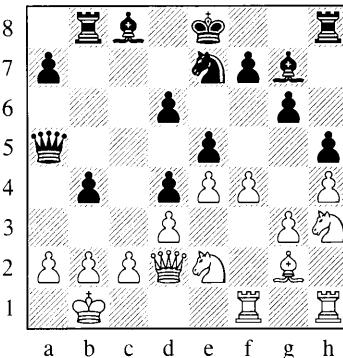
Black has centralized himself well and I think it is White who has to be more careful from now on.

10.f4

I was shocked to find 31 games in my database with this variation. The computer shows an evaluation of -0.30, and I cannot see any real point in White's set-up. However, it seems that there is already nothing better than 10.f4 at this point.

Maya Chiburdanidze always likes to surprise her opponents in the early stage of the game, and in this position she has tried the risky looking 10.0–0–0. However, I cannot say that she emerged successfully from the opening on

this occasion: 10...♝a5 11.♗df1 b5 12.♔b1 b4 13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.♗e2 ♛b8 15.f4 Black was dictating events in Chiburdanidze – Pamuk, Kusadasi 1990, and a further improvement is:

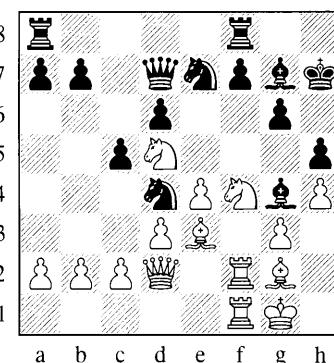


15...♝b6!N \mp Putting Maya's idea under a cloud.

10...♝g4 11.0–0–0 ♛d7!

This logical and harmonious move is widely accepted as best nowadays.

In the stem game Portisch created problems for himself with the rash 11...exf4?!, allowing the white knight to re-enter the game too early. 12.♗xf4 0–0 13.♗f2 ♔h7 14.♗af1 ♛d7 15.♗cd5

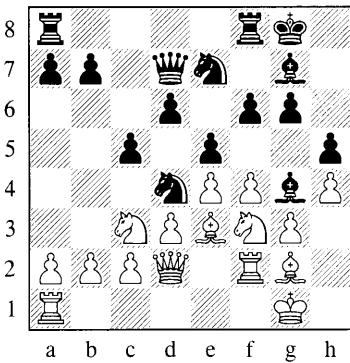


15...♝g8? (15...♝dc6!N \mp) 16.♗h2 ♗c6 17.♗h3 f6 18.c3 ♘e5 19.d4 ♘c4 20.♗d3 ♘xe3 21.♗xe3 ♘h6 22.♗f4 \pm White had a clear advantage and went on to win in Hort – Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1968.

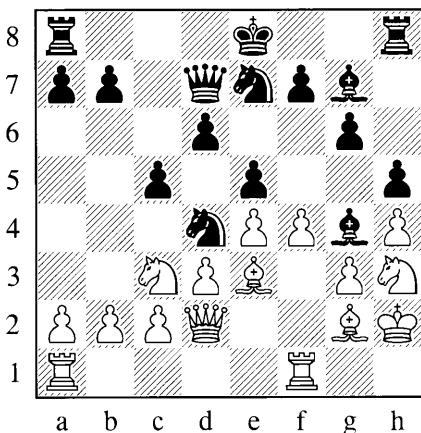
12.♕h2

I don't think that White has anything better than this.

Instead, 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗f3 0–0 14.♗f2 occurred in Eichler – Nitsche, corr. 1980, when it seems to me that the following line is best:



14...b5!N 15.♗af1 ♕ae8 16.♗h2 b4! 17.♗d1 ♘e6 18.f5!? (18.c3 b3!) 18...gxsf5 19.c3 ♘b5!?. Although this was a rather complicated variation, Black maintains an advantage.

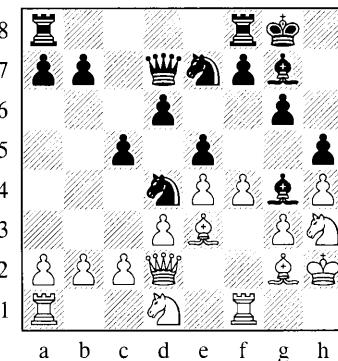
**12...0-0 13.♗f2**

Preparing to double rooks on the f-file is designed to strengthen the idea f4-f5.

13.f5?! is an attempt to take the black position by storm that shouldn't work: 13...gxsf5 14.♗f2 (14.♘h6? ♘xh6 15.♘xh6 ♕e6 16.♕d2 was an

unfortunate choice in Salcedo Tornero – Rojo Huerta, Madrid 2010. Black only had to find 16...♕g6!N??, intending ...f6, when it would have been him doing the attacking.) 14...f4 15.gxf4 exf4 16.♗xf4 ♘g6 17.♗g3 f5 18.exf5 ♘e5↑ Black maintains the better play, as it is the white king who is the more exposed of the two.

13.♗d1 has the obvious intention of c2-c3, but it is too slow:



13...d5 14.c3 ♘e6 15.fxe5 d4N (15...dxe4 was also better for Black in Arapovic – Makarichev, Sarajevo 1982) 16.♗h6 ♘c6?? Black enjoys the slightly better chances due to his active pieces and the weakness of the g4-square.

After 13.♗f2 Black usually hurries to counterattack with the b-pawn, forcing the c3-knight away from the critical d5-square:

13...b5!?

It is not clear this is best, but it makes sense.

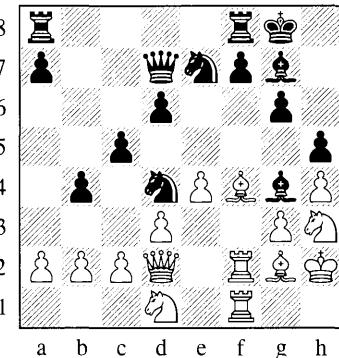
13...f6 was played in Wanzek – Liebert, Germany 2002, and is a solid alternative for those who might be looking for a possible improvement at this point.

14.fxe5!N?

White fixes the structure, but it does not completely solve his problems.

14.♗af1 b4 15.♗d1 (15.♗d5? ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♗f5! → is just bad for White) 15...exf4? (15...g6 is also playable) 16.♗xf4! (16.♗xf4 leaves the d1-knight without prospects, and after the simple 16...♗ab8!?

Black is just better.)

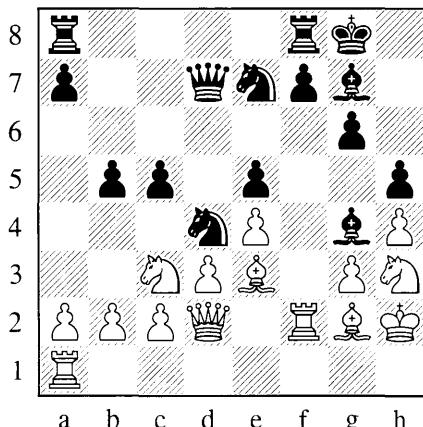


16...d5! 17.♗h6 dxe4 18.♗xg7 ♗xg7 19.♗g5 ♗f3† 20.♗xf3 exf3 21.♗xf3 ♗xf3 22.♗xf3?

White was a shade worse in Conquest – Smirin, Komotini 1992.

14...dxe5!

Designed to stop White from occupying d5 with the h3-knight.

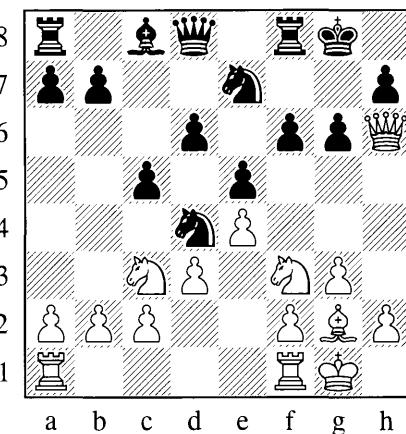


15.♗d5! ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♗ac8 17.a4 b4?

A complicated position has been reached where both sides have their chances. If given the option I would choose Black, in view of his safer king and mobile kingside pawn mass.

B3) 8.♗f3 ♗d4 9.0–0 0–0

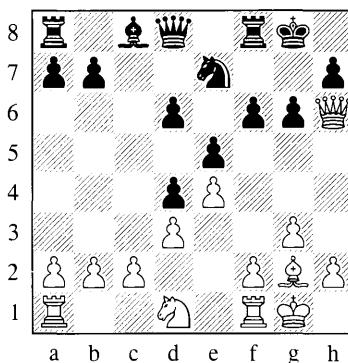
10.♗h6 ♗xh6! 11.♗xh6 f6



This leads to rather dull positions where Black does not seem to be in any danger.

12.♗d2

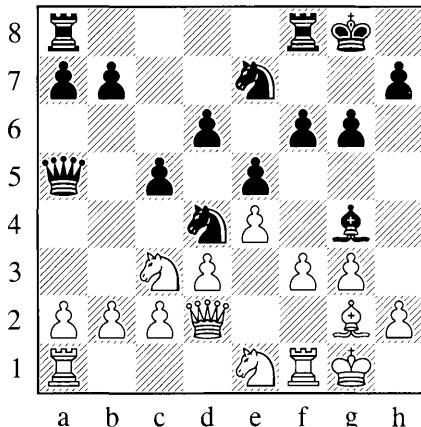
12.♗xd4 cxd4 13.♗d1! (13.♗e2 ♗b6 14.♗fb1 [14.♗c1 ♗g4↑] 14...f5! 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♗g5 ♗f7 17.♗d2 ♗g4 18.♗f1 ♗af8?) was much better for Black in Horie – Uchikura, corr. 2001.)



13...♗e6 14.♗d2 ♗c8 15.c4 dxc3 16.bxc3 d5 17.exd5 ♗xd5 18.♗b1 ♗xg2 19.♗xg2 ♗d7 20.f3 ♗d5? Black had a slight edge in Mezera – Odehnal, corr. 2000, but White ultimately held.

12...♗a5! 13.♗e1 ♗g4! 14.f3

Black is better after 14.f4 due to the concrete reply 14... $\mathbb{W}b4!$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 18.bxc3 b6=.



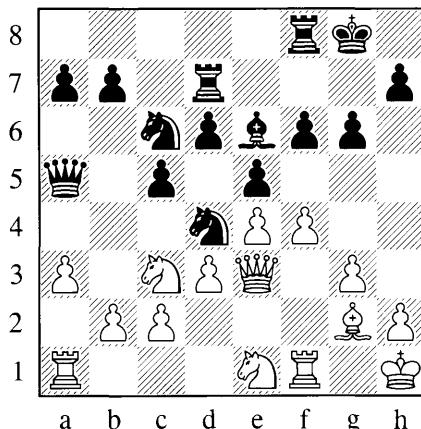
14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 16.a3

16.f5?! $\mathbb{gxf5}$ 17. $\mathbb{exf5}$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ leaves White with insufficient compensation for the pawn.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is well met by 16... $\mathbb{exf4}$ 17. $\mathbb{gxf4}$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19.a3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ with a fine game for Black, although White is probably not worse.

16... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e3$

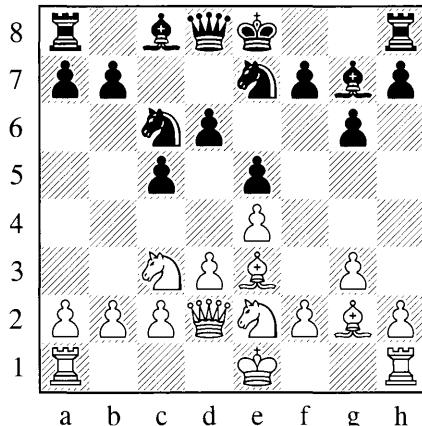
18. $\mathbb{Q}f3N$ $\mathbb{exf4}$ 19. $\mathbb{gxf4}$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#?$ would have been more interesting, with chances for both sides.



18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{exd5}$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 22. $\mathbb{fxe5}$ $\mathbb{fxe5}$ 23.c3 $\mathbb{Q}ef7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}b5\#$

Black had the better chances due to his superior minor piece in Vertes – A. Horvath, corr. 2006.

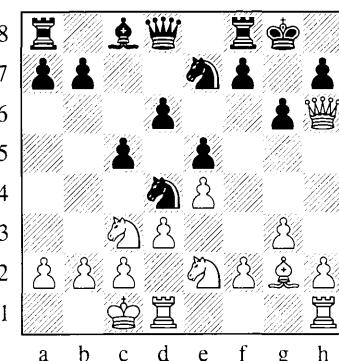
B4) 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



Leading to a rather clumsy formation where White will probably have to pull both knights back to the first rank in the near future, so as to expel the enemy one from d4. That gives Black enough time to organize sufficient counterplay.

8...0-0 9.0-0

9. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 11.0-0-0?!



11...b5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#?$ (12.h4 is more critical, although Black stands fine after 12...f6! 13.f4

♔h8 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.♗df1 ♔f7!?? 12...cxd4 13.♕e2 ♔e6 14.♔b1 ♔c6 15.♔c1 ♔c8 16.♔d2 ♘a5 17.h4 f6 18.♔h3 ♘xh3 19.♔xh3 This was Naftalin – Polaczek, corr 1984, when best is 19...d5!N†. This example shows how easily things can go badly for White.

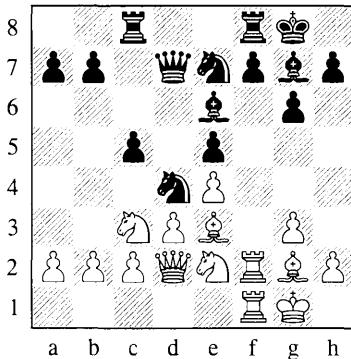
9...♘d4 10.f4 ♔e6

The main position. White now has to decide how he will arrange his rooks before trying to evict the d4-knight.

11.♔ae1

This has been Korchnoi's choice.

11.♔f2 ♘d7 12.♔af1 has been tried on quite a few occasions, but it looks harmless to me after the correct 12...♔ac8!. For example: 13.fxe5?! (13.♔c1 exf4 14.♔xf4 d5 15.♔h6 dxe4 16.♔xe4 f5 17.♔xg7 ♔xg7 18.♔g5, as played in Morovic Fernandez – Hoffman, Mesa 1992, looks excellent for Black after the simple 18...♔d5!N†, exchanging White's most important defensive piece.) 13...dxe5



14.♔g5?! c4! 15.dxc4 ♘xc4 16.♔d1 ♔e6† Black has the better pawn structure, ensuring him a tiny edge.

11...♘d7 12.♔c1 ♔ae8

A critical moment: White is about to complete his manoeuvre, but Black is fully mobilized and should have no problems coping with it.

13.♔d1

White has to proceed as planned.

Weaker is:

13.♔d5?

Surrendering control of f5 to Black.

13...♘xd5 14.exd5 ♘g4

White is struggling. One sample line given by Robert Hübner is:

15.c3

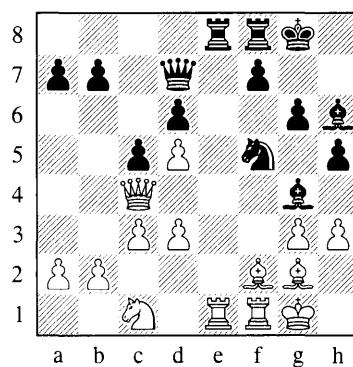
15.fxe5 ♘xe5†

15...♔f5 16.♔f2 exf4 17.♔xf4 h5!

17...♔h6!?? is also possible, with better chances for the second player.

18.h3 ♘h6 19.♔c4

Here I would like to improve on Dr Hübner's analysis by offering:



19...b5!†

Improving on the proposed 19...♔xc1?!, when White can equalize the chances by means of 20.♔xe8! ♘xe8 21.♔xc1=.

The concept behind 19...b5!! is entirely Kasparovian and is as follows:

20.♔b3 h4!! 21.hxg4 hxg3 22.♔xc5
22.gxf5 gxf2† 23.♔xf2 ♘xf5† 24.♔g1 ♘xe1
25.♔xe1 ♘d2!! 26.♔d1 ♘f4!+
22...♘e3!! 23.♔xe3 ♘xe3† 24.♔xe3 ♘xe3†

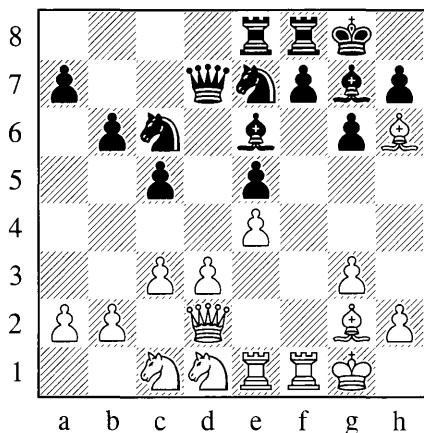
Black's attack should carry him to victory.

13...b6

Solid, aiming to play ...d5 later without worrying about the defence of the c5-pawn.

14.fxe5 dxe5 15.c3 ♜dc6 16.♘h6

So far we have been following the game Korchnoi – Hübner, Barcelona 1989. Now the legendary German GM recommends:

**16...♝d8!?** N 17.♗xg7

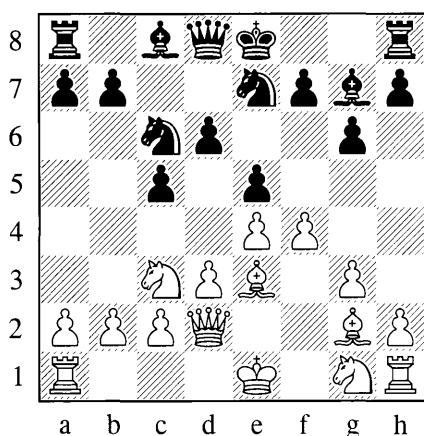
17.♗f2 c4 18.dxc4 ♜c7 19.♗e3 ♜xc4† is also considered slightly better for Black by Hübner.

17...♝xg7 18.♗e2 a5 19.♗e3

I think that 19.a4!? could be worth a try.

19...a4 20.♗f2 f6†

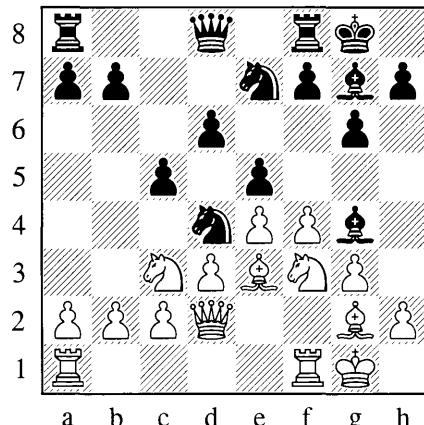
Hübner correctly assesses this position as better for Black. White has no active plan and d3 is a static weakness.

B5) 8.f4

This is the move favoured by the engines. White will bring his knight to f3 in typical fashion after all.

8...♞d4 9.♞f3 0–0 10.0–0

At this point Black has a choice of squares for his c8-bishop: B51) 10...♝g4 or B52) 10...♝e6.

B51) 10...♝g4

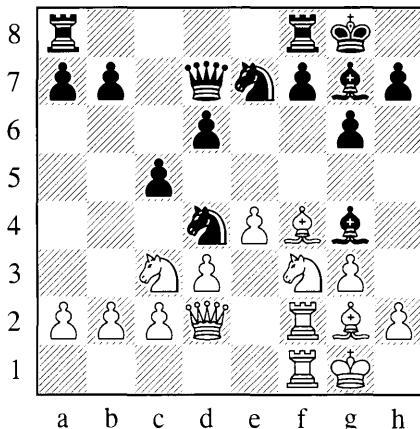
Nigel Short has opted for B511) 11.♗f2!?, but the most popular attempt has been the immediate B512) 11.♗h4.

B511) 11.♗f2!?

Short's choice does have a certain value, from both a theoretical and practical point of view, but it is well met by:

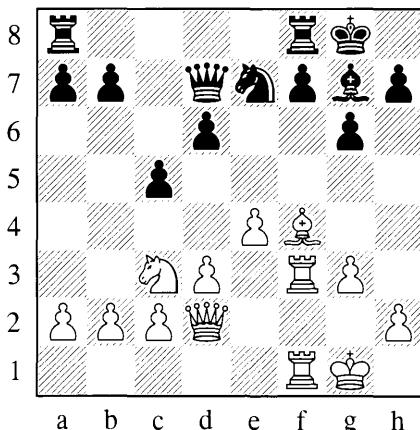
11...♝d7 12.♗af1 exf4! 13.♗xf4!

A typical reaction after 13.gxf4! is 13...♝xf3 14.♗xf3 ♜xf3† 15.♗xf3 f5!†, when only Black can be better; White's attack has been stopped dead in its tracks and his king is exposed. After a massive advance of his pawns on the queenside, the second player will soften White's defence of the sensitive e4-square and create new targets for himself.



13...Qxf3†! 14.Qxf3 Qxf3 15.Qxf3

This was Short – Nataf, New Delhi/Tehran 2000, and now I like:



15...d5?!N 16.Qh6 d4! 17.Qxg7 Qxg7

18.Qe2 f5?! 19.Qf4

19.Q3f2?!, fxe4 20.dxe4 Qxf2 21.Qxf2 Qg8

22.Qg5 Qd6 should be about equal too.

19...Qc6 20.exf5 Qxf5 21.g4!! Qe5 22.Qe2?!

The knight wants to get to e4, even at the cost of a pawn.

22.Qg2 Qee8= is completely equal.

22...Qee8!

22...Qxg4?!, 23.Qg3 Qe6 24.Qf6! Qxf6
25.Qxf6 Qxf6 26.Qh6= gives White powerful

pressure, as the queen combines well with the knight.

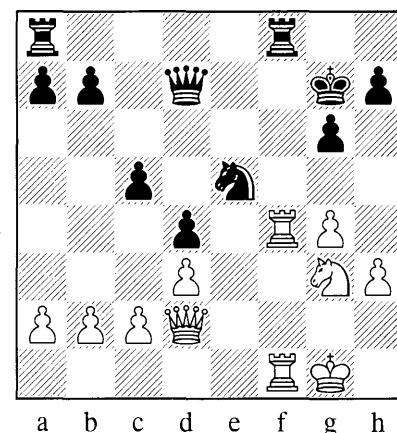
23.Qg3!

23.Qf7† Qxf7 24.Qxf7† Qxf7 25.Qg3 Qe3 is not worse for Black.

23...Qe5 24.Qf4 Qf8 25.h3

25.Qxf8 Qxf8 26.Qxf8 Qxf8 27.Qf4† Qf7
28.Qe4 b6=

25.Qe4 Qxf4 26.Qxf4 b6=



25...Qe7 26.Qe4 Qxf4 27.Qxf4 b6=

So 11.Qf2?! is not as innocent as it may appear, but in the end careful defence leads to a level position.

B512) 11.Qh4

White is planning the f4-f5 advance.

11...exf4

A sound reply, stopping any f4-f5 ideas once and for all.

12.Qxf4

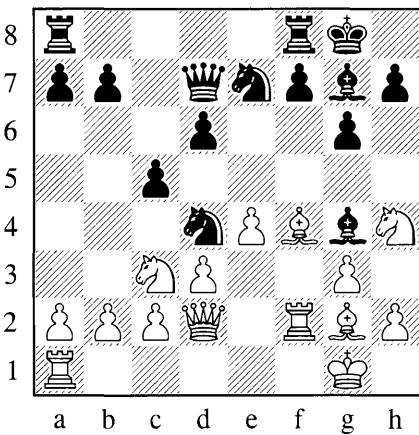
White has to recapture with the bishop.

12.gxf4?!, Qec6 13.Qf3 Qxf3 14.Qxf3
Qxf3† 15.Qxf3 f5 16.Qe1 Qd7 17.Qg3 Qae8

18.♕g2 ♕d8 19.♗h1 ♜e6 20.♗g5 ♔e7= Black had a typical edge, with no risk involved, and went on to win in Brih – Koch, Clichy 2006.

12...♝d7 13.♝f2

White defends c2, preparing to double rooks as well as exchange dark-squared bishops on h6. This is a critical point, with Black having an interesting choice:

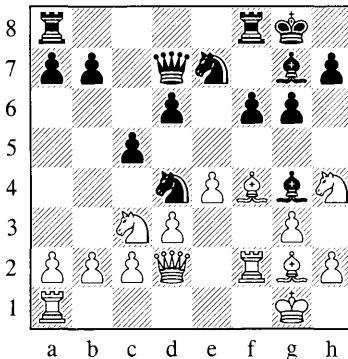


13...b5

This is a standard move, gaining queenside space, but it allows the exchange of dark-squared bishops that White is angling for.

13...f6!?

Therefore this makes sense, as the exchange of bishops is now less effective.



14.♝e3!

Instead, 14.♗h6?! ♜xh6 15.♕xh6 g5! 16.♗xf6 (16.♗f3? ♔df5!!+ is the brilliant point, trapping the queen) 16...♗xf6 17.♗xg5+ ♜g6 18.♗xg6 ♔xg6 19.♗d5 ♔h8= leaves White struggling in vain to prove sufficient compensation for the piece. 14...♗f7 15.♗af1 ♜af8 16.b4 16.♗xd4 cxd4 17.♗e2 ♜b5! 18.b3 ♔c6 19.♗f3 ♜b6 20.b4 (20.♗f4 ♜h6!) 20...♗d7= is fine for Black. 16...cx b4? 17.♗xd4 ♔c6! 18.♗e3 bxc3 19.♗xc3 f5= Black has enough counterplay for equality.

14.♗h6 ♜ae8 15.♗af1 b4

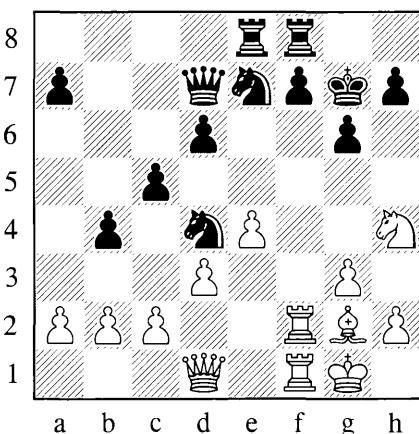
After 15...f6 the engines give 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♗d1±, and this position is indeed more pleasant for White.

16.♗xg7

In case of 16.♗d1 ♜xd1 17.♗xd1 ♔dc6 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♗df1 f6 20.c3 bxc3 21.bxc3 d5 22.♗e1 ♜d8 23.exd5 ♗xd5 24.♗e4 ♔e5 25.♗f3 ♜fe8= the play is approximately balanced.

16...♔xg7 17.♗d1 ♜xd1 18.♗xd1

White seems to be a bit better because of his bishop, but in fact things are not that clear:



18...d5!?

This was played in a high-level game, but may not be best.

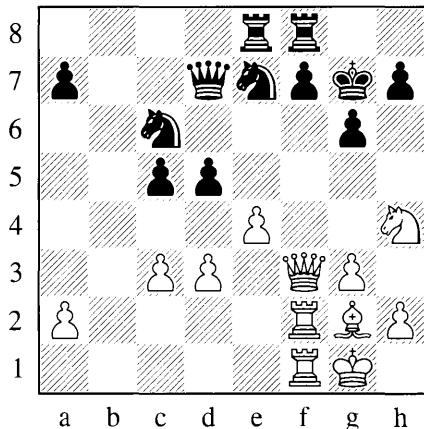
I also looked at 18...♝a4!?, which could be the route to equality or even a way to play for the full point. After, for example, 19.♕h3 (19.♕a1!?, 19.♗g4 ♜xa2 20.c3 ♜e6!) 19...♝xa2 20.c3 ♜dc6 21.♗f3 ♜g8 it's unclear to me whether White has enough for the pawn.

19.c3 bxc3 20.bxc3 ♜dc6 21.♗f3?!

Oleg Romanishin is a great positional player, but here his intuition fails him.

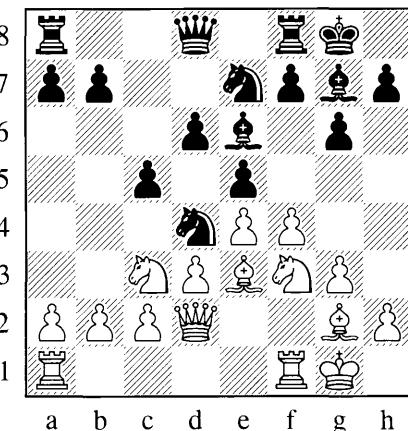
A better try is 21.exd5! ♜xd5 22.♗b3! ♜d8 23.♗b5 ♜d6 24.d4! cxd4 25.c4 ♜e3 26.♗xc6 ♜xf1 27.♗xf1± when in my opinion Black is struggling, so in fact my recommendation of 18...♝a4!? acquires paramount importance.

After 21.♗f3?! in Romanishin – J. Horvath, Balatonbereny 1993, Black could have equalized with:



21...♝d6N 22.exd5 ♜e5 23.♗f6† ♜xf6 24.♗xf6 g5 25.d4 cxd4 26.cxd4 ♜g4 27.d6 gxh4 28.dxe7 ♜xe7=

B52) 10...♜e6



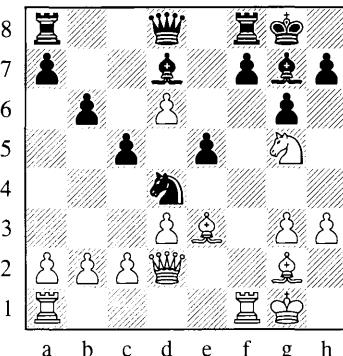
I somehow feel that this is more natural than 10...♝g4, although both moves should be good enough for equality.

11.♘h4

Not the only move of course, but a quite logical one. It demonstrates the main difference from having the knight on e2, as now White intends to push f4-f5.

11.♘g5 ♜d7 12.♗f2 ♜c8! 13.♗af1 f6 14.♘f3 ♜e6 15.h3 exf4 16.♗xf4 ♜xf3† 17.♗xf3 d5 18.exd5 ♜xd5 19.♕h6 ♜xc3 20.bxc3 ♜d7= was balanced in Makarichev – Ubilava, Tallinn 1983, and the players agreed to a draw after a few more uneventful moves.

Relinquishing the centre by 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♘g5 does not seem to be a great idea to me, as it frees Black's play. 12...♝g4 13.h3 ♜d7 14.♗d5 ♜xd5 15.exd5 b6 (15...♞h6!?) looks even better) 16.d6



16...f6! 17.♕d5† ♔h8 18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♗g2 ♜c8 20.♗f7† ♜xf7 21.♗xf7 ♛f8 22.♗d5 ♛xd6 23.g4 ♔h6 24.♗ae1 ♔e3† 25.♔h1 ♛f4∞ Black had fantastic compensation for the exchange and went on to win in Vibbert – Quesada Perez, Arlington 2014.

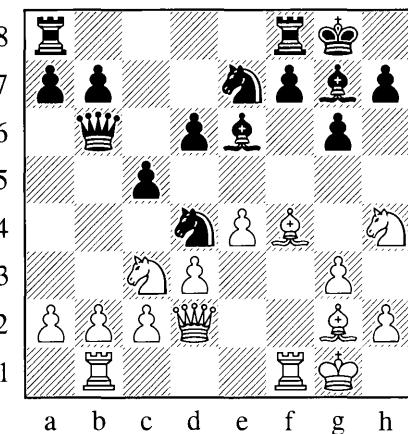
11.♗f2 is of course one of the most logical moves in the position and has been played by Short. However, Black's pieces are harmoniously placed, and for this reason he can equalize immediately: 11...exf4! 12.♗xf4 ♜xf3† 13.♗xf3 (13.♗xf3?! looks inferior, and after 13...♝c6 14.♗af1 ♜e5 15.♗e2 ♛b6 16.b3 ♛a5∞ Black has the slightly better chances.) 13...♛b6 14.♗b1 d5=

Finally, 11.♗ae1 f6? 12.b3 ♛d7 13.♗e2 d5! 14.fxe5 ♜xf3† 15.♗xf3 d4! 16.exf6 dxе3 17.♗c3 ♔h8 18.♗ef1 b6 19.♗xe3 ♛ae8 20.e5 ♜f5† saw Black eventually emerge victorious in Cross – K. Rodriguez, corr. 2008, but I can hardly claim this was all forced.

11...exf4! 12.♗xf4 ♛b6!

The pawn on b2 is a weakness in these lines, and Black usually attacks it in order to gain time for his development.

13.♗ab1



13...c4!?

This is my idea.

13...♝ad8 happened in Speelman – Portisch, London 1982, but I don't like it so much in view of 14.♗g5∞.

14.♗h1 cxd3 15.cxd3 ♛fe8 16.♔h6

I cannot see anything more constructive for White than this, but we are well placed to meet it.

16...♔xh6 17.♗xh6 ♛c5!

Centralization is the key; once the black queen reaches e5 we have nothing to fear. One possible line is:

18.♗be1 ♛e5 19.♗d5 ♛xd5 20.exd5 ♛ef5! 21.♗xf5 ♛xf5

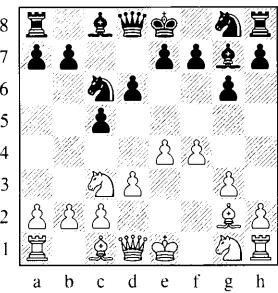
With slightly better prospects for Black.

Conclusion

In my view, the most likely positions in the Closed Sicilian to mishandle are those where White succeeds in exchanging dark-squared bishops, as that potentially reduces our king's safety. These positions normally arise in systems where White refrains from an early f2-f4, in particular when White chooses 6.♗e3. As the reader may have noticed, in those systems I have chosen a different set-up, involving ...e5, in an effort to fortify the dark squares as much as possible. I would advise the readers to study this chapter carefully, as these are perhaps the only lines where the use of an auto-pilot will not always help.



Closed Variation



6.f4

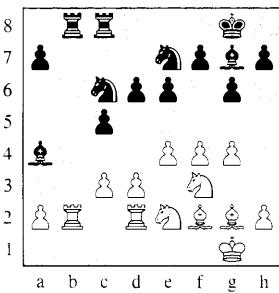
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3.g3 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.d3 d6 6.f4

6...e6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 8.0–0 0–0

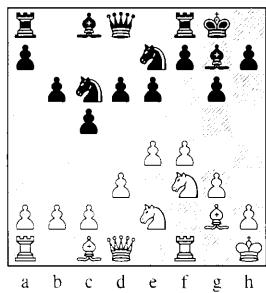
A) 9.g4	329
B) 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$	330
C) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}b8!$	331
C1) 10.a4!?	331
C2) 10.c3	332
D) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$	333
E) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	335
F) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6!?	336
F1) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f2$	336
F2) 10.d4	338

C2) after 20. $\mathbb{Q}dd2!$



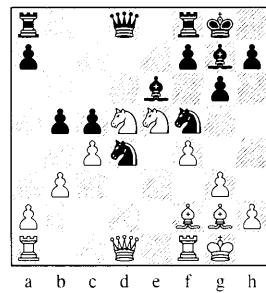
20... $\mathbb{Q}b6!N\approx$

D) note to 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$



10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!!N$

F2) note to 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$



16...h5!N

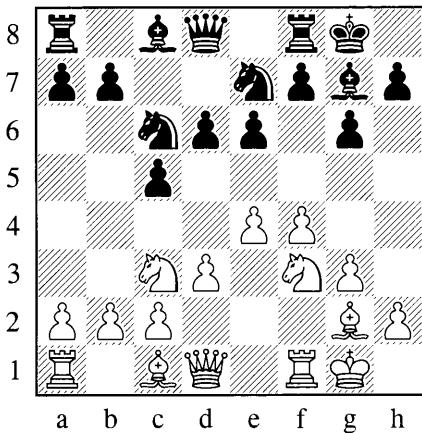
1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♘g7 5.d3 d6 6.f4

The time has come to examine what I would call the Closed Sicilian proper, namely 6.f4. This is the standard and most principled move, preparing to expand with f4-f5 at the earliest opportunity.

6...e6

It is obvious that White aspires to play f4-f5, so we are blocking him right away!

7.♘f3 ♘ge7 8.0–0 0–0



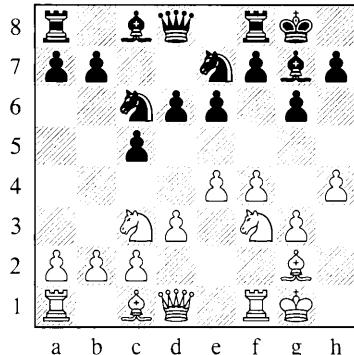
This is the most basic tabiya of our repertoire. With f5 turned into a fortress, Black is ready to pursue his aims in the centre and on the queenside. But this will very much depend on how White configures his forces.

White has a wide range of options: A) 9.g4, B) 9.♗e1, C) 9.♘e2, D) 9.♔h1, E) 9.♕d2 and F) 9.♗e3.

9.a3 ♜b8! → will most likely transpose to variation E.

9.h4!?

A weird idea employed by the Dutch player Karel van der Weide, designed to force a weakness in the protective cover around the black king.



9...e5? 10.♗g5?!

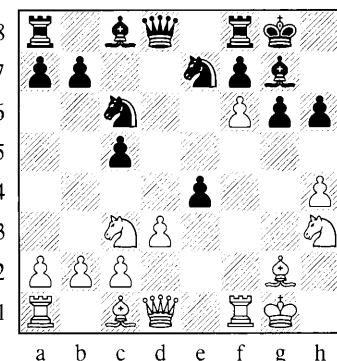
10.fxe5 ♘xe5 11.♗xe5 ♜xe5= is probably not worse for White, but is less in keeping with an attacker's spirit.

10...exf4 11.gxf4 h6 12.♗h3 d5! 13.f5

13.exd5 ♘b4 14.h5 ♘bxh5= is the objectively better continuation for White.

13...dxe4 14.f6

In Van der Weide – Los, Leeuwarden 1993, Black should have played the obvious:



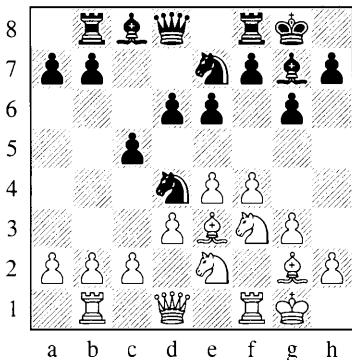
14...♗d4†N 15.♔h1 ♜xf6 16.♗xe4 ♜g7

17.c3 ♜d8 18.h5 ♘f5 19.hxg6 fxg6=

I cannot see a decent follow-up for White.

9.♗b1 is a respectable choice, which will most likely transpose to variation E. Here is a possible deviation: 9...♗b8 10.♗e3? Suddenly White switches to ♘e3 mode, but the unprotected state of the c3-knight allows Black to organize himself in time against the b2-b4 idea. 10...♗d4 11.♗e2 I can't see anything

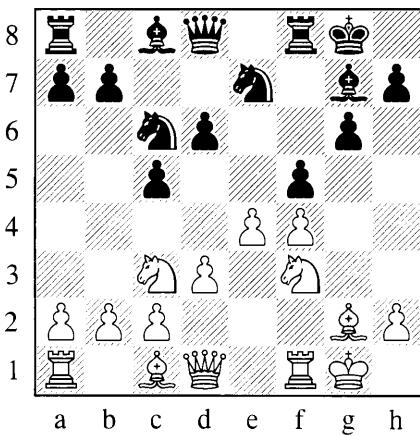
better for White. (11.♕d2 b6! 12.♗f2 [12.b4 ♗xf3† 13.♔xf3 cxb4 14.♗xb4 ♗c6!+] 12...♗b7 13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.♗e2 e5= was balanced in Lyrberg – Loginov, Kecskemet 1992.)



11...♝xf3†! The right piece to take. 12.♗xf3 b6 13.c3 ♜b7 14.b4 ♘d7 15.a3 ♘fc8 16.c4 ♘e8 17.♗b3 ♜c6 18.♗g2 ♘e7! An excellent Nimzowitschian idea, giving more freedom to the b8-rook along the 8th rank and protecting the queen. The position is balanced, and Krajnc – Gallinnis, email 2008, was eventually drawn after an interesting tussle.

Finally, one last move I would like to comment upon is 9.a4?!. After 9...b6! 10.♗e3 d5 11.♗f2 d4 12.♗b1 e5 13.♗a3 exf4 14.gxf4 ♘g4 15.♗d2 ♘d7 16.♗c4 f6∞ the result is anyone's guess, but I am optimistic about Black's chances as he has good development and a safe king.

A) 9.g4 f5! 10.gxf5 exf5



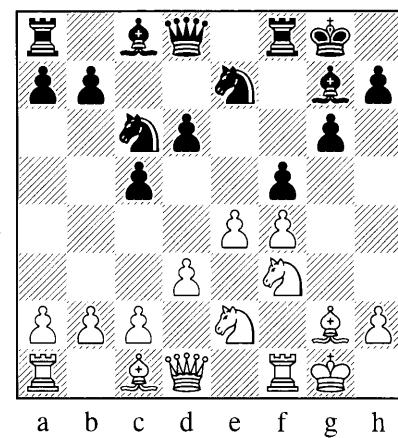
This leads to a situation which should be well-known to us by now. White's attack has been stopped, and Black enjoys the better chances in the centre and on the queenside – where the fight will mostly take place. Let us see how play might develop:

11.♗e2

This looks like a logical attempt to control d4 and block the pressure on the long diagonal.

The alternative 11.♗e3 should be answered by 11...♗d4!, with the idea to further pressurize the e4-square by means of ...♗d7-c6. For example, 12.♗d2 ♗d7! 13.♗ae1 ♘c6 14.♗h1 ♘b6 15.b3 ♘ae8 16.♗g5?! was Medina Garcia – Hort, Palma de Mallorca 1969, and here most accurate was the simple 16...♘a5! with a large advantage for Black.

After 11.♗e2 Black is given the chance to expand on the queenside:



11...b5!

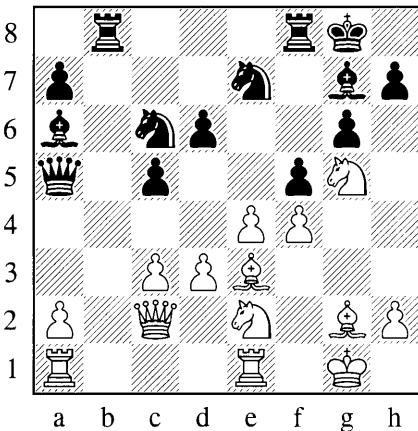
I see no reason for the second player to keep his b-pawn back.

12.c3 ♘b8 13.♗e3 b4 14.♗c2 ♘a5 15.♗fe1 bxc3 16.bxc3 ♜a6

Black has reached an ideal configuration, tying his opponent down to the defence of his fragile central skeleton.

17.♘g5

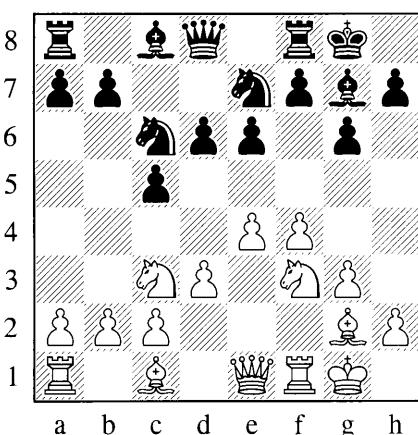
An attempt to take advantage of the only weakness in the Black camp, namely e6.

**17...fxe4!**

And this is a typical way to counter it! If White now takes back with the d-pawn on e4, the a6-bishop will settle on c4, covering everything.

18.♘xe4 ♘f5 19.♗f2 ♘ce7?

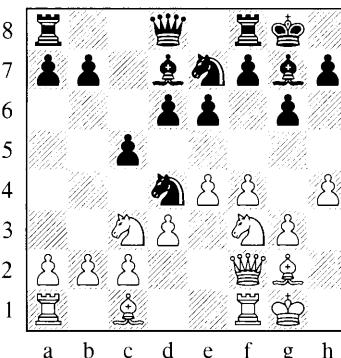
Black had a small but clear advantage in Vohl – Morozov, corr. 2010, in view of the better pawn structure and the excellent base on f5 for his knights.

B) 9.♕e1

It is hard for me to understand what this aspires to, but in any case I am satisfied with Black's chances after the natural reply.

9...♘d4 10.♘xd4

10.♗f2 ♘d7! 11.h4 (11.♗e3 ♘b6 12.♗ab1 ♘ad8?) is also better for Black) was Boyd – Wells, Sheffield 2011, and here Black could simply have ignored his opponent's demonstration with the typical:



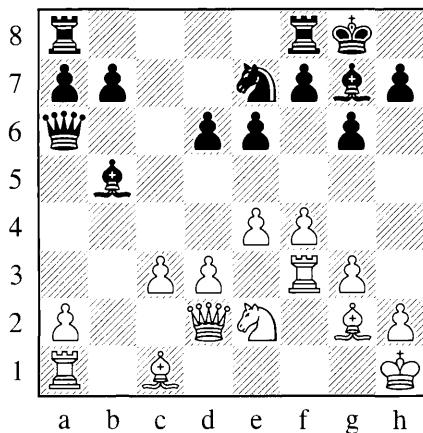
11...f5! N? The main thing is that after 12.h5? gxh5! 13.♗e3 ♘b6 it looks impossible for White to recover the pawn, and Black will go on to build pressure against the enemy centre by putting his bishop on c6 as usual.

10...cxd4 11.♘e2 ♘b6 12.♔h1

12.♗f2 e5 13.c4 f5 14.b3 ♘d7? is better for Black, a typical line being 15.♗d2 ♘c6 16.♗ae1 ♘ae8 17.♗c1 g5! 18.exf5 ♘xf5 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♗f3 gxf4 21.gxf4 ♘e6!? with some attacking chances.

12...♘d7 13.c3 dxc3 14.bxc3 ♘a6 15.♗d2 ♘b5 16.♗f3

We have followed Piesina – Zagorskis, Kaunas 2001, and here I like the logical:



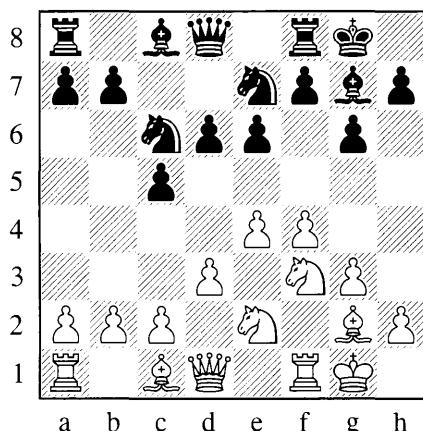
16... $f5!?$ N 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $fxe4$ 18. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19. $a4 e5$

19... $\mathbb{Q}ad8!?$ could be even better.

20. $fxe5$ $dxe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf8!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

The benefits of striking at White's fragile centre have been revealed. Once the position opens up Black is slightly better due to having a better pawn skeleton, and White is merely trying to hold.

C) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This is supposed to be a flexible move, maintaining the option of playing either in the centre or on the kingside with g3-g4 later on. I think the most principled reaction is:

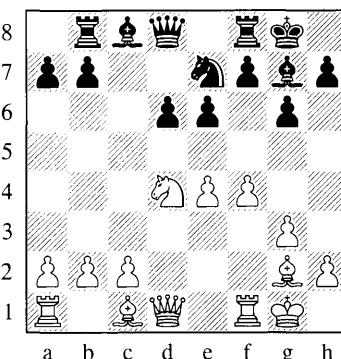
9... $\mathbb{Q}b8!$

Preparing to cramp White's queenside with a march of the b-pawn.

White's main tries are C1) 10.a4!!? and C2) 10.c3.

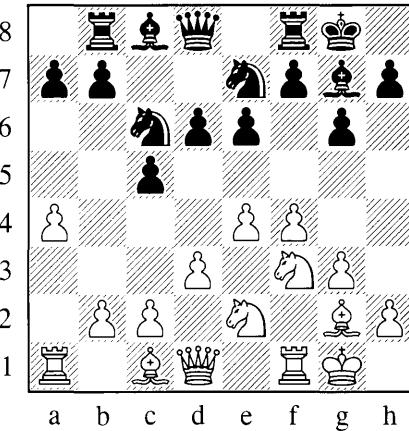
Instead, 10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $b5$ 11. $g4$ $f5$ 12. $gx f5$ $exf5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $b4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $h6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$ $fxe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$ produced a typically excellent position for Black in Anurag – Saiyn, Sharjah 2013.

10.d4 $cxd4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$



12... $e5!?$ N (12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ is less clear in view of 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3\Rightarrow$) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\mp$ This looks like a risk-free advantage for Black.

C1) 10.a4!!?



An interesting possibility, but Black can react as follows:

10...b6 11.c3 ♜a6 12.♗e3

12.♗b1?! d5 13.e5 d4 14.c4 ♜f5= is quite unimpressive.

12...d5!?

This will lead to simplifications.

A complicated position arises after 12...♝d7 13.♗f2 f5 14.♗e1∞.

13.e5 d4! 14.cxd4 ♜f5 15.♗f2 ♜cxd4!

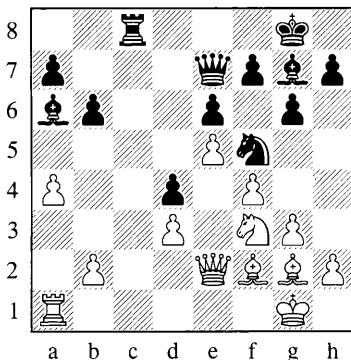
16.♗exd4 cxd4

In the resulting situation an eventual knight jump to e3 will secure equality. For example:

17.b4

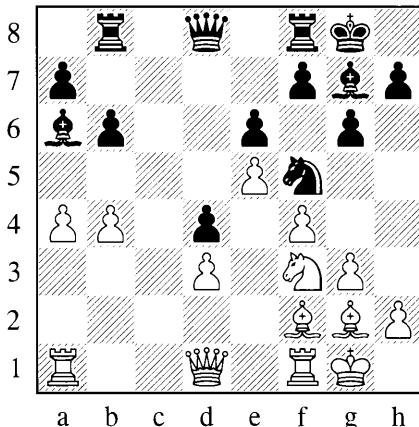
Trying to stifle the a6-bishop.

After 17.♗e2 ♜e7! 18.♗fc1 ♜fc8 19.♗xc8† ♜xc8 it is rather White who has to be careful, but the result is a draw all the same:



20.♗xd4 (20.a5 bxa5 21.♗xd4 ♜xd4 22.♗xd4 ♜f8 23.♗e4 ♜d7=) 20...♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♜d8 22.♗e3 ♜f8 23.a5 bxa5 24.♗xa5 ♜xd3=

In case of 17.♗e1 ♜d7 18.b4 Black has gained a tempo for pressure on the d-file, so the jump is effective: 18...♗e3 19.♗xe3 dxe3 20.♗xe3 ♜fd8∞



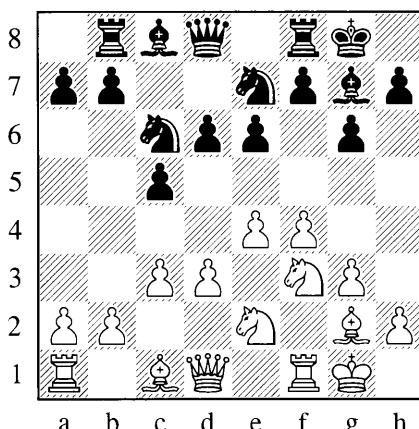
17...♗e3

This has to be played immediately, but the result will be a draw anyway.

18.♗xe3 dxe3 19.b5 ♜b7 20.d4 ♜e4! 21.♗e1 ♜d5 22.♗xe3 ♜fd8=

The d4-pawn will fall and, in view of the opposite-coloured bishops, the outcome will almost certainly be a draw.

C2) 10.c3



The German player Christian Gabriel, who has been the specialist in this line for White, used to rely on this move.

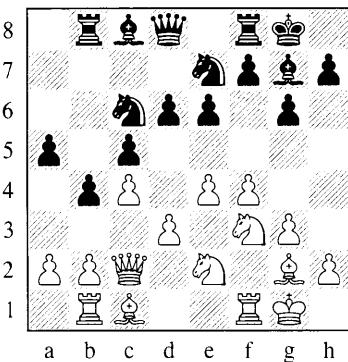
10...b5 11.♗c2 b4

I consider this position to be an opening

success for Black, as lines will be opened on the queenside and it is he who dictates the play.

12.♕e3

12.c4?! is strongly met by: 12...a5! 13.♗b1 (13.♕e3 a4! 14.d4 b3 15.axb3 ♜xb3! 16.♕a3 cxd4 17.♘fxd4 ♜xe3! 18.♘xc6 ♜xc6 19.♕xe3 ♜b6 20.c5 dxc5??)



13...a4! 14.♗xa4 b3! and White seems to be in trouble.

12...bxc3 13.bxc3 ♜a6

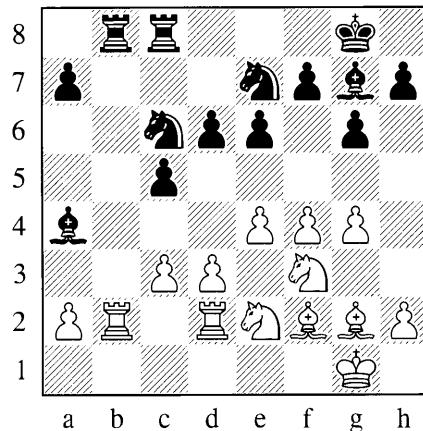
The bishop is strongly placed here, pressing d3, and the queen will reach a nice spot on a5 next move. Black may not be better, but his position is comfortable and easier to play in a practical game.

14.♗fd1

14.♗ab1 ♜a5 15.♗d2 was played in Diaz Fernandez – Suarez Real, Spain 1996, and looks more to the point. However, even then Black is fine by replying with 15...♗fd8? or 15...♗b5?.

14...♗a5 15.g4 ♜fc8 16.♗f2 ♜a3 17.♗ab1 ♜b5 18.♗b2 ♜xb2 19.♗xb2 ♜a4 20.♗dd2!
20.♗db1? ♜c2!?

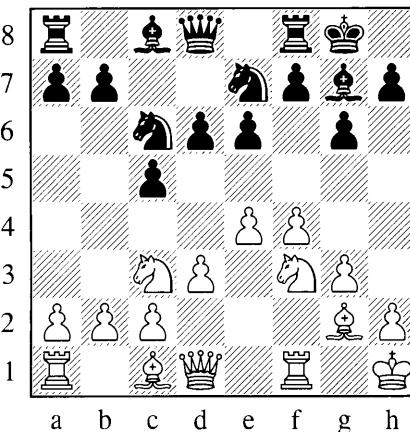
So far we have been following Gabriel – Miladinovic, Singapore 1990. At this point strongest is:



20...♗b6! N∞

With an unclear ending, offering chances to both sides.

D) 9.♗h1



This seems to be a non-committal move, but it is clear to me that it is closely connected with plans involving g3-g4 and ♜e2 above anything else. So, I think that an excellent reply is:

9...b6!

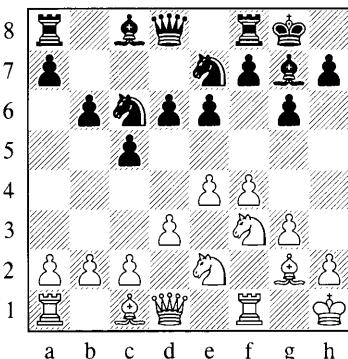
This move has the advantage of ruling out 10.♗e3 due to 10...d5! followed by 11...dxe4?, so White is only left with the plan of a kingside attack.

10.♗h4!?

With this move White is threatening f4-f5.

10.g4?! f5! 11.gxf5 exf5 12.♗e1 (12.e5 dxе5 13.♕xe5 ♜b7 14.♕e3 ♜b8† is also bad for White) 12...♗d7! 13.♕d2 (again, 13.e5 ♜b8! 14.♕b5 dxе5 15.fxe5 ♜b4 16.♕a3 f4† is better for Black) 13...♜b7 14.♗h4 ♜ae8 15.a3 ♜d4 This was another smooth opening enterprise for Black, and he went on to win in San Claudio Gonzalez – Dimitrov, Lalin 1994.

10.♗e2 is best answered in the following way:



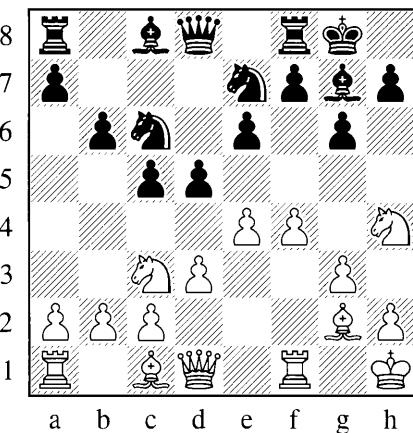
10...♗d7!!N White overprotects the e6-square in preparation of ...f5 and also keeps the c8-bishop flexible. 11.c3 (11.d4? ♜a6† leaves Black much better) 11...f5! 12.♗e3 ♜a6! Black has strong pressure against White's centre. A possible continuation is: 13.♗c2 c4! 14.dxc4! (14.d4?! fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♜b7 16.♗g5 ♜d8† leaves Black with a positional advantage due to his absolute control over the light squares.) 14...♗xc4 15.♗fe1 fxe4 16.♗xe4 ♜d5 17.♗c2 ♜f5 18.♗g1 ♜b7! 19.♗ad1 ♜b4 20.cxb4 ♜xf3 21.♗c3 ♜ac8= The chances are approximately balanced, but if I was called to choose a side it would be Black.

10...d5!

In this particular case this is the best move.

Instead, 10...f5 11.exf5!± produces a situation where Black probably has to retake with

the g-pawn, and this gives White valuable attacking chances.

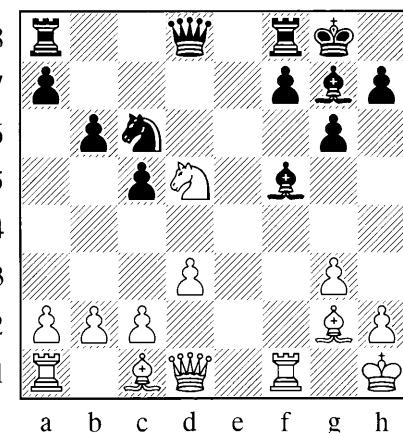


11.f5?

With the knight on h4, blocking the centre by 11.e5?! looks too slow. I will give a sample line: 11...♗d7 12.♗d2 ♜b7 13.♗f3 ♜ae8 14.a3 f6! 15.exf6 ♜xf6† Black has organized himself perfectly and holds a slight edge.

11...exf5 12.exf5 ♜xf5 13.♗xf5 ♜xf5 14.♗xd5

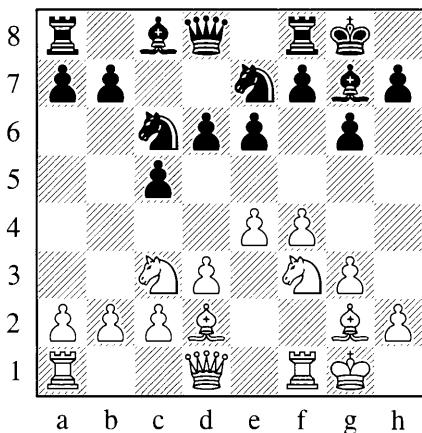
14.♗xf5 gxf5 15.♗xd5 is another idea, yet after 15...♗d7 intending ...♜ae8, the computer thinks that White's compensation is not enough.



14...♝e6 15.♞f4 ♝d7 16.♞d5 ♞c8!?

White finds it hard to develop his queenside without weakening himself, so Black's position is once more for preference.

E) 9.♞d2

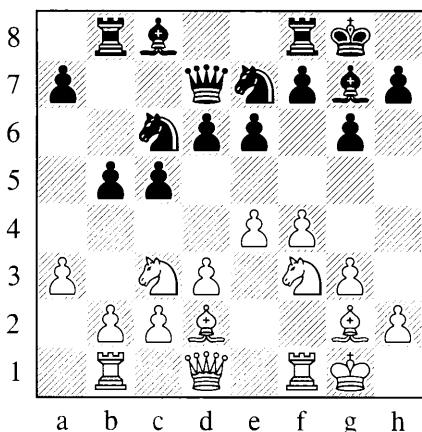


Designed to put a stop to Black's queenside activity, but it seems that it doesn't quite succeed:

9...b5! 10.a3 ♞b8 11.♗b1 ♜d7?!

This is a nice move, associated with a fine positional idea.

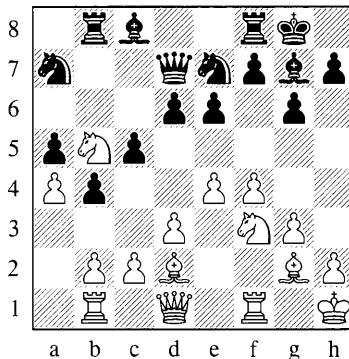
Alternatively, 11...a5 12.a4! b4 13.♗b5! is not at all clear. White could even be slightly better with such an annoying knight on b5.



12.b4!

I consider this logical move to be best.

After 12.♔h1 a5 13.a4 b4 14.♗b5 ♜a7! the point of 11...♜d7?! is revealed, as the strong b5-knight will be exchanged.



15.♗xa7 ♜xa7 16.♗e3 d5 17.e5 d4 18.♗d2 b3 19.cxb3 ♜a6 20.♗c2 ♜b6 21.♗fc1 ♜fc8 22.♗e1 ♜d5↑ Black went on to win in Spassky – J. Polgar, Monaco 1994.

12...♞d4N

This is of course a logical reaction, but there are alternatives:

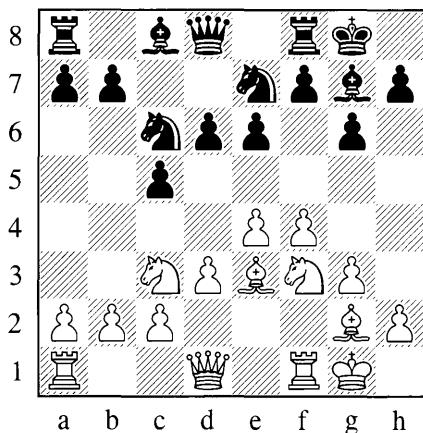
12...a6 13.bxc5 (13.♗e2??) 13...♜a7 14.♔h1 ♜xc5 15.e5! d5 keeps the position closed, but 16.♗c1 was probably slightly better for White in Tarnowiecki – Elwert, corr. 1999.

12...cxb4N 13.axb4 a5!? 14.bxa5 ♜a7† 15.♔h1 b4 16.♗e2 ♜xa5 17.♗e3 b3! 18.cxb3 ♜a6 is given by the machines, and Black's compensation looks excellent to me.

13.bxc5 dxc5 14.e5 ♜b7?

The position is rather tough to assess, but my feeling is that Black shouldn't be worse.

F) 9.♘e3



This is universally accepted as the best move for White, toying with the idea of d3-d4.

9...b6!?

I like this modern treatment quite a lot.

9...♗d4 10.e5!? has been the topic of heated theoretical discussions in the past, and the evaluation is not unfavourable for Black. I believe, however, that 9...b6!? is simpler to learn and keeps enough winning chances for us.

White's main moves are F1) 10.♘f2 and F2) 10.d4.

10.♗d2?! is not so good, because it allows Black to carry out 10...d5 under favourable circumstances. After 11.♘f2 dxe4 12.dxe4 ♗xd2 13.♗xd2 e5 14.♗f3 ♗e6± Black has better chances in the ending, as his pieces are more purposefully placed and he controls more space.

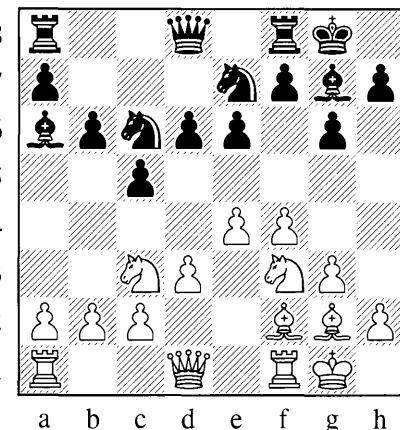
10.♗b1 d5 gives Black the initiative according to Palliser in *Starting Out: Closed Sicilian* and I can only agree.

F1) 10.♘f2

A prophylactic measure, fighting against ...d5. I think that an interesting reply for Black is:

10...♗a6!?

Stopping d3-d4, while preparing to complete mobilization by putting the queen on d7 next. White has the following choice:



11.♗e1

Renewing the idea of d3-d4 looks like a logical decision.

11.g4?! is met comfortably with 11...♗d7, as the further 12.f5?! d5!↑ prepares to open up the game under favourable circumstances for us. If 13.♗h4, then 13...exf5 14.exf5 (14.gxf5 dxe4+) 14...f6! 15.♗d2 gxf5 16.gxf5 ♗xf5 17.♗h3 ♗ce7+ and Black is in absolute control.

11.♗d2

This is too slow and gives Black time to accomplish his plan.

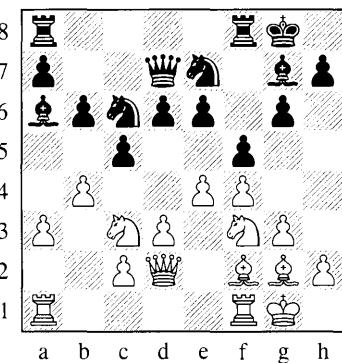
11...♗d7 12.a3!?

12.♗ae1 ♗ae8 13.g4 f5! 14.gxf5 (14.h3 fxe4 is good for Black, as mentioned by Palliser) 14...exf5 15.♗h3 d5 16.e5 ♗d8! 17.♗e2 d4 18.♗g2 ♗e6 19.h4 ♗b7 20.♗g5 ♗xg2 21.♗xg2 ♗d5+ 22.♗g3 ♗c6± Black was

pressing in Spassky – Atalik, Tallinn (rapid) 1998.

12...f5 13.b4!?

13.♗fe1 ♗d4 14.♗xd4 cxd4 15.♗e2 happened in Himanshu – Arun Prasad, New Delhi 2010, and here 15...e5N 16.c3 dxc3 17.♗xc3 ♜b7 would have been excellent for Black.



13...♗d4!

13...fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♜xa1 15.♗xa1 ♜b7 16.♗e1 ♜f5 17.c3 gives White rather annoying compensation.

14.♗xd4 cxd4 15.♗e2 e5 16.a4 ♜b7

The second player has a fine position with pressure on e4, and I would rate his chances as a tiny bit better. For example:

17.a5 fxe4 18.dxe4 bxa5 19.♗xa5 ♜c6 20.♗a3 a6 21.c3 dxc3 22.♗xc3

22.♗xc3 ♜a7!

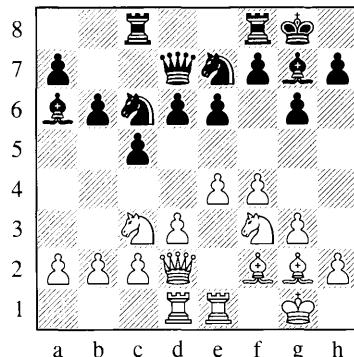
22...exf4 23.gxf4 ♜xb4 24.♗a4 ♜b5 25.♗b1 a5 26.♗xd6 ♜ad8 27.♗e6† ♜h8

Black maintains a slight initiative, although with correct play the game should end in a draw.

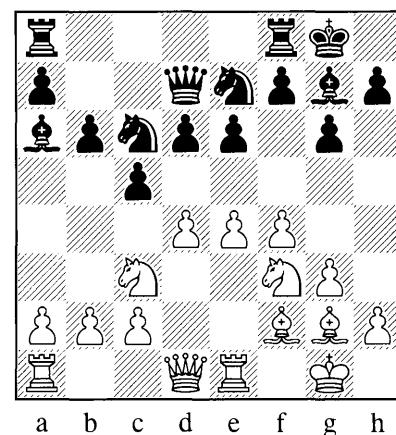
11...♗d7 12.d4

A healthy move, but Black is well placed to meet it.

Instead, 12.♗d2 ♜ac8 13.♗ad1 is meek:



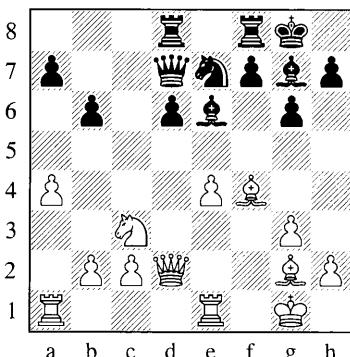
13...♗d4! 14.♗xd4 cxd4 15.♗e2 ♜c6 16.c3 dxc3 17.bxc3 d5 18.exd5 (18.e5!? may have been preferable, but White is worse in any case) 18...exd5 19.♗c2 ♜b7 20.♗a4 ♜fd8 21.♗c1 h5 22.h3 ♜c7 23.♗h2 ♜h7 24.♗a3 d4 25.cxd4 a5! 26.h4 ♜b4 27.♗xc3 ♜xc7 28.♗e4 ♜d7 29.♗b3 ♜d5 30.♗xd5 ♜xd5 It was clear that Black was dictating the play, and he went on to win in Detela – Pierzak, corr. 2012.



12...♗ad8 13.a4! ♜b7

This may be acceptable, but is not so much to my liking.

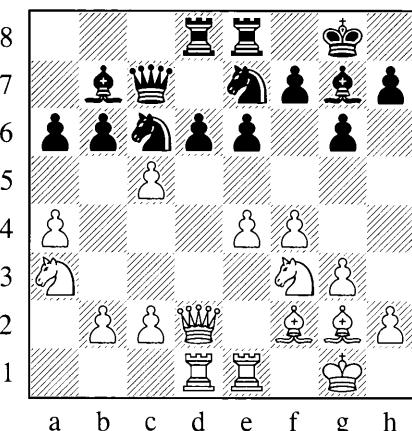
13...cxd4! 14.♗xd4 ♜xd4 15.♗d4 e5 16.♗e3 exf4 17.♗xf4 ♜c4 18.♗d2 ♜e6= is closer to my own philosophy on how the position should be treated. With a nice square on e5 for his pieces Black can hardly be worse, for example:



19. $\mathbb{E}f1$ (19. $\mathbb{E}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6=$)
 19... $\mathbb{W}c8?$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ (20. $\mathbb{E}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{E}d7=$; 20. $\mathbb{E}h1$ d5? 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. exd5 $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3\infty$) 20... $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{W}a5\rightleftharpoons$ White has to constantly watch out for his own queenside weaknesses as well.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ a6
 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{dx}c5$

18.c3!N d5 19.e5 ∞ was by far the critical test: Black can go after the a4-pawn, but White will have an attack. This is the reason I prefer 13... cxd4.



18... $\mathbb{dx}c5$

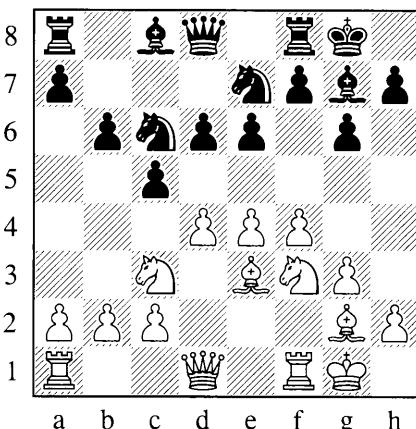
Now Black is absolutely fine.

19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 21. e5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. b3
 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\rightleftharpoons$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d1$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

$\mathbb{W}xc6$ 29. c3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b5 31. axb5 axb5
 32. $\mathbb{Q}ce3$ $\mathbb{Q}cb6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The players agreed a draw in Martin Molinero – Fessler, corr. 2011.

F2) 10.d4



It seems that this is the critical continuation at this point.

10... $\mathbb{E}a6!?$

There is hardly any reason to say no to developing with gain of time.

10... d5

This move does seem to be in perfect shape as well.

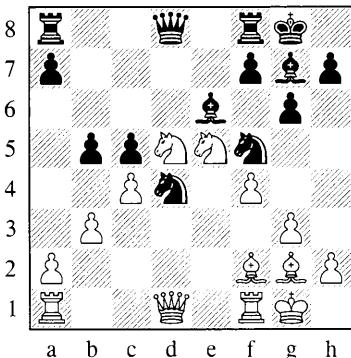
11. exd5

Black is in good shape after 11. e5 $\mathbb{A}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$, which is also pointed out by Palliser.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 12. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}cxd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ exd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. c4 b5!

15... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}c1$ b5 18. b3 bxc4 19. bxc4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 20. g4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4\infty$ was unclear in Bonugli – Estremera Panos, Porto San Giorgio 2006.

16. b3



16...h5!N 17.Qe1

17.Qe3?! Rc8 18.cxb5 Wb6 19.Qxf5 Qxf5 20.b4 (20.a4?! Qxe5 21.fxe5 Rfd8+) 20...Qxe5! 21.fxe5 Rfd8 22.bxc5 Wxc5 23.Wa4 Qc2 24.Wa6 Wxe5 25.Wxa7 Qe2† 26.Qh1 Qe4!→

17...Rb8 18.Wd2 bxc4 19.bxc4 Re8!

Black has placed his pieces in the most active way, and a march of the a-pawn to a3 is on the cards. For example:

20.Qad1

20.Qab1? Rxb1 21.Rxb1 Qxe5 22.fxe5 Qxd5+ 20...a5! 21.h3 a4 22.Wc1 22.g4?! hxg4 23.hxg4 Qh4 24.Qxd4 Qxg2 25.Wxg2 cxd4 26.Qxd4 a3 27.Qd2 Qxd5 28.Wxd5 (28.cxd5 Rb4↑) 28...Wc7∞

I am tempted to say that it is Black who is pressing after either:

22...Wa5∞

Or 22...Wc8!?

11.Qe1!

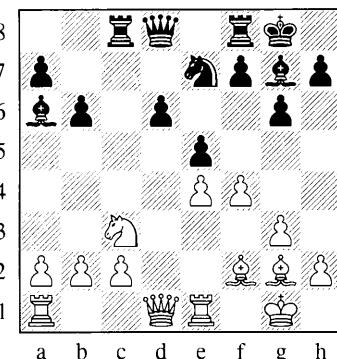
Placing the rook on f2 is a bad idea here: 11.Qf2?! d5! 12.Qd2 (12.Qe5 cxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Wxd4 Qc6 15.Wa4 Qxe5 16.fxe5 d4 17.Qd5 Qb7 18.Qf6† Qxf6 19.exf6 e5 20.Wb4 Re8†; 12.exd5 Qf5! 13.Qd2 exd5↑) 12...Qa5! 13.b3 Wc7 14.e5 Qf5 15.Qf2 cxd4 16.Qe2 Qe3 17.Qc1 Qxg2 18.Qxg2 Qb7!↑ Black's advantage is evident.

11...Rc8 12.Wd2!

White should stay firm in the centre.

Opening up the long diagonal by 12.d5?! can only cause White trouble: 12...exd5 13.exd5 Qa5 14.Qd2 (14.Qh3 Rc7 15.f5 Qc4 16.Qc1 Qxf5 17.Qxf5 gxf5 18.Qh4 Rf6 19.Wh5 Qc8 [19...Wd4† 20.Qg2 Wg4 21.Wxf5∞] 20.Qg2 h6†) 14...b5! 15.a3 Qb7!↑ The pressure against d5 becomes annoying.

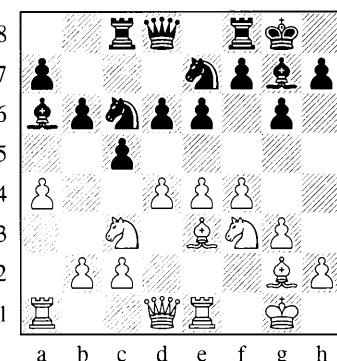
12.Qf2 is recommended by Palliser. I think Black should take twice on d4 and follow up with ...e5, with the following game being an instructive example: 12...Qxd4 13.Qxd4 cxd4 14.Qxd4 e5 15.Qf2 (15.Qe3 exf4 16.Qxf4 Re8!?)



15...Wd7 (15...exf4?! 16.gxf4 Rc4!?) 16.Wd2 Rfd8 17.Qad1 Qc4 18.h3 We6 19.a4 Wd7 20.Qe3 Qc6 Black had a pleasant position and went on to win in Meinhardt – Boensch, Germany 2007.

12.a4

An acceptable try, after which I recommend:



12...cxd4! 13.Qxd4 Qxd4

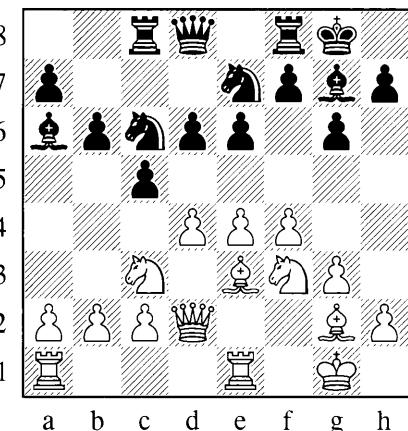
Also possible is: 13...Qa5!? 14.Qcb5 e5 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.Qb3 Qxb3 17.cxb3 Qc6 18.Qf1 We7 19.Wd6 Wb7 20.Wa3 Wd7 21.Wd6 (21.Qad1 Wg4↑) 21...Qcd8 22.Wxd7 Qxd7 23.Qed1 Qfd8 24.Qxd7 Qxd7 25.Qc1 Qb7 26.Qc4 Qf8 27.Qf2 (27.Qd5 Qd4 28.Qxd4 Qxd5 29.exd5 exd4 30.Qxd4 Qxd5±) 27...Qd4∞ With an unclear endgame.

14.Qxd4 e5 15.Qe3 exf4 16.Qxf4

Probably better is 16.gxf4 f5 (16...Qxc3 17.bxc3 Qxc3 18.Qd4 Qxe1 19.Wxe1∞; 16...Qxc3!? 17.bxc3 Qc6∞) 17.Qd4 Qxd4† 18.Wxd4 fxe4 19.Qxe4 Qf5 20.Wd2 Qb7∞ with approximate equality.

16...Qc6! 17.Qh3 Wa8 18.Wxd6 Qd4∞

Black gets at least enough compensation for the pawn.



12...cxd4!

A clear solution.

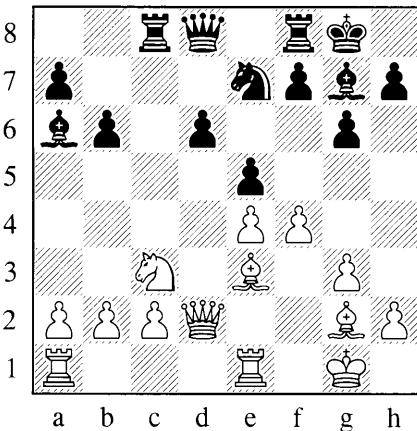
I don't like 12...Qa5 13.b3 Wc7 14.d5! Qxc3 15.Wxc3 exd5 16.exd5 Qxd5 17.Wd2∞ so much, as we could fall under an attack after f4-f5.

13.Qxd4 Qxd4!

13...Qa5!? 14.b3 e5 15.Qdb5±

14.Qxd4 e5 15.Qe3

Equality is also the result after 15.Qf2 Wd7 16.Qad1 Qfd8 17.fxe5 Qxe5 18.Qd4 We6 19.Qd5 Qxd5 20.exd5 Qxd4† 21.Qxd4 Wf5 22.c3 Qe8=.



15...Wc7!

I like this strong move, piling up the pressure on c3.

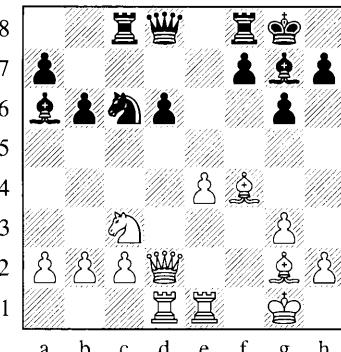
White may have an edge after the following sequence of moves:

15...exf4 16.Qxf4!

16.gxf4 f5∞

16...Qc6 17.Qad1!?

17.Wxd6 Wxd6 18.Qxd6 Qfe8 19.Qad1 Qc4∞



17...Qe5 18.Qg5 Qc4! 19.Qc1 Wc7 20.Qd5! Wc5†!

20... $\mathbb{Q}xb2?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f6\# \pm$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e7\# \mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{W}b4$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 25.a3 $\mathbb{W}xa3$ 26.e5?
 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 27. $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
 32.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$
 26... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$
 27. $\mathbb{Q}exe5$ $dxe5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ h6
 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}d1!$ 32.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$
 33. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 34. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5? (34... $\mathbb{Q}xh3\#$)
 35. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\infty$ 35. $\mathbb{W}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc2\#$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ f5 39. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$
 $\mathbb{Q}g7\infty$
 27... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$ $dxe5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d7!$
 29. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f6$ (30. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$)
 30... $\mathbb{Q}f8\infty$
 29... $\mathbb{W}xc1$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ a5 ∞/\pm

Black has two pawns for the exchange and a passed a-pawn, but my feeling is that the activity of the white pieces matters most in this case.

16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $exf4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$
 19. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8\infty$

We have reached an important position for the evaluation of 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$. Normally White should have an edge in such a position in view of the bishop pair and the weakened black kingside, but a few important factors render the assessment unclear:

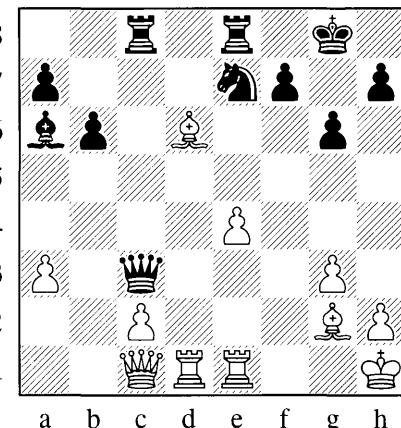
- 1) Black has the better pawn structure and the more active pieces.
- 2) It is difficult for White to initiate pressure on the f-file due to Black's control of the critical f1-square.
- 3) e4-e5 would allow the black knight to come to f5 with strong effect.

22.a3

22. $\mathbb{W}f4?$ has a brutal threat in $\mathbb{Q}e5$, but after 22... $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ Black gets a significant advantage.

22.e5?! is also weak because of 22... $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$.

22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ed8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ could be the prelude to a repetition.



22... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c4$

Black is at least equal. White does not have an effective way of attacking, and if Black can somehow exchange light-squared bishops the first player could easily end up worse.

Conclusion

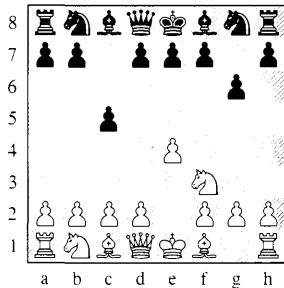
In this chapter, with White clearly aiming for the advance f4-f5, I have returned to the ...e6, ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ set-up.

I think that the results of this work have vindicated my choice as I couldn't find any problem for us, but on the other hand, I have to admit that White's status is better than I expected.

Overall, the Closed Sicilian is alive and kicking, but the offered repertoire should enable readers to face it with confidence and defuse any attacking attempts. In practical chess the positions are easier to play with Black, but objectively the chances are about equal.



2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



2...g6

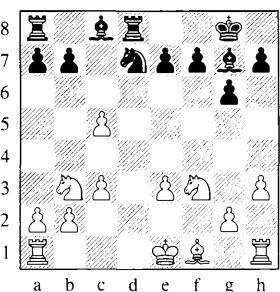
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

2...g6

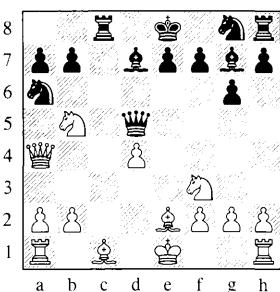
A) 3.d4	343
B) 3.c3 d5 4.exd5! $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 5.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$	344
B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	346
B2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ cxd4	347
B21) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	347
B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$	349
B221) 8. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$	349
B222) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	350

B1) after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



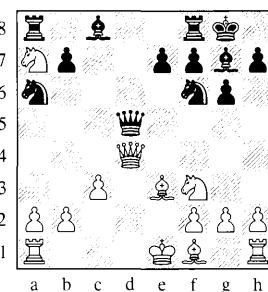
13... $\mathbb{Q}h6!N$

B22) note to move 8



10... $\mathbb{Q}h6!N\#$

B222) note to 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6

2...a6 is the only Sicilian where 3.d4 is not the main line, but actually a weak choice. All sorts of Anti-Sicilian looking moves such as 3.c3, 3.c4, 3.♘c3 and 3.g3 seem to offer White the advantage and are considered main lines, so for understandable reasons I will refrain from offering any repertoire for Black here.

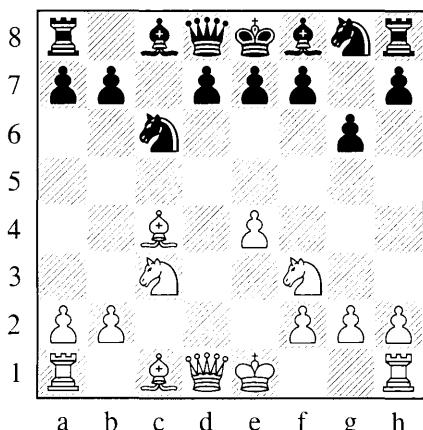
2...g6 is usually the prelude to an Accelerated Dragon or the Maroczy, but what if White doesn't play a pure 3.d4 at this point? I decided to investigate two options involving the move c2-c3: A) 3.d4 cxd4 4.c3!?

A) 3.d4 cxd4 4.c3!?

Leading us into Morra Gambit territory, where I think that fianchettoing is a decent option for Black.

4...dxc3 5.♘xc3 ♘c6 6.♗c4

6.h4 should be met by 6...♝f6, as mentioned by Marc Esserman in his book *Mayhem in the Morra*.

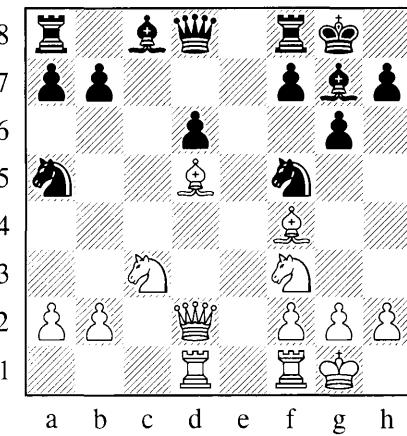


6...♝g7 7.e5 ♘h6! 8.0–0 0–0 9.♗f4 d6 10.exd6 exd6 11.♗d2

11.♗xd6 ♜e8 12.♗f4 ♜g4= is balanced.

11...♝f5 12.♗ad1 ♘a5 13.♗d5

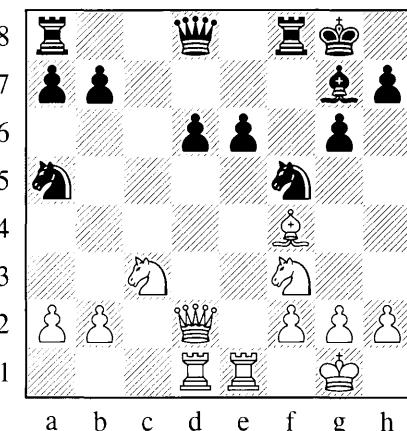
This is considered to be slightly better for White by Esserman, but I have my doubts.

**13...♝e6**

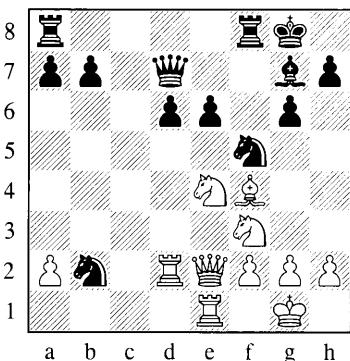
This logical reply was suggested by John Shaw, and Black shouldn't be any worse. For example:

14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗fe1!

15.♗e2?! ♜e7= is excellent for Black, who is planning to advance in the centre with ...e5.

**15...♝c4!**

Marc probably had the following line in mind: 15...♗d7 16.♗e4! With a direct threat of ♘c5. 16...♝c4 17.♗e2 ♜xb2 18.♗d2 The complications are not unfavourable for White:

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

18... $\mathbb{Q}h4!$? 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}f5$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}de2! \pm$

16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$

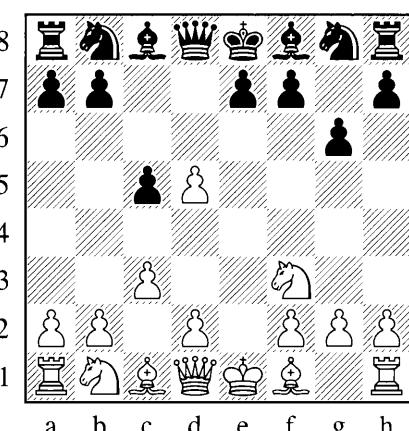
There is nothing else.

17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ h5= is completely balanced, as Black can follow up by taking on c3 and bringing his king to g7.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$
 $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xh4=$

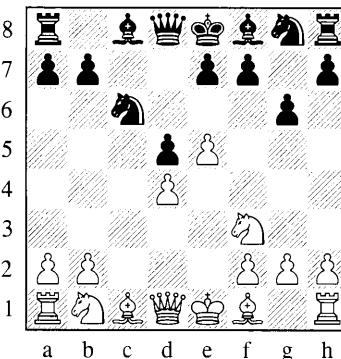
B) 3. c3 d5 4. exd5!



This is White's best option.

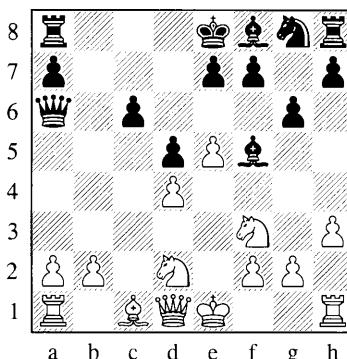
4. e5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. d4 cxd4 6. cxd4

Black has omitted ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, and this detail proves beneficial to him as he has gained a precious tempo to attack the enemy centre:



6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$
 $\mathbb{W}a6$ 10. h3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

There is now a parting of the ways:



11. g4

This looks tempting, but it creates a long-term weakness that Black can exploit later on. However, the alternatives give White no advantage either:

a) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$? $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 12. e6 c5! 13. exf7# $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}hf3$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ cxd4 will probably transpose) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ cxd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}bxsd4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$? 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 $\mathbb{W}e6=$ is not worse for Black.

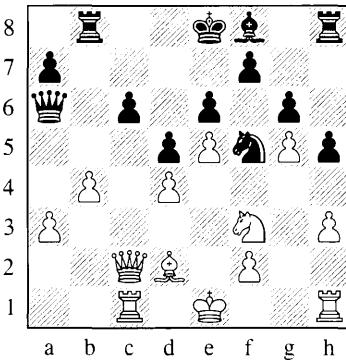
b) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ looks strategically better for White, but with his king stuck in the middle he has little hope of progressing after 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h5! 14.g5
 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 17.b4 $\mathbb{Q}a6!$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 20.a3

20. $\mathbb{W}xc6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4!!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
 $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}hc8!!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xa7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 25.0–0
 $\mathbb{Q}xb4\#$ is the brilliant tactical point behind

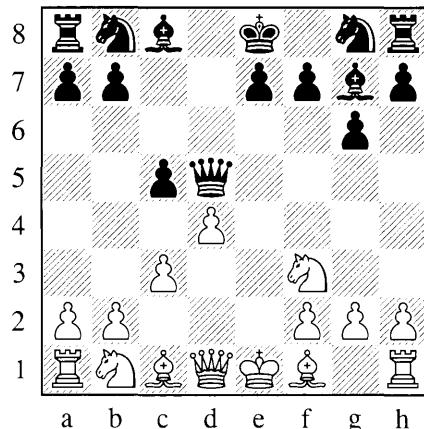
Black's play.



20... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ 0–0 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h4
24.f4 $\mathbb{W}a4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ e5#

Black was left with a huge positional advantage, which he eventually converted, in Ilyuschenko – Jung, corr. 2008.

4... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 5.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$



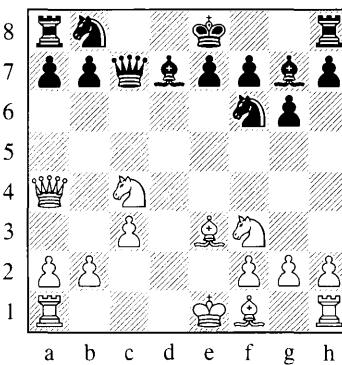
Theory has long considered this position to be slightly better for White, but the correspondence player Manfred Moza seems to have his objections and has been its

stauntest defender from Black's point of view. An encouraging fact for Black supporters is that even players like Giri, Navara, Kamsky, Li Chao and Korobov have lately been willing to enter this position as Black, a fact suggesting that the set-up is fully playable.

The two main moves are **B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$** and **B2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}a3$.**

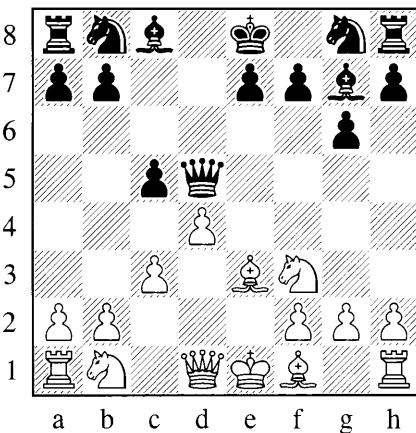
6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is too quiet to put Black under any pressure: 6... $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 7.0–0 0–0 8.c4 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 9.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$, as played in Xu Jun – Li Chao, Jakarta 2012, looks a bit worse for Black after the natural 11.h3N $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ 7.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black had achieved complete equality in Boesendorfer – Moza, corr. 2010.

Finally, 6.dxc5 allowed Black free play and equal chances after: 6... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



11. $\mathbb{W}a5!$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0
14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}ce5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6=$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18.a4 e5=

Belyakov – Gupta, Doha 2014.

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ **B1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$** 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$?

Denying White the c3-square for his knight.

Also possible is:

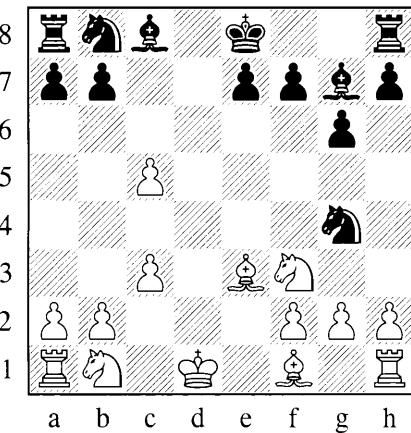
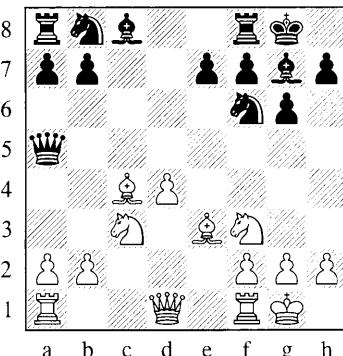
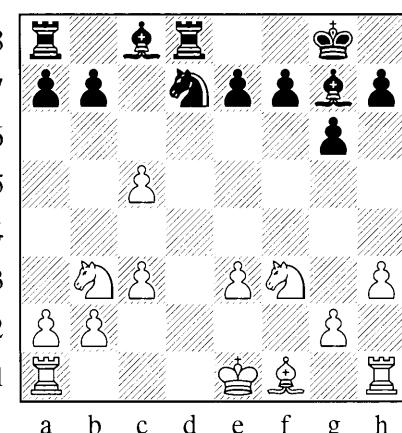
6... cxd4 7. cxd4!

7. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d6=$
was comfortable for Black in Kreutz – Moza,
corr. 2011.7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0 10. 0–010. h3 $\mathbb{Q}e4=$ 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8!=$

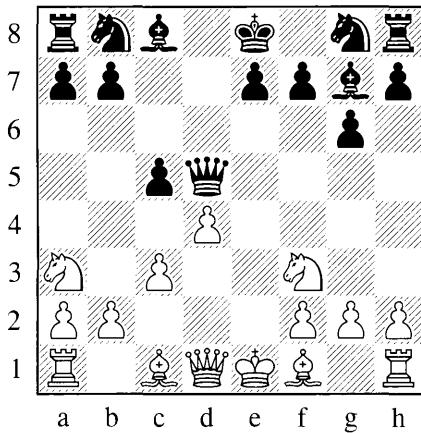
Black enjoys fair chances in this typical Reversed Tarrasch position.

7. dxc5 $\mathbb{W}xd1\#$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

This gives Black strong compensation for his pawn.

9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 0–0 11. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$
12. fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ We have been following Mammadov –
Gupta, Nakhchivan 2013, and now best is:10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$
13. a3 e5! 14. d5 (14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$; 14. dxе5
 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$
a6 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$ is
completely equal) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ looked fine for
Black in Van der Weide – Turner, Paignton
2000.13... $\mathbb{Q}h6!N$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ a5 16. a4
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ed2$
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black has excellent counterplay.

B2) 6.♘a3

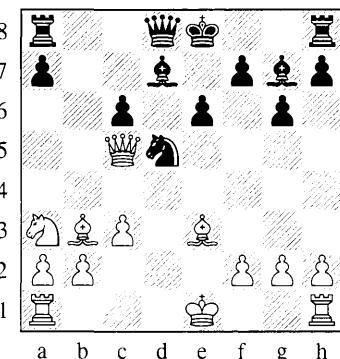
This is the most common continuation, planning a quick ♘b5 to force the b8-knight to the passive a6-square.

6...cx d4

Once the knight has moved to a3, taking on d4 is a natural reaction in all c3 Sicilians. We have reached an important crossroads: **B21) 7.♕c4** or **B22) 7.♘b5**.

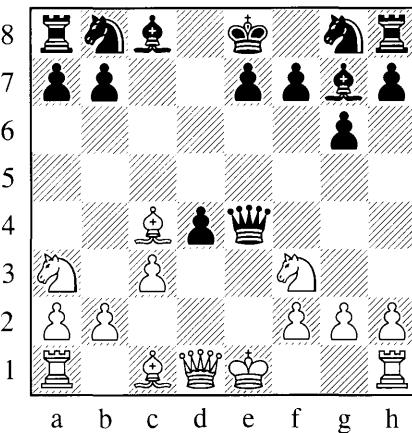
B21) 7.♕c4 ♜e4†

7...♜d8, as played by Kamsky, deserves a look too. 8.♗b3 e6 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♗e3 ♜f6 12.♗b4 ♜d7 13.♗b3 ♜d5 14.♗c5

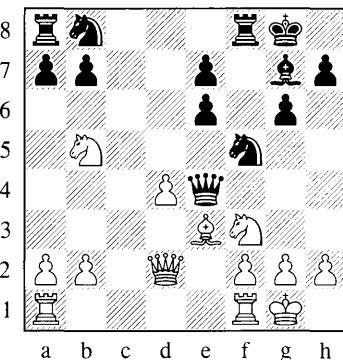


14...♗xe3 15.♗xe3 0–0 16.♗d1 ♜c7 17.♗c5 ♜fd8 18.♘c4 ♜e8† Black went on to win in

Sebag – Kamsky, Gibraltar 2014, but White's opening was rather timid.



11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ left Black in good shape after:
11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $f\times e6$ 13. 0–0



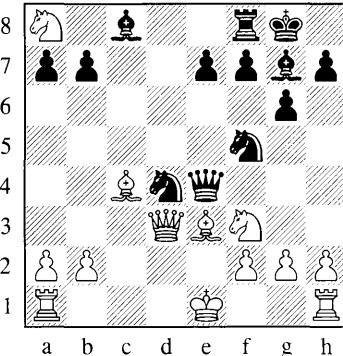
13... $\mathbb{W}c6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ (14. $a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7!!$) 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$
15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 17. $h3$ $a6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$
 $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $a5$
25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 26. $d5$ $exd5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}b4=$
Shields – Moza, corr. 2013. This was excellent and original opening play by Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6!!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}cx d4!$

Black's attack is enough to draw.

13. $\mathbb{W}d3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$ 15. $gxh3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$
16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$ =



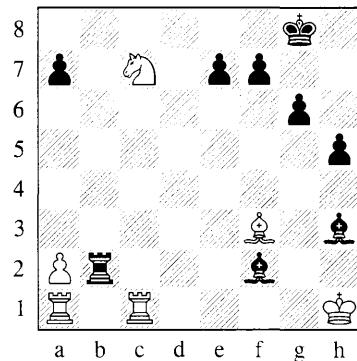
13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 14. $gx f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$
 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 17. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$
20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe3$

22. $f\times e3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$! – +

22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$

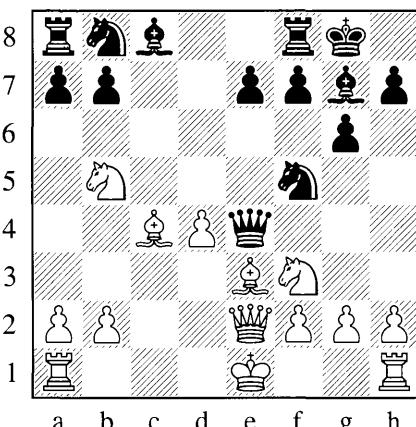
25. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$
28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $h5$

Black's pawn armada compensates for the missing rook.



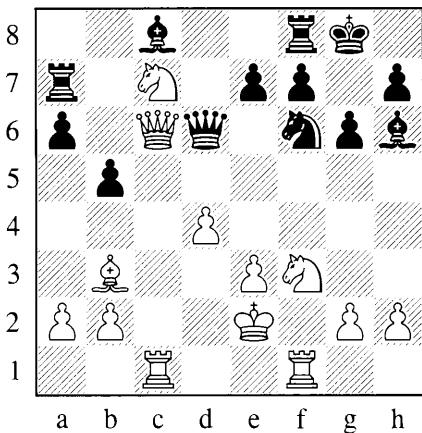
30. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $e6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
33. $\mathbb{Q}cb1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 34. $a4$ $h4$ 35. $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $g5$
37. $\mathbb{Q}b3$
37. $\mathbb{Q}d6!!$ $g4$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $g3!!$
40. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ (43. $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$
 $\mathbb{Q}f2=$) 43... $\mathbb{Q}a2=$
37... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}d1$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5!=$

½–½ The players agreed a draw in the heavyweight struggle Demchenko – Moza, corr. 2013.



11... $a6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $f\times e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 14. 0–0
b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$

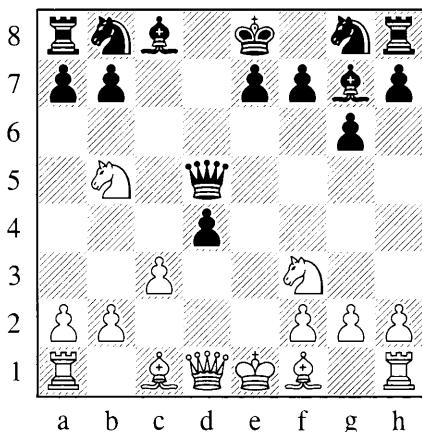
18.♔f2 ♖d6 19.♕b3 ♔d7 20.♖c6 ♕f6
21.♕e2



21...♘g4 22.♗d5 ♘b7 23.♖xd6 exd6 24.h3
♖xd5 25.hxg4 ♘a8 26.g5 ♘g7 27.♗c3 a5
28.a3 a4 29.♗a2 b4 30.axb4 ♘b8 31.♗f2
h5=

The ending was approximately balanced in Beth – Moza, corr. 2012.

B22) 7.♗b5



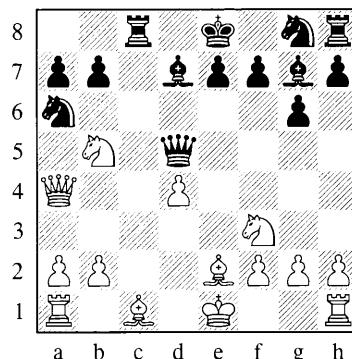
I think this is the most principled move, forcing the black knight to a passive position.

7...♘a6

Black has been forced into some sort of concession, but having the knight on the

rim is not the end of the world. After all, his other pieces are enjoying excellent activity, and if White takes with a piece on d4 Black will enjoy a pawn more in the centre. Let us see how White may proceed: **B221) 8.♗bx4** is undoubtedly a main move, though **B222) 8.♕e3** also looks like a logical reply.

Weaker is instead 8.♖a4?! ♔d7 9.cxd4 ♕c8! 10.♕e2, as played in Pedersen – Hagen, Denmark 2012, due to:



10...♗h6! N= Black has orchestrated his pieces excellently for applying pressure on d4 and may intensify it with ...♗b8-c6.

B221) 8.♗bx4 ♕f6 9.♕b5† ♔d7 10.♕e2!

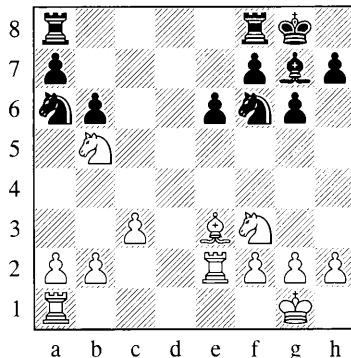
White does have a slight pull but Black should be able to nullify it in due course.

10...♗xb5 11.♗xb5!

Weaker is 11.♖xb5† ♗xb5 12.♗xb5 0–0 (12...♗d5!= was even better, when White had absolutely nothing in Korneev – Antoli Royo, Zaragoza 2010.) 13.♕e3 b6 14.♗d1 e6 15.0–0 ♔d5 16.♗d4 ♕c5 17.g3 ♕xd4 18.♗xd4 a6 19.♗a3 b5 20.♗fd1 ♕ab8 21.c4 bxc4 22.♗xc4 a5= Black was clearly not worse in Mamedyarov – Giri, Beijing 2013.

11...0–0 12.0–0 ♕e4!

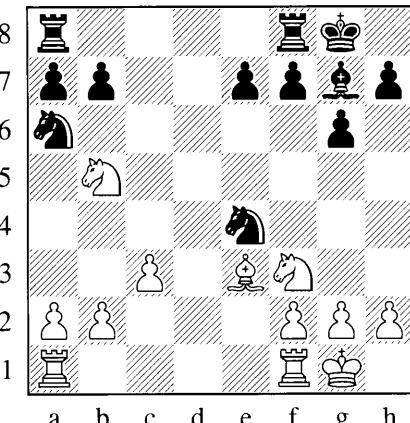
This move by Khmelniker seems to equalize easily.

13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ e6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b6

16. $\mathbb{Q}e5N$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ 18. f4 $\mathbb{Q}ac7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 20. c4 happened in Gjuran – Khmelniker, Pardubice 2008, and here 20...b5! \mathbb{N} is simply great for Black.) 16... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}cc8=$ A repetition of moves would be a logical conclusion.

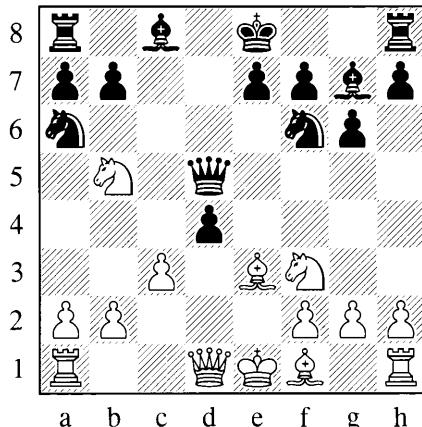
13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

In case of 14. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ exd6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (17. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}a4!!?$) 17...b5!= there is also no advantage for White.



14... $\mathbb{Q}ac5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ a6! 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ e6! 18. f3 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. h4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#!$ 22. $\mathbb{gxf3}$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{fxe6}=$

A draw was agreed at this point in Kobas – Moza, corr. 2014.

B222) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 

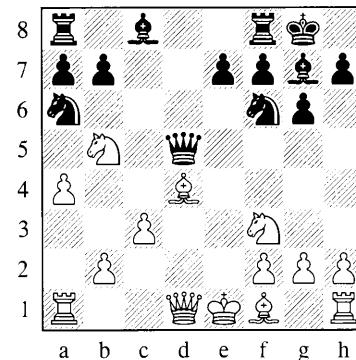
This natural move seems to equalize effortlessly.

9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

It is logical to opt for an ending.

9. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 0–0 10. a4

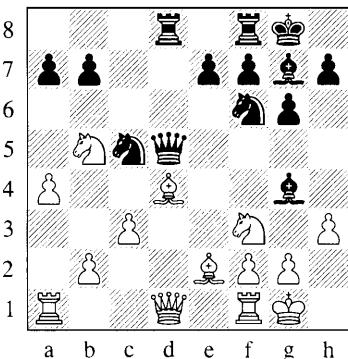
10. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (11. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $\mathbb{fxe3}$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\uparrow$ gives Black tremendous compensation for the pawn) 11... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 13. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 15. $\mathbb{axb3}$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2=$ is hardly dangerous for Black as his knight is safe on b2.



10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 12. 0–0!

This is better than 12.h3?! e5! 13.♗e3, which was played in Ivanchuk – Giri, Beijing (blitz) 2013. Most accurate would have been: 13...♗xf3N 14.♗xf3 e4 15.♗xd5 (15.♗e2 ♗e5!) 15...♗xd5 16.♗xe4 ♗xe3 17.fxe3 ♘fe8 18.♗c2 (18.♗xb7 ♗c5 19.♗f3 ♗xe3†↑ with the idea 20.♗f2?? ♗d2†! 21.♗xe3 ♘h6#) 18...♗xe3† 19.♗f2 ♗e6 20.♗ad1 ♘de8 21.♗he1 ♘e5!± Black has whatever chances exist.

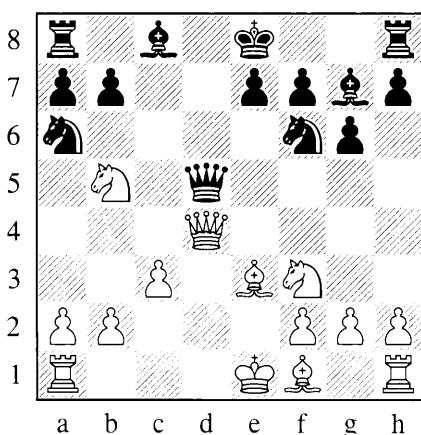
12...♗c5 13.h3
13.♗xa7 ♗e6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗xd5 ♗xd5
16.♗fd1 ♗a5 17.♗b5 ♗f4 gives Black strong compensation for the pawn.



13...e5! 14.hxg4 exd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.cxd4
♗e6 17.♗c4 a6 18.♗xe6 axb5 19.♗b3

We have been following Delizia – Mauro, corr. 2011, when Black could have secured equality with the simple:

19...bxa4N 20.♗xa4 ♗xg4 21.♗b4 ♗d7=



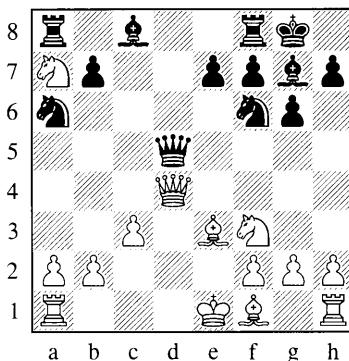
9...0–0!

Lately attention has focused on 9...♗xd4, but I think that the text is a far better move.

10.♗e2

White plays sensibly.

The most obvious question is what happens after 10.♗xa7, with the answer being:



10...♗g4!N 11.♗e2 ♗fd8 12.♗b6 (12.♗xd5?!)
♗xd5 13.♗b5 ♗xe3 14.fxe3 ♘h6#) 12...♗d7
13.♗b3 (13.♗b5 ♗c7! 14.♗a4 ♗h5#)
13...♗h5± With the idea ...♗ac5, when Black has excellent counterplay for a mere pawn.

10.♗c4?!

This is weak due to:

10...♗c6!

With this powerful move Black is fighting for the initiative. The idea is a discovered attack on the white queen.

11.0–0

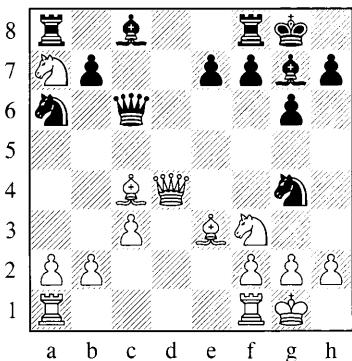
I promoted this untried move for illustrative purposes, since White is already worse no matter what he tries.

One practical example went 11.♗e2 ♗g4
12.♗d2 ♗c5 13.♗xc5 ♗xc5 14.0–0 a6
15.♗bd4 e5 16.♗b3 ♗c7↑ and Black was clearly better in Skoko – Roganovic, Stara Pazova 2008.

11...♗g4 12.♗xa7

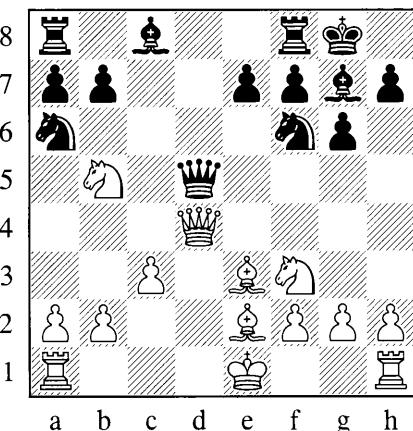
There is only a choice of evils.

12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\uparrow$ is just worse for White.



12... $\mathbb{Q}xa7!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$
15. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{W}f5\rightarrow$

Black has a virulent attack.



10... $b6$ 11. $0-0$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

Play was balanced in Peptan – Krush, Dresden (ol) 2008, and Black eventually prevailed.

Conclusion

This Chapter provided an antidote to the dangerous Morra Gambit, while also concentrating on quiet lines occurring after 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 3.c3. The variations are similar in nature to those arising from a c3 Sicilian, with the games of the correspondence player Moza providing an excellent reference point. Once again White can reach equality if that is all he desires, but any small slip can be punished by ambitious Black players looking to gradually turn the tables and secure the full point.

Chapter
20

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

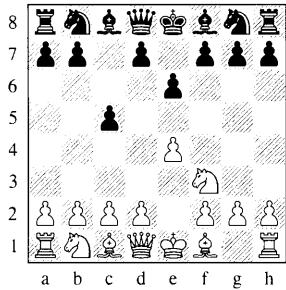
2...e6

Variation Index

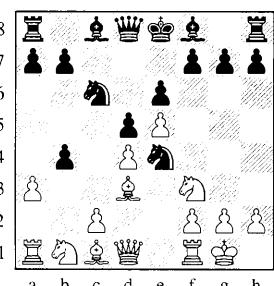
1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

2...e6

A) 3.b4 cxb4	354
A1) 4.a3	354
A2) 4.d4	355
B) 3.b3 a6 4. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$	356
B1) 5.g3	358
B2) 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$	359
B3) 5.c4	359
C) 3.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 4.g3 d5 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$	360
C1) 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$	361
C2) 6.c3	363
D) 3.g3	364

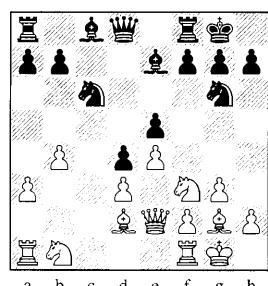


A2) after 8.a3



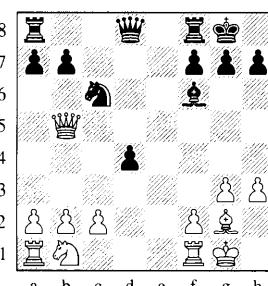
8... $\mathbb{Q}d7!N$

C2) after 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2??!$



12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!N$

D) after 13. $\mathbb{W}b5$

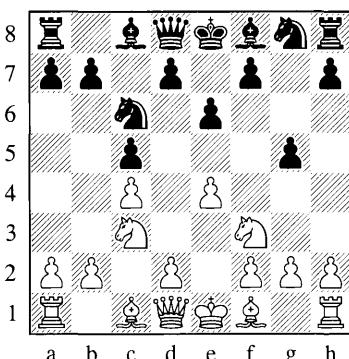


13... $\mathbb{Q}c8!N$

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6

We will now look at several tries for White to avoid an open fight: A) 3.b4, B) 3.b3, C) 3.d3 and D) 3.g3.

3.c4 ♗c6 4.♗c3 g5!?

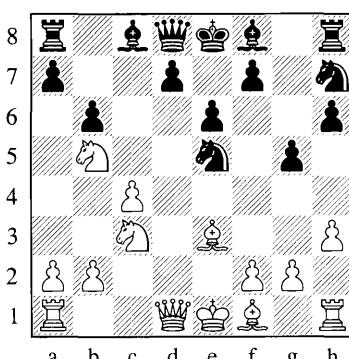


5.d3

5.d4 g4 6.d5 gxf3 7.dxc6 fxg2 8.cxd7† ♕xd7 9.♕xg2 ♕g7= is given in *Chess Informant*.
9.h3 ♕g7 6.d3 h6 7.♕e3 ♗d4 8.♗xd4 cxd4
9.♗b5 ♜b6 10.♗a4 a6 11.e5 ♕f8 12.0-0-0
♕c5 13.♗e2 ♗e7 saw Black have the better of the opening exchanges in S. Zhigalko – McShane, Plovdiv 2010.

5...h6 6.♗e3 ♗f6 7.h3 b6!? 8.e5

8.d4 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♕b7 10.♗xc6 dxc6!=
8...♗h7 9.d4 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xe5 11.♗db5



11...♗a6!? 12.♗d6†

12.h4 ♕xb5! 13.♗xb5 gxh4! 14.♗e2 (14.♗d6† ♕xd6 15.♗xd6 ♗g6∞) 14...♗g8!
15.♗f4 ♜f6! 16.♗c7† ♘d8 17.♗xe5 ♜xe5

18.♗xa8 ♜xg2∞

12...♗xd6 13.♗xd6 f6∞

With a doubled-edged position. White has the bishop pair, but Black is a pawn up and his resources should not be underestimated.

A) 3.b4

The Wing Gambit has a better a reputation after 2...e6 than it has on move 2, but in my opinion even this version does not significantly improve White's prospects.

3...cx b4

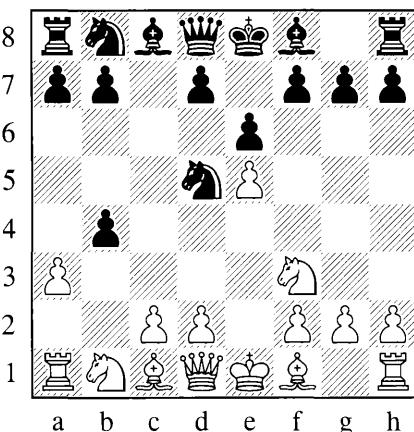
White chooses from A1) 4.a3 and A2) 4.d4.

A1) 4.a3 ♗f6!

Forcing the white e-pawn to move forwards.

5.e5 ♗d5

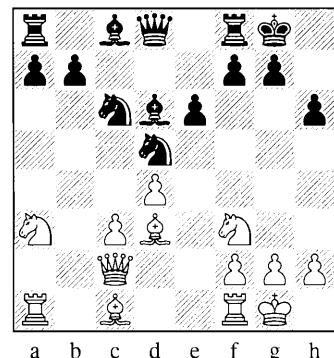
Black has a comfortable game, and it is not clear to me that White has enough compensation. For example:

**6.axb4**

6.d4 d6! 7.exd6 ♕xd6 8.axb4 ♜xb4† 9.♗d2 ♕xd2† 10.♗xd2 0-0 11.c4 ♗f6 12.♗c3 b6 13.♗e2 ♕b7 14.0-0 ♗c6∞ is excellent for Black, who can follow up with ...a5 and post his knight on b4.

6...♝xb4 7.c4

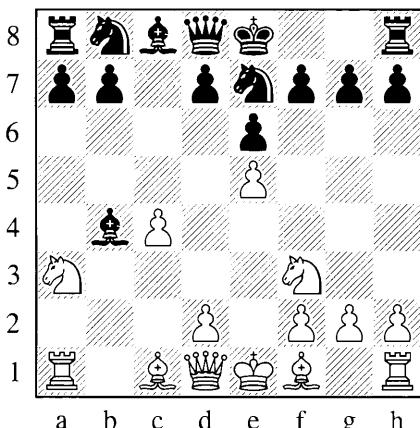
7.c3 ♜e7 8.d4 0–0 9.♗d3 ♜c6 10.♗c2 h6
11.0–0 d6 12.exd6 ♜xd6 13.♗a3



13...b6 14.♗c4 ♜e7 15.♗ce5 ♜xe5 16.♗xe5
a5 17.♗d2 ♜b7 18.f4 ♜c8 19.♗b3 ♜d6†
Black was better in Hynes – Verde, corr. 2008,
although White managed to draw after some
very resourceful play.

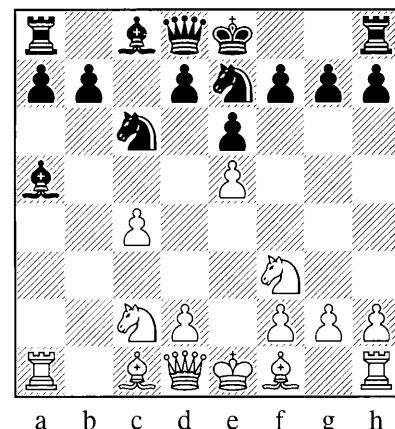
7...♝e7 8.♗a3!?

8.♗c3 ♜bc6 9.♗b5 (9.♗e4 0–0†, intending
...♝g6 followed by ...d5, is excellent for Black,
and the same applies to 9.♗a2 ♜a5†) 9...0–0
10.♗c2 ♜f5† is better for Black.

**8...♜bc6 9.♗c2 ♜a5!**

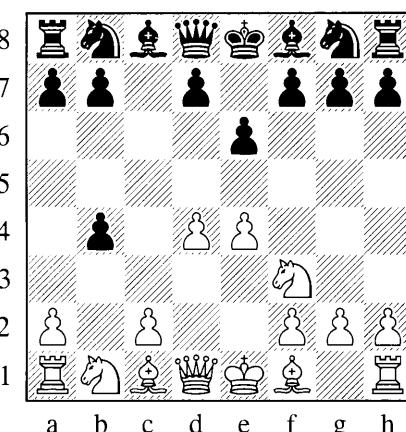
9...a5?! offers White serious compensation,
with a possible line being: 10.♗xb4 ♜xb4
11.♗a3 ♜b8 12.♗e2 0–0 13.0–0 ♜ec6 14.d4 d5

15.exd6 ♜xd6 16.♗d3 ♜d8 17.♗e4 b6
18.♗fd1 h6 19.♗d3 f5 20.♗e2 ♜a6 21.♗ac1
♜e8 22.♗b1 ♜f4 23.♗b2 ♜bd8 24.♗c3≈
White's bishops remain untouched and far
away from the reach of the black forces, and an
eventual d4-d5 will bring dangerous pressure
to bear against g7.



10.♗d3 ♜c7 11.♗e2 d6 12.exd6 ♜xd6
13.♗b2 0–0 14.0–0 e5! 15.♗fe1 ♜f5†

Black has the better game in my opinion.

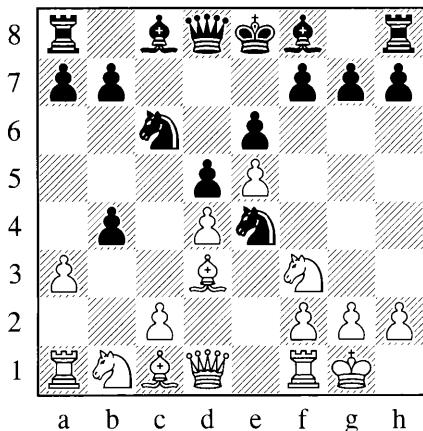
A2) 4.d4

This move, played by Zvjaginsev, seems to be
the most logical.

4...♝f6 5.♗d3

This is the idea: White wants to keep his central pawn front intact for the time being.

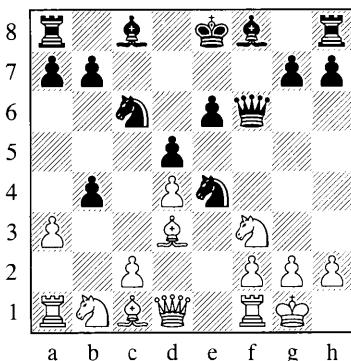
5...d5! 6.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.a3



8... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N

I like this novelty, preparing to develop the queenside, and even threatening ...a5 at some point.

Zvaginsev – Neverov, St Petersburg 2010, continued 8...f5 9.exf6 $\mathbb{W}xf6$, and here White should have chosen:



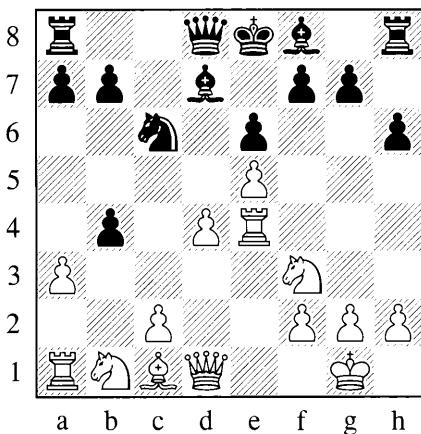
10. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ (10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1\pm$) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $a xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5\uparrow$ White has the better game.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5 11. $exf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 12. $c3$ $bxc3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}cxе4$ $\mathbb{W}d5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 0-0-0 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ e5 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $exd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}hg8!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ is better for Black.

9. $a xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}el$ h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 13. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$ also looks slightly better for the second player, although a tough struggle lies ahead.

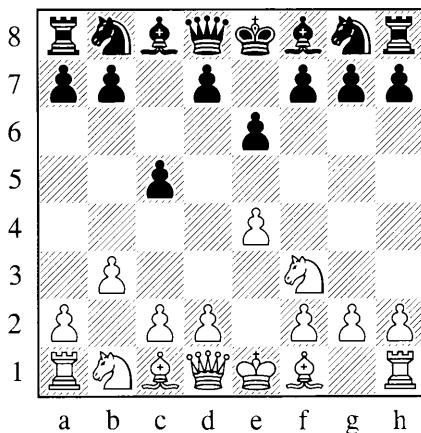
9...h6! 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



11...a5! 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a7\#$

A subsequent combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ seems to give Black excellent play.

B) 3.b3



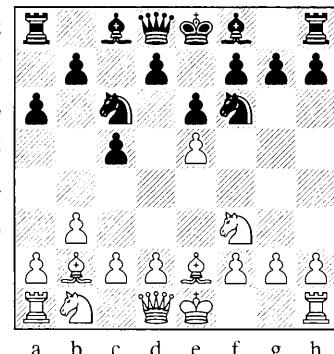
This is supposed to have more poison against 2...e6 than it has on move two, but Black has nothing to worry about.

3...a6 4.Qb2 Qc6

I think this is the best set-up for Black, stopping $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ideas. Now White has the following options: **B1) 5.g3, B2) 5.We2** and **B3) 5.c4**.

5.Qe2 Qf6! 6.e5

6.Qc3 d5 7.exd5 exd5 8.d4 happened in Harikrishna – Matlakov, Dubai (rapid) 2014, when most accurate would have been 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ N 9.0–0 0–0 10.Qa4 cxd4 11.Qxd4 Qd7 12.Qxc6 Qxc6 13.Qd4 We8↑ with at least equal chances for Black.



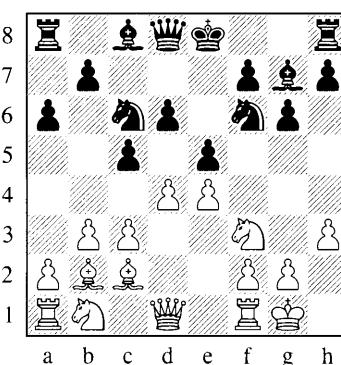
6... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 7.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 8.Qe1 Qe7! 9.Qf1 f6! 10.d3 10.exf6 Qxf6 11.Qxf6 Wxf6 12.Qc3 0–0 13.Qe4 We7 14.g3 Qg6↑ looks better for Black due to his pawn centre and open f-file. If 15.d4, then a strong answer is 15...cxd4 16.Qxd4 d5 17.Qxc6 bxc6 18.Qd2 e5↑ and Black dominates.

10...0–0 11.Qbd2 Qxe5 12.Qxe5 fxe5 13.Qxe5 d6 14.Qxf4 Wxf4 15.g3 Qf8=

The chances were approximately balanced in Rochev – Bischoff, Dun Laoghaire 2010.

5.Qd3 is a rather romantic set-up which again invites Black to move his e-pawn twice; after 5...d6 6.0–0 e5! I believe Black's chances to be at least equal, despite a minus score in practice.

The main thing here is that White needs a lot of time to get his pawn to d4, and Black can exploit this by organizing himself accordingly. Play could continue: 7.h3 g6 (7...Qf6 8.Qe1 g6 9.Qc3 Qg7 10.a4 0–0 11.Qc4 Qh5 12.Qd5 Qb8 13.Qc3 b5 14.axb5 axb5= was also fine for Black in Repkova – Thesing, Triesen 2007.) 8.c3 Qg7 9.Qc2 Qf6! 10.d4 Poetsch – Frischmann, Oberhof 2013, and here Black could have secured an advantage with a brilliant retort:



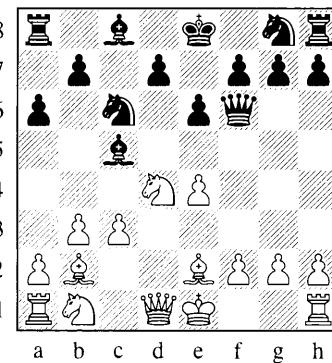
10...exd4!N 11.cxd4 Qh5! A chief point is 12.Qc3?! cxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxh3!!↑.

5.d4 cxd4 6.Qxd4 We6

Leading to an open type of game where White can hardly hope to fight for the advantage, in view of the clumsy placement of his pieces.

7.c3 Qc5 8.Qe2

8.Wd3 Qge7 9.Qd2 0–0 10.g3?! d5 11.Qg2 Qd7↑ was already better for Black in Degraeve – P. Schlosser, Haguenau 2013.



8... $\mathbb{Q}ge7!$

8... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 11. g3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 was Gelashvili – Homa, Philadelphia 2012, and now 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#N$ gxf6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h5\bar{x}$ gives White more than enough compensation for the pawn; the black king will find it hard to obtain safe shelter on either side of the board.

9.0–0 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d5 11. exd5 exd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}ac2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\bar{c}$

Black had an excellent position in Gallegos – Potkin, Internet 2004.

B1) 5.g3

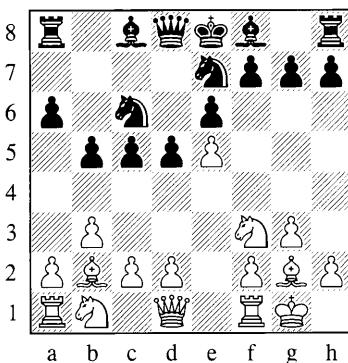
This attempt at a double fianchetto should probably be answered by:

5...d5!?

Black sharpens up the game.

6.exd5

6.e5 $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ (6... $\mathbb{Q}h6\?!$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8.0–0 0–0 9. d3 b5 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\bar{f}$ is even more elastic)
7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ b5 8.0–0 (8. a4?! b4 \bar{f})

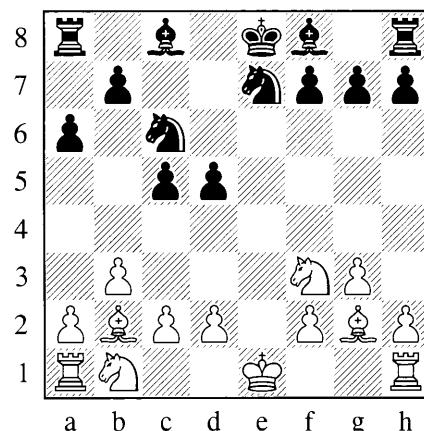


8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 9. d3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. c4 dxc4 11. dxc4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ This was rather preferable for Black in Fernandez Romero – Nisipeanu, Gibraltar 2011.

6... exd5 7. $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$

8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 0–0–0 11. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$, as played in Liou – Chandra, Paracin 2014, looks a bit cooperative from White's point of view. Why should he leave his king in the centre, jeopardizing the coordination of his pieces? Black should have now played the rather obvious 12... f6N \bar{f} , keeping all the pluses of his position and ensuring himself of the slightly better chances.

8... $\mathbb{Q}gxe7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 11. 0–0! f6

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8\?!$ 12. d3 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. d4 g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g4 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ cxd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. c3 $\mathbb{Q}bc6\bar{c}$ was also at least equal for Black in Elez – Damljanovic, Novi Sad 2014, although the famous Serbian GM lost in the end.

12. d4 $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe1\#$!

13. dxc5! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ 0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ leaves Black with only a trifling edge.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 15. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5\#$

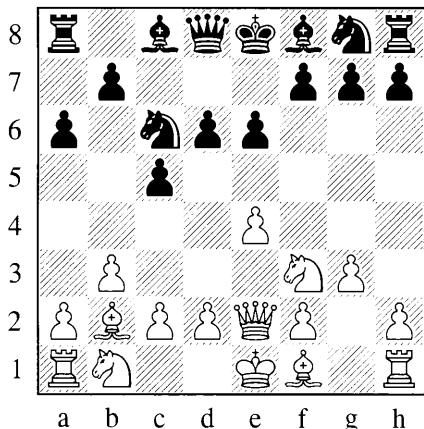
Black had the advantage in Bissieres – Guichard, Condom 2010, due to the weakness of the pawn on a2, and went on to win.

B2) 5.♗e2 d6!?

Black embraces the idea of closing the centre by ...e5 now that the queen is not particularly well placed on e2.

6.g3

6.d4 looks premature after: 6...cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♘xd4 8.♘xd4 ♗f6 9.♘d2 (9.c4 d5! 10.exd5 ♖b4† 11.♘c3 ♖b6∞ gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn) 9...e5 10.♗b2 ♗e7 11.g3 In Antipov – Illescas Cordoba, Linares 2014, Black should have continued with 11...♗e6!N 12.♗g2 ♖c8 13.c4 b5→.

**6...e5!?** 7.♗g2 g6 8.0–0

8.♘a3 ♗g7 9.♘c4 b5 10.♗e3 happened in Anurag – Lopez Martinez, Barbera del Valles 2013, and here Black could have even considered 10...♘f6N→, keeping the e-file clear for his rook, perhaps with a subsequent idea of ...d5 or even ...♗d4.

8...♗g7 9.c3 ♗ge7 10.h3

10.♗d1 0–0 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♗g4 13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♗bd2 ♖c8 15.♖ac1 ♖xc1 16.♖xc1 ♖a5→

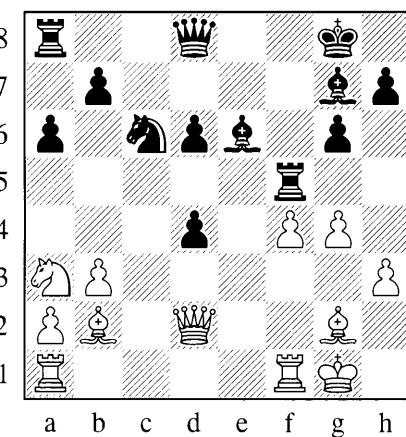
10...0–0 11.d4!? exd4 12.cxd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.♗d2! ♗c6 15.♘a3 ♗e6 16.f4 f5

It was worth considering: 16...d5!? 17.e5!

(17.f5 dxе4 18.fxe6 f5∞) 17...♗c8 18.♗c2 (18.g4 ♖b6 19.f5 ♗xe5 20.fxe6 fxе6 21.♗h1 d3† is better for Black as the a3-knight is in a state of near paralysis) 18...d3 19.♗e1 ♖b6† 20.♗h2 ♗b4 21.♗xd3 ♗c2 22.♗ac1 ♗e3 23.♗fe1 ♗xg2 24.♗xg2 d4∞

17.exf5 ♖xf5 18.g4

So far we have followed Klima – Michalek, Czech Republic 2003, and here Black should have played:

**18...♖c5!N∞**

The position is complicated, but Black's chances are not worse. The point of keeping the rook active on the fifth rank is that it may even jump to c3 at some point.

19.b4!? ♖c3 20.f5 gx f5 21.gxf5 ♗f7 22.f6 ♖xf6 23.♗f4 ♗g7 24.♗ad1 ♗e5!?

25.♗xd4 ♖ac8

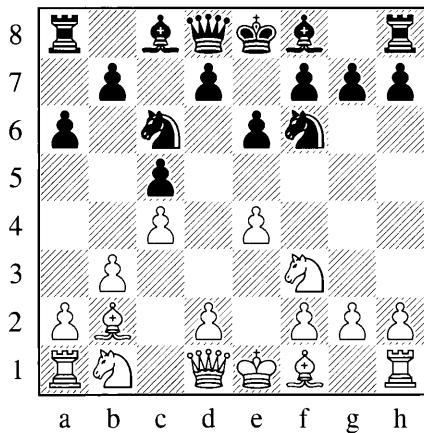
Resulting in a very unclear game.

B3) 5.c4

This is considered to be best: White makes the advance ...d5 more difficult to carry out and prepares d2-d4 according to circumstance.

5...♗f6!

Tempting the e-pawn forwards is the best way here, as Black is prepared for its advance.



6.e5 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗h6

Now Black is ready to undermine White's centre, so the first player must choose his next developing moves carefully.

8.♘c3

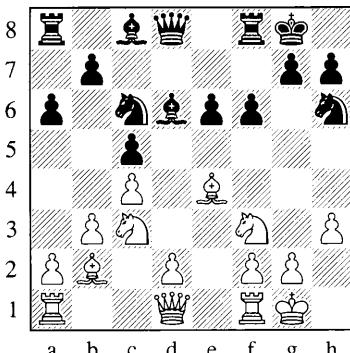
8.♗d3

This offers no advantage after the accurate:
8...d6 9.exd6 f6!

Preparing to recapture harmoniously on d6 with the bishop.

10.0–0 ♘xd6 11.♗e4 0–0 12.♘c3

This is preferable to: 12.d4?! cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♜e5 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.f4 ♘d6 16.♘c3 c5 17.♘c2 ♜c7= Black had the freer game with excellent piece play in Antipov – M. Petrosyan, Moscow 2012.



12...♗e5! 13.♘a4 ♘xf3† 14.♗xf3 ♜b8 15.♗e3
15.d4 cxd4 16.♘xd4 b5=

15...♗c7!

15...f5 16.♗f3 f4!? 17.♗e2 ♘f5∞ is the computer preference, but is not to my liking.
16.d4 ♘f4 17.♗e2 cxd4 18.♘xd4 b5 19.cxb5
axb5 20.♘c5 f5 21.♗f3 e5 22.♗d5† ♜h8
23.♗e3 ♘xe3 24.♗xe3 f4!=

A wild position arises where Black has powerful counterplay, as his knight is coming to d4.

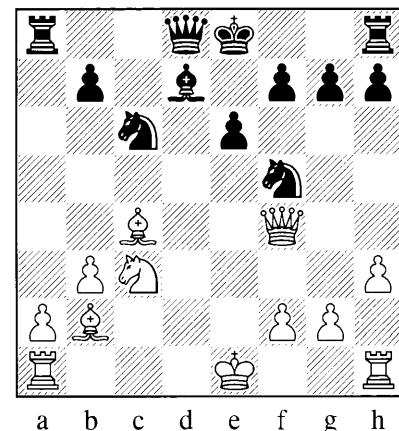
8...d6 9.exd6 ♘xd6! 10.d4!?

10.♘e4 0–0=

10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘d7 12.♘db5! axb5

13.♗xd6 bxc6 14.♘xc4 ♘f5 15.♗f4!

15.♗d2 ♘e5 16.♗e2 ♘c6 17.♗xd8† ♘xd8
18.0–0 ♘d2 looks dangerous for White,
although I'm not sure Black has more than a
draw.



15...e5 16.♗d2 0–0 17.0–0 ♘fd4 18.♗e2
♘e6=

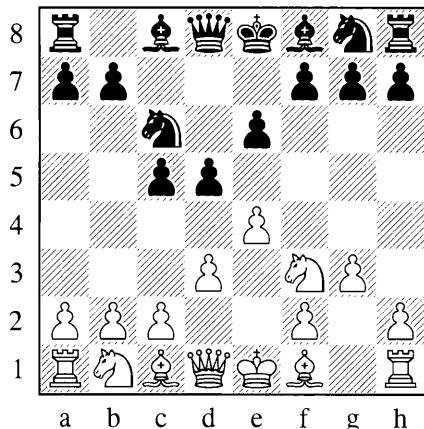
After the exchange of light-squared bishops there is nothing for White to boast about, so the position should just be level.

C) 3.d3

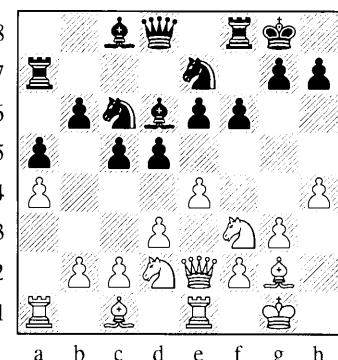
After this move White will almost certainly fianchetto his king's bishop, reaching a King's Indian Attack set-up.

3...Qc6 4.g3 d5

Our tabiya for this line. Black has gained central space and waits for White's next move before configuring his pieces accordingly.

**5.We2**

Recently this move has superseded the older 5.Qbd2, after which a good set-up for Black is the one I employed against Dzhumaev several years ago: 5...Qd6! 6.Qg2 Qge7 7.0–0 0–0 8.We2 a5! 9.a4 b6 With counterplay always looming on the a6-f1 diagonal Black should be fine. 10.h4 f6! 11.Qe1 Wa7! Another excellent move, which I really liked during the game.



12.c3 Qb8 13.d4 cxd4 14.Qxd4 Qxd4 15.cxd4 Qc6 16.exd5 exd5= 17.Qf1 Qh8 18.Qd1 Qb4 19.Qa3 Qd7 20.Qf3 Qd6 21.Qf4 Wb8 22.Qxd6 Wxd6 23.Qe3 Qe6 24.Qc3 Qa2 25.Qc2 Qb4 26.Qcc1 Qa2 27.Qa1 Qb4 28.Qac1 Qa2

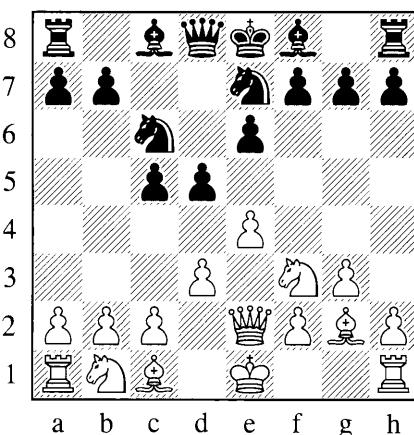
29.Qc2 Qb4 30.Qcc1 ½–½ Dzhumaev – Kotronias, Mumbai 2003. Throughout the latter part of the game I had the feeling that I was slightly better, and perhaps it was really so, but I couldn't prove it in the end.

Let us now return to 5.We2, a move that prevents the above set-up.

5...Qge7

A logical and popular reply. I do not like formations involving the move 5...Qf6, as I believe they offer White too many attacking chances.

White's most popular move by far is **C1) 6.Qg2**, but **C2) 6.c3** makes a lot of sense too.

C1) 6.Qg2

White allows the following forcing sequence:

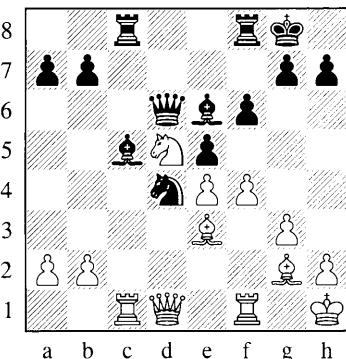
6...dxe4 7.dxe4 Qd4 8.Qxd4 cxd4

I believe that Black has fully equalized.

9.e5!!

9.0–0 e5! is fine for Black, as was shown by the following game: 10.c3 (10.f4 Qc6 11.Qd2 h5! 12.fxe5 h4 looks quite dangerous for White) 10...Qc6 11.cxd4 Qxd4 12.Wd1 Qc5 13.Qc3 0–0 14.Qd5 Qe6 15.Qe3 Qc8

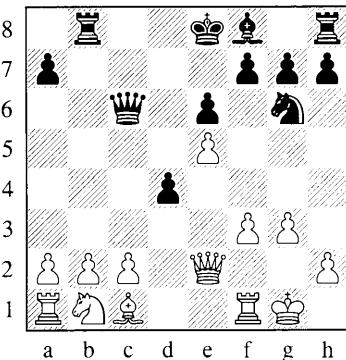
16. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17. $f4$ $f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ In Kazhgaleyev – Andersson, France 2002, most accurate was:



18... $a5N$ 19. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $fxe5$ $fxe5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}h5$
 $\mathbb{Q}b3=$

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.0-0

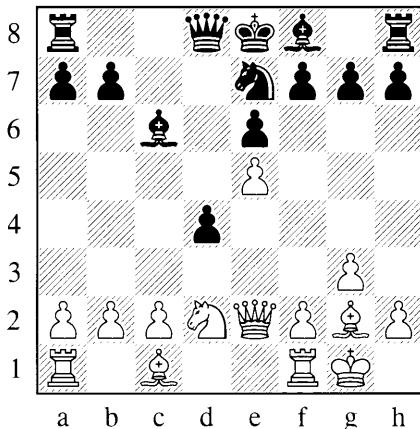
10. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d5$
13. 0-0 happened in Vescovi – Morovic, Sao Paulo 2004, and here Psakhis' recommendation of 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{W}xc6=\mathbb{B}$ looks quite adequate for Black.
A possible follow-up is:



17. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{B}d8!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}d5$ 19. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $cxsd4$
 $\mathbb{B}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}b6\uparrow$)
21... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$
24. $\mathbb{W}f2$ 0-0 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 27. $\mathbb{B}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $h6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 30. $b3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$
31. $\mathbb{B}d6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 32. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $a5=$

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2!N$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\ddagger?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e4?!$ $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{B}d8$ 14. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $g5!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 17. $f4$
occurred in Morozhevich – Shchukin, Novgorod 1997, and now 17... $\mathbb{W}xe4N$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}d5$
19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $h5\mp$ would have simply been strong for Black.

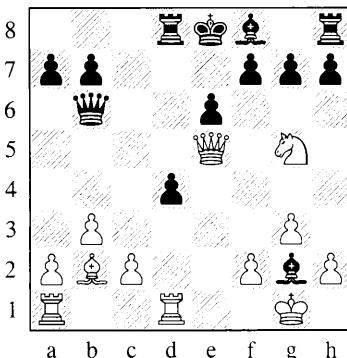


11... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This seems to be the most testing, though Black has good counterplay in all lines:

Black has a good game after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\ddagger$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e4$ 0-0=, as the pressure against e5 and b2 makes it difficult for White to attack.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ leads to an equal ending after some complications: 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (13. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\mp$) 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $b3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{B}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe5$



17... $\mathbb{W}c6$! Intending ...h6 among others, so White must act. 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h1!$ (18...h6?? now loses to 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6!+$) 19.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc6\uparrow$ bxc6 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ 24.c3 (24. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\infty$ is an unclear ending, as Black can quickly mobilize his f- and e-pawns.) 24... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25.b4 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 29.a4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3=$

12... $\text{N}f5!$ 13. Qd1 Qc5

Black is bound to lose his d-pawn, but he gets good compensation for it:

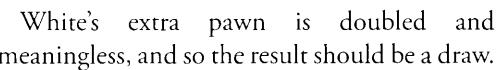
14.c3

14.a3 ♜b6! 15.c4 (15.c3 ♜d5! 16.♘xd4 ♜xd4 17.cxd4 0-0=) 15...♜a4! 16.♗d3 ♜xc4 17.b3 ♜xc1† 18.♗xc1 ♜b5 19.♘d2 ♜xd3 20.♗xd3 0-0= is just equal.

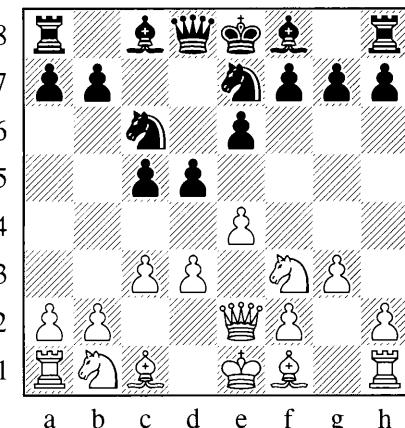
14...0-0! 15.♘xd4

15.g4 ♜xf3! 16.♗xf3 ♜h4 17.♗xb7 ♜b6! 18.♗e4 dxc3 19.bxc3 f5 20.exf6 ♜xf6 21.♗e3 ♜xe3 22.♗xe3 ♜f3† 23.♗xf3 ♜xe3 24.fxe3 ♜xf3 25.♗d3 ♜b8∞ offers White nothing.

Nor does 15.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b6\infty$ offer White anything, as control of d5 outweighs the pawn minus.



C2) 6.c3



Morozevich, Bologan and Fedorov like to include this move in White's set-up, and with good reason.

6...d4?

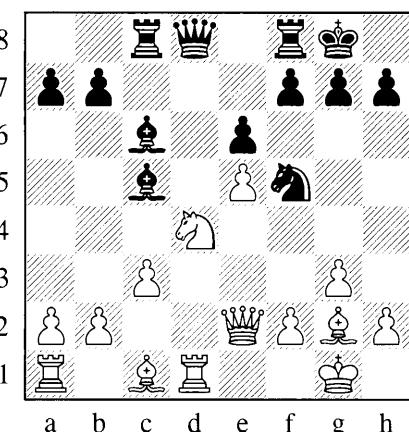
I like this reaction by Pavel Tregubov, showing an excellent understanding of the King's Indian structure that has arisen. The white queen is not so well placed on e2 if Black can play ...e5, so this is what he should be aiming for, even at the expense of a tempo.

7.cxd4

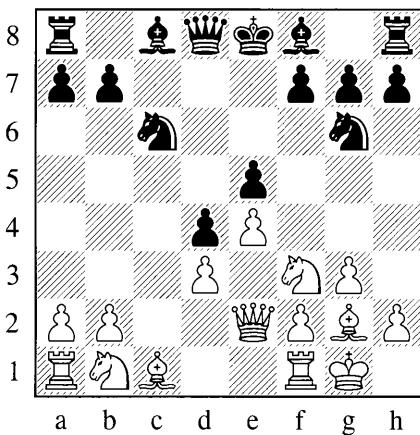
The safest response.

7.e5?! is of course critical, but after 7...dxc3 8.bxc3 (8...xc3?! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.0-0 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b6?? was better for Black in Fedorov – Tregubov, Jurmala 2015) 8...b6 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$? Black has few reasons to worry, as ...b5 will give him counterplay. For example: 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 13.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}af1$ h6 If anyone is better, it is Black.

7...cxd4 8.♗g2 ♔g6 9.0-0 e5



Black has achieved his aim of playing ...e5, and has even prevented the attacking gesture $\mathbb{Q}h4$ followed by f2-f4.



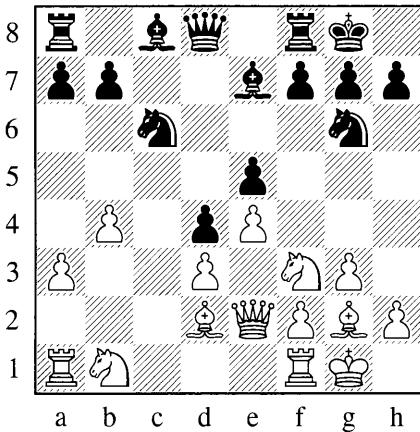
10.a3

10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ h5!? 11. h4 $\mathbb{Q}e7\rightleftharpoons$ looks okay for Black. That said, the position is by no means clear.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. b4 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$??!

This queenside play is overambitious. White cannot have everything, especially from such a slow opening.

12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ b5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 15. $bxa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ was probably more to the point, although even then Black has an easy game.



12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!!N

Preparing ...a5.

The inferior 12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2=$ gave White the necessary time to complete development and equalize the chances in Bologan – Tregubov, Konya 2012.

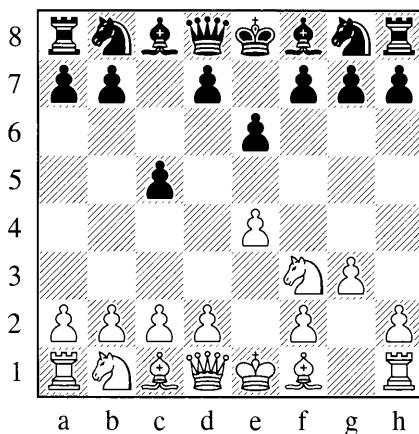
13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$ a5 \rightleftarrows

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. h4 $\mathbb{Q}fc8\uparrow$

Black's queenside initiative gives him the lion's share of the chances.

D) 3.g3



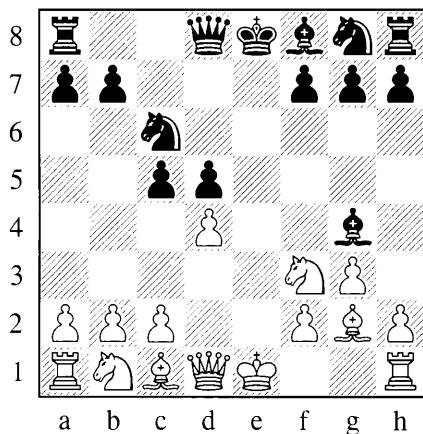
This is one of the most popular Anti-Sicilians against 2...e6. White will most usually opt for a King's Indian Attack set-up, but does not abolish the possibility of d2-d4 under certain conditions.

3...d5?!

In my view this is the most sensible move here, leading to an open struggle. Black will soon have an isolated queen's pawn, but he obtains excellent activity in return.

4. $exd5$ $exd5$ 5. d4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

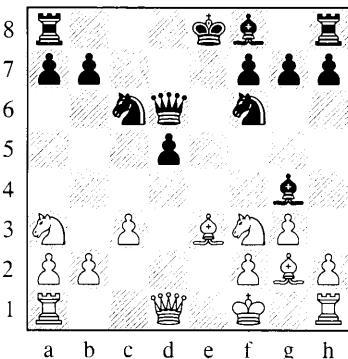
One of several strong choices, putting the enemy d-pawn under immediate pressure.



7.0–0

Considered best.

7.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}e7\text{!}$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 9.c3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ was the continuation in Hasangatin – Vorobiov, Krasnodar 2002, and at this point I like:



11... $\mathbb{W}d7\text{!N}\rightleftharpoons$ Seizing more light squares and preparing to deploy the bishop actively on d6. I believe that Black is at least equal in this case.

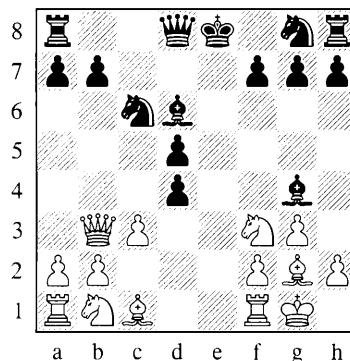
7.c3 cxd4 8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$

This has been played on a few occasions, with the verdict being one of complete equality.

9. $\mathbb{W}b3$

9.h3? $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ 11. $\mathbb{E}d1$

(11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\infty$ is in no way worse for Black as the extra pawn on d4 obstructs several attacking ideas.) 11... $\mathbb{E}c8\text{!N}$ I like this developing move quite a lot. (In Tkachiev – Nunn, Hastings 1997, the inferior 11...dxc3 was played, which nevertheless kept Black within the drawing zone.) 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d3 \Rightarrow Reaching a position where I would prefer to be Black.



9... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\text{?!$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7=$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6=$

A draw was the eventual outcome in Rozentalis – Christiansen, Groningen 1992.

7...cxd4

White will now need some time to regain the pawn, which Black hopes he can exploit in order to catch up in development and equalize the chances.

8.h3

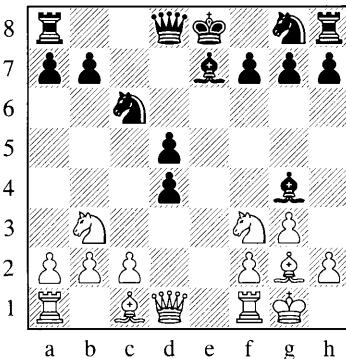
The most direct method.

8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

This does not pose Black any serious problems either.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7\text{?}$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

In case of 9.h3 Black may of course play 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5\infty$, but another important continuation is: 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$? 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 0-0!=) 12...0-0 13.c3 (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$ 17. c3 a5=) 13... $\mathbb{E}e8!$ 14. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xe7=$ The black knight is headed towards d6 and I can't see any edge for White.



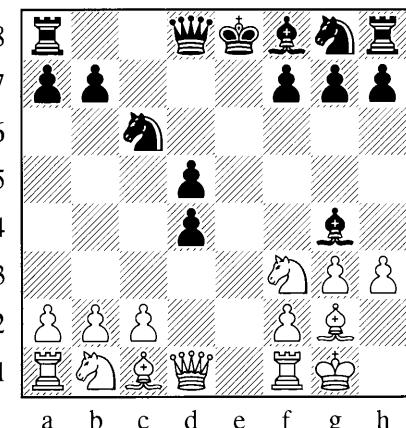
9... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$! 10. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}ge7$

Black has delayed the recovery of the pawn, which should be enough to guarantee eventual equality.

12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$

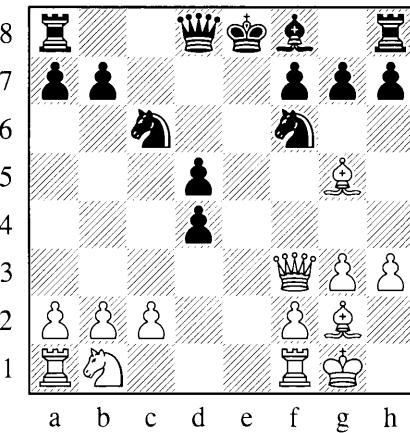
16... $\mathbb{E}ad1$ b6= is no improvement.

16... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ h5=



8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

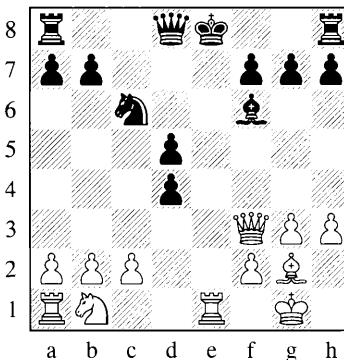
Without this move White would be worse.



10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

12. $\mathbb{E}e1\ddagger$

This intermediate check is best answered with the untested:



12... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ N

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ d3
15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $dxc2$ 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ 0-0 17. $\mathbb{E}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. a4± left Black tied up in Morozevich – Vitiugov, Eilat 2012.

13. $\mathbb{W}b3!$?

Taking the pawn now by 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ runs into 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}c8=$ and Black equalizes.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g6 14. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$ is not problematic for Black either.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

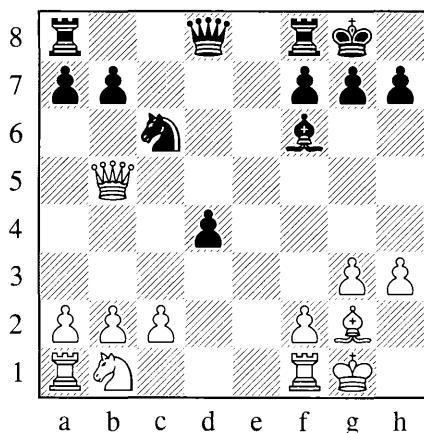
Only now is this played, guarding the important d5-pawn for the time being, so as to complete development by ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. I see no advantage for White in that case, with one possible continuation being:
 14.c3 g6! 15.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4=$

12...0–0

White has regained the pawn but Black has castled, so the status quo remains intact.

13. $\mathbb{W}b5$

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ would be similar.



13... $\mathbb{E}c8!N$

The unnatural 13... $\mathbb{E}b8?$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a6 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ b5 17.b4!± left Black a little worse in Chernobay – Bukavshin, Russia 2014.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

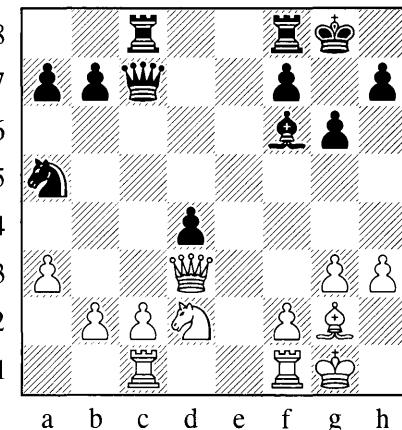
14. $\mathbb{W}xb7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}a5=$

14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ g6

The position is approximately balanced.

16.a3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ac1$

17.b4 $\mathbb{W}xc2!$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b3! \rightleftharpoons$



17... $\mathbb{E}fe8$

17... $\mathbb{Q}g7=$

18.b4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$

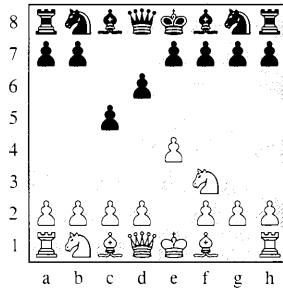
White's weaknesses along the c-file outweigh his light-square preponderance.

Conclusion

If I was called upon to name the systems that worried me most in this chapter, I would reply that they are probably the ones associated with 3.g3 and 3.b3. There are several strong grandmasters at the absolute top (such as Carlsen, Morozevich and Adams) who use these systems from time to time as surprise weapons with White, and I believe this means something. However, I also believe that I have offered a comprehensive coverage of the best lines for Black in these openings, and I am confident they will offer you good positions with sufficient chances to play for a win.

~~Chapter~~
21

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



2...d6

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2...d6

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1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6

Of course the majority of Sicilian players are fond of 2...d6, and this comes as no surprise, as it offers the most fighting chances. Its additional merit is that deviations from 3.d4 (apart from 3.♗b5† ♘c6 which transposes to the Rossolimo) seem to lack bite.

We will examine A) 3.♗c4 and B) 3.c3.

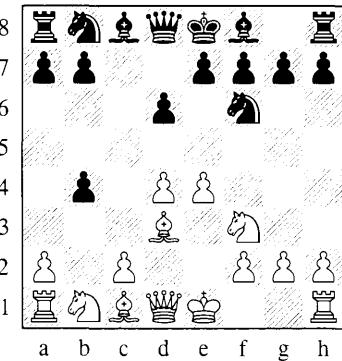
I guess the reader is probably fed up with the various Wing Gambits or similar ideas this book has covered, and to be honest so am I. However, for the sake of completeness I feel obliged to offer a little guidance as to how to meet it here:

3.b4?! cxb4 4.d4

After 4.a3 ♘f6! 5.♗b5† (5.axb4 ♘xe4 6.♗e2 e5!?) 5...♗d7 6.♗xd7† ♘bx d7 7.♗e2 a5! 8.0–0 e6 9.d4 ♗e7 10.c4 0–0 11.e5 dxe5 12.dxe5 ♘e8 13.♗d1 ♘c7 14.♗d4 ♘a6! 15.axb4 axb4 16.♗d2 ♘ac5 17.♗xa8 ♗xa8 18.♗xb4 ♗a1 19.♗b2 ♗a8† White had recovered his pawn, only to discover that he was strategically worse in the ending in Lynn

– Noble, corr. 2013.

4...♗f6 5.♗d3



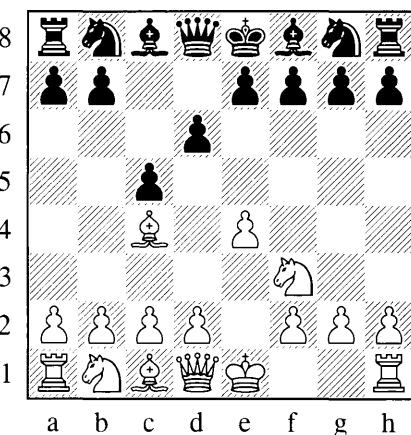
5...g6! 6.♗bd2 a5 7.0–0 ♗g7 8.♗e1 0–0 9.♗b2 d5! 10.e5 ♗h5 11.♗f1

11.g3 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♘c6 is also much worse for White.

11...♗f4=

White was clearly struggling in Meehan – Pessoa, corr. 2011.

3.g3 is another version of the King's Indian Attack, but Black has more flexibility when ...e6 has not been played. Several moves are possible, depending on your personal repertoire and what might happen if White switches plans with d2-d4. One reliable option is: 3...♘c6 4.♗g2 g6 (If the Dragon transposition bothers you, you can consider 4...e5!? 5.c3 [5.0–0 g6 followed by ...♗g7 reaches Black's desired set-up] 5...g6 6.d4 when Black can choose between 6...cx d4 7.cxd4 ♗g4 and 6...exd4!? 7.cxd4 ♗g4, both of which lead to interesting and virtually unexplored territory.) 5.0–0 (5.d4 cx d4 6.♗xd4 followed by ♘c3 is a Fianchetto Dragon. This is theoretically fine for us, but beyond the scope of this work; Gawain Jones provides excellent coverage for Black in his second Dragon volume.) 5...♗g7 6.d3 (6.c3 can be met by 6...e5) 6...e5 7.c3 ♗ge7 8.a3 0–0 We have transposed to the 2...♘c6 3.g3 KIA, as covered on page 396.

A) 3.♗c4

Preparing to castle. As in several other Anti-Sicilians, White plans c2-c3 and d2-d4, but Black's next forces him to curb his ambitions for the time being.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. d3 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. c3

5. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ gives us an extra option in 5... $\mathbb{Q}a5$, but I am not such a big fan of the position arising after 6. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$. Therefore I suggest that we continue with the 'routine' 5... e6 6. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$, which should transpose to our main lines.

5... e6

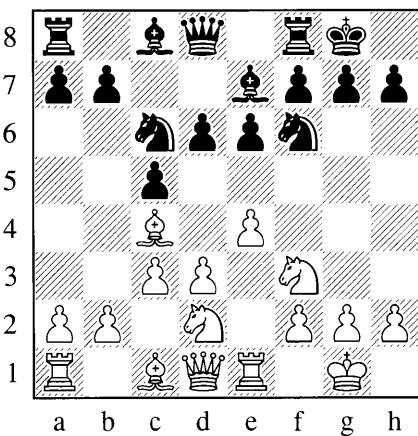
White's main options are A1) 6.0–0 and A2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$.

A1) 6.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This will most probably transpose to variation A2, unless White chooses the following formation:

7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

One clear-cut solution is:

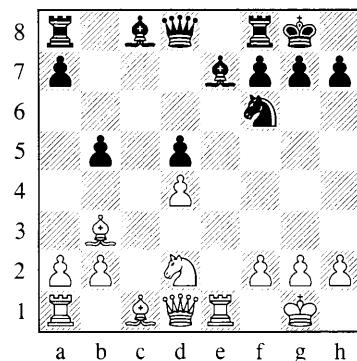
8... d5?! 9. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b5!

Gaining space on the queenside and preparing to open lines for counterplay. White has then the following choice:

10. e5

This looks like the most natural response to me, and has been played by both Leko and Vallejo. It is White's turn to gain space on the kingside, hoping to create attacking chances there.

Alexei Shirov has been rather pessimistic about Black's chances after the alternative 10. exd5? exd5 11. d4!, considering White to have a slight edge, but in my view the position remains in perfect balance. For example: 11... cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! (12. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ is slightly worse for White as the d4-pawn is rather weak) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. cxd4

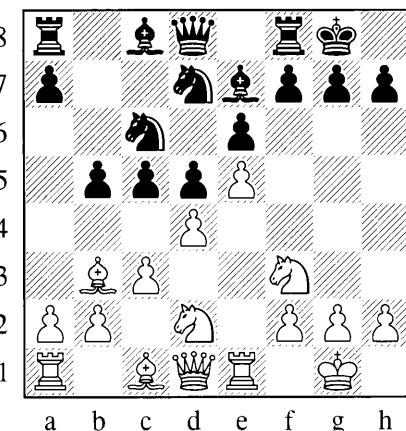


13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! (also interesting is 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$? 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$ Black is in no way worse.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. d4!

White has reached his desired formation, but this is only the beginning of the story.

The alternative 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$? d4! leads to a position where the b3-bishop is likely to become a spectator.



11...Qa6!

11...b4 is less exact because of 12.Qa4!.

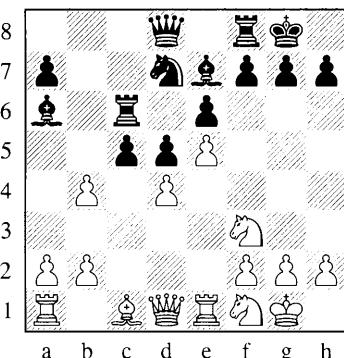
12.Qf1 b4!

Black is in time to create counterplay by opening up the a6-f1 diagonal.

13.Qc2

Inexact is 13.Qe3?! bxc3 14.bxc3 cxd4 15.cxd4 Qb4!= when the threatened invasion on d3 gives White serious headaches.

13.Qa4!? was Vallejo's preference, designed to slow down Black's queenside counterplay. 13...Bc8 14.Qxc6 Bxc6 15.cxb4

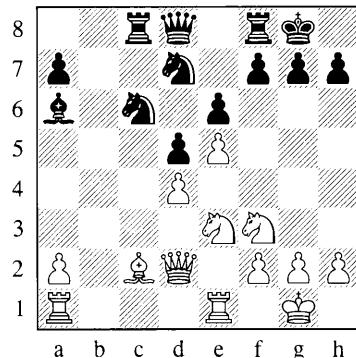


15...Qxf1!?(15...cxb4N 16.Qg3∞ is considered unclear by Shirov) 16.Qxf1 cxb4 17.Qe3 Wa5 18.g3 Bfc8 19.Qe1 Bb5 (19...Qb6?N 20.b3 Qa8∞, with the idea of ...Qc7-b5-c3, was another Shirov recommendation) 20.h4 a5 21.b3 This was Vallejo Pons – Shirov, Linares 2002, and here Alexei considers that 21...f6!N 22.exf6 Qxf6 23.Qd3 Qd6= would have given him an equal position. In my opinion Black is a tad better, but obviously White has his chances too.

13...bxc3 14.bxc3 Bc8 15.a3!

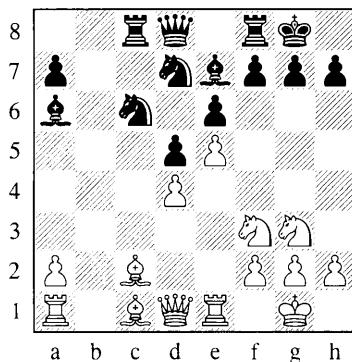
Leko's choice; I think this is critical, to keep the black pieces out of b4.

For example, after 15.Qe3 Black has: 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 Qb4! 17.Qd2 Qxd2 18.Qxd2



18...Wa5! 19.Qd1 h6 20.Qg4 Qb4 21.Qb1 Wa3! 22.Qd2 Qd3 The advantage is clearly on Black's side. 23.Qxh6† does not work in view of 23...gxh6 24.Qxh6 Qc1!! 25.Qh5 Qf4= and the black queen comes to f5, putting an end to White's attack.

With the above variation in mind, White may essay the alternative attacking deployment with a knight on g3, but the knight is rather less effective there as it lacks access to g4. For instance: 15.Qg3 cxd4 16.cxd4



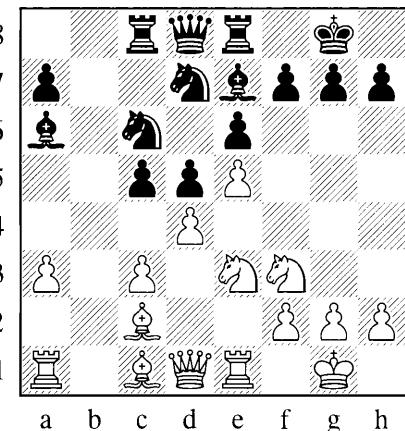
16...Bc8! (16...Qb4?! 17.Qb1 Qc7?! is not good due to 18.Qg5→) 17.Qh5 Qf8≠ With his kingside relatively safe, Black may now focus on his queenside endeavours.

15...Bc8

15...Qxf1 16.Qxf1 Be8 17.Qd3 Qf8 18.Qe3 Wa5= does not look bad either, and is perhaps better from a practical point of view,

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

as an important attacking piece of White's is eliminated.

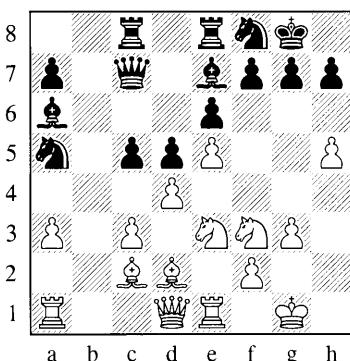
16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8!N$

I think that Black is completely safe after this.

Instead, 16...cxd4 17.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b5?!$ 18.g3! $\mathbb{W}a5$ 19.h4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}ec8$ 22.h5! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{B}xb1$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xb1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ illustrated perfectly what White is aiming for in Leko – Gelfand, Tilburg 1996, and here 26.h6!N→ would have given the Hungarian GM a dangerous attack.

17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

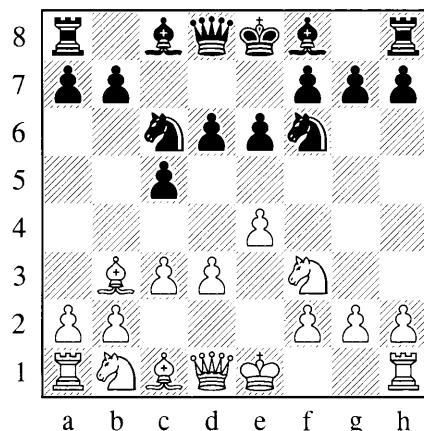
Leko's idea of 17.g3 is best answered by: 17... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (18.h4? cxd4 19.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$) 18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19.h4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20.h5



20...cxd4! 21.cxd4 h6! It is not clear how White continues the attack, as $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is impossible for the time being, and Black is ready to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and recapture with the d-pawn in reply to $\mathbb{Q}xc4$. (Originally my idea was the immediate 21... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ dxc4? but then 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ seems to give White some pressure.)

17... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 18.g3 $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ 20. $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a6\rightleftharpoons$

Already the positional threat ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is on the cards, causing discomfort to the first player.

A2) 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 

White will have to play this move sooner or later, to make sure he preserves this bishop and avoids being hit by ...d5.

6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 7.0-0 0-0

An important tabiya. White would like to set up the formation with pawns on e4 and d4, and has a choice of two main methods to prepare this: A21) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ or A22) 8. $\mathbb{B}e1$.

A21) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$

This move looks a bit artificial to me, but is nevertheless acceptable.

8... $b5!?$ 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 a5! 11.e5!

11. $\mathbb{W}xb5?$ would be a blunder in view of 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$ or 11... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xc6 \mathbb{Q}xf1$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}a6\mp.$

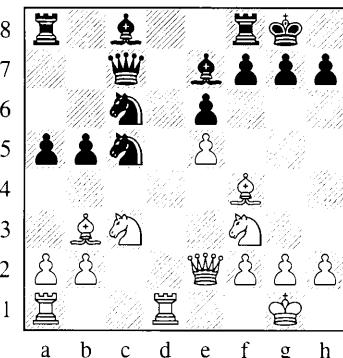
11...dxe5 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$

This is considered best by Tiviakov and Bauer. The threat is $\mathbb{W}e4$.

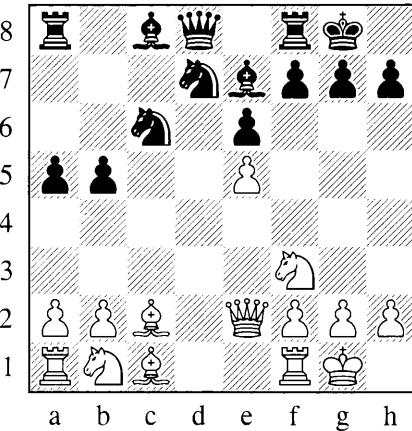
Alternatively, 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{W}b8!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7 \mathbb{W}xb5!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5 \mathbb{Q}xb5\mp$ leads to an ending where Black's space on the queenside guarantees him a slight pull.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b4! 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e4$ (16. $\mathbb{W}e3!?$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{W}b6=$) 16...g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e4 \mathbb{Q}d5!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc4 \mathbb{Q}ad8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$ was equal in McShane – Tiviakov, Gibraltar 2003.

Finally, 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is most accurately met by the immediate:



15... $\mathbb{Q}a6!N$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xb3!?$ 16. axb3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$ allowed the white knight to settle on d6 in Sedlak – Kutuzovic, Zadar 2003, after which White went on to win smoothly.) I see nothing better for White than: 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe4 \mathbb{Q}b4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a4 21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}xc2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc2 \mathbb{Q}b7=$



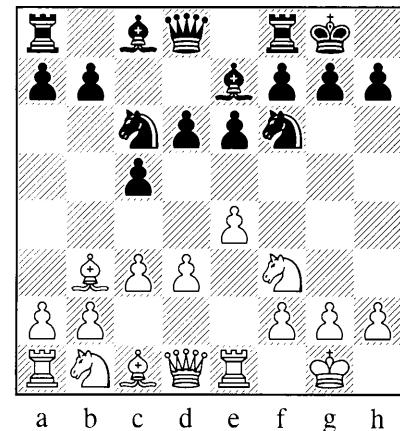
13... $\mathbb{W}c7!?$ N

Given by Tiviakov in his ChessBase annotations on his game versus McShane. This, by the way, bears Bauer's seal of approval in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}dx5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}ac8\rightleftharpoons$

The final position is excellent for Black, while Bauer's 18... $\mathbb{Q}fd8\infty$ is also good; keeping the a8-rook supporting the precious a5-pawn, perhaps with the aim of advancing it in order to cramp White's queenside.

A22) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



This natural rook move is favoured by most players.

8...b5

I decided that this move is objectively better than immediately advancing in the centre. Black starts his usual queenside expansion while keeping a flexible central stance, and might throw in ...d5 later on if the circumstances justify it.

Practice has shown that 8...d5 9.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10.d4 b5 yields a position that is more pleasant for White after the accurate 11.a3!± (instead, 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$! is, as we already know, fine for Black, as ...b4 will give him counterplay). Unfortunately, 11...b4?! is hardly good, as White replies 12.axb4 cxb4 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ a5 16.c4→ with an excellent attacking position.

9.d4

The standard reply.

9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ d5! 10.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.d4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$!→ gets us back to what we want.

9.a3 is a cunning waiting move that has been tried by Malakhov amongst others, but I think the untested 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$?! gives Black satisfactory play by exploiting White's failure to advance his d-pawn directly. The main point lies in 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxe5 11.a4 c4!∞ when an unclear position is reached, offering rich play to both sides.

9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

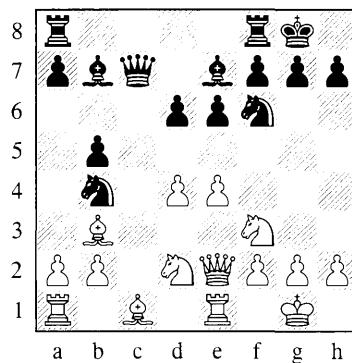
I think this is a logical move here, putting e4 under pressure.

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$!?

The choice of GM Ulibin is probably the only White continuation to pose a few problems.

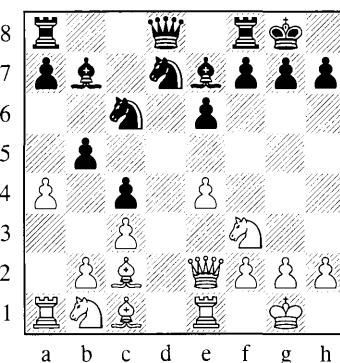
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$? looks like a blunder in view of 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$!N.

Harmless for Black is 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ cxd4! 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$! and White's light-square weaknesses come to the fore. 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$



13.d5!N (13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$? a5↑ was abandoned as a draw at this point in Bauer – Inkiov, Montpellier 2014, but Black already enjoys some initiative and could have played on; 13. $\mathbb{W}xb5$? a5↑ is dangerous for White, as his queen is exposed and the d3-square vulnerable to invasion.) 13...exd5 14.exd5 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}bx d5$ White has some compensation for the pawn and should be able to draw, but obviously the onus is on him.

Finally, 10.dxc5 dxc5 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c4 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.a4 is probably best met by:



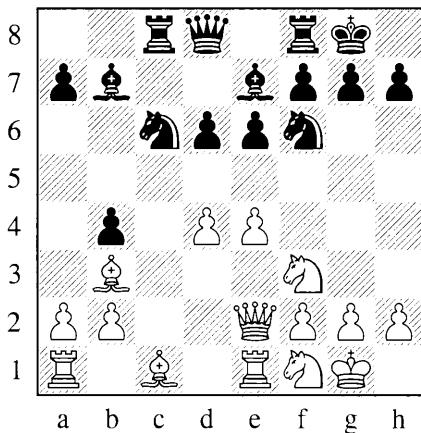
13...b4!N (13...a6 happened in Zagema – Dvoirys, Leeuwarden 1994, but here I don't like 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$!N $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$! for Black.) 14. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ∞ Black's compensation for the pawn looks quite sufficient.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 b4!? 12.♗bd2 ♜c8

Black has gained space and made the b3-bishop feel a bit uncomfortable.

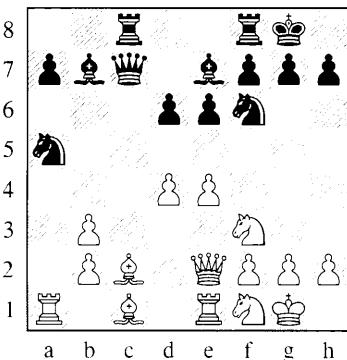
13.♗f1!

13.♖c2 ♜b6 14.♗b3 a5↑



13...d5!?N

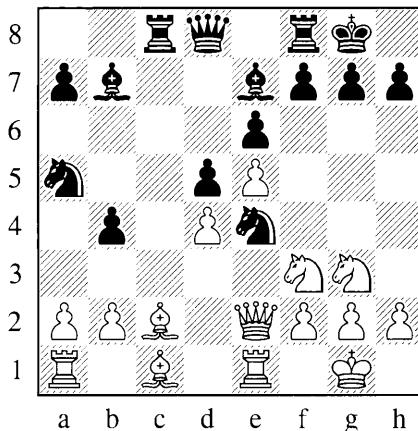
I believe this is superior to: 13...♗a5 14.♖c2 b3!? 15.axb3 ♜c7



16.d5!N (16.♗g5 ♜xc2 17.♕xa5= was level in Ulibin – Oparin, Trieste 2013.) 16...♜xc2 17.♕xc2 ♜xc2 18.♕xa5 ♜d8 19.♕a4! (19.♕xa7 ♜b6 20.♗e3 ♜xa7 21.♗xc2 ♜c8 22.♗e3 ♜xc2 23.♗xa7 ♜xb2=) 19...exd5 20.♗e3 ♜c7 21.exd5± White enjoys a little pressure.

14.e5 ♜e4 15.♗g3 ♜a5!? 16.♗c2

16.♗e3 ♜c4∞



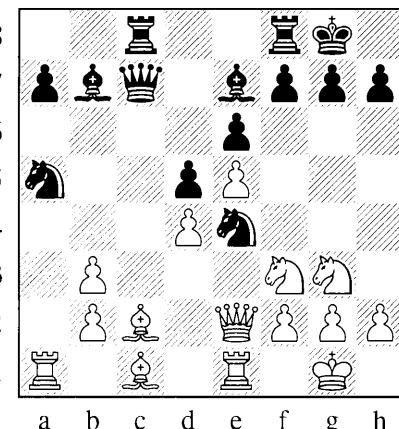
16...b3 17.axb3

In case of 17.♗b1 bxa2 18.♕xa2 ♜b3 19.♗f4 ♜b6 20.♗xe4 dxe4 21.♗xe4 a5∞ the misplaced rook on a2 means that Black has good compensation for his pawn.

17.♗xb3 ♜xb3 18.axb3 ♜b6 19.♗e3 ♜xb3 is about equal.

17...♜c7

Initiating a forced sequence and bailing out to a drawn ending.



18.♗d1 ♜b4 19.♗f1 ♜b6 20.♗c2 ♜c6
21.♗e1 ♜xe1 22.♗xe1 ♜xc2 23.♗xa5 ♜xg3
24.♗xc2 ♜xc2 25.hxg3 ♜fc8 26.♗e3 ♜xb2
27.♗xa7 ♜xb3=

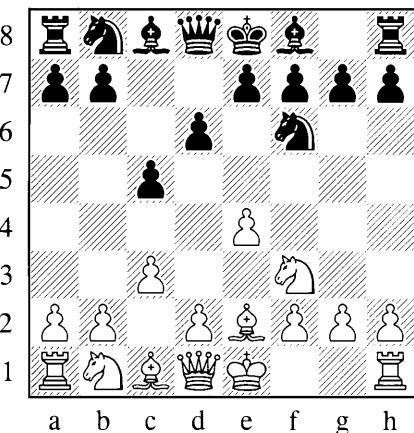
2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ **B) 3.c3**

A natural move, dictated by the desire to build a broad pawn centre.

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

While this move does not immediately threaten the e4-pawn (as its capture would be met by $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow$), it helps prevent d2-d4, as then the e4-pawn really would be en prise. White has four main possibilities: **B1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$,** **B2) 4. h3,** **B3) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and B4) 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.**

4.e5 dxe5 5. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ e6 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 7.d4 a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is given as equal by Georgiev and Kolev in *The Sharpest Sicilian*, and it is difficult to argue with their assessment.

B1) 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 

Intending 0–0 followed by $\mathbb{Q}e1$, $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and d2-d4. However, Black can disrupt this idea by threatening to take on e4.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d7\text{?}$

This looks like a healthy way of attacking the e4-pawn.

Slower means include 4...g6 and 4... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, while quite risky is 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5.d4! cxd4 6.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 7.d5 $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9.bxc3 with

a position where White obtains dangerous compensation in return for the pawn.

5. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White insists on his d2-d4 idea.

5.d3 g6

This leads to a balanced game, as White's central play has been slowed down.

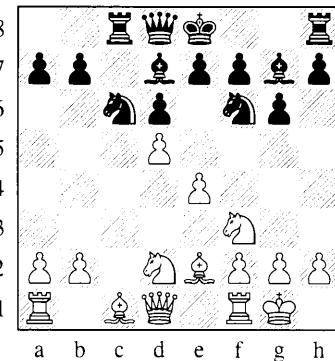
6.0–0

6.e5 dxe5 7. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ happened in Novikov – So, Moscow 2011, and here I recommend 11...exf6! N 12.0–0 0–0 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8\text{?}\rightleftharpoons$ intending ...f5 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, with an unclear game.

6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ e5! 9.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 10.a3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e7\rightleftharpoons$ is also unclear.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\text{?}$ 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$! 10.d5!?

10.a3N 0–0= was preferable.



10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 11.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ bxa6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$

Black was slightly for choice in Cvek – Polzin, Austria 2008, although the game eventually ended in a draw.

5... $\mathbb{W}c7\text{!}$

Black insists in preventing the formation of an enemy pawn duo in the centre. After this accurate move I consider the game to be approximately balanced.

6.0–0 g6 7.d4

7.d3 ♜g7 8.♘a3 0–0 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗xf6? 11.♗d2 f5 12.♗fe1 ♜c6 13.♗ad1 ♗ad8 14.♗c2 ♜e7† was a bit better for Black in Soltau – Lehikoinen, corr. 2004.

7...cx d4 8.♗xd4 ♜c6 9.♗e3 ♜xd4?

10.♗xd4 e5! 11.♗e3 d5 12.♗d2 ♗g7=

Black had comfortably equalized in Giri – Wang Hao, Beijing 2012.

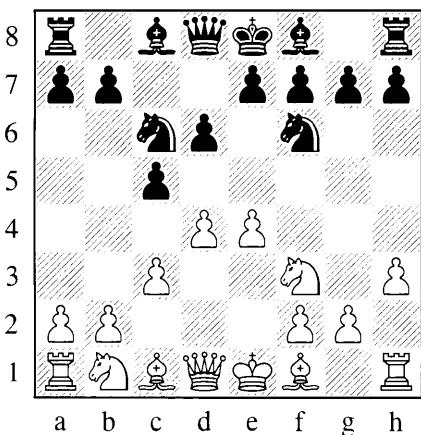
B2) 4.h3

A popular move, intending ♘d3-c2 followed by d2-d4.

4...♗c6

The time invested in 4.h3 allows Black to bring his knight out, as now the gambit with 5.d4 is quite harmless.

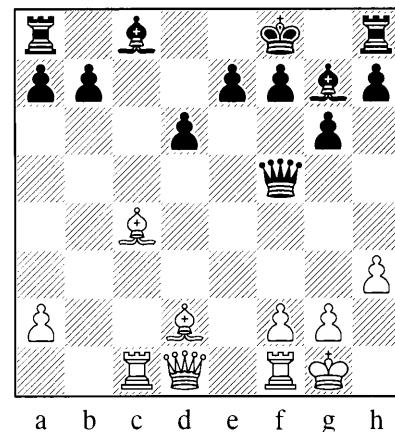
Of course we need to know how to react to **B21) 5.d4**, but more common is **B22) 5.♗d3**.

B21) 5.d4

This might be not so bad, but clearly White will struggle to prove full compensation. Let us follow an instructive correspondence game:

5...cx d4 6.cxd4 ♜xe4 7.d5 ♜a5† 8.♗c3 ♜xc3 9.bxc3 ♜e5 10.♗xe5 ♜xc3† 11.♗d2

♗xe5† 12.♗e2 g6 13.0–0 ♗g7 14.♗b5† ♗f8 15.♗c1 ♜xd5 16.♗c4 ♜f5

**17.♗e1!N**

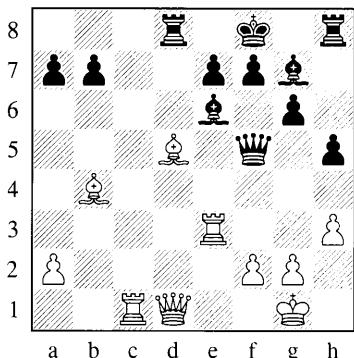
This is given as relatively best by Bauer in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*.

Returning to our correspondence game, the slip 17.♗b3?! made things difficult for White. After 17...h6 18.g4 ♜f6 19.♗d5 ♗g8 20.♗c7 e6 21.♗xb7 ♗xb7 22.♗xb7 ♗f8 23.♗b1 a5! 24.♗g2 (24.♗xa5 h5!–+) 24...d5 25.♗a7 g5 26.♗xa5 h5 27.♗a4 ♗g6 28.♗b3 d4 29.♗c5 ♗e4† 30.♗g1 ♜e2 31.♗a5 e5† Black had a rock-like fortress and was taking over the attack in Stefanov – Adelseck, corr. 2008.

17...h5 18.♗e3 ♜d7

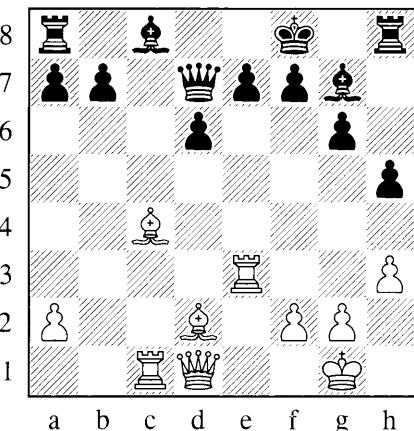
Bauer considers White to have insufficient compensation, although in my view White is probably not worse.

For this reason I started to investigate the alternative 18...d5?!, but here too White seems to hold after the stunning: 19.♗b4! ♗e6 20.♗xd5!! ♗d8 (Equality arises from 20...♗xd5 21.♗xe7† ♗g8 22.♗c5=; while 20...♗xd5? 21.♗d3 ♜xd3 22.♗xd3 ♗g8 23.♗c7 ♗h7 24.♗xe7 ♗hd8 25.♗e2 ♗ac8∞ could well be Black's best chance to play for a win, but objectively he is not better.)

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

21. $\mathbb{Q}e4!! \mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ $\mathbb{W}e8$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ h4 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ The black rook is kept out of the game and the a7-pawn is vulnerable, two facts rendering the position drawish.

Let us now see why White is no worse after 18... $\mathbb{W}d7$:



19. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$

Bauer failed to spot this move.

He instead looked only at 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $exf6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d5 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $dxc4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ when Black should be able to press for ages.

The idea of 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ is to allow White make use of the c-file in some lines. One likely continuation is:

19... $d5$

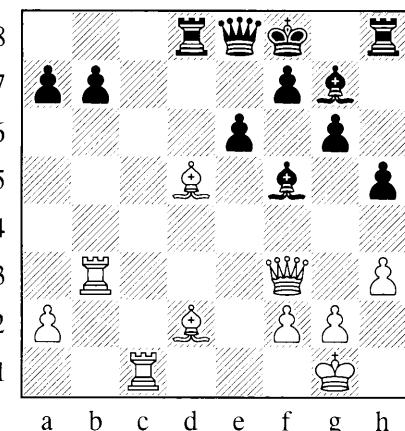
19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$! $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $exf6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e1$! $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}cc7$ d5 25. $\mathbb{W}a5$! $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$ displays one major point behind White's 19th.

20. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

20... $e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!=$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f3!$ e6

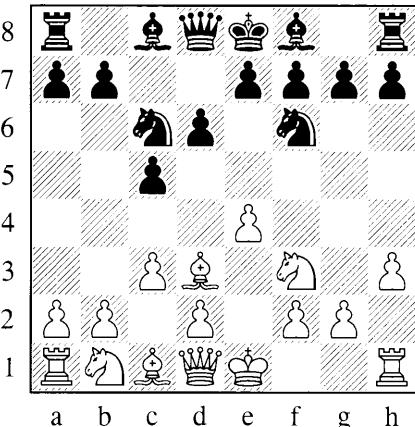
23... $b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$



24. $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ e5 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$

Black is still a pawn up, but White's activity is so great that it amounts to excellent drawing chances.

B22) 5. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



The standard continuation.

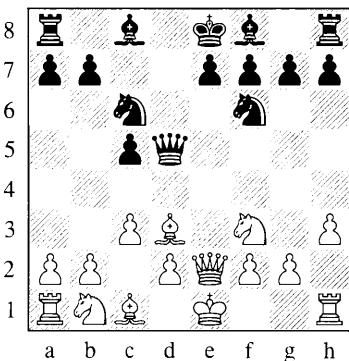
5...d5!

Striking at the centre before White has time to organize himself.

6.e5

Obviously the critical choice.

6.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ is the alternative, hoping to untangle by $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and d2-d4. It is for this reason that I recommend:



7... $\mathbb{W}e6$! Forcing queens off, and taking the sting out of a potential White initiative in a typical middlegame IQP position. The following correspondence game ended in rather easy equality for Black: 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10.0–0 a6= is fairly even too) 9...e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12.d4 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ dxc3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ cxb2 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ gxf6 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\#$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Comes Dumoulin – Boehme, corr. 2010. In the final position Black is a pawn up, but his worse pawn structure gives White sufficient compensation to draw.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The pressure on e5 forces White to make an immediate decision about the future of his e-pawn, and as it turns out every move has its drawbacks.

7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

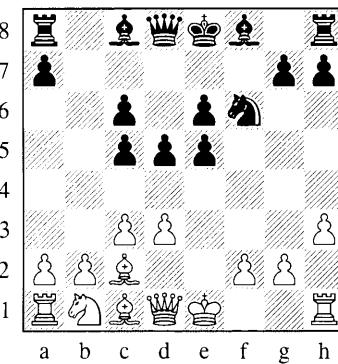
This is considered by Bauer as the main continuation.

7.e6?

This gives Black a pawn for no reason at all.

7...fxe6 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 11.d3 e6 is also worse for White despite Black's peculiar pawn structure, which I think deserves a diagram:

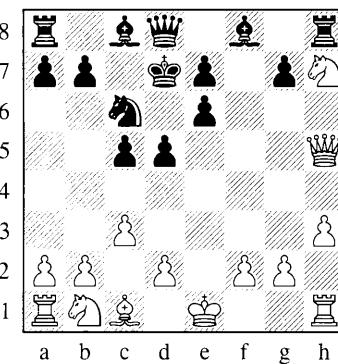


8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is pointless for White, as taking on h7 will leave him badly pinned.

9... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$

Recovering the pawn in this way rebounds badly on the first player due to:



11...b6!

Black has a huge initiative, for example:

12.0–0

12.d4 $\mathbb{Q}a6\bar{=}$ is no improvement.

12. $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{t}$ exf6 13. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ won White an exchange in Quillan – Ward, Oakham 1990, but he was left with awful light-square weaknesses and an unsafe king.

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{t}$ exf6 15. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h4?$

16.d4 cxd4 $\bar{=}$ is depressing too, but was probably a better practical chance.

16... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6+$

White, apparently disgusted with his position, resigned in Gonzalez – Vera, Las Tunas 1996.

7. $\mathbb{W}e2$

This is a better move than 7.e6?, but compared to 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ it gives Black the extra option of:

7...c4!? 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

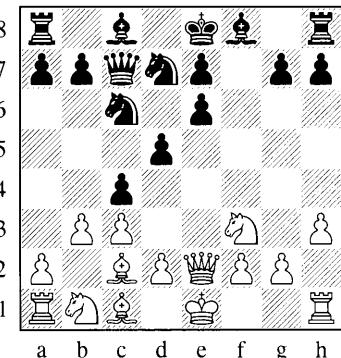
Piling up on the e5-pawn.

9.e6!

9. $\mathbb{Q}a4?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\bar{t}$

9...fxe6 10.b3!

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5\bar{?}$ gave Black the advantage after 10... $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\bar{t}$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3 13. $\mathbb{W}h5\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g6$ e5 \bar{t} in Kural – Sukhorukov, corr. 2007.

10... $\mathbb{Q}de5\bar{?}$

Also tenable is 10...b5, which led to a complex struggle after 11.d4 (11.d3?) 11...e5!

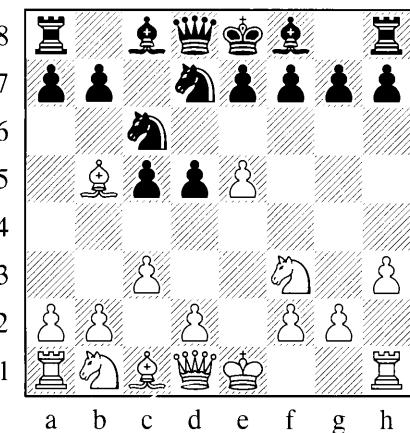
12. dxe5 e6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14.0–0 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ a5! 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}f7\infty$ in Pichot – Perez Ponsa, Saenz Pena 2014.

11. bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\bar{t}$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}e5\bar{t}$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$

13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\bar{t}$ 14. fxe3 dxc4 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g6 ∞

13... $\mathbb{W}xe2\bar{t}$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ g6 ∞

The position is unclear, as both sides have deficiencies in their pawn structure.



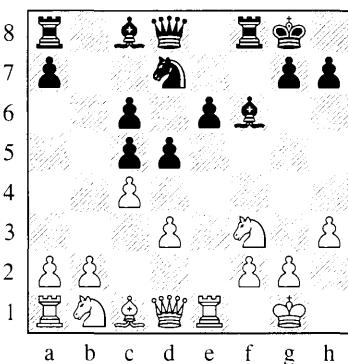
7...e6!

Bauer considers the move 7... $\mathbb{W}b6$ as more critical, but I don't like queen sorties in this type of position. The main reason is that after $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ Black should recapture with the queen to justify his play (if he takes back with the pawn White will never play d2-d4, but rather go for c3-c4). However, I now feel we have lost too much time, and I cannot see an appropriate arrangement for the black pieces – with the c8-bishop being a particular problem. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that the text is natural and best, opting for a French structure without loss of time.

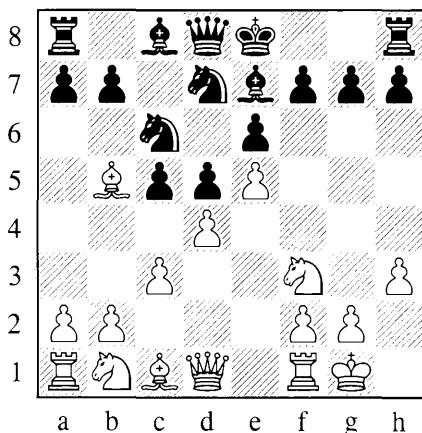
8.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.d4

Thus, after several adventures, White manages to obtain a proper pawn chain in the centre, but I think Black has decent chances in the ensuing struggle.

The untried 9.♗xc6 bxc6 \rightleftarrows does not impress for White, as he has played two useless moves in this type of formation, namely c2-c3 and h2-h3. One would expect the advantage to be on Black's side, but I haven't been able to find a clear way to it. One possible variation is: 10.d3 0–0 11.c4! f6? 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.♗e1 (13.♕e2 e5! 14.♗c3 ♗b6 15.♗xe5 ♕e8 16.f4 ♗a6 17.♕f3 dxc4 18.dxc4 ♗xc4 \mp)



13...dxc4? 14.dxc4 ♗e5 15.♗xe5 ♕xd1
16.♗xd1 ♗xe5 17.♗c3 (17.♗d2?! ♗a6 \mp)
17...♗a6 18.♗e3 ♕fb8= With complete equality.



9...♗b6?

Now that White has committed himself to d2-d4, this move acquires much more substance! The point is that taking on c6 can be answered by ...bxc6 and suddenly the

c8-bishop becomes a good piece, as the centre will almost certainly be opened up.

10.♗a4

This is what practically everyone plays. One chief point of Black's play is that the bishop cannot retreat to d3, as the d4-pawn would be hanging.

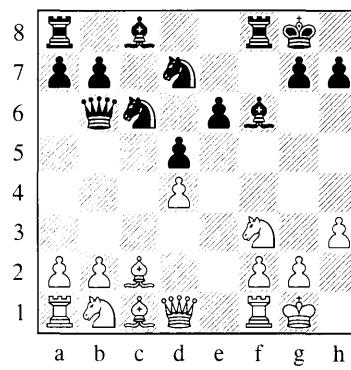
10...0–0 11.♕d3

A logical move, trying to set up a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal.

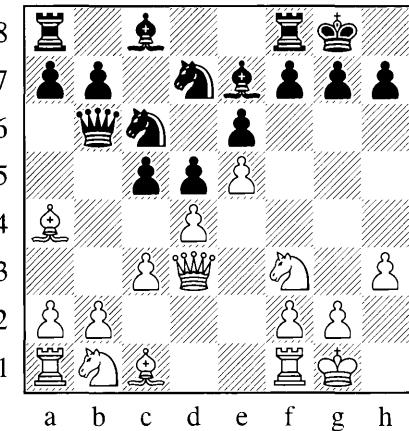
11.dxc5 is a typically Nimzowitschian move, trying to play for the d4- and e5-squares, but Black should be okay after: 11...♗c7? 12.b4 ♗dxe5 13.♗f4 ♗xf3† 14.♕xf3 e5 15.♗h2 ♗e6 \rightleftarrows

11.♗e1 f6 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.♗c2 ♗d7 14.a3 ♗ac8= was okay for Black in Siger – Ederer, corr. 2010.

Finally, 11.♗c2 cxd4 12.cxd4 f6 13.exf6 ♗xf6 was the continuation in Dimov – Simeonov, corr. 2011, and here best seems:



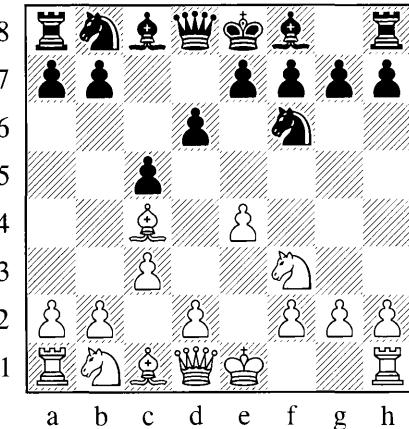
14.♗e3!N (14.♗d3 g6 15.♗d1 ♗g7 is at least equal for Black, with an exchange sac looming on f3.) 14...♗xb2 15.♗bd2 ♗a3 ∞ I am not sure if White's compensation for the pawn is sufficient.

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 11...f6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ g6

12...f5! was another possibility, but the text is clearer.

13. exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. dxс5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$?

Black had an excellent position in Scuderi – Bancevich, corr. 2010. He later lost the game, but the opening certainly cannot be blamed for that!

B3) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 

A spicier alternative. To be honest, I didn't know about the existence of this move until John Shaw brought it to my attention. White's idea to push his pawn to d4 in one go is fairly

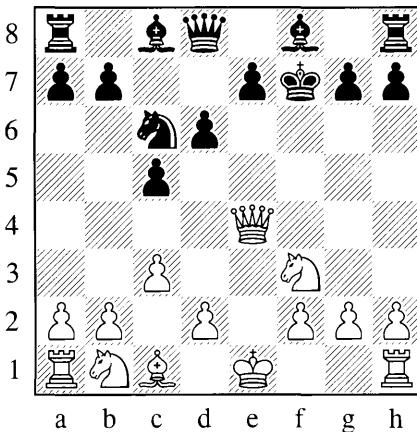
logical, but there is one slight problem with it: the e-pawn is hanging!

4... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

I rarely refuse to take a central pawn when given the chance, so I didn't have any doubts as to the best line here.

5. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 7. $\mathbb{W}xe4$

White has recovered his pawn and even deprived us of our castling rights, but a deeper look is sufficient to convince everyone that it is rather he who is fighting for equality. Black has the two bishops, and the light squares in the white camp are weak due to the presence of the pawn on c3. Still, Black has to coordinate his somewhat untidy position to have chances of an advantage, and one should not think this is a task that will be carried out automatically.



7...g6!?

A good move, and not too difficult to find. One bishop will be developed on f5 and the other on g7, in an attempt to control the centre and perform artificial castling.

White has played both B31) 8. d4 and B32) 8.0–0.

8.♕g5†

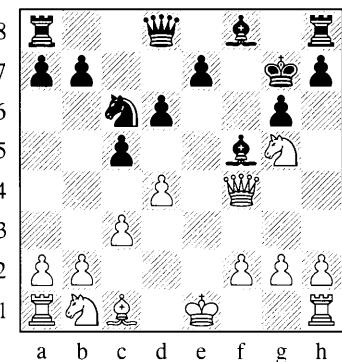
This looks a bit premature; White cannot attack with only two pieces.

8...♔g7 9.♕f4??

Better was 9.♕e6† ♔xe6 10.♕xe6 ♕e5 11.0–0 ♜c8 12.♗d5 ♜c6 13.♕xc6 ♗xc6† with an edge for Black.

9...♗f5 10.d4!?

This was Miladinovic – Juhasz, Senta 2009, when Black should have continued:



10...cxd4!N 11.cxd4 h6 12.♕xf5

12.♕f3? ♔b4--+

12...gxf5 13.♕e6† ♔f7 14.♕xd8† ♜xd8†

Black holds a large advantage, as the enemy d-pawn is about to fall.

8.♕c4†

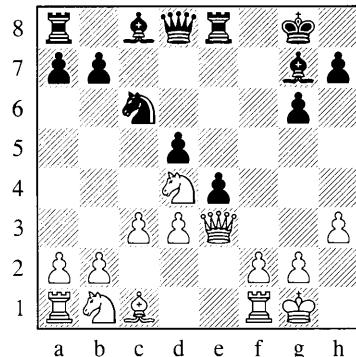
This can be answered with a dynamic pawn sacrifice:

8...d5! 9.♕xc5 e5

Black obtains control of the centre with gain of time. The following game confirmed the soundness of Black's position:

10.♕e3 e4 11.♗d4 ♜g7 12.0–0 ♜e8 13.d3 ♜g8 14.h3!

14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.d4 a5! gives Black powerful compensation, as the a8-rook can switch over to the kingside via a7 to participate in a potential attack.



14...♗xd4 15.cxd4 ♔f5 16.dxe4 ♔xe4 17.♕b3 ♜xd4 18.♗c3 ♜d3 19.♗xd5!

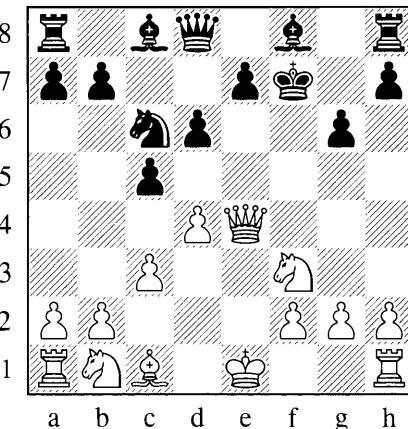
The players agreed a draw in An. Gupta – Mohanakrishnan, corr. 2012, in view of the following variation:

19...♗xf1 20.♗f6† ♔h8 21.♗xe8 ♜xg2=

22.♗xg2 ♜h4=

Black recovers his piece with an even game.

B31) 8.d4



This is the main alternative to castling, trying to control the centre and quickly free the c1-bishop for attacking purposes.

8...cxd4

White has the following choice:

9.cxd4

This looks most natural, even if the pawn is a bit weak on d4. On the bright side, the knight

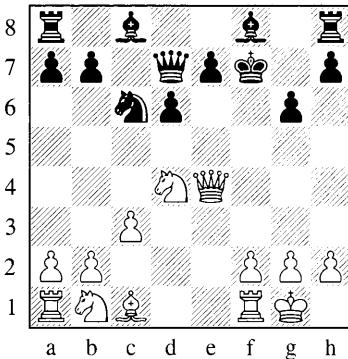
can now be developed on c3, and important squares in the centre are kept under control.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

If I were Black here, this would make me feel a lot happier, thinking, wow, no more checks on g5! A possible continuation is:

9... $\mathbb{W}d7?$ 10.0–0

As in Siger – Szencyz, corr. 2008. Here I like:



10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ N 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
13. $\mathbb{B}d1$ b6!

13... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. d5! is unclear. White intends to trade our good bishop with $\mathbb{Q}e3$ -d4.

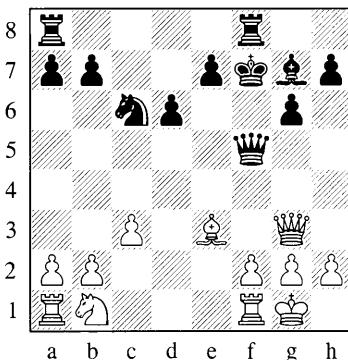
14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c4\#?$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}hc8\#$

15... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. d5 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}hc8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}g4\#?$

The second player is slightly for choice.

9. $\mathbb{W}f4\#$ should be answered by: 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$
10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ (10. cxd4 e5!) 10... $\mathbb{W}a5?$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. 0–0 $\mathbb{E}hf8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



14... $\mathbb{W}b5?$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$
17. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$
20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}f5$
23. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d7$ a6 25. $\mathbb{E}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5\#$ Tleptsok – Almeida, corr. 2010.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$

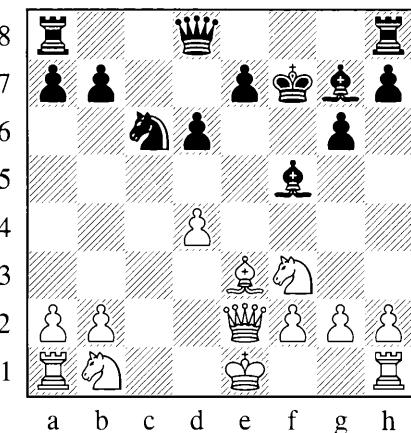
The right move.

10. $\mathbb{W}d5\#?$ is a pointless check that occurred in Rafailov – Kohlweyer, Albena 2013, and here simply 10... e6N 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ axb6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 15. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b5# would have led to a considerable endgame plus for Black.

10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$!

This did not impress me, as the bishop is a bit clumsy. I believe 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ would have maintained the equilibrium.

So far we have followed Froewis – Anders, Aigen 2004. At this point Black should have played the natural:



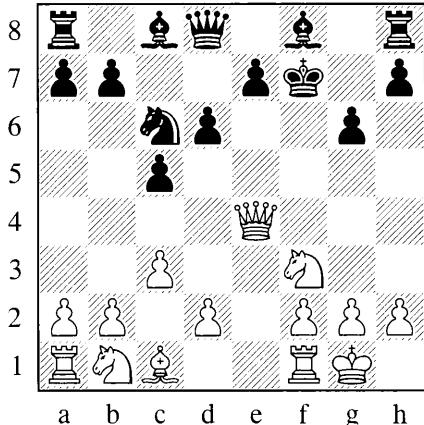
11... $\mathbb{E}f8!$ N 12. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 13. h3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
14. a3 $\mathbb{Q}e6\#?$

14... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$

Black has the more pleasant game. He is fighting successfully for the light squares and

has no weaknesses in his camp, while White lacks a constructive plan.

B32) 8.0–0



A logical choice, bringing the king to safety while keeping the possibility of checks on c4.

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

This developing move is quite natural.

Another possibility is 8...e5 9.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e3$ cxd4 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 13.fxe3! $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$, when White's extra pawn gave him a slight edge in Tleptsok – Wicklund Hansen, corr. 2009. Black failed to defend accurately in the remainder of the game and lost.

9. $\mathbb{Q}g5\text{?}$

One of the two annoying checks White has at this point.

9. $\mathbb{W}c4\text{?}$ e6

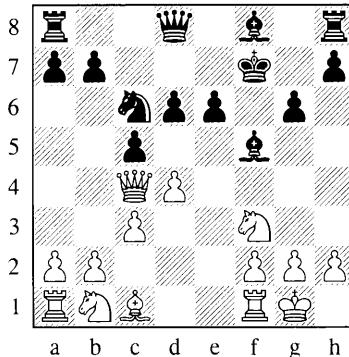
9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.d4±

10.d4

10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11.d4?! cxd4 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\text{?}$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe8\text{?}$

$\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 16.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ is at least equal for us.



10...d5 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ cxd4 12.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5\text{?}$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\text{?}$ lands White in a bad endgame as his queenside will be paralysed.

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

This was H. Andersson – Miras Garcia, corr. 2008. I would suggest:

14... $\mathbb{Q}f8N$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3\text{?}$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

Leading to a balanced game.

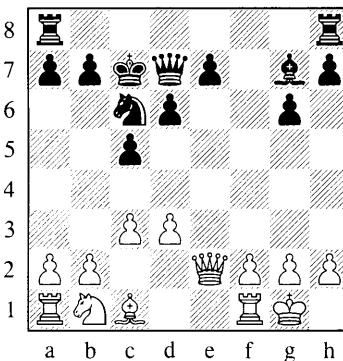
17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}e8\text{?}$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2\text{?}$ h5! wins the d4-pawn.

18... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8=$

Black has deployed his forces quite harmoniously, and I don't see a problem for him in the ensuing fight.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5\text{?}$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (11.g4 h6!?) is hardly problematic for Black) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 14.d3 $\mathbb{Q}c7\infty$



This led to unclear play in Muskewitz – Tscheuschner, Berlin 2014, and is perhaps

White's most interesting try. Having said that, I don't see anything wrong with our position and after ... $\mathbb{Q}af8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$. The black king feels safe enough to allow us proceed with play in the centre and on the kingside, with typical moves like ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and ... $h5$.

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

Peculiar, but not bad!

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $h6$

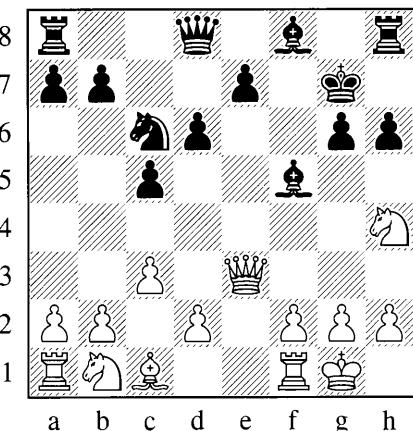
10...c4N also looks interesting.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7N$

11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ gxf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8\infty$ was Trani – Richard, corr. 1999, but I somehow feel the text is safer.

12. $\mathbb{Q}h4!$?

12.d4 cxd4 13.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ is a typical device to remember. Black conquers d5 with a slightly better game.



12...e5!?

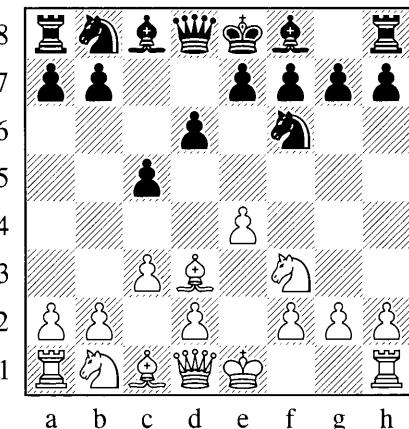
Why not? Giving up the bishop pair in return for a central pawn mass looks strategically justified here.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf5\#$ gxf5 ∞

This position certainly requires practical tests, but I don't believe Black is worse; his king

will be relatively safe on h7, and other pluses include an open g-file and a central pawn preponderance. A lively struggle is in prospect.

B4) 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



This is a straightforward attempt to develop the kingside and, at the same time, prepare the formation with pawns on d4 and e4 in the centre. It may look a bit clumsy, but its adoption by several strong players indicates that it is not entirely devoid of venom.

4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 5. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

5.0–0 will probably transpose, but playing in the manner of the text keeps the option of the typical Giuoco Piano manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}b1-d2-f1-e3(g3)$ before castling.

5.h3 d5 transposes to variation B22.

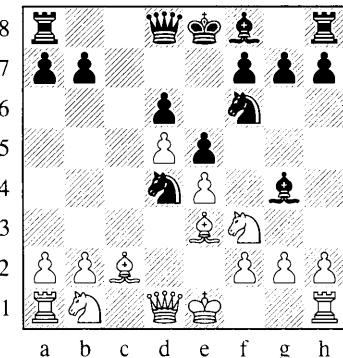
5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The most critical continuation, making the realization of d2-d4 difficult.

6.d3

This is what practically everyone plays.

6.d4 has been known to lead to a good game for Black since the early 1960s. 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 e5 8.d5 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



9... $\mathbb{Q}xc2\#!$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13.f3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14.0–0 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f1$ b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ f5↑
In Kozomara – Gligoric, Sarajevo 1961, the famous Serbian GM had the initiative and went on to win.

6.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 7.d3 will transpose to lines below.

6...e6

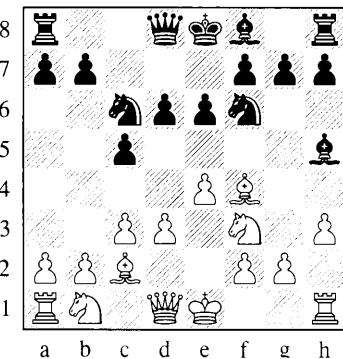
At this point White has **B41) 7.0–0** or **B42) 7. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$** .

7.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$

This will most probably transpose to lines featured below, unless White now tries to develop his queen's bishop:

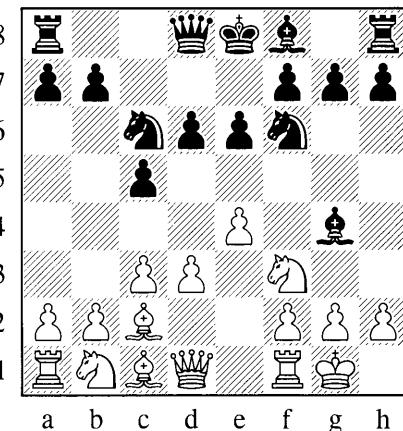
8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

8.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ dx e 4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14.dx e 4 0–0–0 15.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ was absolutely problem-free for Black in Bachmann – B. Smith, Freemont 2012.



8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 11.g4
11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}de5\#$
11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12.h4 f6
With chances for both sides.

B41) 7.0–0

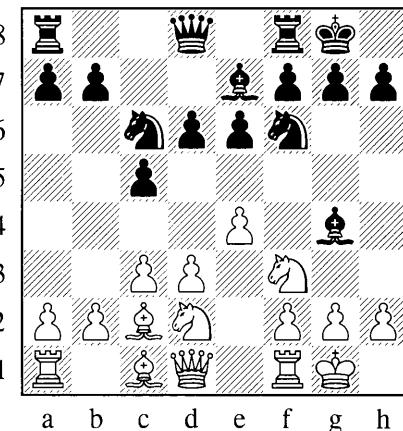


White abandons the idea of a quick $\mathbb{Q}b1$ -d2-f1 and concentrates on standard development.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ d5 is hardly inspiring for White. 9.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0–0 with the idea ... $\mathbb{W}c7$, and the e3-bishop is a weakness.

8...0–0



9. $\mathbb{B}e1$

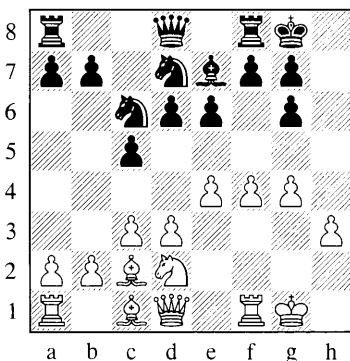
If White wants to chase and capture the enemy bishop it is preferable that he does it immediately:

9.h3 $\mathbb{B}h5$ 10.g4 $\mathbb{B}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$

It is better for White to still have his rook on f1 in this type of structure, although Black is still fine.

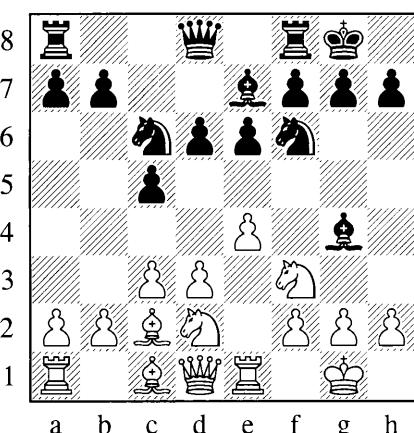
13.f4

13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ce5!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5\#$



13... $g5!$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $gxf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ff1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$

The resulting position is more than okay for Black, who intends a combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ and ... $d5$ with strong counterplay.



9... $\mathbb{B}h5!?$

Asking White what his next move is.

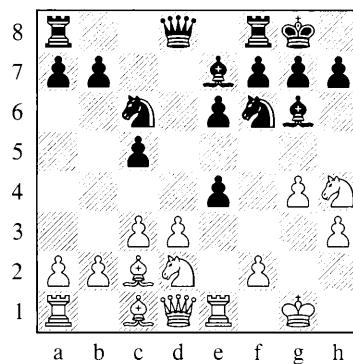
Alternatively:

9... $d5$ 10.h3

10. $\mathbb{W}e2?!$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{B}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$
13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{B}d6!?$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $fxg6!?$
16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ 21.a4 b6 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$
 $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ gave Black a nice edge in Akopian – Vasquez, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013.

10... $\mathbb{B}h5$ 11.g4 $\mathbb{B}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $dxe6$

12... $\mathbb{W}c7?!$ is also unclear.



13. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 14. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $g5!$
16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $h4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
19. $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $f4$ $gxf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

As played in Nevednichy – R. Dimitrov, Plovdiv 2014.

22... $\mathbb{W}b6?!$ N ∞

In the game Dimitrov placed his queen on c7, and even won eventually, but somehow I feel it does no harm to have c7 available for the bishop, as exchanges along the d-file look helpful for Black.

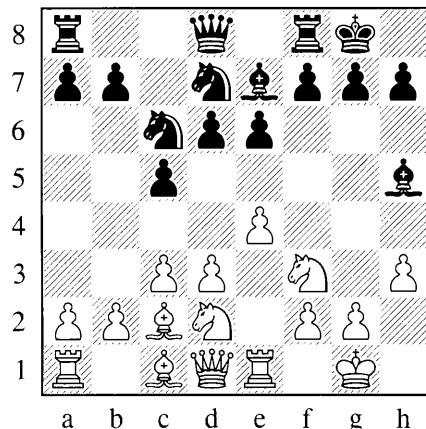
10.h3

10. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ is also possible. After 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ I see nothing better for White than 11.h3, transposing to the note to White's 11th move.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{B}g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (12.d4 $cxd4$ 13.cxd4 $\mathbb{E}c8\#$) 12... $b5!$ 13.d4 $\mathbb{Q}b6=$ shouldn't worry Black, as his queenside play is quite decent.

10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

An important juncture, with White having a choice between 11.g4 and 11. $\mathbb{Q}f1$.

**11.g4**

The great Vlastimil Hort has played this move, which in itself is a recommendation. Before transferring his knight to g3, White gains space and avoids exchanges.

11.Qf1

This should be answered by:

11...Qde5 12.g4

12.Qg3 Qxf3 13.gxf3 Qg6! 14.f4 Qh4 is fine for Black, who intends ...Qh8 followed by ...f5.

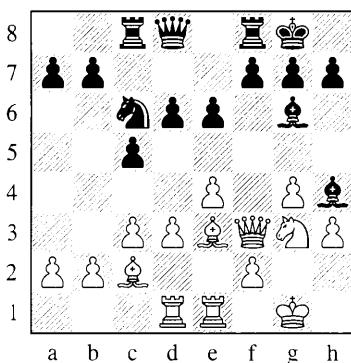
12...Qxf3† 13.Wxf3 Qg6 14.Qg3 Qh4!

15.Qe3 Qc8

Black has an excellent position.

16.Qad1

16.Wg2 Wd7 17.Qf1 Qh8 18.f4 f5† is also slightly better for Black.



16...c4?! 17.dxc4 Qe5 18.Wg2 Qxc4

19.Qc1 h6!†

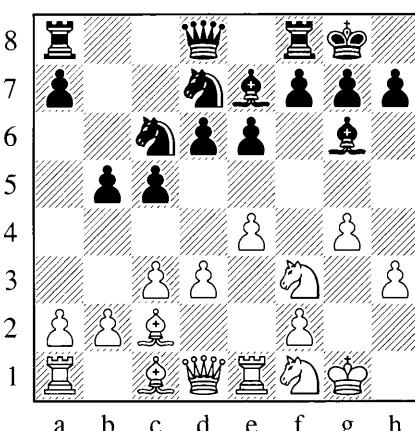
To stop Qg3-f5 ideas.

In Panajotov – Kr. Georgiev, Albena 2010, Krum was slightly better, but an error of judgement later allowed his opponent to turn the tables and win.

11...Qg6 12.Qf1 b5

Logical chess: Black gains space and a good square for his knight on b6.

The point of Hort's conception would be evident after 12...Qde5 13.Q3h2! Qh4?! 14.f4! Qxe1 15.Wxe1 f5 16.fxe5†, with complications that do not seem unfavourable for the first player.



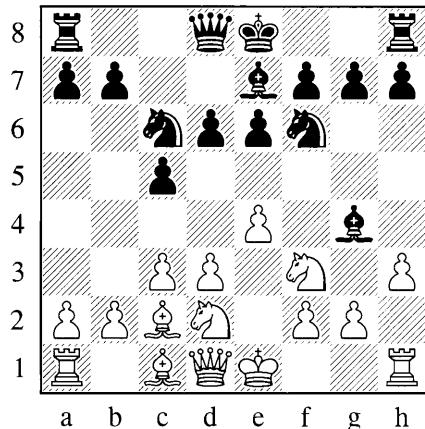
13.Qg3 Qb6 14.We2 d5 15.Qe3 Wd7

16.Qad1 f5!†

Black stood excellently in Hort – Pelletier, Essen 2000, but the legendary Czech player prevailed in the complicated struggle that followed.

B42) 7.Qbd2 Qe7 8.h3

8.Qf1 d5! 9.We2 c4! 10.exd5 cxd3 11.Qxd3 Qxd5 12.h3 Qxf3 13.Wxf3 Wa5 14.Qe4 0–0 15.Qd2 f5 16.Qxd5 Wxd5 17.Wxd5 exd5 18.Qf3 Qf6 19.0–0 d4 was balanced in Short – Kasparov, Zurich 2001.

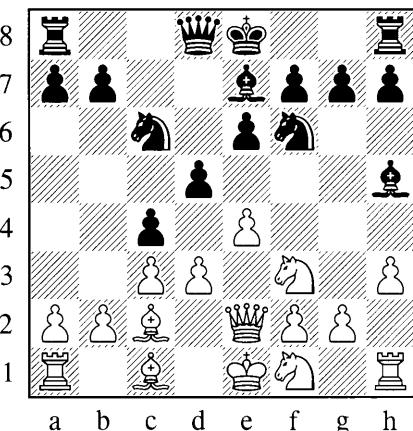
8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

We have another split, between **B421)** 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ d5! and **B422)** 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$!?.

B421) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ d5!

Black is fine, as both the following lines illustrate:

B4211) 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ and **B4212)** 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$!?

B4211) 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c4!

This allows Black to liquidate White's pawn chain in the style of the Short – Kasparov game above. White has an extra possibility compared to that game as the bishop is on h5, but White can hope for equality at most in the ensuing positions:

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

Attacking the h5-bishop.

11. exd5 cxd3 12. $\mathbb{W}xd3$

White got crushed after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$!? (13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$! $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ was apparently White's only try for equality, although Black's position remains the more attractive one after 15...0–0 $\bar{+}$.) 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$! \uparrow 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$? $\mathbb{Q}d4$! 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ \uparrow 16. $\mathbb{gxf3}$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3$ 0–0 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ e5 \rightarrow 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 22. $\mathbb{h}4$ b4! 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{bxc3}$ 0–1 Crosa – G. Jones, Istanbul (ol) 2012.

12... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0–0! 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{h}xg6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ f5 $\bar{+}$

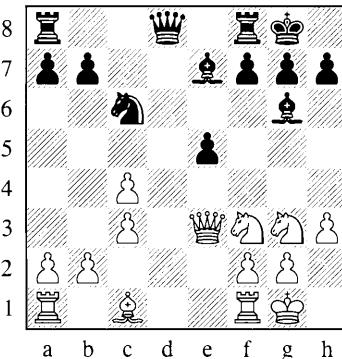
Black was left with a small but clear advantage in Laznicka – Sedlak, Turin (ol) 2006.

11. $\mathbb{dxc4}$ $\mathbb{dxe4}$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

This wins a pawn, but Black's compensation is tremendous:

15... e5! 16. 0–0

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\bar{+}$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ $\bar{+}$ looks awful for White as both his king and queen are exposed.



16... f5! 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ e4 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{cxd4}$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$

White was suffering in Biriukov – Tishin,

Bogoroditsk 2011, although at this point he could have improved:

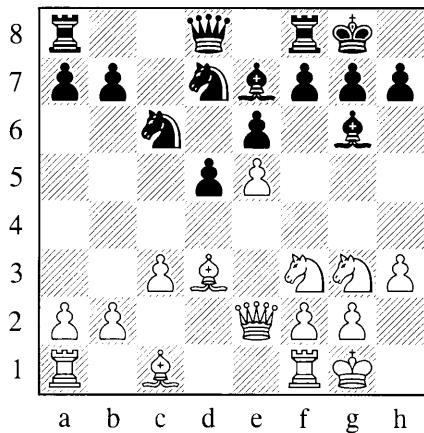
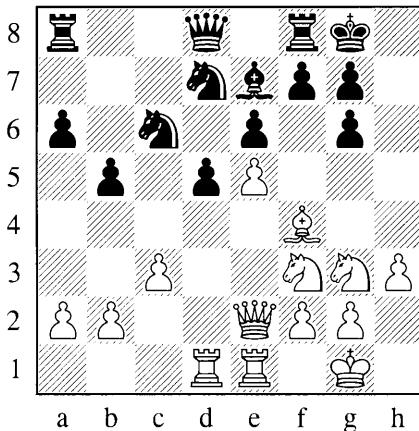
20.♘f4!N=

This prudent blockading move would have minimized the damage.

11...cxd3 12.♗xd3 ♗g6 13.0–0 0–0 14.e5

♘d7

Some engines consider 14...♗xd3 15.♗xd3 ♘d7 as more exact, but the truth is that the immediate knight retreat appears safer and more human.



15.♗xg6 hxg6

A routine recapture, and one that should be perfectly okay for Black. However, from the practical view point I believe 15...fxg6?!N 16.♘d4 ♘xd4 17.cxd4 ♘b8 18.♗g4 ♘d7 19.♗e3 ♘c6 20.♗e2 ♘d8 21.♗ac1 (21.♘f4 ♘f5) 21...♗b6= may have been easier to handle.

16.♗e1 a6 17.♗f4 b5 18.♗ad1

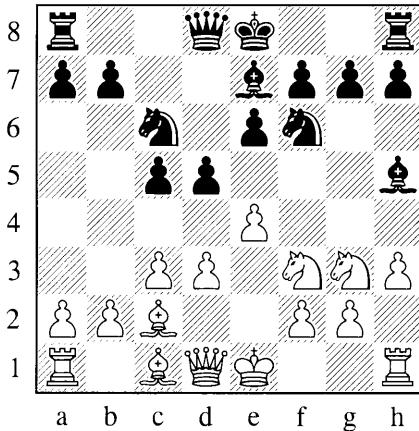
In the game we are examining, Black quickly went astray with: 18...♗b6?! 19.♗e4! ♘c7 20.♗eg5 b4 21.cxb4 ♘xb4 22.♗f1 ♘d7 23.h4 ♘b7? 24.h5 gxh5 25.♗d3 g6 26.a3 ♘e7 27.♗xe6! White was already winning in Rozentalis – Atakisi, Istanbul 2009.

Although White controls more space on the kingside, there is nothing simple for him after sound moves such as:

18...♗c8N=

Or 18...♗a5?!N, intending to meet 19.a3 with 19...♗a4 20.♗c1 ♘c4→.

B4212) 10.♗g3!!



Played by the Russian opening connoisseur Kharlov (among others), this move looks like the best possibility for White in the given situation, as it avoids an opening of the centre that could only favour Black.

10...♗g6

10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 d4∞ is possible, but I see no reason to give up the bishop pair.

11.0–0

This looks like the most natural response.

I also looked at 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, when I think the safest equalizing method is 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 13. 0–0 $\mathbb{B}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $a6$ 15. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $dxe4$ 17. $dxe4$ $c4=$ as played in Barlov – Ehlvest, Vrsac 1987.

11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

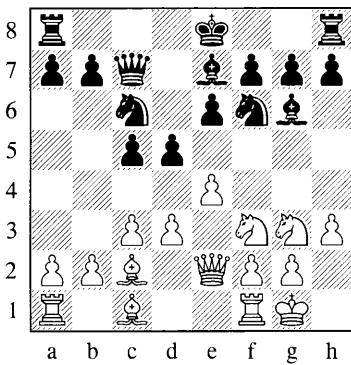
This is a flexible try that deserves some attention.

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

Nevertheless Black should have no problems, as he is preparing to fight against the g3-knight by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ next:

12. 0–0

The complicated alternative 12. $a3$ 0–0 13. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 15. $f x g 3$ occurred in Ostermeyer – Tal, Porz 1981. It seems to me that Tal's choice of 15... $\mathbb{W}xg3!?$ was actually riskier than the more harmonious 15... $\mathbb{Q}h5!N$, which he fails to comment upon. After 16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 18. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 19. $exd5$ $exd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ the computer says it's equal, but as far as I'm concerned Black is a pawn to the good. I would expect him to have the upper hand in a human fight.



12... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$

The principled reply.

13. $exd5$

According to Macieja 13. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $exf5$ 14. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $fxg6$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $hxg6$ 17. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ would have produced even chances.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

Black was perhaps a shade better in Makarov – Macieja, Presov 2000.

11... $\mathbb{W}c7!?$

The most flexible choice, keeping open the options of ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, ... 0–0 and ... 0–0–0.

12. $\mathbb{B}e1$ 0–0–0!?

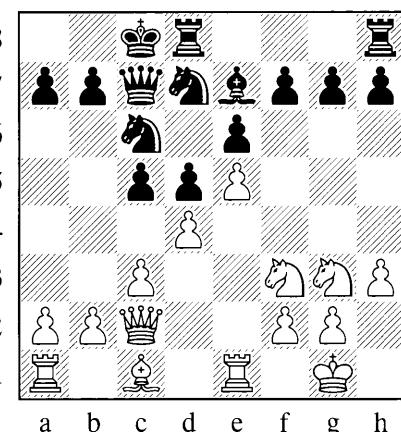
A daring concept, but by no means bad; Black is slightly ahead in development and controls more space, so why not castle long?

13. $e5$

Natural. White closes the d-file and opts for a manoeuvring game.

The more elastic 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ would have been answered by 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$, when Black solves all his problems. If 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ then 14... $dxe4$ 15. $dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $f6=$ with a balanced game.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc2$



15... $h6!?$

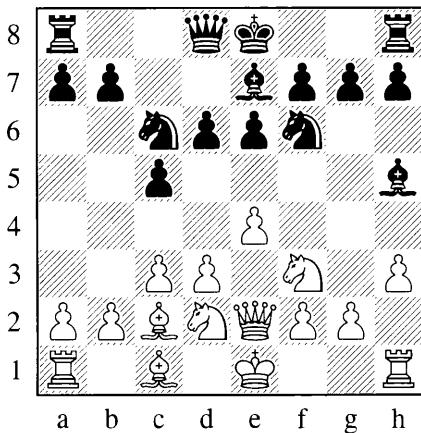
Playing for the full point.

Instead 15... $cx d4$ 16. $cx d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}df8=$ would have been thoroughly balanced.

- 16.♕e3 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♔b8 18.a3 ♔a5
 19.♔d1 ♕c8 20.b4 ♔c4 21.♔c1 ♕c6
 22.♔h5 g6 23.♔f4 ♔cb6 24.♔d3 ♕c2
 25.♔c5 ♕xd1 26.♔xd1 ♔c7!∞

Black went on to win a complex game in Kharlov – Khairullin, Serpukhov 2008.

B422) 9.♗e2!?



A preparatory move chosen by Kasparov himself, which carries the most venom.

After 9.♗e2 White is toying with the ideas of ♔d2-f1-g3, g2-g4 and 0–0, so Black needs to make up his mind on how to react.

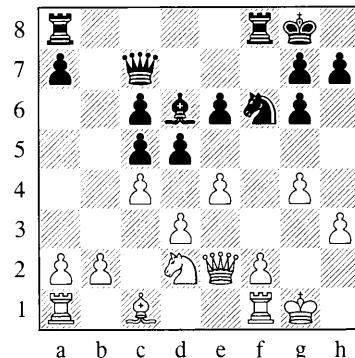
9...d5!

A concrete response. Now 10.♔f1 c4! transposes to a position analysed on page 390 that is satisfactory for Black, so White must seek other ways to infuse life into his position.

Kasparov twice faced 9...♗c7, and after 10.♔f1, intending g2-g4 followed by ♔g3, he had things more or less going his way.

10.0–0

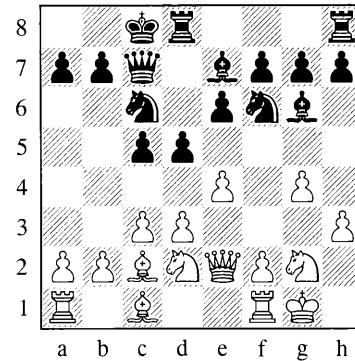
10.♔a4 0–0 11.g4 ♔g6 12.♔xc6 bxc6
 13.♔e5 ♗c7 14.♔xg6 fxg6! 15.0–0 ♔d6 16.c4 happened in Rodchenkov – Khismatullin, Kazan 2007, and here Denis should have simply played:



16...♗ae8N 17.♔b3 ♔d7† Maintaining excellent control over the dark squares, with a slight yet steady advantage.

10.g4 ♔g6 11.♔h4 ♗c7 12.♔g2!?

This is Akopian's approach, bringing the important f4-square under control and creating fresh problems with the f2-f4-f5 idea.
 12...0–0–0 13.0–0



13...h6!?

13...♗he8 14.♗e1 ♔d6 occurred in Akopian – Gelfand, Enghien-les-Bains 2003, with approximately even chances.

An idea for Black is to retreat his bishop to h7 and then follow up with ...g5 and ...h5, so White must watch out. A possible continuation is:

14.♔f3 ♔d6 15.♗e1 dxe4 16.dxe4 ♔h7!N
 Less testing was 16...♔d7 17.♔e3! h5 18.g5 h4 19.♗f1 ♔h5 20.♔d1 ♔b8 21.♔fxh4 ♔h2† 22.♔h1∞, when White was probably

not worse in Kreutz – Hechl, corr. 2009.
17. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}d7\#$

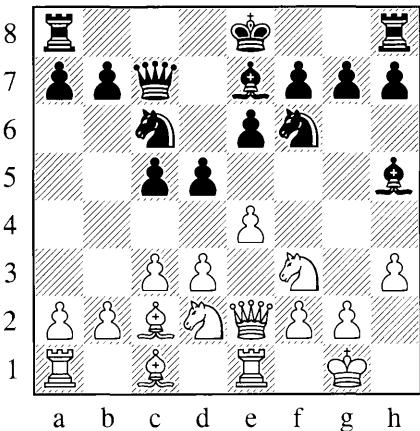
In my opinion Black has the better chances, as I don't see a concrete way for White to justify the strange placement of his pieces.

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

Again, being flexible looks like the best way to handle the issue. Castling can wait – it is more important to control the precious dark squares first.

11. $\mathbb{B}e1$

11. $a3!?$ is another try, but White should not continue like this: 11...0–0 12. $g4 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}xg4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ f5 15. $exf5$ exf5 16. $\mathbb{W}a4 \mathbb{Q}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}hf3 \mathbb{Q}a5$ 0–1 T.V. Petrosian – Kotov, Voronovo 1952. Thankfully for the 9th World Champion, this was only a training game.



11... 0–0–0!

A hyper-aggressive move, which seems to be enough for at least equal play.

12. a3

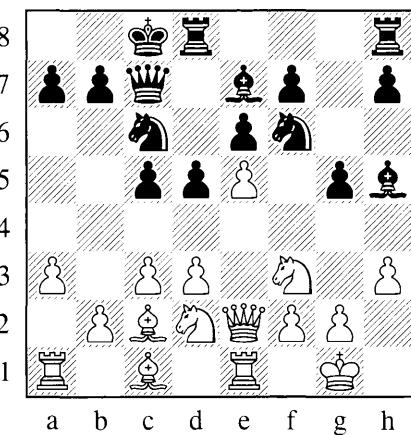
White dreams of a queenside attack, but Black's next prepares to unleash his own attacking potential.

For this reason the more reserved 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ may well be better, although even then, after 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6N$ 13. $g4$ dx $e4$ 14. $dxe4 \mathbb{Q}g6\#$, Black's

control over several critical dark squares gives him a good game. For example, 15. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ f6 and White's weaknesses are slowly starting to tell.

12... $\mathbb{g}5!$ 13. $e5!?$

13. $b4!?$ N was undoubtedly more critical, as now the game becomes one-sided.



13... $\mathbb{g}4!$ 14. $exf6$ $gxf3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3!?$

A second mistake that practically seals White's fate.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $g4 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ had to be tried, holding back the attack. Even then, after Sutovsky's 17... $\mathbb{Q}he8\uparrow$ planning ...e5-e4, the advantage must be on Black's side.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h6!?$ $\mathbb{Q}hg8-$ +

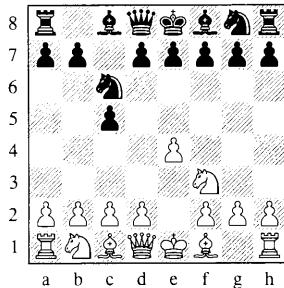
Black's attack was already decisive in Areshchenko – Sutovsky, Gibraltar 2005.

Conclusion

This was an important chapter, dealing with several quite annoying possibilities at White's disposal after 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6. These continuations are not as widespread as 3.d4 is, but contain some poison and require certain knowledge from Black players. I believe my suggestions leave Black in good shape, and I wish the readers well in their future battles – where many creative games lie ahead!

Chapter 22

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



Introduction

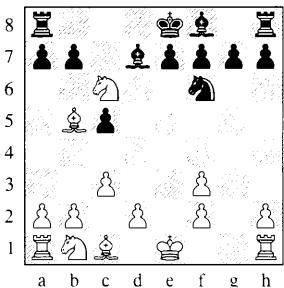
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3

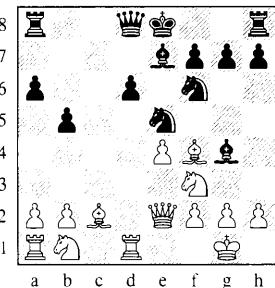
2...Qc6

A) 3.g3	396
B) 3.c3	397
C) 3.Qb5 d6 4.c3 Qf6!	399
C1) 5.e5	399
C2) 5.Qe2 Qd7	401
C21) 6.0–0	401
C22) 6.d4	403

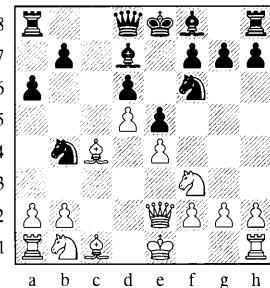
C1) after 9.gxf3



C21) after 13.Qf4



C22) note to 8.Qxc6



9...bxc6!N

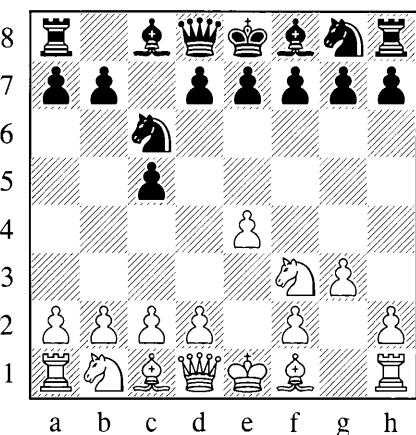
13...Qc8!!N

10...Qc8!N

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

In this chapter we will consider the sidelines **A) 3.g3** and **B) 3.c3**, before moving on to the more serious business of **C) 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$** .

The important $3. \mathbb{Q}c3$ has been covered in Chapter 12, while $3.d3 g6$ ($3... \mathbb{Q}f6$ followed by $...d5$ is also fine) $4.g3 \mathbb{Q}g7 5. \mathbb{Q}g2 e5$ will almost certainly transpose to variation A.

A) 3.g3

This is perhaps the most harmless version of the King's Indian Attack, so I will not devote too much space to it.

3...g6

$3...e6 4. \mathbb{Q}g2 d5 5. exd5 exd5$ could transpose to variation D of Chapter 20 after $6.d4$, but $9.0-0$ is an extra possibility which I would rather not allow.

$3... \mathbb{Q}f6 4. d3 d5$ is a simple and strong alternative, when Black can choose between several reversed King's Indian set-ups. The kingside fianchetto could be an especially good choice, as it safeguards against a kingside attack and leads to positions where White's extra tempo is unlikely to make a huge difference. However, I will focus on a Botvinnik-style set-up, as it can also arise via the $2...d6 3.g3$ move order, as discussed on page 369.

4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

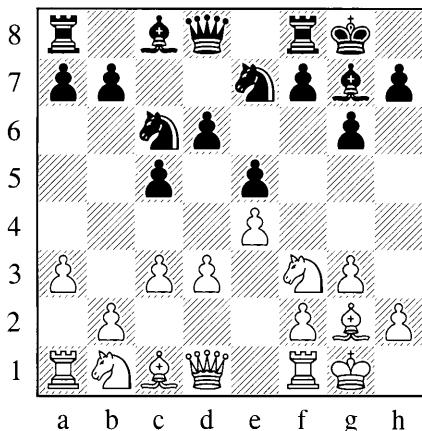
$4.d4 cxd4 5. \mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}g7 6. \mathbb{Q}e2$ will lead to the harmless Fianchetto Variation against the Dragon. As I mentioned on page 369, it is beyond the scope of this book to cover this in detail, and I could hardly improve on Gawain Jones's recent work in any case. If you don't wish to allow this, I would suggest $3... \mathbb{Q}f6$ and $4...d5$ as mentioned above.

4... $\mathbb{Q}g7 5.0-0 e5 6.d3 \mathbb{Q}ge7 7.c3$

Other moves exist of course, but the queenside expansion has been White's most popular plan.

7...0-0 8.a3 d6

$8...a5?$ would be a positional mistake due to $9.a4!$, when White gets some great squares on the queenside.

**9.b4 a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2 h6 11. \mathbb{Q}b3$**

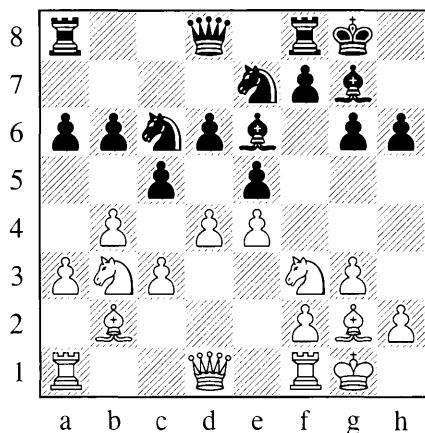
$11. \mathbb{Q}b1$ can be met by $11... \mathbb{Q}e6$ anyway, as $12. bxc5 dxc5 13. \mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{Q}a5$ followed by $... \mathbb{Q}xd3$ favours Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6 12. \mathbb{Q}b3$

$12. \mathbb{Q}e1 b5 13. \mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}b6$ ($13... \mathbb{Q}b8!?$ N followed by $...a5$ is also promising) $14. \mathbb{Q}f1$ occurred in Adly – Vudit, Tsaghkadzor 2015, when $14...a5!N$ would have been excellent for Black.

12...b6 13.d4?!

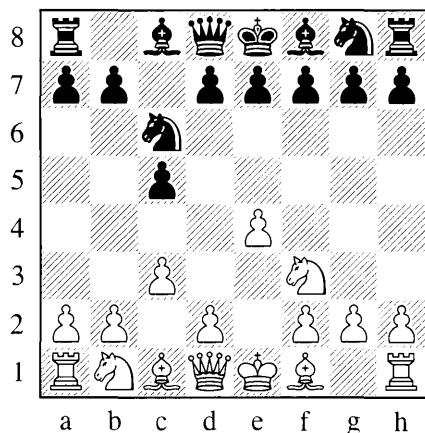
The central expansion does more harm than good, but if this does not work then it is obvious that White's opening scheme has not been a success.

**13...exd4 14.cxd4 cxb4 15.axb4**

In Gierse – Horstmann, Germany 1988, Black could have obtained a clear plus with:

15...d5!N

Stabilizing Black's central position before eating the b4-pawn.

B) 3.c3

Some players like to wait for ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ before reverting to the c3 system in order to avoid

certain set-ups, but Black's position remains fully compatible with the proposed repertoire beginning on page 77.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4.e5

4.d3 and 4. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ have both been tried, but one does not require special preparation to meet such moves.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

This will usually transpose to one of the variations analysed under the 2.c3 section. White has some independent tries, but none of them should trouble us.

5.d4

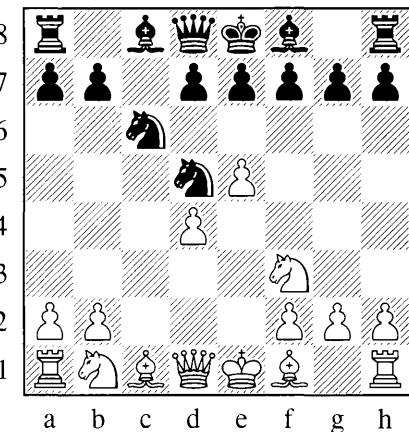
5. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 either leads to a mainstream variation or a harmless sideline, for instance:

a) 6.0–0 d6 7.exd6 (7.d4 cxd4 transposes to note 'b' below) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 8.d4 0–0 gives Black smooth development and a pleasant game.

b) 6.d4 cxd4 7.0–0 (7.cxd4 d6 leads to Chapter 8) 7...d6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$?! (8.cxd4 is Chapter 8 again) 8...exd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 10.cxd4 dx5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ with two bishops and an active position for Black, Pruja Ramirez de Cartagen – Salgado Lopez, Badajoz 2013.

5...cxd4 6.cxd4

6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6 transposes to note 'b' above.



6...d6 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$?

This is the most popular of White's non-transpositional options, but it damages his structure and leaves him fighting for equality if Black responds correctly.

The most popular and best continuation is 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ e6, which transposes to Chapter 8.

7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is too timid to cause us any problems; 7...g6 is one good reply.

7.a3 is a poor relation of the 7.a3 line seen on page 123. Since Black has not played ...e6 here, he has the easy option of 7...dxe5 8.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ e6 with a comfortable game.

7.exd6 has been played many times, but Black can already think about taking over the initiative with: 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$! (7...e6 and 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ are also fine of course) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (8.dxe7? $\mathbb{Q}xe7$) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10.gxf3 0–0–0† 8...e6 Black will pick up the d6-pawn and obtain an excellent position, having developed his light-squared bishop on a more active square than normal in the IQP structure.

7...dxe5

Heading straight for a better endgame.

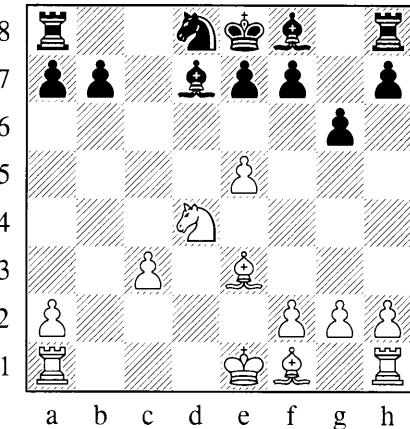
7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 8.bxc3 dxe5 is playable, but messier after 9.d5.

8.dxe5

8. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ † Black blockades the IQP and will be able to press for a long time.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ † $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 10.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

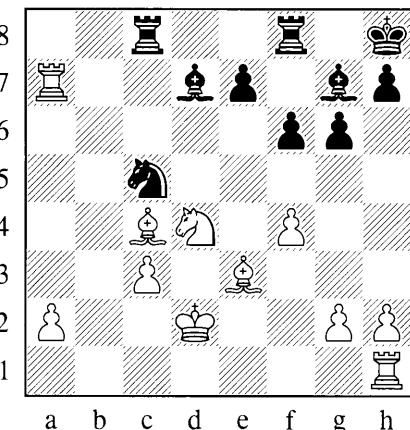
12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ leaves the e5-pawn vulnerable, so White should arrange to play f2-f4 while he has the chance.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14.f4 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ f6!**

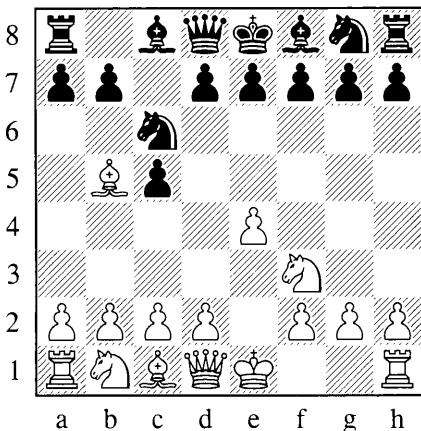
An important move to activate Black's kingside pieces.

16.e6!

16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ was unpleasant for White in Kharlov – Fedorov, Ekaterinburg 2002.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ † $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ **19...e5 20.fxe5 fxe5 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ † 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$**

Black kept a slight initiative, although White held the draw without too much trouble in Lindhard – Krabbe, corr. 2013.

C) 3.♗b5

The Rossolimo Variation has become a popular way to avoid the main lines of the Sicilian and their heavy theoretical debates. White aims at quick castling, and then fighting for control of the centre by means of c2-c3 and d2-d4. The plan is simple in essence but surprisingly difficult to meet in praxis, and Black players should be aware that they need to be well prepared and patient in order to face it with success. For the purposes of our repertoire I am recommending a system based on 3...d6 and 4...♝d7, which can also be applied by Black players who have to play the move 2...d6 in order to reach their favourite Sicilian.

To be honest, my personal view is that Carlsen's beloved way of avoiding the Najdorf or the Dragon by means of 3.♗b5† should be rather harmless after the solid reaction 3...♝d7, but for practical reasons I deemed it more appropriate to suggest 3...♝c6 even in that case, transposing to the Universal Rossolimo Variation, as I call it. This system, including both ...♝c6 and ...d6, is more in keeping with our attempt to obtain lively positions, as it avoids an exchange of bishops at such an early stage. On the other hand, it has the disadvantage of a somewhat stilted kingside development, which White will try to exploit. It is exactly for this reason that mastering the opening nuances

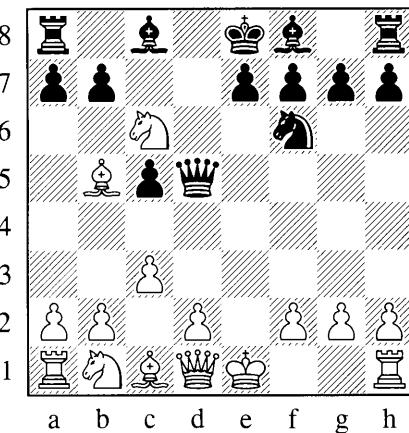
acquires paramount importance, at least until we have managed to castle.

3...d6 4.c3

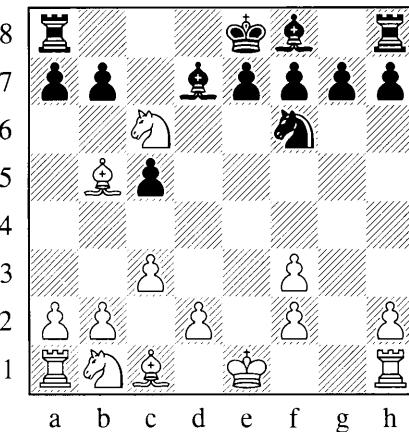
This has some logic to it, aiming to play d2-d4 as quickly as possible. White's other 4th moves are examined in the next three chapters.

4...♝f6!

Attacking the e4-pawn forces a small concession. Play may continue with **C1) 5.e5** or the more common **C2) 5.♔e2**.

C1) 5.e5 dxе5 6.♝xe5 ♔d5!? 7.♝xc6**7...♝d7!**

I evaluate Black's chances as somewhat higher. The only challenging continuation is:

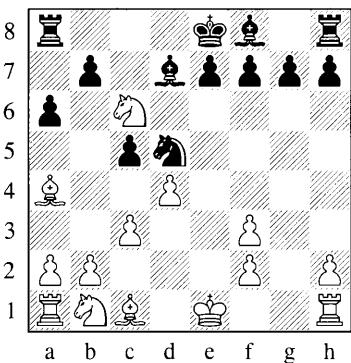
8.♔f3 ♔xf3 9.gxf3

9...bxc6!N

It is important to keep all three minor pieces on the board, in order to exploit the weakness on f3 and White's exposed king.

Weaker is: 9...♝xc6?! 10.♝xc6† bxc6 11.d3 e6 12.♗d2 ♜d7 13.♗c4 ♜b6 14.♗a5! ♜d7 15.♗e3 ♜b8 16.0–0–0± White had a solid plus in Sulskis – Degraeve, Cappelle la Grande 2001, and went on to win.

Another possibility is: 9...a6 10.♗a4 ♜d5 11.d4!



11...e6! (11...cxd4? 12.♗b4!±) 12.dxc5 ♜xc5 13.♗d2 ♜xc6 14.♗xc6† bxc6 15.♗c4 f6 16.♗e3 ♜e7 17.♗a5 ♜d7 18.0–0–0 ♜c7= I consider the position to be approximately equal.

After 9...bxc6! it is White who is struggling for equality. For example:

10.♗c4

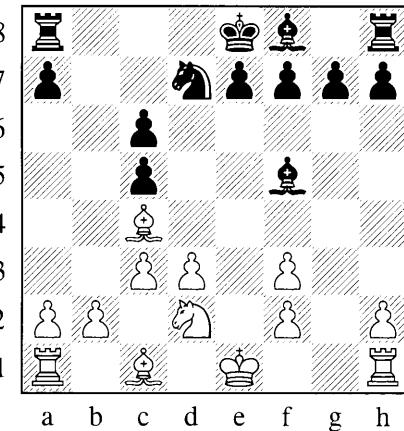
In case of 10.♗a4 ♜d5 11.d3 0–0–0 the weakness of the d3-pawn and the f4-square allow Black to dictate the play, as the following line shows: 12.♗e3 (12.♗a3 g6±) 12...g6 13.♗d2 (13.♗xc5 ♜f4 14.♗c2 ♜f5↑) 13...♜f5 14.♗e4 ♜xe3 15.fxe3 ♜xd3 16.♗e2 c4 17.♗ad1 ♜xd1 18.♗xd1 ♜c7±

10...♜f5 11.d3 ♜d7!

This is an instructive manoeuvre, with Black aiming at White's weaknesses.

12.♗d2

12.f4?! ♜b6±



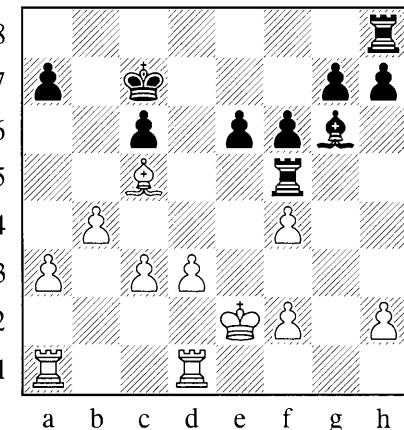
12...♝e5 13.♔e2 ♜g6!

Giving the bishop access to the h5-square.

14.f4

14.♗e4 ♜h5±

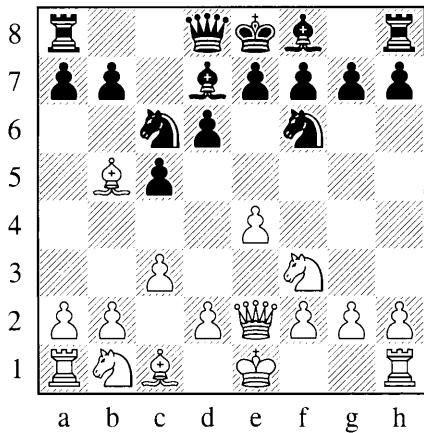
14...♜xc4 15.♗xc4 f6 16.♗e3 0–0–0
17.♗hd1 ♜d5 18.b4 e6 19.a3 ♜c7 20.♗a5
♜d6 21.♗b3 ♜f5 22.♗xc5 ♜xc5 23.♗xc5
23.bxc5 e5↑



23...♝xf4=

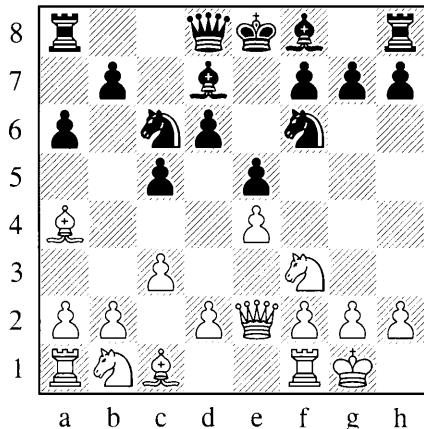
Black has the more pleasant position, although the presence of opposite-coloured bishops makes it rather drawish.

C2) 5.♗e2 ♜d7



I like this move, keeping our pawn structure intact. White can respond with either **C21) 6.0–0** or **C22) 6.d4**.

C21) 6.0–0 a6 7.♘a4 e5!?



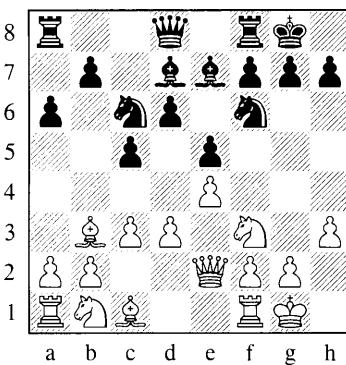
I don't think there is any need to play ...b5 immediately, since it gives White a target for a2-a4 later on. We have reached a crossroads, but I have the impression that Black will have an easy ride no matter what White chooses.

8.♗d1

White prepares d2-d4, but in the Spanish positions that arise the presence of the queen on e2 gives Black easy equality.

Instead, the immediate 8.d4 produces a position that is quite balanced: 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗xd4 10.♗xd7† ♜xd7 11.♗xd4 exd4 12.♗d3 (12.♗d2 ♜e7 13.♗b3 0–0 14.♗f4 [14.♗xd4 ♜fe8†] 14...♜fe8 15.♗fd1 ♜d8†] 12...d5 13.♗d2 dxe4 14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.♗xe4† ♜e7 16.♗d1 ♜d8 17.♗e3 f5 18.♗e5 ♜d5= This massive simplification may not be to everyone's liking, but it is a sound way of equalizing.

8.d3 This quite move is an admission that White is not fighting an advantage, but on the other hand it is a reliable way of playing, adding emphasis to completing development rather than fighting for dominion in the centre: 8...♜e7 9.h3 (after 9.♗g5 0–0 10.♗b3 one simple way of maintaining level chances is 10...♗h5=) 9...0–0 10.♗b3

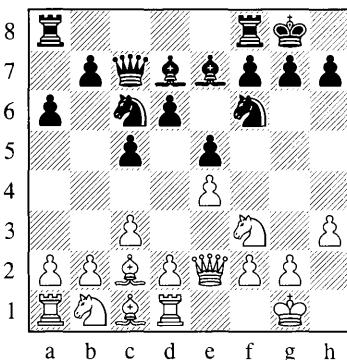


10...h6! Ruling out the possibility of ♗g5 forever. 11.♗e3 ♜e8 12.♗bd2 ♜f8 13.♗fe1= Black has organized himself well. In Kr. Georgiev – Adamski, Warsaw 1983, the players decided to split the point in this equal position.

8...♜e7 9.d4

After the slow 9.h3 0–0 10.♗c2 (10.d4? ♗xd4†; 10.♗b3 ♜a5 11.♗c2 ♜c7 12.d3 h6†)

10...♝c7, the move d2-d4 does not have any effect:



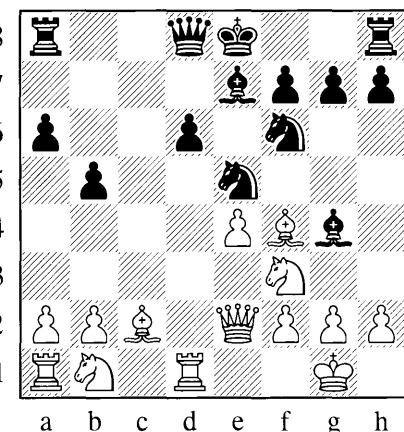
11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4
 14.♗xd4 d5! 15.♘c3! (15.e5? ♗b5!; 15.exd5 ♘fe8†) 15...dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗b5 17.♘d3 ♘e5
 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♗e4 ♗xd3 20.♗xe5 ♗xe2
 21.♗xe2= Massive liquidations have occurred, leading to a dead-drawn ending.

9...♝b5 10.♗c2

10.dxe5 ♘xe5! 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♗c2 c4 is excellent for Black.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗g4 12.dxe5 ♘xe5
 13.♗f4

White seems to be on the verge of acquiring a little something, but after the powerful memory-marker that follows it proves to be just an illusion:



13...♝c8!!N

An excellent multipurpose move, forcing the white knight to develop on c3 rather than d2 (meaning that Black will be able to force a weakness on f3 according to circumstance later on), and at the same time preparing to contest the c-file by means of ...♝a7-c7.

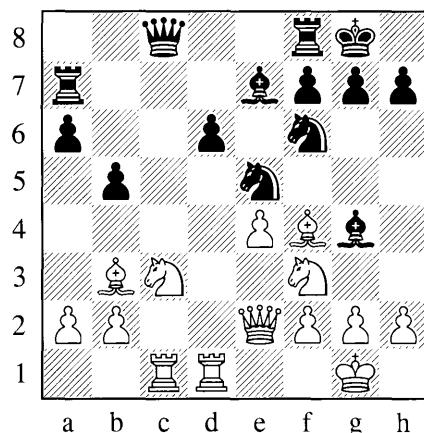
13...♝xf3 14.gxf3 ♘c8 was less accurate in Escobar Forero – Menassa, Cartagena 1995.

14.♘c3

Inferior is 14.♗b3?! ♘xf3 15.gxf3 ♘h5! 16.♗g3 ♘g5! 17.♘c3 ♘f4 18.♗f1 ♘xf3† 19.♘h1 ♘g4 20.♘d5 ♘d8, with a double-edged position where Black is by no means worse.

14...0-0 15.♗b3 ♘a7! 16.♗ac1

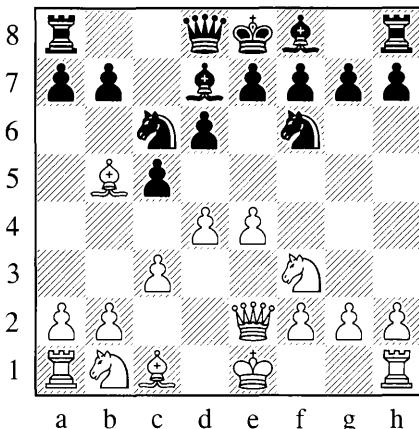
16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.h3 ♘xf3 18.♗xf3 ♘c5 19.♗ac1 ♘c7= is simply equal.



16...♝c7 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♘xf3
 19.gxf3 ♘g6

Black is most certainly not worse here, and the expected result is a draw after something like:

20.♗xc7 ♘xf4 21.♗d2 ♘h3† 22.♔g2 ♘xc7
 23.♔xh3 ♘c8=

C22) 6.d4

Basically White has to play this, otherwise he will end up in a type of 'bad' Spanish where the queen is not so functional on e2.

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 a6

Putting the question to the bishop is the way to embarrass White. Black has to act quickly, otherwise White will castle and consolidate his space advantage in the centre.

8.Qxc6

This has been tried by Judit Polgar and is a logical reaction, as every bishop retreat has its defects.

8.Qa4 d5!

The bishop on a4 falls prey to tactics that secure at least an even game for Black:

9.e5!?

9.exd5 Qa5† 10.Qc3 Qxd5 11.Qd2 Qxc3 12.Qxc6 Qxc6 13.bxc3 e6 14.c4 Qb4 15.d5 Qxd2† 16.Qxd2 Qd7= and Black was slightly better in Cicak – Babula, Czech Republic 2001.

9...Qe4 10.0–0 Qxe5 11.Qxe5 Qxa4 12.Qc3 Qxc3 13.bxc3 e6 14.Qe1

White has certain compensation for the material, but the best he can hope for is a draw. 14...Qf6 15.c4 Qd6 16.Qb1! b5? 17.cxd5 0–0

18.Qd7 Qf5 19.Qxf8 Qxf8 20.Qd2! Qxd5 21.Qb4 Qxd4 22.Qxd6 Qxd6=

It does seem like White will achieve his aim.

8.Qd3

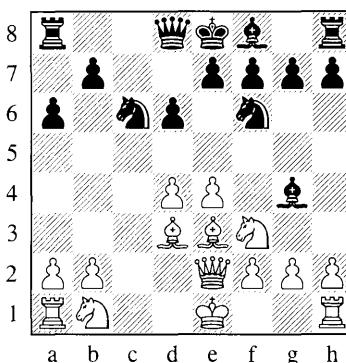
This can be met in two ways. In either case, Black does not seem to face any problems:

8...Qg4!?

8...e5 9.d5 Qb4 10.Qc4 was the continuation in Conquest – Grivas, Corfu 1991, and here Black should play: 10...Qc8!N 11.0–0 Qc7! 12.Qa3! (12.Qbd2 Qc2 13.Qb1 b5 14.Qb3 Qe7= leaves White in a bit of a tangle) 12...Qe7 13.Qd2 Qc2! 14.Qac1 Qxa3 15.bxa3 Qb8=

9.Qe3

Rather provocative is 9.d5 Qd4 (9...Qe5 10.Qbd2 g6 11.h3 Qxd3† 12.Qxd3 Qd7! 13.b3 Qg7 14.Qb2 0–0 15.0–0±) 10.Qe3 (10.Qd1 Qd7=) 10...Qxf3 11.gxf3 e5! 12.dxe6 Qxe6= with a good game for Black, who intends ...d5.



9...Qb4 10.Qc3 Qxd3† 11.Qxd3 Qxf3 12.gxf3 g6

As in Thorsteinsdottir – T. Gara, Istanbul (ol) 2012. One possible continuation is: 13.0–0–0N Qg7 14.e5 Qh5 15.f4 Qd7 16.Qb1 0–0∞

8...Qxc6 9.Qc3!

This move is the most logical, preventing ...Qb5 ideas.

2.♘f3 ♘c6

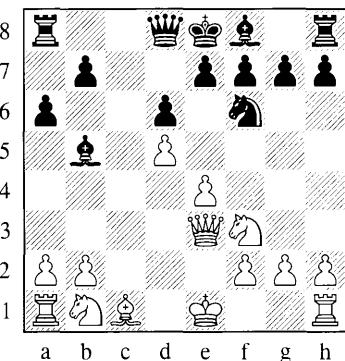
9.d5

This was Polgar's choice, but I think that the following line represents a good response:
9...♗b5!

I prefer this to 9...♗c6, as played in J. Polgar – Tiviakov, Ohrid 2001.

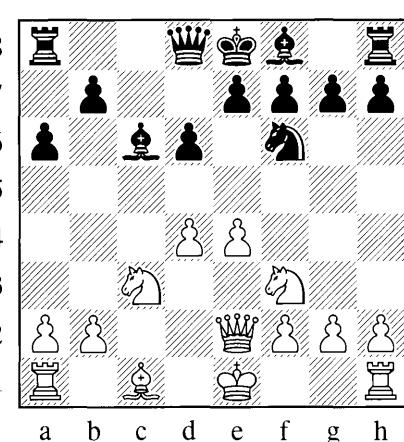
10.♗e3?

The alternative 10.♗c2 ♜c8!N (it is strange that all Black players have preferred to refrain from this natural move in favour of 10...♗c8) 11.♗c3 g6 12.♗d4 ♗g7 13.♗dxb5 axb5 14.♗e2 ♗a5 15.0–0 b4 16.♗b5 0–0† is better for Black, if only slightly.



10...a5! 11.♗c3 ♗a6 12.a4 g6 13.♗b5 13.♗d4 ♗g7 14.♗db5 0–0 15.0–0 ♜c8 16.♗d1 ♗d7 17.♗e2 ♗c5 18.♗c2 ♗d7 is also slightly better for Black according to the engines.

13...♗g7 14.0–0 0–0 15.♗e1 ♜c8†
Black's position was slightly for preference in Makropoulou – Hagarova, Calvia (ol) 2004.



9...d5!

I hate giving away space for no particular reason, and I think that the text move is something we can afford, as we are not too far behind in development. As we shall see, it should lead to a balanced game.

10.e5

10.exd5?!

We should not be afraid of this one:

10...♗xd5! 11.♗g5 e6 12.♗xf6 gxsf6

Black's control over d5 cannot be challenged.

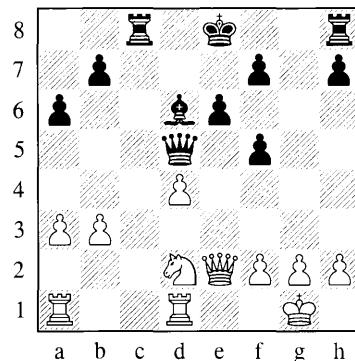
13.0–0 ♗b4?!

13...♗e7= as played in Hasangatin – Hennigan, Prague 2004, is also reasonable.

14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗fd1 ♜c8 16.a3 ♗d6 17.♗d2 f5 18.b3!N

Intending to activate the knight by ♗c4.

18.♗ac1? ♗xc1 19.♗xc1 ♗xd4! 20.♗f3 ♗f6 21.♗d3? ♗xb2! 22.♗d1 ♗e7 23.♗d7† ♗f8† Black was clearly better with his two extra pawns and went on to win easily in Hasangatin – Movsesian, Moscow 2004.



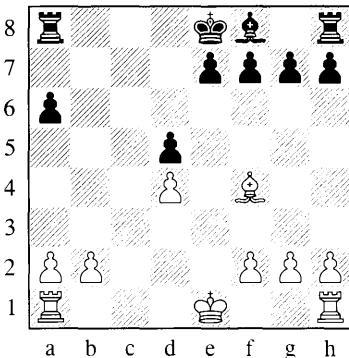
18...b5 19.a4! ♗g8! 20.g3 ♗g4! 21.axb5 axb5†

Black is fine, and this represented White's only chance of maintaining equality.

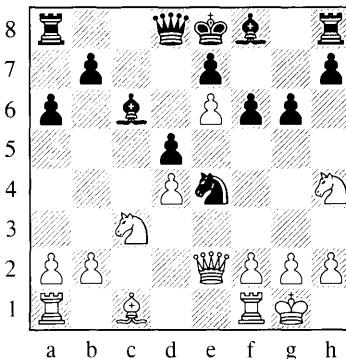
10.♗e5 A natural reply, not only because White hunts our bishop, but mostly because he wants to weaken our pawn formation.

10...♗xe4 11.♗xe4 dxe4 12.♗xc6 bxc6

13.♗xe4 ♗d5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♗f4



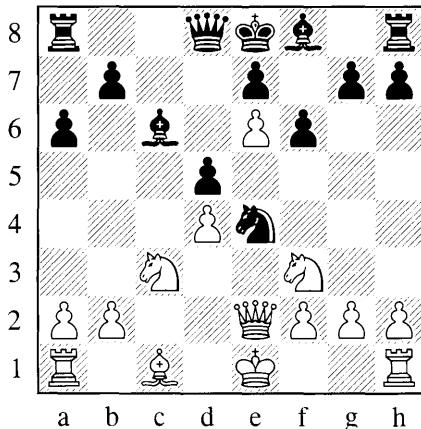
Black went on to win, in Mirkovic – Vujacic, Belgrade 1980.



15...g6! An important move: by developing his bishop on g7, Black will gain an important tempo in order to connect his rooks and ensure equality. 16.Qe2 Qg7 17.Qd3 Qd7= The game is balanced. Although there is still play left, a draw is once more the likely result here.

10...Qe4 11.e6 f6!

Of course Black does not take on e6, but keeps this pawn as a target for the future.



12.Qd2!!

The knight on e4 must be challenged, as it is Black's strongest piece.

12.Qh4?! g6 13.0–0!N

White has to play this.

After 13.a4?! Qd6 14.f3 Qg5 15.0–0–0 Qxe6= the precious e6 soldier was a goner, and

13...Qg7

13...Qxc3?! 14.bxc3 Qb5 15.Qc2 Qxf1 16.Qxg6 Qxg2 17.Qxh8 Qe4 18.Qe2 Qc7 19.Qh5† Qd8 20.f3 Qxc3 21.fxe4= only leads to a draw.

13...Qd6 14.Qe1! Qg7 15.f3 Qxc3 16.bxc3 Qa4 17.Qb1 b5 18.Qd3 f5 19.g3 0–0 20.Qf4 Wa3 21.Qd2 Qac8 22.Qbc1 Qc6 23.Qe5 Qxe5 24.Qxe5 b4 25.Qg5 f4 26.Qf1= gives White strong counterplay.

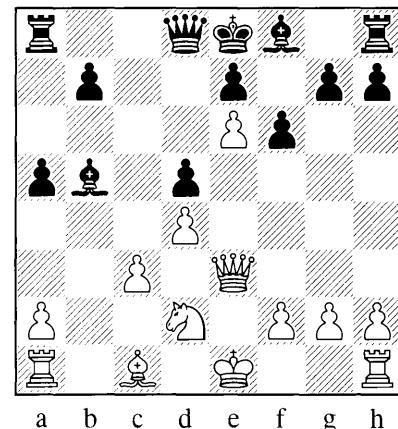
14.Qe1?

14.Qf5 0–0 15.Qh6† Qxh6 16.Qxh6 Qxc3 17.bxc3 Qb5=

14...0–0=

Black has the more pleasant position.

12...Qxc3 13.bxc3 Qb5 14.Qe3 a5

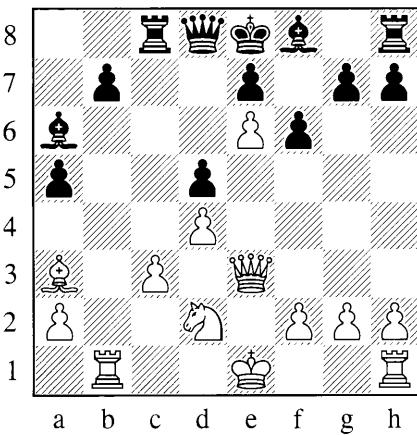


15. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

After 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16.f4 g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ Black has a plan to attack the e6-pawn by ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3N$

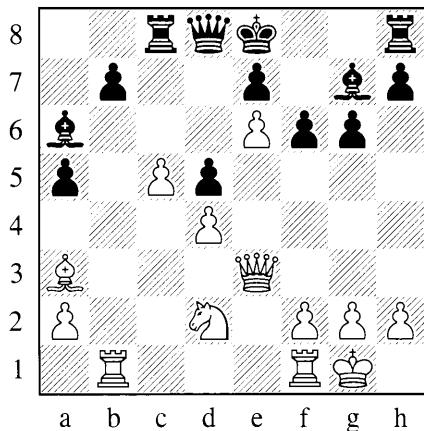
This looks more challenging than 16.f4, as played in Zappa Mexico – IvanHoe, engine game 2012.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ **17. $c4!!$ g6!**

17...dxc4 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4\uparrow$ looks dangerous for Black.

18.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 19. $c5!?$

19.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 0–0–



19... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$
22. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ f5=

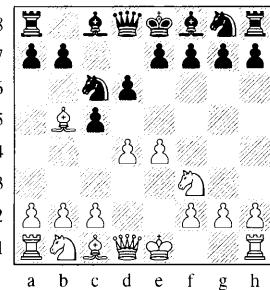
With a likely draw. It may be disappointing that a draw arises from a position that appeared promising for Black, but if White doesn't know this analysis it is quite difficult to find the best moves on the board.

Conclusion

This chapter saw us begin our coverage of the Rossolimo Variation, where I have decided to recommend the Universal System for the basis of our repertoire. Many of the lines in this chapter have a Spanish feel to them, and some subtle manoeuvring is often required to reach our optimum piece configuration. Although equality is often the verdict here, my analysis should give the readers plenty ideas to catch out a poorly prepared opponent.



2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



Rossolimo – 4.d4

Variation Index

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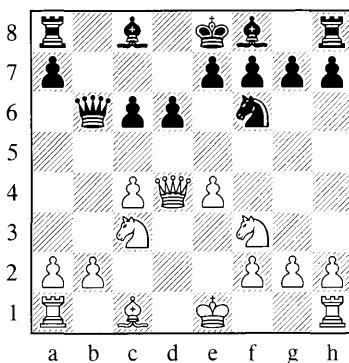
1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.Qb5 d6 4.d4

This leads to a position that can also be reached via 1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4?! Qc6 5.Qb5. When we were beginners we were taught that moving the queen during the early stages of the struggle can easily prove pointless or faulty, but that is not always the case as chess is full of exceptions. In any case, White can get away more often with early queen sorties, especially if there is some sort of strategic justification behind them. I think there is one such here: White will capture with the queen on d4 and quickly develop on the queenside, in order to castle long and obtain a double-edged position with opposite-castled kings.

4...cxd4 5.Qxd4

The logical follow-up.

5.Qxc6† bxc6 6.Qxd4 Qb6?! 7.c4 (Probably better was 7.0–0 Qxd4 8.Qxd4 Qb7= with a double-edged position, but I like Black's prospects in view of his bishop pair and central pawn preponderance.) 7...Qf6 8.Qc3



8...g6! 9.0–0 Qg7 10.Qe1 0–0 11.h3 Qe6?! (11...Qd7=) 12.e5 dxe5 13.Qh4 Qfd8 14.b3 Qh5↑ Black was better in Gutman – Wippermann, Boeblingen 1999, and went on to win.

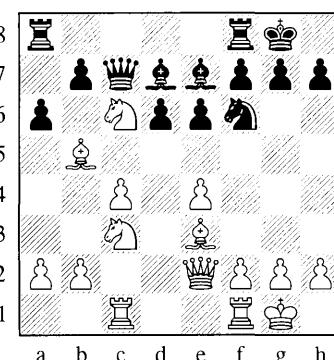
5.Qxd4 Qd7 6.c4!?

The only move to have some meaning.

6.0–0?! Qf6 7.Qc3 (7.f3?! e5 8.Qxc6 bxc6 9.Qb3 Qe6=) 7...g6! is already at least equal for Black.

6...Qf6 7.Qc3 e6

I consider this to be the most solid set-up. 8.0–0 Qe7 9.Qe3 0–0 10.Qe2 Qc7 11.Qac1 a6 12.Qxc6 bxc6 13.c5 d5 14.Qg5 e5 15.Qf3 d4 16.Qa4 Qe6∞ is not better for White.

**12...bxc6!?**

12...Qxc6 13.Qxc6 Qc6 14.f3= is also playable of course.

13.Qa4 c5! 14.Qc2

After 14.Qxd7 Qxd7 15.f4 a good way to obtain counterplay is 15...Qb8! 16.Qf3 Qc6 17.Qh3 g6 18.Qf2 f5? 19.exf5 Qxf5∞, when Black's control over d4 and the open f-file gives him sufficient compensation for the weak e6-pawn.

14...Qc6

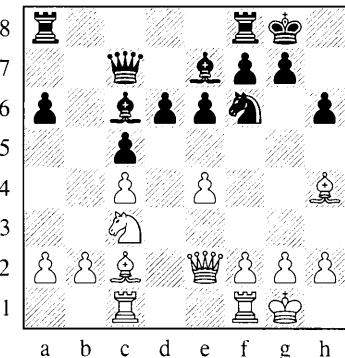
Black didn't have any problems in A. Smirnov – Chu Wei Chao, Albena 2014. In the game White blundered with:

15.Qg5!?

15.Qcd1N Qd7 16.f4 Qad8 17.Qd3 g6 18.Qc1 Qb7= would have been better, with approximate equality.

15...h6 16.Qh4?

Overlooking the following nice tactic:



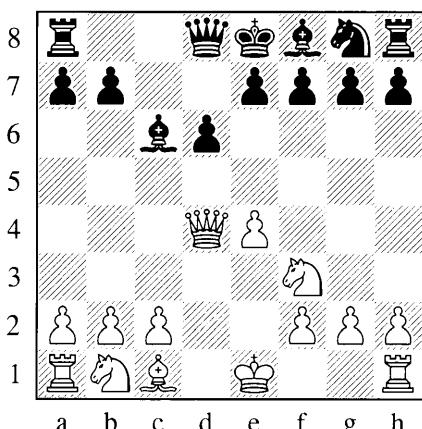
16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\ddagger!!$
19. $\mathbb{W}xe2$

19. $\mathbb{Q}h1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\ddagger!$ is the main point of Black's combination, winning the queen.

19... $\mathbb{W}xe7\mp$

The extra pawn eventually proved decisive.

5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 6. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$



We have reached the tabiya for this variation: Black has two bishops and no weaknesses at all, so he should be fine. White has a basic choice of plans: the first with **A) 7.c4** involves a Maroczy set-up, and the second with **B) 7.Qc3** begins the aforementioned idea of quick queenside development followed by long castling.

A) 7.c4

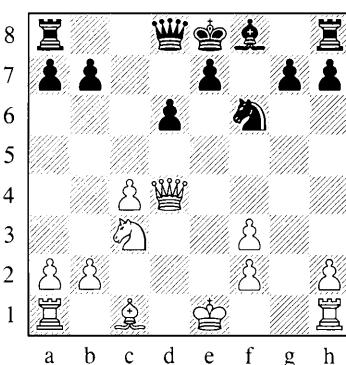
Black can meet this move in challenging fashion:

7... $f5\text{!?}$

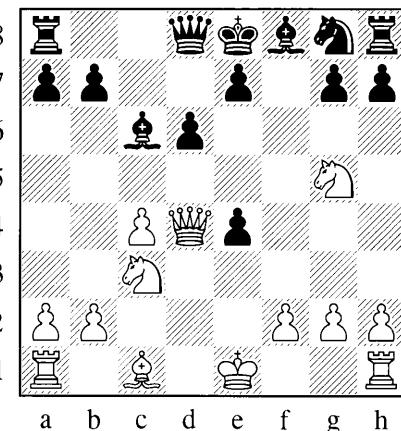
Seeking to disrupt White's plan of consolidating a central space advantage, while at the same time opening up the position for the bishops. We will consider **A1) 8.Qc3** and **A2) 8.exf5**, when I think that the following analysis convincingly demonstrates that Black is at least equal.

A1) 8.Qc3 fxe4 9.Qg5!

9.Qxe4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.Qc3 (10.Qxf6?! gxf6 \mp is of course better for Black, as the white king will be unsafe on the kingside and the pressure along the g-file already seems difficult for White to handle.) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11.gxf3



11...g6! 12.Qe3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13.0–0–0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14.Qb1 $\mathbb{W}f5\ddagger$ 15.Qd3 Black has the slightly better ending after 15... $\mathbb{W}xd3\ddagger$ 16.Qxd3 $\mathbb{Q}c8\mp$.



2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 9...e5 10. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 11.0-0

11. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{W}h4+-$ is a well-known opening trap that first occurred in Bruzon – A. Rodriguez, Cuba 1997.

11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

White has a respectable position, but it shouldn't worry us as the two bishops are a powerful asset that outweighs the weakness of the d6-pawn. It seems that White's most prudent way of continuing is to get his pawn back at once:

12. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$

Delaying the capture on e4 can only leave White worse:

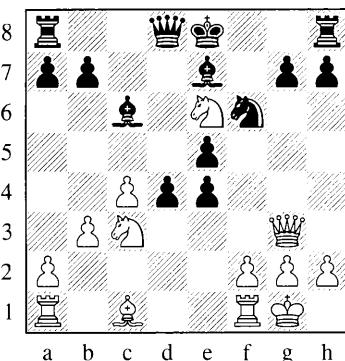
12.b4?! is rightly dismissed by Tiger Hillarp Persson due to 12... $\mathbb{W}b6!$.

12.b3 d5?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}e6$!

13. $cxd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h3 \mathbb{W}d6!+$ leaves White without a clear way of proving full compensation for the pawn.

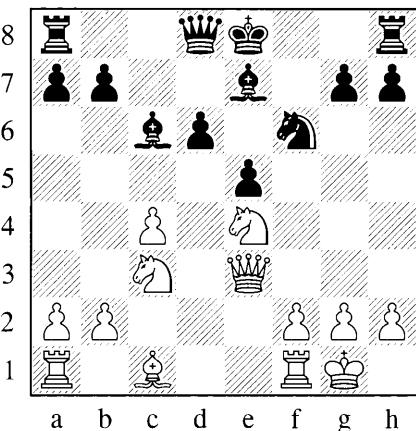
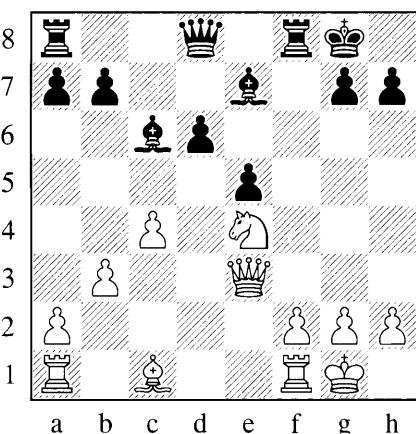
13...d4 14. $\mathbb{W}g3!!$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd8 dxex3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 exf2+$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf2 bxc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}d7?!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 h5!$ is excellent for Black, but is probably the lesser evil from White's point of view.

14... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5! \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $cxd5 \mathbb{Q}f6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 18. $dxc6 \mathbb{W}xg3$ 19. $hxg3$ 19. $cxb7? \mathbb{W}xg2!+$ 19... $bxc6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 a5!+$

Black seems to have the upper hand in the ending in view of his extra space and active king.

Let us now return to the prudent 12. $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$:

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0 14.b314... $\mathbb{W}e8!?$

The human and harmonious way of developing. The queen will find a good home on g6, and then Black can follow up by doubling rooks on the f-file.

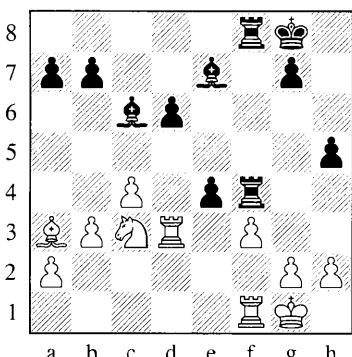
For those loving computer play and concrete solutions, the ideal choice might be 14...d5.

After 15.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 16.f3 $\mathbb{W}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ exd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1!=$ there seems to be nothing better than a draw by repetition though, and this fact was the main instigator for choosing 14... $\mathbb{W}e8?$ as my main line.

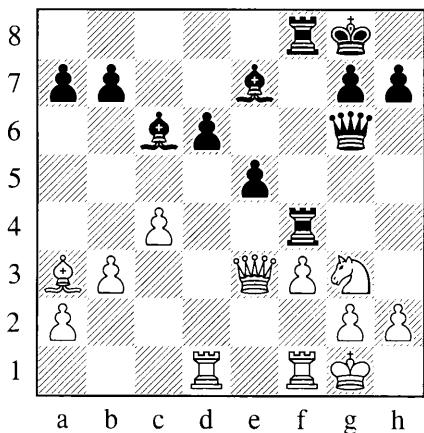
15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}af8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

This looks unnatural.

18. $\mathbb{W}d3!$ is a better way of playing, actually preparing $\mathbb{Q}g3$. In that case play remains balanced, for example: 18...h5 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ e4



21. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exf3 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 24.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}c1\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b5!=



18...h5N

A typical move for this type of structure, suggested by Tiger Hillarp Persson in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*. The g3-knight asks to be kicked away.

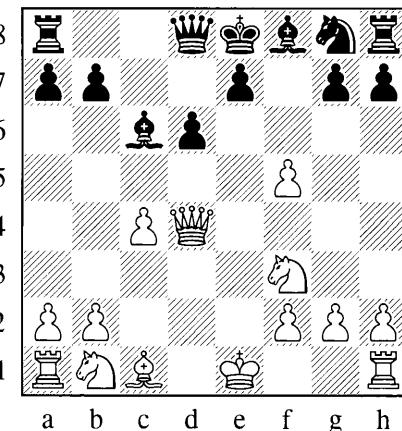
An erroneous way of treating the position was seen in Dzhumaev – Laxman, Chennai 2004, which continued 18...b6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b1$ d5? 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 22.cxd5 $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$ and White went on to win. With such a static pawn on e5 Black does not have real chances to hold the ending.

19. $\mathbb{W}d3!$

White should seek salvation in a queen trade, which seems to lead to a tiny edge for Black.

19... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ h4 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ h3 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ hxg2 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg2=/\#$

A2) 8.exf5



This looks like the best option for the first player.

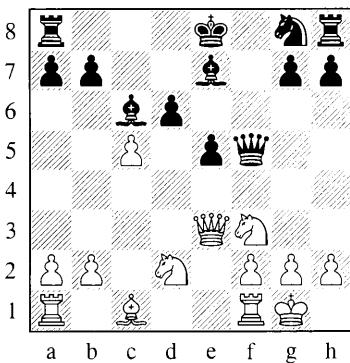
8... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$

With this check Black recovers his pawn and is on the way to a harmonious piece configuration.

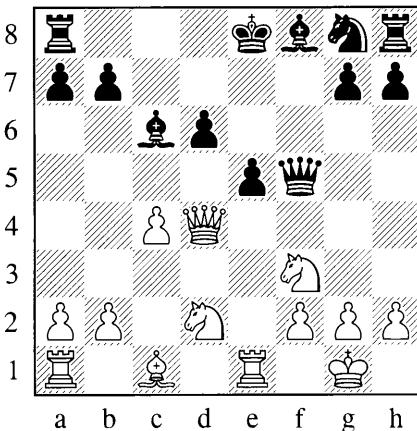
White can block the check with either A21) 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ or A22) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$.

A21) 9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 10. 0–0 e5 11. $\mathbb{E}e1$

11. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ will almost certainly transpose after 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$, as the independent try 12. c5 brings White nothing:



12...0–0–0! 13. cxd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (14. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 16. gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1 = \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Ni Hua – Bluvshstein, Edmonton 2009.



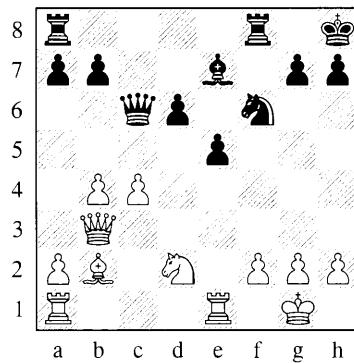
11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$

Black has an excellent game, for example:

15. b3

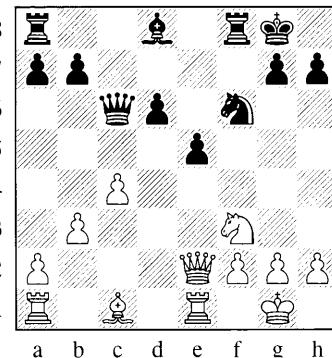
It looks natural to defend the c4-pawn, so as to free the d2-knight for action.

After 15. b4 0–0 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ the white structure is a bit loose, and the bishop's absence from kingside affairs might be felt later on. A possible line of play is:



17... $b5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 19. h3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c2$ (20. $cxb5?$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. c5! $dxc5$ 22. $bxc5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}xc2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ h6 29. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{E}c8=$ White has managed to maintain equality by dynamic means.

A different method of configuring the white forces is 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, but here 16... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ looks quite strong, planning a bishop transfer to b6. After 17. b3, as played in Zhang – Paragua, Ho Chi Minh City 2009, it would have been best for Black to continue:



17... $a6!$ N Toying with the idea ... $b5$. 18. a4 (18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\#$ is excellent for Black) 18... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6\#$ The weakness

of b3 is already felt and Black is by no means worse.

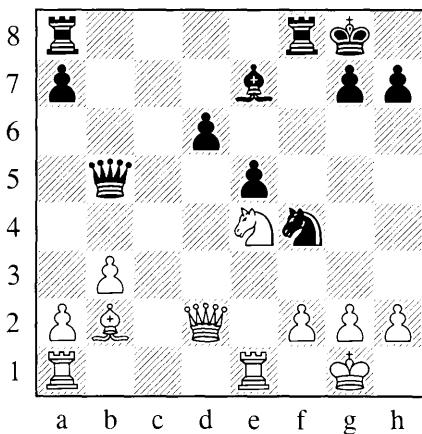
15...0–0 16.♗e4 b5!

A thematic move, trying to soften White's control over d5.

17.cxb5

17.♗xf6† ♜xf6 18.cxb5 ♜xb5 19.♗b2 was Zupe – Wertjanz, Graz 2009, and Black is at least equal after 19...♝d8!N.

17...♜xb5 18.♗b2 ♗d5?! 19.♗d2 ♗f4!



20.♗ad1!N

20.♗xd6?! ♜d3! 21.♗e4 ♜xd2 22.♗xd2 ♗d3† was already bad for White in Kottke – Lindemann, Germany 2004.

20...♜b7 21.f3 ♜ad8=

The game is more or less balanced, and the computer gives the following line:

22.♗e3 ♗d5 23.♗d2 ♗f4 24.♗e3 ♗d5

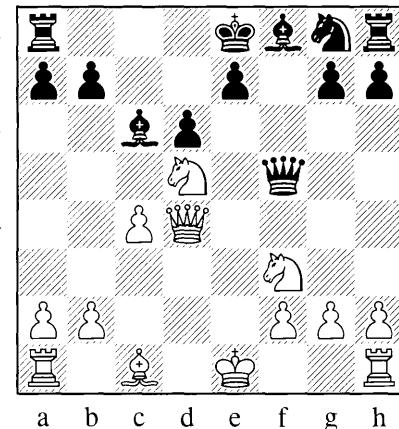
With a draw by repetition.

A22) 9.♗c3

White has no chance of an advantage if he fails to control d5.

9...♜xf5 10.♗d5

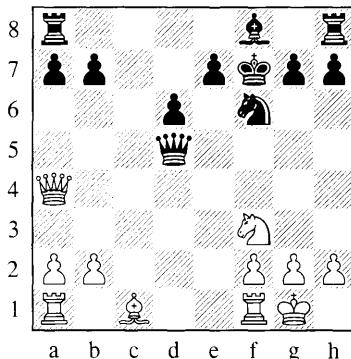
This is the idea: White blocks the c6-bishop with gain of time, as a check on c7 is threatened.



10...e5!

The best retort.

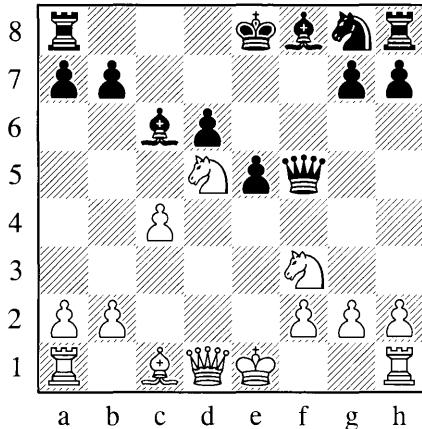
Accepting the pawn by 10...♝xd5?! 11.cxd5 ♘f6 12.♗a4† ♘f7 leads to a strong initiative for White and is not recommended. 13.0–0 ♜xd5



14.♗e3!N (But not 14.♗d1 b5! 15.♗xd5 bxa4 16.♗a5 e5 17.♗xa4 ♘e7= when Black was already doing fine in J. Garcia – Martin Gonzalez, Lleida 1991) 14...a6 15.♗fd1 ♜b5 16.♗c2 ♘g8 17.♗ac1± Black is tragically behind in development and, with both his king and queen exposed, cannot hope to survive.

After 10...e5! White is at a crossroads, facing a dilemma of where to put his queen: A221) 11. $\mathbb{W}d1$ or A222) 11. $\mathbb{W}e3$.

A221) 11. $\mathbb{W}d1$



The ‘human’ preference can be answered in a simple manner:

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Black is ready to finish his kingside development and slowly gain the upper hand, due to his bishop pair and powerful light-square control in the centre. Let us witness White’s efforts to avert such a turn of events:

12.0–0

I guess that almost everyone would withdraw his king to safety first.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$?

Black can ignore the attack on his a7-pawn: 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!

Focusing on central control.

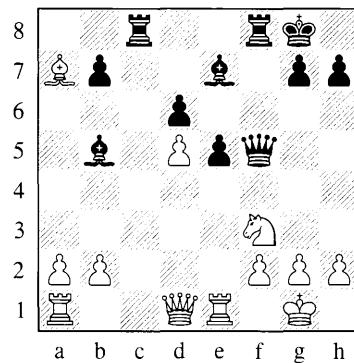
13.0–0!

White should avoid 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$? $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$! 14. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$! 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 0–0N

16... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ was also excellent for Black in Wicklund Hansen – Schmidt, corr.

2004, but I could not resist including the following variation, where White has to play energetically in order to secure the draw:



17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!!

17. $\mathbb{W}b3$?! $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ → gives Black tremendous attacking chances for a mere pawn.

17... $dxe5$ 18. $d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $b6$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$!

21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$? $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$

21. $d7$? $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $b5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $h6$ =

21... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e7$! $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 23. $dxe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ =

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

Again White has a decision to make:

13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

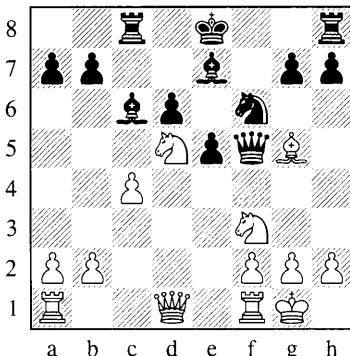
Planning $\mathbb{Q}d4$, but it’s not clear the rook belongs on the e-file.

Instead, 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ transposes to the note on 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$? above.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

I couldn’t find an advantage for Black after this interesting try.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



14.♗b3!N

It is only this strong move that leads to equal chances. White would instead be worse after: 14.♕xe7?! ♕xe7 15.♗xf6† gxf6 16.♗d2 ♜hg8 17.f3 ♘d3↑ Black intends to double rooks on the g-file, and the c6-bishop is powerfully positioned.

Or 14.♗xf6?! ♜xf6 15.♗d2 0–0 16.♗ad1 Levacic – Zufic, Medulin 2002, when Black should play 16...♗d8!N 17.b3 ♘g6 18.♗e1 ♜f7↑.

14...♝xd5

This is the easy way to equality.

For those seeking to mix things up, 14...♝d8?! 15.♗xf6 gxf6 looks worth a try. Here is a sample line worked out with the help of a computer: 16.♗fd1 0–0 17.c5! ♜h8 18.cxd6 ♜g8 19.♗ac1 ♘e6 20.♗e3 ♘d7 21.♗h4 ♜b6 22.♗d3 ♜g5 23.g3 ♘cg8 24.♗xc6! ♘xc6 25.♗hf5 e4 26.♗e2 ♘d7 27.♗e7 ♘d8 28.♗c4 ♘e6 29.b4 e3! 30.fxe3 ♘d7↑ 15.cxd5 0–0 16.♗xb7 e4 17.♗d4 ♘xg5 18.♗xe7 ♘xd5 19.♗e6† ♘xe6 20.♗xe6 ♘fe8 21.♗d4 ♘e5 22.♗ac1 ♘ec5=

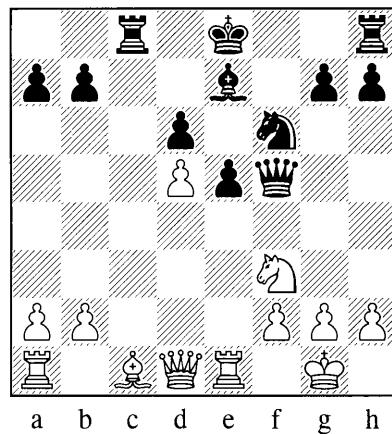
With an approximately balanced ending.

13...♝xd5 14.cxd5

14.♗d4?! ♘h5 15.♗xh5† ♗xh5 16.cxd5 ♘d7 17.♗b5 ♘e7 18.♗xa7 ♘c5 19.♗e3 ♘xd5 20.a4 ♘f6 21.♗ac1 ♘d3↑ was slightly better for Black in Damjanovic – Groszpeter, Prague 1986, as his central pawns and better king outweigh White's queenside pawn majority.

14...♝e7!

14...♝c2? 15.♗d4!±



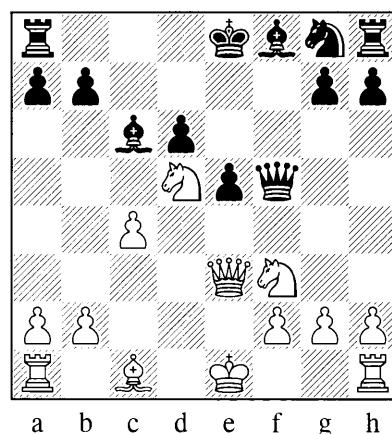
15.♗a4†!N

Inferior is 15.♗b3 b6 16.♗e2, as played in Belikov – Dvoiris, USSR 1988, in view of 16...♗d7!±.

15...♗d7 16.♗b3 h6 17.♗e3 a6 18.♗ac1 ♘xc1 19.♗xc1 ♘d8!=

The chances are balanced, as White's weakness on d5 outweighs any other small advantage he might have. Black will castle and follow up with ...♗f7, and it is hard see the first player coming up with anything constructive to counter this.

A222) 11.♗e3



2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

This looks slightly awkward, but it is the computer preference, even if only by a tiny margin. The idea is to keep e4 under surveillance and to keep the a8-rook tied to the defence of the a7-pawn. There is also the prospect of an immediate $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 12.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 13.0–0

White cannot protect his pawn, so he concentrates on fast development.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

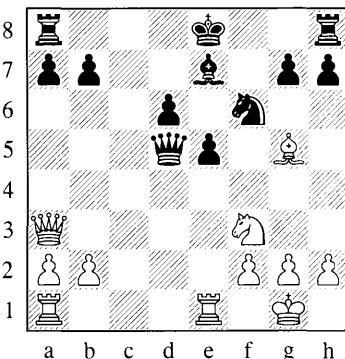
I like this developing move a bit more than the obvious reaction examined just below.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$

The problem is that exchanging queens is not obligatory for White.

14. $\mathbb{W}a3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ 0–0
 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b3\#$
 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8=$ should be okay for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 16...a6! 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 0–0
 21. $b3$ a5= Black should be able to extinguish White's slight initiative and fully equalize in due course.

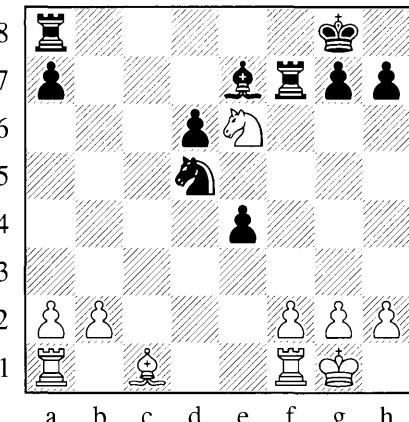
18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}f5!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$
 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 0–0 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 24. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$

25. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 26. $g3$

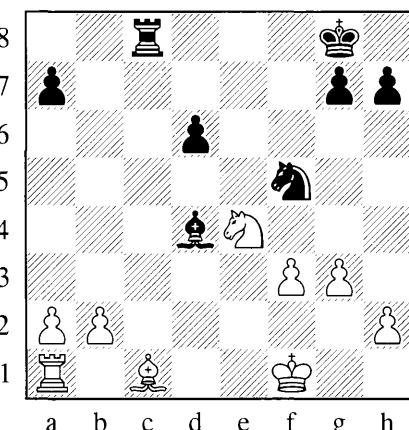
White does have a few practical chances, but I nevertheless tend to describe his advantage as rather nominal.

**14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ e4 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$**

Black has comfortably equalized, and this was verified in a correspondence game.



19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 20. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $f3$
 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 26... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f4=$



27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 29. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$
 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 31. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
 33. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

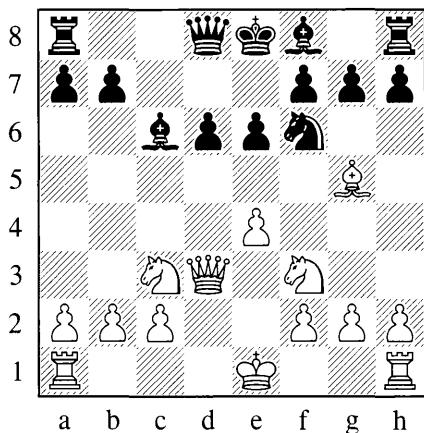
36.♕xh7 ♜f2† 37.♔e1 ♜xf3 38.♕g5 ♜e3†

½–½ Sanchez Roempler – J. Wells, corr. 2003.

B) 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♗g5 e6

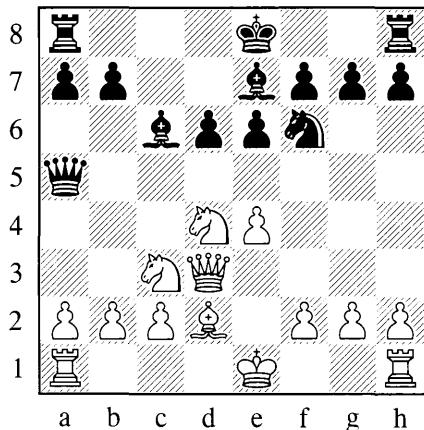
White players have tried the immediate
B1) 9.♗d3, but **B2) 9.0–0–0** is most usual and probably best.

B1) 9.♗d3



Preparing to bring the knight quickly to d4 and free the way for the f-pawn, harmonizing the white position. I would like to suggest a little known idea to meet this:

9...♗e7 10.♘d4 ♗a5 11.♗d2



11...♗h5!?

This has rarely been played, but I cannot see anything wrong with it. Long castling is prevented and Black will try to play ...d5.

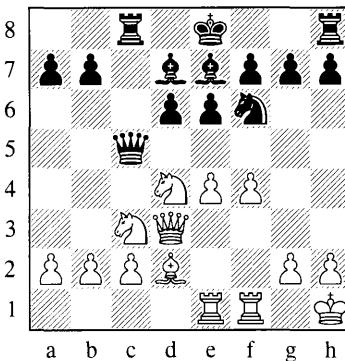
12.f3

12.f4 ♜c8

This looks excellent for Black, with the idea being:

13.0–0 ♜c5! 14.♗h1 ♜d7 15.♗ae1

Black gets an ideal position after: 15.♗f3 0–0 16.♗e3 (16.e5 ♘d5 17.♗xd5 ♜xd5 18.♗xd5 exd5†) 16...♜c7 17.♗d4 ♜c6†



15...0–0 16.e5

16.♗f3 ♜fd8†

16...dxe5 17.fxe5 ♘d5 18.♗xd5

18.♗e4 ♜c4!

18...♜xd5 19.♗f5!

19.♗c3 f5!†

19...♜c5 20.♗xd5 exd5

Reaching an ending that is at least balanced for us.

Another way to try to stop ...d5 is 12.♗f4, but then 12...0–0 (12...d5 is also okay, as the line 13.e5 ♘d7 14.♗g3 0–0 15.0–0 ♜g6= indicates) 13.0–0 ♜fd8 leaves White without a clear plan. The computer gives 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♗ae1 d5 16.exd5, but it is hard to imagine Black being worse after 16...♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♜xd5=.

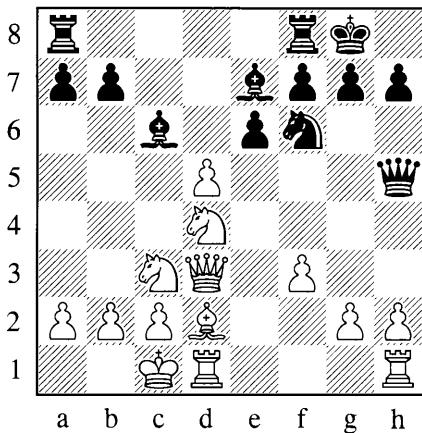
Finally, 12.0–0 ♘g4! N→ produces a position where Black enjoys excellent counterplay.

12...0-0

12...d5N= was also perfectly possible.

13.0-0-0 d5! 14.exd5

We have been following Draghici Flutor – Martin Gonzalez, Catalonia 2013, and now I like the natural:



14...Qxd5N 15.Qxc6 bxc6#

With a slight edge for Black.

B2) 9.0-0-0 Qe7

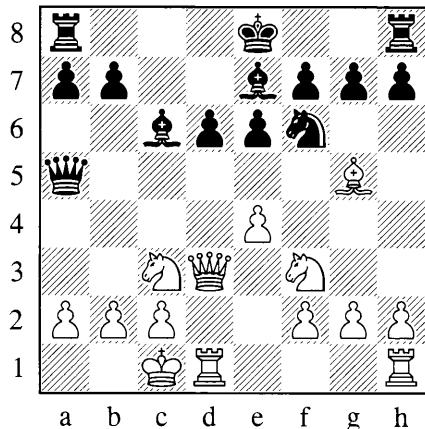
Black has two bishops and a healthy structure, while White has a slight lead in development. In a position with opposite-castled kings both sides will try to make use of its advantages, which, in my view, seem to delicately balance each other. **B21) 10.Qd3!**? has been tried, but **B22) 10.Qhe1** is the main move.

B21) 10.Qd3!?

Again with the idea of freeing d4 for the knight, but this time the plan is $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and f2-f4-f5, trying to provoke Black into playing the strategically undesirable ...e5.

10...Qa5!

Thematic, pinning down the knight on f3 for the time being.



White has a wide range of options: **B211) 11.Qd2**, **B212) 11.Qh4**, **B213) 11.Qb1** and **B214) 11.h4**.

B211) 11.Qd2

The temporary weakness of the a2-pawn allows Black to seize the initiative:

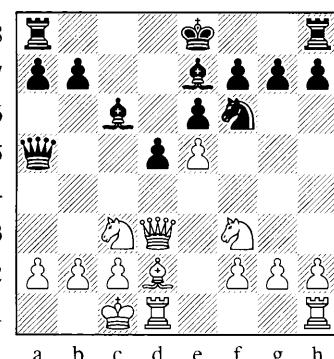
11...d5! 12.exd5!

This is the only move to give White any hope of equality.

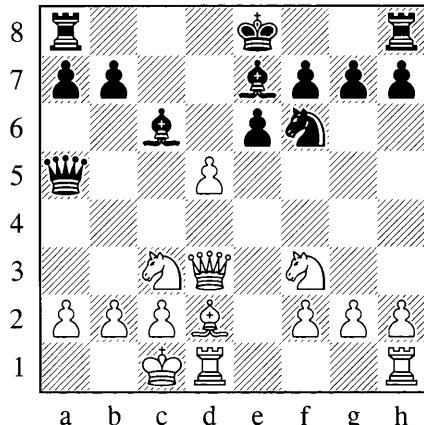
12.Qxd5?? is clearly a horrible blunder in view of 12...Qxa2--.

12.Qe5 left Black on top after 12...dxe4 13.Qxc6 bxc6 14.Qc4 Qc5! 15.Qxc5 Qxc5# in Carapinha – Mengual Bolo, corr. 2010.

Finally, 12.e5 is given by Kasimdzhanov, but he fails to notice:



12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ N I don't see how White can equalize. 13. $\mathbb{W}d4!$ (13. $\mathbb{E}hf1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\#$ 16. $fxe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$) 13... $\mathbb{W}b4!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ed4$ $f6\#$ As soon as the position starts opening up, the two bishops will be a powerful force in Black's favour.



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

Inferior is 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$, as played in Matsenko – Naoum, Thessaloniki 2009. The obvious 15...f6N $\#$ leaves Black with a considerable endgame advantage.

13... $\mathbb{E}d8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 18. $fxe3$

White had almost equalized and eventually held the draw in Sorcinelli – Nicolenco, corr. 2009.

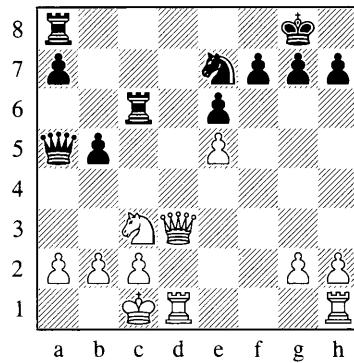
B212) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

This little known method of preparing $\mathbb{Q}d4$ is Judit Polgar's, but it is too artificial and allows Black a good game.

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}h5!$

Again, I like this queen transfer as a method of nipping White's attack in the bud.

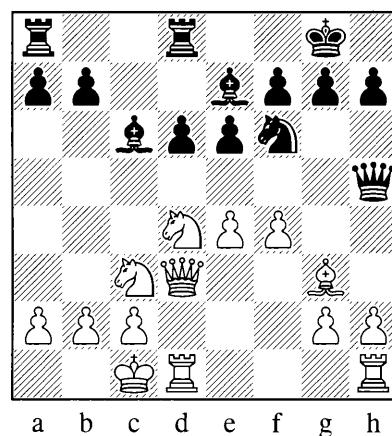
In Polgar – Yudasin, Pamplona 1990, Black was rewarded with a full point for choosing the riskier 12... $\mathbb{E}fc8$, but I doubt it is that good. After 13. $f4$ $b5$ 14. $e5$ $dxe5$ 15. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ Judit should have taken the pawn with:



18. $\mathbb{W}xb5!$ N $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d6!$ Leading to a race where White has the upper hand: 19... $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 20. $exd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}f4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $h5$ 26.a4 h4 27. $\mathbb{E}d2!$ \pm

13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 14.f4

We have been following Qadimbayli – Idrisov, Varna 2011, when best was:



14... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

15. $f5$ $d5!$ \rightarrow or 15. $\mathbb{E}he1$ $a6$ 16. $f5$ $d5!$ \rightarrow .

15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{B}he1$

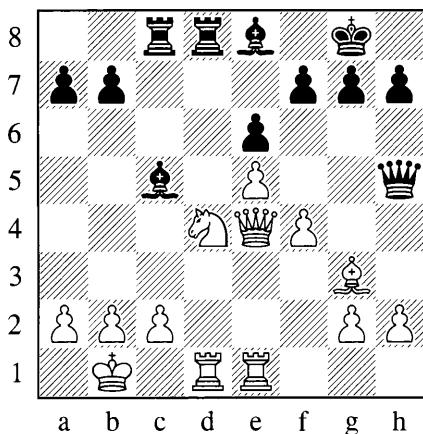
Black has various possibilities, but he can force a drawish endgame if he so desires:

16...d5 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

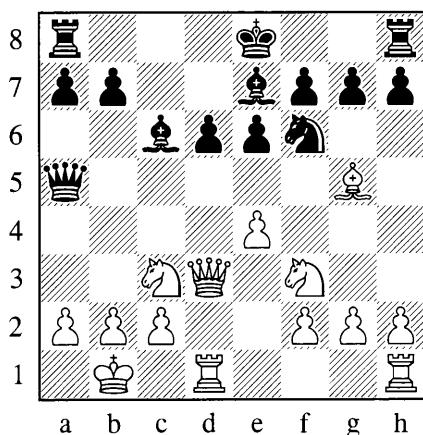
This mechanism is only good when there is already a white rook on e1, preventing the first player from playing $\mathbb{Q}e1$.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 21. $\mathbb{B}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. c3 $\mathbb{B}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ h6= is also completely level as White's extra pawn is useless.

**20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{=}$**

Black's tremendous bishops offer him ample compensation for the pawn.

B213) 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ 

Giving Black a valuable tempo to complete his development.

11...0-0 12. h4

A combination of $\mathbb{Q}b1$ with 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is actually not a bad thing, but after 12... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5! 14. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\bar{=}$ I still prefer Black, if only slightly.

12...h6

White now has a wide choice but, apparently, not a fully satisfactory plan:

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

It looks natural to place the bishop opposite to the black queen, but this will be met with a fine strategic retort.

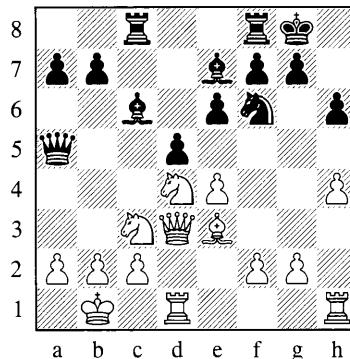
13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ d5 15. exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c4\uparrow$ saw the advantage rest with Black in Nakamura – Karjakin, Cuernavaca 2004.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$

This looks unnatural.

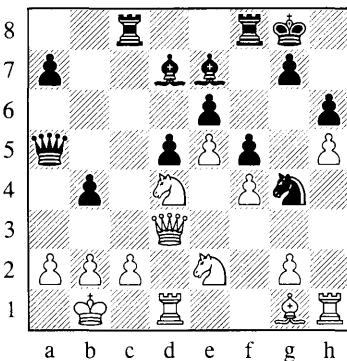
13...d5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$

14...dxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c4\rightleftarrows$ is less clear.



15. e5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. f4 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. h5 f5! $\bar{=}$

Black's game is the more pleasant. The idea is to retreat the queen and follow up with a push of the a-pawn, but it has to be carried out with precision. For example:

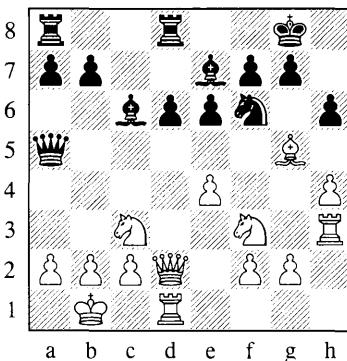


- 20.Bh3 Bc4!
 20...Bc7 21.Ba6! Bb6 22.Bxb6 axb6
 23.c3= is only equal.
 21.Qc1 Bfc8 22.Qcb3 Bd8 23.Qd2
 23.Qxf5 Bxf4=
- 23...B4c7 24.Ba6 Be8!

It is apparent that White is reduced to a passive and preventive role, whereas Black can try to improve his position in various ways.

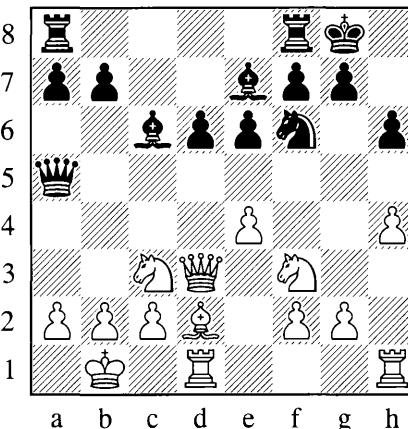
13.Qc1?! doesn't look impressive either; it fails to harass the black queen, leaving the second player with a free hand. After 13...Bfc8=, intending a push of the b-pawn, Black is simply better.

Finally, 13.Bh3?! prevents the capture of the g5-bishop, but is otherwise completely pointless. I think that Black should play: 13...Bfd8 14.Bd2N (14.Qd2?! happened in Fecke – Schiffer, Germany 2005, but I fail to grasp the point after 14...Bc7=)



14...Bac8 (14...d5? 15.Qxf6 Bxf6 16.Qxd5 Bxd2 17.Qxf6† gxf6 18.Qxd2 Qxe4= is also possible) 15.Qd5 Bxd2 16.Qxe7† Qf8 17.Qxd2 Qxe7 18.Qxf6† gxf6!= With a better ending.

After 13.Qd2 there is a fine reply that Black players need to be acquainted with:



13...Ba6!

Allowing doubled pawns, but at the same time highlighting that White is weak on e4 and g4.

Instead, 13...Bc7 is less good than it would have been with the h-pawns standing on their original squares. After 14.Qd4 d5 15.exd5 Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.g4? White is ready to push g4-g5 and the position is not so clear anymore.

The queen exchange **B2131) 14.Bxa6** is slightly less common than **B2132) 14.Qd4**.

B2131) 14.Bxa6

This appears natural, but Black obtains easy play.

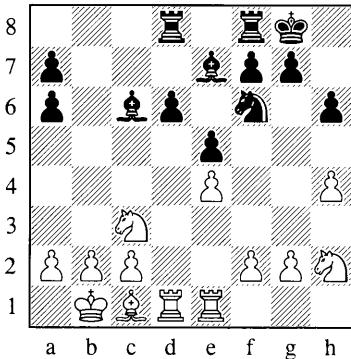
14...bxa6 15.Bhe1 e5!

This is a key move, fixing e4 as a target

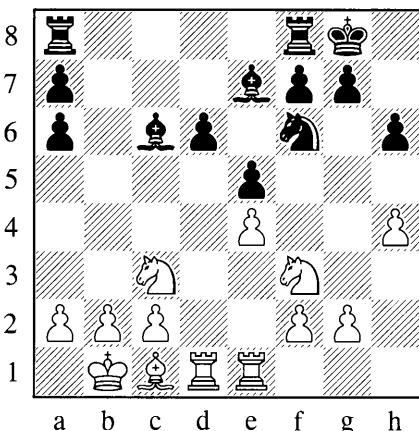
and preventing White from improving the f3-knight.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

In case of an immediate 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$, trying to prevent the knight from settling on g4, Black has: 16... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



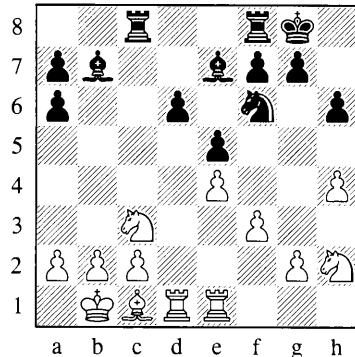
17... $d5!?$ Not forced, but good enough.
18. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $dxe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
21. $c4 \mathbb{Q}b7=$ With a balanced game.



16... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ N

I like this move, settling immediately on the wonderful g4-square.

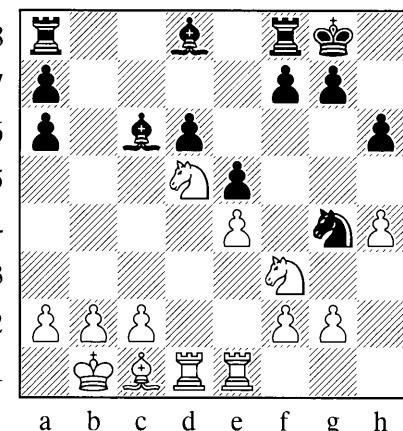
16... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ was played in Movsesian – Lagunow, Germany 1996, but here 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$ N $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $f3$ gives White a decent position with some slight chances to wrest the initiative:



18... $\mathbb{E}xc3?!$ 19. $bxc3$ $d5$ 20. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ The exchange sacrifice was clearly not adequate in view of 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d5 \mathbb{Q}d8$

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19. $b3\bar{m}$ seems to give White just enough for the pawn, as both a6 and d6 are weak.



18. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White is very close to equality, for example:

20. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e7!$

21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
24. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

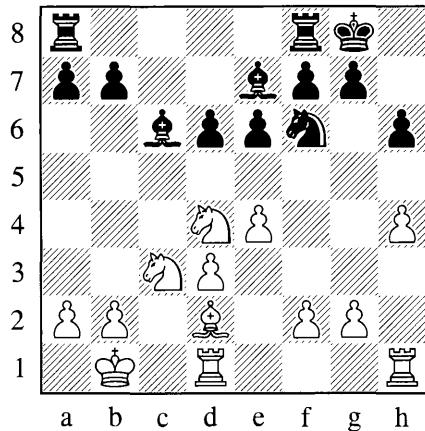
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$
25. $\mathbb{Q}ed1=/\bar{f}$

B2132) 14.♕d4

White players started employing this in recent years, but it is hard to believe that such a way of playing can lead to any problems for Black.

14...♝xd3 15.cxd3

The following move is unlikely to come as a surprise:



15...♝g4!

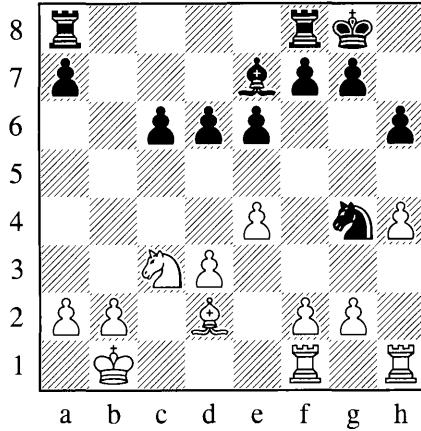
White's options are restricted, as his intended follow-up of f2-f3 and g2-g4 has been prevented.

16.♝xc6

16.♝df1 allowed Black to keep his bishop pair by 16...♝d7!, and after the further 17.♝h3 ♜fc8 18.f3 ♜e5 19.f4 ♜g4 20.h5 ♜f6 21.♝f3 ♜d8! 22.e5 f5!= he was already better in Strohhaeker – Borovikov, Deizisau 2010.

16.♝e1 allows Black to keep the bishop pair too, but is more harmonious as it does not tie a whole rook to the defence of the f2-pawn: 16...♝d7 17.♝c2 f5 18.f3 ♜f6 19.exf5 exf5= I would describe the position as equal, because White controls the d4-square with his pieces and it is not easy for Black to attack the slightly exposed h4-pawn.

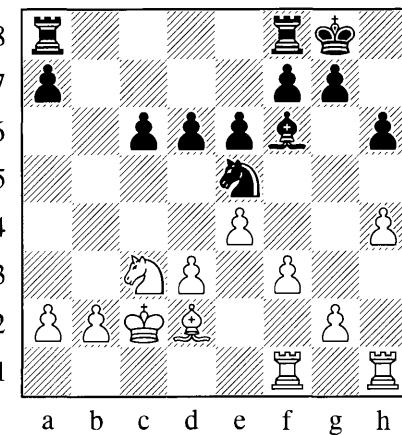
16...bxcc6 17.♝df1



17...♜f6

17...f5 18.f3 ♜e5 19.♝c2 c5 20.♝e2 ♜c6 21.♝f4 ♜d4† 22.♚b1 fxe4 23.dxe4 ♜fb8 looks quite good for Black, but White held in Rissanen – L. Hansen, corr. 2011.

18.f3 ♜e5 19.♝c2



19...c5!?N

It seems to me that Black can ignore White's kingside demonstration.

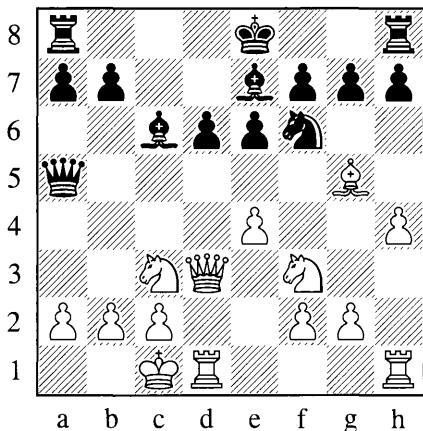
19...h5 20.♝e2 c5 21.♝c3= allowed White to hold her own in A. Muzychuk – Romanko, Dagomys 2010.

20.g4 ♜c6 21.g5 ♜d4! 22.gxh6 ♜b4† 23.♚b1 ♜fb8! 24.♝e2 ♜xd3 25.b3 gxh6

26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 cxd4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xh6 \mathbb{Q}h7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2 a5$

Black's strong centre and queenside prospects render the position favourable for him, even if only slightly.

B214) 11.h4

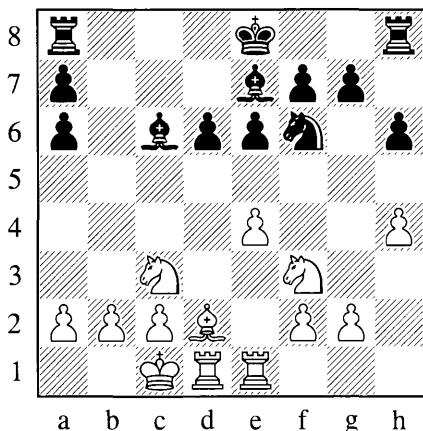


The standard continuation: White renews the idea of placing the knight on d4, but at the cost of weakening the g4-square.

11...h6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}a6$!

It's this move again, trading queens and killing White's attacking potential.

12...e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{W}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ bxa6 should also be satisfactory for Black, as we already know.

13. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ bxa6 14. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$!

Black takes advantage of the fact he has neither castled nor played ...e5 to prevent White from stopping this by putting his knight on h2.

14...e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$? is instead double-edged, since, compared to positions we've already seen, White has saved a tempo by missing out $\mathbb{Q}b1$. On the other hand Black has not yet castled short, and 15...0–0–0!? \Rightarrow led to an interesting battle in Kaminski – Renet, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Practically forced.

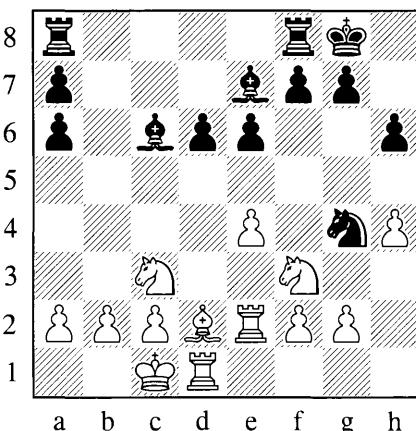
An important point is that 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$? is simply not possible, because after 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$ White is hanging on h4 and f2.

15...0–0

This allows White to untangle a bit, but has nevertheless been Gelfand's choice.

15...e5?! is not so good, because after 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ± White intends $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$ and is slightly better.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$? is perfectly feasible, but after 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$! $\mathbb{Q}d8$? (16...e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ± allows White the slight edge he is aiming for) 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 18. b3 0–0 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ∞ I am not sure whether Black has achieved any significant improvement over Gelfand's play.



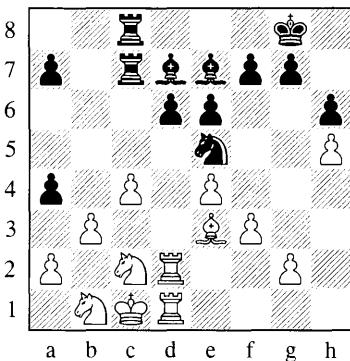
16.♘d4

16.♗f4 e5 17.♗g3 f5 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♘d5 is an excellent position for Black after either 19...♗d8 or 19...♗f8!?

16...♗d7 17.f3 ♘e5 18.♗f4!?

It seems to me that this is the best move, preparing to put d6 under siege.

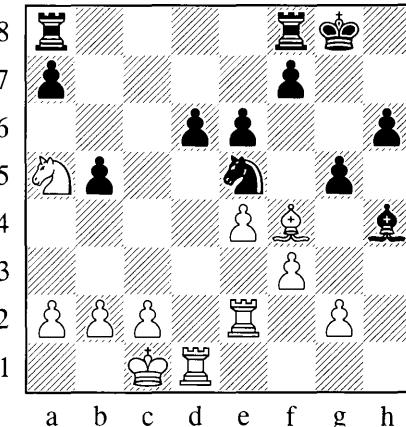
18.h5?! ♗fc8 19.b3 ♗c5 20.♗e1 (20.a4?!) 20...♗ac8 21.♗b1 ♗b8 22.♗f2 ♗f6 23.♗e3 ♗bc8 24.♗ed2?! a5 25.c3 (25.a4 ♗xa4!) 25...♗5c7 26.♗c2 ♗e7 27.c4 a4↑



Black was better in Kaminski – Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 1997, after successfully manoeuvring to achieve the ...a5-a4 thrust. However, I am not sure White defended in the best possible manner; he could have tried to place his pieces and pawns in such a way that ...a5 would be stopped by a2-a4, fixing the pawn as a weakness and avoiding an opening up of the position. In the game Gelfand managed to win in just a few more moves.

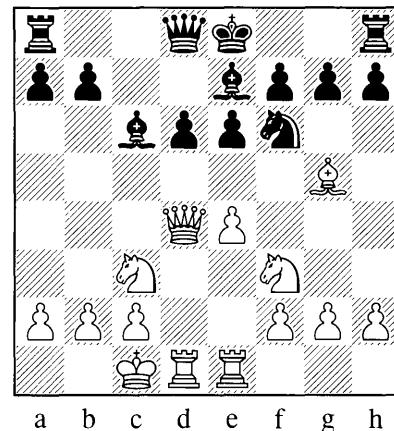
18...♗xh4 19.♗b3 ♗b5 20.♗xb5 axb5 21.♗a5 g5

An unclear position was reached in Kartal – Broniek, corr. 2009. Actually the game record stops at this point with a '0–1' sign attached to it, but I find this hard to believe unless White lost on time. Black is pressed on d6, but the push of the g-pawn promises counterplay. A continuation could be:



22.♗h2 g4 23.f4 g3 24.♗g1 ♗g6 25.♗e3 f5 26.♗d2 ♗h7!?

From a practical point of view I would prefer the black pieces here, and I think that overall we enjoy excellent chances in the 10.♗d3 line.

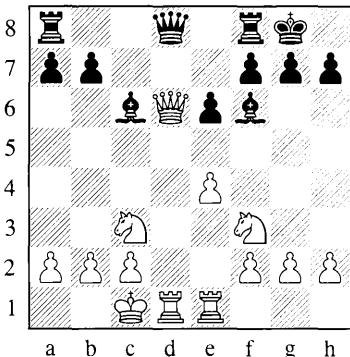
B22) 10.♗he1

White basically needs to protect his e-pawn as then he may move the queen to d2, freeing d4 for the f3-knight. Once this is achieved he will attempt to attack by pushing his kingside pawns.

10...0–0

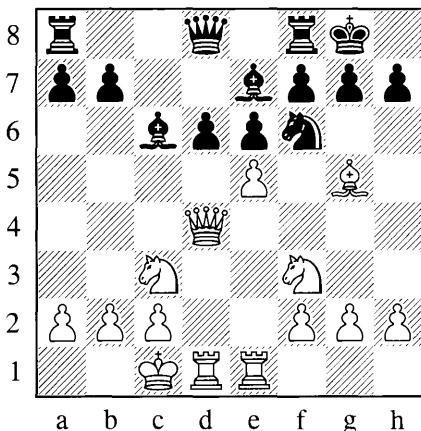
At this point White can play **B221) 11.e5**, **B222) 11.♗d2** and the most important continuation **B223) 11.♗b1**.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$?! gives up the bishop for no obvious compensation. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd6$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (12... $\mathbb{W}a5$?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 14. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxcc6\#$ may be even more promising for Black) 13. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}fxd8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ It is clear that White is struggling to hold the ending with a broken structure and an inferior minor piece.

B221) 11.e5

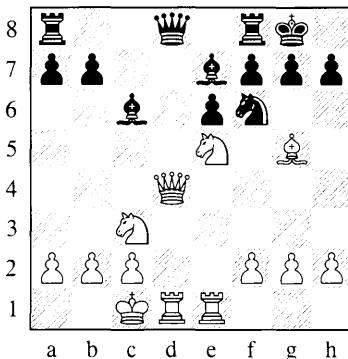


The only question after this timid move is whether Black can play for a win in the ensuing positions, as equality seems to always be within his grasp.

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

Trying to avoid giving White the option of too many exchanges.

11... $dxe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! (12. $\mathbb{W}h4$?! $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xd1\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$? 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ leaves Black with a little bit of play, although the position should objectively be a draw.)



12... $\mathbb{W}c7$! 13. $\mathbb{W}c4$! $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxcc6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}xd1\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd1=$ In Povarov – Stone, corr. 2013, White had nothing, but neither did Black. The game eventually ended in a draw.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

This has been the main move in tournament practice.

Alternatively, 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 15. $exd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xd6\#$ is very slightly better for Black.

13... $dxe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

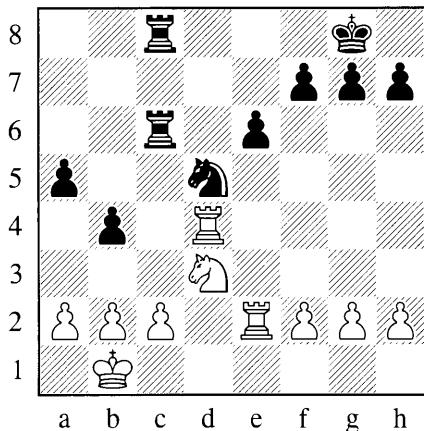
White's powerfully centralized knights should suffice to keep him within the drawing zone, but the position still has some fight left.

14. $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $b5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $b4$! 18. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $a5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$!

19. $f4$!? $N\infty$ would have been preferable.

19... $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e2$

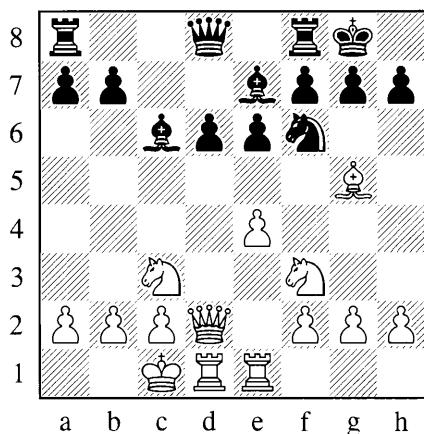
Black was pressing in Gullaksen – Molner, Reykjavik 2014, but his next move let his advantage slip. Instead of 21... $\mathbb{E}c4$?! as played in the game, he should have chosen:



21...g6!N 22.Qf4 Qb6#

White lacks a clear plan, and still has difficulties to overcome in view of the cramped position of his king. As they say, the side who has more space should avoid exchanging pieces, and nothing is truer in the present situation.

B222) 11.Wd2



This is a serious and logical option, preparing to bring the knight to d4 and then start an attack. However, Black has an interesting antidote.

11...h6!

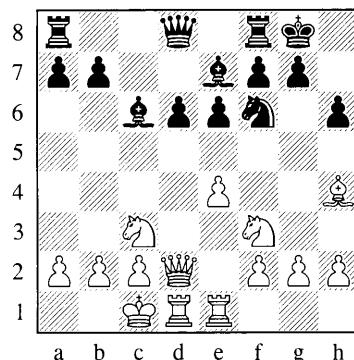
Seemingly going against the rules, as the move weakens the kingside where White intends to attack, but this is a case where Black

uses the position of the bishop on g5 to gain space and time in the centre, furthering his own strategic aims.

12.Qf4

Unfortunately for White the bishop has to retreat to this unnatural square, allowing us to hit it once more.

12.Qh4? allows a typical tactical mini-operation:

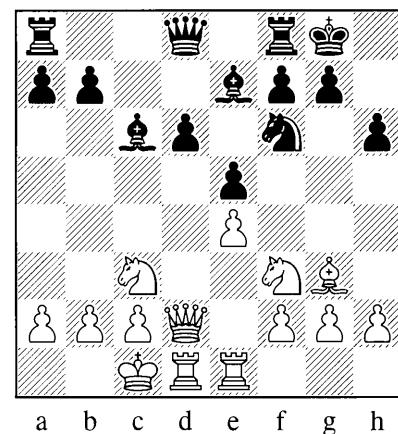


12...Qxe4 13.Qxe4 (13.Qxe4? Qxh4 14.Qxh4 Qxf3+) 13...Qxh4 14.Wxd6 Wxd6 15.Qxd6 Qe7 16.Qd3 Qfd8# Black has a considerable endgame advantage: he has two bishops versus two knights, and the asymmetric pawn structure favours them.

12...e5!

A principled follow-up, gaining space and ruling out Qd4.

13.Qg3



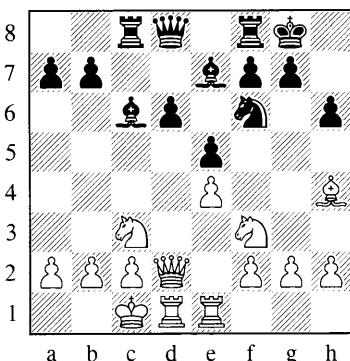
13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

I like this little-known idea, preventing White's intended $\mathbb{Q}h4$ and at the same time furthering our own queenside aims. Although it has not been played by top players, it may actually be the best move.

There have been many games where Black chose 13... $b5$ or 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$, but both of these replies allow 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$, which has drawing tendencies. One such example is:

13... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$! 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$!

Instead, White's decision not to play this move immediately led to his demise in the following game: 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$?! $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$? (19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$) 19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $g5$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$! 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ Hasangatin – Yakovich, Krasnodar 2002, and now most effective was 22... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#N$! 23. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $g4$! 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (25. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2!+$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{W}c4!+$ leading to a hopeless situation for White.



14.. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}a5$!?

Clearly drawish is 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8=$.

17.a3!

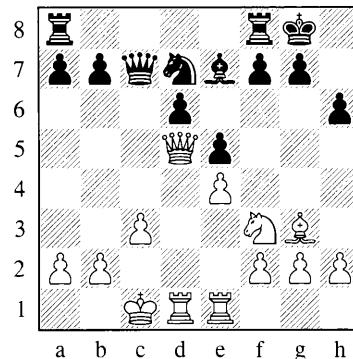
17. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$? allowed Black to win quickly by: 17... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$! 18. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $gxf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6??$ (19. $\mathbb{W}a3\#$ was forced) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4+$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$ 0–1 Cruz Ravina – Babula, Burguillos 2008.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $g6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}gxg6\#$ $fxg6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Safarian – Bodaan, corr. 2006.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

Starting a battle of nerves looks like the best policy for White, as both the f3-knight and the g3-bishop are standing inactive. The only plan I can see for him is $h2-h3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}h2-g4-e3$, but to achieve this he needs to get his king off the perilous c1-h6 diagonal.

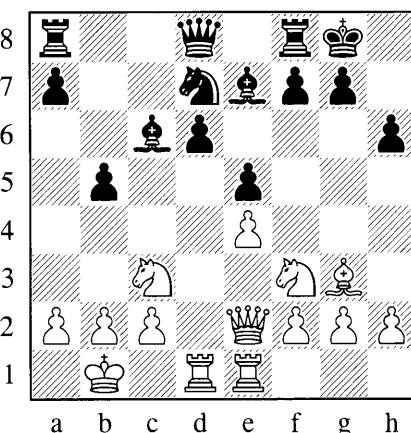
Instead, the immediate 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$?! led to a clear advantage for Black after: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16. $c3$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 17. $c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ is not a big improvement)



16... $b5$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8\#$ O. Panov – Susedenko, corr. 2011.

14... $b5$! 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$

A critical moment.



15...a5!

Black's idea is to keep the g3-bishop out of play for as long as possible.

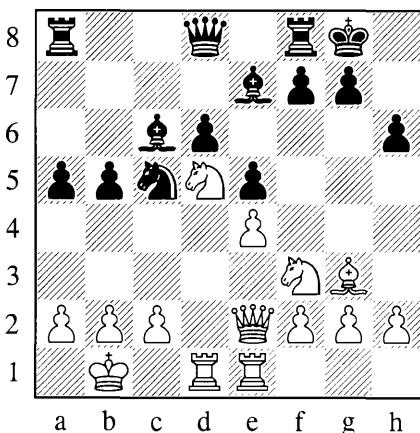
Instead, 15...b4?! 16.Qd5 Qxd5 17.Qxd5 Qc7 allowed White to breathe by 18.Qh4!, and the position was suddenly unclear in Crut – Romieux, France 2008. The main point here is that Black has not advanced his pawns enough on the queenside, and this fact deprives him of serious attacking chances. The text aims at pushing the pawns as much as possible before allowing Qh4.

16.Qd5

I don't see anything else for White.

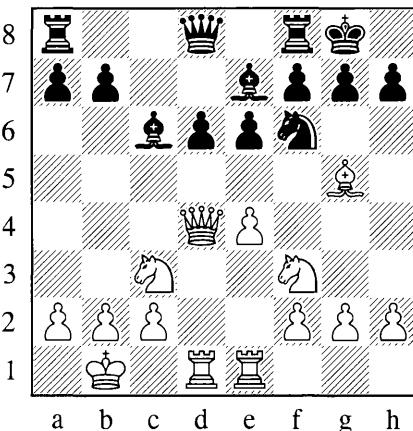
16.Qxb5?! is dangerous in view of 16...Qxb5 17.Qxb5 Qc7→. The white king looks rather exposed by the open b- and c-files.

16.h3 b4 17.Qd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 Qc7 19.Qh4 is also ineffective in view of 19...g5 20.Qg3 Qfc8→, when Black's pawn storm looks much faster than any counterplay White may have on the kingside.

16...Qc5!±

As played in Lingen – Morcin, email 2012. Black does not have to take on d5, but

instead keeps White's pieces cramped while increasing the pressure in the centre and on the queenside. I believe that the second player has the better prospects here, so 11.Qd2, albeit a serious move, gives us interesting fighting opportunities.

B223) 11.Qb1

It seems a wise precaution to bring the king to b1 before doing anything else, protecting the weak a2-pawn.

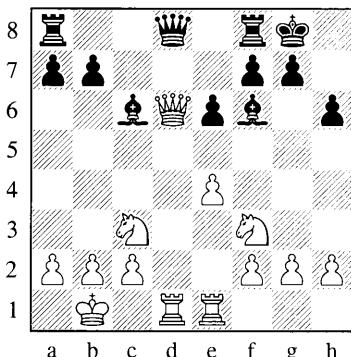
11...h6

Again I like this apparently provocative move, forcing White to declare his intentions regarding the future of his bishop. I believe that the weakening of our kingside is not so important and is something we can live with.

12.Qh4!

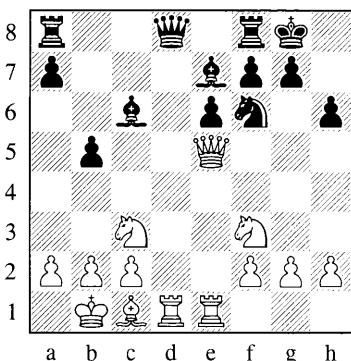
This is the most popular response, maintaining the pressure on the h4-d8 diagonal.

Alternatively, 12.Qxf6?! Qxf6 13.Qxd6 is pointless as usual, and can only lead White into trouble:

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 

13... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 16. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ axb6 18. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$
 Black has a superior ending, with the better pawn structure and stronger minor piece.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$ is also rather passive, allowing us a free hand on the queenside. We should proceed as follows: 12... b5! 13. e5 dxе5 14. $\mathbb{W}xe5$



14... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b7\#$) 15... b4
 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ Black clearly had the better chances in Bogut – P.H. Nielsen, Eilat 2012, as the strong pawn on b4 gave him wonderful attacking possibilities. He went on to win without much difficulty.

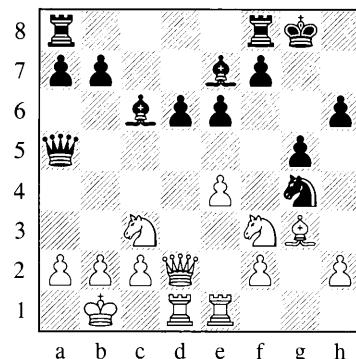
12... $\mathbb{W}a5!$

I feel this is most logical, as it gives Black's queen maximum activity and access to many important squares along the fifth rank. It has been the choice of Topalov and Areshchenko, a fact that speaks volumes about its merits.

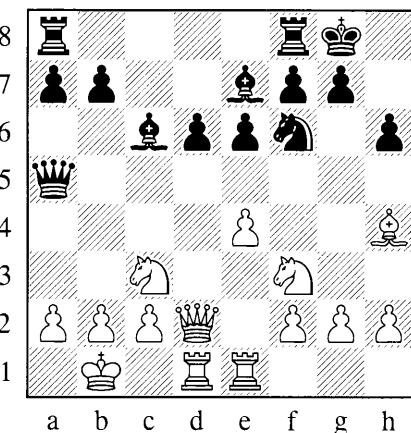
13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

I believe this is the most logical reply, creating the threat of $\mathbb{Q}d5$ while freeing d4 for the f3-knight.

The hyper-aggressive 13.g4 was employed by Naiditsch against Areshchenko, but the Ukrainian GM wasn't impressed and simply captured the pawn. After 13... g5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ it seems to me that the most accurate continuation available to Black was:



15... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ (Naiditsch – Areshchenko, Kiev [rapid] 2013, continued 15... $\mathbb{W}c5\#$, which is rather unnecessary) It is not so easy to find a good follow-up for White. For example, 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (16. h4?! $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$)
 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. h4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ and Black has a small but clear advantage in the ending.



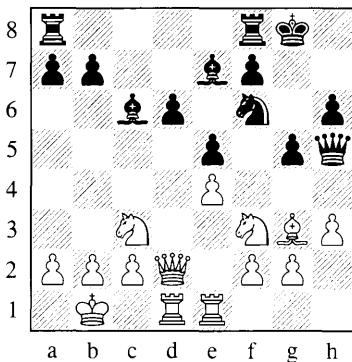
13... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

An important manoeuvre, which gets the queen out of the dangerous vis-à-vis on the e1-a5 diagonal. The queen ties down the f3-knight to the defence of the h4-bishop, and Black hopes he will have enough time to organize the advance ...d5 to gain the upper hand in the centre. It goes without saying that White needs to disrupt this plan, and at the same time further his kingside ambitions, so the next move looks rather forced.

14.h3! $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$

I believe this centralization gives Black excellent chances to equalize.

A world-class debate continued instead with the ambitious 14...g5?!. 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e5. In Timman – Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2003, Black's attempt to stifle the g3-bishop, no matter how impressive it may appear, could have landed him in a worse position after:



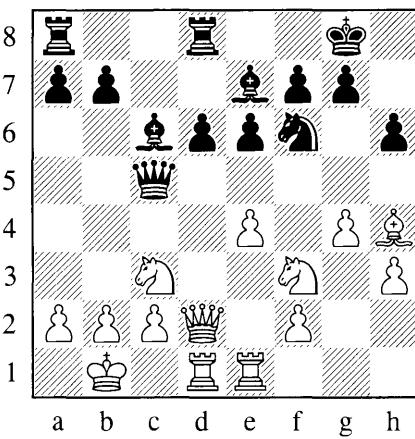
16. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$, as played in the game, is less clear in view of 16... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$?N \rightarrow) 16...b5 17.f3! b4 This occurred in the later game Greet – Gormally, Swansea 2006, when best is 18. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ N \pm , as pointed out by Topalov himself in his notes to the Timman game.

15.g4!

Faced with ...d5, White needs to undertake drastic measures.

Too slow seems 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$! b5! 16.g4 (16. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$! e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}dd1$ g5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b4 \mp is a massive improvement for Black over the Timman – Topalov game) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$ and the exchange of queens is forced, after which only Black can be better.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$



A critical position for the assessment of 14... $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$ and the whole concept of ... $\mathbb{Q}a5-h5$. The threat is still ...d5, and White can choose between the tactical B2231) 16.g5?! and the positional B2232) 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$!.

B2231) 16.g5?!

This tactical solution isn't quite satisfactory in view of the following line:

16...hxg5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ b5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$

18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5\mp$

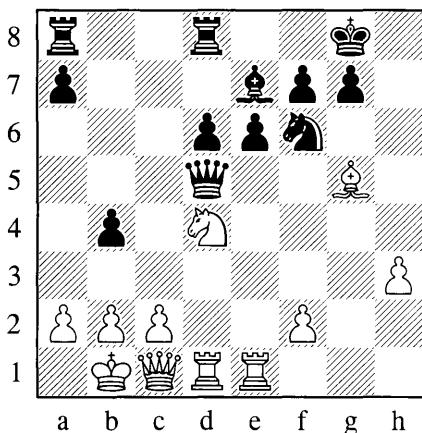
18...b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

White has some attacking chances, but a pawn is a pawn and Black has a sound defensive structure.

21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$!?

This is the most annoying option for Black, as White gets out of the ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ fork with gain of time by threatening $\mathbb{Q}xe6$.

After 21.f3 Black can force a drawish ending by 21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$? 22.fxe4 $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ fxe6 26. $\mathbb{B}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 27. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7=$ if he so desires, but it is quite likely that he can fare even better than that.



21... $\mathbb{W}c4$!

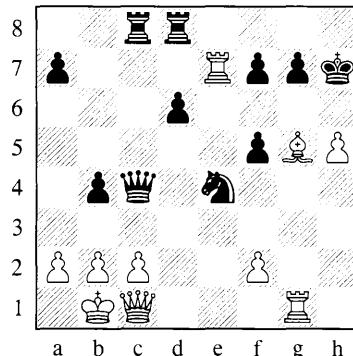
I like this move, which has the deep idea to attack the multifunctional d4-knight by means of ... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ -c5-d5! White dare not evict the queen by b2-b3, as that would create a gaping hole on c3 for the black knight.

22. $\mathbb{Q}h6$?

This startling move is the most dangerous try I could find.

22. $\mathbb{B}g1$ $\mathbb{B}ac8\#$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{B}c5$ looks slow for White.

22.h4? $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 23.h5 $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ also leaves the first player struggling to draw, although he can probably achieve it with the spectacular: 24. $\mathbb{Q}f5$! (24. $\mathbb{W}f4$ e5 25. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{B}e8\#$ or 24.h6 g6 25. $\mathbb{W}f4$ e5 26. $\mathbb{W}h4$ exd4 27. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xc2\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ d3!) are hardly any problem for us) 24...exf5 25. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{B}g1$! The computer rates this as equal but, to be honest, the way to safety is rather what one would call 'luck' in chess.



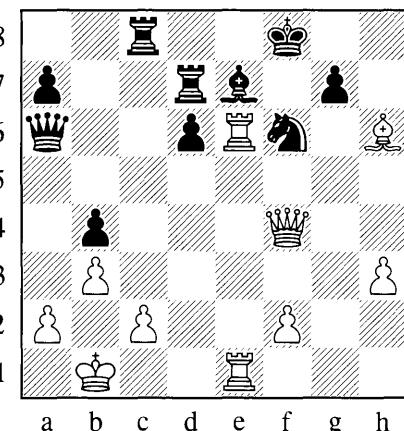
26... $\mathbb{B}g8$ 27.f3?! $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xg5$ $\mathbb{B}ce8$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ $\mathbb{B}e2$ 30. $\mathbb{B}gl$ = Despite Black's apparently more active pieces, the position is equal.

22... $\mathbb{Q}f8$! 23. $\mathbb{W}f4$!

23. $\mathbb{B}g1$? gxh6 24. $\mathbb{W}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8+$

23... $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 24.b3! $\mathbb{W}a6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$! fxe6
26. $\mathbb{B}xe6$ $\mathbb{B}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{B}de1$!

27. $\mathbb{B}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{B}f7+$

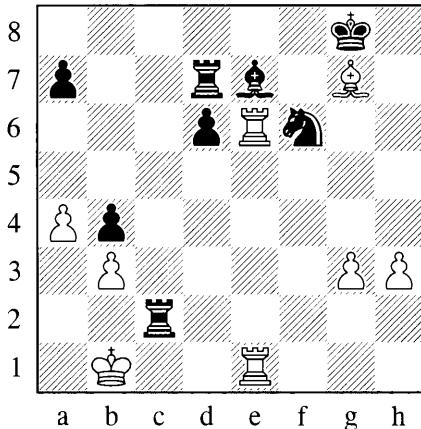


27... $\mathbb{B}xc2$!! 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$!

28. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$? $\mathbb{W}xa2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xb3\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{B}c7+$

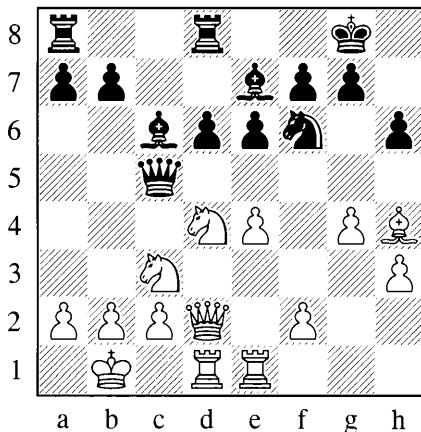
28... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 29.a4 $\mathbb{W}d3$ 30. $\mathbb{W}g3$! $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 31.fxg3

The end of the complications finds Black slightly better after either of the following replies:



31... $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$
Or 31... $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$

B2232) 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$



16...g5!?

Improving on 16... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$, when Black soon got into difficulty in J. Williams – Hassan corr. 2013.

17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

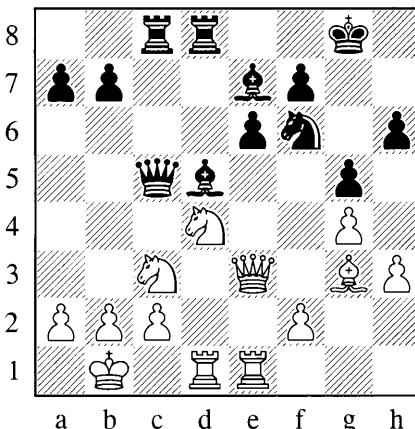
17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ d5 19.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5\rightleftarrows$

17...d5 18.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$?

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20.h4 $\mathbb{Q}ac8\rightleftarrows$

19... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$

It turns out Black's activity sufficiently compensates for his weakened kingside:



20. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

This centralization appears best, but the alternative is also interesting.

After 20.f4!? $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}de2$, a good reaction is: 21... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$) 22.fxg5 hxg5 23.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\rightleftarrows$

20... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 21.f4!?

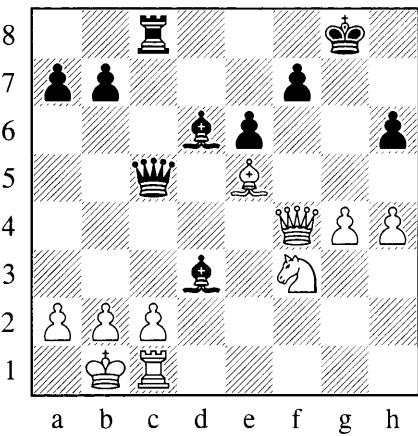
21.b3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ is quite okay for Black.

21... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23.h4!

23.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ (24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4?$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$)
24... $\mathbb{Q}g5\rightleftarrows$

23... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\#$
26. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

27. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ is just unclear.



27...Qf2! 28.Qxh6 Qxe5 29.Qxe5 Qe4
 30.Qg5+ Qh7 31.Qd3 Qxd3 32.cxd3 Qxc1+
 33.Qxc1 b6=

The computer says White has no way to make progress in spite of being a pawn up, and I believe it.

Conclusion

This exciting chapter began with the sequence 1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.Qb5 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Qxd4 Qd7 6.Qxc6 Qxc6, with White then choosing between 7.c4 and 7.Qc3. Against the former I propose 7...f5?!, when our open f-file certainly leads to some double-edged positions. My analysis shows the most harmonious set-ups for the black pieces, and there is plenty scope for creativity as the second player fights for the full point.

7.Qc3 sets the wheels in motion for opposite-side castling, and while this does not necessarily signal the beginning of brutal mating attacks, the play does become sharp and tactical. There is a lot of hard work for the reader here, but I am convinced that my analysis shows the clearest routes to fight for the initiative.

Chapter 24

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Rossolimo - 4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$

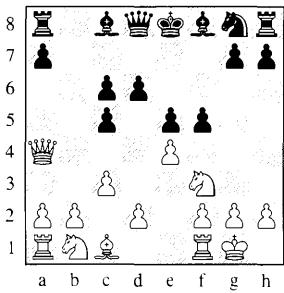
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\#$

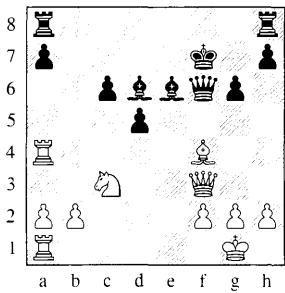
4... bxc6

A) 5.e5	436
B) 5.0-0 e5!?	439
B1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$	440
B2) 7.d4!?	441
fxe4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	
B21) 8...exd4	441
B22) 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 d5	442
B221) 10.dxe5	442
B222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!!$	444
B23) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!?	446
B24) 8...d5!?	448
B3) 7.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$!?	452
8.d4 e4!	
B31) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	453
B32) 9. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.dxc5 d5!	454
B321) 11.c4	455
B322) 11.b4	456

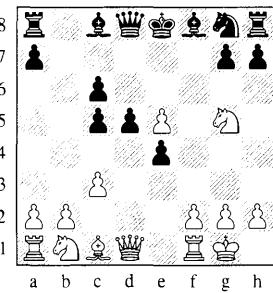
B1) after 7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$



B21) after 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



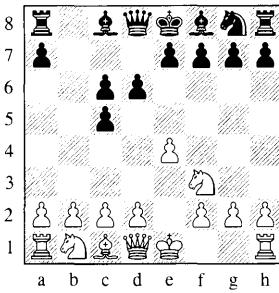
B24) after 9. dxe5



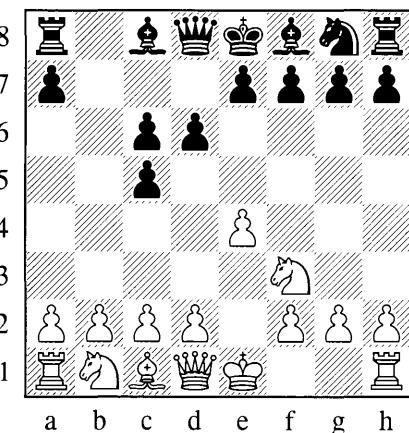
7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!N

20... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!N

9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$!N



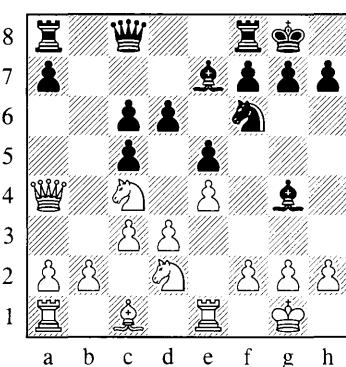
1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 d6 4.♗xc6† bxc6



This is an important line. White surrenders the bishop but inflicts a slight weakness upon our pawn formation, which he hopes to exploit later on. He will try to do so by either a disruptive e4-e5, or (in case we have already played ...e5) by c2-c3 and d2-d4, opening up the centre and aiming to saddle us with weaknesses on d6 and c6.

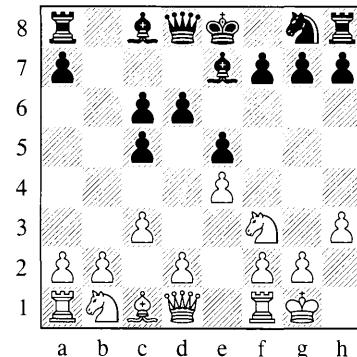
We will consider A) 5.e5 before moving on to the main move B) 5.0-0.

5.c3 ♗f6! 6.♗a4 (6.d3 g6?! 7.0-0 ♗c7 8.♗a3 ♗g7 9.h3 0-0 is also excellent for Black)
6...♗d7 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♗bd2 0-0
10.♗e1 ♗c8 (another possibility was 10...♗e8 11.♗c4 f6) 11.♗c4 ♗g4 12.♗fd2



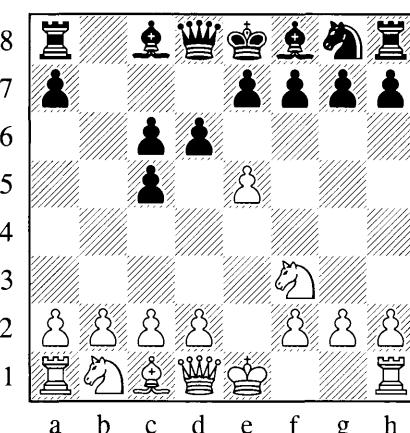
12...♗d7! 13.♗e3 ♗b6 14.♗c2 ♗e6 15.♗f3 f6 16.d4 cxd4 17.cxd4 c5! 18.dxc5?! ♗xc5†
Black stood fine in Dimitriadis – Dochev, Heraklion 2011.

5.h3 is the sort of precaution that is rather needless at this point. 5...e5 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.c3?! (7.d3 f5 8.♗bd2 ♗f6 is also more pleasant for Black)



7...f5! 8.exf5 e4! 9.♗e1 ♗xf5 10.d3 exd3 11.♗xd3 ♗f6 12.c4 0-0 13.♗c3 ♗d7 14.♗el ♗ae8 15.b3 ♗d8!† Black stood well in Almagro Llamas – Etchegaray, Elgoibar 2014, and went on to win.

A) 5.e5



A logical move which disrupts our plan of setting up a proud pawn centre by ...e5.

However, the time lost allows Black strong central play, which he achieves in the following manner:

5...dxe5!?

This ruins the pawn structure, but Black will get a lot of tempos to compensate.

6.♗xe5

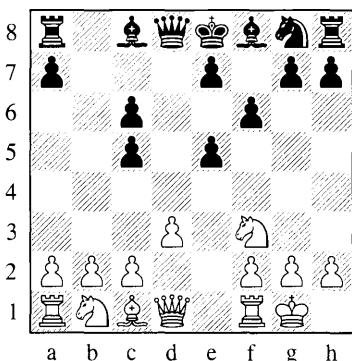
6.0–0

This is rather extravagant, but it shouldn't be taken lightly.

6...f6!

6...e4 7.♗g5 ♖d5 8.d3 exd3 9.♗c3 ♖d7 10.cxd3 ♗f6 11.♗e3± looks a bit better for White.

7.d3



7...c4! 8.♗c3

8.dxc4 ♖xd1 9.♗xd1 g6 is a fine ending for Black.

8...cx d3 9.cxd3 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗e1 ♖b8!

Intending ...♗b7-d7 amongst others.

12.♗e2 ♗b7

12...e6 13.d4!

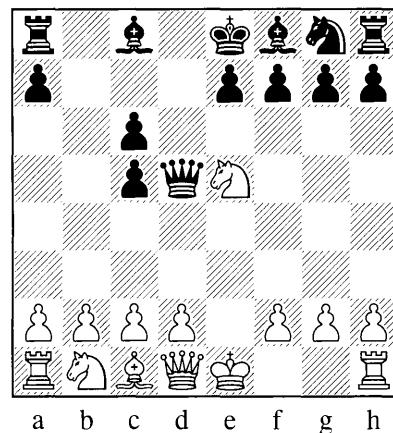
13.♗e3 e6 14.♗ed1 ♗e7 15.d4 e4! 16.♗xe4

♗d5 is

I like Black's position: he has returned the pawn, but he has two powerful bishops and a strong knight on d5 to compensate for his weakness on c6.

6...♖d5!

This strong centralization is the point behind 5...dxe5!?, attacking both e5 and g2.



7.♗f3 ♖e4†

Now it is Black's turn to annoy his opponent, as White will have to either give up a pawn or lose castling privileges to parry this check.

8.♔f1

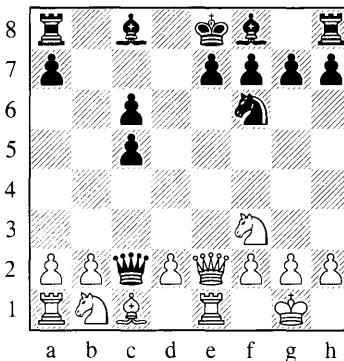
The more popular response, keeping White's pawn structure intact at least.

8.♖e2 ♖xc2 9.0–0

9.♗a3 ♖g6 10.0–0 ♘h3 11.♗e1 ♘g4 12.f3 ♘f5 13.♗c4 ♖e6! is quite unimpressive from White's point of view.

9...♗f6 10.♗e1

10.♗c3 e6 11.♗e5 ♖f5!? 12.g4 ♗xg4! 13.♗xg4 ♘a6! 14.♖xa6 ♖xg4= is an interesting, albeit not forced, line.

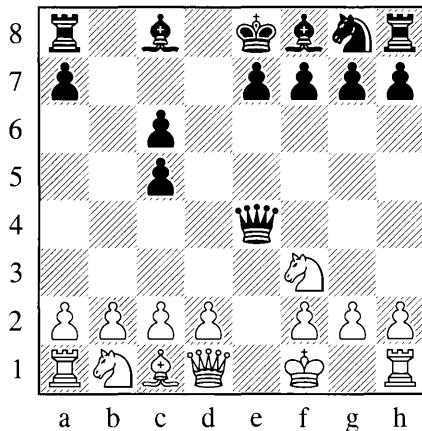


10...e6

10... $\mathbb{W}f5$! N could also be tried.11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$!12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! \checkmark

I like this, developing while pinning a dangerous piece.

Instead, 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$! 0–0 14. d3 (14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ is not as bad as it seems for Black, as his bishop is coming to b7) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ was slightly uncomfortable for Black in Bulmaga – Breslavskaya, Kharkov 2007, although even here the best move 15... $\mathbb{E}e8N\infty$ would have left the situation rather unclear. The h1-a8 diagonal is a long-term asset for Black.



8...g6

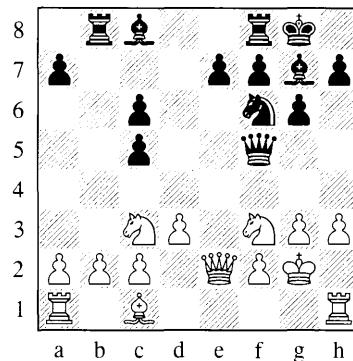
This looks like the best set-up; by developing his bishop on g7 Black can exert maximum influence in the centre.

An example of what could go wrong if Black is not careful is: 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 9. d3 $\mathbb{W}f5$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ g6 11. b3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 16. g3± White had a pleasant edge and went on to win comfortably in Ntirlis – Weiss, corr. 2013.

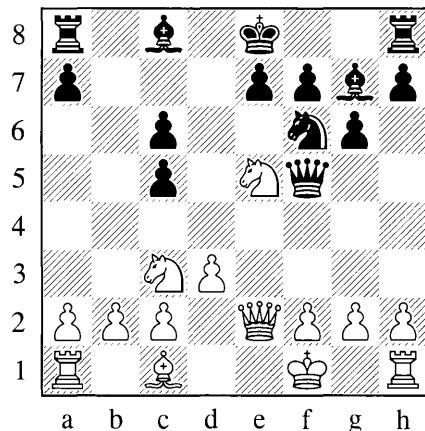
9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 10. d3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The slower 12. h3 has the idea of bringing the king to safety by following up with g2-g3

and $\mathbb{Q}g2$. Black may play: 12... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 13. g3 (13. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 15. g4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ h5 17. g5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is at least equal for Black) 13... 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



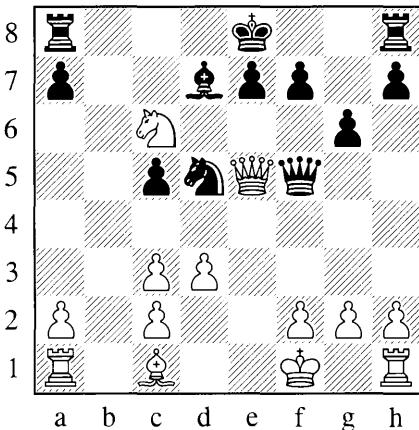
14... $\mathbb{E}e8$! 15. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$! Black gets an excellent position, as White cannot maintain control of the critical c4-square.

12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$! N

12... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ was unclear in Delorme – Edouard, Arinsal 2009.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$!?14. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e5$

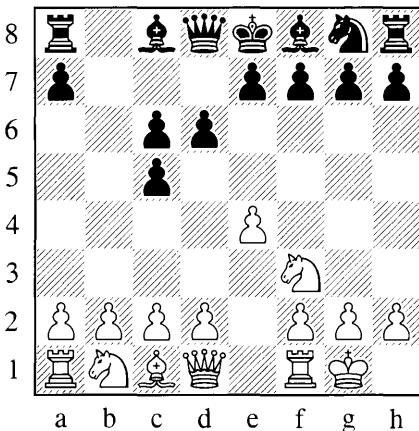
15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is excellent for the second player as well, as he has the easier play. White has problems with the h1-rook, and the c2, d3 pawn duo will be a target of attack.



15... $\mathbb{E}g8!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $gxf5$ 17.c4 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 18.cxd5
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19.f3 $\mathbb{E}b8=$

The ending is of course balanced, but Black's piece activity makes the position easy and pleasant to play.

B) 5.0-0



It seems wisest for White to castle before undertaking any action in the centre.

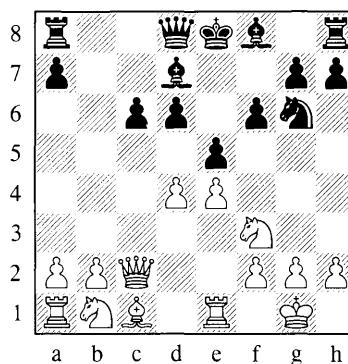
5...e5!?

Tiger Hillarp Persson gives the simple and safe 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*, which should eventually be good enough for equality. I decided to offer something spicier, as I believe that gaining space is a principled way of playing if it can be justified by tactical means.

6.c3!

Were it not for this move we would have an easy ride. The text threatens to open up the centre, benefitting the better developed side – and that is undoubtedly White. Thus, urgent measures are required on Black's part, who should try to disrupt the plan of d2-d4 by striking first in the centre.

White has a few alternatives, but they are slow and allow Black to organize himself. One such example is 6. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathfrak{Q}e7$! 7. c3 $\mathfrak{Q}g6$ 8. d4 cxd4 9. cxd4 f6! 10. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ when Black has a super-solid centre and can complete his development without having to worry about tactics.



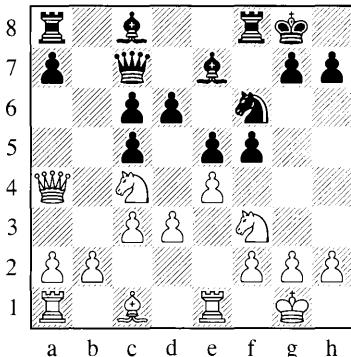
11.b3?! (11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.♗bd2 0–0 13.♗ad1 ♘e8! – also looks excellent for Black, but at least in this case White keeps the f4-square covered.) 11...♗e7 12.♗bd2 0–0 13.♗b2 ♜c8 14.♗ad1 ♘e8! 15.♗f1 ♗g4 16.♗e3 c5! 17.dxc5 ♘xc5 18.♗d2 ♘c6+ Black had seized a clear advantage in Guerrero – Nakamura, Chicago 2008, and went on to gain the full point.

6...f5!?

I think that this is the most thematic move, striking at the light squares where White is currently weak. Of course it entails some risk, but after other moves Black would be slightly worse without real chances to play for a win.

White sometimes plays **B1) 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$** , but the two main possibilities are **B2) 7. d4!?** and **B3) 7. exf5.**

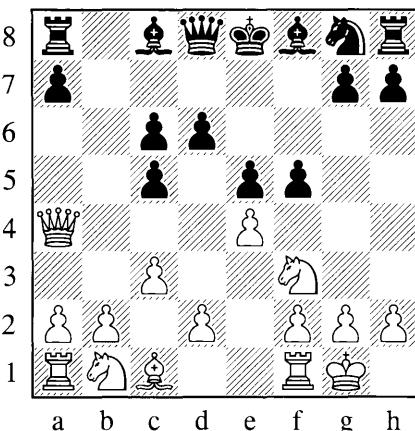
7. d3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ was Tochtrop – Joachim, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2006, and now I like:



a b c d e f g h

11...fxe4!N 12. dxe4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 14. h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\mp$ Black plans ... $\mathbb{E}e6$ and ... $\mathbb{E}af8$, with an excellent game.

B1) 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$



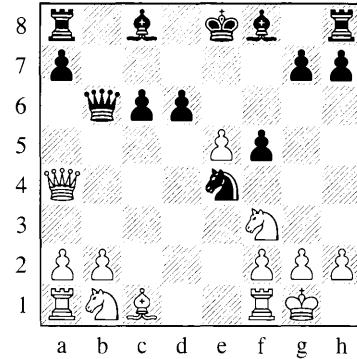
a b c d e f g h

I would be surprised if such a move caused Black any trouble.

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N

The white queen looks a bit out of play on a4.

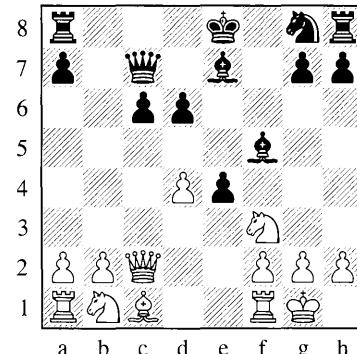
Instead, the widely used 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$? looks dubious in view of the following little-known game: 8. d4!! cxd4 (8...fxe4 9. dx5 exf3 10. exf6±) 9. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 10. dx5 $\mathbb{W}b6$ Naudier – Riff, Besancon 2006, when best is:



11. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ N $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. bxc3± Black is undeveloped and likely to come under a huge attack.

Another possibility is 7... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 8. exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 9. d4, and now:

a) 9...cxd4 10. cxd4 e4 11. $\mathbb{W}c2!$? (11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ [12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$? d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\mp$] 12...d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. f3 $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ is okay for Black according to analysis by S. Ivanov) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1\pm$)



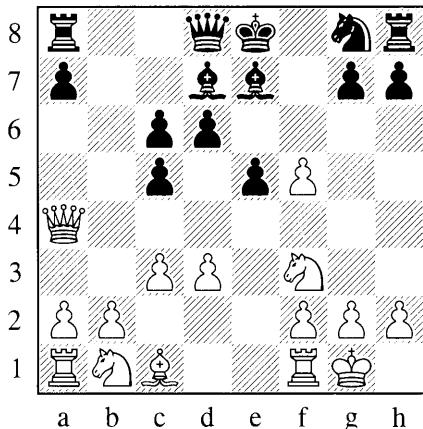
12. d5! $\mathbb{W}c8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ cxd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$ This is a position worth analysing, but I feel White has a small edge.

b) 9...e4!? 10.♗e1 ♗f6 11.dxc5 d5 is unclear.

The following is what is likely to happen after ‘my’ 7...♗d7! (I hope I am allowed to call it this as, strangely enough, it has never been tried).

8.exf5 ♗e7 9.d3

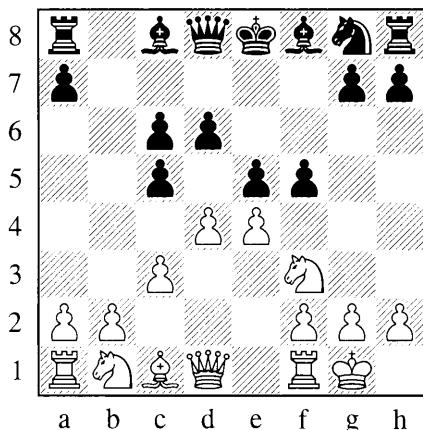
9.d4? cxd4 10.cxd4 c5=



9...♗f6 10.♗bd2 0–0 11.♗e4 ♗xf5 12.♗xc6
♗c8 13.♗a4 d5 14.♗xf6† ♗xf6 15.♗d1
♗d6↑

Black has tremendous compensation for the pawn, and could well be much better.

B2) 7.d4!?



Meeting fire with fire. White believes (rightly so) that the position of the enemy king in the centre will offer him enough compensation for the pawn.

7...fxe4

Black should of course take the offered pawn and try to weather the storm.

8.♗g5

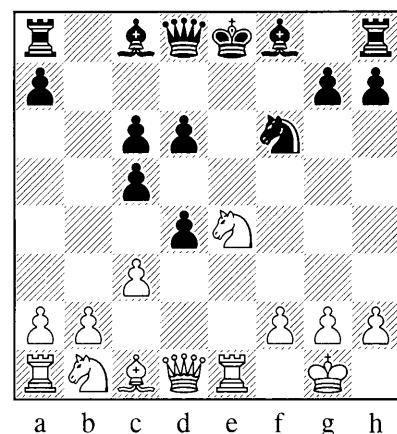
At this point we have reached a major juncture for this line, where I would like to examine the following choices for Black:
B21) 8...exd4, B22) 8...cxd4, B23) 8...♗f5?! or B24) d5?!

B21) 8...exd4

This has been played by the strong Serbian GM Bojan Vuckovic, who is quite serious about his openings. I must confess that I hadn't looked at the move too much, but the following game indicates that it may be just playable:

9.♗xe4 ♗f6 10.♗e1!

10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xf6† ♗xf6 12.♗e1† ♗f7
13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.cxd4 cxd4 15.♗d2 ♗f5=



10...♗xe4 11.♗xe4† ♗f7 12.cxd4 d5
13.♗f4† ♗g8 14.dxc5 ♗xc5 15.♗c3
15.♗d2? ♗d6 16.♗a4 ♗f6 17.♗f3 h6

18.Qe3! Qd7! (18...Qxb2 19.Qd4±) 19.Qd2 Qh7 20.Qd4 Qf7 21.Qe5 Qxe5 22.Qxe5 Qhe8 23.Qe1± is a bit better for White.

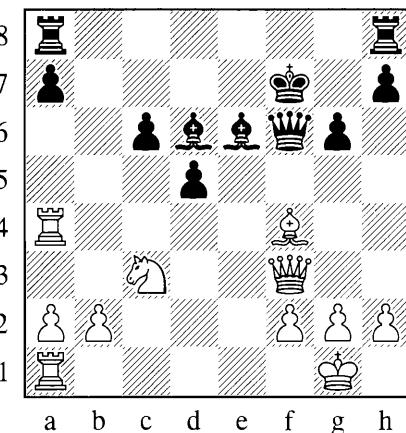
15...Qe6 16.Qe3! Qd6 17.Qa4 Qf7! 18.Qh5†
 18.Qc1 Qe8 19.Qa6 (19.Qe2 Qd7 20.Qd4 Qc8 is not as awful for Black as it seems, because the rook is misplaced on a4.) 19...Qc8 20.Qxa7† Qg8 21.Qa4 White is a pawn up, but I feel Black has enough play to hold.

18...g6 19.Qf3†

19.Qh6? Qf8 20.Qh4 Qe7 21.Qg5 Qd7 is another position where Black suffers because of his unsafe king, but it's not easy to find a knockout blow.

19...Qf6 20.Qf4

As played in A. Kovacevic – Vuckovic, Sombor 2009, and now I recommend:



20...Qc5!N

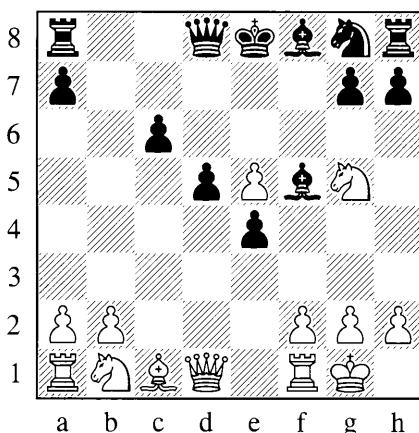
Black is close to being equal.

B22) 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 d5

White now has **B221) 10.dxe5** or the stunning **B222) 10.Qxe4!!.**

B221) 10.dxe5 Qf5

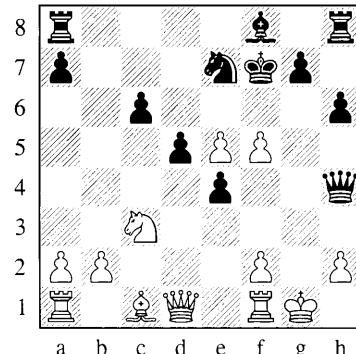
This merely leads to unclear positions, as the following analysis indicates:



11.Qc3

White will need this move to have any chance of an advantage, with the only question being whether it has to be preceded by Qa4 or not.

I had at first dismissed 11.g4 as too weakening, although it is by no means losing: 11...h6 12.Qf7! (12.gxf5 hxg5+) 12...Qxf7 13.gxf5 Qh4 14.Qc3 (14.e6†?! Qf6+) 14...Qe7



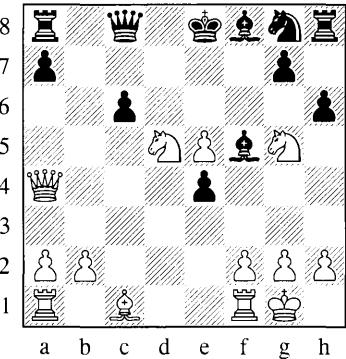
15.f3! e3 16.Qxe3 Qxf5 17.Qf2 Qf4 18.Qxd5! Qxe5 19.Qc3 Qd6 20.f4 Qe6± Black's king is less draughty than White's, and this makes his position slightly easier to play.

11.♔a4

I spent a lot of time analysing this obvious continuation, concluding that Black stands rather well after either 11...♕c8 or 11...♕d7. One interesting line is:

11...♕c8 12.♕c3 h6 13.♕xd5!?

13.♕h3 ♕xh3 14.gxh3 ♔e6= can't be worse for Black with White's kingside so ruined.

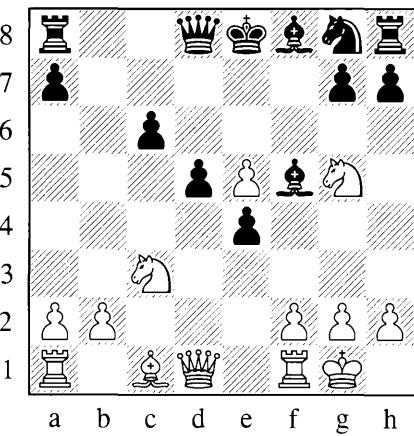


13...hxg5 14.♕xg5 ♕e7 15.♕ac1! ♔b7! 16.♕e3 ♕d8 17.♕fd1 ♕f7 18.♕xc6 ♕d7 19.e6†

19.♕xe7 ♕xc6 20.♕c4† ♕xe7 21.♕c5† ♕e8 22.♕xd8† ♕xd8 23.♕f8† ♕e8 24.♕g5† ♕e7 25.♕xh8 ♕xb2 26.♕xe7† ♕d7! 27.g4! e3= is a draw.

19...♕xe6 20.♕c7 ♕xb2 21.♕xe7 ♕xd1† 22.♕xd1 ♕xe7 23.♕c5 ♕e8 24.♕h5† ♕f8 25.♕h8† ♕f7 26.♕h5† ♕f8=

The game must end in a perpetual.

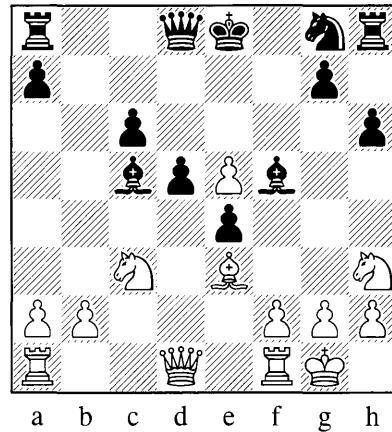


11...h6 12.♕h3 ♕c5

Black cannot take on h3 because of ♕h5†.

13.♕e3!

13.♕a4 ♕b6 14.♕f4 ♕e7 15.b4 (15.♕h5†? g6 16.♕h4 ♕c7! is better for Black) 15...0–0→ yields an approximately balanced position.

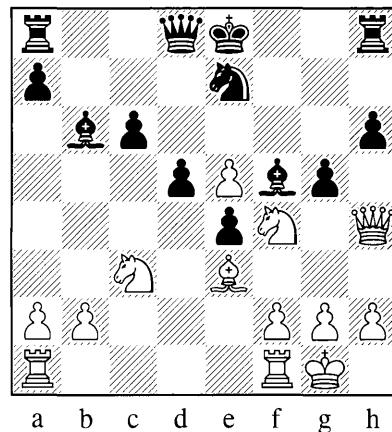


13...♕b6 14.♕f4!

14.♔a4 ♕e7 15.♕xd5?! ♕xd5 16.♕xb6 ♕xh3 17.gxh3 0–0 18.♕c7 ♕g6 19.♕ad1 ♕f7 20.♕xe4 ♕f4 21.♕d6 ♕xh3† 22.♕g2 ♕xf2 23.♕xf8 ♕xe4 24.♕xf7 ♕xf7 25.♕d6 ♕e6= is an ending the computer considers completely equal.

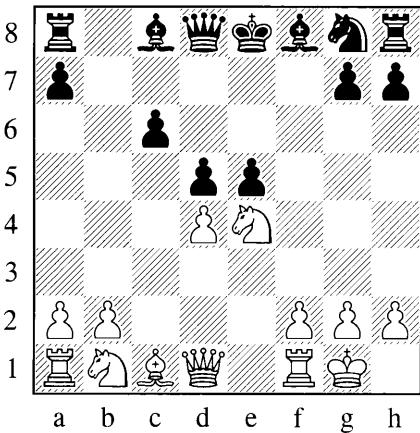
14...♕e7 15.♕h5†! g6 16.♕h4 g5

16...♕b8?!



17. $\mathbb{W}h5\# \mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}fe2 \mathbb{W}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe8\# \mathbb{Q}xe8$
 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}c8\#$

B222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!!$



8... $cxd4$ 9. $cxd4$ $d5$ is one of the two lines I originally wanted to suggest, but I was soon disappointed to discover that this underrated sacrifice gives White a slightly better ending. After all these promising lines, it is easy to understand that an in-depth analysis of 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!!$ left me in a state of shock.

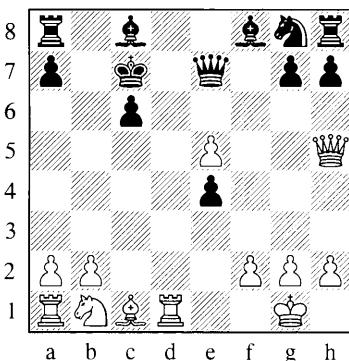
10... $dxe4$ 11. $\mathbb{W}h5\# \mathbb{Q}e7$

This awful king move is unfortunately forced.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

Black had fared well with this alternative in a correspondence game, but the sad truth is that the move loses:

12. $dxe5 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{B}d1 \mathbb{W}e7$



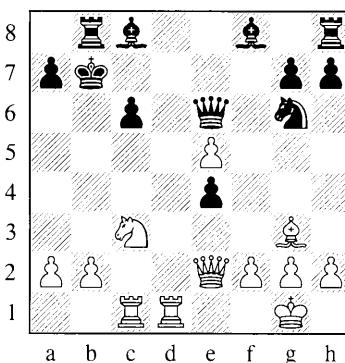
14. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ N

My novelty. The inaccurate 14. $\mathbb{B}g5?$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{B}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (18. $\mathbb{W}xe4 \mathbb{W}f5$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ had led to a good position and an eventual win for Black in Stefanov – Desmoitier, corr. 2000.

14... $\mathbb{W}e6$

The alternative 14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $gxh6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}d6\pm$ looks hopeless for Black as well.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2!$
 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $\mathbb{W}g4$
 18... $\mathbb{B}b8$



19. $\mathbb{Q}b5!!$

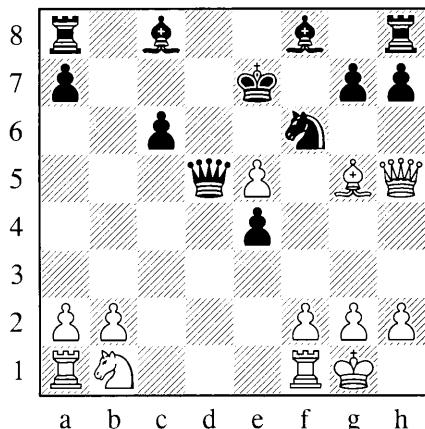
A bolt from the blue.

19... $cxb5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe4\# \mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $b4!$ $a5$ 22. $f4$ $axb4$ 23. $f5+$

That was a massive disappointment for me, but I hope that my discovery of all these moves will prevent Black players falling victims to this deep opening trap.

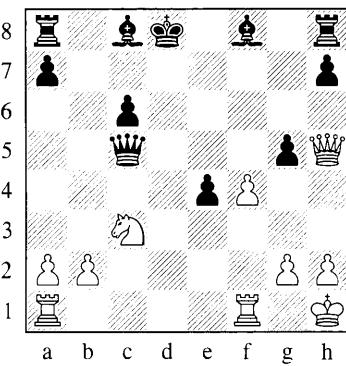
Returning to 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$, I was surprised to see that Black is not losing in 15 moves (and may in fact be not losing at all) yet I'm not satisfied with the results of my research from the repertoire's point of view.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\# \mathbb{Q}f6$ 13. $dxe5 \mathbb{W}d5!$

**14.f4!!**

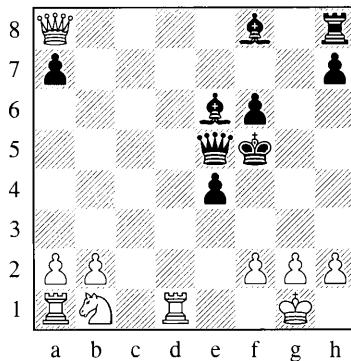
Black is presented with a rather grim defensive task in the resulting ending, which is a rather unfortunate fact considering that all the other lines seem to work:

For example, 14.exf6† gxf6 15.f4! fxg5 16.♕c3 ♜c5† 17.♔h1 ♔d8! leads to a draw:



18.♗f7 (18.♕xe4 ♜f5 19.♗d1† ♔c7 20.♗d4 ♜g8 21.fxg5 ♜d5 22.♗a4 ♜e6! 23.♗ac1 ♜b7 24.♗f6 ♜b5 25.♗xb5† [25.♗e4 ♜d5] 25...cx5b 26.♗xg8 ♜xg8 27.♗cd1 ♔c7∞ is just unclear) 18...♗e7 19.♗fd1† (19.♗c4 ♜c5) 19...♔c7 20.♗d5† cxd5 21.♗xd5 ♜b8 22.♗b5† ♜b7 23.♗e5† ♜c7= White can only be worse after 24.♗xh8?! ♜g7! 25.♗xg7 ♜xg7.

14.♔h4 ♜e6! 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗d1 ♜xe5 17.♗e8† ♜f5 18.♗xc6 ♜e6 19.♗xa8 leads to a picturesque draw:

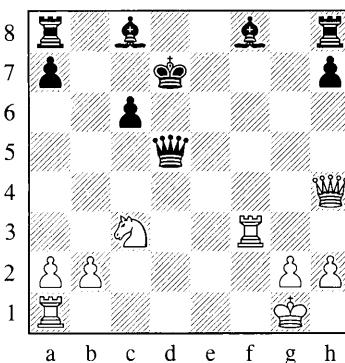


19...♗d6!! 20.♗xh8 ♜xh2† 21.♗f1 ♜c4† 22.♔e1 ♜b4† 23.♗c3 ♜xc3† 24.bxc3 ♜g1† 25.♗d2 ♜xf2† 26.♗c1 ♜e3† 27.♗b2 ♜b6†=

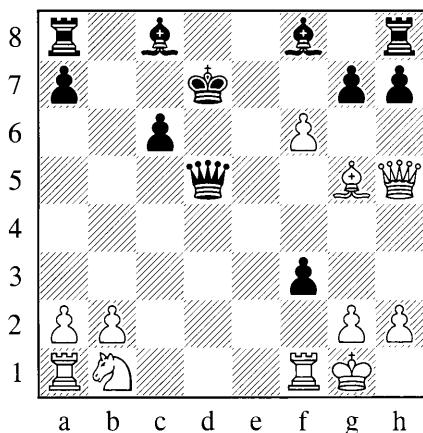
14...exf3 15.exf6† ♔d7

Not the only move, but the alternative seems rather laborious too.

15...gxh6 16.♗xf6†! ♜xf6 17.♗xf3† ♜e7 18.♗h4† ♔d7 19.♗c3

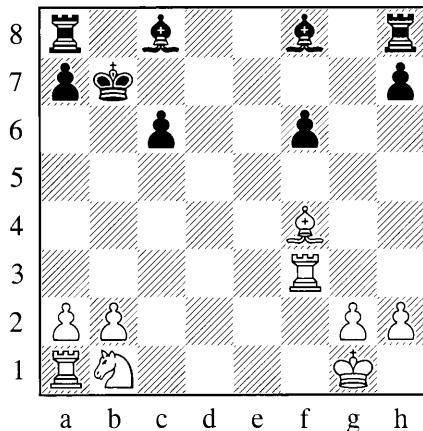


19...♔e7 20.♗h3† ♔d8 21.♗xd5 ♜c5† 22.♗e3 ♜xh3 23.♗xh3 ♜e8 24.♗f2 ♜b8 25.b3 ♜b7 26.♗d1† ♜c8 27.♗f3 ♜be7 28.♗d3† White is a bit tied up for the moment, but if he manages to put his h- and g-pawns on the third rank, place his king on d2 and follow up with ♗c2 (all of which I think he can do) then I don't see full compensation for the pawn. Maybe I am missing something here, so this position definitely requires deeper analysis.



16. $\mathbb{W}g4\# \mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4\# \mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{W}xf3$
19. $\mathbb{E}xf3 \mathbf{gx}f6$

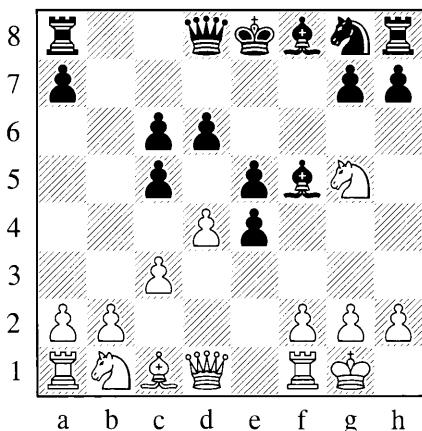
Thus, an ending with equal material, and even two bishops for Black, has been reached. I was ready to attach the '=' sign to Black's last and conclude happily that we have one more good line available against 7.d4!?, but the more I looked at the position the less I liked our weakness on f6, and the c5-square in particular.



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

The endgame may be drawable for Black, but I would recommend it only to great technicians and endgame connoisseurs, and even then not without some reservations.

B23) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$

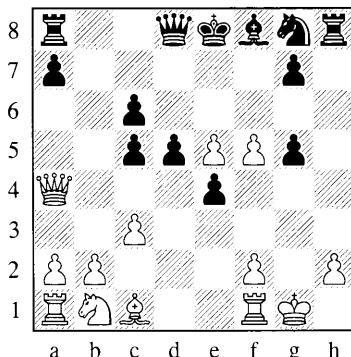


This continuation is relatively unexplored but seems quite okay to me. It looks logical, as ...h6 is already threatened. In my opinion White only has one really good move:

9.f3!

This typical reaction tests the correctness of 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$.

9.dxe5? is already a grave error, and after 9...h6 10.g4 hxg5 11.gxf5 d5 12. $\mathbb{W}a4$ White was on the edge of a precipice in Petr – Bellahcene, Al-Ain 2013. Black could have finished his good opening work with the simple:



12... $\mathbb{Q}e7N\#$ Black would have had every reason to count on victory.

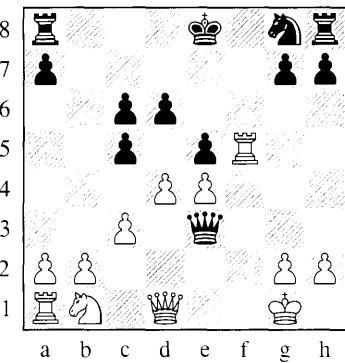
Another move worth considering is 9.♗e2, but after 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.f3 ♖h6! 12.fxe4 dxe4 13.♕c3 ♘xd4† 14.♔e3 ♘d3= it is hard to believe Black can have any problems.

Finally, 9.♗b3? d5 10.♗b7 ♔e7! is just losing for White.

9...e3!

Only in this manner can Black gain equal chances.

9...♗e7 fails to: 10.fxe4! ♗xg5 11.♗xg5 ♘xg5 12.♗xf5! ♘e3†



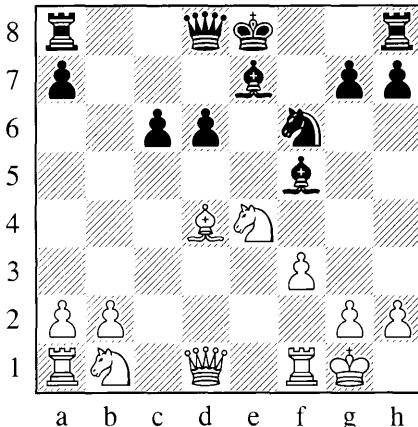
13.♗f2!! ♖f6 (13...♖h6 14.♗b3 0–0–0 15.♗d2±) 14.♗d2 0–0 15.♗c4 ♘xe4 16.♗xd6 ♘d5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♗e2!± After a series of accurate moves, White has reached a position where Black's doubled c-pawns saddle him with an unpleasant defensive task.

10.♗xe3 ♘e7

Having kept the f-file closed, Black can develop without problems.

11.♗e4 cxd4 12.cxd4 exd4 13.♗xd4 ♖f6

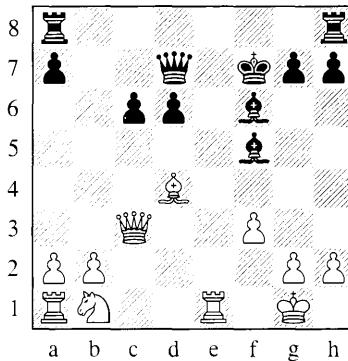
Black is close to complete equality here, but the position is delicate because of his 'hanging' c- and d-pawns.



14.♗xf6†

White should of course hurry to give a check on the e-file.

14.♗c2 is easier for us: 14...♘d7! (14...♗xe4 15.fxe4 c5 is less clear) 15.♗xf6† ♖xf6 16.♗e1† ♖f7 17.♗c3 (17.♗f2 ♖xd4 18.♗xd4 ♖xb1!? 19.♗axb1 ♖he8 20.b3 d5 21.♗bc1 a5!= looks thoroughly balanced. White has little chance to make something out of the c5-square weakness without his knight.)

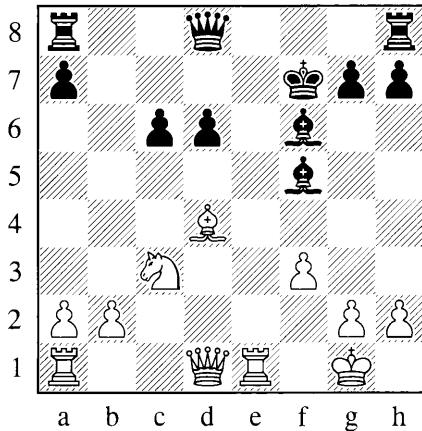


17...♖he8 18.♗d2 ♖xe1† 19.♗xe1 ♖e8 20.♗xe8 ♖xe8 21.♗f2 ♖e6 22.♗c4 c5 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♗e3 ♖b1 25.a3 ♖e5 26.♗d2 ♖e6 27.♗g4 ♖d4†!? 28.♗xd4 cxd4 29.♗e2 a5 30.b4 axb4 31.axb4 f5 32.♗f2 ♖d5=

14...♗xf6 15.♗e1† ♖f7 16.♗c3

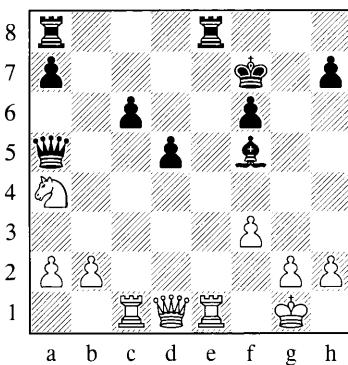
Solid chess.

The computer initially likes 16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ d5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$, but after 17... $\mathbb{E}c8=$ the knight is misplaced and there is no question of an advantage.



16...d5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is answered strongly by 17... $\mathbb{W}a5!$
18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{G}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}he8=$. For example:



20. $\mathbb{E}f1!?$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2!?$) 20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 21. b3
(21. a3 $\mathbb{E}e3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{E}g8\#$) 21... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d4$
 $\mathbb{E}e2$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{E}ce8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{E}xe2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}e7$
26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ 27. $\mathbb{E}d1$ a5 $\#$

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f2$

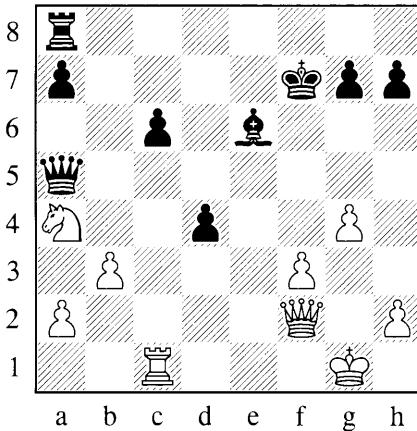
19. $\mathbb{E}ed1$ $\mathbb{E}he8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b5\#$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{E}ae8$.

19... $\mathbb{E}he8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 22. b3 d4! 23. g4

23. $\mathbb{E}d1$ c5=

23... $\mathbb{E}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c1$

24. $\mathbb{E}e4$ d3 25. $\mathbb{W}e3$ d2 26. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}a4$
 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8\#$



24... $\mathbb{W}e5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xc6$

25. f4 $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ or 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}e8\#$.

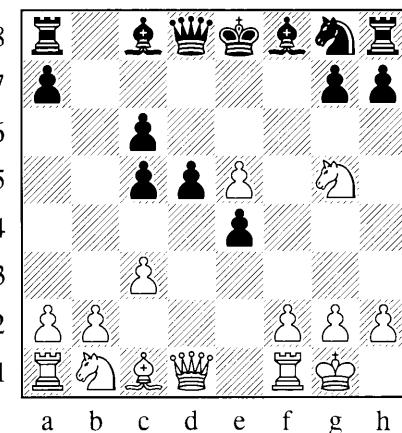
25... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}e8!\#$

Thus, 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ is an interesting alternative to our main line.

B24) 8...d5!?

This move denies White the c3-square for his knight and leads to complicated play.

9. dx5



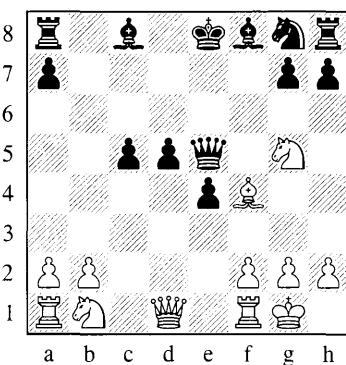
9...♛c7!?

This is a recommendation of the extremely talented IM Aggelos Vouldis that has not yet been tried in tournament practice. Black uses his queen to attack the annoying e5-pawn which is hampering his development. Part of the analysis that follows was made in an older joint session by IM Vouldis and GM Halkias, while some of the lines were discovered later on by me and Yannis Stathopoulos.

10.♗f4!

This seems to be the critical reply.

10.c4? is clearly bad: 10...♛xe5 11.cxd5 (11.♗c3 ♗f6!?) 11.♛a4 ♗d7 12.♗e1 ♗f6!?) 11...cxd5 12.♗f4!?



12...♛f5!? (12...♛xf4 13.♛xd5 ♗b8 14.♗d1 is less clear) 13.f3 ♛xf4! 14.♛xd5 ♗d6 15.♛c6† ♛e7 16.g3 ♛xg5 17.♛xa8 ♗f6! It is hard to see how White will survive.

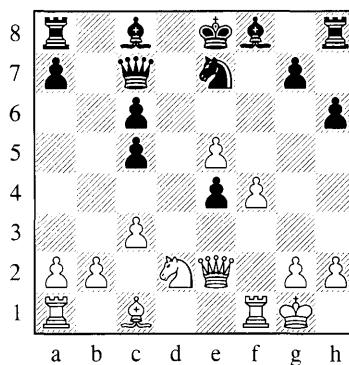
10.♛a4?! h6 11.♗xe4 dxe4 12.♗d2 ♛e7 13.♗xe4 ♗d5 14.c4 ♗b6 15.♗d1 ♛e6 seems to leave White with rather insufficient compensation for the piece.

10.f3?! h6 11.♗h3 ♗xh3 12.gxh3 ♛xe5 13.fxe4 c4!↑ gives Black dynamic play with no problems at all.

10.e6?! looks antipositional as it allows all the

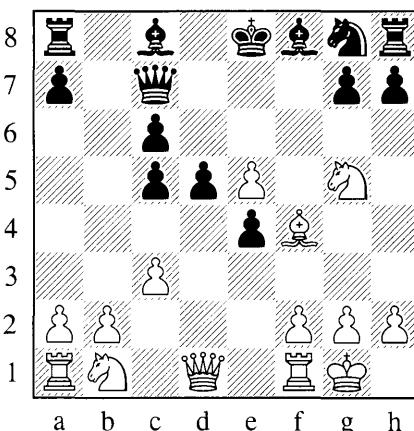
black pieces to spring to life. After 10...♗f6 11.f3 ♗d6! 12.fxe4 0–0 13.exd5 cxd5! Black's tremendous bishop pair should carry the day for him.

10.f4 is a logical move as it attempts to hold on to e5, but after 10...♗e7 our proud centre should give us the edge. For example: 11.♛e2 (11.♗e3 h6 12.♗h3 ♗f5!) 11.e6 h6 12.♗f7 ♗g8!?) 11...h6 12.♗xe4 dxe4 13.♗d2



13...♗f5 14.♗xe4 0–0–0 15.♗d6† ♗xd6 16.exd6 ♛xd6 17.♗d1 ♛e6 18.♛a6† ♗b8! White's compensation does not seem to be enough.

Finally, 10.♛h5?! g6 11.♛h4 h6! looks almost winning for Black, as ...♛xe5 is coming.



10...♗f5!

This move creates the powerful threat of ...h6.

10...Qe7 creates a traffic jam in the Black camp, and White can exploit this by 11.c4!, piling up the pressure. After 11...h6 12.Qf7 Qg6 13.Qd2† Qxd6 14.exd6 Wf7 15.Qg3 0–0 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.Qc3↑ the position remains tense, but the strong pawn on d6 gives White the better chances.

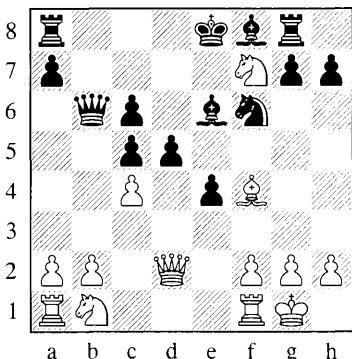
11.Wa4!

White must play incisively or he will end up significantly worse. By eyeing our weakness on c6, the first player creates a multitude of threats that require careful handling.

11.e6? is a bad mistake in view of 11...Wxf4 12.Qf7 Qxe6 13.Qxh3 Qf6+.

11.g3?! also looks rather unhealthy after either 11...Wc8 or 11...Wb7.

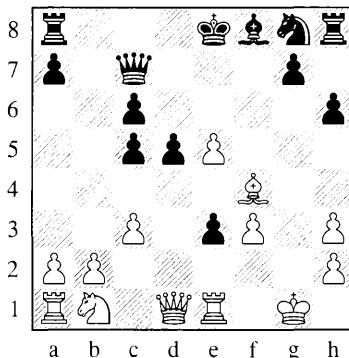
11.Wd2 looks (and is) more logical than the above moves, yet after 11...Wb6 I see no problems for us. For instance: 12.e6 (12.f3 h6+) 12...Qf6 13.Qf7 Eg8 14.c4 Qxe6



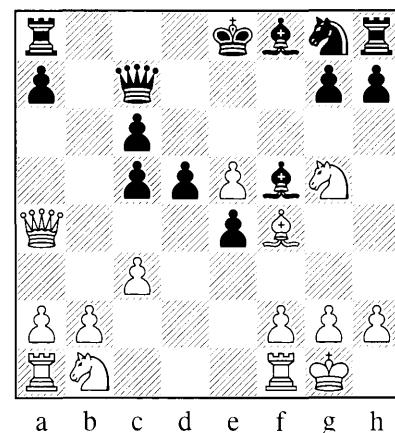
15.Qg5 Qf5 16.Qe5 h6 17.Wf4 Qd7 18.Qxf6 gxf6 19.Qh7 0–0–0 20.Qxf6 Qd6!→ The counterattack is in full swing. 21.Wxd6? is not possible because of 21...Qh3 22.Wf4 Exg2† 23.Qh1 Eg6+.

11.Qd2 is a developing move that deserves some respect, yet after 11...h6 12.Qh3 g5 13.Qg3 Qe7 14.e6 Wc8 15.Wh5+ Qg6 16.Wg4 Qf5 the best White has is to repeat with 17.Wh5+=.

Finally, 11.f3? is well met by: 11...h6! 12.Qh3 (12.fxe4? hxg5+ reveals the dark side of having the bishop on f4) 12...Qxh3 13.gxh3 e3 14.Qe1 (14.Qxe3 Wxe5 15.Qe1 Qf7=)



14...Qe7 15.Qxe3 Qf5 16.Qf2 Qc7= Black has excellent positional compensation in return for the pawn.

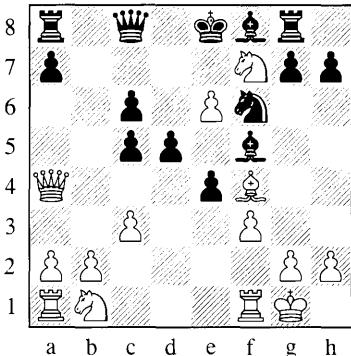


11...Wb7!

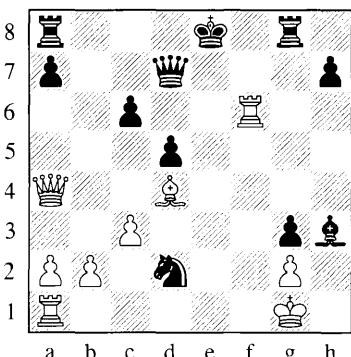
Safeguarding the queen against all sorts of tactics and finally preparing to evict the knight.

11...♛c8? is not good:

a) 12.e6 leads to a complicated position that should peter out to a draw after correct play by both sides. The following long line summarizes the action: 12...♝f6 13.♝f7 ♜g8 14.f3

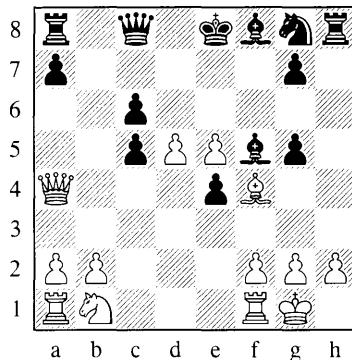


14...g5!! 15.♝d6† ♜xd6 16.♝xd6 ♜xe6
17.♝xc5 g4! 18.fxe4 ♜xe4 19.♝d4 g3! 20.h3!
♜xh3 21.♝d2! ♜xd2 22.♝f6! ♜d7

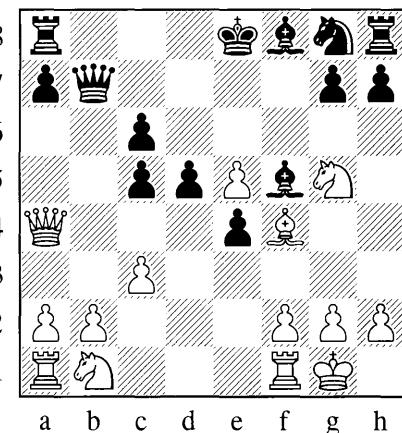


23.♝d1!! 0–0–0 24.♝xd2 ♜f5 25.♝f1 ♜g6
26.♝e5 ♜b7 27.♝d4 (27.♝f1 ♜a8 28.♝a4
♝e4 29.♝a5 ♜df8 30.♝xf8† ♜xf8 31.♝d4 ♜f5
32.♝e1 ♜f7 33.♝xg3 ♜g6=; 27.♝xg3 ♜e4
28.♝f7 ♜xg3 29.♝f2 ♜xg2† 30.♝f1 ♜g7=)
27...♝a8 28.♝c5 ♜c8 29.♝f1?? (29.♝f8
♝xf8 30.♝xf8 ♜xf8 31.♝xf8† ♜e8 32.♝d6
♝b1 33.♝xg3 ♜xa2 34.♝f2 ♜c4 35.♝c7 d4
36.♝xh7 ♜g8 37.♝xg8† ♜xg8=) 29...♝b7
30.♝d4 ♜ge8 31.♝xg3 ♜e1† 32.♝h2 ♜e7=

b) 12.c4!! h6 13.cxd5! hxg5



14.♝g3!!± Black is busted, as he cannot stop d5–d6 next move. With the queen on b7 this possibility does not exist, because there is the simple retort 14...♝b5.

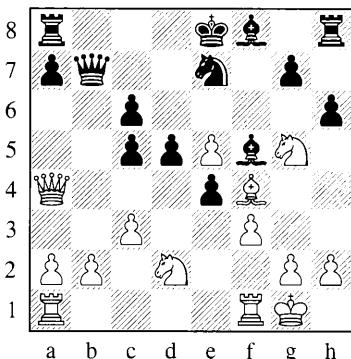


12.e6!?

The first choice of the engines.

I would rate Black's chances as better in the unclear position arising after 12.c4 h6 13.♝h3 d4 14.♝d2 ♜e7 15.♝ae1 ♜g6 16.♝g3 ♜e7 17.♝xe4 0–0–0.

12.♝d2 deserves some attention, yet after:
12...♝e7! 13.f3?? (13.e6 ♜g6 14.f3 e3!
15.♝xe3 ♜e7 16.♝b3 h6– is fine for us)
13...h6

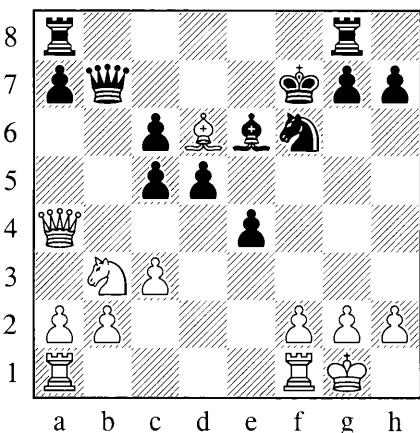


14.fxe4! hxg5 15.♗xg5 ♔e6 16.exd5 ♘xd5
17.♗e4 c4! 18.♗xc4 ♔d7! 19.♗ad1 ♕e8
Black intends ...♔a6 followed by ...♔c8, and I believe that the position is quite unclear, with chances for both sides.

12...♘f6!

After all these nuances the knight has finally managed to enter the game! Black is one move away from safety, as ...♔e7 is threatened.

**13.♘f7! ♕g8 14.♘d2 ♕xe6 15.♘d6† ♕xd6
16.♕xd6 ♘f7 17.♘b3
17.♗xc5 ♕xb2=**

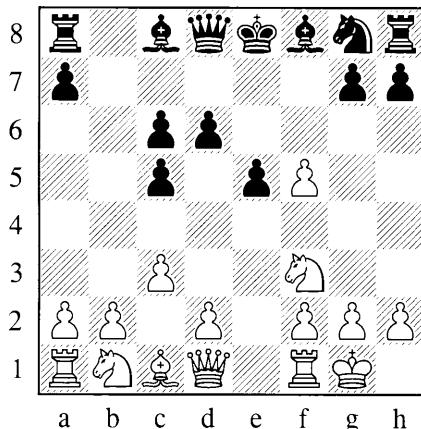


17...c4 18.♘c5 ♕b5 19.♕a3 a5∞

Black will follow up with ...♔e8 and castle artificially, and with the white queen far away from the action I cannot see any dangers for us. Thus, we have two good lines against

7.d4!?, and it is up to the reader to choose one according to his style and taste.

B3) 7.exf5



This is considered to be the most critical reply.

7...♔e7?!

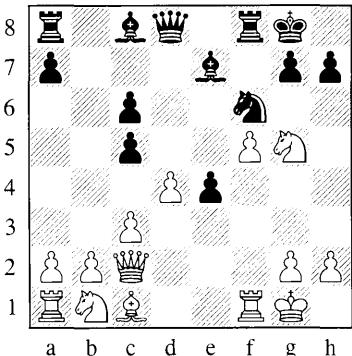
Here I am suggesting this little-known move of fellow Greek GM Stelios Halkias, which has an interesting point associated with prophylaxis: Black wants to defend himself against ♘g5 ideas, so he makes a first step in this direction by defending the critical square twice.

8.d4

This is of course the only move to have any point.

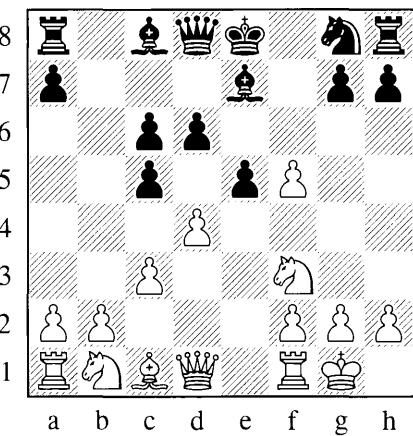
As we already know, Black is fine after 8.♗a4 ♔d7!.

In case of 8.♗c2 ♘f6 9.d4 e4 10.♗g5 d5 11.f3 0–0 12.fxe4 dxe4 Black stands excellently, as the position has dangerously opened up for the bishops:



13.♗b3† (13.♗xe4 cxd4↑) 13...d5 14.♗xe4 ♜xf5 15.♗bd2 (15.♗xc5?? ♜xc5 16.dxc5 ♜d3 17.♗xf8† ♜xf8 18.♗d1 ♜e8–+) 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 ♜b8↑ With a dangerous initiative for the second player.

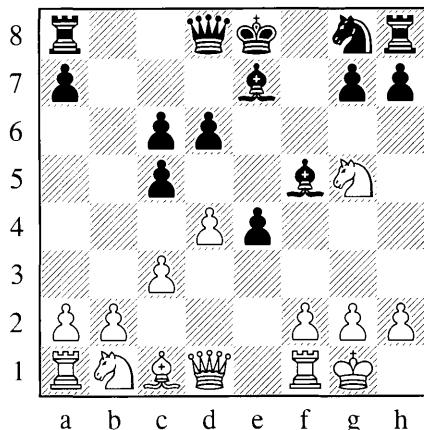
After 8.♗e1 Black can simply take back his pawn by 8...♜xf5, when I can see no problems for him. Halkias gives the following line: 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 e4 11.♗fd2 d5 12.♗c3 ♜f6 13.f3 ♜b6!↑



8...e4!

This is the main point of Stelios' conception; by not exchanging on d4, he denies the white knight the c3-square. Black plays energetically, hoping that his two bishops and strong centre will be more important than a mere pawn. We are now at a crossroads with White having two knight moves: B31) 9.♗g5 and B32) 9.♗fd2.

B31) 9.♗g5 ♜xf5



This continuation is of course important, but Black seems to be doing fine:

10.♗e1

This looks like the most natural choice, preparing to attack e4 with all White can afford.

10.dxc5?! d5↑ gives Black an excellent game as ...h6 is threatened. White does have f2-f3 available, because that drops the g5-knight.

10.♗e2

Black has several possibilities, with the one I prefer being:

10...♗f6?!

10...♜xg5 11.♗h5† ♜g6 12.♗xg5 cxd4 13.♗xd8† (13.cxd4 ♜f6 14.♗c3 0–0=) 13...♜xd8 14.cxd4 ♜d7 15.♗c3 ♜f6= is an approximately balanced ending due to the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, but I like Black's centralized king.

11.f3! cxd4! 12.cxd4

12.fxe4 ♜g4 13.♗c4 ♜b6! 14.cxd4 h6 15.♗f3 ♜xe4 16.♗e2 d5 17.♗c3 0–0= 18.♗xe4 ♜xf3 19.♗xf3 ♜xf3 20.gxf3 dxe4 21.♗xe4 ♜f6 22.♗e3 ♜xb2 23.♗c1 ♜xa2 24.♗xc6 ♜b8 is fine for Black too.

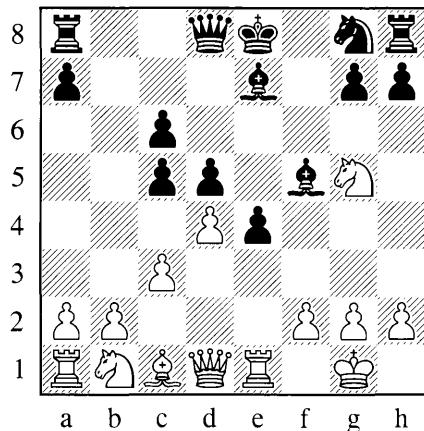
12...♜b6! 13.fxe4 ♜xd4† 14.♗e3 ♜g4!

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.e5 dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

If anybody has problems, it is certainly not Black.

10...d5

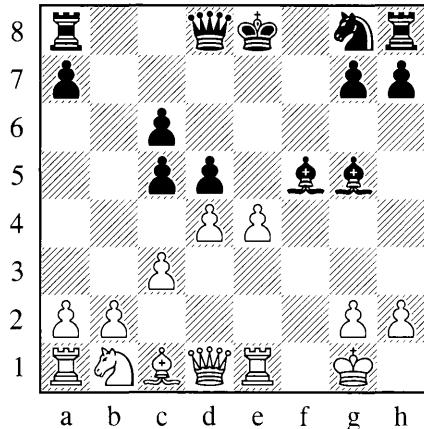
White is again hard pressed to meet the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ followed by ...h6.



11.f3

I cannot see anything else.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 12.fxe4



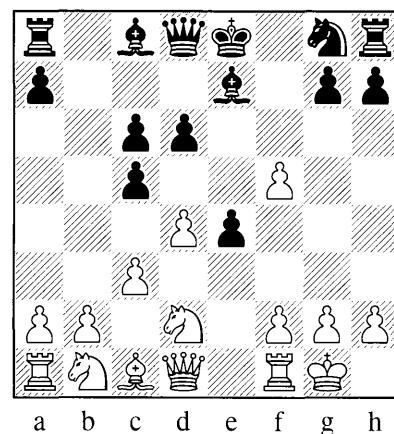
12... $\mathbb{Q}h4!$

An important nuance, after which Black is at least equal.

13.g3 dxe4 14. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xh4$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

The position has drawish tendencies, but if anyone is slightly better it is Black.

B32) 9. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$



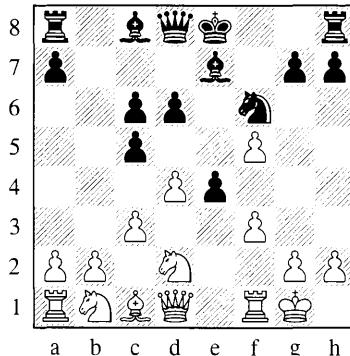
In this particular position, retreating the knight to d2 looks more critical.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10.dxc5

Taking as many pawns as possible seems to be the biggest test of Black's idea.

10.f3

This can be met in two ways:



10...exf3

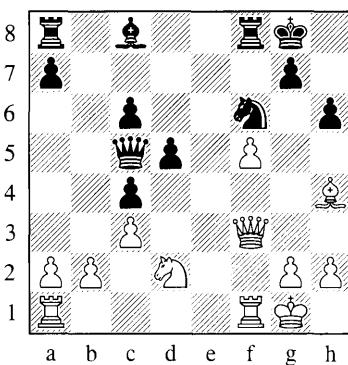
This one leads to equality.

10...d5!N is more complicated: 11.fxe4! (11.♗e2?! cxd4 12.cxd4 ♘b6+) 11...dxe4 12.♗c4! (12.♗b3 ♘a6 13.♗e1 0–0) 12...cxd4! 13.cxd4 ♘a6 14.b3 c5! 15.♗e3 cxd4 16.♗xd4 ♗c8 17.♗xa7 ♘c7 18.♗f2 0–0 Black's compensation for the pawns is enough, as his bishops are powerful in conjunction with the e4 passer.

11.♗xf3

11.♗xf3 ♗xf5 12.dxc5 0–0 gives Black excellent compensation for his pawn. 13.♗d4 was Mokshanov – Gabrielian, Samara 2013, and now I prefer the simple retreat 13...♗d7N∞, when I believe that Black has at least equal chances.

11...d5 12.♗b3 c4 13.♗c5 0–0 14.♗g5 ♘xc5 15.dxc5 h6 16.♗h4 ♘a5 17.♗d2 ♘xc5†



18.♗f2N

18.♗h1 happened in Oral – Halkias, Reykjavik 2008, and here Black is simply equal after 18...♗e4N=.

18...♗b5 19.b3 cxb3 20.axb3 ♘e4 21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♗g3!?

22.♗xe4 ♘xf5=

22...♗xf5 23.♗d4 ♘xf1† 24.♗xf1 ♘g5=±

10...d5!

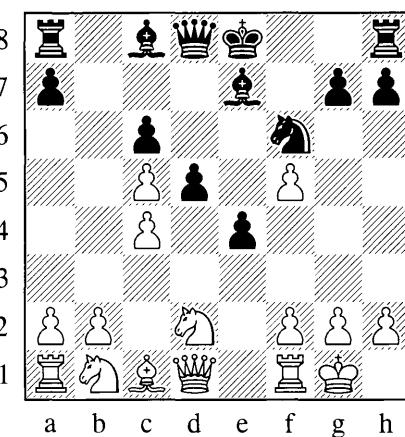
Black is two pawns down and as yet uncastled, but this is where the bad news ends. His two bishops are powerful and there are a lot of weak light squares in the enemy camp. In addition, White's development is not ideal.

White has a choice of pawn moves: **B321) 11.c4 or B322) 11.b4.**

11.g4?? equals hara-kiri after 11...h5 12.g5 ♘g4+.

11.♗b3 ♘xf5 (11...0–0N∞ looks even better to me, keeping White guessing) 12.♗f4 ♘g4 13.♗d4 was agreed drawn in Spasov – Solak, Kragujevac 2013, but in my opinion Black has at least enough for the pawn after 13...0–0∞.

B321) 11.c4



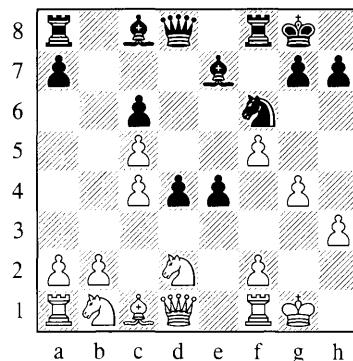
11...d4!

Creating a dangerous duo in the centre.

12.♗b3

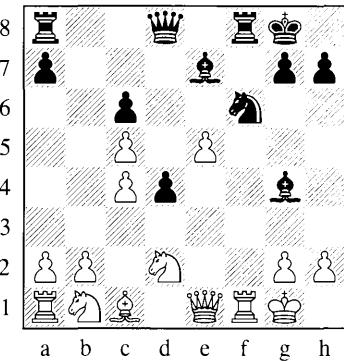
Trying to soften up the pawn front.

12.g4?! is terribly dangerous: 12...0–0 13.h3 (13.g5? ♘xf5! 14.gxf6 ♘xf6†; 13.♗b3? ♘xg4! 14.♗xg4 ♘xf5 15.♗g2 ♘d7†; 13.f3 e3 14.♗b3 h5∞)



13... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ e3 15. fxe3 dxe3 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ h5!↑

In the case of 12.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13.fxe4, both 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6=$ and 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ are good. Here is one possible continuation: 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 0–0 15.e5 (15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}1d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\infty$)

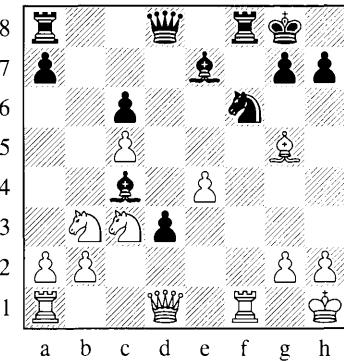


15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1\uparrow$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18. b3 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ d3 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 26. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4=$ Black forces a perpetual.

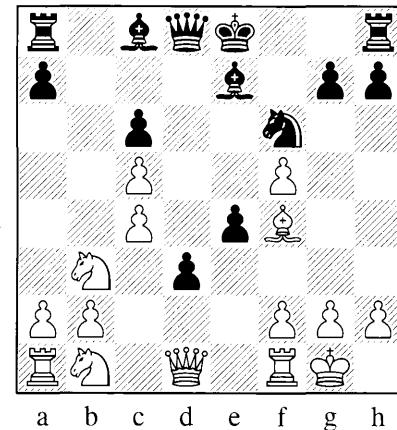
12...d3 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

13.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 15. fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}e6=$ looks safer.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ was tested in a recent correspondence game: 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. f3 0–0 15. fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



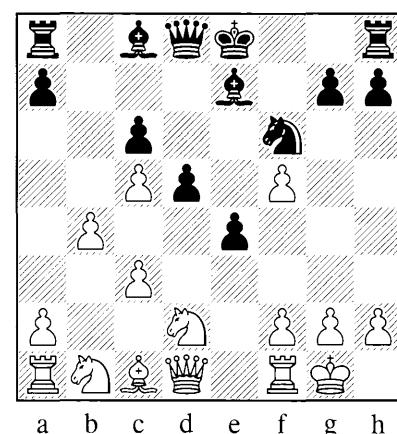
17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 24. e5 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 25. exf6 gxf6 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ hxg5 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ ½–½ Schuster – Avotins, corr. 2015.



13... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6\uparrow$

Black could even be better here, as these advanced pawns appear monstrous.

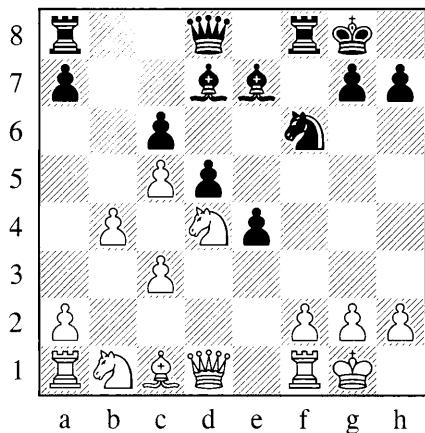
B322) 11.b4



This looks like a logical reaction, trying to keep the important c5-pawn.

11...0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

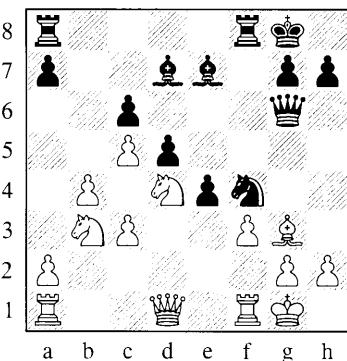
Black has recovered one of his pawns and has castled into safety. This position is quite important for Stelios' conception as a whole. A general remark is that White's queenside pawn mass will win every endgame, but luckily this looks far away for now.



14.♘a3

A logical recommendation of the engines, bringing the knight quickly into play. However, White also has a choice of bishop moves to try and shield his king:

14.♗f4 can be met in the following manner:
 14...♕e8 (14...a5?! is also possible) 15.♗d2
 ♜g6 16.♗2b3 ♜h5 17.♗g3 ♜f4 18.f3
 (18.♗a5 ♜d3→; 18.♗xf4 ♜xf4 19.♕c2 ♜af8
 20.f3 ♜g5 21.♖ae1 ♜h6→)



18...♗h4 19.♗xf4 ♜xf4 20.♕c2 ♜af8∞ Black

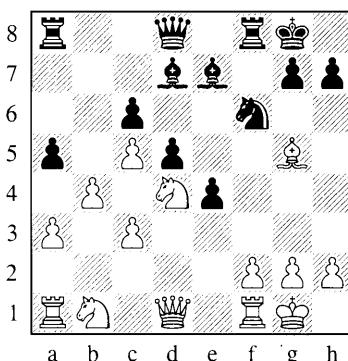
has amassed a lot of troops against the enemy king, and this fact makes the situation quite perilous for White. Rerouting the bishop to g5 followed by placing the queen on h6 will create more concrete threats. This could be analysed further, but Black should have at least enough to draw here.

14.♗g5

Black has several attacking ideas, and I will just present a peculiar one I found with the help of my silicon friend:

14...a5?! 15.a3

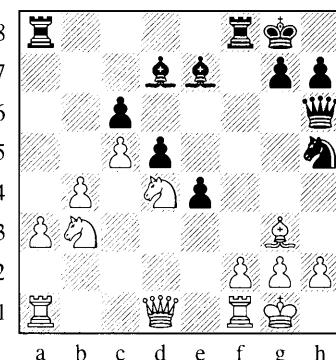
After the erroneous 15.♗d2? the reply 15...axb4 16.cxb4 ♜b8!–+ kills White, as the threat of ...♗g4 can be parried only by surrendering the precious b4-pawn.



15...♕c7! 16.♗h4 ♜f4 17.♗g3 ♜h6

Thus, the black queen has found her way to the kingside.

18.♗d2 axb4 19.cxb4 ♜h5! 20.♗2b3

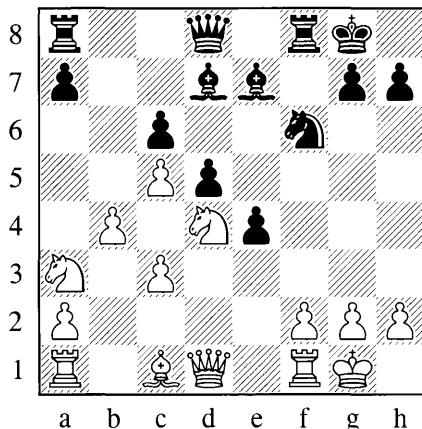


2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$ 20... $\mathbb{Q}xg3!?$

20... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 21. $f3$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 22. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ looks bad for White) 21... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ gives Black a dangerous attack too.

21. $hxg3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$ 23. $a4??$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2!+$ 23... $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$

White is suffering from a strange paralysis on both flanks.

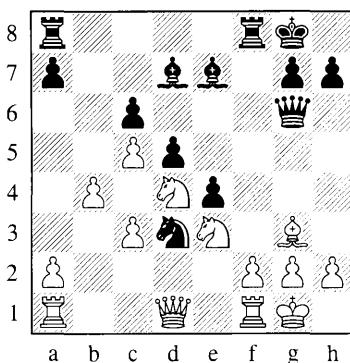
14... $\mathbb{W}e8$

This standard way of bringing the queen into the attack looks best.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}h5!?$

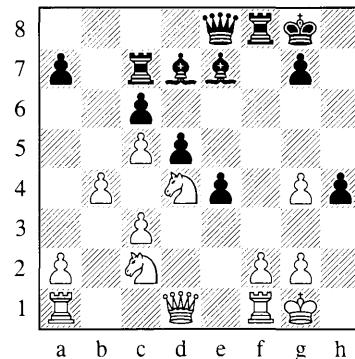
Playing the knight to h5 rather than the queen to g6 is of great importance here.

15... $\mathbb{W}g6$ is inexact because of: 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac2 \mathbb{Q}h5$
17. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3! \mathbb{Q}d3$



19. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ This startling move forces Black to retreat, and after 19... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}a6!?$ White may prepare an exchange sacrifice on d3. I am not convinced by Black's chances.

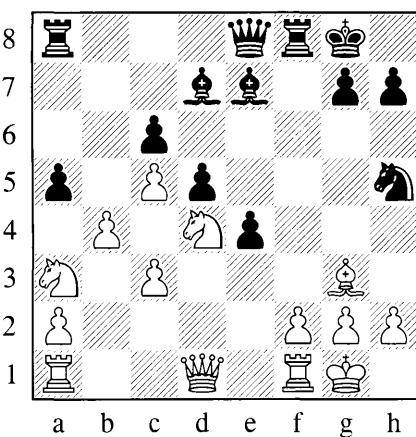
On the other hand, 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ may well be an interesting alternative: 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ is a major point) 16... $h5$ 17. $h3$ $h4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 19. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ac2$



20... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ 21. $f4$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ leaves White in a precarious situation as ... $\mathbb{W}g6-g5-f4$ is threatened) 21... $exf3$ 22. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{W}g6\infty$ This leads to a complete mess.

16. $\mathbb{Q}g3 a5!?$

16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ should also be fine for Black, as now White is rather forced to take on f4. 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac2$ $\mathbb{W}g6\infty$ reaches the position Black was aiming at with 15... $\mathbb{W}g6$.



17.♗ac2 axb4 18.cxb4 ♜a4! 19.a3 ♗xg3
20.hxg3 ♜f6?

Black should be okay, as it is difficult for White to make something out of those queenside pawns without allowing significant counterplay against his king. But even if I am wrong, the improvements given above should suffice to give Black excellent chances.

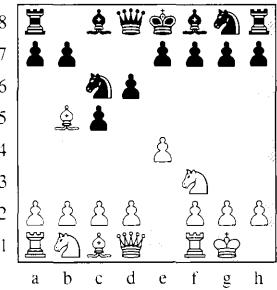
Conclusion

This chapter saw White weaken our pawn formation with 4.♕xc6†, when the play quickly becomes sharp in nature. One disappointing moment was when I realized the strength of 5.0–0 e5!? 6.c3! f5!? 7.d4!? fxe4 8.♗g5 cxd4 9.cxd4 d510.♗xe4!! for the first player, but I could not resist presenting my analysis as instructional material for the readers. However, Black can choose either 8...♝f5!? or 8...d5 to avoid that line, with both moves offering excellent chances.

The other main line of 7.exf5 ♜e7!? 8.d4 e4! leads to some crazy and imbalanced positions, but as long as Black plays dynamically in the middlegame, and doesn't allow White to swap off into a superior ending, then he should be in excellent shape.

Chapter 25

2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$



Rossolimo - 4.0-0

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.Qb5 d6 4.0-0

4...Qd7

A) 5.c3 Qf6 6.d4!?	461
A1) 8.d5	462
A2) 8.Qg5!?	464
B) 5.Qe1 Qf6	465
B1) 6.h3	465
B2) 6.c3 a6	467
B21) 7.Qxc6!?	468
B211) 8.Qxc6 9.d4 Qxe4 10.Qxf6 gxf6	470
B212) 12.Qbd2	471
B22) 7.Qa4 b5!?	472
B221) 8.Qc2 Qg4	473
B222) 9.a4	474
B23) 7.Qf1 Qg4	476
B231) 8.d3	476
B232) 8.d4!?	480
B233) 8.h3 Qxf3! 9.Qxf3 e6! 10.d3 Qe7!	483
11.Qd1 0-0	486
B2331) 12.Qd2	487
B2332) 12.a4	

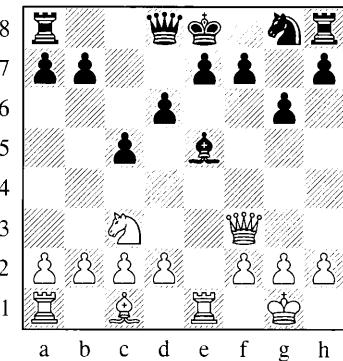
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 d6 4.0–0

This is both the most common and the most critical continuation: White places his hopes for an advantage on quick development, with a follow-up that normally comprises the moves c2-c3 and d2-d4. Of course Black will not sit and watch with his arms crossed, so most probably the first player will need additional preparatory moves such as ♕e1 and h2-h3 to give his central strategy a better chance of success.

4...♗d7

A) 5.c3 and **B) 5.♕e1** are the main possibilities, and in the majority of games will transpose to each other. I will mention a few other ideas just for the sake of completeness:

5.♗c3 is not dangerous for us. After 5...g6! Black will control the important dark squares in the centre and obtain good play. One example where White tried to stir up some action went: 6.♕e1 ♗g7 7.♗xc6 ♗xc6 8.e5 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♗xe5

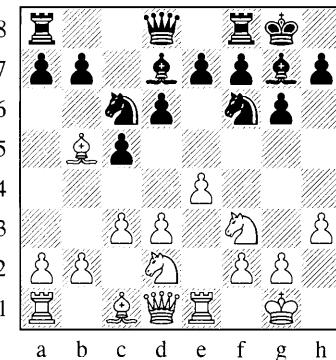


10.♗xb7 (10.d3 ♔f8? 11.♗xb7 ♗g7=) 10...♗f6 11.♗c6† ♗d7 12.d3 0–0 13.♗h6 ♗e8↗ Black stood fine in R. Popov – Golubev, Internet 2005.

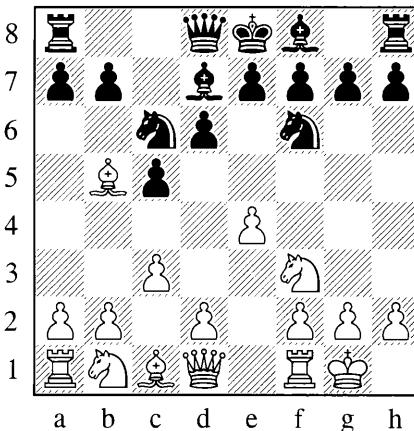
5.c4 ♘f6 6.♗c3 e6 7.d4 (An attempt to deviate is 7.♗xc6 ♗xc6 8.♗e2, but Black could consider keeping the centre closed with 8...e5?∞ with an interesting struggle in prospect.)

7...cx d4 8.♗xd4 This transposes to the note on 5.♗xd4 ♗d7 6.c4!? examined at the start of Chapter 23.

5.d3 is a positional way of playing, but with such slow means White cannot really hope for an advantage. I recommend: 5...g6 6.c3 ♘f6 7.♗e1 ♗g7 8.h3 (8.d4 0–0 9.d5 ♘e5 10.♗xd7 ♘fxd7=) 8...0–0 9.♗bd2



9...♗e5! 10.♗xd7 ♘fxd7= Black had achieved comfortable equality in Petr – Pa. Lerch, Pardubice 2005.

A) 5.c3 ♘f6

This will transpose to Variation B2 after 6.♗e1, but White has an extra option:

6.d4!?

Sacrificing the e-pawn for quick development and pressure in the centre.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

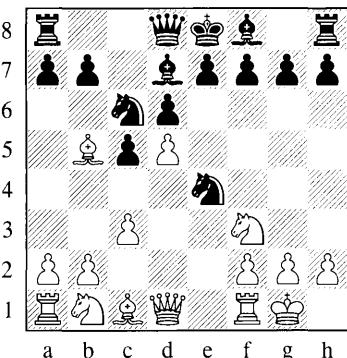
White has two main possibilities:

7. $\mathbb{E}e1$

If I were Black I would be more worried about this, but the truth is that with prudent play the second player will easily repel the pressure no matter which line White chooses.

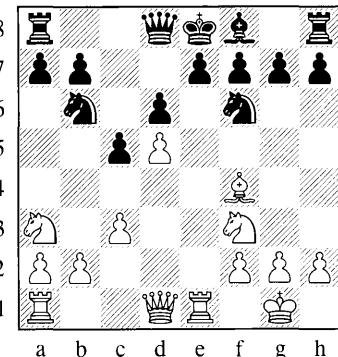
7.d5

Rather innocuous, as the position becomes less open. With only one file available it is quite unlikely that White will manage to generate serious pressure.



7... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ef6$ 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}a3$?

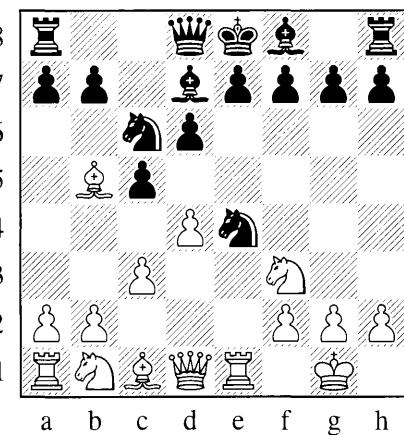
11. $c4!$ $g6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ 0–0
14. $h3\bar{\infty}$ gives White some compensation, but whether it is fully sufficient is another question. Sacrificing a second pawn is much more than his position can tolerate.



11... $\mathbb{Q}bx d5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $e6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 14. $c4??$
14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ was a better practical chance, but
14... $a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 16. $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a3$
 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b6$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{+}$ would still have been close to winning for Black.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7+$

Black had a huge material advantage in Tabatt – Caruana, Gibraltar 2011, and went on to convert it easily.



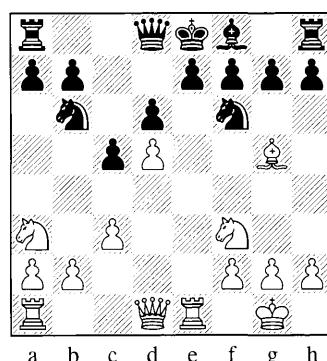
7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

7... $d5!?$ = may be just as good; I haven't been able to discover any advantage for White.

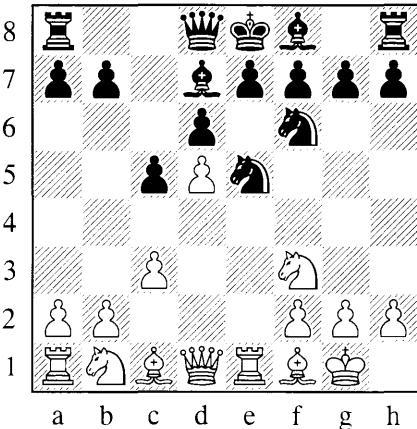
Some interesting possibilities arise after both A1) 8. $d5$ and A2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$.

A1) 8. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1!N$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$! $\mathbb{Q}exd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$



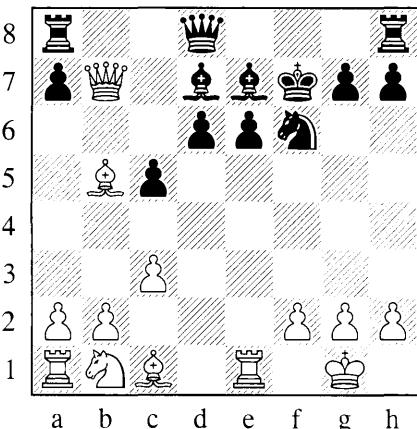
11... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}b3$ h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e6 15. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ was fine for Black in Kr. Georgiev – Tukmakov, Chania 1992.



9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xf3$

White has some compensation for the pawn according to Tukmakov. I think that Black equalizes rather easily by:

10...e5! 11.dxe6 fxe6 12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

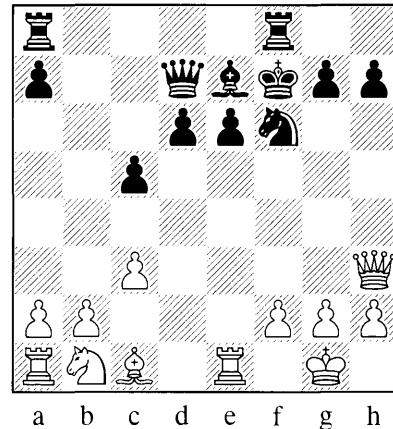


14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$

14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a5 18. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}hc8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ a4 ∞ is a tough ending for both sides, but I like our pressure against b2.

14... $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}hf8!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h3$

16.c4 $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d5 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6=$



16...d5 17.c4! $\mathbb{E}ae8$

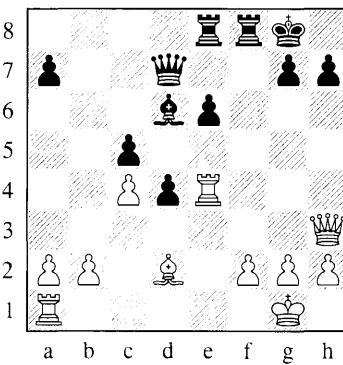
Black is fine, provided he takes care to avoid a bad bishop versus good knight scenario.

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White is trying to increase the pressure against the hanging pawns, but Black has a defence.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

This is fine for the second player, as the pressure against e6 cannot lead to anything in the absence of knights. A sample line is:



22. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$

Also possible is 22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$?!) $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 24.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$! with the idea 25.h3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$!; 23.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 24.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 25.b3 a5=) 23...h6 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 26.f3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 27.b3 a5 28. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ =

23.f3 e5

Black's 'bad' bishop defends the whole structure and I cannot see any progress for White. This happens because White's own bishop, albeit a good one, is not agile enough to take advantage of our weaknesses, especially in a middlegame.

24.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ =

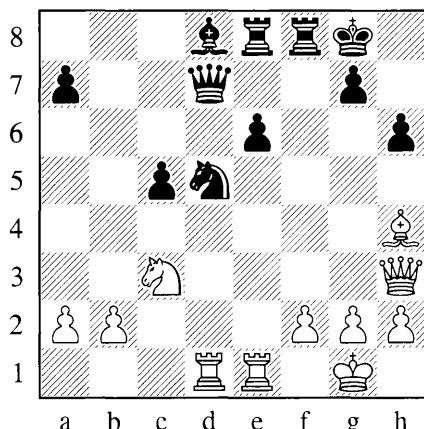
The engines consider Black to be slightly better, but I think it's just equal; White will always find something on the kingside to distract us from carrying out a successful ...a5-a4.

18...h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$! 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21.cxd5

21. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$?

21... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$?

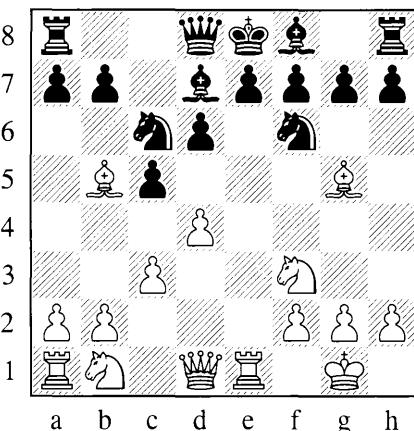


22... $\mathbb{Q}f7$! 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

23. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$?

23... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ c4 26. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ =

A2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$?

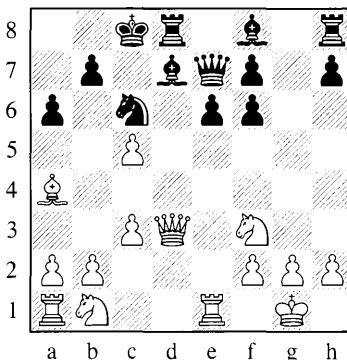


More development! I think this is the only move to cause Black some embarrassment.

8...h6!?

Tukmakov's old suggestion seems best here.

8...a6 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ d5?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11.dxc5 e6 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 0-0-0



14.b4! $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 15.cxb4 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 19.a4± led to a bad position for Black in Jusic – Predojevic, Zadar 2013.

9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

This position is quite complicated but Black should be fine. For example:

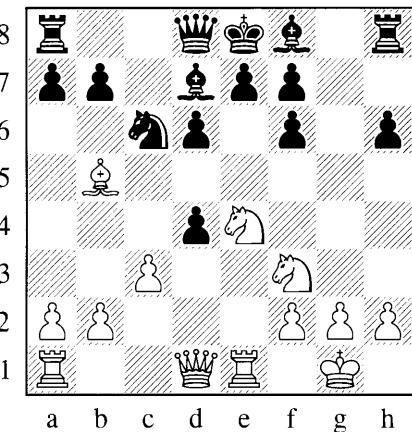
10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

10.♕xc6 ♕xc6 11.d5 ♔d7 12.♗d3 ♗c7
 13.♔bd2 0–0–0 14.b4 ♘b8 15.c4 ♘g8
 16.♗ab1 ♘a8? is merely unclear.

10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.a4 ♗g8 13.c4 a6
 14.♔xd7† ♘xd7 15.♔c3 0–0–0 16.a5 ♘g4
 shouldn't scare Black either.

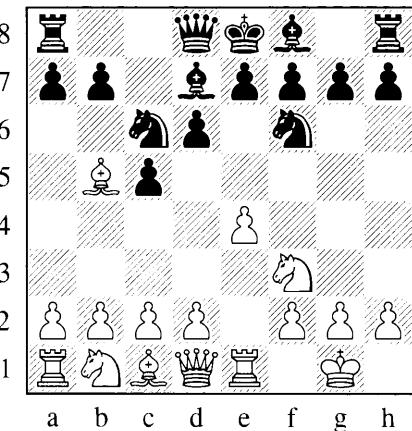
10...cxd4 11.♘e4!

11.cxd4 d5 12.♗b3 a6 13.♔f1 ♘c8 looks quite safe.



11...e6 12.♗xc6 ♘xc6 13.♗xd4 ♘xe4
 14.♗xe4 d5 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♗f3 0–0–0
 17.♗xf6 ♘d6 18.♗f3 ♘h7 19.♗c1 ♘e7=

B) 5.♗e1 ♘f6



White can continue with either **B1) 6.h3** or **B2) 6.c3**.

B1) 6.h3

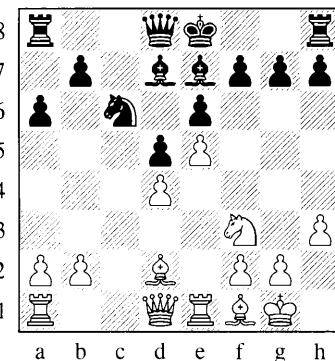
This has been played at both amateur and grandmaster level, but it is slow and I think Black can meet it in various ways.

6...e6

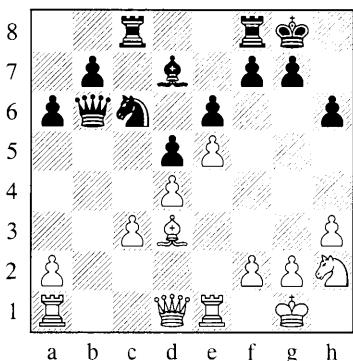
I believe this standard reaction gives us a good game. Alternatively:

I don't like 6...g6 7.c3 ♘g7 (7...♗e5 8.♔f1 [8.♗e2?] 8...♘xf3† 9.♗xf3 ♘g7 10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4±) 8.d4 0–0 9.♔f1 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 ♘e4 due to 12.♗b3?, forcing Black to weaken his dark squares with 12...e6. After 13.♔c3! ♘a5 14.♗a3 (14.♗b4 ♘b6!=) 14...♘xc3 (14...♘c6 15.♔d3!±) 15.♗xc3 ♘c8 16.♗d2 ♘c4 17.♗d1± I believe that White has an edge, as he has a clear plan to attack on the kingside and I don't see too much counterplay for Black on the other wing.

6...a6?! is acceptable. 7.♔f1 e6 8.c3 ♘e7 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5 11.e5 ♘e4 12.♔bd2 (12.♔c3 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♘a5?) 12...♘xd2 13.♔xd2



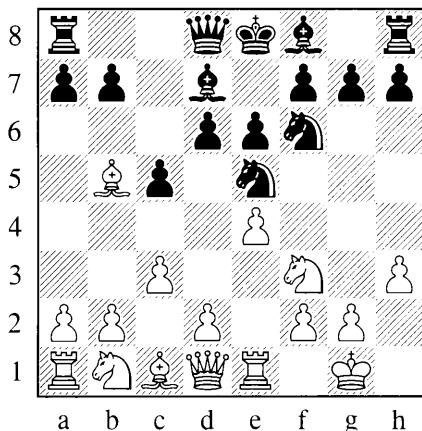
13...♗b6! An important move, forcing the bishop to the clumsy c3-square. 14.♔c3 0–0 15.♔d3 ♘ac8 16.♗b1 h6 17.♗d1 ♘b4! 18.♗h2 ♘xc3 19.bxc3



19... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ It is important for Black to trade off the d3-bishop as it breaks the force of White's attack. 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $axb5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ Black had managed to neutralize White's slight opening pressure and obtain an excellent position in Bartel – Eliseev, St Petersburg 2012.

7.c3 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

The right moment for this move, preventing White from obtaining a proud pawn centre.



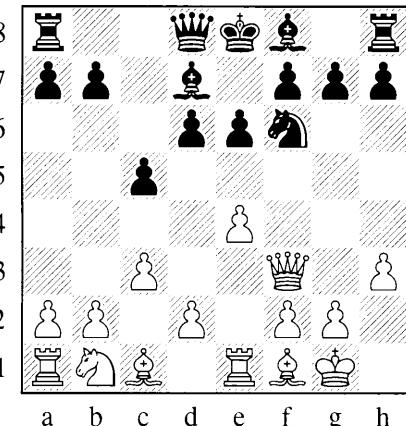
8. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

Adhering to the rule that he who has more space should avoid too many exchanges.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#?$! $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 9. d4 cxd4 10. cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$
11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ d5 12. e5 $\mathbb{Q}g8\#?$ is better for Black, who has the superior bishop and no weaknesses.

White's slight advantage in development amounts to nothing in such a closed position.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$



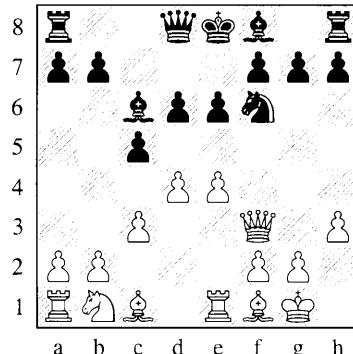
9... $\mathbb{Q}c6\#?$

This is the point, deploying the bishop quickly to the long diagonal to pressurize White's e4-pawn.

10. d3!?

A solid move which reduces the radius of the bishop.

10. d4



10... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

This looks fine for Black.

10... d5 11. exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 13. c4 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 14. d5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ looks natural, but White

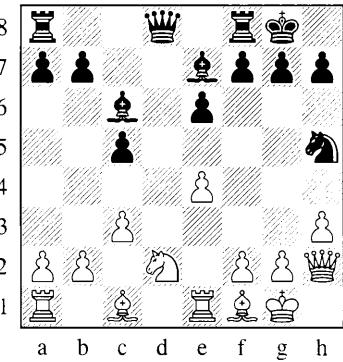
is slightly better after 15.♕e2! 0–0–0 16.a3 ♜a6 17.♗g5! f6 18.dxe6 ♜xe6 19.♗xe6 fxg5 20.♗c3±.

White is also a bit better in case of 10...cxsd4 11.cxd4 d5 12.e5 ♜e4 13.♗c3±.

11.dxc5

11.♗d3 0–0 12.♗e3 ♜c7 13.♗d2 b5=

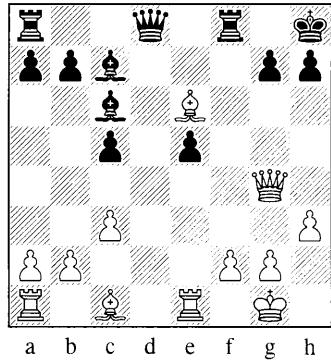
11...dxc5 12.♗d2 0–0 13.♗g3 ♜h5 14.♗h2 14.♗f3 ♜f6=



14...♗d6! 15.e5 ♜c7 16.♗e2

16.♗c4 f6 17.g4?! b5!↑ is at least equal for the second player.

16...♗f6 17.♗g3 ♜d7 18.♗f3 f6! 19.♗c4 ♜h8 20.♗xe6 ♜xe5 21.♗xe5 fxe5! 22.♗g4



22...♗e8! 23.♗b3

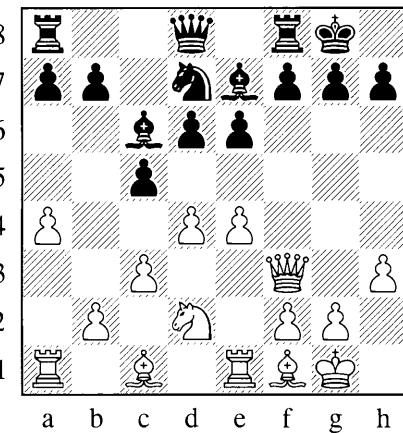
23.♗e3?? h5–+

23...e4 24.♗e6 ♜xe6 25.♗xe6 ♜ae8 26.♗g4 ♜f4! 27.♗xf4 ♜xf4 28.♗ad1 ♜f7=

Leading to a balanced endgame. This line is by no means forced, but it illustrates some fine positional ideas for Black.

10...♗e7 11.a4 0–0 12.♗d2 ♜d7! 13.d4

We have been following A. Rombaldoni – Kotronias, Warsaw 2013, when I should have played:



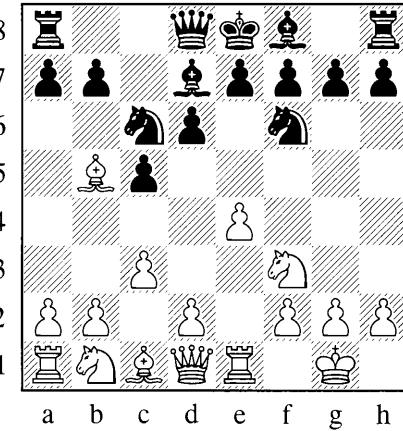
13...♗c8!N

It is difficult for White to untangle himself in the centre. The engines give the following variation:

14.♗d3 cxd4 15.cxd4 h6 16.a5 a6 17.♗g3 ♜h8 18.♗f3 ♜f6 19.d5 exd5 20.exd5 ♜xd5 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♗h4 ♜g8 23.♗d4† ♜f6=

I am sure Black has other ways to play as well, and that allowing the draw is not forced.

B2) 6.c3



This is the important main line, with White trying to set up a strong centre right away.

6...a6

By putting the question to the white bishop, Black wants to relieve the pressure against c6 and free the d7-bishop from defending it. In that way, he will be able to deploy his own bishop on g4 and fight for control of the all-important d4-square.

Both **B21)** 7.♗xc6!? and **B22)** 7.♗a4 are important alternatives to the main continuation of **B23)** 7.♗f1.

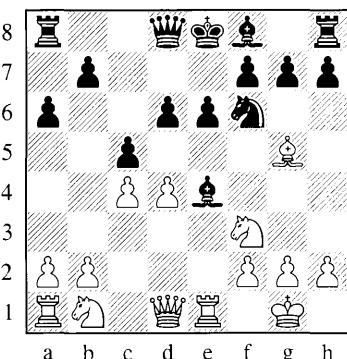
B21) 7.♗xc6!? ♗xc6 8.d4

A pawn sacrifice that leads to tense positions, with chances for both sides. Black should of course accept the gift:

8...♗xe4 9.♗g5

Developing with gain of time.

A mistaken way to proceed is 9.c4?!, because Black is allowed to move his e-pawn with impunity. 9...e6 10.♗g5



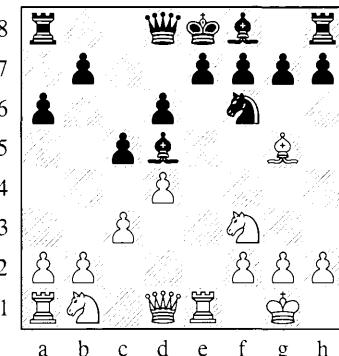
10...♗g6! 11.♗xf6 gxf6+ White does not have compensation for the pawn; Black has two bishops and his kingside looks like a fortress, defended by the one on g6.

9...♗c6

This is the safest move.

9...♗d5

Proposed by Tiger Hillarp Persson in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*, but I don't like it due to:



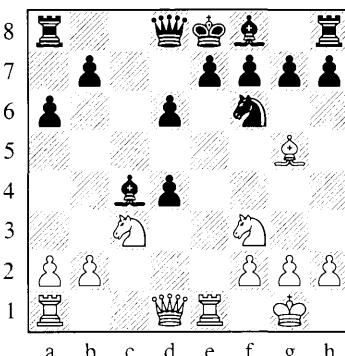
10.c4?!

10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 cxd4 12.♗xb7 ♘c8 13.♗f3 e5 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.c5 is mentioned as something to avoid by Tiger, and looked uncomfortable for Black in the subsequent game Tseitlin – Axelrod, Israel 2012.

11.♗c3 cxd4

11...♗e6 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♗a4+ b5 14.♗h4 is a position where Black's kingside looks paralysed.

11...e6 12.♗xf6! gxf6 13.d5! e5 14.♗h4 ♖b5 15.♗e4 ♗d7 16.♗h5∞ is the old main line from Martinovic – Anand, Groningen 1989, but this position, albeit tenable, is not to my liking because of the weakness of the f5-square.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

Tiger only mentions the unnatural 12. $\mathbb{W}xd4$, providing a refutation of it.

The computers evaluate this as up to +0.20 in White's favour despite being two pawns down, surely a bad sign for our position.

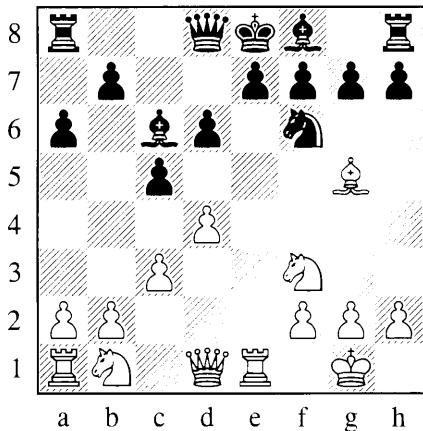
12...e6?

12...e5! is more resistant according to the engines, but still scary after something like

13. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{A}e6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe6 fxe6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1\uparrow$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{W}xf6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow b5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}dxb5 \mathbb{A}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+=$

Black could already resign in Li Chao – Bu Xiangzhi, Shenzhen 2011.



10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

This looks like the critical test. White gives up his remaining bishop, but hopes for a squeeze starting with d4-d5 next move.

10.c4 cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ e6 gives balanced chances in an unclear position.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ gx6

Compared to the note on 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$, White has already committed himself to the $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ capture. This actually leads to positions that are more or less okay for Black, with an example being:

13. $\mathbb{W}xb7$

13. $\mathbb{W}xf6 \mathbb{Q}g8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}c8\rightleftharpoons$

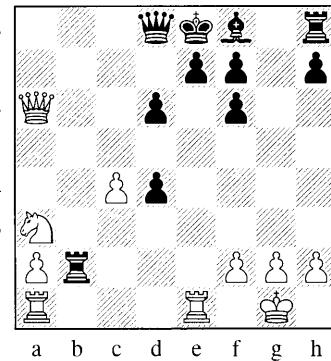
was excellent for Black in Klima – Markos, Poruba 2013.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa6 \mathbb{Q}xb2?!$

Also possible is 14... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5 f5\infty$ with a double-edged fight.

15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

15. $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow \mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a8\uparrow \mathbb{W}d8=$ leads to an immediate draw.



15... $\mathbb{Q}g7N$

15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow \mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a8\uparrow \mathbb{W}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e4\pm$ was better for White in Markovic – Bogosavljevic, Vrnjacka Banja 2012, even if only slightly.

I don't think White has anything better than to take the draw by perpetual:

16. $\mathbb{W}a4\uparrow \mathbb{W}d7$

16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}eb1\pm$

17. $\mathbb{W}a8\uparrow =$

10...gx6 11.d5

Practically forced, so as to decrease the scope of the bishops.

11. $\mathbb{Q}h4?!$ cxd4 12. cxd4 d5 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}d7\mp$ is better for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

This position is complicated, but I think Black has good chances.

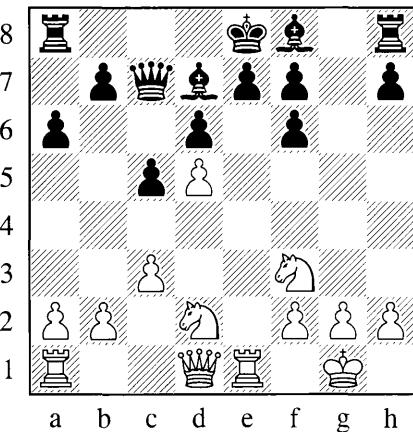
Let us explore both possibilities: **B211) 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ and B212) 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$.**

12.c4 takes away the c4-square from the white knight and looks a bit slow to me. I recommend simply 12...Bg8 13.Qc3 f5 restraining the white knights, with the better game for Black.

B211) 12.Qbd2

Black should prepare long castling:

12...Kc7

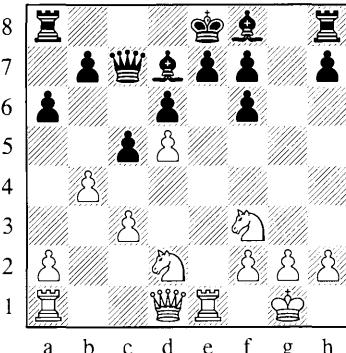


13.Qh4!

In my opinion this positional choice is strongest, but it is not the only idea.

13.b4

White tries to open lines on the queenside before Black castles there:



13...Bg8

13...f5?! 14.Qg5 h5! 15.Qc1 Bg7 16.h4 Bc8

17.Qe2 Be5 was unclear in Silva – Dutra Neto, corr. 2011.

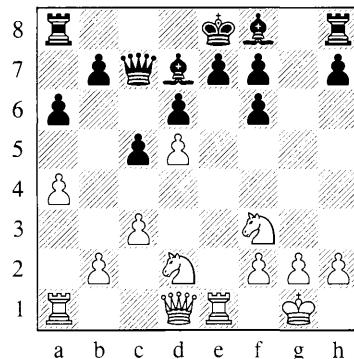
14.Qe4 0–0–0 15.bxc5!

15.a4 f5 16.Qeg5 Bg7 17.b5 (17.Qd3 h6 18.Qh3 Bg4+) 17...Ba5! 18.c4 h6 19.Qh3 Bg4+ gives Black the much better game.

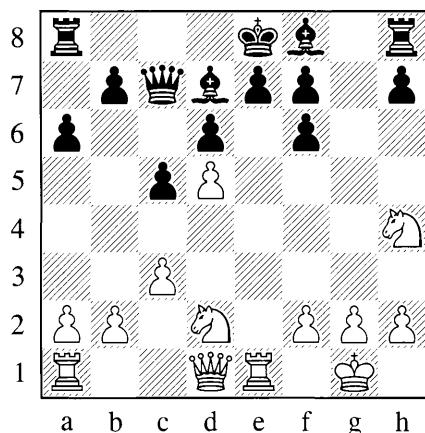
15...dxc5 16.c4 f5 17.d6 exd6 18.Qf6 Bg6 19.Qd5 Wa5 20.Bb1 Be6

With a complicated position where I believe in Black's chances.

13.a4 tries to create a square on c4 for the knight, so Black should not castle immediately:



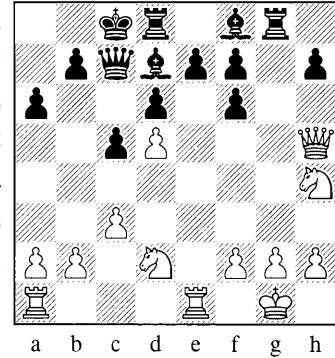
13...Bg8!N (13...0–0–0 14.Qc4 e6? 15.b4 exd5 16.Qe3± as in Orlov – Lobzhanidze, Germany 2010, is exactly what Black should avoid.) 14.Qc4 e5?! 15.Qd3 0–0–0 16.Qxh7 Bg7 17.Qc2 f5 18.b4 f4 Leading to a wild race, the consequences of which are difficult to evaluate.



13... $\mathbb{E}g8!$ N

Black is fighting against the $\mathbb{W}h5$ idea.

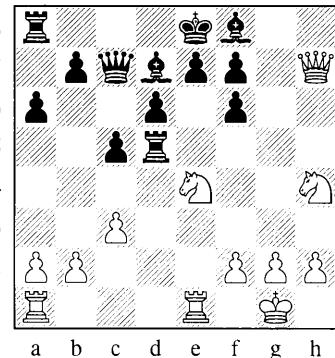
13...0–0–0 14. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $\mathbb{E}g8$



15.f3! (15. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{E}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3!$) 15... $\mathbb{E}g7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{g}4$ c4 19. $\mathbb{E}ad1\bar{\mathbb{E}}$ is the kind of squeeze I would like to avoid.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

14. $\mathbb{W}h5?$! $\mathbb{E}g5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

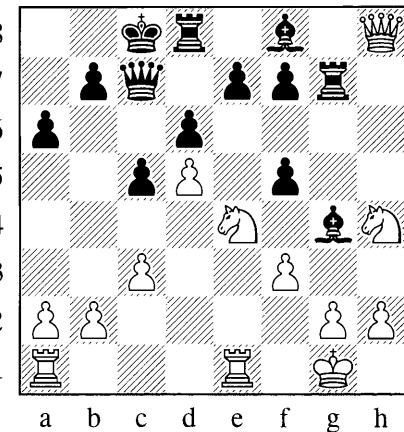


16... $\mathbb{E}e5!$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{E}e6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ fxg6 19. $\mathbb{W}xg6!$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f7$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xf8!$ $\mathbb{Q}c7!$ is a brilliant line worth remembering, and is the tactical justification of Black's 13th.

14...0–0–0

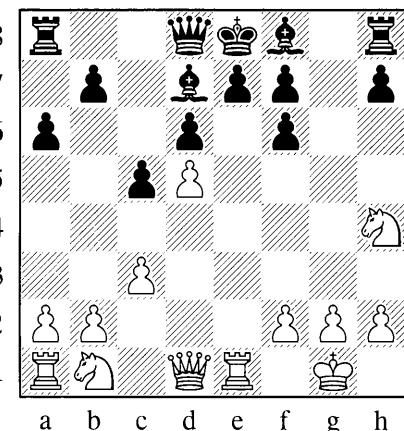
When the knight goes to e4 we are not at such a great risk of falling under an attack on the queenside.

15. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{E}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h8$ f5 18.f3



18...fxe4! 19.fxg4 $\mathbb{E}xg4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{E}f4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 28.gxf3 $\mathbb{E}g8!$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2=$

B212) 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$



This positionally well-founded move starts an immediate siege of the important light squares f5 and h5.

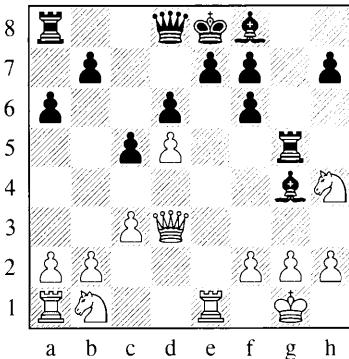
12... $\mathbb{E}g8!$

Once more the key move, fighting against $\mathbb{W}h5$.

13. $\mathbb{W}d3$

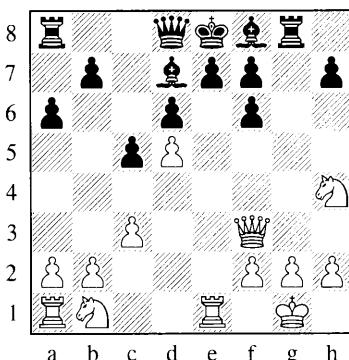
This looks like a good square for the queen.

13. $\mathbb{W}h5?!$ $\mathbb{B}g5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ (14. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$)
14... $\mathbb{B}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$



15...c4! 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}a5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ is almost winning for Black.

13. $\mathbb{W}f3$ happened in Neelotpal – Sethuraman, Kavala 2012, and here Black played the rather illogical 13... $\mathbb{W}b6?!$. I prefer:



13... $\mathbb{B}g5?!$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{B}e5$ Black's game is fully in order.

13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0-0 15. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{B}g7$
16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ e6!

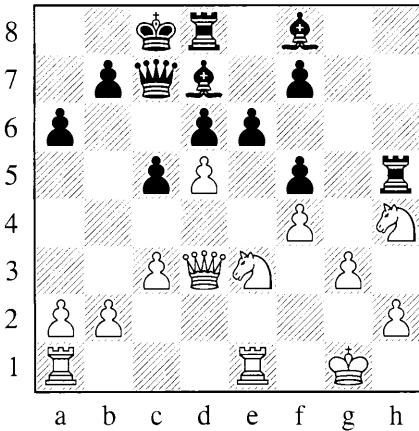
In this position ...e6 does work.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

17. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ f5?

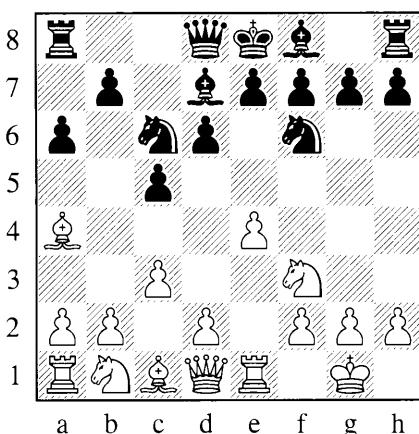
17... $\mathbb{B}g5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 19. f4 $\mathbb{B}h5!$ 20. g3

20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5?



20... $\mathbb{B}xh4$ 21. $\mathbb{gxh4}$ $\mathbb{B}h6\rightarrow$

I believe that Black has the better practical chances, as his king is the safer one and he has a good attack for the exchange. The computer says it's about even, but who cares?

B22) 7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 

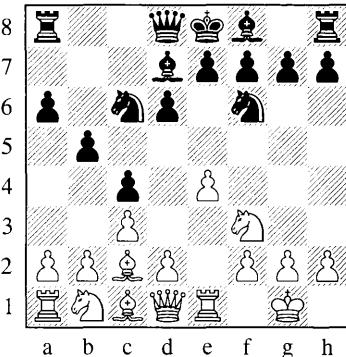
We'll now analyse this important retreat.

7... $\mathbb{B}b5?!$

This gives White a target with which to open the a-file later on, but Black has the consolation that the bishop ends on a rather passive square.

8.♗c2

8.♗b3 provokes Black into playing ...c4, which I think it is something he would like to do anyway: 8...c4 9.♗c2



9...g6! 10.b3 ♗g4 11.♗a3 ♗ce5 12.h3 ♗xf3† 13.♔xf3 ♗e5 14.♔e2 ♗c8 15.bxc4 bxc4 16.f4 ♗d3 17.♗xd3 cxd3 18.♗xd3 ♗h6= Black has full compensation for the pawn, yet the position requires practical tests.

8...♗g4

By pinning the knight, Black makes White's life difficult. The plan with d2-d4 has been stopped, and the first player should seek play via an opening of the a-file. He can try the preparatory **B221) 9.d3** or continue immediately with **B222) 9.a4**.

9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♔xf3 g6 11.d3!

11.♔d1 ♗h6! 12.d3 ♗xc1 13.♔xc1 0–0 14.♔h6 e6 15.♗d2 ♗d7 16.f4 ♗f6 17.♗f3 ♗ac8= is perfectly fine for Black.

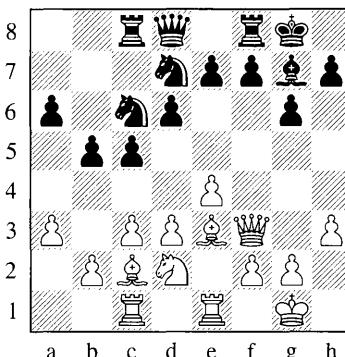
11.a4 transposes to the note to White's 10th move in variation B222.

11...♗g7 12.♗e3 0–0 13.♗d2
13.♗d1?! ♗d7 14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 e5!=

13...♗d7 14.♗ac1 ♗c8! 15.a3

I think 15.♗e2?! is a bit better, preventing the idea I am going to mention below. Still, Black should be fine: 15...♗b6 16.♗f3 a5 17.d4 (17.a4 ♗xa4 18.♗xa4 bxa4 19.♗a1 ♗d7=; 17.a3 a4 18.♗cd1 ♗c7 19.h4 b4 20.cxb4 cxb4 21.♗b1 ♗b7 22.h5 bxa3

23.bxa3 ♗a5=) 17...cxd4 (17...♗c4!! 18.♗xc5 ♗xe3 19.♔xe3 dxc5 20.♗ed1 ♗c7 21.♔xc5 ♗e5 22.♔xc7 ♗xf3† 23.gxf3 ♗xc7 should be drawable as well) 18.cxd4 ♗c4 19.♗d3 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♗b4 21.♗xc8 ♗xc8 22.♗b1 ♗b7 23.a3 ♗c6 with the idea ...a4. The text was played in Tiviakov – Spoelman, Amsterdam 2014, and now Black has an interesting idea:



15...c4!N 16.d4

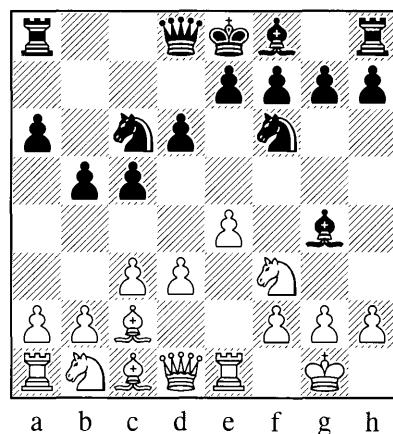
16.♗xc4 ♗ce5 17.♔e2 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 bxc4 looks a bit better for Black.

16...e5! 17.d5 ♗a5!

17...♗e7 18.g4!± stifles the e7-knight.

18.a4 ♗b7! 19.axb5 axb5 20.♔e2 ♗f6!=

Black's knights are superbly placed, and the impending exchange of bishops on g5 deprives White of real chances of an advantage.

B221) 9.d3

This approach looks rather slow.

B222) 9.a4

9...e6 10.♘bd2

White's latest try is 10.♗e3??, but it can hardly change the evaluation of the structure as being excellent for us. I would recommend 10...♝e7 11.♝bd2 0-0 12.h3 ♜h5= with equal chances.

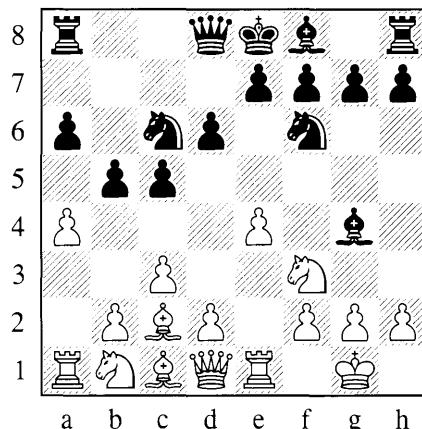
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}f1$ d5!?

Black has a solid position, and can play to win by utilizing his space advantage on the queenside.

13. ♔g3 ♕g6 14. ♔h4 0-0 15. exd5

15.f4?! d4! 16.f5?! ♕h5! 17.♕xh5 ♕xh5#

15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.d4 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$
 b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $bxcc3$ 20. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $cxd4$
 22. $cxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 24. a3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$
 25. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4\mp$ was better for Black in
 Pavasovic – Petkov, Zadar 2005.



This can be dangerous, even for experienced grandmasters. Black is relatively undeveloped, and should seek a way to quickly bring out his kingside pieces and castle without making any concessions.

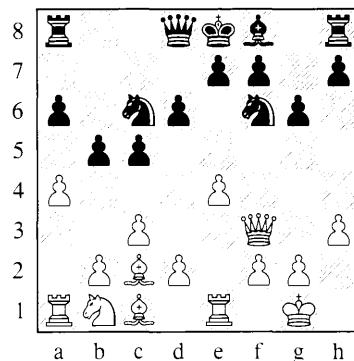
9...g6!

Tiger also recommends this move in *Experts*, and I think he is right. The attack on b5 is something that can be dealt with.

10.axb5

This immediate recapture looks logical, but Black's position is sound enough to resist any kind of pressure.

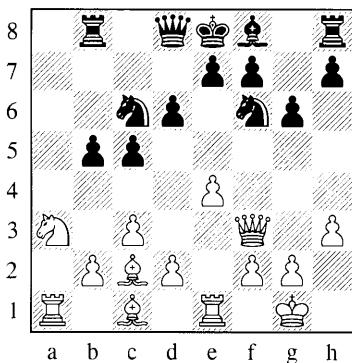
10.h3 ♜xf3 11.♕xf3



11... $\mathbb{E}b8!$

In Macieja – Kotronias, Patras 2014, I forgot my preparation and blundered horribly with: 11... $\mathbb{E}g7??$ 12.axb5 axb5 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 15.exd6 e6 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 19.d4+– I guess sometimes chess players want to kill guys who make noise in the room next to the playing hall, but this should be the topic of another book.

12.axb5 axb5 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$



13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

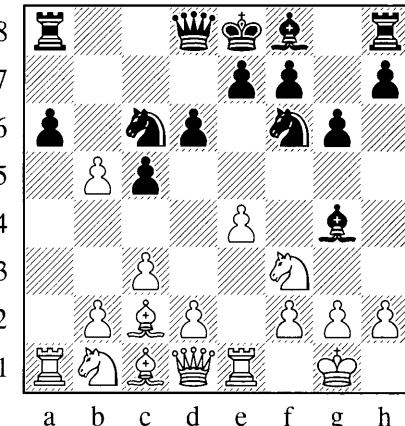
This is the move I could not remember when thinking about my 11th, even after a full twenty minutes!

Had I read *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*, I might have at least remembered Tiger’s recommendation of 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$, which is good enough for equality but not as easy as my own move. I am sure Macieja wanted to surprise me had I followed Tiger’s path, with one possible way being 14.b4!?, cxb4 15.cxb4 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$, although Black looks okay after 16... $\mathbb{Q}g7$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0–0–0.

After 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ Black is absolutely fine and can even play for a win. The computer finds nothing better than:

14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17.d4 cxd3 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Black has an aesthetically pleasing position with strong potential.



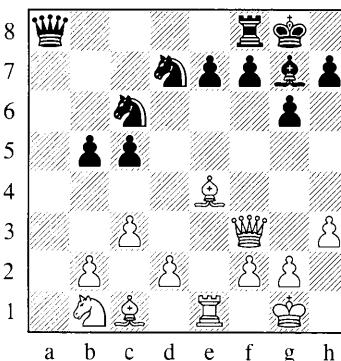
10...axb5 11. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$

White only has a temporary initiative. Once Black castles he may even be better a pawn down!

12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Attacking b5 directly makes sense.

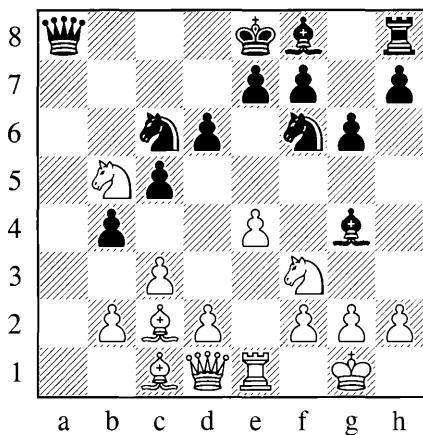
I had also looked at: 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14.e5 dxe5 15. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 0–0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



17... $\mathbb{Q}de5!$ (17... $\mathbb{E}c8??$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ [18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$ $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ is horrible for White] 18... $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e3!$ is less impressive) 18. $\mathbb{W}e3$ c4 19.f4 Otherwise Black unpins himself with ... $\mathbb{W}a6$. 19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3 21. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ b4 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ e6 23.d4 $\mathbb{W}a6$ Black had fantastic compensation for the pawn in Tauber – Raivio, email 2011.

12... $b4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5!!$

13. $cxb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$

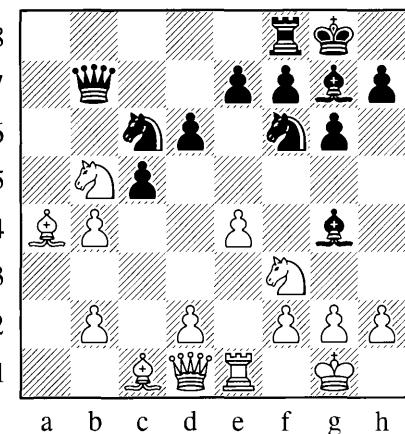


13... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ 15. $cxb4$

15. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $exd6$
18. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 20. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$

15...0–0

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ is an interesting alternative.



16. $bxc5$ $dxc5$ 17. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}ce5\bar{s}$

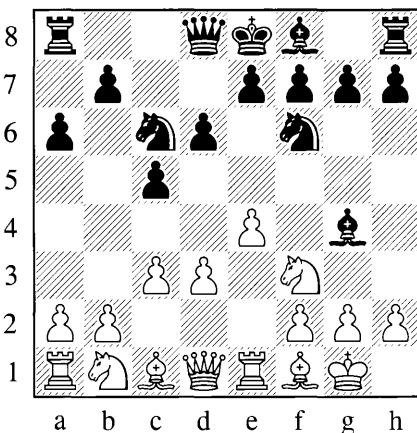
Black has scored an impressive 1.5/2 from this position.

B23) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Again Black pins the knight so as to make d2-d4 less appealing. A positional fight with several tactical nuances will soon be in full swing.

White has a choice between B231) 8. $d3$, B232) 8. $d4$? and B233) 8. $h3$.

B231) 8. $d3$



This slower move shouldn't worry us.

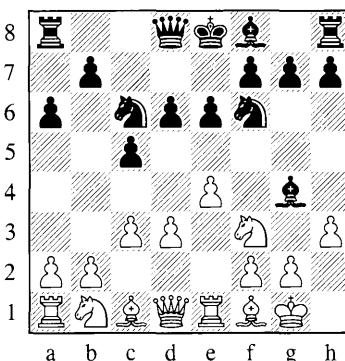
8...e6

Black will obtain a good game.

9. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

9. $h3$

Black has a choice:



9... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$

9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 10. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is a direct transposition to variation B233.

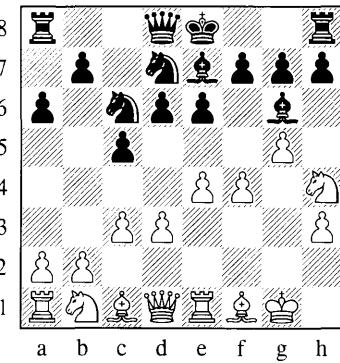
10.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

I don't see any problem with the black position. For example:

12.g5!?

12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ allowed Black to grab some dark squares with 12...e5 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ h5 15. $\mathbb{Q}ce3$ hxg4 16.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g5=$, when he stood fine in Rublevsky – Khalifman, Cesme 2004.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13.f4



13... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$ N

Black seems okay to me, as ...f6 is threatened.

Houdini gives the following continuation:

14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 d5 16.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hxg6 21.d5

21. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}b3$

24. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xb5!$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb5=$

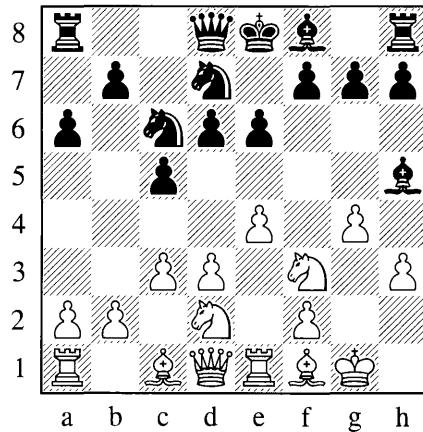
21... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 0–0! \rightleftarrows

Summing up, 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$ is a new move that needs some more analysis, but at first look it seems that White does not have anything serious against it.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 10.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.g4

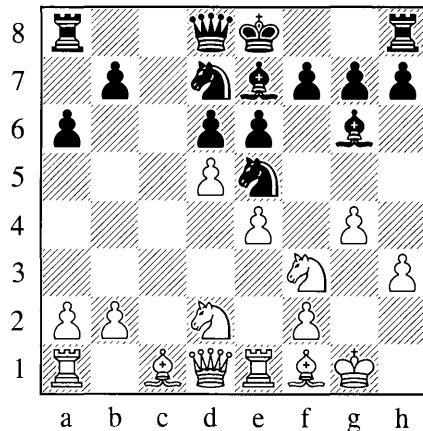
11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ was too passive a treatment by White in one of my own games, and after 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ b5 14.f4 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}hf3$

$\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b4 17.c4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f5= play was balanced in S. Kasparov – Kotronias, Vrachati 2011.



11... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 12.d4! cxd4 13.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 14.d5 $\mathbb{Q}ce5$

We have reached a position that has been advocated by Topalov amongst others. In my opinion the following lines verify that Black enjoys equality:



15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

The prudent choice for White, avoiding complications.

15.dxe6?! fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$ is strongly met by 16... $\mathbb{Q}h4! \uparrow$, when only Black can be better.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$?

Black should react dynamically:

15... $dxd5$ 16. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$

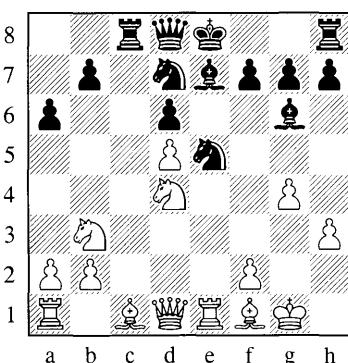
The tactics are on Black's side and seem to ensure at least equality.

17. $\mathbb{Q}2b3?$

17.f4 $\mathbb{W}b6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 0–0 (18... $\mathbb{W}xd4\#?$)

19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ is okay for us after either 19... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ or 19... $\mathbb{Q}g5?$.

With the help of computers I discovered the following brilliant sequence, which reminded me of a painting by Van Gogh:



17... $h5!$ 18.f4 $hxg4$ 19. $fxe5$

19. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ will transpose.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d7\#$

21... $\mathbb{W}b6$

21... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$

22. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$

22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23.g5 $\mathbb{Q}c2!!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}h1\#$

25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$ leads to a perpetual.

22... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

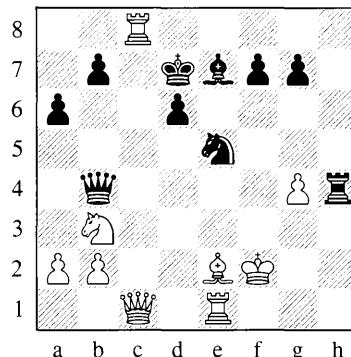
23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}h1\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$

26. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

$\mathbb{Q}h1\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1=$ is a second perpetual, more brilliant than the first one.

23... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5!!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

26. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}b4!$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c1$



28... $\mathbb{Q}d3\#!!$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g2\#$

31. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$

And this is the third one, surpassing any possible imagination. Sheer brilliance!

15... $dxe5$

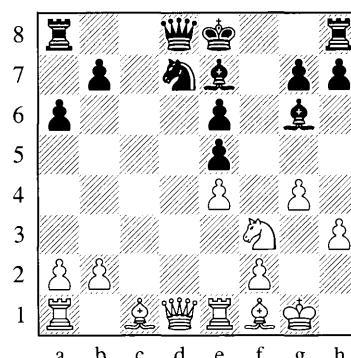
This is forced, but Black should not mind the doubled pawns as he gets a lot of activity for his pieces.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$

This has been played by Zhang Zhong and is the best move. Black should not overestimate his chances.

16. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is rather pleasant for Black.



17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

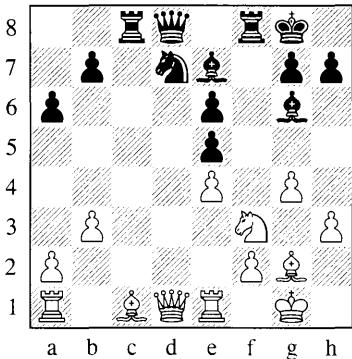
Black has an excellent position, as he can always defend e6 with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$.

18.b3

18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}d2$ 0–0
 21. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd6!$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$
 24. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}cc8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$
 27. $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e8\text{?}$ is unclear.

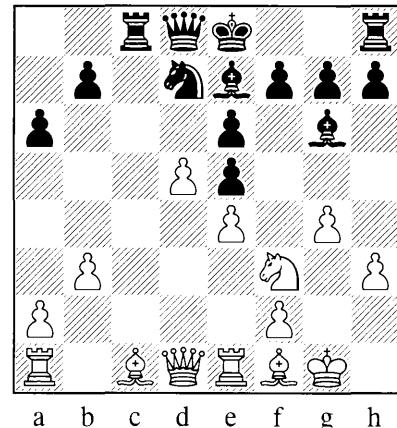
18...0–0 19. $\mathbb{B}g2$

19. $\mathbb{B}c4$ $\mathbb{B}c6!$



19... $\mathbb{B}c6!$ 20. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{B}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}f4!$ 23. $\mathbb{B}ed1$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{B}f4$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$
 26. $\mathbb{B}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{B}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$
 29. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{B}e4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 32. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d7=$

16... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 17. $b3$

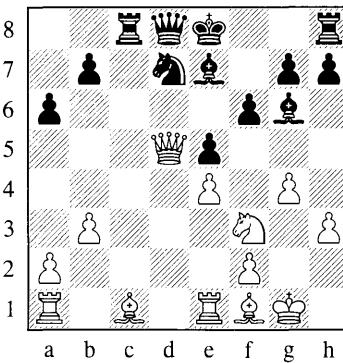


17... $f6\text{?N}$

My proposed novelty, defending e5 and coordinating the pieces.

After the rash 17...exd5?! 18. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $f6$ in Zhang

Zhong – Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2004, White should have simply played:

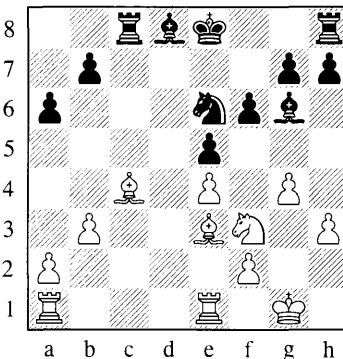


19. $\mathbb{W}xb7\text{?N}$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b4\text{?}\pm$ There isn't full compensation for the pawn.

18. $\mathbb{Q}h4\text{?}$

18. $d6$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ makes the advanced pawn a target.

18. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd8\text{?}$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



21... $\mathbb{B}xc4!$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\text{?}$ leads to excellent compensation for Black as ... $h5$ is on the cards.

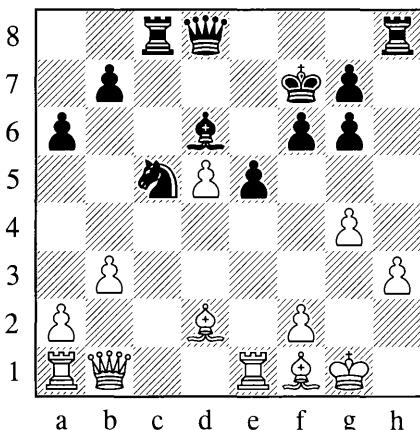
18... $exd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$

19. $exd5$ $\mathbb{B}d6$ will transpose.

19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 21. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 22. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $f5$

25. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $fxe4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 28. $\mathbb{Q}ec2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $a5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 $b5$ 32. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 34. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
 35. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $a4=$ is a dead draw.

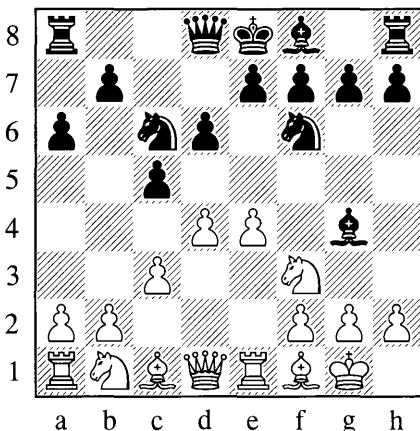
19... $hxg6$ 20. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b1$



23... $a5!$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7!$

The idea of ... $e4$ gives Black strong counterplay.

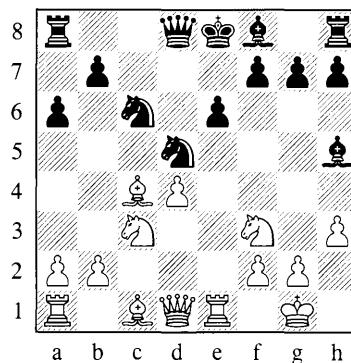
B232) 8. $d4!?$



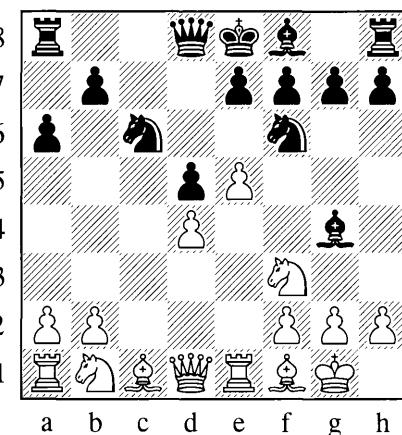
This has become popular lately, but according to my analysis it is not a threat.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $d5!$ 10. $e5!$

10. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $e6$ 12. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$
 was Gausel – Petursson, Gausdal 1987, and now I think Black should have played:



13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 14. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$
 $0-0$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (17. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 18. $exf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 21. $gxf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$)
 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ (17... $exd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$) 18. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
 19. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ With an unclear game.

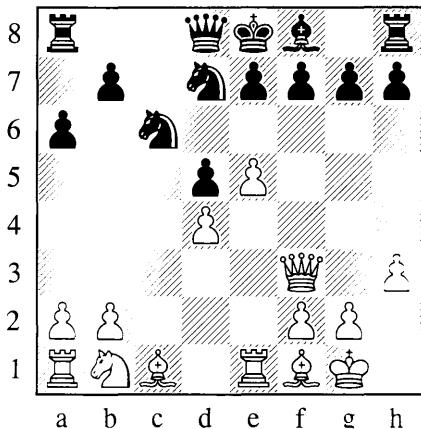


10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ 11. $h3!$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $e6$ could even be worse for White.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$

Black should take the offered pawn:



12...Qxd4!

Otherwise he will most likely end up in a slightly worse position without counterplay.

13.Qd1!

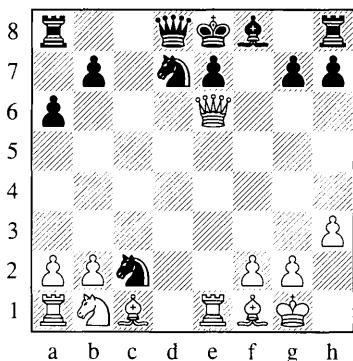
The critical continuation, which raises several important questions.

13...Qxd5

I faced this as Black in one of my own games, and I did not hesitate to go after White's rook:

13...Qc2 14.e6! fxe6 15.Qxe6?

As I commented for the ChessBase site, 15.Qxe6!N Qf6 16.Qxb7 Qc8 17.Qb3!! Qd4! (17...Qxa1 18.Qa4† Qd7 19.Qc6!!† is, unbelievably, better for White) 18.Qa4† Qd7 19.Qxd7† Qxd7 20.Qe2 Qxe2† 21.Qxe2 e5 would have led to some sort of balanced ending.

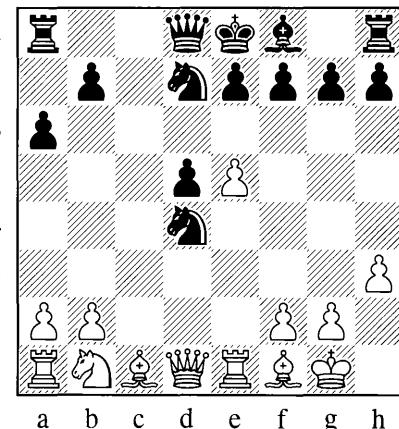


15...Qb6! 16.Qe4?!

16.Qe2†

16...Qc6!† 17.Qe2 Qxe1! 18.Qxe1 e5 19.Qc3 Qc5 20.Qe4 Qd4 21.Qg5 0–0 22.Qc1 Qc5! 23.Qxc5 Qxc5

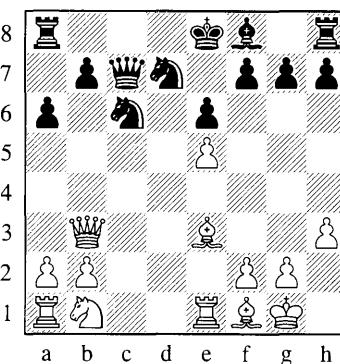
I went on to win in Howell – Kotronias, Warsaw 2013.



13...Qc6 14.e6!

Ruining the structure seems best, as otherwise Black will play ...e6 and get his pieces out comfortably.

An example of this scenario is: 14.Qxd5 e6 15.Qb3 Qc7 16.Qe3 (16.Qf4 Qdxe5 17.Qg3 [17.Qd2 Qd6] 17...f6=)

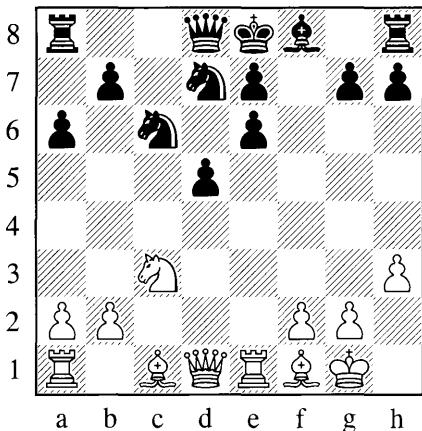


16...Qcxe5! 17.Qd2 Qc6 18.Qac1 Qe7 19.g3 0–0 20.Qc4 b5 21.Qd2 Qac8 22.a4 bxa4 23.Qxa4 Qb6 24.Qe4 Qb7 25.Qxa6 Qxa6= $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Sueess – Albano, corr. 2012.

14...fxe6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3!!$

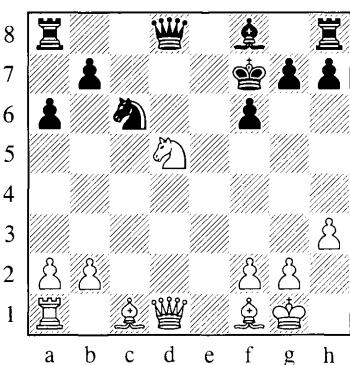
A possibility that escaped Tiger's attention when he analysed the position in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*.

He only looked at 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ (16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ e6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ g6 19. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\mp$) 16...g6 17. $\mathbb{E}xg6$ hgx6 18. $\mathbb{W}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}d6\rightleftarrows$ which is indeed an important line, but only half the truth.

**15...g6!N**

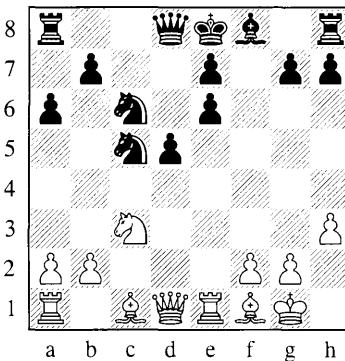
Black should insist on sacrificing the e6-pawn for development, and this is the right way.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ has been tested in several engine games, but as I have pointed out on the ChessBase site: 16. $\mathbb{E}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xf6\uparrow$ exf6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$



18...b5! 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$! $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e3$!
(21. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}h6!$ $\mathbb{E}a7!$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$
24. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ g6 25. $\mathbb{W}h5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{h}4$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 32. b3 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$)
21...g6 22. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c1\uparrow$
This is too laborious for Black, and I'm not even sure he can draw in the end.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ does not work in view of the brilliant:



16.b4!! $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
19. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b2\uparrow$ White has a huge initiative, and Black's under-development is particularly glaring.

16. $\mathbb{E}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7!$

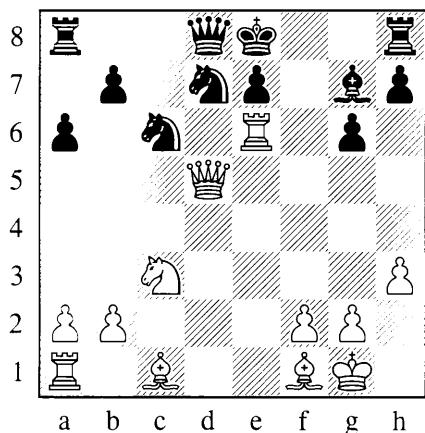
Development above all!

16... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$ gives away the game due to 17. $\mathbb{E}xc6\rightleftarrows$ followed by a fork on d4.

17. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

White has to take on d5, the only question is how.

After 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!!$
19. $\mathbb{W}xd8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}d1\rightleftarrows$ is at least equal for Black, who has better pieces) 18... $\mathbb{W}xd1$
19. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}d8!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!!$)
20... $\mathbb{Q}a4\rightleftarrows$ Black is pressing his opponent on the queenside, securing at least equal chances.



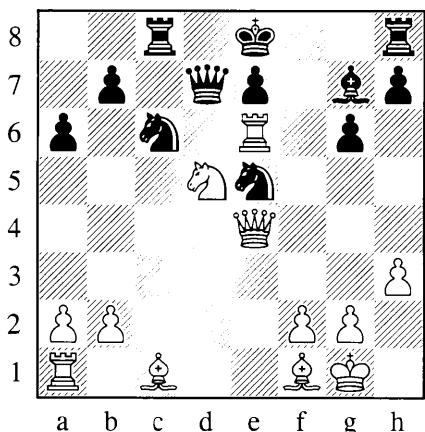
17...Qde5!

If we look at the game the classical way, White should be better in view of his two bishops and superior pawn structure. However, it is all about dynamics, and with this move Black traps the rook on e6!

18.We4! Wd7 19.Qd5!

19.Qc4 Qxc4 20.Wxc4 Qd+=

19...Ee8



20.Qh6!!

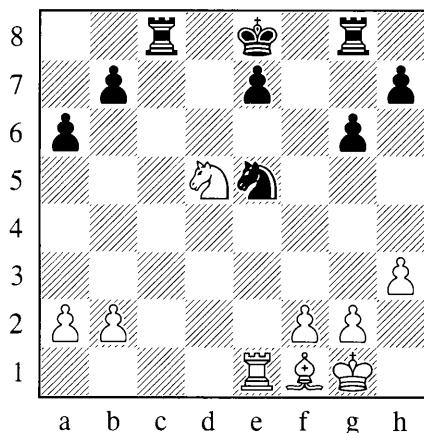
White keeps on throwing wood onto the raging fire to maintain his initiative.

20...We6 21.Qxg7 Eg8 22.Qxe5

22.Qc4 Qf7 23.Qxe5 Wxe5 24.Qb6† e6
25.Qxc8 Exc8 26.Qe1 Wxe4 27.Qxe4 Ee8=

22...Wxe5 23.Qxe5 Qxe5 24.Qe1

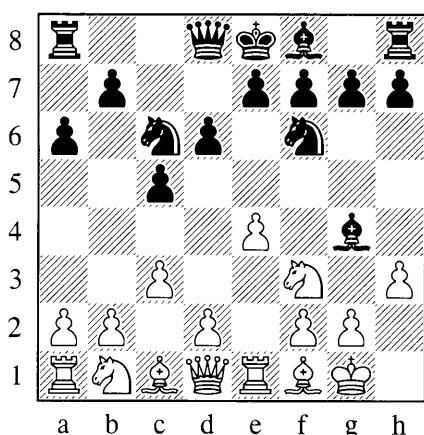
The culmination of White's play, regaining the exchange, but it turns out the massive simplification has stripped White of any advantage.



24...Qc6 25.Qf6† Qf7 26.Qxg8 Qxg8=

This ending is equal. An important defensive device at Black's disposal is to exchange rooks and then place his knight on d6 and pawn on e5, creating a fortress.

B233) 8.h3



2. $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c6$

This bold move is considered the most critical, gaining the advantage of the two bishops right away.

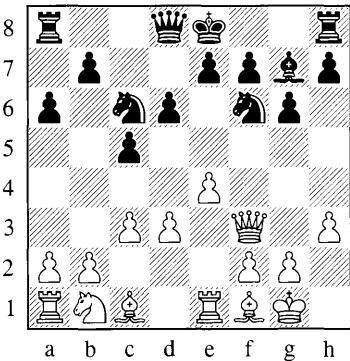
8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$

8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ is unfortunately an error. 9. $\mathbb{g}4!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 10. $d4!$ $cxd4$ 11. $cxd4\pm$ and any way of taking on e4 costs Black material.

9. $\mathbb{W}xf3 e6!$

A relatively new approach. When the white bishop is situated on f1 we would rather not fianchetto our dark-squared bishop. The point is that White's light-squared bishop does not interfere with the rest of its army (as was the case when it was on c2), and White will sooner or later play his pawn to d4 and activate the bishop purposefully.

An example what may happen after 9...g6 is:
10. $d3 \mathbb{Q}g7$

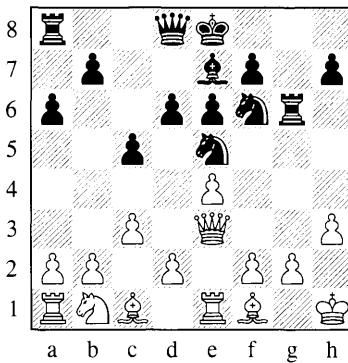


11. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ (11. $\mathbb{W}d1$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ allows Black the interesting option 12...b6?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $d5\infty$)
11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $b5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$?! (14... $\mathbb{Q}de5$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is more reliable, but White is a bit better nevertheless as he can play all over the board.) 15. $d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2!\pm$ White was turning the screw in Ponomariov – Caruana, Dortmund 2012.

10.d3

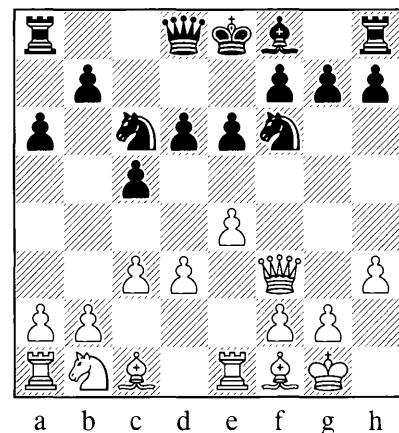
Some engines might want to stop us from getting our bishop to e7 by 10. $\mathbb{W}g3$, but after

10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$! they will soon be disillusioned:
11. $\mathbb{W}xg7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 12. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$! 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (13. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$! 14. $\mathbb{W}e3$



14... $\mathbb{Q}fg4!!$ 15. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4!\pm$
Black is already close to winning.

10. $\mathbb{W}d1$ allows an immediate 10...d5!, when Black is just fine.

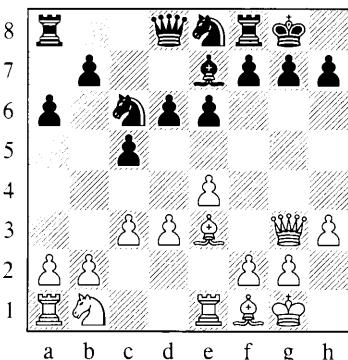
10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$!

10...d5?! is not so good due to 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$, when White has some pressure.

11. $\mathbb{W}d1$

After 11. $\mathbb{W}g3$ 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$!) 13. $\mathbb{W}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 14. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$! 15. $f4$ $e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ [17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ looks excellent for Black with the undermining possibility ...c4 lurking in the background] 17... $exf4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

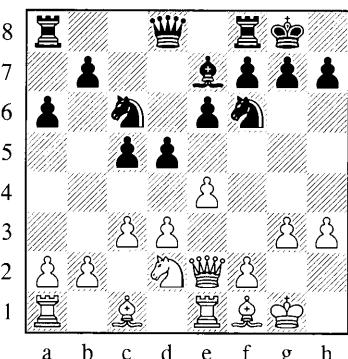
19.gxf4 d5??) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Black may even contemplate the wild:



13...f5! 14.exf5 $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ d5 16.d4 c4!
17.b3 b5 18.bxc4 bxc4 19. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$
 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 21.g3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 22.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{E}ff8\rightleftharpoons$
With strong counterplay.

11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ d5 13.g3

This is recommended by Kornev in *Rossolimo and Friends*. With the queen on e2 we should go for the moves ... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and ...b5, with the idea of possibly playing ...c4 at some point if the tension lingers too long.



13...b5

Kornev gives 13... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15.c5? $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.f4 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a5 18.a4 b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ with an edge for White

14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

14.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ (15... $\mathbb{E}b8?$)
16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ (16.a4 b4 17.c4 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$

$\mathbb{Q}c7\infty$) 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17.a4 $\mathbb{E}fd8$ looks quite solid for Black.

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

From here on, White's attempt to build the Kornev formation does not seem to succeed as well as against an early ... $\mathbb{E}c8$.

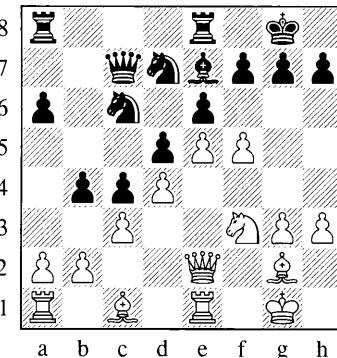
15.e5

In case of 15.f4 c4! Black is fine as the position opens up: 16.dxc4 (16.e5 cxd3!
17. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$) 16...bxc4 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$
18.b3 $\mathbb{W}a5\rightleftharpoons$

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{W}c7$

16...c4?! could be more exact.

17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c4! 18.d4 b4 19.f5



19... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$

This is where ... $\mathbb{E}e8$ comes in handy.

20.fxe6!

20.f6? gxf6 21.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ won't succeed for White.

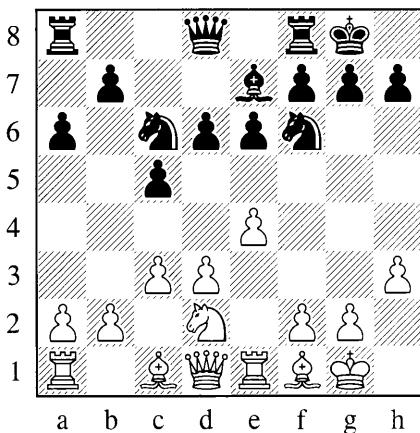
20.g4?! a5 21.a4 bxa3 22.bxa3 a4 is wild and woolly.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}ab8\infty$

I am not sure how to evaluate this. Black has chances to create play down the b-file and against c3, but White has his own chances on the kingside. It is probably balanced, but a deeper look would be required to confirm this.

11...0–0

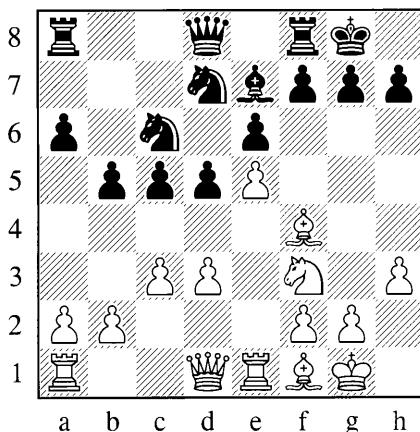
The final split of the chapter will focus on B2331) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and B2332) 12.a4.

B2331) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 

The time has come to finally advance in the centre:

12...d5 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

15.d4?! c4 reaches what should be our favourite formation, and after 16.g3 b4 17.h4 bxc3 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ Black stood better in Safarli – Solak, Konya 2012.



15... $\mathbb{Q}b8\rightleftarrows$

This position is double-edged, as White's attacking chances are hampered by the inactive bishop on f1. Let us see what may happen:

16.b3!!

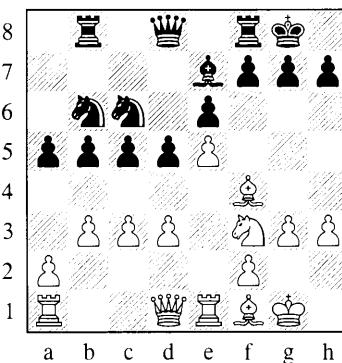
Trying to keep the b-file closed.

Again, 16.d4?! c4 17.a3 a5 18.g3 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.h4 $\mathbb{E}a8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{E}b8$ left White with no attack and Black pressing in Boruchovsky – Van Kampen, Tel Aviv 2013.

16... $\mathbb{E}e8\rightleftarrows$

A sensible defensive precaution.

Black should not hurry with the move ...a5 as it may lead to a complete queenside blockade. One example where things went wrong is 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 17.g3 a5?!



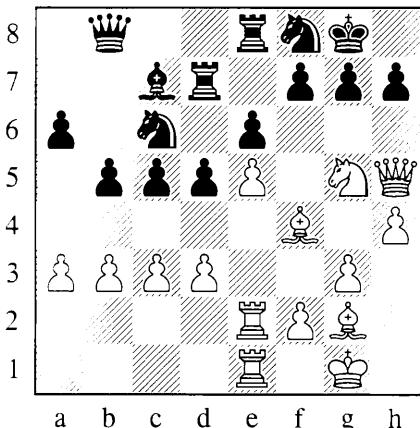
18.a4! bxa4 19.bxa4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.h4 $\mathbb{E}b2$ 21.c4?! dxc4 22.dxc4 \pm White had made some progress in Edouard – Van Kampen, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

17.g3 $\mathbb{W}c8\rightleftarrows$ 18.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d8$

The bishop would like to come to a5 to harass the newly created weakness on c3.

19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24. a3 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}ce1$

So far this is Ganguly – Debasish, Sharjah 2014, and it seems to me that Black could have finally played:

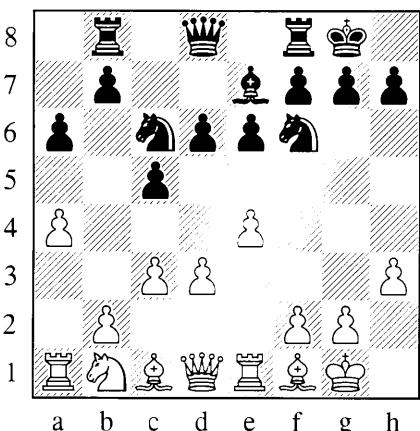


25...a5!Nf

Black holds a slight edge.

B2332) 12.a4 Bb8

12...d5 is of course also possible.

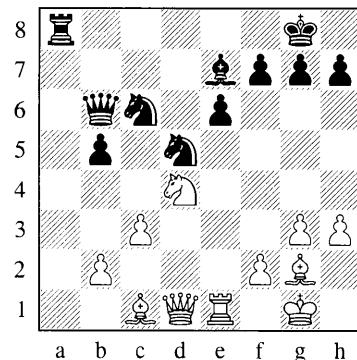


13.g3 b5 14.axb5 axb5

The chances seem balanced. I will present some sample lines:

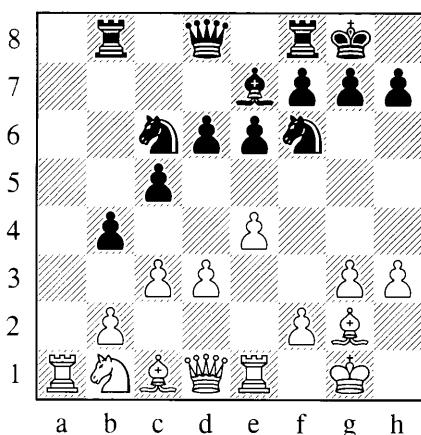
15.Bg2

15.Qd2 Bb6 16.Qf3 (16.f4 Ba8 17.Bxa8 Bxa8 18.Qf3 d5 19.e5 Qd7 20.Qe3 Wa5 21.Wc2 c4?) 16...Ba8 17.Bxa8 Bxa8 18.d4 d5 19.exd5 Qxd5 20.Qg2 cxd4 21.Qxd4



21...Qc5! 22.Qxd5 Qxd4 23.cxd4 exd5 24.Qe3 Wb7 25.Wd3 Qd8 26.Qg2 Qe6=

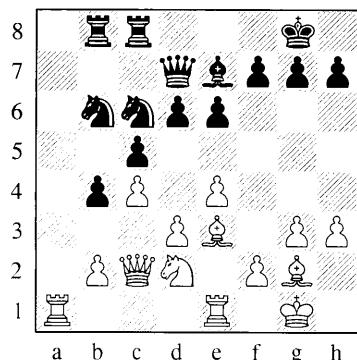
15...b4



16.Qe3N

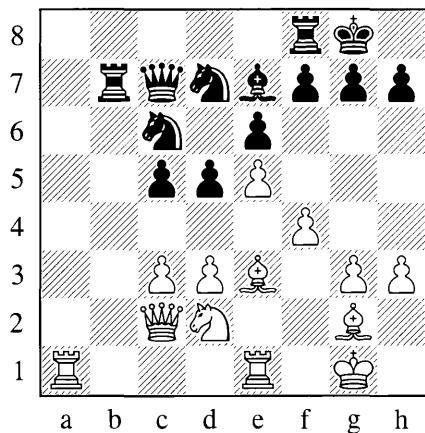
16.Qd2 Qd7 17.Qc4 Wc7 is unclear.

16.Qf4 Qd7 17.Qe3 Qb6 18.Qd2 Wd7
19.Wc2 Efc8 20.c4



20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 24. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 27. exd6 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b6=$ This was level in Sutovsky – Tiviakov, Montreal 2007, although Black played superbly and went on to win.

16... d5 17. e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. f4 bxc3 19. bxc3 $\mathbb{W}c7$
 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



21... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}eb1$ $\mathbb{E}xb1\#$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xb1$ $\mathbb{E}xb1\#$
 24. $\mathbb{W}xb1=$

Conclusion

The Universal System against the Rossolimo is one of the most double-edged and dynamic battlefields in the whole of opening theory. Black's king lingers in the centre long enough for the sake of achieving our positional aims, and for this reason in most lines it is important to know the theory move by move, at least until the moment we castle into safety. If a player does his homework, however, then he has excellent chances to play for a win even against stronger opponents, as this is a system they tend to underestimate. Some of the most important positions undoubtedly arise after 4.0–0, but with careful study of the variations presented in this chapter, the reader can look forward to lasting success against 3. $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

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